

*A Cochise County Historical Society  
Publication*

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# *The Story of Soldiers Hole*



*By Mary Magoffin*

Chiricahua Reservation became Public Domain by Presidential Decree, which meant that as soon as it was surveyed it could be homesteaded. In the meantime, a person could exercise his Squatter's Right and claim land until he could legally file for a Homestead. Many people waited anxiously to move into this pristine land with its sea of grass, shallow water and promise of mineral riches.

Understandably, the Chiricahua Apaches were exceedingly unhappy with the new arrangement, so periodically some of them would break out of the San Carlos Reservation to make one of their traditional raids into Mexico, wreaking havoc on white settlers in their path.

In order to better protect the scattered population, Fort Huachuca was established in 1877. Cavalry troops on maneuver would stop at the waterholes for water and to rest their horses and themselves; thus evolved the name 'Soldiers Holes'. At that time there were several pools of water. In time, only one was left, but local legend has it that the 'real' Soldiers Hole was a wooden whiskey barrel with perforations which let in clean water for human consumption.<sup>3</sup> Please note that the variations on 'Soldiers Hole' will be used as they are used in the references.

James Grizzle, present owner of the Soldiers Hole site, states that when he was a small boy, Soldiers Hole was a shored-up drinking trough for cattle, the top of the trough being just above ground level.<sup>4</sup> Subsequent flooding and silting has covered all traces of the trough, as well as Indian sign.

In 1877, Ed Schieffelin discovered silver at Tombstone, and when mining began in earnest timber was sorely needed for housing and for the mines. For freighters hauling timber from the Chiricahua Mountains, Soldiers Holes were a life-saver. The Mexicans have a saying: 'Agua es Vida', or 'Water is Life'; so very true on the desert.



*William G. Sanderson*

William G. Sanderson and his family were on their way to Tombstone in 1880 when they learned about a small-pox epidemic there. In a letter written by his daughter, Mattie Sanderson Chambers in 1936, she wrote: "I can still hear my father as he turned to my mother and said to her, 'Turn out your chickens, Katherine, we will stay here'. And so we did. For fifteen years we were happy in the Sulphur Spring Valley at the Soldier Hole Ranch."<sup>5</sup>

In his diary, 'A Tenderfoot in Tombstone' on Wednesday, July 28, 1880, George Parsons names Mr. Sanderson as being the proprietor of a well at Soldiers Hole.<sup>6</sup>

William G. Sanderson and Ambrose Lyall brought in the first artesian wells in Cochise County, A.T., a couple of years later, in 1883, to be exact, and received \$3,000 for their efforts



from the Territorial Legislature. At that time the water level in the vicinity of Soldiers Holes ranged from thirty-five to fifty feet.<sup>7</sup> Today it stands somewhere around eight-five feet, according to Louis Cooper.

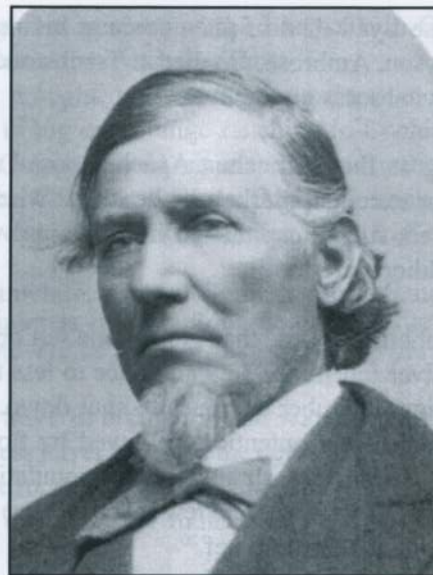
Among Sanderson's first neighbors were Frank and Tom McLowery, who started their ranch some four miles south of Soldiers Holes. This outfit quickly earned the reputation of being headquarters for the 'Cowboy' element which was attracted to Tombstone. 'Cowboy' being a derogatory term for an outlaw or rustler.<sup>8</sup> To be sure, not all cowboys were in this category.

Roughly six miles north of Soldiers Hole itself, the Brophy brothers, Jim and Frank, established their Soldiers Hole Ranch at Brophy Well.<sup>9</sup> Jim Brophy immediately recognized the need for a way-station to accommodate travelers. In addition to serving meals, whiskey was sold over a bar in the ranch house.<sup>10</sup>

A number of important things happened in the year 1881. Namely, the Southern Pacific Railroad spanned the continent;<sup>11</sup> Cochise County split away from Pima County<sup>12</sup> and the Texas Mine commenced operations,<sup>13</sup> bringing Galeyville into existence, thereby creating more traffic by Soldiers Holes.

Johnny Ringo stopped at Soldiers Holes and spent the night on his way to his date with Destiny. To this day there is still controversy over how he met his death on July 13, 1882, on the south bank of Turkey Creek.<sup>14</sup>

The Erie Cattle Company was organized by a group of Pennsylvanians in 1883. By claiming the surface water in springs and cienegas in most of southern Sulphur Spring Valley, they gained control over approximately sixteen townships. A township is composed of thirty-six sections; each section being one square mile. In other words, a lot of land on which they could run 10,000 head of cattle in the beginning.<sup>15</sup>



*Ambrose Lyall*

Two years later, in 1885, the Chiricahua Cattle Company was formed when eight smaller ranchers consolidated their holdings. Their range was 75 miles long and 35 miles wide, a big part of the northern half of Sulphur Spring Valley. Records show that they ran 15,000 head of cattle and 300 horses on their range. Cattle were worth \$11.50 a head and horses were valued at \$33.50 each.<sup>16</sup>

Sanderson and Lyall, at their Soldiers Hole Ranch, were sandwiched between these two huge ranches. Presumably the partners had used money from the artesian well reward to buy cattle and start ranching. In 1885, Thomas Goss bought half of Sanderson's interest in the Ranch. Three years later, a corporation was formed which took in three more investors: Joseph Tasker, George Pridham and Oliver H. Bliss. This new venture was given the name 'Soldiers Hole Land and Cattle Company'.<sup>17</sup>



Ambrose Lyall died of pneumonia at his ranch on June 25, 1886.<sup>18</sup> His son, Ambrose, Jr., died at Tombstone on October 21, 1889, of an "abscess on the liver."<sup>18a</sup>

As long as the Chiricahua Apaches posed a threat, the military was an excellent market for beef, but when Geronimo and his followers finally capitulated in 1886, and were sent to Florida, the soldiers left, too.<sup>19</sup>

It was about this time that Tombstone fell on hard times. The price of silver fell from \$1.29 an ounce to less than a dollar an ounce, forcing a number of mines to shut down. Fires at the Grand Central and the Contention, followed by flooding, were the final blow. Tombstone shrank from a population of 8,000 people to a virtual ghost town. The few folk that were left couldn't provide much of a market for beef.<sup>20</sup>

Price fixing by the Dressed Beef Trust caused prices of cattle to plunge ten to fifteen dollars a head in the fall of 1886. By August, 1887, prices were as low as \$6 or \$7 a head, the lowest since the beginning of the range cattle trade.<sup>21</sup>

For a while, California was a promising market, but the Railroad started gouging cattlemen and with cattle so cheap they couldn't afford to ship them by rail.

And to top it off, there were indications that parts of Cochise County were experiencing a drought, a precursor of what was to come.

The stage was set for disaster with the range grossly overstocked and deteriorating. After a promising start, 1891 turned into a drought year, resulting in a big die-off of cattle. The ranchers who could, moved their cattle to better pastures, some as far away as Kansas. Soldiers Hole Land and Cattle Company sent half their herd to the Animas Valley in New Mexico and the other half to Sonora, Old Mexico. It was estimated that between twenty-five

and seventy-five percent of the livestock in Cochise County perished of either starvation or thirst.<sup>22</sup>

The drought, plus the homesteaders fencing, effectively put an end to big open range ranching in Cochise County. The Erie Cattle Company sold out to the Ryan Brothers from Kansas in 1900. The Chiricahua Cattle Company hung on for another thirty years or so, but not on the open range in Cochise County.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, back at Soldiers Hole, Sanderson sold his remaining interest in the corporation to George W. Severns in 1892, and moved the Spike S headquarters to the Buckles Ranch.

Mr. Severns brought in and set up a twelve-battery stamp mill to process silver ore from the new mining camp at Gleeson.<sup>25</sup> Huge granite rocks for the foundation of the stamp mill were hauled with much difficulty, by mule team, from Gleeson to Soldiers Hole.<sup>26</sup>

A glowing report in the August 10, 1892, Tombstone Epitaph, predicted that the mill would soon be in operation. For a solid week the test pump had pumped 60,000 gallons of water per day. Severns expected to increase the capacity to half a million gallons daily, and in time to double even that amount. He proclaimed: "The amount of water in Sulphur Spring Valley can be estimated as inexhaustible and sufficient to make the growing of all kinds of produce a profitable calling."<sup>27</sup>

At Soldiers Hole, a settlement sprang up, made possible by employment at the stamp mill. An old School Record in Bisbee shows there was a school at Soldiers Hole, District #3, for the school year of 1892-93. The total expenses for the five-month year were \$1,052.25. The teacher, Laura Hunsaker, was paid \$599 for the year. There is no record of how many children attended school.<sup>28</sup>

The citizens of Soldiers Hole felt that their little town needed a Post Office, so a petition was duly sent to Washington



requesting one. The name was not well received and the Spanish word, 'Descanso', meaning a haven of rest, was substituted. The Post Office was active for a little less than two years, then the name Soldiers Hole was back on the maps.<sup>29</sup>

Silver was demonetized about the time Severns Mill started operations, meaning that silver was no longer used as a monetary standard, thus silver mining again was no longer profitable. As a result, Severns Mill turned out to be a huge disappointment to all concerned.<sup>30</sup>

A young cowboy by the name of Bob Johnson rode in from Texas, arriving at Soldiers Hole, A.T. on May 8, 1893. He cowboyed for many ranches in the area, including the Erie and the Chiricahua Cattle Companies. In 1912 he filed for a homestead in Government Draw south of Tombstone. The ending paragraph of his unpublished manuscript states: "I have lived on the X Triangle for 47 years, from February 1912 to July 1959. The only vacation I ever had was when I retired."<sup>31</sup>

In 1899, a caravan of six wagons coming from Show Low headed for Colonia Oaxaca, Sonora, Mexico, stopped at Soldiers Hole. A Mormon, John McNeill, was taking his family and a considerable herd of sheep, goats and horses to his son's in Mexico. His wife, Mary Ann McNeil, wrote in her diary that day:

"Sat. 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1899. This morning cold but pleasant. Today is my son Ben's birthday 19 years of age he is left behind . . . We drove on to a mans ranch 11 miles and watered the horses 12:30 PM. Camped for dinner. Pa and Jesse (12 years old, mm) are left behind with the sheep every day . . . we lost four goats with loco weed on the road. 3:15 Pa has just got here for his dinner. Plenty of miskeet brush for wood . . . Drove to a ranch they call Soldier Hole and watered the horses from a camp there. There was a quartz mill but not running. A man told me it had not run for about seven years. Drove about a mile and camped."<sup>32</sup>



*Whitewater Post Office, c. 1907*

Homesteaders were flocking to the Soldiers Hole/Whitewater area even before the Indians were subdued. After Severns Mill shut down, the population shifted to the southeast of Soldiers Hole. The Whitewater Post Office became an entity on April 2, 1907, and survived eleven years.<sup>33</sup>

School records in Bisbee from 1909 through 1915 show that an average of forty-two children attended Soldiers Hole School each year. The schoolhouse which had been at Soldiers Hole is presumed to have been moved to Whitewater, and after Statehood the name was changed to Whitewater School, #12. The Mormon settlers first Sunday School was known as Soldiers Holes Sunday School.<sup>34</sup>



In 1908 Robert Tyler arrived and settled a few miles north of Soldiers Hole. He started a small store, then came a Post Office by the name of Webb, and shortly after a school was built. Mr. Tyler and G.I. VanMeter were instrumental in routing the railroad through Webb and Elfrida on its way to Douglas. No doubt this helped contribute to the demise of Soldiers Hole. The Post Office at Webb was discontinued in 1938 when it consolidated with Elfrida. The Webb School is now a private residence, as is the Whitewater School.<sup>35</sup>

Sometime in the early 1890's Jake Scheerer, an early time teamster and trader, bought land to the south of Soldiers Hole, which became the Double Rod Ranch. His brother, George, bought the land around and to the north of Soldiers Hole. It was George who planted the row of hackberry trees in a straight line south of Soldiers Hole.<sup>36</sup> Mamie Grizzle stated that there were seven big, beautiful trees until the 1960's when they began to die. Now there is just the one live stump with a single green branch left, as of the year 2000.<sup>37</sup>

George Scheerer's great-grandson, LeRoy Dawson, lives and farms about three miles north of Soldiers Hole. He is the



*Old Webb Schoolhouse (Now a private residence)*



*Whitewater School  
Last day of school in 1957*

namesake of a great-uncle, LeRoy Scheerer, who died at Soldiers Hole in 1913, of a ruptured appendix. Leroy said that his folks never mentioned Soldiers Hole because of the painful memories.<sup>38</sup>

Soldiers Hole slipped into oblivion until a big farming boom in the 1950's. Then the stone foundation for the stamp mill was dislodged and pushed, rock by rock, to the north side of the field, and farming began where the stamp mill and village once stood. Today it is an alfalfa field farmed by Louis Cooper, who graciously donated the rocks used for the monument.

During an interview with Mamie Grizzle, members of the Cochise County Historical Society learned about the plight of Soldiers Hole.<sup>39</sup> We decided that it would be a worthwhile project to erect a monument to the spot where everything pertaining to Webb, Whitewater and Elfrida began.

James Grizzle pledged his support and assistance with heavy equipment needed to do the job. Cliff Whetten advised us that Jim Collett was handy with rockwork. When approached, Jim volunteered his time and expertise, and the monument was completed just in time for Christmas, 2000.





The legend on the bronze plaque states:

#### SOLDIERS HOLE

DURING THE CHIRICAHUA APACHE CAMPAIGN (1861 – 1886) CAVALRY TROOPS ON MANEUVER CAMPED HERE AT A PERMANENT SOURCE OF WATER KNOWN AS SOLDIERS HOLE. W.G. SANDERSON AND AMBROSE LYALL STRUCK ARTESIAN WATER NEARBY IN 1883. IN 1892 A TWELVE-BATTERY STAMP MILL WAS ERECTED AND A POST OFFICE WAS ESTABLISHED UNDER THE NAME 'DESCANSO', MEANING A HAVEN OF REST. A SCHOOL WAS BUILT WHICH THE MORMON SETTLERS ALSO USED FOR THEIR CHURCH. WHEN THE RAILROAD BY-PASSED SOLDIERS HOLE IN 1909, ITS USEFULNESS CAME TO AN END.

COCHISE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WHITEWATER/ELFRIDA LDS WARD

THE GRIZZLE FAMILY THE COOPER FAMILY

JIM COLLETT

ROCKS FROM THE STAMP MILL WERE USED FOR THE MONUMENT

DEDICATED 2000

We are very pleased and proud of this ruggedly beautiful monument. It was truly a cooperative effort on the part of many people. We hope and trust that with it, Soldiers Hole will never again be forgotten.

Mary Magoffin  
Cochise County Historian

*Although the monument was physically constructed by Jim Collett and James Grizzle, it would not have become a reality without the efforts, faith and loyalty to the project demonstrated by Mary and John Magoffin. The Cochise County Historical Society is deeply indebted to the Magoffins for having the perseverance to see the monument through to completion. It was a tremendous undertaking and we are sincerely appreciative of their efforts.*

*Thank you, Mary and John,  
from the Board of Directors of the Cochise County  
Historical Society,  
on behalf of the full  
membership of the Society.*

## Footnotes

1. Edwin R. Sweeney, Cochise, U of Oklahoma Press, 1991, pp. 146-161;  
Robert M. Utley, A Clash of Cultures, Division of Publications, Nat'l Park Service, Washington, D.C., 1977, pp. 21-24.
2. Edwin R. Sweeney, Cochise, U of Oklahoma Press, 1991, pp. 367-390.  
Robert M. Utley, A Clash of Cultures, Division of Publications, Nat'l Park Service, Washington, D.C., 1977, pp. 37-42.
3. Interview with Mrs. Mamie Grizzle on March 19, 1999.  
Also information  
From Mrs. Mabel Brown, Elfrida historian.
4. Interview with James Grizzle, March 19, 1999.
5. Letter from Mattie Sanderson Chambers, March 18, 1936, to Arizona Pioneer's Association. Letter on file at A.H.S., Tucson, Arizona.
6. George Whitwell Parsons: The Turbulent Years: 1880-82. A Tenderfoot in Tombstone, Edited, Annotated, and with an Introduction by Lynn R. Bailey, Westernlore Press, 1996, Tucson, AZ, p. 69.

7. Tombstone Epitaph, February 28, 1892. (At Bisbee Mining and Historical Mus.)  
Allen A. Erwin, The Southwest of John Slaughter, Arthur H. Clark Co., Spokane, WA, 1997, p. 143.  
Lynn R. Bailey, We'll All Wear Silk Hats, Westernlore Press, Tucson, AZ, 1994, p. 8.  
Journals of the Territory of AZ, 1885, 13<sup>th</sup> Legislature, p. 131.
8. Silk Hats, p. 31.
9. Bill Stark, telephone interview, Jan. 23, 2001. He grew up on a ranch about a quarter of a mile from the Brophy Well.  
Sam Place and Ann Stark Place, telephone interview, February 18, 2001. Ann is Bill's sister.
10. Arizona Place Names, Will C. Barnes and Byrd Granger, U of A Press, Tucson, AZ, p. 32. (1960 edition)
11. *Ibid.*, p.30. (Benson).
12. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 38. (Galeyville).
14. Larry Christiansen, Who Shot Johnny Ringo? Cochise County Historical Society Quaterly, Vol. 3, #1, Spring 1973.
15. Silk Hats, p. 45.



16. Ibid., pp. 76-81.
17. Tombstone Epitaph, September 15, 1888. (At Bisbee Mining and Historical Mus.)
18. Ibid., June 26, 1886.
- 18a. Ibid., October 22, 1889.
19. Angie Debo, Geronimo, The Man, His Time, His Place, U. of OK Press, 1976  
pp. 281-298.
20. Silk Hats, p. 73.
21. Ibid., p. 118.
22. Ibid., pp. 127-136.
23. Ibid., p. 179-182.
24. Ibid., p. 137.
25. Ibid., p. 137.
26. Personal interview with Louis Cooper, March 24, 2000.
27. Tombstone Epitaph, August 10, 1892. CCHS vertical file.
28. Ledger sheets, Soldiers Holes School District #3, 1892-93. School records, Bisbee.
29. Tombstone Prospector, August 7, 1892. Bisbee Mining and Hist. Museum.  
Arizona Place Names, p. 32, (Brophy Well)

30. Silk Hats, p. 137.
31. Bob Johnson's unpublished manuscript, Southwest Pioneer Cowboys Assn. File.
32. Mary Anne McNeil's Diary, loaned by her granddaughter, Laveen Thompson Fenn.
33. Arizona Place Names, p. 57.
34. Whitewater/Elfrida Ward History, 1906-1991, Vickie Beard Thompson.
35. A Short History of Webb, Arizona, A Story of the Robert M. Tyler Family,  
From The Tombstone Epitaph, Sept., 30, 1965, The Cochise County Historical  
Journal, Volume 29, No. 1, Spring/Summer 1999.
36. The Daily Dispatch, August 15, 1986. Scheerer History Mirrors County's  
By Cindy Hayostek.
37. Interview with Mamie Grizzle, March 19, 1999.
38. Interview with LeRoy Dawson, July 15, 2000.
39. Interview with Mamie Grizzle, March 19, 1999.



*The preceding paper was presented by Mary Magoffin at the Arizona Historical Convention at Pinetop, Arizona, on April 28, 2001. Papers were limited to twenty minutes, therefore a great deal of pertinent information had to be omitted. The editorial staff of CCHS felt that there was sufficient data to warrant a monograph on the subject of Soldiers Hole. So we present for your edification and enjoyment:*

### **'The REST of the SOLDIERS HOLE STORY'**

As there may still be some confusion concerning the name and the location of Soldiers Hole, we give you here the background we have based our conclusions on. We are sure that the original site is on the west side of Whitewater Draw, about one-quarter of a mile north of Gleeson Road. This is where James Grizzle pointed out where the perforated whiskey barrel was, which supplied clean water for the soldiers to drink. It was put there after Fort Huachuca was established in 1877, so no doubt the soldiers themselves gave it the name.

The plural, 'Soldiers Holes' was derived from the "small round watering places" mentioned in Mattie Chambers letter. It is a matter of conjecture as to how long there were a number of waterholes, just when they dried up, or even how many there were. It is possible that when the artesian wells came into production, the water level dropped, affecting the waterholes.

In *Arizona Place Names* we are informed that the Brophy Brothers put up a way-station where they served meals and whiskey, and called it 'Soldiers Hole Ranch', which makes sense because Soldiers Hole was about the only point of reference in southern Sulphur Spring Valley, at that time. This site was also known, more correctly, as 'the Brophy Well' and was located six miles north of Soldiers Hole on the east side of Whitewater Draw. Harold and Susan Stark's ranch headquarters were a quarter-of-a-mile south of Brophy Well.

However, back to Mattie Chamber's letter, she refers to their 'Soldiers Holes' ranch, but the name of the corporation formed a few years later was 'Soldiers Hole Land and Cattle Company'.

Some fifteen years later, on October 28, 1906, the 'Soldier's Holes Sunday School' was started by Brother Edward C. Phillipps, Stake Sunday School Superintendent for the Mormon settlers. They used both ess'es and an apostrophe, which may have been more correct, grammatically speaking. But after only about a year, the name was changed to Whitewater Sunday School.

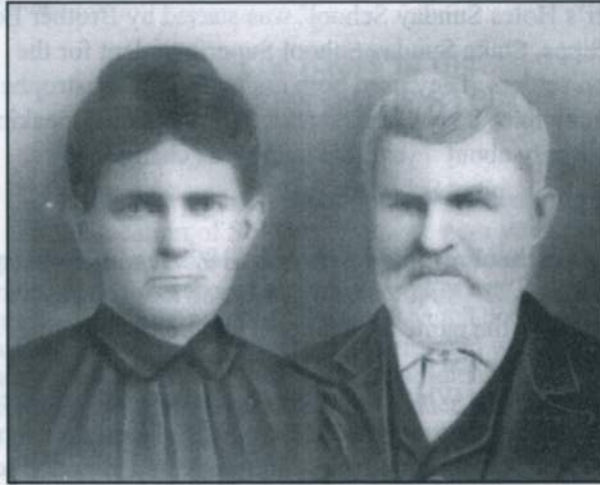
On school records for the year 1892 it was 'Soldiers Holes School, #3'. In the next available school records for 1909 through 1915, the name is 'Soldiers Hole School', but the number has changed to 12. It is not likely that with the population now at Whitewater, the children would have been sent five or six miles over to Soldiers Hole. David Patterson is adamant that his father and aunts and uncles all attended school at Whitewater. Ida Mortenson told of walking a mile to school, which places the school at Whitewater.

Still another variation on the name surfaced in Janice Bryson's article about Jesse 'Jack' Benton, in describing the ranch his dad bought in Tex Canyon around 1900: "It was a wonderful ranch, knee-high in grass, big trees and game of every description....Thirty steps from the house was a spring that ran year round. Between the house and the spring were two big cottonwood trees planted by John Long in 1882. They had been brought from the Soldiers' Water Hole in the Sulphur Spring Valley as little saplings."

So any variation on the name is politically correct, but our preference is 'Soldiers Hole'.



We hoped that we might locate descendants of the Sanderson's and the Lyall's, and incredibly, we did. Both families are well aware of the pioneer experiences of their fore bearers, which they're willing to share with us.



*William G. and Louisa Catherine Sanderson*

### **THE SANDERSONS**

W.G. (William Grenade) Sanderson was born July 27, 1826, in Limestone County, Alabama. He came west at an early age and made his first fortune panning gold on the Frazier River in British Columbia. Unfortunately, he lost it in an ill-fated canal building venture.

In the 1860's he prospected in the Kingston, California, area. At the age of forty-five, he married Louisa Catherine Davis, who was twenty-one. Catherine was raising her sister Sarah's three orphaned children, Mary Anne, Lizzie and George Truelove, thus W.G. started married life with a ready-made family.

During the next eight years, while living in Kingston, California, W.G. and Catherine had four children of their own: Roy, John, Martha Jane (Mattie) and William.

While at Kingston, W.G. built a hotel and a racetrack. Kingston was a prosperous trading center between Visalia and Los Banos, but when the railroad was routed to Hanford, Kingston became a ghost town, and all that is left today is a memorial marker.

Early in 1877, W.G. came to Arizona and promptly sent for Catherine and the children. The Railroad brought them as far as Yuma, where they got on a flat-topped steamer and came up the river to the junction of the Bill Williams River at Aubrey Landing. W.G. met them with a covered wagon in which they journeyed on to Fort Thomas, where W.G. had invested in a dairy farm.

There they grew cane and successfully produced the first sorghum molasses in the area. Unfortunately, the climate wasn't healthy for Catherine or the children, and after George Trulove died of malaria, they decided to move on. Edward was born at Fort Thomas.

As W.G. had some experience in mining, they set out for Tombstone, but stopped over at Soldiers Hole for twelve eventful years. During the years in Arizona, Jerry, George, Joseph, Grover and Carrie were added to the family. Baby Carrie died of whooping cough at the age of only two months in 1891.

When W.G.'s luck ran out in the Sulphur Spring Valley the following year, the family moved to Bloomfield, New Mexico, east of Farmington, where he farmed. Their tenth and last child, Rhoda Belle, was born at Bloomfield in 1893.



Some time later, W.G. was awarded a government contract to deliver mail between Pagosa Springs and Edith, Colorado. For the next four years he delivered mail, packages and passengers by stagecoach between the two towns.

The Sandersons final move was to Meeteese, Wyoming, where W.G. died on January 29, 1903, at the age of 77 and was buried there.

After W.G.'s death, Catherine moved to Salmon, Idaho, and lived with Edward and Grover for twenty-seven years. She died November 23, 1932, and is buried at Salmon, Idaho.

Life was truly the frontier experience for W.G. and Catherine. Their oldest son, Roy, related how: "...one night Catherine had been left at the ranch with her large family. The pasture for the horses was close to the house, with the gate near a large porch where the boys slept on hot summer nights. Catherine and the girls slept inside the house.

"A group of Indians came during the night and stole all the horses, leading them hobbled right by the porch and out the gate without waking anyone....most unusual as Catherine was a very light sleeper.

"In the morning they discovered the tracks of fourteen Indians who had crouched in the dust with their rifles pointed at the sleeping family. Had anyone stirred in their sleep, they were sure the entire family would have been killed."

It's not clear whether the Sanderson's provided meals for the passersby. In his diary entry of July 27, 1880, George Parsons speaks of "refreshing man and horse at Soldiers Hole", but he had purchased six loaves of bread and about a yard of bologna sausage that morning before they left Tombstone. On the return trip from the Chiricahuas two days later, he noted:

"hard time crossing bottom land; mud, water, and mosquitoes were terrible. Reached Soldiers Hole though about noon—doing well and fed...."

In "*The Devil has Foreclosed*", Parsons tells of being with a party of six adults and a baby on their way to Rucker Canyon. On August 26, 1883, he wrote: "...Fine drive by Turquoise to G.W. (sic) Sanderson's (at Soldiers Hole), 25 miles, where we stopped and refreshed man and beast..."

Upon their return on Friday, August 31, 1883, they got a late start "so we camped at Sanderson's. Mrs. C. and daughter slept in wagon while we fellows camped on the porch..."

It seems highly unlikely that Catherine, with at least nine youngsters to care for, under primitive conditions, would be serving meals to travelers at all hours. However, southern hospitality being what it is, and being so far from civilization, they may well have shared whatever they had at hand. Certainly everybody was welcome to the shade of the big trees and the water which was readily available.

## **THE LYALLS**

Ambrose S. Lyall, a native of North Carolina, was born sometime around 1822. He married Martha Davis, who was seven years his junior, at Visalia, California, in 1846. Dale Lyall, a great great grandson of Ambrose, is sure that Martha and Catherine Sanderson were sisters; that Martha was sixteen years older than Catherine, and had already married and left home before Catherine was born.

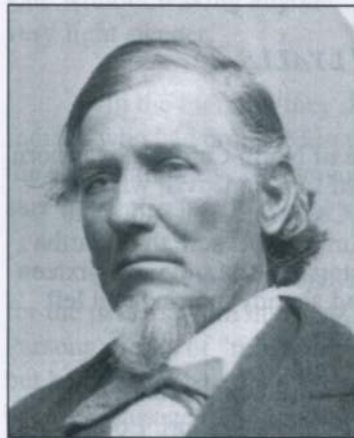
In Dale's 'Davis Family Group Record', Martha is shown as being born on May 15, 1832, in Missouri. Louisa C. (Catherine?) is shown as being born 'about' 1848, in Missouri.



(Sanderson family records give her birth date as December 11, 1849, in Missouri). It is not clear just when the Davis family moved to California, possibly around 1850.

The Sanderson's were not aware of the fact that Martha and Catherine were sisters, but it would explain why the Lyalls moved to the vicinity of Soldiers Hole shortly after W.G. and Catherine settled there, as well as the partnership between the two men. The fact that they were sisters wouldn't necessarily mean that they were close, especially with that much age difference.

The other reason Dale contends that they were sisters, is that in John Lyall's trial for 'Conspiracy to Unlawfully Kill Cattle' in 1894, Roy Sanderson states under oath that he knows John Lyall, and that John is his (Roy's) cousin.



*Ambrose Lyall*

The Lyall family consisted of fourteen children:  
1. Joel, MO, 1847; 2. Mary, MO, 1849; 3. Sarah Louisa, UT Territory, 1853; 4. Cynthia, CA, 1854; 5. William, CA, 1855; 6. Alice, CA, 1857; 7. Amanda, CA, 1861; 8. Jane, CA, 1863; 9.



*Martha Lyall*

Malinda, CA, 1864; 10. Ambrose, CA, 1868; 11. Charles, CA, 1870; 12. Henry, CA, 1870 (they were twins); 13. Johnny, CA, 1870 or '71; 14. Carrie, CA, 1873. All but Charles and Henry lived to adulthood. We don't know how many children came with Ambrose and Martha to Arizona.



*Lyall Homestead, c. 1900*

It is almost impossible for us, today, to imagine the hardships these first pioneer women endured. For example, Martha Lyall spent twelve and a half years in a pregnant condition over a period of twenty-six years. This does not include any possible miscarriages. Many women died in childbirth or from complications thereof. Nearly all the babies were born at home with a midwife or a neighbor lady helping.

Big families were the norm and children had to pitch in and help out just as soon as they possibly could. The older children looked out for the younger ones as a matter of course.

There were no miracle drugs to lean on, and childhood as well as other diseases were often fatal. Just doing the family



wash was a major undertaking. There was no corner grocery store to run to for supper fixin's. Instead, they probably had a big garden to provide variety to their diet of beans and cornbread.

Sanderson family traditions give us two incidents of youngsters growing up at a tender age.

W.G. and Roy, who was eleven years old, happened to be in Tombstone the day of the OK Corral shoot-out. When they heard the shots, they ran to the scene, and bending over Billy Clanton's dead body, W. G. exclaimed, "He fired three shots after he had been shot in the heart!"

At the age of fourteen, Roy Sanderson guided Capt. Henry Lawton and his troop of U.S. Cavalrymen to Guadalupe Canyon on their pursuit of Geronimo's band.

We do know from Dale's records that Joel, the oldest son, settled over around Steins, New Mexico. In his Oral History, Dale's father, Clarence, states: "The family came to Arizona when Elmer Archer (Arch—my father) was two years old...My great Grandad (Ambrose) had money and Grandad (Joel) had money..." so it was no wonder that W.G. would welcome Ambrose as a partner.

Ambrose died of pneumonia on June 25, 1886, at his ranch home. In December of 1895, his body was exhumed from the grave near Soldiers Hole and reburied in the Tombstone Cemetery. Martha was a widow for twenty-six years, dying in Douglas on January 7, 1910. She, Ambrose S., Ambrose S. Jr., and daughter, Carrie Denton, are all buried in the same plot in Tombstone.

Dale Lyall has given us a picture of what he has been informed was the Lyall home. They acquired the McLaurey holdings when they went into the cattle partnership with W.G.

Ambrose and W.G.'s main claim to fame came from bringing in eight artesian wells in the vicinity of Soldiers Hole. They filed for the \$3,000 reward which was offered by the Arizona Territorial Legislature. Here is the article which first appeared in the Tombstone Epitaph on January 1, 1884.

### ARTESIAN WATER

Extracts from Reports of Commissioners Appointed by the Governor to investigate the Cochise County Wells.

(The following reprint from Files of the *EPITAPH* of January 1, 1884, will be found very interesting. The artesian wells of Cochise County are the only ones in the territory and their importance can hardly be overestimated.)

To His Excellency, F.A. Tritle, Governor of Arizona, and Hon. E.P. Clark, Territorial Auditor:

Your commissioners visited the wells and inspected five of them, all on Mr. Sanderson's property. They also heard reports of three others sunk by the same gentleman on the land of adjoining proprietors.

The first well visited was finished and flowing water struck on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, 1883, and forms the basis of Mr. Sanderson's reward. It is 39 feet deep, very nearly 6 inches in diameter, and tubed all the way to the bottom. The upper edge of the tube stands a few inches above the ground and a steady stream of water amounting probably to 40,000 to 50,000 gallons in 24 hours runs from it.

Southward from this point four other wells are sunk within a distance of three miles, all of which were visited by your commissioners, and three others are



found on the Abbott, Jones and Long ranches, extending to a distance of seven miles further southward.

Thus artesian water has been obtained along ten miles of this valley's length, by eight wells.

The wells vary in depth from 38 to 83 feet, and they gain depth the further they are southward from Sanderson's, the deepest well bored so far being that at Jones', the most southerly of all. Their flow is from 25,000 to 50,000 gallons each in 24 hours.

The conditions under which flowing water is obtained appear to be quite uniform along the whole distance.

The wells are situated in the sink of the valley. Other wells were first sunk on the valley slope about four miles east of the successful line, but no flow was obtained, though the wells filled with surface water. The conditions there were different from those at the flowing wells.

In the line of successful wells the materials passed through in boring were always the same in character and succession, and were as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> - Surface soil from 8 to 15 feet thick.

2<sup>nd</sup> - Tough clay, black, red or white in color, according to locality, 22 to more than 40 feet thick.

3<sup>rd</sup> - Sand 2 to 6 feet thick.

4<sup>th</sup> - Coarse gravel at unknown thickness, which forms the bottom of all the wells, and into which the well tube is forced about 18 inches.

At all the unsuccessful wells no clay was reached, though it may be at greater depth.

Water is found in the sand or third stratum, but it is probable that the coarse, loose gravel, underlying this bed, is the real source of the flow. The large spaces between the coarse gravel stones probably give room for 30 or 40 percent, by bulk of water and if there is a flow southward, as it seems to be probable, this gravel bed undoubtedly offers the easiest and best line of flow.

In any case boring into the gravel is necessary, as the sand is so fine and flowing as to rise in the wells if the open tube ends in it. By driving the tube into the coarse gravel a filter is obtained which keeps back the

sand and allows the water to pass. Small holes are made in the lower lengths of the pipe, within the sand stratum, which also give the water entrance.

The flow is steady, the water perfectly clear and pleasant, though slightly flat to the taste. The flatness is not due to minerals in solution, but, on the contrary, probably indicates unusual purity of water.

The water already obtained in this way is sufficient to water at least 30,000 head of cattle, besides affording sufficient irrigation to maintain the gardens that a population attending the stock would require, and perhaps tree plantations for the relief of stock from sun and wind. If the success which has attended the former operation continues to the line, the artesian wells of this part of Sulphur Spring Valley will supply water sufficient for at least 100,000 head of stock.

In all respects Sulphur Spring Valley appears to be of the common type of dry valleys which are so abundant in Arizona, and your commissioners consider that this fact gives double importance to the discovery of flowing water by artesian borings within it.

There can be no doubt that all the water of this valley is obtained from the rainfall upon the area included within the mountains on the east and west, and between the divide above Hooker's and the southern boundary of the valley in Mexico, probably about 3,000 square miles. No other sources of supply are apparent on the surface, and none are suspected under ground. The conclusion is therefore reached that the flowing wells are supplied by the rainfall of the region.

This fact your commissioners consider to be very important, both as an indication of what Arizona may hope to obtain in water supply in other valleys from the ordinary established operations of nature, and also as a guide to them in reaching an intelligent decision under territorial laws.

John A. Church  
E.B. Gage  
I.E. James



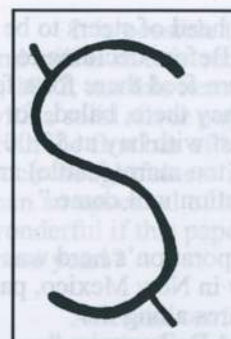
Ida Flood Dodge tells us in her book *Arizona Under Our Flag* that the \$3,000 reward for the first artesian well to be discovered in Arizona Territory was claimed by W.G. Sanderson. However, Mattie Chambers clearly states in her letter that her father received \$1,000 for bringing in the first artesian well in Arizona (Territory). One explanation for this discrepancy could be that Ambrose Lyall may have invested more in the venture than W.G. Perhaps Ambrose put up the capital and W.G. supplied the labor? Surely W.G.'s daughter would know how much her father received.

It seems that their elation was short-lived, because according to John Rockfellow in his book *Log of an Arizona Trail Blazer*, referring to the earthquake of May 3, 1887:

"... the big shock came ... the earth cracked open and water ran out and spread over the ground while the wells ceased flowing ... The flowing of water kept up for weeks, but finally subsided, and I don't think the artesian wells have ever been active since." Which indicates a radical change in the water channel which sustained the artesian wells, and which may have also affected the permanent pools of water.

Susan M. DuBois and Ann W. Smith in *The 1887 Earthquake in San Bernardino Valley, Sonora: Historic accounts and intensity patterns in Arizona* tell us that: "... one and a half miles from C.S. Abbott's house the water shot up into the air to a considerable height, about 4 or 5 feet in width, and extended fully 100 feet in distance ... the flow was decreasing very fast, but for miles the plains were covered with water."

W.G. and Catherine first settled on the south side of what is now Gleeson Road, where the huge trunk of a long-dead cottonwood tree lies, or so the grandsons were told. By 1883 they had moved their family about three miles to the southeast and set up the headquarters of the Spike S Ranch. (This is where the first cotton gin at Elfrida was located on land donated by M.O. Rundell many years later. His daughter, Olive Ruth Rundell Watson now lives in Tucson.) The eight artesian wells were bored to the south and west of the headquarters, down Whitewater Draw, for a distance of ten miles, as we have learned.



*Spike S Brand*

According to *Descendants of William Grenade Sanderson*, revised in 1960 by Bessie Sanderson: "The mark and brand of A. Lyall and W.G. Sanderson for the Spike S Ranch in the Sulphur Springs Valley, Arizona (Territory), was as follows: The earmark filed and recorded at the request of A. Lyall on April 6, 1883, was the slit in the right and smooth crop off of left ear and the brand of an S with spikes off the curves placed on the left side and vent on left shoulder. The earmark was changed in Tombstone, Arizona (Territory), August 27, 1889, to two splits in the right ear instead of one."

The partnership was between just Lyall and Sanderson for about two years, then in the fall of 1885 Sanderson sold half of his interest to a Thomas Goss of Los Angeles.

Less than a year later, Ambrose Lyall died, leaving Martha to cope with all the problems.

There could have been a plan for organizing a corporation at that time, because in August of 1888, 'Soldiers Hole Land and Cattle Company' became an entity. According to Lynn Bailey in *We'll All Wear Silk Hats*, "... the venture was capitalized at \$150,000 divided into 1,500 shares of \$100 par value". The stock holders were: W.G. Sanderson, Martha Lyall, Thomas Goss, Joseph Tasker, George Pridam and Oliver H. Bliss.

Sadly, the corporation was doomed to failure. The country had enjoyed exceptional rainfall from the time cattle were first brought in, so it was a real shocker when the big drought of 1890-'92 hit. Most ranches were stocked to the hilt, and when the feed was gone, it was a matter of watching the cattle die or moving them to where there was feed.

An interesting item in the *Tombstone Prospector*, October 21, 1891, tells of W.G. Sanderson going to Kansas "...



where he will arrange for wintering 1,600 head of steers to be shipped from Soldiers Holes Co.'s range. Before deciding to ship east he went to Phoenix to try to secure feed there for a few hundred head. He found plenty of alfalfa hay there, baled, for \$2.50 per ton, (!) but concluded to ship east with hay at \$3.00 per ton in the stack. Mr. Sanderson thinks too many (cattle) are being shipped to California and that a reaction will come."

As the drought ground on, the Corporation's herd was split with part going to the Animas Valley in New Mexico, part into Sonora, Old Mexico and part to pastures along the Arkansas river in Colorado. To quote Lynn Bailly again: "... the company was all but gutted by January, 1892. The Bank of Tombstone held a mortgage of \$7,414 on the property, secured by Sanderson's 188 shares of company stock. To avoid foreclosure, Sanderson sold the home ranch, its water rights and several hundred acres to George W. Seaverns. Sanderson then moved his Spike S headquarters ... to the Buckles Ranch."

In September of 1894, Sanderson sold the remnants of the Soldiers Hole Company to the Ryan Brothers and left the country for greener pastures in New Mexico. Such was the life of a true frontiersman. W.G.'s entire life was lived before the advent of the automobile. Today, W.G. and Catherine have in the neighborhood of two hundred descendants, but none live anywhere near Soldiers Hole.

Seaverns was the principal developer of the "Turquoise Mining District" surrounding what became the town of Gleeson, where silver ore was mined. Mr. Seaverns erected a twelve-battery stamp mill to process the ore at Soldiers Hole based on the availability of water. A bunkhouse for the millhands and a school for the children were built.

It was here that the first post office in the area was given the name "*Descanso*" meaning a 'haven of rest'. Mexican names were not popular then, as they are now, and none of the old-timers recall the name. We have to thank the Postal History Foundation in Tucson and *Arizona Place Names* that the name is on record.

Unfortunately, when silver was demonetized in 1894, the mine, the mill, the post office and Seavern's dreams all came crashing down.

It is possible that somewhere a tangible relic of the mine and mill is in existence. The *Tombstone Prospector* of August 7, 1892, ran this item: "The *Prospector's* desk is ornamented with a solid silver paper weight in the shape of a brick made from the first bar of bullion turned out by the Descanso Mill. Such thoughtfulness is what creates in the breast of a newspaper man an upheaval of love for the human race." Wouldn't it be wonderful if this paperweight were to come to light after all these years?

After the terrible drought of 1890-'92, apparently there was a period of good rainfall, because when the Patterson family arrived in 1907, Bluford, who was eleven years old, remembered:

"The valley was a garden of Eden with native grass three and a half feet tall". They came from Del Rio, Texas, in a covered wagon drawn by a four-horse team, and the trip took two months. A four-foot chicken coop was attached to the back of the wagon and their mules and saddle horses were driven behind the wagon. The family homesteaded on 160 acres southeast of Elfrida. David Patterson is the sole remaining member of the family who still lives in Cochise County.

A considerable number of the homesteaders were Mormons who left Mexico during the various insurrections. Many came to the Whitewater area with only what they could carry, and considered themselves lucky to get out of Mexico alive. These hardy souls survived and overcame many difficulties, and thanks, in part, to their efforts, the town of Elfrida is thriving.

After all the toil and trouble that John and Mary Ann McNeil had in getting there, living in Mexico wasn't what they had hoped for at all. The mountain lions just about wiped out their sheep and goat herds, and the angora wool was so full of brambles and trash that it was practically worthless.

John died in Mexico. Mary Ann came back to the states first, then moved back to Show Low where her son Eph built her a comfortable home where she spent her last years. Little Annie married Elmer Thompson and lived in the Whitewater area all her married life. She lived to be almost a hundred years old.



Ida Mortenson told Diana Sanford in an interview that when they arrived from Mexico in 1908, there were only about six families living in the area. Her father put in a small truck farm and sold the vegetables in Gleeson, Courtland and Douglas.

Fred Tanner, who grew up in the area during the '30's, recalls that a neighbor lady by the name of Jones ran a little store near Soldiers Hole, until around 1920. He is under the impression that Cavalry troops came there on bivouac from both Douglas and Ft. Huachuca. After WW I, when these camps shut down, so did the little store, which was probably about the last gasp for Soldiers Hole.

Fred remembers finding lots of arrowheads and chippings, etc., on the west side of Whitewater Draw. He would spend a few days with Jackie Mills at the old Tomahawk Ranch, and they would always hike over to the mill site. He says that the remnant of the mill was still on the foundation, which was about four foot high. This would mean that there were at least two layers of rocks under the mill.

One rather curious commentary: the Ryan Brothers came from Kansas and bought up parts of the Erie Cattle Company and the Spike S, and other ranches. Enoch Shattuck, one of the owners of the Erie, went to Kansas, where he established a ranch at Ashland, which his grandson, Dan Shattuck, still owns and operates.

The homesteaders weren't a bit sorry to see the big ranches fall by the wayside. The cowboys delighted in cutting fences and harassing the 'nesters'. One Old Timer's comment was: "They took the cream and left us with whey." The pattern for agriculture in Sulphur Spring Valley has been either a boom or a bust, starting with Soldiers Hole. If it were possible for a person to realize one cent for every dollar that has been invested and lost in the valley, he would be a very wealthy person, indeed!

The seven hackberry trees thrived until serious farming began. As the water level receded, the roots couldn't get enough water year round to sustain the trees, and they all died, with the exception of the one stump. There are also lots of trunks of dead



*Hackberry Trees at Soldiers Hole, early 20th century*

cottonwood trees up and down the watercourse, so they probably met with the same fate.

It has been a cross between a jig-saw puzzle and a treasure hunt to try to find information on Soldiers Hole, and there are a few elusive clues still uncovered. It seemed important to us, because this is where it all started as far as anglo civilization in the valley is concerned. We at Cochise County Historical Society strongly felt that Soldiers Hole deserved recognition.

We thank everyone who has helped make the monument a reality. Especially the Grizzles, the Coopers, Jim Collett and the LDS Ward. We sincerely thank everybody who has shown interest in this project. Thank you.





*Mary Magoffin, Cochise County Historian*

### ***Mary's Story***

"I was born in Douglas, Arizona, on July 26, 1927, to Lea Theodore and Grace Nebold Burnett. I had one brother, Lea T. Burnett, Jr, who was 15 months older than me.

"My dad's family came to Arizona from Texas in 1910, via New Mexico. Grandpa had come ahead on an immigrant train with the Grizzlies. After he found a place to settle, grandmother and the kids came from Clovis, New Mexico, in a covered wagon. They homesteaded about half way between Pearce and Elfrida.

"Mom was a school teacher and when the school teacher at the Brophy School died in the flu epidemic in 1919, Mom finished the term. Mom had been an assayer at the smelter

"Dad's mother was on the school board, so it was natural that my parents met. Dad had been a "dough boy" during WWI, though actually, he was in the Cavalry.

"Six years after meeting, they married and lived in Douglas where they invested in a potato chip factory just in time to lose everything in the Depression.

"Mom taught a year over at Parker Canyon while dad built us an adobe home. We started living there at the old homestead in 1933.

"We were in the Pearce School district, so that's where we went to school. I graduated from there in 1944.

"Even the country schools frowned on hiring women teachers on the pretext that it was taking jobs away from men, but World War II changed all of that.

"Mom got a job teaching at Pearce High School, which was moved to Webb around 1946, then to Elfrida, where it became the Valley Union High School.

"I went to the University of Arizona for a couple of years and to James Millikin University in Decatur, Ill. for one year.

"When I came home, I got a job with Mattie Pressey where I cowboied and helped her in general, which was a great experience.

"While there, she and some other ladies introduced me to John Magoffin and a romance developed.

"We got married on Feb. 12, 1950, on mom and dad's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and as the saying goes, 'lived happily ever after!' So far, anyway!!

"We have been blessed with four very special kids, Meg, John Jr., Molly and Matt. They in turn, have blessed us with five super grandchildren, Chris and Mike Magoffin, Caitlin and Claire Magoffin and Jonathan Hunt.

"We enjoy being a part of the Cochise County Historical Society an try to contribute something to the community with other volunteer work."