**E.J. & Kim Stephens**

Newhall residents Kim and E.J. Stephens are the co-authors (along with Dr. Alan Pollock) of two books on Santa Clarita history: *Legendary Locals of the Santa Clarita Valley* and *Then & Now: The Santa Clarita Valley*. In addition, Kim and E.J. split the co-authoring and editing duties on several more books relating to Los Angeles and Hollywood history, including *Early Warner Bros. Studios, Griffith Park, Early Paramount Studios, Early Poverty Row Studios*, and the soon to be released *Paramount Studios: 1940-2000*. They also wrote a popular history blog called *Deadwrite’s Dailies*, which was later published in book form as *Blog Day Afternoon*.

The couple have two beautiful children and two equally beautiful cats (along with one that’s kind of funny looking).

Kim Stephens: I fell in love with the piano at the age of seven. That passion led me to play in several shows in high school and to pursue a degree in jazz piano in college. When I realized that making a living as a musician was no picnic, I fell back on an office job at a computer software company which unbeknownst to me would blossom into a 30-year career. This led me to Southern California, where I was hired at Warner Bros. Studios into their IT department. Twenty-five years later I met the love of my life, E.J. Stephens, after he moved into the office directly across from mine. E.J. and I are both still with Warner Bros. to this day and feel that WB is in our DNA. We were even married in one of the studio’s backlots. WB truly is sacred ground for us.

We feel the same way about the Santa Clarita Valley. We love old westerns and silent films and spend lots of our weekends exploring where these films were made. That’s one of the things that is so special about the SCV, knowing that Charlie Chaplin, and Buster Keaton, William S. Hart, and a host of others starred in this valley.

I never envisioned myself writing history books as I didn’t particularly like the subject in school. I see now that this was because of the lazy way history was taught to me. When I realized that history was simply great stories, I was all in. That’s when E.J. and I decided to tell some of these stories.

E.J. Stephens: I was born in Indiana and moved out to Pasadena after high school. I don’t think I stepped foot in the Santa Clarita Valley more than a handful of times before I moved up here after I met and married Kimi. At that time I thought that Santa Clarita was nothing but a bedroom community near Magic Mountain. When I came to the SCV I knew I had to learn its history if I ever hoped to really put down roots.

My research quickly led me to Hart Park, where I took a tour of the mansion. As a lifelong fan of silent films and of Hollywood history, I of course knew about William S. Hart’s influential career, but to be honest, I don’t think I had ever seen any of his films at that point. I decided to learn everything I could about my new neighbor and quickly discovered that many of his films, and dozens of other westerns, were filmed locally. This made sense because the vistas of the SCV evoke the Old West. And why not? The SCV *was* the Old West. It was where everything associated with that colorful era happened: gold strikes, oil wildcatters, shootouts, train robberies, bandits, range wars, floods … you name it. And it was also where the Hollywood myth of the Old West was later created. Few places have this amazing two-tiered history – The *Real* West and the *Reel* West!

Kimi and I are lucky that we share so many of the same passions. I don’t think we will ever run out of writing projects. We are about to sign a contract to write our ninth book together – tentatively entitled *The First Link in the Chains* – about where the famous California restaurant chains began. And we have outlined a couple of projects for later including *The Tapho Files*, a study of fans of celebrity gravesites, and *A Jagged Line in the Sand*, which is about travels along the San Andreas Fault.