



# Rancho Simi Trail Blazers

*A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation*



## MARCH TRAIL WORK PARTY

No work party was held on Feb. 21 due to wet ground and the threat of further rain.

The next Trail Blazers work party will be held on **March 20, 2004** on the upper section of the **Chumash Trail**.

Meet at the trailhead on Flanagan Drive at **8:00 AM**.

Depending on the weather we will either carpool up the Rocky Peak Fire Road to access the upper trailhead or work up from the lower trailhead. We will work from **8:00 AM to 12:00 Noon**.

Hope to see you there!

Work Parties Chair  
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.



## WELCOME NEW MEMBER

**David Kikuchi**

## 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 at 805-584-4453.

## 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 March 17, 2004**

## LARRY'S STATION

Larry's or Mountain Station was operated by Lawrence Howard between 1861 and 1874 at the foot of the grade on the Ventura County side of Santa Susana Pass. It was a small tavern, where travelers could spend the night and be fed before or after traversing the pass. The Coastal Stage route traversed the pass between 1861 and 1875. Stage horse teams were changed at Larry's Station. Larry died in 1874.

We know that the site of the station was south of where the railroad currently exists. However, the ground elevation in the area has been raised because of the placement of the cuttings from the construction of the railroad tunnel, the cuttings from the construction of the tunnel for the Colorado River water line (no longer used), and the State water project water tunnel.

Some small water pipes do extend into the water tunnel cuttings just west of where the old freight road hits the valley floor. The presence of those lines suggests that water was conducted from a spring to a now buried facility, which may have been Larry's Station.

*Simi Valley: A Journey Through Time* (1997), pages 58-60, includes a first-hand account of Mrs. D.D. DeNure of a narrow brush with Tiburcio Vasquez, California's most feared bandit, and his band at Larry's Station. No date is given for the encounter, but it probably occurred during the early 1870s. The account is worth reading.

Mike Kuhn



## THE RANCHO SIMI UNDER SPANISH-MEXICAN OWNERSHIP

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

El Rancho San Jose de Gracia de Simi was granted to Santiago Pico by the Spanish Governor Diego de Borica in 1795. Rancho Simi was one of only two ranchos granted in present-day Ventura County under Spanish rule (Rancho Conejo was the other one.). Mexico was responsible for the other 16 land grants in the county. While the Picos (but not Santiago) seemed to have occupied the Simi prior to 1800, the Simi adobe, located on the present-day Strathearn Historical Park, was not built and finished until 1801 or 1802.

The Picos, in cooperation with the Fathers of San Fernando Mission, began running sheep on the rancho. Some cattle were also raised; there appears to have been a limited market for both sheep and cattle in southern California at the time. The occupation of the Picos ceased in 1820, when Indians burned some of the structures. The title to the rancho was reconfirmed by Governor Sola in 1821. The rancho was sold to Jose de la Guerra y Noriega around 1832, however, the sale was not officially completed until 1842 and was not validated until 1845 – everything took a long time in those days.

In 1846 war broke out between the United States and Mexico and the United States occupied California. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the war in 1848. California was admitted to the Union in 1850. A Board of Land Commissioners was established to settle land claims. The Board of Land Commissioners confirmed the right of Jose de la Guerra to Rancho Simi in 1854 and the U.S. government confirmed title in 1865.

The Rancho experienced its greatest economic success during the 1850s and early 1860s, when an enormous market for beef emerged in the

goldfields. The rancho carried several thousand head of cattle at that time and sheep again were grazed, mostly on the flatland of the valley and in the Tripas. During the same period the vegetable gardens at the western end of the valley expanded to cover about 40 acres.

Prior to 1858 the de la Guerras lived in Santa Barbara and only occasionally visited Rancho Simi. In 1858 the ranchstead at the western end of the valley was again attacked by Indians and the structures burned. The de la Guerra moved their headquarters to the larger adobe in upper Tapo Canyon and the family moved from Santa Barbara.

The Tapo Adobe had been constructed sometime earlier – perhaps as early as the 1840s - on the same basic plan as the Simi Adobe. The adobe was located where Tapo Canyon Regional Park now stands. The site of the adobe now is reflected in a mound of adobe melt with the remnant of a 1917 reconstruction still visible within a chain link fence enclosure. The site is in the general location of the pre-1812 village of *Ta'apu*. Located adjacent to a perennial stream, the area had persisted as a sheep and cow camp inhabited by Chumash Indians, who were the vaqueros and sheep herders employed by the de la Guerras. The de la Guerras had flower gardens and olive, fig, orange, apple, and pear orchards planted. Grapes were planted further down the canyon – all under irrigation. The Tapo wines and brandies had a reputation for excellence throughout California.

The Rancho Simi continued to do well after the death of Jose de la Guerra in 1858. However, the drought of 1861-1865 forced the de la Guerras to borrow money. By 1864, the mortgage holder, Isaac Cook, had gained title to all of Rancho Simi, except for the 14,400 acres that came to be called "Rancho Tapo." Francisco de la Guerra retained title to Rancho Tapo until 1877, when he was forced to sell to Thomas Bard.

## RANCHO SIMI AT THE CLOSE OF THE 1880s

The following quotation is copied from Janet Scott Cameran's *Simi Grows Up* (1963), who cites *The California Farmer* (June 1963) as the source for the *Rural Californian* (1888):

"The Simi Rancho is the largest single body of land in Southern California which is now on the market in small tracts. It is nearly all in Ventura County, though a part of the 96,000 acres is in Los Angeles County. The Rancho contains 20,000 acres of good hill lands suitable for vines, fruit trees, and olives; about 40,000 acres of stock ranges; and the remainder is rough mountain land from which the water supply is drawn. The price runs from \$5.00 to \$60.00 per acre. The cheap land is suitable for stock growing, and the best of the valley land can be had at \$60.00. The terms of sale are reasonable to actual settlers."

This advertisement came after the railroad had arrived in southern California and there was the promise of the railroad going through Simi Valley. Thomas Scott, the owner of the Pennsylvania Railroad had died in 1881 leaving the disposition of his holdings of much of southern Ventura County to his agent Thomas Bard. Up to 1888 there were very few settlers in Simi Valley, and they were largely leaseholders and their employees. Simi had largely been used for grazing land during the Spanish, Mexican and the emerging Anglo-American period, with some grain production during the latter 10 years. The promise of the railroad and a new onslaught of settlers from the East and Midwest initiated a new chapter in the history of Simi Valley. The Indians were largely gone, Rancho Simi had long since passed into the hands of Anglo-Americans and the real estate agents had arrived. The Simi Land and Water Company was formed in August 1887 in order to subdivide Simi Valley and offer it for sale.

Mike Kuhn

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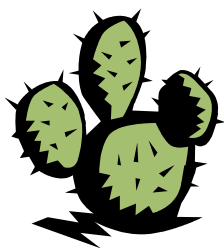
## A THORNY SITUATION

Jan Hinkston's interview of Joseph Bannon in a nursing home in Jamestown, California, in 1974 describes a somewhat humorous event experienced by his father during the first decade of the Twentieth Century in the Chatsworth area.

The Bannon family had a sandstone quarry near the railroad tunnel near Stoney Point. (The Bannons later operated the Southern Pacific Railroad quarry where the Santa Susana Park ball diamond is today and Mr. Bannon served on the school board in Simi Valley.) It seems that Mr. Bannon had several greyhound dogs. In those days most people simply fed their dogs whatever was available. So Mr. Bannon went rabbit hunting, using the dogs to scare up their own dinner. A jackrabbit jumped by the dogs, and Mr. Bannon managed to shoot the rabbit just as it disappeared into a cactus patch.

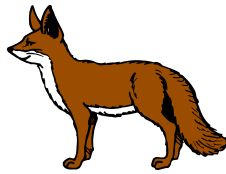
Mr. Bannon sighted the dead rabbit well inside the cactus patch. In order to retrieve the carcass, he climbed out onto the main stem of a blue elderberry tree which extended conveniently a few feet over the dead rabbit.

Now, everyone knows that elderberry stems are weak, but to Mr. Bannon it was worth a try. Somewhat predictably the branch gave way, and Mr. Bannon dropped into and onto the cactus patch. At that point the recovery of the dead bunny became secondary. While Mr. Bannon was not seriously injured, his son remembered that it was a painful experience and that his mother spent some time with pliers removing the cactus spines, which gave up their hold on Mr. Bannon only with great reluctance.



Mr. Bannon, his son and the cactus patch are no longer with us. Only the land remains. If it could speak, it would tell many stories worth remembering – associated with place over thousands of years. Our appreciation of where we live would be so much richer if we recorded even these small stories for future generations.

Mike Kuhn



## THE ISLAND FOX

Six subspecies, each located on separate islands, of the endangered island fox (*Urocyon littoralis*) are endemic to the Channel Islands. Three of those subspecies have experienced serious population crashes because of colonization by golden eagles. Two of the subspecies are now extinct in the wild (they still exist in captive breeding programs), while the third, on Santa Cruz Island, has experienced a decline in population from 1500 to fewer than 100 in less than a decade.

The golden eagles arrived on Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa islands and preyed mostly on feral piglets. As opportunistic hunters, the eagles also take island foxes and, to a lesser extent, skunks, which are far more nocturnal. From Santa Rosa Island it was an easy flight to San Miguel Island, where only foxes were available as prey animals. Since 1999, 31 eagles have been relocated to the mainland and a major effort to eradicate feral pigs has begun. However, the last seven to ten eagles have eluded capture and continue to threaten foxes.

Now the dilemma – studies suggest that if the eagle prey base, that is the pigs, are removed before the eagles are eliminated, the number of foxes will continue to decline and the fox

subspecies may become extinct. This effect would occur because eagle predation on foxes would increase as the piglet population declines. On the other hand, fox recovery, in the presence of pigs, is directly proportional to the successful removal of eagles.

In the United States, the Migratory Bird Treaty and the Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle Protection Act both prevent taking of golden eagles except under special circumstances granted by the Secretary of the Interior. It now seems that the only way to save the foxes is to eliminate the golden eagles, which means shooting them. The solution to this conservation problem is more complicated than simply removing pigs. In order to save an endangered species, the Santa Cruz Island Fox, it is necessary to completely remove, by any and all means possible, a protected species, the golden eagle.

The magnificent golden eagle is the most widespread and abundant eagle in the world. It is present throughout the western hemisphere, Africa and Eurasia in great numbers. While protected, it is not a threatened or endangered species.

Mike Kuhn



On the Mishe Mokwa Trail, left to right: Bill Cespedes, Arlene Altshuler, and John Sabol. Photo by Mike Kuhn



# RSTB Calendar

## March 2004



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> <i>Happy Birthday Martin DeGoey</i>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	<b>5</b> <i>Happy Birthday Sylvia Adams</i>	<b>6</b> Hummingbird Trail See Schedule
<b>7</b> Rocky Peak 4pm hike See Schedule	<b>8</b> <i>Happy Birthday Colleen Janssen</i>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Palo Comado See Schedule
<b>14</b> Rocky Peak 4pm hike See Schedule	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> RSTB Meeting See Page 1 <i>Happy Birthday Rick Johnson</i>	<b>18</b> Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Chumash Trail Work Party See Schedule
<b>21</b> Rocky Peak 4pm hike See Schedule	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> Chumash Trail 6pm hike See Schedule	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> Sam Merrill Trail See Schedule
<b>28</b> Rocky Peak 4pm hike See Schedule	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>			



# Rancho Simi Trail Blazers

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## Hiking Schedule



- March 4 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)
- March 6 Hummingbird Creek**  
4.6 MRT with 1100' elevation gain. Directions - 118 Fwy to Kuehner exit. Meet at **8:30am**, north of freeway on Kuehner. Bring 2 -3 qts. of water and snack. Wear boots.
- March 7 Sunday Evening Hike**  
Meet 4pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- March 11 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)
- March 13 Palo Comado Canyon**  
Moderate to strenuous 10 MRT hike. Hike up Palo Comado Canyon, past the Sheep Corral and Sulphur Springs, and back along Cheesebro Canyon. 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. of water and snack, bug juice. Wear boots.
- March 14 Sunday Evening Hike**  
Meet 4pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- March 18 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)
- March 20 Chumash Trail Work Party**  
Help maintain one of the most traversed trails in Simi Valley. Directions - take 118 Fwy to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite, turn right on Flanagan. Trailhead is at the end of Flanagan. We will be working from 8am – noon. Tools will be provided. Bring 2 - 3 quarts of water, hat, sunscreen, and gloves, to work on the trail.
- March 21 Sunday Evening Hike**  
Meet 4pm at Rocky Peak trailhead at the end of Rocky Peak Rd off Santa Susana Pass. (Strenuous, 5 MRT)
- March 25 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)
- March 27 Sam Merrill Trail to Echo Mountain**  
5 MRT with 1400' elevation gain. This trail was originally built in the 30's, and takes you on a tour of the ruins of "The White City" at the top of the mountain. 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. of water and snack, bug juice. Wear boots.
- March 28 Sunday Evening Hike**  
Meet 4pm 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.

**RANCHO SIMI TRAIL BLAZERS**

*A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation*

Executive Chair:	Mike Kuhn	HM (805) 583-2345	hannahmike@adelphia.net
Treasurer:	Peter Ely	HM (805) 523-1409	
Secretary:	David Wagner	HM (805) 577-5931	centmfgdavid@sbcglobal.net
Park District Liaison:	Colleen Janssen	WK (805) 584-4453	volunteers@rsrpd.us
Work Parties Chair:	John Sabol	HM (805) 583-2541	jtsabol@juno.com
Hiking Chair & Website:	Arlene Altshuler	HM (805) 581-9735	arlene.altshuler@mindbox.com
Ways & Means Chair:	Marty Richards	HM (805) 526-4414	
Publicity Chair:	Ursula Christie	HM (805) 527-5338	ursulachristie@yahoo.com
Newsletter Editor:	Arlene Altshuler	HM (805) 581-9735	arlene.altshuler@mindbox.com

-----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 630445, Simi Valley, Ca 93063

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



\_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. Postage  
\_\_\_\_\_

**RSTB**  
**P.O. Box 630399**  
**Simi Valley, CA 93063-0399**