

Smoke Signal

CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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www.chatsworthhistory.com



Co-Presidents: Linda & André van der Valk

September 2023, Issue #3

Editor: Ann Vincent

Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

I am opening this month's newsletter with good news. We have our new roof. It looks great and looks exactly like the old one which is what we wanted. Thank you, Mike's Roofing & Building for a great job.

We are now in the process of looking for a new ride-on lawn mower. We have an idea of what we want, it is just narrowing it down locally and getting it done.

There has been a lot of activity at the acre. Ann and Donna are busy getting ready for Pioneer Day. Ann is getting all the non-profits lined up for the day and along with Donna they are getting all the fun activities ready for the kids. Jelena and I worked on the bear case and the wall display. Our theme is the early businesses of Chatsworth, and our bear is dressed like a soda jerk this time. We also put back together the display cases that had been flooded in the rains. The museum is looking great.

If anyone is interested in pruning rose bushes, we sure could use the help. We are at the acre on Wednesday mornings, stop by say hi and bring your shears.

We will be having our ice cream social on September 19th. It is our way to say thanks to our members who have supported us. We appreciate the members that help us keep the Homestead Acre going.

We hope to see you at the Ice Cream Social and on Pioneer Day.

Linda and Andre

Chatsworth Historical Society Board of Directors 2022-2023

Co-Presidents	Linda & André van der Valk
Treasurer.....	Jim Van Gundy
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Hospitality.....	Jelena Csanyi
Gardens	
Smoke Signal Editor.....	Ann Vincent
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Upcoming Events

General Meeting

Welcome Back Membership Roundup ICE CREAM SOCIAL

September 19, Tuesday 6:00pm



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.

PIONEER DAY

October 1, Sunday

11am -3pm



FAMILY FUN for everyone!

Flyers available online

[chatsworthhistory.com/Events](https://www.chatsworthhistory.com/Events)

General Meeting

October 17, Tuesday 6:30pm

GRAY FAMILY HISTORY

The Nelson and Minerva Gray family were important members of our early Chatsworth History. They arrived in 1893 and lived on an 80-acre ranch north of Lassen to Devonshire, west of Topanga to Farralone.

The program will be available in person and Zoom.

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 always need pruning to keep them at their best. Everything is growing now and the garden is beautiful!



IN THE MUSEUM: Our docents continue to reorganize and catalog our early photograph collections. We have displays set up that we look forward to sharing with you, come check them out.

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. Come join us!

IN THE COTTAGE: An inventory project is ongoing, as we confirm and learn more about the history of the items on display so we can provide more information on our tours.

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 March 1, 2024

For more information, send an email to 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 Flyer**
- **Fruit Cutting at the Gray Ranch**
- **1903 Grammer School Diploma**
- **Walnut Trees at the Acre**
- **New Roof for the Museum**
- **1875 Reed Parlor Organ**

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING OPEN HOUSE

Our Open House events the first Sunday of each month continue to bring new people to the Acre. This month the museum displays were updated to include early Chatsworth Business photos. The weather was perfect. We hosted another 50 visitors...that's a great day!

REPAIRS

The Cottage and Museum both require what I like to call "Maintenance, Maintenance and More Maintenance". Sometimes it just takes a new set of eyes to see additional items to be repaired. We all know that "A stitch in time saves nine" ... so our old cottage has a list of things on our "To Do List" to keep it sound for the future. The Garden as well has its regular maintenance to keep up with including pruning and weeding. If you would like to be on our Maintenance Team...let us know.

PIONEER DAY Notice

There will not be a White Elephant or Plant sale at this year's Pioneer Day. We are focusing on educational activities instead.

We will have a Bake Sale to complement our snack bar; please consider baking items to be donated...

Please email me if you have baked good items you would like to donate. Ann Vincent at chatsworthhistory@gmail.com

31st Annual Pioneer Day

Sunday, Oct. 1, 2023

11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Bring your children & grandchildren

Old-time fun for everyone!

- Panning for Gold
 - Blacksmith
 - Leather Crafts
 - Bee Keeping
 - Rock Chippers
 - Butter Churning
 - Spinning Wheels
 - Design a Quilt
 - Telegraph Station
 - Corn Husk Dolls
 - Snack Bar
 - Bake Sale
- Chores and Games of Yore
and more!

Chatsworth Historical Society



Location: The 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, Children: \$1
Donation: (Free for kids under 5)

Visit Chatsworth Museum Exhibits and Tour the 1911 Homestead Cottage

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.



Take the Pioneer Challenge



Test your skills at Chores of Yore,
panning for gold, beekeeping, blacksmithing, leather work, quilting and more...

Learn Morse code and use a telegraph, texting 1880's style.

Make butter, grind coffee and enjoy our beautiful gardens.

Have fun with sack races and other games. Try your skill at roping.

See spinning wheels in action, and make a cornhusk doll.

Learn how bees pollinated orchards throughout the Valley.

Visit this years "Little House on the Prairie" display outside under the walnut tree.

Visit the 1911 Hill Palmer Homestead Cottage and see our kitchen with a wood burning stove and early conveniences. In the Virginia Watson Museum...enjoy our Photo Collections of Early Businesses in Chatsworth and learn about our early Chatsworth Pioneer families.

Come in costume... Bring your children and grandchildren and Take the Pioneer Challenge!

1904(about) Fruit Cutting Sheds at the Gray Ranch

We “rediscovered” an original photo from the archives, from the Johnson Family. Written in pencil on the front, *Fruit cutting sheds at the Gray place Farralone and Lassen.*

A note with the picture says: *This was a crowd in Chatsworth in its early agricultural days. Woman second from left hand side, wearing hat is Emma Johnson Graves. Scene is a fruit cutting shed near “Tex’s” place. On Gray farm near Lassen St. & Farralone.*

We scanned it at 600dpi and found the images below:



The Gray family moved to Chatsworth in 1893, living on an 80-acre ranch north of Lassen to Devonshire, west of Topanga to Farralone. The photo is taken looking northwest.

First, we noticed that the railroad grade (a white horizontal line) in the upper left of the photo has been completed between tunnels 24 and 25. The tunnels were completed in 1904. Enlargement at right...



Secondly, we recognized the older lady next to the wagon wheel as Nelson Gray’s mother, Sarah Mead Gray. She would have been 83 years old at the time. And she looks like she is in charge. She passed in 1909.



Emma Johnson was 31 years old in 1904. She married Fred Graves in 1896, and by 1904 she had already had three of her five children, Jessie, Cecil and Queenie.

And finally, we noticed that the fruit boxes were labeled NA Gray. Click on the link here for a [600dpi pdf](#) image....



1903 Chatsworth Park Grammar School Diploma – Bertha Lehmann

We uncovered a 120-year-old treasure in our archives, with the following label: *Donated to the Chatsworth Historical Society by Virginia Watson in 1964. Diploma was found at the school, back in a closet by Mrs. Laverne Lee. After Mrs. Lee's death, her successor John Hungerford, gave the diploma to Mrs. Watson.* The diploma is dated June 12, 1903, and measures 16" tall by 20" wide.

Handwritten in the lower left is "Eight Year Course"; in 1903 middle school was also taught at the school. San Fernando High School was not completed until 1905, Canoga Park High School was completed in 1914.

Bertha was 16 years old when she graduated at Chatsworth Park School. A search on Ancestry.com found that Bertha Lehmann was 18 when she married Norman Johnson in Burbank in April 1905.

At right is a 1911 Johnson Family Picture of Norman Johnson, his wife Bertha Helen Lehmann Johnson, and their son Fahy. The January 1920 census has them living at a farm on Devonshire with their 11-year-old son Fahy. Also living with them was the matriarch of the family Ann Johnson, Nelson's mother, who passed away two months later in March at the age of 74.

Ann Johnson had moved off the homestead by 1910 after her son Charles Johnson built her a house on his property at today's Bee Canyon Road.

Bertha is the grandmother of today's CHS Life Member Richard Johnson.



WALNUT TREES at the Homestead Acre

We have three walnut trees on the Homestead Acre, two of them are Hybrid Walnut trees and one is a native California Black Walnut.

Hybrid Walnut trees were developed to grow larger and taller. Native California Black Walnut trees are generally a large shrub or small tree, with 1 to 5 trunks.

Our November 1998 Newsletter mentioned the huge walnut tree east of the cottage. The tree is around 100 years old, based on some old photographs. And there is a second large hybrid tree north of the cottage.

The newsletter also mentioned the old California black walnut tree with the large trunk nearly 3 feet in diameter in the southwest corner of the Acre that had been removed because it died.

Only the dead part of the tree was removed, the roots of the old black walnut survived, and we now have a new tree growing from the dead trunk of that old black walnut. See photo of Ann near the stump.

In 1926 Victor Girard was selling Walnut Acres north of Ventura and west of Shoup to Valley Circle. They were 1 to 5 acre lots with walnut trees planted on them. You had to build a house and live on the acres before the property was turned over to you; he didn't want people to resell lots without homes on them and he wanted to maintain the walnut orchard. He referred to the 968 Acres as the largest walnut grove in the world.

Comparing the leaves of the two trees distinguishes the difference. Leaves from a California Black Walnut tree are narrow and have saw-toothed edges. Leaves from our hybrid trees are wider and larger than the black walnut leaves, and have smooth edges.



Black Walnut leaves



Hybrid Walnut leaves



New Roof for the Museum

In August, our museum roof was repaired and all new shingles installed. Mike's Roofing & Building did a great job and matched the previous color perfectly. On a drive by, you might never notice the roof has been replaced. It was great to know that our Museum was safe when only a couple weeks later we had the Trifecta of Hurricane winds, rain and even an earthquake on the same day. No issues at the Museum or Cottage!

A big Thank You goes to Councilman John Lee and our additional members who donated to cover the expense of the new roof. *Editor's note: The*

Museum was built in 1961 as a Pro Shop on the Devonshire Golf Course ([pg. 41 of Aqua Sierra Roy Rogers Sports Center presentation](#)).

Cottage Corner – 1875 Reed Parlor Organ

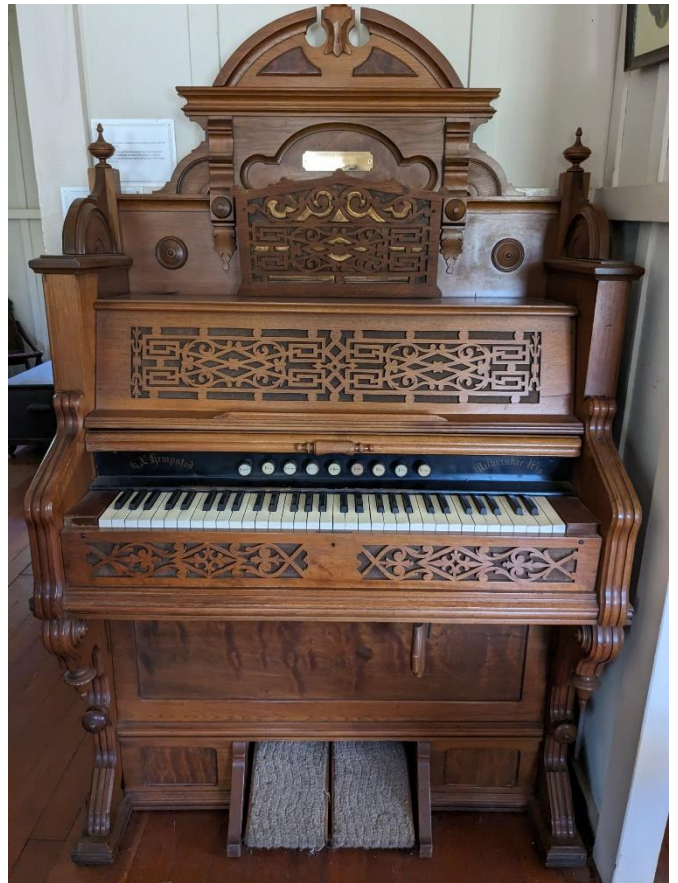
Ann Vincent

From time to time, we like to include information about items in the cottage. Recently I located paperwork that tells us more about the organ we have in the cottage.

The organ was donated in 1975 by Peter and Helen Fritz who had originally purchased it from The Sargent's Restaurant in Burbank. The history of the organ is that it was played at the restaurant weekly for many years as entertainment for the patrons. When the restaurant no longer had use for it, it was purchased by the Fritz family. When the Fritz family decided to move from Chatsworth to Valencia, they donated it to the Homestead Acre for the cottage. Their donation was to honor friends Herbert and Marie Roberts who had lived in Chatsworth early on and were early members of the Chatsworth Pioneer Church. Their daughter Mrs. Robert Gregg explained that her grandfather, Dr. Forest Elliott, helped build the Chatsworth Reservoir.

The details of how we obtained it were important, but I was also interested in the organ itself. This type of organ would have been used in a church setting or at a home. It is referred to as a reed organ where air is pumped by foot into a baffle that provides air to the reeds used to produce the sound. Reed organs were popular and less expensive than pipe organs. A reed organ used in a church setting would have a low back that the organist could see over, while the parlor organ we have at the Acre has a high ornated wood carved back.

This parlor organ was said to be over 100 years old when it was donated to us in 1975. That would make it at least 148 years old today, made in or before 1875. On the front is stamped "HN Hempstead Milwaukee, Wis". From what I can find, Hempstead contracted a manufacturer to produce organs with his name on them. H N Hempstead sold his store in 1890 and moved to Chicago.



Although many of the items in our cottage did not belong to the Hill Palmer family, they do provide the opportunity to visualize that time period.

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 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

CHS YOUTUBE Channel
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 45 PowerPoint presentations posted. Enjoy!

Can we email our newsletter to you?

Please email us to provide your email address.
 Thanks! 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 818-882-5614 www.chatsworthhistory.com

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$20.00 |
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Reminder: If you got this mailed to you, an asterisk on your label means your dues are due!