



What's a Tooele?

One of the tests to determine if a person is native to the area is if they can correctly pronounce TOOELE. The correct pronunciation is TOO-WILL-AH. Newcomers, however, often pronounce it TOOL, TOO-LEE or TOO-ILL-EE. Tooele County was originally know as TUILLA County. The spelling was changed to TOOELE in 1852 when the boundaries of the State of Deseret were extended to the California border.

Recent historical research reveals that the name "TOOELE" comes from the native Goshute (Go-shoot) word "bear". There are several families with the last name "Bear" living in the Grantsville-Tooele area who are descendants of the man who signed the peace treaty with early Tooele Valley Mormons.

Some historians say "Tooele" refers to the main Goshute Indian Chief Tuilla who lived in the valley years before the arrival of the Mormons. This is documented by oral histories of early Mormon pioneers. However, the Goshutes did not have traditional "tribes" like other Native Americans. They were organized as families with the father or grandfather as the head.

There are other versions of the name. One is that Tooele took its name from "Tule", the abundant weed or bulrushes in the swampy areas of the valley. It is claimed that the name was misspelled by Thomas Bullock, secretary to Brigham Young, and the corruption of the word became Tooele. Arguments against this re that Bullock was an educated person and would hardly misspell so simple a word as "Tule".

The third version is that LDS Church Apostle Orson Pratt, the first Mormon pioneer to enter the Tooele Valley, remarked that the valley resembled an Austrian village "Mat Tooele" that was located near the Adriatic Sea. LDS Church Historian Andrew Jensen points out; however, that Orson Pratt did not visit that village until 20 years after the naming of Tooele.

Another belief is that an Englishman on seeing the many hills that surrounded the Valley remarked that the Valley was "too hilly" or that due to the thick growth of willows that the valley was "too willy".

So, the choice is yours. Pick whichever explanation you like....for me, I like the Indian Chief theory!



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