



THEY MADE THEIR WAY TO MENIFEE

William Newport - 1885 by Ship and Wagon Train

Written by Bill Zimmerman, Menifee Valley Historical Association

The city of Chester is one of England's oldest. It is still surrounded by ancient walls built by the Romans in A.D. 73 that once protected its inhabitants from invasion. In this city on June 5, 1856 William Newport was born. William "Billy" Newport was a "born farmer". His father and grandfather were English farmers. He loved the business and brought great energy of character into the lifestyle of his choice.



In 1876, at the age of 20, Newport came to the United States with the desire to purchase land in California for farming. He landed in New York, then to San Francisco and Los Angeles. He lived and farmed in Los Angeles for nine years. He found what he was looking for - good plow land - and made a purchase of 2,000 acres in Menifee.

It must have been a real sight to see in 1885, Mr. Newport making his way to Menifee. Like a young English patriarch with twelve wagons in his train, loaded with implements, provisions, lumber and his 9' x 18' cook-house on wheels. He had with him his men servants and his cattle and horses.

Built in the late 1880's by William Newport, his home was on the North side of Newport and Evans Road. In 1890, while visiting England, at 34 years of age, William Newport married 17-year old Mary Catherine Lloyd. They had four sons and a daughter at the Ranch. He planted 10 acres of fruit trees and laid out the grounds adorned with shade and ornamental trees, hedges, walks and drives, make the homestead one of the most attractive in the valley.



c. 1880

The local farmers who were already established in Menifee pitied the young man, who they thought, would likely make a failure of farming in this dry valley.



When Newport's ranch hands unloaded their caravan, they immediately took to the task of constructing a good ranch house, two large barns and a bunkhouse, which were located near today's Lazy Creek Park. Newport carefully laid out the grounds around his ranch with ornamental trees and fruit orchards.

His main industry was production of grain, mainly wheat, barley and alfalfa.

He ran four gang plows pulled by teams of horses which gave him the ability to cultivate, sow or harvest two hundred acres in a day. He also enjoyed breeding prized Berkshire hogs.

William "Billy" Newport made many warm friendships in Menifee, employed numerous local men and showed what judicious efforts can produce as a result. Today, Menifee's main east-west thoroughfare is named in Mr. Newport's honor.



September wheat harvest, 1905



The Newport Ranch property was sold in the late 1950's to Del Webb, the founder of Sun City Senior Communities.

This article was prepared by Bill Zimmerman, Vice President - Menifee Valley Historical Association and was based on information in our Museum Archives.

