INDIGNANT TIMES

News Nuggets Straight from the Sluice

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Cowboy Logic vs. The Times

The Chamberlin Ranch stands as one of the Santa Ynez Valley's more durable facts: a working cattle ranch that has outlasted fashions, fads, and several very confident predictions about "the end of ranching." According to the family's own account, the modern story begins in 1929 when Theodore "Ted" Chamberlin purchased roughly 8,000 acres from the old Mexican land grant known as Rancho Corral de Quati. Ted's wife, Ailie, bestowed a name on the enterprise: Rancho Los Potreros—Spanish for "pastures," and a reminder that the ranch was intended for work, not merely admiration.

The Chamberlins specialized in registered Polled Herefords, raising cattle and raising a family at the same time, which is a feat of stamina best attempted by the young, the stubborn, and the historically unwise. In those years, the ranching life in Santa Barbara County wasn't an Instagram aesthetic; it was fence-mending, calf-sorting, hay-hauling, and the kind of practical math that begins with "How many head did we lose?" and ends with "How are we still here?"

If you want a fuller portrait of that "still here" quality, consider the life of Willy Chamberlin (1940–2015), one of Ted and Ailie's children, who grew up on Rancho Los Potreros amid valley oaks, Herefords, and the everyday labor that turns land into livelihood. Willy's story reads like a local syllabus: early ranch work as a child, business studies, service, and eventually civic involvement that carried the ranching worldview into the broader machinery of county life.



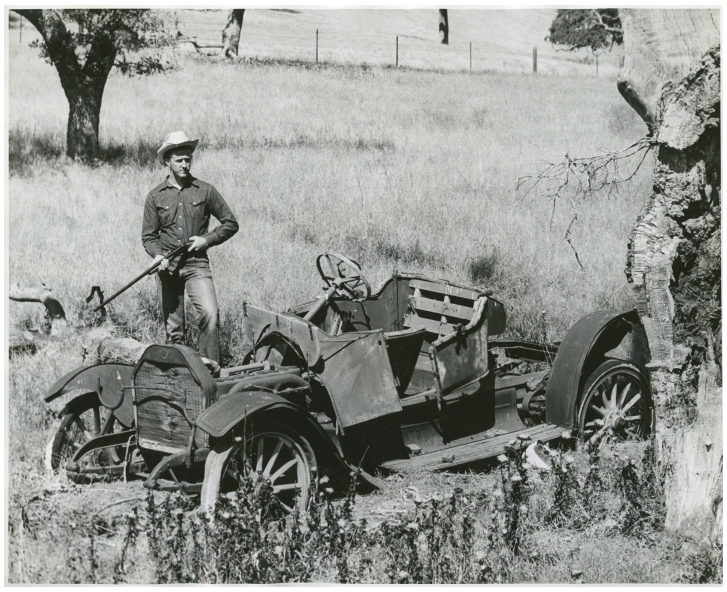
Today, the Chamberlin Ranch describes itself as continuing through second, third, and fourth generations, emphasizing land stewardship and sustainable ranching, while also opening portions of this "majestic landscape" for film locations. In other words: the cows remain, the work remains, and the scenery—long appreciated by horsemen—now occasionally accommodates camera crews with the same basic requirement as any visitor: don't break anything, and kindly close the gate.

A Clamper cannot help but admire that arrangement. History preserved not in a museum case, but under boot, hoof, and the occasional director yelling for "one more take" while an oak tree stands unimpressed—having already watched a century's worth of humans doing their earnest little projects.

Buried Treasure on the Chamberlin Ranch

Our brother, Bob Burtness, shared with me some history of his own making: the case of the Studebaker that tried, by slow degrees, to return itself to the earth. In the late 1950s word circulated of an old car, settling into the soil as if the ground were politely swallowing it to spare everyone the trouble of hauling it away. The vehicle had been stationed there since at least 1928, when Ted Chamberlin bought the ranch.

Chamberlin, it is said, enjoyed riding past the car, casting an eye upon it with the proprietary satisfaction of a man who owns both land and the right to refuse perfectly reasonable offers. He would not sell the relic. Not for love, nor money, nor even the sort of persuasive charm typically deployed by the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus when something interesting sits unattended.



Bob Burtness and 1909 EMF Studebaker
Chamberlin Ranch, Circa 1950's

Burtness—possessed of a long-standing affection for vintage vehicles and a familiarity with the Chamberlin clan—approached Ted with a proposal notable for its restraint: no purchase attempt, only a desire to photograph the artifact and thereby preserve a bit of valley history. Chamberlin replied in the traditional language of ranch diplomacy: lunch first, discussion second, and family present to confirm that nobody was being led into modernity against their will. The meal was reportedly excellent, the socializing even better, and permission was granted.

Why photograph a car that was actively disappearing? Because the Horseless Carriage Club held an annual contest, and Burtness had grown tired of entries featuring modern homes and gas stations. He wanted something purer: a machine in its native habitat—and the steady march of time. For technical assistance he enlisted Bob Long, a Claremont Men's College graduate fresh from studies at the Brookes Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara. Reaching the subject required passing a locked gate and walking a good distance, as if the ranch itself insisted that any visitor earn the privilege of witnessing history's slowest burial.

Props were assembled with the seriousness of a theatrical production and the logic of a Clamper brainstorm: a six-foot ladder for "aerial" shots and, for reasons still unidentified by the principal organizer, a 16-gauge shotgun intended to appear in the frame. The resulting photograph—Long behind the camera, Burtness acting as choreographer and "actor"—won the contest.

The image went on to grace a regional Horseless Carriage Club magazine cover and was later repurposed by Ward Kimball for his "Asinine Alley" column in the Horseless Carriage Gazette, a feature that ran for three decades. Kimball, for readers keeping score, was no minor scribbler: Santa Barbara High alum, Disney man, Mickey Mouse makeover artist, and creator associated with such icons as Dumbo, Jiminy Cricket, and the Cheshire Cat, not to mention an Oscar-winning film and leadership of the Firehouse Five jazz outfit.

Oddly, the Studebaker eventually sold to a Santa Maria man who restored it. Apparently Chamberlin decided the old machine deserved another life, before it vanished into the soil. It merely paused there long enough for a Clamper to document the moment—before history, as it often does, hitched itself to a new owner and rolled on.

Legendarily "Hard To Reach"

Brothers and fellow custodians of questionable judgment: it has come to press time once again that a portion of our noble rabble has achieved the rare feat of becoming fully un-findable. Some have moved their homesteads without leaving so much as a forwarding scribble. Some have abandoned old email addresses like last year's indiscretions. Others, through administrative sorcery or simple neglect, have slipped beyond the reach of our proclamations, invitations, and other official nonsense that must, by ancient custom, be delivered to you before you can ignore it properly.



Be assured: dispatches have been sent. Summons have been issued. Digital carrier pigeons have been launched with great ceremony and minimal training. Yet too many of them vanish into the fog, returning only with the hollow look of a message "undeliverable."

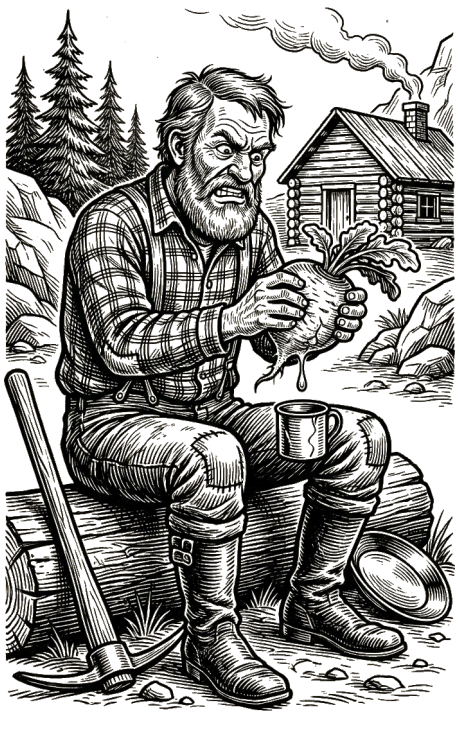
If you've not heard from us in a while, you need to set us straight so the next edict finds you!

Proceed immediately (or at least before the next round of festivities) to: https://dlgyp.org/serious-shit/. Or scan the code with your phone camera to be taken there via a marvel of technological advancement.

TCB Challenge Proves Challenging

As described in our first edition of this publication, a class of Technically Challenged Brothers walks among us. Clampers for whom the modern contrivances of the electrical age are akin to squeezing blood from a turnip.

But let the record show: our last call to assist these Brethren produced results that were—how shall we put it—less than Satisfactory. Too many TCBs still drift beyond the campfire, not for lack of interest, but for lack of a simple hand at the right moment.



Therefore, your officers reissue a friendly challenge to the able-fingered: any Brother who can navigate a link without cursing is urged—nay, expected—to sponsor one or more TCBs. Make the call. Share the details. Help with the sign-up. Be the human "submit" button.

Seek them out. Guide them in. And prove we are a chapter, not merely a mailing list. And thus shall our ranks swell again with those we sorely miss.

From Spring Panic to Summer Glory

Daringly, your editor offers a less than modest opinion: our major-events calendar resembles a pack mule loaded by committee: the Fall Clampout strapped hard to one side, the winter Widder's Ball lashed to the top, while the Candlelight and Spring Clampout dangle precariously on the other side of the beast.

The mule team arrives, sure footed but resentful.

Since the Humbug's reign ends in spring, the cure is obvious: move Candlelight to summer and make it the incoming Bug's first duty. Put the lighter, solemn cargo on first—warm evenings, longer light—then spread the remaining burdens evenly along the trail.

A Balanced load, for all four seasons: Summer Candlelight, Fall Clampout, Winter Widder's Ball, Spring Clampout.

What say the brethren?



Man Finds Gold - Cannot Find Claim

What follows is this writer's account of local historical events, assembled from stubborn facts and the even more stubborn tendency of humans to behave predictably around anything that glitters.

A short spell downstream from our present camp at the Chamberlin Ranch sits another familiar Clampsite, Rancho San Marcos. In 1855, the river country there committed the oldest California offense: it shone at the wrong moment in front of the wrong people.

The incident began with Mariano Lopez, majordomo of Dr. Richard S. Den's Rancho San Marcos, leaving Mass at Mission Santa Ynez. Watering his horse, he noticed a yellow glint in the riverbed—gold dust, or something impersonating it well enough to start trouble. Lopez gathered a sample and, rather than holler "Eureka" into the breeze, carried it to Santa Barbara to be tested.

He took it to Benigno Gutierrez, a druggist—because in those days the line between pharmacist and assayer was apparently drawn in pencil. Gutierrez tested the material with aqua regia and judged it by malleability, the frontier method of asking a substance to prove it can keep its identity under pressure. The verdict came back "oro fino," pure gold, reportedly worth as much as $19 an ounce. In 1855, that figure did not require confirmation; it required a shovel.

Then the story delivered its best twist. Lopez—the man who noticed the glint—could not find a paying claim. While strangers scratched and dug, Lopez searched and came up empty, watching outsiders treat a working rancho like a public convenience store stocked with fortune. Foot traffic multiplied. Patience did not.

Lopez responded with the classic instrument of frontier authority: a posted notice, in English and Spanish, warning trespassers they would be treated as "suspicious persons," and dealt with accordingly. The notice also upgraded the affair from "gold rumor" to "possible hostage crisis," and that summoned management. Dr. Den issued a public clarification: no damage had been done, and Lopez's restrictions were not official rancho policy.

And then, as abruptly as it began, the fever broke. Within weeks the prospectors drifted off to chase the next glittering promise, leaving behind disturbed ground, tired animals, and a tidy lesson: in Santa Barbara County, even a gold rush can be a short meeting—called to order by rumor and adjourned by reality.

Official Hysterical Keepsake
Exclusively for attendees of the 6031 Spring Doins at Rancho Los Protreros.
Courtesy of Our Noble Grand Humbug, Thaddeus "The Protégé" Haines, AL-XXXVI,
de la Guerra y Pacheco Chapter 1.5 of the
Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus
Credo Quia Absurdum!