

[Charles C. Geck]

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Marie Carter

Anthony, N. Mex.

OLD TIMERS STORIES

Charles C. Geck (Wife; Roman Geck)

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"In recalling the early days of Dona Ana County" Charles C. Geck of Anthony, New Mexico, said; "I was born in the family home where my father, W.C.P. Geck was born before me, and where my grandfather Geck lived a life time. I say a life time because he came to this country so very long ago. He came to America from Germany almost ninety year ago. Our house is one of the oldest houses in the town of Dona Ana; it is in good condition and occupied by my Aunt, Mrs. W.C. Weir."

In mentioning his grandfather Mr. Geck said: "Grandfather Geck was a trader and a merchant. In the early days, when a shipment of merchandise was ordered, the merchants never know when they were going to receive it, if at all, for the Indians would ambush the pack trains and wagons, murder the drivers, rob the caravan and burn the wagons. My grandfather told me many an exciting tale of the early days. I sometimes thought that he knew everything; that he was the wisest man in the whole world. No matter what I wished to know he could tell me something about it."

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Mr. Geck's parents craved new scenes. "So they piled their household goods in the old covered wagon and headed for Las Cruces," he said. "That was in 1888. Las Cruces was a mere village. Then my parents left Las Cruces and went to La Union. The reason people moved up and down the valley in the old days was because the Rio Grande wouldn't let them remain in one place; it was like a mad dog at their heels. They would no sooner get settled then it would rise and flood them out. During the flood of 1905 the valley was covered with water from San Miguel to White Spur, where the El Paso Electric Light power house stands." [????]

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Mr. Geck paused then resumed: "My parents, who had moved from La Union to Vinton, not far from White Spur, were forced to move to Chamberino. There, in Chamberino, it was not so good either, for as soon as they would plant their crops the Rio Grande would rise and wash their seed away. It was a common sight to see some poor rancher's adobe dwelling floating down the river; they couldn't bother about their homes when it was all they could do to save their lives. I think the Rio Grande should have been called "Mad River". During the flood of 1905 the Provincio family and other ranchers had to come to town to shop on skiffs. Por Dios, it was an ocean! The Provincios are some of the very early pioneers. Louis Provincio, Nemecio's son, married my sister Alvina." In 1902 my parents moved to Anthony."

In speaking of employment Mr. Geck said: "Work was scarce in the old days. I would work for fifty cents a day and sometimes had to take my wages out in trade. Farmers ploughed with a small hand plough and cut wheat with a scythe. The principal crops were wheat, corn, frijoles, (beans) and alfalfa. The old Santa Fe Office was a small adobe house west of the Santa Fe tracks. This whole valley was bosque or woodland with trees nothing but trees everywhere; we were kept pretty busy clearing the land. But in the old days neighbor

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helped neighbor, and to say how much do I owe you, would have been and insult, for when your time came they would all flock to your ranch and lend a helping hand."

In comparing old main street with new main street Mr. Geck observed: "The old business street is very quiet and the new business street is noisy with traffic--in the old days it was a wagon road. Charley Miller built and ran the first store on the old business street west of the Santa Fe tracks. And this same man gave me my first job in Anthony. His store was next to Mrs. O.C. Story's place of business.

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Resuming the subject of the old business street Mr. Geck said; "We were proud of the old street. Mr. and Mrs. Pat Coleman ran a boarding house until Mrs. O. C. [/Story?] bought the house they lived in. Then the Colemans moved to Chamberino and started a sheep ranch. Mrs. Story, who had a sick husband, also ran a boarding house. But at a later date she quit keeping boarders and started a notion store, which was the foundation for the dry goods store she runs today on U.S. Highway 80, or the Broadway of America."

In speaking of the boarding house business Mr. Geck explained: "Anthony was a stopping place for travelers that's the reason so many of the townfolks kept boarders. Mr. and Mrs. Alvarez ran a boarding house after they lost heavily in the flood of 1905. The Alvarez family lived in the house at the north end of the street, where Judge and Mrs. Smith live at the present time."

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In the course of his conversation Mr. Geck mentioned the Valdez family of La Union, saying: "Mrs. Valdes was born in La Union. Her people were among the first to colonize

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this valley. They are connected with my family by marriage. Before her marriage, Mrs. Valdez was an Enriquez. Her brother, Emeilia Enriquez, married one of my sisters. Por Dios! he chuckled, "we are like a chain letter."

When asked about the style of houses built by the early settlers Mr. Geck replied: "Since we had plenty of trees we used them to build pole houses. The poles were placed straight up and down and then plastered in between with adobe mud. We used poles for our ceilings, too. Then we whitewashed the house inside and out. The floors of our houses were plain dirt. Americans and Mexicans, we all [lared?] [fared?] alike in the old days. Gradually people began to build houses out of acobe, which were warmer in winter and cooler in summer."

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They had good times in the old days. "Innocent fun." Mr. Geck called it. "We had picnics, barbecues, dances, chuck wagon suppers and rodeos. The last rodeo was staged about eight years ago by a group of old timers, and the last chuck wagon supper ten or eleven. The good old days when we took our guitars and sang love songs to the girl of our dreams will never return. Pretty soon the mothers will be like the girls and buy all of our native dishes in tin cans." Charles C. Geck was born in Dona Ana, New Mexico, Jan. 27, 1880; He married Romana Benevides of Las Cruces, New Mexico in 1912; Came to Anthony, New Mexico with his parents in 1902. Mr. and Mrs. Charles C. Geck have five children; Margaret, Charley, Mary Estella, Tela and Harry. Margaret is now Mrs. Mike Apadoca of San Miguel, and Charley is in the United States Navy. Mary Estella, Tela and Harry are pupils in the Anthony grade school.

Charles C. Gecks parents, Mr. and Mrs. W.C.P. Geck had seven children: Charles, Beatrice, William, Josephine, Epifanio, Louis and Alvina. Charles is a farmer of Anthony,

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New Mexico; Beatrice lives in Las Cruces; William is a business man of El Paso, Texas; Epifanio is a farmer in San Diego, California; Louis is a resident of Los Angeles, California; Alvina is the wife of Louis Provincio, a valley farmer.

Charles C. Geck's father, W.C.P. Geck, moved his family to Anthony in 1902, where he built a home which is still standing in the town proper, a short distance east of U.S. Highway 80. W.C.P. Geck served Anthony as Justice of the Peace for fifteen years, and his son, Charles C. Geck, held the same office for two years-- 1932 and 1934.