

An Incident In the Life of Albert E. Thurber in Mexico

In 1885 a migration began in the south western United States of white people to northern Chihuahua, Mexico. They were welcomed by the president, Porfirio Diaz, of Mexico to establish colonies and help develop the resources of that country. As a result three thriving towns (seven communities were established in the state of Chihuahua and two in the state of Sonora, A.E. Thurber must be referring to the larger towns of Colonia Dias, Colonia Dublan and Colonia Juarez W.W.S.) were established in that part of Mexico. About ten years after their beginning, my father, hearing of the advantages of having a warmer country where the winters were short and the summers long, moved his family there, where I grew up from a small lad to manhood and married a daughter of one of the first settlers.

As a livelihood I secured a job as a clerk in a large merchantile establishment called the Union Merchantile. Up until the Revolution started things were very peaceful and we were a very happy and contented people. After the war had been going almost two years and our part of the country was filled with rebel bands they looted all merchantile institutions starting with Japanese, Chinese and German businesses and then they began on the American owned stores. These rebel bands consisted of about five hundred men and the more desperate they became the more demanding. They first demanded horses, saddles and cattle for beef. Their source of supply of guns and ammunition were coming from the United States. Smuggled across the border mainly through small New Mexico ports.

First occasion of their raid on our store was by one of their agents, however, when he completed outfitting his small band of men consisting of about twenty five to thirty, to our surprise and astonishment he brought in a whole bag of silver pesos and gave them to us in payment.

A week later the big leader came down from his head-quarters at old Casas Grandes with a troupe of cavalry about two hundred men. He demanded that his entire company be outfitted with clothing consisting of shoes, hats, underwear and blankets. Being the head man in the clothing and shoe department, I immediately dismissed all the lady clerks consisting of both white and Mexican girls and sent them out through a gate in the back fence, so the rebels did not see them at all.

The managers of all the departments held a council with the rebel leader requesting that the transaction be orderly but we would give them what they needed. The first gesture we made toward being friendly was to offer hay to feed their horses while they were there, requesting that they retire across the street to a vacant lot and the hay would be delivered to them. This resulted in their leaders becoming friendly rather than aggressive. With our force we were able to wait on about fifty men at one time and we handled it in such a way that we made an itemized statement of all the goods which we gave out to them so that we might make a claim on their would-be government, or provisional government.

Throughout the day there was not a single incident that was disagreeable except one fellow who was not satisfied with the hat

I gave him and poked his gun in my ribs, demanding a better one but was immediately reprimanded by his superior officer standing near.

After they were outfitted and had retired from the store to where their mounts were, the leader requested a statement of the amount which came to nearly \$3000. This he signed by writing in red ink the name of the Provisional Government across the face of it and that was all the pay our establishment received.

Shortly after that the colonies left there and the merchandise that remained in the big store was haluled off in box cars to the rebel army and the building (was) burned.

The following are a couple of pages I copied from Aunt Amy's Book. They are just partially there but I thought they were interesting enough that we would want to read them. W W.S.

Reminiscences of A.E. Thurber

-----ten horses, three wagons and (I) continued freighting for nearly a year before returning home. Father had left me and gone home because of the illness and health of my young sister, Geneveive. He (?) stayed and tended the farm and I stayed with the freight job until almost Christmas time, when I sold part of the teams and returned home.

During the winter I was 19 and 20. I went to school with several older boys and we finished the 7th and 8th grades in one winter. Then I attended the Juarez Stake Academy three years, completing a course in bookkeeping and accounting and the two years of Spanish under Manrique Gonzales, a very good Mexican teacher.

I had good times all through the years with many boy and girl friends. It was while attending the academy the second year I met and fell in love with Amy whiting whom I married and who has been my faithful wife and companion through the years. It seems now in reminiscing that all of my companions through the years were of the very highest and cleanest type both girl and boy friends, all of whom so far as I can learn have taken their places and filled them well in the church and the business world, but of all of these I chose the very finest and but for her faithfulness I'm certain I could not have accomplished half of what I have. Amy graduated from the Juarez Academy in the spring of 1908 and we were married in the Salt Lake Temple Oct. of that year. After our marriage we spent two weeks visiting relatives in Utah, then returned to Dublan, Mex. where I continued to work in the store for about four more years or until July 1912 when we were forced to leave there on account of the revolutionary conditions there.

We landed in St. Johns in August of 1912, Amy, her mother and the children coming about two weeks before I came. I had remained in El Paso and Hachita, New Mexico trying to find work. I found Aunt Amy and children staying with Clara Burk and family and the next morning I left to take a job on the Whiting sawmill. In October (I) started to work in the A.C.M.I. and worked there for 15 years. In 1917 (I) homesteaded a ranch at Vernon. In 1914 (I) completed a new home on (a) five acre tract on the edge of St. Johns and we moved into it at Thanksgiving time.

(In the) spring (1915) the Lyman Dam broke and left us without water for several years. I sold the ranch and cattle at Vernon in 1928 and in February of the year opened a barber shop and dry cleaning business in St. Johns where we are still in business.

In 1940 I bought a lot in town close to my business and built a home in town. I sold my large home and land to Bud Cowley and moved into the new home in town in the fall of 1941. Now at 74 I am still active and operating my business.

Church Activities

Sunday School chorister in Dublan for one year before I left there. Ward clerk in Dublan under my father, A.D. Thurber, bishop for six months just before leaving. Sunday School superintendent in St. Johns three years. In the presidency of Seventy's Quorum for about ten years. Filled a short term mission in northern states in 1927 in Wisconsin District.

Stake clerk in St. Johns with Pres Levi S. Udall twelve years. In the High Council one year, then Stake clerk again for two years until Pres. Udall was released. Secretary of High Priests Quorum under Pres. Carl A. Anderson and Hugh Richey about four years. Group leader of High Priest's group in St. Johns Ward for six years.

Ward teacher 25 years. I took pride in always making full and complete visits. Believe fully in law of tithing, proud of having been a full tithe payer all my adult life. Thoroughly converted to church welfare, fast offering and budget system of Ward. Felt that we have been blessed abundantly in trying to comply faithfull with these requirements.

Have always cultivated and cherished love and friendship for all people. (I) Believe wholly and sincerely in prayer as a medium of communication with our Father in Heaven.

written by A. Ezrel Thurber