


FOLLOWING THE TRAIL OF THE APACHES 1886.

THE MEXICAN BAILE

THE CHIRICAHUAS



By E. L. Vail
(Tucson)

Mr. Vail came to Arizona in 1879. The story of Following the Trail of the Apaches covers his experiences of a few days in June 1886. The three sketches were written by Mr. Vail in 1920 and review his experiences and observations of those early days in Arizona.

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CHARLES MORGAN WOOD

Written in 1920

A MEXICAN BAILE.

By E. L. Vail.

Ranch life in early days was not entirely without amusement. All young men must play occasionally. About seven miles west of the Empire Ranch in the Santa Rita Mountains there is a little placer gold mining camp called Greaterville. This was the nearest settlement to the ranch, and in the late seventies and early eighties, the mines produced a good deal of gold dust. The population of Greaterville was principally Mexican, with some American miners from California, Colorado and other places.

The Mexicans are very fond of dancing, and there are always some musicians among them. With a violin, guitar, bass-viol or harp, they make very good dance music. Occasionally, the Mexican miners and their families would give a "baile" (dance), and the cow-boys from the ranch would ride up there to attend. On one such occasion, when the Empire crowd arrived, the baile was in full swing, but the Mexican miners decided they would not let the cow-boys have their girls as partners, so they locked the door and would not let them in.

One of the Empire crowd had an idea which proved very successful. The weather was cold and there was a fire in the fire-place in the little adobe building where the dance was being held. With a little assistance from the others, he

climbed up on the roof and dropped a handfull of six-shooter cartridges down the chimney into the fire. In a few minutes when the cartridges commenced to go off the Mexicans came out with a rush through the doors and windows which they did not stop to open.

The Empire crowd chose their partners for the next waltz and the dance went on. One of the Mexican dons, whose girl had been captured by a ranch man, was following his new rival around the room with a dangerous looking knife, and a Texas cowboy was close behind the Mexican with his Colt 45 ready for action in case the jealous lover made a break.

Fortunately there was no blood shed and after the dance was over, the owners of the ranch extended a cordial invitation to all those who were present and to their families to come to the ranch as their guests at an early date.

On this occasion several friends from Tucson were also present. There was plenty to eat, and as usual in those days, sufficient to drink, and all had a good time. Many of the Mexican ladies brought their babies , which were parked in the boss's bedroom.
