

# *The Echo*

News from the Pleasant Valley Historical Society

## Our Early Settlers -The Pellerino Family

As part of our on-going Oral History program, we interviewed Jim Pellerino, or “Jim-Bo,” as Debbie Thiessen lovingly refers to him. He had a marvelous story to tell of his earliest Pleasant Valley ancestors.

Jim heard these stories from his grandmother, Laura, daughter of Joe Cananas. Laura went to Center School when she was young. Jim’s great grandfather, Joe Cananas, met his wife, Mimi, in San Francisco. They were both originally from Portugal but arrived in San Francisco by different routes. They married and moved down the coast to the Somis area. His ranching brand was JEC. (The 1912 School District Map book in our museum identifies the land that Joe and his family owned in Somis as being north of L.A. Avenue, toward the foothills)

Joe Cananas was quite a character. He dry-farmed lima beans on the land that they owned. They used a stationary thrasher to separate the beans from the straw. Joe was not really an honest sort. He would load his wagon with lima bean sacks filled with dirt, put them on the bottom of the wagon, load the bags of lima beans and go get weighed. He would then slit the bags at the bottom, the dirt would fall out as he drove along, and he would unload the bags of beans that were left.

He had a reputation for running around with women. He was not concerned with whether they were married or not. He got caught on occasion. One time his wife caught him with another lady. She hit him with her boot and knocked him out.

Joe wanted to purchase the property next to his ranch but the people did not want to sell. He put strychnine in their flour, but was caught before anyone was hurt. The law went after him, but a lawyer got him off.

Joe and Mimi had two daughters, Laura (1901-1986) and Antonia. Laura remembers, as a little girl, watching the processing of a slaughtered pig. First, the meat would be par-boiled. Then, the lard would be taken off and the meat put into a crock. The lard was then placed on top of the meat. The crock would be tied with a rope and lowered into a cistern to keep it cool. When they wanted to eat, they dipped a spoon into the crock and lifted out the meat and lard that they would eat for their meal. This surely would be a challenge to today’s dietary and sanitary guidelines!

Joe Cananas gave each daughter half of his land.

Laura married Joe Pellerino (1897-1973), an Italian; they had two sons, Paul and Eugene. Laura was working in the bean field when she went into labor with Paul. She went to the car, drove herself to the hospital and was back in ten days with her boy! Joe had kept working and did not realize she had left until he saw the car was gone. They had only one car so when she came home ten days later, Joe saw his son for the first time.

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We continue to have a good relationship with the City and are in the final stages of negotiating a new lease agreement for the museum property. This process has moved ahead steadily for the past few months and should be completed soon. Thanks to Stan Daily, Frank Roth, Bob Rust, Bill Manzer and Ira Grooms for working on this since 2014. The importance of the new lease is that we will have secured a long-term lease for the current location and we will have the confidence needed to consider the possible expansion of the museum.

The museum has been here in this building since 1988. How often we hear people say, "I have lived here over 10 years and never been inside". We need more space and more visibility. With a new architectural feature on the building, more people will stop and come in for a look. With more space, we will be able to have more interesting exhibits to show the collec-

There is a positive feeling on the board that it is time to construct an addition to the existing museum building. We could double the floor space and make the roof line more attractive. This would be a significant project and we think there is support in the community for doing it. You will hear more about it soon as we consider the options for doing it and make plans for a fundraising drive. Due to our careful management of Society funds over the years, we have managed to accumulate some seed money for such a project but we will need more and you can help.

Max

### WAVING FOR FREEDOM

Our museum site proudly displays a lighted outdoor United States flag 24 hours a day. Because of the winds, the flag needs to be replaced generally every three months.

If you would like to donate a new 3' x 5' flag, please rop it off at the museum.

Thank you.



## THE PELLIGRINO FAMILY HISTORY, Continued from Page 1

They were a hard working family. They dry farmed the land in Somis that belonged to the family. One day Ol' Joe Cananas asked his daughter, Laura, for the deed to the land that he had given her. He needed to pay his taxes; he said he would pay her back when his crops were paid for. She gave him the deed and Ol' Joe went to the bank, borrowed on the land, paid the taxes but never repaid Laura.

Dry farming for the Pellerino family meant they had lima beans, pigs and cattle on the land. Laura used to say they used everything from a pig except the oink. They worked the farm and split the income three ways, a third to each—Paul, Gene and their cousin, Bob Bianchi.

It was not until Joe Cananas died and the land was to be divided that Laura learned the land-deed she gave her father for his “debt” went to Antonia. Laura just went on.

Paul, Gene and Bob Bianchi (Antonia's son by her first marriage), joined up when WWII came along. They fought with distinction in the Pacific Theatre of war. At the end of war, Paul paid the back taxes owed on Antonia's property so they would not lose the ranch.



Jim Pellerino

During prohibition Joe Pellerino raised grapes on his land among other things. He made wine from the grapes and sold it to his friends. When prohibition ended, many of his “friends” no longer came for the wine. He was hurt by it and he lost trust in most of the people with whom he worked.

Laura was the one who would interact with people. She was very much a businesswoman as she kept all the books and did the business transactions for the family. At a time when the world saw women as more “decorative,” Laura was doing much of a man's job as well as being the mother and wife of the family. Laura purchased land on East Street in Somis and lived in the little house that was built in 1935 for her mother, Mimi Cananas. Laura was chosen as a Doña by PVHS in 1971.

Paul's son, Jim, was very close to his grandmother and her life and stories will always be part of his family. Jim and his wife, Theresa, have two children and have been involved with Somis 4-H mentoring kids in swine projects for years. Jim works for Berylwood Heights Mutual Water Company.

**WHY join *Pleasant Valley Historical Society*?**

We are a society of Pleasant Valley residents and friends who, since 1964, are interested in preserving and providing access to information on the history of the area. We are the only organization who has such a focus on the Pleasant Valley area. A small group of volunteer members is working to preserve and present the ever-growing collections of changing displays, research books, and accessible files of maps, pictures, and articles.

To accomplish this properly, many of the artifacts and documents need to be protected in archival polyester sheets and sleeves. These are expensive. For example, a single 9" x 12" sleeve costs \$1.94. Larger sleeves that can contain a single newspaper sheet costs \$6.95. These alone eat up a large part of our annual budget.

Our beautiful Charles Honn Botanical Garden is the other big budget item. Professional gardeners do the necessary major work. The large Amish-style Gazebo is available to members for small parties. Seasonal changes plus the presence of Monarch butterflies make the garden a favorite relaxation spot—a quiet hidden gem

So why join? Currently, membership dues provide about one-third of our budget. You can see how important your annual dues are in helping us preserve archival of items. The cost of a luncheon for two could also buy twenty archival sleeves!

Please consider joining if you have previously just been reading *the Echo*. If you are already a renewing member, please consider raising the level or adding an extra donation.

**MEMORIALS**

Fred Phipps and Cathy Trainer donated in memory of **Carolyn Koroknay, Teressa Lewis, Marian Trachsel, David Brown, Michael Ann Rockenstein, Merrie Jochums, Ceil Copey, Howard Farner, Martha Castelanos**

Pat Wise gave in memory of **Joe Cannon**.

**HONORARIUMS**

Liz and Joe Dilbert gave in honor of **Doña Ana Blattel, Don Martín Daly, Doña Grace Martínez, Doña Rita Faulder**

Adele Walsh donated in honor of **Ira Grooms' 90th Birthday**.

**GENERAL DONATIONS**

Robert and Donna Lutz made a generous contribution.

Richard Honn made a generous donation in support of the Honn Botanical Garden.

## Board of Directors 2017-2018

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### Standing Committees for 2017-2018

Finance: Bob Rust; Museum Operations: Bill Todd; Events: Joy Todd; Garden; Betty Jo MacDonald;  
Facilities: Bob Burrow; Communication: Betty Sullivan.

*Thank you for supporting our dine out events. They help us pay for Museum operation,  
maintain the garden and print and mail this newsletter.*

#### THE PLEASANT VALLEY HISTORICAL

#### SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

Invites you to DINE OUT at

#### PRESTO PASTA

1701 Daily Dr.

Camarillo

**ON TUESDAY,**

**JANUARY 9**

From 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

You must present this coupon in  
order for the Society to receive  
credit.

#### THE PLEASANT VALLEY HISTORICAL

#### SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

Invites you to DINE OUT at

#### CHESTERS ASIA

2216 Pickwick Dr.

Camarillo

**ON TUESDAY**

**FEBRUARY 6**

From 11 a.m to 9:30 p.m.

You must present this coupon in  
order for the Society to receive  
credit.

**NEWS FROM THE  
PLEASANT VALLEY  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

*The mission of the Pleasant Valley Historical Society and Garden is to acquire, identify, restore and preserve artifacts, documents and photographs related to the Pleasant Valley community; to make the museum and garden a focal point for the dissemination of local history and the education of the general public, and to recognize local residents who have provided outstanding service to the Pleasant Valley community.*

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Betty Sullivan, 482-6340

**PUT THIS DATE ON YOUR CALENDAR**

Dine Out at Presto Pasta on January 9

Dine Out at Chesters Asia on February 6



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
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Oxnard, CA  
Permit No. 128

Pleasant Valley Historical Society  
P. O. Box 570  
Camarillo, CA 93011-0570  
Museum Open: Saturday and Sunday  
12 noon to 4 p.m.