

# Smoke Signal

## CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Co-Presidents: Linda & André van der Valk

December 2021, Issue #5

Editor: Ann Vincent

### Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

The Chatsworth Historical Society has lost another one of our treasured longtime members. Betty Summers passed on December 8th at the age of 96. Betty and husband Jim were active members for many years. Betty was our cottage curator and docent in charge of the gardens for many years. Jim acted as our handyman and Betty would have many things for him to do. Before the acre had sprinklers Betty and Jim would hand water every day. They would place sprinklers and come back in a while to move them to another spot. That was true dedication.

Betty worked as a waitress in Chatsworth at the Cabin, where Burger King is located now. Jim would come in for a cup of coffee and the rest is history. Andre often said that Betty was the epitome of a grandma, beautiful and kind. Betty was always willing to help.

Jim and Betty shared their stories of Chatsworth. The one that I always laughed at was when Betty would tell the story that as a child, they would visit



her mother's Aunt Augusta Iverson and Aunt Caroline Williams up on the Santa Susana Pass Road. Betty's mother, Hildur, was always concerned that the rock on Stoney Point would fall on them when they traveled by it.

Jim and Betty donated many photographs and items and, most of all, memories to the Acre.

We hope everyone has a safe and healthy holiday season.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

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
Research Director.....	Ray Vincent
Garden Director.....	Annette Campbell
Director-at-Large.....	Connie Ager

### Upcoming Events

#### Open House

January 2, Sunday 1-4pm

February 6, Sunday 1-4pm

Subject to LA City Covid Rules and Regulations

#### General Meetings

No meeting in December

January 18th, Tuesday 6:30pm

In-person and Zoom, details to follow

### The History of Chatsworth Oakwood Cemetery



Join us for a presentation about our local cemetery that includes the history of the property, the homestead families, celebrities and others that have found their final resting place here in Chatsworth.

## 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. Roses need their winter pruning to keep them at their best.



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

**OPEN HOUSE** is scheduled for the first Sunday of each month from 1-4pm. We enjoy greeting guests and have fun sharing the history of the Homestead Acre with new visitors.

**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 organize, research or 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 March 15, 2022

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

## Included in this newsletter:

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

- **New horse buggy – Andersons**
- **Toyon Christmas Berry**
- **Hill Family Piano**
- **Dayton Canyon Robbie Wilson Books**
- **Fig Orchards & Docia Conley**
- **Kahana Stunt School**

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## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

On October 20<sup>th</sup>, we had our first in house program since March of 2020. We held it as a hybrid meeting with both live audience and zoom participants at the same time. The subject was the history of **Twin Lakes and Deerlake Highlands** from 1920's through the new construction today. If you missed that program, it is available at [Twin Lakes & Deerlake Highlands History.pdf](#) (right click to open in a new window). In addition, new photos and video footage showing the construction of the Poema and Canoga bridges were donated by Philip Hodgetts, Twin Lakes resident. They are available at [Deerlake Ranch Construction Videos](#).

At last month's general meeting, we told the story of **Docia Conley and the Paradise Gift Shop**. The shop was centered on 148 acres of figs planted in 1924 on Devonshire and DeSoto. See page 7 for more on that story.

Also, in November we received a horse drawn buggy (without the horses) donated by the Anderson family. Ron Anderson's late father purchased the buggy over 50 years ago and it had been on display in their front yard on Kinzie Street all of this time. The family was glad it could find a



new home with us and it is now located in the garden near the Time Capsule.

Thank you to Jim and Tim van der Valk for transporting it to the Acre.





**Hollywood got its name from the Toyon, aka Holly Tree and Christmas Red Berry Tree**

**Did you know? It is the 100-year anniversary of a November 1921 California State Senate Law outlawing the harvesting of Toyon without the written permission of the owner.**

In 1921 a bill was passed in the California State Senate that outlawed the harvesting of California Holly Berries without the written permission of private land owners, plus berries could not be taken from public lands.

- “Trucks were taken into the private and public canyons and cuttings were brought into the cities by the truckload”.

School boys in Marin County were selling berries to passing automobilists and others.

- Penalties attached to the violations were a \$500 fine or 6 months, or both.
- Any person, firm or corporation is guilty of a misdemeanor
  - (a) Who mutilates or destroys any Toyon or Christmas red berry tree growing on public or private land unless in the case of private land, the owner gives his consent thereto;
  - (b) Who sells, offers or exposes for sale any Toyon or Christmas red berry or any part thereof...

**HOLLY TREES OF COUNTY TO BE SAVED FROM VANDALS**

Recent Legislature Enacts Law Providing Penalty for Tree Mutilation

**IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS**

Dealer Offering California Holly Must Display Consent of Owner

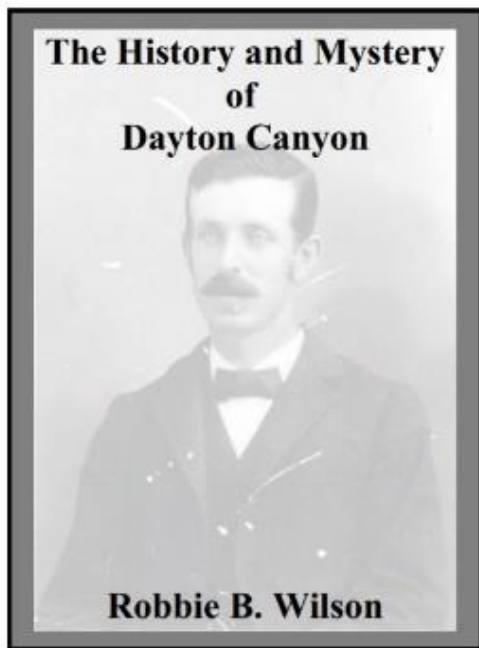
There is to be no mutilation of California holly trees in Orange county this winter. A new law aiming to protect the tree is in effect and will be enforced. Wholesale raiding of mountainsides and canyons where the trees

**SAN FERNANDO, Dec. 1, 1888.**  
*Dear Mrs. Otis:* My little sisters read the letters in the MIRROR, and we like them very much. We live in the Santa Suzana district, in and near the foothills. It is a very nice place. A creek runs past the house, which comes from a spring a little farther up the cañon. The ferns look very pretty at this time of the year. Maybe I'll send you some when I find some fine ones. The chokeberries are ripe, and look lovely. I think they and oranges look nice on Christmas trees. I have three little sisters and two married ones. I am 12 years old. I have a sheep, two dogs and four rabbits. There are lots of acorns here, and Billy, the sheep, likes them when I hull them for him. He and my dog Hunter have fine times playing. Well, I guess my letter is too long now. If I see this in print, I will write again and tell you about our school and what kind of a Christmas I have. Good by.  
 Your San Fernando friend,  
**LOVELL HILL.**

- Minnie Hill Palmer's older brother, Lovell Hill, wrote this story when he was 12 years old. Mrs. Eliza Ann Otis was the wife of Harrison Gray Otis, who in 1886 was the President of the Los Angeles Times.
- Mrs. Otis was a member of the staff at the Times, and worked in such departments as “Women and Home” and “Our Boys and Girls”.
- Lovell talks about the creek and the ferns in the spring a little farther up the cañon. He mentions decorating Christmas trees with chokeberries and oranges. Chokeberries, bright red (and bitter), are Toyon berries.

This information is a part of our 2018 presentation [The Minnie Hill Palmer Story.pdf](#) posted on the [chatsworthhistory.com](http://chatsworthhistory.com) website.

## ADDITIONAL MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS



Robbie Wilson, a distant relative of Clyde Dayton's wife Lulu, has spent many years compiling the history of his family. He provided us with both print and digital copies of the two books he published: [\*The History and Mystery of Dayton Canyon \(2014\)\*](#) and [\*Clyde Dayton and His Writings \(2021\)\*](#). He recently completed the second book and thanked our Chatsworth Historical Society in the forward.

We are extremely grateful to Robbie for his historical research, and allowing us to include it on our website as a research document for historians of the future. It is quite the story.

In addition to these two books, we also have the book [\*The Queen Restrictor \(1890\)\*](#) published by Clyde Dayton. All three of these books are now available on our [chatsworthhistory.com](http://chatsworthhistory.com) website under Digital Archives/Publications/Technical Papers.

This is the third article that we have written on Clyde Dayton. The other articles can be found in our [June 2014 page 5](#) and [June 2018 pages 5-6](#) newsletters.

For some background on Clyde Dayton and Dayton Canyon, the following is an excerpt from our June 2014 newsletter. You can find more information in our [CHS Homestead Series Part 3 presentation](#).

### CLYDE DAYTON

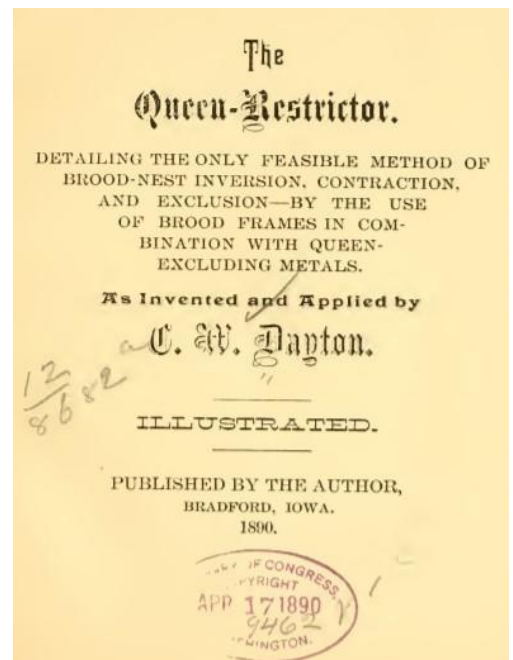
In 1903 Clyde Dayton recorded his homestead of 59 acres on the south edge of Dayton Canyon. He had 350 hives of bees, a bee house & apiary. In 1905 his wife Katie died of tuberculosis. In 1908, Clyde Dayton is granted his patent on 59 acres, and in that same year he purchased 80 acres "mostly valuable for stone building purposes" north near Woolsey Canyon.

In 1909 Clyde married Lulu Adkisson, also a Seventh Day Adventist. Clyde wrote a weekly paper on health, and ads for his "red ripe" honey. In an excerpt from Catherine Mulholland's *The Owensmouth Baby*,

**"A familiar site in the early days was the Red Ripe Honey Man trundling his wheelbarrow through the town as he sold his honey and doubtless advised the residents on the proper foods to eat".**

Dayton lived reclusively with his wife in the hills west of town, was regarded

dubiously by some of the settlers, and came to a violent end. On April 17th, 1922, the Los Angeles Times reported "Charred Bodies of Two Found – Double Murder or Murder and Suicide in Grim Cabin Ruins? – Visitors to Secluded Spot Stumble on Remains of Man and Wife." Clyde was 60 and Lulu was 52 at the time of their deaths on April 12th.







# KAHANA STUNT SCHOOL in Chatsworth

By Ann & Ray Vincent

During our Twin Lakes / Deer Lake Highlands research, Chatsworth Twin Lakes resident Falcon Belmontez remembered participating in training classes at the Kahana Stunt School as a teenager, learning to ride motorcycles. She is still in contact with Kim and his wife Sandra, and Falcon put us in touch with the Kahana family.

The Kahana story begins in 1929, with Kim born in Hawaii. He joined the Army US Airborne Ranger unit in Korea. After the war he moved to California and worked as a movie extra and performed stunts. He did not know how to ride a horse initially, so he went to legendary Hollywood cowboys such as Yakima Canutt and the family of John Epper who mentored him.

In 1972, at the age of 43 he founded The Kahana Stunt School in Chatsworth. The first few years the focus was teaching stunts safely to members of the movie industry, however it opened to the public in 1977.



His Karate training studio (at left) was at 21746 Devonshire, which is today's Craftiness store just east of Param Yoga.

He later moved his studio to 21710 Devonshire in the old Lombardi Bldg., which has been replaced with the strip mall on the southwest corner of Devonshire and Owensmouth.



Outdoor stunts were taught on his two-acre property on the northeast corner of Owensmouth and Kingsbury, just south of Chatsworth Street. The property included a 50 ft. tall tower to teach falling techniques, trampolines, a western town, two horses, a collection of motorcycles and other outdoor adventure stunt opportunities.

In 1979, the Kahana Stunt School was featured on Channel 4, now available on YouTube. [Hour Magazine visits the Kahana Stunt School](#)

Gary Collins introduces Co-Host Pat Mitchell, as she joins Kim's daughter Debbie and they jump off of the 50 ft tower.

Screenshot from the video at right.





The Kahana Stunt school was very selective and did not guarantee you any work, but you were taught a work ethic based on safety.

Kim's three sons, Tony, Rick and Kim Jr., and one daughter, Debbie, all taught at Kahana's stunt school, hold Black Belts in karate, and all have performed in numerous blockbuster films.

There have been many newspaper articles and video interviews that provide the following history.

A native of Hawaii, he dropped out of school in third grade. He ran away from home twice, succeeding when he stowed away on a ship as a 12-year-old determined to get off the island after watching the kamikazes attack Pearl Harbor. He lived on his own hitchhiking, stealing to feed himself and served time in jail.

He joined the Army and fought in the Korean War; surviving a harrowing ordeal as a prisoner of war. He came to California and worked as a movie extra but quickly learned he could make better money performing stunts.

"In Korea, people were shooting at me for free, but in the movies, they would pay me for that," he said.

He loved working in the movies, where he could use all of the skills he learned in street fighting, martial arts and motorcycle riding.

By 1989, the Kahana Stunt and Film School moved to Lake County, Florida on 100 acres of land.

The property is remote and wild making the perfect movie backdrop when directors need authentic Florida jungle. He can train them in firearms, staged explosions and car crashes without bothering the neighbors.



In a February 4, 1982 LA Times article about his training school, Kahana is shown teaching his students how to rappel down Stoney Point.



Their website is:  
[KahanaStuntSchool.com](http://KahanaStuntSchool.com)

For additional Video featuring the school today see:  
[2017 Kahana Stunt School documentary](#)

## Docia Conley, Kadota Figs, and the Paradise Gift Shoppe

Last month at our November 16<sup>th</sup> general meeting, we presented the story of Docia Conley and the Paradise Gift Shoppe. It was a family-owned business and one of Chatsworth's successful icons, located at 21032 Chatsworth, just east of today's Chatsworth Library. We were fortunate to have Joy and Jodi Chenard in attendance. Their grandmother Phoebe Chenard inherited the business from Docia Conley, and their father Leonard ran the business as they grew up in Chatsworth.

Some highlights from the presentation included the 1924 148-acre tract map identifying the Loomis Kadota Fig Farm in Chatsworth, centered at Devonshire and DeSoto. William Loomis planted figs on each acre, and sold an acre of Figs for \$1,500.

The 1924 LA Times clipping to the right advertises...

- The trees are all set out and in bud and will have figs on them this year.
- The price includes care for two years.
- Luncheon will be served next Sunday at Kadota Fig Farms at Chatsworth
- See the model acre, showing how to raise chickens, strawberries and vegetables between the fig trees to get an income from the start

In Jan 1926, the Docia A. Conley Company buys a 2-acre fig farm and will erect a \$10,000 preserving plant at the Kadota Fig Farms.

**THURSDAY, JAN. 23, 1926** **ILLUSTRATED DAILY NEWS** 9

**REAL ESTATE**  
ACTIVITY-PROGRESS-SUB-DIVISIONS SECTION (BUILDING-FINANCING-FARMING)

**PICTURE STORY OF KADOTA FIGS**—Taken on the Kadota Fig Farms, showing at top, left to right: Planting trunk with no branches; showing figs on branch, first season; first season after pruning five branches, and second season's growth, with 10 branches pruned. At bottom, left to right, second season's growth, with foliage, and canned and ripe figs from second season fruit.

**FONTANA GROWERS PAY \$50,000 FOR PACKING PLANT**  
Purchase of the building and grounds of the Fontana Packing Plant from the Fontana Farms Company at a consideration of \$50,000 was announced yesterday by officials.

**Pictures Tell of Growth Of Kadota Fig Trees**  
The above pictures show the well-tended in size to take care of a double growth of fig trees to the San Dimas larger extent. The Docia A.

**REPRESENTATIVE FOR WALNUT PARK CHOSEN**  
The Thomas M. Casey Investment, of 214 South Pacific Boulevard, Huntington Park, through an arrangement has entered into business.

**CAHUENGA PASS AID TO INDEPENDENCE ACRES**  
Diane Fortune is a noble personage, but she appears to have chosen Independence Acres as one of her favorite spots in this land of good fortune, declares Mr. Gillette, sales manager at Independence Acres. He also states that the opening of the new Chahuenga Pass road has removed all former objection on Ventura Boulevard. Numerous people have found the new road

### An Acre of FIGS for \$1500

On Sunday, March 16th, I will sell some of the finest Kadota Fig tracts in the state at the amazingly low price of \$1500. Just think of it! Some of the tracts are over an acre.

The trees are all set out and are in bud and will have figs on them this year. The price includes care for two years. These tracts are worth from \$2500 to \$2500, and those who purchase NOW can show a big saving. Half-acre tracts as low as \$600.

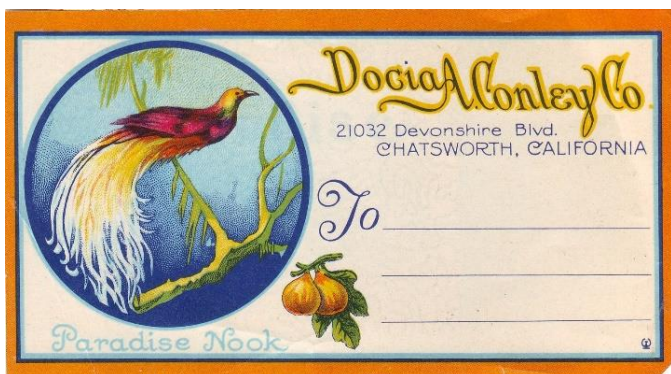
Don't fail to visit the finest self-supporting, money-making subdivision in or around Los Angeles. Luncheon will be served next Sunday at the

**KADOTA**  
**Fig Farms**  
at Chatsworth

The November 16<sup>th</sup> program includes the full story about the Figs and the history of Docia Conley and the Paradise Gift Shop.

[Docia Conley Kadota Figs & the Paradise Gift Shop.pdf](#)





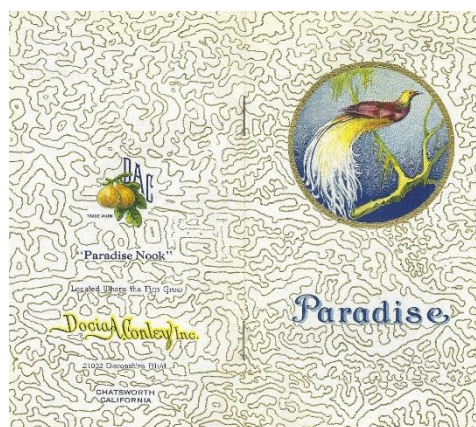
Docia Conley had been processing/canning fruit since 1908

In 1915 Conley & Conley is incorporated, and a fruit preserving plant is built in Highland Park on Pasadena Ave.



In 1926 they built The Paradise Tea Room and Gift Shoppe, and a Processing Plant on their 2-acre fig farm.

The presentation covers events in the 20's and 30's, including hosting visitors at the 1932 Summer Olympics



*Interior Paradise Shoppe*

**Paradise Gift No. 49**  
BASKET FIG PRODUCT—A well made basket which will be useful after the contents are eaten; packed with, Sweet Spiced Kadota Figs, Kadota Fig Jam, Candied Figs, Candied Figs (Stuffed), Fig Pudding, Fig Cookies.  
EACH PACKAGE WRAPPED SO AS TO GIVE IT INDIVIDUALITY, BUT ALL NESTED IN A BASKET.

49A.....	\$4.50
49B.....	\$6.00

*Price Prepaid*

**Paradise Gift No. 6**  
*Paradise Box containing—*  
Sweet Spiced Kadota Figs  
Jar Sweet Spiced Watermelon  
Jar Guava Jelly—Jar Orange Marmalade  
Jar Sweet Spiced Cherries  
Jar Luncheon Pickles  
*Box Assorted Candied Fruits—*  
Box Candied Grapefruit Peel  
Box Stuffed Figs—Carton of Walnuts

No. 6A.....	\$ 8.50
No. 6B.....	\$11.50
No. 6C.....	\$15.00

*Price Prepaid*

**Gift No. 8**  
*Fancy Basket containing—*  
3 lb. Jar Sweet Spiced Kadota Figs  
6 oz. Jar Sweet Spiced Watermelon  
6 oz. Jar Guava Jelly  
6 oz. Jar Orange Marmalade  
6 oz. Jar Fig Jam  
4 Packages Candied Fruits each in Fancy Package finished with cellophane and trim.  
*Price Prepaid, \$7.50*

**Gift No. 9**  
*Attractive Bird Box containing—*  
Jar of Sweet Spiced Kadota Figs  
Assorted Candied Fruits with Sweetmeat Fork  
*Price Prepaid, \$2.00*

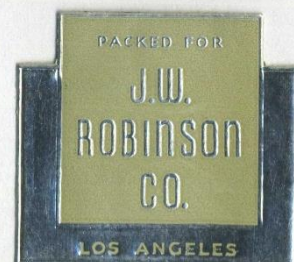
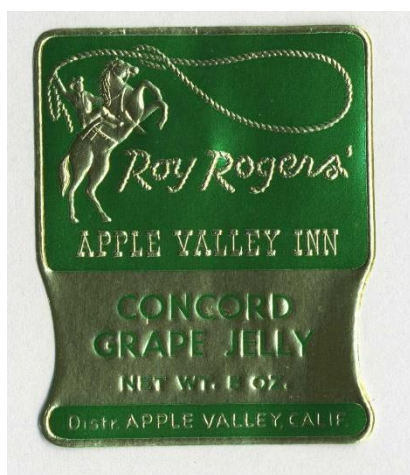
**Paradise Gift No. 10**  
Candied Grapefruit Cup filled with Assorted Candied Fruits, made in our own plant, in Imported Lantern Basket—orchid, blue and gold, tied in cellophane and ribbon, with sweetmeat fork.

*Most Unusual*

*Price Prepaid \$2.50*

They did Private Labeling for Roy Rogers and Major Dept Stores.

In 1979 the Paradise Gift shop closed and the land was developed.



# 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 36 PowerPoint presentations posted. Enjoy!

## Can we email our newsletter to you?

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.

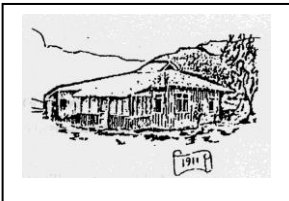
For those receiving email only newsletters, we will advise you by email when your dues are due.

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

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

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

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

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

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