

CHATSWORTH PAST & PRESENT

By Ann & Ray Vincent

February 2013

The Chatsworth Park Quarry story begins in 1891 when William Bannon acquires the De La Osa adobe at La Cuesta, which was the Stagecoach way station in today's Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park.

William Bannon was an experienced quarryman. Before arriving in California, he had worked for over 10 years in Texas, in charge of the quarries for the Galveston Harbor jetties, and the stone used in the Austin State Capital Building. In 1887 he came to California and was in charge of the Grayrock quarries that produced the rock for the buildings at Stanford University.

In 1892 Bannon homesteaded 160 acres with his wife and four sons. He restored the existing two stone reservoirs, added fencing, and cultivated 50 to 90 acres of "rolling farmland" to raise seasonal crops and grow fruit trees.

During that same year Chatsworth Park Stone Quarry operations began. In 1893 Southern Pacific Railroad completed the Burbank Branch to Chatsworth, ending at Marilla and between Topanga and Farralone.

The picture below shows the train just east of Topanga and north of Marilla. Notice Stoney Point in the background, the Train Station at the right with the Chatsworth Hotel behind it, the Hill/Graves store at the left, and that Topanga (then Santa Susana) dead ended at Marilla. And notice there are no structures north of the Chatsworth Hotel all the way to Stoney Point.

For the next six years, the Chatsworth Quarry provided dimensional stone and distributed it throughout the greater Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino areas. Large blocks were sent from Chatsworth to the Bly Brothers cutting yard in Los Angeles, where workers used mechanical drills, saws, planers and surfacing machines to cut and shape the stone.

In 1898, Southern Pacific laid another mile of track into Chatsworth Park next to the quarry, and Bannon purchased 120 acres next to the stone quarry. In 1899 Bannon was awarded a contract to supply fifty

carloads of stone a day of irregular sandstone riprap for the construction of the San Pedro breakwater. Operations began in early 1901; Bannon sold his quarry to the California Construction Company I June of that year, and moved his family to Texas.

For the next four years, as many as fifty quarrymen drilled, blasted, hauled and deposited between 500 to 700 tons of quarried blocks a day, using as many as five steam-powered derricks, one of which was mounted on a railroad flatcar, to load the rock onto rail cars for shipment out of the quarry.

The sandstone rock formed the core of the San Pedro Breakwater, and was covered by granite to protect it from direct action of the seas.



Loading rock at the quarry, notice the rock tongs at center lifting a rock onto a flatbed car.

The Quarry continued operations under different operators until 1915. The advent of steel and concrete construction methods spelled the end of dimensional stone.

Remnants of quarry operations (i.e., large rocks in piles) are widespread in various locations in today's State Historic Park, and volunteers give interpretive hikes of the park and quarry operations.

Chatsworth Historical Society

