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MEMOIR OF A KENTUCKIAN IN NEW MEXICO 1848-1884

By J. MANUEL ESPINOSA

I

INTRODUCTION

DURING the Mexican War the army of occupation brought to New Mexico the first large influx of permanent settlers from the Anglo-American West. The cutting edge of the Anglo-American frontier was sharp along the Missouri line, which for economic and geographic reasons was the base for the advance into the New Mexico area. The peopling of Missouri in frontier days was principally from the older frontier immediately behind it: namely, Kentucky and Tennessee.¹ And so as the frontier leaped across the plains to Santa Fé in the first half of the nineteenth century, spurred on by trade and then by the annexation of the region by the United States, it was natural to find many Kentuckians figuring in the story. Among them were James Magoffin, Francis P. Blair, David Meriwether (by adoption), Henry Connelly, Neill B. Field and a host of others. Some went to New Mexico direct, others after having spent some time in Missouri, Texas, or some other adjacent frontier area.

1. See Hattie H. Anderson, "Missouri, 1804-1828: Peopling a Frontier State," *Missouri Historical Review*, XXXI (January, 1937), 174-180.

Samuel Ellison, the author of the memoir here published,² was among those who were attracted to New Mexico during the period of the Mexican War. As for the details of his life story they may be found in the memoir itself. Suffice is to say that Ellison arrived in Santa Fé on October 10, 1848, with the army of Colonel John M. Washington and lived in New Mexico from that day until his death on July 21, 1889. He was active and important in public life as one of the lesser lights who played their part in the development of New Mexico during the first four decades under the rule of the United States. New Mexico and the New Mexicans appealed to him, and he took for his wife a New Mexican girl, Francisca Sánchez.

Ellison's brief manuscript is important because of the interesting sidelights it brings out in connection with his journey from Kentucky to New Mexico, the story of the American occupation, New Mexico political history from 1848 to 1884, and some of the personalities involved, and the lengthy first-hand description of the Santa Fé archives and the Pile incident.

The memoir was utilized by Bancroft in his *History of Arizona and New Mexico*,³ and in some places much of it was incorporated into his work. It seems that it was written at Bancroft's request during the time that the latter was gathering materials for his history. Bancroft has the following to say of Ellison and his memoir: "Samuel Ellison, territorial librarian, has given me important aid in my researches, and has been named often in this volume . . . His *History of N. Mex., MS.*, 1884, is not only a sketch of his own life, but contains his important testimony on early events and officials."⁴

2. This manuscript, entitled *History of New Mexico*, Santa Fé, 1884, here published for the first time, is in the Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

3. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Arizona and New Mexico*, San Francisco, 1887.

4. *Ibid.*, 791.

II

HISTORY OF NEW MEXICO BY SAMUEL ELLISON
SANTA FE, 1884

Judge Samuel Ellison, born in Kentucky Feb. 22, 1817, lived there until 20 years of age & then went to Cincinnati, remained there 3 mos. recruiting a company under the direction of Col. Sherman & Gen. Chambers, & with 40 men, he as lieutenant, went to Texas. Reached Houston in Sept., '37, then the seat of gov. of the repub. of Texas. (Judge Ellison is Swede on his father's side and German on his mother's).⁵

Gen. Sam Houston was then president and Hockley was secy. of war. The place was called Houston at that time. It was the head of navigation at the Buffalo bayou. Remained there a short time & went to San Antonio de Bexa [sic].⁶ The war was over. His company was attached to another company at Houston, & Ellison was attached to the quartermaster dept. at San Antonio. Resided there till '42.

Gen. A. Sidney Johnston was then com. gen. of Texas having relieved Felix Houston as such.⁷ Johnston & Houston had a duel in '37.

Ellison was an officer till '39 about which time Austin was established.⁸ La Mar was president. Went from Austin to 3 forks of Trinity River & thence to Coffee Station on Red River, where a fort was established on the southern side of the Cross Timbers.

5. A number of Ellisons appear in the Kentucky records for the decade of the 1790's and the early decades of the nineteenth century, but I have not been able to find any clear link between any of them and the Samuel Ellison of this memoir. It is quite probable, however, that his parents were originally from Pennsylvania, the source of origin of some of the Kentucky Ellisons, including a Samuel Ellison and his wife, Rachel, both of Philadelphia, who bought land in Bourbon County on August 22, 1794. Mrs. W. Breckenridge Ardery, *Kentucky Court and Other Records*, Lexington, 1926, 11, 118-119.

6. Béjar.

7. Johnston became commander of the army of Texas January 31, 1837. This appointment aroused the jealousy of Felix Houston, who challenged Johnston to a duel and seriously wounded him.

8. Austin was chosen as the capital of the Republic of Texas in 1839.

The fort was established in 1839 by Wm. G. Cook [sic],⁹ and was abandoned in the spring of '40, when the command returned to Austin, and on the reduction of the army was mustered out of service, and from that time to '41 (during '40 and '41) acted as deputy sheriff at San Antonio.

During the year 1841 he was at Austin at the time Wm. G. Cook, McLeod, & Navarro left for New Mexico, & were taken prisoners near Anton Chico by General Manuel Armijo, Ellison remaining at Austin. [See Kendall's Santa Fé Expedition].¹⁰

In '42 in Dec. crossed the Rio Grande into Mexico, & took charge of a cotton farm near Monclova in Coahuila, where he remained till the spring of '46. Then he went to Matamoras & joined Gen. Taylor's command after the fight at La Palma. Was then appointed quartermaster's agent for the army, & continued in that capacity till July '48, when he was transferred to Col. Washington's command, who came from Monterey to Santa Fé, and Ellison came with him. Washington left Monterey with his command, 500 men, on the 26th of July, 1848. Ellison left on the 24th & proceeded in advance to see that the several camps were provided with forage and wood.

Passed through Saltillo, Patos, Mapami, Chihuahua, El Paso del Norte, & the command reached Santa Fé on the 10th of Oct., 1848.

At Chihuahua Maj. Pike Graham separated from the command with 250 men & went to California.

Ellison continued here as quar. agt. till Nov. 1849 when he was employed as interpreter & secretary to Col. John Munroe, the then civil and military commandante of New Mexico. Remained such till '51, when the territorial gov. was established, and James J. [sic]¹¹ Calhoun was appointed governor. Calhoun died on his way to the

9. Cooke.

10. George W. Kendall, *Narrative of an Expedition across the Great South-western Prairies from Texas to Santa Fé*, 2 v., London, 1845.

11. James S. Calhoun, governor of New Mexico, 1851-1852.

States,¹² & was succeed [sic] by Wm. Carr Lane¹³ for whom Ellison acted as secy., translator, and interpreter (not for Calhoun). After Carr Lane was Merriwether,¹⁴ and Abraham Rencher¹⁵ & Ellison acted in same capacity for both of these, and was in '59 was [sic] appointed clerk Sup. Ct. & of the 1st judicial dist. ct. of the ter.¹⁶ In 1866 he resigned & went to farming. Was in the legislature 3 times, & was once speaker of the house.¹⁷ After that translated the laws and legislative proceedings grants & proving up titles before the surveyor gen. of the ter.¹⁸

In 1881 was appointed ter. librarian, & since that time has devoted most of his time in examining the old Mexican archives found here when Gen. Kearny took possession in Aug. '46, many of which he has translated. Most of the archives are fragmentary and unsatisfactory, on close examination, for they frequently break off abruptly, in treating of the acts & doings of governors, captains-general, and the number of the Indians. In 1881 & re-appointed in 1883 librarian.¹⁹ He was appointed U. S. commissioner in 1867 by Chief Justice John Slough, the first com. appointed in the ter. under what is known as the peon act. It was represented after the war, and [after] slavery had been abolished, that [many were in] the condition of peons, Mexican servants and Pueblo Indians, and Indians taken captive or purchased from wild tribes and held as slaves. This act abolished all that, imposing severe penalties, & appointed com-

12. June, 1852.

13. Governor from 1852 to 1853.

14. David Meriwether, governor 1853-1856.

15. Governor 1857-1861.

16. Ellison held this post from 1859 to 1866, and from 1868 to 1869. Bancroft, *op. cit.*, 704; W. G. Ritch, ed., *New Mexico Blue Book* (1st ed., 1882), 120.

17. Ellison served in the legislature of 1856, 1865, and 1866, and was speaker of the House as a member from Santa Fé county in the Fifteenth Assembly, 1865-1866. Bancroft, *op. cit.*, 706; Ritch, *op. cit.*, 104, 111.

18. On October 4, 1880, Ellison was commissioned a notary public for Santa Fé county. Original commission in possession of the editor. See Ritch, *op. cit.*, 69. The same authority, p. 64, gives Ellison's name in the "Official Register" for 1882 both as librarian and as "assistant secretary and translator."

19. Ellison was territorial librarian until 1889. *New Mexico Historical Review*, X (April, 1935), 172, note 2.

missioners to investigate matters & liberate the peons. They were then as much an article of trade as a horse or a sheep.

On his arrival at Santa Fé the 10th of Oct. 1848 all was under military rule. Washington's men and army followers numbered about 500—that is, what Washington brought and Maj. Ben Bell had, & teamsters &c, amounted to 500. Bell was capt. of Cavalry (brevet Maj.) Washington relieved Bell who was afterward stationed at Taos and was transferred in '50 to Ft. Leavenworth.

Washington acted as civil and military gov. up to the organization of the ter. when he was relieved shortly after by John Munroe who was relieved as civil gov. by James J. [sic] Calhoun, Munroe still remaining at the head of military affairs.

There was a remarkable good police here under Bell's adm. & good order kept, and this continued under Munroe & the rest.

The leading men of the territory in 1848 were—at Santa Fé Donacino [sic]²⁰ Vigil, who was appointed Sec'y ter. by Gen. Kearny, & afterward, on the assassination of Gov. Chas. Bent was appointed Gov. by Gen. Price. Miguel E. Pino was connected under the Mex. gov. with the Custom House dept., and so was Tomás Ortiz. Augustin [sic]²¹ Duran was chief of same dept. The vicar Felipe Ortiz was considered the leading man in the political and civil departments of the city and county of Santa Fé.

In San Miguel County Santiago Ulivarri, Padre Leiva, and Herman Von Grolman prefect of said county were the men who controlled political affairs in that county.

In Mora. Co. José María Valdez, and ——— Vigil.

In Taos Padre Martínez, Pascual Martínez, & Pedro Valdez.

In Rio Arriba Co. Antonio Roibal, Antonio Manzanares, and Diego Archuleta.

20. Donaciano.

21. Agustín.

In Santa Anna Co. Tomas C. de Baca, and Francisco Sandoval.

In Bernalillo Co. Juan Cristobal Armijo, Pedro Perea, Ambrosio Armijo, & Rafael & Manuel Armijo.

In Valencia Co. Antonio José Otero appointed judge of the 3d judicial district by Gen. Kearny.

In Taos Charles Beaubien was appointed judge of the 2d judicial dist. 23 Sept. 1848. Another leading man in Valencia Co. Antonio Luna; and Socoro [sic]²² Co. José Antonio Baca y Pino; Pedro Baca, and Vicente Pino.

In Don [sic]²³ Ana Co. was Guadalupe Miranda, former of [sic] secy. of the territory, and Pablo Melendrez.

These were the political force of the country at that time, and down to 1854-5—some of them later. Whatever they said must be was—& some of them down to 1859, after which date other influences came in, wielded a very great influence in politics. Then continued till '79, when a new element came & took a decided independent stand; that is, people coming in weakened the power of the former politicians.

Col. Washington went east, & embarked at New York for Cal. & was wrecked on the Str. *San Francisco*. He was a very positive, brave, & efficient officer.

Munroe was an artillery officer, a Scotchman, & stood very high. Was the best mathematician in the army, as well as the ugliest looking man. A whig in politics. A very determined man in all his acts and doings. He would brew his pitcher of toddy at night, & take the first drink of it at noon next day, after which hour he would not attend to any official business. He said he wouldn't live in a country [where is snowed] in Nov. & May. (He arrived in Nov. when it snowed, & also the next May) & so he got himself transferred. He was relieved by Col. Fauntleroy.

Calhoun had been consul to Habana for many years, was sent out here as Indian agt. & was appointed first gov.

22. Socorro.

23. Doña.

and ex-officio supt. Ind. affairs, under organization. Had ability, was a politician by profession, was very popular and very intemperate. Nothing particular during his adm. no Indian troubles.

Wm. Carr Lane was a man of superior intellect, & was highly esteemed by the people of the territory, both natives & Americans. He ran for delegate of the territory against Padre José Manuel Gallegos who, that is the latter, on a contest for the seat was declared to be elected, on the ground that the Pueblo Indians had no right to vote. Including the vote of the Pueblo Inds. Wm. Carr Lane would have been elected, but without that vote Gallegos was declared elected by 500 votes.

Gallegos was a man of ability, suspended by Archbishop Lamy for concubinage. He procured the first appropriation of \$20,000 & \$50,000 for a capital & penitentiary.

During the adm. of Wm. Carr Lane, supt. of Ind. Affairs as well as gov., Ind. war came on, & he requested Col. Sumner (known in the army as bull-head Sumner; he was shot in the head, & the ball glanced & he recovered) to allow him to furnish 500 volunteers to aid in the suppression of the Navajos. Sumner declined, and Lane became very much excited & challenged the Col. to fight him. Sumner decline; he then made an expedition against the Navajos & compelled them to retire from their country.

Merriwether gov. & sup. Ind aff. & general superintendent of the construction of the skeleton as it now [1884] stands of the capital & penitentiary. \$20,000 more were appropriated, and there is nothing now to show for it but some stone walls & unfinished partitions, good for nothing but for the stone. During Merriwether's adm. the offices of gov. & supt. Ind. affairs were separated, Merriwether continuing as gov. & James L. Collins assumed the office of Supt. Ind. Aff. Miguel A. Otero got a further appropriation of \$60,000 to complete the buildings.

When John S. Watts was delegate in Cong.²⁴ he compromised matters, giving up this last appropriation of

24. 1861.



SAMUEL ELLISON

\$60,000 together with all the territory lying between Conejos [sic]²⁵ and the Sangre de Cristo mountains to Colorado, provided the people of New Mexico should be relieved of the then war for the Union tax. If that had not have been done the territory would not have been obliged to pay the \$325,000 voted by its last legislature for these buildings, \$125,000 for penitentiary & \$200,000 for a capital. Watts was an honest & conscientious man.

The first legislature was the best the territory has ever had, the best material of Mexicans and the best Americans the territory could produce, and that you can see from the laws of 1852. The second legislature was fair, but they have been gradually going down in quality. Up to 1864 they were considered to be very fair men. Before that time bribery, since then so common, was unheard of. Bribery was first resorted to support the act of Gen. Carleton bringing down a large portion of the Navajos to the Bosque Redondo on the Pecos River. A memorial was got up centurrying [sic] the act, to defeat which money was used.

Abraham Rencher was a lawyer, had [been] minister to Portugal, member of Congress from North Carolina, conservative, honest & intellectual. Was highly esteemed by the people of the territory.

Henry Connelly was of a visionary, romantic, poetic turn, could quote John Gilpin in one breath. He was tolerated because he was appointed from the territory. Still he was a good man. He was from Kentucky. He went to Valverde, witnessed the fight between Canby and the Texans; after Canby was whipped he, the gov. returned to Fort Union, hastily. When he went to Valverde he left Ellison in charge of the territory. There was no secretary here at that time. After the Texans had been whipped out he [Connelly] returned and took charge of his offices.

After the fight at Valverde Sibley & Slough met at Glorreto [sic]²⁶ &c. Sibley drove Slough back about two

25. Conejos, Colorado.

26. Glorieta.

miles, but as Slough had sent a force around to the rear of Sibley & burned his train Sibley was compelled to retreat, & returned to Texas. The smoke of the fire burning the horses & the train could be seen 25 miles.

The territorial library was established in 1852 with an appropriation made by Congress of \$5,000 made in 1851. Congress afterward appropriated \$500 to pay freight on books. It has since been kept up by exchanges. There is no appropriation by the legislative assembly for the purchase of books, or even for freight on them, & never has been. They made an appropriation of \$50 per annum for fuel & stationery for librarian, and \$600 per annum for his salary.

In 1848 the Mexican archives consisted of the acts and doings of the governors and captain-generals under the Spanish government as far back as 1681, the retaking of Santa Fé by Vargas in 1692, his several fights with the Pueblo Indians, the captives taken by him & placed in slavery up to 1697. On the 19th day of August 1680 after a nine days siege the Spaniards cut their way out and left the country, when the Indians destroyed everything Mexican. Up to 1803 fragmentary statements in regard to the establishment of priests in the missions are among the archives.

Under the adm. of Wm. A. Pile²⁷ many of the archives were sold to merchants and grocers for wrapping paper, and only about one-fourth recovered. There was an organized search made for them by the citizens, who waited on the gov. to have it done. Pile graduated as a Methodist preacher, went into the army, commanded a regiment, and was sent out here as governor to complete his education. He was a very weak man intellectually and every other way. If he had any intellect at all it did not run in the right groove. He was up to all sorts of chicanery, was not honest, and if it had been any other country he would have been driven out of the country. The deed of vandalism was found out the day after it was done, when some of the citizens met and

27. Governor from 1869 to 1871.

appointed a committee who waited on the gov. and requested him to have the papers returned. Then he sent out the librarian Bond²⁸ and had them brought back, a cartload of them, and dumped into the back room. Wendell Debus kept ordinary goods, Indian antiquities & pottery. He bought one lot for about \$30, & had the money refunded to him, when he returned most of them, but not all. Others bought smaller portions. The gov. was partly fool and partly knave.²⁹

They were placed in a room loosely and remained there with the chickens roosting on them & the drippings from the house falling on them till Gov. Wallace employed Ellison to gather them up and place them in a room adjoining his parlor. After that they were placed in the charge of Ellison as librarian.

Wallace was an excellent governor, a man of intellect, positive, and popular.

The legislative journals & session laws have always been printed in Spanish & English. It is not the law but the custom. There is a territorial law requiring all proceedings of all courts to be kept in Eng. & Sp. but no attention is paid to it. In Justices courts, if the justice is Mexican he keeps dockets in Spanish; if American in Eng.

There is a very large collection of archives in the Indian Pueblo of Santa Clara, in the hands of the Indians, boxed up. They say they have had them from time immemorial. They consist of certificates of baptism, marriages, funerals, no court or war proceedings. There is some correspondence among [sic] Spanish officers, orders, & edicts as to the treatment of the Indians.

28. Ira M. Bond was territorial librarian for the same period during which Pile was governor. Later, he was editor of the *News*, a small English and Spanish weekly which was published at Mesilla, Doña Ana county, from 1878 to 1884.

29. For further accounts of the destruction of the archives see Bancroft, *op. cit.*, 19, and references there cited, and the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, March 4, 1886, quoted in *New Mexico Historical Review*, X (April, 1935), 171-172. Ellison's statement here clearly demolishes Twitchell's weak defense of Pile. Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History*, 2 v., Cedar Rapids, 1912, II, 413-414.

There are others in the Indian Pueblos of Narambe [sic],³⁰ San Juan, Taos, and the Picurries. Somebody says there are some at Socorro, and elsewhere. In fact, probably every Pueblo has some. Some of these papers refer in an indefinite manner in regard to lands, their titles & boundaries, but nothing definite.³¹

The archives in the library are now arranged in 135 pasteboard boxes about 10 by 15 inches & 2 inches thick according to subjects. These are diaries of different governors and captain generals in relation to their operations against the Pueblo Indians and wild tribes of the "provinces and kingdom of New Mexico."

Most of what we would require would be about the different campaigns extending from the Arkansas River to the Moqui Villages, the general insurrection of the Indians on the 4th of June 1696. It is reported that about 200 of the Christianized Pueblo Indians joined the tribe of Navajo-Apache Indians. These are contained in five of the boxes, well arranged in these 5 boxes chronologically. In these boxes are Indian wars and campaigns.

Other boxes contain matters regarding Church and clergy, the location of mission & convents in the different pueblos, names of the padres and Christian teachers and lay brothers.

Then there are charges against the different governors one against another, for speculation. Also a few documents relative to the assassination of Gov. Pérez in 1837, Armijo assuming the reins of gov. at that time, and ordering shot the pretended Governor as he terms it, Gonzalez, and four other insurgents. Also the erection of the fort in 1791 where the present Fort Marcy now stands. Many documents relative to the duties of Custom House officers, and the duties of the territory in 1803, and the number of Spaniards & Pueblo Indians the country then contained. (He states 37,000 1/3 of them Pueblo Indians.)

30. Nambé.

31. Most of the Indian mission records, including those of the Santa Cruz Valley pueblos and Taos, are now in the newly constructed Cathedral Chancery Archives in Santa Fé.

There is an incomplete journal of Diego de Vargas, gov. & capt. gen. from 1692 to 1697. (He was superceded by Rodriguez & returned to Santa Fé in 1703 as Marques de la Nava de Brasinás.) There is also a pay roll dated May 1 1697 giving what purports to be a complete census of the province at that time. He gives the name of every man, woman & child.

The journal of Vargas appears to have been in one vol. stitched or bound, but now torn apart & is in sections. It begins about p. 57 & terminates at about 250. He would make a campaign report in full of what he had done, retaining the original & forwarding copies to the viceroy. This he did to avoid risk of losing the original on the road. He assigns that as a reason.

This journal referring to times previous &c contains much about the insurrection, & the history of the country from 1692 to 1704.

He also speaks of the location of silver and gold mines, of his then working three silver mines. He had the ore of one assayed which showed about \$80 to the ton containing flux to reduce the ore. Also the location of a quicksilver mine, situated on the west bank of the Colorado of the West.