

# Smoke Signal

CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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Co-Presidents: Linda & André van der Valk

April 2014, Issue #2

Editor: Ann Vincent

## Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

I can't believe it is already April. Time is flying by again this year and that means that we are all getting ready for The Garden Festival. Hopefully, we will have good weather and a great turnout since this is one of our two annual fundraisers. As always we can use volunteers to help set up and tear down. If you would like to help the day of the event let Ann Vincent know so that we may assign you to a task.

A couple of weeks ago Andre and I were lucky to ride in Councilman Englander's Trail Ride in conjunction with ETI Corral 54. Mayor Garcetti, Councilmembers Tom LaBonge and Nury Martinez also rode. It gave the Chatsworth Equestrian groups and Mitch a chance to share our wonderful trail system and just Chatsworth in general. There were approximately 100 riders that joined in the ride. It was quite a sight to see as they went up Chatsworth Street. This was my first ride like this and I will be spoiled by having the LAPD shut down Chatsworth Street so we could travel east bound on Chatsworth Street to the trails by the wash. I am sure having the Mayor here gave some added perks to the ride. I was impressed by the way that the Equestrians look out for each other. They would stage themselves in the back and the middle and check on those of us that might not be as experienced as the rest. I was able to see things that I have wanted to see and was not able to get into before on foot.

Chatsworth is a unique community and we are fortunate to have so many groups that know that and work hard to keep it that way. When we tell people about how many Los Angeles Cultural Landmarks we have they are always amazed and the Historical Society was always there behind it. The Equestrian groups work hard to make sure that we keep our trails and that they connect so that hikers and horses can get around in the hills. We have two groups that work hard to preserve our Santa Susana Mountains and the Santa Susana Pass State Historical Park so that the future generations can also enjoy it as we have.

I hope to see everyone at the Garden Festival. Take some time to speak to some of the volunteers of the various organizations and find out what is happening in Chatsworth.

Happy Spring, Linda and André

Chatsworth Historical Society  
Board of Directors 2013-2014

Co-Presidents .....	Linda & André van der Valk
Programs .....	Ann Vincent
Ways & Means .....	Bea Berman
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Director-at-Large .....	Beverly King
Director-at-Large .....	Connie Ager
Permanent Member .....	Lila Schepler

## Upcoming Events

### April 27, 11-4 pm GARDEN FESTIVAL

Arrive early, enjoy our Duchess Tea in the Garden and visit our vendors and garden clubs throughout the day. Our Cottage and Museum will also be open for tours. Be sure you stop by the bake sale and our white elephant booth for special treasures, but don't forget to browse our plant sale for just the right item to add to your personal garden at home.

Tell your friends and family to join us for a wonderful day at the Garden Festival. Remember that this is one of our two major fundraisers for the year that supports the maintenance of the Acre and helps preserve our collection of Chatsworth History. We appreciate your participation and support.

### May 4<sup>th</sup> OPEN HOUSE Homestead Acre tours from 1-4 pm

### May 20<sup>th</sup> General Meeting 7:00 PM Share Your Chatsworth Stories

Come share your own Chatsworth History story. We look forward to hearing from you about what brought you here...and what kept you here in Chatsworth. To be followed by our installation of officers for the 2014-15 year.

## HOMESTEADING

### In the Chatsworth Hills Part 3

Ann & Ray Vincent

April 2014

Our March program (part 3) of the series once again covered the rules of Homesteading and defined the Spanish Land Grant areas of Rancho Simi and Rancho Ex Mission de San Fernando. This time we focused on the land in between that was government land available for homesteading south of Plummer, west of Valley Circle, and north of Roscoe.

Once again, 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.

We start with the Schweikhard family and the Domec family in this issue. We have too much information to include the rest in this newsletter so we will continue the information on the Woolsey and Dayton families in the July 2014 issue. They all have great stories.

#### Schweikhard Family

Katherine and August Schweikhard arrived in Chatsworth in 1897 or earlier. They had 4 children, Rosa, Emma, George and Stella. They homesteaded 37 acres at Valley Circle Blvd. just east of today's Chatsworth Lake Manor. In 1912 August and Katherine sold their

homestead to the City of Los Angeles for the Chatsworth Reservoir and moved into town. Today, the three acre Chatsworth Oaks Park, located at 9301 Valley Circle Blvd., is on the Schweikhard parcel. The DWP still owns all 37 acres.



An article in our archives tells a fun and fascinating story about the Schweikhard family. It is a story told by August's son George, and reprinted from an article regarding "Misinformation that is Current in Southern California" by Don Meadows.

In 1897, a drought caused the family to find extra forage for the stock. They noticed that the pigs liked the acorns under the oak trees, so August suggested that the horses would eat them too if the shells were broken. They tried it out and it worked just fine.

Then Dad got the idea that a feeding basin of rock would work just fine for a feeding trough, so with a dull hatchet we cut out a nice big trough in the horse corral.

We kids would gather up acorns in buckets and put them in the trough and mash them up for the stock.

After 1912, when the City bought the ranch for the Reservoir, a truck came up to the ranch looking for the old Indian water trough. August's son-in-law, Roy, didn't know anything about a water trough, but he did steer the crew to the old feed rock. The boys in the truck said that was what they were looking for, and with a lot of trouble they got the rock loaded to carry away.

Next thing anyone knew we saw our old feeding trough on Olvera Street with a sign on it saying it had been made by Indians more than a hundred years ago.

A bronze marker formerly read: **WATER TROUGH HEWN BY THE MISSION INDIANS IN THE YEAR EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY. PRESENTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND POWER OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES. 1930.**

Today, the bronze marker reads:

**SANDSTONE TROUGH USED FOR FEEDING LIVESTOCK, HEWN IN 1897, BY THE SCHWEIKAND FAMILY ON THEIR SAN FERNANDO VALLEY RANCH. PRESENTED IN 1930 BY THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND POWER OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES.** The sandstone trough still exists today, at the north end of Olvera Street.

(Yes Schweikhard is misspelled on the plaque)



#### Domec Family

Francesca Domec, eldest daughter of Pierre Domec, was granted a 148 acre homesteaded in 1901 in what is now Chatsworth Lake Manor.

There is a three part back-story to this homestead:

- 1) Francesca's mother, Maria Dolores, was the daughter of Jose Odon, a Chumash Native American who was a grantee of Rancho El Escorpion. Francesca was born there in 1854.
- 2) Francesca's father, Pierre Domec, an industrious 1844 French immigrant, was a cooper in 1850, a lime-burner in 1860, and a stock raiser in 1870.
- 3) Pierre Domec's 1865 homestead claim for 160 acres conflicted with the final boundaries of Ex Mission de San Fernando in 1871. He built a second adobe on government land, which would become Francesca's eventual homestead.

*This second adobe homestead shown on the right was at the northern end of Chatsworth Reservoir within government land.*



From 1797, the Chatsworth Reservoir area, south to Ventura Blvd, was in the domain of the San Fernando Mission and was a cattle, sheep and horse ranch.

### Rancho El Escorpion

El Escorpion today is known as Castle Peak, located at Vanowen and Valley Circle Blvd, just south of Bell Canyon. There is a 3 acre El Escorpion Park at the site.

In 1797, The San Fernando Mission is established. That same year, a Chumash Native American, Jose Odon, is born. He marries Eusabia, and they have four children. Two of their daughters, Maria Dolores and Espiritu, will later marry two Frenchmen, Pierre Domec and Miguel Leonis.

In 1836, Odon moves to Rancho El Escorpion property at the mouth of Bell Canyon, and the site of the Chumash village known as Huwam.

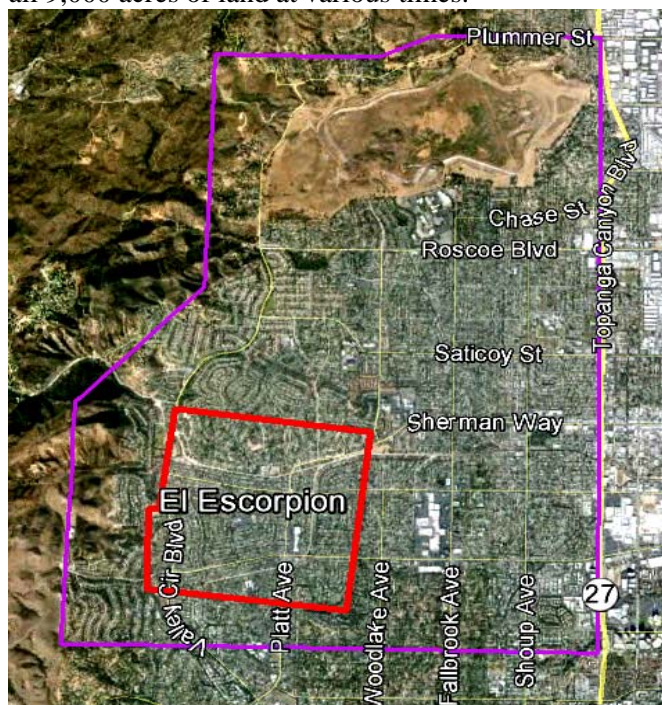
In 1839, at the age of 42, Odon receives his Decree of Emancipation from the San Fernando Mission.

By 1843, Urbano and Urbano's son Manuel join Odon at El Escorpion.

In 1845, the three Chumash Native Americans, Odon, Urbano, and Manuel petition Governor Pio Pico for two leagues of land, close to 9,000 acres.

In that year, Governor Pico makes the grant for one half of a square league. Juan Sepulveda, the Second Alcalde (mayor) of Los Angeles, surveys off a parcel that was actually only a quarter of a league (1,110 acres), even though it was ratified as half a square league. It was accepted by Odon and Urbano.

Up to 1870, Odon and future partners of El Escorpion dispute the boundaries, occupying and using all 9,000 acres of land at various times.

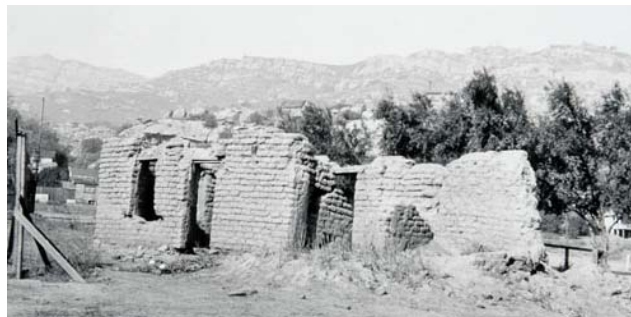


El Escorpion of 1,100 acres is outlined in red. The purple outline is representative of the 9,000 acres of land used by the grantees of El Escorpion, reaching north to include the Chatsworth Reservoir, and east to Topanga Canyon.

The area to the south was known as Escorpion Viejo. The area to the north was known as El Escorpion de las Salinas (salt marshes), later known as Chatsworth Reservoir/Nature Preserve.

Pierre Domec arrives in Los Angeles in 1844 at the age of 24. He works as a cooper, and is in charge of the wine cellars of his compatriot Jean Louis Vignes.

By 1855, 35-year old Pierre has established a lime-burning operation at El Escorpion. Pierre Domec and other Frenchmen operated the limekilns. Lime had a ready market in Los Angeles, for mortar in brick



construction, for the process of tanning cowhides, and in sanitation. This 1935 photo from the Autry museum is identified as a photograph of the ruins of "Pierre Domec Adobe, Chatsworth Lake." We are not certain of the exact location of this adobe, but it may be one of several that were near the limekiln.

The limekiln used by Pierre Domec can be seen today looking east at the intersection of Woolsey Canyon and Valley Circle.



2014 photo of Limekiln, known as Chatsworth Calera Site, designated in 1975 as *L.A. Historic Cultural Monument 141*

*We were fortunate to have the assistance of Michelle Covello at the Leonis Adobe who shared records with us, and Ken Ditto who documented the descendants of the Domec Family.*

## Pierre Domec Obituary

Excerpts from a Google translation of the January 1883 article in L'Union Nouvelle, organe de la population francaise du sud de la californie:

- *M. Pierre Domec, who died last Monday at the age of 63 was a pioneer of Los Angeles when he arrived in 1844. He was soon given the direction of the cellars of his compatriot Jean Louis Vignes.*
- *Later he created lime furnaces and in 1863 he was appointed director of the liquidation of Don Abel Stearns, a position he held three years.*
- *Then he conceived a project to ship a convoy of 3,500 horses across the Rocky Mountains to Omaha where they were sold to the army of the United States. He then went to Texas where he bought 4,000 cattle to take back to California. His return was disastrous; he struggled against Indians and drought across unknown lands and deserts. In short, he lost in this campaign most of his fortune.*
- *Since that time P. Domec could not recover from this disaster and he succumbs to both moral and physical sufferings, but he is remembered as one of the France's most enterprising citizens of this country.*

## FAMILY HISTORY

Pierre died in 1883, and his widow Marie Odon died in 1884. They had two daughters, Francesca and her sister Celedonia, who never married. The daughters filed a homestead claim in 1896, and in 1901, Francesca received the 148 acre homestead.

- By 1880, their younger sister Maria Antonia Domec had married Francisco Moore and they had a daughter Maria Irene Moore born in 1882.
- In the 1940 Chatsworth census, Maria Moore is living with her son Henry Acosta (20) at 23144 Smith Road in Chatsworth Lake Manor.
- In 1952 Henry dies, leaving a wife Frances and two children John (12) and Yolanda (2).
- A 1952 newspaper article has John Acosta in the 6th grade at Chatsworth Elementary and active in the Scout Pack from Chatsworth Lake.

## CABIN SITES in LAKE MANOR

By 1924, the P.D. Estate Company was formed, with shares distributed to sisters Francesca and Caledonia and their niece Maria Moore. Cabin sites were sold in the 20's and 30's, giving rise to the Chatsworth Lake Manor that we know today.



## 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.

## Just a few of the stories we are hearing: BIG OAK THEATER HISTORY

We recently had the opportunity to learn more about the Graves Family home on Chatsworth Street. This was the early 1911 residence of Emma and Fred Graves on Chatsworth Street and Farralone Ave. Their home was sold to the Feamster family who owned the Chatsworth Pony Rides that were located there in Chatsworth. The Feamster family has provided us with some wonderful film footage of the property in the late 50s. The Feamster family sold the property to the Hart family that currently enjoys creating theatrical productions in the old barn. Hopefully next year we can pull all of this information together for a presentation everyone can enjoy on the history of this property. If you used to work at the Feamster ranch here in Chatsworth...let us know.

## EARLY CITRUS GROWERS in Chatsworth

Valeta Koller recently shared her history regarding growing up on citrus groves here in Chatsworth. Her father managed the groves of many ranches here in the area besides his own. Jim Summers, who also grew up tending the groves has great stories about lighting the smudge pots on the coldest nights. These stories and more about the availability of water in the area and how it changed Chatsworth from cattle and dry wheat farming to acres and acres of citrus groves will be another adventure.

## AQUA SIERRA SPORTSMAN CENTER

At a recent Women's Club meeting I had the privilege of sitting across from Beverly Ullis whose husband was an active member of the Gun Club. She has lots of stories to tell about members and activities including making lots and lots of lasagna for club dinners. I also met Mark Kovacs, whose father was a dentist to the many celebrities that lived here in the valley and participated at the club. He has stories about shooting here too. We look forward to collecting more information on the Gun Club while we still can. If you know anyone else...that shot here, please let us know. AND... if your run across any information, documents, handouts, etc., you may have stored all these years on the golf course or shooting range, NOW is a great time to share. Thanks.

Just email us at [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com)

**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 May 4 and June 1st 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.

<b>Booklets and Books</b>	
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
EI ESCORPION By Chester Cohen	\$10.00

**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.

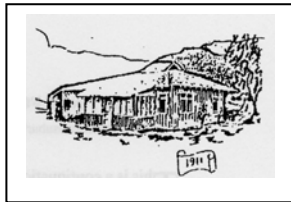
**Wondering if your Dues are Due?**

For those receiving email only newsletters, we will advise you by email when your dues are due. With a life membership there is no code on your address label. If there is a code on your address label, then this is what it means:

- 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!



**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)

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

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY / STATE / ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Interest / Expertise: \_\_\_\_\_



Over 300 Rose Bushes in Bloom

The Chatsworth Historical Society Presents

# A GARDEN FESTIVAL

Sunday, April 27, 2014

11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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

Featuring Roses and Crafts

## The Duchess Tea

- \$10 per person  
- 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.



Museum Exhibits Featuring the  
Chatsworth Chamber of Commerce  
100th Anniversary  
along with Chatsworth Pioneer Families

Tour the Rose Gardens

Vendors and Garden Clubs

Live Plant Sale

White Elephant Sale

Quilt Display

Tours of 1911 Homestead  
Cottage  
(11 - 4 p.m.)



Bake Sale

Arts & Crafts

Hot Dogs and Soda

**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.

## At the Homestead Acre in Chatsworth Park South

For more information contact [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com)  
To download a full size flyer go to: [www.historicalsocieties.net](http://www.historicalsocieties.net)

### 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 previous page for details)*