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Tattered Tidbits: Alpine Historical Society

HOW ALPINE GOT ITS NAME

George Washington Webb was born in Georgia in 1825. In 1849 after the Civil War he brought his family to California in search of gold. By the 1850's he held several gold mine claims in the area of Nevada City, California. He would put a claim in on a mine and instead of mining it he would sell it. In a period of 30 years, between 1850 and 1880, they moved at least nine times. During that time George was busy buying, selling, trading and bartering.

The Homestead Act was established in 1862. That is when the US Government began giving away 160 acres to anyone who promised to work the land. George would stake a claim and develop the 160 acres of land that was given to him. Then he would resell it to other pioneers. You could say he was one of California's first land speculators.

In 1860 George moved his family to Julian and became involved in the Julian-Banner Toll Road. He had three partners and he was responsible for the construction of the road. There are still portions of the old road visible in the San Felipe Canyon below Hwy-78.

An article written on June 17, 1871 in the San Diego Union newspaper said the following fees were charged: "\$.25 per cart, \$.50 if it had a buggy or wagon with a horse or mule, \$1.00 for a loaded four horse wagon..." The money helped pay for the maintenance of the road and salaries for the owners.

The Webb family moved again in 1872, and this time to Viejas in an area called Oak Grove. It was called Oak Grove because there was an abundance of oak trees. Years later a settler, named Johnson, cut down the oaks to make charcoal.

Mr. Webb's Homestead was located near a new wagon road he was building. He named his place "Alpine Ranch" and called his road the "San Diego Julian Toll Road". It went through Valle de las Viejas, via Guatay and up to the gold mines in Julian.

Their Homestead was located just off of Harbison Canyon Road, east of the Creekside Early Learning Center

In 1865 when the Post Office was first established people took the Webb Ranch name of Alpine to distinguish it from the Viejas Post Office. That is how Alpine got its name. Prior to that the roads here were known as "Camino de Sycuan," "Camino de la Sierra," "road to Williams Rancho," and the "Jackass Mail Trail."

There were no schools in Alpine for his children to attend. So Mr. Webb petitioned the El Cajon School District to establish a school. On July 7, 1875 the County Board of Supervisors approved the new district. Webb was responsible for establishing the first school in Alpine on his property. The first school teacher was Ms. Emma Everhart.

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