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ALPINE

A PICTURESQUE SETTLEMENT ALONG THE CUYAMACA RANGE

by Luther M. Leisengring

Alpine, situated about thirty miles northeast of San Diego, and lying between the steep Sweetwater valley on the south, Cajon on the west, and Viejas on the north, is one of the most picturesque localities in San Diego county. Surrounded on all sides by mountains, its timber bordered creeks showing in marked contrast, it lies like a flower spot among Titanic graves. Besides being so picturesque, it is also one of the healthiest spots on the face of the earth. Agassiz, the world-renowned scientist and naturalist, has pronounced its climate the most salubrious in the world. Situated at an elevation of from 1,500 to 1,800 feet above sea level, its freedom from the fogs, so prevalent along the coast, is at once apparent. At the same time it can enjoy the sea breezes and the purest of pure air that they bring, and escape, by reason of the shelter on the east, the distressing desert winds.

The altitude of Alpine keeps it from heavy frosts; such as occur here are not heavy enough to damage more than the tenderest growth of lemon and orange trees. Adam Beatty, who has lived here since 1869, says that in his recollection the temperature has never been higher than 105 degrees (Fahr.) and that of course was unusual, and never lower than 24 degrees (Fahr.) The summer days and nights are so pleasant that many of the ranchers camp out during that season, in preference to staying in their houses, in order to get as much "ozone" as possible. The very age of some of the inhabitants and their present health and strength attests to the genuineness of Alpine climate. Some of these are: B. R. Arnold, Adam Beatty, E. W. Morse, Mrs. Willett, Mr. Bosman, Henry Stiles, and his wife, John Thompson and T. E. Horton, all ranging from 70 to 81 years of age, and all "hale and hearty."

For the past fifteen or twenty years Alpine has had an almost world-wide reputation as a home for consumptives. Persons have come even from "Bonny England," settled here with a hopeless, makes no difference anyway kind of a feeling, to find health and strength return, and that a desire for vigorous, outdoor life takes the place of the languid, listless feeling before experienced.

The soil is mainly the deep, rich form of decomposed red granite, strong in all the properties essential to fruit growing and all agricultural purposes. What adobe there is has sufficient sand mixed with it to give good healthy drainage. This latter soil is superb for apples, apricots and peaches, or for grains. And, let me add, no finer flavored fruit can be grown in San Diego county than can be grown here. Hay and grain of all kinds can be grown in large quantities, of fine quality, by means of the winter rains.

Nearly all the ranches have fine running water upon them, and such as have not can strike water but a short distance below the surface so that irrigation, whenever it is necessary (seldom), can be provided for.

When Adam Beatty first located here in 1869, his nearest neighbor was five miles distant—no town—nothing. Now he can boast of seventy odd neighbors within a radius of five miles, can go to a fine large store for his supplies, hear speeches in a large, well-built hall, take his dinner at a first-class hotel, visit two well-equipped schools and question fifty or more scholars, and can enjoy life generally, in spite of the fact that he is almost an octogenarian.

Our store, at which anything in the general supply line can be bought, is in the hands of C. F. Emery and John McCormick, both genial and enterprising gentlemen. They likewise attend to the distribution of the regular daily mail and answer, over telephone, all inquiries from San Diego.

Let me add that there are two well organized church and Sunday school societies, and two free libraries, containing some 500 volumes.

Adam and Carolyn Beatty moved from Texas to the middle part of Harbison Canyon, east of the creek, in 1869. He later built a house south of present South Grade Road along the old (easterly) alignment of Tavern Road. That house was moved for the Alpine Historical Society to its present location on Tavern Road.

Sites of these early settlers are as follows: Arnold—southeast corner Arnold Way and Tavern Road; Beatty—see previous note; E. W. Morse (extremely important San Diego merchant)—just west of Tavern Road on South Grade Road; Willett—on Alpine Heights Road; Bosman (Basserman)—just south of Alpine Boulevard and west of the Willow Road I-8 interchange; Stiles—just south of South Grade Road and east of Via Viejas Oeste (barn survives).

Collected and endnoted by Albert Simonson.

Typed and submitted by Carol Walker.

Alpine Historical Society

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