

THE UHLMAYER FAMILY

by Clarice Tate Uhlmeyer

Immediately following the Civil War, contingents of northern soldiers were sent west. Herman Frederick Uhlmeyer was one of these soldiers. He was mustered out at Mariposa, where he panned for gold until he made his "stake." From there he came to the Owens Valley, first settling in Independence, where he seems to have taken up some land. Chalfant tells in the "Story" of Inyo" that he was one of those early settlers who helped in the Indian wars here. In 1874, he went to Big Pine and bought land from the Government, which he later patented. On this property he built a substantial house. This land was about a mile north of Big Pine on the road to Bishop Creek. He planted locust trees around the house and began reclaiming his land for farming and cattle raising, but he never entirely gave up prospecting. East of town at the foot of the White Mountains is a spring that still bears his name, as it is there that he had located gold claims.

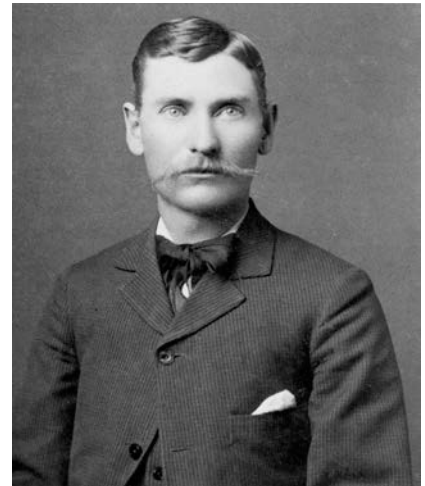
Fred was an ambitious man. In addition to the mine that he worked, he erected a small mill on his land on Baker Creek to process the ore he took out of the White Mountain property.

Fred never married, and as years went on, he began thinking more and more of his widowed sister-in-law and her children, back in St. Louis. From letters still in the family, it is evident that he had always kept in contact with them, but perhaps not too often. On February 4, 1885 he wrote to his nephew, Will, wishfully hoping that they could all come out and live in Big Pine. Among other things he says "I have one of the finest houses in the Owens River Valley and could make you all a good home." He told about the railroad that had come in, in 1883, and that hay and grain had dropped in value since that time. The price of cattle had also gone down, and even though he kept the finest stock, he could not get the price of their real value. He also said that he had had pneumonia a number of times in recent years, and that his health was none too good.

On March 10, 1885, he wrote a second letter - a short one this time - requesting his nephew, Will, to come at once. He asks that the whole family come if they wish, and tells Will how to draw money on him and how to get to the valley by train. He says he is very ill, again, with pneumonia.

Will left St. Louis at once, came across the continent to Reno by the transcontinental train, then took the narrow gauge down to Alvord, the station for Big Pine. When he arrived, his Uncle Fred had died.

William H. Uhlmeyer had grown up in St. Louis, and had made his living and helped his widowed mother by working in a general merchandise store. He was in his early twenties when he arrived in Big Pine knowing nothing about farming, cattle raising, or mining, and he was left with settling up his uncle's estate. He learned it all the hard way.



William Henry Uhlmeyer

Within a few years his two sisters, Minnie and Emma, came to join him and to keep house for him. The three were not entirely compatible, so the two girls went out to work. Minnie went to Bodie as hired help and Emma took up dress making. In 1889, Emma married Joe Schalten, a carpenter, and they built a home just north of town, on the main road. About that time, Minnie married Daniel McPhail, a widower, in Bodie, and they came back to Big Pine, bought property and ranched until Dan's death in 1915. When the City of Los Angeles was buying property in the twenties, both Minnie and Emma, who

was also a widow by now, sold, and moved to Fontana, where they lived out their lives. Neither had ever had children.

Meanwhile, Will had married Angie Belle McDonald in 1893. By this time Will had become very active in the affairs of the town, had even entered politics and was elected as County Supervisor. For many years, and at various times, he was elected to the board of school trustees. He never really cared for farming, but did like mining. At times he would lease his ranch. Once he ran the Butler Hotel for a number of years. Many times, he would hire help to do all the farm work and he would clerk for Upton Tracy in his General Merchandise store. He built a large two-storied house, in town, across from the old school building and the family lived there over a long period of time. Later this house became the "Temperly Tavern."



Angie Bell McDonald Uhlmeyer

The Uhlmeyers had six children. Elsie, the oldest, married Gordon Barmore, editor of the Big Pine Citizen. When Gordon sold to Chalfant Press, they moved to Southern California. Ira, the oldest boy, married Clarice Tate, and they always lived in the Valley. Ira was a veteran of the First World War. He died in 1959. Edna married Glenn D. Allen. They lived in Southern California until 1960, when they moved back to Big Pine and built a home. Edna is now a widow, and one of her sons lives in the valley, as well as a grandson. Donald married Ruth Powell, a school teacher, and after ranching a year or so, they moved to northern California. They were later divorced, and Donald moved back to the valley. He now lives in Lone Pine with his wife, Virginia. Angie has never lived in the valley. Charles married Ethel Hess of Bishop, but spent a large part of his life in Nevada. Charles died in 1968, in Bishop, but his two sons, Bill and Ira, by a second wife, still live in Bishop.

Will sold his ranch to the City of Los Angeles in the late twenties. His wife had died in 1922, and he married a widow, Minnie Martin, a few years later. He died in 1949.