



The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 45, ISSUE 4

July-August 2019

Calendar

Monday, July 22

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Monday, August 3

Deadline for the September-
October *Dispatch*

Saturday, August 17

Lecture and book signing on
Southern Pacific Railroad Depots-
2:00 PM Old Town Newhall Library

Monday, August 26

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Check www.scvhistory.org for
other upcoming events.

President's Message

by Alan Pollack



We certainly had a wet winter this year. But it pales in comparison to a 50-year flood which pummeled Los Angeles and the Santa Clarita Valley in February-March of 1938. The damage from this epic storm led to the construction of the many flood control channels which we are familiar with today.

THE FIVE-DAY DELUGE

It all started on February 27, 1938, when 1.42 inches of rain fell on the Los Angeles area. The Los Angeles Times reported "The rain is only a forerunner of additional storms heading southeastward from the North Pacific..." Another 2.25 inches of

rain flooded the area the next day. Heavy runoff "brought debris-laden currents surging to doorsteps of many homes and stalled automobiles by the thousands on low-lying streets and highways." The Los Angeles area then received a 15 hour reprieve from the storm, only to be followed by another storm which hit the area on the evening of March 1. The new storm spread from Los Angeles to Burbank, Glendale, Beverly Hills, Sandberg, Saugus, and Santa Monica. Many streets were said to be choked with debris, with occasional broken or sunken pavement. One man died of a heart attack when he tried to extract his car from a mud-covered road in Colton. Police had warned him not to drive over the road, to no avail.

Venice was particularly hard hit, as it received much of the drainage from areas of

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President's Message

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higher elevation. Residents were reported to be splashing along in streets that had become canals, and several homes were flooded. The Los Angeles River overflowed its banks in downtown Los Angeles and carried away 30,000 board feet of lumber intended to be used in construction of a Union Pacific bridge to the new Union Passenger Terminal. Residents in Topanga Canyon were isolated by numerous mud slides in the canyon.

But the deluge wouldn't stop. The Los Angeles Times headline on March 3 stated "THIRTY DEAD IN SOUTHLAND FLOODS". Southern California's heaviest rainstorm in a quarter of a century had entered its fifth day. Bridges in Long Beach and Universal City collapsed, sending 15 people to their deaths in the flood waters. The Times reported: "Property damage ran into the millions as bridges broke, highways sank, homes collapsed, commercial houses swam, and gardens and ranches were flooded." A pedestrian bridge in Long Beach collapsed, resulting in up to 12 people drowning in the Los Angeles River. Five people died when the 250-foot Lankershim Boulevard bridge collapsed into the Los Angeles River at Universal City. The dead included a 26 year old woman, along with her 1 1/2 year old son, who were buried when a landslide hit their home in Beverly Glen. Her husband survived and was found in his bath tub several hundred yards down the canyon. In all, 6.29 destructive inches of rain fell on Los Angeles that day.

Thousands of families had to be evacuated from their flooded homes in the San Fernando Valley, Compton, and Venice. Los Angeles became isolated as its three transcontinental railroads had to stop service due to bridge washouts and flooded lines. Pacific Electric Railway's service was also crippled by the floods. Landslides in the Santa Monica Mountains killed at least six people. Scores of people were injured when their homes were crushed like match boxes, when tons of rock and earth fell on them. More flooding occurred in the San Fernando Valley when the flood gates of the Big Tujunga Dam had to be opened to save the structure from collapsing. Van Nuys became isolated, when all major bridges into the area were flooded or washed away. Homeowners had to be rescued from their flooded homes by a flotilla of boats. Even movie stars such as Leo Carillo and Delores Del Rio were evacuated from their homes. A broken levee on the Los Angeles River sent hundreds of residents between Glendale and Los Feliz Boulevards fleeing to higher ground.

By the next day, the death toll had risen to sixty-two. In all, a total of 11.06 inches of rain fell on the city during the

five-day storm. Los Angeles was said to be a "lonesome metropolis", unable to communicate with the rest of the world by means of rail, bus, airplane, telephone, or telegraph. Fifteen hundred homes were declared uninhabitable, resulting in 3700 storm refugees. Due to a break in the main Hoover Dam power line, much of the city was without electricity. In addition, there were shortages of gas and, ironically, water. Yet things could have been worse. The city's \$50,000,000 investment in a vast flood control system of dams was credited with the prevention of tremendous loss of property and life. However, there was extensive damage to roads and bridges throughout Southern California, requiring a massive repair effort.

DAMAGE IN THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY

Also falling victim to the great flood of 1938 was the Santa Clarita Valley. Roads were damaged all across the valley, as water roared down from the surrounding canyons. The tracks of the Southern Pacific Railroad suffered extensive damage. Several bridges were out in the Saugus area, as well as the Pico Bridge west of Newhall. Multiple cave-ins occurred in the Newhall Auto Tunnel, causing several closures to auto traffic. The entire valley was illuminated by a fire occurring at Edison's Saugus substation when a gas main broke. Much of the town of Castaic was reported to be flooded. A major traffic artery through the valley was blocked when the bridge over Castaic Creek was washed out near Castaic Junction. The home of the James Fryer family was washed away by the flood waters of the Santa Clara River in Soledad Canyon. The school at Honby lost all of its outbuildings. Two big bridges on Soledad Canyon road were washed out. Most of the buildings at the Nadeau Deer farm in Mint Canyon were destroyed. The flood severely damaged the grounds of the Saugus Rodeo in Soledad Canyon. Shortly thereafter, Paul Hill, owner of the rodeo at that time, lost the property to bank repossession, and ownership passed to William Bonelli in 1939; it eventually became the Saugus Speedway.

Approximately 115 people perished in the floods of 1938 in Los Angeles. Damage was estimated at \$78 million, with 5600 homes and businesses lost in the floods. Following the floods, the US Army Corps of Engineers channelized many of the local streams in concrete, thereby creating the flood control channels that we see throughout the city today.

Sources for this article:

Los Angeles Times: February 28- March 5, 1938

Newhall Signal: March 3, 1938



Southern California Scenes from the 1938 Floods



Amgen Tour of California- Mc Bean Parkway May 18, 2019

This was the final leg of the bicycle race, running through the mountains from Santa Clarita to Pasadena

Old Treasures Come Home to Rancho Camulos

by Dr. Susan Falck, Museum Director

Last fall, a U-Haul van carefully packed with historically significant artifacts made its way from Ventura, heading east on Highway 126 through the Heritage Valley to Rancho Camulos Museum. Inside the van was a diverse array of historical treasures belonging to Rancho Camulos, many of which were used here in the 1800s by the del Valle family, then owners of the property. The Museum of Ventura County had served as caretakers for the collection for nearly 25 years, following the 1994 Northridge Earthquake that devastated Camulos and put the collection at risk. Now it was time for the Camulos heirlooms to come home.

Over the past several years, I have led Rancho Camulos volunteers in work to create safe, secure spaces for archival materials and artifacts related to the rancho's history. Many of these items were scattered about the property in various rooms and in the winery building. I've noted, "Our goal was to move the items into environmentally safe and secure locations, then organize and inventory the collection." The first phase of this effort was completed in June of 2018, with the opening of the museum's research library in the restored 1920 adobe building on the property. We have continued to make tremendous headway in processing our collection, thanks to several volunteers, most notably Dianne Cox, who has been instrumental in organizing and cataloging the archival and artifact collection. Board member and historian Judy Triem has also contributed time to researching the rancho's history and the collection, while board chair Leon Worden, president of SCVT, has used his resources to digitize much of Rancho Camulos' archival collection.

The newest acquisitions from the Museum of Ventura County include some special treasures that will be useful in sharing the Rancho Camulos and del Valle family's story with visitors. Items returned include a tapestry-covered kneeler, believed to have been used in worship by Señora Ysabel del

Valle, a mahogany bedroom dresser used by del Valle family members, the torn altar cloth from the Camulos chapel that was referenced by author Helen Hunt Jackson in her bestselling novel *Ramona*, two complete sets of vestments worn by priests who conducted mass in the Camulos chapel, as well as numerous items of women's clothing and linen baby clothes.

In May of this year, Rancho Camulos hosted a group of graduate students from Loyola Marymount University and their professor, Leon Wiebers, who specializes in historic textiles and costumes, and university archivist Cynthia Becht. The group spent several hours studying the vestments and clothing noted above, and provided helpful information to Rancho Camulos staff and volunteers working on conserving the items. My own historic research interests focus on house museums, and I noted "We are extremely fortunate to have a relationship with university partners like LMU, who can help us move our archival and conservation efforts forward." The museum plans to display a number of the items returned from the Ventura Museum in a new exhibit planned for the parlor and living room of the main adobe house located at Rancho Camulos. Additional items from the larger Camulos collection, including family portraits, personal items, and trunks that once transported luxury items from China, will also be featured in the exhibit.

As part of the effort to create a new and improved exhibit space, repairs and improvements will be made to several rooms inside the main adobe beginning this summer. Late last year, electricity was restored to the exhibit rooms, which will allow for proper lighting, a climate control system, and improved security. While Rancho Camulos is still in the early stages of planning the exhibit, the museum anticipates that it will be ready for public viewing by early 2020.



LMU Professor Leon Wiebers examines a bodice worn by Josefa del Valle. Wiebers offered museum staff and volunteers conservation tips on how best to care for the textiles in the artifact collection.



Professor Wiebers examines a full set of vestments used at Camulos circa 1900. LMU archivist Cynthia Becht is on the right; an LMU grad student is on the left.

The Threespine Stickleback: SCV's Endangered Anchovy

by John Boston

"After three days, fish and guests stink."

-Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard's Almanack

It is the bane of developers. It is a holy relic of the Sierra Club. Thousands know its name, yet only a few have ever seen one. We are speaking in reverent bass tones, of course, of Santa Clarita's Threespine Stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus williamsoni*).

Or, as Caesar salad chefs like to call it: *anchovieicus porcupineus doubleporcupineus us us*.

This guppy-like creature paddling through the spittle that is the Santa Clara River is smaller than an infant's finger, yet it is listed as a federal endangered species right next to Bigfoot. This demitasse fish has stopped multi-billion dollar housing projects like Newhall Ranch dead in their tracks.

"We categorically deny any and all charges of pulling tiny sticklebacks out of their native waters by the Newhall Ranch project, holding them by their fins and having illegal alien workers punch them in the stomachs," said Skip Newhall, who thinks Newhall Ranch is a salad dressing.

Skip's brother, Tony, noted: "The Newhall family loves sticklebacks. We had several for breakfast, in an omelet."

Zoological records dating back millions of years, to when the Santa Clarita Valley was under the Pacific Ocean, indicate that the Threespine Stickleback wasn't always the diminutive little bottom-dweller it is today.

We have skeletal remains of a distant cousin to the Stickleback," said Dr. Sarah Tippish-Lee Squidguy of the College of the Canyons' prestigious Oceanographic Institute. "These prehistoric Sticklebacks were amazingly like their modern cousins, maybe a bit larger, sucked algae, made baby Threespine Sticklebacks without much superfluous facial expression and, in general, bothered no one."

However, some rogue scientists, whom we, in the media, prefer to quote because, frankly, they're much more interesting than regular scientists, claim that these ancient Sticklebacks grew to over 95,000 feet long, making them the largest creature to ever inhabit planet earth. Next to Bob Kellar, of course.

These same rogue scientists speculate that these ancient Sticklebacks would actually come out of the water, run up on the beach where would be Saugus today, headbutt a Tyrannosaurus rex, then sprint back into the ocean spray giggling.



"Absolute nonsense," Squidguy disagreed. "In the arena of giant prehistoric fish study," the COC oceanographer pointed out, "those scientists who hold to the Stickleback/T-rex Head-Butting Theory are held in very low regard in this profession. Sadly, sometimes, science is not very glamorous, and people just don't want to hear simple facts that there never were any giant Stickleback, and that the current little fish indigenous to the Santa Clara River live rather predictably boring lives of what must be quiet fish desperation," said Dr. Squidguy.

Still, one cannot ignore those stories that up until the late 19th century, Threespine Sticklebacks floundered through the streams here in record number. Indeed, there are reports that Newhall Land, one of the world's leading producers of potatoes, once attempted to corner the fish 'n' chips market, harvesting millions of tons of the crunchy little vertebrates to go with their potatoes.

"While we do not necessarily agree that Newhall Land and Farming did, last century, dabble in piscatorial harvesting, and even if we did have some part in depleting the area's reserves of Threespine Sticklebacks, well, tough toadies, the statute of limitations and all that," said Skip Newhall.

"Today, the Stickleback balances precariously on the brink of extinction," commented one of those rogue scientists. "No more will we see it merrily bouncing out of our babbling brooks like so many midget salmons."

Of course, the more we become civilized and remove the natural world around us, we do tend to romanticize Nature's wonders, large and small.

"In the final analysis, Sticklebacks aren't porpoises," said Dr. Squidguy. "They don't bounce beach balls on their noses or play 'My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys' on bicycle horns."

I suppose that with Newhall Ranch starting soon, perhaps Newhall Land should pay homage to our little mini-sardine. I'd love to see a big main entrance to the SCV's next vanilla yuppie concentration camp. At the top of the gate would be a giant Threespine Stickleback.

And, if Newhall Land ever gets back into the steer-raising business, the Stickleback would look really neat as a cattle brand.

John Boston is a local historian, novelist and is the most prolific satirist in world history. He writes Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays for The Signal, and thinks it would be ducky if you bought his latest novel, "The Melancholy Samurai" on Amazon.com.

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Heritage Junction During the Cowboy Festival April 14, 2019



Axe Throwing



Rodeo Performer

Photos by Gordon Glattenberg

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Thanks to those who volunteered since the last issue of the *Dispatch*:

Weekend Docents

Cassie Croasmun	David Murillo
Debra Haynes	RuthAnne Murthy
Barbara Martinelli	Alan Pollack
Benn Miranda	Anna Schindler
Annette Moulay	Gordon Uppman

Interested in becoming a docent? Visit our website at www.scvhs.org

Those who open and close for the docents

Cathy Martin	RuthAnne Murthy
Barbara Martinelli	Alan Pollack

First Sunday Questers*

Cathy Altuvilla	Lisa Hoover
Kathy Ensell	Pat Horanberg
Libby Forcum	Sandra Knopf
Ann Grayson	Linda Shellaberger
Fritz Grayson	Paul Shellaberger
Joanne Gross	Jenewyn Van Wie
Cynthia Harris	Deann Wood
Jessie Hoover	

School Tour Questers*

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Ann Grayson	Jude Mahan
Fritz Grayson	Louise Schultz
Cynthia Harris	Betsy Swallow
Linda Hinz	Jenewyn Van Wie

Archiving

Sarah Brewer Thompson	Ann Stansell
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Grounds

Cathy Martin	Leon Worden
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*Don't know who the Questers are? See www.questers1944.org



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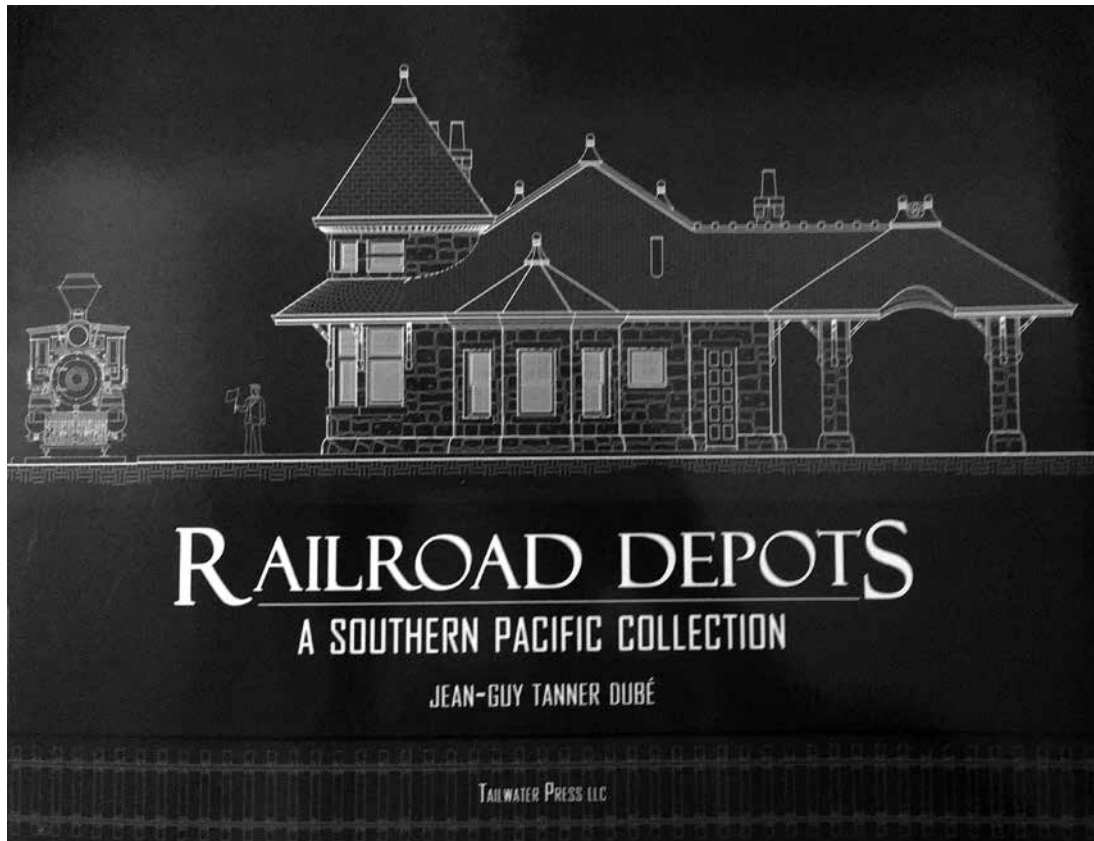
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The author will present a lecture and book signing at the
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