

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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A Unique Artisan

Temecula's Bible Land And The Sand Man

For many years some roadside statuary known as *Bible Land* drew visitors to the Temecula area. Located on the east side of Highway 395, with access from the Temecula Oak Creek Canyon road which today goes through the Temecula Creek Golf Course; *Bible Land* was a major part of the life's work of Ted Conibear who came to the Temecula area in 1957 originally for health reasons, but soon began building his iconic collection of Biblical scenes for visitors to enjoy. His work was an area fixture near the southerly gateway to the Temecula Valley until 1971 when the widening of Highway 395 would create Interstate 15 and force the removal of his works, plus the property had been sold to a company that would eventually create the Temecula Creek Inn and golf course.

Ted Conibear was born in 1907, and at one time was both a carpenter and a cop in Detroit. Ted began his sand sculpting hobby as a young man in his 20's while still in Michigan. Later he spent years working county fairs around the country and professionally displaying his magic with sand sculpting, entertaining at times as many as 15,000 daily.

Conibear the artist, made life sized statues of Biblical characters out of tons and tons of sand and water. He preferred sand of a given color and texture which he found locally at the mouth of the San Dieguito River near the Del Mar Fairgrounds. Late in his tenure in Temecula he fashioned a great piece of art – a life-sized statue of Christ as he was nailed to the cross. This statue was not in the *Bible Land* proper, but rather located on the hillside above Highway 395 on the opposite side of the highway. He had plans to make two Roman soldiers in the act of nailing Christ to the cross to complete the display.

Bible Land was accessed via a narrow winding road (known today as Rainbow Canyon Rd.) that led to what might have appeared to many as a modern day "Garden of Eden" with its shade giving trees, tame animals and in the center a structure more lean-to like in ap-



Ted Conibear at work in Temecula

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Temecula's Bible Land . . .

pearance where visitors could behold the statue of Jesus in Gethsemane, the Last Supper and many more well sculptured works by Ted Conibear. At its peak *Bible Land* in Temecula would draw approximately 50,000 visitors to its 100-acre retreat.

With the highway widening encroaching he moved to the Yucaipa / Calimesa area near Redlands and created what would become known as *Bible Land II* where it became a known roadside favorite. As Ted Conibear aged the continual maintenance became more of a burden, and as his health failed so did the faithful tending of his creations.

Many times vandals would destroy portions of Ted's work. It happened early in Arizona, later in Temecula, and in the late 1970's vandals again attacked his work at *Bible Land II* which required months to reconstruct. Ted Conibear passed away in 1994 at age 87. Soon after his passing the family decided that *Bible Land II's* wonderful displays were deteriorating beyond recognition, and had the artwork destroyed.

At times during his life Mr. Conibear would take on commissions to do finished art using cement based products for permanence, and some of his work in this medium is still viewable today. In the Fallbrook Masonic Cemetery is "*Suffer the Little Children*", and at the Acheson & Graham Garden of Prayer Mortuary in Riverside, are "*Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane*", and "*Jesus, the Good Shepherd*".

Pictured below is "Suffer the Little Children" in the Fallbrook Masonic Cemetery; shown at the right is another one of Ted's more permanent works "Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane" which can be seen at the Acheson Graham Garden of Prayer Mortuary in Riverside; and bottom right is his Nativity Scene done in sand at Bible Land in Temecula.



Spotlight on Members – Featuring – Phil Washum

Phil was born in 1946 in Cincinnati, Ohio. He was adopted at birth. His adoptive parents couldn't have children of their own, so Phil had no sisters or brothers.

His parents grew tired of the winters in Ohio so they moved to Long Beach, California when Phil was four years old. A few years later, they relocated to Lakewood. Phil attended George Washington Carver Elementary School and then attended John Brown Military Academy in Long Beach on Signal Hill, where he completed 7th, 8th and 9th grades. He excelled in academics, and really took to military life.

Phil grew up playing Little League, and became a pretty good pitcher on the school baseball team. The team often played other military schools. He threw five no-hitters during the three years he attended the Military Academy. He was always involved in sports: tennis, golf, baseball and bowling. Phil attended the Academy because his Mother wanted him to go to West Point or Annapolis when he finished high school.

Phil attended Lakewood High School and graduated in 1963. While there, he played all three years on the Varsity Tennis team. While attending Lakewood High, he started his first job as a box boy at Cal Store Grocery in Long Beach. He was 16 years old and loved his job. Upon graduation from high school, he continued working at Cal Store and moved up the ladder in the grocery business while also attending Long Beach City College. He played two years on their Varsity Tennis team as well.

During this time, our country was involved in the Viet Nam War. Phil was drafted and served two years in the Army in Viet Nam. When he was discharged in 1969, he came home and located his old boss who was then working for Arden Mayfair. Phil went back to work doing what he loved best, the grocery business. He worked in that business until he retired 37 years later in 1999 at 54 years old.

Phil and Charlene love traveling. They bought a 33 foot motorhome and traveled to most of the 50 states. They sold the motorhome about two years ago and still travel, but now they stay in hotels. They enjoy live theater, movies, Storm baseball games, and visiting the grandchildren.

Today, Phil is an avid golfer and plays several times a week. He is also president of the Murrieta Men's Golf Club.

Since 1988, Phil has volunteered as a marshal doing crowd control at professional golf tournaments in southern California. His first marshaling duty was at the Riviera Golf Course in Los Angeles. Phil also did some celebrity caddying for Peter Falk, Craig T. Nelson, and basketball legends Elgin Baylor and Jerry West. Prior to O. J. Simp-

son's legal problems, Phil would chat with him at the Riviera Golf Course every year, where O.J. was a member. In Phil's 30 years of marshaling, he also met and talked with Arnold Palmer, Tiger Woods, Phil Michelson and Ricky Fowler.

Two of Phil's favorite groups in Temecula are the Temecula Valley Historical Society, and The Vail Ranch Restoration Association. Several years ago, Phil accepted the job as TVHS Tour Guide. He and Char research and locate interesting historical places for TVHS members to visit. Under Phil's leadership, our tour group has grown. The group enjoys the camaraderie, and discovering new places while learning about the history of the surrounding area.



Phil Washum ready for a game of golf

Governor to be Neighbor With Ranch Purchase

(Reprint from the Lake Elsinore Valley Sun, July 4, 1968)

Governor Reagan has purchased 771 acres of land from Rancho California in the Santa Rosa area of the former Vail Ranch, west of Highway 395. The area chosen by the governor is considered excellent cattle grazing country with a good stand of oak trees and a vast expanse of grassland.

The site of the ranch land purchase is relatively undeveloped. However, sometime ago a water district was formed for this area and this was consequently annexed to the Western Municipal Water District and the Metropolitan Water District. This gives the region access to Colorado River and Feather River water. Access is readily available through a county road.

Governor Reagan was quoted as saying that he intends to start construction soon on a ranch home on his property to be used for weekends, holidays and vacations. He formerly had a beautiful 200 acre ranch in the Malibu Mountains near Hollywood. Since that was sold, it is expected that he might develop his Riverside County property with a home, horse corrals and pastures to give the atmosphere the governor and his family enjoys.

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Temecula Telephone Exchange To Receive New Switchboard

(This is reprint of article that appeared in the Elsinore Leader Press, April 25, 1946)

A new thirty-line switchboard is to be installed at the Temecula Exchange of the California Water and Telephone Company within two weeks, according to Fred Cope, area manager.

The board will be a manual, common battery type and will be installed in the Swangun Café. It will replace one which has become inadequate due to the increased traffic through the exchange, according to Mr. Cope.

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"Everything is changing. People are taking their comedians seriously and the politicians as a joke."
— Will Rogers

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday, August 5 — Sunday Fundays at Vail HQ each Sunday 11 am to 4 pm. Demonstrations, vendors, music, rides on train and stagecoach. Family fun free. First Sundays Mompreneurs are vendors with their home-based business products. Also be sure to visit the VaRRR folks in the cookhouse antique store.

Friday, August 17 — 8:00 p.m. at the Vail HQ stage — Friday Night Movies "Hoodwinked" Free outdoor summer activity, family friendly movies. Bring lawn chairs and blankets.

Monday, August 27 — 6:00 p.m. monthly program of the Temecula Valley Historical Society to be held at the Little Temecula History Center (Red Barn). Lori Sisquoc curator of the Sherman Indian Museum and others will present a program about "*The Sherman Institute.*"

Friday, August 31 — 6 pm to 10 pm. Last Friday each Month May through October "*Starlight Bazaar*" at Vail HQ. Night markets with vendors, live music, carriage rides, displays, and entertainers.

**** Mark your calendar ****
for the TVHS Annual Dinner
Saturday, November 17th
at the Assistance League
See below, more info to follow.

Donations Needed for Annual Dinner

TVHS is seeking donations of event tickets, goods, services, or destinations, to be auctioned or raffled at our Annual Dinner on 11/17/18. Funds raised go to restore and preserve Temecula's historic past and fund college scholarships. New items of value are sought, i.e. balloon ride tickets, golf, hotel vouchers, gift certificates or items from local merchants. Items will be combined to create baskets worth a minimum of \$50. Auction and raffle items have been a staple of TVHS' ability to fund projects preserving Temecula's wonderful history. To donate, please contact Shari Crall at 951-323-6509 or sscrall@gmail.com.

All donations must be received by October 1.

100 Years Ago in Temecula

Selected events from Lake Elsinore Valley Press, Temecula Gossip Column – August 1918

Issue of August 2, 1918

J. Contreras and son Manuel returned from Los Angeles the last of the week where they had been to see one of his sons who was very ill. They say that he is recovering very slow but is expected to get well.

Thomas Arviso made a trip to Riverside the first of the week, he having taken his daughter to Sherman Institute.

Robert J. Magee returned home last week from Hemet, where he was working cutting fruit.

Mahlon Vail, who was in Los Angeles for a few days on business returned home the last of the week.

S. Logan, county recorder, was an interesting visitor in town one day last week.

Mahlon Vail has been appointed fire warden.

Alfred Knott's garage is completed and now he is ready to take care of all the work that comes in.

Alvin Smith returned recently from the oil fields and is spending some time with his parents. Alvin has enlisted in the navy and now is waiting to be called.

Pete Escallier Jr. left for Riverside Wednesday morning, where he was called to have his physical examination. Pete is one of the boys who was drafted recently.

Issue of August 9, 1918

The Vail Company brought a large number of cattle from their Santa Rosa Ranch to the Pauba Ranch, where they were turned into cornfields for fattening.

Twelve cars of cattle from Warren's ranch were shipped from here to Los Angeles Sunday morning.

Mr. and Mrs. C. P. Shumate and son Kirk left for San Diego the last of the week and expect to stay a month there. Mr. Shumate goes there for a very much-needed rest. For the past few years he has worked very hard as cashier of the First National Bank of Temecula.

Mrs. Julia Vejar, formerly of Pechanga now of Oxnard, stopped in town for a short visit with friends on her way to Pala on business with P. T. Hoffman, superintendent of the Pala Indian agency. Mrs. Vejar left for Oxnard Sunday morning.

The dance given by Ferrell Freeman at the bank hall last Saturday night was well attended. Tamales were served for supper at the Lizzie M. Hall lunchrooms.

Issue of August 16, 1918

Robert J. Magee shipped a carload of dimension rock to Los Angeles the first of the week. The trucks of O'Connell did the hauling because teams are scarce.

C. P. Shumate, cashier at the First National Bank of Temecula, died at San Diego Thursday morning and was laid to rest there Saturday afternoon. He leaves a wife and son to mourn his loss. Mr. Shumate for the past four years was an untiring worker in the bank. To his many friends it was a great shock when the news of his death

arrived. The cause of death was asthma. A large number of the town people motored to San Diego Saturday to attend the funeral of C. P. Shumate.

James O. Freeman recently purchased a new Chevrolet auto through the agency of Alfred Knott.

John B. Kelly sold his pool hall last week to R. M. Estrada and the rooming part to O'Connell for the sum of \$600.

The telegraph line that was laid through the Temecula canyon is being changed now and is being laid along the county highway from Rainbow to Fallbrook, where it is connected.

J. T. Bunn of Los Angeles is assistant cashier at the bank since the death of C. P. Shumate.

Temecula will have a grand fiesta this month beginning the 22nd and ending the 25th. Some of the most daring cowboy stunts will be pulled off and everybody should come to see Wild West cowboys doing their daring stunts. At night there will be dancing and games, in fact, during the fiesta every minute there will be some doings so come one and all.

Issue of August 23, 1918

Another carload of lumber arrived for Albert F. Nienke, which was unloaded Tuesday.

In another week the work on the beet fields at the Pauba Ranch will be in full swing. Every implement that is to be used is being repaired. It will take many weeks to do the work.

Last Friday morning between three and four o'clock George Maruffo went out of his house to find his horses and ran on to a chicken thief prowling around his chicken coop. The thief already had a large hen in a sack, but as soon as he was seen with the goods he beat it leaving the sack and chicken behind. He went to a machine that had been standing by the road all night. The thief was unknown to the people here. Lately some of the people here in town have lost chickens and if not the same party somebody else is doing the stealing.

N. Vail of Los Angeles, uncle of Mahlon Vail of the Pauba Ranch, is this week visiting at the Pauba Ranch.

Elmer O'Connell, who has part of the contract to haul rock from Pala left for Los Angeles the last of the week on business interests.

Issue of August 30, 1918

Alfred Knott has engaged a new machine for his garage.

Parks of Cahuilla arrived in town with cattle, which he shipped to San Bernardino.

The grand celebration at Temecula was a great success. There were several hundred people who came from far to witness the cowboys' sports that were pulled off during the fiesta. Excellent music was furnished by Calac and Amago.