

# Homolovi Ruins State Park

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## Cemetery from City of Sunset, Arizona Territory, Established 1876

*Photos & Text by Kenn Evans,  
Park Ranger*

Although **Homolovi Ruins State Park** protects Hopi lands and cultural artifacts, the park also contains a small cemetery from a group of 19th century settlers who founded the city of Sunset. Sunset Cemetery stands as a mute testimony to the undaunted spirit of the brave pioneers who forged a living from this once desolate and forbidding land.

On January 24, 1876, over 200 men, women and children were called as missionaries to settle the Little Colorado River Valley. James Brown and Lot Smith were appointed to lead the expedition by President Brigham Young of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The families had ten days to prepare for the journey south. It was necessary that they depart before the melting snow swelled the rivers and streams, making travel impossible.

On February 3, 1876, teams of horses, mules and oxen pulled wagons filled with the necessities of life to establish new communities in the Arizona Territory. The journey took six weeks, covering 600 miles of new and unknown country. On Friday, the 24th day of March 1876, Lot Smith and 115 families arrived at Sunset Crossing. President Young had instructed them to settle near Sunset.

Here the families divided into companies, and held a meeting to decide where each company would locate. They wanted to keep close to one another in the event of trouble. Lot Smith's company Sunset settled north of the crossing and on the east side of

the Little Colorado River. Jesse O. Ballanger's company (Ballanger's Camp - Brigham City) settled on the west side of the Little Colorado River north of the crossing. William Allen's Company (St. Joseph - Joseph City) located 23 miles upstream from Sunset across from George Lake's company (Obed) on the south side of the Little Colorado River.

Each company organized into the United Order, a cooperative system where all things were held in common, each contributing to the common good and receiving an equal share of the surplus as needed. Their attempts to dam the Little Colorado River were unsuccessful. The river would frequently flood, washing out the dams, flooding the fields and destroying the crops before they could be harvested and stored. Obed, St. Joseph, and Sunset relocated to higher ground and on Christmas Eve 1876, the Smith Company moved into the newly built fort of Sunset.

Sunset was built of cottonwood logs and measured 198 feet square, consisting of 31 dwellings 14 by 16 feet, one dining hall 55 feet by 15 feet, one school room 33 feet by 14 feet, one kitchen 15 feet by 15 feet, two store rooms 14 feet by 20 feet and 10 feet by 20 feet, a granary 8 feet by 12 feet, and

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*The entrance to the cemetery is noted with a historical marker.*



**AZStateParks.com**

## Historical Cemetery Visitor Etiquette

*Courtesy Pioneers' Cemetery Association*

Historical cemeteries are important to families and communities. This importance has been recognized in state legislation. They are the final resting place of our ancestors. They have religious, cultural, and research values.

Inappropriate actions, whether intentional or unintentional, may cause irreversible damage to these fragile resources. When visiting a historical cemetery, leave it as you find it. If you find vandalism or maintenance issues, contact the landowner. Cemeteries occur on both public and private land. Local mortuaries and/or cemetery associations will have information on land ownership. Help preserve Arizona's historical cemeteries by following visitor etiquette:

### Do:

- Obtain permission to be on the land from the landowner.
- Be respectful.
- Follow specific rules established by the cemetery.
- Report damage and/or vandalism to the landowner and/or local law enforcement.
- Take photographs and make sketches rather than rubbings.



### Do Not:

- Stand on, remove, move, deface, damage, handle, or tamper with any of the grave markers, fences, rock outlines, graves, or cemetery architecture. These activities may result in criminal violations under Arizona Revised Statutes 13-1604; 13-1802; 41-865 and/or civil violations under § A.R.S. 41-856; 41-841 to 41-846.
- Clean gravestones without following prior evaluations, recommendations, and preservation plans completed by professional conservators.
- Make chalk or charcoal rubbings of gravestones.
- Weed, dig, or plant without permission of the landowner.

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a corn crib 10 feet by 32 feet. The fort housed 102 people: 19 men, 18 women, 43 boys and 22 girls.

The first post office on the Little Colorado River was established at Sunset on July 5, 1876. The Post Master was Mr. Alfred M. Derrick. The post office closed November 23, 1887. The local newspaper was called the Enterprise, containing short stories, poems, and news of visiting missionaries.

These early pioneers settled the territory, befriending and sharing the gospel with the Indians. After many hardships, floods and droughts, the pioneers were relieved of their calling in 1881. Many of the pioneers were called to other missions in the San Luis Valley at Manassas, Colorado and to colonize along the Gila River Valley of the Arizona Territory. The last to leave Sunset was Lot Smith, in 1888. Church President Brigham Young died on August 29, 1877. President Young called Lot Smith to the Arizona Territory and no other authority ever released him from his calling.

Today this lonely windswept graveyard stands in memoriam to these early resourceful and resilient pioneering families. If you have any information about the cemetery or the historic forts and would like to share this information, please contact the park.

## Arizona Territory

On February 24, 1863, the Arizona Territory became separate from the New Mexico Territory and when Sunset camp was established on March 24, 1876 it was recognized as a part of Yavapai County. On February 14, 1879 the area was added to the newly formed large portion of Mohave County. March 21, 1895 the area became the newly formed Navajo County. On February 14, 1912 Arizona Became the 48th State in the Union.

# Internments at Sunset Cemetery

*As of March 14, 2005 this is the most complete list of those who lie in rest at Sunset Cemetery.*

## Marion Benjamin Black

Birth: Jul. 4, 1881 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
 Death: Jul. 4, 1881 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
 Father: William Grant Black  
 Mother: Lucretia Jane Maxwell  
 Buried July 5, 1881 LDS Archive record has 1879-07-26 Sunset, Apache County A.T. Note: only hours old from Journal of Levi Mathers Savage 1876- 1935

## George Roselle Burk

Birth: Dec. 1882 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
 Death: Sep. 8, 1893 Navajo County, Arizona Territory  
 Father: Hubert Roselle Burk  
 Mother: Laura Doris Morris

## Marion Aaron Burk

Birth: Sep. 30, 1880 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
 Death: Feb. 6, 1881 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
 Father: Hubert Roselle Burk  
 Mother: Lois Hamblin

## Mrs. Buxton

Death: Nov 14/15, 1881 Yavapai County, AZ Territory

## James Allred Curtis

Birth: July 6, 1872 Salem, Utah, USA  
 Death: 3 Jul 1879 Yavapai County, Arizona Territory  
 Father: Moses Curtis  
 Mother: Elizabeth Hanks  
 Buried July 4, 1879

## John Jones Edwards

Birth: April 6, 1798 Carmarthenshire, Wales, Wales  
 Death: Dec 28, 1879 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
 Father: Edward Edwards  
 Mother: Mary Jones  
 Wife: Johanna Williams. Married: May 24, 1827  
 Five children

## Francis Asbury Hammond Jr.

Birth: September 15, 1850 South Cottonwood, Salt Lake County, Utah  
 Death: April 27, 1876 Sunset Fort Yavapai County, Arizona Territory  
 Father: Francis Asbury Hammond  
 Mother: Mary Jane Dilworth  
 Wife: Never Married  
 One of 12 siblings, 6 girls, 6 boys. Re-inturred in Utah. Recorded in the Ogden Junction May 18. "Captain and secretary in Lot Smith's company, he was taken suddenly ill, with a severe pain in the right side."

## Mrs. Walter Hill

Death: 1883 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
 Husband: Sheepman, Walter Hill  
 Inscription: Wife of Sheepman  
 Note: Nothing more could be read on this stone in 1964, not member of L.D.S.

## Maggie James

Birth: Dec. 19, 1882 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
 Death: Feb. 20, 1883 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
 Father: Joseph Henry James  
 Mother: Elizabeth Salomia Bloomfield  
 Note: Original gravestone removed and a granite stone put in 1990s



## Joseph Ether Knight

Birth: Oct. 18, 1840 Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois  
 Death: Jun. 27, 1878 Yavapai County, Arizona Territory  
 Father: Newel Knight  
 Mother: Lydia Goldthwaite  
 Wife: Jane Lucinda Judd  
 Married: 17 Feb 1863  
 Children: 7  
 Headstone placed on grave Feb 2, 1886 By Israel Call



## Joseph Reid McNeil

Birth: Jun. 17, 1881 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
 Death: Sep. 14, 1898 Navajo County, Arizona Territory  
 Father: James (Thomas) Reid McNeil  
 Mother: Mary Jane Montgomery

## Phoebe Deseret "Nellie" McNeil

Birth: September 16, 1876 Yavapai County, AZ Territory  
 Death: June 5, 1878 Yavapai County, Arizona Territory  
 Father: James (Thomas) Reid McNeil  
 Mother: Phoebe Ann Merrill  
 Death date from W.C. McClellan's diary: Wednesday 5 June 1878  
 Sawmill. {McClellan} very unwell. Sawing today. About noon Jas McNeil arrived here with dying child. It breathed its last in a few moments. Helped make coffin in afternoon. He started for camp about 5 o'clock. F.G. Nielson's Diary "6 Thursday June 1878 Fast day Fasted till noon....Attended fast meeting which was occupied in paying respects to Bro.McNeils little girl Nellie who died. The parents came here with the child this morning. Remarks were made by.....Funeral took place at 5 pm on hill southeast of fort...."



# Internments at Sunset Cemetery (cont.)

## Baby Miller (or Meiller or Mueller)

Death: Nov 14/15, 1881 Yavapai County, AZ Territory  
Mother: siblings Brigham City? WCMcClellan

## Pvt. James Gadison (Gad) Morris

Birth: 1830 Franklin County Georgia,  
Death: Mar. 21, 1878 Yavapai County, Arizona Territory  
Father: James Morris  
Mother: Lucy Parham  
Wife: Elizabeth Wanslee  
Married: 6 Jan 1852  
Children: 11  
Lived at Ballenger's Camp (Brigham City, AZ) may have died from a heart attack. Gad was enlisted as a PVT in Co. C, 40th Reg, Georgia Infantry, May 1, 1862, he was captured at Vicksburg, Miss. 7-4-1863, and again in 7/1864 War Dept. showed him 6'1" dark hair & dark eyes. Note: headstone in SE corner of cemetery, body may not have been interred here. Some references said, "Buried along Little Colorado River."



## Frihoff Brigham Nielson

Birth: Jan. 10, 1878 Yavapai County, Arizona Territory  
Death: Aug. 22, 1879 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
Father: Frihoff Godfrey Nielson  
Mother: Emma Waitstill Mecham  
Buried 08/23/1879



## Silas Harvey Norton

Birth: Jan. 3, 1872 Salt Creek Nephi Juab County Utah, USA  
Death: Feb 16, 1878 Yavapai County, Arizona Territory  
Father: John Alfred Norton  
Mother: Mary Sophia Marble  
Buried Feb 17, 1878

## J. C. Plumb

Birth: Feb 8, 1879 Sunset, Yavapai County, Arizona Territory  
Death: Aug 16, 1879 Brigham City, Apache County, Arizona Territory  
Father: John Merlin Plumb  
Mother: Mary (Polly) Ann Clifford  
1 of 14 siblings 10 girls 4 boys

## Marius Earl Porter

Birth: Jul. 8, 1880 Porterville Morgan County, Utah  
Death: Aug. 10, 1881 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
Father: Sanford Marcius Porter  
Mother: Nina Malinda Leavitt

## Smith Doolittle Rogers

Birth: Aug. 31, 1878 Parowan Iron County, Utah  
Death: Jan. 10, 1879 Yavapai County, Arizona Territory  
Father: Smith Doolittle Rogers  
Mother: Eliza Snow Smith

## Baby Smith

Birth: USA  
Death: Sept 25, 1881 Mormon Lake Yavapai County, Arizona Territory  
Father: Jedediah Heber Smith  
Mother: Sylvia Stoddard  
Died at Mormon Lake. Buried at Sunset 26 Sept 1881

## Rhoda Minerva (Minnie) Smith

Birth: Jun. 8, 1885 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
Death: Jul. 12, 1886 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
Father: Lot Smith  
Mother: Alice Ann Richards  
Died from Scarlet Fever Buried on July 13, 1886

## George Albert Smith

Birth: Sep. 9, 1874 Farmington Davis County, Utah  
Death: Jun. 19, 1883 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
Father: Lot Smith  
Mother: Alice Ann Richards  
Drowned in Little Colorado  
Plot: Sunset Cemetery NE corner

## Wilford Woodruff Smith

Birth: Dec. 28, 1879 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
Death: Mar. 14, 1883 Apache County, Arizona Territory  
Father: Lot Smith  
Mother: Alice Ann Richards  
Died as a result of falling into a vat of boiling lye water during soap making, being burned, he died on the third day after the accident. Plot: NE corner



## John (Baby Boy) Wright

Birth: Jan. 21, 1877 Yavapai County, Arizona Territory  
Death: Jan. 21, 1877 Yavapai County, Arizona Territory  
Father: Joseph Wright  
Mother: Betsey Jane Bowers  
Lived one hour buried January 21, 1877, from Journal of Levi Mathers Savage