SANTA CLARITA HISTORY CENTER

DISPATCH

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Annual Dam Tour Set for March 23

Join SCVHS historians for an informative visit to the site of the 1928 disaster, second-worst in California history

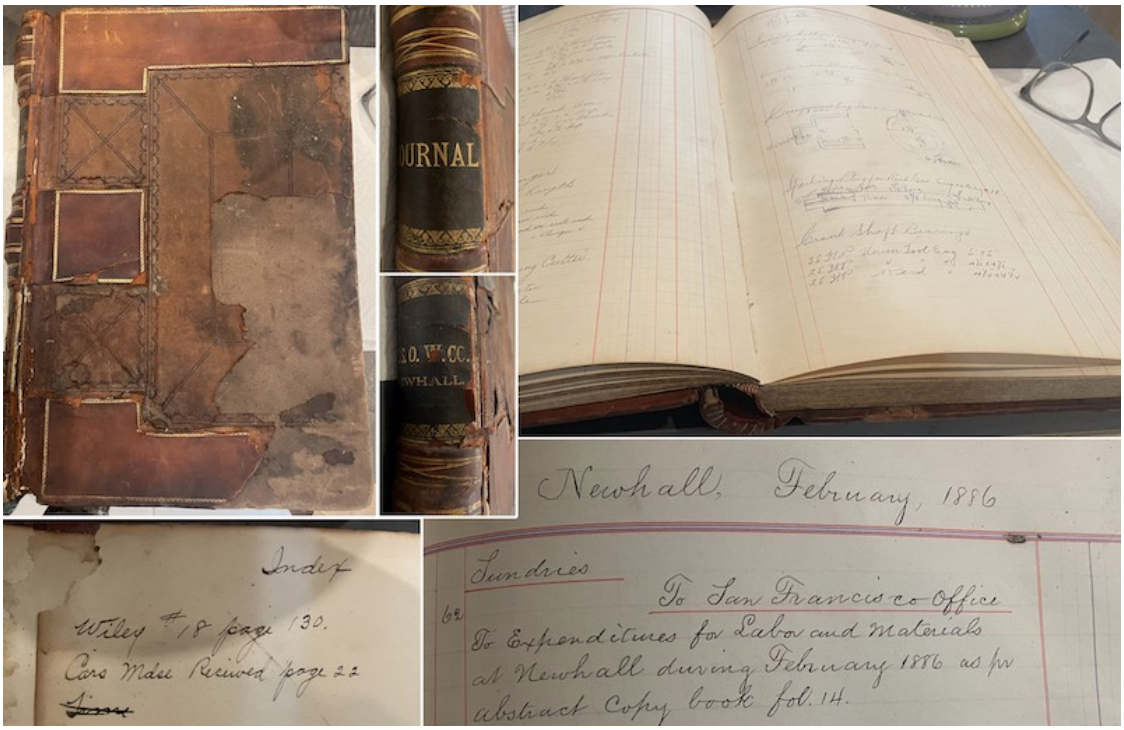
Tickets are now on sale for the popular tour of the ruins of the St. Francis Dam, presented by the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society, and scheduled for Saturday, March 23. Join four SCVHS historians as they tell the story of the quest to bring water to the arid land of 1920s Los Angeles and how one man's attempt to make it happen turned into the second worst disaster in California's history.

The failure of the St. Francis Dam at midnight, March 12, 1928, killed more than 400 people, leveled farms and homesteads, destroyed property and livestock and changed the way dam safety is addressed across the nation.

Tickets for the event are $50 and may be purchased on Eventbrite https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2024-annual-st-francis-dam-disaster-lecture-and-bus-tour-tickets-791636384737. This tour is very popular and sells out every year, so early reservations are recommended. The location of the presentation will be sent to those who purchase tickets.

The tour will begin at 10:30 a.m. with a short presentation on the history of the dam by SCVHS President Alan Pollack, archaeologist Ann Stansell, Dianne Hellrigel and “Dam Man” Frank Rock. After the presentation, busses will take participants into San Francisquito Canyon for an immersive experience, narrating at important points of interest to the disaster.

It is recommended that long pants, long-sleeved shirts and athletic shoes or hiking boots be worn for the hike, as well as a hat and sunscreen. Water and a snack will be provided. Funds raised will benefit programs at the Santa Clarita History Center. For questions, email crock@scvhs.org. To learn more about the Center and sign up for our newsletter, visit www.scvhs.org.



Acquisition of the Year (and it’s only January!)

A Missouri book dealer specializing in antique volumes recently visited SCVHistory.com and offered a unique artifact that the Historical Society purchased from him. It’s a significant volume of information about the local oil industry and the development of Mentryville.

Bound in cracked leather and handwritten, the original journal documenting expenditures and parts and supplies used by California Star Oil Works and Pacific Coast Oil in Pico, Wiley, and Elsmere canyons during 1886-1887, then jumping to 1909, is now part of our collection.

It's a heavy, oversized book (11x16 inches, 9.6 pounds) with writing on more than 100 pages, including drawings and dimensions of custom fixtures (some for Pioneer Oil Refinery engines); orders for the bunkhouse and machine shop in Pico Canyon; and more. The entries for 1886-1887 may have been written by C.A. Mentry himself, the 1909 entries by his successor, Walton Young. Lots of undiscovered country in here for a future researcher.

THE CITY OF SANTA CLARITA COWBOY FESTIVAL
OLD TOWN NEWHALL

History Center to Welcome Cowboys in April

The City of Santa Clarita's Cowboy Festival is set to return for its 28th year on April 20 and 21 and will be held at William S. Hart Park – and the Santa Clarita History Center! The renowned event and resident favorite, which showcases the essence of cowboy life and Western culture through captivating sights, sounds and styles, is scheduled will be held both days from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Volunteers from the History Center will be on hand to welcome visitors and share our plans for the growth of the Center and opportunities for involvement. Bring the kids by our booth

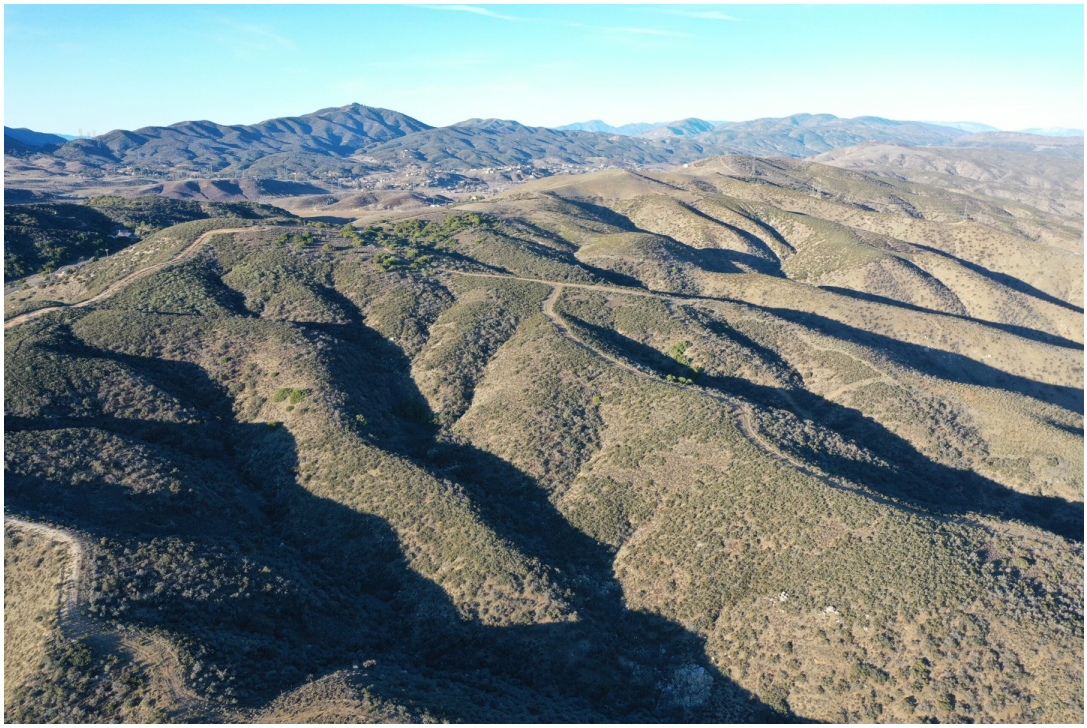
for coloring pages and a sweet Western treat. People will be able to sign up for our newsletter and to volunteer on various projects at the Center.

General admission to the Cowboy Festival is free, and attendees will be treated to an array of live musical performances and entertainment throughout Hart Park. Food and drink, including that famous peach cobbler, will be available for purchase, and guests will have the opportunity to shop from vendors offering unique Western apparel, crafts and more.

Information regarding details and tickets for special events featured at the Cowboy Festival, along with opportunities to volunteer, will be released soon. To learn more about the 2024 Cowboy Festival, please visit CowboyFestival.org.

New Year, New Projects, New Needs

With the new year, we're launching a variety of new projects, from improving our collection care to securing our buildings from the elements to getting our new museums on track (do you hear that train a'rolling, right into the depot?) YOU can be part of these exciting efforts by making a donation and investing in the future of our community's past. Click here to donate or mail your check to SCVHS, P.O. Box 221925, Santa Clarita, CA 91322-1925. All donations are tax-deductible.



Land Veritas donates 500 acres of ancestral land to Tataviam Land Conservancy

More than 500 acres of land has been given to the Tataviam Land Conservancy, a nonprofit corporation formed by the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians in 2018. The donation, from Land Veritas, marks the first time in over a century that the Tribe has regained ownership of a portion of its original territory. The land is located in the Elizabeth Lake area and is part of the homelands that once spanned more than 1.5 million acres from the Antelope Valley to the Pacific Ocean.

“We are deeply grateful to Land Veritas and Tracey Brownfield for reconnecting us to our ancestral territory,”said Rudy Ortega, Jr., President of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians and a member of the Santa Clarita History Center’s Advisory Board. “The significance of this donation goes beyond property ownership. It’s a restoration of heritage and a commitment to environmental stewardship.”

This donation also builds upon the Tribe’s recent historic agreement with California State Parks to formalize cooperation and collaboration in the management and protection of natural and cultural resources and interpretation for state parks within the Tribe’s ancestral lands. For more information, visit www.tataviam-nsn.us and www.tataviam.land

CalArts President Ravi S. Rajar with Rudy Ortega, Jr. at the scholarship announcement

New scholarship at CalArts honors Tataviam arts scholars

The Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians and California Institute of the Arts recently announced a first-of-its-kind scholarship to support students who have extensive knowledge of and passion for the Fernandeño Tataviam community.

“As a descendant of Chaguayanga, the village that CalArts occupies, it is my deepest honor to be able to represent my Tribe in this historic relationship with this institute,” said Rudy Ortega Jr., president of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. “CalArts’ financial support of admitted students who have knowledge of my Tribe will have impacts within and outside of the Native community for generations to come.”

The Fernandeño Tataviam Scholarship for Excellence will provide post-grant financial support to admitted students in the visual and performing arts who have demonstrated a sustained commitment to understanding the history of, and/or further enhancingthe presence of, Fernandeño Tataviam. CalArts' campus in Valencia sits on the ancestral homeland of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

California Oil Museum (photo by Konrad Summers)

Santa Paula receives California Oil Museum building, artifacts, and $2 million grant

In December, a landmark building and historic institution was given a new lease on life as Chevron, through its affiliate Union Oil Company of California, transferred ownership and control of the former headquarters of Union Oil, founded in 1890, to the City of Santa Paula. Included in the donation are the historic headquarters, a rig building, an adjacent parking lot, select oil industry memorabilia and a $2 million grant. Of local note: a 15 hp Farrar and Trefts boiler from the Pico oil field is used in the 1890's drilling rig on display at the museum.

The grant is intended to assist the City with maintenance of the 133-year-old iconic building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as being a California State Historical Landmark and Ventura County Historical Landmark.

Since 1993, Union Oil Company of California has leased its former headquarters and adjacent properties near the corner of Main Street and 10th Street to the City of Santa Paula to serve as the home of the California Oil Museum.

The museum was managed by the California Oil Museum Foundation, a small nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the historical significance of the petroleum industry's

early impact on the region. Due to pandemic-related financial hardships, the museum closed in September 2021.

The City envisions the museum and other future tenants will transform the space into a vibrant,educational, and community-oriented hub, stimulating local businesses and serving as a catalyst for economic development in downtown Santa Paula.

HISTORY IS ALL AROUND US - Look what's happening in the area!

Cultural Showcase co-sponsored by Santa Clarita Library

Raising the Curtain Foundation, in partnership with the City of Santa Clarita Public Library, proudly presents the second annual Cultural Community Showcase on Saturday, February 3 at the Newhall Family Theatre for the Performing Arts. Doors open at 4:30p.m. The 90-minute show will begin at 5 p.m.

This family-friendly, vibrant event celebrates the rich diversity of the Santa Clarita Valley, featuring an array of performances from local performing arts groups, including Pacific Island dancers, Bulgarian dancers, Ballet Folklorico and more.

Audiences will be treated to a world tour of music and dance,showcasing the talents and traditions of different cultures represented in the community. This event is FREE and all ages are welcome. There will be free refreshments on the patio after the show, where audience members will be able to meet and greet the performers.

The Newhall Family Theatre is located at 24607 Walnut Street,Santa Clarita; parking is available in the Newhall Elementary School staff parking lot or the Old Town Newhall Library lot. Admission is free, but tickets are required and may be obtained by visiting www.showtix4u.com/event-details/79628. Don't miss this exciting multicultural night of entertainment!

Newhallywood Silent Film Fest Coming Feb. 16-18

The popular silent film festival returns to the Newhall Theatre for the Performing Arts and The Main for one weekend in February, offering free showings of notable silent films such as "The Mark of Zorro," "Robin Hood" and "Thief of Bagdad" starring Douglas Fairbanks, and two classic William S. Hart films, "The Ruse" and "Hell's Hinges," playing at the Newhall Theatre, with horror silents such as "Waxworks" and "The Hands of Orlac" featured in late night showings at The Main.

Also part of the festival is a “BusTour Keaton,” which will take participants on a motorcoach tour of Hollywood, featuring studio locations from the silent era with a focus on where Fairbanks and Ince made their films. The tour is a ticketed event, with details available at newhallywoodfilmfest.org.

HISTORY HUB

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 Historic Park

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page-id+585

Ridge Route Communities

www.ridgeroutemuseum.org

Fillmore Historical Museum

fillmore.museum@gmail.com

It’s not too late! Donate to the SCVHS now by clicking HERE! Thank you!

The Dispatch is edited by Carol Rock. Questions and comments can be sent to crock@scvhs.org.

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