

THE ALPINE ECHO

March 1, 1962

ECHOES OF THE PAST

The Old Timer

By Niel Galloway

Palmer took up a 120-acre homestead partly in section 30. He, like a lot of others, worked some for me. The Palmers split up and she got the 120 acres and married T. M. Bullard which many of you knew. She was a lot older than Tom. A. L. McNett's second wife was one of Mrs. Bullard's daughters. She was married before to Littman. Both Mr. Bullard and Mrs. Littman are buried in the McNett plot in Alpine cemetery. Tom Bullard did odd jobs, some building and digging wells. He also used to drive team and do general farm work for me. He was always well-liked. He was buried in Alpine about two years ago at 79.

Now we come near to Arnold Way. Up against the hill to the west of the valley, there are some old eucalyptus trees; that was the Decorsey homestead. Two boys, Billie, a bantam-weight prize fighter, and Philip. He was suffering from a stroke when I knew him. The Decorsey house had been carried away piece by piece. There was none of it left. McNinch now has a poultry ranch there, but before him there was Landino, an Italian. He worked for McKie Construction Company (L. A. McKie). Landino came down here weekends, built a nice home. His wife was not well. She died and Landino got killed by a bulldozer running over him. He had three children; two married and one boy six years old. Everyone that knew him liked him; he was too good-hearted for his own good. He made money but someone was always borrowing it and never paying back. So all he had was the land when he passed on and that was not clear.

Next, we go north on Arnold Way to where that clump of eucalyptus stand on a slight knole. That is the old Baily homestead. He was called Doc Bailey. He was a spiritualist; claimed he could cure your sickness by laying on his hands, but of course you were supposed to have a few dollars in your hand to complete the cure. Anyway, the old lady was crippled. She used a crutch to get around. I think they got some support from the Spiritualist Society and perhaps some relative. Bailey had worked as a clock and watch repair man. After they both died, I a little more each time to pay the mortgage before, until he finally found a bow drill. This drill was run by sawing a bow back and forth. It is now in a collection in Julian. When the old lady died, my mother laid her out. There were no undertakers in those times. Yo ueither made a casket or bought one ready made. Old Bailey was a kind of cantankerous old cuss, but the neighbors brought him what he needed, after she died. He finished his days in a home someplace. They willed the place to the Spiritualist Society, but a lawyer named Davis got it and still owns it to the best of my knowledge.

I am going to wander a little farther north where Arnold Way joins Highway 80. Looking off to the right down below the highway, there is a new house. That piece of property was homesteaded by Lanwer, a very well educated man. Lanwer had a family, but they did not live together. He made what he called a parabolic curve device to gather the heat from the sun to cook and bake what he ate. His trouble was alcohol. He made it himself, had a small home-made still. He did not sell it. It killed him, and he was found after he had been dead several days.

A couple named Wiley got the place. He was a brick and stone mason. They had two boys, and a girl who is now Mrs. Martha Radcliff and still lives there. One of the boys is a

plumber in El Cajon. I don't know where the other one is. Old man Wiley took up more land under the grazing act, although he never grazed anything.

Next the now-known Galloway Valley. In the early days this was known by the old-timers as Mormon Johnson Valley. I will get to Mormon Johnson later. I have what is called an abstract of title. It tells every mortgage and divorce suit; in fact everything that was ever recorded in San Diego Court House. It is a 9x13 inches and about five-eighth inch thick. The first 160 acres was proved up by Henry M. Johnson, Sept. 17, 1881 and was signed by James A. Garfield, President of the United States. In October 1881, Johnson borrowed the first \$1,700, the record says. This was sold to several people before it was paid off. In fact, Johnson just kept borrowing lost it June 2, 1883, he obtained another 160 acres from the government. About that time Blanch P. Johnson filed suit for divorce. It was not granted, as she had no marriage certificate, although she had two children. She was given some money, and filed a separation Nov. 10, 1883, Johnson borrowed \$2,200 from Levi Chase July 2, 1885, Emily S. Johnson filed a suit for divorce. She had some children; doesn't say how many, but he agreed to pay her \$1,500. The next mortgage was for \$3,000 to D. C. Hermann. There are a lot more mortgages; you will get tired reading about them. These mortgages changed a lot of hands.

Finally, the High Brothers, William and John High, got it. They foreclosed on Johnson and became owners of the Valley, but apparently they also mortgaged it and lost it to the bank in San Diego. This bank failed and Melacton Barnett must have had stock in it for he got the mortgage as his share of bank assets. I bought the valley from his son, Melcaton Barnett, Jr. in July 1909.

Now during the time between Johnson and Barnett there were quite a few renters. Some I knew well. There was George Benton who had children I remember. Laura Benton, a school teacher, never married. Another daughter, whose name I forgot, married and had a family. Frank Benton was the oldest. He was a dairyman in Santee. He had a family by two marriages. The first wife died. He finally built a home on Tavern Road and died there. Jake Benton worked for W. D. Hall Company in El Cajon for many years, is now retired and lives in El Cajon. He had one son who works for the Hall Company repairing automotive equipment.

Elmer Benton still manages the Quamadero Ranch in Descanso owned by Whitney and other businessmen of San Diego. Then there were the twins, Lawrence and Clarence Benton. Lawrence worked for the Forest Service and Clarence is in Northern California. So George Benton had a lot of help. I know all of them personally. He had a brother Robert, who was a big cattle rancher. I will get to him in some future article.

George Benton was a very interesting man to talk to. He lived to be nearly 90. Through a lot of his life he was interested in cattle. He told me he used to go into Mexico buying cattle. Now these cattle were a grand mixture, mostly longhorn, same as the early Texas cattle, long-legged and it took a good horse to catch one.

You never tried to walk among them; if you did the chances are you would be charged and riding on some of them horns. They were very spooky. It didn't take much to stampede them. George Benton told me about the early days driving those wild cattle across the desert to the mountains in San Diego County. He got \$15 a day; the common bowboy got \$1.50 per day and board. It seems George Benton knew all the water holes in the desert, and kept shovels buried near them. When they got some place near the water holes some of them rode ahead and shoveled out the water so the cattle could drink. George said he thought some of them shovels are still buried there.

George's wife passed on several years before he did. He died in La Mesa. The daughters still live there.

Continued next week