

THE ALPINE ECHO

March 8, 1962

ECHOES OF THE PAST

The Old Timer

By Niel Galloway

Ambrose Castro was another renter of Galloway Valley. Castro as every one called him, was a Portugese from Portugal. A sailor, he came to San Diego on a sailing ship and jumped ship in San Diego. There was a large ranch in Bostonia called the Boston ranch. It was a kind of stock company owned by Bostonians. At one time El Cajon was the raisin center of the world. It employed quite a lot of people the year round and Castro was one of them. He had a wife and three children in Portugal. He got \$1.50 a day and saved up his money to send for his family.

When he had nearly enough another Portugese borrowed it and Castro had to do it all over again. Somewhere along the line he took up a homestead. I think either 40 or 80 acres over the hill south of Alpine Heights. He planted it to fruit, olives and some grapes. Somewhere along the years he saved enough to send for that family, Charlie, Mary, and Delio. It was said, I can't prove this, that when they came to New York they knew no one or any English and were put in a box car with some household equipment and sent to California.

After they arrived, there was borne four more children. John, a pair of twins (Joe and Jack) both dead. The war was not kind to these two. And a girl Julia. Castro was a naturalized citizen. He was very fair. His wife very dark with kinkey hair. They worked very hard and saved some money. They used to sit up half of the night cutting and drying fruit by lantern light. Somehow they took to liking me and when he had a letter to write, he came to me although I was a newcomer at the time. When they got quite old he, like a lot of old people, wanted to go back to Portugal.

He still owned a piece of land he inherited there being the oldest son of his family. His oldest son, Charles worked for the Llewelin Iron Works in Los Angeles, saved his money; went back to Portugal, married and lived on the Castro property. He finially inherited it. When Castro got ready to go to Portugal, he drew over \$2,000 from the bank and carried it in a money belt. When he got to France, he went to get some papers, so he could leave for Portugal and fell or someone bumped him off. Anyway, he was killed and the money belt removed.

The police claimed he had nothing on him. That left the old lady stranded in France. She could only talk Portrugese, however, they sent for the son, Charles, in Cape Verde Islands to come and get her. She did not want to leave here in the first place. She had three children still living here. The day they left she clung to my hand and said, "Neels, O Neels!" She did not want to go.

Well, Castro made a Power of Attorney naming A. L. McNett, a deputy sheriff of Alpine, and myself. He said you not being very well you do the head work and let McNett do the foot work, but it did not read that way. Our Power of Attorney ceased when Castro died. He had made a Will naming A. L. McNett and myself. It was signed by a butcher from Lakeside and a neighbor. They did not sign it in the presence of each other, so it was no good. The Castros had a son, John, neither one wanted John to have anything to do with it. However, he got appointed and got away with part of the funds before he was gotten out.

It took months to get papers to Portugal and back, then they were no good because legal papers in Portugal are signed on the back, not legal in U.S.A. Finally the American Counsel got it signed right and McNett was appointed. He died some time later and I had to take over. I did not want it but I wanted this old lady to have some money while she was living, and I sent it each month until World War II came then the only way I could send it was by radio telegram that cost \$8 each time. So I sent it twice a year until she died. I received \$25 from the estate. I wanted nothing. I hope this does not bore you.

After her death I wanted nothing to do with it. Now these old pioneers worked from before daylight to way after dark. There was nothing like relief money them days only the poor house after they were worn out if they had no money. They worked for a few cents a day or nothing at all, when crops failed, which they sometimes did.

Next there was a colored man named Coonie. He ran a kind of a wayside eating house and did some farming. The old timers from the mountains used to stay here overnight. It was too far from their homes to and from San Diego in one day. They told me Coonie was an excellent cook. I never met him. I believe the cattle drivers stopped there also.

Next was Nick Anderson. He was related to the Foss family in some way. He farmed the valley for awhile. Perhaps Coonie came after Anderson. I am not sure which way it was. Nick Anderson ran a thrasher and thrashed all over El Cajon Valley. Some of the Fosses traveled with him. He moved from here to Ramona and died there. I bought his old thrasher before he died. That sure was an awful old piece of equipment, part of it still lays up in the field west of the station. Rege Small broke it up for junk. Nick Anderson also freighted with horses. Like several others, he

Then Barnett quit renting it,

Then Barnett quit renting it, the renters stopped the sales. That was where I came in. I told you some of my trials and tribulations in articles before. I soon saw I had to build up this land so I turned to live stock which made it rough. You don't cash in on live stock for a year or so. I ran a small dairy, sold sour cream, sent it to Lakeside on the stage, then by express on the San Diego Cuyamaca and Eastern Railroad. I tried hogs and made no money, no green pasture, a good part of the year.

During World War I the government wanted farmers to raise sheep to furnish wool for the soldiers. I had, in 1925, 200 sheep. When the war was over, the U. S. Government dumped their wool on the market and forced the price of wool from 40¢ a pound to 6¢. I put mine in storage in Boston and a couple years later sold it for 35¢.

The sheep did more to build up this land than any other form of livestock as they distributed the fertilizer more evenly over the ground and the droppings took several years before they entirely disintegrated—sheep made me more real money than any kind of livestock.

In 1925 I met up with a bad accident and had to sell the sheep. That was when I built the gas station. I was told I never could work again. After two or three years the State Highway 80 moved to the north. It seems we have traveling highways as well as highways to travel on.

Now, I am going back to the early days. I have always had daily mail. McCain (I think Arnold started it) ran a stage each way six days a week from Lakeside to Descanso and Cuyamaca with four horses. I had two canvas sacks, one home and one in Lakeside. The stage

took one sack and left me one each day. This place was well-known in the early days as many people stopped here. Part of the time, it was a sort of hostelry for man and beast.

The well was a sure attraction for the horses and later the autos got water here. They were just a boiling and a foaming by the time they got up the grade this far. When I came and for a couple years later, the water was drawn up with two buckets and a rope, a bucket on each end. The buckets were pointed on the bottom so they would dip and fill each time. After a while I got enough money for a hand pump; later on a windmill, second hand \$15 and put three whiskey barrels in the tower for tank storage, cost \$3.

A few years later a gas engine and a pump jack and a 2,000 gallon tank. Now a jet and pressure tank. I did what I could with the finances available after paying off the mortgage. I never went borrowing again. He who goes borrowing goes sorrowing. Also bonds are only a mortgage also. I am getting tired—my arm is worn out. Probably too gaffey for my own good. Next time I will take up the cattle drives out of the mountains and some of the characters that made up the drives. The Jaurnolistic Jackass.