

Origins of Idaho's County Names

Number 69

1968

ADA:	Ada Riggs, daughter of H. C. Riggs, a member of the legislature who got the county established.
ADAMS:	President John Adams.
BANNOCK:	Local Indian tribe.
BEAR LAKE:	Local natural feature.
BENEWAH:	A Coeur d'Alene Indian leader.
BINGHAM:	Henry H. Bingham, Pennsylvania Congressman and friend of Territorial Governor W. M. Bunn.
BLAINE:	James G. Blaine, U.S. Congressman from Maine and Republican candidate for president in 1884.
BOISE:	French word meaning, "wooded."
BONNER:	E. L. Bonner, who established Bonner's Ferry in 1864.
BONNEVILLE:	Captain B. L. E. Bonneville, Army officer, explorer, fur trader.
BOUNDARY:	Borders on Canada, Washington, and Montana.
BUTTE:	Local natural feature.
CAMAS:	An edible bulb, mainstay of many Indians' diet.
CANYON:	Local natural feature.

- CARIBOU:** Cariboo Mountain and mining area, named for Cariboo Fairchild, who prospected the Cariboo mining area just north of the county.
- CASSIA:** From a French word cajeux, meaning raft: a variation of Raft River.
- CLARK:** Sam Clark, an early settler.
- CLEARWATER:** For the river.
- CUSTER:** General George Armstrong Custer.
- ELMORE:** A quartz mine near Rocky Bar.
- FRANKLIN:** Franklin D. Richards, a Mormon apostle.
- FREMONT:** Explorer John C. Fremont.
- GEM:** From the nickname for Idaho, "Gem of the Mountains."
- OODING:** Frank R. Gooding, governor and U.S. senator from Idaho.
- IDAHO:** For the steamer Idaho, launched June 9, 1860, in the Snake River and used by miners during the Idaho gold rush.
- JEFFERSON:** President Thomas Jefferson.
- JEROME:** Jerome Hill, an investor in a local reclamation project.
- KOOTENAI:** Local Indian tribe.
- LATAH:** For Latah Creek.
- LEMHI:** Fort Lemhi, the LDS Salmon River Mission, named for King Limhi in the Book of Mormon.

LEWIS:	Meriwether Lewis.
LINCOLN:	President Abraham Lincoln.
MADISON:	President James Madison.
MINIDOKA:	For the first settlement in what is now the county; one of a series of Indian (or pseudo-Indian) names applied to railroad sidings along the Union Pacific. May mean spring" or "well" or "broad expanse."
NEZ PERCE:	Local Indian tribe.
ONEIDA:	Oneida, New York.
OWYHEE:	For the river mountains, and mining area explored in 1819-1820 by fur trappers from Owyhee (Hawaii).
PAYETTE:	Francois Payette, fur trader at Fort Boise.
POWER:	For the power plant at American Falls.
SHOSHONE:	Indian tribe (originally the county included mostly the Shoshoni Indian country, but boundary changes left no overlap between the original and the modern county.)
TETON:	For local mountains and valley.
TWIN FALLS:	For the irrigation tract and city, which were named for the falls.
VALLEY:	Long Valley, a natural feature.
WASHINGTON:	President George Washington.

Idaho State Historical Society • Idaho State Archives • 2205 Old Penitentiary Road • Boise, ID 83712
Phone: (208) 334-2620 • Fax: (208) 334-2626 • For more information, visit
www.history.idaho.gov

The ISHS reference series was produced over many years by a number of individuals, some of whom devoted more time to their topics than others. Reference series entries are not updated. The series is designed to be a starting point for research.