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# Massacre at Wickenburg: Arizona's Greatest Mystery

By R. Michael Wilson



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**Massacre at Wickenburg: Arizona's Greatest Mystery** By R. Michael Wilson

The massacre at Wickenburg was one of the most notorious crimes committed in the Wild West--a story revealed in this book through a criminal investigation. November 5, 1871. A westbound stagecoach carrying seven men and one woman left Wickenburg in the early morning hours. At 8:00 a.m., six of the passengers were shot dead. One man and the lone woman, severely wounded, escaped into the desert. Debates raged over the identity of the murderous ambushers -- Indians? Mexican bandits? The two survivors? After a massive investigation, the U.S. Army concluded that a band of local Yavapai Indians were responsible, which led to a policy of "removal and concentration" that altered the fate of nearly every Indian in America's Southwest. Wilson, a longtime law enforcement officer who has spent decades researching 19th century crimes, presents the first book about this notorious crime and its resulting fallout. This is an intriguing look into the past, and a riveting story that reads like a mystery novel.

R. Michael Wilson has served as a consultant for "The History Channel" about crimes of the Old West and the author of several books, including *Great Train Robberies of the Old West*. He lives in Las Vegas.



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### Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

#### A Bloody Puzzle

On a chilly morning in early November 1871, a Concord stagecoach left the little town of Wickenburg, Arizona, traveling west through a quiet desert. The morning was split by a horrified yell? *Apache!*? and then the roar of gunfire. As the bodies slumped under a rising sun and the blood seeped into the sand, the stage became set for one of the West's most enigmatic and echoing tragedies.

Were the culprits truly Indians, or had they been Mexican bandits in disguise? Were the only two survivors somehow involved? When the U.S. Army finally laid the blame on a band of local Yavapai Indians, it became clear that the real ramifications of this horrific crime were only just beginning to present themselves.

#### About the Author

**R. Michael Wilson** has been researching the Old West for fifteen years, following a career as a law-enforcement officer. An active member of the National Outlaw Lawman Association (NOLA) and Western Writers of America (WWA), his particular interest is crime, and his writing philosophy is "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." He resides in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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A pursuit posse was formed in Wickenburg at about midnight on November 5. They rode west on the La Paz Road to the site of the attack and took up the chase at first light. Following the erroneous report of the massacre in the November 11 *Miner*, members of the posse sent a letter to the editor that was published under the title "Corrected Account of the Massacre." In the November 18 edition of that newspaper, all members of the posse subscribed to the following account:

" . . . So soon in the morning as it became light enough to see footprint, a party of our citizens were on the spot and took the trail. Judging from the indications after killing the passengers, something scared the Indians, causing them to leave in hot haste--scattering in different directions. After following up those different trails a distance of four or five miles they all united, forming one large trail, and heading towards the Date Creek Reservation. The trail showed them to be a party of Indians, some forty or fifty in number."

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