

Educator's Ancestor Fought San Elizario Indian Attacks

By VIRGINIA TURNER
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Activities of San Elizario residents center around their church and school.

And the story of Alfonso Alarcon, superintendent and principal of the San Elizario Independent School District, interlocks with the story of San Elizario.

Mr. Alarcon's great-grandfather, Capt. Gregorio Nacianeno Garcia, was born in San Elizario. He became an American citizen when Texas joined the United States in 1845. He led residents in efforts to repel Indian attacks.

MR. ALARCON was studying commercial law, intending to become a lawyer at International Business College in El Paso when he returned to San Elizario for a holiday.

He got his bachelor's degree at the University of California at Los Angeles and his master's degree at Sul Ross.

HE POINTED to the school building, the largest structure in San Elizario, where grades one through eight are taught.

"That is my college," he said with a grin, "and I am the president."

Mr. Alarcon was born Feb. 17, 1901, in San Elizario and like many other residents, has lived there all his life.

"I like the quiet," he said. Mr. Alarcon is Democratic chairman of his precinct, and also serves as precinct election judge. He is supreme president of the Catholic Union of St. Joseph, a post he has held for 27 years.

RIGHT NOW he is coach and instructor in basketball, volleyball, ping pong and other sports for the County Summer recreational program.

"In the evening, practically everyone takes part," he said. "Even the ladies. We have all ages — young ones, middle-aged, and older ones. They play softball and hardball."

Many of San Elizario's residents were born and raised in the town. They participate with enthusiasm in church festivals and school events, almost as a huge family. And many are related.

El Paso historians are interested in restoration of some of San Elizario's buildings and promoting the town as a tourist attraction.



Lorenzo Alarcon

"IT'S A FINE idea," Mr. Alarcon said. "I'm in favor of it. I'm sure everyone else would be too. There would be the question of money. Many of the residents here farm on a modest scale. But I'm sure of their co-operation in any such project."

"I think it would be wonderful," Mrs. Bernie Madrid, operator of El Molino Grocery Store, said. "The old buildings should be preserved."

MRS. MADRID was also born and reared in San Elizario. She and her husband named the store "El Molino," which means "The Mill, because the building was the second location of the first flour mill in the County.

When the original building burned, the mill was moved. Mr. Alarcon estimates San Elizario's population at about 2000. There are 228 students.

MR. ALARCON'S grandfather was mayor of San Elizario. He was also a farmer and merchant. His father, who died when Mr. Alarcon was two, was a farmer. His mother was postmistress in San Elizario for 28 years.

Of Mr. Alarcon's seven children (six daughters and one son) five are teachers and a sixth, Lorenzo Jr., is attending Texas Western College and intends to teach.

Mr. Alarcon lives across the street from the old jail, the first jail in El Paso County,



JAIL-COURTHOUSE—Old San Elizario jail at extreme left. Room at right was second location of the first El Paso County Courthouse.

ANCIENT TREE — Lorenzo Alarcon stands in trunk of pecan tree, estimated to be about 200 years old when it burned down seven years ago. The tree had a diameter of four feet and had a spread of almost 100 feet.

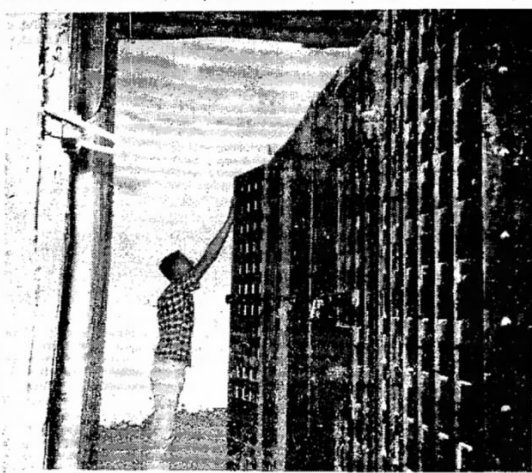
which was organized in 1850. San Elizario was the first county seat.

THE JAIL in 1877 once housed Melquiades Segura, a buddy of Billy the Kid.

The Kid, during a visit to Mesilla, heard his friend was in jail in San Elizario. He left Mesilla late one afternoon and by 3 a.m. the next day he was in San Elizario.

Billy slipped up to the jail and knocked on the door. When the Mexican jailer called, "Quien es?" Billy answered: "Texas Rangers. Open up. We have two American prisoners."

AS THE DOOR swung open, Billy pushed in and shoved his six-shooter into the astonished jailer's stomach. Billy disarmed him. A guard, disturbed by the noise, came to investigate. He was relieved of his gun. Billy released Segura and locked the two Mexicans in the cell.



BILLY THE KID WAS HERE—Interior of old jail consists of iron cell blocks. It was here in 1877 that Billy the Kid freed his pal, Segura and locked up the jailer.

Then Billy and Segura, on Rio Grande and were soon safe in Old Mexico.

TOMORROW: The Vico-Regal Mansion.

Make the deal of the year