

TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

February 2018
Volume 18 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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For the Second Time on Front Street

After Years Finally New Temecula Bank

Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the December, 1965 issue of Guenther's Gazette a monthly publication at Guenther's Murrieta Hot Springs. The editor was Arnold French. It is being reproduced here as it appeared originally.

By the time this issue goes to press, Temecula will have a bank.

This will be the second time in the chequered history of the town that such an enterprise has graced Front St.

Long ago, I think around 1912, an impressive structure was erected to house the FIRST NATIONAL BANK of Temecula. The President of this institution was Eli E. Barnett, Grandfather to Ralph Barnett esteemed Secretary and Treasurer of Guenther's. Vice Pres. George Burnham.

Some years later Eli sold the bank to Mahlon Vail who became President with Hugo Guenther as Vice President.

The bank carried on it's business in a desultory fashion until March 1943 at which time it went out of business and the most important structure in town went thru a period of fitful disuse.

At the time of writing this erstwhile money changer's temple is vacant, and a large realtor's sign proclaims the place to be "For Sale."

Almost directly across the street stands a modest stuccoed building, somewhat early Calif. in design. It houses the Post Office and, until recently, a defunct Café which had proclaimed itself the "Rite Spot."

Somehow or other evil days came to the Rite Spot, and the last customer banged his empty beer bottle on the counter and left.

The screen door rusted in the winter rains and the Coca Cola signs that framed the entrance dimmed in the scorching sun.

Passersby to the Post Office sometimes peered thru the dusty windows to briefly glimpse the lonely failure of within.

Not too long ago a bustle of activity collected to the Rite Spot. Workers ganged feverishly over and around it and once again progress moved in on Temecula.

I must admit, reactionary as I am, I viewed the whole proceedings with no small dismay, but comforted myself with the thought that an earlier Temecula had boasted a bank and history was only repeating itself.

I mourned that it would be new and modern, not in keeping with the careless touch that gives Temecula a weather beaten charm.

On Monday afternoon, Nov. 29th between four and six o'clock in the afternoon, the SECURITY FIRST NATIONAL BANK opened its door to host a celebration party.

Let it not be said that all money marts are indifferent to the tempo of towns they grace.

Most definitely The SECURITY FIRST NATIONAL BANK of Temec-

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A New Temecula Bank

ula, clean and new looking though it is, might very well have found itself completely in accord with the town when it began in the middle Eighties.

Someone with whimsical thought refurbished the interior with a paneled wainscoting surmounted by turn of the century wallpaper.

A pot-bellied stove gleams black and cheerful in one corner of the room, and high on the papered wall a "Regulator" clock ticks soberly its' measure of the time.

I noted with delight the old crank telephone they'd mounted on the wall and from the ceiling hung two lamps that might have graced the entry hall at "Tara."

Two gleaming cuspidors winked in brassy splendor on the floor, and knowing to some degree the habits of Temecula I have a feeling they will not be purely ornamental.

In a casual sense the people of Temecula are interested in this new enterprise and will no doubt develop an attitude of watchful waiting.

As I have said before we are a low income group and most of us live from payday to payday. The General Store has always cashed our checks with such charming good will and easy informality I doubt that any bank could or would perform such function in any like manner.

Margaret Ramsey native to this region, recounted this delightful anecdote concerning a former Cashier in the original First National Bank of Temecula.

Named Porter Shumate this gentleman was a character straight from the pages of Genteel South. Wearing clothes outmoded, but elegant, Mr. Shumate carried on the business of the bank with easy but formal courtesy.

During the early career of this institution Margaret's mother and father, pioneers to Temecula, decided to open separate checking accounts. Later they decided this was a cumbersome arrangement and merged the two accounts into one. Shortly before this merger Mrs. Roripaugh, Margaret's mother, wrote a check, which was late in being returned to the bank, and during this interval the merger of the two accounts had been completed.

Months later she received a pleasant letter regretting that they had received a check, drawn on her account which was without funds. Almost casually this information was tendered.

Later when Mrs. Roripaugh explained the situation to Mr. Shumate she tearfully asked, "What will you do to me?"

With a courtly bow the Cashier gave this immediate answer, "Madam; with gentlemen we might deal harshly, but when Ladies are concerned we never do a thing."

"Why do you sit there looking like an envelope without any address on it?"

-Mark Twain

An April 2018 Induction

Walter Vail to Receive Special Honor at National Cowboy Heritage Museum

The Vail Ranch Restoration Association was notified a few weeks ago that Walter Lennox Vail, the founder and former owner of the historic Vail Headquarters, will be honored on April 14, 2018 with induction into the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum's Hall of Great Westerners in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Since 1961 the Western Heritage Museum has honored exceptional individuals who have made an indelible impact upon the history of the great West. Mr. Vail will join the ranks of other honorees including Theodore Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, Dwight D. Eisenhower and more than 200 other great individuals whose lives exemplify Western ideals.



Young Walter Vail

At the age of twenty-one, Vail left his home in New Jersey to go west. He first went to the mining town of Virginia City, Nevada and was disillusioned with the scoundrels he found there. A family member advised him to go to Arizona Territory and to buy land. Vail and his brother Edward and other investors bought land, cattle and water rights in an area near Tucson. While there, silver was found on his property and the prosperous Total Wreck Mine filled his pockets. The town of Vail, Arizona grew up around the mine. Mr. Vail was always looking for pastureland for his livestock and in the late 1800s he organized one of the last great cattle drives of the West to move 1,000 head of cattle from Vail, Arizona to pastures of Warner Springs, California. An early partner was Jack Harvey who was from England.

Vail eventually bought up four contiguous Mexican land grants in the Temecula Valley to form his 87,500-acre cattle ranch that dominated the region in the early to mid-1900s. The Vail Headquarters was the "command center" of his operation. Unfortunately, Vail was crushed between two streetcars in Los Angeles and did not live to see the success of the enterprise that was taken over by his family and was managed by his son Mahlon Vail. In 1964 the Vail holdings of the Temecula Valley were sold and it was the end of an era. VaRRRA advocated to keep the buildings and Vail Headquarters intact for future generations to enjoy.

The Ramona Pioneer Historical Society

&

Guy B. Woodward Museum



645 Main Street
PO Box 625
Ramona, California 92065



TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY TOUR SCHEDULED

Members and guests are invited to join us on Wednesday, February 7th, for a docent-led tour of the Guy B. Woodward Museum in Ramona. The tour includes the Verlaque Home built in 1886, and the barn, bunkhouse and post office. The tour costs \$5/person. We can have lunch afterwards at the Ramona Café. We will meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Red Barn to carpool to the Woodward Museum. Call Phil at 951-201-0020. See photo above.

Santa Margarita Ecological Reserve Nature Hikes Scheduled for 2018

TVHS members and friends will have the opportunity to join with several docents giving hikes in the Santa Margarita Ecological Reserve. During early 2018 with dates ranging from early February through May. Hikes vary from 2½ to 6½ miles in length, most hikes are on Saturdays. To receive information about the dates and a description of the level of difficulty of each hike, please request the info at smrdocenthikes@gmail.com and identify yourself as a member of the Temecula Valley Historical Society.

Call for Volunteers For Spring School Tours of Vail HQ and History Center

VaRRA is hosting third-grade students at the History Center and Vail Headquarters on April 27, May 14 and May 21. If you would be interested in volunteering to help on one or all three days from 9-12, please contact Rebecca Farnbach - sunbrook@hotmail.com or 951-775-6057.

Historic Symposium Set for March 3rd at Benedict Castle

The Riverside County History Symposium is set for the Benedict Castle on March 3rd, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. The cost is \$30 per person, and includes four extremely interesting presentations, breakfast, lunch and a tour of Benedict Castle located at 5445 Chicago Ave. in Riverside. If have questions contact through their website — www.riversidecountyheritageassociation.org.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Thank you for renewing your membership:

Arlie and Coral Bergman
Beth Cobb
Gary and Judy Giles
Forrest Greenwood & Marti Scott
Jeffery Harmon
Roger & Carole Honberger
Kent & Penelope Johnson
James Lawton
Mike & Shelley Leddy
Wayne & Vernetta Mackley
Virginia Niedrauer
John III & Jerry Lynn & John IV Randall
Rick & Vicky Reiss
Manny & Linda Robles
Dale & Ann Silimperi
George & Mary Ziegler



Sarah Kay Bierle

Sarah Bierle to Present

California to Gettysburg: The Hancock Family

The February 26th presentation at the Temecula Valley Historical Society will be Sarah Kay Bierle presenting "From California to Gettysburg: The Hancock Family." In 1858, Winfield and Almira Hancock and their two children moved to California. As a U.S. Army officer, Winfield S. Hancock's duties had taken the family to several remote outposts, but their time in California would be some of their most memorable days. The American Civil War began while the Hancocks were in California, and this conflict presented challenging choices. Their decision - made in California - would impact one of the great battles of the war.

Sarah Kay Bierle is an author, speaker, and co-managing editor at Emerging Civil War. She enjoys studying many aspects of the Civil War, especially the role of civilians, medical staff, and anything related to Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. She graduated from Thomas Edison State University with a BA in History and now shares quality historical research to inform and inspire modern audiences. Sarah resides in Temecula, is a member of the Temecula Valley Historical Society, and coordinates an annual Civil War Conference in Temecula.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday, February 4 — 2:30 p.m. at the Little Temecula History Center (Red Barn), Mindy Johnson will present Annie Mendenhall Bergman, an influential woman who was born on Palomar Mountain and lived the remainder of her life in Aguanga. Annie and her husband owned a ranch consisting of thousands of acres of land in the valley.

Wednesday, February 7 — 8:30 a.m. Meet at Red Barn to carpool to Guy Woodward Museum in Ramona. This field trip tour will cost \$5 per person. See article on Page 3 for more information.

Thursday, February 15 — 1:00 p.m. Riverside County Historic Commission will hold a regularly scheduled meeting at the Little Temecula History Center. Public is welcome to attend.

Tuesday, February 20 — 10:30 a.m. Bonnie Martland as (Mary Jane Welty), and Mindy Johnson as (Maria Apis), will be presented to the Friends of the Murrieta Library in the Community Room of the Murrieta Public Library. Guests are welcome.

Monday, February 26 — 6:00 p.m. at the Little Temecula History Center (Red Barn), Sarah Bierle will present *From California to Gettysburg: The Hancock Family*, about Winfield Hancock who as an Army Officer had challenging choices to make when the U.S. Civil War began. See story this page.

Saturday, March 3 — 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Riverside History Symposium at the Benedict Castle. Cost is \$30 for the days activities includes breakfast & lunch, see article on Page 3 this issue for contact information.

Sunday, March 4 — 2:30 p.m. at the Little Temecula History Center (Red Barn), Lynn Cudé will present Ramona Wolf, who with her husband, Louis, operated the Wolf Store adobe (still standing today at Vail HQ).

Monday, March 26 — 6:00 p.m. at the Little Temecula History Center (Red Barn), Bonnie Martland will Make a presentation about Gettysburg.

Monday, April 23 — 6:00 p.m. at the Little Temecula History Center (Red Barn), Terry & Jill Finch on *Who Came to California?*

Monday, May 21 — 6:00 p.m. at the Little Temecula History Center (Red Barn), Steve Lech will present the *1893 Debate for Riverside County*.

Monday, June 25 — 6:00 p.m. at the Little Temecula History Center (Red Barn). Michelle Latimer will do Presentation about Pechanga Press.

Spotlight on Members – Featuring – Elaine Eshom

Elaine was born and raised in a small village in the Finger Lakes area of western NY. Her family owned and operated a full service gas station with towing service, snow plow and car wash. Her father was the mayor when she was a child and all of the male family members were volunteer firemen. Her mother, Jean, was an RN at the VA and later at a local hospital.

She moved to California in the early 1980s, and first lived behind the Candy Store on the Ortega Hwy. Over time Elaine moved to several inland empire cities before settling in Temecula in 1989. She says that from the moment she first set foot in the Temecula Valley, it felt like she was finally home.

Elaine met her husband, Rob, on a blind date that was arranged by her Jenny Craig counselor, on March 16, 1991. They've been together ever since. The two were married in Las Vegas on their tenth anniversary, surrounded by family and friends.

She went back to college in 2000, majoring in Multimedia with a minor in History. The internet was young, and she hoped to start a business making websites for businesses. However, by the time she was half way through, the market changed so she took a part time job at the college as she worked toward a degree.

She began taking classes in History, Archeology, and California Indian studies. Temecula and its native people became the subject of many term papers. She was so enthusiastic in researching her subjects that many of her papers had to be edited down from 25 pages to 10.

After graduating in 2003 with honors, Elaine was featured on the front page of the local Temecula newspaper (The Californian) in May of that year. The article highlighted the trials she'd endured and how she'd made a triumphant comeback to earn her degree.

She continued to work at the college and also taught classes in the Business Department. She retired in the spring of 2014, which was a good thing because her mother decided to move in with them the following year.

Jean, Elaine's mother, suffered severe health issues when she first arrived in California. Consequently Elaine has become her full time caregiver. A job she describes as the most difficult, yet most rewarding job she's ever done.

They also have a daughter Wendy, son-in-law Chad, and two grandchildren, Abby and Will, who reside in Raleigh, NC. They pack up Mom and fly out there to



Elaine Eshom

see them at least once per year. Will turns 5 in February and Abby will be 7 in June.

Rob and Elaine are members of the Old Town Temecula Gunfighters. You'll find them performing their zany skits and shootouts at the old Temecula Hotel on Main Street, on the fourth Saturday of every month from January - October. They are also members of Reliance Church. These two activities take up most of any spare time.

Elaine's involvement with TVHS began in 2004 as a member and soon after she was elected to the board and has served several terms since, a few as secretary. She's also a member of The Notable Women of Temecula, portraying Freda Knott.