

An Alpine History Mystery

Forrest and Hazel

February 2015

All you mystery lovers out there know that a really good mystery has multiple layers and so it is with our story of Louisa Alcott Snow Willett. You may remember that she was the 70-year-old widow and former school teacher who moved to Alpine in the early 1880's to claim a 160-acre homestead in the area we know as Alpine Heights. This gutsy and determined woman accomplished this task on her own, with some occasional hired help, but with no spouse or family to share the burden. Then, in 1883, her cousin John Milton Snow moved with his family to a homestead on adjacent land. In 1891, Mrs. Willett invited her nephew, William Stephenson, and his wife Ida to move with their two children from North Dakota to Alpine where they built a home on her property.

Of course a good story also needs a love interest and that seems particularly appropriate for our February mystery. Well, it turns out that when we look deeper into the story of Louisa Alcott Snow Willett and all the relatives and friends that she persuaded to move to Alpine, we find that Cupid was at work bringing together two young people who left their imprint in the hearts of Alpine in many ways.

After moving to Alpine, Ida Stephenson kept up correspondence with her friends and family in North Dakota, and in particular her nephew Don Taylor and his wife Jennie. Don was a builder and was hired to repair damage all around the town of Oaks, ND after a cyclone roared through the area. Don was delighted when a young fella by the name of Forrest showed up looking for work. Forrest had some good skills and lots of potential, so he was hired to help with the repairs. Not long after the cyclone repairs were done, the Taylors with their teen-age daughter Hazel, and their sons, Maylon, Baird and Donald decided it was time to move to a milder climate. So in 1924, they came to Alpine to see just what it was that Aunt Ida liked about this place. Don found work as a builder, Hazel went off to college in San Diego, and the family settled into a nice home in the Willows area.

Now, as we know, Cupid's arrow can travel a long way to bring two hearts together. And so it was no big surprise when Forrest, the young carpenter from North Dakota, followed his heart to Alpine where he could work for Don Taylor and be close to Hazel again. And it was no big surprise when Hazel, after finishing her college studies, returned to Alpine where she and Forrest were married. Eventually, the Taylors moved to San Diego, but Forrest and Hazel lived out their lives here in Alpine, where they were pillars of the community.



Well if this story leaves you wondering what was the surname of the young couple, Forrest and Hazel, who Cupid brought together across the miles from North Dakota to Alpine, CA, then you have just uncovered our history mystery question for February.