

THE ALPINE ECHO  
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ECHOES OF THE PAST  
The Old Timer

By Neil Galloway

In July 1909, at 25 years of age, I came to San Diego looking for U. S. Government land to homestead, and found it was all on top a mountain. Hearing of the land now called Galloway Valley, I made arrangements to buy it, with high hopes of paying for it from crops I could raise.

To my great disappointment, the soil had been so impoverished, I did well to get one-half ton to the acre. Homesteaders before me raised wheat and burned the straw. This wheat was hauled to San Diego by teams of horses and sometimes loaded on boats in the harbor there. On the road of that time, three-quarters of a ton was a big load for two horses going East or West.

When their worn-out soil would not raise wheat any more, the old timers turned to barley. Next they raised oats and sold the hay. The land had been mortgaged and lost several times and I came near to being the next victim and realized I must rebuild the soil or quit. Then began the long process of reclamation. This was done by years of hard work and good soil practices as known at the time. Coming from a citrus district in Western San Bernardino County, I knew much of what had to be done. Galloway Valley is now a productive piece of land which will probably be covered with houses.

One of the old time families that homesteaded before I came was named Hancock. They came from Australia to Oregon. The father was so madly crippled with rheumatism that they drove to San Diego in a covered wagon seeking a drier climate. He died before I came to Alpine, leaving three daughters and a niece, none married. They were not young, except for the niece. Mary did the cooking and housekeeping; Elizabeth did the farming; Anna did a little bit of everything, and worked out some, too. They always had a few heads of cattle which Minnie, the niece, herded on the mountains. They were herding them in the valley here when I came. It had been lost to the bank for mortgage. The bank failed and Melicaton Barnett got it for his part of the bank assets that were left. Now, I needed someone to help plow part of my land. I asked Liz, as Elizabeth was called, if she knew of anyone. She said, "What's the matter with me?" She was then about 60 years old. So she followed a walking plow several days for me from daylight till dark. These were hardy pioneers that made our early day's history.

Liz could sling a wicked black-snake whip. If one of the horses got balky, she sure could dress him down. They always raised a pig or two. Many times I was asked to get the life out of a pig, but from there on they did not need anybody's help. They raised a few chickens and a good garden most of the year. They had a spring on the south end of their property, between them and Harbison Canyon, that always ran. The water was carried from the spring in a pail. In later years they had goats instead of cattle. The brush had encroached on the land, and other settlers moved in, so there was not much feed for cattle anymore.

Mr. Hancock had a very complete set of blacksmith tools all, or nearly all, handmade. He even made drills to drill iron. I expect he did a lot of smithy work for the early settlers.

For all that Liz' hands were badly malformed by arthritis, she did some beautiful needle-work, and when she was 70 years old, I've seen her mount to horseback from the ground many times.

The Hancocks worked for me quite a bit. I had 27 acres of nice raisin muscat grapes. They picked them for me. I got \$10 a ton, paid them \$6. Freight from Lakeside to San Diego was \$2. This got \$2 for me and team all day hauling to the Cuyamaca and Eastern railroad that then ran as far as Foster where Joe Foster, the supervisor, lived and ran a stagecoach from Lakeside to Julian with mail and passengers. The old timers did not drive or ride a horse every day to the store. There was a store in Dehesa and a church, and a store and Town Hall at Alpine, the Woman's Clubhouse, still standing.

The Hancocks used to drive a wagon to El Cajon, maybe once or twice a month. I did the same. It took all day to make the 25-mile round trip. There was not much there, either. W. D. Hall company was just getting started. There was a general store—Stell Burgess, two blacksmith shops, a barber shop, a butcher—Bascombe, two hotels, a drug store—Bower's, a harness and shoe repair shop, a few groceries kept by Mrs. Stanisfield in her front room across the street from where Weinstock's radio store is now. That building held the first El Cajon bank, and later the telephone exchange.

The present generation don't know what hardship is. They see too much, hear too much, and want too much, are never satisfied.