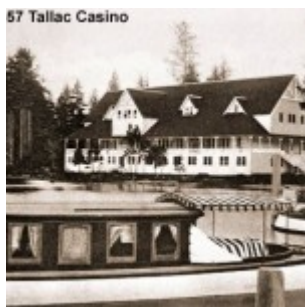


History: A glimpse of life on the Celio Ranch

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The following letter was read by Vera Broder Silberstein at the September meeting. This letter is a composite of three letters written to Vera from Anna Celio, daughter-in-law of Carlo Celio and wife of George Celio.

Thank you for picking me up and setting me down in a past I seldom recall and had almost forgotten. I was eighty two in July, the day man's foot prints were placed on the moon.



I was married June 2nd, 1909. My honeymoon trip was up that old, old trail awinding into the land of my dreams and over into Hope Valley where the Celio's then had their dairy. The cattle were driven making eight stops before we reached our destination. The lower ranch we rented from George Hanlan at Deer Creek in the Sacramento Valley. The first days drive was to Latrobe, not a long drive but so much had to be done – cows milked, calves fed, breakfast gotten, bed clothes packed, and numerous other articles put n the wagon. One of the articles was this little steam engine used to run the butter churn. This was a busy little engine. It ran the saw that sawed the wood, that made the steam that ran the separator, and that heated the water that washed the vat, separator, buckets, churn, and butter press, scrubbed the dairy floor, also heated the water that washed the clothes, and the bath water. So you it was responsible for cleanliness.

I can't tell you when the churn or the engine were purchased except that they were there when I came, and they had been

dairying there five or six years before I came.

From Latrobe our drive would be to Celio's ranch at Nashville. Next day to the Six Mile House, then Riverton, Kyburz, Strawberry, Meyers and then our destination, Hope Valley. I thought it almost hopeless when I looked around a bare cabin, a little old-fashioned wood stove in the center of a bare room – two large wooden tables, a long bench and a couple of stools, and a couple of small rooms. Off the end of this room were a couple of wooden bunks with straw ticks. Wood rats had had access to the cabin during the winter and on top of all that there were six hungry men to feed for dinner. I did have help and we did manage to heat water, wash the cooking utensils and get a meal. And no matter what I thought of the beds before or afterwards they felt heavenly that night.

Yes, I remember your grandfather well. They used to come down from his cabin and stop in for a chat. Also your Dad came for awhile during the summer. Neighbors were few in Hope Valley and the days long and lonesome although it was rather pretty back where we were and always green.

We had five milkers and milked 125 cows all by hand – we never used milking machines. We kegged all the butter in brine and hauled it out in the Fall.

In 1917 we moved to Lake Valley and began building the dairy there. Charles Celio insisted the house would be two stories, the roof a certain pitch, the floor space a certain dimension, but I could plan the rooms anyway I wished.

I had so many plans, flowers, a small pond with water lilies, a clump of delphinium, and of course Quaking Aspen. I can still see it all quite vividly.

Then my husband, George Celio died in 1919. I left the dairy in 1921. The last year I was there the house grew rather sinister. The youngsters and I were all alone. In the late afternoon when shadows lengthened there was a feeling of

something creeping up. In the middle darkness an owls hoot and coyotes howls. The terrible bigness of the night just seemed more than I could take. Besides my middle girl wasn't well and needed a doctors care. I lost her when she was eleven.

Change, change, I guess that is what life is all about. Nothing stays the same but I hate to see that beautiful country change. That is why I never wanted to go back. I want to keep the picture unspoiled in my mind.

For years now I have lived in Avenal. I used to like to garden but arthritis has taken its tole and I have had to give it up. My mind and memory are quite good and I have fought to keep them that way. I have enjoyed your letters. They have made me look back on my younger days – riding horseback over those mountains, fishing those mountain streams, – oh my that couldn't have been me! Why I can hardly move from my comfortable rocker. I am just a contented 83 year old woman whose younger life was so much different. I do knot know that I have helped you any, but I have gotten some pleasure just reminissing. And now good night.