

Tonopah Historic Mining Park Foundation presents

Tailings

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Tonopah circa 1902 in color!

Tonopah Historic Mining Park Foundation

The Tonopah Historic Mining Park Foundation (*EIN: 88-0464320*) is a Nevada 501c3 nonprofit corporation, whose educational purpose is to preserve Nevada's mining history, heritage, and the life surrounding it at the Tonopah Historic Mining Park. Contributions may be tax deductible pursuant to the provisions of Section 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. § 170(c). For more information please visit our website at: www.tonopahminingpark@gmail.com

Created in October 2000, the THMPF was created as a partnership with the Town of Tonopah, and provides educational displays and information made available to all who are interested in learning about our amazing mining history in Nevada, which includes not only the mines, but the people and businesses that made our local mining towns what they are today.

The THMPF Board consists of the following dedicated individuals, who have generously donated their time and effort to the Foundation and the Park, really making a genuine impact.

- Ann Carpenter, Chairman
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- This publication was created by Eva La Rue, THMPF Administrative Assistant.

Thanks to the wonderful staff of the Tonopah Historic Mining Park and the Town of Tonopah. These are truly incredible people who greatly care about our local history and sharing it with the world. We definitely appreciate you all and enjoy working with you as a team.

- Chris Mulkerns, Administrative Manager
- Kat Galli, Tourism & Events Coordinator
- Jeff Martin, Park Host & Tour Guide
- Russ Gartz, Tour Guide & Photographer
- Mike Baca, Tour Guide

Our next big project we are tackling is the Silver Top orehouse (aka Grizzly), the walking bridge to the building, and the trestle above the walking bridge. Not only that, but restoring/repairing the Desert Queen hoist house and headframe as well. These areas are currently not accessible by the general public and by making the necessary repairs, visitors will be able to not only get a close-up view, but will be able to enter into these buildings and learn more about how the ore was processed at these mines.

However, we cannot do it without your support! Your many generous donations over the years have made a difference and enabled us to complete other much needed projects, so we are hoping we can count on you again. Please take a moment of your time and send in your donation today! Thanking you in advance and hope to see you at the Park!

Tonopah Takes Hold, Part 2

Note: This is the second installment from Foundation Trustee Stanley Paher, presenting a series of articles on Tonopah and Goldfield which were initially written by a newspaperman on the scene: Carl Glasscock. The articles have been edited for clarity and space.



Tonopah, facing towards the future Tonopah Historic Mining Park, probably in the summer of 1902, shows tents amid recently constructed wooden buildings.

When the town site of Tonopah was surveyed in the first days of settlement, Jim Butler and Tasker Oddie designated one lot for a Mrs. MacGregor, who was one of the substantial citizens of Belmont. It was a desirable lot with a promise of considerable value when the town should grow as the founders expected, and as it did very quickly. One of the newcomers therefore

promptly chose it as his own, put down a board floor and erected a tent. Butler and his associates informed the lot jumper that he was on property belonging to a most estimable woman named Mrs. MacGregor, and that Mrs. MacGregor wouldn't like it at all, and that he had better get off, and do it now. The lot jumper declined, and went about his business.

When he returned, he found that his tent had been dragged into the street and burned. The wail that went up was heard all the way



By the Winter of 1902 most of the tents were replaced by wooden buildings and Main Street is clearly identifiable with the many false fronted business buildings with advertising. The mining area at the foot of Mt. Oddie shows further development.

to Carson City where it echoed so clearly in the courts that it brought forth a verdict of damages of five thousand dollars and costs. "The boys ought not to have burned that tent," says the Senator, grinning. "It had five thousand dollars in currency in it. At least that's what the man said, and he made it stick. We paid." But Mrs. MacGregor retained the lot, and duly profited thereby.

Lot jumpers were more active in those first days than claim jumpers. A Mrs. Davidson, still a resident of Tonopah after thirty years, held a lot at Florence Avenue and Erie Main Street. A man named Sollender decided that it was a good lot, and proceeded to start housekeeping on it. Then "Diamondfield Jack" Davis, who came to the camp with an earned reputation as a detective, border fighter and once convicted killer, decided that he'd use the lot himself. His bluff worked, and Sollender moved out. But others took a hand in the absence of Diamondfield Jack, hitched a team of mules to the platform on which the tent was raised and dragged it up the hillside. It was nothing for a man of Diamondfield Jack's talents to get excited about, and he accepted the new location peacefully. There were some who maintained that he didn't even know the tent had been moved. Men were that way sometimes in the early days.



Tonopah in 1902, looking up Main Street towards Mount Butler in the south.

In any event, a bearded and benevolent-looking photographer named E. W. Smith, who took most of the early pictures used in illustration of this narrative, finally occupied the lot in peace and reasonable security.

One more claim-jumping story is told by Senator Oddie. Tom Lockhart, an acquaintance of Butler and Oddie, jumped two claims of the eight originally located by Butler. Butler was inclined to be patient, as a lazy man must be, but this looked a little too rough, and his anger stirred. Strong for peace through diplomacy if it could be so gained, Oddie went to the ground in question and informed Lockhart that it belonged to the original locators, and suggested pleasantly that he retire.

Lockhart was willing to fight. Oddie preferred to reason. It ended with Lockhart unclenching his fists and agreeing to get off if Butler and Oddie could convince him he was wrong. They brought the records to do so, and Lockhart moved over to a new location on what became the Tonopah Extension, which eventually produced \$3,087,437 in dividends, and perhaps twice that much in gold and silver. But that was after Lockhart had sold to Charles M. Schwab for twenty-eight thousand dollars. When, a few days after the sale, he learned that Schwab had been prepared to pay fifty-six thousand dollars, Lockhart wailed to a jeering world that he had lost twenty-eight thousand dollars in that hole.

With money like that being passed around, and Oddie feeling his responsibility to his directors, he soon found himself with numerous enemies in the riff-raff of the camp. Billy Metson tells another story.

“When they built the narrow-gage railroad to Tonopah, they put on a luxurious narrow-gage sleeping-car. The train used to pull out about one o’clock in the morning. The car was

open at nine and any one desiring to occupy a berth could do so. One night I boarded the car and was asleep in my berth until awakened by very bad language. It seemed that Oddie had done to bed in the opposite berth, and a couple of men were standing before him. One of them said, 'I've been following you for two weeks to kill you, and I'm going to do it right here.' And he had a gun down on Oddie, who was at his mercy.

"I had a 'forty-five' under my pillow, and I promptly crowded it into the back of the fellow who had the gun, and invited him to drop it. He did. Then I suggested that the two of them leave the car, and I followed along until they got down into the railroad yard. After they had gone about fifteen feet, they told me it wasn't my fight, and that they were coming back to 'get' Oddie. I suggested that they come along before the train pulled out and we would try to do the best we could.

"They did not return. Oddie and I dressed and waited until the train pulled out, but there were no more visits.

"Oddie is a very mild-mannered, sociable fellow, and is fully equipped with moral and physical courage. These fellows got him while he was asleep, and he didn't have a chance".

Despite such incidents, Tonopah was a remarkably peaceful and well-regulated camp for the time, though to without its high lights. Cash income in the summer and autumn of 1901 was far greater than a desert town of a few hundred population really needed to maintain itself. Local business boomed. Stores, saloons, blacksmith shops, restaurants, gambling layouts, and other appurtenances of a mining camp sprang up and thrived.



Among the "Original Locators of Tonopah and First Residents" are Tasker Oddie, J. H. Jenkins, Jim Butler, Belle Butler, and possibly E. W. Smith's dog, Shep.

The Brougher brothers started a saloon; Ole Elliott started a saloon; Harry Ramsey started a saloon; Wyatt Earp started a saloon; Jim Butler started a saloon; Tom Kendall and Jack Carey started a saloon – the Tonopah Club – soon to be most famous of them all. It was to thrive through the prosperous years as the scene of many of the most colorful events incident to the life of a richly producing mining town, and to be the setting of anecdotes that have attained the dignity of legends.

The present Tonopah Club is still owned by Tom Kendall, who looks to-day far more like the man one would expect to found and manage the business than did the slender, clean-cut, black-eyed, black-haired youth who actually did found it. Its glories have departed but its legends live on. The bar where champagne frequently displaced Bourbon or beer, the better to celebrate discovery of some new strike or the flotation of some new company or merger, is now a lunch counter. The gambling rooms beyond the bar again sound with the drone of the crap dealer, the click of the roulette wheel, and the slip of cards and chink of silver dollars at the faro bank, since the licensing of open gambling by the state.

The stakes, however, are not what they were. Some sensational play took place in the Tonopah Club in its heyday. There was, for instance, the thirty-four thousand dollars lost to house by Charley Taylor in a single sitting. Taylor had made a big cash clean up in a mining deal and was anxious to test out a system that he had devised for beating the roulette wheel. The owners of the gambling concession in the Tonopah Club were willing to oblige.

They set up an extra wheel in a private room at the rear, where the system player would not be annoyed by idle spectators or traffic. A dealer named Mercer, one of the regular employees of the house, presided. Taylor bought five thousand dollars' worth of chips and proceeded to systematize. That was at two o'clock in the afternoon. At two the next morning he had dropped thirty-four thousand dollars. So, he bought a round of champagne for the crowd that had squeezed into the private room despite the traffic rules, and called it a day.

**“Tonopah
Club”**

**A Cosy
Resort.**

**Thomas Kendall Prop.,
● ● ● ● TONOPAH, Nev.**

The best of everything in the way of liquid refreshments can be found at this popular sporting house. Only first-class articles of

**Liquors,
Wines,
and Cigars ● ● ● ●**

Nice Cool Lager Beer.

“The Tonopah” is an up-to-date saloon in every respect. Card tables for lovers of whist, solo and other games.

A gentle **TIGER** in club room.

A share of the public patronage is solicited.
Courteous treatment extended to visitors.

Tonopah Bonanza, December 14, 1901

“He was the coldest gambler I ever saw, and I’ve seen a lot of them,” Tom Kendall told me recently in the Elks Club of Tonopah. “He never batted an eye or fluttered a hair on a five-thousand-dollar bet, win or lose. I wasn’t able to figure out his system. Any-way it was not good.”

But that was one of the high lights of later days in the Tonopah Club. At first there was no such big money in the camp. When Tom Kendall and Jack Carey started the place, their profits were chiefly from whisky and beer freighted across the desert from the narrow-gage railroad at Sodaville. The gambling was incidental. One Hennessy dealt a stud game. George Wingfield also dealt stud, played draw or dealt faro, when opportunity and the bank roll made it possible.

Wingfield was then a smart young cowboy who had come into the new camp from Oregon. He was a cool-headed poker player, and Kendall and Carey liked to have him around. When he won, he was a spender. When he lost, he was still good-natured, and the winners at his game were likely to imitate his generosity. Cigars and drinks were ordered freely from the bar. Hennessy was not so free-handed or so popular, but he was reliable, and the Tonopah Club wanted more than one game to entertain its customers.

At first there wasn’t much cash available. The gambling hardly promised sufficient returns to justify payment for a license, and without a license the faro bank was forced to operate, when it operated at all, without a limit. The result was that any gambler with a sufficient roll and nerve to play it frequently could break the bank by doubling up on his bets.

Still Wingfield was optimistic, and frequently appealed to Kendall, Carey, Hennessy, Bliss Robinson and others to back a faro bank. Such a game, without a limit, was known as a flare, or flyer. And in one such game for which the bank roll was subscribed by Carey, Robinson, and Wingfield, the latter, dealing, won twenty-two hundred dollars from Sammy Tyke and Frank Golden, later proprietor of the Golden Hotel in Reno, which is still headquarters for mining men in Nevada.

With that capital Wingfield and Carey organized the gambling concession of the Tonopah Club on a more businesslike basis, purchased the necessary license, ended the flare games and headed for prosperity.

And then, during a temporary absence of Wingfield, a man named Brock appeared from Salt Lake City with a bank roll sufficient to choke a burro, and an ambition to buy in. Momentarily dazed by the spectacle of such a roll, Carey agreed. Wingfield returned to face an argument.

Tom Kendall was for Wingfield. Jack Carey was for Bock. It looked like a bad day for the Tonopah Club. The club was Tom’s baby, but Solomon had nothing on him. He told Carey he would cut the club in two. The building was of lumber, sixty feet long on the street, and perhaps half that deep. It would be a simple surgical operation for a good carpenter.

The bluff, if it was a bluff, worked. Carey withdrew his support from Brock, and the Tonopah Club continued under one roof, with Kendall and Carey as its proprietors and Wingfield and Carey as the concessionaires of its games.

So, the camp moved along into its first winter as a proved mining town.

The Great Nevada Meteor of 1894

Would Have Passed Over Tonopah (Had It Existed Then)

By Thomas J. Straka

On February 1, 1894 a meteor passed over present-day Tonopah and landed somewhere east of town. Men that went in search of the meteorite at the time found only branches broken off trees by meteor fragments, sagebrush torn up by the roots, and a few scattered meteorite fragments.¹



Fifteen years later a meteorite presumed to be its remains was found on

the west side of the Quinn Canyon Range (near Goat Ranch Springs) and was displayed in the offices of the Tonopah Banking Corporation (in the three-story building still on the Mizpah Hotel site).² The meteorite was discovered in August 1908 by a borax prospector who brought a small piece of it back to Tonopah. Three men and a six-horse team were dispatched to retrieve it. Eight days later it arrived in Tonopah.³

Figure 1: Quinn Canyon Meteorite, top view, length 44 inches, breadth 34 inches. Photo by E. W. Smith, Tonopah

At the time there were several residents in town who had seen the meteor in 1894. One was Fred Cockrill, superintendent of the West End Mining Company.⁴ He described the event in a letter to the *Mining and Scientific Press* written three days later:

To the Editor: I send a description of the meteor that fell at this place on the night of February 1st. The thermometer registered 15 degrees above zero. At 10 o'clock 7 minutes a brilliant meteor appeared, coming from the southwest. It made a tremendous illumination, suddenly, as if a great flash light was thrown in well-lighted rooms, wherever a corner of window curtain or shade was not tightly drawn. So intense was it in brilliancy that those who were out of doors were dazed,

¹ Phillip I. Earl, "This Was Nevada: Great Nevada Meteor of 1894," *Henderson Home News and Boulder City News* (20 August 1981), p. 19.

² "Fine Meteorite on Exhibit in this City," *Tonopah Daily Bonanza* (17 November 1908), p. 4.

³ Stephen B. Castor and Gregory C. Ferdock. *Minerals of Nevada* (Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology Special Publication 31). Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 88.

⁴ "Tells of Seeing Meteor Fall," *Tonopah Daily Bonanza* (18 November 1908), p. 4.

and but few could tell whence it came or whither it went. It was of a dazzling electric blue, like many arc lights had suddenly shot into existence. The illumination lasted about four seconds, disappearing in the northeast. The illumination brought all who were awake to their doors, awe stricken, thinking some slumbering crater had burst into flame.



Figure 2: Quinn Canyon meteorite, side view, length 44 inches, height 20 inches. Photo by E. W. Smith, Tonopah photographer.

Thirty seconds later a terrific explosion occurred, like tons of dynamite suddenly exploded, shaking the hills and echoing through the rocky caverns.

It was like a huge bombshell had been hurled in our midst. There followed a boiling and sizzling roar, like an immense mass of red-hot iron cooling in water. The sound grew fainter and gradually died away. This lasted about fifteen seconds.

Those that were sleeping and did not see the illumination were aroused and rushed out of doors, supposing it to be an earthquake or that the crack of doom had come.

When the snow melts and the focus of the explosion is definitely located, a search will be made for the meteorite.

None who saw or heard this meteor will forget it, and they will relate it in future years as a great event; nor will anyone here desire to be nearer to those celestial bombs than he was that night. Some ducked their heads to let it go by and considered it a very close call for a star.

FRED CORKILL.

Candelaria, Nev., Feb 4, 1894.⁵

The geologist dispatched to retrieve the meteorite described its shape as resembling a “great turtle”.⁶ Figures 1 and 2 present top and side views of the meteorite.⁷ The Tonopah newspaper further described the meteorite and the local interest as:

It weighs slightly over 4000 pounds and measures eleven feet in circumference, forty-two inches long, thirty-four inches wide, and is two feet thick. The base is oval in shape and it is very irregular in outline. The upper surface is deeply channeled and pitted by the fusion in passing through the atmosphere. When found it was slightly embedded in the earth, showing that it was traveling at an angle with the earth’s surface when it struck. The body is composed of 90 per cent iron and 10 per cent nickel.... When the meteor was being unloaded and placed in the bank a large number of people were attracted by the novel sight and many comments were made as to the perfect condition and beauty of the specimen.⁸

The entire meteorite was purchased by the Field Museum in Chicago in 1909. Later it was dated and found to be older than 15 years, so it was not actually the Great Meteor of 1894.⁹ The meteorite was cut in half by the Smithsonian Institution and a one-ton portion is on indefinite display at the Fleischmann Planetarium at the University of Nevada in Reno.¹⁰

Author:

Tom Straka is a professor of Forestry and Environmental Conservation at Clemson University in South Carolina.

⁵ Fred Corkill, Letter to the Editor: “The Meteor at Candelaria, Nevada,” *Mining and Scientific Press* 68:6 (February 10, 1894), 84.

⁶ Walter P. Jenney, “The Nevada Meteorite,” *Mining and Scientific Press* 98:2 (9 January 1909), 93-94.

⁷ Walter P. Jenney, “Great Nevada Meteor of 1894,” *American Journal of Science* 28:167 (1 November 1909), 433.

⁸ *Tonopah Daily Bonanza* (17 November 1908), p. 4.

⁹ Vagn F. Buchwald, *Handbook of Iron Meteorites: Their History, Distribution, Composition and Structure*, Volume III (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), 1003-1004.

¹⁰ “Nevada Meteorite Picture of the Day – Quinn Canyon Meteorite,” Museum of the Fleischmann Planetarium and Science Center in Reno, Nevada. Online at: <http://meteorite-recovery.tripod.com/nvmetpod/03-07-01.htm>.

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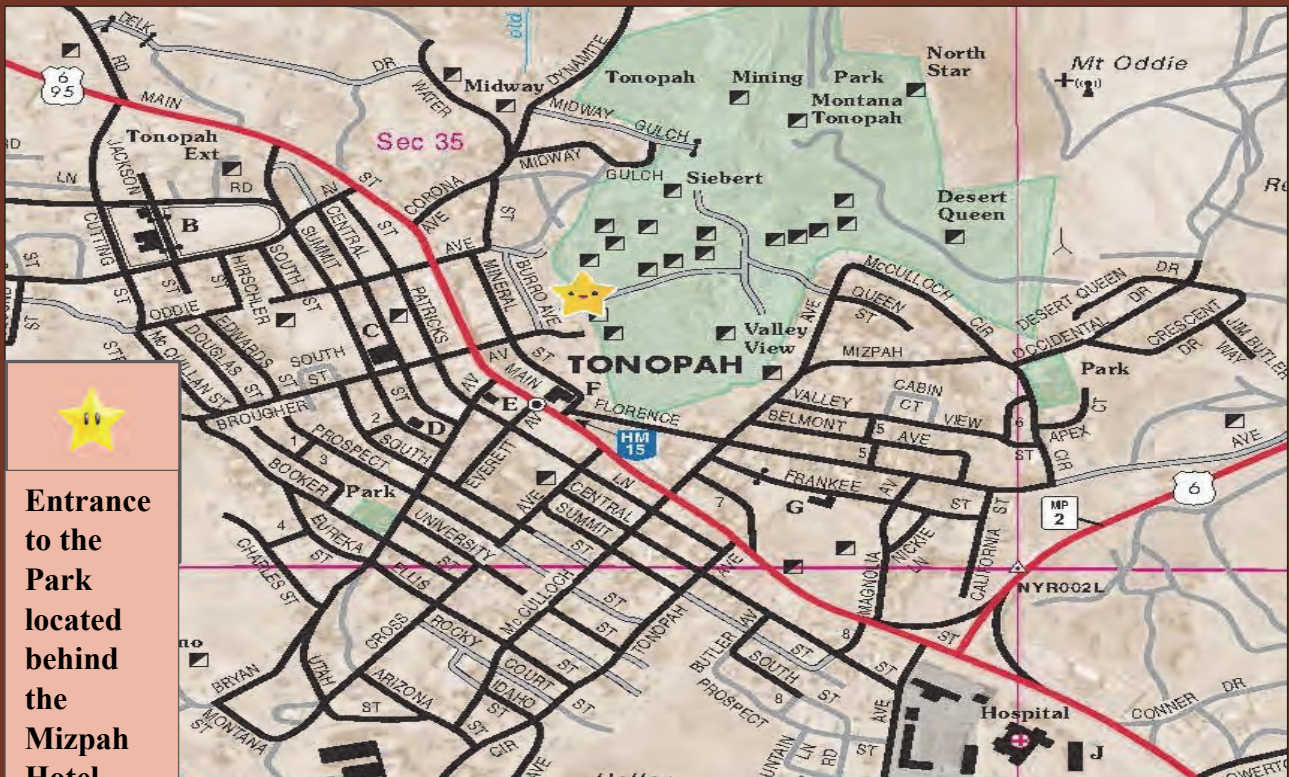
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