

[Sadie Orchard]

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Subject: SADIE ORCHARD, ONE OF FEW NEW MEXICO WOMEN STAGE DRIVERS

S-240 - Folk-ways

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SADIE ORCHARD, ONE OF FEW NEW MEXICO WOMEN STAGE DRIVERS

There weren't many careers for women in the good old days, but Sadie Orchard carved out a rather unusual career for herself back in the eighties.

Mrs. Orchard was one of New Mexico's few women stage drivers and today is owner of the Orchard Hotel in Hillsboro, New Mexico.

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In a personal interview, Mrs. Orchard told the colorful story:

"I came to Kingston, famous mining town in Black Range District in Sierra County, in 1886, "Mrs. Orchard said.

"At that time Kingston was a mining town of about 5,000 population with a big silver boom going full sway. Dance halls and saloons did a rushing business almost day and night. Fortunes were made, and in some cases, lost over night."

"Mr. Orchard and I drove the stage line for 14 years. We had two Concord coaches and an express wagon."

DROVE HORSES

"I drove four and six horses every day from Kingston to Lake Valley and sometimes as far as Mutt station."

"In those days we did not have the roads we can justly boast of in New Mexico today, and my trips were surely trying - especially thru picturesque Box Canyon between Kingston and Hillsboro."

"Many times I had for passengers some very famous people. Lillian Russel, stage star, as far as I know was never in Kingston, but members of her troupe were, and I had occasion to meet the actress. She was a 2 guest at one time on a ranch West of Hillsboro, The Horseshoe ranch, I believe."

Having been told that Mrs. Orchard had some very rare old pictures of some of the pioneers of Kingston, I asked if I might see them, but was told that old timers had taken them all, one by one, leaving none for "Sadie" as old timers all over the state call her.

GETTING OLDER

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Sadie, the daring stage driver of those good old days which Gene Rhodes delighted to write about so realistically, is getting older as the years slip by, but she is still the big-hearted, resourceful woman of frontier days who saw her job, tackled it broicALLY and did it manfully with a twinkle in her eyes.

"I'm a product of the 'Old West'," laughed Mrs. Orchard, "and you know in those days we didn't have much chance to practice the refinements and niceties of high society."

However, the writer of this sketch knows scores of pioneers who can vouch for her charity to her fellowmen.

The Santa Fe branch line cut-off to Nutt and Lake Valley replaced the stage coach line, but now the railroad to those points is to be abandoned. The famous Bridal Chamber mine with its millions of high grade ore has been shut down. Time marches on bringing many changes.