

TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

October 2010

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A Character from the Old West

Charley Parkhurst Stagecoach "Whip"

By Duane Preimsberger

California history is chockfull of unique characters that live the past of our State and locating them is sometimes almost as fascinating as is the individual. Finding an unusual tombstone in the Pioneer Cemetery in Watsonville was pretty interesting as I read:

Charley Darkey Parkhurst
1812 ----- 1879

Noted Whip of the Gold Rush Days
Drove Stage over Mt. Madonna in
Early Days of Valley. Last Run
San Juan to Santa Cruz. Death in
Cabin Near 7 Mile House
Revealed One Eyed Charley
A Woman. The First Woman to Vote
In the U.S. Nov. 3, 1868

*Erected
Pajaro Valley Historical Assn.*

Finding a tombstone that described a 67 year-old, cross dressing woman who drove stagecoaches during some of California's really rough and ready days was enough to pique my interest. So, with a few key strokes on my computer I uncovered a wealth of fascinating information about "Mountain, Cockeyed or One-eyed Charley" from a seemingly endless supply of sources.

Part of the legend involves descriptions of her early years in Lebanon, New Hampshire when she was born and known as *Charlotte Darkey Parkhurst*. Unfortunately, she was disconnected from her family, some say she was abandoned, and placed in an orphanage from which she later escaped while disguised as a boy. Getting work in the disguise was easier and safer than searching for employment as a girl so Charlotte retained her masquerade and soon acquired a new moniker, "Charley." Earliest employment was as a stable boy, cleaning stalls, feeding horses, washing carriages and all the other go-fer work that came along. Charley developed an interest in horses and worked tirelessly learning everything about them. Along with the interest in the four legged critters came a fascination with the duties of the "whips," or stagecoach drivers, who visited the stables.

Soon, Charley was becoming a skilled whip and could easily handle teams of two, four or six horses, gaining a reputation as

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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

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. This will
be the last meeting for the
calendar year 2010. New
board of directors for 2011
will be introduced.

Weekend, Nov. 19 – 21 --
St. Catherine's Centennial
event. There will be a
weekend of activities to
celebrate their Centennial
anniversary.

Monday, Jan. 24, 2011 –
Monthly meeting at Little
Temecula History Center,
6 to 8 p.m. Marc Hendon,
Commissioner with Riverside
County Historic Commission
will speak on the Earps in
Riverside County.

Monday, February 28 --
Monthly meeting at Little
Temecula History Center,
6 to 8 p.m. Steve Lech, will
Speak on the formation of
Riverside County.

Charley Parkhurst (continued)

an outstanding driver. Charley apparently got a little edgy about the possibility of discovery of the secret disguise and decided to move along. For a little while he drove stages in Georgia and then decided to head to the Golden State. He stepped down the gangplank in San Francisco in 1851 after months at sea.

Whip work was easy to find during these tumultuous "Golden Years" and Charley was telling all who'd listen, "I aim to be the best damn driver in California." Soon he was gaining a reputation as a skillful and reliable whip who could handle the stage routes through some of the wildest, gold-crazed areas in central California. Charley met robbers on one of the runs and turned over the strongbox at gun point. Not wanting a repeat of that embarrassment, Charley became adept and accurate with a .44 caliber revolver and the next robber who forced Charley's hand got himself a one way ticket to hell as the .44 barked a response to the bad guys order to "Stand and Deliver."

Bad Guys didn't hurt Charley near as bad as did the horse that kicked him in the face while he was shoeing the animal. That's when he got his Cockeyed or One-eyed nickname. The injury and subsequent loss of the eye didn't slow Charley down and he was soon back to doing what he enjoyed, driving a team of six in front of a Concord coach.

Age, aching joints and "rheumatize" in his bones caused Charley to give up the reins in that late 1860's. Soon he was running a stage-stop and a ranch and occasionally working as a lumberjack during winters. A decade later, Charley met his match as cancer of the tongue and mouth, perhaps from years of smoking and "chawin" tobacco, put him out of the drivers seat for good. His death led to the preparation of his body for burial and much to the surprise of those involved in the process, the secret of Charley's masquerade finally came to light.

The fallout from the discovery unfurled a wealth of rumors. Some alleged that Charley was a star crossed lover who was victimized by a man monster. Others indicated that there was medical proof she'd been a mother. The Yreka Journal suppositioned, "She may have been disgusted with the trammels surrounding her sex, and concluded to work out her fortune her own way." No one knows for sure what the reasons were; the secret went to the grave with Charley. What is known is that Charley Darkey Parkhurst became one of the most successful and skillful whips ever to drive stagecoaches through California during the wildest boomtown days. This reputation came from his peers, passengers and companies as prestigious as Wells Fargo. Charley left a fascinating and remarkable legacy that lives on even today! Type in Charley Darkey Parkhurst on your search engine and enjoy the ride.

In Memoriam

Word was received on Sunday, September 26 that Tommy Hotchkiss passed away. Tommy was a long-time resident of Temecula, where he lived with his wife Irene. Services are planned for 10 a.m. Friday, October 8 at St. Catherine's Catholic Church.

President's Message

On Tuesday evening at the Temecula City Council meeting, the Temecula Valley Historical Society presented the City of Temecula an engraved plaque to thank the City for its participation in the Old Highway 395 Project, along with a check to reimburse them for the purchase of the signs. Dick Fox, who headed the 395 Project, did an outstanding job of getting the signs placed along the stretch of the highway as it passed through Temecula.

At our September meeting, Dr. Lisa Woodward presented an excellent power point presentation of the *1875 Eviction of the Temecula Indians*. We had a sell-out crowd who appreciated the depth of the presentation. Our next meeting will be again on the fourth Monday of October at 6:00 p.m. Historian Anne Miller will be the guest speaker on *The Story of Maria Apis*. Our Annual Meeting will be on November 13th, at the Little Temecula History Center, starting at 6:00 p.m. It will feature a catered dinner and our speaker will be Bob Morris on the history of the Temecula Tractor Race. We will also be honoring Tommy Hotchkiss, who along with Bob Morris started the first Temecula Tractor Race. Tommy passed away last week. We will also install new board members and elect new officers at the Annual Meeting. Please mark your calendars' for November 13th.

Jimmy Moore

New Member

Richard & Irene Scearce

Renewals

Emily Gerstbacher

Bonnie Reed

Jack Roripaugh

Irene Hotchkiss

Horse Thieves in Temecula?

(Editors Note: The following item is from the Southern News dated October 24, 1868. The Southern News was a semi-weekly that later became the Los Angeles Daily News in 1869.)

LOS ANGELES, October 24, 1868 -- On Wednesday last, Deputy Marshal Frank Baker obtained information that a gang of horse thieves were prowling around the neighborhood of Temecula, and as a horse had been stolen from John Wilson, of this city, Sheriff Burns was informed of the fact, who despatched (sic) Frank Baker in search of the thief and horse. Thinking that it was more likely that the thief might be in the neighborhood of Temecula, he obtained the services of Deputy Constable John Roberts, and started in pursuit. In crossing the Santa Ana river they obtained information that a band of horses with eight or ten men had come up from below, on the river, and had crossed at that place. From other parties along the road, Frank learned that several other bands of horse-thieves, all going the same way, had been seen, with animals. Some of these parties came from the direction of Jaurapa (sic) and San Bernardino, but no large numbers of parties had passed Temecula. Upon arriving at the ranch of Juan Machado, he informed Baker that there had passed, three days before, three different bands of horses, all in sight of one another -- the first band having about eighty head of horses and twenty-two men; the second band, fifty head of horses and about eighteen men; and the third about twenty horses and eight men, showing evidently that this is one of the best organized bands of horse-thieves ever seen in this county, and that they have a rendezvous in the Temescal range of mountains.

November Centennial

St. Catherine's Celebrates Century as Official Parish

On the weekend of November 19, 20 & 21 St. Catherine's Catholic Church in Temecula will celebrate its Centennial with special events. There will be many activities to celebrate their 100th anniversary.

In November, 1910 St. Catherine of Alexandria was made an official parish by the San Diego Catholic Diocese. Although many from the Temecula Valley went to services at the Pala Mission, the closest 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 are 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 where Mildred Tobin grew up). In 1991 the new building was dedicated and has been added onto over the years.

Annual Meeting Set for November

Mark your calendars – the Annual Meeting of the Temecula Valley Historical Society will be held on Saturday, November 13, 2010. Festivities will start at 6 p.m. with hospitality time, then dinner to be served at 6:30 p.m. The event will be held at the Little Temecula History Center. A catered dinner will be part of the evening, along with some fine wine tasting. Cost \$20 per person.

In addition to a wonderful, fun and informal program on the history of the Temecula Tractor Race, 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.

100 Years Ago

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

November 4, 1910

- Mrs. Preston V. Swanguen and Grant Howard, together with Eli E. Barnett and several others are arranging to seed considerable acreage in alfalfa.

- Messrs. David Blower and Charles McVicar are opening up a large quarry near here, it having been proven that the quality of stone guarantees a profitable market.

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

December 8, 1916

New Catholic Church for Temecula

A meeting of businessmen was held in the Bank hall at Temecula Monday night, Dec. 4. Mr. Shumate, cashier of the Temecula bank, was chairman. There were present Rev. J. J. Burri, August Cantarini, Mr. Barnett, Mac Machado and other prominent citizens. It was the third meeting that has been held. It is planned to build a Catholic church in Temecula and the businessmen generally think it will be a good thing for the town. Six town lots have been secured on the main boulevard near the beautiful new grammar school. Mac Machado, a popular public spirited merchant, made a liberal donation on the price of two lots and the Santa Fe Ry. Co. did likewise on the other four, so the new church is provided with six slightly building lots. Rev. J. J. Burri has been very successful in raising funds. If built of stone, the stone will be donated and if parties can be induced to donate the hauling, it will be possible to build a church valued at \$3,000 to \$4,000. If a wood frame church be decided upon, a frame structure to cost about \$1500 will be erected. Five hundred dollars cash has been donated through the Catholic Church Extension Society of Chicago. An altar from the same source has been donated. The society secured the money from a wealthy gentleman in the east. The Diocese of the Catholic Church of Southern California purchased the lots. Towards the building fund \$500 is promised, but it is hoped that the total will be much greater. Work will begin very soon and the new church will be completed early in January. Temecula is certainly coming to the front. In the past year a fine new two-story concrete bank building was erected. The new bank is in a very prosperous condition. A beautiful new grammar school has been opened and now it is proposed to build a handsome church. Mac Machado, the prominent merchant, is the pioneer in building a beautiful and costly store building. The Machado store is one of the best attractions in Temecula.

February 9, 1917

Temecula's New Church

Father Burri's Congregation to Build Edifice at Cost of Thousands

Rev. J. J. Burri announced last Sunday that work would begin Wednesday on the new Catholic Church in Temecula. It will be a frame building 26 X 36 feet. The addition will consist of a sanctuary 12 X 12 feet and a vestry 10 X 12 feet. B. J. Smith of Elsinore will be superintendent of building and it is hoped the building will be finished in time to be dedicated on St. Patrick's Day. Jean Laborde of Perris will furnish the granite for the altar seven feet wide. The tabernacle will be seven feet wide and eight feet high and of 3 1/2 feet depth. The door of the tabernacle will be solid bronze highly polished with the chalice and host engraved on it. The church will have an open ceiling showing the framework of the roof constructed of finished lumber suitably stained and polished. The building and furnishings will cost about \$12,000.