

DENNISON, WILLIAM E.

0001

DENNISON, WILLIAM E.

Born at _____ Virginia, _____ 18__ (about 1833).

Son of _____ and _____.

Listed, U. S. Census, 1860, Middle Santa Cruz Settlement, Arizona County, N.M., age 27, born in Virginia, occupation - Farmer, property valued at \$900; U. S. Census, 1870, Big Bug, Yavapai County, A.T., age 37, born in Virginia, occupation - Miner; the following is taken from an obituary in the Prescott Arizona Miner of October 8, 1870:

Mr. Dennison was in every sense of the word a pioneer of Arizona. He came into Southern Arizona in 1857, and lived there till 1864, when he came North, and has made his home in this neighborhood ever since. Mr. Cal. Jackson states that he knew him in Tucson thirteen years ago, that at that time there were 135 white men there, and now only six or seven are left besides himself, nearly all the rest have been killed by Indians; one by one they have been picked off.

The circumstances of his death are these: For some weeks past he had been living at Davis & Taylor's on the head of the Hassayampa Creek, and prospecting in company with Messrs. Davis, Groom and others. On Tuesday Davis turned a horse out to graze near the cabin, which, when it was wanted on Wednesday, was missing. Wednesday P. M., about three o'clock, Davis and another man left the cabin to renew the search for the horse, and Dennison remained to watch three mules that were yet on hand. That was the last seen of him alive.

About four o'clock D. R. Poland and others, who were going to the Bradshaw mines with provisions, etc., on descending the hill west of the cabin, found Dennison's lifeless body lying in the trail, a few steps below the shaft on the Aster Lode, and about 350 yards from, and in full sight of the cabin. Two bullet holes a few inches apart were in his breast, and his body had been stripped of all clothing except his undershirt.

Two mules had been picketed on the hillside above the house in open ground, and within rifle-shot of the house, while the third was turned

loose. Examination of the ground and signs show that the Indians had probably taken the missing horse the night before and had been watching all that day to get the other stock; that finding Dennison was left alone in the cabin, they had sneaked down and caught the loose mule, taken him up to the top of the hill in the brush, yet in sight of the house, and there kept him in sight, expecting, as it happened, that when Dennison came out of the cabin and saw the mule, so far away, he would go after it, when he would be killed, and they could secure the other mules and plunder the cabin.

Two oak trees stand close by the trail, one on each side, just below the Aster shaft, and behind each tree an Indian lay in wait, and when Dennison came up the trail to get the mule and got within ten or twelve feet of the trees, they shot him dead. The Indian look-outs on the hill must have been alarmed by the approach of the Poland party, or some other cause, for they did not take the two mules which were tied, nor did they visit the cabin.

Only last Sunday he was in town and received a letter from his father, which he spoke of, saying the letter was written two years ago, and had just reached him; that he believed he had found a silver lode on the Hassayampa that would soon enable him to make a fortune and go home, adding the customary words, "If the Indians don't get me first." Alas, the redskins did get him, and he has gone to his long home.

Bill Dennison, as he was called, was in the prime of life, about thirty-five years old, and a universal favorite wherever he was known; generous, genial, social, tender-hearted, as true as steel to his friends, and as brave as man need be. He had a correct ear and was very fond of music; was a good singer, a good banjo or guitar player, and often the life of many a jovial party in the early days at Weaver, Walnut Grove, and Prescott, which none of us who were participants therein can soon forget. The Apaches have murdered dozens who were out associates, and now Dennison is added to the list.

No stranger in the country, no outsider, no

DENNISON, WILLIAM E.

- 3 -

one except those who have lived here for years, can appreciate the feelings of a pioneer when he learns that another of his early friends and associates in this, the blood-sprinkled land, has been slain by the redskins. Tears will start in the eyes of many rough mountaineers when they hear the news. The Indians have got Bill Dennison at last.

Killed by Apaches in Yavapai County, A.T., October 6, 1870,
buried, _____ Cemetery, in Prescott.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Arizona Miner; Prescott, October 8, 1870, 2:2-3 (obituary).

ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Arizonian, Tucson, October 2, 1869, 2:4 (reprint from the Arizona Miner).

The Arizona Miner, Prescott, February 18, 2:3 and October 14, 1871, 1:3; March 24, 1876, 1:3 (poem by his mother).

The Prescott Courier, November 16, 1887, 4:2-3.

The ARIZONA Enterprise, Tucson, March 10, 1892, 1 : 7 (memorial to Congress concerning Indian Depredations).

WANTED

1. Any mention of him in the Arizonian before he went to northern Arizona.
2. Obituaries in Tucson newspapers and other references to him.