At high noon on September 5, 1876, a distinguished group of dignitaries from Los Angeles and San Francisco gathered at a remote place called Lang Station in Soledad Canyon just north of Los Angeles to witness railroad magnate Charles Crocker drive a golden spike to unite the two great Western cities by rail. With Crocker stating “Gentlemen, I am no public speaker, but I can drive a spike”, this Southern Pacific Railroad line was completed. On the Board of Directors of the Southern Pacific was one Henry Mayo Newhall. His San Francisco and San Jose Railroad had been bought out by the Southern Pacific 6 years earlier. Newhall had later purchased the Rancho San Francisco in Los Angeles County. He deeded a right of way through the Rancho to the SP for 1 dollar and for another dollar gave land to Western Development, a subsidiary of the railroad to establish the town of Newhall on October 16, 1876.

131 years later, Newhall and Crocker would most certainly be astonished to behold the urban landscape as we greet the fall of 2007 in the Santa Clarita Valley. The Historical Society works to preserve this great history of our Valley. Exciting events and plans continue to develop at Heritage Junction for the SCVHS.

Over $3000 was raised for the Society at two recent events. Thanks to Duane Harte

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Los Pobladores Member Bob Lopez
To Tell the True Story of the First Documented Gold Discovery in California History!

Saugus Station
Saturday, Sept 29, 2:00 PM: Free

See Page 7
Well, once again it is time to turn our thoughts towards Autumn. Even though some of our schools have strange schedules, at least for me, September conjures reminiscences of going back to school. October still invokes memories of Halloweens gone by and spooky stories.

This year, we will be collaborating with Valencia High School's AVID students, a dedicated group of haunt guys and some sponsors of course to present what we hope becomes our signature event: The Heritage Haunt, with this year’s theme as “Field of Screams.” It is already being assembled, with temporary walls going up. Electronics will run the animatronics and the sound systems. There will be plenty of frights to go around, so please make sure everyone hears about it! Even if you aren’t into going through the “haunted house” you might find something interesting at the craft fair planned to go along with it.

The Haunt will operate on the following 12 dates, with varied times and activities:

October 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31; 2007

Hours of the Haunt:

- Thursdays and Sundays: 7:00 – 9:30 pm
- Fridays and Saturdays: 7:00 – 11:00 pm
- Tuesday Oct 31: 7:00 – 10:30 pm

Haunt Activities:

- Haunted House Tour
- VIP Behind the scenes Haunted House Tour
- Live Haunted House digital picture of patrons in Haunt production and sales
- Concession stand sales
- “Scare Zone” Interactive Haunt Area
- Photography Booth for pictures with Haunt Characters and Props
- Animatronics displays in front of the NHRH and Midway
- Small children “trick or treating and varied location with in the event area
- Roaming Haunt Characters for crowd entertainment
- Fall Festival Fair for 2 days (October 27 and 28) that will operate from 10 am until closing
  - Arts and Craft Sales
  - Hearse Car displays
- Small children’s events to include
  - Halloween Safety,
  - Halloween Craft Building,
- Behind the scene tour of how a haunt works at scheduled times during day light hours during non operating hours.
- Halloween themed games

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Ghost Hunters Visit Heritage Junction

Let us not forget, however that we don't need any electronics to find spooks at Heritage Junction. We were visited this year by some ghost hunters from the Ghost Sightings and the Paranormal Research group of Southern California (www.fattony99.com) They poked around the Station and Ranch House with few surprises. But we were all treated to some anomalous stuff at the Pardee House. Along with the group, we invited a local psychic, who goes by the name “Darla” and is a friend of mine. She didn’t say much as we walked around. In fact, we had agreed that she should stay quiet to see what the ghost hunters came up with on their own. Once we had settled into the house, one of the researchers found a spot that caused her digital thermometer to rapidly go up and down. I was standing by Darla, who could hardly contain herself. She thought that the ghost hunter was blocking a “portal” and it would all be right if she moved out of the way a little. So she broke her silence. We then watched for 20 to 30 minutes as Darla would call out that someone was coming through the portal and it would all be right if she moved out of the way a little. She broke her silence. We then watched for 20 to 30 minutes as Darla would call out that someone was coming through the portal, and the ghost hunter reported a significant drop in temperature, with a return to the ambient temperature shortly thereafter—over and over. This was not a planned trick. Darla had never met the ghost hunters. And they did not even know she was a psychic until that point. So I can only conclude that we were given a spooky treat!

Martha, The Blue Lady of The Newhall Ranch House

I love a good ghost story; doesn’t everyone? Add ghost story to genealogical researcher…and you usually have no luck. Maybe that is because the ghosts are made up in our own heads and therefore can’t be found in any record. I understand that is unfortunately the most likely case. However, I can hardly resist a challenge, and so as the person who has escorted most of the psychics who have come here around, I took what they have said and did some research.

Some of the comments are listed below:

- Young woman and old woman who are related, or a woman who can show either old or young
- Wearing dark colors, usually blue (from about the time of the 1880s)
- Long brown hair, usually up

Accompanied by an 8 year old boy named Timothy
She goes by Martha

Recently I visited with the above mentioned psychic Darla, who spent considerable time with me trying to pin down information about our mysterious resident. She added the following details.

Darla’s story

Martha was born about 1823. She is afraid of the camera flashes because as a child she was apparently frightened by lightning. It seems she might not have had all of her little gray cells firing at the same time. Her parents paid a dowry and married her off, but her husband raped her early in the marriage. She got pregnant, but lost the baby and had no more children. Her husband wasn’t around much, apparently, and she pretty much liked it that way. She is associated with both adobe and brick, but was apparently living in the oldest part of the house when she was removed from it. Darla thought her last name was Barrera or something with a B. After throwing out some names of local residents, Darla says that she didn’t mix much with the adults and stayed pretty much with the children. She is all about the children - even though she had none herself. She knew many of the surnames that I listed off, but when I mentioned Wolfskill, she was afraid of him.

When I mentioned “Doña Isabel” she was all recognition. I started showing Darla photos of Camulos and she said that Martha never went to the front of the house, she wasn’t allowed. I then remembered that there is a brick winery there and the house is adobe. Other details really pointed to Camulos, so did some research online.

From the record

Doña Isabel del Valle was the daughter of José Serbulo Varela and Acención Avila. I first looked at the 1880 census and found the del Valles listed under Acención Del Valle. This was quite clearly Isabel’s mother, Acención (Avila) Varela. Isabel was third in the list. Just after Acención was her sister, Marta, who would have been born in the 1820s. So I went looking for Marta Avila. It seems Maria Marta was baptized on July 29, 1825 in San Gabriel, Los Angeles, CA, and married Juan Nepomuceno Padilla on February 14, 1851 in Los Angeles. I found the two of

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Heritage Haunt

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them on the Census in 1860 in Los Angeles, aged 37 and 32 respectively...no children, but there were servants and laborers engaged in farming. By the 1870 census, the husband is out of the picture and there are Acención and Martha keeping house for José Ignacio del Valle, who is living in a different dwelling from the other del Valles. It is hard to tell how far away. Acención is listed as Keeps House and Martha is a House Servant. In the 1880 census, she is back to Marta, and as above, living with the del Valles. After that I can’t find anything on her, at least as yet.

I can only speculate, but José Ignacio, Acención and Marta might have been living out on this end of the rancho, the women looking after the 31 year old José while he looked after the family’s interests closer in. Camulos, which is where their home is, sits on the extreme western end of the property and was always in dispute. The land wasn’t really lost until 1875 when Newhall bought it. William Wolfskill held papers on the land, in hopes that the del Valles might raise the funds to keep it. Even when Bard and Scott owned the options on or bought the land...about the time the back end of the house was built, José could have been hired to look after the area. It is feasible, but at this point, not provable. When Bard and Scott gave up the project and Newhall bought it, Wolfskill was probably the one to toss them out of the house...if that is where they were.

Investigation of Pardee House and Ranch House

Letter from Frank Caringella

Here is what we found...

All of the videos and sound recordings did not indicate anything unusual.

There were a few pictures that did have anomalies in them (see attached). Depending on your personal interpretation of Orb’s, there were quite a few that we designated as dust. There is one picture that has a dark shadowy abnormality on the left side. We all studied it and were not able to determine exactly what it was. I also sent this picture to two of my colleagues in the field and they too were unable to determine exactly what it was.

Temperature readings fluctuated in the main room in the Pardee House. The temperature changes were two to four degrees. These readings were registered with a stationary thermometer.

The downstairs of the Ranch House area also had slight temperature changes by three to four degrees. These readings were taken with a Thermal thermometer.

EMF readings spiked throughout both homes. Most notably in the Pardee House. The two rooms located to the left of the main room showed Low-end readings were 0.1 and the High-end, 4.8.

Did any of your group capture anything out of the ordinary that night? I would love to see and hear about it if they did!

Thank you again for allowing us to perform our study at Heritage Junction. I will keep in touch so we can discuss the possibility of a return trip!
Wall Raising for Heritage Haunt

Heritage Haunt Facade
President’s Message

Continued from page 1

for organizing the SCVHS wine and beer booth at the Jazz and Blues Festival, and to participants Barbara Martinelli, Cathie Kincheloe, Harold Hicks, and Pauline Harte, and all the other volunteers, who had a great time passing out the spirits to an enthusiastic crowd of jazz lovers. Another successful event was our annual Christmas in July dinner and auction. Many interesting and unique crafts and food items were generously donated by our Board members and special thanks go to organizer Sue Yurosek and auctioneer extraordinaire Nancy Cordova for a great evening. Participants in the audience included Signal columnist Michele Buttelman, her husband Keith, and past Society President Tom Frew.

The Hart Foundation is now a reality!! The Boards of the Historical Society and Friends of Hart Park both approved the founding By-Laws of this joint effort to help raise more money for both organizations. The new Foundation will include 3 representatives from both groups who will recruit other prominent members of the Santa Clarita community to help with our fund raising efforts. The documents to establish the foundation are currently being organized by Alex Hernandez of the City of Santa Clarita, and we will hopefully be up and running within several months. Mr. Hernandez is also working on establishing a Historic Preservation Ordinance to protect the remaining historic buildings in Santa Clarita. He has asked for the Society’s help to figure out which structures in the City are worthy of historic protection.

The Board of Directors also met recently with Jeff Lambert, planning consultant for the owners of the Beale’s Cut area. Much was discussed at the meeting about the owner’s plans to restore Beale’s Cut as part of a development project that they plan to propose for the site to the north of the cut. Mr. Lambert voiced a commitment to consult with the Historical Society as these plans develop in the next few years.

The construction of our Heritage Haunt is finally underway. Planned for October are a high tech haunted house, corn maze, scare zone, and crafts fair to be held at Heritage Junction. Ed Marg and his dedicated co-workers are working long and hard to make this dream a reality. They still need lots of volunteers to help with the project. Please consider donating your time and talents. If interested, contact Pat Saletore at (661) 254-1275.

Please mark your calendars for upcoming events in our Lecture Series. Coming Saturday, September 29 at 2:00 PM, the Saugus Train Station will be hosting Bob Lopez of the Los Pobladores organization, who will be speaking on the Placerita Canyon gold discovery of 1842. Bob is a distant relative of gold discoverer Francisco Lopez, and also a direct descendent of one of the original 11 families who settled the pueblo of Los Angeles in 1781.

Also coming to the train station on Saturday, November 10 will be historian John Robinson, author of the books “Gateways To Southern California” and “Mines of the San Gabriels.” Mr. Robinson is an expert on the history of the mountains and mountain passes of Southern California and will be speaking on the history of the mountain passes of the Santa Clarita Valley, including Newhall Pass, Tejon Pass and Soledad Canyon. Mr. Robinson would argue that the Newhall Pass should really be referred to as the Fremont Pass. Come to his talk to find out why!!

As always, thanks to all the docents and Board members for donating their time and talents to help the Society function and serve the public. See you all at the Train Station!!

Alan Pollack
Most school children in the U.S. learn that the first discovery of gold in California occurred at Sutter's Mill on the south fork of the American River in 1848. But the kids of the Santa Clarita Valley know better. They know that the first documented gold discovery in California actually occurred 6 years earlier, in 1842, right here near a famous oak tree in Placerita Canyon. The man credited with this discovery was Francisco Lopez. On Saturday, September 29 at 2:00 pm, the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society will be presenting a talk by Bob Lopez, a distant relative of Francisco Lopez and member of Los Pobladores, an organization of direct descendants of the original settlers of the Pueblo of Los Angeles in 1781. Mr. Lopez will present the true and mostly forgotten story of his ancestor’s discovery of gold in Placerita Canyon and the minor gold rush that followed, long before the more famous California Gold Rush that captivated the whole world into the 1850’s and beyond. The talk will be given at the Saugus Train Station at Heritage Junction in Newhall.

Reports of gold in the Santa Clarita Valley date back to the 1790’s with the legendary Lost Padres Mine in the Castaic area, the location of which has not been found to this day. There were also reports of gold in San Francisquito Canyon in the 1820’s. But the first person to file a government claim for mining gold, and therefore be credited with the first documented gold discovery in California, was Francisco Lopez, a trained mineralogist from the university at Sonora, Mexico. Lopez was the uncle of Jacoba Feliz, 2nd wife of Antonio Del Valle, who had been granted the Rancho San Francisco by Governor Juan Alvarado in 1839 (thereby becoming the first official owner of the Santa Clarita Valley).

Lopez set off on March 9, 1842 with companions Manuel Cota and Domingo Bermudez to search for cattle in what would become Placerita Canyon. Legend has Lopez falling asleep under an old oak tree in the canyon and dreaming of gold. When he awoke, he dug up wild onions under a grove of nearby sycamore trees and found gold clinging to the roots of the onions. The oak tree was to become known as the Oak of the Golden Dream, today a historic landmark in Placerita Canyon. However, there is much controversy as to whether this is the actual tree under which Lopez had his golden dream. The actual tree may well have been located in the area now known as Disney’s Golden Oak Ranch.

Lopez brought gold samples to Los Angeles merchant Abel Stearns who sent the gold to the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia where it was confirmed to be worth $19 an ounce. Lopez, Cota, and Bermudez then petitioned Governor Alvarado for permission to mine the gold, thereby establishing the...
Placerita Gold

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first documented gold discovery in California history. Lopez’ discovery set off a minor gold rush, mostly consisting of miners from the Sonora area of Mexico. While there were some reports of the Lopez find in the Eastern American press, the Placerita gold discovery was primarily noticed by Mexican citizens in an area that was part of Mexico at the time. Although preceding James Marshall’s famous gold strike at Sutter’s Mill in Northern California by 6 years, the Placerita gold discovery and gold rush has been mostly lost to history, except to those of us here in the Santa Clarita Valley.

The gold in Placerita Canyon was mostly played out by 1849. Marshall’s discovery on the American River proved to be far richer than Placerita and set off one of the greatest migrations in human history, an event largely responsible for the settling of California and the Great American West.

Bob Lopez is a direct descendent of Luis Quintero, a member of one of the eleven families who founded the city of Los Angeles on September 4, 1781. He is an active member in Los Pobladores and is also related to the gold discoverer Francisco Lopez. Mr. Lopez is sure to provide a most interesting and unique perspective on this important episode of Santa Clarita’s history.

The general public is welcome. 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.

Recent Docents

Thank you to the following members who served as docents during June and July:

- Frank Adella
- Phyllis Berman
- Laurie Cartwright
- Sioux Coghlan
- Sarah Floyd
- Francesca Gastil
- Harold Hicks
- John Lesperance
- Bill and Karen Limbaugh
- Barbara Martinelli
- Barbara Milteer
- Sandy Neill
- Alan Pollack
- Pat Saletore
- E. J. Stephens
- Gordon Uppman
- Kristyn VanWy
- Michelle Veasman

Recent Docents provide the most interesting and unique perspective on this important episode of Santa Clarita’s history. The general public is welcome. 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.

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