



The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 34, Issue 2

March-April 2008

Calendar

Saturday, March 8

Talk on St Francis Dam disaster by Frank Rock, free; 1:00 PM Saugus Station. See the President's Report and page 4.

"A Celebration of Chaplin," featuring a screening of "The Pilgrim." Saugus Station, 7:30 PM. See page 4.

Sunday, March 9

Talk on St Francis Dam disaster by Frank Rock followed by a tour of the the dam site, \$35; 1:00 PM Saugus Station. See the President's Report and page 4.

Monday, March 24

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Friday, April 4

Friday Night Flickers, "Safety Last," starring Harold Lloyd; 7:30 PM Saugus Station. See page 4.

Tuesday, April 1

Deadline for the March-April
Dispatch

Thursday, April 24

Chuckwagon Dinner Show, 6:00 PM, Heritage Junction

Monday, April 28

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Also...

First Thursday of Every Month

Genealogy Club Meeting
7:00 PM Saugus Station

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

President's Message

by Alan Pollack



Shortly before midnight on March 12, 1928, carpenter Ace Hopewell was riding his motorcycle up San Francisquito Canyon road on his way to Powerhouse No. 1 of the Los Angeles Bureau

of Power and Light. Hopewell passed by the mighty St. Francis Dam, which was completed just 2 years earlier by Los Angeles Water Chief William Mulholland and had just been filled to capacity five days prior. Mulholland had achieved heroic status in Los Angeles when he completed the Owens Valley-Los Angeles Aqueduct in November, 1913, a miraculous accomplishment that allowed a semi-desert small town to grow into the metropolis we know today. Following the completion of

the Aqueduct, Mulholland had directed the construction of a series of dams in the Los Angeles area with the goal of providing a large reserve of water for the city in the event of a disruption of the Aqueduct from events like earthquakes (or sabotage by the angry residents of the Owens Valley, who had been blowing up sections of the Aqueduct to protest the means by which Los Angeles had taken water from their valley).

As he rode one mile past the dam, Hopewell suddenly stopped when he heard a landslide-like crashing sound from back in the dam area. It was 11:57 ½ PM. He continued up the canyon to the powerhouse where he learned that the huge dam had ruptured, spilling 12 billion gallons and a 180 foot high wall of water into San Francisquito Canyon. It turns out Hopewell was the last living person to see the St. Francis Dam before it

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TALKS AND TOUR ON THE ST FRANCIS DAM DISASTER

SATURDAY - SUNDAY, MARCH 8 - 9

AT THE SAUGUS STATION

1:00 PM

SAVE THE DATES!

**DETAILS ON PAGE 4,
PHOTOS ON PAGE 7**

President's Message

Continued from page 1

ruptured, creating the second largest disaster in California history as an epic flood of water and debris traveled 55 miles through San Francisquito Canyon and the Santa Clara River Valley, devastating the towns of Piru, Fillmore, and Santa Paula, and killing between 450 and 600 people before emptying into the Pacific Ocean at Montalvo between Oxnard and Ventura.

At the base of the dam that night as Hopewell passed by may have been dam keeper Tony Harnischfeger and his wife Leona Johnson. Earlier that day Harnischfeger had placed a frantic call to Mulholland when he noticed muddy water leaking from the Western abutment of the dam. While dams did normally leak to some extent, the mud indicated to Harnischfeger that the base of the dam might be eroding and subject to catastrophe. Mulholland arrived around 10:30 am with his assistant Chief Harvey Van Norman and inspected the dam. He concluded that the leakage appeared normal and went back to Los Angeles, a decision he would regret for the rest of his life. Later that night Harnischfeger may have noticed more frightening problems with the dam. He might have been inspecting the dam base as Hopewell passed by. We will never know for sure.....after the dam rupture, his wife's lifeless body was found at the base of the dam; Harnischfeger's body was never found.

1 1/2 miles downstream from the dam was a group of homes for workers at Powerhouse No. 2. Lillian Curtis and her family were awakened by the roar of the floodwaters bearing down on the powerhouse. Lillian and her son scrambled up a hillside while her husband went to retrieve their daughter. The mother and son were the only survivors of the family.

Ray Rising, a utility man from the powerhouse, was also awakened and faced a 10 story high wall of water. He was swept into the flood but managed to climb on to a floating rooftop which took him to safety. He was the only other survivor at this powerhouse. The building itself was swept away by the flood, leaving only the floor slab.

At the base of San Francisquito Canyon (today the Tesoro Del Valle development) was the ranch of movie star Harry Carey. The flood roared through and destroyed part of the ranch, including a Navajo Trading Post which had been a popular tourist attraction. Carey was away on business in New York at the time. Legend has it that a group of Navajo Indians hired by Carey to run the trading post had called Carey asking to leave the ranch for Arizona the night before the dam break on the basis of a premonition by their

medicine man of an impending dam rupture. But according to Carey's son Harry Carey, Jr., the Indians actually asked Carey one month prior if they could leave when he did, after the medicine man went deer hunting near the dam and noticed a big crack in the face of the dam.

As the flood approached Castaic Junction, Raymond Starbard, an Assistant Edison Patrolman at the Saugus Substation (which can still be seen on Magic Mountain Parkway) was almost washed away by the flood. He hitched a ride to Wood's Garage next to the Saugus Cafe. There Starbard made a call to the Newhall Sheriff's Substation No. 6 and was credited with being the first person to sound the alarm about the flood. Starbard lived in a home next to the substation built by the Edison Company for its workers. His home can be seen today as one of the historic structures at Heritage Junction.

Just past the Ventura County line along the Santa Clara River was a railroad siding called Kemp. There a group of 150 workers for the Edison Company were fast asleep in a tent camp used while they were building a transmission line. Night watchman Ed Locke watched in horror as the huge flood of water approached the camp. He ran through the camp waking up as many people as possible. Locke, a true hero of the disaster, himself perished that night along with 84 of the workers as the flood hit a geologic outcropping called Blue Cut which created a whirlpool effect that uprooted the tents. Most of the survivors had their tents zipped up, which allowed them to float on the whirlpool.

There were other heroes to recognize at Santa Paula. Louise Gipe, a night telephone operator at Santa Paula received a call from the Pacific Long Distance telephone operator at 1:30 am warning of the impending flood headed her way. Ignoring the peril to her own life, she stayed at her post, notifying Highway Patrolman Thornton Edwards and calling residents in the low lying areas of Santa Paula to warn them about the flood. Edwards would become known as the "Paul Revere of the St. Francis Flood" as he raced wildly from door to door warning residents of Santa Paula. While Edwards spread the alarm through Santa Paula, deputy sheriff Eddie Hearne raced up the Santa Clara River Valley TOWARD the flood with siren blaring to warn residents. He made it as far as Fillmore, where he met the flood waters and had to stop his wild ride.

This month we are remembering these heroes and victims as we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the St. Francis

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President's Message

Continued from page 2

Dam disaster. Frank Rock, one of our leading experts on the dam disaster will be conducting his annual lecture and bus tour to the dam site on the weekend of March 8-9. He will be giving a free lecture on the dam disaster at the Train Station at 1:00 PM on Saturday, March 8. On March 9, Frank will give another lecture followed by a bus tour to the dam site. For more details see the article on page 4 or our website www.scvhs.org or call 661-254-1275.

Also on March 8 we are holding a special event in conjunction with the Hart Museum called "A Celebration of Chaplin". This exciting event will include a lecture on movie history, a buffet dinner, followed by a double feature showing of Charlie Chaplin's "The Pilgrim" and Buster Keaton's "The Paleface". This year marks the 85th anniversary of the release of "The Pilgrim" which was filmed right here at the Saugus Train Station. If all that is not enough, the evening will also feature items from the LA County Museum including Chaplin costume pieces from "City Lights", props from the Chaplin movie "Modern Times", Buster Keaton's pork pie hat, and props from the 1992 Robert Downey, Jr. movie "Chaplin". Tickets will be \$40 per person. Get them early as there is limited seating and this incredible event is sure to sell out quickly. Call 661-254-4584 for tickets and info.

The Chaplin evening was put together by our newest Board member E. J. Stephens, along with Board member Kristyn Van Wy and Administrator of the Hart Museum Ayesha Saletore. Thanks to all of them for their efforts. E. J. has been doing a wonderful job with our "Friday Night Flickers" series of classic movies with a connection to the SCV. We welcome him to the Board and look forward to many more great events from him.

Also reelected to the Board of Directors in January were Jeff Boultinghouse, Cathie Kincheloe, Kristyn Van Wy, and myself. Congratulations to you all. Thanks to outgoing Board member Glen Rollins for his many years of dedicated service to the Board. We will miss his expertise and hope to see him back with us in the future.

Our Lecture Series continues to draw big crowds and great lecturers. On January 12, we featured Union Pacific engineer Mike Jarel speaking on the operations of the Saugus Train Station and drew another standing room only audience. Mike captivated the crowd with his expertise and historic photos of the station. The talk was filmed by Leon Worden and Phil Scorza. Leon edited and produced a

fantastic show based on the lecture which can be viewed at the SCVTV website www.scvty.com. Upcoming shows will include John Johnson from the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History who will speak on the Native Americans of the SCV in May, and Harrison Scott who will do another presentation on the Ridge Route in September. The historic road will hopefully be reopened by then after restorations from rain damage 2 years ago. Scott is also working on 2 new books on the Ridge Route which he hopes to have published and available at the talk.

Past president Carol Rock will be hosting our annual Chuckwagon Dinner Show at 6:00 PM on April 24, as part of the Santa Clarita Cowboy festival. This popular event will feature great western food and live entertainment. Don't miss out. Tickets are now available for \$40 per person at www.cowboyleftival.org. Proceeds will go to the Historical Society. Thanks to Carol for leading this event for us.

In other Society news, representatives from the Historical Society sat in on recent city meetings regarding a proposed Historical Preservation ordinance, the renaming of San Fernando Road, and the marketing of the redevelopment of Old Town Newhall. We will be developing for the city a historic walking tour of downtown Newhall which we will conduct with our docents.

Executive Director Pat Saletore will be participating in a local history lecture series to be given by College of the Canyons. We hope to have much more collaboration with COC in the future.

I am happy to announce that the Historical Society has been nominated for Organization of the Year as part of the SCV Press Club's Newsmaker of the Year awards. We will be attending the awards show in February. We should all be proud of this accomplishment, which highlights our efforts over the last few years to increase what we offer to the public and community.

Thanks to Board member Barbara Martinelli for her successful efforts to restart tours of Heritage Junction and the Train Station for our local public schools. The first tour in January was led by docent Gordon Uppman and ladies from the Questers organization.

As always, thank you to all the volunteers that keep our organization going. We could not do it without you. See you all at the Train Station.

Alan Pollack

Friday Night Flickers by E. J. Stephens

THE PILGRIM: MARCH 8

We have a very special evening planned for Saturday (yes, not a Friday), March 8. On this evening, the historical society will be partnering with the Hart Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History to present "A Celebration of Chaplin." This event is presented to honor the 85th anniversary of the film "The Pilgrim," which Charlie Chaplin partly filmed inside the Saugus Train Station.

This night will feature dinner, the presentation of "The Pilgrim" and a Buster Keaton film, items belonging to both Chaplin and Keaton will be on display, lectures will be given, and live accompaniment will be presented by 95-year-old pianist Bob Mitchell.

This is a special presentation and is not a normal "Friday Night Flickers" show, since the ticket price is \$40, rather than the \$5 charged for the Flickers.

SAFETY LAST: APRIL 4

The April 4 show will feature Harold Lloyd's 1923 classic "Safety Last." (This will also be its 85th anniversary!) I am putting together the details on an evening that will once again include Bob Mitchell on the piano.

THE FUTURE

We are hoping that the success of this series will evolve into a silent film festival in Newhall.

Heritage Junction/Red Cross Blood Drive March 16

To help commemorate the 80th anniversary of the St. Francis Dam Disaster, the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society along with the Red Cross will be hosting a blood drive at Heritage Junction on March 16 from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Donors must be healthy, weigh at least 110 pounds, and be over the age of 17. Please bring a valid photo ID and eat a nutritious meal prior to donating. Donors can register by calling (661) 254-1275 or by showing up at Heritage Junction, 24101 San Fernando Road, next to Hart Park. Please donate blood to help save a life!

See related photos on page 7.

80 Years Later, Dam Still Fascinates Historians by Carol Rock

The second-worst natural disaster in California history occurred March 12, 1928, when the St. Francis Dam collapsed, sending a wall of water rushing through San Francisquito Creek and the Santa Clara River, killing 450 and laying waste to thousands of acres of land. To commemorate the 80th anniversary of the disaster, the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society will host two events exploring the dam break and its aftermath.

At 1:00 PM. Saturday, March 8, noted dam lecturer Frank Rock will give a free 90-minute lecture on the disaster at the Saugus Train Station in Heritage Junction, which will include a multimedia presentation of photographs, maps and other memorabilia. Doors will open at noon for the lecture; no reservations will be taken, so arrive early for a good seat.

On Sunday, March 9, Rock will conduct a motorcoach tour and hike of the dam ruins as a fundraiser for the Society starting at 1:00 PM. Tickets for the Sunday lecture and tour are \$35 per person, which includes water and snacks. Participants should wear comfortable walking shoes and long pants for the moderate hike. The tour will last approximately three hours, with the motor coaches returning to Heritage Junction.

Rock is a historian who has been featured on the History Channel, Discovery, and the Learning Channel and is considered the expert on the disaster. He is currently working with noted geologist J. David Rogers on a book about the disaster and has lectured on the disaster at the California Conference of Historical Societies Symposium, College of the Canyons and other groups of historical interest.

Tour reservations may be made via credit card by calling (661) 254-1275 or by mailing a check or money order to the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society, P.O. Box 221925, Newhall, CA, 91322-1925. Seats are limited, so make reservations early to guarantee a spot for the tour. Any remaining seats will be sold the day of the tour on a first-come, first-served basis. Unforeseen road or forest closures may cause cancellation of the tour.

John Mann by Leon Worden

Glen Rollins once said, "It takes a special talent to put people to work for free." It is so true. He was talking about John Mann.

John was the rare soul who made you want to do more. To do better. I don't think I lived up to his expectations, in fact I'm sure I didn't. Living up to John's expectations was like living up to your own – because he had a knack for recognizing people's capabilities.



People get involved in the Historical Society for different reasons. Some are generalists, like me. They're interested in all Santa Clarita Valley history, from one end of our valley to the other, from the dawn of Man to the present day. Others are specialists, interested primarily in one facet of our history. They know everything there is to know (far more than we generalists ever will) about, say, the St. Francis Dam or the Ridge Route or

William S. Hart. Others are location-specific and are interested in a particular geographic region, such as Canyon Country or Newhall or Mentryville. Still others are educators, living for the opportunity to share our history with a third grader. And some are fund-raisers. OK, far too few are fundraisers.

John wasn't any of these. John was in a class by himself. John was all about the people. I don't mean long-dead historical people. I mean the real-life people who crossed his path. He cared about every last one of them.

Let's be honest. We've had some strong personalities on the board of directors through the years. John kept them from killing each other. But it went beyond that. He got them to work together. He got them to see past their (our) petty differences and get things done for the good of the whole. In the process, he stood back and allowed each individual to shine. He never hogged the spotlight, even when he deserved it.

For at least six of the ten years in the 1990s that John was president, the Historical Society was a reflection of him. He held it together and moved it forward, project by project. No, nothing happened quickly enough – not for John or anyone else – but I don't frankly know if anyone else could have kept it all on track.

I wish John could have known Alan Pollack and seen some of the new board members in action. I think he'd be thrilled – and proud to know the seeds he planted are really taking root.

John bowed out of the society in 2001, and out of his print shop in Canyon Country a short time later. He suffered from diabetes and seemed older than his years. Plus, he was old



At a recent party for docents, Konrad Summers was named Docent of the Year

Recent Docents

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

Frank Adella	Barbara Martinelli
Phyllis Berman	Barbara Milteer
Jeff Boultinghouse	Sandra Neill
Laurie Cartwright	Alan Pollack
Sioux Coghlan	Pat Saletore
Sarah Floyd	Konrad Summers
Francesca Gastil	Gordon Uppman
Harold Hicks	Kristyn VanWy
Bill and Karen Limbaugh	Michelle Veasman

school. If you didn't want to make the investment in computer graphics – and he didn't – then you might as well close up shop. So he did. Why spend the money when your days are numbered? He knew they were. At least he said so, no matter how much we all protested.

And besides, his shop was a hangout for friends as much as it was a business. And when local charities came knocking, it wasn't even really a business. Can you say, "below cost?"

I had known John prior to coming on the Historical Society board. My mom had brought him some of his first solo print jobs back in the late 1970s when she was at HR Textron. I didn't know him in the context of his involvement in Scouting, or Rotary, or Friends of Hart Park (he was president of the latter two), but I'm sure he blessed those organizations, and their people, with the same wit, patience and compassion that he brought to the Historical Society.

Thank you, John. It was a wonderful ride. My love to Martha.

Executive Director's Report by Pat Saletore



CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

This event came off very well. Harold Hicks, our Santa held court inside the Saloon, which was decorated for Christmas. We managed to get lights, garland, and trees up all over the park in record time. It didn't rain as expected, all of the buildings were open, and we had a lot of goodies. People came and oodled and ah-ed at the buildings. Kids...

and many adults took advantage of our "passport" game where participants collected stamps from all the buildings on their Heritage Junction brochures, then collected a small ornament from the gift shop. A lot of new people came to visit us, and that was the point of the event anyway.

The decorations were taken down in a timely fashion and (drum roll) we have a volunteer who wants to take over the event! Scott Sivley, one of the haunt guys wants to get involved in a big way. We were also able to participate in the Sheriff's toy drive by acting as a storage point in the Ranch House.

ROAD WORK

Hauntmaster Ed Marg has been working himself hard getting the space around the truck trailers and the area in between the Station and the Ranch House graded and stable. He and his "Bobcat" style tractor have been out there getting it done. Just before this last storm, he came to me to see if I could get some gravel donated. I found that the City of Santa Clarita had a pile of asphalt grindings available. He got the area up by the Feed Trough ready for it just before the storms arrived and got enough laid out that we managed to avoid that lake that forms up there every time it rains.

That is probably what prompted David Jallo to nominate Ed for the LA County Dept. of Parks & Rec. North Community Services Agency Volunteer Award.

SPEAKING OF AWARD NOMINATIONS...

The Society has been nominated (by Michelle Buttelman) for the Press Club's Newsmaker of the year award in the division for organizations. She also tells me that she gave "an impassioned speech" justifying her recommendation because she felt we have come so far and had been in the news so much in the last year.

INDIAN ARTIFACTS

Roger Basham and Winston Wutkee, both recently retired professors from COC have begun work on evaluating the artifacts that were donated by Newhall Land last fall. I am very excited to get both of them involved with the project and hope that they stay involved to set up the display and maybe even remain involved with that aspect of our history.

DOCENTS

I plan to launch a docent training by the end of February. If you know anyone who is interested, please just get them within reach and I will take care of the rest.

A.B. PERKINS GRANDDAUGHTER

On January 14, Leon, Duane, Alan and I attended a meeting on the Historic Preservation Ordinance. We have been following up on those meetings and the ones about marketing Redeveloped Old Town Newhall. People filtered in and Duane sat on my left, and a woman whom I did not know sat on my right. Alan came in a few moments later and sat in the empty chair on her other side.

Why am I telling this so particularly? I was so glad I did not tell her the seat was saved! At the end of the meeting, she turned to me and said "I sure sat in the right place tonight!" Then she went on to explain that she was Maggi Perkins, Albert Perkins' granddaughter. She went on to mention that she has a number of things she would like to donate. Of course both Alan and I took serious notice of this point, and we are trying to get a meeting time with her that will suit all of us.

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>.



**St
Francis
Dam
Disaster
Aftermath**



**Red
Cross
in
SCV
Long
Ago**
(See page 4)



School Tours Resume by Barbara Martinelli

School tour season for our local public schools has begun. The first tour, on January 18th with 75 students involved, went very smoothly thanks to the assistance of experienced docent Gordon Uppman, and four lovely ladies from the Questers. This tour was special because these students attend Leona Cox School in the Sulphur Springs School District. Students, teachers and parents were intrigued to learn of the connection between their School District and our Mitchell Adobe.

Upcoming tours:

- In February we have eight days scheduled (320 students).
- In March – three days (190 students).
- In April – two days (100 students).
- In May – one day (100 students).

Three of the days scheduled involve fairly large groups, and the Questers have graciously offered to help out on those days. Each tour provides feedback for improvement, and these third graders are an enthusiastic group!



Barbara Martinelli with some of the students during the January 18th tour of Heritage Junction



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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

Historical Society Board of Directors

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Gordon Glattenberg ----- Dispatch Layout

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

**Society Info: www.scvhs.org
Photo, Text Archives: www.scvhistory.com**