

# Adobe Dust

JUAN MATIAS SANCHEZ  
ADOBE MUSEUM



JUNE 2016

## General Membership Notice

2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the  
month

At the Sanchez  
Picnic Table Area  
from  
June-August

6:30pm start time

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Sunday, June 26th**

12pm to 5pm

Rancho Fiesta Day

(Juan Sanchez's  
birthday)

## Message From the President—Lest We Forget

Memorial Day weekend has come and gone. We celebrate Memorial Day weekend with our families, friends and BBQ's in parks and backyards, as we should. Originally known as Decoration Day, Memorial Day originated in the years following the Civil War and became an official federal holiday in 1971. However, it is important that we remember the loss of life of our military service members during time of war. At Montebello City Park on Whittier Blvd. there is a War Memorial to commemorate our Montebello military service members that have given the ultimate sacrifice for their country. Therefore, it is only fit and proper that the MHS observe and honor the valiant that have fallen.

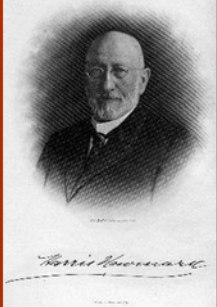
Thank you, Chris Vargas



## News From Arlene, Membership

If you have not renewed your membership it is not to late, please mail your check to-day. If not this will be your last newsletter. Let us welcome renewed & newest members we also have a new Lifetime member: Marge Villa Cryan, Patsy & Ronald Parsons, Carmen Vargas, Dan & Pam Skewes, Weston Fisher PHD, Elaine Houghton, Barbara Rush, Mary & Donald Crocker, Anthony & Camille Acosta, & Carolina Ibarra Mendoza. Keep the History Alive!! Bring a friend to our next meeting

## Harris Newmark—Founder of Montebello



After the death of Alessandro Repetto, a group of businessmen -which included Kasper Cohen and Harris Newmark - purchased 5000 acres of land from his heir for \$60,000. The twelve hundred acres obtained by Kasper Cohen and Harris Newmark were subdivided in 1899. The original community called Newmark consisted of forty acres bounded by First Street on the East, Fifth Street on the West, Cleveland on the north, and Los Angeles Street on the south. The self-trained engineer, William Mulholland, developed the community's water system. It was on the recommendation of William Mulholland that the name of the community was changed from Newmark to Montebello which means beautiful hills in Italian.

Harris Newmark who was born July 5, 1834 arrived in Los Angeles from West Prussia In 1853. After taking a wild stage ride from the port in San Pedro, he met his brother who was a merchant in Los Angeles. At the time of his arrival, Los Angeles was a "bawdy town filled with motley gamblers and outlaws, of Sonoran miners, of Californios who dressed in fantastic finery, of Yankees who had married into Spanish speaking ranch-owner families, and an increasing group of 'foreigners' like - Harris". In 1853 (and for the next 30 years), Los Angeles was an extremely lawless town. In "Sonora Town" all forms of indulgences were available until the late 1870's. Human Life was cheap. In the worst part of town twenty to thirty murders a month was not uncommon. Like most men who walked the streets of Los Angeles, Harris Newmark walked the streets well-armed. Citizens took the law in their own hands by forming vigilante committees. Hangings were common and the minorities and Indians took the brunt of it. Apparently, Harris Newmark witnessed several lynching's.

Harris Newmark learned Spanish before he learned English in order run his brothers merchandise and grocery business. He was a respected and honest businessman and was very successful.

All the water used in Los Angeles at the time came from the river, or from the ditches or *zanjas* leading from the river. The person supervising the control of the water was called a *zanjero*. People bathed and washed their clothes in the river. Animals of all forms drank, crossed, and soaked in the river. Diseases of all forms were spread by the river.

For three decades, smallpox epidemics occurred every other year. During the epidemics the wagon called the "Black Maria" was common on the city streets. The Native Americans were decimated by small pox. There was an isolated *pesthouse* – which was used for person afflicted with small pox and other serious diseases near Chavez Ravine.

Harris Newmark was familiar with all of the important people of his time. The rancher Juan M. Sanchez was one of Harris Newmark's good customers. Harris gave Sanchez sound advice that he should refuse to allow his land to be put up for collateral to save the Temple and Workman Bank. Although Sanchez told Newmark that "I do not wish to die of hunger!" a few days later Newmark learned that Sanchez gave up all his land for his friends. Juan M. Sanchez lost twenty-two hundred acres of the finest land in Southern California to Lucky Baldwin.

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# Those Who Worked the Land

There is a two-fold reality to California's agricultural history, that being of need vs. want. Migrant workers and laborers were needed but not necessarily wanted and depending upon circumstances a laborer's life could be a good one or could be unstable. Seeking permanence was the main goal, and to work the land of a wealthy owner was a step towards stability, however not easily attainable.

The acclaimed American author John Steinbeck, in his essay "Their Blood Is Strong", states that the workers were needed but hated, " In California we find a curious attitude toward a group that makes our agriculture successful. The migrants are needed, and they are hated. Arriving in a district they find the dislike always meted out by the resident to the foreigner, the outlander. This hatred of the stranger occurs in the whole range of history, from the most primitive village form to our own highly organized industrial farming." The migrant worker was hated because he was ignorant and unclean. He was also viewed as a menace, and if allowed to organize, could refuse to work , causing great loss to crops and compromising the profits of the owners. Although necessary, he was far from desired and could prove to be disloyal.

Steinbeck categorizes the workers as two kinds of laborers, the "old kind of laborers, Mexicans and Filipinos" and the "river and dust bowl refugees". The old kind were quickly outnumbered by the influx of farmers from regions such as Oklahoma, who met with catastrophe during the 1930's. Those who were skilled farmers were much more desired than those who had never owned land, so the displaced former farm owner was somewhat better off but not by much, having lost his land and uncertain about ever obtaining property of his own. The status of a refugee was low, having lost everything and now needy and burdensome to the locals. Against all prejudice, was the necessary determination of these people to give their families food and shelter, even in the face of hatred and rejection, for the poor could not afford to be popular, they merely needed to survive.

Yet there were bonds among the laborers which emerged in better circumstances, where families bonded with one another in a communal way and eventually factory jobs were obtained which offered more stability and rights for the workers. Yet, the land needed to be worked and as conditions became better, the migrant worker was able to find much more reasonable options. There is much to be said about those who worked the land, how they struggled to maintain their values, how they tried to keep their families together, all in the face of adversity, but to come to symbolize what we call the American spirit, a nation strengthened by the labor of its people.

Written by Barbara Garcia-Guzman

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 Juan Matias Sanchez 

# RANCHO FIESTA DAYS



Historical costumes,  
music, and the museum  
will be open for tours.



Food will be offered  
with your \$5.00 donation.  
Burger, chips, & soda.



Sunday June 26th  
Noon to 4:00 P.M.

JUAN MATIAS SANCHEZ ADOBE MUSEUM  
946 N. ADOBE AVE, MONTEBELLO, CA 90640

Please Join Us!

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MONTEBELLO HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
A Non Profit 501 (c)(3) Organization

Chris Vargas, President; (323) 819 - 5103  
[www.MontebelloHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.MontebelloHistoricalSociety.org)