

THEY MADE THEIR WAY TO MENIFEE

Evans Family Settled Menifee's West Side



Thomas Jefferson Evans

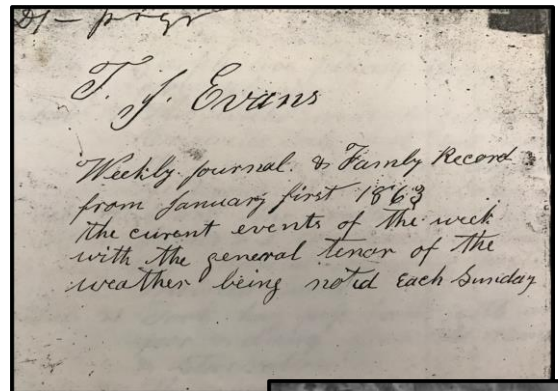
Thomas Jefferson Evans was born in Cloverdale, Indiana in 1826. He was the 5th of 11 children. As a young man he left his father's home in Indiana to cross the plains by ox team and ended up in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He was employed there as a policeman for 2 years.



The picture you see here is like what he might have drove across the countrv.

After returning to Indiana, at the age of 25, the lure of gold in California took him west and again he crossed the plains by ox team and arrived in the Sacramento area. He mined in the Feather River Valley for a few years.

Thomas kept a diary from 1863 until a week before his death in 1901. When reading the diary, you are able to gain some insight into his life. They are all in his own handwriting with pencil, purple ink and pen. He wrote a few sentences every Sunday and at year's end compiles his net worth and any event he thinks special. Of course, the weather was always mentioned.



Cynthia Fowler

At 33 years of age, he married Cynthia Fowler of Maine and they settled in Gilroy where they started their family. Their second son Henry was born in 1863 and after several trips to Southern California, the family moved to San Bernardino in 1873.

Young Henry Evans (11) and his older brother George (13) learned to work hard at an early age and were sent into the mountains to cut wood for shingles. In 1885, at the age of 22, Henry married Ella Ferrell, daughter of James B. Ferrell and they soon moved to a ranch in Menifee to be near his in- laws. Ferrell filed a Homestead Claim on land in 1887 on what is now the Audie Murphy Ranch.



Ella (Ferrell) Evans & Henry Evans



Henry and Ella lived on property that his father purchased which was located at the eastern end of today's Canyon Lake. All but one of Henry and Ella's eight children were born at this location. Henry farmed and raised cattle on the property. When they needed to shop for provisions, they would take their horse and buggy to either Perris or Elsinore.



Henry Evans bought 65 acres after 1908 where the Menifee Middle School and Menifee History Museum are now located. He farmed his land and in 1914 he served as Riverside County road foreman for the Menifee District. One of his projects in 1917 was to build a bridge over the San Jacinto River at

a cost of \$1,800. This bridge would be to provide an all-weather crossing of the San Jacinto River that flowed into Lake Elsinore. The original road crossed the river just below the current Canyon Lake dam and continued on the west side of the river. The road was eventually rerouted and is now the six-lane highway between Menifee and Lake Elsinore.



Henry was a respected man and a friend to many. He was particularly generous to hobos of that era. Hobos that were working their way across the country had their own secret

language and would make a series of "notches" in the fences or gates of land owners to let travelers like themselves know that *"good people who will give you a meal live here"*.

Henry recognized the importance of a quality education for the children residing in his community, so he served as a trustee for the Menifee School District and was active in all matters of social and civil interest. Evans road and Evans Ranch Elementary School have been named to honor the pioneer settler.

In 1927 Henry and Ella sold 1,150 acres to the Temescal Water Company so a dam could be built to store water that flowed from San Jacinto River and Salt Creek, which created Railroad Canyon Lake. Henry Evans' favorite poem and philosophy was *"Let me live by the side of the road and be a friend to man"*. Five generations of his descendants have called Menifee home and many still live here today.

