

# 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

September 2022, Issue #3

Editor: Ann Vincent

### Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

It is hard to believe that we are coming to the end of summer. Of course, the end of summer means we are getting closer to Pioneer Day, and we are very excited to be able to have Pioneer Day this year. We have had wonderful feedback; it is always a great event for everyone and especially the kids. Ann Vincent and Donna Nachtrab have been working on getting the games and chores of yore ready for the kids. Jelena Csanyi and I have been getting the museum ready with a new display about the Chatsworth Train Tunnels. The photographs that we have of the crews working on the tunnel are probably one of my favorite displays that we do.

Once again, this year Councilmember John Lee will be providing the bus shuttles from the Chatsworth Train Depot to the acre and back again because of our limited parking. We thank Councilmember Lee for his continued support of the Historical Society and the Acre.

As I write this sitting in my air-conditioned home on a 108-degree day I think about how difficult these days must have been for Minnie and her family. They planted trees to give them shade, but as some of our docents have found out on hot days ...the cottage is hot. There is so much that we take for granted but when I look back at what Minnie and her family endured there must have been times when it was difficult. Minnie as we have discovered was a hardy soul and an instrumental member of the community. From helping her mother with the laundry for the crews building the tunnel, being involved with the Girl Scouts and now we are hearing from people that Minnie used to babysit. We are fortunate that many people are able to share their stories of Minnie with us.

I hope to see everyone at Pioneer Day and our Ice Cream Social. Linda and Andre

### Chatsworth Historical Society Board of Directors 2021-2022

Co-Presidents .....	Linda & André van der Valk
Treasurer.....	Jim Van Gundy
Secretary.....	Donna Nachtrab
Hospitality.....	Jelena Csanyi
Gardens .....	Karyne Ventris
Smoke Signal Editor.....	Ann Vincent
Research Director.....	Ray Vincent
Director-at-Large.....	Connie Ager

### Upcoming Events

#### General Meeting September 20, Tuesday 6:00pm Welcome Back Membership Roundup ICE CREAM SOCIAL



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.

#### PIONEER DAY Sunday, October 2, 2022

11am -3pm

The flyer is available  
online at

[chatsworthhistory.com/Events](http://chatsworthhistory.com/Events)



#### General Meeting October 18, Tuesday 6:30pm ROCKPOINTE HISTORY

Our neighbor to the east is Rockpointe Townhomes,  
739 units, 4 pools, 90 acres

Program will be available in person and on Zoom;  
watch for the reminder card to be mailed and posted  
on Facebook.

## 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 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. We will feature our train history and tunnels this year for Pioneer Day.

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

**IN THE COTTAGE:** An inventory project is in process 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 1, 2023

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. Right click with your mouse to open the link in a new window, so you can easily get back to the original newsletter.

- **Pioneer Day**
- **Hill 1899 Homestead Map**

## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

### The Grapevines are posted!

In our last newsletter we discussed the Grapevines found in storage. After many hours of scanning and compiling, we have posted all [239 issues of the Grapevines](#) that we have. They range from Dec 1954 to Jun 1960. A fascinating timeframe as Chatsworth changed from a rural community to a suburb.... If you read one a day, you will finish before next year!!

### OPEN HOUSE August 7

We were honored to have special guests Sharon and Jonathan Legg, descendants of the Gray Family of Chatsworth, attend our Open House. Nelson and Minerva Gray, who arrived in Chatsworth in 1893, had nine children. They lived in the beautiful home on Lassen where the Olive Trees are planted. Their oldest son, George and his wife Agnes had 13 children. Their oldest daughter, Margaret is the mother of Sharon, who visited in August.

Sharon has been to the Acre before and has donated several items including dishes that have been passed down from the Gray family to her. Here is a photo of the Gray wash basin and pitcher set they have donated. We appreciate the opportunity to preserve these family heirlooms from our early Pioneer Families.



30th Annual  
Chatsworth Historical Society  
**Pioneer Day**  
Sunday, Oct. 2, 2022  
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**We are back, please join us!**

Our 2022 Pioneer Day has transitioned away from vendors, and is now solely focused on educational Pioneer activities, to entertain old and young alike.

Local schools, as always, will be invited to participate; all events are free after an entry donation fee of \$5 for adults and \$1 for children.

All proceeds go to maintain our Acre grounds, cottage and museum.

Our Pioneer Day always features **Chores of Yore** and we are fortunate to have the Lawrence Middle School assist.

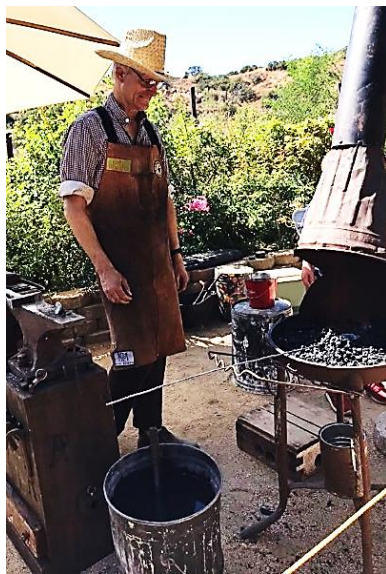
What you can look forward to:

- **Blacksmith, Gary Standke** allowing children to help forge miniature horseshoes.

- **Nita Standke baking** cornbread and churning fresh butter from cream.

- **Wayne Christensen of Standing Bear's Trading Post** and his team of talented leather workers will assist you in creating a stamped leather keychain using the tools of their trade. They will have all types of beautifully tooled leather items on display

- **Gold Panner, Pat Keene** from Keene Engineering (manufacture of Mining equipment) will be on hand to help you pan "real gold" that the Gold Panning Association has brought with them from their adventures mining in the California hills.



- **Wood Carver Cliff Cox** has a beautiful display of carved wooden birds and other items... a long-lost art he will be happy to tell you all about.
- **Woodland Hills Rock Chippers** who will have their rock collection on display and will help you make a ring if you like.

- **Bee Keepers with Valley Hive** will have honey produced locally and a display of bees in a contained hive so you can see what goes on inside. Bee keeping was done by many of our early homesteaders.



- **Chatsworth Nature Preserve** -The Santa Susana Mountain Park Association SSMPA will provide information past and present.

- **Trace your own Ancestors** with the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and the Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War 1861-1865.

- **See fossils found in our hills** while young aspiring Archaeologists use a shaker box to discover treasures.

- **Spinning wheels and how they work**, an early skill to create yarn for weaving and knitting from the LA Spinning Guild.

- **Design a mini quilt.** Making quilts out of any fabric on hand was necessary for a pioneer family to have warm bed covers. Quilting is an art form too. Come see some of our quilts hanging in the museum and the cottage.



- **Learn about musical instruments of the day.**

- **Darn some socks, weave, learn to braid, hang some laundry on the line, catch a few fish, and practice your aim for accuracy with bean bag toss.** What skills do you think the Pioneers needed to survive?

- **Boy Scouts will teach you knot tying and lashing.**

- **Try sack races and tug of war**

- **The Pioneer Church** will be represented at the event displaying information about their early 1903 history.



- **Interested in plants? We have all kinds.** The California Native Plant Association will be on hand to advise you on your garden and also distribute free plant seeds for several varieties of natives. Our traditional plant sale will feature plants of all kinds including natives and succulents. We invite you to roam around our gardens and enjoy the roses, trees, iris, and lilies. The Iris Association will be there with plants available too!

**Text 1900's style on our telegraph.** Do you know Morse code...we will show you!



- **Chatsworth Train Tunnels** are featured in our museum, where you can learn about the early history of our community.
- **Our Snack Bar and Bake Sale** will be available all day with hot dogs and sodas and sweets.
- **Our White Elephant Sale** will be available for those of you looking for treasures.
- **You can hop on the stagecoach.** Climb onboard to learn what it was like to travel over the Devils Slide route in our hills.



## Providing a family friendly Pioneer adventure for our community.



**30th Annual  
Chatsworth Historical Society**

# Pioneer Day

**Sunday, Oct. 2, 2022**

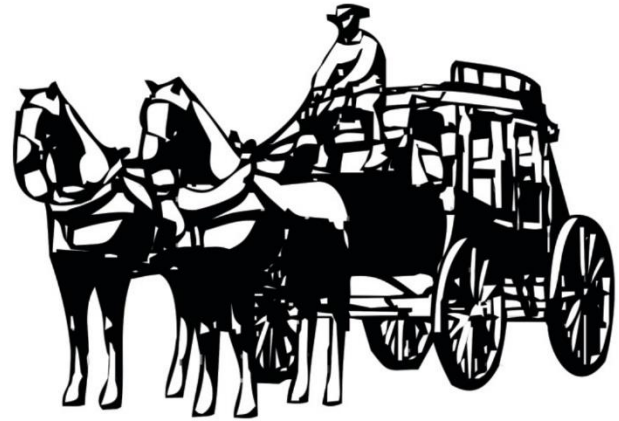
**11 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

Bring your children  
& grandchildren

Take the  
Pioneer  
Challenge

***Old-time fun  
for everyone!***

- Panning for Gold
- Blacksmith
- Leather Crafts
- Chores and  
Games of Yore
- Bake Sale
- Woodcarvers
- Spinning Wheel Demo
- Design a Quilt Craft
- Rock Chippers
- Bee Keeping
- Telegraph Station
- Butter Churning  
and more!



**Chatsworth Museum Exhibits**

Featuring  
Pioneer Families  
and the history of our  
Chatsworth Railroad and Tunnels

**Tour Minnie's 1911 Cottage**

**Location:** Homestead Acre,  
Chatsworth Park South  
(West end of Devonshire St.)  
10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA

**Information:** (818) 882-5614  
chatsworthhistory@gmail.com  
www.chatsworthhistory.com

**Admission** Adults: \$5,  
**Donation:** Children: \$1  
(Free for kids under 5)

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 3 p.m.

## Minnie Hill Palmer Background

Ray and I have recently been reviewing some of the maps on hand at the acre, and have posted the maps we commonly use for research on our website at Digital Archives, Research Tools, [Maps](#).

In our archives is a “new” discovery, the 1899 plat map from James Hill showing the layout of his homestead, location of fields planted, fences and much more in order to claim his homestead. Ray has studied this carefully and you can read about it in the next few pages.

Minnie was born in 1886 on the Homestead. In 1909 she married Alfred Palmer and they moved to Los Angeles and had two children, Edith and Leroy. They lived for a short time in Montana, then returned to Chatsworth in 1920 to live at the ranch and help take care of her mother. In the 1930 census, there were five people living at the ranch. Rhoda, is 84 years old and lives another 5 years. Lovell (Minnie’s brother) is 53; Minnie is 43; Alfred is 49. Their son Leroy is 17. Their daughter Edith is married and living in San Fernando.



By the 1940 census, Lovell is now married and moved out. Minnie and Alfred live in the house with Leroy and his wife Ann. Alfred passed away in 1946, and Leroy and Ann have moved to a home in San Fernando. Minnie lived alone in her childhood home for another 30 years. Electricity was installed in the 40’s; running water was added by [Aqua Sierra](#) in 1955. Retiring to a convalescent home in 1976, she passed away in 1981 at the age of 94, but attended the Grand Opening of the Homestead Acre by the Historical Society in March of 1980 (photo at left)

We have two articles that describe Minnie’s life, both posted on our website.

[Growing Up On The Acre](#), written by Candice Craig is based on interviews with Hill Family members who lived on the ranch in the 20’s and 30’s.

[1964 Minnie Alice Hill Palmer Story by Virginia Watson](#), tells Minnie’s story of life on the ranch and is based on an interview with Virginia Watson when the Chatsworth Historical Society was founded.

Shown at right is a closeup of the “Title” of the 1899 James D. Hill Homestead Map (from the original blueprint) that is discussed in the following article.....



## The 1899 James D. Hill Homestead Map (from the original blueprint)

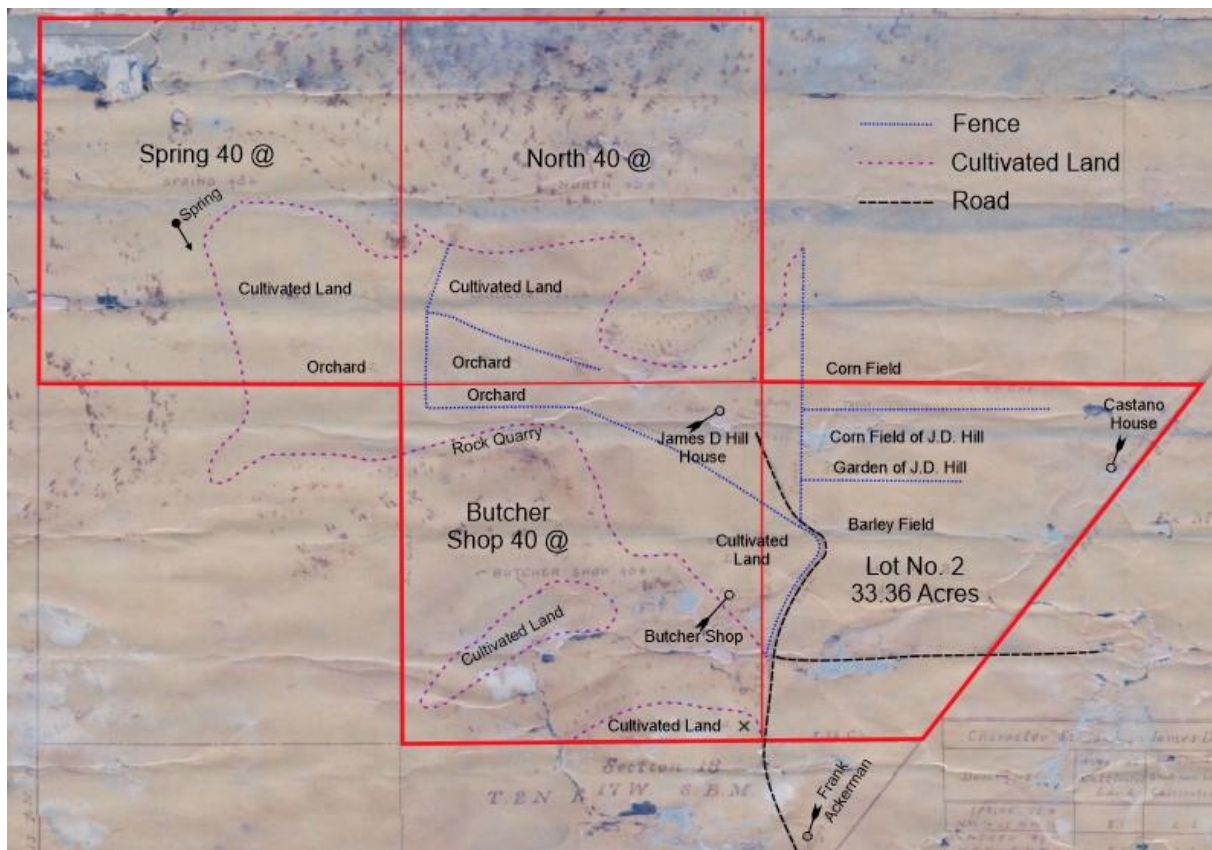
James D. Hill brought his wife Rhoda and six children to Chatsworth in 1886, after Rhoda visited Mr. Charlton in the spring of that year. They took up squatter's rights on their property and homesteaded it. Minnie Hill was born in November 1886 on the property. They were granted their homestead 15 years later in 1901. In 1911 they built a new house on the property, which still stands today as Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #133. Details at [The Minnie Hill Palmer Story](#).

As a point of reference, the Google Earth map below has an overlay of the Hill and Butler Homestead parcels.



We have been digging through our map collection at the Acre, and came across a unique 20"x21" [1899 Plat of the Hill Homestead \(from the original blueprint\)](#). We added lines on the map below to highlight features. It tells an interesting story, as the Hill Homestead of 120 acres was officially granted in August 1901. The 1899 Hill Homestead Map includes an extra 33.36 acres that was not granted to James Hill, but granted to Alexander Butler in December 1901.

The three Hill 40-acre homestead parcels are identified below as "Spring 40 @", "North 40 @" and "Butcher Shop 40 @". Lot No. 2, 33.36 acres, would become the Butler Homestead in 1901.



The right section of the 1899 Hill Homestead Map provides the following information:

Character of Land in James D. Hill's Homestead in Sec. 13

Description	Acres of Cultivated Land	Additional that can be cultivated	Total Acres Agricultural Land	Grazing Land	Rock & Mountainous Land	Total Acres
Spring 40 @ NW ¼ of NW ¼	8.8	2.2	11.0	6.0	23.0	40
North 40 @ NE ¼ of NW ¼	9.5	1.8	11.3	6.0	22.7	40
Butcher Shop 40 @ SE ¼ of NW ¼	16.9	1.5	18.4	12.0	9.6	40
Lot # 2	31.0	2.0	33.0	0.36		33.36
Totals	66.2	7.5	73.7	24.36	55.3	153.36

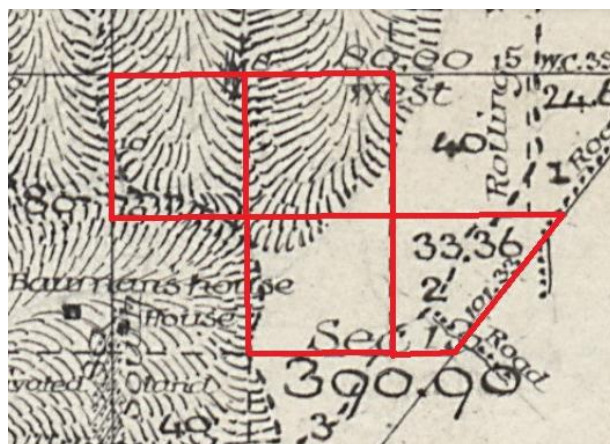
Plat

Showing character of land in James D. Hill's Homestead on N ½ NW 1/4 ; SE 1/4 NW 1/4 & Lot 2 in Sec. 13 T.2N. R.17W. S.B.M.

Scale 4 chains to an inch

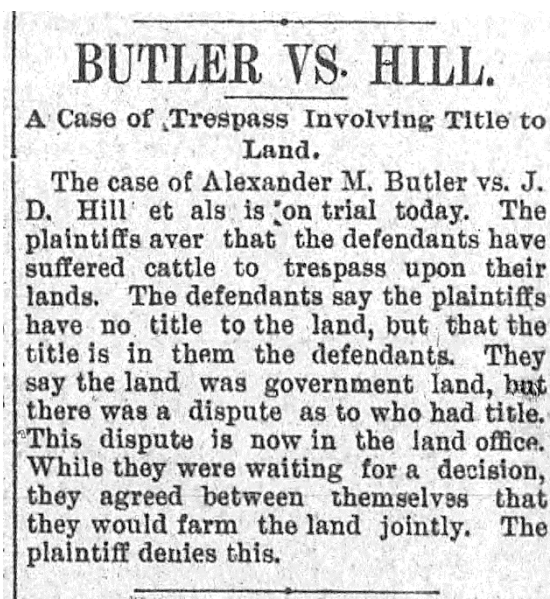
Goldsworth & ????, Civil & Mining Engineers  
Los Angeles, Cal. June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1899

In 1896, 23-year-old Alexander Butler was on the voting registers in Chatsworth. That would mark the five-year requirement for earning his homestead in 1901. Also in 1896, the land office, today the Bureau of Land Management, published the map that would be used to determine eventual homesteader boundaries. A crop of that map is at the right, with the Hill and Butler parcels overlaid. The full map is on our website [BLM T2NR17W](#)



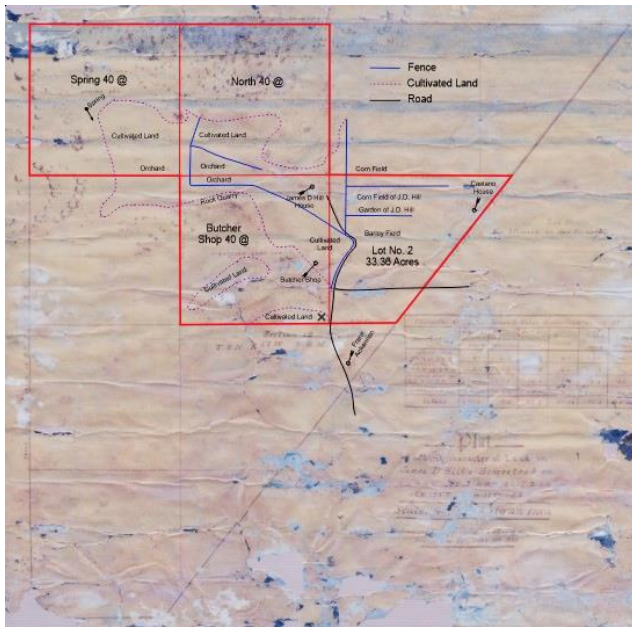
Hill disputed Butler's claim to Lot 2. A Jan 1896 LA Times article states that Butler has begun suit against Hill for \$500 and a restraining order to prevent cattle trespass on his property to graze on Ex-Mission lands (lands east of Andora). The May 6, 1896 Los Angeles Record article at right describes the case in more detail. The suit was settled for the defendant, Hill, as reported on May 7 by the LA Herald: "The plaintiff complained of cattle upon his lands, but the defendant laid claim to the title of land in question. The dispute of ownership is still in the land office". That claim would be settled by the land office in 1901, when Butler was granted title to Lot 2.

Hill identifies the Butler house as the "Castano House" on his map. Castanos M & Brothers, prospectors & miners, are listed in the 1892 Chatsworth Directory. Luis Castanos settled later in Santa Paula, and we can theorize that Butler purchased the Castanos property, including house and well, in 1896 or earlier.

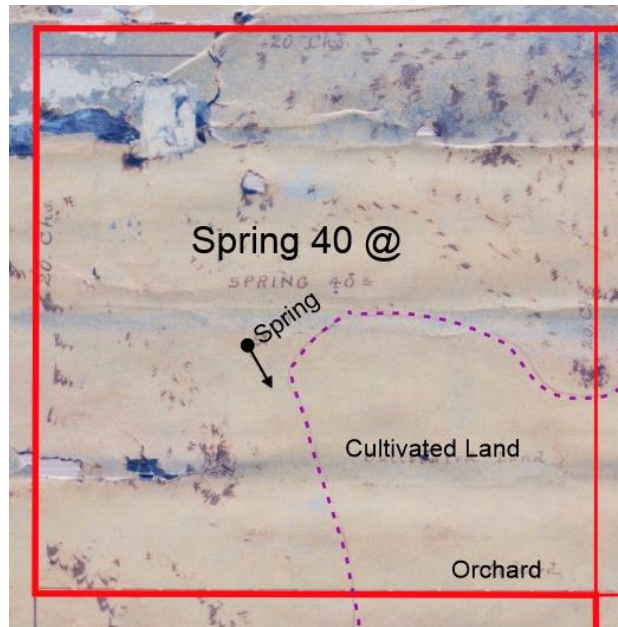




The full 1899 Hill Homestead (with overlay) below



Closeup “Spring 40 @” (with overlay) below

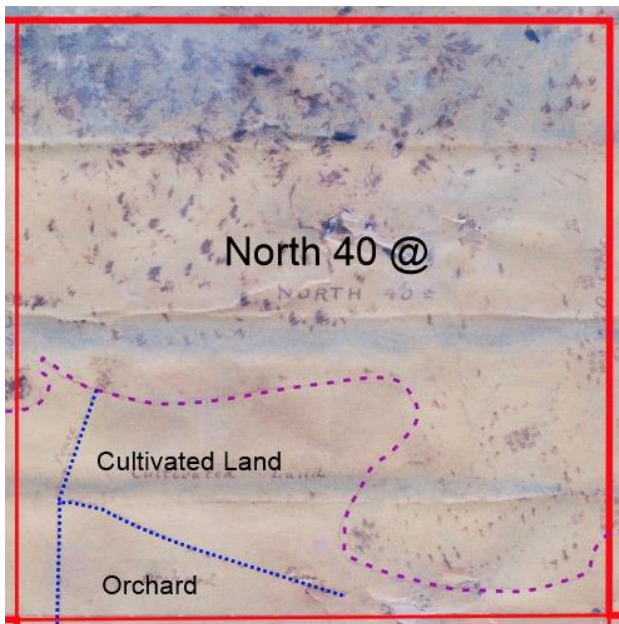


The Spring 40 Acres above right identifies the Spring, just left of center. The Spring is dry today, as train tunnel construction pierced the aquifer feeding the Bannon and other springs in 1901. Water still flows today out of the east portal of the tunnel, and there is a story from [Growing up on the Acre](#) about the efforts made to clean out the ditch and keep the water flowing to water the vegetables.



The Spring was a little north of where the 1956 two-acre trout lake was created, that was filled with well water. ([Aqua Sierra and Roy Rogers Sports Center pgs. 21,23,52-55](#)). Today there is a fence around the depression that was the trout lake.

Closeup “North 40 @” (with overlay) below

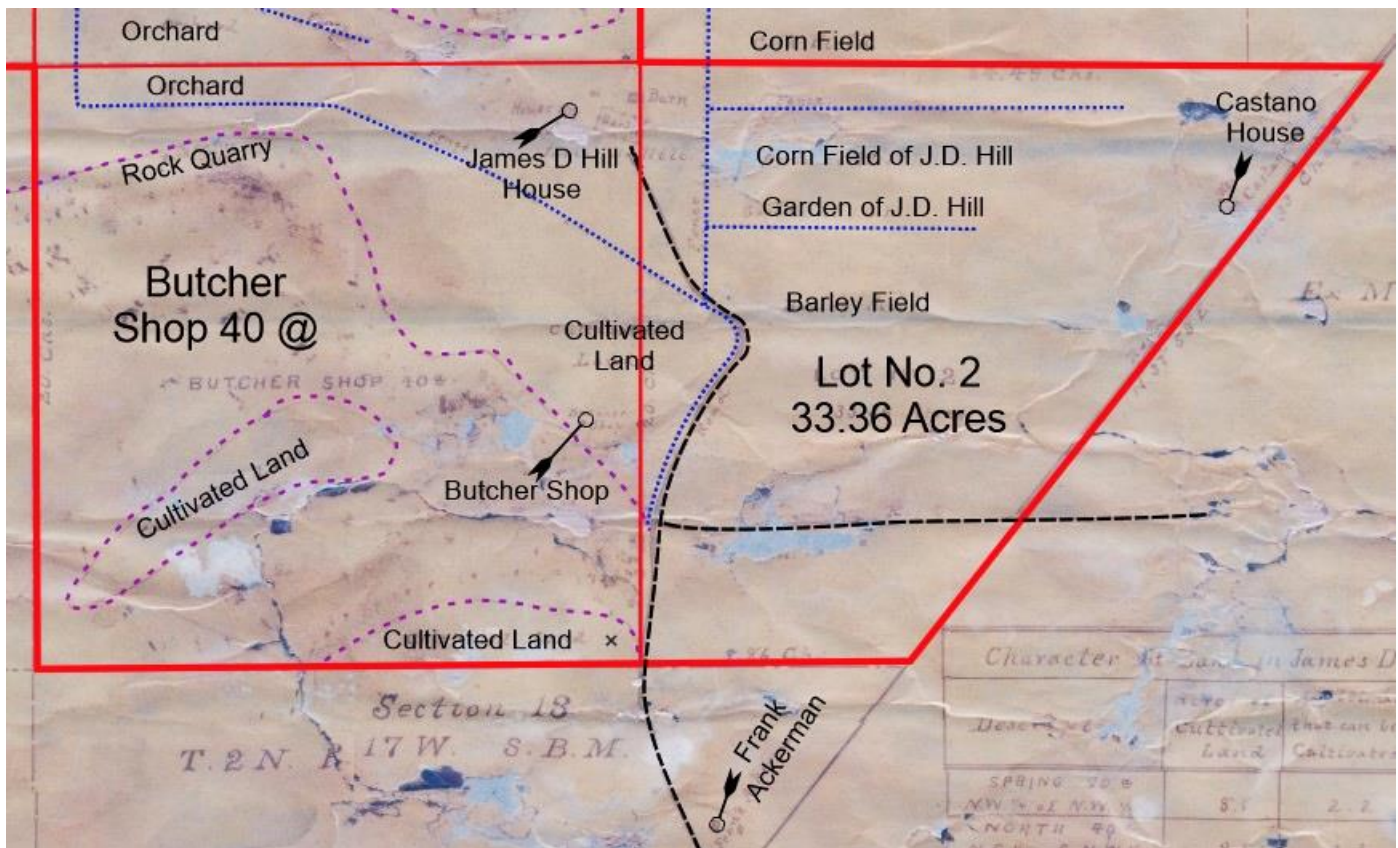


The North 40 acres is mostly made up of Rock and Mountainous land.

The lower section with the purple curved dashed line identifies Cultivated Land. The blue straight dashed line is identified as a Fence

On this section is Cultivated Land and an Orchard.

Closeup “Butcher Shop 40 @ and Lot No. 2 33.36 Acres” (with overlay) below

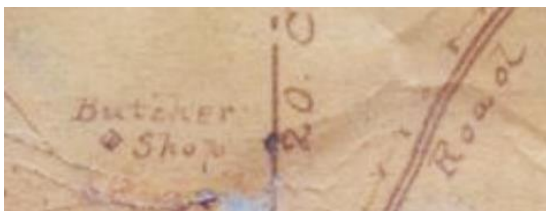


The Butcher Shop 40 acres identifies a Rock Quarry, the James D Hill House, and a Butcher Shop. The fence identified in dashed blue follows a road identified in dashed black that leads to the Hill House.

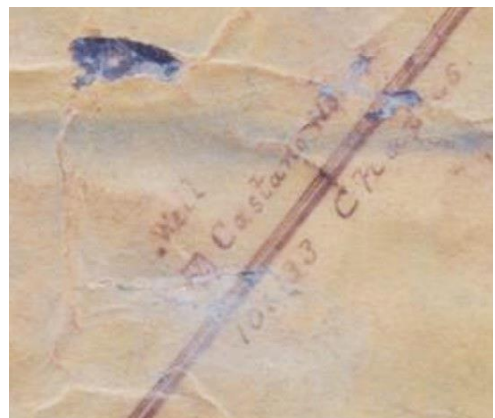
A closeup of the James D Hill House at right, identifies the House, Barn, Well (part of map missing/disintegrated), Garden and an outbuilding between the House and Barn. Notice that the barn is built on the edge of the eventual vertical Property Line, but the fencing and road are on Lot No. 2.



The Butcher Shop building below is small, similar in size to the outbuilding between the House and Barn.



Closeup of Castano House and Well at right



Note: Frank Ackerman married James Hill’s first daughter, Ruth, and was granted his 42-acre homestead in 1899. The Ackerman homestead was below Butcher Shop 40 @ and Lot 2; the Frank Ackerman house is identified on the map above.

# 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 41 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.

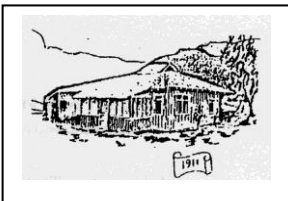


## CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### 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)



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

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!**