

TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

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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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Temecula Valley Historical Society
P.O. Box 157 Temecula, CA 92593
951-303-6860

www.temeculahistoricalsociety.org



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Jean Baptiste Charbonneau

By Duane Preimsberger

Many of the Temecula Valley Museum Docents and hundreds and hundreds of Temecula Valley school kids have explored the, "They Passed This Way," granite monument in Sam Hicks Park. While there, they may have heard Docent Norm Taylor spin a delightful story about Jean Baptiste or J.B. Charbonneau, the son of trapper Touissant Charbonneau and his 16 year old Shoshone wife, Sacagawea. J.B. was born to the couple in the Dakotas in 1805 during the Lewis and Clark Expedition as the Expedition journeyed west across the United States, looking for a North-West passage, at the request of President Jefferson. This 4000 mile + round trip journey, one of the most memorable in American history, helped to open the West to settlers into the next century.

In spite of sickness, several near drownings, freezing weather and other misfortunes, Jean Baptiste managed to survive the long trek. As it went on William Clark, one of the Expedition leaders was taken by the little boy and he gave him a nickname, 'Pomp'. While traversing the Yellowstone River in Montana, Clark found an unusually shaped high point and named it "Pompy Tower," for the child. It overlooked a beautiful area where buffalo, elk, and other wild critters often grazed.

When the trek ended in St. Louis MO. William Clark offered to take Pomp under his wing and raise him. His parents initially refused the offer but after three years of living in an Indian village on the Missouri River they changed their minds and Pomp went to live with Clark. Unfortunately, this parting marked the last time that the boy would ever see his mother. Sacagawea died at the age of 24 shortly after giving birth to a daughter, Lizette.

J.B. became a real part of the Clark family, one that grew to include 5 other children. As a family member, he got a great education learning classical Latin and Greek and all the other subjects young gentlemen were expected to know in that era. When his education was complete, J.B. decided to go to work for a trading company in which William Clark was part owner.

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While employed as a trapper and a guide J.B or "Baptiste" as he was now known met 25-year old Paul Wilhelm, a German Prince, who was exploring the United States and soon the two young men, became fast friends.

When it came time for Paul to return to Germany he asked Baptiste to accompany him home to Wurttemberg where he lived in a 600 year old castle.

Baptiste accepted the offer and once in Europe he quickly found that he had a propensity for learning languages and became a proficient speaker of German, Spanish and Italian.

Prince Paul loved to explore and before long the two friends had visited a good portion of Europe and North Africa. Unfortunately, Paul's vagabond ways cost him his marriage and shortly after the separation he and Baptiste returned to the United States. After a time, Paul decided to go back to Germany and Baptiste bid him a friendly and touching farewell after deciding to remain in the U.S. and to make his way once again as a guide, trapper and mountain man.

Although the life was rough and often dangerous, Baptiste did quite well and soon had a reputation not only as an expert mountain man but as a kind, thoughtful, friendly, brave and generous fellow. In 1846 Baptiste was offered and accepted a position with the United States Army, assisting the Mormon Battalion in blazing a trail from New Mexico to California. The journey that passed through Temecula was a difficult one and Baptiste distinguished himself by finding water sources during the desert march that saved the Battalion from dying of thirst on several occasions.

After being released from his military obligations in 1847, Baptiste became the Alcade or magistrate of the San Luis Rey Mission in Oceanside. His gentle spirit and sense of fairness rebelled at the poor treatment of the Native Americans he observed and after only 8 months

he resigned his position just in time to head north for the Gold Rush.

Baptiste was not successful in his search for the precious metal and he drifted from job to job. By 1866 Baptiste, now 61 years old, was a hotel clerk in Auburn California. There, he had become a respected member of the community; smart, articulate, and a guy who could tell stories of fascinating adventures in exotic places. Wanderlust reached into his soul on the day he learned of a new gold-strike in Montana and before long he was on his way. It too was a difficult trip and along the way Baptiste contracted pneumonia in the dreary, cold and wet weather. He didn't survive and on May 16, 1866 he followed his mother Sacagawea to the grave.

In 2000, the two of them were united in unique and very special way when the United States Treasury minted the Sacagawea dollar. Engraved on the face of the coin is the image of lovely Sacagawea with the infant Pomp riding contentedly on her back; mother and son are together once again.

And so Docent Norm Taylor can and does tell a great story about a mom and her son who live on in the history of our Nation. As Norm tells his story he reaches into his pocket and pulls out and displays a small, rounded, golden colored coin. It was minted as a tribute to those two pioneers, one of whom visited our valley.



President's Message

Monday, July 27th turned out to be a busy *history day*. The Temecula Valley Museum hosted a regional history group called CINCH (Council Interpreting North County History). This is an informal group that meets quarterly to share their current projects, program ideas, and activities with the other members. After that meeting many local folks and CINCH members boarded a bus provided by the City of Temecula with the primary goal of see the Oak Grove Stage Station up close. Before the bus returned they also visited the Aguanga Stage stop, Camp Wright, and the Vail Ranch headquarters site to see the restoration project progress.

The July meeting was another joint meeting with the Temecula Valley Museum, and what a nice program arranged by Rebecca Farnbach. Glenna Mathews a retired history professor and author of "*The Golden State in the Civil War*," gave a very interesting presentation covering the many facets of life in California after statehood, and the little known impact & influence that the Golden State provided during the Civil War era.

Also during July the nomination committee met and was able to get agreement from 5 members to become board members for 2016. They will become part of the board at our annual meeting in November. More on that later.

Dick Fox

Save the Date:

Friday, NOVEMBER 20th

Join us for the Temecula Valley Historical Society's Annual Dinner on Friday, Nov. 20th at 5:00 pm at the City Hall Conference Center.

Musician, David Adele, will be performing for our group. More information to follow.

How much do you know about our local history?

1. On Highway 79 South, east of Temecula, is a very small Community named Rader. How did Rader get its unusual name?
2. Temecula was originally in San Diego County. When did it become part of Riverside County?
3. The previous name for Rancho California Road was Long Valley Road. What was the previous name for Winchester Road?

Answers on page 5



Glenna Mathews, Ph.D., (pictured above) is an expert on California and the Civil War. On the afternoon of July 27th, Glenna went with local historians to tour the Oak Grove Stage Station and Camp Wright, a nearby Civil War site. Glenna also spoke to a large audience of a combined Temecula Valley Museum and Temecula Valley Historical Society on the same evening.

UPCOMING EVENTS

At our **August 24th** meeting Bob Kent will present his research on the Lake Elsinore Hot Springs. He will discuss the major hot springs resorts and several less well know resorts and bathhouses in Lake Elsinore. Bob, a retired geologist will present the source of the springs and how hot and cold springs occur side by side. Bob and his wife Suzie are residents of Menifee and are members of the Temecula Valley Historical Society.

For our **September 28th** meeting Andrew Thompson will present "Hidden in America, Part 2" on little known facts in US History, following up from his Part 1 that he presented in May. Be ready for a pop quiz and be ready to stretch your imagination for unexpected answers.

Barbara Waite will speak at our **October 26th** meeting on the experiences of an old-time teacher in a one-room school.



(Photo courtesy of the Andrew Sevy Eagle Project Website)

A Headstones Tale

By Jeffery G. Harmon

A simple headstone of a twelve year old girl can be found in the Temecula Cemetery. A visitor may pause and speculate the young girl's early demise, and another may not give it a second thought. The headstone's tale is a familiar Temecula story of alcohol and tragedy. Though no bullets flew in a saloon, Anna's tale still needs to be told to honor her memory, and to serve as a warning.

It begins with New Year's Eve celebratory drinking which resulted in brothers Marcus and Donas Vegar being arrested on January 1st for violating Riverside County's anti-drunkenness law. They were taken to the Elsinore Justice Court for trial.

Marcus Vegar was the son of Dionisio Vegar, Sr., of Pechanga, and Julia Little Bull, of the Oglala Sioux, Pine Ridge Agency, South Dakota. His father died around 1917, and his mother remarried to Patrick Siro Speziali in October 1929. After Marcus graduated from Elsinore Union High School, he returned to South Dakota. He went through the tribal rituals, making him a Sioux chief. He then returned to Temecula to be with his family and to make a living.

On March 4, 1936, Marcus and Donas Vegar, with Clarence and Dave Freeman, were visiting at the Freeman ranch in Temecula. After midnight, Marcus left the ranch and began walking towards Temecula along the Elsinore-Fallbrook highway. A mile from the ranch, Marcus was struck by an unknown motorist, who never stopped. It is believed that Marcus was knocked unconscious and left lying on the highway.

At 5:25 a.m., Joe Smith, a Pauba ranch foreman, was traveling down the Temecula grade during a heavy fog when he struck Marcus. Smith later testified, *"I thought it was a sack of potatoes when I ran over it with my automobile – when I got out and saw it was a man, I was*

frightened." (March 12, 1936, Elsinore Leader Press)

A. F. Nienke, who owned a service station down the road, assisted Smith in transporting Vegar to Dr. Glen Westphal in Elsinore. However, Marcus died during transport.

The funeral was held on March 9th at the Temecula Cemetery. Marcus' mother, Julia Speziali, who was recovering from a recent broken leg, was driven to the funeral by Alfred "Toad" M. Freeman, a Temecula cattle rancher. After the service, they stopped at the Helm ranch to visit and to have a few drinks.

According to court documents, at about five o'clock Mrs. Speziali suggested taking the three daughters of the Helm family to a moving picture theater in Elsinore. Pearl, Hazel, and Anna Mae Helm, daughters of John E. and Kitty Helm, went with Alfred Freeman and Julia Speziali. Their mother asked the girls not to go, but they were persistent. Ten minutes after leaving the Helm home, a terrible tragedy occurred.

Pearl later testified. "Mr. Freeman drove alright for awhile, and even turned a corner easily, but then the car got to zigzagging on the road. I took hold of the steering wheel once and pulled the car back on the highway. But just a little ways farther the car suddenly shot off the road and struck the telephone pole" (April 14, 1936, Riverside Daily Press)

Highway patrol officers arrived at the scene of the accident near the intersection of Winchester road and the Inland Highway. Alfred Freeman, who was uninjured, was immediately arrested and transported to Elsinore. Julia Speziali's leg was fractured, Pearl had a gash on her forehead and Hazel, who was riding in the coupe's rumble seat, received injuries to her chest and a broken nose.

Twelve year old, Anna Mae Helm, who was sitting on Mrs. Speziali's lap, was knocked unconscious by a frontal skull fracture. She was transported to Riverside County hospital, but died twenty-four hours later at 5:50 p.m.

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Alfred Freeman, who was in the Elsinore jail, now faced murder charges.

On March 12th, a hearing was held at Elsinore City Hall. District Attorney Earl Redwine filed murder charges and Freeman's trial was moved to the Riverside County courthouse. During his arraignment on March 16th, Freeman pleaded not guilty. His trial began on March 31st.

Superior Judge G. R. Freeman (no relation) presided over the court trial on April 14th.

"High-heeled cowboy boots gave a resounding atmosphere of frontier courts to Judge Freeman's courtroom as spectators from the Temecula Valley continued to arrive during the morning session. "

"The defendant, with his flowing mustache, unruly shock of hair and shoes fitted with high heels like those normally seen on range boots, would be "in type" for a picture of early California days." (April 14, 1936, Riverside Daily Press)

The defense waived a jury trial and soon the witnesses were called to the stand. Dr. Glen Westphal testified that immediately after the accident he examined Alfred Freeman and found him to be in the second stage of intoxication. Other witnesses came forward, testifying they had witnessed Freeman drinking prior to the accident. Finally, Alfred Freeman took the stand and gave his testimony.

He "testified that as he was driving around the turn Mrs. Spezialli put her hand down by his pocket and "she slapped her foot on my foot that was on the gas" which speeded the car up a little and "at the same time she grabbed the steering wheel and switched it out", and that just before they arrived at the pole one of the Helm girls grabbed the steering wheel." (People versus Freeman Crim. No. 332. Fourth Appellate District, August 14, 1936)

On April 16th, Judge Freeman found Alfred Freeman guilty of involuntary manslaughter. Alfred Freeman would be sent to San Quentin prison for one to ten years. Judge Freeman strongly believed that his sentence would be a warning for future would-be drunk drivers who violated the law. On May 11th, the court's decision was upheld, and Alfred Freeman was taken to prison.

Defense Attorney Joseph Seymour filed an appeal which was heard in the San Diego district courts on August 11th. However, no further information has been found in the newspapers involving this case.

By the end of August, Freeman's court case was soon overshadowed by a high profile Temecula news story, the McNeill Murder. Judge G. R. Freeman's crusade did not stop drunk drivers. In 1936, 634 arrests were made for drunkenness and 91 arrests for drunk driving in Riverside.

Years later, John E. and Kitty Helm were both buried next to their daughter in the Temecula Cemetery. The tale of Anna's headstone has now been shared. May we remember this twelve year old girl who was an innocent victim of a drunk driving accident in 1936.

How much do you know about our local history?

Quiz answers:

1. A copy of the 1885 application for the post office had the name Cedar, but apparently the name was already taken. The writing on the application suggests that it was someone at the U.S. Post Office Department who came up with Radece, Cedar spelled backwards. Caroline Tripp was the postmaster.
2. Riverside County was formed on 9 May 1893.
3. Banana Road

Membership News

WELCOME NEW MEMBER:

Patty Gollnick

THANKS FOR RENEWING:

Lisa Woodward

Meet and Greet:

Please join us for a Meet & Greet time, with refreshments, at 5:30 pm on Monday, August 24th, at the history Center (the red barn next to Kohl's) on Temecula Pkwy. prior to the meeting at 6:00 pm.

We'd like to get to know you.