

EMPIRE CITY CEMETERY

(aka Empire Cemetery, New Empire Cemetery, Brunswick Cemetery)
Ormsby (now Carson City) County, Nevada

Sue Silver ~ ©March 2011

Part 1 - Introduction & History



A little about Empire City

Nicholas Ambrose, also sometimes referred to as Ambrosia, opened up a way station on the old emigrant trail along the Carson River in the early 1850s. He became known as “Dutch Nick” and the station became known as “Dutch Nick’s,” and it included a hotel and saloon. One account notes that a “Frank Rechter, formerly of Franktown, Washoe County, was bought out there in 1853 by J. H. Rose and thereafter “emigrated to Empire City, then a trading post, where he died in the closing years of the fifties...”

In September of 1857, two merchants who supplied the territory on the eastern Sierra Nevada were accosted by Indians, one being killed during the event. They were said to have been packing “goods for “Dutch Nick,” who keeps a trading post on the road between here (Genoa) and Gold Canon.”

After the discovery of gold and silver, in 1859, in the area of the Comstock mines at Virginia City, Gold Hill and Silver City, new communities east of Carson City began to emerge. With the increasing population, housing became critical and there was a lack of readily available lumber to build homes and business. One saw mill, Colburn’s, was set up in Eagle Valley and running by November of 1859.



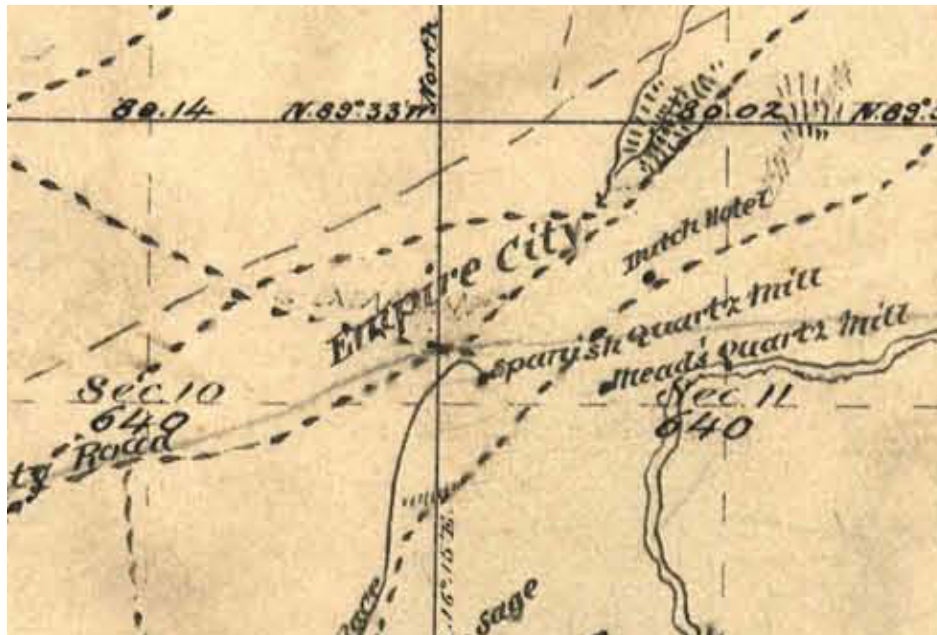
“Nicks”

(Map of the Washoe Mining Region; R. M. Evans; Britton & Co., 1860)

On December 4, 1860, the County Court of Carson County, Utah Territory, “[O]rdered that the survey OF “Empire City” made May 1860 by Barker & McBride, for Wm. H. Mead, and Nicholas Ambrosier (AKA Ambrose, Ambrosia, Dutch Nick) be approved specially.” The order christened the official birth of Empire City. (*Empire City, Ormsby County, Nevada*, by Eileen Cohen (2010) has a copy of this map for viewing.)

In June, 1861, news came that a “New Quartz Mill,” bearing sixteen stamps was being built by Atchinson and Harrington “on Carson river, above Dutch Nick’s.” By August, the population in the area of “Empire City, including the Sullivan Mining District, and the inhabitants for ten miles along the river” totaled 285. In a letter to the Sacramento Daily Union published on September 3, 1861, a correspondent wrote: “Journeying onward from this point [meaning Carson City], the first stretch, of three miles, over a sage plain, mostly a deep sand, brings us to Empire City, a hamlet, recently sprung up on the banks of the Carson river.”

In September of 1861, Nevada’s ships of the deserts, camels imported to carry salt to the mines and mills were reported to have been seen “in the vicinity of Empire City” on their way to Washoe Lake. In October, 1861, the Nevada Legislature set the boundaries of the Third District for Congressional representation to be within “Eagle Valley, Carson City, Empire City, etc.” Later that month, Juan Gonzales was murdered at a ball held at “Dutch Nick’s, Empire City.” His was the first death found reported to have occurred in the new town.



“Dutch Nick’s” Hotel noted as “Dutch Hotel”
 (General Land Office Rectangular Survey, dated 5/16/1862)

From its birth, Empire City served primarily as a milling town where companies erected large stamp mills to process the ores. By benefit of its location on Carson river, it also became a terminus for wood that was floated down the river from Alpine County, California, for fuel wood for the mines and mills. In late August or early September, 1868, Solomon Wagenheim, a Jewish pioneer of California, floated down the largest drive of wood in the town’s early history, reported to be 15,000 cords.

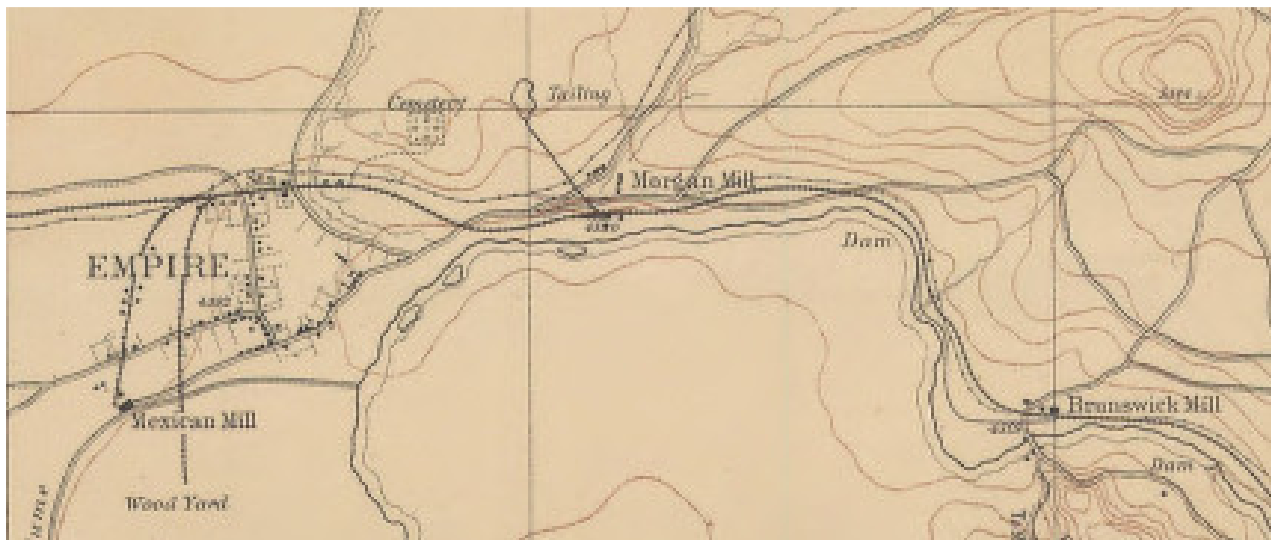
In November of 1868, a correspondent to the San Francisco *Bulletin*, wrote: “Five miles from here [meaning Carson City] is Empire City, with its 300 inhabitants and its two big mills, the Yellow Jacket and the Mexican – the latter crumbling in idleness and the former pounding away night and day.” [San Francisco Bulletin, 11/27/1868.]

Lumbermen and wood contractors started up businesses and profited from the new mining district. The first rush to the Comstock territory came over the Sierra Nevada from California; at first being mainly men, but later some families followed. Many of the early arrivals from the Golden State found disappointing results and returned home. Some stayed and played pivotal roles in the settling of what, in 1864, became the State of Nevada ~ the Silver State.

The town of Empire remained busy while the mills worked and the wood was driven down the river. Workers came and left according to those times. Some families, beginning with the Ambrose family settled the little town with the big name and many of them remained for decades.



Map of the Washoe Silver Region, showing Empire City & Merrimac Mill (upper right)
 (H. H. Bancroft & Company; May 1862)



Empire in relation to the locations of the Mexican, Morgan and Brunswick Mills
 (Excerpt of Outline Map of Washoe District, Nevada (1879), Courtesy of UNR)

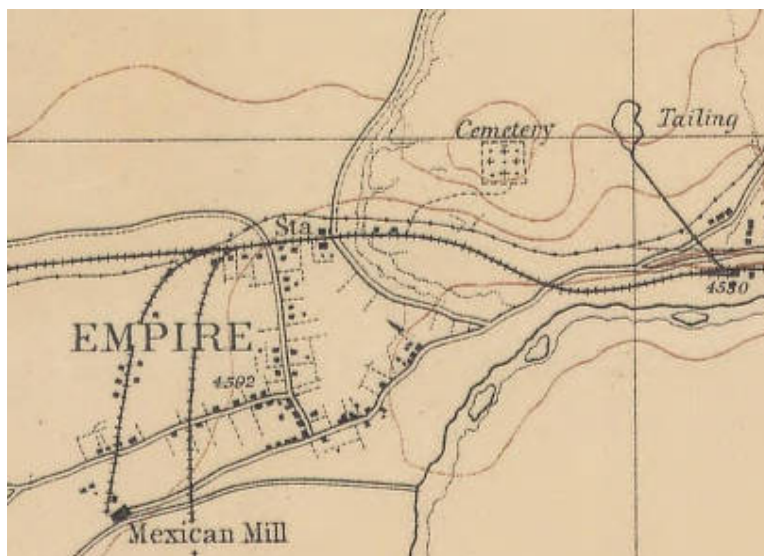


Empire City

(Courtesy of daveat1910, Ancestry.com; photo not dated)

Every town needed a cemetery...

Over the years the cemetery that became used at Empire City has been referred to as the “Empire Cemetery”, “New Empire Cemetery”, and the “New Brunswick Cemetery.” The choice of the little hill where the cemetery was located was likely seen as the natural place for it. At this elevated location, it would avoid the floods that were experienced when the Carson river overflowed its banks in the spring, putting it on higher ground and away from inundation. The graveyard was also out of the way of heavy freighting and teaming outfits that were often prone to accidents under their heavy loads. On the hill, the little burying ground remained a safe place, offering peace of mind to those whose friends and family rested there.

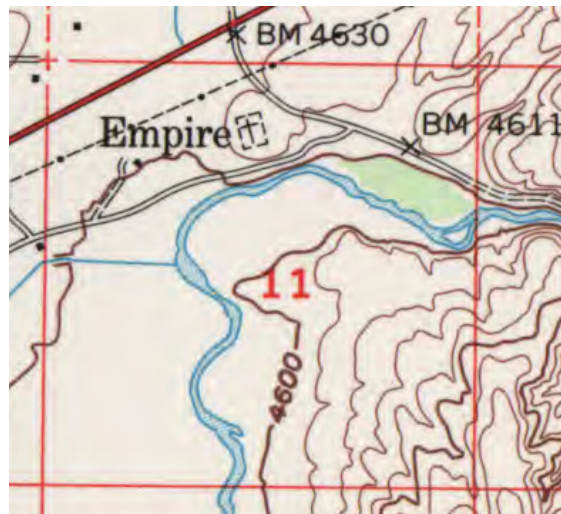


Location of Cemetery at Empire City, Nevada

(Excerpt of Outline Map of Washoe District, Nevada (1879), Courtesy of UNR)

According to Eileen Cohen (*Empire City, Ormsby County, Nevada*, 2010), the “cemetery, which was originally called the Hillside Cemetery, is on a hill on the east side of what was Empire...” Ms. Cohen does not provide a source to evidence that the name was originally “Hillside Cemetery.” Cohen’s book, however, includes a copy of map of Empire City dated 1871, she received from Muriel Darling, which shows “Hillside Cemetery,” handwritten, at the east end of Empire city, north of the Virginia & Truckee Railroad tracks. The writing of the cemetery’s name does not match the writing of the street names, such as First Ave., Second Ave., etc. This may indicate that it was written on the map at a later date and by other than the surveyor.

The land on which the cemetery is located is part of the Northwest quarter of the Northeast quarter of Section 11, Township 15 North, Range 20 East. This part of Section 11 and the South half of the Northwest quarter of Section 11 were patented by the U.S. to S. H. (Samuel Huntington) Wright, on June 10, 1871.



Section 11, T15N, R20E
(USGS Dayton Quadrangle, 1956, Rp 1971)

In 1894, Rebecca Ambrose sold the remainder of the Ambrose lands at Empire City to her son Charles “Ab” Ambrose. There appears to have been a question as to the legitimacy of the title to the land in or around 1920. Contained in Eileen Cohen’s book on Empire City is a statement of explanation written by C. A. Ambrose of the “Ambrose Ranch and Town of Empire, Explaining the Town of Empire.” In this statement, Ambrose wrote that the “Ambrose Ranch was taken up in 1849 by Nicholas Ambrose, and owned and lived on by him until his death.” Ambrose continued:

“On the Carson River in the year 1860, One half of one part of this land lying along where the railroad runs today was sold by him to Wm. Read, Stebbins and Hall. Record shows that a town was started in 1860. Later on when Nevada became a State, and land was surveyed a patent was issued to Judge S. H. Wright, then District Judge for this District [Second Judicial District] for the people, and lots or Deeds to lots was given by him in the Town of Empire and money received for said lots were turned over to Mead, Stebbins, Hall and Ambrose from this part of the Ranch: all the balance that was left was Deeded to H. Ambrose by Judge Wright in one large tract that was claimed of and is today and has been since 1849 part of the Ambrose Ranch...”

The process Ambrose describes is approximately the method for which federal Townsite Patents were issued by county or district judges. This might explain why S. H. Wright received a patent for land at Empire, except, according to the Bureau of Land Management the patent was not a Townsite Patent, but a Cash Entry sale. Had the patent been an actual federal Townsite Patent, by federal statute the

judge would have had to hold out the land on which the cemetery was located for the benefit of the public. This provision of the law would have also applied to land on which a school had been built or any other publicly used lands, such as streets and highways.

Other than the fact of Wright's land patent and the explanation given by Charles A. Ambrose, it remains unclear how title to the cemetery is now vested in the Carson City and County. Muriel Batesel, great-great-granddaughter of S. E. Jones told Eileen Cohen that Jones "gave some of his land to the county including the cemetery and the adjoining property that became a mill site for processing sand and gravel." This statement needs to be verified.