

Smoke Signal

Co-Presidents: Andre & Linda van der Valk

Editor pro-tem: Keith Watts

March, 2003

FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS - The Homestead Acre has been a busy place this month. We are getting ready for the Garden Festival. That means new displays in the museum and getting the garden to look its best. Betty, Jim and Trini have been very busy in the garden looks great. This takes constant work and the Society is fortunate to have people to keep it up. Santa Susana School has offered to plant and weed for us on Earth Day and it is a fun day watching the children in the garden, planting flowers and cleaning the weeds out of the creek for us. Earth Day is April 22nd this year.

The docents have decorated the cases for us this month. Under the guidance of Keli Jacobsen, the cases have been turned into a wonderful jewelry and hat display from the 50's. The bear in the tall case will be wearing a poodle skirt, getting ready for a sock hop, thanks to Rick Angel.

.....Linda and Andre

Chatsworth Historical Society
Board 2002-2003

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GARDEN FESTIVAL - April 22

The public is invited, as well as all CHS members, to our annual Garden Festival.

When: Sunday, April 27, 2003.

Time: 11am-4 pm.

Where: Homestead Acre, in
Chatsworth Park South.

There will be interesting exhibits, demonstrations, crafts, plants for sale, as well as food and beverages. The gardens will be in bloom; and there will be music, and afternoon tea in the Duchess' Tea Room. Fun for adults and children! So be sure to mark your calendars for our Garden Festival on Sunday, April 27.

VALLEY VIGNETTES - Virginia Watson

Our community is 115 years old this month! The Chatsworth Historical Society is commemorating the occasion, as it has for the past 40 years, by having a birthday cake with ceremonial cake-cutting and an observance of the event. The actual date used is the first time that a subdivision map of a town called Chatsworth Park was filed with the Los Angeles County Recorder's office, March 10, 1888.

Three long-time residents will share the spotlight and help cut the cake at the regular meeting at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 18th, at The Chatsworth Museum, 10385 Shadow Oak Drive. Hope you can come and join in the fun.

Valeta Butler Koller, who is the oldest living Chatsworth native, will be present as well as Lila and Bill Schepler who have lived in Chatsworth and participated in community life since the early 1930's. Valeta Koller is the daughter of Edith and James Butler. Butler was a well-known rancher who owned many citrus groves, and he built the first supermarket building in Chatsworth in 1960. Valeta was born in November 1922, but there was no hospital in Chatsworth nor nearby so her mother traveled to Alhambra for her birth at a hospital where her mother's doctor practised. Valeta's early life was spent in rural Chatsworth and later, after her mother and father were divorced, she and her sister lived in Hollywood with their mother but spent summers and vacations with her father and brothers. She returned to Chatsworth after she was married in 1952, and has lived here ever since.

Bill Schepler's father was one of the developers of "The Miracle Mile" an area on Wilshire Boulevard that was very successful. As young children Bill and his brother Frank enjoyed the Beverly Hills life, but during the depression, Frank H. Schepler, Sr. suffered great losses and the family moved to a small ranch in Chatsworth. Bill adjusted to ranch life and will give some highlights of early Chatsworth at the birthday meeting. He will show the Society's slide collection.

Lila Schepler was Lila Swartz when she came to the area as a child in the early 1930's. Her family lived on the northwest corner of Devonshire Street and De Soto Ave. where the new Walgreen drug store opened earlier this year. Mrs. Schepler has served as president of the Chatsworth Historical Society six different times including finishing out the term of the first president, Charles Janess, after his illness.

John Thorpe, vice president in charge of programs, will introduce the program. Keli Jacobsen, in charge of hospitality, will make arrangements for the refreshments.

COMING EVENTS at the Acre

Tuesday, March 18, 7 p.m. - General meeting, celebrating the 115th birthday of Chatsworth.

Sunday, April 6, 1-4 p.m. - Open House, tours.

Tuesday, April 15, 7 p.m. - General meeting, 40th anniversary, founding of CHS.

Tuesday, April 22, kids celebrate Earth Day.

Sunday, April 27, 11am-4 pm Garden Festival

A PREVIEW OF COMING ATTRACTIONS

Remember when the movie industry was young and the new movies were hawked with that expression? It was with a sense of anticipation and thoughts of pleasure to be enjoyed that we watched those excerpts from the movie that was to be shown the next week. Well, now that you have seen the schedule of coming Society events at the Acre, we are going to present a little more in the way of a preview of those coming attractions for our CHS members and friends..

The first attraction coming up is our 115th Birthday Celebration which you have already read about at length in this issue.

The second attraction is our monthly OPEN HOUSE from 1-4 p.m. on Sunday, April 6, at The Acre. Betty Summers' docent team is working with Keli Jacobson and Virginia Watson. The docents will conduct tours of the Museum and the Homestead Cottage.

April 17, 2003 is the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Chatsworth Historical Society, so our third attraction is a celebration of the anniversary to be held at the regular monthly meeting on Tuesday April 15th at 7pm. in the Chatsworth Museum.

Back in 1963, when the Chatsworth Community Coordinating Council was new, interested people were invited to the home of Kathryn and Kelly Johnson to discuss the formation of a committee to save the Pioneer Church building. The building was scheduled for destruction to make way for other development of the land. (The Chatsworth Methodist Church had built a larger building farther north on Topanga Canyon Boulevard.)

At the meeting it was proposed that an historical

society be formed to preserve the church and other historic items. Two people who are still members of our society were present at that meeting- Keith Watts and Virginia Watson.

Member Lila Schepler was an early president, and member Bill Schepler and his late brother Frank Schepler, Jr. helped plan and physically move the church building, helping to get the building up on rollers, taking down fences that were in the path of the move and putting the fences back up, as well as minor repairs etc.

The Pioneer Church was moved from 10051 Topanga Canyon Boulevard to a hill in the northwest corner of Oakwood Memorial Park where it remains today. It is currently occupied by an Anglican congregation. Tours are held on the first Sunday of every month, the same as The Acre.

A movie will be shown at the meeting, detailing the two-day journey of the Pioneer Church to its current location.

The fourth attraction is a commemoration of Earth Day for 2003, planned for Tuesday, April 22, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at The Acre. It is a joint project with nearby Santa Susana School and the Chatsworth Women's Club's Conservation Committee. Last year was the first time CHS participated in the nationally advertised event. Gretha Davis, a teacher at the Santa Susana School, contacted us to see if the school children could plant flowers and help us get the Acre ready for spring. All of our docents and some of our board members plus the teachers and administrators at the school helped.

Betty and Jim Summers, CHS board members in charge of the grounds, worked with the students and their advisors. The students brought plants and flowers and Betty & Jim showed them where to plant them. Our own gardener, Trini Sanchez, also worked to get the ground ready for planting. The older children helped us to clear weeds and debris out of the creek bed to prevent water from getting dammed up. (When we had El Nino one year, the

water flooded our storage area and damaged some of our collection.)

We present a short program and the children get a snack. Last year Ralph's Market provided a snack and also allowed the children to decorate paper bags with the conservation theme and they passed them out to customers.

It is a pleasure to watch the children create a beautiful, living scene with flowers and plants and to see the pride they exhibit in helping us. Some brought their parents to the next Open House to show them what they had done.

We need lots of volunteers to make this a successful event. Please call Betty Summers at (818) 341-2714 to volunteer.

Our Garden Festival is the fifth attraction and will be held from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, April 27 at The Acre. A feature our spring event is the outdoor DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE HIGH TEA with lots of homemade goodies and held in a beautiful garden setting. Students from Chaminade help us to serve the tea and assist in our plant sale and other events.

Our Financial vice president, Bea Berman, is again in charge of our Festival.

If you would like to volunteer to help at our Garden Festival please call co-president Linda van der Valk at (818) 882-3661 or leave your name and number at The Acre telephone (818) 882-5614 and we will contact you.

We wish to express our concern and support to Bea Berman, who is spending time at the hospital where her husband, Marshall, is recovering from surgery.

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