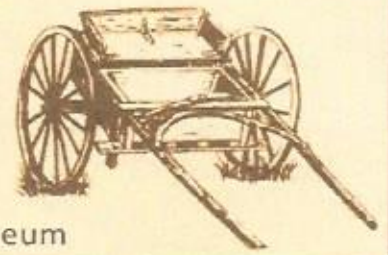


Fourth Issue 2017 ~ Oct. - Dec.  
Next Issue January 2018

# THE MAIL CART



Newsletter of the Simi Valley Historical Society and Museum

## *President's Message*

Well, here we are. We are nearing the end of yet another year. We have accomplished some amazing things this year. We have reached into the school system to provide more outreach and education than we ever have before. We should continue this momentum and find more ways that we can add additional benefit to the educational curriculum of Simi Valley schools. We now have a new web-site. We can accept electronic credit card transactions in the Simi Store. The Simi Store is also undergoing a host of other positive changes, including Strathearn branded merchandise and a whole selection of new history themed toys. We have a growing list of new docents and new board members. We continue to see record numbers of people attending our events, and engaging with us in various ways. We are slowly moving toward our goal of becoming more prominent and visible in the community. We would like to build on this momentum and launch some additional programs.

While we reflect on our successes, it is also important to look at the road ahead. The last part of each year is always the most challenging for our organization, as we generally have many event and fundraising activities near the end of the year. This year is even more challenging. We have some big projects ahead of us. In addition to Dia de los Muertos and Rocket Day, we have the Simiopolis fundraiser coming up in February. Our success with fundraisers is critical to continue to provide our organization with the needed funds to achieve all of the things we hope to accomplish.

As you know, in April we intend to move the Printz/Powell Colony House to Strathearn Park. This effort will cost almost \$100,000. Additionally, we hope to also build an auto-barn to house our growing collection of vintage/restored automobiles. This effort will cost well over \$100,000. The next few years will likely be some of the most challenging years our organization has faced.

The good news is, we have an amazing group of dedicated volunteers who will carry our organization to success on all fronts. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our successes in 2017 and who will continue to support us as we move forward into 2018 and beyond. It is the dedication and passion of our volunteers that make all of this possible. All of us should be very proud of where we have been and where we are going. Keep up the great work. There are no words big enough to express the appropriate level of gratitude for all of these efforts. Please continue your dedication to preserving local history and being apart of our thriving organization.

*Joe* - President, Simi Valley Historical Society





*You are Cordially Invited to  
Our 53rd Annual Dinner Meeting!*

Friday, November 3rd, 2017 - 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-J: Main Dish*

*K-S: Salad*

*T-Z: Dessert*

**Guest Speaker: Gerald Olsen**

He will be speaking on the history of the Norwegian Grade and the Norwegian Colony.

2017 Highlights and Updates \* Election of Officers and Board of Directors \* Docent Awards

*If you pay your 2018 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!*

**Thank You** to our Dia de los Muertos  
SPONSORS!



*We very much appreciate  
your generosity!*

American Legion Post #484

Pat Havens

Dena Kauffman

Karen Olson

Nutrishop

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Weddings & Events

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## PRESIDENT'S AWARD



The Simi Valley Historical Society President 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](mailto: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 I would like to recognize Jeannie Liss. Jeannie has been a long-time supporter of the programs that take place at Strathearn Historical Park and Museum.

As the Volunteer Coordinator for the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District, she ensures volunteers are provided for special events at Strathearn Park and throughout the Park District. In addition, she volunteers her own time at events by providing a photo booth so attendees to the park can have a lasting memory of their visit. For the past two years she has obtained a grant from Lions Club International that has benefited the Simi Valley Historical Society, Strathearn Park and supported community events at the Park.

Jeannie is also a member of Kiwanis Club of Simi Valley and volunteers her time to support their events which benefit the community immensely.

Her enthusiasm and tireless efforts make events held at Strathearn memorable moments to cherish by all. She is most deserving of this award and acknowledgement.

Joe Wade-  
President, Simi Valley Historical Society



# Día de los Muertos

**Strathearn Historical Park**  
137 Strathearn Place, Simi Valley

**Day of the Dead Celebration**  
Sunday  
October 29th, 2017  
2pm-7pm


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

Music • Dancers • Live Performances •  
Face Painting • Food vendors  
Día de los Muertos craft vendors  
Crafts for kids

Altars created by local families will be on display.

Buy tickets online!!!  
Go to <http://svhs.ticketleap.com>

For more information:  
(805) 526-6453 + [SimiMuseum@sbcglobal.net](mailto:SimiMuseum@sbcglobal.net)  
[www.simihistory.com](http://www.simihistory.com) + [facebook.com/StrathearnPark](https://www.facebook.com/StrathearnPark)



### Mark Your Calendars:

**October 29, 2017 - Día de los Muertos Celebration**

**November 3, 2017 -**

**Annual Membership Dinner Meeting at  
Rancho Santa Susana Community Center**

**November 18, 2017 - Booked Out:**

**The Fires of Creation**

**February 3, 2018 - Colony House Simiopolis  
Fundraiser**

**February 10 & 11, 2018 - Civil War Days**



Odds and Ends...

We have a NEW website...and we're very excited about it! As we continue to build it we will add more functionality, and items that we hope you will find interesting! CHECK IT OUT!



**WWW.SIMIHISTORY.COM**



In other news...join us at the Simi Valley Senior Center for a series of Historical Presentations! On October 31st you can learn about Simi Valley's 'Cults Characters and Culprits!'

Go to our NEW WEBSITE and click on 'Events' for more details!!

### *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!

We have presentations scheduled for November 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th from 7 pm to 9 pm. These presentations cover the history of Simi, and the history of the beautiful historical structures at our park. They will teach you everything you need to know to begin a rewarding and fun role as a volunteer guide at the park!

We would like to WELCOME ABOARD four wonderful people who have just completed the docent training and are currently 'learning the ropes.' A big welcome to **John Billinger, Susan Goetz, Danny Greenstreet and Shelley Howard!**

We'd also like to welcome **Rosemary McAnany** to our volunteer family!

At Strathearn Historical Park & Museum volunteer hours are flexible, and there are various activities and programs available to satisfy a broad spectrum of interests. The basic commitment is one day a month, but most of our volunteers sign up to do much more. 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 Bruce Matzen 805-582-9336 or email the Visitors Center at [simimuseum@sbcglobal.net](mailto:simimuseum@sbcglobal.net)

**Bruce Matzen**  
Docent Training Chair



## Mechanical Restoration



It seems like fall is in the air with the leaves starting to drop and slightly cooler weather. Our workshop volunteers continue to do amazing things while working on our various projects in the shop, and out in the yard. The 1934 Cat tractor is more than 75% complete. It is in need of some minor mechanical tasks, body work, and assembly prior to painting. It may be completed for 2018 History Day...time will tell. We have several other projects in the shop that will be started in 2018. We have projects for everyone, so please drop by the Park on Monday mornings around 9 AM and we will give you a tour. You can meet the crew, or just have some coffee.

All the best for a safe and happy holiday season.

Regards,

Richard A. Johnson - Simi Valley Historical Society Mechanical Restorations Director

## DOCENT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Docents at Strathearn Historical Park & Museum love what they do.

We love maintaining the buildings and guiding tours of all kinds. Docents are the back bone of the historical society. Not only are we responsible for all the tours, which include daily tours, special request tours, and the third grade school tours, but we also participate in work project days, and all of the special events. These special events include Civil War Days, History Day, Dia de los Muertos, and Rocket Day. Docents are very dedicated. We are interested in the success of the park and take responsibility to ensure the park's success.

When I accepted the position of Docent Director, I really did not appreciate the need for more docents. We need more docents to help with all of these docent responsibilities. I would like to set up a committee to brainstorm and actualize a docent recruitment strategy. Please accept an invitation to help me with this project. Who will you invite to join us? We have implemented an updated training program to better meet the needs of novice docents. Our hope is that docent trainees will enjoy the experience and stay with us for many years to come. I took this position as director because I have a tremendous respect for my fellow docents and look forward to many future successes.

Please contact the Visitors Center at the park at 805-526-6453 or [simimuseum@sbcglobal.net](mailto:simimuseum@sbcglobal.net) if you'd like to become a volunteer, or if you'd like to become part of a committee that will explore ways to find individuals that will enjoy being a part of our volunteer community as much as we do!

Dr. Frank Sinsheimer  
Docent Director





## HISTORY POLICE

In this issue of **HISTORY POLICE** we'll reflect on Simi Valley's Hispanic and Mexican heritage. Families with Mexican heritage have been an integral part of this valley for a very long time. During the Mission, or land grant era, this area was very sparsely populated. Mexican Independence from Spain in 1822 had little effect on El Rancho Simi. In 1827 there were only 19 individuals here. **ONLY EIGHT WERE ADULTS!** Those individuals were inhabitants and workers on El Rancho Simi, and occupied the valley before California became a state in 1850. After this, Anglo pioneers and eastern investors began to slowly arrive in the area. The individuals who had been in Simi Valley as part of the land grant period remained, and worked alongside and/or for the newcomers on leased land. Charles Emerson Hoar, who is one of the early pioneers of the area, acquired his land which we know as Hummingbird's Nest, from a man named Juan Pucillo. Many descendants of these long time Valley residents have struggled to ensure that their family's existence was recorded and acknowledged, so the history of this Valley would reflect the contributions and experiences of their ancestors.

**LUCY CHAVEZ** could be considered an activist. She was very outspoken in making sure that the historical record was accurately documented. Her mother Crestina Ferrer arrived in the Valley in 1905, and donated the bell that hung in the belfry of the Old St. Rose of Lima Church for many years. She struggled to have the fact acknowledged that people of Mexican descent helped settle the Valley. Lucy also fought to correct inaccuracies about the founding of the St. Rose church.

**NELLIE VASQUEZ** recounted that her father, Yrineo Delgado, left the Mexican State of Jalisco and came to the Valley in 1913 to work for the railroad. She also recounted her experiences with the segregation that took place in Simi Valley when she was a student at Simi Elementary.

Different facets of History in our Valley, including experiences, both positive and negative, of residents should be recounted and recorded in an effort to obtain a more complete understanding of Simi's History.

Pat Havens, Simi Historian and author of *Simi Valley-A Journey Through Time*, has been working to interview descendants of the early Mexican families. Several of these personal accounts can be found in *A Journey Through Time*. Below Mrs. Havens recounts a few more memories...

Simi Valley has always had a rich and varied component of Mexican families. Some families became aware of this place because of working on the railroad. As orchards and other farming expanded, many ranches hired families to live on their property as permanent workers. They were trusted and valued.



Nellie Delgado Vasquez was a docent at Strathearn Park and worked to educate visitors about Mexican heritage.



Mike Alba was a WWII Hero

Our World War I plaque now displayed at the Military History Museum has the names of 38 locals who served; three had gold stars that represented the fallen. One was Manuel Silva; it is not known if he was related to our local Silvas. The four wooden World War II plaques (also currently on display at the Military Museum in the Town Center mall) list dozens of Mexican names who did their patriotic duty.

Some were heroes, such as Mike Alba. The Albas had a large family and very inadequate living conditions on the large ranch northwest of First St. and the railroad crossing. Mike was one of the oldest, did well in school, got a scholarship to Redlands College. When WWII started, he enlisted; however, they wanted him to stay in college and complete his education. He was so successful during the war that his knowledge and expertise were used to help create the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. His teachers often described how proud they were of him.

Armando Patino worked for the school district for many years. The next genera-





Manuel Bañaga Sr. is second from left in this photo of workers at Hall's Turkey Ranch

tions have made genuine marks on our history.

Libby Ortega Maciel was a direct descendant of José Francisco Ortega, who came on the first exploratory trip of Alta California in 1769, with Father Junipero Serra. The large local Maciel family made their own mark in our schools, especially in sports. Several of them are still living here and taking a role in various community events.

The Manuel Bañaga family was highly regarded. Manuel Sr. had come here in 1916, and he worked on many ranches, including the McCoy Ranch (now Wood Ranch development) when it was in its pristine 5000-acre condition, and later the Hall Turkey Ranch. During World War II, several Mexican families, led by the Bañagas, held colorful fiestas in Simi. Proceeds were donated to a military hospital

to buy radios for injured servicemen.

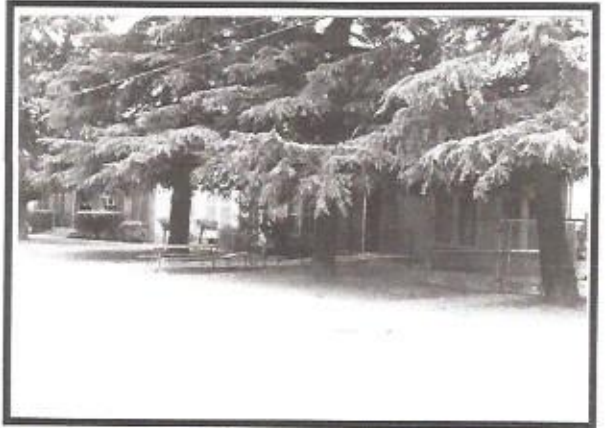
Elder son Manuel became a barber after the war, and operated his barbershop on Los Angeles Avenue for fifty years. He made many friends and had frank conversations with his clients. When St. Rose of Lima church moved to its new 1964 location on Royal, Armando and Ramona Delgado Bañaga acquired the old St. Rose of Lima Church Building. Their long-lasting feelings about segregation made it hard to convince them that both the church and the barbershop should be preserved at Strathearn Historical Park and Museum. Those two buildings mean a lot to many people.

Nellie Delgado Vasquez and Lucy Ferrer Chavez were outspoken in their views of the past treatment of Mexican schoolchildren. When Simi Elementary School was opened in 1926, the school board decided to segregate the Mexican children. They had used lumber from the original Simi School (located on Third St. between L.A. Avenue and California Street) to build two buildings, with two classrooms each, on Deodora Street, at the south end of the schoolgrounds. Nellie and many others remembered a line across the schoolyard. This continued until Leighton R. Stewart became principal in 1941.

A book called "American Me" (Beatrice Griffith, 1948) was given to the museum in 1979. On page 154, Mr. Stewart wrote: "We in Simi Valley eliminated segregation in 1943. LRS" Listed are the teachers and others who had read the book.

Nellie decided to become a docent at the historical park, because when she visited she noted that we had a docent with a very thick German accent. (If Linda von Borzestowski could be a docent, she certainly could!) She seldom missed a chance to tell about segregation, and that line across the schoolyard that they were not to cross.

Everyone who learns about it can relate to the long-lived hurt that segregation caused, here in Simi Valley, as well as all the southwestern states that were annexed after the Mexican War in the 1840s.



The bungalows where the Mexican children attended classes until segregation ended in 1941 still exist on Deodora

It would be a comfort in so many ways, if all could be convinced that those deep hurts could finally be laid to rest.

Gil Chavez is to be appreciated for his efforts. He has been in touch with many, whose contacts and memories he has renewed in recent years.



Pete Ruiz (center in photo) had a great reputation for his skills in agriculture—and also in barbecuing for large gatherings! His family members helped the local Lion's Club for many years.



# The Fires of Creation

a Celebration of the men and women  
who worked in the local Aerospace Industry  
creating our finest hours with the American Space Program.

Our Rocket Day will include "Mission Control" in the big barn with three giant screens showing Rocket Launches, Planetary Missions and Hubble photographs. Our JPL Solar System Ambassador will be on hand to answer questions about the Planetary Missions. Display cases in this area will show Space program and NASA memorabilia. Mission Control feed will be projected into the rafters. All JPL program launches had to have peanuts to munch on for luck in Mission Control Pasadena.

The church building will be designated Santa Susana Field Laboratory with three screens showing Ray Vincent's excellent powerpoint, the National Park Service's brand new video about SSFL, and NASA's new video out this summer about the Simi Hills facilities where 20,000 rocket engine tests were performed over the 60 years the test stands were operational. On the north wall will be a display of beautiful space program photographs taken by Glenn Grossman over the years.

Aerojet Rocketdyne is loaning us a RS-18 engine for display. This was the engine that lifted the Apollo astronauts off from the surface of the moon. Aerojet Rocketdyne is bringing us an Astronaut from Johnson Space Center in a live presence. They are also sending along finger rockets to launch from your hand.

In the Visitor's Center we will have two sessions of lectures from Frank Winter who is flying from the National Air & Space Museum in Washington, D.C. He will tell us about early Rocketdyne.

Other presentations in this building include Rachel Brachman telling about the 20 years she spent on the Cassini Mission. Display cases in this area will contain space program memorabilia.

In the open barn will be our Burro Flats Mural display of the shaman's viewing point at SSFL and Dr. Krupp of Griffith Observatory will be on hand to tell us about the Winter Solstice services he has participated in with the Chumash, Tataviam, Tongva and Kitanemuk over decades.

In the open area will be our Rocket Launching activities where foam projectiles will be spring load launched at Pad 39A. Pad 39A will be manned by NASA minions as ground crew and they will dance with joy as "flames" exit the flame bucket.

We are hoping to have a Rocketdyne Retirees Roundtable on the Strathearn House front lawn with retirees chatting about their experiences "on the Hill," "down at Canoga," and at the DeSoto facility. Many of them have already brought great artifacts for us to share such as the 4' X 4' aerial photo of SSFL from the 1960's from Tom Bennett.

Our Ham Radio Club members are putting up ways to access the International Space Station by hanging lines and antennae over the trees near the barbershop.

We will be selling packaged moonpies, milky way bars, starbursts and astronaut ice cream. Food trucks are being sought for hot dogs, hamburgers and kettle corn.

Volunteers working with us will be Bank of America folks, SVPD Explorers and Royal High School ROTC cadets. Our ever faithful docents will man the historic buildings for their usual wonderful tour talks.

**Join us for a fun day Saturday, November 18th from 11 am to 5 pm at Strathearn Park.**

Best wishes, Nancy Kidd, Event Chair

**A celebration of the local aerospace workers and industry that made the US Space programs possible...**

**In person NASA astronaut from Johnson Space Flight Center**

**Aerojet Rocketdyne H-1 rocket engine on display**

**Frank Winter from the National Air and Space Museum**

**Astronaut ice cream and other novelties**

**Food trucks and vendors**

**Live feed from the International Space Station**

**"Mission Control" room launch videos. NASA videos**

**Dr. E.C. Krupp, Director, Griffith Observatory**

**Memorabilia and photos from Rocketdyne on display**

**And much, much more!!**

**Adults: \$10.00 | Children: \$5.00 | Children 4 & under: FREE**  
(13+) (5-12)

**Saturday, November 18th 2017**  
**11AM - 5PM**

*The Simi Valley Historical Society presents*

**THE FIRES OF CREATION**

*at Strathearn Historical Park and Museum*  
137 Strathearn Pl, Simi Valley, CA 93065 (805) 326-6453

Made possible by support from

AEROJET  
ROCKETDYNE





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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

Weekday Park Hours: Monday - Friday

9 am - 3 pm

For information please call (805) 526-6453

Email: [Simimuseum@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Simimuseum@sbcglobal.net)

### Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum

P.O. Box 940461

Simi Valley, CA 93094-0461

[www.Simihistory.com](http://www.Simihistory.com)

[www.facebook.com/Strathearnpark](https://www.facebook.com/Strathearnpark)

"A generation which ignores history has no past  
and no future." ~ Robert A. Heinlein



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 want to avoid the busy time around the Holidays, send in your dues for 2018 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? Please email Caryl Barefoot at [carylretired2@sbcglobal.net](mailto:carylretired2@sbcglobal.net) or call 805 526 6453.

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**Renew your membership  
before January 2018!**

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 |