Bitterroot Valley Place Names

Bitterroot Valley, Bitterroot River, and Bitterroot Mountains – These geographic sites are all named after the bitterroot plant, and also perhaps due Salish people referring to the north area of the Bitterroot Valley as "Place of the Bitterroot." The root of the plant is used for food and it is indeed bitter. Lewis took a specimen of the plant and the plant's botanical name is a tribute to Lewis – *Lewisa Rediviva.* There is some irony to this naming as the Salish people had utilized the plant for generations and have oral literature about the plant's origin. In 1895 the Montana State Legislature designated it the state's flower.

Lolo – There are a variety of ideas as to the origin of name of the town Lolo. Some believe it was a corrupted version of an Indian way of saying either the name Lewis referring to Meriwether Lewis, or Lawrence, referring to a French Fur Trapper. The area is significant to mainstream history as the Lewis and Clark Expedition stayed in the area. This site is now a state park called "Traveler's Rest."

Florence – This small town is named after Florence Abbot Hammond, who was the wife of a prominent Missoula resident. Earlier it was called "One Horse" and was settled in 1889.

Corvallis - This Montana town was named after Corvallis, Oregon by people who had formerly lived there. The origin of the name Corvallis is French from the words, *couer* meaning heart and *vallee* meaning valley.

Stevensville – A settlement that grew up around Fort Owen. It was named after Isaac Ingalls Stevens, who was the first Governor of Washington Territory. He negotiated the 1855 Treaty of Hell Gate with the Salish, Pend d'Oreille and Kootenai Tribes.

Victor – One of the few places in Salish homelands with an Indian reference. This small town was named Victor, which was the English name used to refer to the Salish Chief, Plenty Horses, who was principal Salish leader present at the negotiation of the 1855 Treaty of Hell Gate. The treaty bears his mark.

Hamilton – This is the largest town in the valley and is the county seat of Ravalli County. It was named after J. D. Hamilton who was involved in securing the right-of-way for the Northern Pacific rail line.

Darby – Near the southern end of the Bitterroot Valley, this town was named after its postmaster, James Darby.