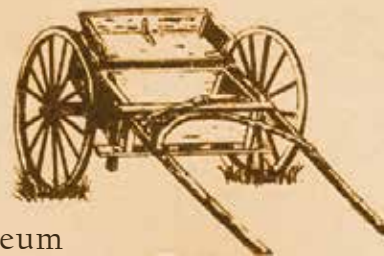


Fourth Issue 2019 ~ Oct.-Dec.

Next Issue Jan. 2020

THE MAIL CART



Newsletter of the Simi Valley Historical Society and Museum

President's Message

Happy Fall! I hope that everyone is enjoying the cooler weather and the lovely sights and sounds that are part of this season. As ever, the Fall and Winter months will be filled with Historical Society activities and fun:

We will be participating in the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District's 3rd annual "Heritage Halloween" event at Strathearn Historical Park on Saturday, October 19th. There will be "old-time games" from 5 pm - 6 pm; the wee ones will enjoy Trick-or-Treating at our historic structures from 6 pm - 7 pm; the Costume Parade will begin at 7 pm, and the Movie in the Park will start immediately after the Parade. Bring chairs to sit in to watch the movie; bring a picnic dinner, or purchase hot dogs, chips, kona ice and drinks. (RAIN OR HEAVY WINDS WILL CANCEL THE EVENT!) If you were at the event last year, you know how much fun we had!

The Historical Society's 5th annual Dia de los Muertos celebration will be at the Park from 2 to 7 pm on Sunday, October 27th. As ever, there will be beautiful altars, fantastic entertainment, fun kids' crafts, festive face painting, and fabulous food and craft vendors. For those wishing to attend, tickets are \$7 adults, \$5 for kids (5-12), and can be purchased in advance (WWW.SIMIHISTORY.COM) or at the gate.

Our annual General Membership Meeting and Dinner will be at 6 pm on Friday, November 1st, at the Rancho Santa Susana Community Center, 5005 E Los Angeles Avenue. Related details are provided in the announcement printed in this newsletter. Please note that as the theme for this year's dinner is the City's 50th anniversary, the Board will be providing "birthday" cake for dessert. We've planned special entertainment for the evening, and hope that you all will join us to celebrate the Historical Society's accomplishments in 2019 and the beautiful city that we all love.

Our annual Holiday Open House will be from 11 am to 3 pm on Sunday, December 8th.

As 2019 comes to a close I want to express the Board's most sincere thanks to and appreciation for the volunteers and Docents who keep Strathearn Park beautiful, well-organized, and active! You are the heart, soul, and face of our organization – and we cannot thank you enough!

And as we move into 2020, exciting things are on the horizon. Among other things, we will be fundraising to complete work on the interior of the Printz/Powell Colony House. A grant has already been received from the Busy Hands Garden Club for landscaping around the building and Club members have expressed their desire to help with the related work! Information on fundraising and other activities will be forwarded to you in future messages. The Board looks forward to partnering with you on every exciting opportunity that 2020 will bring. In the meantime, sincere best wishes to you and yours for a safe and happy Holiday Season, and thank you all, again, for a wonderful 2019!

Best Wishes,

Vicki Spilka

President, Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum

"History is a cyclic poem written by time upon the memories of man."
- Percy Bysshe Shelley

‘PRESIDENT’S AWARD’

The Simi Valley Historical Society will recognize one individual quarterly with the “Simi Valley Historical Society President’s Award” for outstanding service and commitment to the Community, the Historical Society, Strathearn Park, or local history in general. This award will be given 4 times per year. Individuals can be nominated for the award simply by sending an email to Simimuseum@sbcglobal.net with the subject line President’s Award Nomination; include who is being nominated and why.

This quarter we would like to recognize an amazingly dedicated docent and volunteer at Strathearn Park - **SANDI PATTERSON.**

Sandi has been a docent at Strathearn Historical Park and Museum since September 2013.

Along with her love of history which led her to volunteer at Strathearn Historical Park, Sandi has a love of dance! She has taught and/or teaches dance at Moorpark College, Cal Lutheran, Simi Valley Adult Ed. Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District, Conejo Parks and Recreation, Princess Cruise Lines, the Conejo YMCA and more.

She enjoys a wide variety of dance styles including ballroom, swing, country western, folk, world and square dancing. Most recently she was square dancing away at the City’s 50th Anniversary Barn Dance on September 21st.

At Strathearn Park in her role as a docent, Sandi gives amazing tours. She is extremely conscientious., always ensuring that her tours are accurate as well as interesting for our visitors.

In addition to giving tours and educating visitors about Simi History, Sandi is always looking for ways to help our organization. From looking for interns to help out, investigating possible grant opportunities to just about anything that needs to be done, Sandi is willing to help!

Thank you, Sandi, for your enthusiasm and willingness to help out in any way you can! We appreciate you.

Mark Your Calendars:

**October 27, 2019 - Dia de los Muertos
Celebration**

**November 1, 2019 -
Annual Membership Dinner Meeting at
Rancho Santa Susana Community Center**

**December 8, 2019 - Heritage Holiday Open
House**

March 7th & 8th, 2020 - Civil War Days



Sandi (third on right hand side) on an outing to the Santa Susana Train Depot with fellow Strathearn Volunteers

You are Cordially Invited to The Simi Valley Historical Society's 55th Annual Dinner Meeting!

Friday, November 1st, 2019 - 6:00 P.M.
at Rancho Santa Susana Community Center
5005 Los Angeles Avenue, Simi Valley, CA 93063

Please bring serving utensils and a dish that generously serves 10 people. Please label your utensils and dishes, so you can be happily reunited if you get separated! The Historical Society will provide tableware, paper goods, rolls and butter, iced tea, lemonade and water. Please bring a dish as determined by your last name according to the following breakdown:

A - M Main Dishes
N - Z Salad or Vegetables.

**** The Historical Society will provide dessert!**

*If you pay your 2020 dues the night
of the dinner you will be eligible for door prizes!
This is always an enjoyable evening of great food
and wonderful people. We hope to see you there!*

We will continue the celebration of
Simi Valley's 50th anniversary of in-
corporation with a couple special long
time residents...and we'll have fun!

2019 Highlights and Updates * Election of Offi-
cers and Board of Directors * Docent Awards



City of Simi Valley - Important Dates!

- 1963 – First incorporation study committee formed.
- September 27, 1966 – First proposed City incorporation ballot failed, 4,463 votes to 4,016.
- September 20, 1969 – Incorporation vote succeeds; 6,454 to 3,685 votes.
- Voters selected the name of Simi Valley over Santa Susana; 5,964 to 3,365.
- First City Council elected comprised of Les Cleveland, Jim Dougherty, Richard Ostler, Howard Rogo and David Sigmon.
- October 10, 1969 – City officials Cleveland and Dougherty travel to Sacramento to receive official incorporation status certificate as the 403rd city in California. That evening the first City Council meeting is held with the City Council taking action on 30 agenda items, including appointing Les Cleveland as Mayor and Jim Dougherty as Mayor Pro Tem.



Pioneer Perspective

A Pioneer speaks by R.E. Harrington, from
Enterprise – Sun & News

First Simi Valley Sub-Division started in 1887

R.E. Harrington was a pioneer who came to Simi Valley in 1907 and lived here the remainder of his life. He wrote one of the early history books about Simi Valley; Early Days in Simi Valley. He also wrote a column in the Enterprise Sun & News in the 1960s into 1970 called 'A Pioneer Speaks' that touched on many topics of interest regarding early Simi history. This article pays a visit to Simi's first 'subdivision,' the very first neighborhood which sprung up with the arrival of the Colony Houses!



All of the Colony Houses had the same floor plan initially

Simi Valley's first Sub-division! It was started way back in 1887, when the Simi Land and Water Company was formed. The transcontinental railroad had been completed into Los Angeles and both the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific were in competition. They dropped their rates for passenger travel from Kansas City to Los Angeles to a figure below \$8 and all of Southern California received a great boom as a result. Cement sidewalks were even put in Pacoima at that time. During this boom the Simi Land and Water Company was organized.

They built a large and imposing hotel on a mound where the Simi Valley High School now stands. This hotel had over 20 rooms, a veranda all around the front commanding a beautiful view of the valley. Water was piped down from the spring on Mr. Hoars Humming Bird ranch. Thomas R. Bard, who was now in charge, since Thomas Scott had died, became the chief stock holder in the new company. He put Charles B. McCoy in charge of the Hotel. McCoy was a very genial host and helped toward making the new company a success.

A stage line was started running from the new railroad at San Fernando to the new hotel and prospective purchasers were thus brought into the Valley.

The new company advertised in the East, especially in Chicago, and the largest group answering this advertisement was the, "California Mutual Benefit of Chicago". This group was organized and helped advertise the lands for sale in Simi Valley. The Chicago group, among others, included eight doctors. These men had plans to build a sanitorium in Simi and many of them came out here with that in view, but their plans were never carried out and some of them returned to Chicago.

In the advertising in the Chicago papers there was a picture of a fish being pulled out of the Arroyo Simi and also a picture of a steam boat docking in a river, supposed to be the Arroyo Simi. Eastern people imagined the Arroyo Simi to be like eastern rivers. Of course great disappointment was felt, when no such river was found here.

Before coming out, the Chicago colony inquired about housing out here and finding out that there was none, they brought their houses, ready cut in Chicago, with them. There is an erroneous statement prevalent that these colony houses were shipped out by boat. The fact is, that the transcontinental railroad was already in operation and they were shipped from Chicago to Saticoy and hauled by team from there.

The above picture is of one of these houses. There are only two left now, the other belonging to the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church on Ashland St. in Simi (author's note: both surviving colony houses are now at Strathearn Park.) Originally there were twelve such houses and all were in use when I first came here. The fact that there were eight doctors in the original colony



Rosa Printz and Larry Powell - the only two owners of this Colony House

had a lot to do with the unusually fine class of people who settled here in the early days.

The house pictured above (author's note: referring to the Printz/Powell Colony House) served as post office for over 20 years and later when telephones first came into the valley served as telephone central as well. Mrs. Rose Printz together with help from her daughters took care of both jobs. The rest of this article will have to do with an interesting experience I had at this old post office.

We used to hire school children from Los Angeles to help us harvest our apricot crop. A new boy came out about a week after the first group. One of the first things he did was to write a letter back to his girl and of course wanted to mail it. The other boys told him to take a walk down to Simi that evening and they would show him where he could mail it.

They took him to the old colony house and told him to mail his letter through a slot in the front door of this house. He slowly approached the house in the dark and mailed his letter, thinking all the time that it didn't look much like a post office. As he came back, the other boys thought they would have a little fun, so they said,

"You Rube, you believe everything we tell you don't you". The boy immediately became frantic and rushed back and pounded on the door. Mrs. Printz finally stuck her head out of an upstairs window. The boy said "some mean boys told me this was the post office and I stuck a letter through your front door".

Mrs. Printz replied, "this is the post office."

What is Happening Now!

Update on the Colony House Project



And there they sit! The two last Colony Houses, reunited at long last. Well...one and a half colony houses at the moment, but soon the Haigh/Talley and the Printz/Powell Colony Houses will be sitting next to each other. The Haigh/Talley Colony House was moved to Strathearn Park in 1970, and the Printz/Powell Colony House followed in April 2018. The Printz/Powell house sat cut in half in the front of our Park until the preparations could be made for its final move next to the Haigh/Talley house. Earlier this month, on October 1st, the first story moved (photo above, right) and was raised up in order for the final preparations for its reconstruction to be made, after which it will be placed on the foundation. About the time you are reading this newsletter, the second story should be close to being placed on top of the first! The construction will continue to complete the exterior.

Now...the next chapter will begin. The interior of the house is a whole different story! The Historical Society will embark on a journey to restore and prepare the interior of the house and ready it to be a museum full of exhibits for our visitors to see. This of course will mean some fundraising efforts by your Simi Valley Historical Society and Museum! Stay tuned!!

A Long Trip Down Memory Lane



Pat Havens and George Sjostrom in 1980

George Sjostrom moved to Simi in the early 1980s. He and his wife Joan built a house on a hill on Tierra Rejada Road. Looking due east, he could fathom what the Strathearn family and all our other settlers had accomplished. He must have visited Strathearn Park early on and inquired about the historical society. He recognized its value. Then he tried hard to strengthen our leadership, by studying the *Enterprise*, our local paper, and making note of who was active in the community. He wanted us to add people with power to our board. He was president for a short time, including our first Barn Dance in the barn when it still sat on its hill on the Wood Ranch.

While reviewing our files recently, I found an article written by Sjostrom. It was printed in 1983, in "Footprints" (published by our local Chamber of Commerce).

George quoted several long-ago authors, including Robert Burn's poem, in which he apologizes to a field mouse for tearing up her nest, during Spring plowing. The quotes denote his actual words.

"It is in fact, the heritage of its people and the legacy of its land that have breathed magic into the valley of the Simi... as if by a magic more sudden than Burn's plow, the land of the Chumash and the village of Shimiji have been transformed into a dynamic metropolis. The settlers and pioneers of the 1800s would gasp with disbelief at the streets and buildings that now stand in what were once fields and orchards."

Rights to settle the Simi Rancho were given first to Santiago Pico in 1795, and re-granted later to his three sons, Javier, Patricio and Miguel, by Governor Diego Borica. George described Borica as being "urbane and witty... fond of good dining ... the mild climate ... easy living ...and beautiful women."

He thought the Chumash would be even more "amazed than the Picos," and "another surprised visitor would be the Pacific whale whose fossilized remains were found in one of our canyons. Oyster shell beads and fossils found in the hills surrounding Simi Valley, are graphic evidence that our valley floor was once sea bottom..."

"If a photographer had begun taking pictures, one every hundred years or so, from the end of the Ice Age to the present, we could now watch a slow-motion diorama. We could watch the icecap melt, we could see our valley covered with the waters of the Pacific, the gradual emergence of the land—and Presto! The sudden appearance of this thriving metropolis." I believe he would have been entranced with the thirty years' evolution of our technology. He would have been able to make this happen!

Mr. Sjostrom ended with this ode to our area: "We have been given a bounteous valley, we have been tempered by wind, flood and fire, and we will succeed. We are the Simi Valley."

Pat Havens 9/27/19
City Historian & Museum Director
Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum

Día de los Muertos Festival Returns to Strathearn Park

The Simi Valley Historical Society is inviting everyone to attend their fifth annual Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebration. This event will take place on Sunday, October 27th, from 2p.m. – 7p.m. at Strathearn Historical Park & Museum.

Día de los Muertos now traditionally takes place on November 1 and 2—All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. It is a celebration where deceased loved ones are remembered and revered.

The origin of Day of the Dead can be traced several thousand years to the Aztec, Toltec, and other Nahuatl people, who considered mourning the dead disrespectful. For these pre-Hispanic cultures, death was a natural phase in life's long continuum. The dead were still members of the community, kept alive in memory and spirit—and during Día de los Muertos, they believed they temporarily returned to earth.

Key elements of Día de los Muertos revolve around ofrendas, or offerings, which are created through a visual display of altar-making and grave decorating. The offerings, a main focal point of the observance, echo the dedication and love toward the dearly departed. Altars are used to welcome the ancestors' spirits back into the home. The altar includes the four main elements of nature – Earth, Wind, Water and Fire. Everything on an altar has special meaning. Sugar skulls, food, drinks— these are things you might find on 'ofrendas,' or altars, built this time of year to entice those who've passed to the other side back for a visit.

These days, Day of the Dead altars are also created in libraries, museums and classrooms in both Mexico and the United States, as a way of honoring Mexican traditions and encouraging cross-cultural understanding.

Altars created by local families will be on display at Strathearn Park at our Día de los Muertos celebration. Anyone interested in building an altar can fill out a form on the Dia de los Muertos event page at www.simi-history.com or email simimuseum@sbcglobal.net for details.

At our Dia de los Muertos celebration we will also have music and dance troupes performing.

Aztec Dancers will perform traditional indigenous dances and speak to the symbolism and origins of Día de los Muertos.

Please join us and experience this colorful celebration!



Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum presents...

Día de los Muertos

at Strathearn Historical Park
137 Strathearn Place, Simi Valley

Music and Dancers!

Food Vendors
Face Painting
Craft Vendors

Crafts for kids:
skull masks,
tissue flowers and more!

FOR DETAILS ABOUT PERFORMERS
AND PERFORMANCE TIMES
VISIT SIMIHISTORY.COM



Day of the Dead
Celebration

Sunday

October 27th, 2019
2pm-7pm

\$ 7 ADULTS
\$ 5 KIDS (5-12)



Buy tickets
online!
www.simihistory.com

(805) 526-6453
facebook.com/StrathearnPark

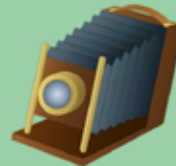
Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum presents...

Holiday in the Park!

Sunday, December 8 from 11:00 am - 3:00 pm
FREE ADMISSION!

Join us for a relaxing day of
entertainment, unique shopping
and Santa!

Food Vendors
Face Painting
Craft Vendors



Bring Your Camera!
Lots of photo ops and
pictures with Santa!

Live entertainment!
Historic houses decorated and open for tours.
Unique shopping in the Simi Store!

Strathearn Historical Park
137 Strathearn Place, Simi Valley
SimiHistory.com

(805) 526-6453
facebook.com/StrathearnPark



2019 Board of Directors

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Strathearn Historical Park & Museum

Historian	Pat Havens
Park Coordinator	Carolyn Valdez
Admin. Asst.	Louise Kaul

Docent Led Tours: Saturdays & Sundays: Between the hours of 1 & 4 pm

Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays: One tour at 1 pm

Donation: \$3 for Adults, Simi Valley Historical Society Members are Free

We are a Blue Star Museum - Active Duty Military Personnel and Families are Free

Week day Park Hours: Monday - Friday

9 am - 3 pm

For information please call (805) 526-6453

Email: Simimuseum@sbcglobal.net

Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum

P.O. Box 940461

Simi Valley, CA 93094-0461

www.Simihistory.com

www.facebook.com/Strathearnpark



Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum
Located at Strathearn Historical Park & Museum
137 Strathearn Place, Simi Valley, CA 93065



The Mail Cart is sent quarterly to all current members. The Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum's membership year runs from January 1 through December 31.

The Mail Cart is electronically being sent to all members with an email address on file. If you are receiving a 'paper copy' of the Mail Cart and would like to receive it via email (*there are extra articles in the electronic version!*) please send us your email address. Any changes to your email address should be included to continue receiving the electronic Mail Cart! If you do not have an email address, or have requested a printed copy of the Mail Cart, the postal service will continue to deliver your copy. Questions regarding your membership? Call our business office at 805 526 6453 or email simimuseum@sbcglobal.net

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Signature _____

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Please select desired membership.
Make checks payable to SVHS&M

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