



Smoke Signal

CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Co-Presidents: Linda & Andre van der Valk

June 2000

Editor: Zena Thorpe

As the new Co-Presidents of the Chatsworth Historical Society, we would like to thank John & Zena Thorpe for their hard work and efforts over the past years for the society, but especially this year with the Sesquicentennial Celebration and the resulting financial success. This year the Sesquicentennial Celebration and John & Zena's leadership resulted in establishing a record fund raiser for the society and allowed us to finalize our non-profit status with the IRS, opening new avenues for future fund raisers and applying for grants previously only talked about.

As Co-Presidents, we would like to ask our general membership for ideas and their participation in the Historical Society. We would like to get the word out to the community of our offerings and to solicit our longtime members to "catalog their memories" so that "old Chatsworth" can be preserved.

We look forward to initiating steps to preserve the homestead cottage, soliciting grants and help from the city in repairs and replacement as necessary.

We would like to thank Virginia Watson for conducting a wonderfully entertaining installation for us and our board members.

Linda & Andre

Chatsworth Historical Society Board 1999-2000

Co-Pres.....	Linda & Andre van der Valk	882-3661
Programs.....	John Thorpe	882-3572
Rec. Secretary.....	Bea Berman	341-5449
Treasurer.....	Lillian Schepler	341-2697
Membership.....	Keith Watts	341-4489
Smoke Signal.....	Zena Thorpe	882-3572
Museum Curator.....	Virginia Watson	341-3053
Cottage Curator.....	Betty Summers	341-2714
Hospitality.....		
Gardens Directors.....	Dean & Candy Craig	341-4461
Director-at-large.....	Betty Summers	341-2714
Director-at-large.....	Barbara Pampalone	882-2395
Director-at-large.....	Ruth Grant	882-3990
Photog. materials.....	Bill Schepler	341-3447
Permanent member.....	Lila Schepler	341-3447

VALLEY HISTORY DISPLAY

A special display of San Fernando Valley history, assembled and curated by Robert Marshall, Director of Urban Archives at CSUN, and Lara Bickell, Ph.D. candidate at Claremont University, has been retained for California Museum Week, June 4th - 11th. Numerous historical societies throughout the Valley loaned some of their most prized artifacts for a commemorative display at our California Sesquicentennial event in March. It was received with much interest. Don't miss this opportunity to see this unique presentation. The museum will be open from 1pm to 4pm on June 4th, 5th, 6th, 8th, 9th, 10th & 11th and from 10am to 4pm on June 7th. On June 11th we will have a special reception to thank all the participating historical societies.

WHAT'S NEW AT THE ACRE

Our Sesquicentennial exhibit is coming to a close at our Chatsworth Museum as this Smoke Signal goes to press and we are ready to begin California Museum Week. We will be open all week, every day 1- 4 p.m. except for Wednesday when we will be open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. All our docents, except Elaine Campbell who is on vacation, are taking part. Many of our exhibitors are also helping out.

Although it is the last week for the exhibit at our Museum there is a possibility that the exhibit may be moving to the Sunland-Tujunga area to the Little Landers Bolton Hall for a few months and then possibly going to the Burbank Historical Society. Lara Bickell is working on that project now and you will hear more about it later.

Our new docents have received their badges and will be wearing them for our California Museum Week opening and most of them have costumes to wear.

Our unusual hard-working docent team of Connie and Gerry Ager were honored at the recent Chatsworth Community Coordinating Council Banquet along with Lara Bickell and Robert Marshall who planned and produced the exhibit with our help.

June 14th we are having a school tour, Noble Avenue Elementary School is coming back for the second time. They really enjoyed learning about the pioneers of the Valley and we enjoyed having them.

We have received a gift for our collection from John and Ed Ahlstrom. They are the son and grandson of Reuben Ahlstrom and have given us a map and Reuben's notes regarding the Post Office, its locations and the Post Masters and Post Mistresses.

Reuben Ahlstrom was the son of Hanna Johnson, one of Ann Willden Johnson's

daughters. I believe Hanna Avenue is named for her.

Melvin Woodward, who has visited our Acre many times in the past, has bought a house in Yorba Linda and is back at his computer working on his genealogy of the Hill family. He is renewing his dues and will be attending Pioneer Day on Oct. 15. Woodward has verified information about his great grandfather James David Hill's death plus he has taken pictures of Hill's tombstone.

James David Hill was Minnie's father. A Civil War Veteran, he lived at Sawtelle for a while in later life and was killed in an automobile accident on Nov. 23, 1923. He is buried in the old Evergreen Cemetery in Boyle Heights, Woodward said. Military records had shown that Hill had died at Sawtelle, but there was no record of him being buried there so it is good to have that little bit of history cleared up.

We had had a bee problem in the kitchen at The Acre. Betty Summers kept finding dead bees on the floor and we could not see where they were coming from. Recently Candy and Dean found that they were coming in from around the water pipes on the outside and getting in the kitchen from under the sink. We called the City and they sent out two men to spray the area. We may have a bee hive in the wall there and if so it will have to be removed. (Only a part of the wall will have to be removed.) The spray should work until our California Museum Week is over and then the City can patch up the area.

That same Friday we had three BIG raccoons visit The Acre. They came up the wash chased by a group of cawing crows. One of them climbed up in the old Black Walnut tree. They seemed to have moved on -- but if you are at The Acre be careful and look out for them -- they can be mean.

It has been an eventful month !

Virginia Watson, Curator

EILEEN JANESS DIES

Eileen Janess, one of our beloved founding members, has passed on at age 92. She and her husband at the time, our first president, Charles Janess, attended our organizational meeting on April 17th, 1963 and from then on the two of them were active leaders of our group. Eileen served in several different board positions and then spent 12 years as treasurer, filling out the forms for the Charitable Trust, helping with all our official paperwork, as well as committee work to keep the Society going.

Dedicated to her family, her church and her Community, Eileen organized the first Girl Scout Troop in Chatsworth in October, 1946, shortly after the family moved here. That troop (Troop 81) grew and prospered under her able leadership and eventually included a Mariner Ship with older Girl Scouts. Although the ship is inactive, Eileen kept in touch with many of the girls (now women) until the last few months.

Also, when Eileen first came to Chatsworth she took snapshots of different corners and buildings locally such as the drug store at Topanga and Devonshire Streets and a few of those pictures are now a part of our Collection. A crowd of well-wishers attended a 90th Birthday Celebration at The Homestead Acre in July, 1988 where Mrs. Janess was honored by her many friends and relatives and on May 25, 2000 a Memorial Service was held at the United Methodist Church with a large crowd attending. Eileen's smile, her soft-spoken, altruistic philosophy and impeccable character will be long remembered by members of the Chatsworth Historical Society.



EDITOR'S NOTE

We have a few of the California Sesquicentennial souvenirs left. Don't miss out on your memento of this important event in California history.

We have a beautiful commemorative booklet with tons of information about California and local history. We have commemorative pins featuring the official sesquicentennial logo, sweatshirts, T-shirts and mugs with the official logo and posters & post-cards picturing the magnificent Sesquicentennial Quilt.

The recent Memorial Day reminded me of our own "unsung" heroes who deserve our recognition. Our "Unsung Hero" for this month is Virginia Watson.

Virginia was a founding member of the Chatsworth Historical Society and has been largely responsible for its survival over the years. There are few days that Virginia DOES NOT go to the Acre to check on things there. She has been Museum Curator for many years and has been a driving force in many of the events, history conferences etc. She assiduously gathers and safeguards information about Chatsworth's past and is responsible for almost all of the publicity that goes out to the media about the society.

Virginia worked closely with Robert Marshall and Lara Bickell on the special Valley History display and is presently working on the week-long commemorative event for California Museum Week.