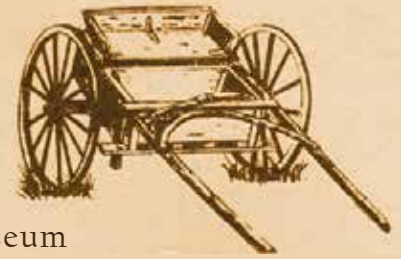




Third Issue 2020 ~ Oct-Dec
Next Issue January 2021

THE MAIL CART

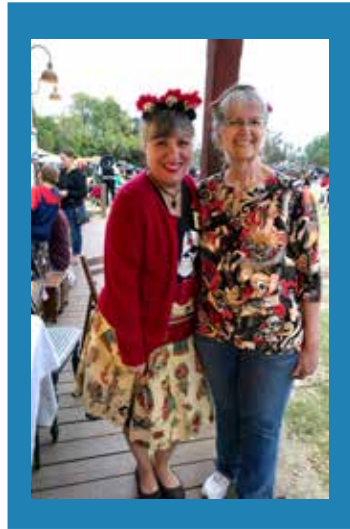
Newsletter of the Simi Valley Historical Society and Museum



President's Message



Greetings to all,



I want to take this opportunity to give everyone an update on current happenings at Strathearn Park. The SVHS Board of Directors continues to meet each month on the second Thursday at 6pm. However, due to Covid 19 restrictions, meetings are held using the Zoom platform and will continue to do so, most likely through the end of the year. Members are welcome to attend open board meetings via Zoom. Please contact Carolyn Valdez (SimiHistory@gmail.com) and she will provide you with a Zoom link via email. There have been some changes on the board recently. Don Novell resigned as Treasurer due to health and family issues. Don continues as a board member. Karen Olson is our new treasurer bringing her experience as a treasurer for other nonprofits, as well as a background in accounting. Shelley Howard graciously accepted the Secretary position. We are accepting applications from members interested in becoming a board member. Please contact Judy Pepiot for more information.

The Annual Meeting scheduled for November 6, 2020, is cancelled due to Covid 19 restrictions. Members will be receiving a letter about the officers elected to the board soon with an explanation about how we will proceed to approve the current board of directors. I would like to express my appreciation to Judy Pepiot for taking point to keep everyone informed of the procedures during this unique and challenging year.

This year, Dia de los Muertos at Strathearn Park on November 1, 2020, will have a different look. Due to Covid 19 restrictions, we will focus on the cultural aspect of the holiday, specifically altars of remembrance. Altars will be on display in the Wood Ranch barn. Additionally, the Simi Store will host an outdoor marketplace with Dia de los Muertos merchandise. The event will be free to the public. Visitors can also try out our fabulous new audio tour while on the grounds. There will be no food or entertainment at this event.

Finally, I would like to share with everyone my gratitude to Kate O'Brien and Elaine Freeman, directors on the Rancho Simi Recreation and Parks District board. I have worked closely with Kate and Elaine at our monthly liaison committee meeting with RSRPD since January. Both women are ardent supporters for the preservation of Simi History, Strathearn Historical Park and Museum, SVHS&M events, docent programs and school tours. At the June 2020 RSRPD board meeting, Elaine was instrumental in moving the vitally important re-roofing of the Adobe from the 2021-2022 budget to this year's budget. With Kate and Elaine's assistance, we have Ventura County Cultural Heritage Board's permit to begin work on the roof before the rains come to Simi Valley this year, thereby protecting the oldest structure in Simi. This is one example of Kate and Elaine's dedication to our beloved park. Kate and Elaine are currently running for re-election to the RSRPD board of directors. If you have not decided who you will vote for in November, please keep the actions and deeds of Kate and Elaine in mind.

Your humble servant,

Linda Bosley

President, Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum



'PRESIDENT'S AWARD'

The Simi Valley Historical Society will recognize one or more 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 four times per year. Individuals can be nominated for the award simply by sending an email to StrathearnPark@gmail.com with the subject line President's Award Nomination; include who is being nominated and why.

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary volunteers. This Mail Cart recognizes three of them! They worked together to help make the Strathearn Park Audio Tour a reality! This quarter we thank Steve Abarta, Cynthia Livesay and Sue McElvogue!



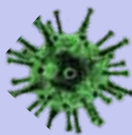
Steve Abarta joined our docent family in 2018. He has been a resident of Simi Valley since 1986 when he moved here with his wife and three children. He and his wife Mariana are foster parents. They have cared for over 100 babies over the past 30 years.

Steve has been interested in video editing since around 2001, and is the owner of Ovation Media Services. As well as being a docent, Steve has undertaken several projects at Strathearn Park. He digitized hundreds of our aerial photographs of the Valley, and then put together a presentation for one of our History Day events, using the aerials taken in the 1960s and comparing them to present day photos. Using his technical expertise, he recorded and then edited the audio of our new audio tour. He is also one of the individuals you hear speaking on the tour!

Mark Your Calendars...Maybe?

**November 1, 2020 - Dia de los Muertos
Celebration**

March 27 & 28, 2021 - Civil War Days



Everyone is aware of the uncertainty surrounding events at this time. We hope to be able to safely host more events in the near future, as well as open up the inside of our museum and historical structures for tours.

Please follow us on facebook, or check our website **www.simihistory.com** for updates often!

IMPORTANT! PLEASE NOTE: The Annual Meeting scheduled for November 6, 2020, is cancelled due to Covid 19 restrictions. Members will be receiving a letter about the officers elected to the board soon with an explanation about how we will proceed to approve the current board of directors.

This year, Día de los Muertos at Strathearn Park on November 1, 2020, will have a different look. Due to Covid 19 restrictions, we will focus on the cultural aspect of the holiday, specifically altars of remembrance. The event will be free to the public. Visitors can also try out our fabulous new audio tour while on the grounds. There will be no food or entertainment at this event.



Cynthia Livesay is one of our newest volunteers! After attending a tea held at the Santa Susana Train Depot in 2019, and meeting some Strathearn Park volunteers, Cynthia decided to become a volunteer at Strathearn. She has a passion for costuming and historical clothing, so naturally she fit right in. She volunteered at some events, including last years Dia de los Muertos event and the Celebration of Simi's 50th Birthday. Soon after she began volunteering, Covid derailed most of our volunteer activities. When Cynthia heard that an audio tour was in the works, she volunteered to be part of the team.



Sue McElvogue retired from LA City Department of Parks and Recreation. After retirement, she worked part-time at the Senior Center in Simi planning activities there, and became a volunteer and a docent at Strathearn Historical Park.

Public speaking is not something that everyone relishes...but Sue embraces it! Sue has a B.A. in Theater Arts, enjoys doing Community Theater, and absolutely loves to read poetry and short stories to audiences. She is one of the narrators for Strathearn's 'Corsets and Crinolines' 1860s clothing presentation, and has done voice-overs for the Simi Valley Historical Society, Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District among others. When the audio tour project was in the works, there was no doubt that Sue needed to be involved!

Thank you, Steve, Cynthia and Sue, for volunteering your time to help bring the audio tour to fruition, as well as helping in so many ways around the Park!

Listen to the tour that Steve, Cynthia and Sue helped to produce!

Take an Audio Tour of Strathearn!

The tour will take you around the Park in twenty stops.

Grab your face mask and head on over to Strathearn Park and take our audio tour!

Don't feel like going out? You can 'take the tour' at home!



<http://youraudiotour.com/tours/763>

A Historian Remembers

Recollections of Agricultural Simi by Patricia Havens

What did Simi Valley look like when you first saw it? The range of replies to that question covers a long time, now that we are nearing the end of 2020. There are very few left who could describe it, even as it was in the mid-1900s. Esther Ruiz Ayhens. Dewey Runkle. Me?

Were you aware of ranches? Did you realize they were private property? Or did you think all the open space was public space. Several have memories of trespassing on the Runkle Ranch.

How long did it take for you to discover Tapo Canyon, or Susana Knolls? Gems for sight-seeing our more unusual areas.



Wood Ranch before development

Our family moved here in 1943. Adrian and Emma G. Wood had bought the 5000-acre cattle ranch, that they dubbed Taylor Ranch Company, same name as their 13,000-acre property in Ventura (goes from the beach to Foster Park). My Dad, Joe Hayes, came here to help operate it.

The valley floor was carpeted by dozens of orchards: apricots, walnuts, citrus--and there were always large expanses of row crops—beets, beans, tomatoes. Grapes. Banana squash. Vineyards. Vine-ripened cantaloupe was one of my favorites.

Los Angeles Avenue was the early route from Saticoy to L.A. We had four little villages that had existed since the Simi Colony (late 1880s); Santa Susana (1900 depot; 1904 when the four railroad tunnels were completed). Community Center was developed in the mid-1920s as a location for new schools. And Mortimer Park was started when a man named Lewis Mortimer bought the area we know now as Susana Knolls. He subdivided it into tiny lots (also mid-1920s). These four areas had small grocery/general stores and a variety of other businesses that dealt with ranches and mechanized vehicles as they came into use. When our family came, the post office was in an old store building at Fourth and Los Angeles, after having been housed in several different Colony Houses from those earliest days.



The 'first' Simi High in Community Center, as it was first built in 1923

Agriculture with all its cycles pretty much governed everyday life. It caused a lot of work that had to be completed on a schedule that involved most of the residents, from owners to ordinary citizens. All ages. There was always work to be done, and hardly any time off.



Apricots in blossom 1922

Apricots for example. There were hundreds of acres of apricot orchards in Simi. Moorpark had apricots as a theme for community events that brought people from miles around. Apricots in bloom made a beautiful show in the spring, knowing full well that by July 4 more or less, there would be work that needed to be done quickly and efficiently. Apricots were sold as dried fruit. Men and boys took care of the field. Women and teenagers worked in the pitting shed, cutting each fruit in half around the crease. No “slipping pits”! The 3 x 7-foot trays were filled and stacked onto low flat cars on rails.

By the end of the day they were rolled into a smudge house to be treated with sulfur fumes (to remove insects). The next step was to lay acres of apricot trays to dry in the sun. A sight to behold.

The end result (and desire) of each crop was to see it finished and sold. Growing and harvesting Barley or Beans or Beets or Citrus—each crop had its own tried-and-true process to follow.

No one today could possibly imagine doing the physical work needed to make a living at that time. Hired workers were paid by their own measured outcome. For each lug box of apricots that was completed, a ticket was punched. Twenty-five cents (25 cents) per box was the going rate. Walnuts: there were usually two prices per gunny sack: \$1 with green husks still on, \$1.25 for clean walnuts. Many a teenager earned money for their school clothes.



*Pitting Apricots in the
Harrington Pitting Shed*

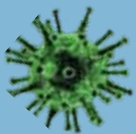


Tapo Citrus Packing Crew in 1950s

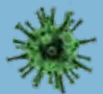
Tapo Citrus Association was more organized, with crews of pickers scheduled to tend to the various ranches. As the trees grew, they produced more. Mexican laborers were used with both citrus and walnuts. Tapo Citrus had some permanent housing. Some ranchers had the same families come back each year. Mrs. Currier mentioned a young man bringing his wife to see where his family used to come when he was a small boy.

We have a new book ready to print, called “On the Tapo.” It will highlight one of our premier agricultural farming and ranching areas.

Pat Havens
Simi Valley City Historian
Museum Director



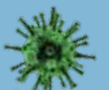
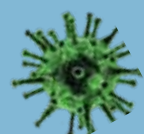
2020 A YEAR TO BE REMEMBERED?



Please Remember: we’d like to bury a time capsule THIS YEAR here at Strathearn Park. To be opened in thirty years, in 2050.

This has been QUITE A YEAR. Maybe we won’t want to remember it. But then, won’t it feel good to figuratively ‘bury’ this year? So here’s the question: What would YOU want to include in this time capsule? Yes...masks. That’s a given. News articles about Covid-19, and the BLM protests. No doubt there will be news items after the election in November. What else? Someone has suggested a roll of toilet paper. Please give your input!

Email StrathearnPark@gmail.com.



Pioneer Perspective

A Pioneer speaks by R.E. Harrington, from
Enterprise – Sun & News, April 6, 1966

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 is about Simi Valley in the agricultural era.

Prunes and Apricots were valley's First Fruit Crops

The picture below is another I took with my old 5" by 7" plate camera. It happens to be our own dry yard with some four thousand trays of apricots out drying in the sun. Our son, Arthur, is the little boy standing in the railroad track in the center of the picture. In the background you will see the pitting shed and the girls who did the pitting. Also, the sulphur houses where the fruit, after it is cut in half and the pit removed, is treated with burning sulphur fumes to keep it from turning black and forbidding. At one time, nearly everyone in the Valley had an apricot orchard.



R. E. Harrington's apricot dry yard.

Before I start telling about our prune and apricot orchards, I would like to say a word about the first crops I ever harvested in the Simi Valley. As I have told before, many of the early ranchers planted a variety of fruits to see which fruit would do the best. I acquired two such ranches. Rather than to see fruit wasted, I picked grapes and apples into lug boxes, loaded them onto our spring wagon, hitched up our team and started for Oxnard. Going down I went through the Las Posas and sold at nearly every ranch for most of them were bean farmers and were hungry for fruit. At Oxnard I put up my team in a livery stable and stayed over night in the old hotel, located just west of the Plaza. In the morning I drove home by the way of Camarillo and Somis, thus selling most of the way home as well.

The apples came from the first ranch I ever owned, the grapes from my father's ranch. The way I acquired the money to buy my first ranch should also be interesting. My father was a graduate of Boston University Law school, and due to overwork, came to California for his health. He regained it by fishing from his row boat in the Santa Barbara Channel and gave me all the fish. I sold them to wealthy residents in S. B. and put the money in a savings bank. At Christmas time my brother and I picked holly in the mountains back of S. B. and sold bunches and wreathes, also to wealthy residents. This money was also put into the savings bank, and when this money plus interest was withdrawn, it paid for my first ranch.

Some of the early prune ranchers were Nealy Woods with 40 acres, Fred Foster with about 80 acres and Mr. Crane with about 40 acres. There were also many smaller orchards. Prunes were first dipped in lye, then washed and put out to dry. The lye cracked the skin, allowing the moisture to escape from the prune while drying. This process would not work on apricots, they had to be halved and sulphured before drying.

Prunes didn't prove to be an ideal crop here. For one thing they ripened their fruit later than apricots when soil moisture was scarce. Without irrigation this proved to be a great handicap. The quality here was often poor. One year Mr. Woods sold his entire crop to Mr. Hoar for pig feed.

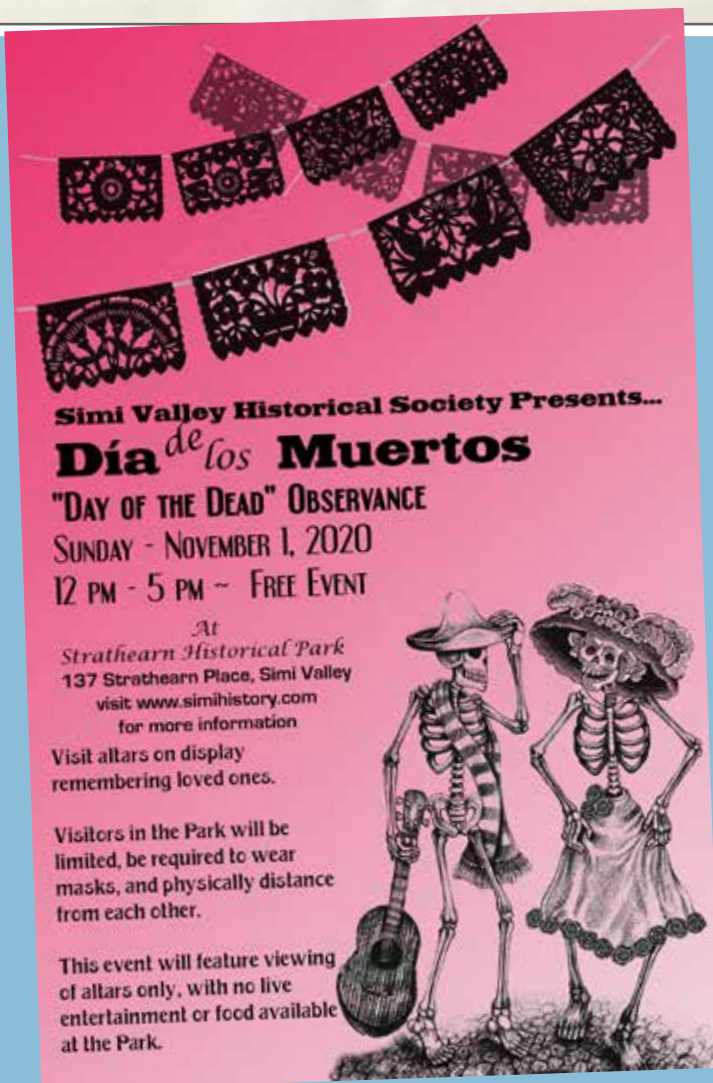
When we were looking around to buy in 1907 Mr. Fred Foster came up from Ventura and tried to sell us his entire prune orchard for \$100 per acre. This land consisted of over a hundred acres (a few acres not planted to prunes. It included all of the land now occupied by schools, the M. E. Church, library, stores and fire station. I was only a boy of 18, and father thought it would be too much for me, so we bought the old Wood ranch instead.

Our first apricot crop came in the summer of 1908. We had Edna Pitts and Mrs. Cornett as experienced pitters in our crew and Newton Crane as an experienced man in our dry yard. Dried apricots used to sell readily in Germany before World War I; but after that they were difficult to sell. American housewives preferred the canned apricots, they were easier to prepare.

During World War I, we employed farmeretts to do all of the work usually performed by men. They did very well, only one was overcome by the heat. Two of the boys who worked in our dry yard wrote to me from the army of occupation in Germany wanting their old jobs back. I agreed to employ them again and so they came back to their old jobs. One of them was alright but the other had been gassed and worked under difficulties.

In 1908 I sprayed all the apricots then in the Valley for brown scale. We organized and bought a two horse spray rig. Fred Fitzgerald was the president of the spray company. We used caustic soda and oil mechanically mixed. Later brown rot and other pests developed, but at that time only brown scale.

Another job I had was the inspection of all trees being planted. On this job I worked under the County Horticultural Commissioner in Santa Paula. Apricots were mostly harvested by school children. They had a good time out here.



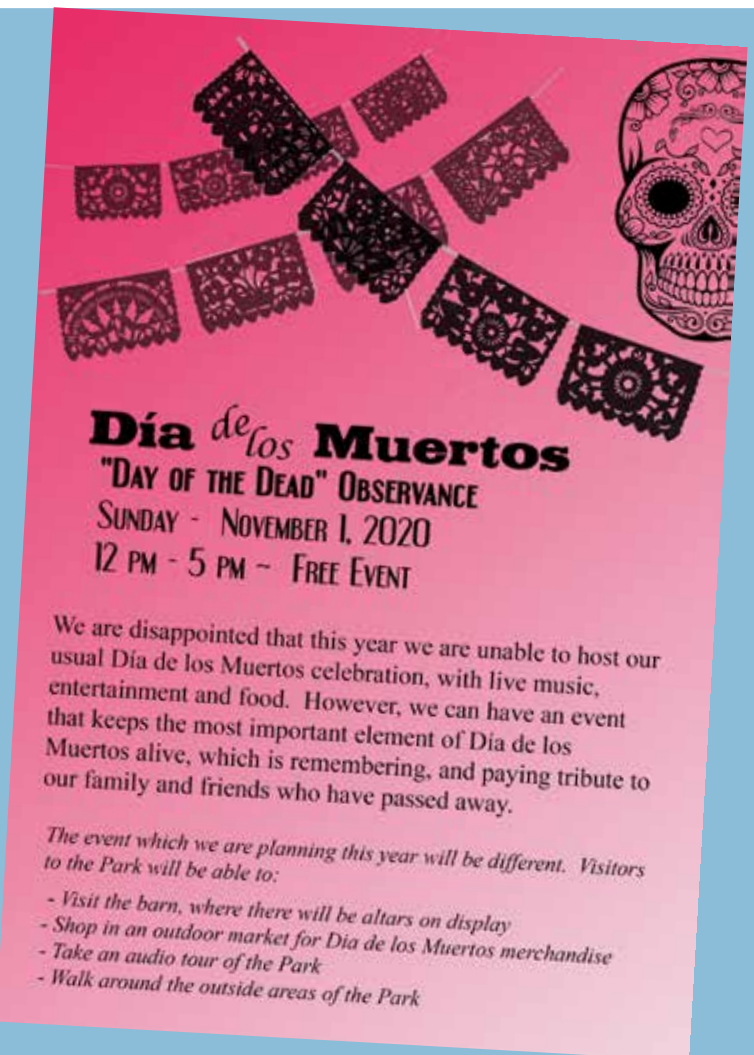
Simi Valley Historical Society Presents...
Día de los Muertos
"DAY OF THE DEAD" OBSERVANCE
SUNDAY - NOVEMBER 1, 2020
12 PM - 5 PM ~ FREE EVENT

At
Strathearn Historical Park
137 Strathearn Place, Simi Valley
visit www.simihistory.com
for more information

Visit altars on display
remembering loved ones.

Visitors in the Park will be
limited, be required to wear
masks, and physically distance
from each other.

This event will feature viewing
of altars only, with no live
entertainment or food available
at the Park.



Día de los Muertos
"DAY OF THE DEAD" OBSERVANCE
SUNDAY - NOVEMBER 1, 2020
12 PM - 5 PM ~ FREE EVENT

We are disappointed that this year we are unable to host our usual Día de los Muertos celebration, with live music, entertainment and food. However, we can have an event that keeps the most important element of Día de los Muertos alive, which is remembering, and paying tribute to our family and friends who have passed away.

The event which we are planning this year will be different. Visitors to the Park will be able to:

- Visit the barn, where there will be altars on display
- Shop in an outdoor market for Día de los Muertos merchandise
- Take an audio tour of the Park
- Walk around the outside areas of the Park

Officers

President Linda Bosley
Vice President Judy Pepiot
Secretary Shelley Howard
Treasurer Karen Olson
Past President Vicki Spilka

For information please call (805) 526-6453
Email: StrathearnPark@gmail.com

Board Members

Kris Grayson
Richard Johnson Nancy Kidd
Sylvia Moya Don Novell

Directors at Large

Pat Havens Joe Lansden
Dewey Runkle Alan Shack
Ryan Valencia

Strathearn Historical Park & Museum

Historian Pat Havens
Hist. Park Specialist Carolyn Valdez
Admin. Asst. Louise Kaul

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 Card 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 Card is electronically being sent to all members with an email address on file. If you are receiving a 'paper copy' of the Mail Card 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 Card! If you do not have an email address, or have requested a printed copy of the Mail Card, the postal service will continue to deliver your copy. Questions regarding your membership? Call our business office at 805 526 6453 or email strathearnpark@gmail.com

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Credit/Debit Card: MC VISA Discover Card

_____ Exp _____ CVV# _____

Signature _____

(Payment Mailing Address) PO Box 940461, Simi Valley, CA 93094-0461

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

- | | |
|--|------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$15.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$25.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business/Sustaining | \$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$500.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor | \$1,000.00 |