

Valley Had Various Names Before Official El Cajon

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(This is the sixth in a series telling the history of El Cajon Valley. Herein are related the many names that the Valley was called over the past 200 years.)

Before we get into the modern phases of the El Cajon Valley History, it may be interesting to have a look at the various names which have been applied to this area. Some of these names are most vague, and in some cases, are without meaning as far as the modern researcher can ascertain. Others do carry with them, a rather romantic history.

According to Mr. John Davidson's (Serra Museum) writings in the San Diego Public Library files, the name of PELCHA referred to the Valley. But beyond this point there has never been a really true meaning of the word agreed to by all authorities.

There is another reference to the Valley in an Indian expression, which according to Mrs. Leslie Lee, wife of the noted artist, is of local Indian origin. AMUT-TAR-TU, which Mrs. Lee breaks down into the following meaning. AMUT—meaning 'level ground' and then skipping the TAR she tells us that the TU implies 'center.' One authority who has examined this middle part of the name, stated that it could mean valley or canyon or bottom of the mountains. But this has not been either confirmed or discredited.

As the years passed, perhaps the most significantly historical of all the names is that of Santa

Monica. This name according to legend was applied by the Padres and was taken from the lore of Catholic history.

According to Mr. Ben Dixon, Curator for the San Diego County Historical Society, the story behind the name comes from that which happened some 1500 years ago.

SANTA MONICA EXPLAINED

The name of Santa Monica was probably given to the Valley by the Padres when they first came through the Mission Gorge sometime in the 1780's, and gazed out upon this beautiful valley. We may assume from this, that the date must have been on a May 4th, the day of Santa Monica, according to the Catholic calendar.

Who was Santa Monica?

Santa Monica was a christian daughter of chirstian parents, born in the town of Tegosta, in Algeria, Northern Africa, about the year 325 or 330 AD. She grew into

young womanhood and married an old hard boiled pagan, an official of the Roman Empire, by the name of Partritious. They had three children, the oldest who became famous in later years as St. Augustine.

Santa Monica became most famous in Catholic lore. In France there was a Society of Santa Monica, and eventually she was made the patron Saint of Motherhood. Her bones were moved many times until finally they were put to rest in a church which was named for her famous son St. Augustine, in Paris.

Thus, when the Padres first arrived in the Valley on some 4th of May, they named it "The Vale of Santa Monica," truly a fitting tribute to the Valley.

Following the Santa Monica era, came the Don's reference to the Valley as the Cajon Rancho. Soon after the purchase of the area by I. Lankershim, A. L. Knox built the Knox Hotel and Livery Stables and the name was then changed to Knox's Corners. This name prevailed more or less as a nick name. When new ranches started to become known and the town started to spring up, the name of El Cajon from the days of the Don's was put back into use, and has since remained.

One final oddity in this name business. When the post office was first established by Knox in 1878, the postmark and the official name of the office read "Elcajon," and remained thus until 1905, when it was officially changed to "El Cajon" by the U. S. Post Office at the insistance of Zoeth S. Eldridge.