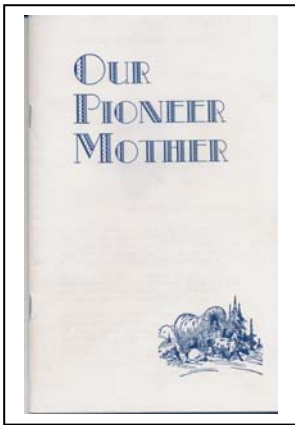


EARLY CHATSWORTH PIONEER HISTORY

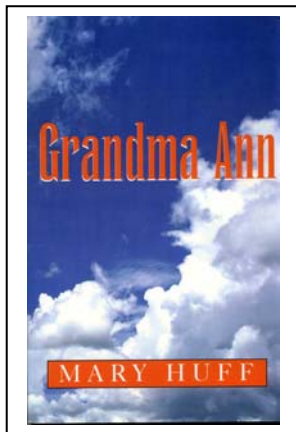


One of the best resources we have about growing up as a pioneer family in Chatsworth are the two books “Our Pioneer Mother” and “Grandma Ann”.

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.