

# An Alpine History Mystery Solved!

## How did Cockney Bill find a Wife?

November 2013

Cockney Bill was a toughened old salt who left London at the age of 15 to sail the seas. In 1836, when his ship landed in San Diego, Bill had seen enough of the sea-faring life and decided to stay in San Diego. He eventually found his way east to the Valle de las Viejas and purchased 17,000 acres. Here he set up his Rancho where he raised grain and ran a stage stop. It was a lonely life for Bill and he longed so much for a wife and family. But with just a handful of settlers in the backcountry of the 1850's how was he ever going to find a wife? The answer to this dilemma for Bill was very simple: He placed an advertisement in the San Diego Herald Newspaper!

Yes, on September 5, 1857, the Herald newspaper ran his very unusual ad, which Albert Simonson tells us went straight to the point: **WIFE WANTED**. In the ad, Bill described his own appearance as "passible" and his financial status as "unexceptional" but he thought he could support a family if the wife were "free from those extravagant notions and airs so peculiar to a large portion of females in this part of the country".

Bill's ad continued by describing his perfect wife as a woman "not less than 25 nor over 32 years of age – of fair personal appearance and education and of sound healthy body." And, he noted that "If of a prolific family, so much the better." But this salty-sailor-turned-mountain-man tempered his direct approach with a final touch of romantic verse as he was seeking a lady in whom "the graces of form to the features impart...the sweetness that lives in an innocent heart."

Well, this worked out just fine. Within a month Cockney Bill Williams married Doña Ramona Machado de Curley, a woman regarded as one of San Diego's merriest of widows. She brought to the marriage 5 children from her first husband – an instant family for the lonely Cockney Bill. Together they lived in the Adobe house he built in Valle de las Viejas and he now had a few more hands to help out in the fields. But this was not to last for long. You see, Bill took sick and died about six years later. He is buried in El Campo Santo cemetery in Old Town San Diego. Yet, his story and many others live on at the Alpine History Museum.

Thank you for reading and solving our Alpine History Mystery. You can find the complete mystery story at: [www.alpinehistory.org/alpine\\_history\\_mysteries.html](http://www.alpinehistory.org/alpine_history_mysteries.html). At this same site, you can also enjoy mysteries from prior months. We welcome your comments and questions so please send us a note to [mystery@alpinehistory.org](mailto:mystery@alpinehistory.org) or to Alpine Historical Society, P.O. Box 382, Alpine, CA 91903-0382.