

TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

February 2012

Volume 12 – Issue 2

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 Wheelmen of the 1890s

By Jeffery G. Harmon

In a small town consisting of farmers, cowboys, and quarrymen, Frank Fernald's Bicycle Shop seemed out of place in the late 19th and early 20th century. However, by the 1890s, the bicycle craze was at a fever pitch all across America, as people discovered a freedom of mobility without horse or engine. Fernald, a bicycle enthusiast, joined the movement and opened his Temecula shop in the 1890s.

One of the early bicycle tours to travel through the Temecula Valley came through on September 12, 1889. A group of wheelmen (cyclists) left Pasadena on an eight day cycling tour of Southern California. They traveled through La Puente and Pomona then spent their first night in South Riverside. The next day they traveled through Elsinore and Temecula heading south to San Diego. Then they returned to Pasadena via the coastal route.

In 1891, the Riverside Wheelmen Club formed. One year later, in July 1892, club members joined Los Angeles and San Diego clubs in the first annual relay race.

The route description through the Temecula Valley was as followed:

“From Perris follow the road on the left hand side of railroad track to Temecula, 32 miles. Riders must be careful at Temecula and get on the right road to Pala . . . After leaving Temecula keep the left hand of the road until it crosses the Margarita River, about four miles from the village. The road to Pala is the worst part of the journey, on account of sand, rivers, mountains, etc. Good accommodations can be had at the house of William Veal in Pala.” (Riverside Daily Press, July 19, 1892)

In September 1893, The Riverside Wheelmen Club hosted their Second Annual Meet. Prizes were awarded to the first ten riders who completed the road race. There were short distance and long distance races. Temecula residents C. F. Smith and Frank L. Fernald were listed as late arrivals for the Wheelmen's tournament.

C. F. Smith was a new Temecula bicycle enthusiast. The Riverside Daily Press wrote:

“C. F. Smith, the Pauba and Santa Rosa rancher, below Temecula, rode from Pauba to Riverside yesterday in five hours, the distance being forty miles, and Mr. Smith has only been riding a wheel for three weeks.” (September 9, 1893)

(Continued on Page 2)

Calendar Of Events

Monday, February 13 –

5:30 p.m.

Temecula Valley Genealogical Society meeting at Temecula City Hall Conference Center. Trooper Carl Wright will be giving a presentation on the history of the Buffalo Soldiers in honor of Black History Month.

Thursday, February 16 –

7 p.m.

Temecula Valley Museum's Black History Month Event, "Catch the Spirit," a play about Amelia Earhart and Bessie Coleman, the First African American female pilot, who are sent from heaven to Earth to assist a family in crisis. Play presented by E.P. McKnight

Monday, February 27 - 6p.m.

TVHS monthly meeting at Little Temecula History Center. Steve Clugston will do a first person presentation as George Washington.

Monday, March 3 – 10:30a.m.

Guided tour of Old Town San Diego. Cost: \$6 per person
More information to follow.
Carpooling will be suggested.

Monday, March 26 – 6 p.m.

TVHS monthly meeting at Little Temecula History Center, education program to be determined.

Temecula Valley Museum Exhibition

January 28 ~ April 1, 2012
"Tools of the Trade" featuring Tools, photos and displays of many crafts people from coopers to cobblers to surveyors

Wheelmen

(Continued from Page 1)

Frank Fernald was named a member of the Riverside Wheelmen Club in January 1894 when he set out to break a century run record between Perris and Pomona. A century run is a 100 mile course. He completed the round trip between Perris and Pomona in 8 ½ hours.

The third annual relay race between Los Angeles and San Diego took place in June 1894. A letter of greeting was sent by the mayor of Los Angeles to the mayor of San Diego in a "Pony Express" manner. The Los Angeles Wheelmen opted out of the race, so the Riverside Wheelmen picked up the slack. Roy and Frank Fernald and William Wolf, all of Temecula, took part in the race.

The Riverside Daily Press reported on the day of the race, "A dispatch has been received from Temecula that the messages (the mayor's letter) passed through that place at 11:13 a.m. The distance to Temecula, 113 miles, was made in 6 hours and 43 minutes or at a rate of a fraction less than 8 ½ minutes to the mile" (June 16, 1894)

The Temecula team rode from the Temecula River to the Vista Post Office, a distance of 24 miles. There they passed on the message to the Escondido Wheelmen.

Bicycle races were a common sport in many community events in 1894. Frank Fernald took part in a ten-mile road race at the Perris 4th of July celebration. At the four day Temecula Fiesta in August, not only were there foot and horse races, but also bicycle races!

At the September 1894 Riverside Wheelmen Club's Third Annual Meet, several Temecula residents participated. Riverside Wheelmen Club members from Temecula were F. L. Fernald, C. F. Smith, P. Pohlman, and William Wolf, and non club members, were M. Machado, and F.E. Machado.

By 1895, a quarter-mile bicycle track was constructed in Murrieta. In March, the Riverside Wheelmen, joined by Perris, Good Hope, Elsinore and Temecula wheelmen, enjoyed a casual ride to the Elsinore Hot Springs. In May 1895, James Patterson, Jr. and W.D. Newers, of Perris set out to break Frank Fernald's 1894 century road record. (It is unknown if they accomplished that feat)

Women were also bicycle enthusiasts. In the 1890s, The Ladies' Spinning Club was formed in Riverside. There are few club reports or of women competitors in the sport. Most Ladies' Spinning Club events, such as moonlight rides, were more for leisure. However, in August 1894, Mrs. George W. Cobb, of Riverside, accompanied 35 Riverside wheelmen on a round trip to Pomona. "Quite a long ride for a lady," a Riverside Daily Press reporter wrote.

Children enjoyed cycling just as much. Here is one account from 1895:

"Two little girls fasten an end of a long rope to each bicycle, give the middle of the rope to their mother, who holds it tightly, whips up the horse, and away they go for a mile or so, or until the top of the grade is reached, when the rope is untied and the girls – with a "Thank you mama," go spinning back over the road." (Riverside Daily Press, July 10, 1895)

119 Years Ago

The Riverside Daily Press

January 19, 1893:

M. Machado writes from Temecula that there are fifty votes in Temecula precinct, of which forty-eight are for Riverside (County), one for San Jacinto (County) and one against any division.

C. H. Benton of Murrieta says . . . "This feeling for a new county would not have been manifested if we had not been completely shut off from San Diego by the flood of February, '91, and no prospect of the road ever being rebuilt."

100 Years Ago This Month

The Riverside Daily Press

February 7, 1912:

The Temecula baseball team is practicing again the last few weeks. Sunday they played the Pala Indians at Pala, and a week before a game was played at the Murrieta Hot Springs.

February 14, 1912:

Auld Gossip Column

B.S. Cummins, accompanied by Dr. L. Roripaugh, was having work done at the Temecula garage on Thursday and Saturday of this week. They were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Fernald for luncheon.

February 22, 1912

J.C. Johnson, for the past two years, agent for the Santa Fe here has accepted a similar position at Rialto. His place here is taken by Mr. Summerville.

Wheelmen (Continued from Page 2)

At the turn of the century, the Riverside Wheelmen Club disbanded. The Inland Highway slowly paved over the old dirt wagon roads and more cars rolled into the valley. Around 1910 Fernald opened the Temecula Valley Garage. Then on June 5, 1917, Frank L. Fernald died. However, the bicycle legacy lived on in the valley.

In 1917, seventy-three Riverside bicycle enthusiasts reformed the Riverside Wheelmen Club. In December 1917, club members Gerald Loucks and Lawrence Martinez, two-sixteen year old Riverside boys, rode their bicycles from Riverside to San Diego to establish the club's first road record. As they pedaled down Front Street, passing Fernald's garage, the spirit of the old bicycle shop owner must have been smiling proudly as the two boys raced by.

How does the two young men's journey end? Well, that is another story waiting to be told.

50 Years Ago This Month

February 1, 1962 Lake Elsinore Valley Sun

The Secret Pal Club had its revealing party at Tim's Tiny Acre Wednesday evening, for dinner. Those attending were Irene White, Janette Schroeder, Dorothy Hotchkiss, Vivian Strickland, Connie Dawes, Audrey Ferris, Virginia Worthy, Audrey Evans, Alberta Foreman, Katherine Gezewskie, Nona Roripaugh, Marion Roripaugh, Jean Carberry, Nathline Liefer, Margaret Cameron, Florence Anderson, Ruby Hicks, Helene Seay, Thelma Beauchamp, Betty Otto, Freda Knott, and Helen Snideman. Everyone received a beautiful gift and drew names for 1962.

25 Years Ago This Month

February 1987, Rancho News

Construction began on the Temecula Valley High School Stadium, a 2,500 seat facility.

Rancho California Road Bridge over Murrieta Creek closed February 12 to expand it to a four lane bridge.

Speed limit on Interstate 15 was 55 mph, but a study showed the average traffic speed was between 65 to 70 mph.

Founders of the Old Town Temecula Tomorrow Citizen's Coalition, Roy Howard and Gerald Laine, asked the Riverside County Traffic authorities to install a stop sign at the corner of Front and Main streets. 800 local residents agreed. A traffic signal is slated for the intersection in late 1988.

It is predicted that by the year 2000, Southwest Riverside County could be populated with as many as 125,000 people.

75 Years Ago This Month

February 18, 1937,
Riverside Daily Press

Foot, Tire Prints Enmesh Burglar

Clever work in obtaining a plaster cast of a foot print and automobile tire tracks left near the Vail ranch house at Temecula when it was burglarized on Feb. 2, resulted in the arrest at Los Angeles yesterday of Floyd Bechtel of that city, who is asserted by officers to have confessed robbing the ranch of tools. Deputy Sheriffs Charles Worcester and F. F. Labrum, assigned to work on the case, took a cast of a footprint left by the burglar and also found a perfect imprint in the soft earth of the tire tread on his car. Suspicion led to Bechtel, and when he was confronted with the evidence obtained at the scene of the burglary he is declared to have admitted his guilt. He will be brought from Los Angeles to this city to answer the charge of burglary.

Membership Activity

New Member

Jeffery G. Harmon
Bryon Harrington

Renewals

Richard Searce
Lisa Woodward

President's Message

Bonnie Martland

The Temecula Valley Historical Society's first meeting of the New Year gave the society a jump start on what looks to be an eventful 2012. The Board of Directors agreed on initial plans for this year in a number of areas; these plans will be fleshed out beginning with our February 27th meeting. We would like to invite all our members to become actively involved this year. All committees need assistance with on-going projects and new endeavors.

The position of the society's Treasurer is now available. Our current treasurer, Bill Harker, who recently celebrated his 95th birthday, has had some health issues during the past few months. Consequently, he has decided to lighten his load. He will be helping the society during this transition period. (Whoever takes the position will benefit from Bill's meticulous record keeping.) There are other duties which Bill has done for the society. We are in need of members to take over these duties as well.

In response to the Executive Committee's review of our current management procedures, we have decided to do some fine tuning. An expansion is planned for both the Membership and Public Relations Committees. Vice-President Dick Fox's workload for both the Society and the Temecula Valley Museum has been increased. He recommended to the Board that his trusted assistant, researcher and contributor, Jeffery Harmon, take over publication of the newsletter. The Board accepted his recommendation with thanks to both Dick and Jeff for their past and on-going services.

Thanks, in a large part, to a donation to the society by the Pechanga Tribal Council, we are planning to purchase our first computer with several software programs. This equipment will make record keeping more user-friendly, and help expedite business and membership services. Any members with computer skills are encouraged to assist us during the purchase, installation, and maintenance.

Finally, the Events Committee has announced the first TVHS excursion of the year will be to Old Town, San Diego on March 3rd. A park docent will conduct a guided tour at 10:30A.M. at the Old Town Plaza. The cost is \$6 per person and the tour should take about an hour and a half. There are several connections to Temecula's history in San Diego's Old Town. There will be time after the tour to explore the town on your own. Please come and join us!

If you have a suggestion for a future excursion, please let us know!