

# **The Ruby Mercantile Murders Separating Fact From Myth**

Arizona History Convention  
Tempe, Arizona

April 25, 2003

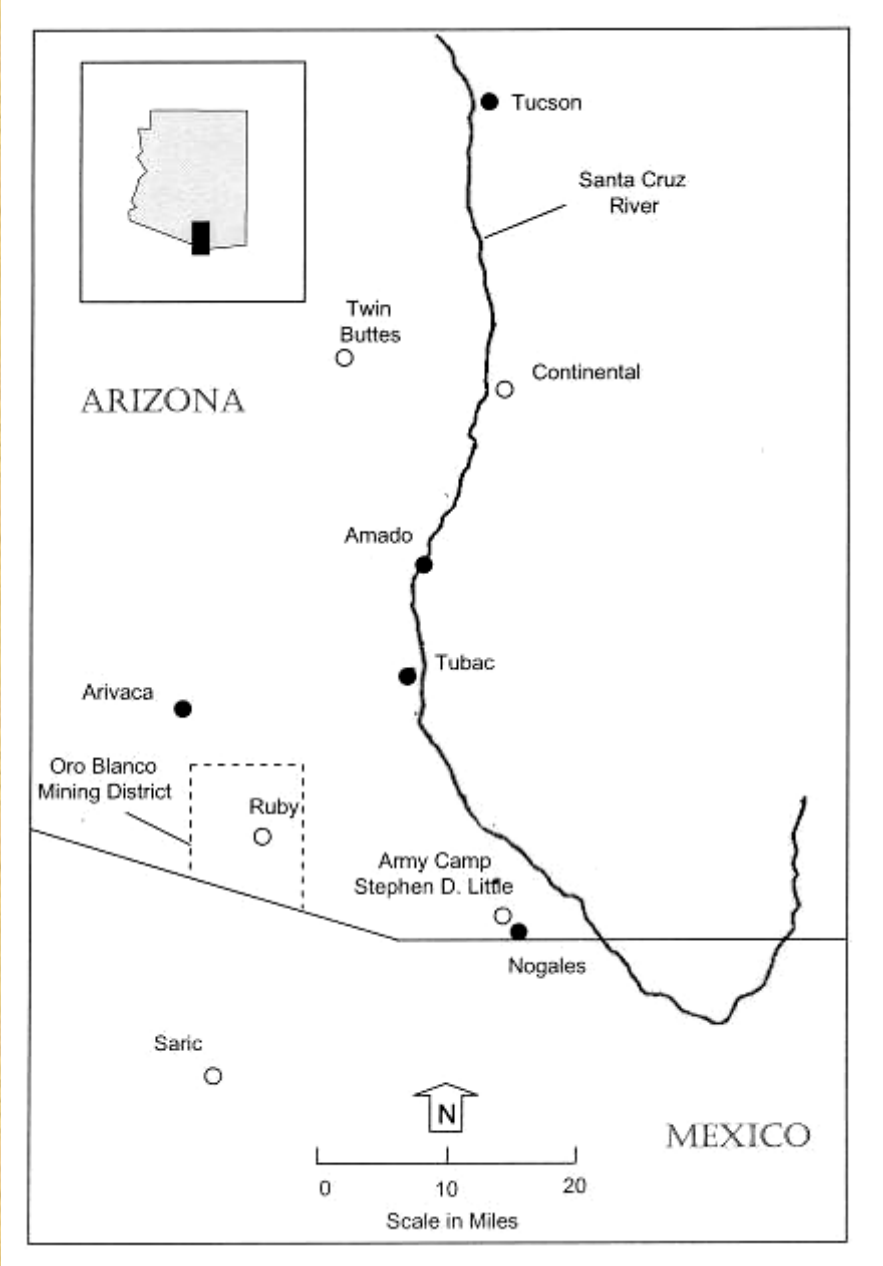


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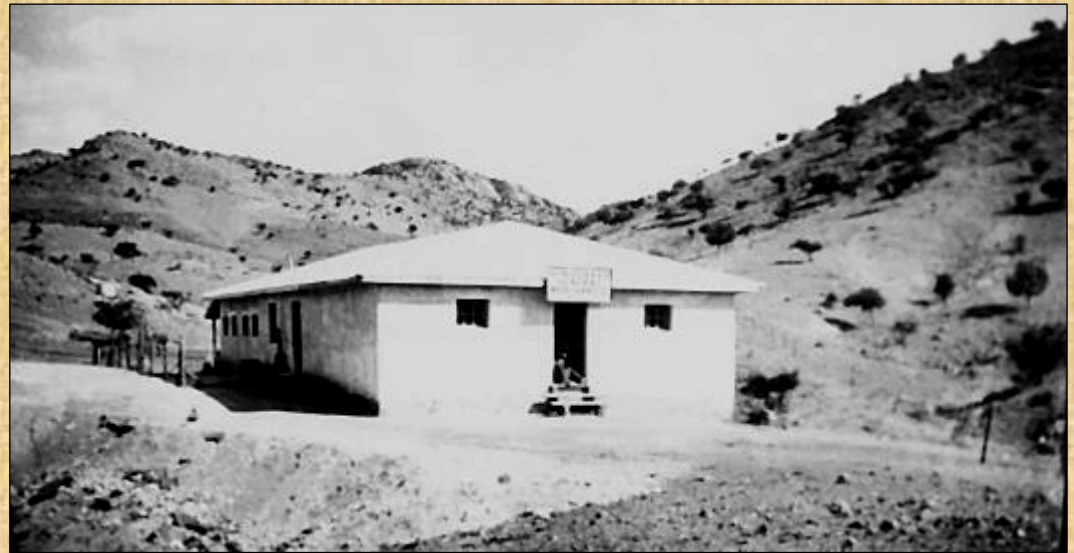
# South-Central Arizona - 1920



# **Ruby Began to Grow in 1917 When Mining of Lead and Zinc Started**

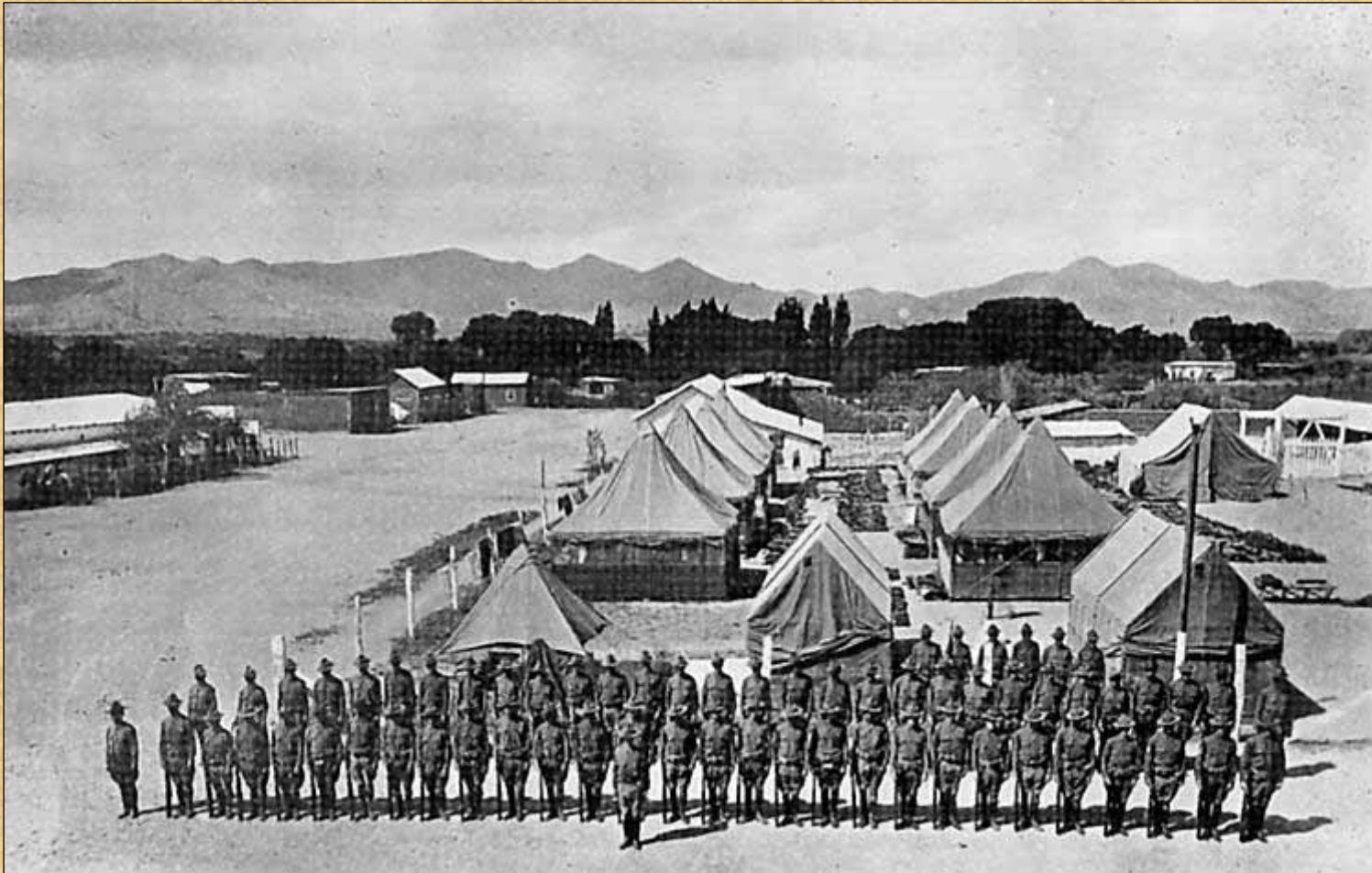


# The Ruby Mercantile was Built in 1915



# The U.S. Cavalry Protected Southern Arizona from Mexican Revolutionaries and Bandits

Troops in Arivaca - 1916



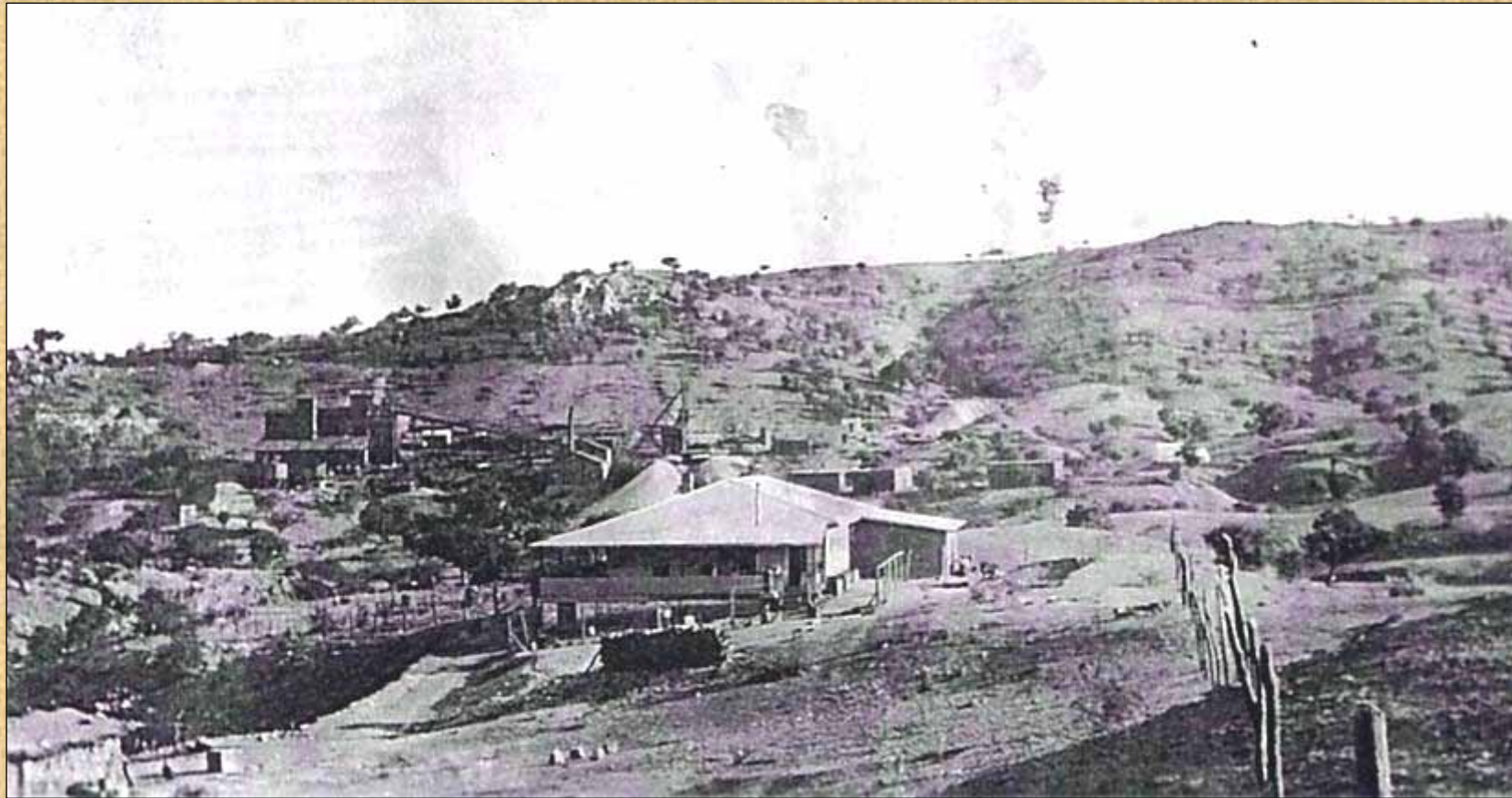
# Fraser Family Photos – 1904-1919



# Tenth Cavalry Troopers with Two of John and Ines Fraser's Children - 1919



**Alexander and John Fraser were Robbed and Shot  
on February 27, 1920**





# Telegrams to Ines Fraser – February 28, 1920

**1920 FEB 28 AM 9 01**

**ALEXANDER SHOT AND KILLED YOUR  
HUSBAND SHOT BUT BELIEVE HE WILL  
RECOVER AS HE IS RESTING EASY**

**1920 FEB 28 AM 10 28**

**YOUR HUSBAND HERE IN HOSPITAL  
HE REQUESTS YOU COME AT ONCE  
RUBY STORE ROBBED HE WAS WOUNDED**

**1920 FEB 28 PM 2 12**

**CONDITION SERIOUS LEAVE SATURDAY  
TAKE STAGE TUCSON FOR NOGALES**

# The Fate of the Fraser Brother Murderers

- **Ezequiel Lara** – Imprisoned in Sonora Mexico for another killing in August 1921
- **Manuel Garcia** – Killed in shootout by Deputy Sheriffs George McLure and George Holloway on October 12, 1920

# **Letter to Ines Fraser from Deputy Sheriff McLure**

(Two Weeks after the Garcia Shootout)

“I received your appreciated letter [of concern] this morning and will say that I am near recovery, only a little weak. . . I am very glad that Garcia has run his race and will bother no one else. To say that he was cruel, puts it mildly.

You may rest assured that if Lara is heard of again in this Country, that the sheriff’s office here will do all in its power to capture or kill him . . .”

# Frank and Myrtle Pearson Bought the Ruby Mercantile within a Month of the Fraser Murders

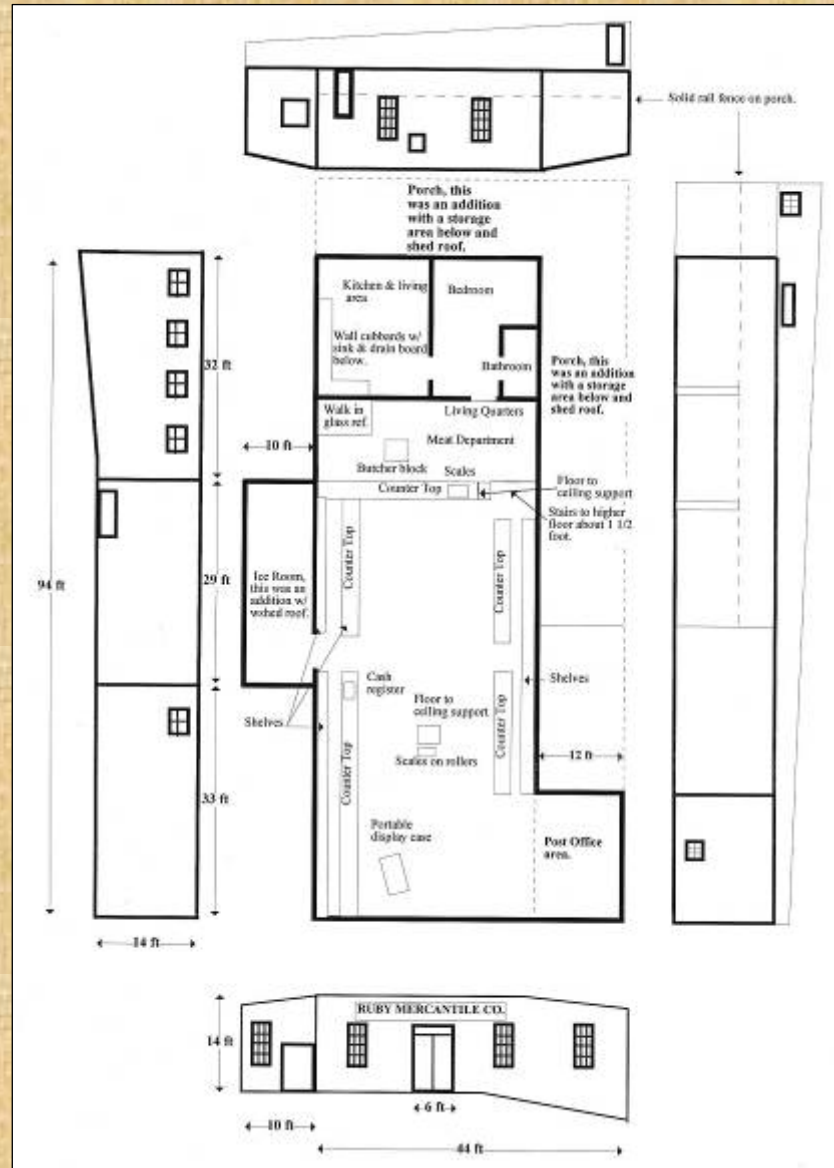
Frank Pearson – 1920



Daughter Margaret Pearson – 1920



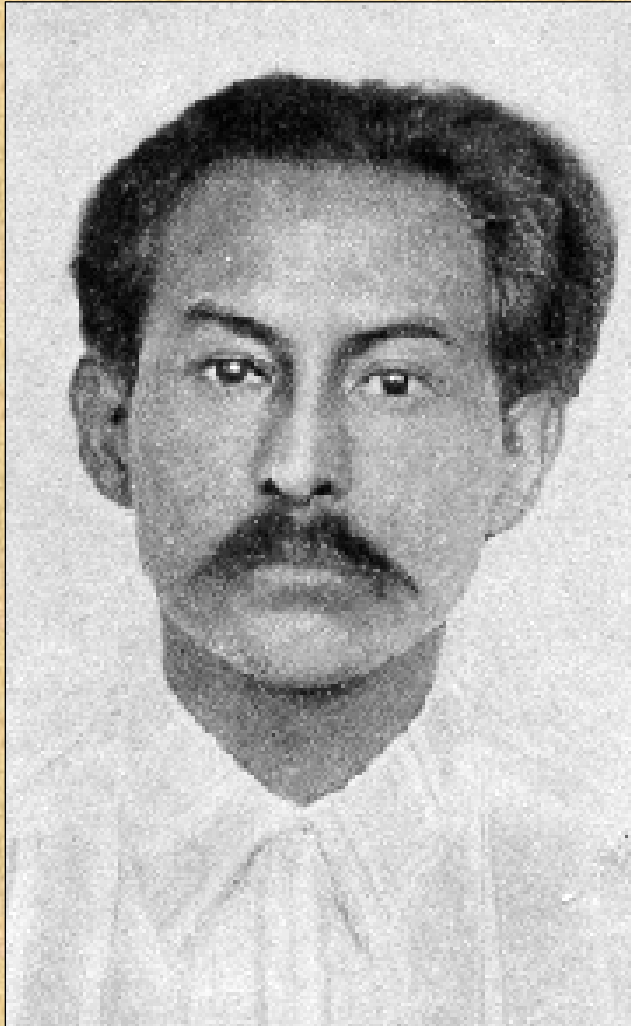
# Frank and Myrtle Pearson were Robbed and Killed on August 26, 1921



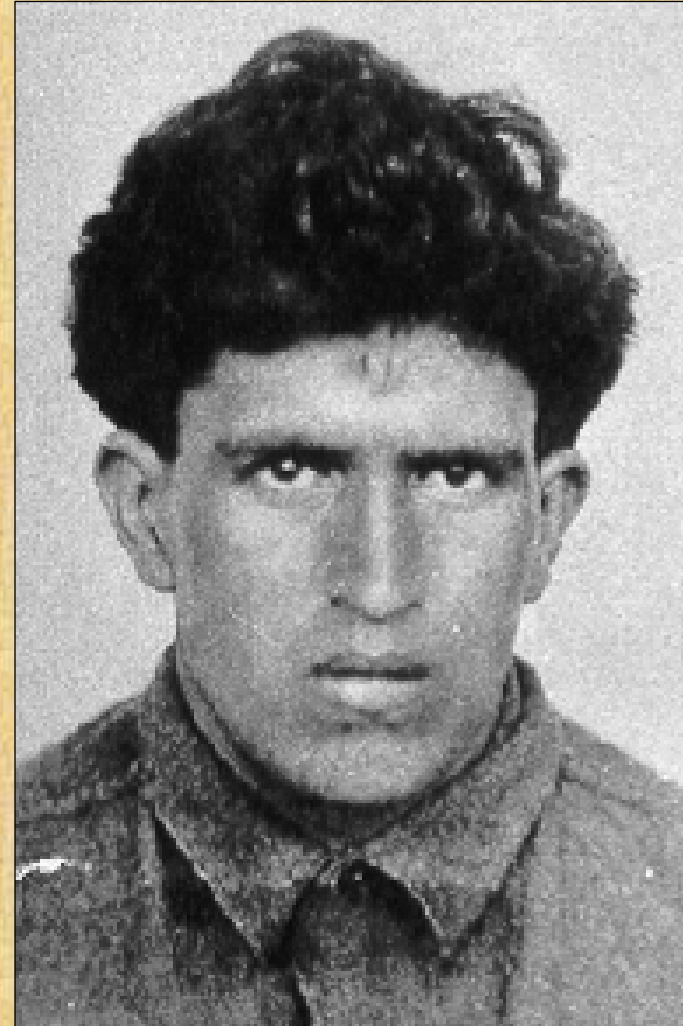
Layout of the  
Ruby Mercantile

# Witnesses Identified 2 of the 7 Pearson Murderers

Manuel Martinez



Placido Silvas



# **Silvas and Martinez Trials**

- **Placido Silvas**

- First trial: 12/15/21 – 12/24/21 **Mistrial**
- Second trial: 05/18/22 – 06/04/22 **Convicted**

## **Sentenced to Life Imprisonment**

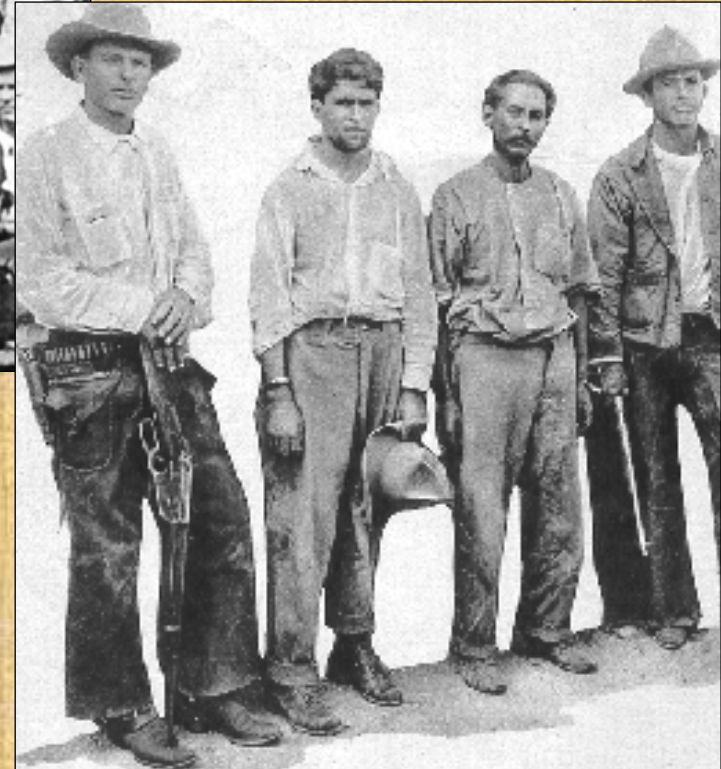
- Third trial: 06/27/22 – 07/12/22 **Mistrial**

- **Manuel Martinez**

- Trial: 05/16/22 – 05/18/22 **Convicted**

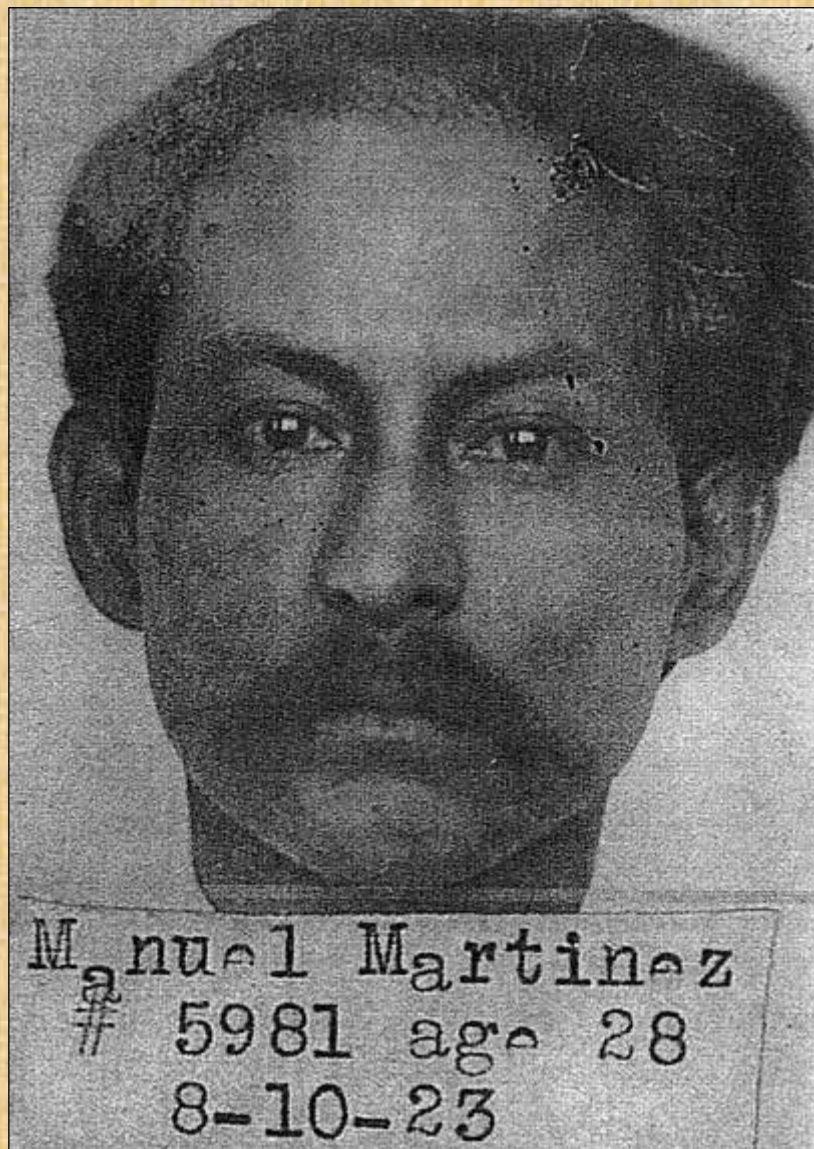
## **Sentenced to Hang**

# Five Days after Escaping from an Automobile Wreck Martinez and Silvas were Recaptured





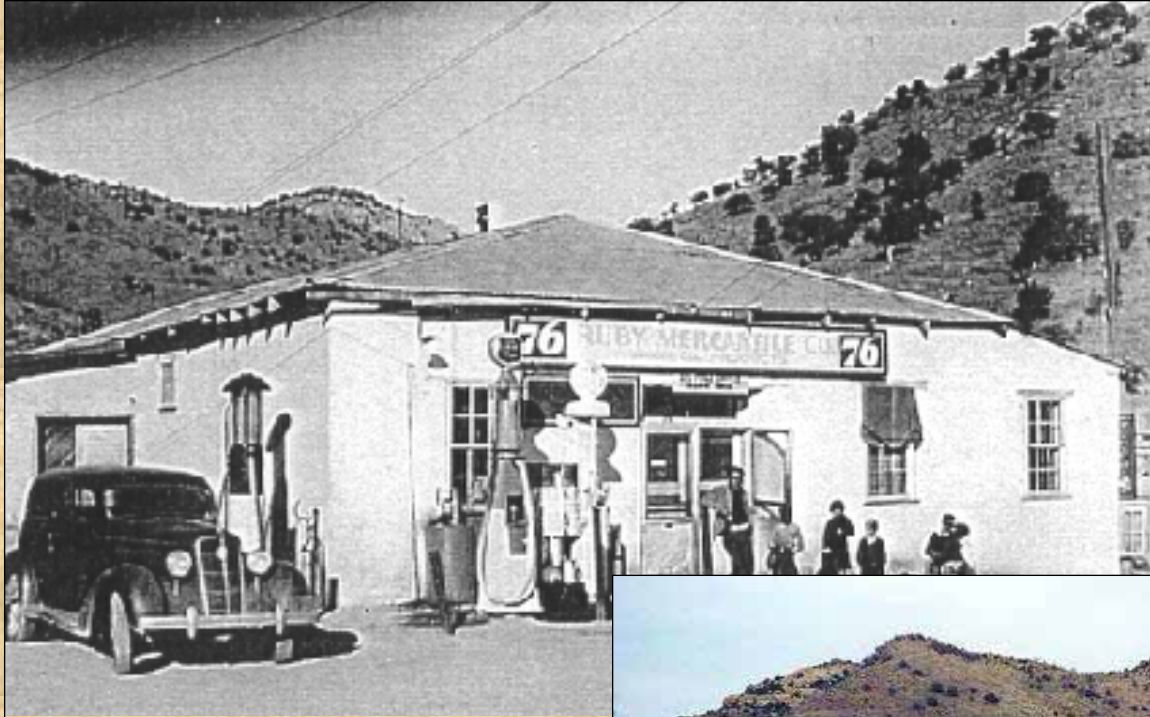
# Manuel Martinez was Hanged on August 10, 1923



# Placido Silvas Escaped from a Florence Prison Work Ranch on December 3, 1928



# Epilog – Ruby Mercantile



Mid 1930's

Today



## Myths Corrected

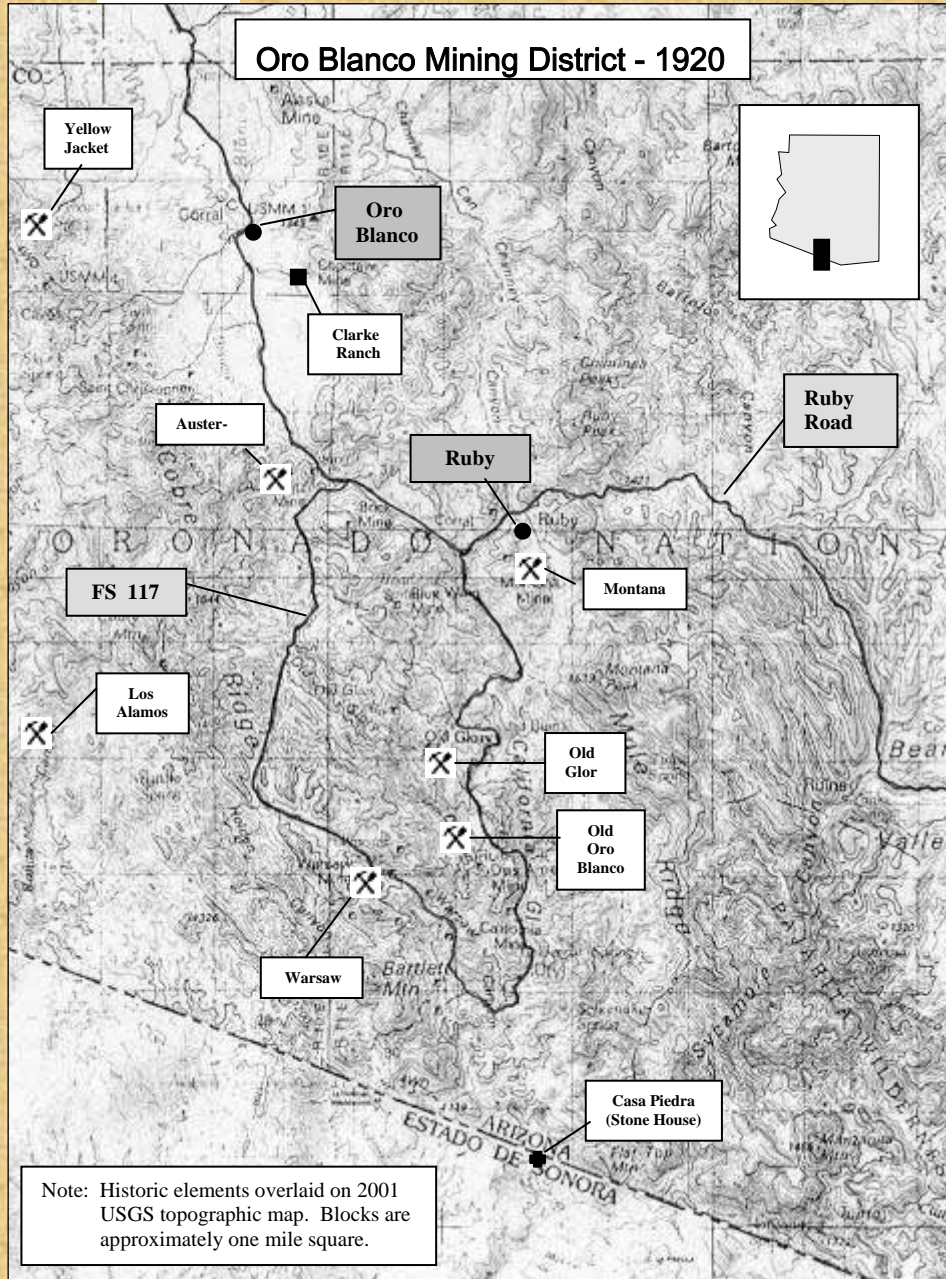
- The Fraser and Pearson robberies/murders were not committed by the same gang
- Deputy Sheriff Holloway was not killed by Manuel Garcia
- Ezequiel Lara was brought to justice
- Elizabeth Purcell, Mrs. Pearson's sister, did testify at the trials of Silvas and Martinez
- Silvas and Martinez were known to Ruby residents
- Silvas and Martinez did not kill Sheriff White during their escape while being transported to Florence prison
- Silvas and Martinez were not “railroaded” to prison/gallows without a “fair trial”

Note: Correct names and spelling:

Fraser, Pearson, Holloway, McLure

To  
Arivaca  
(4 1/2)

### Oro Blanco Mining District - 1920



To  
Nogales  
(20)

## Epilog – Frasers

- Ines Fraser returned to San Diego after settling her husband's affairs
- She taught at a Montessori School, a primary school, and eventually taught children with learning disabilities
- She continued writing poetry - several poems published
- Ines lived with family members until her death in 1970
  
- Ines' daughter, Constance Fraser, born just 2 ½ months before her father's murder, grew up in San Diego
- Constance married George Austin Kiely in 1942 - moved around the country quite a bit with the Air Force
- Constance returned to Arizona in the late 1960's – resides today in central Arizona

# Remembering the West

Wide sky and far horizon,  
Mild air and shimmering light,  
Brown hills and yellow valleys,  
And close pricked-stars at night.

The canyons cool and drafty;  
The friendly, silent moon;  
The peace, the room, the freedom;  
The clear-cut desert noon –

Far out from towns and traffic, -  
I'm going back some day –  
Remote, alone and quiet  
To live, to love, to stay  
Ines A. Fraser

## Epilog - Pearsons

- Margaret Pearson was raised by Myrtle Pearson's sister, Elizabeth Purcell (later Mrs. Woody Gatlin), in Patagonia, Arizona
- Frank Pearson's sister, Irene Pearson, returned to Texas with no known subsequent connection to Arizona
- Margaret Pearson married William H. Anderson in 1937, retired from a long teaching career in Nogales in 1976, and resides today in southern California