

# TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

June 2010

Volume 10 – Issue 6

*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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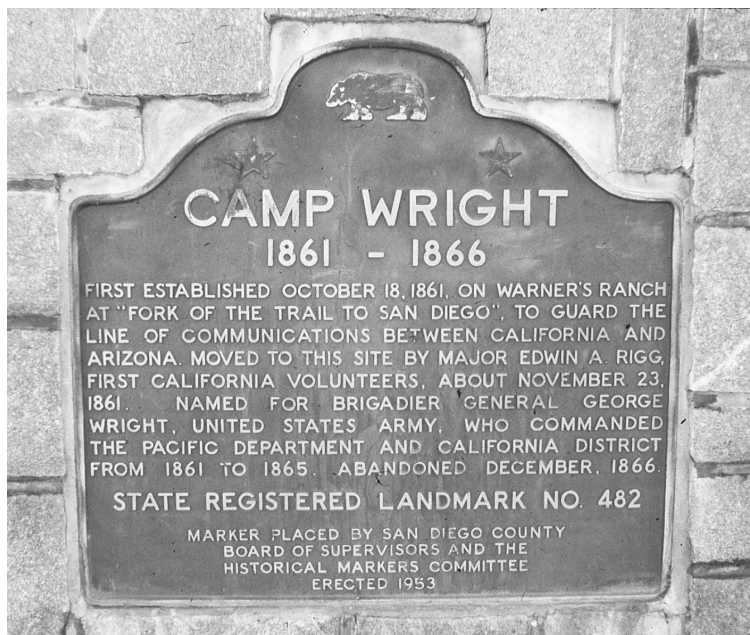
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#### **Events/Education**

Bonnie Martland

**Historian** – Kathi Price

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*State Historical Landmark near Oak Grove.*

### Rebs & Yankees in Temecula Area

## Camp Wright's Role During Civil War Told

**By Duane Preimsberger**

It's a little disconcerting to learn that Union soldiers searched for and ultimately located armed and dangerous Rebel agents not that far from our community! It all started, not in Southern California but in Sacramento, the Capitol of the Golden State. There, Assemblyman Daniel Showalter, from Mariposa County, insulted Assemblyman Piercy, who was a representative from San Bernardino; the insult had to do with the issue of slavery. Piercy became so angry that he challenged Showalter to an illegal duel with rifles at forty yards.

On a late spring afternoon, May 25, 1861, the two opponents met near the town of San Rafael. After arming themselves, they both fired their rifles and thankfully, both missed. Showalter demanded that another volley be fired and this time Piercy missed again but was struck in the head and killed by Showalter's bullet.

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## Calendar Of Events

**Saturday, June 12** – Flea Market in the Park to benefit Temecula Valley Museum. 8:30 to 3:00 p.m

**Monday, June 14** – Monthly Meeting at Little Temecula History Center, 6 to 8 p.m. Presentation by Adam Collings, author of "*California West of the West*".

**Sunday, July 11** – History Tour of San Juan Capistrano Starting at 11:00 in SJC. More details to come.

**Monday, July 12** – Monthly Meeting at Little Temecula History Center, 6 to 8 p.m. Presentation by Howard Holter, Ph.D, Cal State Dominguez Hills professor, speaking on original land grants in Temecula, and both Pio and Andreas Pico.

**Monday, August 9** – Monthly Meeting at Little Temecula History Center, 6 to 8 p.m. Charles West, member of the San Diego Model-T Club will present "*How the Model T Changed the Face of America*".

**Monday, October 11** – Monthly meeting at Little Temecula History Center, 6 to 8 p.m. Anne Miller will Present "*The Story of Maria Apis*".

**Monday, November 8** – Monthly meeting at Little Temecula History Center, 6 to 8 p.m. Thomas Long, Ph.D., History Professor at Cal State San Bernardino speaking on California Gold Rush.

This exchange closed the chapter on duels between elected officials in California.

Showalter immediately became a hunted man and fled from the Sacramento area. He decided to seek sanctuary in Southern California where he had friends who were, as he was, sympathetic to the Rebel cause. After some circuitous travel, he reached Los Angeles and joined the group who were planning on heading southeast in an effort to join up with the Confederate forces and fight against the Union.

During this same time period Union Army Brigadier General George Wright, who commanded all Yankee troops in California, became aware of an increasing number of Rebel sympathizers who were using the stagecoach routes into the South. Wright was a well respected, hard-nosed career soldier who had a rather interesting attitude toward any attempt to create problems for the Union in California. "The time has come when individual rights must give way and I shall not hesitate to crush any attempt at rebellion within this Department."

Wright decided to increase the Union presence and ordered that a force of soldiers under the command of Major Edwin Rigg position themselves to thwart the leakage of able bodied men into the Confederate ranks and to protect travelers using the stagecoach routes. On October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1861, Riggs found a site near Warner Springs and established "Camp Wright," named for his commanding general. As it turned out this site had significant weather problems, including but not limited to the campfires being extinguished due to the very windy conditions.

Rigg got a big "Hooray" from his troopers when, on November 23, he had them move to the Oak Grove Stage Station where the weather was better and the troops could enjoy hot meals once again without gales blowing out the cooking fires or cooling off their food!

A few days later, Major Riggs received intelligence information suggesting that an armed band of Confederate sympathizers led by Dan Showalter was on the way into the South.

Riggs's troopers searched unsuccessfully for the Rebels but all that they initially managed to capture were a few stray horses. Finally, on November 27, solid intelligence led to a pursuit through the Temecula area and further south. In the early morning hours of November 29<sup>th</sup> Showalter and his group were taken by surprise, surrendering without a fight at a place then known as the Minter Ranch, near Lake Henshaw!

A subsequent investigation by Major Riggs and his men soon discovered arms, supplies, and documents indicating that all 18 of the captured men including Showalter were Rebel sympathizers. This evidence outweighed the false oath of allegiance to the Union that the captured men had signed and as a result they were taken to Fort Yuma in custody. Surprisingly, once there and after six months of incarceration, the Rebs were able to convince their Yuma captors that they were all truth tellers and that the oath of allegiance that they had signed earlier was a very valid document. As a result, they were all released!

Showalter quickly made his way into the Lone Star State of Texas and was soon made a Rebel Lieutenant Colonel, in command of a regiment. Several years later, Showalter's life began to change for the worse. Following combat around Brownsville,

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## President's Message

If you haven't viewed the new Temecula Valley Historical Society web page at [temeculahistoricalsociety.org](http://temeculahistoricalsociety.org) constructed by our new Webmaster Dale Garcia, you are missing a lot. Dale has converted the previous website into an easy to search and use set of pages for the Society. We now receive a weekly report showing the number of visits we've had to the website, and it is averaging over fifty a week. It is now possible to send an e-mail to the Society for information. If you haven't viewed it yet, please do so. You will find it very interesting and informative.

Our current historical project, placing Historical Route 395 signs through Temecula, is progressing Very well. We currently have commitments for about 80% of the needed funds.

Please join us for our next Meeting at the Little Temecula History Center on Temecula Parkway (next to Kohl's) on June 14<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m.

*Jimmy Moore*

### Recent Membership Renewals

Gene & Judy Knott  
William & Barbara Dosta  
Vernette (Knott) Mackley  
Gene & Barbara Tobin  
Walt & Jean Dixon  
Anne Miller & David Elliot  
Mission Oaks Bank

### Welcome, New Member

Gera Jane Thole

## Rebs & Yanks in Temecula (Continued from Page 2)

Texas, Union troops were defeated by Showalter and other Reb officers under the command of General John Salmon Ford. In June of 1864, General Ford fell ill and Showalter, his second-in-command, was so drunk he was unable to take over for the General. On September 6<sup>th</sup>, Showalter was again so drunk he was unable to command his regiment under enemy fire and the men became so disorganized that an officer from another unit took over and drew order out of chaos. As a result, Showalter was relieved of his command.

Following the conclusion of the Civil War, Showalter moved to Mazatlan, Mexico where he ran a hotel. One day, he got into a knock down, drag out, donnybrook in the hotel's bar and managed to contract lockjaw, dying from it a few months later.

Since his demise, Temecula and a good part of the adjoining area has been mostly free from pro Rebel influences!

### ----- In Memorium -----

## Gene Knott Memorial Service Fills Murrieta Methodist Church

A celebration of life and memorial service for Eugene (Gene) Knott filled the Murrieta United Methodist Church on Saturday, May 15. Gene was a member of a Southwest County pioneer family who passed away at his Murrieta home on May 1, after a valiant fight with pancreatic cancer. Gene was born in 1942 and raised in Temecula, but had lived in Murrieta for 35 years.

Gene Knott was the grandson of Al and Freda (daughter of J. Charles Rail) Knott who had an early blacksmith shop in Temecula. With the progression of automobiles they later added an auto garage and gas station that Al co-operated with his son Vernon Knott.

The Joseph Charles Rail's settled in Murrieta upon their migration to the West from Iowa. Offspring of that pioneer family were: Ross, Ira, Cecil, Freda, Verna (Freeman) and Floyd Rail. Gene's mom, Annie, was born to Patrick Speziali, an immigrant from Gresso, Switzerland and Julia of Pine Ridge, South Dakota. The combination of the Swiss and Sioux Indian gave the personality traits that Eugene was so blessed to have.

Gene Knott worked for almost three decades for the Eastern Municipal Water District. He was also a popular speaker on local history, sharing stories about his family and the early days of Temecula. Gene had a gentle and calm demeanor which will be missed. The Temecula Valley Historical Society was blessed and honored to have had Gene on its Board of Directors for a number of years.

## TVHS Activities Update

During the month of May society members were busy in multiple ways within the community. Early in the month saw members staffing a booth in support of the annual Children's Matsuri event in Old Town.

Also TVHS in partnership with the Temecula Valley Museum and the Vail Ranch Restoration Association (VaARRA) conducted the judging and public display of the annual 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade History Contest. Kudos to Duane Preimsberger for his judging assistance. A total of 91 individual entries from multiple schools were entered this year. Public Display of the top 30+ entries was held on Sunday, May 23 at the History Center.



*Temecula Valley Historical Society*  
*P.O. Box 157*  
*Temecula, CA 92593*



## Check Out Updated TVHS Website

If you haven't yet done so, check out our new web site at [www.temeculahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.temeculahistoricalsociety.org)

### Newsletter Now Available On-line

This newsletter is now available each month to either read on-line or print from the societies web page.

On the home page click on "newsletter" button, then select the months newsletter of interest.

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*"In my many years I have come to a conclusion that one useless man is a shame, two is a law firm and three or more is a Congress."*  
 -- John Adams

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## \*\*\*\*\* Mark Your Calendars \*\*\*\*\*

# TVHS Tour Of Historic San Juan Capistrano

TVHS has scheduled a walking tour of the historic area of San Juan Capistrano for Sunday, July 11. The tour will begin at 11 a.m. at the SJC Historical Society building (the old O'Neil home), and will cover about 3-4 blocks downtown. The tour will last about 1 1/2 hour and will end at the Blas-Aguilar Adobe which houses a small museum. After that, everyone will be on their own for more sight-seeing or lunch, etc. There are several restaurants in the downtown area and the Mission is open until 5 pm with an admission price of \$9 for adults and \$8 for seniors (includes an audio tour). It is suggested that people plan to arrive a bit early so they can visit the Historical Society headquarters in the O'Neil Museum.

The SJC Historical Society asks for a donation of \$2.00 per person and other places may have a similar expectation. The tour can accommodate 45 people, so members and others need to make their plans and firm up "reservations" by notifying Lisa Woodward by the end of June or until we are full with 45 confirmed participants. Contact Lisa Woodward at [LLWoodward@verizon.net](mailto:LLWoodward@verizon.net) or through her cell phone 951-514-7406.

There is a parking structure right across the railroad tracks from the Historical Society building (the O'Neil Museum) and the Los Rios Historic District (and downtown). A map will be part of the July TVHS Newsletter. Those needing wheel chairs will need to make their own arrangements. For more information about San Juan Capistrano Historical Society and a map of the town please visit their website <http://sjchistoricalssociety.com>.