

Juan Mena, 109 Year Old Veteran Who Commanded Maximilian Firing Squad, Dies After Sudden Illness

ALAMOGORDO, N. M., Sept. 15 (SP).—Juan Mena, who figured in the execution of emperor Maximilian in Mexico in 1867, died suddenly at his home here at 5 o'clock Monday at the age of 109 years. Mena was one of Alamogordo's most respected Spanish American citizens and despite his age, was active to the last, being on the street a few hours before his death.

Mr. Mena served in the Mexican army for 18 years and was captain of infantry at the time of the revolt against Maximilian. He commanded the squad of five detailed to execute the French emperor and his three Mexican generals, Mijelas, Mirabon and Marquez in 1867.

Although Mena could neither read nor write, his mind was keen and his narratives of the historical events were always the same and tallied almost perfectly with history records of the rebellion which resulted in the death of the French emperor.

The three generals were executed first, according to Mr. Mena's story, and the volley struck the emperor

just as he had finished confession to the Catholic priest.

As is the Mexican custom, captain Mena, as commander of the firing squad, fired the "mercy shot" which struck Maximilian in the forehead. Mr. Mena related to his friends here how the empress, Charlotte, crazed with grief, was made to witness the execution.

Mr. Mena was born in Santa Rosalia, near Monterey, Mex., in 1817, and entered the army of general Juarez when he was 12 years old, serving then for 14 years. After twenty years of civilian life he re-entered the army, serving for four years. He was fifty years old at the time of Maximilian's death.

He lived in San Antonio for many years and spent seventeen years in El Paso before coming here eight years ago.

Porfirio Diaz, former president of Mexico, was a captain of cavalry of equal rank with captain Mena in the Mexican revolution.

Mena went to El Paso to meet him a few years ago when Diaz visited that city. Captain Mena was never married, and has made his home here with Mr. and Mrs. Abe Apodaca.