

WINNEMUCCA CIVIL WAR MONUMENT

By David A. Davis, Camp Historian/Civil War Memorials Officer
Gen. William Passmore Carlin Camp No. 25, SUVCW
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Winnemucca has two cemeteries: the original Old Pioneer Cemetery near Pioneer Park north of town and the later Winnemucca Cemetery on the southwest end of town. The Humboldt Lodge No. 16 of the IOOF (Oddfellows) acquired land from the Central Pacific Railroad on 15 April 1879 that would ultimately contain the Old Pioneer Cemetery¹. The McDermit Post No. 87 of the Grand Army of the Republic was organized in Winnemucca on 12 November 1885². The McDermit Corps No. 58 of the Women's Relief Corps was organized on 11 December 1897³.

On 11 August 1888, for one dollar, Post Commander James Sacket, and "first and second vice commanders" S. W. Reese and Andrew Morrison of the McDermit Post No. 87 acquired a 50-foot by 50-foot parallelogram of land from the Oddfellows and Masons to use as a burial ground⁴. No survey plat for the Pioneer Cemetery has ever been found, and the exact location of the GAR plot is not known. The McDermit Post No. 87 is last noted in the newspapers in 1911 when it had four members left⁵, and the McDermit Corps No. 58 may have been active as late as 1919⁶. About 1909, the Winnemucca Cemetery came into existence, and a number of bodies were moved there over time from the Pioneer Cemetery. In 1937, US Highway 95 was cut through the main part of the Pioneer Cemetery and at least part of the GAR plot. The remains of nine CW soldiers were put in small metal boxes and reburied in the Winnemucca Cemetery⁷.

The veterans section of the Winnemucca Cemetery contains the following nine Civil War veterans' graves in a line: H. H. Smith, U. S. Soldier; Geo. Davidson Co. C (G?) 3rd CA Inf.; J. C. Dur(?)gan, U. S. Soldier; O. Sprague, U. S. Navy; Spenger Grouse, Co. D, 1st NV Inf.; Henry Hough, Co. E, 1st MD Inf.; Jno. Ryan, Co. C (G?), 3rd U. S. Cav.; Peter Swan, Co. D, 69th IL Inf.; and Jacob Zeigler, Co. E, 36th IN Inf. The newspaper articles used to make this report and research by the General William Passmore Carlin Camp No. 25 Graves Registration Officer Don Huffman show other Civil War veterans are still buried in the Old Pioneer Cemetery and in the Winnemucca Cemetery.

Early in 1967, Mayor Felix A. Scott, Building Inspector Walter Case, Police Chief Jack Marden, and State Assemblyman Melvin B. Howard supported a project to set up a monument to the Civil War veterans and McDermit Post in the Old Pioneer Cemetery. In early 1968, County Recorder Joe Germain supplied information from the records and Councilman Hughie Schoff started a Civil War veterans' roll call. It was planned to put the monument at the north side of the "Old" Pioneer Cemetery facing Frisco Street near the marble headstone of Civil War veteran and Central Pacific Railroad conductor Nick Cole⁸.

Journalist-historian Doris Cavanagh also became a driving force in this. On March 1, 1968, Mayor Scott, Councilman Schoff, County Librarian Mrs. Joyce Frashier, and Mrs Cavanagh decided to put the monument at the south side of the Old Pioneer

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Cemetery facing Pacific Street, and then the plaque was ordered. Mayor Scott donated "native stone" (local field stones) salvaged from the old Johnson and Becker saloon, which was the site of the first courthouse in 1873, for use in building the monument. Building Inspector Case, his uncle Lee Case, and Tiffany Poulin agreed to erect the monument⁹.

On March 24, 1968, a historic hedge of mostly rose bushes was planted along the cemetery fence with ten metal fence posts to each represent a part of Humboldt County. Post 9 was designated for Civil War veterans¹⁰. This hedge is not now apparent, and may not now exist.

The 14-inch by 24-inch bronze plaque, inscribed "IN MEMORY OF ALL CIVIL WAR VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF McDERMIT POST 87 GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC, MAY 1968." was shipped from Portland, Oregon on April 15. The monument was to be erected Saturday May 4 with stonemason Hugh Bain of Golconda shaping the stone. Retired plumber and American Legion service officer Ralph Vivier was to fashion metal flag holsters and a Grand Army of the Republic arch. Mrs. Dewey (Myrtle York) Huckaba brought out a book she owned that contained the regulations and charter members of the McDermit Post No. 87 and diagrams of the 29 lots in the old Grand Army of the Republic Cemetery, which was shown to be immediately south of the former fenced area of the Mason-Oddfellows' Cemetery. County Commissioner Chairman Louis Bidart said the county would underwrite the cost of the construction materials. The broken marble headstone of Civil War veteran James Randall was to be placed near the monument¹¹.

At 12:30 pm, Sunday May 26, 1968, the dedication was held despite the fact that though the base had been laid, the stonework had not been completed, and delivery of the plaque was delayed. Mrs. Cavanagh arranged the program. Mayor Scott and Councilman Schoff were the masters of ceremony, bugler Gene Landess sounded reveille, and the Sonoma Heights School Chorus sang.^{12, 13}

Nothing more is directly said in later issues of the newspaper, but an article August 28, 1968, about a dedication to a nearby railroad plaque mentions the GAR monument as though it was complete by then¹⁴. Also, despite the newspaper reports of the use of native stone and a metal arch, the monument is actually built from cinder blocks, measures 4 feet long and 3 feet high, and sits on a concrete slab measuring about 5 feet by 7 feet. Flanged metal pipes stick up a few inches out of the ground off each end of the monument, but no arch exists today.

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Entrance to the Old Pioneer Cemetery, Winnemucca, Nevada. The Winnemucca Civil War monument is just beyond the gates.

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The Winnemucca Civil War monument.



The plaque on the Winnemucca Civil War monument.

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REFERENCES

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- 2). McDermitt Post, The Silver State, vol. 27, no. 36, p. 3, col. 1, Friday, November 13, 1885.
- 3). Women's Relief Corps., The Silver State, vol. 51, no. 56, p. 3, col. 4, Wednesday, December 8, 1897.
- 4). Deed between McDermitt Post No. 87 and Humboldt Lodge No. 16 of the IOOF; Deeds, Book 28, p. 350-352.
- 5). Memorial Day Fittingly Observed, The Silver State, vol. 43, no. 133, p. 1, col. 1, Tuesday, May 30, 1911.
- 6). Big Memorial Day Celebrations at Winnemucca Today, Lovelock Review-Miner, vol. 12, no. 18, p. 8, col. 5, Friday, May 30, 1919.
- 7). Staff at Humboldt County Museum, oral communication, 2005.
- 8). Civil War Veterans' Monument Planned, The Humboldt County Bulletin and Battle Mountain News, vol. 97, no. 45, p. 3, cols. 1, 2, 3, Wednesday, February 7, 1968.
- 9). Plaque Ordered for G. A. R. Monument, The Humboldt County Bulletin and Battle Mountain News, vol. 97, no. 50, p. 2, cols. 1, 2, p. 6, cols. 4, 5, Wednesday, March 13, 1968.
- 10). Historic Hedge Planted, The Humboldt County Bulletin and Battle Mountain News, vol. 98, no. 1, p. 2, cols. 3, 4, p. 9, cols. 6, 7, 8, Wednesday, April 3, 1968.
- 11). Monument to be Erected This Week, The Humboldt County Bulletin and Battle Mountain News, vol. 98, no. 5, p. 1, cols. 5, 6, 7, Wednesday, May 1, 1968.
- 12). GAR Monument Dedication to be Sunday, The Humboldt County Bulletin and Battle Mountain News, vol. 98, no. 8, p. 1, col. 6, Wednesday, May 22, 1968.
- 13). These Photos, The Humboldt County Bulletin and Battle Mountain News, vol. 98, no. 9, p. 1, col. 3, Wednesday, May 29, 1968.

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