

# The Hathaway Ranch Museum & Rancho Santa Gertrudes Historical Society

## - NEWSLETTER -

11901 E. Florence Avenue • Santa Fe Springs, California 90670

Volume 1, Number 3

AUTUMN 1991

### If you liked WWI, You'll love WWII

An afternoon of some of the great hit songs of WW II is on the program for a November meeting of RSGHS. Entertaining us will be Bernard Hardy and Rita Murray, who brought us a lot of memories last year with their presentation of WW I vintage songs.

The program/meeting date is November 10th at 2:00 pm at the Hathaway Ranch Museum. Ladies are urged to dig into their closets and come attired in a snazzy USO outfit; gentlemen should wear an appropriate military cap if they can't button their old uniforms. Stroll down memory lane with Bernard and Rita as they perform some of your favorites: "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree," "The White Cliffs of Dover," and many more.

Rita sings with Whittier's Chorale Bel Canto and with the Whittier Presbyterian Church Choir. Bernard, a former RSGHS Board Member, has entertained local audiences for many years in a wide variety of piano programs.

This program is for members only. there is no charge, but reservations are required. CALL: 213/944-7372 or 213/944-6563

### HELP!!

If you received a receipt and new membership card from us for dues paid in June, and also received your uncashed check for those dues in a separate envelope from the United States Postal Service, let us help you unravel the mystery.

Our corresponding secretary sent the acknowledgments and checks to our treasurer who received a damaged and empty envelope! The missing checks must have been lost in some mail chute until the postal service kindly returned them—some of them, at least—to the check writers whose names were on the check.

If such a check was returned to you we would appreciate your sending it back to us.

### PICNIC IN THE PARK

The annual awards picnic sponsored by the Rancho Santa Gertrudes Historical Society will be held this year at Heritage Park in Santa Fe Springs on Sunday, September 22, at 2:00 pm in the plaza area near the Carriage Barn.

"Ranch Hands" who have volunteered their services to the society and to the Hathaway Ranch Museum during the past year will be honored. Winners of the 1991 historical photo contest will receive their awards.

The "Gertie" award for 1991 will be presented to Virginia Mathony. The "Gertie" is presented each year to a resident of the former Rancho Santa Gertrudes who has contributed substantially to the preservation of history in this area.

The cost of the picnic is \$6.00, which includes food and favors. Checks should be made out to the Hathaway Ranch Museum. We need your reservation by September 15th. Please send checks to Hathaway Ranch Museum, 11901 E. Florence Ave., Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670.

(NOTE: Volunteers who have accumulated 50 hours or more of service to the museum during the past year will be guests of the museum. They will be notified separately.)

### PICNIC RESERVATIONS

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ places for me at RSGHS picnic at Heritage Park in Santa Fe Springs on Sunday, September 22, 1991, at 2:00 pm.

I enclose \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ reservations at \$6.00 each.

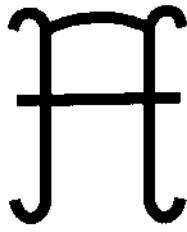
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



Manuel Nieto was granted this brand, shown at left, for his Rancho Santa Gertrudes in the year of 1784 — California's third Rancho. A portion was granted in 1834 to Josefa Cota de Nieto, and is now the site of Los Nietos, Downey, and the majority of Santa Fe Springs.

### Rancho Santa Gertrudes Historical Society

#### Membership Categories

Youth (high school or younger)	\$1.50
Individual	\$3.00
Family (2 adults & minor children)	\$5.00
Business:	\$10.00
Supporting:	\$50.00
Sustaining:	\$100.00
Lifetime:	\$500.00

Make checks payable to **Rancho Santa Gertrudes Historical Society**, or you can simply abbreviate the name as **RSGHS**. Annual membership dues and contributions should be mailed to: RSGHS 11901 E. Florence Ave. Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670

Notice of membership dues are sent on a yearly calendar basis. Contributions are tax-deductible in the amount allowed by law.

The RANCHO SANTA GERTRUDES HISTORICAL SOCIETY is a non-profit corporation which promotes and develops historical activities of all types within land bounded by, but not limited to, the Rancho Santa Gertrudes as shown on early maps of Spanish and Mexican land grants.

### Combined Hathaway Ranch Museum and Rancho Santa Gertrudes Historical Society Newsletter

<b>Published by</b>	The Hathaway Ranch Museum and Rancho Santa Gertrudes Historical Society
<b>Mailing Address</b>	11901 E. Florence Ave. Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
<b>Telephone</b>	(213) 944-6563 or (213) 944-7372
<b>RSGHS Board of Directors</b>	
<b>President</b>	Jean E. Hathaway
<b>Vice President</b>	Faye Smetanka
<b>Corres. Secretary</b>	Nadine Hathaway
<b>Recording Secretary</b>	Joyce Vimala
<b>Treasurer</b>	Felee Cutrone
<b>Membership</b>	Ray Stenson
<b>Liaison-Museum</b>	Jean Hathaway
<b>Liaison-Pico Rivera</b>	Martha Russell
<b>President of the Docents</b>	Caroline Long
<b>Board Members</b>	Evelyn Grembla Ruth Grams James Hogan Jack Johnson Henry Lynn Betty Putnam Francine Rippey Gloria Saldano
<b>Typesetting &amp; Composition</b>	Terry Hathaway

This Newsletter is a general news journal and solicits articles regarding the general interest, and the technical aspects of historical maintenance or restoration. Submissions must be sent to the Hathaway Ranch Museum or RSGHS, 11901 E. Florence Ave., Santa Fe Springs, California 90670.

## Calendar Section

September 1, 1991 Sunday 2:00 - 4:00 pm  
Tours—Hathaway Ranch Museum Free

September 22, 1991 Sunday 2:00 pm  
RSGHS Awards Picnic - Heritage Park, SFS  
Cost \$6.00 per person, reservations required.

October 6, 1991 Sunday 12:30 pm  
RSGHS Board Meeting - Ranch Museum  
Designated Members

October 6, 1991 Sunday 2:00 - 4:00 pm  
Tours—Hathaway Ranch Museum Free

November 3, 1991 Sunday 2:00 - 4:00 pm  
Tours—Hathaway Ranch Museum Free

November 10, 1991 Sunday 2:00 pm  
World II Program and Songs  
Hathaway Museum Members only.  
Free but reservation required.

December 1, 1991 Sunday 12:30 pm  
RSGHS Board Meeting - Ranch Museum  
Designated Members

December 1, 1991 Sunday 2:00 - 4:00 pm  
Tours—Hathaway Ranch Museum Free

## GENEROUS MEMBERS

We are grateful to the following people for their generous donations beyond their basic dues:

Mrs. Kenneth Ball  
Norfleet & Yvonne Blaine  
Gil & Lucy Cota  
Dick & Hazel Fields  
Al Fuentes  
Bernard Hardy  
Jean & Meredith Hathaway  
Don & Jan Hawkins  
Frank & Shirley Martinez  
Murray's Landscaping, Inc.  
Henry & Marty Newton  
Mary & John O'Connor  
Jonnie & Ada Pebley  
Larry & Dorothea Perry  
Lewis & Dixie Pollard  
Marvin & Betty Putnam  
Al & Mary Sharp

Larry & Lynda Short  
Tom & Sylvia Takata  
Ione Whistler

## NEW MEMBERS

Paul & Nancy Aquilar	Melinda York
Jean Gilbert	Nordine Realty
L. R. Davis	Bill & Audrey Messer
Jonnie & Ada Pebley	Larry & Dorothea Perry
Michael & Shirley O'Connor	Kathryn Dobson
Ray & Betty Jo Klausen	Velma Ploessel
Elden Hughes	Martin & Betty Bradley
Patty Carpenter	Timothy & Jocelyn Cox
Thomas & Dagmar McGinley	John & Elsie Hudson
Dixie Reynolds	Don & Jan Hawkins
Harold & Bonnie Settle	James & Carol Mann
Jim & Virginia White	George & Dorothy Morton
Alice Whitehead	

## VOLUNTEERS As of April 1991

Frances Agapoff	Frank Martinez
Ann Bartunek	Mary O'Conner
Marvin Carizen	Jonathan Parent
Mildred Carizen	Betty Putnam
Marjorie Fargo	Josephine Ramirez
Ruth Grams	Marjorie Rondeau
Evelyn Grembla	Martha Russell
Jean Hathaway	Art Saldano
Jesse Hathaway	Faye Smetanka
Meredith Hathaway	Phyllis Stenson
Jack Johnson	Ray Stenson
Anita Kiesel	Mollie Teschler
Caroline Long	Louise Thorson
Henry Lynn	Joyce Virnala

## ADDRESS CHANGES

Christopher & Teresa Bauer  
14877 Mystic St.  
Whittier, CA 90604

Anita Davis  
12129 E Beverly Blvd. #3F  
Whittier, CA 90601

LeRoy & Maxine Green  
1521-Z89 Hwy 101 West  
Sequim, WA 98382

• Part of EVELYN GREMBLA'S extensive collection of dolls will be displayed through the month of September in the Santa Fe Springs Library. Included will be dolls from many countries, different periods of time, and many different sizes made from different materials.

## MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

• GILBERT COTA, a longtime RSGHS member and a Norwalk resident who has been volunteering his services to the community for more than 30 years, is Norwalk's 1991 Citizen of the Year. He was selected by a committee from the Norwalk Community Coordinating Council. He was honored May 23 at the 51st annual installation dinner of the coordinating council.

Cota is a member of the Norwalk City appointed Historical Heritage Commission and volunteers as a guide at the Hargitt House Museum. A volunteer sheriff's deputy for years, Cota serves as docent at the sheriff's museum in Whittier. He has also been active with the City of Hope hospital/research center, Friends of the Norwalk Library, the Huntington Park Elks lodge, Native Sons of the Golden West and the Norwalk Coordinating council.

• JANICE SMITH, SARAH DAVIS, and ANITA KIESEL were judges at History Day, L.A.

• Mayor of Norwalk is none other than longtime RSGHS member MIKE MENDEZ.

• ANITA KIESEL, who, with ANN BARTUNEK, has organized and cataloged the Hathaway Ranch Museum's library, was given the 1991 William J. McCann Humanities Award by the Santa Fe Springs Friends of the Library. Kiesel has been Vice-President and Treasurer of the Friends of the Library, has helped prepare books for the alarm system and has helped with the children's program at the library during the summer. She has been active with LIFE literacy program and is a docent at Heritage Park in Santa Fe Springs.

• ELEANOR BROWN was selected Artist of the Month for the month of July by the Southland Art association. Her water colors and oil paintings were on display at the Taylor Ranch in Montebello throughout the month. Brown was also given a special honor as first runner up in the Resident of the Year award given by the City of Montebello.

• HILDA LOPEZ, an active volunteer in the Pico Rivera community for 41 years, was named the Senior of the Year by the City of Pico Rivera. Lopez was nominated by the Shade Lane Seniors Club and was honored by the County Board of Supervisors in ceremonies honoring outstanding older Americans in Los Angeles County.

• JAMES AND SOLEDAD HOGAN were also runners-up in the residential Citizen of the Year awards sponsored by the Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce. (Ed note: We omitted the names of the Hogans when we mentioned other nominees in our last newsletter.)

Continued on page 4.

## AN ARTIST IN THE PUENTE HILLS

### Excerpts from the 7/9/91 lecture by Joe Da Rold

The Puente Hills are not part of the San Gabriel Mountains, but part of a system that includes the "Modelo" hills toward the west, and the "Monterey" range of the Palos Verdes hills. They are seismic, not volcanic, in origin, and have been produced by the Whittier Fault. Geologically they are known as the "Puente" Hills, but perhaps had the settlers of La Puente not gotten to Southern California first, the hills might indeed have been named the "Whittier Hills".

We are going back in time 12 million years to the Miocene Epoch of the Cenozoic Age to the birth of the hills, when the entire Los Angeles Basin was a lake bed, and seismic activity was at its most intense. As the sea level dropped, the Puente Hills emerged and were rapidly uplifted. They would reach a maximum thickness of 4000 feet and continue to rise to this day, as evidenced by our recent earthquakes. They are considered to be a "young" mountain system, comparable in age to the Chesapeake region on the East Coast and the Monterey area of Northern California. The recent Sierra Madre quake caused the San Gabriels to rise three inches; no doubt the 1987 quake raised the Puente Hills a like amount. Knowing this may not help soothe our nerves, but it does help our understanding.

The hills were an inspiration to the early Whittier founders, so much so that by December of 1887 a two-story observatory was built in the hills and christened with an overnight party of townspeople. The San Gabriel and Santa Ana rivers were described as "silver threads tying the mountains to the ocean. The great valleys of these rivers are spread like a map — great fields of ripe and green corn, meadows of dark green alfalfa, orange and walnut groves, apple, peach and apricot orchards, and all kinds of fruit and vegetables, giving a beautiful variety of colors." This description of the dedication of the Whittier Heights Observatory is taken directly from the first issue of the Whittier Graphic newspaper and is one of the few first-person reports of the hills and landscape from this period.

The Puente Hills are covered with chaparral, a Spanish word meaning "place of the evergreen scrub oak" and botanically defined as a tangle of shrubs and trees that grows from sea level to an elevation of 4000 feet. It consists of hard-leaved shrubs and dwarf trees, including mountain mahogany, toyon, and manzanita, all of which are present in the Puente Hills.

Over the years, deer and bears have roamed the Puente Hills, but the predominant animal life has been small game, such as bobcat, gray fox, rabbits, skunks, ground squirrels, opossums and coyotes. As one who has re-

cently moved to the foothills, I can attest to seeing the deer, hearing the coyotes, and smelling the skunks. The Whittier Audubon Society reportedly has identified at least 50 species of birds in the Puente Hills, including roadrunners, woodpeckers, mockingbirds, hawks wild ducks, crows, owls, and California quail. Several species of snakes and amphibians are also found as part of the animal food chain. Since the Cenozoic Age was the "Age of the Mammals," there are no dinosaur remains to found.

One aspect of the hills we tend to overlook is the importance of the Puente Hills relative to the early days of oil exploration. At least five separate oil fields were located in the area of the hills contiguous to Whittier. The impact of those early 1880 and 1890 discovery dates can be best put in perspective by noting that although land in the Santa Fe Springs area had been leased for exploration as early as 1865, the development company (Los Angeles Pioneer Oil Company) could find no oil, and the 25-year lease was abandoned. It was not until 1919 that Union Oil was finally able to produce the first oil from Santa Fe Springs.

Unfortunately, another point of comparison explains why Whittier's place in the oil industry is merely an historical footnote next to Santa Fe Springs. The Whittier field produced 22 million barrels of oil in 55 years. Compare this to the 118 million barrels produced in the Santa Fe Springs field in the single year of 1923.

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### Members in the News from page 3.

- Norwalk Mayor MIKE MENDEZ has been selected as an alumnus to the Santa Fe High School Hall of Fame. Councilman AMAT BARCELON was selected to the Hall of Fame as a parent of alumni.
- RAY STENSON was named as an alternate to the Southeast Mosquito Abatement Board by the Santa Fe Springs City Council.

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### PHOTO CONTEST REMINDER

**\$100.00 1st Place**  
**\$50.00 2nd Place**  
**\$25.00 3rd Place**

Hurry and get your contest entries in before the deadline of September 12, 1991. Send them to RSGHS, 11901 E. Florence Ave., Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670.

The photographs submitted become the property of the Society. The decision of the judges is final, and the judges reserve the right to withhold prizes in case of insufficient quantity or quality of entries.

# Letters & Other Stuff

The miniature railroad consisting of one "260 Mogul" engine built in 1903, two cars and approximately 900 feet of 10-gauge track arrived last June; and was on display at the July open house along with authentic sound effects! The track is currently being cleaned and made ready for use. A permanent display site is still undecided.

**A request from the PhotoArchives:** Will all RSGHS members please save and donate to the PhotoArchives the cotton from their vitamin jars? Non-sterile cotton is used for cleaning photographs, and we need all we can get. You may not realize it but RSGHS and the Hathaway Ranch Museum houses and maintains a large collection of priceless historical photographs relating to all aspects of early life in Southern California. The cotton you normally throw away can easily be recycled through us!

**Update on the Photograph Work Party:** Sixteen docents donated their time on the morning of May 18th to help reorganize the PhotoArchives. Of the 2500 photos, 200 were completely processed, another 500 were indexed, and another 1000 were matched up with their control cards. Joe sends his thanks to all who participated in this major undertaking for a job very well done.

## Report on the July Open House

Congratulations and thanks to all who participated in our July event: Bernard Hardy, for providing an afternoon of music; Joe for his lecture; and Faye & Joyce for serving as cashiers.

Our first two volumes of "SETTLERS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA" were received enthusiastically. To date nearly 90 copies have been sold. Thanks, also, to Virginia Mathony for her donation to the Book Fund as a result of sales of her own new book.

Thanks to the SFS Firemen's Association for displaying their 1903 steam pumper—improvements are noticeable each time it goes on view. On exhibit for the first time was the newly purchased 1903 Wabash miniature steam locomotive (with full-scale sound effects!).

Many others lent a "helping hand" to get ready, to host visitors, and to clean up. Thanks to everyone who made the day a success.

## HOLY COW!

Michael Marsh, a pupil in Mrs. Ohama's 3rd grade class at Lakeland School, was given a certificate for suggesting the winning name for the life size fiberglass cow which resides in the milking barn at the Hathaway Ranch Museum. "La Moo" was the name chosen by the Ranch Hands, volunteers for RSGHS. School children were invited to submit names, and the final selection was made from those names.

Paying for the cow was a community effort. Substantial donations came in from several sources, the largest of which was \$1000, which the Board of Directors of the Rancho Santa Gertrudes Historical Society voted to donate from their treasury.



Caroline Long, President of the Docents or "Ranch Hands" of RSGHS, presents Michael Marsh with a certificate for suggesting the winning name for the museum's cow. In the background are members of Mrs. Ohama's 3rd grade class from Lakeland School.



Michael Marsh with the fiberglass cow that he named.

## JOYCE VIRNALA REMEMBERS

### RSGHS BOARD MEMBER JOYCE VIRNALA

*(This article also appears in Volume I of "Settlers of Southern California" published by the Rancho Santa Gertrudes Historical Society.)*



My maternal grandparents, Lisa and Gustav Wakkinen, came to the United States from Finland in 1878. Lisa (born in 1846) was already 32 years old. They spent a short time in Ohio and then settled in Northern Minnesota in 1879. They purchased a 120-acre farm from the Northern Pacific Railroad near the area known as New York Mills, so named for the lumber mill which had been operating there since 1872. The town itself was not incorporated until 1884. There they cleared the land of tree stumps, rocks, etc. and started to farm. They had four children, my mother being the last, born when Lisa was 47 years old.

Indians were living on all sides of the early settlers. They were friendly and helpful, assisting the settlers in many ways. When my older brothers and sisters asked Grandmother Lisa about the Indians, she would say (In Finnish, of course) "What is the use of talking about those things. They are in the past. There is no time for such nonsense." It's too bad she didn't have the time to pass along stories of her experiences.

I was only 5 when my grandmother died, but I have memories of sitting with her on her bed and looking at the Finnish pictorial newspaper with her. She died in 1938 at 92 years of age. My father came from Finland in 1907, at the age of 16, and wandered the country sometimes traveling on the freight trains—as did many others. His father and sister also came to the States, but his mother remained in Finland. She was said to be a "seer and healer." Eventually he found his way to Minnesota,

met my mother and married her. The other Wakkinen children had left the farm, so Dad and Mother stayed to help my grandmother. When Lisa died she left no will, as we understand it, and Dad had to put the farm back at auction.

Emil and Lydia Virnala had 8 children, one dying in infancy. There were 3 surviving brothers, and 4 girls; I was the youngest. Those being the depression years, we certainly were "poor," but life on the farm was the perfect life as far as I was concerned. I loved all the animals. Every cow and horse had a name and they were my "playmates." Being the youngest, one might say I was "spoiled." We had chores and such but there was all that space and freedom.

Dad died when I was 12. When I graduated from high school, I went to Chicago, Illinois. I worked there for eight years and was then transferred, by the advertising agency I worked for, to Los Angeles in 1958. In June of 1959 they closed the Los Angeles office and I had the opportunity to return to Chicago or stay in California. I walked up the street and applied for an opening at Reader's Digest and got the job, so I stayed.

I left the Digest in 1967. My son was born in February 1968. During this time, my sister, Faye, was divorced and we decided to pool our resources and I moved in with her and her three sons in Santa Fe Springs. During this period, I worked for the State of California at the 48th Agricultural District, the Great Western Exhibit Center on the Santa Ana Freeway. It was at the Great Western that I met Merrie Hathaway, and through her, Nadine and Dick Hathaway. In 1970, the Digest asked me to return to the fold. I did and I am still there and hope to remain until I retire.

Eric is 22 and a member of the United States Coast Guard Reserves. He is a Junior at Cal State University in Long Beach. In 1987, Eric and I decided to get a home of our own and bought a house in Norwalk. After 19 years with my sister, it did seem to be an awesome responsibility, but we have adjusted and enjoy our "space."

When the Rancho Santa Gertrudes Historical Society was looking for a Recording Secretary, my friend Merrie, put my name forward. And that is how I became involved with the Society. It has been an interesting and rewarding experience. I have met many delightful and interesting people. And it certainly has increased my sense of history.

I regret that I was too young to talk with my grandmother about her experiences with the Indians, why she decided to come to the United States, crossing on the boat and going through Ellis Island. My hope is that when I retire, I might make an extended visit to Finland to search out my roots.