



The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 41, Issue 5

September - October 2015

Calendar

Monday, September 22

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Thursday, October 1

Deadline for the November-
December *Dispatch*

Saturday, October 3

Talk on "The Mysterious Tataviam:
Original Inhabitants of Camulos."
4:00 PM, Rancho Camulos Museum
See page 5

Monday, October 26

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

OutWest Concert Series at The Repertory East, 24266 Main St in Newhall. 8:00 PM

Thursday, September 24: An evening
with Tracy Newman and the
Reinforcements; \$17.00 for SCVHS
members

Thursday, October 22: An evening
with the Tom Corbett Band; \$17.00
for SCVHS members

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



In its heyday, the Ridge Route was the scene of many an auto calamity. Take an incident reported by the Los Angeles Times on September 20, 1920: "A turkey was saved, but

a woman was killed and four persons injured yesterday afternoon at Caswell's, a mountain station on the Ridge Route, when an automobile driven by Thomas Limbert of Long Beach overturned as the driver swerved to avoid hitting the bird." Limbert was injured in the accident while his wife Gussie was killed. The nearest telephone turned out to be eight miles away at Sandburg's Hotel. It took several hours to get an ambulance to the scene of the

accident. Speeding on the Ridge Route was so dangerous that in August, 1921, a Justice Baird announced that anyone arrested for driving over 25 miles per hour on the road (which had a speed limit of 15 mph), would be thrown in prison.

THE COUNTY SPEEDERS' COURT

In spite of Baird's dire warning, the mishaps and speeding were to continue. Almost one year later, the Times reported on a day in the county speeders' court of Justice Forbes. On that day, 320 cases were heard. The fines for the day totaled \$3625, and in the preceding 5 months a total of about \$55,000 was paid out by motorists for violating the traffic regulations. Less than two weeks after the court marathon, a speeding motorist failed to negotiate a curve on the road and plunged his auto 250 feet into the canyon floor below.

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Newhall Post Office during the filming of the TV series
"Rich Man, Poor Man"; June, 1975

President's Message

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There were four passengers in the car, who were taken to Glendale Hospital. "It was declared nothing less than miraculous that they escaped instant death. According to reports, their injuries consisted of many cuts, bruises, and broken bones, but all will recover, it is said."

The Highway Commission announced in March, 1924, that they would spend \$24,000 to increase safety of travel over the Ridge Route by "daylighting" and widening curves over the next few months. And yet the carnage continued. Two months later, John Straight, a wealthy resident of Portland, Oregon, was killed while a passenger in a car driven by Portland Banner Courier reporter Earl Brownley. The vehicle in which the two men were riding ran off a 150 foot embankment located two miles north of Castaic. Brownley escaped with minor injuries. In August of the same year, Constable Jack Pilcher of Newhall responded to an accident on the Ridge Route. According to his report, a large touring car driven by Frank Moran with five other passengers was forced off the road by two oncoming cars and rolled thirty feet down a mountainside. The other cars failed to stop after the accident. Moran's car overturned twice on its way down the mountain. The injured passengers were taken to Newhall Hospital by passing motorists. Among the injuries were three skull fractures and a broken arm. The skull injuries were considered potentially fatal.

WIDENING AND STRAIGHTENING THE RIDGE ROUTE

In 1926, the California Highway Commission approved an allotment of \$42,000 to continue widening and straightening operations on the Ridge Route between Castaic School and Reservoir Summit. The widening project had already been under way for two years. The funding for the improvements came from maintenance funds furnished by a gasoline tax and motor vehicle license fees. According to the LA Times, "The Ridge was originally located and built more than ten years ago, but the standards adopted are not adequate for the traffic of the present. The present Highway Commission has been endeavoring to remedy the condition by removal of as many of the dangerous points as possible, and considerable straightening of the road has been done, with the hearty approval of users of the route."

As if navigating the dangerous curves was not bad enough, there was also outlawry to contend with on the Ridge Route. There was a report in July, 1926, of a daring daylight robbery thwarted on the highway nine miles south of Sandberg's. Two twenty year old thugs were captured minutes after pummeling 54 year old Glendale resident C.A. Pamerson over the head with an automatic pistol. Mr. Pamerson was found unconscious in his car, covered with blood and suffering three long gashes on his head. He was rushed to Newhall Hospital where his condition was listed as serious. The outlaws had hijacked the car and kidnapped the injured driver. They were finally captured one quarter mile north of the National Forest Inn, when a patrol car of the Automobile Club of Southern California saw the hijacked car being driven erratically as it headed towards them. The officers turned the patrol car across the highway blocking the path of the highwaymen and easily arrested them. The criminals were taken to Newhall and turned over to Constable Jack Pilcher. They were lodged in the Newhall Jail for the night.

TRAGIC ACCIDENTS ON THE RIDGE ROUTE

In the winter of 1927, two men slipped off the highway in snowy conditions and plunged 300 feet into the canyon below. Officers found the crushed bodies in a new sedan which was described as a complete wreck. An improvised stretcher was made, and two deputy sheriffs along with other bystanders toiled to pull the bodies back up the steep cliff with ropes. As reported in the LA Times of December 25, 1927, "The car, according to deputies, evidently went over the cliff somewhere between midnight and daylight, as the bodies were cold when located by the officers. Apparently the machine had slipped on the snow while taking a sharp curve and rolled over and over down the bank, leaving a trail at points where it touched as it dropped. Patches of blood on the snow added to the gruesomeness of the find."

An especially tragic crash occurred in August, 1929. Thirty two year old Simona Vargas climbed up a 200 foot embankment while seriously injured three miles north of the National Forest Inn. She flagged down a passing motorist and revealed a horrifying mishap. Her five children and her father Daniel Vargas were killed when the auto's brakes failed, causing the car to crash through

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a guard rail and plunge down the embankment. Simona, the only survivor of the crash, made her report to the Sheriff's Office Substation in Newhall. Four of the bodies were found an additional 200 feet from the wreckage. Daughter Inez, the youngest victim, was only 18 months old. Two months later a truck driver heroically plunged his truck over a 300 foot precipice to avoid crashing the heavily loaded vehicle into a group of motorists stalled on the highway. The truck tumbled end over end down the embankment and pinned the driver and his two passengers beneath the wreckage. Luckily all three survived the crash, but the driver suffered a concussion, fractured skull, and facial lacerations requiring twenty five stitches.

THE RIDGE ROUTE ALTERNATE

Finally on December 22, 1929, plans for construction of an alternate road for the Ridge Route were announced by the State Highway Commission. The new road was to be built between Castaic and Gorman with a far easier grade and fewer curves, reducing the distance of the drive by seven miles. The project would relocate a 26 mile section of the original Ridge Route to a more westerly location and lower elevation, thereby avoiding numerous heavy grades and curves. The original road was felt to be at its maximum capacity for travel, resulting in excessive hazards due to traffic congestion, numerous and extremely sharp turns, and snow and fog in the winter months. The new highway would be capable of handling 12,000 or more cars per day, while the old road was already overloaded with 1500 cars daily. Under agreement with the Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County, the old Ridge Route would be taken over by the county while the state would be relieved of any further maintenance costs.

The doom of the famous Ridge Route was sealed in January, 1930, when the State Highway Commission authorized condemnation proceedings for the new alternate Ridge Route. The new highway would have only one-fifth of the curvature of the old road. The maximum grade of the new route was set at 6 percent. It would eliminate two of the three summits existing along the original road. The cost of the new road was originally estimated to be \$3,400,000, but the final cost turned out to be only \$2,900,000 as a result of favorable construction bids and reduced costs of materials. The Automobile Club, advocating for the new road, pointed out that it

would bring the northern and southern parts of the state closer together by at least one hour's driving time for automobiles, "having the effect of moving the vast agricultural area of San Joaquin Valley bodily from forty to fifty miles closer to Los Angeles markets and shipping points." They further predicted a tremendous economic saving to the entire state due to reduced shipping costs of oil, machinery, cotton, grapes, general merchandise and other products of manufacture and agriculture.

The Ridge Route Alternate road was finally opened to traffic on October 29, 1933. Opening day ceremonies were held at "Channel Change" about midway between Castaic and Gorman on the new highway. Alfred Harrell, a Bakersfield publisher, was master of ceremonies that day, with brief speeches given by representatives of Public Works, the State Highway Commission, Auto Club, Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Kern and Los Angeles County Boards of Supervisors, State Division of Highways, and California Highway Patrol. Gates at both ends of the road were opened at 10:00 AM to allow thousands of motorists to attend the ceremonies. Motorists were requested to return to their cars immediately after the ceremony, to facilitate clearing of the highway. The Los Angeles Times reported: "A short time after the highway was officially accepted by Harry Hopkins, Chairman of the California State Highway Commission, in behalf of Governor Rolph, the new ribbon of cement was throbbing to the beat of thousands of motors and echoing the tune of singing tires that sang a song of progress... The closing act of the ceremony was the cutting of a barrier of blue and gold ribbons across the new highway by Chairman Hopkins."

Today, short segments of the Ridge Route Alternate can still be seen running to the west of Interstate 5, although a significant portion of the route is now covered by Pyramid Lake. On the old original Ridge Route, there is one spot toward the top of Serpentine Drive where one can stand and look out in the distance to see all three versions of the roads which run between Castaic and Gorman: The 1915 road, the 1933 alternate, and Interstate 5...truly a sight to behold!

Alan Pollack

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The Order of the Chanta Sutas

by Rachel Barnes



It is one of the most iconic images of the Hart Mansion: A cowboy leans against his grazing horse and stares down at the cigarette he's rolling with steely-eyed concentration. Visitors see this image in detailed bronze when they first walk through the mansion's front door. And if they are so inclined, they can see it in all its life-sized glory on a rocky outcrop in Billings, Montana.

Yes, *Range Rider of the Yellowstone* is a classic depiction of an Old West cowboy. But so few know this sculptured masterpiece is more connected to the Sioux Indians of the Great Plains than it is to the cowboys of the western frontier. At least, it was... initially.

In 1925, world famous movie star William S. Hart wrote out a plan for a secret society he called *The Order of the Chanta Sutas*. Modeled heavily on the Freemasons and targeted to boys between 14 and 16, Hart's society has three Degrees – 1) the Indian, 2) the Plainsman, and 3) the Scout. Each comes with its own body of secret knowledge, including a secret handshake, and moving from one Degree to the next requires the completion of initiation tasks set by each Degree. Ultimately, the members obtain the full body of the Order's wisdom, and doing so should ideally transform them into grown men with “the qualities of sterling manhood which were required in the past, in the making of America, and which are demanded in the citizen of tomorrow,” (“My Life East and West”, Hart, p. ix).

With the society's structure formulated, Hart next had dreams of a national headquarters. In the main lobby, a bronze statue would sit, one that ideally included a representation of Hart and his beloved horse, Fritz. The actor reached out to friend and artist Charles Cristadoro, and the two developed a concept that would feature both movie star cowboy and movie star horse in its final creation.

Work started on the statue, and in October 1925, Hart wrote a letter to then Arizona Senator Henry Ashurst, expressing his excitement at the bronze and its placement in the society's heretofore unrealized headquarters. Hart then wistfully revealed, “now I will confess ... I have an uncontrollable desire to have a reproduction of myself and my horse placed at some lonely spot on the rim of the Grand Canyon of Arizona, far

away from crowds and the strife of life. I would like to know when my horse and myself are dust—a bronze reproduction of our mortal selves will be battling the elements and gazing for all time at that matchless work of the Creator...” (letter to Ashurst, October, 1925).

Based on correspondence back and forth with the Senator, Ashurst agreed with Hart's plan, and suggested he contact the National Park Service, since the Grand Canyon was technically under their jurisdiction. Hart did so, and, while disappointed, he was very sympathetic and understanding when he received the rejection in September 1926 - any changes to the environment of a National Park had to get approval from Congress, and since the main objective of all National Parks was the preservation of the natural landscape, the inclusion of a bronze statue would likely not get that approval.

Hart didn't mope for long, though. The previous July he had been up to Billings, Montana, for a Custer Memorial, and he contacted some friends in that city. Would they be interested in this sculpture? Well, of course! Hart was a philanthropic patron of Billings, supporting local organizations like the St. Vincent Hospital and School, and the Pioneers of Eastern Montana. The city would be honored to take the sculpture.

The statue was finished and dedicated in Billings in 1927, where it still stands to this day.

As for *The Order of the Chanta Sutas*? Hart's dream of a secret society for teenaged boys was never realized in his lifetime. Others have attempted it in the years since, although the outcome of those undertakings remains a mystery.

What about the *Range Rider of the Yellowstone* statue and its connection to the Sioux? The secret knowledge Hart outlined for the *Chanta Sutas* initiates was based on Sioux philosophy and wisdom. And the words “Chanta Sutas” mean “Great Heart” in the Sioux language. According to the movie star, *Chanta Sutas* was the name bestowed upon him by his Sioux friends when he spent a few short months with them as a teen in 1876 – 1877.

So while *The Order of the Chanta Sutas* did not become a reality in Hart's lifetime, and the statue of Hart and Fritz does not grace the Grand Canyon, the *Range Rider* statue does stand on “the rim of some lonely spot,” and now that Hart and Fritz are gone, “a bronze reproduction of our mortal selves [is] battling the elements and gazing for all time at that matchless work of the Creator...”



Our Tataviam Heritage

by Maria Christopher

Native Americans played an important role in the history of the Santa Clarita Valley and Rancho Camulos, particularly the group called the Tataviam. Evidence indicates that Native Americans lived in this area for well over 10,000 years. The Chumash and Tataviam were here when the first European explorers arrived. The Chumash had preceded the Tataviam and had the larger population of the two tribes. When the Tataviam arrived about 450 AD, most of the Chumash moved West beyond the Piru Creek.

According to the SCV History web site and other sources, the Tataviam were Shoshone-speaking people who are believed to have migrated from the plains area. It is said that the Kitanimuks of the Antelope Valley bestowed on them the name Tataviam, which in their language roughly translated to “the people facing the sun” while the Chumash referred to them as Allikliks, i.e., “the people who stammer or do not speak clearly”. Eventually they established about 25 villages, and their total population was estimated to have been between 500 and 1000.

Kamulos, near the junction of the Piru Creek and Santa Clara River, was one of the larger settlements. The name is most often said to translate to “juniper berry”, but other sources say it meant gathering place. In any case, the existence of the Tataviam was documented by the Portolá party in 1769. Kamulos, like many of their other villages, was situated on an old Native American trade route between what is now New Mexico and the Pacific Ocean.

When the Missions were established, the land area of Kamulos was part of Rancho San Francisco, the San Fernando Mission lands. The Tataviam would become the Vaqueros, trained in the Spanish horsemanship traditions; they rounded up the wild horses and drove the cattle for the Mission. Many of the Tataviam moved to the mission compound, willingly or unwillingly.

There is controversy over the positive and negative impact on the Native Americans during the Mission period; however, there is no doubt their lives were forever changed. After Mexican independence in 1821 and the secularization of the missions, many returned to join others who had remained in the traditional villages.

In 1839, Antonio Del Valle received the Mexican land grant of over 48,000 acres of Rancho San Francisco, which included many Tataviam villages. After Antonio's death, his

son Ignacio inherited the 18,000 acre westernmost portion of the property. He called it, Rancho Camulos, after the Tataviam village of Kamulos.

The del Valle family used the Tataviam as vaqueros and as the labor to build the 1853 main adobe residence that still stands today, as well as other houses and agricultural structures. There is a story about one Tataviam woman with a significant scar on her leg who made a lasting impression on the roof tiles she made by shaping the clay over her leg. Juan Fustero, who claimed to be the last full-blooded Tataviam, lived and worked at Camulos and died in 1921. Many of the workers lived on the rancho and are buried in the Camulos cemetery. It was through



Juan Fustero

their efforts that the rancho thrived. The del Valle family provided education and cared for them in the good times and bad. Many of their descendants still work the fields and orchards of Camulos Ranch today.

Hopefully this short article has piqued your interest in local Native American history. If so, explore the extensive information on SCVhistory.com. Also, on October 3 at 4:00 PM at the Rancho Camulos Museum, there will be a rare opportunity to meet and hear Dr. John R. Johnson, Curator of Anthropology at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History since 1986. His talk will be on “The Mysterious Tataviam: Original Inhabitants of Camulos.” Details are at [\(805\) 521-1501](tel:8055211501) or info@ranchocamulos.org Reservations are recommended but not required, and donations are suggested

New at the Gift Store by Cathy Martin

Be the first to buy one of these new SCV Historical Society plush stuffed animals! They are super soft and are wearing an embroidered T-Shirt with our logo. They are an astonishing low price of \$10.00 each!

We also have available a wooden train set and a horse truck and trailer with our logo on it too. It's never too early to pick up some unique gifts for your kids or grandkids.

And when you purchase from the SCV Museum Gift Store all the proceeds help maintain Heritage Junction. Cathy Martin



Join the SCV Historical Society Today!

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Memberships make great gifts for your historically-minded friends and family! To join or renew online, visit <http://www.scvhs.org>.

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

School Tour Docents:

Sandra Cattell	Monica May
Bob Feder	RuthAnne Murthy
Harold Hicks	Gordon Uppman
Barbara Martinelli	

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

Weekend Docents:

Sandra Cattell	Barbara Martinelli
Sioux Coghlan	Monica May
Evan Decker	RuthAnne Murthy
Rick Ferrante	Alan Pollack
Sara Floyd	Jeff Prange
Harold Hicks	Brent Roberts
Anna Kroll	Anna Schindler
Debra Martin	Gordon Uppman

Those who open and close for the docents:

Duane Harte	RuthAnne Murthy
Darryl Manzer	Alan Pollack
Cathy Martin	Sue Yurosek
Barbara Martinelli	

Weekend Questers*

Charlotte Gill	Cathy Martin
Linda Hinz	Dee Roche
Pat Horanberg	Sue Yurosek
Jeanine Jones	

Grounds:

Sandra Cattell	Manny Santana
Darryl Manzer	Glen Terry

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

New Members

We welcome to membership in our historical society:

Gayle Becker Eric Gladbach

and Renewing Members ...

Carla Crancer Maj. Charles E. Smith
Ed Marg

Coyotes: An SCV Constant for 1 Million Years

by John Boston

“The only people with a right to complain about what I do for a living are vegetarian nudists.”

— Ken Bates, California trapper

The last time I was at Yosemite, it was hard to leave. It's always hard to leave a good vacation or paradise. My last treat of the semi-wild was when I was leaving the park: Two coyotes sprinted up an embankment in front of my truck, then jogged across the road to the other side.

I stopped. I was more interested in them than they were in me. About a mile above sea level, spring was just arriving, and God's two wild dogs still had their thick winter coats. They looked zestier than their cousins back in Santa Clarita, who look a bit mangy in comparison. I think the 'yotes here do all right, from mice to toy poodles to someone's discarded cheeseburger.

I've never been scared of coyotes. Of course, I'm not a vole or a housecat. I don't vibrate hysterically when something weighing 30 pounds crosses my path. I've heard a hundred horror stories about these predators and still, I wouldn't have it any other way, sharing my back yard with them.

Behind my house there is this natural wash, a wildlife corridor. I see coyotes regularly on my hikes in the back hills of the SCV. They trot by the house very late at night and howl enough to wake the dead. It scares the hell out of houseguests. Me, I'm a bit macabre. I hear that startling cry. It wakes me, briefly. I don't bother to open my eyes. I just smile and fall back to sleep. It's a lullaby.

The coyote has been around this valley in its present form for about a million years. We have a parallel intelligence, this beast and me, smart in different ways. The Indians call him, The Trickster. He even runs that way. Dogs, when they make their appointed rounds, leave a trail of parallel tracks. It's sort of a lazy, doe-dee-doe style of locomotion. Coyotes have this slinky, sprinter's gait. They run precisely, making sure the back paws land in the front paws' tracks. I'm told it's to conserve energy. Me, I think they're just cocky and showing off.

In fact, long before Democrats and Republicans, our own Tataviam Indians were divided into two clans, coyote and mountain lion. They couldn't marry inside their own clans. A tribal leader was always chosen from the mountain lion sect, but the adviser was a Coyote.

A friend of mine told me a tale a while back about how a friend was horseback riding up in Acton. She was with her dog, a sweet and trusting creature. The dog got ahead a bit on the trail, picking up the scent of a girl coyote in heat. The coyote playfully frolicked with the dog and he was a pretty good-sized fellow. The horsewoman's dog wouldn't obey her cries to heel

as he was dumbly playing tag with the girl coyote. She merrily led him up a hill where he disappeared. On the other side was the pack and they ripped open that dog pretty good before the woman raced up to rescue him.

It's an indictment on we guys. We're dumb for love.

I'm halfway not bad at mimicking a coyote's yelp — two short yips and a howl — or producing that annoying, high-pitched sound by sucking air through my lips and teeth. That's the sound a rabbit makes when it's injured. I've had coyotes come tearing out of seemingly some other dimension to investigate. Then, they hit the brakes. Perhaps I'm reading motives into the situation but, to me, I've seen a look of chagrin and disappointment. “Oh. It's you. The too-big-to-eat creature who doesn't run very fast.” They are snobs. They'll stop calling to you when they discover you're human.

Behind his back, we used to call one of the ranchers around here Fast Eddie. Ed drove his tractor up and down Bouquet Canyon and, with a little encouragement, those big Fords can hit 40 mph-plus. Ed never went above 12. Not 13. Twelve. Hence the moniker. Fast Eddie firmly believed that coyotes could differentiate, by smell, if a man was packing a gun or not. A coyote or wolf has a sense of smell a million times keener than a human's. It was Fast Eddie's theory they could smell, through the diesel fuel, pesticide and body odor, the difference of gun steel and tractor steel. Maybe they could smell gunpowder. Ed based his theory on the fact that when he had a .22 rifle with him on the tractor, the coyotes would stay a respectful half-mile away. When he didn't have the gun with him, they'd loll about, sometimes as close as 20 yards away, while he was plowing.

I've noticed that the vibration from plowing will stampede varmints. Rabbits, rats, mice, skunks — they'd panic as the heavy equipment would rumble over their underground homes and off they'd scamper. I really didn't need an elephant gun while weeding. The coyotes always came close to the field.

I usually sigh and shake my head when the TV news people interview some giant woman in Spandex, holding her 10-year-old, giving an exclusive interview how everyone in suburbia is afraid to go out and that something must be done to eradicate Señor Trickster.

Odd. I'd miss them terribly if they were gone. More than any tie I have to this valley, I think it's the coyote that makes me feel I'm home.

(John Boston just launched his new national website, FooFMagazine.com. Wicked humor. Swashbuckling commentary. Entertainment.)



The Heritage Junction Dispatch
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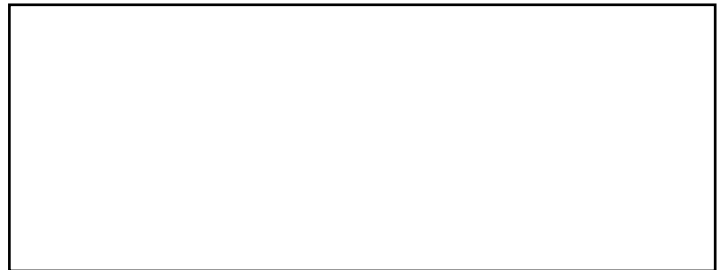
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*Solemint Jct (Sierra Highway and Soledad Canyon Road)
September 8, 1968*