

# **Back in the Day...**

**A history of mining in early Menifee**



## Back in the Ol' Days...

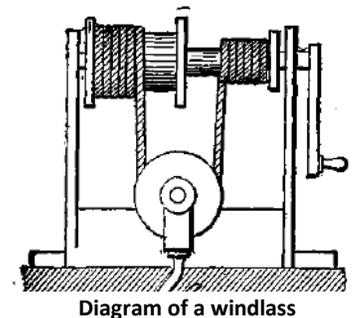
Men first settled in the area we now call Menifee to look for gold. The first miner here was a man from Kentucky named Luther Menifee Wilson. In 1880, he staked his first claim in what is now Menifee. Eventually, he had claims throughout the valley. His major **claim**, called the Menifee Quartz Lode, was in the area of Murrieta and Holland Roads. To stake a claim back in the old days, a miner would stack a pile of rocks at each corner of the piece of land he wanted to claim as his own. Then a miner would have to register his claim, or file paperwork, with the county.



In this photo to the left, Luther Menifee Wilson is pictured on his claim in what is now Menifee. His worker is in the background cranking a windlass. This was extremely hard work. A man would turn a crank and lower a bucket into a mine pit, or mine shaft, deep in the ground. The bucket would be filled with **quartz** that hopefully contained gold. The crank would be turned again to raise the heavy bucket full of rock to the surface. In the 1880's and 1890's, Luther Menifee Wilson did discover gold in Menifee. In fact, he discovered about \$18,000 worth of the precious metal. Back in the old days that was a lot of money!

and many men came to Menifee to look for gold. They dug mine shafts all over the valley. None of them became rich gold miners. For many years these mine shafts remained empty and abandoned in the valley. This was dangerous because people could fall into them. Now the mine shafts have all been filled in with dirt. What ever happened to Luther Menifee Wilson? Well, he wasted all of his money and spent it carelessly. He died a poor man in Winchester in 1899.

Gold fever soon spread throughout the area



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Another hopeful prospector was Samuel Walker who moved to Menifee in 1885. He prospected with his sons in the dry creek beds around the valley. They used a sluice box to sift rocks that could possibly contain gold. Samuel Walker spent most of his life in Menifee prospecting for gold, but he was never successful.

David Wickerd, came to Menifee in 1910 to farm. Many of his relatives had settled in the area. David Wickerd discovered a **vein** of silica while digging a well near a tree on his property near Tucker and Scott Roads. (Silica is used for making glass and ceramics.) He had a 100-foot, hand-dug mine with a 300-foot section that extended out to Scott Road. David Wickerd never became rich from his mining and later sold the property.

The most successful mining operation in Menifee was on the Wright property. In 1932, Edward and Christine Wright moved to Menifee from Los Angeles. They used a pick and shovel to make the mile-long road through the hills to their property. The Bouris family allowed them to cross their property to make the road. Edward later discovered desert rose stone near the highest point on his property, which is now known as Crowfoot Mountain off of Bundy Canyon Road. Rock taken from the **quarry** was used on tombstones. Later Edward Wright's son, Paul, began to operate the quarry. In order to get the valuable stone, the large rocks were blasted and then broken into smaller pieces. The stone from the quarry was used for decorations on banks, churches, homes, and businesses as far away as Redlands and San Diego. The quarry finally shut down in 1977 when it became difficult to make money.



Paul Wright is pictured here as a young child in front of his house built with rocks from their quarry.

Now it is time to make a decision. Would you have liked to have been a miner back the old days of Meniffee? In the chart below, list the positives and negatives of being a miner back in the old days of Meniffee. Use evidence from the article you just read.

| Positives of Being a Miner in the Old Days of Meniffee | Negatives of Being a Miner in the Old Days of Meniffee |
|--|--|
| ---  | ---  |
| ---  | ---  |
| ---  | ---  |
| ---  | ---  |
| ---  | ---  |

After thinking of the positives and negatives, it is time to form an opinion about being a miner in the old days of Meniffee. Write your opinion on the lines below. This will be the topic sentence of an opinion paragraph.

T= \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

 \_\_\_\_\_ (state 1 fact that supports your opinion)

 \_\_\_\_\_ (state a different fact that supports your opinion)

Now choose evidence from the positive negative chart. Those are the reds of a T-chart. Copy the information from this organizer to a T-chart. Use the T-chart to write an opinion paragraph about mining in early Meniffee.

## Mining Vocabulary Squares

|              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Definition:  | Part of Speech: |
| Word Family  | Picture         |
| <b>claim</b> |                 |

|               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Definition:   | Part of Speech: |
| Word Family   | Picture         |
| <b>quartz</b> |                 |

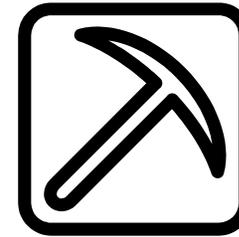
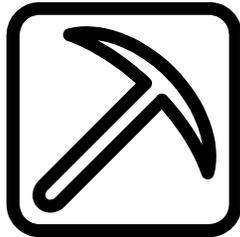
|             |                |
|-------------|----------------|
| Definition  | Part of Speech |
| Word Family | Picture        |
| <b>vein</b> |                |

|               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| Definition    | Part of Speech |
| Word Family   | Picture        |
| <b>quarry</b> |                |

# Mining in Early Menifee

**Miners-Year**

**Locations**



**Products**

**Interesting Facts**