

# The Signal Story: 107 Years of Rich History

## 1919 ... An era begins

“With this issue we unfurl the sails of The Newhall Signal upon the sea of journalism, and we hope that our efforts will be of service and benefit to the Newhall and Saugus valley area. In order to do our best, we must have the unbiased support and cooperation of the good citizens of these communities, and we are looking forward with perfect faith that this assistance will be extended to us.

“The columns of this paper will be open for the discussion of any subject that will be of interest or benefit to the people of the Newhall and Saugus sections, but we reserve the privilege of eliminating anything that smacks of malice.

“We should continually bear in mind that what tends to the true interest of one, helps others, and we must all work in harmony to promote the ongoing of our home section.

“In conclusion, will say that we hope for the loyalty and help that is necessary to make this paper a credit to the town.”

So wrote The Signal’s first editor, in the newspaper’s very first issue, on Friday, Feb. 7, 1919, launching a 100-year-plus tradition of vigilance and community journalism.

Edward H. Brown’s fledgling publication had a hometown feel from the start, carrying front-page items about parties, trips to the beach and residents’ shopping excursions to Los Angeles and other points south.

But even then, when Newhall was a sleepy rural town where talk at the corner store focused on a big crop or the proper way to breed chickens, there was a hint of the growth that would occur in the latter half of the century.

When The Newhall Signal made its debut, a one-year subscription cost \$2. There were no screaming headlines, and one could find unlabeled opinion in almost every news story.

Among the tidbits in the first issue of The Signal: “There have been several cases of the ‘flu’ here, but they are all up and around now.” “Mr. Buttler of the Butter Grocery was in Los Angeles the first of the week buying goods.” “Mr. Bricker, of the Bricker Grocery, was in San Fernando on Monday. He is kept quite busy with his truck business.” “The Sterling Borax Mine, near Lang, is working full time, three sets of miners working eight hours each, consequently the mine never stops working.”

The Signal’s first big story was that of the destruction of the Swall hotel, a landmark structure and one of the newspaper’s regular advertisers. On Friday, March 21, 1919, the headline screamed: “AN OLD LAND MARK BURNS DOWN TUESDAY.”

The Signal in its first year still had a post-war feel, carrying the occasional letter from one of “our boys” still stationed in Europe after serving in World War I. Brown scribed sarcastically in the Feb. 28 issue, “The Germans still cherish hopes that America will stand their friend at the peace table. The sinking of the Lusitania and the bombing of American Red Cross hospitals are, of course, strong and convincing reasons why we should feel kindly toward them.”

Far from the thriving region it has become, the valley in 1919 was an agricultural community where everyone knew everyone else by name. A wedding announcement would refer to the bride as “one of our most outstanding girls.”

## The 1920s

Historian A.B. Perkins described the 1920s as the decade when nothing much happened outside of the St. Francis Dam disaster and the Buffalo Tom Vernon train robbery.

The Signal was still in its infancy, getting used to its wings and townspeople. Spaces between stories were often filled with large ads reading, “Boost Newhall.” Editorials referred to people who didn’t get involved in their community as “flat tires.” Mastheads carried slogans like, “The Newspaper With A Backbone,” and “For Each Other, Not Against Each Other.”



SIGNAL FILE PHOTO

When Edward H. Brown published the first issue of The Signal in 1919, Newhall was a relatively sleepy town of “500 souls.”

## March 15, 1928

**HALL SIGNAL**  
SAUGUS ENTERPRISE

nia, Thursday, March 15 1928 Number Eleven

**is Always Best**  
Lawrence Hawthorne

ay, it seems, a little boy with idle dreams now I did enjoy, too quickly sped, soon I shall see, youth has fled, return to me.

is but a day sun will set, in spirit gay harbors no regret, and faces morning with a smile—embrace make today worth while.

**Big Local Enterprise**

We have in this locality an industry that probably very few persons have given proper consideration, yet it represents a heavier initial expenditure and heavy yearly expenditure. This industry is the Dunn Dairies, known as the Wayside Farms. The finest cows in the state are to be found on these farms, as well as the most modern equipment and latest methods of handling dairy products. These products are never touched by human hands from the sties to the milk cans.

**GREAT ST. FRANCIS DAM CRUMBLES**

Great Wall of Water Sweeps Sleeping Victims Into Eternity

**DEATH FLOOD COMES IN DARKNESS**

Bodies Recovered All Along The Valley From the Dam To The Ocean

**Dead May Number 400**

One of the worst calamities that ever happened in Southern California, took place Tuesday morning at about 12:30 a. m. when the great San Francisco Canyon dam broke, and sent a wall of water crashing down the canyon, sweeping everything in its path to destruction. The canyon opens into the Santa Clara Valley a short distance below Saugus. It is stated that in the canyon proper the wall of water was 75 feet high. Below it spread from hillside to hillside, taking everything in its path. Ranches, the railroad track, the Edison station, everything melted away before the terrific rush, backed as it was by the great waters of the great reservoir.

The first damage west of Saugus was at the Edison station, which was entirely destroyed as far as the buildings was concerned. The old concrete station, which was abandoned when the new plant was built, was completely obliterated.

The loss of life was appalling. Coming as it did, in the dead of night, few had any chance to escape. Those living in the canyon were most of them caught asleep, the condition of the bodies show, all of them being in night clothes, or naked, the terrific rush tearing the clothes from them. The first two

Miss Belle Fraizer, a survivor of the flood, escaped by grasping a log, and climbing up the bank of the canyon. She buried herself in the mud till morning, and was found by searchers and brought to the hospital.

The following persons received first aid treatment at the recovery hospital:

C. E. Hanick  
Tennard Ranock  
Miguel Ruiz  
Belle Fraizer  
L. H. Ruiz  
James J. Ernsholt  
Chester Johnson  
Louis Hopkins  
John Pfeiffer  
Curtis Randall  
Albert David  
Mary Nichols  
Chester Smith

Mrs. A. L. Garcia

At the new Edison ramp near the country line of Ventura, 70 men ate supper Monday night. Only 60 were accounted for up to Tuesday night.

The removal of the bodies by the undertakers began during Tuesday afternoon. Mr. and Mrs. Homer Coe, the little son, Kenneth, and Mrs. Nellie Hansen were taken to Sawtelle. Eddie and Rosina Ruiz were taken to Noble's undertaking parsons

**The Newhall Signal**

\$2.00 For the Year DEVOTED TO THE NEWHALL-SAUGUS VALLEYS Build Up, Don't Tear Down

Vol. I. Newhall, California, Friday, February 7, 1919 No. 1

**PERSHING UP ON FRENCH CUSTOMS**

American General Claims Admiration of the People.

**KISSES OLD FRENCH LADY**

Round Smack on the Two Cheeks of Dear Old Lady Who Made Speech Expressing Gratitude of People to Americans—Acquires Such Facility in the Language That He Can Now Make Good Speech in French.

**FAIRBANK'S NEW FILM**

Douglas Fairbanks and his company of about two hundred, came up from Los Angeles Tuesday by special train and sat on a moving picture stunt. We did not learn the name of the future film, but judging from what we saw, "Douglas at the County Fair" might be considered appropriate. The location chosen for the taking of the pictures was the vacant ground lying west of the depot. Market street from the drug store to the railroad track, was decorated with yards and yards of bunting, signs, flags, etc., not omitting the "ice cream" stands along the way. There were about forty horses in the performance and these did their part by going along the water main which people pay to see at a county fair. A "special train" met by the committee was an interesting feature.

Altogether the performance at "Fairpoint," which was the name Newhall assumed for the day, was very enterprising and we did not have to pay the price of a ticket either.

**OUR HEALTH OFFICER MAKES A VISIT**

The Sterling Borax Mine, near Lang, are working full time, three sets of miners working eight hours each, consequently the mine never stops working. Forty-five men are now employed and the town has an air of industry. The men are all loyal and devoted to their superintendant, Mr. Stewart. They all look prosperous and contented. The Colony was visited last week by our local Health Officer, Dr. Geo. Stevenson, who inspected the school children, reports no sickness, and the healthiest bunch of youngsters he ever met.

Mrs. Stewart, wife of the Superintendent, acts as godmother over the children, looking after their physical needs while Miss Lenson, the amiable and competent school teacher, is very proud of the progress the children are making in their studies. Our Health Officer, Dr. Stevenson, and Mr. Chas. Houghton, the druggist, were welcomed and entertained by the officers of the Company to which they return thanks for the same.

**Berlin.**

"In Berlin! Then you will go there, madame!" cried the general to Madame Polnaire.

"Then they talked of other things and after the luncheon the president's personal estate was near St. Michel, General Pershing asked to visit it, and the car was directed thither.

"It drew up before a mass of grey cinclera, once the Polnaire family home. Pershing bowed his head. Madame Polnaire, silent and full of memories, stood beside him. The general turned and said quietly to her: "At Berlin, madame, how I understand."

"For example," the president happened to say, "we must seek peace in

**THE LOCAL NEWS ITEMS**

"Say, can't you send us in some school notes each week?"

There have been several cases of the "flu" here, but they are all up and around now.

Mr. Buttler of the Butter Grocery was in Los Angeles the first of the week buying goods.

Mr. L. O. Pullen, our genial barber, was in Los Angeles Monday buying stock for his clear stand.

We have had scarcely any rain so far this season and the farmers are praying for more moisture.

The five-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas M. Prena, who has been very sick with pneumonia, is rapidly improving.

Mr. Bricker, of the Bricker Grocery, was in San Fernando on Monday. He is kept quite busy with his truck business.

E. S. Christfeld is repairing the house which he recently purchased on "Myson street." When these changes are completed, the place will be occupied by ye editor and family.

Dr. G. F. Stevenson, health officer for this section, made our office a pleasant call the first of the week, and in the matter of count stands No. 1 on our list of subscribers.

Mr. Bucknell, manager of the Newhall Lumber Co., and family, spent Sunday in Los Angeles with friends and relatives.

We are strangers here, and if those knowing of items of interest will kindly bring them to this office, it will greatly assist us in making our columns more interesting.

Mr. W. W. Hooper, of Brewley, Cal., an old mining engineer, is stopping at Hotel Swall. Mr. Hooper is not feeling very well and is here for his health. He has many words of praise for our climate.

We understand that there will be services in the Presbyterian church next Sunday, the first time for eight weeks, which was also closed on account of the "flu." It is understood Pastor Evans will speak.

Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Swall visited Los Angeles Tuesday on business. The Swall Hotel is enjoying a good business as several are here for their health—and from the way they speak this climate agree with them.

Mr. R. C. Gibson, of Happy Valley, and proprietor of "Egeland," informs us that he is enlarging his hen house so as to be able to run 1000 laying White Leghorn hens. He believes in the best, that is the reason he has White Leghorns.

**SHIPS FIRST IN FRANCE'S NEEDS**

Must Have Aid in Restoring Merchant Marine.

**VAST LOSSES SUMMED UP**

Edward de Billy, Deputy High Commissioner of the French Republic to the United States, Gives Statement of Country's Needs—2,500,000 of Her Young Men Killed or Maimed, 25,000 Factories Ruined.

With 2,500,000 of her youngest, ablest, and most spirited men killed or maimed, and upward of half her industry and shipping destroyed by the war, France's appeal to her allies during the period of rehabilitation will be for help in rebuilding the factories and farms which the Germans wrecked and for assistance in constructing or purchasing ships, said Edward de Billy, deputy high commissioner of the French republic.

Attaining his country's gain by the conflict, in the revitalizing of the French spirit of self-confidence, subdued by the defeat of 1871, and in rebuilding France and Europe with their agricultural districts, Mr. de Billy said the war's losses were far greater. The total that France was "total white," but said the handicap imposed as a result of her sacrifices in restoring the invader could not be overcome except with outside aid.

Referring to figures, he declared that 25,000 factories in the French districts occupied by the Germans were destroyed or stripped of their machinery; that almost 12,000,000 head of cattle were seized; that thousands of miles of farm land, devastated by shelling, were left in a state of sterility; that the net loss in ship tonnage, through sinkings and enforced curtailment in production, was 670,000 tons; and that the money cost of the conflict, in appropriations and public debt aggregated 158,000,000,000 francs, or \$31,000,000,000.

"Our army had to stand," he said, "the first rush of the invasion, while the other armies were being prepared. And, however wonderful was the effort of the British, some months later, the first rush of the American army, the first held by the French had never been less than two-thirds of the total force of the Swiss army. Thus our losses were greater than those of any other army. A part of our country has been invaded, its population treated as slaves, their houses looted, their factories destroyed, while on the fighting line the soil of France has been plowed so deep by shells that no agriculture is possible. The entire population has been lamenting over France as a dead white. Nations! France is dead white. She has men filled with renewed and splendid energy. But here she stands, the problem of regaining her place in the economic markets of the world, with a part of her industrial and agricultural resources destroyed, and with her men killed and maimed to a number that exceeds imagination. Do you see any figures on these subjects?"

They sold all kinds of things at The Signal office, such as Brunswick records, fuse plugs, note pads, school pads, cards and “No Shooting or Hunting” signs. The Signal office was the place where people registered to vote. It was the area’s printing shop and was pretty proud of its work, according to an ad from September, 1924: “WANTED - Your Printing Business. If We Can't Please You, DON'T COME AGAIN!”

There were three different editorial regimes in the 1920s, starting with Edward Brown, founder of The Signal. Upon his death in 1920, his widow Blanche Brown took the reins and brought in Thornton Doelle as her assistant.

Doelle had published a few issues of a little paper called the “Saugus Enterprise.” No copies are known to exist today. When The Signal bought him out, this paper’s full name became “The Newhall Signal and Saugus Enterprise.”

Blanche Brown’s newspaper was full of news; the society column ran on the front page, and Thornton, whose “real” job was with the Forest Service, wrote several columns and poems. In addition, they occasionally ran a column called “Peanut Pietro,” written totally in Mexican slang.

In January, 1925, while Blanche still owned the paper, Doelle took over as lessee and editor. He filled the pages with graphics, poetry and fanciful commentary. He was a colorful editorialist.

The newspaper was sold in June 1925 to A.B. “Dad” Thatcher, who changed its whole look. Doelle’s plethora of poems disappeared. In their place, O. Lawrence Hawthorne appeared under the masthead, complete with artwork. Page one carried news, society items, obituaries and, sometimes, sports. Local news jumped to the back page. Inside pages were filled with wire reports, items on cooking, housekeeping, agricultural or historic features and serialized stories. The pattern continued into the 1930s.

The Signal was published weekly, on Fridays at first, changing to Thursdays in 1924.

The paper strongly favored the creation of a chamber of commerce, proposed in 1924. See ANNIVERSARY, A6

## 1929



SIGNAL FILE PHOTO

Was it a sign of things to come? Even in 1929, there was an occasional traffic jam in Saugus for events such as the annual rodeo. Here, motorists crowd the streets lined by Saugus Cafe and the Saugus Train Station (left).

## 1919 – First Cartoons

**Toon-ing in**

The 75-year evolution of editorial cartoons in The Signal

He Has Had His Day

1919 The first cartoon ever to appear in The Signal (March 14, 1919)

1919 The first editorial cartoon in The Signal (Oct. 10, 1919)

(Special Information Service U. S. Department of Agriculture)

SIGNAL FILE PHOTO

The first cartoon and editorial cartoon to appear in The Signal’s first year.

# The Signal

SINCE 1919  
SANTA CLARITA VALLEY SignalSCV.com

## ANNIVERSARY

Continued from A5

ing in 1919 and again in 1922 that one be formed. It estimated that 2,200 cars tooled through town every day.

Comics first appeared in The Signal on Nov. 18, 1926. A.B. Perkins and his wife actively campaigned to build a community high school and managed to get a bond measure on the ballot. They personally lobbied the Los Angeles County Board of Education to form a district to serve the 150-plus students who then commuted to San Fernando High School.

By far the biggest news was the destruction of the St. Francis Dam on March 12, 1928. At three minutes before midnight the dam collapsed, sending a 180-foot-high wall of water crashing down San Francisquito Canyon through Castaic Junction, past Piru and Fillmore and eventually into the Pacific Ocean near Ventura.

The violent floodwaters carved a swath of death through the Little Santa Clara River Valley and left some 470 bodies in its wake. It was the second-worst disaster in California history in terms of lives lost — second only to the great San Francisco fire and earthquake of 1906.

### The 1930s

The decade opened with publisher A.B. Thatcher at the helm of The Signal. The front page was peppered with church news, school news, Kiwanis news, births, deaths, women's club news, lost dogs, weddings and various other social goings-on. There were regular announcements of dances at the "Saugus clubhouse."

Newhall School news was divided into grade level, with students submitting information after grade one.

California news and ranch news could be found on the inside pages. The Depression took its toll on the nation, but mentions of "hard times" in The Signal of the early 1930s were scarce. Rather, the paper reported that the times were hopeful and the people resourceful.

Most Signal news centered around home, church and family. Taking a peek into a 1930s kitchen window, one would find a wood-burning stove or one of those newfangled gas varieties that were advertised weekly. The wood stove gave "considerable heat, and [was] desirable in the spring or fall when the mornings and evenings are chilly and the middle of the day almost hot."

The Bank of Italy on San Fernando Road was the only bank in town. It became the Bank of America in 1931.

"Dad" Thatcher ran an article from American Banker's Magazine explaining that advertising was the "moral duty" of every businessman.

Patriotism ran high. In 1934, community leaders promised that the local Fourth of July celebration would be a "a wham, a Zow, and likewise a Knock-out!"

By mid-decade, people were streaming into California in record numbers and The Signal's world-consciousness was expanding. Local news still ran on the front page, but the interior pages often carried wire stories and photos of Japan, China, Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. Ranch news disappeared altogether.

In fall 1938, The Signal took on a decidedly different look. The rather abrupt change was the result of a change in publishers, with F. W. Trueblood taking the helm. Church news moved to the back pages, as did Thatcher's "Jin Jer Jar" column, quietly signaling the end of an era.

Local attention turned to the plight of the valley's high school students and the lengths they had to go to for an education. The exciting news was that a new high school was on the horizon, with the seventh and eighth grades taking on the status of a junior high.

Overall, The Signal was a reflection of an optimistic community of good-hearted townfolk.

### The 1940s

The Santa Clarita Valley awoke to fog on New Year's Day, 1940. The future bustling areas of Newhall, Saugus and Canyon Country were still merely hamlets of homes tucked together, collectively called Soledad Township, with gas and electric lights cutting through the fog that had blanketed the valley for the past week.

People looked forward to the end of the Depression. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was president, tires cost \$3 to \$7 each, and you could buy only American cars.

A war was waged in newspaper advertisements over the benefits of electric stoves versus gas appliances.

Talk centered around the need for a local high school. At the time, teenagers were still being bused or otherwise driven "over the hill" to San Fernando High. Signal editorials supported the creation of a new school and district.

A drastic change took place between the covers of The Signal — not in the reporting, but in the advertising. Suddenly, gas, electric and telephone companies asked people to curtail the use of their services. Previously, utilities begged people to use more gas and electricity and to make more phone calls.

World War II dominated most people's thoughts in the early '40s.

In June, Fred Trueblood temporarily resigned as publisher to join the U.S. Navy civilian staff. His wife, Anne, and Mark Trueblood ran the paper in his absence.

By the time Fred returned in 1944, peace was in sight. Ads encouraged women to "dream of that brand new kitchen you can have after the war."

The first major oil discovery was made in November 1948, at the Sherman well. In the coming months, new wells would pop up all over Newhall, tapping into a large oil pool.

Business was good. New buildings were being built. New stores were opening regularly. The baby boom was getting under way.

The paper was growing, too. The weekly picture of a scantily clad starlet had been replaced with photos taken by Signal photographers of local people and local events. The front page carried news of oil discoveries and hog ranch debates.

Electric lights illuminated many homes as the 10,000 residents of the Little Santa Clara River Valley counted down to midnight on Dec. 31, 1949.

### The 1950s

Newhall had a national rodeo roping champion, high school sports teams called the Injuns, a Fourth of July parade at "Slippery Gulch" (aka Monogram Movie Ranch in Placerita Canyon), a two-headed calf and a champion chin-chilla named Mike.

The decade would bring tail fins, sonic booms and an inkling of the growth to come, as The Newhall Land and Farming Co. unveiled its ambitious plans for a new community to be called Valencia.

The Signal of the early 1950s had already established a few trademarks. Owner-Editor-Publisher Fred Trueblood's "Signal Tower" column ran each week on the front page, while his editorials took government officials to task

See ANNIVERSARY, A7

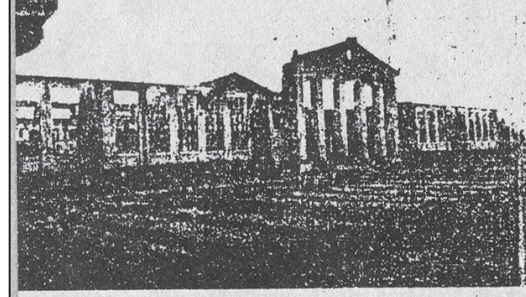
February 17, 1939

# THE NEWHALL SIGNAL

And SAUGUS ENTERPRISE  
Covering Castaic, Val Verde, Honby, Solemint, Forrest Park, Agua Dulce, Acton, and the Canyons  
OLIVE TWENTY-ONE NEWHALL, CALIFORNIA. FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1939 NUMBER 7

## MYSTERIOUS FIRE DESTROYS SCHOOL

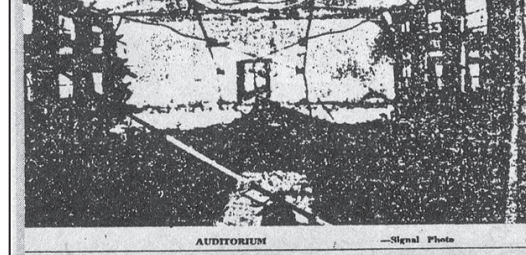
### Valentine Day In Newhall



FAÇADE — Signal Photo



SOUTH WING — Signal Photo



AUDITORIUM — Signal Photo

Heating that the fire had had All of the gratings which on burning considerably expanded would permit an entrance below the floor levels were intact.

## Late Discovery of Blaze And Lack of Fire Hydrants Doom Town's Biggest Bldg.

A disastrous fire, of mysterious origin that investigators have indicated, utterly destroyed three-fourths of Newhall's fine Grammar School in the early morning hours Tuesday. Lack of available water for fire fighting purposes greatly hampered the fire fighting forces of county and government. While the north wing of the school, containing the fifth and sixth rooms and the serving room was saved by heroic efforts, the rooms will not be available for use, and the structure is, for all practical purposes, a total loss. Its original cost was about \$65,000.

## Fake Times Fire Picture Rouses Ire

When the news of the fire was made by an unnamed source, it was reported that a blaze in the neighborhood, and who stopped at the Soledad hotel and telephoned the fire department headquarters of the Forest and Fire Warden, the call was answered and the firemen immediately started for the library room. The firemen immediately started for the library room. The firemen immediately started for the library room. The firemen immediately started for the library room.

EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS  
An Editorial.  
There is not a structure in Newhall of any size that is free from the active menace of the agency that destroyed its biggest building, the school. There is plenty of water available, but not for fire protection. There are no fire hydrants. Who is to blame? Everybody.

SIGNAL FILE PHOTO

As the Depression took its toll on the nation, mentions of "hard times" in The Signal of the early 1930s were scarce (as seen in this front page). Rather, the paper reported that the times were hopeful and the people resourceful.

December 12, 1941

# V-U.S. Army, we welcome you-and how!

## THE NEWHALL SIGNAL

And SAUGUS ENTERPRISE  
Covering Castaic, Val Verde, Honby, Solemint, Forrest Park, Agua Dulce, Acton, and the Canyons  
VOLUME TWENTY-THREE NEWHALL, CALIFORNIA. FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1941 NUMBER 38

## NEWHALL CALM UNDER IMPACT OF WAR

Civilian defense set-up active, volunteers enroll  
SIDE CALLED OFF  
Due to the present crisis the side scheduled by the Newhall-Saugus Auxiliary Monday Police Club for Sunday, December 14, has been indefinitely postponed. Adequate notice will be given as to the date and time of the next side.

SEEN ANY SOLDIERS LIKE THIS?  
Army takes over guard duty, black-outs enforced by soldiers



The war came to Newhall this week with an impact that was felt by every man, woman and child. Monday night came the first "black-out" night. The city was dark, and the streets were lit only by the light of the moon.

AMERICAN'S REPLY  
Willard McLaughlin, Bob Stone and Bill O'Connell, led down their way, which looks promising. Today they left for the Navy receiving office at Los Angeles to sign up.

NOT ALL SOLDIERS  
First Greenwald's little boy came home from school Tuesday all soiled with excitement. "They say the soldiers are here," he reported.

BEACON OUTS  
Well, they finally got everything blacked out but an airplane beam up. Castaic way—some say it was too late.

Two arrested, held for FBI as German spies  
The two men were arrested at the office Monday for violation of the espionage laws. They were held in the city jail.

Christmas drawing tickets supplied  
Although war and black-outs held the center of the stage in Newhall this week, Christmas was not forgotten.

LAST RITES ARE HELD FOR ED H. BOOTH  
Ed. H. Booth, partner at the law firm of Booth, Booth and Booth, died Tuesday night at the County hospital of pneumonia and heart failure.

FOR DICKER OF BAIN  
Resounding local weather clerk of the phenomenal rainy season of last year, a man held in from the boom of the Pacific coast, Tuesday and made a late practice session by shedding 33 such of rain.

Halt means halt says commander of U. S. battalion  
Black-out good but not good enough, verdict

OFFICIAL BLACKOUT  
BLACK-OUT EQUIPMENT  
Both officers looked thoroughly equipped and business like.

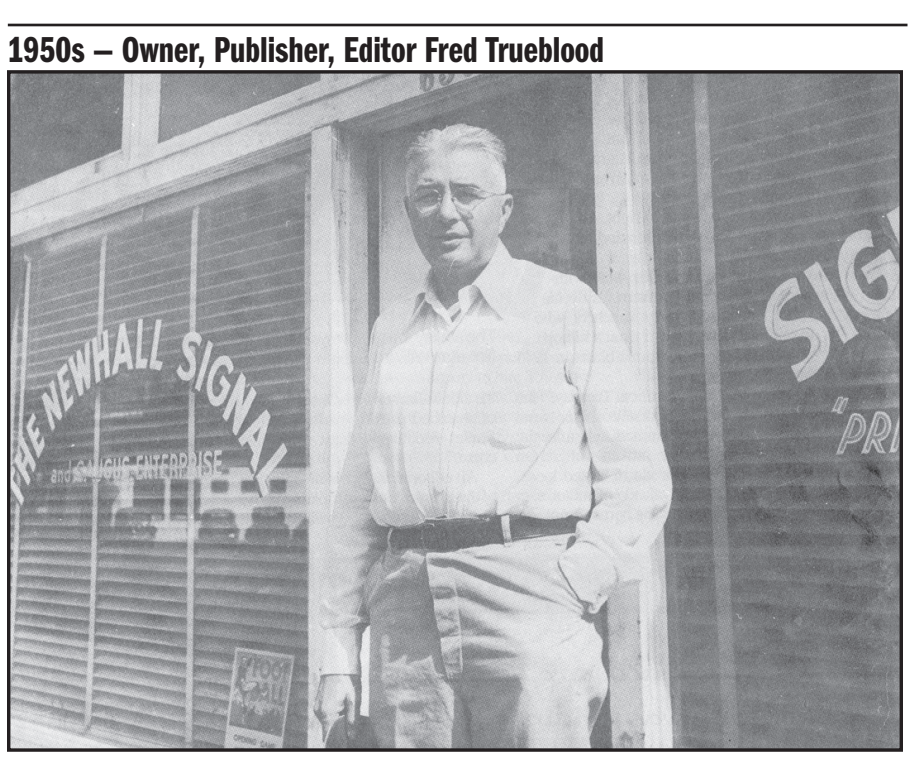
PERSONNEL OF THE INDUSTRY BATTALION  
The personnel of the industry battalion were distributed over the area for the guarding of strategic plants.

LEVIN FOR THE BLACK-OUT  
LEVIN FOR THE BLACK-OUT  
LEVIN FOR THE BLACK-OUT

SIGNAL FILE PHOTO

The Signal's first issue after the Pearl Harbor bombing offered an optimistic message during a difficult time.

## 1950s — Owner, Publisher, Editor Fred Trueblood



SIGNAL FILE PHOTO

Owner/Editor/Publisher Fred Trueblood carried The Signal torch during the 1950s.



# ANNIVERSARY

Continued from A7

hunt in 1974 was one of several Signal promotions featuring buried treasure.

## The 1980s

Growth. That's the story of the Santa Clarita Valley in the 1980s. The population exploded with a vengeance. No longer was the SCV a rural backwater. Before the decade was out, civic leaders would get their coveted home rule.

The decade also saw The Signal blossom from thrice weekly into a full-fledged, seven-day-a-week publication.

The Newhalls — Scott and his wife, Ruth, and their son Tony — had sold the paper to Georgia-based publisher Charles Morris in 1978, but they stayed on to run the paper for another 10 years.

The Newhalls pushed hard for home rule throughout the 1980s. Given the political difficulties of county formation, the effort shifted back to cityhood.

The city formation effort gained strength when voters learned that they were sending roughly \$4 million more in tax dollars to downtown Los Angeles each year than they were getting back in services.

By 1987 the cityhood drive was in high gear. Prior to election day, county officials stripped the boundaries of the proposed city from 90 square acres to less than 40. But this time, the effort would succeed.

On Nov. 3, voters within the proposed city gave thumbs-up to cityhood. (The cityhood vote did not have to go before all voters in the county.) Local citizens simultaneously elected their first City Council: businessman and school board member Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, book store owner and civic activist Jan Heidt, chamber of commerce Executive Director Jo Anne Darcy, high school teacher and COC board member Carl Boyer III, and retired fire-fighter Dennis Koontz.

For the first time, the people of "Santa Clarita" had a local government that could spend local tax dollars on local services.

The 1980s would see The Signal get more and more involved in ever-increasing community happenings. The Signal carried a "Voice of the Valley" page early in the decade with contributions from various valley residents, including prose, poetry, photographs, drawings and cartoons.

As new subdivisions sprouted and the valley's population soared, residents took a greater interest in preserving SCV history. In 1980 a huge, community-wide fundraising drive was organized to save the Saugus Train Station, which was slated for demolition. School children pitched in pennies to move the station 2 miles down San Fernando Road, to its present location at what was then called Heritage Junction Historic Park.

Meanwhile, downtown Newhall merchants established the Walk of Western Stars (initially Western Walk of Fame) to salute local Western celebrities, beginning in 1981 with Gene Autry, Tom Mix and William S. Hart.

The Signal made strides of its own. In 1986 it moved from its longtime downtown Newhall location to the Morris Newspaper Corp.'s shiny new facility on Valencia's Creekside Road, where a major auto mall had taken root.

Two years later, the Newhall era ended as Scott, Ruth and Tony left The Signal. Scott and Ruth launched a short-lived, thrice-weekly paper called "The Citizen," while Tony took an editorial position at his parents' old stomping grounds — the San Francisco Chronicle.

The Signal adopted a newer, more modern format and a new, aggressive reporting style under editor Chuck Cook.

By the late 1980s the population had reached an estimated 140,000 people in the city of Santa Clarita alone. Official estimates predicted a 270,000 population by the year 2010.

The Signal was well positioned to serve the growing community.

## The 1990s

Santa Clarita continued to grow as the 1990s dawned, but not as rapidly as it did in the 1980s. Real estate brokers and agents were hurting in the early part of the decade as a recession took hold, deflating home prices. Some developers were forced to auction homes.

Yet growth remained the top local political issue, foreshadowing the resurgence of construction that would occur in the latter part of the 1990s. The decade began with the William S. Hart Union High School District announcing it was going to sue in an effort to force the County of Los Angeles to adhere to a court decision that would allow local governments to withhold development approvals for projects that would overburden schools.

1992 brought the long-awaited Valencia Town Center mall, developed by The Newhall Land and Farming Co. It was just the first piece of a "town center" commercial development that would continue into the new millennium.

Also debuting in 1992 was Metrolink, the new commuter rail system, which opened for business in September.

On Oct. 26, 1992, Scott Newhall, the flamboyant former owner and editor of The Signal, died at age 78.

Entering 1993, the Santa Clarita Valley struggled through the worst financial problems, watched the crime rate increase and adjusted school schedules to year-round classes. The biggest issue for government was the lack of sufficient funds. The county lost an estimated 25% of its general fund to the state, which was attempting to cover its own shortfall, resulting in a scramble for what was left.

A proposed 190-million-ton capacity landfill in Elsmere Canyon remained a hot topic until 1995, when U.S. Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon — who had been Santa Clarita's first mayor — succeeded in pushing through legislation with the help of Sen. Barbara Boxer that thwarted a land swap that was needed for the dump to be built.

What was perhaps the biggest story of the decade broke at 4:31 a.m. Monday, Jan. 17, 1994, when a 6.7-magnitude earthquake, centered in Northridge, rocked the Santa Clarita and San Fernando valleys. Homes were destroyed and lives uprooted in the disaster, which would become the single most-covered event in Signal history.

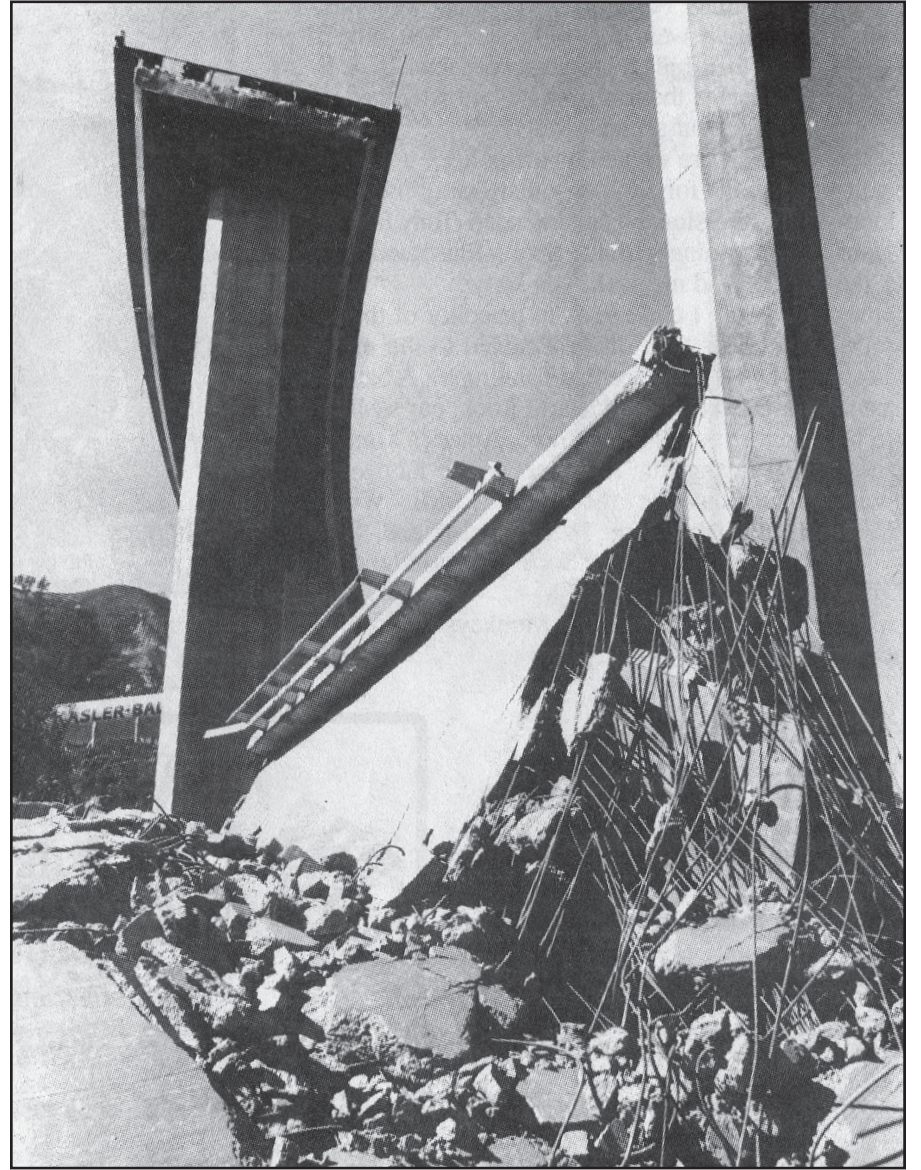
The quake would also spark one of the decade's fiercest political battles: Using earthquake damage as its impetus, the city launched a proposal for a \$1.1 billion redevelopment plan that would finance a wide array of infrastructure improvements throughout the city. The plan was challenged in court by the Castaic Lake Water Agency, which contended it stood to lose significant revenues and that the plan exceeded the scope of redevelopment law. The city ultimately abandoned the \$1.1 billion proposal after Los Angeles County sided with the water agency in court.

Throughout the 1990s, growth and related issues — traffic, school overcrowding, crime — dominated local political discourse. And although the city of Santa Clarita consistently rated in the nation's top five lowest-crime cities in America with populations over 100,000, there were signs that this was no sleepy hamlet anymore. In response to parental concerns about youth fashions of the day, the William S. Hart Union High School District approved a mandatory school uniforms policy for La Mesa Junior High School seventh graders.

Significant losses for the decade included the end of Saturday night racing at the Saugus Speedway. Racing was discontinued mid-season in 1995 as the track's owners cited structural problems with the grandstands.

Significant gains for the community included the annual Cowboy Poetry and Music Festival, the brainchild of then-Assistant City Manager Ken Pulkamp. The idea was first scoffed at by many in the community — including The Signal — but in a few short years the event had placed Santa Clarita firmly

## 1971 and 1994 Earthquake Damage



SIGNAL FILE PHOTO

The Highway 14 to Highway 5 interchange, then under construction, collapsed in the 1971 earthquake. It would collapse again in 1994.

on the Western circuit.

The 1990s also saw the largest one-time event ever to grace the Little Santa Clara River Valley: In 1998, the PGA Tour paid the SCV a visit as Billy Mayfair beat out Tiger Woods to capture the Nissan Open Championship in a thrilling one-hole playoff at Valencia Country Club.

For The Signal, the cavalcade into the 1990s saw the birth of new traditions in the personages of award-winning satirist John Boston and the legendary Randy Wicks.

The man who needed only one name cut his eye teeth in the shadow of Scott Newhall at The Signal's old offices on 6th Street. With the chicanery of Newhall and a style all his own, Wicks' editorial cartoons added spice to the pages of The Signal for 16 years.

His untimely death on Aug. 3, 1996, at the age of 41 left a chasm deeply felt throughout the valley. Hundreds of friends, family members, community leaders and admirers attended memorial services at his alma mater, California Institute of the Arts.

## The 2000s

2001 Ethel Nakutin is named publisher.

In 2004, Richard Budman becomes publisher and minority owner, bringing SCV This Week to The Signal and making that the Sunday paper.

The Signal website continued to grow in the 2000s. Under the leadership of Budman, The Signal introduced video to the website in 2004.

In 2005 The Signal introduced two bell-weather special sections that continue today. The very popular Best Of poll, which proclaims the best businesses in town according to a reader's poll, and the much-acclaimed Top 51 Most Influential People in Santa Clarita, which lists and ranks the most influential people in town according to The Signal.

2007 Jay Harn is named publisher.

2008 Ian Lamont becomes publisher.

2009 The Signal debuts The Signal e-edition.

## The 2010s

February 2012 Randy Morton becomes publisher.

February 2014 Russ Briley named publisher.

On Jan. 1, 2016 after owning the paper for more than 30 years, Morris Multimedia sold the paper to Charles Champion, Gary Sproule and Russ Briley

In 2016, after being located on Creekside Road in the Santa Clarita auto mall for 30 years, The Signal moved to a new location in Center Pointe on Diamond Place.

On June 7, 2018, The Signal was sold again to former Publisher Richard Budman and his wife Chris Budman.

On July 22, 2018, The Signal announced the return of the Sunday paper in the form of The Sunday Signal, a free publication distributed to 70,000 homes.

In February 2019, The Signal added a video newscast to its lineup.

## The 2020s

March 2020 brought the worldwide coronavirus pandemic. Businesses throughout Santa Clarita closed as they did around the world.

The Signal's advertising revenues dropped by more than 90%. Signal staff had to work from home, and the size of the paper was reduced with the lack of news, but the paper never missed a publishing day, delivering needed information about the pandemic six days a week and on its website, signalscv.com.

Key informational stories were translated into Spanish on The Signal's Facebook page to keep the Spanish-speaking community informed about the coronavirus. By the end of 2020 Signal employees returned to the office. In 2021 businesses began to reopen and as events returned and residents started to go outside again the paper returned back to pre-pandemic levels. The Signal moved its offices to the Valencia Industrial Center.

In 2022 The Signal debuted a new Canyon Country magazine delivered to all houses in the Canyon Country area.

Nov. 24, 2025: The Signal started another venture aimed at the future by debuting The Buzz, a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week streaming television station with news, talk, sports and events. The station is available on Buzzscv.com, Apple TV, Roku, iHeart and by downloading The Buzz app.

Much has changed since Edward H. Brown put out the first edition of the Santa Clarita Valley hometown newspaper in 1919. This once-peaceful little community and its newspaper have burgeoned into something our first settlers could not have imagined.