



# The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 45, ISSUE 5

September-October 2019

## Calendar

### Monday, September 23

Board of Directors Meeting  
6:30 PM Saugus Station

### Thursday, October 3

Deadline for the November-  
December *Dispatch*

### Monday, October 28

Board of Directors Meeting  
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Check [www.scvhistory.org](http://www.scvhistory.org) for  
other upcoming events.

## President's Message

by Alan Pollack



It was the day the "Tombstone" died. Los Angeles desperately wanted to forget the colossal dam disaster which had occurred on March 12, 1928, killing over 400 people and wrecking

the career of their beloved water czar William Mulholland. And yet, there it stood. The central section of the St. Francis Dam, which had withstood the phenomenal pressures of hydraulic uplift and 12 billion gallons of churning water as the dam gave way, remained as a sad reminder of the human failures of Los Angeles and its Bureau of Water Works and Supply. Worse yet, it had become an enormous tourist attraction. Lines of Model Ts would park next to the Tombstone as

their passengers marveled at and posed for photos with the dam's remains. This black mark on Los Angeles would be photographed over and over for posterity, much to the chagrin of the Los Angeles elite.

### THE DEATH OF LE ROY PARKER

And then the unthinkable happened. On May 27, 1928, like many tourists before him, 17-year-old Le Roy Arthur Parker decided to climb up the steps of the Tombstone. Le Roy, a high school student at the time, had been born in Colorado to his parents William R. Parker and Carrie Hoffman Parker in August, 1910. Three months later, the family moved out to California. On that fateful day in May, 1928, William Parker drove Le Roy, his friend, and his brother Willis, from their home on Raymond Avenue in Los Angeles to go sightseeing at the dam site in San Francisquito Canyon.

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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

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## President's Message

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Le Roy and his father climbed thirty feet up the side of the Tombstone. Fifty feet away, Le Roy's friend found a snake on the hillside. And he had a bright idea. Using a stick he found nearby, the friend picked up the snake and hurled it in the direction of Le Roy. Naturally wanting to avoid being hit by the snake, Le Roy lost his balance and fell thirty feet to his death in the rubble below. Thus, he became the last victim of the St. Francis Dam. At the time of his fall, Le Roy's father was only ten feet away but could not save him. Mr. Parker rushed down the Tombstone to get to his fallen son. He found him still conscious with possible broken ribs, but otherwise he seemed to be OK. He helped Le Roy into his car and rushed over the Newhall Pass to the San Fernando Hospital.

In spite of the best efforts of doctors and nurses, Le Roy's condition rapidly deteriorated after arrival at the hospital. Within a few hours of his fall off the dam, Le Roy Parker passed away. On his death certificate, the cause of death was listed as "Fracture of upper dorsal spine and laceration of right lung and other injuries. Falling from a part of concrete bridge. Accidental." Two days after his death, Le Roy was buried at Inglewood Cemetery.

### PLANS FOR THE TOMBSTONE'S DEMISE

The death of young Le Roy Parker may have been the last straw for the city's tolerance of the Tombstone. On April 11, 1929, the Newhall Signal announced the intentions of Los Angeles to blow up the remains of the dam. According to the Signal "it is not only a menace to anyone driving past it, but also an unpleasant reminder of the great tragedy."

The plan was to drill two tunnels through the Tombstone, fill them with dynamite, and explode them to bring down the dam remains. The project was to be completed under the direction of R.R. Robertson, assistant engineer of the Municipal Bureau of Power and Light. The main goal was to tip the Tombstone into a huge pit which was dug into the wash below it.

From the upstream side of the dam, the two 20 foot wide, 10 foot high tunnels were blasted 43 feet into the dam structure. A pillar was placed in between and at each end of the tunnels to support the dam structure. At the completion of the tunnels, the plan was to drill 300 powder holes into the support pillars and fill them with 5 tons of gelatin-dynamite. An electric battery would be used to set off the dynamite all at once. As reported in the Signal, "It is expected that this will completely pulverize the three supports, and that the dam will then topple over." To prepare for the dam's destruction, Los Angeles firemen

practiced with explosives, by blowing up portions of the still-intact western wing dike of the dam.

### THE DAY THE TOMBSTONE DIED

Four weeks later, in the early evening hours of May 10, 1929, the plan was carried out. At 7:00 PM, R.R. Robertson and his crew went to a protected hillside about 450 feet from the dam and exploded the dynamite by means of an electrically-connected plunger. As the dynamite was set off, the 90 million pound Tombstone toppled over into the pit which had been prepared for its demise. According to the Los Angeles Times the next morning, "Echoes of the explosion bounded and bounced from mountain top to canyon wall as crashing blocks of concrete sent up a grey pall of dust to settle for miles on lonely hills and white sand washes, the burial grounds of the unrecovered dead. As the echoes of the blast died down, and the night covered the spot where fourteen months ago there stood the huge dam backing up its millions of gallons of water, nothing remained but a tremendous pile of shattered concrete blocks blocking the canyon, obliterating the road, and once again damming the little stream. Today other blasts will be touched off and steam shovels then will clear away the last of the wreckage."

The Times further reported: "Workmen and other spectators perched on the surrounding hills watched the towering mass crumble. First the concrete wall bulged outward, then came a rumbling explosion followed by an ear-shattering roar as the concrete split into huge jagged blocks and crashed into the gigantic grave which had been dug at its base. And just as the night settled down, the \$15,000 job of destruction was done and the last remaining portion of the ill-fated dam was gone."

Some of the spectators that night were reported to be survivors of the flood. One of them was quoted as saying "It stood there like a reminder..."

The remains of the Tombstone and other portions of the dam can still be seen today in San Francisquito Canyon at the newly designated St. Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial and National Monument. In the next few years, we hope to honor the memories of the victims of the disaster with a visitor center and memorial wall at the dam site.

*Sources for this article:*

*Los Angeles Times, May 28, 1928*

*Newhall Signal, April 11, 1929*

*Newhall Signal, April 18, 1929*

*Los Angeles Times, May 11, 1929*

*Santa Cruz Evening News, May 11, 1929*

## Something's New at the Gift Shop by Cathy Martin

**W**hat's new at the Museum's Gift Shop? A lot! For starters, you can find unique giftware, and a new line of books. Since there will be only one more *Dispatch* issue before Christmas. I figured I'd let you get an early start with your list.

I'm always thinking of that hard-to-buy-for person. That's why I try to bring in items that are unique and one of a kind, like the book bag featured here. The handles and belt-style closure are made out of leather, while the body of the bag is made of heavy canvas. It comes in four different style patches, to reflect your personal preference. We also have a new small selection of SCVHS logo toys. From wooden trains to an adorable t-shirt plush. Something every child would love to own.

By the time you receive this newsletter, our shipment of new books will have arrived. From junior readers to adults, there is sure to be something for everyone. Topics include plant and animal identification, history, maps of California ghost towns and gold mines, stories of the Old West, and "Do Princesses make Happy Campers?" (I certainly hope so!) Add in a few new Cowgirl cook books to round things out.

Please remember that the money raised from your purchases goes toward the restoration of Heritage Junction. It's a never-ending job, keeping the buildings, train and grounds in order.

Happy Shopping!



Book Bag



SCV  
Historical  
Society  
logo plush

## Rent Heritage Junction! by Cathy Martin

**H**ave you ever thought about renting Heritage Junction for an event? This couple did. They had their dream one-of-a-kind ceremony come true at the Ramona Chapel and Saugus Train Station Freight Room. The bride even rode a horse in her wedding dress!

We have hosted all types of rentals over the past few years. Corporate dinner parties, Birthday parties, even a dog sniffing competition. Yours could be next.

If this is the one-of-a-kind location you have been looking for, look no further. Yes, we can rent for most any kind of party/gathering you can think of. Check us out. Give Cathy a call to make arrangements at (661) 645-0107.



## Fall Forays to the Historic Heritage Valley

by Maria Christopher

Fall is the perfect time to head west on Highway 126 and experience the festivities and activities offered there, many with a connection to local history.

The Rancho Camulos National Historical Landmark preserves what remains of the Mexican Land grant of 1839, Rancho San Francisco, that once included most of what is now Santa Clarita. It is open for docent-led tours Saturdays at 10:00 and 11:00 AM, and 12:00 PM, and Sundays at 1:00, 2:00, and 3:00 PM. Tours include a screening of the DW Griffith production of "Ramona" starring Mary Pickford that was filmed there in 1910. See the newly completed Tataviam Interpretive area and learn about the area's first inhabitants and about the del Valle and Rubel families that called this place home.

On October 19, the Rancho Camulos Museum will host a trivia night fundraiser. The trivia questions will focus on Rancho Camulos, Ventura County, Santa Clarita Valley, and Southern California history, and will include refreshments. The event is free to members, and a \$25 donation makes you part of the Camulos family.

Consider taking a camping trip or day trip to Lake Piru for fishing, water sports, and outdoor fun. Perhaps you'll catch a glimpse of the herd of deer that hang out near the entrance. The Los Padres National Forest also offers outdoor adventure opportunities. The Hopper Mountain Condor Sanctuary above Fillmore provides possible sightings of these soaring creatures, and the Friends of California Condors Wild and Free organization offers lectures and tours.

Fillmore's main attraction is the vintage Fillmore and Western Railway, with its Weekend Scenic Trains through the valley and other special themed trains, such as Murder Mysteries. In addition, downtown Central Avenue offers unique shopping and even a winery with local wine tasting.

Santa Paula's historic Main Street also offers unique antique and boutique emporiums, and restaurants offering diverse

cuisine from New Orleans Cafe to Irish Pub and everything in between. It also boasts a walking tour of historic murals and a live theatre venue.

Santa Paula's four museums also offer Free First Sunday every month. Each of these museums, Oil, Art, Agriculture, and Air, celebrates a different aspect of our heritage. At the California Oil Museum, explore the history of black gold by visiting the Union Oil Company's corporate offices and watch a 1900 working oil rig. See vintage planes and hangers at the Airport. Learn about the diverse agricultural bounty of Ventura County at the Agriculture Museum, and immerse yourself in fine art and engage in contemporary artistic endeavors for all ages at the Art Museum.

On September 28 the Santa Paula Aviation Museum will host a Roaring '20s themed fundraiser, with dinner, music, speakeasy, vintage cars and aircraft, and even a Hot Air Balloon Glow.

If classic cars are your interest, check out Cruise Nights in Santa Paula on first Fridays, and at the Elkins Ranch Golf Club near Fillmore the last Saturday of each month.

The backroads through the valley offer scenic auto-touring and cycling adventures.

Halloween in the Heritage Valley has a special flair: the Pumpkin Patch at Limoneira Ranch with its Pumpkin Chucker and amazing Corn Maize, the Santa Paula GhostWalk's street theatre immersion, and the Fillmore and Western Railway's Pumpkinliners and Zombie Hunter Trains offer entertainment on weekends in October.

Día de los Muertos activities in Fillmore and Santa Paula offer authentic traditional celebrations of this Hispanic holiday.

As you can see, there are many things to see and do in the Heritage Valley in the fall. On the Web, visit [Heritagevalley.net](http://Heritagevalley.net), and on Facebook see Heritage Valley Tourism Bureau for future events. Come back to a simpler time and Get Your Kicks on Highway 126.



*The Oil Museum*

## Prepping for the Next SCV Disaster

by John Boston

*"Due to a lack of experienced trumpeters, the end of the world has been postponed three weeks."*

*Anonymous*

*SCV is a wonderful place to live, but it does have its faults.*

The last few months, I've been slowly acquiring emergency goodies. The operative word here is slowly. Lucky for me, I've plenty of room. I've started to stock the shelves with some D.P.N.'s (Disaster Preparedness Necessities) like tap water, canned goods, Dr. Pepper and a Band-Aid.

You never know when El Nino or El Gordo or El Somethingo will strike.

Still, I've more shopping ahead. There's the possibility of planet-ending earthquakes, hurricanes and, remote as it is, the St. Francis Dam bursting again. I've got to get one of those hand-cranked weather radios so you can find out where the asteroids are plunking, and an umbrella in case the asteroids are headed for Santa Clarita. Note to self: THICK umbrellas. I must buy a solar-powered large freezer for E.I.C. (Emergency Ice Cream) and get the chain saw fixed.

Besides clearing fallen trees, you need a good 36-inch McCulloch in working order so you can get into your neighbor's fortified ranch to get at *their* ice cream. I mean, they smile and wave when you drive by, but, in times of catastrophe, will they share their ice cream?

Probably not. Why? Because in the next disaster, the new currency will be ice cream. A 27.91 earthquake?

I'll need at least a year's worth of pudding in a bag, butterscotch. And several hundred gallons of oil and petrol. I was thinking of maybe cranking up the old Newhall Oil Refinery. The petroleum factory, not the new restaurant. But then, if you own a refinery in a

disaster, you've got to go through the bother of enlisting a small army of trusted men to guard it from roving bands of whining yuppies.

Add to my list: radiation suits; 4 miles of razor wire; extra contact lens stuff; toiletries; some attack dogs; some Purina Attack Dog Chow; Dinty Moore's canned beef stew (the kind they REFUSE to sell at the Way Station); six milking cows; and Greg Jenkins.

Greg's a doctor. Greg's my doctor. He's such a good doctor, I haven't seen him in 11 years. I'm already building a cozy abode for Greg above the garage to go with the Band-Aid.

I don't want to panic anyway. But in case something happens, like gas goes up to \$3.79, we're going to need stuff. Decks of cards and poker chips. Extra horses. Siege engines. Broadwords for close-in fighting. Tylenol. The Veluzat's generator at Melody Ranch that could power a nuclear aircraft carrier until the year 4011.

Let's see, what else? Ovaltine. A few thousand cases of Top Ramin noodles. Shoulder-held anti-tank bazookas. Flak vests. Cake mix. A Bible (with Revelations x-ed out so I don't get depressed). Gum. Slave girls.

I am so far behind in my disaster preparedness. My neighbor, Richard Mosshart? I am most envious. Besides being rated the 13,084th Greatest Athlete in Hart High History, Dick's got all 8,000 acres of his spread connected to a computerized system. One push of a button and a huge dome encloses his entire ranch.

Darn guy. He got the last one of those at Newhall Hardware, before it fell on hard times and became a radio station.

*Having penned more than 11,000 columns, blogs, essays and think pieces, John Boston is the most prolific humorist in world history and owner of 119 major writing awards. He writes three weekly columns for The Signal. Go buy his latest novel, The Melancholy Samurai, on Amazon.com*



*Drinking water donated to Santa Clarita after the Northridge Earthquake. Valencia: January, 1994*

## A GIFT DIVIDEND: EXPLORING AN AUTHOR IN THE HART BOOK COLLECTION

by Margi Bertram



When we look to William S. Hart's book collection for interesting treasures, there are a number by the author Elbert Hubbard, including *A Message to Garcia*, a 14-part series titled *Little Journeys*, and a biography of Hubbard by Felix Shay.

Who was Elbert Hubbard? Why might Hart have purchased his works? And what was so interesting about Hubbard that he read a biography of him?

Elbert Hubbard was born June 19, 1856, in Bloomington, Illinois, and he died May 7, 1915, at sea off the southern coast of Ireland. Does that death date ring any bells?

Hubbard was born into a farming family, and his father also had a medical practice, so he helped out with both of these. It is said that the young Hubbard was a boisterous, hard-working young man with an eager do-it-yourself attitude who believed strongly in American know-how.

Around the age of 19 he went to work for the Larkin Soap Company, where his outgoing personality made him an excellent salesman. He moved from sales to advertising, creating some mass marketing ideas that led to even greater success. This started with inserting a modest premium into every box of soap. This strategy of gift dividends escalated quickly into larger and more interesting souvenir picture cards. Before long, you would get a handkerchief inside the package of the "Pure White" toilet soap and then a bath towel with the purchase of "Ocean Bath" soap. Eventually, they were giving away piano lamps, oak dining chairs, and their most popular giveaway was something called the Chautauqua desk!

After 17 lucrative years at Larkin, Hubbard left to pursue his true passion, writing, and a hope for a literary career. He attended Harvard for a short time, and while there was inspired to begin his project titled "Little Journeys." In 1894, he set sail on his first trip to Europe to meet and talk with prominent personalities, creating additional material for this collection of biographical pieces.

This was the beginning of a different phase in Hubbard's life. Upon returning to America, Hubbard published the first of his "Little Journeys," on George Eliot and John Ruskin. He left tradition behind, adopting the Bohemian lifestyle and attitude prevalent among many of the literati of the Gay 90s, the decade of the art of Aubrey Beardsley, the witty plays and trial of Oscar Wilde, society scandals, and the beginning of the suffragette movement.

Returning to East Aurora, New York, Hubbard established The Roycroft Press in 1895, in collaboration with his first wife. Roycroft was something of a double entendre based on two 17th century bookbinders, Samuel and Thomas Roycroft, but beyond this the word roycroft had a special significance to Elbert Hubbard, meaning King's Craft. In guilds of early modern Europe, king's craftsmen were guild members who had achieved a high degree of skill and therefore made things for the King. The Press became popular, and quickly expanded to include a community of printers, furniture makers, metalsmiths, leather smiths, and bookbinders, becoming simply "The Roycrofters." A quotation from John Ruskin formed the Roycroft doctrine: "A belief in working with the head, hand and heart and mixing enough play with the work so that every task is pleasurable and makes for health and happiness." Hubbard based his creative society on his belief in the beauty and functionality of craftsmanship and the rejection of sterile, machine-made goods that lacked quality and style.

Hubbard began publishing more and more of his own socialistic writings and "truisms," probably most well-known for his inspirational essay "A Message to Garcia," about a soldier who succeeds in accomplishing a difficult mission. The essay was given to all U.S. Marines and Navy members in both the first and second World Wars, and meant to inspire Americans to "get the job done."

During this time, this new Bohemian perspective also led to Hubbard's involvement with a young schoolteacher, Alice Moore. In 1894, she gave birth to a daughter, Miriam. By 1901, Hubbard's first wife filed for divorce, and in 1904, Elbert and Alice were married. Alice became an active partner in Roycroft, and was instrumental in keeping the business on track as Hubbard became one of the most sought-after public speakers. A noted writer and feminist in her own right, Alice Moore Hubbard marched in the first Washington, D.C. suffragist parade on March 3, 1913.

In 1912, the famed passenger liner RMS Titanic sank after hitting an iceberg. Hubbard subsequently wrote of the disaster, singling out the story of Ida Straus, who as a woman was supposed to be placed on a lifeboat ahead of the men, but refused to board the boat and leave her husband. Hubbard then added his own commentary:

Mr. and Mrs. Straus, I envy you that legacy of love and loyalty left to your children and grandchildren. The calm courage that was yours all your long and useful career was your possession in death... You knew how to do three great things—you knew how to live, how to love and how to die.

## Hart Book Collection

Bizarrely, in May 1915, Elbert and Alice Hubbard set sail for England on the Lusitania. Both died when the ship was sunk by a German submarine. His end seems to have followed the pattern he had admired in Mrs. Straus. In a letter to Elbert Hubbard II dated March 12, 1916, Ernest C. Cowper, a survivor of this event, wrote:

Neither appeared perturbed in the least. Your father and Mrs. Hubbard linked arms—the fashion in which they always walked the deck...I called to him, "What are you going to do?" and he just shook his head, while Mrs. Hubbard smiled and said, "There does not seem to be anything to do."

The expression seemed to produce action on the part of your father, for then he did one of the most dramatic things I ever saw done. He simply turned with Mrs. Hubbard and entered a room on the top deck, the door of which was open, and closed it behind him. It was apparent that his idea was that they should die together, and not risk being parted on going into the water.



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

### Weekend Docents

Cassie Croasmun	David Murillo
Debra Haynes	RuthAnne Murthy
Anna Kroll	Alan Pollack
Barbara Martinelli	Anna Schindler
Benn Miranda	Gordon Uppman
Annette Moulay	

Interested in becoming a docent? Visit our website at [www.scvhs.org](http://www.scvhs.org)

### Those who open and close for the docents

Cathy Martin	Alan Pollack
Barbara Martinelli	Sue Yurosek
RuthAnne Murthy	

### First Sunday Questers\*

Becki Basham	Cathy Martin
Nancy Cordova	Sue Yurosek

\*Don't know who the Questers are? See [www.questers1944.org](http://www.questers1944.org)



*1983 was an El Niño year. All the Colorado River reservoirs overflowed into their spillways. This is Parker Dam in July of that year.*

*The reservoirs have been shrinking ever since then.*



The Heritage Junction Dispatch  
P.O. Box 221925  
Newhall, CA 91322-1925  
info@scvhistory.com

Telephone (661)254-1275  
Headquarters: Saugus Train Station  
24101 Newhall Avenue, Newhall 91321  
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**Dated Material: Please Do Not Delay**



The "Tombstone"-  
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