

SAN DIEGO UNION

August 11, 1870

OUR HILLS AND VALLEYS LETTER FROM THE MOUNTAINS

(An Excerpt)

By Mc. & T.

Valle de Los Viejos—Hay and Stock—Life in the Country—A Rough Road Pine Valley—A Good Place—The Stock Interests of the County—Law Extraordinary—"Satisfactory Damages"—Hunting—How the Hunter Gets Bruin, and How Bruin Sometimes "Gets" the Hunter—Health in Our Mountains—Fresh Air and Pure Cold Water—Come Up to the Hills.

PINE VALLEY, SAN DIEGO COUNTY

July 30, 1870

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After having been so shamefully humbugged and swindled by John W. Forney's dispatches on the railroad question, we concluded to head up into the hills and seek some consolation in the pine woods and mountain air. One day's journey brought us to the

Valle de los Viejos,

Laid down on the map of the Cuyamaca Grant as its southern boundary. This valley is three miles in length and one in width; the greater part is covered with green grass, that supports hundreds of sheep and many cattle and from which several hundred tons of wild hay have been taken off this year. Some barley was raised, but the drought cut the crops short. The Valley is claimed by a Spanish Grant, but is now in the possession of a half dozen American settlers, who are determined to contest the claim of the Grant holders.

This is one of the finest little valleys in the whole county. Two or three crops of wild hay can be cut in a year from the marshy part of the land. There are two or three small fields of corn as dark and thrifty as that grown in the rich bottom lands of the Wabash Valley in the State of Indiana.

We spent last Sabbath under the hospitable roof of Mr. B----, this was not in the programme on starting out, but as one of our firm is a susceptible young man, and as the calico attractions were great, we concluded to take the world easy and travel slowly. Here allow us a few reflections on

Life in the Country.

It is not always serene, quiet and charming for those who live in the green fields and mountain meadows. Their troubles are manifold as beset those who dwell in towns and cities. There is Mr. S., in whose field a horse was shot last week; his trouble will come over this shooting, whether he had any hand in it or not. Here is B. who is in a quarrel over a strip of land. While H., the sheep man, is in a tearful stew because we stopped here and George interfered with his prospective domestic hopes. And so the pot of human trouble bubbles and boils over in the country as elsewhere. All is vanity saith the preacher.

A Rough Road.

A ride over the mountains Monday morning brought us to Pine Valley, and the ranch of Capt. Emery, where we are now safely housed, eating of the fat of the land and drinking pure mountain water, mixed with Dublin stout. The road between these two valleys is fearfully rough, and should be repaired at once, as the travel is increasing daily. Our friend, Supervisor Riley, will please make a note of this.

Pine Valley

Is properly named, and is one of the most charming spots in all Southern California—say a mile wide and two miles long—completely surrounded with high hills and mountains, with a deep fringe of beautiful pines, tall as the cedars of Lebanon, on the margin, and a magnificent mountain stream flowing through the middle, in which we daily bathe, as the sun comes up from the desert and floods the pine trees with golden rays of morning light. We are of the family that go out after the “early worm.” Pity the worms while we are up here.

The two assignees of the Mexican era land grant of 1846 were long dead at this time, but the widow of José Antonio Aguirre was shown as owner on contemporary assessor records. The assignees and heirs failed to get the grant confirmed under United States law.

Overgrazing and a great flood in 1916 eroded topsoil and opened a deep gulch in the formerly moist, fertile valley bottom.

Mr. B. was Royal Barton, whose house was situated near the creek in the western part of Viejas Valley, near a sharp ninety degree turn in Viejas Grade. He was known as the murderer of John Tanahill, a neighbor.

Mr. S. was James Swim. B., Royal Barton, murdered Tanahill in a boundary controversy. H. may be a Mr. Harden or Hinton.

Captain William S. Emery from Maine was married to Lucy Spaulding of the sporting goods family. Emery exchanged a pack horse and a saddle for Pine Valley. In 1869, Emery built a large log house with three or four fireplaces. It was situated by the creek in the western part of Pine Valley. See bio file, San Diego Historical Society or Campo museum archives.

Collected and endnoted by Albert Simonson.

Typed and submitted by Carol Walker.

Alpine Historical Society

February, 2005