

# Smoke Signal

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

chatsworthhistory@gmail.com www.historicalsocieties.net



Co-Presidents: André & Linda van der Valk

November 2013, Issue #5

Editor: Ann Vincent

## Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

Pioneer Day was another great success thanks to Bea Berman. Bea made sure everything went smoothly and as always she made sure we had great weather. The day before it was so windy that a tree split next to the White Elephant Booth. Thanks to Ray Vincent and his trusty chain saw we were able to have the branches taken out of the way by the time Connie started setting up the booth.

We have been busy with tours. We have had 3rd grade classes and last week we were part of LA Commons which was celebrating the LA River. There were five hundred small events taking place near the LA River. We were chosen for our proximity to the Santa Susana Creek. If you would like to be a docent and help with tours we certainly can use the help. We will be having docent training in January so if you are interested please let us know.

Andre and I took a tour of the Santa Susana Field Lab and saw where engines were tested in the facility. We visited three of the test stands and also saw the area where there was a nuclear melt down in the 50's. If you have a chance to go on one of the tours that they have periodically try to go. It is not only very interesting but the terrain is beautiful. While we were waiting at the guard gate to check in, there was a coyote peering over the hillside. It turns out his name is Charlie. He has a mate and a cub there.

Apparently we were told there are plenty of bunnies to keep him happy there and he visits the guard shack to get water from a bird bath there.

I guess it is things like that which occur that make me happy to live in Chatsworth.

Happy Fall, Linda and André



Special Thanks to ALL OF OUR VOLUNTEERS who made Pioneer Day a big Success!

Chatsworth Historical Society  
Board of Directors 2013-2014

Co-Presidents .....	Linda & André van der Valk
Programs .....	Ann Vincent
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 Schenler

## Upcoming Events

### November 19, 7:00 PM - Tuesday Program Chatsworth Hills Homesteaders II

A continuation of the Homesteader series, hear the stories that shaped Chatsworth. These are the pioneers that lived on government land to "prove up" earning the right to own the land. Come see who owned your neighborhood! This section will include the families that staked out land between Chatsworth Street and Plummer west of Andora.

### Christmas Party

Our Annual Christmas Party, hosted by Linda and Andre van der Valk, has been canceled due to Andre's recent coronary bypass surgery. He is home recovering and we look forward to having him out and about soon.

Happy Holidays - No December General Meeting

### 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, November 3<sup>rd</sup> and December 1<sup>st</sup>

### Wednesday Morning Docent Program

Throughout the year our docents continue to work on the garden and other museum projects. We are also looking for additional volunteers to help give tours at Open House and for the schools that visit. Interested?

# Pioneer Day

By Bea Berman

There is an old adage “Neither rain, snow or sleet will keep the pony express from doing their job.” That’s how I felt the weekend of Pioneer Day because of the unexpected weather, but we survived.

Saturday, the winds were horrendous, so



Each year Gil and Kay bring us a different buggy for display. Thank you!

hard to set up, all we could do was set up the tables and thanks to Ann Vincent, she recruited some Marines and some ROTC students from El

Camino High School along with our regulars, Ray Vincent, Bob Dager, Gary Bercow, Randy Mineo, Jim Summers, Jelena Csanyi, Connie Ager and her sister Carol, her husband Tom Senior, Janine Bergez and Annette Campbell. In addition there was Mike Micklich, Peter Ullrich, and John and Kenny Huffman who all helped too! With all of this help, we finished in no time.

Sunday, the day was nice and we got started early to put the tents up and get everything in order.

Now for my thank yous: Most importantly, I want to thank our Councilman Mitch Englander for providing our shuttle bus which transported 389 passengers and made our day a success and we made close to \$5,000.00

Our gate was manned by Irene Nalbandian and Janis Heiden who did a great job. Thanks to Gil and Kay for bringing us the horse drawn buggy and to the Robbins family for sharing their 1914 model T. Ann headed the information table along with her volunteers. Loretta and Rod Sandoval did most of the baking for our bake sale. A huge selection of baked goods were donated by Cub Scout Pack 226 and their families. Loretta and Rod could not attend this year, so my daughter Randi and Kathy Underwood manned the table. Dr. Standke and his wife Nita were in their regular spot for the blacksmithing and baking, but unfortunately could not light the fires because of the wind/fire warnings

so they provided demonstrations on how things would be made. Pat Keene and his group brought the gold panning and his wife had a beautiful display of ceramics.

Connie Ager, my daughter Adrienne and Michelle DeGaetano took care of the white elephant table. The house tours were given by Beverly King, Betty Summers and Gloria Benedetti. Beverly also baked her famous pumpkin bread for the bake sale.

The museum was manned by Elaine Campbell, Linda Dunham, and Karine Panichi. Our special guests in the museum during the day were Lila Schepler and Jim Summers.

Kathy and Tim Reynolds headed the Chores of Yore showing butter churning and washday chores, while Bill UpdeGraff ran the sack races challenging everyone to participate.



Bill UpdeGraff had fun judging sack races.

Harriet van Tiger helped teach the kids the



Quilting Squares

art of rubberstamping while Monte Mickelson provided his leather making expertise working with all ages making leather stamped bookmarks and bracelets. Our quilters provided a great craft for the kids allowing them to create their own quilt pattern with a variety of colorful miniature quilting

squares. The San Fernando Historical Society, represented by Midge Gisel and Joy Hubbard, provided the corn husks and fabric to help guests make their own corn husk dolls. The Chatsworth Neighborhood Council sponsored a craft booth carving soap by Diana Dixon Davis.



Corn husk dolls

Additional pioneer



methods were taught and demonstrated by the Spinning Jennys, the woodcarvers, our rock chippers and a new display by member Lorie Lawrence with her handmade Indian crafts with Peter Ullrich and George Madrid displaying their carved walking/hiking sticks.

Joey Magic arrived and entertained the crowd with a little slight of hand and abracadabra! Sheriff George brought his Charityville Jail Western



Monty Mickelson supervises a young pioneer using leather stamping tools to make a bookmark.

Re-enactment and Living History Team. They deputized kids who put their parents and others in jail. They were eventually released after bail was set and paid as a donation to the Historical Society. The Charityville team included some fancy card players teaching the game of faro to all he could entice.

Girl Scout troop 6322, including Brooke Petretti (Andre and Linda van der Valk's granddaughter) sold lemonade throughout the day and helped at the snack bar. The van der Valk family members directed by Andre all helped behind the snack bar along with assistance by Jim Summers who once again did KP duty dicing onions as needed and Gary Bercow who helped man the barbeque for hot dogs.

Rico, my son-in-law, handled the parking lot and kept it running smoothly with the help of the Lawrence Middle School Students.

Ms. Pena and Mr. Van Dam from Lawrence Middle School guided their leadership class members as they each assisted throughout the day with whatever was needed, parking, assisting vendors and teaching chores of yore. They helped on Sunday with early morning set up and planned their students to come in shifts so that students were still available to help at closing, taking down the

tents, tables and all. Additional help came from Donna and Tom Nachtrab and Peter Ullrich on Sunday too. Everyone's help was truly appreciated.

The Chili Cook-off was a success and a special thanks goes out to our Chili judges this year: Jerry Thompson, manager from Ralphs Grocery Store; Alyssa and Mitch, owners of Chatsworth Cleaners; and Daniel Keys, grandson of Warren and Linda Stone.



John and Zena Thorpe show off the Blue Ribbon that John earned for his chili recipe.

The winners were:

John Thorpe  
First place

Kiwanis Club  
Second place

Cub Scouts  
Pack 226  
Third place



Our wonderful crew at the Santa Susana Gold mine worked throughout the day teaching our young gold panners what to look for and helping them find real GOLD!

P.S. Thanks for donating the Gold each year. The kids love it.

As usual, a special thanks to Jelena, Ann & Ray and Linda & Andre. The event could not have been a success without all of you.

Bea Berman, Chairman

## CHATSWORTH PAST & PRESENT

By Ann Vincent

November 2013

Chatsworth's past cannot be remembered without mentioning our local farms and produce stands. One of those produce stands can still be seen today along Topanga just north of Chatsworth Street. The Vellone Family Farm is still producing fruits and vegetables at the same location since the early 1940's. The stand was in operation for 38 years, from 1958 to 1996. Most residents remember it shaded under a giant live oak, which collapsed in 1980, sparing the structure. Frank Vellone passed away in 2009, however his wife Lillian and son Bill are still farming on the land.

The family farm land was purchased by Frank's parents, Bill and Ida Vellone. In the 1950's they also owned the Blvd Market, where they sold their produce, operating it as a mom and pop grocery store. It was located on the southeast corner of Canoga and Devonshire (Chatsworth Karate today). Lillian remembers that the Boulevard Market was a regular stopping place for Desi Arnaz, who would come into the market every Sunday afternoon to buy a 5 cent Cigarillo.

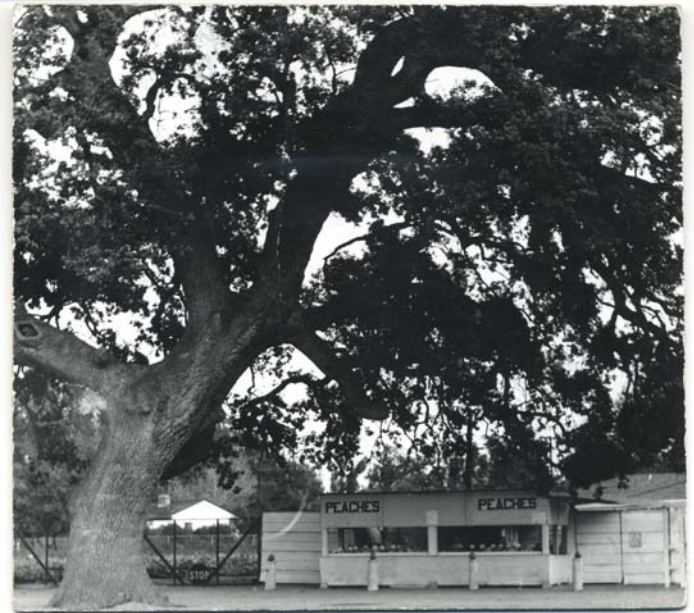
Frank Vellone and his wife Lillian built their home on two acres of the original 9 acres in 1953 on the corner of Andora, Chatsworth and Topanga. They built and opened the produce stand on July 10, 1958. Lillian tells of opening the stand each day, putting out the produce starting at 8:30 in the morning. Their daughter Edie would help after school and their son Bill would work with Frank in the fields, learning the farming business.

A seasonal business, May was always the peak of the season, but the stand would stay open from April to September each year. The hours were from 10 am to 7 pm daily.



Frank Vellone

Although they also provided produce from other nearby farms, they specialized in vine-ripened tomatoes, cantaloupe, green beans, tree-ripened fruit and freshly picked corn. Lillian is very proud that their produce has always been "Organic" by today's standards. In a quote from an old news clipping, she says "People come from



Vellone Family Farm produce stand, still standing today. The landmark tree on Topanga Canyon Blvd. that provided shade for many years fell down in 1980.

as far as Marina del Rey to buy our produce, which is picked fresh several times a day. Our produce is not sprayed."

In another article that Lillian shared, Frank talked about growing corn. He said that he didn't mind growing corn or hoeing it, but he did not like picking it. He explained that it was such a hot, dusty job that it required a shower several times a day. Since the ripe corn varies as much as 10 days between the very earliest cobs and the latest one, to get the maximum yield, he would have to go through cob by cob, cracking the husks to see if they were ready. If not, he took a leaf and wrapped it around so the bugs couldn't get in. Then, the exact day they were ready, they were sold at the stand.

While interviewing Lillian for this article, we sat in her ranch kitchen, surrounded by an orchard of fruit trees not far from the old stand. She reminisced about the celebrities that were regular customers including Andy Griffith, Dinah Shore (who used to buy eggs and beans), Roy Rogers, Dennis Weaver, Dom DeLuise and the Captain and Tennille.

The stand closed in 1999, but their produce is still marketed at various natural food markets in the area such as Mary's Secret Garden in Ventura, Erewhom Natural Foods on Beverly Blvd. in West LA, and Full O' Life Natural Foods and Restaurant in Burbank.

Bill was president of Future Farmers of America at Chatsworth High in 1971-72, and runs the farm now. Just for fun, he still sports his official school jacket occasionally when attending growing conferences. He has an old tractor on the ranch for sale....stop by and make him an offer!



## HOMESTEADING In the Chatsworth Hills

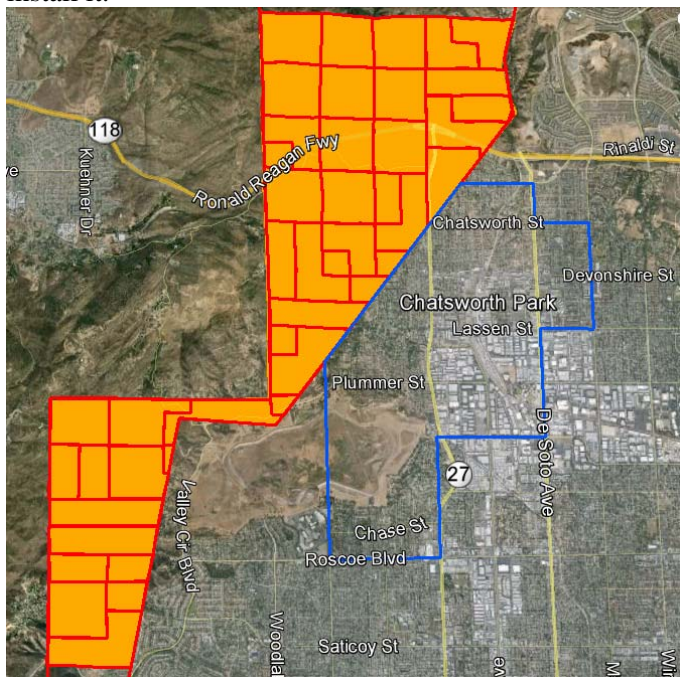
Ann & Ray Vincent

October 2013

Our October program (part 1) of the series covered the rules of Homesteading and defined the Spanish Land Grant areas of Rancho Simi and Rancho Ex Mission de San Fernando. The land in between was government land available for homesteading.

There were 45 homesteading families, as seen below in the orange section. For our presentation, we overlaid the sections of land, 160 acres for most, on a Google map that shows what is there today to easily see where each homesteader lived.

If you would like the Google Earth overlay file, please send us an email at [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com) and we will send you the file and instructions on how to install it.



The October presentation covered the homesteaders who lived north of Chatsworth street up into the hills above the 118 freeway. The November presentation (Part 2) will be from Plummer north to Chatsworth Street. A short recap of the homestead families we covered in Part 1 follows.

The first to stake out 160 acres was the **Ramon and Augusta De Jeremiah** family, who selected flat land along the Santa Susana Creek in 1865. In 1870 Ramon was 25 years old and they had two small children. They were successful farming the land and lived there until about 1900 when Augusta, now a widow, moved to San Fernando. During that early time there were French Basque shepherders in the area that included a young boy, Martin Biscaluz, whose son later became the Sheriff of Los Angeles, Eugene Biscaluz.

**Stephen Lopez**, whose original homestead document is on display at the Chatsworth Museum, arrived and earned the land that the railroad traveled through just west of the Jeremiah family property.

Stephen Lopez, a member of the prominent Lopez family of San Fernando, was 21 in 1892 and his occupation on his voter registration was butcher. Later, after moving back to take care of his aging father's holdings in San Fernando, Stephen's occupation is real estate.

The **Neils and Ann Johnson** family arrived in California from Utah in 1868. They located in what is now known as Brown's canyon in 1871, arriving just before Milton Brown. After confrontations with Milton over sharing water availability for cattle, they moved on to the area they homesteaded by 1874, becoming good friends with the Jeremiah family. The Johnson's were the first English speaking family to arrive. We have been fortunate to have published family histories of this family available at the Historical Society, and descendants of this family were among our founding members.

**Fred Graves** arrived in Chatsworth in 1896 and married **Emma Johnson**, the eighth child of Neils and Ann. They homesteaded 160 acres in the hills next to the Johnson family which eventually became part of the Johnson ranch. They moved down from the hills into Chatsworth where Fred's brother Harry and father Eli also bought land that had originally belonged to the Jeremiah family. Fred became a respected member of

the community, serving as sheriff for 10 years, and becoming partners with homesteader Lovell Hill running the Graves & Hill General Store.

The Harry Graves Ranch on Tulsa Street had this mail box out front while Virginia Graves Ditto and Bonnie Graves Lakey grew up there. It tells a story of it's own with all of the addresses assigned to that property



Addresses include:  
Rural Route 1 Box A15;  
10755 Santa Susana  
22101 Tulsa

over the years.

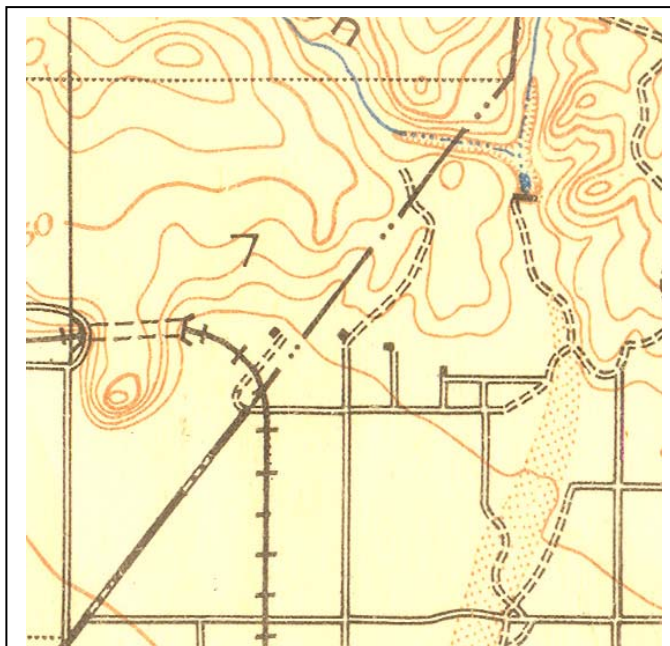
**J.R. and Caroline Williams** arrived in Chatsworth in 1881 from Kansas. J.R. is listed in the 1894 Maxwell Directory selling Jersey cattle. Caroline (Carrie) invited her sister Augusta Swagman of Sweden out to stay with her while expecting another child. Augusta was encouraged to homestead the adjacent 160 acres next to the Williams. She met and married **Carl Iverson** of Norway and history was made with the Iverson Movie Ranch. Although J.R. Williams originally had hoped to expand to include Augusta's land, he ended up selling most of his land to the Iverson family in the 1920's as they expanded the movie ranch. The Williams moved to a house on Devonshire and Farralone for many years. When the Pioneer Church was moved to Oakwood Cemetery in 1965, three generations of JR Williams (I, II, & III) were on hand as

the cornerstone of the church was opened to display items stored away in 1903. Portions of the William's family homestead now include Rocky Peak Church and the State Historic Park, which was at one point Spahn Ranch.

Some of our not so well known homesteaders include **Dionisio Sanchez**, of Mexico and his wife Maria and six children, who earned 129 acres directly west of the Williams family. Very little of his land was flat, and the homestead house was located close to where Fred Graves and Emma Johnson lived in the hills. This section would later be dissected by the 118 freeway. The southern edge of this parcel is now part of the northern edge of the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. (SSPSHP).

**Florence and Charles Mattingly** from Los Angeles each purchased 160 Acres under a Cash Sale option in 1909 and 1912. There is no evidence that they ever lived on the property and their land was never developed. It has become a part of the SSPSHP.

**George Charlton** homesteaded the section of land known today as Stoney Point. He was listed as an apiarist (bee keeper) in the Maxwell Directory in 1894 and a horticulturist when he registered to vote. The railroad went through his property with the construction of Tunnel #28 under Topanga. A quarry existed on his property from 1906 to 1915 that was run by his son Oliver, and Oliver hired William Bannon, another homesteader, to work his quarry. This land is now occupied by the Chatsworth Hills Academy, Stoney Point Ranch, The Chatsworth Methodist Church, Firewood sales by California Land Clearing and the Vellone Family Farm.



The map shown is a 1903 topography map with homes indicated as squares...you can see the roads that led to each home. Andora is the diagonal road. The road to the right of the tracks is Canoga. You can see the Charlton home in the triangle where the number 7 is. The Charlton home is right where Chatsworth Hills Academy is located today.

**George Haight**, identified as the owner of the Twin Lakes development from our research last year on the history of Twin Lakes, homesteaded the first 160 acres of his property. He had a close family friend **Newel Asay** and his wife who homesteaded additional adjacent property that eventually became part of the Haight land holdings. The Haight and Asay families were both from San Francisco, and The Haight Ashbury District was named for his prominent San Francisco family. George Haight came to Los Angeles following the San Francisco Earthquake in 1906. Newel arrived in 1916 earning his land by 1921. By 1927, Twin Lakes properties were being sold as a lakeside resort with a colorful brochure.

**Frank Raposo** - (located above Iverson) came from Portugal in 1894 and his homestead documents were issued in 1899. Frank also became a citizen in 1899. His sponsors on his citizenship papers were Frank Ackerman and Lovell Hill, both Chatsworth homesteaders. Citizenship also required 5 years of residency in this country.

**Tavner Myers**, from Missouri, received his Homestead papers in 1917. He registered with the local draft board for WWI in 1918, and his paperwork was signed by Carl Iverson as registrar. Tavner continued to live in Chatsworth through 1930, eventually selling real estate, living on what is now Topanga Canyon Blvd.

Others that we know less about, but would appreciate more information on if you find it...

**Jose Mondragon** - From Arizona, arrived in or before 1896, Homestead papers issued 1901, he registered to vote in 1896.

**Frederick Bachmann**- From Germany, probably arrived on or before 1904, Homestead papers issued 1909.

**Benjamin Conner** - From Nevada, Land papers issued 1915. Purchase through Cash sale.

**George Jones** - Probably arrived about 1914. Homestead documents issued 1919.

**Brooks Miller** - Homestead papers issued 1925.

**R C Ray** - Homestead 1935. His land, which includes what is now Rocky Peak Park above the 118 freeway, was purchased under a special "Stock Sale for Cattle".

# WANTED PHOTO

## Chatsworth World War II History

In World War II Observation Towers were built for civilians to help watch for and report incoming enemy planes. Special silhouette spotting cards were created to help identify the types of planes.

Jim Summers, early Chatsworth resident, recalls he and his mother both manning the tower in Chatsworth. It was first located south of Devonshire near Jordan and then moved west toward Farralone. Jim found this photo of a similar tower structure on the east coast. He says ours were never painted to look this nice...Does anyone have a photo of our towers?

Let us know if you find one. Thanks!



Greenwich Connecticut  
Observation Tower World War II

## It's Your Community...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, 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 now email newsletters to those of you that have given us an email address. However, we also continue to send you a snail-mail copy until you advise us not to. 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).

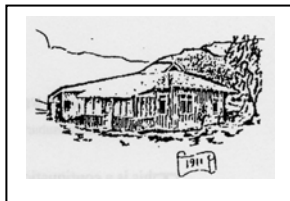
- The first digit represents membership type, 1 – individual and 2 – family/organization.
- The next two digits represent the month that you last paid your dues.
- The last two digits represent the year that you last paid your dues.
- If the month and year on your address label is over one year old, then your dues are due!

For those receiving email only newsletters, we will advise you by email when your dues are due.....



## 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  
[chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com) 818-882-5614 [www.historicalsocieties.net](http://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: \_\_\_\_\_



**Chatsworth Historical Society**  
**Virginia Watson Museum & Gift Shop**

The following items are available for sale at our Gift Shop for you history buffs that would like to share some Chatsworth History with others.

The Museum will be open for tours at Open Houses on Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> and Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>. from 1-4 pm. Items can be purchased at that time. To arrange to purchase items other than the first Sunday of the month, email [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com) or call the museum at 818-882-5614 to make arrangements for shipping if necessary.

**Booklets and Books**

CHATSWORTH HISTORY by Virginia Watson \$10.00

CHATSWORTH PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL The First 100 Years  
by Ioline Cleveland \$10.00

WINDOW INTO THE PAST by William Schepler \$10.00

QUIET ON THE SET by Robert Sherman \$25.00

OUR PIONEER MOTHER As told to Lenora Johnson MacDonald \$10.00

**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 7 for details)*