



Smoke Signal

Volume 32 No. 10

April, 1995



CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth CA 91311
(818)-882-5614

President: Sheila Watts Editor: Virginia Watson

COMING EVENTS!

From the President:

Thank you so much for all your well wishes on the occasion of my recent surgery. As mentioned in the last Smoke Signal, I had hip replacement surgery on March 14. I was very fortunate and everything went well - I was home from the hospital in one week and after 3 weeks and 2 days I was discharged. I'm still using a cane outdoors and must continue physical therapy for another week. Here I am, ready to get on with the rest of my life and grateful for the rapid recovery.

I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at the Festival on April 30. I'll be there at the White Elephant booth.

Sheila

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OPEN HOUSE
Sunday, May 7

Docents:
Team Four:
Vicki Wyant for Virginia
Zena Thorpe
Paula Delzer
Evelyn Kanouse

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INSTALLATION - Tuesday, May 16, 7 p.m.
At The Acre

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The Chatsworth Historical Society has recently been having two major fund raisers a year. The spring Garden Festival and the fall Pioneer Day. This allows our members to have more time to be docents, lead tours, clean and fix up The Acre and Gardens, Museum and Library.

This month the Garden Festival is planned for **Sunday, April 30, from noon to 4 p.m. at The Homestead Acre, 10385 Shadow Oak Drive.** Enclosed with your Smoke Signal is a flyer telling all about the event.

Donna Afflerbach and Zena Thorpe and their committee have most of the details ironed out as you can see from the following report.

GARDEN FESTIVAL REPORT

The committee for the Garden Festival is hard at work fine-tuning all the details that an event of this scope requires. A call is going out for docents and members to help at the various booths and displays. Your help, even for an hour or two, would help considerably and allow others to enjoy the goings-on. Call Donna in the evenings at 882-0485 to volunteer. If you cannot attend as a volunteer or visitor, you could help provide some needed items. Card tables (10) with or without chairs are in need for the Duchess' Tea Room, call Zena at 882-9954. Sheila is looking for NEW but UNWANTED items for her White Elephant Table. She can be contacted at 341-4489. Please make that call to help as soon as you finish reading this newsletter.

Thanks, Zena and Donna, Co-Chairwomen

Past president Jane Matthews was one of the participants in the 50th Anniversary celebration of the Allied Landing in France, a turning point of World War II. Jane sailed over on the QE2 and wrote this first-hand account of the ceremonies for the Smoke Signal.

I was fortunate to be among those who attended the D-Day ceremonies in France last June. I flew to London on June 4, spent the night and next day there, took the boat train to Southampton (it was raining so the dockside band concert was cancelled.) I wondered why Cunard kept moving up the departure time on the QE2. Since Cunard had supplied the Queen and the QE1 for troops during WW II, they went all out to celebrate this occasion. And our U. S. Department of Defense worked on the plans for three years.

We sailed around 5 p.m. and anchored outside of Portsmouth in Stokes Bay. What awaited the next day aboard was probably the highlight of the voyage. It was called the Solent Review of Veterans. I had to look up "Solent." (The Sol is printed on Navy maps of the area.) Two ocean tides flow around Britain from the north seas and meet the outcoming tide in opposition daily at the mouth of the Hamble River. Ours was the lead ship in the two rows of destroyers and cruise ships. President Clinton spent the night aboard the flattop USS George Washington anchored next to the QE2. In the afternoon Queen Elizabeth accompanied by heads of state attending the D-Day ceremonies sailed by on The Royal Britannia saluting the veterans on the two rows of ships.

Activities went on all day (see photos in the Museum display for May), hundreds of small boats were in the Bay, and Spitfires and other vintage planes saluted the ships. French and American wreaths were thrown on the waves to honor Navy personnel.

In the evening we led the flotilla toward the French shore, and the QE2 was berthed at Cherbourg for the night. Many destroyers lined the shores of the battles next day. In the morning we were bused to the first ceremony for American veterans at Utah Beach. The crowd was smaller there, only three reviewing stands. Presidents Mitterand and Clinton entered. Clinton gave the speech and was welcomed warmly by the veterans

After a catered lunch in a blue and white tent, we boarded the bus again for Omaha Beach. Schools and businesses were suspended for the day and there was a security officer at every crossroad. The weather in the morning was similar to that of D-Day, overcast, chilly and drizzles. It cleared by 3 p.m. for the ceremony at Omaha Beach where the President again spoke to the veterans. **9,386 stones mark the graves of Americans, and there were small French and American flags in front of each. The French Government has given the U. S. this park land.** Utah Beach is swampy and rather wild, while Omaha has lawns and trees.

Bob Hope and Dolores gave two shows on the QE2. Glenn Miller's Band played as did the Royal Marine Band. Several officers from the Scottish regiment piped. Walter Cronkite and Andy Rooney were aboard and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. was interviewed in a ship's lounge. Dame Vera Lynn performed twice. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. (I lost a cousin at the Battle of the Bulge and two other cousins served in the Army.)

We sailed back to Southampton, left off 1,000 and took on 500 passengers (quite a few Germans) and sailed to New York City, my first Atlantic crossing by ship.

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Ghost Town Resting Peacefully In Nature's Sanctuary.....By Nancy Razanski

A 3,035 acre unspoiled land expanse frozen in time for over a century, the previously owned Santa Clarita Chevron oil fields will now be preserved as parkland with the purchase by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. The Conservancy, along with the City of Santa Clarita, will buy this rolling-hilled, oak-hardwood savannah for \$4.9 million dollars.

When this fantastic news broke in the April 6, 1995 "Los Angeles Times" article, my estatic first response was, "I know that wonderful place! It's the scenic wonderland route to the ghost town Mentryville." I flashed back to the October 21, 1978 excursion to Mentryville that Janice Hinkston and I took as part of the fall conference of the Associated Historical Societies. It was hosted by the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society and the Newhall Women's Club.

Even more amazing than Mentryville's status as the first California oil town now consisting of the Mentry Mansion, the one-roomed Felton School circa 1885-1932, and an old barn, was Carol Lagasse. Carol, the wife of Standard Oil employee Frenchy Lagasse, has a creative talent for rescuing and restoring antiques. Carol once even rescued a bisque doll head from a city dump. In 1978 Carol was then working on restoring the schoolhouse and the Mentry Mansion. I wonder if her work is completed yet?

I was fortunate to obtain the autograph of an old school marm from Felton School that day. Her name was Helen Mace Burson. She taught at the one-roomed pioneer schoolhouse from 1915-1917. Helen put her John Hancock next to an article on Mentryville which appeared in a book I had just purchased from the Santa Clarita Historical Society. It was entitled, "A Guide to Historic Places in Los Angeles County," written by the History Team of the City of Los Angeles American Revolution Bicentennial Committee in 1978. Also included in the book were listings of Chatsworth's Historic Sites namely, Stoney Point Outcropping, Palmer Residence, Old Stagecoach Trail, Indian Pictographs, Oakwood Memorial Park, and Chatsworth Community Church circa 1903.

Back in 1978 and up until this present purchase, people could only travel through the oak savannah to Mentryville with special permission from Standard Oil obtained through the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society's Carol and Franchy Lagasse. Conservancy Director Joe Edmiston said that the area will now be open for public recreation within weeks.

Enroute to Mentryville, I couldn't believe this golden grassland, whose heights mingle ethereally with twisted oak branches could exist anywhere else but Paradise itself. Imagine how green it must look now with all the recent rains. If only Standard Oil would sell it for parkland someday or keep it forever, I had prayed. This prayer stayed dormant like a wildflower seed within me for nearly 17 years. Then on April 6, 1995, this dormant seed of a prayer burst forth into fruition. God Bless everyone responsible for keeping this area intact for future generations of people and wildlife.

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(Ed. note: Nancy is a past president of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association and a Life Member of the Chatsworth Historical Society.)

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LILA SCHEPLER NOMINATED
FOR COORDINATING COUNCIL AWARD

Lila Schepler, who finished out the first term of office as president when founding president Chuck Janess had a serious heart attack, is the CHS nominee for the 1995 Outstanding Citizen, the Chatsworth Coordinating Council award.

Mrs. Schepler has been president of the Society during several of our most eventful years. Finishing Janess' first year, she served again and was president and leader when we moved the church in January, 1965. Who can forget that final Sunday ceremony she organized? A cold, windy afternoon filled with reminiscing, poetry and speeches before the Monday morning move. And she was president again in 1976 when during the country's bicentennial celebration, the church was finally finished and rededicated.

In August, 1993, both Lila and Bill were honored at the 90th birthday celebration of the Pioneer Church for their part in saving, moving and rehabilitating the church building.

However, CHS discovered that although Bill had received the Outstanding Citizen Award, Lila had never won. Taking into consideration the 60 years of volunteering she has given the community, the CHS executive board voted to place her name in nomination, not only for her many hours of devotion to the Society, but her church and community volunteer services also.

The announcement of the winner is always kept a secret until the installation banquet of the CCCC and Society members are invited to attend.

At the April executive board meeting, John Thorpe announced that another CHS executive board member has been nominated for the same award. Keith Watts, our first vice president, was nominated by the Chatsworth Friends of the Library.

AWARD STORY CONTINUED

A long time ago, when the award was first given, two awards were made, one for women and one for men. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Coordinating Council would go back to that arrangement?

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CURATOR'S CORNER

From time to time we have visitors to The Homestead Acre who are members of the Hill/Palmer family and we enjoy talking to them and having them visit.

Recently a woman who thought she might be related to the Chatsworth Hill's asked a friend to stop by The Acre and ask about the relationship. The friend is Jeanette Butler Gowan, neice of Valeta Butler. She lives in Cedar Rige, California and the friend's name is Norma Hill Rydlewski and she lives in Modesto, California. Her father's name was James Hill, the name of James David and Rhoda Jane Hill's oldest son.

I will be writing and talking to the two women on the telephone and will keep everyone posted as to her story which promises to be very interesting. Mrs. Gowan tells me that Norma is the baby depicted in a well-known painting titled, "Migrant Mother." Sorry I don't have any more details, but I'll report next month of the progress of the research.

One other time when I was working we had an interesting visitor who had been born on the property--I think he said in a tent. He was Cally Lily Hill Hardaker's son and he gave me a lot of information about the family.

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Dr. Ruth Boak, former president of the CHS has suffered a debilitating stroke. It was some time ago and Dr. Boak is currently bedridden at her home. A very active community worker, Dr. Boak was also president of the Chatsworth Chamber of Commerce and the Chatsworth Community Coordinating Council.
(Cont.)

WHAT IS A WHITE ELEPHANT?

We are always asking for white elephants to sell. What is a "white elephant?" Many of our members are familiar with the term, but some of our newer members haven't ever heard the expression.

The dictionary defines a white elephant as: 1. an abnormally whitish or pale elephant, found usually in Siam; (that will tell you how old my dictionary is) an albino elephant or 2. a possession of great value but entailing even greater expense or third an annoyingly useless possession.

But my recollection of a white elephant comes from the late twenties or early thirties when my aunts were very active in "club" work in Indiana. They participated as we do in rummage sales to make money. Very popular then were the white elephant statues, tiny or sometimes large, usually carved of ivory which was very plentiful then. Everyone had one or two knick-knacks like that, usually one or two elephants crossing a bridge, sometimes many elephants at a time, but they were very popular.

But soon people tired of them. When rummage sales came up, people donated their new, but never used, carved elephants to the sale in droves (or would it be herds?) To me that's what a white elephant sale reminds me of. Has anyone done any research on the subject? Would love to hear from you on the subject.



1903 PIONEER CHURCH, CHATSWORTH, CALIFORNIA

Dr. Boak story continued.

An avid horsewoman, Dr. Boak taught Microbiology at UCLA.

Cards and letters may be addressed to her at 85 Avocado Place, Camarillo, CA 93010.

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A ROSE IS A ROSE IS A ROSE.....

Have you noticed that we have new identification on some of our rosebushes? One of our newer docents and our vice president in charge of hospitality, Paula Delzer, is replacing many of our name tags identifying our plants. Lots of them were destroyed in the recent rains. Candy Craig is helping her to identify correctly the names and dates.

THANK YOU BOTH!

COMMEMORATIVE GIFT

Margaret Stichweh sent in a check to cover our May monthly payment to the SBA for our earthquake repair expenses. The donation was in memory of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Henry whose anniversary was May 16.

Bill Henry was the Washington, D. C. correspondent for the Los Angeles Times when the CHS was first started. He and his wife had a home here in Chatsworth and were members and supporters of the Society.

Thank you very much!

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GARDEN FESTIVAL

Don't forget our Garden Festival, Sunday, April 30th from noon to 4 p.m.

Volunteer to help or come and enjoy yourself. Remember it is one of only two fundraisers a year. SUPPORT OUR SOCIETY!
