

# Smoke Signal

## CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Co-Presidents: Linda & André van der Valk

April 2023, Issue #2

Editor: Ann Vincent

### Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

It is springtime and Chatsworth is looking beautiful. The mountains look green and fresh. We drove by the Nature Preserve and it is nice to see water in the eco-pond. It has been a long time since we have seen that much water in the pond.

It has been a busy springtime at the acre. We are getting ready for our Vintage Fashion Show and Tea. Ann has been busy going through our collection of clothing that we have. She has been looking for items for the fashion show but also going through and storing them in a better way than we had before. It has been a lot of work for Ann, and it is much appreciated. We are getting some big laughs at the size of the waist on some of the dresses. Maybe that is why there were corsets and then girdles. We are looking forward to a successful event and so far, the pre-ticket sales has been doing well.

We had another successful Open House this month. We had over 50 guests, including a visit from family members of the Gray family. It was nice to share our photos and information of their family with them. The Gray family was very much a part of the development of Chatsworth.

Our library is expanding thanks to donations from Duke Mulholland. He sent us a signed copy of "I'm Your Huckleberry: A Memoir" by actor Val Kilmer, who lived in Chatsworth in Roy Roger's former home for a time. Duke also donated a signed copy of "Reflexion" by Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme of the Manson Family, sent to us from the publisher. And, a copy of "Woodlands in the Santa Susana Mountains of Los Angeles County".

We are still working on the new roof. Thank you for those of you who donated to us for the new roof. We appreciate all of the donations that we receive.

Happy Springtime.

Linda and Andre

### Chatsworth Historical Society Board of Directors 2022-2023

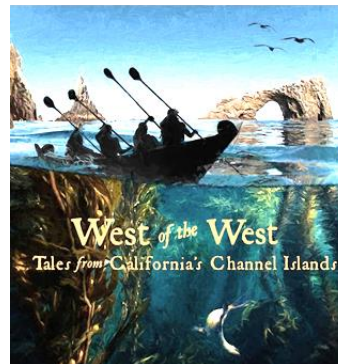
Co-Presidents .....	Linda & André van der Valk
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## Upcoming Events

### General Meeting

April 18, 2023 – 6:30 pm

### Ancient Peoples of the Channel Islands



Please join us for a program on the Ancient Peoples of the Channel Islands. Beginning with the discovery of the oldest human remains ever found in North America – **13,000 year old Arlington Springs Man** – to the true story

of the Lone Woman of San Nicolas – the inspiration for the best-selling children's book **Island of the Blue Dolphins**. The program will include excerpts from the public television program **West of the West, Tales from California's Channel Islands**.

Program will be available at the Homestead ACRE and on Zoom; [Zoom Meeting Link](#)

Or go to: [www.Zoom.us/join](http://www.Zoom.us/join)  
or Dial: (669) 900 9128

Meeting ID: 848 4323 4310 Passcode: 100200

### Garden Party and Vintage Fashion Show

April 30<sup>th</sup> 12:30 – 3:00pm

prepaid tickets only see page 3



## 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. Everything is growing now, it's beautiful!



**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. Our clothing collection has become a focus as we prepare for our Fashion Show on April 30.

**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.  
[Brick Order Form.pdf](#)

Our next brick order will be August 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.

- **Garden Party & Vintage Fashion Show**
- **The History of the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park**
- **Nike Missile Base history**
- **Devonshire Golf club photos**

## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

### Garden Party & Vintage Fashion Show

We are excited about our upcoming event for April 30<sup>th</sup>. Previously held as our Garden Festival which included a Duchess Tea, this year we will have a fashion show featuring vintage clothing from our museum collection.

We will not be serving our traditional tea, but instead will have a buffet of desserts, tea and beverages for our guests to enjoy. We again thank the San Fernando Valley Rose Society for pruning our Rose Gardens in January for this event.

Attendance will be limited with a \$30 prepaid ticket required for entrance. We have set up PayPal to make your purchase convenient.

To prepare for the event, over 300 items of vintage clothing have been pulled out of our museum storage, reviewed, and cataloged. It has been a challenge to pick just the right items to share this time, but we hope to do this again in the future with another fun Fashion Show theme.

Come join us on April 30<sup>th</sup> for a fun adventure in the Garden as we travel through history with Fashion.

**To purchase your ticket, go to**  
<https://www.chatsworthhistory.com/Events.html>

**Purchase cut off is April 15.**  
**Seating is limited**



**Garden Party & Vintage Fashion Show**  
**Sunday April 30, 2023**  
**12:30 to 3:00 pm**

Pre-Paid Admission/Donation \$30 per person by April 15  
Gates open at 12:30 pm; come enjoy a harpist in the Garden and smell the roses.

At 1pm, a vintage Fashion Show with desserts & tea  
will be held under our spectacular walnut tree.

Prepaid Tickets are available at <https://www.chatsworthhistory.com/Events.html>  
Seating is limited.

The cottage and museum will be used for staging the Fashion Show  
and will not be available for tours.

HOMESTEAD ACRE 10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA 91311  
Located just inside the entrance to Chatsworth Park South.

Parking available at Chatsworth Park South,  
please carpool as space is limited.

For more information contact: [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com)  
818-882-5614

# Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park History

## Volunteers with a Vision

This program was presented on February 21<sup>st</sup> and is posted on our website, [chatsworthhistory.com](http://chatsworthhistory.com), Digital Archives, [Presentations](#). It was inspired by the 25th anniversary of the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park (SSPSHP).

The Park was dedicated in January 1998, and a local dedication ceremony was held in May 1998 at Chatsworth Park South. The presentation focused on the volunteers who created the park, and their continuing efforts to maintain the park, train volunteers, and lead hikes.

The Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park is a California State Park of 670 acres, located in the city of Los Angeles, between the communities of Chatsworth and Simi Valley.

### Historic elements of the park include:

- In January 1972, the Old Santa Susana Stage Road was declared Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #92
- In 1974, 174 acres was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The Park is a steep, rugged landscape, created by materials deposited in deep marine canyons some 70 million years ago.
- Las Pilitas (Spanish for “the little basins.”) The name of the central portion of the Park at the bottom of Devil’s Slide. This name was used by the Fernandinos who were interviewed by J. P. Harrington in the early 1900s.
- 1859 Old Santa Susana Stage Road
- 1892 Chatsworth Park Quarry
- 1903 Railroad tunnel to Simi Valley
- 1939 Stage Road plaque

Kiosks with park brochures and information regarding upcoming hikes are at the four main trailheads:

Andora Trailhead, 9861 Andora Ave  
Larwin Trailhead, 10249 Larwin Ave  
Chatsworth Park South, 22360 Devonshire St  
Lilac Lane Trailhead, 7700 Lilac Ln, Simi Valley



### The first six years, 1969 to 1974 - Jan Hinkston and the founding of the SSMPA and FPSSM.

Janice Hinkston was an elementary school teacher at Chatsworth Park Elementary. She lived on Jensen Drive in West Hills, across from the Chatsworth Reservoir and just north of Dayton Canyon. She tells the History of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association (SSMPA) in the 1973 commemorative book “SANTA SUSANA over the pass... into the past”, pages 6-13.

Jan noticed some oak trees down on her drive to work, and decided to attend a meeting of “Chatsworth Beautiful” in May, 1969. And she joined some committees.

### A few Highlights of “A History of The SSMPA” by Jan Hinkston follow:

September 1969 - Jan meets with the Simi Valley Sierra Club.

March 1970 - Jan begins to study the history, geology, and archaeology of the Simi Hills.

April 1970 – letters sent to legislators

November 1970 - SSMPA becomes a separate organization from Chatsworth Beautiful.

January 1971 - a zoning variance for a mobile home development on the upper stagecoach trail is denied (today’s Lilac Lane Trailhead)

March 1971 - LA County Park and Recs and the LA County Historic Landmarks Committee tour the area.

June 1971 - Jan goes to Sacramento and shows slides to the Calif. Parks and Recreation Director.

January 1972 - Fifty-five acres of the Old Santa Susana Stage Road is declared Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #92

March 1972 - huge crowds hike the Stagecoach Trail in a two-day country fair in Chatsworth Park South, with proceeds going to the Land Trust Fund to save the Old Stagecoach Trail.

By 1973, more than \$10,000 has been raised for the SSMPA Land Trust Fund.

In 1974, 174 acres of the “Old Santa Susana Stage Road” is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### 1986 “Santa Susana Where the Past is Present”

promotional video. The October SSMPA 1986 newsletter announced a new 16-minute video tape. The film was funded by a grant from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

- The video is posted on our YouTube channel [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2B0\\_fgzojY&t=76s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2B0_fgzojY&t=76s)
- It includes an Introduction by Jan Hinkston, and a Burro Flats Painted Cave interpretation by Paul Faulstich.

### The next 23 years, 1975 to 1998 – Land acquisitions culminating in the State Park designation, and volunteer efforts to educate the public about the park.

The first acquisition was announced in 1977, the 265 acre Nichols Property. They were a part of two homestead parcels, husband and wife Charles Mattingly (160 ac) and Florence Mattingly (160 ac). Three Mattingly descendants owned equal shares of the 265 acres: daughters Helen Mattingly McDonald, Elizabeth Mattingly Nichols, and the daughter of deceased Ruth Mattingly, Olive Valdez. This property includes the 1895 Chatsworth Grade Road, labeled in the State Park as “El Camino Nuevo”



First Acquisition

Charles Mattingly was an attorney living in Downtown Los Angeles. Charles and Florence purchased two 160 acre parcels in 1909 and 1912. In the SSPSH Nichols property folder, their daughter, Elizabeth Nichols, in a letter of March 1, 1974, spoke of her childhood in Chatsworth. “We are enjoying perfect weather here in Alamos (Sonora, Mexico). Alamos is surrounded by very beautiful mountains, and reminds me a little of my early experience on the ranch in the Santa Susana Mountains. When we were children our father owned, in addition to the land we now hold, all of the property bought by Mr. Retz, as well as over one hundred acres, on the other side of the road which is now owned by John Brandeis and is the west end of his ranch. Papa sold all of this property to a cowboy actor named Fred Thomson, who had a famous white horse. It has changed hands several times since. I hope the Brandeis ranch is still intact. It is very beautiful property too.”

The second acquisition in 1980 was the 43 acre Spahn Ranch site south of Santa Susana Pass Rd. The map below identifies the two parcels on either side of today’s 10 acre Rocky Peak Fields, a part of Rocky Peak Church. They were a part of two homestead parcels, Dionisio Sanchez (129 ac) and James Williams (160 ac)



Second Acquisition

The third acquisition was announced in 1983, 120 acres, and includes the Devil’s slide, relay station, and cistern. The map below identifies the five parcels at the westerly end of the Park, the Lilac Lane Trailhead to the olive trees below the way station. They were a part of two homestead parcels, Cora Henry (135 ac) and William Bannon (160 ac). The upper 42 acres were owned by Leland Webster, and the lower 78 acres were owned by Douglas Palmer (no relation to Minnie Hill Palmer). The Palmer property was the Bannon Homestead later purchased by Hill in 1926.



Third Acquisition

The fourth major acquisition was announced in 1991, the 55 acre, Larwin Trailhead to the Quarry and Stagecoach Trail (1991-07 SSMPA newsletter) This was the last unpurchased portion of the Old Stagecoach Trail that was on the National Register of Historic Places. The property was a part of two homestead parcels, William Bannon (40 ac) and James Hill (160 ac). The Hill family purchased the Bannon acreage in 1926, and Douglas Palmer owned the 55 acres in 1973. It was purchased by the State Parks Department with 1988 Proposition 70 bond funds.



Fourth Acquisition

The fifth major acquisition was announced in 1991, the 156-acre, Andora Trailhead to the Quarry, Miranda Meadow and Stagecoach Trail. The map at right identifies the six parcels totaling 156 acres. The property was a part of two homestead parcels, Francisco Miranda (133 ac) and William Bannon (160 ac). In 1923 Oakwood Cemetery purchased five 40-acre parcels totaling 200 acres. In 1991 it was referred to as the Ransbottom property. Ransbottom Corp. developed Summit Ridge in Chatsworth in 1987. These parcels were also purchased with bond funds.



Fifth Acquisition

On May 16th, 1998, a local dedication ceremony was held at Chatsworth Park South.

### The 1998 State Park Dedication Ceremony

The video of the dedication ceremony is posted on our YouTube channel as a [Playlist](#) in 4 parts:

- 1998-05-16 SSPSHP Dedication 1 - 2014 Trailer 4 min
- 1998-05-16 SSPSHP Dedication 2 before Dedication, 39 min
- 1998-05-16 SSPSHP Dedication 3 Dedication Ceremony, 1 hr, 1 min
- 1998-05-16 SSPSHP Dedication 4 after Dedication, 15 min

It was digitized and shared in 2014 during the 16th anniversary of the State Park.

Jan Hinkston had retired by 1998 and moved to Oregon to be with her family. In 1998, Al Knight compiled some of Jan's papers in "*The Papers of Jan Hinkston - A Collection*". He also sent many boxes of Jan's SSMPA records to CSUN. Jan passed away in 2010 in Madison Wisconsin. A tribute to Jan and her many achievements are found in the [Nov 2010 SSMPA Newsletter](#). A public memorial service was held on March 25th, 2011 at the Homestead Acre.

### The next 25 years, 1998 to 2023 – The drive for improvements.

After its dedication in 1998, the new Park remained obscure until a drive for improvements was begun by the Chatsworth Women's Club in 2002. Thousands of names were gathered by petition, along with letters of support from local community

organizations. Hundreds of postcards, petitions and letters were sent to elected officials representing the area.

The grass-roots campaign continued for five years and resulted in the development of a General Plan/EIR that was approved by the California Department of Parks and Recreation at a meeting here in Chatsworth, and published in 2008.

[Santa Susana Pass SHP - General Plan Historic Overview](#) - Alexander Bevil - 78 pgs  
[Ethnohistoric Overview](#) - John Johnson - 72 pgs  
[Cultural Resources Inventory - Archaeology](#) - Mealey/Brodie - 36 pgs

In 2008 Santa Susana Pass SHP was one of the 48 California state parks proposed for closure in January 2008 as part of a deficit reduction program. In 2008/2009, Volunteers signed up for the California Archaeological Site Stewardship Program (CASSP) with Barbara Tejada, Angeles District Archaeologist, California State Parks.

In 2011, FPSSM rebooted to serve the need to oversee the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. FPSSM has taken over the responsibility of the SSPSHP-Volunteer Program set up in 2010 by SSMPPA to provide Park Observers, Graffiti Squad and Interpretative Hike Leaders.

FPSSM filed paperwork to convert itself to a State Co-operating Agency - [Cooperating Associations Program](#). There are 89 non-profit Cooperating Associations serving most of the 280 state parks.

Third-grade interpretive hikes began in 2011, and continue to this day.

In 2012, we had a Trails Day in May, with five educational centers, from the Larwin Trailhead.

Smokey the Bear showed up at Trails Day in 2014, with John Luker and Teena Takata.



Third-grade interpretive hikes continue today, coordinated by Dottie Acker and Richard and Karen Dow. Below are some of today's interpretive educational centers.



Community efforts keep the park open. Presently, a corps of Volunteers are working hard in the Park on graffiti removal, weed abatement and as Interpretive Docents and Park Observers.

# The Chatsworth LA88 Nike Missile Base

This program was presented on March 21<sup>st</sup> and is posted on our website, [chatsworthhistory.com](http://chatsworthhistory.com), Digital Archives, [Presentations](#).

Did you know that at the top of Browns Canyon at the end of DeSoto in 1958 there was an Army base with Nike Hercules missiles armed with nuclear warheads?

The presentation was first given in 2011, and included some related videos for history buffs, *The Nike Hercules Story*, and *Duck and Cover*, available on YouTube, search for the title and [chatsworthhistory.com](http://chatsworthhistory.com). In 2019, we added a newly discovered 1961 *Lassie Episode, The Patriot s7e22*, also available at YouTube that was filmed at the Chatsworth Base, where Lassie trains a German Shepard to be a good guard dog. And a biography from Greg Brown, LA88 crewman, 1968-1971.



Our March Presentation featured a newly discovered 1959 Nike Hercules Missile Film made in Chatsworth, *1959 Nike-Hercules – A Reality*, available on our [YouTube](#) channel. It was filmed at the Chatsworth Nike Missile Base, and features scenes with prominent Chatsworth citizens, including Roy Rogers and his two

daughters Debbie and Dodie, and Chatsworth Park Elementary School Principal Mrs. LaVerne Lee (with pupils Ray Vincent and Nancy Ferrell), shown at right. Other citizens in the film were Al Brain, Ben Boydsten and Rev. Charles Hughes (not pictured here).



## A Brief History

The Nike Missile Base LA88, located in Chatsworth on Oat Mountain, was part of the “Ring of Steel” that protected Los Angeles and its aerospace industries from 1956 to 1974, during the Cold War. Nike Missile bases provided defense against a Soviet Union nuclear attack.

The base was initially equipped with anti-aircraft missiles (Nike-Ajax), followed by the Nike-Hercules in 1958.

The August 30, 1958 photo at right caption from the LAPL Valley Times collection reads:

Dignitaries attending ceremony which marked first Nike-Hercules base to go operational in nation are dwarfed by huge weapon which can destroy entire enemy squadron of bombers with atomic warhead.

In foreground at Oat Mountain Base in Chatsworth are, left to right, Maj. Gen W. A. Perry, Donald Douglas Jr., Don Belding and Sheriff Eugene Biscailuz.



As a side note, chronicled in our [July 2021 newsletter](#), Eugene Biscailuz’s father Martin, in the 1880 census, was living in the foothills of Chatsworth as a sheep-raiser with his step-father at the age of 19.



## The 1959 Devonshire Golf Course – source: The Valley Times Collection



Photograph caption dated May 26, 1959 reads:

Celebrities do a little cutting up with big plastic golf ball after yesterday's round for the official opening of Devonshire Golf Course at Roy Roger's Sports Center in Chatsworth.

Pictured from left are Pat Brady, Ashley Lofea, host pro; Peter Graves, Roy Rogers, Pat Knowles and Jackie Cooper.

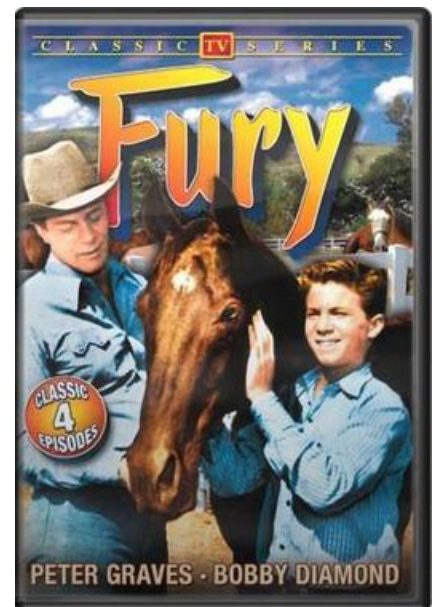
These 'hackers' had no trouble hitting this king size ball and Rogers playing with the conventional ball posted a three-over par 30."

I remember Peter Graves from Mission Impossible and the Airplane comedies. I was wondering why Peter Graves was in Chatsworth for the photo shoot in 1959.

Peter Graves starred in the 1955 to 1960 television series "Fury", as Jim Newton who operates the Broken Wheel Ranch. Much of the outdoor footage was shot on the Iverson Movie Ranch in Chatsworth, where the "Fury Set" was built in 1955, specifically for the series.

This set included a small house, a cabin, corrals, and other features, but it was dominated by a large barn. In addition to being used throughout five seasons of Fury, the set was used in many films, before it burned to the ground in the Newhall/Malibu fire of fall 1970.

Peter Graves older brother James Arness played Marshall Matt Dillon on Gunsmoke from 1955 to 1975, which was filmed in Thousand Oaks.



**About the Valley Times collection** - Published daily from 1946 – 1970 and featuring innovative photo spreads unlike any other paper in the region, the Valley Times produced a pictorial treasure trove of the San Fernando Valley's history during its most dynamic period of growth.

The Los Angeles Public Library Tessa Collection continues to scan and add photos from their Valley Times Collection. <https://tessa.lapl.org/>, search Chatsworth. As an aside, the LAPL recently posted a blog that ties the history our Chatsworth community with photographs. [DIG LA Blog on History in Chatsworth](#)

# 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.

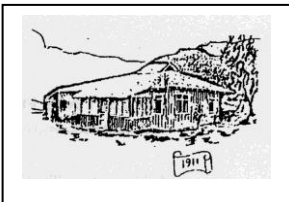
Please use the form to renew by mail or the link below to renew by **PayPal or Credit Card:**  
<https://www.chatsworthhistory.com/membership.html>

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          |   |   |

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