

# TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

June 2015  
Volume 12 Issue 6

*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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A Publication of the

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## An Early View of Temecula

*(Previously published in a 1965 issue of the Guenther's Gazette, a monthly publication originated at Murrieta Hot Springs. Author Unknown.)*

Six quick miles south of Guenthers, this scattered collection of buildings dreams under a brassy sun and leans with habit against the insistent wind.

Not infrequently some feature writer for one of the Metropolitan dailies discovers the place and shortly thereafter Temecula is dramatized in a Sunday issue.

The treatment is usually typical Sunday Supplement. First a word picture of the place followed by a brief history. Research for this comes from a bartender who's been here six weeks, or some equally reliable source; a little hearty humor calculated to amuse Metropolitan readers and escalate their urban superiority, and possibly a quick delineation of quasi town character presumably typical and suffering from a beer hangover. This heavy nonsense if plentifully larded with dramatic shots by a staff photographer and a complete page has been devoted to this "Historic" hamlet.

Pleasantly enough, Temecula is not on the main highway. A quick right hand turn takes you off this busy thoroughfare descends swiftly to a narrow valley and swinging left again guides you thru the main portion of the town. You are on Front St.; and it has born this name since the township was plotted in the middle eighties.

The character of Temecula varies with each hurried tourist who scans the place in three quick minutes. It is a collection of sun warped shacks, scattered aimlessly around one vacant building which looks like, and indeed used to be a bank.

It is a town of the "Old West" with an historic aspect, "Wonder where Boot Hill could be?"

Sometimes it's a quick look and "My goodness what a terrible place to live!"

Frequently some quiet loving soul sees it truly. A lovely narrow valley where a handful of fortunate people live. To themselves they say, "I'd like to live in a place like this." But the sharp inward sigh tells the true story. They'd like to, but never will.

In a physical sense, Temecula is not neatly ordered. The small business district seems to have packaged itself, while the rest of the town sprawls in a comfortable clutter. A small creek, adequately bridged, divides Temecula and contributes much to its easy charm.

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Fifty or sixty years ago this village was home to about 210 persons. Today the population is essentially the same, but quieter. Much.

Sixty years ago all the “brush poppers” from the neighboring ranches rode in on Saturday night.

Sometimes, before the serious business of the evening began, they even got haircuts. They gathered in the restaurant to eat tough fried steaks, stood for minutes in the dust to sip pleasantly at the town belles, glanced in at the livery stable to see if the hostler had comfortably stabled their mounts, then with these preliminaries attended, made for the town saloon.

Not properly a saloon for Temecula was legally dry, and their refreshment came from a “blind pig.”

These early years were often punctuated by brief bloody episodes generated in a swift flaming moment and fulfilled in a red haze of drunken anger.

Some of the buildings, theaters for these dramas, still stand. One, a corner place, bearing a large realtor’s sign, but still holding its flavor of a time gone, quietly dreams on the dusty sunlit street.

Early Temecula was much busier than now. We had a barber shop, a town photographer, a boot maker, a dance hall over the livery stable, a pool hall, bank and railroad. Now these enterprises are only memories.

The railroad! Ah, the railroad, complete with a red depot and a station master. Leaving Temecula on its way to Fallbrook, the roadbed followed thru a wild canyon which also contained the Temecula River.

Disregarding the sage advice of those who knew, they laid the track to close to the canyon floor, and the river, a sundried trickle in the summer, became on different occasions in winter, a raging torrent which poured with hell bent fury thru the canyon and twisted long sections of track like so much spaghetti.

This sort of thing happened with regularity, and reluctantly the roadbed was abandoned.

Sometimes, standing on the bank of the Santa Gertrudis in the pale moon light of a frosty winter night, I like to fancy I can hear the sharp drawn whistle of a Santa Fe engine and the distant echo, mourning down that lonely canyon route.

In a certain sense, Temecula has very little civic spirit. Other small towns so busily organize Chambers of Commerce, town hall meetings, erect the usual signs of “Watch so & so Grow”. Not Temecula.

The town is no larger now than it was 75 years ago. There were no sidewalks or street lights then, and none now, and the town couldn’t care less.

This is the way the majority want to live. Most of us are a low income group and we know that growth brings irritating regulation, conformity and always higher taxes. There is a phrase used by all the competitors in the outside “Rat Race”. It is called the “Good Life”. We have a definite idea what it means and to us the “Good Life” is a pain in the neck.

I have inferred that we are not push button minded.

Some of us know that flush toilets often let you down and consequently you will find many primitive, but practically fool proof “Out Houses” discreetly gracing the rear premises of many houses. Just in case?

Every home and business in Temecula has it’s own well. Some have electric pumps, others still rely on windmills. When the power fails, and it frequently does, the electric pumps have a pretty thin time, but the wind is with us always.

The Wind, leaving the sea coast thirty miles away, sings thru the mountain canyons gaining force in each quick mile. With the regularity of a summer Trade in reaches Temecula around 10 in the morning increasing thru the progressive day, until by late afternoon it is half a gale. Abruptly in early evening it stops, almost as if someone had closed a window. A phenomena that seldom fails and a benison to the town. Without this pouring tide of air Temecula would blister like any of its less fortunate neighbors.

I have said that we have little civic spirit, and I mean in the sense of pushing towns that place no value on quiet serenity. We are Mexican, Indian and Gringo and are closely knit together. We have a nodding acquaintance with many of our neighbor’s closet skeletons, and perhaps we pick a few nits in private, but certainly we present a solid front to any outside influence that seeks to change our ways.

The most important social center is the General Store. Here at one time or another, the whole town gathers, not as one group, but during a day’s course almost everyone in Temecula will have paid a call to this cheerful Emporium. Often a purchase which would nominally take three or four minutes extends to an hour when several housewives meet

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**Happy Father's Day !**

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fortuitously and exchange local news and village gossip. There is a warm interest and fellowship not to be found in any urban super market.

Without mention of the dogs my picture of the town would be sketchier than it is. One frequent visitor to the place jokingly remarked that he doubted if we had enough trees to meet their needs. This is debatable and I wouldn't care to come to any quick conclusion.

They, the dogs, gather in amiable groups outside the door of the General Store and like the customers within, represent in a day's time the entire canine population. I am sometimes amused when some resident quickly scans this shifting group and audibly remarks, "Well, there's a newcomer, wonder who he is?"

So many years the people of Temecula have listened to the noisy clamor of progress and tiring of this senseless din have gone inside and closed their doors. I would – this could be always so, for I love the town the way it is. Each sun warped shack, the vacant buildings dreaming of the past, the tumble weeds careening down the dusty streets. I would not have it change, but the chimera of growth surrounds us and we stand so alone against the jackals from the urban jungles.

## TVHS UPCOMING EVENTS

### June 22 at History Center

5:30 - 6:30 PM - A celebration of our scholarship winners.

6:30 - 7:30 PM - Steve Williamson will speak on the "They Passed This Way" rock.

### July 27 at Civic Center Conference Room

6:00 PM - Glenna Matthews will speak on "California and the Civil War".

### August 24 at History Center

Robert Kent will speak on the Hot Springs in the Elsinore area.

### September 28 at History Center

Andrew Thompson will speak on "Little Known Facts in American History" - Part 2

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome New Members:

Ray, Rebecca & Joshua Brown  
Matt Gunnell  
Lisa Lopuck  
Jasmine Gunnell

Thank you for renewing your  
membership:

Cheryl Cady  
Walt Dixon  
Diane LaTulippe

Please join us for a "Meet & Greet"  
on Monday June 22<sup>nd</sup> at 5:30 PM  
just prior to the regular membership  
meeting at the Little History Center  
(red barn next to Kohl's) on  
Temecula Parkway.

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

History is one of the most  
remarkable things in our lives, the  
mere fact it occurred is  
remarkable...

Anonymous

### **July TVHS Newsletter**

Anyone having items to be included in  
the July newsletter should submit them  
to me by June 28<sup>th</sup>.

Judy Preimsberger, editor  
email: [pberger30@verizon.net](mailto:pberger30@verizon.net)  
p/n (951) 699-6619

## A thank you to TVHS members from VaRRA...

The Vail Ranch Restoration Association (VaRRA) wants to thank everyone who participated in the antique sales in the Wolf Store over the past few months.

For the first time in over 100 years the adobe was a "store" once again and attracted visitors to the site where the stories of the historic past were told and retold and volunteers shared the story of how the renovation of the property has come to fruition.

The antique sales there are now a part of the past as the building is being outfitted for the businesses of the future.

Thank you again to those who donated merchandise, who purchased items and who volunteered time to make the antique sales successful.

The funds VaRRA added to its coffers will supply museum displays throughout the site.

You can watch for signs this fall for Augie's Coffee and a La Minute Ice Cream to open in the Wolf Store - a place to sit and relax and to ponder old times.



*"Sorry, I'm having a senior moment.  
I've completely forgotten why I've come here"*

### Interested in a field trip to the Queen Mary?

Would anyone be interested in a chartered bus tour to the Queen Mary in Long Beach?

Andrew Thompson would like to organize one on a weekday, leaving from the History Center around 8 am and returning around 5 pm.

A cost of \$95 would include bus transportation and narrative en route, a professional tour of the ship and lunch. Time would be allowed for personal shopping or wine tasting.

Please email Andrew at [r28media@gmail.com](mailto:r28media@gmail.com) or Rebecca Farnbach at [rebfrnbach@aol.com](mailto:rebfrnbach@aol.com) if you are interested.

We will not make plans until we hear a positive response from 50 people.

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