



Temecula Valley
Historical Society

Newsletter

September 2007 Vol 7 Issue 7

We meet at the historical Pujol School on Santiago Road on the first Friday of each month from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. Plan to be there for a board meeting followed by an interesting speaker.

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www.temeculavalleyhistoricalsociety.org

Society News

At our August meeting, **Eugene Knott** and **Gene Tobin**, two of the three "Genes" who were the first employees of what became the Rancho California Water District, shared photographs and told anecdotal stories about their experiences providing Temecula with water. By the way, the other water district employee at the time was **Gene Barnett**. Adding information from the audience was a special guest, **Walt Dixon**, formerly with Montgomery Engineering, an agency that worked closely with the fledgling water district.

On September 7, **Whitney Wilkinson**, the son of **Sandy Wilkinson** (who ran the first Temecula water district) and the great-grandson of **Walter Vail**, will come from San Diego to speak with us. Whitney says he's been wanting to meet us.

Then in October, **Don Conibear**, son of **Ted Conibear**, the sculptor of the former Temecula tourist exhibit called **Bibleland**, will speak to us about his special father.

Isn't it great how the Society is visible throughout the community? Much of it is thanks to **Pam Grender**, chairperson for the **Plaque Committee**. She is also responsible for writing the **Old Town Temecula Walking Tour Guide**. Most of you don't know that she goes to all the Old Town businesses each month to restock brochures. Be sure to read her report on the following page.

(continued inside)

If you would like to have a say in what is going on in Old Town Temecula, be sure to attend **Old Town Review Board** meetings at 9 a.m. on the second Monday of each month in the Main Conference Room in City Hall.

You may also be interested in attending the **Old Town Workshop** meeting on Monday, August 20 at 6 p.m. at the City Hall. Let's be visible as the Historical Society when it comes to preservation of Old Town Temecula.

The Society is indebted to **Myra Gonsalves** for many years of faithful service as Historian. Her albums of photos and collection of news articles of historical interest will be treasured by the Society for years to come. Because of pressing family business, she has resigned and leaves big shoes to fill. No one can ever take Myra's place, but if anyone wants to step in to help archive the Society's history, please contact **President Barbara Tobin** to volunteer. You can reach Barbara at 951-760-6096 or at Barbara.tobin2@verizon.net.

Thanks to **Charlene Fink** for serving as Secretary and is taking a leave of absence to take care of other responsibilities.

Elaine Eschom deserves a big thank you for renovating our Web site and for helping with secretarial duties. See www.temeculavalleyhistoricalsociety.org As mentioned during the August meeting, there is a wealth of information on this wonderful Web site, thanks to Elaine and to efforts of previous Web masters, including **Jeff Harmon** who posted tidbits from early gossip columns from the Elsinore newspapers.

If anyone has a story to contribute to the newsletter, please send it to **Rebecca Farnbach** at sunbrook@hotmail.com or to 41403 Bitter Creek Ct., Temecula, CA 92591.

PLAQUE AND BROCHURE REPORT

Preliminary steps have been taken to complete our Society's 26th bronze plaque. This site plaque will commemorate the former Temecula Livery Stable which once stood where the Bank is today. The new owner of The Bank Of Mexican Food has agreed to let us install the plaque near the front door of his building. Members of the Society have supplied him with historical pictures including one of the livery stable, which he will be displaying inside the restaurant.

A new 15"X15" bronze plaque is ready to be installed on the Pujol Schoolhouse. Loretta Barnett and I worked together on the wording, which contains a correction to information on the first plaque that was once installed on this historical building by a former Temecula Valley Historical Society. That plaque is currently available for viewing inside the schoolhouse. The Barnetts have said that both plaques will be displayed on the outside entrance walls. Roger Sannipoli has agreed to install the plaque and his father, Al Sannipoli, whose company supplies plaques, gave us a reduction in price.

15,000 more tour brochures are on order from Minute Man Press. Due to space limitations in the brochure, it has been decided that any plaques outside of Old Town and Pujol Street will not be included on the map.

I will, once again, be applying for a Community Services Grant with the City for plaques and brochures.

A list containing new criteria for historical designation with plaques and markers has been compiled for the consideration of any future building or site. Please see me if you would like a copy or have any questions or comments.

- Pam Grender

Juan Murrieta's diary indicated it was hot on July 29, 1881, "102 in the shade and 135 in the sun".

Temecula Tidbits

Before Ralph Love used the Art Shack for his gallery, it was the first Riverside County library in Temecula and Freda Knott was the librarian. Later it was the Fernald General Store. Mrs. Fernald took over the business after Mr. Fernald died from appendicitis.

The Burnham Store, now called the Merchantile Building (in front of the theater in Old Town) was the grocery store Eugene Knott remembered during his childhood. Mr. Martin and Mr. Matthew opened up M&M Market, now the Porch Antique Store, giving some competition to the Burnham Store.

The first Border Patrol was in the Immigration Office next to the Temecula Hotel in Old Town. Then it was moved to the south end of Old Town, near First and Front Streets. Eventually it was moved to Diaz Road near Blackdeer Loop, before being located on Interstate 15, where it is now.

When females were apprehended, they were handed to female agents to work with. Notably, Jeff Gezweski's mother, Catherine Gezewski, served as an agent for over thirty years. Mary Gomez, wife of cowboy Joe Gomez, and Ruby Hicks, wife of Sam Hicks, also served the Border Patrol.

Al Knott made metal silhouette outlines for a Border Patrol shooting range, which was first located near La Paz Road, then moved to near Vail Lake Resort, then again moved to near Sixth and Pujol Streets.

Old-timers had to smile at things new folks did sometimes. Colonel Tibbits, who flew the Nola Gay that bombed Hiroshima, bought Casa Loma, the Vail house on the hill. He and his wife added the second story to the adobe. They were putting up fencing for their thoroughbreds, when they discovered a stone carved with "Here lies Cowboy Joe" near some cottonwoods in Wolf

Valley. Not wanting to disturb a grave, they routed the fence around it. What the Tibbets' didn't know was that the monument was a joke some cowboys played on Joe Gomez.

Likewise, when the Interstate came through, construction halted when the workers found a granite boulder inscribed in 1885, "Here lies Joe Blow."

Thanks to Eugene Knott for sharing these memories.

What is She Doing Now?

Do you ever wonder where some of our former leaders are? I asked our second President Charolette Fox to tell us what she is doing.

She answered that she serves as President of the Riverside County Historical Commission and is a director of the Vail Ranch Restoration Association. She serves on the Elsinore, Murrieta, Anza Resource Conservation to educate and coordinate projects for stream monitoring, code enforcement, and wildlife protection.

She is on the Temecula Community Services Commission, an advisory board to the City Council on cultural amenities such as the history museum, children's museum, community theatre, library, the development of trails and parks, and other open space areas.

She is on the state board as Natural Resources Director and in the League of Women Voters. She is a legislative advocate, a trainer, and a public educator, always ready to serve.

Correction to August Newsletter

Did you notice a time warp? In the second to last paragraph of Evelyn Love Norris' article, it should have read, "...influenced by his father living and voting in the area of Temecula and Murrieta in 1892", instead of 1992.