tonopahnevada.com

TONOPAH CEMETERY 1901-1911

Located next to the Clown Motel
521 N Main Street
Tonopah, Nevada 89049

TONOPAH nevada

TONOPAH CEMETERY 1901-1911

Discover the amazing stories behind some of our "permanent residents."

---

1 The Marojevech Brothers

On June 20, 1907, Frank Marojevech tried to stop a runaway ore car at Belmont Mine. The car had a broken brake replaced with a shovel handle. It failed, and he was crushed and killed. His brother George, visiting at the time, tried to help but was also run over. His legs were amputated, but he died that night. The tragic accident took both brothers in a single day, shocking the Tonopah community.

2 William "Big Bill" Murphy

Big Bill Murphy became a Tonopah hero during the 1911 Belmont Mine Fire. Seventeen miners died, including Bill, who made multiple trips into the smoke-filled mine to save others. On his final descent, he said, "I am nearly all in, but I will try again." He never returned. A statue of Bill stands outside Tonopah's post office, and a nearby mural depicts the miners' snowy funeral procession. His bravery remains a symbol of selfless sacrifice.

3 George "Devil" Davis

George "Devil" Davis, Tonopah's first African American resident, was a prankster and saloon owner beloved by many. He led the Black community politically and ran The Eureka saloon. But his marriage was troubled— he was abusive, according to witnesses. On June 22, 1907, his wife Ruth shot him in the back and continued firing. She served only a year in prison. George's life was a mix of charisma, leadership, and deep personal turmoil.

4 Sheriff Thomas Logan

Sheriff Tom Logan, serving his third term, was killed on April 7, 1906, in the Manhattan Red Light District by a gambler. He was unarmed and in his nightshirt. His final act was stopping the piano player from retaliating. The murderer was acquitted, but Logan's reputation endured. He was credited with making Tonopah "the most peaceable mining camp in the world." His death left a lasting impact on the community he helped civilize.

5 The Three Merten Brothers

Between 1908 and 1910, the Merten family lost three sons. Albert died of typhoid fever. Sam perished in a mining accident at the Montana-Tonopah Mine. William, only 17, succumbed to heart failure. Tonopah residents came together to raise funds for their grieving mother and Albert's widow, reflecting the town's enduring solidarity in tragedy. Their story is one of compounded loss and the quiet strength of a community that cared for its own during hardship.

6 Bina Verrault

In New York, Bina Verrault and Izella Browne ran a "Love Syndicate," conning men by posing as rich widows. They amassed $100,000 in gifts—about $2.5 million today. Arrested, Bina fled mid-trial and resurfaced in Tonopah. Years on the run took a toll, and she died from alcoholism. Her fall from high-society con artist to tragic death made headlines worldwide. Bina's story remains a cautionary tale of charm, deceit, and inevitable downfall.

7 Stella Campbell

Stella "Brick" Campbell, a chorus girl at Tonopah's Big Casino, died in 1909 after drinking poison in a failed suicide pact. Her friends tried to save her with milk and olive oil, but she lingered for ten days before passing. Her partner in the pact, Birdie Kelly, backed out but later attempted suicide several times. She eventually moved to Oakland. A man who had fallen in love with Birdie later died by suicide.

8 William Clay Barnes

Corporal William Clay Barnes, a Buffalo Soldier and Philippine-American War veteran, died July 14, 1907. While working underground, Barnes drilled through an unexploded and overlooked dynamite charge. The day before, he received a letter from his wife announcing her plan to divorce. Two days later, he was buried with military honors. Bill survived war only to die in a mine but is remembered as both soldier and miner.
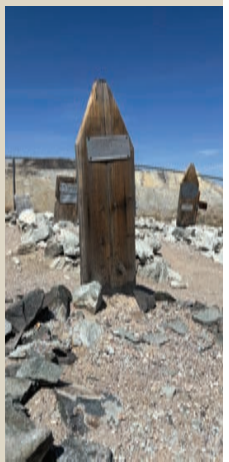
9 Hannah and Tommy Lydon

Hannah Lydon died on March 6, 1910, leaving behind six children. Her son Tommy, beloved and athletic, was 11. Just weeks later, Tommy accidentally shot himself while playing with a broken gun. Despite surgery, he died after five painful days. His final words to his father were, "If this keeps on there'll be only a few of us left." Tommy was buried beside his mother, mourned by classmates who served as pallbearers.

10 Lawrence G. Gilson

On October 23, 1909, laborer Lawrence G. Gilson ended his life using dynamite outside Tonopah. Financial struggles and a night of drinking likely led to his decision. His decapitated body was found the next morning. Identified through his belongings, Gilson was linked to the Point Richmond Aerie of Eagles. Despite little known about his past, the Tonopah Eagles honored him with a somber funeral. His tragic, explosive death left the town shaken and sorrowful.
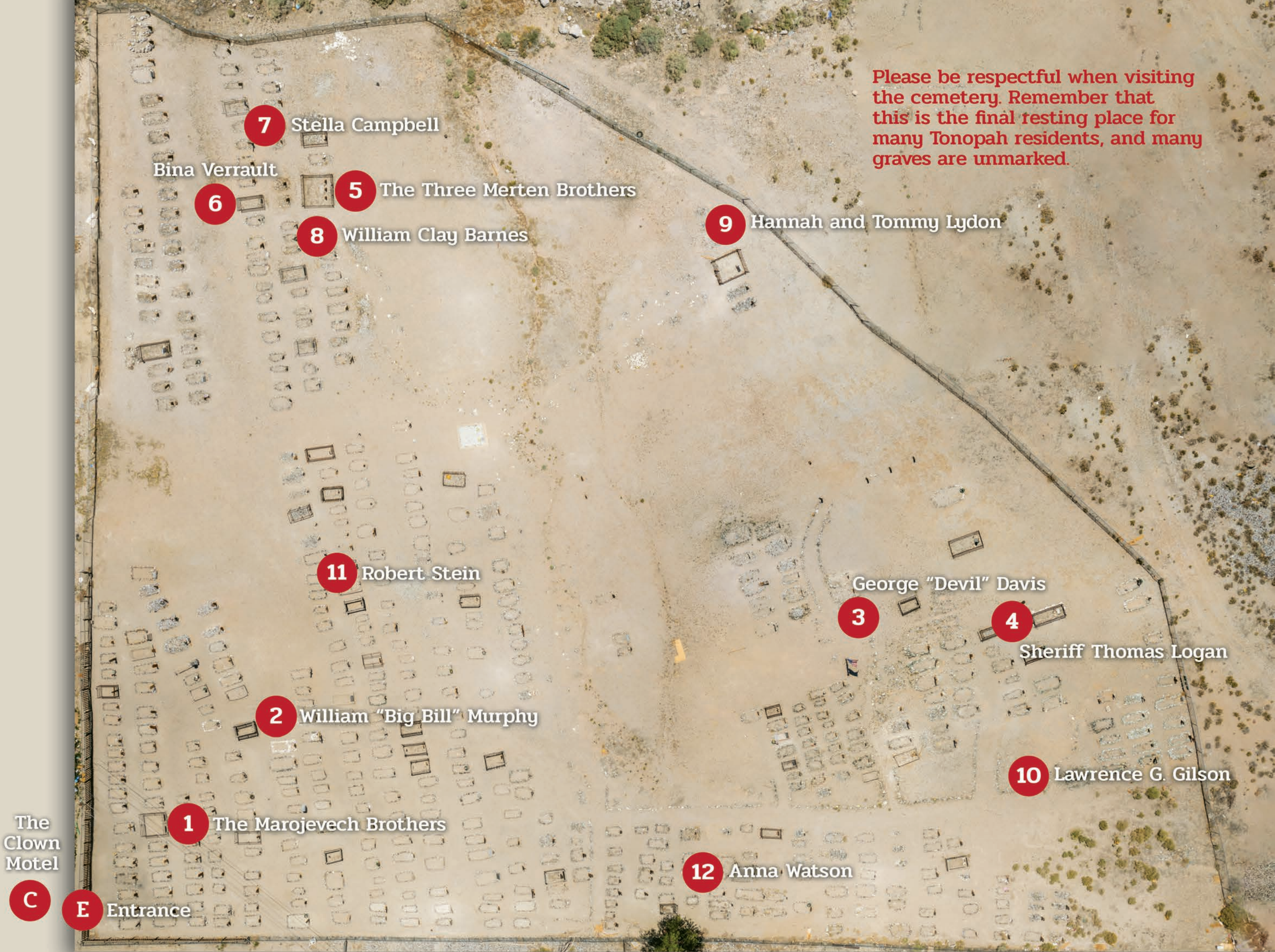

11 Robert Stein

Born in 1856, Robert "Bob" Stein became Nye County's first sheriff in 1876 and worked in both law enforcement and mining in Nevada and Arizona. Stein was a stowaway on a lumber wagon going to Bullfrog in early 1906. He was found in a dugout in Bullfrog some months later, suffering from the effects of a stroke and pneumonia. He died in his 80s at the Miner's Hospital in Tonopah on November 30, 1906.

12 Anna Watson

In a drunken rage, R. D. Russell shot and killed his mistress Anna Watson, then took his own life on September 1, 1905. In a note, he revealed his real name was R. D. Chase and that he had lived a double life for six years. He asked that his wife and children in Chicago be informed. Chase and Watson had run a disreputable rooming house and, as poverty set in, he resorted to begging while she pursued wealthier men.

Please be respectful when visiting the cemetery. Remember that this is the final resting place for many Tonopah residents, and many graves are unmarked.

7 Stella Campbell

Bina Verrault

6

5 The Three Merten Brothers

8 William Clay Barnes

9 Hannah and Tommy Lydon

11 Robert Stein

George "Devil" Davis

3

4

Sheriff Thomas Logan

2 William "Big Bill" Murphy

10 Lawrence G. Gilson

1 The Marojevech Brothers

The Clown Motel

C

E Entrance

12 Anna Watson

History of the Old Tonopah Cemetery

Nearly 600 people are buried in the Old Tonopah Cemetery, having died from illness, injury, mining accidents, suicides, and even murder. One misconception is that many of the decedents died due to a "mysterious plague," also known as the "Tonopah plague." This "plague" was actually nothing more than common pneumonia caused by a lack of sanitation, especially among those who lived close to the slaughterhouses. After the

San Francisco Call published an article in its January 14, 1902 edition claiming the pneumonia deaths in Tonopah were "out of control", the Tonopah Daily Bonanza replied with a correction, arguing that they found the 27 deaths due to pneumonia between May 1901 and January 1902 in relation to a population of 1,500 was not a heavy mortality rate. A subsequent visit to the new camp by Dr. S.L. Lee, president of the Nevada State Medical Board, resulted in his finding that there was nothing mysterious about the epidemic and attributed the heavy mortalities to poor sanitation and lack of facilities for the proper care of the sick.

The causes of death on grave markers were added in recent years based on historic research conducted by Central Nevada Historical Society members. Causes of death are not typically noted on markers but were added by historical society president Allen Metscher to increase visitors' interest in the site. Only about 30% of the grave markers are original, many having been stolen or deteriorated. Most markers were rebuilt by the Tonopah Conservation Crew under the guidance of Metscher with old material, giving them an original look. The locations of many of the graves were found by Metscher by using dowsing rods, an old technique used to locate groundwater or other disturbances such as gravesites.

The technique proved to be accurate when a copy of the original plot map was discovered in a storage shed in Round Mountain. If you find the grave of an individual you are interested in learning more about, write down the name and date of death, then go to https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov to search some of the old newspapers online. You can also visit the Central Nevada Museum in Tonopah and use their fantastic research library. Who knows what you might discover! Be sure to let us know if you find an interesting story of your own. Until then, please take your time and enjoy exploring our amazing Old Cemetery!

Old Tonopah Cemetery Tour