

KNOX, A.L.

SELECTS SITE FOR EL CAJON



Amaziah Lorú Knox, the founder of the City of El Cajon. It was through Knox's selection of that part of El Cajon Valley now known as Main and Magnolla streets to build his hotel, the site of the city was located in it's present spot.

— Courtesy of the Union Title & Trust Company from a photo in the San Diego Historical Society files.

A. L. Knox Cited As First Business Man In Present Location of City

(This is the fifteenth in a series, telling the history of El Cajon Valley. Herein is related the story of the man who actually first founded the city of El Cajon at its present location.)

In the year 1856, the clipper sailing ship "GOLDEN ROCKET" set sail from a port along the coast of New Hampshire, bound for the far-off coast of California, via Cape Horn. On board was a young married couple, setting out for a new life. In the ship's log their name read, "Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Knox."

It was 154 days later that the GOLDEN ROCKET dropped anchor in the harbor of San Francisco. The sea coast town was still booming as a mining center started in '49. Within a short time, Knox, rancher and builder, was engaged in the same business.

But not all was well with the newly weds. Mrs. Knox soon became tired of the ruggedness of

the western pioneer. Although her husband coaxed her to try and stick it out until he had enough money to settle down, she decided to return to her eastern home with its comforts and convenience.

In the middle of 1857, A. L. Knox put his bride off only a few months on a stage bound for Ogdon, Utah, where it intersected with the trans-continental rail

road. Although Knox never saw his wife again, she wrote many letters begging him to return. But he loved the west, and his desire to remain in this virgin country was a greater love than that he had for his wife.

Knox continued to work at various mining operations in and around Alpine County. It was nearly 10 years after he had arrived in California that he heard of the new city which Father Horton was building at the harbor of San Diego. The prospects of good employment looked better than that which he was engaged in.

Knox picked up his belongings and packed them into a wagon and headed south along the coast. From Los Angeles to San Diego, Knox went through a roadless stretch, which he had to travel the best he could. On August 1, 1869 he drove his four-horse team up the main street of the new town of San Diego. To his disappointment, conditions were not as he had expected. There was only one store, and a very few other buildings. So far as the building trade was concerned it was nil.

After a few weeks, Knox heard about the Cajon ranch, and how it was prospering, that labor was scarce there, and also that ranching was a major occupation. Knox again took his wagon and headed east. It is a fair guess that Knox arrived in the Valley in the Spring of 1870.

Knox located and applied for work on a ranch owned by Sublett and Meridith. He was hired at \$30 a month and room and board. In a short time, Knox through his ability had won advancement to foreman of the 27,000 acre wheat ranch. It was in 1874 that Knox was credited with harvesting some 21,000 sacks of wheat, with an average of 138 pounds per bag, a record which at that time was almost unheard of.

Knox left the services of Sublett and Meridith in the later part of 1874. He found it more profitable to sell his services as a planter and carpenter. It was also along about this time that Lankershim offered Knox a contract to plant his entire holdings in the valley. It was this association which made these two men great friends for life.

It was along in this time (1874-5) that Knox took on one of the ruggedest jobs he ever had. A branch of a national telegraph line was bringing in a line from Yuma to San Diego. One of the major problems which confronted them, was to get poles from San