Chapter 8

As the 20th century began, Nevada was becoming a place. New mining and road towns were springing up. Roads and other forms of transportation were also improving. Education and voting rights for women were becoming important issues.

Entering a New Century

1914 - Nevada legislature gives women the right to vote in state elections.
1918 - Anne Martin runs for the U.S. Senate.
1920 - The 19th Amendment gives women the right to vote.
1929 - The Great Depression begins.
1930 - President Roosevelt dedicates Boulder Dam (Hoover Dam)
1931 - Gambling becomes legal.
1930 - Six-week divorces are granted in Nevada.

People lined Tonopah's Main Street for this 1907 parade.


Mining Moves South

By the turn of the **century**, many Nevada mines had closed. Still, a few prospectors searched the deserts looking for riches. One man, named Jim Butler, discovered an area of rich silver ore in southwestern Nevada. A new mining camp soon developed around his find. It was called Tonopah.

Butler made a great deal of money without having to do much of the work. He decided to **lease**, or rent, part of his land to other people. The people he leased to had to agree to give him part of whatever they found. They sealed their deal with nothing but a handshake. Luckily for Butler, the men he leased to kept their word.

*Jim Butler was a farmer and rancher before he discovered a large vein of ore that came near the surface of the ground.*

*Nevada, Our Home*
A Challenging Life

Bullfrog, Goldfield, and Rawhide were some of the other mining districts that brought new prospectors to central and southern Nevada. Many prospectors were grubstaked by others. Grubstakers paid for the supplies of miners in return for a share of their profits. Some of these prospectors made rich strikes in southern Nevada.

Living conditions in these small mining towns, however, were not very good. Most miners and their families lived in houses that were slapped together quickly. One woman described life in Tonopah this way:

*The problems of housekeeping on the desert were very real. During the bitter cold winters the wind moaned and whistled through the cracks in the board-and-batten houses. In the terrific summer heat, you had to cook over a wood stove with one eye always watchful for insects....Have you ever turned suddenly to look at your baby on the floor and found a scorpion on his arm? Have you ever found a bedbug on your pillow and faced the task of getting rid of the pest? The women used to say that it was no disgrace to get bedbugs, but it was certainly a disgrace to keep them.*

Female Prospectors

Although mining in Nevada attracted mostly men, a few daring women were there too. Lillian Malcom came to the Bullfrog mining district fresh from her adventures in Alaska. She thrilled miners with stories of dog sleds and jumping across floating sheets of ice. Sometimes she wore a skirt with boots and sometime she wore men’s pants. After leaving Bullfrog, she was off to try prospecting in Death Valley.

Other women tried their luck as miners in Goldfield. Alice “Happy Days” Diminy was one of them. She worked her claim alone with only two burros for company. Her husband was in Alaska searching for gold. Diminy lived in a little stone house she built by herself. She lived in Nevada for many years and planted a garden every spring.
Queen of the Mining Camps

It didn’t take long for the small tent town of Goldfield to become Nevada’s largest city. Once the word got out that rich gold deposits had been found there, thousands of people rushed to the area.

A millionaire named George Nixon sent his young partner, George Wingfield, to Goldfield to help him make even more money. Nixon and Wingfield bought the claims of many miners. Soon they were in control of most of the mines in Goldfield.

All the wealth coming out of the mines brought other mining companies to the area too. A beautiful, four-story hotel was built in Goldfield. Banks, saloons, newspapers, libraries, theatres, and churches lined the streets. The people of Goldfield also enjoyed baseball games, circus performances, and even major sporting events.

One Labor Day event brought lightweight championship boxing to Goldfield. Oscar “Battling” Nelson and Joe Gans fought for the $30,000 prize money. More than 8,000 people came to see the fight. Joe Gans was the winner.

As Goldfield grew, big labor unions were formed by the miners. Members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) were sometimes called “Wobblies”. There were many problems between mine owners and labor unions. After a strike broke out, Governor Sparks sent the state police to Goldfield to keep the peace.

After 10 years, Goldfield’s boom began to die. Then a fire destroyed most of the town’s buildings.

Autos in the Boomtowns

Tonopah and Goldfield were the first Nevada boomtowns to use automobiles. They also were some of the first towns in our state to have speed limits for cars. In Tonopah the speed limit was 4 miles per hour. In Goldfield it was 6 miles per hour. The new laws also made it clear that “vehicles drawn by horse” always had the right of way.

This 1906 photograph shows Oscar “Battling” Nelson arriving in Goldfield just before the big fight.
A Need for Roads and Highways

As Nevada’s silver, gold, and copper booms came and went, so did its population of people. By the early 1900’s many of those who came to Nevada came by automobile. They had to drive across the deserts because very few roads linked the new mining towns with larger cities. Some people thought trips like this were exciting. Others had a difficult and often dangerous journey.

Driving in the Desert

As travel by automobile became more popular, travel companies tried to get people to go on automobile adventures through the desert. They took out ads in the newspapers. One ad read like this:

Go automobiling in Death Valley with Alkali Bill.... Alkali Bill himself meets every train and whizzes you over the desert 45 miles by way of Death Valley and the famous Amargosa Canyon...

Soon, our government realized that better roads were needed. However, they didn’t have much money to spend. There was no money to pay workers, so the government asked for volunteers to help build our roads. They also looked for new ways to earn money for road building. One way they raised money was by making a law that people needed to have drivers licenses. With the money made from these licenses, Nevada was able to begin building roads.

What do you think

How do you think transportation has changed since the automobile was invented?

How would your life be different today if there were few roads you to travel on?
Copper in Nevada

Just west of Ely, two prospectors searching for gold found a strip of red metal just barely under the ground. The red metal turned out to be a large copper deposit. Soon, a new mining rush in Nevada had begun.

A little while later, the Nevada Consolidated Copper Company was formed. The company built a mill and smelter to separate the copper from the ore. A new railroad line took the ore from the mines to the smelter. As more people took jobs in the area, new towns like McGill and Ruth popped up.

The owners of Nevada Consolidated Copper also organized company towns for their workers. These towns were much nicer than most mining towns. The company towns were planned communities with many services, like reading rooms, a fire department, and a hospital. Company towns were more orderly than most Nevada mining towns and not as violent.

The copper coming out of mines in the area was used to make wires that carry electricity. Big open copper pits gave jobs to many people. Copper actually made more money for our state and its miners than all the silver from the Comstock Lode.

Memory Master

1. Who was Jim Butler? What is he famous for?
2. What is a grubstaker?
3. Which big labor union members were sometimes called “Wobblies”?
4. How did Nevada’s government make money to help pay for building roads?
5. What was a company town?
Bringing Water to the Desert

Far away from Nevada, in Washington, D.C., President Theodore Roosevelt talked about supporting new projects in the West. Nevada’s Senator Francis Newlands hoped to get federal, or U.S. government, money for water projects. He knew one of our state’s most important needs was to bring water to the desert. He wanted people to be able to farm the western and central deserts of Nevada.

The first part of Newlands’s project was to dig canals and ditches and to connect the Truckee River with the Carson River. The new U.S. reclamation service wanted to irrigate more than 400,000 acres of land. A booklet was printed to attract settlers to the area. Settlers were promised cheap land and water.

Hundreds of settlers came, but there were still many problems to overcome. During dry years, farmers couldn’t get enough water to their crops. Many frustrated settlers gave up and left their farms. Others decided to stay and keep trying. In time, other water sources were developed. Finally, farmers were able to grow successful crops in the desert.

Many ditches and canals were dug to flood Nevada’s deserts with much-needed water.
Storing the Water

Digging ditches to carry water into the desert was only one part of Newlands’s plan. Another important part of the plan was to build permanent, or lasting ways to collect and store water. Federal money was used to build the Lahontan Dam and reservoir on the Carson River.

Reservoirs are places where large supplies of water are stored. After the reservoir was built, the town of Fallon attracted many farming families and businesses. Newland’s project was one of the first federal water projects in the western United States. It helped Nevada become one of the nation’s leading growers of alfalfa.

Activity

Research an Event in the 20th Century

Look at the timeline at the beginning of this chapter. It shows important events that happened during the 20th century in both the United States and Nevada. Read through the events and see which ones you already know about. Choose one event you want to know more about. What would you like to learn? Write down three questions. Then try to find the answers in books, on the Internet, or by asking family members or people in your community. Once you finish your research, you can present what you’ve learned in one of many ways. You can write an essay or song, make a poster, perform a skit, or give a speech to your class.

This photograph shows the Lahontan Dam just before it was completed in 1914. It was built so farmers could have enough water to get through the hot Nevada summers.
Nevada Votes for Women

Women’s suffrage, or the right to vote, was one of our country’s biggest issues in the early part of the 19th century. Many times efforts to give women the vote in Nevada failed. Finally, male voters gave Nevada women the right to vote in state elections.

It took six more years before all women in the United States could vote in national elections. Right away, women began running for important government offices. Anne Martin was one of them. She ran for a seat in the U.S. Senate twice. Even though she never won the senate seat, her work in support of women’s suffrage was very successful. She became president of Nevada’s suffrage group and worked with other women across the world.

Edna C. Baker was the first woman in Nevada to be elected to a state office. She was elected to be a member of the University of Nevada’s Board of Regents. She also supported Nevada’s suffrage movement.

Lady Sheriff

When George Crowell, the Lander County sheriff died, his wife Clara was selected to replace him. Clara had already proved she was well suited for the job. One night, she ran a stranger off her property when he came to her door demanding money.

After becoming sheriff, Clara chased horse thieves, bank robbers, and cattle rustlers. She broke up brawls, ran criminals out of the mountains, and demanded people respect the law.

When Clara’s term was up, she went to work for the county hospital. She was the matron there for the next 20 years.

Anne Martin 1875-1951

Anne Martin was a very important leader in the fight for women’s right to vote. She was born in Empire, near Reno. She attended a school in Reno and later graduated from the University of Nevada. Her father had been a state senator.

Martin was in her 30's when she became involved in the women’s suffrage movement. She even became president of Nevada’s Equal Franchise Society. She drove all over the state meeting with women and men who supported the cause.

Many people in Nevada’s mining towns supported the movement. However, people in places like Reno and Carson City did not.

Eventually, the votes of mine owners, ranchers, and railroad workers were enough to give women in Nevada the vote.

Martin also fought for women’s suffrage across the nation and Europe. Once, while she was in Ireland, she was arrested for protesting.
Healing the Wounds of War

Soon after World War I ended, new industries created more jobs. People were able to buy telephones and radios. Families in small towns got electricity for the first time. Now they had light with the flip of a switch. They could also keep their food cool in refrigerators.

Many families bought their first car during the 1920s. Owning a car gave people the freedom to go wherever they wanted. Buying a car cost about $290. Airplanes were another new invention that would bring many changes over the years.

Another thing that changed was how women dressed. They began wearing their skirts and hairstyles much shorter than before. Women that dressed in these new styles were called flappers. This period was a lively time that became known as the Roaring Twenties.

Can you guess what this funny-looking machine does? If you guessed that it played music, you guessed right! It was called a wind-up phonograph. How has modern technology changed the way we listen to music today?

Compare the way the women in this photograph dressed with the women in the photograph at the beginning of the chapter. How have styles and fashions changed since the 1920s?
Let Me Entertain You

Listening to nightly radio programs was something families came together to enjoy. They loved listening to comedy acts and detective stories. They listened to the new sounds of jazz music. Another thing many people enjoyed was going to the movies. The first films were called silent movies because they didn’t have sound. Sometimes theater owners hired a piano player to play music for the movie. Later, when sound was added, people called them talkies.

The Great Depression

As the end of the Roaring Twenties drew near, Nevada and the rest of the United States fell into a depression. A depression is a time when there isn’t enough work for the people. When people can’t work, they can’t buy food or clothing for their families. Many families were starving. Some even lost their homes.

It was a very hard time for our country. Hundreds of businesses closed. Banks closed, and many people lost their life savings. Workers all across the country lost their jobs. This was the worst depression the United States had ever known. It was called the Great Depression.
Boulder City

The new city built for Hoover Dam workers was called Boulder City. It was a lot like living in the company towns that were built by Nevada mining companies. Single men lived in long buildings called barracks. Families were given small wooden houses to live in. Rose Lawson talked about the first houses that were built in Boulder City:

We didn’t have any plumbing; we didn’t have any water. We did have electricity—one outlet in each room and a light hanging from the ceiling. … The house was built exactly like a shoebox: two rooms with a little porch…. Every house was exactly alike…. Men coming home from work—if they weren’t thinking, they’d come into the wrong house.

Workers living in the city bought their goods at a company store and ate at a company mess hall. Later, there was even a public school. When workers returned too late from a weekend in Las Vegas, they often found the gates to the city closed. The city’s curfew meant workers would sometimes have to sleep in their cars. A curfew is a set time for people to be off the streets. Workers were expected to be well rested and ready for work each morning.
Hard Labor

More than 13,000 men worked to build the Hoover Dam. Some carried water, and some climbed the cliffs high above the river. Men working in the tunnels had to deal with unbearable heat. Much of the work was very dangerous, and things didn’t always go well.

Many men were hurt and over 100 men died. No one had ever built a dam this big before. Building a cement wall between two steep canyon walls was an engineering marvel. Tons of steel and concrete were used to make the dam.

Today, the wall of the dam stands 726 feet high and 1,244 feet across. The highway that runs across the top of the dam connects Arizona with Nevada.

When the dam was almost finished, President Franklin Roosevelt came to Nevada to dedicate it. One of the workers said this about the president’s visit:

_Everybody was excited... That was quite impressive, hearing him dedicate that dam. After that we went right back to work, moving that pipe again._

—Dean Pulsipher

Finished at Last

Six months after the dam was dedicated, it was finally complete. Today, the dam brings thousands of visitors to Nevada each year. Inside the dam, large generators pull water from the Colorado River to produce electricity. The electricity is sent to homes and businesses in Nevada, California, and Arizona. Behind the dam are the waters of Lake Mead. People go there to boat, fish, and swim.

*Working as a high scaler on the walls of the canyon was a dangerous job.*
Der or Hoover Dam?

Sometimes people get confused about whether to call it Boulder over Dam. Actually, the name has changed so many times it's a little hard to know. At first, the planners wanted to the dam after Boulder Canyon, where the dam would be

Later, when the dam was moved to a different canyon, they d it Hoover Dam, after President Herbert Hoover.

But, when Franklin Roosevelt became president, the name of am was changed back to Boulder Dam. But that was not the f the name battle. The name was changed back to Hoover one more time, and so it remains today.

The waters of the Colorado River back up behind Hoover Dam to form Lake Mead.

Nevada, Our Home
Nevada's New Economy

Families weren't the only ones having trouble as a result of the depression. The state was running out of money for its much-needed public projects. Building dams and reservoirs was very important, but improving and building state highways was important too. There just wasn't enough money to pay for everything Nevada needed. Soon, the state had to begin looking for new tax sources. One answer was to make gambling legal and then tax it. To make something legal means it's no longer against the law.

Gambling had always been a part of frontier life. Different groups tried outlawing it now and then, but people usually found ways to get around the new laws. Somewhere in Nevada, people were always betting on cards, dice, horses, or sporting events.

Building a Tourism State

Nevada became the first state in the nation to make gambling legal. In the beginning, though, it didn't seem to help the state's economy much. But soon people from California began coming to Nevada for a weekend of fun. All the money they spent on gambling was money the casinos had to pay in taxes. Gambling taxes soon began to help our state pay for things like schools, highways, health care, and other public services.

Another law Nevada passed that brought many people to our state was its new divorce law. People could get easy divorces after living here for only six weeks. Once our state started offering quick weddings, Nevada became the wedding and divorce capital of the United States.

Memory Master

1. Name two new things that families enjoyed following World War I.
2. Name two things that happened to families because of the depression.
3. What river was dammed to build the Hoover Dam?
4. Where did the people who worked on the dam live before Boulder City was built?
5. Which two new laws helped build Nevada's tourism industry?
Consider Character

Honesty
At the beginning of this chapter, you read about a man named Jim Butler. He leased land to prospectors who promised to give him part of the gold or silver they found. Because they kept their word, these prospectors showed the trait of honesty. How important is it to be honest today? Do you keep your promises? For one week, try keeping an honesty journal. Write down when you choose to be honest and when you don’t. Did you notice when others were honest or not honest? Did you find it hard to be honest? Why?

Technology Tie-In
Taking the heat out of desert life in early Las Vegas was very difficult because of high summer temperatures. Sometimes it reached 105 degrees or more, just as it does today. Many of the early settlers lived in tents that got very hot. In those days, tents had a “fly cover”, or section of cloth above the tent, that helped protect the tent from the heat of the sun.

Hoover Dam workers living in early tent towns cooled their tents at night in creative ways. They hung wet sheets in front of the doors and windows. A breeze blowing through the wet sheet helped to cool the tents. Later, when homes were built in the area, similar cooling systems were created to cool them. They were called evaporative coolers. Some homes still use them today. But for very hot climates like those in southern Nevada, most people cool their homes with air conditioning. Without it, Las Vegas may not have become the major city that it is today.

Activity
Be an Inventor!
Reread the section on mining towns, especially the report by the woman in Tonopah (Lesson One). What technology could you develop to keep insects out of the house? Remember you only have the materials available to mining towns in the early 1900s. Draw a picture, or write a description of what you would invent to keep pests out. Be creative, like the settlers who cooled their tents at night by hanging wet sheets in front of the windows!
Expanding Railroads

Railroads helped our state’s economy. They provided a faster, easier way for people to ship things to places around the state. Study this map of railroads in Nevada. Answer the following questions:

1. Which railroad owned the most track?
2. Which railroad had the shortest route?
3. Why were so many railroads built during this time?
4. Which railroads had the same names as the routes they traveled?
5. Which railroad traveled through Sodaville?
6. Are any of these railroads still used in Nevada today? If so, which ones?
show these people outside Nevada] that humans are like everybody maybe better than other people. We are riffraff that they us out to be!"
Governor Grant Sawyer