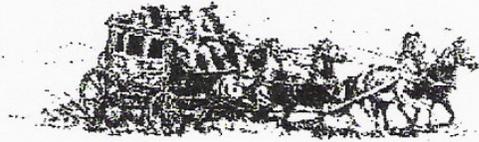


TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

February 2014

Volume 14 – Issue 2

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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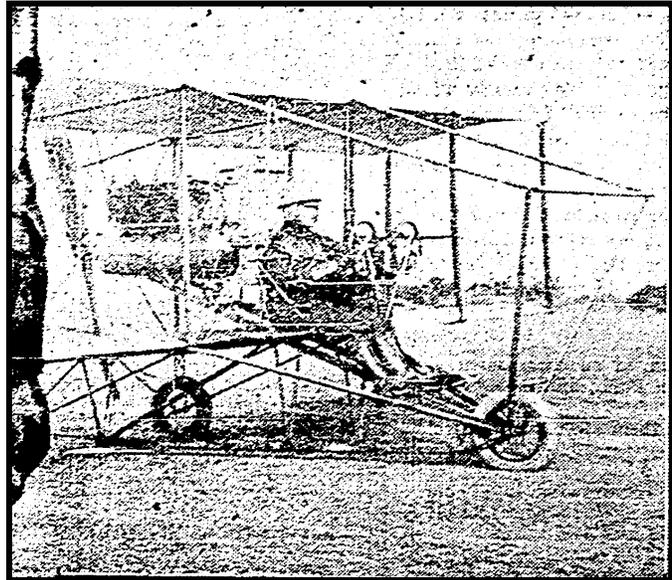
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Lieutenant Walter R. Taliaferro in a Curtiss Scout bi-plane
Source: January 21, 1914 San Diego Union

A Plane Lands in Elsinore

By Jeffery G. Harmon

As the Curtiss scout biplane flew out of Temescal Canyon, Second Lieutenant Walter R. Taliaferro spied the deep blue waters of Lake Elsinore. With his engine gasping for the last drops of fuel, the army pilot scanned the area for a safe place to land his machine. The town residents, hearing the whining engine, came out of their houses, businesses, and schools to watch the plane glide towards the lakeshore. Finally, the landing gear touched the earth, and the pilot sighed with relief as his cross-country journey had ended.

Walter Taliaferro was an army pilot from the First Aero Squadron located at North Island, San Diego, California. On January 20, 1914, Taliaferro's mission was to break aviation's cross-country record by flying continuously from San Diego to Pasadena and back. He left the military camp at 7:46 a.m. and reached a cruising altitude of 7800 feet.

With no communication or navigation systems except a compass, Taliaferro followed the California coastline, and then the railroad tracks to Pasadena. Once he flew over Pasadena, he headed east towards Corona. He kept the Santa Ana Mountains on his right as he flew over Corona and headed south towards San Diego.

(Continued on Page 2)

Calendar Of Events

Monday, February 24 – 6 p.m.

Carl Love will speak about changes in the Temecula Valley over the past twenty-five years. Speaking as a writer, a columnist for the Press Enterprise, a teacher, husband and dad, he will give his observations of the rural communities of Temecula and Murrieta exploding with growth, interwoven with human stories of triumph and tragedy. Autographed copies of his book "From Two Lanes To The Fast Lane" will be available for purchase for \$16 following his presentation.

Temecula Valley Museum Exhibition

The Many Faces of George Washington

January 11 ~ February 16

Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in California

February 22 ~ April 6

Saturday, February 15 – 10:30 a.m. ~ 12:00 p.m.

Temecula Valley Museum
Steve Clugston as
George Washington

Thursday, February 27 -7 p.m.

Temecula Valley Museum
Gallery Talk
Black History Month Event
MS. E.P. McKnight presentation
Fee: \$5

Thank you for Renewing Your Membership

Walt Dixon
Sara Hostetler
Ken & Mary Lavezzari

Elsinore (Continued from Page 1)

If not for a fuel leak in a gas tank, Taliaferro would have accomplished his mission. At 11:41 a.m. he was forced to land on the Superior Land & Water Co.'s property. W. S. Derkin, a company employee, greeted the army aviator and offered to drive him into town.

Once in Elsinore, Taliaferro sent a telegram to his commanding officer to make his report. He stated that after repairs were completed, he would continue his flight. For unknown reasons, the telegram did not reach North Island until 4:00 p.m.

It took four hours for a local mechanic to repair the plane. Once it was refueled, Taliaferro left Elsinore at 3:30 p.m. He continued to follow the mountain range south towards Temecula. The afternoon winds blowing out of the Santa Margarita Canyon may have caused the pilot to change course and fly southeast, following the Temecula River.

The plane flew over the Vail Ranch headquarters and out towards Aguanga and Warner Springs. When Taliaferro reached the headwaters of the San Luis Rey River in the Warner Valley, the sun was slowly setting. He searched the southern terrain and realized that he would be flying over mountainous country with little to no safe landing areas.

Reversing course, Taliaferro raced the setting sun back to Elsinore. Once again he followed the Temecula River, passed the Vail Ranch and then northward to the lake. At 5:00 p.m. his commanding officer called the Elsinore sheriff and inquired about his missing aviator. At the same moment, Taliaferro strolled into the sheriff's office and notified his commander of his failed attempt. He then got a room at a local hotel and planned to resume his cross-country trip the next day.

Though it appeared at first that his mission had failed, Taliaferro had broke the army and American record for a single day's flight. In 3 hours and 45 minutes, he had flown 220 miles at an average speed of 60 miles per hour.

On January 22, 1914, at 7:30 a.m. Taliaferro's plane lifted off and headed north to Corona. While flying over Prado, just west of Corona, the plane began having engine problems. He glided his plane towards a farmer's field. When his plane landed, a wing scraped a barbed wire fence. With more repairs needed, Taliaferro contacted his commander. Two army mechanics were dispatched to disassemble the plane in order to have it shipped by rail back to San Diego. The cross-country mission had ended.

Walter Taliaferro continued performing military flying exercises at North Island. He married Leicester Sehon on April 29, 1915 and they spent their honeymoon in Riverside at the Glenwood Mission Inn. Afterwards, Taliaferro returned to the skies, ready to meet the next challenges.

On September 17, 1915, Taliaferro broke the sustained flight record when he flew for 9 hours and 48 minutes over San Diego Bay. His plane lifted off the airfield at 5:18 a.m. and reached a cruising altitude of 2000 feet due to fog. He circled the San Diego

Murrieta News
100 years ago

February 14, 1914,
Riverside Daily Press

William Anderson has added the undertaking business to his hardware and implement store in Murrieta.

Mr. Tarwater has finished putting out quite an orchard on his home place.

The entertainment given by the Episcopal Church at the hall last Saturday night was a great success socially and financially. Over \$50 were taken in for the program and supper.

February 27, 1914,
Riverside Daily Press

A. J. Sykes is investing in cows and shipping cream. He thinks it pays.

Owing to the heavy rains we had no train out or in last Saturday, and the train on Sunday looked like a Riverside special, as about the only thing it carried was the Riverside papers.

The Ladies' Aid will serve a tamale supper from 6 to 8 on next Thursday evening, March 5. Program after supper. Twenty-five cents admission pays for both and should insure a full house. It will be given at the hall.

Elsinore (Continued from Page 2)

area an estimated 400 times and his plane used 45 gallons of gas and 5 gallons of oil. He later claimed he would have flown longer if not for a fuel leak. He landed his plane at 3:06 p.m. and immediately received cheers and accolades for his incredible feat.

One month later, tragedy struck. On October 11, 1915, Taliaferro lifted off from the North Island airfield. His mission was to complete a loop the loop maneuver. Two army pilots had completed several loops prior to Taliaferro's flight. His plane pointed towards the sky and flew upside down and then came out of the loop. Suddenly the plane did a nose dive at 2000 feet.

With the engine still running, the biplane struck the ocean surface with a resounding crash. The wrecked plane floated for a few minutes and then the cold waters enveloped the pilot and his machine. A rescue speed boat was delayed as it had to wait to be fueled up. Investigators believed that if the boat had been prepped and on standby, Taliaferro could have been saved.

After 24 hours of searching, divers found the wreck and salvage operators were then able to hoist the craft from the bottom of the bay. Investigators found Taliaferro still strapped to his machine, which led them to believe the pilot was dead before he hit the water. Two theories emerged, either Taliaferro was unconscious after the loop maneuver or he came out of the loop too fast, snapping his neck and killing him instantly.

The beloved pilot was mourned by the military and the city of San Diego. After a short church service, a funeral procession escorted his body to the Masonic Cemetery.

"With the firing of three volleys over Taliaferro's grave, a mourning nation had marked the passing of another martyr whose life was taken in a time of peace while preparing himself for what might come." (October 16, 1915, San Diego Evening Tribune)

Lieutenant Walter Taliaferro's legacy continued to be remembered. The First Battalion's Twenty-first Infantry established Camp Taliaferro at Balboa Park in 1916. A British aeronautical school was established in Fort Worth, Texas in September 1917. Field #3 was named Taliaferro Field. Finally, the Aero Club of America awarded Taliaferro posthumously a medal of merit for his sustained flight record.

Though his flight across the Temecula Valley was brief, Taliaferro would be remembered for his daring feats in the years that followed. His cross-country flight and his sustained flight records would prove man and machine's abilities in times of peace and times of war. His pioneering spirit and his ultimate sacrifice should never be forgotten.

Researcher's Note:

Post's Winchester landing was on January 9, 1914

Taliaferro's Elsinore landing was on January 20, 1914

Volunteers Needed For Special March Event

As part of the March 27 - 29 Oregon-California Trail Association (OCTA) regional meeting in Temecula, VaARRA will hold a two-day open house at the Little Temecula History Center and the Historic Vail Ranch site on Saturday, March 29 & Sunday, March 30. The facilities will be open on both dates for the OCTA meeting attendees, as well as available to the general public. Antique vendors will also hold a flea market at the historic property. On March 29th several authors of local history books will be at the History Center from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. to sell and autograph their works.

OCTA meeting is free to attend at the Temecula Civic Center Conference Room all day on March 27 & 28. It will feature speakers including Anne Miller, Ph.D. and Phil Brigandi. To register and for more information, contact Anne Miller at dmeajm@verizon.net.

Please join us for a "Meet & Greet" time at 5:30 PM on Monday, February 24th, prior to the meeting at 6:00 PM.

We would like to get to know you.

REFRESHMENTS
will be served!

President's Message By Dick Fox

A Full House is a good thing. Whether playing poker, or having every chair filled (and then some) -- for a very special evening event. For those of you who filled the chairs at our monthly program meeting of January 27, we want to express our thanks for helping us set a new record for program attendance -- 76! Those who were not present, missed a marvelous program indeed. Perhaps in the future we can get our historic "Ladies of Temecula History" to return for an encore performance, or to tell the "rest of the story."

An eventful spring is building on the books. And if having a busy schedule of events isn't enough to keep us occupied with local history interests, Artec Partners -- the owners of the Vail Ranch Headquarters buildings next to Kohl's, have announced that they have finally received the needed financing to continue work on the restoration project of the remaining buildings. Significant work is scheduled to begin in early March. After 15+ years of trials, tribulations and delays, it finally appears that this storied piece of Temecula's past will once again be able to "stand proud."

2014 Riverside County History Symposium March 8, 2014

At the Dale Senior Center at White Park in Riverside, California
Registration Deadline is February 22nd

For More information

Visit: <http://rivcohistorysymposium.weebly.com/>

Or

Steve Lech

c/o Riverside County History Symposium

P.O. Box 21168

Riverside, CA 92516-1168

List of Speakers and Topics

The Jim Crow Era (Leisure Experience of African Americans in the Lake Elsinore Resort

By Alison Rose Jefferson

Early Roads That Shaped the Pines-to-Palms Highway By Harry Quinn
History of Murrieta Hot Springs, by Rebecca Farnbach and Tony Guenther

History of March Air Force Base by John Hale