

Is it Beaver Creek, Lake Montezuma or Rimrock??

by Bill Cowan, 2009

In the beginning the area that is now Camp Verde was a military reservation owned by the U. S. Government and occupied by soldiers. What is now Main street Camp Verde was actually called Stable Row and was a back street of the Fort which housed the stables, and also the Suttlers store which was the equivalent of the PX ,and finally the Stage Stop at the south end of the street. The military reservation was about 3 miles by 3 miles. The settlers, which are why the fort was there, had originally settled in the Clear Creek area, in Middle Verde, along the river and also along Beaver Creek where they had access to water for irrigation. No one would have wanted that high area where the fort was, because they couldn't get water up there.

There were three schools, the oldest of which was Beaver Creek School, Clear Creek School and Squaw Peak School. The latter two were located below the fort. This area was always called Beaver Creek and the name, I believe, came from the first white beaver trappers who came before this was even the U. S., came here trapped the beavers and left.

So there was a community of ranchers and farmers along Beaver Creek who interestingly established Beaver Creek School out near what is now Ranch Roja Rojo on Walker Creek in 1882. The community was known as Beaver Creek because of the creek. In 1926 Virginia Finnie, a local gal who lived at Soda Springs, was working at the Arizona Biltmore where she met an interesting character named Romaine Laudermilk. They got married and got some financial backing and established what they called Rimrock Guest Ranch. This was the beginning of Beaver Creek being known for her three large and famous dude ranches, Rimrock, Soda Springs and Beaver Creek Guest Ranch - that was up where Southwest Academy is now. The wealthy dudes came frequently and much of the money for the original development was supplied by Russell Boardman who was a flyer who brought guests into the Rimrock Airport, which the guest ranches built. Dudes, many of whom were the heads of corporations wanted their mail delivered while they were out here. They also wanted a phone, to stay in contact and the first phones were put in specifically for the dude ranches.

There was no post office here then. Folks had to go down to Camp Verde for their mail. The Rimrock Guest Ranch applied for a post office and Romaine's mother became the postmaster. As the post office was at the Guest Ranch, the name applied for was Rimrock and as time passed, all the area around here came to be known as Rimrock because folks picked up their mail at the Rimrock Post Office.

In the late 50s one of the largest and most prosperous ranches in Rimrock, (many of which were owned by wealthy folks who had come to one of the guest ranches and owned them as a hobby) that being what has been known as the Jackson Ranch or the Bell Ranch was subdivided and called Lake Montezuma. The original headquarters home was converted to a restaurant, bar and Golf Shop.

The folks in Rimrock had always been here and were mostly country folk but when Lake Montezuma was established here came folks from the city. That was when the clash began, slowly but gained momentum as more folks soon lived in Lake Montezuma than in all the rest of Rimrock. They ultimately established their own post office and many signed a petition to close the school and merge it with Camp Verde Schools. This was ultimately done for a while but the Rimrock folks some of whom had been here for generations ultimately had the decision reversed.

So you have three names for the community. One, the name from the beginning, One which is the original post office district, and one which is the name of a subdivision in the second. Kiwanis felt that the area could be better served by trying to resolve the Rimrock / Lake Montezuma debate by simply referring to the community by the original name so we put up the Welcome sign.