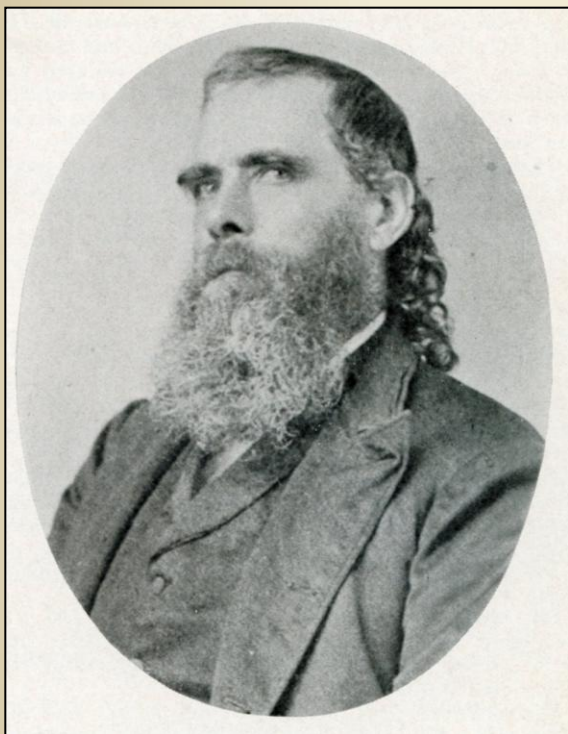
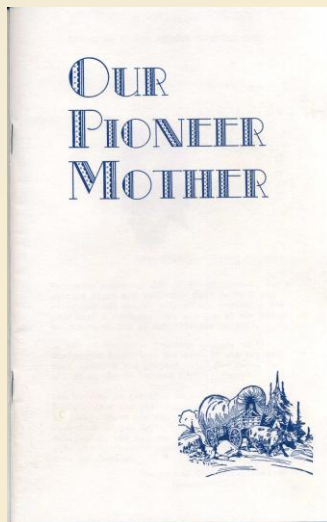


# The Johnson Family in Chatsworth



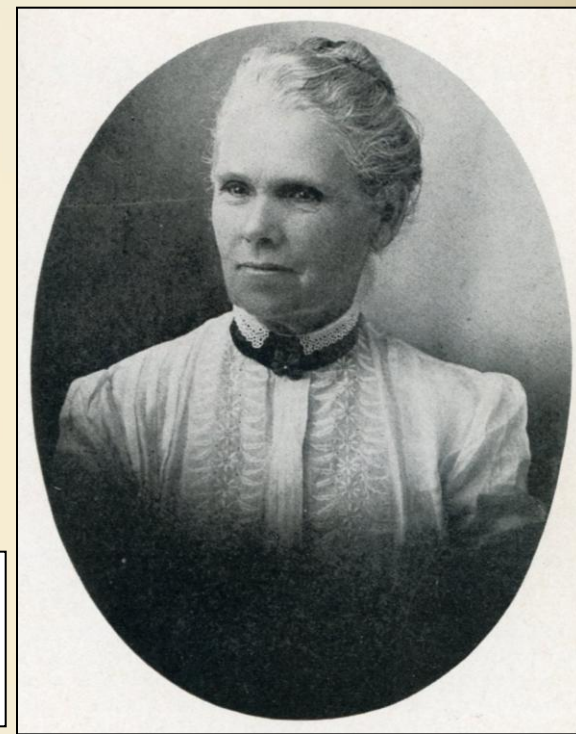
Neils Christian Johnson  
1834-1915



Lenora Johnson self-published the story of Ann Johnson in 1931



Mary Huff published her grandmother Mary's 1927 handwritten story of Ann Johnson in 2001



Ann Jane Willden Johnson  
1845-1920

# Introduction

At age four with her parents, in 1849, Ann Willden crossed the Atlantic, sailed up the Mississippi and traveled by wagon train to the raw land of Utah.

A bride at fourteen, she was a mother of three when she and her husband decided to flee the Mormon Church and farm in California.

Ten years and three children later they homesteaded in the San Fernando Valley, where four more children were born.

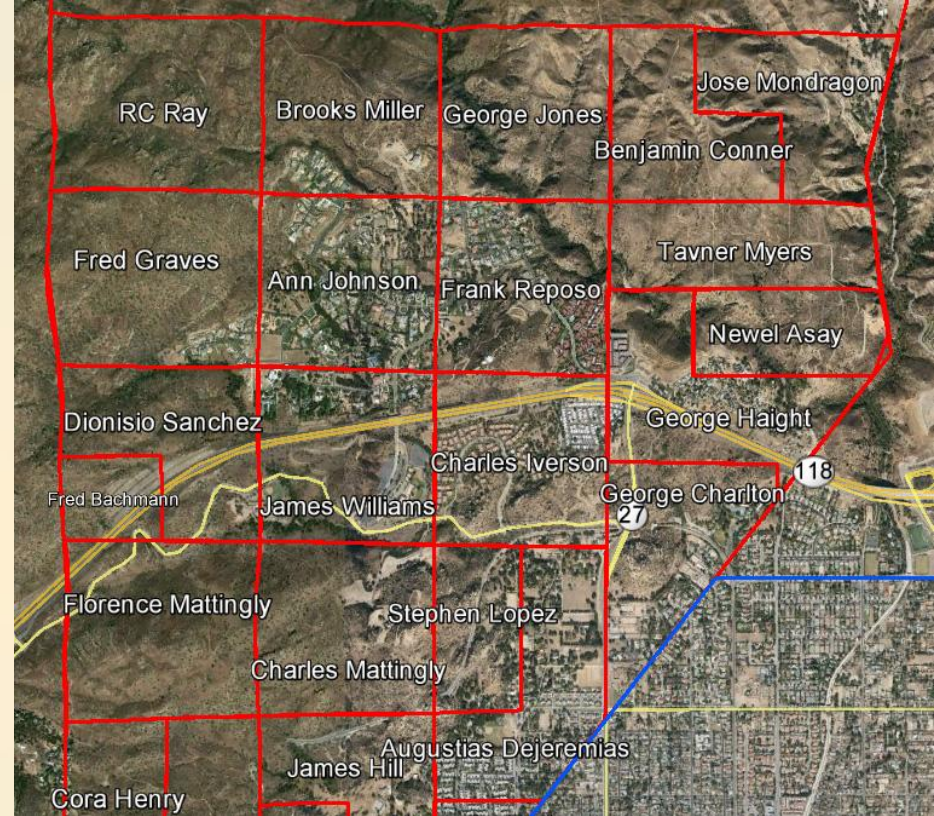
From her daughter's writings and her own letters, her story of hardships, love, fear, courage and joy of life, will take you back to harsher times and gentler spirits.

As written on the front flap of the hardcover  
dust jacket of "Grandma Ann"

## Overview

The 160-acre Johnson homestead was north of today's 118 freeway; today it is a gated community known as Indian Springs.

- This presentation will cover the family from their start in Utah to their contributions in Chatsworth.
- 1849-1866 - England to Utah to California
- 1867-1873 - Lone Pine to Los Angeles to Browns Canyon
- 1874 - Creating their homestead
- 1914 - Ann moves to her new house on today's Bee Canyon road
- 1929 - The family sells the homestead to John Brandeis



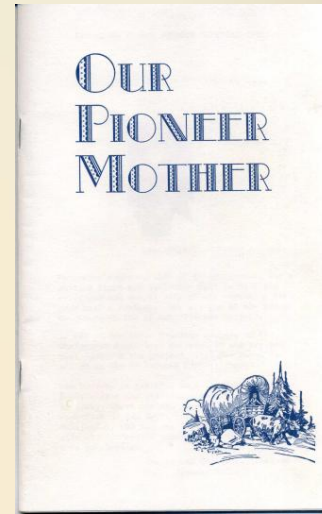
Homesteader parcels overlaid on Google Earth

This presentation will be posted at our website, [chatsworthhistory.com](http://chatsworthhistory.com), Digital Archives, Presentations.



# Introduction

- We are fortunate that Ann's second child, Mary "Nellie" Proctor, created a handwritten manuscript with soft point pencil, originally titled "The Little Pioneer Mother". It is undated except for 1927 late in the work.
- When Ann Johnson died in 1920, Mary began writing some stories of her mother's childhood and trip across the plains, as her mother had told her. She decided a complete story would be a wonderful keepsake for her brothers and sisters.
- Ann's sixth child, Lenora, was a schoolteacher and helped Mary in editing the story.
- In 1931, Lenora published Ann's story as "Our Pioneer Mother", 31 pages. Much of her story was based on Mary "Nellie" Proctor's 1927 handwritten work. It was self published, leather-bound with gold leaf pages as the interior and back covers.
- In 1976, the Chatsworth Historical Society reprinted the 1931 "Our Pioneer Mother", as the Katherine Walton Johnson Memorial Edition. It is available for purchase at the Chatsworth Historical Society.
- In 2001, Mary Huff, the granddaughter of Mary "Nellie" Proctor, published Nellie's 1927 manuscript, titled "Grandma Ann", 232 pages. Mary Huff in the preface discusses how her grandmother's manuscript was passed to various relatives before it was finally published in 2001.
- "Grandma Ann" is published on demand from Amazon.com for \$32, copies are also available for purchase at the Chatsworth Historical Society.



1976 reprint of  
1931  
"Our Pioneer  
Mother"  
at left

2001 "Grandma  
Ann" below



# Introduction of the family members

Neils Johnson (1834-1915) marries Ann Willden (1845-1920) in 1860 in Utah. They had 10 children...

- Hannah (1861-1937) born in Utah. Marries John Ahlstrom in 1881 in Chatsworth
- Mary "Nellie" (1862-1947) born in Utah. Marries Elon Proctor in 1879. Writes her mother's story "The Little Pioneer Mother" in 1927 with pencil and paper. The book is later published as "Grandma Ann" in 2001.
- Maria "Christina" (1864-1955) born in Utah. Married Andrew Springer in 1883, then Francis Bliss in 1897, eight years after Andrew's death in 1889.
- Willard Willden (1865-1950) born in Eldorado, Nevada. Married Lillie Beebe 1893.
- Charles Willden (1867-1945) born in Lone Pine, CA. Married Grace Brow 1890 while homesteading 160 acres in today's Knapp Ranch Park. She died in 1908 in a wash-day fire while heating water outdoors. He married Emalie Resing in 1912.
- Olive Lenora "Nonie" (1869-1947), born in an adobe on 6th and Spring St, Los Angeles. She marries David MacDonald in 1894, he dies in 1895 of tuberculosis 15 months later.
- Walter Levi (1871-1877), born in Brown's Canyon, Chatsworth. Died at 6 yrs, buried at the foot of a giant rock.
- Emma (1873-1962), born in Brown's Canyon, Chatsworth. Married Fred Graves 1896. Fred was a neighboring homesteader and the Constable in Chatsworth in 1903.
- Norman (1884-1931), born in Los Angeles. Marries Bertha Lehmann 1905. Son Fahy wrote the preface to 1931 "Our Pioneer Mother". In 1900, Norman (16) and Eastman (14) are living on the homestead with Ann.
- Oliver "Eastman" (1885-1965), born in Chatsworth at the Homestead House. Marries Zoa Spohn in 1917.

## Introduction of the family members



This may be Long Beach. Picture of Ann Johnson and her daughters, Hannah, Mary, Christy, Lenora and Emma

1893. Back row Grace Brow Johnson, Emma Louise Johnson Graves, Lenora (Nonie) Johnson McDonald, Lily Beebe Johnson wife of Willard Johnson. Middle row Charles W. Johnson holding son Ivan Johnson. Ann Willden Johnson, Willard Wilden Johnson. Front row, Eastman and Norman Johnson



# The Willden family travel from England and settle in Utah

**1849**, Charles and Eleanor Willden leave England on a sailing vessel with their family. Charles is a Mormon Missionary. Ann is 4 years old and the family has seven children.

- They land at the mouth of the Mississippi and travel by boat up river to Council Bluffs, Iowa. After three years Charles had a prosperous 160-acre farm. In late **1852** the Mormons in the Pottawattamie Company of Council Bluffs were called to Utah by Brigham Young. Charles sold the farm, bought a covered wagon, and left with his family and household goods on the three-month trip to Utah. (pg19 GA)
- The wagon train went to Salt Lake City then south to what is now Cedar City, Utah. They began to clear the land, some built a fort. Most families, as did the Willdens, built dug-out homes for the first winter. (pg23 GA). Eleanor's last child Louisa was born in the dugout home in December **1853**; the large Willden family of 8 slept, cooked and ate in the one-room dug-out home.
- Each man was required to help build the fort, it was built of logs and was a half-mile square. It was finished by spring 1854 along with a sawmill and gristmill for making flour. Wool from their sheep was spun to make their clothes. They soon lived within a home made from milled lumber within the fort.
- In **1857** a wagon train of immigrant families from Arkansas bound for California was passing through Cedar City. They camped in Cedar City, inside the fort. Threats were made against the Mormons, and they threatened to kill Brigham Young. Some Mormon men and Paiute Indians surrounded the wagon train at Mountain Meadows, about 35 miles southwest of Cedar City. The result was the [Mountain Meadows Massacre](#), where all men and women and most children on the wagon train were killed. As a result, Ann became increasingly fearful of her brothers, and less trusting of her father. (pg. 26 GA, pg. 10 OPM)
- They lived in the Old Fort for about 3 years, then moved into a new house in New City. (pg26 GA) *(editors note from Richard Johnson's 1979 thesis, pg. 41: people actually began to move out of the Old Fort onto the city lots in New City, abandoning the Old Fort as a community center." So "New City" became/was "Cedar City".)*

Note: references are made for continuity and clarity by page number and book, as follows:  
(pg. xx GA) = Grandma Ann, (pg. xx OPM) = Our Pioneer Mother

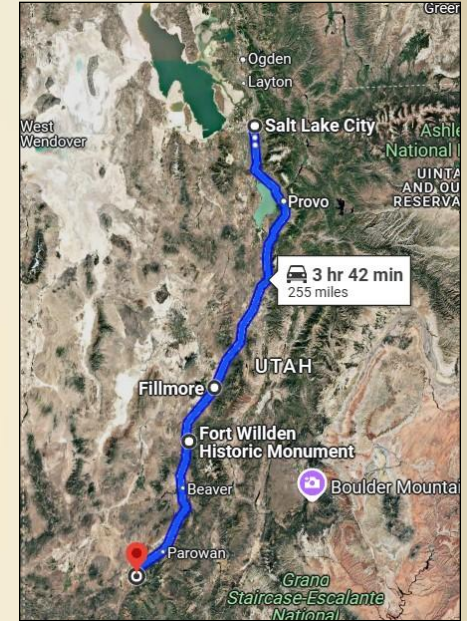


# Neils Johnson marries Ann Willden in 1860

Neils Johnson was born in Copenhagen, Denmark. He decided to leave Denmark and stowed away on a lumber vessel sailing to England. From there he worked his way up the Mississippi River on a boat to Saint Louis, Missouri. From there, with a few non-Mormon men, he joined a hand cart train of Mormons to Salt Lake City, and on to Cedar City. **Their goal was to head to the new Mormon Colony in San Bernardino, California, the great golden state.**

Neils stopped in Cedar City, found a place to live, and found a job with Ann's older brothers. (pg31, GA)

- Ann began thinking of Neils. Ann at 14 years was very young but grown, and other older Mormon men began asking about Ann becoming their second wife.
- On Feb 9, **1860**, Ann and Neils were married in the Mormon all-purpose building in New City, Utah, by her father Charles who used a ceremony that he had used as a Baptist minister.
- Neils used what he had earned to buy a span of horses and a good heavy wagon, and began to haul for hire. **Neils used the southern route to haul goods from Utah to the Mormon settlement at San Bernardino, California.** (pg32, GA)
- Times were tough, so in the fall Neils, Ann and Ann's brother John traveled to Salt Lake looking for work. In Salt Lake winter 1860 they rented a house, but there was no work to do, so they shot rabbits to sell and dug up sagebrush and sold it for wood (pg12, OPM). When spring **1861** came, they started out for Cedar City.
- When they reached Fillmore, a terrible late spring storm came upon them. They were short of provisions, Ann was pregnant and expecting a child in April.

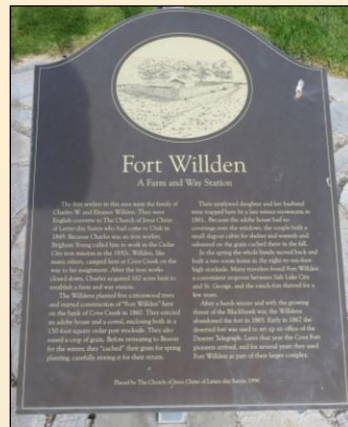


Google Maps -  
Salt Lake to Fillmore  
to Fort Willden  
to Cedar City (red)

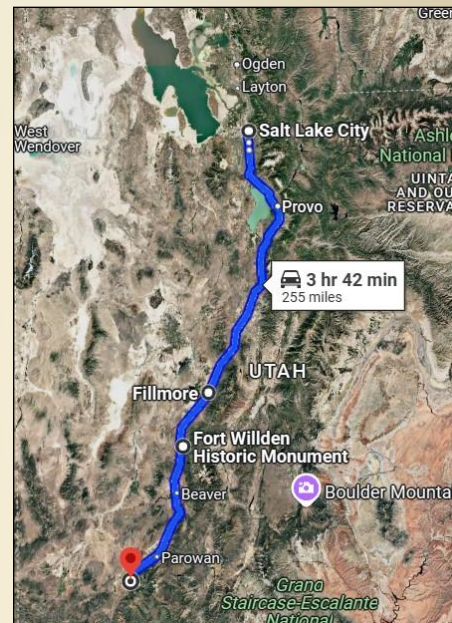


# 

- In the meantime, in 1859 Ann's father Charles Willden started a settlement in Cove Creek, and in 1860 began building what would become [Fort Willden](#) with his son Elliott. (pg. 34 GA)
- Ann's brother Charles met them in Fillmore, and told them of the new settlement at Fort Willden, where their father had buried or "cached" some wheat that he was saving for his spring planting.(pg12, OPM)
- The snow was so deep they walked slowly nine miles to Cove Creek (today named Fort Willden). Ann's brother John had to almost carry Ann as she was exhausted, while Neils was walking with and looking after the team.
- The adobe house that Ann's father had built had no doors or windows, but they put blankets over them and were able to start a fire. The mail carrier came by heading south and carried news to Beaver City of their helpless condition. Ann was awakened at midnight by a number of young men from Beaver City with pack animals loaded with provisions for them.
- After a time, their provisions gave out. They dug a cellar and made a fireplace in it, and ate the cached wheat.
- Their parents and brother Elliott and wife came soon to help. And their first child, **Hannah Jane Johnson, was born in this little cellar home at Cove Fort on April 24th, 1861** (pg13, OPM)



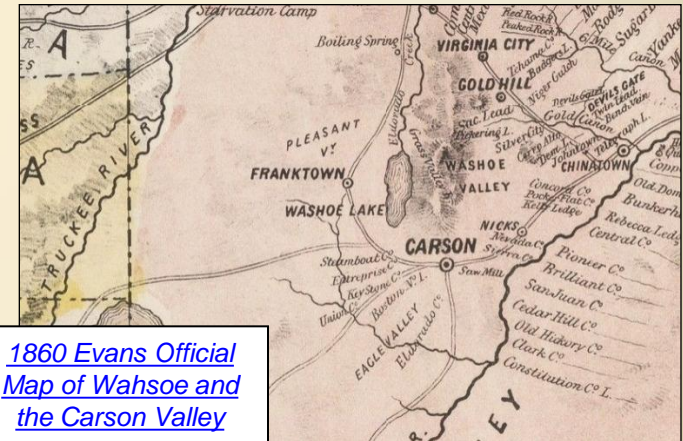
A plaque at Fort Willden tells Ann Johnson's story, full text in the Appendix



Google Maps -  
Salt Lake to Fillmore to Fort Willden to Cedar City (red)

# The Escape

- Later that spring the Willden family moved up to Fort Willden.
- Ann & Neils moved back to the Old Fort at Cedar City. **Mary Eleanor was born on Nov. 30th 1862, and Christina Marie was born Jan 24th, 1864.**
- In 1865 Neils and Ann made plans to leave Utah with their 3 daughters. Neils did not want to join the Mormon Church. Ann's father believed that any Mormon who left Utah would lose his soul, and forbade anyone from taking Ann out of the territory.
- Ann and Neils decided go out of Utah separately. Neils took two horses, and Ann would follow later with a small group of wagons. They took the overland route to Nevada. Ann had given Neils a piece of an old blue calico dress of hers and asked him to hang a piece of cloth on some tree or bush as a guide at his camping places. (pg46 GA, pg. 17 OPM)
- Neils made it to the fort in Nevada, and after many days Ann made it too. Ann's father Charles tried to follow them, but a late cold driving rain washed out the roads and filled the canyons with snow.
- They then moved to Dayton, Nevada, then 10 miles west to Eldorado.
- **Willard Willden Johnson was born November 13, 1865 in Eldorado, Nevada.** They lived in a clay floored cabin, Neils worked in a lumber company mill and Ann did the cooking for the man's family (pg50 GA) (ed note: The city of El Dorado no longer exists, but Richard Johnson's 1979 thesis identifies an 1860 map that places the El Dorado Mining company just south of Carson City, Nev. - Eldorado creek and Eldorado Co on map at right)



# Neils and Ann go to California

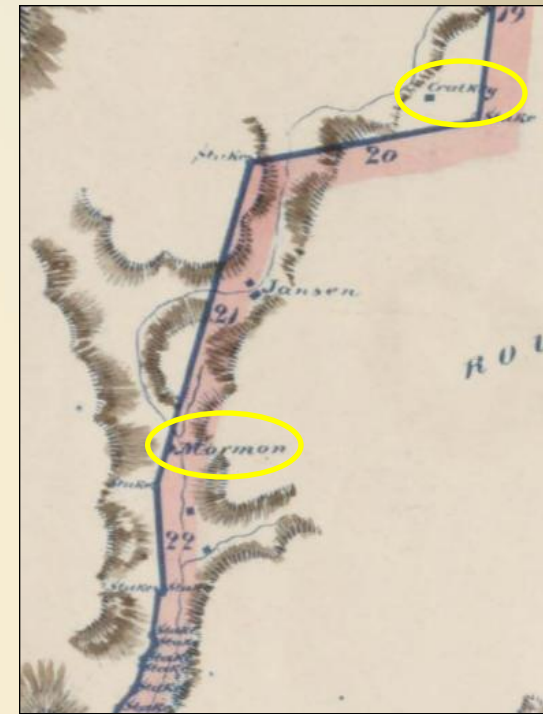
- In the spring of 1886 Neils made a trip over to Owens Valley. There was land to be had and markets for produce and settlers were coming. They were soon on their way. They left with a years worth of provisions and enough seed wheat for next years planting. They moved to **Owens River**, and bargained for a ranch.
- They bought some cows and began to make butter. The first year they sold four hundred dollars worth. They would pack it into barrels and Neils hauled it to the nearby mines and Independence. (pg63 GA).
- Neils hired the Indians who lived along the foothills of the High Sierra, men to help on the farm, and women to help Ann with washing and cleaning. He paid them with flour, bacon, coffee and beef.
- On **May 24, 1867, Charles Willden was born in Lone Pine** (their 5th child)
- In the fall of 1867, over fear there would be problems with water rights, they left, on their way to **Los Angeles**. They briefly stopped at Elizabeth Lake, then down San Francisquito Canyon, arriving in San Fernando. Spending the night, they traveled through the San Fernando Valley, down the Cahuenga Pass, and struggled with the team through the mud flats of Hollywood. (pg76 GA)
- They ended up setting up the large one roomed tent at the corner of Fifth and Pearl (now Figueroa). Neils was busy hauling wood from the Arroyo Seco. They then rented a small house on Fifth and Main. Even working every day and taking every hauling job he could find, the town rents were too high.





# Neils and Ann go to California

- They decided to buy groceries and take them up to Owens River to sell. When Neils got to Soledad Canyon in Santa Clarita, he set up a grocery store. They did well with the business, but it was no place to make a home for growing children. So Neils carried the goods to Owens River and sold them there.
- Ann was expecting a child in a few weeks, so she rented an adobe house of two rooms at the corner of 6th and Spring, and hired a nurse. **Olive Lenora Johnson was born December 23rd, 1868 in Los Angeles.** (Their 6<sup>th</sup> child)
- They returned to Soledad Canyon for a year raising cattle, then bought a quit claim deed in Brown's Canyon. They built a house entirely of logs, and called it their "Log House".(pg. 116 GA, pg. 26 OPM)
- Colonel Mormon lived in a rock house and had cleared the bears out of the nearby hills and mountains (pg. 122 GA) This was why Brown's Canyon was called Mormon's Canyon first. [Early Pioneers - Johnson & Mormon & Brown](#)
- **Walter Levi Johnson was born in the log house on October 27, 1871.** (pg26 OPM)
- The Johnson's neighbors were the Cratkeys. They sold their property to Mr. Brown. Neils realized that the log house was on Mr. Brown's property, so he sold the house to Mr. Brown, and built a new 4-room house down canyon built of cottonwood shakes.(pg. 130 GA)
- **Emma Louise Johnson was born in the shake house on April 16, 1873.** (their 8<sup>th</sup> child)



[1871 Plat of the Ex Mission de San Fernando](#), identifying Mormon and Cratkey on the map (circled in yellow)

Note: Mormon Canyon is north of Desoto up Brown's Canyon Rd.

# Neils & Ann move to their 160-acre homestead in Chatsworth

- They needed level land; a deep canyon was not a good place for a home.
- **1874** - In early summer they rode west to a place with level land, and a clear spot where there was a winter lake. They found a spring. They built a road to the new place, and within two weeks everything was moved; family, cows, pigs, chickens and dogs. The spring was almost a quarter of a mile away. (pg27 OPM)
- Neils hired two men to dig a well. They stopped at 30 ft. While Neils was away for the week hauling wool with Christy, Ann and the children cleared the land. Ann also lowered the children down into the well to continue digging. They hit water at 45 feet. (pg. 152 GA)
- Neils begins hauling up wood for a new house. They finished the house with real glass on the windows before winter came.
- They planted wheat on the land they had cleared. They harvested wheat, threshed it by having horses walk over it. They then gathered the wheat up into a bucket, tossed it into the air to separate the wheat from the chaff. They had 13 sacks of grain; Neils took it to the flour mill in town, and came back with 9 sacks of flour, equal to 900 lbs. (pg. 159 GA)



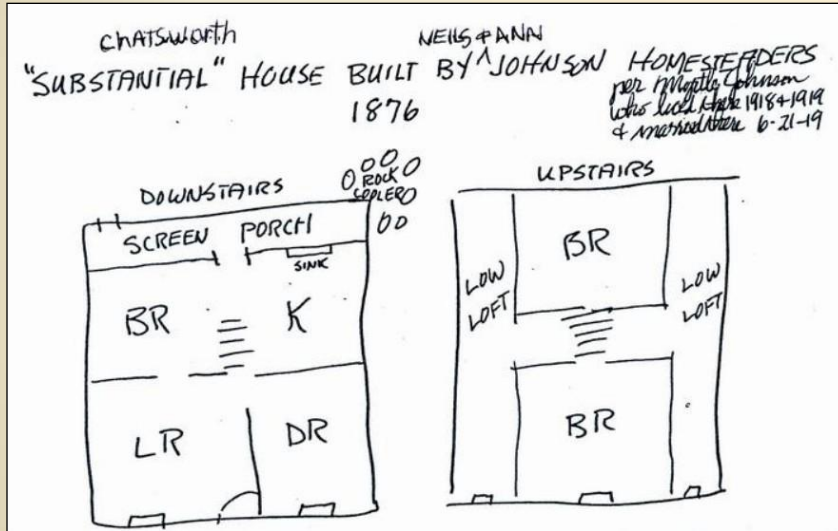
1910 Johnson boys Kelly & Leslie in wagon



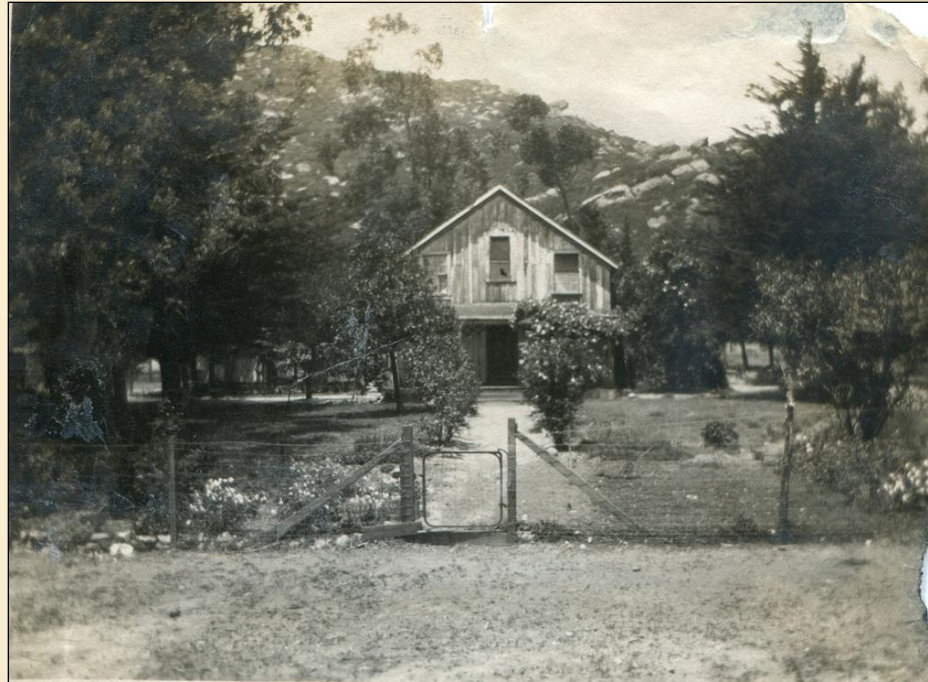
1915 Johnson relatives ready for a hay ride

# They find a new spring and build a two-story house

- They find a new spring on the homestead, and a new place to build a house. (pg181 GA).
- In **1876** they built a substantial house of eight rooms. It was situated at the foot of the great rocky hills, where an ever-living spring of water bubbled forth. (pg. 28 OPM)



Above from Ann's family scrapbook  
Notice the rock cooler in front of house





# Johnson Homestead 1929

- At right is the earliest aerial of the Johnson homestead, the year it was sold to John Brandeis.
- Notice that it is completely fenced.
- Notice the diagonal tree lined driveway/road to their house, which is at the foot of the mountains at today's 22637 La Quilla Drive (\$10 mil, 16 acres per Zillow)

Yellow - corners of the 160-acre homestead

Red - Homestead house, at end of tree lined road

Black - 20-acre Fern Ann Falls, reserved for Johnson descendants

1929 ucsb aerial Johnson Homestead



## Views of the Johnson Homestead



*A tree lined drive to the homestead house*



*A view of what they called Mount Avenue looking down from hills across orchards to cleared land.*

Views of the Johnson Homestead  
Pg 19 of the Starling "Bruz" Bryant book  
Note: The trees lining the driveway were olive trees



## Views of the Johnson Homestead



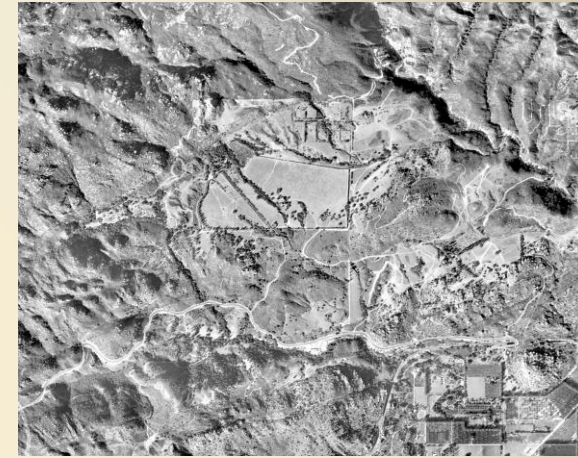
2025 - Some of the olive trees lining the Johnson driveway remain at 22637 LaQuilla Drive



## View of the Johnson Homestead, looking east



# 1952 Brandeis Ranch, the old Johnson Homestead



Above overview,  
And at left enlarged,

a 1952 aerial of Brandeis Ranch,  
the old 160-acre Johnson Homestead

The 10 2-acre parcels of Fern Ann Falls  
can be seen in the upper right



# Fern Ann Falls

- In 1929, 140 acres of the homestead is sold to John Brandeis, with 20 acres retained as Fern Ann Falls, 10 2-acre parcels reserved for the Johnson descendants.
- Note the diagonal bridge over the creek on Fern Ann Falls Rd that splits Nellie's parcel in two. The creek is light blue on the map.
- Richard Johnson's 1979 thesis, pg. 99, documents that Harold Johnson lives on five acres. That may have been the northwest corner that is currently Ranch at the Falls. (Hanna + Christine + lower half of Nellie on the west side of the creek).
- Today, none of the parcels are owned by Johnson descendants

Map from LA County Assessor portal

Descendant parcel ownership is identified in Ann's Family notebook





## The large round pool next to the 2-story house

- The house also had a large round pool (notes from Ann's family scrapbook and other sources)



## Photos of the Homestead House



Ann Johnson on the front  
porch  
(Neils passes in 1915, Ann  
in 1920)

1928 the children of Neils  
and Ann Johnson at the  
Homestead House  
4th of July

Will, Eastman, Norman,  
Charlie, Christie Bliss,  
Hannah Ahlstrom, Emma  
Graves, Lenore  
MacDonald, Nellie Proctor





# The Johnson Family in Chatsworth

- Their nearest neighbor was the Jeremiah family, who lived at the foot of the hills. There was no school within 10 miles of them, so in the evening Ann taught the children their "Primer" and helped them with writing and spelling.
- As the girls grew older, they went to live with families in Los Angeles so they could go to school, and one by one, each was happily married.
- At their ranch home, Ann held Sunday School for her children and study for children of other neighbors. Church was held when a traveling Baptist minister visited. Besides Ann's ranch, the church was sometimes held beneath the Oaks near today's Chatsworth Reservoir. In 1880, she founded Union Sunday School which became the Chatsworth United Methodist Church in 1888. [History of the Chatsworth Methodist Church](#)
- In 1880 the [Santa Susana School](#) was established in Chatsworth, and Ann was the clerk of the board of trustees the first few years. Church services/Sunday School were also held at the school.
- Ten years after the birth of Emma, **Norman Carvin Johnson was born, in 1884**, at Hanna's house in Los Angeles, followed by **Oliver Eastman Johnson in 1885** at the Homestead House.



1905 Santa Susana School with addition

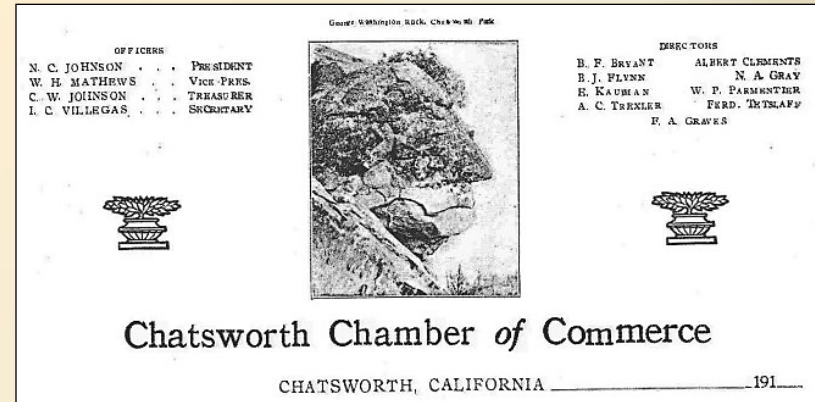


1965 picture of 1903 Pioneer Church on Topanga



# The Johnson Family in Chatsworth

- The Johnson farm flourished in the 1890's. Ann's butter came more in demand, and she improved her dairy stock with Jersey heifer calves. Ann's delivery service, which included butter and produce, became a part of the social life of the community. (pg. 220 GA)
- In the 1900 census Ann is living at the Homestead with Norman 16 and Eastman 14. She is 56 years old. Neils lived with Christie in Monrovia.
- In 1905, Norman marries Bertha. Up until 1909 or 1910, Ann and Eastman run the farm alone, then Reuben runs the ranch when Eastman gets a good job with the phone company (pg. 213, GA)
- In 1914 Ann moves into her new house on Santa Susana Pass. The Homestead house was leased out to Charles Pogue in 1918. Charles was a farmer and the father of Glen Pogue, who lived at 10853 Santa Susana. Glen married Dorothy Johnson, daughter of Charles. Harold Johnson, Dorothy's brother, married Myrtle Pogue, Glen's sister.
- In 1914 the Chatsworth Chamber of Commerce is founded. Norman is President, Charles is Treasurer, Fred Graves is a Director.
- Neils dies in 1915; Ann dies in 1920. Neils and Ann are buried in Rosedale Cemetery, Los Angeles.
- In 1929, 140 acres of the homestead is sold to John Brandeis, with 20 acres retained as Fern Ann Falls, 10 2-acre parcels reserved for the Johnson descendants.



# Ann's house on Santa Susana Pass Road

- 1914 Ann moves into her new house on Santa Susana Pass.
- 1928 Chatsworth Directory
  - 10901 Santa Susana - "Kelly" & Katharine Johnson
  - 10811 Santa Susana - Charles Johnson
- Note: The Chatsworth Historical Society was formed in 1963 at Katharine Johnson's kitchen table.

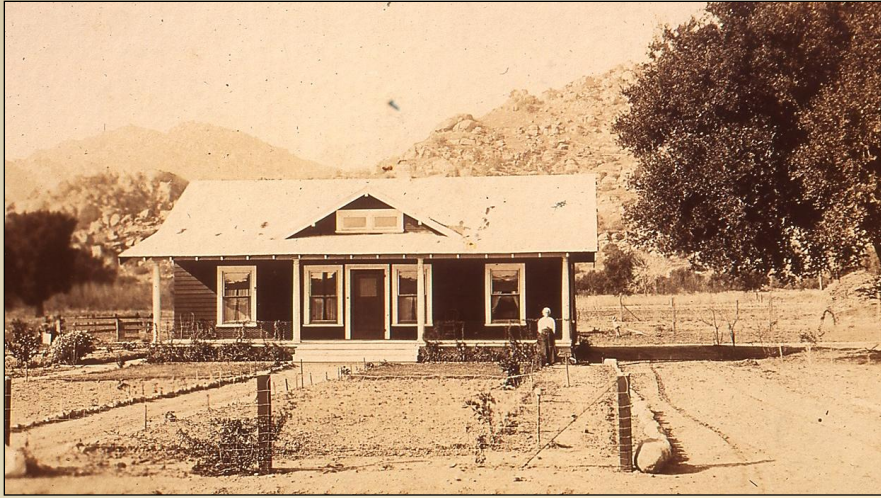
Red = Kelly / Katharine Johnson house  
Blue = Leslie Johnson house  
Orange = Charles (CW) Johnson house  
Orange Line = Charles's tree lined driveway  
Green = Ann Johnson House  
Yellow = Glenn Pogue House

1928 UCSB aerial





# Ann's house on Santa Susana Pass Road



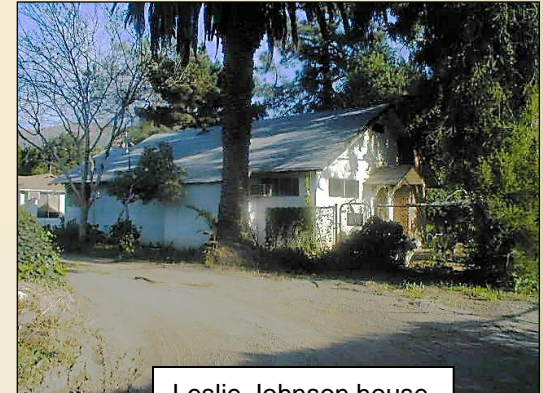
Ann Johnson House



Kelly / Katharine Johnson house  
10901 Santa Susana



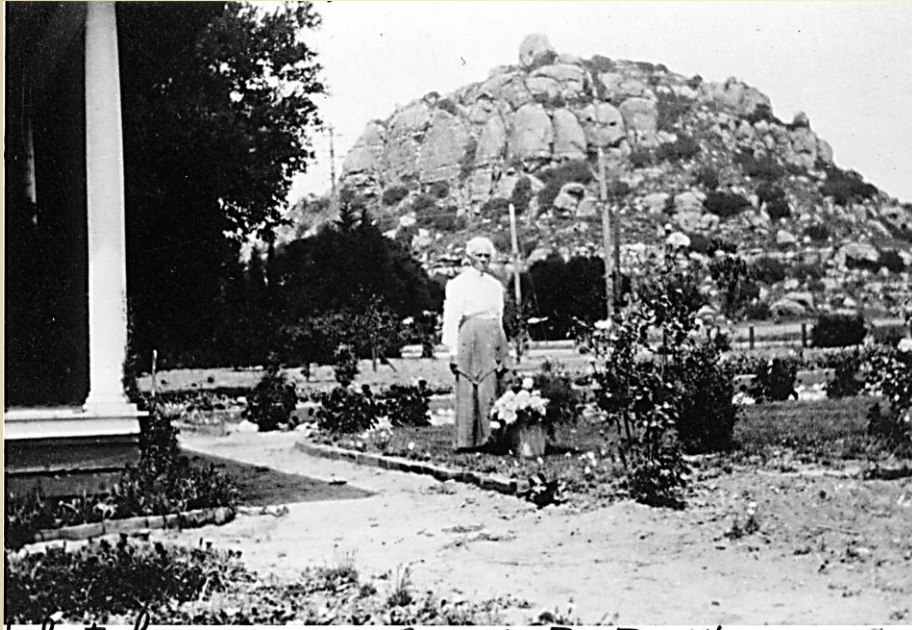
Charles Johnson House  
10811 Santa Susana



Leslie Johnson house



## Ann's house on Santa Susana Pass Road



Ann Johnson House  
Stoney Point in background



Ann Johnson Tea Party

## Hannah marries John Ahlstrom

- Their first child and daughter Hannah (age 19) marries John Frederick "Fred" Ahlstrom (32) in 1881. Fred was born in Stockholm, Sweden, was a carpenter, and immigrated to the US in 1873. He was ranching in Chatsworth when he met Hannah. (*See Appendix - 1907 John Ahlstrom History*)
- After their marriage they went to Los Angeles where he engaged in carpentry work and worked on the street cars. In 1894 he had 11 acres devoted to raising berries.
- They had nine children.
- Their son Reuben Ahlstrom owned property on Lassen St. west of Topanga that included the Graves Hill Store area.
- Around 1910 Reuben was working full time on the Homestead ranch/farm, when Eastman got a good job with the telephone company (pg. 213 GA)
- In 1913 Fred Ahlstrom was doing most of the work on Ann's new house next to Charles on Santa Susana/Topanga. (pg. 214 GA)
- In 2004, Reuben's son Ed Ahlstrom visit the Acre ([Smoke Signal Oct 2004](#)). Virginia and Ann [video-interviewed Ed in May 2006](#).
- 2024 Hannah Ahlstrom's wedding dress is on display in the Hill Palmer Cottage, featured in the 2024 Wedding Fashion Show.



Hannah Johnson

## Mary Eleanor (Nellie) marries Elon Proctor

- Their 2nd child and 2nd daughter Nellie (age 16) marries Elon Proctor (24) in 1879.
- They had 3 children.
- Nellie and Elon Proctor acquired a well drilling business in Southern California, had two boys and a girl, and settled in the City of San Fernando.
- Their granddaughter Mary Proctor Phillips Huff wrote the book Grandma Ann, published in 2011.
- In May 2006 a pioneer reception was held at the Chatsworth Museum featuring Mary Huff, Ed Ahlstrom, Bill Pogue and others. [Smoke Signal May 2006](#).
- Mary Huff's daughter Mollie Phillips Garitee donated Johnson family memorabilia to the Historical in 2024, article published in the [Nov 2024 Smoke Signal](#)



Mary Eleanor "Nellie"



# Christy Johnson marries Douglas Springer, and then Frank Bliss

- Their 3rd child and 3rd daughter Christy (age 19) marries Douglas Springer (23) in 1883. Douglas dies in 1889, then Christy marries Frank Bliss in 1897.
- Christy and Douglas Springer lived in San Francisco a while and after he died, she came back to LA, married Frank Bliss, and had two more children.
- She had 3 children, Florence Springer, Frances Roger and Howard Bliss
- Frank and Christy had a large farm in Monrovia, and specialized in avocados. Sometime, when the two youngest children were still small, Neils left home, and went to live with Christy in Monrovia, where he died in 1915. Regarding Neils leaving home, Ann said "there was no more work for him to do as a teamster, and he was always closer to Christy than to any of the rest of us." (pg. 208, GA)



Frank Bliss, Christina "Christy" Johnson  
Children Florence Springer and Howard Bliss

## Cousins including Frances Bliss at Long Beach, about 1908



Picture of Ann Johnson and her daughters, Hannah, Mary, Christy, Lenora and Emma

This may be Long Beach California, about 1908

First Cousins have a fun day at the beach

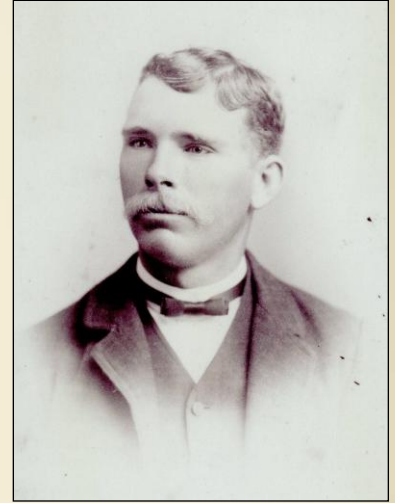
front It-rt June Proctor, Anna "Queenie" Graves, Frances Bliss.

back It-rt Eleanor Ahlstrom, Marguerite Johnson, Ella May Johnson



## Willard Willden marries Lillie Beebe

- Their 4th child and 1st son Willard (age 27) marries Lillie Beebe (16) in 1893.
- They had 6 children - Ida, Clarence, Marcilla, Marrel, Hazel and Samuel.
- Willard worked as a lookout for the County Fire Department on one of the mountain tops that ring the valley. In his later years he had a service station on the corner of San Fernando Road and Pierce Street in Pacoima (pg. 207 GA).
- In the 1892 Directory he is listed as a horticulturist.
- His 1950 death certificate lists his occupation as a carpenter of houses.
- In 1911, Lovell Hill and Willard Johnson built the cottage at the Minnie Hill Palmer Homestead Acre, that still exists today. (pg1, [1986 Growing Up On The Acre](#))
- He spent a lot of time with his nephew, Elmo Proctor prospecting and roaming around the desert. After Lillie died he married Stella Proctor Richards the widowed sister-in-law of his sister Mary. (pg. 207 GA)
- At our September 2024 Ice Cream Social, we had a visit from Barrett Purko. Willard is her 3rd great-grandparent, from the Ida Honeycutt line.

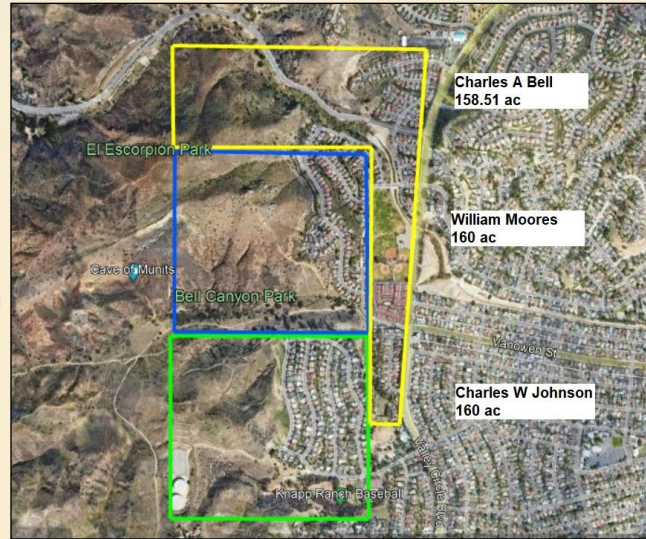


Willard 24 years old

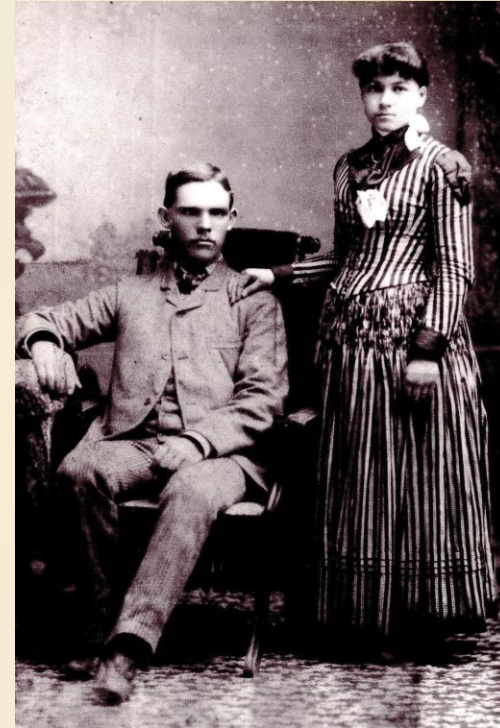


# Charles Willden marries Grace Brow and then Emily Resing

- Their 5th child and 2nd son Charles (age 23) marries Grace (14) in 1890.
- They had eight children, Oliver, Iven, Ernest, Harold, Ray "Kelly", Leslie, Ella, Dorothy.
- In 1889, before Charles married, at the age of 22, he homesteaded 160 acres just south of Bell Canyon. Knapp Ranch Baseball is on his homestead parcel.
- They lived there for 15 years.
- In 1899, he purchased an 8-acre ranch north of Chatsworth School. Around 1904, he moved to the Chatsworth ranch. (1934 Keffer - History of San Fernando Valley, in the appendix).



160-acre  
Charles W Johnson  
homestead in Bell Canyon



Charles and Grace

# Charles Willden marries Grace Brow and then Emily Resing



- In 1907 Charles incorporated the California Honey Company, later selling it to his sons. (1934 - Keffer, appendix) [The History of Bee Canyon](#)
- They produced as much as eighty tons in one year.

1920's photo at right, of Chatsworth looking east from Garden of the Gods (enlargement above)  
C=Charles' House, A = Ann's House, B = Barn  
Bees = Bee Hive Boxes



# Charles Johnson Family - Santa Susana Pass Road

- In **1899**, he purchased an 8-acre ranch north of Chatsworth School. Around **1904**, he moved to the Chatsworth ranch. (1934 Keffer - History of San Fernando Valley, in the appendix).
- In **1908**, when the youngest was about six months old, Grace died in a wash-day fire.

1909 Charles W Johnson Family  
Santa Susana Pass Road  
Dorothy Ecroyd Liss Ancestry page

Left to Right Ann Willden Johnson, E.J. Emerick J Barzen friend, Oliver Eastman Johnson, brother, Miss Mora, housekeeper, Harold Johnson, Ray LaValle Johnson, in front is Leslie Johnson, Ella Johnson, Dorothy Johnson, Charles W (CW) Johnson father, Ernest Johnson and Hannah Jane Johnson Ahlstrom, (married to John Frederick Johnson)





# Olive Lenora (Nonie) marries David S. MacDonald

- Their 6th child and 4th daughter Lenora (age 24) marries David (27) in 1894. David unfortunately had tuberculosis at the time, and died 15 months later in Dec 1895.
- They had no children.
- Lenora got her teaching degree in 1891, and started teaching at Chatsworth Park Elementary School for 3 years.
- Later she became engaged to Fredrick G Charlton, a previous Chatsworth neighbor and an aspiring artist who became an illustrator for the San Francisco Chronicle. He survived the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake, but was killed 4 months later by a streetcar in Los Angeles where he managed his art business. [November 2024 Smoke Signal](#)
- Around 1910 or before, Lenora, who had no family but was living frugally as a teacher, purchased some land on both sides of Topanga. Ann chose a site for a new house on the west side of Topanga, where she could see Stoney Point from her front yard. (pg. 213 GA) (editors note: Her brother Charles bought an 8-acre ranch adjacent to Lenora's property in 1899)
- In 1912 they had the foundation to Ann's new house laid. Nonie would supply the bulk of the monies for materials, and sons would do the work. In Jan 1913, Ann, almost 60 years of age, was nailing on the shingles to the new house on a cold, windy day. She moved into the new house with Eastman in 1914. Many in the family lived close by. (pg. 216, GA)
- Lenora taught Elementary School in Chatsworth, Temecula, and Lordsburg (pg. 207 GA)
- In 1931 Lenora published "Our Pioneer Mother".



Olive Lenora (Nonie)



## Walter Levi Johnson

- Their 7th child and 3rd son Walter was born in the log house in Brown's Canyon.
- Walter died of an unknown illness at the Homestead house at the age of 5.

"Back in the year 1877 our little blue-eyed, sunny-haired, laughing son, Walter, passed away to his heavenly home. We buried him there in the hills at the foot of a giant rock, which stands as an everlasting monument"

(pg. 29, OPM)

# Emma Louise Johnson marries Fred Graves

- Their 8th child and 5th daughter Emma (age 23) married Fred Graves (21) in 1896.
- They had 6 children, Jess, Theodore, Cecil, Anna (Queenie), Curtis, and Warren.
- Fred and Emma homesteaded the 160 acres west and adjacent acres to the Johnson Homestead, 22 years after the Johnsons arrived. [Chatsworth Hills Homesteaders Part 1](#). His acreage includes Hialeah Springs, and is a part of today's Indian Springs development north of the 118 freeway.
- 1899 Theodore drowns in a reservoir/fish pond at the age of 1 at the homestead. (pg. 54, 2014 Starling "Bruz" Bryant Early Chatsworth)
- Fred Graves becomes Constable of Chatsworth from 1903-1910, and also goes into partnership with Lovell Hill, another homesteading family, to run the Graves & Hill General Merchandise ([Sept 2015 Smoke Signal](#)).
- 1904 Emma is pictured at the fruit cutting sheds at the Gray Ranch ([Sept 2023 Smoke Signal](#))



[1912 Chatsworth Postcards](#) - Graves & Hill Gen'l Merchandise & Post Office



## Emma Louise Johnson marries Fred Graves

- 1908-1913 Fred purchases land west of Andora and north of Chatsworth Street. His father Eli and brother Harry soon purchase additional adjacent land north of Chatsworth street.
- 1909 - Jess and Cecil come down with infantile paralysis, Jess recovers, Cecil is crippled for life (pg10, [1978 Queenie Billings interview](#)). Later Cecil invented a block and tackle whereby Emma could lower him into his Model-T Ford (pg. 211-213, GA)
- 1932 Fred Graves sells most land holdings, and moves his house from 10637 Andora to the present location 22200 Chatsworth Street (known today as the Big Oak Theatre).
- 1978 - Jess Graves, and Anna "Queenie" Graves Billings, are interviewed and give oral histories of Chatsworth memories.
- 2014 - Starling (Bruz) Bryant, "Queenie's" son, publishes a 108-page book, of Early Chatsworth Johnson family photos and memories.
- 2009 - Ken Ditto (his grandfather Harry Graves was Fred Grave's brother), shares Graves Chatsworth History.



1956 Emma Graves and Charles Janess

## Emma Graves Home on Andora Street about 1909



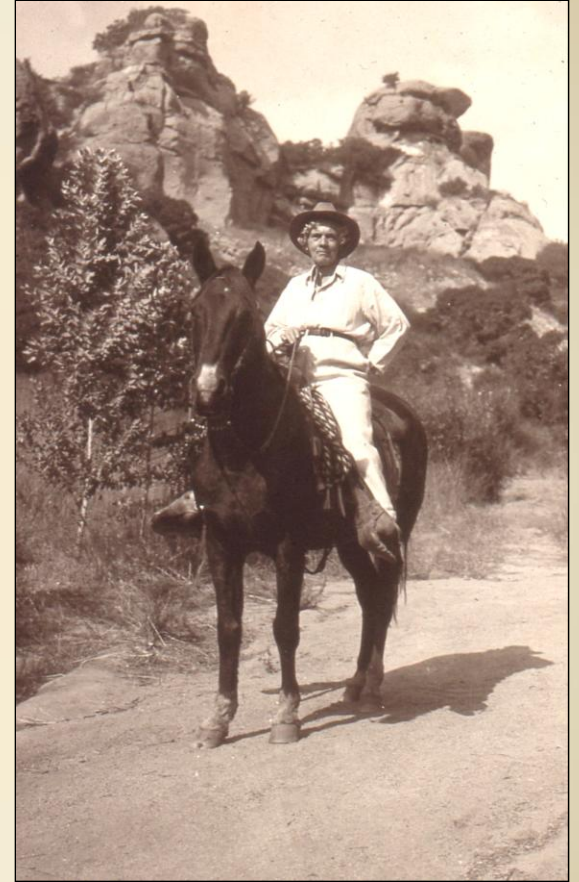
Emma, Warren, Curtis, Cecil and Jess



## Fred Graves Family photos



Fred Graves Family April 1946, 50th Wedding Anniversary  
First row - Cecil, Emma, Fred  
Second Row - Jess, Anna "Queenie", Warren, Curtis



Emma Graves



## Norman Johnson marries Bertha Lehmann

- Their 9th child and 4th son Norman (age 21) marries Bertha Lehmann (18) in 1905.
- They had one child, Fahy Orville Johnson.
- In 1903 Bertha graduated from Chatsworth Park Grammar School  
[Story in Sept 2023 Smoke Signal](#)
- In 1914, Norman organized the first Boy Scout Troop in the valley, Troop 26. The history of Troop 26 is in the appendix.
- In the 1920 Census, Norman had a farm on Devonshire.
- In 1979, Norman's grandson Richard published a thesis with annotated footnotes clarifying places and dates from "Our Pioneer Mother".

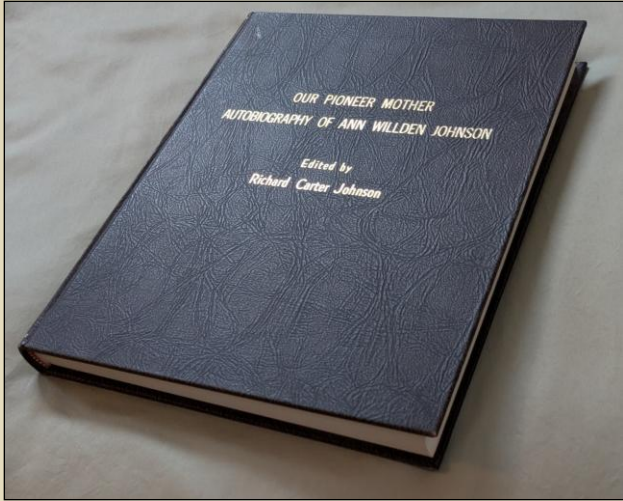


1911 Norman Fahy Bertha



Norman Carvin Johnson  
Los Angeles County Fire Chief

# Norman Johnson



In 1979, Norman's grandson Richard published a thesis with annotated footnotes clarifying places and dates from "Our Pioneer Mother".



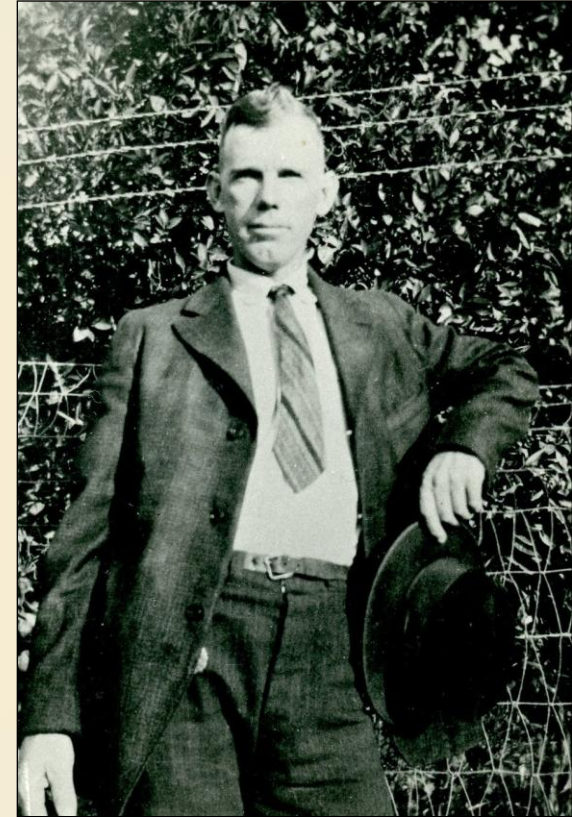
1912 Neils, Fahy and Norman Johnson 3 generations in Monrovia

# Eastman Johnson marries Zoa Spohn

- Their 10th child and 5th son.
- In the 1910 census, Eastman and Ann were the only ones at the Homestead.
- In 1910, the [Johnson "Pacific" Telephone Company](#) was established. Ann broke her arm up at the Homestead, and the Johnson's decided that it was high time there was a telephone service. Eastman was in charge, and the line went from the ranch on the hill down to Charles Johnson's place. Neighbors and businesses soon joined in.
- Married Zoa Spohn in 1917, they had no children
- In the 1920 census, Eastman and Zoa are living in Woodland Hills. His occupation is Zanjero, for the Water Company. (In Los Angeles a zanjero is a person in charge of water management)
- In the 1950 census, Eastman and Zoa are living in Sherman Oaks. Eastman is a meter service inspector for the Water Company.



Wall phone in  
Minnie's cottage



Eastman



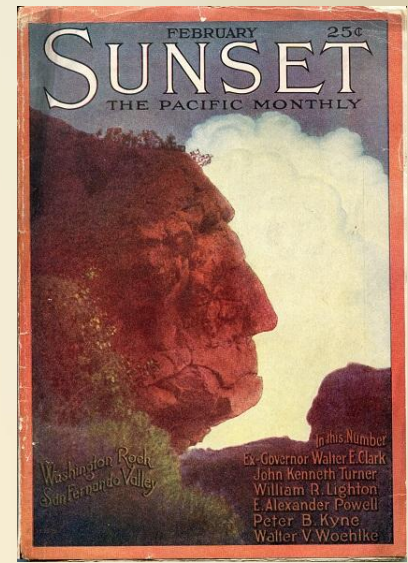
# Other Items that are a part of the Johnson story

## George Washington Rock

In July of 1901 an article was printed in the San Francisco Call newspaper that highlighted a rock formation they referred to as a sphinx. "The rock is on Chatsworth Park Rancho, the property of Mrs. Johnson".

In February of 1914 Sunset magazine featured a color photo of the George Washington Rock on the cover of their magazine. The Rock has been featured in many newspaper articles and books over the years.

See the full article at [2022 George Washington Rock Adventure](#)



## 1883 Herald Examiner article on the NC Johnson Ranch (see appendix for full article)

In May 1883, Al Workman gave a personal tour of the San Fernando Valley wheat ranches to the editor of the Los Angeles Herald Newspaper. (see our [Wheat Farming Presentation](#) for those articles). At the end of the tour, Al Workman showed the editor the NC Johnson Ranch.

The editor wrote a glowing article about the ranch and homesteaders, excerpts below:

"He has located one hundred sixty acres of government land, seventy of which have already been put into grain and orchard. He has a positively elegant home, a hundred stand of bees.. In search for water, he simply tunneled into the mountain's side, being rewarded by a stream which runs fully fifteen thousand gallons a day."

"Johnson, by creating a perfect Paradise on the mountain's summit, has opened new possibilities to the settler in this section."

# Other Items that are a part of the Johnson story

## Johnson photos of 1917 Santa Susana Pass Road Construction

From the [November 2015 Smoke Signal](#) - Provided by Richard and Sue Johnson

Stoney Point is seen in the background of both photographs.

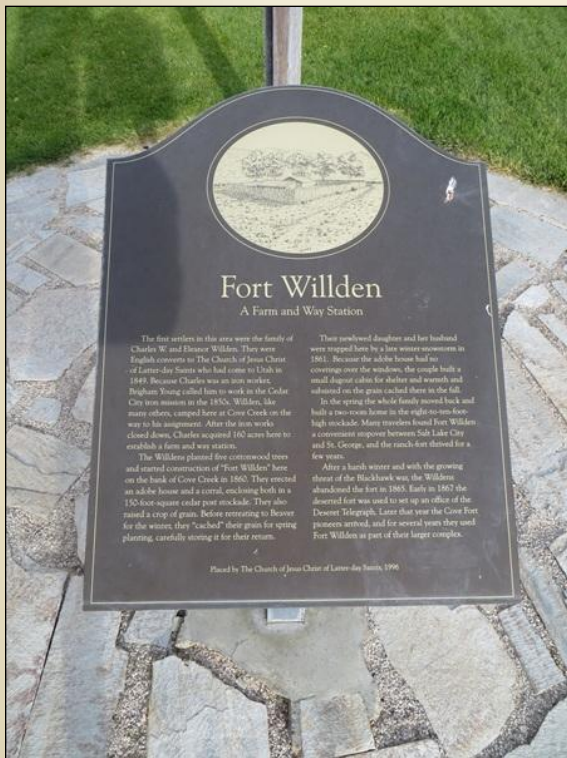


# Sources and Acknowledgements

- References written documents:
  - 1931 - Our Pioneer Mother Ann Johnson - Lenora Johnson
  - [1963 - Chatsworth History - Katharine Johnson](#)
  - [1978 - Jess Graves Oral History - CSUN](#)
  - [1978 - Anna "Queenie" Billings Oral History - CSUN](#)
  - 1979 - Richard Johnson publishes a thesis with annotated footnotes clarifying places and dates from "Our Pioneer Mother". The thesis was a part of his Master of Liberal Arts from USC.
  - [1986 - The Letters of Ann Willden Johnson, 1907-1920](#)- Richard & Suzanne Johnson
  - [1986 - Growing up on the Acre](#)
  - [1988 - Chatsworth Methodist Church History Lila Schepler](#)
  - 2001 - Grandma Ann - Mary Huff
  - 2014 - Early Chatsworth California 1859-1959 - Starling "Bruz" and Doris Bryant
- References photos and Facebook:
  - 2006 - Mary Huff (Nellie)
  - 2009 - Ken Ditto (Graves)
  - 2009 - Bruz Bryant (Emma)
  - 2012 - Joel Curtis Graves (Emma)
  - 2015 - Richard Johnson (Norman)
  - 2016 - Dorothy Ecroyd Liss (Pogue)
  - 2020 - Robert Langley (Emma)
  - 2024 - Molly Garitee (Nellie)
- Smoke Signal Newsletter articles
  - As referenced
- Prepared by Ann & Ray Vincent February 2025



## Appendix - Fort Willden Plaque



# Fort Willden

## A Farm and Way Station

The first settlers in this area were the family of Charles W. and Eleanor Willden. They were English converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who had come to Utah in 1849. Because Charles was an iron worker, Brigham Young called him to work in the Cedar City iron mission in the 1850s. Willden, like many others, camped here at Cove Creek on the way to his assignment. After the iron works closed down, Charles acquired 160 acres here to establish a farm and way station.

The Willdens planted five cottonwood trees and started construction of "Fort Willden" here on the bank of Cove Creek in 1860. They erected an adobe house and a corral, enclosing both in a 150-foot-square cedar post stockade. They also raised a crop of grain. Before retreating to Beaver for the winter, they "cached" their grain for spring planting, carefully storing it for their return.

Their newlywed daughter and her husband were trapped here by a late winter snowstorm in 1861. Because the adobe house had no coverings over the windows, the couple built a small dugout cabin for shelter and warmth and subsisted on the grain cached there in the fall.

In the spring the whole family moved back and built a two-room home in the eight-to-ten-foot-high stockade. Many travelers found Fort Willden a convenient stopover between Salt Lake City and St. George, and the ranch-fort thrived for a few years.

After a harsh winter and with the growing threat of the Blackhawk war, the Willdens abandoned the fort in 1865. Early in 1867 the deserted fort was used to set up an office of the Deseret Telegraph. Later that year the Cove Fort pioneers arrived, and for several years they used Fort Willden as part of their larger complex.

Placed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1996

# Appendix - 1907 John Ahlstrom History

JOHN FREDERICK AHLSTROM  
from A HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA AND AN  
EXTENDED HISTORY OF ITS SOUTHERN COAST COUNTIES  
Vol. II  
BY J.M. GUINN, A.M.  
Historical Record Company  
Los Angeles  
1907

JOHN F. AHLSTROM. The development of Los Angeles county and Southern California in general has had in John F. Ahlstrom one of its most interested witnesses, and as well a citizen whose best efforts were always given toward the furtherance of every movement which tended to upbuild his community. He is a native of Sweden, born May 14, 1848, the son of John F. and Johanna (Warlin) Ahlstrom, also natives of Sweden; both are deceased, the father dying, when seventy-two years of age, and the mother when thirty-six. The father was a cooper by occupation, a trade which he followed throughout his entire life. Of their family of eight children two sons and two daughters are located in the United States, the others being residents of their native land. The Lutheran State Church of Sweden claimed the religious allegiance of the parents and their children have been true to their early teachings.

John F. Ahlstrom was reared to young manhood in his native country, receiving a limited education in the public schools, after which he learned the trade of carpenter. He worked at his trade in Sweden until 1873, when he immigrated to America, and coming direct to California, located in the vicinity of Niles, Alameda county, where he engaged as foreman in a nursery. After twenty months he went to Yuba county and in Marysville engaged in carpenter work, following this with a period of ranching in Sutter county. He then went to Mendocino county and engaged in the logging business in the Redwoods, and after one year, on the 20th of May, 1876, he arrived in Los Angeles, where he engaged at ranching and other pursuits in the vicinity of Anaheim. A little later he accepted employment in the planing and grist mills of this section, remaining thus occupied for two years when he went to Chatsworth and engaged in ranching for a time, finally disposing of these interests because of dry seasons. After his marriage in 1881 to Miss Hannah J. Johnson, a native of Utah, he came to Los Angeles and engaged in carpenter work and also worked on the street cars. In 1894 he purchased his present property, which consists of eleven acres of land devoted principally to the raising of berries. He has placed many improvements on the place and by an intelligent cultivation also has added to the value of the property.

Mr. and Mrs. Ahlstrom are the parents of the following children: Arthur, Grace, Reuben, Bertha, Lilian, Maie Corinne, Charles and Eleanor. In his fraternal relations Mr. Ahlstrom is associated with the Independent Order of Foresters of Los Angeles; politically he takes an active interest in the principles of the various parties, but reserves the right to cast his ballot for the man whom he considers best qualified for public duties. With his family he belongs to the Baptist Church. Mr. Ahlstrom is a man of many admirable traits of character, faithful in the discharge of all duties that fall to the lot of a citizen, earnest in his efforts to advance the best interests of the community, and as such a man, citizen and neighbor he has won a large number of friends who best appreciate the qualities so demonstrated throughout his life.



# Appendix - 1934 - History of San Fernando Valley - Keffer - Charles W Johnson Bio

## CHARLES W. JOHNSON

The man who has the distinction of being the longest time resident of the San Fernando valley is Charles W. Johnson of Chatsworth. Mr. Johnson is a native son, born at Lone Pine on May 24, 1867, the son of Niels C. and Anna (Wilden) Johnson. His father was born in Denmark, and his mother in England. When Charles was a young boy, the family moved to Southern California and located at Solidad Canyon, above the town of San Fernando. They next moved to Brown's Canyon, but only remained there a short time, when they took up a squatter's claim north of Chatsworth, consisting of one hundred and sixty acres. This was in 1872 and Charles Johnson has lived in this vicinity ever since. His father cleared this land and put in an orchard of apples and peaches. The fruit growing was not very profitable in those early days, and the father made a living for his family largely by hauling woolly and wheat out of the San Fernando valley to Los Angeles.

At the present time Mr. Johnson is living on his beautiful eight-acre ranch, located about a mile north of the Chatsworth school. This property he purchased thirty-five years ago, paying twenty-five dollars an acre for it at that time. While he has always been interested in fruit growing, his principal occupation has been in the bee business for many years and he has produced as much as eighty tons of honey in one year. In 1907 he incorpo-

rated the California Honey Company, but he subsequently sold out to his sons.

When a young man Mr. Johnson homesteaded a place near Canoga Park, and he lived there from the time when he was twenty-two years of age until fifteen years later, when he returned to the Chatsworth district.

Mr. Johnson's span of over sixty years in the San Fernando valley covers the pioneer period when the whole region was little more than a wilderness, populated with a few hundred people, and includes the past twenty-five years when the tremendous growth, development and increased population has taken place. Perhaps nowhere in the world has greater development taken place in the course of two generations than in the San Fernando valley; and Mr. Johnson has been an eye witness to all of this.

He was first married to Grace E. Brow, who is now deceased. His present wife was Emaly Resing. He has the following children: Ernest L., Harold F., Lavalle, Leslie Y., and Dorothy, who is now Mrs. Glenn Pogue.



# Appendix - 1953 Troop 26 All Star Scout Show - Boy Scout Troop 26 History

## ANNUAL ALL-STAR SCOUT SHOW

### History of Boy Scout Troop 26

The community of Chatsworth is not only the next oldest town in the valley, but also claims the honor of having the first Boy Scout Troop in the valley.

Thirty-nine years ago, in 1914, just four years after Scouting was organized in the United States, the late Norman C. Johnson established the Troop. The Troop was then known as Troop I. Mr. Johnson carried on as leader until 1922, when the San Fernando Valley Council was organized. Under the new set-up, the Troop number was changed to 12, and A. H. Prince took over as Scoutmaster.

Other men, who saw the value of this Scouting program to the boys of the community and gave of their time as Scoutmasters, were R. L. (Kelly) Johnson, Cecil Graves, the late George Capes and the late Melvin Jones, Tracy Hughes, Gordon Watts, Ward Melrose, Sid Walker, Edward Ahlstrom, Arnold Spotts, Charles England, and the present Scoutmaster, Bob Nesbitt.

During a lapse in the Troop at one time, the boys who were interested in Scouting, went into the Canoga Park Troop, and when the Chatsworth charter was resumed in 1940, the number 26 was given the Troop, which has been the number ever since.

It was about this time that the Troop was given a lot in Deer Lake Highlands where a cabin was built for them by their sponsoring group, the Canoga Park American Legion, which was then a combined Post with Chatsworth. But during the depression, the lot and cabin were lost for the nonpayment of taxes. Efforts have been made in various ways since that time, to establish a similar Scout building for the boys, but none have been successful.

Their meeting place is White Oak Hall, as their sponsorship was taken over last year by the newly organized Men's Club of the church, which is carrying out a fine program for the boys.

The boys have had fine experience in camp training through the years; have been taught service to the church and community; have broadened in many areas in which they have worked for their merit badges.

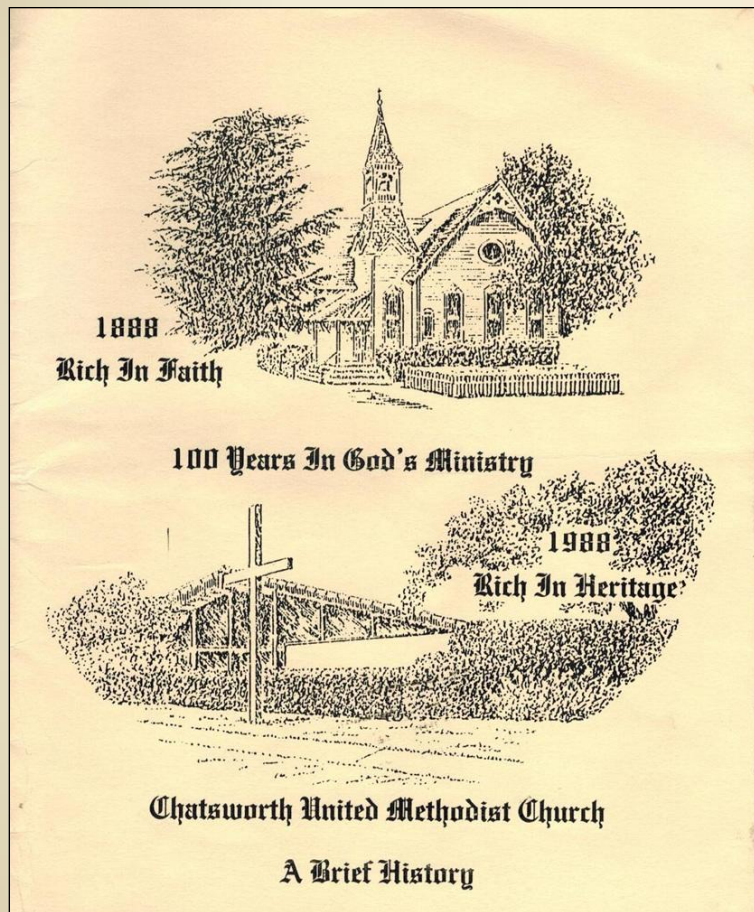
The Explorer Scouts, boys 14 to 18, were re-organized last year, under the leadership of George Padgett, after a lapse of several years, and have a fine group of interested boys, with Ray Johnston as their present Advisor.

The boys are looking forward eagerly to summer camp, and five delegates from the Scouts and two from the Explorers, will have the privilege and honor of attending the national Jamboree at the Irvine Ranch in July.

And so, Scouting in Chatsworth goes on, providing interesting, challenging, worthwhile, and enjoyable activity for our growing boys, and training leaders to carry on this good work in the future.

Norman Johnson, who established the Troop, was a brother of Aunt Emma Graves, first white English speaking child to be born in the valley. Their mother, Ann Johnson, the first white woman in the valley, was responsible for the establishment of the Community Church here, where Scouting in Chatsworth was born.

# Appendix - 1988 Chatsworth Methodist Church History - Lila Schepler



A Story of the  
United Methodist Church  
Chatsworth, California  
1888 1988

The first American family to homestead in the Chatsworth area came in 1870. Ann and Neils Johnson brought their family and carved a home from the rocky Santa Susanna Mountains in that year.

It was at their ranch home that Ann held Sunday School for her children and study for those few children from neighboring ranches as well. Church was held when an itinerant Baptist Circuit Rider came through the area. On one of his visits Ann was baptised and remained a Baptist all her life. Besides Ann's ranch, the church was sometimes held in the warm summer months on the area which later became Chatsworth Lake Reservoir, a facility of Los Angeles Dept. of Water and Power. The huge oak trees, that still grow there today, made a shady canopy for the worshippers.

As more people moved into the area, the Santa Susanna Grammar School was built to accommodate the children who walked to the school from their ranches. Some of those pioneers were the Iversons, Hills, Williams, and Grays. Minnie Hill Palmer was born on the homestead in 1886 and lived there most of her life. Nelson Gray and family moved here about 1895 and bought land, vast acres from Topanga Canyon Blvd., west to the county line. It was Gray who gave the land on which the Santa Susanna Grammar School was built and named for the surrounding mountains. It was a county school and a small minimum attendance had to be maintained. Ann used to go with her horse and buggy and round up the children from the various ranches if there were not enough in attendance on a given day to maintain the quota. Ann must have been proud when her daughter Leonora later taught at this school.

Ann and Neils had a two-story home built on their ranch with a swimming pool near the front of the home. Often church was held in this home, and after the Grays came and built a 13 room, two-story home at Lassen and Farralane, church was held at their home as well. Nelson Gray donated the land from his extensive properties at the corner of Devonshire and Topanga Canyon Boulevards, the same site where the Chatsworth Park Elementary School still stands today. A one room school was built, and shortly a second room was added. Mr. Gray had a bell cast in Philadelphia and shipped around the horn in the late 1890's. It hung in the belfry to call children to school. It also called those pioneer folk to worship, for church service was held in the school for many years.



## Appendix - 1883-05-17 NC Johnson Ranch

### An Example to be Imitated.

During our recent trip to the San Fernando Valley we encountered an experience which ought to have a good effect upon our Board of Supervisors, and is calculated to encourage those who are to build homes in our mountain nooks and cañons. Thinking that we had had enough of wheat and grain, Gen. Al. Workman, when we reached the old stage road through the Santa Susana Pass, told us that he proposed to treat us to a sight of the mountain home of Mr. M. C. Johnson, a Dane, at one time connected, as a teamster, with the San Fernando company. Mr. Johnson has established himself at the foot of the highest peaks of the San Fernando mountains. He is nineteen hundred feet higher than the plain, and his home is reached by a roadway whose construction is, of its kind, as great a miracle as was the transportation, by Hannibal and Napoleon, of their armies over the Alps into the plains of Lombardy. This man

into the plains of Lombardy. This man and his sons—both youngsters—have created roadways which represent more real labor than all the Boards of Supervisors of Los Angeles county have put on all the roads of this opulent county during the past ten years. We know what we are talking about, because we have been over them. Our ascent, in a driving rain, recalled to our recollection the refrain of the old song, "Up in a balloon, boys, up and up and up." Truly, it was an up-hill operation. But at last our labors were rewarded; and, right at the foot of one of the highest peaks of the San Fernando mountains, a charming scene burst upon our vision. On

ing scene burst upon our vision. On this elevated coigne of vantage Mr. Johnson has created a really ideal mountain home—a thing as perfect of its kind as Mr. L. J. Rose's Sunny Slope or Mr. Cogswell's Sierra Madre villa. Mr. Johnson has not, like those gentlemen, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars upon his place; but both of them, were they to visit this poetical mountain eyrie, would cheerfully admit that this energetic Dane, considering the difficulties he had to encounter, and the means at his disposal, has accomplished greater results than they. He has located one hundred and sixty acres of government land, seventy of which he has already put into grain and orchard. He has a positively elegant home, a hundred stand of bees, and appointments which are simply perfection, and whose existence demonstrates him to be possessed of a high order of mechanical ingenuity. Year by year he will go on subjugating the chapparal until nearly his whole hundred and sixty acres will be under a really elaborate state of cultivation. With a sublime knack of labor, in his search for water, he simply tunneled into the mountain's side, through the solid granite, being rewarded as richly as was the rod of Aaron, by a stream which runs fully fifteen thousand gallons a day. He has another stream of similar volume. He has constructed

reservoirs, which he has stocked with carp. This indomitable horticulturist sells his fruit and garden truck to the farmers of the valley, and is as prosperous as he is independent. He has accomplished simply wonderful things, and we avow for him an admiration which we experience for no other man in Los Angeles county. Other men, have shown what can be done in the foot hills. Johnson, by creating a perfect Paradise on the mountain's summit, has opened new possibilities to the settler in this section.

1883-05-17 - SFV Wheat - NC Johnson Ranch - LA Herald Examiner