

There's Money on the Trail

by Angela Lewis



I began genealogical research in 1998, and although I enjoy learning my family history, my distant relatives sometimes seem like nothing more than names and dates on a chart. The paper trail backs up the research, and now the DNA tests prove those family ties, but most of these ancestors have never felt real to me because I never knew them. My grandparents on my mother's side both died when she was young, and so her Gurulé ancestry—from her mom's side—has been strictly on paper. Yet every now and then, I find a “something” that excites me, a connection that breathes life into the names on a page. That moment came for me when I found my ancestors had traveled the Santa Fe Trail.

When I first saw the list of old Santa Fe Trail travelers, published in the *Las Vegas Daily Optic* in 1910, I was thrilled to see the name of my great-grandfather, Felipe de Jesus Gurulé, along with his brother Tomas and his uncle Donaciano.¹ Since its inception in 1821, the Santa Fe Trail served as a great commercial highway. These Gurulé men took that highway, not all the way to Missouri, but they sought adventure and fortune like many travelers before them.

Felipe Gurulé was born in Albuquerque to Damasio Gurulé and Maria Rafaela Gallegos and baptized February 8, 1855² at San Felipe de Neri church in what is now called Old Town. I found most of the family records in this same church. As a young teenager, he worked alongside his brother Tomas as a sheepherder, according to his listing in the 1870 census.³

In the late 1800s, many New Mexicans migrated to Colorado to work in the mines. The state's first railroad was nearing completion during this time, and people had easier means to travel. Felipe Gurulé

must have seen opportunities, so he left Albuquerque. Newspapers and church records show Gurulé traveled back and forth between New Mexico and Colorado. His trips took him over the route of the old Santa Fe



*Felipe Gurulé and his wife Simona Sanchez
(photograph courtesy of Ray Romero)*

Trail, but the once-teeming road fell into disuse while rail travel increased.

The railroad brought migrants faster than wagons, and the Gurulé brothers saw opportunity. Felipe got into the real estate business and, before long, ran a series of advertisements in Colorado newspapers to promote his business. His brother Tomas joined him, but other family members looked elsewhere for profit. His uncle, Donaciano, chose to resettle his family in Arizona to farm for many years.

The 1880 census recorded Felipe Gurulé as living in Trinidad, Colorado, at the base of Raton Pass, where he found work as a store clerk.⁴ He married Maria de la Luz Saiz on April 19, 1875 at Holy Trinity Church in Trinidad,⁵ and the young couple had two children. The oldest, Maria Devorah Gurulé, was baptized April 16, 1877⁶ at Holy Trinity Church with his parents Damasio Gurulé and Rafaela Gallegos as *padrinos* (godparents). Their second child, Jose Damasio Gurulé, who was named after his grandfather, was baptized March 19, 1881.⁷ His uncle and aunt, Tomas Gurulé and Maria Macedonia Gurulé, served as *padrinos*.

It's unknown what happened to Maria de la Luz, but she may have died giving birth to their second child, or she contracted smallpox during the epidemic that swept Colorado during that time. Felipe married a second time, on June 6, 1882⁸, to Maria Eulogia Baca, the daughter of Jose Baca and Maria Cruz Salas. They had a daughter, Maria Dionisia Gurulé, baptized April 10, 1885, at Holy Trinity.⁹ Tragedy struck again when his second wife died. Can you imagine how he felt, to find himself widowed a second time, and with small children in the home?

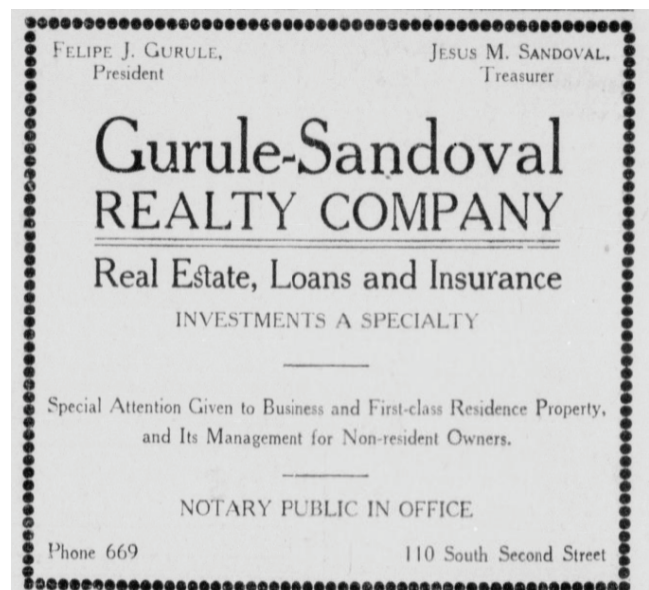
Just two months after the most recent child was born, Felipe married again, on June 21, 1885¹⁰, this time to Simona Sanchez, the daughter of Martin Sanchez and Maria Paula Rael. Along with raising children from his first and second wives, Simona began having children too. Their first child, named after his father, Felipe de Jesus Gurulé, was baptized October 7, 1887¹¹ at Holy Trinity. I never found other information for this child, so I think he may have died, which could have led to the family's decision to move to New Mexico. Possibly, the housing market

in Colorado went sour, and forced Felipe to take his business back home.

Felipe and Simona then had a daughter, Maria Lucinda Gurulé, and she was baptized February 9, 1889¹² at Immaculate Conception church in Albuquerque. This baptismal record provides a time frame for the family's relocation from Colorado to New Mexico. Their youngest child was my grandmother, Rafaela Gurulé, who was baptized at Immaculate Conception church on February 25, 1891.¹³

Research of the census records builds a timeline for Felipe Gurulé's career path. Back in Albuquerque, the 1900 census showed Gurulé served as a bookkeeper.¹⁴ His brother Tomas was identified as a gambler in this same census.¹⁵ Tomas must have decided that legal real estate deals were more profitable because he changed professions. In 1910, he listed "real estate" as his occupation,¹⁶ just as his brother Felipe did.¹⁷ Donaciano Gurulé remained listed as a farmer in the census records.¹⁸

Beginning in November 1908, advertisements began appearing in the *Albuquerque Daily Citizen* newspaper—big ads with huge letters, offering people a chance to buy a lot and build their dream home. The Gurulé business apparently flourished because the advertisements kept running, eventually in the *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, such as this one in the Sunday, March 14, 1915, edition.¹⁹



In summary, Felipe de Jesus Gurulé was a success! A family man and a working man. He had traveled the Santa Fe Trail back and forth between New Mexico and Colorado. Felipe worked hard, starting as a store clerk, then growing his skills to become a real estate manager. He was even a notary public. He proved his bilingual capabilities because he had to dictate the newspaper ads, which were in English. Felipe took risks: he invested and he was an entrepreneur. His travels across the old Santa Fe Trail

helped with his success, even while the great road was in decline.

Felipe de Jesus Gurulé lived a long, prosperous life, and died shortly after his 77th birthday on March 6, 1932,²⁰ in Albuquerque.

About the Author: Angela Lewis is a 10th-generation Gurulé-Gallegos descendant and manages the Gurule Family Website: <https://www.gurule-family.org/>.

Sources

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