



Genoa in the 1870s. The Raycroft Hotel is far left and their stables the next building down. You can also see the Gilman Hotel, Odd Fellows building and the court house.

Chapter 2: Douglas County - Genoa and vicinity

Genoa, the county seat of Douglas County, is among the oldest settlements of Nevada. The locality first attracted the attention of some Mormons in 1848, who were en route to the gold diggings in California from Salt Lake City, and during that and the succeeding years a few families settled here. Not until 1850, however, did it assume the title of Mormon Station, by which it was so well and widely known for many years afterwards. As a trading and recruiting place for the immense emigration which was then flocking toward California from the East, its situation was admirable, while its pastoral advantages were great, and the adaptability of the soil to the culture of grain and the hardy vegetables had been proven.

THE FIRST TRADERS. Principal among the Mormon settlers of Genoa was Col. John Reese, after whom Reese River was subsequently called, a man of robust energy and much enterprise. He started the first trading-post, and also fed the hungry emigrants for a consideration. But he did not stop at these. He put up a blacksmith shop and shod their animals and repaired their wagons, and later erected a flouring and saw-mill.

About eighteen miles south-east of Genoa, in the lower hills of the Pine Nut Mountains, in the fall of 1859, there were found such mineral "indications" as to create considerable excitement among the residents, and many claims were located. The following year, however, more encouraging "prospects" were obtained higher up in the same range, which caused an abandonment of the first-named discoveries, and the immediate formation of Eagle Mining District.





Our road yesterday was pretty much the same. While staying here, a waggon drawn with 4 horses, and with others to relieve them, passed by us. It belonged to a merchant that had in the summer taken some goods to be disposed of in Utah, whom managed, as he told some of the brethren, to make a pretty good business of it. He carried passengers also, of which he had 3, now returning from the Washoe Diggings, having made very good time of it. One of them had a nugget upwards of 1 lb. weight, and numerous smaller ones.

William Ajax, 1861



Raycroft Hotel, Genoa, Nevada, 1882

Courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society

THE PIONEER HOTELS. After Colonel Reese, the first hotel was kept by a man named Merkly, who, after awhile, sold out to George W. Brubaker, and he, in turn, disposed of the establishment to a man named Raycroft. Mr. Brubaker subsequently erected the building in the north end of town known as Rice's Hotel.

EARLY CONDITION OF GENOA. At the time of the discovery of silver, there had congregated in the immediate vicinity of Genoa about 200 people, the most of whom had been attracted there by the agricultural and grazing advantages which the locality possessed. Several hundred people were engaged in gold mining to the southward at what was then called the Walker River, or Mono, mines, who, to a considerable extent, made Genoa their supplying point. Genoa also had a newspaper; it was connected with the outside world by a telegraph line, and the overland stages passed through. A grist and saw-mill were in operation. Two stores supplied the residents with all necessities in the grocery and clothing lines, and it was the leading town of western Utah. Situated close to an abundant supply of pine timber, from which lumber, shingles, etc., could be cheaply manufactured, building was comparatively easy. During the immense emigration of former years it had been the favorite recruiting place for people en route to California; and many here lingered for a few days or weeks to rest their cattle, and lay in stores preparatory to surmounting the last, then formidable, barrier—the Sierra Nevada Mountains—which barred the pathway to the Mecca of their weary pilgrimage from the far East; and it bid fair to become an important frontier town,

which would be able to nourish upon its own natural resources. The discovery of the famous silver mine a few miles to the eastward of this prospective inland city, however, effected an entire change of circumstances, and, consequently, a change of futurity awaited it—a different history than that anticipated by its early residents.

MAILS, STAGES AND EXPRESS.

Colonel A. Woodard and Mr. Chorpening had associated themselves together, and under the firm name of A. Woodard & Co. made a contract with the United States in 1851 to carry the mail from Sacramento, in California, to Salt Lake City. This route, commencing at Sacramento, ran via Folsom to Placerville, in El Dorado County; thence over the Sierra by the old emigrant road, through Strawberry and Hope Valleys into Carson Valley, through Genoa, Carson City, Dayton, Ragtown, and thence across the Forty-Mile Desert to the Humboldt River, near the Humboldt Sink; then following the old emigrant route east along the Humboldt River to what is now Stonehouse Station, on the Central Pacific Railroad, near which it left the river and, turning to the southeast, took the “Hasting’s Cutoff” to Salt Lake City. The entire length of this route was 750 miles. The mail was packed on the back of a mule, and the trip was made once a month each way.

Genoa Stage Lines crowded with 15 rather dapper looking men onto its open “Jupiter” wagon.



Steve Crandell Collection

California Oct. 20th 1849

Beloved Companion

One strange peculiarity prevails here for modern times. Every man is allowed as many wives as he can support. Bah! (with more rather have the undivided affections of my one than share it)

I have not yet been to the Post Office to enquire for that letter, for I do not expect it is there The U.S. mail is expected in about two weeks, which will just be in time to leave me without one solitary word of information from you until I get away through to California. But I hope there to find enough to compensate for all. And all I can do is to wish you in the cheerful enjoyment of Heavens richest blessings Remember me to all the Family, and enquiring Friends

And believe me your devoted and Affectionate Husband

E. A. Spooner

P.S. Lost my gold pen and have to write with a crow quill, alias Turkey Buzzards The prospects for obtaining gold are not as good as we had

