

The Kirkpatrick Family – via Rail and Coastal Steamer

Written by Bill Zimmerman, Menifee Valley Historical Association

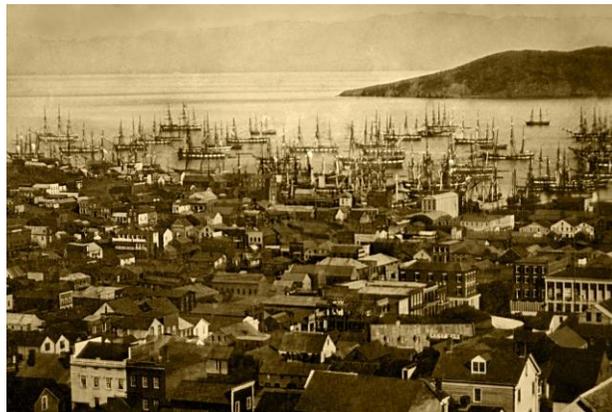
The Kirkpatrick family was one of the first to homestead land in Menifee. They owned a general store in Union City, Tennessee. The loss of the War Between the States devastated the family as they held worthless confederate bonds and mason jars of confederate money. The Kirkpatricks made plans to move to California in the 1870's. They had been corresponding with friends that had already gone west, and the Knott family (Knott's Berry Farm) invited them to Garden Grove to look at available farms in the area.

The men traveled to western Iowa from Tennessee. They packed a "Homestead Car" that the Transcontinental Railroad provided for a flat \$100 dollars. The car was loaded with the livestock on one end of the boxcar, the household goods on the other end, and the family in the middle.



When they arrived in San Francisco there was no rail connection to Southern California, so all was loaded onto a coastal steamer which landed them at a wharf which is now known as Newport Beach.

Soon the family learned that the Menifee area was opened to homestead, so they rushed here to stake a claim.





The section of land they claimed was on the east side of the Menifee valley, today's Menifee Lakes community. When they first saw the valley, it was chest high in wild oats.

In 1890, William Kirkpatrick helped construct the Menifee School which was located near the southwest corner of Newport and Bradley Roads.



William also built a large Victorian-style home on their property for his wife Callie and their nine children.



In the 1900's, the family farmed as much as 8,000 acres. The Kirkpatricks raised dray horses that were ideal for pulling harvesters.



This article was prepared by Bill Zimmerman, Vice President - Menifee Valley Historical Association and was based on information provided by Leonard Kirkpatrick Jr.