Mickey Free: Apache captive, interpreter, and Indian Scout / by Allan Radbourne; additional research by Joyce L. Jauch.

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949 E. Second Street
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FOR MARION

my wife, who for decades has accepted Mickey Free as an invisible lodger in our lives and who continues to support and encourage everything I do.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION v-viii

1 SANTA CRUZ TO CEDAR CREEK 1

2 MICKEY FREE 23

3 RIO VERDE TO SAN CARLOS 45

4 INTERPRETER AND INDIAN POLICEMAN 65

5 INDIAN SCOUT AND INTERPRETER 87

6 SCOUTING THE MOUNTAIN STRONGHOLDS 107

7 TURKEY CREEK AND FORT APACHE 129

8 THE LAST CAMPAIGN 151

9 FLORIDA VIA THE WHITE HOUSE 171

10 LAST DAYS OF AN APACHE CAMPAIGNER 195

AFTERWORD 219

NOTES 221

BIBLIOGRAPHY 263

INDEX 277
“Mickey Free” was the nickname bestowed upon Felix Telles, a young Mexican from Sonora, when he was enlisted at Camp Apache as an Indian Scout in 1872. A dozen years earlier, he had been known in southern Arizona as Felix Ward. This transition of identities led some to believe that he was part Apache. Others thought he was part Irish.

John A. Ward, Mickey’s stepfather, was born in Ireland about 1806. He was one of the hundreds of thousands of Irish men and women who left for America in the 1840s and 1850s. Family tradition has it that Ward arrived in Arizona from Texas, which suggests that he traveled over the established emigrant trail to California, which passed just north of Santa Cruz, Sonora.

It appears that Ward first went on to the gold country, drawn no doubt by the same dreams that attracted so many other emigrants. Charles D. Poston recalled the “sombre colored son of Erin” turning up at Tubac on foot from California, seeking food and shelter, in the winter of 1857. Poston, who imagined his guest might be some sort of fugitive, cautiously extended his hospitality. After breakfast the following morning, Poston advised Ward to push on to Fort Buchanan and the Sonoita Valley, where he might find work.

Evidently, the Irishman acted on Poston’s suggestion. “My father was ... one of the first settlers,” Santiago Ward recalled. “He came before the Civil War and hauled lumber from a sawmill in the Santa Rita Mountains to the forts and to Tucson. He brought down the lumber for the old San Augustine church.”

Quite possibly, Ward’s employers were the group from Maine who Poston reported had begun a lumbering operation in 1857 from their headquarters at the Canoa ranch on the Santa Cruz River. John Ward’s experiences were so similar to other pioneer settlers who arrived in Arizona after having first tried California that the daughter of one of them could almost be speaking of Ward when she recalled that her father “first started a ranch.” She added that, “he had no cattle on the ranch but brought most of them and most of his supplies from Santa Cruz.... It was while on one of those trips that he met [my mother]... who lived in Santa Cruz, and he married her.”

By the end of 1858, John Ward had established a ranch (really an all-purpose farm for raising stock and crops) in the Sonoita Valley. He brought there from Santa Cruz, Jesús María Martínez, a twenty-eight-year-old single mother and her two children. Born in 1830, Jesús María was the youngest child of Modesto and Carmen Martínez. As a sixteen-year-old girl, she had fallen in love with Santiago Telles, a local boy of the same age, described as “a very light Mexican with blue eyes and brown hair.” She became pregnant and gave birth to a son in 1847. Perhaps because of resistance from Santiago’s parents, Juan and Ciriaca Telles, the teenage lovers did not marry. They subsequently named their son Felix Telles, demonstrating that the father, whom Felix grew to resemble in appearance, openly acknowledged his paternity.

About two years later, Santiago Telles married another woman. The finality of his act may have led Jesús María into the embraces of a Señor Rangel. In 1849, she gave birth to a baby girl. Although Felix’s half-sister, Teodora, received Rangel’s name, her father soon disappeared from the scene.

By this time, Jesús María, a nineteen-year-old single mother of two, must have been one of the most hard-pressed inhabitants of her crumbling, impoverished hometown, situated on one of the traditional Apache plunder trails at the neglected edge of Sonora’s northern frontier. She had, nevertheless, managed to hold on and to somehow feed and clothe her children until the opportunity for a better life appeared in the shape of John Ward.

While it is almost certain that Jesús María and John shared the same Catholic faith, it is unclear whether they ever had a ceremonial wedding. In any event, by living together and declaring themselves man and wife they would have been readily accepted as married in common law, as were many others in that time and place. Certainly, the two children were known by Ward’s name, and he and their mother remained together until death parted them.

Over the next couple of years, Jesús María and her two children settled comfortably into their new life with John Ward. There was plenty to keep them busy, as Teodora helped her mother with the
endless round of household chores that constituted domestic life on the frontier and Felix worked alongside his stepfather tending the stock and crops. Felix had by now grown into a skinny, fair-complexioned, auburn-haired teenager. His appearance, however, was marred by a blind left eye, probably from an infection in infancy. Ward probably had use for a spare pair of hands when he went for supplies. This gave Felix the opportunity to see Fort Buchanan, established in 1857, where White & Grainger’s, the area’s largest general store, was located. The army post at the head of the valley was only nominally a “fort.” In fact, Indians had stolen cattle and horses from the post herd three times between January 13 and 20, 1859. Nevertheless, its presence was a major factor in attracting settlers.

The Sonoita settlement, the only American farming community in the region, was located along a narrow, wooded valley, watered by a shallow creek that rose on the southeastern slope of the Santa Rita Mountains and descended southwest from Fort Buchanan to the Santa Cruz River. Despite a seasonal tendency to dry up, the creek provided a persistent water supply that had attracted Sobaipuri Indian settlement as far back as the seventeenth century. “The total length of the Sonoita valley is about 11 miles, its breadth from 50 feet to half a mile; the sides precipitous and very rough. The road winds along the bed of the stream most of the way, between tall cliffs occasionally where passage is very narrow,” reported the Tubac Weekly Arizonian on March 3, 1859. “Now and then the valley widens a little, leaving a small interval which can be irrigated, and there are the farms hemmed in by the adjacent hills, which roll away into formidable mountain ranges.” The newspaper characterized the Sonoita Creek as “a treasure beyond price to the farmers in the neighborhood.”

John Ward owned one of seven farms that occupied the valley. Three or four miles below the fort was “Paddy” Graydon’s place and his hotel, locally called the “White House” or “Casa Blanca.” Next came the farm to which the Protestant Irishman, Felix Grundy Ake, had brought his family from California in 1855. Then came the Ward ranch, a couple of miles below where the creek bent westward toward the Santa Cruz. Next west lay the substantial farm of William C. Wordsworth, who had come from California with the Ake party and whose 1858 crop of barley, alone, was valued at $5,000. Beyond the Wordsworth farm lay B.C. Marshall’s 160-acre ranch, previously owned by Texan William R. Thompson. Two miles below Marshall’s place, Elias Green Pennington of Virginia farmed with help from his dozen sons and daughters. At the point where the creek went underground, New York William Findlay operated a 200-acre ranch, upon which he and Tennessee native Natharial Sharp were erecting a two-story grist mill.

John Ward’s 160-acre ranch surrounded by oak, willow, and cottonwood, and “abundantly supplied with water,” stood at the heart of this community. In common with his neighbors, the fifty-three-year Irishman raised two crops a year, barley and then corn (maize). He no doubt grew some vegetables, and evidently had an orchard, although a much smaller one than that of his neighbor, Marshall. Ward ran a small herd of cattle, and apparently raised some sheep or goats. After White & Grainger’s store, the nearest sources of supply were at Tubac and at Santa Cruz, Sonora, both roughly thirty miles distant by road.

Ward built his house at the foot of a low hill, on a bluff overlooking the creek. The northwest-facing structure was a substantial one for its time and place. The sixty-by-sixteen-foot single-story adobe, with two-foot-thick walls standing ten feet high, was covered by a grass roof supported by a five-inch upright beam standing in the center of a packed-earth floor. A wall divided the interior into a smaller (west) room, which served as a bedroom, and the main living and dining room. Lit by five large windows and with doors at the front, side, and rear, it must certainly have impressed Jesús María and her children, even before they stepped inside. The arching of some of the main windows and the fact that the double-adobe brick walls were carefully laid on stone footings indicate that John Ward had taken pains in the construction of his house.

A 1960 excavation, however, produced no evidence of a fireplace. It appears likely that Jesús María followed the common practice of cooking mainly outdoors. A tiny assortment of artifacts pro-
vide intriguing glimpses of daily life. John may have worn work pants with iron buttons, owned a Henry rifle, and practiced glassblowing, a skill that he perhaps brought with him from Ireland. His wife’s small wardrobe appears to have included a common dress with fabric-backed brass buttons and a finer garment fastened with mother-of-pearl buttons. A vulcanite hair comb, a shoe-button hook, and the remains of a pair of square-toed women’s shoes also probably once belonged to Jesús María. If so, the wear on the shoes suggests that she may have been pigeon-toed. A grandson’s wife preserved one other small detail of Jesús María’s home life. “The mother’s name was Jesus but they had another name, they used to call her ‘Modesta’ Martínez,” she explained. “They give names to people; like me, my name is Theresa and everybody calls me ‘Chita.’”

In March of 1859, John Ward made a deal for a small, independent business to be run from his property. An advertisement in the March 31 edition of the Tubac Arizonian announced:

ANDREW J. NICKERSON & COLE
Blacksmiths and Wheelwrights
Ward’s Ranch, Sonoita Valley

The above firm are prepared to do all work in the line of their business, in a neat and durable style. Wagons made and repaired; all sorts of blacksmithing done, including horse and mule shoeing, with utmost despatch and reasonable prices.

Nickerson and Cole probably worked out of a brush jacal some distance from the Ward house, most likely alongside the creek. The “firm” may have paid rent or, possibly, made an arrangement to provide Ward with free smithing and other work in exchange for permission to operate their business. Certainly, Nickerson and Cole’s presence added to the farm’s security. At harvest time, Ward probably hired extra hands from among the local Mexican labor force.

For Felix and Teodora the comfortable, well-supplied farm in its picturesque setting could hardly have contrasted more with their childhoods in the narrow and dusty streets of beleaguered Santa Cruz. Their new home provided a healthy climate, pleasant surroundings, and regular meals made from their homegrown produce. As the Arizonian observed, “the labor and time bestowed by the farmer on his land in this territory will always be profitably returned to him.” The newspaper itself, however, moved away in July 1859, having been purchased by former army officer Sylvester Mowry, who transferred it to Tucson.

In February of 1860, G.M. Jones included the Sonoita Valley on his Tucson-Fort Buchanan stagecoach route. At about this time John Ward was preoccupied with the birth of his and Jesús María’s first child. Because the Wards lived between two English-speaking Protestant families, Jesús María understandably chose to spend her confinement in Santa Cruz, among women—possibly relatives—who shared her language and religious beliefs. There she gave birth to a daughter whom she named María.

On August 26 and 27, 1860, Assistant Deputy Marshal David J. Miller visited the Sonoita Valley as enumerator for the eighth decennial federal census. The record he compiled shows that Elias Pennington and Findlay and Sharp had moved away, leaving ten principal farms along Sonoita Creek. New arrivals included Phillip Morris, Rueben Russell, T.A. Thompson, and Joseph Ashworth, another member of the Ake party who came from California in 1858. Felix Ake and Napoléon Rock Ake were both listed as farmers, as were Paddy Graydon and B.C. Marshall. William C. Wordsworth was listed as a lawyer.

The Ward household consisted of John, Jesús María, the couple’s five-month-old daughter Mary, Felix, and Felix’s half-sister, Teodora. Ward’s property was valued at $2,000 (higher than Ashworth but lower than the other Sonoita Valley farmers). Jesús María possessed personal property of her own, valued at $200. By contrast Mrs. Wordsworth and the Ake ladies were shown as owning no property. The 1860 census also listed carpenter Robert L. Ward (no relation to John), of North Carolina, with his wife, Manuela, and their three children. There is no entry in the census for Andrew J. Nickerson, although Marshal Miller found John Cole at Fort Buchanan. The thirty-one-year-old Canadian gave his occupation as “coach maker” and estimated the value of his property at $3,500.
Before moving on to Calabasas, Miller counted a total of sixty-six persons living at the “Sonoita Creek settlement.”

Even as they enjoyed their new life in the Sonoita Valley, Felix and his sisters must have heard the adults talk about sporadic Apache raids in the area, stock thefts, and occasional violence between the American newcomers and their Mexican neighbors. The community was accustomed to settling disputes in frontier fashion. “The citizens of the Sonoita Valley have long kept up a rivalry with Tucson in the line of ‘amusements’ and ‘innocent recreations,’” a newspaper correspondent reported. “Last week they indulged their taste by having two shooting affrays, and one attempt at shooting, but the latter happening upon the reservation at Fort Buchanan, was interrupted by the commanding officer, who is so antiquated in his views that these sports of the people are not relished by him.”

When the Sonoita Creek folk were not taking shots at one another, they may have noted the ongoing political strife in Sonora. American settlers doubtless paid close attention to news from Mesilla calling for a convention of Arizona delegates to write a constitution and apply for admission as “a sovereign state” in the Southern Confederacy. The proposition was bound to receive a sympathetic hearing where many of the Americans were southern-born and where everyone was in some degree disenchanted with the federal government. Largely ignored by the United States, southern Arizonans were becoming daily less impressed with the army’s ability to protect them from Indian raids.

Sylvester Mowry, who had purchased the Patagonia Mine in April after resigning from his anachronistic role as Arizona’s delegate to Congress, was prominent among southern Arizona’s Confederate sympathizers. He had worked hard to promote Arizona’s interests in the nation’s capital and he probably did almost as much to promote the Confederacy in Arizona during his visit from California in January, 1861. One of Mowry’s companions on that trip recorded, “in leaving the pretty valley of the Sonoita, we stopped for a moment at John Ward’s rancho where the arrival of the brothers Mowry was celebrated by true men.” John Ward expressed his own sympathies when he subsequently named two of his three sons for Jefferson Davis and Stonewall Jackson.

Arizona was under pressure from several sources at the beginning of 1861. The wind of secession was blowing strongly from the southern states, via Texas and New Mexico. Meanwhile, Apache activity escalated from stealth to overt aggression. Infantry troops posted to the area were unsuited to pursuit of Indian raiders. Bad weather and poor roads impeded the mail, while low wages sapped the local economy.

Regardless, a man still had to feed his family and conduct his business. John Ward, therefore, set out across the border, presumably headed for Santa Cruz in Sonora. On January 27, an Apache raiding party, probably returning from Sonora, attacked the Ward ranch. No doubt attracted by the absence of men about the place, the raiders failed to notice the Canadian coachmaker, John Cole, “lying sick near Mr. Ward’s residence,” probably in the blacksmith shack. From his hiding place, Cole saw nine Apaches rush the house, intent on capturing the women and children, while another party pursued the livestock on the other side of the creek. Most likely this latter group came upon young Felix, some three hundred yards from the house. Neighbors who heard the story from Felix in his later years related that “there was a big orchard and while the sheep and goats were grazing on the hillside [he was]... sittin’ on top of a peach tree, and they told him to come down and he did, and they took him away.”

The opportune arrival of two Americans, H. E. McCarty and George W. Wilson, caused the raiders to break off their attack. Although the two men gallantly pursued, the Apaches made off with twenty head of cattle and the boy Felix. “A posse of men went after the Indians but they divided in three groups. One group took my brother, a second took the cattle,” Santiago Ward recalled. Santiago had heard that “the other group just kept foraging. Of course they decoyed the men to taking the wrong trail.” With the return of McCarty and Wilson, word of the raid was sent to Fort Buchanan.
The next morning, 2d Lt. George Nicholas Bascom rode out with a detachment of 1st Lt. Richard S. C. Lord’s dragoons to locate the Indian trail. Evidently the one they found led northeast, suggesting that the raid had been the work of Chiricahua Apaches. Consequently, on January 28 Col. Pitcairn Morrison issued Post Order 4, in obedience to which, “2 Lieut. G.N. Bascom, 7 Infantry, and 54 enlisted men of Company C 7 Infantry left this Post January 29, 1861, to Apache Pass and vicinity to recover a stolen boy and stock [taken] from neighboring settlers.” Bascom, a twenty-five-year-old Kentuckian, was an 1858 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and had served with the Utah Expedition in 1859. Accompanying the infantrymen, who were mounted on mules, were Antonio Bonillas, the thirty-five-year-old post interpreter, and John Ward, who had either been sent word of the raid on his ranch, or had simply returned from Sonora to the grim news of his stepson’s abduction. “Ward was very much attached to the boy,” wrote a contemporary.20

The column from Fort Buchanan reached Apache Pass on the Sunday following the raid. Bascom sent for Cochise, who came in to talk the next day. The Chiricahua chief denied any part in the raid, saying that the “Coyoteros” (usually meaning White Mountain Apaches) were responsible and were holding Felix. He offered to return within ten days with the boy. Bascom, however, demanded hostages to guarantee that Cochise would fulfill his promise. Cochise cut his way out of the tent in which the talk was taking place, and dashed away under fire from startled soldiers outside.

The next day, Cochise returned with a considerable following, including Chief Francisco and his Eastern White Mountain Apaches. While asking under white flags for a parley, the Apaches seized the keeper of the Apache Pass Overland Mail station. Talking then turned to fighting. Although attempts to ambush stages approaching from both the east and west failed, Cochise managed to capture three Americans and burn out a Mexican wagon train, killing eight teamsters. In a raid on a watering party on February 8, the Chiricahuas killed another Overland Mail Company employee, while wounding John Ward and one of Bascom’s sergeants. Doctor B. J. D. Irwin, hurrying from Fort Buchanan to provide medical assistance, intercepted three White Mountain Apaches with stolen stock, which he subsequently turned over to Lieutenant Bascom.

On February 14, 1st Lt. Isaiah N. Moore, Lieutenant Lord, and seventy dragoons arrived from Fort Breckenridge and undertook an unsuccessful scout for Cochise’s band. As the soldiers started back to their posts on February 19, Lieutenant Moore concluded to hang the six adult male prisoners near the charred wagon train, where the bodies of the captives killed by Cochise had been found. The soldiers then resumed their march, capturing a Chiricahua woman and two boys seized by the Chiricahuas on February 5, en route to Fort Buchanan. It must have been a hard thing for John Ward, back home about February 23, to tell his wife that the Apaches were now openly at war, the stage route blocked, and the prospects bleak for Felix’s return.21

Without warning, in April the Overland Mail Company abandoned the region. The Apaches, encouraged by the withdrawal of the stage line, increased their attacks. Samuel Robinson, accountant for the Santa Rita Mining Company, noted in his diary, “On last Saturday [April 27] a man on the Sonora named Flowers was killed by the Indians, and a Mexican who was sent to the Fort for assistance was shot on his return between Titus and John Wards. Titus house has been sacked of everything, and about all the settlers are moving from the Sonora valley to the Fort, Calabasas and Tubac for safety.”22

As the momentum of war in the east increased, it seemed inevitable that the military, too, would soon pull out of southern Arizona. In June of 1861, the Santa Rita Mining Company abandoned its property and moved to Tubac, where the employees arrived on the fifteenth. “On arriving here today,” Robinson wrote, “I learned that a Mexican was found dead in the road near Johnny Ward’s place on the Sonora two or three days ago.”

A month later, even Tubac’s future was uncertain as the soldiers prepared to depart. Many settlers followed suit. “Quite a caravan came in from the Sonora and Santa Cruz this evening—perhaps twenty or thirty persons, the most of them going to Tucson,” Rob-
inson noted on July 18. Two days later, he observed “Mr. Wadsworth [sic], Ake and several others arrived this evening bringing all the cattle on the Sonoita with them.”

On July 23, the army abandoned and burned Fort Buchanan. Two weeks later, the last Americans left Tubac for Tucson. “Well, this country is going to the devil with railroad speed,” wrote a newspaper correspondent. “Secessionists on the one side and Apaches on the other will bring us speedily to the issue, and the issue will be absence or death.”

Following a short occupation by Confederate troops, who retreated before advancing Union volunteers from California, on February 24, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed the bill that created Arizona Territory. The first party of federal officials that arrived in December included U.S. Marshal Milton B. Duffield. Duffield, who was responsible for producing a census, reported in May of 1864 a non-Indian population of 4,573 persons, including soldiers.

Only Elias Pennington and John Ward remained of the pioneer Sonoita Valley farmers. Living at Tucson since giving up his farm, Ward was listed in the census as a glassblower by occupation and a resident of Arizona for six years, together with Jesús María and the couple’s daughter, Mary. There were now three more Ward children: eight-month-old Ella; two-and-one-half-year-old J. D.; and “James”, born in late 1860. The anglicization of the eldest Ward child’s name fails to obscure Jesús María’s poignant decision to call the boy “Santiago” after her first love, the father of her lost son, Felix.

Fifty-nine-year-old John Ward, who had risked his life farming on the Sonoita Creek when Fort Buchanan offered the only protection, probably moved out of Tucson about 1865. With his family, he began farming again on the Potrero ranch, near the military detachment at Tubac. There, they raised pigs and hay for local sale. Over the next couple of years, the army transferred its garrison from Tubac to Camp Cameron, and then to Camp Crittenden. At the same time, its role shifted from fighting Indians to feeding them.

By 1867, the farmers around Tubac were no safer from Apache attack than the Sonoita Valley settlers had been before the war. A letter to the San Francisco Bulletin underlined their peril by listing recent Indian depredations. “On the 1st day of May, 1867,” the correspondent noted, “John Ward, living at the Potrero Ranch, had all of his stock taken by the Indians in broad daylight and whilst the animals were hitched to the ploughs.” He estimated the value of Ward’s loss at $600.

The raid, which served as a grim reminder of Felix’s abduction six years earlier, represented a severe financial setback from which John Ward had not recovered when he died in October, 1867. Case No. 30 in the Pima County Probate Court states that he died without making a will and that his estate was valued at about $400, roughly equal to his indebtedness.

On October 25, Ward’s neighbor, John Petit, petitioned for the power to administer the estate for “the use and benefit” of John and Jesús María’s four minor children. Because the March census listed three sons and two daughters (besides Teodora, who probably would not have been considered Ward’s child in this regard), it seems likely that, in an era of high infant mortality, one of John and Jesús María’s children had died during the intervening seven months. Since no further papers were filed with the case, which was
heard at Tucson on November 5, we can assume that John Petit received the letters of administration and did what he could on the children’s behalf.

Doubtless the Potrero ranch was put up for sale. It must have been at this time that it came again into the hands of Pete Kitchen, who had first farmed there in 1861 and with whose name it is invariably associated. The fate of the two youngest Ward children remains a mystery. In 1934, Santiago Ward recalled that “After father’s death, mother was not well so she took us [Mary and himself] to Magdalena [Magdalena, Sonora] to live. I stayed with a family named Swastika in Magdalena and that is why I have no better education. Mother died there in Magdalena.”

Meanwhile, we can reasonably surmise young Felix’s state of mind as his captors carried him away from the Sonoita Valley in 1861. Here was a skinny, five-and-one-half-foot tall, thirteen-year-old boy, who had spent his childhood in a Mexican frontier village made wretched by the constantly marauding Apaches, and who had moved to an American community which increasingly came under attack during his time there. Now, he found himself in the hands of los barbaros, the bogeymen of his youth. He must have expected horrible torture and a lingering death. As time passed and neither eventuality came to pass, he slowly began to recognize that he was not among demons, but in the company of fellow human beings. Indeed, in their own language and estimation, Apaches were “The People,” a fact that Felix would come to appreciate. And yet, his fears were hardly groundless, for he was at the maximum age limit for a male captive. He almost certainly would have been killed had he not looked younger than he was.

In a 1977 interview at San Carlos, May Mitchel Naltazan, a niece of Mickey Free’s second wife, revealed the identity of the Apaches who raided the Ward ranch more than a century earlier. Victor, the chief of the group, had one eye and wore “a leather patch and string down under his head.” According to May, “He was Arivaipa [Apache]. He move from Mexico to Arivaipa and then stay there ... where El Capitan was. The Arivaipa captured Mickey Free in the beginning.”
used to talk about how Mickey was captured; Mickey say, ‘When I
was captured I was on a peach tree.’”34

Like Adahay, Felix was soon on the move to the White Moun-
tain country. The Arivaipa and Pinal Apaches quite often traded
or gave away captives to other bands living at a greater distance
from the white man. As the elderly White Mountain Apache known
by the American name John Rope explained to ethnologist Gren-
ville Goodwin, “Mickey Free, he was raised with me, but we always
treated him just like one of us.” Rope recalled that Eskiminzin’s
people traded Felix for some special medicine and that the old sha-
man who received him “turned Mickey over to father to use as his
helper.” In his published recollections, Rope says that “Mickey was
raised by my father. He was given to him by the San Carlos people
when a little boy. Mickey and I were brought up together, so we
called each other brothers.”35

John Rope’s father, Nayundiie, was leader of the local group of
Western White Mountain Apaches who lived at the forks of Cedar
Creek. Nayundiie’s two wives, who had born him many sons and
daughters, were the sisters of Adahay. In addition to John Rope, their
children included the boys who, when Apache names later became
anglicized, were known as Nathan and David Declay. “Mickey stayed
with John Rope and my great grandmother’s people and my great
grandmother would cook for these kids,” Mary Riley explained. “The
two wives were her sisters. They died in childbirth. That’s why she
mentioned Mickey; he went for water, stayed with the kids. She
said, ‘I was always afraid to feed him, he’s gonna work for it. I leave
enough in the pot. I was so afraid he will dig down too far and make
a hole in my pottery,’ women used to be scared to feed him! She
would say, ‘Mickey sure could eat.’”36

In this way, Felix discovered that the “bloodthirsty savages”
were quite as capable of warmth and humanity as any other people.
Moreover, their strong sense of paternity ensured that no young
person, orphaned or captive, wanted for a family. Gradually, as he
learned the Apache language, Felix found that his captors were a greg-
garious and fun-loving lot among themselves, despite their reserve

with people they did not know well and their suspicion of strangers.
A deep-rooted kinship bound them together through their clan sys-
tem, an extension of the blood tie that was difficult for an outsider
to understand. Because these clans were matrilineally descended
and exogamous, their influence was most plainly seen in marriage
patterns. But it reached into many other important aspects of life as
well. One or two clans usually predominated among a local group
and members of these clans owned the farmsites.

Nayundiie, the head of Felix’s foster family, was leader of the
local Western White Mountain Apache group whose principal farm-
site was at the forks of Cedar Creek, from which his clan received
the name “Cottonwoods Joining.” Nayundiie’s two wives, the children
they had borne, and their sister, Adahay, were of the “Slender Peaks
Standing Up” clan, which was strongly represented at the farmsites
a little to the south, at Cedar Creek Crossing, and whose principal
site was near Bear Springs. Most closely related to Nayundiie’s clan
was the “Between Two Hills” clan, many of whose members, along
with the Slender Peaks people, were invited to farm at Cedar Creek
after a drought ruined some of their own farmsites in about 1864. It
was among these people, interrelated through blood and marriage,
that young Felix widened his immediate contacts and with whom he
would remain associated throughout his adult life.37

The story of Felix Ward’s first decade among the Apaches is
one of acculturation. Demonstrating the same sort of resilience and
adaptability with which his mother had escaped a harsh life in Santa
Cruz, Felix learned the Apache language, absorbed the Apache way
of life, and accepted Apache values and obligations.

Because the farmsites were not permanent camping places,
young Felix led a nomadic existence. Local Apache groups moved
around within their native territory, particularly on hunting and
food-gathering trips. “We used to gather acorns all the way from
Oak Springs on the west, to Rocky Creek on the east. When the
acorns were ripe, we climbed the trees and shook the acorns to
the ground,” John Rope recalled. “After a while we always sent someone
back to Cedar Creek to see how the corn was getting on. If the corn

16

17
were ripe all our people would pack up the acorns we had gathered and move back to harvest the corn. In the late Fall we used to gather juniper berries.”

Besides helping around the camp and on food-gathering trips, Felix and the other boys played games, held races, enjoyed mock fights, and went hunting. “We boys used to hunt rats with bows and arrows. A lot used to start out in the morning and hunt till mid-afternoon. The way we got the rats was by one boy poking a long stick into the rat’s nest, while the other boy would stand near the nest entrance,” John Rope explained. “The rat would come to the door and stick out his head; then the boy would shoot him.”

Adahay, who remembered Felix as a perpetually hungry boy liable to ruin her good pottery in his enthusiasm to scrape up the last morsel, served his meals on the stone metate she used for grinding corn meal, and assigned him some chore by which he could earn his meal. “That’s why when he was staying with that group, he stayed. Grandma didn’t send him away ‘cause he help; he was better help than the other boys. After that she started to feed him kinda like she feed the rest of them,” explained Mary Riley. “But after he started to live with them and she started to love him a little, so she didn’t care anymore and she treated him just like her own. She said pretty soon the boys used to go huntin’ with their daddy.”

As an old lady, Adahay described to her great granddaughter how the boys triumphantly returned with a wild hog slung on a pole—their first real hunting trophy. The next day, after the common custom, the prize was barbecued and shared among everyone. She recalled, too, how Felix would bring back birds, rabbits, and other small game. Adahay boiled the rabbits in a stew to which she added ground acorn. She then made ash-cornbread; “the real cornbread she ground herself.”

Despite Felix’s alien origins and the appetite he had developed at his stepfather’s well-stocked farm, Nayundiie’s sister-in-law grew genuinely fond of the fair-skinned captive boy attached to her foster family. She even forgave Felix when he and some other boys failed to warn the camp of an imminent attack. “She said Mickey just sat and had a drink of water and didn’t go tell them who was coming,” Mary Riley related. “She was so mad at him. Somebody sent him after water and after he fill up his tus [water jug], he had a drink of water and even when he knew there were ‘things in his way’ [the enemy], he didn’t come and tell his people. Mickey wasn’t sure though, she said he told her there were ‘a lot of black things in the night and it was almost morning.’” Adahay told her great granddaughter that many people were killed and that “just a few got away alive. All the big boys got away, they ran fast.”

This incident appears similar to an attack of soldiers, with Papago (Tohono O’odham) and Manso Apache allies, launched on a White Mountain Apache camp in about 1864. In any event, the terrified inaction of Felix and the other boys, caught away from camp in the predawn darkness, was a typical human failing that their elders subsequently forgave, perhaps in part because of Apache beliefs that associated nighttime with ghosts and malignant spirits. As he grew older, Felix was often absent from Nayundiie’s camp, but Adahay still saw him whenever he and her late sisters’ sons returned.

As young Felix Ward absorbed the Apache lifestyle, from 1861 to 1871 the non-Indian population of Arizona increased by almost fifty percent. The flood of newcomers produced a growing degree of contact, and often confrontation, with Arizona’s native peoples. While settlers like John Ward may have felt a little better protected than before the Civil War, the Apaches now nervously watched the proliferation of military posts throughout their native territory. Several of these posts doubled as rationing stations for proposed Indian reservations.

Fort Goodwin, for example, was established at the southwestern edge of the White Mountain and Cibicue Apache territory in 1864. At first a base for troop movements against Apache camps, it became for many Indians, particularly women and children, a source of novel sights and strange gifts. Here, many of them saw white soldiers and civilians for the first time. In May of 1870, shortly after Arizona became a separate department within the Division of the Pacific, the army established a post in the heart of White Mountain and Cibicue country. It was subsequently moved to a better location at the forks of the White River and named Camp Apache. In addition to its military role, Camp Apache served as a “feeding station” for the neighboring Indians. This function could hardly have failed to
please the young man who, a few years earlier, had scraped Adahay’s pots to near-destruction. Indeed, Felix seems to have improved on the opportunities the army post offered between weekly ration issues. He is remembered as having “worked about the mess kitchen at Fort [sic] Apache for his board.”

Nayundie’s people, living on Cedar Creek, were among the westernmost of the White Mountain Apaches. Chief Pedro’s band lived above them and bands led by Chief Miguel and the other Cibicue chiefs camped to the west. To the east were the Eastern White Mountain Apaches, whose principal chief was Eshkeldahsilah. While intermarriage and clan affiliations bound Nayundie’s people to the other White Mountain bands, proximity brought them into contact with the Cibicue people as well. Roaming young men like Felix were no doubt well acquainted on all sides.

Young Felix’s acculturation continued against this background. After several interviews, Adahay’s great granddaughter Mary Riley said in a confidential whisper: “There is something I didn’t tell you. It’s about People that were our Enemies. Well, Mickey Free was a warrior and they train[ed] him to be a warrior, and he went on Apache raids.” Mary confided that Mickey had spoken of his part in a raid against Indian enemies and even of killing a young woman and baby. When she and the other children asked him why, he replied: “They did that to our Apache tribe over where Velasquez Butte is, on the other side. That’s where they kill a lotta Apache, they did the same thing.” In Mary’s eyes, “He was thinking about that and he was doing the same thing; and he is not an Apache? He sure thought he was Apache.”

That the former victim of an Apache raid had himself become a raider is a telling measure of the degree to which Felix absorbed the lifestyle of the White Mountain people. They had become his people, and neither opportunity nor invitation would thereafter induce him to leave them. Felix not only participated in raids but, as later events would show, he went on at least one trip to trade with the Hopi. Both activities clearly demonstrate the degree to which he had become accepted and trusted by his captors. An Indian agent once observed that although Felix had been “stolen by Indians when a child,” he had become “adopted as a member of the tribe, a posi-

As he witnessed the visits of successive commanding generals and peace commissioners, the initial enlistment of Apache scouts in 1871, and the establishment of the Camp Apache Indian Agency, Felix must have recognized the consolidation of American authority in Arizona. If so, he prepared once again to adapt to new circumstances. The time came in November of 1872, as Brevet Maj. Gen. George Crook, commanding the Military Department of Arizona, prepared to launch a campaign against the hostile Indian bands.

The visiting peace commissioners had established reservations to which the Indians must now go. Self-sufficient, converging columns of soldiers from the principal military posts sited around the Indian country would compel recalcitrant Yavapais, Tonto Apaches, and some bands of the San Carlos group to comply.
of the most prominent and ubiquitous representatives of that interesting group of men who served throughout the Apache campaigns. The fact that Mickey was able to find employment, or enlistment, continuously for more than twenty years belies suggestions that he was considered untrustworthy. That continuity of service, which he shared with many other Scouts, interpreters, chiefs of scouts, packers and packmasters, contrasts sharply with the constant turnover in military officers and Indian agents, prompting one to wonder which groups ultimately had the greater influence on the outcome of the campaigns and the application of the reservation policy.

NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

AAAG – Acting Assistant Adjutant General
AAG – Assistant Adjutant General
AAQM – Acting Assistant Quartermaster
AGO – Adjutant General’s Office
AGO-LR – Adjutant General’s Office Letters Received
AHF – Arizona Historical Foundation
AHS – Arizona Historical Society
CIA – Commissioner of Indian Affairs
CIA-LR – Commissioner of Indian Affairs Letters Received
CO – Commanding Officer
CVLS – Camp Verde Letters Sent
IG – Inspector General
HED – House Executive Document
JAGO – Judge Advocate General’s Office
LRDA – Letters Received Department of Arizona
LSCA – Letters Sent Camp Apache
LSDA – Letters Sent Department of Arizona
NA – National Archives
NAA – National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution
NHS – Nebraska Historical Society
SCASR – San Carlos Agency Selected Records
SED – Senate Executive Document
SI – Secretary of Interior

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE


4. 1831 and 1851 Santa Cruz censuses; Keiran McCarty to author, May 23, 1978; “Reminiscenses of Santiago Ward”

5. For Santa Cruz, see Kessell, “The Puzzling Presidio,” pp. 21–46. For Sonora, see Bancroft, History of the Northern Mexican States and Texas; Voss, On the Periphery of Nineteenth-Century Mexico; Velasco, Sonora; and Mowry, Geography and Resources of Arizona and Sonora. For more about Apache routes into Mexico, see Smith, Apache Plunder Trails Southward, pp. 20–42.

6. “Reminiscenses of Santiago Ward”

7. For Fort Buchanan, see Serven, “Military Posts on Sonoita Creek”; and Altshuler, Starting With Defiance, pp. 19–21.


10. “The bits of glass and ironstone crockery; square cut nails and bridle fastenings; soldered tin cans, remnants of farm tools, and empty cardboards; buttons, a book, and a railroad spike—these are the things of this period of history. These metal, glass, leather, and wooden objects are not exotic. They were commonplace. They fill in the details of the daily lives of people.” Fontana and Greenleaf, “Johnny Ward’s Ranch,” p. 28. Ward interview, pp. 40–42. Theresa Ward, was unaware that the name of Jesus Maria’s father was Modesto Martinez.


12. Altshuler, Lates from Arizona, pp. 33–45; Tenth Decennial Federal Census, 1860, Arizona County. Mary Gardner Kane could have been speaking for Maria when she recalled, “Father had taken mother to Santa Cruz so that she could be cared for, and, in consequence, I was born in Mexico instead of Arizona.” “Reminiscenses of Mary Gardner Kane,” p. 3.


14. Altshuler, Lates from Arizona, p. 149

15. Ibid., p. 156; Wagoner, Arizona Territory, pp. 3–4; Lamar, Far South-west, pp. 109–113.


20. Fort Buchanan, Post Return, January 1861; Cullum, Biographical Register, vol. 2, p. 713; Heitman, Historical Register, vol. 1, p. 197; William S. Oury account in Arizona Weekly Star, June 28, July 5, 1877. Ethnological studies describe the Chiricahua and Warm Springs Apaches in terms of central, eastern, and southern divisions. These people themselves identified four sub-tribal groups: the Chokonen, Nedbi, Chilehne, and Bedonkoh. The Chokonen were principally based in the mountains of southeastern Arizona. Their notable chiefs during the nineteenth century included Miguel Narbona, Trigollen, Pisago Cabezon, and the celebrated Cochise (ca. 1815–1874), who became principal chief in the late 1850s. After his death in June 1874, Cochise was first succeeded by his eldest son, Taza (who died on a visit to the East in 1876); and then by the Taza’s younger brother, Nacoe (ca. 1856–1921). These people were relatively well known to the Western Apaches and to Americans, and had a long history of raiding into Sonora. They were usually referred to as the “Cochise,” or “Chiricahua,” Apaches. The Nedbi (southern Chiricahua) made their home in northern Mexico’s Sierra Madre. It was said that their favorite site was “about a three-day walk from Casas Grandes” in Chihuahua. Posita Moreaga and Teboquita were among the better-known leaders prior to Juh (ca. 1825–1883). They were the least well known to Western Apaches and to Americans, but had an ambivalent relationship with such Chihuahuan communities as Casas Grandes and Janos, while directing their raiding against Sonora. They were sometimes called “Southern,” or “Mexican,” Apaches. By the mid-1880s, they were rarely distinguished from the other Chiricahua people.

The Nedbi (southern Chiricahua) ranged the country west of the Río Grande to the Black Range in New Mexico. Their favorite camping ground was at Ojo Caliente. They appear to have been successively led by Cuchillo Negro, Delgadito, Victorio (ca. 1820–1880), and then Loco and Nana. Usually called the “Ojo Caliente,” or “Warm Springs Apaches,” they established friendly relationships with some New Mexican communities and raided most often into Chihuahua. Living west of the Black Range, respectively north and south of the Gila River, were the people known as the “Mogollon” and “Mimbres” Apaches, but who called themselves Bedonkoh. By the 1870s they were hardly ever identified separately. Teboca, Juan José Compa, and Mangas Coloradas were their most noted leaders. Genomin, who was born in the “Mogollon” band country, identified himself as Bedonkoh. They were friendly with their neighbors, the Eastern White Mountain Apaches, and raided mainly into Chihuahua. By the 1880s, these people were rarely distinguished from the Chilehne.

Today, the descendants of the Chokonen, Nedbi, Bedonkoh, and Chilehne live principally in Oklahoma and New Mexico.
224


24. While the activities of soldiers and volunteers reduced the Indian threat, in Washington the U.S. House of Representatives passed, and sent on to the Sen­ate, a bill to create Arizona Territory. Waggoner, Arizona Territory, pp. 5-19. For the war, see Colton, Civil War in the Western Territories; and Kirby, Confederate Invasion of New Mexico and Arizona. See also Altshuler, “The Case of Sylvester Mowry”; Thompson, “Vulture over the Carrion,” pp. 381-404; Finch, “Arizona in Exile,” pp. 57-84; Foch, Confederate Pathway to the Pacific; and Carmony, ed., California Column Occupies Tucson,” pp. 11-40. For the confrontation at Apache Pass, see Saylebourne, ed., “Battle for Apache Pass: Reports of the California Volunteers.” The establishment of government and law proceeded through­out 1864. The territory was divided into judicial districts, the capital was moved to Prescott, and the First Territorial Legislature was convened. Mohave, Pima, Yavapai, and Yuma counties were created. In 1865, initial jurisdiction over Ariz­ona was transferred from New Mexico to the Department of California, a new post was established on the Rio Verde, and an Indian reservation was set aside on the Colorado River. Waggoner, Arizona Territory, pp. 28-62; Altshuler, Chains of Command, pp. 37-38; Sacks, De It Enacted; and Sacks, Arizona’s Angry Man.

25. 1864 Special Federal Census, Tucson.


27. Altshuler, Chains of Command, pp. 39-130; Waggoner, Arizona Terri­tory, pp. 65-75, 507; Miscellaneous Probate Cases 25, Pima County, 1864-1889, Hayden Collection. Rense Smith was elected to represent Tubac in the territorial legislature, but was murdered by Mexican cattle rustlers on June 15, 1871. Waggoner, Arizona Territory, p. 510. The 1860 census describes Tennesseean Thomas D. Hurton as a thirty-three-year-old bricklayer. The Prescott Arizona Daily Miner, October 19, 1866, reporting that he was not attending the current session of the legislature, refers to Hurton as an old resident and a farmer, living at Huavabi.

28. 1867 Arizona Territorial Census, Potrero.


32. May Mitchell Tazkan zinc interview, San Carlos, 1977, in Jauh, “Transcripts of Interviews,” vol. 3, pp. 34-52. Later at San Carlos, Victor was designated tag band chief.FSE.1. In 1880, his camp was located on the San Carlos River, about eight miles north of the agency. Indian censuses indicate that he survived into the twentieth century. “Yavapai & Western Apache Chiefs,” Radbourne biographical files.


37. Goodwin, Social Organization of the Western Apache, pp. 97-122, 600-629, 652-56. See also Perry, Western Apache Heritage, pp. 75-79, 227-28; and Kaut, Western Apache Clan System.


39. Ibid., p. 35.


41. Ibid., pp. 56-57.

42. Goodwin, Western Apache Raiding and Warfare, pp. 191-92.

43. Martin, An Arizona Chronology, pp. 6, 12. For background on this period, see Waggoner, Arizona Territory, pp. 3-102; and Faulk, Arizona, pp. 113-32.

44. Altshuler, Starring With Defiance, pp. 9-12, 27-28; John Rope in Goodwin “Reminiscences of an Indian Scout,” Part 1, pp. 36-39; Altshuler, Chains of Command, pp. 183-84; Davison, “Fort Apache”; Ralph P Stanson to CIA, February 21, 1923, Letters Received #18397, RG 75. Stanson gathered his information from relatives and contemporaries.

45. Eskeldahsansh (born ca. 1805) is unintentionally misidentified as “Dia­blo” in Grenville Goodwin’s writings. That nickname was actually applied to the Cibecue Apache, Eskilin (ca. 1850-1880), the younger half-brother of Eskilin (ca. 1820-1874), alias Miguel, the principal chief of the Carrizo band. Eskenhyan-
Dr. Quicksilver. Lever first wrote under the pen name "Harry Lorrequer." See pp. 212-13.


8. "Arizona Weekly Miner, December 27, 1872; Camp Apache Post Returns, January, 1873. A sketch of Delchay's life is in Thrapp, "Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography" vol. 1, pp. 389-90. Del Shay Basin, in Gila County, bears his name. Granger, "Will C. Barnes' Arizona Place Names," pp. 100-101. Possibly in his late fifties by this time, Delchay had a considerable reputation among his own people as a war chief. Among Americans his notoriety overshadowed such prominent Yavapai chief Wa-poo-eta, alias Big Rump, and Yavapai chiefs Moqua, Ichewachakama, Chiquito-je; and Tonto Apache chiefs as Cha-it-lipan, Chilchuanna, Zah-se-lay, and Chimehueva-sal. The confusion of Delchay with the Yavapai chief Wa-poo-eta, alias Big Rump, is difficult to understand. It may have originated with Mike Burns, who in his youth had heard various stories about Big Rump and another Yavapai war chief, Telshe, and later attributed them to Delchay. Burns served as an informant for John G. Bourke, William H. Corbusier, Thomas Edwin Farish, and others.


NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Camp Apache Post Returns, November-December, 1872, M.417, Roll 33; Bourke, On the Border with Creek, p. 178; Hein, Memories of Long Ago, pp. 91-92. See also Altshuler, "Cavalry Yellow & Infantry Blue," pp. 163-64. For Crook, see Bourke, On the Border with Creek; Schmitt, ed., "General George Crook, Robinson, General Crook and the Western Frontier." For an excellent biography of Bourke, see Portet, Paper Medicine Man. Biographical sketches of Ross are in Thrapp, "Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography," vol. 3, pp. 1243-44; and Altshuler, "Cavalry Yellow & Infantry Blue," pp. 163-64.

2. Goodwin, "Reminiscences of an Indian Scout," Part I, p. 43. Bourke, On the Border with Creek, p. 178, was under the impression that one of "the first young men" enlisted was Nochaydelklinne. The Cibicue medicine chief, however, was not a young man in 1872, nor do the enlistments include any identifiable variant of his registered name.


4. Radbourne, "Naming of Mickey Free," pp. 341-46. Charles James Lever (1806-1872) was a native of Dublin who began life as a doctor and turned novelist after the 1837 publication of a story in the Dublin University Magazine. "Mickey Free" was first published in 1840, and proved to be the most memorable character in his most popular story. Lever first wrote under the pen name "Harry Lorrequer." See Stevenson, Dr. Quicksilver.


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264
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