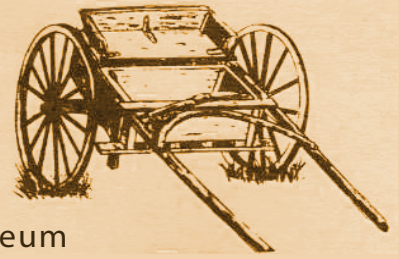


Third Issue 2013 ~ Oct.-Dec.
Next Issue December, 2013

THE MAIL CART



Newsletter of the Simi Valley Historical Society and Museum

President's Message: How it all began – then and now

How many of you know how the Simi Valley Historical Society came to be?



In the early 1960s several longtime residents, now referred to as Pioneer Families, were concerned that Simi's history was being discarded and replaced by progress. Neil and Patricia Havens and David and Janet Strathearn were discussing their concerns on the way home from a night out. The decision was made to start the Simi Valley Historical Society. They put an ad in the paper stating their intentions. The historical society, starting with 8 members, grew to 50 members in 4 months. They were meeting in church Sunday school rooms and school class rooms.

March 23, 1964 the Simi Valley Historical Society elected its first board: President –Eleanor Taylor Vice Presidents –Janet Strathearn and John Willard, Secretary/Treasurer –Hildie Appleton, Ways & Means Director –Joe Appleton, Publicity Director –Ann Lindeen, Historian –Lorraine Shinn.

Officially the Simi Valley Historical Society was recognized and recorded by the State of California September 1964. ***It will be our 50th anniversary in 2014!***

The first museum was set up in the old Library on Third Street and run by the new historical society. Initially the county offered the 1930 library to the highest bidder. There was only one bidder (Wayne Vroman). After many legal discussions the county decided to rent the library to the historical society at \$1.00 per month as a museum. Originally the money for the library was raised by the people of Simi through bake sales, events, etc. The decision to award it to the historical society is due to the fact that it indeed belonged to the people of Simi Valley.

In 1969 the Strathearn heirs offered the homestead, located at 137 Strathearn Place, to the Simi Valley Recreation and Park District. In 1970 Bruce and David Strathearn on behalf of the family signed an agreement with the Simi Valley Recreation & Park District, now known as Rancho Simi Recreation & Park District. The park district and the historical society formed a partnership for the care and maintenance of Strathearn Historical Park & Museum.

Since then Strathearn Historical Park has grown by moving historic buildings, scheduled to be torn down, to the Park: Colony House in 1970, Library in 1971, Wood Ranch Barns in 1982 (First barn dance held at the Park was in 1983), Currier Apricot Pitting Shed in 2000, St. Rose of Lima Church in 2002 and the Bañaga Barber Shop in 2008.

Now that you know how it began, and how we've grown, you know how important it is for us to continue in the spirit of the pioneer families by preserving, protecting, and making our Park a place to be proud of. That can be done by participating in events, 'work parties,' and other projects that come up on occasion. Our events include: Civil War Encampment (February), History Day (June), Ghost Tour (October), Holiday Open House (December). We are currently working on a Garden Party for May 2014 and a Cowboy Ball in September 2014.

Please read further in this newsletter to learn about WPA, or work party, and other projects that are happening at the Historical Society. Some projects require as many helping hands as possible. Watch your email for what's happening and what's coming up!

Georgia - President, Simi Valley Historical Society

"Difficulty is the excuse history never accepts."

~Edward R. Murrow



GET READY FOR A GLORIOUS GARDEN PARTY!



Just because we didn't have our regular Friendship Tea this year, it doesn't mean that next year will also be without a special day for the ladies! On Sunday, May 18, 2014, we are planning a fabulous Garden Party at beautiful Strathearn Historical Park from 2:00-5:00 p.m. Plans are underway, thanks to Debbie Thomas and her band of merry women who are famous for producing great fundraisers. The afternoon is planned to involve the entire park by incorporating different venues for eating, drinking, shopping, and don't forget-celebrating with friends. So, first, mark your calendar to save the date. Next pay your Simi Valley Historical Society membership for 2014 so you'll be ready to order your ticket when details roll-out. Committees will be formed for various functions-so stay tuned!



Our Artist at Large!

Once again our friend David Sgambellone has created something wonderful for the Simi Valley Historical Society! He is the artist who painted the beautiful Royal Crown Mural, as well as the lettering on the barbershop, and has also re-painted our "Simi Store" after some repairs. His latest project for us is a recreation of a sign that hung over an early blacksmith shop in Simi on Third St. Come and see it...we are proudly displaying it in our barn over our blacksmith collection. It is picture perfect. Thank you, David!



Volunteer Update

We would like to welcome the newest additions to our volunteer docent family who have joined us in 2013! A big congratulations and welcome to:

**Kindah Brennan, Nancy Edwards,
Linda Hodgkinson, Judi Mauck,
Sandi Patterson, Jane Prevas,
Jim Shaner, Jody Viscum-Rehder,
Donna Weiss and Pam Zeller!**

We thank them for their interest and readiness to help teach all about Simi Valley History and helping to preserve our heritage!

Our next class will be in late January or early February. If you or one of your friends are interested in joining this special group please give me a call. I would also like to thank the many, many volunteers that are instrumental in the success of our events like the Ghost Tour and the day-to-day activities at our Park!

Karla Hubbell 818-388-3301

Electronic Mail Carts!

This is the first time the Mail Cart is electronically being sent to all members with an email address on file. If you do not have an email address on file or have requested a printed copy of the Mail Cart, the postal service will continue to deliver your copy. The Historical Society is significantly reducing printing and postage costs which is enabling the dues to remain at present levels. Again, if you do not wish to receive the Mail Cart in an email, please send the request to carylretired2@sbcglobal.net.

Caryl Barefoot ~ Membership Chair

You are Cordially Invited to Our
49th Annual Dinner Meeting
Enjoy a Night in Black and White

Friday, November 15th - 6 P.M.
at Santa Susana Community Center
5005 Los Angeles Avenue

Guest Speaker - Wayne Ferber
2013 Highlights and Updates - Georgia Trumble
Election of Officers and Board of Directors
Docent Awards - Karla Hubbell
Door Prize Drawings

Please bring serving utensils and a dish that generously serves 10 people. The Historical Society will provide drinks and tableware. Please bring a dish as determined by your last name according to the following breakdown:



A-J: Dessert
K-S: Main Dish
T-Z: Salad

If you pay your 2014 dues the night of the dinner you will be eligible for door prizes!

This is always a great evening of great food and wonderful people.

We hope to see you there!

The Cross on Mt. McCoy

That cross on Mt. McCoy is as old as the hills. Well, maybe not THAT old, but at least a couple hundred years old, in one form or another.



It is believed that the cross was used as a navigation aid. In the early 1800s, travelers looked for the cross on the hill, possibly placed there by Spanish priests, to know they were roughly halfway between the Ventura Mission and the San Fernando Mission. Here at the half way point on the Camino Real was the Simi Adobe. At Rancho Simi, travelers could

rest and replenish their water supply.

Near the end of the 19th Century, a shepherd is believed to have replaced the cross with one made of stone. Members of the Runkle family reported seeing a cross on Mt. McCoy when they arrived in Simi in 1904.

The stone cross remained on the mountain until R.E. Harrington and his students erected a wooden cross in 1921. He was inspired to erect a wooden cross like the one documented on a hand drawn surveyor's map he'd seen dated 1858 and 1859.

In 1941, members of the Simi Valley-Moorpark Lions Club and ranch workers replaced the wooden cross with the current concrete one.

The cross on Mt. McCoy is designated Ventura County Landmark No. 106.

Mark Your Calendars:

October 11-27 - Ghost Tour
(Fri., Sat., Sun)

November 15 - Annual Meeting

December 8 - Holiday Open House

February 15, 16, 2014 - Civil War Encampment

May 18, 2014 - Garden Party

June 14, 2014 - History Day

September 13, 2014 (tentative) - Cowboy Ball



WPA

In the President's message Georgia mentioned WPA, or work party, and other projects the Historical Society undertakes. The WPA is generally the first Saturday of each month starting at 9AM. An assortment of projects are undertaken at WPAs. It could be anything from setting up for an event like Ghost Tour, general maintenance around the park, even decorating for the holidays! An example of an on-going project at the museum is the organization of our artifacts in a new storage area, the 'annexes.' Now that stored items have been moved to their designated annex, we need to get a group together to organize each annex. This is one of those "many helping hands as possible" situations. An email will go out reminding everyone when a WPA takes place, and if the date is changed it will be noted in the email. Who helps out at these WPAs? Everyone! Docents, board members, volunteers, and sometimes people who are interested in volunteering at Strathearn Park and just want to meet other people who are doing the same. Come on out! We could always use another helping hand!

Mechanical Restoration

Work continues on our 1929 John Deere Model D Tractor. We are nearing the end of a long journey. It has been almost three years of attention and mechanical prowess from our outstanding group of volunteers. Thank you to all the entire team that has helped with this project. Remaining efforts include rear wheel sandblasting and painting, mounting of rear fenders, hitch, steering, gas tank and magneto and final assembly and painting of chassis etc.

Our Stover gas engine is almost completed, and ready to fire up once again after a rest of several years, we are excited to once again witness the running of this engine.

Starting on October 7th our workshop will be closed to allow the area to be used for Ghost Tours activity. We will open again on November 4th, and continue with our Monday workdays.

Upcoming projects include 1940 Farmall Tractor Model B, Caterpillar 22, 46 Chevy PU, and our 1926 Model T.

If you are interested in volunteering, and having some fun working on these pieces of Simi Valley History, please call the Park at 805 526-6453 or email simimuseum@sbcglobal.net and leave your contact information.

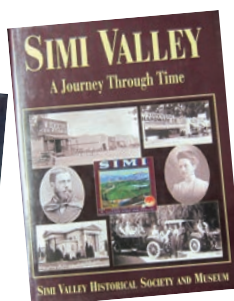
Have a great fall season,

Richard Johnson

Mechanical Restorations Director SVHS&M

Holiday Gift Ideas!

Books!



Ornaments!



...and more!

Preserving our Heritage

With Help from the

Ventura County Community Foundation

This Summer the Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum applied for and was awarded a grant from the Ventura County Community Foundation's Heritage Fund! "The Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF) is a public charity committed to promoting and enabling philanthropy to improve our community for good for ever. Its three core priorities are stewarding donor legacies, teaching nonprofit leadership and investing in the future."

The grant is in the amount of \$6,283.26. The project that this grant will help fund focuses on digitizing the museum's collection of oral and video histories currently stored on tapes and audio tapes, digitizing slides, updating the museum's cataloging software and adding storage space to accommodate all our newly digitized files.

Digitizing our tapes and slides will ensure that these materials, which are in danger of deterioration, will be preserved for future generations.

The Historical Society will continue to strive to be a resource for the entire community and those seeking to learn about Simi's history by maintaining the goals of preservation and education.

We are excited about undertaking this project, and grateful for the opportunity this grant is providing. Thank you VCCF!



OUR
'ANALOG'
COLLECTION



WE'RE DIGITIZING!



~THE JOURNEY THROUGH TIME SPEAKER SERIES~

We had a fascinating presentation last month in our Speaker Series. We met at Strathearn Park in the original St. Rose Church building. "Cults, Characters and Culprits" consisted of some interesting stories about Simi's more sensational side. We even had a fun skit about a 'blind pigger.' Don't know what that is? Well, you'll need to come visit us at the park when Bruce Matzen is volunteering, he'll fill you in!

The Presentations in our series are based on information from our best selling book, "SIMI VALLEY – A Journey Through Time," written by Pat Havens & Bill Appleton.

This month on Wednesday, October 16 at 6:30 we will present "The Cowboys of Simi Valley and the Johnny Varble Story" in our barn. On November 20- "Meet The Strathearns!" Some of our wonderful and talented docents will portray members of the Strathearn Family...I understand a family member or two might break out into song, they were very musical, you know.

There will be no presentation in December, but new presentations with new topics are in the works. Stay tuned for what 2014 will bring!

For more information call our visitor center, 526-6453 or email simimuseum@sbcglobal.net

All presentations are free.

In Loving Memory

We lost two wonderful friends of Strathearn Park. Virginia Nelson, who was a caretaker at Strathearn Park for 9 years passed away August 20th. Along with all of the wonderful things she did for the community, she also took care of us here. She made sure the little details were taken care of and the Park looked beautiful.

Valene Williams who was on the Historical Society Board Of Directors since 2000, passed away on her 83rd birthday-September 27th. Valene and her family have a long History in Simi Valley, and she served on the Historical Society Board so she could help preserve the History of Simi.

These amazing women will be missed very much.



HISTORY POLICE

Sometimes it is necessary, and in the public's interest, to HALT the misperceptions that bubble up from time to time about Simi Valley's History. If certain inaccuracies are not corrected they immediately will erode away at our community's foundation. O.K...maybe not, but we thought we'd set some things straight anyway...just for the record.

In this exciting edition we will talk about 'Colony Houses.' Twelve pre-fab 'kit' houses that were shipped to Simi in 1888 by an investor group in Chicago looking to develop Simi Valley. The group was called "The California Mutual Benefit Colony of Chicago" soon shortened to 'The Colony.' This formed the earliest neighborhood in Simi Valley. All but two of the Colony Houses were located in the townsite laid out by the Colony (south of LA Ave and west of First St.). The other two were located near the current intersection of Cochran and Erringer and where Madera and the railroad tracks intersect.

Were the Colony Houses Sears Kit Houses? No...the Colony Houses were partially built kit houses, but they were manufactured by T.W. Harvey in Chicago, Illinois. They were sent to Simi in 1888, this pre-dates the Sears houses by 20 years.

I heard that the Colony houses that were shipped to Simi came 'around the horn' of South America? **No...they did not.** They were shipped from Chicago, Illinois by rail to Saticoy, which was at that time the closest rail point, and then brought to Simi from there by wagon. Frank Bither hauled them by wagon to Simi from Saticoy.

Weren't there 13 Colony Houses? The records that we have seen only show the existence of 12 colony houses.

Didn't they all burn down? No...there are two left. One is at Strathearn Historical Park & Museum. It was moved to the park in 1970. The second surviving Colony House is in the Simi Colony townsite area of Simi.

Is it true that Simi Valley was originally called 'Simiopolis?' Yes! It was! The investor group in Chicago called Simi 'Simiopolis' when they were promoting Simi Valley as a place to live. It was only called 'Simiopolis' for about 6 months.



The Colony House at Strathearn Park shortly after it was moved to the Park in 1970.



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



The membership year is January 1 through December 31, 2013. The Mail Card is sent to all current members. Questions about receiving your next Mail Card or Membership? Call Caryl Barefoot @ 805-527-2769

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Historian	Pat Havens
Park Coordinator	Carolyn Phillips
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

Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum

P.O. Box 940461

Simi Valley, CA 93094-0461

www.simihistory.com

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