

# Smoke Signal

**CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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Co-Presidents: Linda & André van der Valk

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Editor: Ann Vincent

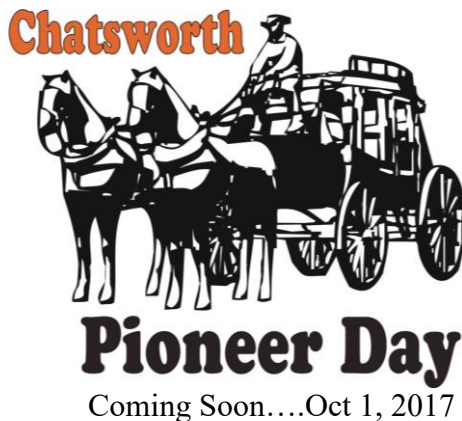
## Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

I would first like to start off thanking Dale Chaloukian and the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park volunteers that helped him remove the graffiti off of the plaque that was placed in the hills in 1939 by the Native Daughters of the Golden West. The plaque is a tile monument marker along the Stage Coach Trail at the portion known as Devil's Slide and was commemorating its use from 1859 - 1890. In 1972 the Stagecoach Trail was declared Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument #92 and it is also listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. Chatsworth is an amazing community. Someone posted on facebook that they were hiking and saw the graffiti and before you know it Dale says it will be removed and it was quickly. It shows how much the community cares and works together.

Our parking lot was seeded and now we have green grass. The park landscaping looks like it is finished or almost finished. The road still needs to be redone and we hope that we will be able to have access and resume our monthly Open House and future programs.

Happy Summer  
Linda and André



Chatsworth Historical Society  
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## Upcoming Events

### General Meetings

**There are no General Meetings scheduled for June, July and August.**

**September 10, 2017 Sunday 5:00 PM**

Dinner will start at 5:30

### Membership Roundup at the ACRE

Our park is scheduled to be open, so please join us as we round up all of our members for an end of summer barbeque. We look forward to starting out our new year of Chatsworth History adventures with this fun get-together. If you are a prospective member and have not joined yet, plan to join. (The cost of the membership is worth it for this dinner!)

**October 1, 2017 Sunday 11-3**

### PIONEER DAY

This is our big fundraiser, and we need your support to help our volunteers maintain the Acre and museum for the future! Mark your calendar and plan to be there.

**October 17, 2017 Tuesday 7:00 PM**

### General Meeting

Put this date on your calendar because we will come up with a fantastic program about our Chatsworth History to share with you. Watch for the September Smoke Signal Newsletter for more information.

## DOCENT DOINGS at the ACRE:

Our docents keep busy with projects throughout the year. We meet every Wednesday morning 9-noon.

**OUT IN THE GARDEN:** Annette and Karyne can be found dead-heading roses and hand watering plants as needed every Wednesday morning. If you need some outdoor fresh air therapy, come join them!

**IN THE MUSEUM:** Linda van der Valk is continuously working with the items donated to the museum by our members and the community.

**IN THE COTTAGE:** An inventory project is underway to confirm and learn more about the items on display and their history so we can provide more information on our tours.

**DOCENTS ARE NEEDED:** Help guide guests through the museum and cottage. If you would like to learn the history of our community and help share it with others, then contact us for more information at [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com).

## Keith Watts Memorial

June 19 2017 11 am

at the Chatsworth Community Pioneer Church at  
Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery  
22601 Lassen Street Chatsworth California.

The children of Keith and Sheila Watts invite those who wish to join us in a celebration of Keith Watts life at the church they both worked so hard to save. There will be a luncheon at Los Toros Restaurant at 21743 Devonshire Street at 12 Noon for those who can join us after the memorial. RSVP required for luncheon. Thank you

## Chatsworth Park Elementary School

We enjoyed a field trip at the acre held on March 29<sup>th</sup>. The local school is able to walk to the Acre, which made it possible for us to escort them through the construction to get into our museum and cottage.  
*From the teachers:*

*I'd like to thank you for the wonderful visit to the Chatsworth Homestead and Museum. Our students were excited to learn about life in the olden days from the informative tours. On top of that, they had a blast in the gardens, looking for lizards and snails and simply being out in nature. We are so lucky to have this opportunity so close to our school. A big thank you to all volunteers who made this unforgettable field trip possible!*

**Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park Volunteers** at work removing graffiti from 1939 Stagecoach Plaque. As mentioned by Linda on page one....



# Southern Pacific Railroad Dishes

Ann Vincent

I had the opportunity to stop by the Simi Train Depot Museum on Katherine Street recently on the weekend. They have refurbished the living quarters above the depot with time period accessories. Since I love dishes...I was delighted to see the dining room table set with several different types of dishes created specifically for the various Railroads. My favorite was the set used by the Southern Pacific Railroad that features Prairie-Mountain Wildflowers. The table was complete with a historic menu for your dinning car experience.



I had no idea there were dishes for each railroad service...probably best I didn't know earlier, I would have tried to start collecting them.

The Simi Santa Susana Depot is the same design as our original Chatsworth Depot first located at approximately Marilla and Topanga. It was the most common depot of standard design built by Southern Pacific in California known as "Two Story Combination Depot No. 22". Of about ninety built between 1890 and 1916, less than a dozen survive and none are used in active service today.



1893 Chatsworth Train Depot – S.P. Construction Plan #22

Facing the need for literally hundreds of depots spread across thousands of miles of track, Southern Pacific wasn't about to employ an army of architects to design them. From 1877 through about 1894, the Southern Pacific carefully developed more than two dozen standard designs "in house" using their own drafting department. Their designers addressed needs a railroad understood well. A one-story depot was chosen if the station agent and his family could find suitable housing in a near-by town. A two-story depot contained compact living quarters on the second floor, and the station agent - and family - simply moved in. Other areas of the design efficiently performed functions that were almost universal to railroad depots: a ticket sales counter, an area to check baggage, a telegraph "bay", and a small attached warehouse for freight were all incorporated into most of Southern Pacific's standard designs. All of these functional areas were part of the original plan for the Chatsworth Depot.

If you do run over to the Simi Santa Susana Depot <http://www.santasusannadepot.org>, be sure to visit the Model Railroading Club's exhibit. They obviously have too much fun designing, building and playing with their Railroad.

## VALETA BUTLER KOLLER – Interview



Valeta Butler Koller – Officiating at the cutting of the Chatsworth Community Birthday Cake 2014

Valeta Koller is the daughter of James P. Butler, one of our early ranchers who moved from Pasadena to Chatsworth in 1919. He had purchased the land in advance, but was waiting for water to get to the valley to plant his citrus trees. He was well known for his expertise in Citrus ranch management, overseeing groves that he and others owned.

The family included James, his wife Edith and their two children Margaret and James. They built a small wood framed board and batten house on Lassen Street near where Independence St is now. (The area near Lawrence Jr. High) Valeta noted that in a house built like that, the wind would come right through the walls. In 1920, another son, John was born and then on November 21, 1922, Valeta May Butler was born.

Valeta tells the story that in 1927 when she was 5 years old they built a new three bedroom house at 21039 Lassen, with stucco walls “to keep the wind out”.

Before James Peterson Butler II moved his family to Chatsworth in 1919, he operated a Citrus Nursery in Lamanda Park, Pasadena. While in Pasadena, James Butler was known for his

watermelons, referred to as the “Watermelon King”. Valeta says that he knew exactly when to pick them. When his first daughter Mildred was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, the local newspaper ran the head line: “Watermelon King has a Firecracker”.

Once in Chatsworth, while waiting about 5 years for his newly planted oranges, lemon and grapefruit trees to mature and bear fruit, he grew watermelon, alfalfa and grapes to provide an income. Valeta said that her father only planted groves of Valencia Oranges, not Navel Oranges. Once again he perfected the best time for harvesting, bringing in the top dollar sending the oranges to the Sunkist Packing house on Canoga and the lemons and grapefruits to San Fernando packing houses. In addition to his own acreage that he continued to purchase, he also managed citrus groves for other land owners such as Mr. Frost, a wealthy Chatsworth landowner and resident, who became a close family friend throughout the years. Mr. Frost owned the property that became Chatsworth High School.

Valeta lived in Chatsworth through 1935 attending Chatsworth Park Elementary School during the rebuilding of the school following the 1933 Longbeach Earthquake, when the students attended classes in tents set up on the school grounds while the school was rebuilt. At that point, her mother and father divorced and Valeta and her sister moved to Hollywood with her mother Edith while she attended Bancroft Jr High and Fairfax high school. Edith traded her orange groves received in the divorce settlement for an apartment building in Hollywood. Edith continued to purchase and sell income property in the Hollywood area. She managed to make sure that the apartment building they lived in was directly across from the school the girls were attending at the time.

After graduating from Fairfax High school in the winter of 1941, Valeta worked at Lockheed for a while and eventually decided to become an Airline

**Valeta currently holds the record as our oldest living Chatsworth born resident at the age of 94. She was born in 1922. Her family lived here in Chatsworth since 1919.**

**James Butler was highly regarded as an expert in citrus farming in the valley. He managed groves for many land owners in the area.**



Valeta Butler WWII

Stewardess. Following the interview that she felt was more about what her legs looked like than her qualifications, she noticed an advertisement to join the Navy. The Navy recruiter told her to report back on July 4<sup>th</sup> and rebuffed her comment that it was a “Holiday” with the response that there are no Holidays during war time. So she returned on July 4<sup>th</sup> and signed so many papers that she had ink all over the hand that she raised to be sworn in. The other women who had joined were all gathered and they were informed that they would be taking a Troop Train to New York for boot camp. On the troop train, (used only to transport soldiers across country) they were all put to work cleaning and maintaining the train along the way. Boot Camp was held on the Hunter College campus in New York. Valeta was still in boot camp when the bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima to end the war on Aug 6, 1945. Everyone in boot camp was given liberty and Valeta joined her sister living in New York at Times Square to celebrate. It would still be another year before her term in the Navy was over but she was fortunate to land a desk job in Washington, DC.

After the Navy, Valeta moved back to Hollywood. In the meantime, her father James in Chatsworth had remarried Dr. Olive Spaulding in 1942. Olive had seen a home built in 1927 on 10 acres in Chatsworth that she loved (on Topanga and San Jose), so James purchased it when it became available in hopes that Olive would marry him.



Valeta Butler Koller - 1947

In 1947 Valeta married Jim Koller. Jim was still in the military, and they lived in Hollywood where Valeta attended City College on her GI bill studying photography since she liked art, but knew photography would be more useful to get a job. They had two children, Clarlyne and Frederick. Jim and Valeta separated soon thereafter.

With the help of her father, a house was moved onto the earlier property the family lived on in 1919 on Lassen Street. While her children were going to school, Valeta attended Pierce College to finish her AA degree focusing on investment, finance and real estate courses. Note: Valeta mentioned that she could not attend her own graduation because her daughter was graduating the same time from Jr. High.

By 1960, Valeta’s father James continued to buy and sell Chatsworth citrus properties. One of his lots involved the construction of a shopping center on the northwest corner of Canoga and Devonshire -- The Hughes Market (now Ralph’s) and an adjacent drug store.

Eventually, Valeta took over managing the family investments and moved into the family home on San Jose Street to care for her father, and continues to live there today.

The house on San Jose St.: Built in 1927 has not been remodeled and Valeta lives in that house today. It has 19 rooms with a formal living room, formal dining room, breakfast room, Kitchen, butler’s pantry, laundry room and servants quarters at the east end of the house. The main hall opens out to a courtyard with a pond next to the master bedroom. Built in walls of storage for linens line the open hallway. A guest bedroom with an attached/ adjacent bathroom has the hall continuing to the west side of the house where two more bedrooms and a bath are found. Valeta said that she had the opportunity to meet one of the boys who lived in the house when it was first built when he stopped by to see if the house was still standing.

James Butler  
always said  
**“Buy a good piece of  
property, take care of  
it and it will take care  
of you.”**

Valeta currently holds the record as our oldest living Chatsworth resident at the age of 94. She was born in Chatsworth in 1922. Her family has lived here since 1919.

**27th Annual  
Chatsworth Historical Society**

# Pioneer Day

**Sunday, Oct. 1, 2017**

**11 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

Bring your children  
& grandchildren

**Take the  
Pioneer  
Challenge**

## ***Old-time fun for everyone!***

- Chores and Games of Yore
- Vendors
- Bake Sale
- Woodcarvers
- Blacksmith
- Leather Crafts
- Panning for Gold
- Spinning Wheel Demo
- Veteran Quilt Display
- Design a Quilt Craft
- Rock Chippers
- Bee Keeping
- Telegraph Station
- Butter Churning and more!



### **Chatsworth Museum Exhibits**

Featuring  
Chatsworth Pioneer Families  
and the  
History of Rocketdyne

### **Tour Minnie's 1911 Cottage**

**Location:** 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

**Donation:** Adults: \$5,  
Children: \$1  
(Free for kids under 5)

**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.**

## Chatsworth Historical Society 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](mailto: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 RECORDS online at**  
<http://www.chatsworthhistory.com>

**facebook**

**CHS FACEBOOK PAGE**

[www.facebook.com/HomesteadAcre](http://www.facebook.com/HomesteadAcre)

### SLIDESHARE.NET

<https://www.slideshare.net/ChatsworthHistory/presentations>

Slideshare has a listing of our CHS presentations that can easily be watched online. Enjoy!

### Can we Email our newsletter to you?

Please email us to provide your email address.  
Thanks! [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto: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.

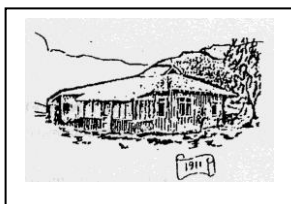
For snail mail, if you have an asterisk at the end of your name on the mailing label, your dues are due.

Please use the form below to renew your Membership. 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](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com) 818-882-5614 [www.chatsworthhistory.com](http://www.chatsworthhistory.com)

Yearly:	<input type="checkbox"/> New Member	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal
Life Membership:	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Family \$20.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Organization \$20.00
	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 125.00	

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

STREET ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY / STATE / ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interest / Expertise: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reminder: If you got this mailed to you, an asterisk on your label means your dues are due!**