



The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

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September - October 2021

Calendar

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

Friday, October 1

Deadline for the November - December *Dispatch*

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

President's Message

by Alan Pollack



Reginaldo Del Valle was a distinguished member of one of Southern California's most prominent Californio families of the rancho period.

ANTONIO AND YGNACIO DEL VALLE

The family legacy started with the arrival of Spanish Lieutenant Antonio Del Valle at Monterey, Alta California, in 1819. As a member of the San Blas Company, he was sent from New Spain to protect the city from Argentine pirates. A few years after Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, Antonio was joined in Monterey by his son Ygnacio Del Valle. The latter came from the Mexican state of Jalisco in 1825. Following

in his father's footsteps, Ygnacio became a soldier in 1828, under the command of Alta California Governor José María de Echeandía. Starting as a Second Lieutenant, he eventually became Captain in control of the Presidio at San Diego and the chief customs house officer. After Echeandía was succeeded as Governor by the unpopular Manuel Victoria in 1831, Ygnacio remained loyal to Echeandía in San Diego, while Antonio served under the new Governor Victoria in Monterey. That same year, a feud developed between Echeandía and Victoria when a small group of wealthy citizens, including Abel Stearns and José Antonio Carrillo, petitioned Victoria for democratic reforms. Victoria branded Stearns and Carrillo as traitors, initially ordering their execution but later banishing them from Alta California.

The feud culminated in the Battle of Cahuenga Pass near Los Angeles on

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President's Message

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December 5, 1831. Antonio and Ygnacio Del Valle fought each other as they served on opposite sides in the battle. Like the Del Valles, numerous other local families opposed each other that day and were not eager to kill their relatives. As a result, the skirmish claimed only two fatalities and a facial injury to Victoria. In the aftermath of the warfare, Victoria resigned as Governor, with Echeandía taking over the position again. The two Del Valle relatives were said to have never spoken to each other again.

After the secularization of the California missions in 1834, Antonio Del Valle was appointed administrator of the San Fernando Mission. He and his wife Jacoba Feliz later petitioned Governor Juan B. Alvarado for a land grant known as the Rancho San Francisco. Alvarado signed over the Rancho to the Del Valles on January 22, 1839. Modern-day people would recognize the Rancho as most of the Santa Clarita Valley. Just two years later, Antonio died without a will and without reconciling with his son Ygnacio, on June 21, 1841.

Upon the death of Antonio, a legal fight ensued between his widow Jacoba Feliz and his son Ygnacio for control of the Rancho San Francisco. As a result, Ygnacio was awarded 13,599 acres at the western end of the Rancho San Francisco, which became known as the Rancho Camulos. After spending a number of years in residence at the Plaza of Los Angeles, during which he served as Mayor of the Pueblo, city councilman, and a California State legislator, Ygnacio and his wife Ysabel Varela Del Valle permanently moved to Camulos in 1861.

REGINALDO DEL VALLE: THE EARLY YEARS AND EDUCATION

Ygnacio and Ysabel Del Valle had six children, one of whom was Reginaldo Francisco Del Valle. Reginaldo was born at the Del Valle's adobe home on the Plaza of Los Angeles on December 15, 1854, and he grew up at the Rancho Camulos. During that time, the Del Valles lost most of their livestock to the severe droughts of 1862-1864. As a result, they also lost the Rancho San Francisco, and Camulos shrank to a mere 1340 acres.

Reginaldo attended high school in 1867 at St. Vincent's College, later to become Loyola Marymount University. He moved on to college in 1871 at the Jesuit institute Santa Clara College at San Jose. After graduating from college in 1873, he became a law student while clerking at a San Francisco law office. He passed the bar in 1877 and was admitted to the practice of law.

REGINALDO DEL VALLE'S POLITICAL CAREER

While practicing as an attorney, Reginaldo also entered the political arena in California, becoming an active member of the Democratic Party. His first elected position was as a California Assemblyman in 1879, after a practically unanimous nomination by the County Convention of Los Angeles. Undoubtedly his most significant accomplishment as an Assemblyman was introducing legislation in 1881, at the urging of former California Governor John G. Downey, to establish a Branch State Normal School in Los Angeles, a college for training teachers. According to the UCLA pamphlet "Remembering UCLA's Latino Forefather: Reginaldo Francisco del Valle," "When his own bill seeking to secure the Branch State Normal School for Los Angeles was defeated in the Assembly, he persuaded a fellow Angeleno colleague in the State Senate to introduce a virtually identical bill in that house. After the Senate passed that bill, Del Valle then successfully guided it to approval in the Assembly as well; and on March 14, 1881, 'An Act to Establish a Branch State Normal School' in Los Angeles was signed into law". Thus originated the idea which eventually became the University of California at Los Angeles. The Normal School started in Downtown Los Angeles on land donated by Del Valle. It moved to Vermont Avenue in 1914. On May 23, 1919, UCLA was officially established as the Southern Branch of the University of California when Governor William D. Stephens signed Assembly Bill 626 into law, transferring control of the Normal School and its assets to the UC Regents.

Representing Los Angeles County, Reginaldo moved on to the State Senate in 1882, where, the following year, he was elected as the youngest ever President of the Senate at age 27. His stint in the Senate lasted until 1886. He was an unsuccessful candidate for Congress from the Sixth District of California in 1884.

The 1889 publication "Pen Pictures From the Garden of the World: An Illustrated History of Los Angeles County, Calif." described Reginaldo's character: "*His official services are owing to his fealty to party interests and a sense of duty to his country rather than to personal ambition. What he may feel of that infirmity of noble minds is impenetrably hidden under a natural modesty that is as striking as it is attractive. Among our many distinguished fellow citizens, there is no one whose character and ability have endeared him to a wider circle of friends, no one who is more warmly esteemed or more cordially respected by those who know him intimately and well or enjoy the privilege of this acquaintance.*"

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At the Democratic State Convention in August, 1890, the Democratic Party nominated Del Valle for California Lieutenant Governor. His running mate for Governor was San Francisco Mayor Edward B. Pond. The Los Angeles Times summed up his candidacy on August 22, 1890: "*With his law partner, Hon. M.E.C. Munday, Senator Del Valle has established an extensive and lucrative practice in his profession and is today recognized by political friends and opponents as an able and honest gentleman, popular as a candidate and equal to whatever position he has been called to fill.*" While favoring his Republican opponents, the Times remained very complimentary towards Del Valle: "*The nomination by the Democratic State Convention of our young fellow-citizen and Native Son, Reginaldo F. Del Valle, for the office of Lieutenant-Governor, was a deserved compliment to the man, to the section and to his race, which will, we are sure, be fully appreciated in Los Angeles and throughout the Southern country. The Times, a Republican paper, takes pleasure in commending Señor Del Valle for his ability, integrity and worth as a gentleman, and will do what it can in a proper way to elect his opponent.*" Unfortunately for Pond and Del Valle, the Times got its way with the narrow victory of the Republicans Henry H. Markman for Governor and John B. Reddick for Lieutenant Governor.

After the gubernatorial loss in 1890, Del Valle no longer sought any other public office, but he remained active as a lecturer on parliamentary law and according to UCLA: "Bilingual and bicultural, he was prominent in southern California's Atlantic-American society and a sought-after figure at social events, and at the same time belonged to many Latino organizations, such as La Junta Patriótica de Juarez, the Original Young Spanish Americans, and the Club Cura Hidalgo. He was a popular speaker at Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence Day celebrations and a source for historical societies and newspaper reporters interested in the real history of Latino California."

REGINALDO'S FAMILY

On September 2, 1890, Reginaldo Del Valle married Helen M. White Caystile in San Francisco. She was the widow of T.J. Caystile, co-owner of the printing plant Mirror Company in Los Angeles. The Mirror Company took over the Los Angeles Daily Times in 1881, hired Harrison Gray Otis as editor, and became the Los Angeles Times newspaper. Caystile brought her daughter Helen into the marriage, who Reginaldo adopted. Together, they also had a daughter Lucretia Del

Valle. After spending her younger years as a stage actress (most notably playing Ramona in the yearly Mission Play at the San Gabriel Mission), Lucretia, like her father, became a Democratic Party activist. She was a California delegate to Democratic National Conventions in 1928, 1936, 1940, and 1956, and vice-chair of the Democratic National Committee in 1937. She also traveled with her husband, Henry F. Grady, who served as United States Ambassador to India and Nepal, Greece, and Iran in the 1940s and 1950s. While in her capacity as the Ambassador's wife, she promoted women's rights in Iran.

REGINALDO AND THE LOS ANGELES PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

One of Reginaldo's most important and final positions began in 1908 as a Los Angeles Public Service Commission member. The Commission was responsible for the city's water, power, and other public services. During a twenty-one-year stint on the Commission, mostly as its President, Del Valle oversaw Chief Engineer William Mulholland's construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct. He was instrumental in negotiating with the angry farmers and ranchers of the Inyo Region during the Owens Valley Water Wars, to broker a peace that allowed the aqueduct to be repaired from bombing incidents and for the project to move toward completion.

Upon his death, both the Ventura County Star-Free Press and Los Angeles Times recognized his essential contributions to the acquisition of water for Los Angeles. Said the Star-Free Press: "*By his service on the Los Angeles water and power commission for 21 years, however, he developed a mighty water system for the southern area. He was largely responsible for water coming from faucets instead of from the river in Los Angeles. The city's present system of reservoirs, power dams, water distribution, and the aqueduct from Owens Valley came from those early day dreams.*" The Los Angeles Times, in an editorial, stated: "*To him, as much as to anyone, Los Angeles owes the mighty aqueduct that was built to tap the water sources of the Sierra. His twenty-one years of service with the municipal agency responsible for our water and power development attest the esteem in which his fellow citizens held him.*"

REGINALDO'S HISTORICAL INTERESTS

Reginaldo also developed a keen interest in the history of the city of Los Angeles and California. As a founding member of journalist Charles Lummis' Landmarks Club, he helped

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refurbish and reconstruct California's deteriorating historic Spanish missions. He was also a founding member of the Southern California Historical Society and is credited with the idea to install mission bells along the highways making up the El Camino Real. In 1887, he participated in founding the fraternal organization Ramona Parlor of the Native Sons of the Golden West. He also delivered a rousing speech on March 9, 1930, in Placerita Canyon at the dedication of the Oak of the Golden Dream, defending the Francisco Lopez gold discovery in 1842 as the real first discovery of Gold in California history. In the speech, he stated: "Now, after two hundred years, it has been said by historians that an English navigator said there was Gold in abundance here. There is no record, however, of its having been found. About one hundred years later, however, Gold was definitely discovered, and it was at the time and place, and by the person narrated in this beautiful document read to you, and we appreciate it greatly. Therefore it is a very important thing. Of course, there was no noise made except in the local part of the State when Francisco Lopez discovered Gold here. There was no promotion scheme in its development. When Marshall discovered Gold in the North, he also discovered some good advertisers — almost as good as the Real Estate advertisers of Los Angeles! — He found Mr. Sutter and those who were building up the site of San Francisco."

Reginaldo Del Valle passed away from a heart attack on September 20, 1938. He joined his deceased parents Ygnacio and Ysabel Del Valle, at the Calvary Cemetery in East Los Angeles. After Ygnacio died in 1880 at age 72, he had been initially buried at a small cemetery at Rancho Camulos. Shortly before her death in 1905, Ysabel chose to have Ygnacio's remains moved to Calvary Cemetery, where the two are buried in the same coffin.

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Remembering UCLA's Latino Forefather: Reginaldo Francisco del Valle, Presented By CESLAC, UCLA Center For the Study of Latino Health & Culture, 2019



Reginaldo F Del Valle, 1913, as an L.A. Public Service commissioner

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A Short History of UFO Sightings in the SCV

by John Boston

Coming in summer of 2021, our award-winning local author is launching his own publishing company, John Boston Books (johnbostonbooks.com). The initial offering is the first of a three-part series: "Ghosts, Ghouls, Myths & Monsters — Santa Clarita, The Most Haunted Town in America." This is Chapter 10.

QUESTION: Where would an alien from another dimension park his, her or its space craft in Santa Clarita?

ANSWER: Next to a parking meteor...

— Anonymous

Our Santa Clarita Valley is famous and infamous for many things, including a long-ago bar and restaurant called Tip's. It used to sit atop Hamburger Hill (where Lyons and Pico Canyon collide over Interstate 5?) and was literally one of the most famous bars in all of California. They served epic rum drinks in an aboriginal canoe with 83 straws. Bobby Batugo, head bartender there for years, won several competitions and was literally the reigning Best Bartender in both America and the entire planet.

I bring this up because, except for people staggering out of the long-gone Tip's, I'm not aware of any little green men sightings in the Santa Clarita. But more than a half-century ago, a man and his wife reported seeing a flying saucer hovering over their Newhall house, then, for nearly an hour, doing wild flying patterns in the pre-dawn sky. Here is Fred Trueblood's front-page account, in its entirety, from September 25, 1952; Fred was editor of The Mighty Signal:

CALLING ALL SAUCERS

Flying saucers have been a little tardy in making their appearance above Newhall, but last week, one finally showed up, was duly watched, observed and reported, so now our village has caught up with the rest of the country on this ultra-modern heavenly manifestation.

The observers were Mr. and Mrs. Von Fortenberry of (address left out) Newhall. The time was between 5:30 and 7:00 a.m. Friday morning, Sept. 19.

Looking at the sky to observe the early morning cloud formations, they saw a bright, saucer-like disc, moving slowly beneath the clouds. They thought at first that the disc was the morning star, but soon realized that it was too large for this classification.



The Fortenberrys say that the saucer at times stood still and at other times moved rapidly across the sky, trailing a cloud of vapor. It was visible for about two hours before fading out in daylight.

The Fortenberrys were respected pillars of the community in 1952 and lived here for many years.

Weird coincidence? That same day, several SCV postal workers on their routes reported seeing

several bald eagles in the valley. Except for a scant rare incident, bald eagles hadn't been spotted here in a century.

Fortenberry's 1952 sighting wasn't the first UFO spotted in Santa Clarita. In the oddest of coincidences, a spaceship was seen by yet ANOTHER MEMBER of the clergy.

This event occurred on July 8, 1947. Rev. Clayton C. Root, (no relation to the lovable child vegetable hero in "Guardians of the Galaxy") who lived in Newhall but whose congregation was in North Hollywood, reported: "The saucer moved to the northeast and had a halo around it."

Certainly, one would have liked to read a report containing cattle mutilations, or at least laser swords. Sadly, such details were missing, but Root's friend Ben Schiller, also a minister, saw it too.

Interestingly, this was the day AFTER the 1947 Roswell flying saucer incident in New Mexico. For some reason, that was a banner year for UFO sightings, and southern California was no exception. There were police and FBI reports of a spaceship landing near Redford and Magnolia streets in North Hollywood (not far from Root's church). It was metallic, bright, shaped like a saucer and complete with radio antennas. And, it was 30 inches in diameter.

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John Boston Article

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Almost exactly a decade later, on October 13, 1962, we had another UFO sighting.

THE SCV GOES 'UNDERWATER'

Locals reported seeing the alien space craft, complete with exhaust ports, hovering over the sky. Well. Depends on how you define "hover" and how you define "sky."

Turns out the panicked locals spotted some plexiglass domes used in the filming of the movie, "Underwater City" at the Juniper Tree Rifle Range. For you film buffs, "Underwater City" earned 2 stars and stars no one.

In March of 1967, 20 years after Roswell, an Air Force officer from Edwards reported seeing a UFO hovering over the hills of Saugus. Around the same time, someone "photographed" a flying saucer in Chatsworth that rose over the mountains. The persons at the event claimed the craft "heading straight for us."

Again, I apologize. No details of aliens shrinking people's heads to vole-size or offering to trade beautiful outer space vixen in bikinis for gum. Nope. Sorry.

Turned out that four honor student high school boys from Granada Hills built the UFOs, inflating plastic dry cleaner laundry bags and putting lit candles in them.

Up San Francisquito Canyon, on July 17, 1945, W.R. Haynie reported seeing a UFO. Haynie saw an object hurtling through the post-



midnight skies. He suspected it was either ball lightning or possibly a meteor. The thing landed with a huge, violent explosion somewhere in the lonely canyon, near the wreckage of the great St. Francis Dam.



Joe Rudell saw an orb from the heavens race aflame through the atmosphere and hit Bouquet Canyon in an epic explosion in the winter of 1934. Rudell combed the canyon for months, but it wasn't until May 24, 1934, when he found a 13.5-pound meteorite. The "rock" was about 4 by 6 inches,

very dark and three times heavier than any stone of the same size. It was not affected by a variety of acids poured onto it.

An unofficial UFO report was filed by the U.S. Air Force when pilots spotted an Unidentified Flying Object hovering over Fort Tejon, just north of the SCV, on September 4th, 1945.

The pilots then witnessed the object accelerate at blinding speed, west toward the Pacific. Upper management in the Air Force dismissed the sighting as a "weather balloon," although that wouldn't have accounted for the high rate of speed nor the fact winds would have carried the balloon toward Mojave, not the ocean.

Best-selling novelist and author John Boston has earned more than 100 major awards, mostly for writing about the SCV. His Mr. SCV column appears Fridays in The Signal newspaper and his Time Ranger history column runs Saturdays. Look for several new books soon at thejohnboston.com or johnbostonbooks.com.

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Rancho Camulos Is Back Better than Ever

by Susan Falck

As California's COVID-19 case numbers continue to decline and museums and other public places reopen, Piru's Rancho Camulos Museum is pleased to open its doors for both indoor and outdoor public tours. Despite the pandemic – or perhaps because of it – RCM has used the lockdown period to make significant improvements that preserve the National Historic Landmark and enhance visitors' experiences. The numerous projects completed over the past 17 months or are currently underway were made possible by the dedication of volunteers and board members who generously shared their time and talents. Here's a look at what has been accomplished since March 2020:

- The ceilings of the Main Adobe parlor and living room have been repaired and painted. No longer will visitors see hanging paint chips in two of the most important rooms at Rancho Camulos, where the story of the del Valle and Rubel families are shared. The new paint brightens the area considerably.
- The 1930s era pond has been refurbished and repaired, thanks to the leadership of volunteers Dianne Cox and Jack Infranca, Castaic residents. The pond, which was added to the schoolhouse lawn by the Rubel family after a trip to the Hoover Dam inspired the children to want a "dam" of their own, is one of the quaintest features of Rancho Camulos. A leak was repaired, the pond thoroughly cleaned, an overgrowth of reeds trimmed back, and new lily pads added. The refurbished pond offers visitors a quiet place for reflection and calm.
- The museum's replica of the historic 19th century grape arbor was completely rebuilt during the summer of 2020 by a team of dedicated volunteers led by Fillmore native Bob Cox. The arbor is a focal point of the museum's grounds, and it recalls the history of grape growing at the ranch as well as how the structure was used by residents more than a century ago to host picnic gatherings under the shade of the leafy vines. Once the arbor was rebuilt, several volunteers successfully trained a new crop of vines

to begin growing; they are well on their way to covering the new arbor.

- Thanks to Santa Clarita Concrete owner Wayne Crawford who generously donated materials and labor, a wall on the northwest corner of the Main Adobe at risk of collapse has been rescued. The museum is indebted to Museum Board Chair Leon Worden for coordinating this important project and fostering a new community partnership for Rancho Camulos.
- The historic winery building, constructed in the late 1860s, has undergone extensive repairs to the exterior brickwork. The building was severely damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake and continues to require maintenance to keep it stable. Thanks to veteran board member Judy Triem for overseeing this project.
- A new irrigation system for the largest of the museum's historic rose gardens was installed, replacing an old system that did not deliver adequate water. The new system, along with much-needed pruning, has worked wonders. We are seeing some of the largest roses there in years.
- The Fillmore Rotary Club generously donated their time to clean up the grounds of the museum, nearly filling a 40-yard dumpster with debris.
- While many physical upgrades and repairs have been made to the museum's buildings and grounds during the pandemic, important work has also been done to better organize and preserve the museum's archival and artifact collection. In the coming months, more of these items will be displayed for a more complete and engaging narrative of the dynamic history of Rancho Camulos.

Come see the many improvements at Rancho Camulos. Individuals can come for docent-led tours on Sunday afternoons from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. Tours for groups of ten or more can be arranged by emailing info@ranchocamulos.org.



RCM volunteer Jack Infranca taking care of the museum's 1930s era pond. Jack and his wife Dianne spent many hours restoring the pond recently, which provides Camulos visitors a scenic area ideal for rest and reflection.



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While Southern California is still dry, areas to the east have received a lot of rain from the monsoon, as seen here just west of Seligman, AZ, in July, 2021