

Temecula Valley Historical Society

Newsletter

November 2005 Vol 5 Issue 11

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www.temeculavalleyhistoricalsociety.org
Contact us at 951-501-9159

2005 Annual Meeting

Evelyn Love Norris, daughter of Temecula's famous painter Ralph Love, will present the program for the Annual Meeting of the Temecula Valley Historical Society on November 16 from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Assistance League Chapter House at 28720 Via Montezuma in Temecula. She will bring some of her father's work and will give an overview of his life.

A sit-down dinner will be served. The cost is \$35 per person and reservations are required by Friday, November 11. If you have any questions, please call Audrey Cilurzo (951) 304-3666, or Eve Craig (951) 699-9872.

Monthly Meetings

Everyone is invited to attend the meetings of the Temecula Valley Historical Society at noon on the first Friday of each month in the community room of the Temecula Valley Library. The board of directors plans to invite speakers to give presentations on local history following each board meeting during 2006.

A Message About Dues

Members are notified no less than two weeks prior to the month in which their annual membership renewal is due. If their annual dues are not paid by the last day of that month they will be dropped from the membership roster.

Please note: Only one renewal notice will be sent, so please pay your dues when you receive the notice. Your cooperation in getting your annual dues payments in on time will be most appreciated.

Bill Harker, Treasurer

The Monument-al Task

By Eve Craig

Just to keep you informed about the state of Wolf's Monument, you should know that our Boy Scout, Matthew Johnson, working toward his Eagle Scout badge, gathered a group of twelve fine, aspiring young scouts and a few elders together and managed to dig large holes through ground as hard as concrete, about eleven 15-gallon holes for 7'-8' specific trees which grew in Louis Wolf's era.

Our Landscape man has completed trenches for the North side and is working on trenches for the South side of the area. The Scouts stopped temporarily due to hot weather, and the Landscape man stopped as well. Hopefully the weather will cooperate soon and 50 holes for shrubs will be dug. The scouts will then ask some nurseries for their assistance in providing trees and shrubs. More will be printed for the next issue of our Newsletter. Thanks for listening.

Got Stories?

The Temecula Valley Historical Society loves to present stories about local history in the newsletter. If you have a story, please write it and send it to Rebecca Farnbach, 41403 Bitter Creek Ct., Temecula, CA 92591 or Sunbrook@hotmail.com. You do not have to be a polished writer to share your story. We will edit it for you.

Ysabel "Bessie" Gonzalez Barnett

By Rebecca Marshall Farnbach

Ysabel Barnett has always been identified with education. She is in two of the oldest photos of Temecula schools. She is the young woman posing with her father in the buggy in front of the Pujol School and is one in the group of children posing at the school.

Her father Jose Gonzales left Spain and became an accountant for a shipping company in Scotland. Jose married, and before long, he and his brother Servando and their wives embarked on a long trip to America, with the ship going around Cape Horn and to ports in China and the Philippines. His brother settled in Mexico. Jose's wife died before they reached California.

After arriving in San Francisco in the late 1860s Jose met Juan Murrieta, a sheepherder in the San Joaquin Valley. Murrieta was from the same Basque region of Spain. Shortly after they met, Murrieta and his partners bought 52,000 acres in the Temecula area.

Jose moved to the Temecula Rancho in 1874 to keep books for Murrieta and to help manage the Temecula and Pauba Ranchos.

Meanwhile, Grace Street came from England with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sumner as a governess to nurture and instruct their children. Jose first met Grace when he was visiting the Summers to give them help with a poorly ventilating fireplace.

Jose and Grace were married March 17, 1874, in a ceremony in the Wolf Store performed by John Magee, the justice of peace. Jose became a United States citizen in 1881.

Gonzalez' had two children. Ormiston, "Ormie," was born in 1877 and Ysabel, "Bessie," was born in 1879. Orison was named to honor Jose's first wife Margaret Ormiston.

Jose built their home the same year Bessie was born. The adobe still stands on Jefferson Street in the Adobe Plaza. The building, surrounded by commercial enterprises, is now home to the Pablito's Language School.

When Ysabel was ready to begin high school, her father didn't want to send her to a nearby town where she would have to live with strangers. Instead, he sent her to live with his brother Servando in Mexico where she could receive her secondary education in the "Old Spanish Tradition."

She returned to Temecula and became a teacher and an accomplished pianist. She married Adrian Benjamin "Ben" Barnett and raised sons Ralph, Chester and Francis.

Temecula had a population of about 200 people when Ysabel died in 1969. The Barnett's owned a ranch on Highway 395, which is now Jefferson Avenue. It was where Stater Brothers market is now.

Local historian Horace Parker spent a great deal of his childhood chumming with her sons. When Bessie was in her 80s he returned to Temecula and visited her often. He gave a tribute at her funeral.

Ysabel "Bessie" Barnett is a role model to the children of Temecula. It is fitting for an elementary school to remember her legacy and bear her name.

Excerpts from Horace Parker's Tribute to "Aunt Bessie," March 23, 1969

Courtesy of Malcolm and Loretta Barnett

During two very critical periods in my life, Mrs. Barnett, or Aunt Bessie, had a guiding influence.

The first time was in 1924 when a lonely, only child and his family moved to Temecula. Believe it or not, Temecula was the largest town I had lived in for over six years. Chester and Francis Barnett were classmates of mine in the old grammar school. It wasn't long before I began visiting them on the Barnett Ranch. Ben and Bessie Barnett used to encourage the town boys to come up and play around the ranch with their boys.

As I look back, we must have been quite a trial for Ben and Bessie. We built horrible looking tree houses in the backyard, left unfinished swimming pools, rolled out tennis courts, built dams in the creek, and so forth. Aunt Bessie always had a po-

of chili beans on the stove and filled our cavernous tomachs with beans and crackers.

As we became older Ben helped form a scout troop and became our scoutmaster. For a time we met in the schoolhouse, but after a hard day's work it was easier for Ben to relax at home, so the Boy Scouts literally moved in on Ben and Bessie. If I remember correctly, Francis was at first under age, but was as active as any of us. Sometimes we'd finish our scout tests late at night and many times some of us would stay overnight.

Aunt Bessie was a real boys' mother. She liked boys and doted on her three sons. Ralph, who was a few years older than his brothers and me, formed a jazz band with his mother. She played piano and Ralph played saxophone. I think Max Thompson was on the drums and I don't remember who the others were. They played for everything from school and church functions to all-night dances. Some of Aunt Bessie's happiest memories were the dance dates she and her boys played on Palomar Mountain, and that was quite a trip in the early 1920s.

After I graduated from high school in 1930, almost 30 years passed before I began regularly visiting Temecula once again. My folks had died. I was under terrific tension with a large veterinary practice. To escape from this tension, I returned to Temecula and the friends of my childhood.

Instinctively I was drawn to Aunt Bessie, who was alone now. She was in her 80s and we would sit and talk by the hour about old times and old-timers. It was therapeutic for both of us.

During WWII Miss Aurora Hunt, the eminent Civil War historian, taught school in Temecula. Aunt Bessie and Miss Hunt became friends and started a history of the Temecula Valley. Cleverly, as I look back on it now, Bessie began developing in me an interest in the Temecula, Pauba and Little Temecula Ranchos, so it was primarily through her influence that I became a historian. From this interest came a syndicated column, a desert guidebook, three booklets on Temecula, a publishing company, and so forth. This interest that Bessie had inculcated in me eventually caused me to quit veterinary practice and devote full time to

history, writing, publishing and the field of environmentalism or human ecology.

When I'd visit her on the ranch, she'd see me drive up from her side window, and before I could open the door I'd hear her cheery hail, "Come in, Horace. I'm in the dining room. Well, how's my boy today?" If Billy Friedemann were along, it was, "How are my boys?" Strange, but she always called me Horace, never "Doc" or "Parky."

I have many notebooks full of Aunt Bessie's notes, which I took down. She seldom wrote anything, because she said her eyes bothered her. She was always accurate. If Aunt Bessie didn't know a date or a fact, she said so. Miss Hunt had taught her well and Bessie insisted on my being accurate.

It seemed Aunt Bessie was related to everyone in the valley – the Barnetts, McClintocks, Roripaughs, and others more distantly. My first lessons were in straightening these all out along with her mother who was a Street, and her father, a Gonzalez. Aunt Bessie was a historical bridge between present day events and those that happened almost a century ago.

There were three crises in Aunt Bessie's life, which she weathered – the death of her beloved daughter Adrienne, her boys in service during World War II and the death of her husband, Judge Barnett. Many other crises didn't seem to bother her – when she moved from her old home she naturally felt badly, but she took it philosophically.

Aunt Bessie had many close and dear friends and relatives. How much she appreciated your visits and rides through the country.

Bessie was always proud of her three sons, as well she should be – they returned her affection and respect. Aunt Bessie always said she had lived a full and happy life and spiritually she was content and at peace.

Although I am not a polished speaker, I know Aunt Bessie would be delighted to know that Horace, one of her boys, is giving her eulogy. So, I say, "Good-bye, Aunt Bessie," and using an old Spanish phrase that I've heard you use, "Vaya con Dios."

Temecula Valley Historical Society
P. O. Box 157
Temecula, CA 92593



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TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The Board of Directors formulate and vote on policies. The membership may vote for Directors at the annual meeting.

Membership is open to anyone regardless of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

Dues and donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Donations may be designated or undesignated.

Checks payable to:

Temecula Valley Historical Society

Mail to:

P. O. Box 157

Temecula, CA 92593-0157