



## Before it was the Nevada Test Site

### Introduction

Peter Skene Ogden, an Englishman on a Hudson Bay Company trapping expedition down the Humboldt River, was the first white man to enter northern Nevada. It was 1826, and Nevada was the last state to be explored by the white man. Until that time, Nevada had been inhabited by Paleo-Indians and migrants. During the same year, the famous trapper-explorer Jedediah Smith crossed the southern tip of the state on his way to California. The Old Spanish Trail, Nevada's oldest, was first traveled by trappers and missionaries as early as 1829. Trail blazing was active during the 1840's with the establishment of the Bidwell Trail across northern Nevada in 1841, explorations by John C. Fremont from 1843 through 1845, and the ill-fated Donner Party in 1846. Despite a considerable amount of travel across the state, it was not until 1849 that the first permanent settlement was established by a group of Mormons at Mormon Station, later to be called Reese's Station, renamed Genoa in 1856, a name it still retains.



*Evidence of early explorers into the area that is now the Nevada National Security Site, petroglyphs may be found in several areas of the site.*

### First Evidence of White Explorers

The first evidence of the white man at the Nevada Test Site, now known as the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS), was a stone block inscribed with the name F.O. Byor and the date 1847. The block was used in the construction of a fireplace, part of a stone cabin at Cane Springs. The stone was later moved to the Mackay School of Mines Museum at the University of Nevada, Reno. The origin of the stone, however, remains a mystery. Margaret Long, author of *The Shadow of the Arrow*, stated in her book that a number of legends are connected with the stone, one being that it was carved by a

member of the Mormon Battalion who might have wandered into the area in 1847. The Mormon Battalion of 500 men was formed during the Mexican War in 1846 to serve as a home guard for settlers in California. The unit left Brigham Young's winter quarters at Council Bluffs, Iowa and marched to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and then by way of Santa Fe and Albuquerque, New Mexico to Los Angeles, California where they arrived in January 1847. Part of the battalion traveled overland to meet Brigham Young's group which was moving westward toward Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847. This group could have well passed through the present Nevada National Security Site on their way east.

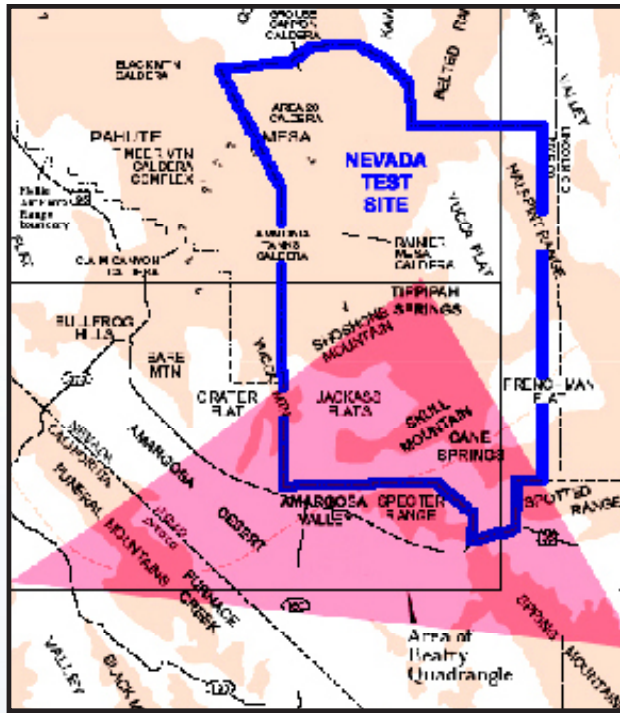
### Early Emigrants

The first recorded entry of white travelers into the present Nevada National Security Site was that of a group of emigrants to California in 1849. This group had broken off from a party led by Captain Jefferson Hunt in the neighborhood of Enterprise, Utah, after hearing rumors of a shorter route to



# Nevada National Security Site

California than that offered by the Old Spanish Trail. While Hunt headed southward over known territory, the splinter party plunged off into the unknown. A second split was made at Papoose Lake, a dry lake north of Indian Springs, where a group of wagons known as the Bennett-Arcane Party, decided on a southerly route. The remaining wagons, the Jayhawkers, followed a westward course to Tippihah Spring. There another split occurred. The Jayhawkers separated from the slower moving family of James Brier, with the Jayhawkers going south between Skull Mountain and Forty Mile Canyon. They crossed Tonopah Wash and entered Amargosa Valley east of the wash. The Briers entered Forty Mile Canyon, west of Tippihah Spring, and after many difficulties were forced to abandon their wagons. Continuing on foot, the Briers picked up the trail of the Jayhawker party and were reunited with them at Furnace Creek. The Bennett-Arcane party, led by William Lewis Manly, proceeded southwest from Papoose Lake to Cane Springs, at the base of Skull Mountain, and on into Death Valley. Nearly all of the emigrants reached California.



*Pioneers traversed through the highlighted area that is now the Nevada National Security Site and surrounding regions in 1849.*

Later movements into the Nevada National Security Site involved prospectors, ranchers, wild-horse hunters, and the establishment of a relay station for a freight line at Cane Springs. Improvements were made to produce better flows of water at the more important springs. Operating mines included the Horn Silver mine at the short-lived town of Wahmonie, that existed for about three months in 1928; the Climax tungsten mine at the north end of Yucca Flat, a cinnabar mine and retort on Mine Mountain, and rich galena deposits of the Groom Mine.

## Today

Today, the Nevada National Security Site is a national asset for supporting experimentation, testing, training, and demonstration for defense systems, and advanced high hazard operations. The site is the leader for rapidly designing, developing, and implementing the technological support required for experiments and tests of our national defense systems customers, something that F.O. Byor probably didn't fathom at the time he carved his initials into that stone in 1847.

For more information, contact:  
U.S. Department of Energy  
National Nuclear Security Administration  
Nevada Site Office  
Office of Public Affairs  
P.O. Box 98518  
Las Vegas, NV 89193-8518  
phone: 702-295-3521  
fax: 702-295-0154  
email: [nevada@nv.doe.gov](mailto:nevada@nv.doe.gov)  
<http://www.nv.energy.gov>

DOE/NV - - 713 - Rev 1  
August 2010

