

Smoke Signal

CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Co-Presidents: Linda & André van der Valk

February 2017, Issue #1

Editor: Ann Vincent

Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

The rain has been a blessing for the acre this year. Our Black Walnut tree and our Redwood tree needed a good soaking and they definitely got it.

The acre is looking great right now. The roses have all been cut back thanks to all of our volunteers and the San Fernando Valley Rose Society. Our daffodils are in full bloom and looking beautiful.

The rain has delayed work at the park. They were two weeks away from completion but now with repairing damage from the rains and finishing the landscaping they are about two months away from completion. They will be redoing the road from the entrance of the park to the recreation center. We are happy about getting new asphalt.

A member of Troop 99 Boy Scouts of America will be doing his Eagle Scout Project at the acre. Reno Benedetti, a Chatsworth resident will be building us two new benches along with organizing various garden projects at the acre. We are excited that Reno picked the acre for his Eagle Scout project. Reno's mother Gloria is one of our docents at the acre. You can usually find her in the cottage during our events.

Looking forward to a beautiful Spring at the acre.

Linda and André



Our daffodils are already in bloom!

Chatsworth Historical Society
Board of Directors 2016-2017

Co-Presidents	Linda & André van der Valk
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Director-at-Large.....	Linda Dunham
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Honorary Member.....	Elaine Campbell

Upcoming Events

February 21, 2017

7:00 pm Tuesday

“Restoring Habitat, One Yard at a Time”

Join us for this program by Alan Pollack for those individuals and groups that are interested in the goal of restoring and preserving wildlife habitat. The information will include native plants and options for landscaping your yard as a wildlife habitat.

March 21, 2017

7:00 pm Tuesday

Standing on the Corner...Watching all the Years Go By...

This program features photographs of Chatsworth street corners taken in 1949 and 2007. It has recently been updated to include those same locations in 2017 as changes occurred. Come join us for a walk through Chatsworth year after year...as we see our town grow. Celebrate our 129th Chatsworth Birthday (officially March 10)

OPEN HOUSE

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

March 5th Sunday Open House

April 2nd Sunday Open House

GARDEN FESTIVAL April 30th, 2017 11-3 pm

MONARCH BUTTERFLY RELEASE

Nadia Harding, a docent at the Historical Society,



has created a butterfly garden at the Acre. At her home garden, she collects and protects larva and then releases the butterflies when

adults. Nadia had several butterflies ready to release; so on Thursday, Feb 9th Monarch Christian School invited her to release the butterflies at the school. She also gave a short presentation to the 3rd grade class on the life cycle of butterflies. Nadia invited Jelena and I to join her, so I was able to



catch a few photos. There are four distinct stages:

1. **egg**
2. **larva** (caterpillar)
3. **pupa** (chrysalis),
4. **adult**

Monarch Butterflies ready for release



Monarch Butterflies still in the chrysalis stage

Antique Spinning Wheel



Thank you to Marolyn Lucas who has donated her antique spinning wheel.

We are delighted to give it a home in Chatsworth at our Hill Palmer cottage.

RESTORING HABITAT, ONE YARD AT A TIME.

Our February 21st General Meeting will feature Alan Pollack, it should be a great meeting.

Learn how to attract birds and butterflies to your garden with Alan Pollack, a National Wildlife Federation Wildlife Habitat Steward and the leader of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society's "Audubon at Home" program. His slide-show presentation covers the basic "how-to" of creating a wildlife habitat in your yard and sustainable gardening practices. He'll also take you on a virtual tour of his own garden.

For more information visit his site
<http://www.sfvaudubon.org/alans-blog/>
San Fernando Valley Audubon Society

DOCENT DOINGS at the ACRE:

Our docents keep busy with projects throughout the year. We meet every Wednesday morning 9-noon.

OUT IN THE GARDEN: Annette and Karyne can be found dead-heading roses and hand watering plants as needed every Wednesday morning. If you need some outdoor fresh air therapy, come join them!

IN THE MUSEUM: Linda van der Valk is continuously working with the items donated to the museum by our members and the community.

IN THE COTTAGE: An inventory project is underway to confirm and learn more about the items on display and their history so we can provide more information on our tours.

DOCENTS ARE NEEDED: Help guide guests through the museum and cottage. If you would like to learn the history of our community and help share it with others, then contact us for more information at chatsworthhistory@gmail.com.

8M Color Movie Film of the 1964 Chatsworth Parade is here!

The footage donated by Faith Golden has been converted to a digital file and is available to see at our YouTube site, chatsworthhistory.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tOWnF7VYzY&t=296s>

ROSE PRUNING DAY was a great success!

Thank you to our volunteers and especially the **San Fernando Valley Rose Society** for pruning our rose gardens on Saturday, January 28. In addition, we received help from the Rancho San Antonio Boys Home whose students earned community service hours by assisting us with this project.



Photos by Linda Dunham

It was a great morning spent preparing our gardens for a beautiful blooming season in the spring in preparation for the Garden Festival. THANKS!



Eagle Scout Project update:



All the volunteers behind one of the many freshly mulched gardens.

Scout Reno Benedetti of Troop 99 coordinated a landscaping project on Sunday, February 12, adding much needed mulch to our rose gardens. Reno will also be building us some benches, thanks Reno and Troop 99 for all of the hard work!



History of Burro Flats, Rocketdyne, and the Santa Susana Field Lab

The presentation at our November meeting covered 4 areas:

Pre-history (Native Americans)

Ranching history

Movie history

Santa Susana Field Lab history

144-65 million years ago - The Chatsworth Formation is created, at 5,000 feet below sea level. Over the years the North Pacific Plate collided with the North American Plate, and now the formation is 1,000 feet above sea level. During that time ancient seashores eroded the sandstone boulders and created unique erosion features and caves.



1800 AD For over 5,000 years Chumash Indians paint elaborate colorful pictographs at the Burro Flats Painted Cave. Studies have shown that there are astro-archeological features to the paintings that tie to the Winter Solstice.

1795-1865 El Rancho Simí, 113,000 acres was granted to Santiago Pico.



1888 The Simi Land and Water Company subdivides all of the land of Rancho Simi. Subdivision A is

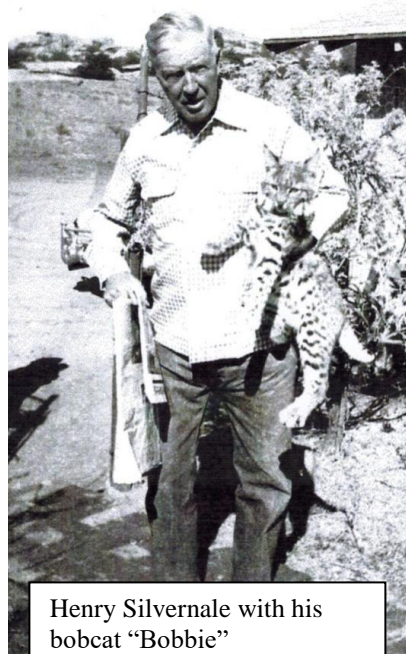
identified as Potrero del Burro, "Pasture of the Burro".

1910 Eddie Maier, millionaire beer brewer in downtown Los Angeles, purchases Subdivision A, Rancho Potrero del Burro and the Canada Aliso. Eddie Maier is a strong supporter of the Elks Club and is best known for Brew 102 beer.

1939 Henry Silvernale, a 57 year old dentist in Santa Monica, his son Max and family friend Bill Hall purchase "Burro Flats" of Tract A. They will own Burro Flats for 15 years, until 1954. They call it "Sky Valley Ranch".



Sally Silvernale Ziegler shared a story (15 years old at the time): "Another exciting event in the last few



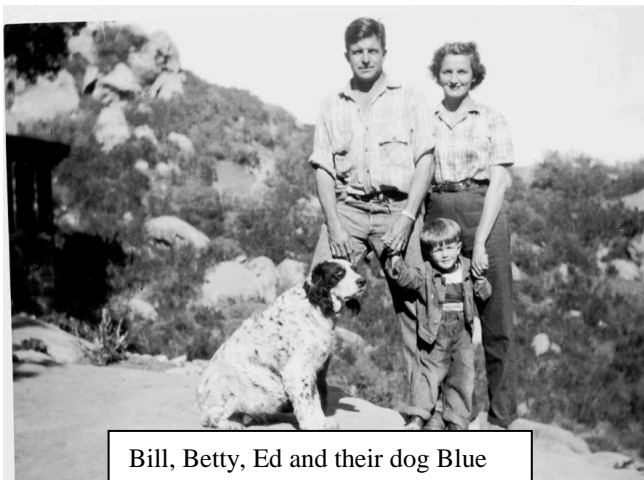
years was the addition of an orphaned female bobcat. We named her "Bobbie". She was adorable. Grandma Mom would set up the dining table for all of the movie people, and Bobbie would hop up and clean off the table. She was a real character."

Bill Hall and Betty Knapp lived in a house built into the side of a giant rock overhang, and raised



The Bill Hall Rock overhang house

two children there. Betty was an author of children's books and used the serene setting of Burro Flats as inspiration.



Bill, Betty, Ed and their dog Blue

From 1937 to 1954, a total of 43 movies were filmed at Burro Flats. Those movies include 1941 Robin Hood of the Pecos with Roy Rogers, 1947 California with Barbra Stanwyck and Ray Milland, and 1954 Apache with Burt Lancaster.



1947 The movie "California" is filmed at Burro Flats. It includes a classic wagon train scene with 15 covered wagons.

1945 During WWII, North American Aviation (NAA) built more than 42,000 aircraft, the most of any American company, with a plane coming off the production line every 15 minutes in Inglewood, California. At the end of the war, company employment dropped abruptly from 91,000 to 5,000. At that point the company decided to meet future military requirements as opposed to focusing on commercial aviation.

1947 NAA determines that their rocket propellant testing in Inglewood is too dangerous. They lease land in the Santa Susana Hills from the Dundas family.



1949 The first rocket test stand is completed in a natural, bowl-shaped depression in what is today referred to as Area I. "Santa Susana's Bowl Area" was the first liquid-fuel, high-thrust rocket engine test facility in the continental United States with multiple, permanent test stands.

In 1950, the first American-made large liquid propellant rocket engine was tested at Vertical Test Stand 1.

From 1954 and 1957, additional test stand complexes were built. The sites were given the sequential names Alfa, Bravo, Coca, and Delta.

Milestones soon followed as the site supported virtually every major space program in U.S. history, from men landing on the moon to the Space Shuttle.



Over the course of nearly 60 years, 17,000 rocket engine tests were conducted at Santa Susana, known by the employees as “The Hill”.

1957 President Eisenhower’s “Atoms for Peace” initiative inspires the Sodium Reactor Experiment (SRE) conducted at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory. Edward R. Murrow televises the SRE's start on his program, “See It Now”, as it powered the nearby city of Moorpark.

1959 the SRE becomes the first civilian reactor to suffer a serious accident when more than a third of its fuel rods overheated and melted through their protective cladding. During the accident, coolant continued to circulate throughout the reactor core and the reactor vessel remained intact, preventing a meltdown. Following the accident, the SRE was

repaired and operations continued, without incident, until the end of the project in 1964.



Mayor Sam Yorty operates the nuclear power reactor in 1963

1967 North American Rockwell (Rockwell) becomes the corporate successor to NAA

1988 nuclear research ends.

1996 Rocketdyne sells their aerospace entities to Boeing.

2006 rocket engine testing ends.

2007 Boeing, NASA and the Department of Energy sign a cleanup agreement with the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC).

Cleanup efforts to date:

Over 300 buildings have been demolished and removed from the site.

The building that housed the Sodium Nuclear Reactor Experiment (SRE) has been demolished, completely excavated, and removed.

Stormwater treatment systems are in place, with 270 groundwater monitoring wells.

900 acres have been restored with native plants to reinstate the watershed and habitat.



2017 Today, Boeing offers site tours of the Field Lab to explain the history of the site, and the progress of their continuing cleanup efforts.

There is also an ongoing debate as to what final level of cleanup should be required, cleanup to “background” or a “risk based” cleanup.

Concurrently, local community efforts are being pursued to preserve the 2,850 acre SSFL as a natural and historic area. Efforts include:

1. The area has been included in the Rim of the Valley Corridor Project.
2. Nomination of the area as a National Monument.
3. The Santa Ynez Chumash have established Sacred Site status to the area.
4. Discussions are underway at NASA to consider keeping a few of the test stands as a part of the historic resources of the site. As a part of the 2007 agreement all test stands were to be removed.
5. The Santa Susana Field Lab no longer exists. It is proposed that the site in the future be renamed “Sky Valley”.

To view the entire presentation, go to chatsworthhistory.com, Presentations, Burro Flats Rocketdyne SSFL History.

KEITH WATTS 1923-2016

Passed away December 14, 2016 at the age of 93



Sheila and Keith Watts

Keith was a devoted volunteer, a founding member of the Historical Society, and active Board member through last year.

Past President John Thorpe shared the following: Keith was a member of the distinguished 101st Airborne Division that was involved in the D-Day assault and dropped paratroopers behind enemy lines prior to the invasion. When Keith was stationed in England, he spent his R&R in the city of Leeds in the county of Yorkshire, where he met his future wife Sheila.

Daughter Heather Watts shared that Keith was a Sergeant in the Army Air Corps where he was a glider pilot. After WWII he attended Cal Poly and then got his Master's Degree in Engineering at Stanford. The family moved to Chatsworth in 1961, where Keith worked at Rocketdyne and was an important part of both the Gemini and Apollo missions working on NASA booster engines.

Past President Virginia Watson shared: Keith Watts, an original member of the Chatsworth Historical Society recently died and seeing his name recalled the many years of service he has given. He became a member at the first meeting to handle the church and historic affairs. He enjoyed the work and so did his wife and his four children so they all worked hard on all the projects available. His children were allowed to miss school to see the church being moved to its new location and to enjoy the culmination of their effort.

There was a lot of work to keeping up the church building, the Minnie Hill Homestead, and housekeeping, but Keith and his family helped get it done. As a member of the Society, Keith held many board positions, served as membership chairman several times, assisted at all Society Events, published flyers, brochures and newsletters. He also chaired the grand opening of Chatsworth Park North, the first park in Chatsworth. He also was known as a prominent member of the Friends of the Chatsworth Library. He was named Chatsworth Community Coordinating Council Citizen of the Year in 1996.

The following year in 1997 Keith's wife Sheila passed away, shortly after they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Sheila's memorial service was the first funeral of note held in the Pioneer Church, after its 1965 move, and it was standing room only. After her death he continued to work for the Society, but he also spent time on the East Coast visiting his daughters and other family members. He helped with the parking as Pioneer Day and the Garden Festival grew in popularity and attracted more people from around the San Fernando Valley. In his later years he suffered from the typical ailments of age, but he managed to help when he could as he lived only minutes away from the Acre. More often seen than heard, his work was crucial in the founding and future of the Chatsworth Historical Society. His memory lives on in his family and his legacy to the community.

Heather added that her parents are buried together near the Pioneer Church which meant so much to them. They both loved Chatsworth and raising their family there. He leaves behind four children; Mark of Auburn, CA, Heather of New York City, Kevin of Northern California and Jennifer of New York City. Besides his 4 children and their spouses, Keith leaves behind his 3 grandchildren Savannah, Jack and Ryan and his step granddaughters Margaret and Dana. He also leaves behind his close friend Anna Combs of Chatsworth and all of the members of the Chatsworth Historical Society. There was a private funeral in December and a memorial service is being planned for later in the year.

Keith will be missed...



2008 Membership Roundup

Chatsworth Historical Society

Virginia Watson Museum & Gift Shop

The following items are available for sale during Open Houses on the first Sunday of the month. To arrange to purchase items at other times, email chatsworthhistory@gmail.com to make arrangements for payment and shipping, if necessary.

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

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 to stop future newsletter mailings and save us some money. And also please email us to provide your email address. Thanks!

Wondering if your Dues are Due?

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

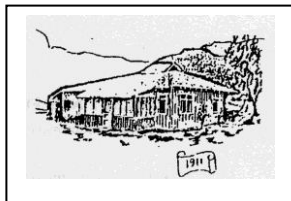
For snail mail, if you have an asterisk at the end of your name on the mailing label, your dues are due.

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.



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 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: _____

Reminder: If you got this mailed to you, an asterisk on your label means your dues are due!