



THEY MADE THEIR WAY TO MENIFEE

The Drake Family Came by Train from Pennsylvania

Written by Bill Zimmerman, Menifee Valley Historical Association

In 1887, Joseph and Harriett Drake of Lawrence County Pennsylvania boarded a train with their four children bound for California. Their final stop was Elsinore, California.



Joseph and Harriet Drake



Shortly after their arrival, the family met Mr. George Everitt, who had just finalized a homestead claim of 320 acres in Menifee. Mr. Drake offered Everitt \$1,600 in gold coin for a portion of that land. Everitt agreed to sell 80 acres to the Drakes. The property is located on Zeiders road just north of Keller road, in the southern portion of Menifee.

Upon arriving, the Drakes got busy with improvements on their newly acquired property. By 1888 they had completed construction of a home and large barn.

In 1906, Harriett Drake, then a widow, granted title of the property to her son Lou for one dollar. Lou had a fiancée in Philadelphia named Lizzie Weldon. The couple had been corresponding by mail for over 25 years planning their wedding. It had been Lizzie's duty as the youngest child to remain with her parents until they passed away. In November 1914 at the age of 42, Lizzie arrived as a bride and lent personal touches to her new home in Menifee. She planted lilac that she had brought from her Pennsylvania home, and a rose bed. She had Lou construct a fence around the yard "to show where it came to an end."



Lizzie and Lou Drake 1898

From her front porch that faced east, Lizzie could clearly see the children walking along Scott road to the one-room Antelope schoolhouse. It was so clear in 1914 that she could see the trees on San Jacinto Mountain, and so quiet she could hear the train whistle in Romoland, 10 miles to the north.

An unfortunate injury forced Lou to give up wheat farming. He sold his teams of horses and built chicken houses in order to raise fryers and eggs to sell commercially. Under the house on the north side was their egg cellar where Lizzie candled and weighed eggs. She would have used an actual candle as there was no electricity in our valley until 1946. In the cool cellar Lizzie set pans of milk for the cream to rise so she could make butter. There was an ice box in her kitchen and ice blocks were delivered from Perris.

Lizzie was known for baking the best Angel Food cakes, and several times a year she would deliver a cake for the dozen children attending the one-room Antelope schoolhouse. Although she never had children of her own, she was loved by the children in this valley. She was their Sunday School teacher and held 4-H meetings in her home.



Today the Drake home is the residence of Mrs. Betty Bouris. When Betty and her husband Herk were married in 1950 they knew they wanted to be farmers and live in Menifee. Mrs. Drake offered to sell her place to them. Betty Bouris recalls those days fondly. "I remember hanging linens on the clothes line in 1951. It seemed to me I was standing on the edge of the world," says Bouris, who serves as board member with the Menifee Valley Historical Association. "The only thing to stop the eye were a few farm buildings in clumps of trees scattered a mile or two apart and then the hills and distant mountains beyond miles and miles of wheat."

On the property today, the windmill and well are in their original place, and in Lizzie Drake's rose bed some of her roses still bloom each year, close to 100 years old.

This article was prepared by Bill Zimmerman, Vice President - Menifee Valley Historical Association and was based on information provided by Mrs. Betty Bouris.

