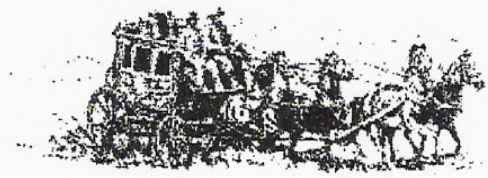


TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

May 2015

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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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THE UNITED STATES AND CALIFORNIA'S FIRST (and) LAST EMPEROR

by Duane Preimsberger

Just because a guy died over 135 years ago, doesn't give Californians the right to forget the State and Nation's very first Emperor; Joshua Norton, the First. Few of us know very much about this member of Royalty who held Court on the Streets of San Francisco.

The young Emperor-to-be arrived in California from South Africa with \$40,000.00 in his possession during the gold rush inauguration year of 1849. A somewhat chunky, dark haired and bearded man of average height there was little to draw attention to him. He was soon respected as a good businessman and was doing quite well with the legacy left him by his late father. Unfortunately, he made a costly investment mistake while trying to corner the market on rice. He made large investments on current and future deliveries and became over extended when the market went flat, leaving him penniless. Following the financial debacle, Joshua disappeared for a while and when he came back his mind was more than just a little bit addled, perhaps by the stress and strain caused by his financial ruin.

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Upon his return to the City by the Bay, it was obvious that he was suffering from what appeared to be a mental malady that gave him visions of royalty and an august status. In 1859 he produced a series of letters and sent them to the various San Francisco newspapers in which he anointed himself, Emperor of these United States. Immediately following this unique declaration, Emperor Norton I began issuing orders and decrees. He dissolved the U.S. Congress because it was corrupt: he called for the construction of a bridge and tunnel connecting Oakland and San Francisco and issued a royal decree imposing a twenty-five dollar fine on anyone who used the term "Frisco," either in speech or writing, when referring to the City by the Bay.

San Francisco, renowned for its iconoclastic attitude, even in those early days, began to enjoy having their very own Emperor strolling their streets, alleys, docks and byways. While on his strolls Emperor Norton would see problems with streets, sidewalks, police uniform appearance, cable cars with flaking paint and other city ills and he'd issue proclamations demanding correction or repairs. The Emperor found that eateries throughout the City enjoyed feeding him at no cost and many procured a plaque, displayed prominently by the entrance declaring that the Imperial Emperor Norton I approved of the cuisine within. The performing arts groups in San Francisco made certain that the Emperor appeared to mark the opening of any new productions set on the San Francisco stage. The cops from San Francisco's Police Department rendered a snappy hand salute to the Emperor as he passed by.

At one point, the City/County Fathers noticed that the Emperors clothes, modeled much like a Civil War Generals garb with plenty of brass buttons, gold braid, a well-used sword and a variety of colorful hats, were growing a tad shabby and they soon passed a resolution authorizing the expenditure of city funds to purchase the Emperor new clothing befitting his status within the City. They presented his new uniform with a lot of pomp and circumstance and the Emperor responded in kind by following up with an appropriate Thank You and an Award of Nobility in Perpetuity for each member of the Board of Supervisors.

Norton I began to suspect that all was not well between the U.S. and Mexico and in order to prevent violence and bloodshed he proclaimed himself, "Protector of Mexico!" Although there is no record of him actually protecting Mexico there is a record of him facing down an angry mob that was bent on doing damage to some Chinese residents of the City. Standing alone between the two groups, Emperor Norton I began repeating the Lord's Prayer over and over until the mob dispersed!

The inhabitants of the City by the Bay regaled in having such an illustrious and unique figure of royalty within their City and they were genuinely fond of him. They managed to produce rumors that suggested that he was in reality actual royalty, perhaps the son of Napoleon or the secret lover of Queen Victoria! They accepted his royal script for the payment of his bills that he issued himself in denominations ranging from fifty cents to as much as ten dollars. The Emperor's Castle was a small room in a boarding house not far from City center. It was there that he prepared many of his decrees and proclamations and produced his own money.

He was indeed a charming and unusual figure and The City of San Francisco mourned for several days after Norton's reign ended on the night of January 8th, 1880. The San Francisco Chronicle reported; "on the reeking pavement, in the darkness of a moon-less night under the dripping rain... Norton I, by the Grace of God, Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico, departed this life."

In a city of some 230,000 over 30,000 mourners gathered to watch as the Emperor's over two mile long funeral cortege, passed by. The onlookers ranged from the lowest classes to men of the cloth, business tycoons, women of upper-class families and the poorest inhabitants. They bowed their heads in silent tribute as his casket rolled by and after the service was concluded more than just a few retired to a saloon, bar or club and offered a sincere toast to a man who for years added charm, and a special character to the City by the Bay. Today, his gravesite is marked with a large tombstone bearing the words: "Norton I, Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico". The marker was paid for by the City of San Francisco as a gesture of thanks commemorating his reign.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday, May 18, 2015

6:00 P.M. HIDDEN AMERICA: What They Didn't Teach You in School by Andrew Thompson, former tour director in Washington, D.C.
Here is a rundown of the subjects that will be discussed:

Christopher Columbus

History credits Columbus for discovering America. We'll look at others who came before him and where they left their mark in North America. We'll also examine where Columbus's body is today. Apparently, there are **TWO** places on earth who claim to have his remains, we'll examine the mystery.

Sybil Ludington

Forgotten to history, Sybil Ludington mounted her horse named Star on April 26, 1777 and at age 16, rode 40 miles to alert American colonial forces that the British were coming. She was credited with alerting over 400 soldiers to help drive back the British at the battle of Ridgefield. She was honored and recognized for her bravery by George Washington. **Two years before** on April 18, 1775 Paul Revere made his famous ride (but only went half the distance). Why has history forgotten this brave young girl and what ever happened to her?

Napoleon Bonaparte

Napoleon was emperor of three-quarters of Europe late in the 18th century. Learn about Napoleon's secret plan to invade America. He began his troop build-up in the Caribbean Islands and would invade north into the colonies. Learn what the President of the United States knew and what he didn't... and the unexpected turn of events that stopped the invasion and eventually lead to Napoleon's fall from power.

Abraham Lincoln's Assassin: John Wilkes Booth

John Wilkes Booth, the Tom Cruise of his day, has forever gone down in history as the assassin of Abraham Lincoln our 16th President of the United States. History records that Booth was captured days later in a barn in Maryland. Several witnesses at the time came forward and insisted that the body of John Wilkes Booth was misidentified. According to witnesses, documentation and physical evidence, Booth may have made his escape. We'll examine the facts and take a look at an astonishing book published in 1907 by attorney, Finis Bates who claims that he spoke to Booth and was at his death bed in 1903 in Enid, Oklahoma. Learn the shocking details of what happened to the Oklahoma body and where it is today.

SPECIAL TVHS MEETING

JUNE 22, 2015

On June 22 we will have a very special evening.

From 5:30 to 6:30 pm we will introduce and celebrate our four 2015 High School Seniors going into history related fields who are receiving college scholarships from the society.

This will be followed by a presentation from 6:30 - 7:30 pm about the "They Passed this Way" rock in Old Town by Steve Williamson who will also have his books on that topic available for purchase.

OLD TOWN WALKING TOURS

Every Saturday May 2-September 5

Walk through the historic streets of Old Town Temecula with a docent of the Temecula Valley Museum. Step into a time where horses and wagons owned the streets! As you venture through Old Town and explore Temecula's oldest landmarks, you will learn interesting facts about Temecula's long and colorful history.

The tour departs at 10:00 AM every Saturday starting May 2 through September 5 from the Temecula Valley Museum, located directly across from the Farmer's Market.

We will even hold your purchases as you enjoy the tour!

The tours are \$2 per person.

To RSVP or for more information, please call the Museum at (951) 694-6450.

Meet and Greet

Please join us for a Meet and Greet time at 5:30 pm on Monday, May 18th, prior to the monthly meeting at 6:00 pm at the Little Temecula History Center.

REFRESHMENTS will be served.
We'd like to get to know you.

PHOTO of NOTABLE WOMEN OF TEMECULA



"Two NEW ladies have joined the Notable Women of Temecula:

Far left, Julie Gilbert portrays Jean Bethell, (Erle Stanley Gardner's Secretary). Middle, Loretta Barnett, presents Bessie Barnett (the first Caucasian girl born in Temecula, who lived here her entire life)."
(Refer to the March TVHS newsletter to view original photo)

THANKS TO RENEWING MEMBERS

Thank you for renewing your Membership:

Garth & Janice Bricker
Vincent & Audrey Cilurzo
Stephen & Mary Corona
Martin Dinsenbacher
Don & Julie Gilbert
Doug & Sally Haserot
John & Bonnie Martland
Barbara Mina
Jimmy & Peg Moore
Gary & Sally Myers
Ken & Bonnie Reed
Dan Stephenson
Michael & Carol Ann Strode

June TVHS Newsletter

Anyone having items to be included in the June newsletter should submit them to me by May 27th.

Judy Preimsberger, editor
email: pberger30@verizon.net

Bouris Ranch Tour by TVHS April 17th



Members of the Historical Society toured the Bouris Ranch in Menifee on Friday, April 17th. The owner, Betty Bouris, talked about living on the ranch for the past 65 years.

The ranch now consists of 80 acres of land. Betty's husband was a collector and restorer extraordinaire (antique farm equipment, antique cars, antique tractors, and every kind of farm implement imaginable).

It was interesting to learn how the farmhands planted and harvested grain for many years. We were treated to a tour of Betty's rose garden surrounding her home.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Betty for being such a delightful docent and allowing us to experience the Bouris Ranch.

