

FELIX GRUNDA~~Y~~ AKE

Arizona Pioneer
1855-1861

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Felix Grunday Ake was born in Alabama around 1810. Research does not yield any account of his boyhood, but he most likely grew up either in Alabama or Tennessee. The Ake family is of Irish decent, his father, and mother, Bridget O'Brien, being from Dublin Ireland—as were many of his other kin.

The date of Felix Ake's marriage and his wife's maiden name are ^{av}unavailable. His wife's first name was Mary. The family apparently lived in Tennessee for a number of years as two of his sons, Edward and Bob and one of his daughters, Anne, were born there. The family was very well off. His property was from an inheritance from his father, and on it he farmed and raised horses and cattle. Sometime during the late 1840's, Felix Ake moved his family to Arkansas in the Vache Grasse country below Fort Smith. Here, he had two more sons and one daughter, Charles Jefferson, William and ^{Jenny}Anne. At one time Felix G. Ake engaged in a road building project, constructing a road from Fort Smith to Little Rock, Arkansas.

In the spring of 1853, the family moved to California, where Felix Ake had a large herd of cattle and a home in the southern part of the state. The cattle and home were there from a previous cattle drive that Felix Ake had made several years before. The

cattle and home were being taken care of by Napoleon Rock Ake, an adopted son. The family lived in California for only two years. In 1855, Felix Ake contracted with the United States troops in the Gadsten Purchase area to supply forage for the livestock and provide other necessities for the troops. The family moved to the Calabasas Hacienda near Tucson for a brief period and then on to the Sonoita Creek settlement near Fort Buchanan.

Little is known of Felix Grunday Ake's residence in the Sonoita Creek settlement in Arizona. Ake's purpose in living here was to supply the troops with forage and other goods. His farm was one of about seven in the area. Ake's land consisted of about one hundred acres as did the other farms near his. He raised cattle, horses and hogs on the farm, as well as farming part of his land with forage and various green vegetable crops. Ake also engaged in trading with the Indians who were fairly peaceable and contracted to cut timber for the mines at Arivaca and ^{Cerro} ~~Sierra~~ Colorado.

Felix Ake was a prominent personⁱⁿ the area. They lived in what Charles D. Poston described^{as} "a mansion on the Sonoita", where religious services and social events were held. One such event was the marriage of Ake's daughter, Anne, in which a large number of people from the surrounding farms and from Tubac came.

Felix G. Ake is listed as a member of the convention at Tucson, on April 2, 1860, to organize the territory of Arizona. As to his wealth and prestige, they can only be guessed at from accounts of his life in Arizona. Jefferson Ake recalls that when the family was to later leave Arizona for New Mexico, Felix had eighty thousand dollars in gold with him, plus a large herd of cattle. In Arkansas, he had had as many as sixty-two slaves. In the United States Census of 1860, his property alone was valued at eight thousand five hundred, listing his occupation as farmer. Ake apparently was a hard working and enterprising man, living a profitable life on the Sonoita. He occasionally lost cattle, horses and mules to the Indians, but not enough to seriously hurt him.

In 1861, The Civil War broke out. Ake, having made a sizable fortune, was to leave Arizona. The captain of Fort Buchanan told Ake that he could follow the troops in their abandonment of the fort or meet the troops later in La Cienega east of Tucson. Felix Ake chose the latter and prepared to leave the Sonoita Creek settlement. A party of forty-seven people, mostly men, but a few women and children including the Ake's, left Arizona. There is no mention of his slaves leaving with him, if there were any. The party arrived in La Cienega only to find that the troops had

gone on to Fort Macrae. The party journeyed on toward New Mexico, but were attacked by about two hundred Indians just before reaching Cooke's canyon. At this point, there are two accounts of the attack; one from Jefferson Ake, Felix's son, and the other from Thomas Farrel, a man in the party. According to Jefferson Ake, the party was attacked early in the morning and fought until mid-afternoon. The Indians were of different bands, one being led by Mangus Colorado. The party had only eight men unhurt in the battle, with several dead. Ake lists about five men who were the major fighters in the skirmish, including his father, Felix Ake. According to Farrel, the fight lasted about three hours and Cochise was one of the Indians. One of the men shot had one thousand dollars worth of bullion in his wagon, and Farrel relates that he saw Jeff Ake and another man taking the bullion for themselves. Says Farrel, "There were no cowards left in our party but Ake, who would have shot a man in the back for crossing his field." He says that Ake was so doped up on opium that he did nothing during the fight. When Farrel was wounded, Felix Ake tried to take his gun and leave him for dead. Ake was finally persuaded, at gun point, to put Farrel in one of the buggies.

After the fight, the party met up with some confederate troops, who pursued the Indians and recaptured part of the livestock that

the Indians had taken.

The Akes were eventually to arrive in Las Cruces, where Felix Ake, a confederate sympathiser supplied the troops with forage. When word that the California Column was moving through Arizona, the Akes moved on to Texas and settled near Austin. Here, Ake engaged in cattle raising and cotton farming. While in Texas, Felix Ake served in the early days of the war with Mexico. The last information that can be gathered is that Felix Ake lived out his days in Texas. During the Civil War he aided the confederate troops in any way he could, but suffered constant harassment following the war, by the radical Republicans, carpetbaggers and soldiers. The exact date and place of Felix Grunday Ake's death is not known but the last his son mentioned anything about Felix in They Die But Once, was in the years 1874-75. Mrs. Ake apparently lived to be very old, probably close to a hundred years old.

Bibliography

O'Neil, James B., They Die But Once, Knight Publications Inc. ,
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