



Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

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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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The Murrieta Methodist Church located on the corner of Washington Ave and A Street. (Source: Lloyd House)

The Murrieta United Methodist Church

By Jeffery G. Harmon

The Murrieta United Methodist Church is the oldest congregation in Murrieta. This year the congregation is celebrating its 140th anniversary. Since 1886, the Methodist Church has been a vital part of the growth and development of Murrieta. Multiple generations of families and friends have gathered together to worship and to support each other and the community. From a frontier foundation to a tragic church fire, the church has continued to serve the

needs of the people and the valley.

The earliest recorded preaching was held on April 12, 1885 at the Fountain House Hotel. Rev. Rich, of Sedgwick, Kansas, was appointed to establish a church in Elsinore and Murrieta. He would visit each community on alternate Sundays. In June, Sunday School classes were led by Rev. Boyden.

At the Annual Methodist Southern California Conference



Witnesses stand by and watch as the Methodist church and Sharer's Hall burned to the ground on April 10, 1963 (Source: Lloyd House)

held in September, ministers and church leaders gathered to receive their next annual church appointments.

Founder John Wesley believed that each minister had unique talents and experiences. By re-assigning ministers to new churches annually, it allowed the congregation to have new leadership and changing perspectives.

Rev. W. D. Lowder was appointed the Elsinore-Murrieta circuit for the 1885-1886 sessions. The Murrieta school house was completed in October 1885 and the congregation began meeting there. Rev. Lowder worked in Elsinore to help build the first Methodist church. He also worked with the Murrieta congregation to file articles of

incorporation.

On June 29, 1886, the church trustees filed their papers with San Diego County. They were Mr. and Mrs. R. N. Bollen, Mary Buchanan, A. B. Burnett, Dr. and Mrs. H. B. Lashlee, Josie M. Ogborn, N. N. Tower, and Horatio Warren. Afterwards, Robert W. Bollen, Daniel N. Buchanan, A. R. Doolittle, H. B. Lashlee and Rev. W. D. Lowder were elected new trustees to manage the church during its first year.

Two town lots located at the corner of Washington Avenue and A Street were purchased for \$140 on July 27th. Fundraising efforts began in order to purchase materials to build the new church. In September, Rev. Charles W. Nicklin took charge

of the Elsinore-Murrieta circuit for the 1886 – 1887 sessions. The west side of the lake had been added to the circuit, keeping Nicklin busy trying to meet the needs of the three congregations.

On September 11, 1887, the Murrieta Methodist Church was dedicated. Daniel Buchanan and A. R. Doolittle built the church at a cost of \$2,000. Rev. Amos M. Ogborn was assigned the first minister to serve in the new church for the Murrieta-Winchester circuit. During his tenure, his mission was to build a new church in Winchester.

By the 1888 Annual Conference, Murrieta had built a parsonage for the annual residential minister and his family. In Winchester, the new church

had been built and dedicated. Sadly, on September 4, 1888, the Elsinore Methodist church was destroyed by a violent rain and windstorm. However, the congregation immediately began plans to rebuild.

Rev. Irving N. Lovejoy was assigned the Murrieta-Temecula circuit for the 1889-1890 sessions. It was the hope that a church could be established in Temecula. He worked the circuit for three years. By the 1892 conference, the Temecula efforts were abandoned and parishioners were encouraged to join the Murrieta congregation.

Rev. George Cocking was assigned the Murrieta-Wildomar circuit for the 1904-1905 sessions. He transferred from Indiana with his family, due to his son's chronic illness.

It was hoped that the Southern California climate would ease his son's symptoms.

During his time in Wildomar, Rev. Cocking worked with the congregation to secure a permanent building for a church. The United Presbyterian Church in Wildomar sold their church building to the Methodist in August 1905. Funds were raised to provide furniture and make repairs on the structure.

The Wildomar Methodist Episcopal Church was dedicated on September 10, 1905. The presiding elder, Rev. John L. Pitner, was assisted during the dedication ceremony by Rev. George Cocking, and Rev. Harry H. Hunt, of Elsinore. The church was christened McCoy Chapel in honor of J. C. McCoy

of Hiawatha, Kansas for his generous gift to the church.

Years later, Rev. C. W. Sharer was assigned to Murrieta in 1940 and served till 1944. In 1942, he built a new addition to the church, which included a social hall, a kitchen, and two classrooms. He used salvaged lumber from the former Wildomar Methodist church. In tribute to the pastor, the congregation named it Sharer Hall.

Then on April 10, 1963, an arsonist set fire to the Murrieta Methodist Church. The Murrieta Volunteer Fire Department was unable to save the historic structure. The next Sunday, Rev. Tom Warner and the church members gathered at Sykes Ranch for the Annual Easter Sunrise service.



The Murrieta Methodist Episcopal Church on Washington Ave. The front door faced A Street.
(Source: The E. Hale Curran Collection)



Fundraising efforts began immediately in order to build a new church at a new location. Meanwhile, church services were held at the Murrieta Grammar School on Adams Avenue and Sunday School classes were held at different church members' homes.

On March 28, 1965, the new church structure was dedicated at the corner of Kalmia Street and Adams Ave. By the 1980s, rapid growth in the valley brought about the need to build a larger church. On June 4, 1989, the new church was dedicated for the growing congregation. In the 1990s, the population continued to grow and soon the church needed more classrooms and offices.

Today the Murrieta United Methodist Church continues to grow and to serve the needs of the community. As the church celebrates its 140th anniversary, the congregation looks to the future generations to continue to build a community and to serve God, their neighbors and beyond.



In Memory of Dorothy June Mefferd by Marci Liefer

We are saddened to announce the passing of our mom, Dorothy (Dot) June Mefferd on May 10th, 2026.

She was born in Syracuse, New York on July 10, 1927. She moved to California in the early 1940's. She married Clifford E. Mefferd in 1948 and then moved to Murrieta, California in 1963.

She volunteered with the Murrieta 4-H Club. She also helped cook and serve the meals at the Annual Firemen's BBQ for many years.

She worked for the Delaney Stock Farm, El Rancho Murrieta, and the Murrieta Veterinary Hospital. She retired from International Immunology.

She then moved to Dewey, Arizona for short time, but then returned to live with her daughter, Marci Liefer, and her husband Wayne, on their ranch in Temecula.

She is survived by her two daughters, Marilyn and her husband, Barry Sutton and grandson, Duane Sutton, and Marci Liefer and her husband, Wayne.

She had a deep love for the western way of life.

There will be no services as per mom's request. In lieu of flowers donations can be made to the Murrieta Valley Historical Society.

Museum Update

The school year has come to a close and we have finished our school tours. We would like to thank our volunteers for making this another successful year for us. The students and teachers have enjoyed their visit. Thank you for your support.

On April 18th we participated in the 79th Annual Fireman's BBQ. It was wonderful visiting with friends and families and meeting new people. We were able to share Murrieta's rich history with all those that

visited our booth. We want to thank all those that volunteered their time to make this event successful.

On April 25th we participated in the Lake Elsinore History Days event. All those that participated stated that it was a memorable time for all.

Recently, we received a donation from the Temecula Valley Women's Club. Last year we participated in their Holiday seasonal event, which were well attended and brought in over a hundred visitors to the

museum. We gratefully appreciate their donation and their support of our museum. Thank you.

Please follow us on Facebook or Instagram @murrieta museum or on our website at 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.

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