

An Alpine History Mystery – Solved!

Who Built the Toll Road from Alpine to Julian?

July, 2014

In 1871-72, George Washington Webb and his first son, Sam, built a Toll Road from Valle de las Viejas to Julian. Two years later, San Diego County purchased the road from Webb and re-named it Public Road Number 10. But they say it took 3 years for Webb to finally get paid by the County – seems like funds were kind of tight then too.

Today's Highway 79 from Julian to Sunrise Highway follows the alignment of Webb's toll road fairly closely. But from there to Alpine, Webb's historic route passed to the east of the two Stonewall Peaks, then followed Stonewall Creek and Cold Stream Trail for a ways and then it rejoins the current Highway 79 before it passes Green Valley Falls. The best preserved section of the old road might still be seen on the north slope of the Viejas Valley, just up a bit from the current Viejas Grade Road.



In 1872, when George Webb moved his family to the Oak Grove in an area we now call Harbison Canyon, he named his new homestead "Alpine Ranch". They found fewer than 50 pioneers living here at that time, and there were no schools. Because the Webbs valued education for their children they petitioned for establishment of an Alpine School District and got approval to build the first school in the area next to their Alpine Ranch. They hired Miss Emma Everhart as Alpine's first school teacher.

But by 1876, George was ready to move again, this time to a new ranch at the foot of San Miguel Mountain in Sweetwater Valley. Then in 1880 he moved once more to Gila Bend in the Arizona Territory. He lived the rest of his days in Arizona, dying in Nogales in 1896 at the age of 72.

In his short time here, George Washington Webb left a lasting legacy in our little town. In 1885, a new Post Office was to be built here but it needed a name that would distinguish it from the Viejas Post Office, which was established in 1873 as a stop on the San Diego to San Antonio Mail Route. The name chosen for the new Post Office was taken from the Webb's homestead and was shortened to Alpine. From that day to this, our little town has been known as Alpine – a legacy from George Washington Webb, the man from Georgia, who built the toll road to Julian and the first school house in the Alpine School District before setting forth on new adventures.

We hope that you enjoyed this Alpine History Mystery. If you would like to become a member of the Alpine Historical Society to receive our newsletter and to help support our mission and programs please send a note to: membership@alpinehistory.org or call 619-445-2544 and we'll send membership information to you right away.

Alpine History Mysteries are created and edited by Tom & Judy Myers from stories, collections, and archives maintained by the Alpine Historical Society.