



# The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 45, ISSUE 3

May-June 2019

## Calendar

### Monday, May 27

Board of Directors Meeting  
6:30 PM Saugus Station

### Monday, June 3

Deadline for the May-June *Dispatch*

### Monday, June 24

Board of Directors Meeting  
6:30 PM Saugus Station

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

## President's Message

by Alan Pollack



In the November-December, 2012 issue of the *Heritage Junction Dispatch* (Volume 38, Issue 6), I told the story of the Johnstown Flood of May, 1889, and pointed out many similarities to the

story of the St. Francis Dam disaster. Earlier that year, I had taken a trip to Johnstown, Pennsylvania, to visit the site of the worst dam disaster in American history, a flood that decimated the industrial town of Johnstown, killing well over 2000 people. There I witnessed the Johnstown Flood National Memorial, replete with a National Park Service visitor center and museum, documentary films and ranger tours. Then it dawned on me...why not do this for the site of the second greatest dam disaster in

American history (and second worst disaster in California history) right here in San Francisquito Canyon? I completed the article by stating "At the St. Francis dam site there is...nothing but the ruins. While it is a national remembrance well deserved in Johnstown, perhaps the St. Francis deserves similar recognition. Can we in the Santa Clarita Valley make that happen?"

### The Forgotten Disaster

The St. Francis Dam had been built by Los Angeles hero and water czar William Mulholland. Completed in 1926, the St. Francis Dam tragically collapsed just before midnight on March 12, 1928, sending a debris-laden wall of water 54 miles to the Pacific Ocean, leaving in its wake over 400 deaths and wanton destruction of property. Los Angeles in the 1920s was a booming city with dreams of becoming one of the elite cities of

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

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## President's Message

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the world. The dam disaster served as a black mark against this ambitious vision of greatness, and a black mark against their hero Mulholland. Thus the city went to great lengths to bury the memory of the disaster and to forget.

And forget they did, for by the 1960s most people in Los Angeles were not even aware that such a calamity had taken place in their beautiful megalopolis. But there were some who remembered. Certainly the survivors of the disaster and the families of the victims remembered. And some local historians remembered. First there was Santa Paula historian and author Charles F. Outland, who published his landmark book "Man-Made Disaster, The Story of St. Francis Dam" in 1963. Later there were other researchers and historians exploring the disaster, men like J. David Rogers, Chair, Geological Engineering, University of Missouri-Rolla, who studied and determined the sequence of events that caused the dam to collapse. There was the "Dam Man", Frank Rock, a local St. Francis expert who for many years was one of the few keeping the memories of the disaster alive by delivering yearly lectures at the Historical Society, and by leading bus tours to the dam site.

### Bringing The Disaster Back into Public View

More recently there were Donald C. Jackson, Professor of History at Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania, and Norris Hundley, Jr., Professor of History at UCLA. They originally wrote an article for the journal "California History" in 2004 called "Privilege and Responsibility, William Mulholland and the St. Francis Dam Disaster", in which they explored the culpability of Mulholland in contributing to the dam's collapse. In 2015, they published a more extensive story of the dam disaster called "Heavy Ground: William Mulholland and the St. Francis Dam Disaster."

Shortly thereafter, writer and filmmaker Jon Wilkman published "Floodpath: The Deadliest Man-Made Disaster of 20th-Century America and the Making of Modern Los Angeles".

In 2012, California State University Anthropology Professor James Snead and his graduate student Ann Stansell began the Forgotten Casualties project to document and tell the stories of all the victims of the disaster. This culminated in Stansell's August, 2014 master's thesis "Memorialization and Memory of Southern California's St. Francis Dam Disaster of 1928", a tremendous historical accomplishment in which, among other

ground-breaking research items on the disaster's history, she compiled the most accurate listing of dam victims which has ever been accomplished.

### The Impossible Dream

Shortly after I came up with the idea for a National Memorial for the St. Francis Dam site back in 2012, I met up with community activist and Community Hiking Club Executive Director (and current Historical Society Board member) Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel. She had the legislative expertise that I lacked to get a bill through Congress, having successfully pushed through legislation to designate hundreds of thousands of acres of wilderness in California. We have been working on this dream ever since. We initially formed a committee consisting of myself, Dianne, Leon Worden, Laurene Weste, Frank Rock, Ann Stansell, and Don Ray to explore the long-shot possibility of creating a National Memorial.

We had our first success in 2014, when Dianne convinced Congressman Buck McKeon to introduce House bill H.R.5357, The Saint Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Act, just prior to his retirement from Congress. The next year, new Congressman Steve Knight reintroduced the bill as H.R.3153, the Saint Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial and Castaic Wilderness Act, which in 2016 morphed into H.R.5244, the Saint Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Act. I had the privilege of accompanying Congressman Knight to Washington DC on May 24, 2016, to testify before the Subcommittee on Federal Lands of the House Natural Resources Committee to promote the National Memorial bill. In 2017, Knight, along with his co-sponsor Congressman Julia Brownley of Ventura, reintroduced the bill as H.R.2156. Later that year, California Senators Kamala Harris and Dianne Feinstein introduced the Senate version of the bill, S 1926, to provide for a National Memorial and



*Bill signing: March 12, 2019*

National Monument at the dam site. H.R.2156 was unanimously passed in the House on July 31, 2018, but passage through the Senate proved more difficult, and the bill ran out of time at the end of 2018.

Happily, the story continued beyond the end of 2018. On February 6, 2019, newly elected Congressman Katie Hill reintroduced the bill as her first piece of legislation, H.R.1015. Hill stated "The St. Francis Dam Disaster took place 10 miles north of what is now my hometown of Santa Clarita. In honor of the hundreds of lives lost, this Memorial

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## President's Message

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will uplift the stories of the tragedy and serve as a constant reminder that our infrastructure is deeply important to our community's safety and security. I am thankful to my neighbor, Congresswoman Julia Brownley, for co-sponsoring this legislation, and for our Senators Kamala Harris and Dianne Feinstein for their support in the Senate." Along with reintroducing a stand-alone bill in the Senate, Harris was successful in getting the National Memorial bill included in a massive lands bill package S.47, the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act. S.47 passed the Senate by a vote of 92-2 on February 12, 2019. The House followed through by passing the bill on February 26, 2019, by a vote of 363-62.

### The Dream Becomes Reality

And now, I am proud to announce that on March 12, 2019, on the 91<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the St. Francis Dam Disaster, S.47 was signed into law by the President of the United States, officially creating the 353 acre St. Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial and National Monument. This forgotten tragic episode in the history of Southern California has finally gotten the recognition that it has always deserved, along with the memories of the over 400 victims who lost their lives on that horrific night. We have many people to thank for this accomplishment, including all those mentioned above. I would like to especially thank Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel, Councilwoman Laurene Weste, Michael Murphy, and the City Council and city of Santa Clarita for their efforts to bring this project to a successful conclusion, along with our media mogul, SCVTV President and Historical Society Vice President Leon Worden. Also, thanks to the thousands of Santa Clarita residents who wrote us letters of support to send to Congress.

Now we enter a second phase of the project. Our ultimate goal is to build a visitors' center at the dam site, along with a memorial wall with the names of all the victims of the disaster. This will be equally as challenging as getting the National Memorial designation. Congress will not be funding this National Memorial, instead we will be depending on private donations. To this end, we are creating a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, The St. Francis Dam National Memorial Foundation, with the mission to raise the funds to build the National Memorial in San Francisquito Canyon. The National Memorial and Monument will be run by the US Forest Service. They will depend on our funding to build and administer the Memorial. We will be meeting with the Forest Service in the next few weeks to get the ball rolling on a plan. We will be depending on our community to help us complete this noble endeavor. Stay tuned...

## From SCVHistory.com Jan 28, 2019

Three members of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society were thanked by the City of Santa Clarita for their work to memorialize the victims of the 1928 St. Francis Dam disaster.

The former dam in San Francisquito Canyon, part of the L.A. City aqueduct system, collapsed just before midnight Monday, March 12, 1928. Nearly 13 billion gallons of water were unleashed on sleepy residents from Saugus to the sea. An estimated 411 people perished in the flood. It was California's second deadliest disaster after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

The St. Francis Dam Disaster site is a state historic landmark but has never been recognized at the federal level, even though it was America's worst civil engineering failure of the 20th Century and prompted dam safety measures that are still utilized today.

City Councilwoman Laurene Weste presented certificates to Historical Society directors Alan Pollack, Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel, and Ann Stansell for their efforts to raise public awareness of the victims who paid for the development of Los Angeles with their lives.

Stansell was the first researcher to put names to casualty numbers in a comprehensive manner. As a graduate student at California State University, Northridge, she spearheaded the "[Forgotten Casualties Project](#)," which identified each individual victim (some of whom may never be known) and determined their final resting places. Stansell holds a master's degree in anthropology and now works as a National Park Service archaeologist.

Pollack, president of the Historical Society and a medical doctor by profession, came up with the idea to have the disaster site designated a national memorial after visiting a similar dam disaster site in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, which has the federal designation.

Pollack teamed up with Erskine-Hellrigel, president of the local Community Hiking Club and a veteran promoter of environmental legislation, to draft and lobby for passage of the [Saint Francis Dam Disaster Memorial Act](#). The act cleared the House of Representatives in the last congressional session and has been reintroduced in the Senate this year.

The legislation, which incorporates Stansell's and others' research, would designate 353 acres of already federally-owned Forest Service land as the memorial site and would accommodate a visitors center to be built with privately-raised funds. Pollack and Erskine-Hellrigel have established the St. Francis Dam National Memorial Foundation for that purpose and are actively seeking monetary pledges.

See photo, page 10

## History Comes Alive in the Heritage Valley

by Maria Christopher

As you head west out Highway 126 from Santa Clarita today, you probably think about the changes underway, the development, the changing landscape, the future. However, next time, why not reflect upon the past, and the rich history of this road and valley. The Santa Clara River Valley from the Los Angeles County- Ventura County border to the City of Ventura has been branded for tourism purposes as the Heritage Valley.

The Heritage Valley is Santa Clarita's big back yard! It offers opportunities to explore many aspects of our local history... oil, agriculture, the railroad, and of course, the many cultures that contributed to this area.

Today State Route 126 is known as the Korean War Veteran's Memorial Highway. However, did you know, centuries ago it was part of the Native American trade route system, the main route from the San Joaquin Valley to the sea? Kashtuk (Castaic) was a major crossroads, and from about 500 AD many Chumash and Tataviam villages were established along the fertile banks of the Santa Clara River. One such Tataviam village was Kamulos. Later, during the Mission period, this area was part of the San Fernando mission lands, Rancho San Francisco. This was the land of the vaquero, and it is said that the Spanish padres trained the natives to herd the cattle and wild horses.

This road was part of El Camino Real, the name given to roads that linked the missions, in this case Mission San Fernando and Mission Santa Buenaventura.

After the San Fernando Mission was secularized in 1839 under the military leadership of Antonio del Valle, he received a Mexican land grant of over 48,000 acres that included all of Santa Clarita and extended to Piru creek. He established his Estancia on a hillside where Six Flags is today. When he passed away two years later, roughly 1,800 acres of the land grant went to his eldest son, Ignacio, who named his rancho Camulos, after the Native American village Kamulos, at that site. In 1853, construction began on the main adobe, which still stands at Rancho Camulos today.

After the severe damage to the Rancho Camulos buildings in the 1994 Northridge earthquake, a non-profit museum

was formed to preserve this historical treasure. This group's efforts eventually resulted in 40 acres containing the historically significant buildings being designated as a National Historic Landmark, the only such designation in Ventura County. You can take a docent-led tour there most weekends. On May 4, there will be a dedication of a reconstructed Tataviam village, which was constructed primarily by Tataviam descendants using traditional materials and methods. On June 15, you can join in a "Days of Wine and Spirits" event to learn about the history of winemaking in Ventura County.

As you continue down the road you will come to the community of Piru, which is a favorite with film makers and the gateway to Lake Piru, with its camping and water sports opportunities. Nearby is Bennett's Honey Farm that offers free wine tasting and local honey. In late June they will host a Honey Festival.

The next town is Fillmore, now most noted as the "Home of the Movie Trains", the Fillmore and Western Railway. They offer a wide assortment of scenic and themed vintage train rides year-round. You can also explore historic downtown with its numerous antique stores and the Fillmore Historical Museum, as well as a winery.

A few miles farther is historic Santa Paula, which is said to have more museums per capita than New York City. They include Agriculture, Art, Aviation, and Oil museums. Take a walk through the downtown area with its interesting murals and architecture, shop at the unique antique and boutique stores, and enjoy live theatre and the diverse restaurants. On May 4, there will be a traditional Cinco de Mayo street festival.

Your journey through this rural agricultural area and its small towns will lead to discoveries of farms, produce stands, and nurseries along the valley floor, and nearby mountains that are home to the Sespe Wilderness and Hopper Mountain Condor Sanctuary.

Experience the rich history of this part of the Santa Clara River Valley, the Heritage Valley. For more information, visit [heritagevalley.net](http://heritagevalley.net).

## A Terribly Abbreviated History of SCV Rodeos

by John Boston

*“Cowboys are special, with their own brand of misery...”*

— Willie Nelson

**A**las, it would take a book and then some to share all the grand stories and history of cowboying in the SCV. Since the days of the dons and vaqueros, this valley has had more than its fair share of round-ups, fiestas, barn dances, grizzly bear roping, and that spine-fusing, I.Q.-depleting event: The Rodeo.

In 1921, we had our first modern rodeo here. Around where Newhall Elementary sits today, between 7,000 and 8,000 fans jammed into the ranch there to watch cowboys and cowgirls from all over America compete.

There was no fence, no grandstands. Six local residents who came up with the idea stood in a field with satchels of change and collected the entrance fee.

Included in the price of admission was a “free” barbecue for the first 5,000 attendees. The Rodeo of '21 lasted all day and had everything from thoroughbred handicapping to chuck-wagon racing, and all the other events in between.

At the end of the event, “Cowboy” Bob Anderson, a local movie producer, and his five entrepreneur friends went to the local Bank of Italy, sat on the floor and spent all night counting mostly coins. But when it was all over, each had made a profit of about \$1,000.

The next year, the five (minus Bob) expanded the rodeo, moving it to where Circle J is today and changed the date to the Fourth of July. The rodeo went bust and all five lost money, despite an attendance of over 10,000 people.

A Signal reporter noted: “The SPCA has taken most of the joy out of steer wrestling.” The old form was invented by famed black cowboy, Bill Pickett, easily one of the toughest hombres of the old West. Bill invented this style of vaulting from his horse, grabbing the steer by the horns, twisting them 180°, then biting the steer on the lips to pull it down. Talk about liking your steak rare...

In 1923, the rodeo moved to the future home of the Baker Arena (Saugus Speedway) and moved the date back to the end of April. They made money; the Newhall Rodeo of 1923 was absolutely epic.

More than 8,000 folks who enjoyed things cowboy showed up for the third annual Newhall Rodeo. The festivities started with a parade through town, followed by a huge barbecue. A

couple of local cowpokes took top money. Leonard Cesena (whose family still hails from these parts) was first in steer riding, and Hank Wertz Jr. was top man in the calf roping.

Local rancher Fat Jones supplied much of the rodeo stock. Fat, you might recall, had the ranch over by Calgrove, and it was on that acreage later on where he would discover a complete sabretooth tiger skeleton perfectly preserved. Many of the eyes were on the celebrities. Three of the biggest movie stars on the planet were here: Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and Tom Mix.

We arrested a rather large gang of ticket counterfeiters at the rodeo, too. Our cops caught up with them early: About 25 con men had sold \$264 worth of the bogus entry passes.

Over the years, the local rodeo would become world-famous, attracting tens of thousands of people per day and turning the sleepy little Santa Clarita Valley into a parking lot.

Here’s a little time line to help you picture things:

- In 1923, shoe baron C.H. Baker came up with the idea for a big Southern California rodeo. (His brother, Roy, was involved in western sports.) C.H. built the original wooden stadium and a grand home on the property, owning it until 1931.
- That year, Baker sold his ranch to one of Hollywood’s biggest stars, Hoot Gibson, and a business partner, Salle Eilers. They owned it until 1935.
- Then, Paul Hill took over operation of the ranch. Paul was done in by the weather in 1937, when we had a flood of Old Testament proportions. The Santa Clara River changed course and wiped out Soledad Canyon Road, along with the ranch and stadium. There was no rodeoing there from 1937 to '40.
- In 1940, young Art Perkins, son of valley historian A.B., got the idea to bring back the rodeo, albeit on a smaller level. However, with the help of a local lawyer, Arthur Miller (Nope, not Marilyn Monroe’s hubbie.) they took over the Jauregui Ranch in Placerita and thousands attended.
- Same year, 1940, multi-millionaire rancher “Big” Bill Bonelli bought The Baker/Gibson Ranch and repaired the damages of the Flood of '37, and next year the first Newhall-Saugus Rodeo returned with a vengeance.

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## John Boston Article

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In the 1930s and 1940s, a Who's Who of Hollywood came out to sit in the stands: Gary Cooper, Clark Gable (who used to take roping lessons from Placerita's Andy Jauregui), Carol Lombard, W.C. Fields, Errol Flynn — the list is almost endless. Cowboy star Buck Jones attended frequently. Buck would die with two of my uncles in the infamous 1942 Coconut Grove Fire in Boston. It was the deadliest nightclub disaster in American history, claiming 493 lives and wounding hundreds.

The 1940 rodeo featured a chariot race between Hoot Gibson and Tom Mix through the streets of downtown Newhall. Mix won. (Mix, by the way, named his daughter, Thomasina. At least it wasn't Thomasina Mix — *Junior*...)

The next year, more than 75,000 people would attend the event on Soledad Canyon Road.

Hauntingly similar to events of today, during World War II they held the number of fans down to just 5,000. Authorities worried terrorists or spies would bomb Newhall's typically larger gatherings.

While they weren't household names, over the years, we have been home to many Hall of Fame and otherwise famous cowboys, too, who competed in the events. A few of the prize winners even had other jobs.

Slim Pickens? The big, gangly western character actor of a hundred or so films? The cowboy who rode the A-bomb while yelling "Yee-HAAAHH!!!" in "Dr. Strangelove"? He competed in several Newhall-Saugus rodeos in the 1940s and '50s. If memory serves me well, he took a second one year in the wild-cow-milking contest. That's where you have to corner a range girl cow and fill up a quart milk bottle for time. Good way to lose a hat and the head in it.

In 1953, a young handsome cowpoke named Ben Johnson who sometimes lived in Placerita Canyon took top money in the calf roping event. Johnson would later co-star in many westerns, including "Shane," and would later win a little bigger prize than the '53 calf-roping belt buckle. Ben won an Oscar for best supporting actor in "The Last Picture Show."

Andy Devine was a frequent visitor to the big rodeos of his day. He was the sidekick on the Wild Bill Hickcock TV show of the 1950s who always creaked at the beginning: "Hey Wild Bill! Wait for me!"

Andy had reason to be in the area. He had owned the little Newhall International Airport.

There was some Hollywood actor type who wasn't allowed to risk his neck in the hard-core end of rodeoing. He did

take a first in the parade event before the event. I seem to recall his name was John Wayne, or something like that. The Duke was also one of the directors of the Newhall Rodeo Association in the 1940s.

The area was rich with so many characters, too. Hutch Blunts of the Triple Bull Ranch up Soledad was a rodeo performer who had a little more smarts than most. In the off season, he invited a friend — Cid Cequella — to stay with him. Cid was a world-renowned circus performer and acrobat famous for being able to land on his feet from any position. Hutch had Cid teach him how to land boots first from any angle off a bronco.

There was a bronc rider who lived up Sand Canyon in the 1940s and made the national circuit. His name was Belter Tuler, and he was bowlegged. Tuler was his own PR agent, circulating fliers billing himself as "The Cowboy Who Is Curved To Fit The Horse." Belter said he got the idea from a wristwatch ad.

Sam Garrett, owner of the Circle G Ranch in Sand Canyon in the 1950s, was a seven-time world champion calf roper.

Roxie McIntosh was one of the world's top women bronc riders. She had to take medical leave for a while during the 1973 circuit; Roxie was pregnant.

Alas, progress reared its ugly head and the great crowds of the Newhall-Saugus rodeos were now a distant roar. A few times, we've tried to revive the tradition. We used to have rodeos from time to time at the old Frontier Days celebrations in the 1960s into the 1990s.

In 1982, I remember, they held a smallish rodeo at the short-lived Rivendale complex where Towsley Canyon Park is today on The Old Road.

Right after Merle Haggard sang "The Star Spangled Banner," an amazingly knock-down, knuckle-bitingly, eye-wateringly gorgeous buxom and unfettered cowgirl stood. She offered a rebel yell and lifted her blouse, exposing some serious anatomy the size of matching world globes from my 6th-grade class.

Now that was a good rodeo.

*Local John Boston is the most prolific humor writer in world history. Look for his Time Ranger column in Sunday's Signal and his History of The Signal in Sunday's paper.*

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## What's in a Name?

by Margi Bertram



He was born Vincenzo in Angri, Salerno, Italy, on March 28, 1892. When he was two, his parents migrated to the United States (via Austria-Hungary), part of a surge of people fleeing the poverty and lack of opportunity in southern Italy

for the New World. The family settled in the Navy Yard section of downtown Brooklyn, New York. His father was a barber by trade, and his mother was a seamstress. His father could read and write, giving him an advantage over many of his fellow immigrants, so he was able to land a job at a grocery store frequented by Italian immigrants. After a few years, and a few more children, his father was running a barber shop, and the family lived in quarters above the shop. As the family adapted to their new home, they anglicized their names, and Vincenzo became James.

He was a determined boy with big plans. Apparently bored with life in Brooklyn, and as was done at the time, James left home in 1908, at the age of 16. Traveling to the Midwest, he literally joined the circus. He was strong, athletic, and loved being outdoors and away from the city. Attempting to fit in, he worked hard to lose his Italian accent, and if asked about his dark hair and olive complexion, he claimed to be part Mexican or Native American.

Then the United States entered WWI. James joined the army and served in France, rising to the rank of lieutenant, and apparently was an excellent marksman. He received a medal from General John Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Force.

Returning from the war in 1919, James settled in Homer, Nebraska. Now 27, he set out to change his life. He cut ties with his family in New York City and changed his name to Richard Joseph Hart, modeling himself after our friend, silent film star William S. Hart, even borrowing his last name.

James, now Richard, did odd jobs to survive. In May of that year, when rescuing local residents from a flood, he met a young lady named Kathleen Winch. They fell in love, married a few months later, and eventually had four sons.

The year 1920 brought Prohibition to the nation, making it a crime to manufacture, sell, transport, or traffic alcohol. That summer, Richard Hart received a commission to be a Prohibition Agent from the Governor of Nebraska. Soon he was raiding stills and confiscating moonshine, and became known as a "Prohibition Cowboy."

Richard's success as an undercover agent did not go unnoticed, and he received a job with the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs, with the task of eliminating liquor manufacturing on reservations. He became known as a tough, effective agent, often traveling to crime scenes on horseback.

While on assignment in the fall of 1923, Richard accidentally shot and killed an innocent man. The victim was white, rather than Native American, and in those days that became more problematic. He was charged with manslaughter, but a coroner's jury found him not guilty, determining that the shooting was justified. However, the damage was done, and Richard's reputation suffered from it.

After laying low for a while, in 1924 Richard decided to initiate contact with his family, from which he had long been estranged.

This is where the story gets even more interesting. The truth was that the man who achieved a modicum of celebrity as Richard J. "Two Gun" Hart, the reincarnation of the Old West lawman, was not a mixed-blood Oklahoma cowboy. His name was actually James Vincenzo Capone, brother of Alphonse "Al" Capone, the foremost racketeer and gangster of the Prohibition era. In some ways, he was similar to his famous brother – both were strong-willed, and they both liked guns. As Laurence Bergreen wrote in his book, *Capone: The Man and the Era*, "Each brother personified one aspect of a duality deep in the Capone family's collective psyche; one choosing to become an outlaw, the other a lawman, each a mirror of the other."

After this successful initial family visit, Richard began making the trip to Chicago on a regular basis. When reporters figured out who he was, they pushed him to make a statement, "If it came down to it, would you choose family or the law?" Richard stated that he would arrest any of his family if they bootlegged in Nebraska, but as long as the Capone clan remained in Chicago, he would turn a blind eye to their activities. After the initial flurry of press, everyone largely forgot about Richard for decades.

By the early 30s, with Prohibition on the way out and Richard approaching middle age, he began to find it difficult to make a living. None of his jobs paid well, so he took to working odd jobs to make ends meet.

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## What's in a Name?

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Ironically, as Richard struggled in the 30s, he would have been aware of the rise of his brothers within the Chicago mob world, with Al especially becoming especially notorious selling illegal liquor, and visibly ignoring the law. As suggested by Bergreen, "Richard was determined to differentiate himself from [his family] and not merely by changing his name. If they found themselves on the wrong side of the law, he would make certain to be on the right side." Richard went to Chicago to see his family, hat in hand. He was given cash, and these trips became more regular.

By 1940, Richard Hart was broke. Continuing to take money from his family during periodic visits, Richard never expressed remorse for abandoning the Capone clan for so many years.

In the early 1950s, as the IRS began investigating another Capone brother, Ralph, the connection to Richard resurfaced, again causing a media circus. Everyone seemed to forget that they had already exposed Richard during family visits decades prior. James Capone/Richard Hart was subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury in Chicago. By this time he was 60 years old, overweight, had diabetes, and walked with a cane. He testified, but died shortly thereafter of a heart attack, on October 1, 1952. He had outlived his younger, better-known brother Al by five years.

*Primary source: The Big Con: Great Hoaxes, Frauds, Gifts, and Swindles in American History by Nate Hendley*



## Some of Our Most Dedicated Docents



Anna Kroll



RuthAnne Murthy



Anna Schindler



Gordon Uppman

*Docents seen with Alan Pollack*



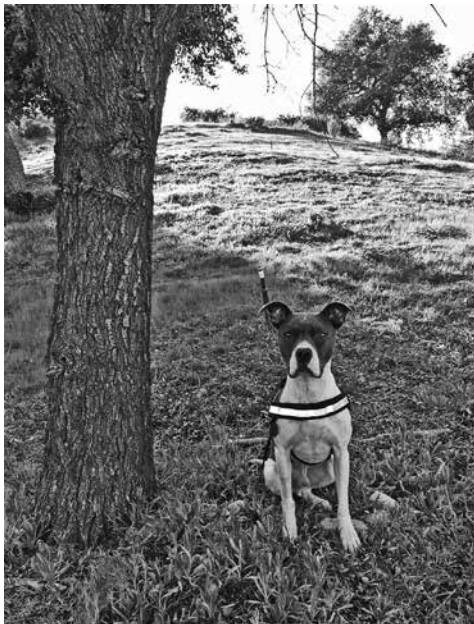
## Canine Scent Work at Heritage Jct. by Cathy Martin

I'm sure you're wondering about the title of this article. What is Canine Scent Work? Airport drug-sniffing dogs? Do they compete with each other?? They might, but that's not what was happening here.

The group holding the event was named Pink Biscuit, a member of the group National Association of Canine Scent Work (NACSW™), which is the official sanctioning and organizing body for the sport of K9 Nose Work. These people train their dogs to find hidden scent pods on a course. All dogs and their handlers are timed during each course, and the dog with the shortest time wins. There were all kinds of dogs here, but surprisingly no Beagles or Blood Hounds.

The event lasted two full days, Feb 23-24, 2019, and a champion was named. This handsome boy sitting next to the tree won the overall competition.

I hope they come back next year. It was a lot of fun watching them work!



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

### Weekend Docents

Cassie Croasmun	Benn Miranda
Ciara Haddy	Annette Moulay
Shea Haddy	RuthAnne Murthy
Debra Haynes	Alan Pollack
Anna Kroll	Anna Schindler
Isabelle Leos	Gordon Uppman
Barbara Martinelli	

Interested in becoming a docent? Visit our website at [www.scvhs.org](http://www.scvhs.org)

### Those who open and close for the docents

Cathy Martin	RuthAnne Murthy
Barbara Martinelli	Alan Pollack

### First Sunday Questers\*

Sandra Cattell	Cathy Martin
Linda Hinz	Diane Milikin
Judy Holland	Dee Roche
Jude Mahon	

### Archiving

Sarah Brewer Thompson	Ann Stansell
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### Grounds

Mike Jarel	Cathy Martin
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\*Don't know who the Questers are? See [www.questers1944.org](http://www.questers1944.org)

### Join the SCV Historical Society Today!

Life Member	\$350.00
Life Member with spouse	\$500.00
Corporate	\$200.00
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Alan Pollack, Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel, and Ann Stansell are recognized by the City of Santa Clarita's Laurene West for their work on the St Francis Dam Memorial on January 28, 2019-

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