

***THE ALPINE SUN SHOPPER – October 2, 2014***  
***Tattered Tidbits: Alpine Historical Society***

**Sophronia Athearn Nichols**  
**Medical Doctor and Homeopath**  
**Part III**

by Gail O'Quinn

Sophronia's son Willie graduated in April of 1887 in Petaluma and in October the family moved to San Diego, where Willie started college. The family took up residence at 1045 6th St. and Sophronia also set up her practice there. She was listed in the San Diego Directory as a Homeopathic Physician and surgeon. They attended St. Paul's Episcopal Church on 4th and C Street.

Alice, Sophronia's daughter, married Nicholas Wilfred Anderson and the couple moved next to Sophronia's sister, Carrie Foss, and her family in Alpine. Sophronia also moved to Alpine, into the little house on Tavern road, that now is home to the Alpine Historical Society where much of Alpine's rich history is on record. Attached to the house is the old plank school house. It is the first school built here and was moved onto the property by Dr. Nichols, who used it as a dispensary.

Thought we don't have details we know that George Stephenson was the first baby Sophronia delivered in Alpine in 1895. What we do know is that late one cold, wet January night in 1897 Sophronia was awakened by a frantic knock at her door. A little boy of 10, named Ralph had ridden nine miles on horseback, on country roads in the dark to fetch the good Doctor. His mother was about to give birth and Sophronia was needed.

A quick change into warm clothes and grabbing her medical bag, Sophronia set out for the Willows, Ralph's horse in tow and Ralph on the buggy seat beside her. They rode through the rainy night, a journey that we make in ten to twelve minutes took three to four hours back then.

Under Sophronia's care Dorothy Walker Noble Markley was born, believed to be the second maternity case of her practice in Alpine. Sophronia stayed and cared for mother, baby and family for three days and then, satisfied all was well, returned home. Dorothy grew up and later had a daughter, Betty Noble, who was a lifelong resident of Alpine and a devoted member of the Alpine Historical Society. She was also President of the Cemetery Association. It is due to her actions that Sophronia's grave site has a new marker, memorializing this woman whose loyal service helped so many.

What homeopathic remedies might Doctor Nichols have taken with her? Possibly Calcarea phosphoricum to use in alternation with Kali phosphoricum in case the mother became exhausted during a long lasting labor, or to assist with recovery after delivery. Calc. phos. would also address mild anemia. Bellis perennis would be high on her list as the remedy of choice for strained and stretched internal muscles and ligaments. Arnica montana, the queen of remedies, for bruising, shock, and any injury that might occur to mother or infant. Hepar sulph-calc, Silica or Phytolacca to treat the possibility of mastitis. Antimonium tartarium or Carbo vegetabilis for breathing difficulties in newborns. These are just some of the remedies Dr. Nichols may have had on hand, ready for any eventuality.

From 1889 to 1893 Dr. Nichols lived and practiced in Otay, CA. During that time her beloved mother, Ann Athearn died in San Francisco. Sophronia became a member of the California State Homeopathic Society on May 10th, 1893. That year she lived and practiced in Riverside, CA, before returning to Alpine in 1894. She was 59.

In the world at large New Zealand is first to grant woman the right to vote; Nikola Tesla, (not Marconi) invents the radio, Ellis Island becomes the reception center for new immigrants, Western Samoa changes International Date Line, so that year there were 367 days in this country with two occurrences of Monday, July 4. Also, Arthur Conan Doyle publishes the *Adventures of Sherlock*

*Holmes* and Tchaikovsky's ballet *Nutcracker Suite* premiers.

Payment for the good Doctor's service might be rendered in money, but more often than not might be a chicken for the pot, a clutch of eggs or a basket of vegetables. Sophronia cared for all who came to her, and drove for many miles in her horse-drawn buggy day or night to attend the medical needs of those who couldn't come to her. This was the life of a country Doctor and she not only accepted it but embraced it.

She lived in Alpine until 1902, when, at the age of 67 she had a stroke and moved in with her daughter at Rancho Barona, Lakeside. She died on November 12th, 1903 and was buried in the Alpine Cemetery. Buried, but never forgotten, for Sophronia Athearn Nichols was a woman of substance and courage, giving great service, and her memory will live on in the hearts of many.