

# TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

May 2012

Volume 12 ó Issue 5

*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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*Rawson stationary threshing outfit 1898 (Courtesy of Gail Barton)*

## The Year the Grass Stopped the Train

By Jeffery G. Harmon

*M. Machado reported that things were booming in his neck of the woods, the outlook for a fine crop is excellent, and everyone is looking forward to a prosperous year. (Riverside Independent Enterprise, January 7, 1903)*

Each year, Riverside County dry farmers gambled their livelihood trying to predict weather patterns for the upcoming growing seasons. Farmers plowed their fields and sowed their seeds at the beginning of the year. Then they would stare at the sky and pray for Providence's nourishing rain. In 1903, prayers were answered and Riverside County experienced an historical bumper crop.

The first sign of things to come appeared the morning of April 10, 1903. The Temecula train left the depot headed for Perris, but it did not make its destination. Green stalks had sprung up along the railroad tracks. A Thursday night rain caused the stalks to overlap the tracks, greasing the tracks along a grade. The San Jacinto train had to be held at Perris for nearly an hour while the tracks were cleared for the Temecula train to complete its run.

*“This is the first time for many years that grass has delayed traffic. It appears that the recent rains followed by the warm weather has given to vegetation a wonderful growth and within these few days the grass out Temecula way has sprung up like a giant in the night falling over the rails in such thickness as to conceal the rails” (April 10, 1903, Riverside Daily Press)*

(Continued on Page 2)

# Calendar Of Events

**Saturday, May 12** – 10 a.m.  
Temecula Valley Museum  
A Walking Tour of Old Town  
Temecula

**Saturday & Sunday**  
**May 19 – 20**  
Western Days in  
Old Town Temecula

**Monday, May 21** – 6 p.m.  
TVHS monthly meeting at Little  
Temecula History Center, Pam  
Grender presents: A Visit from  
Helen Hunt Jackson.

**Monday, June 25** – 6 p.m.  
TVHS monthly meeting at Little  
Temecula History Center

**Tuesday, July 10** – 5:30 p.m.  
Author James Thomas  
Presents, Lewis & Clark and  
The Corp of Discovery, at  
Temecula Elks Lodge,  
28061 Diaz Road, Temecula.  
Dinner at 5:30 p.m.  
\$12.00 per person  
7:00 p.m. 1 hour presentation  
"Corps of Discovery" book sale  
And signing following program.  
Proceeds benefit children's  
Charities studying causes of  
Autism.  
RSVP required.  
For more information contact:  
James Thomas  
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Phone: 760-742-1464

## **Temecula Valley Museum Exhibition**

April 14 ~ June 17, 2012  
"Wine Country: From the  
Missions to Modern Day"

## **The Ramona Pageant**

April 21-22, 28-29, & May 5  
For more information call:  
1 (800) 645-4465

## The Year (Continued from Page 1)

From the Box Springs grade to Temecula and as far east as Hemet and San Jacinto, tall waving grain could be seen mile after mile. Merchants, tradesmen and ranchers looked forward to the harvest season. The bumper crop would yield great profits in the buyers market.

*õThis year many a mortgage will be wiped out, many an old store bill cancelled, and many a luxury will be added to the home of the dry rancher, all of which he richly deserves.* (Riverside Daily Press, May 16, 1903)

Some of the Temecula farmers were E. E. Barnett with 2,400 acres, The Cosmos Land and Water Company with about 8,000 acres, and Jacob Ludy and Grant Howard with about 800 acres each.

*õBut the grandest and most extensive of all is the Pauba and Temecula ranch of 20,000 acres, the crop belonging to Messrs. Cobb and Culver. It is divided about half and half to barley and wheat and the outlook is for a yield to surpass anything in the history of the valley.* (Riverside Daily Press, May 21, 1903)

Besides farming, Cobb and Culver also had a thousand head of cattle. In 1903, they invested \$700 to \$1000 in digging artesian wells on their ranch to irrigate their lands.

The Riverside County harvest season began in earnest on June 4th of that year. The regional flour mills waited for the grain to be transported from the fields. The warehouses were swept in preparation for storing crop. The Santa Fe railroad studied the logistics of hauling one of the biggest amounts of freight to come out of the valley in the last ten to fifteen years. The railroad estimated that 500 to 1500 cars of grain would be hauled out during the harvest season.

As the harvesting began, it became apparent that there was not enough man power or enough machine power to handle the enormous yield. Twenty combined harvesters began working the fields in Perris, Menifee, and Hemet. The threshing machines worked feverishly through the hot summer days.

Thomas Rawson, of Crown Valley, bought a \$3,000 threshing machine in June to meet the harvesting demand. Now with two threshing machines and several stationary machines working in the area, Rawson's crew worked tirelessly from ranch to ranch. By August, his crew had completed threshing in Winchester and began proceeding east through Diamond Valley. He sent his second machine and crew south, working towards Temecula.

By the third month of the harvest season, a half a million sacks of grain and barley had been threshed. On average, 25 to 30 cars left the Perris depot on a daily basis.

## 119 Years Ago

Riverside Daily Press

August 19, 1893

J. M. Gonzalez, who is in from Temecula, gives good report of the crops in the vicinity of Temecula and Murrieta, so far as yield and quality are concerned, but he says the ruinously low prices will greatly incommode the ranchers. About all the wheat shipped goes to San Diego and the price realized is about an average of 52 cents per sack net. All who can afford to hold their crop are storing for a hoped for increase in prices, but many are compelled to sell at any price they can get. He says that the honey crop is also being largely stored. The prices offered per pound are four and four and one-half cents. Even at those prices many would sell, but there is little cash to buy with. Checks are offered by purchasers, but owing to the present doubtful financial market, the producers would prefer the cash.

## 100 Years Ago

### This Month

May 3, 1912

Riverside Independent

Enterprise

The Pacific Sewer Pipe Company, whose big factory is located at the clay beds at Terra Cotta, is shipping from four to five carloads of pipe everyday to the Empire Land and Cattle Company at Temecula. A superior grade of pipe is turned out at this factory and the factory is one of the big assets of the valley. Earl McClintock is superintendent.

## The Year (Continued from Page 2)

While on vacation at Tent City in San Diego, W. H. Haynes, Santa Fe Conductor of the Temecula Branch, told the San Diego Union, "We have already moved 400 cars of grain out of that section of Hemet, San Jacinto and Temecula. We have not yet begun to make any sort of a hole in the big pile that is to be shipped from there. In fact, the big supply at Temecula has hardly been touched." (Riverside Daily Press August 28, 1903)

Thomas Rawson's crew continued threshing in the Diamond Valley through September. When they finished, they joined the second outfit as it neared the Temecula Valley. The delay in threshing was seen as a blessing. Crop prices had started to rise, which meant the later harvest stood to gain higher profits. However, the potential of rains in October, threatened to destroy the waiting crop.

By mid-September 150,000 sacks of grain were still waiting to be threshed. Thomas Rawson added four stationary threshing machines near Temecula to try and finish the harvest season. On September 27th, a half an inch of rain fell. The threshing machines had to stop and wait for the crops to dry. By October 3<sup>rd</sup>, Temecula reported that there was no grain damaged by the early rain. However, east of Hemet, the crop was lost.

With the help of seven stationary threshing machines and several combined harvesters, 100,000 sacks of grain were threshed in October. The rains held back until the harvest ended in early November. At the end of the season, Thomas Rawson bought the Haslam barn at Winchester to store his two threshing machines till the next season.

With no grass to stop it, the last Temecula freight train rolled out of the valley loaded with grain. The farmers smiled as they reflected on the bountiful harvest. Their smile slowly faded as they gazed upon their barren fields. There would only be a month of rest before the next season would begin. However, with winter settling in, it was time to gather with family and friends in celebration of the year's many blessings.

The Long Branch Saloon in Old Town Temecula was a place known for drinking it up and fighting it out. One guy had to have his whole face reconstructed. Doctors attached wires to pull his face back together. The wires were attached to a button on his forehead. By the 80's the Long Branch had closed and a church took it over. A bunch of motorcycle riders came into town who were used to pulling up to their old "watering hole" for a drink. When they went inside, they found the pastor in street clothes remodeling the inside. When the riders tried to order a drink, he explained, "This isn't a bar anymore. It's a church."

To which the biker replied, "Well, I'll be d-----, is nothing sacred?"

Submitted by Karen Robertson

## 75 Years Ago

May 29, 1937,

Riverside Daily Press,  
**Surprise Shower for  
Bride-Elect**

Elsinore ó Miss Lucy Helvie was honored with a surprise miscellaneous shower by the E.U.H.S. Latin club at the home of Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Scherner, Thursday evening.

Miss Helvie, who is a member of the June graduating class, will become the bride of Albert Ceas, June 20, at the home of her sister, Mrs. Richard Barnett, in Temecula.

The supper table was attractively decorated in pink and blue with candles and cellophane bows. A beautifully decorated cake inscribed with öLucyö and öAlbertö and a large basket of gifts presented the honoree during the supper hour were a complete surprise to her. Lively games entertained during the evening.

## 50 Years Ago This Month

May 3, 1962,

Lake Elsinore Valley Sun

### **A.J. Escallier Serving aboard USS John Paul Jones**

A. J. Escallier, boiler man first class, USN, son of J. A. Escallier of Elsinore, Calif., is serving aboard the destroyer USS John Paul Jones, observed by President John F. Kennedy during a two-day visit on April 13 and 14 to the Atlantic Fleet in Norfolk, VA.

## *President's Message by Bonnie Martland*

I goofed, and forgot one of America's most cherished holidays! I forgot Memorial Day!

To correct this, in May we will break with tradition, and change the society's meeting date from the fourth to the third Monday of the month. We will meet on Monday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, and *not* May 28<sup>th</sup>, Memorial Day, as had originally been scheduled.

As is all too common with many Americans these days, I got wrapped-up in my daily routine and hectic schedule and forgot to pause and consider how much has been sacrificed and by so many, that we may enjoy the blessings we have. Freedom is not free is a familiar cliché, I know. They are trumped on Veteran's Day and Independence Day and other patriotic holidays.

Memorial Day was originally known as Decoration Day and dedicated to honoring the dead of the Civil War. Today we commemorate the dead of all America's conflicts who lost their lives in service to the nation. By extension, we honor all those who volunteer to serve. An ancestor is on the roster of Continental troops at Valley Forge. A nephew recently graduated from the Naval Nuclear Training Program; and the tradition of service continues. My military experience was during the Viet Nam War era. My husband did duty as a Survival Assistance Officer, a cousin's name is etched on The Wall, and the memory images of a fellow servicemen's funeral are still vivid.

Our last TVHS excursion was a tour of the Mission Inn in Riverside. One of its highlights is a wall of wings dedicated to airmen, and women, who have served their country. On the way home we stopped to övisitö my dad at the National Cemetery in Riverside and also spent a little time at the Memorial to Medal of Honor Recipients.

These experiences tell me that remembering those who served, and commemorating those who have gave their lives in service to their country is a not a cliché but a privilege and honor.

## 25 Years Ago This Month

May 13, 1987, Rancho News

### **Postal site selected on Rancho California Road**

Rancho California's newest post office will be located on a five-acre site on the southeast corner of Rancho California and Margarita roads, said Robert Muller, U.S. Postal Service spokesman.

Building on a site donated by the Rancho California Development Company, postal officials, using funds from a federal accelerated facilities program, are to begin construction in early 1988.

The postal service is expected to hire an architect to design the building, which will be approximately 28,000 square feet. The new post office will offer ample parking for customers and employees, a modern lobby and post office boxes, said Muller.

The Temecula Post Office delivers to 5,911 mailboxes, has 12 delivery routes and 28 employees.