

TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

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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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The Temecula Grade on Rainbow Canyon Road south of Temecula Creek Inn. The Inland Highway towards San Diego and all points south. Photo taken in 2011 by Jeffery Harmon who generously shared it to be part of this article.

Challenges of the time . . .

Paving Temecula Grade For the Inland Highway

By Jeffery Harmon

Rainbow Canyon Road begins in Temecula at Pechanga Parkway and winds its way up the Temecula Grade towards the San Diego County line and the unincorporated community of Rainbow. This route was constructed over a hundred years ago as part of Riverside County's first highway, the Inland Highway.

The construction of the Inland Highway in Riverside County began with the passage of a \$1,125,000 Good Roads bond issue that passed in December 1913. The bond provided the county the means to not only construct the Inland Highway, but also to construct feeder roads as well. It was a planned 220-mile county highway system that was organized into twenty-two road projects and would be constructed within a two year period. The Inland Highway was not a single project, but multiple segmented projects that connected one town to the next. The project did not include paving the highway through incorporated cities such as Riverside, Perris, and Elsinore.

The original wagon road that ascended the Temecula Grade was originally located on the east side of the pass. It began near the present day intersection of Pechanga Parkway and Loma Linda Road. The road then crossed the

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Paving the Inland Highway . . .

Pechanga Creek and went past Judge John Magee's second general store before it climbed the grade to the summit. The grade was referred to as Magee's Grade, and later as the Rainbow Grade.

When the California Southern Railroad was planning its route, it was believed that the railroad tracks would come over the Temecula Grade. However, railroad officials refused to heed the advice of their surveyors and the local townspeople and opted to have the route run through the Santa Margarita Canyon towards present day Oceanside. Flood waters washed out the tracks in the canyon in 1891, and Temecula became the end of the line.

Before the highway could be built on the Temecula Grade, a proposed route had to be mapped. J. P. Flynn and his survey crew mapped the proposed highway route up the Temecula Grade in May 1914. A new route had to be located because the original wagon road was too steep for the automobiles of the day.

The early cars did not have fuel pumps. Gravity was used to deliver gas from the front of the gas tank to the carburetor. When the car travelled up a steep incline, the gas would flow away from the opening causing the car to run dry. To solve the problem, drivers would have to drive their cars in reverse to cross the steep grade. The new highway road was designed to follow the contours of the west foothills with a series of curves that reduced the incline of the grade.

Once the survey crew chose a route, the county officials had to secure the right-of-way from the property owners. The Vail family owned most of the Temecula Grade and at the summit James W. Knight operated a ranch. It was reported that the Temecula Grade was *"held up pending the securing of deeds for rights of way through the Knight tract and the Empire Cattle Company tract."* (March 20, 1915, RIE)

Once the route was secured, J. S. Hilend of Anaheim was awarded the contract to grade the road. He hired about 75 men and had 30 mules to begin the heavy grading project in April 1915. The cost of the project was \$18,136. The contract was for grading the road, but not for the laying of concrete.

"The grade work is sublet to Mexicans, more than half a hundred of whom are busy as ants blasting along the steep sides of the rock-ribbed canyon, rolling immense boulders down the mountainside or shoveling along the cliff where the formation is softer." (June 18, 1915, Elsinore Leader Press)

Once the road was completed it would be *"opening up a three mile stretch from a point about 1 ¼ miles south-east of Temecula to within three-quarters of a mile of the San Diego county line."* (May 7, 1915, RDP)

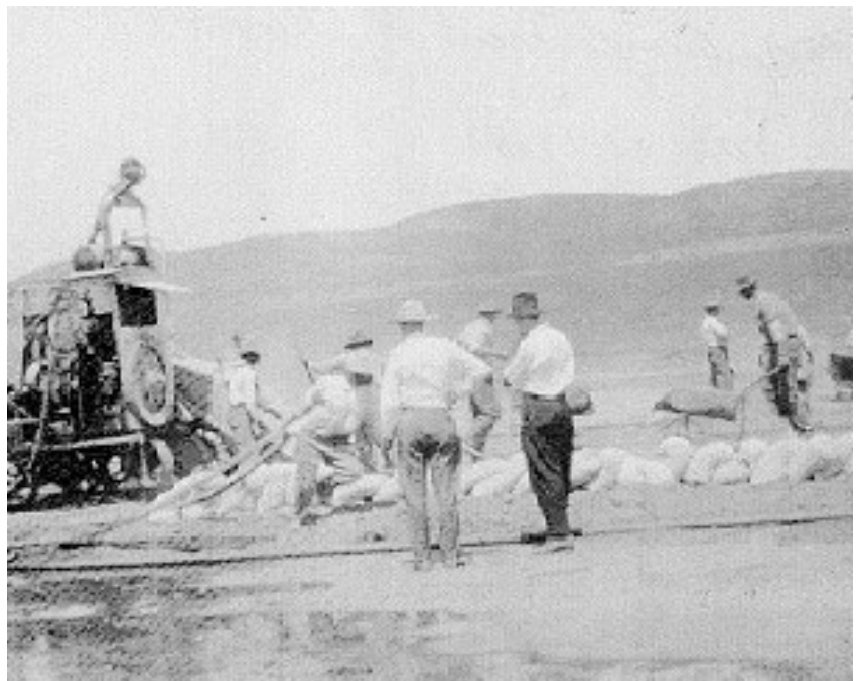
On May 6, 1915, Thomas Kolb attempted to remove a stone from the path of the new road. He planted an explosive under the rock, but the material prematurely exploded and tore Kolb's leg off. Two Indians from the Pala Reservation discovered Kolb, who was in critical condition. One Indian ran to the reservation to get a physician, and the other stayed with Kolb. When the physician arrived, Kolb was dead. Thomas Kolb was laid to rest in the Kolb Family Cemetery, which was located on a bluff above the new county highway.

Meanwhile, the grading continued on the new highway through August and was completed by September. It would take a year for the grading to settle before concrete could be laid on the new road.

J. S. Hilend was then awarded a contract for the eastern desert highway. In November, he was on a hunting trip with a party of friends near Blythe. A rifle accidentally discharged when he was entering the automobile and the blast hit his arm, shattering his elbow. His friends raced him to the San Bernardino hospital and it was believed his arm was amputated.

A year later the Hyde Construction Company was awarded the contract to pave the three mile Temecula Grade with concrete. However, the road construction project was delayed until May 1916, because a devastating winter storm struck Southern California in January.

The winter storm caused at least fifteen breaks in the new Inland highway between Elsinore and Temecula. Fifteen feet was washed out near E. E. Barnett's place. The Barnett home was located on the north bank of the Santa Gertrudis Creek. A bridge was constructed at the creek



This 1915 photo captures Connors Construction Co. paving Front Street in Temecula as part of the Inland Highway improvement project.

— Photo courtesy Gene Knott Collection

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Paving the Inland Highway . . .

crossing and was sometimes referred to as the Barnett Bridge.

Chief Engineer George Pearson reported that two wood bridges were washed out between Murrieta and Temecula. He stated that these bridges should be reconstructed in concrete. At the foot of the Temecula Grade, the Pechanga Creek overflowed the highway. The water stood at six feet and stopped all traffic up the Grade.

In Elsinore, the bridge over the San Jacinto River was washed out. The railroad was also washed out in Railroad Canyon between Elsinore and Perris. To the north in the Temescal Canyon, the Lee Lake Dam washed out and flooded farms to the north as waters raced towards Corona and the Santa Ana River.

At the Riverside Chamber of Commerce meeting, a disaster relief bond was proposed to replace washed out bridges and highways. By April, a proposed budget of \$713,425 was needed to repair the storm damage in the county.

A new concrete bridge over the Temecula Creek cost \$16,000. A new concrete bridge for the Barnett Bridge crossing the Santa Gertrudis Creek cost \$5,600. In Elsinore, road repairs and a new bridge over the San Jacinto River cost \$137,800. These were a few of the repairs that needed to be made along the Inland Highway following the storm.

By the end of 1916, the Temecula Grade was paved. Riverside County now had a paved highway from San Bernardino County to San Diego County. The Inland Highway was maintained by the county until 1931.

California Governor James Rolph signed legislation that designated the Temecula Grade a part of State Highway 71 in August 1931. Three years later Highway 395 replaced Highway 71 in October 1934. Highway 395 ran the Temecula Grade from 1934 until 1948. Following World War II, Highway 395 was realigned between Escondido and Temecula. The realignment bypassed the original highway on the west where the present day Interstate 15 freeway is located.

Today, Rainbow Canyon Road serves as a "backdoor" for commuters trying to escape the Interstate 15 traffic jam in Temecula. The road is also a scenic drive with its tight turns and ancient oak trees that shades the road. This one hundred year old highway should be preserved for future generations to discover and to experience.

Volunteers Needed for Student Tours

There are six student tours for third-grade classes scheduled on weekdays from 9:30 - 12 during May. Would you be willing to be a presenter at one of the stations at Vail HQ and the History Center? If so, please contact Rebecca Farnbach at 951-775-6057 or RebFrbach@aol.com to volunteer.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday, May 4th — 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. a Charity Craft Fair at the Vail Headquarters.

Sunday, May 5th — 2:30 p.m. at the Little Temecula History Center, Michele Elling will portray Edna Swanguen, the owner of Hall's Cafe and also the local telephone operator in Temecula. The program is free and open to the public.

Sunday, May 5th — 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Vendor Fair at the Vail Headquarters.

Wednesday, May 8th — Docent led tour of Old Town San Diego and 10 of their museums. Meet at Red Barn at 8:45 a.m. to depart at 9 a.m. to car pool. Tour in San Diego begins at 10:30. After tour, there are plenty of food and restaurant choices in the area.

Sunday, May 19th — 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. "Meet the Authors" at the Little Temecula History Center. This free program is being offered by Anne Miller and Rebecca Farnbach for people who are interested in writing and getting published. Each will discuss their own writing and publishing experiences, as well as have copies of their works for purchase.

* Note see below *

**TVHS May monthly meeting is
3rd Monday this month
Will start at 5:45 to meet our 2019
scholarship recipients.**

Monday, May 20th — 5:45 p.m. Regular monthly program of the Temecula Valley Historical Society, to be held at the Little Temecula History Center (red barn), join us for "Meet & Greet" with refreshments at 5:30 p.m. before a wonderful program by Steve Freer about *Native Rock Art*.

Monday, May 27th — Memorial Day

Saturday, June 1st — 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Civil War Conference at Temecula Conference Center. "*The American Civil War - 1864: Fighting to Survive*" Six knowledgeable and distinguished speakers plus Displays. Lunch included with registration. See more Registration information on Page 5 of this issue.

Sunday, June 2nd — at 2:30 p.m. Gerry Nicholas will Portray O.T. Hackett at the Little Temecula History Center. Hackett was the stagecoach driver who Delivered mail to Temecula.

Notable Men & Women of Temecula Activities & Presentations



Michele Elling as Edna Swanguen

Edna Swanguen

Edna Swanguen was Temecula's switchboard operator for 43 years. She took over the job from her mother, Lizzy Hall, in 1918. Edna and her husband, Carl, also helped Lizzy run Hall's Café, which was the first public eating establishment in town. In 1938, Lizzy moved to Los Angeles and left the café to Edna and Carl. They kept the café open until 1954. Edna operated the switchboard until 1961, at which time the General Telephone Company finally installed the technology for Temecula residents and businesses to use dial telephones.

Saturday, May 11th, Gerry Nicholas will portray the stagecoach driver, O.T. Hackett, for a private organization at the Four Seasons Lodge in Murrieta.

Wednesday, May 22nd, Mindy Johnson will present Annie Mendenhall Bergman for the Senior Golden Years Group at the Mary Philips Senior Center in Old Town Temecula at 1:00 p.m. It is open to the public.

— Membership News —

Thank you for renewing your membership:

*Sarah Kay Bierle
Terry Bracci
Garth & Janice Bricker
Martin Dinsenbacher
Dick & Charolette Fox
Jerry & Darlene Gilbert
Sara Hostetler
Diane LaTulippe
Barbara Mina
Sally Myers
Virginia Niedrauer
Gerry & Andrea Nicholas
Lloyd & Evelyn Love Norris
Rick & Vicky Reiss
Scott & Lynne Sanders
Dana Thoman
Karl Weiler
Lisa Woodward*

County Historic Commissioner Opening Available

An opening for a seat as a representative of the area is available. Parties that are interested should apply through the office of Chuck Washington our district's member of the Riverside County Board of Supervisors.



Don't miss this all-day event on Saturday, June 1, 2019, when six historians and four historical groups join Gazette665 to present an all-day celebration and commemoration of an important year in American History.

The American Civil War - 1864: Fighting To Survive

You'll learn about battles and campaigns, civilians' efforts on the homefront, the conflict of loyalty and religion, and military medical care. This all-day event includes lunch, several historical displays, question and answer time with researchers, and book shopping opportunities. Speakers come from across the country and local history will also be highlighted through a partnership with Temecula Valley Historical Society.

WHEN: Saturday, June 1, 2019 - 8:30am 'til 5:00pm, catered lunch is included

WHERE: The Temecula Conference Center, Temecula, California

REGISTRATION:

\$40.00 Early Bird Registration, catered lunch included (available 'til April 15)

\$50.00 Regular Registration, catered lunch included

HOW TO ATTEND: We have printable forms or safely secure on-line registration. Visit www.Gazette665.com for more details and registration.

Speakers:

David T. Dixon - Religious Beliefs & Civil War Loyalties

Rex Kern – Building U.S. National Cemeteries

Dr. Chris Mackowski – The Overland Campaign

Professor Michael K. Shaffer – The Atlanta Campaign

Heather St. Clair – U.S. Sanitary Commission Fundraiser Fairs in 1864

Sarah Kay Bierle - Medical Care in the 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaigns