



Jose Policarpo Rodriguez, the Old Guide, Surveyor, Scout, Hunter

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To attempt to give the full experience and adventures of Jose Policarpo Rodriguez (1829–1914), one of the early pioneer citizens of Bandera county, Texas, would require more space than this description affords. He was a noted surveyor, scout, hunter, Indian fighter, preacher and ranchman. He grew up enduring Comanches raids, surveyed territory for the Republic of Texas and the United States Army, fought against warring Indians, and mapped settlements for German settlers in Texas. When he came to Bandera county in the 1850s he located on Privilege Creek on 360 acres of land. He was born at Zaragosa, Mexico, in 1829, and died at his home on Privilege, Texas, in 1914, aged 85 years. Polly's Peak, a noted Texas landmark, was named for him. He built a stone church with his own hands in the Privilege community and preached there for many years. His children, grandchildren and great grandchildren became prosperous and respected citizens of that community. Polly Rodriguez had the confidence of all men, and he builded wisely and well for oncoming generations. In 1841, Rodriguez and his father came north from Zaragosa, Mexico, to the Republic of Texas. He found work as a surveyor in the Hill Country of Texas. At age 24, in 1849, Policarpo was hired as a scout for the Whiting and Smith expedition, a government-contracted venture charged with establishing a westward road from San Antonio to El Paso. The expedition left Fredericksburg on February 21 and finally reached El Paso on April 11. Since the last part of the expedition was marked by exceedingly difficult traveling conditions and Indian attacks, the Whiting party chose a more direct route back to San Antonio and arrived there on May 25. This latter route, laid out with the invaluable help of Rodríguez, became the principal westward road to El Paso. The expedition also established Rodríguez's reputation as a reliable scout, and he continued to serve the government in this capacity until 1861. General Whiting writes of the author: "We had been uneasy for Polly, but to-night he made his appearance. After a long and faithful trailing of the missing animals, he had been forced to give up the search, and we concluded some roving party of Indians had picked them up. This boy Policarpo is one of the most valuable members of my party — a patient and untiring hunter, an unerring trailer, with all the instinct and woodcraft of the Indian combined with the practical part of surveying which he has learned from Howard; moreover, a capital hand with the mules. I don't know of any person whom I would rather have in the woods." In writing of a battle with a panther, Policarpo writes: "My dog scented the trail of some animal and, following it, began to bark. I took my gun and, following, found that he had treed a panther. It was on a willow tree which overhung the Leon Creek. I took aim at his head and fired. It was not a dead shot, but the animal dropped into the water, which was deep at that place, and began to swim around. My dog jumped in after it, and they clinched and both sank. To save my dog I took off my clothes as quickly as possible and jumped into the water. They came up both nearly drowned. The dog swam one way and the panther the other. I caught the panther by the tail and lifted it up so as to sink his head in the water, and we swam around and around, he trying to get at me and I keeping out of his way...." CONTENTS I. Boyhood Days. II. Surveying. III. Hunting Adventures. IV. On the Llano. V. With the United States Army. VI. Back from El Paso. VII. With Wagons on the Plains. VIII. A Panther Story. IX. Cowards and Traitors. X. The Right Young Lady. XI. Plains Lore — Hunting Adventures. XII. General Smith's Trip to El Paso. XIII. Bears, Indians, and a Night Ride. XIV. Locating a Ranch. XV. Out of the Army — Civil War. XVI. The Protestants — Conversion. XVII. Persecutions. XVIII. A Preacher. XIX. Joins the Annual Conference. XX. In Labors Abundant

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