

# TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

August 2010

Volume 10 – 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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### Reprint of 1952 Magazine Article

## A Visit to the Old Laguna Rancho

*(Editor's Note: This article appeared in "The Southern California Rancher" magazine in January, 1952. The magazine is no longer in publication. The text below is as it appeared at that time.)*

In 1874 Harper Bros., of New York City, published a book titled "California for Health, Pleasure and Residence" by Charles Nordhoff, who had made a trip to the West two years earlier. One chapter was devoted to life, as he saw it, at the old Laguna Rancho, then owned by Don Juan Bernardo Machado, member of a big family of Early Californians, many of whose descendants still are living. Laguna Rancho surrounded what is now Lake Elsinore, and the old Machado adobe which is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. R. K. McGill, owners of the western section of the original 13,338 acre land grant of 1844.

### **Here is Nordhoff's Story:**

On my way from San Bernardino, I stopped over night at a large Mexican Rancho, the Laguna . . . We got to Senor Machado's house an hour before sunset, and received at once a grave permission to unsaddle our horses and remain overnight. An Indian came up to take away the horses, which were turned into a pasture lot to shift for themselves, receiving a little barley in the evening and next morning. As for myself, I looked around with some curiosity, for this was the first time I had had an opportunity to see how the old Californians of wealth live.

Senor M. is reputed to possess 40,000 acres of land. He told me he had sold 1,800 young colts at \$6 a head. He owns several thousand sheep; as to cattle, he could not tell how many there were until after the rodeo. The rodeo is the annual gathering of cattle, when the owners in a large district drive all the stock into one great plain, and each with his vaqueros picks out his own cows, withdraws them into a separate herd, brands the calves which innocently follow their mothers, and then turns the whole mass adrift again, or in some cases drives them home to his own land.

Senor M. is therefore a person of substance. He is a man above middle height, a little corpulent, 45 years old, a little grizzled, and grave with all the gravity of the Spaniard. He politely invited us into the house; but seeing my inclination to remain out of doors, he gravely and silently brought out chairs for us. As for himself, he leaned against the house and looked at my curiosity with mild contempt.

I offered him a rather good cigar, whereupon he became a little communicative. He had worked hard, he said, but was now getting old, and took it easy.

"Could he find a grizzly bear for me in the mountains?"

**(Continued on Page 2)**

# Calendar Of Events

## **Monday, August 9 –**

Monthly Meeting at Little Temecula History Center, 6 to 8 p.m. Charles West, member of the San Diego Model-T Club will present "*How the Model T Changed the Face of America*".

## **Monday, Sept. 27 –**

Monthly meeting at Little Temecula History Center, 6 to 8 p.m. Lisa Woodward, will provide the program.

## **Monday, October 25 –**

Monthly meeting at Little Temecula History Center, 6 to 8 p.m. Anne Miller will Present "*The Story of Maria Apis*".

## **Saturday, November 13 –**

Annual meeting at Little Temecula History Center, 6 to 9 p.m. Catered dinner. Bob Morris will relate the history of the old Temecula Tractor Race event.

## **Weekend, Nov. 19 – 21 --**

St. Catherine's Centennial event. There will be a weekend of activities to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vail sponsored BBQ to begin fund raising to build the church.

## **Monday, November 22 –**

Monthly meeting at Little Temecula History Center 6 to 8 p.m. Thomas Long, Ph.D., professor at Cal State San Bernardino will Speak on the California Gold Rush.

"Well, yes, he could; but he was not fond of grizzly bears. One had come down among the flock of his sheep, a mile off, the night before, but the herder had driven it off; it was a bad beast. He used to hunt them when he was younger, but now" – he shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, he had Indians," seeing me look at several who were skylarking about the place, catching each other with lassos – "they are useful; but not good for much", he added, "but quiet." He paid them \$15 a month, and they bought what they needed at his store.

I remarked that the Laguna was a lovely piece of water.

I looked into his garden where he had half an acre of young grape vines, two or three dozen young apple trees, and a small orchard of young English walnuts, set out much too close together.

"Yes," he said with a mild shrug, "it is very well; the garden is growing; it is not much, but I am content. What do I want more? I am well, I have enough, I owe nobody money; if anyone comes to buy of me he must bring the money in his hand. Muy Contente."

Presently a fire was laid upon the hearth in the sitting room and night falling upon us in the noiseless way with which the dark comes in this country, we walked in and sat down.

And now you shall hear how this contented man of great wealth lived. The house is of adobe, which of course is sundried brick. It is oblong and contains three rooms. The front room was the store or shop, where he dealt out calicoes, sugar, coffee, dry goods, groceries, besides grape brandy, to his Indians and any others who chose to come. The next room which had no windows contained two beds in which his three young boys slept. It contained also the materials for the family sewing and a closet. The first room, which held Senor M's bed and a fireplace, was also our dining room, and here presently a coarse but soft cloth was spread, and three women and a little girl began to lay the table and serve supper.

At one end of the house a small room had been built on for a kitchen; opposite to that was a spacious store room, in which hung "carne seco" jerked beef, from the rafters; bloody sheets of meat which looked unfit to eat, but which made a savory stew. On the floor three or four young lambs were confined, which by and by succeeded in getting out and came bleating into the dining room.

Beyond the house itself, about 15 ft. distant, was a clay oven for baking bread, covered with a raw bull's hide, the hairy side downward, intended to keep the top dry in case it should rain. Beyond this, a few feet farther off, was a range of open shanties which in riding up I had innocently taken for cattle sheds. In these the Indians lived. Later in the evening hearing singing and the droning of a stringed instrument, I walked out and saw how they lived. Half a dozen men were sitting around a wood fire, which had been made in the center of an open shed. They sat on wooden blocks or lounged on the earthen floor; they talked in Indian or in Spanish, and at intervals one broke into a snatch of song, which was taken up by the rest, and swept, not unmusically, through the air, slowly rising and falling away until there remained only the musician whose instrument was

# President's Message

Hope all of you remember that starting in September, our meeting will be held on the last Monday of the month at 600 P.M. at the Little History Museum on Temecula Parkway (Hwy. 79S). In August we will continue meeting on the second Monday as usual. The program should be interesting and informative on the impact of the Model-T Ford on our lives.

Last week my wife and I attended a social meeting of the Temecula Valley Convention & Tourist Bureau and learned of ways they are attempting to lure visitors to our Valley. It reminded me of the stories I had heard about the "Bible Land" that was built in the area between Temecula and Rainbow in the late 1950's to attract tourist to our area. A quick review of Tom Hudson's "A Thousand Years in Temecula Valley" helped me recall my previous studies. Mr. & Mrs. Ted Conibear leased the land adjacent to old Highway 395 and Tom built sand sculptures: *The Last Supper, Jesus in Gethsemane, The Nativity and Women of Samaria*. He used local people as models for the figures in his work. He relied on donations to cover his cost. Unfortunately, when Hwy 15 was built it cut off access to his monumental work. I wonder if any of the people who served as models are still around. If so, please contact me (951) 302-9536.

*Jimmy Moore*

**Recent  
Membership Renewals**  
Rod & Dee Reynolds

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## **Nordhoff's Story Continues . . .**

composed of a cornstalk about 30 inches long, stretching a single string made of lambs' entrails.

"They are poor creatures," said Senor M. with a shrug of his shoulders, "poor creatures, but quiet; not good for much, but useful".

I asked where they slept. He pointed to a door which opened into a tightly enclosed shed, which I had imagined was a chicken house. In the farther end, truly, the chickens were at roost, but the larger part was floored with poles on which barley straw was spread – and here the Indians slept – if they slept, of which, later, I had occasion to entertain some doubts. Outside of the yard near the house was what we should call careless disorder and litter.

When supper was served, two benches were drawn up to the table, and we three men sat down and helped ourselves to the stew of meat and onions, to excellent bread but no butter, to a dish of black and red beans, some fried potatoes, and to coffee or tea as we preferred. Presently came in two boys 13 and 11, and in a few minutes more their mother – stout and healthy looking, as is the habit of California Spanish women. She took one end of the table and drew a chair to her side for a lad of 8 years, her youngest, who ate out of her plate, drank coffee out of her cup and indulged in sundry hugs and kisses during the meal. Later dropped in a young woman – a poor relative, probably and a little girl who held the same situation. After the manner of poor relations, they spoke in whispers, sat uneasily on their chairs, and finished their meal sooner than the rest of us.

***(Part 2 of this article reprint will appear next month)***

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## **Annual Meeting Date Set**

Mark your calendars – the Annual Meeting of the Temecula Valley Historical Society will be held on Saturday, November 13, 2010. Plans are evolving around that date, with the event to be held at the Little Temecula History Center. A catered dinner will be part of the evening, along with some fine wine tasting. In addition to a wonderful program on the history of the Temecula Tractor Race, presented by Bob Morris; the event will include an art show which will remain on display through the next day (Sunday, November 14). Watch for more details in the Newsletter in the coming months.

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### **\*\* NOTE: Regular Meeting Date to Change \*\***

During the business/board portion of the Society's June meeting it was decided that we will move our meeting date to the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month. Initially it was thought that we'd make the change effective in August, but that was not compatible with the August speakers schedule and commitments. So beginning in September, the regular meeting of TVHS will be on Monday, September 27 at 6:00 p.m. at the Little Temecula History Center. Our monthly newsletter will attempt to keep all dates, etc. correct and hopefully not cause anyone to miss a meeting or presentation of interest.

## Special Outing Opportunity to Arizona Available in October

Some of us are going to attend the Empire Ranch Foundation's 10<sup>th</sup> Roundup and Open House near Tucson, Arizona on October 23rd. Walter Vail, who founded the immense Vail Ranch in Southern California, started the cattle business at the Empire Ranch in the 1870s. In 1881 Walter Vail took his bride to an Arizona adobe home that was later expanded and improved, and still stands today on a protected parcel of BLM land.

Members and friends of the Temecula Valley Historical Society are invited to travel to the Tucson area to participate in this special event featuring Western skills, lore & storytelling, tours of the historic ranch house, a kids corral, Western author's pavilion, historic displays, music, raffles and an auction accompanied by a huge Western Barbecue.

Carpooling is planned with departure for Arizona scheduled for Friday, October 22 and return on Monday, October 25, although participants may plan their own schedules. Possible side trips could include Casa Grande, historic Tucson, San Xavier Mission, Vail Arizona, Tombstone Arizona, and Yuma Penitentiary to name a few.

Stay tuned for more details on this special event that will be fun to share with our "sister" Vail Ranch enthusiasts from Arizona. For more information contact Darell Farnbach at 951-552-3516.

## - 100 Years Ago this Month in Temecula -

*(From the Archives of the Lake Elsinore Valley Press Weekly newspaper)*

### **August 12, 1910 - Mexican Fiesta at Temecula**

An old-time Indian and Mexican Fiesta in celebration of San Luis Rey is advertised to be held at Temecula, August 23rd to 26th. There will be Indian dances and games, feather, eagle, and fire dances, Pelota and Peon games, horse races, foot races, baseball games, cowboy and Mexican feats in horsemanship, including bronco busting, coin-lifting, etc. Dancing day and night. It is an attractive program throughout, and no doubt will draw a large attendance. It is probable the noon train south will be continued on to Temecula during the Fiesta.

### **August 19, 1910**

- Work is progressing famously on the ramadas for the Fiesta. From all indications now this promises to be one of the largest Indian fiestas ever held in Southern California.
- Adrian B. Barnett and wife are going camping in the Cahuilla Mountains.
- Mrs. Herman G. Vogel has returned from her visit in San Diego.
- Charles Hadsall and George Greyson of Murrieta are in town today.
- Raphael Olivera lost his finger in a sausage machine about ten days ago. It is healing up in nice shape.
- Harry L. Heffner was in town last week shaking hands with his many friends here.
- Another dog with symptoms of rabies is reported at Pechanga.  
*(Ed. Note: Mr. Heffner above was Vail Ranch Foreman after Walter was killed.)*

### **August 26, 1910 - Exciting Runaway at Temecula**

An exciting runaway took place at the Temecula fiesta yesterday. Mrs. Ed Ludie (Ludy?) was in a carriage with her little child, when the team became unmanageable. She was thrown over the dashboard and lodged on the buggy tongue still holding to her child. Someone ran up and grabbed the child and the woman then fell to the ground, but fortunately escaped serious injury. The team ran for a distance of some four miles before being run down by cowpunchers. The vehicle was demolished.

## 1863 Mail Robbery & Murder in Temecula

*(Ed. Note – This item appeared in the Daily Alta California, August 15, 1863)*

A few days ago the Government mail from Los Angeles to Fort Yuma was robbed, and the two men employed in conveying it, killed. The sad affair occurred some six or eight miles east of Temecula Postoffice. My informant says that the men were shot all to pieces, most of the balls entering their backs. They were found about one thousand yards from the main road, covered up with brush and leaves. The mail-bag was cut open, and left on the ground near by. Its contents were strewn all around, and led to the discovery. It is not known here if there were any valuables in it or not; no clue as yet to the perpetrators of this vile deed. As the incoming mail was four days behind time when my informant left Temecula, it is apprehended that they have met with the same fate.