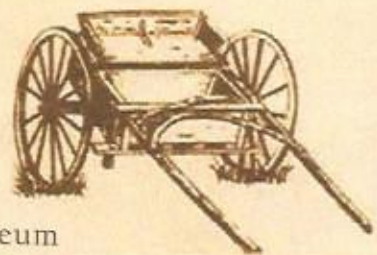


First Issue 2019 ~ Jan. - March
Next Issue April 2019

THE MAIL CART

Newsletter of the Simi Valley Historical Society and Museum



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. The award can be granted to anyone in the community regardless of any affiliation with the Historical Society.

This quarter we would like to recognize an outstanding volunteer at the Santa Susana Train Depot & Museum, **Curt Osterhoudt**. He became the museum's first volunteer in December 1998.

Curt has had a love of trains since childhood. He liked to visit the depot and watched the progress that was being made in the railroad model room. He then took notice that work was being done to develop a museum portion of the depot. He got involved, and quickly became instrumental in the development of the depot's museum, working closely with late Museum Director, Tom Bergh.

Having an eye for displays, he has overseen exhibits since the inception of the museum. Along with being the docent on duty on Saturdays and curating exhibits, he undertakes a multitude of other necessary tasks, from pulling weeds, raking rocks, installing outdoor displays, building a motor shed, painting the museum's 1929 pickup, and much more.

An enthusiastic and accomplished speaker, he gives presentations about Corriganville and railroad history to depot visitors. Curt also shares his love of history by giving presentations throughout the community including at assisted living facilities, the Senior Center, and at various museums.



Curt receives recognition for being a docent twenty years accompanied by his sons and granddaughters

Curt served in the Army from 1967-1969, after which he worked at AT&T from 1969 until his retirement in 1996. He married his high school sweetheart, Cathy in 1970. They've been married for 48 years and have two sons, and three grandchildren. When not volunteering his time at the depot, Curt also enjoys ping pong and yoga, at times leading the yoga class at the Senior Center.

Thank you, Curt for never hesitating to undertake any task that is asked of you, always coming through, and ALWAYS giving one hundred percent.

With appreciation from the directors of the Rancho Simi Foundation and Volunteers at the Santa Susana Train Depot and Museum

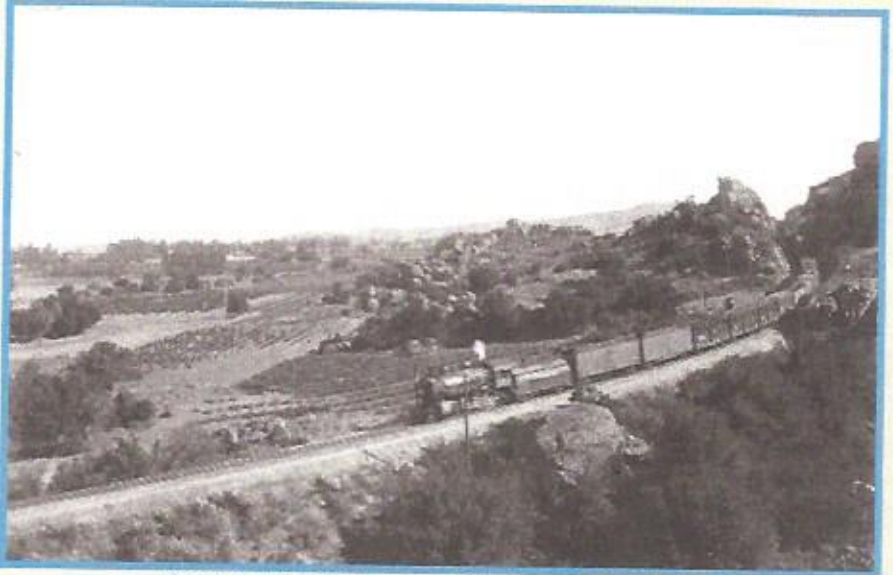
Pioneer Perspective

A Pioneer speaks by R.E. Harrington, from Enterprise Sun & News,
Taken from articles published February 12 & 26, 1969, and October 17, 1971

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. The article below summarizes two articles he wrote about the railroad in the valley.

The Railroad Comes to Simi Valley

One event that contributed to the growth of Simi Valley was the day when the railroad came our way. Before that day the settlers whom the Simi Land and Water Company had brought in were having a hard time of it. Water for irrigation had not come yet** and although there was plenty of artesian water in the village of Simi there was little out on the first ranches other than a little that could be pumped by windmill. Dry years contributed to their hardship. Probably Simi had less than 5 inches of rain for the years of 1907-1909.



Coming out of middle tunnel Chatsworth side of pass

At last word came that the main trunk line of the railroad was soon to come through the valley. What rejoicing this brought. This meant work for the teams and men in the valley and closer connections to the world markets. Before this, everything had to be hauled out by team and shipped by boat from Hueneme. Here (above) is a picture from Mr. Appleton of a train coming through on the new railroad, taken on the Chatsworth side of the mountain. Note how small the trees are at Chatsworth. They too were quite isolated before the train came through. The first trains came no nearer than San Fernando. There was a wide area between Chatsworth and San Fernando planted only to grain.



1903-Hay brought to load onto railroad cars in Simi, to be hauled to Hueneme (instead of three day trip with horses and wagons.)

**Note from Pat Havens: Imported water did not come till the 1960s, always too expensive for farming. Each farmer had to drill his own well, which worked for years. Private wells used for a long time, not too many windmills. There was a huge natural aquifer under Simi Valley. Pumps could be purchased after one-cylinder engines were available. As the groundwater played out, they formed water companies in order to share, then they began to talk about bringing Metropolitan water in.

Other pictures taken from Mr. Appleton were probably taken when the railroad was first built into Simi. The team and wagons were probably those formerly used to haul grain to Hueneme. I showed this picture (bottom of previous page) to Supervisor Joe Appleton and he agreed with me that it must have been taken from the Simi siding location looking toward the George Bott ranch in a northwesterly direction. Probably a short distance ahead on the siding which shows in the picture were some cars standing ready to receive this big load of hay. This picture must have been taken about 1903 when the railroad was first built into the Simi Valley but the tunnels through the Santa Susana Mountains were not yet completed so no through trains were running as yet.



Crops brought for shipment to Santa Susana Depot

A second picture, (above right) taken at about the same time must have been taken from or near the Santa Susana Depot location. The sacks of grain are probably waiting to be unloaded onto some train cars.

The third picture (below), taken several years later, is one of the Santa Barbara local trains stopping at Simi.

When the railroad was first built through here, no trains at all stopped at Simi. There were two reasons for this. One was that the people owning land where the Simi siding is located wanted a big price for the land, thinking that of course a depot would have to be built there, near the only town in the valley. But the people owning land in the east end of the valley offered free land for a depot and the railroad company decided on that location. Another reason that they liked the Santa Susana location better was because it is more level. Most old steam locomotives had only two drive-wheels on each rail and often had difficulty in starting a train if on a grade.



Simi Depot, about 500 feet east of what is now First St.

When I first came here in 1907, Mrs. Carrie Willard was driving a stage from Simi to Strathearn. When the railroad first came through, the Strathearns in exchange for a right of way through their property, required all trains to stop at Strathearn when flagged. The mail for Simi was put off there. Mrs. Willard brought the mail and any passengers from the Strathearn siding to Simi every morning. I am told that formerly John Sawtelle drove this stage.

By 1911 a small depot was built at Simi and the Santa Barbara local train stopped there but I do not think that any

heavy train stopped there because of the grade. One time I came down from Santa Barbara on the local to get off at Simi where my wife was to meet me. In olden days the brakeman used to come through the train calling each stop. As we approached Simi he came through calling Sam-me. I thought to myself, he must know better than that. He comes through here every day. While thinking it over, I came to the conclusion that if he pronounced it right, every one would look at him and perhaps miss their depot.



HISTORY POLICE

In this exhilarating issue of **HISTORY POLICE** we'll talk about the **AMERICAN CIVIL WAR**...among other things.

Our Civil War Days event is coming up quickly. So...is that what this Valley looked like during the time of the Civil War? Battlefields? Cannons firing across the valley? Hoop skirts? **NO. NOT AT ALL.**

So, what was this Valley like during those years? What was going on in California? You may not think of California when you think of the Civil War, but there were pro-union and pro-secessionist forces that deeply divided the state.

Here is a very general time line partially excerpted from a much more extensive one titled **"THE CIVIL WAR IN CALIFORNIA"** compiled by the California State Department and Recreation. Local information in this time line is from Pat Havens' Time Line-Simí Valley (in red). This includes events before the Civil War, and events after which shaped Simí.

1795: El Rancho Simí Land Grant--The rancho was called San José de Altagracia y Simí, Santiago de la Cruz Pico received permission to occupy El Rancho Simí and use it as his own.

c1810: The Simí Adobe was built. This still stands at Strathearn Park. It is the oldest structure in Simí.

1820-1830: El Rancho Tapo came to be noted as a separate site, though it was part of El Rancho Simí. The Tapo Adobe was built during that decade.

1821: El Rancho Simí was re-granted to Patricio, Francisco Javier and Miguel Pico, sons of Santiago Pico, who had died in 1815. [They did not receive the original 1795 grant, as stated in some early history accounts].

1822: Mexican Independence from Spain had little effect on El Rancho Simí.

1827: Population at El Rancho Simí was 19 people. Eight were adults.

1831-1832: Rafael Pico sold Simí Rancho to José de la Guerra.



José de la Guerra

1849: California Gold Rush – Thousands rushed to California and many rapid changes began. The gold rush caused a great demand for cattle. José de la Guerra's ranchos flourished.

September 9, 1850: California joined the Union and became a state.

1850: There was a high production of cattle on Rancho Simí earning \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually.

December 1856: The U.S. 1st Cavalry moved its headquarters to Ft. Tejon.

1858: José de la Guerra died.

1858–1860: Francisco de la Guerra lived at the Simí Adobe, still headquarters for El Rancho Simí.

June 1860: Construction began on the Santa Susana Pass Stagecoach Road.



Santa Susana Pass Road

November 6, 1860: United States: Abraham Lincoln was elected the 16th President of the United States. California's four electoral votes went to Lincoln, even though he only received 32% of the total popular vote.

[1861-1865: U.S. CIVIL WAR]

April 6, 1861: In the Santa Susana Pass, the first overland mail stagecoach traveled along the Santa Susana Stagecoach Road, establishing the new route between Los Angeles and San Francisco. News of the Civil War took 20 to 30 days to reach Simi Valley by the Coastal Stage, the main line of which went through Simi Valley.

1861: The coastal stage route passed through Simi Valley until 1875. The local stations and stops were Larry's Station at the foot of the Santa Susana Pass, Simi Adobe and the "Simi Station which was at the junction of Moorpark and Tierra Rejada Roads" as per historian Charles Outland.

1862-1864: Extreme drought years in Simi and many cattle died.

December 19 1862: General Wright requested authority to raise four companies of 'native' (Californio) cavalry in the Los Angeles District. January 20, 1863 Secretary of War gave authority. Officers could not speak the

language of the country they were prepared to defend. Like many other California units did, the native cavalry acted in the absence of the Regular Army. Simi Valley Connection: Two of the four companies had a Simi connection. Company A was commanded by José Ramon Pico, a nephew of Andres Pico, grandson of Santiago Pico, original recipient of the Simi Rancho land grant. Capt. Antonio Maria de la Guerra, son of Don José de la Guerra, the second owner of El Rancho Simi commanded Company C.

November 19, 1863: Gettysburg, PA: At the dedication of the new Soldier's National Cemetery at Gettysburg, President Lincoln delivered his famous Gettysburg Address.



Antonio Maria de la Guerra

1864: Isaac Cook was given deed to El Rancho Simi as a result of the sale of El Rancho Simi land due to non-payment of mortgage debt to him by de la Guerras.

Some deceptive practices were undertaken by American investors to wrest control of land from Spanish landholders.

1865: A land patent confirmed the de la Guerra claim to Rancho Simi under the Land Act of 1851. José de la Guerra had already died. The sons soon lost the remainder of their Rancho Simi land because of mortgages during the bad years of drought and poor management of finances.

1865: The Rancho Simi was purchased by eastern land investors headed by Thomas A. Scott of Pennsylvania. Thomas R. Bard, a man in his twenties, was hired to manage Scott's affairs.

April 9 1865: Appomattox, VA: General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia to General Ulysses S. Grant at the home of Wilmer McLean in Appomattox. Soon, other Confederate Generals followed suit, making the Southern defeat complete.

April 14 1865: Washington, D.C.: United States President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth in Ford's Theatre, Washington, D. C.

August 31 1865: Washington, D.C.: The US Federal government estimated that the American Civil War had cost about \$8 billion. Human costs have been estimated at more than one-million killed or wounded.

1880s: In the mid 1880s, the de la Guerras finally lost their hold on the Tapo property. In 1885 The Tapo Ranch was offered for sale in Ventura County newspapers.

1887-1888: The formation of the Simi Land and Water Company, headed by Thomas Bard; they started the first land division and offered the Rancho Simi land for sale.



Land offered for sale after the formation of Simi Land and Water Company

Holiday Open House

On December 9th we welcomed many visitors to our beautifully decorated Park for our Holiday Open House. They were entertained by the Valley View Middle School Choir, Pipe Dreams Flute Duet, the Methodist Church Bell Ringers, and Channel Islands Harmony Chorus. And, of course, Santa (Robert) Claus and his lovely elf delighted young and old with their Christmas cheer! Thank you docents, volunteers and board members who decorated our Park, baked delicious goodies and informed our guests about our Simi history. We couldn't do it without you!

Linda Bosley - Event Chair



Story Tellers Needed!

Would you like to teach people about the interesting history of our community and tell stories to illustrate how life was lived a long time ago? Get Involved at Strathearn Historical Park and Museum and the Simi Valley Historical Society! We are looking for story tellers that enjoy learning and teaching our history!

Today is the day that you can sign up to become a docent at Strathearn Park. The docent experience is enjoyable in many ways. You will lead tours to the historical buildings and share stories about the history of Simi. Your stories begin with the Chumash people, then the Spanish era and finally the pioneer families who settled in Simi. You will meet many other docents with similar interests, and you will make a considerable contribution to our community! The training is only 2 hours a week for 4 weeks. Your minimum commitment is a 3 hour assignment once a month and a 1 hour meeting. Please come and join us! If you love Simi as we do, you will love being a docent.

At Strathearn Historical Park & Museum volunteer hours are flexible, and there are various activities and programs available to satisfy a broad spectrum of interests. Come and join a wonderful group of people who are dedicated to preserving as well as sharing Simi Valley's history.

If you are interested please call the museum office at 805-526-6453 or email at simimuseum@sbcglobal.net

Welcome New Docents!

We'd like to welcome those who joined our volunteer family in 2018!

Steve Abarta, Emily Albers, Martha Azcarate,
Russ Cunningham, Steve Demski, Evelyn Gomez, Thomas Grant,
Pina Valdez, Steve Weiss, Nellann Wilson, Luca Harper

Mark Your Calendars:

February 2 & 3, 2019 - Civil War Days

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

*Tentative

Chumash 101 at Strathearn Park

1st Nations Chumash 101 Presentations for the public at Strathearn Park monthly on the 4th Sunday of the month (excluding January 2019) from Noon to 1 pm in the Visitors Center!

Video presentations, ethnographical maps, subject books to peruse, clapper sticks, activities.

Trained archaeologist guest speakers, and more!



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Park Coordinator Carolyn Valdez
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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. If you haven't already...send in your dues for 2019 now!

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

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