

# Smoke Signal

**CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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Co-Presidents: Linda & André van der Valk

July 2021, Issue #3

Editor: Ann Vincent

## Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

We hope that everyone is doing well and staying cool. At the acre we are getting ready for our first Open House in over a year on August 1<sup>st</sup>. We need to get rid of the cobwebs and do some clean-up but we will be ready. There have been quite a few inquiries into when we will be open. We will not be open the first Sunday in September due to the Labor Day weekend, but after that we should be able to be open on the first Sunday of each month.

We have undertaken an interesting project in the museum. We are transferring all the hard copies of the photos we have from acid free boxes to acid free sleeves and placing them in notebooks to make the photos more accessible to our guests. We have most of all the photos on our computers but this way we can easily get to them when needed. We have been having a lot of fun doing this project. Not sure when it will be completed but we are not in any huge hurry. Thank you to Donna, Ann and Connie in helping me with this project.

Ann and Donna have organized the library so that we can find our books in a more efficient manner.

Ray and our new docent Henry have been busy trimming some of our trees and removing over-grown bushes. Annette and Nadia are continuing their work in the garden. Our gardens look amazing especially when you realize most of the work is done by our volunteers and our gardener, Trini, who mows and weeds and does maintenance work as needed.

We are looking forward to starting our general programs again in October. Ray and Ann have been working on some great programs for us to enjoy.

Linda and Andre

### Chatsworth Historical Society Board of Directors 2020-2021

Co-Presidents .....	Linda & André van der Valk
Treasurer.....	Jim Van Gundy
Secretary.....	Donna Nachtrab
Hospitality.....	Jelena Csanyi
Smoke Signal Editor.....	Ann Vincent
Cottage Curator Emeritus.....	Betty Summers
Research Director.....	Ray Vincent
Garden Director.....	Annette Campbell
Director-at-Large.....	Connie Ager

## Upcoming Events

### Open House

**August 1, Sunday 1-4pm**

Looking forward to sharing our displays and history. Subject to LA City Covid Rules and Regulations

### Welcome Back Membership Roundup ICE CREAM SOCIAL

**September 21, Tuesday 7:00pm**



Join us outside under the walnut tree on Tuesday evening for a fun Ice Cream Social with a variety of toppings. Get a chance to say hello to other members and hear about our plans for the upcoming year.

### Open House October 3, Sunday 1-4pm, Pioneer Day is Cancelled

### General Meeting

**“The History of Twin Lakes  
and Deer Lake Highlands”**

**October 19, Tuesday 7:00pm**



As our first in person meeting from our museum, we are excited to finally bring this program to our members, sharing the history of this area. Overflow seating outside will also be available.

## DOCENT DOINGS at the ACRE:

Our docents keep busy with projects throughout the year.

### OUT IN THE GARDEN:

If you need some outdoor fresh air therapy, come join our gardening team.



**IN THE MUSEUM:** Our docents are reorganizing and cataloging some of our early photograph collections. We have new displays set up that are available to share; come check them out.

**OPEN HOUSE** is normally scheduled for the first Sunday of each month from 1-4pm, except on Holidays. August 1<sup>st</sup> will be the first one this year.

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

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

## Memorial Brick Plaza



Click the link below for the Memorial Brick Order Form, \$100 per brick.

<http://www.chatsworthhistory.com/CHS-BrickOrderForm.pdf>

Our next brick order will be September 1<sup>st</sup> 2021

For more information, send an email to [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com) or call 818-882-5614.

## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

During the last few months Al Knight and Ray Vincent have been working with the Knapp family descendants to document their history. The Canoga Owensmouth Historical Society has invited Al, Ray and Knapp Family members to speak at their upcoming general meeting in September.

### Knapp Family - Owensmouth and West Valley History Presentation

**September 8, Wednesday 7:00pm**

### Canoga Owensmouth Historical Society

7248 Owensmouth Ave., Canoga Park  
at the old fire station

## Included in this newsletter:

NOTE: Watch for links in our articles that allow easy access to more information.

### Chatsworth Train Depot Artwork – Bruce Everett

Train Depot Museum display

### Shepherds in the Chatsworth Hills

History of the French Basque Biscailuz Family raising sheep in our Chatsworth foothills in 1880.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Schepler Memorial Library

We have over 800 history books on California, Los Angeles, San Fernando Valley, Native Americans, Movie History, and Local Authors to name a few categories. We also have family bibles and family histories submitted by our homestead families.

Most of these books have been donated to the library by members over time, some have come from the LAPL library when no longer in circulation. We try to keep the subject matter to our local history since we have limited space available for the library.

Using our early Sears & Roebuck catalogs, we identify and learn more about some of the items on display in the cottage and museum.

I hope to highlight some of the fascinating books we have on hand in future articles.

Ann Vincent



# Chatsworth Train Depot Artwork – Bruce Everett

By Ann Vincent

For those of you who are not aware of the Chatsworth Historical Society's Train Depot Collection, I thought we should take a quick look. The new Train Depot and Museum was built in 1996 and created the opportunity for Chatsworth to share our history to the travelers who pass through. Items chosen include our history of Native Americans, westerns filmed at the Iverson Movie Ranch, WW1 and WW2 residents military history, Chatsworth Homesteading, and the Space Program at Rocketdyne. Our scenic rock formations are represented by two large beautiful oil on canvas landscape paintings.



The next time you visit the Chatsworth Train Depot, step back and enjoy the artwork created by Bruce Everett.



Fire in the Hen's Teeth – Oil on Canvas by Bruce Everett

"Fire in the Hen's Teeth" was painted in 1986. In a recent interview, Bruce told us that at that time he lived on Franklin St. in Chatsworth Lake Manor. It seemed like fires took place every few years, and this view was intriguing since he couldn't see the flames, but only the glow against the hills. This was from a photograph Bruce took at the church parking lot, not far from where he lived.

The painting was done in his garage, where he had created a large studio to paint this 78" x 98" inch (6.5'x8') oil painting. Bruce was able to send us a digital copy of the 35mm slide of the painting.

We asked Bruce why he used Hen's Teeth, and he said he had heard the Hen's Teeth and The Twelve Apostles, or The Apostles, used about equally in his local neighborhood to describe the rock formation. The reference to Hen's Teeth is a fun idiom. Hens don't have teeth, so the implication is that something is so rare to the point of almost non-existence. It is an Americanism of the nineteenth century, and appeared in James Gilmore's *My Southern Friends* (1863): "Horses are scarcer than hen's teeth around here." Our beautiful mountain views are just that, incredibly scarce or rare and a view that is extremely difficult or impossible to find.



Box Canyon – Oil on Canvas by Bruce Everett

The second painting, done in 1989, is titled “Box Canyon”. It is a view heading north on Box Canyon Road, looking up a draw. This painting is 66” x 96” (5.5’ x 8’) and was also painted in Bruce’s garage studio.

Bruce relayed the story of mounting them high on the wall at the Train Depot. He had asked a student of his to assist him only to find out that both of them were experiencing a fear of heights as they went up the ladders. The disadvantage of having them mounted so high, is that you can’t fully appreciate the detail and the brush strokes and you lose the sensation of

how large they really are. But they are safe from being touched and damaged. A job well done and we enjoy having them on display.



Patti and Bruce Everett at their home in Templeton, CA

For 35 years, from 1970-2005, Bruce was a Professor of Painting, Drawing, Design at California State University, Northridge, and retired as a Professor Emeritus.

Bruce has also had a successful career as a painter for more than 45 years. He had many one-man shows, including in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. His work has been exhibited in museums and galleries in Los Angeles and throughout Southern California, Oregon, Seattle, New York, Connecticut and Texas. He is also included in numerous books, exhibition catalogs, and publications on Photorealism and landscape painting. His paintings are in many public, private and corporate collections.

He has an upcoming show at the George Billis Gallery, 2716 S. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90034 from September 11<sup>th</sup> through October 9<sup>th</sup>.

You can find more information about his paintings at <http://bruceeverett.net/>



## Shepherds in the Chatsworth Hills – Biscailuz/Dornalechi History

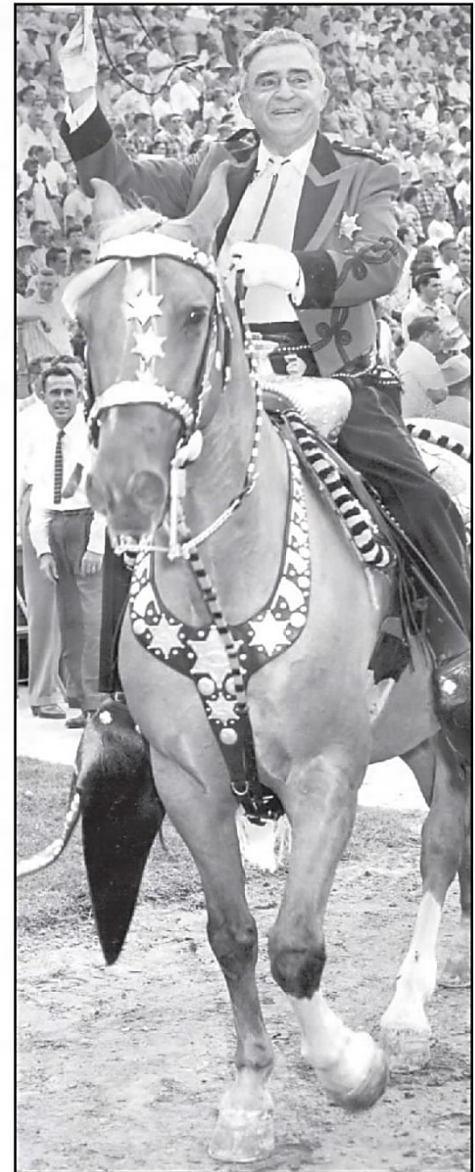
Basque history of Southern California, [reference bridge2pyrennes.org](http://reference.bridge2pyrennes.org)

This story features Martin Biscailuz of French Basque descent and his son Eugene Biscailuz (1883-1969) who became the 27th Sheriff of Los Angeles County, California, serving in that capacity for 26 years, from 1932 to 1958.

In the 1880 Census, living in the foothills of Chatsworth we found Martin Biscailuz, 19 years old with his brother William and his step-father Bernardo Dornalechi who was a sheep-raiser. This began our research into the Dornalechi family. Bernardo had just lost his wife Juana to anthrax and had two young children to educate. His two Biscailuz stepsons were no doubt helping him with the sheep in that 1880 Census and adjusting to a home without their mother. Martin's son, Eugene Biscailuz's life and story was documented in the 1950 book, "Biscailuz Sheriff of the New West".



Above, Eugene Biscailuz with the Lone Ranger and Tonto, children unidentified.  
Below, the 1955 Sheriff's Rodeo at the Coliseum with Tonto, the Lone Ranger, Eugene, Roy Rogers; Dale Evans kneeling in the middle.



*Los Angeles Times*

**AROUND TOWN:** Sheriff Eugene Biscailuz greets crowd during a rodeo in 1957.



On that same June 1880 census page (shown below) are some familiar Chatsworth names. Dwelling number 105 is Milton Brown (Brown's Canyon), Dwelling 106 is Ramon Dejeremias (Santa Susana Creek and Chatsworth Park North), Dwelling 107 is Bernardo Dornalechi, Biscailuz, and six Basque laborers, Dwelling 108 is Rita and Fabricio de la Ossa (Stagecoach way station at Devil's slide in the SSPSHP), Dwelling 109 is the Mirandas (today's Oakwood cemetery), Dwelling 110 is Domec (today's Chatsworth Lake Manor). Note: The Johnsons were on the previous census page.

Brown

105	1143	Brown Milton	M	M 44		1	Stock Raiser
		— Elizabeth	W	F 45	Wife	1	Keeping House
		— Adelle	W	F 18	Daughter	1	At School
	1144	Smith Joseph	M	M 21	Step son	1	

Dejeremias

145		Higgins Edna	W	F 1	Boarder	1	
106	1146	Dejeremias Ramon	M	M 45		1	Team Laborer
		— Anguista	W	F 53	Wife	1	Keeping House
		— Antonia	W	F 10	Daughter	1	At School
		— Biserita	W	M 9	Son	1	At School
	1147	Dejeremias Santos	M	M 17	Boarder	1	Laborer
	1148	Dejeremias Ramon	M	M 44	Brother	1	Laborer
	1149	— Antonio	M	M 35	Brother	1	Laborer

Dornalechi  
Biscailuz

107	1150	Dornalechi Bernardo	M	M 50		1	Stock Raiser
		Biscailuz Martin	M	M 19	Step son	1	At School
		— William	M	M 16	Step son	1	At School
		Biscailuz Domingo	M	M 11	Son	1	At School
		— Mary	W	F 7	Daughter	1	At School
	1150	Echberri August	M	M 27		1	Laborer
	1151	Bellan John	M	M 26		1	Laborer
	1152	Altamir Valentin	M	M 29		1	Laborer
	1153	Lapier John	M	M 57		1	Laborer
	1154	Montan Abraham	M	M 25		1	Laborer
	1155	Monon Chanchu	M	M 30		1	Laborer

de la Ossa

108	1156	de la Ossa Rita	W	F 61		1	
		— Antonio	M	M 42	Son	1	Laborer
		— Fabricio	M	M 40	Son	1	Laborer
		— Macloia	W	F 21	Daughter	1	
		— Florestina	W	F 19	Daughter	1	
		— Mary	W	F 15	Daughter	1	
	1157	de la Ossa Santos	M	M 19	Boarder	1	
	1158	de la Ossa Simon	M	M 95			Laborer

Miranda

109	1159	Miranda Fernando	M	M 29		1	Laborer
		— Antonia S	W	F 23	Wife	1	Keeping House
		— Julia	W	F 3	Daughter	1	
		— Ramon	M	M 1	Son	1	

Domec

110	1160	Domec Peter	M	M 60		1	Laborer
		— Francisca	W	F 22	Daughter	1	Keeping House
		— Celestina	W	F 20	Daughter	1	At Home
	1161	Arnaud Eugene	M	M 25	Nephew	1	Laborer



## The Biscailuz Boys

Martin was born in 1861 in a wooded ranch in the Palos Verdes hills, where his parents were wool-raisers. His parents were Basques, and had come here direct from the French Pyrenees in 1852. Martin's father Jean Baptiste (1805-1864) and wife Juana Belategui (1830-1878) had two children, Martin and William.

Martin was 3 and William was just born when their father died sheep-ranching in the Palos Verdes Hills in 1864. We know that their mother remarried Bernardo Dornalechi by 1871, and had two additional children, Domingo and Maria. We suspect that the family remained in Palos Verdes for their youth, based on remembrances of Eugene *riding with his father Martin on "trips also to the ranches in Palos Verdes, so flowery in the spring, where they rode horseback, and where the French Basque farmers lived in cool, well designed houses, built in American style, but exquisitely neat, with arbors, libraries and gardens."*

When he died, Jean, Martin's father, left 2,000 sheep worth \$4,000. Jean's wife Juana remarried Bernardo Dornalechi, the sheep-raiser in the Chatsworth foothills found on the 1880 census with his two children Domingo and Mary Dornalechi (11 and 7 years old) and his two stepchildren Martin and William Biscailuz (19 and 16 years old).

Tragedy struck the Dornalechi family on Oct 1, 1878, when Juana died of anthrax poisoning at the age of 48. An 1896 State Board of Health Report described:

*"the first outbreak in these parts was in a band of about three hundred sheep, belonging to a man by the name of Myers, near the San Fernando Mission; they nearly all died. That was in 1878 or 1879. The first person to die was a Mrs. Donalechi (Dornalechi), in the same neighborhood, and a year or two later. The sheep on the same ranch were rapidly dying at that time. The woman was probably inoculated by a fly, as the pustule was on the upper part of her breast. At the time, she was supposed by her neighbors to have erysipelas. From there, it seems to have spread to nearly all parts of Los Angeles County" ....*

*... "that on the Encino ranch...In the foothills are sulphur springs, and sheep brought to the ranch, if watered at these springs, do not have it; but if taken to the lower part of the ranch they do; and that sheep raised on the ranch at the springs can go to the lower lands with little danger; all of this they attribute to the medicinal effect of the sulphur water."*

As a side note, in 1881 Louis Pasteur helped develop a vaccine for anthrax, which was used successfully in sheep, goats and cows.

According to the 1917 Owensmouth Gazette, Bernardo Dornalechi was active in promoting education and the need for a school in Chatsworth for his children.

Our [June 2016 Smoke Signal](#) newsletter carried the May 1917 Owensmouth Gazette article, "The History of the Chatsworth School from its Beginning". The opening paragraph states:

*"Thirty-eight years ago, in the year 1879, when little was known of California, and the San Fernando Valley was one carpet of wild flowers, a few pioneers drifted from other parts into the extreme northwest end of the valley. One of these men was Bernardo Don Letchi (Dornalechi), his wife and two children. He realized that children should have an education and so he made the suggestion that a school be started. There were only seven pupils, but that was enough to start with, and Chatsworth is honored today to have two of those pupils as residents of the community: Messrs. William and Charles Johnson."*

## Martin Vincent Biscailuz (1861-1899)

In 1880, Martin age 19 was living with his stepfather and was listed in the census as “attending school”. Martin was attending St. Vincent’s, founded in 1865, the first higher learning college in Los Angeles (before USC and UCLA). It was located on 6th between Hill and Broadway.

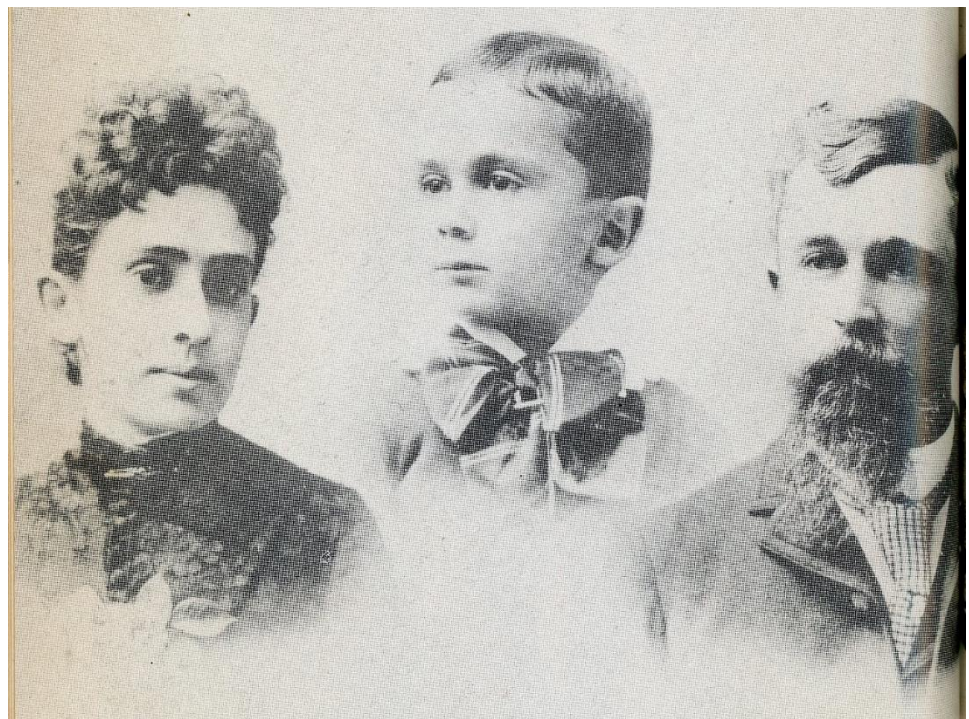
After graduating from St. Vincent’s College, Martin married Ida Warren in 1882. You could say that he married well. Her influential parents were William Warren and Juanita Lopez.

Juanita’s grandfather Claudio Lopez was a soldier from Mexico and the last mayordomo of Mission San Gabriel. Juanita was also related to Francisco Lopez, who found gold while he was picking wild onions in Placerita Canyon March 9, 1842 — six years before the better publicized discovery at Sutter's Fort.

Ida’s father William Warren was the LA City Marshal and had been killed in the line of duty in 1870.

Martin and Ida lived in luxury in Boyle Heights, overlooking the Central Plaza. They had maids and a footman. Martin had also gone into politics, and was a member of the Los Angeles City Council.

Since he knew six languages, he had many clients among the prosperous Basque settlers.



Ida Warren, Eugene, Martin Biscailuz - circa 1888

Martin was an attorney on the Oxarart / Amestoy case of 1888, where Amestoy won possession of the enormous Rancho Encino. Martin’s fee for the case was a sack of twenty-dollar gold pieces, totaling \$35,000.

Despite his successful law practice and his celebration in press articles as a prominent attorney noted for his lavish old-time hospitality, Martin developed tuberculosis and an addiction to absinthe, dying at the young age of 37.



## William Joseph Biscailuz (1864-1943)

(Martin's younger brother) also attended St. Vincent's college, and in 1885 married Anita Lopez of the [Lopez family](#) (also related to Francisco Lopez). William and Anita lived in Santa Clarita/Newhall, having nine children. They lived at the foot of a hill coming down from Pico Canyon. He was employed by the Standard Oil Company in Newhall for 35 years.



In 1927, William visited his old home site in the Chatsworth foothills after five decades. The 1927 LA Times newspaper article documents:

*“the Biscailuz home as near what is now the Oakwood Cemetery Properties. The house where he lived is gone, and the Rancho de la Ossa, once a thriving stage-coach station, also is a place of ruins. Biscailuz also mentioned that his home was not far from one of the foothill hangouts of Tiburcio Vásquez, who often, according to Biscailuz, would descend on the Biscailuz home for a hasty meal.”*

1927 Photo at left courtesy [SCVHistory.com](http://SCVHistory.com)

Caption from a 1927 Santa Clarita Signal article reads: *“Picture of Mr. Biscailuz taken at the arch at Oakwood Cemetery, near where he lived five decades ago.”*

William and Anita are buried at [Oakwood Cemetery](#).

## Eugene Warren Biscailuz (1883-1969)

Eugene was perhaps the best known of the family. He joined the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department as a deputy in 1907 and retired more than half a century later in 1958, as the county's top cop.

In 1929, when Eugene was undersheriff, California Governor Young called upon him to reorganize the old State Motor Patrol. As first superintendent of the California Highway Patrol, he developed the patrol into an efficient statewide law enforcement agency, and it became a model among state police organizations.



May 17, 1959, retired Sheriff Eugene Biscailuz at Placerita Park reenacting a romanticized version of Francisco Lopez's discovery of gold while picking wild onions in Placerita Canyon in 1842.

Mr. Biscailuz also pioneered development of honor farms and honor ranches, in which trustworthy prisoners were given outdoor work and a chance for rehabilitation.

Eugene began his career as Sheriff in 1932, when he was appointed with a deluge of petitions to appoint Eugene as Sheriff upon the retirement of Sheriff Traeger. Sheriff Biscailuz was then reelected six times by a huge majority.

The Sheriff's Relief Association began an annual barbeque in 1924 to help when a deputy was disabled or when he died, and his family required help. In 1934, 60,000 people attended the event at the California Zoological Gardens, near today's Lincoln Park. In 1944 the event changed to the Sheriffs Annual Show and Championship Rodeo at the Coliseum. The 1949 event drew a crowd of 102,270, headlined by John Wayne with Jane Russell as queen of the rodeo. In 1954, the star of the show was Gene Autry.

When Eugene retired, he was probably most often remembered as a smiling figure on a silver-saddled palomino, riding annually in the Tournament of Roses parade. Biscailuz was virtually a "human-bridge" between the old Pueblo of Los Angeles and the metropolis that it became.



# 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



**DIGITAL ARCHIVES online at**  
<http://www.chatsworthhistory.com>

**facebook CHS FACEBOOK PAGE**  
[www.facebook.com/HomesteadAcre](http://www.facebook.com/HomesteadAcre)

**CHS YOUTUBE Channel**  
[youtube.com/chatsworthhistory1/videos](http://youtube.com/chatsworthhistory1/videos)

**SLIDESHARE.NET**  
<https://www.slideshare.net/ChatsworthHistory/presentations>

Slideshare has a listing of our CHS presentations that can easily be watched online. We now have a total of 33 PowerPoint presentations posted. Enjoy!

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Please email us to provide your email address.  
 Thanks! [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com)

## 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.

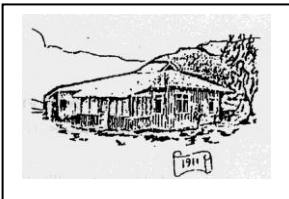


## CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### 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.chatsworthhistory.com](http://www.chatsworthhistory.com)



- Yearly:  New Member  Renewal
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- \$ 125.00

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

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

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

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