

TATTERED TIDBITS OF ALPINE HISTORY

Excerpts from Local Newspapers and Notes
by Albert Simonson

May 31, 1873

Ensign Velasquez and a presidio detachment mapped Alpine/Viejas area. They had lunch here, but didn't see anything worth mentioning in the diary. "Dozed until 3 o'clock." The map was good enough for government work.

June 2, 1783

Ensign Velasquez returns at 7 o'clock to presidio from backcountry outing, setting a precedent for many more.

September 15, 1821

Padre Payeras sets a big cross in front of Santa Ysabel chapel and six hundred Indians kiss it. The Indians offer the Spaniards an evening meal of mesquite bean bread. Padre Sanchez says the bread is "not bad at all."

March 8, 1846

Mission Padre Oliva approved the grant of Rancho Valle de las Viejas in the Osuna brothers "to impede the incursions and robberies of heathen Indians." They were crack shot, tough hombres.

March 10, 1846

Ramon Osuna, son of San Diego's famous first mayor, petitioned the governor for 27 square miles of mission land around Alpine. Alpine's first subdivider!

May 1, 1846

Governor Pico approved grant of Rancho Valle de las Viejas y Mesa del Arroz (Alpine) to sons of San Diego's first mayor. They had to stock cattle and build a house.

December 6, 1846

Viejas rancho Leandro Osuna killed two officers at the Battle of San Pascual, where the California Lancers beat the U. S. Army. The way he saw it they were illegal aliens violating citizens' property rights.

May 1, 1848

"Cockney" Bill Williams offers 500 pesos to Osuna brothers for Valle de las Viejas, about eleven cents an acre.

May 13, 1848

"Cockney" Bill Williams bought the eastern quarter of Viejas rancho for 500 pesos, or eleven cents an acre. Seems reasonable!

May 10, 1851

J. A. Aguirre, wealthy ship owner and China merchant, bought western Viejas rancho (Alpine) for \$900 gold coin. It's worth more now!

May 24, 1851

Major Heintzelman scouts a good trail from Fort Yuma and arrives at Campo.

January 10, 1852

Mountain Indian Chief Garra shot by firing squad for leading revolt.

February 15, 1852

Major Heintzelman drops in at "Cockney" Bill's Rancho Volcan (Julian). "Hailstones as large as a mess kit ball."

February 16, 1852

"Cockney" Bill and the Indians drove most of the livestock from Volcan Rancho to his big new Viejas Rancho. He was gambling on Viejas.

April 25, 1852

Viejas rancho Leandro Osuna played violin at the Pacific Pioneer Yacht Club Ball. Who sez we got no class?

September 15, 1852

"Cockney" Bill and his band of Santa Ysabel Indians and 40 head of cattle reach Fort Yuma.

October 11, 1856

Wagon road from San Diego to "Cockney" Bill's rancho at Viejas is declared a public county road.

September 5, 1857

"Cockney" Bill Williams, Viejas rancho, put ad in paper for a wife. It worked, and he married the popular Ramona within a month. Advertising pays.

September 8, 1857

Major Woods, en route from Fort Yuma to San Diego, woke up in a Cuyamaca hay barn. Riding through Viejas, he scouted a trail for the Jackass Mail. Later, he reported to Congress on "a large working party of Indians" preparing the predecessor to I-8.

October 11, 1857

Rancho "Cockney" Bill Williams was appointed by County Board of Supervisors to explore a possible route for a road to the east from his Viejas rancho. "Cockney" Bill was a notorious drunk, but always found his way.

April 1, 1859

Leandro Osuna, formerly co-owner of Alpine area, shot himself in the heart. He had been dependent and was rumored to have been poisoned by an Indian concoction made from bones of the dead.

August 24, 1860

"Cockney" Bill Williams of Viejas filed first homestead declaration in county to protect himself from creditors. The Estudillos of El Cajon and the San Antonio-San Diego Mail Line sued and cleaned him out anyway.

January 26, 1867

Campo settlers petition county to form "Milquatay School District." Some people call the

Place "New Texas."

February 22, 1870

Big gold strike at Julian City, to be known as Washington Mine because of president's birthday.

July 25, 1870

Captain Emery treats city reporters to Dublin Stout Ale at Pine Valley. Emery says he taded two horses and a packsaddle for the whole valley.

August 11, 1870

The San Diego Union described this area as a "pot of human trouble, bubbling and boiling." Seems believable!

October 15, 1871

Texas Pacific Railroad laid claim to Alpine land for planned rail route to the east. Hasn't happened yet.

May 29, 1873

Viejas post office was formally established with Clendenin as postmaster. He shot a judge for granting Mr. Clendenin a divorce.

May 15, 1874

George Washington Webb of "Alpine Ranch" sold his "San Diego-Julian Toll Road" through Alpine to the county supervisors. Nick Overmier, who lived behind present post office, became "Roadmaster."

1875

Miss Everhart was involved in a murder at the Alpine schoolhouse.

May 12, 1875

Viejas rancher Tanahill shot neighbor Barton in the leg. Usually, they just shot each other's animals. Real creeps.

November 16, 1875

French sheepherder Pascal Beilles was shot through the head outside the new Alpine District schoolhouse at midnight. The fashionable Emma Everhart, schoolteacher, was in attendance at the killing. Young Warren Webb of Alpine Ranch tried to flee justice on the coastal steamer. This was unnecessary because the witnesses lied. He was freed.

December 4, 1875

Lopez bandidos attack Campo store. Two bandidos shot dead. Two more lynched with a single rope. One of bandidos has a watch and rifle from a stranger who left Viejas and never arrived at Campo.

December 2, 1875

A bee man set off from Viejas to Campo. He was never again seen, but his watch was found on the corpse of a bandit after a Campo shootout. To bee or not to bee was the big question in those days.

October 20, 1877

Viejas rancher Royal Barton was convicted of murdering Tanahill by bashing his head in with a fencepost. Barton was upset with his jerk neighbor for shooting him in the leg.

September 17, 1881

"Mormon" Johnson and his wives got a government patent on Webb's "Alpine Ranch" at the upper end of Webb's Road (Harbison Canyon Road). The old name for the tract was "Oak Grove" for the huge oaks that stood there until Johnson cut them down. It then became known as "Mormon Valley," and later as "Galloway Valley" and "Deer Creek Ranch." These names reflect what is no longer there. Ironic, isn't it?

February 20, 1884

Captain Adam Beaty, veteran of the Mexican War, received a homestead patent for 160 acres southeast of South Grade and Tavern Roads. Beaty remembered when his next-door neighbor was five miles away.

March 11, 1884

Nick Overmier fought off two drunk Indians who attacked him and his eight-mule team, otherwise, a boring day.

April 22, 1884

Nick Overmier planted 20 acres of Zinfandel grapes at present downtown Alpine. His house was just behind the present post office.

July 7, 1884

Pedro Perez homesteaded present Palo Verde Ranch.

May 14, 1885

Hugh Field made homestead claim for northeast corner of Tavern and South Grade Roads. Like everyone else, he planted a vineyard to combat thirst.

November 11, 1885

"Alpine" name became official with establishment of post office at south end of Olivewood Lane. The idea of ozone-charged "Alpine" air attracted tuberculosis sufferers and was acclaimed by the town's vigorous geezers.

February 7, 1886

Emma Everhart, lovely first teacher of the Alpine School District, awarded a contract for building two millinery shops in San Diego.

August 21, 1886

A party was held at Whitney's Alpine Store, post office, stage stop and home. The women gossiped. Then things got boring again.

October 15, 1888

Henry Steil, a German immigrant, submitted a homestead filing for his farm just east of the present entry to Rancho Palo Verde, where a picturesque barn still remains. He grumpily called his place "Rancho B Damn."

August 25, 1891

Nick Overmier, who was for many years the sole occupant of present Alpine, died from injuries by horses. He was a horse lover, but he who lives by the horse dies by the horse.

February 26, 1896

Dr. Sophronia Nichols, Alpine's maverick woman doctor, bought land at Huey Lane and Tavern Road for her office and home. It cost \$25. Her place is now a museum.

June 11, 1900

Famous Alpiner E. W. Morse spoke to Chamber of Commerce about Viejas area in 1853. He pointed out that Viejas was the largest grain producer in the county, and that oxcarts were manufactured here for grain trains to town via Spring Valley. Indians drove the oxen.

January 14, 1916

Rainmaker Hatfield seeds clouds at Morena Lake, causing a deluge that washes out dams, roads and bridges. Fertile Viejas valley is ruined. Old Leno, a local Indian, blames it all on evil spirits mad at humans.

January 16, 1916

Horrible flood washed out a big gulch at fertile Viejas. Old Indian Leno blamed evil spirits. Paleface politicians blamed official rainmaker Hatfield and his chemicals. They refused to pay him for his rainwater.