

Butte Meadows

“During the hot valley summers, Chicoans by the hundreds headed for the Bay Area or the mountains. Many citizens, still active and alert, recall the long dusty rides to Butte Meadows.

George Lucas, a member of the Lucas family who owned Fourteen Mile House, sets us right on the fact that a stage stop was not a mountain inn. In the days when heavy wagons and stages headed from Chico to the mountains, there were rest stops for the horses every five or seven miles. J.H. Lucas, the Chico man’s uncle, owned the Fourteen Mile house and Chicoans leaving town early in the morning would stop there for breakfast while horses were being changed.

Mrs. H.A. Roth’s father, J.F. Entler, drove the stage route to Butte Meadows and on to Prattville while Mrs. Entler ran the Butte Meadows Hotel. Mary Roth remembers that her father started out from Chico with four black horses pulling the stage. He changed to four bays at Fourteen Mile House, and after Butte Meadows, four little mules pulled the stage over the summit. Reverse order on the return trip.

Leta (Mrs. J. Warren) Robbie recalls driving to Butte Meadows with her father, the late W. B. Dean and Mrs. Dean. The latter in a futile effort to keep out the dust, wore a veil with a flower pattern. Leta, then a little girl, was intrigued by the flower pattern clearly defined on her mother’s face when the veil was removed. The pattern was of heavier material than the surrounding net.

Both she and Mary Roth recall the breakfasts at Fourteen Mile House. J.H. Lucas had twelve children, and when the stage drove up the kids would scatter in all directions to observe the passengers dismount, from behind manzanitas.

George Lucas says it burns him up to hear criticism of the winding mountain road between Chico and Forest Ranch as he drove it hundreds of times before the road was paved, as did others who discuss those days. The dust was just the part of it. There were deep chuck holes and any ride to the mountains was “bouncy” to put it mildly.

Mrs. Roth remembers the time when the family cow invaded the back porch and ate the onions. She can’t remember how long it took for the milk to get back to normal. No one would touch it while the onion taste remained.

She recalls also that the Rev. Willis G. White, the Presbyterian minister, when she was a girl, came to Butte Meadows to perform a wedding ceremony. Then, since no other musician was available, he remained to play the piano for the wedding dance.

With no electric refrigerators, keeping food fresh was a problem and the burlap covered drip coolers, suspended from trees, did very well, she states.

Mrs. Robbie said that the stage ride to Butte Meadows was not without interesting features. The driver would point out mountain lion caves in the distance and the animals could be seen moving about. And there were bears, always many bears in those days.”

Vida Shepard, California Places, Volume13, FSR, Paradise Genealogical Library