

## FIELD OBSERVATION REPORT

By Mary Wilson

January 10, 2021

All rights to material contained in this report are reserved and must have permission to use from the author.

Rain amounts from the Poppy Reserve Weather Station shows rain from November 2020 to January 2021 is less than an inch—not enough for a good wildflower season this year. There have been years in the past that show little rain up to January and then the rains come and there is a pretty good year of wildflowers—will have to wait and see.

### December 21, 2020—Astronomy Great Conjunction



The word “conjunction” in astronomy means two or more objects meet up with each other in our sky. This so-called planetary conjunction occurs every two decades. But, as with all things 2020, this year was different. The planets, Jupiter and Saturn, appear to be separated by a mere sliver of sky, displaying an apparent closeness not seen since the year 1226. The next great conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn was in the year 1623. The great thing is you could see this event around dusk and did not have to have special training to see it.

*Jupiter and Saturn (ring around it) and Moon during Conjunction.*

### Prime Desert Woodland Preserve—43201 35th Street West, Lancaster, CA



You may remember the blue antelope from 2019 that were located in Antelope Acres at the foot of the A.V. Poppy Reserve. The artists Nathaniel and David wanted to bring the antelopes back to the Antelope Valley and placed their artwork made from materials they scavenged from the site .

Well the antelope have migrated to the Prime Desert Woodland and may have a permanent home. To see them take the trail on the west side—walk the wooden bridge to the trail heads and take the trail that goes to the far west side of the park. You will see something blue at the end of the wooden bridge.



## ALMONDS

In the Antelope Valley during the early 1880s and 1890s, there was heavy rainfall and homesteaders successfully cultivated alfalfa, barley, wheat and a variety of fruits and nuts (almonds). A serious drought occurred between 1894 and 1904 forcing many settlers to abandon their land in the Antelope Valley. In 1905 irrigation came into being thanks to water pumps by gasoline and later electricity.

Almond trees grow from 13 to 33 feet in height. The flowers are white to pale pink and appear in early spring. Almonds begin bearing nuts the third year after planting. They reach full bearing five to six years after planting. The fruit matures in the autumn, about 7-8 months after flowering.



Almonds are eaten raw or toasted and come in the form of whole, slivered and ground into flour. They are used in nougat, pastries, cookies, cakes and chocolate makers use 40% of the world's total almonds in making chocolate covered almonds. The almond flour is combined with sugar or honey for marzipan, the blanched kernels are used to make almond butter, and almond milk is manufactured from almonds with a creamy texture and nutty taste. There is an almond oil that is used by massage therapists to lubricate the skin.

The Egyptian Pharos used almonds in their breads and the almond tree was brought to California from Spain in the mid-1700's by Franciscan Padres. California produces more than 80 percent of the world's almonds.

For those of you that remember Rancho Raviri and their wonderful almond treats and dried fruits their store is now located at 42055 50th Street West, Unit 11 in Quartz Hill.

## FROM THE EARLY DAYS

By Jane Pinheiro

The following article appeared in Almond Blossom Festival program dated February 22-24, 1974.

The first permanent homes in this south west corner of Antelope Valley were those of pioneer ranchers. There were small springs in the foothills then to supply water for domestic needs. These people raised cattle, planted vineyards and orchards of almonds, apricots and pears and dry-farmed grain fields. It was found that almonds produced only above a frost line. (Roughly south of M-4 in Quartz Hill, and whence following an irregular pattern along the foothills of the valley.) In the late 1800's pear blight took most of the pear trees, but the apricots and almonds continued to flourish. There were almond hulling and shelling sheds built, also an apricot canning and drying shed. (These historic landmarks were converted some years ago to an apartment complex on M-4, known as Flying A.)

In the 1930's the ranch known as the Earl Estates was subdivided and became known as the "Dude Ranch". The old ranch house was converted to a clubhouse café. "Weekend" houses were built, an irrigation reservoir was made into a swimming area, a golf course was laid out, a skeet shooting range installed, a riding stable was established, and the development was touted as "the poor man's Palm Springs".

During World War II, with gas rationing and the war effort, the recreation aspect diminished, the clubhouse was converted into apartments, and the area settled into a sort of doldrums. When the war had ended, it settled into a period of stability and steady growth. New houses began appearing and new people came to stay. Eventually the idea developed that a community group was needed, and the Civic Improvement Association was organized, and this created the need for an established name, as the area was known variously as “Earl Station”, “The Dude Ranch”, etc. A community or town hall meeting was called at the school house—then the Belleview School—to select a name. Several suggestions were submitted; Almondville, Goddeville, Antelope Belleview, etc., and Quartz Hill. The area had at one time been referred to as “The other side of the Quartz Hill”. A vote of those present was taken, and Quartz Hill was chosen by the majority. Soon a sub-station post office was established, making it an official designation. A little later someone came up with the idea that a Chamber of Commerce was a better status symbol than a Civic Improvement Association, so the Quartz Hill Chamber of Commerce was founded and eventually the Civic Improvement Association faded into inactivity.

Then one early Spring day two or three years later of 25 years ago; Byron P. Glenn and the writer were standing on the top of the hill at the Glenn home looking out over the orchards and noting that, the first almond trees were breaking into bloom. Then and there he decided Quartz Hill should have a festival at almond blossom time. We took the idea to the Chamber of Commerce Board and the Almond Blossom Festival was born. A queen was chosen, a parade planned, and all the activities pertinent to a first festival got underway. Your writer took on the publicity and the Los Angeles media and radio stations cooperated magnificently. Even Mother Nature fell in line. The result was a superb display of almond and apricot blossoms stretching over the hill sides. The weather was perfect. It was a fun day! Everyone enjoyed our “bit of beauty” and our festival in spite of a traffic jam on Godde Pass and all the restaurants in the valley running out of food, even though the Festival Committee had barbecued more than a thousand pounds of spare ribs, which they dispensed with all the trimmings at \$1.25 per serving for as long as they lasted. The next year a thousand turkeys were cut up and made into sandwiches to help allay the visiting appetites. Desert polo (this was played with brooms and volleyball), horse shows, a ballet, band concerts, a fly-in-day, everything someone thought up and had gumption enough to carry through on. But always there have been blossoms and a parade. Some years nature has cooperated, some not at all, the trees have bloomed late or early, though always there have been some in bloom. The sun has shown, the wind has blown, and twice there has been snow.

The Almond Blossom Queen, Miss Quartz Hill, has been selected and crowned at a variety of events; dances of course, variety shows, etc. and held wherever a place could be found and reflecting the imagination of the chairman of the year. The old Del Sur School, before it burned, was the scene of one coronation ball; the old Antelope Valley High School Auditorium before it was torn down, was the setting of a variety show—coronation on a night of pouring rain. The Jane Reynolds building in Lancaster served for a dance on one occasion and a variety show on another. One year the hangar at the Quartz Hill Airport was the site for a ball; someone got detergent instead of soap flakes on the floor and the air was filled with dust; but it was a good swinging orchestra and everyone danced until they choked and then went outside ‘til they could breath again, then came back and danced some more. It was memorable!

The early days have gone, and we feel much of the spontaneity, fun and sparkle have gone with them. What we have left is the nostalgia of happy memories, revived annually with each succeeding festival.

