

THE LAND PARK NEWS

since 1991

June 23, 2011

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A tale of two friends in the Wild West – with Land Park connections

By JACKIE BOOR
Land Park News writer

In 1898, Jim Butler, one of the most intriguing people buried in Sacramento's Old City Cemetery on the west end of Broadway, was elected for a second term as the District Attorney of Nye County, Nev. Butler would soon trade in his DA hat to become a millionaire silver baron and revered founder of Tonopah, Nev.

At the same time, my great-great-grandfather, Thomas Logan, was elected to his first of three terms as Nye County Sheriff and joined with Butler to go about the business of wrangling rowdy miners and drunken gamblers as the Wild West transitioned to a more civil way of life.

Two years later in 1900, Butler discovered ore so rich in silver that it led to the breakneck transformation of Tonopah from a gritty mining camp to a thriving city with three newspapers, an opera house and numerous saloons. Owners included Butler, Logan and even famed lawman Wyatt Earp – whom Sheriff Logan is known to have disarmed when Earp got a little "juiced up."

Six years later on the morning of April 7, 1906, Logan, while sleeping at The Jewel House in Manhattan, Nev., was awakened by a scream from the proprietress after a patron twisted her arm when she asked him to leave. Logan rushed to her aid and in the process of escorting the troublemaker out the front door was shot four times. The gambler would later claim that he so feared for his life that he raised his pistol in self-defense.

Witnesses testified that Logan, before he died on the scene, prevented others from killing the gambler – described by editor of the *Tonopah Weekly Bonanza* as "an absinthe fiend." Still, the killer was later acquitted of murder and that decision has remained a topic of discussion among historians and descendants to this day.

Butler joined a host of prominent Tonopah businessmen who publically deplored the killing, stating: "The murder has cast a deep gloom over Nevada people here."

Buried with honors

The largest funeral in the state of Nevada at that time, Logan was laid to rest in the Old Tonopah Cemetery. On the other hand, through a series of unin-



Land Park News photo, Jackie Boor
Buried in a pauper's grave, Nevada silver magnate Jim Butler died in Sacramento a wealthy man. Family squabbles over his estate resulted in the City of Sacramento having to bury the body 10 years later in an unmarked grave that is now paved over. This marker was placed as close to the grave as possible decades later by citizens of Nevada.

*Affluent founder
of Tonopah, Nev.
buried in a pauper's
grave in Land Park.*

vited complications, Butler would ironically end up buried in Pauper's Field in Sacramento's Old City Cemetery.

According to former Manager for the Center for Sacramento History, James Henley, when Butler died in Sacramento in 1923 at the age of 68, there was talk of burying him in a solid silver casket. However, his children from his wife's first marriage failed to cooperate in not only accomplishing that task but also in deciding where to bury him – in El Dorado County, where he was born, or in Tonopah, Nev., where he had built his massive fortune.

Buried in a pauper's grave

After more than a decade, Henley further explained, the City of Sacramento chose to take Butler "out of storage" and put him in the ground. With no support to fund a plot, Butler was buried



Land Park News photo, Jackie Boor
Buried with honors in Tonopah, Nev., the grave of Sheriff Thomas Logan on the morning of his 150th birthday, May 29, 2011.

with the indigent population near the cemetery's chapel.

In 1994, the chairman of the Old City Cemetery Historical Group, Bob LaPerriere, M.D., spearheaded an effort to place a large marble marker befitting Butler's historical stature near his grave which is now covered by a small concrete service road.

Recognizing they would likely not be able to bring Butler back to Nevada, a group of citizens in Tonopah opted to establish Jim Butler Park as a tribute to the city's founder.

United recognition a century later

Of the two men, Logan ended up in the more prestigious resting place. His grave is surrounded by an ornate wrought iron fence and sits prominently on a rise in the Old Tonopah Cemetery. On Memorial Day last month, 19 of his descendants were invited by

the City of Tonopah to collectively serve as the grand marshal in the 41st annual Jim Butler Days parade.

That weekend was also Logan's 150th birthday. At a graveside service for the family, current Nye County Sheriff Anthony DeMeo awarded our great-grandfather posthumously the Purple Heart for injuries "suffered while on duty at the hands of an armed suspect" and a Medal of Valor for "his resolve to his Oath of Office, after being mortally wounded, he not only subdued an armed suspect through his actions, he safeguarded the suspect from possible serious harm or death by an angry crowd."

One cannot help but marvel at the irony of Butler and Logan, two longtime friends, separated by death more than a century ago, being honored together for their contributions to the history of Central Nevada.