

Smoke Signal

CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Co-Presidents: Linda & André van der Valk

April 2019, Issue #3

Editor: Ann Vincent

Co-Presidents' Message

By Linda & André van der Valk

The Chatsworth Historical Society is sad to announce the passing of our beloved Virginia Watson. Virginia passed away on March 3, 2019. Virginia was not the only founding member of the Historical Society, but she was the driving force in preserving the history of Chatsworth. Virginia spent thousands of hours researching and recording the history of our area. I always like to say that if it was not for Virginia, we would not have anything to do at the Acre because it probably would have been turned into something else for the park. I personally learned so much from Virginia about history and recording history and developed a friendship that I will never forget. Virginia was a very special person and will be deeply missed by myself and everyone at the Acre.

Our Councilmember Greig Smith announced that the roadway to the Acre and to the recreation center of the park will be named Virginia Watson Way. It passed through the LA City Council and the sign is being made as I write this article. We are hoping that it will be in place in time for the Garden Festival. We are so appreciative to Councilmember Smith who by the way helped rename the Chatsworth Museum to the Virginia Watson Chatsworth Museum. These are honors benefiting a wonderful woman who dedicated her life to make sure the history of Chatsworth was documented for future generations.

We are busy getting ready for the Garden Festival on Sunday, April 28th. As we do every year, we are hoping for great weather. Thank you in advance to everyone who is helping to make this a great day. Ann Vincent, our Event Chair, has been working hard to make sure the day goes well. We can always use baked goods for the bake sale.

Happy Spring
Linda and André

Chatsworth Historical Society
Board of Directors 2018-2019

Co-Presidents	Linda & André van der Valk
Treasurer.....	Jim Van Gundy
Secretary.....	Donna Nachtrab
Hospitality.....	Jelena Csanyi
Smoke Signal Editor.....	Ann Vincent
Museum Curator Emeritus.....	Virginia Watson
Cottage Curator.....	Betty Summers
Research Director.....	Ray Vincent
Garden Director.....	Annette Campbell
Director-at-Large.....	Connie Ager
Honorary Member.....	Bea Berman
Honorary Member.....	Elaine Campbell

Upcoming Events

**April 16, 2019 Tuesday 7:00 PM
General Meeting**

The Apeta Momonga Mission Trail – Please join us as we discuss the latest Los Angeles Historic-



Cultural Monument. In 1987, the City Council dedicated the equestrian and hiking “Old Mission Trail” just south of the 118 fwy between DeSoto and Tampa. That trail is now Historic-Cultural Monument #1177. Come hear the history of the trail, before Mission times when it was a trail to Momonga, and during Mission times, when it became a part of the El Camino Real.

GARDEN FESTIVAL & DUCHESS TEA

April 28th from 11am to 3pm

DOCENT DOINGS at the ACRE:

Our docents keep busy with projects throughout the year. We meet every Wednesday morning 9-noon.

OUT IN THE GARDEN:

If you need some outdoor fresh air therapy, come join our gardening team on Wednesday mornings 9-noon.



IN THE MUSEUM: We will be sharing photos and information on the Stagecoach Trail during our Garden Festival in April. We will continue to have open house scheduled for the first Sunday of each month from 1-4pm except on Holidays.

IN THE COTTAGE: An inventory project is still underway to confirm and learn more about the items on display and their history so we can provide more information on our tours.

DOCENTS ARE NEEDED: Help guide guests through the museum and cottage during our Open Houses, Tours and Special Events. If you would like to learn the history of our community and help share it with others, please contact us for more information at chatsworthhistory@gmail.com.

ACTIVITIES:

In March, we gave a tour to the Chatsworth Elementary School 3rd grade classes. It is always fun to share our history with the students.



Bea Berman was on hand to explain the story behind our quilt in the museum along with Linda van der Valk, Marcia Chopp and Ann Vincent. Dottie Acker and Gloria Benedetti provided a tour of the cottage, while Nadia Harding and Jelena Csanyi talked about our butterfly garden and Native American leaching basin. Thank you to the docents who help make these school events and our Open House tours happen.

Memorial Brick Plaza



Click the link below for the Memorial Brick Order Form \$100 per brick.

<http://www.chatsworthhistory.com/CHS-BrickOrderForm.pdf>

Bricks that were ordered before March 1st are in place for the 2019 Garden Festival. We will continue to add new bricks, however the next cut off will be August 15 to have them placed before Pioneer Day. For more information, send an email to chatsworthhistory@gmail.com or call 818-882-5614.



GARDEN FESTIVAL

We always look forward to all of the help we can get from our members as we plan for this event.

If you are a baker, please share your talents and donate some cookies, brownies or something fun for our bake sale.

This year we will again be hosting our Duchess Tea and have determined that we should provide two seating times to keep everything moving. The tea will open at 11:30 and we will start selling tickets for that seating. Once we have sold out that seating, we will continue selling tickets for the 12:30 seating. Guests will be able to enjoy the vendors until their seating time. We will be able to let the front gate know what the status of the ticket sales are for visitors arriving.

We hope everyone enjoys the day, the vendors, our museums and our beautiful gardens.



Stoney Point and it's Spring...2019



The poppies are out in force, along with their orange and yellow cousins. Iverson explorer Cliff Roberts snapped this shot just last month looking southeast toward Stoney Point from up above Nyoka Cliff. Thank you Dennis Liff for sharing this with your Iverson Ranch Blog.

Virginia Faye Watson



by Ann Vincent

Virginia Faye Wilson Watson was born in Terre Haute, Indiana in March 24, 1921 and passed away on March 3, 2019 at the age of 97. She is known to most of us as our Historian, Museum Curator and friend. We took the opportunity to do an oral history interview with Virginia in 2010 and will share some of that information with you.

After growing up in Terre Haute, Indiana, Virginia and her family came to Los Angeles in 1936 where she attended Highland Park High School, graduating in 1939. Virginia shared stories about a high school club she participated in called the Gloom Chasers where they took part in adventures. One of those adventures included visiting Twin Lakes here in Chatsworth where one of the club member's family had a cabin. This was her first Chatsworth experience and she loved it here.

Following high school, Virginia's first job was in downtown Los Angeles in the fashion district filing records in the office, but she said she would occasionally get to model a fur coat or something fun. This was the first time she had seen entire floors of women working at sewing machines all day.

Virginia and her boyfriend Henry both took part in a friend's wedding, then decided to elope that night. It was a surprise to everyone. Henry worked for MGM studios at the time and they lived in Culver City. They both eventually got jobs at Hughes Aircraft where Virginia was in charge of their central file storage. She mentioned that Howard Hughes would walk right by her desk to get to his office. They were not supposed to speak to him, but she managed to say "Hello" one day when she ran into him on the stairs. Virginia shared with us that Howard Hughes hired a maid to wipe down all the phones with formaldehyde, as Howard Hughes was a nut on cleanliness.

In 1952, Virginia and Henry moved out to Chatsworth purchasing a six acre lot on Chatsworth Street. Henry, who loved working with horses, wanted a place to train his rescued race horse, who eventually ended up winning at Caliente. A job change for Henry caused them to sell the six acres thinking they would be moving back to Culver City again, his new job at North American was suddenly relocated to the new plant being built in Canoga Park, so they purchased a new home on DeSoto in 1956, and enjoyed staying in Chatsworth. Virginia's next couple of jobs included owning and working at the Malt Shop on the corner of Devonshire and Topanga in the Crisler building, followed by a job as secretary for the principal of Chatsworth Park Elementary school. She did everything from office work to acting as school nurse and keeping an eye on the students sent to the office for detention. As secretary, Virginia got to know the children and parents of some of Chatsworth's earliest settlers whose families were still attending Chatsworth Park Elementary. This sparked an interest in the history of those families and of Chatsworth itself. The principal Lavern Lee gave her a copy of "Our Pioneer Mother" and she was hooked. Always interested in writing, Virginia started writing a weekly column for the Daily News in 1961, called "Out Our Way". This involved writing about everything happening in Chatsworth, and so it is not surprising that she became a member of the Chatsworth Women's Club and helped found the Chatsworth Community Coordinating Council the same year.

In 1963 the Chatsworth Historical Society was founded to save the Pioneer Church, with a plan to eventually have a museum. Virginia immediately started collecting photos and memorabilia from the Williams family. She got to know Minnie Hill Palmer who would also participate and attend the Chatsworth Historical Society meetings. At that time they were held at member's homes or the new Chatsworth High School. The relocation of the Pioneer Church in 1965 gave hope to a museum at the church, but delays in repairs put that off, so she continued to collect artifacts and stored them at her home. By 1973, she had created a history slide show for the schools featuring photos that had been donated. Also in 1973 the Chatsworth Women's Club offered to pay for printing if Virginia would write a book. She titled it "A Childs View of Chatsworth" and wrote it for students. The book was subsequently re-published by the Chatsworth Historical Society in 1991 and is now in its Fourth edition as "Chatsworth History".



During this time, Virginia and Henry were also pursuing their interest in horses by creating a business. In 1968 they opened a shop at 21754 Devonshire called Equine Emporium, that sold books and magazines and gifts. This developed into selling items at each of the local racetracks, Hollywood Park, and then Del Mar and then Oaktree and then Santa Anita. They did that business for 10 years before Virginia decided to go back to writing for the Valley News and picked up the Out Our Way column again.

Virginia had gotten to know Minnie and interviewed her with plans to eventually write another book. The old Golf Course Pro Shop had been moved onto the acre and it was not long before the dreams of a museum were back and the building

was renovated. Minnie was now at a nursing home, but came to visit the new museum in 1980 at Christmas before she passed in 1981.

Virginia had finally found a place for her collection of documents and photos at the new museum and she donated the display cases from the equine gift shop too. It wasn't long before the Chatsworth Museum and Hill Palmer Cottage were up and running with a full group of docents and active board members. The Society hosted a variety of events annually and for special occasions to raise funds, they held yard sales and hosted weddings too.

In 2003, Huell Howser was invited to Chatsworth by Virginia, and her passion for history resulted in Huell coming back a few months later to film a second episode, both of which are still available for viewing. In 2007, the Historical Society Museum was renamed "The Virginia Watson Chatsworth Museum". Her many contributions over many years have made a lasting difference in our Community....and she will be missed.

Chatsworth Postcards 1912

We enjoyed a great presentation in March on the H.F. Rile collection of photographs taken in 1912. The Los Angeles County Natural History Museum recently added 19 photographs of Chatsworth to their digital collections... And the Chatsworth Historical Society archives include donations of postcards of the same photos from the Homesteader Families.

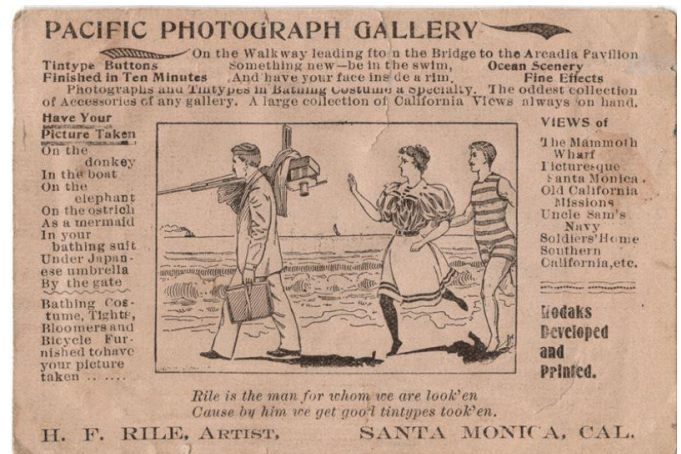
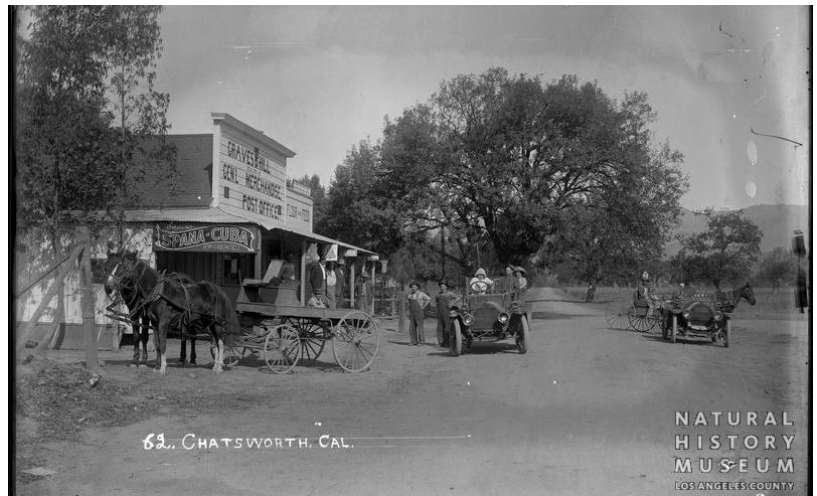
The presentation explored the locations of those photographs which became postcards, and documented what Chatsworth was like in 1912, 24 years after its founding. It was a rural city of dirt roads, that were well traveled....

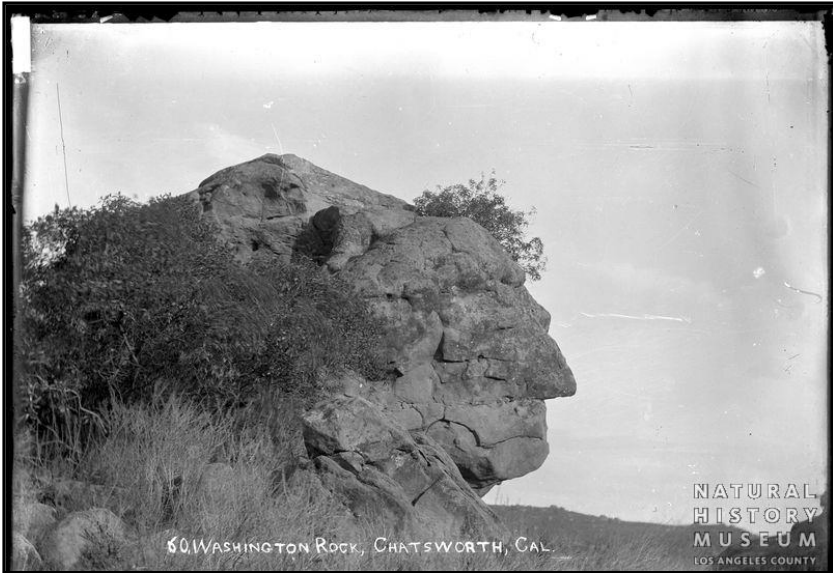
The photographs were undated, but we determined the date of 1912 based on a picture of the Hill Cottage (built in 1912), and a postcard from the Iversons dated Feb 1913. A visit to the Natural History Museum showed that the photos were a collection of 5" x 7" glass negatives, and some prints. Images of the glass negatives are posted online. The photographs are numbered 50 through 75, so a total of 26 photos existed at some time, although only 19 are in the Museum collection. Two additional photos were identified as postcards, one from the Iversons and Hill donated postcards, and one postcard from David Coscia, who attended our March presentation. All of the photographs have the same lettering on the front, and appear to have been taken during the same visit to Chatsworth.

Harry Frantz "H.F." Rile was born in Philadelphia in 1860, and by 1886 at the age of 26 he had established Rile and Pencost Studio on Santa Monica Beach. By 1892, he had established the Pacific Photograph Gallery on the Santa Monica Beach, at the Arcadia Pavilion, just north of today's Santa Monica Pier, on the beach below the palisades. He sold Souvenir Photographs, before the 1907 era of Picture Postcards.

Beginning in 1873, the US Post Office issued pre-stamped penny postal cards. The front of a postal card was blank for messages and the back was reserved for the address. Beginning in 1907, postcards began to have divided backs. The entire front was reserved for an image while the left side on the back was reserved for a message and the right side for the address. The "Divided Back" Era (1907-1915) is considered the Golden Age of postcards. In 1909, 969 million postcards were sent in the United States. To encourage collecting, companies produced numbered series and special postcard albums.

In 1912, at the age of 52, Harry Rile visited Chatsworth. He probably took the train, and stayed at the Chatsworth Hotel. His tour guides may have been Fred Graves (age 37) or Lovell Hill (36), owners of the Graves & Hill General Store. And perhaps Charles Johnson (45), or Karl Iverson (52). Note: Hollywood and D.W. Griffith discovered Chatsworth in 1912 (Man's Genesis).





60 WASHINGTON ROCK, CHATSWORTH, CAL.

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM LOS ANGELES COUNTY

His photographs included north of today's 118 fwy (George Washington Rock on the Johnson Homestead), Garden of the Gods, Stoney Point, Lassen and the Miranda Adobe, a view of Chatsworth from the Old Stage Road, Railroads, and the Chatsworth Grade Road, before the Santa Susana Pass Road was built. Part of the program shared some postcard notes from homesteaders written on the back of their donated postcards, including one segment from Anna Iverson in 1913 –

“Sena, Mama and I been putting up awful lot of fruit. Joe & Papa will work in the springs now. How do you like this photo of Chats? I got it at Graves & Hill's store.”

Visit chatsworthhistory.com, Digital Archives, Presentations, “Chatsworth Postcards 1912”, to view the entire presentation.



67 SANTA SUSANNA PASS, NEAR CHATSWORTH, CAL.



53. NEAR CHATSWORTH TUNNEL, CAL.

The Chatsworth Historical Society Presents



A GARDEN FESTIVAL

Featuring Roses, Crafts, Plant Sales
and Chatsworth History

Vendors and Garden Clubs
Arts, Crafts, Demonstrations

The Duchess Tea

- \$12 per person
- 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Served in the Rose Garden

**1911 Homestead
Cottage Tours**
Rose Garden Tours

Museum Exhibits

Featuring Chatsworth Pioneer
Families and 1904
Railroad Tunnel History

Bake Sale
Hot Dogs and Soda



For information and tea reservations (+10 persons), please email chatsworthhistory@gmail.com

**Note: Parking is
limited at
Chatsworth Park
South**

Park your car at the north
end of 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.

Sunday, April 28, 2019

11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

\$5 Admission Donation – Children \$1

Kids under 5 Free

THE HOMESTEAD ACRE

At the First Stop Sign in **Chatsworth Park South**

(West End of Devonshire Street)

10385 Shadow Oak Drive, Chatsworth, CA 91311

chatsworthhistory@gmail.com 818-882-5614 www.chatsworthhistory.com

*All Proceeds go to the Chatsworth Historical Society for the preservation of the
Minnie Hill Palmer Homestead Acre and the Virginia Watson Chatsworth Museum*

Virginia Watson Museum & Gift Shop

The following items are available for sale during Open Houses on the first Sunday of the month. To arrange to purchase items at other times, email chatsworthhistory@gmail.com to make arrangements for payment and shipping, if necessary.

CHATSWORTH HISTORY by Virginia Watson	\$10.00
CHATSWORTH PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL The First 100 Years by Ioline Cleveland	\$10.00
WINDOW INTO THE PAST by William Schepler	\$10.00
QUIET ON THE SET by Robert Sherman	\$25.00
OUR PIONEER MOTHER As told to Lenora Johnson MacDonald	\$10.00



DIGITAL ARCHIVES online at

<http://www.chatsworthhistory.com>

facebook

CHS FACEBOOK PAGE

www.facebook.com/HomesteadAcre

SLIDESHARE.NET

<https://www.slideshare.net/ChatsworthHistory/presentations>

Slideshare has a listing of our CHS presentations that can easily be watched online. Enjoy!

Can we email our newsletter to you?

Please email us to provide your email address. Thanks! chatsworthhistory@gmail.com

Wondering if your Dues are Due?

Your dues are due one year after the last time you paid your dues.

For those receiving email only newsletters, we will advise you by email when your dues are due.

For snail mail, if you have an asterisk at the end of your name on the mailing label, your dues are due.

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.

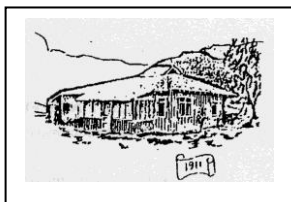


CHATSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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 818-882-5614 www.chatsworthhistory.com



Yearly:

Life Membership:

New Member

Individual \$15.00

\$ 125.00

Renewal

Family \$20.00

Organization \$20.00

NAME _____ Phone: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____ Email: _____

CITY / STATE / ZIP: _____

Special Interest / Expertise: _____

Reminder: If you got this mailed to you, an asterisk on your label means your dues are due!