**Silents – A Roaring Success!**

Where were you on Saturday night, August 17, 2013? Well, if you weren't at Hart Park for this year’s Silents Under The Stars, you missed the party of the summer! Over180 people were in attendance for this year’s fantastic evening of great food, silent auction and entertainment.

Silents Under The Stars is a fund raising event that has been going on for a little over 15 years now and has successfully grown every year. It started because many of the people in the community knew of William S. Hart and his enormous contributions to the Santa Clarita Valley and the movie industry, but they had never been up to his house, now Museum, or had seen any of the over 70 movies in which Bill either wrote, produced, directed or starred. An equally important part of Bill Hart's legacy is that many of his ground breaking films were shot right here in the Santa Clarita Valley. In fact, it was because of Bill’s movie making here, that he fell in love with our valley and eventually made it his home.

So Silents began as a simple and fun way to share some of Mr. Hart's wonderful old silent movies. It caught on quickly and soon expanded to include a BBQ dinner, music, special guest speakers, authors and a silent auction. It is now one of the years most anticipated fund raising events.

This year was no exception. Chairperson Sherron Blowers, her husband Bill Blowers and her committee of Board Members Bill West, Gerry Hogan, Nadiya Littlewarrior, Becki Basham, Cindy Beals, Bob Hill and Jeff Wheat outdid themselves. They were supported at the dinner and in the Gift Shop by volunteers - Friends of Hart President Laurene Weste, John Davis, Carol Frost, Jon Claitman, Marvin Claitman, Roger Basham and Cathy O' Conner. The wonderful staff of Hart Park, headed by Norm Philips, worked tirelessly for 2 days to have everything ready for this years event. The Museum staff and volunteers were not to be outdone. Museum Administrator Margi Bertram, Education and Volunteer Coordinator Rachel Barnes and volunteers Phyllis Dozier, Suzanne Kush, Evelyn Novak, Lee Osterloh, Lalena Vellanoweth, Jaci Rohr and Jennifer Petes had the Mansion in tip top shape for special, after hours, Station Tours. It was also the Grand Opening of a brand new exhibit in the house on Silent Film Movie Mogul Thomas Ince. It features many costumes, props, documents and photos from several Hart movies. Mr. Ince was the man who was primarily responsible for Bill Hart’s rise to movie superstar status. The exhibit is exceptional and will be on display at the Mansion through December. If you didn’t get to see it, get up there. It is a "must see"!

Although it proved to be a little warm, by 6:30 a nice little summer breeze had taken over the area of the park just behind Hart Hall and at 7:00 Rattlers Restaurant began dishing out their delicious BBQ chicken, tri tip, mashed potatoes and cole slaw for which they have become so famous. By then, the toe tappin' sounds of the the All Digital String Band had everyone in the mood to party.

This year’s special guests speakers were John Boston and David Shepard. John knows the history of this valley and shared it in fun, anecdotal stories of when Hart was alive. The stories made us feel like Bill and Fritz were right there with us. David Shepard, film historian and walking encyclopedia of all things movies, brought to life for us the silent movie era in which Hart lived worked and was a huge star. David brought with him this years movies which were really a treat. Rather than screen one of Bill's many westerns, "The Cradle of Courage" was shown. It was a nice departure because it showed that Hart was a skilled actor and could do more than just westerns.

The other film, a 15 minute short titled "The Making of Broncho Billy", was a great example of some of the other western films that were being made at that time. Broncho Billy Anderson was another successful western movie star, but one who never quite reached the heights of our friend Bill. It too was label:hart-hart-of-the-matter-hotm-2013-fallfun to see. Both films were accompanied by the incomparable Ray Lowe on keyboards. Nobody does it better, and this year Ray added percussion effects to Hart's exciting movie.

As an added treat, John Boston and Hart Board Member E.J. Stephens both took time out to sign their new books on Santa Clarita and Paramount Studios respectfully.

Lastly, we can't leave out the fund raising Silent Auction that everyone worked so hard to prepare. There were some very interesting items this year, one of which was a very unique, antique desk fan. The Auction was a tremendous success and as always, the proceeds will go to help keeping Hart Park and Mansion the pride of the Santa Clarita Valley. Maintenance of the Park and restoration of the house and its artifacts are a big part of the Friends of Hart mission statement.

10:00 pm saw tail lights leaving the park and a really great time was had by all.

Now that's a jam packed evening. I am exhausted just telling you about it. If you didn't get there this year, start making plans right now for next August.

That’s it for now. Till next time ... we'll see you 'round the old Corral.

Oh, by the way, don't miss out on the next big Hart Park event, September 28, 29. It is the only authentic Pow Wow and Native American Craft Fair within 50 miles and it's right here at William S. Hart Park, the home of BIG FUN!