

On a Historical Note....for The Signal, January 27, 2023
– by Carol Rock

Everything old is new again – and that’s what’s happening at Hart Park in Newhall. Heritage Junction – where 8 historic buildings and a steam engine and caboose are on display to the public – has officially been renamed “Santa Clarita History Center” and a new logo designed and adopted.

“We’re creating an entirely new experience for visitors to the park,” said SCV Historical Society President Alan Pollack. “This is an exciting time for the Historical Society. We’re evolving into a professional museum organization with full-time staff and best practices for collections care. We’re giving our museum campus in Hart Park a fresh makeover with professionally designed exhibits for a better and more meaningful visitor experience. ‘Santa Clarita History Center’ conveys who we are and what we’re doing.”

The logo, designed by former Disney art director Greg Wilzbach and a bold departure from the vintage logo used since the Society’s founding in 1975, features elements of historic firsts and influences on the Santa Clarita Valley and its surroundings – and mirrors the color palette of the City’s Old Town Newhall arts district.

“Santa Clarita has a huge amount of diverse history! Designing a logo that captures it all with a more contemporary graphic design, was quite the challenge,” Wilzbach said. “After attempting to design one graphic image to represent everything I decided to try to graphically represent, with multiple images, some of the most recognized aspects of our history: indigenous peoples (the sun coming up over the land in the center of the logo), agriculture, oil, railroads, mining, and film making. I also wanted to incorporate the color palette established for the Old Town Newhall campaign. Hopefully this new logo will help represent a new phase in bringing our rich history to life.”

Heritage Junction – or the concept of a location where endangered historic structures could find sanctuary - has been part of the Santa Clarita Valley for more than 40 years.

It all started in 1980, when the endangered Southern Pacific railroad depot was moved from its original location across from the Saugus Café to land within the boundaries of Hart Park and became the SCV Historical Society’s headquarters. Former Signal Editor Ruth Newhall was intimately involved in the move, raising money and moving her vehicle incrementally down Railroad Avenue (which was then known as San Fernando Road) as donations came in.

As the years went by and development took off, the collection of historic buildings grew. Gene Autry donated the 1629 Mogul Engine from Melody Ranch in 1982 because he believed that a train station needed an actual train. Bricks from the damaged Mitchell Adobe bricks were recovered from the homestead in Sand Canyon and reassembled across from the depot in 1986. In 1987, there was a flurry of activity, as the schoolhouse and Ramona Chapel from Callahan’s Old West up Sierra Highway, and the Kingsbury House, from downtown Newhall, were moved in. The Edison House was rescued from a group of worker’s homes at the Edison Curve on Magic Mountain Parkway in 1988. The majestic Newhall Ranch House, once used as a haunted

house by employees of Magic Mountain, moved from the overflow parking lot of the amusement park – the longest move of any structure - in 1990 and in 1992, the last house to join the collection was the Pardee House, formerly the home of the Chamber of Commerce and Boys and Girls Club, from the triangle now known as Veterans Historical Park.

The moniker “Heritage Junction” was first adopted by the Society’s board of directors in March 1989, to honor the train station as its first acquisition and anchor. Today, the Santa Clarita History Center will be home to two museums and a variety of historic structures for visitors to explore.

“Those of us who’ve been involved with the Historical Society for a long time feel a sense of nostalgia for ‘Heritage Junction,’ but we’re turning corners and striving to serve a community that has changed and grown at least three-fold since we founded our museum nearly 50 years ago,” said Leon Worden, Society Vice President and overseer of the restoration efforts. “We need to make sure we’re connecting with the people who live here today and living up to their expectations. A lot of towns and cities across America have ‘History Centers.’ Newcomers and visitors immediately have an idea of what they’ll find there, just from the name. As we see it, ‘Santa Clarita History Center’ is our future, and the new name is just the first of many exciting new things to come.