

# TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

September 2017  
Volume 17 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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[www.temeculahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.temeculahistoricalsociety.org)



## Last of the "Pony Express" Riders

# Chico Carried the Mail

*(Long after the original "Pony Express" ceased operations, Southern California had its own "rider" in the person of Francisco (Chico) Ramidz, this is his story.)*

*(By Erwin Hein, originally published in Touring Topics, August 1938.)*

Francisco (Chico) Ramidz, dusky little Californian, calls himself the last of the pony express riders.

Two generations have inherited the inland hills since Ramidz packed the mails on horseback over a 125-mile trail between San Bernardino and Julian. But for four years the hoof-beats of his horses echoed through the canyons.

On his old route today are a few patriarchs, who remember the hard-riding Chico as a veritable magician with a six-shooter, an intrepid servant of the then sparse public, and a good guitar player. But he rides no more.

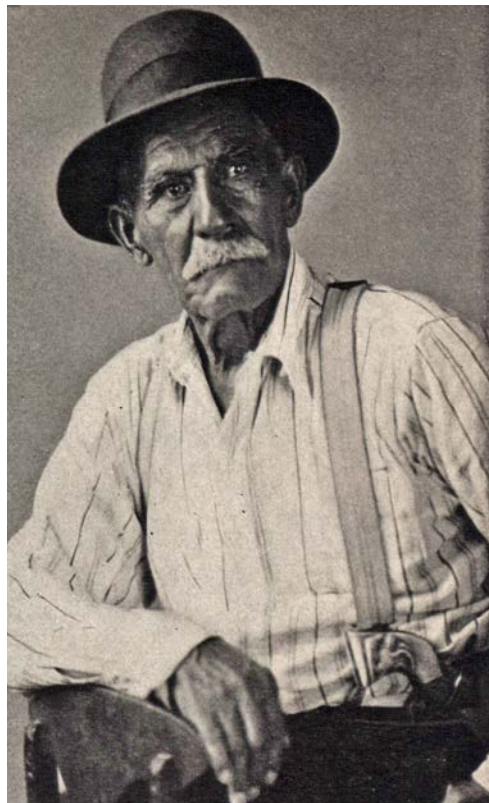
Chico can't shoot a flying quail or running rabbit without halting his horse – not now. Black eyed *señoritas* whom he knew on the old Spanish ranchos wouldn't recognize this 86-year-old Redlands resident. He lives alone in a clap

-board shack – an almost forgotten descendant of French and Spanish families that knew California in the days of the Dons.

Ramidz was born in Los Angeles on April 12, 1852. The American flag was still new to the State. Joaquin Murrieta was scouring the countryside. Francisco's first outcry resounded through a two-room adobe building on First near Aliso Street. Seven years later he was transplanted to the San Bernardino valley to become the adopted son of kindly, plump Mrs. Caroline Pishon. She was the wife of Captain M.J. Pishon, whose army duty kept him so busy introducing legal restraint to resentful Indian tribes and white communities that he was rarely at home.

At 15 Chico was breaking horses and mules on a stock ranch for 50 cents a day. At 20 he yielded to the lure of \$30 a month and became a pony express rider.

"A San Diego firm had a contract to carry the mails between San Ber-



Chico Ramidz here wears the ivory handled pistol he carried in his pony express days.

(Continued from Page 1)

# Chico Carried the Mail . . .

nardino and Julian,” says Ramidz. “They had the same sort of service from Julian to San Diego, plus stage coaches. Stages brought the mail from Los Angeles to San Bernardino.

“Too much killing was going on. Drivers were hard to keep, so on several occasions I had to drive the six-horse stage during my rest periods in Julian.”

They called him Chico because he was only five feet, one inch tall, though he weighed 140 pounds.

At the beginning he was allowed three days for a one-way trip. This made it a leisurely jaunt, barring such frequent perils as floods and heavy snows. Later it was cut to two days and the hard-pressed rider was astride a horse almost constantly, except customarily he was allowed two days to loaf at the Julian end. He carried mail in both directions, starting with a 50-pound leather pouch strapped securely on behind his saddle.

Whims of the weather brought frightful thrills. More than once Chico’s horses weren’t equal to the task and he had to struggle afoot through sunbaked canyons, heavily burdened, to the nearest habitation. He swam muddy rivers, fought snowdrifts.

Outlaws were a constant threat.

“I had to shoot my way out of two or three scrapes,” says Ramidz, “but I don’t think I ever had to kill anybody. It was mostly bluff – shooting close enough so the other fellow would run. Usually you never got near enough to know who you might be shooting – and you never liked to make a mistake.

“One night my horse and I had swum the San Jacinto river and I was riding toward the darkness of Laborde Canyon when I heard someone behind me. I saw a man riding from the river. He circled, got ahead of me and stopped at the mouth of the canyon. I stopped my horse a minute, thinking. Then I decided that I had to make it



**The ruins of the old stage station at Aguanga, in southern Riverside County.**

through the canyon sooner or later and I drew my pistol. I twirled it on my finger so it would flash in the moonlight, dug my heels into the horse and raced ahead.

“The other fellow was taken by surprise, I guess. He drove his pony off into a gully and I sped past. Not a shot was fired. Then I was in the blackness of the canyon, where there was no moonlight. I simply shut my eyes and gave the horse his head.

“Finally I reached the top and paused. In the canyon I could hear two horses running. I was on a downhill grade then, heading into San Timoteo Canyon. Nine miles from the summit I reached a trench, which had been dug at the edge of a ranch to keep cattle from escaping. The trench was filled with leaves. I threw my mail sacks and guns into the ditch, then hid the horse in the darkness of some trees. I returned to the mail sacks and covered myself with leaves. I nearly froze before dawn, but I was safe from my pursuers, who passed close a couple of times during the night.”

Starting usually in the gray dawn, Ramidz rode southeast from San Bernardino, pointing to San Jacinto, Temecula, Aguanga, Oak Grove, Warner’s Ranch and Julian.

He splashed through a vast cienega and the Santa Ana River, passed half a dozen ranch homes that had sprung from the brushy expanse. He loped through a village of Cahuilla Indians in San Timoteo Canyon.

From the San Jacinto bills Ramidz looked south upon a sunlit lake, into which the San Jacinto River poured its waters. In modern years it is seldom more than an alkaline marshland, the river having been appropriated for irrigation of the Hemet valley. But back in 1872 Ramidz shot ducks there. In midsummer he waded his horse around the cool edge before crossing the Pico grant to reach San Jacinto Nuevo y Potrero, the Estudillo rancho.

By the old mail route it was a generous 25 miles from



**Wolf Store once the post office in Temecula, used as shed on the Pauba Ranch.**

(Continued from Page 2)

## Chico Carried the Mail . . .

San Jacinto to the original Temecula, oldest settlement of the future Riverside County, today headquarters of the Pauba Ranch. The adobe post office where he stopped was the Wolf Store, today a tool shed. Here he knew Ramona Wolf, the postmaster's wife, who was to become so friendly with Helen Hunt Jackson that the author was to name her famous book *Ramona*.

Temecula was his overnight haven in the years that he operated on a two-day schedule.

Now he was on a well-defined road as he traveled south, stage coaches having scorched a trail in their 72-hour dashes between Los Angeles and Yuma. But the road was lonesome again, the Butterfield line having been abandoned during the Civil War because not enough troops remained in California to quell the outlaws, who thrived in this region. Near Aguanga he usually paused at the Bergman ranch, where the stages had maintained a depot, to add a rifle to his portable armory. Always he carried one pistol on his belt and another lashed to his saddle horn.

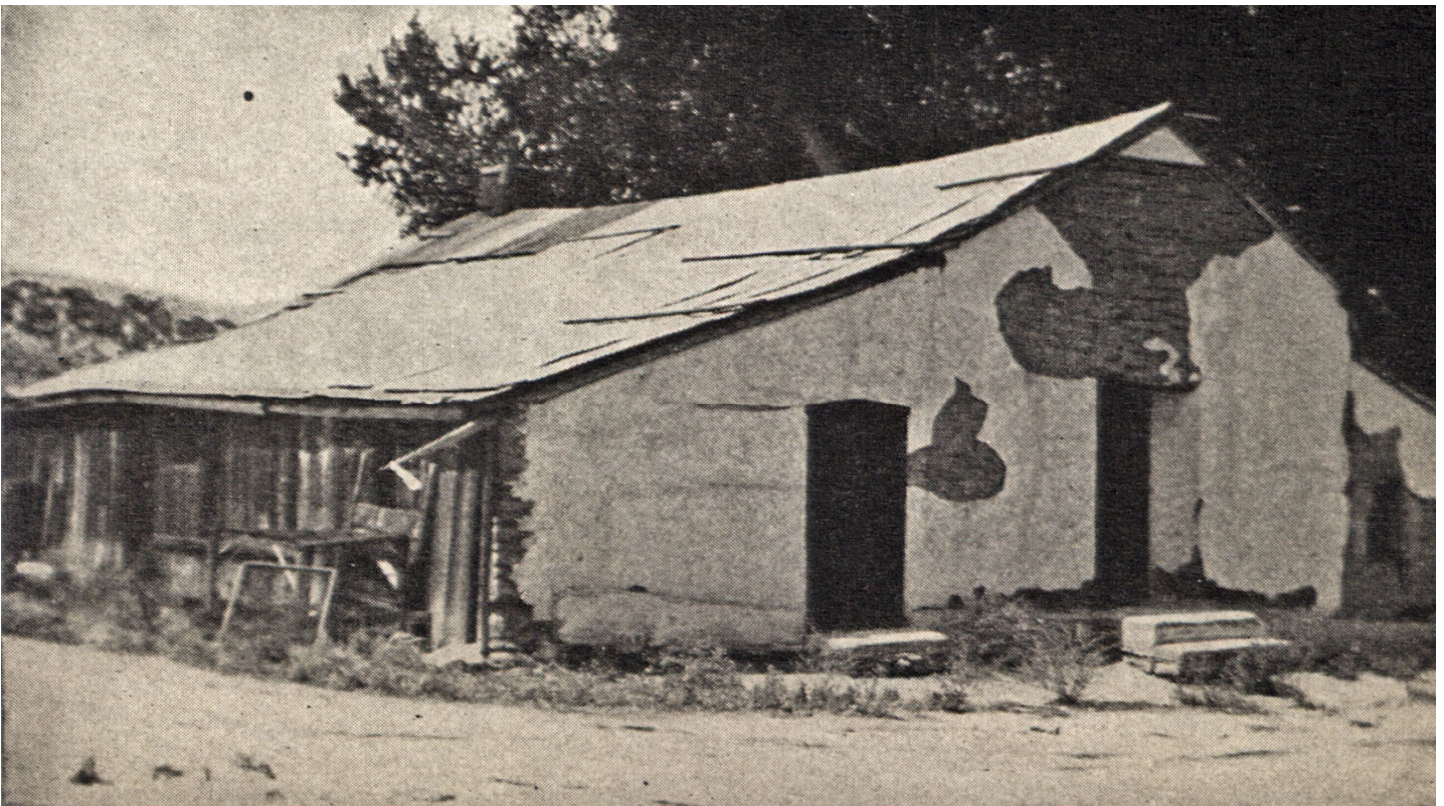
At Oak Grove, shady little shelter 20 miles from Old Temecula, Ramidz was cheered by the sight of a comfortable building with rooms end to end, in a long rectangle. Today there is a frame exterior hiding the old mud walls. Joe Marks was the wilderness postmaster.

Continuing 12 miles southeast along Temecula Creek, the horseman found a primitive town. He splashed his mount through the occasionally riotous waters of Agua Caliente Creek and glimpsed adobe dwellings on the hills ahead. The road dodged clusters of clay huts. Bronze, naked children watched him enter the village and leave again at the other end. Rarely did he stop. The settlement hadn't achieved any of the renown that blesses the Warner Hot Springs of today. The Indians called the place Agua Caliente.

Six miles more and he dropped an allotment of mail at the four-room adobe building known variously as William Marshall's store and Warner's Ranch headquarters. This had been another stop for Butterfield coaches, which followed the rough trail through San Felipe Valley en route to Yuma and the East.

Each little settlement along the mail route had its share of adventure, but Chico regarded Julian as the wildest of all. Men worked and fought for gold. Two hotels, the largest buildings, loomed amidst a dozen or more saloons. Men toiled, drank whiskey, quarreled with knives and guns.

"Indians used to get the blame for everything," says Chico, "but the Americans and Spanish did most of the robbing and murdering. The Indians used to do some killing of their own, but it was for revenge."



The old post-office at Warner's Ranch, used as quarters for workers in later years.

# Notable Women of Temecula

## Jean Bethell

When 20-year old Jean Bethell came into the Pierpont Inn Restaurant in Ventura one day in 1921, little did she know she would meet a man who would change the entire course of her life. But that's exactly what happened.

The man was Erle Stanley Gardner, the creator of Perry Mason. This day, however, Perry Mason didn't yet exist. This day in 1921, Gardner was just a 22-year-old criminal defense attorney working hard at his practice and needing help. So he asked Jean to come work for him as his secretary.

Initially she started working as his legal secretary. But Gardner had also started writing crime fiction on the side, which he was fervently trying to get published. During the day Jean worked at his law practice, but then would go to his house after office hours to take dictation for his stories.

There was a reason Erle was so driven – which was that soon after establishing his law practice, Gardner realized that while he loved the excitement of litigation and developing trial strategy, he actually detested being cooped up in an office. Because above all, Gardner was an outdoorsman. He loved anything you could do outdoors. So he'd seized upon a way to make a living using his legal knowledge creating fictional characters who solved crimes using their legal knowledge.

Jean's routine became typing as his legal secretary during the day, and typing his story manuscripts in the evening. With such an all-consuming occupation, it wasn't long before Erle's work became Jean's life.

The road wasn't easy. He finally sold his first story in 1921 to a magazine called *Breezy Stories*, for which he was paid \$15.

Erle's persistence paid off when he wrote "The Case of The Velvet Claws" – his first Perry Mason novel. The year was 1933. At the age of 45, he gave up his law practice for good.

By the early 1940's, Erle began writing radio scripts in addition to just books, and realized he needed more secretarial help. He'd also bought a big ranch in Temecula in 1937. He hired Jean's two sisters, Peggy and Honey, and eventually four other women. Together they produced the manuscripts for "The Fiction Factory" – as Gardner dubbed his business.

Throughout it all, Jean was Erle's executive secretary. She was his right hand. The ranch had become Erle's beloved home, where he could relax with good friends, good food, and good fun outdoors on the rolling hills of his property, and Jean made it all work.

Over the years, many people speculated that Erle based Perry Mason on himself, and based his loyal secretary, Della Street, on Jean. They also speculated that Per-

ry and Della were romantically involved. So what about about Erle and Jean? Was it true? You can find out when you hear Jean Bethell tell her story. Meet Jean Bethell in person on Sunday, November 5th, at the Little Temecula History Center (Red Barn) at 2:30 p.m. for a Living History program devoted to Erle Stanley Gardner and Jean Bethell.



Jean Bethell , presented by Julie Gilbert

## — Member News —

### *Welcome New Members*

Sandra Devol

Wayne & Daphne Grigsby

Lyndi Dana & Shayla Dana-Urbaniak

—  
Thank you for renewing your membership:

Dan Stephenson/Rancon

Dave & Karen Strauss

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## Member *Flashes*

**NOTE:** At the September 25 regular meeting, TVHS nomination committee will be presenting the slate of Board positions for calendar 2018.

**NOTE:** Some assistance is needed in distributing our Old Town Walking Tour Guide to locations throughout the area.

Please contact Cheryl Cady to let her know how you might be able to help with this important, but light duty and occasional task. Contact Cheryl at [ccbissi63@gmail.com](mailto:ccbissi63@gmail.com)

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## — THANK YOU —

The TVHS board of directors thanks the Munoa Family and members of their LDS ward for the invitation to a gathering in Robert and Janice Munoa's home to hear the history of their Pechanga family and how the Mormon Battalion assisted the Temecula band after the January 1847 massacre. Five Board Members from TVHS attended and gleaned helpful information.

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## Mark Your Calendars

# TVHS Hosting Plans For “Invaders” 50th

The Temecula Valley Historical Society is planning to host a 50th Anniversary Commemoration of “*The Invaders*” TV series. The pilot episode which was filmed in Old Town Temecula in 1967, will be shown at an outdoor event. This special event is currently planned to be held Friday November 10th, and be an afternoon and early evening get together. Stay tuned for more details.

Attendees will have the fun of comparing scenes from the program, and relating to today’s Old Town landscape.

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Every Sunday** — Sunday Funday at the Vail Headquarters — Summer hours are 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Rides, demonstrations & activities. Consider volunteering. Don’t forget the Tuesday’s Farmer’s Market from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Now through November 12** — Gallery exhibit at Temecula Valley Museum, *Eternally Yours* showcasing the art of Lisa Cabrera and her colorful presentation of the traditions of *Dia de la Muertos* celebrating the life of deceased loved ones.

**Wednesday, September 6** -- Vail Headquarters Movie Night. FREE outdoor movie, *The Lone Ranger, 1956*. Bring lawn chairs, blankets, etc. Movie night specials available at Vail Pizzeria, Juice It Up, and Cheflavor.

**Wednesday, September 13** — Informal get acquainted Session. Chance to chat with other members over a Piece of Pizza, or sandwich. Meet at Vail HQ 5 - 7 pm.

**Thursday, September 21**— 2:00 p.m. Mindy Johnson will present Notable Woman Maria Apis at the Harveston Chateau.

**Saturday, September 23** — Western Days in Old Town. A 1 day event featuring a ICS Regional chili cookoff, Western music, gun fight skits, a high noon shoot out and bank robbery.

**Monday, September 25** — Monthly TVHS program. 5:30 p.m. Meet & Greet with refreshments. At 6:00 p.m. Dale Garcia will present “*Disasters in Temecula*”. Regular monthly board meeting to follow, visitors are welcome to attend this monthly business meeting.

**Friday, September 29** — 6 -10 p.m. *Starlight Bazaar* at Vail Headquarters. Under the stars live music, extraordinary vendors, and performers — FREE. Horse and Carriage rides available for \$5. Shops open.

**Monday, October 23** — Monthly TVHS program. 5:30 p.m. Meet & Greet with refreshments. At 6:00 p.m. Linda Barcelona will present “*A Bigail Adams*”. Regular monthly board meeting to follow, visitors are welcome to attend this monthly business meeting.

**Friday, October 27** — 6 -10 p.m. *Starlight Bazaar* at Vail Headquarters. Under the stars live music, extraordinary vendors, and performers — FREE. Horse and Carriage rides available for \$5. Shops open..

**Friday, November 17** — 5 :30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. for our Annual Meeting and Gala Dinner at the Assistance League. The program for the evening is “*Some Fun Tonight*”, which will be given by guest speaker Chuck Gunderson, who is the country’s leading expert on the Beatles’ North American concert tours.

# Spotlight on Members — Featuring — **Bonnie Reed**

Bonnie Reed is a native Californian, hailing from Pasadena. She married right out of high school, then she and husband Ken relocated to Azusa where they raised three children. Bonnie had always loved old buildings, and was fascinated with their histories. Her mother had the same interest, and she even furnished her home in antiques which she shared with Bonnie in her new home. So it was a natural for the two of them to partner up in an antiques business which they began in Glendora in the 1970s.

The family relocated to San Marcos in 1984 and found the perfect spot for the business in the small town 30 miles north called Temecula. It was old, quaint, and just opening up to expansion. Bonnie soon became involved in the local happenings, helping to establish long-time favorite events within Old Town: The Rod Run, Western Days, Bluegrass Festival, Film Festival, and seasonal promotions, to name just a few, which were administered thru a volunteer group of merchants she spearheaded for 11 years.

As Cityhood came to Temecula, the duties of marketing Old Town were transferred to the City, and Bonnie could concentrate on her business and the needs of the newly formed Historical Society. Always an advocate for preservation, she readily accepted a request to serve on its Board of Directors. To date, she has served 11 ½ years, participating in various capacities. Chairing a Nominating Committee, By-laws Review, Project Committee, and Plaques Committee are some of her contributions and she is pleased with the Society's progress.

Her strongest concerns have always been for Old Town, and it remains so. She is very happy to see the end result of 20 years and thousands of hours put in to save the Vail Ranch Headquarters. Although not an official project of TVHS, it has been at the heart of everyone involved and the community at large has stepped up their support. She is relieved to see the restoration of the Hotel and its surrounding property. She is especially proud of the expansion that the Society has made with their Scholarship program and educational efforts to offer ongoing available information to the community about the history of the Temecula Valley.

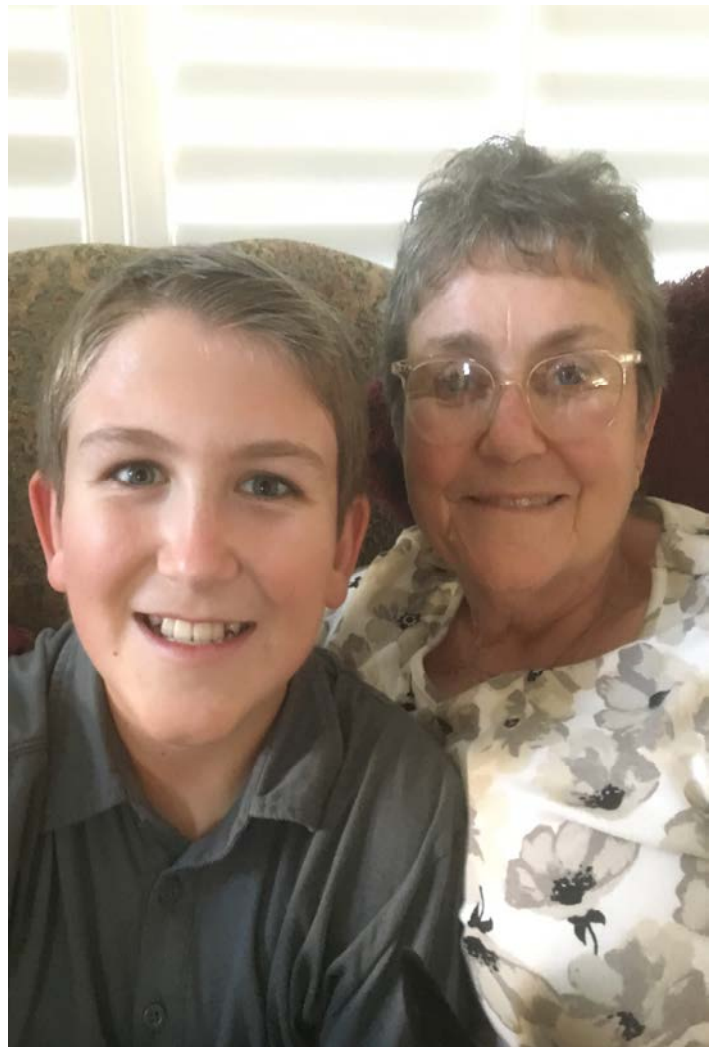
Bonnie's family has always been her greatest asset. She has tried to teach her children the value of preservation for the future of society. She is most proud to have a grandchild join in her love of "Old". After all, that holds the hope and knowledge for the future.

## Reserve Your Spot

# Mission San Luis Rey Tour Scheduled for TVHS in September

Members & guests of the Temecula Valley Historical Society will be touring the beautiful Mission San Luis Rey in Oceanside on Wednesday, September 13th. The two-hour docent-led tour will begin at 10:00 a.m. The tour costs \$12/person.

A lunch will be available for \$12/person as well, but must be reserved in advance. We will meet at the Red Barn at 8:45 a.m. to carpool or caravan, and we will leave at 9:00 a.m. To make sure you have a spot reserved, contact Phil Washum at (951) 201-0020. Let Phil know if you are planning to stay for lunch.



**Bonnie Reed and Grandson Joshua**

# 100 Years Ago . . .

*(Selected from the Lake Elsinore Valley Press, Temecula Gossip Column, September, 1917)*

## **Issue of September 7, 1917**

Joe Campbell of Arizona, a brother of the governor of Arizona, was in town one day last week. While here he was the guest of Joe Winkels. Mr. Winkels took him sight-seeing and they were dinner guests at the home of the Vail Brothers. Mr. Campbell was impressed with our valley and the cattle at the Pauba Ranch, which are owned by the Vails. Mr. Campbell has a large ranch in Arizona with many hundred head of cattle.

George A. Burnham returned home Sunday from San Diego where he spent a week's vacation. He would have stayed longer but on account of business had to return. Mrs. George A. Burnham and daughter are staying at Ocean Beach.

Harry Walters, who was spending a week with his parents, returned to Hemet the first of the week to work on his potatoes. Harry expects to have a good crop this year.

Mrs. Dean and family of Los Angeles were visitors in town Friday and Saturday. For about twenty years Mrs. Dean was a resident here. Her daughter, Miss B. Dean, then was a schoolteacher at the Indian reservation at Pechanga. Mrs. Dean and family are great friends of the Indians, the other day they paid a visit to the reservation, and all the Indians were glad to see them.

The barn of H. Bergman was burned to the ground last week on Saturday morning. A large number of tons of hay were burned and the damage is estimated at about \$1000. The cause of the fire is unknown but might have been the damp hay.

## **Issue of September 14, 1917**

Sixteen carloads of cattle were shipped to Los Angeles this week to the Cudahy Packing Co. The cattle were brought from Warren's ranching, belonging to the Vail Bros., and were bought by Mr. Dysiert, cattle buyer for the Cudahy Packing House Co.

Mac Machado presented an Indian basket to Mr. Vail to use for paper waste at his office at the bank. Mr. Machado bought the basket of an Indian from San Ysidro. The basket is very beautifully ornamented.

B. J. Smith of Elsinore has the contract for the building of the new school building in Wolf Valley. Mr. Smith is a good mechanic. He built the new Catholic Church here last year and judging by the work he did, he will no doubt do as good work on the schoolhouse, which will be a credit to himself and the community in the valley.

Last Thursday Pat Speziali was stranded near Aguanga, about 20 miles east of here. He was on his way to Warner's when some of his bearings on the engine of his flivver were burnt and the consequence was that he had to be towed into town by the Fernalds.

The biggest forest fire that has been seen here for years started Friday afternoon at the Dripping Springs, along ten miles east of town. Many of the ranchers who are living there have not lost anything yet. Two of the ranchers close

to where the fire is burning are in danger of having their ranches burned. At the present writing the fire is going up Smith Mountain. Sunday evening the fire warden took a number of men from town to fight the fire. They fought all night and were getting the fire under control, but almost noon the wind came up and started the fire again. Monday all day they were fighting but couldn't control it as the wind was strong and there is plenty of brush and dry grass that helps the fire to burn with more force. The cause of the fire is unknown. It seems that it started by the road.

## **Issue of September 21, 1917**

Ground has been broken for the new school building at the valley. In a day or two all the necessary material for the new building will be hauled.

Last Monday, the Union school began its session for the coming year with Miss Alma Wilson, principal, and Miss Alma Friedemann, assistant. There was a good attendance.

Mr. Bergman of Aguanga brought down a fine bunch of steers, which he sold to the butcher.

Last week the John B. Kelly had a close call to going up in smoke. A fire was discovered in the back yard, but it was put out before doing much damage.

Mr. and Mrs. Mac Machado motored to Hemet Sunday morning and spent the day.

Last Sunday morning Eli E. Barnett had the misfortune to lose his automobile by fire. Fire was discovered about two o'clock in the morning in the place where the machine was kept, but it was then too late to save his car.

## **Issue of September 28, 1917**

James P. Rawson of Hemet was in town the last of the week. Mr. Rawson is interesting in the building of the new schoolhouse in the valley. He has the position of teacher. School will begin when the new building is finished. At present Mr. Rawson is engaged in planting potatoes at Hemet.

Mr. Talley who is buying horses for Uncle Sam was in town one day this week. He bought twenty-two head from different farmers around here. He expects to return soon again to buy more.

Ole E. Larsen, proprietor of the poolroom and barber-shop here, made a business trip to Los Angeles last week returning home the first of the week.

Albert F. Nienke proprietor of the Temecula Valley lumberyard is furnishing all the lumber for the new schoolhouse in Wolf Valley.

Paul E. Clark of the Pauba Ranch and a large planter of sugar beets left the last of the week for Santa Ana to look for more men to do the work in the beet fields. Help is very scarce here.

Walter Chapin who was employed at the Temecula Valley Garage left for his home in Corona and recently left for Camp Lewis with the rest of the Liberty boys who are going to show the Kaiser where to head in.



# TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO Box 157

Temecula CA 92593-0157

You are cordially invited to the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner of the:

## TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Friday, November 17, 2017 from 5:30 pm until 9:30 pm

At the **Assistance League of Temecula**

28720 Via Montezuma, Temecula, CA 92590

The price of \$40 per person includes dinner and the evening's program.

**Chuck Gunderson** will present: "*The Beatles 1964 North American Tour*"

A riveting 45 minute multimedia presentation about the Beatles.

Chuck is the country's leading expert on the Beatles three North American concert tours.

Introduction of the 2018 Board of Directors and Officers

Silent Auction and Opportunity Drawings with exciting & unique items

Social Hour 5:30 to 6:30 pm - Dinner at 6:30 pm – Program Presentation at 7:30 pm

A portion of the dinner proceeds will go to the TVHS Scholarship Program

Please complete the form below and return it with your check

**RESERVATIONS AND PAYMENT MUST BE RECEIVED BY WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2017.**

### TVHS Annual Dinner Reservation

Friday, November 17, 2017 5:30 pm – 9:30 pm

**Menu:** A buffet dinner featuring an appetizer of vegetables crudité with vegetable dip, a mixed green salad with choice of dressing, an entrée of chicken tarragon in a white wine sauce, orzo rice pilaf, fresh seasonal vegetables, and dinner roll with butter. Drinks include: iced water, lemonade, and choice of ice tea or coffee. Wine will be available for a donation. Cake will be served for dessert.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Number attending: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I cannot attend but will assist with a donation for TVHS scholarships. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

The cost is \$40 per person (Guests are welcome!).

Make checks payable to: **TVHS** (checks must be received by November 1<sup>st</sup>)

Tickets will be held at the door.

Please mail form and check to: **TVHS, P.O. Box 157, Temecula, CA 92593-0157**

For further information, contact **Cheryl Cady** : ccbissi63@gmail.com, or call her at: 760-822-2543