

# DR. JOHN M. WHITLOCK

The Tragical Death of Doctor J. M. Whitlock in 1862 at Fort Stanton, New Mexico

John Marmaduke Whitlock, M.D., was a native of Kentucky and immigrated to New Mexico in the early 40s. He settled in Las Vegas, married Mrs. Josefita Lucero of San Miguel County and moved to Agua Negra valley.

When the Civil War broke out, he enlisted as a surgeon for the First New Mexico Volunteers - Colonel Christopher ("Kit") Carson commanding - serving until the close of the war, then taking up the practice of his profession in Las Vegas.

For a short time during the year 1862 his family lived in Albuquerque. He had two children at that time, John M. Whitlock and Josefita Whitlock Robinson, both since deceased. The Rev. J. M. Whitlock, Jr., a resident of New Mexico all his life, was educated in Kentucky and took up the ministry as a profession, serving as missionary within the Presbyterian Church in New Mexico for about thirty-five years. Josefita, the daughter, married John Robinson, later sheriff of Mora County. Shortly after Dr. Whitlock was killed, Mrs. Whitlock was remarried to Mr. James W. Holman who was associated in business with Dr. Whitlock at the time of the latter's death. Mrs. Whitlock died at Agua Negra in 1891.

The killing of Dr. Whitlock was the result of a dispute between him and the captain of a company of Regulars while taking about five thousand Navajo Indians from Fort Defiance to Fort Sumner, New Mexico, in 1862. It seems that on a certain occasion the captain came into camp with a Navajo baby impaled on the bayonet of his rifle and playing with the body of this child as though it were an animal. Doctor Whitlock saw him and called his attention to what he called an outrage and that no gentleman, especially a soldier of the United States, should be guilty of such conduct, at the same time perhaps calling the captain a harsher name than we wish to repeat. Whereupon the captain said, "If you don't take that back you will have to fight a duel with me." To which Whitlock replied, "Alright, go and get your pistol and we will shoot it out. I will not swallow my words or apologize to you." In a short while the captain appeared at the doctor's tent and called him out. Whitlock, pistol in hand, came out and both, without further ado, fired almost simultaneously. The captain fell, apparently shot through the heart. Whitlock went back into his tent.

In the meantime, the alarm was given to the captain's company. A lieutenant, whose name I do not now recall, mobilized the company and announced that their captain had been shot to death by Doctor Whitlock. Immediately, without any investigation, the lieutenant headed his company towards the doctor's tent and without any trial ordered his soldiers to fire then and there, shooting the doctor to pieces. He is buried right where he fell, as it was impossible to move the body. No investigation of this cruel murder was made by the War Department and no one was ever punished for the awful deed.

The Reverend John M. Whitlock, at the time of his father's death, was a lad of about fifteen or sixteen years of age going to school in Kentucky. Doctor was a descendant of the well-known families, the Pendeltons, Marmadukes, Whitlocks and Morgans of Virginia and Kentucky....

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The above article was written by Mrs. B.C. Hernandez and appeared in Vol. 16 of the New Mexico Historical Review. Dr. Whitlock is part of the family being researched by Victor Dodier, see Main Line #15, included with this issue. The dates given in the above article were all 1868 but have been changed to 1862 based on an account of Dr. Whitlock's death that appeared in the St. Louis Democrat December 5, 1862 plus the transcript of the seven pages of testimony given at the Board of Officers investigation of the death of Dr. Whitlock. As with most recountings of past events the three sources are at variance with each other while the basic facts are there.

SOURCES: UBC97,144; X336/5; X337/4; X202; REF43