



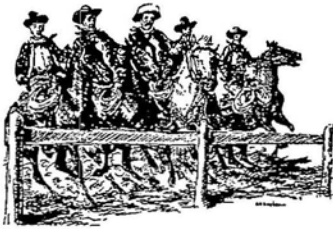
Santa Susana Mountain Park Association

Volume 30, Issue 7

January 2001 Newsletter

A Non-Profit 501 (c) (4) Organization
Incorporated August 31, 1971

From the Archives



by Albert Knight

Editor's Note: Al is a professional archeologist and a past SSMPA vice president.

I was recently reading The Cattle on a Thousand Hills - Southern California 1850-1880, by Robert Glass Cleland (Huntington Library Publications, Fifth Printing 1990). I had read an earlier edition of this fine history many years ago, well before my association with the SSMPA and had forgot (if it had ever registered) that this book has a very interesting reference to Santa Susana Pass. I will give you an outline of the story, and hope that you will look up and read the full reference for yourself (see pgs. 250-263).

Southern California, especially Los Angeles, in the mid-1850s, was a pretty wild place (who says there are no traditions in Los Angeles!). Robberies and killings were commonplace, and Indians, Mexicans, half-breeds and whites vied for the honors of being the most *loco y macho*. And race relations were, to say the least, not good. One of the most famous *banditos* of the time was a young Mexican man who went by the name of Juan Flores. Flores and his band of cutthroats were angry that their people had been robbed by the newly arriving *Norteamericanos*, and they proceeded to rob, raid and sometimes kill, across much of the southern part of the new state. Flores and his gang eventually committed one of the most infamous crimes in the history of the state--they ambushed and killed the sheriff of Los Angeles, J.R. Barton, and three of his posse, with only two of the party of six surviving to tell the tale.

(continued on pg. 2)

January '01 SSMPA General Membership Meeting

Monday, 1/15/01 - Clarence Freeman, retired consulting civil engineer for Soil Conservation Service & U. S. Army Corp of Engineers, who currently resides in Fillmore, will present a program about (1) the proposed massive Newhall Ranch development, located in both L.A. & Ventura Counties, that is currently in litigation; (2) the upper Santa Clara River watershed; and (3) the 150-foot high, silted-up Matilija Dam that blocks the (historically in number, approx. 2000) southern steelhead run from spawning areas up-river from this dam. The meeting will start at 7:15 p.m. and the program at 8:00 p.m. Please come and hearing this fascinating lecture.

General Membership Program Meetings take place every third Monday of the months September thru November and January thru May. Program meetings start at 7:15 and generally conclude by 9:00 p.m. The venue is the meeting room at the Rockpointe Recreation Center, 22300 Devonshire St., Chatsworth, on the south side of the street, one block before entering Chatsworth Park south.

All SSMPA members are encouraged to attend not only General Membership Program Meetings but also Board of Directors Meetings, which take place at the Chatsworth Park South Visitor's Center on the first Monday of the month. Refreshments are served at program meetings.

Do you have an idea for a future program or lecturer? If so, call our program chairman, Dorian Keyser, at (818) 345-3795.

The entire southern part of the state was thrown into turmoil and hundreds of men were deployed to track Flores and his men down, no matter how long it took. The goal was to block every pass in Southern California and then to flush Flores and his men into one or more of these traps.

Of interest to us here are the contributions made by Don Andres Pico, of San Fernando, and Mr. James Thompson, eventually the owner of the Encino Rancho, leaders of two of the posses. Many local Indians, especially some of the Cahuilla, also formed or joined various posses. The San Fernando Valley passes were also reinforced by "a command of U.S. troops from Fort Tejon. Mr. Thompson placed 10 of the soldiers, with two of his own men, at Scorpion Ranch. The "Simi Pass" referred to below is the original trail through today's Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park.

This strategy was soon successful. Cleland quotes the Los Angeles Star, Feb. 7, 1857, as follows: "On Tuesday last, Juan Flores came to the Simi Pass, in search of water; two soldiers stepped up behind him, and with their guns leveled and cocked ordered him to stop, which he immediately did, and dismounted. At this time, he was without arms, had not even a pocket knife, was mounted on a very poor horse, and had only a little dried beef on his saddle behind him." He was questioned, but gave another name. However, when he was taken to the troops camp, one of the Mexican posse members immediately recognized him as Juan Flores, and he was put under arrest (see pg. 258). Flores, however, may have been

taken while scouting. For while the commotion regarding the arrest of Flores was going on, one or two of his men managed to get through the pass. Thompson interviewed Flores in the field. Although he generally denied being guilty of most of what he was accused of, including being the leader of the gang, he was wounded in the right arm and admitted that he had accidentally shot himself during the retreat from the battle with the posse from El Monte. Flores then asked to be taken to a clergyman, to make his confession and to be able to write one last time to his mother.

The *bandito capitan* was taken to Los Angeles and he and 11 of his men were tried, sentenced to death, and executed. The execution of Flores was reported in the Los Angeles Star on Feb. 27, 1857. Although the description of the execution is too long to quote here, it is very moving and well worth the read, especially for those who oppose the death penalty. The execution was, in short, poorly performed. "The fall was too short and the unfortunate wretch struggled in agony for a considerable time...the body was kept hanging for about an hour and was then handed over to those who had been engaged to take charge of it..." (Cleland, pg. 263).

The pass had proven its importance. A few years later James Thompson would receive the contract to build a wagon road on the Los Angeles side of Simi Pass, and he would build facilities to service that pass road. The road and the foundations of some of the facilities can be seen in the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park to this day. ●

Editor's Comment: Interestingly, commercial & residential development is looming on the horizon for another old Simi Pass, specifically the area along Dayton Canyon, which can be approached at the intersection of Roscoe & Valley Circle Blvds. (One can still access Dayton Canyon through the unlocked gate to experience the lovely riparian area and delta where the tributary meets Dayton Creek, which will all be altered with development and the installation of a cement culvert.) The final Environmental Impact Report has been accepted and certified by the City, and the City Council has adopted the General Plan Amendment. Next up: the resolution of the development agreement between the City and the developer. Anyone wishing to comment on record regarding this development, either in person or in writing, should do so by January 17th. This will be our last opportunity. Some of the issues that leave questions to be answered: What about the diminished source of water for existing wildlife? Also, since SEA protection will be removed with annexation of the land from County to City, how will the natural resources be protected? On the following page is the letter from the City, dated December 22, 2000:

NOTICE TO PROPERTY OWNERS/OCCUPANTS WITHIN A 500-FOOT RADIUS:

You are hereby notified that the full Los Angeles City Council will conduct a public hearing on Wednesday, January 17, 2001 at approximately 10:00 am. or soon thereafter, in Room 300, 200 North Main St., LA City Hall, relative to an Ordinance authorizing the execution of Development Agreement with SunCal Companies for proposed Commercial and residential projects located at 24000 Roscoe Blvd. within the Chatsworth/Porter Ranch and Canoga Park/ Winnetka-Woodland Hills/West Hills Community Plan Areas.

If you are unable to appear at this hearing, you may submit your comments in writing. The file referred to above can be reviewed in the office of the City Clerk. Written comments may be addressed to the City Clerk, Room 615, City Hall, 200 North Main St., Los Angeles, CA 90012.

Please be advised that the City Council reserves the right to continue this matter to a later date, subject to any time limit constraints. Please contact this office if you would like to be notified of any future hearing date should Council not act on this matter on the aforementioned date.

John A. White, Legislative Assistant
Planning & Land Use Management Committee
(213) 485-5707
e-mail: jwhite@clerk.ci.la.ca.us

Note: If you challenge this proposed action in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the City Clerk at or prior to the public hearing. Any written correspondence delivered to the City Clerk before the City Council's final action on a matter will become a part of the administrative record.

SSMPA Board of Directors Election

The SSMPA by-laws define a 10-member board of directors consisting of a president, vice president, recording secretary, corresponding secretary, treasurer, and five members-at-large. The election of the new board will take place via secret ballots that will be counted at the April, 2001 SSMPA membership meeting. We invite members to come forward and be nominated for the new board to replace several present board members who will not be running for re-election. We welcome new people with new ideas! Please contact Dorian Keyser at (818) 345-3795 or Judy Garris at (818) 346-7654 if you would like to be a candidate or wish to recommend potential candidate(s). All nominees will be on the ballot if they agree to run for office.

Immediate Help Wanted - Newsletter Editor

Patricia Milow, our very able and conscientious newsletter editor for more than three years, is no longer able to continue as editor of the SSMPA newsletter due to job constraints. We are actively seeking her replacement, so if you or someone you know is both qualified and interested in taking on this satisfying task, please contact either Dorian or Judy at the above phone numbers to volunteer. We would love to have you! (Note: the newsletter editor uses material primarily supplied by others. Also, the newsletter you are reading was prepared by our treasurer, Susan Gerke.)

To submit an article for publication in our newsletter, send it to SSMPA, Attn: Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 4831, Chatsworth, CA 91313.

California Red-legged Frog

The US Fish and Wildlife Service is holding informational meetings on their proposal to designate critical habitat for the California Red-legged Frog, which was listed as a federally threatened species in May 1996. The frog lives on Ahmanson Ranch and would be adversely affected by the development. The meetings are scheduled as follows:

January 3, 2001, 1 to 4 pm, San Luis Obispo Embassy Stes, 333 Madonna Rd, San Luis Obispo, CA.

January 5, 2001, 1 to 4 pm, Best Western Monarch Hotel, 6680 Regional Street, Dublin, CA.

The economic analysis as well as the critical habitat proposal are available at:

<http://www.r1.fws.gov>

Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park

We are disappointed that no money has been made available for the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park, despite the fact that funding for its expansion and operation has very high priority with Angeles District management. This is because the political climate gives priority to inner city needs for State Proposition 12 funds. SSMPA is investigating ways to convince the elected officials that our park deserves greater consideration as it is located within the City of L.A and should qualify as an urban park.



GOOSE TALES

Greetings of the Season from the Canada Goose Project! This will be the first edition of a somewhat regular column informing you of the Canada Goose census count, occurring every year between October and March. This year, the "high count" so far--and much to our amazement--was 1,150 birds flying out of Encino Reservoir between 6:40 and 7:30 a.m. on Sunday, December 24, 2000. They were headed northeast and appeared to overfly the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Area.

As some of you know, three acres of the east side of the Wildlife Lake (I'm campaigning to have it named Lake Swift) has been seeded for the last few years with rye grass. During the first and second years, the geese came to feed by the hundreds. Then, two stray dogs appeared, making their home under the bushes and beside the lake. The result? They chase the geese, eat the wildlife and in general are surviving in this area. I commend their survival skills, however, when we have visitors from Alaska and Canada, we need to be more hospitable. The Recreation and Parks Department seems unable/unwilling to do much, the park rangers have been seen running after these two well-fed canines, and the Fish & Game Department has mumbled something about not being allowed to capture the dogs with tranquilizing implements. What can we do?

The wild birds do not have many other safe places to rest and forage, what with Pierce College not watering their farmland and Chatsworth Nature Preserve dry because of lack of rain. I think a few well-placed telephone calls from all of you might generate some energy. How about it? James Ward is the Chief Maintenance Supervisor at the Sepulveda Basin (818-756-8190), and Cindy Miscikowski handles anything connected with that side of the Basin (818-756-8150). Also, let's get the federal government involved, since these wild birds are protected "from harassment and injury" by the Migratory Bird Treaty between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. Brad Sherman's number is 818-999-1990. Steve Soboroff is currently President of the Board of Commissioners for City Parks & Recreation. (He is running for mayor now, a major leverage point.) Call him at his office at 213-473-5888.

This year there are four Snow Geese flying with the Canadas. They are beautiful, outlined against the blue dawn, with their pure white feathers and black-tipped wings. Come join us on the Goose Count! We need the help and you'll not regret getting up early to see the sun rise over the Santa Monica Mountains, listening to the call of the Wild.

--Rosemarie White, Canada Goose Project



Quotable Quotes

"There will be a continuous strip of publicly owned property going all the way from the Santa Susanas down to the Pacific Ocean." --Joe Edmiston, Executive Director of Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (*Los Angeles Times*, December 24, 2000)

"For 24 years I have never backed down or given up on the environment, and I never will in my whole life. I guarantee it!" --Al Gore (*Madison, WI*, October 26, 2000)

"Prosperity will mean little if we leave to future generations a world of polluted air, toxic lakes, and vanished forests.... The solution is not to eliminate the federal role in protecting the environment, the solution is reform--reform that sets high standards." --George W. Bush (*Aliquippa, PA*, April 3, 2000)

"I just wish that we had done more in Florida." --Carl Pope, Executive Director, Sierra Club (*Sierra magazine*, Jan./Feb. 2001)

January 2001 Hikes

For most hikes, hikers need sunscreen, lugsoles, socks, a hat & water.

Also, serious rain cancels.

Stagecoach Trail & Exploration Series hikes are offered by Santa Susana Mountain Task Force (SSMTF) of the Sierra Club, and publicized by the SSMPA. This page also lists Rim of the Valley Hikes, sponsored by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority.

Stage Coach Trail Hike

Sunday, January 28, 2001. Interpretative hike into history in our Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Meet at 9:00 am for the 4-mile (700 ft. gain) loop up the Stage Coach Trail. Bring water and a snack in a back or hip pack. From Topanga Canyon Blvd., turn west on Devonshire and drive into Chatsworth Park South to the second parking lot by the Recreation Building. Call Lee Baum (818) 341-1850 for more info.

Sierra Club Hikes

Thursday, January 11, 2001. Palo Comado's China Flats: Moderately paced 8 mi, 1000' gain hike, Oak grasslands, some steep uphill to flats, possible stream crossings. Meet 8:30 am King James Ct (Ventura Fwy 101, exit Lindero Cyn Rd, N 3 mi to just past Kanan. Park on Lindero Cyn Rd). Lunch by stream, under Sycamore trees.

Thursday, January 18, 2001. O'Melveny Peak/Bee Cyn & Mission Peak Trails: Moderately paced 7 mi, 1200' gain hike. Meet 8:30 am trailhead (Balboa Blvd N, L on Orozco to Sesnon, L 1/4 block. Park on lot).

Sunday, January 28, 2001. Betty B. Dearing Trail/ Fryman Cyn: Moderately paced 7 mi via Wilacre Peak & Coldwater Cyn Peak to Fryman Cyn overlook. Meet 8:30 am at trailhead (on Fryman Rd, just W of Laurel Cyn Blvd in Studio City, S of Ventura Blvd. Park in lot.)

Sunday, January 28, 2001. Rocky Peak (2714') Santa Susana Mtns: Stretch your legs before the Superbowl on moderately paced 7 mi, 1400' gain hike to peak amongst 65 million-yr-old sandstone outcroppings. Meet 8 am at trailhead. From 118 Fwy in Simi Valley, exit on Yosemite Ave, go N 1/2 mi to Flanagan Dr, turn R, drive 3/4 mi to end then park.

San Fernando Valley Audubon Society Hikes

Saturday, January 13, 2001. Birdwatching hike for beginning adults and school children from 8:30 until 11:00 a.m. at the Sepulveda Basin wildlife area. Directions: Exit 405 Fwy at Burbank Blvd, go W on Burbank 1/4 mi, turn north (right) on Woodley, go 1/4 mi to first possible R turn, turn R, go 1/4 mi to wildlife area parking. Look for people with binoculars.

Sunday, February 4, 2001. Bird Walk Topanga State Park. For beginners & buffs. Enjoy birds in habitat; learn what they eat, how they live. Meet 8 am at Topanga State Park (8 mi from Ventura Fwy or 4.9 mi from PCH on Topanga Cyn Blvd, take Entrada Rd 1.1 mi (2 L turns) to park entrance; \$5 lot fee). Bring water, snack, binoculars, bird book.

Rim of the Valley Hike

Sunday, January 28, 2001. Hike into Sage Ranch to discover the colors of winter! Spend time with a naturalist as you experience the colors of lichens, ribes, ceanothus and more. Three miles round trip, 100' elevation gain/loss. From 2:00 to 4:30 pm. Directions: From 101 Fwy, exit Valley circle heading north. From Simi Valley, exit Topanga Blvd, west on Plummer to Valley Circle heading south. At Woolsey Cyn intersection, turn and follow the signs to Boeing & Sage. Turn right at top of the hill onto Black Cyn Rd. Entrance to park is 200 feet from intersection. Park inside the gate. Call (805) 492-2184 for more info.

We encourage any member who lives in or near the Santa Susana Mountains or Simi Hills to become an active member in SSMPA's effort to protect these area's wildlife corridors. Speaking at City Planning hearings to educate about our wildlife corridors would be great, yet any type and amount of voluntary service is always appreciated. You may be able to contribute an article to the newsletter, man a table of SSMPA merchandise, participate in a committee. . . To find out how you can volunteer for the SSMPA, call Judy Garris at 818-346-7654 or Susan Gerke at 818-704-9304.

January 8, 2001, 7:30 PM Board of Director's Meeting: Chatsworth Park Visitor's Center
January 15, 2001, 7:15 PM Program Meeting: Rockpointe Recreation Center
February 5, 2001, 7:30 PM Board of Director's Meeting: Chatsworth Park Visitor's Center
February 19, 2001, 7:15 PM Program Meeting: Rockpointe Recreation Center



Thanks to the folks at the Office Depot store on Topanga Canyon Boulevard south of Victory for the donation towards the duplication of our newsletter. We very much appreciate it!

If the expiration date on your label is marked in **pink**, your SSMPA dues have expired. Please send in your dues if you wish to continue your SSMPA membership and to receive our newsletters. If it's already paid, kindly disregard this notice.

If the expiration date on your label is marked in **blue**, payment of your SSMPA membership dues is **due this month**.
Finally, if the expiration date is marked in **green**, payment of your dues is **requested next month**.

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