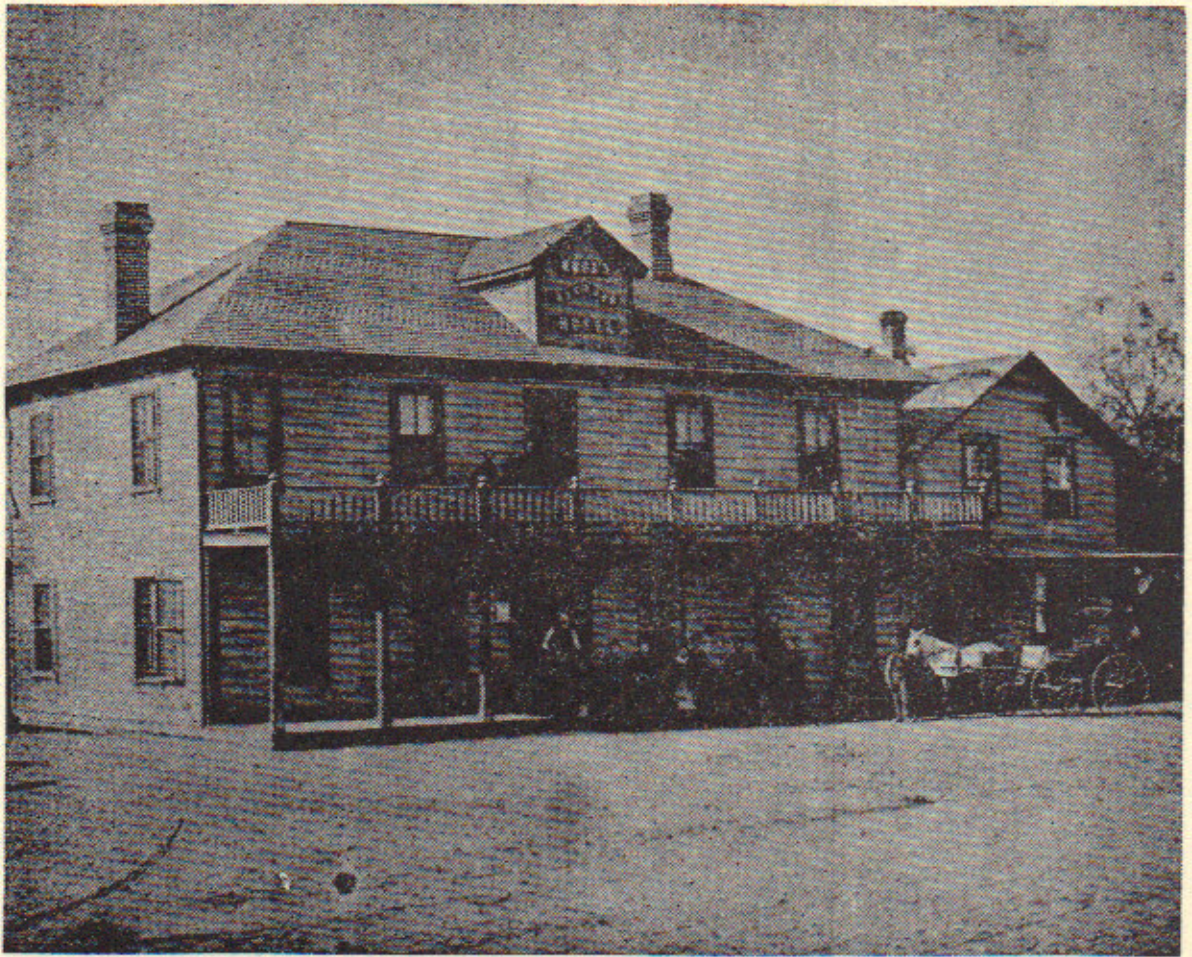


KNOX HOTEL, CIRCA 1885



Although this photo is undated, it is assumed that the original hotel of 1887 has been added back from Main street, and a huge stable had onto. Along the left hand side can be seen the adobe addition which contained some five rooms.

The corral at this time had been moved further back from Main street, and a huge stable had been built at about the location of the present day Free Brother's market.

— Union Title Insurance Co. photo

A. L. Knox Hotel Was Beginning of El Cajon Business District

(This is the sixteenth in a series, telling the history of El Cajon Valley. Herein is related a continuation of the accounts surrounding A. L. Knox.)

For some reason, perhaps to avoid the terrain or the cultivated fields, the road from San Diego in 1875-77 came through the Grossmont pass and followed approximately the same course as the present day Highway 80 does, to the intersection of Magnolia street. Here the road made a sharp turn to the left, and followed a course much the same as North Magnolia into Santee. That sharp turn to the north was the one thing which caught A. L. Knox's attention.

Knox reasoned that the heavy-laden cargo wagons from and to

the booming mining town of Julian could just about make it into San Diego in one day's travel. He observed that most of these 10 and 20 mule team wagons would stop at this sharp turn for the night, then in the morning would

go into San Diego. Often they would leave hobbled in the fields, these mules which were not needed for the short trip. In the evening they would return, camp again, and then head up the mountains early the following morning.

With all of these observations in mind, Knox suddenly decided that this would perhaps be one of the best spots in the Valley to put up a rooming house or hotel. No man with a dollar in his pocket would pass up the opportunity of a good hot meal and a good bed when available after a hard day of mule skinning over the treacherous mountain roads between here and Julian.

Although there has been a search made of all available records it has never been established from whom Knox acquired the land upon which he built the first part of the hotel. It can be assumed that through his friendship with Lankershim, and the work

that he did for him, there may have been a deal in a matter of settling up Knox's wages.

At any rate, Knox did start his first hotel in the early part of 1877, located about the rear of today's Thrifty Drug Store.

This first hotel was a small affair and contained only five rooms and a small lobby. On the eastern side an additional room was built for the kitchen and dining room. This two story building was well built, as is attested by the fact that it still stands at the south east corner of Lexington ave., and South Magnolia street,

and is used as a residence.

Knox hotel was an immediate hit with the mule skimmers as well as passengers. A large corral was arrangement than hobbling in an open field. Before long, Knox siderable length to see that the family settled in comfortable quarters up near the Grossmont pass. This was a fact with Knox: that he never turned a man from his door who was hungry and did not have the price of a meal.

And it was the same with any one who was destitute such as the Birdsey family.

With in a very short time, Mr.

Birdsey became worse in health. He soon passed on, leaving his wife with two infant children. Again Knox befriended the family. He took them into his hotel and made them at home.

Mrs. Birdsey could feel nothing but admiration for her benefactor. Knox with all his success, had been a lonely man, and it was only natural that the two were united in marriage in 1878. The following year a son was born, Charles Randall Knox, presently a popular El Cajon physician. A second child was born a couple of years later, Alice M.