

Smoke Signal

VOLUME 32 NO. 8

February, 1995

CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

10365 Shadow Oak Drive

Chatsworth, CA

SHEILA WATTS, PRESIDENT

VIRGINIA WATSON, EDITOR

COMING EVENTS

Feb. 17, 18 & 19....Spring Symposium
Newhall. See Page 2

March 5, 1-4 p.m. Open House at the
HOMESTEAD ACRE
Team Two: Lillian
Schepler, Sheila
Watts, Bea Berman,
Sylvia Oates and
Lucille Clements.

March 7, 7 p.m.....Board Meeting at
Chatsworth Museum

March 11, 9:30 a.m. Saturday Birthday
Trip to Roy Rogers
and Dale Evans
Museum. See Page 3.

April 28,.....Whitsett Lecture
at CSUN. Page 3.

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* Docents Attend Workshop *

Donna Afflerbach, Betty Summers,
Lillian Schepler and Virginia Watson, as
well as Lila and Bill Schepler, all attended
the Docent League of Southern California's
workshop held at Frank Lloyd Wright's
Hollyhock House, better known as Barnsdell
Art Park in Hollywood. It was an audience
participation workshop on communication and
how to handle the problems that come up
while teaching history through a tour.

A thought-provoking event, docents
came back with many new ways to handle
different situations and techniques for
answering the many questions one encounters
while giving a tour.

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IN MEMORIAM

Memorial services were held February 7,
at Oakwood Memorial Park for **Virginia Graves
Ditto**, a long-time member of the Chatsworth
Historical Society and, at the time of her
death, the oldest living native still residing
in the area. Because of that, each year since
Minnie Hill Palmer died, Mrs. Ditto has been
extended the honor of cutting the community's
birthday cake.

Born in Chatsworth on September 7, 1924, Mrs.
Ditto spent almost her entire life on the same
property where she was born near Chatsworth
Park North.

She attended Chatsworth Park Elementary
School and several times shared publically her
memories of that experience. She attended
Canoga Park High School and donated her high
school sweater and yearbooks to the CHS
collection.

A member of the pioneer Graves family of
Chatsworth (Part owners of the Graves and
Hill General Store) Mrs. Ditto's ancestors
also included members of the Donner Party
who crossed Death Valley.

She traveled extensively and loved it
immensely. She enjoyed knitting, gardening,
bridge and animals, especially cats, turtles
and tortoises, and was known for her quick,
witty remarks.

She is survived by her five children,
four grandchildren, four great-grandchildren,
and her sister Bonnie Jean Lakey of Vashon
Island, Washington. Her son Henry is a
continuing member of the CHS.

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HEATHER'S LAST DANCE.

On Sunday, January 15, Heather Watts retired from the New York City Ballet after 25 years as a principal dancer. The program took place at the State Theatre in Lincoln Center.

Heather chose as her last dance, *Valse Triste* to the music of Jean Sibelius, choreography by Peter Martins; she was partnered by Jock Soto. It was an extraordinary event with standing room only. At the conclusion of the dance the audience gave her a standing ovation lasting ten minutes.

Curtain call after curtain call continued all the while roses were pouring over the stage from the rafters and from the audience. She received two huge bouquets of roses as well as a large heather plant and a number of people were on stage to bow to her.

The performance was televised on CBS that evening.

Afterward, friends hosted a party for 450 guests at the Landmark on the Park on Central Park West where it seemed that most of New York was present. Among the guests were Peter Martins, Jerome Robbins and Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Family members attending the event included Mark & Cynthia Watts, Kevin & Diane Watts, Jennifer & Mitch Green Heather's siblings; an aunt and uncle, Joy & Morris Broyles of Virginia and her parents, Keith & Sheila Watts.

Heather was interviewed on PBS by Charlie Rose a few days prior to the retirement. During that program, highlights of her

career were discussed. Heather was the last of the Balanchine ballerinas, who had worked closely with the choreographer and company director, George Balanchine.

In 1979 at the request of then President Jimmy Carter, Heather appeared at the White House in a program of dance when she was partnered by Baryshnikov.

For the past 14 years she has directed the N.Y. State Regents School for Gifted Children in Saratoga Springs. In recent years she has directed a group of "Stars of the New York City Ballet," on tours of 90 cities in the United States and Europe. She turned her celebrity to charitable groups, helping raise funds for aid related causes as a director of God's Love We Deliver and for the Last Wish Foundation for children.

Heather received ballet training locally at the Sheila Rozanne Ballet Center before being admitted to the School of American Ballet, the training school for City Ballet. She joined the company at age 16.

By Sheila Watts

CONFERENCE NEWS

Our neighboring Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society will host the 1995 Conference of California Historical Societies' Spring Symposium this weekend, Feb. 17, 18 and 19, at the Heritage Junction Historic Park in Newhall.

Lots of interesting programs and trips are planned and it isn't too far or too late to attend some or all of it.

For more information call Paul Kreutzer, (805) 251-3145.

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Marshall Berman will undergo **fetal transplant surgery** for the treatment of Parkinson's Disease on Monday, February 20, at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles. He is expected to be in the hospital for a week or so, reports Bea, but for at least two months he will have to be very careful and be isolated at home because his immune system will be affected.

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Lillian Schepler is back in her own condo following about a month spent in the Seven Star Hotel while workmen repaired the earthquake damage. Lillian reports that she did not get a room with a heart-shaped spa, but she did report how nice everyone was to her, especially the day she locked her purse inside her car and the management helped her to get back her keys.

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HENRIETTA WASHBURN has moved to Florida to be near her son Bob, his wife Kim and their baby Melissa.

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ROY ROGERS has been hospitalized for heart problems, according to the news media. At this writing he is in Loma Linda Hospital but we hope he will be home soon.

We plan to make our trip to Victorville on March 11, and we were hoping he could be present. Dale Evans Rogers called to say that one or both of them would be there, but that was before he got sick.

For the tour we will meet at 9:30a.m. at The Homestead Acre. The bus (Councilman Berson arranged for the bus for us.) will be there. We should arrive in Victorville about 11:30 and will have lunch at the Hometown Buffet. Cost of the lunch is \$5.39 including tax. After lunch we will have a self-guided tour of the Museum. Lunch cost is not included.

Cost of the trip is \$10.00 Send check or Money Order to The Chatsworth Historical Society, 10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA 91311. There are still a few seats left.

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At the February board meeting it was decided to have a fund raiser on Sunday, April 30 at The Acre.

It may be called a Garden Party and may have displays, demonstrations, plant sales, flower arranging, bake sale, white elephant sale and a fashion show--possibly using our own costume collection (that part is not clear yet as ye olde editor will also be the chairwoman of that part of the event.

Lots and lots of help will be needed! We are running out of the man and woman power needed to put on such an event. If there is any part of the project that you are interested in working on, please call Zena Thorpe, 882-3572 or Donna Afflerbach, 882-0485 eves, to volunteer. They are in charge.

John Thorpe is in charge of set-up and return-to-normal operations. He needs volunteers also. Please call him if you can set-up tables, put up chairs, return items to storage afterward or what have you. His number is 882-3572. (Same as Zena's--they are still married.)

Betty Summers is in charge of plant sales. She is potting up cuttings now. Call her if you can babysit a plant or pot one up for us to sell. Or if you have a specialty and can donate a plant give Betty a call at 341-2714 and we will arrange to pick it up.

We have been having only two major fund raisers a year. Our spring festival which has been called everything from a Rose Festival to a Garden Show and then in October we have our Pioneer Day. The rest of the year we carry on our Open House keep up the Cottage and the Museum and participate as much as possible in community events.

Money earned from our projects goes to pay for insurance (\$1250.00 a year!) paying for lights including air conditioning, telephone, Smoke Signals, postage and incidentals.

Please turn to page four.

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WHAT'S UP (cont.)

We haven't bought anything for the house for ages--however we borrowed money from the Small Business Administration for our earthquake damage and our new carpeting in the Museum was included in that. Bea Berman made the arrangements for the carpeting, Sheila stayed all day at The Acre while they laid it and Virginia, Sheila and Betty Summers, emptied the cases so they could be moved. Keith Watts and Ramon Avila also helped with changing and moving the cases.

Because we are short of volunteers, we had to pay extra to have the majority of the cases and the desk, bookcases etc. moved in and out and rearranged. Stop by and see it--it looks a lot better.

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NOMINATING COMMITTEE NAMED

A **nominating Committee** was named by the president at our February board meeting. Keith Watts, and John Thorpe were appointed and Bea Berman volunteered to serve. They will meet and report at our March Birthday meeting which will take place on the bus on the way to Victorville.

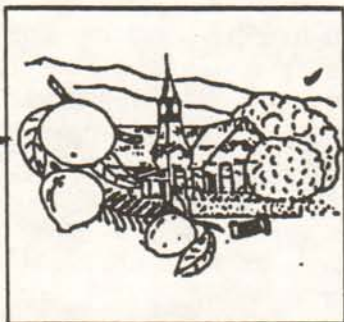
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Suggestions are welcomed - Please send any suggestions for improving the Smoke Signal or any suggestions for improving our meetings or programs in the Society to Suggestions: The Chatsworth Historical Society, 10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA 91311.

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Chatsworth Historical Society
10385 Shadow Oak Drive
Chatsworth, CA 91311



Mrs. Lillian Schepler
22335 Devonshire St.
Chatsworth, CA 91311