The intersection of San Fernando Road and Sierra Highway is now surrounded by gas stations and fast food joints, but back in January, 1847 it may have been the location of a campsite for John C. Fremont and his troops, who were on their way into the San Fernando Valley to accept the surrender of Mexican troops under the command of General Andres Pico during the Mexican-American War. Fremont had gained fame by leading three expeditions to explore the Western frontier between 1842 and 1846, and he became known as the “Pathfinder”. His expeditions took him along the Oregon Trail and into the Sierra Nevada in California. His guide was the famous frontiersman Kit Carson.

Mexico and its leader General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna had lost their Texas province to the troops of Sam Houston during the Texas Revolution in 1836, which included the famous battle of the Alamo in San Antonio. For the next 10 years, the Republic of Texas would be an independent country. It was annexed into the United States in 1846, but Mexico had never given up the hope of regaining Texas. The Mexican-American war began as a territorial dispute over Texas, but eventually spread throughout the Southwest to include California.

During his third expedition to the West, in 1846, Fremont was sent into California commanding a military unit. He was involved in the Bear Flag Revolt in Northern California and, under orders from Commodore Robert Stockton, also captured Santa Barbara.

Pico had defeated the U.S. troops under General Stephan W. Kearny at the battle.
Talk Planned by Noted Railroad Expert on the Saugus Station
by Alan Pollack

Long-time residents of the Santa Clarita Valley may remember visiting the Saugus Train Station when it was in full operation as a passenger and freight stop on the Southern Pacific Railroad. Newcomers to the Valley most likely know the Station as a historic building in Heritage Junction at William S. Hart Park which now serves as the headquarters and museum for the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society. Mike Jarel has gained extensive knowledge of railroad operations as a long-time engineer for the Union Pacific Railroad. On Saturday, January 12, 2008 at 2:00 PM, Jarel, past Vice President of the Southern Pacific Historical and Technical Society, and author of “The Sunset Limited - Southern Pacific’s Premier Train With a Southern Accent” will turn back the clock and bring the Saugus Train Station back to life when he gives a talk for the Historical Society and describes how the Station was operated in its prime as a stop along the Southern Pacific. Attendees will be transported back in time while seated within the historic Saugus Train Station itself at Heritage Junction in Newhall.

The Southern Pacific railroad developed from the famous Transcontinental Railroad which was completed at Promontory Summit, Utah on May 10, 1869. The western half of the Transcontinental Railroad was built by the Central Pacific Railroad Company run by the “Big Four” railroad magnates: Collis Huntington, Charles Crocker, Leland Stanford, and Mark Hopkins. Upon completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, the Big Four set their sights on California and began buying up a series of small railroads to form the Southern Pacific Railroad. One of those railroads was the San Francisco & San Jose Railroad owned by none other than Henry Mayo Newhall. Newhall’s birthplace of Saugus, Massachusetts was built along the Southern Pacific line linking San Francisco and Los Angeles by rail was completed at Lang Station in Soledad Canyon in September, 1876, with a ceremony that featured Charles Crocker driving in a golden spike. Mr Crocker stated to the crowd of dignitaries “Gentlemen, I am no public speaker, but I can drive a spike!” That same year, the town of Newhall was established right where the Saugus Cafe is located today. Two years later, due to a lack of sufficient water at that site, the whole town packed up and moved down the road to its present location centered around Railroad Avenue and Market Street. When the Southern Pacific decided in 1887 to build a branch line from this valley along the Santa Clara River to Santa Barbara, a new town called Saugus (named after Henry Mayo Newhall’s birthplace of Saugus, Massachusetts) was built on the original location of Newhall and the Saugus Train Station was born. Like many Southern Pacific depots, the Saugus Station was probably built in Sacramento and then transported in pieces to its final destination in Saugus. The original location of the station was on the east side of the current railroad tracks by San Fernando Road, just south of Drayton Street (across the street and just south of the Saugus Cafe.)

Speaking of the Saugus Cafe, many may not know that the Cafe actually was started in 1887 inside the Train Station. It was originally owned by Joseph H. Tolfree and called Tolfree’s Saugus Eating House and Depot Hotel. Tolfree apparently owned a chain of depot restaurants along the Southern Pacific, including Mojave, and Bakersfield. Martin and Richard Wood purchased Tolfree’s restaurant in 1899 and changed the name to the Saugus Cafe. They moved the restaurant across the street to it’s current location in 1905.

The Train Station has been host to two U.S. Presidents. Benjamin Harrison stopped in Saugus in 1891 on a nationwide whistle stop campaign tour (unfortunately for him, he lost to Grover Cleveland in the 1892 election). Theodore Roosevelt passed through the station in 1903, presumably on his way to stay at the Acton Hotel and visit with his friend, California Governor Henry T. Gage, who happened to own some gold mines in the Acton area.

The station has also done duty as a movie location, most notably Charlie Chaplin’s 1923 silent “The Pilgrim”, Frank Sinatra’s 1954 thriller “Suddenly” (shot on location also in downtown Newhall), and the 1989 film “The Grifters” starring Angelica Huston and John Cusack.

Continued on Page 3
Talk on Saugus Station

Continued from page 2

By the 1970's, the Saugus Train Station had lost its importance to the Southern Pacific Railroad. The last passenger train came through in May, 1971, and the east end of the branch to the coast was abandoned. The station was closed down by its last agent, James Guthrie, on November 15, 1978. It was moved to its current location in Heritage Junction on June 24, 1980 after a protracted community effort to save the station. Metrolink bought the line through Santa Clarita in the early 1990's, and Southern Pacific was merged into the Union Pacific Railroad in 1996.

It is amusing to note that while the town of Newhall and the original Newhall Train Depot were started in Saugus (present day), the Saugus Train Station is now located in Newhall. A most confusing turn of events!!

Mike Jarel will share his insider's view as an engineer for the Union Pacific Railroad to give attendees a feel for how the Saugus Train Station was operated during its heyday as a working depot on the Southern Pacific line. The talk will take place within the historic Train Station itself. The general public is welcome, and admission will be free. For more information on this and other upcoming programs from the SCVHS, please call Pat Saletore or Alan Pollack at 661-254-1275. Website: www.scvhs.org.

Children’s Christmas Parade

A Children’s Christmas Parade was put on by the City of Santa Clarita on December 1. No one would have predicted who would be representing the SCVHS in this parade.

We were represented by some of the AVID students who helped with the Heritage Haunt! There they were...dressed in Halloween costumes...with Santa hats, gaily working the crowd! What? But wait, there’s more! They actually won a trophy! “In what category?” you might well ask! MOST HOLIDAY SPIRIT!!!
of San Pasqual in San Diego County in December, 1846. In spite of this victory, Pico the next month saw the writing on the wall and agreed to surrender to the Americans. According to local historian Arthur B. Perkins, Fremont’s expedition may have stopped overnight at the home of the Del Valle family (the former estancia of the San Fernando Mission on a bluff overlooking present day Magic Mountain). From there they proceeded to the San Fernando/Sierra Highway intersection. The next day Fremont took half of his troops over what we now call the Newhall Pass; the remaining troops with artillery wagons took a route to the east of the pass through Grapevine Canyon. They arrived at a ranch house called Campo De Cahuenga (now located on Lankershim Blvd. next to Universal Studios) on January 13, 1847 where Fremont accepted the surrender of Pico’s forces in the Capitulation of Cahuenga, which effectively ended the Mexican War in California. Three years later, California became the 36th state.

Now we are ready to greet the New Year in January, 2008. Hats off to Ed Marg and his Haunt gang for the great success of the 1st annual Heritage Haunt at the Newhall Ranch House. Thousands of people were in attendance, and the Haunted House received rave reviews from the public. By the way folks, due to time limitations, this was actually a scaled down version of what Ed had originally planned to do!! With more time next year, we are hoping for an even bigger and better Haunt. Thank you again to the Haunt people for their tireless efforts and countless hours spent putting this together!!

I would like to welcome our newest member to the Board of Directors, Kristyn Van Wy. Kristyn has done a fantastic job as a docent at the Train Station and brings to the Board great enthusiasm and dedication. We greatly look forward to her participation on the Board.

Speaking of the Board, we will be holding elections for the Board of Directors at our annual General Meeting to be held prior to the lecture scheduled at 2:00 pm on Saturday, January 12, 2008. We would welcome and encourage anyone interested in running for a Board position to let us know at 661-254-1275. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor on the day of the election. The lecture will be by Mike Jarel, long time Union Pacific engineer and past Vice President of the Southern Pacific Historical Society, who will be describing the operations of the Saugus Train Station when it was an active stop on the Southern Pacific Railroad.

Docent E.J. Stephens continues to run our “Friday Night Flickers” program of classic movies with a connection to the SCV. The last show featured Buster Keaton in the silent classic “The General”. Stay tuned for more great ficks!! I’m happy to announce that local dam expert Frank Rock will be returning in March for his annual St. Francis Dam lecture and tour to the dam site. The event is tentatively scheduled for March 9. Details remain to be worked out, but if you are interested in attending this event, please leave your name and contact information with Pat Saleatore at 661-254-1275. This will be the 80th anniversary of the second worst disaster in California history.

Many thanks to Newhall Land and Farming Company for their generous donation of thousands of Tataviam artifacts which were discovered during the construction of the Riverpark project in Soledad Canyon and are now in our possession. The remains of a village were also found on the site and left undisturbed. We would like to commend Newhall Land for their efforts to preserve these important artifacts. They will hopefully help shed new light on the daily lives and customs of these Native Americans of the SCV. Roger Basham will be helping us to sort and catalogue the collection, a portion of which will be placed on display at our museum. A wonderful ceremony to celebrate the artifacts donation was held at the Train Station in November. The ceremony featured dignitaries such as Marlee Lauffer of Newhall Land, City Manager Ken Pulskamp, and City Councilman Tim Ben Boydston. Some of the artifacts were featured in beautiful display cases, and blessings and speeches were done by leaders of the local Fernandeño-Tataviam tribal council.

Representatives of our Society will be attending a December 5 brainstorming session at City Hall aimed at setting in motion a 2008 marketing plan for the Old Town Newhall area. We will also be attending a City Hall Historic Preservation stakeholder meeting on December 10 to discuss the draft version of Historic Preservation code amendments currently being worked on by City representative Alex Hernandez.

Thanks once again for all the great work and dedication of our docents, Board members and other volunteers. See you all at the Train Station.

Alan Pollack
Being open to the public is one of the most important things we do in the Historical Society. This is more difficult than it might appear at first. Without our volunteer docents, we would not have this service at all! They are the faces that represent us to the public.

Many people come into the museum and have absolutely no clue that there was any history in this valley at all. Even people who have lived here for decades come in and exclaim, “I have lived here for 20 years and I didn’t know you were here!” It is almost always about 20 years, too. Why is that? What was happening here 20 years ago? The housing boom of the 1980’s. People moved into their new houses and saw the new city and immediately assumed that it was a new town. Our docents set that notion to rights immediately.

It is not enough that we have the doors open and people come in. Any of our current docents can tell you that. Generally speaking, the people who come in are interested enough to ask questions. Visitors expect that by coming to our museum, they will get to know more about the Santa Clarita Valley. While the level of knowledge varies within the docent group, they can all field most of these questions. Sometimes they are HARD questions. Sometimes I am sent running to a reference book or have to get back to people. Being a docent is not like being Vanna White on Wheel of Fortune. It is a challenge where you “pays your money and ya takes your chances.” Sometimes there are tons of people and it is all you can do to keep up. But other times, it is deathly dull and dusting the cases starts looking like entertainment! Docents sometimes don’t last long. It isn’t a great fit for everyone. But those who have stuck with it are some of our most valuable volunteers. They are the group I turn to when I need help the most. Right now, we have four active docents on our board of directors, including our president, Alan Pollack. It is a pretty impressive group.

I am going to try to add to the group this spring by having a docent training on Sundays, beginning in February. If you or anyone you know wants to be involved with this group of really dedicated volunteers…call me at 254-1275 or email me at pat@scvhistory.com. If we can get our numbers up enough, I would like to see the museum open one weekday a week. I think we can do it!

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Executive Director’s Report

by Pat Saletore

Thank you to the following members who served as docents during November and December:

- Frank Adella
- Phyllis Berman
- Jeff Boultinghouse
- Laurie Cartwright
- Sioux Coghlan
- Sarah Floyd
- Francesca Gastil
- Harold Hicks
- Marla Khayat
- Bill and Karen Limbaugh
- Barbara Martinelli
- Barbara Milteer
- Sandra Neill
- Alan Pollack
- E.J. Stephens
- Konrad Summers
- Gordon Uppman
- Kristyn VanWy
- Michelle Veasman

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Join the SCV Historical Society Today!

Life Member: $350.00
Life Member with spouse: $500.00
Corporate: $200.00
Non-profit: $50.00
Family Member: $50.00
Regular member: $25.00
Senior Member (60+): $15.00
Junior (18 & under): $9.00

Memberships make great gifts for your historically-minded friends and family! To join or renew online, visit http://www.scvhs.org.

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Recent Docents

Thank you to the following members who served as docents during November and December:

- Frank Adella
- Phyllis Berman
- Jeff Boultinghouse
- Laurie Cartwright
- Sioux Coghlan
- Sarah Floyd
- Francesca Gastil
- Harold Hicks
- Marla Khayat
- Bill and Karen Limbaugh
- Barbara Martinelli
- Barbara Milteer
- Sandra Neill
- Alan Pollack
- E.J. Stephens
- Konrad Summers
- Gordon Uppman
- Kristyn VanWy
- Michelle Veasman
A collection of Tataviam artifacts from excavations at the River Village site was recently donated to the Historical Society by Newhall Land. The artifact conveyance ceremony took place at the Train Station on November 15th, with several speakers including Marlee Lauffer and Steve Zimmer of Newhall Land, Dr. Alan Pollack of the Historical Society, and Rudy Ortega Jr. of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

Since this well-attended event, ten more boxes of artifacts have been turned over to the Historical Society, and after they have been examined several new displays will be arranged for public viewing. It is our understanding that a site report will also be made available to us in the future, and this will allow the Society to add further information to our displays. The majority of artifacts represented are lithic materials, including manos and metates, hammerstones, steatite beads, and projectile points. Several Anthropology instructors from College of the Canyons will be helping with the development of the displays, which we hope will be ready by early in 2008.

Please come and ask to see these special new pieces of our local history at the Saugus Train Station.
Bob Mitchell, one of the world’s last living links to the silent movie era, thrilled a packed house at the historic Saugus Train Station on Friday, December 7, 2007, as he accompanied Buster Keaton’s silent comedy classic “The General” on the piano. The film was presented by the SCVHS during “Friday Night Flickers,” a bi-monthly series of silent, revival, and Santa Clarita Valley-based films. The audience laughed loudly and often as Buster rescued his girl and his train, while Mitchell accentuated every emotion on the keyboard.

Mitchell, who turned 95 in October, has been playing the piano since he was four, and first accompanied a silent film in 1924, when he was 12-years-old. After the arrival of talkies put Mitchell and the other silent organists out of work he became a men’s and boys’ choir director. The “Mitchell Choir Boys” toured the world for decades and appeared in over 100 films, including the 1944 Best Picture winner, “Going My Way.”

For many years Bob’s voice was familiar to L.A. radio audiences as he hosted several popular music programs. He still maintains a very busy schedule, appearing regularly at silent film theaters and festival, and at various churches in L.A. He is currently in the process of forming yet another choir!

Because it was Pearl Harbor Day, Mitchell honored all the veterans in the room (including himself) before the film with the song “I Love A Parade,” which he played and sang. The audience showed its appreciation by offering Mitchell a standing ovation at the conclusion of the evening.

“I think that was our first standing ovation here,” commented Alan Pollack, President of the SCVHS.

The “Friday Night Flickers” program is tentatively scheduled to continue at 7:30 PM on Friday, February 1, 2008, when the 1956 rock ‘n’ roll musical “The Girl Can’t Help It,” starring Jayne Mansfield, will be presented as a tribute to rockabilly legend Gene Vincent.

Vincent, who died in 1971 at the age of 36 and is buried in Newhall’s Eternal Valley Cemetery, was most famous for his hit “Be-Bop-A-Lula.” Vincent and his band, the Blue Caps, performed the song in the film. Several other legendary performers appear as well, including Eddie Cochran and Little Richard.

For anyone wishing to see Bob Mitchell perform in person in the future, he has agreed to play for a special Flicker night in early March to commemorate the 85th anniversary of Charlie Chaplin’s 1923 film “The Pilgrim.” (“The Pilgrim” was partially filmed inside the Saugus Train station, when it was at its original location across from the Saugus Cafe.) An evening of entertainment is being planned to celebrate the occasion, with dinner, exhibits, and music. Details of these events will be posted on the SCVHS.ORG website as they become available.

A Message from the Hart

Many of you may know that the Hart Museum provides guided tours to the public Wednesday through Sunday, but did you know that we also have special events throughout the year?

Imagine yourself as a guest of William S. Hart entering his living room to attend a special performance by talented music artists. With our next performance on Saturday, February 2nd, the Hart Museum will be bringing the spirit of jazz to the American West! We invite you to come hear Carlos Cuevas’ jazz trio in the warmth of the William S. Hart Museum. Cuevas, a pianist and composer, has been hailed as “accomplished and inventive” by Down Beat magazine. An artists’ reception follows the performance.

Please call the Museum at 661-254-4584 for ticket availability and reservations. Members are $20; nonmembers are $25.
Christmas Open House
December 8

The Gift Shop Ready for the Holidays

Harold Hicks as Santa and Girl Scouts at the Heritage Haunt Saloon

The Heritage Junction Dispatch
P.O. Box 221925
Newhall, CA  91322-1925
info@scvhistory.com

Telephone (661)254-1275
Headquarters: Saugus Train Station
24101 San Fernando Road, Newhall
Open to the public each Saturday and Sunday 1:00 to 4:00 PM
Kingsberry House open the first Sunday of each month from 1:00 to 4:00 PM

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“Preserving the best of the past for the good of the future”

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