



# The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 43, Issue 3

May - June 2017

## Calendar

### Monday, May 22

Board of Directors Meeting  
6:30 PM Saugus Station

### Thursday, June 1

Deadline for the July-August  
*Dispatch*

### Sunday, June 11

Reception for new library at  
Rancho Camulos  
4:00 to 6:00 PM, Piru, CA  
See page 7

### Monday, June 26

Board of Directors Meeting  
6:30 PM Saugus Station

### OutWest Concert Series at The MAIN Theater (Formerly Repertory East), 24266 Main St in Newhall. 8:00 PM

Friday, June 23: An evening with  
The Hot Texas Swing Band. \$20 for  
SCVHS members

Check [www.scvhistory.org](http://www.scvhistory.org) for  
other upcoming events.

## President's Message

by Alan Pollack



He was an avid collector of all things Old West, and a rabid fan of Helen Hunt Jackson's "Ramona".

ROBERT E.  
CALLAHAN

Robert E. Callahan was born Oct. 27, 1892, in Virginia. Eight years earlier, Jackson had published her book that exploded onto the American scene and quickly gained immense popularity, virtually unprecedented in American history. Jackson's original intent in writing Ramona was to bring to national attention the plight of the Mission Indians in California. In a way, "Ramona" was her attempt to make up for the failure of an earlier book she wrote, "A Century of Dishonor", a nonfiction treatise which

came out in 1881. This book was a history of injustices done to Native Americans in America over the previous century. Jackson had hoped that her book would help change government policy and reduce abuse of Native Americans. To that goal, she sent a copy of "A Century of Dishonor", at her own expense, to every member of Congress. The book was criticized as being dry and overly sentimental, and failed to have the impact that Jackson had hoped for. In "Ramona", Jackson sought to use the fictional story of the tragic romance of full blooded Indian Alessandro and the half Indian, half Spanish Ramona to illustrate the abuse of Native Americans in a more interesting and emotional way. She failed yet again in her quest, as the romantic picture that she painted of Southern California completely overshadowed her original intent.

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Articles and inquiries regarding  
*The Dispatch* may be made to  
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## President's Message

*Continued from page 1*

But the book was still to become the most popular novel of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and it caused a boom of tourism to Los Angeles as people sought to see the "sites" of the Ramona story, one of which was the Rancho Camulos in the Santa Clara River Valley (the presumed home of Ramona). Robert Callahan, like countless other Americans, was swept up in the Ramona phenomenon, and it would form the inspiration for an enterprise that became his greatest legacy.

Callahan, himself, was partially Native American. His ancestry bestowed upon him one-sixth Iroquois blood. He was known to speak fourteen Indian dialects and became a voracious collector of Indian and Western artifacts. He became an expert in shooting rifles and shotguns, and at age 13 joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, where he was able

to show off his shooting abilities until he was kicked out after they discovered he had lied about his age. Callahan then jumped on a train and hoboed his way to New Mexico, where he lived among the Indians for the next two years. His next stop was Los Angeles, where he landed a role in a silent movie. The next year, Callahan went to Chicago to study advertising. There, he came up with a retail idea that developed into a coast-to-coast operation which made him wealthy and allowed him to "retire" to California in the 1920's. He subsequently published a book on advertising and sales, and produced radio shows for Warner Brothers in Hollywood. He wrote western stories for the Los Angeles Times Sunday Magazine. He also wrote books on Indians such as "Heart of an Indian", "The Lone Indian" (which he claimed was the basis for the Lone Ranger), "Santa Fe Trail", and "Daughter of Ramona". Of his ten books, three were turned into movies. Callahan authored the original Ramona Pageant which is still held to this day in Hemet. He constructed the pageant around a sequence in the play "Ramona". He married his second wife, the former Marion Carney, an actress, in a small Arizona town in February, 1950. They moved into a two-story home built by Callahan in Toluca Lake.

### RAMONA VILLAGE

Callahan was a very accomplished man by the 1930s, but it was his next endeavor for which he will always be

remembered. He embarked on a project to recreate life in the Old West on a lot in Culver City on Washington Boulevard. On June 10, 1928, the Los Angeles Times reported: "Dedicated to the American Indian, his tradition and welfare, Ramona Village, comprising a group of structures costing approximately \$500,000 will be constructed immediately on a three and one-half acre site at 5675 Washington Boulevard, it was announced yesterday by Robert E. Callahan, Indian authority and President of Ramona Village..." The original plans called for the construction of a 2000 seat theatre, trading post and museum, Spanish café, amphitheater, typical Indian Village, replicas of canyons, Ramona Garden, realistic representation of Death Valley, and parking spaces, surrounded by an ornamental wall. Callahan planned to host at the site "alluring Spanish and Indian

operas and symphonies, Spanish fiestas, and primitive Indian dances and pageants". Programs at the Village were to include "Indian runners, musicians, sculptors, and artists from many tribes, various dances such as the Montezuma Ball, and pageantry." The Village would be inhabited by Indians making beads, bracelets, and rugs.

The next month, architectural firm Meyer & Holler was chosen to build the village. The same firm had supervised the construction of Grauman's Egyptian and Chinese Theaters in Hollywood. They planned to build "Massive columns, buttresses, huge beams, ceilings, towers, and tile roofs... true to early California type. Pathways, caves, and mountain peaks will tower above the clustering pueblos. Another feature will be the Spanish

Café, and from its center diners may peer through massive windows into gardens of flowers and listen to tinkling guitars in the hands of señoritas". The centerpiece of the Village was to be an Indian Theatre in which an all-Indian cast would perform a dramatization of "Ramona", as well as other performances by the Indian tenants of the site. Also planned nearby was a Kiva in which dances and ceremonials of Southwestern tribes would be demonstrated. Scattered about the facility would be workshops and studios of Indian craftsmen and artists. The first building in the Village was completed on July 7, 1928. In November, Meyer & Holler revealed plans to build the Ramona Chapel to be used as a

Newspapers The Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles, California)  
Sun, Nov 18, 1951 Page 81



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## President's Message

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"literary center and unique marriage place". It was to be a replica of the chapel at the Rancho Camulos. In 1947, the Los Angeles Times reported that Callahan had built the chapel in memory of his first wife Essie. The church was 18 feet long by six feet wide, accommodating 16 persons, two to a pew, and featured a white-backed bible on the altar donated by the late Carrie Jacobs Bond.

### CALLAHAN'S ARTIFACTS

In September 1929, Callahan embarked on a three week trek across the state to find Old West artifacts. He brought back 63 items to Culver City, stating "I find that historic evidences of the development of the West are cherished by all true Californians". Among the items he claimed to have found were a ski made for Joaquin Miller, an old yoke reputed to be the last used by the Donner Party, two Indian guns presumed to be relics of the Soldier Creek Indian fight, a windlass used in 1849 in the Bodie ghost town, a saloon chair from Carson City, Nevada, in which Mark Twain reportedly sat and wrote his famous Calaveras frog story (and in which three men were killed while sitting in it), a sugar bowl from which John C. Fremont took sugar to sweeten his coffee on the morning he started south to capture Los Angeles in 1847, a three-legged stool which was said to be made by an Indian who was thought to be the real life model for Alessandro in the "Ramona" story (donated by Isabel del Valle Cram, one of the former owners of Rancho Camulos), a pot and kettle given to Jack London by friends in Bodie, which he used on his first trip to Alaska, and a battle axe swung by the outlaw Black Bart.

In May, 1930, Callahan announced plans for construction of a building to house the Ramona Supper Club one block over from his village. It was to be a nonprofit organization whose mission was to "preserve the traditions of old California, further an interest in the arts and crafts of the American Indian and encourage the development of present day composers, musicians and artists of California". The building was to be patterned after early Indian architecture, with "doors, peep holes, recesses and passageways typical of the Indian architecture found in Orifla, Touoss, San Juan, San Domingo, and Santa Fe, N.M. many centuries ago".

Sadly, Robert Callahan's grand vision of Ramona Village was not destined to be completed...

In the next issue of the Dispatch, we will continue the saga of Robert Callahan, Mission Village, and Callahan's Old West.

*All quotes are attributed to the original articles in the Los Angeles Times.*

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

**W**eekend Docents  
 Sandra Cattell Barbara Martinelli  
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\*Don't know who the Questers are? See [www.questers1944.org](http://www.questers1944.org)

## Riding in Mexico with a Horse with No Mane...

by John Boston

*"I have lost friends, some by death . . . others by sheer inability to cross the street."*

—Virginia Wolf

I say this not at all to tempt the gods, I only offer it as story. I've never been thrown by a horse. Granted, even in my youth I would not actively seek out ponies 85 percent covered by spur scars or carrying the handle, "Old Widow Maker." I have been bucked more than once. Twice, horses were suddenly inspired to be somewhere far across country with urgency. But, I stayed in the saddle.

I've bailed out once right before a horse failed to take a good-sized jump. Yes, for a while I rode English. Lips pursed, reins in both hands, pinkies out. Every once in a while, I'd let out a "Jolly good!"

Before the Fourth of July parade a few years ago, I got out of a sick bed to ride and probably shouldn't have. About 45 seconds before the beginning of the parade, I dude-ranched it. In attempting to make sure I had enough oomph to get my right leg up and over that saddle, I gave it a little too much gas and sailed completely over the horsey. Knocked the wind out of me. A kind sheriff's deputy helped me up. Gentleman he was, he showed only a polite smile and didn't guffaw. I got back up.

A good friend of mine got stuck in a bog up to his horse's ears and took a couple of hours to swim to safety and pull his mount out behind him. It happened on the outskirts of town, and you wonder why they don't call the place Quicksand Canyon instead of just plain Sand Canyon.

Another friend had her horse run away. They were hit by a car while crossing another canyon road. Had another saddlepal disappear right when I was talking to him, as if the Earth itself sucked him up. His horse fell asleep while walking. It just fell asleep, collapsed to its knees, shook its head and quickly got up in embarrassment as if nothing had happened or the horse had actually meant to do that. Of course, the pony came up riderless and that's always a dead giveaway something's wrong.

One of the toppers of Bad Horse Experiences comes from a pal of mine. She's a Newhall girl, and a doctor now. It happened years ago down in Mexico, and why is it so many horrible stories involve the phrase, "...while I was down in Mexico?"

This friend of mine was no Larry Mahan. In fact, she's not what you'd call athletic. I think she'd have trouble riding Amtrak. I was taking her back to the airport this week and we got to talking about horses and she simply said, "You mean you never heard my horse story?" She had that somber tone of voice, the kind people have when they say, "You mean you don't know that house is haunted?" or "I thought you knew I served 15 years for murdering my husband."

"I was down in Mexico, below Ensenada, maybe 20 years back," she said. It was a perfect spring day and we enjoyed the sanctuary of my new car. "A bunch of us, my friends, we went down for a short vacation. You know. Have a few drinks, laugh, carouse."

There are exceptions to every rule, but if you're going to the beach south of the border to ride horses, it's because you're some combination of being young, dumb, in love, or shooting a commercial for Obamacare. Health insurance monopolies like to use TV spots featuring people riding horses on the beach because they feel it promotes an image of health, and Lord knows that particular branch of organized crime is going to cough up any money toward anyone feeling healthy.

Anyway, my amiga saddles up. She and her posse of friends, in their early 20s, mosey out of town onto a sandy trail and they are now actually riding on the beach. My friend is on a horse that has somberly matched the pace of the John F. Kennedy funeral procession and she wants a little more "Hi-Ho-Silver-And-Away!" for her money. Or, as the people on the other side of The Wall like to say: "¡Hola Ho plata y lejos!"

Thing is, my friend is not a cowgirl. She won't give him any spur. Or, in her case, heel of tennis shoe. She just kind of bounces up and down on his back, which, in Monty Roberts/Horsewhisperer talk means, "Let's you and I get into a fistfight."

My friend gets her wish. The horse takes off like it's shot out of a cannon. Down the beach, toward Tierra del Fuego, it sprints. I mentioned my pal doesn't know doodly about Things Equine so instead of pulling back on the reins ("I didn't want to hurt the horsey's mouth!") she drops the reins.

Dropping the reins on a runaway horse is like giving your gun to a teen-age ISIS member or English Lit major at an Ivy League school and saying, "Here. I'm going to lie down and take a nap. You're on the honor system to guard yourself."

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## John Boston Article

*Continued from page 4*

My friend tries pulling on the horse's mane, figuring, and I quote: "That maybe if I could pull its hair and hurt it just a little, it would stop and look up at me."

How The West Was NOT Won. The horse bolts down the beach, then makes an abrupt turn toward Acapulco. It's actually heading back to the stables, as ill-mannered rental horses do so well. Before it can get to the stables, it has to cross that little stretch of Highway 1. Or, the Mexican freeway.

The horse is running the wrong way against traffic, and, of course, this now being pavement instead of relatively soft sand and seawater, my friend picks this particular spot to get thrown.

It gets worse. She only gets partially thrown. Her foot is caught in the stirrup. She's semi-conscious, being dragged on the freeway, in the wrong direction, against oncoming traffic, leaving a trail of blood and credit cards.

Some gentlemen slammed on their brakes, got out of their cars and corralled the horse. They tend to her best as they can until the ambulance arrives and she's mumbling, in the proper Spanish vernacular, "¿Donde están mis amigos? ¿Donde están mis amigos?"

Well, they were no están aquí.

My friend (she's a doctor now, so I'm not going to use her name) was rushed to the hospital, treated for about 6,000 contusions, a mild concussion, given a few X-rays and lots of nice visits from the doctors and nurses, while she waited several hours for her friends to show.

Finally, they did. My friend was a little more than blinky, but she wanted to know why it took so darn long for them all to show up.

I found the answer rather startling. Her best friend at the time said the owner of the rental stable said to show there were no hard feelings on either side, he'd give the group two extra hours of free riding.

It just startles you, doesn't it? I think it started her asking, "Just what in the hell did I do to deserve friends who would pick a free pony ride over seeing if I was alive or dead?"

Bonus, her pals were all from her church group. Apparently, something from the Protestant mystique did not stick.

I will probably not get over that story for many years. It kind of makes you want to look up at least her alleged best friend two decades after the fact. It makes you want to whack her in the head with a two-by-four, brush your hands

together in a "That takes care of THAT" fashion, then go for a nice two-hour go-cart ride while she writhes in her driveway, moaning.

*(With more than 10,000 essays and opinion pieces, SCV author John Boston is America's most prolific humor writer. Weekly, he pens The Time Ranger & SCV History for the SCVBeacon.com. Every two weeks, he writes the SCV History for your SCV Gazette. Don't forget to check out his national humor, entertainment & swashbuckling commentary website, [THEjohnboston.com](http://THEjohnboston.com). You'll be smiling for a week...)* © 2017 by John Boston

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## Volunteer Opportunities

by Cathy Martin

**D**o you like to garden? We could use some help with the Rose Garden.

Want to be a docent? Volunteer for an event? Let us know. Please call 661 254-1275 and tell us what type of work you would like to do. There is something for everyone!

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## Keeping Your Cool

by Margi Bertram



Think about the last time you went to your kitchen for a glass of ice water, or a cool, refreshing beverage out of the refrigerator. How many times a day do you go to your refrigerator for something?

Today, the refrigerator is America's most-used appliance, found in more than 99.5% of American homes. Generally speaking, we all likely take this convenience pretty much for granted.

Our early ancestors used snow, cool streams, caves and cellars to keep food cool. Salting or smoking was also used to preserve meat and fish. In 18<sup>th</sup> century England, ice was collected in the winter, packed in salt, wrapped in fabric, and stored underground in ice houses to keep frozen until summer.

Wooden boxes with hollow walls lined with tin or zinc date back to the mid-1800s, allowing ice to be distributed for both commercial and home use. A large block of ice was placed in a compartment at the top of the box. Cold air circulated down and around storage sections. A drip pan at the very bottom collected the melted water and had to be emptied daily, although some fancier models had spigots for draining the melted water.

In a 1907 survey of working families in New York City, 81% of those surveyed were found to own "refrigerators" in the form of ice stored in a tub or these wooden cabinets. Originally, these boxes, resembling furniture, were referred to as refrigerators, and it was only when electric refrigerators started using the old name refrigerator that the term "ice box" became the way to distinguish the old wooden boxes.

On display in William S. Hart's kitchen is his wooden ice box, manufactured by the Bohn Syphon Company. This brand was originally popular with railroad companies, and ads promoted them by pointing out, "The one fact that the greatest organizations in the business world, who demand efficiency above all other considerations, have adopted them for refrigerator and dining cars, is the greatest possible recommendation of the Bohn Syphon System." They were touted as being dry enough that matches could be kept dry in them indefinitely.

The iceman (or ice woman; yes, there were a few) was a local fixture in the community because he made regularly scheduled deliveries, and unlike the milkman or postman,

would usually be the one to carry their product right into the house. This put him in a position to observe anything new with the family, such as visitors from out of town, or family celebrations, news he was likely to deliver along with ice to neighbors, including our friend William S. Hart!

It appears that the earliest example of artificial refrigeration goes all the way back to 1755, when an experiment by Scottish professor William Cullen managed to produce a small amount of ice. Unfortunately, it had no practical application at that time.

The first practical system was built by James Harrison, who applied in 1856 for a patent. He was able to provide commercial vapor-compression refrigeration to breweries and meat packing houses, with a dozen systems in operation by 1861.

In 1914, engineer Nathaniel B. Wales created a useful electric refrigeration unit which became the basis for the Kelvinator, named after Lord Kelvin, the father of thermodynamics and for whom the Kelvin temperature scale is named. What better

name for a refrigerator company?! The Kelvinator brand became the first successful US-made refrigerator to enter full-scale production, and by 1923 held 80% of the American market for electric refrigerators.

In 1928, the year of the Kelvinator refrigerator seen in Hart's home, the price ranged from \$210 (for a separate unit to fit your existing ice box, with the fantastic name "Zone of Kelvination") to \$685 depending on the model. That same year the average price for a Ford Model A was about \$500!

By 1929, when the one-millionth Frigidaire was produced, even Frigidaire's president could say: "Electric refrigeration for the home has definitely passed out of the 'Maybe – some day!' stage. It is entering the 'What? – haven't you got it yet?' stage. The sale of mechanical household refrigerators was increasing at a phenomenal pace. Total annual household refrigerator sales nationwide went from 100 in 1910 to 468,000 in 1928.

My favorite fact in researching this story is that in 1932 the Leonard brand, manufactured by Frigidaire, brought to market a new foot-controlled door latch, called the Len-A-Dor, which opened at the touch of a toe, designed "to aid the busy housewife with both hands full of dishes." I wish my current refrigerator had a feature like this!



*William Hart's Ice Box*



## Rancho Camulos Museum Announces New Research Library

by Susan Falck

### SCVHS Members Invited to Public Reception

**N**ational Historic Landmark Rancho Camulos Museum of Piru, CA, will open a new research library in June, housing a collection of books on Southern California history, archival documents, photographs and maps related to the rancho's 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century history, and subject files pertaining to rancho and museum history.

The library, organized by a group of museum volunteers with assistance from a Los Angeles Public Library librarian, is housed in the museum's recently renovated small adobe building facing Highway 126. The library occupies one room of the 1920s-era house, which originally was occupied by the ranch manager. "We have created a cozy, intimate space for our collection, with a comfortable work space for scholars and the general public," noted Dr. Susan Falck, museum director. "Our hope is to share our excellent collection with the community and scholars eager to learn more about early rancho life, and Rancho Camulos specifically."

Falck notes that prior to the museum's new library space, important historic documents were pigeon-holed in various areas of the large museum property, mostly in cardboard boxes. "We didn't really have a sense of what we had, and we were not doing a good enough job of protecting the collection. Now the archival collection is maintained in proper acid-free archival boxes which are stored in a secure space." The more than 200 books in the new library are shelved on beautiful custom-made bookcases designed to fit the dimensions of the room, which also reveals a small area of the original adobe brickwork of the structure. SCV resident and museum volunteer, Dianne Cox, spent many hours restoring the room and selecting the furnishings for the library. Donations from several Southern California residents and grants from Chevron and Thrivent helped fund the library project for the non-profit museum.

The majority of the museum's book collection was donated by Fillmore resident Marie Wren, one of the organization's founding volunteers, who came on board

shortly after the museum was established in 1994. An avid bookworm interested in Southern California and Western history, Wren had acquired hundreds of books over the years. Now in her eighties and running out of space for her collection, she donated approximately 200 books earlier this year to Rancho Camulos, spanning Ventura County history, Native American history, rancho history, women's history, as well as a complete set of Henry Bancroft's History of California, considered one of the most valuable and comprehensive sources of the state's early history. The library also includes several early editions of Ramona, the bestselling romance novel written by Helen Hunt Jackson that helped to publicize Rancho Camulos and the rancho lifestyle nationwide. Under the guidance of professional librarian Meredith McGowan, a small group of museum volunteers has been steadily processing and cataloguing Wren's books, as well as the archival collection. The library will include a computerized database so that visitors may easily search the collection. The museum plans to make the catalogue available via its website in the future. The library will initially be open on Sunday afternoons from 1:00 to 4:00 PM, and by appointment on other days of the week.

To celebrate the opening of the Rancho Camulos Research Library, a wine and cheese reception is planned for Sunday, June 11, from 4:00 to 6:00 PM. Members of SCVHS are cordially invited to attend. In addition to seeing the new library and the restored small adobe, visitors will have a chance to view a special exhibit of highlights from the museum's archival and artifact collection, several of which date back to the mid-1800s, and many on display for the first time. "In many ways Rancho Camulos wrote the book on Southern California history," says Falck. "Camulos inspired author Helen Hunt Jackson to make this place the setting for her blockbuster novel Ramona, which created interest in the rancho period and simultaneously ignited a remarkable tourism boom in Southern California. Now it's time to revisit and share that history with the public via this very special research library."

For more information about the library or June reception, please 805 521-1501, or email [info@ranchocamulos.org](mailto:info@ranchocamulos.org).



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*This Metrolink train, seen at Los Angeles Union Station, represents a sight no longer seen in the SCV. The leased BNSF locomotive is coupled in front of the train's Hyundai-Rotem cab car after one such car derailed in 2015 after hitting a pickup truck in Oxnard. The cab cars' front ends have since been strengthened, so the BNSF locomotives have been returned to that railroad.*