

THE ALPINE ECHO

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ECHOES OF THE PAST

The Old Timer

By Niel Galloway

When I came here we had a 4-horse stage. I have been told that Joe Foster started it. I knew he owned the one that ran from Foster, the place that was the end of the San Diego Cuyamaca and Eastern railroad. The stage from Foster to Julian was a Concord stage. It was hung on leather straps and rocked around a lot. The 1916 flood of the San Diego river took out most of the railroad tracks from Santee and they were never put in again. I don't know just how many different people owned the line from Lakeside to to the Stanewall mine in Cuyamaca. Greenleaf was one of the owners; his son, Albert Greenleaf used to be one of the drivers. He is now in his eighties and lives in Japatul Valley. The owner, when I came, was James McCain. He did not have a Concord stage, but a three seater spring wagon. He hauled some express besides passengers. I, along with other people, shipped cream to Lakeside on it, thence by express on the train to San Diego.

Angie Smith, Jimmie Ames and Paul Shuts were some of the drivers. This stage also carried the mail from Lakeside to Alpine and Descanso. It was a Star Route. The people that lived along the way on the road that the stage took, each had two good stout canvas sacks. We fastened them to a post with an arm out with the wire spring clothes pins. Sometimes a strong wind blew them down, but not often. We had one sack home and one sack in the Post Office. They stopped and watered the horses at Flinn Springs and again at my place here. They had to draw the water up with a bucket and rope. I drew thousands of gallons that way before I got money enough to buy a hand pump. In the early days they did not have pumps, but later on they got windmills. I had one but there never was much wind in the valley. There were days when it wouldn't run at all. Later I got a gasoline engine and a 2000-gallon tank.

There is a little bridge about a thousand feet east of here. Right after you pass it, the road turned to the left and went right up on the ridge. It was steep and many a team balked at it. I helped many an old timer up to the top of that ridge. You can still see the old road if you look. Jim Ames, one of the drivers, still lives in Lakeside. The others are all dead except Greenleaf.

A few years later on Jim McCain got a couple of Steamer automobiles. That was the last of the real old time transportation. They changed horses at Alpine both ways. The stage barn was about where Isabella hobby shop is now. There were two or three roads going up the side of the mountain from Viejas Valley to Hulburt Grove. You can still see them. In fact, one is still in use.

When I came the Descanso hotel, at Descanso, was the terminal. A man by the name of Berkey ran it. I think one of the Berkey boys was on the stage, I am not sure, if it was horses or the Steamers. The original Descanso hotel burned down and a new one was built since I came in 1909. I am not sure whether the stage went to Cuyamaca at that time or not. Old man Berkey was quite a character. When I was up there one time he said to me, "I owe you for a bale of hay I got when you was not at home." The old timers I found honest. It took them quite a while sometimes but if they owed you, they paid, if they didn't die first.

Now, going up that ridge into Midway Drive lived the Wilbur family. The old man and his wife lived there. They had a grown son, Lawrence. He was librarian once. He was well read on most any subject, not too ambitious about work. He could work the hardest to keep out of work of any man I ever knew, but he was very congenial. The old man said, "Well, I guess we spoiled him." Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur were both Ann Arbor College graduates. She was a little mite, perhaps 100 pounds; he probably weighed 180 or better. They raised sheep in Colorado at one time. Mr. Wilbur Sr. was a most interesting person to talk to. He was a Socialist. They formed a Socialist colony in Sinola, Mexico. They did fine; raised so much as 100 tons of sugar cane to the acre. They also had citrus trees. They purchased land from the Mexican government; he described the climate there as perfect. They dug a canal with slip scrapers and oxen, some places as much as 15 feet deep. They kept the oxen on the top of the canal and had poles attached to the scraper and pulled them up with the oxen, a long slow process, but they got the water to their crops.

The American Sugar Company wanted the land, so bribed the Mexican government to take the canal away from them. The result: the Sugar Company got their land for practically nothing. Wilbur went to Mexico with \$5000 or more, and came out with \$600. He was a Civil War veteran and lived on his pension until he died. She went first. After she went he just willed himself to die. I don't know who Wilbur bought his place from. I don't remember how many acres, but the Jerneys own part of it now. The Wilburs were pioneers most of their lives. I believe that was the Tart place.

Right east of Wilburs was a family by the name of Collins; they had two boys. I did not know much about them. Clark McKee bought that place; the original house burned down. There are now several owners of the Wilbur and Collins places. There are several buildings there, but that was the road to Alpine when I came, also the stage road.

It took a good team of horses to get 1,500 pounds up that road, with many rest periods. I did it many times. The road at present is in the same place through the little valley. Clark McKee built a new house on the south side of the road part way up the hill. McKee also owned the Alpine Tavern.

This brings us out at Arnold Way near the site of the old Alpine Tavern. Going west a little way, were some eucalyptus trees and two stone pillars that mark the junction of Foss Road and Arnold Way. That was the Athern homestead, sometimes called the Campbell place. Mr. Athern was Mrs. Foss' brother. I never met him. There are several houses on the north side of the road; that is still the Athern place.

Then we come to the Alpine Terrace and I think that was also part of the Athern's. Dr. Ghering built that adobe house, one of the first in there. He was a very brilliant man, studied in the USA and Europe also. He came from Hollywood where he owned a store building which he sold to Safeway Stores for \$50,000. Some good operator sold him Bolivian 8 per cent bonds for \$1008 each. He died in Edgmoor Farm. He sold them bonds for \$8.00 each. That is right: Eight dollars. I doubt if Bolivia ever paid for them bonds. Even governments can go broke when they over-extend themselves. However, if I had not met Dr. Ghering, I would have one hand no good to me. He fixed it for me. I knew him very well. Mike Liebert was up in there also.

Now we get to the Alpine Tavern. Arnold built it for a Mrs. Campbell. There was a Rogers owned it. Clark McKee owned it when I came. He sold it to Milner. Milner died there. I don't know who owns it now. The hotel burned down quite recently.

The two-story house on the southeast corner of Arnold Way and Tavern Road was the parsonage, built by Arnold. On the other corner, Mrs. Fisher lived. She was a widow with three or four children. Mrs. Will Kuhner of Lakeside was one of her daughters. One son shot his wife and then committed suicide with a revolver. He evidently played a game of solitaire before he shot himself, I am not sure, but I think the old Alpine school is on part of the Fisher place.