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EDDY COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

SILAS GIBSON CEMETERY RECORDS

Records extracted by Richard Wilkinson
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GPS Coordinates for this Cedar Canyon burial site are:

32 deg. 10 min. 28 sec. North
103 deg. 58 min. 02 sec. West
Just over 3000 feet above sea level.

A concrete marker was placed over the grave in 1968 by three persons who's names appears on the marker. Vic Queen, John and Lewis Means.

The marker states: "Silas Gibson Killed in Indian Fight 1869" About May or June 1869.

The chance of just coming up on this site are very remote. You will have to be out in this desert looking for it. Its a very remote and primitive location. If you are walking, take water. Please remember to respect this BLM land and take out any trash you carry in. Following oil field roads, you can drive very close to the site and only have a very short climb down into the canyon and back up again by foot. The climb down and up again is short but steep.

The following is an excerpt from an article written by Lee Myers for the El Paso Times, the date of the article is unknown, but judging from the authors observations that there was no marker on the grave when he saw it, it may have been written prior to 1968 because the concrete marker on this grave is dated then:

"... Only a limited amount of inquiries served to tell me that two friends of mine, John and Lewis Means, old timers locally, were distantly related to the man, that he had been a member of a party of Texans, with a herd of cattle and several wagons, enroute to California.

My friends' maternal grandparents, Robert and Deborah Hardin, were of the party, and their daughter, my friends' mother, Cynthia, was born early in 1870, in one of the covered wagons just after arrival in California. As youngsters, grandfather Hardin had told the boys how the Indians had attacked them, the death of one man in the ensuing fight; but in the course of a full and active lifetime the account had gradually faded from their memories until they now remembered little other

than the most basic facts of the tale..."

Author Lee Myers visited the burial site and could not find out anything about this slain man for a long time afterward. Then all of a sudden:

"...Several years previous Lewis Means, retired, had gone to Arizona to make his home and had stored an accumulation of odds and ends in Albuquerque. Now, returned to Carlsbad, he had asked his brother to move these effects back to his re-established home and John had complied.

No sooner had the assortment of boxes been unloaded from John's pickup than Lewis, curious and reflective, began half absently pawing it over - and there it was!"

"...Many years before there had existed, somewhere in the family, a letter, a written account of the complete incident, penned by an older and well informed relative, but so long in the past had it been that Lewis had lost all remembrance of its contents, had only known in a very dim way that it had actually existed. John knew nothing whatever of it.

Now that story was told.

Following discovery of gold in California Silas Gibson had gone there, had prospered, and with a brother had returned east to Texas, where they had persuaded relatives to try their luck in the land of gold and milk and honey.

The party of 18, men, women and children, with four or five ox-drawn wagons, 1,500 head of steers and 40 horses, left Blanco County, Texas, in May, 1869. Traveling by way of Ft. Concho, Castle Gap and Horsehead Crossing, they pushed their way up the east side of the Pecos to near the mouth of Black River, in New Mexico, where the Indians attacked fiercely.

The party split, part of the men helping the women to form a fort of the wagons for protection from the fire of the Indians, the rest protecting the cattle and horses. The savages also split, attacking both wagons and animals, and succeeded in stampeding the horses, their real objective.

Now the Whites were forced to divide forces still further and to pursue and attempt to regain the horses. They were successful in this effort; most of the pursuing party were busily engaged driving the horses back to the wagons but Silas Gibson and one or two others continued to fight the Indians, trying to drive them away. Silas was mounted on a splendid horse, a racer; then he and his companion, a Thomas Shelly, gave up the chase and started their return to the wagons.

Shelly, unwisely, had ridden his horse almost to exhaustion and seeing this, the Indians pursued them trying to bring one or both down. Silas called to Shelly to ride on as best his horse could while he, Silas, dismounted to fire at their pursuers in an attempt to shield his companion from further pursuit.

This he was successful in doing but the Indians, wily and experienced in such affairs, killed Silas' mount, then, circling him madly, they were not long in bringing him down, too, and scalping him.

Silas was consigned to his lonely grave next day and the grave was covered with rocks for protection against predatory animals..."