

Juan Vigil

Juan Vigil was the son of Santiago Vigil, the chief shepherd for a Mormon by the name of William Berry. In December of 1903, Berry decided to move his herd of sheep from St. Johns, Arizona, to Thatcher, Arizona. Santiago, seventeen year old Juan and William Wiley Berry, Berry's nineteen year old son, were moving 500 head of sheep while William Berry was still in Thatcher finalizing the details of the move. On December 22, 1903, as the sheep moved through Brushy Basin, near Gisela, Arizona, they came upon some local cowboys who were not at all pleased to find sheep in the area. Without warning the cowboys shot the two young boys.

Santiago, hearing the shots ran to the scene to find that Juan was dead and his sweater was afire because the shot that killed him was so close range. Santiago rode into Payson, Arizona, to report the murders to the local sheriff. Shortly afterwards, Juan and Wiley were both buried in the cemetery at Gisela, although this was home to neither boy.

Sometime afterwards, Wiley's body was moved to Thatcher where it was reinterred in the Thatcher Cemetery.



**A special thanks to Stacy Shepherd of the Thatcher area
for this photo of Wiley's final resting place.**

Three days later, Christmas Day of 1903, there was a Christmas party held in the "16 to 1" Saloon in Payson. Among the attendees was Santiago Vigil. He spotted his son's murderers, brothers Zachary and John Booth, pointing the men out to the deputies who arrested them and placed them on trial in Globe, Arizona. In the trial Zachary Booth swore that John was not present at the murders, even though Santiago swore he was there. John was eventually released and continued to live and prosper in Gisela where he raised a family. Zachary was found guilty and on September 15, 1905, he was hanged behind the old courthouse in Globe and is buried in an unmarked grave in the Globe Cemetery

Even Juan's body was relocated within the Gisela Cemetery and he ended up next to the grave of John Booth, the man accused of his murder. Juan's grave, outlined in rocks is also unmarked. Since we know he is buried next to John Booth and Booth's grave next to his wife, are both clearly marked, there is no doubt this is

Juan's grave. He lies next to one of the men his father feels certain killed his son. That is a place where no man should have to rest.



Juan Vigil's Unmarked grave

Source: A booklet by a local historian, Mr. Paul Machula, entitled *Pinal Mountain Legacies*.

