Chapter 9

Wars and difficult times the world had a lasting on our state. The Great Depression left families food or shelter. Many more suddenly without work. Eventually, new industries government projects helped Nevada get back on its

Today, Las Vegas is one of the biggest tourist cities in the world.

1951
Atomic testing begins at the Nevada Test Site.

1956
U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds move from Arizona to Nellis Air Force Base.

1959–1973
Vietnam War

1950–1953
Korean War

1964
National Civil Rights Act makes it against the law to discriminate because of race.

1962
Nevada Test Site begins underground testing.

1954
Civil Rights Movement begins.

1997
Flood damages parts of Sparks and downtown Reno.

1995
Problems Around the World

While people in Nevada and the rest of United States were trying to recover from the Depression, countries in Europe were having problems too. Both Germany and Italy let dictators control their governments.

Soon, Germany and Italy began attacking their neighbors. The attacks turned into war. Then Japan joined the war with Germany and Italy. The three countries became known as the Axis powers. This was the beginning of World War II.

The United States Joins World War II

At first, many people in the United States didn’t want to worry about the growing problems in Europe. President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked the Japanese to agree to peace. The Japanese never answered. Instead, they attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

It began early one Sunday morning as Japanese planes flew a surprise attack. They bombed United States airplanes and battleships. More than 2,000 people were killed, and almost that many were wounded. After the attack, the United States joined the Allied forces of Great Britain, France, Canada, Australia, and the Soviet Union. Together, they fought against the Axis powers.

Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941.
For the United States, the war began quickly. Factories hurried to make supplies. Our country needed airplanes, tanks, and bombs. Factories also made ammunition, such as bullets, grenades, rockets, and missiles. Millions of men and women were called to serve in the army, air force, and navy. People were training to go to war on bases all over the United States. In Nevada, there were bases where people were trained and factories where war supplies were made.

Training Pilots in Nevada

Leaders in the United States Air Force thought Nevada was a great place to build an air base. The sunny weather and cloudless skies made the conditions perfect for pilot training. An area north of Las Vegas was chosen because it was far from crowded cities. It was called the Las Vegas Army Air Corps Gunnery School.

The base was very good for southern Nevada’s economy. Building the base cost more than $2.5 million and gave jobs to more than 6,000 people. It was a great success, and thousands of pilots were trained there. Later, the school’s name was changed to Nellis Air Force Base in honor of Lt. William H. Nellis who was killed during the war.

Many well-trained pilots graduated from the Las Vegas Army Air Corps Gunnery School.
More Bases for Nevada

Because of Nevada’s wide-open spaces, the military built other types of bases in Nevada where supplies could be stored. An ammunition warehouse, or depot, was built near the town of Hawthorne. Here, the navy stored ammunition to keep it far away from enemy attacks on U.S. coastlines. These explosive supplies were also placed away from homes and people in case of an accident.

The ammunition was stored in deep holes lined with concrete. Many people in Nevada had jobs because of this project. Fallon, Tonopah, and Reno also had bases that helped bring money and jobs to Nevada towns.

Thunderbirds

By, Nellis Air Force Base, refers to the famous Thunderbirds. These highly trained aviators perform air shows all over the world. They are especially famous for their special tricks, robotic maneuvers. Thunderbirds got their name from an Indian legend. The story said that the wings of the Thunderbird made the earth shake, and lightning shot from its eyes. At Nellis Air Force Base, it is thought Thunderbirds are a good symbol for their pilots' skills. Can you guess why?

A Hawthorne Army Ammunition Depot worker takes out the inside of an old artillery shell. Sadly, the government may end up closing the base.

Nevada, Our Home
From Minerals to Miracle Metal

Military bases were an important part of bringing money and jobs to Nevada during World War II. But turning ore into a silvery white metal called magnesium was even more important for Nevada. Magnesium was used to build airplanes and bombs. The United States needed more of both when it entered the war.

Soon the government asked a company by the name of Basic Magnesium Incorporated to build a factory in the desert near Las Vegas. The factory needed large amounts of electricity to keep it running. Since Hoover Dam was close by, they could get all the electricity they needed.

Basic Magnesium was able to hire thousands of workers. In fact, there were so many workers that a town had to be built nearby. The first community built was called Basic Townsite. Later, the name of the town was changed to Henderson, in honor of Nevada's Senator Charles B. Henderson.
Gangster Casinos

Almost four years passed before another hotel joined El Rancho Vegas and the Last Frontier. The Flamingo Hotel and Casino was the third hotel to be built on the Strip. The project was started by a man named Billy Wilkerson. But it became famous because of a young New York gangster named Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel.

By the time Siegel was 18, he had already been involved in murder, drugs, and many other lawless activities. With Siegel’s help the Flamingo became a big, flashy place with lots of neon lights. It had rows of palm trees and beautiful gardens, a waterfall at the front entrance, a health club, tennis courts, and more. All that luxury cost about $6.5 million, and Siegel's gangster friends paid for it all. The hotel opening, however, did not go well. Few people in the area came. Weeks later, Siegel was murdered, and others moved in to manage the hotel.

Not long after that, other casinos with mob connections opened along the Strip. Most of them hid millions of dollars, so they wouldn’t have to pay taxes. In time, Nevada governors and other officials worked hard to regulate, or control, this growing industry.
More Gambling Centers

Reno was also becoming a big gambling center. “Harolds” Club was the first modern casino in that city. The owner of the club was Raymond “Pappy” Smith. One of Smith’s ideas changed the gambling business in Nevada. He put up signs all around the United States and beyond. The signs told people how many miles they needed to travel to reach “Harolds” Club in Reno. Some of the signs were in very unusual places. There were signs in Alaska and on the islands in the South Pacific. “Harolds” Club signs became famous. Some were even seen in movies.

Another way Smith brought customers to his casino was by allowing people to bet with pennies and nickels. He hoped average people would gamble too.

Harrah’s Hotel and Casino was another famous gambling hotel built in Reno. Owner William Harrah started with a small bingo parlor. He was well known for running an honest game. Harrah’s antique car collection also brought many tourists to Reno. Today, more than 150 of Harrah’s antique cars can be seen in Reno’s National Automobile Museum.

Lake Tahoe has become a large gambling center too. Many hotels and casinos provide tourists with year-round gaming. But just as many visitors come to the area to enjoy summer or winter activities. Some have built homes in the mountains to get away from city life. Others come to relax in the lake’s crystal-clear waters. Winter activities, like skiing and snowboarding, are wildly popular as well.
The Korean War

Only five years after the end of World War II, the United States went to war again. This time the war was in Korea. President Harry S. Truman and 15 other nations sent troops to help South Koreans protect themselves from invading North Koreans.

The United States didn’t want to get involved in the war at first. Later, President Truman agreed to send troops to the region. The war lasted three years. More than 35,000 American soldiers lost their lives, including 34 from Nevada.

War in Vietnam

The Vietnam War, fought in Southeast Asia, was the longest war in American history. U.S. troops were sent to help the South Vietnamese protect themselves from North Vietnamese invaders. The North Vietnamese wanted everyone in Vietnam to live under a communist government. But the South Vietnamese wanted their own government.

Many people in America were angry when our government sent troops to Vietnam. They held protest marches and spoke out against the war. Other Americans believed our country should help other countries fight communism. More than 58,000 Americans died in the war. About 151 of them were from Nevada.

When the war finally ended, many soldiers were missing in action (MIAs). Others were held as prisoners of war (POWs). Today, there is a long, black, stone wall in Washington, D.C., that honors the Americans who died in Vietnam.
Nevada Soldiers

Many soldiers from Nevada fought bravely during these wars in Asia. One man who lost his leg during the Korean war later became the governor of Nevada. His name was Mike O’Callaghan. Another man, named Ronald Lovejoy, was a prisoner of war in North Korea. At a reunion many years after the war, Lovejoy told of trying to help a fellow prisoner stay alive. He said one day his friend just gave up and died.

Days of Honor

Our country has many holidays when we pause to honor someone or something special. One of these is called Veterans Day. Every year, on November 11, we honor those people who have gone to war.

In the beginning, Veterans Day was called Armistice Day. Armistice means to stop fighting or to declare a truce. President Woodrow Wilson named the first Armistice Day right after World War I. Later, it became known as Veterans Day.

Memorial Day is another day our country honors special people. It first began after the Civil War, when many people visited and decorated the graves of fallen soldiers.

No one is really sure how or where this tradition got started, but soon people began calling it Decoration Day. Today, it’s a national holiday we call Memorial Day. It has also become a day for honoring all of our dead, not just those who died because of war.

Citizens line Las Vegas streets for this 2005 Veterans Day parade.

Modern Nevada
**Bombs in Our Backyard**

It was January of 1951 when the government started testing atomic bombs in the deserts of Nevada. After World War II, atomic testing had taken place in the Pacific Ocean. Then testing was moved to scientific labs closer to the United States. Government leaders hoped moving the testing closer to home, would make it cheaper and easier.

Nevada was chosen to be the site of future atomic tests for many reasons. First, the area north of Las Vegas had very few people. Good weather conditions and miles of government-owned land were also reasons Nevada was chosen. Las Vegas officials thought the test site would help bring jobs and government money to the area. They supported the government’s decision to open a test site in Nevada.

*Sometimes an atomic cloud was easily visible from downtown Las Vegas.*
It wasn’t long before the citizens of Las Vegas began to feel the ground shake and see mushroom-shaped clouds in the sky. Although strange at first, the tests soon became part of everyday life. Reporters were invited to come and watch the explosions. Businesses began advertising “Great Atomic Bomb Sales” and “atomic hairdos”. Movies, like the Amazing Colossal Man, told make-believe stories of how radiation might change people and animals.

The Fallout

Atomic bombs that exploded at the Nevada Test Site left behind large clouds of radioactive dust and sand. Sometimes radioactive dust is called fallout. When a bomb went off, clouds of dust traveled east, blown by the wind. Radioactive dust blew into many of the small towns and communities in southern Utah. As it fell to the earth, radiation came in contact with animals, people, and the land.

At first, local people were told no one would be in danger from the fallout. Government officials didn’t listen when people reported stories of goats turning blue. They didn’t respond when farmers told them thousands of sheep died shortly after an explosion.

Years later, large numbers of people in small Utah towns began to die of cancer. These people became known as “downwinders”. Today, the federal government gives money to the families of some of the people who died from cancer because of the testing.
Atomic Tests in Nevada

The Atomic Tests in Nevada booklet was given to people who lived near the test site. It provided them with information about atomic testing and public safety tips. Here is a small sample of what was inside:

You people who live near Nevada Test Site are in a very real sense active participants in the Nation's atomic test program. You have been close observers of tests which have [helped] greatly to building the defenses of our country and of the free world.

The End of Testing

A little more than 10 years after atomic testing began, governments across the world voted to ban, or outlaw, above ground testing. For the next 30 years, explosions at the Nevada Test Site were done in underground shafts and tunnels. Not until 1992 was all testing suspended, or stopped. By then, over 900 atomic tests had taken place at the site.

Memory Master

1. What did gangster casino owners do that prompted government officials to begin regulating the industry?
2. How did Raymond “Pappy” Smith attract all kinds of gamblers to his casino?
3. Decoration Day later became which national holiday?
4. What is radiation? How does it affect people, land, and animals?
A Diverse State

Since the early mining days of Nevada, many different cultures, or ethnic groups, have settled in our state. Virginia City and other Nevada mining towns were settled by people from England, Wales, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, Spain, Italy, and many other countries of the world. A diverse place includes people from many different countries and cultures.

Some of these people were accepted by those already living here, but many others were not. For example, after World War II, it was difficult for Americans to trust Japanese people. That was because of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Not even those Japanese people born and raised in the United States were safe from prejudice. Prejudice is judging people based on their race, religion, whether they are male or female, or whether they are rich or poor.

When Pearl Harbor, Hawaii was attacked, Japanese Americans were treated very poorly by our government and other Americans. The Fujii family of Reno, Nevada had their home searched by the FBI. The family camera, radio, and other things were taken from them. Kay Fujii, who owned a gardening business in the area, was sent to jail. Bud Fujii, who was nine, had to protect himself from attacks by students and words of hatred from his teachers.
The Civil Rights Movement

Even though many good things were happening around the country, minority groups had a hard time getting good jobs. There were other problems too. Hotels, theaters, and restaurants were segregated. Segregation separated white people from black people.

Cities and neighborhoods were segregated too. So were schools, hospitals, and swimming pools. Many people wanted to change this in Nevada and around the United States. African Americans began to work together to make changes. They wrote letters and talked to leaders. They wanted new laws that would stop segregation and discrimination. They wanted better jobs and fair and equal treatment.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a minister in Georgia. He worked hard to end segregation, especially in southern states. He led peaceful marches and protests. He reminded everyone that our nation was built on the belief that “all men are created equal.” Dr. King spoke in cities all across the country. Both black and white people joined in his marches. Over 200,000 people took part in a march in our nation’s capital. Dr. King gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech there. He told people that only a person’s character should count, not his or her color. Sadly, a few years later, Dr. King was murdered. But his death didn’t stop the struggle for civil rights. Others across the nation worked hard to continue the fight.
Civil Rights in Nevada

After Basic Magnesium Inc. closed its doors, most African American families got only low-paying service jobs at hotels and casinos. Casinos didn’t let African Americans gamble, eat, or attend shows. They couldn’t even watch black entertainers.

In fact, African American entertainers weren’t allowed to stay in the hotels they performed in. After their shows were over, they were quickly asked to leave. They were told to look for lodging in black boarding houses on the west side of town.

The Moulin Rouge

The Moulin Rouge was the first integrated hotel in Las Vegas. This meant that it was open to both blacks and whites. Black entertainers not only performed there, they were also allowed to gamble and stay the night. Many white entertainers, after their own shows were over, came to the Moulin Rouge to gamble with their black friends.

The Moulin Rouge was also the first to hire black workers to do more than clean rooms and wash dishes. They hired a black hotel manager. They also hired black dealers, chorus girls, waitresses, and hosts. However, the hotel stayed open only about six months. Years later, it opened and closed again and again under many different owners.

In 1960, another historic civil rights event took place at the Moulin Rouge. A meeting was held to talk about changing the segregation policy of Las Vegas hotels and casinos. It came about because a large group of African Americans had decided to hold a peaceful protest along Las Vegas Boulevard. They wanted hotel owners to know they were against hotel and casino segregation. They promised to hold a protest march along the street if something wasn’t done to change the policy, or rule. The group also promised to invite lots of newspaper reporters.

But the march never took place. State and local officials got together with African American leaders and hotel and casino owners. They worked out an agreement that would finally put an end to hotel and casino segregation in Las Vegas.
t Mining Corporation operates this mine in Twin Creeks, Nevada

decade is a period of ten years.

Nearing the End of the Century

Nevada continued to grow and develop during the last few decades of the 20th century. The state’s rapid growth came with many problems and challenges too. Mining, water, industry, and storing nuclear waste were all important issues.

Return of the Mining Boom

Mining has been an important part of Nevada since its beginning. In fact, you may remember that one of our state nicknames is the Silver State. New mining methods during the last half of the 20th century helped mining in Nevada boom once again.

For over 30 years copper was the most valuable metal mined in Nevada. It brought many people and jobs to our state. Later, new discoveries of microscopic gold were found near Elko. These goldfields have also had a positive impact on our state. Some people claim these gold deposits are the richest in the Western Hemisphere. Most of them are located close together along a 50-mile strip of land known as the Carlin Trend.

Other Nevada mines are some of the nation’s leading producers of mercury and tungsten. Cement, gypsum, lime, salt, sand, and gravel are a few of the important nonmetals Nevada produces.

Golden Nevada

Gold is a very important mineral to Nevada. The mines in our state produce more gold than any other state in the nation. The gold coming from Nevada also makes the United States the second largest producer of gold in the world. Only South Africa produces more.
Water Resources for Nevada

The need for water has always been an important part of life in Nevada. As more people began moving to the southern part of our state, new water resources had to be found. The government began to think about pulling Colorado River water out of Lake Mead. It would have to be piped into Las Vegas.

Once the project began, it took about 10 years to complete. Today, the project is part of the Southern Nevada Water System. It includes six pumping stations, a reservoir, a 4-mile tunnel, and 31 miles of pipe. This new water system made it possible for the area to support more people than ever before.

Managing a River

The Truckee River is another important water resource for our state. It provides irrigation for farmlands. It feeds livestock and is also used for recreation and industrial supply. The Truckee runs from Lake Tahoe, through parts of California, Reno, and Sparks, and into Pyramid Lake.

Heavy rains have caused the Truckee to run over its banks now and then. The last big flood was in 1997. Seven inches of rainfall near Lake Tahoe caused mudslides and the worst floods in over 30 years. Hundreds of businesses were hit, and thousands of people were out of work.

Since then, state officials and many citizens have worked to find ways to prevent future floods. The Truckee River Whitewater Park has improved water flow. It has also provided new opportunities for recreation.
Yucca Mountain

For almost 20 years, the U.S. government has wanted to store nuclear waste at Nevada’s Yucca Mountain. Nuclear waste is the material that is left over after nuclear energy is made. Most of the people in our state don’t want radioactive material stored here. They believe it’s too dangerous.

The government has spent millions of dollars to get Yucca Mountain ready for shipments. If the site is approved, steel cans of nuclear waste will be shipped starting in 2010. The waste is harmful to humans, so it would have to be moved by machines. State officials and thousands of citizens are fighting to keep Yucca Mountain from becoming a nuclear waste dump.
Theme Resorts

As things all over Nevada changed, so did hotels and casinos on the Las Vegas Strip. Hotel owners spent more and more money. Each hotel promised to be bigger and more beautiful than those built before.

Caesars Palace was one of the first luxury resorts built with a theme in mind. It was copied from the designs of ancient Rome. Huge stone pillars line the walkways. Graceful statues shoot streams of water into the air. The Olympic-sized pool is lined with marble tiles from Italy. Caesars was also the first to add many shops alongside the hotel. Hundreds of top entertainers have performed there. Caesars has also hosted many important sporting events.

Since that time, hotels and casinos along the Strip just keep getting bigger and more expensive. The Mirage caught the eye of visitors by bringing in tigers, sharks, and huge aquariums. Treasure Island has an outdoor pirate show for guests and people passing by. Circus Circus, the Bellagio, New York-New York, the Luxor, Excaliber, the Stratosphere, and the MGM Grand are just a few of the other theme hotels on the Strip. In fact, the 10 largest hotels in the world are all located in Las Vegas.

Modern Nevada
Consider Character

Pick someone in this chapter whom you think made a difference in Nevada’s history. Then make a character triangle. Copy the diagram on the right onto your own paper. Then fill it in using examples from the chapter. You can pick one character trait and write three details, or you can pick three character traits and write one example for each.

Technology & Tie-In

How important is technology in war? How does war affect technology? How does war affect the technology industry? To answer these questions, compare war weapons from World War II, Korea and Vietnam. An interesting comparison would be to research aircraft used in these wars. Use the pictures in this chapter as well as other sources, like the encyclopedia. Then discuss with your class how technology changes and how it affects the results of war.

Nevada, Our Home
**Geography Tie-In**

Locate the biggest map of the world in your classroom. A wall map or globe will work best. Send one person at a time up to the map. Then have the teacher or another student read off the “Places Locate” lists from Lessons 1–3. Have the student at the map locate one place from the list. Then have another student take a turn. Keep going until each student has had a turn or all the places have been located on the map or globe. Were the students near the end of the list faster than those at the beginning of the list?

---

**Activity**

**New Ideas Make Life Better**

Imagine what your life would be like today if there were no airplanes, telephones, automobiles, or electric lights. Important inventions like these make our lives better and easier in many ways. Read through the following list of important inventions and the people who invented them:

- A Scottish immigrant by the name of Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone.
- Thomas Edison was the inventor of the electric light bulb.
- The Wright brothers, Orville and Wilbur, were the first to fly a powered airplane.
- An industrial-strength rubber for tires was accidentally created by Charles Goodyear.
- An engineer named Thomas Moore was the first to name his invention the refrigerator, or ice box.
- Stuart Cramer called his new climate control invention air conditioning.

Choose one invention from the list. On a separate piece of paper, write five ways your life would be different without the invention. For example, “If there were no automobiles, I would have to find another way to get to soccer practice. I could walk, ride my scooter, take my skateboard, run, ride a horse, or miss practice.”
Think it's good that we
chance to choose our
instead of just being
so they are.”

—Sarah Hatch,
a fourth grader