

THE ALPINE SUN SHOPPER – March 5, 2009
Tattered Tidbits: Alpine Historical Society

BEATRICE BOYD LAFORCE – “ALPINE’S 20TH CENTURY MATRIARCH”

When you asked Mrs. LaForce where she was born she would say, “I was born in the back of a wagon somewhere in Arkansas.” She would never tell anyone how old she was. While doing research about her life I called her son James Clayburn Jr. He told me she was born in 1905.

Mrs. LaForce was known as the Matriarch of Alpine. In 1971 she wrote a book about Alpine titled, “History of a Mountain Settlement.” She also wrote several plays and other books. One book is called, “Psalms for the Winter Twilight,” written in 1996. For many years she wrote articles for our local newspaper, the Alpine Sun. The last book she wrote was “The Toadstool.” It was published after she died.

She and her husband Clayburn, Sr. met in San Diego in 1923 and were married in 1925. They moved to Alpine in 1943. They had three children, Carolyn, Alice and Clayburn, Jr. The first house they lived in was called La Chaquita, located on Rancho del Sequan, off Tavern Road and Balentine. Today that house is known as the Captain Adam Beaty house and is one of the Alpine Historical Society’s museum buildings.

In 1946 they purchased a 260 acre homestead off South Grade Road. They built their house themselves with a combination of railway ties, native stone and cement blocks. The railway ties were in lengths of 8, 12 and 16 feet. They were placed in log-cabin style to form the walls. Mortar holds the house together. The house was finished in 1949. Although brand new, it felt like the house had been there for years. It was rustic and rugged and they called their place “Sky Mesa Ranch.”

For many years she would invite the third grade students to visit her house when they were studying the history of Alpine. She would show the children how to grind corn to make tortillas, how to cook on a wood burning stove and a variety of other activities. Her house was a showplace with Indian artifacts, collections of wagons, spurs, horse bits, horse shoes and many other western memorabilia.

Bea led a very active life. She was involved in many community and civic organizations. For many years she worked part time in the Alpine Library. Also assisted in the organization of the Alpine Players and the first Alpine Art Association. She and her husband Clayburn started the Alpine Historical Society in 1962. On September 12, 1975 she was honored as Citizen of the Year.

She loved animals, nature and plants. She had a pet goose that was like a watch dog. He protected her and followed her where ever she went. A very kind, intelligent woman who was fiercely independent and an advocate for western ranch culture. She always wore a dress, a hat and gloves and was very conscious of being a stylish country woman.

However at home she was a true pioneer woman. She cooked on her wood burning stove, took care of her donkey, horses, goats, geese, chickens, several cats and her doves that she kept in the veranda.

She died on Feb 2, 2003. Her house and property were sold to a developer and he kept the name Sky Mesa Ranch. The original house still stands. Rev and Mrs. Doug Bray purchased her house and made some renovations but kept the integrity of the house.

The Boulder Oaks Elementary School honored Mrs. LaForce by naming their library the "Beatrice LaForce Library."

Carlette Anderson and her husband JC have lived in Alpine for 16 years. She is a past president of the Alpine Historical Society and author a "My Alpine," a history of Alpine for children. She can be reached at myalpinehistory@aol.com



Beatrice Boyd LaForce