



# Smoke Signal



CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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PRESIDENT: John Thorpe

GUEST EDITOR: Donna Afflerbach

FEBRUARY 1998

## "HISTORY-REBUILT" CCHS SPRING SYMPOSIUM FEBRUARY 20-22

The San Fernando Valley Historical Society will host the Conference of California Historical Societies Spring Symposium at the Airtel Plaza Hotel. Participants will enjoy a tour of historic sites in the west Valley including Leonis Adobe, the Canoga-Owensmouth Museum, Rancho Cordillera del Norte and our own Homestead Acre. "Fiesta Californio", a gala in the tradition of the old General himself, will be held Saturday evening at the beautifully restored Andres Pico Adobe in Mission Hills. Call Chuck Tichenor at 882-8375 for details on price and availability of these and other events.

## PROGRAM MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Our next program meeting will be on St. Patrick's Day, March 17<sup>th</sup>. We will be remembering Chatsworth's 110<sup>th</sup> birthday. Archivist, Robert Marshall will acquaint us with the CSUN Urban Archives Center which he heads.

January's program meeting featured Marlene Merkel who presented music, pictures, and jelly beans to accompany her fascinating comparison of the Eagle (General Sam Houston) and the Raven (General Santa Ana). Thanks to Joe Pampalone who coaxed Marlene to share her interest in history with us!

Virginia Watson enlivened the meeting with a little quiz about the past U.S. presidents' pictures currently on display. **Bud and Bunny Levine** teamed up to correctly identify the greatest number. Virginia hoped someone would recall who had donated this wonderful set of pictures to the Society so it can be properly documented.

## A PRESIDENTIAL QUIZ

Here is another chance to test your presidential knowledge.

## NAME THE PRESIDENTS PORTRAYED ON U.S. COINS.

(Answers at end of newsletter.)

## DOCENT DOINGS

### Sunday, March 1<sup>st</sup> Open House

Team Two: Lila Schepler, Lillian Schepler, Sylvia Oates, and Vicki Wyant.

Anyone who would like to help host the two CCHS tours of the Homestead Acre on Saturday, February 21 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. is welcome---- no experience necessary! All you need to do is be friendly and brag a lot about the Society and the Acre. Several of our docents will be preoccupied as guides on the buses for the CCHS tour as part of our Society's contribution to this important event. Call Donna at 882-0485 if you can help.



**ROSE & CRAFT FESTIVAL '98**  
**SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 10a.m to 4 p.m.**

Candy Craig has begun work on this year's spring event which will feature an **invitational gourd and basket artist's show and sale**, a rare/unusual rose bush sale, an award-winning quilt display as well as historic cottage tours. If you know of a vendor of fine hand-crafted items that might like to participate in this unique event, please call Candy at 341-4461 so she can send them an application.

**GARDEN HELP GIVEN**

**FROM THE PRESIDENT**

With all the rains we are having plus the removal of the trailer, the gardens should be at their best for the Rose Festival. It is thanks to Dean Craig's negotiating with Recreation and Park Department, that the trailer has now gone. So as soon as "El Nino" stops crying, we can clean up the Acre so that everyone can see the improvement its absence has made to the grounds. Dean also arranged for the repair and extension of the asphalt in front of the museum and to make other future improvements to the area.

John Thorpe

The future improvements John mentioned are now needed. The last onslaught of "El Nino" caused the creek to overflow, dislodging the bridge and flooding the shed with water and the driveway with mud and debris.

Thanks to **Shirley Herald** who answered last month's call for help in pruning the roses that we want to look fabulous for the rose festival in April. More help is welcome. Call Candy at 341-4461 and tell her when you can come. In return for your help, she will give you gardening tips as well as lessons in pruning techniques.

**THE SESQUICENTENNIAL BEGINS**

Zena Thorpe was an invited guest at the January 24<sup>th</sup> kickoff celebration in Coloma marking the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of James Marshall's discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill. Zena and co-designer Ellen Heck presented the **Sesquicentennial California Quilt**, a California Heritage Quilt Project, to Governor Wilson and the public. An immense ten foot square, it is still being finished by volunteer quilters in Sacramento. It will travel the state after its exhibition at the State Fair in September. The Society has reserved a stop in Chatsworth so we and other Valley residents can appreciate its full color and detail depicting California "golden discoveries".

A local event highlighting, the 1998 Sesquicentennial theme of "golden discoveries", is the **Silver Screen Cowboy Bus Tour** sponsored by the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society on March 29<sup>th</sup>. The \$35 tour begins with breakfast at the Heritage Junction Historic Park and meanders through locations used by silent and talking cowboy stars Tom Mix, Gene Autry, Hopalong Cassidy and others. Tour includes free admission to the Cowboy Poetry and Music Festival at the Melody Ranch where the tour ends. (805) 255-4910

**MEMBERSHIP**

The Society appears to have incurred a 'membership bonanza' this month. We are pleased to welcome the following new members: Eric Barker, Dr. and Mrs. Clark Merkel, and Bruce Faunce, all from Chatsworth--- Hazel Crute of Canoga Park--- Jean & Antonette Mabilon of Northridge--- Warren & Pamela Meyers of Valley Village--- Heather Watts and Dr. Jennifer Watts-Green, both residing in New York City.

In addition, we are delighted to receive membership renewals of Chatsworth residents Janice Lauritzen,



Shirley Herald, Ed & Leuise Mitchell and Victor & Vicki Wyant, as well as Nanci Oliva-Bond & Bob Bond of Williamsburg, VA.

The Society is indeed fortunate to have the additional support of these members and we look forward to their participation during this active year.

Keith Watts, V.P. Membership

### CONGRATULATIONS !

On January 27, 1998 one hundred seventy acres in the hills behind Chatsworth Park South officially became **The Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park**. Members of our Society were on hand to cheer Jan Hinkston, founder of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association, who symbolized the legion of people who worked so diligently for 28 years, each in their own unique way, to accomplish this dream.

The Society continues to show support for the success of the Historic Sate Park by having three of the Four-week Naturalist Education Program starting on February 21 at our site. Virginia Watson and Lila & Bill Shepler will provide expertise on the early settlers at the March 14<sup>th</sup> session. Anyone who is interested in enhancing their knowledge of the geology, wildlife, plants and Native Peoples of our area can attend. Details are on the enclosed flier.

### A MINI TOUR

Attendees of the CCHS Symposium will be touring selected Valley sites. You will have to take that tour to learn about those places. However, here are some facts about a place the buses will pass on that tour---- the **Van Nuys Airport**.

In the era of the barnstormer, a small group of men incorporated to build an airport in the rural San Fernando Valley. Opened in 1928 under the name **Metropolitan Airport**, it consisted of 80 acres amid trees and farmland. The hangar fees for a biplane were \$35 and landing fees were 50 cents.

Howard Hughes, Hoot Gibson, Cecil B. DeMille, Gene Autry and Wallace beery were among a growing number of stars flying at the expanding airport. Amelia Earhardt set a new speed record in 1929 at one of the many air races hosted there.

In the 30's Hollywood studio producers used it as a film location for the movies "Lost Horizons", "Storm Over the Andes", and "Men With Wings". "Casablanca " was filmed in the 40's, with "Lethal Weapon 4" just filmed recently.

In 1942 the United States Army acquired 163 acres of airport property and supplemented it with an additional 163 acres of land to construct what became known as the **Van Nuys Army Air Field**. After the war in 1949, the City of Los Angeles purchased the airport from the War Assests Administration for only one dollar----with the provision that the CA Air National Guard base remain on site. It was renamed **San Fernando Valley Airport**; then in 1957 received its current name the **Van Nuys Airport**.

The Air National Guard moved to the Channel Islands in 1990. Their former site served as a vital staging area for the military during the 1992 riots in Los Angeles and for the American Red Cross to prepare thousands of meals following the 1994 Northridge earthquake. 350,000 spectators at Aviation Expo '96 watched the B-2 Stealth Bomber make its first public appearance over Los Angeles.

Today Van Nuys Airport is touted the **busiest general aviation** airport in the world and the sixth busiest airport in the United States.

[Facts taken from A CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF VAN NUYS AIRPORT. Also available from the airport office, a complete list of films made at the airport location.]



## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

I wish to thank Virginia Watson and Keith Watts for their technical and moral support in getting this first attempt in composing a newsletter accomplished.

Donna Afflerbach

[ QUIZ ANSWERS : \$.01 Abraham Lincoln; \$.05 Thomas Jefferson; \$.10 Franklin D. Roosevelt; \$.25 George Washington; \$.50 John F. Kennedy; \$1.00 Dwight D. Eisenhower ]



THE FOUNDATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAINS  
presents . . .

*The Santa Susana Docents and invites you to a  
Four-week Naturalist Education Program.*

Enjoy with us a "Living Guide" to the Panoramic Santa Susana Mountains.  
Learn about the region you live in!

Enhance your knowledge and enjoyment  
of the geology, wildlife, plants, and Native Peoples of our area.

February 21: 9 AM - 3 PM

Bob Thomas  
Julian Gonzales  
Dana Dierkes

**Our Rocky Landscape**  
**Snakes and Lizards—How to live safely with them**  
**Practical Uses of Edible and Medicinal Native Plants**

February 28: 9 AM - 3 PM

Ray Sauvajot  
Rosi Dagit

**Wildlife Populations and Wilderness Corridors**  
**How Oaks Add Value to Our Lives**

March 7: 9 AM - 3 PM

Mati Waiya  
Art Langton  
Gloria Lothrop

**Chumash Dress, Dance, and Music**  
**Chaparral Birds of the Winter and Spring**  
**Hispanic Influences in our Region**

March 14: 9 AM - 3 PM

Craig Torres  
Virginia Watson,  
Lila & Bill Schepler  
Marge Feinberg

**His Tongva Ancestry and Traditional Soapstone  
Carving Skills**  
**A Portrait of Early Settlers' Lives**  
**Future of the Rim of the Valley Heritage Trail**

**Meet at** Visitor Center, Chatsworth Park South, 22360 Devonshire Street, Chatsworth.  
Brunch provided in the morning, snacks and drinks in the afternoon.  
Wear comfortable clothes and walking shoes.

**For more information or to RSVP to the series,** please call Gretha Davis at (818) 340-4011.

**Cost:** All four days for only \$15 if signed up by February 18<sup>th</sup>. The cost will be \$20 for sign-ups on February 21st. *Adult enrollees only.* Cost non-refundable, applicable to future naturalist programs.

**To Pay for the series by Mail:** Please make checks out to the "Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains." Mail to: **FPSSM**, c/o Gretha Davis, P.O. Box 4831, Chatsworth, CA 91313-4831

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