



# Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 11, Issue 2

April 2026

*It is our mission to identify, preserve and promote the historic legacy of the Murrieta Valley and to educate the public about its historical significance.*

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Murrieta Valley Historical Society

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The 2019 Board Members: From left to right back row: Connie Cain McConnell, Jenny Mayoral, Al Volbrecht, Annette Jennings, Jeffery Harmon. Front row: Mary Alice Kean, Peggy Goffman, Terri Kean Whitaker, Carol Sierra, Ashley Jennings-Bigay and Pat Jennings

## The Murrieta Valley Historical Society 10th Anniversary Celebration, Part 2 By Jeffery G. Harmon

The Society was three years old when the Murrieta Museum opened. We were excited and proud of all that we had accomplished in a short time. As we looked to the future, we were hopeful and optimistic that we would accomplish much more, and the Society would continue to grow. However, at the dawn of the New Year, a global health threat

began to emerge that would impact all our lives.

The year 2020 began with the Murrieta Elementary School's Third Grade tours at the museum. The first classes arrived at the museum and were given a tour and students participated in hands-on activities. The class was then taken on a walking tour of the His-



Museum Director Annette Jennings leads a Third Grade tour of the museum

toric Downtown District. Several more classes were scheduled to visit the museum in the coming months, but soon the tours would be cancelled.

The COVID pandemic struck the world in 2020. On March 13, 2020, Americans were instructed to quarantine at home in order to stop the spread of the deadly disease. Businesses, schools, churches, civic groups, and the government closed their doors. The world stood still as an invisible specter of death hovered over the land.

The Murrieta Museum immediately closed its doors. Gathering in groups was forbidden for fear of spreading the disease. The Society's board members continued to meet via teleconferencing on the Zoom program. It was unknown how long the quarantine would last or how long the pandemic would endure.

Sadly, the Society suffered a great loss when Society treasurer Al Vollbrecht passed away on December 28, 2020. He had been a board director since 2017. In mid-2019, Jenny Mayoral resigned and Al was named the second Society treasurer. During the museum renovations, Al joined the volunteer painting crew. He also donated the Murrieta timeline poster that travels the perimeter of the museum's interior.

Also on December 8, 2020, Murrieta lost our oldest living pioneer, Alice Vose. Alice was Annette Jennings's mother. Alice had preserved many historical items and photographs over her years related to Murrieta's history. She loved and served her community and gave generously her time and resources.

Pamela Malnar was named the Society's third treas-

urer in 2021. She had been working with the membership committee for over a year and had recently been named committee chairman. She is a descendant of the Thompson family and has lived in Murrieta all her life. Her detailed work as our treasurer has been greatly appreciated. She has also done great work with our members, and she has strived to increase the Society's membership.

On May 13, 2021, the museum reopened on Thursdays with new public health guidelines. Volunteers and guests were required to wear face masks to prevent the spreading of the disease.

In the summer, plans for the Al Vollbrecht Memorial Garden in front of the museum had begun. Later that year, a Peace tree was planted in the center of the garden. The tree was a cutting from a tree that survived the bombing of Hiroshima. Behind the tree, cuttings from the historic roses located at the Laurel Cemetery were planted, and in front were some of Al's favorite plants.

Later that year, the Society began hosting a booth once a month at the Murrieta Market Nights. Plans were also being made to resume the Murrieta Elementary School Third Grade tours for the next school year. A total of six Third Grade classes toured the museum through the spring of 2022. During this time, a Murrieta Historical Mural created by Aimee Edgeworth was installed in front

of the museum.

On April 23, 2022, the Murrieta Fire Department celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Fireman's BBQ. The event had been moved from Hunt Memorial Park to Town Square Park. Pat and Annette Jennings have hosted a Murrieta History booth at the Annual BBQ for many years, with special exhibits on the history of the Fire Department. The booth also provided an opportunity to have a mini reunion with pioneer families.

The biggest heartbreak came on July 26, 2022, when the Historic Lakeman House was demolished. Casey Jurado and Jason Brawner purchased the Bezanson property in 2017. They had hoped to restore both Ray's Café and the Lakeman House, but they could not find any investors. Estimates to restore the Lakeman House came in at several million dollars primarily due to the compromised foundation. After several years, it was decided to demolish the house in hopes of preserving the Café building next door.

The Historical Society received some criticism from people in the community for allowing the home, built in 1885, to be demolished. As president, it had been a difficult decision to sign off on the project.

The Historical Society worked to preserve the history of the home and the families that had lived there. We invested four months cleaning up the property and rescued over 10,000 items related to Murri-

eta's history. We also received the Newel banister post from the staircase and several firebricks from the fireplace. We accomplished all that we could with the volunteers and the resources we had available. The Murrieta Museum now shares the history and legacy of the Lakeman House with visitors to this day.

A long-term Society goal was to place plaque sticker markers in the Historic Downtown District. On August 6, 2022, while visiting the museum, a local family made a donation towards a plaque program in the Historic Downtown District. The next several months we began researching how to install plaques on properties and what type of plaques we would use.

We learned about a sidewalk sticker emblem program used by the Perris Historical Society. Public sidewalk stickers were first seen in abundance during the pandemic in order to pro-

vide safe distancing for people standing in lines. Instead of requesting permission from multiple owners to install plaques on their properties, we only had to make one formal request with the owner of the sidewalks, the City of Murrieta.

On December 5, 2022, we received an additional donation towards the plaque program. With the funding in place, the project began. The only hurdle we had to overcome was to receive permission from the City of Murrieta to install the plaque stickers on the sidewalks. The approval process took several months before we received authorization for the installation. We appreciate the City of Murrieta for being a supportive sponsor of the project.

The year ended with another loss: On November 20, 2022, Retired Murrieta Fire Chief Marvin Curran passed away. Marvin was the last surviving founding member of the



Sykes Park Dedication, October 3, 2024

Murrieta Volunteer Fire Department. Marvin was 18 years old at the time. As Fire Chief, he was instrumental in transitioning the Fire Department into a City owned department. We are forever grateful for his service and commitment to our community.

After many meetings and correspondence, in 2023 we were approved by the City to install the sidewalk plaque stickers. By October 2023, ten plaque stickers had been installed. Each sticker has a QR code that visitors can scan to learn about the historic site. After the installation, early data showed the general public was engaging with the sidewalk plaque stickers. In 2024, five more plaque stickers were ready to be installed.

Secretary Carol Sierra resigned in February 2024 due to health concerns. By June 2024, Kathi Price had been installed as the Society's second secretary. Kathi and her husband, Paul, have volunteered many hours for the Society. They are also active with the Perris Valley Historical Society.

Another big joint project with the City's Park and Recreation Dept. was completed on October 3, 2024. On that day, Sykes Park was dedicated along with the Walk-through History project. The project provided park visitors with an opportunity to walk through the grounds and learn about the history of the Sykes family and farm.

The sidewalk plaque



In 2025, the historic sidewalk sticker project was updated. Pat and Annette Jennings sponsored the 20th sticker, The Thompson Barn, at the corner of Washington Ave and Ivy St.

sticker project continued in 2025. In February 2025, two more plaque stickers were installed bringing the total to 17. Pat and Annette Jennings oversaw and inspected the plaque stickers each month. After several years, it was determined that some of the original stickers needed to be replaced due to wear. By December 2025, several plaque stickers had been replaced and three more were added bringing the total to 20 in the Downtown Area. This final project of 2025 was made possible through donations and sponsorships for the program.

After ten years, the Murrieta Valley Historical Society has continued to follow its mis-

sion statement to identify, preserve and promote the historic legacy of the Murrieta Valley and to educate the public about its historical significance. Through the Murrieta Museum, school tours, walking tours, historic presentations, newsletters, social media, and the Historic Downtown Murrieta historic sidewalk plaque sticker program, the Society has fulfilled its mission and will continue to do so into the future. We couldn't have accomplished all that we have done in the past ten years without the hard-working volunteers, the Society members, donors, and supporters. Thank you for helping us to continue to preserve and protect Murrieta's historic legacy for generations to come.

# Museum Update

We are preparing for two upcoming events this month. On Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup> we will be having a booth at the 79<sup>th</sup> Annual Murrieta Fire and Rescue BBQ. We will be sharing the history of the Murrieta Fire Department and of Murrieta. We always look forward to visiting with former residents and long time friends. On Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup> we will also have a booth at the Lake Elsinore History Days sharing information about Murrieta's history.

The school tours are al-

most finished for this school year. We hosted seven 3rd grade classes and a couple of senior groups from the Murrieta Senior Center and a Senior Assistant Living. I would like to thank my class tour volunteers, Kathie Price, LaShawn Butler and Pat Jennings for helping with the hands-on activities.

The museum volunteers have been busy archiving 120 binders with photos and documents from Murrieta families. Pat Jennings has been busy scan-

ning photos to add to the museum's collection.

Please follow us on Facebook or Instagram @murrieta museum or on our website at [info@murrietahistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@murrietahistoricalsociety.org)

If you have any questions, please call us at: 951-677-7758

Thank you,  
Annette Jennings,  
Museum Director



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**The General  
Monthly Board Meeting  
is held on the second  
Monday at 5:30 p.m.  
Please join us at  
the Murrieta Museum**



The Murrieta Museum,  
41810 Juniper Street  
at Hunt Memorial Park.

## BECOME A MEMBER TODAY

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