

## THIS WEEK'S GUEST WRITER

Dorothy McDonald has been a resident of Descanso for a number of years, and is well-acquainted with the historical background of the whole Mountain Empire. She is a writer, appearing in "Life in These United States" in Reader's Digest, in the October issue of the San Diego Magazine, in the Zane Grey magazine, and many others.

Next week will be Mrs. Hazel Hohanshelt

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Despite the frighteningly narrow detours on Highway 80 just now, the eventual road plan is beginning to emerge as a broad almost straight ribbon of concrete stretching at a gentle grade up through the mountains east of Alpine. An interesting sidelight on its location was given recently by Mr. Ed Kincaid, an old-time resident of the area and the grandson of Gabino Aguilar, who settled on the area now known as the old Flinn and Ellis ranches in 1849.

"As early as 1890," Mr. Kincaid relates, "my uncle Charles Ellis and his neighbor James Flinn were interested in the possibility of a short-cut on the south side of Descanso Mountain as the road then went around the north side of the mountain. This short-cut would shorten the long haul they had to make up the old Viejas Grade, across the Sweetwater River at the ford near the site of the present Descanso Post Office, and then back south and west to their places just above Japatul Valley."

Charles Ellis and "Jim" Flinn, together with a Mr. Shaeffer who lived near the foot of Descanso Mountain (in what is now the C. J. Schweiss place) hired a surveyor named McLaren to explore the possibility of a road on the south slope.

"I was a kid in my 'teens then," Mr. Kincaid recalls, "and my uncle pressed me into service as chainman. All during the hottest weather that summer I dragged a rod and chain along this grade."

The surveyor's report showed that the project, while possible, would cost a prohibitive amount and so the three men, after an unsuccessful attempt to interest State and County road planners, abandoned the idea.

"That was nearly sixty years ago," Mr. Kincaid remembers, "but a lot of the newly-aligned Highways will follow almost exactly the route along which I dragged a chain for that surveyor, McLaren. It's too bad that neither he nor the three men who hired him could have lived long enough to see their dream come true."

Dorothy McDonald,  
Descanso