

NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY



Volume XXV

Spring 1982

Number 1

NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

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The *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* (ISSN 0047-9462) is published quarterly by the Nevada Historical Society at 1555 E. Flamingo, Las Vegas, Nevada 89109. The *Quarterly* is sent to all members of the Society. Membership dues are: Student, \$5; Regular Annual, \$15; Annual Sustaining, \$50; Life, \$500; Corporate Patron, \$100. Membership applications and dues should be sent to the Director, Nevada Historical Society, 1650 N. Virginia, Reno, Nevada 89503. Second-class postage paid at Las Vegas, Nevada. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 1650 N. Virginia, Reno, Nevada 89503.

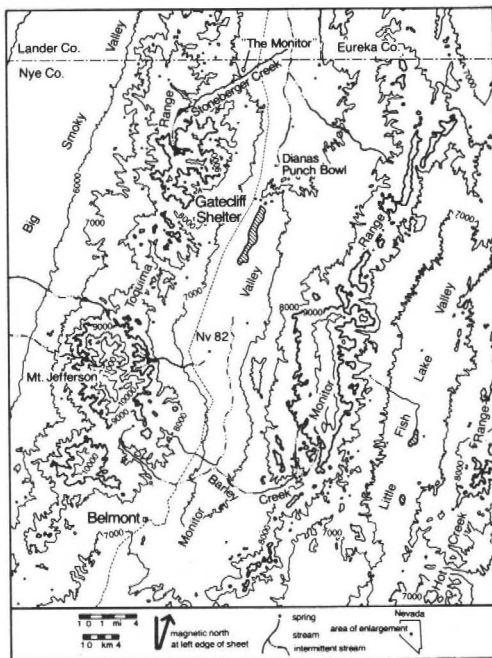


Figure 1. The major natural and cultural features in Monitor Valley, central Nevada. (David Hurst Thomas)

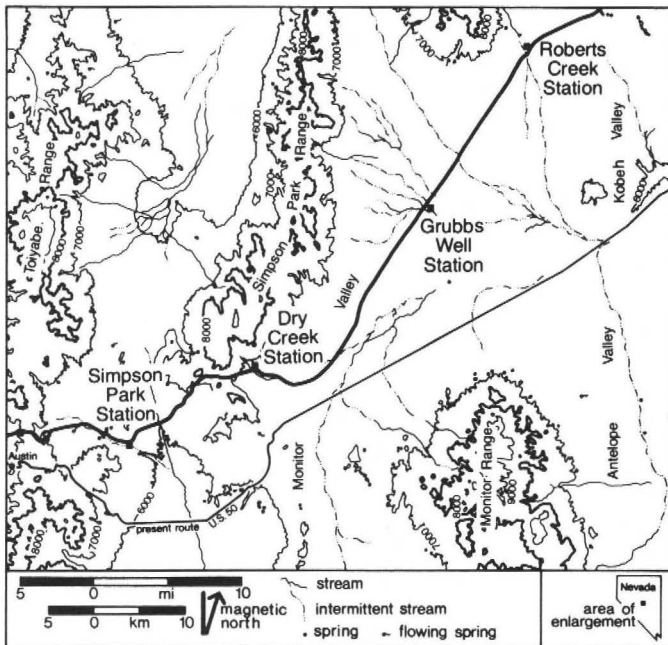


Figure 2. Locations of the Pony Express stations in and around Monitor Valley. (David Hurst Thomas)

The Colonization of Monitor Valley, Nevada

DAVID HURST THOMAS

WE WILL NEVER KNOW when the first human ventured into Monitor Valley. Recent archaeological excavations at Gatecliff Shelter and Triple T Shelter firmly established the presence of people in this area at least as early as 3500 B.C.¹ When the first white settlers arrived in the area, Monitor Valley was occupied by Western Shoshone people.² These Native Americans spoke Central Numic languages, a sub-branch of

¹ Since 1970, field crews from the University of California, Davis and the American Museum of Natural History have spent seven summers conducting fieldwork in this area. This research was focused on the excavation of Gatecliff Shelter, a forty foot deep rockshelter containing deposits spanning the last 7000 years. Nearly a dozen other prehistoric archaeological sites were located and mapped as part of this reconnaissance. These archaeological data are currently being analyzed at the American Museum of Natural History, and the results will be published shortly (Thomas, in preparation.)

In order to provide a historical baseline for the prehistoric research in Monitor Valley, we examined the relevant historic literature. As it turned out, very little historical research had been conducted in this area, and nowhere had the initial white settlement of Monitor Valley been documented. At the request of the editor of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, I have prepared the following manuscript which discusses in some detail the known history of Monitor Valley. No attempt is made in the present paper to reconstruct the prehistoric aboriginal occupation in Monitor Valley; interested readers are referred to the final published account of our Monitor Valley research (Thomas, in preparation).

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Mr. Guy Louis Rocha, former Curator of Manuscripts at the Nevada Historical Society and now the Nevada State Archivist; without Guy's strong interest and encouragement, this paper would have been considerably shorter and certainly less complete. I am also grateful to Mr. Bob Nylen, who generously allowed me to use his notes from Nye County Tax Rolls. I also thank Dr. Donald Hardesty, Dr. Catherine Fowler, Mr. Alvin McLane and Mr. Mont Lewis for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I thank Mr. Dennis O'Brien for preparing the artwork, and Ms. Judith Lee Silverstein for taking the photograph of "The Monitor," Ms. Jane Epstein and Ms. Margot Dembo for editorial assistance. Errors, of course, remain the sole responsibility of the author.

² Julian H. Steward, "Basin-Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Groups," *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin* No. 120 (1938): 109-110; W.J. Hoffman, "Miscellaneous Ethnographic Observations on Indians Inhabiting Nevada, California, and Arizona" in F.V. Hayden, ed., *10th Annual Report of the U.S. Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, Being a Report of Progress for the Year 1876 Part 3* (1878) pp. 461-478.

Numic, a division of the widespread Uto-Aztecan language family.³ Unfortunately, ethnographers have rarely discussed the Monitor Valley Shoshone, and most of our knowledge about these people must come from the archaeological record. This scanty evidence can, on occasion, be supplemented by historical records, which provide an admittedly biased vision of the Monitor Valley Shoshone lifeway. These early explorers and settlers are universally quite negative toward the Shoshone, and the reader should be cautioned to keep these ethnocentric biases in mind when evaluating the historic sources.

The Great Basin was, of course, one of the last areas of North America to be influenced by white culture. By 1750, it was the only major region which still remained unknown to the white man.⁴ A massive area of internal drainage, the Great Basin encompassed an almost impenetrable area of 210,000 square miles, measuring nearly 900 by 600 miles at its widest parts. Initial exploration was slow in developing, but once begun, settlements were rapidly established in the more favorable and accessible regions. This early colonization was sporadic, and the more remote portions of the Great Basin remained unexplored and unsettled for decades.

The Monitor Valley was one such backwater area. Situated well away from the initial settlements of the Great Basin, Monitor Valley was literally on the way to nowhere. The history of settlement in such remote areas is instructive, because it illustrates the processes by which many nineteenth century frontier settlements were established and maintained.⁵ In a real sense, Monitor Valley can serve as a case study documenting the processes by which white settlers slowly expanded into the more peripheral areas of the American West.

A case can be made that the Monitor Valley was a cultural backwater even in prehistoric times. Like many of the upland valleys of central Nevada, Monitor Valley was probably not occupied before 4,000

³ Sydney M. Lamb, "Linguistic Prehistory in the Great Basin," *International Journal of American Linguistics* 24, No. 2 (1958): 95-100; Wick R. Miller "Anthropological Linguistics in the Great Basin" in Warren L. d'Azevedo et al., eds., "Current Status of Anthropological Research in the Great Basin: 1964," *Desert Research Institute Publications in the Soc. Sci.* No. 1 (1977) 75-112; C.S. Fowler, "Ecological Clues to Proto-Numic Homelands" in Don D. Fowler, ed., "Great Basin Cultural Ecology," *Desert Research Institute Publications in the Soc. Sci.* No. 8 (1972) 105-122.

⁴ Gloria Griffen Cline, *Exploring the Great Basin* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963).

⁵ The concept of the *Frontier pattern* has been discussed in detail by Stanley South in *Method and Theory in Historical Archaeology* (New York: Academic Press, Inc., 1977) pp. 141-163; see also Donald L. Hardesty, *The Pony Express in Central Nevada: Archaeological and Documentary Perspectives*, Cultural Resources series, No. 1 (Nevada: Bureau of Land Management, 1979).

B.C.; and yet, not far away, much older human settlements are known.⁶ The archaeological record of Monitor Valley shows an initial "settling in," followed by millennia of what appears to have been fairly sporadic occupation. The aboriginal population of Monitor Valley was never high, and it is doubtful that aboriginal groups lived there year round. Both archaeological and ethnographic evidence indicates that the prehistoric population density was much higher in areas such as the Reese River Valley, Owens Valley and probably also along the Humboldt to the north.

In short, the archaeological and historical records of Monitor Valley tell the story of a relatively isolated region which was almost begrudgingly colonized some 6,000 years ago by native Americans and then recolonized 130 years ago by white explorers and settlers. Such peripheral areas are often overlooked in the study of frontier adaptations, and this neglect is evidenced by the paucity of both archaeological and historical literature.

Early Exploration

The first white man known to have traveled across the Great Basin is mountain man Jedediah Strong Smith, whose journey took him directly through Monitor Valley. A native New Yorker, Smith and two partners purchased, in 1826, a controlling interest in the Missouri-based Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Smith set out during that summer to explore the territory west of the Great Salt Lake.⁷ His exact route across the Great Basin has been debated for over fifty years, but the issue seems settled with the recent publication of his journal.⁸ The route can also be traced from his letters and a map prepared in 1839 by David H. Burr, topographer to the U.S. Post Office.⁹

⁶ As for example near Pleistocene Lake Tonopah (Elizabeth W.C. Campbell and William H. Campbell, "A Folsom Complex in the Great Basin," *Masterkey*, 14:1 [1940] 7-11; Lorann S.A. Pendleton, "Lithic Technology in Early Nevada Assemblages" [Masters thesis, California State University, Long Beach, 1979]); at Mud Lake (Donald R. Tuohy, "Some Early Lithic Sites in Western Nevada" in Cynthia Irwin-Williams, ed., *Early Man in Western North America, Eastern New Mexico University Contributions in Anthropology*, 1 [4]:27-38; Donald R. Tuohy, "The Test Excavation of Hanging Rock Cave, Churchill County, Nevada," *Anthropological Papers of the Nevada State Museum* No. 14 [Carson City, 1969] 26-50.); Railroad Valley (Robert Elston, personal communication, 1980); and probably also along the Humboldt River (Robert Elston, personal communication, 1980).

⁷ The documentary evidence is unclear as to what, precisely, was Smith's objective: see George R. Brooks, ed., *The Southwest Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith: His Personal Account of the Journey to California 1826-1827* (Glendale, Calif: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1977) pp. 22-28.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Reprinted in Dale L. Morgan and Carl I. Wheat, *Jedediah Smith and His Maps of the American West*, California Historical Society, 1954.

Smith's early explorations began near Hyrum, Utah, in August of 1826. Leading a party of about a dozen men, Smith headed through southwestern Utah, crossed into Nevada (probably near the modern town of Bunkerville in Clark County), traveled across the Mojave Desert to the San Bernardino Mountains, and ultimately arrived at Mission San Gabriel on November 26.¹⁰ Because Mexican law at the time forbade entrance of unauthorized foreigners into California, Smith was ordered to return east, following the same route by which he had just arrived.

Not anxious to repeat his unpleasant Mojave Desert crossing, Smith surreptitiously blazed a new route north from Mission San Gabriel. Skirting the northern edge of the Mojave Desert, Smith led his party into the San Joaquin Valley. He crossed the Sierra Nevada in May, 1827. The precise location of this crossing has been debated by historians;¹¹ but the most probable route seems to have been up the Stanislaus River (through modern-day Angels Camp and Murphys) and on through Ebbetts Pass.¹²

It was this second Great Basin crossing which apparently took Jedediah Smith through Monitor Valley. A notation on the 1839 Burr map reads simply, "Some Isolated Mountains rise from this Plain of Sand, to the regions of Perpetual Snow, the small streams that flow from these, all soon absorbed into the sand. It contains a few miserable Indians, but little Game." Elsewhere, Smith noted that he "found some Indians who appeared the most miserable of the human race having nothing to subsist on, (nor any clothing) except grass seed, grasshoppers, etc."¹³

Smith's small party skirted the south of Walker Lake on June 1, 1827, and proceeded to the east approximately following the route of modern U.S. Highway 6.¹⁴ While at Walker Lake, he commented on "considerable horse sign," an interesting note since Smith is generally credited with being the first white man in the area.¹⁵ After taking some fish from an abandoned village, he "went a little further where there

¹⁰ See C. Hart Merriam, "Earliest Crossing of the Deserts of Utah and Nevada to Southern California: Route of Jedediah S. Smith in 1826," *Quarterly of the California Historical Society*, II, No. 2 (July 1923) 228-36; Dale L. Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1953); Cline, *Exploring the Great Basin*, p. 155; Brooks, *Southwest Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith*, p. 38.

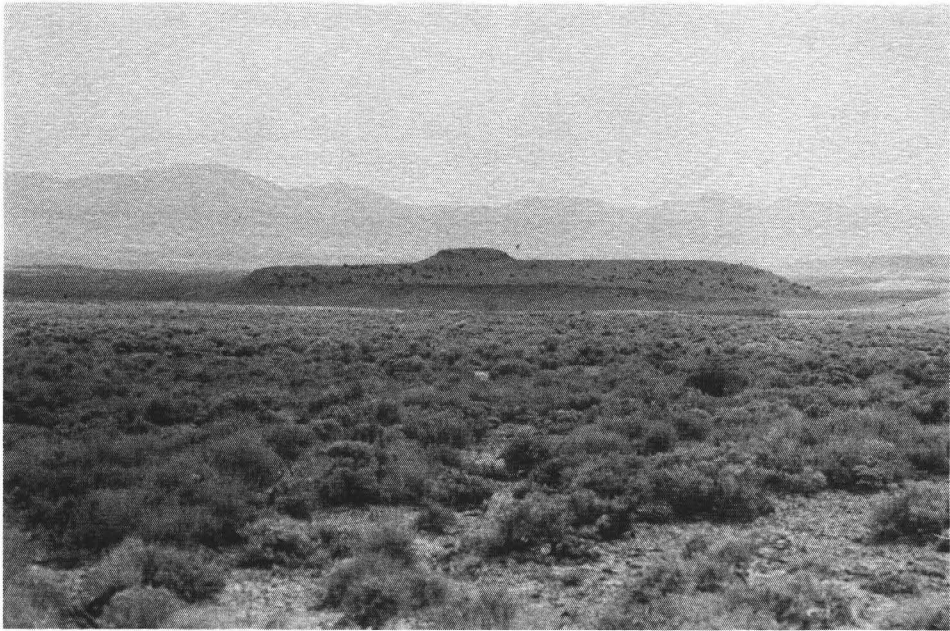
¹¹ Among them Morgan, *Jedediah Smith*, p. 207; Effie Mona Mack, *Nevada: A History of the State from the Earliest Times through the Civil War* (Glendale, Calif.: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1936); Cline, *Exploring the Great Basin*, p. 157.

¹² Francis P. Farquhar, "Jedediah Smith and the First Crossing of the Sierra Nevada," *Sierra Club Bulletin*, 28 (1943) 36-53; Brooks, *Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith*.

¹³ Cited in Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West*, p. 210.

¹⁴ Farquhar, "Jedediah Smith"; Morgan, *Jedediah Smith*, p. 418; Cline, *Exploring the Great Basin*, p. 158; Brooks, *Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith*, pp. 173-174.

¹⁵ See Brooks, *Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith*, p. 174.



“The Monitor” formation as it appears upon entering Monitor Valley via Petes Summit; the photograph view is to the southeast. (*David Hurst Thomas*)

was several families encamped. They were fishing with nets very neatly made with fine meshes. . . about ten O Clock at night I was awakened by the sound of horses feet. I started up and 20 or 30 horsemen rode by at full speed to where the fishermen were encamped.”¹⁶

Smith also observed several Indians in the vicinity of Walker Lake wearing buffalo robes and Spanish blankets. His journal notes that the Walker Lake Paiute deliberately deceived him about the availability of water to the east, in hopes of sending him “where I might perish for want of it.”¹⁷

The Smith party left Walker Lake, moved between the Gabbs Valley and Pilot Ranges, around the southern end of the Shoshone and Toiyabe Ranges, and crossed Big Smoky Valley just south of Peavine Creek.¹⁸ He followed a well-marked Indian trail across Big Smoky Valley on June 7, 1827, to find “water and good grass” in the area. Smith and his two

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹⁸ This portion of the journey is, incidentally, identical to the route taken two decades later by John Charles Frémont.

partners stopped for their midday meal just west of the modern town of Manhattan, then crossed the southern tip of the Toquima Range directly east from Manhattan along a route approximated by Highway 69.¹⁹ They camped for two nights, June 7 and 8, near the site of Belmont.

On June 9 the Smith party traveled across Monitor Valley proper and passed into the Monitor Range via McCann Canyon. The next day Smith "found an Indian and 2 squaws who had no opportunity of running away. I endeavored to talk a little with them by signs but found them too stupid or wilful. They had a piece of a Buffalo robe and a Beaver skin which last I bought of them."²⁰ The trail took them east to Hot Creek, along the base of the Pancake Range, and finally into Utah south of Gandy.

This portion of Smith's return trip seems to have been as miserable as the earlier westward crossing of the Mojave Desert. In a letter to General William Clark (of Lewis and Clark fame), Smith noted:

After traveling twenty days from the east side of Mountain Joseph, I struck the S.W. corner of the Great Salt Lake, traveling over a country completely barren and destitute of game. We frequently traveled without water sometimes for two days over sandy deserts, where there was no sign of vegetation, and when we found water in some of the rocky hills, we most generally found some Indians who appeared the most miserable of the human race.²¹

Smith arrived at the Salt Lake with only a single horse and one mule remaining, having eaten the rest. He ultimately joined his partners along the Utah-Idaho boundary at the great bend of the Bear River.²²

Nearly two decades elapsed before another explorer, John Charles Frémont, saw the central Great Basin. Frémont's first expedition proceeded up the Platte River and explored the Wind River Mountain Chain. After his return, Frémont organized a second expedition, which, like the first, was under the direction of the Topographical Engineers Corps of the U.S Army. Frémont left St. Louis in May, 1843, traveled along the Oregon Trail, explored the Snake River, and ultimately arrived at Fort Vancouver. Equipped with provisions for three months, Frémont re-entered the States, headed through southeastern Oregon, and spent New Year's Day, 1844, camped on the western edge of the Black Rock Desert, north of Pyramid Lake. Because of heavy snow, the party

¹⁹ Brooks, *Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith*, p. 178.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.

²¹ In this quotation, Smith used the term "Mountain Joseph" to refer to the entire Sierra Nevada Range; see Maurice S. Sullivan, ed., *The Travels of Jedediah Smith* (Santa Ana, Calif.: 1934) p. 165 and also Brooks, *Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith*, p. 149.

²² Mack, *Nevada: A History*, p. 66.

elected not to cross the Sierra Nevada there and continued south to the Walker River, crossing the mountains by what is now known as Carson Pass. Frémont arrived at Fort Sutter, Sacramento in March, 1844.

Frémont's group remained in Sacramento only two weeks, returning to the Great Basin by way of the Old Spanish Trail, through Las Vegas, and northward to the Oregon Trail; it then traveled east to the Missouri River, where Frémont prepared his final report.²³ In this report Frémont described the Great Basin as a massive land of internal drainage; his account provided the first official description of the Great Basin:

The existence of the Great Basin is therefore an established fact in my own mind; its extent and contents are yet to be better ascertained. It cannot be less than four or five hundred miles each way. . . Of its interior but little is known. It is called a desert, and, from what I saw of it, sterility may be its prominent characteristic. . . The contents of the Great Basin are yet to be examined.²⁴

Even while writing his report, Frémont was making plans to examine the "contents" of the Great Basin in some detail.

Little time passed before Frémont led a new party of sixty, leaving the Missouri River in August, 1845 and arriving at the Great Salt Lake in mid-October. He elected to cross the Great Salt Lake desert directly, apparently where no white man had previously ventured.²⁵ He camped at the base of Pilot Peak (north of Wendover) and then split his party; the larger group journeyed west to the Humboldt River, while Frémont led a small group to the southwest.

After crossing the South Fork of the Humboldt, Frémont continued a "tortuous course rendered unavoidable by the necessity of using just such passes as the mountains gave, and in searching for grass and water."²⁶ He and his party of ten men generally traveled along Indian trails which skirted the foot of the ridges: "When well marked showing use, these never failed to lead to water and the larger the trail the more abundant the water."²⁷

Frémont's map showed that they passed through Diamond Valley, arriving at a stream he called Basils Creek (Kingston Creek), near the head of Big Smoky Valley. They traveled down the west side of Big Smoky Valley until they arrived at "Boiling Sp." (Darroughs Hot

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 97. Over 100,000 copies were distributed, and the report had a profound effect on later emigration to the Far West.

²⁴ John Charles Frémont, *Memoirs of My Life* (Chicago and New York: Belford, Clark & Co., 1887 [1886]) pp. 391-392.

²⁵ Mack, *Nevada: A History*, p. 98.

²⁶ Frémont, *Memoirs*, pp. 434-435.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 435.

Springs), where they camped on November 16, 1845. The group traveled around the southern tip of the Toiyabe Range, adding "Moore's Creek" to his map (Peavine Creek), and then to the eastern shore of Walker Lake, which Frémont named after Joe Walker, the guide of the northern party. They then crossed into California over Donner Pass.²⁸

As the Carson Valley and Salt Lake City areas became more densely settled, there was a brief interest in exploring a more direct route across the Great Basin, or at least in finding better terrain through which to make the crossing.²⁹ On September 18, 1854, Lt. Col. Edward Jenner Steptoe led a government detachment to find such a route.³⁰ Steptoe was accompanied by John Reese, a pioneer Mormon settler and businessman in the Carson Valley, who almost every year since 1851 had made the crossing to Salt Lake City in order to acquire supplies and merchandise for his business.³¹ When the Steptoe party reached the location of modern Battle Mountain, Reese and two companions apparently followed the Reese River for some distance to the south; Reese called this the "New River," but the name was later changed to Reese River in his honor.³²

The next major white incursion into the central Great Basin occurred some fourteen years after Frémont passed through Big Smoky Valley. This expedition was under the command of Captain James H. Simpson, commissioned by the U.S. Army Topographical Corps to find a suitable military route between the Mormon settlements at Camp Floyd, Utah, and Genoa in the Carson Valley. The major route had previously

²⁸ Frémont made a number of ethnographic observations, some of which are discussed by Carling Malouf, "Ethnohistory in the Great Basin," in *The Current Status of Anthropological Research in the Great Basin: 1964*, Warren L. d'Azevedo, et. al., eds. p. 13; Robert F. Heizer, M.A. Baumhoff and C.W. Clewlow, Jr., "Archaeology of South Fork Shelter (NV-EL-11), Elko County, Nevada," *University of California Archaeological Survey Reports*, No. 71 (Berkeley, 1968) p. 5; Ruth Hermann, *The Paiutes of Pyramid Lake*, (San Jose: Harlan-Young Press, 1972); Edward C. Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes: A Tribal History*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Printing Service, 1975) pp. 22-23; and the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada in *Numa: A Northern Paiute History* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Printing Service, 1976). Among other things, Frémont noted in his *Memoirs* (p. 436) that the Indians used a sinew-backed bow and arrows tipped with obsidian points. Frémont's party also happened upon an old abandoned "Digger woman," who was approximately eighty years old and left to die "because she was very old and could gather no more seeds and was no longer good for anything".

²⁹ Juanita Brooks, "The Mormons in Carson County, Utah Territory," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 8 (Spring 1965), 15.

³⁰ Myron Angel, *History of Nevada with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers*, (Oakland: Thompson & West Publisher, 1881) p. 37; W. Turrentine Jackson, *Wagon Roads West: A Study of Federal Road Surveys and Construction in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1846-1869* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

³¹ Brooks, "The Mormons in Carson County," p. 15.

³² Captain J.H. Simpson, *Report of Explorations Across the Great Basin of the Territory of Utah for a Direct Wagon-Route from Camp Floyd to Genoa, in Carson Valley, in 1859* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876) p. 78.

been along the Humboldt River, and Simpson set out in early May, 1859 to find a short-cut. His party consisted of sixty four men including several scientists, guides, and military personnel. Unlike Smith and Frémont, Simpson kept detailed notes of his travels.³³ The present discussion is confined to the immediate vicinity of Monitor Valley.

While traveling down the *Pah-hun-hupe* (Diamond) Valley, Simpson noted "a couple of bush-fences or barriers converging to a narrow pass, and a large hole in this last portion. Pete [a Ute Indian] says they are to guide deer near the hole, in which the Indian hides himself, and shoots them as they pass with bows and arrows at night, a fire being used as a lure."³⁴

On May 20, Simpson and his party entered the Kobah (Kobeh) Valley; "this Kobah Valley is the most extensive one we have seen, and, like the Great Salt Lake Desert, seems once to have been a lake. . . Streams run from the sides of the mountains, toward the valleys, but sink into the alluvion at their base. They are generally grassed, particularly in the cañons or rivines."³⁵ Simpson established camp on May 22 at *She-o-wi-te* near the modern Roberts Creek Ranch and the group rested, since eight were ill and "unfit for duty."

Three Western Shoshone, apparently grandfather, son, and grandson, visited Simpson's camp in northern Kobeh Valley. Simpson questioned them regarding local place names and inquired about the number of their people.

To this I could only get the answer there were very few of them. One of them is an old man of at least sixty years, and he as well as the others represent that they have always lived in this valley, and, never having gone far from it, cannot tell us of the water and mountains beyond their limited range. They say they

³³ In fact, Simpson was quite critical of the quality of Frémont's observations complaining that "the geographic memoir of Frémont. . . does not enter into the particulars of his exploration of 1845 and 1846, but only gives a general view of the Great Basin," (Ibid., p. 22). Aware of his predecessor's shortcomings, Simpson attempted to record "the particulars of each day's travel across the Great Basin, as well as a minute description of country traversed," (Ibid., p. 27). Simpson subsequently published both an abbreviated and a full-length account of his exploration: J.H. Simpson, *The Shortest Route to California Illustrated by a History of Explorations of the Great Basin of Utah with Its Topographical and Geological Character and Some Account of the Indian Tribes* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1869); and his *Report of Explorations Across the Great Basin*. Because of this care and planning, his journal provides the earliest ecologically and ethnographically relevant descriptions for the central Great Basin. A number of investigators have previously considered Simpson's observations for other areas (e.g., Robert F. Heizer and M.A. Baumhoff, "The Archaeology of Two Sites at Eastgate, Churchill County, Nevada," *University of California Anthropological Records*, 20 [Berkeley: 1961] 119-120; Robert F. Heizer and Martin A. Baumhoff, *Prehistoric Rock Art of Nevada and Eastern California* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962] p. 48; Malouf, "Ethnohistory in the Great Basin," p. 20).

³⁴ Simpson, *Report of Explorations Across the Great Basin*, p. 70.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 73.

have no chief, though they speak the Sho-sho-nee language; are clothed with the rabbit-skin cape, similar to the Go-shoots, and represent that they wore no leggings, even in the winter. This is scarcely credible, cold as the winter must be in this region, but it seems to be a fact. They are very talkative and lively. Eat rats, lizards, grass-seeds, etc., like the Go-shoots. The guide says he saw them, after throwing rats in the fire, and thus roasting them, eat them, entrails and all, the children in particular being very fond of the juices, which they would lick in with their tongues and push into their mouths with their fingers. The old man represents that a number of his people died last winter from starvation and cold. . . .³⁶

Later that afternoon Simpson hiked up the creek to visit

A wick-e-up of the Diggers that have visited our camp. It had been reported to be about from one-eighth to one-fourth of a mile above our camp; but, with all the search we could give for about a mile up, we could see nothing of it. Returning on the other side of the creek, we at last got sight of it, it being only distinguished from the sage-bushes around it by the circular form given to its development, it being made of these bushes in their still growing state, and some few loose ones thrown in. To our surprise the inmates were gone. This we conceived strange, as they had come into our camp immediately on our arrival, and seemed to be very confident of protection and safety. What makes the matter more strange, it appears that in going off they shot an arrow into one of our beeves, which looks as if they had become offended at something.³⁷

The next day Simpson discovered that his cook had indeed offended the visiting Shoshone by threatening him with his revolver.

On May 23 Simpson moved his group southward toward Monitor Valley. They passed the hot springs two miles north of the site of Bartine Ranch and made camp at what Simpson called Shelton's Spring, named after one of his dragoons. This stop, Camp No. 20, was on modern Clover Spring, just south of Highway 50. Simpson's party found several human bones while cleaning out the spring:

This is corroborative of the statement of my guide, last fall, that the Indians of this region bury their dead frequently in springs. It may be imagined that those who had drunk of the water did not feel very comfortable after the discovery.³⁸

On May 24 the expedition moved seven miles to the southwest and stopped at *Wons-in-dam-me* or Antelope Creek (now known as Willow Creek, at the northern end of the Monitor Range). Simpson noted that the stream was about three feet wide and one foot deep, in good grass

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 71-72.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 72.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 73.

and abundant cedar timber. Simpson also recorded that the Kobeh and Monitor Valleys were dominated by bunchgrass and would provide ample fodder for wagon trains.

Simpson's party then continued westward, across Monitor Valley, crossing Stoneberger Creek, also said to be three feet wide and one foot deep. The Journal noted the "fine grass. . . toward the mountains and many signs of sage-hen and antelope in the valley. A herd of the latter seen." To the west they observed the *Pah-re-ah* or Water Mountains (Simpson Park Mountains) remarking on the abundant streams which flowed into Monitor Valley.

While camped at the northern tip of the Toquima Range, they were visited by a party of fifteen or twenty Shoshone:

They are the most lively, jocose Indians I have seen. Say two rats make a meal. Like rabbits better than rats, and antelope better than either, but cannot get latter. Have no guns; use bow and arrow. They occasionally amuse us very much in their attempts to ride our mules, which are, however, so much frightened at their rabbit-skin dress as to cause them to run off with them.³⁹

Skirting the southern edge of the *Pah-re-ah* Mountains, the Simpson party passed through Hickison Summit, but made no mention of the conspicuous rock art there.⁴⁰ Big Smoky Valley, termed *Won-a-ho-nu-pe*, was "very thinly covered with *artemisia*" and more antelope were observed. Near his Camp No. 23, below Simpson Park Canyon, Simpson noticed

under a cedar. . . a very large willow basket of conical shape, which would contain probably a bushel and a half. Concealed under the same cedar were a number of rolls of willow peeling nicely tied together; also faggots and bundles of peeled willow -- the stock in trade of some industrious Digger. Directed they should not be disturbed.

Simpson also noted along the western slope of the *Pah-re-ah* range a number of "columns of stone," which he reckoned were placed there by Indians "as landmarks to guide them over this trackless region." The expedition then crossed the Toiyabe Range through what is now known as Simpson Park Canyon, a few miles northeast of the present town of Austin. Once again Simpson commented on the "luxuriant" stands of willow and grass, "the stream in the cañon is quite pure, and I think

³⁹ Ibid., p. 75.

⁴⁰ Described in Heizer and Baumhoff, *Prehistoric Rock Art of Nevada and Eastern California*; see also Trudy Thomas, "Petroglyph Distribution and the Hunting Hypothesis in the Central Great Basin," *Tebawa* 18 (1976) 65-74.

there must be trout in it. . .there is a great deal of meadow along [the stream], and bunch-grass on the sides of the mountains.”

Simpson's Camp 23 was situated on a lake “several acres in extent. Ducks frequent it. . .Should it ever become necessary to establish a post, say near the entrance of *Won-a-ho-nupe* (Simpson Park) Cañon the grass, water, and timber of this mountain-range would be amply sufficient.”⁴¹ On May 27, Simpson was visited by an old Shoshone, who

represents that we are the first white persons he has ever seen. He says there is a large number of Indians living around, but they had run away from fear of us. . .He is at least sixty years old, and says he never had a chief. I asked him if his country was a good one. He said it was. He liked it a good deal better than any other. I asked him why. Because, he said, it had a great many rats. I asked him if they ever quarreled about their rat country. He said they did. So it would appear that civilized nations are not the only people who go to war about their domains.⁴²

The next day Simpson led his party through a pass now bearing his name to a camp on the west side of the Toiyabe Mountains. The large river in this valley was known by the Indian name of *Pang-que-o-whop-pe*, or Fish Creek. Simpson preferred to name it after his guide, Mr. John Reese, who had been there previously. During his visit the Reese River was ten feet wide, one and one-half feet deep, and contained trout weighing two and one-half pounds.

Simpson continued his journey across Central Nevada, arriving in Genoa on June 12, some 41 days after he had left Camp Floyd. Simpson lingered in the Carson Valley for a few days, then traveled across the Sierra Nevada to visit Placerville, Sacramento, and San Francisco. The return journey began from Genoa on June 24 and he reached the Reese River Valley on July 6. Simpson's Journal is more condensed for the return trip, but he still provides useful glimpses on both man and land in pristine central Nevada.

The lake in Simpson's Park had fallen considerably since his visit six weeks earlier,⁴³ but the grass in Reese River Valley “as well as everywhere nearly on the mountains [was] very abundant; more so than when we passed before. Hundreds of acres of good hay may be cut in Simpson's Park.”

Seventeen Shoshone-speaking Indians visited Simpson's camp, “two of them riding horses.” One of them, who spoke a little English, told Simpson that the Toiyabe Mountains comprised the “dividing boundary

⁴¹ Simpson, *Report of Explorations Across the Great Basin*, p. 77.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

between the Pi-Utes and the Diggers [Shoshone] proper." That night, two of Simpson's men returned to camp with ten brook trout caught in the Reese River, some weighing two and one-half pounds.

Amidst a thunderstorm Simpson moved his group eastward across Monitor Valley, camping on July 8 once again on the *Wons-in-dam-me Creek*, now Willow Creek. They were joined by several Shoshone, "each carrying his two rat-sticks. Several of them are entirely naked, except the breech-cloth. Quite a heavy shower of rain has been falling, but, although it came down cold and chilly, these Indians seemed to take it as if it were not an extraordinary occurrence."⁴⁴

Before Simpson's party continued eastward the next day, they were "amused" with a dance performance by the visiting Shoshone: "The appearance of so many white men and wagons, in their country is quite an epoch in their lives, and they are correspondingly elated." Simpson ultimately returned to Camp Floyd, Utah, on August 4, 1859.

The Pony Express

Simpson successfully established a workable route between Salt Lake City and the Carson Valley, cutting off almost 300 miles from the Humboldt River route. His exploration had an immediate effect on the east-west mail system. The United States had initially attempted to establish mail service between California and Salt Lake City using a mule train in January, 1851;⁴⁵ this was the so-called "Jackass Express".⁴⁶ The first route followed the old Emigrant Trail, which generally paralleled the Humboldt River.

The results of Simpson's survey became known shortly after he returned to Camp Floyd in August, 1859, even though the official report was not published until seventeen years later. The Overland Mail followed much of Simpson's Central Route from Utah to Genoa. The operator, George Chorpenning, began constructing a new series of stage stations along the Central Route west from Jacob's Well (in western White Pine County). Because of the increased cost involved in relocating the mail, passenger, and express lines, Chorpenning lost his mail contract in April, 1860.⁴⁷

The mail contract was immediately awarded to Jones, Russell and Company, which soon changed its name to Russell, Majors & Waddell.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 111.

⁴⁵ Leroy R. Hafen, *The Overland Mail 1848-1869* (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, Co., 1926).

⁴⁶ Victor O. Goodwin, "The Humboldt--Nevada's Desert River and Thoroughfare of the American West," *Nevada Humboldt River Basin Survey, U.S.D.A., 1966*.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

The "Pony Express," as it was called, operated only from April 3, 1860 to October 28, 1861, and it continued Chorpenning's construction of stage stops, several of which were built in the vicinity of Monitor Valley.⁴⁸

A Pony Express station was built at Simpson Park in the spring of 1860, apparently near where Simpson had camped on May 27, the previous year. It was quickly beset with problems, and the Simpson Park Station was attacked and burnt on May 20, 1860, presumably by local Indians. As part of his western travels, the British scholar, explorer, and erstwhile anthropologist, Sir Richard Burton stopped at the Simpson Park station on October 13 of that year, noting that the station house had already been rebuilt: "A hideous Pa-Uta and surly Shoshone, whom I sketched, loitered about the station. They were dressed in the usual rabbitskin cape, and carried little horn bows, with which they missed small marks at fifteen paces".⁴⁹ The station was probably also used by the Overland Mail and Stage Line until 1862 or 1863, when the run was changed to stop in Austin.

Another Pony Express station was established further east at Dry Creek, the site of Simpson's camp of May 26, 1859. Located at the head of Monitor Valley, the Dry Creek station was one of the last to be constructed. When the Simpson Park station was raided, Pony Express carrier William Streeper traveled there to investigate. On his return to Dry Creek, he found the scalped and mutilated body of Ralph Rosier, the station keeper.⁵⁰ By this time Si McCandless, a white man married to a Paiute, was operating a trading post in Monitor Valley, just across the road from the Dry Creek Pony Express station. According to McCandless,

⁴⁸ For a first-rate example of how documentary and archaeological evidence can be combined, see Donald L. Hardesty, *The Pony Express in Central Nevada*, cited above, which deals with two central Nevada Great Basin Pony Express Stations.

⁴⁹ Richard Burton, *The City of the Saints, and Across the Rocky Mountains to California* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1862). Burton's brief visit to central Nevada might be termed the first anthropological study of the area. Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890) was one of the greatest British travelers of the nineteenth century, writing more than fifty books describing his journeys. He lived in India for seven years, and became proficient in five of the Indian vernaculars, as well as in Persian and Arabic. He achieved worldwide recognition for his accounts of the pilgrimages to Medina and Mecca in 1853, and later participated in expeditions which attempted to find the source of the Nile, discovering Lake Tanganyika, exploring the Gold Coast, Dahomey, and Benin.

Burton visited the United States only briefly, describing his experiences in *The City of Saints*. Unlike his predecessors Simpson and Frémont, his international travels fostered a more cross-cultural perspective, although his observations were by no means value-free. Burton was equally interested in observing white frontier life in the Americas, especially among the Mormons, and it is this interest which enlivens his accounts of experiences in the central Great Basin.

⁵⁰ Raymond W. Settle and Mary Lund Settle, *Saddles and Spurs: The Pony Express Saga* (Harrisburg: The Stackpole Co., 1955).

some of his wife's relatives may have been involved with the unpleasantries at Simpson's Park and Dry Creek.⁵¹ It has been estimated that the 1860 hostilities cost the Pony Express about \$75,000, and may have contributed to the financial failure of the enterprise.⁵²

Unpleasantries occurred on both sides in those early days in Monitor Valley. C.W. Brewer, a soldier who traveled the Pony Express route in the summer of 1860 wrote:

The Pony Express & Mail Route is well stocked with Brigham's Boys who themselves have excited the Indian troubles. At Dry Creek one of them shot down an Indian ruthlessly and in cold blood saying he would rather shoot a man than a dog.⁵³

Richard Burton also reported on his stay at Dry Creek on October 11, 1860:

...we found the station on a grassy bench at the foot of low rolling hills. It was a mere shell, with a substantial stone corral behind, and the inmates were speculating upon the possibility of roofing themselves in before the winter. Water is found in tolerable quantities below the station, but the place deserved its name, "Dry Creek".⁵⁴

Burton also visited the graves of those killed in the May uprising.

The Grubbs Well station was situated to the east, in the northern end of Monitor Valley proper. Few accounts exist, but it was apparently in operation as early as August, 1861; it seems likely that this station was initially constructed for use in Butterfield's Overland Mail and Stage Express, and only incidentally used by the Pony Express.⁵⁵

The Roberts Creek station was constructed at the spot of Simpson's May 21-22 camp, where Monitor and Antelope Valleys join to form Kobah Valley. It was constructed in the spring of 1860, being one of the initial stops for the Pony Express. As at nearby stations, conflicts quickly arose between the Shoshone and the whites. In fact, on the second trip of the Pony Express, the rider was delayed for six hours at Roberts Creek because the horses had been driven off by local Indians. Hostilities continued through May and June.

Richard Burton visited the Roberts Creek station on October 10, 1860, and made the following characteristic comments:

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Glenn D. Bradley, *The Story of the Pony Express* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1913), p. 174.

⁵³ Cited in Dorothy Mason, *The Pony Express in Nevada* (Reno: Harrah's Club, 1976), p. 30.

⁵⁴ Burton, *City of the Saints*, p. 483.

⁵⁵ Mason, *The Pony Express in Nevada*, p. 32.

From the hills rose the smokes of Indian fires: the lands belong to the Tusawichya or White Knives, a band of the Shoshones under an independent chief. This depression is known to the Yutas as Sheawit, or Willow Creek. . .

About the station loitered several Indians of the White-Knife tribe, which boasts. . . never to have stained its weapons with the blood of a white man. They may be a respectable race, but they are an ugly: they resembled the Diggers, and the children are not a little like juvenile baboons. The dress is the usual medley of rags and rabbit furs: they were streaked with vermilion; and their hair. . . was fastened into a frontal pigtail, to prevent it falling into the eyes. . . Mose Wright [a rider for the Pony Express] described the Indian arrow poison. The rattlesnake. . . is caught with a forked stick planted over its neck, and is allowed to fix its fangs in an antelope's liver. The meat, which turns green, is carried upon a skewer when wanted for use: the flint head of an arrow, made purposely to break in the wound, is thrust into the poison, and when withdrawn is covered with a thin coat of glue. Ammonia is considered a cure for it, and the Indians treat snake bites with actual cautery. . .⁵⁶

The winter of 1861 was apparently a difficult one for the Shoshone, and Pony Express station keepers occasionally supplied them with food. The *Salt Lake City Deseret News* (Feb. 20, 1861) reported that the snow was very deep in the vicinity of the Roberts Creek station, and that the Indians were "in a destitute and starving condition. One Indian was recently found dead within a half mile of the station, who had perished of cold and starvation while on his way there for food. Another had fallen down nearby from exhaustion, badly frozen, who was seen taken to the station and resuscitated before it was too late to save his life." After the Pony Express ceased operation on October 28, 1861, the Roberts Creek station continued to operate as an Overland Stage station until 1869.

The Silver Boom

Myron Angel has suggested that prior to 1862 "the overland mail created all the civilized life in the central and eastern part of the Territory of Nevada".⁵⁷ But the character of the central Great Basin changed almost overnight when William Talcott discovered silver in Pony Canyon. Talcott, a former Pony Express rider, was working at the time hauling wood for the Overland Stage station at Jacob's Well, in the Reese River Valley.⁵⁸ The silver ore was quickly assayed in Virginia City and proved to be extremely rich. Word spread rapidly and the Reese River Mining District was established on May 10, 1862. The response to

⁵⁶ Burton, *City of the Saints*, pp. 481-482.

⁵⁷ Angel, *History of Nevada*, p. 461.

⁵⁸ Russell R. Elliott, *History of Nevada* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), p. 101.

the new boom was so great that by fall the territorial legislature was forced to create a new county, named Lander, from the eastern portions of Humboldt and Churchill counties. The original county seat was established at Jacob's Well (Jacobsville), but Austin rapidly won the contest for survival among the small rival communities and the county seat was officially moved there on September 21, 1863.⁵⁹

The area reached its maximum population of 5000 to 6000 in the late 1860s.⁶⁰ The silver ore in Austin had been overrated and the production rate for the 1860s and 1870s was unimpressive. But Austin's true influence came not from actual silver ore production, but rather from its role as a "mother camp" to many discoveries in eastern Nevada.⁶¹

One of these ancillary booms occurred in the Toiyabe Range to the south of Austin. Nye County was established to accommodate this mining activity to the south, and Ione became the first county seat. But as prospecting continued, it became clear that the greatest potential for wealth, business, and population lay further east. In May 1867, the Nye County seat was moved to Belmont, a newly established community at the edge of Monitor Valley.

Located on an 8000 foot high plateau of the Toquima Range, Belmont had been long favored as an area of aboriginal settlement.⁶² The area offered a fortunate combination of abundant spring water and plentiful piñon-juniper woodland. Silver was first discovered there in October, 1865, allegedly by a local Shoshone.⁶³ Belmont grew to almost 1500 inhabitants in 1866-1867; and during a second boom from 1873-1874, it became the largest town in central Nevada and at its peak it sported a ten-stamp mill, five local sawmills, a bank, a school, a telegraph service, two newspapers, and dozens of small shops.

As settlers poured into mining settlements like Belmont, the outlying valleys were rapidly explored and homesteaded as well. As one might expect, the details of the actual white settlement of Monitor Valley are incomplete. We do know that the Nye County Assessor, writing from Ione on November 4, 1865, did not mention white

⁵⁹ The establishment of Austin is discussed in detail by Rodney Hendrickson Smith, "Austin, Nevada 1862-1881" (M.A. thesis, University of Nevada, Reno, 1963); see also Buster L. King, "The History of Lander County", (M.A. thesis, University of Nevada, Reno, 1954).

⁶⁰ Victor Goodwin, Appendix II, Section I, Historical Information, *Water and Related Land Resources, Humboldt River Basin, Nevada: Reese River Sub-Basin* (Report No. 8), U.S. Department of Agriculture (1964), p. 6; see also Angel, *History of Nevada*, pp. 461-469.

⁶¹ Russell R. Elliott, *History of Nevada* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973) p. 102.

⁶² See Steward, "Basin-Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Groups," p. 110; and also Hoffman, "Miscellaneous Observations on Indians."

⁶³ Angel, *History of Nevada*, p. 519.

settlement in Monitor Valley. But one year later, on November 14, 1866, explicit reference was made to agricultural interests in the Monitor Valley area.

Myron Angel, who lived in Austin during this time, claims that the first known white settlement in Monitor Valley took place in 1866 by Jacob and Samuel Stainenger.⁶⁴ Angel further reports that George and Thomas Andrews soon settled near the Stainengers and, in an ensuing confrontation, Thomas Andrews was killed by one of the Stainenger brothers. The *Territorial Enterprise* of January 22, 1867 carried a lengthy account of the shootout, reporting that "if Mark Twain had had as many homicides to record as have occurred [in Nye County] within the last few months, he would not have been under the necessity of inventing the cruel murder of Dutch Nick's, wherewith he created a sensation, and shocked the moral sense of many readers of the ENTERPRISE". According to this account, the Stainenger brothers took up two quarter sections on Mosquito Creek sometime during the summer of 1866. After setting up several boundary stakes, they traveled to Austin for provisions, intending to return as soon as possible to improve their ranch and to cut the native hay growing nearby. Apparently there was already great competition for good farm land, because when one of the Stainenger brothers returned from Austin, he found that the Andrews brothers had taken over their land and were in the process of cutting the hay. According to the *Enterprise* story, the Andrews brothers had already claimed the quarter sections entitled to them, and the new claim was made "for a friend of theirs who lived in Austin." Unable to get the Andrews brothers to give up the land, the Stainengers took possession of an adjoining tract of land "which was not considered to have much value, where they have resided ever since."

The actual shootout occurred in a dispute over the fenceline separating the Stainenger and Andrews ranches. Thomas Andrews died instantly from two shots in the back, and George Andrews was severely wounded with a buckshot immediately below the eye. No arrests were made over the incident, "the community looking on it as a free fight, in which it had no interest." The incident points up not only the historical details of the earliest settlement of Monitor Valley, but also underscores the high value placed on obtaining rights to water and choice agricultural land located near mining settlements like Belmont.

A minor mystery remains regarding the actual naming of Monitor Valley. Local tradition recounts that the valley was named for a distinctive rock formation which closely resembles the famed Civil War

⁶⁴ Also spelled Staininger and Stinger. See Angel, *History of Nevada*, p. 515.

naval vessel. Despite a search for the relevant historical documents, we could find no verification for this suggestion. We do know that both Monitor Valley and Monitor Range were unnamed in 1845, when John C. Frémont passed through the neighboring Big Smoky Valley. Frémont's map showed Monitor Valley as simply "unexplored." Captain Simpson's map, documenting his crossing in 1859, primarily adopted native Shoshone terms, and Monitor Valley remained unnamed.

The ironclad warship the U.S.S. *Monitor* was commissioned in 1861, fought its historic battle with the *Merrimac* in March, 1862, and sank in a hurricane off the Carolina coast on December 31 of that same year. The local western newspapers of the time, such as the *Reese River Reveille*, carried whatever news was available from the eastern battle-front and it is probable that Monitor Valley was named by someone familiar with the famous warship.

Apparently the earliest published reference to Monitor Valley is in an editorial in the *Reese River Reveille* on December 3, 1864:

For several months past the Indians of the country southeast of Smoky Valley have borne quite an enimical [sic] attitude, and occasionally made raids upon the isolated ranches in the neighborhood of the Boiling Springs, Twin Rivers [both in Big Smoky Valley] and Monitor Valley. . . They do not steal because they are in need of provisions, for they commenced their robberies last spring when they still had large supplies of pine nuts and other food in plenty . . . The Indians who have committed the depredations are from the third range of mountains southeast of Smoky Valley, a distance of some forty or fifty miles. Their section is entirely uninhabited by the white man.

Five months later, the *Reese River Reveille* of May 5, 1865 carried a front page story describing a band of 500 Indians massing in Monitor Valley, allegedly to attack Austin. Apparently the name was not widely known at the time, since the editor felt obliged to add that Monitor Valley "is situated south of the Smoky range."

A map is also available which records an early usage of the term "Monitor Valley." This map, on file at the Nevada Historical Society in Reno, is entitled "Map of the Reese River Mining District, showing exploration of D.E. Buel in 1864 and Joseph Todd in 1865," and includes the names "Smoky Valley," "Smoky Range",⁶⁵ "Monitor Valley," and "Monitor Mts." Published by the D. Van Nostrand Company of New York City, it contains a number of dated "endorsements": B.J. Burns (Editor of the *Reese River Reveille*, October 10, 1865), J.S. Slauson (Mayor of Austin, October 5, 1865) and M.J. Noyes (Lander County

⁶⁵ Now called the Toquima Range.

Supervisor, September 30, 1865). The map shows Monitor Valley as an empty and largely uninhabited space.

Belmont was the only significant population center in the area, and this small mountain community conditioned white settlement of the entire Monitor Valley. Because of its isolation, transportation became a major problem; not only was it necessary to freight out the silver ore but also tons of incoming supplies, lumber, and technical equipment were required to support the local population.

Additional information regarding early transportation systems in Monitor Valley is available in a manuscript collection housed at the Nevada Historical Society in Reno. The manuscripts consist of correspondence and reports written between 1864 and 1869 by a New York-based mining engineering and consulting firm.⁶⁶ This firm, established by Rossitor W. Raymond and Dr. Justus Adelburg in 1864, expanded to include a western branch in Austin a year later. Included in the collection is a series of over thirty-five, written (some in German) by Carl Stetefeldt, which details claims, ledges, and mines throughout the Reese River Mining District and other areas in Central Nevada.⁶⁷

Writing in November, 1866, Carl Stetefeldt described the major toll road connecting Belmont with Austin. This road began in Austin, followed the Overland Trail, then turned down the Smoky Valley, and passed through Clipper Gap in the Toquima Range. After passing the site of an abandoned sawmill at Clipper Gap, the road narrowed considerably:

at the summit . . . there is a steep ascent which, however, could be reduced if the trail will be enlarged to a road. Four miles beyond the summit, one reaches Stoneburger Ranch, a considerable piece of fertile land situated in a wide canyon . . . from the ranch to Austin you have to figure on 40 miles. From the ranch to Hot Creek there is the Stoneburger Toll Road, on which loaded wagons can cross.

This toll road continued east, across the Monitor, Hot Creek, and Reveille Ranges; a southward fork led down Monitor Valley and ultimately to Belmont.

This important road was further described in the *Reese River Reveille* of November 19, 1866:

⁶⁶ The Adelberg and Raymond collection is briefly described in "NHS Archival Acquisitions," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring, 1980) pp. 52-53.

⁶⁷ Carl A. Stetefeldt, "Report on the Mineral Deposits in the Reveille Mining District, Nye County," Manuscript MS. NC376 on file at the Nevada State Historical Society, Reno (1866), original in German.

We are informed by Mr. A. Stonebarger that he will keep his road open for travel as far as Hot Creek during the coming winter. Working parties will be kept upon it constantly, and should there be at any time a fall of snow sufficient to obstruct the passage of teams, a force will be at hand to accomplish its immediate removal. Mr. Stonebarger is also engaged in building a substantial hotel and barn for the accomodation of the travelling public, at his ranch in Clipper Gap, upon the eastern slope of the Smoky Valley range of mountains, about thirty miles distant from Austin. These are movements in the right direction, as this road . . . is destined to become one of the most important thoroughfares of the State, and stations along its line where teamsters and travelers can be accomodated will be much needed, and we doubt not, most liberally patronized. Teamsters can already procure forage at several points upon the road beyond Stonebarger's ranch, and stations are in course of construction at convenient intervals. The first place at which hay can be obtained after leaving Stonebarger's is Warm Springs, in Monitor Valley [probably at Diana's Punch Bowl or perhaps near Potts Ranch].

The recently published diary of Martha Gally also discusses a crossing over the Stonebarger Toll Road, enroute from Austin to Hot Creek.⁶⁸ After spending the night at an abandoned wood chopper's cabin near Clipper Gap, the Gally family traveled along Stonebarger's road into Monitor Valley on December 15, 1866. In her diary, Mrs. Gally observed with some pride that she "was the first white woman who had ever seen that valley which is called Monitor."⁶⁹ Accounts such as these make it clear that Monitor Valley was settled both from the north (as a wagon route from Austin) and simultaneously from the south, as a direct outgrowth of booming Belmont.

Other toll roads were quickly established linking Belmont with Austin, and the relative merits of these routes were commonly evaluated and debated in the newspapers of the time.⁷⁰ One could travel west from Belmont by means of the Jefferson Toll Road, a twelve mile route which crossed Jefferson summit and ultimately reached northward to Austin.⁷¹ This route also allowed coaches, sleighs, and buckboards to carry mail and passengers into Big Smoky Valley. The Alatcona Toll Road progressed eastward from Belmont across the Hot Creek Range, and another toll road also crossed Pryor Pass, to the southeast. These roads were privately owned and maintained, a tax being paid to Nye County.

⁶⁸ Marvin Lewis, *Martha and the Doctor: A Frontier Family in Central Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1977) pp. 87-88. "Stonebarger" is evidently the correct spelling, although some sources have variants. The 1875 Nevada State Census, for example, has it as "Stoneberger."

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁷⁰ See, e.g., *Territoria! Enterprise*, June 20, 1868.

⁷¹ *Belmont Courier*, March 14, 1874.

Stage service was available connecting Belmont with Austin almost from the initial settlement of Monitor Valley, late in 1866. An advertisement appearing in the *Territorial Enterprise* of February 19, 1867 noted that the stage ran three times weekly, took fifteen hours to travel the distance, and charged \$15. The stage carried only passengers and Wells Fargo express matter. A "Fast Freight Line" operated twice weekly between Austin and Belmont. On May 1, 1868, stage service was scheduled on a daily basis from Austin, with the route passing through the center of Monitor Valley.⁷²

The establishment of Belmont as a major mining community fostered rapid settlement in the southern Monitor Valley, primarily as an agricultural hinterland. The settlement pattern during the 1860s was in marked contrast to the aboriginal usage of the land. In prehistoric times, people lived primarily in the uplands, particularly on ridges and near high altitude springs. Although lowland springs and streams were exploited prehistorically, aboriginal settlements were situated at some distance from the actual water source, presumably to allow animals to water.⁷³ By contrast, the historic white settlers homesteaded these lowland water sources first, using the surrounding undeeded lands for grazing purposes. By 1870 fifteen homesteads appeared on the Nye County tax rolls, totaling 1680 deeded acres. These early settlements in Monitor Valley were, almost without exception, located on the flats near the mouth of one of the side canyons (Meadow Canyon, Pine Creek, Mosquito Creek, Pryors Canyon), as well as ranches near Stoneberger and Butler Canyons, to the north in Lander County.

In direct response to the economic development of Belmont, settlements continued to proliferate in Monitor Valley during the 1870s. During this period, the local papers carried repeated accounts extolling the agricultural productivity of the various Monitor Valley ranches. Meadow Canyon, for instance, produced an abundant harvest of native hay, grain, potatoes, Jerusalem artichokes, and onions, all of which were shipped to Belmont for sale.⁷⁴ Approximately 3000 head of cattle and a large number of sheep were grazing in Monitor Valley in the late 1870s between the Stoneberger Ranch in the north and the Sampson Ranch, located about eighteen miles northeast of Belmont.⁷⁵

⁷² Lucille Rae Berg, "History of the South Central Part of Nevada, (M.A. thesis, University of Nevada, Reno 1941) p. 22.

⁷³ See David Hurst Thomas and Robert L. Bettinger, "Prehistoric Piñon Ecotone Settlements of the Upper Reese River Valley, Central Nevada," *American Museum of Natural History Anthropological Papers*, Vol. 53, part 3 (1976) pp. 263-266.

⁷⁴ *Belmont Courier*, July 13, 1878.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, November 10, 1878.

The Nye County 1880 census records a total of twenty eight residents in Monitor Valley. Occupations were listed as rancher, farmer, miner, stage driver, laborer, and housekeeper. Interestingly enough, less than half of the twenty adults living in Monitor Valley at this time were born in the United States; countries of origin included Ireland, Italy, Sweden, England, Canada, and Germany.

A number of small-scale irrigation projects were initiated to improve the agricultural and grazing potential of the area. The 1870 Nye County Tax Rolls show, for instance, that water from Pine Creek was diverted by irrigation ditches and supplied to at least three ranches.

Monitor Valley agriculture supplemented the bland mining town diet with a number of welcome additions. Sage grouse from the Monitor Valley foothills and wild ducks from Mosquito and Barley Creeks were occasionally offered for sale in Belmont,⁷⁶ and turkeys were imported from the Corcoran Canyon Ranch for sale over the Christmas holidays in 1879.⁷⁷ By this time, a number of Monitor Valley farmers were spending their winters in Belmont.⁷⁸

Timber, always in short supply, was necessary not only for construction in Belmont, but also for fuel at the silver stamp mills, mine shoring, hoisting, and fenceposts. Sawmills were soon established throughout the Toquima Range, and local stands of piñon and juniper were rapidly exhausted.⁷⁹ One sawmill was constructed at Clipper Gap, sometime in the mid-1860s, and was moved further up into the mountains as the available timber was exhausted. Another sawmill, about three miles south of the Stonebarger Ranch, was built about this same time and produced some 400,000 feet of timber annually.⁸⁰

Sawmills such as these often used portable equipment, particularly at the higher elevations where limberpine was being timbered. One such portable sawmill was established in 1871 by Mr. J. Huey on Mt. Jefferson, at the head of Pine Creek (Nye County Tax Rolls, 1871). A wagon road was then constructed to allow the sawed logs to be transported for sale in Belmont.⁸¹ This entire sawmill was moved five years later from Mt. Jefferson to the Reese River Valley.⁸² Operations such as these generally felled and milled the timber during the summer

⁷⁶ *Silver Bend Reporter*, November 16, 1867; *Belmont Courier*, December 12, 1874.

⁷⁷ *Belmont Courier*, December 27, 1879.

⁷⁸ *Belmont Courier*, February 1, 1879.

⁷⁹ See David Hurst Thomas, "Historic and Prehistoric Landuse Patterns at Reese River," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (1971) pp. 2-9.

⁸⁰ Stetefeldt, "Report on the Mineral Deposits in the Reveille Mining District".

⁸¹ *Belmont Courier*, November 22, 1874.

⁸² *Belmont Courier*, January 15, 1879.

and fall, and then transported the logs downhill on large sleds during the winter.⁸³

The Belmont mines and mill flourished for about two decades, producing high grade silver chloride ore. But in the mid-1880s, the combination of depressed silver prices, added costs of pumping from greater depths, and a decrease in the silver content of the ore created a major decline in the Belmont mining activities.⁸⁴ Belmont gradually lost both economic potential and population, and the county seat was moved to Tonopah in 1905. A brief redevelopment occurred in 1915 when the Monitor-Belmont Company built an electrically-powered flotation mill to treat the old mine tailings, but the mill operated only two years.⁸⁵

Although Belmont was Monitor Valley's major population center, a number of smaller mining communities were established in the area. Silver was discovered in East Northumberland Canyon in 1866. The ledge was nine feet thick and contained very rich ore; by December of that year a 180 foot tunnel had been completed. A small village, named Learville, quickly arose on the slopes overlooking Monitor Valley. A ten-stamp mill was installed and the operation continued until 1870.⁸⁶ Another mining operation, centering on the Monitor and Blue Bell mines, opened in 1879 and continued until 1891.⁸⁷

Silver mining continued sporadically until gold was discovered in 1936, and a complete mining operation was begun by the Northumberland Mining Company. Established at Northumberland summit, it employed seventy men, and included an assay office and shops.⁸⁸ The large mill was moved to Northumberland from the played-out mines of the Weepah district. Major gold production ceased in 1942, but currently there is talk of reopening a large open pit gold mine in the early 1980s; East Northumberland Canyon is at the present time the site of two major barite mines.

The town of Jefferson, located in the Toquima Mountains about 12 miles north of Belmont, was established when silver was discovered in

⁸³ As part of the archaeological reconnaissance on Mt. Jefferson in 1978, we had occasion to inspect the ruins of Huey's sawmill, located at an elevation of about 10,200 feet. A massive pile of mill ends is still present and large stumps of limberpine are all about; some of these trees reached four feet in diameter. One of the wrecked log sleds can still be seen near the South Pine Creek trail.

⁸⁴ Francis Church Lincoln, *Mining Districts and Mineral Resources of Nevada* (Reno: Nevada Newsletter Publishing Company, 1923); Victor E. Kral, "Mineral Resources of Nye County, Nevada," *University of Nevada Bulletin*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (1951) p. 19.

⁸⁵ Kral, "Mineral Resources of Nye County."

⁸⁶ *Silver Bend Reporter*, May 4, December 7, 1867; July 15, 1868; see also Lincoln, *Mining Districts and Mineral Resources*.

⁸⁷ Kral, "Mineral Resources of Nye County", p. 135.

⁸⁸ *Reno Evening Gazette*, July 5, 1941; see also Berg, "History of the South Central Part of Nevada."

1873; a toll road connected Jefferson to Belmont.⁸⁹ At its peak the town operated two stamp mills and had a population of 800. Both mills ceased operation by 1878, and only four miners were living in Jefferson in 1881.⁹⁰

With the exception of these brief flurries of silver and gold mining, the white settlement of the Monitor Valley has focused on ranching and some limited farming. The population declined steadily during the late nineteenth century, a trend which has continued. The tendency in the present century has been toward the combination of several smaller ranches into large livestock operations. Currently two large ranching outfits control lands which had been originally homesteaded and farmed by literally dozens of small, independent ranchers during the nineteenth century. Indeed, the permanent population of Monitor Valley, including Belmont, is presently far below 100 individuals, and although ethnographic population figures are sketchy, it is probably safe to conclude that the contemporary population density of the area is less than half that of the aboriginal population.⁹¹

⁸⁹ *Belmont Courier*, March 4, 1875.

⁹⁰ Angel, *History of Nevada*, p. 525.

⁹¹ During our archaeological research in Monitor Valley (which lasted from 1970 through 1979), the entire livestock industry of Monitor Valley was operated by fewer than one dozen full-time employees.