

George C Boyd

George C Boyd was born September 1838 in Tennessee. He was the fourth of seven children of Edward Boyd and Caroline T Ogburn. About 1845, the family moved to Christian County in Kentucky. When George was eight years old, his father died, leaving his mother to care for seven small children.¹ On the 1860 censuses, George is listed as living and working in both Carson City and Gold Hill, both mining towns in Carson County, Utah Territory (now Nevada).²

By 1873, George was in Pioche, Lincoln, Nevada, where he was appointed as a deputy constable and night policeman. George was described as “well known to all citizens as an excellent officer, performing all his duties in the most correct manner. Our town has become infested with many petty thieves who prowl around in the darkness to rob and steal. Boyd has served some time as an officer in Pioche and will use his best endeavors to protect the property of everyone”.³

A few months later, George went into the Philadelphia Brewery and “became abusive and had an altercation with the proprietor Schustrich”. George was drunk and drew his pistol which caused an abrupt departure of everyone from the saloon. Deputy Sheriff W L McKee arrested George and took him to jail. Ordinarily nothing further would have been said or done, but the deed was committed by a peace officer, and the obligation to keep the peace is doubly binding on a man sworn to maintain order.⁴ George was charged with exhibiting a deadly weapon in a “rude, violent and angry manner” which was taken up in the Justice’s Court in July 1873. He resigned but was called on to testify as an officer testify in the Harrington murder trial the next month.⁵

In 1874, George and several other parties struck very rich placer mines in the hills above Mountain Meadows. The deposit was quite extensive, and several claims were registered.⁶ In 1875, George was a miner in Lincoln, Nevada.⁷ Sheriff Andy Fife appointed several deputies, including George, to enforce the order against setting off fireworks in thickly settle portions of Pioche.⁸ George participated in the Pioche Stampede, moving to Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory, where he ran a saloon.⁹

Early on, George and Frank R Carter seemed to own many of the 31 blocks platted for the town. They sold lots between November 1876 and 1878 (some of which are reflected in the attached Appendix) with Frank solely selling several additional lots in 1879-1880.¹⁰

George had a cabin on the tract of land where the Leeds schoolhouse now stands. He seems to have owned or partly owned another lot in Rocky Holler where he had a mining claim. Mariger describes him as a *Beau Brummel* to the women (he was well-known to the shady women in town) and a sort of Santa Claus to the children, with pockets of candy and sweet crackers. To the men, he was hard and cold as steel, probably from serving as a law-enforcement office in Pioche.¹¹ George and Frank R Carter owned several lots on Blocks 14 and 15 in the town. Perhaps this is the source of naming the northern frontage road Boyd Street?

¹ United States Census, 1850.

² Nevada 1860 Territorial Census Index.

³ *Pioche Record*, 8 January 1873, p. 3.

⁴ *Pioche Record*, 18 July 1873.

⁵ *Pioche Record*, 18 July 1873, p. 2; 19 July 1873, p. 3; 20 August 1873, p. 3.

⁶ *Nevada State Journal*, 21 July 1874, p. 2.

⁷ Nevada State Census, 1875.

⁸ *Pioche Record*, 4 July 1875.

⁹ *Saga of Three Towns*, by Mariger, 1951, pp. 32-3.

¹⁰ Washington County Records.

¹¹ *Saga of Three Towns*, by Mariger, 1951, pp. 32-3.

In 1877, George was involved in the first horse race in Silver Reef. Entries included Russell Scott, Al Grant, Ed Clark, Henry Clark, George and two Mormon mustangs. J B Van Hagen acted as judge. Clark's and Scott's animals were the favorites in the pools. Boyd's horse got the start and kept it up until near the end when one of the Mormon mustangs caught up and passed in a jiffy, winning the race and the purse. The favorites in the pool came out a long distance in the rear. All pools were paid the same night at John Cassidy's saloon.¹²

George had a clash with Joseph Flitcroft Birch, who owned and operated a store named *Birch's Bazaar* on upper Main Street in Leeds. A piece of land was claimed by both; Oscar McMullin said it was a mining claim, F S Hamilton said it was a building site; others say it was their dogs fighting. George started threatening Birch and Birch even had George arrested in November 1877 and held under a \$1,000 bond for nine months. In July 1878, George went twice to Birch to get up a quarrel and swore he would kill him before sundown and abuse his daughter.¹³

George strode up and down the street with his gun, waiting for Birch to show. Birch heard him and came to the door of the store. Boyd fired his pistol and the bullet came within an inch of Birch's head and hit the wall. Birch retreated to the store office and shut the door, then shot twice through the two-inch pine door panel. One bullet hit George between the ribs and lodged in his spine. He died 16 hours later, at noon on 17 July 1878.¹⁴

George's body was prepared for burial and lay in the saloon where funeral services were usually held. The respectful people refused to have anything to do with him, in fact his own brother refused to come to the funeral. He was buried in a low place in Silver Reef and later the wagon road went over his grave.¹⁵ George had been engaged to 18-year old Mary Leany of Harrisburg. His bereaved sweetheart never got to see his body and it is not known where he was buried. She never married.¹⁶

Birch gave himself up to the sheriff and the acting coroner held an inquest. Birch was brought to trial in the local Justice's Court in St George and at the District Court at Beaver. His plea was self-defense. A full investigation was made and after a full examination of many witnesses, Birch was acquitted and discharged on the grounds of self-defense. The public generally agreed with the verdict, and even friends of Boyd consider it justifiable homicide. Boyd mourned the rest of his life for his hasty deed, realizing he could have settled it peacefully.¹⁷

¹² *Pioche Record*, 28 April 1877, p. 3; *Silver, Sinners and Saints*, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, p. 141.

¹³ *Deseret Evening News*, 26 July 1878, p3; *Saga of Three Towns*, by Mariger, 1951, pp. 32-3; Joseph Flitcroft Birch 1828-1909 Autobiography at Familysearch.org

¹⁴ *Deseret Evening News*, 18 July 1878, p. 3; *Saga of Three Towns*, by Mariger, 1951, pp. 32-3; *Daily Appeal* (Carson City, Nevada), 24 July 1878, p. 2.

¹⁵ Joseph Flitcroft Birch 1828-1909 Autobiography at Familysearch.org

¹⁶ *Saga of Three Towns*, by Mariger, 1951, pp. 32-3.

¹⁷ *Ibid*; *Deseret Evening News*, 26 July 1878, p. 3; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 July 1878.

APPENDIX¹⁸

Block 13

Lot	Name	Year	Paid	Frontage
1	Wah Lung & Wah Lak Hop	1877		Main St
2	Sam Quong	1876		Van Hagen St
3				
4	Sam Wing	1878		Van Hagen St
5	Ah Fun	1877		Van Hagen St
6	John H Rice	1877		West St
7	John H Rice	1877		West St
8	John H Rice	1877		Boyd St
9	John H Rice	1877		Boyd St
10	John H Rice	1877		Boyd St
11	John H Rice	1877		Boyd St
12	John H Rice	1877		Main St
13	A Brown	1877		Main St
14	A Brown	1877		Main St
15	John H Rice	1877		Main St
16	John H Rice	1877		Main St
17	John H Rice	1877		Main St
18				
19				
20				

Block 14

Lot	Name	Year	Paid	Frontage
1	Christy Mill & Mining	1877	\$100 currency*	
2				
3				
4	Ellen Richey/Richie	1876	\$50 in gold coin	Main St
5	Louisa Miers/Myers		\$155 in gold coin*	
6				
7				
8				
9				
10	Louisa Miers/Myers	1877	\$100 currency	Main St
11				
12	Mary Caldwell**	1880	\$25	
13	Christy Mill & Mining	1877	\$100 currency*	East St
14	Christy Mill & Mining	1877	\$100 currency*	East St
15	Christy Mill & Mining	1877	\$100 currency*	East St
16	Christy Mill & Mining	1877	\$100 currency*	East St
17	Christy Mill & Mining	1877	\$100 currency*	East St
18	Christy Mill & Mining	1877	\$100 currency*	East St
19	Christy Mill & Mining	1877	\$100 currency*	East St
20	Christy Mill & Mining	1877	\$100 currency*	East St

*multiple lots purchased for this amount

**lot sold by only Frank R Carter

¹⁸ Washington County Records.

Block 15 – entire block with frontage on East St sold to Christy Mill & Mining in 1877 as part of the \$100 currency* deal.

Block 17

Lot	Name	Year	Paid	Frontage
1				
2				
3				
4	Jacques and Pitt	1877		Main St
5	Jacobs & Sultan	1877		Main St
6				
7	J J Halpin	1877		Main St
8	Joseph Poujade	1877		Main St
9	Louisa Miers/Myers	1876	\$155 in gold coin	
10				
11	W P Leahigh	1877		Main St
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

Block 18

Lot	Name	Year	Paid	Frontage
1	Alfred Grant**	1880	\$10*	
2	Gibson Clark**	1879	\$50	
3				
4	Alfred Grant**	1880	\$10*	
5	Alfred Grant**	1880	\$10*	
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12	Laura Freudenthal	1877	\$100	
13				
14	John H Rice	1877	\$75	
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20	Alfred Grant**	1880	\$10*	

*multiple lots purchased for this amount

**lot sold by only Frank R Carter

Block 21

Lot	Name	Year	Paid	Frontage
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7	Joseph Birch	1877	\$1	
8				
9				
10	H Anderson	1877	\$25	
11				
12				
13				
14	Peter Heintzelman	1877	\$150 in gold coin	
15				
16	John F Costa	1877	\$100 in gold coin	
17				
18	Louis Woldenberg	1877	\$165	
19	John H Rice	1877	\$1,000	
20				

Block 22

Lot	Name	Year	Paid	Frontage
1	John H Rice	1878	\$25	
2				
3	Peter Harrison	1877	\$1	
4	A T Moore	1876	\$125 in gold coin	
5				
6				
7	Joseph Birch	1877	\$1	
8				
9	John H Rice	1876	\$125 in gold coin	
10				
11				
12	John H Rice	1877	\$75*	
13	John H Rice	1877	\$75*	
14	John H Rice	1877	\$75*	
15				
16				
17	B F Brown	1878	\$25	
18				
19				
20				

*multiple lots purchased for this amount

Research by Elaine Young, Silver Reef Foundation historian, August 2019
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