

THE CHATSWORTH CENTENNIAL QUILT

As presented by Ruth Grant and Zena Thorpe on March 20, 2012

This is Our History Book in Fabric and we wanted everything on the quilt to represent Chatsworth. The quilt squares are done in pictorial appliqué and are renditions of pictures that are in our museum collection.

The large square in the center is a picture of the Hill-Palmer cottage which was our major inspiration. It is surrounded by roses because the cottage garden is a showcase of beautiful trees, plants, and especially roses. It is the only remaining homestead cottage in the San Fernando Valley that has a garden. At the top is a stage coach traveling on the Santa Susana Pass through the Santa Susana Mountains. Below the stage coach there is a square of the unique rock formation of Stoney Point which is rich in archeological information and is a city park. The first square to be finished was done by Zena Thorpe and is of the Pioneer Church which was built in 1903 and was moved to Oakwood Cemetery and restored by our Historical Society in 1963 to save it from being demolished.

Below the Acre square is the first school in Chatsworth. I made this square in honor of my mother who taught in the Chatsworth Elementary School in 1922 and 1923.

Another square with the Santa Susana Mountains is a movie scene with the Lone Ranger.

At the bottom of the quilt is our 100th Birthday Cake. It is on a tablecloth knitted for the quilt by Roberta Weinstein. She was a tireless volunteer worker who was famous for the tablecloths that she knitted for raffles to benefit local causes.

The four comers are a botanical profile of the area---walnuts, olives, oranges and acorns.

The bottom border features a ballet dancer, Heather Watts, who was born in Chatsworth and was a Prima Ballerina with the New York City Ballet. During the time we were working on the quilt I was visiting Denmark and was very impressed when I saw her dance in Tivoli Gardens. Her parents, Keith and Sheila Watts were very active members of the Historical Society, and Keith still is. We decided to include this now famous dancer in our design. On the other side of the bottom border there are horses. If the quilt was to be all about Chatsworth, it had to include horses.

The sunbonnets in the top border are in honor of the dedicated docents who wear pioneer costumes and give tours of the cottage, the museum and the gardens when we have our First Sunday of the Month Open House and also when we

schedule special tours. The poppies are also in the border because they are the State Flower of California.

Zena Thorpe completed the first square to be included in the quilt and she also made the final square. In the center of the bottom border is the coat of arms of the Duke of Devonshire. The Chamber of Commerce of our town was given permission to use it by the 10th Duke of Devonshire because our town was named for his home, Chatsworth House, in Derbyshire, England. Zena is from that part of England so she was happy to volunteer to make that square.

The outside border of the quilt is designed to represent a film strip. Film strips are no longer used but they were used for the huge number of old time movies that brought fame to our community.

The back of the quilt is also important. The signatures in the muslin backing were collected at community events during the year that we worked on the quilt for a one dollar donation each to help pay for the fabrics and the quilting supplies that we used. The names in the hearts are the names of the women who worked on the quilt and they were not added until the rest of the quilt was finished.

The Historical Society chose to make a quilt to celebrate Chatsworth's 100th birthday so we should look at some of the quilting.

In addition to all of the traditional quilting there are crosses quilted in the sky above the Pioneer Church, stars quilted in the film strip border and abc's above the Chatsworth Elementary School. The quilt squares that surround the Hill Palmer cottage are the North Wind pattern (an obvious choice for Chatsworth) and the pattern of the squares that cross the four corners is called the Road to California.

The night before the quilt was to be presented at the community birthday party I mentioned to Zena that we should have quilted the familiar wind symbol, a blowing cloud face in the sky, above the Hill Palmer cottage because of the North Wind quilt squares. Nothing more was said but the next day when I arrived at the party guess what was in the sky above the cottage? A special memory I have is of Zena who because of her involvement in this community project was launched on a path to become one of the most famous pictorial appliqué quilters in the world today.

I want to say that it was a joy to work on this quilt with so many talented and helpful ladies and it will always be a time I visit frequently in my memories.

Ruth Grant---March 20th, 2012

