



# Smoke Signal



CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA 91311  
(818)-882-5614 www.historicalsocieties.net

Co-Presidents: Andre & Linda van der Valk

Editor : Keith Watts

APRIL, 2009

## GARDEN FESTIVAL ALERT

.....Bea Berman, Chairman

I hope you marked your calendar for Sunday, April 26th as we are having our annual GARDEN FESTIVAL at the Homestead Acre from 11:00- 4:00 p.m. This is one of our two fund raisers to help maintain an historical monument taking care of our Museum, Minnie Hill Palmer Cottage and gardens.

We feature our famous Duchess' Tea. A great lunch from 11:30 a.m. til 2:00 P.M. , a great lunch for only \$7.00 and entertainment by the Chatsworth Dance Centre, various garden clubs, arts and crafts vendors, veteran quilt display, plant sale, bake sale, white elephant sale, tours of the cottage and museum and much more. Remember to take the shuttle bus from the Chatsworth Depot, 11 - 4 p.m.

We still could use some bake goods or any new or like-new items for our white elephant booth. For more information, refer to the flyer elsewhere in this issue.

### *Forgot when you last paid your dues?*

*For all yearly dues-paying members, the answer may be found on the mailing label of this newsletter: the first digit, 1 or 2, denotes (1) individual, or (2) family membership. The group of four numbers indicate the day and month of your last dues payment shown in our records.*

*For any questions or discrepancies, please call the Acre to resolve.*

## PROGRAM ANNOUNCED FOR APRIL

Our upcoming program for April 21st should be very interesting. Our own CHS member, John Thorpe, will be showing a film of the autobiography of his uncle who was a farm laborer iin the early 1900's and went on to become a published author.

Lets have a nice turnout.

## FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS

I am going to date myself by saying "Spring has Sprung" and it is a beautiful spring. Last year Andre had bought a 1964 military jeep and he loves to drive around town in it. went up Browns Canyon, and considering the devastation of six months ago from the fire it was beautiful. The hills are green and there are some lavender flowers that you see growing up the hillsides. The County has been working removing the debris and silt from the dam up there and now, in the parking lot of the Michael Antonovich Regional Park, there is a ton of boulders.

You can not go up the road as far as you used to because the Santa Monica Conservancy feels the road is too dangerous to go up any further. It truly is a shame because the views from the top are spectacular. Hopefully, one day the

conservancy will allow people to use the county's Regional Park as was planned when they opened it.

The bridge that went up there before has been replaced by what is called an Arizona bridge (one lane bridge) until the City or County decide who is responsible for the bridge. The neighbors in Browns Canyon have a petition circulating to request that Browns Canyon will remain part of Chatsworth, not Porter Ranch. It is funny because when we moved to Chatsworth, Porter Ranch was Chatsworth.

Another highlight of Spring is the Garden Festival and Bea Berman is again working very hard to make it perfect. Jelena Csanyi is working on making the tea one of our best ever. We will have some new displays in the museum to fit in with the theme of the Garden Festival. Jim and Betty Summers are up at the Acre every day, making sure that the gardens will look great for the festival. We are lucky to have a company like Andy Gump, that donates two portable potties to us for our two fund-raisers. They are so good they call us and ask us if we need them.

.Remember that the Garden Festival, April 26th, is one of two fund-raisers for the year that keep the Acre going and we appreciate your support.

Linda and Andre

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### **LAPTOP COMPUTER NEEDED**

It is planned to augment the audio/visual features of the Museum by installing a display monitor in the Museum. It could then be used for various purposes, e.g., to show and explain exhibits or local historical sites, photos, etc.

If we can obtain a used laptop to drive the monitor, we will proceed to procure a monitor. So if anyone has a used laptop that they would like to donate, we would be glad to evaluate it for this useful purpose. Ask your friends and neighbors. Donations are tax deductible.

### **NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT**

The Nominating Committee for the Chatsworth Historical Society Executive Board has met and presents the following slate for the coming time period, 2009-2010.

Committee Members: Lila Schepler, Chairman, Virginia Watson and Elaine Campbell.

#### Slate of 13 voting positions

Co-Presidents.....Linda and Andre van der Valk  
V.P. Programs & Ways & Means.... Bea Berman  
V.P. Membership .....Keith Watts  
Treasurer .....Ray Vincent  
Recording Secretary .....Elaine Campbell  
Editor Smoke Signal..... Ann Vincent  
Curator Cottage & Gardens .....Betty Summers  
Garden Director .....Jim Summers  
Hospitality..... Jelena Csanyi  
Director-at-Large .....Beverly King  
Director-at-Large .....Evelyn Hutcheson  
Curator Museum (permanent) .Virginia Watson  
Pres. Emeritus (permanent) .....Lila Schepler

It should be noted that voting on the above positions will take place by the CHS membership at the April Meeting.

Nominations will be accepted from the floor (with the approval of the nominee) and voted upon to determine the outcome.

Installation of the new officers is scheduled to take place at the May meeting.

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**TYPICAL LAPTOP COMPUTER**

# CHATSWORTH PAST & PRESENT

By Ann Vincent

April 2009

Owned and operated by Buck Barker and family, The Munch Box is one of Chatsworth's Historic-Cultural Landmarks. It is located at 21532 Devonshire St. in Chatsworth.

Buck's Uncle John and Aunt Linda owned The Munch Box for the first 30 years, with Buck and his wife, Claire following in their footsteps. It has remained a family owned operation now for 53 years. Opened in 1956, the menu has remained basically the same with hickory burgers, mushroom burgers and chili dogs to name a few. Some things have changed over the years--root beer is no longer made on the premises and sold for 10 cents, but the root beer float is still the popular drink. The hitching post to tie up your horse used to be directly behind the building and is now gone.

I was once told that in the 50-60's, schedules permitting, that the freight train conductors would make a point of stopping the train at the Munch Box for lunch. Located along the tracks it would have been convenient.

In 2002, the Munch Box was threatened with the surrounding development of a shopping center and storage facility on the property site. Fortunately efforts had already been initiated by the Chatsworth Historical Society to identify this as a landmark, and with the help of community petition drives and over 1700 letters, Cultural Historical Landmark status was pushed through in time to save The Munch Box.

On June 3, 2003, Councilman Hal Bernson successfully took the recommendation to the City Council. He referred to the Munch Box as an integral part of the old Chatsworth community and a direct link with its past. He also noted that most of these types of establishments that once abounded no longer exist and are only seen in old photographs or movie clips. The Los Angeles City Council unanimously passed the motion, without discussion. With that vote, The Munch Box was officially listed as #750 in the Historic Register for Los Angeles.



Huell Howser and Buck Barker



The Munch Box in 2003.

Celebrating the event, Huell Howser was invited to The Munch Box to see what sites Chatsworth has to offer. His program included an interview with Buck and his wife Claire discussing the history of the family business.



2009 Photo showing extended covered patio dining with original stools for seating in front. The new shopping center can be seen in the background.

When interviewed by Huell, Buck referred to himself more as a "caretaker" of the original establishment. Many of the diners were interviewed by Huell as he quizzed them on their favorite menu items.

To prove to Huell that the Munch Box one of our local icons, Linda and Andre van der Valk displayed a painting by local artist Marty Bell. She had featured The Munch Box as one of a series of four Chatsworth paintings. Others included The Pioneer Church, Stoney Point, and The Chatsworth Florist.

In 2004, the surroundings changed as a new shopping center and storage facility grew around it. To accommodate the crowds, covered tables and wind/rain shades now make it easier to hang out and enjoy your food regardless of the weather. Parking is marked now...not the original dirt lot behind that was always so packed full you wondered how you would maneuver through the cars.



Marty Bell painting of The Munch Box as shown to Huell Howser by Linda and Andre van der Valk during The Munch Box filming

Still a meeting place and favorite place to drop by, The Munch Box also has been known to have antique car collectors gather to show off their 50's style rides.

I regularly stop by with family for my Hickory Burger and Fries, and always look forward to my childhood favorite, the Root Beer Float.



Over 300 Rose Bushes in Bloom

Chatsworth Historical Society Presents

# A GARDEN FESTIVAL

Featuring Roses and Crafts

The Duchess Tea Room  
Afternoon Tea,  
\$7 per person  
(11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.)



Polynesian Dance Revue,  
Chatsworth Dance Centre  
(2 p.m.)

Blooming Rose Gardens

Museum Exhibits  
*Featuring Chatsworth Pioneer Families*

Quilt Display from the  
Veteran's Quilt Project

Tours of Minnie's Cottage  
(12 - 3 p.m.)

Arts & Crafts

Garden Clubs



White Elephant Sale

Bake Sale

Hot Dogs and Sodas

Live Plant Sale

**Note: Parking is limited at Chatsworth Park South**

Park your car at the Chatsworth Train Depot (10038 Old Depot Plaza Road) and use our free shuttle service, every 15 minutes from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Sunday, April 26, 2009  
11 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

\$4 Admission Donation – Children \$1  
Kids under 5 Free

**THE HOMESTEAD ACRE**

At the First Stop Sign in **Chatsworth Park South**

(West End of Devonshire Street)

10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA 91311

Information: 818-882-5614

*All Proceeds go to the Chatsworth Historical Society for the preservation of the Hill-Palmer Property and Virginia Watson's Chatsworth Museum*

Editor's Note: The information in this oral history was gathered by late CHS members Dean and Candy Craig in five interviews of Minnie Hill Palmer's children - Edith Palmer Butler (b. 1910) and Leroy E. Palmer (b. 1912) and Minnie's niece, Ruth Manny Hill Rider. It was transcribed by Candy Craig and late CHS member Sheila Watts. Your Editor separated it into "chapters", added titles and other small editorial tasks. ,,,,Keith Watts

## GROWING UP ON THE HOMESTEAD ACRE IN THE 1920's and 30's

(An oral history on what it was like living on the "ranch" in Chatsworth from 1920 to 1917.)

### (1) THE HOMESTEAD "RANCH"

In 1920 Minnie and Alfred Palmer and their two young children, Edith and Leroy, came home to California from Montana where they had lived and farmed for four or five years. (Minnie and Alfred had been married in 1909 and had previously lived in Los Angeles and Hawthorne, CA.) The family had only marginal success in Montana since too many crops had been lost to hailstorms and the price of grain had fallen precipitously after the end of World War I.

Living on the "ranch" at the time were Minnie's older brother, Lovell Hill, age 44, and their mother, Rhoda Enlow Hill, age 74. Mrs. Hill's youngest daughter, Calla Hill Hardacre, and her two young children, had been living temporarily with the family, helping to care for Mrs. Hill, who had been in poor health. Now it was Minnie's turn to care for her mother, who was a semi-invalid until her death nearly fifteen years later. (Minnie's father, James David Hill, had lived for some years with his older daughter, Rhoda Jane Smith, in Whittier, CA before his death in 1918 or 1919.)

The 1911 cottage, that replaced the original smaller house, was built by Lovell Hill and Willard Johnson and was currently occupied by Lovell and his mother. Edith and Leroy also slept in the cottage, but Minnie and Alfred slept in a separate one room building located southwest of the house. Later, this building became the bathhouse. Behind the cottage were a high-roofed, open-sided garage and a

house-shed that held a bed. A large barn stood about 200 feet southeast of the house. There was also an outhouse, a chicken coop and one of the three dynamite sheds. (The small stone building near the entrance to Chatsworth Park South is the only dynamite shed that remains.) There was also a large redwood water tank mounted on a flatbed trailer in front of the house. It was refilled at a water tap on Devonshire St. and held water used for drinking and washing. Also near the front of the house was a cushioned, metal hammock hung between pomegranate trees. At the west of the house were tubs and clotheslines used for the family laundry.



Early Days at the Cottage

Photo - Property of Chatsworth Historical Society

The cottage, at this time, did not have the later, shed-roofed kitchen or bathroom and the front porch was not screened, but had translucent shades on the front and east side and opaque canvas shades on the west. Leroy said his uncle, Arthur Smith, built the enclosure.

End of Chapter (1)  
(To be continued in subsequent newsletters)

## MARILYN FRUMP MEMORIAL

.....Virginia Watson

A Memorial Service was held for Marilyn Frump, long time docent for the Chatsworth Historical Society, at her home on March 7, 2009. She had been in poor health for the past several years and finally succumbed to her illness. The service was held on the patio with a musical interlude, prayers, reflections and remembering Marilyn, led by Chaplain Dona Mihalsky with friends and family attending

Mrs. Frump and her husband David were members of the Chatsworth Historical Society and Marilyn became a docent, learning the history of the area and providing tours of the museum, house and gardens.

She also did telephoning for the society, especially calling board members to remind them of the meetings. She worked on school tours and baked for our Garden Festival and Pioneer Day sales. An excellent cook, Marilyn made apple pies for our September Roundup and they were so good they were remembered from year to year. Always gracious and friendly, Marilyn enjoyed being a grandparent and often brought her grandchildren with her to the Acre. We will miss her!

At the Memorial her friends and family decided to make donations to the Chatsworth Historical Society in her name. Many gifts have been received and checks can still be made out to the Chatsworth Historical Society making sure her name is included on the check.

Betty and Jim Summers, long-time friends of both Marilyn and Dave, also donated a rosebush in Marilyn's name in our new Memorial Rose Garden.

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