

TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

June 2011

Volume 11 – Issue 6

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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Temecula Valley Historical Society
P.O. Box 157
Temecula, CA 92593
951-303-6860
www.temeculahistoricalsociety.org



This 1932 photo of the Lake Henshaw Dam shows the completed dam.

An Early Area Water Project

Temecula Active During Building of Warner's (a.k.a.) Lake Henshaw Dam

By Jeffery G. Harmon

"The Bent Construction Company of Los Angeles was the successful bidder for the construction of the Warner dam and will start the work within the next sixty days. All the material will come through Temecula." (Mrs. V.B. Sands, Temecula Gossip Column, Lake Elsinore Valley Press, May 19, 1922).

In 1911, William G. Henshaw purchased the Warner Ranch from the heirs of John G. Downey. Henshaw and his partner, Col. Ed Fletcher, set plans in motion to construct a dam at the headwaters of the San Luis Rey River. The dam would create California's second largest artificial lake to date. A tunnel and the head gates were constructed within a few years, but then the dam project halted at the start of World War I.

After the war, Fletcher began advocating for the right to complete the Henshaw Dam. On April 11, 1922, it was announced that the contract for the dam had been awarded to the Bent Brothers of Los Angeles.

H. Stanley Bent explained the project: *"The big dam is to be of dirt construction, which means that it is simply a great dirt fill in the San Luis Rey River. Approximately half a million cubic yards of earth will be used in making the fill, which will extend for 600 feet up and down the*

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Calendar Of Events

Saturday, June 11 –

Flea Market in the Park to Benefit the Temecula Valley Museum. 8:30 to 3:00 p.m. Approximately 100 vendor booths will be available with a variety of items. Be sure to stop by the TVHS booth.

Saturday, June 25 –

Historic Route 395 Fun Run Rally. Drive a segment of the Historic Route 395 starting either in Perris or Escondido, Finish with free eats & music At Elder House in Fallbrook. Contact either Dick Fox, Jimmy Moore, or Jeffery Harmon for details.

Monday, June 27 –

Monthly meeting at Little Temecula History Center, 6 to 8 p.m. Presentation by Steve Allen and Alan Brubaker on the History of Photography.

Monday, July 25 –

Monthly Meeting at Little Temecula History Center, 6 to 8 p.m. Darell Farnbach will do a presentation on "Ranching California Style".

Membership Activity

New Member

Margot Maitland

Renewals

David Elliott & Anne Miller

Gera Thole

Keith Johnson

Neal & Dawn McKenzie

Vince & Audrey Cilurzo

Walt & Jean Dixon

Darell & Rebecca Farnbach

Bonnie Martland

Dick & Evelyn Norris

Robert & June Ulrey

Building of Henshaw Dam (Continued from Page 1)

stream at the base and be about twenty feet at the top. It will be 105 feet above stream bed. It will be faced on the upper side with a concrete slab or shell to prevent damage by the wave action of the reservoir and the spillway will be of concrete. At the foot of the spillway the structure will be protected by masses of rock to prevent any damage from the falling water. There will also be concrete abutments of piers to prevent possible encroachments of the water at the banks." (Daily Times Advocate, June 5, 1922)

By June, the San Diego Consolidated Gas & Electric Company began constructing high power transmission lines from Rincon to the job site. The Bent Brothers constructed a large worker's camp complete with offices, housing, cooking and dining room. More than 300 men were hired to construct the dam, and more would be added as the project progressed.

The first supplies to roll into the Temecula Depot were mules. Some were brought in from as far north as San Luis Obispo. They were used at the construction site to haul wagons of dirt to the dam fill site. Two steam shovels dug into the bank and dumped two scoops on the waiting wagon. The mules then hauled the load like modern dump trucks.

The next supplies to arrive at the Temecula Depot were cars of cement. *"The first car of cement for the Warner dam was received Tuesday. Henry Gray has the contract to haul it from here to the dam."* (LEVP, June 30, 1922)

The cement came from the Riverside Portland Cement Company, whose president was William G. Henshaw. Escondido businessmen had hoped that all supplies would come through their depot, but it was more economical to send the supplies through Temecula. It is believed that Henry Gray's trucks would have transported the cement from the depot, through Pala and then along the San Luis Rey River bank to the dam site.

The Bent Bros had hoped to finish the dam by December 1st in order to collect the coming winter rains. Flood lights at the dam allowed work to continue twenty-four hours a day with three shifts. As deliveries increased at the Temecula Depot, Henry Gray began running six large trucks to the dam site daily.

On Christmas morning the dam was completed and the gates were closed. The waters began to slowly rise, and soon Lake Henshaw was formed. *". . . (With) the closing of the gates of the reservoir, there went down into the history of that section of Southern California the completion of what is considered the greatest work of development in the northern part of San Diego County in more than thirty years."* (Los Angeles Times, December 26, 1922).

In January, the mules returned to the Temecula Depot to be shipped to the next job site. *"The Pioneer Truck Co. of San Diego, who had the contract of excavating the dirt at the Warner dam, has shipped this week 120 mules and 30 wagons to several other camps."* (LEVP, January 19, 1923)

The dam began providing irrigation water for 50,000 acres of land in San Diego's North County region. *"The development of towns in that section of the county will be one of the greatest outcomes of the enterprise"* (LAT, December 26, 1922). Diverted water from the Henshaw Dam helped the cities of Escondido, San Marcos, Vista and Oceanside develop a large citrus industry.

In 1971, state inspectors determined that the Henshaw Dam would fail in the event of seismic activity. Reports showed that the dam had been constructed within the Elsinore fault zone. Between 1978 and 1979, the waters were released and the lake shrank. Today the dam operates at less than 40% capacity. However, Lake Henshaw is still a beautiful weekend destination. Drivers can still follow Henry Gray's truck route to view the wonderful dam that Temecula helped build in 1922.

President's Message

My interest was piqued when we received a request from Robin Smith, a graduate student at the graduate school of education at the University of California, Riverside. She is taking a class on the history of education in the inland Empire and has discovered that not much research has been done on the history of schools and districts in the Inland Empire. Their class goal is to start compiling a local history on the role of education in the IE. Robin is interested in the local history of Temecula Schools and the district, and she most particularly has an interest in the role of female teachers around the early 1900's.

Darell Farnbach and I had a gentleman stop and talk to us awhile back at the TVHS information table at a Rod Run. He talked to us about his grandmother who attended school in Sage, but took her high school graduation exam, administered by a county qualified examiner, at the Welty Hotel. This occasioned her meeting the young man who would become our gentleman's grandfather. The hotel served as a temporary school starting in 1889. Phil Brigandi, in his book, "Temecula at the Crossroads of History" mentions a letter sent by Frank Burnham to Horace Parker, just after the turn of the century, in which he talks about how his teacher quickly put a stop to the boys' lunchtime skinny dipping escapades in Murrieta Creek. Though not specifically about the teacher, even such personal glimpses as these help us envision what school was like in early Temecula.

As a retired Temecula teacher and local history advocate, I have often thought that a good, comprehensive, history of education in the Temecula Valley was overdue.

If you have any information, particularly primary sources (correspondence, photos, newspaper articles, notes, diaries, etc.) or secondary sources that could be helpful to Robin and are willing to share with her, or to let her view, please contact her at 619-647-4636 or email her at rsmit011@ucr.edu. It would be nice to share copies of your material with TVHS also.

Bonnie Martland

Are There Monsters Among Us?

By Duane Preimsberger

I've never paid a whole lot of attention to tales of Sasquatch; large, wild, hairy, bipedal beasts that roam the forests of the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere. Stories about the Yeti in Tibet, Yowies in Australia and Bigfoot in the forests of California have usually left me skeptical. Some of the supposed sightings and photographic evidence have been shown as fabricated! Growing up and living my adult life in Southern California has saved me from the fear of venturing into our local mountains where I might run into a giant, fur covered, bad smelling man-like creature, until recently.

A few days ago, my wife Judy and I were at the Temecula History Center when I was provided with an article entitled "Death Alley," by Jeff Smith. According to Mr. Smith, when the first Europeans came into the San Diego area, local Indians spoke of hairy human giants living in arroyos to the east who were warlike and violent. His tale also speaks to a series of terrible deaths along the Butterfield Stage route between 1858 and 1888. Several were attributed to a wild man, who brutally strangled his victims, leaving the violence ravaged bodies near an aptly named location, Deadman's Hole, a stage coach watering spring about eight miles northwest of Warner's Ranch, not that far from Temecula.

As the years went by, at least seven dead bodies were found near Deadman's Hole, four of them, three men and a woman were found viciously strangled, their necks broken and surprisingly, their valuables untouched. Others, who traveled along the route simply disappeared.

West of Deadman's Hole is another frightening location, Dark Canyon, a place with walls so steep and narrow that sunlight comes only at mid-day. Two Julian residents, Charles Cox and Edward Dean made plans to search the canyon and brave the tangles of thick brush sometimes taller than a man that added to the gloom. At one point, while trying to get a clearer look at their surroundings, they scaled a portion of the canyon wall and spotted a large animal resembling a bear. It walked upright like a man. Fearful of this strange beast, Cox aimed his rifle and fired, the beast screamed in a humanlike manner and fell to the ground, dead.

Cox and Dean approached the hairy body and estimated that it weighed approximately four-hundred pounds. The creature was about six feet tall with a dark wrinkled face that appeared to be Indian, and teeth that were plainly those of a carnivore. It had strange feet, approximately twenty-four inches long, and eight inches wide with a hard pad like sole. Nearby, the two men found a cave like dwelling, ten feet deep that appeared to have been hand carved out of the slope. Inside were five human skulls, other bones, a partially eaten goat and a resting place made from local grasses and plants.

Unfortunately, although Cox and Dean made plans to bring the body of the dead beast to the authorities in a borrowed wagon, they didn't follow through.

Another mysterious tale about scary, hairy, two legged beasts comes from Bigfoot Expert, Ken Coon. Ken interviewed a fellow who was camping alone at Borrego Sink back in 1939 when he had a frightening encounter. In the light of his blazing campfire he was suddenly approached by a pack of white and silver furred bipedal creatures with red eyes. They hung around for awhile but were frightened off by the heat and flame from the campfire. Three decades later, Harold Lancaster who was camping in the same general area of the Sink when he saw a large ape-like beast approaching him.

Lancaster feared the worst so he drew his revolver and fired warning shots into the air. The noise caused the beast to startle, jump a good three feet straight up and run away! Although these supposed incidents were interesting to me they also seemed to lack any real supporting documentation and although

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Monsters Among Us?

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I don't discount them, I'd like more proof.

I did locate an organization that tracks sightings. The Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization (BFRO) has records of over 400 sightings in California since 1998. Twenty-five of them have been in Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego Counties. Since none of them have been in the area close to Ynez and Pauba Roads in the City of Temecula, I still feel pretty safe in strolling through my neighborhood, even after dark.

Oh, by the way. BFRO has suggested that a very bright light shined into the eyes of Bigfoot will generally cause them to flee. Did I mention I have a Maglight in my pocket during evening walks?

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Gene Knott's Temecula Memories

(From interview with Jeffery Harmon,
March 26, 2002)

"To call Rainbow, the call would go north through Corona, around to the coast to San Diego, and then to Rainbow. You could almost drive to Rainbow faster than placing a phone call. I'm sure you've heard stories about our 'switch board operator' Edna Swanguen. She and her husband, Carl, were pioneers here and operated a small café that doubled as the Greyhound Bus Stop. She used to take her own sweet time answering your call, especially when she was busy waiting on customers. They had the switchboard in their bedroom so they could provide service around the clock (provided they weren't sleeping, of course). The people who complain about service today should have experienced our power and telephone service of those days! Carl and Edna Swanguen were just two more individuals that made Temecula unique."

From the Archives

Alfred Stanford Burnham Passes

(From the *Elsinore Leader Press*, May 20, 1943)

Prominent Pioneer of Elsinore Passed Away on Sunday Morning Last

The news of the death of Mr. Alfred Stanford Burnham, better known to hundreds of our citizens as Al Burnham, came as a distinct shock to the community on Monday morning last, as he had been ill but a short time having had an attack of low blood pressure and a recent illness of the flu. While these attacks were quite severe he had so far recovered that he was able to come down town during the past weekend but suffered a severe relapse on Sunday last and was taken to the Community hospital where he was placed under an oxygen tent, but to no avail, and passed peacefully away at 5:50 a.m. Monday morning.

Alfred Stanford Burnham was born in Iowa and came to California in 1886 at the age of four and with his parents first resided on the Burnham farm, better known now as the Morrell place, near Rome hill on Grand Avenue. He attended school during his boyhood days at Wildomar, after which he farmed here in the valley for seventeen years. He then took a position with his brother, George in his store at Temecula where he remained for seven years.

He then moved to the state of Washington where he was associated with another brother in the general merchandise business for a year. Selling out and returning to Elsinore he entered into the grocery business where he remained at his Main Street business for seventeen years. In 1926 he sold his business and entered business in Alberhill where he remained until 1941 when he retired. Since that time he has been at his home on West Graham Avenue.

He had been quite active in civic affairs and for years was a member of the city council, mayor of the city and a member of the board of education of the high school.

He leaves to mourn his loss, his wife, Mrs. Laura Burnham; his brother, Charles Burnham; another brother, Postmaster Louis Burnham; two sisters Mrs. Harry Harris and Mrs. Mildred Curtis, and one daughter, Mrs. Anna Schmalried, of South Gate; two sons, Alfred Stanford Burnham who lives in Long Beach and is Deputy Internal Revenue Collector, also Lawrence Burnham, who recently entered the Army. He also leaves a sister-in-law, Mrs. George Burnham of Temecula.

In passing he leaves a void in the hearts of the hundreds of friends, who had learned to love him and respect his high ideals, his frankness and his earnestness and to enjoy his friendship. He was an active member of the local Masonic body.

Funeral services were held in the funeral parlors of the Everett and Peterson mortuary on Wednesday at 2 o'clock. Rev. J. L. Cameron, retired pastor of the Presbyterian Church, officiated.

Pallbearers were two brothers, Charles and Louis Burnham, two brother-in-law, Harry Harris and Millard Curtis, and Frank and Paul Ware, nephews of the deceased.

Burial was in the Elsinore Valley Cemetery.