



The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 45, ISSUE 2

March-April 2019

Calendar

Saturday, March 9

St Francis Dam Lecture and Tour
11:00 AM Saugus Station;
see page 3

Monday, March 25

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Sunday, March 31

Tour of the St Francis Dam
floodplain
9:00 AM Saugus Station
see page 3

Monday, April 1

Deadline for the May-June *Dispatch*

Sunday, April 14

Tour of Historic SCV Sites
9:00 AM-4:00 PM Saugus Station
see page 4

Monday, April 22

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Check www.scvhistory.org for other upcoming events.



Articles and inquiries regarding *The Dispatch* may be made to 661 254-1275

To arrange for filming at Heritage Junction, contact Cathy Martin at 661 645-0107

President's Message

by Alan Pollack



We're going to try it again.

Forty-one years ago, this month, the Historical Society placed a commemorative marker on a bluff overlooking the site of the remains of the ill-fated St. Francis Dam. The marker was placed to memorialize the over 400 unfortunate victims of a massive flood which occurred when the dam ruptured at 2 1/2 minutes before midnight on March, 12, 1928. The flood waters traveled some 55 miles down San Francisquito Canyon and the Santa Clara River Valley, causing mayhem, death and destruction before emptying into the Pacific Ocean between Oxnard and Ventura. It was the second greatest disaster in California history; only the San Francisco earthquake

and fire of 1906 caused a greater loss of life.

The St. Francis Dam Disaster

The Los Angeles of the 1920s was an up-and-coming city with a rapidly growing population and high hopes of developing a world-class status. The dam disaster served as a huge black mark on the city's reputation and on the reputation of the city's beloved hero, William Mulholland. Mulholland, an Irish immigrant, had risen up from the role of a ditch tender of the city's water system to the Water Superintendent who supervised construction of the miraculous Los Angeles Aqueduct, completed in 1913, allowing the city to grow beyond the limited water supply of the Los Angeles River. The St. Francis Dam would become his ultimate downfall. He took full responsibility for the construction of the dam and died a broken man in 1935. The city fathers of Los Angeles and the leaders of the Bureau of Water Works and Supply, soon to

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President's Message

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become part of the Department of Water and Power, were anxious to erase the memory of this great tragedy as soon as possible. They gave reparations quickly to the victims, avoiding any major court battles, and within one year dynamited the remains of the dam.

And then it was forgotten. The stock market crashed, the Depression followed, then Pearl Harbor and World War II. The city of Los Angeles stopped talking about the dam disaster; the survivors of the disaster were too traumatized to talk about it and just wanted to forget. The disaster was buried under bigger headlines and was forgotten by history. To this day it is remembered by relatively few people, even in our local area.

Starting with Charles Outland in the 1960s and followed by determined men like dam disaster expert Frank Rock, local historians began to recognize the historical faux pas of lost memory that had taken place in Los Angeles. Over the decades after the disaster, no attempt had been made to create any kind of memorial at the dam site. The Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society decided to address and correct that situation on the 50th anniversary of the disaster in 1978. After four years of persistence and paper work, the Society was able to convince the State of California to declare the dam site as California Historical Landmark 919.

The Memorial Plaque

The new State Historical Landmark needed a proper plaque to mark the site of the disaster. Because of a perverse history of vandalism of signs in the remote area in San Francisquito Canyon by gun shooters and burglars, the Society decided to place the plaque on a high bluff overlooking the dam site, relatively inaccessible to casual passersby. The base of the plaque was built out of stone from fragments of the dam itself by a crew from County Fire Station 4. The plaque was designed by James Reynolds, son of the renowned local historian Jerry Reynolds, and was built by Paul Sloane. Because the Society was aware of the previous vandalism, they chose to have the plaque made as a bronze-colored plastic casting, rather than using real bronze. The cost of the plaque was \$100. Four pictures of the dam, both before and after the disaster, were burned into the plaque along with wording commemorating the disaster. The US Forest Service built benches and planted trees around the monument holding the plaque.

Finally, on May 21, 1978, just over 50 years after the disaster, a ceremony was held by the Historical Society, for placement and dedication of the plaque. The ceremony was attended by about a dozen survivors, who were introduced by Historical

Society President Mimi White. They included Lillian Curtis-Eilers and her son Danny, the only survivors along with Ray Rising of the community next to Power Station No. 2, Thornton Edwards, the patrolman regarded as the Paul Revere of the dam disaster for his efforts in saving lives as the flood waters approached Santa Paula, and Juanita Ruiz, who lost many members of her family in San Francisquito Canyon. The plaque arrived in a six-horse stagecoach, accompanied by music played by the Placerita Junior High School Band. Some 150 attendees, many wearing period costumes, heard speeches delivered by some of the survivors, Historical Society President White, and representatives of the Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff's Station, California Highway Patrol, US Forest Service, and LA County Fire Department. The ceremony ended with placement of the plaque by Jerry Reynolds and Paul Sloane.

The Stolen Plaque

That should have been the end of this story, but unfortunately it did not have a happy ending. Just five months later, on October 24, 1978, Mimi White and Fred Trueblood, Jr. visited the dam site and found that the plaque had been stolen. It was also later reported that Newhall Signal photographer Paul Troxell had made the grim discovery. The burglars stole the plaque by removing eight nuts and breaking the protective shield. Quoted in the Newhall Signal, Jerry Reynolds stated, "We thought about putting another plaque up there, but the same thing would probably happen again. It just wasn't worth the effort."



Jerry and Myrna Reynolds inspected the damage.

A New Plaque at Power Station No. 2

Finally, on November 5, 1979, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, after decades of a culture lacking in memory of the dam disaster, worked with the Historical Society to place a plaque behind a chain link fence topped by barbed wire on the property of their Power Station No. 2, rebuilt in 1929 after being destroyed by the flood. The new brass plaque was mounted on a four-foot piece of the dam. A ceremony to dedicate the plaque was led by DWP public relations officer Richard L. Nelson, and two other DWP officials. Historical Society President Cynthia Neal-Harris thanked the DWP for recognizing this sad chapter in their history. The plaque on the Power Station site, along with a small exhibit outside the adjacent Forest Service Station, remains to this day, the only recognition of the dam disaster anywhere in the vicinity of the dam site. It is 1 1/2 miles away from the site.

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2019 Dam Tours

by Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel

March 12, 2019, marks the 91st anniversary of the St. Francis Dam failure, California's 2nd greatest disaster measured by loss of life, as well as the greatest civil engineering disaster in the United States. The Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society will be commemorating the event this March with two adventures open to the public. The first one is our annual St. Francis Disaster lecture and bus tour, and the second one is a tour of the flood plain from San Francisquito Canyon to Santa Paula.

TOUR #1

We'll begin our annual commemoration with a Lecture at Heritage Junction followed by a bus tour to the Dam site on March 9, 2019. The lecture will begin at 11:00 AM, and we will depart for the Dam Site at 12:30. A snack will be provided. Dr. Alan Pollack and Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel will present a historical Power Point presentation from 11:00 to 12:00, followed by a Q and A session.

After we board the bus and head toward the dam, along the way you'll see a few sites that were affected by the flood caused by the dam's collapse. Our first stop will be DWP's Power House #2. Alan, Dianne and "The Dam Man" Frank Rock will speak here, and we will have a brief look at the employee village

From Power House #2, we will proceed to the Dam Site Ruins, where we will disembark and hike down to the ruins of the Tombstone, the Western Wing Dike, the "Pyramid" (which is a 15-ton chunk of the Western portion of the dam), and then to Block 19, one of the largest portions of the dam located a bit farther downstream. You'll also hear about the St. Francis Dam Memorial and learn about the legislation in progress in D.C., and you'll see the area where the Memorial building and the Memorial wall are planned.

You may bring along a bag lunch, if you'd like. Water and a light snack will be provided. Please wear long pants and long sleeves. There may be water on the road as we enter, and we will be hiking not only on the road, but up a steep hill through brush. Hiking Poles are recommended and hiking boots if you have them. If not, look for shoes that have some tread on them, if possible. We will hike slowly and help you along the way. If you cannot hike up the hill, there will be another option for you down below.

If you'd like to attend this tour, please make reservations by calling 661 254-1275. You can pay with a credit card or through PayPal. Tickets are \$40 per person, pre-paid. If the lecture/tour is not sold out, the fee is \$45 at the door.

Heritage Junction is located at 24101 Newhall Avenue, Newhall, CA, 91321.

TOUR #2

If you'd like to join us for an all-day adventure, take the St. Francis Dam Flood Plain Tour on March 31, 2019. This tour begins at 9:00 AM and will end at 4:00 PM. We will depart Heritage Junction at 9:00 AM sharp, so please arrive early. This exciting tour will be a comprehensive tour of properties that were affected by the St. Francis Flood. We'll begin by viewing the exterior of Power House #1, above the St. Francis Dam site, and then walk around the park to see equipment that was used in the building of the Los Angeles Aqueduct and the dam. This is a fabulous photo opportunity, so make sure to bring your camera. You'll even be able to stand inside one of the aqueduct pipes.

Following this stop, we will make a brief stop at the St. Francis Dam site, and hike down to the area where the Tombstone was left standing after the dam break. The "Tombstone" was the center portion of the St. Francis Dam that survived the break. It was blown up in 1929 after a teenager fell off the back of the dam while playing on it. Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel and Alan Pollack will give you a brief history of the failure, new statistics, and a legislative update.

Our next stop will be Power House #2 Village. For security reasons, we'll remain on the bus at this brief stop. Dianne will tell you about some of the people who lived and survived or died here when the flood hit. The Lyman Curtis Family and the Ray Rising Family will be featured, and the recreated houses will be pointed out.

We'll drive just a few feet from the village to the Powerhouse to see one of the plaques that commemorates the flood, and then take a brief walk to the San Francisquito Fire Station to see another plaque, and photos from 1928.

Our next stop will be the Harry Carey Ranch site (AKA Tesoro Del Valle). We'll walk the grounds around the Harry

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2019 Dam Tours

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Carey property, tour the house with the property docents, and sit by the lake to relax and eat your bagged lunch, if you brought one.

From here we will continue to the Edison Substation, where there will be a brief stop for a photo op.

Next, we will travel down Highway 126, where we will pause on the shoulder to see Blue Cut, where the largest number of people died in one spot. Then, we'll creep forward a few feet to see the ranch land that was tended by Rancher Joe Gottardi and 20 braceros. Dianne will tell you personal stories about both of these locations.

Santa Paula Cemetery will be our next stop. Many of the victims here are unknown. There are many mass graves here of the unknown. Graves will be marked with blue or green crosses, noting known and unknown victims.

From here, we will travel back to Heritage Junction. Our guides will answer questions and give you more information about the people affected by the flood, the amount of property damage suffered by farmers along the flood plain, and more.

If you'd like to join this tour, we ask that you wear comfortable, casual attire with comfortable walking shoes. Sunscreen and hats are recommended. We will be doing some minimal walking on this tour.

We recommend that you bring snacks, water and lunch on the bus. There will be no designated stops where you might purchase lunch. Please be prepared with all the food and drink that you will need throughout the day.

We will depart Heritage Junction promptly at 9:00 AM. Please arrive prior to this time so you do not miss the bus.

The cost of this tour is \$55 per person. We will only take pre-paid reservations, as there will be no seats for sale at the door. For reservations, please contact 661-254-1275. You can use a credit card or PayPal. We look forward to seeing you on both of these adventures!

Heritage Junction is located at 24101 Newhall Avenue, Newhall, CA, 91321.

Heinsbergen Designs in the William Hart Museum (see page 5)



*Designs
on
Doors*



Tour of SCV Historic Sites- April 14

There will be a narrated bus tour of Santa Clarita Valley historic sites on Sunday, April 14, 2019, in conjunction with the Cowboy Festival. The tour will start at the Saugus Train Station and run from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

For more information, call 661 254-1275 or go to cowboyfestival.org.

For tickets, call 661 250-3735 or go to cowboyfestival.org/tickets

Heinsbergen Decorating Company

by Margi Bertram

An important part of the interior design of the William S. Hart home is the painted elements on the beams, ceilings, and doors. We know these were done by the Heinsbergen Decorating Company, but what do we know about this company?

Anthony (Antoon) B. Heinsbergen was a Dutch muralist, born in Holland in 1894. He began painting as a young boy, and emigrated with his family to the United States in 1906, settling in Los Angeles. Here he continued his studies, and was an early student of Mrs. Nelbert Chouinard at her Chouinard Art Institute. He worked and traveled throughout the US and Canada to gain experience, specializing and becoming an expert at painting murals. In 1922, he went into business for himself, founding the A.B. Heinsbergen Decorating Company.

Within six years he had built up his reputation as a prolific and influential firm, known for his unique and opulent style some described as a blend of Art Deco and Spanish Renaissance Revival styles. He earned a number of significant commissions, including contracts for Elks Clubs, Union Trust & Savings Bank, Tower Theatre, Roosevelt Hotel, Beverly-Wilshire Hotel, and perhaps most importantly, the soaring new Los Angeles City Hall in 1928. At some point during this time, his work came to the attention of theatre mogul Alexander Pantages, who gave the then 30-year-old artist his first theater commission in 1924. Heinsbergen went on to decorate over 750 theaters nationwide during the golden age of American theater construction, something to which his name will be forever linked.

In the middle of all this, among his private residential work, the Heinsbergen company was hired in 1927 to work on the William S. Hart home in Newhall, California. The designs seen in the house reflect Hart's life-long passion for Native American culture. Although not based on particular groups, they are more of a combination of elements. Similar designs and colors can be seen in rugs, baskets and other artifacts



around the house.

While working on the murals for the new Los Angeles City Hall in 1928, Heinsbergen hired Curlett & Beelman to design an office building for his company. Created in a Late Gothic Revival and Romanesque style, the elaborate design features a prominent cylindrical tower, and detailed decorative relief panels illustrating artisans at work. Used in the construction of the new building were bricks from the demolished old Los Angeles City Hall. Used by the company for more than 50 years, the building located at 7415 Beverly Boulevard in Los Angeles still stands, and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. After the death of Anthony Heinsbergen, his children ran the company, and interestingly, were often hired to conserve the murals their father had created decades before.

We found that another 1928 Heinsbergen project was the interior of the new Hotel Tioga in Merced, California. The largest building in Merced, known as the "Gateway to Yosemite," it was a grand hotel in its time, hosting famous guests including Eleanor Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, Mary Pickford, and John Kennedy. "Borrowing from the indigenous designs of hand-woven baskets, he created boldly-patterned geometric borders richly painted in authentic hues of red, blue,

black, yellow and white."¹ Sound familiar? This pretty much describes what you see here in the Hart museum, prior to the Hotel Tioga.

By 1930, Heinsbergen had accumulated enough wealth decorating movie palaces that he was able to build and decorate a Spanish Colonial Revival home for himself in Pacific Palisades, which is still there. In cast concrete over the front door is the inscription, "Domus Constructa Pigmento," or the House That Paint Built.

More photos are on page 4.

¹ A Guide to Historic Architecture in Fresno, California website (<http://historicfresno.org/bio/heinsber.htm>)

President's Message

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A Rebirth at the Dam Site

And what became of the site of the stolen plaque overlooking the dam remains? Visitors to the bluff today will still see the original stone monument which held the plaque. It has been waiting silently for decades to be made whole again. Thanks to the efforts of Historical Society Board Member, and Community Hiking Club Executive Director Dianne Erskine-Hellrigel, the City of Santa Clarita recently gave a generous grant to the Hiking Club to produce another plaque for the monument. Production of the plaque will begin in the next few weeks. However, due to continued concerns of vandalism in the canyon, the plaque will not be installed until the area can be secured as part of the proposed St. Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial and Monument. A bill to create the National Memorial is currently working its way through Congress. Stay tuned!

Sources for this article:

Scvhistory.com

*The Newhall Signal and Saugus Enterprise
Monday, May 22, 1978, by J. Timothy Fives*

*The Newhall Signal and Saugus Enterprise
Friday, October 27, 1978*

*The Newhall Signal and Saugus Enterprise
Friday, June 29, 1979, by Jeff Stalk*

*The Newhall Signal and Saugus Enterprise
Wednesday, November 7, 1979, by Ruth Newhall*

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

Weekend Docents

Cassie Croasmun	RuthAnne Murthy
Shea Haddy	Alan Pollack
Isabelle Leos	Anna Schindler
Barbara Martinelli	Gordon Uppman
Benn Miranda	

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

Those who open and close for the docents

Cathy Martin	RuthAnne Murthy
Barbara Martinelli	Alan Pollack

First Sunday Questers*

Judy Holland	Dee Roche
Cathy Martin	

School Tour Docents

Barbara Martinelli	Anna Schindler
RuthAnne Murthy	

School Tour Questers*

Cynthia Harris	Linda and Paul Shellabarger
Linda Hinz	Jenewyn Van Wie
Libby Hinz	Deann Wood
Pat Horanberg	

Archiving

Sarah Brewer Thompson	Ann Stansell
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Grounds

Mike Jarel	Cathy Martin
------------	--------------

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

A Lost Drummer & Iron Canyon Cookies by John Boston

A simple thing can be a mystery. Years ago, I was driving and was peripherally aware of a series of signs nailed to telephone poles around old Newhall. Amongst the usual hand-lettered signs announcing garage sales and missing pets was the notice: "Drum Lessons: \$10 an hour." It had an Acton telephone number at the bottom and, in smaller print, the name of the instructor: "G. Baker."

For days, I lazily drove by these advertisements, not putting two and two together. One afternoon, I pulled up to the stop sign at Market and Newhall. I looked up on the pole, and saw the same sign again. This time, I slowly mouthed the words: "G. Baker. G. Baker..." A few miles down the road, I was smiling. "GINGER Baker?" I said to myself. "Nahhh... couldn't be."

It was. You see, Ginger Baker was not the humorous nickname for a creator of spicy desserts. Ginger Baker was the percussionist for Cream, one of the greatest rock bands in history and certainly the best power trio ever: Eric Clapton. Jack Bruce. Ginger Baker.

In his day, he may have been the most famous drummer on the planet. After some hard times, he somehow went from England to Acton. He was cleaning out from a life of drugs and offering drum lessons for 10 bucks an hour.

In these tedious days where we communicate mainly via cell phones and e-mails, it's refreshing to see the good old-fashioned posted message on a fence post or feed store bulletin board.

Years ago, when I lived in Iron Canyon, I saw a sign. It was the most charming of postings:

Iron Canyon Living Grace Women's Cookie Exchange

And, it gave a date. To this day I have no idea what that little advertisement meant. My best guess is it was a group of church ladies for a particularly fetching protestant discipline who met to exchange pleasantries, neighborhood news, and recipes.

The "Iron Canyon" modifier adds more verve and mystery. It's not just the Pasadena Living Grace Women's Cookie Exchange or the Mira Loma Living Grace Women's Cookie Exchange. No; Iron Canyon may be the Beverly Hills of the Santa Clarita Valley, but it sure sounds rustic. It calls up a vision of stalwart, honest, independent frontier women baking exceptionally hearty cookies the size of wagon wheels; Paul Bunyan cookies.

I pulled off the side of Sand Canyon where the sign was posted and sat in my truck, staring at the notice and grinning. Perhaps I was reading something more into the weathered mini-poster. Maybe this wasn't any ordinary collection of local

Aunt Bees into grandchildren and quilting. Perhaps this was some cult of rural housewives lacking essential kitchen skills who met yearly to exchange the same cookie. And, be that so, which of them had the cookie in their possession and for what did they barter? After all, it said, "Cookie Exchange," singular.

Perhaps the coven passed the same cookie on year after year to the new Iron Canyon Queen of the Cookie at mid-year's solstice. Perhaps if they didn't, we wouldn't have summer. Of course, the "Living Grace" part of the corporate logo sort of rules out Druids and probably smacks more of Baptists.

Drat if I only saw the one sign.

Perhaps it's best if the high holy exalted ICLGWCE keeps their movement under the radar. Success has a way of sullyng innocence.

As I sat in my truck, engine running, I pondered. Perhaps if word got out, membership would grow. They might be forced to admit men or join The International Living Grace Women's Cookie Exchange, pay dues and attend conventions in faraway cities.

As they grew, someone might suggest a newsletter be regularly published. Following the supposition of having a newsletter comes the appointing of a public relations officer, just as surely as war follows suspicion of someone possessing weapons of mass destruction. To justify the existence of a media pest equipped with a Web site and business cards, said PR person will have to generate publicity.

Feature stories longer than the Bible will be penned, extolling the virtues of Living Grace, Iron Canyon, The Story Behind The Cookie Exchange and the worldwide solidarity of women baking and exchanging cookies everywhere.

I shook my head and sadly concluded: This can only end badly.

The logical conclusion for the Iron Canyon Living Grace Women's Cookie Exchange will be to rent the ballroom at the Hyatt and host a charity auction, the proceeds from which will go toward building a better cookie.

Perhaps Ginger Baker (the rocker's 79 now!) would consent to provide entertainment and bring his old friends, Eric Clapton and Jack Bruce, to the sleepy confines of our valley. Cream and Cookies seem like such a natural, from a marketing standpoint.

(Having penned more than 11,000 columns, essays, blogs and articles, John Boston is the most prolific humorist in world history. He's back at The Signal with his Mr. Santa Clarita Valley column on Fridays and Time Ranger history piece on Sundays.)



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St Francis Dam: March 17, 1928
See pages 1 and 3