



The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 36, Issue 5

September-October 2010

Calendar

Monday, September 27

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Friday, October 1

Deadline for the November-December *Dispatch*

Fridays, Saturdays, October 15, 16, 22, 23, 29, 30

Heritage Haunt
See page 8

Monday, October 25

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Check www.scvhhistory.org for other upcoming events.

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

President's Message

by Alan Pollack



It was a momentous occasion in California history. On September 5, 1876, a ceremony at Lang Station in Soledad Canyon marked the completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad connecting Los Angeles and

San Francisco. In the last edition of the "Dispatch", we discussed the construction of the San Fernando Railroad tunnel, without which the railroad would not have been possible. Now we will explore the Golden Spike Ceremony at Lang Station through the eyes of contemporary newspaper reports.

An inconspicuous line appeared in the Sacramento Daily Record-Union newspaper of September 2, 1876: "The railroad to Los

Angeles will be completed on Tuesday." With this modest announcement began one of the great events in California history. Los Angeles would finally be connected by rail, not only to San Francisco, but to the rest of the United States through the Southern Pacific's connections with the Transcontinental Railroad. Just as they had celebrated at Promontory Summit in Utah on May 10, 1869, the Big Four of the Southern Pacific (Crocker, Huntington, Stanford, and Hopkins) planned festivities to take place at a location where the last spike would be driven to complete the railroad. This location turned out to be at a remote railroad depot in Northern Los Angeles County called Lang Station. John Lang, a native of Herkimer County, New York, and a dairy farmer in Martinez, California (among other occupations), had moved from Virginia City, Nevada, to Los Angeles in the 1860's due to the ill health of his wife.

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COMING IN OCTOBER

TO HERITAGE JUNCTION!!

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President's Message

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In 1870, he purchased 160 acres of land in Soledad Canyon for \$300. On this land he built a train depot, express office, post office and the Sulphur Springs Hotel and spa. He later became the first station master of the depot which bore his name.

In preparation for the ceremony, it was announced that "L.W.Thatcher, a jeweler of Los Angeles, and formerly a conductor on the Central Pacific Railroad, has made and presented a golden spike and a silver hammer.Value, \$300."

THE GREAT UNDERTAKING

The Golden Spike Ceremony at Lang Station was big news in California newspapers the next day.The Daily Record Union's headline proclaimed "THE GREAT UNDERTAKING FINALLY ACCOMPLISHED". Delegations of dignitaries from both cities traveled by train from San Francisco and downtown Los Angeles to participate in the ceremony. According to San Francisco's "Daily Alta California", the delegation from Los Angeles included the Mayor and consisted of "the leading citizens of Los Angeles County - the bench, the bar, medical and journalistic professions...The banking, mercantile, agricultural and wine interests of Los Angeles County were represented by their most prominent men." The train from Los Angeles arrived at Lang Station at 12:00 noon.The San Francisco newspaper describes the scene:"The two delegations, running over with animation and enthusiasm, which found vent in cheers that made the noise of the cannon seem a misnomer, entered upon their labors.The vicinity of the station is crowded with people. The track for a half mile in extent is lined with the whole force of laborers and spectators, all anxiously awaiting the important consummation."

As the ceremony began, greetings were exchanged between dignitaries of both cities.Telegraph wires were connected to both Los Angeles and San Francisco to announce the event.The astute leaders of the Southern Pacific were determined to demonstrate to the country the speed with which they could lay down rails. 1050 feet of track remained to be laid to complete the railroad. One thousand workers, mostly Chinese, lined up along the tracks and, with picks and shovels ready, awaited the signal.As the signal was given:"The track-graders and laborers set to work.As fast as the rails were laid on the ties, they were immediately

spiked down and the space between the ties filled with earth. In the struggle to close in on the half of the unladen track, the southern or Los Angeles party were winners by a rail, their end being completed 3 minutes before the San Francisco end.The work occupied but 5 minutes.The last rail is laid.The cheers are loud and prolonged."

THE SPEECHES

Charles Crocker, President of the Southern Pacific, was then presented with a golden spike and silver hammer by a citizen of Los Angeles.The San Francisco newspaper reporter stated "At 2:00 President Crocker, standing upon an elevated portion of the track and surrounded by Governor Stanford,Vice President Colton and others, returned thanks for the gift, then addressed the multitude, alluding to the auspicious occasion, and expressing hopes that the connecting rail with San Francisco and Los Angeles would redound to the prosperity of the citizens of the respective cities. He then proceeded to drive the spike, amid deafening cheers..."

Following Crocker's historic blow, speeches were delivered by General D.D. Colton,Vice President of the railroad, followed by Ex-Governor Downey, Los Angeles Mayor Beaudry, San Francisco Mayor Bryant, Governor Leland Stanford, and finally Los Angeles freighting king Phinneas Banning who "at 2:20 closed the exercises with a mirthful address.The dense crowd broke ranks, the workmen to their duties and the visitors to their cars. In response to the cordial invitation extended by the Mayor and citizens of Los Angeles, the cars were immediately turned towards Los Angeles, to attend the banquet to be given in the evening."

THE RECLAMATION

The importance of this railroad connection to the Southern California of the 1870's could not possibly be overstated. Witness the newspaper's description of Southern California as perceived by the rest of the state:"California, in the minds of most of her citizens, exists north of the headwaters of the San Joaquin...Southern California is a mysterious, mythical, half fabulous locality, with no definite boundaries and no practical connection with the commercial world. It may be the peculiar ring of the old Spanish names which the towns bear, it may be the dreary distance which intervened

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President's Message

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between them and the central portions of the State, but certain it is that something has caused an impression in most minds that Southern California was vaguely distant, almost out of the world, and that it never could be reclaimed to civilization, and now it is reclaimed."

HAPPENINGS AT THE JUNCTION

"Newhollywood On Location" was a great success. I had the pleasure of joining E.J. Stephens and his wife Kim as E.J. brought a group of ten people around the Valley to visit historic sites associated with the history of movie making. Sites included Beale's Cut, Mentryville, Harry Carey ranch house, and Vasquez Rocks. A great time was had by all involved. I am hoping this will be the start of more on-location tours of historic sites in the SCV.

Keep your calendars open for our next lecture at the Saugus Train Station. On Saturday, November 6, we will be hearing about the life and times of California's Old West outlaw Tiburcio Vasquez. The talk will be delivered by John Boessenecker, author of a new book on Vasquez to be published this fall. A book signing will be held after the lecture.

We thank Curtis Hill for helping to bring an old railroad phone booth to Heritage Junction, courtesy of the Union Pacific Railroad. Mike Jarel and Manny Santana have been busy helping set things up around the station and we thank them for their efforts.

We owe our special thanks and gratitude to the Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation for yet another generous donation of \$50,000 to help with the repainting of the Saugus Train Station. Board member Sue Yurosek has done a wonderful job supervising the repainting of the building. The Station is looking splendid these days. Come by and take a look!

Thanks also to Linda Rehberger for her tender care of our rose gardens, and to Paul Duryea who is waging an epic battle against the weeds of Heritage Junction.

We are proud of all of our volunteers who help keep the Junction running and in good shape. Have a great Fall season! See you all at the Train Station.

Alan Pollack



The Southern Pacific Station at Lang, April 24, 1966. The Golden Spike Monument is just visible at the left.

Saugus Station Repainting in Final Stages



Southern Pacific Concrete Phone Booth Donated to Saugus Depot Collection

by Mike Jarel

Although Southern Pacific, along with the railroad industry as a whole, embraced radio technology for operations as far back as the 1950's, the complete transition to radio communications used in railroad operations would not occur until the mid-1980's. In the earlier years signal strength from base stations limited dependable reach to trains and their crews as they traversed remote stretches, deep canyons, tunnels and mountainous territories. For this reason, the railroads would continue to depend on land-line based communications via manned station facilities and phone booths spread across the system. At strategic locations, usually at both ends of sidings, at junctions, or at other locations where train crews, as well as maintenance of way and signal dept. employees might need to communicate with dispatchers or terminal offices, sheltered phone booths were provided.

Early wooden phone boxes proved to be inadequate to the railroad environment and were subject to vandalism and phone theft. So in the early 1920's, Southern Pacific began manufacturing their own heavy-duty reinforced concrete booths at their West Oakland maintenance of way shops. These booths were solid but portable and could be placed wherever needed, and provided a secure facility for field phones as well as better protection from the elements for both the equipment as well as the employees using them.

Two versions of these booths were manufactured between 1921 and 1955. Our sister depot at Santa Susana (Simi Valley) has a restored early version that was manufactured up to the late 1920's. Through the efforts of Curtis Hill, Manager Signal Construction at Union Pacific Railroad, arrangements were made for donation to the Saugus Depot of a second generation S.P. booth that is in excellent condition for its age and had been in last use at Bassett, CA, (between El Monte and La Puente) on the former SP (now UP) L.A. – New Orleans "Sunset Route" main line. From dated company drawings, this later version booth was manufactured beginning sometime after 1922 through 1955, when the last were built. Both versions were in wide use up to at least the mid-1980's, when the booths were relegated to secondary communication facilities as radio repeater technology allowed for dependable communications anywhere on the system. Eventually, one by one these booths were decommissioned and eventually were either broken up, used for tool and or chemical storage at maintenance yards, or even used as "rip-rap" for embankment reinforcement. Some still remain, in derelict condition and used by transients for shelter.

On Monday, July 19th, using equipment provided by Mike Redmond of AV Equipment Rental, along with a heavy-duty truck provided by Manny Santana who also was indispensable in the movement itself, our phone booth was retrieved from the Union Pacific's signal storage yard at Los Nietos (Whittier) and successfully transported to Heritage Park and placed at the southeast corner of our depot in the train yard adjacent to our Mogul locomotive. Restoration will include the search for a phone similar to those used in these booths. Originally, wood-cased Western Electric model 1517 BU phones were used; these were eventually replaced with later "Automatic Electric" phones. Both were simple "push to talk" phones with no dialers since the phone circuits were a direct party line. One just waited for a pause in conversation, then identified themselves by the station location and waited for the dispatcher to acknowledge.

Our booth will eventually help in the demonstration of railroad operations that were a regular part of daily life in the Santa Clarita Valley.



Missed my prefix by just 5 numbers ...

by John Boston

"If The Phone Doesn't Ring, It's Me."

-song title by Jimmy Buffet

We have paradox built in to all of us when it comes to newness. New clothes? New baby? New love of our life? That's all fine and hunky dory. But new neighbors who happen to be Hell's Angels? New parking ticket? New telephone area code? No. No thank you very much, please.

Seems like 1,000 years ago, but on a Saturday in 1999, we switched over our phones here in the Santa Clarita. The 805 was dead. Long live the 661. I would have preferred 666 as a new area code. That way, I could smile a toothy smile when out-of-district friends inquire and sardonically reply: "Yes. I live in hell."

But alas, no 666 as even a negotiation crumb. I'm 661 Man. I'm 661 Man until the year 2012, when, according to the Mayans the world ends and more importantly, phone think tank people predict that nearly 8 million more numbers will have been added to 661 and, once again, they'll have to come up with yet another area code.

Which I'd hope would be 666.

"Hello," says the telephone answering machine, "you've reached 666-666-6666, the offices of the Santa Clarita Valley Office of Tourism. We have a light-to-medium industrial base, several hundred throbbing amusement parks and a base population of 42 million people. And, we're evil. Speak clearly and slowly at the beep or your soul belongs to us." That would be a sight. All us Santa Claritans walking around with cell phones, red capes and serpentine tails.

Technology has once again forced me to expand my puny little cranium, made me memorize one more thing: Cell phones. Separate Internet lines. Faxes. Pagers. ATM connections. They are the small gods who require not the live, beating human heart for sacrifice, but their own number. Finally, poor old 805 could hold only so many sequences before it would pop and 661 was invented.

The very first telephone in the SCV was installed in 1900 at Campton's General Store. I'd just kill to find out what that telephone number was back then. One, probably. Pearl Russell worked in that store and part of her job was to answer the rare phone call, and physically walk or ride a horse over to a person's house to tell them they had a long-distance call. The second phone in the Santa Clarita Valley wasn't added until 1913, and I would have loved to

have been there, sheepishly grinning in the background as the owner walks toward the shrill ringing and before picking it up predicts: "Must be somebody over at Campton's."

We are pretty much phone rich in modern times, what with portables around the house and everyone with a cell phone. It wasn't the case back in 1924. Owners of the McGinnis & Urfer's confectionery store announced they would be installing a pay phone inside so that locals could make calls up until 11:00 PM. Back then, we didn't have direct dialing and the phone company office was open only from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM and closed on Sunday. If you had to make an emergency call any other time, the only other 24-hour phone available was at Wood's Garage in Saugus.

Speaking of phones, I just love this little notice that ran in The Formerly Mighty Signal in 1924. It's tres small town: "The Bouquet telephone line, being built by the Forest Service, has been completed to within a mile of the goat ranch."

One of our modern woes is our lack of privacy in this information age. Things weren't much different in 1951, when a young sailor, home on leave, was arrested for cussing over the telephone. Evidentially, local telephone operator Holly Hubbard was eavesdropping while the young seaman was using blue language over the phone. She patched the call in to the local sheriff's office, who sent out a patrol car to his home in Mint Canyon. Terrible footnote about Holly: Several years later, her little compact car would explode on Sierra Highway and she was burned alive while running down the road.

With the flick of a switch in January of 1960, we became the first rural community in California to go direct dial. The very first phone call was from A.B. Perkins to our sister city, Saugus, Mass. Before that, a small battery of phone operators - most of whom recognized your voice - would physically connect one thick wire plug to one copper inlet. Phone numbers prior to 1960 had letters in them, too. The old hospital's phone was 90W. Insurance man Freeman Beal's number was 272J. Dr. Ralph Witten, our dentist? You wouldn't sprain a finger phoning him. His number was 3.

That all changed in 1960. Ma Bell, with the justice of Solomon, raised a great sword and divided the valley in half. Saugus and Canyon Country were given the prefix of 252 and Newhall got 259. That's when the SCV's powers of concentration were stretched to include this newfangled concept called an area code. Ours was 805.

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Telephones

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Locals had to be educated over something called a “dial tone.” The phone company chuckled affably and told us not to panic. The telephone wouldn’t blow up.

When Pacific Bell came out with their 1981 phone book, for the first time in history the word “Valencia” was printed more times than the word “Newhall.” (That’d be 61-59.) The phrase, Santa Clarita, came in third with 41 listings followed by Canyon Country with 35. There were 204 Smiths listed locally. I’m almost embarrassed to confess. I just counted the Smiths listed in the most recent phone book and there are 351, not including our former mayor, Clyde, who spells his name funny.

Come 2012, I just might have to tell all manner of friends and family that I have a new area code. Most will ask, “Why?” and I will inhale a very deep breath and say: “Just because,” because I don’t want to have this same conversation over and over, eating up valuable remaining minutes of my life. I’m going to have to change my letterhead and alert everyone with whom I have even the teeniest of business relations. Bank accounts. Credit cards. IRAs. Insurance.

Wouldn’t it be nice to slip back to simpler times, when you swung your feet up on the desk, holding the satisfyingly heavy speaker part of the phone in one hand and the earpiece in the other. Somebody asks, “What’s your phone number down there?” and you answer: “Me? Oh, one. Just one.”

Join the SCV Historical Society Today!

Life Member	\$350.00
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Corporate	\$200.00
Non-profit	\$50.00
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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> .



Community service volunteers, Ron, Jason and Mike replace deteriorating wood on the Railway Express wagon on the dock at the Station as John Lesperance “supervises.” Soon, it will again sport its bright red and green colors. Thanks also to Tom Burgh and the Santa Susannah crew for a steel ring to use for the tongue.



Questers Dee Roche and Libby Hinze wait for a group of school children to visit the Edison House.

Recent Docents

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

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Frank Adella | Barbara Martinelli |
| Laurie Cartwright | Barbara Milteer |
| Sioux Coghlan | RuthAnne Murthy |
| Sarah Floyd | Pat Saletore |
| Francesca Gastil | Konrad Summers |
| Harold Hicks | Gordon Uppman |
| Karen and Bill Limbaugh | Michelle Veasman |

Visit the Pumpkin Festival on October 23 from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM in Hart Park

Heritage Haunt Hayride of Nightmares

Gates Open 6:30 - 9:30 PM
Friday and Saturday Nights

October 15-16

October 22-23

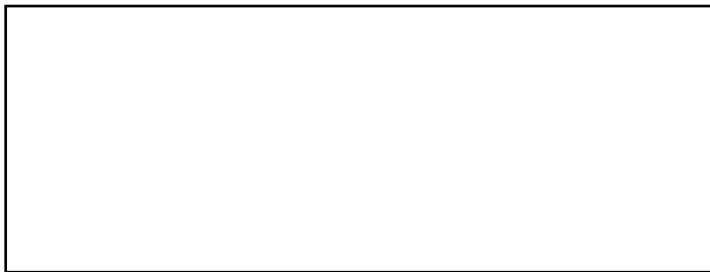
October 29-30

Admission \$15.00

Not recommended for children under 8..

Ticket price includes entrance to all Events, Shows, Performances

Or...if you are really brave...go on a ghost adventure by staying over night in a real haunted house!



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Open to the public each Saturday and Sunday
1:00 to 4:00 PM
Kingsbury 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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