

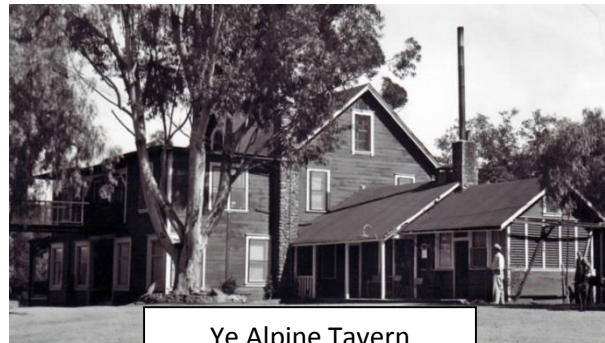
An Alpine History Mystery:

What was the first resort in the Viejas Valley?

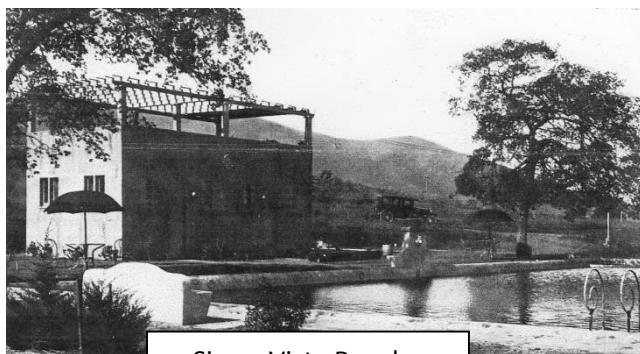
October 2014

Last month the Viejas Hotel and Resort celebrated its two-year anniversary and the 23rd anniversary of the Viejas Casino. As part of their big celebration, they established two new records in the Guinness World Records book. It all started when 299 people gathered around the Viejas Hotel pool to set a world record for the Longest Sparkler Relay. Then the last sparkler in the relay was touched to a fuse, igniting a chain of more than 10,000 fireworks that exploded in the night sky in a dazzling display of positively prodigious pyrotechnics, earning another world record for the Longest Chain of Fireworks. Congratulations to the Viejas Tribe of the Kumeyaay Indians for accomplishing their goal and for developing a first class resort hotel here in Alpine.

But you know Viejas was not the first resort to be built in this mountain settlement we call Alpine. Truth is, this area has been the destination of choice for many seeking a health-enhancing, relaxing, and rejuvenating environment since 1890 when Benjamin Arnold built the Alpine Hotel, which later became known by the more familiar name *Ye Alpine Tavern*.



Although the early settlers here were mostly farmers or ranchers, the leading business in Alpine from the 1890's to the 1930's was the resort business. In fact, in the 1920's, six Alpine area resorts were listed by the San Diego Mountain Resort Association. Some of the early resorts, like *Los Terrenitos*, *Wildwood Glen*, *The Oaks*, and *Viejas Vista* offered "housekeeping cottages only, with or without bath." It was a step-up to stay at *Ye Alpine Tavern* where they offered both "rooms and housekeeping cottages" and you could stay on either the American Plan (room plus three full meals a day) or the European Plan (room plus daily breakfast). The *Green Parrot Lodge and Cottages* opened in 1923 on Highway 80 just a



couple of miles east of the Alpine Center area, where you could stay in housekeeping cottages or the main lodge that boasted family living quarters as well as a public tea room offering all kinds of homemade pastries and breads as well as the only soda fountain between El Cajon and the Imperial Valley. And then there was Julian Eltinge's *Sierra Vista Rancho* which billed itself as "A Mecca for Artists, Writers and all those desiring the last word in Mountain Resorts."

All these places are gone now, either dragged down by the Great Depression, consumed by wildfire, or casualties of the changing times. But there is one other resort that was perhaps the most successful and well known of them all. It was the earliest of the resorts in the Viejas Valley, located just a bit west of the new Viejas Hotel. A few of the cabins still exist, but the main dining room and most of the cabins gave way for construction of the I-8 freeway. Do you know the name of this famous Alpine resort, the first resort in the Viejas Valley? Well, that is our history mystery for October.