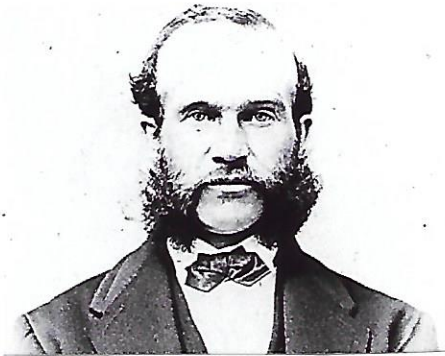


# Mono County Historical Society Bridgeport, CA 2022 Newsletter Bridgeport Cemeteries



Big Meadows was settled in the late 1850s, and by the early 1860s the town of Bridgeport was established. One and a half acres of land in town was earmarked for a cemetery north of Main Street, midway up what is now School Street. The grounds were donated by merchant Amasa Foster Bryant, who owned about half of the available land in Bridgeport at the time.



Amasa Foster Bryant in the 1870s.

As businesses thrived, land surrounding the cemetery was in demand. In 1880 Bryant donated lots across the street from the cemetery to Mono County to build a courthouse. After it was finished in 1881, Alex and Robert Folger moved the Chronicle Union newspaper office behind the courthouse. In 1884 Bryant moved a barn from Bodie to the northwest corner of Main & School Streets. It became known as Bryant Hall and served as a community center for 50 years.

In the early 1880s a larger cemetery was set aside on land east and north of town. Though many old graves were moved to the new location, a small number of internments were to remain in the old cemetery for almost 60 years. A 1902 Bridgeport Townsite map failed to mention that it was still being occupied.

The original Paiute Indian Cemetery is located south of town and down the hill from Travertine Hot Springs. It is preserved and contains about two dozen gravesites. Two marked plots are those of Lee Tom (1888-1961), a World War I Veteran, and Jake Stevens (1870-1949). The current Bridgeport Indian Cemetery is now at the north end of the newer Town Cemetery.

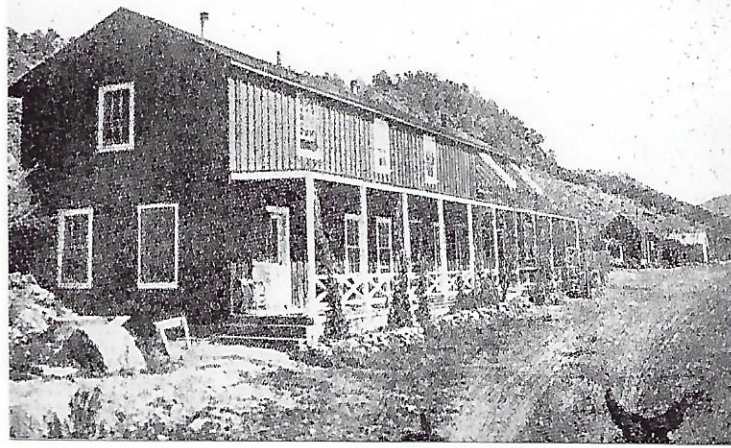


The original Indian cemetery.

In 1879 the Mono County Hospital was built in Bodie. It was difficult to operate and was shut down in 1906. The County bought the old Point Ranch house on the east side of what is now Highway 395 at the Green Creek Road. It became known as the Poor Farm and was mainly a refuge for the aged, ill, and penniless. It was also an operational nightmare, especially in the case of master carpenter and builder Peter Nye, who had lived in Bridgeport since 1863.



Nye suffered a stroke in 1893 that required that he be cared for at the Bodie Hospital. He was moved to the Poor Farm in 1906 and occupied a room for seven years until he died. There was a small unmarked cemetery on the south end of the meadow, but another burial ground was later set up over the hill to the north.



The Poor Farm in the early 1900s.

Joe Scanavino lived with Mary Miller and her sons at the Poor Farm after it closed. It was damaged by fire in 1947. The half that was left intact was sold back to the Point Ranch and it was moved there. Afterwards the Millers and Scanavino lived in a food shed near the unmarked cemetery.



The second Poor Farm Cemetery.

The second Poor Farm Cemetery is on private property and fenced off. There are several marked graves but no headstones. Four burials identified by a sign are of James Cunnard (1831-1914) a blacksmith from Bodie, William Dickinsen (1836-1908), Joe Wilson (1833-1913) and Robert Ritchie (no information). The property is part of the Bodie Hills Preserve and owned by The Wildlands Conservancy, a private nonprofit group which plans to open the acreage to the public for recreational use.

When the Poor Farm was being used as a hospital the only other medical treatment available in the Bridgeport Valley was the County First Aid Station on Emigrant Street next to the old Town Cemetery. It was torn down in 1936 and replaced two years later with a new hospital that was used until 1962. There were no more burials at the Poor Farm after the hospital was built.



The Bridgeport Hospital, built in 1938.

In 1940 a small number of graves remained in the old Town Cemetery that were scheduled to be moved to the newer site. Amasa Scott Bryant (son of Amasa Foster Bryant), Slick Bryant, Stuart Cain, and Elizabeth Evans, with approval from the Mono County Board of Supervisors, purchased additional land from Mono County on the south side of the old burial grounds to fill in what they already owned. After graves were moved, the old site eventually became part of the Bridgeport Park. Memorial Hall was built on old cemetery land in 1955 as a meeting place for the Masonic Alta Lodge 333 and as the new Bridgeport community center.

Each May, before Memorial Day, students at the Bridgeport Elementary School place American flags on the graves of all veterans in both the Town and Indian Cemeteries. For many years the service and sacrifices of veterans was honored with a color guard presented by the Bridgeport American Legion Mark Twain Post 454. Later, Marines from the Mountain Warfare Training Center provided the color guard.

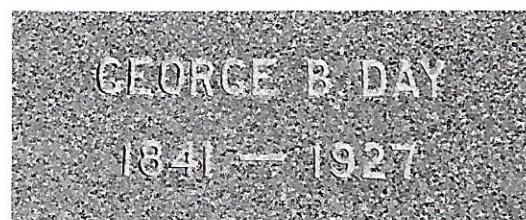




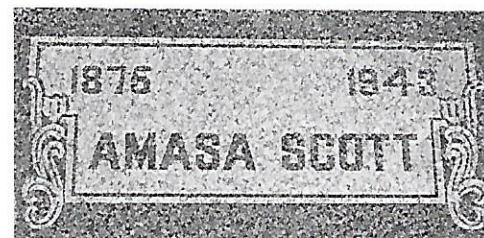
The American Legion Mark Twain Post 454 on May 30, 1949.

Bridgeport was settled by true pioneer stock, men and women who experienced hardships to create new lives for themselves. Community service combined with a good work ethic was a way of life for them and for others who followed, such as the good examples shared below.

George Byron Day (1841-1927). George was known to most as By Day and he was the first white man to winter in Big Meadows. By Day negotiated a peace treaty with local Paiute Chief Captain Jim. He started hauling hay and lumber to the gold camps and worked hard to become a successful farmer and shepherd.



Amasa Scott Bryant (1876-1943). Bryant was the son of pioneer merchant Amasa Foster Bryant, who is buried in San Francisco. Amasa Scott Bryant established the first telephone and electrical service in Mono County, in addition to working the family store and serving as the Postmaster and funeral director.



John (Jack) M. Sawyer (1848-1926). Jack served in the Civil War in Company W, 6<sup>th</sup> Iowa Volunteer Cavalry. In Bodie he was a dairyman and a hotelier. During the late 1800s Jack became one of the more popular saloonkeepers in Bridgeport. He married Helen Anne Kernohan, the daughter of Bodie's first resident family.

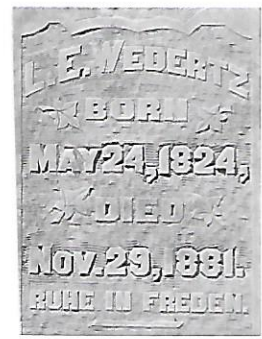


Napoleon Bonaparte Hunewill (1828-1908). N.B. came from Maine in 1852 and mined for six years. He operated a sawmill in Woodside, then moved to Bridgeport in 1861, where he owned two busy sawmills. N.B. built a ranch in the valley and began raising cattle, supplying beef to Bodie and Lundy. The Hunewill family still owns the Circle H Ranch, now a famous working guest ranch.





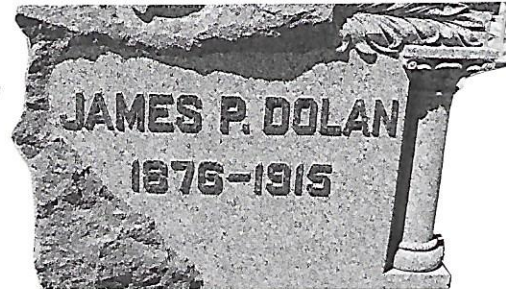
Louis E. Wedertz (1824-1881). Louis emigrated from Germany and operated mercantile stores in New Orleans and San Francisco. He worked a stage station on the old Carson-Aurora Road and opened a store in Bridgeport. Dances and meetings were held upstairs in the store for years. His wife and family operated the store after he died.



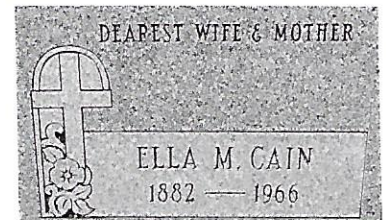
Archibald Samuel Fales (1829-1933). Sam was a teamster during the gold rush. In 1863 he bought the Indian Hot Springs property south of the Sonora-Mono Road and developed it into a resort and stage stop. Sam married widow Diana Muir in 1880 and adopted her daughter, Minnie. The resort was very popular and Sam was a character. His great sense of humor lasted until he died at 104.



James P. Dolan (1876-1915). Jim grew up in Bodie and worked as an assayer at the Standard Mine. He was elected the Mono County Sheriff in 1906. In 1907 Dolan captured the murderer of Deputy William Edwards. In 1912 he married Superintendent of Schools Cordelia Hays. After their daughter Alice was born in 1913, Dolan considered returning to mining, but he was re-elected during the 1914 elections instead. He was murdered by outlaws in 1915.



Ella M. Cain (1882-1966). Ella was born in Bodie, the daughter of Michael Cody, the U.S. Land Office Agent and Mono County Sheriff. In 1900 she began teaching in Bodie and in 1904 married Victor Cain, son of Bodie icon James Cain. Ella and Vic lived in Tonopah and Rhyolite, where he was the Wells Fargo Agent. They later had stores in Aurora, Bridgeport, and Bodie, where Ella again taught.



Sarah Dick Gracian (1870-1969). Sarah was a prolific Paiute Indian basket weaver. She created many baskets during her 99 years of life, a number of which are displayed in the Mono County Museum. Sarah was an authority on Paiute Indian foods and she was known as Grandma to the Bridgeport Tribe.

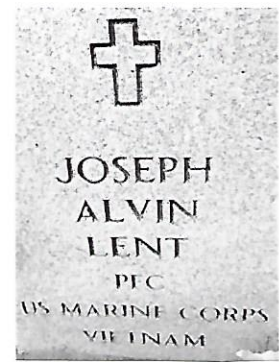


Jack Lundy (1874-1953). Jack Lundy was a Paiute-Miwok Indian. His father was a child when he walked from Yakima, Washington to Yosemite. Jack hiked from Yosemite through Green Lakes Canyon as a child. He grew up in Lundy and later became Chief of the Bridgeport Tribe. Sim Lundy, an expert arrowhead maker, was his son.





Joseph Alvin Lent (1949-2003). Joe was a Paiute Indian raised in Porterville, and served with the Marines during the Vietnam War. In Bridgeport he was a businessman, Curator of the Mono County Museum, and a member of the Mono County School Board. He was later ordained as a full-time minister with the American Indian Full Gospel Assembly.



The Bridgeport Cemetery and the Bridgeport Indian Cemetery are situated on a rise that overlooks Bridgeport, providing an impressive view and quiet atmosphere in which to commune with loved ones who have passed on. It is a fitting tribute.



The Bridgeport Cemetery



The Bridgeport Indian Cemetery

#### SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND PHOTOS

Mono County Museum - Mono County Website - Janelle Mills, Bridgeport  
 John Peters, Mono County District IV Supervisor - Fred Duhart, Bridgeport  
 Joe Scanavino, Virginia Beach, VA - Stephanie Frank, Mono County Clerk's Office  
 John Trammell, Eastern Sierra Nevada Regional Director of The Wildlands Conservancy  
*Mono Diggings*, Frank S. Wedertz, Community Printing, Bishop, 2001  
*The Story of Mono County*, Ella M. Cain, Fearon Publishers, San Francisco, 1961

IN MEMORIAM

ERVIN RAY LENT, SR. (11-27-1952/10-11-2021)

Native Paiute Indian Ervin Lent was born in Bishop to Alvin Virgil Lent and Marjorie Norma Dick Lent. He is survived by his children Ervin Jr, Adrienne, Joseph, Alisha, Hannah, Candice, and Nathan. Ervin graduated from the California State University in Sacramento with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science. He was active in Indian affairs, served as an aide in the California Legislature and in 1998 was elected to the Inyo County Board of Supervisors. Ervin was a generous and honorable man who enjoyed helping those in need. His graveside service at the Bridgeport Indian Cemetery was well attended by family and friends.

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The Mono County Historical Society and the Mono County Museum are funded solely by memberships, donations, and sales. The Mono County Tourism and Film Commission has supported MCHS for seven years by reimbursing costs for calendar production. The Museum Curator and the Board of Trustees are volunteers. The Museum Docent is the only paid employee.

During 2022 the museum will be open May 26 through September 30, Tuesday-Saturday, 9am-4pm. Admissions: Adults/\$2.00, Seniors/\$1.50, Children 6-17/\$1.00. Children under six are free. The Docent is Pam Haas-Duhart. For more information visit the MCHS website at [www.monocomuseum.org](http://www.monocomuseum.org). The museum telephone is 760-932-5281.

The Mono County Historical Society Board of Trustees consists of President and Curator Kent Stoddard, Vice President Lynda Bryant Pemberton, Secretary Sharon Stoddard, Treasurer Nancy Alaniz and Nonofficer Voting Trustees Mary Lent and Jeff Simensen.

Patron and Life Memberships are valid for life. All other memberships are renewable each year effective January 1. MCHS is a registered nonprofit organization per Section 501c3 of the Internal Revenue Code and a public charity under Section 509a2, Federal Tax ID #77-0191728.

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