

# TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

May 2016  
Volume 16 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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951-303-6860

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### THE CANINE MAIL CARRIER OF CALICO

By Julie Gilbert

In 1881, the discovery of silver in the Mojave Desert gave birth to the town of Calico, one of the wildest camps in the southwest. Among its 3,500 residents it counted an array of colorful characters, but none was as memorable or beloved as a black and white shepherd collie named Dorsey.

Early one morning in 1885, Everett Stacy, U.S. Postmaster at Calico, found the dog shivering outside his door. Everett took him in, and he soon became a favorite of Everett and his brother, Alwin, who ran the post office/grocery store at the nearby Bismarck mine. Together the brothers operated a "Star Route" between Calico and the mine, a private mail delivery service paid for by the miners.

One day the dog, initially dubbed "Jack", followed Alwin from the post office out to the mine, a distance of about 3 miles. Alwin decided to tie a note to Jack's collar and see if he could get him to deliver it to Everett back in Calico. Sure enough, he did. This sparked the idea by the brothers to train Jack to carry the mail daily over their Star Route.

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Outfitted with a harness and specially-made saddle bags, Jack, now renamed "Dorsey" after a famous mail carrier of earlier days, left early each morning from Bismarck with the miners' outgoing mail and returned every night with the incoming mail from town. If the mail was late, and the post office was closed when Dorsey got back in the evening, he would howl to let Alwin know he was there, and the door would be opened for him.

True to the postal service motto, Dorsey was undeterred in carrying out his mission while on the job. Mrs. Lucy Belle Lane, who came to Calico in 1885 as a 10-year-old, wrote in her memoirs, "When Dorsey was off duty he would romp and play with us children. But when on duty, he was strictly business, even when we passed him on the trail. He wouldn't let anyone touch him." This was fortunate, as touching him was considered tampering with the U.S. Mails. Mrs. Lane also wrote that as his feet became sore from the sharp rocks, protective leather booties were specially made for him.

So it was that Dorsey became the only four-legged mail carrier in U.S. history. But after two years, the Stacy brothers lost the Star Route and, reluctantly, gave Dorsey to the mine owner, W. W. Stowe. Though Everett once refused a \$500 offer for Dorsey with the response, "I'd sooner sell a grandson", he knew his pet would have a well-deserved life of ease with Stowe's wealthy family in San Francisco.

Thus ended the brief but illustrious career of Dorsey, the canine mail carrier.

## How much do you know about our local history?

1. When people find the legal descriptions of their ancestors' property, they note that the descriptions include things like "the oak tree, the corner of the barn, and fence post". Because none of those exist today, they ask if they can still find their boundaries of their ancestors' property.
2. How long is a chain? And a link, and a rod?

Answers on page 5

## One Hundred Years Ago

May 19, 1916 - Lake Elsinore Valley Press

Mrs. Lizzie M. Hall, Ruth Keyes and Irene Vardy gave a party in honor of the anniversary of the wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Swanguen. The room was beautifully decorated for the occasion with the choicest flowers. Refreshments of ice cream and cake were served. The invited guest who honored the occasion were as follows: Mr. and Mrs. Hall, Miss Ruth Keyes, Mrs. Barton, Miss Edith Walter, Miss Vardy, George Friedemann and (George) Pettrie.

Mahlon Vail and L. C. Hardesty left for Los Angeles the last of the week on business.

Mrs. Eliza Alvarez has filed a petition in the Superior Court for appointment as administratrix of the estate of her deceased husband, Antonio Alvarez, who died about two months ago.

Mrs. J. C. Rodriguez of Valley Center is visiting with her father and mother Mr. and Mrs. (Albert) Banks.

C. P. Shumate, J. M. Nicolas and Mrs. Antonio Alvarez motored to Riverside Wednesday on business returning the same day.

Mr. and Mrs. William Friedemann and Miss Libbie Kienke (Nienke) left Thursday morning for San Diego, returning the next day.

# Murrieta Valley Historical Society

Jeffery Harmon, President

I am excited to announce that on April 6, 2016, the Murrieta Valley Historical Society was formed.

The Society's mission is to identify, preserve and promote the historic legacy of the Murrieta Valley and to educate the public about its historical significance.

Currently, we are in need of a free or low cost public facility for us to meet on a monthly basis.

We would like to thank the Temecula Valley Historical Society for their expertise and guidance in assisting us through this process.

If you have any questions, please contact us at Murrieta Valley Historical Society, P.O. Box 1341, Murrieta, CA 92564.

Email: [murrietahistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:murrietahistoricalsociety@gmail.com) Phone: 951-397-4862.

Jeffery Harmon, MVHS president



Murrieta Valley Historical Society's executive board members.

Pictured above:

Jenny Mayoral  
Treasurer

Jeffery Harmon  
President

Annette Jennings  
Vice President

Carol Sierra  
Secretary

## RIDERS OF THE SILENT STEED

By Julie Gilbert

Prior to 1890, bicycling in America was recreation for the few, with the “high-wheeler” proving too challenging for most people. But with the coming of the “safety bicycle”, featuring equal-sized tires, the sport exploded during the 1890’s, becoming a genuine craze all over the country.

In Riverside, bicycling grew so popular that many roads were made dusty by the wheels. It also gave rise to social concerns, such as the complaints of some women about the riders’ scanty attire, which they charged looked like bathing suits. Men, on the other hand, noted the bold new bifurcated skirts sported by women of the Ladies Spinning Club, commenting with shock that before long women would be riding horses astride, as well as bicycles.

Raised eyebrows did nothing to dampen enthusiasm for the sport, however, and in the fall of 1891 bicycle shop owner Harry Hawes organized the Riverside Wheelmen. Consisting originally of ten “riders of the silent steed”, the club met at the YMCA. From there they ventured to such destinations as Lake Elsinore, Glen Ivy in Temescal Canyon, or the Eden Hot Springs Resort near San Jacinto.

Wanting a place of their own to hold competitive meets, the club leased land and built a half-mile track, dubbed Athletic Park. Here, beginning in 1892, they hosted the first of nine annual Admission Day bicycle meets for clubs throughout Southern California.

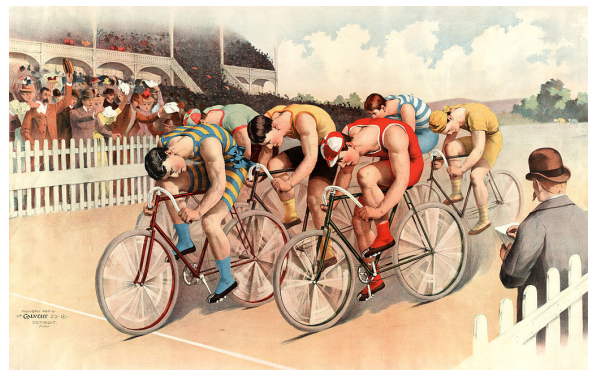
By 1895, the Wheelmen acquired seven acres and built a new Athletic Park with a third-mile oval

track considered state-of-the-art, along with a 30 by 50 foot grandstand. On September 9<sup>th</sup>, the new park was opened, with Wheelmen’s clubs coming from all the surrounding cities. According to the Riverside Press and Horticulturist: “...the stream of visitors increased, those from the greater distances coming on the trains and from the county towns... on their wheels. So great was the enthusiasm that...few of the riders stopped for meals or even to register at the hotels, but made directly for the park to take a spin on the new one-third mile track.”

Events include tandem triplet, mile and novice races, ending with a thrilling 25-mile event. According to the same Press account, riders wore “the gaudiest suits ever seen on the circuit,... bestarred and bespangled in the most startling manner.”

The new track served to increase interest in wheel riding, and the 1900 Meet was biggest of all, aided in part by new electric streetcars. But by 1901, all the major competitors were busy earning a living, out of training, and with no replacements emerging, the scheduled Meet was cancelled.

Early in 1902, the Wheelmen abandoned the track. With others given up in Pasadena, Los Angeles, Ontario, and other cities, the decade of the bicycle craze came to a close.



## How much do you know about our local history?

Answers:

1. You can find that location today, even if it is in a shopping center. The oak tree and other things that don't exist today were only noted to indicate about where the corners were at that time.

What matters in the legal description is the known starting point (that might be at X many feet south from a known township or section line), how many feet (or chains or rods) between the various points, and the bearings (directions) of the lines between those points as indicated by terms such as N 45° W (that today is expressed as heading or bearing of 315° that is north-northwest).

Here in Temecula a surveyor in 1872 noted that at 33 chains from the last known point, he crossed the Overland trail and that the northeast corner of the Wolf Store was South 1.5° East, 62 links from where he was. That is just under 41 feet almost due south. Therefore if the Wolf Store was no longer there, we would still know exactly where it was located. And today, we do know where the trail was located in that area.

2. A Gunter chain is 66 feet long and a link is 7.92 inches, but more commonly because there are 100 links in a chain, you see something like 10.4 chains (that is the same as 10 chains 4 links). So multiply that 10.4 by 66 to get the distance.

A rod is 16.5 feet and is not commonly used in the west.

Note that 4 rods equals a chain and 80 chains equal a mile.

For more information, contact Anne miller at:  
DMEAJM@earthlink.net

## *From The President*

There are many exciting things happening with the Temecula Valley Historical Society and in other local organizations that promote history.

We congratulate the newly formed Murrieta Valley Historical Society and their first president Jeffery Harmon. We look forward to hearing about their successes in identifying, marking and saving historic sites within their area of influence.

If you are on Facebook you will want to join our Historical Society group where we have up to the minute postings of activities, Temecula items that come up on eBay and lively discussions on history topics.

Dale Garcia posted our query about the man who constructed the Wolf Store model and within 24 hours we were supplied with the answer. The builder was Don Walther who owned the Flying W Ranch in Moreno Valley where he also had built a Western town facade. Several of his models are in the Moreno Valley museum.

Work continues at the Vail Headquarters and we are now looking forward to a July opening. It looks like there will be Tuesday morning farmers markets at the site.

We'll see if a venue will be available at the Vail headquarters for our annual dinner meeting.

Thanks to all who serve in so many ways as volunteers for the Historical Society.

*Rebecca Farnbach*

## Upcoming Events

**Sunday, May 1, 2016** - Class by Anne Miller from 1:30-2:30 on learning more about finding and interpreting historical documents. To be held at the History Center.

**Saturday, May 7, 2016** - The Riverside County Symposium will be at the Murrieta Hot Springs Conference Center and will include tours of the historic resort. For more information see [www.riversidecountyhistory.org](http://www.riversidecountyhistory.org)

**Saturday, June 4, 2016** - The Temecula Valley Museum is hosting the Western Cultural Days celebration in Sam Hicks Monument Park.

For our regular meetings:

**May 23** - Dale Garcia will give a virtual tour of his popular walking tours of Old Town Temecula.

**June 27**- Our Scholarship Students will be introduced and they will tell of their plans to enter history related fields of study. We will have an extended Meet & Greet time following their introductions.

**July 25** - We will have a joint program meeting with the Temecula Valley Museum in the air conditioned Conference Center at City Hall. Robert wells, author of "Voices from the Bottom of the South china sea" will give a presentation about the unknown story of the largest Chinese emigrant disaster of 1874.

Monthly Meetings are held at the Little Temecula History Center. The Red Barn next to Kohl's Department Store, 32085 Temecula Parkway.

Please join us for a "Meet & Greet" at 5:30 p.m. prior to the meeting on Monday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>. We would like to get to know you. The one hour program will begin at 6:00 p.m.

REFRESHMENTS will be served.

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

### Welcome NEW MEMBERS:

Rachelle, Martha & Ben Feiler

Paul & Elizabeth Henry

### Thank you RENEWING MEMBERS:

Myrna Bagge

Terry Bracci

Garth & Janice Bricker

Cheryl Cady

Tracy Frick

Sara Hostetler

Diane LaTulippe

Ken & Bonnie Reed

Dan Stephenson

Gene & Barbara Tobin

Don & Esther Trunnell

Peggy Webb