

# Smoke Signal

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

chatsworthhistory@gmail.com www.historicalsocieties.net



Co-Presidents: Linda & André van der Valk

September 2014, Issue #4

Editor: Ann Vincent

## Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

I hope that everyone has been enjoying their summer so far. We had a great time in Lake Tahoe with our six grandchildren and now they are back to school except for Daphne our youngest.

Plans are getting under way for Pioneer Day. Ann Vincent has started contacting the vendors and getting all the details worked out. We were worried that we were not going to be able to have Pioneer Day because of the remediation of the park and that they would be closing our parking lot. So far the contracts have not been locked in yet so we are 99.9% sure that Pioneer Day will happen.

The heat is causing havoc on some of the roses but our garden curator Annette Campbell is taking measures to save the roses.

We continue to receive items from Carla Iverson for our Iverson display case in the museum. As soon as we catalogue the items we will be redoing the Iverson case. We very much appreciate Carla's generous donation of family memorabilia to the Historical Society.

We have received fossils found in the area by Duke Mulholland. We anticipate dedicating a case to display his unique collection of fossils all found in the Chatsworth area. We appreciate Duke's donation to the Historical Society.

We hope to see everyone at Pioneer Day on October 5th.

Linda and André



### JOIN US for a PIONEER CHALLENGE

See how many of our Chores of Yore activities you can complete on Pioneer Day

### Chatsworth Historical Society Board of Directors 2014-2015

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

## Upcoming Events

### Membership Roundup

September 14, 2014 - Sunday 4:00 pm

This annual event held at the Homestead Acre is a potluck dinner to meet and greet new and old members as we kick off our new year of activity. If you are a prospective member and have not joined yet, plan to join. (The cost of the membership is worth it for this dinner!)

### Pioneer Day

October 5, 2014 – Sunday 11-3 pm

This is our big fundraiser, and we need your support to help our volunteers maintain the Acre and museum for the future! Mark your calendar and plan to be there.

### General Meeting

October 21, 2014 –Tuesday 7:00 pm

October's meeting will be the **History of Chatsworth Lake Manor** from the early Chumash Indian Chief Odón to today's hillside residences and local businesses. Thank you to all the Lake Manor residents who have contributed to the program.

### Open House

Homestead Acre tours from 1-4 pm the first Sunday of the month.

## PIONEER DAY 2014

Our annual Pioneer Day is scheduled for October 5th from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm at the Homestead Acre. This year we are changing the closing time from 4:00 pm to 3:00 pm.

There will be fun for everyone with gold panning, blacksmithing, rock chippers, wood carvers, spinning wheels, the Veterans quilt display, chores and games of yore and lots of vendors to explore.

Of course, our mini chili cook-off will begin providing samples at 11:00 am until the chili runs out. If you would like to enter, please send us an email at [chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com). If you would like to bake for our great bake sale we would appreciate your contributions.

We can always use help for set-up. Come Saturday morning at 9:00 am, early Sunday at 9:00 am, or stay late on Sunday at 3:00 pm.

Spread the word to your friends about Pioneer Day and come help us make this a successful event!

**Bring your Children and Grandchildren to Participate in our PIONEER CHALLENGE!**

**24th Annual**  
**Pioneer Day**  
Sunday, Oct. 5, 2014  
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Old-time fun  
for everyone!**

- CHILI COOK-OFF
- Bake Sale
- Woodcarvers 
- Blacksmith
- Leather Crafts
- Panning for Gold
- Spinning Wheel Demo
- Veteran Quilt Display
- Design a Quilt Craft
- Rock Chippers
- Bee Keeping
- Indian Artifacts
- Telegraph Station
- Chores and Games of Yore



**Chatsworth Museum Exhibits**

Featuring  
Early Chatsworth Businesses  
along with Chatsworth Pioneer Families

**Tour Minnie's 1911 Cottage**

**Location:** Homestead Acre,  
Chatsworth Park South  
(West end of Devonshire St.)  
10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA

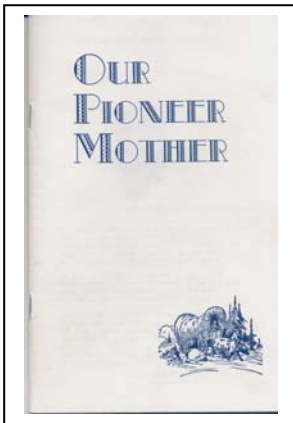
**Information:** (818) 882-5614  
[chatsworthhistory@gmail.com](mailto:chatsworthhistory@gmail.com)  
[www.historicalsocieties.net](http://www.historicalsocieties.net)

**Donation:** Adults: \$5, Children: \$1  
(Free for kids under 5)

**Presented by the  
Chatsworth Historical Society**

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 3 p.m.

## EARLY CHATSWORTH PIONEER HISTORY



One of the best resources we have about growing up as a pioneer family in Chatsworth are the two books “Our Pioneer Mother” and “Grandma Ann”.

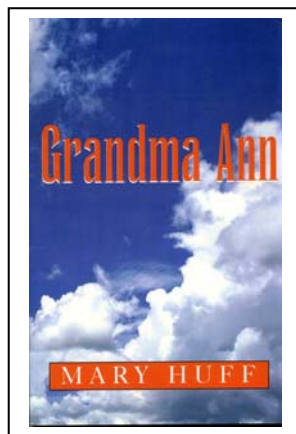
Both books document Ann Wilden Johnson and her family as they travel across the country, finally settling in

Chatsworth. The original handwritten manuscript for “Grandma Ann” was started by Mary Johnson Proctor in 1920, shortly after her mother’s death. This collection of stories all handwritten needed help to complete and got packed away and stored. In 1931 Mary’s sister Lenora surprised the family with a much shorter published version of the story (31 pages) called “Our Pioneer Mother”. The original copies were leather bound and a gift to each of the family members. A copy was donated by Kelly Johnson who provided authorization for “Our Pioneer Mother” to be reprinted by the Chatsworth Historical Society in 1976. (*This booklet is available at the Homestead Acre.*)

After several generations of Mary Proctor’s family passing down the original handwritten manuscript, Mary Huff, the great-granddaughter of Ann Wilden Johnson and granddaughter of Mary Proctor located the originals in 1991. Mary Huff completed this new book titled “Grandma Ann”. It contains all of the stories shared by Ann along with information and letters that were in the possession

of Richard Johnson, the son of Ann’s youngest son Norman. Richard had written a thesis researching dates and details of the family for his Masters Degree at USC. “Grandma Ann” was published in 2001 (232 pages). It is an enjoyable book to read and describes the lifestyle that the family and their children experienced

growing up in the Chatsworth foothills in 1871.



**COLONEL MORMON** --- the book “Grandma Ann” contains a view into the past with names that catch your attention. One name is Colonel Mormon of perhaps Mormon Canyon. Excerpts from this story on page 119 follow:

“About a mile below the Johnson’s, lived another strange person. An old bear hunter had built his house of rocks. In one end was a big fireplace, and the door was in the other end. There were no windows. The roof was made of shakes and the door was of heavy split cotton wood logs. He owned no stock or anything else, except his gun and his dogs, two deer hounds and a big bear dog. Everyone called him Colonel Mormon.

Once he brought some bear meat and asked if Ann would trade it for a loaf of bread. She did so and he often came after that to trade bear meat for Mrs. Johnson’s good bread. One time the old man went hunting and did not return for several days. His old bear dog came home wounded in a fight with a bear. He went first to the rock house, but his master was not there, so he went up to our log house, Ann took him in and washed his wounds and applied unguents and fed and watered him. However, he was so badly hurt that he sickened and died in a day or two. The hunter came home and Ann told him of the dog and her attempt to save him. Colonel Mormon thanked Ann for her kindness and told of the dog’s terrible fight with the bear. The bear and the dog had already met before the hunter had known there was a bear about and the dog was wounded before he could shoot. The dog had also hurt the bear and when Colonel Mormon had finally fired, the two animals had parted and run in opposite directions. The hunter thought that his dog was so badly hurt that he would never make it home and that he had died somewhere out in the brush.”

Pg. 122 “The little mother did not worry as much about her children in this place. Colonel Mormon had cleared the bears out of the nearby hills and mountains.”

*Ed. Note: Colonel Mormon’s name was spelled as both Mormon and Morman in the book. We searched our resources and could find no other potential source for the naming of Mormon Canyon...if anyone else knows please let us know.*

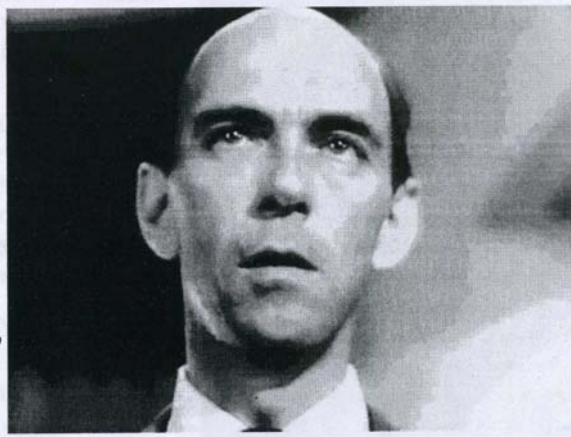
*.. Another name in “Grandma Ann” is Milton Brown, who was found with his family in the 1880 census in the area now known as Brown’s Canyon.*



## 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.

### Memories Shared: COOKIE JAR THEATER



Several of our members grew up with the opportunity to participate in the Cookie Jar Theater. It was created by Milton Parsons and his wife, Collette, who lived on Farralone, north of Chatsworth St.

Milton Parsons was recently featured in a documentary produced by Charles Henson. Charles has sent us a copy and we look forward to showing the documentary in a future meeting, but for now here are some excerpts about Milton.

### THE FACE IS FAMILIAR

“With his sad eyes, solemn expression and dour, New England accent, Milton Parsons was the perfect cinematic undertaker: slightly old-fashioned and humorously grim. Indeed, it's a role he often essayed, along with various mad scientists and lunatics, religious fanatics and creepy butlers.

“After working closely together for years, Milton and Collette made their association permanent: they were married in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, on June 28, 1933.”

### The Boston Globe, July 12, 1936

*Milton's transition to the movies came in 1939. After its award-winning first run on Broadway, Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, directed by Frank Craven, was released to touring companies. It opened in Los Angeles at the Biltmore Theatre on*

*April 4, 1939, with Milton playing choirmaster Simon Stimpson, a man troubled by drink and bitterness. At the conclusion of the run, he found himself with a motion picture contract at MGM.*

“Although straight dramatic roles sometimes came his way, Milton was often chosen for the precise timing and delivery which he used to add comic relief to a plethora of mysteries. Sometimes, he even exhibited a skill for slapstick.”

“The house at 10801 Farralone in Chatsworth was to become their permanent residence, as well as their own theater and school, for the rest of their lives. Collette gave birth to daughter Sally Ann Parsons on September 3, 1940, and the cast was complete.”

“Between movies, both Milton and Collette, and later Sally Ann, were very active in their community, serving with the PTA and the Historical Society; Collette was a Campfire Girls leader, as well. In 1949, the Parsons' began working with the children of the Chatsworth Cookie Jar Theatre. Milton's Hollywood friends, including Barry Fitzgerald, Paul Kelly, Alexander Knox, Florence Bates and others, lent their support to the efforts. The 1951 season opened with *Little Women*, with Milton directing from Collette's script, and Sally Ann playing the part of Beth. The productions used different venues, ranging from the American Legion Post to the patio homes of supporters. By popular demand from the community, Milton and Collette opened a school of dramatic technique and expression at their Farralone home in October of 1951, giving weekly classes to children from primary grades through high school.”



*Milton Parsons holding pitchfork in classic pose  
“American Gothic” from the Music Man.*

Editors note: Milton and Collette passed away in 1980. Their daughter Sally Ann pursued a career in costume design and is the owner of ParsonsMeares providing costumes for Broadway shows in New York City.

# 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 our next Open House 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>	
<b>CHATSWORTH HISTORY</b>	
by Virginia Watson	\$10.00
<b>CHATSWORTH PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL The First 100 Years</b>	
by Ioline Cleveland	\$10.00
<b>WINDOW INTO THE PAST</b>	
by William Schepler	\$10.00
<b>QUIET ON THE SET</b>	
by Robert Sherman	\$25.00
<b>OUR PIONEER MOTHER</b>	
As told to Lenora Johnson MacDonald	\$10.00
<b>EI ESCORPION</b>	
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?

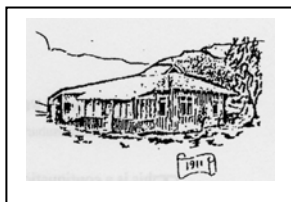
For those receiving email only newsletters, we will advise you by email when your dues are due. With a life membership there is no code on your address label. If there is a code on your address label, then this is what it means:

- 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: \_\_\_\_\_



This is a picture of Christine Smith's grandmother, Dorothy Smith in the Minnie Palmer house during the 1991 Pioneer Day. She was demonstrating tatting. Christine is the wife of Retired Councilmember Greig Smith. The Smith name is in her family too. The sewing box in the cottage was donated by Dorothy.

PIONEER DAY is a time to reflect on the skills and chores required to clothe and feed a family during the early 1900's.

We have several lost arts that have been replaced by a quick trip to Wal-Mart for whatever we need today.

Making our own clothes and learning the art of decoration was a skill that took hours....but those were hours not spent watching television or playing computer games.

Creating a hope chest of beautifully decorated linens was every girl's dream.

**Tatting** is a technique for handcrafting a particularly durable lace constructed by a series of knots and loops. Tatting can be used to make lace edging as well as doilies, collars, and other decorative pieces. The lace is formed by a pattern of rings and chains formed from a series of cow hitch, or half-hitch knots, called double stitches, over a core thread. Gaps can be left between the stitches to form picots, which are used for practical construction as well as decorative effect.



## 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)*