

TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

April 2009

Volume 9 – Issue 4

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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Auto Pioneers – Part One

ACROSS AMERICA BY CAR

BY Duane Preimsberger

(Part 1 of 2)

Horatio Nelson Jackson isn't exactly a well known name in today's hit parade of pioneers but maybe it should be. Perhaps he didn't rival the feats of the Lewis and Clark expedition but he none the less conquered the continent in another fashion. His exploits in making the first transcontinental automobile crossing are well documented in a book, "Horatio's Drive," by Dayton Duncan and in a TV documentary of the same name by Ken Burns.

Automobiles in the late 1890's and early 1900's were slowly coming into vogue. European car manufacturers were busy producing gas, steam and electric vehicles and the United States trailed only slightly behind. Throughout our Nation there were about 300,000 miles of roads of all descriptions, many were no more than wagon tracks across a prairie or a bumpy trail through an eastern forest. In 1900, less than 200 miles of 'improved' roads existed in the United States and most of those miles were confined to cities. Asphalt and concrete didn't exist so these improved thoroughfares might be bricked, cobble stoned, graveled or simply graded.

Additionally, there were few if any road maps or highway and street signs outside the cities and finding your way across the Country involved quite a bit of luck. Sometimes you might get a trip guide that could read; "take the left fork at the wire cattle fence and go until you come to the second big Oak tree..." or you might get directions from a local resident that sounded much the same.

Horatio Nelson Jackson, a 31 year old physician from Vermont, and his wife Bertha, who he called Swife, were in San Francisco after exploring investment opportunities in Mexico and Alaska when Horatio was invited to the saloon in the University Club. There, the members were engaged in a heated debate about the future of the new phenomena seen on San Francisco streets, that thing called the motor car. Since there were less than 10,000 of them in the Country and over 14,000,000 horses most of the discussion seemed to indicate that the car was a merely an unreliable and foolish fad. It was so undependable that it could

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Calendar Of Events

Continuing thru May 31 -
"Lincoln & the Civil War" at
Temecula Valley Museum.
Special Exhibit items from
the collection of Charles
Bechtloff.

Monday, April 13 -
Monthly meeting at Pujol
Schoolhouse - 6 to 8 p.m.
Bill McBurney and Mimi
Milholland "The History of
French Valley."

Saturday, May 9 - "Old
West Chili, Grub & Brew
Roundup" 11 am to 5 pm
Town Square in Murrieta.
Chili Cookoff, Local History
Booths, food and more.

Monday, May 11 -
Monthly meeting at Pujol
Schoolhouse - 6 to 8 p.m.
Bill Irwin who lived at
Murrieta Hot Springs when
Alive Polarity owned the
Property, will talk about
that era of "springs" history.

Monday, June 8 -
Monthly Meeting at Pujol
Schoolhouse - 6 to 8 p.m.
Annie Borel on "Growing
Up in the Area."

Saturday, June 13 -
Flea Market in the Park, at
Sam Hicks Park to benefit
Temecula Valley Museum.
From 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"Isn't it remarkable how our
pioneering ancestors built up a
great nation without asking
Congress for help?"

Anonymous

never be used for long distance journeys like going across the United States and it certainly could never replace the horse!

Horatio took the minority opinion in the discussion in spite of the fact that he had no automobile at hand and little experience in operating one on an extended journey. He pushed forward in his defense of the subject and as the evening progressed he made a wager that crossing the continent by car was very doable and could be accomplished in less than three months. To back up his words he made a fifty dollar bet and indicated that he would soon start on a journey beginning in San Francisco, California and ending in New York City, New York.

Finding a suitable automobile took a little bit of effort and Horatio located a used, bright red, Winton two seat touring car. The car had been built at the Winton Motor Carriage Factory in Cleveland, Ohio; it had 2 cylinders, produced 20 horsepower and could travel at a top speed of 30 mph. It had neither a windshield nor a top and the price for the car was \$3000.00, the equivalent of \$60,000.00 today. Four days later, after equipping the car with cooking utensils, camping gear, extra clothing, tools, spare parts and other personal necessities; including a 22 year old bicycle- now automobile- mechanic by the name of Sewall Crocker, Dr. Jackson was now ready to begin his historic journey.

After naming the car "Vermont" in honor of the state where he and Bertha were from, he waved goodbye to her and set off on what was to become an amazing saga. The first leg of the journey was accomplished aboard the Oakland Ferry, sailing across San Francisco Bay, then Jackson and Crocker really hit the road. They managed to travel fifteen miles before the first mishap, a flat tire. Unfortunately, they had only one spare and when a second tire gave out they wrapped rope around the wheel in order to continue their journey.

They were soon telegraphing San Francisco and the factory in Cleveland for all manner of spare parts including inner tubes and tires as the car suffered a never ending series of mechanical failures and flat tires. When the Winton Company learned what the two adventurers were up to they offered to support the venture with cash and a professional crew. Horatio turned them down, indicating that the effort was something that he wanted to accomplish on his own. As the journey continued tires, tubes and spare parts reached them by railroad and on several occasions by stagecoach.

As the trip progressed the two partners got stuck fording streams and creeks and had to pull the car out by using block and tackle. Large boulders had to be moved out of the way with pinch bars. They drove over sand dunes by piling sage brush out in front and driving over it to maintain traction; piling on more up front again as they inched forward. They often got lost and went miles out of their way before getting information about the path they wanted to be on. At one point, a woman intentionally sent them on a 108 mile wrong way round trip just so that her family could see a motor car up close. The rough road jarred the car so much that gear and parts including the cyclometer, a speedometer like device, fell off leaving them with no way to tell their speed or distance.

(Editors Note: Part 2 of this story will be in next month's issue of the Temecula Valley Historical Society Newsletter).

Presidents Message

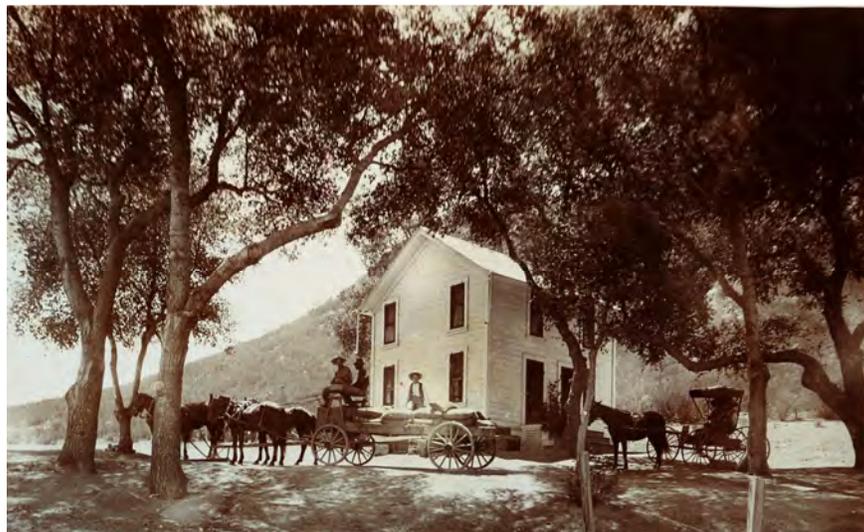
I remember just 20 years ago when the Temecula Post Office celebrated its 130th anniversary by issuing a special cancellation stamp marking that historical event. Now 20 years later during mid-April this year we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the opening of Temecula's original Post Office at the Magee Store on April 22, 1859. Louis Rouen served as the first Postmaster. Phil Baily, owner of Baily's Vineyard & Winery has formed a group called Team Temecula 150 to "coordinate and facilitate the year-long celebration of Temecula's 150 Anniversary by suggesting new events that might be put on, helping to determine how already scheduled events could be enhanced with the anniversary tie-in, and providing support and resources to organizations putting on those events and programs." The Sesquicentennial Celebration Kick-off will be the Temecula Valley Chamber of Commerce Mixer at the Temecula Valley Museum on April 15th at 5:30 pm. On April 18th the merchants in Old Town will celebrate Founder's Day. And on April 22 the new Postmaster, Susan Houpy, will be introduced at Sam Hicks Monument Park and will stamp souvenir post cards with the 150th Anniversary Cancellation Stamp. I hope to see many of you at these events.

I want to thank Audrey Cilurzo for her outstanding presentation at our March meeting on the effects of Prohibition on the eating and drinking habits of Americans. The meeting hall was filled and everyone enjoyed her well researched subject.

Jimmy Moore

"I've reached the age where happy hour is a nap."

Anonymous



The Fred Cooper House

By Bill McBurney

In 1897, Mr. Fred Cooper was in love with Claire Robertson, the first school teacher to serve at Hyatt school. He proposed and she accepted, so he decided to be a really prepared husband by building a home just for her. It was the only two-story home built in the Tualota /Glen Oak area, and was very fine for its time. With the oak trees and the rocky Tualota hills behind it and with the carriages in front, this picture looks like something from a Southern plantation. It was actually a small house - probably 1200 Square feet all together.

The Hyatt School was named for Edward Hyatt, a geologist and naturalist who first took a teaching job in San Jacinto in the 1880s then became the second County Superintendent of schools after Riverside County was formed in 1893. He went on to be the California Superintendent of schools for several terms and formed the systems that made California "the best in the West" as far as school administration was concerned.

Hyatt School still exists albeit in bad shape, and is east of town off Ranch California Road. Hyatt School served less than 12 students per year for its 50 year life (only 7 in 1938). Fred and Claire only lived in the house until 1905 when Fred got a job in West Riverside and sold out. The buyer was the photographer of this picture, taken when the house was new. Thomas Milholland bought it on a 30 year contract which was very rare at the time. He paid it off in full over the next 30 years. Thomas and wife Cora lived in the house for about 5 years then leased it to Stin Sheld who raised a family there. Stin moved so Milholland family members could live there for the next few decades. An interesting aside is that Fred Cooper was the father of Walter Cooper who was born in the house. Walter Cooper married Jessie Sheld Cooper who was the daughter of Stin Sheld and was raised in the house but didn't meet her husband until they were both adults.

The house had a one story addition built on the back, sometime during Stin Sheld's occupancy. When Richard and Ellen Milholland lived in the house in 1938, they boarded the Hyatt teacher, Elizabeth Conrad, who was my teacher. One night, Richard was cleaning his deer rifle and it discharged right into the ceiling which was the floor of Miss Conrad's room. It scared the hell out of everyone! Sadly, the house burned to the ground in 1975 during a wildfire.



*Temecula Valley Historical Society
P.O. Box 157
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Membership Activity

New Member

Diane Latulippe

Renewals

Louise Beesley
John Moramarco Sr.
Michael McMillan
Malcolm & Loretta Barnett
Arlie Bergman
Community Little Book
Donald Coop
Suzanne Dechert
Rod & Charlene Fink
Judy Hancock
Rhine & Sandy Helzer
Mahlon Lawton
Jimmy & Peg Moore
Gary & Sally Myers
Randall Family
Vernon & Gladys Smith
Dan Stephenson
Michael & Carol Strode
Norm & Elizabeth Taylor
Ron & Judith Turco
Donna Webster
Art & Janet Yorke

150th Anniversary of the Opening of the First Post Office in Temecula Opened April 22, 1859



Special Events include:

Sat. April 18, Founders Day – Old Town Temecula

Wed. April 22 - Sam Hicks Monument Park, get your Commemorative Cancellation Stamp on Souvenir Envelopes or Post Cards.

VaRRA will have limited edition, numbered brass belt buckles with the Commemorative Stamp logo available for a donation of \$22. T-shirts with the logo are available at the House of Jerky.

VaRRA's stagecoach will be prominently featured at all events.

-- Tell Us Your Early Temecula Auto Stories--

Please share with us any fun or favorite stories you have about memories of early automobiles in Temecula. Send to Dick Fox at 32800 Hupa Drive, Temecula, CA 92592 – OR e-mail at Fox_R@verizon.net – pictures are always welcome of course. We'd like to include with Part 2 of "Across America by Car" in next months issue.