

CHATSWORTH PIONEERS

The Gray Family

Several articles have been written over time about one of Chatsworth's most influential pioneer families. This article, published in the "The Chatsworth Grapevine" in February 1, 1956, was written by the editors Viola Haskell and Betty Straks following a tour of the Gray Home. Photos have been added for this Smoke Signal reprint of the article.

Feature Section: The Chatsworth Grapevine 1956

Ah! Memories! Chatsworth abounds in them - a blending of the old with the progress of the new. It was our pleasure, the other day, to go through the old Gray home, and walk about the grounds at 22165 Lassen and just stand and listen to what the walls could have said, if they had voices.

Nelson A. Gray and his wife, Minnie, had their nine children (two were born here) came to Chatsworth in 1892 and acquired approximately 400 acres (reasonable in those days) from the hills south of Lassen to Santa Susanna Pass. The big house was built in 1898 at a cost of \$1200.00 and contained 14 rooms, 13 of



them opening on to a "court" which was their living room and dining room (except for special company) 24x24 with an

18' ceiling. The stairway leading up to the three bedrooms above is in the court, and one of the girls came down this stairway in her wedding gown as she was joined in holy matrimony with the local preacher. The upstairs bedrooms are flanked by two attics, and above is the roof attic, and wonderful receptacles for their own private rummage. All the rooms have 10' ceilings; the doors (26 in all) 7' with an additional 2' transom over each, wooden doorknobs on the inside doors and brass knobs on the outside.



from the upstairs. Of course, there was the parlor, which still feels like a parlor today because all of the living is done in the court.

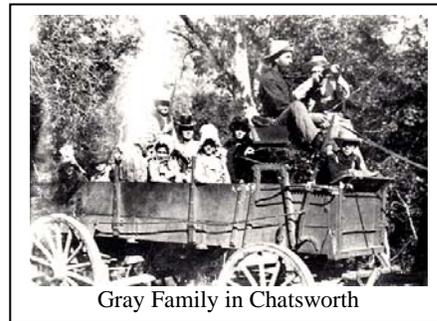
In this court stood the annual Christmas tree cut from the cypress hedge at the back of the garden, which reached to the 18' ceiling, placed in the corner where it could be trimmed

The Gray home was the first to be lighted with gas and they had their own gas plant with part of the machine in the cellar and the tank buried in the yard.

The old milk house, still standing there today although showing the ravages of time, was built from stone from the old Bill Bannon quarry above Oakwood; the walls are 18" thick. This is where the milk and perishables were kept, before the advent of refrigeration and freezers. Artesian water flows over the property today and in those early days was the water supply for the "neighborhood". The huge, old barn has since burned down and replaced by the buildings now on the property.

The grounds are beautifully covered with plants and huge, gnarled white oak and live oak trees, no doubt a sanctuary for play and privacy in those days before amusements. One also finds a headstone carved: "Bobie a good dog died Sept '08".

It was said of their father that he gathered the children about him on Sunday mornings before going to Sunday School (where they all went) and reviewed their lessons with them, while Mother got ready.



Gray Family in Chatsworth

In 1905 the Grays donated the ground for the construction of the Community Church. They sold their home in 1927 to the interests that have it today, known as the Spinks Estate, which now comprises 55 acres. The Geddings first managed the property (parents of Mrs. Failor, 10116 Topanga; then the Alex Summers managed the interest for 13 years during which time Mr. Summers put in the 30 acres of lemons, 10 acres of oranges and 15 in alfalfa.

In 1948 the Bob Werrens took over its management and are still there, loving every inch of the old home and its grounds. (1956 as written in The Grapevine)



Alex Summers shown working on his tractor in approx 1945.

Smoke Signal Editor Note: The only remaining clue that marks the location of this home, is the olive tree lined street along

the front of the original Gray property on Lassen Street. These trees have been classified as LA Historic Cultural Monument #49. The trees were planted in 1890 by N. A. Grey. They are believed to have been grown out of cuttings taken from olive trees at Mission San Fernando.