



The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

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September-October 2020

Calendar

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, Heritage Junction is closed until further notice.

Thursday, October 1

Deadline for the November-December *Dispatch*

Saturday, March 13, 2021

The St Francis Dam tour has been re-re-scheduled. See page 5.

Check www.scvhistory.org for other upcoming events when Heritage Junction reopens.

President's Message

by Alan Pollack



As we enter the fall fire season, we cast our eyes on the mountains and canyons surrounding the Santa Clarita Valley hoping that they survive the next conflagration. Some of these canyons

abutting Interstate 5 have familiar names to us all – Wiley, Rice, Towsley, Lyon, Pico. But who were the men for whom these canyons were named? We start with-

BENJAMIN SILLIMAN, JR.

It all started in April, 1864, when Professor Benjamin Silliman, Jr., head of the chemistry department at Yale University, arrived in California to inspect various mining properties. During his travels in California,

he was enticed by E. Conway & Company to examine their oil lands in Santa Barbara and Los Angeles Counties. Most of the Conway properties were east of Ventura. Conway was hoping to get the endorsement of the prominent Silliman to help promote his oil discoveries in Southern California. After exploring the Conway lands for five days, Silliman came away quite impressed and issued a report referring to the properties as “a remarkable and almost unrivaled source of...mineral oil, favorably situated for cheap extraction...likely to be limited...only by the number of artesian wells put down”.

Silliman later joined an expedition in Arizona sent out by Thomas Scott, vice president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, whose mission was to explore mineral resources next to a proposed route of the transcontinental

Continued on Page 2



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

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President's Message

Continued from page 1

railroad. Another member of that expedition, George Noble, a nephew of Scott, shared Silliman's enthusiasm for oil in Southern California, and convinced Scott to turn his attention to oil. At the urging of Silliman, Scott's lieutenants on the expedition purchased 10 percent interest in E. Conway & Company's oil lands on the Ojai Rancho. As part of that purchase deal, Silliman was granted \$1500 to deliver a "professional report on the property".

Within six months, Scott's people had bought up 275,000 acres comprising seven old Spanish ranchos in Southern California. In the spring of 1865, three companies were started to develop Scott's new oil properties. These were the California Petroleum Company, the Philadelphia and California Petroleum Company, and the Pacific Coast Petroleum Company. In promoting these lands, the three companies leaned heavily on the reputation of Silliman, who issued a report for the California Petroleum Company called "Prospectus, California Petroleum Company, A Description of the Recently Discovered Petroleum Region in California With a Report on the Same by Professor Silliman" (NY 1865). It was this and other reports by Silliman for the two other Petroleum companies which generated great publicity and interest in the oil prospects of lands in Southern California. So enthusiastic were the reports, they were considered irresponsible by other California scientists such as Josiah D. Whitney, chief of the California State Geological Survey, and his former assistant William H. Brewer. Brewer, then a professor at Yale, even stated "I am not aware that petroleum in the sense in which that term is used in Pennsylvania is found in California. I think that at the present state of our knowledge, good illuminating oils cannot be made in California from the asphaltum or its kindred substances... I do not advise friends to invest in mineral stocks..." Silliman's reputation was so destroyed by his overly enthusiastic reports on California's oil, that he was forced to resign as professor of chemistry at Yale in 1869.

DR. VINCENT GELCICH

One of the men influenced by Silliman's reports was Dr. Vincent Gelcich, who began chasing oil rainbows near San Jose in 1863 by leasing a seepage at Moody Gulch. A Slovenian born in 1828 in Splitsko-Dalmatinska, Croatia (then a province of Austria), Gelcich studied medicine in

Italy, where he became a physician. He emigrated to San Francisco in 1850 and opened a medical practice there in 1856. During the Civil War, he joined the Union Army in 1864 as an assistant surgeon for the 4th California Infantry at the Drum Barracks in Wilmington. Following the War, he returned to his medical practice, opening offices in both San Francisco and Los Angeles. Having witnessed the Southern California "oil boom" in the 1860s, brought on by Silliman's reports, Gelcich began promoting the wonders of oil in Pico Canyon when he arrived back in San Francisco in February, 1872.

While his promotions were mostly ignored in San Francisco, Gelcich was more successful in bringing prominence to the Pico Canyon oil region amongst his compatriots in Los Angeles. Gelcich, who was married to Petra Pico-Gelcich (full name María Petra Celestina Pico y Bernal), a daughter of Antonio María Pico y Cota, the brother of Andres and Pio Pico, first started promoting the region around the canyon named for Petra's uncle General Andres Pico in 1866. By 1873, Gelcich began extolling the abundance of oil in Rice Canyon, a few miles south of Pico Canyon. In May, 1873, he wrote a letter to the *Los Angeles Star* newspaper pushing for the establishment of a refinery for Los Angeles. This effort led to the incorporation of the Los Angeles Petroleum Refining Company in July of that year. The first investors in this company included prominent Los Angeles figures like F.P.F. Temple, Edward F. Beale, and Pio Pico. The refinery was built and completed in April, 1874, at Lyons Station, a stagecoach stop, hotel, and post office, also known as Petrolropolis just north of the San Fernando (later Newhall) Pass. The refinery at Lyons proved to be a flop, unable to adequately clean up the local crude oil. A more successful refinery was set up at Andrews Station in 1877, utilizing two of the tanks from Lyons Station. It was the first successful oil refinery in the West, later taken over by Standard Oil of California. Remnants of that refinery still exist today on Pine Street in Newhall, known as the Pioneer Oil Refinery.

The canyons which Gelcich promoted in the mountains of the Santa Susana received their names during the initial rush for oil in the 1860s. Most of the canyons were named for the men who filed the first oil claims at those locations.

Continued on Page 3

President's Message

Continued from page 2

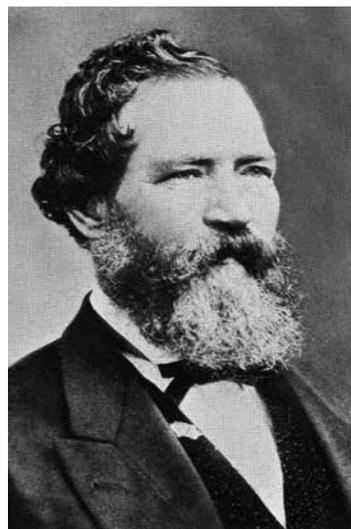
GENERAL ANDRES PICO: PICO CANYON

Probably the most famous of these men was General Andres Pico. Pico first came to prominence on the San Pasqual Battlefield, then a Native American pueblo in what is now San Diego County, during the Mexican War in 1846. At the time, he was the commander of Mexican forces in California, and the brother of the last California Governor under Mexican rule, Pio Pico. Stephen Watts Kearny's Army of the West, now a remnant column of soldiers, had marched into California from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, during the last months of the war. Ironically, based on misinformation that California was already in US hands, Kearney had sent two thirds of his troops back to Santa Fe and continued across the desert with only 100 men. They were met at San Pasqual by Pico's superior forces. Allied with Kearney was Edward F. Beale, a naval midshipman, who was sent with a force of twenty men to assist Kearny by Commodore Robert Stockton in San Diego. Kearny's goal was to reach Stockton's naval forces in San Diego, but Pico was there to stop him. On December 6, 1846, the bloodiest encounter of the Mexican War in California took place, with Kearney's troops overwhelmed by the lariat and lancing skills of Pico's Californios. Kearney lost 21-22 men in the battle, while Pico lost only one. Beale cemented his place in California history, becoming the "Hero of San Pasqual" when he and famous Western scout Kit Carson "walked barefoot through prickly pear cactus and crawled on their bellies within 20 yards of enemy positions" in order to reach San Diego to get reinforcements from Stockton.

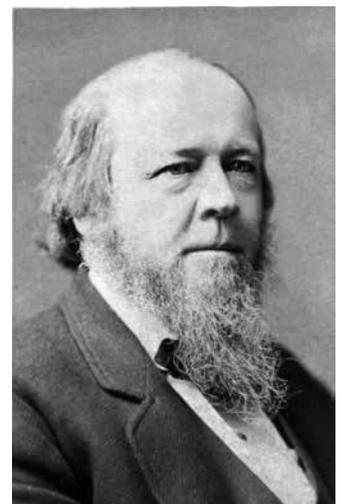
Pico's victory at San Pasqual was short lived. One month later, he met up with U.S. General John C. Fremont at Campo de Cahuenga in what is now Universal City to surrender his Mexican forces and end the war in California. But, like a cat, Pico must have had nine lives. In spite of losing the war, he afterwards became a wealthy landowner in the San Fernando Valley. In 1853, Pico had purchased interest in half of the San Fernando Valley from Spaniard Eulogio de Celis, who had obtained almost the entire Valley after foreclosing on a loan to Andre's brother Pio Pico, who needed the money to finance the war against the U.S. forces. Andres chose as his home the long building at the Mission San Fernando.

There have been multiple historical references claiming that sometime in the 1850s, Pico took asphaltum out of the canyon which later was to bear his name, in order to refine the oil for lighting up the Mission. However, according to local historian Stan Walker, "The only evidence that Andres Pico ever refined oil for the San Fernando Mission comes from William W. Jenkins who writes in the "History of the Development of Placer Mining in California" (from Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California, Volume VII, 1906, p. 71) that 'in 1854 W.W. Jenkins and Sanford Lyon, at the instance of and with Francisco Lopez, visited the oil springs, from whence the Mission San Fernando took the oil in rawhide bags to the mission where it was distilled for lighting purposes.' However, Jenkins was 70 years old when he wrote this, more than 50 years after it (may have) happened. I have found no contemporary account of oil being refined (or distilled) at the mission and used for lighting. Considering the uniqueness of using oil for lighting at that time, I find this surprising. There were many descriptions of the life at the San Fernando Mission in the 1850s. For example, J.E. Pleasants spent a week at the mission in 1856 as a boy and wrote a 13-page description of his stay there. He said nothing about oil. The mission was well known for refining wine and olive oil in stills, but no one in the 1850s wrote anything about refining petroleum."

The story of the naming of our canyons will conclude in the November-December issue of the *Dispatch*



Dr Vincent Gelcich



Benjamin Silliman

1880 United States Federal Census – A Camulos Snapshot

by Maria Christopher

Hopefully as you read this, YOU have submitted your 2020 Census Information. Every Decennial Census is an important civic exercise, conducted every ten years to determine government funding and political representation. Decades later it is also useful for doing historical and genealogical research. The Decennial Census is sometimes described as a “Snapshot of America.” I invite you to look back at this Snapshot of the Del Valle household, Dwelling number 144, Family number 148, Enumeration District 104, in the Township of Saticoy, in the County of Ventura as captured on the 17th of June, 1880.

In those days “Enumerators” would be assigned to travel through, i.e. “canvass”, a geographically designated “Enumeration District”, visit each dwelling, and record all persons living there as of Census Day, which in this case was June 1, 1880. In this particular Census, the data collected included: Name, Color (White, Black, Mulatto, Chinese, Indian), Sex, Age, Relationship to the head of this family, Civil Condition (Marital Status), Occupation, Health (unable to attend to ordinary business or duties, blind, deaf and dumb, idiotic, insane, maimed, crippled, bedridden, or otherwise disabled), attending school, cannot read, cannot write, Place of Birth, Place of Birth of Father, and Place of Birth of Mother.

Enumerator Elwin Hall did a commendable job in making legible entries and certifying the completion of his assignment on June 30. Review of the contents may raise the usual census research questions regarding coverage and accuracy, but the contents also offer some interesting observations and documentation, especially when combined with information from other sources.

In 1861, Ygnacio del Valle had moved his family (actually described as an entourage of 13 people) from their home near the Plaza in Los Angeles (now known as Olvera Street) to the adobe at Camulos. Nineteen years later, the head of the family in that dwelling was “Asention Del Valle.” The problem is, just like the character Ramona in Helen Hunt Jackson’s soon to be written 1884 novel, there was no such person living there. However, there would have been an Asunción Varela, who was the mother of Ygnacio’s wife, Isabel. Since Don Ygnacio had died a few months earlier, Senora Varela could have been designated as the “head of the family”, because at age 62 she was the oldest person in the household (rather than designating Ygnacio’s widow, Señora Isabel del Valle). The last name of Del Valle was listed for all persons in the household, regardless of how they were related or not related. Procedurally, the relationship

of each person to the head of the family should have been indicated, but the three-generation family presented a challenge. Asunción’s 53-year-old widowed sister, Marta, was listed immediately after her, followed by Asunción’s daughter, Ygnacio’s widow, “Issabel”. The next 22 people in the household seem to be listed as to EITHER their relationship to Isabel OR to Asunción. The last person is a 16-year-old “servant”, an Indian shown as “Rosa”, followed by “++”. Did that mean that four other servants were reported as living in the house but for some reason were not listed and counted individually?

Isabel is followed in the listing by 39-year-old “Jopintino” (Juventino), followed by his 37-year-old wife, ‘Sussannah’ (Susana is also erroneously designated as a male). Juventino is designated as “son” then the word “adopted” is added. (this is interesting as Ygnacio’s son Juventino, who had a different mother, is sometimes omitted in family documentation. He had a major role in running the Camulos ranch from when they moved there in 1861, and in 1885, he was pushed aside as Don Ygnacio’s acknowledged successor in favor of his educated younger half-brother, Ulpiano. Juventino would continue to live at Camulos until his death in 1919.)

This household gets a bit more complicated. Next comes a 30-year-old “Madalina” designated as “Sister in Law.” She is married, but her husband is not living there. She is followed by 24-year old Guadeloupe, who is clearly indicated as “Adt. Daugh.” (Could this be THE Guadalupe Ridley, whose story was apparently passed on to author Helen Hunt Jackson when she visited Camulos about two years later, and whose story is said to have gotten integrated into the *Ramona* novel?) Next comes the 20-year-old “boarder” Marietta, who was a teacher and is noted as having been unemployed for all 12 months of the Census year. She is followed by 18-year old daughter Josefa (who five years later would marry in to the wealthy Forster family, with large landholdings near what is now Camp Pendleton). Next, we have 21-year-old son, Ignatio who is identified as “insane.” (He died the following April). The list continues on in age order with Grandsons and Granddaughters (Children of Juventino and Susana) interspersed with two sons and a daughter (children of Ygnacio and Isabel). Finally, we have two nephews and a niece (possibly the children of Madalina, the sister listed above). Next, and last listed, is the apparently multi-person Indian servant, Rosa

All of the persons in the household except Rosa are designated as “White.” Ascuncion, her sister Marta, the “insane” Ignacio, and the servant Rosa, are indicated as “cannot

Continued on Page 5

Camulos Census, 1880

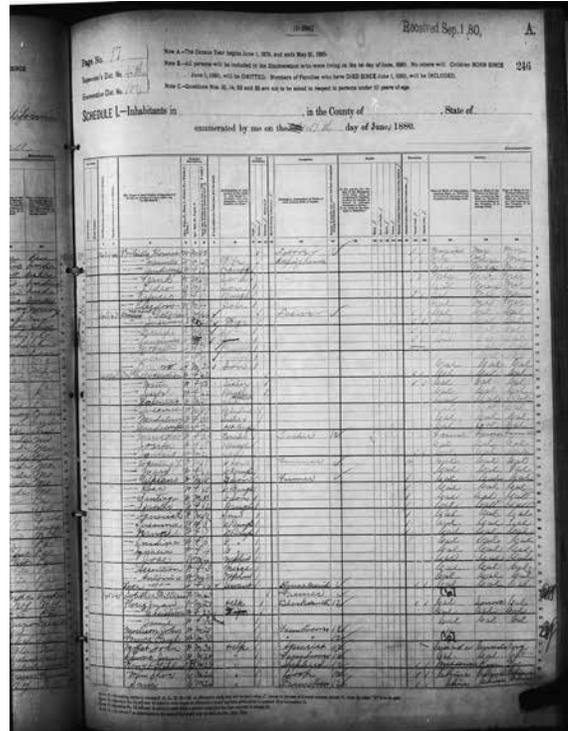
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read and cannot write”. Only three persons have occupation designations: the “teacher”, Marietta, and the “farmers”, 18-year-old grandson Juventino and the 15-year-old son, Ulpiano. “Cal” is indicated as the birthplace as well as Father’s and Mother’s birthplace for everyone in the dwelling EXCEPT for the teacher. She and her parents were born in France.

Given the size of the del Valle household, no wonder Helen Hunt Jackson is said to have exclaimed when she visited Camulos on January 23, 1882, “Good heavens, do all those women, children, and babies belong in that one house?” I can only imagine the bewildered Census Enumerator leaving the Del Valle household of 25+ people, wanting to head toward the nearest tavern. Perhaps he just partook of a glass of the famous Camulos brandy. In any case, he continued his “canvass”.

The next two dwellings he listed were possibly workers at the Camulos ranch. The next dwelling housed an assortment of “help” such as a Blacksmith, Shepard, Apiarist (beekeeper), and several Farm Laborers. That was followed by a dwelling of eight Chinese Farm Laborers who could not read or write.

These were interesting times in Saticoy, as suggested by the Census document. The Indian and white Hispanic Californios were being outnumbered by immigrants from the states to the East. The Hispanic Californios (such as the Olivas and Del Valles) and Indian families (such as the Fusteros) were losing ground. An era about to be captured and fantasized in the novel *Ramona*; this was the Census snapshot of Camulos in 1880.



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Dam Tour Rescheduled

Due to the ongoing coronavirus situation, we have decided to reschedule the St Francis Dam tour to Saturday, March 13, 2021. We apologize for the inconvenience, but know that we are looking out for the safety of all involved.

All current ticket holders will continue to have seats reserved for March 13. Please notify us if you are not able to attend on that date, and a full refund will be issued.

Thanks again for your patience in this difficult time.

Hippie Lives Matter, & Odd Things You Find in Your Bed

by John Boston

The late 1960s through the 1970s were an odd time in Santa Clarita history. For one thing, we had more bizarre and ruthlessly violent murders than in any time in our history. Worse, we had bell bottoms. And, rattling about inside bell bottoms, you were likely to find hippies.

I don't know how it was in other parts of the country, but Newhall hippies were annoying for a variety of reasons. They had their own language. For example, in English, "man" is one of the simplest words to pronounce. In HippieSpeak, they managed to add 50 or 60 extra "A's" and "H's." Somehow, "man" was a plaintive whine uttered with an outstretched beggar's bowl: "Maaaaahhhhhhn...?"

Years ago, when I was just 20, my best pal Phil and I rented a couple rooms from a conundrum of a couple. They were absolutely lovely people, still are. They were hippies with jobs, holding down full-time employment at the local excuse for a Piggly Wiggly. They THOUGHT they were counterculture. They weren't.

Phil and I were counterculture. We weren't anarchists, but we sure could spell it, in German. We didn't align with suits or surfers, the NRA nor Viet Cong, but made fun of people from both genders, all walks of life and were pretty much high I.Q. chimpanzees in horn-rimmed glasses and expensive tennis shoes. Any place you put us was a recipe for disaster.

Our landlords would host a series of semi-hedonistic get-togethers on weekends. The parties were fun and you could count the people who died on one hand. To this day, SCV villagers are shocked that I'm about the only person next to Nelson Mandela who didn't take drugs during that time period. Nelson's excuse? He was in jail. Mine? I didn't need Mind Drano to act goofy and besides. I'd die of embarrassment if a random "Maaaaahhhhhhn ...?" escaped from my voice box.

I worked a ton of jobs. Refereeing. Ranch work. Writing. Freelancing for Phil, who was Signal Sports Editor then. I televised stock car races on Saturdays. On weekends at the Saugus Speedway, the stands and pits were filled with one, big, huge living Palmdale Joke performance art ensemble. Everyone there had that furtive, hunched-over, protective posture, like there were warrants out on them. A few

thousand people wandered about and the crack COC Paleontology Dept. couldn't make a complete set of teeth from the whole bunch. Add to that was the nonstop roar of unmuffled souped-up American engines roaring around a very small circle. Running a TV camera close to the track was like having someone place a huge steel trash can over your head and hit it with a shovel, over and over and over and over again.

What was the LAST thing I wanted when I came home on a Saturday night? Noise. What did I come home to every Saturday night? Noise. And hippies. I'd walk through that thick inversion layer of cigarette, cigar, and questionable devil tobacco smoke.

People would be passed out in every room. Some clothed, some not. There'd be food, plates, trash and butts, both cigarette and human, strewn about the landscape.

But my room? Door tightly closed. Rolled-up towel at the bottom so fumes stayed where they belonged: In hippie lungs. My room was my all-American caustic wise guy Monkey in A Pat Boone Suit sanctuary.

Except for one night. I came home. Drained. Headache. Exhausted. Almost teary. I started to collapse on my bed. Somehow, midair, in an acrobatic move only seen in Daffy Duck cartoons, I caught myself three-eighths of an inch from the top of my blanket. I froze. In slow-motion, I turned. I twisted away before landing on top of two bodies. Two. Naked. Sweaty. Hippie. Bodies.

I landed on the floor.

From my own, personal, formerly clean bed, a drugged and hazy sentence, like a rusty door slowly opened. It asked: "Hey, Maaaaahhhhhhn ...? We're like tryin' to like, like — Make Love Not War here, Maaaaahhhhhhn ...?"

Remember "Easy Rider?" Back then, you could shoot hippies.

I winced. Two strange flower children, naked, probably lice-rich and dirty cloven hooves, were sweating and expelling all manner of bodily liquids all over and into my clean sheets and comforter.

Worse? My room smelled like hyenas. My Hyena by Maybelline.

Nixon-like, I announced: "This is my room. You're in my bed."

Continued on Page 7

John Boston Article

Continued from page 6

“It’s cool, Maaaaahhhhhhn ...? We’ll be done in maybe in a coupla hours — Maaaaahhhhhhn ...?” croaked the Guy Bohemian.

I suppose, in part, it was the simple violation of my space. Probably, it was more that I just finished a 19-hour day. That and I was the only 20-something male in the 1970s who wasn’t having unbridled unprotected sex with thousands of Wanton Hippie Chicks/Future Victims Of Charles Manson harlots with dazed crossed eyes. I ordered them, politely, to leave.

“C’mon, Maaaaahhhhhhn ...? Get outta here,” said the girl.

“Yeah, Maaaaahhhhhhn ...?. Be cool,” said Cheech.

In the Newhall dark, I pressed my lips. Be cool?

I forgot to mention. Another one of my jobs was tutoring Marlon Brando. The Oscar-winning actor would drive up to the SCV for cool lessons. I’d tell him to stop stammering and put his shoulders back. I slapped Marlon and shook him and told him he could begin by acting like a man. Never took.

How did the High Holy Moral Ground shift? Why was I suddenly the uncool one for having my room, my bed, becoming the spawning ground for some yet-to-be-born Hillary Clinton supporter? Perhaps it was just that I was still in shell shock from the stock car races and have the translated word, “Man” pelted at me several hundred times in just four short sentences.

“Cool?” I repeated, pursing my lips in the dark.

“Yeah, man. Be cool. Go `way...”

I tried again. I explained calmly that they were in MY room, MY bed. I got a scolding lecture about my bourgeois, non-Age of Aquarius views on private ownership and that if I were only cool, I’d recognize that this was actually everybody’s bed.

“Come with me, Che ‘Lounge’ Guevara...” I said.

That night was the first and last time I ever touched a naked man during the act of sex, or, otherwise.

Aided by the fact the drug-distorted celebrant of Pan weighed about as much as a 35-pound grocery store sack

of designer exotic bird feed, I grabbed him by an ankle and arm and hoisted him out of my bunk. I carried the U.H. (Unknown Hippie) out of my room; it was not a pretty scene. He kicked. He screamed. He uttered bad words. Down the hall, out the front door; punt. As he screamed hoarsely and accused me of being uncool, I asked unseen deities why, oh why, couldn’t the sprinklers be running?

I came back for the girl, who was standing, wrapped in my blanket. This was a little more awkward. I wasn’t about to tote a naked woman in estrus. She swore at me, leaving the Ultimate Insult a hippie can level on a fellow human being: “You are so like, like, so —UNCOOL!!”

I gasped and grasped my heart.

“Ouch! Summer of love! Power to the people! Free Neil Young! Win Valuable Prizes!” I said to her retreating bare buttocks and my comforter, a Black Power fist raised in the air.

The comforter ended up on a neighbor’s lawn. I stayed up until about dawn, washing bedding and hitting scampering cooties with the heel of my tennis shoe. Funny thing? No one at the party knew the couple.

I suppose I should have looked on the bright side. At least I wasn’t asleep when the unknown hippie visitors crawled into my bunk. Who knows? Maybe 50-some years later, the three of us would have grandkids together and own a tie-dye T-shirt shop/Adult Book Store in Canyon Country.

(Having penned more than 11,000 columns, essays, blogs and think pieces John Boston is the most prolific humorist/satirist in world history. He’s earned more than 100 major awards for writing, including being named, several times, America’s best humor and best serious columnist. He’s currently working on the sequel to his bestseller, “Naked Came the Sasquatch.” Don’t forget to buy his novel, “The Melancholy Samurai,” a commentary on our current culture, at — https://www.amazon.com/John-Boston/e/B000APA0H8?ref=dbs_a_mng_rwt_scns_share or any of his other books.)

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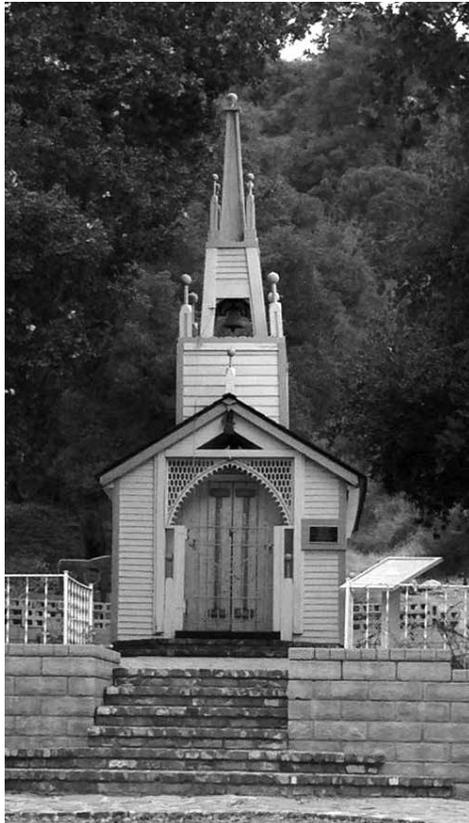
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Dated Material: Please Do Not Delay



Due to structural damage, the steeple on the Ramona Chapel is being removed and replaced.

3 Photos: Marcelo Cairo