

# City of Chino ❖ Hall of Fame

presented on March 21, 2001 honoring

## *Joseph Clegg Lester*

Joseph Clegg Lester established Chino Valley's first local telephone system, opening the area to instant communication with the outside world and commerce.

Born in La Baca County, Texas on May 11, 1860 he was brought to California with his parents at the age of six months. When he was 15, his family came to Chino Valley's Rincon ranch from San Luis Obispo, and became prominent in farming.

Mr. Lester grew to manhood as a farmer, but his interests were also in science and communications. When the newly invented telephone was introduced, he made a study of its principles and use, and in 1905 began stringing 20 miles of wire and installing telephones. He was secretary and manager of construction for the Home Telephone & Telegraph Company of Chino, which was incorporated with the help of local businessmen. One benefit was the elimination of 25-cent toll calls to adjacent communities. At first the system operated through a switch in Pomona, connected to the telephone company in that city. The first magneto switchboard was installed in Chino in January 1906. Rapid growth and demand called for more capital than he could generate locally, so he sold to the Home Telephone and Telegraph Company of Pomona in May, 1910. That company later merged into the Associated Telephone Company, predecessor of General Telephone Company and Verizon in this area.

Of Mr. Lester who died April 28, 1935 Edwin Rhodes said, "He did not talk the Golden Rule . . . he lived it, simply and sincerely."

Joseph Clegg Lester was an important link in the chain which led to the growth of our modern community out of the work and determination of pioneer residents.