



**For the Mainstream Traveler**  
**Wallowa Lake to Joseph**  
Miles: 1.4

**Chief Joseph Monument**

The Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail formally begins at the Chief Joseph Monument at the north end of serene Wallowa Lake. The Joseph band of Nez Perce did not literally start their journey from this point. Rather Chief Old Joseph's grave marks the symbolic beginning of the Trail.

Tuekakas was a young man when Lewis and Clark traveled through Nez Perce country. In middle age, he converted to Christianity and was baptized as Joseph. He is called Old Joseph to distinguish him from his famous son, Chief Joseph.

Old Joseph signed the Treaty of 1855 which set aside seven million acres for the Nez Perce Reservation. Eight years later, the Treaty of 1863 was signed by only a few headmen. More than six million acres, including the Wallowa, were relinquished. Chief Old Joseph did not agree with the Treaty and did not sign.

Chief Old Joseph's life spanned the era when the Nez Perce believed they and the United States coexisted as two independent sovereign nations. His death presaged the realization that a foreign country—the United States of America—claimed dominion over the Nez Perce people and their land.

*I learned then that we were but few, while the white men were many, and that we could not hold our own with them. We were like deer. They were like grizzly bears. We had a small country. Their country was large. We were contented to let things remain as the Great Spirit Chief made them. They were not; and would change the rivers and mountains if they did not suit them.*

Chief Joseph

Fittingly, the trail of the Nez Perce quest for freedom begins here at the grave of Old Joseph, a chief who retained his People's sovereignty as long as he could.

*Follow Oregon 82 for 1.4 miles north into Joseph.*