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## MEMOIRS OF FORTY YEARS IN NEW MEXICO<sup>1</sup>

By FRANK BOND

YOU gentlemen have been very kind to me in allowing me to select my own subject, and I am afraid I am imposing on your good nature to a further extent in giving you a few recollections of my early days in Northern New Mexico, and some of the old timers I knew. This to a large extent is personal and for that I must apologize.

I recall my arrival in Santa Fe in September of 1883. The plaza had board walks and balconies overhead, full of saloons and a wide-open town, gambling going on in most of the saloons if not all of them, and Motley's dance hall was going full blast. Spanish was about the only language spoken, or so it seemed to me then. I felt that I was in a foreign city. I recall the drive in the four horse stage to Española, the driver quite picturesque in his blue shirt, broad-brim hat, with buckskin on the seat and knees of his trousers. The country seemed to me to be a perfect desert, and the people we met, with their few burro loads of wood and sacks of grain in tanned buffalo sacks, seemed so poor that I was by no means very favorably impressed with my new home. My brother<sup>2</sup> was then working for Mr. Eldott at Chamita and I joined him that afternoon. Sunday was the big trading day in the week when the people came to church, and I recall that on the first Sunday we took in so much silver the till had to be emptied. There was not much other money in circulation that day apparently. It was more money than I had ever seen before. Two weeks after arriving in Chamita or San Juan, we bought out Scott and Whitehead<sup>3</sup> at Española who had a very small stock of goods. They came in with the Denver and Rio Grande rail-

1. This paper was read before the Ten Dons in Albuquerque in 1929.

See Frank Bond, Necrology, *New Mexico Historical Review*, XX, p. 271 (July, 1945). A few explanatory footnotes have been added. Editor.

2. "My brother George got on the train one day with about \$125.00 which Father furnished him to go to Toronto for his educational test to take up law . . . [A letter from George stated that] he had never stopped at Toronto but was at that time at La Junta, Colo., on his way to Santa Fe." Frank Bond, *Mss. Notes*.

3. For this business venture Father loaned \$1,800.00, George invested \$500, and Frank put in \$30. *Ibid*.

road as bull-whackers and spent three years in the mercantile business. It was a quiet little town then comparatively to what it had been in the railroad building days, when it was really wild and wooly, having eighteen saloons in which people drank and gambled. A real tent town.

Mr. Alex Douglas was a well educated, polished Scotch gentleman, very exact in his dress and carriage, extremely particular in every thing he did. He spoke the Spanish language perfectly; in fact he used to say he dreamed in Spanish. He ran a little store at Abiquiú in company with Mr. Eldott. He used to take pleasure in recounting some of his early experiences. One time he had occasion to go over to Ojo Caliente on a collecting trip. This was his first visit to Ojo Caliente, and when he got through with his business it was late and he decided to stay over night. Everybody traveled on horseback in those days, so he made up his mind to stop at the most attractive looking house he came to. He finally located one that looked just right to him, so he rode in and no sooner got off his horse than a gentleman came to the door and invited him in, telling him that a boy would take care of his horse. His host was very agreeable and he had a very good supper, and just before retiring he said to him, "You have treated me fine and I want to know your name, so that when you come to Abiquiú for our big feast day, Santa Rosa, I will be able to call you by name, and I want you to come and stop with me." He answered, "My name is Antonio Maez, at your service." Alex said he could have sunk through the floor, as Antonio Maez was a man who was feared, a noted desperado and killer. He went to his room, locked the door, but sat up all night long with his pistol in his hand. Don Antonio returned his visit *el dia de Santa Rosa*, and stayed with him, much to the chagrin of his Spanish-American friends. He and Antonio walked around the plaza arm in arm, and every little while one of his friends would call him to one side and say to him, "Don Alejandro, do you know who this man is you are with? There is no more desperate man in the whole territory." It was not long after this until Maez killed a man in Ojo Caliente at a baile and left for parts unknown.

Alex Douglas is the only man I ever knew who forgot his native tongue. He had first come out from Scotland as a boy in his teens, and located in Canada for a few years and then came to this country. He did not realize that he had forgotten his native tongue until one night in Abiquiú after he had retired, leaving his window open off the porch, a couple of men came up on the porch and seated themselves in front of his window and began talking in a language that seemed to sound familiar to him. In the morning these same two men came in to the store and he inquired if they were the parties who had conversed outside his window the previous evening. They answered, "yes," and then he asked them the language they were talking, and when they said "Gaelic," he realized that he had forgotten it. He was called home to see his mother at her last sickness, and one of his sisters had to interpret for him, as his mother could not speak English.

Another of his experiences he used to tell about was how he was the bravest of all his companions. This occurred in Española. A couple of young fellows held up one of the stores, and shot the proprietor, and escaped; but a posse was organized to follow them with two San Juan Indians as trailers. Alex Douglas joined the posse. The two hold-ups separated, but they trailed one to Embudo in an old adobe house. The Indians were ahead, and when they found him they came back to the posse and said in Spanish that he was there and asleep; Alex Douglas was the only one who understood Spanish. He said, "when I knew he was asleep, I rushed ahead of all the others, threw my rifle down on him and told him to surrender." They took him back to Española and that night they hanged him, although Alex did not appear at the hanging. The only request the young fellow made before they strung him up, was that they should take off his boots as his father had told him he would die in his boots, and he said he wanted to make a liar out of the old man.

The Spanish-American people lived very economically in those days, confined themselves to the barest necessities, bought in Groceries—flour, sugar, coffee, lard, syrup and

candles; in Drygoods—calicos, gingham, bleached and unbleached muslin. They made their own underwear out of the bleached and unbleached muslin. The women would occasionally buy silk fringe shawls, some of which were quite expensive. They also bought some filigree jewelry. They were extremely honest about paying their bills, and to this day in case of a death in the family, a son will pay his father's debt, or a father the son's. They look on this as a personal obligation. There is very little money lost even today in trading with the Spanish-American people, if you do not give them too much credit. They spend so much more now and their wants are so much greater, that they have to be watched more carefully.

We had some real wild west characters in Española in those days, like the three Bachelor Brothers who were buffalo hunters out of Dodge City. We also had with us a man called Tucson John, who was half Negro and half Cherokee. He did a little barbering and a great deal of drinking, stole a few chickens, and was supposed to have been with Billy the Kid, although he never claimed the honor. He was all right when he was sober. One-eyed Joe was a cattle rustler; armed to the teeth with Winchester rifle, six-shooter and knife, he used to delight in taking a few drinks, mounting his flea-bitten mare and making that mare curvet up and down in front of the stores and saloons in town. He was really inviting death. He used to get drunk at the bailes and shoot them up, and one night he shot up the town. I know he shot two holes through the roof over our bed where my brother and I were sleeping. This was almost too much to be endured. Some of the citizens decided he should be strung up to a tree; he was tipped off and left town, wandered into a sheep camp where the herders seemed to have known him. He asked for something to eat. They happened to have strychnine for coyotes, and in some unaccountable way that got mingled with his food, and Joe died. There was no investigation; everybody was satisfied that it was an accident.

Two of the Bachelor Brothers finally secured a tie contract and moved to Tres Piedras. The youngest brother re-

mained at Española and secured a job as care-taker of the engines in the round house at Española for the D&RG. They had a friend who visited them from Santa Fe occasionally with the good sounding sobriquet of Pistol Johnny. He was a dangerous man drunk or sober, particularly so when drinking, very treacherous. He got in an altercation one night with Bachelor and killed him. The Bachelors spent a lot of money they could ill afford in prosecuting him, and he finally went free. I recall while attending the trial at Tierra Amarilla, one of the Bachelors' tie men came to him and told him that he was wasting his money in prosecuting John, that he had three good boys with good horses and good guns, and if he would just say the word, they would be glad to accommodate their good friend Bachelor by shooting down Johnny on his way from Tierra Amarilla to Santa Fe. "But," I said, "you would have to kill Frank Chavez the sheriff," as he was a brave man, and would put up a fight. He grinned and said that another one would not matter in the least.

This same man some years later rode into Española on horseback. I had only met him once, so did not recall him. He went over, however, to the blacksmith, who came over with him and told me that this man had two loads of wool on the way from Ojo Caliente to Santa Fe, but if we would pay as much as Santa Fe, we could have it. I assured him that Española was a much better market than Santa Fe. He hung around all day waiting for that wool, suggesting that they must have had a break-down; about six o'clock or dark he decided they would not arrive until the next day or along in the night, and as our friend was very anxious to attend a baile that night, we kindly fixed him up with a new suit, shoes and hat. He shot up the dance that night, and I never saw him again until he came through on the train in shackles. He had killed his wife; and that wool is still on the way.

Mr. A. Staab, father-in-law of Mr. Max Nordhaus and Mr. Louis Ilfeld, was the leading wholesale dealer of General Merchandise in Santa Fe, and I believe of the whole territory. He was very shrewd and keen. I always considered

him the brightest business man in the state. He carried a general stock and did a large business. He used to recount some of his early experiences when Santa Fe was the big and only city west of Kansas City and north of Chihuahua, and they did business in all that vast territory that now comprises Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and got a very considerable trade from Chihuahua, Mexico. I recall his telling me of one sale of \$30,000.00 he made to a Chihuahua merchant, straight calicos, all paid for in Mexican silver dollars. They packed the goods on mules.

He spoke of a very interesting experience he had with a competitor in Santa Fe. This competitor had grabbed all the sugar trade and Mr. Staab could not sell a single bag. He just could not understand it. He had his own trade who of course were friendly to him and bought all their goods from him except their sugar. It occurred to him one day to take a sack of sugar from the load of one of his customers. He weighed it, and it only weighed ninety pounds. The problem was solved. He immediately wrote the refinery, and they advised him that his competitor had informed them that their trade packed all their goods on burros and that a burro could only carry 180 pounds, and in packing sugar ten pounds had to be taken out of each bag, a source of great inconvenience and trouble to all, so in order to accommodate him, they finally put up a car in 90-lb. bags. This, however, was the first and last car they put up this way.

They received so much silver in trade for goods that they had no place to store it, there was far more than they could take care of in their safes, so they packed it in empty axe boxes and piled them up in their offices, and when their bull teams went east for goods, they gave the silver in charge of the boss freighter. He did not tell me but I was told that they carried stocks of goods in Santa Fe invoicing a million dollars in those days. I have just been thinking that in these more civilized times when people are so much better than they were then, that these axe boxes of silver would not be at all safe piled up in an office.

I will say that Mr. Staab was a very good friend to all his customers who were fair and honest with him. He would

lend them money, or carry them for a year if necessary and was always absolutely square in his dealings. He amassed a fortune there in Santa Fe, and no one did as well before or since.

Mr. Griffin was president of the First National Bank when I first came to the state, but died soon after, when Major Palen succeeded him. Major Palen was very precise in his manner, was a small man and carried himself very erect and always carried a cane. He was a very high type, very careful of the bank's money. I have always thought what an excellent banker he would have proved himself for the time of stress we had after the recent war when so many of our banks failed. I predict that his bank would have lost very little money. He was very outspoken and fearless.

I recall a story they tell about him in connection with George Armijo and Liberato Baca. Both political parties had had their convention and George was running on one ticket and Liberato on the other as candidates for the same office. A few days after the convention George saw the Major coming down the street and he thought this an opportune time to approach him, so he went over and said, "Good Morning Major." "Good Morning George." "Major I am running for office as assessor and would like to have your support." "Who is your opponent George?" "Liberato Baca." The Major coughed his little cough as usual, and responded, "Of two evils I shall choose the lesser," and walked on.

During the panic of 1893 he was very much annoyed one morning as he came down the street to see Don Pablo Gallegos of Abiquiú hitching his team in front of the Plaza. Don Pablo was a heavy depositor of the bank, a wealthy man for those days. He was sure Don Pablo had come down to draw out all his money, and as it was a very considerable amount, he was quite worried. They talked about the crops and politics in Rio Arriba County, and after they had visited, Don Pablo said, "Well Major, I have just come down to make a little deposit with you," and handed him \$10,000.00

in currency, and went away, never knowing that there was such a thing as a panic.

When Major Palen became president of the bank, Howard Vaughn became cashier. Howard was a protege of Steve Elkins. He was very capable regardless of the fact that he got drunk every night of his life; he was sober as a judge and right on the job every morning. Howard Vaughn is a very good man, and I do not believe he touches liquor now. At this time a man by the name of Raynolds of Nebraska and his partner Stinson of Santa Fe were operating in sheep. Raynolds was a big operator, but not at all successful, he never saw anything but the silver lining. He operated on a shoe string. He paid a very small advance on the lambs and always hoped to be able to find a buyer for them before receiving time, or to find somebody to put up the money to pay for any he could not sell at receiving time. They had induced the Major to loan them some money, promising prompt payment when they would turn their next lambs. They had some lambs to receive at Galestee that morning and he had no means of paying for them, so Mr. Stinson called up the bank from Lamy and Howard Vaughn answered the 'phone. Howard had probably taken a little bracer that morning; he called the Major to the 'phone. Stinson explained his position that he had to receive these lambs from Mr. Juan Ortiz who was a good friend of the bank's, and would pay for them just as soon as he could ship them and distribute them to his feeders, and really it was absolutely necessary that he should have this money. The Major responded that he was still owing the bank money which they had promised to pay without fail some weeks ago, they were not reliable people and he simply did not want the business, in fact he got quite angry and finally said, "You are drunk, I smell whiskey on your breath." Vaughn used to take delight in telling this story on the Major.

I recall the panic of 1893, the banks would not loan a dollar. We bought all the wool in our country at six cents per pound and sold it for six and a half cents; in fact we had it sold before we bought it; otherwise we could not have

handled it. We had no competition. Wool was so low in price that the Arizona wool growers were unable to get enough for their wool to pay the freight and the shearing charges. Those fine Arizona ewes sold under the hammer at 50 cents per head. We were forced to take ewes in payment of accounts at one dollar per head which was full value for them. This price seems ridiculous now when ewes are selling at ten and twelve dollars per head. During this panic of 1893, most of the merchants had to remit the currency for their groceries which they bought in Colorado, as the wholesale grocery dealers were afraid the banks would break before the checks would be paid. Conditions were bad in New Mexico, but I doubt very much that we had anything like the suffering they had in other states; in fact I am sure we didn't.

The Roosevelt panic in 1907 was a bad one too in our business, that is, trading in sheep. We buy and advance a dollar a head, and we contract to the feeder and he advances us a dollar per head. These feeders don't have their own money to operate, but in those days borrowed generally from their local banks which were necessarily small banks. They came on to receive their sheep (the panic occurred in the fall). Not knowing that there was a panic, they gave us their checks and drafts on their banks, quite a number of these were turned down, and the result was we had to appeal to our banks for help, as there was no other way to do except carry these sheep for those feeders until they were fat and sold on the market. The Major surely proved a loyal friend to us during this cataclysm, which by the way was one of his favorite words.

I recall during this trouble having received word that one of these drafts for \$18,000.00 had been turned down. I took the train from Española to see the Major at Santa Fe. I was feeling bad when I left home but when I got to Santa Fe the agent handed me two wires when I got off the train advising me of two other drafts for different amounts being turned down. By that time I was sick! I could not find Major Palen, and did not see him until late that night, at least it seemed long to me. He told me he would see us

through, but not to use the bank for any more than we had to. I still had quite a number of sheep to receive and pay for. I recall going up to Servilleta to receive lambs from a bunch of our old customers. I told them about the panic and the position we were in, that we could borrow the money to pay for the lambs, but if they did not need all the money we would appreciate it if they would wait until the lambs were marketed next spring. One of the biggest men spoke up at once and said he did not need a cent, and I could keep all his money, and there was not one but what left part of his money with us. One man who was not there had one of his neighbors deliver his lambs, and as I could not talk to him personally, I mailed him a check for his in full. He wrote me back at once enclosing my check, and said he understood I was giving out my notes in payment of lambs as all his neighbors had told him, and he would be glad to have a note instead of the money. I never forgot how those Spanish-Americans stood by me in our time of need. I remember another customer telling me that he had some \$2,000.00 in twenty dollar gold pieces, to send up one of the clerks and he would give it to him. He said he did not want any interest, but he wanted me to pay him back in gold coin. No doubt he buried it. I, however, did pay him interest. I will say for our old time Spanish-American people that they are the most loyal people that I have ever met, and if you get their confidence, they are your friends always. I thank you.