

Carrizozo, N. Mex.

PIONEER STORY.

By- Mrs. Mary E. Burleson.

My husband Pete Burleson, came to Cimarron, New Mexico in Colfax County in the year of 1876, from the Big Bend country in Texas, which is located in the Davis Mountains, he arrived in Colfax county with about (1500) hundred head of cattle, he settled on a place on the Red River, built a two room log cabin and settled down to raising cattle.

In 1877, my father O.K. Chittenden and Clay Allison brought Mr. Burleson, down to our house to try and persuade him to run for sheriff of Colfax County, is how I first met him.

He first said he would not consider making the race at all as he had his cattle and place to look after, and how much better off he would of been if he had only staid with his first decision as he realized very little out of his ranche and cattle.

They kept after him until he made the race and was elected by a large majority, this was in November, 1877, he took office January 1, 1878, one of the first things he did after taking office, was to run down a negro man by the name of Jack (is the only name I ever heard him called,) he had killed Mr. Maxwell and his twelve year old boy, they had just come to Colfax county from Iowa, and had bought a Ranche and were living in a tent they had this negro Jack hired to cut post for fencing the place, he killed Mr. Maxwell in the tent, took one of his saddle horses

and rode down the road and met the boy coming in with a load of posts, he spoke to the boy and rode on by the wagon turned and shot the boy in the back watched him until he saw him fall from the wagon.

The horses with the wagon went on down the road until they came to the gate entering the Maxwell rancho, on passing through the gate one of the front wheels caught on the gate post, and held the wagon fast, the team stood there two days without food or water, one of the neighboring ranchers was passing by and saw the team standing at the gate, he stopped by to see what was the matter as the horses seemed to be so restless, he went on up to the tent where he found Mr. Maxwell, dead shot through the head.

He went back to the horses unhitched them fed and watered them, and then started out for help, he had only gone a short distance from the gate when he found the boy face down in the middle of the road.

He summoned help and started looking for the negro but he was no where around the rancho, so they knew this negro would know something about the killing, so the hunt for the negro started and they found him at his home in Trinidad, Colorado, where his wife lived.

Mr. Barleson, brought him back to Cimarron, New Mexico, to wait trial, but the feeling was so bitter against the negro he was taken to Taos, New Mexico, for trial and was sentenced

to be hanged at Cimarron, New Mexico, Gelfax County citizens still wanted to take the negro out and hang him, but Mr. Burleson, appealed to these men as citizens of Gelfax County to let the law take its course and hang the negro, and this was the first hanging by law in the Territory of New Mexico, It was in the month of May, 1878. My aunt and I went to see the negro hung but upon seeing him on the gallows and hearing his confession that he did not know why he killed Mr. Maxwell and his son we did not stay to see him hung, but lots of people did as it was a public hanging and the first one in that part of the country.

Mr. Burleson and I were married in Trinidad, Colorado, July 21, 1878, I was going with Mr. Burleson when he ran for sheriff the first time, and did not want to marry him until his term expired, he begged and promised me if I would marry him that year he would not run for the second term, but there was so much pressure brought to bear that he did run the second time and was elected by the largest majority that any sheriff had ever been elected by, at that time, he ran against a man by the name of Joe Hollbrook.

It was either the 29, or thirtieth, of November 1879, that the Santa Fe Railroad crossed the line into New Mexico, W.R. Herley one of the engineers who helped survey the right of way drove the first spike and Mr. Burleson, then sheriff of Gelfax County drove the second spike, in the first Railroad to enter New Mexico.

I went to Trinidad, Colorado, on the last stage coach that run for the next day the mail came in on the train.

In July, 1881, Governor Lew Wallace, asked Mr. Burleson to organize a posse, and go to Lincoln County and help catch Billy the kid, about the time they were ready to leave for Lincoln County, Pat Garrett, killed the Kid at Fort Sumner, New Mexico. When Mr. Burleson's time expired December 31, 1881, we moved to Springer, New Mexico, and went into the cattle business again but did not do so well, so Mr. Burleson went to work for wages and we moved to Magdalena, New Mexico, we did not stay there very long as the VV Cattle Company sent for him to come to Lincoln County and take charge of their cattle we staid there a couple of years and then moved to Lincoln, New Mexico, where he was deputy sheriff under Dan W. Roberts for two terms, and deputy sheriff under Emil Fritz, for two years.

While Mr. Burleson was sheriff and also deputy sheriff he never went after a man but what he got him.

There was five children born to this union, our oldest a boy was born in 1879, at Cimarron, New Mexico, the second a girl at Springer, New Mexico, and the next a girl in Socorro County and the last two boys in Lincoln, New Mexico.

Narrator: Mrs. Mary E. Burleson, Age 78, Carrizozo, New Mexico.