

# TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

September 2015  
Volume 15 Issue 9

*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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## JUAN MURRIETA

by Duane Preimsberger



In 1844, Juan Murrieta, for whom the City of Murrieta is named, was born in the Basque town of Santurce along the northern coast of Spain. The town, steeped in history as a sea-port, was founded in the mid- 14<sup>th</sup> Century. There, the Basque influence continues to this day and intertwined in its culture are the time honored tasks of shepherding, wine making, farming and culinary pursuits. Juan and his brothers grew up in Santurce and the town's history influenced their lives as did a good education that developed them into young men

who were courteous, friendly, well liked and interested in raising sheep.

Two older brothers answered the call of the sea, traveling from Spain to South America; one landing in Peru and another in Brazil where, in both countries, they began to raise sheep. Their influence drew Juan to the Americas and at the age of seventeen he came to the United States with another brother, Iziquel. The two brothers traveled by ship around Cape Horn to California and ended up in Merced. After a brief stint as cattle ranchers they learned that the wool market would be more profitable and they soon owned over 100,000 sheep.

Shortly after beginning their operations in the central valley of California, the terrible drought of 1872 descended upon them and they began to move their huge flocks away from Merced in search of water. A year later and after much exploring to the south, they came into the Temecula/Murrieta Valley and were impressed with what they found. They formed a partnership with Domingo Pujol and Francisco Sanjurjo and began negotiating for land. They ultimately purchased 52,000 acres that were dotted with artesian wells for a dollar an acre. The brothers were soon busy reintroducing sheep into our valley where the four legged critters had been absent since the secularization of the Mission San Luis Rey and its local lands.

Shortly after his arrival, Juan met the girl who was to become the love of his life. Austrian born and royal blooded, Adele Golsh, who lived in Pala, captivated young Juan's heart and the two of them were wed.

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They began a family and before long they had two sons and a daughter. The sheep business was doing well, so well in fact that both brothers decided to sell off much of their properties and the flock at a nice profit. Iziqel returned to Spain and in 1884 Juan decided to move his family to Los Angeles. Subsequent to the move, Juan sold about 1000 acres to the Barnett family whose descendants still live in Temecula today.

Juan and Adele shared an interest in plants and flowers, raising a variety of unusual species at their home on College Street in Los Angeles. Juan also formed an interest in avocados and began corresponding with Senor Fuentes, a Wells Fargo agent who resided in Atlixco, Mexico. Fuentes had attained some successes in raising avocados there and soon baskets of avocados from Mexico were making their way to Juan Murrieta in Los Angeles. Juan began a small grove of avocados at his home and was planting and experimenting with different varieties as he helped to develop a fledgling interest in what would become an important California crop. Today, Juan is remembered by the California Avocado Association as one of the pioneers and earliest growers of avocados in California.

In 1887, Los Angeles County Sheriff, James C. Kays, appointed Juan Murrieta to a position as one of his deputies. Murrieta served for 40 years and earned the nickname, "Grand Old Man." He became an expert in the Sheriff's Office's civil law enforcement duties and became a trusted adviser to nine sheriffs. He grew older and grayer during his many years of noteworthy and satisfactory service, finally retiring with badge number 1 in 1927.

His beloved wife Adele preceded him in death in 1921 and Juan mourned her until his own passing in 1936 at 92 years of age. His memory and accomplishments live on in the history of Southern California as a man who made his mark and left a legacy of commitment, innovation and honor. He was successful in all of his endeavors as an immigrant, a shepherd, landowner, husband, father, friend, avocado grower and lawman.

Here in our Valley, the City of Murrieta and

Murrieta Hot Springs bear his name as tributes to the contributions made by Juan Murrieta during his long and remarkable life. Perhaps today, almost 140 years after his arrival in our Valley, Juan looks down from his heavenly perch and is very well satisfied with the quality and caliber of the places named in his honor!

#### Membership News

Welcome New Members:

Margaret Melton  
Manny & Linda Robles

Thanks for renewing:  
Elaine Eshom

#### Meet & Greet

Please join us for refreshments during a Meet & Greet at 5:30pm at the Little Temecula History Center (red barn next to Kohl's) on Temecula Pkwy/Redhawk Pkwy prior to the September 28th meeting at 6:00pm.

### UPCOMING MEETING NEWS

On September 28th, Andrew Thompson will conclude his two-part presentation on "Little Known Facts about the Founding of Our Country" using a game show format to reveal information about Napoleon Bonaparte's secret plan to invade America, Nazi Prison Camps in America, and the possibility that the United States FBI may have information that Adolph Hitler escaped to South America instead of ending his life in the bunker. This program is too good to miss.

On October 26th, Barbara Waite will present a program based on Elsie Reed Hayes' diaries. Elsie was a teacher to barefoot children in a one-room schoolhouse in rural Arizona right after it became a state. Barbara will share a passage from Elsie's diary written about staying in the Temecula Hotel with her father before going on a trip up Palomar Mountain. This should be an entertaining presentation that will enlighten us to the struggles of pioneer living and the common emotions, wants and needs we share with them today.

*(Editor's Note: The brief article below appeared in the Riverside Enterprise on July 15, 1903. In those days most newspapers had "stringers" or "correspondents" to provide local first hand information of events. Much of the time it was only "local" gossip. Notice that the "dateline" indicates it was from "Bergman", that area today is known as Aguanga. Notice the misspelling of "Veil", which should be "Vail".)*

Bergman, July 13. – (Regular Correspondence.) – Harry Bergman had a narrow escape from a fighting steer yesterday. He was hunting cattle in the mountains and found a lone steer in the bottom of a deep canyon, where it was too rocky to work with a horse, so he attempted on foot to get him out. He succeeded in turning him once, but the second time the animal only lowered his head and made for Bergman, striking him about waist high and knocking him over a ledge of rocks, where he landed on the back of his head, injuring him severely but breaking no bones.

J.Q. Parks and H.F. Bergman, today, started for Temecula with their beef cattle which they sold to J. Oehl of San Bernardino.

Fred Angel of Mesa Grande has been visiting friends in this valley.

Eula Simmons, Vernie English and Maggie Dannon were visiting the Bergman family yesterday.

A thousand head of cattle belonging to Veil (sp?) and Gates passed through here the 11<sup>th</sup> on their way to Warner's ranch.

### How much do you know about our local history?

1. Where was the Murrieta Hot Springs Air port?
2. Before the 1850s, what was the largest building in the Temecula area?

Answers on page 5

**Congratulations to TVHS Board Member Bonnie Martland on being awarded the Grand Prize in the State of the City Address Art Exhibition.**

### *President's Message...*

The end of the year is rapidly approaching along with our Annual Dinner meeting which will be on Friday, November 20, 2015 in the Community Room at Temecula's City Hall complex. A wonderful program by our newest Notable Women of Temecula (NWOT) will follow the dinner, and classical guitar music will be part of our evening as it was last year. Mark your calendars – more to come. As part of the evening's activities will be the introduction and installation of our Board members for 2016.

While marking your calendars, don't forget to note that our next regular meeting will be on Monday, September 28 at the History Center. Meet and greet will be available at 5:30 p.m., and our program will begin at 6:00 p.m with Andrew Thompson doing *Part Two* on "Little Known Facts in American History". Andrew had more information to cover than was possible during his first presentation which became known as *Part One*, so don't miss this next edition.

*Dick Fox*

### TVHS TOURS IN SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER

GREAT OAK TREE AND ERLE STANLEY GARDNER'S RANCH  
On Friday, **September 18th**, TVHS will tour the Great Oak Tree and Erle Stanley Gardner's Ranch. We will meet at 9:45 am at the Pechanga Service Station (past the Casino) on the right side of Pechanga Parkway. Please park in the lot behind the Service Station. The tour begins at 10:00 am and is limited to 20 people. We will put names on a waiting list in case someone cancels. For tour information and reservations, please call Phil Washum at 201-0020 or email him at [pcwashum@verizon.net](mailto:pcwashum@verizon.net). The tour is free to members and their guests.

#### GASLAMP DISTRICT

On Thursday, October 22nd, TVHS will tour the Gaslamp District in San Diego with Tracy Frick as our Docent. We will meet in the parking lot across from the Red Barn (next to Kohl's) at 8:45 am. We will carpool. It is approximately 60 miles.

Even if you are driving yourself, please meet the group at the parking lot, so that we know the number of people to expect when we arrive at the Gaslamp District. The tour will last from 10 am to 12:00 noon. We will have lunch on our own in San Diego. For tour information and reservations, please call Phil Washum at 201-0020 or email him at [pcwashum@verizon.net](mailto:pcwashum@verizon.net).





## The Murder of Mrs. Eliza Cantarini

By Jeffery G. Harmon

Fernando Luna, a Temecula ranch hand, drove his new 1925 Chevrolet touring car into Temecula beaming with pride. He drove up to a house he owned around 1:30 p.m. to show off his new purchase to Mrs. Cantarini, who may have been a renter. Her cousin, Tom Samaniego, a possible resident of Murrieta, was visiting at the time.

Luna insisted that Mrs. Cantarini go for a ride with him in his new vehicle. Her husband, Ricardo, and son, John, were in Palm Springs tending their cattle and she didn't feel it was proper for her to be in a car with another man. Luna was insulted and became enraged.

Frank H. Hall, proprietor of the Temecula Lunch Rooms, heard a commotion and went to investigate.

"He watched the man and woman enter the house, saw Luna leave, and later return, carrying a rifle. Luna fired a shot through the screen door of the kitchen.

He testified that Luna then went around the house and entered it by another door. Almost immediately Hall heard two more shots fired, and thereafter saw Luna hastily leave the house, still carrying the gun, and then drive rapidly away in his automobile, he said. Hall investigated the trouble at the Luna house and found Mrs. Cantarini lying wounded on the bedroom floor. Tom Samaniego came into the room and Hall observed that the man (Tom) had been wounded in the hand, one finger having been practically shot away." (June 11, 1925, Riverside Daily Press)

Mrs. Eliza Cantarini was the daughter of Andreas Tortuga and grew up on the Pechanga Indian Reservation. In October 1904, at the age of 26, she married Antonio Alvarez, age 28. The young couple had one son, John. In 1916, while Antonio was working on the Santa Rosa Ranch, he became deathly ill. He was taken to the Riverside County Hospital, where he soon

died on March 8, 1916.

Widowed, Eliza persevered. She and her son moved back to Temecula to work their small 3 ½ acre farm. Soon, Juan Munoa and Eliza formed a partnership and purchased farm land in San Marcos. Eliza and her son moved to San Marcos, but maintained their small farm in Temecula as well.

In December 1917, Ricardo Cantarini, age 38, married Mrs. Eliza Alvarez. Ricardo had a cattle ranch in the Cahuilla area and the family continued farming operations in Temecula. By 1925, Mrs. Eliza Cantarini operated a tamale stand next to the Temecula dance hall.

On Friday, May 8, 1925, around 1:30 p.m., Fernando Luna had offered Mrs. Cantarini a ride in his new car. After refusing his offer, Luna became enraged. Mrs. Cantarini and Tom Samaniego sought refuge inside her home. Luna grabbed a .25.35 Winchester rifle and fired a shot through the kitchen screen door. The shot severed Tom's middle finger. Luna ran around to the back of the house as Eliza went into her bedroom and slammed the door shut.

Luna entered the house and found the bedroom door locked. Luna fired the rifle at the closed bedroom door, not knowing that Mrs. Cantarini was leaning on the door to keep it shut. The blast shattered the door and hit Cantarini in her right side. Luna, realizing she was injured, fled the scene.

Driving south out of town, Luna took the road towards the Pauba Ranch. The local authorities were notified of the shooting and immediately pursued Luna. When Luna reached Aguanga, his car slid off the road. With his new car ruined, Luna continued fleeing on foot, hoping to return to Mexico before he was captured. However, Constable Jack Roripaugh and local blacksmith, Al Knott, trailed Luna to the home of some his relatives. Roripaugh soon captured Luna without a shot fired and turned him over to Riverside County Sheriff Clem Sweaters and Sheriff Carl Rayburn.

Luna was taken to the Riverside County jail to await the outcome of his crime.

"Luna made an unofficial statement to County Jailor Paul Scott last night, in which he stated that he fired the shots in self defense, after Mrs. Cantarini and Samaniego, whom he asserted were both intoxicated, had attacked him with a knife. He also asserted that

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the woman had attempted to choke him in a struggle just prior to the shooting.” (May 9, 1925, Riverside Daily Press)

Mrs. Cantarini was brought to the county hospital in Arlington around 7:30 p.m. At midnight surgery was performed on the two gunshot wounds she had received. Doctors were optimistic that she would recover, but she died early Sunday morning on May 10<sup>th</sup>.

Luna was charged with first degree murder and his preliminary hearing was held May 27<sup>th</sup>. On June 12<sup>th</sup> in superior court, Luna pleaded not guilty to first degree murder and a trial was set. Tom Samaniego, who was the main witness, was unable to attend, because he was in the county hospital with small pox. Witnesses for the trial included Mrs. Cantarini’s friends and relatives, Constable Jack Roripaugh, and Frank Hall.

On July 6<sup>th</sup>, Luna pleaded guilty to second degree murder according to his legal counsel and no court trial was held. The judge sentenced Luna to 10 years to life in San Quentin prison. On July 10, 1925, Fernando Luna was taken north, never to drive his new automobile again. Seven years later, Luna died of pneumonia in a prison hospital.

Mrs. Eliza Cantarini was laid to rest in the Pechanga Cemetery, surrounded by her family and friends. Her brother, Daniel J. Tortuga, was the executor of her estate. The fate of her husband and her son is unknown. Her tragic death faded from the headlines and her story was soon forgotten.

Researcher’s Notes:

The story of Fernando Luna’s capture can be found in The High Country, Number 1, 1967, “Ten Whole Dollars . . . A Month’s Wages” by Sam Hicks.

The article erroneously claimed the incident took place in June 1926.

Jack Roripaugh was awarded Luna’s Winchester rifle, which became a prized possession. Sam Hicks took a photo of Jack brandishing the rifle with some hunting trophies, but the whereabouts of the photo or the rifle is unknown.

### October TVHS Newsletter

Anyone having items to be included in the October newsletter should submit the info to me by September 28th.

Judy Preimsberger, editor

Email: [pberger30@verizon](mailto:pberger30@verizon) p/n (951) 699-6619

### How much do you know about our local history?

quiz answers:

1. The Murrieta Hot Springs Airport was located just south of Los Alamos Road and east of I-15. The runway ran northeast from I-15 to near the intersection of Los Alamos and Vista Murrieta. While still obvious in aerial photos, the old runway is difficult to see from the ground. For aerial photos, the history, and other photos of this airport, google <abandoned Murrieta Hot Springs Airport> and select the website titled **Abandoned & Little-Known Airfields**. On that website, you will also find information about old Rancho California Airport.

2. The largest building in Temecula before the 1850s was located southwest of Highway 79 South (Temecula Parkway) and Pechanga Parkway. It was known as El Trojo, meaning the granary. Sources, including surveyors' notes, describe it as being L-shaped with the longest side about 193 feet long. It was over 6000 square feet. It was used as a granary, but also contained other rooms for various mission activities. It was in ruins by the 1850s. It is possible that some of the adobes from the old building were used to build new structures in area.

For additional information or questions, contact Anne Miller at [DMEAJM@earthlink.net](mailto:DMEAJM@earthlink.net)

### REMINDER...

In November we will not have a public meeting because of our Annual Dinner meeting at the Civic Center on November 20th and we will not meet in December.

We have a full schedule of wonderful speakers for 2016!