



Smoke Signal



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

February 2003

Editor: Zena Thorpe

I can not believe it is already February and we are halfway through it. January has been a busy month and February is not slowing down. This last couple of weeks has been interesting for us. We are learning a lot about local politics and how this community rallies together for an issue that affects us all. When we learned that the community could be losing The Munch Box the response in petitions and letters of support was overwhelming. Negotiations are still going on but it looks like we will still have The Munch Box for many years to come. Thank you to all of you who signed the letters and sent them in.

We are making progress on the sprinklers. We have a few options and are determined not to go through another summer without them.

Linda & Andre

Chatsworth Historical Society
Board 2002-2003

- Co-Pres.....Linda & Andre van der Valk 882-3661
- Programs.....John Thorpe 882-3572
- Rec. Secretary.....Elaine Campbell 341-4954
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- Membership.....Keith Watts 341-4489
- Smoke Signal.....Zena Thorpe 882-3572
- Museum Curator.....Virginia Watson 341-3053
- Cottage Curator.....Betty Summers 341-2714
- Hospitality.....Keli Jacobsen
- Gardens Director..Jim & Betty Summers341-2714
- Director-at-large.....Betty Summers 341-2714
- Director-at-large.....Barbara Pampalone882-2395
- Director-at-large.....Ruth Grant 882-3990
- Photog. materials.....Bill Schepler 341-3447
- Permanent member.....Lila Schepler 341-3447

PROGRAM MEETING
February 18th, 2003 7pm

Lila Schepler will present a list of Chatsworth homes which are over 75 years old and remain substantially unchanged.

Some of the owners of these homes will be present to give information on the homes and certificates of authenticity commemorating the vintage homes will be presented.

This meeting promises a "homey" slice of Chatsworth history.

Refreshments will be served.

GARDEN NOTES

By Virginia Watson

Winter has been taking a toll on our Homestead Acre. Late last year during a big windstorm, the wind blew all the apples off our apple tree. Recently for the second time another big tree near the road in the front of The Acre blew down and fell across the road, breaking the fence as it fell and damaging the gold panning tub that the Keene Engineering Company loaned us and haven't picked up since Pioneer Day. We lost a few branches from some of the other trees and we had to do some drastic pruning to our tangerine tree that is so old.

Our trees are all old and that should not be news to all of us, as we saved this little plot of land because it was settled in 1886 even before the town of Chatsworth was named. James David and Rhoda Jane Hill came out from Los Angeles to visit "old Mr. Charleton," Minnie said. Mr. Charleton felt that Rhoda Jane needed a vacation because she was pregnant and cooking for a large number of workman in downtown LA. Charleton lived on what is today Canoga Avenue and invited Minnie and James to his home. They found this property and soon moved to the area. Minnie was born at the end of November that year.

In order to own the land when you petitioned for a homestead you had to improve it. So, among other improvements, they planted trees. By the time (1979) the Chatsworth Historical Society had become conservators for the 1.3 acres left from the original homestead there was almost one of every kind of fruit tree. We lost the kumquat and loquat trees early on and the apple tree that Minnie was so proud of went down and was replaced. The big lemon tree near the Centennial area

has been severely pruned and is elderly too, as well as the other citrus trees near the back door.

We have to remember why we saved Minnie's house and garden and named it The Homestead Acre. It was because of the bungalow and the grounds with the flowers and trees. It was like so many other homesteads that were in the Valley and surrounding land. We want to show people what life was like in the 1890's and early 1900's. The school children who come on tours can see first-hand what it was like to not have a bathroom in the house. What it was like to have to make your own soap and to scrub clothes on a washboard. And they need to see trees surrounding the house to give shade and be a windbreak and bear fruit. I think we need to have a plan, a drawing of our grounds and plan how we can replace some of the trees we are losing and still have "the ranch" look like a Homestead Acre of the late 1880's.



BUS TRIP AND MORE GARDEN NOTES

Our trip to the Roy Rogers Museum was a big success thanks to our councilman Hal Bernson who arranged for us to travel in that beautiful comfortable shiny black bus! We enjoyed the tapes that Andre showed of Roy and Dale and of Chatsworth.

We had lots of time to reminisce while we were there and look at the items they have in the museum. They have the award that we gave to Dale when she spoke at our rededication in 1976 and the very first membership cards we made for them giving them Number One and Number Two because they were our patrons.

While we were on the bus, Andre announced that we would have a pruning session on Saturday morning, January 18th. The acoustics on the bus were very good and we had ten volunteers out pruning the next Saturday.

Betty Summers and Linda van der Valk had done some pruning ahead of time but they were there and the group worked on the original roses in front of the house. Helping were: Irene Nalbandian, Doris van Akin, Ramon Avila, Connie Ager, Elaine Campbell, Evelyn Kanouse, Keli Jacobson, and I helped. While we were pruning and talking we discussed what we were doing. Keli Jacobson, who worked a lot with the late Candy Craig in the past, doesn't like pruning. She hates to cut them back feeling for every little blossom, rose hip or branch she cuts off. But our gardener Trini Sanchez has a different view which he expressed later when he worked on the pruning. (Pruning takes a long time--we have over 300 roses.)

Trini is much more practical about pruning and he has a poetic way of looking at the

job.... ..

"You have to **make** them go to sleep," he said recently. They are like children, he said. They don't want to go to bed, but they need to rest in January and February, and so cutting them back gives them time to rest and be dormant . That sounds like a good idea to me--so that when April comes and time for our annual Garden Festival they will be refreshed and bloom wildly.

Although it is February now and several months until our Garden Festival --time really does fly by and so we are all turning our attention to our coming "Garden Festival" which will be held on Sunday, April 27, 2003. Many of you have already seen the addition to the big sign placed near the entrance of Chatsworth Park South, If not, please look for it. David Valastro, Facility Director at the park, added the information about our Garden Festival to the new park sign. Thank you, Dave.

OBITUARY FOR SAMUEL HARRY DOWNING

Samuel H. Downing, 86 years of age, died peacefully in his sleep in Lakeport California, January 28th, 2003. Born in Washington, D.C., he moved to Los Angeles with his parents and younger brother William when he was six. A storyteller by nature, he told of many adventures growing up in the movie capital of the world. During WW II he was a farmer in Chatsworth, raising turkeys, rabbits, citrus and walnuts. He also briefly worked for Cal Tech. He loved engines, gardening, the ocean, boating and swimming. He was a building contractor in Hollywood, the San Fernando Valley, and was also a Real Estate

Broker in Newport Beach and in the Monterey Bay area. With partners Bill and Lila Schepler and Rose and Joe Schurter he was an owner, for a time, of the landmark, Stony Point. He was a Boy Scout troop leader and civic leader. A member of the Planning Commission in Newport Beach he helped chart the way for U C Irvine. He was an Elder in St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach and the Methodist church in Pacific Grove. He was President of the Residents Club at the Burbank Heights Apartments in Sebastopol, CA.

A loving husband and father, he was predeceased by his wife of 47 years, Mary Elizabeth ("Betty") Wright Downing and by his son, William Harry Downing. He leaves behind his daughters Diane Matthews, and Marylu Downing, and son, Sam Wright Downing, son-in-law Roger House and daughter-in-law Paula Downing. He loved his nine grandchildren, Cathy, Mary, Mike, Anne, Amanda, Laurel, Michael, Zachary and Brittany, and his 5 great grandchildren. He also leaves cousins, several nieces and nephews and many friends. A colorful character, and caring man, he will be missed by all.

The family will hold a private memorial service and burial will be at Pacific View Memorial Park, Corona del Mar, California.

Memorial donations may be made to L.M. Tynan Emergency Department Capital Campaign, Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital Foundation, PO Box 4760, Salinas, CA 93912-4760 (Phone: 831-759-1880)

PROJECT VINTAGE HOMES

Project Vintage Homes, led by Lila Schepler, consisted of seeking out homes in the area that were known to be 75 years of age or more. Buildings that had been moved or altered significantly were not included. Mrs. Schepler has compiled a list of 13 homes within the boundaries of Chatsworth that were built in the 1920's. Letters were written to the owners or contact person inviting them to attend our Feb. 18th meeting to tell more about the houses. The Chatsworth Historical Society will present certificates to the people occupying or owning those homes. The names and addresses of the homes will be listed and preserved within the Frank H. Schepler, Jr. Memorial Library in the Chatsworth Museum. Three people have indicated that they will be attending. They are Valeta Koller, Charleen Roesch and Russell Fass. Mrs. Koller's home at 21815 San Jose Street was built in 1927 for the Jim Long family and later bought by Mrs. Koller's father, Jim Butler, Mrs. Roesch is the daughter of the late Eileen and Chuck Janess, founding members of our Society, and is also the widow of Jim Roesch whose parents built her home at 10441 Variel Avenue in 1928. Russell Fass's home at 10291 Farralone Avenue, was built in 1912, around the same time that our Hill/Palmer redwood bungalow at The Homestead Acre was built. A list of the thirteen homes will be available at the program meeting.

NOTES FROM THE BOARD MEETING

The much-needed new shelving has been installed in the museum office.

A new sprinkler system will be installed before the summer heat.

The March program will be a celebration of the Chatsworth Historical Society's 40th birthday and will feature a showing by Bill Schepler of some of the society's historic slides.

The April meeting will celebrate the 100th anniversary of dedication of the Pioneer Church and will feature a showing of the home movie made of the moving of the church from its original location on Topanga Canyon Blvd. to its present home in Oakwood Memorial Park.

GARDEN FESTIVAL

Plans are underway for our annual Garden Festival. Mark your calendar for April 27th. As the time grows closer I will give you more information.

Meantime, we can use items for our White Elephant Sale and of course the day of our Festival, we would appreciate baked goods to sell.

If you need any information please call me at:(818) 341-5449

Bea Berman, Chairman

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

SAVE ENRGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT WITH FREE SHADE TREES FROM IADWP

Don't miss out on *Trees for a Green LA* - an exciting shade tree program sponsored by the Los Angeles Dept. of Water and Power. for City of Los Angeles residents.

Through this FREE public service program LADWP residential customers learn how to plan for, plant and protect trees on their property to create shade that helps reduce home electricity use and costs by up to 20 percent. Those who attend a program workshop can receive up to seven 5 gallon trees per property to serve as nature's air conditioners.

Besides lowering energy use, the trees planted will help improve air quality, lower the rate of global warming, lessen storm water runoff and increase property values.

Please call 1-800-GreenLA (1-800-473-3652) or e-mail: tree@GreenLA.com to sign up for one of the following workshops,

Thurs., Feb.13th Encino Community Center
Tues.,Feb.18th Canoga Pk.Senior Citizen Ctr.
Mon.,Mar.10th Granada Hills Elem. School.
These programs will be held 6:30pm-8:30pm

A Saturday program will be held , Mar.29th
11am. -1pm. at Platt Library, Woodland Hills