

# TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

August 2009

Volume 9 – Issue 8

*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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### **Timeless Temecula – Part 1 of 2**

## Memories Shared Of The Early Days

*(Editors Note: We appreciate and acknowledge the **Country Review Magazine** for its permission to reprint the article below, originally done as part of a History Series that **Country Review** published to celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. As Rebecca Farnbach said in the introduction of her original piece . . . "To celebrate the twentieth anniversary of The Country Review, we also celebrate Temecula, the audience of the publication, and take a look back, much farther back than twenty years. We will see the changing Temecula through the eyes of people of different origins, times and destinations." This is the first of a 2 part series.)*

**By Rebecca Marshall Farnbach**

### **The Birth of Ysabel Gonzalez**

A weary doctor delivered Ysabel Grace Gonzalez, the first non-Indian female born in the wilds of Temecula to stay for a lifetime. The doctor was recovering from tuberculosis and had just buried his year-old daughter on a hillside overlooking the fledgling settlement. Attending the birth of such a healthy baby encouraged him and he wrote euphorically to relatives in New York State saying he had just made it in time to deliver the "very pretty and plump girl".

The name of the doctor and the site of his child's grave have vanished through the years, but the healthy baby Ysabel lived on, and because of her, we have today a good picture of what Temecula was during her lifetime.

When Ysabel was born in 1879, she joined her mother Grace Street Gonzalez, an English governess, her father Jose Maria Gonzalez, a businessman and accountant from Spain, and her older brother Ormiston. Ysabel's childhood home, the adobe centerpiece of the Adobe Plaza on Jefferson Avenue in Temecula, is still standing.

Ysabel first went to school in Temecula, and then went to Mexico for high school, to be taught in the "old Spanish way", becoming an accomplished pianist and a teacher. She married her Temecula neighbor Ben Barnett, who became the local judge. Their home, close to her birthplace, near the former Stater Brothers Store on Jefferson Avenue, doubled as a courthouse for her husband Judge Barnett.

As Ysabel's father aged, he lost his eyesight, so the

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# Calendar Of Events

**Monday, August 10 –**  
Monthly meeting Pujol Schoolhouse – 6 to 8 p.m. Mimi Milholland, more on the French Valley area. Also Steve Allen will present a brief slide show of Lake Elsinore Bus Tour.

**Sunday, September 6 –**  
Temecula Old-Timer's Reunion & Picnic, 1 – 5 p.m. At the CRC on Rancho Vista Road. For those who have lived in the area before Cityhood in 1989. Contact Sandy Neal @ 694-9461

**Monday, September 14 –**  
Monthly meeting Pujol Schoolhouse – 6 to 8 p.m. Sue Tatosian from Western Center for Archaeology & Paleontology.

**Monday, October 12 –**  
Monthly meeting Pujol Schoolhouse – 6 to 8 p.m. "Reflections on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Temecula's Cityhood" by Jimmy & Peg Moore.

**Sunday, November 1 –**  
**"Barbecue at Vail Ranch"**  
This will be the final event of year-long celebration 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1<sup>st</sup> Post Office in Temecula. With the Wolf Store at the center, will have music, gunfighters, stagecoach. Western attire is best. TVHS will jointly participate as part of its annual heritage event. Ticket & cost info to come.

family strung a rope between trees to guide his navigation between the Gonzalez adobe and the Barnett home.

## **The Son of the Stationmaster**

Horace Parker said Ysabel, who he called "Aunt Bessie", welcomed him into her home when he was the "lonely, only child" of the stationmaster when his family moved to Temecula in 1924. Horace Parker loved going to Ben and Bessie Barnett's ranch to play with their boys Chester and Francis, building tree houses, damming the creek, and doing all the fun and messy things boys liked to do. He savored the beans Bessie kept simmering on her stove for the ravenous boys.

Parker had finished college and was a successful veterinarian in Costa Mesa when he returned to Temecula on the sunny and warm Sunday afternoon of October 1, 1950 for the big occasion of the unveiling of a plaque on the Wolf Store adobe to commemorate the 1852 signing of an Indian treaty.

The biggest crowd of old-timers and curious city folk gathered in Temecula for nearly a century. A parade went down Front Street with a Mr. Hawthorne, a television celebrity, as the grand marshal. He was followed by bands, marching groups, and horseback riders. Alice Vaughn Machado, at age 85, was honored as the oldest person in Temecula and Bessie Gonzalez Barnett was honored as a longtime resident. The parade marched to the Historic Vail Ranch Headquarters, where after a program of music, speeches, and prayers of dedication, Mrs. Machado unveiled the plaque.

## **Going Back in Time**

In 1960 the middle-aged veterinarian started to visit the aging Bessie, whose birth encouraged the weary doctor who delivered her eighty years before.

Horace's parents had died by the time he returned to frequent his boyhood haunts and he found it therapeutic for both himself and Aunt Bessie to talk about old times and old-timers of Temecula. Their visits provided a welcomed distraction from the consuming responsibilities of his thriving veterinary practice. Bessie regaled him for hours as he took copious notes for work he eventually published. He eventually quit his veterinary practice to write and research fulltime. "Before I could open the door I'd hear her cheery hail, 'Come in Horace...well, how's my boy today?'"

Horace and his wife Leverne, who he met during his high school years in Elsinore, decided to move to Temecula. They bought the old Welty Hotel, by then a run-down, dirty, mouse-infested place. They renovated the circa 1890 building and its 24 rooms and made it into their home. It connected Parker to his past, as the hotel once catered to people who came to Temecula by train. The Parkers kept the old hotel desk and guest registry near the entrance. The smell of homemade peach pie emanated from Leverne's kitchen as she applied strokes to her paintings depicting Old Town Temecula.

Parker credited Bessie with being "a historical bridge between present day events and those that happened almost a century ago" and the inspiration for his interest in Temecula history. During their long talks, Bessie no doubt told Parker about her early memories of Old Town Temecula, when Front Street was a dirt road and there were only a few stores, a livery stable and a hotel. She would have told him about the granite quarry south of

**Continued Next Page**

## *Presidents Message*

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the members of the Board of Directors who have made my tour as President this year an easy task. Without their hard work and support the Temecula Valley Historical Society would not operate.

I'd like to thank Dick Fox for his patience with my late submission of the President's Message monthly column. Even with his gentle reminders, I always manage to push the deadline. Through the efforts of many who contribute written material, article ideas, and mailing assistance we have a newsletter we can be proud of. Thanks to all.

We suffered a loss with the death of our Vice President Bill McBurney. Bill wrote a column for the Temecula Valley News about the history of the area. As we've seen in the past, others have stepped forward to assist and fill the void with great work.

No organization can operate without the many non-Board members that make significant contributions each month to the success of the programs, meetings and other activities.

It is easy being President when you have an outstanding board, and willing membership. Once again thanks to all for your efforts & support.

*Jimmy Moore*

## ***(Timeless Temecula...from Page 2)***

town that supplied stone for important buildings in Riverside, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Her stories would have entailed transporting livestock and goods by rail and about Parker's father, the station agent.

Bessie shared her memories about Mercedes Pujol's 1885 visit to settle her late husband's estate and how Mercedes loved to bathe in the natural hot springs in Murrieta. Bessie remembered when the Temecula Bank was built in 1914 and when it was robbed in 1930. She knew the Louis and Ramona Wolf, Mac and Alice Machado, Juan and Adele Murrieta, the Weltys who owned the hotel, author Erle Stanley Gardner, Sam Hicks, and Joe Winkles who ran bootleg liquor.

She remembered how the Vails bought four Mexican Ranchos in 1905 and how the Vail Ranch dominated the area. With the ranching operation run from the headquarters adjacent to the Wolf Store near present-day Highway 79 South, cowboys, businessmen, and Hollywood friends visited the ranch and hunted game throughout the area. Others vacationed at the Guenther's Murrieta Hot Springs Resort where Juan Murrieta once washed his sheep.

Bessie remembered the barbecue Vails staged to finance building the Catholic Church in 1917. The Vails donated a steer and, even though it was prohibited, some priests arranged for liquor. A packing plant donated wieners and an athletic club provided entertainment. City folks flocked to the barbecue to witness "female entertainment", boxing and gambling. Riverside County officials declined invitations to attend when they learned that liquor would be served. A police official was the first person to get drunk, and the inebriated emcee had to be rescued after falling in the fire, but the gambling concession made the event a success. Since profit from the event exceeded the amount needed for building the church, the priest was given a new car.

As Bessie talked, Parker passed through time and saw Temecula through her eyes. "... [The] plump baby girl was my old friend ... and it was she who inspired my research on the Temecula country ..."

He wrote the Brush Country Journal syndicated newspaper column and several little books from the 1950s through 1970s, sharing Bessie's memories and his research. By the time Bessie's days in Temecula ended, the lonely little stationmaster's son had made her proud. And now the Barnetts and Parkers all reside near each other in the Temecula Cemetery.

***(Part 2 of this feature will appear in the next issue.)***

## **The Cowboys are Back Home**

Almost two years ago during a violent wind storm, the mural on the east side of Kohl's Department Store was badly damaged. The famous photo of seven of the Vail Ranch Cowboys, was reportedly taken by Erle Stanley Gardner and over the years has been given the title of the "Magnificent Seven."

For over a year the damaged special canvas reproduction just "flapped" in the breeze and continued to deteriorate. Members of the Vail Ranch Restoration Association persevered with the local store manager who had reported the damage through normal channels, but to no avail. It took a special letter to Kohl's Corporate to get the attention of the right level of management to finally "make it happen." All of us in the community are pleased to see our friends back where they can oversee the *ranch*, and hopefully bring some good luck to its future.



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

Patricia Lallou  
Ann Miller & Dave Elliott  
Harriet Hope Zangl  
Bob & Kathryn Curtis  
Darell & Rebecca Farnbach  
Vernette Mackley  
Mission Oaks Bank  
Duane & Judy Preimsburger  
Gene & Barbara Tobin  
Michael Tobin  
Vince & Audrey Cilurzo  
Dr. Lee & Helen Lovaas

### **Visit the Great Oak?**

People often ask how to see the Great Oak Tree. The Pechanga Cultural Department hosts tours on the third Friday of each month. Reservations for tours can be made by calling 951-308-9295.

## **PALEONTOLOGY, HISTORY and WATER TOUR Saturday, September 19, 2009**

Sponsored by the Temecula Valley Historical Society and  
The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

### **To Visit:**

- \* **Diamond Valley Lake Viewpoint**
- \* **Western Center of Archaeology and Paleontology**
- \* **The Center for Water Education**
- \* **East Marina**
- \* **3 Dams, San Diego Canal Inlet, Forebay, Pumping Plant**
- \* **Wildlife / Multi-Species Reserve**
- \* **The lost Indian sites beneath the Lake**
- \* **Garbani and Domenigoni Historical Sites**
- \* **Lunch at the Museum**

Caravan will assemble promptly at 9:00 a.m. at the West Guard Gate off of Winchester Road (State Route 79) West Dam.

Tickets **MUST** be prepaid. Cost to be determined.  
Map and further information forthcoming.

Call President Jimmy Moore at 951-302-9536 or  
Paul Price at 951-244-5937 for any questions.