



Rancho Simi Trail Blazers

A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation



WORK PARTY CHAIR NEEDED

After nearly eight years as both Work Party Vice Chair and Chair, I will be resigning my position as Work Parties Chair, effective June of this year. It is time for someone else to assume this task.

I will be available to train the person assuming this role and I intend to continue attending the Trail Blazer work parties.

John Sabol



APRIL WORK PARTY

Four Rancho Simi Trail Blazers turned out to do trail work in Corriganville on the second of the two California Trail Days. It turned out to be another very hot day. We started the day by cutting down dozens of small Tree of Heaven that had sprung up since we cleared the area just 6 weeks ago. We also bundled the previously cut small tree trunks for pickup.

We then continued on to the Lower Stagecoach Trail. Working up the trail from the bottom, we cleared mustard and brush overgrowing the trail. We completed the clearing up to just short of the Wildlife Corridor intersection.

We worked from 8:00 AM and stopped work early at 11:00 AM because of the heat. Many thanks to the following workers:

Arlene Altshuler, Alan Cueba, Tom Frye and John Sabol

There will be no work party in May. The next work party will be National Trail Day on June 5.

John Sabol



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 order: 805-526-4414.

SPRING BACKPACKING TRIP

This spring's backpacking trip will be an overnight shuttle to Sheep Camp, starting at the Mt. Piños parking lot, and ending at Boy Scout Camp Rd.

Due to elevation gain/loss and starting altitude, this trip is considered moderate with a few strenuous sections.

If you'd like to go, please RSVP before May 24th.

Arlene Altshuler
Hiking Chair

RSTB CLUB MEETING

This month's club meeting will be held at the Community Center

Room B-1
1692 Sycamore Drive
at 7:00 PM

on

Wednesday May 19, 2004



1893 NEWSPAPER REPORT

An 1893 newspaper report points out the dire need for improved transportation routes in and out of Simi Valley. The report is included in *Simi Valley: A Journey Through Time* (1997), page 391. As reported: "Simi Valley citizens want a safe outlet. Last Saturday F.J. Fitzgerald and George Wood started to Fernando with four horses and a light wagon. (There was a) runaway and smashup near the hotel but they patched matters up and proceeded towards the beautiful hill that is a credit to both counties... They got over and back as far as the hill and owing to getting stuck in one of the holes, some of which are 3 and 4 feet deep, they were compelled to camp... Four horses could not get them out. C.B. McCoy played the Good Samaritan... It is almost impossible for a Simi person to get out of this valley either by the River or the Santa Susana Pass and we think the time is ripe for something to be done. This portion of the county is filling up rapidly. We expect to poll 100 votes next election, and we are entitled to a little consideration."

In 1893, outside of cities, government was not in the road business. That was one reason for the early success of the railroads. But Simi had neither. By 1899 both Los Angeles and Ventura counties had invested in road improvements over the pass. Devil's Slide, on the Los Angeles County side was abandoned and a new route was built on the Ventura County side.

Mike Kuhn

SEEDLING PLANTING IN CORRIGANVILLE

On Saturday April 24, 2004, local residents, scout groups, and service club members turned out to plant donated oak seedlings in Corriganville Park. Many of the trees and plants at the site were destroyed in the wildfires last fall. Nearly 400 Coast Live Oaks and 100 Valley Oaks were planted by a large group of volunteers. Also helping were 7 members of the Student Conservation Association.

The trees were planted in 12 inch deep holes in groups of three. The oaks are planted in a group to increase the probability of at least one surviving. The ground was very dry and rocky and the digging was hard work.

Many thanks to all the volunteers and the following Trail Blazers:

Arlene Altshuler, Mike Kuhn, Phil Pratt and John Sabol

John Sabol



Colleen Janssen giving a talk to the volunteers.



*Colleen Janssen, getting ready to distribute close to 400 Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and 100 Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*) seedlings to volunteers.*



Mike Kuhn leads a group of volunteers to the area where they will be planting Coast Live Oak seedlings.

THE TAPO RANCH –THE EARLY YEARS

[adapted from "The Rancho Tapo and Its History," History Associates Incorporated (September 29, 1994)]

Thomas Bard's Tapo Ranch consisted of 22.5 square miles, i.e., 14,400 acres. It was 4.5 miles east to west and 5.0 miles north to south. It is shown on the Stow and Power plat of 1887-1888 as not part of the lands held by the Simi Land and Water Company. The ranch was bordered by present day Alamo Street on the south, by Tapo Street and its northward extension on the east, by roughly the top of the Santa Susana Mountains on the north and by the northern extension of Madera Road on the west.

By the late 19th Century and the first part of the 20th Century the Tapo Ranch began to be further divided. Dry farming on the northern flanks of Simi Valley gave way to irrigated agriculture. The southern flanks of the mountains, along the Simi anticline and the Simi-Santa Rosa fault was devoted to oil and gas production. The coming of the railroad in 1900 and the completion of the railroad tunnels under Santa Susana Pass facilitated marketing of irrigated crops.

Thomas Bard sold the Tapo Ranch to Morris Einstein and Abraham Bernheim in 1887. In 1896 Bernheim sold a parcel, 1,829.18 acres, located in the southwest corner of the ranch, to the Union Oil Company. In 1900 I.H. Warring purchased 800.00 acres in the northeast corner of the ranch, and Bernheim sold 487.20 acres located along the western property line to Robert Eason, who served as trustee for what later became the Santa Susana Syndicate. Then in 1904 Bernheim sold the remaining 11,283.82 acres to the Oxnard-based Patterson Ranch Company (a subsidiary of the American Beet Sugar Company), which purchased the same year the 800.00 acre parcel, which had been sold to Warring, from the Tapo Oil Company.

Prior to its purchase by the Patterson Ranch Company, the Tapo Ranch had been used primarily for cattle and sheep grazing. The Patterson Ranch Company used it to raise mules, horses and grain in support of the 6,000 acres owned by the Patterson Ranch Company on the Oxnard Plain - which land was devoted to the production of lima beans and sugar beets. (Those were the days before tractors.) The valley land and high alluvial fans of the Tripas were well suited to growing hay, barley, and oats needed to feed the horses and mules used on the Tapo Ranch and on the Oxnard Plain.

Mike Kuhn

HAPPY CAMP OAKS

During the branding of cattle each year and other labor intensive chores on the old Strathearn cattle operation, a camp was set up under a grove of giant coast live oaks in what is now known as Happy Camp Canyon – now a county park. The campsite was called “Happy Camp”, which gave the name to the canyon. Those trees were located east of the dirt road that runs up the canyon on level ground. Many of the oaks had trunks of more than five feet in diameter. The shade from the tree canopies created a park-like setting with deep shaded areas. It made a perfect cattle camp and picnic area.

Following the Clampet Fire in 1970 the sandy hillsides of the watershed experienced much erosion, and the valley bottom experienced the deposition of a couple of feet of new alluvium. The root-crowns of those mighty oaks were buried by even more alluvium over the following several winters. One by one those monarchs died off. The cells at the top of the root crowns of trees have to breathe. When buried, they tend to rot, which leads to the death of the trees. The process can take decades. Even before the fire of October 2003, Happy Camp was no longer an inviting site. Only a few large trees remained, and they did not create a complete canopy. Even those trees were in serious decline. Our recent fire brought more deposition, and more can be expected this year, i.e., 2004, and the next couple of years. Even more trees, those on the margin of the valley, are experiencing root-crown burial.

Because of the deposition of so much new alluvium in the valley bottom, there are no oak saplings to take the place of the dwindling oak woodland in that part of the canyon. One is forced to wonder whether we are witnessing a permanent ecological change brought on by decades of successful fire suppression followed by cataclysmic wildfires. This last fire was at least the second round.

During the thousands of years when only the Chumash Indians were here, Happy Camp was subject to nearly annual burning. Consequently, the fuel load was modest. Less damage was done to soils and erosion and deposition was modest. That was when the monarch grove got its start. The Indian burning was replaced by the grazing of sheep and cattle. There was no effective suppression of wildfires and those herbivores kept the ground-level fuel load in the oak woodlands and oak grassland plant communities at a minimum. Now, out of necessity, we suppress wildfires – successfully limiting most fires to small acreages. Grazing animals have been removed from much of the land around the valley, and most hillside areas go 15 or more years without clearing by wildfires. When the big fires occur, they are hot, otherwise humdingers. We are all dedicated to protecting the natural environment, but inevitably the nature of the natural environment is changing. That is something to think about.

Mike Kuhn

SIMI COLONIST ARRIVE NOVEMBER 1888

Up until late-1888 only a handful of Anglo-American settlers and a few Hispanic Americans and Chumash Indians lived in Simi Valley. Mr. C.G. Austin was part of the first contingent of settlers from Chicago who arrived in Simi Valley on November 15, 1888. His diary is quoted in Janet Cameron’s *Simi Valley Grows Up* (1963). From his entry of November 16:

“The little valley in which we are located, and at the lower or west end of which the C. M. B. Colony of Chicago owns sections 8 and 9, is about 8 ½ miles long and about 2 ½ miles wide....It is, although nearly destitute of improvements, I think the prettiest little valley I ever saw. The surface for the most part is nearly level. At its head is a fine grove covering two or more acres of large spreading white oaks with near the mountains a number of live oaks, some of them fine ones....

Two artesian wells have been sunk in the valley, one said to be 60 feet deep on the south side of Section 9 and the other 90 feet deep near by but not on colony land. The 90 feet (sic) well sends up a volume of water about 5 inches in diameter through an iron pipe perhaps four feet high; the 60 foot well a volume of water same diameter with less force about two feet high.

The mountains for the most part are picturesque and pleasant to the view. I strolled in company with....down the valley and around the southeast quarter of Section 9. All were pleased and pronounced it good.”

Janet Cameron suggests that the Chumash village of *Simi* was located close to when the village was established. John Peabody Harrington, a prominent linguist and anthropologist of his day, appeared to have thought so. Janet Cameron also suggests that there was “alkali land” west of the new settlement. The area west of Fifth Street had and still has a high water table, which would surface seasonally were it not for ground water dewatering. Indeed, those lands are extremely peaty. The ground water is very high in salts, approaching as much as 40-45% of that of sea water. The accumulation of evaporites at the surface in the past would indeed have created a white crusty surface of apparent little use for agriculture.

According to Janet Cameron, 12 colony houses were shipped to Simi from Chicago. (Two of those colony houses remain.) Colonists lived in tents until their prefabricated houses arrived - ready for assembly. Most of the first colonists did not stay and the colony did not grow in those first years – but a community was born. Since the railroad had been extended to San Fernando by 1888, letters to Simi were addressed “San Fernando c/o Simi Hotel.” Shortly thereafter the addressed became “Simiopolis, c/o San Fernando.” European America had been born of colonists, with much of each new generation moving west where new lands were available. While no longer an agrarian society, the same thing still goes on.

Mike Kuhn



RSTB Calendar May 2004



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 No Hike See Schedule
2 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule	3 <i>Happy Birthday</i> Myrna Steinman	4	5 <i>Happy Birthday</i> Robert Lisenby Hannah Kuhn	6 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	7	8 Sage Ranch See Schedule
9 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule	10 <i>Happy Birthday</i> Jim Vandenberg	11	12	13 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	14	15 O'Melveny Park See Schedule
16 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule	17	18	19 RSTB Meeting See Page 1	20 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	21	22 Sheep Camp Backpacking Trip See Schedule
23 Sheep Camp Backpacking Trip See Schedule	24	25	26	27 Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule <i>Happy Birthday</i> Alan Cueba	28	29 Cloud Burst Summit See Schedule
30 Rocky Peak 5pm hike See Schedule	31					



Rancho Simi Trail Blazers

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Hiking Schedule



- May 1 No Hike**
- May 2 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- May 6 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- May 8 Sage Ranch**
Easy to moderate 2.6 MRT loop. Check out the local plant life and beautiful scenery. 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 1 - 2 qts. of water and a snack, wear boots.
- May 9 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- May 13 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- May 15 O'Melveny Park Hike**
Moderate - strenuous 7 MRT hike with 1200' elevation gain/loss. See great views of San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys from Mission Point. 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 qts. of water and lunch, wear boots.
- May 16 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- May 20 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- May 22 - 23 Sheep Camp Backpacking Trip**
Strenuous, 2 day shuttle from Mt. Piños to Boy Scout Camp Rd. This backpacking trip is not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park district. See newsletter article for more information.
- May 27 Thursday Evening Hike**
Meet at 6pm at Chumash trailhead. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan Dr. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan Dr. (moderate, 5 MRT)
- May 29 Cloud Burst Summit to Buckhorn Campground**
Moderate - strenuous 5+ mile shuttle with 1300' elevation gain/loss through Cooper Canyon in the San Gabriel Mountains, with a possible detour to Cooper Canyon Falls. Expect to return late afternoon (1 1/2 hr drive one way). 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 - 3 qts. water and snack. Wear boots.
- May 30 Sunday Evening Hike**
Meet 5pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)

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.topcities.com>

RANCHO SIMI TRAIL BLAZERS

A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation

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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 ____

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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 630445, Simi Valley, Ca 93063

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



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