

Vallecitos Days-by Teri Kerns

Despite cool weather and rain in Ramona, and snow in the local mountains, the Vallecitos Days event this past weekend was blessed with warm sun on Saturday. Our own Ramona Trails Association partnered with the San Diego Backcountry Horsemen unit, San Diego County Parks, and the California State Parks to co-host this reenactment event, held at Vallecitos County Regional Park. The springs of Vallecitos and the Indian village of Hawi were first discovered in 1782, by Pedro Pages, a Spanish Army Commandant, on his way to San Diego. This spot of green in the desert was used over the years by various explorers and weary travelers on their way to a better life in California. During the 1846 Mexican-American War, General Kearny and his army camped there, followed later that same year by the Mormon battalion, with the last permanent residents moving on in 1888. The original Adobe Stage Station was rescued from decay in 1933 due to its historical significance to California, and was again open for the event this past weekend. Historical artifacts from the period were on display, and a mountain man camp was set-up nearby, where all enjoyed practicing tomahawk throwing and campfire cooking. This was a step back in time, with several horseback riders, including pack-horse led by Backcountry Horsemen President, Cheryl Wegner, and attire from the 1850's. Ramona Trails members and guests traced the steps and wheels of the Southern Overland Trail, riding into the Stage Station, after enjoying the rare desert flowers, including yellow barrel cactus flowers and desert lavender. The riders entered the park from the east, where they were greeted with water and cheers, local Park Ranger Patty Heyden, introduced her horse "Traveler," to the kids. This was followed by a catered dinner, and Dutch oven dessert, cooked by RTA Past President, Terry Jorgensen.

Sunday marked the accumulation of several years of joint effort, with an opening ceremony of the Hawi-Vallecito Ranch, and new access to designated valley trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. Over 3500 acres of historic ranch land added to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park via the BLM's Sawtooth Wilderness area became open to the public at this ribbon-cutting event.

Originally started four years ago to honor of the 150th Anniversary of the Butterfield Stage, this event will march forward in history in 2011 to the Civil War era. Please stay tuned to ramonatrails.org for more information on upcoming events.