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Juan Aragon y Perea

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## A BRIEF MEMOIR

JULIAN ARAGON Y PEREA

*translated and edited by Gerald Theisen*

## INTRODUCTION

IN HIS brief memoir Julian Aragon y Perea stated that he was born in Belen, New Mexico, in 1830. This fact cannot be confirmed by the baptismal records preserved in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. It is almost certain however, that his birth did occur in New Mexico during the brief period of Mexican administration. It therefore follows that as a youth he witnessed the cession of Mexican territory and the imposition of United States control. As might be expected from one who experienced authority from two external sources, his orientation was to New Mexico, rather than to the United States or to Mexico. This is illustrated in his memoir by the statement that in October of 1848 he "joined an ox train which was returning to the United States from Santa Fe." Nevertheless, he often served the United States indirectly in several official positions. In this sense, he is representative of many former Mexican citizens who served their local area in a variety of minor public offices so necessary to the operation of territorial government.

Without much detail, Julian Aragon mentioned the limited service he saw during the Civil War. His experience provides an interesting insight into the organization of volunteer soldiers. In a letter to Captain G. Chapin, the New Mexican noted that he had "expended for subsistence, horses, equipment, forage, clothing and other necessary expenses, over eight thousand dollars" in sup-

port of his company of volunteers, and that he had only received "about \$500" as reimbursement. He continued, "unless I am able to collect these accounts or expenditures, myself and family are reduced to absolute want."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, Julian Aragon apparently became a victim of the military bureaucracy. In a subsequent letter he informed Captain Chapin that he did not have the requested "fund account" record necessary to receive reimbursement. On the reverse side of Julian Aragon's letter is a note written "by the order of Brigadier General Canby." It states that "the commander of a company is charged with the duty of knowing its accounts and should be prepared at all times to furnish any information in relation to them."<sup>2</sup> This apparently settled the matter.

Mr. Aragon noted in his memoir that shortly thereafter he lost seventy-five head of livestock to the Navajo. After this he mentions little of note until 1878 when he was, in fact, destitute and was forced to take sheep *al partido* (on shares). Most probably, Julian Aragon's financial situation would have been better in 1878 if he had received the reimbursement he requested in 1862.

The highest office Julian Aragon y Perea held was that of territorial legislator. He served as a Representative to the seventeenth Legislative Assembly of New Mexico Territory during 1867 and 1868,<sup>3</sup> in which he was quite active. He sat on several committees and proposed a number of bills. One of the more interesting proposals he introduced would have allowed county probate judges "to facilitate and extend the record of titles granted by the governments of Spain and Mexico to citizens of this territory."<sup>4</sup>

It is important to investigate the activities of minor public officials like Julian Aragon y Perea. Perhaps, with the aid of manuscripts more detailed than this brief memoir, we may achieve better understanding of life in territorial New Mexico.

Julian Aragon y Perea was buried in Anton Chico on October 6, 1905.<sup>5</sup> The memoir remains in the possession of the author's grandson, Adelaido Sanchez, a native of Anton Chico, and it is published here with his kind permission.

## MEMOIR

JULIAN ARAGON Y PEREA was born in the town of Belen, county of Valencia, New Mexico, January 28, 1830. In 1832 his parents, Roman Aragon and Margarita Perea, went to the town of Berna-lillo, New Mexico, and made their home there. At that place his mother died on the third of April, 1844. In February of 1847, his father, Roman Aragon, went with his family and four men and a woman to the county of San Miguel, New Mexico, and he made his home in the town of Anton, where he was married in the same year to Doloritas Gonzales. From that marriage he had two boys, Luciano and Toribio.

Julian Aragon, at that time eighteen years old, was enticed in October of 1848 by two young neighbors, Miguel Barela and Rumaldo Gonzales. Together the three joined an ox train which was returning to the United States from Santa Fe. The boss (Pearce) consented and permitted them to go. In December they arrived at the city of Independence, Missouri, at that time the terminal city for the freighters to New Mexico. From there another man (William Brooms) took Julian Aragon to his house, a house one hundred and fifty miles from that town. In that house he lived and was very well liked by the man and his family. There he went to the public school for three months. In that time Mr. Brooms sold his property and went to a place in the state of Ohio, leaving from Jefferson City, the capital of Missouri. Although Mr. Brooms begged him, Julian Aragon stayed there because he did not want to continue farther.

Since he liked it there very much, he signed on with Mr. John Monk for a salary of \$10 a month. He drove an ox cart, hauling coal from a mine twenty-five miles from the city. At the end of this time he received his pay and worked in the shop of a tailor in order to learn the skill. There he worked in this position until October of 1850. Again he left his job, and he signed on for a salary of \$45 a month with Mr. Mich Rosel, a government contractor who was freighting to New Mexico. He reported to a boss who outfitted a train of twenty-five carts destined for Santa Fe, New Mexico. He worked in this employment as a wagoner

until arriving at Santa Fe in January of 1851. He was then discharged from this job, and he received one hundred and three pesos. He spent \$3 for supplies, and he set out toward Anton Chico, where his father and brothers resided. On the 31st of January he arrived there, after only a short time. He divided his money with his father. He gave his father \$50 and left \$50 for himself. He invested his money by buying corn, and he was to be paid in October. In time he collected it. There were one hundred sacks in March.

He went to the town of San Miguel, at that time the chief city of the county of its name and the place of most commercial importance. He made arrangements with Benito Látex y Sampson to make clothes for his store. He worked in that position until May. At that time those gentlemen gave him goods on commission. He resettled in Anton Chico. He opened up his business the 10th of May. The 10th of August he was married to Maria de la Luz Rael. In October he was able to collect his commercial investment, and he sold the one hundred sacks of corn previously mentioned at \$5 per hundred pounds. In May of 1852 he gave up the foreign business, and he stayed with the little profit which he had. In February of 1853 he made a trip to trade with the Apache Indians. He bought some cattle in June of 1853. He took goods belonging to Don José L. Perea from Bernalillo on commission in Anton Chico until 1856. In 1857 he worked as a freighter from Kansas City to New Mexico and other places until 1861.

In September of 1861 he organized a company of volunteers at his own expense, although it cost him nothing less than \$10,000. He was received and sworn into the service of the United States with his soldiers at Fort Union, New Mexico, for three years on the 3rd of October of 1861 under the designation of Company B, 4th Regiment of Mounted Volunteers, having the rank of Captain under the name of Julian Aragon y Perea. In April of 1862 most of his soldiers deserted at Fort Union. As a consequence Captain Julian Aragon y Perea resigned from the service. He put all his business with the government in order, and he went to see his wife and family.

Immediately, he applied himself to commerce, planting, freighting, and breeding cattle. On March 10th of 1863, the Navajo Indians carried away seventy-five head of livestock. In 1878 he took sheep *al partido* from Don Guadalupe Gutierrez. He held them until 1883 when he turned them over.

Without pay, in 1882, 1883, 1886, 1888, 1889, and 1891, he was named supervisor of public schools in various school districts of the county of San Miguel. In 1867 he was named Representative to the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of New Mexico. In December of 1863 he was commissioned by Henry Connelly (Governor) as first lieutenant of militia, Company D, 1st Regiment, 2nd Brigade. In 1885 he was named deputy assessor for the county of San Miguel by W. D. Kistler. In the same year he was commissioned to take the census in district number three. He served as a member of the grand and petit juries of the district court in the county of San Miguel. In 1888 he was president of the body of directors. In 1893, 1894, and 1895 he was named director of schools for school district number 42 in the county of Guadalupe, and he served as court clerk of the body. On June 6th of 1890 he was named notary public for the county of San Miguel by the Governor. On February 4th of 1893 he was again named notary public for four years. On January 22nd of 1892 a pension of eight pesos a month was granted to him by the Governor under the law of June 24, 1890.

### NOTES

1. Letter to Captain G. Chapin, Acting Adjutant General, Department of New Mexico, Santa Fe, May 29, 1862, National Archives, Record Group 94, compiled service record no. 337, 4th New Mexico Infantry.
2. Letter to Chapin, July 14, 1862, *ibid.*
3. *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Territory of New Mexico, 1867-68* (Santa Fe, 1868), p. 5.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
5. "Cemetery Book," Saint Joseph's Church, Anton Chico, New Mexico, Book 2, p. 15.