



Rancho Simi Trail Blazers



APRIL WORK PARTY

Five Rancho Simi Trail Blazers turned out to work on the Chumash Trail for CALIFORNIA TRAIL DAYS. We drove up the Rocky Peak Fire Road to access the upper trailhead. The work concentrated on repairing erosion damage. Small rocks were used to fill the bulk of the eroded areas. Wheelbarrows of dirt were then pored over the top to finish the tread. One section of the trail on slanting rocks, that was wide and getting wider, was moved upslope and the downslope area blocked with rocks. Mustard plant removal from a long section of the trail was also done.

We worked a total of 6 hours from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Many thanks to the following workers:

Arlene Altshuler, Mike Kuhn, Louise Pomes, Phil Pratt, and John Sabol.

There will be no work party in May due to the Bear Creek Backpack



Work Parties Chair

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed in Corriganville, to take school children on docent hikes during the week. No prior training is necessary. We will train you.

Learn about the history of Corriganville and native plants and animals, and pass this knowledge on to others.

For more information or to become a volunteer, please contact Colleen Janssen

SLIDE SHOW

John Sabol will present a slide show of some of this year's wildflower blooms. After 3 years of drought, this year's rains have produced some spectacular wildflower displays. Included will be flowers from our local trails as well as a great display of flowers from Gorman and the Antelope Valley. Scenic shots taken on a recent trip to Santa Cruz Island will also be shown. Attend the meeting and enjoy views of some of our beautiful local

SUNDAY EVENING HIKE TIME CHANGE

Starting in May, the Sunday Evening Hikes will begin at **5pm**.

RSTB LOGO T-SHIRTS

Are your old logo T-shirts worn out?

We still have short sleeve, long sleeve, and sweat shirts in assorted sizes and colors. Prices are:

- short sleeve \$12
- long sleeve \$14
- sweat shirt \$18

Please call Marty if you'd like to place an

RSTB CLUB MEETING

The monthly club meeting will be held at the
Community Center
Room B-1
1692 Sycamore Drive
At 7:00 PM
On

SPRING BACKPACKING TRIP

This spring's backpacking trip will be to **Bear Creek**, from Friday **May 16th** – Sunday **May 18th**. Those people who would like to go, please RSVP Arlene at 805-581-9735.



CHUMASH TRAIL FLOWER HIKE

An article in the Ventura County Star, which talked about the flower hike on April 27th at 9am, prompted many of the 26 people who showed up.

People divided into two main groups, as some of the hikers wanted to spend more time than others, enjoying the flowers.

It was a beautiful morning, and a number of flowers made a showing, including some not seen so commonly:

- Indian Pink
- Blue Larkspur
- Blue-eyed Mary
- Twining Snapdragon
- Butterfly Mariposa Lily
- Whispering Bells

One of the high points on this hike involved the wildlife. A number of hikers got to see their first rattlesnake up close (well, about 6 feet or so away), as well as a beautifully colored King snake.

Many thanks to John Sabol and Mike Kuhn, for assisting me in leading these hikes.

Arlene Altshuler

WHERE WAS THE HISTORIC CHUMASH VILLAGE OF *SHIMIYI*?

Where was the historic Chumash Indian village of "*Simi*" or "*Shimiya*"?

Current thinking holds that the village was located a little northwest of the Simi Adobe on the south bank of the Arroyo Simi. There is testimony from one of the men who told me that he was involved with grading of the Friendly Village Mobile Home Park that an extensive archaeological site was present. (This information may or may not be true.) In addition, archaeological resources are and have been present elsewhere in the area. It is also quite tempting to surmise that the Simi Adobe was sited based upon the presence of the village as a ready source of labor for the



However, it is also likely that Indians were drawn to the adobe as a result of the disruption of their own culture, the devastating effects of diseases, which led to a 70-80 percent mortality among the Indians during the first decade of the 19th Century, the effects of prolonged draught, and the profound awe in which the Indians held Spanish material and socio-economic culture. It also is likely that a small Chumash settlement would have developed in association with the headquarters of the rancho under normal circumstances.

The Chumash related archaeological material found at the Strathearn Historical Park was probably associated with the Indians, who were employed on the ranch - not with the Chumash village.

One archaeological investigation was conducted on a site not far from the rancho headquarters. That site had been nearly destroyed by grading in 1971. No historical material was found, so there is no good reason to believe that it was the historical village of *Shimiya*.

Janet Cameron, in *History of Ventura County, State of California* (1940), page 180, references a map prepared by Father Crespi. She indicates that map suggests

that the village of *Shimiya* was located "...along the bank of the Simi Creek, in much the same location as the village of Simi..." (This statement is curious because aside from a possible visit to the village of *Ta'apu* by members of the Portola Expedition, I know of no evidence to suggest that Father Crespi ever visited Simi Valley. Certainly, the accuracy or quality of any map prepared from second hand reports would be questionable.) Later, on page 184, Mrs. Cameron asserts that "the Colony" of Simiopolis, which was located between First Street and Fifth Street on the southern bank of the Arroyo Simi, was established "...along the Arroyo Simi at precisely the spot where the Indian village of *Shimiya* stood."

It is clear from these statements that Mrs. Cameron felt she knew where the village had stood. Mrs. Cameron either was repeating the conventional wisdom of the day or was reflecting the collective memory passed along through the Indian sheep herders and vaqueros and the long time resident Mexican American families. We do know that the anthropologist/archaeologist/linguist John Peabody Harrington was called from an archaeological test unit he was digging in the middle of Los Angeles Avenue in the vicinity of Second Street, when he was notified by telephone of the offer to work for the American Bureau of Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institute.

Purportedly, he was looking for the village of *Simi*. We don't know whether Harrington found anything. (I have heard a complaint that he never filled in the hole.) I am unaware of any physical evidence for the presence of the village of *Shimiya*, or any other aboriginal settlement, where Old Town Simi was established. It is curious that no knowledge of artifacts being found or actual artifacts from the village have been passed down through local families. It is possible that all evidence of the village at that location was largely obliterated with the development of the Simiopolis settlement.

From this I am forced to conclude that some doubt remains as to the location of

the village. It is, after all, easy to believe something that was never true. The untruth may lie with either Mrs. Cameron's assertion or with the current conventional wisdom that the village was located further west. In the future, when and if there are any grading or trenching activities near the southern bank of the Arroyo Simi in the Old Town Simi area, I may be found looking at the dirt. Indeed, test excavations were conducted during 1998 on the old Simi Valley drive-in site, and nothing was found other than some material north of the drive-in, including some worked historic glass.

One thing we do know - villages were generally relocated every few years. After a few years of occupation, considering that all waste was disposed of in the immediate vicinity of the village and most waste was disposed of in the village, villages became infested with vermin and probably didn't smell very nice. So it is possible that there may have been more than one site of the historic and prehistoric villages of *Shimiya*. We know, for example, that when the mission fathers returned to the village of *Ta'apu*, i.e., Tapo, in 1812 looking for new laborers and converts for the mission, they noted that the location of the village had been moved up stream to the *cienea*. That move may have reflect the Chumash public health practices at work!

So, we have mystery. Don't you love



THE ORIGIN OF VENTURA

The first chapel in Ventura was named for the patron saint San Miguel. That chapel and three subsequent chapels burnt down. In 1809 a new mission was completed. Apparently, there was a long debate as to whether to adopt San Miguel as the patron saint. Eventually, however, San Buenaventura was selected. So, there you have it.

THE 1769 EXPEDITION OF CAPTAIN GASPAR DE PORTOLA

The Spanish expedition of 1769, led by Captain Gaspar de Portola, may have been the first subjects of Spain to have contact with the Simi Valley area. The expedition spent several days in a camp near the present day Camulos, which is located approximately two (2) miles east of Piru. Portola's men spent several days exploring the Santa Susana Mountains and, according to Patricia Havens, the City Historian, may have stayed one (1) night near the Chumash village of *Ta'apu*, near the present day Tapo Canyon Regional Park.

A possible memory of the Portola Expedition was told to the Gillibrands by the cowboys whom they employed when they first settled in Tapo Canyon. The legend is that the Chumash cowboys told the Gillibrands that the expedition had over-nighted near the village under a specific grove of oak trees. In any case, the trail from Camulos to *Ta'apu* led up Tapo Canyon, on the north side of the Santa Susana Mountains. Certainly, the trail to *Ta'apu* would have been an easily followed route into the Santa Susana Mountains and could have afforded the explorers their first view of Simi Valley. Whether Portola's men visited Simi Valley will probably never be known.

The likelihood that the story of a 1769 visit to the village could have persisted into the 1890s is not at all far fetched. The Indians were the first sheep herders and vaqueros for El Rancho Simi. Some Chumash Indians never left *Ta'apu*, which persisted as a sheep herders camp well into the late-1800s. The so called de la Guerra Adobe was certainly present in the early 1840s in Tapo Canyon and may have been present even much earlier. The Chumash Indians and their descendants remained on the land and associated with the site of the village of *Ta'apu*. The site was one of the few well watered places in the Simi Valley area and was a focal point for the new grazing activities of the Spanish, Mexicans and



California Poppy



Previous backpacking trips: On the left, Margarita Marsh and Jodene Downey at Dinkey Lakes. On the right, a group of people on their way to Bear Creek last year.



SINGING SAND

Several decades ago, I encountered in North Africa roaring sounds emitted by a sand dune as layers of sand near the top of a steep side of a dune began to move. It made me realize what E.F. Gautier, *Le Sahara* (1928), meant when he wrote something to the effect, "When you've been lost in the dunes for days, without water, then you hear the laughter of Raoul." Raoul was a pre-Moslem genie. The reference was to travels in the *Grand Erg Oriental*, the great sand dune sheet of eastern Algeria.

I encountered the same phenomenon in the Kelso Dunes in the eastern Mojave Desert. Those dunes stand more than 700 feet above the surrounding desert floor. When the surface four inches or so of sand near the tops of the dunes are dry and you move down a steep slope, taking care to get the surface layer going, then you hear the laughter of Raoul. The whole surface of the slide plain vibrates with sand grains jumped a half inch or so off of the surface and there is a roaring sound. As your feet go up and down in the sand, they generate a low frequency sound that sounds like a drum and, on a still day, it can be heard for a mile or more. Once at the summit of the dunes, I pounded the side of the dune hard with the palm of my hand and that too

heard friends say that you can get the same effect in Death Valley.

The sound of "singing" dunes was first reported in an 8th century Chinese manuscript and has been reported by many explorers. This low-pitched sound, which has been described in the literature as a cross between an airplane engine and an organ, has been reported in more than 30 deserts in the world.

Now a team of French government researchers has provided an explanation for the phenomenon. They were in south-western Morocco in 2001 and by chance captured an audio recording of an avalanche of sand on a Barchan dune. Back in their laboratory, they were able to reproduce the sound in a turning large donut filled with sand from the dunes.

Their explanation is that the phenomenon operates according to a principle known as "Reynolds dilatency," which describes a vibration created by the dilation and compression of air as grains separate and come together. The researchers found that the unique sound required the movement of a layer of sand grains – each 0.19 mm across – about 10 cm or 500 grains deep.

By the way, the Kelso Dunes are reported to be the best location in the western hemisphere to hear the laughter of Raoul.



May

2003



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	2	3 Sulfur Mtn. See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday Myrna Steinman</i>
4 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule	5 <i>Happy Birthday Robert Lisenby Hannah Kuhn</i>	6	7	8 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	9	10 Lower Zuma See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday Jim Vandenberg</i>
11 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule	12	13	14	15 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	16 Bear Creek Backpacking Trip See Schedule	17 Bear Creek Backpacking Trip See Schedule
18 Bear Creek Backpacking Trip See Schedule	19	20	21 RSTB Meeting See Page 1	22 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	23	24 Happy Camp See Schedule
25 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule	26	27 <i>Happy Birthday Rena Cope-Whitson Alan Cueba</i>	28	29 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	30 <i>Happy Birthday Gary Geise</i>	31 Dough Flat See Schedule



Rancho Simi Trail Blazers

Hiking Schedule



- May 1 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flana-
- May 3 Sulfur Mountain**
Moderate to strenuous 10 MRT hike. This is a beautiful area in the mountains between Ventura and Ojai. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Meet 8am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera
- May 4 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- May 8 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flana-
- May 10 Lower Zuma Canyon**
Strenuous, approx. 12 mile loop. Explore Zuma Canyon starting from the lower end. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park district. Meet 8am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Bring 2 -
- May 11 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- May 15 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flana-
- May 16 - 18 Bear Creek Backpacking Trip**
This Sespe Wilderness backpacking trip is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. For
- May 22 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flana-
- May 24 Happy Camp Upper Trail**
Moderate to strenuous 10 MRT hike with elevation gain/loss of 1300'. See panoramic views of Simi Valley and Moorpark to the Channel Islands. Bring 2 - 3 qts. of water and lunch, wear boots. Directions - from Moorpark, take Route 23 north towards Fillmore) to Broadway. Turn right on Broadway, parking lot is at the end of the road (about .3 miles). Meet 8:30am at
- May 25 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- May 29 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flana-
- May 31 Dough Flat**
Moderate 5 - 8 MRT. Explore the Sespe Wilderness behind Fillmore. This hike is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. Meet 8am near Donut Delite at the corner of Madera and Royal. Wear boots, bring bug

For more 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. Hikes will be cancelled if it rains.

<http://rstb.homestead.com>

RANCHO SIMI TRAIL BLAZERS

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COMMUNICATION / PUB.CHAIR:	ARLENE ALTSHULER	HM (805) 581-9735

-----cut out and return with your payment-----

MEMBERSHIP

Please enroll me as a New () or Renewing () member of the Rancho Simi Trail Blazers for the annual donation fee of:

Single.....\$10

Family..... \$15

Name(s) _____ Birth Mo. _____ Day _____

Address _____

Email Address _____ Phone wk/hm _____

How did you find out about the RSTB _____

Please make out tax deductible member dues check for the year to:

“Rancho Simi Foundation” mail it to “RSTB, P.O. Box 630399, Simi Valley, Ca 93063-0399

Please list any extra names and birthdays of more than one member (Month & Day Only)



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