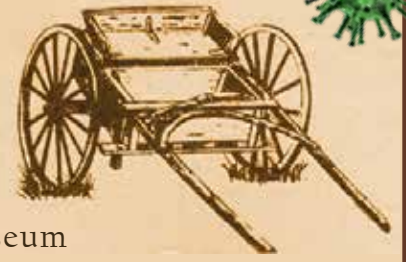


Second Issue 2020 ~ April-Sept.  
Next Issue October 2020

# THE MAIL CART

Newsletter of the Simi Valley Historical Society and Museum



## President's Message

Greetings all,

As the new president of the Simi Valley Historical Society, I wanted to share a bit of information about my experiences and background. I have a degree in History from California State University, Northridge. My teaching career with Los Angeles Unified School District spanned 34 years. I taught U.S. History, and occasionally World History at Lawrence Middle School in Chatsworth. At Lawrence, I was also a History Department Chairperson, mentor teacher, and a member of School Based Management. I retired from teaching in 2018.

Volunteerism is an important lesson that I learned from my dad. I am a California State Parks volunteer at Fort Tejon Historic Park. I served on the Fort Tejon Historical Association board as Chairperson and Treasurer.

I also managed the Post Store at Fort Tejon and actively planned and executed special events like the annual Civil War program, Ladies Tea Party and Ghost Tours. I have served on two different HOA boards where I've lived. When time allows, I assist my partner, Roger, with EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association) events like the Young Eagles program. I am a firm believer in Living History, and making history available to all who seek to learn about the past.

My focus as your president this year is to work with Rancho Simi Recreation and Parks District on two major projects at Strathearn Historical Park - re-roofing the Simi Adobe, and completing the interior of the Printz/Powell Colony house. I am grateful for the support of volunteers like Kristy Grayson, Brenda Lyum, and many other Park volunteers, who are assisting to see these projects to their conclusion. Fundraising to rebuild the interior of the Colony house will need your support and expertise. In these uncertain times, our community needs to know that the history of Simi Valley will be preserved and made available to them and future generations. To this end, we have developed an Audio Tour of our Park, which the public can use when touring the outside of Strathearn Park's buildings using smartphones. Once the State of California and County of Ventura allow the reopening of the buildings, our phenomenal docents can continue a long tradition of educating visitors about the history of Simi Valley.

Warmest regards,

*Linda Bosley*

President, Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum

*"If you want to understand today, you have to search yesterday."*

*~ Pearl S. Buck*

## 'PRESIDENT'S AWARD'

The Simi Valley Historical Society will recognize one individual quarterly with the "Simi Valley Historical Society President's Award" for outstanding service and commitment to the Community, the Historical Society, Strathearn Park, or local history in general. This award will be given four times per year. Individuals can be nominated for the award simply by sending an email to [StrathearnPark@gmail.com](mailto:StrathearnPark@gmail.com) with the subject line *President's Award Nomination*; include who is being nominated and why.

As we did not publish a newsletter last quarter, this quarter we would like to recognize TWO outstanding volunteers at Strathearn Historical Park and Museum; **Julie Hanna and Paul Rock.**



**Julie Hanna** has been a Simi Valley resident since 1993. She has two grown sons, Justin and Joey. She has been an active member of Simi Valley Shotokan since December 2006. Julie has earned an I-KYU (highest level of brown belt) in Karate, and plans to take her test for Black Belt this coming December. Additionally, Julie teaches Karate to children at the facility.

Julie is active in the re-enacting community, working as a cook since 2006 with the Richmond Howitzers Civil War group. Julie also volunteers with the Fort Tejon Historical Association by working in the Post Store at Fort Tejon State Historical Park and assisting with the annual Civil War Program and Ladies Tea Party. Julie is a member of the Les Dames de Chaminade (mothers of alumni) service organization that provides meals to the needy, assists with Special Olympics, fund raises for charities and bakes Amish bread each year for the homeless shelter.

Julie is a consummate needle crafter. She is learning to use a spinning wheel and enjoys cross stitch, knitting, crochet and needle point projects.

Julie collects and reads first edition antique books. She is very proud of her first edition of "Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant" published in 1886 by Mark Twain.

Julie completed her docent training last year began volunteering her time at Strathearn Park in October 2018. She works in the Simi Store during events, and recently assisted with the organizing and indexing of the enormous donation of newspapers which we received a few months ago.

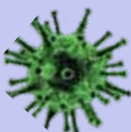
### *Mark Your Calendars...Maybe?*

**November 1, 2020 - Dia de los Muertos Celebration**

**November 6, 2020 - Annual Membership Dinner Meeting at Rancho Santa Susana Community Center**

**December 6, 2020 - Holiday Open House**

**March 27 & 28, 2021 - Civil War Days**



Everyone is aware of the uncertainty surrounding events at this time. We hope that we will be able to host these events



to the left safely in the near future, as well as open up the inside of our museum and historical structures for tours.

Please follow us on facebook, or check our website

**[www.simihistory.com](http://www.simihistory.com)**

for updates often!



**Paul Rock** was born and raised in Simi. He married his high school sweetheart, and they will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary next year. His wife Dana, and their three grown children were also all born and raised in Simi.

Paul has always loved Simi history and has been a docent since 2005. He is actually a second generation docent, as his father was a docent for many years here at Strathearn Park. It seems that love of local history runs in the family!

In addition to leading historical tours around the Park, Paul also helps with special projects and events. He especially loves the farm implements around the property, and everything mechanical.



Paul recently undertook a monumental project. We received a donation of many newspapers, dated from 1961 through 1968. The newspapers, which when stacked together, measure at least six feet high. They consisted of several different publications, and were not in any type of order.

Paul patiently went through the stacks of papers over several days, and organized them by publication, in chronological order. He commented that he enjoyed looking through the papers, because it brought many childhood memories back.

**Thank you both, Julie and Paul for always being willing to step in when we need help around the Park with various projects!**

### *Newspapers EVERYWHERE!*



This is the recent project that both Julie and Paul helped with immensely. In March we received stacks upon stacks of various Simi newspapers, primarily from 1961 through 1968.



This amazing donation was received from Mr. Gordon Lindeen, longtime Simi resident.

The newspapers illustrate the time in Simi history when there was incredible growth and many 'firsts' taking place.

As Mr. Lindeen was legal counsel for the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District for many years, he saved many news items featuring Park District History along with many, many other items of interest.



The Simi papers are not digitized (yet) into databases such as newspapers.com, therefore these are a wonderfully welcome addition to our collection. Be sure to follow us on facebook ([facebook.com/StrathearnPark](https://facebook.com/StrathearnPark)) to see some of the advertisements and news items we've been sharing from this collection.

# Rancho San José de Nuestra Señora de Altagracia y Simí

Rancho San José de Nuestra Señora de Altagracia y Simí was the full name of Rancho Simí. It was a 113,009 acre Spanish land grant which consisted of what is now eastern Ventura and western Los Angeles counties. It was granted in 1795 to Felipe Santiago Pico de la Cruz. After Santiago Pico's death in 1815, the Rancho was re-granted to Santiago's sons Javier, Patricio and Miguel by the Spanish government. The name of the Rancho derives from Shimiji, the name of a Chumash village which was in the Simi Valley for thousands of years before the Spanish arrival.



'Soldado de Cuera' by Raymundus à Murillo [Public domain]  
Santiago Pico was a Soldado de Cuera.

Many early historical accounts indicated that the original grant of Rancho Simí was given to three Pico brothers, rather than their father Santiago Pico (Felipe Santiago Pico de la Cruz). However, as access to mission records, and information in general, has become more accessible, we know that Santiago Pico was the original recipient in 1795. This is where our Simí story begins.

Santiago de la Cruz Pico was a recruit soldier who enlisted to come with the second Anza expedition in 1776. His wife María Jacinta Vastida (Bastida) and their seven children (five sons and two daughters: José Dolores, José María, José Miguel, Francisco Javier, Patricio, María Antonia Tomasa and Josefa María) became a part of the settlement of the 'new lands.'

Four of the five sons became career soldiers: José Dolores, José Miguel, José María and Francisco Javier. The fifth son, Patricio, and their father Santiago, were always connected with El Rancho Simí.

José de la Guerra y Noriega, a Captain of the Santa Barbara Presidio, who had begun to acquire large amounts of land in California to raise cattle, purchased Rancho Simí from the Pico family in 1842.

With the cession of California to the United States following the Mexican-American War, the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo provided that the land grants would be honored, and could be bought and sold, which was not the case under Spanish rule.

A claim for Rancho Simí was filed with the Public Land Commission in 1852, and the grant was patented to the De la Guerra family in 1865 (José de la Guerra y Noriega passed away in 1858).

After José de la Guerra y Noriega's death in 1858, his sons continued to operate the ranchos. The end of their prosperity came when several years of drought in the 1860s caused heavy losses.

In 1865, the De la Guerras lost the ownership of El Rancho Simí excluding the portion that came to be known as Rancho Tapo. The Rancho Simí lands, excluding Rancho Tapo were sold to the Philadelphia and California Petroleum Company headed by Pennsylvania Railroad president, Thomas A. Scott. In 1887, that portion of the rancho was bought by a newly formed company, the Simi Land and Water Company.

El Rancho Tapo was part of the original 113,009 acre Rancho Simí grant, but sometime around 1820-1830, the Rancho Tapo came to be thought of as a separate place within Rancho Simí. The last of the De la Guerras to live in Simí Valley retreated to this 14,400-acre portion of the original rancho that was known as the Rancho Tapo. As late as February 1877, Juan De la Guerra was reported in county newspapers to be preparing to plant walnuts in the Tapo, which appears to be the final mention of their farming in relation to the original Simí grant. The De la Guerra heirs tried every legal means, but by the 1880s, the Rancho Tapo also slipped from their ownership, as had the rest of the Rancho. This signified the end of the Rancho area in our Valley.



José de la Guerra y Noriega

# A PICO POST-SCRIPT:

Traveling around Southern California, the 'Pico' name appears in many places. Have you wondered whether there was a Simí connection? There is! José María Pico was one of the sons of Felipe Santiago Pico de la Cruz and María Jacinta Vastida (Bastida). Two of his sons are very recognized figures in California history. Pío Pico (1801 – 1894) was, in fact, the last Mexican Governor of Alta California under Mexican rule.

Andres Pico was born in San Diego in 1810. He was a rancher, and fought in the Mexican American War, including the battle of San Pascual. In 1851 he was elected to California State Assembly, and in 1860 was elected to California State Senate. He was also appointed as the commanding brigadier general of the state militia during the U.S. Civil War.

Now when you see the Pico name...or references to Andres and Pío Pico...you will know that they were grandchildren of Felipe Santiago Pico de la Cruz, the original grantee of the Rancho Simí land grant. And portions of the house which he built still stand at Strathearn Park! The Simi Adobe is the oldest structure still standing in Simí Valley. We are proud to be preserving our history for future generations of our community!

Below are excerpts from 'A Pioneer Speaks' about the Simi Adobe.

## Pioneer Perspective

A Pioneer speaks by R.E. Harrington, from  
Enterprise – Sun & News, Wednesday, February 9, 1966

*R.E. Harrington was a pioneer who came to Simi Valley in 1907 and lived here the remainder of his life. He wrote one of the early history books about Simi Valley; Early Days in Simi Valley. He also wrote a column in the Enterprise Sun & News in the 1960s into 1970 called 'A Pioneer Speaks' that touched on many topics of interest regarding early Simi history. This article is about the Simi Adobe. Simi's oldest structure which is still preserved at Strathearn Park.*



A photo of the Simi Adobe from the 1940s

### The Only House in Simi Valley

With all the houses in the valley today, it is hard to realize what the valley must have been like years ago with only one house. Moreover it was the only house for nearly a hundred years. The first house was probably built sometime in the early days of 1800. It was partially burned by Indians and later restored and enlarged by Don Jose De la Guerra when the Simi Rancho was given to him by the Mexican Government.

Why were these land Grants made? The Mexican Government owned all of California, which they looked upon as practically worthless. Don Jose de la Guerra was a very influential and highly respected man. He had been the Commandante of the Santa Barbara Presidio and so what ever he asked for, was given to him. The Mexican Government had

more land than money. Don Jose de la Guerra not only was perhaps the most highly respected man of his day but was a good Catholic and very generous. His hospitality was known throughout all of California.

Located on what is now Tierra Rejada road near the little stream which crosses this road about one fourth of a mile after it leaves Madera Road, the De la Guerra home was no doubt used by the Mission Fathers as they journeyed on foot between the San Fernando Mission and the Ventura Mission. On the first map of Simi Valley made in 1858 a Cross is shown on the top of the hill directly south of the De la Guerra Home probably put there by the De la Guerras or some of their Catholic visitors. The present cross on top of Mr. McCoy is the exact spot of this old cross.

Don Jose De la Guerra at one time owned about 250,000 acres. He owned not only the Simi grant of over 100,000 acres, but also the Las Posas grant and the San Julian grant. These grants were all located in Santa Barbara County, for Ventura County was not set apart from Santa Barbara County until 1874.



## Take a Virtual Tour of Strathearn!

These have been challenging times for everyone. We look forward to the day when it is safe to re-open our museum and historic structures for tours once again. Our volunteers miss sharing the history of our Park and our community with visitors.

We are not sure yet exactly when we will be able to open, or exactly what 'the new normal' will be with regard to leading tours. We are looking forward to learning how to navigate the challenges which will present themselves when we are able to take the steps needed to adapt and re-open.

One way we have adapted is by creating an audio tour of our Park! We know that this does not take the place of taking a tour inside the historic structures with our amazing and knowledgeable docents, but it will give Park visitors an opportunity to enjoy a walk around our beautiful Park while learning the History of our structures and our community! It's easy to 'take a tour!' All you need is a smartphone. Scan the QR code below....or enter this webpage into your browser



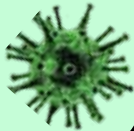
<http://youraudiotour.com/tours/763>



Need WiFi? We have that too! You can log into *strathearn\_wifi*...the password is: *sunshine*.

The tour will take you around the Park in twenty stops. We are working on refining it.

Grab your face mask and head on over to Strathearn Park and take our audio tour!



2020

# A YEAR TO BE REMEMBERED?



Even if we would like to forget 2020...that won't happen anytime soon. There have been so many surreal and cataclysmic events which comprised 2020, we began to think that perhaps this year would be one that should be memorialized in a time capsule. Let's bury a time capsule THIS YEAR here at Strathearn Park. To be opened in thirty years, in 2050.

This has been QUITE A YEAR. Maybe we won't want to remember it. But then, won't it feel good to figuratively 'bury' this year? So here's the question: What would YOU want to include in this time capsule? Yes...masks. That's a given. News articles about covid-19, and the BLM protests. No doubt there will be news items after the election in November. What else? Someone has suggested a roll of toilet paper. Please give your input!

Email StrathearnPark@gmail.com.

Did you know that a time capsule was buried at Strathearn Park on Saturday, October 18, 1975 by representatives from the Simi Valley Women's Business and Professional Club, as their contribution toward the Nation's Bicentennial celebration? The Time Capsule contained several items of historical significance from Simi Valley. The Time Capsule WAS scheduled to be



opened on October 18, 2025, a time span of 50 years. Each item in the capsule was individually sealed in an attempt to preserve the contents from the destructive elements of time, air and water. but as shown in the bottom photo, the area where the capsule was buried flooded frequently, and the contents were unfortunately damaged beyond repair.



## These Items Were Sealed Into The High School Wall



Included in the list of items that were placed in the casket and sealed into the wall of the administration building at the high school during ceremonies yesterday were the following:

A list of the directors of the Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce fact sheet; Simi Valley Women's Club fact sheet; Simi Valley Jr. Women's Club fact sheet; and a Simi Valley Club fact sheet.

Also, a program, and roster of the Simi Valley Women's Club; a roster of the Simi Valley Friends of the Library; and a roster of the Simi Valley Lodge 806.

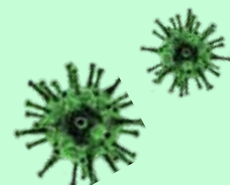
A fact sheet of the Simi Valley American Legion Post

484; a Tapo Ranch fact sheet; a complete set of 1963 coins; photographs of Dr. Gardner, principal; Dr. David Paynter, superintendent; members of the board of trustees.

A directory of teachers in the school district; a list of students in the first graduating class; a PTA program; the constitution of the Associated body of the high school; a list of student body and class officers; a roster of the Simi Valley Lions Club; an edition of the Lions Club 35th Anniversary bulletin; an invitation to attend the dedication ceremonies; sample tickets of the high school dedication luncheon; and the Optimist Creed —Promise Yourself

A time capsule was also sealed in a wall at Simi Valley High School on December 14, 1963 when the 'new' school facility was dedicated. This article makes no mention that it was ever intended to be opened at a later date, but there have been some that said it was supposed to be opened in 2013, fifty years after it was placed.

In a presentation on the History of the Tapo District given on October 22, 1967, Joe Schreiber indicated that the Tapo History was included in this 'casket,' and it was to be opened fifty years from December 14, 1963.



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 Hist. Park Specialist Carolyn Valdez  
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Docent Led Tours: Saturdays & Sundays: Between the hours of 1 & 4 pm  
 Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays: One tour at 1 pm  
 Donation: \$5 for Adults, Simi Valley Historical Society Members are Free  
 Week day Park Hours: Monday - Friday  
 9 am - 3 pm  
 For information please call (805) 526-6453  
 Email: [StrathearnPark@gmail.com](mailto:StrathearnPark@gmail.com)

**Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum**

**P.O. Box 940461**  
**Simi Valley, CA 93094-0461**  
**[www.Simihistory.com](http://www.Simihistory.com)**  
**[www.facebook.com/Strathearnpark](http://www.facebook.com/Strathearnpark)**



Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum  
 Located at Strathearn Historical Park & Museum  
 137 Strathearn Place, Simi Valley, CA 93065



The Mail Cart is sent quarterly to all current members. The Simi Valley Historical Society & Museum's membership year runs from January 1 through December 31.

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Please select desired membership.  
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