

An Alpine History Mystery – Solved!

Why is November 11, 1885 Important to Alpine?

November 2014

November 11, 1885 marks a milestone event for Alpine that actually begins when George Washington Webb moved here in 1872 and established his ranch on property near the present location of Shadow Hills Elementary School. The name given to this beautiful area since the days of the Spanish Explorers was “Valle de las Viejas y Mesa del Arroz”. Well by the time Webb moved here, things hadn’t changed all that much and that very long name seemed like it would stick. But, that’s way too many letters to carve into the wooden sign outside your rancho, so Mr. Webb decided to call his place “Alpine Ranch”. Now that seemed like a nice name for a place that had clean, clear air and beautiful mountain views, even if the mountain tops didn’t get much snow.

Of course in the 1870’s, when California was just a fledgling state and San Diego County only had 5,000 residents, mail was delivered to the east county settlements just once or twice a week and the address was simply written as “Mrs. Edward Foss, San Diego, California.” Then in the 1880’s the county population exploded in what was called “the great boom” and the San Diego Post Office needed a better way to get the mail to its appointed destination. So, we began to see mail sent to a person’s ranch, such as to “Mrs. Edward Foss, Tule Springs, San Diego, Calif.” Then as more post offices were needed, a letter might be sent to a nearby station and the address changed to “Mrs. Edward Foss, El Cajon P.O., San Diego, Calif.”

At the Alpine History Museum we have a notebook full of letters written to the Fosses from other family members back east or in other parts of California. In this book we found a letter that was postmarked on Feb. 22, 1884 that was addressed to “Mrs. Carrie E. Foss, Alpine, San Diego Co., Calif.” Well that’s the first time we saw the name “Alpine” appear in the address, and that got us to wondering just when the name of our town became official.



To answer this question we contacted the United States Postal Service Historian, Steve Kochersperger, in Washington, DC to see what he could tell us. Mr. Kochersperger referred us to Post Office Regulations in effect during the 1880’s that said: “It is preferable to have some LOCAL or PERMANENT name, which must not be the name of any other office in the State”. Well folks in these parts must have been using the name

POST OFFICES ESTABLISHED.

CALIFORNIA.

Alpine, San Diego Co., on Route 46392, Viejas, 5 ms. E., El Cajon, 15 ms. W. [10 nov 85.

Cactus, San Diego Co., on Route 46014, Yuma, Ariz., 23 ms. S. E., Banning, 139 ms. N. W. [10 nov 85.

Dunlap, Fresno Co., on Route 46351, Squaw Valley, 10 ms. W., Camp Badger, 12 ms. S. E. [10 nov 85.

Alpine a lot because the Post Office records show that on November 10, 1885 the Alpine Post Office in San Diego County, California was established. One day later Henry J. Whitney was commissioned as Postmaster and the mail stop at the Whitney Store in the center of this little mountain settlement became a full-fledged Post Office. The Alpine Post Office was commissioned on November 11, 1885 and from then until now this town has proudly called itself Alpine.