

Valley Pioneer Was Man of Many Talents

(This is the seventh in a series, telling the history of El Cajon Valley. Herein is related the final article in regards to A. L. Knox.)

By W. S. Head

Knox with all of his popularity held many side jobs to that of running his hotel. He continued for many years to sell his services as a planter and a builder. He was appointed county road master of this part of the county, maintaining the road from San Diego into the Valley.

In 1878, Knox was appointed the first post master of the City of El Cajon, and for several years maintained the post office in the lobby of his hotel.

In the 1880's, Knox was appointed deputy sheriff, under the term of Sheriff Ben Hill. An interesting story is told of Knox, which showed his feelings toward his fellow man.

He was detailed to take a convicted murderer to a state prison in central California. Knox knew the youth, and could not see that it was necessary to handcuff the man while they were in transit. He told the boy, "Son, I've known you all your life, and I believe I can trust you. Now I'm not going to put these handcuffs on you. We'll just travel as friends. Will you give me your word you'll not try to escape?"

The prisoner agreed, and that was in this manner that they traveled, an almost unheard of privi-

lege afforded a prisoner in these days.

Knox became very popular throughout the country, both as a business man and in political circles. He was a charter member of the International Order of Odd Fellows in the state. Through his activities he gained a position of prominence in that organization. He counted among his friends and often guests at his hotel, such people as Helen Hunt Jackson, the author, Father Uback of the famous story written by Mrs. Jackson, and U. S. Senator W. W. Bowers.

The corners of Main and Magnolia were known for a great number of years as "Knox's Corners." Knox also was always interested in land, and through his work of planting a great many eucalyptus trees in the Hilledale section of the valley, he acquired much acreage.

At the turn of the century, a

man by the name of Knowles (no relation to the famous Sally Knowles who owned the well-known eating place on North Magnolia Street) built a second hotel across the street. It was named the Corona Hotel. This was an elaborate hostelry. However, Knowles did not have the business know-how, nor the personality to make it a success. Knox leased the hotel from him and operated it for several years.

The Corona Hotel burned down later. As the story goes, each room had a charcoal burner to warm the occupants. One chilly morning, a guest allowed his heater to become too hot, and this caused the fire.

In later years, Knox bought the Little Cajon Villa, the house he had built for Lankershim, and it is here that he spent his last years.

Knox passed on in 1918. But in those 48 years that he had lived in El Cajon, he left a great individual force towards the gradual development of the Valley he loved. His influenced progress along material, political, and moral forces which are still existent with his descendants who still reside in the town that their father started.

Strange as it may appear, after such a great personality had given so much of himself and his personal faith towards the founding and building of El Cajon, there has never been a fitting tribute named in honor of the Father of our City.

Yes it is so, not a street, a square, building, a park, no, not even an alley has been honored to perpetuate the name of A. L. Knox!