

# Smoke Signal

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



Co-Presidents: André & Linda van der Valk

February 2013, Issue #1

Editor: Ann Vincent

## Celebrating Chatsworth's 125<sup>th</sup> Birthday and the Historical Society's 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday

Chatsworth celebrates its birthday this year, founded on March 10, 1888. The center of town was near what is today the intersection of Lassen St. and Topanga Canyon Blvd.

The Chatsworth Historical Society is also celebrating 50 years since its founding on April 17, 1963. Thanks to the hard work and efforts of many members over the years, we have a wealth of knowledge, photos and artifacts that allow us to share the rich history of our community.

In 2003, Huell Howser accepted the invitation to visit Chatsworth and several of our Cultural Landmarks including the Munch Box, the Historic Olive Trees along Lassen St, Stoney Point and more. His visits resulted in two California Gold Episodes, "The Munch Box" and "Chatsworth". Huell and Virginia Watson became friends and Huell was honored as a Life Member of the Historical Society. With his passing in January, Chapman College, (the recipient of his California Gold Archives) included Virginia on the guest list for their recent Golden Legacy Program.

As an update on Chatsworth South Park activities, the Councilman's office is still predicting a reopening of the recreation center building early this year. A positive sign is that the front entry sign at the entrance to the park on Devonshire has been repainted...ready to go.

Please join us for our upcoming events and be sure to plan to attend our Garden Festival and Tea approaching in April. We look forward to seeing you at this fun family and community event.

Chatsworth Historical Society  
Board of Directors 2012-2013

Co-Presidents .....	Linda & André van der Valk
Programs, Ways & Means.....	Bea Berman
Membership.....	Keith Watts
Treasurer.....	Ray Vincent
Recording Secretary.....	Elaine Campbell
Smoke Signal.....	Ann Vincent
Museum Curator.....	Virginia Watson
Cottage Curator.....	Betty Summers
Hospitality.....	Jelena Csanyi
Garden Director.....	Jim & Betty Summers
Director-at-Large.....	Beverly King
Director-at-Large.....	Connie Ager
Permanent Member.....	Lila Schepler

## Upcoming Events

### February 19th, 7:00 PM - Tuesday Movie Night

Did you know that the first Superman Episodes were filmed here in Chatsworth as Saturday afternoon movie cliffhangers? Come join us for Episode 1 of the Superman 1948 Theatrical Series and catch a glimpse of the "ATSWORTH" train station.

### March 19th, 7:00 PM - Tuesday Huell Howser Chatsworth Episode & Birthday Celebration

Chatsworth was founded on March 10<sup>th</sup>, and each year we have a celebration with a cake at our March meeting. This year we will also show the 2003 Huell Howser video "Chatsworth", providing a tour of the Olive Trees, the Harvester Barn, Stoney Point and our Historic Acre.

### April 28, 2013 – Sunday 11-4 pm GARDEN FESTIVAL & TEA

Put this on your calendar now and plan to be there.

### Monthly - Museum Open House

The Homestead Acre is open to the public the first Sunday of each month from 1 to 4 pm. The next open house will be Sunday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> followed by April 7<sup>th</sup>.

## Garden Festival

By Bea Berman

It is the start of a new year, and plans are underway for our annual Garden Festival, Sunday April 28<sup>th</sup> at the Homestead Acre.

Again this year we will be having our delicious High Tea, White Elephant Booth, Yummy Bake Sale, Veterans Quilt Display, Garden Clubs and Vendors. The event runs from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. We can use new or like new items for our White Elephant sale, and if you would like to bake for our bake sale, contributions would be appreciated.

Any questions, I can be reached at (818) 341-5449. Tell your friends and we hope to see you on April 28<sup>th</sup>. This is one of our two fundraisers to help maintain the upkeep of our Acre.

Bea Berman, Chairman

## Docent Activities

By Ann Vincent

The Acre continues to be a busy place on Wednesday mornings when we challenge ourselves with both indoor and outdoor activities. Our garden gets attention allowing those with a green thumb to work outside while a handful of docents continue to sort through documents continuing to improve storage and preservation techniques.

Open House is still held from 1-4 on the first Sunday of the month, but we could use some extra help. Besides having two docents in the Museum and in the cottage during this time, we also would like to have two volunteers in the garden who can direct guests to the museum when they arrive and then to the cottage. Some guests just enjoy being outside in the garden too. No surprise...is it beautiful.

If you would like to volunteer, please contact us by email at [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com) or call the office at 818-882-5614 and leave a message.

On Saturday, February 9, a Cordage Native Skills Class was held on the grounds of the Hill-Palmer Homestead Acre. Attendees experienced hands-on how to create rope using native plants. The class was taught by local Indian culture expert Dr. Christenson and organized by the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park and the Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains.



Chatsworth Park kindergarten students pose with Esther Leon, Jim Summers, Frank Ditto, Linda van der Valk and their teacher in front of the photo display in the school office.

## Chatsworth Park Elementary School

Last year one of our goals was to organize and update the information we have on the Chatsworth Park Elementary School. In the process, we contacted the school and received a tour from the Principal, Esther Leon with one of our older alumni, Jim Summers, who attended class in the existing building in 1937.

Since then, a collection of photos of the school with captions has been created to tell the history of the school and are now on display in the school office for the students and parents to enjoy.

Recently in January, the kindergarten class gathered to thank those involved with the display.

This March we will provide a program for the children at the school showing how their school has changed over the years as we celebrate 125 years of Chatsworth History.



Chatsworth Park Alumni (1963) Ray Vincent looks on as Jim Summers points out his photo in a 1937 classroom and Frank Ditto is shown in a photo on his first day of school in 1954.

## CHATSWORTH PAST & PRESENT

By Ann & Ray Vincent

February 2013

**The Chatsworth Park Quarry** story begins in 1891 when William Bannon acquires the De La Osa adobe at La Cuesta, which was the Stagecoach way station in today's Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park.

William Bannon was an experienced quarryman. Before arriving in California, he had worked for over 10 years in Texas, in charge of the quarries for the Galveston Harbor jetties, and the stone used in the Austin State Capital Building. In 1887 he came to California and was in charge of the Grayrock quarries that produced the rock for the buildings at Stanford University.

In 1892 Bannon homesteaded 160 acres with his wife and four sons. He restored the existing two stone reservoirs, added fencing, and cultivated 50 to 90 acres of "rolling farmland" to raise seasonal crops and grow fruit trees.

During that same year Chatsworth Park Stone Quarry operations began. In 1893 Southern Pacific Railroad completed the Burbank Branch to Chatsworth, ending at Marilla and between Topanga and Farralone.

The picture below shows the train just east of Topanga and north of Marilla. Notice Stoney Point in the background, the Train Station at the right with the Chatsworth Hotel behind it, the Hill/Graves store at the left, and that Topanga (then Santa Susana) dead ended at Marilla. And notice there are no structures north of the Chatsworth Hotel all the way to Stoney Point.

For the next six years, the Chatsworth Quarry provided dimensional stone and distributed it throughout the greater Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino areas. Large blocks were sent from Chatsworth to the Bly Brothers cutting yard in Los Angeles, where workers used mechanical drills, saws, planers and surfacing machines to cut and shape the stone.

In 1898, Southern Pacific laid another mile of track into Chatsworth Park next to the quarry, and Bannon purchased 120 acres next to the stone quarry. In 1899 Bannon was awarded a contract to supply fifty

carloads of stone a day of irregular sandstone riprap for the construction of the San Pedro breakwater. Operations began in early 1901; Bannon sold his quarry to the California Construction Company I June of that year, and moved his family to Texas.

For the next four years, as many as fifty quarrymen drilled, blasted, hauled and deposited between 500 to 700 tons of quarried blocks a day, using as many as five steam-powered derricks, one of which was mounted on a railroad flatcar, to load the rock onto rail cars for shipment out of the quarry.

The sandstone rock formed the core of the San Pedro Breakwater, and was covered by granite to protect it from direct action of the seas.



*Loading rock at the quarry, notice the rock tongs at center lifting a rock onto a flatbed car.*

The Quarry continued operations under different operators until 1915. The advent of steel and concrete construction methods spelled the end of dimensional stone.

Remnants of quarry operations (i.e., large rocks in piles) are widespread in various locations in today's State Historic Park, and volunteers give interpretive hikes of the park and quarry operations.

*Chatsworth Historical Society*



## *Historical Notes*

In 1871 the stagecoach from San Francisco, making one of its runs, came over the ridge of the west mountain and stopped at the station (which is now Oakwood Cemetery) for fresh horses to complete the run into Los Angeles. Then it was that the Hills first beheld the panoramic beauty of this vast valley, and in 1886 left Los Angeles to homestead 110 acres at Devonshire west of Andora. (Today lots in Chatsworth are selling as high as \$5,000).

Minnie Hill, whose American ancestry dates back prior to the Revolutionary War, was born in the fall of 1886, and her first school teacher was Miss Lenora Johnson, sister of Emma Graves and aunt of Kelly and Harold Johnson. In 1903 the Hills gave the So. Pacific RR the rights to build the tunnel on the north crest of their property. In 1909 Minnie married Alfred Palmer and lived in the city, whose marriage was blessed with a son and daughter, both married and living in San Fernando.

Fred Graves of 22000 Chatsworth St. and her brother Lovell Hill owned the General Mercantile Store in front of what is now Rube Ahlstrom's place at 9847 Topanga (that was the town in those days, with the hotel across the street) and they sold everything: farm equipment, seeds, grain, yardage, groceries, no doubt complete with the potbellied stove and cracker barrel; and in 1912 the old homestead house was torn down and the present home built.

In 1920 Minnie and Alfred came back to the old home to care for her mother who remained bedfast for 15 years, so with the exception of 11 years, Minnie has lived all of her life right here.

In the passage of time the store was sold and in 1923 Alfred and Lovell were partners in being the agents for the Trojan Powder Co., trucking dynamite from Oakland to the magazine still located on their property, and from there to sites where the dynamite would be used. In 1926 they acquired the old Bannon homestead (where they changed horses for the stage) of 120 acres, making their total holdings 230 acres. In 1937 the Native Daughters of the Golden West laid down a plaque over the old stage coach trail commemorating its existence.

Alfred passed away in 1946 and Lovell carried on the hauling of dynamite in partnership with their son until Lovell passed away in 1951 when the storage plant was closed down.

In 1955 the property was leased to the Aqua Sierra Sportsman's Club and at the present time details concerning its sale to them are being consummated, with the proviso that Minnie will retain the old home and approx. 2 acres rent and tax-free as long as she lives. The Aqua Sierra have modernized the home in that they have piped the water to the house which up until recently had to be carried in.

Minnie has just returned from a week's plane trip to Hawaii in company with a group from the Farm Bureau in Bakersfield which also included her sister and sister-in-law, but her 15-yr. old cat has told her in no uncertain terms that she is to stop gadding about.

The Sewing Circle of old-time friends met at her home last Tuesday for luncheon.

Ah! what memories!

## It's Your Community...

### It's Your History

The Chatsworth Historical Society would like to have you join us in preserving Chatsworth's past. If you have any old Chatsworth publications, like the Grapevine, or have old photos of the area, we would love to have copies of them. We would also like to hear your stories about growing up in Chatsworth or what brought you to Chatsworth and why you stayed here.

### Can we Email our newsletter to you?

In an effort to reduce costs, save paper, and provide you with a color copy, we will now email newsletters to those of you that have given us an email address. However, we will also continue to send you a snail-mail copy until you advise us not to. So please email us at [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com) to stop future newsletter mailings and save us some money. And also please email us to provide your email address. Thanks!

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...

## Wondering if your Dues are Due?

There is a code on 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!

For those receiving email only newsletters, we will advise you in the email if your dues are due.....

### **CHS Members Pass Away**

We wish the best to their families at this difficult time.

Ramon Avila, past board member

Leuse Mitchell, Lila Schepler's daughter

Linda Stone, past board member

Huell Howser, recognized our history as

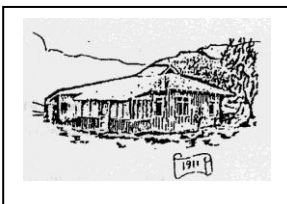
California Gold

Henriette Cavillier, mother of Linda van der Valk



## 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](http://www.historicalsocieties.net)

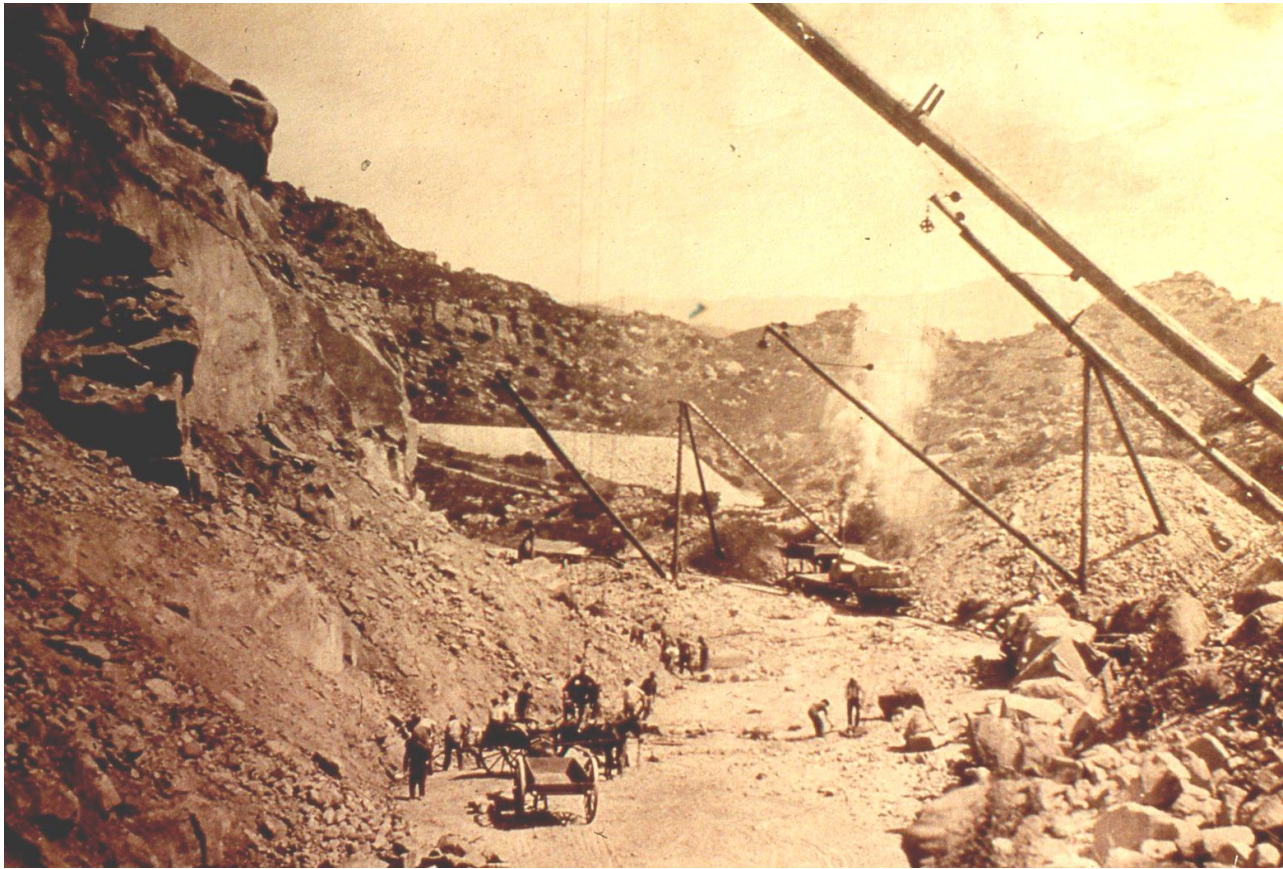
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|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <b>Yearly:</b>          | <input type="checkbox"/> New Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$20.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Organization \$20.00 |
| <b>Life Membership:</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 125.00  |                                  |   |   |   |

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

STREET ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY / STATE / ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interest / Expertise: \_\_\_\_\_



**Chatsworth becomes a Railroad Boom Town** in 1899. The picture above shows quarrymen working at the Bannon quarry, and in the center background, the horizontal white section is the fill between tunnels 26 and 27. So 50 quarry men and 56 men from the tunneling crew, along with their families, lived in Chatsworth for four years. The tunnels were completed in 1904 and the quarry contract ceased in 1903. The Graves/Hill General Store, the Chatsworth Hotel, and the Train Depot were no doubt hubs of activity during this time.

### **Chatsworth Historical Society**

10385 Shadow Oak Drive  
Chatsworth, Ca 91311

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

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