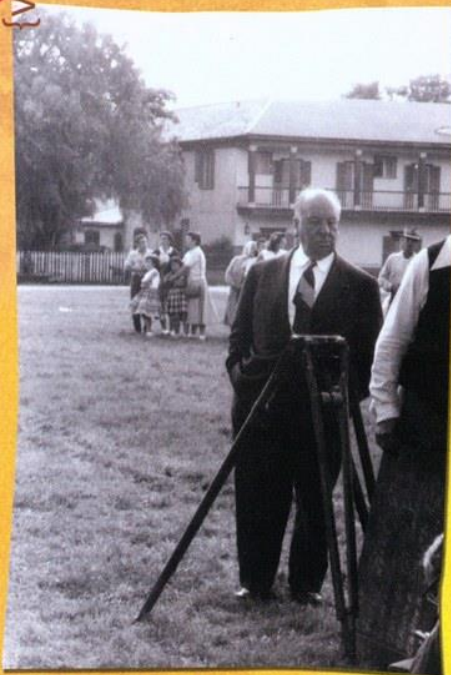


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San Juan Bautista, the central coast town Alfred Hitchcock made dizzy

By Stacey Vreeken



Alfred Hitchcock takes a break in the Mission Plaza between shots.

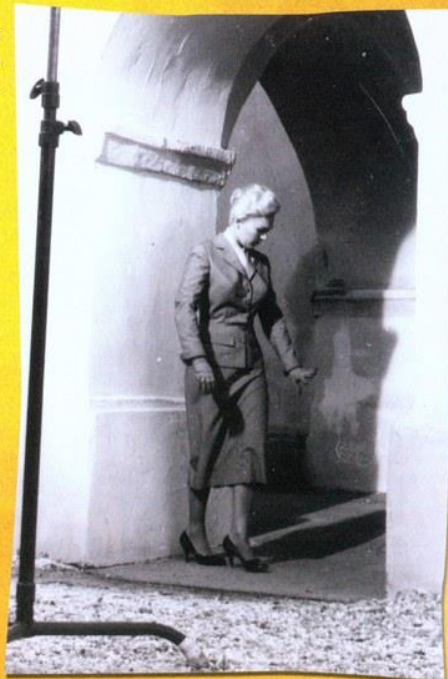
Much of San Juan Bautista looks just the same as it did in the fall of 1957, when Alfred Hitchcock shot the psychological thriller *Vertigo* there – with one major exception. The movie's big climax involves Kim Novak falling from the Mission bell tower, but the original Mission didn't have a tower. Those scenes had to be created in a Hollywood studio.

Nonetheless, the historic Plaza with its green square, Western facades and iconic Mission play a prominent role in the film, which is ranked No. 9 on the American Film Institute's Top 100 Movies of All Time.

During the six days that Alfred Hitchcock and his film crew came to San Juan Bautista, the small town was thrown into total chaos. Local photographer Sam Vestal, who died in 2002, documented stars James Stewart and Novak in relaxed moments and captured the complexity of shooting the film. In those days, there were no trailers to hide in, so cast and crew were available to townspeople and press alike. ■

'VERTIGO'

Kim Novak checks the lighting in one of the Mission arches.

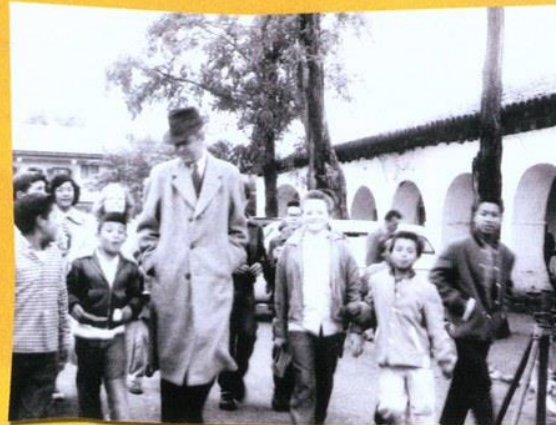


Kim Novak and Jimmy Stewart relax in the Plaza while still in costume.

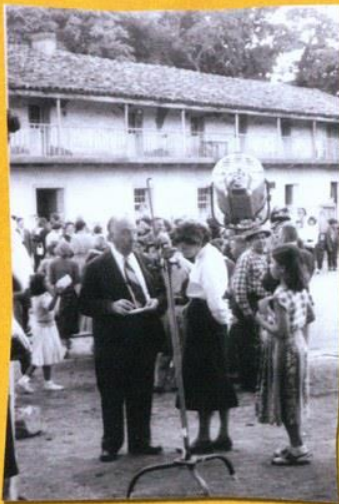
Cabrillo College Emeritus Historian Sandy Lydon was present in San Juan Bautista in 1957 trying to catch a glimpse of Kim Novak during the filming of *Vertigo* and he continues to be obsessed with the movie. Every autumn he leads a *Vertigo*-based tour of San Juan Bautista and environs visiting locations used by Hitchcock in the film. You can find details and dates of this year's tour on his Web site (www.sandylydon.com).



Surrounded by enthusiastic locals, Kim Novak is escorted through the Plaza.



Jimmy Stewart makes friends with some San Juan boys.



With the Castro Adobe as a backdrop, director Alfred Hitchcock discusses the next scene.



Sitting in the Plaza Livery Stable Jimmy Stewart shaves while Hitch relaxes.



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PHOTOGRAPHS COLLECTION OF CAROLYN SWIFT

About the photographs

Sam Vestal was a Central Coast photographer who in 1956 helped his newspaper, the Watsonville Register-Pajonian, win a Pulitzer Prize in public service for exposure of corruption in public office. Vestal photographed the county district attorney's car parked at the home of a man who ran illegal gambling ring. Though Vestal was caught, held at gunpoint, arrested and his camera destroyed, he managed to slip the film to the reporter. The resulting story ended the DA's career, jailed the gambler and won the newspaper the prize. Vestal had a knack for being at the right place at the right time and coming up with just the pictures.

With no star trailers in San Juan, Kim Novak studies her lines inside a Cadillac limo. The same car later appears in the film (parked in front of the Plaza Hall).