

# The Echo

## News from the Pleasant Valley Historical Society

### PLEASANT VALLEY CEMETERY/DIZDAR PARK

By Val Rains

The year is 1941. Imagine you are a young boy almost five years old and you have just moved into the new fire station with your parents and three siblings. And, guess what! Right next to your home is the Pleasant Valley Church Cemetery. Your elementary school is only one block beyond the cemetery and, during lunchtime, many of the students spend their free time, running and dashing in and out between the tombstones.

Later that year, workers began digging up the graves. Let's have a peek and see what they were looking for. Oh, there are bones but where are the wooden caskets? And can you believe that many of the recovered skulls have hair on them! The workers carefully removed all the bones and placed them in new containers. It took at least three years to complete the transfer of the bodies to new resting places.

Mike Dizdar had his nephew, Joseph, a retired gravedigger from Los Angeles, supervise the removals. Joseph, in turn, was supervised by a county health inspector, who watched every move. This is a first hand account by Roger Putnam, son of Camarillo's first fire chief. Mike Dizdar was a good friend of the Putnam family. Sadly, Mike did not live long enough to see the completion of the park.

The cemetery property was not originally part of the government triangle called Pleasant Valley, which was located between land grants. It had been part of the Rancho Santa Clara or La Colonia and was located south of the old Conejo Road, the main highway through town, and what we today call Ventura Blvd. The land was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Davenport for \$125 and then deeded to the Pleasant Valley Baptist Church.

The first burial in the cemetery was a seventeen year old in 1874 by the name of Spear Warner. He was followed by Charles Wells, an infant, in 1875. Then came a nine-year old, Charles Dickey, in 1875. The next were a married couple, Joseph Davenport in 1876 followed by his wife, Pernotia Riley Davenport in 1877. Between 1877 and 1891, there was only one other burial. In 1882, Gussie Mahan, 2 months and 25 days, was laid to rest.

There were places for more than 210 gravesites. The sexton caretaker appointed by the church trustees was the same Frank Davenport who had given the property to the church. The last internment was Mrs. Louise Schuetz in 1919. Lots varied in price from \$5 or \$10 to \$50 or \$60. In 1891, anyone contributing at least \$20 to the building fund was given a cemetery lot. In September of 1891, the Church dedicated their new edifice free of debt. It had cost \$1,800. Cemetery committees were established and funds put aside for upkeep and

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## PLEASANT VALLEY CEMETERY/DIZDAR PARK ( continued from Page 1)

maintenance. The costs ran from \$3.50 a quarter to \$6.50 in 1896. In 1896, an added expenditure to plant and care for trees was made from the cemetery fund. Records indicate that costs were a constant drain on the church budget.

In 1926, negotiations began with Adolfo Camarillo to purchase part of the unoccupied part of the cemetery. It wasn't until 1929 that the sale was consummated for \$10,250. At that time, instructions were given to the Church trustees to consider selling the occupied part. Their attorney reported that "disposal of the ground would be difficult but not impossible" and the costs continued to escalate.

Enter Hazen Dizdar, known to all as Mike, who was responsible for the city's water system. He approached the church with an idea to make the cemetery a perpetual park in the middle of town. He would cover the costs of exhuming and transferring the bodies to Ivy Lawn Cemetery. The Church had to contact any descendant of those buried there and have them relinquish deed to the property to the church, which, in turn, would transfer the deed to Ventura County.

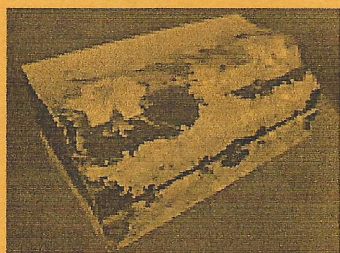
When the bodies, or at least those which could be located, had been reburied, Mike funded the development of Dizdar Park, which was named in his honor. There are swings and slides in use by today's children, instead of tombstones, a sight that would have gladdened Mike's heart if he were still here to see it.

Note: The word "cemetery" is from the Greek word *koimeterion* which is translated as dormitory or resting place.

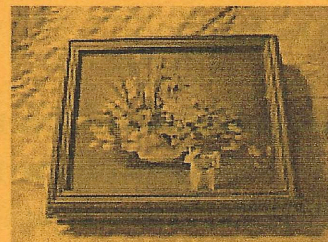


*Young Roger Putnam with newly planted tree.*

### ANTIQUE CLUB



The current display features dresser boxes in a variety of materials. Some are made of celluloid (like the one pictured at the left) or wood (like the one on the right.) These boxes were used to hold madame's jewelry or her various other trinkets. No well bred lady of her day was without one.





## From the Desk of the President

Dear Members,

The calendar year-end is upon us and once more we have the opportunity to recall and appreciate our blessings. The museum has gone through some changes this year as we diligently work to share and store our historical artifacts.

We have a new storage shed, thanks to Ron McCown, as we continue to accumulate historical items. Our little museum is just too small and we have established a Capital Committee to assist in our growth agenda. They are to provide a budget for either growing where we have been planted or moving to a building that will accommodate all of the acquired artifacts. We need money for that and the committee's agenda will include strategies for raising these funds.

Our monthly flea markets have been successful and our vendors like the garden very much--enough to want to come back next year when the weather is warmer. Much appreciation to Ira Grooms and the dynamic duo of Dale and Janet Ackerman for supporting the markets with their time and energy.

Our garden is lovely and the gazebo has provided a gracious venue for weddings and receptions. David Hibbits and Betty Jo McDonald have worked hard this year keeping it up. In the rush of our days, we too often forget those most important to us. Thank you for disseminating our historical facts, pictures and artifacts.

Blessings of the holidays and Happy New Year to all.

Paige Jones Hibbits, Phd

President

### MEMORIALS AND DONATIONS

**Donations were made in the memory of:**

**Bob Kildee** by Pat Wise, Fred Phipps, Stan and Liz Daily, Marie Griffin and Family

**Beverly Quirk** by Fred Phipps

**Caroline Daily** by Adel Walsh

**J. P. Ward** by Fred Phipps

**In honor of a Birthday**

**Barbara Fulkerson** by Adele Walsh



## Charles Honn Garden

By Betty Jo McDonald, Master Gardener

In our mad holiday rush, we sometimes forget about the animals and birds which add color and pleasure to our lives through out the year. Our gardens are a good place to offer them shelter and food. Our very own Charles Honn Botanic Garden is a National Wildlife Certified Wildlife Habitat. It has become bird friendly over the years with plants which you could adapt for your own wildlife habitat at home. Perhaps the best wildlife friendly plant in our garden is the Toyon.



*Heteromeles arbutifolia*, better known as Toyon, is a holly-like shrub, which eventually grows into a dense tree up to 35 feet, and it is what Hollywood was originally named after. Its stiff evergreen foliage and dense clusters of red berries make it a favorite for holiday wreaths, and as a snack for the local wildlife.

Deer browse on its tender new leaves; fortunately, it is one of the few plants that has no trouble outgrowing their reach. More importantly, birds, squirrels and other wildlife rely on the abundant berries during otherwise bleak winter months. The berries hang on the trees for a long time, as apparently they aren't edible until they are very ripe.

If you want to plant a Toyon in your garden, plant it small, no larger than a 5-gallon size; remember, it can get huge, 15 feet across, and it doesn't like a lot of water after it is established.

Another plant which feeds wildlife is the Coffee Berry, or *Rhamnus californica*. This beautiful plant can grow in sun and shade, tolerates little water when established and bears berries which wildlife love. It has a reputation of being disliked by deer, but Las Pilitas Nursery says that, in years of extreme drought, the deer get hungry enough to eat it.

If you have room to plant a tree which will feed wildlife during the cold months, *Alnus Rhombifolia* (white Alder) and *Quercus* or any kind of native oak will provide food during the late fall and early winter; in addition, the oak will provide shelter. Alders flower when they lose their leaves and provide pollen and seed. Oaks, of course, provide the acorns loved by many forms of wild life. They are long lasting and provide fat and protein to help keep fat reserves during the winter months.

If you are interested in planting a native plant in your garden, you can check out Nopolita Nursery in Ventura in the Lassens Parking lot. They have beautiful plants and lots of good suggestions and information.



## WHERE IS SPRINGVILLE?

By Bert Misevic

Many past Automobile Club (AAA) maps carried the names of settlements once existing but now not physically identified along the road. Such is the case for Springville. Referring to a 1989 Thomas Bros. Maps - Guide, Springville was shown as a settlement located in the general area where Central Avenue intersects with Highway 101. This location is also the intersection of the boundaries of three Mexican Land Grants known as Rancho Las Posas, Rancho El Rio De Santa Clara Del Norte and Rancho El Rio de Santa Clara La Colonia.

Springville was a thriving farming settlement in the 1870s through the early 1900s. The only major townships in the county at the time were Ventura, Port Hueneme and Saticoy. Oxnard was not yet in existence and Somis was not yet recognized as a Settlement.

Transportation in these days was by foot or wagon, horses, mules, and by trading ships. Farms and Ranchos were generally self-contained for subsistence. Imagine, in the 1860s, there were no structures existing between Springville to the top of the Conejo Grade except one adobe farm house on Rancho Calleguas. The farm houses in the Springville area were spread out generally between what is now Ventura Boulevard and Laguna Road and between Las Posas Road and the flood control channel west of Wood Road.

The Pleasant Valley and the Springville area attracted farming interest due to the plentiful water and good soil. There was a spring on the land of Jens Pederson, located at what is now the intersection of Wood Road and Ventura Boulevard on the North side of the Camarillo Airport. This spring fed a small lake and was a popular overnight spot for sheepherders and cattlemen to water their animals on their way from Simi Valley to Port Hueneme.

One of the Farmers in the area was Rev. William Otterbein Wood. Parson Wood, as he was known, was a Baptist minister and was ordained in Ohio. His land holdings of about 600 acres straddled Wood Road on the land which now is the western portion of the Camarillo Airport. In 1878 Parson Wood initiated the construction of a church on 5 acres of land donated by Thomas R. Bard located near the intersection of Wood Road and Ventura Boulevard. The Church known as 'The Church of the Little Flock of Jesus Christ' included a cemetery. Once the Church was built, Springville developed into the district shopping site which included two mercantile stores, a hotel-tavern, restaurant, blacksmith shop, two feed stables, and Post Office. A replica of the church, now on display in the Historical Society museum, was made by Wendell P. Daily from wood contained in the original church door. Wendell Daily is the grandfather of Stanley Daily, former Mayor of Camarillo.

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## WHERE IS SPRINGVILLE? *Continued from Page 5*

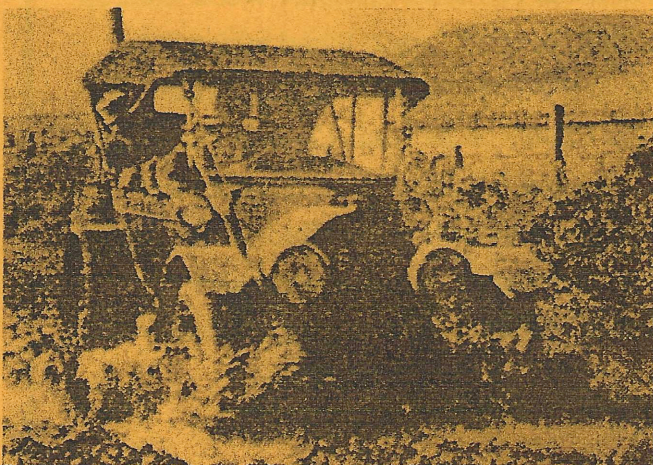
The Springville School District was formed in 1887 and a one room school house constructed. The original school house was replaced in the 1920s. The replacement school house is now a private residence and still stands alongside Pleasant Valley Road near the Camarillo Airport. The school district eventually merged with the El Rio district.

Roads in the area served to move crops from Pleasant Valley to Port Hueneme and to Los Angeles. Several routes existed to Los Angeles which included passage using the Norwegian Grade in Thousand Oaks and through the Santa Rosa Valley and to the Conejo valley area using Portero Road behind U.C. Channel Islands.

Springville Road (now the frontage road alongside Highway 101) passed to the west to El Rio and east as far as Lewis Road. In 1873 the county commissioned the building of a road to the Conejo Valley which is now known as the Conejo Grade. Depending on the wagon and stage coach rigs used, sometimes passengers were required to dismount and walk the grade. However, travel time to Los Angeles was significantly reduced. A stage coach service operated for approximately 12-years which linked transportation from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara, with stops at Newbury Park, Springville, Centerville (later known as New Jerusalem, then El Rio) and Ventura.

The development of the railroad system in the last decade of the 1800s shifted commercial activities to the sites of the railroad depots. The establishment of the railroad depot along present day Lewis Road caused the rail stop to be named Camarillo after the Camarillo Ranch. As commercial activities developed in the area of the railroad depot the businesses in Springville subsequently migrated to the general area of the intersection of Ventura Boulevard and Lewis Road.

The road from Springville to the Newbury Park area was named 'The Conejo Road', sometimes 'The Old Conejo Road' and has now become the Ventura Freeway, and 'Ventura Boulevard' in Camarillo. The Thomas Brothers Guide has identified the frontage road on the south side of the Ventura Freeway from Central Avenue westward as "Springville Road." The road is now marked by the city as "Ventura Boulevard."



The Pleasant Valley Historical Society Museum has recently enlarged their Springville display. Why not come in and take a look. Later, when passing the Highway 101 and Central Avenue intersection, you may bring forth a visualization of Parson Woods' church and the old Springville School just south of the freeway.

*Traveling along Springville Road after a rainstorm.  
More pictures on Page 7*



## July 2010 - June 2011

### Executive Committee and Board of Directors

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Betty Jo McDonald

Roger Putnam

Bob Rust

Jane Brewster

Ted Daniel

Barbara Fulkerson

David Hibbits

Raquel Latham

Ron McCown

Albert Misevic

Val Rains

Tina Sanchez

Adele Walsh

### More Springville Scenes



*Left: The Springfield School*



*Above: Rev. William O. Wood*



**NEWS FROM THE  
PLEASANT VALLEY  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

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*The Pleasant Valley Historical Society Mission is to identify, preserve, classify, restore and acquire artifacts, buildings, landmarks, photographs and historical documents of the greater Pleasant Valley area for the education and use of the general public, and to make the museum a focal point for the dissemination of the history of the area.*

**It's that time of the year!**  
**Time to renew your membership. You will find an envelope enclosed. Just slip in your check and mail it. You will continue to be part of P.V.H.S. and hear about our events and activities for another year.**