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CARLSBAD, EDDY COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

J.O. Watkins CEMETERY RECORD

Records extracted by Richard Wilkinson  
Typing by Richard Wilkinson June 2001  
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This is a very remote burial site. It is nestled up in the Guadalupe Mountains high at an altitude of about 6285 ft above sea level. You can drive to within 220 feet of this grave, but you will have to have a 4 wheel drive vehicle. The GPS Coordinates (Global Positioning System) are 32 deg 06 min 05 sec North and 104 deg 45 min 58 sec West. The margin of error for these coordinates is only 3 feet. If you are within 3 feet of this grave you will see it. It is enclosed with a rock wall about 2 feet high all around it. This burial site is on Public Land and access is all on Public Land.

To get to this cemetery you must take State Road 137 from Highway 285 all the way up into the Guadalupe Mountains. Pass Queen Station and continue south coming to Forrest Road 540. Turn left and continue for several miles on this very good gravel road until you come to the Klondike Pass Road on the left.

Turn left onto Klondike Pass Road (county road 412) and go down into the canyon exactly 1.2 miles. If you cross a cattle guard you have gone too far. You will turn to the left just before the cattle guard. You will have to look closely for the turn off, it doesn't look like a road. If you miss this road and come to the McCollaum Ranch you have gone too far. After turning left onto this very primitive road, follow it to a fence and turn left along the fence. After you leave the county road, you will drive less than 1/10 mile before you cannot go any further in a vehicle.

When you can't go any farther, you will have to walk. However, the walk is easy. You will need to look to the left for a trail (some say this was an old wagon trail). The trail is hidden by a fallen tree. You will have to walk for about 220 feet along this trail (away from the fence line). You will see the grave to your right.

There is a head stone and foot marker inside the rock enclosure. On the day of my visit I saw the cremated ashes of an unknown person strewn on and around this grave. I also noticed that someone had planted Iris flowers over the grave as well. This stone is in a state of deterioration and soon many of the words will not be visible.

The stone reads:

In Memory of

J.O. Watkins Born  
November the 5th  
1884 and Died  
January the 19th 1885

Except you become as little  
children you cannot  
enter the kingdom of  
heaven.

Little or nothing is known about this child or his/her family. I met with Mr. McCollaum and only learned that the cremated ashes showed up about 3 years earlier. Nothing was known about the child. Mr. McCollaum did say that he believed that there was a Watkins homestead located at the cattle guard, however, there is no visible evidence of that now. I believe that during this time period, this location was part of Lincoln County. Land records would therefore be found in Carrizozo, NM at the county seat.

There is also another remote and very old family cemetery very nearby of the Shattuck Family. These are the earliest Eddy Co./Lincoln Co. settlers. In an attempt to gain more information on the Watkins site, I contacted the only known living relative I know of for the Shattucks, Mary Helen Brunt. She knew of this Watkins grave, but did not know anything about him/her. She did tell me that Capt. Shattuck settled in nearby Hooper Canyon in the same year that this child died (1885). However, because of the date, the Watkins had to be the first there or pass through prior to Capt. Shattuck homesteading the area.

Because a head stone is marking the grave, the Watkins family must have remained in the area for some period of time. It takes time to have a stone made in the 1880's. Plus the remoteness of this area from the nearest town would make it likely that the family was living in the area and not just passing through.

It is a very old stone, but is not just a rock. The words are in different script and the scripture at the bottom (Matthew 18:3) is carved in italic. It is very possible that the stone carver was from the Seven River's area. The Watkins stone is "consistent" in font with that of the stones of both Joseph Edwards and Susan Thayer (however, I am only guessing). These two are buried along the the Rocky Arroyo near Waterhole Road and are 1.5 miles apart. Their stones were carved by the same person and it is my understanding that the stone carver was located in the Seven Rivers area. Edwards (killed.1881) and Thayer (d.1887) both died during the same time period as Watkins.

After the Watkins child died, the family would have had to remain in the area to wait for the stone to be carved. Transportation being what it was in the 1880's this would take some time to happen. Seven Rivers is located some 40 or more miles northeast of the Watkins burial site. In the 1880's, this mountain area was very primitive and one didn't just run over to town to get something. Even by today's standards, it takes time to have a stone carved. All of this leads me to suspect that the Watkins Family did live up in the Mountains near this burial site as suggested by the nearest neighbor, Mr. Kenny McCollaum.