

# ***THE FIRST RESIDENTS OF NORTHWEST NEVADA***

Of course, we are talking about **Native Americans** or as they are also referred to: **American Indians**.

This exhibit consists of images of the local **Native Americans** as they have been depicted on postcards of early Reno, Nevada. These postcards were very popular to both tourists and the local residents of European descent as they could send images of the Native Americans to their friends and relatives "back home." Despite their popularity, they are fairly scarce today in the marketplace. Unfortunately, many of the pictures used were not the most flattering poses or were designed to show that the natives were still very primitive. Captions on many of the cards are today considered to be pejorative by today's standards, but in recent discussions with local Native American officials, they have agreed that the postcards in this exhibit are acceptable to show the history of their people.

The earliest archeological records of occupation in the area, now known as Reno, date to 5,000 to 3,000 years before the present time. There is no way to determine the tribal connections of these early people to any of the local tribes.

The Washoe tribe is a small tribe which occupied the area when first contact with Americans occurred. The Washo (from washiu, 'person' in their own language) speak a language which is totally distinct from all other Western tribes. The Washoe made particularly beautiful baskets.

The Northern Paiute (sometimes Piute) tribe is a much larger tribe. They also resided in much of this area. Relations with the Washoe people, who were culturally and linguistically very different, were not usually peaceful. In an early war, the Paiute conquered the Washoe and forbade them thenceforth to own horses.

This exhibit contains Undivided Back Cards (UDB) produced prior to 1907, Divided Back Cards (DB) produced after 1907 and Real Photo Postcard (RPPC) which were produced after the 1920s.

## **WASHOE TRIBE**

The Washoe people were known for their fine and intricate basketry. Even today, many of the women of the tribe still make utilitarian woven products.



**Washoe basket Maker Marie Kizer** is a resident of the Dresslerville Washoe community in Carson Valley, Nevada. She is displaying a baby basket she made. The Washoe people continue to use baby baskets for their newborn children.

DB

Published by:

Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California.  
Contemporary card.





**Valhalla Exhibit - 1994 Festival  
dedication to Dat So La Lee**

One of the most famous of the Washoe basket makers was a woman named Dat So La Le (ca. 1829-1925), whose birth name was "Dabuda," meaning "Young Willow."

DB  
Published by:  
Washoe Tribe  
of Nevada and  
California

Washoe weavers split raw willow into three parts using teeth and hands. Willow rods and threads are kept wet to be flexible enough to make a circular design. An awl is also pictured here.

DB  
Published by:  
Washoe Tribe  
of Nevada and  
California



Both the Washoe and Paiute tribes lived in wikiups. These structures are formed with a frame of ached poles, most often wooden, which are covered with some sort of roofing materials. Details of construction vary with the culture and local availability of materials. Some of the roofing materials use include grass, bark, rushes, mats, reeds, hides or cloth.

The domed, round shape make it an ideal shelter for all kind of conditions. It was generally not portable and was abandoned when the tribe relocated.

DB  
 Publisher Unknown



Rather interesting caption showing the changing attitudes of the younger generation.

DB  
 Published by  
 Dennison News Co.



## PAIUTE TRIBE

The Northern Paiute Tribe usually occupied specific territories, generally centered on a lake or wetland that supplied fish and waterfowl. Pinyon pine nuts were harvested in the mountains each fall to provide winter food. Grass seeds and roots were also staple foods in their diet.



The word **Squaw** has become offensive to many modern Native Americans because of usage that demeans native women as if they were second class citizens or exotic objects.

DB  
Publisher Unknown

The true meaning of local petroglyphs has been lost to history. They may have had religious significance or were guides to game or water sites.



RPPC  
Published by  
ZAN  
1920-1930

While the caption indicates this card shows a Piute camp, it is believed it is actually a view of the camp site of a single extended family.



DB  
Published by  
Edward H. Mitchell  
San Francisco, California

There appeared to be a need for postcard photographers to show as much of the life styles of Native Americans as possible as those cards would more likely be purchased and sent to family and friends out of the local area, resulting in more profits.



An interesting card showing a group of Piutes along with a mother with her child in a cradle board.

DB  
Publisher Unknown





By no means “A Typical Street Scene” in early Reno. The Native Americans were relegated to areas of town away from the mainstream.

DB  
Publisher Unknown

The local Native Americans were frequently considered to be strange and exotic people, when in actuality, they were a very old and proud race of people who had seen their heritage under assault and their historic lands and hunting ranges plundered by the more populous white man.

A group of local Paiutes posing outside a meeting hall used for gatherings and religious ceremonies.



DB  
Publisher Unknown

While invited attendance at a rodeo was an attempt to honor the Paiutes for their rich heritage, all too often it was a way to exploit them and reinforce the “Cowboys and Indians” concept.

RPPC  
Published by  
Southworth-Hilp  
Reno, Nevada



PYRAMID INDIANS AT RODEO, JULY 4, 5, 6, RENO, NEVADA

O-146

Many of the postcards produced during these times actually attempted to show realistic views of the Native American's in their traditional clothing and everyday life. These are, for the most part, carefully staged in a photographer's studio.



Nevada Squaw  
and Papoose,  
Reno, Nevada.

One of the few views that were photographed on the street. This is a very typical woman with her child safely secured to a cradle board.

DB  
Publisher Unknown





Cradleboards are used for the first few months on an infant's life, when a portable carrier for the baby is a necessity. Cradleboards are built with a broad, firm protective frame for the infant's spine. A footrest is incorporated into the bottom as well as a rounded cover over the infant's head similar to a modern-day baby carriage hood. The inside of the cradleboard is padded with a lining of fresh plant fibers such as moss, cattail down, or shredded bark.

DB  
Published by  
Edward H. Mitchell  
San Francisco, California

While the harsh lifestyle of Native Americans was not generally conducive to long life, there were always exceptions and these people were revered not only for their long lives, but they were a reservoir of cultural knowledge and folklore.

DB  
Published by  
C-C-C-C



An interesting studio posed photograph of possibly sisters showing off their newborns in cradleboards. The shawl on the left is definitely not a Native American woven item.

DB  
Published for  
Shepherd & Son, Reno Nevada  
By  
M. Rieder, Los Angeles, California



Piute Squaws and Papooses in Reno, Nevada



Probably a family unit consisting of grandmother, mother and two grandchildren.

DB  
Published by  
Edward H. Mitchell  
San Francisco, California





Very nice close-up of a baby in a beaded cradleboard.

DB  
Published by  
M. Rieder, Los Angeles, California

Nice photo of a woman and her baby in a cradleboard. The intricate lacing to secure the child is particularly interesting.

DB  
C.T. Art Colortone  
By  
Curteich, Chicago, Illinois



A study in hardship – a woman with a load of firewood apparently picked up from a scrap yard.

DB  
Published by  
Dennison News Co.



Excellent view of a very elaborate cradleboard with intricate beadwork and rawhide and bead fringes.

DB  
Published by  
Sierra News Co., Reno, Nevada





A studio posed photo with a tree stump as a prop. The background tends to give a somber atmosphere to what should have been a more pleasant image. Her shoes are definitely not Native American made.

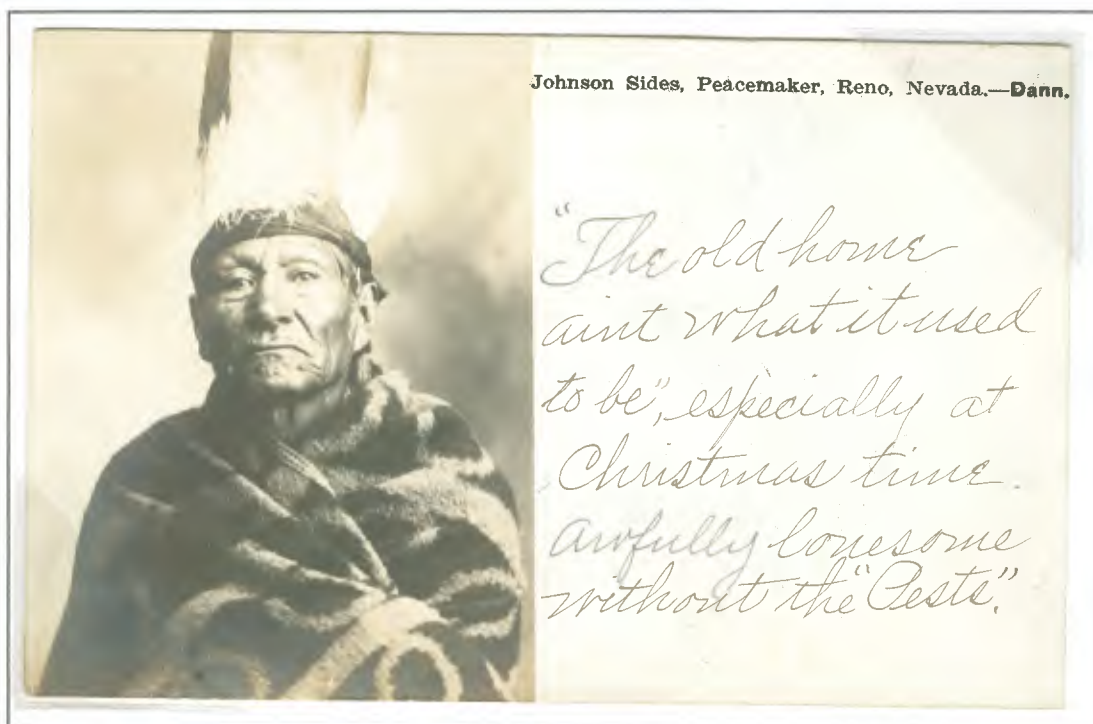
DB  
Published by  
M. Rieder, Los Angeles, California

Another posed studio photo that not only shows an elaborate dress with fringe and beads, but also shows facial tattooing which was not common among the Paiutes, but also includes several baskets.

DB  
Published by  
Edward H. Mitchell  
San Francisco, California



The biggest free pass ever issued was the one which the builders of the Central Pacific Railroad (CPRR) gave to Johnson Sides, chief of the Paiute Indians of Nevada, for himself and people for life, to ride back and forth on all except passenger cars as much as they pleased.



UDB  
RPPC  
Published by  
CYKO

This came about because Charles Crocker, one of the owners of the CPRR, convinced Johnson Sides of the importance of the railroad. Chief Sides convinced his people to be friendly towards the railroad and as a result they, in effect, adopted the railroad and became its protectors.



