

SPAHN RANCH History

By Ann Vincent

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On October 25, 2008 we were visited by Tate McReynolds, who was 73 years old, and grew up here in Chatsworth. His family owned the property south of the Santa Susana Pass Road where his parents, Lee and Ruth McReynolds, ran a trading post known as Lee's Last Frontier. Tate donated a copy of his mother's autobiography to our library.

The property is just south of The Church at Rocky Peak and north of the Santa Susana Creek. For a while it was known as the Spahn Ranch.

In the past...several sources claimed that it was once owned by silent film actor William S. Hart. Recent research has identified silent film star Fred Thomson as owning the property, we tell that story in our February 2023 newsletter. In 1928, Dr. Sharon M. Atkins purchased the property, and Fred's famous horse Silver King.

Bob Turner, a past Chatsworth resident and author wrote "I recall writing a story about Dr. Sharon M. Atkins riding his famous movie horse, Silver King, to the dedication of the CCC camp in the early 1930s. Doc had added the property to his extensive holdings along Santa Susana Pass and had made this site available to the government as his civic duty. I became intimately acquainted with this property not long after Atkins, a prominent Hollywood Physician, bought the place about 1928."

In 1947, Lee and Ruth McReynolds purchased 55 acres of property from Dr. Atkins. Tate's father, Lee, built some movie sets (a western town) next to his Trading Post on this property to catch some overflow from the very successful Iverson Movie Ranch.

In 1953 the 55 acres was sold to George Spahn and became known as the Spahn Ranch. George Spahn added more sets and rental horses and it became a popular location for horseback riding among locals. The ranch became inhabited by members of the Manson family in the spring of 1968 until August 1969 when Manson was arrested. In November 1970 a wildfire destroyed all of the western buildings and Trading Post originally built by the McReynolds family.

Today, this property is now part of the 670 acre Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park.

Tate, shown here with Virginia Watson enjoyed his tour of our museum and walked his old ranch property. He shared his experiences from 1947 to 1957 growing up in the more rural part of Chatsworth.



As a teenager, Tate remembers his first job with a blacksmith he called Mac about 1953, whose last name was MacIntyre. Tate believes Mac owned the

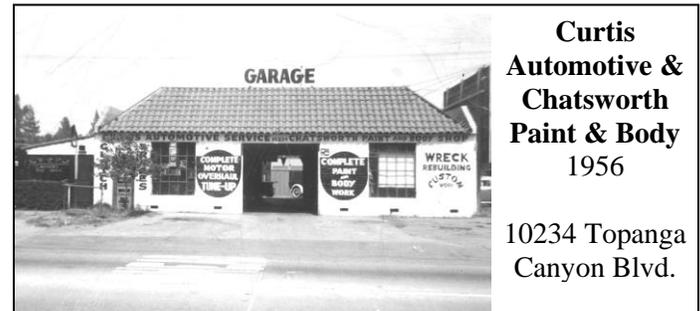
building at 10234 Topanga Canyon Blvd. where Mac taught him how to work on cars and trucks. Mac then rented out the building to both Curtis Automotive and Chatsworth Paint & Body where Tate continued to work until 1957.



Photo courtesy of Tate McReynolds

Curtis Automotive Service Truck in 1955

L-R back: Mike Ragusin, Donny Curtis, Smitty ? & Art Gray; front left (unknown), right Lee Tate McReynolds



At some time before 1988, the business had changed hands to become L&A Auto Coachworks owned by Michael Ross.



In 1998, it was purchased by Hamid Movahedi as Topanga Auto Body & Paint operating at the same location today.

Today, you can see the same building has a newer look and a second rollup door instead of the window on the right.

Tate mentioned that during 1955-56, the wall on the south side of the building was used as a screen to show movies outdoors on Saturday nights.

If anyone remembers anything about MacIntyre...please let me know along with any other stories about businesses you remember in Chatsworth.