

An Alpine History Mystery – Solved!

What was the first resort in the Viejas Valley?

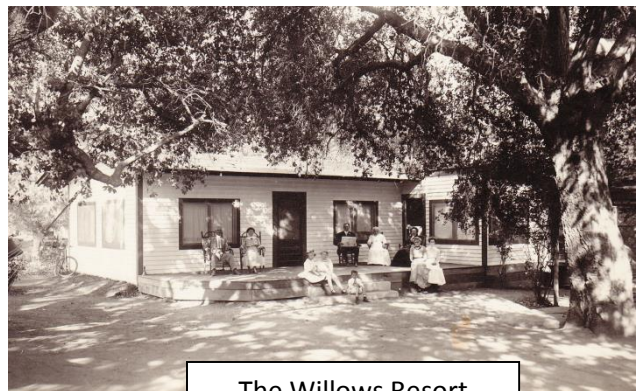
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If you guessed that the *Alpine Berry Fields* was the first resort in the Viejas Valley you correctly solved this mystery. As the story goes, this resort, founded by Fred and Bevie Walker, got started quite by accident. You see, when the Walkers purchased the property in 1894, their only intent was to create a profitable working farm. As you might have guessed, it takes a lot of help to do that. So when they moved to Alpine with their five children, the farming business was a family affair. As time passed they added three more youngsters to the nest so it took quite a farm to raise enough produce to feed that brood. They raised cows, hogs and chickens, planted all kinds of fruit trees, a few acres of grapes, and gathered baskets full of wild blackberries that grew along the banks of the Viejas Creek running through their farm.

Then one day in 1902 a single woman walking across the country stopped in at the Walker place and asked if she could spend the night. Well, the Walkers were neighborly folks and even though they had a full house already, they made room for this weary traveler. After a day or two of respite in the beautiful Alpine countryside and some good home cookin' too, this unidentified traveler went on her way, but not without mentioning that the Walker's farm would be an ideal location for a resort. Well that was one seed that took a long time to sprout. But over the years other travelers stopped in for a visit and made the same suggestion. I imagine that when the Walkers finally decided to start a summer resort there were many regular travelers who welcomed the plan.

Well, that's how the *Alpine Berry Fields* resort got its start. Underneath the live oak and willow trees beside the creek, the Walker family built some wooden platforms with canvas tents for cover and a bit of privacy, and they strung up some rope hammocks for weary travelers who wanted nothing more than a sweet summer nap. Can you imagine a more restful and relaxing place in all of San Diego County in the early 1900's? Top that off with meals created with farm-fresh produce made with loving care from Bevie Walker's kitchen and you just might not want to leave.

This little mountain resort was such a success that the Walkers turned the resort, supported by the produce and livestock raised right there on the farm, into their primary business. And as they began to grow, building more substantial cabins, a croquet court, golf putting green, a library and music room complete with a piano for their guests' enjoyment, and let's not forget the family style dining room, the Walkers also decided that the resort needed a new name. So as you probably already guessed, the name they chose for their fine resort, the first one in the Viejas Valley, the family-operated "farm to table" resort that served an adoring public for nearly 50 years, nestled under the willow trees along the Viejas Creek was *The WILLOWS*.



The Willows Resort