

## TURKEY CREEK ATTRACTIONS

The Green Valley Hiking Club has two hikes that use trailheads in the Turkey Creek area of the Chiricahua Mountains. Turkey Creek is located in the southwest portion of the Chiricahua Mountains and is accessed via SR-181. Hikers that participate in either of these hikes also have the opportunity to visit two unique attractions on their way back out of the canyon after completing their hikes

**ROADSIDE CHAPEL:** The first of these attractions that you come to after departing the trailhead is a small roadside chapel on the right side of the road. This writer was not able to find any information pertaining to the history of the chapel but considers it well worth the visit. Following are a series of pictures depicting the chapel.



Chapel Exterior  
Photo by Wayne Moshier



Chapel Interior  
Photo by Tom Johnson - 2012



Chapel Interior  
Photo by Tom Johnson - 2012



Chapel Interior  
Photo by Tom Johnson - 2012



Chapel Interior  
Photo by Tom Johnson - 2012

**JOHNNY RINGO GRAVESITE:** The second attraction that you will pass when departing the Turkey Creek area is the gravesite of Johnny Ringo and it is also on the right side of the road. It is located on private land but is readily accessible. On 14 July 1882, John Yost found Johnny Ringo's body propped against a tree with a bullet in his head. At the time there was much speculation as to the cause of his death. The official determination was suicide but his friends were convinced it was murder. A few people even boasted about removing this "desperado" from the world. But just who was this man who had been given the reputation of being a notorious gunslinger by the newspapers of the day. Was he really as bad as they said? Following is a brief description of Johnny to let you decide.

John Peters (Johnny) Ringo had led quite an eventful life on both sides of the law although he is best remembered as an outlaw. He was born on 3 May 1850 in Washington (later renamed Greenfork) Indiana. The Ringo family moved to Missouri in 1857 and then left for California by wagon train in May 1864. During the journey, John witnessed his father accidentally shoot and kill himself and it is felt that this event was significant in forming John's future role in life. Despite the accident, the family continued to San Jose California where John continued his formative years. While there he worked for a year for Coleman Younger of the infamous Younger clan on the Younger Ranch.

Johnny left California in early 1871 and by 1874 was living in Burnet Texas and had his first brush with the law when he was arrested for "unlawfully discharging a gun on a public street". By 1875 he was riding with the Scott Cooley gang and became involved in the Mason County Range War, a dispute over cattle ownership between German settlers in Mason County and American born men from neighboring counties. The Germans had supported the North during the Civil War and the American cowboys had Southern sympathies and when this was combined with ethnic prejudices, there was considerable animosity between the two groups. The Germans were the first to escalate the feud in May 1875 when they ambushed and killed a cowboy named Tim Williamson as he was being escorted to the town of Mason by Deputy Sheriff Wohrle. When the Grand Jury failed to indict anyone for the murder, Scott Cooley vowed revenge and killed the sheriff for having refused to protect Williamson during the ambush. Ringo was not involved although subsequent newspaper articles attempted to tie him to the murder.

On 7 September 1875 Moses Baird, a close friend of Ringo, was killed in an altercation set up by James Cheyney. In response, Ringo killed Cheyney on 25 September but was not indicted until November 1876. This incident was the start of Ringo's reputation as a killer. Over the next couple of years he was arrested and confined several times for various reasons but was always released, usually after posting bail. Some examples of the charges were "disturbing the peace", "threatening the sheriff", etc. Ringo seemed to spend quite a bit of his life in various jails during this period. In spite of his notorious reputation he was elected as a constable in Loyal Valley Texas in November 1878 but it doesn't appear that he ever took office since he left Texas for New Mexico in December. A year later (December 1879) he showed up in Safford Arizona where he shot a man for refusing to drink with him (the man survived) and was soon associating with the Clanton

Gang of Tombstone fame. He committed at least one robbery and was accused of several others and in January 1882 he got into a confrontation with Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday on the streets of Tombstone after he was released from the Tombstone jail. In April 1882, Ringo was on the other side of the law when he joined a sheriff's posse attempting to track down and arrest the Earp party after they had killed a man they suspected of being involved in Morgan Earp's murder.

Time was running out for Johnny Ringo though. During the period of 2 through 8 July 1872 he was observed in Tombstone drinking heavily and appearing severely depressed. From 9 to 11 July he was seen in Galeville still drinking heavily. On 14 July, John Yost found Ringo's body propped against a tree with a bullet in his head. There has been much speculation about the cause of death, murder or suicide. Some people have claimed to have killed Johnny but the coroner's report listed the death as suicide. Ringo was buried where he was found.



Historic Site Plaque  
Photo by Wayne Moshier



Ringo Headstone  
Photo by Wayne Moshier



Johnny Ringo's Grave  
Photo by Wayne Moshier

Summary prepared by Tom Johnson in July 2013 from the Johnny Ringo, Angelfire and Wikipedia web sites.