

**FRED GRAVES – CONSTABLE**  
**(Recollections from the early days in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties)**



Fred and Emma Graves – 50<sup>th</sup>  
Wedding Anniversary

*The following recorded stories by Fred Graves have been passed down by Graves family member Joel Curtis Graves.....please enjoy*

Cap Fredericks, the District Attorney, had told me never to serve anything in a civil case without collecting the money but I knew the judge at Calabasas said he had \$250 up from the man who was suing Mrs. Bowers. “Afore I could get to Calabasas to collect, I ran up a \$200 board bill for the sixty days I had the heifers with George Lewis.

When I went to the judge he didn’t give me any money and the old lady she won the suit and I was out \$200 for my experience in Calabasas serving papers for the constable and his superior and they’ve never found him or his carcass up to this time.

**I. “Never Found Him or His Carcass”**

I was elected constable here in Chatsworth, Los Angeles County in '98, the first year we had a judge and constable out here. I was elected three terms. 1910 was the last time I served. I give up the last part of it on account of my mother. My mother died a few weeks afterwards and I told her that I’d give it up. She was always scared I was going to get shot or something. I give it up and turned it over to a friend of mine, Johnny Pilcher.

Daley Nash was constable at Calabasas and disappeared. Somebody had murdered him so far as we knew. I had to go to serve the papers over there for his district while I was constable here, and I had to serve some papers on Mrs. Bowers on the west side of the Malibu country. I sent my deputy over the day before and she ran him off with a shotgun so I went back the next day. I met her coming down the road with some cattle, her and a Mexican boy, and she wanted to know where I was going. I told her I was going up to Mrs. Bowers. She says, “Are you an officer?” I says, “I might be and I might not be”. She says, “If you are, you turn around and go back.” “No”, I says, “I heard that you was the best cook in these mountains over here and I come over to eat dinner with you.” All this time she had the gun pointed at me. Finally she says, “Go on up to the house. Put your horses in the barn. I’ll be back in about a half hour’.

So I went up and unhitched and fed the horses. I really had a good dinner. The old lady had hot biscuits and gravy and all the fixin’s to go with it. Then I told her I had some papers I wanted to serve, for a couple or three or four hogs and a half a dozen goats and a couple of heifers. “Come out here”, she says, “I’ll show you the goats.....You see the top of that mountain up there about a mile away? You see all them white goats up there?” “Yes”, I answered. “Well”, she says, “Go get ‘em.” And she says, “Here’s about half a dozen hog carcasses layin’ around here in the yard. Them’s the hogs.” She finally told the Mexican boy to go bring in the heifers. We went and brought ‘em in and I boarded ‘em with George Lewis.

**II. “Trouble at Calabasas”**

I know the Leonis people in Calabasas in 1894 when I first come here and I know’d ‘em up to the time of their death and they caused less trouble than anybody in this whole country. They had an adobe and fifty or sixty acres of ground and some cattle and horses and so far as I know, that’s all they ever had and they were very peaceful, caused no trouble to anybody.

There was nobody in particular around here that was a lawbreaker. The S.P. Company took every odd section of ground for twenty miles on each side when they come into Southern California with the railroad. A man would file on a homestead he thought was an even section and he put his house and barn and all improvements on it and farmed the ground. When it was surveyed he found he was on a piece of the S.P. ground. Just by Uncle Sam surveying it in 1896 it made a friction and a bad feeling among all the people. There was very few of them had their buildings on the ground they should have, and it made a kind of community feud the way I could size it up, and there was some people killed over it but there was none of ‘em that was really “outlaws”. There was nobody to blame as I could see.

The S.P. never done nothing, they didn’t. They just sit tight and if you was on their piece of ground, then you gotta pay them so much and if you wasn’t, they never interfered, or seemed to, in any way.

An old soldier come there one time and filed on a homestead. Some of them living around there said, “He has no business here. We’ll get rid of him”. They had a little meeting between a few of them, about a dozen. They went down there and waited on him one morning. When he got up and went down to the spring to get water, they shot him and killed him. There was never nothing done about it. Some of them was arrested but they didn’t get the right guy so it just died a natural death.

**Excerpt from the August 29, 1957 Grapevine regarding Fred Graves:** *In the “old days” when Chatsworth was not a part of L.A., Fred Graves (husband of Emma Johnson Graves) served as Constable and also Deputy Sheriff – this was when Chatsworth also had its own jail, by golly! And he was County Fire Warden in charge of the Lookout on Oat Mountain. He and Lovell Hill were the joint owners of one of the first grocery stores here. He did farming on the side and when the store closed he raised cattle on the Jaughin Ranch north of Chatsworth in Browns Canyon. In the days when we had a little county school-house Fred was on the School Board, and before the streets were dressed up with this top modern look, he was the Road Foreman, looking after the dirt roads.*



ca. 1902 – View of a man leaning against the Jail House. A corner of the Leonis Adobe can be seen between the “hangmans” tree and the jail. The Calabasas jail house was built in 1869 and was moved to Chatsworth in 1902. In 1910 the jail house was torn down in Chatsworth. (Photo courtesy of the Calabasas Historical Society)



The photo on the left is the well known photo of the Graves Hill General Merchandise store. The photo below shows Fred Graves standing on the front steps. Notice the sandstone foundation under the porch.

