



Rancho Simi Trail Blazers



C.E. HOAR PURCHASES THE HUMMINGBIRD'S NEST

Janet Cameron cites Charles E. Hoar as having purchased the Hummingbird's Nest Ranch from Juan Pucillo in 1872 or 1873. I repeated this same information in the April 1998 Newsletter. Certainly, Janet Cameron was in a good position to have that information, because Mr. Hoar had lived with the Cameron family at the end of his life. However, it now seems that that information was not accurate. Mr. Hoar occupied "the Hummingbird" as part of his lease of 13,000 acres of land.

Bill Appleton has found the record of the sale of the ranch by the Simi Land and Water Company to Mr. Hoar in 1887 and 1888. It seems that the land passed from the hands of the de la Guerra family into those of an eastern petroleum investment company, which later formed the Simi Land and Water Company. The coming of the railroad to southern California during the 1880s triggered a real estate boom in southern California. The Simi Land and Water Company was formed to offer the land of the company for sale for town and farming purposes. Since Charles Hoar still held a valid lease on those 13,000 acres, a

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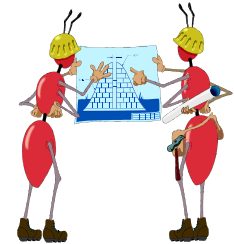
JULY MEETING PROGRAM

Michael Kuhn will present the program for our July meeting. The topic will be the rock art of the Carrizo Plain of eastern San Luis Obispo County. The spectacular rock paintings and petroglyphs of the Chumash Indians bordering that valley will be presented and discussed.



RSTB CLUB MEETING

**The monthly club meeting will be held at the Community Center
In the B-1 Room
1692 Sycamore
At 7:00 PM
On
Wednesday
July 19th.**



JUNE TRAIL WORK PARTY

The work party this month was held on June 3 from 7:00 AM-1:00 PM in conjunction with National Trail Day. Working on extending the "North Ridge Trail", John Downey and I used gas powered brush cutters to clear the tall grass from the trail path and then pitched in with the rest of the crew in digging the trail bed. Although the day was hot, the dirt was not hard packed and we made great progress. Except for a short section that needs the grass stripped, and bridges to span 4 concrete V-ditches, the trail is now finished. The "North Ridge Trail" is 1.3 miles long and extends from Mount Sinai Drive to Evening Sky Drive in the Silverthorn housing tract. Another trailhead exists roughly half way along the route at the intersection of Geronimo Avenue and Broken Arrow Street. Many thanks to the following workers:

Bob Altieri, Arlene Altshuler, Gary Cremeans, John Downey, Robert Foster, Tom Frye and John Sabol.

There was a great deal of trash on the hillsides along the trail (having blown in from housing development) so on June 8 I

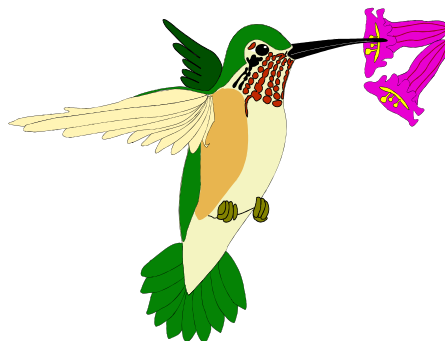
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deal was cut with Mr. Hoar to give up his lease while retaining the Hummingbird's Nest Ranch. The three sales transactions conveyed 160 acres of land for \$12,000, 50 acres for \$500 and 46.68 acres for \$5.00. The lands involved totaled 256.86 acres, while the present day ranch (now called the "Ballymehan Ranch) includes only 96.68 acres.

The \$5.00 price for a 46.86 acre parcel is very low. However, the sale includes the commitment of a conveyance of one inch of flow of water to the Simi Land and Water Company. This one inch of flow is what was elsewhere called a "miner's inch" and is defined as the water that can flow through a one inch square opening with four inches of hydraulic head. (That amount was enough to operate a long tom or rocker in gold mining operations.) This then was the two inch water line for the Simi Hotel that was constructed to house prospective buyers of real estate. (The hotel was located on a hill at the present site of Simi Valley High School. When the high school was built, the hill was graded away.) Mr. Hoar's relinquishing of the lease on those 13,000 acres was apparently handled by a separate agreement but may account for the \$5.00 price for the 46.86 acre parcel. The sale of 50 acres for \$500 indicates that those 50 acres were only usable for grazing in that the Simi Land and Water Com-

pany's land was offered for \$10 - \$100 per acre.

The 160 acre parcel for \$12,000 represented a sales price of \$75 per acre and included a great deal of rocky territory. However, it also included many improvements, including buildings, fences, and corrals. Of great interest is that the sale reserved a right-of-way, 60 feet wide, for the railroad. If the railroad had not excised the right-of-way reservation by the end of 1890, then the right-of-way reservation was to expire. What this tells us is that in late 1887 or early 1888 the decision had not been made as to how the railroad would get through Santa Susana Pass. We do know that the route had been selected by 1895 and the railroad into Simi Valley from the west was completed by 1900. The constructions of the "Chatsworth Tunnel" was begun in 1900 and completed by 1904. So, they had decided that a one and one half mile tunnel through sandstone would be cheaper in the long run than trying to build the rail line



worked alone for 4 hours cleaning up the hillsides. I hauled out four 55-gallon bags of trash, 4 reels of rusty barbed wire, a wood pallet and sheets of plywood and insulation. The area along the trail looks much better!

We had a problem with rubber handle grips pulling off of several of our McLeod tools under heavy use. The handles would then get lost. Larry Bain, General Manager of ZAC Tools helped out. He had replacement handles glued on 2 McLeods, gave me several spare handles and told me what glue to use. I was then able to glue all remaining loose handles. Thanks again, Larry.

I met with Mike Ing, Maintenance Supervisor for the city of Oak Park Parks on June 13, concerning the "Rock Ridge Trail East" that had been re-routed because of the Deerhill housing development. The re-routing cut by the developer is very steep and will erode and be difficult to maintain. I suggested moving the trail and came back a week later to try to find a better path. Several routing constraints and steep canyon walls caused me to conclude I didn't have enough experience to suggest a path in such a difficult area. I will have to return with someone with more trail routing skills.

The Parks Department has recently put out a great map of Simi Valley marked with 32 Simi Valley and Oak Park trails. Stop by the Sycamore Drive District Headquarters and pick up a copy.

The next work party will be held July 15 on the Hummingbird Trail and we will work from 7:00 AM to 11:00 PM. Hope to see you there.

Work Parties Chair
John Sabol

THE MYSTERY OF LAS LLAJAS

The Arroyo de Las Lajas flows out of Los Angeles County from the northeast through Las Lajas Canyon and enters Simi Valley at the northern end of the Simi Valley Golf Course. It drains the largest watershed tributary to the Arroyo Simi. The Arroyo de Las Lajas joins the Arroyo Simi just west of the Metrolink Station. So, what does "Las Lajas" mean?

The meaning of "Las Lajas" is puzzling. The name appears on the 1887 plat of Simi Valley - yes, it appears with a single "l" at the beginning. Indeed, the old timers in the valley pronounce Llajas as though it were spelled "lajas." Does the 1887 plat include a misspelling or is the current spelling, which is included on the Simi East U.S. Geological Survey topographic quadrangle, a corruption of the original word?

I have been unable to find anyone who claims to "know" the meaning of Llajas, and I have been unable to find the word in a Spanish dictionary. So, perhaps that 1887 spelling is correct and the pronunciation that went with it. The double "l" in Spanish is a separate letter distinct from a single "l." Someone who knows Spanish would not confuse the two letters.

John Peabody Harrington's notes on the northeastern San Fernando Valley includes the spelling "Las Lajas." Harrington was the foremost linguist of his day and was fluent in the Spanish of Califor-



Calabasas Peak (left to right): John Downey, Bill Cespedes, Carol Tucker, Arlene Altshuler, Nour Saling, and Rudy Saling. The picture was taken by Mike Kuhn

nia. He also was very familiar with the geography of Simi Valley and certainly knew of Las Lajas Canyon.

In Spanish, the word "laja" refers to flagstone or slab. Certainly Las Lajas Canyon contains high rock outcroppings which present a flat top. Those Harrington notes quote Charlie Bell (after whom Bell Canyon is named) as giving the meaning as "layers of rock." That meaning is relatively consistent with the dictionary definition. But did Charlie Bell have any special knowledge? Or was he simply displaying knowledge of the Spanish language? The fact that he was being reported by John Harrington gives a great deal of cre-

dence that he was reporting a locally understood meaning.

We do know that there was a sheep camp in Las Lajas Canyon and that the canyon was part of an aboriginal, Spanish and Mexican trail between Simi Valley and the San Fernando Valley. Since all of my pre-U.S. Geological Survey sources use the spelling "Las Lajas," I am inclined to the conclusion that the original Spanish word was "Lajas."

The U.S. Geological Survey, it seems, simply made a mistake. They lost the original name and provided a meaningless "sounds-Spanish" name, which is now enshrined on the U.S. Geological Survey's Simi East Geological Quadrangle - perhaps for eternity.



JULY

2000



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						<p>1</p> <p>Sulfur Mountain Hike Meet at 7 am See schedule</p> <p>Happy Birthday Dusty McCarthy</p>
<p>2</p> <p>Rocky Peak Hike Meet at 5 pm Read schedule</p>	3	4	5	<p>6</p> <p>CHUMASH TRAIL HIKE MEET AT 6 PM SEE SCHEDULE</p>	7	<p>8</p> <p>Ferndale Hike Meet at 7 am See schedule</p> <p>Happy Birthday Joe Cassie & Joe Simon</p>
<p>9</p> <p>Rocky Peak Hike Meet at 5 pm Read schedule</p>	10	<p>11</p> <p>Happy Birthday Tim Dorsey</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Happy Birthday Donna Wolfe</p>	<p>13</p> <p>CHUMASH TRAIL HIKE MEET AT 6 PM SEE SCHEDULE</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Happy Birthday Mike Kuhn</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Hummingbird Creek work Party 7 to 11 See schedule</p>
<p>16</p> <p>Rocky Peak Hike Meet at 5 pm Read schedule</p>	17	18	<p>19</p> <p>RSTB JUNE Meeting at 7pm Community Center Room B-1 1692 Sycamore</p>	<p>20</p> <p>CHUMASH TRAIL HIKE MEET AT 6 PM SEE SCHEDULE Happy Birthday Robert Foster</p>	21	<p>22</p> <p>Eagle Spring Loop Hike Meet at 7 am See schedule</p> <p>Happy Birthday Lorraine Ferrall</p>
<p>23</p> <p>Rocky Peak Hike Meet at 5 pm Read schedule</p>	24	25	26	<p>27</p> <p>CHUMASH TRAIL HIKE MEET AT 6 PM SEE SCHEDULE</p>	28	<p>29</p> <p>Long Canyon to Simi Peak Meet at 7:30 am See schedule</p>
<p>30</p> <p>Rocky Peak Hike Meet at 5 pm Read schedule</p>	31					

