



Genoa



In 1851, a man from Salt Lake City named John Reese came to northern Nevada with the goal of establishing a trading post for settlers and pioneers headed west during the California Gold Rush. He had heard of the fertile Carson Valley at the base of the Sierra Nevada mountains and realized its potential as a natural stop for desert-weary travelers from the east. Reese settled on a spot at the western edge of the valley in the very shadow of the mountains, and the first permanent buildings in Nevada were constructed. The trading post was known as Mormon Station, as Reese and most of his party were Mormon. Not before long, Reese's Mormon Station grew into a successful business venture, and settlers began arriving in the Carson Valley, claiming land, and planting crops in the valley's rich soils.

At this time Nevada was not a state, but part of the vast Utah Territory. In 1854, the territorial government created Carson County, and in 1855, sent a delegation to Mormon Station led by elder Orson Hyde to establish a local government. Meanwhile, Reese expanded his business and land holdings, and had a saw mill and grist mill built on his property. He built a house next to his grist mill that still stands today, and eventually came to be known as The Pink House. When Hyde and his men came to Mormon Station, they met at Reese's house and designated the town as the county seat. Furthermore, Hyde is credited with changing the name of Mormon Station to Genoa that same year. As story has it, his admiration of Christopher Columbus led him to name the town after Columbus's birthplace.

Genoa continued to serve as county seat when Nevada became a state in 1864, this time of the newly formed Douglas County. The town enjoyed prosperity through the end of the 19th century, complete with a courthouse, churches, hotels, blacksmiths, a barbershop, and of course, a saloon or two. Gold kept pulling people west, and the discovery of the Comstock Lode in nearby Virginia City in 1859 only served to boost the population and make Genoa a center of commerce. Genoa quieted down though at the turn of the century. The Virginia and Truckee Railroad was built several miles east of town, as was the road that would eventually become U.S. Route 395. The nearby town of Minden was established in 1905 to serve these two new modes of transportation, and the center of power began to shift away from Genoa.

Genoa's importance as a center of commerce and government was further diminished when disaster struck in 1910 in the form of fire. An inmate at the local poorhouse accidentally set his mattress on fire trying to get rid of bed bugs. The fire spread and burned a large section of town and all but destroyed the courthouse. Several businesses were also burned. The town eventually rebuilt and retained its beauty and serene atmosphere, but the fire proved to be the final blow to Genoa's status as county seat. The county seat was moved in 1916 to Minden, along with many of the damaged businesses. Through the end of the 20th century and up to this day, Genoa has remained a very small town, still a few miles off the highway and tucked in the shadow of the Sierras. With an official population of 939, the town is a tight-knit community that maintains its charm and preserves its past. Events like the Cowboy Festival in May and Candy Dance in September attract thousands of visitors and showcase Genoa's rich heritage. Old houses, including The Pink House, dot the landscape. The oldest bar in Nevada still operates on Main Street, and cattle graze on the ranches that surround the town.

