Chapter 7

The young Nevada Territory grew very quickly during the last half of the 19th century. New towns popped up and the population grew away. Citizens began pressing for statehood. Railroads made it easier for people in the East to reach the western frontier. A trip across the country that used to take months was now possible in less than six days. Ranching became important to Nevada too.

Many Nevada towns began as transcontinental railroad stations.

- 1867 Land given to Nevada from the Arizona Territory becomes Clark County.
- 1870 A branch of the U.S. Mint is built in Carson City. The Nevada state capitol is built in Carson City.
- 1875
- 1880 Economic hard times hit Nevada.
- 1881 The Stewarts take over the Las Vegas Ranch.
- 1884 Stewart Indian School opens in Carson City. U.S. soldiers kill Native Americans at Wounded Knee, South Dakota.
- 1887 Wovoka has Ghost Dance vision.
- 1889 The first transcontinental railroad is completed.
- 1893 George Washington Ferris Jr. builds the first Ferris wheel.
A Nation in Conflict

Nevada had just become a new territory when our country was beginning to split apart. Citizens across the United States wanted different things from the government. Southern states wanted the right to own slaves to help farmers grow cotton, tobacco, sugar, and rice. Northern states, however, were more focused on business and industry. New jobs were bringing thousands of Europeans to settle in the northern United States. Some citizens in the North were also against slavery.

President James Buchanan tried to keep the country together. But the southern states broke away from the United States after Abraham Lincoln became president. It was the beginning of a Civil War between the northern and southern states. Southern states began calling themselves the Confederacy. The northern states were called the Union. It was a very hard time for our country. Families were also torn apart when fathers and sons fought for opposite sides.
A Country Torn in Half

Work with a partner to complete this activity. See if you can better understand what happened to the United States when the southern states broke away.

Stand opposite your partner, holding a piece of cloth between you. You and your partner represent the North and the South. Now pull on the cloth in opposite directions. Can you feel the strength of the cloth? Cut a small tear in the cloth, and pull again. What happens to the cloth? Think of the cloth as the United States of America. The tear was caused when the southern states decide to break away from the United States. What happened to the strength of the country? Each of you pulled on the cloth just like the North and South pulled away from each other to protect their own interests.

Make a drawing or write a paragraph to show what you learned from this activity.

Nevada Supports the Union

The Nevada Territory supported the northern states, or the Union cause. Union troops in the area were called to help keep Nevada’s mining towns peaceful. Territory officials didn’t want miners who supported the Confederacy causing trouble in the area. Any troublemakers or supporters of the Confederacy were taken to Fort Churchill to be held or punished.

Miners working the Comstock kept up on the latest war news as it came across the telegraph wires. Some even fired the local cannon to celebrate Union victories. Two Nevada’s counties, Lyon and Lander, and the city of Reno were named after Union officers who died during the Civil War.

This uniform was worn by a Union soldier.

A Time of Growth and Change
Mining Centers

As the Civil War continued in the East, new discoveries of silver and gold brought many small mining towns to the mountains of the Great Basin. They were called boomtowns. Boomtowns were places that grew very quickly. Many also faded quickly. However, some are around even today.

More Boomtowns

Like Virginia City, the town of Austin, in central Nevada, started as a boomtown. It was built when silver was discovered near the stagecoach stop in the Reese River Valley. People immediately rushed to the area. Before long, the town had a mayor, schools, churches, banks, and a city hall. Later, it became the county seat of Lander County. The county seat is the place where county government meets and works. Today, only about 300 people live in Austin. Many visitors, though, come to the area each year.

Aurora was another Nevada boomtown close to the California border. The winters there were bitter cold, and the summers were hot and dusty. Among the town's many buildings, a few were made of brick. The young Mark Twain tried mining for silver in Aurora. He didn't like the hard work of mining and soon gave up. In fact, most everyone left Aurora when the ore ran out. Today, it is one of Nevada's many mining ghost towns.
A Growing Territory

The early mining areas in what is now Nevada had few, if any, laws. Prospectors had to protect themselves and their claims any way they could. As towns and mining communities grew, miners and other settlers began to set up local governments. They wanted rules that would help make prospecting safe.

In towns that grew quickly, like Virginia City, the people wanted more laws. They wanted their own governments. They wanted their own territory, separate from the Utah Territory.

Finally, President James Buchanan created the Nevada Territory. A few days later, Abraham Lincoln became the new president of the United States. Lincoln chose James W. Nye from New York as the territory’s first governor.

Once the new governor finally arrived, he started organizing the territory. He called people to serve in the government. He called judges for the courts. He asked the citizens of the territory to vote for, or elect, people to help make laws. Governor Nye also wanted to collect taxes that would help pay for new schools and services. He wanted to help the people of the Nevada Territory get ready for statehood.
Beginning the Work of Statehood

Many months after Nevada became a territory, the government began the work of becoming a state. The territory’s first job was to create a **constitution**, or set of laws. After the constitution was created, it had to be approved by the voters. It also had to be approved by the United States Congress.

Nevada voters didn’t approve the first constitution that was drafted. But Congress and President Abraham Lincoln really wanted Nevada to become a state. President Lincoln wanted more Union votes to help him win the re-election. He also wanted Union votes to help him pass a new **amendment**, or addition to the United States Constitution. This new amendment would **abolish** or get rid of slavery. It was called the 13th Amendment.

The Nation’s 36th State

Nevadans worked hard and fast to get a second constitution approved before the upcoming November election. In a few months, a new constitution was written and approved by Nevada voters. Then it was then sent by telegraph for approval by Congress. At the time, it was the longest telegraph that had ever been sent.

On October 31, 1864, Congress approved the new constitution making Nevada our nation’s 36th state. It happened just in time for Nevada voters to help re-elect President Abraham Lincoln. William M. Stewart became our state’s first U.S. senator. Later, that year he met with President Lincoln in Washington, D.C.
More Land for Nevada

A few years after Nevada became a state, its government asked Congress to consider adding more land to the state. Nevada wanted to create a new county and expand the eastern border toward the Utah Territory. They hoped the new land would add valuable mining resources to the state.

Congress finally agreed to give Nevada the additional land. The change moved our eastern border from 115 degrees latitude to 114 degrees latitude. The following year, another section of land was added to Nevada. Las Vegas was part of this area. Before it became part of Nevada, this small section of land belonged to the Arizona Territory. Years later, it became known as Clark County.

William Morris Stewart first came to Nevada during the Comstock Lode. He was born in New York and moved to Ohio with his parents. As a young man, he helped clear the land for his family's farm. He also worked hard to get a good education.

Interest in the Gold Rush brought people to Nevada. Stewart moved to Virginia City, where he worked in mining. He met his future wife there and decided to stay.

Later, Stewart became Nevada's first United States senator. He wrote a very important amendment to the United States Constitution. This amendment extended the right to vote to all races. Stewart also supported projects that helped the people of Nevada. He worked hard to help people get a good education.

The University of Nevada and Stewart Indian School both got started with his help. Stewart didn't see the need for Indian reservations. He believed Native American people needed a good education and a chance to do things for themselves. Stewart died in 1900. He was 77 years old.
Activity

Cause and Effect

In almost every part of your life you experience something called cause and effect. A cause is an action, like turning on a light when you enter a dark room. The effect is what happens because of your action, such as the dark room filling with light. Events in history also have causes and effects.

Look at each pair of sentences below. Decide which sentence is the cause and which is the effect that follows. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper. Use the letter “C” for cause and “E” for effect.

Cause: An action that causes something else to happen.
Effect: Something that happens because of an action.

Example:

C  Nevada’s constitution is approved by Congress.
E  Nevada becomes our country’s 36th state.

1. _______ Men of all races had the right to vote.
    _______ The 15th Amendment became part of the United States Constitution.

2. _______ Southern states decide to separate from the United States.
    _______ Northern and southern states fight over the issue of slavery.

3. _______ Gold and silver ore is uncovered in the Reese River Valley.
    _______ The town of Aurora begins to develop.

4. _______ Lincoln wins the re-election.
    _______ President Abraham Lincoln gets Union votes.

Memory Master

1. Name two cities, counties, or towns in Nevada that were named after Civil War officers.
2. What is a boomtown?
3. Which amendment to the Constitution ended slavery?
4. Nevada became our nation’s _______ (which number) state.

Nevada, Our Home
Rebuilding Old Mormon Fort

Many years after the Mormon settlers left their fort in Las Vegas, Octavius Gass began to rebuild it. Gass was a prospector who came to the area after mining in California and Eldorado Canyon. He was tired of mining and wanted to find a new way to make a living.

Gass and a few of his mining friends started a ranch on the land where the old Mormon fort stood. They tore down some of the old buildings and cleaned up the old fort. They wanted to sell supplies to travelers like the Mormon settlers had done. The fort was renamed Las Vegas Rancho.

Gass and his partners raised cattle and horses. They grew beans, grain, and vegetables. They planted peach, apricot, and apple trees. They used the underground springs to get the water they needed. Tired travelers also stopped to rest at the warm bubbling springs.

After a while, Gass bought out his partners. He and his family worked and lived at Las Vegas Rancho for more than 15 years. Later Gass lost the ranch when he was unable to pay his bills. He and his family moved to California.
A Cowboy's Life

Some of the first settlers who came to Nevada from California brought with them Mexican *vaqueros*. Vaquero is the Spanish word for cowboy. Vaqueros were excellent horseman who passed on their unique skills and traditions to others in the region. Over time, vaqueros in the West became known as buckaroos.

Few small ranchers could afford to hire these skilled riders at first. Most families helped each other with common farming and ranching labors. As ranching in the area grew, big companies began buying out some of the smaller ranches. By then, buckaroos were becoming a more permanent part of the landscape. They worked long hours driving the herds and breeding new stock. Nevada even had a few Native American and African American buckaroos.

**Branding** cattle was another job buckaroos had to do. A brand is a special mark that is burned into the hide of a cow with a hot iron. Only a skilled buckaroo could brand a cow’s hide without burning clear through it. Even today, ranches have their own brands or special designs that help others know which animals belongs to them.

Once the cattle are branded, buckaroos drive them out to the range to graze. Sometimes, they move the cattle around so they’ll get plenty of grass and water to eat. Ranchers want their cattle to grow fat, so they’ll be worth more when they sell them for beef. There are still many working cattle ranches in Nevada today.

*These buckaroos worked on ranches in Nevada's Railroad Valley.*

Nevada, Our Home
Activity

Design Your Own Brand

The history of branding cattle and other livestock in Nevada began over 130 years ago. Some of the old brands that were used in Nevada when branding first began are still around today. The Lye brother’s brand, for example, was first used in 1864. It looks like this: \( H \)

Today, the same brand is used by Keith and Jean Thomas, who operate the Lye Ranch.

Have you ever tried to read a brand? First, it’s good to know a few of the general rules. Then you can try creating your own brands. Use symbols, letters, and numbers that mean something to you. You could use the initials of your name or your favorite number. Be creative. Then share your special designs with your friends and classmates.

Rules for Reading Brands

The first thing to remember is that brands are read from top to bottom, left to right, and outside to inside.

Early brands were usually simple letters or numbers. As more ranchers began branding their livestock, they added other symbols to help them create new brands.


Farming in Nevada

When settlers first came to Nevada, they grew only enough food for themselves plus a little to trade or sell. As the mining boom began, Nevada ranches and farms grew to meet the new demands for food.

People in Mason, Smith, Carson, and Washoe Valleys bought more land. They grew alfalfa, potatoes, and wheat. They raised dairy cows to provide people with milk, cheese, and butter. Some farmers planted orchards to provide fresh fruit. Some even planted strawberries and raspberries.

Farm Life

The Crane farm, in Washoe County, was one of the first big alfalfa growers in Nevada. Alfalfa was an important new crop for the area. It could be planted and harvested many times a year—instead of just once like other types of hay.

Early farmers cut the hay with sharp knives until mowing machines pulled by horses came along. Then steam engines took over for horses, and with each new invention, the work got a little easier.

Life on the farm, however, was always hard work. Farmers and their families worked from sunup to sundown. They worked when it was hot and when it was cold. They fought to keep grasshoppers and other pests out of their crops. One farmer wrote about what summers were like in his community:

Moved into a new house...But when warm weather came we were unable to sleep in the house, and were compelled to resort to the sheds and sleep on top of them to keep from scorpions, tarantulas, rattlesnakes, & no escaping mosquitoes. [It was so hot]...chickens at daybreak, hold their wings up and lolling for breath....An egg would roast in short time laying in the sand.

hat do you think?

Nevada’s early mining farming was just as hard as g. If you were living then, I you have chosen to mine farm? Why?

Memory Master

1. Which big event in early Nevada history also caused ranching to grow?
2. Who was “Honest John” Sparks?
3. Why do ranchers brand their cattle and livestock?
4. Where did the first Basque shepherders in Nevada immigrate from?

Nevada, Our Home
Building Railroads and Cities

One of the most important events for Nevada was the coming of the transcontinental railroad. New cities sprung up around the railway stations. People and goods could be easily transported from station to station and from coast to coast. Cities in the eastern United States were finally connected with the wide-open areas of the West. Life on the frontier was about to change forever.

The Central Pacific

The Central Pacific was the first great railroad in the West. It was organized about the same time the Civil War broke out in the East. For the first few years, surveyors studied, measured, and laid out the western route. Then they began to lay the tracks, or rails.

The first tracks laid by the Central Pacific were in Sacramento, California. The job seemed easy at first, but as workers headed east, the job got much harder. Laying track through the Sierra Nevada seemed almost impossible.

Some of the hardest work through the mountains was done by Chinese workers. They blasted and dug through walls of solid granite. The hours were long, and the pay was little. After four years of hard labor and many setbacks, the tracks for the Central Pacific finally crossed the border into Nevada. Laying rails through the Sierra Nevada was one of the most amazing engineering projects of the time.

Railroad Centers

As more tracks and trains made their way across Nevada, many railroad centers, or depots, were built. People got on and off the train at these centers. They were also places where people bought and sold things. Many became the main cities of Nevada. Reno, Lovelock, Winnemucca, and Elko were major railroad centers.

Soon, other trains, called short-line railroads, were running in parts of Nevada. These trains were used to transport ore from Nevada’s mines to the mills. Some carried supplies to the miners. Short-line railroads like the Virginia and Truckee, the Nevada Central, and the Pioche and Bullionville, became very famous in our state. Most were in operation until the mines closed down. After that, most short-lines and their tracks were simply abandoned.

Great Train Robbery

was a dark November night when eight masked men robbed passenger train outside of Verdi, Nevada. At gunpoint, the bandits led the engineer, two brakeman, and a few others inside the room. Then they broke open the Wells Fargo strong box and made off over $40,000 in gold coins. The money they stole was the payroll for Yellow Jacket Mine at Gold Hill.

ree rewards were offered for the capture of the masked men. Together, the rewards totaled $30,500. Washoe County’s sheriff, James H. Kinkead, visited the scene of the robbery the very next morning. He followed a set of footprints soon caught up with one of the men. Kinkead took the man to Truckee jail, where the man confessed to the crime and the names of the other men involved.

fore long, the rest of the men were captured and put in jail. Most of the missing money was also recovered. This Centralia hold-up is reported to have been the first train robbery in the West.

[From our Evening Edition of Yesterday]

THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY—All the talk upon Streets to-day is of the great robbery on the railroad, between Reno and Verdi, last night. It is believed here that the robbers got in the vicinity of $150,000. Chief Deputy Sheriff Cummins, Officer Lackey and other detectives left this city early this forenoon for the scene of the robbery. Wells Fargo & Co offered a $10,000 reward for the recovery of the thieves, or any part of it, and the arrest and conviction of the robbers. Under the head of telegraphic wire is an account of the robbery, as sent us from Reno.

It is probably correct, though it differs in some details from the stories told on the streets. We are informed that near a hundred men are out in pursuit of the robbers.
THE GREAT RACE

It was a big dream to imagine that one day a railroad could travel across the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. With help from President Lincoln, however, two companies took on the challenge.

The Central Pacific Railroad began in California and traveled east. It began nearly two years before the Union Pacific Railroad. The Union Pacific’s job was to build the line going west from Omaha, Nebraska. Each company got money from the government and 6,400 acres of land for every mile of track they laid.

By 1865, both companies were racing toward each other. Both had problems of every kind. During one summer, the Union Pacific had 45 men killed by Indians, 10 were shot during fights, and dozens of mules died from the heat.

Central Pacific workers had even more problems. Some of their trains crashed. Hundreds of Chinese workers died in the mountains, and it was nearly impossible to get enough water to the workers and livestock each day.

The competition, or desire to win, drove both companies to push their workers harder and faster than ever. When one company laid six miles of track in a day, the other company pushed their workers to lay seven.

Cheating was also a problem, so Congress stepped in to help. At last, a meeting place where the tracks would come together was decided upon. The place was Promontory, Utah.

On May 10, 1869, the first transcontinental railroad was complete. Thousands of people came to watch the last tracks laid. A golden spike was used to connect the joining tracks that had these words engraved on it: “May God continue the unity of our Country as this Railroad unites the two great Oceans of the world.”

Promontory, Utah was the spot where the two railroad companies finally came together.

A Time of Growth and Change
Progress in Nevada

New growth and challenges came flooding into Nevada with the coming of the railroad. In Carson City, a branch of the United States Mint was built. Congress had decided it would cost too much to send Comstock silver to the mint in California. Coins from Comstock silver could be made cheaper and easier right in Nevada. Nearly $50 million in silver coins were produced in Nevada’s mint in its 23 years of operation.

Another stately addition to Carson City was the two-story sandstone capitol building. At first, many people were unhappy about the ugly spot where the capitol would be built. They called it the Plaza, but it had no trees or grass. Nevada’s lawmakers, or legislature were the first to use the building. Later, the governor and others had their offices their too.

Working Toward Women’s Rights

In the Nevada legislature, a bill, or proposed law, was introduced to give women the right to vote. At this time, women of the United States could not vote. Men were the only lawmakers.

A legislator from Storey County introduced the Nevada bill by saying, “The women of our land are human beings. They are, I presume, intelligent human beings. Moreover, sir, they are citizens of the United States.”

You would think that all women would have supported this idea, but there were many who did not. Since there were so many men and women who opposed the bill, it did not become law. Women were not allowed to vote in state or national elections until the 20th century.
Mining in Eastern Nevada

Good fortune came to a few mining areas of eastern Nevada too. The small town of Eureka turned tons of ore into silver and lead bars. Hundreds of men were hired to bring wood down from the mountains to heat the smelting furnaces. A beautiful red brick courthouse, an opera house, and newspaper building were also built in town.

But the little town wasn’t without problems. When trouble broke out between the Italian woodcutters and the owners of the furnaces, five men were killed. Luckily, the conflict ended peacefully, even though no one was ever blamed for the murders.

The town of Pioche, near the Utah border, also had its ups and downs as a result of mining. At first, a great deal of wealth came out of its mines. The local government spent much of it on its now famous Million Dollar Court House. But sudden riches caused problems for the town too. It brought gunfighters and others who didn’t respect the law into the area. The small town had at least 40 murders in less than two years. Worst of all, no one was ever punished for these crimes. When silver prices began dropping and the mines flooded with underground water, people began to leave. The boom in Pioche ended after only five years.

Memory Master

1. What was the name of the first great railroad company in the West?
2. Name three Nevada towns that began as early railroad centers.
3. Name the place where the nation’s first transcontinental railroad came together.
4. Why was a branch of the United States Mint built in Carson City?
5. Name one reason the mines in the boomtown of Pioche closed.
The Stewart Ranch

Archibald and Helen Stewart were living in Pioche when they heard Octavius Gass needed help. Gass was in danger of losing his Las Vegas Ranch. The Stewarts helped by loaning him money. But when Gass couldn’t repay the loan, the Stewarts ended up with the ranch.

Helen Stewart didn’t like the ranch at first. It was too quiet and far away from the city life she loved. She wanted to be around other women. She wanted her children to have friends to play with. The Las Vegas Ranch was a very lonely place.

One day when Archibald was out of town, a ranch hand came to the house. He told Helen he was quitting. He also told her he wanted his pay. Mrs. Stewart refused to pay him. She told him he would have to wait until her husband returned. The ranch hand was very upset. He said many unkind things to Helen. When Archibald returned, she told him what had happened.
The First Lady of Las Vegas

Archibald Stewart went after the ranch hand. The man had gone to a neighboring ranch where outlaws were often seen. When Stewart got there, a fight began. Stewart was shot and killed. No one was ever blamed for his murder. Helen had his body buried at the ranch. Even though she had once hated living there, she and her children stayed there for another 20 years.

Helen had to work hard to feed the travelers who stopped there to rest. She served as post mistress and supplied miners in the area with food. She hired ranch hands to help her manage the large, 1,000-acre property. Years later, Helen married one of the ranch hands. She also hired someone to come to the ranch to teach her five children.

Selling the Ranch

Years later, Helen sold the Las Vegas Ranch to William Clark, a wealthy Montana senator. He bought the property for the railroad. Later, the railroad divided the land into smaller lots and auctioned them off. An auction is a public meeting where something is sold to the person willing to pay the most money. The lots were the beginning of the city of Las Vegas.
Las Vegas, a Major Railroad Town

Western railroad owners also soon realized that Las Vegas was the perfect desert rest stop. As soon as William Clark bought the Stewart ranch, he began to lay out his plans. Clark was the head of a new railroad company called the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad. The company hoped to build a line connecting Utah's capital city with the West Coast. Las Vegas was to be a major supply point along the route.

Las Vegas also became an important link to the new mining towns of Rhyolite and Bullfrog. Clark then built another railroad line to connect Las Vegas with these new towns. The line made it easier for miners to receive their supplies by train.

At first, the town grew quite slowly. The summer heat and constant winds were hard on people's nerves. Then a major fire caused even more problems. Businessmen didn't stay long once they saw the dusty little town. To make matters worse, hundreds of railroad workers lost their jobs after a nation-wide strike.
Back in Time

Charles P. Squires was an early Las Vegas citizen who was asked to buy the town newspaper. The paper was called the Las Vegas Age. This was Squires reply:

“What on earth would I do with a newspaper? I have troubles enough already.... But something had started a train of thought which I was unable to sidetrack. Now just suppose I had a newspaper in Las Vegas; perhaps I could help revive the poor, sick little town.”

Squires did buy the newspaper and ran it for 40 years. He also built the first hotel in Las Vegas—in a tent.

Las Vegas School

Plans were made by town officials to hold the first Las Vegas school in a tent near Las Vegas Creek. However, these plans soon changed, and the old Salt Lake Hotel was moved from 2nd and Stewart to 2nd and Lewis. It soon became the town’s first school.

Students of all ages went to the school together. Miss Schultz and Miss Tuttle were its first teachers. Even in Nevada’s earliest days, parents believed education was very important.
Consider Character

What would Nevada be like today if its citizens had given up before statehood? Would you be living in a territory? This chapter shows how the people of Nevada faced hard challenges but didn't give up. They showed a character trait that is necessary for survival. We call this trait perseverance! Find three examples of people in this chapter who persevered even when problems came. Think about how their perseverance helped make Nevada what it is today. In small groups, discuss with your classmates what you are doing in your life to persevere. What will Nevada be like in 50 years because of your actions?

Technology Tie-In

Imagine you and your family will be moving to a new city or country. You have been given the job of deciding where your family will go. It would be helpful before you make your decision to know certain things about your family. For example, does your family like the city or the country? What does your dad do for a living? What kinds of things does your family like to do for fun? Will some of the things you need and want be nearby?

Ask your family questions like these. The answers will help you choose a place where your family can be happy. Do a little research on the Internet to help you choose your imaginary new home. Prepare a poster of pictures and reasons why you have chosen a certain place. Share your decision with your family or class members.
In this chapter you have learned about a few groups of immigrants who came to live or work in early Nevada. You’ve read about the Basque shepherders, a group of Italian woodcutters, and some Chinese railroad workers. Now see if you can locate on a map or globe the original country these groups came from. Work with a group of your classmates to make a list of what these immigrant groups did to help build Nevada.

Activity

Read a Population Chart

Nevada's population went up and down for many reasons during the last half of the 1800s. Study this chart, and then answer the following questions:

1. Which three areas had the largest periods of growth between 1875 and 1880?
2. Which areas experienced the most growth after Nevada became a state?
3. Name the two areas where the population suffered the most between 1880 and 1900?
4. Name the area that experienced the biggest population ups and downs during this period.
5. Pick one area and describe the things that made its population grow or decline.

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A Time of Growth and Change