



**IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
REFERENCE SERIES**

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

CASSIA: mining area just north of the county. 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."

GOODING: 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.