

# TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

February 2010

Volume 10 – Issue 2

*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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|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
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| Secretary      | Barbara Tobin   |
| Treasurer      | Bill Harker     |

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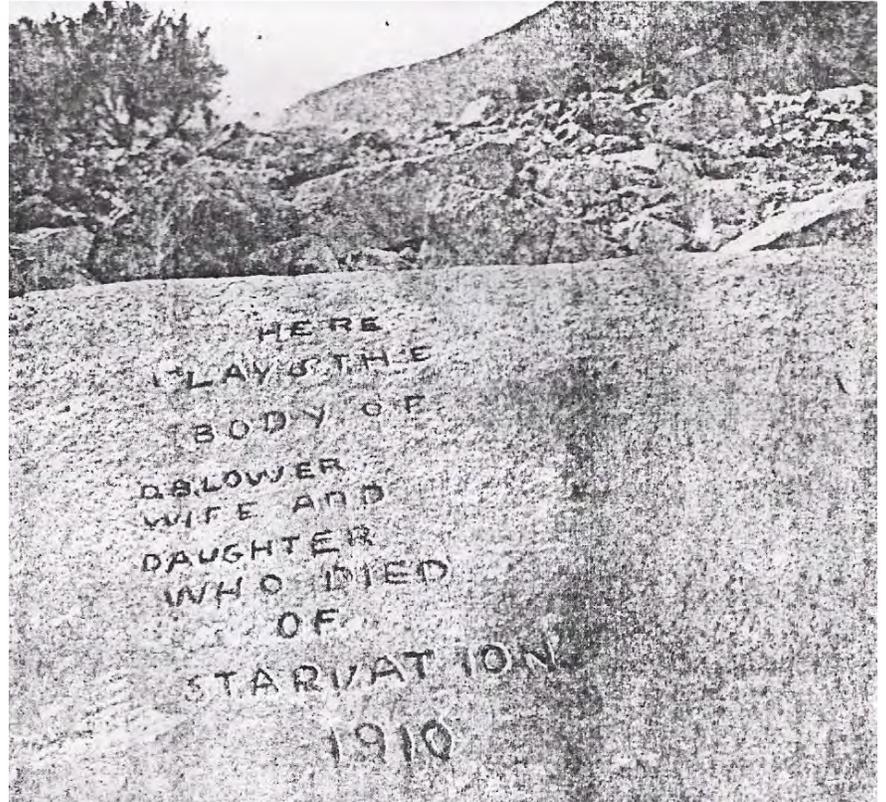
#### **Historian**

Kathi Price

#### **Web Site**

Elaine Eshom

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### Practical Joke Retold

## A Temecula "Tombstone" Was Hardrock Humor

**By Duane Preimsberger**

The hillsides surrounding the Temecula Valley are dotted with large granite boulders and in days gone-by quarrying granite in our neighborhood was a part of the local economy. From sometime in the later 1800's until the early 1900's and the advent of poured concrete, Temecula granite was often found in buildings in our Valley and elsewhere throughout the State. Temecula Granite can be found in the curbstones of old streets in San Francisco, in sections of our State Capitol Building in Sacramento and in the County Courthouse in downtown Riverside.

Quarrying was, according to Horace Parker and other notable

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# Calendar Of Events

## **Monday, February 8 –**

Monthly meeting Pujol Schoolhouse – 6 to 8 p.m. "*The Golshes and the Hapsburgs*" – Inge Haeupler an Austrian researcher who became interested in the possible connection between the Golshes of Pala, and the Royal Hapsburgs of Austria. She has spent years re-searching the topic, and this will be the premiere expose' of the results of her work.

## **Monday, March 8 –**

Monthly Meeting Pujol Schoolhouse – 6 to 8 p.m. "*The Temecula Turntable and Local Mining.*" Paul Price will share information he has uncovered regarding the Temecula train turntable, as well as some rich mining history of the Inland Empire.

## **Monday, April 12 –**

Monthly Meeting Pujol Schoolhouse – 6 to 8 p.m. "*The Lewis and Clark Story.*" Jim Thomas will come dressed in period costume to relate stories of Lewis & Clark, and their amazing journey. Jim's 550 page book "Corps of Discovery" will be available For \$15.

## **Monday, May 10 –**

Monthly Meeting Pujol Schoolhouse – 6 to 8 p.m. "*Mapping the Southern Emigrant Trail*" This meeting will be held at the VaRRR Little Temecula History Center.

Temecula old-timers, a dangerous, difficult, onerous and tough job. The task required a class of workers who themselves were tough and onerous. The guys who took the granite from these boulder strewn hills and cut it with dynamite, sledges and chisels, reveled in the danger and difficulties of their jobs and they lived as hard as they worked. Drinking, fighting, playing and practical jokes were all done with a sustained passion for each activity.

The efforts that went into practical joking were extensive and the guys would spend hours and days crafting an event that would put one over on a co-worker. Quarryman David Lower was selected as a special target because of a habit he had of complaining when the pay checks were late in arriving at the worksite. "Hells, bells!!! My wife and kid on the ranch will die of starvation." He'd yell this death knell as he stomped around expressing his displeasure at the lateness, again, of another pay envelope. Some of his co-workers would later ask, tongue-in-cheek, when the funerals were to take place.

One day when work was slow several of Dave's co-workers gathered up some tools of the trade and sauntered away on a 'secret mission'. What they had planned was to locate a suitable boulder and carve upon it an appropriate epitaph to the Lower family. Their effort, although not as polished as the engravings found on cemetery tombstones, sent an appropriate message.

**HERE  
LAYS THE  
BODY OF  
D.B LOWER  
WIFE AND  
DAUGHTER  
WHO DIED  
OF  
STARVATION  
1910**

A short while after completing their tombstone efforts, Dave's co-workers sent him on a rock picking trek and as he passed by the freshly carved stone he came to an abrupt halt and as he read the words while his comrades enjoyed a good Hoo-HAA! Later in the day, after work the guys made Dave buy a round of adult beverages at the Long Branch Saloon in payment for their "monumental efforts".

As with so many jokes, the participants drifted away and as time went on only a few Temecula old-timers remained who knew the story in its entirety. Those recollections came in handy almost a half-century later when construction was initiated to relocate Highway 395 through Temecula. Surveyors, dozers, graders and water trucks raised and doused dust along the new route. As the work progressed the construction crew happened upon the leftovers of a granite mining operation and as the workers picked their way through the area one of them stumbled upon what he believed was a real grave-stone over the bodies of Dave Lower and his family.

Construction came to a halt as the project bosses mulled over the options available to them. Should they leave the monument intact and relocate the proposed road around the graves; should they arrange to have the bodies disinterred and reburied elsewhere or should they simply move the boulder and pave over the graves? The last option was quickly discarded as being uncaring and inhumane.

One of the bosses decided to check with the Temecula Post

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# Presidents Message

Normally, I try to hold the business part of the Temecula Valley Historical Society meetings to one hour. Our February meeting will be an exception. At our January meeting I appointed a Goals Committee that has been busily working on a revised list of goals for the organization. Following our guest speaker, we will need more time to consider their report. So if you plan on attending our meeting on February 8th, you have been forewarned that the business portion will be longer.

Those of you who missed our January meeting missed a rare opportunity to hear Martha Culbertson talk about her friendship with Julia Child. The presentation was well received by our audience, as was the delicious apple tart Martha served at the meeting. Thanks to our speaker chairperson, Rebecca Farnbach, for arranging such interesting speakers for our monthly program. We welcome you to attend our meetings. If your time is limited, we have no problem if you leave following the guest speaker who will fill the first hour of the meeting.

Hope to see you on February 8th.

*Jimmy Moore*

## (Temecula "Tombstone" continued from Page 2)

Office in an effort to locate any relatives or friends who might know of the Lower family. He hoped that they might lend some suggestions to solving the dilemma now confronting the road construction crew. Fortunately, word of the inquiry reached Charley McVicker, who had been a foreman at the quarry back in 1910 and was knowledgeable about the monument and supposed gravesites. When he was able to stop laughing, Charley was able to alleviate the concerns of the construction crew by relating the practical joke played so many years ago.

It's not known if the bosses found the circumstances humorous but I'm pretty certain that the guys who did the road construction grunt work did and I wouldn't be surprised to learn that they hoisted one or two to the memory of Dave Lower and his prank pulling pals.

The memorial stone was placed alongside relocated Highway 395 as an item of local interest and I wish I knew where it is today. The advent of the I-15 Freeway has altered the topography and that's too bad. It would be appropriate next year on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event to visit the stone, smile and raise a glass in honor of those who played a great practical joke!

*Editor's Note: The Granite "memorial" boulder photo on Page 1 first appeared as part of an article by J.M. Hollister, Resident Engineer in "California Highways and Public Works" magazine, publishing date unknown.*

## "Looking for Young Historians"

### **Society to Assist with Museum's 8<sup>th</sup> Annual 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade History Contest**

The Temecula Valley Museum annually sponsors a 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade History Contest, This year both the Temecula Valley Historical Society and the Vail Ranch Restoration Association have partnered with the Museum to help with this nice educational event. This year the entries will be judged and displayed at VaARRA's Little Temecula History Center (Red Barn building next to Kohl's at Temecula Pkwy. & Margarita Road).

All Third Graders in the Temecula Valley Unified School District are welcome to enter in one of the following format / categories: Video (DVD/CD) 3 to 8 minutes, Power Point Presentation 10 to 12 pages, Posters 20" x 24, 3-Dimensional Model 20" x 24" base maximum, or a Book Report essay style entry from 2 to 10 pages. All entries should include photos and text to help tell the story.

Judging will be based on Historical Accuracy, Clerical Accuracy, Concept Organization, Material Organization, and Creativity.

Student's full name, address, phone number, school name, teacher's name and title of their entry must appear on each project.

Deadline for turning in entries is Friday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Little Temecula History Center (Red Barn building next to Kohl's at Margarita Road and Temecula Pkwy). On Friday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> the History Center will be opened from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. to accept entries. The History Center is also open on Sundays from Noon to 5 p.m. prior to the deadline. No projects will be accepted after Friday, April 23, 2010.



*Temecula Valley Historical Society*  
P.O. Box 157  
Temecula, CA 92593

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## Membership Activity

### New

Paula Jones  
Teresa Lorden  
Lon Martland  
Ann Miller  
Betty Nelson  
Steve Wheeler  
Danielle Pucell

### Renewals

Paul & June Buhler  
Mission Clay Products  
Ron & Judith Turco  
Bill & Carmen Culver  
Rod & Charlene Fink  
Gene & Cindy Kluter  
Lloyd & Evelyn Love Norris  
Louise Beesley  
Arlie Bergman  
Ashley Jennings-Bigay  
Dick Fox  
Mahlon Wilkinson Lawton  
Norman & Betty Taylor

## Other Local Area History Activities

**The Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve** is looking for volunteers to interact with visitors at the historical adobes in the reserve. Volunteers will be trained, and will not be required to hike and/or stand for prolonged periods of time. They may sign up for coverage shifts as short as three hours. For questions or to volunteer call Nancy at 951-677-7341.

**The Temecula Valley Museum** in Sam Hicks Monument Park, will have a Gallery Talk on Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. "I Question America" The legacy of Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer – This is a Broadway style one woman play starring E.P. McKnight. Call 951-694-6450 for reservations.

**Now through February 28<sup>th</sup>** at the Temecula Valley Museum is a Gallery photo documentary exhibit entitled "Life Cycles: Reflections of Change and a New Hope for Future Generations" by Jacalyn Lopez Garcia, Director University of California Riverside, Communities for Virtual Research. 951-694-6450

**The Little Temecula History Center** is operated by the Vail Ranch Restoration Association. It is open every Sunday from Noon to 5 p.m. in the Red Barn building next to Kohl's Dept. Store near the intersection of Temecula Parkway & Margarita Road. Free to visitors.