



# Smoke Signal

Co-Presidents: Andre & Linda van der Valk

February 2001

Editor: Zena Thorpe

It's hard to believe that we are already into the month of February. While we are in the dead of winter and experiencing heavy rainfall there is much to appreciate every time we are at the Acre. We have made several trips to the Acre just before sunset to admire the beauty of the storm clouds over the mountains and the variety of wildlife in its natural state. Our favorite at this time are the hawks that are nesting in the palm tree in front of the museum. Rest assured that at least one of the hawks maintains a keen vigil over whoever enters the grounds. We also have a cat who is living under the cottage. So, Whenever you are in the area come by and see who's really in charge of the Acre.

Linda & Andre

## Chatsworth Historical Society Board 1999-2000

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## PAULINE VELDA AUE

DIED

Chatsworth Historical Society is saddened by the loss of long-time member, Pauline Aue who died January 28th. Pauline was one of those oh-so-valuable members who do not require a great deal of fanfare but are always waiting in the wings to take on any job they are asked to do. Pauline will be sorely missed.

We also note the passing, February 7th, of one of our earliest benefactors, **DALE EVANS ROGERS, "QUEEN OF THE WEST"**. Dale and her husband, Roy Rogers, were members of the Methodist Church in Chatsworth and made a sizable donation to save the little Pioneer Church, in which the services were held, from destruction.

## WHAT'S NEW AT THE ACRE

By Virginia Watson, curator

Open House was held Sunday, February 4th with a nice crowd of about 25 people attending. Betty & Jim Summers went up early and opened everything up and put out the sign for the docents for the 1 p.m. opening.

I worked with Evelyn Kanouse and Keli Jacobson. Elaine Campbell was scheduled to work but she was sick. Candy Craig came and gave garden tours and visited with our guests. We had beautiful weather with sunshine and warm weather. Several people just came by to enjoy our lovely flowers and trees.

We missed having Pauline Aue working in the museum. In the past she has worked many extra shifts for us, greeting people, getting them to sign the guest book, giving out brochures, answering questions and working in the gift shop. Pauline was a remarkable lady. She had been a member of our society since 1974 and was a lot more active after she retired from Kaiser Permanente in 1980.

She had been a docent for the past 17 years working with our Wednesday-at-the-Acre group since it started. She served on the executive board of the CHS as a member at Large, doing telephoning for about 8 years. She worked with other groups including the Santa Susana

Mountain Park Association and The Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains. She also worked with the now defunct Santa Susana Pass Historical District Committee that consisted of members from several local groups interested in history and research and in getting a State Park. She also worked at Theodore Payne Foundation helping with native plants.

She was the Chatsworth Historical Society's candidate for Outstanding Citizen when she won that prestigious award back in 1991-92. She helped get all the two sets of 3x5" author and title cards ready for our library and worked on every Garden Festival and Pioneer Day event since she joined.

A very quiet, unassuming person, she was always there working on any community historical society project.

A CHS fund has been set up in her memory and donations may be made out to the Chatsworth Historical Society and marked "Memorial Fund for Pauline Aue. Pauline loved our library and our books and so we have decided to buy books for the library with the fund.

Another great loss to the Chatsworth Historical Society was the passing of our patroness, Dale Evans Rogers. She and her husband, Roy Rogers, wrote a letter soon after the society was formed asking people to join our society. It was mailed

out to Chatsworth residents and it really helped to give our young group a good start.

It was Dale who gave us permission to use their home for our Appreciation Reception and she was the one who came back afterwards when the church was finally completed in time for our Bicentennial Anniversary of the founding of our country.

Always gracious, charming and generous with her time, she was always willing to help out on most any project even after they moved to Victorville.

We have been getting responses to our web page. Several times lately, people who used to live in Chatsworth wrote e-mails to us asking questions about the area. The responses come to me, chatmimi@aol.com, and I reply. David McClure wrote asking about the Pioneer Church. His mother, Phyllis McClure, remembered it and will be coming to visit in the near future.

Our address is [historicalsocieties.net](http://historicalsocieties.net) if you would like to view the site. John Thorpe is our representative to the committee at CSUN Oviatt Library. He is overseeing the photographing of our pictures that will show the history of the San Fernando Valley. Soon researchers from all over the Valley will be able to call up photographs and see what other historical assets we have.

OPEN HOUSE will be Sunday, March 4th with Betty Summers, lead docent. With her will be Marilyn Frump and Elaine Campbell.

Catherine Mulholland's new book is out and we have an autographed copy in our library. The books in our library cannot be taken out but if you would like to read any of them please come on Wednesday morning and we will fix up a table for you. Or you can call and make an appointment.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

By Albert Knight

*Al is a professional archeologist and past-president of Santa Susana Mountain Park Association. This article first appeared in the January issue of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association newsletter*

I was recently reading The Cattle on a Thousand Hills - Southern California 1850-1880, by Robert Glass Cleland (Huntington Library Publications, Fifth Printing 1990). I had read an earlier edition of this fine history many years ago and had forgotten (if it had ever registered) that this book has a very interesting reference to Santa Susana Pass. I will give you an outline of the

story and hope that you will look up and read the full reference for yourself, (see pgs. 250-263).

Southern California, especially Los Angeles, in the mid-1850s, was a pretty wild place, (who says there are no traditions in Los Angeles!). Robberies and killings were commonplace and Indians, Mexicans, half-breeds and whites vied for the honors of being the most *loco y macho*. And race relations were, to say the least, were not good. One of the most famous *banditos* of the time was a young Mexican man who went by the name of Juan Flores. Flores and his band of cutthroats were angry that their people had been robbed by the newly arriving *Norteamericanos*, and they proceeded to rob, raid and sometimes kill across much of the southern part of the new state.

Flores and his gang eventually committed one of the most infamous crimes in the history of the state--- they ambushed and killed the sheriff of Los Angeles, J.R. Barton, and three of his posse, with only two of the party of six surviving to tell the tale.

The entire southern part of the state was thrown into turmoil and hundreds of men were deployed to track Flores and his men down, no matter how long it took. The goal was to block every pass in Southern California and then to flush Flores and his men into one or more of these traps.

Of interest to us here are the contributions made by Don Andres Pico of San Fernando and Mr. James Thompson, eventually the owner of the Encino Rancho, leaders of two of the posses. Many local Indians, especially some of the Cahuilla, also formed or joined various posses. The San Fernando Valley posses were also reinforced by a command of U.S. troops from Fort Tejon.

Mr Thompson placed 10 of the soldiers, with two of his own men, at Scorpion Ranch. The "Simi Pass" referred to below is the original trail through today's Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park.

The strategy was soon successful. Cleland quotes the Los Angeles Star, Feb. 7, 1857, as follows: "On Tuesday last, Juan Flores came to the Simi Pass in search of water; two soldiers stepped up behind him and, with their guns leveled and cocked, ordered him to stop, which he immediately did, and dismounted. At this time he was without arms, had not even a pocket knife, was mounted on a very poor steed and had only a little dried beef on his addle behind him." He was questioned but gave another name. However, when he was taken to the troops' camp one of the Mexican posse members immediately recognized him as Juan Flores and he was put under arrest (see pg. 258). Flores, however, may have been taken while scouting. For while the commotion regarding the arrest of Flores was going on, one or two of his men managed to get

through the pass. Thompson interviewed Flores in the field. Although he generally denied being guilty of most of what he was accused of, including being the leader of the gang, he was wounded in the right arm and admitted that he had accidentally shot himself during the retreat from the battle with the posse from El Monte. Flores than asked to be taken to a clergyman to make his confession and to be able to write one last time to his mother.

The *bandito capitan* was taken to Los Angeles and he and eleven of his men were tried, sentenced to death and executed. The execution of Flores was reported in the Los Angeles Star on Feb. 27, 1857. Although the description of the execution is too long to quote here, it is very moving and well worth the read, especially for those who oppose the death penalty. The execution was, in short, poorly performed. "The fall was too short and the unfortunate wretch struggled in agony for a considerable time...the body was kept hanging for about an hour and was then handed over to those who had been engaged to take charge of it..." (Cleland, pg.263).

The pass had proven its importance. A few years later James Thompson would receive the contract to build a wagon road on the Los Angeles side of Simi Pass and he would build facilities to service that pass road. The road and the foundations of some of the facilities can be seen in the

Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park to this day.

## EDITOR'S NOTES

At the February board meeting it was proposed that the present executive board members remain in the same positions for one more year. All members agreed.

The death of Tricia Plucknett was noted. Tricia was an active member of the society for many years. She moved away but remained in touch and interested in Chatsworth and the historical society.

Plans are underway for the annual Garden Festival, May 6th. We missed the Garden Festival last year because of the California Sesquicentennial event but, in response to much demand, we will again hold the festival with teas, plant sales etc. Our rose gardens at The Acre should be in full bloom in May, thanks to the tender care of Candy Craig and her helper, Keli Jacobson, so please join us May 6th at the Garden Festival and enjoy an elegant "Tea" amid the glorious sights and smells of our beautiful gardens.

You can also pick up tips on rose care and general garden care at the Festival but in the meantime Candy has included with this newsletter valuable information on how she takes care of our roses.