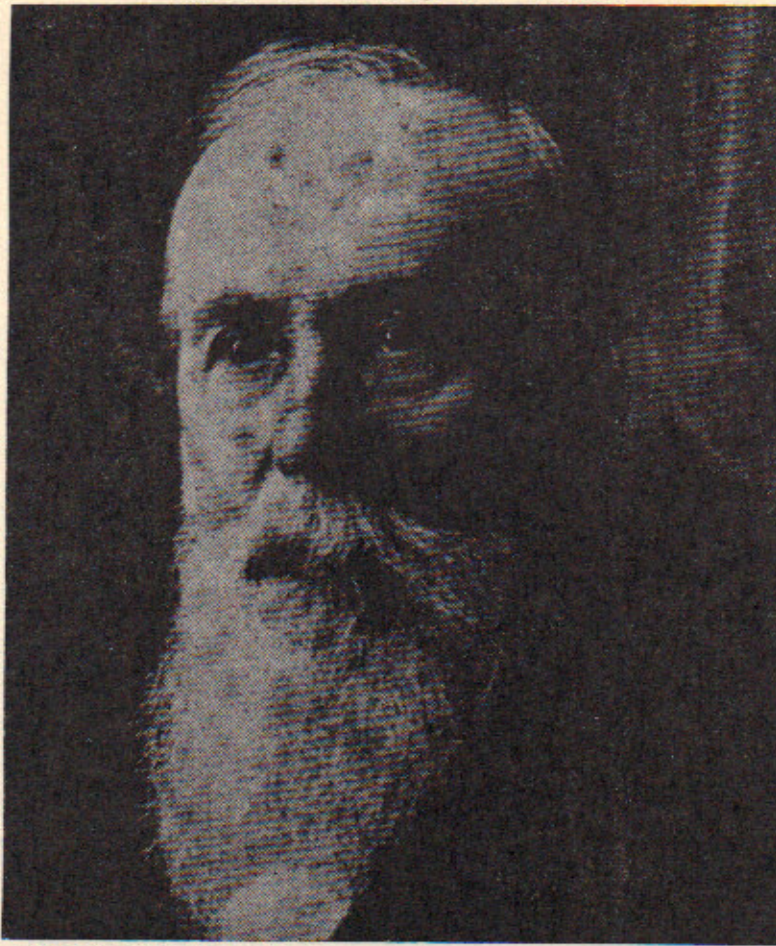


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## EARLY LANDOWNER



**MAJOR LEVI CHASE**, lawyer, pioneer, soldier and early landowner in the Valley. Chase ave., in the south side of the Valley, was a driveway to his country home of 170 acres in the southeast corner of the Valley.

— Courtesy Union Title and Trust

slaps

## Major Levi Chase Engineered First Sale Of Entire Valley

(This is the twelfth in a series of articles telling the history of El Cajon Valley. Herein are told those facts surrounding Major Levi Chase and what he did for the Valley.)

Following the purchase of a part of El Cajon Valley by Elder Joseph Knapp and J. W. Dodge, the name of Major Levi Chase seems to crop up constantly in the Valley's history for the next 30 years.

According to existing records at the Civic Center, San Diego, it was Chase who engineered the first sale of the entire Valley, from Knapp-Dodge to Lankershim.

When the "squatters" appeared in the Valley, Chase was asked to devise a means of evicting them. This was only natural, for the land had been purchased for the purpose of range land and wheat raising. The squatters with their fences and homes, broke the expanse of the area. It was at this time that Chase caused a survey to be made of the entire area to prove the legality of his clients claim of ownership.

During this "squatters" incident, Chase did discover that the 1845 land grant made to the wife of Don Miguel had not been registered with, nor recognized in the United States surveys made by Captain Jack Hays. It became apparent that Chase must establish proper confirmation of this grant before Lankershim could legally claim the land he had purchased.

This proved to be a big job. It was necessary for Levi Chase to

carry the litigation through the local district courts, who refused to pass judgment as it felt that such a matter was out of it's jurisdiction. Chase then took the matter to the Supreme Court in Washington, D. C., where after nearly seven years a judgment was handed down. It was on April 6, 1876, that Chase's long legal fight was rewarded by President U. S. Grant signing the patents, thereby confirming the land ownership to Isaac Lankershim.

Major Levi Chase arrived here in the west as a part of the mass migration of those who sought a new location for their homes after the Civil War. Chase apparently went first to San Francisco, where he became associated with Lankershim. This fact is born out by the letter, shown in an earlier article, from Knapp and Dodge to Don Miguel appointing him in charge of the Cajon Rancho sale.

Perhaps one of the best word pictures of Major Chase is contained in the June 1, 1906, issue of the San Diego Union shortly after his death.

"Major Levi Chase was a native of Calias, Maine. He was born there October 26, 1823. His early life was spent in New York State as a railroad construction contractor. He married an Elizabeth Wheeler, who passed away in 1848. In 1850, he moved to Wapello, Iowa. It was here that Chase took to a serious study of law.

"At the outbreak of the North-South (Civil) War, Chase was credited with being the first man to organize a company of volunteers and offer their services to the Federal Government. Shortly after this, Chase was appointed a Captain and went all through the entire war, winning for his company and himself many honors for conspicuous gallantry. At Pine Ridge, he was appointed to the rank of Major. Following the end of the war, he resigned his commission and returned to his law practice.

"Chase was re-married in 1853 to a Cornelia King. They had one son, Charles Chase.

"Chase was one of six children. His sister was his constant companion until his death. He was regarded in San Diego as one of the richest men in the county. He was also the oldest member of the San Diego Bar Association. He died at the age of 83 of cancer."

Although Major Chase did much for the Valley, and had a weekend home here, even more he became most interested in fruit growing, he never really made the valley his home. His house in San Diego on Broadway, between 12th and 13th Streets, was at one time one of the show places of the city.

Charles A. Chase was the son of Major Levi Chase & his first wife, Elizabeth Wheeler Chase.