

D.C. 17-82

A look back/ Family home once had 12 Halls

HALL, J.P.R. FAMILY - 1982

Ever wonder what El Cajon was like in its infancy? How streets or areas came to be named? What kinds of people were important to the early growth of the community?

Anybody who has lived in the area for even a short time has probably been curious about these subjects.

This column aims to help answer those questions and instruct us a little bit about our history. It is being presented by the El Cajon Historical Society and The Californian. The photos and artwork shown with each column are from the society's collection on display at the Knox Hotel on Magnolia and Park avenues in El Cajon.

The feature will appear monthly.

By Chloris Scott

of the El Cajon Historical Society

If you were told that, before the turn of the century, there was a house in El Cajon with 12 Halls in it you'd probably think that some eccentric builder had been at work.

Not so. The three-generation Hall family were early settlers who arrived in the valley in 1886. Their family home on East Madison Avenue is still used as a residence.

Jesse P.R. Hall was from Michigan, arriving with his wife and children in Sacramento late in 1885. The story goes that a stranger told him of the good fishing off the wharf in San Diego, so he brought

his family south, renting a house near Eighth and Broadway, then considered the suburbs of San Diego.

A millwright, but foremost a farmer, Hall decided the city was no place for him and his family, so he looked to El Cajon valley for land. An account in the June 15, 1892, issue of the El Cajon Valley News (the first year of publication of the paper that now is The Daily Californian) has an account of J.P.R. Hall's fruit ranch.

The article relates that Hall paid \$60 an acre for the 40 acres he purchased in 1886 from the Pacific Coast Land Bureau. The first year he planted wheat. Learning that raisin grapes were a good crop he planted 32 acres in grapes, the rest was planted with a variety of fruit trees, peaches, apricots, pears, apples, figs and oranges, and vegetables. Another 20 acres, purchased a year after the Hall family arrived, was in hay for his horses and cattle.

In addition to working his own ranch, with the aid of the rest of his family, Hall earned some money by doing carpentry, plastering and masonry work for others.

Jesse and his wife, Charlotte, were the parents of 10 children, the oldest of whom, Wilson D. Hall, was 18 when the family first came to El Cajon valley. Wilson helped his dad with building a house and getting the grapes planted, then struck out on his own. He worked in a small shipyard in San Diego and as a carpenter on the Hotel del Coronado; then he helped his dad with his first grape harvest. Having saved

some money from his work in Coronado, Wilson (better known as W.D.) bought a 29-acre tract of land east of his parents. The story of W.D., his marriage to a niece of Gen. U.S. Grant in New York state, his return to El Cajon and his start in the lumber business is another story, for he and his family of eight children have made a great impact on El Cajon through the years.

The Jesse Halls' other children include Marie Elizabeth, who taught school from 1893 to 1914, then returned home to care for her parents; Julian D., who ranched in the Bostonia area; Samuel C., who was longtime secretary of the Los Angeles Athletic Club; Jesse R., who was supervisor of Stanislaus forest; Arthur, who lived in Berkeley and worked as an engineer with Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Co., and Helen who taught in Los Angeles city schools. Three daughters, Burdette, Rosa and Mary died in their late teens and early 20s.

Most of the Hall family, including Jesse's parents, John and Mariah, are buried in El Cajon cemetery. Mariah's is the oldest tombstone. She died in 1889 at the age of 81; her husband died two years later. Jesse, that early El Cajon pioneer rancher, died in 1929, 10 years after the death of his wife.

The Hall home has been occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Al Van Zanten for a number of years. The 60 acres that Hall had is now occupied by houses on small city lots, a school and a park; no longer the site of grape vineyards or wheat fields.