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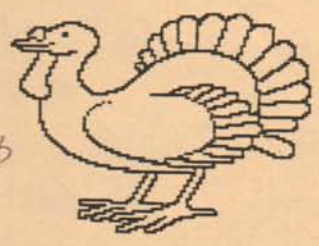
VOLUME 28, NO. 4

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CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

10385 Shadow Oak Drive Chatsworth, CA

Sheila Watts, President, Editor 91311-2063



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.....

First I would like to thank Lillian Schepler and the members who helped her with the recent yard sale. They worked long hours, taking merchandise from the storage unit and carrying it into the museum or to the parking area in front of the museum. They priced the goods for a week before the sale and then spent two days on the sale.

In spite of all the hard work involved, the sale itself had disappointing financial results and we are looking for new fund raising activities. Yard sales are in competition with the hundreds of garage sales throughout the valley and our October sale raised less than \$700.

Next I would like to thank our gardeners. These include Betty Summers, Dean and Candy Craig, Ramon Avila, Virginia Watson & Lillian Schepler. They have all contributed a great deal of time and effort to keeping the gardens looking pretty and neat. However, the time has come for us to ask City Parks and Recreation to assist with the upkeep of the Acre. Mr. Jeffrey Jones is in charge of the horticulture department of Orcutt Park and he is studying the situation and will decide how best they can help.

A special thank you to Jim Summers for taking care of the fallen apple tree. We have had some very forceful winds lately and the old apple tree across from the kitchen blew down. Dean & Candy moved it away from the rose gardens where it fell and then Jim came along and sawed it into small enough pieces for disposal. All of this is appreciated.

Thanks also to Bill Schepler for the second section of "Getting Away from Chatsworth," that is included in this issue. Bill wrote it before leaving on vacation last spring. We appreciate it very much.
Sheila.

NOVEMBER PROGRAM MEETING!

The meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 20 at 7:30 p.m. at the Chatsworth Museum. A very interesting program has been arranged and I hope you'll all plan to attend.

Daryl Schaffer will be the speaker and she is the owner of The Antiquary in Canyon Country. Daryl is a friend of Everett Cleveland's and in addition to a talk on antique and collectible household goods she has agreed to make unwritten appraisals of items submitted by members of the audience.

Bring any antique or collectible item for appraisal and join the fun....we'll be awarding prizes in various categories including a prize for the most unusual item submitted, a prize for the item with the most interesting story, a prize for the oldest and more!

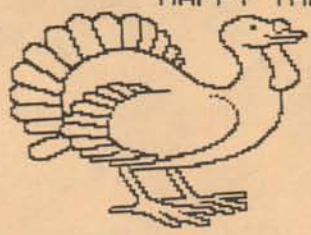
Refreshments will be served and will include pumpkin pie, ginger bread, parkin, coffee, tea and spiced cider.

Please come and enjoy a most interesting and congenial evening.....you may be the big prize winner!

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**Note from the editor:**

Keith and I will be in New York for the week of Thanksgiving, visiting with daughters Heather and Jennifer and taking in the Macy's Parade. It will be the first time in 21 years that we've spent Thanksgiving with Heather and eight years since we've spent it with Jennifer.

**HAPPY THANKSGIVING DAY TO ALL!**





HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE AT THE ACRE!



THE CHATSWORTH HOLIDAY PARADE.....

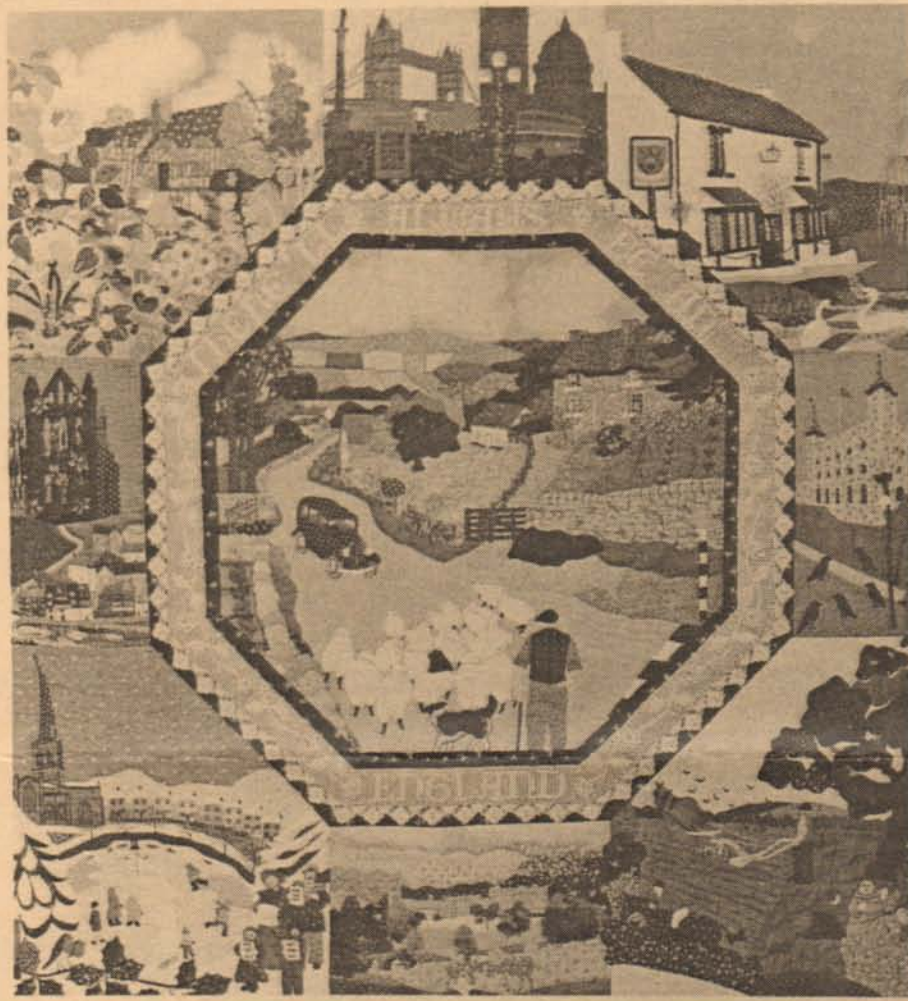
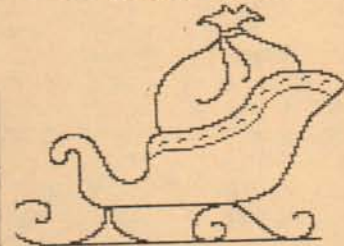
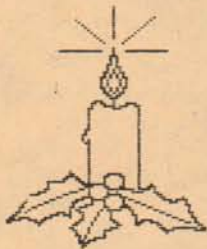
This event will be held from 1 to 4 p.m., on Sunday, December 2nd as part of our regular open house series. The docents will be on hand to give tours of the house, gardens and museum and the public is invited.

The parade will start at 1 p.m., on Sunday, December 9th at Devonshire Street at Vassar Avenue and will travel east to Mason Avenue.

This will be a special event for the Society as we shall honor Zena Thorpe for the spectacular quilt that she made. The quilt was entered in the international quilt contest at Hatfield House, England and won top honors. It has been on display in Houston, Texas but will be here at the Chatsworth Museum for the Open House. The quilt has to be seen to be appreciated - it is exquisite! Plan to attend the Open House, visit with friends and view the history-making quilt!

CHS owes many thanks to Bea Berman who made arrangements with the local office of Wells Fargo Bank to have members ride in the parade in the Wells Fargo Wagon! Lila and Bill Schepler will be riding, in honor of their 50th wedding anniversary and president Sheila Watts. Staff members of the local bank will also be included on the float.

We hope you'll all turn out to cheer us along the parade route.



VIIth NATIONAL PATCHWORK CHAMPIONSHIPS  
6th - 9th JUNE 1991

HATFIELD HOUSE  
Hertfordshire





## GETTING AWAY FROM CHATSWORTH PART II

The last installment found my family leaving home in the western part of Los Angeles to move to their ranch in Chatsworth. Really, the only reason we still had this place to move into was because there was absolutely no sale for property such as this. Citrus groves rarely paid their way, most farming didn't. In fact, if you were careful, you could buy lots of property by just paying the taxes due. Or, even better, by going to the tax auctions where you bought it for less than the taxes. But you had to be careful for the property might be encumbered with a mortgage or, even worse, street bonds.

Speaking of street bonds, Topanga Canyon Blvd. south of Marilla to Roscoe was built with street bond monies and many people lost their property when they couldn't pay them. This included large land owners such as Porter Estates. You could buy these street bonds for as little as ten cents on the dollar.

There was a man in Chatsworth at that time who bought up many of these cheap bonds. He then waited until these properties came up for sale. He would attend the sale and make a very low bid on the property. Usually, there would be another bidder so he would bid it up being careful not to make the winning bid. The winning bidder, of course, paid the taxes--so now there no back taxes due. He then approached the new owner and would offer to sell him the street bonds to the place for 50% of face value. The property was never worth even 50% of the value of street bonds so there was no sale. Now, he owned a very saleable piece of property with taxes paid and street bonds which he had purchased at 10¢ on the dollar. It was men like this who gave real estate brokers a bad name!

Before I leave this interesting character of my youth, I would like to tell another story that was told about him (and knowing the man we all believed it). He owned acreage along the railroad where he always planted ten or twenty acres of oats. If the price of hay was down that year at harvest time it very often caught on fire. He would send the Southern Pacific Railroad a very fair bill for the value of his crop that was destroyed by sparks from the steam locomotive that steamed by in those days. They went along with it several times until I suppose someone in their accounting office noted it, and he got a stern letter saying that this would be the last time they would pay such a claim. I don't believe he ever had another fire.



But back to our story. There were practically no jobs of any kind available. Men who were accepted by the armed forces, especially the navy, were required to be in perfect physical condition and with a darn high I.Q. to go with it. If you wanted a job as gas station attendant with Standard Oil you had to have a Bachelor of Arts Degree!

The whole system was virtually at a stand still. Though, if you had a Civil Service job you had it made. They might cut your salary a little but you had a job. Those few Civil Service jobs that did open up usually required college degrees and years of experience. If they didn't, in many cases, they had thousands of applicants. Some of you will remember Kelly Johnson who was our Chatsworth mail man for many years. He told me how easy it was for him to land the job in boom times of the late twenties and how many people tried to get it away from him when times got hard. He was a Republican and in those days the Postmaster usually changed with each new Administration (and it usually didn't stop with the Postmaster). But Chatsworth had always leaned toward the Republican side so he was able to keep his job- but that was politics.

I don't recall the year Kelly retired, but it was long after World War II. He always had a long mail route from Chatsworth Lake to Twin Lakes. But the day after he retired four rural delivery men took over his routs.

When we arrived to settle on the ranch in 1932 my father was well experienced in what such an operation cost to run. He had owned the place for three years. He even knew the theory of what had to be done. I can remember one very unhappy event when he came out one winter day in 1931 to talk with the caretaker who had slept through a freeze, when they had lost the entire orange and lemon crop for that year. He didn't discharge him, but everyone felt very badly. To make matters worse it was late in the winter and the smudge pots had been fired-up more than once that season. Each firing must have cost several hundreds of dollars for fuel alone.

Speaking of coming out to Chatsworth before we moved here, I remember one time when we had stopped on the way out at a small cafe in an orange grove along Ventura Blvd. for a 10¢ piece of pie. My father told me "Someday this street will be lined solidly with houses and business across the entire Valley". We were looking at a two lane street almost empty and in rather poor repair. I was a little worried about him that day!



My dad was no farmer but he tried. We put in a big garden, bought chickens and rabbits, planted berries and more fruit trees, put in several acres of alfalfa and we even bought a cow. One cow I remember we bought up on Oat Mountain. She was a young Jersey heifer who looked too small to be with calf, but she was anyway. When we got her out of the truck she ate all the weeds in her corral, but that was all. So for two days we watched her and she didn't eat. At last, I took her head and stuffed some alfalfa hay down her throat. She coughed and sputtered but started to chew. She had never tasted alfalfa hay before. She wasn't the first or the last cow we had but none of them ever gave good milk. My mother was never able to make palatable butter from the cream. But I can still remember that cream! That was something I don't think you can buy today even if your Doctor would let you spoon it over your strawberries.

While I am on the subject of cows let me tell a story that happened a couple of years later- after I had gotten used to being a farm boy. My first car was a 1924 Maxwell that cost me \$25. Three of my classmates and I took off for the Pier at Ocean Park on a Friday night. I bet them I could go down Topanga Canyon without using the brakes. I won, but I did get a badly bent fender when I side-swiped the bridge near the bottom( the bridge used to be set at a very odd angle) We got to the pier alright and mostly walked around. We had very little money. We didn't dance at Casino Gardens even if Benny Goodman was there-it cost 10¢ a dance.

I remember that 3.2% beer had just been made legal and a 32 oz. schooner cost 10¢. Two of the fellows had a couple of these. So, about midnight, we headed for home. We hoped we had enough gas- we didn't. We ran out about one half mile from the top. We tried to push the car but it was too heavy. So, two of the fellows walked home to Canoga Park and two of us stayed with the car. In four or five hours they returned with one of their dad's cars and pushed me home to Chatsworth. I might add that in those four or five hours on the hill only one car passed and they weren't about to stop for a couple of big teen agers. That was rather unusual because in those days people stopped to give assistance.

I was telling my sister in law, the former Mary Thelma Shadwick who was our neighbor at the time, about this story and she also had a story about coming over Topanga late at night. They had been on a weiner bake at Castle Rock- you could do that then, have a fire right on the beach and no parking fees or anything. Anyway, on the way up the canyon their truck lights went out. So her



brother and a friend each laid on a fender of the truck holding lanterns they had been using for the weiner bake to serve as headlights and got home safely that way. Almost as good as hearing my father in law telling about coming home from dances covered with robes and blankets on the cold plains of Alberta, Canada, fast asleep- trusting in their horses to take them home. The roads there must have been even less crowded than Topanga.

Oh, yes, about that cow? My mother was frightened to death of cows, and my brother was too young to milk so my father was usually in charge of that task. I wasn't very good at it. This wasn't just my opinion, but the cows, also. But this Friday night my father was in Nevada with a mining engineer friend and I was supposed to do the milking. I had, of course, forgotten. It should have been done at 6 P.M. and now it was 6 A.M. and the poor cow was- shall we say- in distress. She was bawling and milk was spraying from her udders. This was one time she was glad to see even me, though I didn't have my fathers' touch.

The ranch we had moved to was part of what is now Rock Point Condominiums and Chatsworth Park North. We lived next door to Minnie Palmer and Lovell Hill though our home was a quarter of a mile east of them. The ranch had been laid out in 1919 and it was said to have cost over \$100,000 to put in, including over a mile of cement irrigation lines, 20 acres of oranges, 10 acres of lemons, 2 acres of avocados, 6 acres of persimmons. 2 acres of home orchard and buildings and the rest in oaks and rocks in their natural state. A very beautiful lay out, but I am sorry to say not a profitable one. This was really true of most of the orchards in the west valley. Even so, a great many people made lots of money off this land as it was cut up into smaller and smaller sites and turned into homes.

I can remember about 1935 when my father was trying to sell Chic Sales (the author of that well known little book about Outhouses) the ranch for \$50,000. And that was after the orchards were in full production and our house had been vastly improved. Fortunately for my mother and father (as it turned out) the deal fell through.

Even so, though we didn't know it, there were five more years of hard times to live through.

To be Continued