

# Smoke Signal

CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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Co-Presidents: André & Linda van der Valk

April 2013, Issue #2

Editor: Ann Vincent

## Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

Spring time has brought us two new members to the Historical Society, our new granddaughter Daphne Aimee van der Valk and the Vincent's new granddaughter Julie Maxine Lerma. Needless to say we have two very happy sets of grandparents.

A meeting was held at Mason Park for an update on the clean up for Chatsworth Park South. The Draft Remedial Action Plan is available for public comment. Copies of the draft RAP are available at the Chatsworth Library and the Dept of Toxic Substance Control Chatsworth Regional Office. It is also available online [www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/profile\\_report.asp?global\\_id=60000893](http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/profile_report.asp?global_id=60000893). There are three alternatives; the first one would be to do nothing which would cause the park to never be reopened. The second one includes excavation, onsite treatment and off site disposal; clear vegetation from the site and remove trees ( except protected or heritage trees); excavate an average of four feet of soil and treat on site soil that is non-hazardous. This would allow the park to be re-vegetated and include replacement trees. This is approximated to cost fifteen million dollars. Alternative three is the containment through surface capping. Clear vegetation from the site and remove trees (except protected or heritage trees); install a one foot cap surface; excavate and dispose of soil from replacement tree grove areas; place clean backfill in tree groves; and re-vegetate including replacement trees. In this alternative replacement trees will only be allowed in tree groves. At the time of the meeting it was not determined where the tree groves would be. The cost of this alternative is approximately seven million dollars.

The comment period for this draft RAP is ending April 22, 2013 and can be emailed to [chand.sultana@dtsc.ca.gov](mailto:chand.sultana@dtsc.ca.gov). They also can be mailed to DTSC Chatsworth Office 921 Oakdale Ave. Chatsworth 91311. If you have a chance, try to review and make comments. It is important for our Chatsworth Park South, one of the most beautiful parks in the Valley.

We are now getting ready for The Garden Festival. As always Bea is working hard to make it a perfect day. Jelena is busy making sure that the tea is again a perfect way to have lunch in our beautiful gardens. We need volunteers for set up, take down and everything in between. Hope to see you April 28th at the Garden Festival!

Linda and André

Chatsworth Historical Society  
Board of Directors 2012-2013

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.....	Connie Ager
Permanent Member.....	Lila Schepler

## Upcoming Events

**April 16, 7:00 PM - Tuesday**

### “125 years of Chatsworth History”

Celebrate Chatsworth’s 125<sup>th</sup> Birthday and travel through time with our Pioneer families. See historic photos of our home town from 1888 to 2013. This program was recently given at the Chatsworth Library with standing room only....here is your next chance to see it during this Anniversary year.

**April 28, 2013 – Sunday 11-4 pm**

### GARDEN FESTIVAL & TEA

Plan to be there...this is our big fundraiser, and we need your support to help our volunteers maintain the Acre and museum for the future!

**May 21, 7:00 PM - Tuesday**

### 50 Years of Fun...

### with the Historical Society

It has been 50 years since the Historical Society decided to save the Pioneer Church and provided Chatsworth with LA Historical Monument #14. Come see what else we have been up to and join us to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday!

### Monthly - Museum Open House

The Homestead Acre is open to the public the first Sunday of each month from 1 to 4 pm. The next open house will be Sunday, May 5th followed by June 2nd.

## Garden Festival

By Bea Berman

Well, it is almost here. The Garden Festival is scheduled for April 28<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 – 4:00 PM at the Homestead Acre. The cost of admission is \$5 for adults and \$1 for children under 5 years old. The Tea is \$10 per person in our beautiful garden setting.

The day should be filled with all sorts of things to do: Garden Clubs, Vendors selling all sorts of items, our White Elephant Booth, Bake Sale, Plant Booth, along with the participation of many Community organizations. Tours of the Museum and the Hill Palmer Cottage are available throughout the day and of course our wonderful High Tea from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM.

For your convenience a shuttle bus will be provided to allow parking at the Train Depot starting at 11:00 AM and run every 15 minutes throughout the day until 4:00 PM

Tell your friends to come and enjoy a day of fun.

Bea Berman, Chairman

If you would like to volunteer, please contact us by email at [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com) or call the office at 818-882-5614 and leave a message.

## FUN with FIRE...or Making Fire the Chumash Way

By Elizabeth Harris

A traditional fire-making class was held at the Homestead Acre on Saturday, March 23. Sponsored by the Foundation for the Preservation for the Santa Susana Mountains in partnership with the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Dr. Kent Christensen taught a group of 10 enthusiasts about the traditional Chumash way of starting fires with hand and bow drills.

As many readers may be aware (likely from watching TV's Survivor), it is very difficult to make fire – the endeavor requiring a delicate balance of just the right amount of pressure upon the drill (hint: not too much), holding it at the correct angle and rapidly bringing the bow back and forth over the drill.

For a number of the participants, being on bended knee for an extended period of time posed the greatest challenge. But in the end, two of our number mastered the art with a visible flame – Lorie Lawrence and Dodd Harris.

Lorie Lawrence was particularly pleased because she leads the Chumash Educational Center for the third-grade field trips in the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. “Now I have one more amazing Chumash skill to share with the children,” Lawrence said, “It continues to astound me how they made such perfect use of the natural materials around them.”

*Editor's note: Marc Davidson has at least two witnesses that he also finally accomplished the task at the end of the day. This was hard work. Good job Marc for "sticking" with it to the very end.*  
Ann Vincent

## Chatsworth 125<sup>th</sup> Year Celebration

By Ann Vincent



Our Chatsworth Birthday is officially March 10, 1888, so we started out the month of March with our first official cake cutting at Chatsworth Park Elementary School where the student body sang Happy Birthday to our home town.

Superior Elementary School also sang Happy Birthday and invited the Historical Society to give a short history slide show to the students and packed their auditorium. As we showed photos of all the current Historical landmarks, it was fun to hear the students cheer when they saw their favorites like the Munch Box.

Our last Historical Society meeting in March included the Huell Howser video tour through Chatsworth History with Virginia Watson on our big screen for all to enjoy. Virginia Watson was there in person along with early Chatsworth resident Valeta Butler Koller to help us cut the birthday cake as we traditionally do at our March meeting.

The Chatsworth Community Coordinating Council invited the Historical Society to share our 125 Years of Chatsworth History Program with our community leaders on March 25<sup>th</sup> and the Chatsworth Library hosted the same presentation on March 27<sup>th</sup> to a full auditorium with Lila Schepler cutting the birthday cake for that event.

But we are not done yet....as we move into April you can see our “125 years of Chatsworth History” at our general meeting on April 16<sup>th</sup>. Attend the Day of the Horse on Sunday April 14 at Stoney Point Ranch to celebrate and enjoy some cake...sponsored by the Chatsworth Neighborhood Council. The Historical Society will be there to participate.

Sierra Canyon School will be celebrating Chatsworth's Birthday on April 26<sup>th</sup> with over 2000 parents and children expected to attend. You can see Chatsworth's timeline on display there too.

And you can expect that we will have another cake on hand to celebrate our 125 Years at the Garden Festival on April 28<sup>th</sup> at the Homestead Acre as we provide tours of the Hill Palmer Cottage and Museum throughout the day...so don't miss anyone one of these parties.



Over 300 Rose Bushes in Bloom

Chatsworth Historical Society Presents

# A GARDEN FESTIVAL

Featuring Roses and Crafts

*Celebrating Chatsworth's 125<sup>th</sup> Birthday*

The Duchess Tea Room

Afternoon Tea

- \$10 per person

- 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.



Blooming Rose Gardens

Quilt Display from the  
Veteran's Quilt Project

Arts & Crafts

Garden Clubs

Museum Exhibits

*Featuring Chatsworth Pioneer Families*

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

Bake Sale

Live Plant Sale

Hot Dogs and Sodas

White Elephant 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 28, 2013**

**11 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

\$5 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

www.historicalsocieties.net 818-882-5614 chatsworthhistory@gmail.com

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

Please share this information with friends and join us!

# CHATSWORTH MEMORIES

This newsletter features memories from those who grew up in Chatsworth. Thanks to these two founding members of our Historical Society, Lila Schepler and Katharine Johnson, we have a window into our past. Besides some of the memories published here in this newsletter, we also have books published by Virginia Watson, Ioline Cleveland, Bob Turner, Bob Sherman and Bill Schepler. In addition, we have both written, audio and video interviews of some of our earlier residents.

We continue to look for more stories....those that keep our Chatsworth history alive.

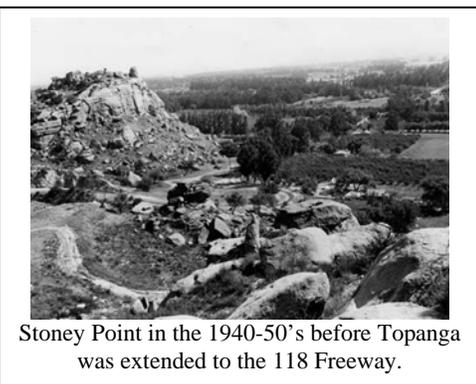


## “Dearie, do you remember when?”

Written by Lila Schepler in 1975

I remember the cold winters in Chatsworth during the 1930's when the north wind swept off Oat Mountain impeded only slightly by acres of citrus, figs and the tall eucalyptus wind breaks you still see around town. We had 10 party telephone lines then (ours had 3 rings I think). We were on the same line with Jim Butler, citrus rancher, who had 5 rings. Fairly often at 3:00 A.M. the Fruit Frost Services' would call him when the temperature sank to the danger point, to alert him to get his men out for smudging to prevent freezing. When my dad heard the ring he got up, for he was one of the men who smudged for 25 cents per hour. So did most of the High School boys in the West Valley. They all came late to school the next day, eyes ringed with black soot—and their hands black, too, for it just had to wear off. Since smudging with oil was so expensive, some of the ranchers bought truckloads of old tires for 5 cents each, and burned them instead. Pfui!

Having roastin' ears and hotdogs was a fun thing for young people down on the old Shadwick ranch (the Home was located about where the Rockpointe Recreation Lounge is today). Roastin' sticks were out from the willows along the wash (now a concrete flood channel), a few ears of corn picked from their garden, wieners and buns you brought with you and a lovely dinner was made around an open fire. Shadwicks had an old wood range in their kitchen that was a marvel to me; the Shadwick girls could tell the temperature by reaching their hand in the oven and could decide if it needed another stick of wood or if it was ready to bake. Ah, the light and fluffy biscuits I ate there!



Stoney Point in the 1940-50's before Topanga was extended to the 118 Freeway.

A fun thing to do on Sunday afternoon was to go for a hike. You could eventually meet every friend in town climbing Stoney Point.

How many generations of youth have learned to climb on this old landmark? Or maybe we walked past Minnie Palmer's home to the small pond on the back of the ranch and went wading. Or, if you were feeling daring and had an older boy along, you hiked toward Santa Susana Pass, skirting the Hobo Jungle along the railroad. They had a small cave to partially protect them in damp weather, a cook area (built of rocks with a screen over them) so they could cook with their tin coffee cans or small pots, an old cupboard which had been rescued from someone's discards and couches made of front car seats. Riding the rails had become a way of life for so many in the early 30's. The hobo's came to your back door and asked for a handout and usually did a little work for it. There was a camp in the hills were fellows in their late teens or early twenties were sent if they were picked up as vagrants. This money the police hoarded until it grew large enough to buy a boy a ticket back home. They fought fires, built roads, built check dams etc.

When I attended U.S.C., each Monday morning found me at 5:30 A.M. in Canoga Park where the Big Red Cars parked overnight at the corner of Topanga and Sherman Way. It was always cold, it seemed. The street cars had funny little heaters under the front seat and it took all the way to Hollywood to slightly warm the old cars! It cost 55 cents to ride one way. On Saturdays, I rode out to Chatsworth on Southern Pacific's Train which made one stop at Chatsworth at 2:00 P.M. That ride cost 60 cents.



Schepler Slide Collection – Bee Keeping on the Johnson Ranch

In 1934 or 35 I worked as extra help for C.W. Johnson who owned the Bee Villa Ranch, in fact had the largest Bee and Honey business in Los Angeles beginning in the

1880's. He let me drive his Model "T" truck, and I had to learn to drive all over again because it had no gear shift. Well, my job was to "smoke" the bees with a blower while he checked the frames for the amount of honey on them. I was prepared, I wore a bee hat with a wide brim from which wire screening hung—and from which, in turn, thin canvas hung. This canvas was tucked into the neck of my sweater and securely pinned. I wore a sweater over a long sleeved shirt because it made it harder to sting through. The sweater was tucked into slacks and secured with a belt, the cuffs were secured with heavy rubber bands. The slacks were tucked into hiking boots. Well, all that was left to sting were my hands. And they did! I seldom came home with fewer than 13-15 stings. Even so, my hands were not badly swollen. How did "Grandpa" Johnson dress? Very casually, usually a bee hat and if he was stung (which was seldom) he took his finger and carefully pushed the bees' stinger out so it wouldn't lose the stinger and die. That impressed me alright.

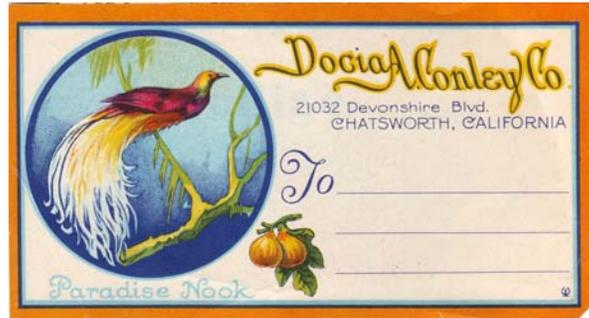
I remember when Kelly Johnson borrowed Cecil Graves big truck, filled it with all the teenagers in Epworth League and drove us over the wildly, winding Topanga Canyon to the beach at Castle Rock. Here we went swimming, or had wiener bakes or grunion hunting. He, and his wife Katherine who was our Counselor, took us 4 or 5 times each summer. Kelly and Katherine were called by their first names by even the very youngest children and it was a mark of great affection and respect. Any couple who used to host parties for teenagers almost every week (ice-cream making, popcorn popping, even taffy pulling) have to be FRIENDS of the youth. I remember doing dishes at their home: the girls washed, handed to the boys who dried, who then tossed them to a

## CHATSWORTH PIONEER CHURCH

Memories of the Pioneer Church and the need to record it's history sparked the beginning of the Chatsworth Historical Society. In this article written by KJ (Katharine Johnson) she records the last day's activities and memories before the congregation moved to it's new building at 10824 Topanga Canyon Blvd. At this point in time, the old building they were leaving behind at 10051 Topanga Canyon Blvd. was scheduled to be torn down.



*Pioneer Church in 1920's while still located on the west side of Topanga half way between Lassen and Devonshire*



Docia A. Conley shipped figs, olives, preserves, and jams all over the world. It was a great place to get a summer/seasonal job when fruit needed to be prepared, packaged, or shipped.

boy standing by the china cabinet who placed them on the shelves! Imagine it in your home? Kelly was a leading baseball player on our town team for many years. Every young person in town spent Sunday afternoon during baseball season cheering him on.

I remember when Docia Conley (and her husband) was the great benefactor of youth hereabouts. Every summer when they made watermelon pickles at the Paradise Cannery on Devonshire she gave the beautiful watermelon heart to the kids to eat: entire dishpans full of the luscious red fruit. Many a watermelon festival was held, supplied by the Conley's.

The era of the 1930's was difficult to live through, so I can't say I was sorry to see it go. Why does it make me feel so nostalgic when I write about those times?

Lila S. Schepler Nov. 10, 1975  
*Lila was born in 1916 and is still a Chatsworth resident, currently 97 years old.*

### **The Chatsworth Citizen**

Thursday, May 2, 1963, Chatsworth, California  
 Newspaper Article written by Katharine Johnson

#### **Sad Sentimental Journey Taken By Long Time Church Members**

"Memory Sunday" at the Chatsworth First Methodist Church brought together 350 members and friends of the church to commemorate the years of service in the old church building, built in 1903, which will be left behind as the congregation moves into the new facility within the next two weeks.

*Continued.....*

The work of the church through the years was observed in the three morning services in the sermon by the pastor, Rev. Robert Fehlman, on the subject, "The Ingredients of Achievement." The choir, at the 11 a.m. service sang the anthem, "Seek Ye the Lord," a favorite of the congregation for more than 35 years.

Following this service a fellowship luncheon was held in White Oak hall, after which the group gathered again in the church for a Program of Memories. The co-chairman, Mrs. Edward Ahlstrom and Mrs. Kelly Johnson, shared the duties, with Mrs. Ahlstrom in charge of the luncheon and Mrs. Johnson in charge of the program.

A sing of old fashioned favorite hymns was led by Harold Johnson and an opening prayer offered by Walter Erickson. Brief histories of the various church organizations were given, beginning with the Women's Society. The president, Mrs. Steve Leach, recalled the day in 1902, when the group organized to assist in raising money to build the church, which was finished the following year, and told of some of its many and varied activities through the years. The Methodist Men's Club history of 10 years was given by Charles Janess, a charter member and former president.

The choir, which has an official record since 1920, was according to old timers, always a part of the service even before then, as musical members of the church shared their talent in this way. Mrs. James Roasch, the present secretary and a member of the choir for 13 years, sketched the service of this group in its ministry of music.

### FAVORITE HYMN

Will Dursteler, a member of the choir for more than 25 years, sang another favorite hymn, "The Church in the Wildwood," with the audience joining in on the chorus.

Mrs. Jack Wardlaw, a former counselor of the MYF, gave the history of the youth work in the church, which dates back to November, 1898, when the church organized an Epworth League Society, and has carried on an unbroken service to youth since that time.

Mrs. Johnson gave a resume of the history of the church. The congregation was established 75 years ago with the appointment of J.C. Elliott, the first pastor, by the Methodist Conference, with meetings being held in the school house. After the erection of the church in 1903, there was no water on the grounds until N.A. Gray, who gave the property for the church, piped water from Hialeah Springs in the hills north of Chatsworth, about 1906. The nearest water was the artesian well, on Devonshire just west of Santa Susana, and the well at the Chatsworth Park School. There was no indoor plumbing until the erection of White Oak Hall in 1921.

### KEROSENE LAMPS

The church used kerosene lamps until 1917 when the church was wired for electricity, and was heated by a wood stove until 1948, when the present gas furnace was installed.

Guests were given an opportunity to tell of the past and of their years of membership. Kelly Johnson has the longest unbroken membership, 52 years. Twenty-five members of the Johnson family, descendants of the pioneer Ann Johnson, who was responsible for the establishment of the church, were present during the day, including out of town people. Mrs. Glen Pogue (Dorothy Johnson) of Palmdale and her granddaughters, Dorothy and Madeline Ecroid of Simi; Wilda Johnson of Burbank; Mrs. Dora Johnson, 93, of Tujunga; and the Bill Pogues of Van Nuys; Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Christensen of Manhattan Beach, former members, were also present.

The meeting closed with the reading of a poem, "The Church with a Tower and a Bell," by Art Honey, and a few words by the pastor who likened the church to one he served in New York. The church has been named a historical monument and can be preserved with the help of the community. It is now a community church building as it was for 65 years when it was the only one in the area, west of San Fernando.

On display were pictures and scrap books of early years.

Tribute was paid to the many pastors who have served the church and to the hundreds of people that through the years, have given of the gifts, service and prayers to bring it to this day. No one will ever know the outreach of lives, brought to a saving knowledge of God in this little church, who in serving Him in other communities and other fields.

K.J.



The Pioneer Church relocated at Oakwood Memorial Park in 1965.

## It's Your Community...

### It's Your History

The Chatsworth Historical Society would like to have you join us in preserving Chatsworth's past. If you have any old Chatsworth publications, or have old photos of the area, we would love to have copies of them. We would also like to hear your stories about growing up in Chatsworth or what brought you to Chatsworth and why you stayed here.

### Can we Email our newsletter to you?

In an effort to reduce costs, save paper, and provide you with a color copy, we will now email newsletters to those of you that have given us an email address. However, we will also continue to send you a snail-mail copy until you advise us not to. So please email us at [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com) to stop future newsletter mailings and save us some money. And also please email us to provide your email address. Thanks!

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...

#### CHS Members Pass Away

We wish the best to their families.

Charles (Chuck) W. Johnson was the son of Katharine and Kelly Johnson.

## Wondering if your Dues are Due?

There is a code on 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!

For those receiving email only newsletters, we will advise you in the email if your dues are due.....

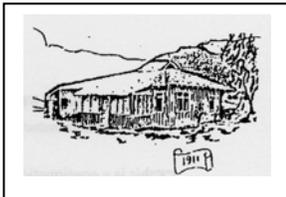


1965 -- Moving the Pioneer Church



## 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  
[chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com) 818-882-5614 [www.historicalsocieties.net](http://www.historicalsocieties.net)

**Yearly:**  New Member  Renewal  
 Individual \$15.00  Family \$20.00  Organization \$20.00  
**Life Membership:**  \$ 125.00

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

STREET ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

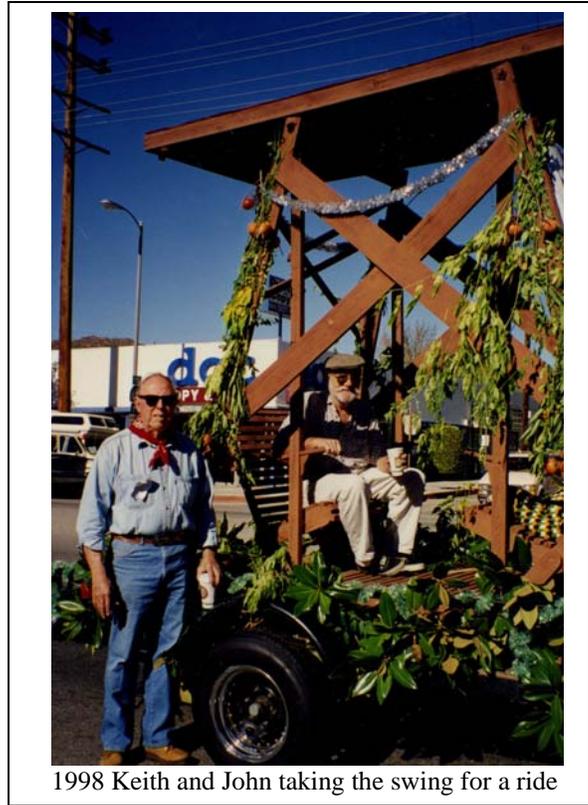
CITY / STATE / ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interest / Expertise: \_\_\_\_\_

# 50 Years of Chatsworth Historical Society Fun



2000 -- John and Zena on a Bicycle built for two



1998 Keith and John taking the swing for a ride



2001 Parade float featured Bea Berman and Elaine Campbell ironing

**Join us on May 21<sup>st</sup> for our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Chatsworth Historical Society (and yes, there will be cake....)**

## **Chatsworth Historical Society**

10385 Shadow Oak Drive  
Chatsworth, Ca 91311

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

*Check the code on your mailing label ...is it time to pay your dues? (See page 7 for details)*