

TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

January 2013

Volume 13 – Issue 1

It is our mission to identify, preserve and promote the historic legacy of the Temecula Valley and to educate the public about its historical significance.

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**John Bianchi and President Bonnie Martland
Annual Dinner, November 10, 2012**

The First Temecula Historical Society

By Jeffery G. Harmon

“As I became more aware of the history of Temecula I thought, why hasn’t somebody put together some kind of group to preserve and discover and record what we got going here? It is so rich. So a couple of us got together and we hosted the first meeting in the lunchroom of our company.” John Bianchi, November 10, 2012

The days of the Vail cattle ranch came to a close in 1964 when Mahlon Vail sold his lands. Rancho California, a master planned community, was laid out and Old Town Temecula was caught in the middle. The Temecula Town Association incorporated on April 16, 1970 to protect the historical and commercial interests of the small town from the encroaching development. A 1890s Western theme was presented as the vision for the historic town.

Early examples of this vision can be found in several locations. Tommy Hotchkiss, former proprietor of the Swing Inn Café, transformed his diner by adding a Western façade. The Longfellows purchased the Friedemann Meat Market building and the properties to its east and built the Main Street Emporium. Bob Morris began constructing the Butterfield Square at the corner of Third and Front Streets. Finally, Roy Morrissey added a Western façade in front of his two trailer art studio.

However, more commercial development was coming to the sleepy town beside Highway 395. In 1977, John Bianchi was elected the new director of the Temecula Chamber of Commerce. During a

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Calendar Of Events

Monday, January 28 – 6 p.m.

TVHS monthly meeting at Little Temecula History Center
Steve Lech will present
"The Mission Inn – Why"
in which he will interpret the many different events, trends and impulses that were happening in the late 1800s and early 1900s that led Frank Miller to construct one of California's most recognizable Landmarks.
Book signing after program

Monday, February 25 – 6 p.m.

TVHS monthly meeting at Little Temecula History Center
Dick Thomas will present
"The History of the Butterfield Stage" dressed as a stagecoach
"Conductor", better known as a shotgun rider.

Monday, March 25 – 6 p.m.

TVHS monthly meeting at Little Temecula History Center
President Bonnie Martland will give a presentation on *The Civil War*.

Temecula Valley Museum Exhibition

January 12 – February 24
"Gold Fever! Untold Stories of The California Gold Rush"

Saturday, January 19 – 10 a.m.

Temecula Valley Museum
A Walking Tour of Old Town Temecula

Thursday, February 21-7 p.m.

Temecula Valley Museum
Gallery Talks presents
"African American Trailblazers"
Celebrate Black History Month
With an original performance by E. P. McKnight.

Welcome New Members:

Jerry & Darlene Gilbert

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presentation, he described the transformation of Main Street in Fallbrook and how the uniformity attracted tourists and shoppers. He emphasized the importance for new businesses to adhere to the 1890s Western theme and to preserve the historic atmosphere.

The Temecula Historical Society formed on September 23, 1977 when a group of people interested in Temecula's historical preservation met in the lunchroom at the Bianchi Leather Company. Those in attendance were John Bianchi, Bob Morris, Evelyn Harker, Henry Quigley, Tom Hudson, Charles Knott, Dorothea Green, and Tommy and Irene Hotchkiss.

"It was obvious that there were two schools of thought. A group of us knew things were happening here and we needed to take a hold of it and on the other side of the room was a hardcore group of old timers that had been here for many, many years that simply did not want change. They liked it just the way it was. They said 'don't bother us.'

Progress was coming like floodwaters. You can't change it. It's coming. If you try hard enough you can channel it into some positive direction and preserve what we got here in the valley. Slowly we convinced some, but not all of them, that we needed to get some kind of organization going here so that we didn't lose this culture. We started a movement that obviously took root, because here we are. I am delighted to have played a small part in that period." John Bianchi, November 10, 2012.

The first elected society officers were John Bianchi, president; Dallas Gray, secretary-treasurer; and directors Dorothea Green, Evelyn Harker, Cleo Morris, Doc Cummins, and Frank Mungia.

On October 4th, John Bianchi and Henry Quigley appeared before the Riverside Board of Supervisors to request the establishment of a historical district overlay for Temecula.

"We would like requirements instituted to have all new construction and remodeling meet an architectural style of the 1890s Western town." (October 8, 1977, Rancho News)

Next the Historical Society petitioned the Union Oil Company to change their service station façade to the prescribed 1890s Western theme. Positioned at the corner of Rancho California Road and Front Street, the service station would have been the first site visitors saw entering Temecula from the north. Although the county had already approved plans for the company's construction, façade modifications were made to meet the society's concerns.

The success of the Historical Society's influence in promoting a 1890s Western theme can still be found in several locations. The Temecula Creek Shopping Center, home of Mad Madeline's Burgers, is one Western themed development. The Rancon Plaza between Fourth Street and Main Street encompassed the 1920s Champion Building making the plaza appear as one continuous historic building. The former GTE building on Moreno Drive attempted a Western theme by encasing the microwave radio tower with wood boards. The crowning

Temecula Union School

Class of 1950

June 1, 1950
Lake Elsinore Valley Sun

The school term will end June 2. The sixth, seventh and eighth grades, taught by Miss Nida Ashman are preparing a play entitled "*Bobby Sox*" to be presented on the last day of school.

Miss Grace Petty's room of third, fourth and fifth graders will present a Maypole dance on the school grounds Thursday afternoon.

June 8, 1950
Elsinore Leader Press

By Nathaline Liefer

Graduation exercises were held Friday evening at the Temecula Grammar School with Charles Knott as valedictorian. Other graduates were Ana Waggoner and Rayona Basques. The upper grades presented a play called "*Bobby Sox*".

Thursday afternoon, the students in the primary room presented a play on Safety and the intermediate room bound the May pole.

The Mother's Club served ice cream to the children. Guest speaker for the evening was Ray Johnson.

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achievement was the Temecula Post Office on Front Street sporting a 1890s Western façade.

During the Historical Society's first year, a historic plaque program was begun. The plaques were installed on several historical buildings in Old Town Temecula. John Bianchi showed a Western film inside his company's employee cafeteria as a fundraiser for the project. There were no movie theaters in the area at the time, so the fundraiser was a huge success.

The event took place on February 10, 1978. The movie presented was the semi-documentary, "Showdown at the O.K. Corral" narrated by Lorne Greene. One hundred and eighty five people attended and \$229.70 was raised from ticket sales and refreshments. The fundraiser was such a success more "Friday Night at the Movies" events were held.

One by one, the plaques at a cost of \$150 each were installed. The first plaque was installed on the brick mercantile building by Bob Morris and Tommy Hotchkiss. The next two plaques ordered were for the First National Bank and the Temecula Hotel. Those plaques were installed in September 1978. Businesses also supported the project. For example, KACOR donated \$150 for one of the plaques.

The Temecula Historical Society's membership grew. By March 1978, there were 59 members and by July membership was up to 72. On May 2, 1978, Oscar and Opal Perris were guests of the Society's monthly meeting. Oscar Perris was the grandson of Fred T. Perris, the namesake of the city of Perris. Fred Perris, Chief Engineer of the California Southern Railroad, also laid out the street design for Old Town Temecula. Oscar brought family artifacts and shared family stories with the group.

At the end of 1978, Doc Cummins, Cleo Morris and Dorothea Green stepped down from the board. Diane McClish, Bob Tilton and Frank Boyer replaced them.

On January 31, 1979, the first meeting was held for the creation of a Historical Zoning District in Temecula. The vision first originated with the Southwest Territory General Plan Steering Committee. However, the Historical Society took up the cause and spearheaded the movement. In July 1980, the ordinance cleared the County Planning Commission and was sent to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

Supervisor Walt Abraham announced the ordinance had passed on October 14, 1980. The original proposed historic district was from Rancho California to Highway 79 South and from Interstate 15 to west of Pujol. However, because of property and business owners, the district was scaled down to 6th Street in the north, 2nd street in the south, the freeway on the east, and River Street on the west. Temecula became the first historic district in Riverside County.

Five residents were appointed to the Temecula Historic District's Review Board in April 1981. They were Margaret Ramsey, Bob Morris, Dr. Don Cummins, Bill Jackson and LaVerne Parker.

The Society would like to thank the following businesses and individuals who donated goods or services for our Annual Dinner fundraiser...

Cynthia Anderson
John Bianchi
Campini's Italian Deli & Market
Teresa Chiniaeff /Outdoor Channel
Roger & Lynn Cudé
Robert and Elaine Culverhouse
Rebecca Farnbach
Bill Harker
Bob Kaler
Tori Kunkle
Lady of the Lake
Bonnie Martland
Myra Masiel-Zamora
Jimmy & Peg Moore
Old Town Spice Merchants
Pechanga Cultural Resources Department
Pechanga Development Corporation
RBF Consulting
Rancho Fruit Market
Riverside International Wine Competition
Rosa's Cantina
Summer Snow
South Coast Winery Resort & Spa
Swing Inn Café
Lisa Woodward
VaARRA
Michael Vasquez

We raised over \$2,000 for the Society.

Also . . .

The Society earned \$54 from the fundraiser held at Bushfire Grill in October.

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After three years as president, John Bianchi stepped down as construction began on his Frontier Museum. The Temecula Historical Society's formal meetings discontinued towards the end of 1980.

"The effort went into remission, but never died away. We all kept in contact and exchanged info. Historically minded Temecula old timers continued to meet informally in the conference room at the new museum building for several years. Great ideas surfaced during those discussions. A low level of interest continued for several years after." John Bianchi, November 23, 2012

In 2000, a second historical society was formed, the Temecula Valley Historical Society. The word "valley" was added to the name to distinguish it from the original society. The plaque program was revived and more buildings and homes were historically recognized.

On November 10, 2012, the Temecula Valley Historical Society honored John Bianchi, the founder of the Temecula Historical Society, at its annual dinner celebration. The legacy and vision of the Temecula Historical Society has provided a strong foundation in preserving and protecting the history and historical treasures of the area. The Society's early contributions should always be remembered.

President's Message by Bonnie Martland

Temecula Valley Historical Society Members,

New years come and new years go,
Pieces of time all in a row.
As we live our lives, each second and minute,
We know we are privileged to have you in it.
Our appreciation never ends
For our greatest blessings:
Our family and friends.

Thank you for supporting TVHS,
Enabling us to do our best,
To preserve and promote our historic legacy
For us all and our progeny.
Your membership helps us reach our goal, so
For 2013, we wish you the very best new year of all!

Happy New Year!!!

Bonnie Martland, on behalf of the Board of Directors

Based on the poem "Pieces of Time" by Amanda Fuchs,