SANTA CLARITA HISTORY CENTER
DISPATCH
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December 2025

SCVHS50: Live From Santa Clarita…

1975 to 2025 - so many things to change, so many things to save

The writers' room is frantic, a gourmet dinner is being planned, silent and live auction items are being solicited, the band is warming up, and an unforgettable night is yours at "SCVHS50: Live From Santa Clarita, It's Saturday Night" - our gala celebration of FIFTY YEARS of preserving the history of the Santa Clarita Valley. Mark your calendars for March 7, and plan on being at the Canyon Country Community Center You've never experienced a FUNdraiser like this; get your tables and tickets NOW! For information on sponsorships, table sales, and individual tickets, email crock@scvhs.org. You don't want to miss this!

Polar Express Experience arrives Dec. 6

Come to the Santa Clarita History Center on December 6 between 1 and 4 pm and let professional photographer Josh Premako take your family picture (up to 8 people per ticket) in front of our Mogul 1629 steam engine and help the SCVHS raise money for restoration projects and programming.

The first-ever “Polar Express Experience” also features activities centered around the Saugus Train Station Museum, which will be open only for ticketed visitors that day. Docents will give a special tour and ticket holders will be able to visit the caboose, which is normally closed on the weekends. Bring your own camera and take selfies with the conductors, settle down on the newly-built station dock and enjoy a special reading of “The Polar Express” by Meredith McGowan and savor cookies and hot chocolate after storytime.

Every child attending will be given a keepsake gift to commemorate the event. Tickets are $25 (for up to 8 people in a family/group) and are available **HERE**.

Rodriguez, Jorgensen named to 40 Under Forty

Amber Rodriguez and Brad Jorgensen were honored at COC on November 14.

Congratulations to all the newly recognized "40 under Forty" community leaders! And a special shoutout to those who are involved with the SCV Historical Society: the gifted and talented City of Santa Clarita Management Analyst Amber Rodriguez, who serves on our Advisory Board; and our awesome intern/volunteer Brad Jorgensen, whom we missed over the summer when he worked as a National Park Service ranger at Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite. Glad you're back, Brad!

We're expanding our footprint on the web

Join us on YouTube and Instagram and help us grow our network.

The Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society recently launched new YouTube and Instagram accounts to feature some of our projects, new artifacts donated to the museums, stories about the best of times at (insert your era/interest here), and share information about programming. Scan the QR codes above and follow us on Instagram so you don't miss a thing - and subscribe to our YouTube videos to help us establish our own YouTube channel. We're already getting a lot of hits on some of our classic videos!

Finishing what the kids started

Volunteers from Youth in Government work on the dock of the Saugus Train Station during the City of Santa Clarita's Make A Difference Day. At right, Tim Burkhart and Leon Worden a few days later after History Center workers finished the project.

On October 25, a group from Youth in Government (as part of the City of Santa Clarita's Make A Difference Day) came over to the History Center to remove nails and screws from the dock at the Saugus Train Station so it could be refinished. The initial plan was to flip over the existing boards and reattach them, refinish the surface and be done. While the teens were getting lessons on working with power tools, Advisory Board member Tim Burkhart was walking his dog through the park and stopped to look at the project.

With his lifetime of experience in construction as a VP at Six Flags Magic Mountain, Burkhart saw something that needed a lot more work. Building on what the group started, he led a group comprised of Leon Worden, Guy Horanberg, Mike Jarel, Manny Santana, and in consultation with architectural historian Jean Guy Dubé, not only resurfaced the dock with new wood, but also closed in the front of the dock following an authentic Southern Pacific design - something that had never been done before. The results are stunning. Stop by the museum some Saturday from 1 to 4 pm and check out their handiwork.

Don’t miss the dam signs!

New informational signs have been placed in strategic points near the site of the St. Francis Dam disaster by the US Forest Service. Photo credit: Kathi Lund

Thanks to the efforts of the St. Francis Dam Memorial Foundation, there are now signs in both directions of Copper Hill Drive directing those looking for the dam site to turn up San Francisquito Canyon Road and proceed for several miles. Once they arrive at the turnout and begin to hike, visitors will see informational signs created by the US Forest Service/Angeles National Forest that talk about the construction of the dam and unforeseen issues that may have contributed to the failure; the aftermath in the wake of the disaster; and the role of geology in the canyon.

SCVHS even gets credit for providing some of the pictures used in these interesting signs. Fun fact: the St. Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial and National Monument is the first national memorial managed by the US Forest Service.

Speaking of the St. Francis Dam, the board is considering holding the annual tour in early May, in response to the challenges of weather in March that has caused rescheduling in previous years. Watch www.scvhs.org for the date selection, which will also be announced here in The Dispatch.

Questers ready to resume docent duties

Leon Worden gives visiting Quester members an update on restoration projects. The group also visited the structures in Quester Court.

In 1989, the Questers - a national organization of volunteers dedicated to historic preservation and education - volunteered their time and donated funds to the Historical Society to restore the Kingsburry and Edison houses at the History Center. Members worked together to restore, furnish, and docent the houses when they were open on weekends. When the pandemic hit, they could no longer give tours.

In October, members of the Canyon Questers visited the History Center to hear about current restoration work. They toured the Saugus Train Station Museum, visited the houses, peeked in the windows (they’re almost ready for visitors) and were encouraged to hear that the History Center has taken significant steps toward protecting the houses and artifacts inside against pests and the weather. They also learned of the Society’s plan to put a sign at the end of the “street,” officially marking the intersection of History Center Drive and Quester Court.

Artifacts need sunscreening too

The Mitchell Adobe Schoolhouse is one of the structures receiving protective ultraviolet coverings on the windows in December.

Phase 2 of applying ultraviolet protection to the windows in the History Center will begin December 8. Last year, UV film was applied to windows in the Saugus Train Station and the Pardee House; the new phase will include applications to windows in the Mitchell adobe, the Edison House, the Kingsburry House, the Red Schoolhouse, and the caboose. Both phases of this project were made possible by a grant from the California State Library.

Speedway drivers share their stories

Saugus Speedway record holder Jimmy Insolo (in blue) is interviewed by race historian Harold Osmer. At right, Figure Eight driver Al McCalla and Insolo chat in the studio after their interviews.

We've started interviewing some of the former drivers from the Saugus Speedway for video presentations on our YouTube and SCVTV, as well as video clips that will be featured with

Speedway artifact displays at the museum. Speedway historian Harold Osmer (whose book about the Speedway is for sale in the Saugus Train Station Museum) conducted the interviews and our first featured drivers were Jimmy Insolo and Al McCalla. More drivers are scheduled in the near future; if you have a favorite driver and have their contact information, drop a line to crock@scvhs.org and we'll get them into the studio.

The perfect gift for that race enthusiast

History Center Site Manager Leon Worden and Archivist Eva Gritz inspect a chunk of the Saugus Speedway track, recovered during artifact collection.

When archivists were recovering larger artifacts from the Speedway property, they also collected quite a few chunks of the speedway track itself. The Historical Society is selling them as a fundraiser. Get your very own piece of history at the museum gift counter (various sizes and prices) from 1 to 4 pm every Saturday.

Who’s keeping score here?

[PHOTO FROM HAROLD OSMER’S SAUGUS SPEEDWAY SCRAPBOOK]

The scoreboard from the Saugus Speedway is waiting to be moved from the Valley Relics Museum in Van Nuys.

We continue to fundraise to bring the original scoreboard from the Saugus Speedway back to Santa Clarita; you may remember that Valley Relics Museum has provided a safe space for this valuable artifact and is donating it to the SCVHS if we cover the costs they incurred with the original removal and storage. We’ve collected more than half of what we need, but we’re still working on raising funds needed to install the scoreboard once it arrives at the History Center. Click **HERE** if you’d like to help us cross that financial finish line (and make sure to drop a line to crock@scvhs.org to let us know about your donation for the scoreboard.

We welcome any and all donations to help us with restoration projects, programming and outreach efforts. Why not invest in your history today? It’s as easy as clicking “DONATE” below. No amount is too large or too small.

DONATE

We STILL need a little IT and website help

VOLUNTEER NEEDED - Have you noticed that our website has become more robust with information lately? Thanks to Leon for the update - but to take this off of Leon’s crowded plate, we are looking for a volunteer who has experience with Elementor to help us keep the website updated, as well as someone who knows their way around information technology. Do you have a few hours every couple of weeks you could give us? Contact Carol at crock@scvhs.org and we’ll put you to work!

HISTORY IS ALL AROUND US!

In this holiday season, please consider supporting the historic and natural areas in the Santa Clarita Valley (and beyond) by shopping at their gift shops. You'll be helping a nonprofit organization provide educational and recreational programs to your community and the gift(s) you purchased were likely handmade by a local artist. Plus you'll feel really good for helping and we all know that's priceless.

“Ahmal and the Night Visitors” at Rancho Camulos

Members of the Mission Opera company of “Ahmal and the Night Visitors”

Rancho Camulos Museum and Mission Opera are teaming up for a one-time-only performance of “Ahmal and the Night Visitors” on Saturday, Dec. 13 at 4 pm at Rancho Camulos. Experience a professional live opera of this holiday classic at a historic venue. Proceeds benefit two educational nonprofits, the Rancho Camulos Museum and Mission Opera. Tickets available online at www.missionopera.com, or reserve tickets at info@ranchocamulos.org and pay at Will Call. General admission - $30, seniors/students - $25, children under 12 - $15.

Water documentary to screen at AV Indian Museum

Antelope Valley Indian Museum will screen the documentary “Our Water Ways: California Tribal Stories” on Saturday, Dec. 6 from 11 am to 4 pm at the museum, 15701 East Avenue M, Lancaster. The film seeks to deepen the understanding of Indigenous stewardship and the critical

role Native Nations play in protecting the health of our rivers, coastlines, and watersheds. The movie is 1 hour, 10 minutes long and will be played on a loop throughout the day. Cost: $3 for ages 13 and older, free for children 12 and under. For information, call (661) 946-3055.

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

Museum of Neon Art (Glendale)

www.neonmona.org

The Santa Clarita History Center Dispatch is supported, in part, by the LA County Department of Arts and Culture as part of the Creative Recovery LA, an initiative funded by the American Rescue Plan.

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

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

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