NEVADA TOWN NAMES

by

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THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Early historians and geographers often speculate upon the meaning and origin of place names, but it has been only within the last half century that a science of place names has been founded. The basis for this science was the principle that no place name can be understood in the light of the present form only, but must be traced to its earliest form. Forstemann in Germany, Rygh in Norway, Noreen in Sweden, Skeat in England, and Longnon in France are well known early pioneers in this work. In the United States George Stewart is perhaps the best known of the recent authors.¹

Prior to the year 1938, very little study had been done on place names in the United States. The work that was turned out was, for the most part, that of historians and geographers in the colleges of our nation. An example of the latter was Edmond Meany’s treatise on Washington towns.²

During the 1940’s, especially in the first year of that period, the Writer’s Project Commission of each of the

¹George R. Stewart, Names on the Land (New York: Random House, 1945).
states turned out some studies, all under the direction and financial aid of the Federal Work Projects Administration. In Nevada, two projects were undertaken, a guidebook to Nevada, comprising one of the American Guide Series of books, and a study of geographical names of the state. The latter study parallels this thesis, but is incomplete, at times inaccurate, and makes no attempt to go into name classification or name distribution. For these reasons a further investigation was deemed justifiable.

The importance of place names. As has just been mentioned, the study of place names and the recognition of the importance of the place name in history has only recently come into its own. In place names are recorded the history of a country, and through the skilled research of the historian, geographer, or ethnographer, many facts will come to life that have been buried by the passage of time.

Our knowledge of the vocabulary of our forefathers is derived chiefly from works of religious or homiletic character and there are extensive gaps in our knowledge of their secular vocabulary, es-


\[4\] Nevada State Writers Project, Origin of Place Names: Nevada (Reno, Nevada: State Dept. of Highways, Sponsor, and State Dept. of Education, Co-Sponsor, 1941). Studies done by the WPA on Nevada names show scant attempt to ascertain information. Several town names that WPA researchers failed to uncover were obtained by this writer with comparative
pecially in its earliest stages. These lost words may be found in place-names. So also a word in common use in early days may have passed completely out of use in our language and still survive in place-names. O.E. hearq, 'heathen grove' only survives in such place-names as Harrow, Harrowden, and Arrow Hill.⁵

The value of place names in historical research is well expressed by Isaac Taylor:

Local names whether they belong to provinces, cities, and villages, or are the designation of rivers, and mountains... are never mere arbitrary sounds, devoid of meaning. They may always be regarded as records of the past, inviting and rewarding a careful historical interpretation.⁶

So it is that studies of names are particularly rich in description of events and happenings of the past.⁷ Nevada is no exception to this rule. Names such as Winnemucca, Shoshone, Owyhee, and Beowawe reflect the heritage of Indian life which preceded the coming of the white man. The entrance of Spanish traders into the area brought such names

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⁷ For some interesting and informative data on the place name in American history, the reader is referred to George Stewart's Names on the Land.
as Las Vegas, meaning The Meadows. Later, when American frontiersmen and trappers came into this region, they left such names as Carson City, named after the famous scout, Kit Carson, to remind us of the transitional period between Indian and modern civilization. Mormon colonization is well expressed in the names of Lund, Logandale, and Overton. Discovery of precious metals gave rise to a host of names, of which Contact, Eureka, Silver City, Orovada, Cobre, and Mercury are perhaps fair representatives. As the mining impetus gave way to the invasion of settlers and merchants, names such as Death, Fallon, Gardnerville, and Hawthorne were early settled on the land. Finally, with the building of the railroad, names such as Jean, Sparks, and Imlay came into existence.

All in all, these names are a well representative key to a colorful history. Their study yields contributions to historical events. As such, it is deemed worthy of investigation here.

**Purpose and scope.** The purpose of this thesis is to present a basic work on the origin, classification, and distribution of certain town names in the state of Nevada. This study is not intended to be complete. It deals only with present towns and other mail stations having United States post offices. Those towns which at present are too
small to have post offices are not dealt with in this study. First, the quantity of all town names in even a sparsely settled state such as Nevada prohibits their inclusion in a master's thesis. A doctoral dissertation could better handle the abundance of material that would occur. Second, the selection of these key towns with post offices is representative of the pattern of Nevada growth. The United States Postal Guide for 1951 was used as a basis for the selection of towns.

For the purpose of this study, a town name is defined as a name given to any type of settlement, whether it be a mail station for scattered ranches, an Indian agency trading store, or a legally organized town in the sense that we know it today. The limitation is, however, that the settlement must have a post office.

Sources of place name information are diverse. Books, histories, and survey reports on state, county, and national level were helpful. Manuscript material in the Bancroft Library at the University of California in Berkeley and the Nevada Historical Museum at Carson City revealed much data. The Library of Congress in Washington, D. C. yielded a few good books on Nevada history. Correspondence was carried on with historians, postmasters, Chamber of Commerce officials, and ranchers in Nevada. In addition, field work

\[8A\] great deal of interest was evidenced by Nevada postmasters and citizens in this study. Most of the people
was carried on in December, 1954, in Northern Nevada.

Reliability of the information presented depends on the reliability of the sources. Primary material was used whenever possible, and secondary material was constantly checked to insure dependability. Personal communication with postmasters and "old timers" of the towns in question helped to corroborate the findings as related in printed form.

asked by letter for information went out of their way to send more than was requested,
CHAPTER II

NEVADA SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Nevada history, in each place, has left its mark on the nomenclature of the state. Settlement of this country came upon the native Indians in successive waves of emigrants, miners, railroad employees and officials. We shall briefly relate this historical background.

Early inhabitants. Although anthropologists have found evidence of human occupation in the region now embraced by the state of Nevada as early as eight or ten thousand years ago, the Indian inhabitant of the 1700's is the first to be of interest to the subject of this paper. At this time the tribal families in the area were the Plateau Shoshonean, including the Northern Paiute who also lived in northern California and eastern Oregon, the Shoshone, the Southern Paiute, and the Washoe, these last grouped around Lake Tahoe in Nevada and California. The Shoshones were known as an extensive, fierce warring tribe, who lived by hunting, and, divided into many groups with a basically similar language, ranged from Montana to Texas. The Washoe were a small tribe, pathetically subdued by the Paiutes. The Paiutes, who fished and foraged among the pinion trees for nuts, were known as a "wicked, saucy, and independent
set, "lazy and given to pilfering. All the tribes lived in miserable conditions, even by Indian standards. Fremont wrote in 1844 that the Indians he met represented "humanity ... in its lowest form and most elementary state." Such was the Indian race at the appearance of the white man.

Topography. Penetration of this area by white men was restricted for several reasons, perhaps the foremost being topography and its resultant factors. The territory lies almost wholly within a great interior basin from which no rivers or watercourses flow to the ocean. The high mountains on all sides serve to squeeze nearly all the moisture from the air before it reaches inland, therefore the rainfall is so light in this large inner basin that vast sections are barren wastes. Exploration and settlement by white people thus was later than in surrounding areas. For many years Nevada constituted a last frontier.

Early explorers. The white man's first entrance into the state of Nevada is claimed for the year 1736 when Jesuit monks are said to have come from Mexico to southern Nevada.

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as missionaries. An adobe house, still standing on the Stewart Ranch in Lincoln County, near the present-day Las Vegas, was supposedly built by these monks. It is a sixteen by thirty feet structure with eighteen-inch square portholes. This building, however, may have been fashioned by the Mormons at a later date. In 1774 or 1775 a Spanish priest, Father Francisco Garces, headed for California, and left us, through Father Pedro Font, a description and rough map of his journey, which may have cut across southern Nevada, since the priests and the viceroy of New Mexico were eager to discover a convenient traveling route between the New Mexican missions and upper California. Later, after Father Garces, Fathers Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante led similar expeditions that also may have run through some portions of Nevada.

These journeys do not seem to have left a very visible impact on the country, however, and Mr. Scrupham states emphatically:

Traditions indicate that the Spaniards had crossed the Colorado River and traded with the Indians along

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3Ibid., pp. 17-18.

4Hubert H. Bancroft, Nevada, Colorado and Wyoming (San Francisco: History Company, 1889), p. 27.


6Bancroft, op. cit., p. 30.
its northern banks, but no accounts of such visits or of possible settlements within Nevada territory has come to light.7

... Spanish called the country 'the Northern Mystery'
... no water and poor forage.8

The maps of this period are extremely crude and inexact, the unknown being filled in with unverified reports and figments of the map-maker's imagination.9 This also clouds the possibility of verifying whether either of these missionary explorers actually did touch on Nevada in their wanderings.

Whether Escalante's party entered the territory of Nevada or not there is good reason to believe that the Spaniards dwelling south of the Colorado had crossed the river and traded with the Indians living in the valley of the Virgin; certainly the Indians living in the valley were familiar with the Spaniards when Escalante visited them in 1776. There are traditions of early Spanish settlements on the north side of the Colorado, but no well-authenticated account: if such settlements existed, which is doubtful, they were only temporary.10

In 1819 Lieutenant Gabriel Moraga went into the Sierra region to capture and punish Indians. He probably was in or near Nevada during the expedition.11

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8Ibid., p. 28.
9Bancroft, op. cit., p. 32.
11Mack, op. cit., p. 61.
This same southern area was further explored when in 1825 or 1826. Jedediah S. Smith, a mountaineer and trapper, led fifteen trappers from St. Louis to Salt Lake, and then proceeded to cross the southeastern corner of Nevada in the search of beaver streams, on to the San Gabriel Mission in California. He entered Nevada just to the east of the present day Panaca in Lincoln County, following the Meadow Valley Wash to an Indian village at Moapa where he rested several days before continuing on to the Colorado. Smith claims to have discovered the river we know as the Humboldt, baptising it Mary in honor of his Indian wife. He made a return trip across Nevada, over the Sierras, completely crossing central Nevada, the first to have done this in the direction of west to east.

During this same period American trappers began to seek new hunting grounds. In the spring of 1825 Peter Skene Ogden, a trapper himself, led Hudson’s Bay Company trappers from Fort Vancouver up the Columbia and Snake Rivers, down to northeastern Nevada. He visited this area for four years, bestowing many names, few of which have survived. He, too, discovered the Humboldt River, first calling it the “Unknown,” then christening it for an Indian wife in his

13 Bancroft, op. cit., p. 38.
company who by a strange coincidence was named Mary also. This name was of short duration, for when the "wife" was dropped, the name was dropped, too, and the river was variously called "Swampy," "Ogden," and "Paul's River," this last for a man in Ogden's company who had died. Ogden was probably the first to explore the Humboldt from its source to the terminus in the Humboldt Sink.\textsuperscript{14}

In 1829 large caravans crossed Nevada from Santa Fe to California for the purpose of obtaining valuable mules. They left no settlements, but are known to have camped in the meadows of Las Vegas.\textsuperscript{15}

The next year a group headed by William Wolfskill followed the lower part of the Santa Fe - Utah trail, turned westwards, and crossed Nevada in the general vicinity of Las Vegas. In time they reached Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{16} Their success encouraged other travelers to use this route, later called the Old Spanish Trail because it was an extension of the one the Spanish had originally pioneered.

In 1832 John Work, a trader for the Hudson Bay Company, led an expedition down the Humboldt. He soon left for Cali-

\textsuperscript{14}\textsuperscript{14}\text{Fletcher, op. cit., p. 64.}

\textsuperscript{15}\text{Effie Mona Mack and Byrd Wall Sawyer, Our State: Nevada (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers Ltd., 1940), p. 38.}

\textsuperscript{16}\text{Bancroft, op. cit., p. 39.}
fornia via an unknown route when he discovered another trader, Young, and other trappers in this territory.17

In 1833 Captain Bonneville sought new trapping places when Captain Joseph Walker led his party down the Humboldt, that he named the "Barren River," to California.18 It was during this expedition that the first hostilities with Indians occurred, when an Indian was slain because a trapper who had had traps stolen swore to kill the first Indian he met.19 There were, during this journey, several other skirmishes with the Indians.20

The next exploring group to enter Nevada was commanded by John Charles Fremont, then lieutenant in the engineers, commissioned to survey lands west of Missouri. Charting a roundabout course, he went through Oregon, down to Nevada around Pyramid Lake, across the Humboldt Sink along the Truskee and Carson Rivers to the Sierras, over to California. On the return trip he used the Old Spanish Trail, finally arriving and camping at the site now known as the city of Las Vegas.

17Fletcher, op. cit., p. 64.
19Davis, op. cit., p. 37.
In August, 1845, Fremont made another western trip to explore Nevada more thoroughly. After entering near Pilot Peak, he divided his party, sending one unit under the leadership of Joseph Walker down the Humboldt River. The second unit, under his command, journeyed to the site of Walker Lake which had been named after Joseph Walker in 1833, where his party reunited with Walker's. The combined expedition then headed for California's Central Valley, by way of Owens Valley and Walker Pass, where Fremont aided in the Bear Flag Revolt.

Fremont's expeditions are important, for he realized the discrepancies in the maps and reports extant and was determined to provide correct facts.\footnote{Thomas Wren, ed., \textit{A History of the State of Nevada, Its Resources and People}. (New York and Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1904), pp. 17-18.} Guillemin-Tarayre, a French geographer who reported a geographical survey of the territory of Nevada in 1871, testifies that Fremont's attempts were appreciated, and he lauds particularly the barometric observations made during these expeditions.\footnote{M. Guillemin-Tarayre, \textit{Mission Scientifique au Mexique et dans l'Amerique Centrale} (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1871), p. 7.} Fremont gave names to many of the rivers and lakes. For instance, his Humboldt designation was to remain instead of Mary or Ogden.
His reports when published stimulated much interest. They also provided the most accurate maps available at that time, together with a detailed description of the terrain.\textsuperscript{23}

**Emigrant migration.** Great unrest had gripped the United States since the panic of 1837, when an economic collapse, resulting from unsound banking and wild speculation, took place. Therefore, the population eagerly listened to rumors and tales brought back by trappers and later reported by Fremont of "fertile meadowlands and brief mild winters"\textsuperscript{24} of Oregon, and the lands of the west. Here was a new country, where a man could have a chance to get ahead. Real estate speculators, expansionists, political schemers and missionaries all added their cry to stimulate interest in the west. Although Oregon was the goal of most emigrants, tales of California brought by Captain Sutter's agents from Sacramento, turned some from their destination.

As a result of the publicity campaign by the afore-mentioned parties, the years 1841-1846 saw many emigrant parties heading for the promised land. The first emigrant party was organized by John Bidwell in 1841. Totally ignorant of the route, and lacking any reliable map, they set out


\textsuperscript{24}Loc. cit.
with laden wagons, but were soon obliged to discard them to continue on foot with their oxen and horses. After many hardships they found the Carson River, the Walker River and the Sierras which they crossed in the neighborhood of Yosemite.

Waves of emigrants succeeded one another. The principal ones were: in 1842 under Elisha Stevens; in 1843 one with L. W. Hastings, and another with J. B. Chiles under Joe Walker; in 1844, the Townsend-Murphy party; in 1845, the Grigsby-Ide party; and in 1846, the tragically famous Donner party. From 1846 to 1848, the Mexican war brought people to this area, and the gold discoveries of 1848-49 in California created a great influx. By this time trails were fairly well defined.

Mormons in Nevada. In the winter of 1845-46 the Mormons were forced to leave Nauvoo, Illinois, after losing their leader, Joseph Smith. In 1847 Brigham Young, a new and energetic leader, marshalled the scattered band, led a small portion of them west along the Platte River and over the Continental Divide to the Great Salt Lake, where he resourcefully assigned his followers to various jobs, so that the combined pay and goods would enable the community fund to grow. Some joined a battalion for war in the southwest, and when they were discharged in the neighborhood of San Diego
and Los Angeles, they took the Old Spanish Trail eastward until they reached the Escalante Trail which they followed to Salt Lake. This became known as the Mormon Trail.

An event occurring in 1848 also influenced the destiny of this region. On February 2, 1848, Mexico reluctantly gave up all claim to New Mexico, Upper California, and lands of the Utah territory. Thus the Nevada lands became American in name as well as in actuality.

It should be noted here that in spite of the constant flow of travelers passing through, Nevada was not settled. The desolate appearance of the countryside, and the lack of water were considerable deterrents. There were favorite camping spots along the trails, however, generally where grass abounded and water existed. The Mormons were quick to realise the advantages, established trading posts to cater to the needs of the emigrants, and cultivated carefully the regions they settled. One of the first stations was at Bag-town, later Lestersville, by the Carson River. H. S. Beatie, one of Brigham Young's traders, built a log stockade and corral in the Carson River region in June 1849, which was called Mormon's Station, the present-day Genoa.

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26 Nevada State Writers Project, op. cit., p. 35.
27 See the chapter on Town Names in this thesis.
Early government. On March 18, 1849, Brigham Young formally announced the organization of the state of Deseret, which included Nevada. Brigham Young was elected president, a government was formed, but was not recognized by Congress. The United States government created in 1850 the territory of Utah, Nevada then being called Western Utah and considered as a part of the territory. This action completely ignored Deseret. Southern Nevada was placed in the territory of New Mexico by the same proclamation.28

The Carson Valley settlers, too far from any legal authority, felt the need for some sort of local government. In November, 1851, a squatter government of sorts was created at a mass meeting at Mormon Station to set up a legal and judiciary system for the community, and to petition congress for a separate territorial government.29

In 1853 these same settlers asked to be annexed to the state of California. When Utah Mormons heard of this request, they immediately formed Carson County, with Genoa as county seat, and sent several officers, among them Orson Hyde, to organize the county.30 Dissatisfaction increased,

28 Nevada State Writers Project, op. cit., p. 37.
29 Angel, op. cit., pp. 31-32.
30 Bancroft, op. cit., pp. 74-76.
however, for Mormons and non-Mormons did not mix well. In 1857 Brigham Young, realizing the impending struggle against the Federal government over the status of his laws and "empire," recalled all Mormon settlers to Salt Lake City. The non-Mormons profited thereby, buying the Latter Day Saints' farms and homesteads for a fraction of their value. When the Mormons left, the slight existing government went with them. The people realized their need and held another mass meeting on August 3, 1857 at Genoa to petition Congress again to create the territory of Nevada as distinct from the territory of Utah, and to provide some form of government.31 Their petition was not to be granted until 1861. In the meantime, much of importance was to happen.

**Gold and silver mines.** The first tale of gold in Nevada is related by H. S. Beatie:

Our party was the first to discover gold in Nevada. This Mr. Abner Blackburn was the first to find it. He made the discovery in July (1849) in the vicinity of what is now Virginia City. . . 32

Beatie told the Mormons of the discovery, a few went prospecting in the Gold Canyon area, but it was not until ten years later that the region came into its own, with the

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finding of the tremendous silver deposits of the Comstock Lode. The word spread to California miners, the Comstock Lode discovery began the "rush to Washoe," creating the boom towns of Silver City, Gold Hill, and Virginia City. The next years brought discoveries at Esmeralda, Unionville, Austin, Eureka, and Ruby Hill. Settlers, prospectors, lawyers, engineers, and hoodlums, to mention but a few, poured by the thousands into the region.

Indian wars. With the ever-increasing number of white men arriving in the area, trapping the few animals, catching the fish of the streams and lakes, and especially cutting down the pinion trees whose nuts provided the mainstay of their diet, the Indians faced starvation. Since the Bonneville party led by Captain Walker, there had been skirmishes, the Indians had stolen cattle and horses whenever possible. But when the great rush to Nevada began, after the particularly hard winter of 1859-60, they assembled around Pyramid Lake in the spring of 1860. Young Winnemucca tried to settle the situation peacefully. After five white men were killed at the Carson River, which incensed the inhabitants of Virginia City, he realised, however, that there was no alternative to war. The first battle took place near Pyramid Lake. The white detachments, an untrained crew from all surrounding settlements, were led by Major Ormsby who was
killed in this bloody defeat. A report of the events finally aroused and brought help from California. A second battle, in this same year, near the same spot, resulted in the victory of the whites. Hostilities did not cease; Indian uprisings flared up in all of Nevada. Therefore, fortifications were built for the protection of the people. Fort Storey, Fort Haven, Fort Churchill and others rose at this time. During this period reservations were established, in which the government allotted lands and water rights rich in fishing and food supplies to the Indians.

**Statehood.** Since 1859, Western Utah (Nevada) had been constantly requesting recognition as a territory of the United States. By 1860 reports of her mining wealth arrived in Washington, and on March 2, 1861, the territory was officially organized by an act of Congress, with James Nye appointed governor of Nevada by Lincoln. That fall a territorial constitution was formulated, the territory was divided into counties, a government was established, and Carson City chosen as the seat of the government.

35Ibid., p. 216.
36Davis, op. cit., p. 190.
37Bancroft, op. cit., pp. 157-166.
The inhabitants of Nevada now desired admittance into the Union as a state because they wanted to be able to elect their own officials instead of having them appointed by Washington, D. C., too far away. The outbreak of the Civil War made Nevada's silver and gold mining important to the federal government, so that the Unionists in a majority in the territory were able to have Nevada proclaimed a state of the Union on March 21, 1864. The formal setting up of the state administrative machinery took place in the latter part of the same year.\(^{38}\)

**Railroads.** Since emigration times in the 1840's, trails had been beaten across Nevada. With the mining rush roads and systems of communication became imperative. The first mail route for this region was established by the government in 1852 between Salt Lake City, Utah and San Bernardino, California. The contract was given to the Mormons, and Las Vegas, on the Old Spanish Trail, was a supply station.\(^{39}\) By 1857 there was a regular tri-weekly passenger service from Missouri to California.\(^{40}\) From 1862 until 1869


\(^{39}\) Angel, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

\(^{40}\) Nevada State Writers Project, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
when the transcontinental railroad was completed, this stage service was daily.\footnote{Ibid., p. 45.} This meant making roads, and bridges, and therefore toll privileges were established. Telegraph lines were erected between all important points.

Soon, however, mining demanded transportation of great quantities of wood for the metal reduction mills, and the weighty machinery that was made in San Francisco. Gradually railroads were built across the state. Many secondary lines developed to various mining districts. Towns sprang up along the tracks, to serve as railheads or freight centers. Las Vegas and Reno, for instance, began their city lives due to the railroad.

**Mining revival.** Fortunes of the mining industry, which had proved the basis of early Nevada history, soon dwindled, as the rich silver deposits showed signs of exhaustion. When the United States adopted the gold standard in 1873 and the silver issue became predominant in local politics, a period of depression and emigration from Nevada set in.

A revival came with the discovery of other great silver deposits at Tonopah in 1900, the great Goldfield "strike" in 1902, and gold at Manhattan in 1904. Later, in
1906, the copper mines at Ely assumed primary importance as the state's outstanding mineral production. These mineral discoveries brought prosperity and an increased population, which in turn developed much railroad building. This second mining boom was tapering off, when, in 1914, the beginning of World War I precipitated a great demand for copper, tungsten, zinc, and other minerals necessary for the manufacture of munitions, which led to the rehabilitation of many old mines and the discovery of new ones.42

Agriculture. Not all interest was centered around mining. From Mormon days, there had been farming in all the favorable localities. Since 1900, the increased use of irrigation and special irrigation projects, such as the Truckee-Carson, and Lahontan Dam, has permitted extensive agricultural development, particularly in the production of wild hay, alfalfa and grain. Irrigation has also permitted the raising of much livestock because it increased the pastureland area. This growing agricultural activity has led to a condition in which agriculture has surpassed mining as a source of economic wealth.43

The last ten years have seen the growth of manufacturing in Nevada, particularly in the areas of Las Vegas and

43Ibid., p. 563.
Reno. Low or non-existent taxes have played a dominant part in this development.
CHAPTER III

CLASSIFICATION OF NAMES

In order to ascertain preferences for certain types of names, they were grouped into six classes for this study, in a modification of the well known Mencken classification of place names. These six classes are: (1) **Places named for individuals.** A large number of names usually fall in this category. The individual remembered may have been an unimportant person, frequently only the man who first settled the place. Examples of this group in Nevada include Austin, Beatty, Bunkerville, Carson City, and Reno. (2) **Names transferred from other and older places.** Nevada towns in this group are represented by Kimberly and Charleston. (3) **Indian words and names.** Examples of Nevada town names in this class are Beowawe and Tonopah. It is well to note here that some names in this classification, such as Winnemucca, could actually be placed in either of two groups. As an Indian name it could certainly be placed in group three. However, it also falls within group one, names commemorating

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an individual. It is more or less up to the discretion of the researcher in which group to place it. In this study, all such names were consistently put in group one. (4) Names descriptive of historical events that occurred in the area. Battle Mountain is an excellent example for this category. (5) Names suggested by local flora, fauna, geology or names descriptive of the area. Many names fall under this classification, such as Contact, Goldfield, Orovada, Cobre, and Mountain City. (6) Miscellaneous names. This group harbors all names not falling into other classifications, and names seemingly without connotation. Adaven is an example of this type of nomenclature.

In general, an attempt was made to be consistent in classification. It should be noted, however, that classification at times may reflect the arbitrariness of the researcher.

**Frequency of occurrence of classes of names.** Table I shows the numerical distribution of names in the six classes as percentages of a total of 102. Percentages are given in whole numbers, as exact percentage would impart a feeling of accuracy which is unwarranted. The predominance of individual names becomes immediately clear. Names descriptive of flora, fauna, or geology, or names describing the area itself, rank next, followed by Indian names, transferred names, miscellaneous names, and names commemorating historical events that
occurred in the area.

**TABLE I**

**DISTRIBUTION OF NAMES AMONG THE SIX CLASSES IN PERCENTAGES OF A TOTAL OF 102**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASSES</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PERCENTAGES</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7 = 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Towns names for individuals are broken down further in Table II. The latter also reflects the arbitrariness of the researcher since, in some cases, an early settler may have been a Mormon and also a postmaster. The numerical value represents percentages of all places named after individuals.

**TABLE II**

**SUBCLASSIFICATION OF ALL INDIVIDUAL NAMES IN PERCENTAGES OF ALL NAMES IN THAT CLASS**

- Early Settlers: 50
- Mormons: 4
- Postmasters and Their Families: 4
- Persons Connected with Railroads or Stage Roads: 14
- Military Commanders: 14
- Others: 14

Table III shows the chronological classification of the break-down on individual names of Table II. Decades beginning with 1860 are shown. Names given prior to 1860, and early names undetermined as to exact date of naming were
placed together. Names given towns since 1950 were placed with the decade of 1940.

**TABLE III**  
CHRONOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION OF INDIVIDUAL NAMES OF TABLE II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decades</th>
<th>Early Settlers</th>
<th>Mormon</th>
<th>Postmasters</th>
<th>RR's</th>
<th>Mil. Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Names given before 1860, and early names undetermined as to exact date of naming</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860's</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870's</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880's</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890's</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900's</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910's</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920's</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930's</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940's-present</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All periods</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preference for individual names is not restricted to any one period, it can be clearly seen, although of the names studied the decades of 1860's, 1890's and the 1900's
produced the most active period of naming. The 1860's were the years when the discovery of the Comstock silver deposits were made, as well as the Carson Valley deposits of gold; this explains the large number of towns established during this period. The 1860's were also a dynamic period for railroad expansion, the transcontinental line being completed in 1869. The 1890's and 1900's were active periods because of the discovery of the great silver deposits at Tonopah and the resultant influx of population. Note the prevalence of military names given in the decade of the 1860's. This was due to the following factors: (1) Commemoration by local officials for courageous officers who were killed in those years fighting Indians. McDermitt, Nevada, for example, was named for Colonel McDermitt, who was killed in 1865 by an Indian ambush. (2) Naming, either by local citizenry or by railroad officials, for noteworthy general officers of the American Army, as, for instance, in Lee, Nevada, named after General Robert E. Lee.

The relatively high figure for railroad names in the 1890's is probably due to the expansion of the railroad dur-


ing the period of prosperity at that time, a direct result of the new mining boom. Then, too, after the turn of the century, new settlements came into being, with agricultural trade centers as an impetus.

Of interest is the group of names given by Mormon settlers. Twelve towns of the group studied were named by Mormon colonizers, of which only two received a biblical name, and those two names did not survive. This would not be consistent with the high percentages of biblical names expected in a religious group. Individual names definitely dominate the Mormon town names analysed in this study.

TABLE IV
TREND IN MORMON NAMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASSES</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PERCENTAGES</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26 = 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discarded names. Seventeen per cent of the names considered in this study were not the original name. In

5Two biblical names did not survive to the present time, although their original name would fall into this group. These names now fall in the class of individual names and the class of miscellaneous names.

6Mr. Fritz Kramer (Idaho Town Names, Berkeley, U. C. Press, 1954) reached a similar conclusion in his study on the town names of Idaho.
order to ascertain whether any particular class of names showed a high disappearance rate, percentages of the total number of discarded names are shown graphically in Figure 1, page 33, for each of the six classes, along with the percentages of all names for the particular class.

A casual observation of the material shown in Figure 1 indicates places named after individuals seemed to have the least permanence. Actually, this is not the case. The greater percentage of displaced names was in fact names descriptive of historical events (Class IV) and miscellaneous names (Class VI), which, displaced by individual names, therefore show up in the individual names column. Personal names, it is indicated, have the greatest permanence.

The same method of presentation as in Figure 1 is used in Figure 2, page 34. This figure illustrates the percentage of names given and discarded during certain decades. The name was not discarded, necessarily, during the same decade it was given.

The comparative instability of names given before 1870 can be seen from the table. This can be identified with the instability of the pioneer period and the boom times of the mining area. Federal agencies such as the Post Office Department and the United States Board of Geographic Names undoubtedly have had much to do with the stability of names since the turn of the last century.
FIRST COLUMN = DISCARDED NAMES
SECOND COLUMN = ALL NAMES

FIGURE 1

PERCENTAGES OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF DISCARDED NAMES BY CLASS
FIGURE 2
PERCENTAGES OF NAMES GIVEN AND DISCARDED DURING CERTAIN DECADES
CHAPTER IV

The following map of Nevada shows the location of
the town names presented in this study, as well as county
boundaries.
CHAPTER V

INTRODUCTION TO THE NAMES

The origin of town names of Nevada forms the body of this chapter. The names are listed alphabetically with the county in which the town occurs following in parenthesis. The spelling used is that of the United States Postal Guide for 1951.

THE NAMES

Adaven (Nye): An early settlement dating from the 1870's; no information could be discovered on the origin of this name.

Alamo (Lincoln): A Mormon settlement dating from the 1860's; it was supposedly named after the Spanish word "alamo," which means "poplar" or "cottonwood," denoting the trees growing in that locality.\(^1\) It may also have been named for the battle of the Alamo.\(^2\)

Arden (Clark): Founded in 1909 as a center for the surrounding mining district, the Arden Plaster Company had

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a large mill here and was the center of economic activity in the town. It was named after the mining district in the Spring Mountain Range, five miles west of the town. The town may also have been named after Arden Forest in Shakespeare's "As You Like It."

Arthur (Elko): The town was settled in 1874, and named for Chester A. Arthur, twenty-first president of the United States.

Aurora (Mineral): In August, 1860, E. R. Hicks, and James M. Braley, led by J. M. Corey, prospected the country east and west of Walker's Lake. Hicks spied a likely vein of quartz while hunting. This vein proved rich in gold when tested, and the three men hurried to Monoville, twenty-five miles away, to register their claims. Others returned with them, and the Esmeralda mining district was formed. The whole region was called Esmeralda in an indefinite sort of way. "Esmeralda" is a Spanish word meaning "emerald." Davis states that, "Probably Corey had in mind some beauty who answered to that musical word, as it is a common name for girls with green eyes." Mr. Wasson states more specific-

5Gannett, op. cit., p. 23.
7Davis, loc. cit.
cally that Esmeralda was a name dear to Mr. Corey, obtained from Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, in the sixth chapter, when the gipsy dancing girl is introduced. The name was thought suitable, for the district was to be a "wild dance of death or disappointment to thousands."

When Monoville learned of the richness of the new strike, it moved en masse to join the tent settlement named Esmeralda. In the late part of the 1860's Corey changed the name to Aurora, after the mythical goddess of dawn. Until 1864 Aurora was the seat of Mono County, California, when a survey discovered it was four miles inside the Nevada line. The town was incorporated in 1864.

**Austin (Lander):** The town was formerly called Jacobsville, and before that Jacobs' Well. It was a tiny settlement on the Pony Express route, and later was a maintenance point on the transcontinental telegraph line. It was named for General Frederick Jacobs of Indian war fame, who at the time was in charge of construction of a stage road across the state. In 1864 the upper and lower camps of this community

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9Davis, *loc. cit.*

were incorporated as the City of Austin. Austin was named for Leander "Kelse" Austin, uncle of George Austin, developer of the Jumbo Mine, one of the leading mines of the area.

**Battle Mountain (Lander):** This town inherited its name from a mining district in the Battle Mountain Range which dominates the horizon several miles to the west. The range in turn commemorates the first of a series of skirmishes between the Northern Paiute Indians and whites in 1861.

In 1861 a band of marauding red men hid in the hills south of here, after attacking a covered wagon train to the east near Gravelly Ford. The Indians lay in wait to ambush avenging pioneers, but the white men circled and attacked from the rear, wiping out all threat to passing wagon trains in this area, and giving the name "Battle Mountain" to this small new settlement. The town was named by Robert Macbeth, a pioneer who knew the early history of the place.

The town was established in 1868 as a station to serve the camps of the Battle Mountain Mining District, which, located partly in Humboldt County, was discovered in 1866.

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13 Personal Communication, Postmaster of Battle Mountain.

The district developed somewhat slowly until the railroad arrived, but by 1870 thirty-two mines and two smelters were in operation. The Little Giant, discovered in 1867, was near the old camp of Battle Mountain, a few miles from the present town; it produced about one million dollars worth of silver.  

**Beatty (Nye):** This district was first settled in 1865. The town, founded by E. A. (Bob) Montgomery in 1904, was named for William Martin Beatty, the first postmaster. Beatty was an old frontiersman who had come to Nevada from California. In 1906 Beatty became a freighting point for the Bullfrog Mining District, first explored in 1904 by Frank Harris and Ernest Cross. Although the center of activity was at Rhyolite, five miles to the west, Beatty handled most of the freight and traffic, and proudly called itself "The Chicago of Nevada."  

**Beowawe (Eureka):** This small ranch and mine railroad station was first known to emigrants in the period 1848-63 as Gravelly Ford. Sheltered between two mountain ranges

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16 *Origin of Place Names: Nevada*, op. cit., p. 52.

17 *Personal Communication*, Postmaster, Beatty, Nevada.


19 Bancroft, op. cit., p. 270.
and dotted with cottonwood groves, Beowawe was long one of the principal Paiute campsites. The Paiute maintained an all year camp near the hot springs and geysers to the south. The name "Beowawe" is derived from the Indian word meaning "gate," so named for the peculiar shape of the hills near this town, which give the effect of an open gateway up the valley to the canyon beyond.21

**Blue Diamond (Clark):** About twenty-eight miles south of Las Vegas, situated in the mountains, there is a mine known as the Blue Diamond. For many years there was no settlement here, until, in 1941, the Blue Diamond Corporation decided to build a board-plaster mill here, with enough homes to house most of their employees. When this was completed, the people named the town for the company who employed them.22 There was early mining in this area for limestone.23

**Boulder City (Clark):** The Boulder Canyon project was enacted into law on December 21, 1928. At that time Boulder Canyon, which is located eighteen miles above the present site of the dam, was strongly considered as the best possible

21Gannett, op. cit., p. 44.
22Personal communication. Stella Phelps.
location. It was not chosen, however. Boulder City was established in 1931 as a construction camp to provide housing for the contractor's employees and employees of the federal government engaged in the construction of Hoover (Boulder) Dam. Boulder City was named for the project which had been named after the original dam site.24

Bunkerville (Clark): One of the oldest community centers, established and operated by Mormons,25 Bunkerville was founded by and named for E. Bunker who came to farm in this region in 1877.26

Caliente (Lincoln): This community was formally laid out in 1901, at which time it was called Caliente. When the post office was established, however, the "e" was dropped.27 Hot springs in the vicinity suggest the name. "Caliente" is Spanish for warm.28

Carlin (Elko): Since Carlin is noted for its fine water, early settlers passing through took advantage of the fact and made this place a rest stop before crossing the Mary Creek Mountains, known as Emigrant Pass.29

24Personal Communication, J. Riskin, Boulder City.
27Davis, op. cit., p. 947.
28Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 42.
The town, settled either in 1868, 30 or 1862, 31 was named for Captain Carlin, volunteer in the Civil War. 32 Bancroft states it was settled in July, 1868 by J. A. Palmer, and soon after by S. Pierce, C. Boyen, and James Clark. A town sprang up with the completion of the Humboldt division of the Central Pacific Railroad. 33

**Carp** (Lincoln): First called Cliffdage for the number of cliffs surrounding it, the name was later changed to Carp, for a railroad employee. 34 The town was first settled in 1907. 35

**Carson City** (Ormsby): Carson City came into existence with the backwash of gold-seekers from California. On November 7, 1851, a party that had crossed the Sierra Nevada from Brent's Bar sought gold in this region, but when prospecting gave poor results, decided to open a trading post here on the Overland Route. While they were building a log cabin that later became the Overland Stage Station, one of the men shot an eagle and nailed it on the cabin wall. This gave the place its name of Eagle Station; it was later called Eagle Ranch, and the meadows roudabout became Eagle Valley.

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31 Personal Communication, Postmaster.
32 Origin of Place Names, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
34 Personal Communication, Postmaster.
35 Origin of Place Names, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
Many of these early settlers were Mormons. In September, 1858, Abraham V. Z. Curry had the present towns site surveyed because he expected the western part of Utah to be separated from the eastern part and soon to become a state. To induce settlement he gave a lot to anyone who would erect a building on it. Major William M. Ormsby then became an enthusiastic promoter of a town that was still chiefly on paper, naming it after Kit Carson, buffalo hunter, guide, and scout with John C. Fremont's party, for whom Fremont named the Carson River. Carson City was declared the permanent capital of Nevada on November 25, 1861.

**Charlestown (Clark):** A town formed around 1876, Charlestown was supposedly named by southerners living in the district, and was probably transferred from Charlestown, South Carolina. The name is derived from Charles II of England.

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36 Davis, op. cit., p. 228.
38 Angel, op. cit., p. 25.
41 Dannett, op. cit., p. 76
Cobre (Elko): Cobre was named for the copper deposits of the surrounding area since the Spanish "cobre" means copper.42 There was an early settlement here, but the main impetus to formation of the town was the building of a railroad.

Contact (Elko): Established in 1895, Contact was a mining camp. It was so named by miners because it is on the "contact" of limestone and granite.43

Dayton (Lyon): Dayton is a many-named town. In 1849 it was a stopping place for emigrants, as it was the first "green spot" after the Twenty-Mile Desert crossing.44 It was first called Ponderers' Rest, because California bound trains sometimes paused here while deciding whether to continue westward or to turn south to settle along the rivers.45 It began as a Mormon trading post, then known as Hall's Station, and later as McMartin's station, after the settlers who owned the station.46 According to Miss Bray, it then

42 Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 22.
43 Lincoln, op. cit., p. 40.
44 Bancroft, op. cit., p. 94.
took on the name Ragtown, soon discarded for Mineral Rapids. They also
became a real settlement with the advent of Chinese laborers imported to dig a canal under Reese. They also washed out gold from the tailings, and thus their numbers gave the name of Chinatown to the growing town. Successive names were Johtown and Nevada City. On November 3, 1861, at a public meeting, it was named for John Day, later Surveyor General of Nevada, who in return for the honor, made a plot of the town.

Deeth (Elko): Deeth was first settled in 1868 by a man named Deeth. When the Southern Pacific engineers were surveying a route through this region, one of the engineers named the settlement Deeth, after the first settler.

Duckwater (Nye): Duckwater was named because it has an abundance of ducks remaining in the area for the winter. Warm water is abundant here, and the marshy area is an ideal feeding ground for the birds. This is an isolated ranch house which serves as a mail station for the surrounding


48Bancroft, op. cit., p. 95.

49Angel, op. cit., p. 300.

50Personal Communication, Postmaster.
Dyer (Esmeralda): Dyer was an early settler in Esmeralda County. In 1863 a mining district was formed in the area and the name, Dyer, was given to the district which later became a town.53

Elgin (Lincoln): Settled in 1882,54 the name is that of a Scottish family and is also a geographic name.55 Possibly it was named after the town of the same name in Illinois, which in turn was named after the Earl of Elgin.56

Elko (Elko): Even before the Central Pacific Railroad selected this spot as freight depot for the boom camps of Hamilton and Eureka mining districts in 1868, traders were on hand to serve trail travelers and real estate speculators sought choice lots.57 The town was founded by George F. Paddleford in December, 1868 or 1869.58 It soon was selected as the site for a stage station, superseded later

51Personal Communication, Postmaster.
52Bancroft, op. cit., p. 271.
53Lincoln, op. cit., p. 66.
54Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 43.
56Gannett, op. cit., p. 116.
58Bancroft, op. cit., p. 277.
59Angel, op. cit., p. 396.
by the railroad. After May 1869, when the transcontinental route was completed, machinery, foodstuffs, whiskey, champagne and people came from east and west. One of the Big Four building this road, Charles Crocker, who named many of the stations along this route, probably gave Elko its name.  
The word "Elko" means "white woman" in the Shoshone Indian language, and the Indians here saw their first white woman at this spot.  
Davis states that Mr. Crocker simply added an "o" to "elk," because of the large numbers of elk in the neighboring hills at that time.

**Ely (White Pine):** Numerous stories are found as to the origin of this town name. Ely actually came into existence in 1868 when an Indian named "Indian John" guided prospectors to the region. These prospectors formed the usual mining camp. But it was only in 1865 that the town erected any permanent building.

At least half a dozen persons have been mentioned as entitled to the distinction of having their name given to the great copper camp. In all likelihood the town was named

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61 *Origin of Place Names*, op. cit., p. 4.
62 *Davis*, op. cit., p. 326.
after John Ely, a native of Illinois, who died poverty-stricken in Montana after a most adventurous career in the west, making and losing several fortunes. He loaned money to a friend, A. J. Underhill, for the purchase of the present day townsite, and Underhill decided to name the land for his benefactor. The town may have been named for Smith Ely also who financed a certain Long in the building of a copper furnace in the west side of the old town.

Empire (Washoe): The settlement here was first called Dutch Nick's Station in the 1850's, after Nicholas Ambrosio, the proprietor. The name was changed to Empire City during boom times on the Comstock Lode in expectation of its becoming a big city. Later, in 1922, the Pacific Portland Cement Company rebuilt the town and bought it from the remaining few residents. It was so named for Empire in Ormsby County, where the company also operated a cement plant, "Empire" being the trade name for the gypsum products.

64 Personal Communication, Bessie Townsend, Ely.
65 B. F. Miller, op. cit., p. 397.
66 Angel, op. cit., p. 562.
67 Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 59.
68 Lincoln, op. cit., p. 235.
69 Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 66.
Although the latter statement is possible, it is most likely the present name was derived from Empire City.

**Eureka (Eureka):** The town came into existence in September, 1864, when men from Austin found a very rich ore body. The prospectors tested the ores by melting, and when the metal flowed in great quantities, they exclaimed "Eureka" which means "I have found it," thereby naming the future camp.70

**Fallon (Churchill):** Fallon's history really begins in the town of Stillwater, twenty miles away. In immigrant days a toll bridge was built across the arm of the Carson Sink at this point by Ellen Redman; and in 1868, Stillwater, though a small community, became the seat of Churchill County.71

In 1896 a post office was established in a tiny shack on "Mike Fallon's Ranch," but the town did not begin to grow until 1902, when the county seat was moved here after a reclamation project had been approved by the government. The county seat was originally in the little town of Stillwater, and the people there did not want the county seat changed. However, the records were somehow mysteriously removed to Fallon. Mr. Warren W. Williams started the town.

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70 Angel, _op. cit._, pp. 425-426.
71 Nevada, _A Guide to the Silver State, op. cit._, p. 266.
of Fallon and gave the land for a courthouse and jail. John Oats gave land for schools and parks. The town was named in honor of Mike Fallon, the original settler.

**Fernley (Lyon):** Fernley is a trade center in a fertile valley of the same name, which is a winter feeding base for livestock. It was settled around 1905. Its origin probably has to do with the presence of ferns in the vicinity.

**Gardnerville (Douglas):** Lutherans appeared in the area of Gardnerville in 1877. In 1880 these and others founded the present town. Lawrence Gilman, the main founder of the town, named it for John Gardner, a rancher.

**Genoa (Douglas):** In June, 1849, H. S. Beattie, one of the traders sent out by Brigham Young, built a log stockade with a corral for horses and cattle at the base of the Sierras by the transient trail of the Humboldt Road. This place, first called Mormon Station, later became Genoa.

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72 Personal Communication, Mrs. Jerald Roth, Fallon.
73 Davis, op. cit., p. 792.
74 Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 47.
75 Gannett, op. cit., p. 125.
77 Davis, op. cit., p. 814.
78 Personal Communication, Postmaster.
There is some controversy over the date Genoa really was settled. Beattie tells of building a house, the first in the valley and perhaps the first in Nevada, in early June, 1849, in the place now known as Genoa.79 But when in 1851 John Reese left Salt Lake City, choosing the same area as best place to establish a new station, he found no remains of the earlier settlement.80 He tells us:

The first thing that I done when I got there was to get a ranche just where I thought was the best place and I built a house and it was called 'Mormon Station' . . . Genoa was named by Elder O. Hyde after the name of the birthplace of Columbus.81

Elder Hyde said he chose this name because the curve in the mountain made him think of the harbor of Genoa.82

Gerlach (Washoe): Gerlach, now only a station and watering point, was settled in 1906 on railroad land, as a division point. It was named for the Gerlach Land and

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80 Angel, op. cit., p. 131.


Cattle Company, located on the nearby Gerlach and Waltz Ranch. 83 Fremont camped by the hot springs near Gerlach in his expedition of 1843. 84

Glenbrook (Ormsby): Glenbrook is a small settlement which began in 1860 as a saw-mill and lumber camp. 85 It was named for a hotel "Glenbrook House" located there, which in turn was named for the natural features of the region. 86 Miss Cleator states that it came by its name because the town is in a lovely glen through which runs a little brook. 87

Golconda (Humboldt): Hot springs in this area were a source of considerable curiosity among early westbound travelers. Inhabited since 1861, 88 the town really grew in 1869. 89 The name Golconda means a rich mine. 90 More specifically Golconda was named for the once fabulous city of India, 91 famous for its diamonds, now synonymous to a "Mine of Wealth." George Stewart classifies this name as one that

83 Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 67.
85 Angel, op. cit., p. 380.
86 Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 19.
87 Cleator, op. cit., p. 189.
90 Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 36.
91 Gannett, op. cit., p. 139.
tried to give the town a good start by making it sound alluring to the prospectors. There are manganese mines here, though to the north and south gold and silver are to be found in rich quantities.

**Goldfield (Esmeralda):** Tom Fisherman, a Shoshone Indian, located a few likely specimens of ore in this area in November, 1902. These specimens came to the attention of Tom Kendall, proprietor of the Tonopah Club in Tonopah. He grubstaked Billy Marsh and Harry Stimler, who staked the first claim in what was to be Goldfield on December 4, 1902. The town was organized and started in 1903. The discoveries here were gold, and the men named the town for their gold discovery.

**Good springs (Clark):** In 1868 a group of prospectors came to this district, but all left soon thereafter, except a man named Good. Good stayed at the springs which are located here, and from him came the name Good springs. According to early reports, Good was an intelligent, agreeable

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93 Lincoln, op. cit., p. 98.


95 Lincoln, op. cit., p. 67.

96 Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 31.
old gentleman and quite a reader. It was not until 1885 that the camp was again visited by prospectors and became a town.97

Halleck (Elko): Halleck station was a settlement established on the north bank of the Humboldt River to serve Fort Halleck, built in 1867, Starr, Pleasant, and Lamoille Valleys. Fort Halleck was closed in 1886 since the troops here saw no major engagements but were here mainly to encourage settlement of the surrounding valleys.98 The town was named in honor of General Henry W. Halleck, one-time commander of the Pacific Military Division.99

Hiko (Lincoln): Hiko was founded as a mining camp in either 1853100 or later in 1866.101 It was named from the Shoshone language, meaning "white man," so-called because at this point the Indians saw the first white man.102

97Personal Communication, Postmaster.
98Nevada, A Guide to the Silver State, op. cit., p. 120.
100Ibid., p. 44.
102Origin of Place Names, loc. cit.
Hiko was originally the county seat of Lincoln County, but the seat was moved to Pioche in 1871.\(^\text{103}\)

**Imlay (Pershing):** Imlay was named for the civil engineer, Imlay, who surveyed the town for the Southern Pacific Company around 1907-1908.\(^\text{104}\)

**Jarbridge (Elko):** This name comes from the Indian "Ja-ha-bich," meaning "devil." This devil or evil spirit was supposed to live in the nearby cliffs.\(^\text{105}\) Such a name was probably chosen because of the rugged mountains in this area and the presence of hot springs. From its beginnings in the late 1880's, it has been an isolated mining camp which has been a steady producer of gold and silver. Most of the ore exploitation has been since 1910.\(^\text{106}\)

**Jean (Clark):** Jean, settled in 1905, was named for Mrs. Jean Fayle, the only white woman there at the time.\(^\text{107}\) It is a railroad station on the Union Pacific.\(^\text{108}\)

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\(^{103}\)Angel, *op. cit.*, p. 490.

\(^{104}\)Personal Communication, Florence Wallace, Imlay.

\(^{105}\)Origin of Place Names, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

\(^{106}\)Lincoln, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

\(^{107}\)Origin of Place Names, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

Jiggs (Elko): Jiggs is in Mound Valley, named for the low hills that resemble ruined pyramids. Because pinion pines westward offered nut harvests, Indians formerly had a year-round camp here. This valley was settled by Texans in the late 1860's, but has since been distinguished as the headquarters of "King Fisher," an infamous outlaw who has figured in Zane Grey novels. The town was called in turn Mound Valley, Skelton, and Hilton.109

Jiggs was named after the comic strip Jiggs. A patron was sending suggestions into the Post Office Department for the naming of this settlement when one of his children, reading the funny paper at the time, suggested it. It was probably named because no other post office was named like it.110

The Jiggs post office was established on December 18, 1918.111 Local ranchers had quite a wordy and fruitful feud over a permanent name, and since one of the names suggested, i.e. Jiggs, had as its main comic strip feature an endless feud of its main characters, the name seemed quite appropriate.112

Kimberly (White Pine): There is a dispute over the

109 Ibid., p. 162.
110 Personal Communication, Postmaster.
111 Personal Communication, Victor Gondos, Jr., Washington, D.C.
origin of the naming of this locality.

On June 6, 1905, a certain Peter L. Kimberly died in Chicago, leaving a ten million dollar fortune acquired in iron and coal of the Lake Superior region, and in gold and silver mines of the west. Mr. Kimberly had also been one of the pioneers in this area of Nevada. Since, at the time of Kimberly's death, a motion was underway to establish a post office for the actual town of Kimberly, then known as the Giroux Consolidated Mines, Mr. Giroux, vice-president of the company, decided to call the town Kimberly in honor of Peter L. Kimberly. The town was officially named on July 1, 1905.\textsuperscript{113}

Another source reports that this town was named for the Kimberly mining region in South Africa.\textsuperscript{114}

Lamoille (Elko): Lamoille was named for a French Canadian trapper who built a cabin on the creek by the site of the present town, making it his headquarters in the 1850's.\textsuperscript{115} The town was settled in the late 1860's.\textsuperscript{116}

Las Vegas (Clark): This area, rich in meadows and

\textsuperscript{113}Personal Communication, Postmaster.
\textsuperscript{114}Origin of Place Names, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{115}Ibid., p. 25.
\textsuperscript{116}Nevada, \textit{A Guide to the Silver State, op. cit.}, p. 161.
in springs, situated on the Old Spanish Trail, was known by explorers as early as 1776. By 1830 this was a recognized and welcome stopping place for travellers and explorers.

Captain John C. Fremont stopped here in 1844 when Las Vegas was still a camping ground. In his diary he explained the significance of the words "Las Vegas" used to designate this area:

Las Vegas is a term which the Spaniards use to signify fertile or marshy plains, in contradistinction to llanos, which they apply to dry and sterile plains. 117

In 1847 Jefferson Hunt, sent from Utah by the Mormons to California for foodstuffs, reported favorably on this location. It was probably these glowing accounts that led the Mormons to decide to establish a settlement here.

The first actual settlement of the region occurred in 1855 when William Bringhurst came with thirty Mormon followers under orders of Brigham Young to build a fort for protection of immigrants and the official mail against the Indians, and to teach the Indians rudiments of agriculture. The settlers erected a stockade, known as The Fort. On January 10, 1856, a post office was opened and Bringhurst was chosen president of the mission. When the Mormons were recalled to Salt Lake City, the deserted village served as a halt for mail carriers.

Then O. D. Gass acquired the land and water rights. Until 1869, this ranch formed a part of the Arizona Territory, and Gass was a member of the Arizona Territory legislature.

During the Civil War cavalry and infantry were stationed by the spring to protect the route, and the post was called Fort Baker. Mining began at this time with the Eldorado Mine, rich in silver and gold.

The ranch changed hands in 1882 when Archibald Stewart, a former miner, bought it. In 1903 when plans were made for the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad, W. A. Clark, former senator from Montana purchased the ranch for the company as a townsite. The camp, known as McWilliams-town, became a prosperous freight station.

Las Vegas was really born on May 15, 1905. On this date L. O. Wittemore, representing the railroad company, announced the sale of lots and proposed future developments. Within a month Las Vegas was already a town, stores and houses rising everywhere. In 1904 the town became the seat of the newly organized Clark County. After a fire and rainstorm almost destroyed the town, it revived, and in 1911 the legislature passed a bill creating the City of Las Vegas. 118

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118 Davis, op. cit., pp. 795-802.
Lee (Elko): Settled in 1863 and named for nearby Lee Creek by J. L. Martin; Lee Creek was named after General Robert E. Lee. 119

Logandale (Clark): Logandale was first settled by Mormons in 1864 and named St. Joseph. 120 However, there never was a post office there by that name. In 1896 a post office was established, and since a man named Logan was the chief landowner and postmaster, the post office was named for him. It carried his name for over twenty years. As there was also a post office named Logan in Northern Utah, there ensued continual confusion and delay to people in the Nevada town by their letters being missent to the Utah address. Therefore, in 1917, the residents of Logan, Nevada, held a mass meeting to talk over the problem and various names were proposed. The name Logandale was suggested by a Mrs. Bert Mills, and the name was soon changed officially in May of 1917. 121

Lovelock (Pershing): When the westward migration took place, the Humboldt River disappeared about two miles northwest of the present town of Lovelock. The remaining water spread out thinly over a large area that formed a

119 Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 25.
120 Angel, op. cit., p. 492.
121 Personal Communication, Mrs. Bert Lyman.
meadow and swamp. This was the Big Meadows mentioned by travellers on the Humboldt Road, who frequently paused here a few days to refresh the cattle and cut hay for the arduous journey facing them. Kit Carson visited the Big Meadow in the 1830's, and Ogden of the Hudson Bay Company trapped beaver here in 1826-29. Lovelock was settled in 1861 by James Blake. In 1862 an Englishman, George Lovelock, built a little stage station here. In 1867 he gave eighty-five acres for a townsite to the Southern Pacific Railroad which named the town Lovelock's after him. This was changed in 1917 to Lovelock when the town was incorporated.

Lund (White Pine): This town was founded in 1898 by Mormons from Salt Lake City. It was named for Anthony Lund, a prominent Latter Day Saints church leader.

124 Davis, op. cit., p. 903.
125 Ibid., p. 893.
127 Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 61.
128 Ibid., p. 74.
McDermitt (Humboldt): In the early 1860's a stage coach stop was started here and called Quinn River Station, presumably named after the local settler, Quinn.\(^{129}\) Around 1865 Indian troubles in this area resulted in Colonel Charles McDermitt's being sent with a troop of cavalry to the place. Colonel McDermitt was the commander of the Nevada Military District from 1864 until the time of his death. Soon after, on August 7, 1865, while out scouting, he was shot from ambush. His body was brought to the station and sent to Fort Churchill, the base near Carson, where it was buried with military honors. Immediately thereafter, a fort was established at Quinn River Station and named Fort McDermitt, in memory of the Colonel.\(^{130}\) On December 1, 1886, the post was turned over to the Department of the Interior for an Indian reservation, which it is still today.\(^{131}\)

McGill (White Pine): William N. McGill was a surveyor, miner, and stockman, who came west from Ohio in 1870.\(^{132}\) He settled and established a ranch nine miles northeast of the present town. The town was named after him in 1906 when it began to grow.\(^{133}\) McGill is in the copper mining

\(^{129}\)Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 172.


\(^{132}\)Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 1152.

\(^{133}\)Personal Communication, Postmaster.
district and has an important reduction plant.\textsuperscript{134}

**Manhattan (Nye):** John C. Humphrey and partners discovered the first gold in this area in April, 1905. The following months saw the town begin. It was named by miners in the hope that it would rival Manhattan, or New York City.\textsuperscript{135}

**Mason (Lyon):** Henry "Rock" Mason, who had seen this valley as pasture land in 1854, returned here in 1859 to build the Mason ranch in 1860.\textsuperscript{136} The town, originally called Mason Valley, had a post office established here in 1871.\textsuperscript{137}

**Mercury (Nye):** This town was begun in 1953 by the Atomic Energy Commission. It was built for the civilian workers in the Atomic Energy project in this area. It consists of eight hundred homes and a thousand permanent trailers. The name is derived from a mine a few miles north of the town.\textsuperscript{138} According to the *New York Times*:

\textsuperscript{134}Davis, op. cit., p. 1058.

\textsuperscript{135}Ibid., p. 968.

\textsuperscript{136}Ibid., p. 852.

\textsuperscript{137}Personal Communication, Victor Gondos, Washington, D.C.

\textsuperscript{138}Personal Communication, Captain Leavitt, U.S.A.F., Las Vegas.
The name Mercury was the arbitrary description of the first base telephone exchange.139

Mesquite (Clark): The region was known to the Mormons by 1855.140 They first settled here in 1880, abandoning the town a few years later. A new migration of Mormons resettled here in 1895.141 It was named for a growth of mesquite in the vicinity.142 Mesquite is a corruption of the Mexican-Spanish word "mezquite," which denotes a dense, bushy shrub.143

Minden (Douglas): In 1855 a German immigrant, Henry Fred Dangberg, crossed the plains, and ignoring the silver lodes on the surrounding heights, took up ranching in this valley. Having observed the Mormon methods of irrigation in Utah, he labored until he had made irrigation ditches in his fields, and succeeded in growing hay on his ranch, which gradually expanded until he had property extending from the Twelve Mile House to Carson, a total of thirty-six thousand acres at the time of his death. Two years before his death, he organized the H. F. Dangberg Land and Development Company, which passed into the hands of his

140Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 16.
141Scrugham, op. cit., I, p. 601.
142Origin of Place Names, loc. cit.
143Gannett, op. cit., p. 206.
sons, John, Henry Fred Jr., and George. The company established Minden in 1905. It immediately became the county seat.\textsuperscript{144} The town was called Minden from the name of the subdivision of Germany where the elder Dangberg was born.\textsuperscript{145}

\textbf{Moapa (Clark):} Moapa was settled in 1865 by Mormons who farmed the land.\textsuperscript{146} This name originated from the Paiute meaning "warm water," because of nearby warm springs.\textsuperscript{147}

\textbf{Montello (Elko):} This region, settled in 1869, was named by railroad officials, according to one source.\textsuperscript{148} Other authorities cite that it is an Indian name and means a small valley surrounded by mountains, which is exactly what it is. The town was originated and named in 1903.\textsuperscript{149}

\textbf{Mountain City (Elko):} Settled in 1869,\textsuperscript{150} silver mining in this region brought Mountain City hundreds of settlers. It was named because of its natural setting.\textsuperscript{151}

\textsuperscript{144}A Guide to the Silver State, \textit{op. cit.} pp. 208-209.
\textsuperscript{145}Scragg, \textit{op. cit.}, III, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{146}Davis, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 102.
\textsuperscript{147}Origin of Place Names, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{148}Ibid., p. 26.
\textsuperscript{149}Personal Communication, Postmaster.
\textsuperscript{151}Origin of Place Names, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 27.
Nixon (Washoe): Nixon was the site of an Indian village. Fremont and his party camped here along the Truckee River on the night of January 15, 1844.\footnote{152} It was named for George S. Nixon, United States Senator from Nevada, 1905-12.\footnote{153} Today it is the center of the Pyramid Lake Indian Agency.

Orovada (Humboldt): Settled in 1918,\footnote{154} Orovada is a supply and Red Cross First Aid Station. The name is derived from the Spanish "oro," "gold," and "vada" from Nevada.\footnote{155}

Overton (Clark): Overton began in 1865\footnote{156} as a Mormon settlement. This region was known as the Muddy Valley, in the 1860's, and was located in the indeterminate boundary section between the territory of Utah and the territory of Arizona. Later the United States Geographical Survey established it as a part of Utah.

At this time, there were three different groups of Mormons here, each having its own town, St. Thomas, St.

Joseph and Lower St. Joseph. Thomas was named for Thomas Smith, leader of the Mormon settlement. The first post office was established in Lower St. Joseph on February 1, 1883, and the town name was changed to Crosby, after Jesse W. Crosby, the first postmaster. But on May 24, 1883, the town's name was changed to Overtown.

St. Thomas kept its identity from its first settlement, up to and until its site was taken over by the Government, as a part of the storage waters of Lake Mead. Upper and Lower St. Joseph were built upon a low-lying mesa some fifty feet above the floor of the valley, and so were not disturbed.

Due to climate and other adverse conditions, Lower St. Joe was abandoned, and the inhabitants moved across the valley, about one and one-half miles away. In the course of this change of location, they called it Overtown, or New Town.

In later years, when a United States post office was established at Overtown, they streamlined the name, and called it Overton.

157 Personal Communication, John Perkins, Overtown.
158 Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 18.
159 Personal Communication, Victor Gondos, Jr., Washington, D.C.
160 Personal Communication, John Perkins, Overtown.
Scrugham explains the name in this manner. It was given by the residents to the settlement over the river, therefore, Over-town.\footnote{Scrugham, \textit{op. cit.}, I, p. 594.}

\textbf{Owyhee (Elko):} The town probably took its name from the Owyhee River. This river was known to Ogden and other trappers as Sandwich Island River, thus called because some natives of those islands were killed by Indians at its mouth. When the name of the islands was changed to Hawaii, the river's name was changed also, but phonetically.\footnote{Fred Nathaniel Fletcher, \textit{Early Nevada: The Period of Exploration, 1776-1848} (Reno: Carlisle and Co., 1929), p. 55.} The town is the headquarters of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation.\footnote{\textit{Nevada, A Guide to the Silver State}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 170.}

\textbf{Pahrump (Nye):} There are three theories as to the meaning of this name. Some feel it is a Paiute word, meaning "big flow of water," or "big orifice," or "cave from which water flows."\footnote{Origin of Place Names, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 17.} Others consider it a Paiute word meaning "people of the meadows,"\footnote{Glossary of Indian Names.} or "roaring or boiling water."\footnote{Personal Communication, C. C. Boak, Chamber of Commerce, Tonopah.} A post office was established here on July 27, 1877.
1891. It was discontinued on December 27, 1897 and re-established on February 5, 1915. 167

**Palisade (Eureka):** Palisade was settled in 1669. It was the northern terminal of the Eureka-Palisade Railroad, which used to bring lead and silver from the mining camps of Eureka. 168 The rock formations in the canyon east of the town strongly resemble the Palisades along the Hudson River, and it was named for this reason. 169

**Panaca (Lincoln):** Mormon settlers under Francis Lee founded this community in 1864. 170 Settlers had passed by this spot earlier, Jedediah Smith having gone just to the east of here in 1826. 171 It was named, according to one reference, by the early Mormon settlers from an Indian word meaning "silver" or "metal." 172 Other sources say the town was given this name by the Indians in the old days, and was so named because in the Indian language it means "warm water." There is a warm spring above the town which supplies irrigation water for the town at present. 173 The former reference

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167 *Origin of Place Names*, loc. cit.
168 Crofutt, *op. cit.*, p. 129.
169 *Origin of Place Names*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
170 Scrugham, *op. cit.*, III, 517.
172 Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 931.
173 Personal Communication, Postmaster.
seems most likely, in view of information obtained.

Paradise Valley (Humboldt): The town and the valley thus named are surrounded by mountains on three sides. According to Angel, a group of prospectors, among them W. B. Huff, in June, 1863, explored the mountains to the northeast of the Humboldt River, and when, looking down from the summit, they saw this beautiful valley, Huff could not refrain from crying out, "What a paradise!", giving this name to the valley.

Pioche (Lincoln): Pioche was first settled in 1860, although the main settlement came after the winter of 1863-64, when some Paiute Indians showed the Mormon missionary, William Hamlin, some rich ore. Assays were impressive, about three hundred dollars a ton for the silver, but distance and hostile Indians postponed development of the area for several years. In 1868 a small unit of ore reduction was installed, and in 1869-70 such persons as F. L. A. Pioche, Nevada, A Guide to the Silver State, op. cit., p. 216.

175 Angel, op. cit., p. 445.
176 Personal Communication, Postmaster.
177 Angel, op. cit., pp. 476-477.
William Raymond, and John Ely began to take an active interest in the area. Soon Pioche had organized the famous Meadow Valley Company, while Raymond and Ely made the Raymond and Ely Company one of the greatest organizations in the mining world.  

The first post office was established here in 1870, and named by Mrs. Carmichael Williamson after Pioche, the wealthy French banker from San Francisco who had many interests in the mines. The town was first called Pioche's, but the name was shortened by the post office to Pioche. 

Preston (White Pine): the town of Preston was founded in 1898 on land ceded to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Original settlers were mostly members of this church from Moroni, Utah, and included families of Sorenson, Bradley, Jensen, and Nichols. The town was named for William B. Preston, presiding Bishop of the church at that time, who had been prominent in making arrangements for the land and for the migration from Moroni.

Reese River (Lander): John Reese was born in New York

178Personal Communication, Chamber of Commerce, Pioche.
179Bancroft, op. cit., p. 272.
180Scrugham, op. cit., I, 615.
181Personal Communication, Darwin Lambert, White Pine Chamber of Commerce.
State in 1808. He came to Utah in 1849 with his brother, Enoch Reese, and later moved to Carson Valley where he set up a trading establishment. Bancroft notes that the land on which Reese's post was built was purchased by the latter from a man named Moore, who in turn had purchased it from a man named Beatie, who had given a chief of the Washoe two sacks of flour for the title to it.182 Reese's station was known to many immigrants between 1851 and 1857. In 1859 Captain Simpson of the United States Cavalry named the Reese River in honor of John Reese who had served as a guide for him. It was formerly New River.183

Reno (Washoe): Even before the gold rush, the site of Reno was a welcome stopover for overland travelers. In 1859 the first settlement was made by C. W. Fuller who built a shelter, half dugout, half log, near a fording place on the Truckee River. The following year he constructed a log bridge from which he collected toll. Thus the settlement came by the name of Fuller's Crossing.184 In 1863 Fuller traded his property to M. C. Lake, who rebuilt the bridge and set up a trading post. In time the place became known as Lake's Crossing185 or Lake's Bridge.186

183 Ibid., p. 21.
184 Davis, op. cit., p. 1031.
185 Angel, op. cit., p. 634.
186 Davis, loc. cit.
In 1868 when the Central Pacific crossed the Sierras, Reno was considered a good place to build a station to handle the great business of Virginia City. Since Lake’s claim on the land was a strong one, the railroad company had to deal with him before it could found a city here. 187

One of the names proposed for the new town was Argenta after the valuable freight the railroad would carry. But because it was the end of the line, it was called "The End of the Track" for a short time. 188 Soon, however, Charles Crocker, one of the Big Four railroad tycoons who doted on naming towns, chose the name of Reno in honor of General Jesse Lee Reno of West Virginia, a Union officer slain at the Battle of South Mountain, Maryland in 1862. Reno had been a personal friend of Mr. Mills of the Central Pacific Railroad. 189

The town officially began when on May 9, 1868, an agent of the railroad company held a public auction of rail


188 Ibid., p. 99.

estate. In 1871 the town became the county seat of Washoe County. The town was almost completely destroyed by fire twice, one time in 1873, then again in 1879. Reno was incorporated in April, 1879.190

Ruby Valley (Elko): A town settled in the 1860's, one source claims it was named for a woman named Ruby.191 The name may have been applied to the lake and mountains of this locality as well as the town because of the glowing appearance of the area at sunset and sunrise.192

Ruth (White Pine): This area was first settled by miners in the 1860's,193 but there is no information as to when the town was formed. It was named by D. C. McDonald, owner of claims in this region, and local justice of peace, for his daughter.194 It is today the headquarters of the Nevada Consolidated Mining Company.

Schurz (Mineral): An early Paiute camp was located here, and today the town is the agency of the Walker Lake Indian Reservation.195 The town and post office were established in 1891. It was named for Carl Schurz, who was a

191 Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 27.
192 Personal Communication, Postmaster.
193 Bancroft, op. cit., p. 277.
194 Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 75.
Civil War general and Secretary of the Interior under President Hayes' administration. 196

Searchlight (Clark): Many conflicting theories exist as to the origin of this name. According to one group, early 1896 found prospectors Gus Moore and Fred Colton discussing the potential values of an outcropping they had found north of the rich and productive Quarette mine. The opinion of one was explosive and negative. His remark that "a searchlight would have to be used if values were there" was instrumental in naming the claim "Searchlight." Development of the claim resulted in rapid growth of the mining camp and the name remained with the town. 197

Another claim is that the camp's name took inspiration from the name of a box of "Searchlight" matches. 198
The most likely theory is that it was named after Lloyd Searchlight, former owner of a group of claims in the area. 199

Shafters (Elko): A small railroad settlement was probably established here around 1900. It was named for General W. R. Shafters, army commander in Cuba during the Spanish-American war. 200

196 Personal Communication, Postmaster.
197 Personal Communication, Chamber of Commerce, Searchlight.
199 Vandenburg, loc. cit.
200 Personal Communication, Postmaster.
Shoshone (White Pine): An Indian showed the Indian silver mine to white miners in 1869, and Shoshone District was then organized. But the place is a ranch, not a settlement or a town. It was first started in 1873 when a man named George Swallow came to this area and settled. The ranch was known then, and still is, as Swallow's Ranch. When the post office was established on May 9, 1896, the Swallows decided to call it Shoshone, as there used to be quite a few Shoshone Indians living around the area. The Indian word "Shoshone" has several meanings. One is "grass." Another is "head" and "tangled" or "curly," referring to the hairdress of the Indians. Its use here, however, certainly refers to the Indian tribes who inhabit the vast area from Owens Valley, California to central Wyoming where their chief reservation exists.

Silver City (Lyon): An early mining district, Silver City was first incorporated in 1877. It was named

201 Lincoln, op. cit., p. 254.
202 Personal Communication, Victor Gondos, Jr., Washington, D.C.
203 Personal Communication, Matilda Swallow, Postmistress.
204 Origin of Place Names, op. cit., p. 41.
205 Personal Communication, Satoshi Yamashita, Berkeley Calif.
206 Lincoln, op. cit., p. 131.
207 Bancroft, op. cit., p. 259.
for the type of ore found in this area. 208

Sloan (Clark): The town was named after a nearby limestone mining district. 209 The town was first settled around 1912 and probably named after a miner by that name. 210

Smith (Lyon): In August, 1859 a group of settlers, R. B. Smith, Cyrus Smith, T. B. Smith, and others settled in the valley. T. B. Smith, one of the settlers, states that: "The name of the place was selected on account of the predominance of 'Smith' in the party." 211 L. R. Ames was appointed first postmaster on June 7, 1892, and the post office was opened and first mail received on August 8, 1892. The name Smith was official at this time. 212

Sparks (Washoe): Sparks, founded by the Southern Pacific Railroad, was moved bodily, houses, trees and all, from Wadsworth in 1904. The town was named Harriman, in

208Bray, op. cit., p. 208.

209Lincoln, op. cit., p. 27.

210Personal Communication, Postmaster.


212Personal Communication, Victor Gondos, Washington, D. C.
honor of the president of the railroad. Later it was called
Sparks for the Governor of Nevada at that time, John Sparks.213

Wren tells us that Reno wanted the new town to be called
East Reno, but a post office was established on September
11, 1903 under the name of Harriman.214

Steamboat Springs (Washoe): The hot springs of the
area were first discovered by Felix Monet in 1860, although
the deposits of mercury and sulphur were not discovered un-
til 1875 by Thomas Wheeler.215 The town received its name
from warm springs "puffing and blowing like a steamboat."216

Guillemin-Tarayre notes also that Steamboat was named be-
cause of the elongated shapes of the steam these springs
raise over the earth and the streamers of vapor that es-
cape noisily from them.217

Stewart (Ormsby): Stewart is a little town of about
eight hundred people located three miles south of Carson
City. In 1889, Senator William M. Stewart persuaded Con-
gress to set aside funds to build an Indian school here,
which started with twenty-seven pupils. Today there are

213Personal Communication, Bennett, Chamber of Com-
merce.


215Lincoln, op. cit., p. 239.

216Angel, op. cit., p. 645.

217M. Guillemin-Tarayre, Mission Scientifique au
Mexique et dans l’Amerique Centrale (Paris: Imprimerie
about six hundred students, two hundred and fifty Navajoes
and the rest Paiutes, Shoshones and Washoes. 218

Stillwater (Churchill): This place was founded by
J. C. Scott who settled here in 1862. 219 It became the
county seat of Churchill County in 1868, but lost it to
Fallon in 1902. It was named Stillwater because it was
located near a large slough in which the water was very
sluggish and stagnant. 220 This town is on the southern
edge of the Carson Sink. A toll bridge was built across
an arm of the Carson Sink here by Ellen Redman during the
immigrant days. 221

Sulphur (Humboldt): The Indians knew of the sulphur
deposits and showed them to the white men. The town was
started in 1875. 222 It was named from the sulphur deposits
of the surrounding area. 223

Tonopah (Nye): This Indian name has several inter-
pretations. A local Indian derived it as "tono," meaning
thorny, and "pah," a Paiute word that always means water,

218Personal Communication, Postmaster.
220Vera E. Hasch, "The Significance of the Nomen-
clature in Churchill County," in Nevada Historical Society,
Third Biennial Report, 1911-1912 (Carson City: State Print-
ing Office, 1913), p. 175.
221Davis, op. cit., p. 787.
222Lincoln, op. cit., p. 103.
223Guillemin-Tarayre, op. cit., pp. 31-32.
the composite "tonopah" being "thorny bush, hiding spring."²²⁴

And according to J. L. Butler's account published in Wren's _History of Nevada_, Tonopah means a small stream.²²⁵ Lincoln gives its meaning as "water brush."²²⁶

In the spring of 1900 Jim Butler, a prospector living at Belmont, Nevada, packed up a burro and started south down along the range on a prospecting trip. One night he camped at this same spring, and during the night the burro strayed off. In the morning while tracking down the burro, he discovered rich outcroppings of ore. Thus Tonopah was founded.²²⁷ Such a spring, a few miles north of Tonopah, was a common camping place for the Indians.

_Tuscarora_ (Elko): This name was given to the Indian tribe of the region by John Beard, who had come from North Carolina, where the original tribe of the Tuscarora lived.²²⁸ Started in the 1860's, the town derived its name from that of the Indians.²²⁹

_Unionville_ (Pershing): This town was started in 1861. It was first called Buena Vista, and later Dixie.

²²⁴_Origin of Place Names_, op. cit., p. 58.
²²⁵_Wren_, op. cit., p. 149.
²²⁶_Lincoln_, op. cit., p. 184.
²²⁷_Personal Communication_, C. C. Boak, Chamber of Commerce.
²²⁸_Origin of Place Names_, op. cit., p. 29.
With the advent of the Civil War and the settling of the town by a predominant number of northerners, the town's name was changed to Unionville. It became the first county seat of Humboldt County in 1861 and held this position until 1873.

**Ursine (Lincoln):** Ursine is located in a little valley, settled in 1863 by a small colony of Mormons. In 1896 when the post office was about to be established, the settlers in the valley wanted the name to be Eagle Valley, but as there was already an Eagleville in Nevada, higher officials of the post office department decided to call it Ursine. Ursine means "bear" in Latin.

**Verdi (Washoe):** Verdi was first settled in 1868 and was named by officials of the Southern Pacific Railroad in honor of the composer Giuseppe Verdi. This name was chosen also for its brevity and dissimilarity to any other nearby station.

**Virginia City (Storey):** This area was first settled in 1857. Gold was first discovered in June of 1859 by sev-

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230 Angel, op. cit., p. 459.
232 Personal Communication, Nellie Dwyer, Postmistress.
233 Personal Communication, Postmaster.
234 Ohmert, op. cit., p. 86.
eral prospectors, among them James Fenimore, whom Bancroft qualifies as "an intemperate Virginian, without either brains or education," nicknamed "Old Virginia." He called his claim the Virginia Lead. Comstock had named the town that grew up around these mines Silver City, then it was known briefly as Ophir, from the Biblical name. Later, however, one night when Old Virginia and his friends got drunk here, he fell down, breaking his bottle, and upon rising, baptized that ground Virginia. Colonel John Reese confirms this story: "The man who lived in Gold Canyon was nicknamed Virginia, and it was after him that Virginia City was named."

**Wadsworth (Washoe):** This settlement was known in early days as Lower Emigrant Crossing. The town was laid out in 1868 by the Southern Pacific Railroad, and named by railroad officials for Brigadier General James S. Wadsworth, noted Union officer in the Civil War.

**Wedekind Mines (Washoe):** This is a little settle two miles north of the town of Sparks. George H. Wedekind, a native of Germany, made the discovery of rich gold ore.

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236 *Origin of Place Names*, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
241 Ohmert, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
here about 1900, and it thrived for a short period. Today it is but a postal station for scattered mines.\textsuperscript{242}

\textbf{Wellington (Lyon):} The town was named for Daniel Wellington, who bought the station founded by Wright and Hamilton in 1863. In 1865 he established a post office here. It became an important stage station.\textsuperscript{243}

\textbf{Wells (Elko):} Though the present town really grew with the building of the Central Pacific Railroad, it previously had been a popular camping site for travelers down the Humboldt, named for the nearby Humboldt Wells, a group of springs scattered in a meadow. The pioneers called them wells, believing them to be bottomless.\textsuperscript{244} We may establish the first settlement of this area in the late 1850's. The name was changed from Humboldt Wells to Wells on May 6, 1873.\textsuperscript{245}

\textbf{Whitney (Clark):} The small town of Whitney was begun in 1931, and was named for S. E. Whitney, a prominent resident.\textsuperscript{246}

\textsuperscript{242}Personal Communication, Chamber of Commerce, Sparks.

\textsuperscript{243}Angel, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 412.

\textsuperscript{244}Crofutt, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 125.

\textsuperscript{245}Origin of Place Names, \textit{loc. cit.}

\textsuperscript{246}Personal Communication, Postmaster.
Wilkins (Elko): This settlement was established on July 1, 1948. Mr. Wilkins died in 1953. His ranch and the part of the town owned by him were sold by his heirs to a corporation composed of James Stewart, the actor, and others. It will continue to carry the name of Wilkins. 247

Winnemucca (Humboldt): The first settler here was a French man, A. D. Lemaire, who erected a toll bridge, the crossing thus gaining the name of French Bridge or French Ford. 248 Later it was called Centerville because it was the center for travel and traffic going northward. 249

The station was named Winnemucca in 1868 by C. B. O. Bannon, a nephew of the man who had been Lincoln's Secretary of War. 250 The name Winnemucca was the name of a Paiute chief of the region, famous in the struggle of the Indians against the whites. His name has been translated variously as "place by the river," "dweller by the river," and even "one moccasin." 251 Other meanings given this name are "the charitable man," 252 and "bread giver." 253

247 Personal Communication, Postmaster.
248 Wren, op. cit., pp. 494-495.
249 Scrugham, op. cit., I, 259.
250 Angel, op. cit., p. 459.
251 Personal Communication, Postmaster.
252 Wright, op. cit., p. 203.
253 Bancroft, op. cit., p. 208.
"one moccasin" interpretation has been explained by the following tale. Two trappers who saw the Indian chief wearing only one moccasin dubbed him "One Mucca," and, as the chief liked the name, he sanctioned its subsequent breakdown to Winnemucca or Winnemuck.254

Yerington (Lyon): First settled in 1860,255 this area was called Pizen Switch. It was called the Switch because it was off the main stage road to the post office. There was a saloon located on the present site of Yerington, and the liquor sold there was said to be so vile that it was called "poison," thus the name Poison Switch.256 A slight variation of this story is that the term is said to have been used by "buckeroos" when they turned at the crossroads, "Let's switch off here and get some pizen."257 Later the name was changed to Greenfield because of its location in green fields. Shortly thereafter, it acquired the name of Yerington, for H. M. Yerington, one of the men responsible for the building of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad.258

254 Hazlett, op. cit., p. 16.
255 Bancroft, op. cit., p. 208.
256 Bray, op. cit., p. 216.
257 Davis, op. cit., pp. 953-954.
258 Bray, loc. cit.
Zephyr Cove (Douglas): A town and summer resort on the east shore of Lake Tahoe. Zephyr Cove was named for the natural features surrounding it. \(^{259}\)

\(^{259}\) *Origin of Place Names, op. cit.*, p. 21.
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