

## Alpine History Mystery for June 2013 – Solved!

The best medical treatments of the Victorian era were unable to quell asthma. So 1887-1888, at the suggestion of his doctor, Benjamin Rice Arnold moved to San Diego hoping that a better climate might be the remedy. But after a year of little improvement, local doctors recommended the cleaner, drier mountain air in Alpine. It is reported that after just a short stay his health was greatly improved and Mr. Arnold subsequently purchased land in the center of Alpine to build the home that he and his wife Harriet would call "Los Robles". The Arnolds also retained their San Diego mansion and when his health improved, they spent some time in both locations.

His arrival in Alpine and his investment in essential services and infrastructure were pivotal elements that changed Alpine from a mountain settlement into a burgeoning community. He provided funds to build the last one-room schoolhouse in Alpine, the first parsonage, the first hotels in Alpine and Descanso, and to improve the road from Alpine to El Cajon and Lakeside. He provided half the funds for building the Alpine Town Hall, believing that if the citizenry provided matching funds they would be motivated to take better care of the hall. He employed local labor so that the funds invested in the community projects would also benefit the citizens financially.

Benjamin Arnold died of heart failure at his San Diego home in 1899 and was buried at the Mt. Hope Cemetery. But that was not his final resting place. In 1903, Harriet Arnold died in Rhode Island and was buried at the Swan Cemetery. Soon after, Mr. Arnold's remains were exhumed from Mt. Hope and moved to be interred beside his wife in Rhode Island.

Thanks to all who responded to the June 2013 History Mystery and to those who came out to our Open House. Please keep a close eye on this publication for our next mystery story and the announcement of our July open house weekend.