

# The Historian

A Quarterly Publication of the Fallbrook Historical Society

Summer 2026

## The History of Live Oak Park



**1904** Fallbrook picnickers arriving at Reche's Grove, now known as Live Oak Park.  
*Fallbrook Historical Society*

The area known as Live Oak Park has been in use as a recreation area for nearly  
150 years.

The first inhabitants of today's Live Oak Park were the Native Americans who harvested acorns from the oak trees. The acorn foods gathered from live oak trees were nutritious and reliable from year to year. Large indentations in the bedrock along Live Oak Creek, still visible today, are evidence of generations of acorn grinding that occurred for village food preparation.

Native American hunters also found the oak woodlands to be rich in game; as deer, bear, and other wildlife also thrived on the acorns and liked to pause in the shade of the trees.

Cattle from the adjoining unfenced Rancho Monserrate grazed here as far back as the 1848.

Vital Reche settled here in 1869. After the Rancho Monserrate borders were confirmed by U.S. surveyors, Reche filed his homestead of 160 acres. Reche raised bees and citrus. Early on, a wide level area among the grove of Live Oaks on Reche's homestead became a popular picnic spot.

In 1880, The San Diego Union newspaper reported that 200 people including Fall Brook residents plus invited visitors from around the County attended a Fourth of July picnic celebration hosted by Mr. & Mrs. Reche within a "beautiful grove of live oaks where a platform and benches were arranged for the occasion." There was a dance in the evening. (1)

Vital Reche passed away in May 1894 at age 69, five months after the death of his wife Amelia. Reportedly, they were buried here at their former residence. (2)

Although Reche's son Charles V apparently began to sell off parts of the estate, Charles continued to allow community picnics to be held here in the grove. In 1895, the San Diego Union reported another well-attended Fourth of July celebration at Reche's Grove with a band and a barrel full of ice-cold lemonade for the children. (3)

The Fallbrook Saturday Afternoon Club (later known as the Woman's Club) took over organizing and hosting community Fourth of July picnics in Reche's Grove in 1908. These annual events held tug of war, broad jump, and shot-put contests, relay races, sack races, and other events. The Woman's Club continued these annual picnics here for at least another ten years. (4)

Prior to 1911, Fallbrook High School began holding an annual reception for incoming freshmen with a moonlight picnic around a bonfire in Reche's Grove. The cheerful event chaperoned by teachers began with a hayride from West Fallbrook. (5)



**1904** Fallbrook High School students enjoying a picnic at Reche's Grove, (today's Live Oak Park). Among the students are Kate Lamb, Lee Ellis, Ray and Roy Velzer, Walter Pittenger, and Camille Pruett. *Fallbrook Historical Society*

After 1918, the name Reche's Grove stopped being used, because the Reche family no longer owned the property and it was being offered for sale again by the Shepard estate.

Denver O. Lamb, a local resident and farmer, is credited with saving the Grove. The nearby Lamb family on Gird Road loved the Grove. Denver overheard a man planning to buy the Shepard estate saying that the land would make a good potato patch once the trees were cut down. D.O. Lamb outbid the potato farmer, buying 120 acres, which included part of the old Reche's Grove.

George W. Houk, a wealthy philanthropist from Chicago, was serving as president of the Chamber of Commerce of Northern San Diego County. Houk decided to spend his own money to reassemble Reche's land for a public park. Raising donations by offering matching funds, Houk obtained the funds to buy the first 7 acres.

In 1919, Denver and Lucy Lamb added to that by donating 3 adjoining acres of Live Oaks that they had saved. The Chamber of Commerce of Northern San Diego County voted to formally establish a park at Fallbrook's Reche Grove, in memory of George W. Houk.

Denver's son Murray Lamb and Denver's son-in-law Eric Hindorff were primarily responsible for the construction of the improvements to the new park, including building the stoves, a dance floor, and concrete tables. On July 17, 1920, the Chamber dedicated the ten acres as Live Oak Park. (6)

On March 16, 1925, San Diego County accepted the donation of 10 acres from Denver Lamb and the Chamber of Commerce of Northern San Diego County for "park purposes only, forever." (7)

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1) San Diego Union, July 13, 1880
- 2) Rochester, N.Y. Democrat & Chronical newspaper 30 May 1894
- 3) San Diego Union, July 9, 1895
- 4) Fallbrook Enterprise news items 1911 to 1918.
- 5) Fallbrook Enterprise Sept 8, 1911
- 6) Fallbrook Enterprise July 23, 1920
- 7) Fallbrook In Review, volume 7 pp 40-43, by Don Rivers.

### THERE ARE TWO TIME CAPSULES BURIED IN FALLBROOK

Heritage Center: The Fallbrook Historical Society buried another Time Capsule at the Heritage Center. It is planned to be opened in 2027. There is a possibility that this could be opened several months earlier as an event for the Historical Society's 50th Anniversary.

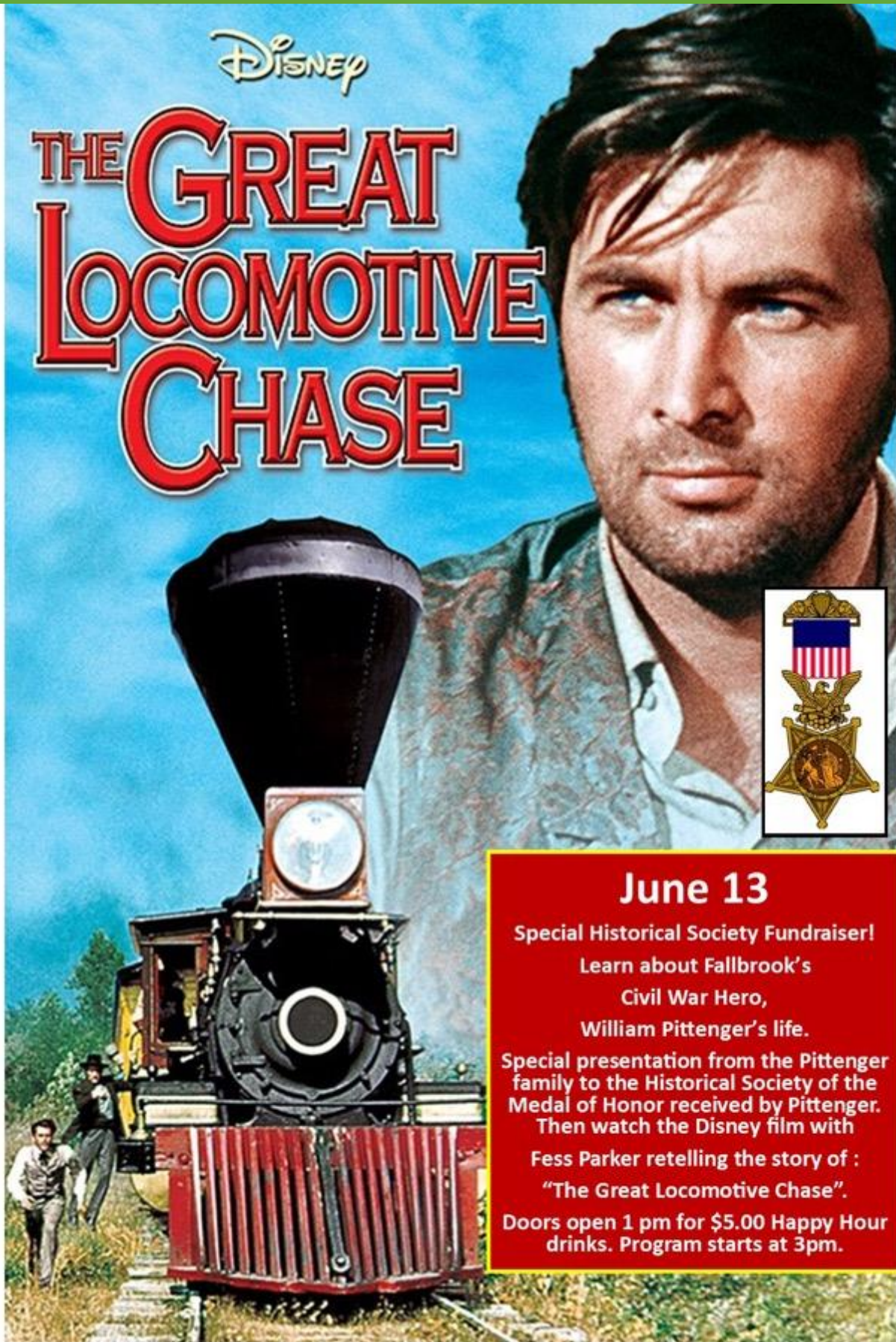


Time Capsule at the Historical Society Heritage Center is due to be opened in 2027.



Time Capsule at Live Oak Park was installed by the Historical Society and the Chamber of Commerce in 1985. Due to be open in 2035.

Live Oak Park: The Historical Society and the Chamber of Commerce buried a Time Capsule in Live Oak Park to mark Fallbrook's Centennial anniversary in 1985. This Time Capsule is due to be opened in 2035.



**June 13**

**Special Historical Society Fundraiser!**

Learn about Fallbrook's  
Civil War Hero,  
William Pittenger's life.

Special presentation from the Pittenger  
family to the Historical Society of the  
Medal of Honor received by Pittenger.  
Then watch the Disney film with  
Fess Parker retelling the story of :  
"The Great Locomotive Chase".

Doors open 1 pm for \$5.00 Happy Hour  
drinks. Program starts at 3pm.



★ ★ ★  
★ **SUVCW** ★  
★ SGT. WILLIAM PITTENGER CAMP 21 ★  
★ PRESENTS ★

# THE MEDAL OF HONOR COMES HOME

→ A SPECIAL GALA PRESENTATION ←  
Join us for an afternoon of history, honor, and remembrance  
celebrating the bravery of **ANDREW'S RAIDERS**  
and the legendary **GREAT LOCOMOTIVE CHASE**

**SATURDAY, JUNE 13<sup>TH</sup>**

★ **1:00 PM** ★  
HAPPY HOUR &  
SOCIAL GATHERING

★ **3:00 PM** ★  
PROGRAM & FILM PRESENTATION  
→ FEATURING: →  
"THE GREAT  
LOCOMOTIVE CHASE"



**MISSION THEATRE** ★  
231 N MAIN AVE  
FALLBROOK, CA 92028

★ FIRST IN VALOR, REMEMBERED IN HISTORY. ★  
★ ALL ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND. ★

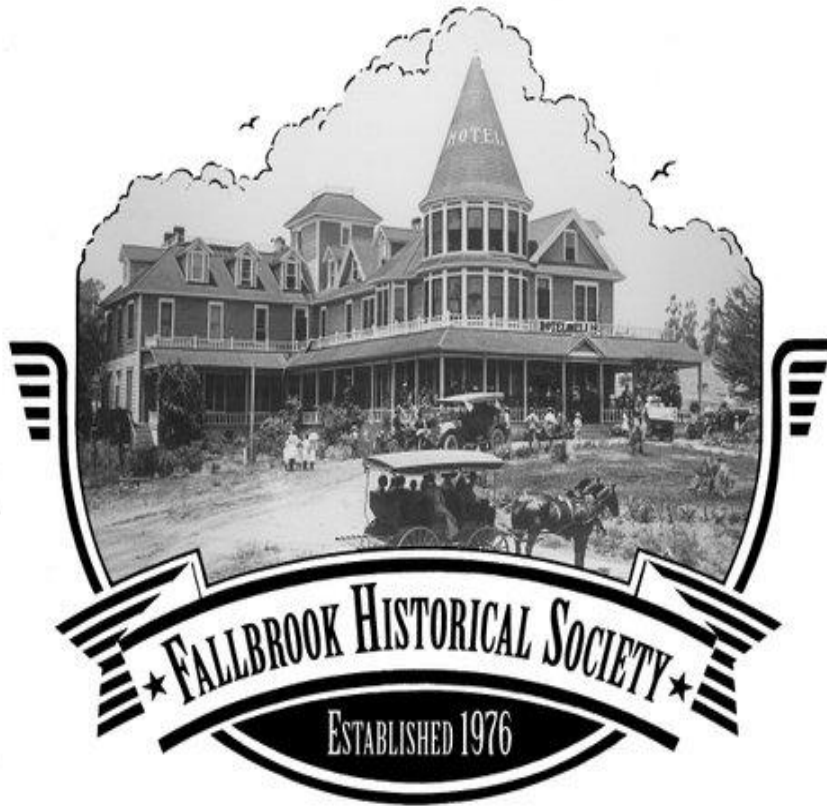
SCAN THE QR CODE  
TO PURCHASE TICKETS





Jeff Duhachek and Don & Mary Lahey after giving tours to the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War of “Everything of Pittenger”.

We are celebrating the Historical Society's  
**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2026**



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