

The Mexicans in the area would plan on a two day trip to harvest mescal. One man would take five or six burros and load them down with these mescal heads. They would come down one day and go back the next. Then they'd put the mescal heads in a kiln and roast them.

Father took Alva and Harvey and Orlando and I—that was all the boys that were big enough to do something. So we got some mules and went out to get some mescal. The first day we went up there, we just couldn't cut those heads down. We had knives and borers which were the tools the Mexicans used, but we didn't know how to use them. So Father got a Mexican to come and show us how, and the first thing he did was sharpen our tools. And when you knew what you were doing, you could take a bore and cut those mescals down, and they would just knock down like a cabbage.

The plant had leaves around the head that were about three feet long and the leaf came to a long sharp point, and there were prickles all up and down the leaves. We had to cut the leaves off, and then we'd leave one leaf on each side, and split the heads and put them over the saddle horn on the donkey and that's how we carried them down.

Well, we went up one trip and that's all we wanted of that kind of work, so Father hired a mexican to come and Orlando and Harvey took one bunch of burros and the Mexican took another bunch of burros and they went up in the hills after the mescale and hauled it in. I hauled wood for the kiln.

THE RECIPE

We'd take some shavings from the mescal and put them in the bottom of the pit and then two or three feet of big mesquite poles and things like that, and then fill it all up with the wood and burn it down until it burned into red coals, and then we'd throw these heads in onto those coals and then cover them over and bake them. Some of them were eight inches thick and when we took them out, they were just as brown as could be all the way through.

Then we'd take them out and cut them up and we had a big wooden wheel with spikes in it. We'd put a horse on that and turn it around and mash this stuff up. Then we'd put it in a barrel and ferment it. Then we'd put it in a still and distill the alcohol out of it. That was the same year grandfather died and he was helping us to make mescal whiskey with us on our place in 1908 before he died.

We only ran the mescal ranch that one summer. We would haul the liquor down to Sonora and sell it to the Mexicans. We got fifty dollars Mexican money for a fifty gallon barrel. We'd take six or eight fifty gallon barrels at a time to Sonora. The flood had happened in 1905 and we moved to San Jose in 1908. [Maybe that is where James Harvey got the money to send some of the children over to Jaurez the school year of 1908-1909.]

That fall Dad sold the home and the mescal ranch for half interest in a one thousand acre piece in San Jose. San Jose was thirty miles closer to the Mexican border than Oaxaca, and Dad and a Mr. Nichols thought San Jose would be a good place to start another Mormon settlement.

BACK TO SCHOOL

The school year of 1908-1909, after the family had moved down to San Jose, his father sent Dad and several of his other brothers and sisters from the two families over to Jaurez Academy to attend school for a year. His father gave all their money for tuition, books, and room and board to Annis because she was the oldest. After they got over to Juarez Annis lost all their money.

So the children went over to the academy and reported their loss to the school principal. Meanwhile a young man had found the money, and instead of turning it in, he went over to a store in Jaurez and started to spend it. The store owner knew the young man, and he also knew that he wouldn't have that much money, so the store owner began inquiring around. Somehow the story got back to the principal of the academy and they called the young man in. He confessed and gave back the money and the day was saved. Just one problem--he had spent twenty dollars of the money.

Up to that time Dad had only been through about the fifth grade. The academy gave him a test and put him in a high school preparatory class. This was the first year that Dad had a full, uninterrupted year of schooling. At the commencement the next spring, Annis got sick and they had to take her home to Oaxaca. She was ill most of the next summer.

SAN JOSE

Of their stay in San Jose, I quote from Blenda's history of this period, Page 144, The Descendants of Fielding Langford:

The family kept increasing, and soon there was a total of eighteen living children. James Harvey couldn't make a living, so by 1908 he traded the home and store for a farm of 500 acres that was about thirty miles closer to the U.S. border. The ground was very fertile there and the family lived there almost four years. These turned out to be the four most prosperous years the family had in Mexico.

Mother's brother Heber describes San Jose as follows:

There was no town, just farms on both sides of the river Batapito. There was the usual schoolhouse and church that acted as a social center. San Jose was located about ten miles north of Colonia Morales. We planted a summer crop of corn, beans, potatoes, and the usual garden. We helped in the harvest and took most of our pay in wheat--the farms were from ten to a hundred acres, but most were forty or more. The small farmers would pool their grain in some central place to save moving time. The thresher was jointly owned by the Langfords and Nichols. They had the largest farms. After their wheat was threshed, they [the Langfords and Nichols] would thresh on the shares. I don't know what percentage they took.

When they first arrived in San Jose, the land had been cleared of brush but the stumps of the mesquite bush were all over the place. The first year James Harvey only had a horse and a one way plow to plow one hundred acres. Mesquite, if the stump is not removed, will put out a new growth and grow four or five feet in one year. So they had to cut the new growth off the trees, before they could plow.

Dad said they would come to a stump, lift the plow over, and start plowing on the other side of the stump. That year they plowed and planted 100 acres of wheat on their new property. And they got a beautiful crop, which was as difficult to harvest as it was to