

OWENSMOUTH GAZETTE
Excerpt from 1917 May 4th article
The History of the Chatsworth School
from its Beginning

Thirty-eight years ago, in the year 1879, when little was known of California, and the San Fernando Valley was one carpet of wild flowers, a few pioneers drifted from other parts into the extreme northwest end of the valley. One of these men was Bernardo Don Letchi, his wife and two children. He realized that children should have an education and so he made the suggestion that a school be started. There were only seven pupils, but that was enough to start with, and Chatsworth is honored today to have two of those pupils as residents of the community: Messrs. William and Charles Johnson.

Los Angeles was willing to furnish a teacher, but it was unable to build a school house. It was decided to elect a Board of Trustees, which was done, and the first Board of Trustees for the Chatsworth School was Mrs. Ann Johnson, the mother of Charles and William; Mr. Brown, for whom Brown's Canyon was named, and Mr. Joseph Lowry. The trustees decided to have school at the home of Mrs. Jeremias, in her adobe house. This house stood in the same location that Mr. Fred Graves residence is now.

The following year a little schoolhouse was built on the property of Mrs. Jeremias that held twenty seats. School was held in this building until the year 1890, and some of the residents of Chatsworth remember going to school in this little building, namely, Mr. Lovell Hill and Mrs. Emma Graves.

The last teacher to teach in this schoolhouse was Mr. William Sheldon, at present the secretary of the Board of Education.

In 1890 a new schoolhouse was built, the main room holding fifty seats. This building had anterooms and a library room. In the next ten years the school grew very rapidly and in the year 1900 the Board of Trustees found that they needed more room; so it was decided to build an addition; when this was completed it was said that Chatsworth had one of the best buildings in the county.

Mr. N. A. Gray had an active part in the planning and the building of this schoolhouse, as he was a trustee for nine years during this time. This building served the purpose nicely until the time

that the people realized that they needed some place to meet as a community center. It was decided by the trustees to ask the people to vote on a bond of eight thousand dollars to build a hall in connection with the school. As the day of the election drew near the trustees began to realize that the people did not want this hall, but wanted something more up-to-date, -- a new schoolhouse with a large auditorium. On the day of the election the trustees voted against their own proposition as well as did

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most of the people. The trustees, Mrs. Minnie Gray, Mrs. Emily Johnson and Mr. Fred Tezlaff, met and considered plans for a new building, and it was also decided to vote all the bonds that could be voted for this new building. The result was that the people voted without hardly a dissenting vote to bond themselves for \$34,500 for the cost for this new school.

After all the contracts were let for the construction of the building, Chatsworth was annexed to the Great City of Los Angeles, and the managing of the school affairs went into the hands of the Board of Education. The Board of Education took hold of the matter with an interest, and when the building was completed the people had something to be proud of. The building contains eight classrooms, a large auditorium, a sloyd room, a domestic science room, library room, teachers' rest room, as well as all equipment that goes with an up-to-date school building.

Editor's Note: A "sloyd" room incorporated the late 19th-century Swedish system of learning woodworking and handicraft-based education. It was intended to develop skilled, industrious and morally upstanding citizens. (The concept of a trade school)