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## ALPINE NAMED FOR SWISS SCENERY

Editor's note—This is the 60<sup>th</sup> article of a series on San Diego county place names. The articles appear each week in the Evening Tribune.

By John Davidson  
Junipero Serra Museum

Alpine, the town, Alpine Heights and the district immediately surrounding, at an elevation of about 1860 feet, 30 ½ miles east of San Diego, long have been famous for certain cures resulting from the combination of sunshine and high, dry air. A newspaper item explains the meaning of the name:

"\* \* \* given to the place by an old lady whose childhood had been passed amid the glorious scenes of Switzerland. To her the changing lights on mountainside and valley and the exquisitely tinted shadows on distant peaks recalled the similar glories of that other Alpine."

Miss Hunsicker comments on the current story, that in Spanish and Mexican times the Alpine country was known as "Mesa de Roas," that that "Mesa del Roza" was meant—which she translates "table land of cleared stubble and bushes;" adding that "there does not seem to be such a Spanish word as Roas."

Mrs. Gertrude Puterbaugh, now living at Alpine, has collected interesting information in regard to early days in that vicinity, and Dr. Knox of El Cajon also is well informed on this subject. They call attention to the many evidences of this being a lively center for Indians in long-ago ages. The many rocks with grinding hollows, the spring on the Clark ranch, and the "Queen Victoria" or "Queen of the Mountain" rock at the foothills of Viejas mountain, two miles northwest of the Alpine postoffice, are mute reminders of that past for which we shall never find dates nor biographical notes. For untold ages the Indians came and went.

B. F. Arnold, who was an uncle of Ben A. Buker, is said to have been the first American to settle at Alpine, buying and developing property there. He built the old store, school house and public hall and the name first applied was Alpine Center. Later the property was owned by others and the house converted into a sanitarium for sufferers from bronchial troubles. It was destroyed by fire a few years ago, having been in use after the war as a sanitarium for tubercular veterans. In an interesting pamphlet published in the '90s, we find the statement of F. B. Walker:

"To San Diegans and those who know Alpine the name is synonymous with an invigorating atmosphere, bright sunshine and balmy breezes. No dense, damp fogs or raw winds visit this favored section, its distance from the coast tempering the breezes, which blow over 30 miles of mesa and mountain before reaching this friendly clime. What California is to the United States as a health resort, Alpine is to the state of California..."

In the early '90s Charles F. Emery, pioneer now living at Tecate and Pt. Loma, "went into the general mercantile business at Alpine so that children could go to school," he explains. The pamphlet which has come into our hands gives a cut of Charlie Emery's store and comments:

"It is a commodious and substantial building, pleasantly located on the Cuyamaca stage road, 11 miles east of Lakeside and 13 miles from El Cajon. C. F. Emery, proprietor and postmaster, has occupied the building since it was erected some five years ago, carrying a full line of general merchandise. He has, during that time, built up an extensive trade, a large part of which comes from the mountain region north and east. Having always lived in this section, Mr. Emery is well qualified for the business he is engaged in, by reason of his acquaintance with and knowledge of the wants and needs of his customers. He has the advantage also of holding the Mexican and Indian trade, by his familiarity with their language and dialect.

### Superb View Seen

"By purchasing of reliable parties only first-class goods, he is enabled to compete in prices with other stores of perhaps greater pretensions. This is the central trading point for a radius of from 8 to 12 miles. It is at this point that the start really made for the Cuyamacas, Julian, Pine Valley and the Morena dam, and where travelers after a few days' rest, replenish their stock of supplies. The reliable information Mr. Emery is able to furnish those who desire to reach the above-mentioned points, concerning the most accessible routes, the best camping grounds and the different points of interest, is of great benefit to the stranger. A further inducement for choosing this route is the well-kept roads and easy grades. Parties leaving San Diego at 9 a.m. will reach the store and postoffice, via stage, at 1 p.m. Hotel and stage station near the store. Places of resort and boarding places within easy reach."

"The Willows," two miles east of Alpine store, known in an earlier day as "Alpine Berry Fields," has been one of the favorite mountain resorts for more than 40 years. It is pictured and described in this pamphlet as a "cool adobe house" where Mrs. F. B. Walker offered "board by week or month at her home at Alpine Berry Fields. Stage and mail line passes house twice daily. Big oaks; running water."

The Alpine neighborhood for the past decade and more has attracted the attention of many artists. Julian Eltinge, female impersonator, bought a slightly ranch there in 1923. Viejas mountain peak, "distant about four miles from the post office, and towering more than 2000 feet higher, affords a view such as few people have ever enjoyed. On a clear day the ocean line can be traced from the Catalina islands to a point far distant below the Mexican line. All the habitable portion of San Diego county is here unfolded to the eye.

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The first verifiable mention of the "Alpine" name occurs in an article "Another Homicide," The Daily Union, November 17, 1875. The "Alpine Ranch" of George Washington Webb was the site of the first "Alpine School District" schoolhouse, located along present Harbison Canyon Road, near a present school. The district included present Alpine. The Webbs were from Georgia. Webb constructed a toll road through present Alpine.

A Mexican land grant gives the name as Mesa del Arroz, also a generic term translated by early Anglo settlers as "Rice Mesa" or "Grassy Mesa." The name occurs in various localities and certainly refers here to the valuable brush-free grazing land just south of town. Arnold was comparatively a latecomer. The first documented settlers of Alpine Center (present downtown) were Nick and Lucy Overmier, whose "Cove Ranch" home was located

420 feet south of Arnold Way and 150 feet east of Olivewood, according to field notes of a contemporary surveyor (see County map, amended 1878, by M. G. Wheeler). The first store was run by Henry J. Whitney. It became the first "Alpine Post Office" on November 11, 1885, making the Alpine name official. A photograph and map survive. Whitney sold out to Emery. The first store was at present 2363 Alpine Boulevard. Emery's second and third stores were at the northeast corner of the boulevard and Victoria. Winnifred Davidson, wife of the author, presented to the San Diego Historical Society an extensive file on Emery. Campo's stone store archives include copies. In it, Emery ascribes the "Alpine" name to Webb and tells about Whitney's store.

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Alpine Historical Society  
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