



Rancho Simi Trail Blazers

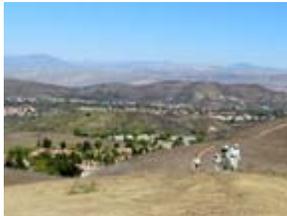
A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation



Weekly hikes

Take a hike or two with us and explore the beauty of Simi Valley and other beautiful locations.

We have a lot of fun, taking photos, talking and



just viewing the beautiful scenery like the one in the photo.

There are hikes every Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday.

THE MT. MCCOY CROSS VANDALISM



The cross on the top of Mt. McCoy, at the western end of Simi Valley, was seriously vandalized on September 17th of this year. The vandal or vandals attempted to cut the cross off at the base.

The vandalism upset many people as an attempt to destroy what has been designated Ventura County Cultural Landmark No. 106 and something that is part of the cultural identity of the community. The cross is a religious symbol and is located on private property. In our society we are taught to respect the right of others to express their religious beliefs.

By tradition, there has been a cross on the top of that prominent hill since at least the early 1800s when the cross served both as a religious symbol and as a beacon for travelers on the El Camino Real. Travelers between the San Fernando and the San Buenaventura missions rested along their way at El Rancho Simi at the western end of the valley. A U.S. Surveyor General map (Norris, Washington and Hancock), dated 1858-59, includes a note "wooden cross" at that precise location. A source from 1877 indicates that there was a wooden cross on the hill - probably the



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same cross. When the Runkle family arrived in Simi Valley in 1904, they indicated that there was a small stone cross on the hill - placed there by a shepherd. The discovery by R.E. Harrington of the 1858-59 survey in a file in Sacramento in 1921 inspired Mr. Harrington to enlist the help of his 12-year-old boys Methodist Sunday school class to carry materials to the top of Mt. McCoy to erect a large wooden cross. (The 1858-59 survey map is on display in the Simi Adobe.) The main timber was two inches by 12 inches and 20 feet long. Easter sunrise services were held at the cross for

(continued next page)

RSTB CLUB MEETING

This month's RSTB meeting will be at: Sycamore Drive Community Center 1692 Sycamore Drive – Room B-1

Wednesday: November 20, 2013
5:30PM (NOTE: Early Start Time)

Everyone Welcome to attend!

Upcoming Events

November 2nd - Las Lajas Canyon, Rocky Peak Fire Road, and Chumash Trail loop - 9.5 Mile Loop - Moderate to strenuous (1,800' of elevation gain/loss) - **8AM**

November 9th - Mishe Mokwa Trail, Sandstone Peak loop - 7 Mile Loop - Moderate (1,500' of elevation gain/loss) - **8AM**

November 16th - Work Party - Mt. McCoy – **8AM**

November 20th - Club Meeting
5:30PM - (NOTE: Early Start Time)
Everyone Welcome to attend!

November 23rd - Happy Camp Canyon, Middle Range Fire Road loop - 10 MRT - Moderate to Strenuous (1,300' of elevation gain/loss) - **8AM** 

November 30th - Stony Overlook via Chivo Canyon - 7.3 MRT - Moderate (1,415' of elevation gain/loss) – **8PM**

Due to unforeseen circumstances, all activities are subject to change without notice. Please see www.simitrailblazers.com/activities/ for event details and the most up-to-date schedule.

Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District events can be viewed at <http://www.rsprd.org> to see what is happening next!

(continued from page one)

47 years. The wooden cross was replaced by the present 12-foot-high reinforced concrete cross in 1941 by the Simi Valley-Moorpark Lions Club and ranch workers. Poor access and insufficient parking near the top of the hill resulted in the abandonment of sunrise services. Now the cross is illuminated during Easter week during the evening hours by the Rotary Clubs in Simi Valley.

The cross is located on a small parcel of land owned by the Simi Valley Historical Society and Museum. It was previously vandalized in a similar manner about 20 years ago. In both cases rebar was exposed. Concern was expressed that the damage might present a hazard to visitors, so the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District agreed to effect the repairs and the historical society agreed to reimburse the district for the cost of the repairs. Repairs to the cross were started the next morning at 7 a.m. and finished the same day. The repairs encased the bottom six feet of the cross in a relatively massive concrete buttress - thus rendering future attempts to destroy the cross much more difficult. According to an article in the *Acorn* (September 27, 2013, p. 8), the cost of repairs was approximately \$2,500.

If you are ever at the cross and witness ongoing vandalism, please call the police.

Mike Kuhn
10-15-13

WHAT DID SIMI VALLEY LOOK LIKE IN THE LATE- 1700s?

What did Simi Valley look like when the Spanish explorers first saw it? Certainly they did not encounter the tree-covered valley that we know today. We have created a humid-lands environment through irrigation with imported water from northern California and the importation of exotic vegetation from around the world.

We know from the testimony of numerous explorers throughout California and the Chumash territory that the Indians burned vegetation every two to three years and sometimes annually in some places, especially around villages. Burning served to favor pioneer plants and perennial grass

that formed a subsistence base for the Chumash. Chaparral and coastal sage scrub are generally thought to be fire climax vegetation associations. In other words, they emerge as a distinct mix of plants as a result of frequent burning. Annual fires, intentionally set by the Indians, were the rule. Fire suppression was unknown. Studies of offshore sediment columns exhibit annual deposits of finely dispersed amounts of charcoal. Since the 18th Century, offshore sediments exhibit much greater quantities of charcoal deposits every seven to twelve years with very little charcoal deposits in between. These records confirm that there were widespread fires annually during the Chumash period followed by infrequent more severe fires during the Mexican and Anglo-American settlement periods - reflecting our policy of suppression of wild-fires which led to infrequent catastrophic fires fueled by massive buildups of biomass. The Spanish needed grasslands for their livestock and, therefore, suppressed the Indian practice of burning off the natural vegetation. The Indian practice of burning natural vegetation seemed to be focused on native grasslands and oak-grasslands. The results would have been to favor grasslands over coastal sage scrub and chaparral. Chaparral would have burned more frequently than now but, in some cases may not have been intentionally burned. Nonetheless, many areas probably went several years between burns. Frequent fires are less likely to damage mature oaks. Indeed, there is some ethnographic evidence that the Indians cleared some vegetation from under oak trees prior to the setting of fires. If this was the case, they were intentionally protecting the oak trees from which they harvested acorns.

The annual burning over thousands of years resulted in an increased rate of soil erosion. Large areas experienced bare ground almost every year. However, the intensity of fires would have been much lower because of the greatly reduced biomass. Therefore, topsoil was not cooked clean of organic materials, and soils would not have become hydrophobic. Therefore, the amount of soil erosion would have been limited.

Father Vicente de Santa Maria described Simi Valley in 1795 as being "dismal." We know from early pictures and descriptions that the valley floor east

of roughly Stearns Street was an oak grassland with scattered valley oaks, only a few dozen of which remain today. The removal of trees to clear the land for agriculture and for fuel wood accounts for the loss of many monarchs. Many of the large oak trees and a few of the California sycamore trees that are present today were here and growing when only the Chumash and other Indians roamed the land. Native oaks in this area often live for more than 500 years.

The grasses, of course, were not the annual grasses that we see today. Those grasses have been introduced from the Mediterranean basin. The most common of which are wild and slender oats, ripgut and red bromes, and foxtails. Perennial grasses, largely bunch grasses, dominated until the 1860s.

The rest of the valley floor would have been relatively barren, devoid of trees and wind swept. Willows would have lined the Arroyo Simi westerly of Sycamore Drive - fed by groundwater. A cienega, i.e., a small lake, was present at the northeastern end of the valley southwest of the present intersection of the freeway with Kuehner Drive. Another cienega was present north of the village of Ta'apu where the Gillibrand office is today. More than one cienega was present at the western end of the valley where the high water table resulted in marshy conditions. The Indians depended upon the cienegas, the water, and the wildlife associated with them. The high water table at the western end of the valley probably resulted in the year round surfacing of ground water in the arroyo beginning somewhere east of Erringer Road. Indeed, the first adobe building in Simi Valley seems to have been built in the vicinity of the Scott/Cameron house south of the Arroyo Simi and east of Erringer Road. The residents of the adobe would have had to have access to a year round water supply. The area where the Wood Ranch Golf Course is today was known by the Spanish as "Cañada Verde," i.e., green valley.

The Arroyo Simi west of Madera Road was dry most of the summer and fall months. Today it is a river - but that's another story.

Mike Kuhn
11-29-04 (revised 10-9-12)

September 7th - Temescal Canyon/Viewpoint Trail Loop



5 hikers carpoled via Hwy 118, I-405, and Sunset Blvd to the lower parking lot at Temescal Gateway Park in Pacific Palisades. A lovely refuge from the nearby urban congestion, it borders Topanga State Park. Our hike began on a shady trail along the streambed in Temescal Canyon and led pleasantly past rustic buildings constructed in the 1920's for the Methodist Church as a west coast center for the Chautauqua movement. The whole area is shaded by towering sycamore, oak, and eucalyptus trees and a variety of other non-native trees such as palms and conifers. The trail began rising (as did the temperature) in Temescal Canyon as it entered Topanga State Park and we soon reached a wooden bridge crossing the (non-existent-today) stream at a point where there is usually a series of cascades (a "waterfall") though there was almost no water due to drought conditions. Continuing westward along the trail as the temperature continued to climb, we soon reached Temescal Ridge and were rewarded by panoramic views of the Santa Monica Mountains, the coastline, and the Los Angeles skyline. However, the day had turned into a real scorcher, so we quickly descended along the Temescal Ridge (aka Viewpoint) Trail to the canyon bottom where we rested for a while in the shade, having abandoned the planned continuation of the hike over to Will Rogers State Historic Park due to the excessive heat. We returned to Simi Valley having completed a 4-mile hike with 1,010' of elevation gain.

September 14th - Palm Springs to Mt. San Jacinto via the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway



Four hikers arrived at the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway (with its rotating cabin providing a 360-degree view) around 9:00 a.m. on an already hot morning for a scenic 10-minute vertical lift from 2,643' at the Valley Station to 8,516' at the Mountain Station where the trail for a

planned hike to the peak of Mt. San Jacinto (10,834') began in the 14,000-acre San Jacinto Wilderness and State Park. Despite the high temperatures on the desert floor, we were greeted by a clear, cool, pine-scented morning as we began our hike, pausing briefly at the nearby Long Valley Ranger Station to obtain a free day-hiking permit. The trail soon began rising through a lovely forest of conifers; the nearby stream bed was dry. After hiking about 2.5 miles, we reached Round Valley, the location of one of only four campgrounds in the park. **NOTE:** A pipe near the trail junction provided a steady stream of water, but a nearby sign stated that the water needed to be filtered/purified before drinking it. We continued our hike, heading east along the trail as it climbed steadily to Wellman's Divide where we took a short break and enjoyed somewhat murky views to the east of the desert and the Santa Rosa Mountains. Resuming our hike we headed west on the somewhat rocky trail as it climbed along the rim of a large bowl-shaped valley providing beautiful views to the north; we spotted the Tramway Mountain Station (where we had begun our hike) across the valley. Eventually we reached a switchback in the trail which allowed us to continue our climb, but now to the southeast. Soon we reached a trail junction with a sign proclaiming that a right turn would take us to the base of the summit in 0.3 mile. We soon reached a stone shelter built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's. From there we began scrambling carefully up large boulders to the actual mountain peak where we joined other "peak baggers," took photos, rested, and enjoyed the panoramic views. After a lengthy stay, we regrouped and retraced our steps to the Mountain Tramway Terminal and descended to our vehicles, tired but happy, having completed an 11.5-mile hike with ~2,600' of elevation gain/loss.

September 28th - Serrano Canyon Loop

It worked! The plan was to avoid the forecast 90 plus degree, with 35 MPH gusts, at Hondo Canyon. The weather could not have been more beautiful at the beach. Highs were in the mid-seventies,



with a gentle on-shore breeze. Eleven hikers met at Donut Delite and carpoled to the Sycamore Canyon trailhead. Since this was the first Trail Blazer hike in Mugu State Park, since the fire, we expected to see overwhelming damage. Our worst fears were realized. Most of the area looked much like the surface of the moon. Much to our surprise, there were a small number of patches untouched by the fire. There was also a bit of regrowth, especially evident at the base of the charred Ceanothus shrubs. After completing the hike, we all met at the beach to eat our lunch and snacks. The tide was high, but still a beautiful beach day. A grand time was had by all, having hiked 10.2 miles, with about 1,600' of elevation gain/loss.



RSTB Calendar November



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 All Saints Day <i>Happy Birthday</i> Mary Martin	2 Las Lajas Canyon, Rocky Peak Fire Road, and Chumash Trail loop 8AM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Jolie Fradkin
3 Rocky Peak Fire Road 4PM See Schedule Daylight-saving time ends ■ Turn your clock back one hour tonight before going to bed. ■ It's also time to change batteries in your smoke detectors. 	4	5 Mt. McCoy Trail 6PM See Schedule	6	7 Chumash Trail 6PM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Sammy Farrar	8	9 Mishe Mokwa Trail, Sandstone Peak loop 8AM See Schedule
10 Rocky Peak Fire Road 4PM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Don Brown	11 Veterans Day Schools & Government Offices closed	12 Mt. McCoy Trail 6PM See Schedule	13	14 Chumash Trail 6PM See Schedule	15 <i>Happy Birthday</i> Edward Cohen	16 Work Party- Mt. McCoy 8AM - NOON See Schedule
17 Rocky Peak Fire Road 4PM See Schedule	18	19 Mt. McCoy Trail 6PM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Randy Klockenteger	20 Club Meeting 5:30PM (NOTE: Early Start Time) See Schedule Everyone Welcome to attend! <i>Happy Birthday</i> Lacey Prentke	21 Chumash Trail 6PM See Schedule	22 <i>Happy Birthday</i> Pam Abernathy	23 Happy Camp Canyon, Middle Range Fire Road loop 8AM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Denise Cueba
24 Rocky Peak Fire Road 4PM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Arlene Altshuler	25	26 Mt. McCoy Trail 6PM See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Isabel Johnson	27 Happy Hanukkah 	28 	29 	30 Stony Overlook via Chivo Canyon 8AM <i>Happy Birthday</i> Mallory Ham



Due to unforeseen circumstances, all activities are subject to change without notice.
Please see www.simitrailblazers.com/activities/ for event details and the most up-to-date schedule.



REGULARLY SCHEDULED HIKES

(Rain cancels – No hikes on holidays)

Sunday Evening - Rocky Peak Fire Road

Meet at **4PM** at the Rocky Peak Fire Road trailhead. Take the Rocky Peak exit on the 118 Freeway and head north over the freeway. Park at the trailhead or across the bridge on the Santa Susana Pass Road. (Strenuous - 4.8 MRT - 1,200' elevation gain.)

Tuesday Evening - Mt. McCoy Trail

Meet at **6PM** in the parking lot, to the south of Donut Delite, located on the north east side of the intersection of Royal Avenue and Madera Road. (Moderate - 4.0 MRT - 675' elevation gain)

Thursday Evening - The Chumash Trail

Meet at **6PM** at Chumash trailhead. Directions: Take the 118 Freeway to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite and turn right on Flanagan Dr. The trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Drive. (Moderate to Strenuous - 5.4 MRT - 1,210' total elevation gain.)

NOVEMBER HIKES AND ACTIVITIES

November 2nd

Las Lajas Canyon, Rocky Peak Fire Road, and Chumash Trail loop

9.5 Mile Loop - Moderate to strenuous (1,800' of elevation gain/loss)

Upon reaching the upper end of the Chumash Trail we'll follow it down to a connector trail to Evening Sky Drive to complete our loop hike. Meet at **8AM**. Bring 2 to 3 quarts of water and lunch/snacks. Wear boots. View website for more detail:

<http://www.simitrailblazers.com/activities/index.html>

DIRECTIONS TO THE TRAILHEAD:

Wait for the leader(s) at the Las Lajas Canyon trailhead (on the north side of the street); there's a kiosk at the trailhead. View website for more detail: <http://www.simitrailblazers.com/activities/index.html>

November 9th

Mishe Mokwa Trail, Sandstone Peak loop

7 Mile Loop - Moderate (1,500' of elevation gain/loss)

After enjoying the spectacular views we'll complete the loop back to the Mishe Mokwa Trail and our vehicles. Meet at **8AM** near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Bring 2 to 3 quarts of water and lunch/snacks. Wear boots. View website for more detail: <http://www.simitrailblazers.com/activities/index.html>

November 16th

Work Party - Mt. McCoy

The event will end at noon. All tools will be provided. We will be removing rocks, doing some lopping to increase trail clearance and some trail trimming. Bring your own water, snacks, gloves, hat, and wear sunscreen. Boots are recommended. Meet at western end of Washburn Street at trailhead. Meeting time is **8AM**.

November 20th

Club Meeting - Everyone Welcome to attend! (NOTE: Early Start Time)

5:30PM - The Sycamore Drive Community Center - 1692 Sycamore Drive - Room B-1

November 23rd

Happy Camp Canyon, Middle Range Fire Road loop

10 MRT - Moderate to Strenuous (1,300' of elevation gain/loss)

View website for more detail: <http://www.simitrailblazers.com/activities/index.html> Meet at **8AM** near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Bring 2 to 3 quarts of water and lunch/snacks. Wear boots.

November 30th

Stony Overlook via Chivo Canyon

7.3 MRT - Moderate (1,415' of elevation gain/loss)

Bring 2 to 3 quarts of water and lunch/snacks. Wear boots.

DIRECTIONS TO THE TRAILHEAD:

View website for more detail: <http://www.simitrailblazers.com/activities/index.html>

* Not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District.  No dogs allowed on trail(s). For additional information on hikes/work parties, contact the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District at 805-584-4400. **Special Note: On all hikes and work parties, bring water and wear lug-soled boots.** <http://www.simitrailblazers.com>

RANCHO SIMI TRAIL BLAZERS

A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation

Executive Chair:	Mike Kuhn	HM (805) 583-2345	hannahmike@me.com
Treasurer:	Craig Malin		
Park District Liaison:	Colleen Janssen	WK (805) 584-4453	volunteers@rsrpd.us
Work Parties Chair:	VOLUNTEER NEEDED		Contact Mike Kuhn at: 805-583-2345
Hiking Chair:	Mark Gilmore	HM (805) 529-5581	markinthepark@sbcglobal.net
Vice Hiking Chair:	Les Wilson	HM (805) 522-2642	les.wilson@roadrunner.com
Website:	Mark Gilmore	HM (805) 529-5581	markinthepark@sbcglobal.net
Ways & Means Chair:	Marty Richards	HM (805) 526-4414	mlrrdh@yahoo.com
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