

# ***VaRRA News***

Newsletter from the  
**Vail Ranch Restoration Association**

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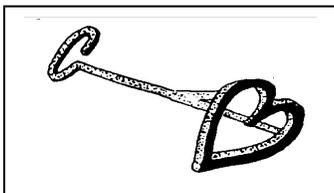
2nd Quarter 2009 – Volume 1, Issue 2

*“Dedicated to the preservation  
and restoration of the Historic  
Vail Ranch Headquarters.”*

**Little Temecula  
History Center is  
NOW Open –  
In Red Implement  
Barn next to Kohl’s  
At Margarita and  
Temecula Pkwy.**

**Sundays 12 – 5 pm**  
*Or by Appointment*

***Come see the results of  
Our efforts, and perhaps  
Volunteer to be a docent.***



## **Vail Ranch Restoration Association**

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## *Riding the Range and a Boat?*

# **Island Cowboys And The Last Vail Ranch**

**By Duane Preimsberger**

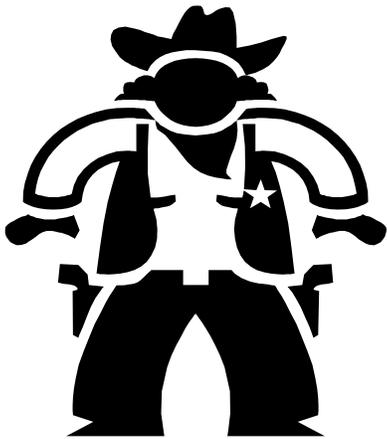
The cattle ranching empire of the Vail family started with the Empire Ranch in 1876 and it covered 1000 sq. miles in Arizona. Walter Vail, the founder and owner, also ran cattle in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado. During a feud with the Southern Pacific Railroad over transportation costs he decided to expand westward, to save some cattle moving money, and in doing so found that Warner Springs east of Temecula was a good place for his cows to graze. He moved a fair sized herd from the ranch in Arizona, managed to save some costs and in doing so he faced down the railroad so that they lowered their rates. A few years later in the early 1900’s as he continued to look for new expansion opportunities he found land for sale in the Temecula area and soon had a spread of 87,500 acres here, encompassing almost the entire valley. Near the intersection of Margarita Rd. and Temecula Parkway the remaining buildings of the Vail Ranch Headquarters are soon to be restored.

Prior to locating Temecula as a desirable place to raise cattle, Walter found Santa Rosa Island in 1901. This 54,000 acre island, 32 miles offshore from Santa Barbara/ Ventura, intrigued him as a unique place to raise cattle. It was free from predators and almost rustler proof. It had been used as a sheep ranch in days gone by so there was a precedent established for herding activities. The climate was good and the terrain for the most part was comprised of gently rolling hills covered with natural grasses and there was abundant fresh water. The most difficult part of the operation was transporting cattle by boat across the channel to and from Santa Barbara or Ventura. Cattle are not the best of sea going animals and sometimes they get a little cranky on the voyages, especially if the seas are less than calm.

Cattle transportation was initially the responsibility of the crew of the sailing schooner, ‘Santa Rosa Island,’ this vessel could hold about 200 head of cattle and traveled comfortably in good seas at about 5 knots, so at minimum, under ideal conditions, the passage to Santa Barbara/ Ventura would take about 7 hours and a lot longer if the sea was rough or the winds slow. In 1913, the 130 foot motor vessel ‘Vaquero,’ built especially for the Vails took over the responsibilities of transporting the cattle to and from the Island and things improved as time was saved. Her powerful 300 horsepower engine increased the speed and her larger capacity now allowed

## Friends of VaARRA Associate Members

Robert & Carol Anderson  
Audrey & Vince Cilurzo  
Eve Craig  
Robert & Kathryn Curtis  
David Elliott & Anne Miller  
Walt & Jean Dixon  
Elaine Eshom  
Dale Garcia  
Phil & Connie Harris  
Suzanne & Fred Legner  
Bonnie Martland  
Neil Miller  
John Moramarco  
Beth Paden, Discovery Works  
Duane & Judy Preimsberger  
Lyz Quinn  
Rosemary & Ray Smith  
Karen & David Strauss  
Mary Lu Taylor  
Lisa Woodward  
Roger Weber



## VaARRA Board of Directors

Darell Farnbach, President  
Rhine Helzer, Vice President  
Rebecca Farnbach, Secretary  
Sandy Helzer, Treasurer  
Dick Fox, Newsletter  
Charolette Fox  
Malcolm Barnett  
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Dave Wilson

as many as 500 calves to be brought from the Mainland to Santa Rosa Island. Although the sailing vessel was no longer a cattle mover, several of the younger Vail's, men in their twenties, decided to use it as a means of exploring the Mexican coast a little further south than Mazatlan. One of the log entries from the vessel as it was moored in Mazatlan Harbor describes the kind of journey they had undertaken.

“Very excellent music was furnished by a band and orchestra. Beer and tamales were served and the dance broke up at about 12:30. The people here are dance crazy and most of the crowd decided to walk back by the drive known as Los Altos. The band was with us, and played all the way down the hill. Everyone decided to have another dance along the waterfront. This kept up for sometime, and when we finally did leave, the entire party went around with the band until the last young lady was deposited at home.” Obviously the Mexican coastal voyage was much more pleasant than one across the Santa Barbara channel with a couple of hundred head of grumpy, noisy and smelly cows.

The Santa Rosa cattle operation was reasonably successful, providing the Vail family with a good return on their investment; although a few years of drought were problematic and required relocating some of the Island herd to the mainland. As many as 5,000 head of cattle grazed contentedly on the Island and the six to a dozen or so cowboys assigned to herd them had little to do to protect them from adversity. It was quite a different task than that of their counterparts on the other Vail properties and one much sought after.

Beginning in the late 1940's and on into the next decade the cowboys on the Island began to notice an increasing interest in their spread from the U.S. Military. They were more than a little surprised when in the early 1950's the U.S. Air Force leased ten acres on the south side of Santa Rosa Island for a highly classified project. Today we know that it was a Cold War facility and it functioned as an Air Control and Early Warning Station until 1965. Interestingly, the cowboys and the flyboys with the secret mission became friends and often loaned or traded supplies back and forth; including cheese, meat, car parts and whatever else was available.

Until recent times, the ranch house built by the family was the Island headquarters for the cattle raising and hunting operations. Some of the Vail family descendants occupied the 90+ year old building and from that headquarters they oversaw the production of some of California's finest beef. That has all changed. In 1986, the family sold Santa Rosa Island, the last of the original Walter Vail holdings, to the U. S. National Park Service. In 2011 after 135 years of being a part of the Vail family, the cattle ranching operations will end as the 25 year Vail lease expires and the shadow cast by the Vail's will disappear from the southwest. The Island will become part of the Channel Islands National Park and the brand in the shape of a Heart will be no more. Hopefully, the history and the legacy of the Vail family will live on in History Centers like ours in Temecula. Perhaps at like places throughout the Southwest the recollections of the Vail family contributions will be remembered for generations yet to come.

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*“Being president is like being a jackass in a hailstorm. There's nothing to do but to stand there and take it.” -- Lyndon B. Johnson*

## VaARRA's Model T . . .

VaARRA is beginning a project to assess the needs, parts and effort necessary to get our 1926 Ford Model T Roadster into running condition. Our intention is not to "restore" it to original new like condition, but rather to see if we can get it back to where it was 20+ years ago (when it last was last driven). Our intention is to maintain its existing configuration, and the character of its history, and patina of its age.

We have already discovered that it has a rather unusual aftermarket transmission which expands the number of gear options and ratios available. Apparently this was added by some Model T owners, especially those who wanted better road speed and gear selection availability. Two members of the local Drifters Car Club (John Harrison and Bob Grieb), will work with Darell Farnbach in this effort. Some of the work may occasionally be done at the History Center, where interested visitors can watch and interact with the team.

## More on T's . . .

The other part of the "T" story, is that VaARRA now has "VaARRA T-shirts" available. Created on a dark chocolate brown, quality T-shirt, they have an image of the Wolf Store on the back, and the VaARRA Heart Brand Logo on the front. Through VaARRA they are available in sizes from Small to XL at \$16.

## The Cherry/Parr Collection

# A Native American Library To Be Available at VaARRA

VaARRA is proud to own a collection of over 700 books, mainly about Native Americans and other indigenous people. Many of the books are out of print and some are rare, including an 1830 Ojibway language Bible and a signed copy of Pancho Villa's wife's memoirs.

William and Donna Cherry donated the collection to VaARRA in 2006. The books were originally collected by Clifford Parr, a pharmacist in Manteca, California. After retiring in Hemet, Mr. Parr gave the books to Mrs. Cherry, a teacher, for reference on California history.

The Cherrys knew about VaARRA through association with Darell Farnbach and asked if VaARRA would like to have the collection. VaARRA's board of directors decided to receive the collection with the idea of creating a study center.

Presently, several volunteers are cataloguing the books under the direction of librarian Joshua Fox, Dick Fox, and Rebecca Farnbach. The books will be kept in shelves in the Little Temecula History Center. Listings will be put on internet web sites for researchers to view. Historians will be allowed to study the books onsite.

We want to thank the following volunteers for their hours of work on the books: Abigail Marshall Juarez, Ann Silimperi, Brendan Casey, and Rosie Wilson.

When the books processing is completed, we plan to hold an open house to showcase the books and to honor the two families responsible for the donation, which we call "The Cherry/Parr Collection".

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## Saturday, June 20

# Meet Twelve Local Area Published Authors

Would you like to interact with twelve published authors all in one place? Then come to the mass book signing sponsored by the Temecula Critique Group at the red History Center barn west of Kohls Department Store (31870 Redhawk Parkway) in Temecula on Saturday, June 20 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

In this informal setting, authors will discuss their paths to writing and publishing. Their books will be available to purchase, ranging from historic fiction, devotional, historic nonfiction, inspirational, poetry, Christian instruction, and a cake decorating book.

Authors who will present their work include Jeri Westerson, Steve & Pegge Hofman, Rebecca Farnbach, Dave Henkel, Joanne Bischof, Ashley Ludwig, Jackie Harts, Pat Proud, Dionne Carpenter, Lakeshia Chambers, and Norma Rowland.

# Brief Notes . . .

. . . VaARRA is considering starting a periodic lecture series in the meeting / theater area of the History Center Annex. We'd like to hear from you about what kinds of lecture topics you'd like to have. Drop us a note at [info@vailranch.org](mailto:info@vailranch.org) . . .

. . . Did you know that VaARRA has completed all of the necessary forms and paperwork required by the National Park Service as part of an application for the National Register of Historic Places. All we need is to complete Section 6 (where restoration plans must be detailed). Completion of this requires detailed cooperation from the property owner. Jerry Tessier of Arteco Partners has indicated that as soon as hurdles such as financing are in place then completion of the application is a go . . .

. . . The total number of visitors to the History Center for the first 5 months of 2009 (thru May), has been 958. Visitors have included folks from out-of-town visiting the area, interested locals, old-time residents back for a visit, families with kids, all folks who are curious about "What's in the Red Barn?"

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"The challenge of history is to recover the past and introduce it to the present."

~ David Thelen

## Looking for a few Wranglers

The Little Temecula History Center is looking for a few good men & women to assist us with special occasions and on an occasional Sunday afternoon at the Center. We need some Wranglers who can help us staff the facilities and provide an overview of the history and artifacts that are a part of the past and are helping to shape the future of our Valley.

Each Sunday, dozens of visitors join us for an opportunity to learn about our rich and varied past here in Temecula. Senior citizens, moms and dads and kids of all ages are eager to learn about the operations of the 87,500 acre Vail Ranch, the Wolf Store, the Butterfield Stage and they very much enjoy experimenting with the many hands on exhibits that we display from days gone by.

If you are interested in learning more about our history and would like to become one of our valued Wranglers we'll be happy to provide the training and mentoring that will make you an expert and a treasured asset for the History Center and for those who visit us in search of knowledge.

For more information, please contact us by dropping by the History Center, or e-mail at [info@vailranch.org](mailto:info@vailranch.org), or optionally call Darell Farnbach at 951-552-3516, or Dick Fox at 951-302-0180.

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## 2009 Artifact Donations

Early this year David Elliott & Dr. Anne Miller donated a nice topographical map documenting where the Southern Emigrant Trail ran through Riverside County. They also donated a number of books.

In February, Jim & Judy Miller donated an oil lamp, lawyer book shelves with 4 drawer filing cabinet base, dresser w/mirror, oak kitchen hutch, wash stand, trunk, Victorian oak table, Victorian walnut table, antiques cabinet, painted mirror, piano, school desk, desk chair, and 1920's vintage walnut table.

During May, Jake O'Brien and his dad Dennis donated a horse drawn buggy with an unusual folding front seat arrangement that allows it to go from a 2 person buggy, to a 4 passenger. Some restoration work is needed, but it should soon be on display at the History Center. The donation includes a trailer to transport the buggy.

Also in May, Quin Gustason donated a small metate (flat grinding stone), with an accompanying mano (hand held grinding rock).

VaARRA certainly appreciates all donations, and we work to quickly display them where room exists to do so.

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"Elections are a good deal like marriages. There's no accounting for anyone's taste. Every time we see a bridegroom we wonder why she ever picked him, and it's the same with public officials." – Will Rogers