

## “Re-interring Nevada’s Unknown Dead”

The “unknown dead”, on February 17, 1885, that is how the Fort Churchill soldiers were referred to. On February 16, 1885 those who had been buried at Fort Churchill were re-interred at the Lone Mountain Cemetery in the G. A. R. section – the number varies from one newspaper account to another (between thirty six and forty-four) but one fact rang true, with the exception of Charles McDermit and his child, the identities of the others had been lost over time.

Each Ft. Churchill grave had been clearly marked with a wooden headstone that had, over the previous twenty years, been reduced to carved pieces of wood. The white paint, gone, and the names of who the graves held, lost.

The following are several articles written on the re-interment of the Ft. Churchill souls. I have also researched the Ft. Churchill muster rolls to determine who died while in military duty from 1863 – 1866. Though it can’t be proven that all of these men were buried at Ft. Churchill, it should account for at least some of those who were re-interred to Lone Mountain....



# “Re-interring Nevada’s Unknown Dead”

## Line Of March

*Morning Appeal, February 15, 1885*

Column will form at 11:30 o'clock a.m. on Carson street, right resting on King St., Monday, Feb. 16<sup>th</sup>, 1885. The line of march will be direct to the cemetery, and after the exercises there will be return to King and Carson streets, and be dismissed.

### Order of March

FIRST DIVISION – Marshall and Aids. Major-General Charles Foreman and Staff. Brigadier-General J. W. Mathewson and Staff. Colonel Lord, commanding 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment, Field and Staff.

SECOND DIVISION – Company F, Nevada National Guard, escort. Section Battery A, Nevada National Guard, escort. Remains of Volunteer Soldiers. Mexican Veterans, Custer Post No. 5, G. A. R. Phil Kearney Post No. 10, G. A. R. O., M. Mitchell Post No. 69, G. A. R.

THIRD DIVISION – State Officers. Members of Legislature and attaches. County and city officers. Children of Public Schools. Citizens on foot. Carriages.

No horses will be permitted within the cemetery grounds during the final ceremonies, and drivers of horses are requested to carefully guard their teams, to avoid accidents which might result from the salute to be fired at the conclusion of the obsequies.

Chas. E. Laughton, Marshal

## The Second Burial

*Territorial Enterprise, February 17, 1885*

### **Parade in Carson Yesterday to receive the Remains of the Fort Churchill Dead**

Carson kept public holiday yesterday in honor of the memory of the dead. The bodies of thirty-six soldiers, buried at Fort Churchill twenty years or more ago, were yesterday reinterred in the Grand Army plot in that town. Congress appropriated \$1,000 for the transfer of the remains, and the Legislature of Nevada \$200 to be expended in paying due honors to the dead on their arrival at the State capital. The weather was highly favorable for a successful parade. The Legislature adjourned for the day out of respect for the occasion. The procession formed in front of the State house at noon, and under the marshalship of Lieutenant Governor Laughton, marched out to the cemetery. The column consisted of the militia companies of Carson and Reno, a section of the Nevada Battery, the Grand Army Posts of Virginia, Carson and Reno, the Mexican Veterans, the members of the Legislature, the children of the Orphans' Home and public school children of Carson, Carson's band and the Reno band furnished the music. The militia made a good appearance. The remains of thirty-six soldiers were inclosed in wooden boxes, piled one on top of another on a dray, the grim freight being draped with white cloth, festooned with black strips. The body of Colonel McDermitt, inclosed in a metal casket and covered with the American flag was borne on a Caisson. The white gloved Senators, Assemblymen and legislative attaches followed on foot in pairs, each man wearing crape on the left arm. The Veterans carried flags. The drums were muffled. The Marshal and his Aides were mounted. At 1 o'clock p.m. the ceremonies began at the cemetery. The trenches were dug, one to hold fifteen bodies and two to hold six each. The Chaplain of Mitchell Post opened the proceedings with a prayer, and the Rev. George R. Davis conducted the Episcopal Church burial services. Minute guns were fired as the remains were lowered into their final resting place. The ceremonies were over, the troops and civilians marched back to town to lively music, and were dismissed at the point of formation. An agent of the General Government, who came on from Washington for that purpose, was present to see that everything was done up in good shape. Quite a number of visitors from Virginia and Gold Hill were also present.

# “DUST TO DUST”

## *Returning Nevada’s Unknown Dead*

### *The Ceremonies Over the Soldiers Remains from Fort Churchill*

*Morning Appeal, February 17, 1885*

“A Solemn and Impressive Scene at the Cemetery Yesterday”

The ceremony of re-interring the remains of the soldiers who died in the early Indian wars of Nevada, was performed yesterday with appropriate surroundings and an imposing military and civic display in this city.

Out of respect for the event all business houses in Carson were closed, the Capitol flag was hung at half-mast, and the population of this city united with the representatives of every town in the State to make the event memorable and striking.

The depositing of the remains in the cemetery was under the auspices of Custer Post No. 5.

THE PARADE was under the command of Lt. Gov. Laughton, assisted by Governor Morrison of Ormsby, Chief Aide; Captain Armburst of Storey, Captain Stears of White Pine, T. F. Laycock of Washoe and General Williamson of Lander, assistant aides.

Reno furnished a military company and band at its own expense. Virginia City was represented by General Forman and staff. Captain Mathewson and staff.

Captain Lord and regimental staff. Captain Coulter with one section of Battery A, Nevada Artillery. The order of marching was as follows:

FIRST DIVISION – Marshall and Aids. Major-General Charles Foreman and Staff. Brigadier-General J. W. Mathewson and Staff. Colonel Lord, commanding 1st Regiment, Field and Staff.

SECOND DIVISION – Company F, Nevada National Guard, escort. Section Battery A, Nevada National Guard, escort. Remains of

Volunteer Soldiers. Mexican Veterans, Custer Post No. 5, G. A. R. Phil Kearney Post No. 10, G. A. R. O.,M. Mitchell Post No. 69, G. A. R.

THIRD DIVISION – State Officers. Members of Legislature and attaches. County and city officers. Children of Public Schools. Citizens on foot. Carriages.

The procession was over a mile long and much the same, except the floral display, as the Decorations Day processions of former years.

The day was as perfect as could be asked for, and an exceptional one for the season of the year full of warmth and sunshine.

AT THE TRENCHES. The place prepared for the reception of the dead, was at the north side of the cemetery. Three trenches had been dug about 30 ft. long and six deep and at the bottom of these trenches were small excavations for each separate coffin.

The military formed about the trenches in a hollow square and the burial ritual was read by the Rev. George R. Davis, Chaplain of the day.

Major McDermit still remained the iron casket in which they were buried, at Fort Churchill. They were lowered at the head of the west trench and draped colors of the companies being lowered over the coffin as it rested in the grave.

At the words “Dust to Dust”, the gun of Battery A began its salute, firing thirteen shots in all. The choir consisting of J. Owens, Nat Dow, Ben Edson and Dean Hatch sang with fine effect “How Sleep the Brave?” “ Abide With Me”, and at close of the ceremonies the crowd numbering about three thousand persons sang “America” led by National Guard Band and the choir.

Continued - "DUST TO DUST"  
*Returning Nevada's Unknown Dead*  
*The Ceremonies Over the Soldiers Remains from Fort Churchill*

*(continued)*

*Morning Appeal, February 17, 1885*

A PICTURESQUE SCENE – during the service the scene was peculiar for the picturesque effect of its surroundings. In the vicinity of the spot where the service was performed and not over a hundred yards from it, rises an abrupt rocky prominence over two hundred feet high. It is composed of huge boulders and masses of broken, jutting rocks, and this mound from base to summit was crowded with people of all classes and descriptions. Upon the largest boulder a group of Indians were gathered, and there was scarcely a rock that did not afford seating accommodations for scores of men, women and children, producing a scene noticed by everybody.

As the ceremonies began, the sun which had been showing full upon the cemetery all the morning, was overclouded, and the cloud passed from the face of the sun exactly as the ceremonies were concluded.

THE UNKNOWN DEAD – while the regular burial services were in progress only one coffin, that containing the remains of Major McDermitt, was placed in the ground. When the crowd dispersed the remains of the unknown soldiers were buried. It would have resulted in too long a service and too much confusion, to have had it otherwise, and the crush was so great about the trenches that Mr. J. A. Conboie and his assistants could not have performed the work.

The remains were all brought to the cemetery in one large wagon drawn by four horses. Although there were forty-two boxes of remains, they only contain the bones and did not weigh over twenty-five pounds apiece.

The headboards, such as had escaped the ravages of the weather and natural decay, were brought from Fort Churchill with the remains. They were plain, pine boards about two inches thick, and fashioned in the shape of a headstone.

The lower portion were nearly all rotted away and the wind and rain had obliterated every vestige of inscription. Even the white paint originally upon the boards had disappeared, and there was nothing to be seen but the bare grain of the wood. As far as any possibility of identifying the remains of any particular person is concerned, except Major McDermitt's and his infant child, there appears to be none.

They represent men killed in battle with the savages, and who died from hardship and exposure at a time when Nevada was but a Territory and thinly populated, and it is not improbable that over many of these soldiers, no burial services were ever before performed.

## Fort Churchill Soldiers Who Died During the War- Cavalry

The forty-four soldiers that were reinterred from Ft. Churchill to Lone Mountain in May 1831 are, for the most part, unidentified. Lt. Col. Charles McDermit, C. C. V. A., does have a headstone, the rest have headstones that read "U.S. Soldier". I have included the names of those who served the Nevada Volunteers from Ft. Churchill and who had passed away for various reasons prior to being mustered out. I don't know if they are or are not buried in the "US Soldier" graves but assume that many of them are. There are thirty-one names here, the rest in the cemetery may have been California soldiers whose final records were not in the Ft. Churchill files or, possibly, other Nevada Volunteers whose records I have not located.

<p><b>Aikens, Henry</b>                      Nativity:                      Joined in: Virginia City                      Age: 25                      Date:                      Died: 4/5/1865                      Location: Camp Nye                      Remarks: Murdered while in discharge of duty</p>	<p><b>Bouchard, Jacob</b>                      Nativity:                      Joined In: Gold Hill                      Age: 26                      Died:2/17/1865                      Location: Camp Nye                      Remarks: Died</p>	<p><b>Clements, Benjamin</b>                      Nativity: Ohio                      Joined In: Aurora, Nv.                      Age: 39                      Died: Summer 1866                      Location:South Pass Stn., Utah                      Remarks: on detached duty to Ft. Bridger. Killed by Indians between 6/26/and 7/21/1866</p>	<p><b>Commons, Nathaniel</b>                      Nativity: Indiana                      Joined In: Virginia City                      Age: 36                      Died: 5/7/1864                      Location: Ft. Churchill                      Remarks: Died of consumption</p>
<p><b>Godfrey, Isaac</b>                      Nativity: Canada                      Join in: Ft. Churchill                      Age: 27                      Died: 5/30/1865                      Location: Table Mtn., Humboldt Co.                      Remarks: Killed by Indians</p>	<p><b>Hatch, Oliver</b>                      Nativity: Ohio                      Joined In: Virginia City                      Age: 44                      Died: 11/20/1864                      Location: Virginia City                      Remarks: Died in Story Co. Hospital</p>	<p><b>Hymes, George</b>                      Nativity:                      Joined in: Virginia City                      Age: 28                      Died: 3/27/1865                      Location: Camp Nye                      Remarks: Died of disease</p>	<p><b>Jacks, John</b>                      Nativity: Scotland                      Joined In: Dayton, Nv.                      Age: 39                      Died: 6/17/1865                      Location: Camp Douglas, Utah                      Remarks: Died of Dropsy</p>
<p><b>Little, Joseph</b>                      Nativity:                      Joined in: Silver City, Nv.                      Age: 38                      Died: 9/3/1864                      Location: Ft. Churchill                      Remarks: Died at Ft. Churchill, Nv.</p>	<p><b>Martin, John</b>                      Nativity: Ireland                      Joined in: Virginia City                      Age: 28                      Died: 3/28/1865                      Location: Ft. Bridger, Ut.                      Remarks: Died of apoplexy</p>	<p><b>McCoy, William</b>                      Nativity:                      Joined in: Virginia City                      Age: 28                      Died: not provided                      Location: Smoke Creek, Nv.                      Remarks:</p>	<p><b>Monroe, James</b>                      Nativity: Illinois                      Joined in: Starr City, Nv.                      Died: not provided                      Location: Table Mtn., Humboldt Co.                      Remarks: Killed by Indians</p>

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<p><b>Northway, George</b>                      Nativity:                      Joined in: Virginia City                      Age: 35                      Died: 4/3/1865                      Location: Camp Nye                      Remarks: Died of disease</p>	<p><b>Sly, Abraham</b>                      Nativity: Ohio                      Joined in: Carson City, Nv.                      Age: 40                      Died: 9/24/1864                      Location: Austin, Nevada                      Remarks: Died</p>	<p><b>Smith, Fred</b>                      Nativity: New York                      Joined in: Silver City, Nv.                      Age: 30                      Died: 1/9/1866                      Location: Camp Douglas, Ut.                      Remarks: Died of dropsy</p>	<p><b>Smith, John</b>                      Nativity:                      Joined in: Virginia City                      Age: 29                      Died: 2/4/1864                      Location: Ft. Churchill                      Remarks: Died</p>
<p><b>Snider, Frederick</b>                      Nativity: Germany                      Joined in: Ft. Churchill                      Age: 25                      Died: 12/9/1865                      Location: Camp Douglas, Ut.                      Remarks: Died of a fractured skull</p>	<p><b>Taylor, Henry H.</b>                      Nativity: Wisconsin                      Joined in: Virginia City                      Age: 37                      Died: 6/5/1863                      Location: Dayton, Nv.                      Remarks: Died of fever at Dayton, Nv.</p>	<p><b>Thompson, Benjamin C.</b>                      Nativity:                      Joined in: Virginia City                      Age: 27                      Died: 11/11/1864                      Location: Camp Nye                      Remarks: Died</p>	<p><b>Thompson, Joseph</b>                      Nativity: Ohio                      Joined in: Virginia City                      Age: 23                      Died: 3/18/1865                      Location: Ft. Bridger, Utah                      Remarks: Died</p>
<p><b>VanOssen (or) VanOschen, Gilbert</b>                      Nativity: Germany                      Joined in: Aurora, Nv.                      Age: 33                      Died: 9/7/1864                      Location: Virginia City                      Remarks: Died in V. C. of consumption – no address of rel. or friends known</p>	<p><b>Whitebread, Godfrey</b>                      Nativity: Switzerland                      Joined in: Virginia City                      Age: 34                      Died: 9/14/1865                      Location: Camp Douglas, Ut.                      Remarks: Died of pneumonia</p>	<p><b>Williams, Charles</b>                      Nativity: Pennsylvania                      Joined in: Dayton, Nv.                      Age: 38                      Died: 2/22/1864                      Location: Ft. Churchill                      Remarks: Died of dropsy</p>	

## Fort Churchill Soldiers Who Died During the War - Infantry

The forty-four soldiers that were re-interred from Ft. Churchill to Lone Mountain in May 1831 are, for the most part, unidentified. Lt. Col. Charles McDermit, C. C. V. A., does have a headstone, the rest have headstones that read "U.S. Soldier". I have included the names of those who served the Nevada Volunteers from Ft. Churchill and who had passed away for various reasons prior to being mustered out. I don't know if they are or are not buried in the "US Soldier" graves but assume that many of them are. There are thirty-one names here, the rest in the cemetery may have been California soldiers whose final records were not in the Ft. Churchill files or, possibly, other Nevada Volunteers whose records I have not located.

<p><b>Corcoran, James</b>                      Nativity: Ireland                      Joined in: Virginia City                      Age: 24                      Died: 9/1865                      Location: Ft. Churchill                      Remarks: Died of disease                      Co. A - Infantry</p>	<p><b>Douglas, William J.</b>                      Nativity: Kentucky                      Joined in: Virginia City                      Age:31                      Died: 7/1865                      Location: Fort Churchill                      Remarks: Died of disease                      Co. A - Infantry</p>	<p><b>Huquet, John</b>                      Nativity: France                      Joined in: Carson City                      Age: 45                      Died: 6/13/1865                      Location: Ft. Ruby                      Remarks: Died of pneumonia                      Co. B - Infantry</p>	<p><b>McGeen, Francis</b>                      Nativity: Ireland                      Joined in: Virginia City                      Age: 44                      Died: 6/7/1864                      Location: Ft. Ruby                      Remarks: Died of hepatitis                      Co. B - Infantry</p>
<p><b>Newell, Joseph J.</b>                      Nativity: Vermont                      Joined in: Genoa, Nv.                      Age:35                      Died: 6/26/1865                      Location: Ft. Ruby                      Remarks: Died of Hepatitis                      Co. B - Infantry</p>	<p><b>Purdy, John</b>                      Nativity: New York                      Joined in: Carson City                      Age: 28                      Died: 11/23/1864                      Location: near Ft. Ruby                      Remarks: Drowned near Fort Ruby</p>	<p><b>Stotts, William</b>                      Nativity: Kentucky (Jefferson Co.)                      Joined in: Gold Hill                      Age: 32                      Died: 1/28/1865                      Location: At the Walker River while enroute from Fort Churchill to Camp Independence                      Remarks: Died of consumption</p>	<p><b>Williams, Ebenezer</b>                      Nativity: Wales                      Joined in: Virginia City                      Age: 31                      Died: 9/ 1864                      Location: Camp (illegible)                      Remarks: Died of disease at camp</p>