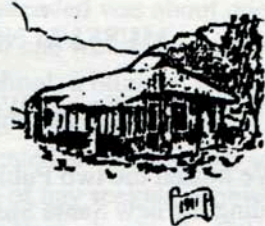


Smoke Signal

CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth CA 91311
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President: John Thorpe

December 1999

Editor: Zena Thorpe

The Season's Greetings to everyone. I hope your holidays are enjoyable and not too fattening!

The new year looks exciting for our society with the news that CSUN is trying to get a Federal grant to provide money for the maintenance and preservation of historical collections in the San Fernando Valley. All of the historical societies in the Valley have been invited to participate and will maintain a voice in the alliance should the venture come to pass. We have had the first organizational meeting and CHS took a prominent role due to us having our excellent web site. [//grad.cgu.edu/~bickell/webpage](http://grad.cgu.edu/~bickell/webpage)

John Thorpe

Chatsworth Historical Society Board 1999-2000

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COMING UP IN THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

FROM GRIZZLIES TO CATERPILLARS

January 18th, 7:30 - 9pm

PROGRAM AND BOOK SIGNING

Bill Schepler will show slides and talk about the historic changes in the West Valley. His new book "*Window into the Past*" will be available for sale.

Program: 8pm.

Refreshments, book signing & sale 7:30 and after program.

MUSEUM NOTES

At The Acre by Virginia Watson

We hosted the two Public Meetings regarding the new Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park Interim Plan in November. They were very well attended and very successful. Dan Preece conducted the meetings and other state park personnel attended.

The public that attended voiced their opinions about what the park needs such as signs, maps, cleaning up trash and repairing the stagecoach trail, protecting the historic and Native American artifacts and getting a ranger.

The suggestion of using The Homestead Acre as a visitor center was approached and listed as a possibility along with cooperating with the Los Angeles City Department of Recreation and Parks regarding hiking information.

Holiday fever has hit The Acre. The Wednesday-at-the-Acre Docents decorated the cottage this last Wednesday and a holiday potluck luncheon is planned for December 15 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., in the cottage. For more information call me (Virginia) at 818-341-3053 or Lila at 341-3447.

There will be two weeks when we don't meet on Wednesday after the luncheon but will resume on January 5, 2000.

Holiday Fever continued in planning our CHS entry into the Chatsworth Parade. Gary Standke (remember our blacksmith from Pioneer Day?) and his son, Alex, will ride on the float as well as Connie and Jerry Ager and hopefully Alejandro, Zena and John's grandson. The theme is "Forging Ahead In The New Millennium" and fits into the parade theme which is

" Helping the Children" by saying "Helping Children by teaching them about the past through our tours and events."

So - maybe it is reaching a little, but it is true. Elaine Campbell has been attending our history talks and will hopefully become a docent. She has lived in Chatsworth for a long time and is a welcome addition to our group. Ramon is still working on the fence for the area where we have our Petting Zoo. He still needs some more pipe and he thought maybe someone has some lying around at home. The pipe is 2" in diameter and the pipe he needs would have to be about 1 1/2" in diameter to fit down into the other pipe. It would also have to be about 6' long. Call him and get the details.

Jim Summers is going to take a couple of limbs off the pine tree over the tractor shed so we can use the boughs for our float for the parade.

That is what makes us such a good group.. we have people with so many different skills and they are always so good to help us out.

GROWING UP ON THE HOMESTEAD ACRE IN THE 1920's AND 30's

In 1986 Dean & Candy Craig interviewed Minnie Hill Palmer's children, Edith Palmer Butler (b.1910) and Leroy E. Palmer (b.1912) and Minnie's niece, Ruth Manny Hill Rider. Following is the last in a series of a recording of the interview.

The five interviews we conducted in 1986-87 with Edith Palmer Butler (EPB), Leroy E. Palmer (LEP) and Ruth Manny Hill Rider (RMHR) contained the following bits and

pieces of information and remembrance. Each is marked with the informant's initials.

As a teenager Edith begged to have her hair bobbed and a permanent in the new 'flapper' style, but her parents resisted. Finally they agreed and her father drove Edith into Hollywood to a beauty salon. It was Edith's first visit to Hollywood and a hairdresser. When Alfred Palmer picked up his daughter, he was shocked at the sight of Edith's short, curly hair and complained to the beauty operator who tried to explain that the tight, curly "perm" made Edith's hair look shorter than it really was, but Alfred Palmer was not pleased. (E PB)

During the years that Edith and Leroy lived on the Acre, Clarence Glenn, an attorney, friend and business associate of Lovell Hill often stayed with the family. Leroy told us that once, Lovell Hill, accidentally shot Mr. Glenn in the arm, but the injury was only a flesh wound and not serious. (LEP)

During the early 1930's Grandmother Hill (Rhoda Jane Enlow Hill), had difficulty walking and used a cane until the last, two or three years of her life. At that time she insisted she could not walk at all, without help, but many mornings, crumbs were found in the kitchen after an occasional, late night snack. Her bedroom was next to the kitchen. (LEP) (RMHR)

Edith Palmer Butler told us of an event that happened to her when the family was living in Montana and she was six years old.

The school Edith attended was about one mile from her house and one winter day, on her way home from school, a blizzard with blowing snow caught her about half way and she became disoriented and exhausted, so she lay down by a pile of hay seeking protection. The next thing, she knew, her mother Minnie was rubbing and warming her at home. Minnie, who had been worried when the storm came up, had gone to meet her little girl and had found her lying by the haystack, unresponsive and covered with snow. Edith had not been chilled too long and she suffered no serious illness or injury from the experience. She, herself, did not remember the incident, but had heard her mother tell the story many times. (EPB)

One of Minnie's older sisters, Rhoda Hill Smith, (Mrs. Arthur Smith of Whittier, CA.) with whom their father, James David Hill Sr. lived before his death, was reportedly blind, due to the use of improper medication when she was a young girl. (LEP) (EPB)

In the earliest photograph of the Hill Family, taken about 1900, in front of the original, homestead house, the young man in the white shirt, holding the reins of a horse was identified as Lovell Hill. The old man with James Hill Sr. was identified as an old, Civil War buddy who lived with the family and worked for board and room. Minnie is the rather tall teenage girl in the short skirt. (EPB) (LEP) (RMHR)

Leroy Palmer said his grandfather, James David Hill Sr., was friendly with an old Civil

War veteran (name unknown) who, in the "old" days, lived with the family and worked for board and room. The two men often went on mineral prospecting trips up near Baker, California where they had filed a mine claim. He said that the family had owned 320 acres of land near Baker and that Minnie and her brothers and sisters still owned the property in the 1930's, but the mine claim had never paid off. (LEP)

What's an Indian Acorn Leaching Basin?

The Homestead Acre has it's own leaching basin in the large sandstone boulder behind the cottage. It is an example of the far longer history of Native American culture on the Acre than the relatively short history of the Hill-Palmer family.

For thousands of years indigenous people of various tribal groups, now referred to as Fernandeno's, collected acorns from the large stands of oak studded grasslands that grew in many parts of the San Fernando Valley. Acorn meal was a staple of their diet, which included seeds, berries, nuts, bulbs, herbs, cactus fruits, fish and meat. It is reported that the two most commonly traded food items were acorns and salt. Tribal rights to stands of oaks and seed bearing grasslands were jealously guarded and defended. The natives maintained these food-producing areas by periodic, low-level burning to keep the chaparral from taking over and to remove insects and diseases to keep the crops healthy and productive. This method of food production is called permaculture.

In late summer or early fall the acorns were harvested by knocking the nuts from the trees with long poles. This also worked to remove dead branches. The acorns were then gathered in baskets and stored for later processing or, part of the crop could be prepared immediately. Depending on the type of acorn, it could be hulled by soaking in water until the husk split or by using a sharp stone tool to

extract the nuts. This work was traditionally performed by old women.

Acorn nuts are very nutritious and sweet, but only after the tannic acid that the thin brown inner skin contains is leached away.

Otherwise, the nuts are extremely bitter and the tannin, if ingested, has a constipating effect.

The hulled nuts were first pounded or ground into meal or flour in stone or wood mortars. In most areas of the valley the meal was put into fine, sieve-like baskets set over a sandy depression on the ground and then water, preferably warm, was poured over the meal until the tannin was dissolved and the water was clear.

In the Simi Hills, with its wealth of sandstone boulders, natural depressions could be enlarged or, grinding the soft sandstone with hard stone implements could make leaching basins. The acorn meal would then be soaked in many changes of water and drained in baskets to remove the tannin. This drain water was saved, boiled down and used for tanning leather.

The leached meal was then dried until it was used. A gruel-like soup, mush or unleavened bread, baked in stone-lined earthen ovens, were some of the ways the meal was prepared. It was often combined with herbs, berries or dried bits of meat to make small loaves that could be carried on long journeys.

It is thought that leaching basins like ours could have been used for holding the meal while it was pounded as well as serving as a leaching basin.

Candy Craig

DECEMBER - JANUARY CALENDAR

WEDNESDAY-at-the-ACRE is usually held from 9am to noon most Wednesdays, call Virginia for information. 341-3053

Dec. 11th, Saturday. 2 p.m. Help Decorate the CHS PARADE FLOAT. Homestead Acre.

Dec. 12th, Sunday 1 pm.

ANNUAL CHATSWORTH PARADE.

Dec. 15th WEDNESDAY-at-the-ACRE

Pot-luck Holiday Luncheon 11am - 2pm

**MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW
YEAR 2000**

Jan. 2nd, Sunday: 1-4 pm. OPEN HOUSE.

The Homestead Acre.

Jan. 4th, Tuesday: 7 pm CHS Board Meeting.

Jan. 5th, Wednesday, 7pm Sesquicentennial
Event Planning Meeting at the museum

Jan. 12th, WEDNESDAY-at-the-ACRE and
ROSE PRUNING DEMONSTRATION,
10 am.

Jan. 18th, Tuesday: 7:30-9 pm. PROGRAM
and BOOK SIGNING. (info: 3414461)

**CALIFORNIA SESQUICENTENNIAL
EVENT March 10th, 11th & 12th 2000**

Mark your calendar for this exciting event. We have received a substantial grant from the California Council for the Humanities and so our plans are just about finalised.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE

March 10th, Friday.

The California Sesquicentennial Quilt will be displayed at the Metrolink Station for viewing by local schools. .

March 11th Saturday

10am Opening ceremony with school bands

11:00am Lecture by Charles Bausback, noted historian from the Huntington Library

noon - 1pm Mariachi music

1pm Living History presentation, John Sutter

2pm Goodwill Industries, "Fashion Through the Ages" show Funded by Los Angeles Times

3pm Lecture by Albert Knight, archeologist and authority on Chumash culture

March 12th Sunday

10am Lecture by History prof. from CSUN

11am Presentation by Los Angeles Times columnist, Cecelia Rasmussen

Noon - 1pm music by Roy Rogers protege, guitarist David Arlen

1pm Living History presentation, Pio Pico

2pm Entertainment by Valleyaires Chorus

3pm Lecture by Catherine Muiholland, granddaughter of William Mulholland.

There will be an ongoing digitized exhibition on the history of the region in the museum. It will be created by Robert Marshall of the Urban Archives Center at CSUN and Lara Bickell, a graduate student in history at the Claremont Graduate School..

Presentations outside include Flamenco dancing, Native American dancing, square dancing and Chinese dancing. There will also be demonstrations of gold-panning, blacksmith, Indian artifacts, cowboy culture - roping etc., celebrity look-alikes, Buffalo Soldiers and much more.

LEARN TO PRUNE YOUR ROSES

For hands-on experience: Come to the Acre, Wed. **Jan. 12, 10 am. for a Rose Pruning Demonstration.** Bring gloves and pruners. Candy (3414461)

The Sesquicentennial Event Planning meeting scheduled for Dec. 15th has been cancelled. The next meeting will be January 5th, 7pm.

Chatsworth Historical Society
10385 Shadow Oak Drive

