

Sarah Elizabeth (Hawkins) Alderson

At the age of 20 Sarah traveled by covered wagon with her family from Missouri to the Verde Valley.

Born: 12/25/1854 Independence, MO

Died: 12/26/1879 Cottonwood, AZ

Burial: Cottonwood Cemetery - Cottonwood, Arizona

Parents:

William Henry Hawkins Sr 1820–1883

Harriet Melissa Stayton Hawkins 1827–1895

Spouse: James Minter Alderson

Children:

Harriet Lou Alderson

James William Alderson

Sarah Elizabeth Hawkins was closely connected to some of the Verde Valley's most enduring pioneer families. Her brothers and sisters-in-law included [Constable James Gabriel Hawkins](#) and [Mariah May \(Dickinson\) Hawkins](#). Had Sarah lived beyond her twenty-four years, she would have become the aunt of their children—[Charles Thomas Hawkins](#) (1883–1936) and **Minnie Lee Hawkins Smith** (1886–1974)—both of whom later became part of the Verde Valley's second generation of settlers.

Sarah Hawkins was one of ten children born to William Henry Hawkins Sr. and Harriet "Hattie" Melissa (Stayton) Hawkins. On September 25, 1873, she married James Minter Alderson in Cass County, Missouri. At about twenty years old, she joined her husband and several other families on a wagon train departing from Independence, Missouri, bound for the Verde Valley in 1875—a journey that placed her among the earliest wave of Missouri-born settlers who would shape the region's frontier communities.

Sarah's life in Arizona was brief but emblematic of the hardships faced by early pioneers. She died tragically in 1879 and was laid to rest in the pioneer section of what is now the City of Cottonwood Cemetery, beside her brother [John S. Hawkins](#). For nearly 150 years, both graves remained unmarked, their locations known only through family memory and fragmentary records.

In 2026, volunteers from [VerdeValleyPioneers.com](#) placed permanent markers at the graves of Sarah and her brother John—restoring their names to the landscape they helped settle and ensuring their stories endure within the region's historical record.

Verde Independent News Article 3/7/2026

https://www.verdenews.com/features/verde-heritage-perils-of-cooking-over-anopenfire/article_905e4115-d618-4616-a054-380c6bf8399a.html

Sarah's father, William Henry Hawkins Sr. was born on 28 February 1820, in Paris, Henry, Tennessee, his father, Williamson Hawkins, was 26 and his mother, Rebecca Ann Littleton Butts, was 20. He married Harriet Melissa Stayton on 17 October 1850, in Independence, Jackson, Missouri. They were the parents of at least 7 sons and 6 daughters. In 1870 William Hawkins, aged 50 and working as a farmer with his wife Harriet M, aged 43 and keeping house at Mount Pleasant township, Missouri, with their children: David E, aged 18; Sarah E, aged 15; William H., aged 13; John, aged 11; James, aged 9, Laura Bell, aged 7; Louisa J., aged 6, Leander, aged 3 and Emery E., aged 1. In 1875, the Hawkins family, along with many other families, took a trek from Missouri to Yavapai County, Arizona. That part of Arizona was filled with beautiful green trees and mineral rich soil for growing food. They and the other families decided to call it home. In October 1876 William was on the election board of the Upper Verde Valley.



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