



Wolf Store

May 2024  
Volume 24 Issue 5

Our mission is identifying,  
preserving and promoting the  
historic legacy of the Temecula  
valley.

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A Publication of the

Temecula Valley Historical Society

P.O. Box 157

Temecula, CA 92593-0157



## May Day on the Santa Rosa Plateau

By Bonnie Martland



### A May Day picnic at the Santa Rosa Plateau in the late 1800's

To welcome Spring and to celebrate the season of new life, May Day has been celebrated around the world since the days of ancient Rome. As people looked forward to Spring and the end of long winter months, religious services, and celebrations of numerous kinds marked the day.

In the late 1800s residents of the Temecula Valley looked forward to the first of May with a special enthusiasm as they were treated to a particularly unique May Day celebration. Parker and Elena Coutts Dear, residents of Rancho Santa Rosa, which is now the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Preserve, invited all to come up their hill and celebrate on a grand scale.

Parker and Elena came from vastly different backgrounds and cultures. Parker, from Liverpool, England, grew up in a country where May Day celebrations were marked with dancing around a beribboned May pole, Morris Dancers, gathering baskets of flowers, and filling baskets with candies and other treats to be hung on the doors of friends and neighbors.

Such May Day celebrations were foreign to Elena who grew up not far from San Diego with a Californio mother and American father from Tennessee. Elena Coutts Dear was the granddaughter of Don Juan and Delores de Bandini, to one of the most prominent Californio families of early San Diego, and daughter of Ysidora de Bandini and Cave Johnson Coutts.

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Cave Coutts, a graduate of West Point, came to California as a Lieutenant of US Army dragoons in 1849. He came with orders to convert Mission San Luis Rey, secularized under Mexican rule, into military barracks. His dragoons also provided protection for the US Boundary Commission delegation after the Mexican American War. The delegation had been sent to San Diego to delineate the exact location of the Mexican American border.

Upon his arrival in San Diego, Cave Coutts met Don Juan de Bandini. He and Don Juan's daughter Ysidora fell in love and married. After his marriage Coutts would resign his commission and set about building his pride and joy, his adobe at Rancho Guajome.

Elena was one of Ysidora and Cave Coutt's ten children. Elena's father was prominent in state and local politics. He helped write the California State Constitution and was made colonel and aid de camp to California's third governor John Bigler. He was justice of the peace for San Diego County and held other important local offices. Elena grew up as part of the large family on the vast Rancho Guajome near Oceanside which is a state park today.

Her father's community status meant a house often full of guests. Elena's mother was quite proud of her Californio heritage and Bandini family name and status. Elena was brought up with this influence and her mother's sense of Californio cultural superiority and tradition, a tradition of hospitality.

Her husband, though also from a well-to-do family, came from quite different circumstances. His father, English entrepreneur John Dear, was a wealthy tea and coffee merchant, trader and merchant. He was considering joining a consortium put together in the 1870s to buy the old Santa Rosa Land Grant and sent his 19-year-old son Parker to California to check out the potential of the property. Upon Parker's arrival at the Santa Rosa, he so impressed the local vaqueros with his horsemanship and marksmanship that he was invited to stay.

John Dear did join the consortium and eventually bought out his partners. Parker inherited the rancho upon his father's death. As a prominent rancher in what was then San Diego County, Parker Dear, had occasion to meet the family of Cave Johnson Coutts. Elena Coutts and Parker Dear were married at Guajome Rancho in July of 1881.

The Dears spent most of the 1880s and 1890s on the Santa Rosa. Their six children were born there and they raised cattle on the beautiful 46,000-acre ranch on its scenic plateau. They lived in a large white Victorian home that looked out onto beautiful vistas that visitors to the plateau enjoy still today.

Since Elena Dear grew up at Rancho Guajome she continued with the Californio tradition of entertaining on a large scale and celebrating special occasions with fiestas and rodeos that lasted several days or more. When she and Parker married and they set up residence at the Santa Rosa Rancho, she liked to entertain with reference to her Californio heritage.

One way she did this was to host, each May first, a May Day Bar-B-Que legendary, not only throughout the Temecula Valley, but throughout the whole of Southern California. People came from San Diego and even from Los Angeles, although it took several days to travel by coach or buggy.

Some years as many as 2,000 people came to the festivities. Escorts guided visitors who needed help navigating their coaches up the grade to the rancho while young bucks on horseback galloped ahead.

Tent communities provide shelter. Guests were entertained by bands hired for the occasion. Vaqueros sang and provided entertainment. Sides of beef were roasted over large pits, in preparation for days, and the aroma of the roasting beef must have been amazing!

Friends caught up on the past year's events and new friendships were made. Although no May pole or English Morris Dancers were present, dancing and singing still enlivened the evenings. The English tradition of sharing one's bounty with neighbors, however, was inherent. There were always enough leftovers to send home with the guests, much to the ladies' delight, so that families could look forward to stew and soup, and maybe even a steak, for days to come.

May Day on the Santa Rosa was a celebration of cultures, community, and family special to the Temecula Valley in the late 19th century. Eventually the Dears left the Santa Rosa, but their May Day Bar-B-Que was so enjoyed that locals kept it going for several years before the tradition became a memory of a very special time in local history.

## TVHS Scholarships

The Temecula Valley Historical Society is proud to facilitate a vibrant scholarship and grant program focused on assisting individuals and organizations furthering preservation efforts and the study of history, with emphasis on the Temecula Valley.

This year's recipients were Temecula Valley Unified School District high school history departments, each receiving a \$1,000 grant.

How were the resources used?

Chaparral High School purchased teacher resources and student material binders for data-based history programs (US History and World History) that will help students develop best practices in reading, thinking and writing about history.

Great Oak High School bought visual materials such as timelines and posters (Presidential posters, electoral college visual aids, World War I timeline, World War II time line, ideology posters etc.) for their history classrooms.

Rancho Vista High School used funds to send students on a field trip to the USS Midway in San Diego in March.

Temecula Valley High School purchased a variety of materials "to help deepen and broaden students' understanding of historical themes". Included were large posters, 3M boards, and review cards with key historical curriculum concepts from the AP curriculum guides. They expect 15-20 classes of students to benefit from such materials annually.

These funds are generated through historical society membership fees, donations from the general public, and revenues generated from Historical Society antique store sales and donations for rides on the kiddie train, both located at the historic Vail Headquarters.

For more information, please contact Bonnie Martland at [bonnie@azteche.com](mailto:bonnie@azteche.com)

Dave Wilson & Bonnie Martland

## Events Calendar

**Every Sunday** - 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"**Sunday Funday**" Family fun, entertainment, and vendor market. Antique store is open. Train rides for kids.

Little Temecula History Center open noon to 5.

**Every Tuesday** - 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Vail Headquarters Farmer's Market

**Monday, May 20** - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Little Temecula History Center.

**NOTE: this the third Monday in May, not the fourth Monday as usual due to Memorial Day being on the fourth Monday, May 27th.**

**Aimee Edgeworth** will present a program on local history focusing on Murrieta and Hemet.

**Friday, May 31** - 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

**Starlight Bazaar**

Night Market with over 40 vendors

Local music performances

Interactive art and live painting

Food trucks - Horse drawn carriage rides

Photo booth - Street performers

Beer and wine available for guests 21+

## The Pledge of Allegiance

Reprinted from '*The High Country*'

With permission of the Temecula Valley Museum.

The Pledge of Allegiance was written by Francis Bellamy, a Baptist minister as part of a campaign sponsored by the Youth Companion, a nationally circulated magazine for children and young adults to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus.

The Original Pledge was first published in the September 8, 1892 issue of the magazine and read:

***"I pledge allegiance to my flag and the republic for which it stands, one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all"***

## 100 Years Ago in Temecula

From the Lake Elsinore Valley Press  
Temecula Gossip Column – May 1924

**May 2, 1924**

Joe Winkle has returned from a week's business trip to Los Angeles. He reports the old town is growing fast but expressed doubt as to whether it will be the largest city on the coast, giving as his reason that "it is too far away from Temecula."

Frank Burnham, of the firm G.A. Burnham and Son, is making some improvements on his house, which will be strictly modern when completed.

Farmers are cutting their first crop of alfalfa hay this week in this section.

J.M. Cockerline of Rainbow a successful poultry man is adding another unit to his poultry houses.

Two men landed in an airplane here Tuesday morning, being short of gasoline. After filling the tanks at the Temecula garage they resumed their flight, stating that they were from South Dakota and bound for the Imperial Valley.

### EDITOR'S COMMENT:

The 100 Years Ago in Temecula items from from the Lake Elsinore Valley Press Temecula Gossip Column for May 1924 are displayed above in their entirety.

Prior to the 4th quarter of 1923, the columns had the byline :”By Mrs. V.B. Sands “ and were quite detailed.. There were normally enough items to fill two pages of this newsletter, so only enough items were selected to fill one page of this newsletter.

From late 1923, through November 1924 when the column ceased printing, the amount of information in the column each month changed considerably. Some months have no column.

Roger Cude

## Membership News

### Thank you for joining:

Beth Good

Jim Sadler

### Thank you for renewing:

Terry Bracci

Sandra Devol

Steve & Denise Haerr

Ladislao & Abigail Marshall Juarez

Andrew & Terri Marshall

Liz White

## Volunteer!!

### We are still looking for:

A History Center greeter on Sundays.

Vail Headquarters greeter on Sundays &/or Tuesdays

Help at our Antique Store on Sundays &/or Tuesdays

Assistance with 3<sup>rd</sup> grade field trips at Vail Headquarters and History Center

Portray a historical person from Temecula's past

Scan publications to create digital documents

If interested, please email us at:

[info@temeculahistory.org](mailto:info@temeculahistory.org)