

## PETE KITCHEN—ARIZONA PIONEER RIFLEMAN AND RANCHMAN

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Pete Kitchen was the connecting link between savagery and civilization in Arizona. He was a rough charcoal sketch of a civilized man. He came to Arizona in 1854, and farmed rich, broad acres on Potrero Creek, near its junction with the Santa Cruz. During the bloodiest days of Indian warfare his name was a household word among the white settlers, and to the wild Apache he was "more terrible than any army with banners."

His hacienda, situated on the summit of a rocky hillock overlooking the valley in every direction, was as much a fort as a ranch-house. On their raids through the valley the Apaches passed by it both coming and going. Kitchen was almost the last settler to hang on after the withdrawal of the troops in 1861. His ranch was the safest point between Tucson and Magdalena, Sonora, and during the darkest days of Apache warfare miners, settlers and travelers made it a sort of rallying point. Thomas Casanega, who lived on a nearby ranch in the early days, and who married a niece of Pete Kitchen, tells with sincerity that there were more men killed between Potrero and Magdalena than in all the rest of the Apache territory; that so many men lost their lives between these two points that if their bodies were laid side by side like railroad ties they would make a track from Nogales to Potrero.

The flat roof of Kitchen's adobe ranch-house was surrounded by a parapet three or four feet high, and a sentinel was constantly posted here to sound the alarm in case of attack. There was also always an armed sentinel posted in the cienega with the stock. In case of a sudden attack, the guard would discharge his gun as a signal to the Indian and Mexican workmen in the fields below. Pete, or his wife, Dona Rosa, would gather up the guns from the corners and wall-racks and lay them out ready for use. Dona Rosa became so expert that in case of necessity she was able to carry on the business alone. When the alarm was sounded, she tied her skirts

around her to make them look like trousers, seized her gun, and with the help of the Opata Indians, who were employed to fight as well as to farm, she would give the Apaches a reception as hot as her Mexican dishes. Pete Kitchen was the only settler whom the Apaches could not dislodge. They made raid after raid, and shot his pigs so full of arrows that they looked like "walking pin cushions." They killed or drove out his bravest neighbors; they killed his herder and slaughtered his stepson, but Pete Kitchen fought on undaunted. His name struck terror to every Apache heart, and, at last, finding that he was too tough a nut to crack, they passed him by.

The tragedy that rocked the Kitchen family was the murder of an adopted son, about twelve years of age—Crandal by name. One day the boy went with the Mexican laborers to work in the field below the house, to the south. He grew drowsy and fell asleep in the hay. A band of Apaches rushed on the Mexicans and began firing. Pete heard one shot, and then another, and another. When the fight began the Mexicans ran for the house, forgetting all about the boy. He woke up just as the Indians were upon him, and the savages shot him. Pete had a number of Opata Indians at work in the field to the west of the house. When the alarm was given they came in at once. At this instant an Apache lookout, posted behind a boulder six hundred yards to the east, on the opposite ridge, rose up and waved a signal to the Apaches in the field to hurry. Pete drew down on this Indian in the brief moment that he exposed himself and killed him at that great distance. He said he drew a bead about six inches above the Apache's head. The bullet pierced his body. After the fight was over, Kitchen went with some of his men and buried the Indian where he fell.

Many stories are told about the old ranchman's alertness, marksmanship and cool courage. He was never caught napping. He was as ready with his gun as he was sure of his mark. The Indians were never able to ambush him. He never traveled the same road twice. He was a generous and companionable man, but there was a certain grim jocularly in his dealings with his enemies. He was once riding along the road, through greasewood, cactus and mesquite, with his double-bar-

reled shotgun thrown across his saddle-bow, when he thought he saw a slight stirring of the bushes in front of him a little way to the right. Swinging his gun very quietly into position for use, he rode steadily toward the bush. Just before he reached it, a man leaped suddenly into view with his revolver drawn and called:

"Throw up your hands!"

Instantly, with both barrels of his gun cocked, Pete covered the fellow and said:

"Throw up YOUR hands!"

The man dropped his weapon to the ground, threw up his hands, and yelled:

"Don't shoot, Pete! I wasn't going to kill you; I was only going to rob you!"

"Just what I was going to do to you," said Pete. "Shell out!"

The fellow did so, but the amount produced was only thirty-five cents. Pete threw him two-bits, and said:

"Now, clear out, and never let me catch you around here again."

Some bandits from Sonora once stole two or three of Kitchen's favorite horses. He took up their trail while it was still hot, followed them across the line and, pursuing them day and night for about three days, at last came up with them. He killed one, one fled, and he captured the third, and recovered the horses. As soon as he recrossed the Arizona line and could safely do so, he made camp so that he could get some sleep, being almost dead for lack of it.

The prisoner, tied hand and foot, and with a rope around his neck, was left on horseback under the limb of a tree to which the other end of the rope was attached. In telling this story, Pete was wont to punch his listener in the ribs with his thumb and say, with a chuckle:

"You know, while I was asleep, that damned horse walked off and left that fellow hanging there."

Pete Kitchen had his own little "boothill." It was just in front of the ranchhouse, where the railroad track is now. Here the dead of his own hacienda were buried and, also, outlaws and desperadoes whom he shot and killed. He hung two bandits and buried them there. Dona Rosa, being a good Catholic, burned candles on the graves of these bad men, who had fought their

right, had finished their course, and with their boots on had been sent to their reward by the strong right arm of her husband.

About 1880, John MacArthur, the youngest scion of the famous MacArthur family, was rendezvousing at Pete Kitchen's ranch and enjoying large luscious slices of the wild Southwest. He was, perhaps, causing his father and the older brothers some anxiety at this time. The MacArthurs were the builders of the Suez Canal, and were well known for other very large contracts that they had successfully put through. John was trying to get his brothers to buy Kitchen's share in the Pajarita Mining Company, and Archibald, James and William had come out to look over the property—and, incidentally to make sure that their youthful brother did not get into mischief. They were being entertained royally by Pete. He took them on hunting trips, fed them on wild turkey and choice ham and bacon, and took them on expeditions into the mountains. They were like boys out of school. John was supposed to have taken on some of Pete Kitchen's skill with a gun, and one day in the yard at the ranch each one was boasting and showing off his skill with firearms. One of the brothers put a little stone on a watermelon. The brothers from Chicago challenged Arizona John to shoot it off. There was much swaggering and boasting, but the stone remained untouched. At last the older brothers' turn came, and with a great pose and a flourish of his .32, he said:

"I'll show you how to shoot!"

Pete had been standing in the doorway of the ranch-house some distance off watching them. Just as the older brother waved his gun, like a flash, Pete reached behind the door and seized his rifle. Bang! The stone was shattered, and the quick-witted brother said:

"There, that's the way to do it!"

None of them knew what had happened until Rock-fellow told the Chicago brothers. It was some days later before they made known to John just what had taken place.

Kitchen's hacienda was like a feudal estate. His immediate family consisted of ten members—made up mostly of nieces of his Mexican wife. He was kind and generous to these girls, caring for them and educating

them as if they were his own children. He took delight on coming home from Tucson, where he went at long intervals to market his produce, in distributing candy, toys and various other gimcracks to the children of the establishment. He was hospitable and kept open house. All travelers were welcome, and his friends could not come too often or stay too long. We get a close-up view of life on the Kitchen ranch from John G. Bourke, in his excellent book, "With Crook On the Border." "The traveler was made to feel perfectly at ease. If food were not already on the fire, some of the women set about the preparation of the savory and spicy stews for which the Mexicans are deservedly famous, and others kneaded the dough and patted into shape the paper-like tortillas with which to eat the juicy frijoles or dip up the tempting Chile Colorado. There were women carding, spinning, sewing—doing the thousand and one duties of domestic life in a great ranch that had its own blacksmith, saddler and wagonmaker, and all other officials needed to keep the machinery running smoothly." In addition to the band of Oyata Indians who were employed to work and fight, there were a good many Mexican workmen on the estate, some of them with families. Pete Kitchen had his own commissariat, and issued all necessary supplies to his own people, and, in case of need, to travelers.

His ranch took in about a thousand acres of rich bottom land, and he raised large crops of grain, potatoes, cabbages, and an abundance of fruit and melons. He had a great many cattle, and his particular delight was a drove of several hundred fine hogs. He prepared large quantities of ham and bacon of delicious quality. This was his specialty, before the advent of the railroad. The Tucson stores used to display signs, **Pete Kitchen's Ham**. The settlements all the way from Nogales to Silver City, New Mexico, were supplied with lard, bacon and ham from the Kitchen ranch. A personal item in the **Tucson Citizen**, of June 15, 1872, gives an idea of the extent of Pete Kitchen's prosperity at that time. He reported that his crops were all good; that he had in twenty acres of potatoes; that during the year he had cured fourteen thousand pounds of choice bacon and hams, and had marketed five thousand pounds of lard. These products brought him, on the average, thirty-five



PETE KITCHEN

cents a pound. He sold large quantities of potatoes in the Tucson market, as well as other produce of various kinds, so his cash income for the year must have been in the neighborhood of ten thousand dollars.

When the railroad came into Arizona he found competition so strong that he could not make money as of old; so he sold his ranch for a good round figure and moved to Tucson. Here he spent the remainder of his days—and all of his money. He was not adapted to the soft seductive ways of civilization in the "Old Pueblo." He was a free spender—generous and careless. He was not one to refuse aid to a friend in need. If a theatrical beauty pleased him he would shower the stage with silver dollars. He had too much leisure; was a good "mixer" and an exceedingly good fellow, and about the only way to display these good qualities was at the bar and the gaming table. He was in his glory at the Fiesta of St. Augustine, which was elaborately celebrated in Tucson in the early days. Few there were who did not take part in the revelry and gaming, and, as for Pete Kitchen, he patronized to the limit, with reckless hilarity, the roulette wheel and the faro table.

Pete Kitchen's word, and his note, were good anywhere. One of his old associates, Joe Wise, who is still living, tells that Pete came to him on the streets of Tucson one day and asked:

"Joe, can you lend me two hundred dollars?"

"Well, then," said Pete, "let's go to the bank together, borrow three hundred dollars, sign the note jointly, and divide the money between us."

"All right," his friend replied; "if we haven't the cash when the note comes due, I've got a few head of cattle in the canyons over there on my ranch that we can round up and sell. Will you be out there and help me find them and bring them in, if we can't meet the note?"

"I'll sure be there," was the reply.

When the note fell due neither of them had any money. The rancher had not seen Pete for a long time, and his ranch was about fifty miles distant from Tucson, in the region of Calabasas; but on the appointed day, as he was out looking for his steers, far off on the mesa he saw the figure of a solitary horseman riding in his direc-

tion. It proved to be Pete. He had spent the whole night on the road in order to be there on time. The cattle were rounded up and driven to market, and the note was paid the day it was due.

Kitchen still bought and sold cattle after he had disposed of his ranch. On one occasion he bought seven hundred head of Mexican cattle, and the vaqueros drove them from Sonora to Tucson to deliver them. The Mexican herders were very ignorant, and were afraid to take either checks or greenbacks in payment. They refused to take anything but gold coin. There was not enough gold in town to pay them; so, after he had discharged at them a volley of the most effective and picturesque oaths at his command, Pete sent to Los Angeles for the gold. Meanwhile, the Mexican cowboys waited and enjoyed the sights of the metropolis. When the gold came they were so ignorant that they could not count it.

"Here, you fools, I'll count it for you," said Pete.

When it was all counted, the chief herder put it into a bag, which he carried around with him everywhere on his shoulder. The fascinating Feast of Saint Augustine was in full blast by this time, and the Mexicans entered wholeheartedly into the festivities. But they found the bag of gold a very serious impediment. Seeing the predicament the fellow was in, Pete came to him and said:

"Here, give it to me, you fool! I'll give it to the Dona Rosa and she'll take care of it."

He took it to his house and threw it under the bed; and the Mexican came and got it when he was ready to go home.

Leading citizens of Arizona, now grown gray, tell with feeling of kind treatment at the hands of Pete Kitchen when they first came to the territory as raw young fellows seeking their fortunes. Jeff Milton was such a youth, and he tells this story:

"Pete Kitchen was a good friend, but a bitter enemy. One day in the Palace Saloon, of which Fred Maish was proprietor, Pete Kitchen was playing cards with some of his friends when a green young fellow from California, who had been looking on, asked if he could come into the game. They didn't want him in, but he insisted, so they let him take a hand. I was just looking on. The stranger was a poor sport, and as he was losing, he kicked up a rumpus. Finally he raised up

from his seat and began to pull a gun on Pete, who was unarmed. I just threw my gun across the table and covered him and said:

“Hold on! Wait a minute! You can’t chew up that little old fellow!”

Pete sort of pushed back his chair and, as he started for the door, said to the fellow:

“I’ll be back in a few minutes and talk it over with you.”

I tried to quiet the fellow, but kept my gun on him. He was only a coward, and he whimpered:

“What are you going to do to me?” “What do you want to hurt me for?”

“I’m not going to hurt you; but do you know who that is you’re trying to kill? That’s Pete Kitchen, and you stand no more chance than a baby. You’d better drag.”

By the time Pete had returned with his gun the young fellow had pulled his freight.

Pete Kitchen was about five feet nine or ten inches in height. He was spare, erect and physically fit, even when he was verging toward old age. His eyes were grayish blue, and he was of a florid complexion. He was quiet and inoffensive in manner—quite the opposite of the typical movie hero of today. He usually wore a broadbrimmed sombrero and, instead of an overcoat, a Mexican serape. His friends did not much enjoy going on a camping expedition with him, for he made too little provision for food and the ordinary camp comforts. He was hardy and more or less indifferent to hunger and cold himself, so on cattle drives and hunting or scouting expeditions his comrades sometimes found themselves almost freezing or starving. When he had failed to provide for his own comfort, he would on a cold night sometimes crawl under Rockfellow’s blanket with him before morning. When he was an old man, he sometimes used to come over to the Stronghold to visit Rockfellow. One cold evening he started to walk to the Stronghold from Cochise Station. He had only his serape to keep him warm, and he got so tired and cold by the time he had gone half way that he stopped and built a campfire to warm himself. He got to Rock-

fellow's just as the family were at breakfast. The spot where he camped was always called "Camp Kitchen" after that.

When Mr. Rockfellow was in the neighborhood of Kitchen's ranch one day, long after the old man was dead—and forgotten so far as the younger generation was concerned—he met an old Mexican, and when he told him who he was, and mentioned the fact that he had once lived for a while on Pete Kitchen's ranch, the Mexican said with a pleased flash of recollection:

"Oh, Don Pedro, my valiente, muy bueno con rifle!"

Pete Kitchen was a man of no ordinary caliber. Apart from his force, resolution and general likeableness, he was a man of mark and originality. The MacArthurs, great men as they were, with a wide knowledge of men and big business, spoke of him as a man of power and character. They thought he was one of the ablest men they had ever met, and said that he would have made himself felt in Wall Street, or anywhere else that his lot might have been cast. He was the beau ideal of the border men of his day—brave, friendly, honest, and magnanimous but also profane, a regular drinker, and a diligent and delighted "knight of the green table." These were the virtues and these the frailties of his time. It was because he combined these good and bad qualities in frontier perfection that he was so famous and so honored. So his money melted away, and at the end he had little in store except an unblemished reputation for honesty, a host of generous friends and admirers and a pioneer record of hard and daring deeds well done.