

Smoke Signal

CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA 91311
(818) 882-5614
www.historicalsocieties.net



March 2010, Issue #2

Co-Presidents: André & Linda van der Valk

Editor: Ann Vincent

Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

The Acre has held up well with the rain. The Daffodils are already blooming as well as the California Poppies. Everything looks green and so fresh I am hoping everything will be beautiful for the Garden Festival. Betty Summers, our Garden Curator, is recovering from knee surgery. We had a great rose pruning day and most of the roses were pruned. For those of us who attended, we learned that roses are not as delicate as we thought when it comes to pruning.

We are busy preparing for the Garden Festival and I think we are going to have a successful one. Virginia contacted Huell Howser and he has agreed to put in a plug for us on April 12th when he will repeat the show about Chatsworth. This year we are doing something new with the tea and taking reservations for groups of 10 or more. The Tea was so successful last year that we ran out about 1:00 PM so please come early to make sure you get a spot.

We just received some great pictures to scan for our collection from the Chatsworth/Porter Ranch Chamber. They really give us a great incite into Chatsworth of the 1920's. There is a picture of the old Chatsworth Elementary School from the 1880's with the one built in 1916 in the same frame. There is also a picture looking towards Rim Rock Ranch and one south of Stoney Point. My favorite is the one of the George Washington Rock that is now located in the gated community of Indian Springs. If you have any old pictures that we can scan please contact us and we will be happy to make all the arrangements to pick them up and get them back to you.

We hope to see everyone at the Garden Festival and if you want to help and volunteer please let us know. We always need help with setting up, taking down, baking, manning booths or just giving people a break.

Linda and André

Chatsworth Historical Society
Board of Directors 2009-2010

Co-Presidents	Linda & André van der Valk
Programs, Ways & Means.....	Bea Berman
Membership.....	Keith Watts
Treasurer.....	Ray Vincent
Recording Secretary.....	Elaine Campbell
Smoke Signal.....	Ann Vincent
Museum Curator.....	Virginia Watson
Cottage Curator.....	Betty Summers
Hospitality.....	Jelena Csanyi
Garden Director.....	Jim & Betty Summers
Director-at-Large.....	Beverly King
Director-at-Large.....	Evelyn Hutcheson
Permanent Member.....	Lila Schepler

Upcoming Events at the HOMESTEAD ACRE

March 16, 2010 – Tues. 7 PM - Stagecoach Trail
Join us for a pictorial history of the Stagecoach Trail including movie footage of the March 17, 1939 Stagecoach Trail dedication ceremony.

April 20, 2010 – Tues. 7 PM
Handmade Quilts with Flower Themes
On hand will be a spectacular display of award winning quilts hand made by Zena Thorpe of Chatsworth. Zena also has a new book "Beautiful Alphabet Appliqué" as a how-to-book for illuminating letters with flowers.

April 25, 2010 – Sun. 11-4 PM - Garden Festival
The Museum display will feature photos of the Pioneer Church and 1965 film footage of the church being moved.

Weekly - Docent Workshops
Workshops meet every Wednesday, 9:00am to noon under the direction of Virginia Watson. Docents are trained to provide tours and assist with projects related to the museum and gardens. Contact Virginia Watson at 818-341-3053 for additional information.

Monthly - Museum Open House -
The Homestead Acre is open to the public the first Sunday of each month from 1 to 4 pm.

Ways and Means

By Bea Berman

I can't believe it's another year and plans are underway for our annual GARDEN FESTIVAL AND HIGH TEA, on SUNDAY, APRIL 25, 2010 at the Homestead Acre from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. This is one of our two fundraisers for the year to help maintain the cost of upkeep for the museum, cottage and gardens.

As always, we need baked goods for our Bake Sale and new or like new items for our White Elephant Booth. Of course we can always use help for set up and take down. If you have any questions, I can be reached at (818) 341-5449.

Tell your friends about the Garden Festival. We are looking forward to seeing you on the 25th of April.

Curator's Corner

By Virginia Watson

Our CHS docents spend countless volunteer hours preparing for our Sunday Open Houses and for our school tours and other groups that visit our facility. The docents have all studied the history of our area and enjoy telling the Chatsworth story to our visitors. In addition they get our Smoke Signal stamped and addressed and to the post office, help with filing and the many office duties.

Docents also help in the gardens, planting, cultivating and weeding, the 283 rose bushes and the other bulbs, bushes, ornamental and fruit trees, many of whom were planted years ago by the James David Hill family.

Bea Berman is a docent who occasionally gives tours but she has been in charge of the Garden Festival for the many of the past Garden Festivals and Pioneer Days. Mrs. Berman is well-known for her work in the community especially the Chatsworth Community Coordinating Council. She and her family spend many hours volunteering for the CHS.

Beverly King is an executive board member and a tour docent but she spends many hours pruning, weeding and planting in the gardens. Most recently she has been refinishing the front doors of the museum and doing a great job of it too.

Ann Vincent, editor of the Smoke Signal and our computer expert, is getting our collection of historic photographs scanned into our computer. But she also is a native plant specialist and works in the gardens in addition to her speaking engagements.

Betty and Jim Summers are in charge of the grounds which means they are often at The Acre early in the morning checking to make sure everything is getting watered and properly care for. Betty is also a tour docent and has worked many years giving tours. She recently had another knee operation and is recuperating at home.

Jim is also a working docent. He has been a Chatsworth resident since 1934 when he was in grade school and attended Chatsworth Park Elementary School. He is a wonderful source and often shares his personal memories with other docents and guests. He lived with his parents and his sister in the N. A. Gray house when it was on Lassen Street near Devonshire.

Evelyn Hutcheson is in charge of keeping track of the docents' hours and other important dates. She is a long-time tour docent who welcomes guests to the museum, keeps track of visitors, and keeps a careful watch of children who visit the museum. Mrs. Hutchinson is also a local historical figure. She was one of the first nurses at Northridge Hospital and worked with Dr. Frederick Gruneck.

Connie Ager is a returning docent. Several years ago she and her late husband were a docent team giving tours and working with the Society. Connie recently retired and is now back volunteering. She grew up in Chatsworth. She and her sister were the special friends of Dodie and Debbie Rogers, the adopted daughters of Roy and Dale Evans Rogers and she has many stories to share.

Elaine Campbell is a busy clubwoman in the area but she finds time to work with the Society's Smoke Signals and photographs, keeping them in order and placing them in chronological order in a series of notebooks. Campbell is also secretary of the executive board of the Society and contributes to the Smoke Signal.

Jelena Csanyi is a tour docent and also in charge of hospitality for the Society. Mrs. Csanyi is really Mrs. Fix-it. She can fix anything -- most recently the big clock in the museum stopped and she has it running again. She is an organizer, a planner, a worker. She is a former caterer and is in charge of the High Tea at the April 25th Garden Festival.

Lila Schepler, who took over the reins of the CHS when the first president Charles Janess had a heart attack, and served five more terms as president, is a docent. She was the organizing chairman of the docents and still works as a docent for the Garden Festival and Pioneer Day in spite of being in her nineties.

Linda van der Valk, our long-time president, is also a well-known Chatsworth personality. She has worked in many areas of our community from PTA and school libraries to the Chatsworth Community Coordinating Council. Although she does not give tours she knows the history of our area and is busy making sure other people in the community know it too. She is a part of our Wednesday-at-the-Acre docent program and guides us in our activities for the Society.

Huell Howser has graciously agreed to re-run the tapes he made of Chatsworth and the Munch Box at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, April 12 on KCET to remind people of our Garden Festival on April 25. Our thanks to him and KCET!

Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society ST FRANCIS DAM DISASTER

Lecture & Bus Tour to Dam Site

Saturday, March 13, 2010

Lecture starts at 11:00 AM, Admission Free at the Saugus Train Station Museum.

Dam Tour starts after lecture, 12:00 PM, Tickets \$35/person. For more information and reservations call 661-254-1275 to see if tickets for the tour are still available.

Tour includes approximately 1 mile walk and uphill hike at dam site Bring comfortable walking shoes and clothing

The dam break is the second-worst natural disaster in the state of California: the failure of the St. Francis Dam on March 12, 1928 killed more than 450 people, leveled farms and homesteads, destroyed property and livestock, and changed the way dam safety was addressed forever more. "Dam Man" Frank Rock, considered an expert in the dam disaster, who has appeared on the Discovery and History Channels as well as local documentaries of the event, will give a short free lecture at the Saugus Train Station with an overview of the dam disaster, followed by a ticketed event, a three-hour motorcoach tour of the dam site.

GROWING UP ON THE HOMESTEAD ACRE IN THE 1920's and 30's...Continued

An oral history on what it was like living on the "ranch" in Chatsworth

Editor's Note: The information in this oral history was gathered by late CHS members Dean and Candy Craig in five interviews of Minnie Hill Palmer's children - Edith Palmer Butler (b. 1910) and Leroy E. Palmer (b. 1912) and Minnie's niece, Ruth Manny Hill Rider. It was transcribed by Candy Craig and late CHS member Sheila Watts. Keith Watts separated it into "chapters", added titles and other small editorial tasks.

Chapter 4

HILL FAMILY MEMBERS

Rhoda Jane Hill, the family matriarch, was still living in 1933 and, although very frail and often bedridden, was still a force to be reckoned with. Ruth Rider told us that Grandmother Hill would tap on her bedroom floor with her cane to call for attention and that she still indulged in chewing tobacco. She loved showing a collection of brightly colored paper stars that she stored in a box under bed. These were saved from the tobacco packages.



James David and Rhoda Jane Hill


In 1929, nineteen year old Edith eloped with Laurence Butler. They subsequently had two children, Valerie and Ronald. In 1935 Minnie's mother, Rhoda Jane Enlow Hill, who with her husband James David Hill Sr., had homesteaded the original sixty acres, died at the age of eighty-eight and a half. Very shortly after, her son, Lovell Hill, married for the first time. He was fifty-nine years old. He and his wife, Laura, moved to a house on Hagar St. in San Fernando. (Lovell Hill died in 1952 and, on his death, Minnie inherited a large part of the two hundred and thirty-acre property in Chatsworth. His wife, Laura, also inherited part of the acreage.) Leroy Palmer married Ann Margaret Swenson in 1937. They had no children.

The 1920's began the Rural American Depression and most farm families did not participate in the prosperous times of the twenties. By the time of the stock market crash in 1929, the farm depression had lasted for nine years and was to worsen during the 1930's. Only the farm assistance programs and the beginning of World War II produced better times, but by then the population of American farm families had been cut in half.

Chatsworth Historical Society Presents

A GARDEN FESTIVAL

Featuring Roses and Crafts



Over 300 Rose Bushes in Bloom

The Duchess Tea Room
Afternoon Tea
- \$7 per person
- 11.30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- Reservations required for groups of 10 or more by April 18th

Blooming Rose Gardens

Quilt Display from the Veteran's Quilt Project

Arts & Crafts

White Elephant Sale

Hot Dogs and Sodas

Polynesian Dance Revue
(2 p.m.)

Museum Exhibits
Featuring Chatsworth Pioneer Families and the 1963 relocation of the Pioneer Church

Tours of Minnie's Cottage
(11 - 4 p.m.)

Garden Clubs

Bake Sale

Live Plant Sale

Note: Parking is limited at Chatsworth Park South

Park your car at the Chatsworth Train Depot (10038 Old Depot Plaza Road) and use our free shuttle service, every 15 minutes from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sunday, April 25, 2010
11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
\$4 Admission Donation - Children \$1
Kids under 5 Free

THE HOMESTEAD ACRE

At the First Stop Sign in **Chatsworth Park South**
(West End of Devonshire Street)
10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA 91311
Information: 818-882-5614

All Proceeds go to the Chatsworth Historical Society for the preservation of the Minnie Hill Palmer Homestead Acre and the Virginia Watson Chatsworth Museum

Garden Festival Flyers can be downloaded from our website at: www.historicalsocieties.net

This concludes the Growing up on the Homestead Acres series.

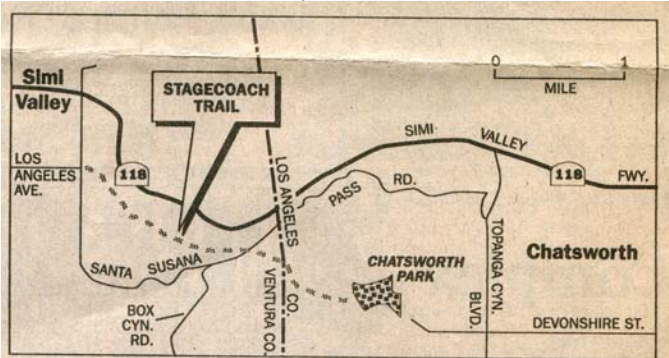
CHATSWORTH PAST & PRESENT

By Ann Vincent

March 2010

THE STAGECOACH TRAIL

When we think Santa Susana Pass, most of us locally think of the Santa Susana Pass Road that runs just south of the 118 freeway. Most only use it now when the freeway is backed up, however it is only one of a series of historic roads used over time to cross from Chatsworth to Simi Valley.



The Santa Susana Pass was first used by the Indians. During the Spanish Colonial Period, the original El Camino Real followed a coastal route from San Diego to San Francisco. The first mission was San Diego de Alcalá, founded in 1769. Upon completion of the 17th of 21 missions at San Fernando Rey de España in 1797, an inland route through the Santa Susana Pass was established. Travelers would go from the San Fernando Mission to the Simi House, built in 1793, and then on to Mission San Buenaventura, built in 1782.

In 1859 the State of California provided \$15,000 to fix up the Santa Susana Pass Wagon Road, which became the Stagecoach Trail, in use from 1861-1895. The work would be under the supervision of James Thompson, who had also been awarded a contract to use the pass to carry mail. This new road went straight up and over the mountain and became known as the

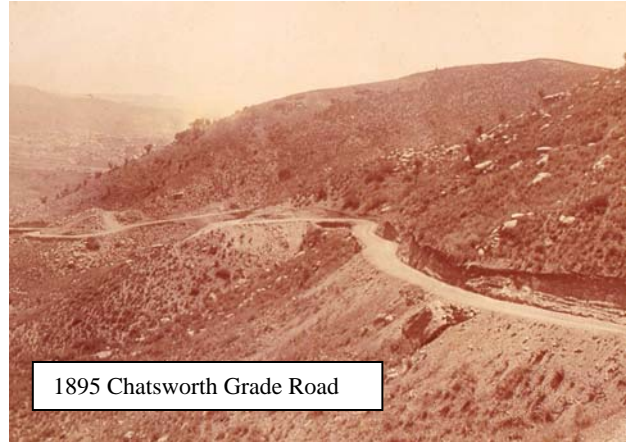


“Devil’s Slide” due to the descent and the need to lock the wagon wheels to keep the wagon from over-running the horses on the way down. Many stories have been recorded of the adventures of traveling the Stagecoach Road.

In 1875 the stagecoaches from Los Angeles to San Francisco were re-routed by a new owner to an

improved grade road south through Conejo with newer, more comfortable wagons. However, the Simi Land and Water Company continued to take passengers over the original Stagecoach Trail until 1895.

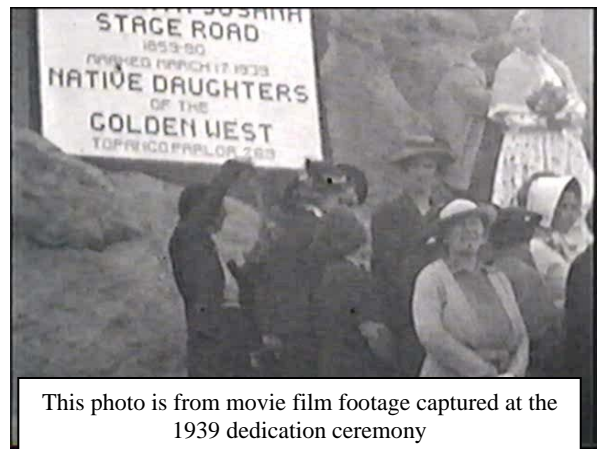
In 1895 the Chatsworth Grade Road was built...with yes, a usable grade that wound through the pass, cut into the hill sides. This made it possible for goods and produce to easily make it through the pass.



The remains of this road can still be seen south of the existing Santa Susana Pass Road and is included in the Santa Susana State Historic Park property.

In 1904 the railroad’s successful completion of the Montalvo Cutoff with three tunnels through the hills of Simi and Chatsworth, connected railroad travel and transportation of goods through the pass to and from Los Angeles.

1917 brought an improved asphalt paved Santa Susana Pass Road that is still traveled today.



On March 17, 1939, the Native Daughters of the Golden West gathered to place a monument along the Stagecoach trail. Over 400 members of the community either walked or arrived on horseback up the steep trail to the summit where the tile plaque was unveiled. Tributes were paid to the pioneers who traveled this historic road.

In 1979 the completion of the 118 Freeway made travel through the pass a 5 minute journey now enjoyed in air-conditioned cars.

Chatsworth Historical Society

Have You Lived Here A Long Time?

Do you remember The Grapevine?

It was a weekly community newspaper that was produced by two local women in the 1950's. It was very small, only about 8" by 10" wide and was filled with news about the people who lived in the area.

The Chatsworth Historical Society has a collection of those newspapers and we would like to fill in the missing dates. Each issue painted a pleasant picture of life in the northwest San Fernando Valley. The paper was full of information about the local PTA, Chatsworth Park Elementary news, church events, Scouts and other youth groups, and baseball, accounts of visitors, vacations and celebrations and advertising of local sales and business information.

Please look around and see if you might have one or two issues tucked back in a drawer or saved in a box and consider donating the paper to our Society. We

plan on making a display of the newspapers this fall. We would welcome any and all issues. If you have any questions please call me at (818) 341-3053. Virginia Watson

Wondering if your Dues are Due?

There is a code on the last line of your address label (if you are a life member, there is no code).

- The first digit represents membership type, 1 – individual, and 2 – family/organization.
- The next two digits represent the month that you last paid your dues.
- The last two digits represent the year that you last paid your dues.
- If the month and year on your address label is over one year old, then your dues are due!

Please use the form below to renew your Membership. And if your neighbor is not a member yet, pass this newsletter on to them and invite them to join...



Tuesday, March 16 – 7:00 PM Stagecoach Trail Program

Join us for a presentation of Stagecoach Trail history and actual 1939 movie footage of the Stagecoach Trail Dedication at the Virginia Watson Museum Chatsworth Park South



CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Membership Form

Your membership helps support our Homestead Acre and the educational and historical programs we provide for our community. Members receive our quarterly newsletters, and receive invitation reminders regarding our monthly programs and annual events – Rose Pruning, the Garden Festival, Membership Roundup, and Pioneer Day. Please mail this form with your annual membership dues and/or contribution made payable to:

Chatsworth Historical Society, 10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA 91311
818-882-5614 www.historicalsocieties.net

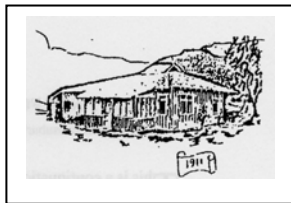
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$20.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Organization \$20.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Membership: \$ 125.00 | |

NAME _____ Phone: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____ Email: _____

CITY / STATE / ZIP: _____

Special Interest / Expertise: _____



OLD PHOTOS - from Chatsworth Past - MOVING THE PIONEER CHURCH



Come see the photos, the movie film and the history of this Historical Monument at the Garden Festival, April 25th at the Historic Acre in Chatsworth



The first official action of the Chatsworth Historical Society was to preserve the Chatsworth Community Church and in 1965 relocate it to its new home at the Oakwood Cemetery. Please join us at the Virginia Watson Museum at the Historic Acre for this year's Garden Festival April 25, 2010, where we will have on display the adventures of actually moving the church and what it took to accomplish this goal.

Chatsworth Historical Society

10385 Shadow Oak Drive
Chatsworth, Ca 91311

Check the code below your mailing label ...is it time to pay your dues? (See page 5 for details)