

TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



Wolf Store

March 2021
Volume 21 Issue 3

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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A Publication of the

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



www.temeculahistoricalsociety.org

Temecula's Telegraph Operator

The Shooting and Death of Asa C. Davis

Preface

Some of the elements of this story were known by the Temecula Valley Historical Society and a story appeared in our April 2014 Newsletter about the shooting, but little other information was available. In January 2020 the Society received an e-mail from a young lady in San Diego who forwarded some information she had run across while doing research on old railroad rights-of-way as part of her college studies. The material was comprised of all the notes and documents that were part of a Coroner's Inquest in San Bernardino regarding the circumstances of the death of Asa C. Davis. The materials were all written in cursive longhand during the inquest in April 1886. Transcribing the documents was a challenge, but through the efforts of Rebecca Farnbach, Dick Fox and a small crew of folks with medical records and surgical nursing experience we were able to decipher medical terms and words. So with a clearer understanding of what happened during that week in April 1886, we are now re-telling the story. This was also presented as part of our January 2021 monthly presentation.

Monday, April 19, 1886 Temecula, California

The mid-day southbound train operated by California Southern Railroad Company pulled into the station area about 1 p.m. There was activity on the platform as the train arrived.

In a box car makeshift office off the platform, Asa C. Davis the telegraph operator at the Temecula station was busy sending messages.

Shortly after the train arrived a Fredrick Foster and some pals came onto the platform. Fredrick Foster lived in Elsinore and was known locally as a sheepherder. Foster appeared to be inebriated and pulled out his pistol, shouting for Conductor Harrington. Apparently he and Conductor Harrington had exchanged "words" a few days before. As Foster was shouting he began to fire his pistol randomly and one shot penetrated the side of the box car office where Davis was working. A Mr. Taylor was in the office at the time and witnessed the event, stated that the errant shot struck Davis in the abdomen, and he immediately shouted "My God I am shot." After being struck Davis sent one last message to the main office in San Bernardino advising them of his having been shot, they responded that they would send a "special" train to bring him to see the company's Dr. G.A. René in San Bernardino.

Almost immediately there was a call out for a doctor, and by chance a young recent medical school graduate Dr. Kaynett, on his way to San Diego

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The Shooting and Death of Asa C. Davis

looking for work responded, and examined Davis. He stated he observed a wound below and near the navel. Davis was in a great deal of pain. Dr. Kaynett also observed what he described as a small piece of "wire" debris, and removed it. He also administered a shot of morphine. By the time Constable Banks was notified and came to the train station, Foster and his friends had departed. Mr. Davis was convinced he was going to die, and lamented that he had gone through the Civil War without a scratch and ended up being shot on the job in Temecula.

The "special" CSRR train arrived in Temecula about 4 p.m. with a Dr. Adams on board. Davis was loaded into the passenger car on a makeshift cot. The train arrived back at Colton about 6 p.m. Dr. Adams later stated that there was no hemorrhage, pulse 120, and temperature 102, and that Davis withstood the trip well. Dr. René joined up with them and they proceeded to transfer Davis to a "flatcar" and take him to Mr. & Mrs. McCleary's place to examine. Dr. René found the "bullet" and later gave it to the sheriff. Dr. René stated that Mr. Davis was in a prostrated condition suffering from shock and a peculiar restlessness and anxiety. Dr. René stayed with Davis until about 11:30 p.m. on the evening of Monday, April 19th, turning him over to a Dr. Wainwright to stay with him during the night.

Tuesday, April 20, 1886 San Bernardino, California

Dr. René returns at 7 a.m. and finds Mr. Davis a great deal weaker, and did not expect Davis to recover. Davis asked to see the sheriff and a member of the Knights of Pythias (a fraternal organization). Sheriff Gill and a Mr. Careo arrived about 9 a.m. Mr. Davis was told to make any statement he thought important. His statement was put to paper by a representative of CSRR and was as follows: "*A message came to Louis Wolf. Signed by. Telling about a fellow Jose Maria said he was dead. I came back to the office after delivering the message. I paid the operator Fred Machado came down ordered me that was good Spanish just playing I said it was good Spanish. I made it myself, but did not expect a greaser to read it. Spoke just in fun as was my custom to Machado the man that did the shooting was a family from Elsinore. He shot a pistol 2 times. I had a mind to tell him not to do so presently he shot again. I was taking a message the third shot which took effect in my body. I worked after I was shot. I saw him afterwards sent for him to come in and told him not to carry a pistol when he was drinking. I saw Machado come in afterwards & think he put him up to shoot me from spite because I spoke to him in that way. This conversation took place, 2 weeks ago and ever since he acted spitefully towards me. The shooting took place about ½ past 1 pm on April 19, 1886.*" His statement was witnessed by Dr. René and Mr. L. Careo. Davis last told Dr. René that "*he understood and that he knew he was going to die. He also said, that the more he thought of it, the more he was convinced that he*

was massacred. He said at the same time, he did not wish to do anyone any wrongful injury." After Davis makes his final statement he passed away about 1:30 p.m. having lived just 24 hours after receiving the shot to his abdomen.

Wednesday, April 21, 1886 San Bernardino, California

The Coroner of San Bernardino convened an inquest into the death of Mr. Davis and had a panel of 6 jurors in hear the inquest. All of the doctors who had been in contact with Mr. Davis from the time he was picked up by the special train in Temecula until his death were in attendance at the inquest, and testified to their activities, and witnessing of final statement. Dr. René who performed the autopsy testified to the jury: "*In the post-mortem which I made by the request of the Coroner Mr. Huff on the morning of the 21st April at 8 am. it was revealed that the gunshot wound was 1" left of navel 1" below entering the abdominal cavity in a slanting direction toward the left. It passed thru the mesentery following close to the perineum and passed thru the peritoneum at a place below the pelvic bone & lowest rib on the lateral & medium line of the left side lodging in the muscle beneath the integument. The intestines were not penetrated.*

Q. By Coroner. From which you know of this case what is your opinion as to the immediate cause of his death?

A. The gunshot wound he received.

Q. The gunshot wound you examined is it your opinion might have caused death?

A. Yes.

Q. In what way is it probable it caused his death?

A. By the shock he received there being no evidence inflammation of the peritoneum present."

Thursday, April 22, 1886 Temecula, California

Constable Banks was finally able to get an arrest warrant signed by Justice Magee, since Magee was unavailable on Wednesday. Banks locates Fredrick Foster, makes the arrest without incident and transports him to San Diego to await arraignment.

Saturday, May 1, 1886 San Diego, California

During a brief hearing before Justice Monroe, a \$1,000 bond was ordered to await trial in the Superior Court of San Diego County. No indication was made of Foster having posted bail.

Wednesday, July 7, 1886 San Diego, California

Fredrick Foster was formally charged and arraigned for manslaughter, for which he pled "not guilty." His trial date was set for Tuesday, July 20.

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Temecula's Telegraph Operator

The Shooting and Death of Asa C. Davis

Tuesday, July 20, 1886

San Diego, California

A jury trial of Fredrick Foster on manslaughter charges begins. One of the witnesses was Mr. Taylor who was in the office at the time of the shooting and testified that he felt it was an accidental shooting.

Wednesday, July 21, 1886

San Diego, California

Jury finds Foster Not Guilty. They considered it an accident.

Summary

With the bullet fired by Foster having gone through the wood siding of the box car it must have lost speed and power so had just enough remaining force to enter his abdomen but do no further damage. Clearly the autopsy states that the bullet did not penetrate his intestines, nor any of the membranes that surround critical areas of the anatomy in the area. Shock was the diagnosis of cause of death, and yet in today's world of medicine Mr. Davis would likely have

survived. Receipt of the Coroner's Inquest documents also answered questions as to how and why Davis ended up dying in San Bernardino having been shot in Temecula. Likewise in modern day America the basic charge of manslaughter would have been more along the lines of involuntary manslaughter and he probably would not have been found Not Guilty, since people are held to some responsibility even if inebriated. We found no indication that Foster posted the \$1,000 bond so can only surmise that he spent almost 2 months in jail awaiting trial. Efforts have been made by multiple people as to where Mr. Asa C. Davis might have been buried. No records exist that we can find, even though we know with certainty his date of death. One newspaper article indicated that he had been working in Mexico prior to coming to Temecula, so he may have had friends or family there for burial purposes. Also having worked in Mexico would suggest that he had at least a conversational level of Spanish which might explain the vague reference to a disagreement with Machado he noted in his final statement about good Spanish.

Recent Donation to TVHS Collection



This marvelous pen & ink drawing of the Wolf Store was recently donated to TVHS by Katherine Bishop, of Portland, Oregon. She discovered it among her mother's belongings recently and had the foresight to contact the Society as to our interest. The label written by the artist says "The Old Hartzels Store, Temecula Valley." We certainly thank Ms. Bishop for this treasure. Artist name undistinguishable.

2021 Riverside County History Symposium

Registration is Now Open!



Hello Everyone! I hope this finds you safe and healthy despite all that's been happening.

It's time to register for the Riverside County History Symposium. Like so many other events of the last several months, this one will be virtual. Because it's virtual, it will be shorter also, but no less enjoyable!

Here are the details:

Saturday, March 6 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon (Registration link is below)

Cost = free!

This year, we will hear about the famous Willie Boy story from the Native American perspective and we will be joined by two excellent living-history portrayers from the Temecula Valley Historical Society. The itinerary is below:

10:00 a.m. - **"Willie Boy from Native American Voices."** – Dr. Clifford E. Trafzer (Distinguished Professor of History and Rupert Costo Chair in American Indian Affairs at the University of California, Riverside).

11:00 a.m. – **"Edna Hall Swanguen"** – Portrayed by Michele Elling. Edna Hall Swanguen was a colorful character who was a wife, mother, and owner of Hall's Café, the first restaurant in Temecula. Edna was also the switchboard operator for the entire Temecula area for over 25 years.

11:30 a.m. – **"E. Hale Curran"** – Portrayed by Mindy Johnson. E. Hale Curran was a business woman who grew up in the Fountain House Hotel and was employed at Guenther's Murrieta Hot Springs Resort. During her 99 years, Mrs. Curran lived a fascinating life.

We hope that you will join us for a morning of local history on Saturday March 6. As always, if you have any questions or would like any additional information, please feel free to write us at rivcoheritageassoc@gmail.com.

Here is the link to register:

Register in advance for this webinar:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ZJxFn2peRQmgP7Tg542CFQ

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

**NOTE* – Please mark your calendars for March 5, 2022 for the next Riverside County History Symposium. It is our intent to hold an in-person event as all the previous ones have been. We are still able to have it in the old Corona Theater, and will be planning accordingly. More information to follow.

President's Message

March, 2021

As my 9-year-old grandson came down the stairs with tears in his eyes, it was time to acknowledge how hard this pandemic has been. "I just want a friend," he said, as his mom hugged him. By the grace of God, our grandchildren moved 10 minutes away from us, in January 2020, after 10 years of living all over the country and the world. It has been an incredible blessing to have them in our little pandemic bubble. But, alas, moving to a new town, going to in person school and playing little league for three weeks before everything shut down, leaves a 9 year old without friends for a year. As a military family, the two brothers and sister are a pretty self-contained unit, but sometimes you just need a friend.

Knowing our newsletter might be looked at 100 years from now, just as we look back 100 years, I thought it time to document. Right now my daily prayer list includes two of my best friends and their husbands, all in bed right with CoVID. One just beat cancer, and I'm really worried about her. My next door neighbor just took leave from his job, two months after recovering from CoVID, but with enough lingering effects he finally decided he needed to be still. I'm also sharing daily texts with a dear friend out of state. She's 10 days out from a month in the hospital with CoVID. She was never on a ventilator but in severe enough straits to be released to a skilled nursing facility rather than home. She is just trying to walk across a room now.

Then there's my parents, 86 and 87. They were very independent, a fragile but competent team, until my Dad fell while golfing in September, breaking his hip. Subsequent treatment, from hospital to skilled nursing rehab, was all done in isolation – no visitors, except at the window, or the phone, or ipad. His cognition seemed to careen off a cliff, and he had a hard time communicating even through those means.

Getting him home was such a relief, but he immediately fell again and the process repeated itself. Two months later we settled them in an assisted living, with the hope it would be temporary, and with the caveat visitors were allowed in their apartment with protocols in place. That all ended right before Thanksgiving, when CoVID made it's inevitable appearance and the facility went into lockdown. They did okay through New Year's, but then they didn't. It is an incredibly helpless feeling to watch your parents struggle and not be able to be there.

Finally, the young adult generation, we missed four weddings, high school, college and medical residency graduations, and some baby snuggles. CoVID has affected every age group. The light at the end of the tunnel is beckoning. May we we all get there together and give each other a real long hug.

— Shari

TVHS Antique store open Sun. 11-4, and Tues 9-1

EVENTS CALENDAR

Tuesday, March 2 — Every Tuesday 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Farmer's Market at Vail HQ. Come get fresh veggies, tamales, empanadas, and artisan craft items.

Sunday, March 7 — 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Vail HQ open
With activities and vendors.

Saturday, March 20 — 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Thistle & Sage
Vegan event.

Monday, March 22 — 6 p.m. TVHS invites all to watch Zoom presentation by Richard Leste of Camp Pendleton Hist. Soc. about Sgt. Reckless. Check TVHS Website for link to Zoom.

Friday, March 26 — 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Starlight Bazaar
With vendors and activities.

Vail HQ is Once Again Open

Please support businesses at Vail HQ

Pills and Aging --

*A row of bottles on my shelf
Caused me to analyze myself.
One yellow pill I have to pop
Goes to my heart so it won't stop.
A little white one that I take
Goes to my hands so they won't shake.
The blue ones that I use a lot
Tell me I'm happy when I'm not.
The purple pill goes to my brain
And tells me that I have no pain.
The capsules tell me not to wheeze
Or cough or choke or even sneeze
The red ones, smallest of them all
Go to my blood so I won't fall.
The orange ones, very big and bright
Prevent my leg cramps in the night.
Such an array of brilliant pills
Helping to cure all kinds of ills.
But what I'd really like to know,
Is what tells each one where to go!
-- Author Unknown*

Membership News

WELCOME NEW MEMBER:

Pamela Malnar

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION
TO THE TEMECULA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Dr. Anne Miller & Dr. David Elliott
Mr. & Mrs. Dennis Sterner

100 Years Ago in Temecula

Selected items from Lake Elsinore Valley Press, Temecula Gossip Column – March 1921

Issue of March 4, 1921

By Mrs. V. B. Sands

A. Knott and family motored to San Bernardino Sunday to attend the Orange Show.

Henry Gray took a truck load of bees to San Bernardino Thursday.

Mrs. W.M. Friedemann has at her house guest her mother Mrs. Desmond of Santa Cruz.

V.B. Sands was a San Bernardino visitor Sunday.

S.J. Lovejoy and C.W. Kirkpatrick of San Bernardino were visitors here Monday.

Among those who attended the Masonic entertainment at Elsinore last Friday evening were Mr. and Mrs. A.B. Barnett, Mr. and Mrs. W. T. Barton, and their house guest, Miss Pope, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Roripaugh, Mr. and Mrs. W.M. Friedemann, and their guest, Mrs. Desmond, Mrs. F.H. Hall, Mr. and Mrs. V.B. Sands and the Messrs. Escallier, Sommerville, Barrows and Vetsie Cantarini.

Mr. and Mrs. H.A. Price motored to San Jacinto Sunday to spend the day with J.T. Thompson and Family.

The Whist Club met with Mr. and Mrs. G.A. Burnham last Wednesday evening. Mrs. W.T. Barton and Carl Swanguen won the beautiful prizes. Dainty refreshments of sandwiches, cakes and coffee were served by the hostess.

Issue of March 11, 1921

By Mrs. V. B. Sands

Mrs. Harry Walters and daughter, Peggy, have returned from extended visit with her sister in San Diego.

Hampton Watts of Los Angeles was the weekend guest at the home of A.F. Nienke.

A.F. Nienke and family and Miss Ethel Burnham motored to Elsinore Friday evening to attend the High School play.

Frank Burnham purchased the courthouse erected by the William S. Hart Company and is wrecking it.

V.B. Sands and family were visiting friends in Perris Sunday.

D.L. Spivey returned to his home in Rushville, Indiana, after spending nearly a year in Southern California with his son, who is employed by G.A. Burnham & Son.

A. Knott and family motored to Elsinore Friday evening to attend the play given by the High school.

Cantarini brothers shipped two cars of barley to Los Angeles this week.

The pupils of the Union school who were neither absent nor tardy are as follows: Albert Escallier, Ralph Barnett, Louis Roripaugh, Frances Warner, James Freeman, Edward Escallier, Agnes Freeman, William Banks, Albers Ceas, Emilie Ceas, Aileen Duncan, Clara Marruffo, Pablo Wevelos, Harry Helms and Albert Barcello.

Messrs. A.J. Escallier, W.M. Friedemann, A.B.

Barnett, V.B. Sands, E.E. Barnett and O.E. Larson attended Masonic lodge at Elsinore last Thursday evening.

Eight airplanes from March Field landed about a quarter of a mile west of town Tuesday morning. They let out several carrier pigeons.

Mr. and Mrs. G.A. Burnham and daughter, Miss Ethel, motored to Los Angeles Wednesday and will return the last of the week.

Issue of March 18, 1921

By Mrs. V. B. Sands

Miss Serena Cantarini entertained the Whist Club last Wednesday evening. A delightful evening was spent by all the members. Dainty refreshments were served at a late hour.

Mrs. Desmond has returned to her home at Santa Cruz, after a couple of weeks' visit with her children, Mr. and Mrs. W.M. Friedemann and Mr. and Mrs. Carl Swanguen. (*Editor's Note: Mrs. Desmond was the widow of Constable Swanguen. It is interesting to note that she remarried and moved to Santa Cruz, California.*)

Clifford Traver of Los Angeles was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. W.T. Barton Sunday.

James Nienke, who is employed in Los Angeles, was home several days last week.

Mr. and Mrs. H. R. Price motored to San Bernardino Sunday. Their young grandson returned with them.

It is reported that Mrs. Paul Clark is seriously ill at her home in Norwalk. Mr. and Mrs. Clark resided in this valley a number of years.

Researcher's Note: Mrs. Desmond was the widow of Constable Swanguen. It is interesting to note that she remarried and moved to Santa Cruz, California.

Issue of March 25, 1921

By Mrs. V.B. Sands

William H. Crane, superintendent of the American Lithia and Chemical Company, returned from New York Thursday and will reopen the Lepidolite mine.

Mrs. J.B. Kelly left Tuesday for Fellows, where she will spend the next three or four weeks with relatives.

Mr. and Mrs. V.B. Sands and son, Elwood, attended the reception given by Rev. and Mrs. H.V. Harts-horn at Perris Friday evening.

E.C. Greenfield has purchased a Buick touring car.

Mrs. W.M. Friedemann entertained the Whist club Wednesday evening.

Mrs. W.T. Barton is in Los Angeles this week.

Mrs. V. B. Sands was the guest of the Bridge club at Perris Friday.

Mrs. Walters and Miss Mabel Pope have returned to their home in Los Angeles.

A.F. Nienke and family attended church at Murrieta Sunday morning.