

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY REFERENCE SERIES

THE NAME "NAMPA"

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Contrary to what many of us thought, Nampa, Idaho, is not the only place in this world with this name.

There is a town in northern Alberta, Canada, named Nampa, with a population of 286. It was apparently named by Robert "Pa" Christian, who was supposed to have come from Nampa, Idaho. However, it appears he came from Iowa, and no evidence of any connection to Nampa, Idaho, has been found. The Canadians were told it was an Indian word for "the place," but what tribe of Indians is unknown. No documented information on the source of the name is available.

There is a town in Pike County, Kentucky--listed as having no population--named Nampa. The Kentucky Historical Society has no listing of the origin of the use of the name there. The Pike County Historical Society thinks it might have been named by John (Jeremiah) "Liver Eatin'" Johnson, early-day fur trapper, who apparently came from that area and, they thought, might have encountered Nampuh or "Big Foot" in his extensive travels. However, John Johnson was at least 30 or 40 years before the time of Bigfoot (if he ever even existed). Nampa, Kentucky, was a small post office that has been discontinued.

There is a village in Rovaniemi town, Lapland, Finland, named Nampa. Eeva Maria Narhi of the Onomastic Division of the Finnish Research Centre for Domestic Language tells me that there are also two lakes called Ala-Nampajarvi and Yla-Nampajarvi, an island called Nampasaari, and a hill Nampavaara in that area. All these names originate in the Samish (Lappish) language. Nambe or Nabbi means "a warm pleasant weather in winter." Nampa has also been taken as a surname in Lapland.

There is a mountain in the northwest corner of Nepal (31° N. latitude, 81° E. longitude) called Mount Nampa, part of the Api-Nampa group. It is 22,162 feet high (6,755 meters). There is a Nampa valley in the area that was first explored by an early British explorer named A. H. Savage Landor in 1899. He is described as being the "most extravagant and picturesque of travellers." The first mountaineer to examine the approaches of the Api-Nampa group was a Dr. Longstaff in 1905. The first actual climb was by John Tyson and W. H. Murray, both British mountain climbers, in 1953. No explanation has yet been found for the name in that area.

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