

'Pink Lady' legend has roots in fact

by Bruce Bailey

Yorba Linda Star June 14 1990 page 2

Alvina de los Reyes--Yorba Cemetery's legendary pink lady--died Dec. 2, 1910. Her legend, however, lived on until now.

According to the legend, Alvina was wearing a pink gown the night she attended a dance at Valencia High School. Returning home somewhere along Kellogg Road, her carriage overturned. She was thrown out, struck her head and died.

She supposedly rises from her grave at the old Yorba Cemetery between midnight and 3 a.m. June 15 of every even-numbered year and visits relatives.

Thus began the legend of the pink lady.

Despite the fact that nobody has seen her, hundreds of curious thrill seekers have camped out near her gravesite every June 15 of even-numbered years in hopes of catching a glimpse of the pink spectral. She has spurned them all.

Perhaps for good reason. Alvina de los Reyes is not the pink lady.

Arthur Peralta, 63, a grand nephew of Alvina de los Reyes, said he is not sure how or why the legend began.

"Alvina was 31 when she died in childbirth. She was not returning from any dance," he said.

Linda Lorenzi, an Orange County park ranger assigned to oversee the Yorba Cemetery, said she believes the pink lady legend started in the '40s and turned into an event for the young. Perhaps to spend the night of June 15 in the Yorba Cemetery became a daring thing to do in those days.

Another problem with the legend, Lorenzi pointed out, was that, "Valencia High School hadn't been built when Alvina was supposedly dancing there."

Another mystery is the question of exactly who Alvina de los Reyes was. Nobody seems to remember her maiden name. Arthur, who lives in Norco, thinks it was Entrada, while Robert Peralta, another of Alvina's many cousins, said it may have been Estrada.

The pink lady legend does have some credence, however. Elmer de los Reyes, a relative of Alvina's husband, Francisco, said, "I recall a story about a young girl dying in a carriage accident back then. She was about 17 and maybe she was dressed in pink."

There also was an early story about a street light reflecting on something or someone coming from Alvina's grave on one of the nights she was supposed to rise, Arthur said. However, "The cemetery has no lights and streets lights were not installed then."

Then, there were the rumors. One had it that the carriage accident really wasn't an accident. According to this story, Alvina's husband had been driving and caused the carriage to tip over, hoping his wife would be killed. This story has never been verified.

Another reason the mystery may have persisted, Lorenzi said, was because the records back then were never complete.

So a mystery does exist. Was a young woman killed in a carriage accident around 1910? Was she wearing a pink gown and was she returning from a dance? Was she buried in Yorba Cemetery? How did Valencia High School, which hadn't been built yet, become the site of the dance?

Some legends die harder than the mortals who created them. Yet, as has often been said, all things must end.

This includes legends.

PHOTO CAPTION:

Gathered together: Relatives of Alvina de los Reyes, reputed to be Yorba Cemetery's pink lady, gather at the Yorba Cemetery during attempts to locate, and name, several family members' unmarked graves. They are, in no order, Arthur, Manual, Rudy, Alfonso and Robert Peralta, Enest Vasquez, Anita Espinoza, Sally Estrada, Gloria and Alfred Cruz, Maria Cruz Francis and Beverly Vasquez Barker.

PHOTO CAPTION:

Her final resting place?: Alvina de los Reyes lies below her grave marker in Yorba Cemetery. Her legend, however, lived on for years.