

“Temecula’s enduring granite- symbolic of the valley’s enduring quality”
Tom Hudson author of A Thousand Years in Temecula Valley

With the addition of a rail line into Temecula, a new industry was about to boom. The granite filled hills of Temecula had not only provided a way of life for the Luiseno Indians, but also an industry of wealth and prosperity for Temecula’s early settlers. Beginning in 1883 and continuing through 1915 granite mining became a staple of Temecula life. It not only brought forth more jobs for the community, but also gave birth to some local and national heroes.

Before settlers came to the Temecula region, the Luiseno Indians found harmony with the granite rocks. Boulders served as cooking utensils for the grinding of corn and other food materials. For the Luiseno Indians granite was a necessary tool.

For early Temecula residents, mining granite meant bringing food to the table for several families. Mining was concentrated mostly on the west side of Wolf Valley. At the time the pay was two dollars a day for the average worker and three for those who were highly skilled; a decent living considering at the time a rib roast cost thirteen cents a pound. The process was overseen by such men as Pat Quinn, a businessman who frequently traveled to San Francisco during the winter and would return with Temecula granite orders in the summer. Other prominent local figures such as Jack Roripaugh emerged in the Temecula mining process. Pat Quinn and Jack Roripaugh stood in good relations. Three times a day Roripaugh would haul five tons of the granite from Quinn’s quarry to the Temecula train station.

The granite boulders were transported from the train station to San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Riverside to grace the cities with their majesty. In Riverside, remains a historic court house on Main Street. The beautiful steps at its entrance were created of granite from the Temecula quarries. From the hills of Wolf Valley, San Francisco’s Market Street and the Embarcadero got their granite curbstones. Cut to precisions these curbstones are still displayed today.

Temecula still has several other landmarks created from the granite mines. At Temecula Creek Inn Golf course off of hole three is a stone house. It was built in 1890 as a bunkhouse for Temecula Quarry workers. Later the stone house was used for local ranch hands and then inhabited by Ted Conibear, an artistic sand sculptor, and his wife. Today the stone house is used as an area where weddings and other special events are held. Another mark exists in front of the Bank of Mexican food in old town Temecula; granite horse tie ups embellish the entrance. Near the Temecula History Museum is a monument made to commemorate the early settlers of Temecula. It was constructed out of a solid piece of granite with the names chiseled in.

Another and perhaps one of the greatest men to have passed through the Temecula rock quarry was John L. Lewis. After his work in Temecula he went on to become the president of United Mine Workers of America (UWMA) from 1920 to 1960. Lewis also helped found the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in an effort to better organize workers in the steel, rubber, glass, textile, auto, electrical, as well as many other production industries. Most important of the awards Lewis received was a presidential medal of freedom. While busy shaping America, John L. Lewis still made it his priority to frequently pass through Temecula to see old friends.

While quarrying in the Temecula valley was a profitable business it ended in 1915. With the advancement of concrete there was no longer a need to make curbstones and many other products from the labor intensive granite blocks. The majestic industry soon saw its end, but left a rock solid mark on Temecula.