

**THE GHOSTS  
OF FORT  
WASHITA**



**by Bob Turpin**

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## Who Is Bob Turpin?

It's me, I'm Bob Turpin. I am an avid western reader, researcher, and writer of historical fiction for over thirty years. My articles and short stories frequently appeared in historical western magazines from 1967 through 1999. In 1972 I published "Oklahoma's Buried Millions" and did a second printing that same year. This was followed by two more small books, "Treasure Hunt" 1 and 2.



I had several more books and a million stories to tell when I was interrupted by illness and had to put my work on hold. During that time I have received letters from western fans nationally wanting to know if and when I would continue my work. Well, I'm happy to say that I am finally back and ready to take you, my readers, old and new, on many more exciting rides into our western history.

So, pard, saddle up and join me on my many rides through the pages of western history and meet the folks who lived there.

With the help of my trusty side kick and wife, Naola, and my good friend, agent, and publisher, Grace Michael, we will be working hard to bring you new and interesting material just as fast as we can get it ready... I have a million stories to tell ... and even though they are considered to be historical fiction, they are all based on true and recorded incidents and happenings through the 1800's.

Here's to your reading pleasure ....

***Bob Turpin***

## The Ghosts of Ft. Washita

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*Fort Washita was established in 1843 for the purpose of protecting the Chickasaw and Choctaw Indians from the Plains Indians in western Indian Territory.*

*On April 16, 1861, the fort was abandoned by U. S. forces and became occupied by Confederate troops through the civil War.*

*The fort was acquired by the Oklahoma historical Society in 1962 and was designated a national historic landmark in 1965.*

*To this day, it is of great interest to young and old alike for it is filled with stories of ghosts, legends, apparitions, violence, and treasure.*

# THE GHOSTS OF FORT WASHITA

On a late Sunday evening in 1891 the Meador family and Sid King, a friend of the family, were returning to their home on Twelve Mile Prairie after purchasing supplies and farm equipment in Denison, Texas. They were just west of the old Fort Washita ruins on the Denison Road, the old Texas Road, when they were alarmed to see a one-horse buggy barreling toward them on the narrow dirt road. The buggy was occupied by two men. The driver was desperately struggling to regain control of his horse.

As the Meador family watched, a front wheel slammed into a large rock beside the road. The wheel was completely destroyed, pieces of wood flying through the air. Charley Colbert and Jim Yarbor who were riding in the buggy were thrown from it. Mr. Meador and Mr. King jumped to the ground to grab the reins of the runaway animal and stop the carriage.

The two men only had minor injuries but were scared half out of their wits. After they settled down the men were able to tell their neighbors what had happened.

Near the crumbling rock walls they saw two mysterious figures come out of the ruins moving toward the road. As Colbert and Yarbor drew near, they saw that the two figures were dressed in white robes surrounded by a swirling grey fog. The bodies seemed to be floating or gliding a few feet



Sid King and Suzanne Meador at Laura Meador's Grave.

above the ground. Spooked by the apparitions, the horse bolted, its eyes wide with fright. Charley Colbert, the driver, was unable to bring the terrified horse under control.

The Meador family decided to make camp across the Denison Road that ran along the fort's south side. Early the next morning they searched the entire area – the post's grounds, cemetery, and the fresh water springs. They found nothing to explain the strange appearance of the apparitions the two men had seen.

Fort Washita was established in the early 1800's to protect the Chickasaw Indians who had relocated there. The soldiers were to contain the warring plains tribes located further west who were constantly raiding the peaceful tribes along the Arkansas Rivers and its tributaries. The plains raiders included the fierce Comanche, Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe Indians. They were always in need of horses, food, and captives, especially young women.

General Zachary Taylor, later elected president, came from Fort Gibson in 1842



The Meador sisters, Susanne and Laura

to choose a location for a new outpost. The site sat on an upland level near where the Washita and Red Rivers merge. The area was abundant with fresh water, grass for the stock, timber, and limestone for building material. Companies A and F of the second Dragoons were brought to help under the command of Captain A. H. Blake. Temporary buildings were quickly built and work began on permanent quarters.

The army hired a number of civilian workers that lived with their families in a tiny hamlet near the post. This settlement became known as Rugglesville. Soon a second camp sprung up named Hatsboro.

The layout for Fort Washita was like most frontier posts being built in hostile country. The soldiers' barracks, officers' cabins, and other post buildings were fronted by a rectangular parade ground. The first building finished was the stables, 10 feet by 40 feet for horses and their riding gear. Next came a two-story barracks building made from large limestone slabs, cut and hauled from nearby hills.

Even before the new post was fully completed there was trouble between the wild Indians and workers. As a result of this unrest the workers and their families lived in constant fear for their lives. A white woman and her child were taken from the small town of nearby Woodville. Soldiers from Fort Washita were sent to search the area for them. The two captives were found – *murdered*.

The warring hostiles weren't the only problem for the soldiers. Cattle and horse thieves were also a constant threat. The Indian agent for the Chickasaw, Mr. A. M. Upshaw, wrote about the conditions in his journal in 1846. He requested that at least two more companies of Dragoons be sent to Fort Washita to rid the area of its