Fall 2023

It’s a whole new place to experience history

Welcome to the new and improved DISPATCH, the newsletter of the Santa Clarita History Center!

We’ve got a new look, new content, new ideas and we’re excited to have you join us! The Center encompasses the area formerly known as Heritage Junction at Hart Park - the place where historic
buildings in the Santa Clarita Valley found sanctuary when they became endangered with demolition. Over the last 48 years, our collection has slowly grown, from the Southern Pacific train station (and a steam engine and caboose) to the Mitchell Adobe, the Pardee House, the Newhall Ranch House, the Kingsburry and Edison houses and the schoolhouse and chapel from Callahan’s Old West.

Every month, The Dispatch will bring you news and information about events, exhibits, involvement opportunities and programming happening here and around the valley. As part of our new venture, we hope to serve as a history hub for all places that feature our area’s history and culture, highlighting its diversity and fascinating past.

Changing our name – and as you see on the masthead, our logo – is an exciting thing! It’s just one of the many positive steps taken by the board as we restore our buildings and introduce new concepts to make this THE place for people to come to learn about history - from familiar subjects to those unexplored before. We’re still in the throes of renovations and construction to bring two state-of-the-art museums to you as well as improve the village that surrounds them. Don’t worry, we are still the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society at heart.

The logo is the creation of our board member and retired Disney Imagineer Greg Wiltbach and
encompasses five of our most historic subjects—transportation, oil, gold, agriculture, and the motion picture industry. Greg is working on changing the signage around the park to reflect our new identity.

Collection comprehension – Archivist Eva Gritz has been focused on cataloging everything in our collection of artifacts and, working with a handful of dedicated volunteers, is making great progress.
Knowing the provenance of each item, as well as its condition and location, is critical in creating new and informative displays for both the Saugus Train Station Museum and the museum being developed in the Pardee House that we hope to open soon. If you’d like to help Eva with this effort, give her a call at (661) 373-9514.

Advisory Board meets - The first official meeting of the SCVHS Advisory Board was held October 24 at Hart Hall. Nearly 20 members of the group – initially formed to advise the Society on the development of the museum planned for the Pardee House – heard presentations from Society President Alan Pollack and VP Leon Worden on the history of the Society and its growth over the last half-century, saw conceptual drawings of the History Center campus by graphic designer and board member Greg Wilzbach, and participated in a discussion initiated by staff member Lois Bauccio and board member Jim Ventress about the Center’s five-year plan and sponsorship opportunities. Members of the inaugural Advisory Board include Tim Burkhart, Tom Cole, Mary Ann Colf, Gloria Mercado-Fortine, Don Kimball, Mike Kuhlman, Phil Lantis, Marlee Lauffer, John Musella, Matt Nelson, Lance O'Keefe, Rudy Ortega, Jr., Frank Oviedo, Patti Rasmussen, Fred Trueblood, Dr. Dianne Van Hook, Ivan Volschenk, Shannon Vonnegut, Marc Winger and Tim Williams. The growing History Center will be looking for input from everyone, so send your ideas to crock@scvhs.org or make a donation at www.scvhs.org.
**Everything old is new to us** – The scanning volunteers at the station (thanks Kathy, Vicki, Madison, Laura, Mike and our very own singing cowboy, Michael!) have been busier than ever making sure to capture page after page of important documents and pictures brought to us from the archives of Santa Clarita Elementary School which is closing after 64 years of service to our community. Yearbooks, school activity records and class photos are becoming part of our collection which we hope to make searchable.

Remember when the Valencia Town Center opened in 1992? Seems like just yesterday, but our Town Center that hosted the Bella Via chalk art festival and featured palm trees, orange crates, and murals in the center courts depicting historic events has changed quite a bit over the last 30 years. We’ve received a donation of artifacts from that Grand Opening that is sure to bring back some good memories. We never know what’s going to walk through the archiving office door! Stay tuned to the Dispatch for more tidbits on items you might see in future exhibits.
Prioritizing the past and planning the future - The board and staff at the SCV Historical Society has been busy over the last few months, hosting evaluators and advisors from three major organizations in the museum world. These visitors toured the History Center, examined our collection and methods of conservation and gave us honest evaluations of our current needs and best practices. Representatives of the Northeast Document Conservation Center conducted a disaster preparedness assessment in December 2022; in July, we welcomed Historic Resources Group, who served as evaluators for the Collections Assessment for Preservation (CAP) program of the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation. We are currently reviewing their preliminary report. (Pictured: the CAP team in the archiving office).

Finally, in August, two peer reviewers sent by the Museum Assessment Program (MAP) of the American Alliance of Museums visited the History Center and helped us examine our administrative and collection procedures. During these visits, several of the Core Documents for the SCVHS were revised, including the Mission and Vision Statements, the Code of Ethics and the Collection Management Policy. All these evaluators are helping us craft a plan to move us toward the professional museum complex we will become within the next five years.
**Vista Canyon is the ‘new’ Lang** – The Vista Canyon Multi-Modal Center, the City’s fourth Metrolink station, was dedicated October 20, with rail service starting on October 23. The new station celebrates the “wedding of the rails” that took place in 1876 at Lang Station, just up the (rail)road from the Vista Canyon development off of Soledad Canyon Road at Lost Canyon. Artwork commissioned by the City by artist James Dinh uses square metal tubes to evoke the sensation of the rails and, at the top, the ridgelines that define our valley. The piece also incorporates five photographs from SCVHistory.com to tell the story of the rail connection, the Golden Spike, and in particular, the Chinese contribution to the construction of the railroad and the nearly 7,000-foot San Fernando Tunnel in the Newhall Pass. In addition, the two plaques that were placed at Lang in 1976 by the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California and by Platrix Chapter 2 of E Clampus Vitus were incorporated into the new structure.
“Ice” Cart goes full circle – Volunteer Guy Horanberg has completed the restoration of the railroad mail/ice cart that Lloyd Houghton liberated from the SPRR Newhall Depot nearly 100 years ago. The cart, which used to reside outside in the elements on the train station dock, (and was often put into use for events or decorated for the holidays) was a vehicle to carry mail from the depot to the post office across Railroad Avenue, but is metal-lined, so could have been used to move cold items as well.
Long before the peaches, there were stones – You may know Bloom Ranch for its peaches, but its history goes back at least 140 years. At that time, it was known as Blum Ranch, the homestead of Acton pioneer George Blum. George was a stonemason who worked on many Southern California buildings, including the first Los Angeles County Courthouse, a red sandstone structure that towered over the intersection of Spring and Temple Streets. The Historical Society has been gifted George’s original tool box and stonemason tools, along with various artifacts from the ranch. In 1891, Blum tired of the stone mason trade and he and his wife, Magdalena planted fruit trees, set beehives and became farmers. George built several structures on the ranch, and when the LA courthouse fell in a 1933 earthquake, Blum retrieved some of his decorative stonework for garden décor you can see today.
Wicks Continues to Inspire – the complete original artwork collection of the late Signal cartoonist Randy Wicks has been donated to the SCVHS. The 4,000 items in the collection are being archived and selections will be part of a rotating display in the new museum. Donor Kiza Hilton facilitated the donation and shared some of her favorites with museum staff.
Thank you LA County! We got a grant! – The Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society was awarded a $14,000 grant from the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture to help with marketing and reopening their facility after Covid closures. The award given to the Society was given in two parts: an Arts Relief and Recovery Grant and a Reopening Culture, Tourism, and Marketing Grant. This funding will support the rebranding of Heritage Junction into the Santa Clarita History Center, help with the development of a new website and online newsletter, and provide printed and graphic materials to attract visitors to the park. The funding has also supported outreach efforts at the Santa Clarita Cowboy Festival and the Hart of the West PowWow.

HISTORY IS ALL AROUND US – LOOK WHAT’S HAPPENING IN THE AREA!

LIGHTS ALL AGLOW - Don’t miss the Barnyard Light Tour at William S. Hart Park on December 9. Starting at 5 pm, the Friends of Hart Park welcome all to enjoy the petting zoo, a visit with Santa Claus, crafts and more exciting activities. Make sure to bring the whole family for this fun holiday event. FREE!
OUTDOORS IS FOR ALL AGES – Two hiking programs and a baby/toddler program are offered at Vasquez Canyon Natural Area this season.

The Little Ones Nature Hour will be held Wednesdays at 10:30 am in the Vasquez Rocks Interpretive Center for children ages 0-3 who must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or caregiver. Activities include games, stories, walks, crafts, animal talks, sensory activities, songs and more. FREE. Registration is required: Visit Parks.LACounty.gov/Reservations to sign up.

Rise and Shine Morning Walks will be led by LA County Park staff on Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m. FREE, all ages welcome. Meet in Parking Lot 3 (by the ‘famous rocks’) and enjoy a 45-60 minute beginner-friendly group walk. Program is weather-dependent.

Sunset Strolls will be led by LA County Park staff on Fridays at 3:45 p.m. The 60-minute walks will highlight the area’s natural and human history. FREE, all ages welcome. Hikes are weather-dependent. Meet at the Vasquez Rocks Interpretive Center. No registration required. For information on all Vasquez Rocks programs, call (661) 268-0840.

We will be featuring short items from the organizations that surround our Center in every issue; in the meantime, please visit their websites to get information on their upcoming events.

Friends of Hart Park
www.friendsofhartpark.org

Walk of Western Stars
https://oldtownnewhall.com/walk_of_the_western_stars/

Old Town Newhall Walking Tour
https://oldtownnewhall.com/walking-tour/

Placerita Nature Center
www.placerita.org

Vasquez Rocks
https://parks.lacounty.gov/vasquez-rocks-natural-area-and-nature-center

Rancho Camulos Museum
www.ranchocamulos.org
Ft. Tejon
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page-id+585

Ridge Route Communities
www.ridgeroutemuseum.org

Fillmore Historical Museum
fillmore.museum@gmail.com

The Santa Clarita History Center Dispatch is edited by Carol Rock.
Comments and questions may be sent to crock@scvhs.org.