

# TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## NEWSLETTER

November 2015  
Volume 15 Issue 11

*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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## TRAVELING TO TEMECULA

By Duane Preimsberger

Not long ago, I was sitting behind the wheel of my car caught in Temecula's Five P.M. traffic as I approached the I-15 Freeway on eastbound Rancho California at Diaz Road. As I grumbled at the delay I happened to glance at the depiction of an 1860's stagecoach on the nearby Wells Fargo Bank building. While looking at the galloping horses pulling the swaying coach I began to think about and compare 19<sup>th</sup> Century land travel to Temecula with today's.

In the mid- 1800's those heading to California on the Southern Emigrant Trail would have arrived in Temecula months after leaving the East. Hollywood's portrayals of Conestoga Wagons, pulled by oxen, making their way slowly across the plains and through mountain passes while heading west. These settlers battles with rugged terrain, heat, drought, winds, snow, buffalo stampedes and hostile Indians aren't far from the truth. The trip was not only arduous it was dangerous, intimidating and sometimes deadly.

An even more difficult journey lay before those who headed West on foot often pulling handcarts loaded with necessary items sometimes including small children. Husbands and wives, shoulder to shoulder, were seen struggling and straining in the traces trying to keep the cart wheels turning over the trails of sand, rocks, prairie and the mountains.

The rutted path marked by thousands of settlers heading into the unknown is still visible near Temecula today in many areas as yet untouched by development. On occasion, you can locate remnants of the bleached bones of oxen and livestock that died of injury or thirst and see the wooden headstones that mark the last resting-place of some of the early sojourners.

Once the early settlers arrived here in Temecula they found that communications between the Nation's West and East were difficult at best, often taking months.. In 1856 the U.S. Post Office began seeking a way to expedite the delivery of mail, messages and passengers between St. Louis, Missouri and San Francisco, California and the places in-between, including our valley. In 1857, 56-year old John Butterfield signed a \$600,000 per year contract to provide twice a week stagecoach service along the route between the two

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cities. The undertaking would operate the longest stage line in the world, over 2800 miles, with two hundred stage stops. It would employ hundreds of men, drive over 250 coaches and wagons and utilize 1800 horses and mules.

If successful, it would reduce time spent in travel and in sending and receiving mail tremendously.

The contract called for the delivery of mail between the two cities within 25 days. Critics flocked to predict failure claiming that the stage could never accomplish the mission; the route and resources were too unwieldy and spread out and the concept was doomed to fail. John Butterfield had a much different view and on September 16, 1858 the first stage carrying United States Mail left Tipton, Missouri heading west.

Onboard for the first trip was a twenty-three year old correspondent for the New York Herald, Waterman L.Ormsby. He wrote a fascinating story about his journey from the perspective of the only through passenger on the first westbound stage. The stagecoach ran twenty-four hours a day with brief stops at way stations where drivers and teams were changed and the passengers were sometimes fed. Some of Ormsby's descriptions of the journey are both inciseful and amusing.

He writes of roads so rough that as the stage bounced over the route he sometimes lost his seat and was occasionally thrown upward until his head struck the roof. Days without rest gradually gave way to the ability to sleep during anything bumpy encountered on the road.

Food at the stage stops was sometimes inedible and Ormsby describes a couple of experiences that leaves no doubt about the quality along the way. "Our meal was cooked by an old woman who if cleanliness is next to godliness she has little chance at going to heaven... one memorable meal was jerked beef cooked over smoldering buffalo chips accompanied by raw onions, wormy crackers and bacon. Some of the stews we were served were called slumgullion... It wasn't exactly like eating at the Waldorf."

His description of the approach to Temecula is one of the more pleasant paragraphs. "We approached the Warner Ranch, a comfortable house in a beautiful meadow; it looks more like civilization than anything seen for days. There are cattle grazing in a beautiful

country. The nearby stations of Aguanga and Temecula are all of convenient distances with excellent accommodations."

Ormsby's trip took 23 days and 23 hours and he wrote upon completion that he found it so fascinating that he'd volunteer to do it again. However, he left San Francisco and returned to New York by sailing ship. The first journey proved that John Butterfield was a man to be reckoned with; his stage operations were a success and continued to deliver mail and passengers until the Civil War stifled using the route through the Confederate States in 1861. The closing of the stage route somewhat isolated Temecula for a few years.

However, in this era, the transcontinental railroad was completed at Promontory Point, Utah in May of 1869. Four years later railroad travel from New York City to San Francisco was completed in as little as 83 hours and 39 minutes. Soon the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads began to tie together a network of the smaller railroads that dotted the California landscape, building new rail lines in the gaps and developing a viable rail system that tied Northern and Southern California together. By the turn of the century rail travel through most of California was a reality. Temecula's first train station in 1882 resulted from an effort by the California Southern Railroad linking San Diego to Colton where the track then joined the Southern Pacific line north to San Francisco and across the Nation.

This first effort identified the Temecula Valley with its own train depot as a viable and known area within the State. Unfortunately, the engineers who designed the route between Temecula and Fallbrook selected a route near the bottom of Temecula Canyon adjacent to the Santa Margarita River. Heavy rains washed out the roadbed on at least two occasions resulting in limited rail service to the area. From 1891 the linkage with Fallbrook had to be done by carriage, wagon, or on horseback.

In 1915 the first two lane highway through Temecula was constructed and wheezing, coughing and backfiring horseless carriages began to show up with frequency along what is now Jefferson Avenue and Front Street. By 1935, the dusty roads and dirt trails that led to our town were beginning to disappear as a system of paved highways began to criss-cross the State and the name Temecula began showing up on the Automobile Club maps as a destination with limited services for motorists. On July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1949 the 500 residents of the Village of Temecula

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awoke to find that the main road had been re-routed away from what is now Old Town to route 395. That route ultimately became the Avocado Freeway, Interstate Highway 15; completed in stages ending in 1985.

Agriculture, Water and Real Estate drove the expansion of the area and along with it came development, business, industry, homes, schools, government and traffic. In 1985 Temecula installed its first traffic light to slow down some of the 10,000+ residents of the area. By 1989 the area had at least three traffic lights and on December 1, 1989 the area, with a population of 27,000 people, became an incorporated City.

Today, traveling to Temecula is a common occurrence as the Wineries, Mall, Businesses, Resorts and Old Town attracts thousands and thousands of visitors. Our attractive setting, good government and climate have caused thousands more to join our early residents in relocating to Temecula, a place to live and enjoy.

Sometimes however, local travel can be a little daunting because of the increase in population, shoppers and visitors. Although, when all things are considered we are still able to move about with far less difficulties than those early travelers who passed this way. The challenges of our journeys today pale in comparison with those confronted by 19<sup>th</sup> Century travelers, we don't starve, freeze, bake or suffer at the hands of hostile Indians. Even with some congestion our ability to commute is an easy task as we look back into history.

As the traffic lights changed several times and I was able to cross the freeway and head to the Mall, I realized that the future of our Community is bold and bright as more and more folks travel to Temecula.

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### **Items needed for Raffle Baskets at Annual Dinner**

If any Society members have items that they would like to donate for the raffle baskets at the Annual Dinner, please contact Lisa Woodward at [llwoodward@verizon.net](mailto:llwoodward@verizon.net) or call Lisa at (951) 514-7406. Items such as decorative items, jewelry, artwork, collectibles, gift certificates, free golf tickets, show tickets, etc. would be much appreciated.

## *TVHS Annual Dinner Meeting*

The Temecula Valley Historical Society's Annual Dinner will be held on Friday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, at 5:00 pm at the Conference Center Room at Temecula City Hall.

Dinner Reservations and payment must be received by November 13<sup>th</sup>.

Included with this Newsletter is an Annual Dinner Reservation form. Please print it out, complete the requested information, include your check made payable to TVHS and mail it to :

Temecula Valley Historical Society  
P. O. Box 157,  
Temecula CA. 92593-0157.

### **How Much do you know about our local history?**

1. There is a small round plaque on the old bank building in Old Town Temecula on the NW corner of Front and Main Streets. The plaque is below the street number 28645 about table height and faces Front Street. What is this plaque?
2. In the 1850-60s, some people filed pre-emption claims to obtain 160 acres of land on which they were living, but did not own. One author noted that Cyrus Kimble was probably murdered in 1865 because he filed a pre-emption claim on land granted to someone else. The author suggested that by doing this, Kimble had signed "his own death warrant." In 1869, Louis Wolf filed a pre-emption claim for 160 acres on part of the Little Temecula Rancho he purchased in 1867. Why did Wolf do this if he already owned the land?

Answers on page 4

## Upcoming Events

### Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 7 p.m.

A special event at the Temecula City Hall community Room as part of the November Pu'éska Mountain Day celebration. All TVHS members are encouraged to attend this special presentation by Pechanga.

### Saturday, November 14<sup>th</sup> – 10 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Pu'éska Mountain Day Event at City Hall Town Square Park. This annual holiday celebration will have cultural exhibits, a mobile museum, and family friendly activities.

### Monday, November 16<sup>th</sup>— 5:30 p.m.

Both the 2015 Board Members and the 2016 Board Members will meet on Monday, November 16th, at 5:30 PM, at the Little Temecula History Center. After the Board Meeting, we will put raffle baskets together for the Annual Dinner. Please bring any donated items that you wish to include in the baskets.

**Friday, November 20<sup>th</sup> – 5:00 - 9:00 p.m.** Annual Dinner Meeting and program of the Temecula Valley Historical Society. A great dinner with live music, always fun silent auction items, presentation and installation of TVHS Board of Directors for 2016, and an opportunity to meet the latest Notable Women of Temecula.

**Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016—5:30 p.m.** TVHS General Meeting. Bonnie Martland will give a presentation on the Civil War. Social : 5:30 - 6:00 p.m. Program starts at 6:00 p.m.

Monthly Meetings 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" time at 5:30 p.m. prior to the meeting on Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup>. We would like to get to know you. REFRESHMENTS will be served!

### Reminder: No General Meeting in November or December

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Welcome to our new 2016 Board Members

**Shari Crall, Suzanne Dechert, Bob Kent,  
Jimmy Moore, & Carol Strode**

## SWEET HOLIDAY SPICE MAY BE CANCER'S BITTER ENEMY

Cinnamon is one of the most ancient spices in human history, and if it's not the most popular, it soon may be. Researchers have found that the aromatic spice appears to have unique cancer-stunting properties. City of Hope's Department of Molecular Medicine showed that extracts of the spice may be able to block the growth of blood vessels in tumors. Here's a recipe for your holiday table:

### Roasted Pumpkin with Cinnamon

#### Ingredients:

- 1 small pumpkin
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Sea salt
- Ground clove to taste
- Ground cinnamon to taste
- Ground nutmeg to taste
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar

**Directions:** Heat oven to 400F. Using a large metal spoon scoop out the seeds and insides of the pumpkin. Use a sharp chef's knife to cut pumpkin into slices, about 1 inch thick. Place pumpkin slices on baking sheet. Drizzle with olive oil and rub olive oil onto both sides of pumpkin. Season with salt, spices and brown sugar. Roast for 20– 25 minutes, depending on thickness of slices.

Source: City of Hope [www.cityofhope.org](http://www.cityofhope.org)

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

### Answers:

1. This plaque is one of many benchmarks where elevations were marked and recorded. The original information often included names of nearby landmarks. A benchmark by Vail Lake helped to confirm that the Southern Emigrant Trail was not along today's Highway 79 in that area.

2. When Wolf purchased the Little Temecula Rancho in 1867, the Land Commission had not yet confirmed the original 1840s land grant to Pablo Apis. Without confirmation of the Apis grant, all the land transactions over the years, starting with Apis and ending with Wolf, would have been invalid. The rancho land would have reverted to the U.S. Government, but at least Wolf would have had a 160-acre homestead that included his store. The Apis grant was confirmed in 1873, making Wolf's ownership of the rancho secure. With regard to Kimble, his pre-emption claim was not the reason he was murdered.

For additional information, contact Anne Miller at [DMEAJM@earthlink.net](mailto:DMEAJM@earthlink.net)