

FOURR, WILLIAM

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FOURR, WILLIAM born at Prairie Home, Cooper County, Missouri, July 11, 1843; son of William and Mary Fourr; married Lucinda Jane Nunn (1854-1942), a native of Texas, at Gila Bend, A. T., May 28, 1868; children, William J., Robert N., Albert F., Frances F., Roy O., (Private, Co. B., 31st U.S. Infantry; died at Vladivostok, Siberia, March 1, 1919), Mary (Mrs. James Alfred Lamb), Clara (Mrs. David A. Adams), Zona M. (Mrs. William J. Bennett), Ida (Mrs. Arthur R. Chadbourn) and Daisy (Mrs. Frederick S. Bennett).

His parents died when he was a child and he was taken to St. Joseph, Missouri, where he attended the public schools; in 1861 he helped to drive a herd of cattle belonging to Charles Ilfeld from Missouri to New Mexico and continued to work for him for about two years after arriving there; George Cooler was Wagon and Forage Master at Fort Craig, N. M. in 1863 and in his reminiscences Fourr stated:

I was an assistant to Cooler, took care of the corrals, weighed the wild gramma hay that the contractors brought to the Post and sometimes stood guard over the hay at night. You see, ● t times, we had as much as 500 tons in one rick, and the contractor might try to burn it to get another contract.

Having heard of the gold excitement in northern Arizona, he and two others left Fort Craig early in 1864 with Cooler who had three yoke of oxen and a covered wagon; he and the other men had horses and one of them always rode ahead as a lookout; they were not bothered by Indians and went via Tucson and Maricopa Wells to the Hassayampa River where they met Henry Wickenburg; from there they traveled over a rough and steep road by way of Peoples Valley to Prescott where he was listed in the Territorial Census taken in April, 1864, as a miner, age 21, resident in Arizona 2 months, property valued at \$75.

He said that while in Yavapai County, he engaged in prospecting and mining, principally along the Hassayampa, and went with other miners on several scouting trips with Captain John Thompson of the New Mexico Volunteer Cavalry; he further stated:

During my stay around Prescott, I hired out to two freighters, Louis B. St. James from St. Louis and a man called Joe Walker. We freighted from Ft. Mojave, a point off navigation of the Colorado, on the old Prescott road. We had three or four wagons in a train and seven yoke of oxen to a wagon. It took us about a month to make the round trip and we got about \$40 and board. Tom Goodwin was wagon master.

There were lots of Indians along the road but they did not bother us much except to run off our stock. Now and again we would see one sticking his head up behind the rocks of some high hill. We called them "crows" and one man would cautiously slip back and around while the rest of us went on with the teams as if we had seen nothing. By-and-by we would hear a shot and our man would come back. Of course, the range was long and we never dared go up to see whether we got our "Crow" or not. Well, it was their own fault. They were waiting for us.

Moved to Yuma in 1865 where he carried the mail from there to Stanwix Station, a distance of nearly 100 miles of which he said:

Started from Stanwix, my home station, about noon and would ride all that afternoon and all night, except a couple of hours, and the next day until between three and four o'clock. Rode one mule and had the mail packed on another. Had six mules or three changes, but I, myself, had to go on to the end. Could not give my mail up to anybody unless I was killed. Sometimes it got awful hot. Have known men to fall off the stage just from the heat. I always wore a cork hat and used to put greencottonwool leaves inside to keep my head cool.

When stage coaches were restored on the southern mail route in 1866 he quit carrying the mail and bought Kenyon Station, 15 miles west of Gila Bend, he sold it the following year and purchased Burkes Station (which consisted of three adobe rooms) near the South bank of Gila opposite Agua Caliente; there he sold flour and groceries to

travelers and freighters and supplied moving Federal troops with hay and grain; by trading with emigrants he acquired a dairy herd in addition to other cattle and sold milk, butter and beef by the quarter.

Early in the morning of November 15, 1868, his cows were turned out to graze on the mesa above Burke's Station and the herder came back to get breakfast leaving a boy with them; a little later the boy reported, "Them Indians got your cattle"; he and two other men armed themselves and rode out to the trail which first went south and than circled north where the Apaches swam the cattle across the Gila River; they found moccasin tracks and later saw two Indians on the other bank of the Gila; he returned home that night because his wife had only a young Mexican boy to stay with her.

The Apaches got away with 20 head of large roan Durham milk cows of Kentucky stock, worth \$75 apiece, 30 common American milk cows, each worth \$40, and 30 Texas cows which he valued at \$25 a head; when filing an Indian depredation claim, he estimated his total loss by that raid at \$3,450.

The Apaches came again in June, 1869, and took 10 fine blooded Durham cows, 30 cows of mixed blood and 30 Texas cows; they came back a little later and drove off 6 head of work oxen making the total value of the animals lost \$2580; with King Woolsey and some of his men, he followed the trail north around the Agua Caliente Mountains for about 30 miles and found where a muley ox had been killed and the meat roasted.

To stop this cattle stealing he asked for help at Fort McDowell

and Lieutenant (brevet Colonel) William McCleave came with 30 soldiers of the 8th U. S. Cavalry; with King S. Woolsey, George Lee, and ex-soldier named Shepherd and himself as guides they trailed the Indians northward to the Harqua Hala Mountains and came up with them on July 6, 1869, near Eagle Tank which was in a narrow canyon and the only available water; the Apaches greatly outnumbered them and by continued attacks prevented them from reaching the springs that day; being compelled to have water they attacked the Indians about 8 o'clock the next morning and after an hour of hard fighting cleared the way so that the cavalry horses and the pack train could drink; a soldier was severely wounded in the head and a number of Indians were killed, one of whom was a Chief.

The Oatman Flat stage station, a four room adobe building, was abandoned because the road in and out of it was so bad that a longer road, about 10 miles around, had to be used; he sold Burke's Station, moved 12 miles eastward to Oatman Flat in the fall of 1869 and afterwards stated:

I spent \$5,000 fixing up a more direct road, which would come by the station. Made it a toll road and also charged ten cents a head for water. At that I never got my money back. Sometimes people did not want to pay and would ask me where my charter was. I would tell them that they had come over part of my road and that, if they did not pay, I would show them where my charter was. I had charter from legislature to collect but the best charter was a double barreled shot gun.

On November 13, 1869, while he was away from Oatman Flat to get supplies, the Apaches stole a yoke of oxen which he left there to graze, broke into and robbed the station; they took a Henry repeating rifle, a Slaughter rifle, 2 Colt 's pistols, and cartridges

and powder, 300 pounds of flour, 50 pounds of beans, 75 pounds of bacon, 25 pounds of sugar and 4 pairs of woolen blankets, the total amount of his loss being \$418.

His name appears in the U. S. Census taken on July 21, 1870, as a Station keeper, age 26, with wife and baby son, property valued at \$2,800; while retaining ownership of the Oatman Flat Station, he also engaged in farming on the Gila under what was known as the "Big Ditch" about 10 miles above the Gila Bend stage station; on July 10, 1872, the Apaches raided his farm and drove off 10 fine blooded Durham Cows and 20 other American milk cows; they also stole 3 large, sound and well broken mules, an American bred horse and a good American mare causing him a loss which he estimated at \$1840; he and Tom Childs, with some others, followed the trail of the Indians for three days in the direction of the White Tank Mountains but none of the livestock was recovered. He made a trip to Washington D. C. In 1893 in an effort to obtain a settlement of his Indian depredation claims which aggregated over \$8,000; "but they told me I needed one more witness and, as I did not have him, I lost my case".

Having suffered a sunstroke, he sold the Oatman Flat Station, disposed of his livestock and other interests on the Gila, and moved with his family to the San Joaquin Valley in California about 1877; he did not like it there so returned to Arizona to look for a new location which he thus describes:

In 1878, after Oatman Station, about the time Tombstone opened, I went to the Dragoon Mountains, in what was later Cochise County. Looked around for three or four days hunting

for a place where there was a permanent water so as to start a cattle ranch. Brought about eighty head with me which I had bought in Yuma. Found a place with lots of sycamore trees, which is a good sign of water, about five miles from where Dragoon Station is now, on the west slope of the Dragoon Mountains.

Returned to California for his family where he bought about 400 head of stock cattle from Miller and Lux and with the help of some cowboys drove them overland to his new range; the Cochise County records show that he recorded a homestead claim for 160 acres 4 miles south of Dragoon pass, located on October 7, 1879, but he did not actually obtain a United States patent to the land until October 8, 1914; the Dragoon division of the Coronado National Forest was established by a presidential proclamation in 1907 and he promptly denied the right of the U. S. Forest Service to limit the number of his cattle who could graze on the part of his range which had been included within the National Forest; Fred Winn, Supervisor of the Coronado Forest at terwards stated:

In one of the hearings some Washington official asked Mr. Fourr on what basis he figured he had acquired title to the land and the reply was, "I took it away from the Indians and by God I aim to keep it". With him, it was always "my land, my canyon, my mountains and my home". His land controlled the entrance to Fourr Canyon and in spite of Forest Service permits authorizing the scouring of wood in that canyon, he held the permittees off with a Winchester and not even Uncle Sam could authorize a permittee to cross his land without Mr. Fourr's consent and the Winchester was a good argument.

He was granted a grazing permit for 50 head of livestock on the Coronado Forest in 1909 and stated at the time that he had used the range for 28 years; in 1916 his permit was increased to 150, yearlong, which he held thereafter; when his 10 year permit for that number was issued in 1925, he claimed ownership of 636 head of cattle; an obituary in the Tucson Citizen reads:

Billy Fourr had watched Arizona grow from a barren waste

of desert and cacti to a flourishing progressive young State through years that have not always been peaceful. Billy Fourr was one of a few who dared to battle with the odds against him in an effort to carve a commonwealth from the wastelands and he succeeded.

In 1878, the same year that Ed Schlegel discovered silver bearing rock in the hills where Tombstone is today, Billy Fourr despite roaming Apache bands dared to start his ranch in the rugged Dragoon mountains. Up to the time of his death, that ranch was still his home. Besides a large run of cattle the ranch supplies most of the apples, pears and peaches used in southern Arizona.

Died at his home in Cochise County, Arizona January 9, 1935, aged 91, buried in the cemetery at Benson, Arizona; in addition to his homestead at the time of his death, he also controlled 14½ sections of land leased from the State of Arizona; the appraised value of his estate was \$15,700 of which \$5,300 was in cash and Liberty bonds.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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