

NEVADA

HISTORY

Native nations, explorers, wagon trains, miners and railroad builders each helped make Nevada.

The First Peoples

People have lived in Nevada for more than 10,000 years. The Northern Paiute lived in the west and the Western Shoshone in the middle and east. The Southern Paiute lived in the south, and the Washoe lived around Lake Tahoe. Food was spread thin in the desert, so families moved with the seasons. They fished the lakes, hunted rabbits and gathered pine nuts each fall.

Explorers and Trails

Spain and then Mexico claimed Nevada but built no towns here. In 1827, the fur trapper Jedediah Smith crossed Nevada. John C. Fremont mapped the land in 1843 and 1844 and named Pyramid Lake. The United States won a war with Mexico in 1848 and took the land. Wagon trains followed the Humboldt River toward California. In 1851, Mormon settlers opened a trading post called Mormon Station. It became Genoa, one of Nevada's first towns.



The Silver Rush

In 1859, miners struck silver at the Comstock Lode. Thousands of people rushed in, and Virginia City became a **boomtown**. Miners dug deep tunnels and held them up with frames of heavy timber.

The Pyramid Lake War

The newcomers cut pinyon trees and grazed cattle where the Paiute gathered food. In May 1860, Paiute

warriors attacked Williams Station, a stop on the trail, and killed several men. About 100 volunteers rode toward Pyramid Lake to fight. Paiute warriors led by Numaga ambushed them and killed more than 70. In June, a larger force of soldiers and volunteers fought the Paiute, who then pulled back. The army built Fort Churchill. The Paiute kept a **reservation** around Pyramid Lake. In 1863, Western Shoshone leaders signed the **Treaty** of Ruby Valley. It let roads, railroads and mines cross their land. Paiute, Shoshone and Washoe tribes have their governments in Nevada today.

Statehood and Rails

Congress made Nevada a **territory** in 1861. Nevada became the 36th state on October 31, 1864, while the Civil War was still being fought. Carson City was the capital. The Central Pacific Railroad built across Nevada in 1868 and 1869. Chinese workers laid much of the track. Reno and Elko began as railroad towns.



Building Nevada

The Comstock mines ran low by the 1880s, and many people left. Silver at Tonopah in 1900 and gold at Goldfield in 1902 brought people back. Las Vegas began in 1905 as a stop on a new railroad. In the early 1900s, canals carried river water to new farms near Fallon. In the 1930s, workers built Hoover Dam. Its water and power helped Las Vegas grow into the state's largest city.

NEVADA THROUGH TIME

1827	1844	1851	1859	1861	1864	1869	1905	1931
Jedediah Smith crosses Nevada	Fremont names Pyramid Lake	Mormon Station opens	Silver at the Comstock Lode	Nevada Territory	Nevada is the 36th state	Railroad across Nevada is done	Las Vegas begins	Work starts on Hoover Dam

PEOPLE TO KNOW

Numaga	Paiute leader in the Pyramid Lake War
Sarah Winnemucca	Paiute writer. Her book came out in 1883.
Mark Twain	Wrote for a Virginia City newspaper
Dat So La Lee	Washoe weaver known for her baskets
Jacob Davis	Reno tailor who put rivets on jeans

WORDS TO KNOW

boomtown	a town that grows very fast
reservation	land kept by a Native nation for its people
treaty	a written agreement between nations
territory	U.S. land that is not yet a state