

TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

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Reprint of 1952 Magazine Article – Part 2

A Visit to the Old Laguna Rancho

(Editor's Note: This article appeared in "The Southern California Rancher" magazine in January, 1952. The article was originally part of a book written in 1874 by Charles Nordhoff about his trip West in the early 1870's. The text below is as it appeared at that time. Part 1 appeared in last month's issue.)

Nordhoff's Story Continues . . .

I presently discovered that two of the lads could speak a little English; and after supper they got out their reading books and slates and astonished and pleased me by their precision in reading and their readiness in ciphering. They had, I found, a teacher or tutor, a young Spaniard, to whom our host paid \$17 a month "and of course a horse or whatever he needs, here". What is odd is that while they could read in English with perfect readiness and correctness, they did not understand half the words they pronounced, and could give me but a broken account of their lesson.

To return to our supper – my host lit his cigar before he left the table, and indeed, he did not wait until I had done with my supper, and we smoked while the table was cleared away. The principal vacquero came later for his supper.

Twenty years ago the countrymen of this man owned the whole of California, the land, cattle, sheep and horses were theirs. Today (1874) the majority of them are poor, in fact very few retain even a part of their old possessions. They are not business men. They have found it easy to borrow or obtain things on credit, borrowing at 2, 3 and 5% a month; ready to renew their notes and borrow more on top of them; and it is said to be perfectly safe to loan to them for they will pay even if it ruins them. And of course it does ruin them.

The style of living I have described, poor and simple as it looks to us, is that usual among the Spanish or Californian population. Their food is chiefly "carne seco" (dried beef), beans, tortillas, which are wheat or corn cakes in shape like Scotch scones, and coffee. Senor M. being a careful man had a cow – I mean a milch cow. His house had a wooden floor, earthen floors were almost universal in the old times and are still quite common.

Curious tales are told of the improvidence of the old Californians in their last days. When the Americans from the East rushed unto the country on the discovery of gold, cattle suddenly became valuable for the meat; before then only the hides were sold. The Yankee demands for beef made the cattle owners suddenly became rich, and they made haste to spend what they so easily got. Saddles trimmed with silver, spurs of gold, bridles of silver chains, were among the fancies of the men. A lady in Santa Barbara described the old adobe houses with earthen floors

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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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Calendar Of Events

Monday, Sept. 27 –

Monthly meeting at Little Temecula History Center, 6 to 8 p.m. Lisa Woodward, will present "The 1875 Eviction of the Temecula Indians".

Weekend Oct. 22 thru 24 –

Empire Ranch Round-up near Tucson, Arizona. On ranch grounds where Walter Vail started his cattle business. For more details call Darell at 951-552-3516.

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 their Centennial anniversary.

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.

covered with costly rugs, four post bed steads with the costliest lace curtains, and those looped up with lace again; and the senoras and señoritas dragging trains of massive silk and satin over the earthen floors.

But to return to Laguna; outside the palings which enclosed the house, the Indian quarters, the little orchard and a pasture field, cattle and horses roamed of their own free will. At night 20 or 30 horses were driven into a large corral, from which the vaqueros chose their mounts the next morning.

We smoked and talked until nearly 9 o'clock by which time this excellent family gaped so fearfully that I proposed to retire and was immediately shown into the store where a mattress was spread for each of us on the floor, our own blankets and overcoats serving as covering. Ventilation I found, the roof afforded, and it was nearly midnight before the Indians ceased their chattering and singing. They began again at 4 and by 5 o'clock (before daylight) I arose and found these uneasy spirits sitting around the fire talking.

We breakfasted before seven and then went out on the great common to see the vaqueros lasso a wild bull. They very neatly separated one animal from the rest of the herd, drove it full tilt toward us, and when it threatened to run us down, whiz went the reata and though I looked with all my eyes, I saw nothing but that the animal stopped in mid-air and tumbled over as though it had been shot. Thereupon the vaquero coolly got off his horse, first winding the reata about the pommel of his saddle. The horse, a mere pony, stood with his fore legs planted firmly and a very knowing look in his eyes. Presently the bull began to struggle. He managed by a sudden motion to raise himself half erect, but the horse quietly took a step backward, tightened the rope, and down went the bull, helpless. This was repeated several times, until I did not know which to admire most, the horse or the man who had so thoroughly taught it.

Out of the Past Newspaper Items

(Ed. Note – This item appeared in the Los Angeles Herald, August 4, 1905.)

T. J. Danforth is at the county jail awaiting examination for insanity. He was found wandering about Temecula in a state of complete nudity, and was brought in by a deputy sheriff. Danforth is a man of about 40, and says he set out from Vista, San Diego County to walk to Temecula, and had no water for three days. He intimates further that he is just getting over a big spree, and the officers are hopeful for the return of his sanity.

(Ed. Note – This item appeared in the San Diego Union, November 14, 1871)

EARTHQUAKE AT TEMECULA. – A gentleman just from the country informs us that quite a smart shock of earthquake was felt at Temecula, about sixty miles distant from San Diego, on the night of October 27th. The people at Bergmans and Charles Thomas ranches were thoroughly roused by the phenomenon, which was immediately preceded by a loud sound, as of an explosion. The shock occurred about ten o'clock, and was of three or four seconds duration. The movement was from southwest to northwest.

President's Message

Hope all of you have driven thru Old Town Temecula or traveled up and down Jefferson Avenue and observed the new *HISTORIC ROUTE 395* signs. Dick Fox and his committee have been working on this project for the past year and we are beginning to see the fruits of their efforts. There are several more signs coming in the Riverside County portion of the historic highway that are in the process of being erected. Many thanks to the businesses and individuals who have helped the Society raise money for the signs and to Dick for his effort in heading the project. A dedication ceremony honoring those who contributed is in the planning stages.

We salute St. Catherine's Catholic Church as they approach their 100th anniversary in November, 2010. They plan a number of events in remembrance of their Centennial. Much of Temecula's history evolves around its first place of worship.

Remember that the Historical Society has changed its meeting date to the 4th Monday of each month effective with our September meeting which will be on September 27th at 6:00 p.m. at the Temecula History Center on Temecula Parkway.

Jimmy Moore

Welcome to New Member

Andrew Leatham

Renewals

Elaine Eshom

Wes & Terri Reeder

Don & Julie Gilbert

A 1917 Fund Raiser

Benefit BBQ at Pauba Ranch To Build St. Catherine's

(Editors Note: The text below was transcribed from a hand-written document, a copy of which was provided to VaARRA by Whitney Wilkinson. The author is unknown, but certainly someone familiar with the "fund raising" BBQ held at the Vail Ranch in 1917. Some minor editing and correcting of some obviously misspelled words has been done to make it more readable. There was no way to verify spelling of some names.)

The Catholic priest from Elsinore came to Mahlon Vail with a request for a cash donation to help build a church in Temecula. The amount suggested by the priest seemed a little out of line, in that he was not a Catholic, so he told him he would think it over.

So a short time later they met at Joe Winkle's Blind Pig. After a drink or two Joe suggested to the priest that he have a barbeque and ask that the Vail Co. donate a steer or two instead. This request was readily accepted.

A few days later while in Los Angeles, Mahlon's brother Walter asked him what arrangements he was making about his barbeque. Mahlon's answer was that the only thing he was doing was furnishing the meat. Walter's reply was, "Oh no, the priest from Elsinore has been up hear and told all your friends that you are putting it on and there is a group of them coming and you have got to do something about it," so they got busy and started asking for donations from that end. Herman Houser of the Houser Packing Co. said he would donate all the weanies they wanted, Eddie Myres of Mivers offered all the beer they needed, Louis Collet all the buns needed. Baron Long of the Vernon Country Club & Fred Harle of Harlows Café would provide all the dance music; the Los Angeles Athletic Club the athletic program; this put the fat in the fire. A dance floor and a wrestling platform had to be built. Then Mahlon called on his friend Bill Trotter of Oceanside, who also had a blind pig and some professional gamblers, to bring them along and help raise funds for the church. Mahlon then went to the Agent at the Pechanga Indian Reservation and told him that Indians would be admitted free, but that beer would be served and would he furnish his policeman to see that the Indians did not get to the beer. The result was that the policeman was the first one to get to the beer.

To assist in the program were Jim Jeffries, Tom Sharkey, Sheriff John Kline (then Sheriff of L.A.), Dewitt Van Court boxing instructor at the club, Dan MacLeod wrestling instructor (who later worked at the ranch) and Mr. Cook - who nearly caused a catastrophe by falling into the barbeque pit, but luckily someone heard him and he was pulled out promptly with no serious burns - and revived with one more drink of whiskey.

Early the next morning word was sent that the Indians were fighting at the barbeque grounds. Mahlon and a few husky ranch hands arrived in time to see one of the Indians chasing his brother with an ax, the boy was finally tackled and shackled.

With some liquors that Bill Trotter always had on hand for emergencies which often occurred at his celebrations, after the smoke cleared there were ample funds to build the church and buy the good priest a small automobile.

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

Public Invitation to BBQ April 13, 1917

Yourself and friends are invited to attend a free barbecue to be given for the benefit of the new Catholic Church at Temecula, California, Sunday April 15, 1917, at Pauba Ranch, Temecula. Opening mass 9 a.m., barbecue at noon. Amusements from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sports of all kinds, dancing and music. Arrangements committee, Rev. J. J. Burri, Rev. George D. Doyle, Mr. Hahlon and William H. Trotter.

BBQ Big Success April 20, 1917

The barbecue held April 15, 1917 at the Pauba Ranch, Temecula was a grand success. On the grounds there were about 800 people and about 200 automobiles. An orchestra of four pieces furnished very excellent music for the dancing. The people were entertained by boxing and wrestling matches from men who came from Los Angeles for the occasion. Bronco busting by men from the Pauba Ranch was much appreciated. Nobody went home hungry, as there was food for everyone. It was a grand time that will be remembered for many moons by all those who were fortunate enough to be present. Owing to the cold and threatening rain the crowd was not there that was expected, but nevertheless, there were some from Los Angeles, San Jacinto, Hemet, Perris, Elsinore and Oceanside. Refreshments of all kinds were served and it required 20 people to serve the food. At the close of the performance, Rev. J. J. Burri made a very pleasing address in which he thanked the entertainers who had come from so far.

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November Celebration

St. Catherine's Celebrates Century as Official Parish

In November, 1910 St. Catherine of Alexandria was made an official parish by the San Diego Catholic Diocese. Prior to then the nearest parish was in San Jacinto. Besides Temecula, the following were considered Mission Churches; Lake Elsinore, Perris and Anza Cahuilla. There are no records of where the congregation met prior to the construction of the first building, which was completed after the BBQ fund raising event.

The first building (now in Sam Hicks Monument Park and known as the Chapel of Memories), was constructed at the corner of 6th and Front Streets, where Soros restaurant and Greyhound Bus Depot is today.

In 1989 the congregation started meeting in a relocatable classroom at its present C Street location (which was the site of the old Kolb family homestead). In 1991 the new building was dedicated and has been added onto over the years.

- 100 Years Ago - - This Month in Temecula -

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

September 2, 1910 - Death of Joseph Nicolas

Joseph Nicolas, a pioneer of the Temecula valley, died Monday of heart trouble and was buried Wednesday from the Catholic place of worship in Temecula, Fr. William Hughes officiating, assisted by Fr. Dole. Mr. Nicolas was 61 years of age and had lived for 30 years on the ranch where he died, five miles east and north of Temecula. The wife, a son and two daughters survive. His funeral was one of the most largely attended ever held in the valley. L. D. Clark of Elsinore was the undertaker in charge.

Annual Meeting To Include Art Show

Mark your calendars – the Annual Meeting of the Temecula Valley Historical Society will be held on Saturday, November 13, 2010. Plans are developing 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). Area artists are invited to participate, see website for entry forms, or contact Bonnie Martland. Watch for more details in the Newsletter in the coming months, and an invitation with response card in your mail box.