

# TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

March 2011

Volume 11 – Issue 3

*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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*In this 1912 photo of Dare Devil Derkum, he is sitting astride an Indian motorcycle probably much like the one he used in 1909 to break a Southern California record.*

### Attempting to Break Record

## Paul "Dare Devil" Derkum Races through Temecula

By Jeffery G. Harmon

On July 20, 1909, at 11:15 a.m. Paul "Daredevil" Derkum checked in at Temecula during a timed 320 mile roundtrip race between Los Angeles and San Diego. He was determined to lower J. Howard Shafer's June 30, 1909 record of 16 hours and 50 minutes. In a cloud of dust, Derkum raced north out of town and into the record books. His finishing time was 10 hours, 59 minutes, and 30 seconds.

Paul J.C. "Dare Devil" Derkum was born July 2, 1881 at Hamilton, Ohio. "In his youth he was a champion bicycle rider and rode professionally in national races from 1898 to 1902. He worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad Co. from 1904 to 1914, but during those years he raced motorcycles. He held the California, United States and World Championships in motorcycle riding and was the second American to compete on foreign soil in motorcycle races. In 1913 he helped organize the Kern County Fair Association and became manager serving through 1924." (*Kern-Los Angeles County CA Archives Obituaries.....Derkum, Paul J.C. April 17, 1958*)

The timed challenge began when J. Howard Shafer raced out of Los Angeles on June 30, 1909 on a 1909 Reading Standard

(Continued on Page 2)

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P.O. Box 157  
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951-303-6860  
[www.temeculahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.temeculahistoricalsociety.org)

# Calendar Of Events

## **Monday, March 28 –**

Monthly meeting at Little Temecula History Center, 6 to 8 p.m. Dr. Thomas Long, (TVHS Board Member), and history professor at Cal State San Bernardino will talk about the California Gold Rush.

## **Monday, April 25 –**

Monthly meeting at Little Temecula History Center, 6 to 8 p.m. Murray Lee, Curator of Chinese American History at the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum will present "The Story of Ah Quin" patriarch and railroad labor broker within the S.D. Chinese community of the 1880's and beyond.

## **Saturday, April 30 –**

Alamos-Hyatt School Reunion, 10:00 a.m. at the Alamos School House at Lake Skinner County Park. Potluck so bring your favorite dish. Water, Coffee, Iced Tea and Paper plates provided. All Welcome. For further info Contact Mimi Milholland at 951-926-5080.

## **Membership Activity Renewals**

Louise Beesley  
Arlie Bergman  
Martin Disenbacher  
John III, Jerri Lynn & John IV Randall  
Mission Clay Products  
Diane Latulippe  
Mike McMillan  
Shari Crall  
Dr. Dan Funderburk

## **Derkum's Wild Ride in 1909** (continued from Page 1)

motorcycle. The course took him south along the Coast Route to San Diego. Then he returned to Los Angeles via the Inland Route. His record time would have been lower if not for one mishap. A tire puncture, caused by a collision with a barbed wire fence, delayed his race. Paul Derkum heard of Shafer's feat and declared that he would lower the record.

At 3:50 a.m., Derkum thundered away from the Los Angeles Motorcycle clubhouse (Twenty-second and San Pedro streets) on a three and a half horsepower stock Indian machine. He first reached Anaheim at 4:58 a.m. and then San Juan Capistrano at 6:50 a.m. In Capistrano he went off course. "It was here that the rider attempted to follow the coast line, as it was low tide, but he struck a six-inch depth of muck and sea wash, and after struggling for half a mile gave up the task." (*Los Angeles Herald, July 21, 1909*).

Derkum rode into Oceanside at 7:30 a.m. In 56 minutes, he covered forty-eight miles to San Diego. He registered at the San Diego Evening Tribune office at 8:30 a.m. Paul explained to the Herald, "I could have started back from San Diego ten minutes after I arrived, but as Schafer, who held the record, was also obliged to wait forty-five minutes, I also had to comply with this regulation." (*L.A. Herald, 1909*).

Leaving San Diego at 9:15 a.m. he passed Escondido at 10:29 a.m. He passed through Temecula at 11:15 a.m. and Elsinore Hot Springs at 12:32 p.m. (I don't think it would have taken Derkum an hour and 17 minutes to travel from Temecula to Elsinore.) He raced through Corona at 1:22 p.m. and Pomona at 2:07 p.m. He arrived at the Los Angeles clubhouse at 3:35 p.m., breaking Shafer's record.

Everyone wondered if J. Howard Shafer could break Derkum's record and reclaim the title. On July 26, 1909, at 5:00 a.m. Shafer revved up his two-cylinder Thor motorcycle at the Los Angeles Herald office on First and Broadway. Shafer was confident that he could make the run in ten hours flat. However, at 12:20 p.m., he returned to the newspaper office failing to set a new record.

"Shafer, who went as far as Santa Ana, was met by a large brown hen at that city and in the mix-up which followed, Shafer, the hen and the motorcycle precipitated into a nearby ditch with the result that Derkum's record is still unsullied and that Shafer returned with a badly battered up machine and a whole handful of chicken feathers as the result of his effort." (*Los Angeles Herald, July 27, 1909*).

During this era, many races took place as promotions for companies and the Good Roads movement. Within the next decade, the Coast and Inland Highways would be paved. Traffic laws would be passed, speed limits posted, and newly purchased automobiles would clog the roadways. It is unknown if "Dare Devil" Derkum's record was ever broken, but it would be fun to attempt on today's modern highways.

Why did the chicken cross the road? So that Paul "Dare Devil" Derkum's record could not be broken.

## *President's Message*

My husband and I recently had a morning appointment in San Diego and afterwards made a spur of the moment decision to visit Old Town San Diego State Historic Park. We had been there many times but had been a few years since our last visit, and for the first time we decided to take a docent tour. Our guide, dressed in period attire, and very knowledgeable made early California history, and the park history, much more tangible. A Vail family spring wagon in the Seeley Stables Museum sparked an after the tour conversation about the Vail Ranch and Temecula's history as part of San Diego County.

It turned out to be a day of firsts. As retired teachers we enjoyed learning about the history of California's first public schoolhouse, the Mason Street School. First we had lunch, accompanied by a lovely young harpist, in the refurbished Cosmopolitan Hotel and Restaurant. We took a walk to the Whaley House. We had often looked in through the windows, but this time bought a ticket and got a tour from the "head docent" who wanted to know about Temecula's historic venues.

Saw no ghosts but loved the old woodwork and in-house theater. We also made our first visit to the Mormon Battalion Monument and Visitors Center accompanied by a family with two young children who enjoyed the interactive presentation immensely. The young lady from Utah who was our interpretive guide was interested to hear about Temecula's Mormon Battalion connection and delighted to show us a picture of her great-great-grandfather who made the 2000 mile trek.

You meet some of the nicest people when you speak history.

*Bonnie Martland*

## Out of the Archives

# Herd of Area Goats Part of 1920's Filming

*(From the Lake Elsinore Valley Press, August 5, 1921)*

F.H. Heald, who has a big herd of blooded goats on his ranch in the Temescal Canyon, turned the place over Sunday to a big bunch of movie people, who spent the entire day taking pictures of the goats in their natural habitat.

It must have been a red letter Sunday for the goats to find themselves, without warning the center of a Persian setting, surrounded by beautiful slaves, gorgeously arrayed sheiks and all the trappings of the desert royalty, after their former, monotonous round of Temescal hills, with an occasional rattler to furnish the excitement.

Mr. Heald says that "The goats starred favorably with the other stars, Persian tents, sheiks, slaves, saris and gorgeous costuming" and that the "royal bucks were a credit to the royalties for which they were named." The company was the "All Star Rubaiyat Incorporation," people who have been taking the picture and getting it ready for two years. It is about completed now.

The players include the great Frederick Warde, Hedwig Reicher, music by Cadman, and a multitude of others, each an artist in his line. Ferdinand Earle is director and the picture is supposed to be one of the great picture events of the year, and is worth millions.

Nine hundred feet of film were taken to select from, cut out, etc. The hilly section in that locality with its desert-like washes must have lent itself nicely to the "Omar" settings and there is a possibility that if Mr. Heald will accompany the movie people to Elsinore and show them our very finest scenery, that they will take at least one scene here.

Elsinore, with her diversity of scenery, her wonderful lake, and the mountains towering over it; her stretches of desert-like wastes in the outlying foothill sections, should prove a sufficient lure for even so wonderful a production as that being put out by the Rubaiyat Incorporation.

*(Researcher's Note: A quick search on the internet shows that this movie was probably "A Lover's Oath", released in 1925 and based on "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.")*

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## *Members Attend Desert Meeting*

Darell and Rebecca Farnbach, Anne Miller and David Elliott, and Roger Weber represented the Society and VaARRA at a Southern Trails conference in Borrego Springs in February. Anne gave a presentation on mapping the Southern Emigrant Trail through Riverside County to this group that is hoping to see the trail given National Historic Trail status, similar to designations of National Monuments and National Parks. Roger and the Farnbachs participated in long hikes, one day in sand to the site of the Carrizo stage stop and on another day in 4" of snow to the recent Warner archeological dig site.

Our group learned a lot and networked with several friends of Temecula history, including Leland Bibb, Phil Brigandi, and Kevin and Denny Henson (who retraced the Mormon Trail two years ago).

# Notes

## **Mark Calendars For Special TVHS Event in May**

The Education & Events Committee has announced that a special event has been scheduled for Saturday, May 21. We have reserved a Walking Tour of San Diego's China Town, followed by a visit to the San Diego Chinese History Museum and a special "tea" in their garden for our group. Reservations and prepayment of \$5 per person will be required before the end of April. The size of the group is limited to a total of 20 persons. Get your reservations and \$\$ in to either Bill Harker or Lisa Woodward by the end of April.

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## **Photos of Old Town Temecula Needed**

VARRA is seeking historical photos of Old Town Temecula to be used in a new Arcadia book they will be putting together as a fundraiser for VARRA. If you have photos from the 1980's or before of any places in Old Town, please contact Loretta Barnett ([mlbarnett55@verizon.net](mailto:mlbarnett55@verizon.net)), Rebecca Farnbach ([rebfrnbach@aol.com](mailto:rebfrnbach@aol.com)), or call Darell Farnbach (951-552-3516) and they can make arrangements to scan your photos.

## An Area Day Trip

# **A Fun High Country Experience in Julian**

**By Duane Preimsberger**

If you ask folks where the Cuyamaca Mountains are, you may get a blank look and that's too bad. These mountains are an hours drive from Temecula, east along Highway 79 South, through beautiful countryside. Located in their midst at over 4,000 feet above the sea; is a tiny town called 'Julian'. The town has a fascinating history; it was founded after the Civil War by wandering Confederate soldiers, including Mike Julian, who were headed west. Shortly after their arrival Julian spawned a short-lived gold rush. After the gold rush a few souls stayed on, farming the verdant land and growing apples and pears.

Today, Julian is a great place to get away from the hustle and bustle of urban living. It's a four season community with mild winters and summers and in the mountains, fall and spring take on special beauty. There's a lot of the history from the 1800's and the Julian Chamber of Commerce will supply a map for a self- guided tour that will take you to an old jail, cemetery, library and museum and point out some other sites of interest, including the 105 year-old Julian Gold Rush Hotel. In the fall you can visit one of the apple or pear orchards and pick fresh fruit nearby. Stores at some of the orchards offer delicious fruit, fresh cider, apple butter, jams and jellies. There are stables for horse-back riding and occasionally a beautiful, open, horse-drawn, coach can take visitors on local tours.

At downtown shops you can browse through antiques, oil paintings, a store full of angels, learn all about birds, engage your sweet tooth at a candy store or stroll among bags of feed and grain. There are a couple of wineries and tasting rooms; hungry visitors can chose from a dozen and a half eateries. Enjoy coffees, pizza, cafes, afternoon teas, fine dining as well as plenty of places to savor Julian's renowned apple pie.

If you want to enjoy a totally different experience in Julian, you can visit the California Wolf Center. It's the home to a number of North American Wolves and is open to the public on a reservation only basis. Each tour lasts an hour and provides a gallery presentation to acquaint visitors with the wolves; staff members take time for questions. The highlight of the experience takes the visitors close up to meet "the pack". It's truly an opportunity not to be forgotten. If you're interested you can call 619- 234- WOLF for times, prices and location.

Julian is a jewel nestled in beautiful mountain scenery; it's truly a special high country experience.

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## **Sheep from New Mexico**

*December 29, 1855, Sacramento Daily Union*

We learn that 23,000 sheep recently crossed the Colorado, and are now on their way to the North. The most advanced part of them have reached Temecula. There are several owners, and some offer to dispose of their flocks at \$3 per head, about the average price for stock sheep in this market, though we have heard of sales at much below this figure.