

# Smoke Signal

CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA 91311

(818) 882-5614

chatsworthhistory@gmail.com

www.chatsworthhistory.com



Co-Presidents: Linda & André van der Valk

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Editor: Ann Vincent

## Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

Today as I am writing this it is a beautiful spring day but that was not the case in February when the rains came and wreaked havoc on our park. The acre was fine but there was a lot of damage to the Chatsworth Park South remediation project. I don't think anyone expected that kind of rain and the water containment did not work as it should have.

We were limited in our access to the acre during the rains. There were hay barriers to stop the mud from going on to Devonshire and we were not able to drive over them. The rains put the project behind at least a couple of months. Unfortunately our parking lot will not be ready for the Garden Festival. We had meetings about this and decided that without the parking lot we are unable to have the Garden Festival this year. We discussed all of our other options but they just were not going to work out. Recreation and Parks also will be redoing the road once the project is complete and we were not sure when that would be. We did not make this decision easily. We are looking forward to Pioneer Day.

We have also moved our next two meetings to Rockpointe because we are not sure of the access to the acre from day to day. Rockpointe is now charging for their community room so we would like to thank Wendi Gladstone for paying the fee for our March meeting. We will have a beautiful park when this is all done we just need to hang in there for the next couple of months.

Andre and I have just furthered the Historical Society's collection by purchasing over 100 slides that we believe belonged to the Schepler family and also purchasing over 1000 DVDs and VHS western films that were mainly filmed in Chatsworth from Jerry England. Jerry has spent many years documenting the Western films that were filmed in Chatsworth and wrote two books about the films. Happy Easter and Happy Passover

Linda and André

Chatsworth Historical Society  
Board of Directors 2016-2017

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## Upcoming Events

**April 18, 2017**

7:00 pm Tuesday at Rockpointe Clubhouse  
(Rescheduled from Cancelled meeting in February)

### “Restoring Habitat, One Yard at a Time”



Join us for this program by Alan Pollack for those individuals and groups that are interested in the goal of restoring and preserving wildlife habitat. The

information will include native plants and options for landscaping your yard as a wildlife habitat.

**May 16, 2017**

**7:00 pm Tuesday**

**History of the Historical Society  
Or 54 years of Fun!**

This month when we install our officers for 2017-18 we will review the accomplishments and challenges from parades to festivals and landmarks.

What lies ahead?

### **CANCELLED - GARDEN FESTIVAL 2017 & Scheduled Open Houses**

Our Open House usually scheduled for the first Sunday of the month has also been cancelled at this point until the park can be reopened.

## DIGITAL RECORDS On Line

<http://www.chatsworthhistory.com>

Many of you may have wondered what we are doing with all of the articles and information that we include with the newsletters.

Go to [chatsworthhistory.com](http://chatsworthhistory.com), **Presentations**. Each of the presentations on Chatsworth History that have been created are stored on [chatsworthhistory.com](http://chatsworthhistory.com) where they can be downloaded and viewed or used for reference material if needed for a project. Video sections included in each program are also available to be viewed with the presentation.

Go to [chatsworthhistory.com](http://chatsworthhistory.com), **Publications**.

Select **Articles**, and each of the Past Present Articles are available. Or you can select all of our past Smoke Signals, selected editions of the Chatsworth Grapevine or Owensmouth Gazette, and other items. We continue to add items to the site, and we will let you know in our newsletter of new items added to the site.

## WE HAVE A FACEBOOK PAGE

facebook

[www.facebook.com/HomesteadAcre](http://www.facebook.com/HomesteadAcre)

You can search for us as either the Homestead Acre or the Chatsworth Historical Society. Monthly notices are posted. Yes, they are the same postcard/mailing you receive by email if you are a member of the Historical Society, so you can always check this page to get the latest news about our activities. Like the page to get the notices posted when they come out.

## SLIDESHARE.NET

<https://www.slideshare.net/ChatsworthHistory/presentations>

Just when you thought viewing our presentations online would be too difficult not having the right software, here is the easiest way to view them.

Recently Slideshare added a new feature that allows our powerpoint embedded videos to play on queue just as they were built into our original shows.

## DOCENT DOINGS at the ACRE:

Our docents keep busy with projects throughout the year. We meet every Wednesday morning 9-noon.

**OUT IN THE GARDEN:** Annette and Karyne can be found dead-heading roses and hand watering plants as needed every Wednesday morning. If you need some outdoor fresh air therapy, come join them!

**IN THE MUSEUM:** Linda van der Valk is continuously working with the items donated to the museum by our members and the community.

**IN THE COTTAGE:** An inventory project is underway to confirm and learn more about the items on display and their history so we can provide more information on our tours.

**DOCENTS ARE NEEDED:** Help guide guests through the museum and cottage. If you would like to learn the history of our community and help share it with others, then contact us for more information at [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com).

## NEW BENCHES FOR THE ACRE

Special thanks goes to Troop 99 Reno Benedetti



Scout Reno Benedetti of Troop 99 coordinated a landscaping project on Sunday, February 12, adding much needed mulch to our rose gardens. Reno also built four new benches.

## LOS TOROS Restaurant to Celebrate 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Sat. April 29, 1:00 pm



Back in January of 2009 we created a Past Present Article on Los Toros.... You can find it at

<http://www.chatsworthhistory.com/Articles.html>

# Chatsworth Nature Preserve / Chatsworth Reservoir Timeline

(with references)

The Chatsworth Nature Preserve is a 1,325 acre parcel of land owned by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, previously known as the Chatsworth Reservoir. Today it is a seasonal wetlands.

## Native American Period –

There was a village site in the reservoir area near the Limekiln (La Calera), at the confluence of Woolsey and Box Canyons. Other local sites included Dayton Canyon, Bell Canyon, and Burro Flats Painted Cave. These 4 sites operated as a single dispersed village system. (reference: personal communication with Albert Knight)

## Mission Period –

The area was known as El Escorpion de las Salinas (salt marshes).

In 1836, Odón Chihuya, a Chumash born in 1797 in Malibu and raised at the San Fernando Mission, moved to El Escorpion at Bell Canyon and managed ranching operations (primarily cattle and sheep) for the San Fernando Mission. The 9,000 acre area included lands reaching north to the Chatsworth Reservoir and east to Topanga Canyon, and south to today's Ventura Freeway.

In 1845 three Chumash Native Americans, Odón, Urbano and Manuel were granted the lands of Rancho El Escorpion. Up to 1870, Odón and future partners of El Escorpion dispute the boundaries, occupying and using all 9,000 acres of land at various times. (reference: *chatsworthhistory.com*, *Presentations*, *Chatsworth Lake Manor*)

## Homesteading Period –

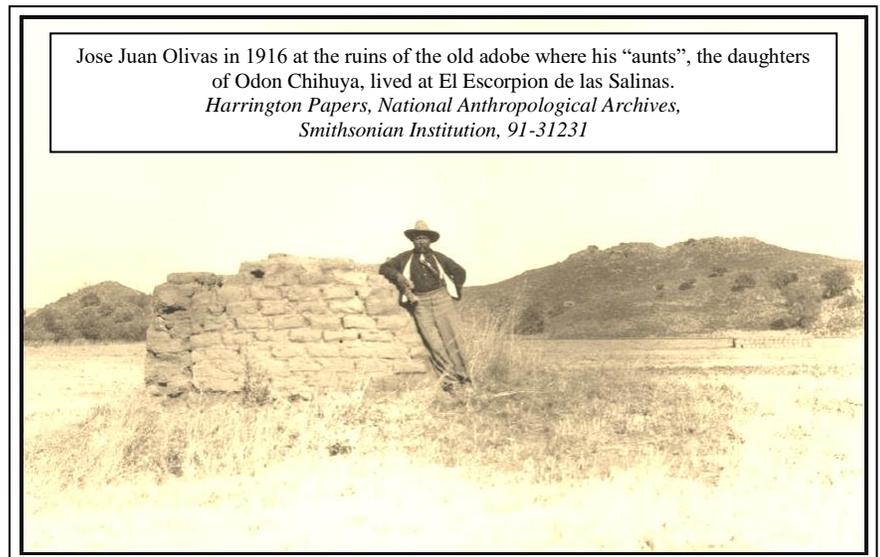
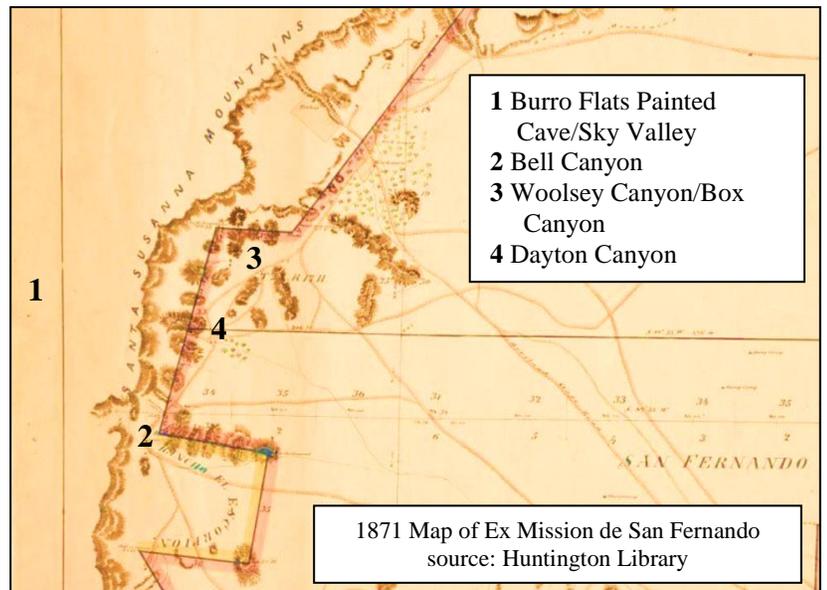
By 1849, Frenchman Pierre Domec was living at the Limekiln site with Odón's second daughter, Maria Dolores. They would have three daughters, Francesca, Celedonia, and Maria Antonia. It is well documented that Domec and other Frenchmen operated limekilns at the site in the 1850's and 1860's.

In 1861, Domec made a sketch map of a 160 acre homesteading parcel at the Limekiln site. It included three adobes, one for the Domec family, and two others for Odón Chihuya's adult children Bernabel and Marcelina.

1901 - Domec's homesteading parcel was not approved as it was partially on private property. His daughter, Francesca Domec, granddaughter of Odón Chihuya, was granted a 148 acre homestead in 1901 in what is today Chatsworth Lake Manor.

1916-17 – John P Harrington, ethnologist and linguist at the Smithsonian, visited La Calera. His notes state that the "Lime pits of the Missions were there".

(references: *chatsworthhistory.com*, *Presentations*, *Chatsworth Lake Manor* and *The West San Fernando Valley Lime Industry and Native American History*)



## **Chatsworth Reservoir Era (1918-1969)**

1913 - The Los Angeles Aqueduct opening day celebration Nov. 5, 1913. It is 233 miles long and diverts water from the Owens Valley to the San Fernando Reservoir.

1918 – The Chatsworth Reservoir is built, fed from the San Fernando Reservoir by a conduit called the “Chatsworth Hi-Line” that runs along the northern edge of the San Fernando Valley. The reservoir dam is built using the hydraulic fill method, i.e. there was no mechanical compaction of the soil forming the dam. It is placed in service in 1919.



Many movies were filmed at the Chatsworth Reservoir/Lake, including 1922 Mary Pickford “Tess of the Storm Country”, 1930 “Hells Angels” and many westerns.

1969 – The reservoir was drained to deepen shallow areas and construct a storm flow bypass system. At that time the Ecology Pond was created as a detention basin at the north side of the reservoir.

1971 – The Sylmar earthquake damages two other hydraulic fill dams at the San Fernando Upper and Lower Van Norman reservoirs. As a result, a decision was made to not store water in the Chatsworth Reservoir unless the dam was rebuilt.

*(reference: chatsworthhistory.com, Presentations, Chatsworth Lake Manor)*

## **Modern Period since the drainage of the Reservoir (1969- )**

1974 - The Ecology Pond was established as mitigation for waterfowl habitat lost as a result of the draining of residual water from Chatsworth Reservoir following the 1971 Sylmar earthquake. It is located at the northern end of the reservoir. Ecology Pond water was routinely replenished during the dry season with potable water from a nearby pipeline. (*CNPC\_Letter\_Ecology\_Pond\_Proposal Mark Osokow 2015.pdf*)

1975 – The Chatsworth Calera Limekiln Site is designated Los Angeles Cultural Monument 141. The kiln can be seen today looking east at the intersection of Woolsey Canyon and Valley Circle.

1997 – The City Council renamed the Chatsworth Reservoir the Chatsworth Nature Preserve/Reservoir, and as such it is the only nature preserve in the City of Los Angeles.

2012 – The DWP instituted water conservation measures, and cut off the potable water supply to the Ecology Pond.

2015 – The DWP dredged the Ecology Pond, and created two connected retention basins. It cleaned drainage channels from upstream areas to encourage water flow to the basins. “Water guzzlers” (supplied by potable water) were installed on the east and west ends of the ponds to sustain wildlife during the dry summer months. Today, it is considered a “seasonal wetlands”, consistent with its historic past.



## An article from JERRY ENGLAND

Funny!!! Yesterday someone asked me if I'd be interested in giving a one hour talk about the "History of Horses in Chatsworth." I told them I wasn't qualified cause I've only kept horses in Chatsworth for 22 years, and it was only 62 years ago I first rode a horse through Chatsworth. Then I remembered a piece I wrote back in 2002...

### Hidden Gold of Chatsworth

Recently a real estate developer referred to the rocky hills he wants to bulldoze under as "just a pile of rocks." Those of us who live in Chatsworth, and know its history see a great deal more.

Equestrians know what sets Chatsworth apart from the rest of the world. It's a treasure right in front of our eyes, but some do not have the vision to see it. The hidden gold of Chatsworth--the real gem--is the fact that Chatsworth is one of the true icons of the Old West.

For hundreds of years Chatsworth's sandstone boulders with towering, almost totem-like, rock formations have attracted man.

First came the Native Americans, who found protection in our rocky hills with their hidden caves, natural pools, and oak tree-shaded canyons.

Then in 1913 something magic happened: legendary filmmaker Cecil B. De Mille found Chatsworth while looking for a location to shoot his epic Western "The Squaw Man." For the next sixty years, thousands of Western movies and TV shows were filmed on locations in Chatsworth.

Our rocky hills became an icon that cannot easily be separated from mythical cowboy heroes, names like Hopalong Cassidy, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and, of course, the Lone Ranger.

### Chatsworth's Six-Gun Heroes

Before the end of the 1920's the word was out--the same unique Western landscape that had attracted De Mille in 1913 now saw a stampede of filmmakers who wanted to shoot Westerns in Chatsworth.

The following are just a few of the locations and movies that were filmed here:

**Bell Ranch:** "The Man Behind the Gun" (Warner Bros. 1952) Randolph Scott, "Gunsight Ridge" (United Artists 1957) Joel McCrea, "Hombre" (20th Century Fox 1967) Paul Newman, "Sunset" (Tri-Star Pictures 1988) Bruce Willis and James Garner

**Burro Flats:** "The Arizona Legion" (RKO 1939) George O'Brien, "Robin Hood of the Pecos" (Republic 1941) Roy Rogers and George "Gabby" Hayes, "Utah

Wagon Train" (Republic 1951) Rex Allen, "Wagons West" (Monogram 1952) Rod Cameron

**Chatsworth Reservoir:** "Susanna Pass" (Republic 1949) Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, the "Rin Tin Tin" television series.

**Chatsworth Trains:** "The Squaw Man" (Lasky 1914) Dustin Farnum, "The Trail Beyond" (Monogram 1934) John Wayne, "Fancy Pants" (Paramount 1950) Bob Hope and Lucille Ball

**Iverson Ranch:** "Three Word Brand" (Paramount 1921) William S. Hart, "The Covered Wagon" (Paramount 1923) Tim McCoy, "The Iron Horse" (Fox 1924) George O'Brien, "Mystery Mountain" (Mascot 1934) Ken Maynard, "Along Came Jones" (United Artists 1945) Gary Cooper, "Pack Train" (Columbia 1953) Gene Autry, "The Lone Ranger" (Warner Bros 1956) Clayton Moore and Jay Silverheels.

To learn more about Western movie locations, go to: <http://a-drifting-cowboy.blogspot.com/> keyword search "Rock Stars."



### Chatsworth's Equine History

**Vaquero Days...** In the mid 1800's Chatsworth's Oat Mountain had a large grizzly bear population that lived on rodents and gooseberries, which can still be found in Brown's Canyon. Vaqueros roping a grizzly bear in the famous James Walker painting could have very well taken place at the base of Oat Mountain.

**The Mission Trail...** An ancient trail that ran from an Indian village in Chatsworth to the San Fernando Mission, the Mission Trail later became part of the El Camino del Santa Susana y Simi trail that

connected the San Fernando Mission to the Santa Buenaventura Mission.

**The Stagecoach Trail...** Established in 1861, went through Chatsworth following the old El Camino del Santa Susana y Simi trail over the Santa Susana Pass to Ventura. That stagecoach route was used until about 1877; then it was moved to the Conejo Grade because of the difficulty of getting over the Santa Susana Pass. As late as 1891 another stage line still used the pass to provide a link between the city of San Fernando and Simi Valley.

**Tiburcio Vasquez...** A bandit leader who reigned terror in Southern California following the gold rush days. Vasquez had a hideout at Castle Rock in Chatsworth. Stoney Point... Known as Castle Rock in the 1800's. Stoney Point was a natural fortress: its nearly flat crest towering high above the west San Fernando Valley gave an unobstructed view for miles around. Clustered about its foot was an Indian village built mostly of adobe. Its inhabitants were Vasquez's friends, from whom he and his band could always find food and shelter; and the law could never find a soul that knew him.

**Roy Rogers and Dale Evans...** "The King of the Cowboys," who fought for law and order with the help of "the Queen of the West," lived at the Double R Bar Ranch, a 138-acre tract of land located on Andora Avenue in Chatsworth. Its rugged terrain of big rocks and hills lent itself as an ideal setting for a cowboy adventure known as "The Roy Rogers Show." Roy Rogers and Dale Evans performed at Chatsworth High School's 1963 dedication, a fitting tribute for a rural north valley campus where some students rode horses to school and tied them to hitching posts for the day.

**The Lone Ranger...** The supreme fighter for truth and justice first appeared on ABC television in 1949, when a narrator intoned these spine-tingling words: "A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust, and a hearty 'Hi-Yo, Silver!' . . . The Lone Ranger!" Most of the show's outdoor scenes were shot in Chatsworth at Iverson's Ranch. Indoor scenes typically used the old Hal Roach Studios in Culver City.

**Equestrian Trails, Inc....** ETI, a nonprofit corporation, was established in 1944, "dedicated to the acquisition and preservation of trails, good horsemanship, and equine legislation." Chatsworth's ETI Corral 54, the Rocky Hill Riders, was established in the mid 1950's.

## **Chatsworth Equestrians Today** *(Penned in 2002, so there's been changes)*

**The Chatsworth ECHO's** protest ride last July 18 (2002) may have been the largest mounted protest in the history of the San Fernando Valley. Over 160 equestrians were joined by approximately 140 pedestrians to protest a General Plan change and the proposed closing of an important access trail along Topanga Canyon Blvd. Ultimately the Los Angeles City Council agreed to keep the trail.



**Thunderhead Ranch** Calf roping and team penning keep ranching tradition alive. (update 2007 -- sold to a developer who plans to build 20 homes where more than 60 horses were once boarded.)

**Pepper Tree Ranch** World class hunter jumpers add a touch of class.

**Misty Hollow Ranch** A hunt club with plenty of cross-country riding thrills, its members ride to the "call of the hounds" that sometimes takes them over steeple chase jumps.

**JR's** This ranch hosts cowboy mounted shooting, re-enacting our Wild West history when the land was tamed by the Peacemaker.

**Stoney Point, Tres Palmas, and Trails End** These are a few of the ranches where folks can board their horses, and be near the Santa Susana Mountains for weekend pleasure rides.

**Chatsworth Backyards** For some of us (such as your editor) our backyards are a place for our children and grandchildren to learn about horses, and to get in touch with their Western heritage. Horses carried my ancestors from New England to Montana between 1638 and 1912. Horses carried them into battle during the French and Indian War, Revolutionary War, and Civil War. Horses plowed their fields, and they fed a nation for over 300 years. We owe horses a place of honor in our heritage.



## Chatsworth Historical Society Virginia Watson Museum & Gift Shop

The following items are available for sale during Open Houses on the first Sunday of the month. To arrange to purchase items at other times, email [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com) to make arrangements for payment and shipping, if necessary.

CHATSWORTH HISTORY by Virginia Watson	\$10.00
CHATSWORTH PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL The First 100 Years by Ioline Cleveland	\$10.00
WINDOW INTO THE PAST by William Schepler	\$10.00
QUIET ON THE SET by Robert Sherman	\$25.00
OUR PIONEER MOTHER As told to Lenora Johnson MacDonald	\$10.00

### Can we Email our newsletter to you?

In an effort to reduce costs, save paper, and provide you with a color copy, we now email newsletters to those of you that have given us an email address. However, we also continue to send you a snail-mail copy until you advise us not to. 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!

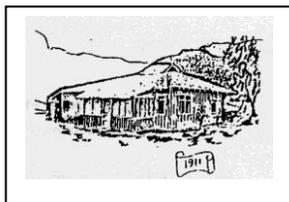
### Wondering if your Dues are Due?

Your dues are due one year after the last time you paid your dues. For those receiving email only newsletters, we will advise you by email when your dues are due.

For snail mail, if you have an asterisk at the end of your name on the mailing label, 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.

### 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)

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**Reminder: If you got this mailed to you, an asterisk on your label means your dues are due!**