

TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

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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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Electricity comes to Temecula

By Jeffery G. Harmon

The earliest development of electrical power in the area began with the Elsinore Light & Power Company. Incorporated in June 1906 by a group of Redlands investors, the small power company provided electricity for the Elsinore business district and a few residential homes. The plant operated for seven years, until it was purchased by a larger company.

On June 15, 1911, the Southern Sierras Power Company was incorporated in Wyoming. In July, the company announced plans to construct a steam power plant in San Bernardino and to connect it to a Bishop hydroelectric plant by building a 250-mile long high power transmission line. By May 1913, the company would be servicing over two thousand customers in San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

At the time, area farmers were using gasoline motors to irrigate their ranches. Electrical motors were cheaper and more reliable, but there were no power lines in the rural areas. Sierras had the financial capital to reach these farming communities. Power lines were installed from San Bernardino to Corona, and to Moreno and Perris valleys. By October 1912, 175 miles of wire had been installed at a cost of \$1,000 per mile.

By 1912, power lines were constructed west of Perris to the Good Hope Mine. With newfound power, electric pumps began pumping the water out of the flooded shafts, enabling the mine to reopen. Then the power lines were constructed westward connecting with Elsinore.

On March 12, 1913, the Elsinore Light and Power Co. was purchased by the Southern Sierras Power Co. for \$7,500.

In 1916, Charles H. De LaClour, of San Diego, announced his intention of buying the rights to develop electrical power, a franchise from Elsinore through Temecula, continuing to Fallbrook and terminating at Oceanside. On May 17, 1916, Sierras bought the franchise for \$70. The company had no plans to develop the line, but the purchase eliminated the competition.

Union lineman called a strike in August 1916, requesting Sierras to pay higher wages. A few strikers caused four short circuits between the Perris and Elsinore Districts. The sabotage was a deliberate threat to the company if the union's demands were not met. The strike came to a peaceful end, but it slowed company expansion in the valley.

(Continued on Page 2)

Calendar Of Events

Saturday, June 9 –

Friends of the Museum Bazaar
at the Temecula Valley Museum

**Temecula Valley Museum
Exhibition**

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

Monday, June 25 – 6 p.m.

TVHS monthly meeting at Little
Temecula History Center
Speaker Richard Carrico,
Professor of American Indian
Studies at San Diego State
University, authority on
Prehistory and archeology of
San Diego County and author of
"Strangers in a Stolen Land"
His books will be available for
purchase

**Temecula Valley Museum
Exhibition**

June 30 ~ September 16, 2012
"The Old West"
Take a look back at daily wear in
The Old West during the late
1800's.

Saturday, July 7 – 2:00 p.m.

Historic Fashion Show at the
Temecula Valley Museum

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

RSVP required.

For more information contact:

James Thomas

Email:

Jimthomas41@gmail.com

Phone: 760-742-1464

Monday, July 29 – 6 p.m.

TVHS monthly meeting at Little
Temecula History Center
Speaker to be announced later

Electricity (Continued from Page 1)

With America at war in 1917, many eastern power plants operating on gasoline or coal were shut down to preserve fuel for the war effort. However, in the west, hydroelectric power was king and Southern Sierras continued servicing its customers. With construction materials in short supply, there was little expansion of the company's electrical lines.

Over one hundred Sierras company employees reported for military duty. J. Lynn Mort, superintendent of Sierras' Elsinore office, enlisted in the Signal Corps. By 1918, he was working a non-combatant role at a power plant in France. While serving there, he died from a disease on November 22, 1918 and was laid to rest in Fannettsburg, Pennsylvania. The Lynn Mort Post No. 200 of the American Legion in Elsinore was named in his honor.

A power line was constructed from Elsinore to Alberhill in July 1916. By March 1918, Sierras extended the line from Alberhill to Corona, providing power for Corona's lemon industry and power to reopen the Temescal Tin Mine. With this gap closed, a full circuit of power, 105 miles long, was available in western Riverside County.

While Temecula residents continued to wait for power lines to be brought to their area, several people bought gasoline generators to light up their residents and their businesses.

Alfred Knott has installed an electric light plant (a gasoline generator) and has placed lights in his garage and machine shop; also his residence has been equipped with electric lights. Mr. Knott has the distinction of being the first businessman to place electricity in their place of business, and now no doubt others will follow his example in the near future. The expense incurred by Mr. Knott in installing electricity and placing his place of business up to date should be a stimulant to the people of this vicinity to work for electricity in Temecula and to remember that Knott's garage is still doing business at the same old stand, but under a brighter light.

(Lake Elsinore Valley Press, December 3, 1920)

With more customers and higher demand for power, Sierras, in 1921, constructed additional transformers and lateral lines. Then in January 1922, Hugo Guenther, manager of the Murrieta Hot Springs Resort, contracted Sierras to run power lines to his resort.

The first thing he will hitch up to the new power will be his fine new well which will develop 50 inches of the finest water in the country. (April 19, 1922, Riverside Daily Press)

Mahlon Vail, of the Pauba Ranch in Temecula, saw an opportunity to bring power to his ranch. So he also contracted with Sierras to extend the lines from the resort to Temecula.

**100 Years Ago
This Month**
Riverside Daily Press

Girl Kills Rattler
June 1, 1912

Miss Lucile Tretheway has had the first reported experience with a rattlesnake this season. Thursday while in route to the mountains in the vicinity of Temecula, she dispatched a rattler which was three and a half feet long and had seven rattles. His snakeship was executed with a short stick.

No Fear of Third Term
June 28, 1912

Miss Lucile Tretheway, who has taught for two years at Temecula, has been reappointed for the coming season. Evidently the third term tradition has no terrors for Temecula, where a faithful public servant is concerned.

Temecula Teacher Resigns
July 3, 1912

After filling in a most capable manner, the position as school teacher at Temecula for two years, Miss Lucile Tretheway has resigned her position. She plans to enter the liberal arts at USC this fall.

Researcher's Note:

In 1916, Lucile Tretheway became a Methodist Missionary to China. She married Dr. Walter E. Libby in 1919 and they had five children.

Electricity (Continued from Page 2)

Eight Southern Sierras men from Riverside are registered at the hotel and are here to place the poles for electricity for the Pauba ranch. No doubt Temecula will have electricity in the near future. (June 16, 1922, Lake Elsinore Valley Press)

Once power was installed, residents and businesses quickly converted their systems.

Messrs. A. Knott, W.M. Friedemann and A.F. Nienke have installed electric motors at their places of business. D. R. Crane (Elsinore) will install the electric motor for pumping water at the school house to take the place of the old gasoline engine. (July 21, 1922, Lake Elsinore Valley Sun)

By 1923, Murrieta residents were wired with electricity and by 1924, Wildomar followed suit. Electric power radically improved irrigation systems, allowing farmers to expand their operations, bringing growth and prosperity to the area.

The Pauba Ranch reported in 1929:

In seven years, a small irrigated area of about 600 acres has been increased to one of more than 2,000 acres, 1,000 of which are devoted to alfalfa. The ranch now has seven pumping plants to lift the water from the wells and pits along the stream bed of the river and two booster pumps to carry it to the mesa on the east side of the stream bed. (October 4, 1929, Riverside Daily Press)

Southern Sierras Power Company continued servicing the valley for many years. In 1941, it was renamed the California Electric Power Company. Then on January 1, 1964, it merged with Southern California Edison. Today over three hundred thousand residents and many businesses in Southwest Riverside County continue to receive power from Edison. The area's growing prosperity is a testimony to the pioneers who brought electrical power to the Temecula Valley.

50 Years Ago This Month

June 21, 1962,
Lake Elsinore Valley Sun

Walter J. Escallier, yeoman first class, USN, son of Mr. and Mrs. F. C. Escallier of Temecula, Calif., is serving at the headquarters of the Commander Military Sea Transportation Service, Far East Area, in Yokohama, Japan.

The Yokohama headquarters is one of four major commands of the Military Sea Transportation Service, which provides ocean transportation for personnel and materials of the Department of Defense.

75 Years Ago

June 3, 1937,
Riverside Daily Press

Red Cross to Open First Aid Station at Temecula

Four officers of the United States Border Patrol stationed at Temecula will be in charge of the second Riverside County Red Cross first-aid station to be authorized by Pacific branch headquarters at San Francisco, according to Paul Vernier, executive secretary here.

The station will be installed next Tuesday at the Temecula Hotel, Vernier states. E.Q. Sullivan, state highway division engineer, has issued a permit for the two metal road signs designating the station.

Francis J. LeClaire, who is in charge of the detachment of federal officers on the inland highway, will be in charge of the emergency station. His staff includes Martin J. Halloren, Arthur E. Outzen and Kent C. Spears. LeClaire, Halloren and Outzen have taken a special first-aid training course of 20 hours from Dr. Glenn Westphal of Elsinore.

Eighth Grade Graduates 1912

Pujol School

Ethel Burnham
Maude Helm
Edna C. Hall

President's Message by Bonnie Martland

Those of you who attended our May meeting were truly brave souls as it was a sweltering evening with lots of humidity and little breeze. Pam Grender was our presenter. Pam, who portrayed Helen Hunt Jackson, and Rebecca Farnbach, her acquaintance, took us back to the nineteenth century in Pam's two-person play on the life of the author of *Ramona*.

Their plans to dress in period attire were thwarted by the excessive heat, yet we were all still transported to the Victorian era San Francisco hotel room in which the two ladies were sitting. Not to opt for Victorian attire was a laudable decision, as, like their hotel, our meeting place had no air conditioning! I was reminded afresh of what the covered and corseted ladies of previous generations were forced to endure as dictated by the dress morays of their day. It also brought to mind a picture of my great-grandmother. In the old photo she is attired in a fitted, tucked, laced, and layered black taffeta dress . . . sitting on the beach at Atlantic City, New Jersey!

A most special part of the meeting was the return of Bill Harker. "Return" implies "gone" or "left." However, Bill has remained a member of the Board of Directors and to those of us on the board, a presence at every single meeting. Recent health problems (allowed at age 95, I suppose) have kept Bill from attending meetings, in person; he figures for eight months. So it was absolutely wonderful to see him back.

Welcome back Bill!

25 Years Ago This Month

June 17, 1987, Rancho News

Graduation will mark end of an era

When Elsinore High School's approximately 318 seniors graduate today, it will be the last time that students from the Temecula and Murrieta valleys will share the limelight with Lake Elsinore students.

For 91 years, students from the two valleys to the south have attended Elsinore High School. The beginning of the end of the relationship came in 1985 when Temecula Valley High School was built to serve their needs.

For the past three years, while Temecula Valley waited to have its first class of seniors, 12th graders continued to make the drive to Elsinore High while freshmen, sophomores and juniors attended the Temecula public school.

About 98 students from the southern portion of the Elsinore Union High School District are slated to graduate today in the 6 p.m. ceremonies at Westphal Stadium on the Elsinore High campus. .