

# Chatsworth Historical Society

Box 102, Chatsworth, California

## Smoke Signal

President: Virginia Watson  
Membership Chairman: Frank Schepler  
Vice-President: Jane Matthews

Editor: Celia Woodman

Tricia Plucknett  
Mailing Editor:

MARCH  
1979

### HAPPENINGS OF THE MONTH

Year of the Child	Albert Einstein born Mar.14,1879
National Peanut Month	Mar. 15-Ancient Ides of March honored Hilaria, "Mother of Gods."
Red Cross Month	Mar. 17 - St. Patrick's Day
American Camping Week Mar. 4-10	National Wildlife Week Mar.18-24
National Procrastination Week-Ma.4-10	<u>MARCH 20 - 7:30 P.M.</u> Chatsworth Historical Society will celebrate the community's 91st Birthday at the Glendale Federal Savings and Loan, 21821 Devonshire...please come.....bring two!.....
Johnny Appleseed Day, (born 1774)Ma.11	and then Spring begins .....March 21, 1979.....
March 11-Orthodoxy Sunday is honored	
Girl Scout Week Mar. 11-17	
March 13-The book of Esther is read on the festival of Purim which celebrates the survival of the Jewish people.....	

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Dear Members and Friends:

I hope all of you will be able to come out to our March meeting --our 91st birthday celebration to held Tuesday, at 7:30p.m. in the Glendale Federal Savings & Loan. The executive board voted to hold the celebration at our regular meeting although the actual birthday is March 10. We celebrate that day because on March 10, 1888 the first subdivision map of a proposed town called Chatsworth Park was filed in the Los Angeles County Recorder's office.

Minnie Hill Palmer will be there to cut our birthday cake. We have also invited former police chief Ed Davis, honorary mayor of Chatsworth, and Chad Everett, honorary sheriff, to the party.

We will have a short program and have invited community organizations and youth groups to come and offer a few words of congratulations.

FERDINAND MENDENHALL will be the speaker. He is going to talk about the history of the San Fernando Valley. Mr. Mendenhall is a member of the pioneer newspaper family that began publishing the Van Nuys News now known as The Valley News in 1911. Mr. Mendenhall came to the San Fernando Valley as a youngster and was the Valley's first Eagle Scout.

Hope we have a big turnout.

*Virginia*

RAY BLANCHARD, a candidate for Eagle Scout from Troop 466, has offered to help get Minnie Hill Palmer's house ready for painting. He will get a crew of scouts together and scrub the cabinets, walls and floors in the kitchen, pantry and bath. If he can get another Eagle Scout candidate, they will do the weeds on the outside. Jane Matthews will be the person who will help him with the paper work and verify his tasks. He expects to do the work during spring vacation the week of April 9-13.

ED DIETRICH, our board member at large, has been looking into the matter of insurance for the Homestead Acre. He has been checking with various insurance companies trying to find the best deal for us. There are a limited number of companies that write public carrier insurance. He has found one and it looks like we will have to pay about \$325 a year. At the executive board meeting we authorized the check to be written. Sounds like a lot of volunteer hours to pay the bill! Thanks a lot Ed, a good job well done.



The following is the report from the nominating committee - these are the nominees for officers for the next year. We will accept nominations from the floor at the March meeting if we have prior permission of that person.

- President.....Jane Matthews
- Vice Pres.& Program Chairman.....Lillian Schepler
- Financial Vice. Pres.....Ioline Cleveland
- Membership Vice. Pres.....Frank Schepler
- Hospitality Vice. Pres.....Fern Jack
- Recording Secretary.....Betty Selvidge
- Corresponding Sec. & Mailing Editor.....Tricia Plucknett
- Treasurer.....Marian Hyland
- Auditor.....Eileen Janess
- Parliamentarian. ....Bill Schepler
- Member at Large....Lila Schepler
- Founding President and Permanent Board Member.....Charles Janess
- Historiographer and Permanent Board Member....Virginia Watson
- Editor of Smoke Signal.....Celia Woodman
- Hobby Chairman.....Raylene Rubin                      Librarian.....Lucille Clements
- Trip Chairmen.....Tom and Betty Woodard
- Display Chairman.....Betty Summers
- Member at Large.....Marlys Stuckenbruck

The election of the above officers will be at the April meeting..... Plans are being made for the installation of the new officers on May 15th.... We will let you know where the dinner will be, in the next Smoke Signal.....

News items:  
 Twin "J's" were delivered to Christie and Gary Johnson on Valentine's Day. Joseph and Jason are the new grandson's of Paul and Margaret Johnson.  
 .....  
 Cathe Cleveland began her practice teaching, which will last for two months. She has a fifth grade class at Alliance, Nebraska.....  
 .....  
 Jane Matthews has moved to her new home in Tarzana - address: P.O.Box 303 Tarzana, Cal. 91356 - Tel. 881-7523...

Welcome back to membership - Bill and Nancy Wilkins!  
 .....  
 Librarian, Lucille Clements - 341-8612 still has books, stationery and cards.  
 .....  
 Rummage Sale for Chats. United Meth. Church will be Fri. March 30th and Sat. morning to noon, March 31st.....  
 Start saving for our Yard Sale June 9-10  
 .....  
 We still need good books for our Memory Library and many articles for our "Homestead Acre" House. Save and donate!  
 .....



A greetin' from *all* of us  
 comin' to say  
 'Tis really a joy and a pleasure  
 To be wishin'  
 the top o' the mornin' to you  
 And a whole lot o' luck  
 for good measure!

Happy St. Patrick's Day!





Walk for History:

On a recent Saturday members of the Board made an interesting "Walk for History". It was to inform the new residents of the 125 home Brookfield Tract about the historic site- the Gray Ranch- on which they live. And, especially, to tell them about the Olive Trees along Lassen Street which border their property. We want them to take pride in protecting and caring for them.

Members who participated were Chuck Janess, Virginia Watson, Lillian and Frank Schepler, Jane Matthews, Celia Woodman and Lila Schepler. Bill Schepler wrote the "Window into the Past" story about the trees which is included elsewhere in this Smoke Signal.

The "Tree Story" was distributed as well as the Society Brochures and an application for membership. It was a fun project as the new residents were very interested in hearing about the area.

As Chairperson, I would like to thank all participants in the Walk. We may extend this project to other areas. Please let me know if you would like to work on this in the future.

Lila Schepler, Chairperson

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Several members of the Chatsworth Historical Society visited St. Martin's in the Field Church on March 4th to see the beautiful Lenten Play, "The Other Wiseman", written by Henry Van Dyke. It was a lovely service and especially meaningful, because it was dedicated to our Milton Parsons, who had been their drama director until his illness the past year. Everyone was delighted to have him present, even with his continuing weakness.

Orville and Lorraine Mitchell have just returned from a 5-week vacation. They spent 2 weeks in Arizona at the Quartzsite Rock-Mineral-Gem show, then another wonderful week on the Colorado River (naturally, traveling in their Travel-eze Trailer). They also visited the Date Festival in Indio (lucky people!), and spent the last week at the Joshua Tree Nat. Monu.

We need old pictures of you, your children, your parents or friends that attended Chatsworth Park Elementary School or pictures of their activities of the early days of Chatsworth. Give to Ioline Cleveland or Virginia Watson.

Good News! Bad News! Bad News - they broke into our Pioneer Church again. Good News - nothing was damaged, (except the window that Chuck Janess continues to repair after their entry.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:  
Wanda Merriott, Henry Watson, Virginia Watson, Jane Matthews, Eleanor Schepler, Marlys Stuckenbruck, Megan Cleveland, and Marshall Berman..

Do I have your name on my birthday calendar? If not, please send me your name and month - also all news - to Celia Woodman - 8867 Farralone Ave., Canoga Park, Ca. 91304, or call 347-8569.....

## A Scoutmaster Saves the Day

BOYVILLE — For weeks the Troop had been engaged in expectant preparation for its Parents' Night program. Everything was in order. The walls were filled with displays — the Scouts with enthusiasm — and the tables with good things to eat. The Toastmaster was well under way. The crowd sang with that respectably restrained enthusiasm which typified a Parents' Night program. Then Jimmie Davis arose to give his oration. This was the moment to which he had looked forward for many weeks. As he arose he caught a glimpse of the beaming face of his mother and of his father's stolid assured countenance. He started with a great burst of enthusiasm. He waxed more eloquent, conscious that his hearers were paying a high tribute to him by their careful attention.

Then something happened. The world seemed to swim before him — he slowed down — faltered — stopped. His face flushed, his hands sought each other frantically and in desperation he looked helplessly toward his Scoutmaster. And ever prepared, having heard that boyish masterpiece rehearsed again and again, the boy's leader supplied the missing words and the lad went on. But somehow it was different now. The masterpiece had been marred. Jimmy paused again — and the Scoutmaster prompted him again. For the remaining two minutes the oration seemed more the Scoutmaster's than the boy's. But Jimmie finished it. In the heart of the lad who sat down, knowing that he had failed, there was a heavy load. Chagrin was plainly written on the face

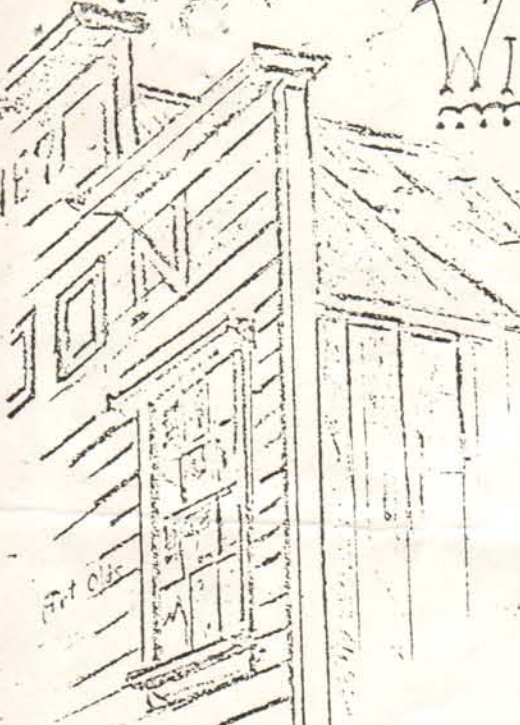
of the boy's mother, and a twitch of the father's face indicated a pained consciousness of shame. The audience applauded in a perfunctory way, sorry for and pitying the boy whom they thought had failed. But the Scoutmaster was on his feet. His quiet eyes twinkled. All listened tensely for he did not talk loudly. What was he saying — "I am more happy than any of you can possibly understand because of what has just happened. You have seen a boy make a glorious victory out of what might have been a miserable failure. "Jimmie had his chance to quit. To have quit would have been easy. But to finish the job even in the face of two hundred people required the highest kind of bravery and courage I know.

"You may some day hear a better oratorical effect, but I am confident that you will never see a finer demonstration of the spirit of our Troop — than Jimmie has just given you — to play the game even under difficulties!" The people thundered their applause now. Jimmie's mother sat straight and proud. The old look of assurance was back on the face of the boy's father. The entire group was enthusiastic again, and Jimmie, with a lump in his throat, said something to the friend beside him that sounded like, "Gee, if I can be that kind of a Scoutmaster some day."

Building Boys is Better Than Mending Men.



HISTORIC OLIVE TREES ON LASSEN STREET



We are told it all started with a picture of the Los Angeles River, complete with wharfs and ships of commerce. A real con job, meant to pick up some of that easy Eastern money. If that is true, it was really a favor for the area we know as Chatsworth. Because it started thoughts of an easier life in the sun with no hard winters for a very successful hardware merchant by the name of N. Gray in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

A deeply religious man, Mr. Gray joined a Methodist group from Chicago for that long rail trip to the West coast in the dead of winter, to see for himself if what he had heard was true- a land of perpetual sunshine.

The group arrived in San Fernando almost a century ago in a snowstorm. You can guess what those Easterners thought of that! They all headed back home, but not Mr. Gray. He hired a hack and made the long trip through the snow to see the oak covered fields of Chatsworth. And liked what he saw.

He returned later and bought hundreds of acres for the tidy sum of \$12,500 an acre. At one time he owned about all the level land west of what is now Topanga Canyon Blvd. and north of Lassen Street.

He brought not only a large family to Chatsworth, but he brought a form of culture to a very small community. He spent the large sum of \$1800 to build the largest home in the West Valley- it was even equipped with a ballroom. He donated land for the first school in Chatsworth and the first Church as well. He developed the dam near the north end of De Soto St. that still stands (though sad to say, now filled to the top with silt). He developed an artesian well on his home site, near the northwest corner of Farralone and Lassen St's. This water he shared with his neighbors.

He also planted the Olive Trees on Lassen, as well as at other locations in the Community. To prove what a far sighted man he was, he planted them far enough apart as an entry to his home that they were almost safe when Lassen St. was to be widened a few years ago. Much wider apart than the beautiful pines and cork oaks which used to line Devonshire, or the picturesque old Catalpa trees that graced Topanga in Canoga Park (in the 30's and 40's).

Almost far enough apart to save them- but not quite. It took a great deal of effort by many people including the Chatsworth Historical Society, The Cultural Heritage Board of the City of Los Angeles, to have them declared a "Site of Historic Interest #49". From there we can thank our Councilman, Robert Wilkinson, for going to bat for us and having the street width decrease so that these living memories of another age can stay with us.

We are quite certain these trees were started from cuttings taken from the Olive trees at the San Fernando Mission. It is interesting to note that those old Mission Trees are only about twice as old as these trees are now!

It is sad but true that Chatsworth was not as good to the Grays as the Grays were to Chatsworth. Mr. Gray died a comparatively poor man. His home survived at Farralone and Lassen until 1977, when it was leveled (along with a large grove of Valley Oaks) to make way for the prestigious Brookfield Tract.

We think it is fitting that these Olive Trees are still standing and shading Lassen Street, a Memorial to a remarkable man- N.A. Gray.

- William F. Schepler  
January 1979



# Chatsworth Historical Society

Box 102, Chatsworth, California

1903

## CHATSWORTH'S 91st BIRTHDAY

WELCOME.....VIRGINIA WATSON, PRESIDENT  
CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE  
COLOR GUARD.....BOY SCOUT TROOP 226  
BRIAN HAYES, TOM HODGSON &  
ANDY WORKMAN

INTRODUCTIONS &  
CONGRATULATIONS FROM  
COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES.....

PRESENTATION.....SHEELAGH & KEITH WATTS  
PAST OFFICERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESENTATION.....GINNY DILL, NORTHRIDGE  
CULTURAL ARTS PROGRAM

PRESENTATION.....JANICE HINKSTON, FOUNDER  
SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAIN PARK ASS'N

INTRODUCTION OF MINNIE HILL PALMER, FIRST LADY OF  
CHATSWORTH AND ED DAVIS, HONORARY MAYOR OF COMMUNITY

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY".....SUNG BY THE GIRL SCOUTS OF  
STONE POINT NEIGHBORHOOD

### CAKE CUTTING CEREMONY

INTERMISSION  
GIRL SCOUTS WILL SERVE CAKE, COOKIES & PUNCH  
reconvene

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER. JANE MATTHEWS, VICE PRESIDENT

HISTORY OF THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY.....  
FERDINAND MENDENHALL

BRIEF BUSINESS MEETING ANNOUNCING NOMINATING COMMITTEE  
REPORT



Mar. 1979