



The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 39, Issue 6

November-December 2013

Calendar

Monday, November 25

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Monday, December 2

Deadline for the January-February
Dispatch

Saturday, December 7

Christmas Open House
12:00-4:00 PM Saugus Station

Monday, December 23

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Check www.scvhistory.org for other upcoming events.

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

President's Message

by Alan Pollack



Could Soledad Canyon pioneer Col. Thomas Finley Mitchell have been involved in a homicide? A review of newspaper articles from 1883 offers suggestive, but not conclusive, evidence that this

might have been the case. Blood feuds ran deep in the early days of the Santa Clarita Valley, and the otherwise model citizen Col. Mitchell may not have been immune to the Wild West violence that was quite common in those days.

Early Life of Thomas F. Mitchell

Mitchell, a native of Virginia born in 1827, had served in the Mexican War with the Texas Mounted Volunteers under the

command of renowned General Sam Houston. He was lured to California by the gold rush in 1852 and spent the next eight years seeking his fortune along with the multitudes of Argonauts from around the world that had descended on the golden state by wagon train and seafaring vessels.

Mitchell Moves to Soledad Canyon

In 1860, Mitchell finally gave up his quest for gold, moved down to Southern California, and became the first American settler in Soledad Canyon. He traveled up to Tehachapi and purchased a miner's cabin, which he hauled down to Soledad to serve as his first home. There he established a cattle ranch at the modern day junction of Soledad Canyon and Lost Canyon roads. He also dabbled in bee hiving. A few years later, Mitchell met 17-year-old Miss Martha Taylor of Arkansas. They married in San Gabriel in 1865. The newlyweds moved out to his

Continued on Page 2



The Mitchell house in Soledad Canyon, built in 1888 and razed in 1986 (see President's Message, above)

President's Message

Continued from page 1

ranch in Soledad, where he abandoned the miner's cabin and built a larger adobe home (see page 5). The Mitchell home was soon to be graced with six children.

Sulphur Springs School District

Mitchell and his neighbor John Lang got together in 1872 to establish the Sulphur Springs School District, the first in the Santa Clarita Valley and second oldest in Los Angeles County history. The Mitchells offered their adobe as the schoolhouse, where Martha Mitchell taught the children of her family, the Langs, and six other local families. The school was moved to Lang's hotel in 1879. In 1886, as enrollment outgrew the Mitchell and Lang buildings, Mitchell donated a site for Lang and Sanford Lyon to build the first Sulphur Springs School.

The Mitchells moved from their adobe and built a two story ranch house two years later. The adobe would fall into disrepair over the subsequent years. In 1986, what remained of the adobe was saved from demolition by members of the Historical Society and brought to Heritage Junction, where it was rebuilt and remains today.

The Murder Near Newhall

But there may be a darker side to the Mitchell story. Los Angeles newspapers of June 5, 1883, reported on a murder near Newhall. The Los Angeles Times reported that Thomas F. Mitchell of Mitchell's Station, situated 12 miles north of Newhall, had sent a note to Postmaster George Campton stating "I have shot and killed F.O. Moore. Send out Coroner to take charge of the body". The Coroner took an evening train to Newhall, where he secured a wagon and, with a posse, headed out to Mitchell's Station. There he found the body of Moore about 35 feet from Mitchell's house, with a crowbar in his hand and riddled with buckshot to the head and stomach. The already decomposing body was brought back to Newhall where a Coroner's Jury was hastily convened. The jury later came to a conclusion, stating "We the jury find that Thomas O. Moore came to his death from shotgun wounds at the hands of Thomas F. Mitchell". There were no witnesses to the murder and Mitchell refused to testify on the advice of his lawyers, who had come up from Los Angeles.

Moore was described as a 39 year old native of New York with a quick temper and revengeful spirit. Mitchell was thought to be a 55 year old native of Tennessee with a reputation as a quiet and peaceable man. Apparently the two men had a longstanding feud resulting from a quarrel over some trespassing livestock, and a piece of land which both claimed as their own. Moore had purportedly

abused Mitchell on repeated occasions, once even slapping his face. The Times concluded "But it is a notorious fact that family quarrels and neighbors' feuds are of the most bitter character and frequently end in bloodshed. Moore was buried yesterday, and Mitchell was walking around when our informant left, expressing a wish to have his examination there immediately without going to Los Angeles. He evidently expects a discharge."

The next day the Times reported "The killing of T.O. Moore by T.F. Mitchell is the all absorbing topic. The parties were well known and lived near each other, about 13 miles from [Newhall]. There has been an old feud existing between them for years, which was aggravated by a recent land dispute. The deceased was continually making threats against Mitchell, and the latter was on his guard."

Conflicting Newspaper Reports

Newspapers of the period did not always get their facts straight, and the story is somewhat muddled by an article on the murder which appeared on June 5, 1883, in the Los Angeles Herald. They reported that the murder took place near Ravena (sic), a Southern Pacific railroad stop which was several miles up Soledad Canyon from where the Mitchell home was situated. The Herald stated the killer's name as "P.M. Mitchell", a neighbor of Moore's. They noted that there were two witnesses to the murder, and at the Coroner's inquest "Mitchell admitted the shooting and said he feared bodily harm, but just how he was to be harmed at a distance of seventy-five feet from a short piece of iron railway bar does not well appear."

The Mitchell Trial

There is no evidence that Mitchell ever faced jail time for the murder of Moore. A listing of a court proceeding in the Los Angeles Herald of November 13, 1883, said, "People vs. Thos. F. Mitchell - Defendant in Court with counsel John F. Godrey, Esq. and District Attorney. Jury called and present. Argument continued; jury instructed by the Court and retired to deliberate upon their verdict. The jury failed to agree and was discharged."

Was this truly the Thomas F. Mitchell that we know from Santa Clarita history? With the evidence as stated above, the reader will have to decide for themselves. Perhaps further research is needed to pin this for sure on the Colonel!

He is buried with his family in the Mitchell Cemetery which can be visited today next to Highway 14, just past Lost Canyon Road.

Continued on Page 3

The Holidays at Hart Museum by Rachel Barnes



For thousands of years, cultures all around the world have celebrated the return of the sun. In late-December (by our modern calendar) the winter solstice arrives in the Northern hemisphere, the shortest

day of the year. After the passing of solstice, the days get longer, and this lengthening of daylight was a big reason to party. In ancient Rome, they celebrated the multi-day feast of *Saturnalia*, which honored the Roman god Saturn. In ancient Greece, it was *Lenaia*, an annual festival for wine-loving, ecstasy-inducing, grape-harvesting Dionysus. And in Northern Europe, it was *Yule*, where the celebrations centered on the burning of a “yule log” – a light that would burn away winter’s darkness, allowing the sun to return.



Some believe it was this practice of burning the yule log that ultimately led to the modern-day practice of hanging Christmas lights.

Furthermore, winter solstice also meant the approaching return of greenery to the land. Celebrators of *Saturnalia* and *Yule* hung evergreen boughs around their window frames and doorways to prepare for the arrival of spring and to thank the gods for sending winter on its merry way. Ancient Egyptians celebrated the rebirth of their sun god, Ra, by placing green palm fronds around their homes. It is also believed the use of greenery in these ancient festivals / traditions led to the present practice of a Christmas tree.

Not surprising when you think about it, since, after all, early Christianity drew on many of these ancient traditions when they established Christian celebrations to recruit converts; Christmas was obviously heavily influenced by these ancient winter solstice festivals.

And let’s continue the tradition, shall we? The holiday season approaches, and the Hart Museum will be decking the halls with evergreen boughs of holly and hanging yuletide lights along the Mansion’s walls in the time-honored (centuries and centuries of time) practice. Will our festive decorations scare away the dark days of winter? You’ll have to let us know when you come for a visit! The decorations are visible from Wednesday, December 4, 2013 through Sunday, January 5, 2014.

A perfect opportunity to come see the festive decorations – and in the dark of the evening no less – is the annual *Cowboys and Carols* concert on Saturday, December 7, 2013. Come see legendary cowboy musician Dave Stamey in the Mansion’s Living Room, and travel back to the good ol’ days of life on the western frontier through music and humor, while the twinkling holiday lights keep the dark of winter outside. Tickets went on sale October 1 and are available for purchase at www.friendsofhartpark.org at \$50 per person, or \$45 per person if you are a member of the Friends of Hart Park.

Hope to see you all there!

Oh, and by the way, you can thank the ancient Romans for fruitcake. They mixed pomegranate seeds, pine nuts, and dried grapes in a barley mash, a combination that led to a cake with a remarkable shelf life. Perfect for Roman soldiers out on campaign. And 2,000 years later ... do I need to comment on modern-day fruitcake’s shelf life?

President’s Message

Continued from page 2

The Los Angeles Aqueduct

November 5, 2013 marks the 100th anniversary of the completion of William Mulholland’s Los Angeles Aqueduct. On that day in 1913, 40,000 Los Angelenos gathered in the northern San Fernando Valley next to the Newhall Pass in present-day Sylmar to honor Mulholland and celebrate the arrival of the first waters from the Owens Valley, which allowed Los Angeles to grow from a population of 100,000 to the millions that inhabit the area today. It was the pinnacle of Mulholland’s illustrious career in Los Angeles. His life, however, would be shattered in 1928, when the St. Francis Dam came crashing down, killing up to 600 people in the resulting flood, and forever ruining Mulholland’s hero-like status in Los Angeles. Several events are planned in Los Angeles to commemorate the anniversary of the Aqueduct, most notably a caravan of 100 mules that will walk the length of the Aqueduct from the Owens Valley, arriving at the Cascades in Sylmar on November 5.

Charlie Cooke by Leticia M Thomas

As a Cooke descendant, I share my memories and family photos. My mom Ernestine (Tina) Cooke Thomas was Charlie's first cousin. Growing up, Charlie's life was the "cowboy way" thru my uncles Cy and brother Isadore (Izzy), having run cattle on all the local ranches in the area. Newhall Land, Tejon and Andy Jauregui and who knows how many others. Most all the "Cooke" siblings lived all over the SCV. Cy traveled a lot and competing in team roping at rodeos in the neighboring states, but mostly California. My grandfather Ernest (Ernie) was scared to death of horses but knew the "cowboy way" was in our blood. He worked as a "ranch hand" himself as a teen for W. S. Hart despite those fears, doing whatever was needed to feed or look after the critters.

He once told me a story of visiting the Jauregui ranch with his older brother Cy, and both Cy and Andy cornered him to the tack room trying to rope his heels... My grandpa made sure my siblings and I, were taken to the rental stables in east Newhall on San Fernando Rd. prior to the 14 Fwy. Been riding ever since and I still do !!

Charlie kept horses himself in Acton up to his untimely passing from us. There are many "horsey folks" in our clans, as the "ancestral Native American ties" remain strong as ever even in this day and age.

Charlie was a "champion" for us as Cooke/Garcia clans with his relentless search to discover our roots. We had been told growing up that we were "tied" to the Paiutes but the nearest band is in Mono County, too far of a migration, but nobody ever "challenged" the claims until the mid-'80's, if memory serves me. The San Fernando Mission records proved to be a wealth of information, but the "archived records" needed a timetable for search for family names

in sacrament records, and everything is written in Latin. Eventually a "tie" was made thru those searches: We "belonged" to the SCV and San Fernando Valley !

Charlie during the search also discovered we are distant cousins to the Coastal Chumash Bands as well. All western US region tribes are of the "Shoshone language", even though I'm sure some deviations are present in traditions and rituals. Some of our family was skeptical, but Charlie established friendships and family relationships within those contacts. He never gave up !! All of us had been "assimilated" to Spanish (European) traditions, due to the padres, so all of the native ones were lost!! Our "new native" language was Spanish. There were more band "ties" to the eastern Antelope Valley as it has been documented in the modern DNA testing to the remains discovered and has been documented with the SCV History articles.

Charlie ALWAYS contacted the local and state authorities so that the remains found were respected and interred as to known traditions. He never stopped at our "tribal affiliations" and challenged all of the new development to respect the burials discovered throughout Southern California. His diligence to preserve sites with remains of our ancestors will be missed in the future, as many developers would just proceed with the back hoe and say nothing.

We sure wish that the artifacts found in the Bower's Cave at Chiquito Canon can be returned home to the SCV, so that all of us can be enjoy the crafts those ancestors left us. Just sayin' !!!

Charlie died in his home in Acton on September 21. Rest in Peace Charlie, as we'll all pray that our earthly peace is taken in sleep.



Quester News by Roberta Harris

Oak of the Golden Dream chapter has recently completed the restoration of an original lamppost that stands at the bottom of the path leading up to the Hart Mansion. For the first time in over 50 years, you can observe it lighted from dusk to dawn.

Despite road construction, the Kingsbury and Edison houses will be open the first Sunday of each month from 1:00 to 4:00 PM.

Do you have family heirlooms or a vintage collection you would like to learn more about? Do you like reading and researching history? Do you enjoy touring historic homes? Do you like to visit museums? If your answer is yes, you might enjoy :

THE QUESTERS

An International non-profit organization founded in 1944 that supports preservation and restoration of artifacts, historic buildings and sites and promotes the study and research of antiques.

Our chapter is currently looking for new members. For more information about The Questers check us out at: www.calquest.org or contact Roberta Harris at:

661 257-0890 or roberta@myquesters.com



*Mitchell Adobe at its original site;
since restored at Heritage Junction
(see President's Message on page 1)*

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

W

Weekend Docents:
 Frank Adella Harold Hicks
 Wendy Beynon Anna Kroll
 Laurie Cartwright Ed Marg, Jr
 Linda Casebolt Theresa Marg
 Sioux Coghlan Barbara Martinelli
 Evan Decker RuthAnne Murthy
 Bob Feder Alan Pollack
 Sarah Floyd Gordon Uppman
 Francesca Gastil Ashley Vancas

Interested in becoming a docent? Visit our website at www.scvhs.org

T

Those who open and close for the docents:
 Linda Casebolt Cathy Martin
 Duane Harte Alan Pollack
 Ed Marg, Jr. Roberto Torres
 Barbara Martinelli

W

Weekend Questers*
 Ann and Fritz Grayson Nancy and Bill Tozzi

G

rounds:
 Kathleen Lucan Gerry Sokolowicz
 Ed Marg, Sr Glen Terry

* Don't know who the Questers are?
 See www.questers1944.org

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>.

Guess Who's Coming to Chumash Dinner?

by John Boston

"Only Irish coffee provides in a single glass all four essential food groups: alcohol, caffeine, sugar, and fat."

— Alex Levine

I am still mostly wicked, and the other day I couldn't resist throwing a Facebook pie at an old friend of mine, Cheryl Atkins Hyphen Something Or Other. She had written from Louisiana that she just had enjoyed the most delicious and simple dinner - lima beans and corn bread. Not being burdened by brakes or moral compass, I commented: "What? The possum wouldn't fit in the microwave?"

Not too long ago, I was sitting in this posh restaurant in Cambria, overlooking the Pacific Ocean oh so blue. I'm eating salmon and it hits me. Did Indians eat dinner? I mean, I know they ate. But did they have a regularly scheduled supper? You know, where the Indian mom shakes her finger at the hubbie and kids and says, "You rascally Chumash better be home by 12 breaths past sundown or you'll be eating your possum and acorn gruel cold, by all the addendum coastal woodland deities that's holy!"

The Chumash, our neighboring Native Americans who held land from Piru up to the central California coast, used to eat a pasty mush made from smashed-up clams and tobacco paste. I mean, blech. That had to curl your hair.

But, I was sitting in this wonderful restaurant. It struck me how very different we Cement People are from the folks who used to live here thousands of years before us. And I really want to know: Did they have an official supptime? Was breakfast at 7:00?

I've read that California Indians had feasts, some of which would go on for days. But did everyone sit down by a morning campfire - all at the same time like Ozzie & Harriet, Ricky and former NBA coach, Don Nelson? Or, did they straggle from dawn to noon, like the typical modern family to gnaw on breakfast (deer jerky, beaver tongue, roots, berries and room-temperature water)?

Did the Chumash who lived on the coast talk at breakfast, or sullenly stare at parent or sibling?

I'm sure there was teenage preening. But it must have occurred at a much lesser angst level. If you're a Chumash youth from The Year Zero, I'm sure you didn't have to worry what you were going to wear to high school. "Today, Mom, I'm going to meet the gang tee-totally topless," says the Chumash coed. And it isn't even an issue. Can you imagine with your own kids?

I wonder if Chumash parents scolded their charges, demanding that before they walked out of that wickiup, they had better pull

up those grass skirts or rabbit skin kilts around their waists so that the other Indians didn't think they were gangsters.

Wickiups. I wish my friend Randy Wicks were still alive. I could innocently inquire if he had been born in one.

Did Chumash teens sing too loud? There wasn't rap music, car stereos or boom boxes. Did the Indian kids bang their drums too loudly or attempt to reach notes off the reed flute scale?

I'm betting much of what the Chumash families ate was fast food. "Boy, that deer was fast," says an Indian hunter, out of breath. "We had rabbit a while back," answers another huntsman. "It was fast food AND it was low to the ground. I've been walking like Groucho Marks for a week and boy, is my back killing me."

I wonder about sharing. Did every family cook for themselves, or, was it a big backyard shared barbecue every time the men brought back the big bucket of Kentucky Fried Pleistocene Bison?

And I'd really like to know: at what TIME did everyone sit down to eat the buffalo? Sunset? I I-ish, like the Spaniards and Italians? Or, as moms are wont to scream the universal answer to "When's dinner?" - "When it's damn good and ready!?"

I'll bet you things tasted really carpet-like to the modern taste bud. Those Chumash. They ate bugs, you know. Me. I push cauliflower around on the plate until the next presidential administration (cripes; please hurry) takes over. I would not, I could not, eat a bug.

I wonder how the Chumash would react to my diet of Taco Bell, McDonald's or, my favorite, PC's Thai Pepper restaurant. What if I could climb aboard a time machine with a few dozen pizzas? Would those Chumash treat me like a king? Or, would they be after my head after all those unfamiliar saturates and polyunsaturated and petroleum-based cheese products hit their pure little digestive tracts and they double over sick and upchucking?

I wonder. Would the Chumash eat the pizzas immediately? Or, would they wait until dinner? And, if you're a Chumash, what time would that be and is that written in stone or is it negotiable?

(John Boston has 119 major writing awards, including being named America's best columnist, several times. Check out his Sunday Mr. Santa Clarita Valley column in SantaClarita.com every week and over at the scvbeacon.com his John Boston Report and Time Ranger/SCV History column.)

© 2013 by John Boston

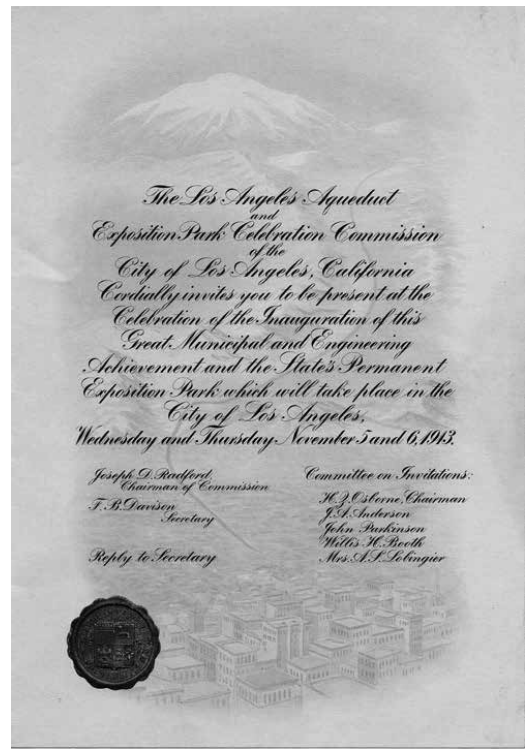
A GIFT FROM RANCHO CAMULOS MUSEUM

by Maria Christopher

Fall is the perfect time for exploring some of the historical gems of the Santa Clara River Valley such as the Rancho Camulos Museum and National Historic Landmark near Piru. Go on your own or take friends and family who are visiting during the holidays. Docent-led tours are usually Saturdays 1-4 and by appointment. Always check our website, www.ranchocamulos.org, before coming out, as we may close due to weather or special events.

Another way of exploring history is just a click away. Our gift to you this holiday season is a tool to enable YOU to become a true history explorer. We invite you to visit this link: <http://cdnc.ucr.edu>. This is the website for the "California Digital Newspaper Collection, a freely accessible depository of a number of digitized newspapers from 1846 to the present".

While not every California newspaper is included, we think you will find it fascinating. The following article is from the Daily Alta California of August 10, 1876. Step back in time as you visit the Santa Clara River Valley.



Invitation to the opening of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, 100 years ago. (see President's Message on page 3)

THE SAN FRANCISCO RANCH
 Is situated partly in Los Angeles and partly in Ventura counties, by far the largest portion of it being in the former county. It is owned by H. M. Newhall, Esq., and others, and is at present occupied by a large number of cattle and sheep, feed being abundant everywhere. The head of the valley commences at the mouth of the Southern Pacific Railroad tunnel, and extends for a distance of twenty miles, more or less, containing in all about twenty thousand acres of tillable land, surrounded by mountain ranges covered with the richest kind of feed. It lies between two important points of commerce, viz.: being twenty-three miles north of Los Angeles, and thirty-six miles south of the town of San Buena Ventura. The Southern Pacific Railroad Company is now rapidly closing up the gap that divides the two ends of their road, and will, without a doubt, have everything in working order by October 1st, and make the actual running time between Los Angeles and San Francisco

ONLY TWENTY HOURS.

At the present time the country is only sparsely settled, there being but two or three small claims under cultivation at the lower end of the valley. Those claims were Government land, and lay outside of the San Francisco Ranch boundaries. The soil is adapted for all kinds of produce, being of a light sandy nature, and is among the best wheat land in the State. The shipping facilities upon the completion of the S. P. R. R., will afford easy communication with the leading markets, and, like a hundred more places in the State that only need an outlet, will give homes to thousands and prosperity for all who are industrious.

The Santa Clara river, which takes its rise in Soledad Cañon, at the upper end of the valley, affords a

NEVER-FAILING SUPPLY OF PURE FRESH WATER
 In great abundance, and by its aid thousands of acres of land can be irrigated at a very small cost. At present nothing of special interest is to be seen following the course of the Santa Clara river, except the thousands of sleek, fat, contented herds that meet the eye, scattered over the plain, or lying in the bed of the river, chewing their cud, as if they did not care whether Tilden ever wrote his letter of acceptance or not.

A distance of fifteen miles from the mouth of the tunnel and ten miles from the mouth of Soledad Cañon, where report has located the Railroad depot and

THE TOWN OF NEWHALL,

is situated the "Camulos Ranch," the garden-spot, truly, of Lower California. Camulos, the property of Don Ygnacio del Valle, contains about fifteen hundred acres of rich alluvial soil, seven hundred acres of it cultivated to the highest state of perfection. The traveller may well be amazed at the sight of the immense adobe house, and outhouses, surrounded by fields of corn and waving grain and extensive vineyards. Immediately adjoining the grand old adobe, (whose rooms are generally well filled with welcome guests from different portions of the State, who come here knowing full well there is always room for more in the capacious old adobe, as well as in the heart of its generous proprietor,) there is a fine orchard and I do not suppose you can find another place in the State that can show such a variety of fruit as is shown therein, except Woodward's Conservatory. Señor del Valle has made this garden his study for fifteen years or more, and still thinks it but in its infancy. At least one thing he has clearly demonstrated, and that is the soil will produce anything and everything that can be desired, with proper cultivation, be it orange or turnip. Many other matters of the resources of our little valley, oil and mining interests, I will defer for a future letter. IXION.



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

Telephone (661)254-1275
Headquarters: Saugus Train Station
24101 Newhall Avenue, Newhall 91321
Open to the public each Saturday and Sunday
1:00 to 4:00 PM
Kingsbury House is open the first Sunday
of each month from 1:00 to 4:00 PM

Historical Society Board of Directors

Alan Pollack ----- President
Ed Marg, Jr.----- 1st Vice President
Scott Sivley ----- 2nd Vice President
Sioux Coghlan ----- Recording Secretary
Barbara Martinelli ----- Corresponding Secretary
Duane Harte ----- Treasurer

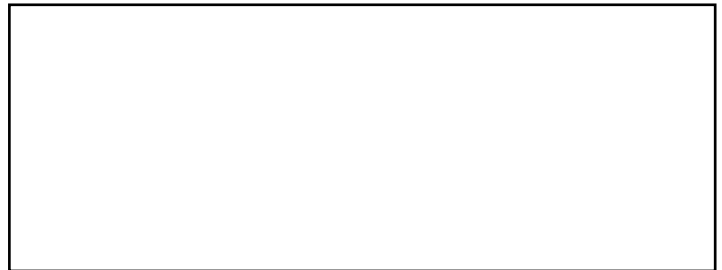
Gordon Glattenberg----- Dispatch Layout

"Preserving the best of the past for the good of the future"

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

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 5012
Santa Clarita, CA

Dated Material: Please Do Not Delay



CHRISTMAS
OPEN HOUSE-
SATURDAY DEC 7,
NOON TO 4:00 PM;
SAUGUS STATION