

### John T. Pruitt, Deceased.

Tuesday, March 2nd, at 10:30 p. m., John T. Pruitt died at the advanced age of 83 in the home of his son, J. A. Pruitt, at Vigo, Concho county, Texas. The remains were buried in the Henderson cemetery Thursday at 12:30 o'clock. Old age was the cause of death. He leaves one son, Lee A., and two daughters, Mrs. Gies. Neill, of Eldorado, and Mrs. Wm. Mannes, of San Angelo, also a large number of grandchildren, to mourn his loss.

Below is a brief account of Mr. Pruitt's very eventful and active life. He was born in Lawrence county, Alabama. While quite a young lad he joined Gen. Lopez' expedition into Cuba, with 500 men. All but a handful of these men were killed. Mr. Pruitt and the few others were captured and taken prisoners to Vigo, Spain, and were there tried and sentenced for ten years' imprisonment. He and three others were pardoned shortly afterwards by Queen Isabella. Returning to the United States, he located in Austin, acted as state surveyor and assisted in adjusting the state and county lines thereabout for some time. Then he became interested in the Austin Daily Statesman, being editor for fourteen years. Next he was state mounted policeman and for a number of years was engaged in running down criminals (mostly horse thieves), his work taking him nearly all over the state and even into Old Mexico. Needing rest, he then engaged in farming and stock raising ten miles south of Austin. This also failed to give him the desired rest that he needed; so he and his family (then consisting of a wife, one son and five daughters), came west and finally, in 1882, settled on the picturesque Kickapoo river in the prosperous little county of Concho. Two years afterwards he procured the license for a post-office at his place, which he called "Vigo," in remembrance of that little town in far-away Spain, where he was tried and sentenced to prison and finally pardoned, so many years before. The office of postmaster he filled with honor and credit until last September, when feebleness and partial blindness rendered him unfit to continue it. Seven months after the discontinuance of the postoffice he very quietly and peacefully passed away.

(Written by M. E. Pruitt, daughter-in-law of deceased.)

Mr. Pruitt was the grandfather of Mrs. James Mullane, of Carlsbad, New Mexico.

### Almost Forgotten Tragedy.

By W. H. Hays

The passing of Mr. John T. Pruitt, an account of whose death appears above in this issue, recalls a tragedy now almost forgotten, but withal, one of the bloodiest that ever stained the pages of American history.

In 1849, General Narciso Lopez, a native of Venezuela, a veteran soldier of Spain and long a resident of Cuba, visited the United States for the purpose of enlisting aid and sympathy for Cuban independence. He visited John C. Calhoun and before him and four other distinguished senators of the United States, he submitted his plans for the liberation of Cuba, and its ultimate annexation to the United States.

The plan of Lopez was most favorably espoused and endorsed by the southern element then in national congress, but bitterly opposed by northern

statesman, for the reason the acquisition of the "Gem of the Antilles" would only add that much more slave territory to the common domain.

Twenty thousand veteran soldiers of Spain were stationed in Cuba, and the United States being friendly to Spain, could not dare not give aid or encouragement to any enterprise looking to the overthrow of Spanish authority in any of her dependencies.

Lopez was advised to proceed gently and organize an expedition against the Spaniards in Cuba. Only fifteen years before, companies had been organized in the states, armed and equipped, and had joined the Texans in their rebellion against the lawful authority of Mexico, and these filibustering expeditions had been recognized later, by the United States congress as legal and righteous, by annexing the revolting province of Texas to the National Union. So it would be, should Cuba achieve her independence; Lopez would become a second Sam Houston, and his followers would win immortal fame, but if overtaken with disaster, they could only fill the graves of patriotic martyrs.

An expedition was fitted out and sailed from New Orleans August 2, 1851. It was made up of about two hundred men, daring, roving spirits of which that age of chivalry and daring adventure was so prolific. Before leaving the American shores, President Fillmore had issued his proclamation, against the expedition, denouncing as robbers and filibusters, all who should aid or in anyway abet the enterprise. On the 12th of August Lopez and his men landed fifty miles north of Havana. A small detachment was sent into the interior to establish communication with those Cubans who had already raised the standard of the revolt.

Lopez was almost immediately surrounded, and after desperate fighting was forced to surrender on August 29th, 1851. He was taken to Havana and on September 1st was garoted. His last words were "Dear Cuba Adieu!"

A few days later General Crittenden and sixty of his followers were captured near the coast and were forthwith condemned to be shot. Stripped to their shirts, their hands tied behind their backs, they were carried in front of the castle of Atares, guarded by double files of Spanish troops and dogged by the ferocious rabble. The United States sloop of War Albany and the United States Steamer Vixen lay in port and their officers and crews witnessed the sad procession. The ensign of the North American republic floated over the American consulate. One lingering look those heroic men cast at the flag of their country, and as the last hope of intervention vanished, the bitterness of death was aggravated by the feeling that they were to die as outlaws, when they should have been claimed as citizens. But, nor this nor the exulting shouts of the Spanish rabble shook the fortitude of these men. Pale and emaciated from exposure they faced frowning muskets and the line of dead-carts in waiting to carry them away. No request for delay, no cry for mercy, no last promise of treacherous revelation with the hope of respite of pardon, was heard from them. In squads of six they were shot down, the officers being reserved for the last. When ordered to his knees, Gen.

Crittenden replied, "Americans kneel only to their God!" When ordered to reverse their position in order that they might be shot in the back, Victor Kerr shouted: "Never! We are not afraid to face death!"

"Cowards!" cried young Stanford. Our countrymen will some day avenge us!" "Liberty forever!" explained Lieutenant James, and his last words mingled with the crash of musketry and echoed over the sea.

The quivering corpses of fifty Americans lay upon the ground. Before they could be lifted into the dead-carts, the rabble rushed forward and mutilated the poor remains with shouts of "Death to the Americans!" Their bloody shirts were borne thru the streets and shown in the coffee houses. Passengers were halted by bloody hands forced as the ruffians said, "to smell American blood." The cry resounded all night through the city and was caught up by the Spanish outposts, and re-echoed back from Moro Castle, and the shipping in the harbor, "Death to the Americans of the North!" "And thus perished," says a chronicler of that day, "those brave men, true representatives of the sympathies, the faith and the ultimate mission of the Republic. They perished as outlaws, but are canonized as martyrs. Their bodies were thrown into a ditch where their bones now moulder, but one day from their seared ashes may arise a flame that will put all Cuba in a blaze and then, perhaps, the world may witness a repetition of a grand drama of the heroic period of Europe."

Phophetic words of that old writer. An awful prophecy from the lips of the dying Stanford when he said, "Our countrymen will avenge us!" a prophecy that had its fulfillment when the storm of American shot, shell and flame swept San Juan Hill and at Santiago, when the American commander said: "Don't cheer, boys, the poor fellows are drowning!"

A number of Crittenden's men had been separated from the command just before his capture. Knowing that their arrest was certain, they threw away their arms. On trial it was shown that they were not taken with arms in their hands, and on these grounds they escaped the death sentence, but were sent in chains to Spain, where they were condemned to penal servitude during their natural lives. Among these was Mr. Pruitt, who, with others, after years of servitude, was released through the intercession of the Washington government.

It is to be hoped that Veteran Pruitt left as a priceless legacy to his children and to the youth of our country a full account of his most eventful career, and that the thrilling story of his life may yet be given the world. It would prove another link in the golden chain of our national history, made glorious by American patriotism and lofty achievements. San Angelo Standard.

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