

[Francisco Gomez]

Edith L. Crawford,

Carrizozo, N. Mex.

Francisco Gomez.

Lincoln, N. Mex.

Words 1362.

AUG 15 1938 2nd PIONEER STORY

I was born at Manzano, Valencia County, New Mexico, on September 17, 1854. My father was Guadalupe Gomez and my mother was Susanita Serna. Both my father and my mother were born near what is now Belen, New Mexico. My father worked for a man named Jose Sais at Manzano and was foreman of his sheep ranch.

Once when I was about seven years old my father sent me out to find the oxen and drive them to the house. It was rather early in the morning. I had made me a little fiddle out of a cigar box and I was going along playing it when an Indian stepped from behind a bush and snatched me up. I was very scared and cried and the Indian slapped his hand over my mouth. He carried me under his arm for about a half mile and then he came up to five more Indians. The one that had me put me on the ground and told me to walk fast. They punched and poked at me all the time to make me go faster. I was barefooted and the rocks and sticks cut my feet and made them bleed. I'd try to sit down to rest and they would kick me and make me move on again. When they got way up on the side of Manzano mountain they stopped for the night. They tied my hands and feet with raw hide tho'ngs. They did not have any thing to eat but pinions. I was so awful tired and worn out

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that I went to sleep and did not wake up until daylight. Only one Indian was there when I woke up but the rest soon came in and they talked and talked for a long time. I don't know all they said but they had wanted to steal some horses and either could not find any or they were too closely guarded and they did not get any. They untied my hands and feet and told me to start 2 down the mountain. I ran as hard as I could go because I was afraid they would come after me. After I had gone for a ways I met my father with a bunch of men coming to look for me. I was awfully glad to see them. My father took me in his arms and turned back with me to take me home. The rest of the men went on up the mountain to hunt for the Indians, but they never did catch up with them. They were Navajo Indians.

I remember that they had ear rings in their ears that were made of silver and were round loops. They wore a band around their heads with feathers stuck in it and had on breech clouts and moccasins. They had necklaces of beads and silver ornaments that hung down on their chests. I remember that the one who carried me had on three of these necklaces. They all had bows and arrows. I do not know what they were made of but the tips of the arrows were of flint about an inch or an inch and a half long and were white or light colored. When the Indian first caught me he had his bow and some arrows in his hand and after we had gone a ways he put the bow in a kind of scabbard on his back and the arrows in a kind of bag hung on one shoulder. My father told me that the Indians had carried me about twenty miles from home. I had been away nearly all one day and one night. I did not have anything but pinions to eat all the time.

My father and mother moved to Lincoln New Mexico in 1863, when I was about nine years old. I do not remember very much about the trip but we moved in a wagon with an ox team. My father settled on a place about a quarter of a mile east of Lincoln and farmed. He used oxen altogether on the farm.

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I can remember when we lived in Manzano that the oxen had big horns and the ropes were fastened to their horns but when we moved to Lincoln they used yokes on the oxen. I

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had never seen them before. When we planted corn at Lincoln my father drove the team of oxen and I dropped the corn in the furrow.

Father would go up in the mountains near our house and cut down trees for wood and would put a chain around the tree and the oxen would snake the tree down the mountain side to the house. When I was about eighteen years old I went to work for the McSween's. I stayed with them for about two years. I remember that one winter Billy the Kid stayed with the McSween's for about seven months. I guess he boarded with them. He was an awfully nice young fellow with light brown hair, blue eyes, and rather big front teeth. He always dressed very neatly.

He used to practise target shooting a lot. He would thro'w up a can and would twirl his six gun on his finger and he could hit the can six times before it hit the ground. He rode a big roan horse about ten or twelve hands high, all that winter and when this horse was out in the pasture Billy would go to the gate and whistle and the horse would come up to the gate to him. That horse would follow Billy and mind him like a dog. He was a very fast horse and could out run most of the other horses around there. I never went out with Billy but once.

Captain Baca was sheriff then and once some tough outlaws came to Lincoln and rode up and down the streets and shot out window lights in the houses and terrorized people. Captain Baca told Billy the Kid to take some men and go after these men. Billy took me and Florencio and Jose Chaves and Santano [Maes?] with him. The outlaws went to the upper Ruidoso and we followed them. We caught up with them and shot it out with them. One of the outlaws was killed and the other ran away. None of us were hurt.

When the Lincoln County war broke out my father did not want to get into it so he made me quit working for the McSween's and come home and stay there. My father did not take any part in the war. I was married to Crecencia Sales in 1881 at Lincoln. We never had any children of our own but we adopted two girls. One is married and the other lives with

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me now at Lincoln. My wife died about ten years ago. My father and mother both died at Lincoln and are buried there.

I still live on the old place that my father settled on so many years ago. I have been Justice of the Peace of Lincoln county for about twenty years at different times and was Probate Judge from about 1900 to 1904. I got so old that I would not serve as Justice of the Peace any more.

I have lived all of my life in New Mexico and have been in Lincoln County for seventy-five years. I do not speak English, but understand it fairly well.

NARRATOR: Francisco Gomez, Lincoln, New Mexico. Aged 84 years.