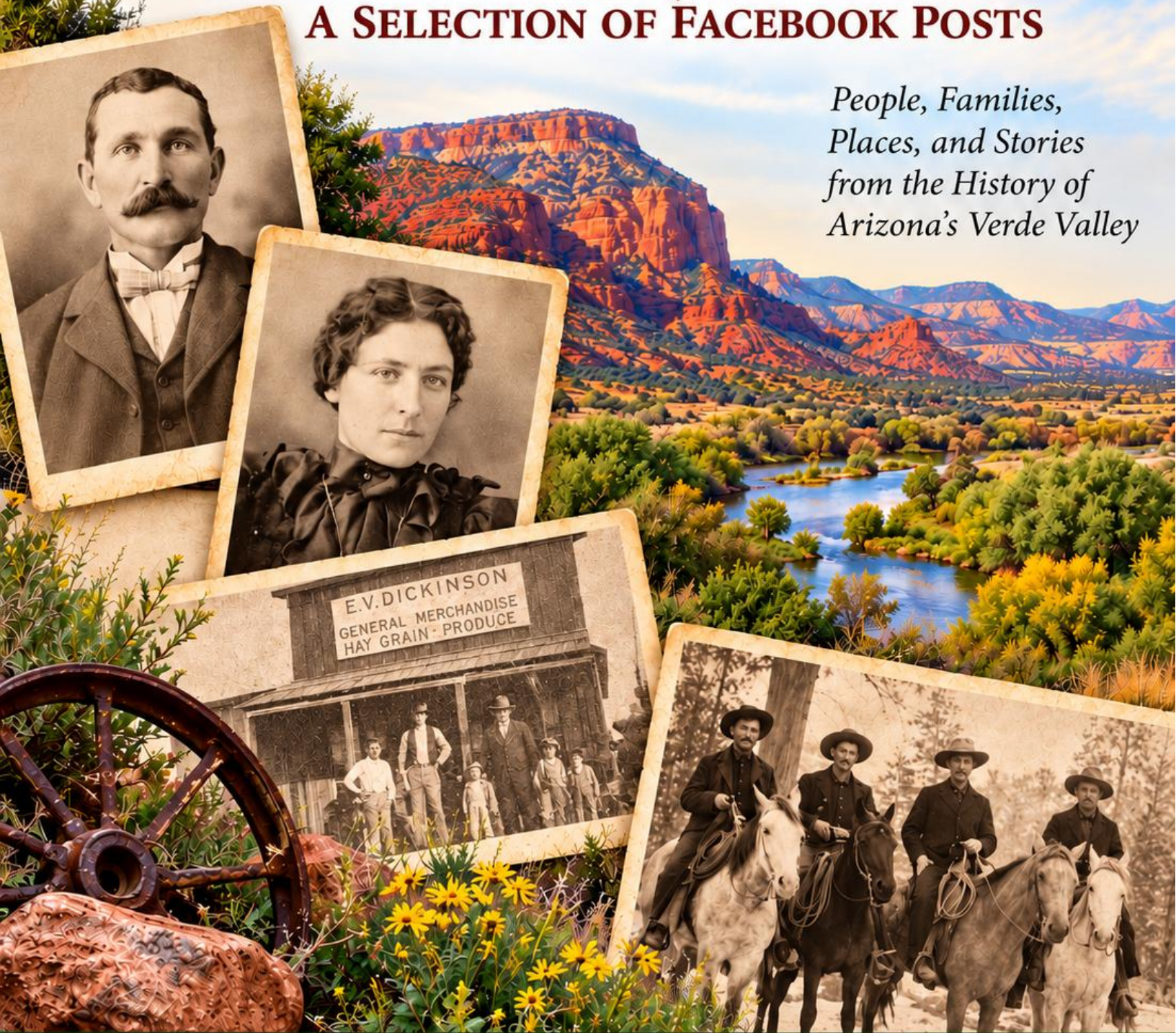


VERDE VALLEY PIONEERS

A SELECTION OF FACEBOOK POSTS

*People, Families,
Places, and Stories
from the History of
Arizona's Verde Valley*



PRESERVING THE STORIES OF THOSE WHO SHAPED OUR REGION

Verde Valley Pioneers

Selected Facebook Posts

by Bill Rowe

Clarkdale, Arizona

2026

*Dedicated to preserving and documenting the history, families, and pioneers
of the Verde Valley, Arizona.*

On the Cover

Frank and Hulda Dickinson

Their wedding photographs are displayed on the walls of Fort Verde in Camp Verde, Arizona.

E.V. Dickinson Store

In the early 20th century, brothers Edward V. (“Ed”) and Frank Dickinson—along with other family members—owned and operated the store and local post office, serving as vital community hubs in the Verde Valley.

The Four Dickinson Brothers

Frank and Hulda’s four sons: Frank, William, Edward, and Alfred.

First Edition

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I expect to update this book periodically. Future editions will incorporate new Facebook Post and correction.

About This Collection

This volume brings together selected posts originally published on the Verde Valley Pioneers Facebook page as part of Bill Rowe's ongoing effort to preserve, document, and share the history of the Verde Valley, Arizona.

Unless otherwise noted, the posts, research, and accompanying text were written by Bill Rowe. A small number of entries are shared Facebook posts from other authors or organizations. These shared posts are identified within the text and are included because of their historical value and relevance to the people, places, and events of the Verde Valley.

The collection includes historical research, family photographs, pioneer biographies, documented stories, and related historical materials. Together, these posts help preserve the stories of the families and communities that contributed to the development of the Verde Valley.

Presented in print, these Facebook posts provide a permanent record for reading, preservation, and future reference. It is the hope of the author that these stories will encourage further research and help connect present and future generations with the rich history of the Verde Valley.

Related Historical Projects

Verde Valley Pioneers

<https://verdevalleypioneers.com>

Dickinson Family History

<https://dickinsonfamily.us>

Facebook: Verde Valley Pioneers — Scan Their Story

<https://www.facebook.com/VerdeValleyPioneers>

Every Verde Valley Pioneer Has a Story Worth Preserving.

Acknowledgments

"Preserving local history is a collective effort, built upon the dedication of researchers, authors, and community members who came before us."

Special appreciation is extended to:

- **Glenda Farley (Verde Heritage)** — For her dedicated work in preserving and sharing the historical heritage of the Verde Valley.
I am deeply grateful to Glenda for the countless hours she has devoted to expanding my knowledge and understanding of the Verde Valley Pioneers. Through her extensive library of articles documenting the history of the Verde Valley, Arizona, she has preserved and shared an extraordinary wealth of local historical knowledge. Her research, writing, and dedication have been invaluable to my own efforts to preserve the stories of the people and families who shaped our region. I sincerely appreciate her generosity in sharing her knowledge and her enduring commitment to keeping the history of the Verde Valley alive for future generations.
- **Bill Cowan** — Local historian.
- **The Book** — *Pioneer Stories of Arizona's Verde Valley* (4th edition, 1972, published by the Camp Verde Historical Society, successor to the original Verde Valley Pioneers Association).
- **Local Historical Societies & Archives** — The Camp Verde Historical Society, Clemenceau Historical Society, Clarkdale Historical Society, Jerome Historical Society, Cornville Historical Society, and regional archives whose published works, records, and preservation efforts made these stories possible. To the many authors, researchers, family descendants, and regional archives whose published works, historic newspaper records, and shared photographs made these articles possible.
- **Our Readers & Community** — To the members and followers of the *Verde Valley Pioneers* community, whose comments, family anecdotes, and shared memories continue to keep our local history alive.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

This book is a collection of individual posts originally published on the Verde Valley Pioneers Facebook page.

The posts are presented in the same order in which they were published on Facebook. However, they are not arranged in chronological order according to the historical events, people, or periods they describe. I published each story as it came to mind, as research uncovered something interesting, or as another piece of Verde Valley history was worth sharing.

Each post is intended to stand on its own. One story does not necessarily build upon a previous story or lead into the next.

You do not need to read this book from front to back. Feel free to browse the pages, turn to any story that catches your interest, and read the posts in whatever order you choose.

Whether you read one story or many, I hope you discover something new about the people, families, and events that helped shape the Verde Valley.

Every Verde Valley Pioneer Has a Story Worth Preserving.

Introduction

This book is a curated collection of selected posts from the Verde Valley Pioneers Facebook page, preserving stories, photographs, and historical research about the people and families who shaped the Verde Valley, Arizona.

Throughout this book, you will find QR codes alongside historic photographs and pioneer profiles. Scan a code with your smartphone camera to access additional resources, including full online biographies, high-resolution photo archives, and grave-location information.

This printed collection represents a moment in the continuing work of preserving local history. To explore additional stories published after this book was printed, and to read reader comments, visit the Verde Valley Pioneers Facebook page.

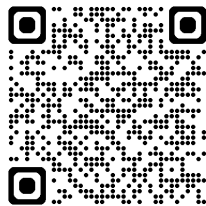


Verde Valley Pioneers Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/VerdeValleyPioneers>

Read Facebook Posts without using Facebook

The following online archives provide access to additional stories without requiring a Facebook account:



Verde Valley Pioneers Dispatches

<https://www.verdevalleypioneers.com/dispatches>



Dickinson Family Library

<https://dickinsonfamily.us/library>

The Smith Family's Journey West — 1887



In the spring of 1887, Maurice “Morris” and Mary Jane (Bristow) Smith packed a covered wagon in Cedar County, Missouri, gathered their eight children, and set out for the Arizona Territory with just \$15, two good horses, and a determination to build a better life.

Lonnie Bristow, a cousin of Mary Jane (Bristow) Smith, having already made one trip to Arizona, returned to Missouri to bring his wife and children west. During that visit he persuaded Maurice and Mary Smith, along with their older sons, to join them on the journey. Maurice owned a sturdy

wagon and two reliable horses, and the promise of new opportunities in the far West convinced them to make the move.

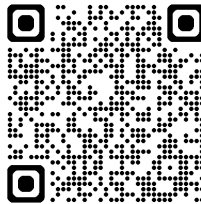
Five-year-old Hulda Susan, the youngest, rode beside her father on the wagon seat while the others walked the rough trail. They crossed Kansas, New Mexico, and Colorado—cooking over buffalo chips, bathing in streams, and stopping to work when money ran low. At one railroad camp, little Hulda, barefoot and determined, earned \$5 by finding a lost horse.

On July 4, 1887, the Smiths rolled into Flagstaff, arriving in the middle of a frontier celebration. A rancher, Charles Mahan, offered them a place to stay for the summer at his family’s ranch near Hutch Mountain. By September, they moved south into the Verde Valley, where Maurice later bought land from Mr. Calloway across the river from Camp Verde, building a home.

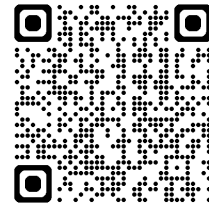
From that 1887 wagon journey came generations of Arizona pioneers, including Hulda, who lived to be 104 and never forgot the adventure that brought her family west.



Morris Smith



Mary Bristow-Smith



Hulda Smith

MARY JANE (BRISTOW) SMITH'S GRAVESITE NOW INCLUDES A QR CODE BIOGRAPHY LINK



Mary Jane (Bristow) Smith

Birth 13 Mar 1842 Joplin, Missouri

Death 16 Jul 1931 (aged 89) Glendale, Arizona

Spouse: Maurice Calvin Adkins “Morris” Smith 1827–1900

Married June 28, 1863, in Andrew County, Missouri at age 21.

Mary Jane Bristow is the daughter of Edward Squire Bristow and Sarah “Sally” Ann Bristow.

Mary Jane’s grandmother, Sarah (Campbell) Ashinhurst (1763–1860), came from Ireland.

Mary Jane and Maurice Calvin Smith had four boys, and four girls. Bill Ed, Wyatt, Ben, and Maurice. Mittie, Julia, Sarah, and Hulda.

Mary is the sister of William Bristow; Ralph Bristow; John C. Bristow; James Oliver Bristow; Elizabeth Tackett; Margaret C. Moore; Sarah Ann Johnson; Josiah G. Bristow; Nancy Stockton Coulter and Edward Bristow.

Mary Jane (Bristow) Smith’s cousin, Lonnie Bristow, having already made one trip to Arizona, returned to Missouri to bring his wife and children west. During that visit he persuaded Maurice and Mary Smith, along with their older sons, to join them on the journey to Arizona’s Verde Valley.

They joined a covered wagon train leaving Cedar County, Missouri, in April 1887, destination was the Verde Valley in Arizona, arriving in Flagstaff on the 4th of July. The Arizona Republic newspaper reported that Mary, at the age of 45, walked the entire distance alongside the covered wagon.

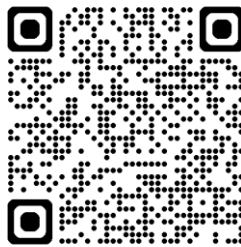
HOW MARY IS RELATED TO THE DICKINSON FAMILY OF THE 1875 WAGON TRAIN

Mary Jane and Maurice Smith had eight children—Bill-Ed, Mittie, Julia, Sarah, Wyatt, Ben, Maurice Calvin, and Hulda—all born in Missouri.

Their daughter Hulda married Frank Lee Dickinson, who traveled west with his family on the 1875 wagon train at the age of eight.

Mary's son, Maurice Calvin Smith, further connected the families by marrying Frank Dickinson's niece, Minnie (Hawkins) Smith.

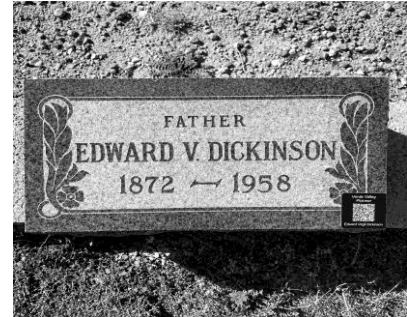
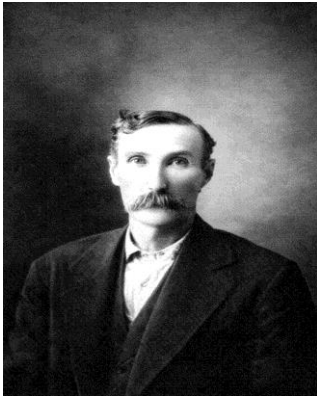
Mary's grave is located at the Glendale Memorial Park in the city of Glendale, Arizona.



Mary Bristow-Smith

Edward Virgil Dickinson

Merchant, Postmaster, and Pioneer of Old Town Cottonwood



Edward Virgil Dickinson was born on 1 August 1872 in Stockton, Missouri, the youngest of Samuel Cotton Dickinson and Nancy Jane Green's children born before the family's migration west.

The sponsor of this gravesite chose to preserve Edward's story by placing a QR code linked to his biography on the headstone. This ensures that visitors to Cottonwood Cemetery can learn who Edward was, a frontier child, a merchant, a postmaster, and a contributor to the growth of Old Town Cottonwood.

A Frontier Childhood on the Wagon Road

In April 1875, when Edward was just three years old, the Dickinson family joined a wagon train departing Humansville, Missouri. Over the next three months and twenty days, they crossed Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico, followed the Old Star Mail route through Winslow and Holbrook, and pushed over the Mogollon Rim by way of Pine Springs, Stoneman's Lake, and Rattlesnake Tanks.

They arrived in the Verde Valley on 23 August 1875, settling near Wales Arnold's ranch at Montezuma Well, a journey that would define the rest of Edward's life. Growing up in this rugged frontier landscape, Edward was surrounded by a large and influential pioneer family. His siblings included Frank Lee Dickinson, William Green Dickinson, Margie Dickinson-Back, Mariah May Dickinson-Hawkins, and Alfred Dickinson, all of whom left their own marks on the Verde Valley.

Merchant of Old Town Cottonwood

By the early 1900s, Edward had become a central figure in the developing community of Cottonwood. The E.V. Dickinson General Merchandise Store, located on Main Street near the old jail, served as one of the town's early commercial anchors. General stores of this era were more than places to buy goods — they were gathering spots, news hubs, and lifelines for ranchers, miners, and travelers and often served as the area Post Office.

Postmaster of Cottonwood — 1904

Edward's role in the community expanded further when he was appointed Postmaster of Cottonwood on January 18, 1904. His dual roles as merchant and postmaster made Edward one of the most recognizable and relied upon figures in early Cottonwood.

Family and Later Years

Edward married Florence Myrtle Stegman on 26 November 1902 in Oak Creek. Together they raised six children, four daughters and two sons, while living at various times in the Verde Valley, Kern County, and eventually Los Angeles County.

He lived long enough to witness Arizona transform from a frontier territory into a modern state. Edward died on 17 July 1958 in Los Angeles County at age 85 and was brought home to rest in Cottonwood Cemetery, Section C, alongside family members and among the pioneers who helped build the Verde Valley.

A Life That Spanned Eras

Edward Virgil Dickinson's life bridged the age of wagon trains and the dawn of the modern West. From frontier child to merchant, from postmaster to community anchor, his story remains an essential chapter in the history of Old Town Cottonwood and the Verde Valley.

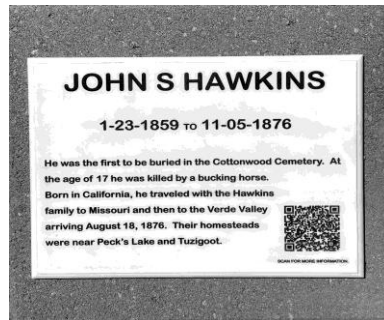
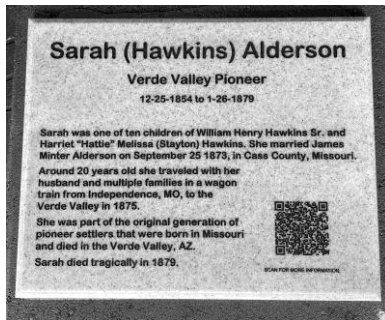
Continue reading about Edward at



<https://dickinsonfamily.us/edward-virgil-dickinson>

UNMARKED GRAVES

COTTONWOOD CEMETERY



For 150 years, the graves of brother and sister John Silvester Hawkins and Sarah Elizabeth Hawkins Alderson lay unmarked, their resting places preserved only through family memory and scattered frontier records. Both died young, and both died tragically. John's burial in 1876 became the earliest known interment in what would later grow into the Cottonwood Cemetery. A quiet beginning to a place that would hold generations of Verde Valley pioneers.

John and Sarah were Verde Valley pioneers, part of the 1875 wagon train migration from Missouri to the Arizona Territory. They were two of the ten children born to William Henry Hawkins Sr. and Harriet "Hattie" Melissa (Stayton) Hawkins, a large frontier family whose lives became deeply interwoven with the early settlement of the Verde Valley. Their journey by covered wagon placed them among the first generation of Missouri born settlers who helped shape the communities that would later become Cottonwood, Clarkdale, and the surrounding valley.

John S Hawkins

Born 1/23/1859

Died 11/5/1876 age 17

John Silvester Hawkins was born in Independence, Missouri. Different censuses record his birth in Missouri and California. The family lived in Mount Pleasant Township, Missouri before venturing west to the Arizona territory. John died on 5 November 1876 in Yavapai County, Arizona when he was thrown from a horse at the age of 17. John's life ended before he could build a legacy.

Sarah Elizabeth (Hawkins) Alderson

Born: 12/25/1854 Independence, MO

Died: 12/26/1879 age 25 Cottonwood, AZ

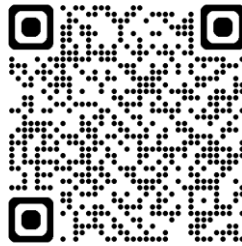
Spouse: James Minter Alderson

Children: Harriet Lou Alderson and James William Alderson

On September 25, 1873, she married James Minter Alderson in Cass County, Missouri. In 1875 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, a journey that placed her among the earliest wave of Missouri born settlers who would shape the Verde Valley communities. Sarah's time in Arizona was brief, reflecting the hardships faced by early pioneers. She died tragically in 1879 and was laid to rest alongside her brother, John.

Their stories, once nearly lost, now stand restored.

Recently, volunteers from VerdeValleyPioneers.com placed permanent markers at the long-unmarked graves of John and Sarah Hawkins. Thanks to these efforts, their history is no longer obscured. Visitors can now scan the QR codes at their resting places to learn who they were, how they lived, and why they mattered. Restoring their names to the landscape they helped settle and ensuring their stories endure within the region's historical record.



<https://VerdeValleyPioneers.com>

SELECTED READER COMMENTS

Rie Helm

My cousin had a baby and it died during childbirth. Over the years, the grave became unmarked because all that was there was a little marker that was metal and must have eventually blown away. I contacted the City of Cottonwood, and they helped me find the grave. I don't know if my advice is helpful or not for the future, but it's worth a try to get a hold of the city of Cottonwood. I can't remember the name of the guy that helped me, but he actually had a map. It never hurts to try.

That little grave is just dirt (by the flagpole) and remains unmarked.

Source: Facebook comment on the original post.

MAURICE ADKINS “MORRIS” SMITH

1827 – 1900

Came to the Verde Valley by covered wagon from Missouri in July 1887



Maurice Adkins “Morris” Smith was born January 9, 1827, in Kentucky and died April 16, 1900, in Camp Verde, Arizona. He is buried in Squaw Peak Cemetery in Camp Verde.

Morris married Mary Jane Bristow on June 28, 1863, in Andrew County, Missouri.

Before leaving Missouri, Maurice had built a respectable life. A Civil War veteran who served in the Medical Corps, he later became known locally as a community doctor and supported his family through farming, wheelwright work, and furniture making.

The decision to move west was influenced by Lonnie Bristow, cousin of Mary Jane, who had been living in the Verde Valley and returned to Missouri only long enough to gather his family for the trip back. His stories of the climate, opportunities, and open land convinced Maurice and Mary to relocate their family to the Verde Valley. All of the Smith children made the journey except Mittie, who remained in Missouri with her husband, John Hamilton.

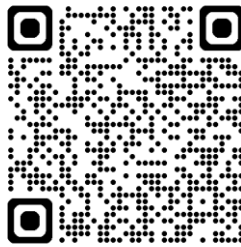
The family arrived in Flagstaff on July 4, 1887, where they stayed with friend Charles Mahan, who was ranching nearby. In September they continued on to the Verde Valley where Maurice homesteaded land near the river, raising vegetables and fruit, and built a home on what was known as the Calloway Place.

Several of Maurice's daughters married into other pioneer families of the valley, including the Dickinson, Thompson, and Mahan families.

- Hulda Susan Smith married Frank Lee Dickinson on December 25, 1899, at the ranch of her sister Sarah Smith Thompson. Frank, a cattleman, had been courting her for some time. Hulda lived to be 104 years old.
- Sarah Ellen "Sallie" Smith married Renos "Bud" Thompson on November 3, 1889, at Beaver Creek near Camp Verde. Bud and Sarah later purchased the Godfrey Van Deren homestead at Van Deren Crossing, which became Thompson Crossing, and later Bridgeport after the bridge was built.
- Julia Sherman "Doll" Smith married Lee Charles "Long Charley" Mahan on May 6, 1888.

Maurice and Mary Jane lived a quiet, contented life in the Verde Valley, watching their children grow, marry, and establish homes of their own. Maurice passed away in 1900 and was laid to rest in Squaw Peak Cemetery south of Camp Verde.

Continue reading about Maurice at



<https://dickinsonfamily.us/maurice-calvin-adkins-smith>

A descendant of Maurice partnered with VerdeValleyPioneers.com to sponsor and place a QR linked memorial marker at his gravesite, ensuring his story and legacy are preserved for future generations.

COWBOYS ON A CATTLE DRIVE BETWEEN THE MOGOLLON RIM AND FLAGSTAFF



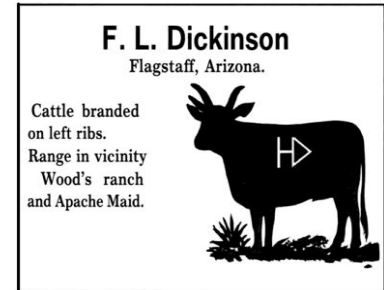
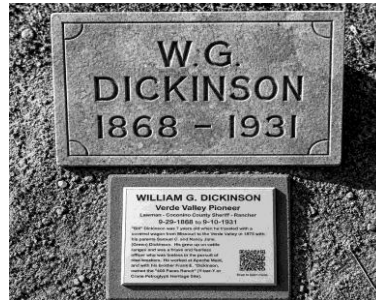
Photo Copyright Bill Cowan

Cowboys on a cattle drive between the Mogollon Rim and Flagstaff. Based on the spread of the trees in the background and those horizontal rock outcroppings, I think this is near Lake Mary around 1900 though the dam in Clark Valley that created Lake Mary was not built until 1903. Pretty easy riding as none of these men have on chaps and from the look, I would say there are Verde Cowboys including Dickinson, Van Deren, Fain and Ralston men among em.

Original Post by Bill Cown December 8, 2011

THE DICKINSON FAMILY

PIONEERS OF ARIZONA'S VERDE VALLEY



The story of the Verde Valley cannot be told without mentioning the Dickinson family. Like many pioneer families who helped shape early Arizona, the Dickinsons arrived with determination, resilience, and a willingness to build a new life in an untamed land.

In the spring of 1875, Samuel Cotton Dickinson, his wife Nancy Jane (Green) Dickinson, their children, and other settlers left Humansville, Missouri, bound for the Arizona Territory. Traveling by covered wagon, they endured a journey of three months and 20 days across the plains, deserts, mountains, and rugged trails of the American West before arriving in the Verde Valley on August 23, 1875.

The Verde Valley they entered was still a frontier. Opportunities were plentiful, but so were hardships. The family established roots in the region and became part of the small but growing pioneer community that would eventually develop into the towns of Cottonwood, Camp Verde, Cornville, and the surrounding settlements.

Samuel Dickinson became an important figure in the community, serving as the postmaster at Cornville from 1887 until 1907 and as Constable in 1888. His children and descendants played significant roles in the development of the Verde Valley through ranching, public service, law enforcement, and civic leadership.

Among the family's most notable members were William, Frank and Marjorie (Dickinson) Back.

William Green "Biscuit Bill" Dickinson. Raised in the Verde Valley after the family's arrival, William became a successful rancher and later served as elected Sheriff of Coconino County. He was also the first deputy sheriff assigned to Cottonwood by the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office [1], helping maintain law and order during Arizona's territorial and early statehood years.

[1] Cottonwood, Clarkdale and Cornville History by AARP © 1984 page 48

Frank Lee Dickinson was a rancher, cattleman, and lawman. Served as postmaster of Cottonwood, Forman of the T Bar Cattle Ranch, appointed Undersheriff for Coconino County. Frank is best known for a dramatic shootout with Porfirio Hernandez who murdered Yavapai County Sheriff James Lowry, fatally wounding the fugitive.

Marjorie Ann Dickinson and her husband, William Back, purchased Montezuma Well ranch for the price of two horses. Their family are known for being the first to set up a museum and offering tours of Montezuma Well. Marjorie is the mother of Mildred (Back) Fain.

Other members of the Dickinson family contributed to the growth of the region through ranching operations, business ventures, and community involvement. Their descendants remained active throughout northern Arizona, leaving a legacy that can still be found in local histories, pioneer cemeteries, and family stories passed down through generations.

Today, many members of the Dickinson family rest in Cottonwood Cemetery, where their graves serve as reminders of the sacrifices and perseverance required to settle Arizona's frontier. Their story reflects the larger story of the Verde Valley itself—a story of courage, hard work, and a deep connection to the land.

More than 150 years after their arrival, the Dickinson family's contributions continue to be remembered and preserved. Their journey from Missouri to Arizona remains an enduring example of the pioneer spirit that helped build the Verde Valley and shape the history of northern Arizona.

LEARN MORE

To explore family biographies, photographs, genealogy records, pioneer stories, and the ongoing effort to preserve Dickinson family history, visit:



<https://DickinsonFamily.us>

Today I celebrate Helen.

A loving grandmother and a wonderful mother-in-law.

Helen Dickinson-Moxcey 1917-2017



my brother, Frank, and I went to the show every night, that there was a movie. We kids sat on a bench up in front. One night I fell asleep and when I didn't show up at home, they had to get the owner, Mr. Beshette, to open up the building and get me. During this time, Jerome was the town that had the most business. My older brothers later worked as butchers in the Company Store there. It was many years before the highway to Phoenix was built, so the area was quite isolated. Prescott and Flagstaff were easier to go to.

As I read this article in the Arizona Republic, it brought back these memories: There was only one business street in Cottonwood, which is now called "Old Town". I remember the fire of 1925. I was 7 years old and we lived in a small rooming house which my mother ran. It was up stairs over a dry-goods store. The fire was across the street down part of a block. My father was ill in one of the rooms and my 18 year old brother, Eddie, was very worried about how he would get him out of the building if the fire spread our way. Luckily, it didn't. Across from the rooming house was the theater. My sister sold tickets, her boyfriend ran the projector, and my cousin took tickets.

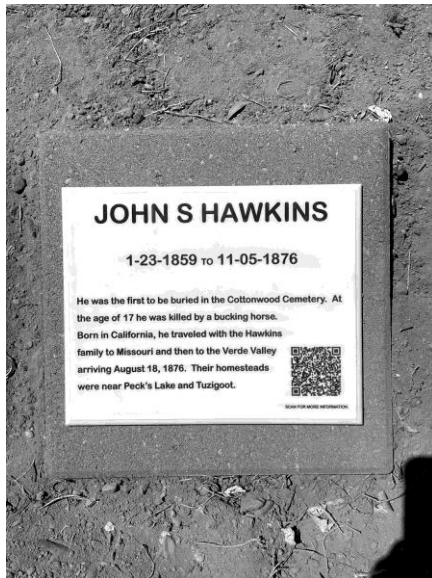
When Helen Dickinson Moxcey was just 7 years old, she lived in Cottonwood with her parents, Frank and Hulda, and a few of her older siblings. Their home was in a boarding house run by Hulda on Main Street, across from the movie theater (now the Tavern Grille).

These photos show Helen and her brother, Frank, back in the day. We also have a priceless handwritten letter Helen wrote later in life, sharing her memories of Cottonwood—including the great fire on Main Street in April 1925, over a century ago!



FROM COFFEE SHOP CHAT TO PRESERVING HISTORY

THE STORY OF VerdeValleyPioneers.com



JOHN S HAWKINS 1859 - 1876

John was the first person to be buried in what became the Cottonwood Cemetery.

For a century and a half, John's grave was unmarked and almost forgotten. But last year, over coffee at the Red Rooster Cafe in Old Town, a group of Verde Valley history buffs decided to change that. They placed a marker on John's grave featuring a QR code that links directly to his short biography.

That single act of remembrance started a movement.

A few months later, they marked another grave in the Cottonwood Cemetery. Soon, they were adding small 2.5" x 2.5" QR codes to existing headstones so that anyone walking by could instantly learn about the history beneath their feet.

Today, this initiative has grown into VerdeValleyPioneers.com, a free resource for relatives and history enthusiasts to honor Verde Valley pioneers.

We've already placed a dozen codes across Cottonwood, Glendale, and Mesa, and our volunteers will be placing QR Codes on the graves of Verde Valley Pioneers that are buried in Coolidge, Flagstaff, and Tucson this winter.

Visit VerdeValleyPioneers.com today to explore the biographies or to add a pioneer's story!

THE 1875 WAGON TRAIN TO THE VERDE VALLEY



On April 26, 1875, a group of brave families departed from Humansville, Missouri, nine wagons set out on a grueling, 3-month-and-20-day journey across the scorching, trackless plains to settle in the Arizona Territory. One traveler, "Parson" James Bristow, later wrote that the journey was so daunting, talking about crossing the plains back then was like "a man now to talk about going to the North Pole."

On August 23, 1875, the exhausted wagon train finally rolled onto Beaver Creek at the Wales Arnold ranch. This single wagon train brought about 50 people who laid the literal foundations of our community.

ARE YOU A DESCENDANT?

Do you have any of these families in your family tree?

- Burford
- Bristow
- Human
- Gaddis
- Hawkins
- Davidson
- Dickinson
- Hutcheson / Hutchinson
- Smith, Lett, Pankey, Parker, Stackhouse, or Wagner

Share your family stories, memories, or photos in the comments below! Let's keep the history of the Verde Valley pioneers alive.

FACEBOOK COMMENTS

1875 Wagon Train Post

Larry Donutguy Clemson: Charlie Gaddis was my Grt Grandma Lucy's second husband - There are some stories of his brother known as Tac Gaddis

Larry Donutguy Clemson: Charlie Gaddis



Larry Donutguy Clemson: Tack Gaddis with Henry Schuerman Jr.



Norman Kent: My great grandfather was on this wagon train. This is why I always have to chuckle a bit when I hear “all them immigrants need to go back to where they come from”. If you aren’t local indigenous people, you’re new arrivals and like me are an immigrant.

Joanne Brooks: My ancestors were on this wagon train. I believe the Fains were as well.

Verde Valley Pioneers – Scan Their Story: I believe that the Fain family established their deep roots in the Verde Valley in 1874. It was during this year that William Marion Fain and his bride, Cary, first arrived along the Verde River to settle in the Arizona Territory.

Sally Jackson: Stuart Rosebrook!

Stuart Rosebrook: yep, those would be my people.

Joanne Brooks: The Alexander Strahans and the Charles Osborns. One of the Osborn girls married a Harberson. Vernon Harbison was my mom's 1st cousin. I think the Wingfields were also on the wagon train.

Joanne Brooks: Al Strahan was Alexander's son. Alexander had quite a large family when he arrived.

Verde Valley Pioneers – Scan Their Story: My wife's grandfather and granduncle bought the store from the Strahans.

Verde Valley Pioneers – Scan Their Story: The Strahan family sold the property and store to the Samuel Cotton Dickinson family. Edward V. Dickinson took over the Cottonwood Post Office as postmaster on January 18, 1904, and was followed by Frank Dickinson on August 4, 1905. The Dickinson family sold the property and store to Alonzo “Lon” Mason.

Joanne Brooks: Dan Fain was born in Oak Creek.

Verde Valley Pioneer Mildred “Millie” (Back) Fain (1879–1967)



Born on September 17, 1879, at Beaver Creek near Cornville in the Arizona Territory, Mildred “Millie” Back Fain was a true daughter of the Verde Valley and a remarkable example of Arizona’s pioneer spirit.

The eldest of seven children born to William Berryman Back and Margie Ann (Dickinson) Back, Millie was raised on her family’s ranch at Montezuma Well, now part of Montezuma Well National Monument. From an early age, she learned the responsibilities and hardships of frontier life. Family stories tell of young Millie helping raise her younger brothers and sisters and managing ranch duties long before she reached adulthood.

One of the most famous stories of her youth tells of a courageous horseback ride across rugged country. Riding her little gray pony, Tony, Millie carried \$5,000 hidden in her skirt pocket to assist her ailing uncle, Frank Lee Dickinson. Along the way, she wisely avoided a camp of suspicious strangers who were later discovered to be horse thieves. Her quick judgment and determination ensured she safely completed her journey, an adventure that became part of Verde Valley folklore.

Millie attended school at Oak Creek and Beaver Creek, graduated from high school in Flagstaff, and later attended Tempe Normal School. On April 13, 1902, she married Granville “Dan” Fain, and together they raised their son, Norman William Fain. Through the years, Millie became known for her strength, resilience, and unwavering devotion to family and community.

She was a longtime member of the Order of the Eastern Star, the Yavapai County Cowbelles, the Monday Club, and the Christian Science Church. By 1954, she owned and operated the Diamond S Ranch, continuing her lifelong connection to Arizona ranching.

Millie's legacy extended well beyond her own generation. Her son, Norman William Fain, served as an Arizona State Senator, and her grandson, Norman William "Bill" Fain II, became a prominent developer known as the "Father of Prescott Valley."

Millie passed away on January 13, 1967, and rests in the Cottonwood Cemetery. Today, she is honored in the Territorial Women's Memorial Rose Garden at the Sharlot Hall Museum, where her story continues to inspire future generations.



Sharlot Hall Entry



Mildred Back-Fain

A plaque with QR Code was placed at Mildred's gravesite.

MILDRED (BACK) FAIN

9-17-1879 TO 1-13-1967

Mildred Back, daughter of William and Marjorie (Dickinson) Back, was born on the homestead of her grandparents, Samuel C. and Nancy Jane (Green) Dickinson at what became Cornville. "Millie" was the oldest of 7 children.

The family home at Montezuma Well became the Back Ranch Historic District where she married Granville "Dan" Fain on April 14, 1902. Their son is Norman W. Fain. Mildred and Dan lived many years in Prescott where she is honored in the Territorial Women's Memorial Rose Garden.



WHO LIES BENEATH THESE MARKERS?



If you look closely at the cemetery south of Camp Verde, the pieces of a long-standing pioneer story just don't fit together.

Online records claim a modest metal marker belongs to Josiah G. Bristow, the husband of Angelina Bristow, who rests nearby. But the historical archives tell a completely different story. Angelina's husband, Josiah G. Bristow (born May 21, 1837), tragically died in Missouri as a young Civil War soldier on August 28, 1864, at just 27 years old.

I don't believe the man buried under this metal marker is her husband.
So... who is he?

Further research and findings will be published at a later date.

HISTORY OF THE VERDE

By Bill Cowan February 15, 2020

A wonderful piece of local history shared by Bill Cowan!
Take a look at this fascinating glimpse into the life of Alf Dickinson.



Photo Caption

Alf Dickinson later lived in Flagstaff and farmed in Sunnyside. Here he is in front of his "Pine Hotel" which faced Railroad Avenue or what is now known as Route 66 just east of San Francisco Avenue. Photo courtesy of Betty Dickinson Kent



Alf Dickinson, right, and Joe Lay, left, working the herd. Each spring and fall ranchers worked together to gather cattle and drive them to the mountain highlands, branding the calves at Clay Park. During the fall round-up those to be sold were separated and driven into the railhead in Flagstaff, or in later years driven to the railhead in Clarkdale. (©Sedona Heritage Museum)

Caption from Photo #1 from my book Verde Valley

Alf Dickinson at age 5 had come with his parents, siblings and a large group in a wagon train from Humansville, Missouri arriving at Montezuma Well in August of 1875. As the Rio Verde Reservation had just been shut down, the family moved onto the newly opened ground of Middle Verde - just above the military reservation along the Verde River. This after a short rest at Montezuma Well. Alf was raised in the cattle business as the ground was free and the grass was tall. He married Ida May VanDeren in the spring of 1895 and the couple had 5 children.

Joe Lay had come to the Verde at age 8 with his father, mother and 4 siblings on what was known as an Immigrant Train arriving in Prescott from Jasper Tennessee on March 22, 1892. Joe was in the cattle business at an age when most ranch kids now are in 4H. A great story was that following a great snowstorm in 1898 he bought the Flying U Quarter Circle herd of cattle from William Loy. Very shortly after this transaction William Loy's daughter Inez says she was evidently included in the deal as Inez and Joe were married shortly after the deal.

Most settlers who had cattle soon had a summer place in the mountains above the Verde where they and their cattle would move each spring. In those days there were no fences so everyone who had cattle ran them on the open range together. As the cattle propagated each family would participate in the Spring and Fall roundups.

In the Spring roundup the cattle were gathered here in the Verde and generally driven as a group up to Clay Park where the "increase" or young calves were branded. Each calf was branded with that of its mother and the cattle of each family was then separated and herded to the area of each family's summer place whether that be a mountain homestead or just a summer camp.

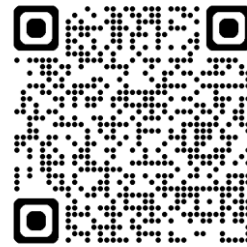
In the Fall of each year the families would again collectively gather the cattle and any new calves born that summer were branded. During the fall roundup the herd was then separated into two groups with one part herded into the shipping pens in Flagstaff and the other herd headed back down the hill into the Verde. This was the case each year up until the construction of the Clarkdale Smelter brought the train to Clarkdale and cattle could then be shipped from there.



Scan to see Bill Cowan's Post



Alf Dickinson biography
DickinsonFamily.us



Alf Dickinson biography
VerdeValleyPioneers.com

HELEN DICKINSON-MOXCEY WAS A TEACHER IN SUPERIOR

In 1925 at the age of 8 Helen's family moved to Superior where she completed school then attended Arizona State Teachers College in Tempe. After graduating she taught elementary school in Superior. The picture below was run on Superior Arizona Memories Facebook Page June 20, 2026 by Bill Rowe.



Helen Dickinson-Moxcey was a teacher in Superior.

Facebook Post Comments

Andrew Barreras

That's a large class .. WOW This may be Harding in the front doors. These children attended Harding cause their primary language was Spanish and the Teach only spoke and taught in English so go figure... My mom said it was very hard to understand what she was talking about you had to figure it out what she meant. and with a class of 45 I bet it was very frustrating for that teacher that most of her class didn't understand her...

Verde Valley Pioneers - Scan Their Story

Andrew Barreras Helen Moxcey knew enough Spanish to get by. She always spoke positively about her pupils in Superior.

R.J. Franklin

Andrew Barreras It was normal to have between 35 and 40 students in each class back then. Most of us who went to Roosevelt School on Lobb between Lime and Porphyry had that many. There were not too many teachers back in the 40s and early 50s and the budget was not very large.

KathynDanny Martinez

That's my Mom middle row 5th one to the right. Teresa Arriola maiden name! My Mom is now 94yrs I will be showing her this maybe she'll recognize someone.. I love this so many students they all look so nice

R.J. Franklin

I knew the Moxceys well. Richard and I were friends when they lived on High School Avenue. Mrs. Moxcey was a jewel of a human being. Wise, calm, and kind all the time. Honors!

Henry Montoya

OMG! I have that picture hanging in my office. My grandpa, Herman Otero was in that class. He's in the front row. 6th from the right. He's 92 years old now.

Chronological Timeline of Helen's Life

May 14, 1917: Born near Cottonwood, Arizona, to Frank and Hulda Dickinson.

1925: Father passes away in Cottonwood; brother Frank accidentally burns Helen's leg.

1926: Helen's mother Hulda marries Ralph Marshall; Helen and her mother take an all-day stagecoach to Miami, Arizona.

1930: The family moves from Miami to Superior, Arizona, where Ralph works as an elite Magma Hoistman.

1928: Little sister Mattie Mae is born in Superior.

1934: Graduates from Superior High School and moves to Tempe to attend Arizona State Teachers College.

1938–1942: Returns to Superior to live at home while teaching at Harding School.

1942–1945: Moves to Phoenix during WWII, teaching and working at Goodyear Aircraft before relocating to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii as a civilian employee.

July 3, 1946: Marries Roland Moxcey in Oahu, Hawaii.

May 13, 1947: Birth of son, Richard Louis Moxcey, in Hawaii.

Summer 1947: Returns to the mainland; moves back to Superior where Roland begins his career with Magma Copper Company.

1952: Returns to teaching in Superior as Richard begins primary school.

1958: Birth of daughter, Diana Kathleen Moxcey, in Superior.

1962: The family relocates from Superior to Apache Junction, closing her primary chapters in the mining town. Husband, Roland, continues working for Magma Copper in Superior, AZ until he retires.

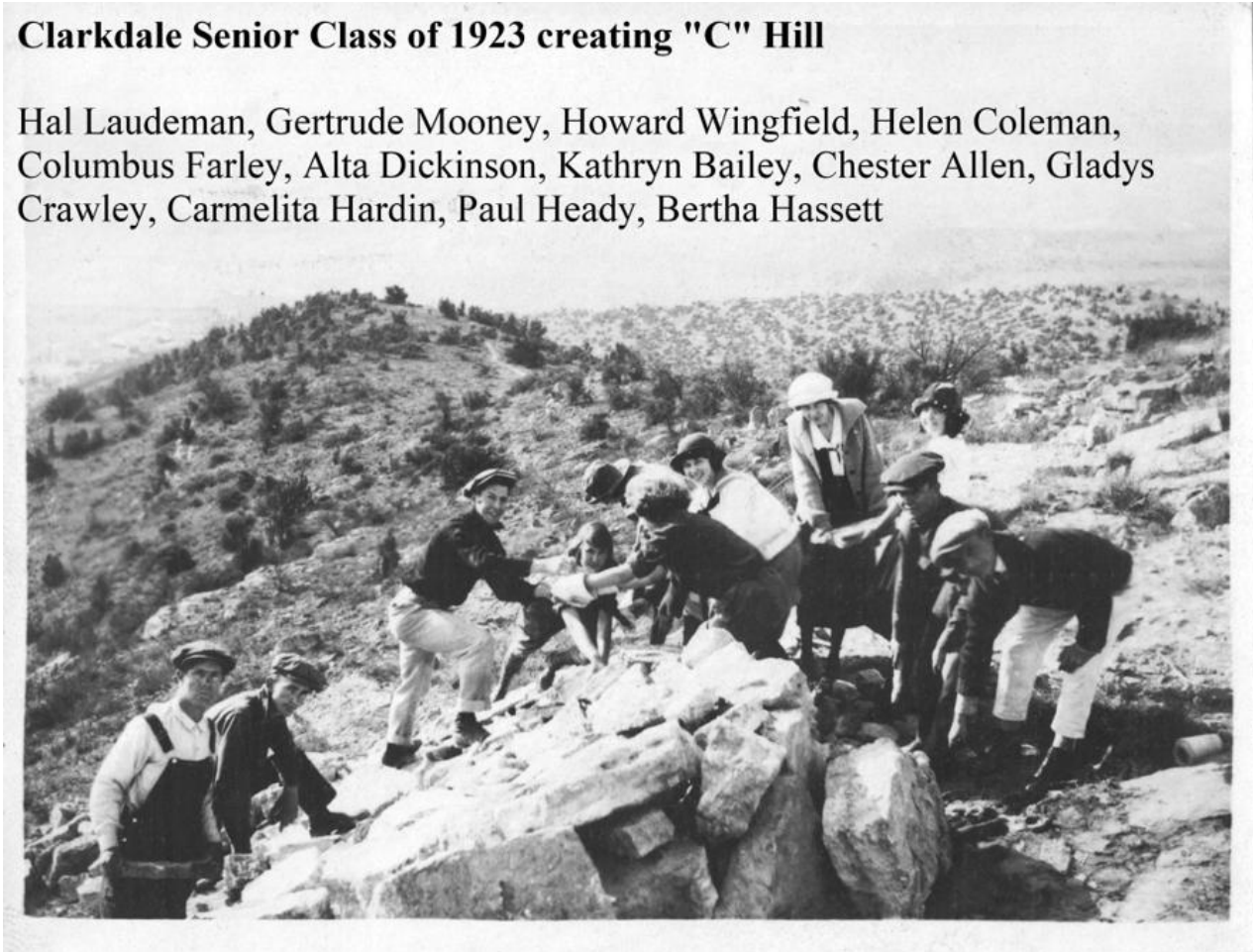
CLARKDALE SENIOR CLASS OF 1923 CREATING "C" HILL

Shared Facebook Post — Clarkdale Historical Society and Museum, June 23, 2026

Thanks to all those involved with the repainting of the Clarkdale "C".

Clarkdale Senior Class of 1923 creating "C" Hill

Hal Laudeman, Gertrude Mooney, Howard Wingfield, Helen Coleman, Columbus Farley, Alta Dickinson, Kathryn Bailey, Chester Allen, Gladys Crawley, Carmelita Hardin, Paul Heady, Bertha Hassett



Classmates, Black hat, white coat is Alta Mae Dickinson-Spooner. White hat is Bertha Hassett.

Alta and Bertha were best of friends in high school and that friendship continued throughout their life's. Later in life they both lived nearby each other in Coolidge, Arizona.



The Clarkdale "C"

One of Clarkdale's most recognizable landmarks is the large "C" located on the hillside overlooking the town. The Clarkdale "C" was originally constructed in 1923 by members of the Clarkdale High School Senior Class of 1923. A surviving photograph shows students carrying and placing rocks on the mountainside to create the letter. Among those participating was Alta Dickinson, Gertrude Mooney, Chester Allen, Gladys Crawley, Kathryn Bailey, Hal Laudeman, and several other members of the graduating class. The project reflected the pride that Clarkdale's young residents felt for their rapidly growing community. More than a century later, the "C" remains a lasting symbol of Clarkdale's heritage and the students who left their mark on the landscape in 1923.

This photograph is particularly significant because Alta Dickinson, is specifically identified as one of the students who helped create the Clarkdale "C" in 1923. That makes the landmark not only a community symbol but also a direct connection to the Dickinson family history.

HISTORIC SPOTLIGHT: AN INCREDIBLE READ

FROM VERDE HERITAGE

Verde Valley Pioneers — Facebook Post



Verde Heritage
June 27, 2026

1875 Verde Valley Pioneers: Joseph and Catharine (Newport) Lett

A man named Charlie Buster had left Missouri and wandered out west. He was in the Salt River Valley when he wrote a letter home to his friends in Missouri during the fall of 1874. Preston Burford, a neighbor of "Parson" Bristow, read the letter. As Pres. Burford knew Charlie Buster well, it set him on fire to move to Arizona Territory.

The large family of "Parson" Bristow and his son-in-law, James Human, decided to travel west with the Burford family. Then a cousin of "Parson" Bristow, James Oliver Bristow, decided to join the group with his large family. The next person who decided to go was "Brother" Lett, according to "Parson" Bristow.

The Census of Washington Township, Cedar County, Missouri, on August 9, 1870, listed Joseph D. Lett, age 44, a farmer, born in Indiana, living with his wife, Catharine Lett, age 40, who was also born in Indiana, and 2 others. They are living near the families of P. Burford and Benjamin Burford and near Morris Smith and James O. Bristow.

According to "Parson" Bristow, "Brother" Lett was a strong Baptist and they were members of the same church. He was a good man, but close [frugal] in dealings with others. "Brother" Lett had no children of his own, but was raising 2 orphan children.

The next families who decided to go were those of "Uncle" Sam Dickinson and Mike Gaddis. They were joined by the Hutchinson, Pankey, Parker, Stackhouse, and Waggoner families. Because the families lived in different settlements, some left their homes as early as April 26, to meet near Humansville, Missouri. The ox-drawn wagon train was organized and left there on May 10 with Pres. Burford as the wagon master. They began their long journey to the Verde Valley on May 11, 1875. After they were on their way, they were joined by other families.

The wagon train followed the well-worn road west which had been established in 1871, and was now parallel to the railroad tracks being constructed westward. Camping places along the route, about every 15 to 20 miles, were designated where water, grass, and wood were available.

Along the way, the family of William Hawkins left the wagon train to follow the new northern cut-off road used by the mail carriers which had been recommended to him by P. B. Hawkins. The family of "Parson" Bristow and James Human traveled with them, which meant the herds of cattle left the main wagon train. Although they traveled slower and stopped to rest a day, they arrived in the Verde Valley at the Wales Arnold Ranch on August 16, 1875.

Wagon Master Pres. Burford took the large wagon train on the southern route. They ran short of food and rested while Pres. Burford and Charles Dickinson went to Camp Verde with pack horses to bring back enough food to get them to the Verde Valley. This largest part of the wagon train arrived at the Wales Arnold Ranch on August 23, 1875.

The families of Joseph Lett and Mike Gaddis stopped at Sunset Crossing, a few miles above what became Winslow, to let their stock rest. They traveled onward with a wagon train from Arkansas and came into the Verde Valley, camping at what would become McGuireville on August 28, 1875.

When the wagon trains arrived, they turned north and camped along the Verde River above the Camp Verde Military Reservation. George Hance had been awarded a contract to supply wood and hay for the military. Men from the wagon trains found immediate employment cutting hay for him. James O. Bristow was hauling the hay from an area north along the river to Camp Verde, and while he was there, he stopped at the Sutler Store and picked up flour, cornmeal, coffee, and other items on credit for the men cutting hay.

Joseph Lett probably joined "Parson" Bristow and James Human who were cutting hay. "Parson" Bristow wrote that a man with some cattle took up the ranch where he first lived. The man set up some cottonwood pickets and threw some willow brush and some

dirt on the brush. This cabin was about 12 feet square. The "Parson" bought him out, giving him \$15 for it. This was the last of September. 1875.

Joseph Lett and his family joined the family of "Parson" Bristow on this land located just north of the Camp Verde Military Reservation (now, just above the I-17 crossing of the Verde River). By that time, squatters were living on most of the land bordering the Verde River, which they would be able to claim after it was surveyed by a government contractor.

Joseph Downs Lett is the son of Jesse and Priscilla (Williams) Lett. He was born about 1826 and married Catherine Mary Newport in Knox County, Indiana, on October 22, 1847. The family of Joseph Lett soon left the Verde Valley and traveled to Oregon, to join their relatives. By 1880, Joseph Lett, age 54, and Mary C. [Catherine] Lett, age 50, were living in Brewster Valley, in Coos County. Joseph Lett had served in the military during the War of Rebellion and applied for a pension in Coos County, Oregon during 1882. Joseph Lett received a land patent near Willamette, Coos County, Oregon.

Joseph Lett returned to the state of his birth where he died in Knox County, Indiana, on August 12, 1898. His brother, Samuel T. Lett signed an affidavit in support of Catherine's application for a widow's pension. The application was submitted by Jesse Lett, a nephew, and William Lett who also signed affidavits in Oregon. Catherine lived in Palestine, Oregon, with her niece, Amanda Lett. Catherine Mary Lett, born about 1830, died July 6, 1901.

Although most of the people traveling in the 1875 wagon trains settled permanently in the Verde Valley, a few went in search of "greener grass" in Arizona, Oregon, and Washington.

(Pioneer Stories of Arizona's Verde Valley; 1933, 1954; Unpublished Manuscript; by James Clawson Bristow; Government records.)

SARAH ELLEN “SALLIE” SMITH THOMPSON

Verde Valley Pioneers — Facebook Post



This past April, volunteers with VerdeValleyPioneers.com placed a QR code on Sallie's headstone so visitors can read her full story.

One of the Verde Valley's remarkable pioneer women, Sallie (Smith) Thompson lived a life that stretched from covered wagons to the modern age.

Born in Missouri, Sallie was the daughter of Maurice Adkins “Morris” Smith and Mary Jane Bristow Smith. She grew up in a large family, among them her sister Hulda Susan Smith, later known as Hulda Dickinson-Marshall, who would also become a well-known figure in Verde Valley pioneer history.

Sarah came west with her parents and siblings in 1887 in a covered wagon, a journey she later described in her own words in the book *Pioneer Stories of Arizona's Verde Valley* in a piece titled “Our Trip to Arizona In A Covered Wagon.” Her firsthand account provides a rare and deeply personal glimpse into the determination and courage required to settle the American West. Her account remains one of the clearest firsthand descriptions of that migration into the Verde Valley.

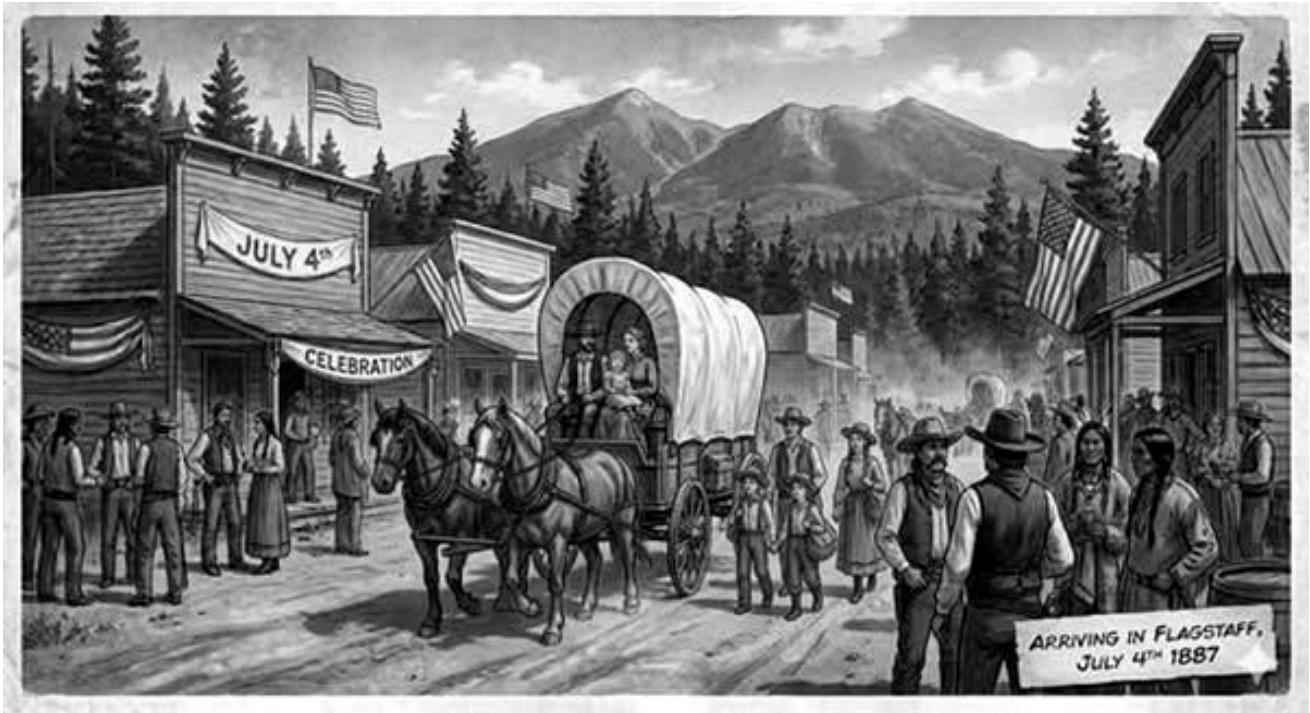
In 1889 she married Renos “Bud” Thompson at Beaver Creek. Sarah and Bud purchased the Godfrey Van Deren homestead at what was then known as Van Deren Crossing. Over time, the area became known as Thompson Crossing, later known as Bridgeport.

Sallie and Bud raised six children—Aubrey, Artie, Alvin, Barney, Donovan, and Edna.

She lived to age 90 and rests in Cottonwood Cemetery, surrounded by the land she helped settle. A true Verde Valley pioneer, Sallie didn't just witness history, she helped build it.

4TH OF JULY 1887

Verde Valley Pioneers — Facebook Post



In the spring of 1887, five-year-old Hulda Susan Smith sat beside her father, Maurice, on the bench of a sturdy covered wagon as he held the reins. Hulda, who was small for her age, watched the vast horizon ahead as the family left Cedar County, Missouri, bound for the Arizona Territory. With only \$15 in savings, two reliable horses, and a wagon packed with essentials, Maurice and Mary Jane (Bristow) Smith and their children embarked on a journey that would reshape their lives. Joined by Mary Jane's cousin, Lonnie Bristow, and his family on the trek to the Verde Valley, the two horses pulled the heavy wagon while the remaining family members walked the entire way.

Written by Hulda (Smith) Dickinson-Marshall:

"We arrived in Flagstaff on the 4th of July in 1887. The town was full of cowboys and Indians; they were having a big celebration. Here we met Charley Mahan. Charley told father there was a cow ranch not far from Flagstaff which belonged to his father. It was near Hutch Mountain, not far from Mormon Lake and Mahan Mountain. Since no one was living there at the time, we might go there. There was a big house, a corral, and some gentle milk cows. We could stay there as long as we wished.

Lonnie Bristow and his family wanted to go to Middle Verde. My brothers, Bud and Bill-Ed, went with them hoping to find work in the valley. We went on to the Mahan ranch to find a large house, a barn, and cows, so we had lots of fresh milk and butter. The country was so beautiful we stayed the rest of the summer. September came all too soon and we

left the beautiful pines for Middle Verde, where we must go to school. Here we found Bud and Bill-Ed working on a ranch."

The Smith family stayed there for the rest of the summer. In September, they moved to the Verde Valley. Maurice C. Smith homesteaded a piece of land near the river for farming, raising all kinds of vegetables and fruit.

According to Hulda, "We moved around a lot in the valley until father bought a piece of land from Mr. Calloway. This was across the river from Camp Verde."



HAVE YOU EVER WALKED 1,500 MILES?

Verde Valley Pioneers — Facebook Post



The approximate distance traveled by a wagon train from Humansville, Missouri to the Verde Valley, AZ in 1875 would be about 1,500 miles, accounting for indirect trail routing and geographic obstacles. While the wagons held supplies, the children of almost all pioneer families walked nearly every mile of the grueling journey.

To put that into perspective, look at the ages of the Dickinson children who walked from Missouri to the Verde Valley in the Territory of Arizona...

Margie Ann (Dickinson) Back 13 years old

Frank Lee Dickinson 8 years old

Mariah May (Dickinson) Hawkins 11 years old

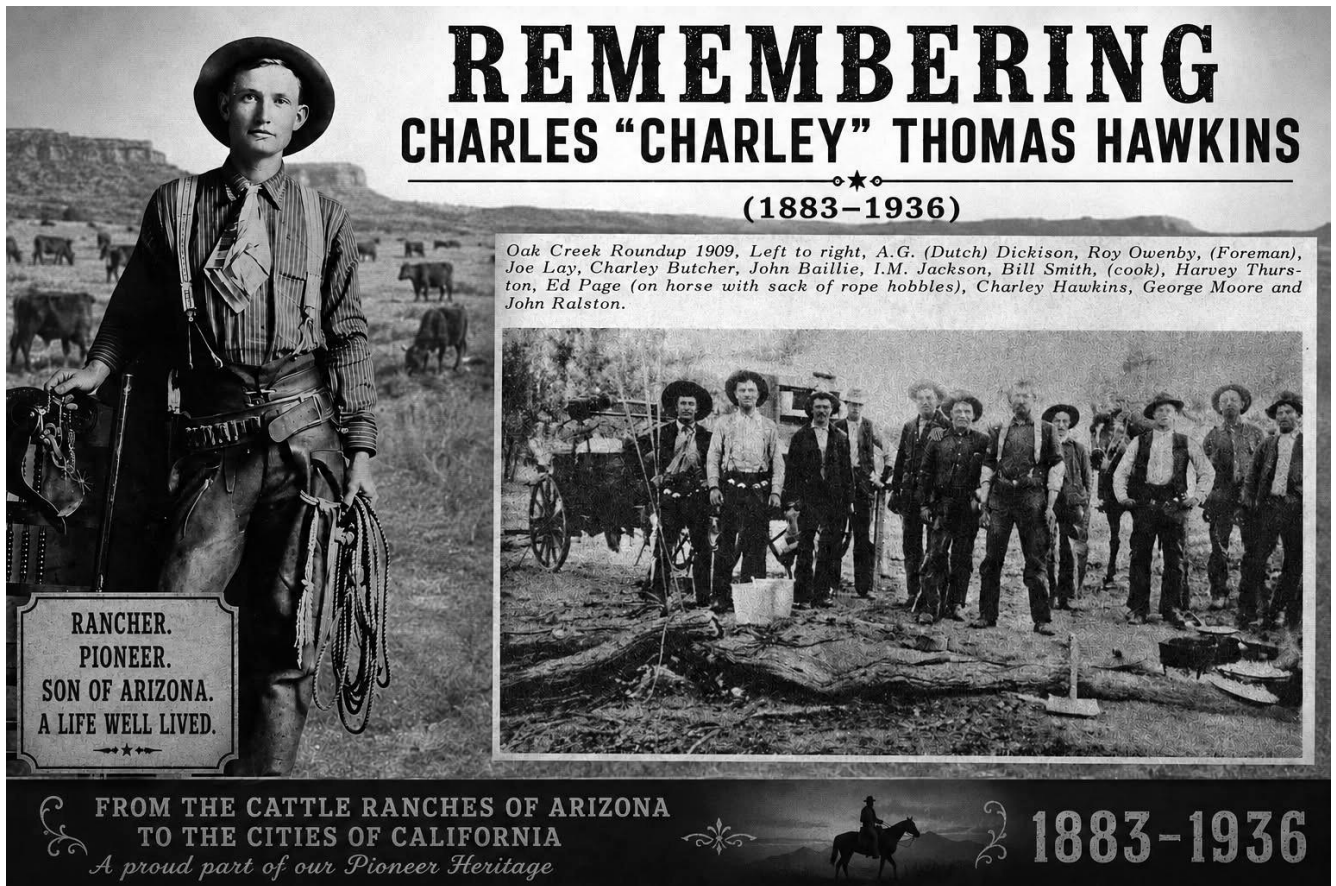
William G Dickinson 7 years old

Alfred "Alf" Dickinson 5 years old, turned 5 along the way

Edward Virgil Dickinson 3 years old, turned 4 along the way

REMEMBERING CHARLES “CHARLEY” THOMAS HAWKINS

(1883–1936)



Today we look back at the life of Charles “Charley” Thomas Hawkins, a true son of the Arizona Territory with deep roots in Verde Valley pioneer history.

Born on November 17, 1883, Charley’s early life was marked by profound loss. His mother, Mariah May (Dickinson) Hawkins, passed away from pneumonia in 1889, and his father, James Gabriel Hawkins, a dedicated lawman, was killed in the line of duty in 1891.

Orphaned at a young age, Charley and his sister, Minnie Lee, were taken in and raised by their grandparents, Samuel Cotton and Nancy Jane (Green) Dickinson. Growing up under the care of the pioneering Dickinson family heavily shaped his character.

A RUGGED COWBOY AND PROGRESSIVE STOCKMAN

Charley followed the path of many of his Hawkins relatives and became a dedicated stockman. By the time of the 1910 Census, he owned a cattle ranch in the Red Rock and Williams areas of Arizona. He worked alongside a diverse group of fellow cowboys, earning a reputation as a hard-working, progressive, and open-minded man.

A NEW CHAPTER IN CALIFORNIA

Like many second- and third-generation descendants of the first wave of Verde Valley pioneers, Charley eventually migrated west. He registered for the draft during World War I. By the late 1920s and 1930s, Charley had moved to California, settling in the Oakland and Alameda areas, where he found work as a hardwood floor installer.

A TRAGIC END

Charley's life was cut short by a tragic accident on February 13, 1936, at the age of 52. According to a report in the Oakland Tribune, he was using alcohol as a rubbing or cleaning solution while smoking a cigar. The alcohol accidentally ignited, causing fatal burns. He was laid to rest at Evergreen Cemetery in Oakland, California.

Though his journey took him from the rugged cattle ranches of Arizona to the growing cities of California, Charley Hawkins remains an unforgettable piece of our shared pioneer heritage.

Today, Charley rests in an unmarked grave, his final resting place bearing no monument to mark the life of a man whose story stretched from the frontier ranches of the Verde Valley to the streets of Oakland. Through the work of Verde Valley Pioneers, his life and legacy continue to be remembered, ensuring that his story is not lost to time.



Charley Hawkins

SAME FAMILIES BUT DIFFERENT NAMES

GODARD, GODDARD, DICKERSON, DICKINSON



Same Families but Different Names:

Godard, Goddard, Dickerson, Dickinson

 In the early Verde Valley, a family name wasn't always fixed. Sometime a name was changed by teachers, clerks, or just happenstance.

 During Arizona's territorial years, record-keeping was inconsistent and often handled by whoever happened to be available: a traveling census taker, a schoolteacher, a military clerk, or a neighbor with neat handwriting. Names were written phonetically, altered by regional accents, or adjusted to match more familiar spellings. In a landscape where documents were scarce and literacy varied, a single entry in a ledger could redefine a family for generations. These small, everyday moments — a teacher's correction, a clerk's assumption, a misheard introduction — quietly shaped the surnames that still appear across the Verde Valley today.

 **The Godard Family**

The Godard family learned this when young Nettie Godard came home from school and told her father, William, that her teacher said they were spelling their name wrong. William accepted it without fuss. His branch became the Goddards. But his cousin Carl Godard kept the original spelling. His son Don carried it on. Two spellings. One family. A split born from a single schoolhouse conversation.



 **The Dickerson Family**

The Dickerson family story took a different turn. They arrived in the Verde Valley in 1875, and by 1876 their name began appearing in local records as Dickinson. Why? We can only speculate — no documented family explanation survives. Maybe they changed it on purpose. Maybe a census worker wrote it wrong and the family simply accepted it. But unlike the Godards, every member of the Dickerson family adopted the new spelling. The entire line became the Dickinsons.



 Has your family ever discovered a hidden name change, a spelling split?

Drop your story below!



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Two spellings. One family. Some possible explanations...

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'Cowboying ain't what it used to be,' according to Frank Godard and Jesse Goddard. Somehow, Frank is GODARD and Jesse is GODDARD. Frank had an explanation. He said that when Jesse got to school, he started spelling his name with two 'd's' and insisted Frank do the same. Frank said he wasn't about to make that extra effort, so he went out to Squaw Peak Cemetery and checked the spelling on his grandfather's tombstone and sure enough --- there was only one 'd.'

The Dickerson family story took a different turn.

They arrived in the Verde Valley in 1875, and within a year or so their name began appearing in local records as Dickinson. Why? We can only speculate because no documented family explanation survives. Maybe they changed it on purpose. Maybe a census worker wrote it wrong, and the family simply accepted it. But unlike the Godards, every member of the Dickerson family adopted the new spelling. The entire line became the Dickinsons.

Has your family ever discovered a hidden name change, a spelling split?

Might you know why the Dickinson last name was changed?

Drop your story below!

Historical details referenced with appreciation to Verde Independent, whose articles help keep our pioneer stories alive.

1876 - 1878 GREAT REGISTER: BEAVER CREEK

846	Dickerson, Charles	23	Iowa	Sept. 4, 1876
848	Dickerson, Samuel Cotton	49	New York	Sept. 4, 1876

846 Dickerson Charles
847 Norton John Toole Garish
848 Dickerson, Samuel, Cotton

THE POCKET FIRE & THE OK DITCH



Posted on *Save The Middle Verde* by Ryna Rock

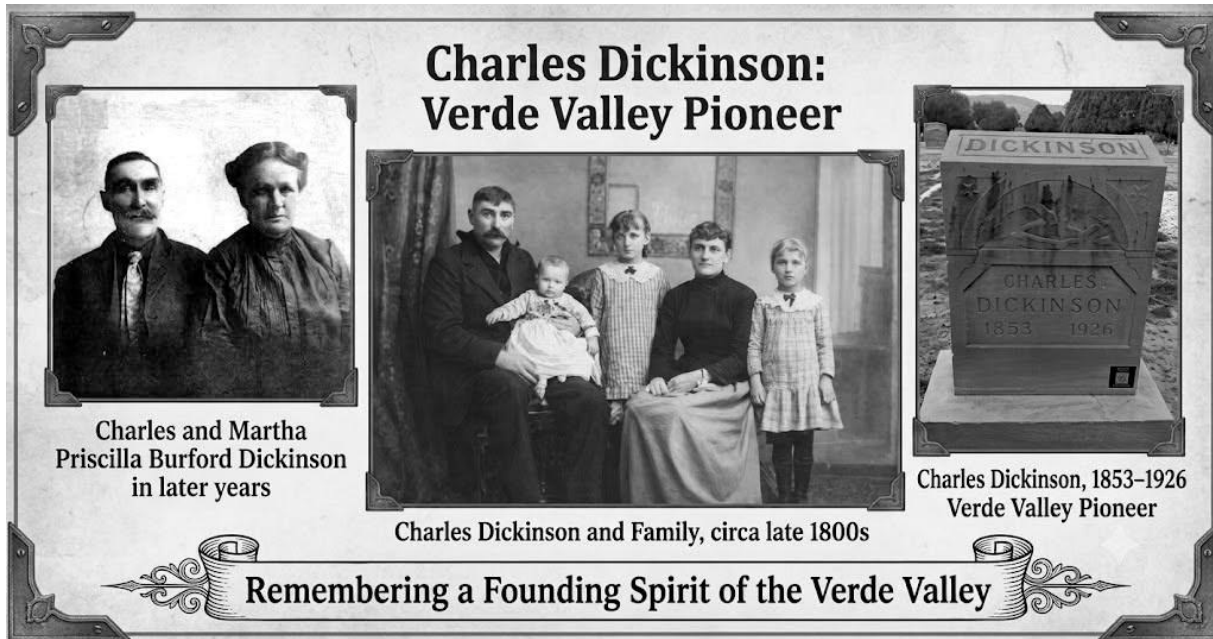
The Pocket Fire's debris had been coming off the Rim with the heavy rain we've had the last few days in creeks and ravines like Oak Creek.....and it all is ending up in the Verde River, turning its water sooty black. We've been waiting for it to appear running through our yard....and today it arrived.... photo is of sooty, black water in the OK Ditch. It's not good drinking water for either wildlife or herd animals right now, being full of microscopic chemicals and particulates.

My wife's great grandfather, Samuel Dickinson, was one of those who dug the OK Ditch.

Feb. 1877, six men formed the O.K. Ditch Company and began to work on the ditch. These men were: Samuel Dickinson, Mitch Birch, Press Burford, M. K. Gaddis, and a man by the name of Hughes, and James Davidson. The first year they got water to the first three ranches which they farmed. The next winter, 1878, They finished the ditch.

CHARLES DICKINSON

1853–1926



Charles Dickinson holding Archie LeRoy, with Mary Rowena, Martha Priscilla (Burford) Dickinson, and Dovie May.

When the first pioneer families came to the Verde Valley by covered wagon in the summer of 1875, one of the young men helping lead the way was Charles Dickinson. At just 22 years old, Charles drove one of the two Dickinson family wagons on a remarkable journey that began in Humansville, Missouri, on April 26, 1875, arriving after more than three months later at the Wales Arnold Ranch near Montezuma Well on August 23.

The trip tested every member of the wagon train. The travelers crossed Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, and northern Arizona, facing dangerous mountain trails, two nonviolent encounters with Native Americans, and the near exhaustion of their food supply. When provisions ran dangerously low, Charles volunteered to accompany his future father-in-law, Preston Burford, on a four-day ride to Camp Verde to obtain food for the struggling emigrants. Their successful return allowed the wagon train to continue its historic journey into the Verde Valley.

After arriving, the Dickinson family settled along Oak Creek where Charles homesteaded 80 acres just east of modern Cornville; in Section 26, Township 16N, Range 4W. Charles later became one of the first stage drivers on the Old Star Mail Route between Prescott and Beaver Head Station before spending many years working as a carpenter for the United Verde Extension Mining Company. His life reflected the determination and hard work that built the communities of Cornville, Cottonwood, Clemenceau, and the surrounding Verde Valley.

In March 1878, Charles married Martha Priscilla Burford, another member of the wagon train. Together they raised a large family, many of whom married into other pioneer families of the Verde Valley.

Their children were:

- Mary Rowena Dickinson (1880–1974), who married James Godfrey Van Deren.
- Dovie May Dickinson (1882–1968), who first married Thomas Benton Farrow and later Sumner Chadbowin Fisher.
- Leroy Archie "Roy" Dickinson (1887–1937), who married Ellen Pearl Duncan.
- Winifred Adeline "Winnie" Dickinson (1895–1969), who married Roy Van Deren in 1913.
- George Arthur Dickinson (1897–1975), who married Maude Evelyn Cobert.

Charles was born in Van Buren County, Iowa, the son of Samuel Cotton Dickinson and Adline (Green) Dickinson. He had two full brothers:

- Leroy Dickinson
- George Wesley Dickinson

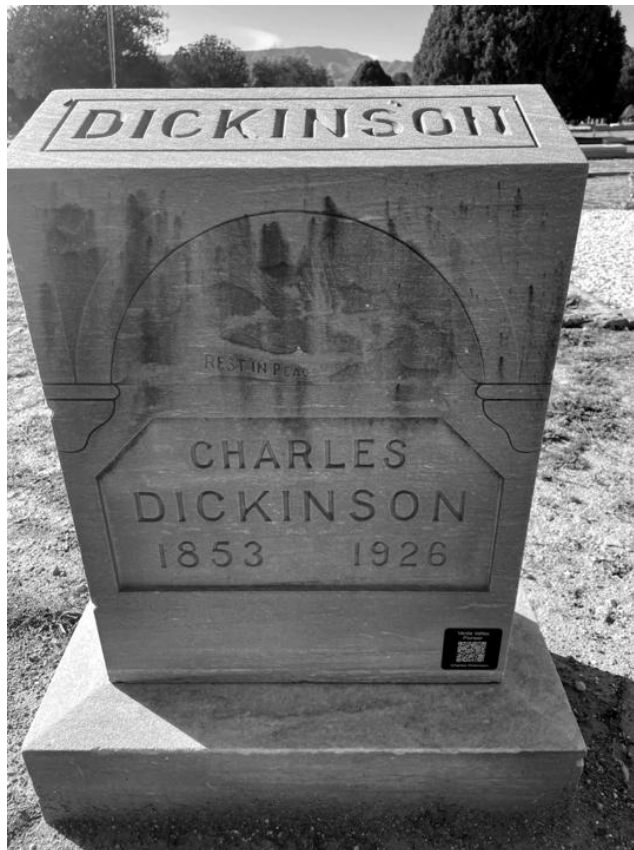
After Adline's death, Samuel married Nancy Jane Green, giving Charles seven half-siblings who also became well-known Verde Valley pioneers:

- Margie Ann (Dickinson) Back, wife of William B. Back
- Sam C. Dickinson, who died in infancy
- Mariah May (Dickinson) Hawkins, wife of lawman James Hawkins
- Frank Lee Dickinson, husband of Hulda Susan Smith
- William Green "Willy" Dickinson, husband of Nellie Pattee
- Alfred "Alf" Dickinson, husband of Ida May Van Deren
- Edward Virgil Dickinson, husband of Florence Stegman

Charles and Martha spent nearly fifty years helping build northern Arizona. In late 1926 they traveled to Ocean Beach, California, intending to spend the winter in a milder climate, but Charles died there suddenly on December 5, 1926, at the age of 73.

A contemporary newspaper remembered him as "a man of high character, always active in anything that made for a betterment of the district, a kind husband and father, and an estimable citizen in every sense of the term."

Today Charles Dickinson lies in Cottonwood Cemetery beside Martha and many members of the Dickinson family. His story, and those of his brothers, sisters, children, and fellow pioneers remains an enduring part of the history of the Verde Valley.



Charles Dickinson's gravesite and Verde Valley Pioneers QR marker, Cottonwood Cemetery



Charles Dickinson

SELECTED READER COMMENTS

Paul Wright

He would be my great great grandfather, my grandfather was Vaudrey Sam Dickinson

Source: Facebook comment on the original post.

Charles Dickinson's First Job on the Arizona Frontier: Delivering the Mail Through Beaver Creek



Charles Dickinson and Martha Priscilla (Burford) Dickinson.

Long before telephones or automobiles connected the Verde Valley, one young pioneer carried something every isolated ranch family eagerly awaited—the mail.

When Charles Dickinson arrived in Arizona Territory with the Dickinson wagon train in 1875, he was still a young man learning to survive on a rugged frontier. The family had endured months of travel from Missouri by covered wagon before settling in the Verde Valley. Life demanded hard work from every member of the family, and Charles quickly became part of the territory's growing transportation network.

One of Charles's earliest documented occupations was serving as a mail stage driver between Prescott and Beaver Head Station on Dry Beaver Creek. The route crossed rough country where roads were little more than wagon tracks, creek crossings could become dangerous after storms, and travelers constantly watched for broken wagons, exhausted horses, or the occasional threat of highway robbery.

Unlike the famous Butterfield or Wells Fargo stages, these local mail routes were the lifeline of Arizona's scattered settlements. Every trip carried letters from loved ones, government documents, newspapers, business correspondence, and supplies that helped isolated ranches remain connected to the outside world.

For Charles, delivering the mail required much more than driving a team of horses. A stage driver needed to know every spring, every difficult crossing, and every shortcut through the Verde country. He had to repair harnesses, calm nervous horses, and keep moving regardless of weather or road conditions. Missing a scheduled delivery could leave entire communities waiting weeks for important news.

Years later, Charles married Martha Priscilla Burford on Dry Beaver Creek in March 1878. Together they would build a life that reflected the movement of many Arizona pioneer families. They spent approximately eight years in Cove, Oregon, where several of their children were born before returning to the Verde Valley. Charles later worked in Jerome during the mining boom, purchased a small farm near Cornville, worked as a carpenter in Clemenceau, and eventually served as a watchman for the United Verde Extension (U.V.X.) Mining Company from 1920 until 1923.

Yet his years as a mail stage driver remain one of the most vivid examples of frontier life. Every successful mail run represented reliability in an unpredictable land. Before railroads and modern highways, the stage driver connected families, businesses, ranchers, miners, and government officials across vast distances. Men like Charles Dickinson helped transform scattered settlements into communities by keeping communication alive.

When Charles died while vacationing in Ocean Beach, California, in December 1926, he left behind more than a farming or mining legacy. He represented a generation of pioneers whose daily work quietly built the infrastructure of territorial Arizona—one mail route at a time.

Visit Their Gravesite

Charles Dickinson's story is permanently preserved through a Verde Valley Pioneers QR Marker located at his gravesite in Cottonwood Cemetery. Visitors can scan the marker to learn more about one of the Verde Valley's earliest pioneer families.

Every photograph, family story, and historical document helps preserve the history of the men and women who built the Verde Valley. If your family has photographs, letters, diaries, or memories of our early pioneers, consider sharing them. Together we can ensure these remarkable stories are never forgotten.

Sources

- Pioneer Stories of Arizona's Verde Valley (1954), Verde Valley Pioneers Association.
- Dickinson Family historical research and family records. DickinsonFamily.us
- Verde Valley Pioneers Digital Archive. VerdeValleyPioneers.com

HISTORY OF THE CLEMENCEAU, ARIZONA POST OFFICE

The Clemenceau Heritage Museum is located in the historic 1924 Clemenceau School building, right next to the original Bank and Post Office. 1 N Willard St, Cottonwood, Arizona

The Clemenceau Post Office was built to serve the smelter for the United Verde Extension (UVX) Mine. The town was initially named "Verde" after the mine, but the federal Post Office Department wouldn't allow a name that conflicted with other communities named Verde. In 1920, the town and post office were officially renamed Clemenceau in honor of French Premier Georges Clemenceau, a close personal friend of James S. Douglas, Jr., the owner of the UVX Mine.

Among the Clemenceau postmasters was Mary B. Douglas, who was appointed to lead operations of the Post Office and Bank. Alta Mae Dickinson served as both a bookkeeper and postmaster, and Clara Fay Thompson served as postmaster in the 1930s. In small Western mining towns of this era, women were frequently selected by the Postmaster General to run local offices; they were trusted community pillars who could maintain regular business hours while the majority of the male population worked long shifts in the mines and smelters.

The Clemenceau Bank and Post Office building served as a central hub for the community, handling both banking and mail. When the UVX smelter closed, the town went into a sharp economic decline and most residents left. By the time Cottonwood incorporated in 1960, only a few remnants of the old town remained. The Post Office was discontinued on November 30, 1955, with mail service moved to Cottonwood. Today, that historic bank and post office building is preserved on the grounds of the Clemenceau Heritage Museum.



Exterior of the Clemenceau Bank building. Exterior photograph courtesy of Matthew Holmes.

Interior of the historic post office, showing the post office box wall.



Photo Credit: Bill Rowe

CLEMENCEAU POST OFFICE BOX HOLDERS, 1934–1935

The following four pages reproduce historical records listing residents and businesses that rented post office boxes at Clemenceau, Arizona, between 1934 and 1935. The records include box numbers, names, and dates rent was paid.

Original records photographed by the author.

CLEMENCEAU, ARIZONA POST OFFICE BOX NUMBERS
1934-35

<u>BOX NO.</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DATE BOX RENT PAID</u>
1	Joe Durfee	07-01-34; 10-01-34 09-01-35; 04-08-35
2	Idela Riva	07-01-34
2	Ortega	04-09-35
4	M.K. Thalian	08-08-34; 10-01-34; 01-23-35
5	D. Cole	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35
12	Joe Bechetti	01-29-34; 01-01-35
13	Joe Pampa	01-05-35
14	G. C. Lassaro	10-01-35
	T. Jiminez	01-01-35
15	C. L. Hollingsworth	07-01-34; 01-01-35
21	T. J. Holmes	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-34; 04-08-35
22	Paul Watts	01-01-35; 04-01-35
23	N. M. Suies	10-01-34; 04-20-35
24	Olga Keusel	09-04-34; 07-01-34
	O. Rintrel	01-01-35
25	Sloper	07-01-34;
	C. B. Spooner	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 10-01-35
32	J. R. Harral	02-23-35; 4-23-35
33	W. P. Wright	02-11-35; 04-23-35
34	Harry Loy	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-06-35
35	M. R. Nelson	10-21-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
37	School	10-01-34; 01-23-35; 04-01-35
42	Domancis Diaz	12-20-34
43	H. Owens	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 4-10-35
44	J. L. Foster	07-01-34; 10-01-34
	J. T. Taylor	04-01-35
45	J. Macias	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 4-04-35
51	J. Burke	12-20-34; 01-01-35
52	Ebner Foster	09-06-34; 04-01-35
53	J. Snow	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35
54	S. I. Gibson	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
55	Felipe Alvarez	10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
62	Thomas Gough	10-01-34; 01-01-35
63	J. Armburst	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
64	S. Juarez	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-06-35
65	C. H. Knight	11-28-34; 01-01-35; 04-09-35
71	V. McClure	10-01-34; 01-06-35; 04-13-35
72	K. H. Bates	11-08-34; 10-22-35; 05-09-35
73	E. S. Stern	12-06-34; 01-01-35; 04-06-35

<u>BOX NO.</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DATE RENT PAID</u>
74	J. H. Thomas	10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
75	C. B. Spooner	10-01-34
82	R. Beach	07-01-34; 03-21-35
83	R. Owensby	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
84	George Doty	01-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-10-35
85	Howard Benson	09-22-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
91	W. Womack	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 01-01-35
93	R. A. Channcil	07-01-34; 01-01-35
94	F. A. Reilly	07-01-34; 10-01-34
95	J. N. MacIntyre	10-31-34; 01-01-35; 05-02-35
96	Ethel Linton	07-01-34; 01-01-35; 06-30-35
102	M. Shanahan	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 04-26-35
103	J. Munds	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
104	Legler	08-27-34
	Baron Thompson	10-01-34; 01-01-35; 01-05-35
105	Roy Van Deren	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
112	L. Simons	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
113	Crec Garcia	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-02-35
114	P. W. Crookham	07-01-34; 11-27-34; 01-01-35
115	E. Gibbons	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 10-01-35; 04-01-35
116	J. Langdon	10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
122	J. H. Douglas	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-26-35
123	William Thompson	07-01-34; 10-04-34; 01-01-35; 04-10-35
124	William Blue	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 01-01-35
125	E. C. Ohlwiler	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35
132	Agnes Holmes	09-17-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 4-01-35
133	L. Vettarick	09-17-34; 01-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-22-35
134	E. Williams	07-01-34; 02-15-35
135	D. R. Powell	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-23-35
141	C. W. Heatherly	10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
142	T. L. France	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 03-30-35
143	Tubrico Leyba	
144	Bert Black	01-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35
145	L. Perez	08-09-34; 11-06-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
152	C. J. Pinney	19-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
153	T. Waller	10-10-34; 04-08-35
154	Reyes Aquila	07-01-34; 12-06-34
155	T. Smith	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 04-06-35
156	Walter Meric	02-26-35; 04-15-35
162	L. M. Sullivan	02-23-35; 04-01-35
163	O. S. Smith	10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
164	G. J. Tapia	10-01-34; 01-22-35; 04-06-35

<u>BOX NO.</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DATE RENT PAID</u>
164	A. Bushmante	10-01-34
165	C. Perez	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-10-35
173	H. Curry	07-01-34; 11-07-34; 01-05-35; 05-08-35
174	H. Breckenridge	07-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-05-35
175	S. Medigovich	08-14-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
176	Dr. Hilton	10-01-34
182	O. York	10-01-34; 10-01-35; 04-15-35
183	Lloyd Wilhite	10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
184	Omar Landers	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-08-35
185	G. C. Lassard	10-01-34; 01-01-35
186	Dr. Lutfy	10-01-34
191	Rodriquez	07-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-06-35
	B. K. Clayton	02-13-35
193	C. C. Goodrich	07-01-34; 10-01-34;
	E. Palcios	04-09-35; 02-04-35
194	V. Moore	07-01-34; 12-01-34; 01-01-35;
	H. W. Tuller	06-06-35
202	J. H. Archambeau	10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
203	W. H. Johnson	07-01-34; 12-29-34; 01-01-35; 01-29-35
204	DeLaTorre	10-01-34; 01-01-35
205	Jose Guerrero	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-22-35
206	Carl Hagins	07-01-34; 01-01-35
211	Henry Hallet	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
212	Dan Shanahan	07-01-34; 11-26-34; 04-01-35
213	George Dickinson	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-06-35
214	M. Moreno	10-01-34; 04-01-35
222	C. Vaughn	07-01-34
	T. F. Shanahan	10-01-34
	S. Dickinson	01-01-35
223	Lee Allen	10-01-34
	L. McBride	01-01-35
224	L. T. Christman	10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-08-35
225	Alfonso Diaz	07-01-34
	Juan Sarla	09-06-34
	A. Diaz	11-06-34; 04-15-35
232	J. F. Shanahan	07-01-34
233	J. Hayes	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35 ; 04-01-35
234	B. Conrey	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35
235	Schwentefeger	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 04-01-35
242	T. Andrews	10-01-34; 04-01-35
243	Juan Ydequez	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 04-25-35
244	J. Cstanada	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-08-35
245	L. Perez	07-01-34

<u>BOX NO.</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DATE RENT PAID</u>
245	E. Picon	01-01-35
251	Marcus Lucero	07-01-34; 10-31-34
252	E. T. Williams	
253	R. Jimenez	10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
254	C. W. Ragle	12-01-34; 04-01-35
255	J. A. Tissaw	04-06-35
261	M. Mendoza	07-01-24; 01-01-35; 06-07-35
262	Y. Pacheco	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35
	E. S. Williams	01-01-35
264	A. Bustamanti	01-01-35; 04-01-35
265	Jose Lira	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
272	Sam Dickinson	04-23-35
273	Hugh Forbes	07-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
274	Jose Garcia	10-01-34; 01-01-35
282	M. Reyes	08-07-34; 02-12-35
283	J. M. Klune	10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
284	Jose Torres	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 02-07-35; 04-08-35
285	Manuel Rodriquez	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-22-35
292	S. T. Duncan	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-06-35
293	R. H. Gearhart	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-01-35
294	Juan Perez	07-01-34; 10-01-34; 01-01-35; 04-06-35
295	D. Guiterrez	09-06-34; 10-01-34; 02-25-35

FRED HAWKINS: JEROME KEPT CALLING HIM BACK TO THE BADGE

Form No. 10.

DEPUTY U. S. MARSHAL'S OATH OF OFFICE.



FOR THE Territory DISTRICT OF Arizona.

I, Fred Hawkins, do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute all lawful precepts directed to the Marshal of the District of Arizona, under the authority of the United States, and true returns make, and in all things well and truly, and without malice or partiality, perform the duties of the office of Deputy United States Marshal of the District of Arizona, during my continuance in said office, and take only my lawful fees; and that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; and I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter: So HELP ME GOD.

X Fred Hawkins

Sworn to and subscribed before me, this 10th day of January, 1910.

C. H. Rockeford,
U. S. Commissioner.

Tucson, Ariz., Jan. 10, 1910.

I certify that the above-named Fred Hawkins, Field, Deputy Marshal, entered upon the performance of his official duties the 10th day of January, 1910.

G. A. Overlock,
United States Marshal.

7-187

FRED HAWKINS — DEPUTY U.S. MARSHAL

Oath of office, sworn and subscribed January 10, 1910, in Tucson, Arizona.

For two decades, whenever Jerome needed a lawman, the name Fred Hawkins kept appearing.

His documented career in Jerome began in September 1899, when he was hired as a police officer following the town's disastrous May fire. By 1900, he was serving as deputy marshal under Jerome Town Marshal James F. Roberts.

Contemporary local papers described Hawkins as "a lawman with cold eyes that looked right through a man."

In April 1904, Roberts resigned to take a deputy sheriff position in Cochise County, and Hawkins was appointed town marshal.

THE VOTERS KEEP RETURNING HIM TO OFFICE

Hawkins was elected marshal in 1906, 1908, 1910, 1912, and 1914. During those years, he faced the difficult task of keeping order in one of Arizona's roughest mining camps—managing saloons, land disputes, and enforcing fire limits against red-light district expansion.

In July 1906, Hawkins and Deputy Sheriff Charlie King organized a widely publicized manhunt for Victoriano Jiminez.

After sixteen consecutive years of service, Hawkins stepped down in 1916. But Jerome was not finished with him.

In December 1917, the town council hired him again as deputy marshal, and by 1918 he was serving as a Yavapai County deputy sheriff stationed in Jerome.

THE GUNBATTLE AT HOTEL JEROME

Then came the night of September 23, 1918.

After gunfire erupted near the Hotel Jerome, Deputy U.S. Marshal Harry Carlson chased a gunman onto the primary school grounds. In the gun battle, Carlson was shot in the leg and City Marshal J. G. Crowley was shot four times.

Deputy Sheriff Fred Hawkins stepped into the fight, shooting and killing the gunman.

And still, his career wasn't over. In 1919, Fred Hawkins was once again elected marshal of Jerome.

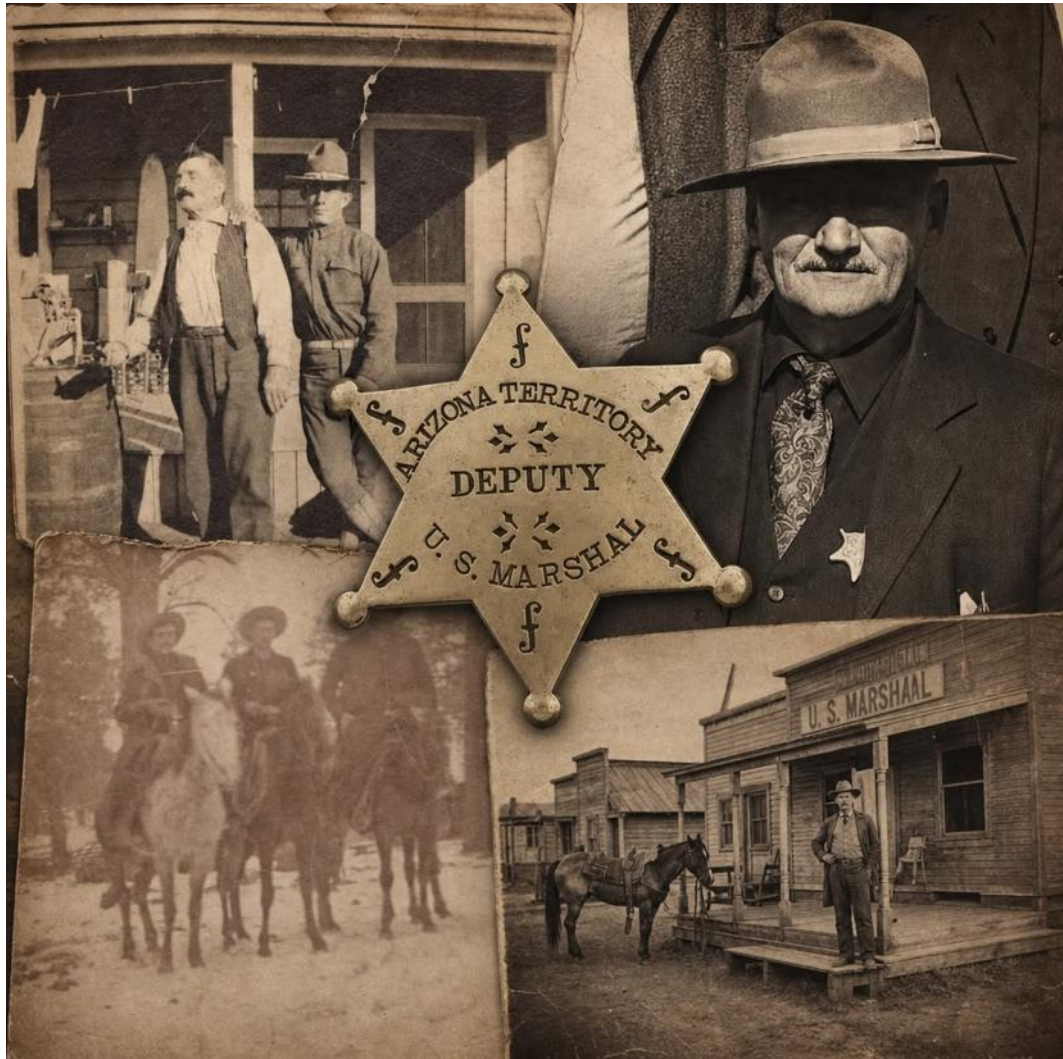
A TWO-DECADE LEGACY

From a police officer in 1899 to elected town marshal in 1919, Hawkins repeatedly returned to the badge. His story wasn't just one term or one dramatic gunfight—it was two decades of service during the town's most turbulent era.

How many people in Jerome today know the name of the man who wore the town's badge for so many years?

THREE LAWMEN WHOSE PATHS OVERLAPPED IN THE VERDE VALLEY

FRED HAWKINS – FRANK DICKINSON – WILLIAM DICKINSON



During the late 1890s through the 1910s, the Verde Valley had no shortage of trouble: fires, saloon violence, mining camp disputes, and sudden bursts of frontier gunplay.

And during those overlapping years, three men repeatedly stepped forward to enforce the law and keep order: Fred Hawkins, Frank Lee Dickinson, and William G. Dickinson. Their careers ran side by side across Jerome, Clarkdale, and Cottonwood, creating a network of lawmen and civic leaders whose paths crossed again and again during the region's most turbulent era.

FRED HAWKINS — JEROME'S RELENTLESS MARSHAL

For nearly twenty years, Jerome turned to Fred Hawkins whenever the town needed a badge. He served as:

- Police officer (1899)
- Deputy marshal (1900)
- Town marshal (1904–1916, 1919)
- Deputy marshal again (1917)
- Yavapai County deputy sheriff (1918)

Hawkins wasn't just a lawman — he was the backbone of Jerome's public safety for two decades.

FRANK LEE DICKINSON — DEPUTY SHERIFF AND FRONTIER LAWMAN

From the DickinsonFamily.us biography, Frank Lee Dickinson served the Verde Valley as a Deputy Sheriff of Yavapai County, working cases across Jerome, Clarkdale, and Cottonwood. He was known for his steady temperament and willingness to face danger head-on.

Law enforcement duties included:

- Serving as Deputy Sheriff of Yavapai County
- Responding to violent incidents across the Verde Valley
- Assisting with criminal investigations and arrests
- Supporting county-level enforcement during mining-camp disputes
- Confronting the killer of former Sheriff James Lowry in 1918
- Engaging in a gunfight with Lowry's murderer
- Coordinating with town marshals and county officials during crises



Frank wasn't just a deputy; he was one of the men Yavapai County relied on when trouble broke loose.



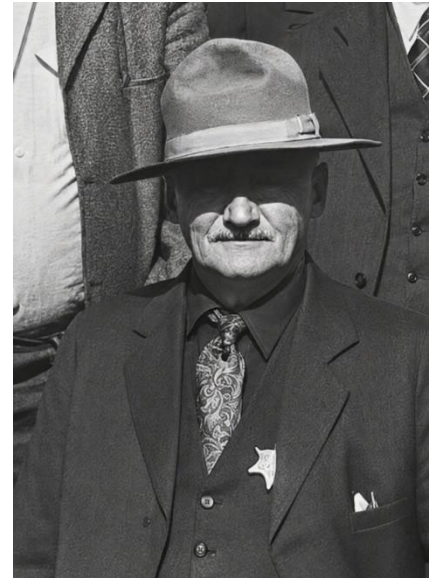
Biography of Frank Lee Dickinson

WILLIAM G. DICKINSON — ELECTED SHERIFF AND CIVIC LEADER

According to the DickinsonFamily.us biography, William G. Dickinson held one of the most important law enforcement positions in the region: He was elected Sheriff of Yavapai County.

William's career blended law enforcement with civic leadership. He served as:

- Yavapai County Deputy Sheriff
- Elected Sheriff of Coconino County
- Justice of the Peace
- Town and mining-camp administrator
- Community leader in Flagstaff



Frank and William were not just lawmen; they were brothers and lifelong cattlemen.

WHERE THEIR PATHS INTERSECTED

Even without a single document showing all three men standing together, the connections are unmistakable:

- They lived and worked in the same towns.
- They operated in the same years.
- They responded to the same crises.
- They were part of the same civic and mining network that held the Verde Valley together.
- In 1918, both Hawkins and Frank Dickinson were involved in major shootings tied to countywide violence.
- William Dickinson's authority as Sheriff of nearby Coconino County overlapped directly with Hawkins' role as Deputy Sheriff and Town Marshal.
- Frank served as undersheriff for Sheriff William Dickinson.
- All three were involved — directly or indirectly — in law enforcement in the Verde Valley.

These men weren't isolated figures. They were part of a tight web of lawmen, officials, and community leaders trying to keep order in a copper camp known for fires, fights, and sudden violence.

A SHARED LEGACY

Today, most people in Jerome, Clarkdale, or Cottonwood may not know their names. But Fred Hawkins, Frank Lee Dickinson, and William G. Dickinson helped shape the Verde Valley during its most turbulent years — sometimes in parallel, sometimes intersecting, always facing the dangers and responsibilities that came with a booming mining and ranching frontier.

Their stories remind us that history isn't just individual events — it's a network of people whose paths crossed again and again as they worked to keep the Verde Valley prosperous.

WILLIAM "BILL" GREEN DICKINSON 1868-1931

PIONEER - LAWMAN - CATTLEMAN

Deputy Sheriff Yavapai County

Sheriff Coconino County 1913–1919

William Green Dickinson, known throughout northern Arizona as “Bill” Dickinson, was born on September 29, 1868, in Cedar County, Missouri. In 1875, at the age of seven, he traveled with his parents, Samuel Cotton and Nancy Jane (Green) Dickinson, by covered wagon to Arizona’s Verde Valley, becoming part of one of the region’s early pioneer families.

Growing up in the Verde Valley, Dickinson helped build the ranching traditions that shaped the area. He and his brother, Frank Lee Dickinson, operated a successful cattle ranching enterprise known as the “100 Place,” land that would later be associated with the historic V Bar V Ranch and Crane Petroglyph Heritage Site near Cornville. Their ranch carried one of the oldest cattle brands in Yavapai County and became well known throughout the region.

Dickinson also devoted much of his life to public service. He served as a constable, was appointed to the Coconino County Board of Supervisors, and was elected Sheriff of Coconino County, serving from 1913 to 1919. During his tenure, he investigated some of northern Arizona’s most notable criminal cases and earned a reputation as a capable lawman. He was also the first deputy sheriff assigned to the Cottonwood area by the Yavapai County Sheriff’s Office.

William married Nellie Pattee of Flagstaff, and together they raised one son, Carl Dickinson. Throughout his life, he remained closely connected to the ranching communities of the Verde Valley and northern Arizona.

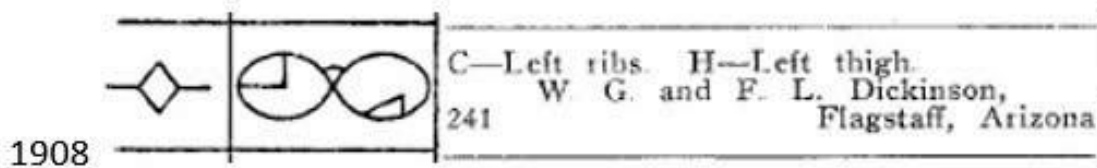
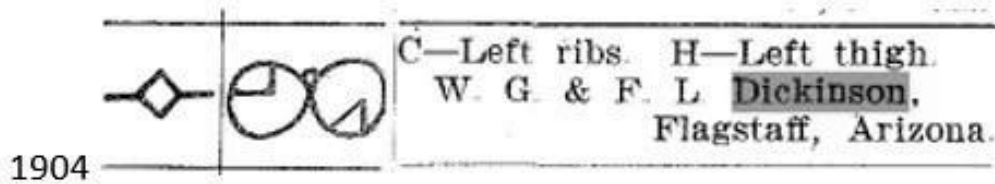
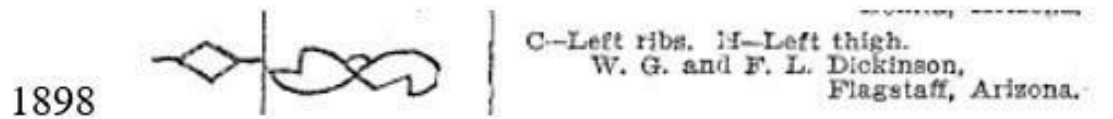
William Green Dickinson died in Flagstaff on September 10, 1931. He is buried in Cottonwood Cemetery alongside members of the Dickinson family, whose legacy remains deeply woven into the history of Arizona’s Verde Valley.

Because of William’s prominence in the Verde Valley and his lasting impact on the region, the sponsor of his gravesite felt that a simple QR code marker was not enough. Instead, they selected an 8” × 10” memorial plaque—large enough to include a short biography along with the QR code that links visitors to his full story. This enhanced marker ensures that anyone walking through Cottonwood Cemetery can immediately understand who William was and why his life mattered to the history of the Verde Valley.

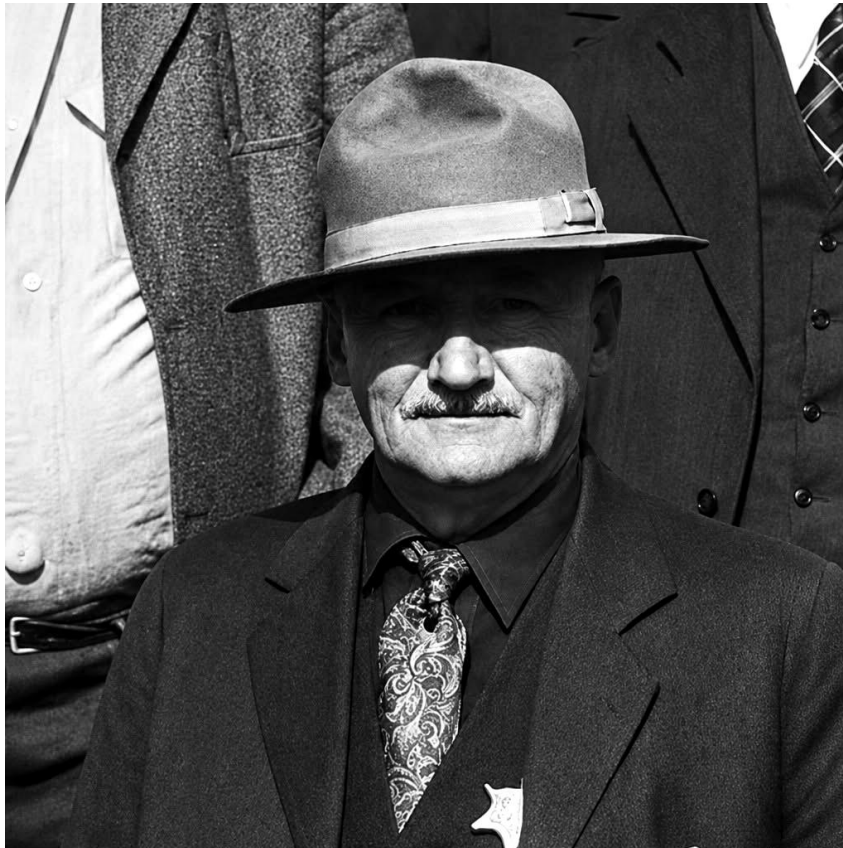
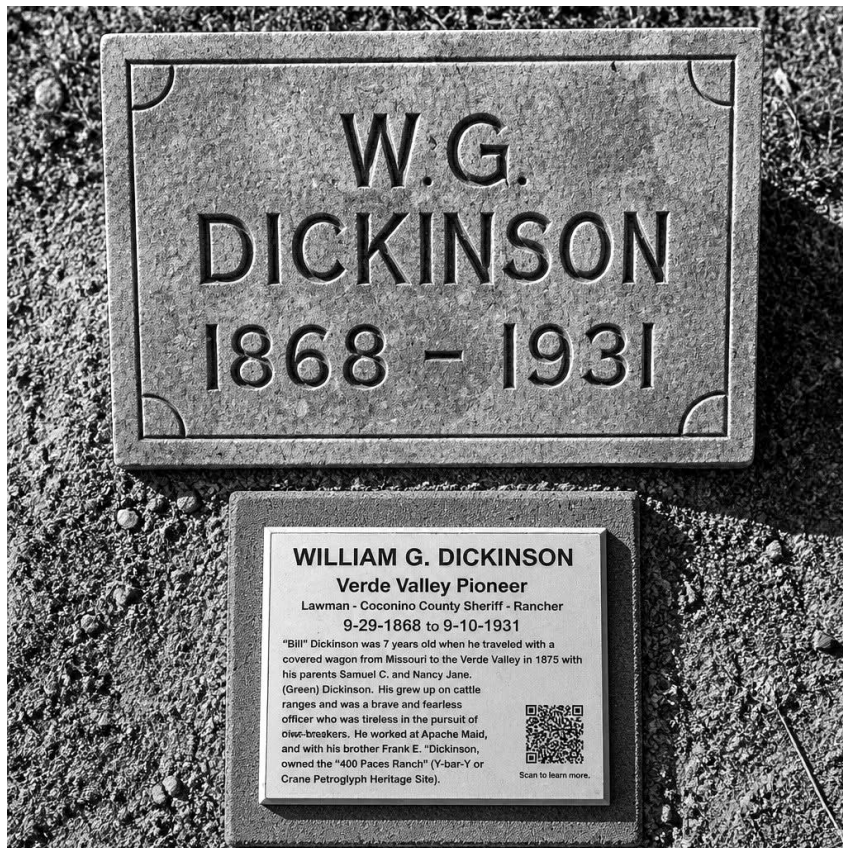


Portrait of William G. Dickinson

William & Frank Dickinson Cattle Brands



William and Frank Dickinson cattle brands, 1898–1908



Historical lawman William G Dickinson

WILLIAM G. DICKINSON AND THE AZBILL CASE



Coconino County's Sheriff William G. Dickinson had seen plenty of trouble, but the winter of 1915 brought a case that stayed with him longer than most. It began quietly—with a letter.

A man named J.P. Strahan wrote from Phoenix, worried about his missing friend, Henry O. Thomas, a young prospector who had left the city with a man he barely knew. Thomas had mentioned a bad tooth before leaving, Strahan said. He believed he could identify him by it.

Dickinson didn't know yet how important that detail would become.

The Body at J.D. Dam

Word soon reached Flagstaff: cowboys had found a body near J.D. Dam, southeast of Williams. Weighted with a sack of rocks. Bound with rope. Left in the water long enough that the elements had taken their toll.

Dickinson rode to Williams, where the investigation had already begun. A cabin near the dam held a wrench matted with blood. Witnesses recalled two men living there weeks earlier—one young, one older. The younger man matched Thomas.

Strahan's letter felt heavier now. Someone was waiting for answers.

Identification

Strahan arrived in Flagstaff and insisted he could identify the body by Thomas's tooth. Dickinson arranged for the remains to be exhumed in Williams.

It was grim work, but necessary. Strahan examined the teeth and confirmed the identity. Later, Thomas's father, C.E. Thomas, agreed: the head shape, the eyes, the prominent teeth—all matched his son.

Dickinson watched the father's face. A man identifying his son is something a sheriff never forgets.

The Suspects

The investigation pointed to two brothers: Willis and Henry Azbill. Their movements across central Arizona left a trail—selling a rifle here, a watch there, traveling with a wagon outfit, using aliases.

Dickinson followed every lead. Ranchers, railroad workers, townspeople—he interviewed them all. Step by step, town by town, he pieced together the brothers' path. It wasn't glamorous work. It was patient, methodical, and exactly what Dickinson was known for.

Eventually, the evidence was strong enough to bring charges.

Trial and Conviction

The case went to trial in Coconino County. The proceedings were tense—witnesses pressured, the courtroom strained—but the evidence held.

The Arizona Supreme Court later reviewed the case in *Azbill v. State* (1918) and affirmed the conviction. The murder of Henry O. Thomas had been proven.

Dickinson didn't celebrate. Justice wasn't triumph for him; it was duty.

The Escape

In 1920, Arizona abolished the death penalty, and the Azbill brothers' sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. Dickinson accepted the change—he respected the law.

But on June 18, 1920, the story took a turn no one expected.

The Azbill brothers simply walked away from the Florence prison while “on their honor.” No guards. No confrontation. They just left.

Statewide bulletins went out with their descriptions. Dickinson read them, knowing the case that began with a letter and a father's grief had ended with two men disappearing into the Arizona horizon.

He had done his part. The rest was beyond him.

After June 18, 1920, Willis and Henry Azbill were never found again.

The Coconino Sun

FLAG STAFF, ARIZONA, FRIDAY, JUNE 16, 1916

DREST FIRE BACK ELDEN MT. WEDNESDAY

rest fire started by one of the
w logging engines burned over
s before checked by men from
l company and the forest offi-
Three fires were started at the
ime but Motor Patrolman Ba-
s able to extinguish two of
efore they gained headway.
ird fire got beyond his control
ie was working on the others
general alarm was sent out.
mill company rushed 15 men
fire, some from the Cliffs and
rom the logging camp, while
est office here send out 5 men.
A. Riordan, of the A. L. & T.,
so at the scene of the fire.
was the second largest fire
ar, the largest burning over
res near Sedona. There is a
mpetition between the various
in the southwest in keeping
es down to a minimum. A re-
s issued from the district office

WILLIS AND HENRY AZBILL ARE CONVICTED OF MURDER

Defendants in Sensational Case never Quiver when
Jury Returned Verdict of Guilty and Fixed
the Penalty as Death.

Willis and Henry Azbill were con-
victed of first degree murder and
sentenced to death Monday night at
the close of a trial of eleven days
duration. The jury was out just
fifteen minutes and it is said that only
two ballots were taken, one to convict
and one for the sentence.

The rest in the defense came as a
surprise last Friday afternoon as it
was known that they had several wit-
nesses that had never been placed on
the stand.

around the bedroll in Azbill's posses-
sion when arrested.

The evidence introduced by the de-
fense regarding another body having
been seen in the J. D. tank two
months prior to the finding of the
body of Thomas was obliterated when
Mr. Wilson reviewed the testimony
of Dr. Manning showing that it was a
physical impossibility for the body to
have been in the tank for that length
of time. Henry Thomas was in Ohio
at the time the body was said to have
been seen in the tank by two witness-
es for the defense.

TOWN CHARTER IS NOT NEEDED TO INCORPORATE

The question of the missing tow-
n charter, brought up in the meeting of
the Board of Trade last Wednesday
evening, has been without a doubt
settled by digging into the minutes of
the board of supervisors in the
meeting of May 26, 1894, and was
presented to the Board of Trade at
special meeting Monday by O. I.
John.

Upon petition of two-thirds of the
tax payers of Flagstaff the board in-
corporated Flagstaff as the town of
Flagstaff in accordance with act No.
72 of the Legislative Assembly of
1893. They appointed the following
men to act as council until their suc-
cessors were duly elected: Gorham
Bray, Peter J. Brannen, James
Vail, John T. Daggs, David Babbitt.
The board of supervisors at that time
consisted of A. A. Dutton, chairman,
F. F. McMillon, member and C. J.
Bush, clerk.

Historical newspaper clipping, The Coconino Sun, June 16, 1916.

Great historical read about William and this case.

Book – Arizona Highways Days of Destiny
By Banks, Smith, Starkey, Stocker, Gehm ©1996
Pages 48 - Chapter title Last Manhunt
Details an extended manhunt by Sheriff William G. Dickinson.

Chapter 5 ("Last Manhunt") in Arizona Highways: Days of Destiny gives a fantastic look at Sheriff William G. Dickinson's relentless 1915 search for the Azbill brothers following the tragedy at J.D. Dam. Truly one of the last classic frontier manhunts in Coconino County history.

MAPPING J.D. DAM — THE REMOTE SITE AT THE HEART OF THE AZBILL CASE



Modern aerial map showing J.D. Dam Lake and surrounding access roads.

If you’ve been following the story of Sheriff William G. Dickinson and the Azbill brothers, you know the case began with a grim discovery at J.D. Dam. But what exactly was this place?

J.D. Dam was a small stock watering reservoir southeast of Williams, Arizona — a man-made earthen dam and pond used by local ranchers in the early 1900s. In those days, northern Arizona ranchers-built dozens of small dams to catch seasonal runoff. These weren’t public works projects — just simple earth dams forming shallow ponds so cattle could drink. J.D. Dam was one of them.

It appears in the historical record because cowboys working the area discovered Henry O. Thomas’s body there in 1915 — weighted with rocks and left in the water.

“Cowboys had found a body near J.D. Dam, southeast of Williams. Weighted with a sack of rocks. Bound with rope.”

The dam itself wasn’t a town or landmark — just a remote watering site on the open range. That isolation is exactly why the Azbill brothers chose it.

Location Context

- Southeast of Williams, AZ
- In the Kaibab National Forest region
- Near ranch cabins and grazing allotments used in the 1910s
- Close enough to Williams for cowboys to ride in with news of the discovery

Coordinates

35.0662846, -112.0275164 (Modern listing: J.D. Dam Lake, Arizona 86046)

Why This Location Mattered

- It was isolated — perfect for hiding a crime.
- Cowboys working nearby were the ones who discovered the body.
- A small cabin near the dam held key evidence, including a blood matted wrench.
- Dickinson's ride to this remote spot marked the true beginning of the investigation.

J.D. Dam wasn't a town or landmark. It was simply a lonely watering hole — but it became the center of one of Coconino County's most memorable murder cases.

Today J.D. Dam Lake is a remote, 6-acre trout fishery in the Kaibab National Forest near Williams, AZ, at an elevation of about 6,700 feet. Managed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, it is stocked periodically from spring through fall with rainbow trout, offering a tranquil setting for shoreline fishing. JD Dam is catch-and-release only for trout; no trout may be kept.

SELECTED READER COMMENTS

Stephen James

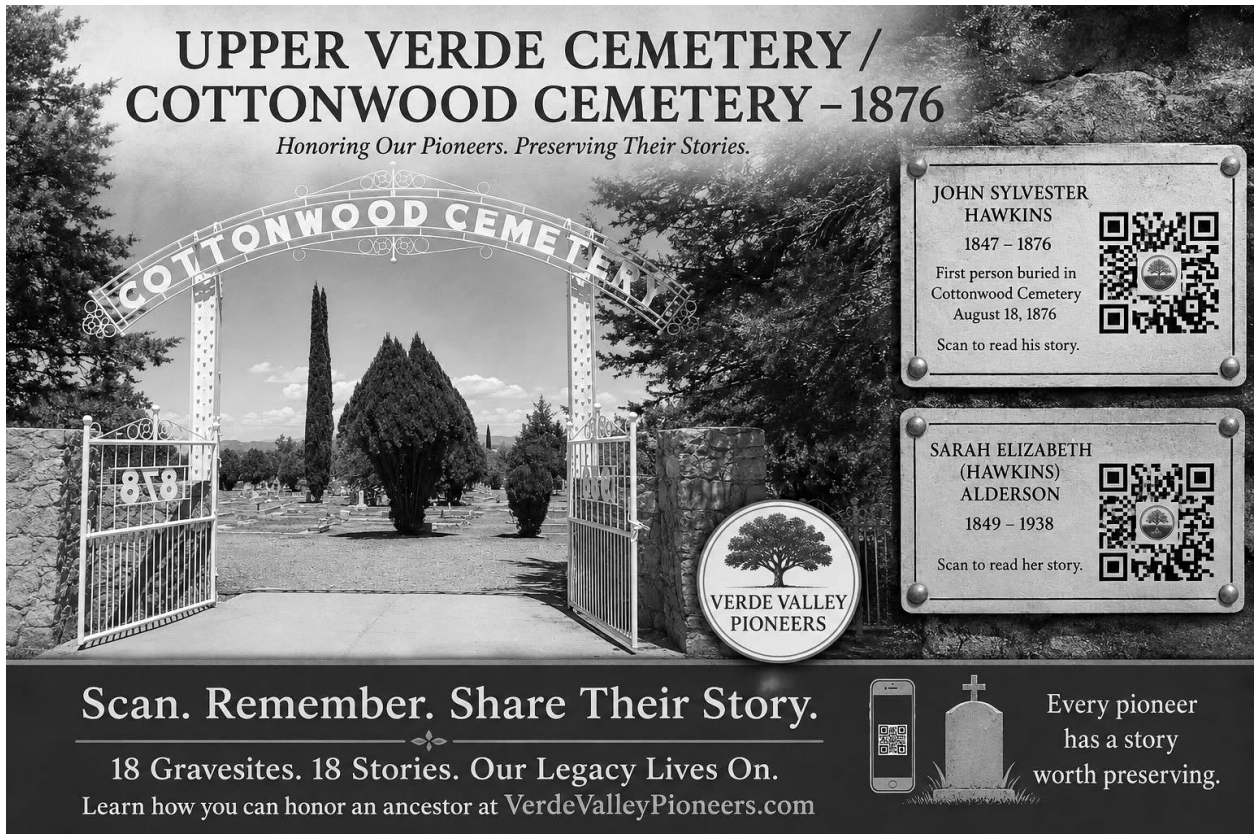
I first discovered JD Dam about 1973, there was a very small cabin there with Sears catalog wallpaper, door was gone as I recall. Went back in early 90's , cabin was gone, did some fishing, saw some eagles fishing also. I understand that the original cabin is nearby and managed by Forest Service.

Paul Wright

Will Dickinson was my great uncle, his brother Frank was my great grandpa also a sheriff, there are some pretty good stories about them, do you have more?

Source: Facebook comment on the original post.

UPPER VERDE CEMETERY & COTTONWOOD CEMETERY – 1876



**UPPER VERDE CEMETERY /
COTTONWOOD CEMETERY – 1876**
Honoring Our Pioneers. Preserving Their Stories.

**JOHN SYLVESTER
HAWKINS**
1847 – 1876
First person buried in
Cottonwood Cemetery
August 18, 1876
Scan to read his story.

**SARAH ELIZABETH
(HAWKINS)
ALDERSON**
1849 – 1938
Scan to read her story.

**VERDE VALLEY
PIONEERS**

Scan. Remember. Share Their Story.
18 Gravesites. 18 Stories. Our Legacy Lives On.
Learn how you can honor an ancestor at VerdeValleyPioneers.com

Every pioneer
has a story
worth preserving.

by Verde Heritage (March 13, 2021)

Original source: Verde Heritage on Facebook (March 13, 2021)

A beautifully written, well-researched article by Verde Heritage tells the story of the Verde Valley pioneers, the beginnings of Cottonwood, and the land that became the Cottonwood Cemetery.

The gravesite of John Sylvester Hawkins, the first person buried in Cottonwood Cemetery, remained unmarked for more than 140 years until volunteers recently placed a marker with a QR code linked to his biography. This meaningful effort became the inspiration for VerdeValleyPioneers.com website.

A few months later, the unmarked grave of John Hawkins' sister, Sarah Elizabeth (Hawkins) Alderson, received a similar marker from our project volunteers.

Since then, 18 QR code markers linked to biographies have been placed at gravesites throughout the Verde Valley, helping preserve and share the stories of early settlers and their families.

If you haven't already done so, I highly encourage you to follow Verde Heritage on Facebook. They continue to share beautifully written, well-researched articles preserving the rich history and stories of the Verde Valley.

The following pioneer families and individuals are highlighted in the article:

Casner Family

Strahan Family

Wingfield Family

Hawkins Family

George Kell

Robert Pleasants

"Parson" James C. Bristow

Talitha Cumi Bristow (Married David Erastus Hawkins)

M. Andrew ("Andy") Ruffner

Inez (Loy) Lay

L. M. Olden

William W. Nichols

Joseph Chaadowine

Charles Willard

William Marshall

David Scott



Scan to read the Verde Heritage article

I wish to thank Bill Cowan for posting these wonderful pictures of Bill and Margie Back.

The Back Ranch Historic District at Montezuma Well National Monument has been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. I was very proud to have done the work on the nomination along with Bob Spude who is the regional historian with Park Service. The application is now in DC and if there are no further snags will be approved sometime in the next year or so. I will be hosting a walking tour of the historic resources of the Back Ranch Historic District on two weekends in March in conjunction with Arizona Archaeology Awareness Month.

Bill Cowan added photos to the album: Back Ranch Historic District at Montezuma Well — at Montezuma Well National Monument.

Both Bill Back and Margie (Dickinson) Back came to the Verde Valley from Missouri by covered wagon in 1875. Both along with other members of their family are buried in the Back plot in the Cottonwood Cemetery.



Following his arrival in Middle Verde in the fall of 1875, Bill Back decided he was not going on to California with his compatriots from Missouri. He got a job working for the Marr Brothers and in 1878 married another 1875 Middle Verde arrival, Margie Dickinson and the couple began raising children. They had a place on Oak Creek near Margie's parents Samuel and Nancy Dickinson.



Shown here is Bill Back with his wagon near Munds Park on one of the weekly trips. Notice the pup or traveler on the back of the main wagon containing chickens raised along Beaver Creek.



It took Bill and Margie Back two years to clear the land that became the original Back homestead but once they had it cleared, they began to make weekly trips to Flagstaff and occasionally to Prescott to deliver produce, meat and goods produced on Beaver Creek.

PIONEER SPOTLIGHT: MARJORIE ANN DICKINSON-BACK (1862–1926)



Marjorie Ann Dickinson-Back — photograph courtesy of William “Bill” Cowan

At just 13 years old, Marjorie Ann Dickinson left Missouri with her family and traveled by covered wagon toward a new life in the Verde Valley.

In 1875, Marjorie traveled with her parents, Samuel Cotton Dickinson and Nancy Jane (Green) Dickinson, as part of the wagon train that arrived at Middle Verde on August 23. Other families making the journey included the Humans, Burfords, Bristows, Davidsons, Letts, Hawkins, and Hutchinsons.

Three years later, on December 23, 1878, Marjorie married fellow pioneer William Berryman Back. Together they established their family in the Verde Valley and became closely associated with the remarkable ranch at Montezuma Well. Family history preserves the story that the couple acquired the ranch in exchange for two horses.

The National Park Service tells another part of that story. The Back family operated a ranch, farm, and orchard at Montezuma Well and eventually helped turn the Well into an early tourist attraction. Visitors could take boat rides, while the family raised cattle, sheep and horses and grew crops using the area's water.

A 2010 National Park Service publication also preserves a fascinating glimpse of the Back family's life. William Back hauled hay, grain and produce toward Flagstaff, where he sold goods to lumber camps and railroad workers. Visitors to Montezuma Well could even take a boat ride for 25 cents.

Marjorie and William raised seven children. Their family became part of the network of pioneer families that helped shape the Verde Valley.

Marjorie's siblings included

- Mariah May (Dickinson) Hawkins
- Frank Lee Dickinson
- William Green Dickinson
- Alfred Dickinson
- Edward Virgil Dickinson

Half Siblings

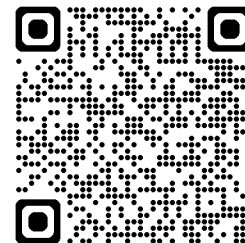
- Leroy Dickinson
- George Wesley Dickinson
- Charles Dickinson

Marjorie's life spanned the transition from Arizona Territory to statehood and the rapidly changing 20th century. Her story is also a reminder that the women of pioneer families were not simply witnesses to settlement—they were part of the families, ranches and communities that made that settlement possible.

Today, the Montezuma Well landscape preserves a tangible connection to the Back family's years there. The National Park Service notes that the family owned and maintained the property for more than 60 years.

QR Marker Installed at Gravesite

Marjorie's gravesite includes a permanent Verde Valley Pioneers QR Marker. Visitors can scan the marker and read her complete biography while standing at her gravesite.



VERDE VALLEY STORY: TWO HORSES FOR MONTEZUMA WELL



Imagine standing in the Verde Valley in the late 1880s and being offered a piece of land surrounding one of Arizona's most remarkable natural wonders.

The land was wild. Catclaw and mesquite covered the bottomlands, and neighbors reportedly thought William and Marjorie Dickinson-Back had made a poor trade.

The price?

Two horses.

Marjorie Ann Dickinson-Back, who had arrived in the Verde Valley with her family by covered wagon in 1875, married William Berryman Back on December 23, 1878. Within the next decade, the couple would become closely connected with the place we know today as Montezuma Well.

Family history records that William and Marjorie acquired the Montezuma Well ranch in exchange for two horses. The National Park Service describing the horse trade as a long-standing local account and placing the Back family's permanent settlement at the property in 1889.

The Backs began clearing the rough land and developing a working ranch, farm and orchard. Water from Montezuma Well and its ancient irrigation system made

agriculture possible in an otherwise arid landscape. The family raised cattle, sheep and horses and grew crops.

But the Backs saw something else in Montezuma Well.

They recognized that people were fascinated by the enormous natural sinkhole, its water, its ancient ruins and the surrounding landscape.

The family began welcoming visitors and eventually turned the Well into an early Verde Valley tourist attraction. Guests could tour the property, see artifacts, camp and picnic—and even take boat rides on the Well.

By the early 1900s, tourism had become an important part of the Back family's operation. Historical accounts preserved by the National Park Service describe William Back guiding visitors around Montezuma Well and taking them on excursions toward Montezuma Castle.

A 2010 National Park Service history of Montezuma Well also preserves the story that the Backs' property initially looked like a bad bargain to their neighbors. William cleared the catclaw and mesquite, used the wood for fuel, developed the water rights and transformed the difficult landscape into a productive ranch.

And Marjorie was there through those years of transformation.

She and William raised seven children at Montezuma Well, making the ranch not simply a business, but a family home.

What began, according to family history, with two horses traded for a seemingly wild piece of land eventually became one of the Verde Valley's earliest tourism destinations.

Today, Montezuma Well is preserved as part of Montezuma Castle National Monument. Visitors can still see the ancient irrigation canal and historic Back family structures and walk through a landscape that connects the Verde Valley's ancient inhabitants with the pioneer families who later made their homes here.

The story is a reminder that pioneer history isn't always about a single dramatic moment. Sometimes it is about recognizing an opportunity, taking a risk and slowly transforming a difficult piece of land into something that serves generations.

VISIT THEIR GRAVESITE

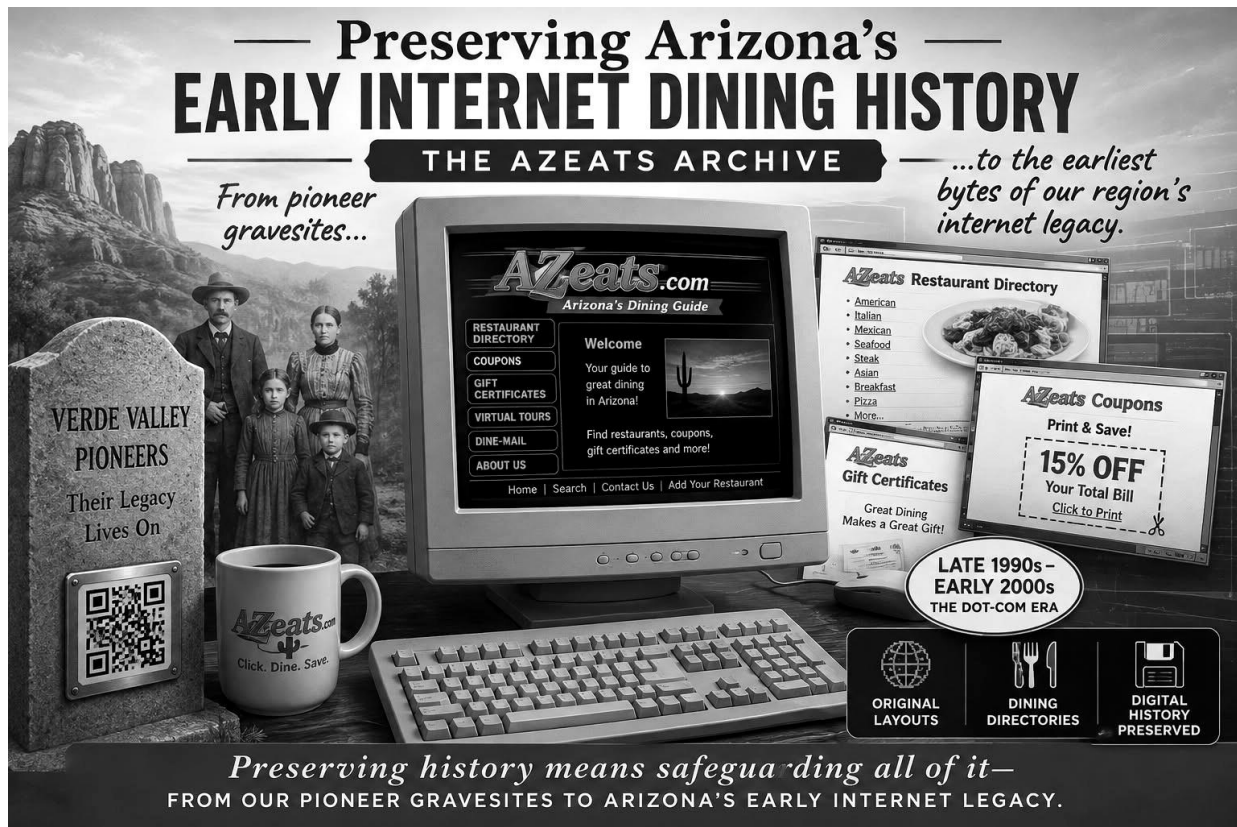
Marjorie Ann Dickinson-Back is buried at Cottonwood Cemetery in the Back family plot. Her story is permanently preserved through a Verde Valley Pioneers QR Marker at her gravesite. Visitors can scan the marker and read her biography while standing where she rests.



William and Margie Ann Back

AZeats History Archive

The Story of AZeats.com



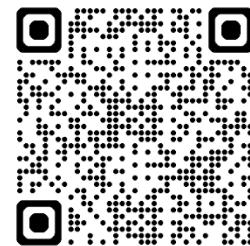
Preserving Arizona's Early Internet Dining History — The AZeats Archive

As many of you know, I have two websites dedicated to early Arizona settlers: DickinsonFamily.us and VerdeValleyPioneers.com. I recently completed a third Arizona history website—Preserving Arizona's Early Internet Dining History: AZeats.org The AZeats Archive.

While my primary passion is documenting and honoring the lives of our early Verde Valley pioneers, local history isn't just about the 19th and early 20th centuries—it's also about capturing how rapidly our communities changed as we entered the digital age.

Back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as the internet was just beginning to shape everyday life, Arizona's dining and web portals were laying the groundwork for how we connect online today. The AZeats Archive preserves the original layouts, graphics, and digital records of early web history and regional dining directories from that dot-com era.

Preserving history means safeguarding all of it—from the pioneer gravesites in our local cemeteries to the earliest bytes of our region's internet legacy.



<https://www.AZeats.org>

COCONINO SUN – CORNVILLE NUBBINS

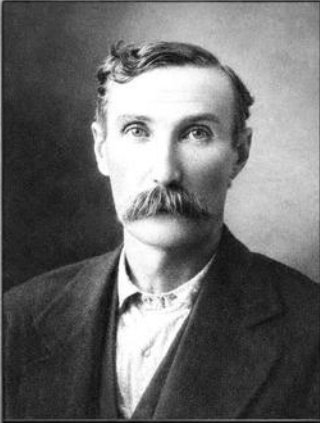
AUGUST 19, 1910

THREE DICKINSONS

in the

CORNVILLE NUBBINS – 1910

A SMALL NEWSPAPER COLUMN THAT CONNECTS A FAMILY



ALFRED "ALF" DICKINSON
1870–1940
Returning to Flagstaff



HULDA (SMITH) & FRANK LEE DICKINSON
1866–1960 • 1867–1925
Hulda visiting friends and relatives in the valley



CHARLES DICKINSON
1853–1926
Lightning struck his residence



The Cornville Nubbins column in *The Coconino Sun* is a powerful reminder that history lives in the everyday moments of ordinary people.

THE COCONINO SUN
Cornville Nubbins
Cornville, Aug. 14.
Albert Dickinson returned to Flagstaff last Thursday.
Mrs. Frank Dickinson, of Flagstaff, is visiting friends and relatives in the valley this week.
It was only a few days ago that the residence of Chas. Dickinson was struck by lightning, killing the dog and nearly demolishing a saddle which had been thrown onto the back porch.

One newspaper page.
Three Dickinsons.
A glimpse of their lives
in the Verde Valley
more than a century ago.

THE COCONINO SUN
FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA
FRIDAY, AUGUST 19, 1910
PAGE 8



Sometimes a family's history is found in only a few lines of an old newspaper.

On Friday, August 19, 1910, The Coconino Sun of Flagstaff published its regular coverage of northern Arizona. On page eight was a short column titled “Cornville Nubbins,” dated August 14. The column reported the everyday happenings around Cornville and the Verde Valley—visitors coming and going, a schoolhouse dance, storm damage, crops, cattle, and other local news.

Among those brief notices were three references to members of the Dickinson family.

The first reported:

“Albert Dickinson returned to Flagstaff last Thursday.”

A few paragraphs later came another:

“Mrs. Frank Dickinson, of Flagstaff, is visiting friends and relatives in the valley this week.”

Then came a much more dramatic report:

“It was only a few days ago that the residence of Chas. Dickinson was struck by lightning, killing the dog and nearly demolishing a saddle which had been thrown onto the back porch.”

At first glance, these might seem like three unrelated newspaper mentions. They were not.

Mrs. Frank Dickinson was Hulda Susan (Smith) Dickinson, wife of Frank Lee Dickinson. Alfred “Alf” Dickinson was Frank's brother, making him Hulda's brother-in-law. Charles Dickinson was the half-brother of both Frank and Alfred.

Charles was the son of Samuel Cotton Dickinson and Adline Green Dickinson. Frank and Alfred were sons of Samuel Cotton Dickinson and his second wife, Nancy Jane Green Dickinson. Thus, Charles was the half-brother of both Frank and Alfred.

Albert or Alfred?

There is an intriguing mystery in the first newspaper reference.

The Cornville Nubbins column clearly identifies the man as “Albert Dickinson.”

However, family records identify Frank's brother as Alfred “Alf” Dickinson, not Albert.

There is an important clue on the very same newspaper page. In the Stock Brands section on the right side of page eight is a listing for “Alf Dickinson, Sedona, Arizona,” accompanied by his cattle brand.

Combined with the family records, this strongly suggests that the “Albert Dickinson” mentioned in the Cornville column was actually Alfred “Alf” Dickinson.

Rather than silently correcting the newspaper, the discrepancy itself is worth preserving. The original says “Albert”; the family evidence points to Alfred. Historical research often requires comparing multiple sources to understand what an original record actually meant.

A Glimpse of Everyday Life

The report about Charles Dickinson is especially revealing.

Charles was one of the early Dickinson settlers of the Verde Valley. Charles, along with Alfred and Frank, had arrived in Arizona with the family in 1875 and had spent decades building their lives in the region.

By 1910, his appearance in the newspaper was not because of a major historical event. It was because lightning had struck his home.

The family dog was killed, and a saddle lying on the back porch was nearly demolished.

It is a remarkably ordinary piece of news—and that is precisely why it is valuable today.

Genealogical records can tell us when someone was born, whom they married, and when they died. A newspaper can sometimes tell us what they were doing on an ordinary week of their lives.

In this single Coconino Sun column, we learn that Alfred was returning to Flagstaff, Hulda was visiting friends and relatives in the valley, and Charles was dealing with the aftermath of a violent summer storm.

One newspaper page connects Charles Dickinson, Frank Lee Dickinson, Alfred "Alf" Dickinson, and Hulda (Smith) Dickinson and gives us a brief glimpse of their lives in northern Arizona more than a century ago.

Sometimes history is found in the smallest places.

PAGE EIGHT

MAINE MENTIONS
Maine, Aug. 17, 1910.
Saturday afternoon news item states that the Maine people are not yet over the shock of the recent fire which destroyed the town of Bangor. The fire was the worst in the history of the town, and the loss was estimated at \$1,000,000. The fire was caused by a lightning bolt which struck the town hall, and the fire spread to the surrounding buildings. The fire was the worst in the history of the town, and the loss was estimated at \$1,000,000.

Cornville Nubbins
Cornville, Aug. 14.
Herald Lane spent Sunday in the valley.
Alfred Dickinson returned to Flagstaff last Thursday.
The W. C. T. U. is holding a house on his immediate claim.
Mrs. Angel, of Phoenix, is in the valley, the guest of Mrs. Montgomery.
A large tree in front of the Harriet house was uprooted by lightning on Thursday.
J. T. Gilliam has a splendid crop of high grade potatoes on the Easterling place.
The Cornville 12 team of 1909 brought down a load of water from Jackson flat which swept away part of the Lee-Newton home.
A very pleasant little dance was given at the school house Saturday night with a number of people from Talmont, Cornville and Camp Verde in attendance.
Mrs. Mary Winkler, of Camp Verde and Mrs. Maggie Muff, of Phoenix, both of whom are in the valley, came to the Cornville house to see the back porch.
Last Monday evening during the storm the lightning hit the house and the house was destroyed. The house was destroyed by the lightning and the house was destroyed by the lightning.

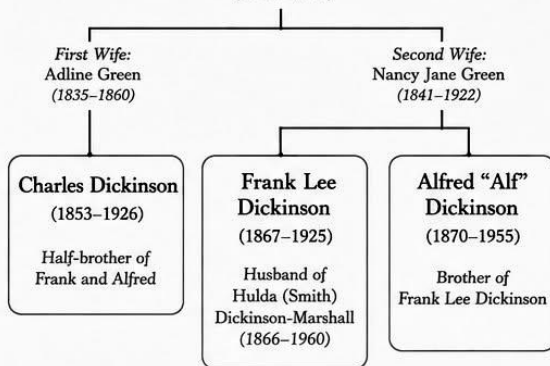
BUSINESS DIRECTORY
DR. C. W. SUIT
PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON
Residence, Cornville
DR. E. S. MILLER
PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON
Residence, Cornville
E. C. PORTZ
DENTIST
Residence, Cornville
E. P. SHILBRETH
Lumber, Mining and Irrigation Law
Residence, Cornville
HARRY M. JOHNSTON, C. E.
L. S. Engineer
HARRY M. JOHNSTON, C. E.
L. S. Engineer
JOSE C. SALAS
Contractor and Builder
CARPENTRY AND REPAIR
WORK OF ALL KINDS
ESTIMATES FURNISHED
On Any Kind of Work
Give me a Trial-You will Be Satisfied
Carey Lee Dentist Prompt Attention
LEWIS & MOYER
Telephone No. 8
FREIGHT EXPRESS TRANSFER
Prompt work. We are in connection with all Express Companies
Don't Forget Our Place No. 8
J. C. BLAKE
Saddles Made & Repaired
Harness Made to Last
Best Goods - Best Prices
Order at Home

STOCK BRANDS
Mrs. Ethel Wallace
Chisholm Brothers
J. O. Harrington
Hugh Anderson
E. D. Collins
R. L. Davidson
Frank Owsenby
A. K. Hawkins
Peter Donathach
R. T. Hawkins
O. T. Hawkins
Black Cattle Co.
A. O. Dickinson

ADOCK BRANDS
R. L. Davidson
Frank Owsenby
A. K. Hawkins
Peter Donathach
R. T. Hawkins
O. T. Hawkins
Black Cattle Co.
A. O. Dickinson

Three Members of One Family

Samuel Cotton Dickinson
(1831-1897)



How they are related:

- Charles Dickinson was the half-brother of both Frank Lee Dickinson and Alfred "Alf" Dickinson.
- Frank Lee Dickinson was married to Hulda Susan (Smith) Dickinson-Marshall.
- Alfred Dickinson was Hulda's brother-in-law.
- Charles Dickinson was Hulda's husband's half-brother (half-brother-in-law).

A NOTE ABOUT THE NEWSPAPER

The Cornville Nubbins column states "Albert Dickinson" returned to Flagstaff last Thursday.
Family records and other evidence identify this man as Alfred "Alf" Dickinson (1870-1955), brother of Frank Lee Dickinson. Newspapers sometimes contained name errors.

Source

The Coconino Sun, Friday, August 19, 1910, Page 8
Cornville Nubbins column dated August 14, 1910
Stock Brands listing on the same page.

Cornville Nubbins

Cornville, Aug. 14.

Haydee Lane spent Sunday in the valley.

Albert Dickinson returned to Flagstaff last Thursday.

W. W. Shirley is building a house on his homestead claim.

Mrs. Angel, of Phoenix, is in the valley, the guest of Mrs. Montgomery.

A large tree in front of the Hubert home was splintered by lightning last Thursday.

J. T. Gilliam has a splendid crop of high grade peaches on the Beatty place this year.

Mrs. Frank Dickinson, of Flagstaff, is visiting friends and relatives in the valley this week.

The storm of last Thursday brought down a flood of water from Jackson flat which swept away part of the Lee-Newton flume.

A very pleasant little dance was given at the school house Saturday night with a number of people from Sedona, Cottonwood and Camp Verde in attendance.

Mrs. Henry Wingfield, of Camp Verde and Miss Maggie Huff, of Pine, both sisters of Mrs. Hubert, came up from the Verde Saturday and will remain for several days.

It was only a few days ago that the residence of Chas. Dickinson was struck by lightning, killing the dog and nearly demolishing a saddle which had been thrown onto the back porch.

Last Monday evening during the storm the lightning set fire to a hay stack at Jimmy Van Devere's ranch, and despite the efforts of the men to save it, it was burned to the ground.

Grass on the range is fine, the rains having been plentiful and, it seems, always coming at the right time to keep the ground in good growing condition. Cattle are looking fine and the cattle men are jubilant over the pros-

THE DICKINSON BROTHERS AND THE ANCIENT BEANS OF OAK CREEK

Territorial Secretary

The Border Vidette.

Vol. 7.

NOGALES, ARIZONA, OCTOBER 14 1899.

No. 41

CURIOSITY IN THE SHAPE OF A BEAN.

There is on Oak creek, growing at the ranch of the Dickinson boys a curiosity in the shape of a bean. The seeds from which the bean vines sprung were taken from one of the many cliff dwellings found so plentifully along the Verde river and and Oak creek, where they have probably been layed away two centuries ago by the thrifty cliff dwellers. The vines are about the size of a common string bean vine. The pods are about eight to eleven inches long and an inch wide. The beans which were just beginning to form

were the shape of lima beans, only much larger. Mr. Dickinson sent a few of the beans to the territorial experimental station. He has quite a patch growing, but will not use them until he hears from the officials to whom he sent the sample. He thinks probably the bean is an oil producer, similar to the castor bean, or that it is for stock feed. The Jerome Hustler says that anyone desiring a few of these beans to plant could probably be supplied by writing to Alfred or Ed. Dickinson after the crop is matured this fall.

Imagine discovering seeds hidden away inside an ancient cliff dwelling... then planting them and watching them grow.

That's exactly what happened in 1899 at the Oak Creek ranch of Alfred ("Alf") Dickinson and Edward (Ed) Dickinson, according to newspaper accounts published in *The Jerome Hustler* and later reprinted in *The Border Vidette* of Nogales on October 14, 1899.

The story tells of seeds reportedly recovered from one of the many ancient cliff dwellings along Oak Creek and the Verde River. Believed to have been stored there for centuries, the Dickinson brothers planted them out of curiosity—and to everyone's surprise, they sprouted.

The vines resembled common string beans, but the pods measured an incredible 8 to 11 inches long and nearly an inch wide. The developing beans were described as being much larger than ordinary lima beans. Unsure what they had discovered, the Dickinsons sent samples to the Territorial Experimental Station to learn whether the beans were useful for oil production, livestock feed, or perhaps something entirely different.

Whether these remarkable beans truly originated from centuries-old cliff dwelling stores or whether another explanation exists, the newspaper articles capture the curiosity and pioneering spirit of the Dickinson brothers. Their willingness to experiment reminds us that the early settlers of the Verde Valley lived side-by-side with the enduring legacy of those who came before them.

Want to learn more about Alfred and Ed Dickinson? Their biographies, along with many other Verde Valley pioneer stories, can be found at VerdeValleyPioneers.com.

Do you have a Verde Valley Pioneer ancestor whose story deserves to be preserved for future generations? We invite you to add their biography to the Verde Valley Pioneers Archive and help us continue building this living history—one family at a time.

VERDE VALLEY PIONEER SPOTLIGHT

ALTA MAE DICKINSON



Vaudrey, Hulda, Frank Alta Mae
Dickinson

Uncovering the everyday life and lasting legacy of a true pioneer's daughter.

Alta Mae Dickinson was more than a pioneer's daughter. She was an Arizona native who grew up in the Verde Valley and became part of the everyday life of the community in ways that are easy to overlook today.

Born in Flagstaff in 1903 to pioneer parents Frank Lee Dickinson and Hulda Smith Dickinson, Alta attended school in Flagstaff and Camp Verde before graduating from high school in Clarkdale. During those high school years, she and her classmates helped create the Clarkdale "C" on the mountainside—a reminder that young people were already leaving their mark on the Verde Valley.

As a young woman living on Cottonwood's Main Street, Alta worked selling tickets at the local movie theater. Her family lived across the street, where her mother, Hulda, operated an upstairs boarding house. With Alta selling tickets, her cousin taking tickets, and her boyfriend running the projector, movie night was a real family affair!

Alta married Robert Spooner in 1926. While the family lived in Clemenceau, she worked as a bookkeeper and served as Postmaster at the Clemenceau Post Office. Her daughter, Barbara Ann, was born during those years.

These small details give us a glimpse of what everyday community life looked like nearly a century ago.

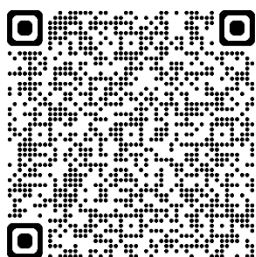
Alta's life eventually took her to Coolidge, where she became a Railway Express Agent. She remained active in her community and in organizations including the Order of the Eastern Star, Rebekah Lodge, the Women's Club, and the Presbyterian Church.

Alta died in 2002 at the age of 98.

Catch Up on Alta Mae Dickinson's Story:



Part 1: Building the Clarkdale "C" — How Alta and her classmates created the iconic mountainside landmark:



Part 2: Serving as Postmaster — Alta's years keeping her local community connected:



QR Marker Installed at Gravesite

Alta Mae Dickinson's gravesite includes a permanent Verde Valley Pioneers QR Marker. Visitors can scan the marker to read her complete biography while standing at the gravesite.

ALTA DICKINSON'S 1923 YEARBOOK

The Alchemist 1923



ALTA DICKINSON

"Her's was not a forceful way.
But she had a gentle smile
And a kindly word to say."

Camp Verde High School.
Dramatic Club (Sec.) '23.
Glee Club '23.
Senior Class Secretary.

While researching Alta Dickinson, I discovered her photograph and senior entry in the 1923 Alchemist, the Clarkdale High School yearbook.

Beneath her photograph are three lines:

"Her's was not a forceful way.
But she had a gentle smile
And a kindly word to say."

The quote caught my attention. It turns out the words were adapted from Edgar A. Guest's poem "People Liked Him," published in 1916. The yearbook editors changed the original "His" and "he" to "Her's" and "she" to describe Alta.

Translated into modern English, her classmates were saying:

"She wasn't pushy, loud, or demanding—she was warm, soft-spoken, and kind to everyone."

It is a beautiful testament to how Alta Mae was remembered by those who knew her.

Her entry also tells us something important about her education. Before becoming a member of the Clarkdale High School Senior Class of 1923, Alta had attended Camp Verde High School.

Alta was active in the Dramatic Club (Sec) and Glee Club, and she served as Senior Class Secretary in 1923.

THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE 1923 CLARKDALE HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR CLASS WERE:

KATHRYN BAILEY

"If I chance to talk a little while, forgive me."

Dramatic Club '22, '23

Glee Club '23

Annual Staff

CHESTER ALLEN

"He'd undertake to prove by force of argument a man's no horse."

Dramatic Club '22, '23

Baseball '21, '23

Football '23

Forum President

Annual Staff

GLADYS CRAWLEY

"A success at all she aimed at. And she aimed at everything."

Dramatic Club '22, '23

Glee Club '20, '21, '22, '23 — President

Orchestra '21, '22, '23

Basketball '21, '22, '23

Forum President

"C" Club

Annual Staff

HELEN COLEMAN

"A maiden never bold of spirit so still and quiet."

Heavener High School, Oklahoma

COLUMBUS FARLEY

"Just an earnest, studious lad. Learning seems to be his fad."

Football '23

CARMELITA HARDIN

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Arlington High School

Dramatic Club '23

Glee Club '23

PAUL A. HEADY

"As good-natured as he is big."

Dramatic Club '22, '23

Football '22, '23

Track '22

Annual Staff

BERTHA HASSETT

"What is the little one thinking about? Very wonderful things, no doubt."

Dramatic Club '22, '23

Glee Club '20, '21

Senior Class Treasurer

Annual Staff

HAL R. LAUDEMANN

"Ye Gods! I am a man after my own heart!"

Football '22, '23

Basketball '21, '22, '23 — Captain

Baseball '20, '21, '22, '23 — Captain

Track '22, '23

Tennis '23

Orchestra '20, '22

"C" Club

Annual Staff

GERTRUDE MOONEY

"'Tis the song ye sing, and the smile ye wear That's a-makin' the sunshine everywhere."

Dramatic Club '22, '23

Glee Club '21, '22, '23

Orchestra '21, '22, '23

Basketball '22 — Captain; '23 — Captain

Senior Class President

"C" Club

Annual Staff

HOWARD WINGFIELD

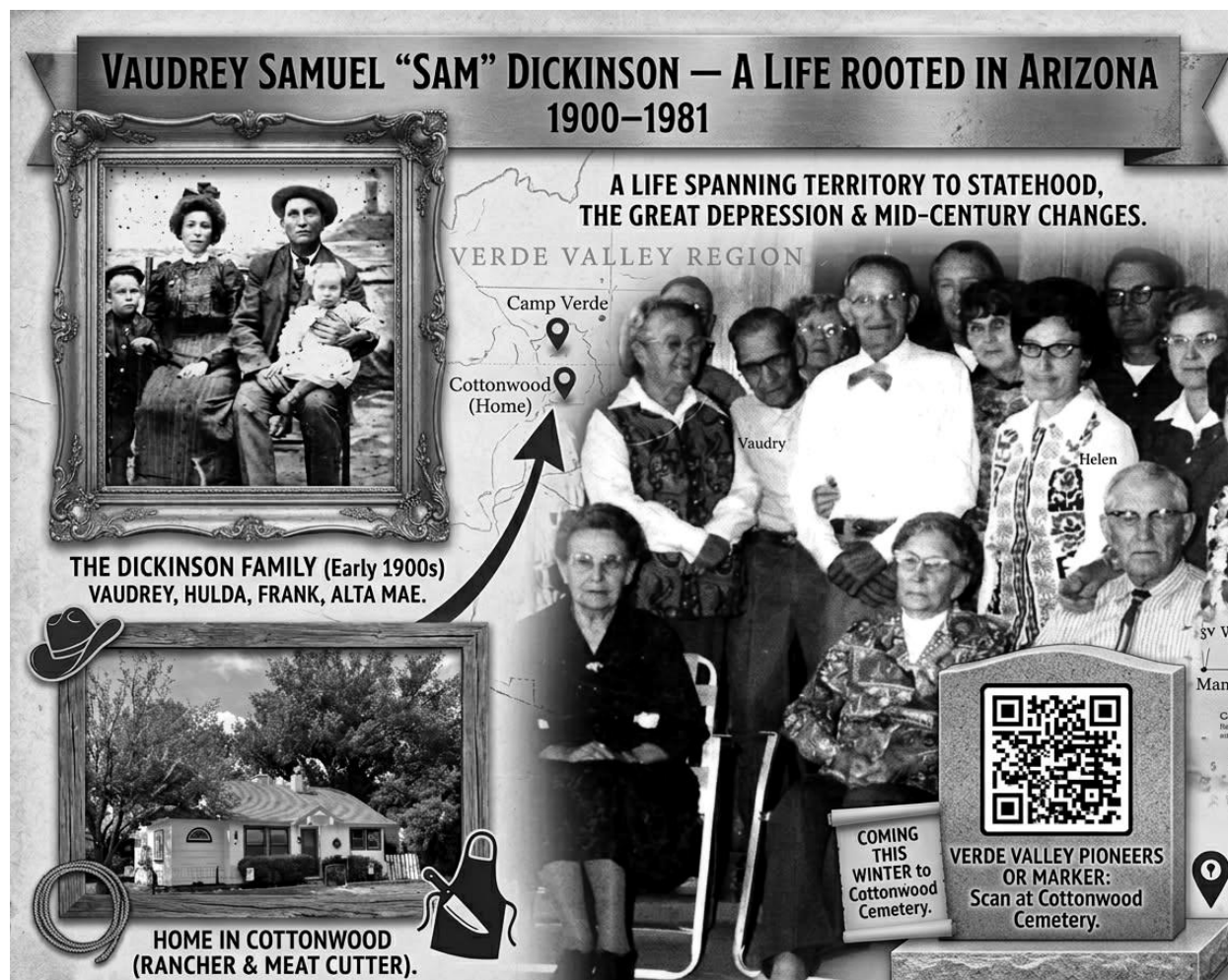
"Oh, this learning! What a thing it is!"

Alta's entry gives us one more glimpse into that world: a young woman who came from Camp Verde High School, became part of the Clarkdale senior class, served as its secretary, and was remembered for "a gentle smile" and "a kindly word to say."

Source: The Alchemist, Clarkdale High School, 1923.

Vaudrey Samuel “Sam” Dickinson

A Life Rooted in Arizona



Some people leave behind a long list of accomplishments. Others leave something just as important — a life that helps us understand the people and communities that came before us.

Vaudrey Samuel “Sam” Dickinson was born October 4, 1900, at Camp Verde, Arizona, the son of Frank Lee Dickinson and Hulda Susan Smith Dickinson. He was part of a Dickinson family deeply connected to the early Verde Valley.

Sam grew up in an Arizona that was still a territory when he was born. His life would span Arizona statehood, the Great Depression, and the changing rural communities of the mid-20th century.

As an adult, Sam worked as a rancher and meat cutter. In 1920, he married Nina Elizabeth Allen in Prescott. They raised two daughters, Ruth and Nancy.

Eventually Sam made his home in Wickenburg, where he became remembered as a longtime resident and a man of the land. He died in Wickenburg in 1981 at the age of 80 and was buried in Wickenburg Cemetery.

The photographs of Sam help bring that story to life. One shows him as a young man with his parents, Frank and Hulda, and sister Alta Mae. Another captures him many decades later, surrounded by family.

These photographs remind us that history isn't only about famous people or major events. It is also about families, working lives, homes, and the ordinary people whose lives helped shape Arizona.

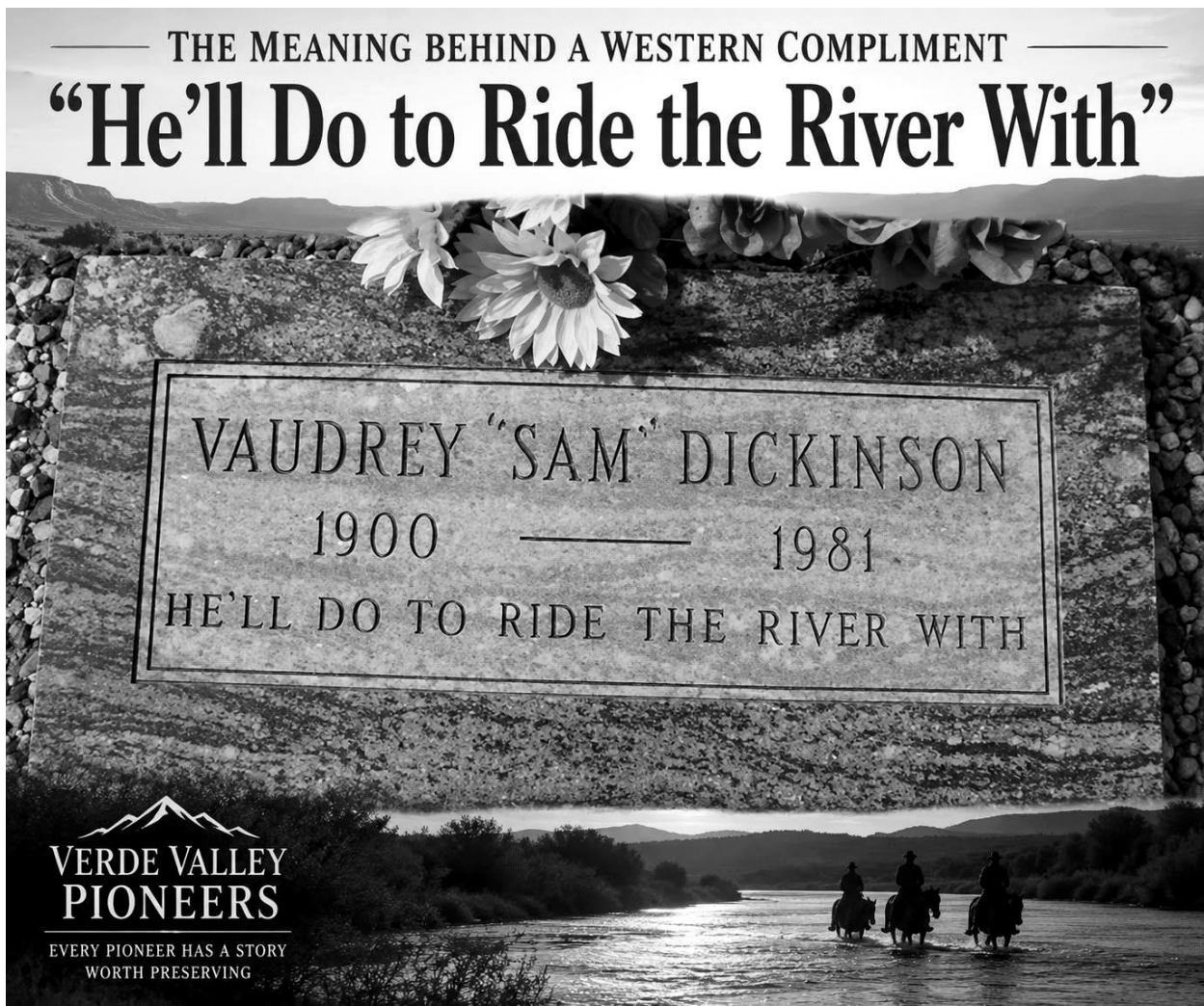
In the second picture below are Vaudrey, his mother Hulda, and his sister Helen,



Vaudrey, Hulda, Frank Alta Mae
Dickinson



HE'LL DO TO RIDE THE RIVER WITH



The Meaning Behind a Western Compliment

The words carved into Vaudrey “Sam” Dickinson’s headstone are more than an old Western expression: “He’ll do to ride the river with.”

“He’ll do to ride the river with” is one of the highest compliments a person could receive in the 19th-century American West. As an epitaph, it signifies that the deceased was exceptionally reliable, brave, loyal, and trustworthy under pressure.

In the days of cattle drives, a river crossing could be one of the most dangerous moments of a long trail. Cattle could panic, currents could be swift, and a rider needed courage, good judgment, and the ability to keep his head when things went wrong.

A cowboy who was described as someone who would “do to ride the river with” was therefore being given a powerful compliment. He was someone you could count on when the going got tough—a dependable partner, a man of courage and character.

A 1961 Texas newspaper even described the expression as one of the phrases pioneers used for “the solid citizens of the times.”

There is an interesting historical footnote. Although the expression is often described as an old cattle-drive saying, the earliest documented examples researchers have located appear in the Western novels of William MacLeod Raine in 1921, including Gunsight Pass. By the 1930s and afterward, however, the phrase was firmly established in Western and Texas vocabulary as a way of describing someone who could be trusted.

Literary and Historical Legacy

The expression became widespread through Old West tradition and was later popularized in classic frontier literature by authors like Louis L'Amour and Elmer Kelton. It remains a classic piece of Western epitaph tradition, reserved almost exclusively for pioneer lawmen, cattlemen, and steadfast friends who proved their worth when it mattered most.

So, in plain English, what did it mean?

He was the kind of man you wanted beside you when life got rough.



Scan to view Vaudrey's biography

HOW FIVE-YEAR-OLD HULDA SMITH HELPED KEEP HER FAMILY MOVING



In 1887, the Smith family set out from Missouri for the Arizona Territory with a covered wagon, determination, and just \$15 in savings. Their journey west was not an easy one. Whenever money ran short, the family would stop along the route so they could find work on the railroad and earn enough to continue westward.

One day, while camped along the way, a local man offered a reward of \$5 to anyone who could find his lost horse. Barefoot and undaunted, young Hulda ventured into the brush in search of the missing animal. After about an hour of searching, she found the horse and for her efforts, Hulda received the \$5 reward.

STONeworks OF THE UPPER VERDE VALLEY

Part 1 of 5 — The People Who Came to the Verde Valley

By Matthew R. Holmes



What happens when people from many different backgrounds come together to build a community?

In this five-part series, Verde Valley Pioneers presents Stoneworks of the Upper Verde Valley, an article by Matthew R. Holmes exploring the people, work, and stone structures that remain part of the Verde Valley's history.

The story begins with Jerome and the mining industry that brought people from around the world to the area.

“The mineral wealth of Jerome is why anyone was originally here. People immigrated here from all over the world to seek their fortune working in the mines. Hard work was the great equalizer.”

Photographs of UVX administration, smelter, and mine workers show an incredible diversity of people working together in and around the mines.

Anglos, Scots, Irish, Cornish, Italians, Spaniards, eastern Europeans, Mexicans, Natives, and Chinese all worked in the mine or in support of the mine.

The story of the Verde Valley is not only the story of the people who arrived here. It is also the story of the work they did—and what they left behind.

STONeworks OF THE UPPER VERDE VALLEY

Part 2 of 5 — When the Mines Closed

By Matthew R. Holmes



The work that built the Verde Valley didn't end when the mines closed.

In 1930, the Great Depression closed the mines of the Verde Valley, except for Clark's, which had enough money to keep going.

Many miners and smelter workers suddenly found themselves unemployed.

But the skills they had learned—especially their ability to work with rock—would prove useful in another chapter of Verde Valley history.

Local men were hired through federal public works projects. Stone and mortar buildings and walls were constructed in places including Cottonwood and Jerome.

The men who had worked underground and around the mines now had an opportunity to put their skills to work building something that would remain above ground.

Some of those stone walls can still be seen today.

They are more than old walls.

They are reminders of the people who built them.

STONeworks OF THE UPPER VERDE VALLEY

Part 3 of 5 — Rebuilding Tuzigoot

By Matthew R. Holmes



During the Great Depression, several government programs brought new opportunities to communities throughout the Verde Valley.

In 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was involved in local projects, including campgrounds and buildings.

Matthew R. Holmes also shares a family connection to this period:

“My grandpa Bob Holmes worked as a chef in the CCC all over Arizona and even in Colorado at Estes Park, Rocky Mountain National Park.”

Later, Bob Holmes became a skilled electrician who worked on projects including Bartlett Dam and the South Mountain towers.

Then, in 1934, local unemployed miners and smelter workers took on another important project.

With the help of the NYA, they excavated and reconstructed Tuzigoot.

Men whose previous work had centered around mining and smelting were now using their skills to help preserve and rebuild an important piece of the region's past.

The work of the Depression era left a lasting mark on the Verde Valley.

STONeworks OF THE UPPER VERDE VALLEY

Part 4 of 5 — The Work Left Behind

By Matthew R. Holmes



The public works projects of the 1930s left more than employment opportunities behind.

They left buildings, bridges, walls—and physical reminders of the people who did the work.

In 1935, the WPA was responsible for local projects including the Del Monte Wash bridge at the south end of Main Street and walls along the road into Jerome.

Then, in 1939, funds were raised for construction of the Cottonwood Community Civic Club building.

It still stands today as a monument to the work programs and workers of that period.

Matthew Holmes observes that it is very likely many of the same men who worked together in the mining industry also worked together on local public works projects.

Unfortunately, their names were not usually recorded.

Often, only the people in charge of the projects were identified.

That means some of the men who physically built these structures have become largely invisible in the historical record.

Yet their work remains.

STONeworks OF THE UPPER VERDE VALLEY

Part 5 of 5 — Stonework That Connects Past and Present

By Matthew R. Holmes



Walk through Old Town Cottonwood and look closely.

Stone and mortar buildings and walls—some old, some new—can still be seen along the streets.

Matthew R. Holmes writes that the Cottonwood Community Civic Club building is perhaps the best example of stonework in the Upper Verde Valley.

And the story doesn't end with the men who built these structures.

“The descendants of some of these men still live in the area.”

Matthew also sees a connection between the workers of the past and today's crews, who continue building homes and infrastructure for power companies, local governments, the state, and private construction.

These structures connect us to the people who came before us.

They connect the past with the present.

And, as Matthew writes:

“A past that needs to be preserved and protected.”

STONeworks OF THE UPPER VERDE VALLEY

About the Author

Matthew Holmes is a sixth-generation Arizona native, born and raised in Phoenix and directly descended from the pioneering Hawkins family of the early Verde Valley.

For the past twenty-five years, Matthew has made the Verde Valley his home, where he works as a local genealogist, historian, and photographer dedicated to preserving the stories of Arizona's earliest settlers.

He holds two degrees from Northern Arizona University—Bachelor's degree in History and a Master's degree in Sustainability—giving him a unique perspective on how the past shapes the future of the region.

Matthew is also a proud volunteer at the Clemenceau Heritage Museum, where he contributes to ongoing efforts to safeguard the cultural heritage of the Verde Valley for generations to come.

This concludes our five-part series, Stoneworks of the Upper Verde Valley.



Scan this QR code to read the full article.



Scan this QR code to download the PDF version.

Jessie Mae Fenstermaker Dickinson-Breckenridge

— *A Life Rooted in Arizona*



This story is possible today thanks to a heartfelt submission from Cody Alan Greene, who shared Jessie Mae’s history with the Verde Valley Pioneers Archive.

Cody’s contribution comes from family memories passed down to him by his great-grandmother, Ella Rose Smith Heydorn — Jessie Mae Fenstermaker Dickinson’s first cousin. Through Ella Rose’s recollections and Cody’s dedication, Jessie Mae’s life and legacy can now be preserved and honored within our archive.

Every pioneer’s story matters. Jessie Mae’s is now part of the record because one family chose to keep her memory alive.

Jessie Mae Fenstermaker was born in 1908 in the mining town of Dos Cabezas, Arizona, but much of the story of her family would eventually unfold in the Verde Valley.

Her father, Joseph Albert “Bert” Fenstermaker, was a miner whose life included the hardships and adventures of the American West. Jessie’s mother died when Jessie was only 10 years old. Despite the difficult circumstances of the family’s early years, members of the Fenstermaker family were eventually reunited in the Verde Valley.

In 1927, Jessie married Edward “Eddie” Lee Dickinson (1906-1968). Together they built their family in the Cottonwood area, raising three children: Dixie Mae, Frank Lee, and Nova Jean.

Jessie and Eddie also ran a meat market in Cottonwood, with their children helping along the way. Their years in the Verde Valley were part of a time when families often worked together to build a livelihood while the communities of the Verde Valley were still developing.

In 1955, Jessie and Eddie moved south to Wickenburg. After Eddie's death in 1968, Jessie married Henry Frank Breckenridge.

Jessie Mae died in Wickenburg in 1990 at the age of 82. Today, her story lives on through her descendants, family photographs, and the records preserved by the Verde Valley Pioneers and Dickinson Family archives.

Jessie Mae's gravesite is scheduled to receive a permanent Verde Valley Pioneers QR Marker this winter. Once installed, visitors will be able to scan the marker and read her complete biography while standing at her gravesite.

Preserving stories like Jessie’s helps ensure that the people and families who helped build the Verde Valley are not forgotten. Family photographs, memories, documents, and stories can all become part of that record.

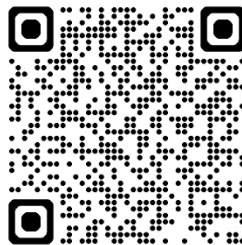




Family photograph supplied with the biography

Sources:

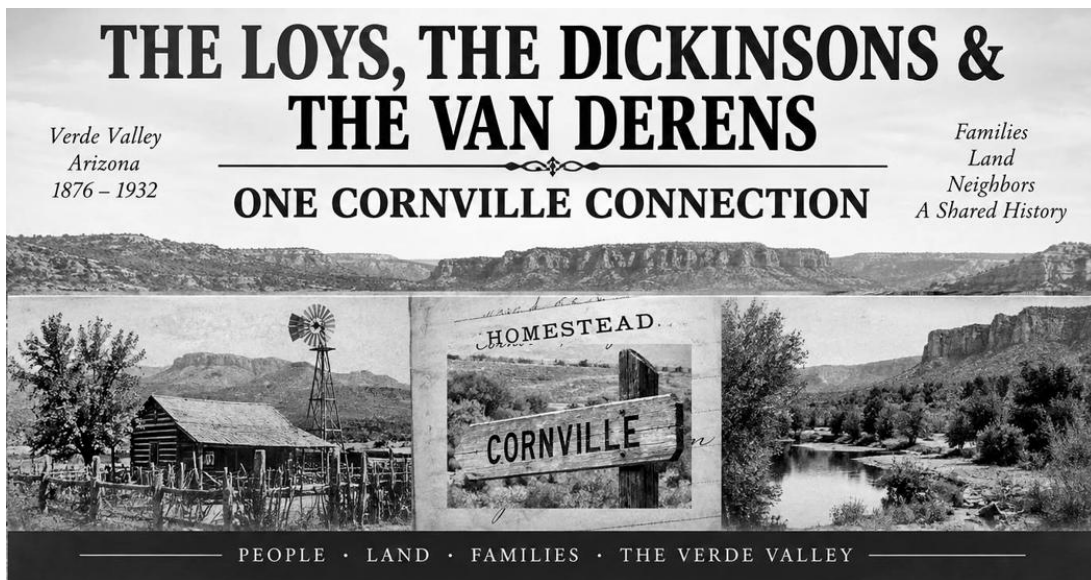
- Cody Alan Greene
- Verde Valley Pioneers Biography — Jessie Mae Fenstermaker Dickinson-Breckenridge
- Dickinson Family Archive — Jessie Mae Fenstermaker Dickinson
- FamilySearch — Jessie Mae Fenstermaker (1908–1990)
- Arizona Gravestones Obituaries — Jessie Mae Breckenridge
- Find a Grave — Jessie Mae Breckenridge Memorial



Scan to read a biography of Jessie
by Cody Alan Green

LOYS, DICKINSONS & VAN DERENS

ONE CORNVILLE CONNECTION



The story of the Loy family in the Verde Valley begins well before William Loy purchased part of a Dickinson homestead.

According to "Pioneer Stories of Arizona's Verde Valley," Samuel Loy was born near Columbus, Ohio, in 1820. He joined the gold seekers in 1849 and crossed the plains by ox team to California, where he spent four years farming rather than mining.

After returning east and establishing a family in Missouri, Samuel and Jane Loy headed west again with their children in the summer of 1876.

They arrived in the Verde Valley on August 13, 1876, but continued on to Prescott for the winter. In the spring they returned to the valley and purchased land from Riley Casner near the mouth of Oak Creek. Samuel intended to farm.

The Loy family was now part of the small community developing along Oak Creek.

A later account in "Pioneer Stories of Arizona's Verde Valley," recalling the neighbors of 1877, describes the early families scattered throughout the valley. It specifically notes that "On Oak Creek settled the Tiptons, Mulhollands, and Dickinsons."

In 1913, William Loy of Cornville was named as one of the witnesses for Charles Dickinson's homestead claim. The other witnesses included Thomas B. Farrow, James G. Van Deren and Roy Dickinson.

But William Loy was not the only witness with a personal connection to Charles Dickinson. James G. Van Deren was also named as a witness—and he was Charles

Dickinson's son-in-law. Charles's daughter, Mary Rowena Dickinson, married James Godfrey Van Deren (1878–1952).

The Dickinson and Van Deren families were connected in several other ways as well. Charles's daughter Winifred Dickinson later married Roy Van Deren, while Charles's half-brother Alfred Dickinson married Ida May Van Deren.

Then, in 1917, William Loy and his family bought part of the place that had been homesteaded by William G. Dickinson on Lower Oak Creek. "Pioneer Stories of Arizona's Verde Valley" says the Loy family lived there until William's death in 1932, and that the property remained with his sons Edward and Lindsay. The book also describes the land as being irrigated by the Lower Oak Creek ditch, one of the oldest water rights in the Valley.

So this wasn't simply a story about one piece of land changing hands.

It was a story that stretched across more than 40 years — from Samuel Loy's arrival in the Verde Valley in 1876, through the early Oak Creek settlement, to William Loy's connection with the Dickinsons in 1913 and his purchase of Dickinson land in 1917.

Sometimes the history of a community is found in the big events. Sometimes it's found in a witness's name on an old homestead document — and in the story of who eventually lived on that land.

04176 NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION Department of the Interior, U. S. Land Office at Phoenix, Arizona. August 3th, 1912. Notice is hereby given that Thomas B. Farrow, of Cottonwood, Arizona, who, on March 5, 1908, made Homestead Entry, No. 1427-04176, for sw$\frac{1}{4}$ se$\frac{1}{4}$, se$\frac{1}{4}$ sw$\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 2 and nw$\frac{1}{4}$ ne$\frac{1}{4}$ ne$\frac{1}{4}$ nw$\frac{1}{4}$, Section 11, Township 15n, Range 3e, G. & S. R. Meridian, has filed notice of intention to make final Five Year Proof, to establish claim to the land above described, before C. H. Rutherford, U. S. Commissioner, at Jerome, Arizona, on the 18th day of September, 1912. Claimant names as witnesses: Samuel P. Embry, of Cottonwood, Arizona. Roy Dickinson, of Cornville, Arizona. Charles Dickinson, of Cornville, Arizona. Edward V. Dickinson, of Cottonwood, Arizona. FRANK H. PARKER, Register. first pub August 10, last Sept. 7	06366 NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION Department of the Interior, U. S. Land Office at Phoenix, Arizona. February 4th, 1913. NOTICE is hereby given that Charles Dickinson, of Cornville, Arizona, who, on June 30th, 1909, made Homestead Entry, No. 06366, for n$\frac{1}{2}$ nw$\frac{1}{4}$ Section 2, Township 15n, Range 4e, G. & S. R. Meridian, has filed notice of intention to make Three Year Proof, to establish claim to the land above described, before C. H. Rutherford, U. S. Commissioner, at Jerome Arizona, on the 17th day of March, 1913. Claimant names as witnesses: Thomas B. Farrow, of Cornville, Arizona. James G. Van Deren, of Cornville, Arizona. William Loy, of Cornville, Arizona. Roy Dickinson, of Cornville, Arizona. FRANK H. PARKER, Register. first pub Feb. 8, last March 8
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VERDE VALLEY COW CAMPS; May - 1915

Newspaper Articles of the Period - Courtesy of Glenda Farley - Verde Heritage
May 17, 2014



Bill Dickinson standing next to the Verde Valley Roundup Chuckwagon

A great follow-up to the prior post about the connection between the Loy, Van Deren, and Dickinson pioneer families.

This 1915 newspaper account provides a wonderful look at the Verde Valley cattle roundups and the people who took part in them — including James Van Deren.

It also gives us a glimpse into the everyday community life of the Van Deren family and other Verde Valley families more than 110 years ago.

Thank you to Bill Cowan for sharing this historical material and to Glenda Farley of Verde Heritage for the research behind it.

I'm sharing it here because it helps put the connections between these early Verde Valley families into a larger historical context.

Great article! For anyone reading through these names, it's very likely that the **Geo.**, **Vic**, and **Irene "Dickerson"** mentioned here are actually members of the **Dickinson** family.

When the family first arrived in the Verde Valley from Missouri, they used the spelling Dickerson, but changed their name to Dickinson shortly after settling here. On top of that, early local newspaper correspondents and typesetters frequently spelled it phonetically as "Dickerson"—you can even see the connection right in this piece where Irene is mentioned visiting her aunt, Mrs. Roy Dickinson!

VERDE VALLEY COW CAMPS; May - 1915

Newspaper Articles of the Period - Courtesy of Glenda Farley - Verde Heritage

"The spring roundup was begun here on the 10th. On Monday the cattle on the mesas between Verde and Oak Creek were rounded up and branded near the Cornville post office. The cattle on the Middle Verde known as the White Hills were branded on the old Jackson Flat as were also the cattle that were gathered from the mesas around Oak Creek on Wednesday. On Thursday a search of House Mountain was made. This is usually the roughest riding and also yielding the smallest bunch of cattle. This year a goodly herd was driven down and branded on the mesa at the foot of the mountain."

"The branding was done largely by Haydee and Lindsay Lane, John Lee and Ira Hart. The number of young calves branded during these four days by the food wagon outfit reached the grand total of two hundred, and the number of cattle rounded up was well beyond the thousand mark. There are a number of pretty bunches of cattle in this section and they are usually fat for the season, promising a fine fall market."

"The young men riding in the roundup were Messrs. James Van Deren Beaver Creek; Geo. Dickerson, Haydee Lane, Jerome; Lindsey Lane, Gene, Don and J. H. Lee, Oak Creek; Ira and Fred Hart, Tom Chaves, Wm. Frederick, Vic Dickerson and Frank Owenby, Sedona, and Fritz Schuerman and an assistant from Red Rock. The camp was moved to Beaver on Friday. On Thursday evening a very enjoyable dance was given at the school house in honor of the visiting cowboys."

"Mrs. Haydee Lane is visiting Mr. and Mrs. James Page. From there she will go to Flagstaff for the summer."

"Miss Irene Dickerson, who is visiting her aunt, Mrs. Roy Dickerson, will soon leave for Flagstaff."

"SEDONA NEWS: On May 13th Iva Van Deren, Venn Derrick, Linn Derrick and Albert Thompson graduated from the eighth grade of the Sedona Public School."

"The school house was beautifully decorated in the class colors of green and white and the following graduation program was given in their honor." ...

"Greeting --- Joe Derrick; Salutatory --- Myrtle Taylor; What Happened in the Hammock --- Earl Van Deren; Nobody's Child --- Ruth Miller; Johnny's Opinion --- Telma Miller; The Hardest Lesson --- Illa Lee; At Uncle Jerry's --- Perry Van Deren; Piano Solo --- Minnie Farley; The Story of an Old Wool Shirt --- Illa Lee; Dolly's Picture --- Gilla Lee; The Reason Why --- Viola Taylor; A Little School Marm --- Lenore Hart; Loving Words for the Teacher --- Dollie Van Deren; Piano Solo --- Mary Farley; My Sister's Graduation Dress --- Ethel Derrick; Goodbye --- Alice Bechtolt; Presentation of Diplomas --- Miss Lamport." ...

"On May 14th the school and some of the parents visited the Red Rock school. After listening to a delightful graduation program given by that school all enjoyed the lunch which followed."

"Sedona enjoyed a very pleasant school year and all will be glad to return the first Monday in September."

"(The interesting correspondence is stolen from the Jerome News from its Cornville Correspondent.)"

(The Coconino Sun; Flagstaff; May 28, 1915; page 1.)

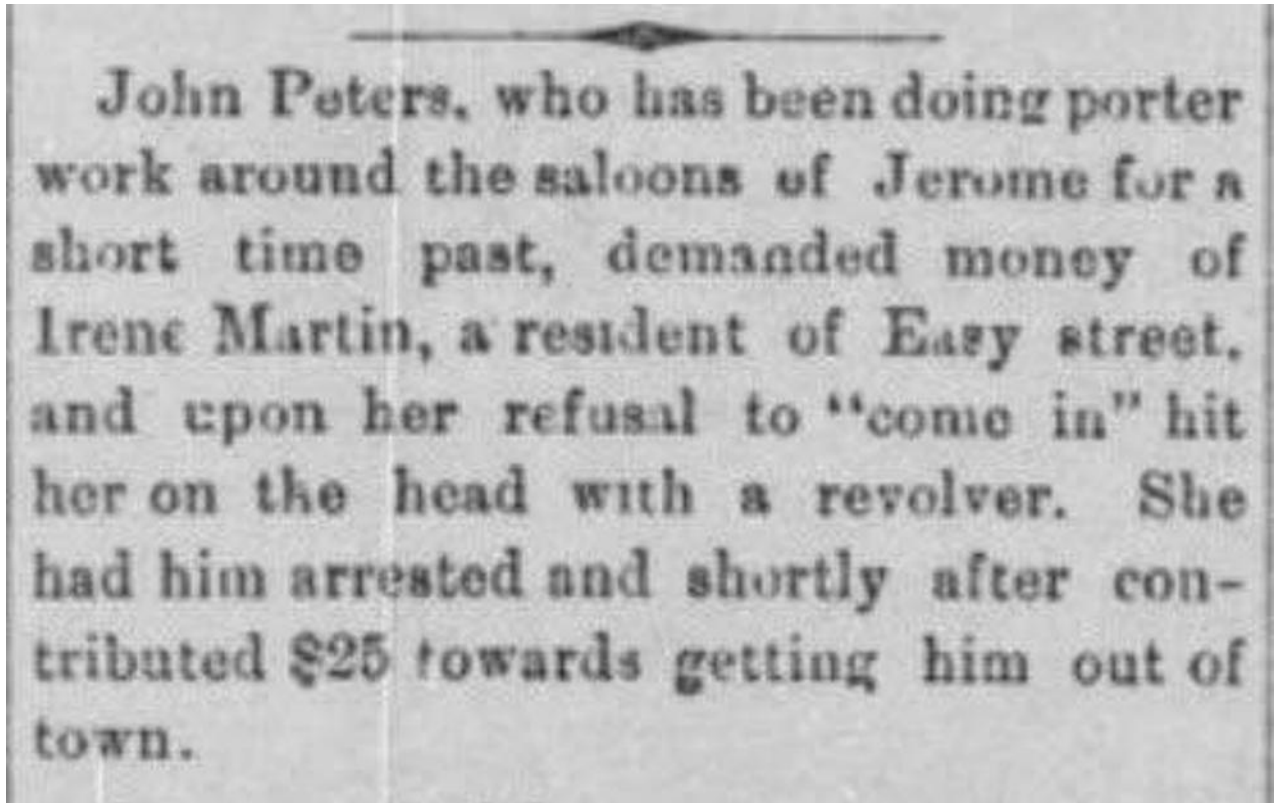


Scan to view on Facebook along with all the pictures.

FRONTIER JUSTICE: \$25 TO LEAVE JEROME

Jerome Mining News, 1898-06-18 - The wild side of Jerome Irene was a resident of Easy Street.

Jerome, 1898 — Frontier Justice on Cleopatra Hill



Life in early Jerome was loud, rough, and often settled long before anything reached a courtroom. Mining camps across the Arizona Territory had their own way of dealing with troublemakers, especially when law enforcement was thin and the jails were small. One of the most common “solutions” was simple: get the offender out of town — and sometimes the victim even helped pay for it.

Newspaper clipping: Jerome Mining News, June 18, 1898. Shared by Larry Donutguy Clemson.

John Peters, a porter who drifted around the saloons of Jerome, decided to demand money from Irene Martin, a resident of Easy Street. When she refused to “come in,” he struck her on the head with a revolver. Irene had him arrested — but instead of pushing for a long territorial court case, she did what many Jerome residents did in the 1890s: she contributed \$25 toward sending him out of town.

In 1898, \$25 could buy a very good suit, a Winchester repeating shotgun, or roughly 200–250 pounds of ordinary roasted coffee — a serious amount, and a clear sign that Irene wanted immediate safety, not a drawn-out legal battle.

This kind of “banishment by subscription” was common in Jerome’s early years. Neighbors, saloon owners, and sometimes even the victim would chip in for a stage fare or train ticket. It was faster than court, cheaper than jail, and effective at removing someone who had become a danger or nuisance. Jerome’s reputation as the “wickedest town in the West” wasn’t just about saloons and mining — it was also about the improvised justice that kept the camp running.

Another small window into the everyday realities of life on Cleopatra Hill — where the community often handled problems themselves, one ticket out of town at a time.

The \$25 "Out of Town" Contribution: It was common practice for local magistrates or victims in mining camps to accept a fine or buy a "floater" (one-way train or stage ticket) to banish troubled individuals beyond town limits rather than pay county jail board.

Selected User Comments

Mel Glotfelty

I wonder where these unwanted men were sent. What town or city where they sent to?

Reply: Verde Valley Pioneers - Scan Their Story

In many Western towns, the arrangement was basically: "Here's money. Get on the next stage and don't come back." The newspapers rarely followed up to see where the person eventually settled.

John Peters was described as a porter working around Jerome saloons. That suggests he was part of the transient mining-camp workforce. Men in that line of work often moved from camp to camp following jobs, so he may have headed to another Arizona mining district rather than a large city.

EDWARD LEE “EDDIE” DICKINSON 1906-1968



*Ralph & Hulda Marshall,
Frank, Eddie, Nova and
Jessie Dickinson. Richard
Moxcey seated on steps.*

Birth 20 Feb 1906

Death 4 Jul 1968 Wickenburg, Arizona - Burial Wickenburg Cemetery

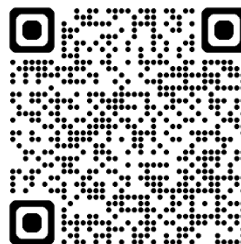
Parents

Frank Lee Dickinson 1867–1925

Hulda Susan Smith Dickinson-Marshall 1881–1985

Spouse

Jessie Mae Fenstermaker Breckenridge 1908–1990



Siblings

Vaudrey Samuel "Sam" Dickinson 1900–1981

Alta Mae Dickinson Spooner 1903–2002

Frank H. Dickinson 1914–1998

Helen May Dickinson Moxcey 1917–2017

Children

Dixie Mae Dickinson Baxter 1929–1972

Frank Lee Dickinson 1934–2019

Nova Jean Dickinson Brown 1936–1984

Edward Lee “Eddie” Dickinson was born February 20, 1906, the son of Verde Valley pioneers Frank Lee Dickinson and Hulda Susan Smith Dickinson-Marshall. His exact place of birth has not been documented, but since his father, Frank Lee Dickinson, served as Postmaster of Cottonwood from 1905–1907, Eddie was most likely born in or near Cottonwood, Arizona. This places his birth during the period when his father was serving the Cottonwood community. Eddie spent much of his early life in Cottonwood before moving to Wickenburg in 1955.

But one of the most vivid glimpses into Eddie’s life comes not from an obituary, but from a handwritten memory preserved by his sister, Helen May Dickinson Moxcey.

Helen wrote about the 1925 Cottonwood fire, remembering the day when Eddie was about 18 years old. The Dickinson family was living in a small rooming house above a dry-goods store when a fire broke out across the street and began spreading down the block.

Eddie was especially worried because their father was ill and was in one of the rooms. Helen recalled that Eddie was concerned about how they would get their father out if the fire spread to their building. Fortunately, the fire did not cross the street from the rooming house.

Eddie later married Jessie Mae Fenstermaker Breckenridge and raised three children: Dixie Mae, Frank Lee, and Nova Jean. He worked as a meat cutter for most of his adult life.

The photographs help tell Eddie's story, too. One shows Eddie with members of the Dickinson family. The photograph is identified as Ralph and Hulda Marshall, Frank H Dickinson, Eddie Lee Dickinson, Nova Dickinson-Brown and Jessie Fenstermaker-Dickinson, with Richard Moxcey (son of Helen Dickinson-Moxcey) seated on the steps.

Another photograph shows Vaudrey, Eddie and Alta, Eddie's brother and sister enjoying a snowy day.

The Wickenburg Sun remembered Eddie as a man whose death was felt by many friends—not only in Wickenburg, but also in Cottonwood and throughout the Verde Valley, where he had spent much of his life as the son of a pioneer settler.

Eddie died July 4, 1968, at Community Hospital in Wickenburg following a lingering illness. He was 62 years old and was buried in Wickenburg Cemetery.

Sources:

- Helen May Dickinson Moxcey, handwritten recollection, History — Cottonwood, Arizona
- Wickenburg Sun, July 11, 1968, obituary for Edward Lee “Eddie” Dickinson
- Arizona Republic, July 5, 1968, obituary page
- Family photographs from the Dickinson family collection
- Find a Grave memorial for Edward Lee Dickinson



Vaudrey, Eddie, and Alta enjoying a snowy day

Written by Helen Moxcey

History- Cottonwood, Arizona

As I read this article in the Arizona Republic, it brought back these memories:

There was only one business street in Cottonwood, which is now called "Old Town".

I remember the fire of 1925. I was 7 years old and we lived in a small rooming house which my mother ran. It was up stairs over a dry-goods store. The fire was across the street down part of a block. My father was ill in one of the rooms and my 18 year old brother, Eddie, was very worried about how he would get him out of the building if the fire spread our way. Luckily, it didn't. Across from the rooming house was the theater. My sister sold tickets, her boyfriend ran the projector, and my cousin took tickets.

Helen May Dickinson Moxcey's handwritten recollection

MEET THE DICKINSON FAMILY VERDE VALLEY PIONEERS

The Dickinson Family
VERDE VALLEY PIONEERS
Est. 1875

Family History Connects Generations

Biographies
Historic Photographs
Family Stories
Genealogy
Newspaper Articles
Historic Places
Gravesites
and More

Explore the Dickinson Family History at
DickinsonFamily.us

Dickinson • Smith • Back • Hawkins • Burford • Bristow • Fain
Moxcey • Van Deren • Marshall • Fisher • Thompson • Strahan • Knowles

PEOPLE
PLACES
STORIES
THAT BUILT
THE VERDE VALLEY

ROOTS IN THE VERDE VALLEY

The story of the Verde Valley is made up of the families who came here, built homes, raised families, worked the land, and helped establish the communities we know today.

One of those families was the Dickinson family, who arrived in the Verde Valley in 1875 after traveling from Missouri by covered wagon. The Dickinson family history includes Samuel Cotton Dickinson and Nancy Jane Green Dickinson and their descendants.

But the Dickinson story doesn't stand alone.

Over the generations, the family history connects with many other Verde Valley pioneer families and surnames—including Smith, Back, Hawkins, Burford, Bristow, Fain, Moxcey, Van Deren, Kent, Marshall, Fisher, Wright, Thompson, Strahan, Fenstermaker, and Knowles.

Many current residents of the Verde Valley are distant relatives of Samuel and Nancy Dickinson.

That means you may recognize a name on the Dickinson Family website—or discover a family connection you didn't know existed.

The Dickinson Family website was created to preserve and share this history. It includes biographies, historic photographs, family stories, genealogy, newspaper articles, information about family members who were lawmen, historic places, gravesites, and more.

The website is a growing family archive, with new biographies, stories, and photographs being added.

If your family has roots in the Verde Valley, you may find that the Dickinson family story connects to your family story as well.



The Dickinson Family — Verde Valley Pioneers

NANCY JANE GREEN DICKINSON — PIONEER WOMAN OF THE VERDE VALLEY



When we think about the pioneers who came to the Verde Valley in 1875, it is easy to focus on the men whose names appear in the records.

But behind many of those pioneer stories were women who made the journey, raised families, built homes and helped create the communities that followed.

Nancy Jane Green Dickinson was one of those women.

Nancy was born April 22, 1836, and eventually made her way to the Verde Valley with her husband, Samuel Cotton Dickinson, and their family.

Her connection to the Dickinson family actually began long before Arizona.

Nancy was a cousin of Samuel's first wife, Adline Green, and served as Adline's bridesmaid when Adline married Samuel in 1849. After Adline's death, Nancy married Samuel in Van Buren County, Iowa, on June 2, 1860.

In 1875, Nancy and Samuel joined the wagon train that left Missouri for the Arizona Territory.

The journey ended on August 23, 1875, when the Dickinson family arrived at Wales Arnold's ranch on Beaver Creek in the Verde Valley.

The family eventually established themselves along Oak Creek near Cornville.

There, Nancy and Samuel raised their children while building a life on the frontier. Their family included Margie Ann, Sam C., Mariah May, Frank Lee, William Green, Alfred and Edward Virgil Dickinson.

The Dickinson home became part of the early Cornville community.

Samuel and Nancy farmed the land, maintained a vineyard and made wine. Beginning in 1887, Samuel served as postmaster and stage stop operator at Cornville, where travelers and the stage stopped along the route through the Verde Valley.

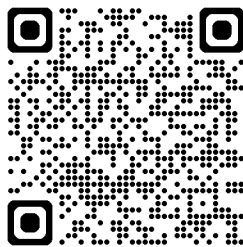
Nancy was there through all of it — raising a family and helping build a home in a young and growing Arizona community.

She lived to see the Verde Valley change dramatically from the frontier community she had helped establish.

Nancy Jane Green Dickinson died November 7, 1916, at the age of 80. She is buried beside Samuel at Cottonwood Cemetery, where her grave now carries a Verde Valley Pioneers QR Code linking visitors to her biography.

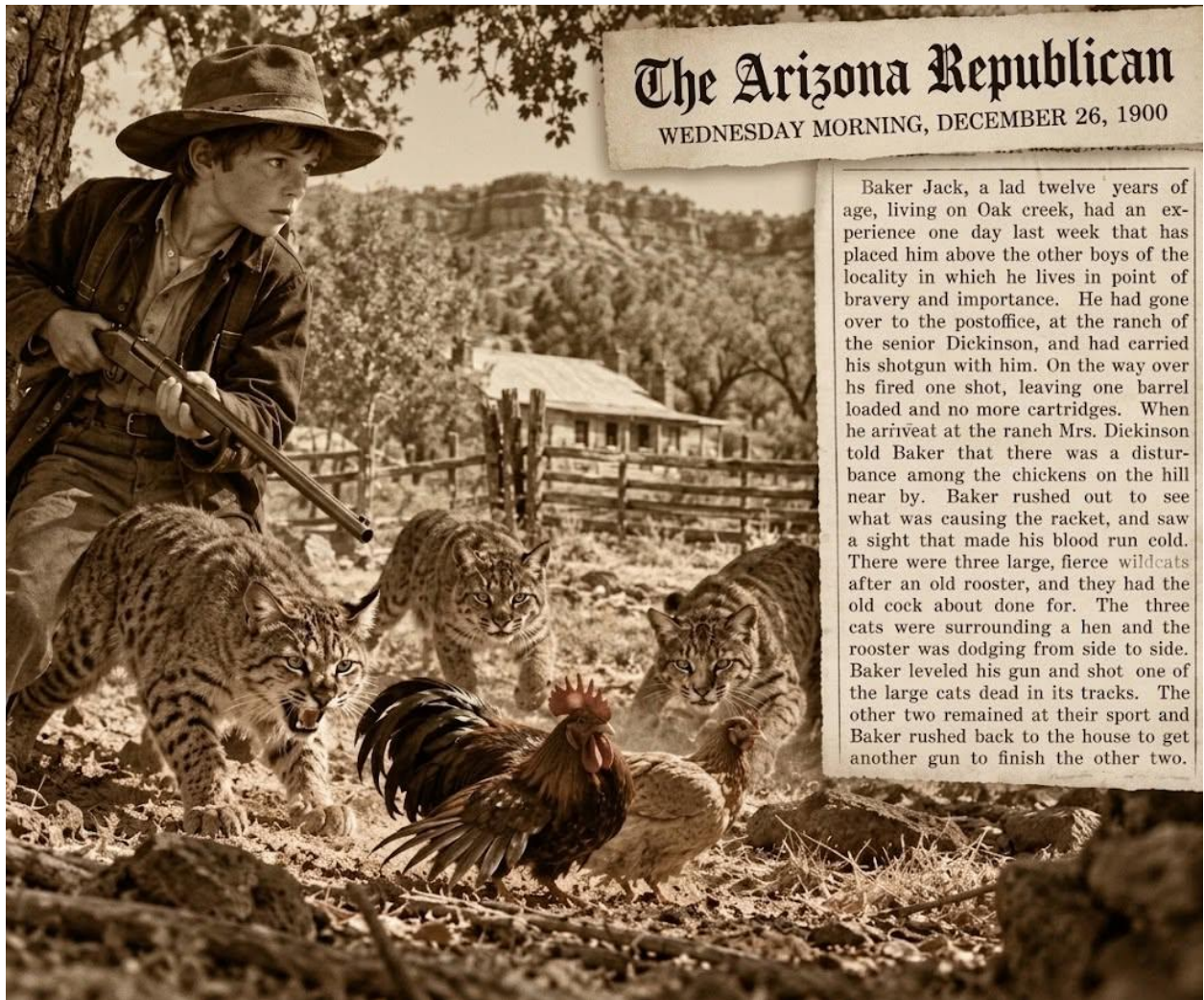
Nancy's story is more than a list of dates.

She was a young woman who traveled west by wagon, raised seven children, built a home on Oak Creek and spent more than four decades watching the Verde Valley become her new home.



Nancy Jane Green-Dickinson

A 12-YEAR-OLD BOY TAKES ON THREE WILDCATS



Sometimes a small newspaper story gives us a wonderful glimpse into everyday life in the Verde Valley more than 125 years ago.

On December 26, 1900, The Arizona Republican reported an adventure involving 12-year-old Baker Jack, who was living on Oak Creek.

Baker had gone to the post office and stage stop operated by Samuel C. Dickinson in Cornville. Samuel had served as postmaster there since April 2, 1887.

On the way to the Dickinson ranch, Baker fired his shotgun and arrived with one barrel loaded and more cartridges with him.

When he reached the ranch, Nancy Jane Green Dickinson, Samuel's wife, told him there was a disturbance among the chickens on the hill nearby.

Baker rushed outside to see what was happening.

What he saw was quite a sight.

Three large wildcats were after an old rooster. The cats had surrounded a hen while the rooster was dodging from side to side.

Baker raised his shotgun and fired.

One of the wildcats dropped dead in its tracks.

The other two remained nearby, so Baker hurried back to the house to get another gun. Nancy was afraid to let him take Samuel's gun, so Baker took the gun he already had and went back outside.

The two remaining wildcats eventually escaped.

Baker wasn't finished, though. He dragged the wildcat he had killed back to the house and skinned it himself.

The newspaper remarked that it was unusual for wildcats to come out in daylight and attack chickens within 100 yards of a dwelling.

For a 12-year-old boy living in the Verde Valley in 1900, it must have been quite a story to tell.

And thanks to a little article in The Arizona Republican, we can still tell that story today.

Samuel C. Dickinson became the Cornville postmaster and stage stop operator on April 2, 1887, and continued in that role until July 13, 1905. His wife was Nancy Jane Green Dickinson (1836–1916).

Source: The Arizona Republican, December 26, 1900.

Verde Valley Pioneers — Every Verde Valley Pioneer Has a Story Worth Preserving.

MAURICE AND MINNIE SMITH

A LIFE OF FARMING, RANCHING AND FAMILY



Maurice Calvin Smith and Minnie Lee Hawkins Smith were two Verde Valley pioneers whose lives were deeply intertwined with the Dickinson family.

Maurice was born August 17, 1879, in Cedar County, Missouri, to Maurice Adkins Smith and Mary Jane Bristow Smith. His family came west from Missouri by covered wagon in 1887, and Maurice spent his boyhood in the Verde Valley. He would eventually become a rancher, farmer, storekeeper and blacksmith.

Minnie Lee Hawkins was born in the Verde Valley in the mid-1880s. Her parents were James Gabriel Hawkins and Mariah May Dickinson Hawkins. Minnie and her brother, Charles Hawkins, were orphaned when they were young. Their father, Constable James Hawkins, was killed on April 19, 1891, while escorting a prisoner to the courthouse. The prisoner suddenly drew a gun and shot Hawkins in the chest. James Hawkins had served as a Yavapai County constable for only three months.

After their father's death, Minnie and Charles were raised by their maternal grandparents, Samuel Cotton Dickinson and Nancy Jane Green Dickinson. In other words, Minnie wasn't simply connected to the Dickinson family through marriage — she was a granddaughter of Samuel and Nancy Dickinson and was raised in their home. The Dickinson family history specifically identifies Minnie as the daughter of James and May Hawkins and the granddaughter of Samuel and Nancy.

Minnie married Maurice Calvin Smith on December 25, 1902, at Cornville, Arizona. Maurice was the brother of Hulda Susan Smith, who married Verde Valley pioneer Frank Lee Dickinson. That made Maurice and Frank Dickinson brothers-in-law, while Minnie was Frank Dickinson's niece.

The Smiths began their married life by farming the old Wood's place south of Camp Verde. They later bought an interest in Minnie's brother Charles Hawkins' cattle operation. They eventually sold their cattle to Bill Dickinson, Minnie's uncle, and bought the Cottonwood Store along with Frank Dickinson. After a period in the store business, they sold it to Lon Mason.

Still wanting to own a cattle ranch, Maurice and Minnie moved their family to Williams, Arizona. There they bought the H Bar A and KY ranches from Charley McGary. They later acquired the 7HF cattle and additional range from Charley Burke. After operating the ranch, they sold it to the Poison Brothers.

Their ranching story continued. They bought the N Lazy E Ranch from Bill Dickinson, Minnie's uncle, and acquired the W Bar Triangle cattle from Ed Hamilton. Their daughter Agnes was born while the family was living in Williams. Their sons were Eugene and Cecil.

Cecil, of course, was the little boy at the center of our recent story — the baby who was trapped beneath a wagon in a ditch near Cottonwood in 1910 and was rescued by his father. The Jerome News reported that dramatic rescue on July 30, 1910.

When Agnes was six years old, the family moved to Ash Fork, where Maurice and Minnie bought the Rafter M Bar Ranch. They remained there for four years before selling and moving to Glendale, where they purchased a 100-acre farm. They remained there while raising their family.

Eventually the Smiths moved to Tucson and Tiger. Maurice worked for a time as a blacksmith at Tiger before the couple retired to Oracle, Arizona. Maurice died in Oracle on March 5, 1960. Minnie later died in Pima County.

Their story is a remarkable example of the interconnected families of the early Verde Valley.

Maurice Smith was the brother of Hulda Smith-Dickinson.

Minnie Hawkins Smith was the granddaughter of Samuel and Nancy Dickinson, who raised her and her brother after they were orphaned.

And together, Maurice and Minnie built a life that stretched from Camp Verde and Cottonwood to Williams, Ash Fork, Glendale, Tucson, Tiger and Oracle — farming, running a store, raising cattle, raising a family, and becoming part of the history of Arizona.

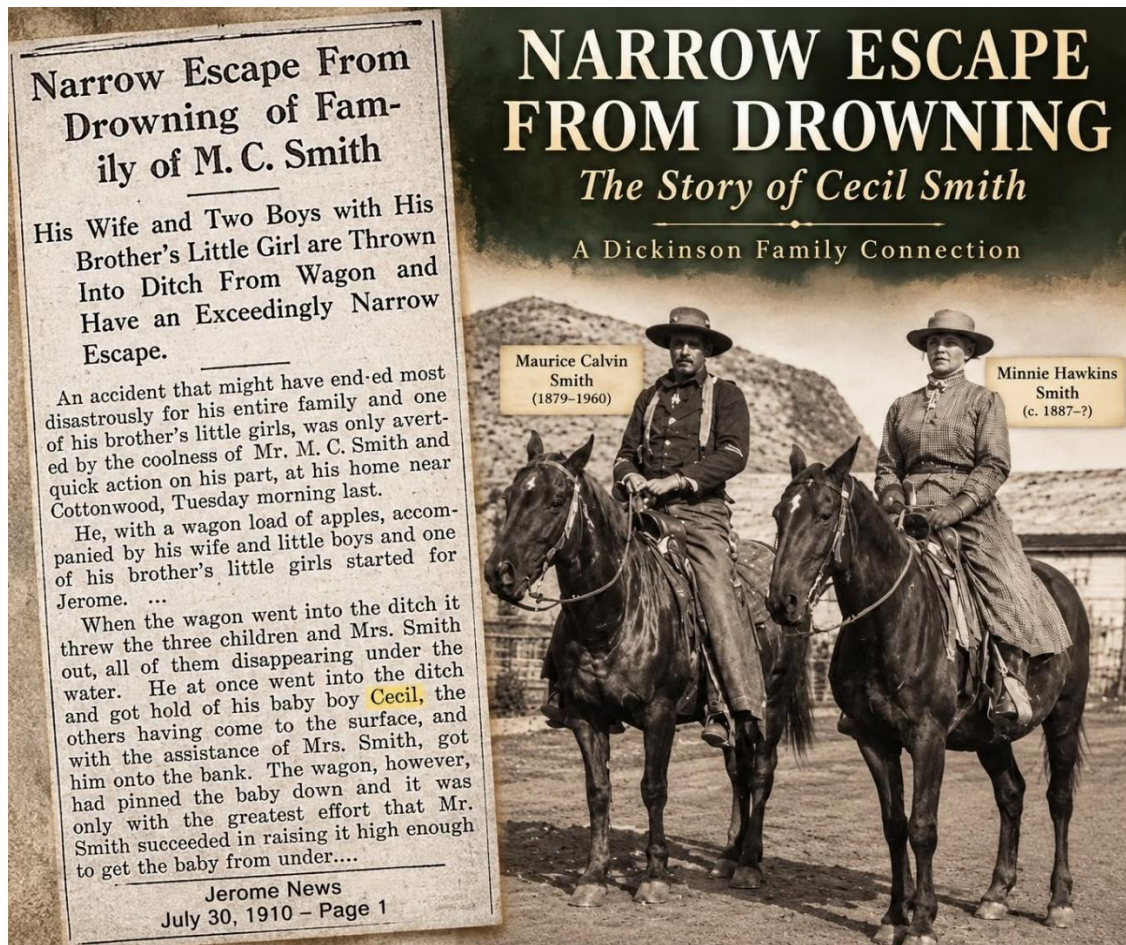
Sometimes a single newspaper story opens the door to an entire family story.

In this case, it began with a little boy named Cecil Smith, trapped beneath a wagon in 1910 — and led us back to the remarkable life of his parents, Maurice and Minnie Smith.



SOURCES: Pioneer Stories of Arizona's Verde Valley, p. 191; Jerome News, July 30, 1910, p. 1; Yavapai County marriage records; Dickinson family research; Officer Down Memorial Page, Constable James Gabriel Hawkins. Officer Down Memorial Page, Find a Grave

THE BABY WHO ALMOST DROWNED A DICKINSON FAMILY CONNECTION



I wish to acknowledge **Verde Heritage** and @Memories of the Verde Valley by residents present and past and @MaryMargeret for asking the question “Great story. Wonder what became of that baby”

NARROW ESCAPE FROM DROWNING — IDENTIFYING THE BABY

On July 30, 1910, the Jerome News reported a terrifying accident near Cottonwood involving the family of M. C. Smith.

Maurice Calvin Smith was preparing to take a wagonload of apples to Jerome. His wife, Minnie, their two young boys, and a little girl who was the daughter of one of Maurice's brothers were in the wagon.

As Maurice went ahead to open a gate, the horses began backing up. Minnie was unable to hold the wagon with the brake, and the horses backed into a deep ditch.

The wagon overturned, throwing Minnie and the three children into the water.

Maurice immediately went into the ditch. Two of the children and Minnie surfaced, but his baby boy was trapped beneath the wagon.

Maurice grabbed the baby's arm and, while keeping his head above water with one hand, struggled to raise the wagon enough to free him.

He succeeded.

The July 30, 1910, newspaper identifies the baby by name: Cecil.

WHO WAS CECIL?

Genealogical records identify him as Cecil L. Smith, born in 1908 — making him about two years old when this frightening accident occurred.

Cecil was the son of Maurice Calvin Smith and Minnie Hawkins Smith.

AND HERE IS THE DICKINSON FAMILY CONNECTION.

Maurice Calvin Smith was the brother of Hulda Smith-Dickinson, wife of Verde Valley pioneer Frank Lee Dickinson.

Minnie Hawkins Smith was the granddaughter of Samuel Cotton Dickinson and Nancy Jane Green Dickinson.

That makes little Cecil Smith a great-grandson of Samuel and Nancy Dickinson — and connects this dramatic 1910 newspaper story directly to the Dickinson family.

The newspaper account gives us a remarkable glimpse into the danger faced by Verde Valley families more than a century ago.

Maurice later recalled the terrifying seconds when he was holding his baby's arm and trying to raise the wagon. When he finally got Cecil safely onto the bank and realized that his family was all right, Maurice said he laughed as he had not laughed in a long time.

A 116-year-old newspaper story has now allowed us to put a name to the little boy who was rescued from beneath that wagon: Cecil L. Smith.

SOURCE: Jerome News, July 30, 1910, page 1.

The original newspaper clipping is included with this post.

What became of Cecil L. Smith?

Cecil grew up in a Verde Valley pioneer family deeply connected to the Dickinsons, spent his childhood around cattle ranches in Williams and Ash Fork, and eventually appears to have remained in the Verde Valley area.

Cecil's parents are Maurice and Minnie Smith. Here is some information about the family after the 1910 drowning incident:

- Maurice and Minnie initially farmed the old Wood's place south of Camp Verde.
- They then bought an interest in Minnie's brother's cattle operation.
- They later sold the cattle to Bill Dickinson and bought the Cottonwood Store.
- They eventually sold the store to Lon Mason.
- Wanting to own a cattle ranch, they moved the family to Williams, Arizona.
- They bought the H Bar A and KY ranches from Charley McGary.
- They subsequently bought the 7HF cattle and additional range from Charley Burke.
- They eventually sold that ranch to the Poison Brothers.
- They then bought the N Lazy E Ranch from Bill Dickinson, who was Minnie's uncle.
- Agnes was born while the family was living in Williams.
- When Agnes was six, the family moved to Ash Fork, where they bought the Rafter M Bar ranch.
- After four years they sold the Ash Fork operation and moved to Glendale, where they bought a 100-acre farm.
- After raising their family, they moved to Tucson and Tiger. Maurice worked as a blacksmith at Tiger before retiring to Oracle.

The other stories on the July 30, 1910, front page of the Jerome News provide a fascinating snapshot of life in the Verde Valley and Jerome at the time. The dominant story concerns the United Verde Extension, where mining operations had uncovered sulfide ore at a depth of 1,100 feet, generating considerable excitement about the district's future. Another story reports plans to build a new bridge over the Verde River at Aultman, while a local column discusses the prospects for copper mining and the financial potential of the district. The page also reports the death of one of Arizona's oldest citizens, M. J. Hickey, along with a story about changes to the boundaries of the Chiricahua National Forest. Other articles touch on food shortages and rising prices, political responsibility for the forest situation, and local developments around Jerome. Together, the page gives a remarkable glimpse of a community focused on mining, transportation, agriculture, government, and the rapid growth of northern Arizona in 1910.

ANGELINA "AUNT LINA" BRISTOW (1822–1892)



Among the early settlers who helped shape the Verde Valley was Angelina Bristow, affectionately known throughout the community as "Aunt Lina." Born in Tennessee in 1822, Angelina experienced both hardship and perseverance during her life.

She was the wife of Josiah G. Bristow, a Civil War veteran. Through determination and faith, Angelina secured a widow's pension and devoted herself to raising her family. Josiah G. Bristow was the brother of Mary Jane (Bristow) Smith, both being children of Edward Squire Bristow and Sarah Ann (Ashenhurst) Bristow. He was therefore the uncle of Hulda Susan (Smith) Dickinson-Marshall, whose family came to the Verde Valley by covered wagon in 1887.

In 1877, Angelina moved to Arizona's Verde Valley, where she spent the remaining years of her life. Her presence quickly became known throughout the region, not for wealth or prominence, but for her generosity, compassion, and unwavering devotion to others. Community members remembered her as a faithful Baptist and a woman who was always ready to care for the sick, comfort the distressed, and assist those in need.

When Angelina passed away on April 17, 1892, after suffering complications from influenza, the community mourned the loss of a beloved friend and neighbor. Her obituary described a life marked by self-sacrifice, charity, and service. So respected was "Aunt Lina" that her funeral was attended by people from across the Verde Valley, many crossing difficult terrain to pay their final respects. The Verde River was running too high for the local minister to cross, so the funeral services were conducted by Rev. Wm. R. Neal. Despite the challenges posed by the swollen river, a large gathering of valley residents came to honor a woman whose kindness and devotion had touched so many lives.

Today, Angelina Bristow is remembered as one of the valley's quiet heroes, an Arizona pioneer whose legacy was built not through fame, but through kindness, faith, and dedication to her community. Her story remains an enduring part of Verde Valley history and a testament to the strength of the women who helped settle Arizona Territory.

Angelina is buried in Squaw Peak Cemetery, a small historic cemetery south of Camp Verde. Also buried there is her husband Josiah's brother-in-law Maurice Smith, and a man bearing the same name as her husband, Josiah Bristow. (more on this in a future post)

A future Verde Valley Pioneers post will explore the fascinating story of Angelina's husband, her struggles to secure his pension and questions surrounding the identity of the Josiah Bristow who is buried in the Squaw Peak Cemetery. Together, their graves serve as a reminder of the Bristow family's deep roots in the Verde Valley.

ANGELINA “AUNT LINA” BRISTOW

1822 – 1892

REMEMBERING A VERDE VALLEY PIONEER

In Memoriam:

Died, at the residence of her son on Lower Verde, April 7, Mrs. Angelina Bristow, a native of Tennessee, aged 68 years and three months. The cause of her death was congestion of the lungs, brought on by a severe attack of la grippe.

Deceased was a soldier's widow, her husband having been wounded at Prairie Grove, Arkansas. He returned home and soon after died from the effects of the wound. As she had two small children, she applied for a pension, which was granted her over a quarter of century since.

Aunt Lina, as she was called by every body who knew her, was a good woman and consistent member of the Baptist church for over forty years. She came to the Verde valley in 1877 where she has resided up to the time of her death. Her faults, if she had any, were errors to which all human kind are heir, as none is perfect, but her life was as near perfect as anyone ever attained. Narrow would the person be who would withhold one word of praise due her for her many deeds of self-denial, charity and devotion to duty in caring for the sick and distressed.

She leaves two children, a son and a daughter, both grown and married.

The funeral was largely attended by people of Verde valley, especially those who lived on the west side.



Arizona Weekly Journal-Miner • April 20, 1892

On Tuesday, we featured the post “ANGELINA 'AUNT LINA' BRISTOW (1822–1892).” Below is the full text of Angelina’s obituary, originally published in the Arizona Weekly Journal-Miner (Prescott) on April 20, 1892:

In Memoriam

Died, at the residence of her son on Lower Verde, April 7, Mrs. Angelina Bristow, a native of Tennessee, aged 68 years and three months. The cause of her death was congestion of the lungs, brought on by a severe attack of la grippe.

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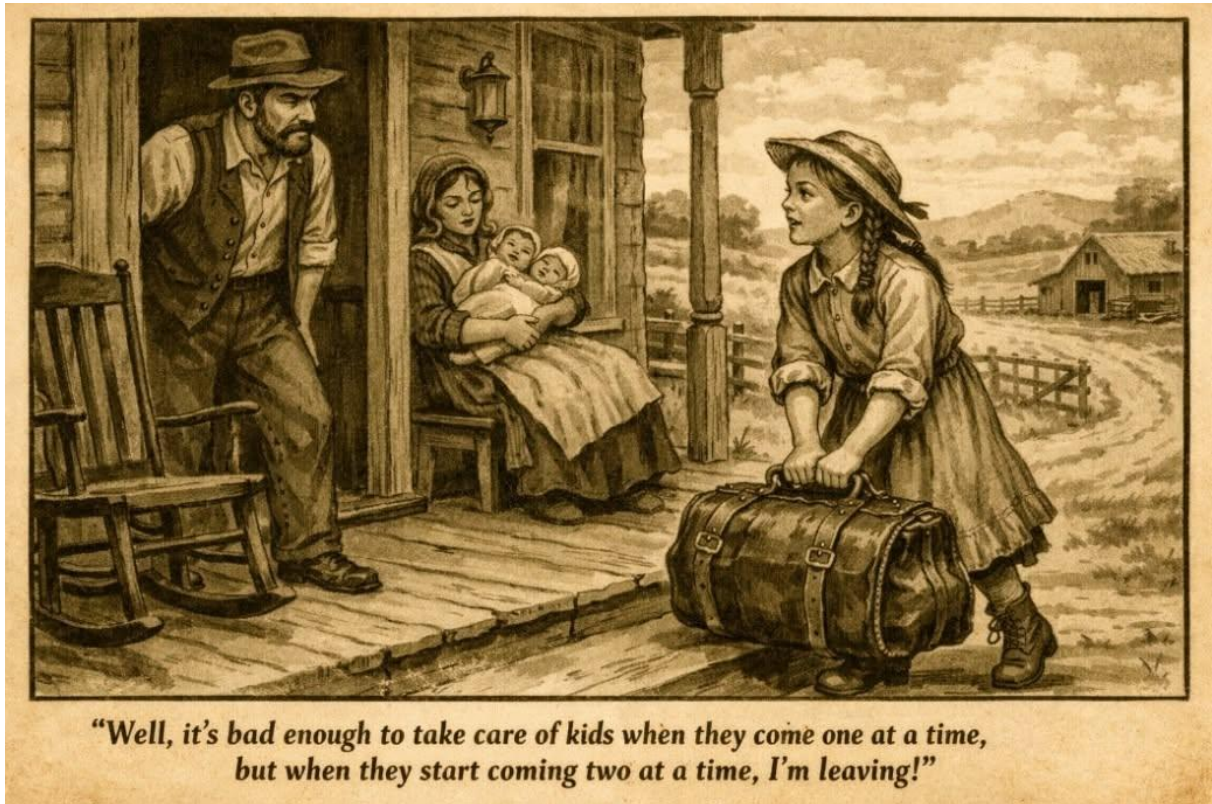
Aunt Lina's life among us has been one of so many kind acts that when death struck the balance, the good deeds to the sick, the school, the church and the needy that if there was any wrong done by her to anyone by word, thought or deed, it was too small to be of any account.

She leaves two children, a son and a daughter, both grown and married. As the river was past fording and the minister who resides here could not cross, she was buried on West Lower Verde. Hon. W. S. Head read the funeral service. There were some two or three songs by the ladies suited to the occasion.

The funeral was largely attended by people of Verde valley, especially those who lived on the west side.

MILDRED (MILLIE) BACK FAIN

THE PIONEER GIRL WHO DREW THE LINE AT TWINS



As a child, Millie became caretaker of her younger siblings, who began arriving in rapid succession. When her mother gave birth to twins in 1889, however, 10-year-old Millie packed her bag and headed out the door.

As she lugged her heavy satchel outside, her father asked where she was headed. Millie replied, "Well, it's bad enough to take care of kids when they come one at a time, but when they start coming two at a time, I'm leaving!"

Mildred (Back) Fain is the daughter of William and Marjorie (Dickinson) Back. The Back ranch is now Montezuma Well a National Monument.

Dovie May (Dickinson) Fisher (1882-1968)

Born on August 7, 1882, in Cove, Oregon, Dovie May Dickinson Fisher was the daughter of Charles Dickinson and Martha Priscilla Burford Dickinson. She was part of the extensive Dickinson pioneer family whose history became deeply intertwined with the development of Arizona's Verde Valley.

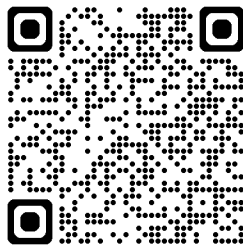
Dovie spent her youth during a period when many western families were seeking new opportunities across the frontier. She married Thomas Benton Farrow, and together they raised a family that included sons Melvin Walder Farrow and William Benjamin "Bill" Farrow. Tragically, their daughter Velma Farrow died in infancy.

After the death of her first husband, Dovie May (Dickinson) Fisher remarried Sumner Chadbowin Fisher. By 1950, she was living in Globe, Arizona, where she was identified in her son Melvin Walder Farrow's obituary as "Mrs. S. C. Fisher of Globe," showing that her life and family connections extended beyond the Verde Valley into Arizona's mining communities.

Dovie lived through remarkable changes in the American West. Born during the era of horse-drawn wagons, she witnessed the arrival of automobiles, telephones, modern highways, and the growth of Arizona from a territory into a state. Her life spanned more than eight decades of western history. The documented facts place her firmly within the network of pioneer families who helped build communities in Yavapai County and throughout Arizona.

She passed away on May 20, 1968, in Phoenix at the age of 85 and was laid to rest in Cottonwood Cemetery beside other members of her family. Today, her grave remains a tangible link to the Dickinson and Farrow pioneer families of the Verde Valley.

Do you have photographs, documents, letters, or memories of Dovie May (Dickinson) Fisher or the Farrow family? If so, please share them so that her story and the history of her family can be preserved for future generations.



Biography of Dovie May (Dickinson) Fisher

THE STRONGEST MAN IN ARIZONA CHALLENGED FLAGSTAFF IN 1895

ARIZONA TERRITORY • LOCAL LAW • REAL PEOPLE • REMARKABLE STORIES

WILLIAM G. DICKINSON

— CONSTABLE of COCONINO COUNTY —

ELECTED IN 1894

FLAGSTAFF
ARIZONA TERRITORY

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN A
SELF-PROCLAIMED
“STRONGEST MAN
IN ARIZONA”
MET CONSTABLE
WILLIAM G. DICKINSON
IN FLAGSTAFF IN 1895?

A TRUE STORY FROM THE
PAGES OF THE COCONINO SUN

COCONINO
COUNTY
ARIZONA TERRITORY

THE COCONINO SUN

FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA TERRITORY
MAY 2, 1895

A Fiery Fighter's Fiasco.

Robert Harrison, a cook in a logging camp near town, came in yesterday. At 6 o'clock he had imbibed enough to feel sociable, but another four hours' bout with Flagstaff booze inflated his ideas of his ability as a scrapper and he became pugnacious. Mr. Harrison took off his coat, threw down his hat and issued a general defi to everybody passing along Railroad avenue.

“I kin lick any man in Flagstaff,” he shouted, striking a James Corbett attitude.

Nobody denied the assertion and the hostile gentleman from the pine woods became more belligerent than ever.

“Come at me,” he yelled, “I’m the only strong man in Arizona. Sandow ain’t in it with me.”

Just then Constable Dickinson appeared and took hold of the terror. He refused to go and tried to throw the officer. Dickinson gave a lightning jerk and the prisoner shot forward about fifty feet. It took all the fight out of him and he went along to the calaboose as docile as a burro that had been out on the range all winter. This morning Judge Prime fined him \$5.

VERDE VALLEY PIONEERS
PRESERVING OUR SHARED HISTORY

What happened when a man claiming to be the "only strong man in Arizona" challenged the town of Flagstaff in 1895?

According to the article, a cook from a logging camp named Robert Harrison spent several hours enjoying Flagstaff's hospitality before deciding he was "the only strong man in Arizona." After issuing challenges to everyone along Railroad Avenue and becoming increasingly belligerent, Harrison attracted the attention of Constable Dickinson.

The newspaper reported that Dickinson appeared on the scene, took hold of the troublemaker, and when Harrison refused to accompany him, the constable gave him a quick jerk that reportedly sent the man "about fifty feet." The article noted that this immediately ended the would-be fight, and Harrison was taken away "as docile as a burro that had been out on the range all winter." The next morning, he was fined \$5 by Judge Prime.

While newspaper writers of the era often added humor and exaggeration to their accounts, stories like this provide a fascinating look at everyday life in Arizona Territory and the responsibilities shouldered by local peace officers.

In 1894, William G. Dickinson was elected Constable in Coconino County, Arizona Territory. A small newspaper account published in the Coconino Sun on May 2, 1895, provides a glimpse of the kind of situations lawmen faced in territorial Arizona.

Source: The Coconino Sun (Flagstaff, Arizona Territory), May 2, 1895.

A Fiery Fighter's Fiasco.

Robert Harrison, a cook in a logging camp near town, came in yesterday. At 6 o'clock he had imbibed enough to feel sociable, but another four hours' bout with Flagstaff booze inflated his ideas of his ability as a scrapper and he became pugnacious. Mr. Harrison took off his coat, threw down his hat and issued a general defi to everybody passing along Railroad avenue.

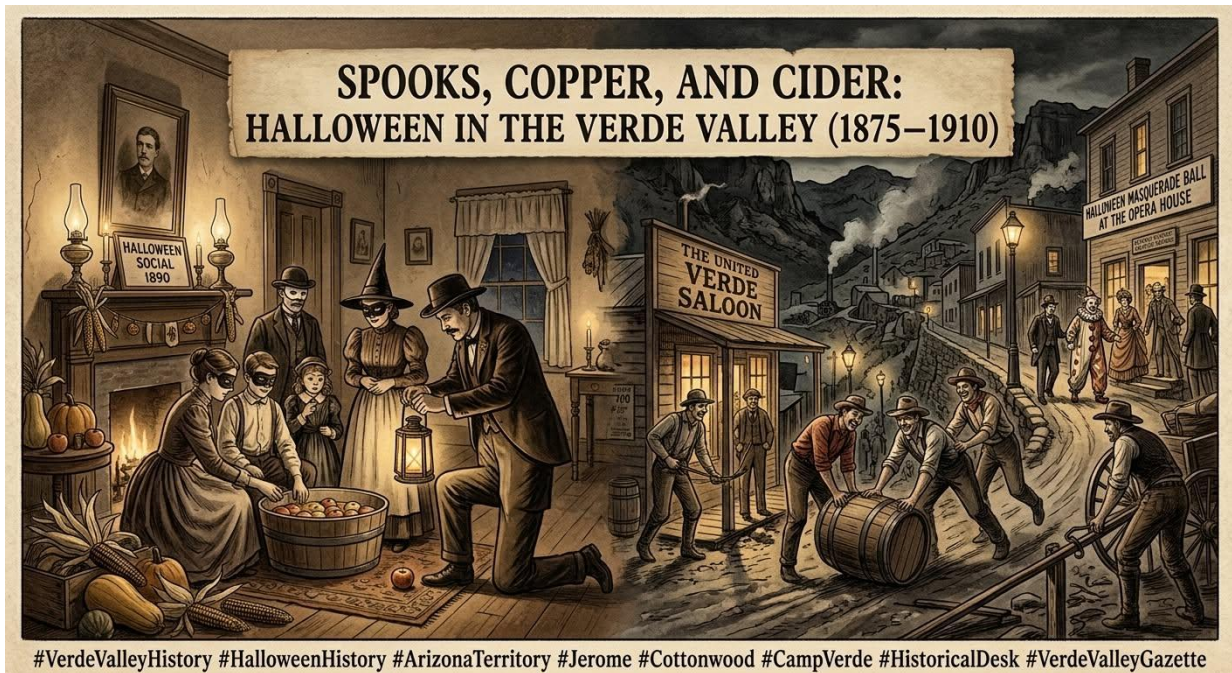
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SPOOKS, COPPER, AND CIDER: HALLOWEEN IN THE VERDE VALLEY (1875–1910)



Long before costume shops, plastic buckets, and trick-or-treating transformed October 31st into a candy frenzy, Halloween in Arizona Territory was a tale of two celebrations: one festive, the other mischief. Between 1875 and 1910, as the Verde Valley evolved from a rugged military frontier into a bustling hub of copper mines, homesteads, and orchards, Halloween grew from a forgotten autumn evening into one of the most anticipated nights of the year.

In the boomtowns and river communities of Yavapai County, Halloween was celebrated in two completely different worlds: the elegant, candlelit parlor parties of Victorian socialites, and the chaotic pranks of frontier mining camps.

From Frontier Quiet to Victorian Magic (1875–1890)

In the late 1870s, Halloween barely registered in the Verde Valley. Life along the river revolved around the grueling routine of farming, ranching, and the military beats around Fort Verde. Harvest festivals, the Fourth of July, and Christmas dominated the social calendar.

However, as the 1880s progressed, national ladies' magazines made their way out West via the newly completed railroads. Settlers—particularly women eager to bring refined social traditions to the territory—brought Victorian customs to homesteads in Cottonwood and Camp Verde.

These early gatherings were often tied to the harvest season, community fellowship, and old-world Halloween traditions brought west by settlers. Young men and women gathered

in ranch homes, schoolhouses, and community halls for "Hallowe'en Socials." With only kerosene lamps, lanterns, and fireplace light illuminating the room, the evening offered a welcome break from daily chores and ranch work. Typical activities included music, storytelling, seasonal refreshments, simple games, and playful Halloween customs that mixed amusement with a touch of superstition.

- **Bobbing for Apples:** A popular party game that tested coordination and often sparked friendly competition among participants.
- **Fortune-Telling Games:** Many Halloween gatherings featured harmless games intended to predict future romances, marriages, or good fortune, reflecting traditions brought from Europe and the eastern United States.
- **Harvest Treats and Socializing:** Refreshments were strictly local, treats such as apples, cider, pies, cakes, popcorn, and nuts often accompanied an evening of games, music, and socializing.

High Carnival in the Mining Camp: Jerome (1895–1910)

While farm families were bobbing for apples along the river, the copper metropolis of Jerome was celebrating Halloween with a distinctly raucous mining-camp energy.

By the late 1890s, Jerome was a clinging city of timber and tin perched precariously on Cleopatra Hill. Its multi-ethnic workforce of miners, combined with a high male-to-female ratio, gave October 31st a sharp edge.

Celebrations in Jerome split along social lines:

The Masquerade Balls

For the town's social elite, mine executives, and members of fraternal orders like the Elks and the Knights of Pythias, Halloween meant the annual Masquerade Ball. Held at the local opera house and lodge halls, these galas featured live orchestras and grand marches. Local newspapers like the Jerome Mining News ran detailed post-event write-ups listing attendees elaborate "Fancy Dress" attire:

- Classical figures, Spanish conquistadors, and Marie Antoinette gowns.
- Traditional Halloween disguises like witches, black cats, court jesters, and "Pierrots" (French clowns).
- Prizes awarded for the "Most Grotesque," "Most Beautiful," and "Best Sustained Character."

The Street Mischief and Inclines

Down on Main Street and Hull Avenue, Halloween mischief was part of the season, with off-duty miners and local youths finding creative ways to surprise their neighbors.

In a town built on a steep 30-degree incline, pranks carried a unique element of physics. Popular Halloween antics recorded in local police blotters included:

- Unhooking wagon brakes and rolling empty beer kegs or timber barrels down the winding mountain grades.
- Swapping outdoor outhouses or hauling farm equipment onto saloon roofs.
- Soap-marking display windows and unhinging front gates.
- Setting off fire alarms—a prank heavily condemned by editors in a timber town terrified of catastrophic fires.

Camp Verde: Post-Military Mischief

Downriver at Camp Verde, where Fort Verde was deactivated as a military post in 1891, Halloween took on a rural ranching flavor.

With the military garrison gone, local ranch youths used October 31 as an excuse for farmyard mischief. Practical jokes often targeted wagons, gates, livestock, and other everyday fixtures of ranch life. It was an era when trickery was the main attraction. The custom of children going door to door for candy, later known as "trick-or-treating," would not become widespread in America until the late 1930s.

Summary: A Legacy of Spooks and Cider

By 1910, as Arizona prepared for statehood, Halloween had firmly established itself in the Verde Valley. Whether through the charm of a rural harvest gathering in Cottonwood, an officer's ball at Camp Verde, or a wild masquerade atop Cleopatra Hill in Jerome, early Arizonans embraced the night as a welcome respite from the hardships of territorial life.

SHERIFF JAMES LOWERY
A LAWMAN OF THE EARLY VERDE VALLEY



On July 16, 1918, the killing of former Yavapai County Sheriff James G. Lowry set off a manhunt across the Verde Valley. The search would bring Frank Lee Dickinson into a story that connects the people, cattle country, and lawmen of early Arizona. In an upcoming four-part series, we'll revisit the events of that July night, follow Frank Dickinson's role in ending the manhunt, and explore the life of a pioneer, cattleman, and lawman whose story is woven into the history of the Verde Valley.

Few men were as closely tied to early law enforcement in Yavapai County as James Lowry. He served multiple terms as Yavapai County Sheriff and was widely known throughout the region as a respected peace officer. According to historical records, Lowry later worked as a deputized guard at the United Verde Extension Mine near Jerome. On July 16, 1918, while attempting to break up a fight, he was shot and killed in the line of duty at age 65.

Today, James Lowry is remembered among the Yavapai County deputies who gave their lives while serving their communities. His final act was one of courage and duty, helping maintain order during the bustling mining era of the Verde Valley.

Below is a transcription of the newspaper article shown.

EX-SHERIFF LOWRY MURDERED AT VERDE TUESDAY NIGHT

James G. Lowry, ex-sheriff, was killed, Deputy Sheriff C. R. Wright was shot through the left arm, and two men received slight wounds when an attempt was made to arrest a Mexican called Porfidio, at Verde, the new smelter town, at about 6:30 o'clock Tuesday night. Lowry died as he had lived, a brave and courageous man, his last act before expiring being to unbuckle his gun and hand it to a bystander with the request that he "go and get the Mexican." News of the killing reached this city shortly after it occurred, but it was not until early this morning that the particulars of the tragedy were obtainable, as nearly the whole population of Verde was engaged in a man hunt for the murderer. Up to a late hour this morning no news of his capture had been received, although five autos carrying about eight men each were scouring the country in the hope of running down the man. — Prescott Journal-Miner.

Part 1 of 4 will post in a couple days.

A NOTE ON THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE.

The *Prescott Journal-Miner* reported Sheriff Lowry's final request using the words "go and get the Mexican." We retain this wording because it appears in the original newspaper account. The article does not provide the man's full name, reminding us that historical newspaper accounts sometimes identified people by ethnicity rather than by name.

The newspaper printed the man's name as "Porfidio," while other historical sources identify him as Porfirio Hernandez.

UNREST IN JEROME – JULY 1918

The collage is titled "VERDE VALLEY PIONEERS SPECIAL SERIES" and "PART 1 OF 4". It features a large date "July 16, 1918" and the subtitle "On This Day in the Verde Valley".

On the left is a newspaper clipping from the "Weekly Minor" dated July 22, 1918. The headline reads: "SHERIFF JAMES LOWRY MURDERED MURDERER KILLED BY DEPUTY SHERIFF FRANK DICKINSON". The clipping includes a portrait of Sheriff James Lowry and a photograph of a man lying on the ground.

In the center is a photograph of a town, likely Jerome, Arizona, with a large building and a mine in the background.

On the right is a document titled "DEPUTY U. S. MARSHAL'S OATH OF OFFICE". It is signed by Fred Hawkins, dated January 10, 1920, and sworn to by C. H. Overland, U.S. Commissioner.

Below the newspaper clipping is a small photograph of a town, labeled "JEROME, ARIZONA 1918".

At the bottom of the collage is a banner that reads: "A DEADLY ATTACK • A FALLEN SHERIFF • A VALLEY ON EDGE".

Verde Valley Pioneers Special Series Part 1 of a 4-part series

By the summer of 1918, Jerome remained a community on edge. The labor unrest that had shaken Arizona's mining camps the previous year had not completely subsided, and law enforcement continued to watch for signs of new violence.

Among those helping protect the town was lawman Fred Hawkins, serving alongside Jerome Police Chief Joe Crowley. Reports reaching local authorities suggested that armed men were preparing to strike the mining communities of Jerome, Clarkdale, and Clemenceau. In response, additional peace officers, deputies, and mine guards were assembled to strengthen the towns' defenses.

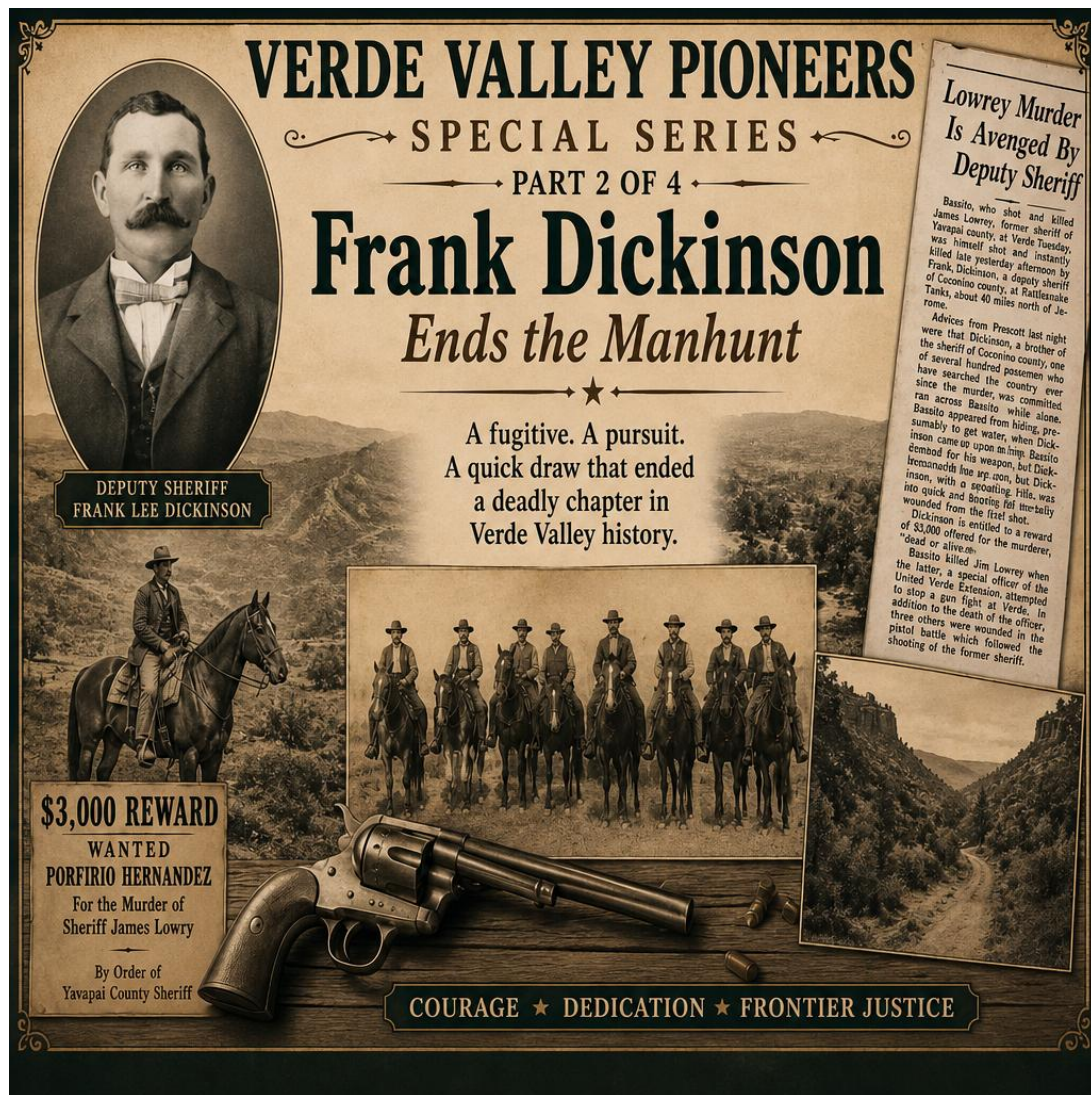
In July 1918, gunfire erupted near Clemenceau during a confrontation between armed men and local officers and guards. Former Yavapai County Sheriff James Lowry, then serving as a deputy guard for the United Verde Extension Smelter, was fatally shot.

Porfirio Hernandez was identified as the man accused of killing Lowry. He escaped into the rugged country surrounding the Verde Valley.

News of Lowry's death spread quickly. Law enforcement officers, deputies, ranchers, and posses began searching the canyons, mesas, and trails of Yavapai County for the man accused of killing one of Arizona's best-known former sheriffs.

The hunt had begun.

Frank Dickinson Ends the Manhunt



Verde Valley Pioneers Special Series
Part 2 of a 4-part series

Following the killing of former Yavapai County Sheriff James Lowry, posses spread across the Verde Valley searching for the fugitive believed responsible for the attack.

Among those participating in the search was Deputy Sheriff Frank Lee Dickinson, who knew the rugged country around Camp Verde and Jerome well from years of working cattle and traveling the backcountry trails.

While riding near Rattlesnake Tank, Dickinson encountered a man matching the description circulated by the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office.

According to contemporary newspaper accounts, Dickinson attempted to place the suspect under arrest. Instead of surrendering, the man drew a pistol and opened fire.

Dickinson immediately returned fire.

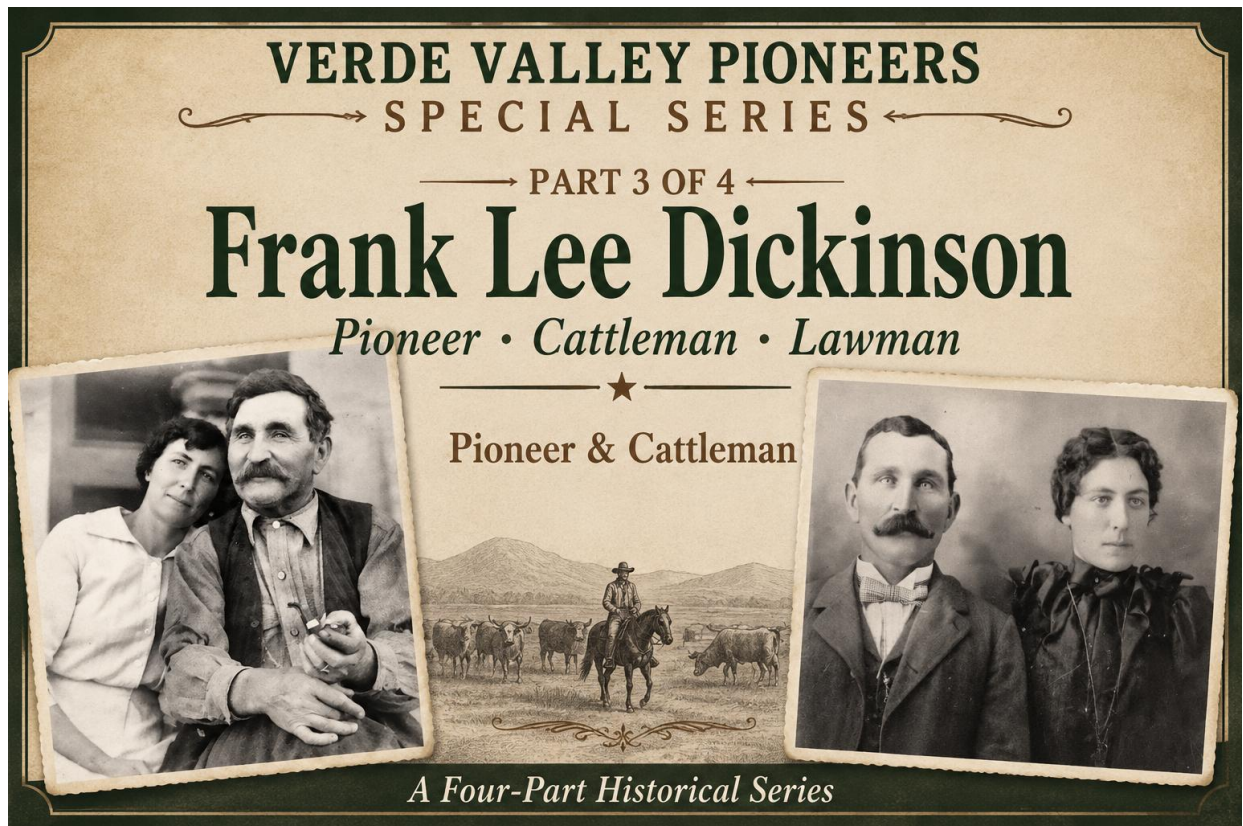
The exchange lasted only moments. Dickinson's shot struck Porfirio Hernandez, ending both the gunfight and the statewide manhunt. Dickinson escaped without injury and rode to notify authorities that the fugitive had been located.

With Hernandez's death, one of the most dramatic law enforcement episodes in Verde Valley history came to an end.

The events of July 1918 underscored the dangers faced by Arizona peace officers during a period marked by labor unrest, wartime tensions, and violence in the mining camps.

Today, the names of Fred Hawkins, James Lowry, and Frank Lee Dickinson remain tied to one of the most significant law enforcement events in the history of the Verde Valley.

Frank Dickinson — Pioneer & Cattleman



Part 3 of 4
Verde Valley Pioneers

Born January 13, 1867, in Johnson Township, Missouri, Frank Lee Dickinson was the son of Samuel Cotton Dickinson and Nancy Jane (Green) Dickinson.

In August 1875, at just eight years old, Frank traveled west with his family in a wagon train from Missouri. They settled near the Camp Verde Military Reservation, where his early life was shaped by the demands of frontier life.

As Frank grew older, he became a skilled cattleman, working livestock and riding the ranges of central Arizona. In December 1899, he married Hulda Susan Smith in Prescott. Hulda had also come to the Verde Valley by covered wagon, arriving at age five in 1887.

From 1905 to 1907, Frank served as Postmaster of Cottonwood while continuing his connection to ranching and livestock. In 1911, he applied for a 160-acre homestead in what was then the Tusayan National Forest, now the Coconino National Forest.

By 1918, Frank was foreman of the T Bar Cattle Ranch. The following year, he organized plans for a major cattle sale. In 1922, he worked at the Apache Maid Ranch.

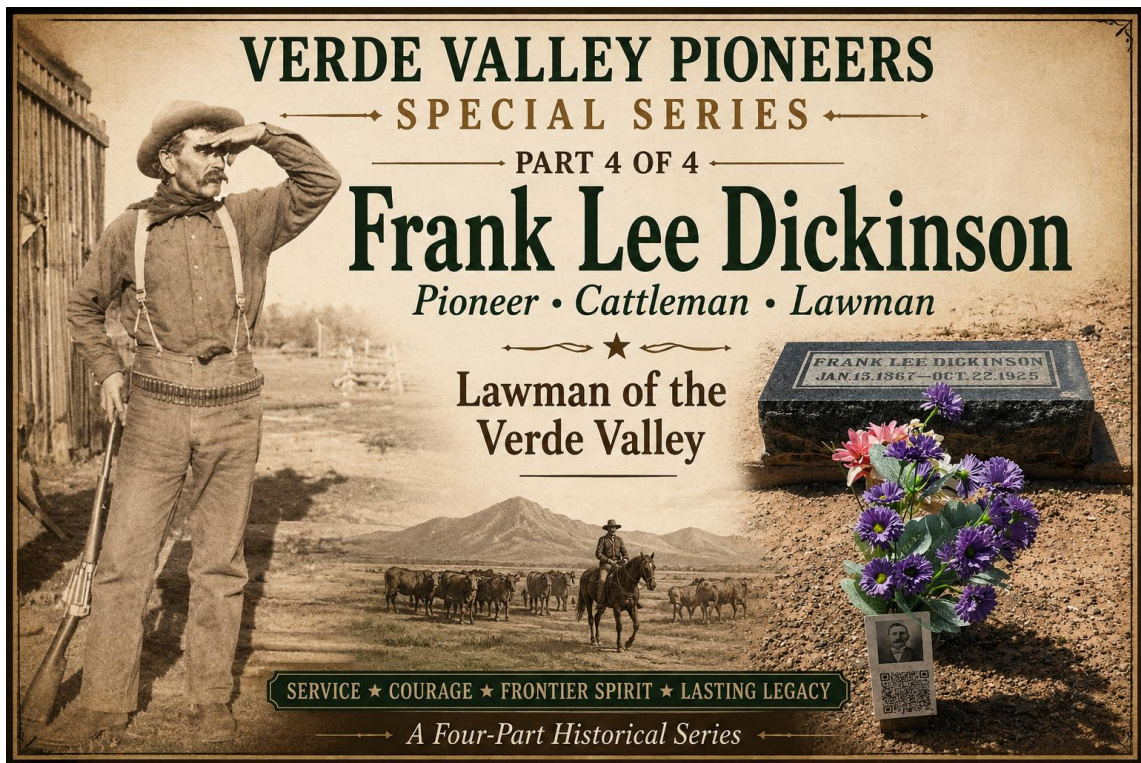
Frank and his brother, William Green Dickinson, were also half-owners of the 100 Place Ranch, later known as the V Bar V Ranch. The property is now part of the V Bar V Heritage Site, home to the Crane Petroglyph Heritage Site.

Through decades of cattle work, land management, and ranch development, Frank became part of the working foundation of the Verde Valley's ranching economy. He earned a reputation as a capable cattleman with a deep knowledge of the country.

But Frank's life was not shaped by cattle alone. Frontier life also gave him a strong sense of duty and respect for law and order.

The skills and reputation he built on the open range would eventually lead him into another role—one that would test him far beyond the cattle country.

Frank Dickinson — Lawman of the Verde Valley



Part 4 of 4

Verde Valley Pioneers

Frank Lee Dickinson never abandoned the life of a cattleman when he accepted the responsibilities of a law officer. On Arizona's early frontier, the two often went hand in hand. Communities depended upon respected ranchers—men who knew the country, understood its people, and could be trusted to make difficult decisions far from the nearest town.

For Frank Dickinson, serving the public became another form of caring for the country he called home.

His law enforcement career began in 1901, when he was appointed a Deputy Sheriff in Yavapai County. It was the first of many public positions that reflected the confidence local officials placed in his judgment and character.

In December 1915, Dickinson was appointed Undersheriff of Coconino County, serving under Sheriff William G. Dickinson. The work demanded far more than making arrests. An undersheriff was expected to enforce state laws, investigate crimes, transport prisoners, and assist citizens across a county measured in thousands of square miles. Contemporary newspaper accounts place Frank Dickinson in the field enforcing Arizona's prohibition laws, transporting convicted murderers to the state penitentiary, investigating livestock theft, and assisting with arrests throughout northern Arizona.

Those responsibilities required qualities that could not be learned in an office. Dickinson's years on horseback as a cattleman had taught him patience, self-reliance, and an intimate knowledge of Arizona's backcountry. Whether following cattle trails or tracking fugitives, he relied on the same calm judgment and determination that had earned the respect of his neighbors.

Although his years of service included many difficult assignments, history remembers him best for July 1918, when he ended the statewide manhunt for Porfirio Hernandez following the killing of former Yavapai County Sheriff James Lowry. That dramatic encounter has become one of the best-known episodes in the history of Verde Valley law enforcement, but it represented only one chapter in a career devoted to public service.

Even after that widely reported event, Dickinson quietly continued serving his community. Newspaper accounts from the following years show him transporting prisoners, enforcing the law, and carrying out the everyday duties expected of a deputy sheriff while continuing his work in Arizona's ranching industry. For Frank Dickinson, public service was never about recognition; it was simply another responsibility to fulfill.

Frank Lee Dickinson died on October 22, 1925, at the age of fifty-eight, and was laid to rest in Cottonwood Cemetery among many of the pioneers who helped shape the Verde Valley.

Today, he is remembered as a pioneer, cattleman, and lawman. Whether riding the open range, protecting his neighbors, or pursuing dangerous fugitives, Frank Dickinson answered whatever duty his community required. His life reflects the character of a generation that helped build the Verde Valley—not through fame or fortune, but through hard work, integrity, and a willingness to serve.

Newspaper References

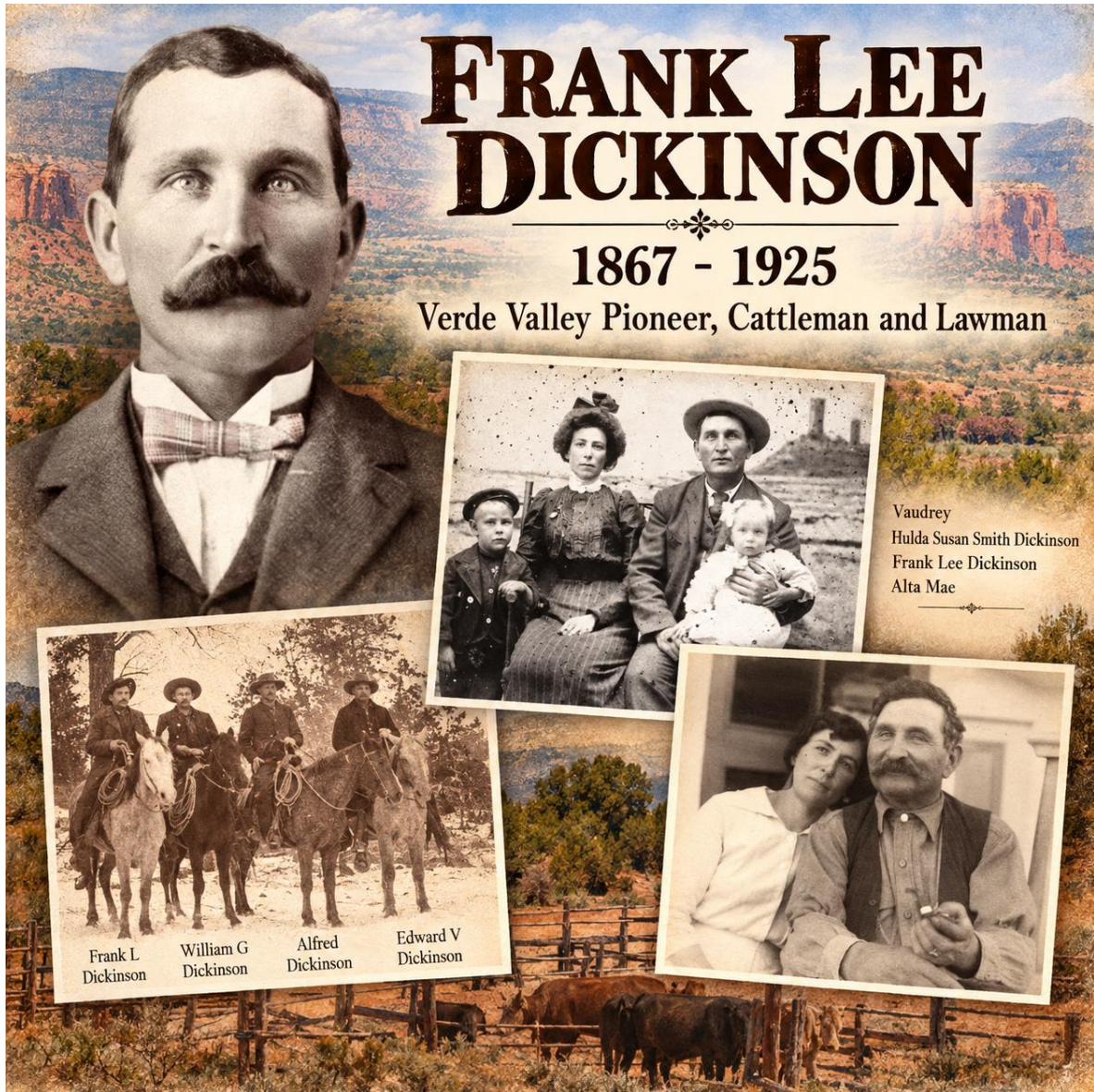
The Coconino Sun (Flagstaff), 1915–1916. Contemporary coverage of Sheriff William G. Dickinson's administration, deputy appointments, prohibition enforcement, prisoner transport, and county law enforcement activities.

Arizona Republican (Phoenix), July 1918. Coverage of the Jerome uprising, the death of James Lowry, and Frank Dickinson's role in ending the manhunt for Porfirio Hernandez.

FRANK LEE DICKINSON

Verde Valley Pioneer, Rancher, and Lawman

January 13, 1867 – October 22, 1925



Few men experienced as much of Arizona's early frontier history as Frank Lee Dickinson. During his lifetime he was a cowboy, rancher, cattleman, businessman, postmaster, deputy sheriff, and undersheriff. His story is woven into the history of the Verde Valley, the cattle industry of northern Arizona, and the families who helped build the communities we know today.

Frank arrived in Arizona as a young boy when his parents, Samuel Cotton Dickinson and Nancy Jane Green Dickinson, brought their family west from Missouri in 1875. The Dickinson family settled in the Verde Valley near Beaver Creek and the Camp Verde Military Reservation, at a time when much of the region was still frontier country.

Growing up in the Verde Valley meant learning to work hard at an early age. Frank attended school at Middle Verde, but ranch work soon became a major part of his life. By the time he was fourteen years old, he was already working cattle and learning the skills that would serve him for the rest of his life. According to his obituary, he spent his youth as both a cowboy and farmer, becoming familiar with the vast stretches of country that made up Yavapai and Coconino counties.

Life on the Range

Ranching was at the center of Frank's life.

Over the years he worked with several well-known cattle operations, including the Hashknife outfit, the Beaver Creek 100 Ranch, Woods Ranch, and Apache Maid Ranch. He also worked with the Babbitt brothers and became involved in a variety of ranching ventures throughout central and northern Arizona.

One of his closest business relationships was with his brother, William Green Dickinson. Together they shared interests in cattle, ranching, and other business ventures. During their later years in the cattle business, the brothers owned the H Triangle and T-Bar-S brands and held interests in Apache Maid Ranch and the old Woods Ranch in the Mogollon Mountains. These operations represented some of the country where Arizona cattlemen built their livelihoods during the territorial and early statehood years.

Like many pioneers, Frank adapted to changing opportunities. While ranching remained his primary occupation, he also participated in the Dickinson family's business activities in Cottonwood. He served as Cottonwood's postmaster from 1905 to 1907 while the family operated a local store before eventually selling it to Lon Mason.

For a brief period, Frank and his family lived in California, where he operated a garage in Inglewood. After about eighteen months away, however, Arizona called him back. He returned to the state and resumed the ranching life he knew so well.

A Frontier Lawman

Frank's knowledge of the country eventually led him into law enforcement.

He served as a deputy sheriff in Yavapai County and later as undersheriff of Coconino County. In December 1915 he was appointed undersheriff, replacing Tom Eakins. At a

time when law officers often traveled long distances on horseback, the job required courage, endurance, and a deep familiarity with the land.

Newspaper accounts from the period record Frank's involvement in several law enforcement actions. Among them was escorting the Azbill brothers, who had been convicted of murder, to the state penitentiary in 1916. Other reports linked him to investigations, the seizure of illegal whiskey, and the pursuit of fugitives across northern Arizona.

His obituary described him as fearless in carrying out his duties and loyal to the responsibilities entrusted to him. Those who knew him regarded him as a dependable officer who never shied away from difficult work.

The Hernandez Manhunt

One of the most dramatic events associated with Frank's career occurred in July 1918 during the search for Porfirio Hernandez, who was wanted in connection with the killing of former Sheriff James Lowry.

As law officers searched northern Arizona for the fugitive, Frank became part of the manhunt. According to later law enforcement accounts, he eventually encountered Hernandez and ordered him to surrender. Hernandez refused. A close-range gun battle followed. When the shooting ended, Hernandez was dead, bringing one of the region's most publicized manhunts to a close.

The incident became one of the best-known episodes of Frank's years in law enforcement and secured his place in Arizona frontier history.

Family Life

While much of Frank's life was spent working cattle and serving the public, family remained at the heart of his story.

On December 25, 1899, he married Hulda Susan Smith. Together they raised a family and built a legacy that would continue through future generations. Their children included Vaudrey Samuel Dickinson, Alta Mae Dickinson, Edward Lee Dickinson, Frank Lee Dickinson, and Helen May Dickinson.

Many descendants would later carry different surnames, but their connection to Frank and Hulda remained an important part of their family history. Through their children and grandchildren, the Dickinson family's roots continued to spread throughout Arizona and beyond.

His Final Years

In his later years, Frank's health began to fail. His obituary described a lengthy illness and the physical hardships he endured. Family members rallied around him, and special mention was made of the devotion shown by his brother, William Green Dickinson, whose concern for Frank reflected the strong family bonds that had carried the Dickinsons through decades of frontier life.

On October 22, 1925, Frank Lee Dickinson passed away in Cottonwood at the age of fifty-eight. He was laid to rest in Cottonwood Cemetery. Three days later, the *Coconino Sun* published an obituary honoring a man who had spent a lifetime ranching, serving the public, and helping build Arizona communities.

A Lasting Verde Valley Legacy

The life of Frank Lee Dickinson tells the story of the early Verde Valley itself.

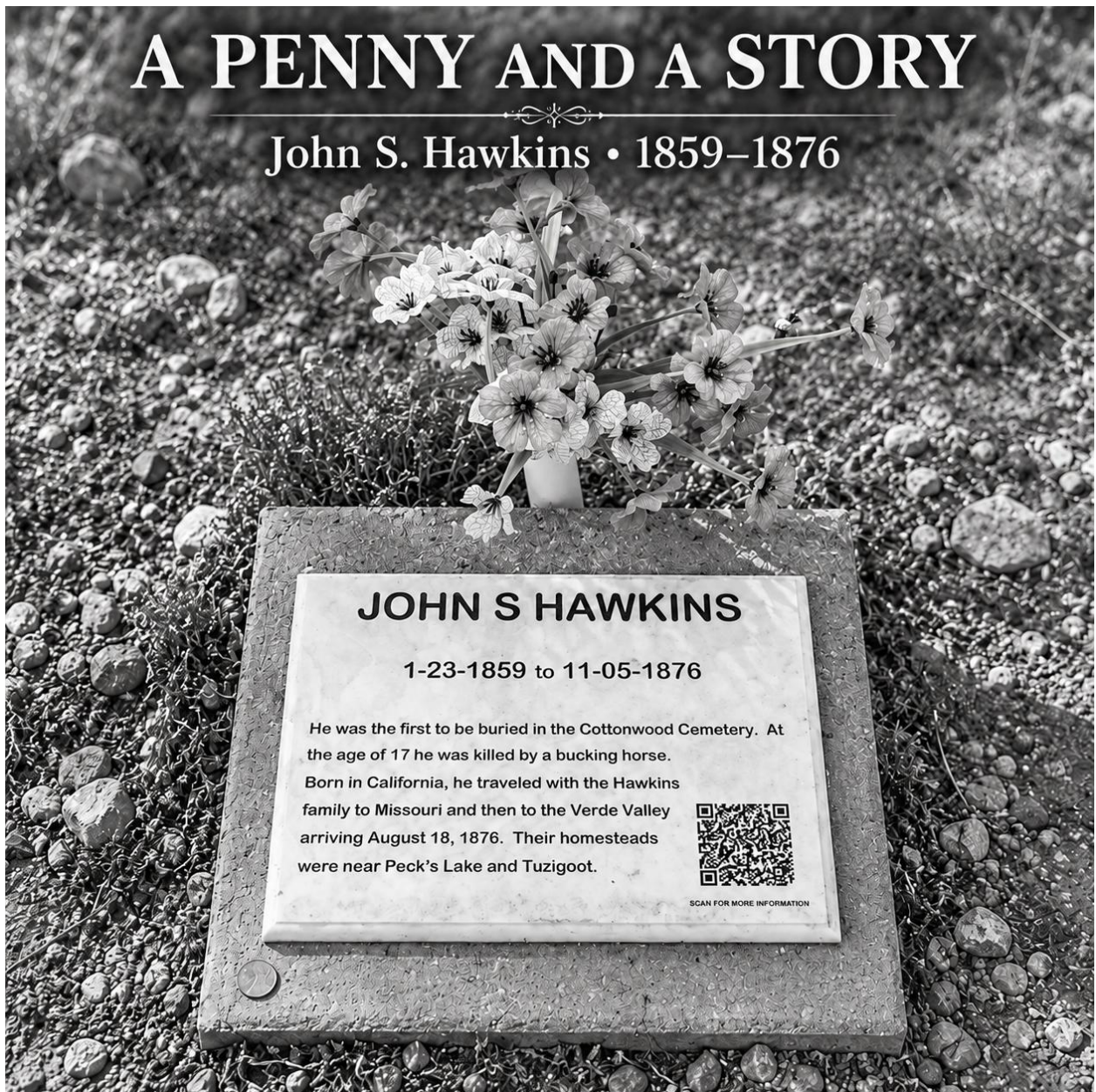
He arrived as a child when much of Arizona was still frontier country. He grew into a cowboy and cattleman, worked some of northern Arizona's best-known ranches, helped manage large livestock operations, served as a lawman, and participated in events that became part of Arizona history.

Yet his legacy extends beyond ranches, cattle brands, and law enforcement records. He was a husband, father, brother, and pioneer whose descendants continue to remember the stories passed down through the generations. His life reflects the determination, independence, and resilience that helped shape the Verde Valley during its formative years.

Today, more than a century after he first rode the ranges of northern Arizona, the story of Frank Lee Dickinson remains an important chapter in the history of the Verde Valley and in the story of the families who helped build it.

Sources: *Coconino Sun* obituary (October 25, 1925), Dickinson family histories, Pioneer Lawmen accounts, and related Dickinson family research.

A Penny and a Story



While visiting the grave of **John Hawkins** in Cottonwood Cemetery, I noticed something that caught my attention.

Resting on the corner of his grave marker was a single penny.

Most people are familiar with leaving flowers at a grave, but fewer know about the tradition of leaving coins. Across the United States, visitors have long left pennies, nickels, dimes, or quarters at gravesites as a quiet sign of remembrance. A penny simply means someone stopped by. It says, "I was here. I remembered."

Who left this penny and why, I do not know. But seeing it made me pause and think about the story behind the marker.

John Hawkins holds a unique place in Verde Valley history. He was the first person buried in Cottonwood Cemetery. He came to the Verde Valley with the Hawkins family in August 1876 and tragically lost his life at just 17 years of age after being thrown from a bucking horse.

Today, visitors can scan the QR code on his grave marker and learn more about his brief life and his role in the early history of the Verde Valley. What was once only a name and a date has become a story that can be shared with anyone who stops to visit.

As I stood there looking at that penny, I was reminded why preserving these histories matters. A grave marker tells us where someone rests. A biography tells us who they were. It connects a person to a family, a community, and a place in history.

Perhaps the person who left that penny scanned the QR code and spent a few moments learning about John's life. Perhaps they simply wanted to leave a small token of respect. Either way, their gesture served its purpose.

More than 150 years after his death, John Hawkins is still being remembered.

And in many ways, that is what Verde Valley Pioneers is all about. Every grave marker marks a life. Every pioneer has a story. Our goal is to help ensure those stories are not forgotten.

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