

WILD WEST

THE AMERICAN FRONTIER

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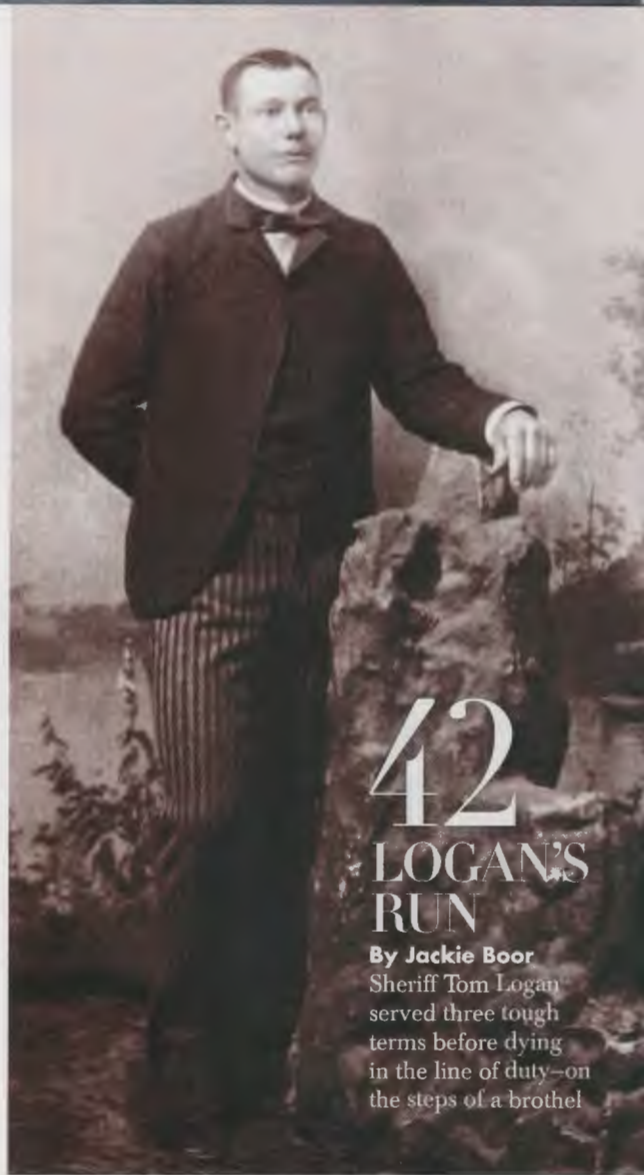


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LOGAN'S RUN

Sheriff Tom Logan served three turbulent terms in Nye County, Nevada, before being gunned down in the line of duty **By Jackie Boor**

COME, YOUTH, IN SEARCH OF PATTERN FOR THE MAN;
LEAVE SLAUGHTERED SELF IN RESOLUTION HOLY,
HERE THE BIER OF SHERIFF THOMAS W. LOGAN

—Jay Gee Cole, Tonopah Sun, April 9, 1906

On the afternoon of April 12, 1906, one of the largest funeral processions in early Nevada history made its somber way through the flourishing boomtown of Tonopah. Beneath a cloudless sky a seemingly endless file of mourners escorted the body of Nye County Sheriff Thomas Walter Logan from the small opera house to a colorless cemetery north of town.

Logan had died six days earlier after being shot in the line of duty at a house of ill repute where he was spending the night. Every mining operation in town halted work. Flags fluttered at half-staff. Schools, offices and businesses closed, wrote the *Tonopah Bonanza*, “as a mark of respect to the dead official, who had done more than any other man to give Tonopah the proud distinction of being the most peaceable, law-abiding mining camp on the face of the earth.”

Inside the nearby jail in a stately stone courthouse, Logan’s killer, Walter Barieau, did battle with an onslaught of personal demons. Lucid one moment and wildly deranged the next, only he knew what had driven him to shoot the unarmed lawman. Was the killing an act of self-defense or a hot-tempered reaction by a gambler known to disregard authority? Perhaps, as some suggest to this day, it was a cold-blooded deed commissioned by an anonymous enemy.

Three months later the mystery would only deepen when Barieau was acquitted, leaving a beloved sheriff’s reputation so tarnished that his family would endure a century of disgrace and bitterness where there had once been devotion and pride.

The first of seven children, six of whom were boys, Thomas Walter Logan was born on May 29, 1861, in the Nevada Territory village of Franktown, southwest of Reno. Tom’s parents, Robert

and Mary (*nee* Perkins) Logan, had married 10 months earlier on the Fourth of July in Sacramento, Calif. An outspoken, ambitious man, Tom’s father built one of the first hotels on Lake Tahoe shortly before Nevada became a state in 1864. When that undertaking failed to prosper, he chased fortune from one boomtown to another, including Austin, Belmont and Pioche.

By 1871 the Logan family had settled in the fertile Moapa Valley, just east of where Las Vegas would later rise glittering above the desert. Partly by example, and partly due to the unrelenting demands of frontier life, Tom’s parents instilled in their children an unwavering work ethic and a ready willingness to take a stand against injustice. The Logans lived in a one-room adobe house with a dirt floor. Schooling took place beneath a cottonwood tree bearing a blackboard nailed to the trunk. Tom’s mother became the first postmistress of what is now Logandale. His father served several years as a well-respected justice of the peace. With the help of Indian ranch hands, the family grew alfalfa, grain, sorghum and grapes.

When Tom’s mother, a kind-natured woman plagued with fragile health, died in 1882 at age 38, his father hired 23-year-old Hannah Hamblin to cook and care for the Logan children, the youngest of whom was just 6 months. The niece of Mormon missionary and diplomat Jacob Hamblin, Hannah was an energetic woman who ran a strict household and freely shared her opinions. Tom, two years her junior, was smitten.

Tom and Hannah married in the spring of 1883. Over the next 20 years their family would grow to include six daughters and two sons. For most of the first decade they lived in northwestern Arizona Territory, where Tom worked his way up from hired hand to grocery store owner and eventually bought a cattle spread. In 1892 the promise



This shield badge belonged to Tom Logan (opposite, posing circa 1890).

DEFYING HIS WIFE'S MORAL SENSIBILITIES, SHERIFF LOGAN OPENED A SALOON—A GUARANTEED SOURCE OF INCOME

of even better opportunities drew the couple to Nevada, where they took up ranching in Nye County's Monitor Valley and later in the Big Smoky Valley.

Tom, who stood 6 feet 4 inches, steadily gained status as a rancher in the sparsely populated region. Well educated by his father in matters of law and justice, Tom served briefly as a justice of the peace before running for Nye County sheriff in the fall of 1898. Logan defeated popular incumbent Charles McGregor by a narrow vote of 120 to 113. He was 37 when he took office on Jan. 3, 1899. At more than 18,000 square miles, Nye County is larger than several New England states combined. In 1900 it took Sheriff Logan, who was also the tax assessor, eight days in a horse and buggy to travel from one end of his district to the other.

One of Logan's longtime friends, District Attorney Jim Butler, had a penchant for prospecting. Popular legend has it that during one fortuitous outing in May 1900, some 60 miles southwest of his Monitor Valley ranch, a fierce windstorm separated Butler from his burro. When he finally recovered the wayward animal, they sheltered beneath a large outcrop where he happened across the precious ore samples that soon etched Tonopah on the map as "Queen of the Silver Camps."

Butler's discovery ended the more than two-decade financial depression following the decline of Nevada's Comstock Lode. As opportunists of both the law-abiding and conniving sort poured into his district, no-nonsense Logan easily won re-election in 1900. The rising demands on law enforcement were reflected in the district attorney's annual report, which showed just 22 criminal cases in 1901 but nearly 1,000 by the end of 1904. A sign above the entrance to the new jail in Tonopah read PIONEER—a hint to evil-doers, explained the *Tonopah Bonanza*, that on release they best "hike themselves to more enticing climes."

By the end of 1901 Tonopah's population alone had reached 1,500. Defying his wife's moral sensibilities, Sheriff Logan opened a saloon, initially called the Logan & Saylor Sample Room but later renamed The American. Hannah believed Tom was asking for trouble by catering to the gluttonous underbelly of society. Where she saw debauchery, however, he saw a guaranteed source of income.

Among the many saloons in Tonopah at the time was the Northern, co-owned by Al Martin and Wyatt Earp, who had come to town with wife Josie in February 1902. *The Tonopah Daily Sun* later recalled an encounter between Earp and Sheriff Logan:

One night Earp became drunk, and his wife came into the place to which he was drinking and tried to get him to go home. The man slapped her face by way of reply, and the act roused the ire of a young miner who was also drinking....A fierce altercation followed, and Earp rushed out of the place to his own saloon down the street...and came back with two big six-shooters swinging in his hands and breathing blood and sudden death for the man who had defied him. Sheriff Logan was called to the scene, pushed his way to the center of the fray, caught Earp by the arm and, without raising his voice, talked Earp into giving up his guns....[Logan] did not know what fear was, and he always tried to stop trouble by peaceful means, although there was no better hand with a gun in this country than he.

As Nye County transitioned from the horse-and-buggy days into the Industrial Age, Tom Logan ran for a third term in the fall of 1902. His main challenger was James Cushing, a 28-year-old miner from Wisconsin who was heavily supported by union workers. Nye County's population had swelled since the last election, and there was far more on



Tom Logan posed for this portrait about the time of his 1902 encounter with a drunken Wyatt Earp, who co-owned a saloon in Tonopah. Opposite: Mary Perkins Logan, mother of the future sheriff, holds first son Tom in 1861.





AS NYE COUNTY TRANSITIONED FROM THE HORSE- AND-BUGGY DAYS INTO THE INDUSTRIAL AGE, TOM LOGAN RAN FOR A THIRD TERM IN THE FALL OF 1902

a sheriff's plate than in the pre-Tonopah days. Nevertheless, Cushing defeated Logan, who represented the old guard, by just six votes. "Sheriff and Assessor Thos. W. Logan, a justly popular officer, gives way to Jas. G. Cushing, who will be found equal to the official demands," the *Bonanza* reported on Jan. 10, 1903. Cushing and the other newly elected officials faced many challenges, including expansion of the fire department, road repairs, sanitation and disease prevention, not to mention the establishment of a governing body for Tonopah, the regional population center, to counterbalance the county commissioner's power base in distant Belmont.

In addition to fighting crime and collecting taxes and business fees, Cushing soon found himself embroiled in controversy over his failure to protect Tonopah's Chinese quarter from a union mob attack that claimed the life of a defenseless washhouse operator. Disfavor mounted over what many perceived to be his preferential treatment of certain wrongdoers. "The sheriff," wrote the once supportive *Bonanza* on Sept. 26, 1903, "has proven his utter unworthiness to hold the responsible position which he occupies....It is more in sorrow than in anger that we feel constrained to give publicity to these facts concerning Sheriff Cushing, but as his actions tend to reflect discredit on the county and odium on the people, it is time to call a halt, and sentiment must give way to the demands of right and justice."

As Cushing's administration mired in controversy, Tom Logan remodeled his saloon, invested

in a variety of mining claims, served as a jury foreman on a murder trial, acquired title to a 160-acre, spring-fed cattle ranch in the Big Smoky (60 miles northeast of Tonopah) and occasionally offered Cushing a helping hand, as reported by the *Bonanza* on Oct. 11, 1903:

Word was received from Belmont Thursday night that Welsh and Johnson Smith, two prisoners confined in the county jail in Belmont, made their escape from the institution on Wednesday night by cutting through the outer brick wall of that building. The men's enjoyment of liberty, however, was brief, as on the following day they were caught in Jefferson Canyon, 15 miles from Belmont, by ex-Sheriff Tom Logan and John McCann.

The Industrial Age officially reached Nye County with the arrival of the railroad in the summer of 1904. On Jan. 7, 1905, *The Salt Lake Tribune* praised Tonopah's efforts to modernize, noting amenities like telegraph and telephone communications, electric lights, paved sidewalks, steamer car transportation lines and "every comfort obtainable even in a city the size of New York." Matters of public nuisance and crime spawned by rapid growth, inadequate infrastructure and lagging leadership were overshadowed by headlines related to dazzling gold discoveries that spawned Nevada boomtowns like Goldfield, Manhattan, Berlin, Beatty and Rhyolite. The population of Goldfield, 20 miles

south of Tonopah, would soar from zero to 20,000 by 1907.

Undaunted by the last election or the mounting challenges of a growing county, Logan again ran for sheriff and assessor against State Assemblyman Tom McCabe. The press described both as "sterling men," while the candidates themselves agreed that if defeated, it would at least be "by a good man." Logan won handily, but the *Bonanza* for one wondered if he and his deputies were up to the task, airing its concern on March 25, 1905:

Don't Ask Too Much

It should be borne in mind that this country is being flooded with men from all over the world, and, as it is to be expected, the great rush now in progress brings in its train no inconsiderable criminal element....No one man, nor any six men, could reasonably be expected to clear up all the mysteries which are bound to come to the public notice. It requires more than perseverance, more than hard work and more than experience to cope with a situation such as confronts the officers of Nye County.

Local justice courts were an invaluable law enforcement tool, largely adjudicating such minor infractions as petty assaults, fraud or vagrancy. However, during the first week of March 1906 the justice assigned to Berlin, in northwestern Nye County, had to call in reinforcements. Populated by Portuguese, Italian and Basque workers,

Berlin was a one-company mining camp 100 miles north of Tonopah. When management began replacing its Portuguese employees with Basques, resentment festered. At one point discharged miners beat a foreman so severely that he fled town. Fearing more trouble, the Berlin justice wired Sheriff Logan.

Instead of saddling up a posse, Logan proved himself a 20th-century lawman by summoning a driver and car from the Desert Auto Co. Intent on getting the jump on the troublemakers, he and four deputies set out for Berlin. The *Sun* described what unfolded on March 7, 1906:

Through the night they pounded along with lights out, as the water in the gas lamps was frozen. On reaching Berlin they got out of the car on the edge of town, and, revolvers in hand, they scattered through the streets, holding up everyone they met and driving the excited men before them into the big store building. In almost no time 40 frightened Basques had been rounded up, and a pile of guns ranging from .22 to .45 caliber were in the deputies' possession.

Logan and deputies arrested 27 men, who were tried before the justice of the peace and handed heavy fines. Those who could pay were ordered to leave camp, while the others remained in custody until they could. The "averted race war in Berlin" captured national headlines, and no further inci-



Logan's killer, Walter Barieau, sits in the Tonopah jail (albeit briefly) in editorial artist Arthur Buel's illustration in the *Tonopah Daily Sun*, April 12, 1906.



Sheriff Logan stands third from left in a photo taken outside the Cosmopolitan Hotel & Saloon in Belmont, Nev.

'DON'T PULL THAT GUN,' LOGAN WARNED, BUT BARRIEREAU IGNORED THE ORDER AND FIRED, SHATTERING A WINDOWPANE IN THE DOOR

dents related to foreign laborers occurred under Sheriff Logan's watch.

Although consumed by his official duties, Logan's concern for his family was evident in a March 9, 1906, letter written to three daughters attending business college in California. After encouraging them to "stay in school," he described how he was "trying to shape up" for the rest of the family to come visit. All depended on a chance he had to make more money than he'd ever seen. He enclosed \$50 and closed the letter with, "With all kinds of love to you all, I am your affectionate Papa."

The evening of April 6, 1906, Sheriff Logan retired to a private room in the Jewel, a house of ill fame in the thriving new mining camp of Manhattan, about 40 miles northeast of Tonopah. Just before dawn May Biggs, a former boardinghouse owner from Tombstone, set about closing her establishment. When she found Walter Barieau stretched out on a parlor couch, she asked him to leave. Biggs, alleged to be involved in a personal relationship with Logan, later testified at the coroner's hearing:

I said [Barieau] should not spoil the fun that they had by keeping me up any longer, or words to that effect. So he got up, and when I started out of the door, he went back. His hat was on the table. I thought he would come out for sure. He told me to mind my own business.... Then when he took hold of my wrists, I went down on one knee, and then I screamed. I thought he was going to hit me.

Their scuffle woke Logan. Unarmed and dressed only in a nightshirt, he rushed from his room to intervene. Moments later Biggs was leading Barieau, followed by Logan, down the hall to the front door. Once outside in the street Barieau turned to Logan, standing in the doorway, and reached beneath his coat. "Don't pull that gun," Logan warned, but Barieau ignored the order and fired, shattering a windowpane in the door. Biggs and her piano player ducked back inside. But Logan charged Barieau, who shot him five times before the sheriff wrestled him to the ground. *The Manhattan News* reported that evening:

Upon arising, the people in that vicinity witnessed a struggle between two men, both of whom were wet with human gore.... An eyewitness states that the mortally wounded sheriff prevented a double tragedy in a manner that showed the temperament of the man who crossed the great divide. After [the piano player] got Logan's gun, he returned and leveled it at the accused and would have pulled the trigger but for the sheriff, who waved [him] away and told him not to shoot.

Logan died about two hours later from a ruptured femoral artery. A coroner's hearing held that night in a Manhattan hotel lobby produced an affecting scene, as each witness confirmed Biggs' account. Barieau, reported the *Sun*, "sitting in the shadow of the gallows, writhed and twisted in a very agony of penitence." He would not testify, pled not guilty and, amid rumors of a mob lynching, was whisked away by deputies to the jail in Tonopah, the new county seat. The *Sun* offered this editorial tribute:

Thomas W. Logan was a naturally constituted man for the office he held.... When the most dangerous men were in the act of committing their crimes,

These tokens are from Logan's saloon, first called the Logan & Saylor Sample Room, then renamed The American.



Logan's lengthy funeral procession makes its way down Tonopah's main street on April 12, 1906.



instead of girding himself with weapons for a street parade and doing what some sheriffs do to attract attention, Tom Logan was one of the quietest men in the whole camp and always did his duty quietly and well. He would look down the barrel of a loaded gun without a quiver, and he never thought anything of it. A model sheriff, a good citizen, Sheriff Logan was a man who was a benefit to the world in which he lived.

Three months after the murder, Barieau, well known to California lawmen for his quarrelsome nature and illegal gambling schemes, went on trial. His defense attorneys were Stephen Flynn, a seasoned litigator from Michigan, and a young hotshot of a co-counsel from Reno named Pat McCarran. Together they engineered a case for self-defense bent on eroding Logan's reputation, discrediting the "red-light district" witnesses and

falsely portraying Barieau as someone who "had never been in trouble before."

The prosecution was no match for attorneys Flynn and McCarran, and on the morning of July 13, 1906, Walter Barieau was set free and soon off to Panama. McCarran, who would credit "The McCarran Miracle" as the springboard to his political career, later died in office as a four-term U.S. senator. Lead counsel Flynn, on the other hand, hanged himself three years later and was soon forgotten.

On May 28, 2011, 105 years after Tom Logan's death, Nye County Sheriff Anthony DeMeo awarded him the department's Purple Heart and Medal of Valor, noting it mattered not if the three-time sheriff had been shot on the steps of a brothel or a church. He had acted in the interest of public safety and in so doing had made the ultimate sacrifice as an officer of the law. WW

Jackie Boor [Jackie Boor.com] is a great-granddaughter of Tom Logan and author of the 2014 book Logan: The Honorable Life and Scandalous Death of a Western Lawman, from which this article is adapted. (See review in the June 2015 Wild West.) Suggested for further reading: Some Gave All: Forgotten Old West Lawmen Who Died With Their Boots On, by J.R. Sanders.