

***THE ALPINE SUN SHOPPER – November 4, 2010***  
***Tattered Tidbits: Alpine Historical Society***

**STAGE COACHES AND MAIL ROUTES**

In 1872 George Washington Webb, his son Sam and 18 workers put in a toll road through what is now Alpine. Nelson Overmier was appointed road master and used an 8-mule team to re-grade the dirt road.

Mr. Overmier and his wife Lucy built a ranch along that road and called it Cove Ranch. His house was located just behind today's Post Office. It included most of what is now downtown Alpine. The nearest neighbor was very far away.

Alpine grew as a way station for the Julian mine wagons. The trail between the mines and San Diego came through Alpine. Drivers would haul supplies to the mines and deliver gold to San Diego. They stopped in Alpine to rest and water their horses.

The area where they stopped is located near the corner of Alpine Boulevard and Marshall Road. You can still see the creek that supplied their water. Stop by that intersection one day and take a look. Try to imagine the approaching wagons. Can you see, in your mind, the hot sweaty horses drinking water from that creek?

In 1850 the army ran a military horseback mail route through Viejas from San Diego to Yuma, Arizona. It is known to be the first regular U.S. Mail route in Southern California.

On November 16, 1857, Silas St. John carried the first civilian eastbound overland mail out of San Diego via Carrizo Creek to Fort Yuma. On September 9, 1858, there was an attempted robbery. Single-handed he defended the state. St. John lost his left arm in that fight. He recovered and continued to work as a stagecoach driver for Wells Fargo. He died in San Diego on September 5, 1919.

James Birch had established the San Antonio and San Diego Mail Line. It ran through Cockney Bill's State Stop. This stagecoach carried both passengers and mail. During that time they used mules instead of horses because they were better able to withstand the desert environment. The stage stop was east of Alpine in Viejas Valley.

His competitor was John Butterfield. Northern newspapers called Birch's route the "Jackass Mail Train" because he used mules. The Jackass Mail stopped operating at Viejas State Stop in the 1860's due to the Civil War.

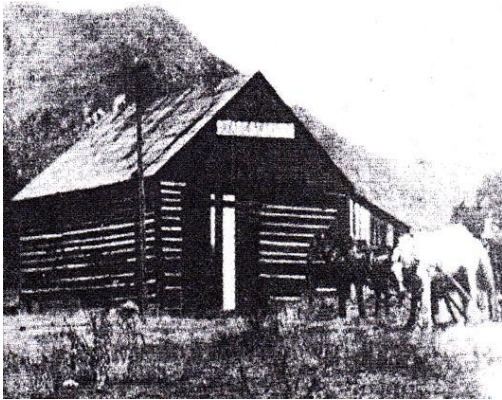
Before 1885, J. H. Whitney opened the Stage Station and General Store in Alpine. The first mail service didn't start here until 1885. This was where all the town's people came to buy their groceries and pick up their mail.

When Mr. Benjamin Arnold arrived in Alpine in 1889 there was no stage line operating on a regular basis. He started a stage route that went from San Diego through Lakeside and up to

Alpine. Just one of the many contributions Mr. Arnold made to improve the lives of the citizens of Alpine.

Harry Pennoyer drove the stagecoach, in this area, longer than any one else can remember. He built his house in 1905 off of Harbison Canyon Road, in a place he called "Sleepy Hollow."

By Carlette Anderson



Up to 1884 the Stage Stop was called Valle de las Viejas. Photo from the LaForce Collection.