

[Wetherell's Death]

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WETHERELL'S DEATH *

“This story was published once. I don't know what the name of the magazine was that carried it but I know it was not a true account. I was there when it happened and I also attended court afterward. The story as I tell it is true to the last detail and you can write it as I tell it.”

This is the introduction that Tom Fallon gave me to this story. He was reared on the mountain and has taken an active part in the development of the cattle and lumbering industries of this section. He is the typical old cowboy of the West whose type is rapidly being replaced by the rancher who uses the automobile more than the horse.

“Me and this boy went to look for a stolen horse. It was the 22nd of June, 1910. I was herding down near Chaco Pueblo Bonita. The horse belonged to Dick Wetherell. An Indian stole the horse. It was a frame up. Me and Mill Finn found the horse in the flat and caught him. We rode up to the hogan and called. A squaw came out and said that the old man was not there. I was sitting on my horse and could look into the door of the hogan. It was dark in there but I could see the old man lying on a blanket. I told Finn. Bill Finn could talk Navajo and he called him out. Dick Hanassi, the Indian, came out. They talked. The Indian

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grabbed him by the thro'at and Bill hit him over the head with his sixshooter. We sat there a few minutes and I got off my horse and turned the Indian over to see if he was dead. He was not dead but was stunned by the blow. I was not armed. Bill had only one round of cartridges for his gun. We rode away driving the stolen horse with us. Soon an Indian, riding very rapidly, passed us.

*Mr. Tom Fallon told this tale. "Wetherell" as he spelled it appears in other books as "Wetherill." Morgan, Elizabeth, "Brief Sketches of Regional Tales of Western New Mexico," A. M. Thesis, New Mexico Normal University, 1955.

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Another Indian rode up behind us and told me that three or four hundred Indians were coming and that they were going to kill some one to avenge the blow that had been struck. I was riding for T.P. Tallard, who was camped on the Escavada, and I had to ride back over the trail we had just used. As I went back thro'ugh, the Indians stopped me. They were going to tie me up, but when they found I had no gun I was able to talk them out of it. I rode on and saw Dick Wetherell and [Tallard?] riding down a hill. I turned so as to meet them. Tallard told me to go on and cut certain horses out of the herd that was being held until we got the horses we wanted out. Tallard and me rode over to the herd and cut out the horses he wanted. Wetherell left us and went on. As we started back with the horses we met an Indian coming up the dug way. He told us that there had been a fight and Wetherell had been killed. He would not tell us where the body was. We began to look for him as we went on down the road. We found him lying on the right hand side of the road. Both thumbs had been shot off. He was shot over the left eye and thro'ugh the chest. It appeared that he had fallen from his horse when he was shot thro'ugh the chest and that an Indian had then walked up and shot him in the head, leaving the powder burns on his face. Tallard rode over to Fort Wingate after the soldiers and I went to the settlement - if it could be called that - to protect three Mexican women, a widow and a school teacher until the soldiers could arrive. I took the horses on to the ranch and later went down to Los

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Lunas for the trial. Finn was fined and the Indian who shot Wetherell was given ten years. I think he received a suspended sentence." C 18 - 6/5/41 - N. Mex.