



The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 37, Issue 5

September-October 2011

Calendar

Monday, September 26

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Friday, September 30

Deadline for the November -
December *Dispatch*

Monday, October 24

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Check www.scvhistory.org for
other upcoming events.

President's Message

by Alan Pollack



On an empty plain in what would later be called the San Fernando Valley, the Mission San Fernando Rey de España was dedicated on September 8, 1797. The mission was named in honor of

King Ferdinand III of Spain, who had been canonized in 1671 for his role in defeating the Moors in Spain in the 13th century. Present that day to bless the new mission was Fray Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, the successor as President of the Missions in Alta California to the famed Father Junípero Serra, who died in 1784 after establishing the first nine missions in this remote Spanish territory.

FINDING A PROPER MISSION SITE

Two years earlier, in 1795, a group of Spanish soldiers accompanied by Fray Vicente de Santa María set out to find a suitable mission site to be located between the already established missions at San Gabriel and San Buenaventura. Among the sites they explored for the new mission included Simi Valley, Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Rancho Encino, and the Santa Clarita Valley. On their landmark expedition in 1769 both Father Juan Crespí and Captain Gaspar de Portolá had recommended our valley as a potential site for a mission. Fray Santa María did not agree. In his diary addressed to Fr. Lasuén he wrote on September 3, 1795, "This zanja is very easy of access, so that with its water some land can be irrigated; but in said district we found no place suitable for establishing a mission.

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President's Message

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It is six leagues distant from the Camino Real to the north, and it has the additional drawback of the pass through the sierra." Fray Santa María was referring to the treacherous San Fernando Pass (later Newhall Pass) as a significant impediment to the establishment of a mission in the Santa Clarita Valley.

Thus the SCV lost out to the Rancho Encino in the San Fernando Valley. The Rancho Encino belonged to Juan Francisco Reyes, who had been rewarded this land grant for his service in the Royal Spanish Army first at the Monterrey garrison in 1771, and later at La Misión de San Antonio de Padua, the third mission established in Alta California. He later settled in the San Fernando Valley and built an adobe at Rancho Encino (now Mission Hills). He served as alcalde of the Pueblo of Los Angeles from 1793-1795. As the land grant given to Reyes was legally considered a "temporary occupation", the Franciscan missionaries proceeded to confiscate his land to build the new mission. Reyes apparently did not put up a fight and was later given land farther north near La Purísima as consolation.

DEDICATING THE NEW MISSION

Within two years, the new San Fernando Mission was completed. On the day of its dedication, Fray Lasuén wrote to Governor Don Diego de Borica: "It affords me great pleasure to Your Lordship that today, the solemn feast of the Nativity of Most Holy Mary, I blessed water, the grounds, and a large cross which we venerated and erected in a beautiful region known as Achois Comihabit by the natives, and located between the Missions of San Buenaventura and San Gabriel..."

ESTABLISHING THE OUTPOST

But the site of the mission proposed by Crespi and Portolá in the Santa Clarita Valley was not forgotten by the friars at the San Fernando Mission. By 1804, they decided to build a ranching and agricultural outpost on a plateau above the confluence of the Santa Clara River and Castaic Creek, at what is now called Castaic Junction. The outpost was to be called the Estancia San Francisco de Xavier. Previous Santa Clarita local history literature has referred erroneously to the outpost as an asistencia (sub-mission). To qualify as an asistencia, the outpost would have had to include a chapel. There is no evidence that a chapel existed at the outpost above Castaic Junction during the Spanish mission

period. The building of the Estancia San Francisco was hastened after the friars had to thwart an attempt to grant the Camulos Ranch along the Santa Clara River to the west of Castaic Junction to Francisco Avila. The estancia thus established a formidable Mission presence in the Santa Clarita Valley. The steep San Fernando Pass, which had prevented the establishment of a mission in the SCV actually proved to be a bonus for the new outpost, as it allowed for only minimal fencing to control the livestock being herded around the estancia.

THE DEL VALLES

Along with the entire California mission system, the Mission San Fernando was secularized by the Mexican government in 1834. Mexico had won its independence from Spain in 1821. In 1835, former Spanish Lt. Antonio Del Valle was assigned as mayordomo or administrator of the San Fernando Mission. Del Valle had previously petitioned for ownership of the Rancho San Francisco de Xavier in 1833, but was thwarted by the Franciscan missionaries. A second petition to Governor Juan Alvarado in 1839 was successful, and thus Del Valle officially became the first non-native owner of the Santa Clarita Valley. The Del Valle family took up residence at the old Estancia San Francisco at Castaic Junction.

MANLY AND ROGERS

Although Antonio died in 1841, his young widow Jacoba Feliz was still living at the Estancia in January, 1850, when two of the unsung heroes of California history stumbled on the property after crossing the Mojave Desert by foot in their attempt to save the survivors of a gold rush-bound wagon train which had become stranded in Death Valley. William Lewis Manly and John Rogers obtained badly needed supplies at the Rancho San Francisco and were able to return to Death Valley to save the Bennett-Arcan wagon party and bring them back to the Santa Clarita Valley. In the 1892 book about his ordeal, "Death Valley in '49", Manly gives probably the best known eyewitness description of the Estancia San Francisco: "A house on higher ground soon appeared in sight. It was low, of one story with a flat roof, gray in color, and of a different style of architecture from any we had ever seen before. There was no fence around it, and no animals or wagons in sight... As we came near the house no person was seen, but a mule tied to a post told us there was some one about,

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President's Message

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and a man soon made an appearance, dressed about the same style as the one we had passed a short time before... Rogers now began looking around the house, which was built of sun-dried bricks about one by two feet in size, and one end was used as a storehouse... We tried to inquire where we were or where ought to go, but could get no satisfactory answer from the man, although when we spoke San Francisco he pointed to the north... So we concluded to go on a little way at least, and I hobbled off in the direction he pointed, which was down the hill and past a small, poorly fenced field which was sometimes cultivated, and across the stream which followed down the valley."

Source material for this article: "San Fernando Rey De España, An Illustrated History", Kenneth E. and Carol M. Pauley, 2005.

HAPPENINGS AT THE JUNCTION

The SCV Historical Society was well represented in this year's 4th of July parade in Newhall. Riding on vintage cars through the parade route were Board members Duane Harte and Cathy Martin, volunteer Shari Fleischman, and yours truly, waving Old Glory to the crowds lining the streets of our fair city. Thanks to Duane for his efforts to get the Society involved in this Newhall tradition, which dates back to the 1930's

Welcome to the fall in the SCV! We are continuing in our efforts to fully organize and catalogue the extensive archives of the Historical Society. Thanks go out to Board member Paul Duryea and volunteers Angela on the Archives and Ethan on the Cataloguing for their help in this important endeavor.

We thank you all for your continued support of our Historical Society. Have a great Fall season and... see you at the Train Station!

Alan Pollack

William S. Hart Museum and Hart Park Activities

by Rachel Barnes



Silents descended under the stars - and an amazing full moon - on Saturday, August 13, when the Friends of Hart Park hosted their annual fundraiser, *Silents Under the Stars* here in Hart Park.

Over 200 guests enjoyed a catered dinner from Rattler's Bar B Que Restaurant while listening to live blue grass music performed by the awe-inspiring All Digital String Band, followed by a screening of the Tom Mix favorite, *The Great K & A Train Robbery* (1926) and the 1950's documentary, *The Saga of William S. Hart*. Both films were introduced by noted silent film historian, David Shepard, and accompanied by live organ music played by Ray Lowe. All the proceeds from *Silents Under the Stars* will support projects for both Hart Park and the Museum.

Now Fall is just around the corner, which means the Hart Museum is preparing to participate in the 18th annual *Hart of the West Pow Wow* on Saturday and Sunday, September 24 and September 25. This event will offer a unique opportunity to experience the richness of Native American culture, with dancers, drummers, and arts and crafts displays right here in Hart Park. It is open 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM on Saturday, and 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM on Sunday.

The *Bow-Wows and Meows Pet Fair* on Sunday, October 9, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, brings together thousands of pet owners, shelters, pet rescues, pet care vendors, and yes, our delightful animal companions for a "meow-tastic" day that celebrates pets, pet care, and pet adoption.

We round out October with the 2011 *Pumpkin Festival* on Saturday, October 22, where Halloween-themed activities abound, including one of the most fun pumpkin carving contests around! (Times have not yet been established.)

The temperatures may be ready to cool down, but activities at the Hart Museum and Park are only starting to heat up, so stay tuned!

Upstairs. . by Pat Saletore

For those of you who have not visited my office for more than a couple of weeks...you are going to be a little surprised. My office has moved upstairs. Now, if your reaction to this is "EEEEWWWW!!!" You really need to come visit my office.

Since early this year, I have been putting in photos and notes about the work upstairs and on the Library. Well, it has all come together since the last newsletter. The Society now has a suite of offices, which are all in use. The two trackside rooms upstairs are being used as an Archive and its office. Paul Duryea and new volunteer Angela have sorted out our collection of paper in all of its forms and begun the project of cataloguing the maps, which are being filed into our new map drawers, courtesy of the City of Santa Clarita grant from earlier this year. Also included in that grant was an order of about 100 newspaper boxes, which are being filled and kept in the Tin Room. It's shocking if you knew what the Tin Room and the trackside rooms upstairs were like just last year.

The "green room" or "Jerry's Room" is also quite transformed. It is now a pleasant room to scan and catalogue on the two computers dedicated to those tasks. Figuring out how best to get the maximum amount of information in a record for maps was a job...but the learning curve for setting up the camera and photostand to work with the computer really required a village; all of us put our heads together to make this work. Here you see Ethan and Becky pondering options on the software.

My office, while smaller than it was downstairs, is much more organized and a lot better looking. You can't beat the view, either. Don't worry, though, Ace is still prominently located, just not inside the office, but on the stairs. The stairwell is also way brighter and more interesting now, with some of our framed pictures on display instead of taking up floorspace.

The really exciting development is not at all cosmetic, but entirely energetic. Now that there is a place to scan and catalogue and conserve and work, we can have people come into the space and actually work on the collections we have. We have room to work and people to do the work. We aren't just talking about painting, weeding and focusing on keeping the buildings from falling down anymore. We are talking about preservation, conservation, research and organization.

But wait, there's more! We were (as I write) waiting, not very patiently, for the shelves to be finished in the future library in the Pardee House. This means that we will be shelving the books and continuing their cataloguing. It also means that we, and soon the public, will have the

opportunity to actually do research on the 1000+ books in that collection.

The Library Committee is very excited and for very good reason. THIS is what a historical society should do for its community. This is what it takes to not just preserve, but to educate. Our information will soon be available, not just by taking tours, but by doing research. It will be possible to find more information that has been locked up in storage or hidden in boxes. What old questions will be answered? What new questions will come up? What cool things will come to light as a result of these developing projects? It is like reading a mystery novel - I just can't wait to turn the page!



Installing Shelves in the Library

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Recent Scenes in the Pardee House Library



*Anna Kroll (left) and Barbara Martinelli
peruse some of the library's contents*

Recent Docents

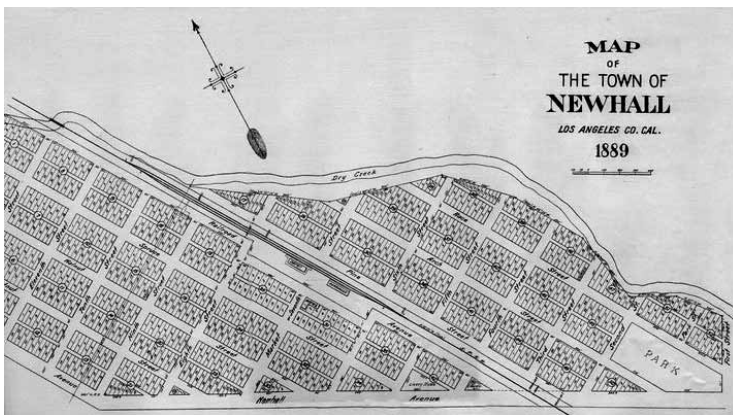
Thank you to the following members who served as docents during July and August:

Frank Adella	Harold Hicks
Jeff Bovard	Barbara Martinelli
Laurie Cartwright	RuthAnne Murthy
Sioux Coghlan	The Questers *
Evan Decker	Konrad Summers
Sarah Floyd	Gordon & Marlene Uppman
Francesca Gastil	Michelle Veasman

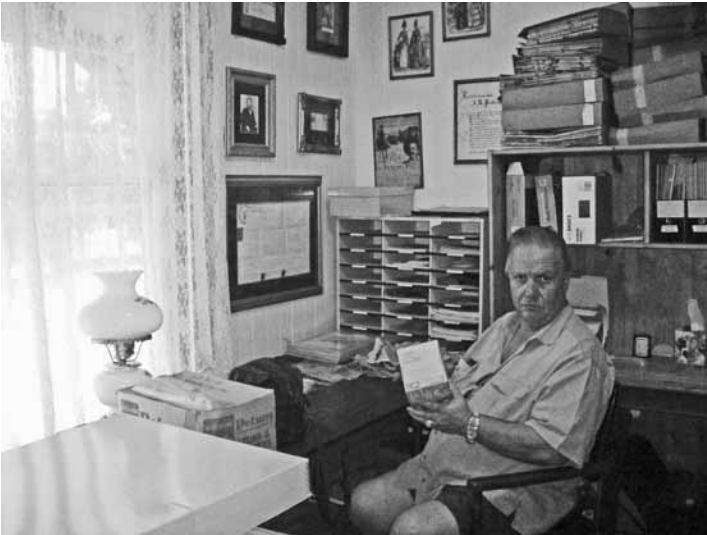
Also, thank you's to the following, who opened the doors so that the docents could do their jobs:

Duane Harte	Barbara Martinelli
Ed Marg	Alan Pollack
Cathy Martin	

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



More Scenes from the Saugus Station



Paul Duryea working with the archives



Ace Cain, a former movie actor and local businessman



If Shoulda's Were Nickels, I'd Be Rich

by John Boston

"Very few things happen at the right time and the rest do not happen at all. The conscientious historian will correct these defects."

- Herodotus, 479 B.C.

Never in my wildest nightmares did I think I'd end up being something as cobwebian as a historian. A lower case historian, granted, but a historian nonetheless.

Years ago, when I was both young and obnoxious, I shared working space with A.B. Perkins. It was when the Then-Mighty Signal was shotgunned out amongst all those buildings on 6th Street, San Fernando Road and Railroad Avenue. The Newhall Signal was like a motel up until the 1980's, except instead of beds, there were desks. I worked in a small bungalow with this elderly Icabod Cranish fellow Perkins, who was the undisputed town historian for a half-century.

We never spoke. I mean, never. I can't tell you how the irony of that makes me laugh out loud, to this day.

At the time, I was busy with women, poker, practical jokes, road trips, gas station men's sports leagues and a half-hearted attempt not so much to be a writer, but a rich one. AB and I sat across from one another in a maroon bungalow. He'd would pore over yellowed manuscripts and old photos. On the phone he'd not so much laugh but smirk and share stories with grizzled Santa Clarita veterans, today many of them dead, about how life was here when it was just dirt and jackrabbits.

I was too uninterested to even eavesdrop. I never asked him a question. Sadly, long after he was gone, I learned A.B. was an epic practical joker.

He was the ringleader in a prank on some sorry customer of Dr. Ross, the dentist. The poor patient went in for a root canal, and back then they put you completely out. When Dr. Ross finished, Perk and Signal editor Fred Trueblood snuck in, removed the man's shoes and socks and painted his feet red with iodine. When the poor native awoke, he groggily looked at his feet and thought he had gone to hell. Adding insult to dental surgery, Perk and Fred buried the guy's shoes and socks.

I can't tell you the pages, now numbering into the thousands, I've typed about local Santa Clarita Valley history. I greedily pore over old diaries and archives. The more I seem to find out, the less I seem to know about life in the past tense here. I know words. I know stories. I lack suchness.

I know lots of stories about bears, for instance. But that's different than seeing a giant, man-eating grizzly in the wild, of running from one, of chasing one on horseback like a madman on a moonlit night. Tasting. Seeing. Smelling. Hearing. Feeling. Sensing. I'm practical enough to not want to be on the lunch bucket end of Nature's food chain. But experience - that's the thing. Experience makes you more alive.

I have so many questions.

I've said before, I'd like a time machine, and the patented Colgate Invisible Protective Shield so that I could witness history without becoming one of its victims. Wouldn't it be grand to sit at a Tataviam fire a thousand years ago? Who was God to them? Did they have jokes, and more importantly, would I get them? How long would it take me to get over my shyness that I'm sitting in a circle with a bunch of naked people?

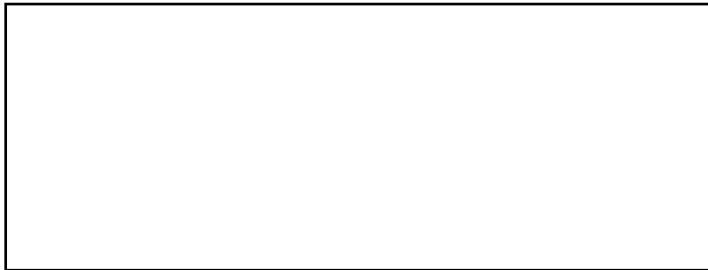
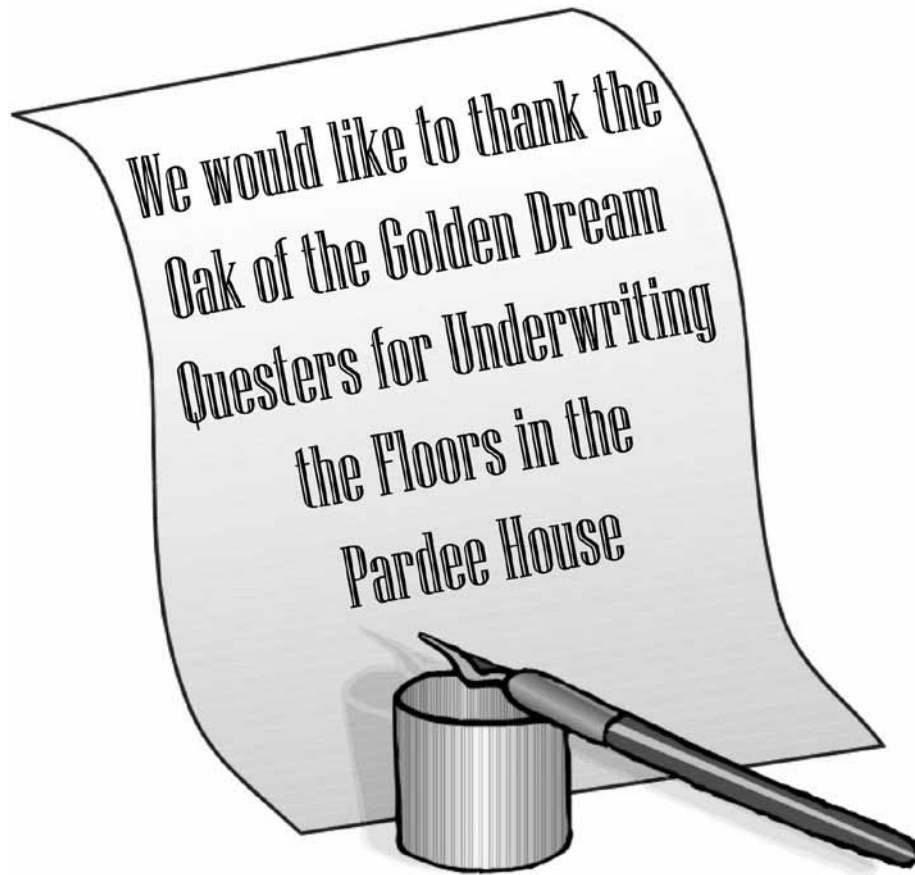
I wouldn't necessarily like to live way back then, before air conditioning, video, contact lenses, my beloved Coca Cola, and designer ice cream available in a near-instant. But I wouldn't mind visiting. I wouldn't mind riding around this valley on horseback, trying to figure where Hart High would be 10 centuries hence, or my home, or the Mall.

Given the chance, I'd jump all around in yesteryear. If I could just float in mid-air, I'd like to have safely seen the St. Francis Dam bursting in 1928 and watch that 200-foot tall wall of water come roaring down the canyon. I would have liked to have felt the mist and, maybe it's ghoulish, but I would have even like to have wandered around the next day and inspected the tragic devastation.

I'd like to be up in Acton, and watch the pistol fighter Tiburcio Vasquez walk right by me. I'd like to hear what the townspeople whispered about him. I'd like to have walked around and seen infantrymen in their machine gun nests at Saxonia Park during World War II, or had a cold beer in the old 5-star Southern Hotel in the 1880s and chat with then old-timers.

I would like to be able to go back just 40 years and pester grumpy old A.B. Perkins with a few thousand questions.

John Boston is a local author, historian, political satirist and winner of more than 100 major writing awards. His new huge website, thejohnbostonmagazine.com will be debuting in September. He will be publishing six new SCV history books beginning in 2012.



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

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