



The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

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July - August 2021

Calendar

Due to ongoing construction, Heritage Junction is closed until further notice.

Monday, August 2

Deadline for the September - October *Dispatch*

Check www.scvhistory.org for other upcoming events when Heritage Junction reopens.



Articles and inquiries regarding *The Dispatch* may be made to 661 254-1275

To arrange for filming at Heritage Junction, contact Cathy Martin at 661 645-0107

President's Message

by Alan Pollack



In this issue of the *Dispatch*, we are taking a short break from looking back at Santa Clarita's history to focus on what we've been up to in the present. As most of you

know, one of the primary missions of the Historical Society is the restoration and preservation of the historic buildings residing at our headquarters in Heritage Junction in Newhall. Suffice it to say, with old buildings such as these, that task is daunting and expensive. And indeed, due to lack of adequate funding over the years, many of these buildings had fallen into

various states of disrepair, now requiring large sums of money to bring them back to a usable condition for the public.

Thanks to Santa Clarita City Councilwoman, Mayor Pro-Tem, and Historical Society Board member Laurene Weste and her wonderful colleagues at the City of Santa Clarita, funding has become available to complete the needed tasks to restore the buildings. Powered by generous grants from the City and the donation of time and materials from many community volunteers and businesses, work is well underway during the current pandemic to make the needed repairs to our buildings. As they say, it takes a village. Heritage Junction will continue to be closed to the public over the next few months while the repairs continue.

Continued on Page 2

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President's Message

Continued from page 1

Currently, Heritage Junction consists of eight historic buildings, and a 1900 Southern Pacific mogul locomotive donated to the Society by Gene Autry and his Melody Ranch in 1981. At their original locations, all the buildings were destined for the scrap heap, until they were saved by dedicated members of the Society.

Saugus Train Station

Previously located opposite the Saugus Café, at the intersection of Railroad Avenue and Drayton street, the Saugus Train Station was transported to Heritage Junction on June 24, 1980. The move was made possible by a massive community fundraising effort spearheaded by Ruth Newhall, Society Board member and editor of the Newhall Signal. The station opened at its original location on June 21, 1888, after the Southern Pacific Railroad completed a spur line through the Santa Clara River Valley from Saugus to Ventura in 1887. Passenger service continued at the station until the start of Amtrak in April, 1971, with freight trains monitored by the final station agent, James "Bob" Guthrie until November 15, 1978. After its move to Heritage Junction, the Station has continued as the Historical Society's headquarters and museum of local history.

Ramona Chapel and Little Red Schoolhouse

Next to arrive at the Junction were two buildings donated by Marion Callahan, the widow of Robert Callahan. He created a Native American and Old West tourist attraction called Ramona Village in Culver City in 1928. After finances for Ramona Village evaporated with the stock market crash in 1929, Callahan rebuilt on the same site in 1932 what he renamed Mission Village. The new attraction again featured Native American and Old West artifacts and was the first significant motel and mobile home park to be built in the United States. Unfortunately, after many successful years in Culver City, Callahan had to move Mission Village in 1963 as it stood in the way of the new Santa Monica Freeway. Although his original intent was to move his attraction to a two-acre site at Lankershim Blvd. in North Hollywood, Callahan decided on a fourteen-acre site on Sierra Highway in Mint Canyon after running into zoning difficulties in

North Hollywood. Thus, Callahan created what was first called Indian-Frontier Village, later known as Callahan's Old West, using some leftover buildings and his artifacts from Mission Village and newly obtained collections. After he died in 1981, Callahan's attraction survived only as a movie location site and theater venue for the Canyon Theatre Guild. Two of the Callahan buildings, the Ramona Chapel and Little Red Schoolhouse, were moved to Heritage Junction in April 1987.

Kingsbury House

In July 1987, the Society moved the Kingsbury House to the Junction from its original location on 8th Street and San Fernando Road in Newhall. Originally built in 1878, the building carries the name of Charles Kingsbury, who purchased the home with his wife Ruth in 1943. Kingsbury, a Spanish-American War veteran, helped build the powerhouses in San Francisquito Canyon after the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, and owned a meat market in Newhall. The interior of the building has since been lovingly restored with period furniture and décor by the local Questers organization.

Edison House

The Edison house was built in 1919 as one of a group of cottages to house Southern California Edison employees at the new Edison Saugus Substation on what is currently Magic Mountain Parkway. It was donated to the Society by the Newhall Land and Farming Company and moved to Heritage Junction on January 18, 1989. The Questers group has also restored the interior of this building.

Mitchell Schoolhouse Adobe

The remains of an adobe building built by Soledad pioneer Thomas Finley Mitchell in 1860 were moved to Heritage Junction after a heroic effort by Society members to block a developer from razing the building entirely in 1986. Subsequently, the Society carefully dismantled the adobe brick by brick and restored the building at Heritage Junction in time for its dedication on November 5, 1989. As it was the first structure in the Santa Clarita Valley to be used as a school, it became known as the Mitchell Schoolhouse Adobe.

Continued on Page 3

President's Message

Continued from page 2

Newhall Ranch House

The Newhall Ranch House was located on what is now the employees' parking lot of Six Flags Magic Mountain at Castaic Junction. The earliest parts of the building probably dated back to 1865 and were likely built by Thomas Bard, who later became one of the founders of the Union Oil Company in Santa Paula. Newhall town founder Henry Mayo Newhall became the building's owner as a part of his purchase of the Rancho San Francisco (comprised of most of the Santa Clarita Valley) at a Sheriff's sale in 1875. His son Gregory expanded the building with an elegant Victorian-style porch in 1893. In August 1990, a grant from the City of Santa Clarita enabled the Historical Society to move the ranch house to Heritage Junction.

Pardee House

The last building to arrive at Heritage Junction is destined to become the Historical Society's new museum of local history in the near future. Henry Clay Needham, a noted prohibitionist who moved from Kansas to Newhall to set up an alcohol-free colony in 1888, built a Good Templars Hall in Newhall in 1890. Ed Pardee, a pioneer oilman from Pennsylvania, who later became a local sheriff and livery stable owner, purchased the building in 1893 and moved it to Market and Walnut Streets. That site of his home is now the Veteran's Historical Plaza. Pardee's house was later used for the Pacific Telephone exchange for Newhall, the Santa Clarita Boys Club, and the Newhall-Saugus (later Santa Clarita Valley) Chamber of Commerce. A grant from the City of Santa Clarita enabled the Pardee House to move to Heritage Junction in August 1992.

Leon Worden and Guy Horanberg

Over the last several months, many restorative efforts have taken place at the Junction. The first order of business was to clear the surrounding area of overgrown weeds and brush. This massive four-month effort was accomplished by our two Herculean volunteers, Board Vice President Leon Worden, and Board member Guy Horanberg. First, the two men cleared heavy brush and fallen logs from the surrounding hillsides, some of which

had burned in the 1970 Clampitt Fire. Then, they cleared the mesa and two gullies behind the Ramona Chapel while battling fire ants and hornets.

Other projects accomplished by Leon and Guy included fixing the drainage around the Mitchell Adobe and Little Red Schoolhouse. After purchasing all new tools, they patched the leaky roof of a train shed and sealed the top in silicone. They pruned and thinned out markedly overgrown trees throughout the property. Numerous 40-yard roll-off dumpsters donated by Dennis Verner of Burrtec Waste Systems carried away all the debris generated by the projects.

Next, they cleaned out and organized the old kitchen of the Newhall Ranch House; they polished furniture and re-housed antiques. Then, moving to the Pardee House, they refinished some of the display cabinets for our future museum.

Over two decades' worth of leftover construction materials stored on the Heritage Junction property were either used or thrown away.

And Leon and Guy were not finished yet. Red bricks and pavers were relocated and covered for future use with the help of a reach machine borrowed from AV Equipment Rental. A 40-foot storage container donated by Rancho Camulos Museum along with an existing container were de-rusted and painted. Their roofs were patched and sealed in silicone, and new shelving was installed in both storage containers. The Society will use the old container for historical artifacts, while the new container is primarily for construction materials and other non-historic supplies. With help from Eva Gritz and Cathy Martin, they organized artifacts in the old container and moved seasonal gift shop inventory into the new container. Cathy also moved all the holiday decorations from the train depot into a 10-foot "Christmas decoration" container. In addition, they repaired, repainted, and reset wooden monument signs for the adobe, ranch house, and locomotive, and began restoration of a railroad phone booth.

Continued on Page 4

President's Message

Continued from page 3

Mike Jarel and Manny Santana

Meanwhile, in the train yard, volunteers Mike Jarel and Manny Santana were hard at work. Mike installed new floodlighting to illuminate the steam locomotive for nighttime appearance and security. He also repainted and reinstalled a historic wigwag. Finally, Mike and Manny reinstalled a crossbuck railroad crossing sign inside a bollard.

The interior of the Saugus Train Station is due for some significant changes. It will be transformed into a Southern Pacific Train Station museum after our current exhibits are moved to the new Pardee House historical museum. Eventually, archiving activities will move into the baggage room, in place of the current museum space. The Society formed a task force to spearhead the restoration of the train station. The committee includes Mike Jarel, Jean-Guy Dube, Greg Wilzbach, Guy Horanberg, and Leon Worden. In preparation for the restoration, they cleaned out and reorganized the downstairs office, reopened the trackside door, cleaned out the women's waiting room, and reopened the entrance to the lobby. In addition, the lobby was cleaned out, and the gift shop consolidated. New display racks for gift shop items and brochures were purchased and assembled. Finally, they cleaned out and organized the kitchen, cleaned out the utility room, and purchased and installed new window blinds.

We can't thank enough all the Board members and volunteers who spent the last year improving the appearance of Heritage Junction. They have left us all quite a legacy of work.

Our Guardian Angels

Much has also been done in the past year to the exteriors of the historic buildings of Heritage Junction. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the many who helped us along the way. They include Mayor Pro Tem Laurene Weste and the Santa Clarita City Council; the City of Santa Clarita; Brian Strickland of American Steeples; Don Cruikshank of AV Equipment Rental; Ric

with Aztec Container; Cole Burr and Dennis Verner of Burrtec; Mac with Country Antique Fair Mall; Dave Davis Plastering; DeVore Insulation; Juan Hernandez of Economy Construction; Don Kimball of Five Point; Tim Carter of Foster Construction; Heys Plumbing; Howard & Sons; Marcelo Cairo of Inertia Engineers Structural Solutions; Dale Donohoe of Intertex; Tim Price of Isaiah Industries; Glenn Adamick of JSV Development; Maxwell Electric; the Veluzat family of Melody Ranch; the Musella Group; Nicholas Frank of Nicholas Aire Systems; Leon Worden of SCVTV; Perry Irelan of SCV Lock and Key; Jason Tolleson of Serrano Development; Josh Christensen of SW Regional Council of Carpenters; Lefty Randall of The Conservation Station; Steve Killian, Justin Klopfenstein, and Josh of Victory Builders; as well as Cathy Martin, Greg Wilzbach, Guy Horanberg, James McCarthy, Jean-Guy Dube, Mike Jarel, and Ray Orloff of the Historical Society.

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Coyotes and Road Trips to Gorman in Night's Wee Hours

by John Boston

I've always embraced the nocturnal. I don't know what odd combination of events — nature, environment, gene pool, state of mind — makes me a night owl. I remember being quite bright in school and having problems. If only they'd start class at a decent hour, say, 2ish, right after brunch. It's hard to vault cheerily out of bed at 6:00 AM, when your little head finally hit the pillow three hours earlier.

Don't blame my parents, at least not for that.

As a child, I'd be in bed, far from sleep. I'd silently bounce on the mattress, doing calisthenics or stand on my head. Later, without parental supervision, I would take walks in the middle of the night.

Years ago, when I lived in Placerita Canyon, I'd hike in the wee hours to Fox Field. I'd like to keep it a secret and not tell you where Fox Field is, because I don't want the last sanguine and sacred semi-wild place in the valley to be overrun with jogging yuppies. Alas, it's too late: The city ended up making it a hiking park.

Years ago, as has happened for centuries, a cold snap and full moon visited. Eskimos would politely grin at my expense, me carrying on how cold it was when the mercury plunged to the 20s. I piled on layer upon layer of clothes, topped off with a coyote fur bomber hat, complete with ear flaps. Not very P.C., but I console myself that this *Canis latrans* died of old age — before we skinned it. And besides, the distant cousin to The Roadrunner's nemesis, Wile E., was being put to functionality long after he had departed his decadent omnivore lifetime.

I like walking in the woods when the moon is full, everything non-wild is asleep, and it's below freezing. I know there are bear and wildcats, puma, and deer about, close but mostly invisible. I can hear rustlings, small to medium to large. It can be so bright, you almost need sunglasses. Or, moonglasses.

I'd hop on the bicycle at 1:00 AM. and make a run from Placerita Canyon to the post office in Newhall. It's so refreshingly dark and quiet. Sometimes I'd just get in the car and drive to Mojave or the beach, depending on where some inner wanderlust whim led me. Gasoline is now flirting with \$5 a gallon. But today? I take the Prius.

Years ago, I was adding to my growing collection of unpublished work and had been making suspiciously wonderful progress. Then I hit a wall. It wasn't writer's block, there's no such thing. But, sometimes, you just need to shake out the cobwebs and open the inner and outer ears.

Taking a tape recorder, with my truck headed north, it seemed a few seconds later I was miles past Castaic. What I had prayed for — inspiration — I received. For the next three hours, I drove and dictated notes into my Sony.

Up to Gorman for gas. It was freezing near Tejon Pass. The wind blew stabs of cold air onto my unprotected skin. It was quite refreshing, and I couldn't stop smiling, so alone and alive.

I zigzagged back and forth across the backroads of Antelope Valley, headed along the lonely Munz Ranch Road, and drove through Lake Hughes. Not a single glare of headlights or brake lights. There's a great line from The Beatles — "Oh that magic feeling, nowhere to go — nowhere to go." I stopped a few places, sitting on the tailgate, looking up at the stars. There were four planets aligned in the western sky. As much as I like the solitude, it can get a little creepy, and that's fine, too. I've had that feeling around campfires, by myself, that something's out there, watching you. I think a big part of it is what the 20th century philosopher Joel Goldsmith called, "The Thunder of Silence." We are constantly drowning in so much noise — even the hum of appliances, that when it's quiet — truly quiet — it can be startling. Same thing with light pollution. In cities and suburbia, even in the longest part of evening, there's an omnipresent night light blazing so you can't really see all that's out there, all that's in there.

I was on the road for hours and passed only four cars on those back roads. I saw falling stars and a poor deer deader than the wide lapel decomposing on the shoulder. I roared by owls and dutifully trotting raccoons, falling stars, and sleeping farmers.

I drove with the window open. No stereo. Just the sounds of the cold wind roaring through. I wore my protective coyote pelt cap and ran the heater. It felt calming, soothing, on my legs. I slowed to a crawl to drive next to a coyote, trotting down the center of Lake Hughes Road. We both stopped to regard one another.

Continued on Page 6

John Boston Article

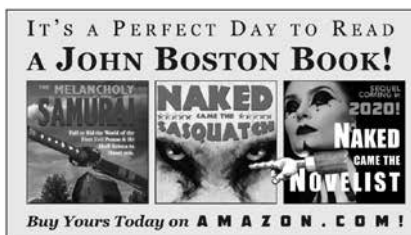
Continued from page 5

We're both old souls, although the modern coyote has been around Santa Clarita for, give or take, at least a million years. They're not Italian, but coyotes broke off from the Miacis family tree 42 million years ago. Coyotes can smell a hunter almost two miles away and can literally tiptoe on their nails when sneaking up on something. They can run 40 mph and meander 100 miles in search of food when too many neighboring coyotes overpopulate their territory. This one? He was a big fellow, used to civilization and smelly exhaust. His eyesight is six times greater than mine, and his sense of smell is about 25 times more acute than a human's. Perhaps, in some future life, he'll be an art critic.

My late-night coyote friend, stared at me, then trotted away, perhaps toward the deer carcass 20 miles off. He actually stopped to look at me again, a coyote's version of the doubletake.

I still smile when I think of him. Perhaps he recognized the hat.

Johnbostonbooks.com will be launching soon with the first of three volumes of "Ghosts, Ghouls, Myths & Monsters — The Most Haunted Town in America." It's a compilation of the SCV's weird, strange, and supernatural tales. With more than 11,000 essays, blogs and columns, John Boston is the most prolific satirist and humorist in world history. He's lived in Santa Clarita since boyhood.



Colossus Car Arrives at Heritage Junction

A new arrival at Heritage Junction is this repurposed coach from the original Colossus roller coaster at Six Flags Magic Mountain. Colossus was the world's tallest and fastest wooden roller coaster when it opened in 1978. It closed in 2014 and reemerged in 2015 as the hybrid Twisted Colossus coaster. This coach, made by Morgan Manufacturing (then) of Scotts Valley, Calif., was built between 1987, when Morgan started providing rolling stock for Colossus, and 2001, when Morgan ceased production.

This particular coach was transformed into the base of a Christmas tree that Six Flags California (Magic Mountain and Hurricane Harbor) donated to the Santa Clarita Valley Boys and Girls Club's inaugural Festival of Trees fundraising auction in November 2003. The tree, along with its coach-base, was purchased by local philanthropists Harold and Jacqueline Petersen, who donated the coach back to the SCV Boys and Girls Club for its June 2021 Benefit Auction, where it was acquired for the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society.



Kathy Ensell and Eva Gritz try out the Colossus car

Racing History in the William S. Hart Collection

by Kim Walters*

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In working with the collection of photographs from silent film actor William S. Hart, I recently came across a folder: Automobiles-Racing event July 20, 1919. The images are of a race car "W.S. Hart Studio" driven by Lambert Hillyer, who is accompanied by Marshall Neilan.

Hillyer was an amateur race car driver, film director and screenwriter. He directed many of Hart's western films, and Neilan was an actor, screenwriter, film director and producer.

Upon further research I found that the race took place on a one-mile oval dirt racetrack once located on Slauson Avenue between Central and South Park Avenues (now Avalon Boulevard). The headline in the *Los Angeles Herald* for July 19th read "Big Actors' Benefit Fund Race at Ascot Speedway Sunday." There were seven events held, including an auto-plane race between Cecil B. DeMille in his bi-plane and "race-car idol" Eddie Hearne in his big Hudson racing car. Lambert Hillyer did well as the driver for the William S. Hart Studio in the three events he raced: 1st place in the Australian Pursuit Race, 2nd place in the Pacific Coast Amateur Championship 25-mile race, and 3rd place in the 10-Mile Studio Race.

Studio portraits of actors and actresses are also contained in the Hart photo collection. One of the most fascinating women in the collection is Eva Mudge (Generva Delphine Mudge). Mudge started her career in vaudeville in New

York City, then went on to perform with Wild Bill Cody's Wild West show before coming to Hollywood to appear in silent films. She is listed in 1898 as the first woman in New York State to obtain a driver's license. She then went on to become the first women race car driver, racing a Waverly Electric in 1898 and later a Locomobile.

* Collections Manager, Natural History Museum, History Department, Seaver Center for Western History Research.



Eva Mudge, n.d., from the William S. Hart Collection (P-075-52-035)



William Hart is standing in back of the car, facing the camera.

William S. Hart Collection (P-075-13-38a)



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The Saugus SP station in its original location. The station and other buildings in Heritage Junction are currently undergoing significant renovations. See story on Page 1.