



STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item: 5A

Report To: Parks and Recreation Commission

Meeting Date: December 5, 2023

Staff Contact: Jennifer Budge, CPRP, Parks and Recreation Director, jbudge@carson.org

Agenda Title: For Discussion Only: Presentation only regarding the park of the month: Lone Mountain Cemetery. (LeeAnn Keever, lkeever@carson.org)

Staff Summary: Department staff will provide a brief history and overview regarding the City's municipal cemetery, Lone Mountain Cemetery.

Agenda Action: Other/Presentation

Time Requested: 15 minutes

Proposed Motion

N/A

Board's Strategic Goal

N/A

Previous Action

N/A

Background/Issues & Analysis

Lone Mountain Cemetery remains an active cemetery that is maintained by the Carson City Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department maintenance staff. With its rich history and unique display of headstones, citizens not only come to honor and celebrate family or friends who may be buried but also glimpse into the past of Carson City. Maintenance staff provide daily, weekly and monthly services to maintain this unique asset for Carson City.

Applicable Statute, Code, Policy, Rule or Regulation

N/A

Financial Information

Is there a fiscal impact? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If yes, account name/number:

Is it currently budgeted? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Lone Mountain Cemetery

The past, the present and the future

Cemetery Trivia

- The word “cemetery” has its origins in the Greek word for “sleeping place” and is land meant for burials.
- A graveyard specifically refers to a cemetery with a church adjacent to or on the grounds, while a cemetery does not have a church adjacent to or on the grounds.
- Prior to 1831, cemeteries as we know them did not exist. Burials took place in graveyards or in family plots. However, in 1831, the Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts was completed. From that point on, the American public embraced the concept of large cemeteries with vast expanses of grass and trees. Cemeteries became America’s first parks. A place where a family could honor their loved ones while using the grounds for recreational purposes.
- Family cemeteries are allowed in Nevada counties with a population of less than 55,000.

Cemetery Picnicking



Photo: Historic St. Luke's. Photo taken prior to 1957

Why Cemeteries are Important to Society

- Cemeteries help people connect with the past while looking to the future
- Cemeteries are therapeutic – they allow people to face grief head-on, while bringing the community together as a whole
- Cemeteries are an important part of end-of-life decisions. Each funeral, each plot, each decision, is an immensely personal choice
- Cemeteries preserve the memory of our loved ones who have passed, they let others know that our loved ones were important and influenced history in some way
- Cemeteries offer us a sacred place for quiet, reflection and contemplation, providing comfort and solace
- Cemeteries are a final gift to our loved ones and an important way to honor their memories
- Cemeteries are a lasting legacy to future generations

Why Historic Cemeteries are Important

The history of the rich and poor, famous and infamous is recorded in our historic burial grounds. These grounds are often the only record or artifact remaining to tell the story of the community and individuals who formed it. Each tombstone is an irreplaceable historical document containing some of a region's earliest written history. The ready accessibility of these sites allows all of us, not only professional historians, to view, appreciate, and study these documents, to enjoy their art work and symbolism, and to learn of our own history. Unlike some museum artifacts, these are readily available to everyone and are in the same location where they were originally placed. They are valuable educational tools through which we can teach our history to new generations and impart a sense of our historic past.

Events of personal importance and historical interest are found in the inscriptions on the stones. The epitaphs provide important genealogical information which may be lost or destroyed in early written records. These stones provide important social and cultural information ranging from statistics regarding age, sex, ethnic, and religious information, to the causes of death, and less direct information such as the community's attitude toward women, as suggested by the size of their headstones, the intricacy of carvings, and the effusiveness of their epitaphs.

Historic graveyards contain some of our earliest examples of art. Studying the symbolic art work on the head and footstones reveals the attitude toward death and immortality. Central themes such as sorrow, everlasting life, purity, innocence (and many other themes) are symbolized by certain motifs, including but not limited to weeping willow trees, roses, draped stones, doves, lambs, wreaths, ivy vines, anchors, a cross, stars, shells, and many more. (source: Carson.org)

The Lone Mountain Cemetery Operates Under the Following:

NRS 440.350 to 440.590, NRS 451, NRS 452, NRS 642 and
NRS 689, NAC 440.160 to 440.190, NAC 451,
NAC 452 and NAC 642

Carson City Municipal Code 13



The Early Days

From the 1860s forward, Carson City had a number of active cemeteries spread across the Eagle Valley:

- The Pioneer/Walsh Cemetery on the west end of 5th Street (first known cemetery in Carson City, also the oldest cemetery in Nevada)
- The Lone Mountain Cemetery (also known as the Wright or Ormsby County Cemetery)
- The Empire Cemetery on Deer Run Road
- The Nevada State Prison Cemetery behind the old Nevada State Prison
- The original Stewart Indian School Cemetery (Location not disclosed at the request of the Washoe Tribe)
- The Ormsby County Poor Farm Cemetery at Fuji Park
- The Winnie Family Cemetery (Silver Oak development)

Background

The Lone Mountain Cemetery sits on approximately 40+ acres in North Carson. When it was built, there were no homes, businesses or buildings near the cemetery. The name Lone Mountain comes from the “mountain” to the north of the cemetery. This is the only raised terrain in the otherwise flat Eagle Valley.

The oldest known burial at Lone Mountain was in the 1860s. As time passed, many of the other cemeteries in Carson City became inactive and the remains in those cemeteries were either left in place or transferred to other cemeteries. During the 1860s, most of the individuals interred at the Pioneer Cemetery were reinterred at other cemeteries, including Lone Mountain.

The Lone Mountain Cemetery has been an important part of Carson City since the 1860s. From that time forward until 1960, the cemetery was owned by local mortuaries, businesses and fraternal orders. All that changed with the 1959 election. During that election, more than 50% of Carson City’s voters favored the creation of the Ormsby County Cemetery District. The District was charged with the cemetery’s administration and beautification. The District operated the Lone Mountain Cemetery for the next 10 years. In 1969, Ormsby County was dissolved and the consolidated municipality of Carson City was created. The Ormsby County Cemetery District was also dissolved and Carson City became responsible for the administration and operation of the Lone Mountain Cemetery.

In 1960, the cemetery district abandoned the 80-year old water system in Lone Mountain and began development of a water system for the cemetery. Until the new water system was installed, water trucks provided water to the cemetery.

Prior to 1971, the Lone Mountain Cemetery was comprised of a number of different sections including the Catholic Section, the Hebrew Section, the Oddfellows, the Masons, the Eagles, the Veterans’ Section and the indigent section. In 1971, the sections were consolidated when Carson City took over the administration and operation of the cemetery.

Active Cemeteries in Carson City



Lone Mountain Cemetery



Walton's Cemetery



Nevada State Prison Cemetery

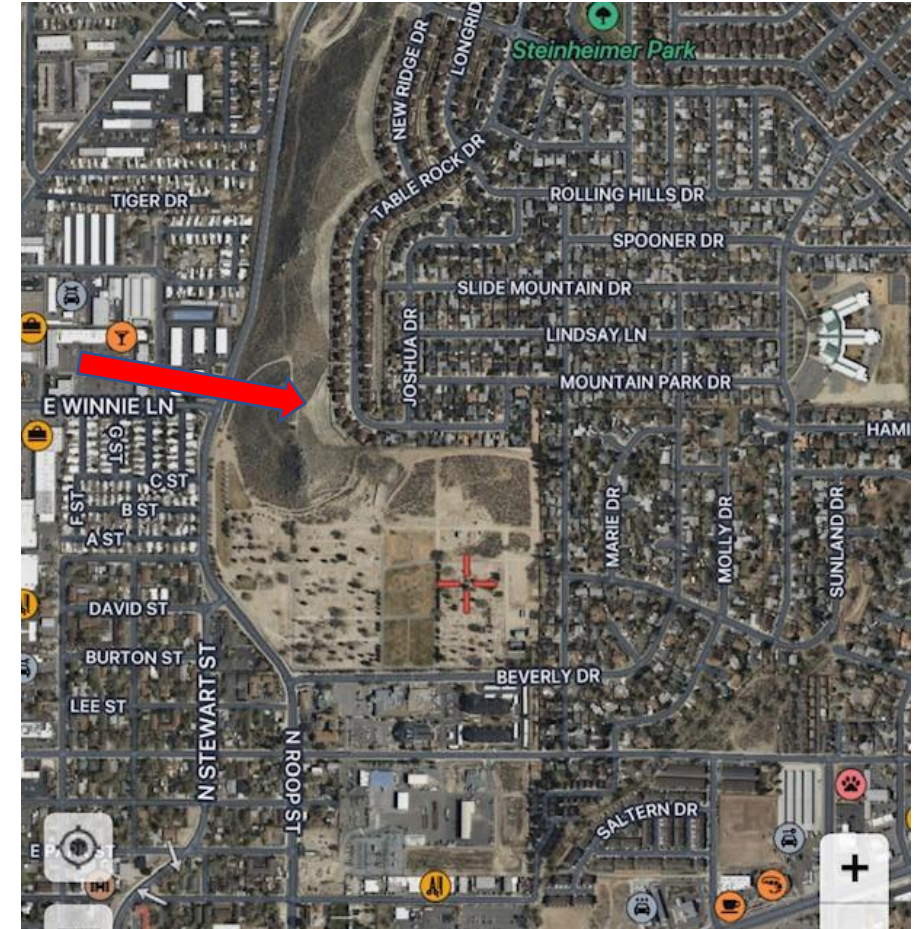


Stewart Indian Cemetery

Aerial Views of the Lone Mountain Cemetery 1944 and 2020



Former pond – approximate location,
Table Rock & Kennedy Drives



Early Photograph of a Funeral in the Lone Mountain Cemetery, Taken From Lone Mountain in 1891



Oldest Known Photograph of the Lone Mountain Cemetery - September 1890



2023 version of the Oldest Known Photograph of the Lone Mountain Cemetery



Staff

The staff at the Lone Mountain Cemetery are dedicated to serving the people of Carson City and the surrounding communities. They perform their duties efficiently and with compassion for the families they serve.

The staff members show their commitment to the veterans – and their families - buried in the Lone Mountain Cemetery. This commitment is best exemplified by preserving the sanctity and dignity of a veteran's final resting place.

The staff members look forward to the improvements in and growth of the Lone Mountain Cemetery.

Stone Gates

In 1979, the stone gates at the cemetery's entrances were constructed by Native American master stonemason, Randall Wungnema. Randall's father, Ernest, was a master stonemason who was recruited by Frederick Snyder, superintendent of the Stewart Indian School, to teach masonry at the school.



Coincidentally, Mr. Snyder's grave is located in the Lone Mountain Cemetery.

Fence Post or Hitching Post?

People are undecided on this post – was it used to hitch horses during a service? Or is it the last remaining fence post of a long-forgotten fence?



Lone Mountain Cemetery...



...Uses the latest, modern technology

Grave Digging

At one time, the graves at the Lone Mountain Cemetery were dug by hand or by using dynamite. Today, the staff uses heavy equipment and other mechanical tools to dig the graves.



Crypts and Urns

To preserve the integrity of a gravesite, the use of crypts and urn vaults is mandated in the Lone Mountain Cemetery.



The crypt keeper arrives!

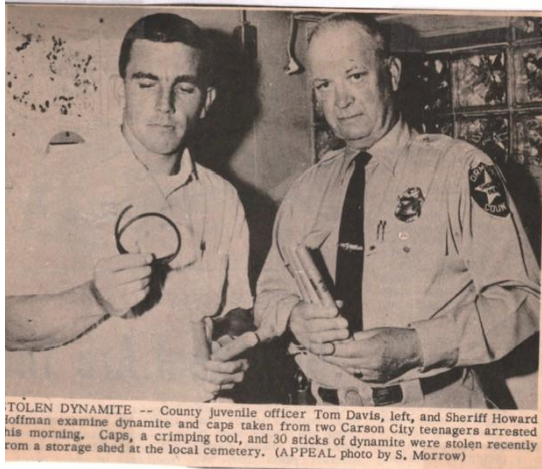


A crypt or urn protects the contents, prevents the earth from slipping and makes removals/transfers easier. These are examples of what happens when an crypt is not used.



Vandalism is a problem all cemeteries face. The most well-known case of vandalism at the Lone Mountain Cemetery occurred on Nevada Day 1997. The Clayton Crypt (the only mausoleum in Lone Mountain) was broken into for the express purpose of grave robbing.

The skulls of Mr. & Mrs. Clayton were taken and then sold. Fortunately, the skulls were recovered and returned to the crypt. The perpetrators served time and the City permanently sealed the crypt.



Prior to the 1997 incident, the most noted case of vandalism occurred in the early 1960s when teenagers broke into the storage shed on the cemetery grounds and stole dynamite. The dynamite was recovered and the teenagers sent to the juvenile facility in Elko.

Since 1997, vandalism at the Lone Mountain Cemetery has decreased due to a number of factors:

- Fencing/set hours of operation
- Patrols by park rangers
- Community involvement

Headstones

Headstones are also known as gravestones, tombstones or markers. No matter the name, these stones are used to mark burial sites. The use of headstones in graveyards and cemeteries became common around the mid-1600s.

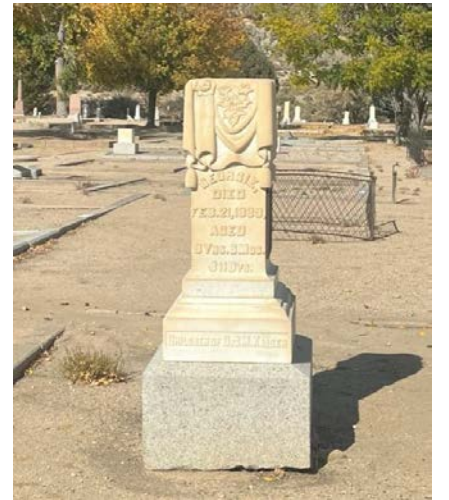
Headstones were originally used only by the middle and upper classes. However, with the advent of the protestant religions, all classes began to employ headstones during their burial rituals.

On occasion, a grave may have footstones, which in conjunction with the headstone, marks or outlines the grave. Headstone were used as coffin lids prior to the turn of the 20th century.

Headstones are important for the part they play in a culture's burial practices. Headstones not only mark a grave site, they also contain information important to both family members and future generations. Headstones are living, unchanging history.

Over the centuries, headstones have evolved from wood to metal and stone. The Lone Mountain Cemetery does not allow marble headstones, benches or statues as that stone is fragile and will not stand up to the extremes of Nevada's weather systems.

The symbols on a headstone vary from country to country, culture to culture and are important to each and every segment of society. Many websites list the meanings of the different symbols found on headstones throughout the world.



Temporary Markers

In the past, the local mortuaries would provide temporary markers as a means of identifying a grave until a permanent marker or headstone could be installed. That is no longer the practice today. It appears that practice was discontinued in the 1990s.



Some families would encase the temporary marker in cement and use that as a permanent marker.



TLC

As with any aging infrastructure, some of the markers and graves at the Lone Mountain Cemetery, are in need of TLC. However, due ownership questions, the historic nature and the fragility of the monuments, staff is reluctant to repair or re-sit the monuments or coping.



Due to its fragile nature, marble headstones, markers and other decorative items are no longer allowed in Lone Mountain Cemetery



Community Involvement

The Lone Mountain Cemetery has become a vibrant part of Carson City largely in part to community involvement. People actively participate in the tours, the flag placements for Memorial Day, the 4th of July and Veterans' Day as well as Wreaths Across America in December.

The community participates in the annual cemetery cleaning.

Many people have family members buried in Lone Mountain and take care of their family plots, and the surrounding plots.

People do not hesitate to call the park rangers or sheriff's office if they feel something is wrong at the cemetery.



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Employees of near-by businesses walk through the cemetery on their breaks.



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Annual Budget

In 1960, the annual budget for the Lone Mountain Cemetery was \$12,000.00.

In FY24, the annual budget for the Lone Mountain Cemetery was \$201,215.00

In 1960, there was one staff member.

In 2023, there are 3 full-time Park staff who help to maintain the grounds and provide burial services, along with their other park maintenance duties, and 1 part-time office staff.

Records are Vital

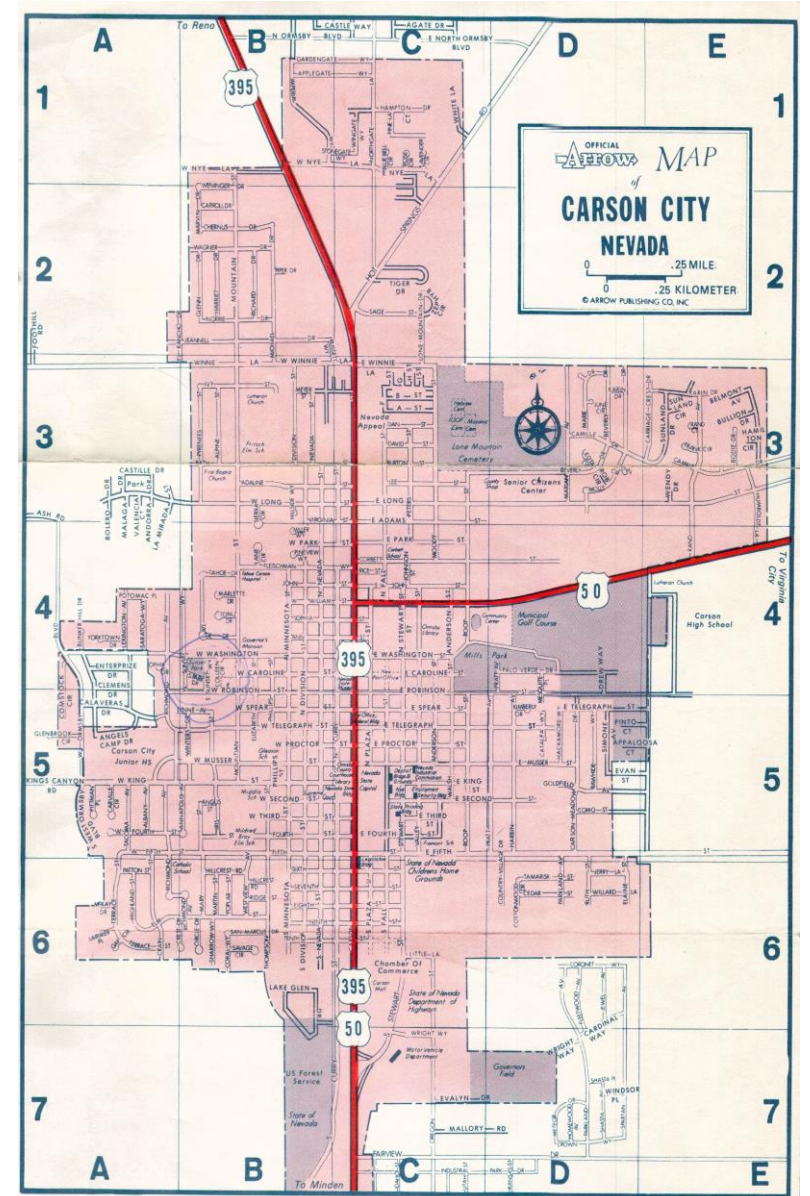
In the late 1800s, Carson City had a strong, vibrant Chinese community. These members of the Chinese Community contributed to Carson City's economic well-being by working on the V and T Railroad or working in the mines.

Custom dictated that a deceased Chinese person be returned to China for burial with family members. However, due to the expense, that was not always an option for the members of the Chinese community. Some of Carson City's Chinese community were buried on the west side of the Lone Mountain Cemetery in the Chinese Cemetery.

Through time, the Chinese Cemetery was forgotten until December 2001, when a construction project unearthed six, male burials on the corner of Stewart and Roop Streets, across from the Lone Mountain Cemetery. The burials were in the tradition of Chinese burials. It was thought that at one time the Chinese Cemetery extended as far west as Moody (now Stewart) Street. That portion of the cemetery was privately owned. Information about the Chinese Cemetery was lost to the ages due a loss of records.

Due to the missing records, it was not possible able to identify these men. The remains were sent to UNLV where they were studied by UNLV graduate students. The study assisted in detailing Chinese burial practices.

And this is why record keeping in a cemetery is so vital!



Notable People Buried in Lone Mountain



The Rabe Family, early Carson City Residents
(Martha Circle and Parker Drive are named after
Rabe Family members)

Governors, secretaries of state, business owners, railroad magnates, and other pioneers who settled here and helped establish the State of Nevada are buried in the Lone Mountain Cemetery.

The contributions made by these individuals helped shape Carson City and Nevada, and influenced the lives of people on a national and international scale. Carson City is home to the streets and buildings named after these individuals.



Henry Yerington, V&T Superintendent,
political activist, philanthropist



The Goni Family, Long-time Carson City residents
and supporters of open space

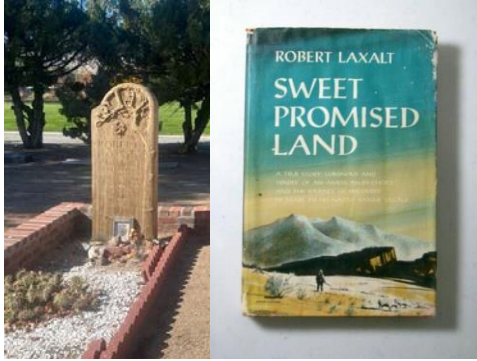


The Butti Family, businessmen, political
activists, philanthropists



Frederick Snyder, superintendent of the Stewart Indian
School, father of the Stewart Vernacular style of
architecture

More Notable People Buried in Lone Mountain



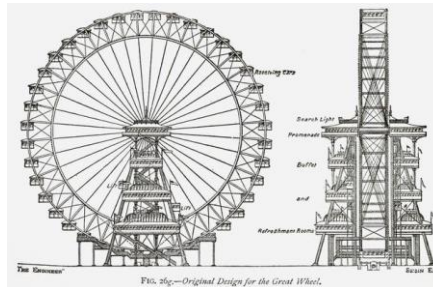
Robert Laxalt, considered to be one the “giants” of American literature



Abe Curry, Founding Father of Carson City, politician, V&T employee, mint superintendent



John Koontz, father of the Nevada State Archives, longest serving constitutional officer in Nevada history



Dangberg/Ferris Families, Early pioneers, farmers, inventors



Lester Groth, Carson City’s first paid fire chief

More Notable People Buried in Lone Mountain

P.H. Clayton – Political activist and “notorious secessionist”

Jennie Clemens – Daughter of Orion Clemens, Secretary of the Nevada Territory and niece of Mark Twain

Hank Monk – Renowned stage coach driver

Matthew Rinckel – Proprietor of the Eagle Market, owner, Rinckel Mansion

Reinhold Sadler – Ninth Governor of Nevada

John Henry Kinkead – Fifth Governor of Nevada

John Bath – Pioneer and farmer

The Lompa Family – Dairy farmers, businessmen, philanthropists

Aaron D. Treadway – Farmer & park owner.

Moonshine Monuments

The Lone Mountain Cemetery has a number of cast zinc or white bronze headstones. These headstones are hollow and the sides open for access to the interior. These headstones were popular due to their low cost (compared to stone) and durability.



While still manufactured today, these markers reached the height of their popularity from the 1890s through the beginning of WWII.

During prohibition (1920 – 1933), these headstones were used as points of sale by area bootleggers. These “merchants” would open the monument, place their product inside and reseal the monument. Their customers would then pick up their orders and leave their money in the monument. These transactions were on the honor system.



We could not find another instance where these cast zinc monuments were used in this manner in other cemeteries.

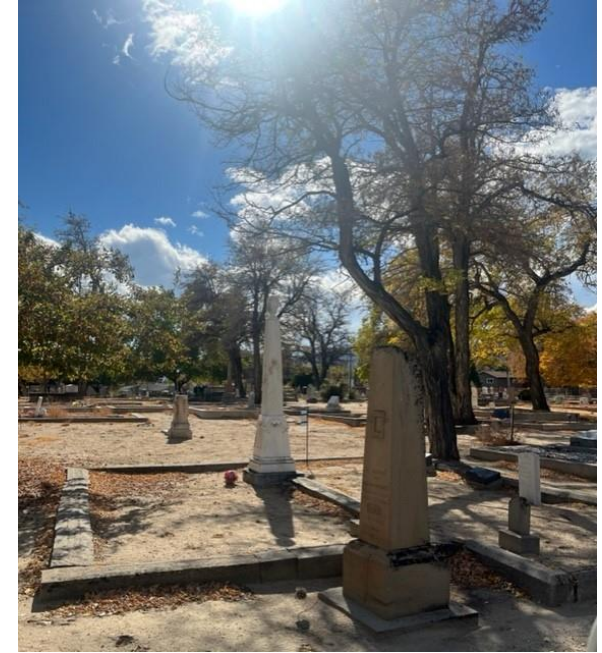
Note: The staff at Lone Mountain has sealed these monuments and they are now strictly for decorative purposes.

West Side Story



Looking west towards Roop St. There are graves in the field. Local lore has it that all the headstones were wooden, and due to a fire many years ago, the headstones were destroyed. As such, even with records, it is not possible to identify the graves. Burials are not permitted in this area.

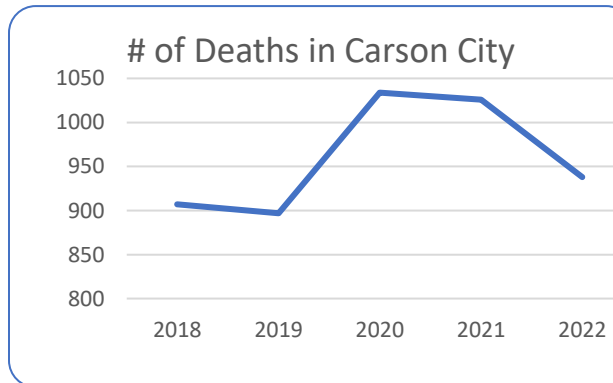
Around Lone Mountain



The Future

With the increase in the global population, many municipalities (including Carson City) are faced with accommodating an growing number of burials (both full body and cremated).

Approximately 938 people died in Carson City during 2022.



When planning any expansion of the Long Mountain Cemetery, Carson City's planners and cemetery staff will need to reconcile state law and Carson City's policies with the needs/wants of the families burying their loved ones in the cemetery.

They will have to take into consideration green burials (biodegradable caskets/urns, seeded urns and green cremations), digital enhancements (headstones with solar lights and/or video recordings of the deceased), decomposing headstones, headstones that house urns and interactive headstones (complete with digital guestbooks).

Photographs/Information

- Carson City Parks and Recreation
- Western Nevada Historic Photographs
- Nevada State Museum
- Lone Mountain Cemetery Office
- Carson City Coroner's Office