

In considering the challenge to write a piece on the topic of “Name”, I’m thinking of a place in the Colorado Rockies. It’s just a village, nestled at the mouth of one of our most important canyons, and one would probably never know it’s there but for the exit sign. It’s not an incorporated town, just an accumulation of a few homes and businesses.

The Apache, Cheyenne and Ute nations at different times inhabited the two natural areas from which the town gets its name. Rock climbers scale the walls of the granite canyon much of the year as hikers and fishermen meander a wild and scenic creek. Twin tunnels on the highway share the name of the place, but the canyon and the creek had it first.

It is one of the most unusual place names in America, contrary, understated and sufficient. The locals take pride in it and they protect it from the meddling of cartographers and chambers of commerce. The sign erected by the highway department is quite enough and doesn’t take a lot of letters.

The announcement of a rest area may be an enticement to exit, but few do. Nevertheless, passing travelers must wonder what’s there, and what the unusual name represents. Their attention is soon diverted, as those eastbound are rising into one of the most magnificent natural wonders of America, Glenwood Canyon. The westbound, having just experienced the canyon, are about to descend into the historic resort city of Glenwood Springs.

I have dropped plenty of clues, and by now you may have figured out what place my essay with no name is about, but if you haven’t, I’ll just tell you. Take Exit 119 on I-70 to No Name, Colorado, gateway to No Name Creek and No Name Canyon, and home of the No Name Tunnels and the No Name Bar and Grill.