

Frequently Asked Questions about Mt. Moriah Cemetery

Where did the name Mt. Moriah originate from? Deadwood's Mt. Moriah Cemetery and its street names contain a religious affiliation with the Christian Bible and the Jewish Torah. The real Mount Moriah is located within Jerusalem, Israel and is the location of Solomon's Temple. Coincidentally, there are fifteen Mt. Moriah Cemeteries in the United States.

What do the symbols on the cemetery gateway represent? The Mt. Moriah gateway symbols, from left to right, represent the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Freemasonry, and the Star of David.

How many people are buried in Mt. Moriah Cemetery? The burial of James Delong on June 1, 1878 was the first of 3,627 recorded burials in Mt. Moriah Cemetery. The number may be higher due to lost and incomplete burial records. Approximately half of the burials in the cemetery have permanent grave markers.

Why are rocks left on some of the graves? Rocks on the grave act as a remembrance to the deceased. The origin of this practice is not clear, however, the placement of stones on graves has gone on for thousands of years. When rocks are not available, coins and bits of glass are sometimes substituted.

Can I buy a plot in Mt. Moriah? Mt. Moriah is a "closed" cemetery. All of the plots within the cemetery are held by various individuals and families for future use. Deadwood's active cemetery, Oakridge Municipal Cemetery is approximately one mile east along US Highway 14A going towards Sturgis, South Dakota.

Is there a Chinese Section in Mt. Moriah Cemetery? In 1908 the Deadwood's Chinese community built an altar and ceremonial oven in Section 6. Over time, this section of the cemetery would be referred to as the Chinese section in Mt. Moriah Cemetery. In 2013, the Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission rebuilt this unique feature to the cemetery. Some of the bricks used in the oven were salvaged from the Wing Tsue Emporium, once located in Deadwood's Chinatown district.



Mt. Moriah Cemetery Hours of Operation

There is a \$2.00 entrance fee to Mt. Moriah Cemetery. Children under 12 are free. Funds generated from this entrance help with the ongoing maintenance and beautification of the cemetery.

Memorial Day to Labor Day
Sunday to Saturday - 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Winter Schedule
Open to foot traffic but limited maintenance

Mt. Moriah Cemetery Visitor Center Hours of Operation

Memorial Day to Labor Day
Sunday to Saturday - 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

City of Deadwood
Historic Preservation Office
108 Sherman Street
Deadwood, SD 57732
Tel.: (605) 578-2082
www.cityofdeadwood.com



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DEADWOOD Mt. Moriah Cemetery



BLACK HILLS BOOTHILL

Established 1878

HistoryLink

A TRAIL TO DEADWOOD'S PAST



Kenneth Sjogren tombstone, Section 2 Lot 161

1878 - Mt. Moriah Cemetery - 1949

In 1878, the newly formed Lawrence County purchased a tract of land for the development of a cemetery. Located on a mountainous plateau overlooking Deadwood Gulch, this land was to become Mt. Moriah Cemetery. In accordance with Victorian customs of the day, the cemetery was laid out in an oval configuration and divided into four sections surrounded by two potter's fields on the north and south sides. For fourteen years, Lawrence County oversaw the operation and maintenance of Mt. Moriah. During this time, many of the remains from Deadwood's first cemetery were exhumed and reburied in Mt. Moriah including western gun fighter James Butler Hickok and Methodist Minister Henry Weston Smith.



By the 1890s, Deadwood citizens concerned by the lack of maintenance in the cemetery formed the Deadwood Cemetery Association. In 1892,

Lawrence County deeded Mt. Moriah to the Cemetery Association. For the next forty-six years, the association regulated burials and oversaw numerous improvements to the cemetery. By the 1930s, many of the plots in the cemetery were either filled or purchased resulting in a limited amount of revenue being generated for the perpetual care. This led to the Cemetery Association deeding Mt. Moriah to the City of Deadwood in 1938.

As the new stewards of the cemetery, the City of Deadwood with the help of the Chamber of Commerce began to promote Mt. Moriah Cemetery as a tourist attraction. One of the more noticeable improvements included the construction of two adjoining retaining walls for the graves of Wild Bill and Calamity Jane.

Lack of funding however, prolonged the improvements to the cemetery. As a way to procure revenue for cemetery restoration, the City of Deadwood began charging an entrance fee in the mid-1980s. Ten years would elapse before Mt. Moriah would undergo a \$4.8 million dollar restoration funded by the Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission. Using funds generated through limited gaming, the five year restoration project restored broken monuments, repaired retaining walls, paved the streets, and improved the drainage in the cemetery. The crowning achievement of the restoration was the creation and installation of a bronze marker in the likeness of the 1890 Wild Bill Hickok memorial dedicated on August 2, 2002.

Today, Mt. Moriah Cemetery provides visitors with an opportunity to learn about Deadwood's colorful past through a visitor center adjacent to the cemetery and self-guided walking tour. The paved roads provide an excellent opportunity for walkers and hikers to explore the site. Please set aside a minimum of one half-hour to view the celebrity graves. Once at the celebrity graves, add an additional 15 minutes to walk to the historic overlook of downtown Deadwood.

Please remember, Mt. Moriah Cemetery is sacred ground and should be treated with respect. Please take only photographs and leave nothing but memories.

"The climate in the Black Hills is so damn healthy that you would have to kill a man to start a cemetery".

George V. Ayres, Deadwood businessman and longtime resident

In 1949, Mt. Moriah Cemetery was officially closed to burials. Oak Ridge Cemetery replaced Mt. Moriah as Deadwood's municipal cemetery. As Mt. Moriah continued to grow in popularity, the City of Deadwood hired a landscape architect in 1967 to develop a master plan for the cemetery. Recommendations included eliminating vehicular traffic, developing pedestrian transportation, suitable interpretation, and general improvements to the cemetery.