

From article in El Defensor Chieftain, Nov. 17, 1966

**FORTUNEFAMILY ESTABLISHED HERE IN 1861  
HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE BUILDING OF SOCORRO**  
[Stapleton – Fortune families]

The history of the Fortune family in Socorro reflects the history of New Mexico and the pattern of its growth and development from a territory into a state within the Union.

When a young boy, **Robert Stapleton** (who later became a colonel in the United States Army) decided to leave his native Ireland for America. His sister, **Mary Therese**, felt that Robert was too young to go on his American venture alone and declared to the family, "I will not let my brother go alone. I will go with him."

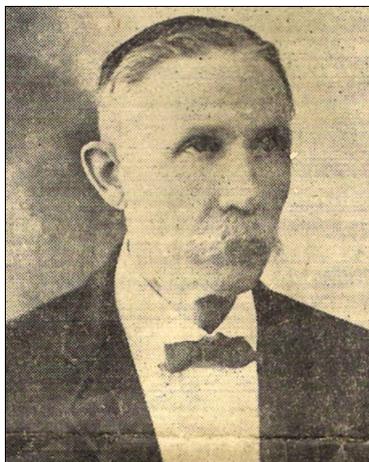
A few years later Col. Stapleton was sent to the territory of New Mexico and in the capacity of purchasing agent, supervised the building of **Fort Craig**.

In the meantime another Irishman, **Patrick Fortune**, had come to Missouri where he was granted American citizenship in 1857. He joined the Army and his regiment was sent to Fort Craig to protect the families seeking a new future in the territory.

**Patrick Fortune** married **Mary Therese Stapleton** in Lemitar in 1861 but had not long to live, dying of pneumonia in 1864. The couple had one son, **Edward**, who married **Guadalupe Baca**, daughter of **Juan Jose Baca**, the union reflecting the history of New Mexico in which the blood-line of the Spanish conquistadores was joined with that of other European stock.

Both the Bacas and later the Stapletons and Fortunes contributed to the building of Socorro. Juan Jose Baca while a senator in the Territorial Legislature, had worked for the legislative act which established the **School of Mines** in Socorro and then had donated land for its building. As merchants the families brought merchandise to town, trips taking six months by oxen teams to St. Louis and back.

The [Gertrude Fortune] home is on the southwest corner of the Plaza and was formerly a store with a post office where Mrs. Mary Therese Stapleton Fortune was postmistress for many years during the 1870's and 1880's. At one time the patio was a room with high small windows used as lookout points during Indian raids.



**Edward Fortune**

**Guadalupe and Edward Fortune** had eight daughters. The youngest, **Mrs. Josephine Cathcart** and **Mrs. Donna Van Atta**, are twins and live in Pheonix. The other six daughters made their home in Socorro. **Priscilla [Sanchez]**, the widow of the lawyer, the late **Julius Sanchez**, lived on School of Mines Road for many years. She died a few months ago.

Her son, the **Rev. Robert Sanchez**, was educated by the Jesuits in Italy. Two sisters, **Mrs. Florence Raef** and **Miss Elizabeth Fortune**, are temporarily living in the Sanchez residence. **Mrs. Therese Fortune Stapleton** lives on Mt. Carmel Avenue.

**Mrs. Lucy Fortune Green** is well remembered for her many years of service as a teacher in the Socorro County school system. **Miss Jenny Fortune**, former Secretary of State, is a gifted artist and craftsman, having fashioned in the patio a beautiful shrine which took seven years to build. She also paints, one of her pictures being that of another Socorro landmark, the **Severo Baca** house on Park Street. Baca was her great-uncle and brother of Juan Jose Baca.



**The Fortune sisters**  
(l-r) Mrs. Therese Fortune Stapleton,  
Mrs, Florence Raef, Mrs, Lucy Green  
and Miss Jenny Fortune  
*(Image scanned from 1966 El Defensor Chieftain)*