

# TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

November 2009

Volume 9 – Issue 11

*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.*

### 2009 Officers

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Carol Strode Darell Farnbach  
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#### **Program Speakers**

Rebecca Farnbach

#### **Historian**

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#### **Web Site**

Elaine Eshom

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## Vail Family Before Temecula - Part 2

# Gila Monsters, Snakes, Stampedes Obstacles in Quest to Expand West

By Rebecca Marshall Farnbach

*Two greenhorns from the East with good business savvy cashed in on adventure and made their fortunes in frontier Arizona. When they needed more pastureland in 1904 they came to Southern California and bought four former Mexican ranchos, amassing 87,500 acres from Temecula to Lake Elsinore. The enterprise dominated the area economically and was the largest employer. The Temecula bank and other businesses were formed to support the huge Vail Ranch. This is the story of how they happened to settle in California.*

*(The story continues from last month. . .)*

Walter and Edward founded the Empire Land and Cattle Company in 1886. Three years later California entrepreneur Carroll W. Gates bought a half interest in the company. When the Arizona markets for beef collapsed in the mid-1880s, the company found new markets in Kansas City and Los Angeles, and expanded to new grasslands in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and California.

Walter faced death in 1890 after he shot a beautifully marked Gila monster and slung it over the saddlebag behind him. After riding a distance, he reached backward, and the reptile that Walter thought was dead bit him. He hurried back to the ranch and someone sent a message for the Southern Pacific Railroad to rush an engine to the mine to take him to Tucson for medical treatment. Walter was seriously ill for several weeks, but eventually recovered from the potentially deadly bite.

Shortly afterward, Walter and Edward led a protest against the same rail line that had saved his life. The Vails needed to get cattle from Arizona to pastures in California. Southern Pacific had sharply raised shipping fees, so the Vails boycotted the railroad and took the stock by cattle drive. Edward, Empire Ranch foreman Tom Turner and eight Mexican

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# Calendar Of Events

## **Sunday, November 1 – “Barbecue at Vail Ranch”**

This will be the final event of the year-long celebration of 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, & other displays / activities. Western attire is best. TVHS will jointly participate as part of its annual heritage dinner. Tickets are \$15 in advance, \$18 at the Gate. Food served from Noon to 5 p.m. Wine and Beer available to purchase. Come join the fun and help us to close out the year long celebration of our Heritage and the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1<sup>st</sup> P.O.

**Saturday, November 7 –  
“Heritage Day”** This event is part of the Erle Stanley Gardner annual weekend celebration, and will include historical groups, music, activities and displays. Sam Hicks Monument Park From 10 am to 3 pm.

**Monday, November 9 –**  
Monthly meeting Pujol Schoolhouse – 6 to 8 p.m. No special program. Annual Business meeting, the new Board of Directors to elect the Officers for 2010.

**December** – Traditionally no Society meeting is held during December.

ranch hands drove 917 steers from the Empire Ranch in Arizona to the Warner Ranch pastures in California.

They survived a stampede and a perilous crossing of the Colorado River. They recaptured 110 runaway steers, and were detained in Yuma by a sheriff who demanded taxes. After intervention by their Tucson attorney, they followed the old Butterfield Stage Trail and encountered a challenge by Indians. After appeasing the Indians with sugar and coffee beans, they passed through a valley full of rattlesnakes. They traveled the desert at night with a lantern hung on the tailboard of a wagon, which the steers followed “like soldiers.” They stumbled on cattle bones, a broken-down wagon and a human skull. A sheriff approached and shot and killed a young man who had joined them, and took his brother into custody.

**A**fter two months and ten days of adventure, the desert drive ended at the Warner Ranch pasturelands. They had lost only two head of cattle while crossing the Colorado River. When the cowboys returned to Arizona, they met with other ranchers to identify a safe route for driving cattle to California. The route was never established, because a Southern Pacific representative attended the meeting and shipping fees were reduced to the previous rates.

The Vails developed one of Arizona’s largest and most influential livestock operations of one million acres and 40,000 cattle, a success mainly attributable to Walter’s business genius and constant supervision. Walter constantly analyzed breeding patterns and sales, and adapted ranch practices to capitalize on trends.

**T**he one room adobe with a dirt floor was transformed into a 22-room home with electricity and indoor plumbing. Walter and Margaret raised seven children there before it was sold in 1928. The house is now listed on the National Registry of Historic Places.

The United States Bureau of Land Management manages the ranch as a conservation area, and allows cattle to graze, by special permit. One of Walter Vail’s great-granddaughters heads the Empire Ranch Foundation, a non-profit historical group that presents educational programs at the ranch.

*Two young men from the city came west, seeking adventure. They found it and amassed a fortune, too. None of the dangers of frontier life killed them, not Apaches, Gila monsters or fights over a yellow dog.*

*In tragic irony, streetcars provided Walter’s initial investment and also killed him. At age fifty-seven, with his empire at its zenith, he was fatally injured when two Los Angeles crushed him. His five children ran his business empire in Southern California, including the massive Vail Cattle Ranches of Temecula, Imperial Valley and Santa Rosa Island and real estate holdings in Huntington Beach.*

*Edward Vail never married. He stayed in Arizona where he regaled listeners with stories of his early life in the Arizona Territory. He served as president of the Arizona Pioneer Historical Society and died in 1936 at the age of 87.*

# Presidents Message

As the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Temecula Post Office fades into our memories, we will be having a grand finale celebration at the Vail Ranch of Sunday, November 1st with a BBQ, open house, exhibits, gunfighters demonstrations, raffle prizes and general good time. Hope all of you can join us. The event is free, with tickets for the BBQ selling at the Main Post Office on Rancho California Road, the Chamber of Commerce office, Temecula Valley Museum and Bailys in Old Town for \$15 pre-sale, or \$18 at the gate. Beer and wine will also be available for purchase.

With the end of the year fast approaching, I would like to thank all of the members of the Board of Directors for their untiring support of the Historical Society as well as the other volunteers who have contributed to a great year of progress. We will certainly miss our retiring members of the board: Norm Taylor and Carol Strode. We welcome our newly elected Board members: Diane LaTulippe, Bonnie Martland and Richard Bouchard.

A special thanks to Paul & Kathi Price for arranging for our tours; to Darell and Rebecca Farnbach for our guest speakers and the Team Temecula 150<sup>th</sup> representation; Dick Fox for publishing our Newsletter; and to all the other members of the Board who helped make this a successful year.

*Jimmy Moore*

## Nominating Committee Report

During the regular October TVHS Meeting, the Nominating Committee reported the following:

Board seats whose term expires at the end of 2009 were Norm Taylor, Carol Strode, and Dick Fox (finishing the unexpired term of Carol Marsden).

Both Norm Taylor and Carol Strode indicated that they did not want to be considered for another term. Our thanks to them for their service. Dick Fox is willing to serve a 2<sup>nd</sup> term. With 2 vacancies the Nominating Committee proposed that Richard Bouchard and Bonnie Martland be placed for consideration. In accordance with the By-Laws of TVHS, when the number of nominees equals the openings then no printed ballot election through the entire membership is required. All three nominees were elected by the Board for terms commencing in 2010 and running through December of 2012.

The makeup of the TVHS Board of Directors for 2010 consists of the following; and this Board will elect from among its members the officers for next year.

	<u>Term Expires</u>
Elaine Eshom	12-31-2010
Darell Farnbach	12-31-2011
Dick Fox	12-31-2012
Bill Harker	12-31-2010
Gene Knott	12-31-2010
Pat Lallou	12-31-2010
Diane LaTulippe	12-31-2011
Jimmy Moore	12-31-2011
Paul Price	12-31-2011*
Richard Bouchard	12-31-2012
Bonnie Martland	12-31-2012
Barbara Tobin	12-31-2010*
Lisa Woodward	12-31-2010

\* 2<sup>nd</sup> Term



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## Kudos to . . .

Thanks to Roger Sannipoli for his donation of the cost of the Flea Market booth, as well as his willing assistance. Also the others working the booth were Diane LaTulippe, Bonnie Martland, Paul & Kathi Price and Richard Bouchard. Sounds like they had a successful day. They sold raffle tickets, DVD's and a new membership – Welcome **Dale Garcia!**

### 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.

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Join us for an . . .



## Old Fashioned BBQ

*To Kick-Off Heritage Week, the final week of the year-long celebration  
Recognizing the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1<sup>st</sup> Temecula Post Office*

**Many historic displays, gunfighters, live music, and activities  
which are FREE to the public . . .**

**Where:** Old Vail Ranch Headquarters &  
Wolf Store (2<sup>nd</sup> Temecula Post Office)

**When:** Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup> -- 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Cost:** BBQ tickets \$15 per person (\$18 at door)  
(Water & soft drinks included) (Wine & Beer available  
To purchase)

**Tickets available at: Baily's in Old Town, Temecula Valley Museum,  
Chamber of Commerce, and Temecula's Main Post Office.**

*\*Note – TVHS Annual Heritage Dinner being held in conjunction with this event.*