



# The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

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## Calendar

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

### Monday, February 1

Deadline for the March-April Dispatch

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

## President's Message

by Alan Pollack



### Rancho Camulos and the Southern Pacific Line in 1886

In 1886, Rancho Camulos had already become known worldwide, just as the Southern

Pacific Railroad was running tracks through the Santa Clara River Valley, right by its doorstep. The Del Valle family, residents of Camulos, were prominent members of Los Angeles society ever since patriarch Antonio Del Valle was granted the Rancho San Francisco (now the Santa Clarita Valley) by Governor Juan Alvarado in 1839. But the Del Valle's home at Camulos became known worldwide after the publication of Helen Hunt Jackson's phenomenally successful

novel "Ramona" in 1884. Two years prior, Jackson had briefly visited Camulos as part of her research for the book. Although she never revealed to the public the actual sites on which her book was based, Jackson's description of the "Home of Ramona" in the novel very closely matched the location of Rancho Camulos:

*"...midway in the valley to the east and west, which had once belonged to the Missions of San Fernando and San Bonaventura."*

*"The house was of adobe; low, with a wide veranda on the three sides of the inner court; and a still broader one across the entire front, which looked to the south.... The two westernmost rooms had been added on, and made four steps higher than the others ... Between the veranda and the river meadows, out on which it looked, all was garden, orange grove, and almond orchards".*

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## President's Message

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While Rancho Camulos was basking in worldwide renown in 1886, the Southern Pacific Railroad barons started to build a line extending from their main tracks at Newhall (now Saugus) through the Santa Clara River Valley to Montalvo, Ventura, and Santa Barbara, eventually connecting with their Coast Line from San Francisco. Camulos became a significant stop on this new line, which served tourists swarming to California to see the "real-life sites" of the "Ramona" story.

### Rancho Camulos and the Del Valle Family

In late April of 1886, the construction of the Southern Pacific line was about to begin. Edwards Roberts, a reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, visited Camulos and described in detail what he saw there:

*"From Newhall, where just now all the talk is in regard to the proposed new railroad to Camulos, the Santa Clara Valley is a garden... It is strange there was never before this a railroad built into such a fruitful region... What I sought is this which I have found, the Camulos ranch, the home of 'Ramona', whom 'H.H' [Helen Hunt Jackson] created and described as living with the [fictional] Señoras Moreno in this house from which I write tonight. Yes, here lived the heroine of the novel which many call the American novel, long watched for and now come at last. Here from the cool shaded veranda on which I sit is the courtard [sic]; here Felipe's room, and there Romona's [sic], and there the Señora's... nearby is the south veranda, the señora's own, on which opened the room the good Father Salviederra used always to occupy; beyond that is the garden, 'always a mass of verdure,' and in which is the chapel; in other directions are the olive, almond, and orange groves. It is all as Mrs. Jackson in her novel of 'Ramona' describes it. One recognizes at once the various places where this and that scene was enacted, and the characters of the story become living realities".*

The *Chronicle* correspondent also related his interaction with the Del Valle family:

*"There being no hotel in this part of the valley, the Camulos is often filled with belated strangers or visited by those desirous of seeing what an old-time Spanish ranch is like. The household is composed of nearly twenty people, related to the señora [Del Valle]. They are all acquainted with 'Ramona,' and regret not being able to show one the original of that lovely character. 'Many who come here,' I am told, 'do not believe that we are not the ones Mrs. Jackson described. They ask for 'Ramona' and 'Señora Moreno,' and will not believe we are not the ones they*

*wish to see. We remember when Mrs. Jackson came. She did not remain long, and our Señora, who, we are told, is so much like the 'Señora Moreno,' was then away".*

### The Southern Pacific Line

The same month that Edwards Roberts visited Camulos, the *Los Angeles Daily Times* reported on the coming of the Southern Pacific Railroad to the Santa Clara Valley:

*"Following very close upon the cheering announcement of the formation of a company to build a coast line of railway through San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties, to a connection with the Southern Pacific at Newhall in Los Angeles County, comes the news that work has already been commenced. Yesterday, as we learn, a gang of three hundred men were put to work near Newhall, and the number is expected to increase to one thousand very shortly. Within ninety days, twenty miles of road will be completed at this end.*

*"This new railroad enterprise is one of the first importance to this part of the State; it is an event for the city of Los Angeles, which is to be connected with a stretch of fertile and productive country than which there is no better on the footstool.*

*"Any man of penetration could see that the manifest destiny of this coast country was sooner or later to be penetrated by a branch railway connecting with transcontinental systems, and opening it up more fully to invasion by the settler, the tourist and the home-seeker.*

*"The coming line will not only be of prime and immediate importance to the region which it is to traverse, it will become the favorite passenger route for travelers coming overland by the Southern route, and destined for San Francisco, Northern California, and Oregon.*

*"No intelligent man in his senses will deliberately seek the inner route, and encounter the dust, heat, and discomfort of the great interior valleys and burning plains that lie between Tehachapi and the Bay of San Francisco, when he can have the choice of a pleasant coast route, swept by cooling sea breezes, flanked by picturesque hills, dominated by majestic mountains, and bordered by smiling fields and fruitful orchards..."*

*"The road will pass through the fertile lands along the Santa Clara River, the Sespe, Santa Paula and other creeks, through the extensive ranchos of Camulos, San Francisco and other large tracts, and connect with the existing line at a point (Newhall) in the very heart of an important grain and mineral region, rich in wheat, barley, and oil, and promising in its production of the precious metals."*

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## President's Message

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The financiers and leaders of the project were Charles F. Crocker, V.T. Smith, W.V. Huntington, W.E. Brown, Timothy Hopkins, S.T. Gage, and John L. Willicut.

### The Grand Annual Picnic at Camulos

As work on the new railroad was beginning, the Del Valle family held their grand annual picnic at Camulos on May 16, 1886. The event usually occurred on July 1, on the birthday of Don Ygnacio Del Valle. They held it earlier this particular year to honor U.F. Del Valle, who had *"lately attained his majority."*

A party led by Senator Reginaldo F. Del Valle (a son of Ygnacio Del Valle) arrived from Los Angeles on May 15. Señora Ysabel Del Valle (the second wife and widow of Ygnacio, who died in 1880) and her family greeted the new guests. Among them was Mrs. George Campton, wife of Newhall's general store owner.

That evening, the guests dined on turkeys and other fowl under the vine-clad arbor in the garden at Camulos. Following the dinner, Señora Del Valle led evening devotions in the Camulos chapel. At the evening's end, the guests *"returned to spacious parlors"* where *"music, singing, and dancing were indulged in."*

The next morning, the Camulos guests traveled six miles on *"every conceivable vehicle from a gig to a four-horse farm wagon"* to Piru Canyon, where the picnic took place. As reported in the Los Angeles Herald, under a strand of oak trees, *"a noble steer was lassoed by native and imported vaqueros and brought to his knees... Don Marcos Forster brandished aloft a wicked looking knife and the whole scene was wildly romantic. While the savory parts of the lamented steer were being barbequed, the young people grouped under the trees and listened to the soft melodies of Spain rendered by Miss Ysabel Del Valle and the other ladies with guitar accompaniment"*.

After dinner, the Del Valles hosted a rodeo. The main attraction was guest of honor U.F. Del Valle, who *"placed his brand on a large number of calves"* to lay the hoped-for *"foundation of a handsome fortune."* As sundown approached, everyone headed back to the rancho for another night of music and dancing. The following day, they held another dinner, where the guests took a drink to the host's health for their hospitality. Finally, on May 18, all guests *"took their departure, bearing with them the memory of a most delightful experience amid the orange groves of Camulos and full of praises of the hospitality of the Del Valles."*

The railroad did not reach Camulos until November, 1886. In October, the *Los Angeles Herald* reported the new line to be graded about twelve miles from Newhall. At that time, three thousand men were at work on the line. The next month, bridge builders were spanning Castaic Creek with a temporary track laid around the projected bridge. The *Santa Cruz Surf* newspaper reported on November 23 that the construction train was running three miles above Camulos, with the grade completed for an additional three miles. Also, bridge builders were working on Piru and Sespe Creeks.

On November 26, Reginaldo Del Valle became the first passenger on the railroad completed between Newhall and Camulos. According to the *Los Angeles Herald*, *"He did not travel in his own Pullman car, but made himself at home on a flat car, which would have been blissful enough had it not been that a very high wind made the Senator hold on for dear life during most of the trip."*

### Senator Reginaldo Del Valle Explores the Southern Pacific Line

By December, 1886, the Southern Pacific tracks reached Piru Creek, some 18 miles from the intersection with the mainline above Newhall. On December 15, Reginaldo Del Valle, with a party of Southern Pacific employees and a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*, mounted the caboose of a westbound freight train on the main Southern Pacific tracks to explore the progress of the line out of Newhall.

The *Times* reported: *"As all the party except the Senator, the doctor, and the scribe are of exuberant girth, the very small caboose was more than full and spilled over at each end."*

At 11:30 am, the train reached the intersection of the mainline Southern Pacific tracks and the new line. As described in the *Times*: *"Here, where the brown landscape has no building to relieve it save the little red section-house and the big ditto tank, is where the main line and the Ventura branch come together. Just why the company should have given the go-by to Newhall- a pretty, prosperous and well-located town -and started its branch off from next door to nowhere, was not apparent to folks up a tree. It is one of the idiosyncrasies to which even railroads are sometimes liable."* Of note, they built the Saugus Train Station in 1888, just south of this intersection.

At 4:00 pm, a construction train met the Del Valle party to continue along the line from the mainline junction. They all hopped into a boxcar on the train. After three miles, they crossed the Santa Clara River *"on a fine truss bridge 170*

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feet long". A mile further on, they crossed San Francisquito Creek on a strain beam bridge with three spans of 80 feet each. Opposite the Newhall Ranch House at Castaic Junction, the track made a strong curve to the left along the north bank of the Santa Clara River before crossing Castaic Creek on a straining-beam bridge with seven spans of 80 feet each and 200 feet of trestles. They had just laid the steel for the bridge the day before.

The *Times* went on to describe the scene at Camulos: "Around a high promontory, where a shelf has been cut above the importunate river, the train rolls out in full view of that rare and romantic sample of the old hacienda, the rancho of Camulos... The new road runs within a few hundred yards of the fine old house, and a sidetrack was finished yesterday for the station of Camulos". The entourage left the train at dusk to spend the night at Camulos and participate in a fiesta staged by Senora Del Valle in honor of the Senator's birthday.

The next morning, Del Valle and company left Camulos to explore the railroad's ongoing construction beyond the rancho. The track ended about 1 ½ miles past Camulos. Graders had reached Piru Creek, where construction of a 340-foot bridge was underway. The day before, they had laid steel across the truss bridge and its two spans. Nine miles downriver, a bridge across Sespe Creek was also underway. The reporter for the *Times* estimated 600 to 700 men working on the railroad at that time. He further wrote: "The last of the explores got back to Los Angeles last night, by freight train, delighted with their trip and the prospects of the new road."

On April 25, 1887, Dr. Stephen Bowers, editor of the *San Buenaventura Daily Free Press*, arrived in San Francisco and had an interview with the *San Francisco Examiner*. There he announced that the railroad would reach San Buenaventura (Ventura) on April 26.

He further stated: "and henceforth we will be connected with the world. Hitherto, although having a fine country of varied resources, we have been isolated. Now we are ready to move right ahead."

The Southern Pacific line through the Santa Clara River Valley was complete. Now on to Santa Barbara and the rest of the Coast Line to San Francisco.

The line along the Santa Clara River subsequently became a branch from Saugus to Montalvo when the line from Montalvo to Burbank through Simi Valley and Chatsworth was completed in 1904. The Fillmore & Western tourist railroad now operates on remaining trackage along the Santa Clara River.

Sources for this article:

Rancho Camulos Museum: [www.ranchocamulos.org](http://www.ranchocamulos.org)

*Los Angeles Daily Times*, April 14, 1886

*San Francisco Chronicle*, May 9, 1886

*Los Angeles Herald*, May 20, 1886

*Los Angeles Herald*, October 21, 1886

*Los Angeles Herald*, November 13, 1886

*Santa Cruz Surf*, November 23, 1886

*Los Angeles Times*, November 27, 1886

*Los Angeles Herald*, November 28, 1886

*Los Angeles Times*, December 18, 1886

*San Francisco Examiner*, April 26, 1887

Surdam's Grand Basket Picnic Excursion to Bardsdale, Ventura county, Cal., in the fertile Santa Clara Valley, on the Newhall and Ventura Branch of the S. P. R. R., only 52 miles from Los Angeles, 22 miles from Newhall, and 7 miles from Camulos, the home of "Ramona," on

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*It did not take long for the new line to attract tourists.*

## Grumpsmas: A Brand-New December Holiday...

by John Boston

*“A two-pound turkey and a 50-pound cranberry — that’s Thanksgiving dinner at Three Mile Island.”*

— Johnny Carson

I don’t mean to be a downer at the tail end of the worst year since like 563. But is it possible in these emotionally jagged climes that by celebrating Christmas, we’re hurting the feelings of our fellow brothers and sisters who don’t feel particularly grateful?

With isolation and government-mandated quarantine, few will gather around the holiday table for Christmas, Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa. Under normal circumstances, families gather around festive tables. We hold hands. We pray. In a blink towards contriteness, we count our blessings and give thanks for home, health and family. But — what about the chronically grumpy? Don’t they have rights, too?

Don’t we need a balance from all this joy and harmony, especially from a holiday that dangerously leans toward a Judeo-Christian religious and possibly un-Constitutional holiday? I submit that in these politically correct times, we need a secular and emotion-free holiday for the virtue-signaling, statue-toppling acrimonious. We need Grumpsmas. It would have all the trappings of Thanksgiving and Christmas, except everyone celebrates their Inner Victimhood.

I’d wake on this new, special December morning, my daughter Indiana in her jammies, tugging at me and smiling. But, instead of smiling back, I’d let out a death moan and roll to a sitting position. I’d yawn, scratch my hairy stomach, and reach for a warm gulp from the previous night’s last can of beer. I’d squint, blink, cough, then glower at my offspring before asking: “Whadduh *you* lookin’ at?”

Then I’d cough again, and Indiana Boston, being Grumpsmasly spirited like her father, would respond with one of her patented growls and coughs.

On Grumpsmas Day, in the Boston home, like lo these many days under quarantine, we never get dressed. We both wear the same dirty gray sweatpants, stained Peanuts sweater and stained brown corduroy coats we slept in. We wouldn’t comb our hair. We’d start Grumpsmas by driving down to a Castaic truck stop and have coffee and doughnuts. Under Los Angeles County lockdown measures — in the car, of course. The silence would occasionally be broken by one of us cupping a sleeve and making a squeaking circle through the steam on the inside of the windshield.

Perhaps a cheery family with red-cheeked children would skip past our dented truck. The mother would bend over, wave and offer: “Hi! Hi in there!! Have a *wonderful* Christmas!”

Both of us would slowly and sullenly turn our heads toward the woman, our eyes lowering in a chorus of damning but unspoken, “What’s so *wonderful* about it?” I’d slowly roll down a window, stick my head out and yell, “KISS MY ...” ...the last word being drowned out by an airhorn from a passing diesel.

There are still relatives to visit on Grumpsmas. It’s illegal, but we’re heavily armed for any holiday roadblocks or roving bands of HOA militia. Twelve hours later, we’re standing on the Boston/Peters porch of a motorhome, knocking. The door opens. Several sullen people bearing no family resemblance stare, as if recalling a litany of unrevenged injustices going back lifetimes. Finally, terse nods are exchanged.

“Wrestling on TV?” my daughter asks. The relative points toward the living room and nods. Tersely.

The living room is filled with other grumpy relatives. Everyone is in gray sweatpants and brown corduroy jackets. The younger family members have disappeared under sweatshirt hoods. They’re texting. Indy and I make eye contact at three people on the couch, as if, by sheer will, we can mind-meld them into rolling off onto the lime green shag carpet so we can have their space.

They ignore us, which makes us grumpy. As does the Grumpsmas Day Special re-run of “Oprah.” The show’s topic is: “Why Won’t People Worship Me?”

About an hour later, someone off-handedly suggests: “Anyone want to go outside and maybe play a little touch football!?” He’s a younger family member, not fully matured yet into his grumpiness. We ignore him.

This being Grumpsmas, there aren’t enough seats at the table. The younger children are given a partially eaten pie, which is set on the floor in the laundry room. The strongest will eat well, as it should be on Grumpsmas.

Cooking is too much of a chore for those who celebrate this holiday for the forlorn and cranky. Our host explains the menu. There was a car crash the night before involving a grocery store clerk. He had just stolen 800 marked-down microwaveable Buffalo Wings that had passed their pull date back in September. Deadpan, our host recalls passing the wreckage. Before the ambulance arrived and over the protesting moans of the clerk, our host darted cross the spreading puddle of blood and gasoline, then loaded up his truck with the appetizers.

“Like he was going to be in any shape to eat them,” my sibling added.

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## John Boston Article

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Someone at the table mumbled: "You should have driven around until you found an accident where they had mashed potatoes."

Several years back, an in-law, new to the family, asked if we were going to say grace. She was met with vacant stares, implying: "Why? We're damned." Someone mumbled: "Life has no meaning." We made Signs of The Cross and ate, the silence occasionally broken by small sobs.

Dinner lasts four minutes. No more, no less. There are no feigned pleasantries or shallow comments about the cooking. After all. It was just stolen Buffalo wings.

There is no dessert on Grumpsmas. No toasts, no champagne, no white wine, no turkey, no coffee afterwards, or insincere wishes about staying. Clean-up is a breeze. The layers of open newspapers acting as our tablecloth are rolled up, as would be the paper plates had we had any. The great ball of newspaper pulp and mini chicken bones is then taken over to the neighbor's front lawn next door. They're not home. We set the greasy trash on fire. The neighbor's dog, who had been hysterically barking, is transfixed by the flames. Fire: It's as close to jubilation as you can hope to reach, on Grumpsmas.

There are no good-byes. No present exchange. No asking the little ones: "Was Santa good to you this year?" Too much water has flowed under too many bridges. Once, a few years back, another in-law attempted a farewell hug. Colder than Montana, my sister-like substance merely stood there, arms folded and stiffened.

"Please. Don't," Tweedie said. Families say things like that. On Grumpsmas, 2020...

*The world's most prolific humorist, John Boston writes both his Time Ranger and Mr. SCV column weekends at The Mighty Signal. His new publishing company, John Boston Books, is launching soon. Check [thejohnboston.com](http://thejohnboston.com) for details. While they have no meaning for Grumpsmas, John Boston Books do make for wonderful gifts and great reading. "There's Nothing Quite Like A John Boston Book!"*

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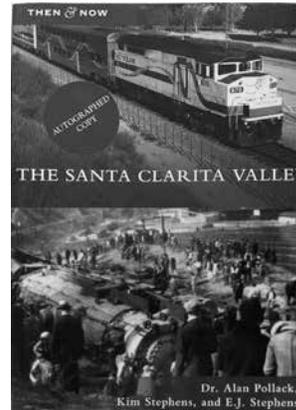
## New Books about SCV

by Cathy Martin

**N**eed a break from watching TV while staying safe at home? Want to have a look into SCV's past? Have you ever wondered what Santa Clarita looked like decades ago? Then I have two book suggestions for you. The first book is "Santa Clarita Valley, Then and Now", which has photos of locations in the area; what they looked like in past years, and how they appear now. There is some text to describe each location.

The second book, "Santa Clarita Valley A Pictorial History 1926-1976", is filled with fifty years of photos of events in our little valley, with the photos arranged in chronological order. The more things change, the more they stay the same, except for traffic, that never changes, it only gets worse!

You can purchase these books on the [SCVHistory.com](http://SCVHistory.com) Web page. You can have them mailed to you, or add a note to the order with your phone number, and you can pick them up on Fridays at the SCV Museum gift shop. (inside the old Saugus Depot). Be Covid safe!



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## Another Look at the 1886 Camulos Connection

by Maria Christopher

One of the Rancho Camulos-connected artifacts selected by the Smithsonian National Museum of American History for an exhibit that opened in Washington, DC, on June 17, 2017, *Many Voices, One Nation*, is a five-foot wooden cross. It stood for many years in the del Valle chapel garden. Old photographs reveal that the cross bore a Spanish inscription, the English translation of which reads: "IN MEMORY OF THE YEAR 1886, WE ADORE YOU, OH CHRIST, WE BLESS YOU, BECAUSE WITH YOUR HOLY CROSS + YOU REDEEMED THE WORLD." It is presumed the cross was placed in the chapel garden at Camulos in or after 1886. But why? What is the significance of 1886?

Another Camulos mystery to explore... Some speculate that it was related to the chapel construction. But no, that historic structure dates back to about 1867. Perhaps it was placed to commemorate the passing of Don Ygnacio, who had moved his family there from Los Angeles in 1861? But no, Ygnacio died in 1880. Looking at what would be considered other significant family events such as births, deaths, and marriages, revealed no clues. The cross is not mentioned in any documentation, but it is visible in a couple of undated photos and definitely shown (although in a slightly different location), in the D.W. Griffith 1910 silent film version of *Ramona*.

My next step was to review newspaper archives for that year. I found that 1886 marked the end of Reginaldo del Valle's (eldest son of Ysabel and Ygnacio) term of office in the California Senate. It also marked the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday of his brother, Ulpiano. Back in the July-August edition of the *SCVHS Dispatch*, I shared the story of how, in honor of that event, the family had rescheduled their annual picnic to May and used that occasion to announce that Ulpiano had been named as the Camulos Ranch manager. Perhaps that event was the impetus for creating the commemorative cross?

However, I also came upon regular updates on the progress of the construction of the Southern Pacific Coast Line along the Santa Clara River. For example, the November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1886 edition of the *Los Angeles Herald* announced that the track had reached

15 miles out from Newhall, and Reginaldo had been the first passenger on the "virgin track...holding on for dear life" by riding in on a flatcar.

In late December, a lengthy article in the *Los Angeles Times* celebrated the 18-mile extension of track laid between Newhall and Piru Creek. An expedition of local civic leaders, which included Senator Reginaldo del Valle, rode in a crowded caboose from Newhall to Rancho Camulos. A reporter recounted the festive stopover at Camulos as a highlight of the journey: "It was dusk when the party arrived, and the procession marched at once down the avenue to the house. After introductions to Senator Del Valle's charming mother and sisters, the visitors were reminded that it was the Senator's birthday. In honor of the fiesta, the long table had been spread in the long arbor in the garden, and there at 7 o'clock p.m., on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December, a happy throng dined sumptuously, pausing to condole, now and then, as they looked up at the purple clusters of the huge vines, whose trunks are 8 inches in diameter, of los pobres diablos (the poor devils) back East who were shivering over their fires. It goes without saying that the evening was delightfully passed."

Reflect on the fact that a 7:00 PM repast in mid-December would have been in total darkness, and it was unlikely the entourage would be viewing grapes on the arbor vines. Perhaps they were under the influence of the famous Camulos brandy and wine! However, the article certainly reflects that it was considered an important event.

Perhaps the arrival of the railroad at Camulos IS the answer? As it did everywhere else, the railroad changed the nature of Camulos, ushering it into the modern era as an accessible destination, the "Home of Ramona," the legacy of Helen Hunt Jackson's novel. Perhaps the mystery of the significance of commemorating 1886 with the cross is resolved.

Regardless whether you concur, YOU can experience this legacy yourself. Be sure to join us as "Helen Hunt Jackson Returns to Camulos," an annual Rancho Camulos Museum living history reenactment, January 23, 2021. Details of the event will be posted at [Ranchocamulos.org](http://Ranchocamulos.org).





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**Dated Material: Please Do Not Delay**



Southern Pacific switch engine #2475 rolls west from Saugus with a caboose, heading toward Piru and Fillmore on the Santa Paula Branch. on December 31, 1971. Magic Mountain Parkway is visible on the left edge. A car dealer now occupies this area..  
See pages 1 and 7.