



Frank Lee Dickinson

Rancher and Lawman

1875 – Age 8, travels to the Verde Valley, Arizona by wagon train from Missouri.

Born: Jan 13, 1867 Missouri

Death: Oct 22, 1925 (aged 58)

Parents:

Samuel Cotton Dickinson

Nancy Jane (Green) Dickinson

Spouse: Hulda Susan (Smith) Dickinson-Marshall

Dickinson Line: Samuel Cotton Dickinson → Frank Lee Dickinson

Siblings:

Margie Ann (Dickinson) Back

Mariah May (Dickinson) Hawkins

William Green Dickinson Alfred Dickinson

Edward Virgil Dickinson

Half Brothers:

Leroy Dickinson 1850 - ?

George Wesley Dickinson 1852 – 1901

Charles Dickinson 1853 - 1926

Frank Lee is the father of Helen (Dickinson) Moxcey, grandfather of Richard Moxcey and Diana (Moxcey) Rowe, and great grandfather of Chris Moxcey, Michael Moxcey, Jessica Rowe, and Holly (Havens) Martinson.

Frank Lee Dickinson was born January 13, 1867, in Missouri, the son of Samuel Cotton Dickinson and Nancy Jane (Green) Dickinson. His life would span the final decades of the American frontier and the early years of modern Arizona. Through ranching, business ventures, and years of law enforcement service, he became one of the recognizable figures of the Verde Valley during its formative years.

Frank's father, Samuel Cotton Dickinson, was among the pioneer settlers who helped establish the Dickinson family in Arizona. In 1875 Samuel moved his family from Missouri to the Verde Valley by covered wagon. The journey brought the Dickinsons into a rugged land that was only beginning to see permanent settlement following the closure of the Verde Indian Reservation. Samuel established the family in the cattle country of central Arizona, a decision that shaped the lives of his children and the generations that followed.



In 1875, when Frank was eight years old, the Dickinson family joined a wagon train traveling from Missouri to the Arizona Territory. The journey placed the family among the pioneer settlers of the Verde Valley. Like many frontier children he experienced both school and hard work at an early age. In 1877 he and his brother William attended school in Middle Verde where their teacher was Ewan Witts. By the age of fourteen Frank had already begun working cattle and learning the demanding skills required of an Arizona cowboy.

Frank worked for several cattle outfits, including the T-Bar, 100 Place, V-Bar-V, Apache Maid, and Hash Knife operations. Over time he and his brother William Dickinson began running cattle on their own. Ranching would remain the foundation of Frank's working life, although he would also pursue a variety of business ventures and law enforcement roles.

During these years Frank met Hulda Susan Smith of Camp Verde. Hulda had been born in Cedar County, Missouri in 1881. Huda at the age of 5 came to Arizona with her family in 1886 by covered wagon. The couple were married on December 25, 1899 in Prescott AZ at the ranch of Hulda's sister, Sarah (Smith) Thompson, and brother-in-law, Renos Thompson. Together, Frank and Hulda raised five children while building their lives in the ranching communities in and around the Verde Valley of Arizona.

Frank helped his brother, Edward purchase one of Cottonwoods first stores from the Strahan family. The store also served as the Cottonwood Post Office. Edward became postmaster in 1904, and Frank later served from 1905 to 1907, before the family sold the property to Alonzo 'Lon' Mason.

Frank continued working cattle throughout northern Arizona and spent time running ranch operations for the Babbitt Brothers, including the Woods Ranch and the Beaver Creek "100" Ranch. In 1911 he filed a homestead claim for 160 acres in the Tusayan National Forest, later renamed the Kaibab National Forest.

For a short period around 1914 Frank tried a different enterprise when he opened an automobile garage in Inglewood, California. The family lived there for about eighteen months before returning to the Verde Valley. Their youngest daughter, Helen May Dickinson, was born after their return in 1917.

That same year, 1917, Frank and his brother William purchased the "100 Place," later known as the "V Bar V Ranch" from James and Rowena (Dickinson) Van Deren. Rowena's father was Charles Dickinson, Frank's half-brother, and her grandfather was Samuel Cotton Dickinson. The property would eventually become historically significant because of the extensive petroglyph panels located there, now preserved as the Crane Petroglyph Heritage Site.

Alongside ranching, Frank served many years in law enforcement. He worked as a deputy sheriff in Yavapai County and later served as undersheriff of Coconino County beginning December 1, 1915. His duties included enforcing prohibition laws, transporting prisoners, and investigating livestock crimes.

Frank also remained deeply involved in the cattle industry. In 1918 he served as foreman of the T Bar cattle ranch owned by the Babbitt brothers. Ranching and law enforcement frequently overlapped in the frontier West, and Frank's work often required both skills.

In the early 1920s Frank gradually stepped back from large-scale cattle operations. In 1921 he sold his share of the cattle business along with homes he owned in Flagstaff and Camp Verde. He later moved to Clarkdale where he worked as a security guard at the smelter and also served as a cattle inspector.



Frank Lee Dickinson died on October 22, 1925, at the age of fifty-eight.

He was buried in Cottonwood Cemetery near members of the Dickinson family. His life bridged the era of wagon trains and frontier lawmen with the early decades of modern Arizona.

Frontier Lawman: The 1918 Gunfight

In July 1918 Frank Dickinson while searching for cattle encountered a suspicious rider near Rattlesnake Tank. The man claimed to be looking for sheep, but Frank recognized him as Porfirio Hernandez, the fugitive wanted for the murder of Yavapai County Sheriff James Lowry.

Using a quick distraction, Frank asked the man to look behind him toward what he suggested might be a wolf. As the man turned, Frank dismounted and ordered him to surrender. Hernandez instead drew a pistol and opened fire.

Frank returned fire with his .38 Colt revolver. The exchange lasted only seconds before Hernandez fell mortally wounded. Although the fugitive fired several shots as he fell, none struck Frank. The encounter ended the search for Sheriff Lowry's killer and became one of the most dramatic law enforcement stories in the early history of the Verde Valley. Frank received a \$3,000.00 Reward that was offered for Porfirio Hernandez.

V Bar V Ranch and the Petroglyph Heritage Site

The ranch purchased by Frank and his brother William Dickinson in 1917 later became known as the V Bar V Ranch near present-day Rimrock, Arizona. Today the property is preserved as the Crane Petroglyph Heritage Site and is managed by the United States Forest Service. The site contains one of the largest and best-preserved collections of petroglyphs in the Verde Valley. Visitors can view hundreds of ancient rock carvings created by the Sinagua people centuries before the arrival of European settlers, making the ranch property an important cultural and historical location in Arizona.

Timeline of Frank Lee Dickinson's Life

1867 – Born January 13 in Missouri

1875 – Age 8, travels to the Verde Valley, Arizona by wagon train

1877 – Attends school in Middle Verde

1899 – Marries Hulda Susan Smith on December 25

1905–1907 – Serves as Postmaster of Cottonwood

1911 – Files homestead claim in Tusayan National Forest

1914 – Operates automobile garage in Inglewood, California

1915 – Appointed Undersheriff of Coconino County

1917 – Purchases the V Bar V Ranch with brother William and operates a Jordan Car to carry passengers between Cottonwood and Jerome. 1918 – Serves as Coconino County Deputy Sheriff and ranch foreman of the T Bar Cattle Ranch; involved in gunfight with Porfirio Hernandez 1921 – Sells cattle interests and homes in Flagstaff and Camp Verde 1922 – Serves as deputy sheriff in Clarkdale and worked at the Apache Maid Ranch.

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