

Smoke Signal

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



January 2010, Issue #1

Co-Presidents: André & Linda van der Valk

Editor: Ann Vincent

Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

It seems like just yesterday that some were worried about what the year 2000 was going to bring. Before we know it is 2010. Our oldest granddaughter Hunter is going to be ten and we wonder where the time has gone but some things never change. Bea has already gotten started preparing for this year's Garden Festival and we are getting ready for our annual Rose Pruning Day.

Our Rose Pruning and Garden Chore Day is January 30th at the Acre. We need help pruning the roses and trimming some of the other plants and bushes back. We will have coffee at 8:30 AM and then start pruning right after. If you are interested in roses and gardening this would be a great day to help us out.

I would like to thank Ann Vincent for her Past and Present articles in the Smoke Signal. I think we find them all very interesting and she is giving some of the present owners of the businesses a chance to learn about the past of their building and business. We are always looking for more information concerning the area or the Pioneer families of Chatsworth. If you have pictures you would like to share we are always happy to have them. We have a great scanner and we are able to copy the pictures and give you back the originals.

We are in the process of planning a change in the museum display in time for the Garden Festival. There is always something to keep us busy.

We hope that everyone has a healthy and prosperous New Year. Linda and Andre

Boy Scout Troop 535 Eagle Project

Brandon Troth coordinated his fellow Boy Scouts and friends to accomplish improvements for the Homestead Acre on December 19th 2009. Brandon's project included improvements on the memorial rose garden and the native plant garden, setting in a sandstone boarder around each. The local sandstone was donated by Chatstworth Landscape.



Brandon has also built several new benches for the acre for the use of our visitors. Thanks, Brandon!

Chatsworth Historical Society
Board of Directors 2009-2010

Co-Presidents	Linda & André van der Valk
Programs, Ways & Means.....	Bea Berman
Membership.....	Keith Watts
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Recording Secretary.....	Elaine Campbell
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Director-at-Large.....	Evelyn Hutcheson
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Upcoming Events at the HOMESTEAD ACRE

January 19 – General Meeting – 7:00 pm "Off The Beaten Path"

Bronwyn Ralph, author of "Off the Beaten Path, A Guide to exploring Cultural Landmarks, Historic Monuments and other Points of Interest in the San Fernando Valley", will be on hand to discuss her book and her research on the San Fernando Valley.

January 30th - Rose Pruning and Garden Chore Day 8:30 am to 12:00 noon

Join us for a morning of chores to get ready for the Garden Festival. Bring hand pruners and gloves. There is something for everyone to do.

April 25, 2010 – Garden Festival

October 3, 2010 – Pioneer Day

Weekly - Docent Workshops

Workshops meet every Wednesday, 9:00am to noon under the direction of Virginia Watson. Docents are trained to provide tours and assist with projects related to the museum and gardens. Contact Virginia Watson at 818-341-3053 for additional information.

Monthly - Museum Open House

The Homestead Acre is open to the public the first Sunday of each month from 1 to 4 pm.

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

An oral history on what it was like living on the "ranch"
in Chatsworth

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. Keith Watts separated it into "chapters", added titles and other small editorial tasks.

Continued from previous issues of the Smoke Signal:

Chapter 3

EVERYDAY LIFE

Everyone washed and bathed in the kitchen using a tin pan or tub until the bathhouse became available. Edith told of an incident of youthful fury that took place in the bathhouse in the mid-twenties. At the time, her cousin, Lillian, Aunt Calla's daughter, was living at the ranch and attending school. The two girls were about the same age and were expected to be friendly, but Edith resented Lillian because she was allowed to do her homework and studying after school, while Edith had to help her mother. Only after the dinner dishes were done was Edith allowed some free time. One evening after dinner Edith prepared for a nice bath by carrying many pails of hot water to the bathhouse tub, but she had forgotten something, so had to go back to the house to get it. When she came back, Lillian was in the tub. Edith was furious and yanked Lillian from the tub. The fight was ended when Minnie, hearing the yelling and screaming, separated the two girls.

The children did not have many toys, but there were always lots of things to do when they had free time. Leroy hunted rabbits. Edith played the piano and took lessons from Mrs. Johnson that Minnie paid for, by crocheting. With no electricity or radio, the family made their own entertainment. They often played card games, cribbage and pinochle. Edith said, "We played lots of pinochle!"

In the early 1920's Edith and Leroy watched a motion picture company shooting scenes for a silent movie on a hill behind the house. The hill had been covered with piles of salt to simulate snow and a trapper or mountain man character was filmed hiking up and down the mountain. The piles of salt being used to look like snow were a source of great

amusement.

Edith and Leroy remembered how much both their mother and father liked to knot, knit, embroider, crochet and piece quilts. A quilt frame was suspended by ropes from the living room ceiling and, by means of a pulley and rope, was let down to be worked on. Alfred Palmer knotted and crocheted two beautiful black handbags that Edith showed us. (Alfred Palmer was born in Minnesota and had a twin brother, Albert. Alfred Palmer died in 1946 at the age of 63.)

Furniture that Edith remembered from her childhood included her Uncle Lovell's roll-top desk that held a black stick telephone. The telephone generator and ringer were mounted in an oak wooden box attached to the wall. The family owned a dark-finish, upright piano and the usual tables and side chairs. The living rooms had room sized dark-patterned carpets. (The lamp that currently hangs in the corner of the Museum may have hung in the house at one time. Minnie gave this lamp to Edith about 1952 and Edith gave it to the society in 1986.)

The adults in the family were not churchgoers, but Minnie felt Edith and Leroy should attend church to meet other children and be part of the community. Unfortunately, Edith, who was only ten or eleven, had only one good, yellow dress. The other children made remarks about her always wearing it. She was very unhappy and pleaded not to go to church, but was sent anyway. A short time later when Minnie, on meeting the minister in town, asked about Edith's progress and was asked in return, "Do you mean the girl who wears the yellow dress?", Edith was not forced to attend church any longer.

Ruth Manny Hill Rider, Minnie's niece, who often visited the house in the early 1930's, told us that the wide, square opening between the two living rooms was hung with portieres made of knotted, heavy brown thread trimmed with eucalyptus buttons (seed pods) and at the bottom, red glass beads. These macramé type curtains were about 20" wide, floor length and were tied back so that they formed a narrow drape. The bedrooms contained "a bed, dresser and chair and not much else", said Edith. Linoleum rugs covered the bedroom floors and the kitchen had a "scrubbed wood" floor and a kerosene cooking stove. Kerosene lamps lighted the house and there was a kerosene heating stove in the west living room.

Ruth Rider said she had never eaten in the

dining room because meals were taken on the porch when guests came, and the dining room, although it contained a table, was used as Lovell Hill's bedroom.

Mrs. Rider remembered the dark green exterior color of the house, but said that, from any distance, the house looked dark and unpainted. Only the color on the rear exterior of the house was

still in good condition. (Paint scrapings of the house confirm this.) About 1958, Minnie had her grandson, Ronald Butler, paint the house butter yellow and he stated that the original color had been a very dark green.

Next Chapter to follow in the next Smoke Signal edition is "Some Family Members."

MEMORIES OF MOVIE STARS

By Elaine Campbell

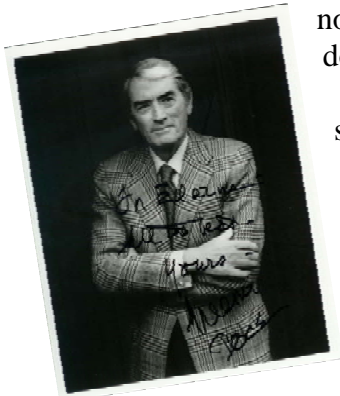
In 1928 when I was 6 years old, I was taken to see the movie "The Singing Fool" with Al Jolson. In that movie he sang a song to a little boy – I think it was his son. The name of the song was "Sonny Boy". I never forgot that experience or the song. I can still remember some of the words.

That started a life long love of movies and movie stars. I grew up during the depression so I doubt that my parents would have allowed me to buy movie magazines, even though they were only ten cents. We had an older family friend whose wife had passed away and he had a lot of Sunday dinners with us. He brought me stacks of movie magazines and he would bring them to me when he came for a meal. On one page of the magazine there was a section that gave you addresses to send for stars pictures. It was just the cost of a penny postcard – and that I could afford! So when I was about 12 years old I started sending postcards. Some of the very popular actors and actresses would send back a postcard with a scene from their latest movie and the information that for twenty-five or fifty cents they would send an autographed picture. Sometimes I would save up and splurge – but I wanted to spend my money on seeing the latest movies, so I didn't do that more than a few times. I think I collected pictures for about 2 years and ended up with a collection of over 100. They are all signed – but by whom? I'm sure the very popular stars had their secretaries doing it for them. Many of them have my name on them – others just a greeting or the stars name.



I wrote a few letters and sometimes I would get an actual letter in return. I wrote to Marie Wilson and we corresponded for about a year. Maybe some of you old timers will remember her. She was very young and her handwriting wasn't much better than mine.

I had all those pictures in a box – had never done anything with them. In about 1972 we lived in a house with a long hall down to the bedrooms, and my husband suggested I get them out, frame them and he would hang them down the hall. I found the perfect frame – and fortunately the store could order enough so they would all be the same. Ever since then, they have adorned my walls and I get very nostalgic as I sit here at my computer and they are "looking down" – at me.



The last picture I added to my collection was a surprise. My daughter's best friend is a professional gardener and she was doing landscaping for Gregory Peck. She told him that she had a friend who collected movie star pictures. He asked her if I had his picture and she told him that I was in my 80's and I had done this as a child. He asked for my name – went in his home and came out with a picture signed "For Elaine, all the best Yours, Gregory Peck."

Editors Note: Several of Elaine's photos were used at the museum during our 50's display last year.

CHATSWORTH PAST & PRESENT

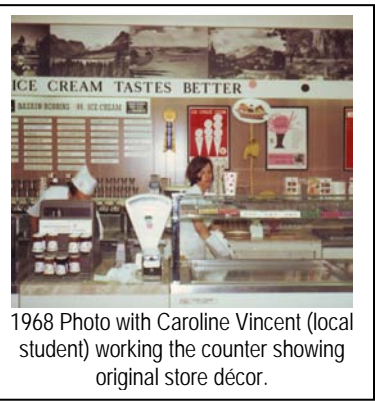
By Ann Vincent

January 2010

Baskin Robbins 31 Flavors Ice Cream stores had their beginning in Glendale and Pasadena California in 1945. Store #123 is in Chatsworth and Baskin Robbins now has over 2,600 stores nationwide. The Chatsworth store, now owned and operated by Barbara and Peter Laspina, is located at 20445 Devonshire. This family operated business goes back 43 years to the Ditto family, who first opened the store in 1967.



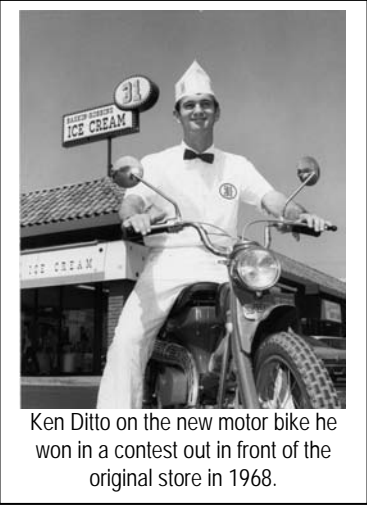
Virginia Graves Ditto, a Chatsworth native descended from the Chatsworth pioneer Graves family, owned her first store in Panorama City in 1963, but jumped at the chance to own one locally when a new plaza was under construction on the corner of Mason and Devonshire in 1967. The price of a scoop of ice cream when the store opened was just 15 cents. For Virginia, a young widower with five children, the new store continued to be the center of family life. She had no need to dole out allowances...if the kids wanted money, they had to work. Frank, Ken, and Bill each mentioned that they developed strong right arms from scooping ice cream.



1968 Photo with Caroline Vincent (local student) working the counter showing original store décor.

Ken says that the Baskin Robbins company was more like a family business; it was nothing to go to work and have the company owners Burt or Irv sitting in a chair in the store just having a conversation with his mother on matters of the business. Ken also

remembers movie stars dropping by, especially Roy Rogers and William Shatner. Frank Ditto remembers that the family car at the time was an off-white VW Bug with brown and pink dots and the 31 flavors logo on the side. Under the back window was a sign displaying the flavor of the month. Ken had fun entering contests every year to promote new items, and in 1968 he won 1st place for his Ice Cream Parfait recipe. In 1970, Virginia decided it was time to sell. However Bill, still in his senior year of high school, continued working for the new



Ken Ditto on the new motor bike he won in a contest out in front of the original store in 1968.

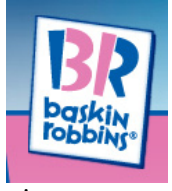
store owner, Mr. Davis, who only owned the store a short time. Stuart and Gloria Rosenbloom owned the store from 1972 to 1977. The store changed hands one last time in 1977 to current owners Barbara and Peter Laspina, who have operated it the last 33 years.



Peter and Barbara Laspina at the Chatsworth Baskin Robbins

Barbara also participates in the corporate contests, and invented a new flavor. Quarterback Crunch has been a seasonal flavor for 32 years now, introduced each year during the football season. A proud inventor, Barbara sports license plates that say "QB CRNCH".

The "31 flavors logo" originally indicated that you could treat yourself to a different flavor each day of the month. Today, there is no limit to the number of flavors that are available. The new logo still carries the 31, but you have to look for it.



Barbara and Peter have always been involved in the community through fundraising activities and personal support for some of their student employees. Barbara got involved and volunteered as a cheerleading coach with Chaminade for nine years. Looking back at 33 years as owners of the Chatsworth Store they proudly informed me that they are ranked 28th out of 2,600 Baskin Robbins stores in the United States, quite an accomplishment. When you visit the bright colorful festive store, and see the spectacular display of ice cream toppings and desserts, you truly feel as though you have stepped in to Candyland. Be sure to stop by and select your favorite flavor!



2010 Chatsworth Baskin Robbins

Chatsworth Historical Society

Have You Lived Here A Long Time?

Do you remember The Grapevine?

It was a weekly community newspaper that was produced by two local women in the 1950's. It was very small, only about 8" by 10" wide and was filled with news about the people who lived in the area.

The Chatsworth Historical Society has a collection of those newspapers and we would like to fill in the missing dates. Each issue painted a pleasant picture of life in the northwest San Fernando Valley. The paper was full of information about the local PTA, Chatsworth Park Elementary news, church events, Scouts and other youth groups, and baseball, accounts of visitors, vacations, and celebrations and advertising of local sales and business information.

Please look around and see if you might have one or two issues tucked back in a drawer or saved in a box and consider donating the paper to our Society. We plan on making a display of the newspapers this fall. We would welcome any and all issues. If you have any questions please call me at (818) 341-3053. Virginia Watson

Wondering if your Dues are Due?

There is a code on the last line of your address label (if you are a life member, there is no code).

- The first digit represents membership type, 1 – individual, and 2 – family/organization.

- The next two digits represent the month that you last paid your dues.
- The last two digits represent the year that you last paid your dues.
- If the month and year on your address label is over one year old, then your dues are due!

Please use the form below to renew your Membership. And if your neighbor is not a member yet, pass this newsletter on to them and invite them to join...

Ways and Means

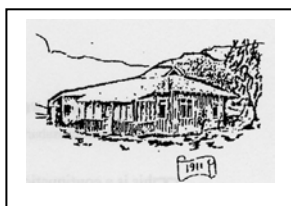
By Bea Berman

I can't believe its' another year and plans are underway for our annual GARDEN FESTIVAL AND HIGH TEA, on SUNDAY, APRIL 25, 2010 at the Homestead Acre from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. This is one of our two fundraisers for the year to help maintain the cost of upkeep for the museum, cottage and gardens.

As always, we need baked goods for our Bake Sale and new or like new items for our White Elephant Booth. Of course we can always use help for set up and take down.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at (818) 341-5449. We are working on getting the shuttle bus from the train depot and hopefully it will come through.

Tell your friends about the Garden Festival. We are looking forward to seeing you on the 25th of April.



CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Membership Form

Your membership helps support our Homestead Acre and the educational and historical programs we provide for our community. Members receive our quarterly newsletters, and receive invitation reminders regarding our monthly programs and annual events – Rose Pruning, the Garden Festival, Membership Roundup, and Pioneer Day. Please mail this form with your annual membership dues and/or contribution made payable to:

Chatsworth Historical Society, 10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA 91311
818-882-5614 www.historicalsocieties.net

- Yearly:** New Member Renewal
Life Membership: Individual \$15.00 Family \$20.00 Organization \$20.00
 \$ 125.00

NAME _____ Phone: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____ Email: _____

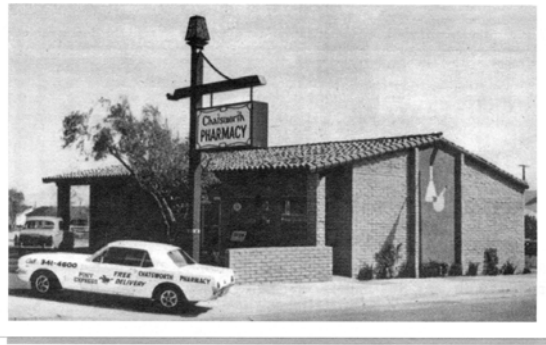
CITY / STATE / ZIP: _____

Special Interest / Expertise: _____

OLD PHOTOS - from Chatsworth Past - CHATSWORTH PHARMACY



1950 to 1960 – Devonshire and Topanga



1960 to 1978 – 10230 Canoga Ave



1978 to 1999 – 21501 Devonshire



1999 to approx. 2003 – 21525 Devonshire

These photos are from an old advertising brochure produced by Chatsworth Pharmacy boasting over 50 years of service as of 2000 to the Chatsworth Community. The brochure showed all the locations they had occupied during that time. The owner was Paul Snyder who closed the business at 21525 Devonshire some time after 2003.

Chatsworth Historical Society

10385 Shadow Oak Drive
Chatsworth, Ca 91311

Check the code below your mailing label ...is it time to pay your dues? (See page 5 for details)