



**Historical Museum at St. Gertrude**  
*At the Welcome Center of the Monastery of St. Gertrude*  
Open Tuesday – Saturday 9:30 to 4:30pm  
Adults \$6, Students \$3, Age 6 and under Free

<http://www.historicalmuseumatstgertrude.org/>.

Our **mission** is to preserve the rich heritage of the **Monastery of St. Gertrude**, Camas Prairie, Snake River, Salmon River and surrounding areas. This 8,000 square-foot facility houses **collections** comprising over 60,000 artifacts, with 10,000 on display. View special exhibits, including the stories of the Benedictine Sisters, the Nez Perce people, Polly Bemis and Buckskin Bill. Discover the Rhoades Emmanuel Gallery – rare, exquisite Asian and European artifacts dating to the 14th century. Join us for our annual **Raspberry Festival**, **Fall Lecture Series**, and other fun and educational **family events**.

## About

Preserving the past for the future, the Museum features a rich and in-depth collection focusing on the history of North Central Idaho, specifically, mining, ranching, farming, the Chinese in Idaho, the Nez Perce, local characters, antique weapons and more.

### **Mission & Vision**

Our mission is to preserve the rich heritage of the Monastery of St. Gertrude, Camas Prairie, Snake River, Salmon River and surrounding areas. Our 8,000 square-foot facility houses collections of more than 60,000 artifacts, with 10,000 on display.

### **Historical Museum as Ministry**

The scope of the Museum's work is the heritage of the Monastery of St. Gertrude and the Camas Prairie region of North Central Idaho.

Rooted in the tradition of Benedictine Spirituality, the Sisters sponsor the Museum and direct it to be a permanent, public, non-profit educational institution, which provides for the systematic collection and care of its artifacts.

Societies build upon the past. In order to preserve the past for future generations, the Museum staff accepts, preserves, and re-tells the stories connected to the artifacts. The Museum is a cultural and educational resource for guests of all ages.

### **Objectives**

The Historical Museum will:

- ~ Preserve artifacts within the scope of the Museum.
- ~ Provide a quiet, peaceful, beautiful environment in which visitors can muse on multi-cultural artifacts which bridge the past and the future.
- ~ Provide an experience of stability and of reverence for the past in a time of increased mobility and its resulting rootlessness.
- ~ Provide cultural and educational experiences for all people regardless of age, ethnic, socioeconomic status, and religious preference.
- ~ Make materials available for researchers, including families tracing their heritage.
- ~ Welcome guests with hospitality in the spirit of our founders and our Benedictine Rule.

**Through the ministry of our Historical Museum,  
we and our visitors are made more aware of and are  
grateful for the accomplishments and lives of our ancestors.**

### **HOW THE HISTORICAL MUSEUM CAME TO BE**

*by Sister Joan Smith*

**In 1910 Sister Rose Hodges, a science teacher at St. Scholastica Academy in Colton, Washington, received a collection of minerals from the National Museum of Natural History, which later became the Smithsonian.**

**In 1931 Sister Alfreda Elsensohn, a teacher at St. Gertrude's Academy in Cottonwood, Idaho, brought the collection to the Academy and it became the beginning of the Museum. At that time (1931) the Museum was housed in the school attic. She continued to collect artifacts there until 1954 when the new Academy building was dedicated. The Museum was then moved to a large basement room set aside for this purpose.**

***Sr. Alfreda Elsensohn in the Museum's  
next location - the basement of St.  
Gertrude's Academy.***

**Sister Alfreda continued to work mainly in science areas, including doing taxidermy with her students. Many animals were part of the Museum collection during these early years as well as minerals, insects, and animal specimens. As the collection grew, people began giving her artifacts of a more general nature, and she began to collect more historical items, including the S. S. flag that was flying over Dachau when the Allies liberated the concentration camp. The doctor and his medic took the flag down. When the doctor died later, his widow sent the flag to Sister Alfreda since his medic had been a local man. The**

Museum continued to receive other items related to both the First and Second World War.

## **Weis Rockshelter**

### **Weis Rockshelter**

**More than 8,000 years ago the ancestors of the Nez Perce first made this rock shelter their home. This small shelter is located near Cottonwood, Idaho and is close to the Salmon River, making it an ideal location because its proximity to major food sources and transportation routes. The shelter is not a cave, but a small niche in a wall of basalt. The shelter was continuously inhabited until about 600 years ago.**

**From 1961 to 1963, archeological excavations under the direction of Idaho State University archeologist B. Robert Butler were conducted here. These excavations were some of the first professional archeological work ever completed in Nez Perce country.**

