

Tombstone by Tombstone

The Meadows Family

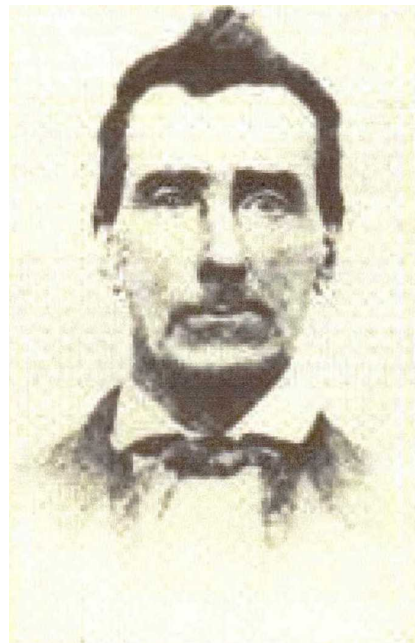
In 1877 the area known as Pleasant Valley was exactly what its name implies, at least in appearance. The grass was as high as any place in the country. The mountain streams ran with clean, clear waters. The skies were blue and sunny. It was surrounded by beautiful mountains. Wildlife was abundant. There were very few white people in the Valley. The reasons for the latter phenomenon were multiple. Primarily it was because of two reasons, location and Apaches. Located in the center of the state and surrounded by mountains, all of the east-west traffic went north or south of the valley via easily accessible routes. It was very difficult to get into Pleasant valley.

The Pleasant Valley War (Graham-Tewksbury Feud or Tonto Basin War) was still a few years away when John Mobberly and Margaret (Enlow) Meadows, with their twelve children, became pioneer settlers in the Rim Country of Arizona, settling in the Tonto Basin area in 1877. The Meadows were an interesting family and some of the children would play historical roles in the area, as well as nationally. The sixth son was to become the western legend, "Arizona" Charlie Meadows and the subject of the book *Arizona Charlie* by Jean Beach King, the granddaughter of Charlie's sister, Maggie. Charlie was an American showman and sharpshooter, and a contemporary of "Buffalo Bill" Cody whose Wild West Show inspired Meadows to pursue his own performing career. Not only did he perform with Wild Bill, he formed his own Wild West show that toured around the world. The last son was known as "Kid" Meadows, one of the most famous trick riders ever seen. Another son, John Valentine, was both a coroner and Justice of the Peace in Payson during the height of the Pleasant Valley War. Before any of them could become well known a horrible tragedy would strike the family.

John Mobberly Meadows was born in 1828 in Whitely County, Kentucky, and sometime before 1852 he had moved to Crawford County, Arkansas, where he married Margaret Enlow. Margaret was born in Crawford County in 1831. They had at least one child while living in Crawford County as that is where Henry William Meadows was born in 1852. According to the 1870 census, Henry's brother John was born in California two years later. Then children were born in Kansas, Arkansas and five more in California as early as 1860.



Margaret Meadows



John Mobberly Meadows

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John Valentine was the second oldest son and in 1876, when he would have been around 22 years of age, his father sent him from their home in Visalia, California, to the Arizona Territory to find a suitable site for a ranch. John wrote home to tell his father that the land was plentiful, available and grass was perfect for cattle in an area known as the Tonto Basin. He also reported that the Apaches had been subdued. The rest of the Meadows family departed in spring of the next year. They began their Diamond Valley Ranch on the Rio Verde River thirty miles west of Pleasant Valley and a few miles north of Payson.

In late 1881 and early 1882 bands of renegade Apaches from the nearby reservations were breaking out and raiding ranches in the Tonto Basin, killing whites and stealing horses. On September 6, 1881, the William Middleton ranch was raided by six Apaches under the leadership of Nan-tia-tish who killed George Turner, Jr. and Henry Moody and wounded young Henry Middleton. Turner and Moody were neighbors who had ridden to the Middleton home to warn them that Apaches had broken out of the reservation. In May of 1882 Nan-tia-tish again bolted the reservation and raided Pleasant Valley ranches. Henry's shoulder was healed by now, but the Apaches managed to steal their horses. No one was injured this time, but the Middletons had had enough. They sold their ranch and moved to Green Valley, now known as Payson.

On July 7, 1882, the Meadows were warned that Nan-tia-tish's band had been seen and suggested the family move into Green Valley for safety. John Meadows did not wish to leave, but for the safety of the family did so. Three days later someone made a fatal mistake and gave the all clear message.

John took the report as being true and the family returned to the home to find it as they left it except for some bear damage to the food storage area. Returning to the home with John was his wife Margaret, daughter Maggie, sons Charlie, John Valentine, James, Jacob and Mobley, and a friend of the family, Sarah Hazleton.

On July 14th Charlie left the home to go scout for Apaches for the Army. At Pine Creek, he met his brother Henry who had been at Camp Verde wrangling horses for the Army. Henry had heard of Nan-tia-tish's recent activities and was on his way home.

On July 15, 1882, the renegade band of Apaches led by Nan-tia-tish surrounded the Meadow's home. Mrs. Meadows gave an account the next day that she was to repeat often in the coming days: *It was early in the morning and we heard the dogs barking. My husband said, "My dogs are baying a bear. I'll take my gun and go over there and kill it." I saw him pass that bare spot [a bit of open ground] and just as he entered those vines on the other side, the Indians opened fire. I saw him fall. They kept up one continuous war hoop and a continual rain of bullets were (sic) falling on the house and yard. The boys rushed out with guns to save their pa. The kicking up of sand around them showed how thick the bullets were falling. I could not see how they got back to the house without being shot to pieces. [Henry], the oldest, always directed all the works. He had us pile up sacks of flour or any other sacks in such a way as to furnish us protection from any stray bullet.*

...During this time I was so excited...but I noticed the boys looked pale. John came to me and asked, "Ma, can you get me some splints?"

"Yes, what's the matter?"

"My arm is all shot to pieces."

...A little later Henry came to me and said, "Ma, have you a pair of scissors?"

"Yes, here they are."

He made a quick movement and I saw something fall to the floor. It was part of his entrails. He said afterwards that he knew he could not live long, and that he wanted to save his mother and the children before he passed on.

It was now up to the women and children to defend the house. The young ones stood on tubs and sacks of flour to get high enough to shoot through the gun ports. Their firing was effective enough to keep the Indians at bay. The Indian's occasional volleys had no effect on the log cabin. So, they amused themselves by shooting at the Meadows' cattle. They ceased firing around 8:00 the next morning and began rounding up the Meadows'

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horses. Not satisfied with the damage so far inflicted, they opened the gates and drove the horses through the cornfield until it was completely destroyed. They finally took the horses and headed north.

With the departure of the Indians and arrival of help for the Meadows, the body of the father was found and buried in the house. All evidence of the grave was obliterated to prevent the Indians from mutilating the body while the family was moved into town. Feather beds were placed in a wagon and the wounded boys carried to town under heavy armed guard.

The word of the siege reached Payson at about the same time Charlie was arriving on the Globe stage. He rushed to the ranch to arrive almost simultaneously with the Cavalry who were chasing Nan-tia-tish. With the cavalry were about 60 loyal Apache Indian scouts and three of their famous leaders, Al Sieber, Tom Horn (**see Volume One**) and Mickey Free.

The army caught up with the Apaches on July 17th and set a trap for them. The Battle is known as Big Dry Wash and it resulted in the death of 20 Apaches, including Nan-tia-tish, and unknown wounded. The army reported two dead and six wounded. One of the dead on the army side was an Apache scout who saw his father on the other side. He threw down his weapon and ran toward the father; Al Sieber called out for him to stop. When he failed to do so, Sieber shot him. The other dead was a soldier who was buried there and is buried at the site in a marked grave that I have been unable to find. There is a monument to the battle on the site. This was to be the last major Indian battle in Arizona.

Some friends removed the body of the father from the house and moved it to a grassy knoll in Payson below where Fort McDonald was located at the time. John Meadows had the distinguished honor of being the first person buried in Payson's Pioneer Cemetery. On September 17, 1882, Henry (**Photo at right**) lost his courageous battle for life and was buried next to his father. This date was exactly two months to the day after the famous Battle of the Big Dry Wash.

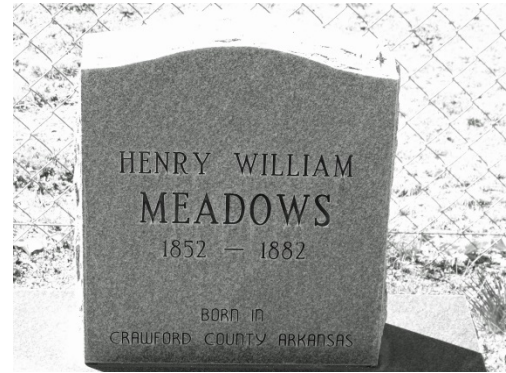
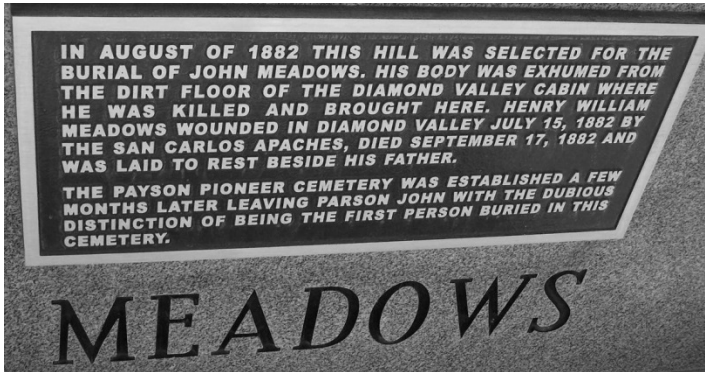


Margaret only survived for about two more years, dying in 1884 and she, too, is buried next to her husband.



Margaret and John's Tombstone

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Seven years after the battle, John Valentine was at the train station in Phoenix when one of the Apaches that attacked the Meadows home recognized him and began to brag about it. John drew his gun, shot him dead, and climbed on the train for California where he remained until he was murdered by an unknown assailant at the age of 64. Arizona Charlie toured the world with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show before he formed and toured with his own show. For a while he owned a casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, and on December 9, 1932, he died in Yuma, Arizona, where he is buried.

**Source: *A Little War of Our Own: The Pleasant Valley War Revisited*, by Don Dede-
ra *Pleasant Valley War*, by Jinx Pyle**