

TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

January 2014

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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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Second Lieutenant Henry B. Post

Source: February 10, 1914, San Diego Union

A Plane Lands in Winchester

By Jeffery G. Harmon

His engine sputtered as the last drops of gasoline passed through the fuel line. Second Lieutenant Henry B. Post scanned the landscape below for a safe place to land his aircraft. Spying a level field, Post steered towards his target. Strong winds fought man and machine as they came to a rough landing in a farmer's field. On January 9, 1914, his plane had landed in Winchester.

Henry Burnett Post was twenty-seven years old when he was transferred from the Twenty-fifth Infantry to the Aviation Corps at North Island, San Diego, California in May 1913. He was born in New York, the son of Colonel Henry Albertson Van Zo Post, a Civil War veteran. From the moment Henry's training started, he demonstrated a natural flying talent. By the summer's end, Henry took his final tests for his Aero Club of America license in a Curtiss military bi-plane.

"The test consisted of describing two sets of figure eights around pylons set about 1600 feet apart and landing within 50 meters of a mark after volplaning (glided flight) from a height of 500 feet, with the motor shut off." (August 29, 1913, San Diego Union)

As summer turned to fall, Henry Post along with other aviators and military personnel were treated to dinners at the Hotel Del Coronado. Afterwards, ragtime dances were held until late into the night. The military men also participated in other social functions at the hotel. Post signed up in October to learn the Argentine tango.

(Continued on Page 2)

Calendar Of Events

Monday, January 27 – 6 p.m.

Lynn Cude, Pam Grender and Bonnie Martland present:
*Three Temecula Women:
Ramona Wolf, Helen Hunt Jackson and Mary Jane Welty*

Monday, February 24 – 6 p.m.

Program to be announced

Temecula Valley Museum Exhibition

The Many Faces of George Washington
January 11 ~ February 16

Thursday, January 23 -7 p.m.

Temecula Valley Museum
Gallery Talk
Steven M. Freers presents:
"Rock Art of the Grand Canyon Region"
Book signing following Talk

Welcome New Members:

Daniel Barber
Buddy & Dianna Frank
Gary & Judy Giles
Michelle Lusin
Gary & Eileen Penovich
Lashman & Dusty Soriya

Thank you for renewing your Membership:

Forrest Greenwood &
Marti Scott
Andrew & Gloria Masiel
Randall Family
Richard Scarce

Winchester (Continued from Page 1)

Meanwhile, he continued to soar above the San Diego Bay in the daytime, always trying to beat the latest flying record.

On October 17, 1913, Post flew for thirty-five minutes in a Curtis military scout at an altitude of 2500 feet.

"He immediately began circling for altitude and after attaining a height of 2500 feet began a wide detour of North Island and Coronado. After cutting a number of figure eights, Lieutenant Post executed a beautiful volplane, righting his plane when he was approximately 1500 feet from the ground. At one time he was almost directly over the lighthouse, a mere speck in the sky." (October 18, 1913, San Diego Union)

A few weeks later, on November 5, 1913, Henry Post broke his next personal record. He flew for thirty-six minutes at an altitude of 3700 feet. On his next record flight he reached 4000 feet. Then on December 18, 1913 Henry Post broke the army military record when his plane flew at 10,600 feet. During this flight he experienced strong winds, altitude effects, and engine problems.

"While in the air, Lieutenant Post had trouble with his carburetor and for some time considered the advisability of changing his seat in an effort to remedy this difficulty. He managed to avoid doing this however." (December 19, 1913, San Diego Union)

As the year 1913 came to a close, Post and other aviators voiced their concerns about the safety and reliability of their airplanes. For example, a two man, cross-country flight that Post was assigned to in November, was cancelled due to engine problems. Despite these setbacks, flights continued on North Island.

A 9 o'clock in the morning, on January 9, 1914, Second Lieutenant Henry Post lifted off North Island in a C type Wright airplane on a solo, cross-country flight. He planned to fly eighty miles to the city of Beaumont. His flight path is unknown, but he would have flown over the Temecula Valley as he traveled northward.

As he approached Winchester, he began to have engine trouble. When he landed in the farm field, he broke a small brace. Post enlisted D. A. Haslam, a local mechanic, to make repairs on his airplane. Captain Arthur Cowan at North Island received a long distance phone call from Post who gave a full report of his flight. Though Post was twenty miles short of his goal, he still managed to set a new military cross-country record. It was estimated that Post had traveled sixty miles in a little less than one hour.

Lieutenant Post then took a train and an automobile to Beaumont and stayed the night. The next morning he returned to Winchester to find that repairs were completed. According to a newspaper's account, people had come to see the plane, sit in the driver's chair and have their pictures taken. After final preparations were made, Post started up the engine.

The plane lifted off a little after 10 o'clock in the morning. His plane circled around Winchester several times until he reached an

(Continued on Page 3)

Murrieta News 100 years ago

January 9, 1914
Riverside Daily Press

Mrs. K. E. Sleeper and Mrs. Hattie Hale invited a few of their friends to the Fountain House on New Year's night to hear the Thompson orchestra play. Composing the orchestra are Willis Madole, guitar, George Hale, mandolin, and Hale Sykes, piano. Altogether it was a very pleasant evening.

The young folks had a farewell surprise party for Miss June Thompson on Monday night, at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. M. W. Thompson. Mr. Thompson went with his daughter on Tuesday to Los Angeles, where she will study music.

January 30, 1914
Riverside Daily Press

Murrieta had a big rain, about five inches, just following a rain of three inches, within a week, making 14 inches for this season. While the river was very high, overflowing its banks in many places, not much damage was done. The approaches at both ends of the wagon bridge began to wash away, but Road Overseer Cliff Anderson and several men worked all Monday morning in the rain, filling hundreds of sand bags and soon stopped what would have been a big washout.

Winchester (Continued from Page 2)

ideal flying altitude. His plane then headed south towards San Diego, once again crossing over the Temecula Valley. It was reported that as he flew over coastal towns on his way back to North Island, he dropped Beaumont promotional brochures from his plane. In the afternoon, Post landed at the base and was praised for his achievement.

During the last week of January, Henry Post received word that his father had died. Post traveled to New York to attend the funeral. Afterwards, Post returned to San Diego by train bringing his wife and sister with him. They took up residence at the Mission Apartments.

Anxious to return to the air, Henry planned to break his previous altitude record. On February 9, 1914, shortly before 8:50 in the morning, Henry lifted off from North Island and slowly circled the bay, as his plane climbed higher and higher. When his barograph read 12,140 feet, Henry Post smiled knowing that he had broken the record. Feeling the effects of the high altitude Henry began the slow descent back to base.

At around 600 feet tragedy struck. Post suddenly lost control of his plane. Lieutenant V. B. Clarke gave an eyewitness account what happened next.

"At a height I should judge to have been about 600 feet, the Wright pointed downward and plunged vertically, perhaps a little more than the vertical. About 400 feet from the water Post was thrown clear of the machine, falling end over end to the bay. An instant later the wings of the machine collapsed and fluttered down in shreds preceded by the heavy engine." (February 9, 1914, The Evening Tribune)

Henry's wife and sister were having swimming lessons at the Hotel Del Coronado when they received word of Henry Post's death. Fellow aviator and friend Lieutenant Walter R. Taliaferro accompanied the body with the family by train to the Arlington National Cemetery. Henry Post was laid to rest in section 3 with other early aviator pioneers and would one day be joined by future astronauts.

Following his death, an investigation was conducted to determine why his plane malfunctioned. There had been several airplane deaths within the past year on North Island. The government was blamed for under funding the project, the military commanders were blamed because they had no actual flight experience, and the Wright manufacturing company was faulted for the plane's malfunction.

After months of investigating and finger pointing, reforms slowly started to be made at North Island. In remembrance of his service and sacrifice, the Henry Post Airfield at Fort Sills, Oklahoma was named in his memory. Though he flew for less than a year, he had set several aviation records, including his final record shortly before his untimely death. The Aero Club of America awarded him a medal of merit posthumously for his altitude record.

(Continued on Page 4)

TVHS proudly presents:
***Notable Women of
Temecula***

On January 27, 2014 at 6 p.m. In a premier performance Helen Hunt Jackson (portrayed by Pam Grender), Ramona Wolf (portrayed by Lynn Cudé), and Mary Welty (portrayed by Bonnie Martland) will share how their lives were intertwined with the early history of Temecula.

Come and hear how these courageous women contributed to the growth and prosperity of Temecula.

Ramona Wolf labored with her husband, Louis, in their store, raised their family, and hosted many dinners for travelers and area settlers.

Helen Hunt Jackson visited the Wolf's and wrote the book, *Ramona*, which brought public awareness to the plight of the Native Americans.

Mary Jane Welty, a wife and mother of seven daughters, operated a hotel next to the railroad.

Come and enjoy this amazing portrayal. It will be a night to remember!

Please join us for a
"Meet & Greet" time
at 5:30 PM on
Monday, January 27th,
prior to the meeting
at 6:00 PM.
We would like to get to
know you.
REFRESHMENTS
will be served!

Winchester (Continued from Page 3)

Captain Cowan stated, "The man had the natural ability of the born flyer, and it had to take the breakage of a machine to get him," (February 10, 1914, San Diego Union)

Those in the small farming community would always remember the brave military aviator who landed his plane in Winchester early one January morning.

President's Message by Dick Fox

Greetings --

As we begin a New Year, looking back at accomplishments is as important as looking forward to new endeavors. Our appreciation for local history was enhanced each month with wonderful programs, as well as seeing the major restoration of the Wolf Store completed during 2013.

The clean slate of a New Year offers the opportunity to add or change volunteer interests and activities. The history community in Temecula always welcomes new faces to help fulfill the education commitment as part of being a non-profit public benefit organization.

Both the VaRRA History Center and Temecula Valley Museum are in need of more docents, to help with visitors during regular operation hours, and for special events & group tours. Consider these enrichment opportunities.

Our society is certainly fortunate to have a nice meeting space at no direct monthly or annual rental expense. Special thanks to VaRRA. One of the ways that we as an organization can help -- is for members to volunteer to have their name added to a list of available docents, and be willing to work an occasional Sunday afternoon at the History Center, or assist with special event staffing.

A huge note goes out to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of board members Myra Masiel-Zamora and Tom Long who left the board at the end of 2013. We welcome back to the board Bonnie Reed who is beginning a second term; Elaine Eshom who is rejoining the board after a brief hiatus, and greet new board member Cheryl Cady. Many thanks and kudos to Lynn Cudé for her efforts that resulted in adding seventeen new memberships during the year. Way to go Lynn!

See you all Monday, January 27, 2014 for the first monthly meeting of 2014. A special program is planned with visits from 3 ladies with historic ties to Temecula.

Dick Fox
President 2014