



EL CAJON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# HERITAGE



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April 2018

## President's Message



*Letitia Coxe Shelby Chapter, D.A.R*

*E.C.H.S.*



Dear friends of E.C.H.S.,

I would like to invite you to join us for the ceremony at which the Letitia, Coxe Shelby chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, will present the Knox House Museum with an historic plaque.

The ceremony will take place at the Wieghorst Museum on our normal 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday Quarterly Meeting Day (April 21<sup>st</sup>) at 1:00 pm. This will not be a luncheon. See the back of the Heritage for RSVP details.



After the presentation, the Knox House will be open for members of D.A.R and E.C.H.S. to view the plaque. Please join us!

Carla

*An Old El Cajon Beehive Farm. See G. Carroll Rice's article in this newsletter for more tales of life on an El Cajon farm.*



## *Do you shop at Amazon?*

*Did you know your purchases could also benefit the El Cajon Historical Society at no cost to you?*



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## Welcome New Members

- ✦ Rick Zager
- ✦ Gary Vaughn
- ✦ Duane "Bud" Close  
& Gary Close

## ***Do You Remember This?***

Downtown redevelopment projects completed between 1999 and 2011, included a new lighted walkway making it safer for pedestrians crossing the 200 block of East Main Street.

*Note the telephone lines in the alley behind the northern side of Main Street that were soon to be undergrounded.*



*Behind downtown's first new restaurant is the new fence enclosing Rea Street's Olaf Wieghorst Museum and Western Heritage Center. Beyond that are the new El Cajon Police Headquarters. Behind it is Park Street.*

*A sweeping westward view of diagonal parking installed to narrow this block of Main Street to disallow competitive and dangerous passing by drivers using it as a quicker way to freeways.*



*Photos from private collections of former Mayor Joan Shoemaker, and E. P. Lay, El Cajon Historical Society.*

# ANIMAL TALES FROM RURAL EL CAJON

by G. Carroll Rice



*Historic Downtown Main Street*

Imagine viewing El Cajon Valley from one of its western hills on a sunny afternoon almost any year between 1898 and World War II. The slowly expanding City was concentrated along Main Street between the railroad tracks on the western side and Mollison Avenue on the east. Outside the City, a patchwork of vineyards, gardens, open fields, and isolated homes blended into the green of orange and

avocado groves on the eastern, northern and southern foothills. To the west, the hills and valleys were largely undeveloped and were inhabited largely by grazing cattle, flocks of sheep and an occasional motion picture company shooting 'westerns.'



Upscale homes and the beginnings of an art colony had appeared in the Grossmont-Mt. Helix highlands where horses were popular and the most dominant animals.

All across the El Cajon Valley, horses and mules were still evident both as pleasure and draft animals, and in spite of a few small dairies, the family cow was still a permanent fixture. The requisite cats and dogs near homes protected them against rodents, wild animals and strangers. In addition, scattered El Cajon families had donkeys, goats, a pig or two, perhaps a fattening calf, ducks, geese, turkeys and very importantly, chickens for home and market – housewives often selling eggs to the markets.



You may also be sure that wherever we had domestic animals, large ranch or small family farm, we observed them and told stories about their behaviors – often with a smile.

As anyone who has been around livestock knows, animals have distinctive personalities, their own interpersonal relationships, their reactions to other resident animals, and their own ways to find ways out of pens or through fences. For example, pigs can be pig-headed enough to go right through an electric fence – squealing but not stopping; and horses, cows, calves and even Shetland ponies can bolt and run as if terrified at the unexpected squawk of a chicken.



Personally, I had a good relationship with our non-human residents, but my mother found it gross when I sat on the lawn swing sharing a slice of watermelon with a free-roaming chicken. The hen liked the black seeds; I savored the seedless crisp, sweet red 'meat.' Against all objections, my behavior has all of the earmarks of a 'win-win' situation and a sterling example of the interrelationship of man and his animals.

This interdependence impacts both human and animal lives. Both must be fed according to their own requirements, and provisions made for their health and comfort every day, every night. Cows must be milked, eggs must be gathered, water provided, and provisions made to eliminate parasites and other pests . . . you get the picture. As might be expected, animals who are about to give birth get special attention.

In good weather, our pregnant sows (mature female pigs) would lie down on their sides and farrow (give birth) in the old orange grove where they grazed. Newborn piglets come from their mother with their little front feet in a diving position; and, as soon as they land on solid ground, they run around their mother's hind legs to get a nipple.

However, in the winter rain or cold weather, farrowing sows need shelter and warmth. With this in mind, we divided an old chicken house into three inside farrowing (birthing) pens with spacious outdoor pens for each. The chicken house had been built on blocks, and ramp-type doors were opened down into the outside pens allowing the sows to walk up the slope to get inside.

*(continued on page 6)*

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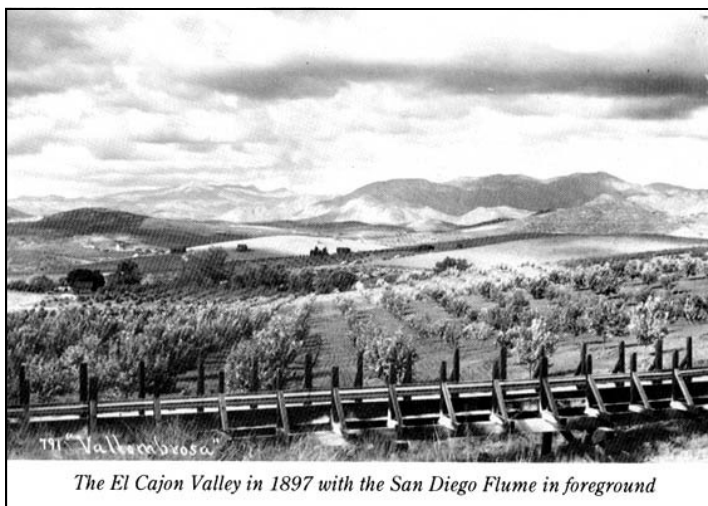
This simple arrangement would appear foolproof, but as my father was leaving for work one cold wet morning he took one last look in an inside pen at an overdue sow. He stopped in his tracks when he realized that she had farrowed with her head and forequarters inside the nice warm farrowing pen and her backside at the open door. Little piglets, just born, were falling off the ramp and on the ground. Instinctively seeking a nipple, they crawled under the boards blocking the open space under the elevated chicken house and pushed through the accumulated dust until they were well out of reach.

Obviously someone had to crawl through the dust under that chicken house and rescue piglets. Since my father was clean, dressed and leaving for his job with the County Road Department, there was no doubt about who the 'someone' would be. While I was at the back of the building, clearing my way to crawl under barbed wires, electrical wires, chicken wire netting and boards, my father induced the sow to move and make room for more baby pigs inside. When he had the ramp door closed, he joined me with a cardboard box to hold the rescued animals. As I recall, there were five little pigs in distress and it took two trips to the farther side of the building to capture them. They were as cold as frogs and as squirmy as only little pigs can be, but they were all soon passed out to my father who put them in the box and covered them with a blanket. While he carried them to the house, I scrambled out of the powdery, chicken-tainted crawl space, forgetting an electrified barbed wire overhead. The shock on the back of my neck was not severe, but it was sudden and it snapped my face back down in the fluffy foul-tasting dust. Spitting and mumbling, I was soon at the house brushing myself off and sipping a cup of coffee provided by my mother.

My father finally left for his job, leaving the animals in the care of my mother and me. The piglets were gently heated in a box in my mother's oven and shortly afterward restored to their mother, warm and healthy. When my father called from his office in Lemon Grove about an hour later, we could report that the sow's contented grunts indicated a happy mother and there were no complaints from her litter of greedy, nursing babies.

Animals! If you watch them for a while, they'll have you smiling, shaking your head, or pausing to realize how clever they really are. If I ramble on like this, I might wind up by telling of a hen that adopted some orphaned kittens and tried to teach them to be chickens. Be that as it may, that's a story for another time, and I want to leave you, too, feeling warm, entertained, and satisfied.

# Knox Notes



The El Cajon Valley in 1897 with the San Diego Flume in foreground

## A Friendly Reminder

### **2018 MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE**

2018 has arrived, which means it's time for most ECHS members to send in their dues.

Most memberships are on a calendar year basis. We greatly appreciate members who send in their dues early, helping their association by saving billing costs. This cost savings enables ECHS to make better use of its funds.

Membership dues for 2018 remain:

\$12 for Individual \$20 Family

\$30 Organization \$40 Business

\$500 Enhanced Life (Life members never need to renew).

Please make checks payable to ECHS and send to: P.O. Box 1973, El Cajon, CA 92022-1973.

Thank you!

### **Slate of Officers for 2018:**

President.....Carla Nowak  
Vice President.....Colleen White  
Recording Secretary.....Rebecca Taylor  
Corresponding Secretary.....Ruth Cope  
Treasurer.....George Dall/Joe Klock

### **Continuing Directors whose term expires December 2018:**

George Dall  
Mike Kaszuba  
Jack Dickens  
Rebecca Taylor

### **Continuing Directors whose term expires December 31, 2019:**

Colleen White  
Fran Hill  
Eldonna Lay  
Joe Klock

### **Proposed Directors whose term expires December 31, 2020:**

Linda Garity  
Ruth Cope  
Carla Nowak  
Christy Klock

### **Proposed Appointed Directors:**

Rick Hall  
Carroll Rice  
Linda Foltz

**From:** El Cajon Historical Society  
P. O. Box 1973  
El Cajon, CA 92022

**To:**

### **April Meeting**

Our April Quarterly Meeting will be April 21, 2018 at 1 PM at the Weighorst Museum, located at 131 Rea Ave., El Cajon, CA, 92020.

The DAR, Letitia Coxe Shelby Chapter will be presenting a Plaque to the El Cajon Historical Society.

After the presentation, cake and coffee will be served. You are also encouraged to come see the Plaque at the Knox Museum after the presentation. There will be no charge.

Please RSVP so we know how many people to expect.

### **April Meeting Reservation Form**

Number Attending \_\_\_\_\_

Name  
\_\_\_\_\_

Address  
\_\_\_\_\_

City, Zip  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone  
\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail  
\_\_\_\_\_

**RESERVATION DEADLINE –**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018**

Mail reservations to:

ECHS, P.O. Box 1973, El Cajon, CA 92022-1973