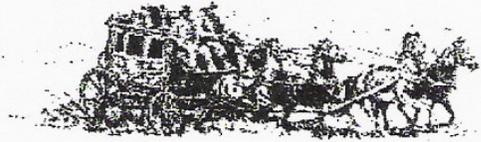


TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

April 2014

Volume 14 – Issue 4

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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1886 Western Electric Steiner Telegraph
(source: internet photo)

The Death of a Telegraph Operator

By Jeffery G. Harmon

Ten minutes after the southbound passenger train pulled into Temecula Station, a young drunken man dressed in rough clothes and a cowboy hat began shouting wildly at the crowd. He pulled from his belt a .45 Colt revolver and fired several shots. A bullet pierced the station office wall and struck the telegraph operator. "My God, I am shot!" exclaimed Railroad Agent Davis in disbelief.

Twenty-year old Frederick Foster and his parents moved from Marysville, California to Elsinore a few months prior to the shooting. Foster found work with local shepherders and was known by residents as a kind, hardworking young man. One day he had a heated argument with the local train conductor, John Harrington. Foster vowed to repay Harrington for the trouble he had caused.

On April 19, 1886, Foster and his fellow shepherders headed to town to quench their thirst. Foster had too much to drink and heard the train coming into the station. As passengers disembarked, Foster began calling out for Conductor Harrington, who had moments earlier entered the railroad office to speak with Agent Davis.

(Continued on Page 2)

Calendar Of Events

Monday, April 28 – 6 p.m.

Ron Quirk, docent at Rancho Guajome on the topic of "*The Rancho Guajome Adobe and its Cast of Characters*".

Monday, May 19 – 6 p.m.

Meet the recipients of the Society's first ever college scholarships. These students will tell about their plans in lieu of a regular speaker.

Temecula Valley Museum Exhibition

Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters of California
February 22 ~ April 6

THANK YOU FOR RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP:

Steve Lech
Roger & Lynn Cudé
Dick & Charlotte Fox
Douglas & Sally Haserot
John & Bonnie Martland
Mission Oaks Bank
Jimmy & Peg Moore
Dick & Evelyn Norris
William & Claudia Perozzi
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Gene & Barbara Tobin
Peggy Webb
Irene Hotchkiss
Owen Garrett, Mission Clay
Products
Carrie Penny
Ray & Rosemary Smith
Donald & Esther Trunnell
Ronald & Judith Turco

Telegraph (Continued from Page 1)

John Taylor, a passenger and wool buyer, followed Harrington into the office. Foster pulled out his gun and fired two shots. His first shot went through the crowd, barely missing stagecoach driver, Samuel Warren Hackett. The second shot may have been fired into the air to call Harrington out for a fight.

According to Foster's testimony, after he fired two shots, he staggered over to a car and leaned against it for support. Because of his drunken state, he fumbled and fought to reload his gun. Suddenly his gun fired. The bullet pierced the side of the converted box car that housed the offices of the California Southern Railroad and the Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Express. Agent A. C. Davis, who was relaying a message on the telegraph machine, was struck in the abdomen.

Realizing that he could be mortally wounded, Agent Davis continued tapping away at the telegraph, speaking in low tones and spitting up blood. After the message was completed, Davis allowed himself to be laid out on the office floor. A doctor on the passenger train administered a heavy dose of morphine, because there was no way to save Davis' life.

Agent Davis expressed no desire for the drunken man to be arrested. He didn't know Foster, and knew that the shooting was an accident. John Taylor later told the newspaper that Davis had stated ". . . *thought it hard after serving two years in the war, and not receiving a scratch, (I) should have to die in this manner.*" (April 20, 1886, San Diego Union)

Foster's gun was quickly seized and relinquished to Conductor Harrington. Foster began to sober up when he was told that Davis had been mortally wounded. Constable James Banks arrested Foster at the scene. After order had been restored, the passengers boarded the train, and continued their trip south to San Diego.

A day passed before Justice John Magee returned to Temecula. After a preliminary examination, Foster was transferred to San Diego to stand trial in Superior Court. On April 30th, he appeared before Justice Monroe, who set the bail at \$1,000, as Foster awaited his trial.

On July 7th, Foster pleaded not guilty to manslaughter charges. On July 20th, the trial was held. The next day the jury acquitted Foster of all charges. After he was set free, Foster was not heard from again.

Agent A.C. Davis had been a line man for two or three years before he was promoted to railroad agent. He may have been engaged to be married a few days before his untimely death. It is unknown where Davis' final resting place is, but his dedication to completing his work before his untimely death should always be remembered.

Researcher's Note: This story is pieced together through several eye witnesses' accounts and multiple newspaper articles. The chain of events that led to Agent's Davis' death may never be full understood. One thing is certain, drinking and firearms have proven to be a deadly combination throughout the wild and dangerous history of Temecula.

Murrieta News 100 years ago

April 24, 1914
Riverside Daily Press

After a short session of the Bible class on Wednesday night of this week, April 22, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Rail, those present were all ushered into the parlor, where was witnessed the wedding of Alfred Knott and Miss Freda Rail. Rev. Mr. Bormose of the M.E. church, of which they are both members, performed the ceremony. After congratulations from relatives and friends, all returned to the dining room, where a fine dinner was awaiting them. Mr. Knott, a former resident of this place, who now lives in Temecula, has a good trade and a good business. Miss Freda was one of Murrieta's best girls, a leader of the young people of the church and organist for church and Sunday school for many years. Their many friends wish them a long, happy and prosperous life.

Mrs. K. E. Sleeper has had some very neat signs placed on the main highway directing people to the Fountain house. A. V. Wilson was the artist.

Quite a rain fell Wednesday, something like an inch, doing about as much damage as good, as there was so much hay down and the heavy grain went down badly.

TVHS Members Busy Celebrating History

By Rebecca Marshall Farnbach

From Monday through Sunday during the last week of March many volunteers from the Temecula Valley Historical Society celebrated our historic past in several venues. It started with the monthly meeting with a presentation by Rebecca Farnbach and Tony Guenther, the great-grandson of the founder of the Murrieta Hot Springs Resort.

On Thursday and Friday several members attended the Oregon – California Trails Association (OCTA) annual meeting at the Temecula Civic Center, with an attractive display that attracted attendees to the table where Dr. Anne Miller's maps of the Southern Emigrant Trail provided information. In conjunction with the Vail Ranch Restoration Association (VaRRRA) items were presented for purchase: the DVDs, 395 signs and books about local history.

Speakers at the conference included local celebrities as Dr. Miller, who was instrumental in obtaining the location and did much to organize the conference, and Phil Brigandi. Other speakers gave presentations that gave context to our local history, including the Western Expansion, Mormon Battalion, and the Anza expeditions. The insightful film "The Pursuit of a Dream" showed 15 teenagers in present day who traveled two weeks by wagon on the Oregon Trail. The teens chose the tools and food to take and had to manage horses and wagons along the route with no modern devices.

On Saturday the Temecula Valley Museum offered OCTA participants an interpretive walking tour of Old Town led by Bonnie Martland. Following the tour, many came to the Little Temecula History Center for a chance to walk a portion of the Southern Emigrant Trail and to enter the historic Wolf Store adobe. Maps were given for a self-guided car tour east on the trail to see the Oak Grove and Warner Stage Stations.

While the tours were going on, VaRRRA had an estate sale inside the Wolf Store, once again a store for the first time in over 120 years. Buyers came and TVHS volunteers answered history questions. If you hear someone say there isn't much history in Temecula, they must not have been in town during the last week of March 2014.

By the way, if you missed the estate sale last weekend you have another chance to view the items on Sunday afternoons 12 – 5 or by special arrangements with Darell Farnbach (951-552-3516).

Letters to the Editor:

I really enjoyed this issue with the history of The Swing Inn. I'm also looking forward to the Trails event on March 29 and 30. It mentioned that the Wolf Store may be open. I am hoping so. Whenever I've gone to an event at the ranch site, I have always wished we could actually go inside the buildings, rather than just see the outside of them.

Julie Gilbert

Upcoming Historic Event: The Bank's Centennial Celebration

In June the Bank of Mexican Food will hold a several day celebration of the 100th anniversary of the opening of the bank in Temecula. If you are a former patron from when it was a banking institution, please let us know at: sunbrook@hotmail.com or by calling Rebecca Farnbach at 951-699-5148. We would like to honor you during this celebration.

President's Message by Dick Fox

Greetings --

The Southern Trails Chapter of the Oregon California Trails Association (OCTA) held its annual meeting & symposium in Temecula March 27, 28 & 29. After an opening welcome & unique rendition of "Happy Trails" sung by Mayor Maryann Edwards, the days were filled with presentations by notable historians, writers and nationally active members who advocate for serious recognition of remaining portions of our early emigrant trails throughout the western states.

For those of you who were able to attend sessions during the recent symposium, I'm confident you will join me in exclaiming "what a treat"! Those who were not able to attend missed an opportunity to enrich your knowledge about some of the wonderful stories of the pioneers who traveled into and through the area.

After two days of sitting in chairs, attendees were hosted at the museum on Friday afternoon, and they all had the opportunity to sign up for an Old Town Walking Tour to be held on Saturday morning. Bonnie Martland did the honors of leading the walking tour. Also on Saturday the recently restored Wolf Store and Vail Ranch Headquarters site was open so that OCTA meeting attendees and the general public could walk and photograph the remaining segment of the Southern Emigrant Trail that is known to have passed within a few feet of the front of the Wolf Store. Visitors were also able to see inside the Wolf Store, and visit the History Center where many of the authors were available to sign books. Many even spent time and \$\$ at the estate sale which was going on inside the Wolf Store. The estate sale was probably the first time in 125 years or so that money changed hands in exchange for goods inside the old store.

Please join us for a
"Meet & Greet" time
At 5:30 PM on Monday, April 28th,
prior to the meeting
at 6:00 PM.

We would like to get to know you.
REFRESHMENTS will be served!

Meetings are held in
The Little Temecula History Center, the red barn next to Kohl's near the
intersection of Temecula and Redhawk Parkways.