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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Murrieta's first post office was located in Dr. Horace Lashlee's Drug Store on the corner of Clay Ave and A St.
(Photo: The E. Hale Curran Collection)

Murrieta's Post Office History
By Jeffery G. Harmon and Mary Alice Rail Boyce

Murrieta was established 141 years ago, when Murrieta's first post office opened on July 28, 1885 in Dr. Horace B. Lashlee's Drug Store on Clay Avenue and A Street. For three years, customers received mail at his store.

David H. Connell became the second postmaster for a year from June 21, 1888 through June 13, 1889. The location of the post office during his tenure is unknown. Connell was listed as a farmer and dairyman, which means he may not have had a place of business and would have had to rely on the local merchants for postal space. One newspaper article suggested that the post office may have been located in the Colerick Bros. store, which was located across the street from Dr. Horace Lashlee's Drug Store.

The third postmaster was Robert W. Bollen. He served from June 14, 1889 to October 13, 1893. He moved the post office to his Notion Store located on 2nd Ave between B St. and Juniper. The store ad read: "The Post Of-



J. M. Richardson's Hardware, Feed Mill and Implements.
Murrieta Post Office (1894-1898)
Photo: The E. Hale Curran Collection

fice Store."

"Robert W. Bollen came to Murrieta in 1885. He bought 20 acres, built a house, and planted trees and grapes. Mr. Bollen, elected Justice of the Peace in 1889, resigned to serve as postmaster. He was a wagon maker, a merchant, a farmer and a member of the Masons. By 1889, he had the Murrieta Notions Store and announced the opening of a Lodging House." (Boyce)

Postmaster Bollen resigned as postmaster in October 1893 due to declining health. He died January 14, 1905 in Los Angeles and was buried in the Los Angeles National Cemetery. He was a veteran of the Mexican American War.

David H. Connell served a second term from October 13, 1893 to February 20, 1894. During this time, the post office was located in the former bank building owned by George Fox. The small bank building was located between the Fountain House Hotel and the Colerick Bros. Store.

John M. Richardson served as the fifth postmaster from February 21, 1894 to January 27, 1898. He had served as a deputy for Postmaster David H. Connell from October 13, 1893 to February 20, 1894.

Postmaster Richardson moved the post office to his Hardware, Feed Mill and Implements building on Third Ave, north of B Street. He had opened his business on April 22, 1886. He also served as clerk of the Murrieta School and was in charge of the public scales.

He was born in England and had moved to America. His marriage had ended in divorce and his ex-wife lived in San Francisco.

In 1898, he became sick with pneumonia, but he didn't take sick leave from his post. He died within a few days on January 21, 1898 and was laid to rest in the Laurel Cemetery.

After the death of Postmaster Richardson, his assistant, Oliver W. Miller became the postmaster. He served as the sixth postmaster from January 27, 1898 to March 13, 1928. The post office was moved to the Murrieta Santa Fe Depot.

"His two daughters, Evelyn and Sylvia assisted at five cents a day, according to letters written to Hale Curran. The tiny post office space was in the middle of the depot. It was a dark place, lighted with a small kerosene lamp. There were five lock boxes. Everyone else had to ask for their mail. Hale Curran commented, 'In the winter, it was icy cold and in summer, it was hot as a furnace.'" (Boyce)

Oliver Miller followed his brother, Eugene, to Murrieta around 1890. They settled in what would be named Miller Canyon, located west of Hayes Avenue and Juniper Street. He served as Justice of the Peace in January 1895 and served on the Murrieta school board in 1898.

"Through some clerical error in the filing of the original post office application in Washington D.C., Murrieta had two t's. The error carried through the years until its correction finally took place in the fall of 1924. Postmaster O. W. Miller filed papers that stated: "The name of my post office is Murrieta (late Mur-

rietta), Riverside County, California." The error was corrected and Murrieta was officially spelled with one t, as intended in 1884." (Boyce)

Postmaster Miller died on May 20, 1927 in Murrieta. He was laid to rest in the Laurel Cemetery. Afterwards, Albert K. Small was appointed acting postmaster until the government made an official appointment. Ten months later, on March 14, 1928, Albert K. Small became postmaster. His daughter, Emma, helped.

Albert Small married Edith Thompson, daughter of Henry Clay Thompson in 1894. They had five children. The Small family settled in Orange County, California where Albert ran a small general store. His father-in-law invited Albert and his family to live in his large red house in Murrieta so that Edith could care for her father in his golden years. Henry also offered to build a general store next door for Albert to run. Albert agreed to the terms. The A. K. Small & Co. General Store opened in 1909. Albert ran the store for thirteen years and then sold the business to George Burnham and his son, Frank in 1922.

By 1928, the post office was moved to the south end of the former A. K. Small & Co. General Store.

"The post office space was a rough-shod kind of place, made of worn boards never painted or finished in any way. A dimly-lighted room, it had a single bulb hanging from the ceiling. A rickety rocking chair had been left there, tied with baling wire so that when you sat down the seat hung catty-wampus to the rockers. Bailing wire or not, it did hang together. A small desk with a few pigeonholes was there for writing out money orders and such." (Boyce)

Postmaster Small served until June 8, 1936. The government had an age limit for postmasters, and Small had aged out. Small died on October 26, 1940 from pneumonia. He was laid to rest in the Elsinore Valley Cemetery. Today the former post office space is now home to Vista Donuts.

Postmistress Rose Tarwater succeeded Postmaster Small and served from June 9, 1936 to August 18, 1961. Hale Curran served as clerk. Rose Tarwater came from a long line of postmasters. Her grandfather, E. A. Snider, was postmaster in Temecula and her father was postmaster in Recluse in San Diego County.

"Mrs. Curran arrived early each morning to open the doors. She said, "On winter mornings, the place was cold as a tomb. They heated the area with an iron coal-burner stove. It was so old and warped that the lids wouldn't seat and the door wouldn't close securely. That loyal old stove took the chill off the room and heated water in the percolator for coffee each morning. Rose Tarwater brought fresh cream from their cows."



Hale Curran, Dixie Ely, and Postmistress Rose Tarwater at the Murrieta Post Office. Photo: The E. Hale Curran Collection

Doughnuts from the store next door completed their daily breakfast routine. Hale remarked that she hadn't had a doughnut since that tasted as good as those eaten in the old post office." (Boyce)

In October 1939, Postmistress Tarwater attended the National Postmasters Convention in Washington D.C. and while there made a request to the Assistant Postmaster General for a new post office building in Murrieta. Her requested was granted and on July 1, 1940, the office was moved into a new building on Washington Avenue across the street from the Tarwater home.

During her 25 years of postal service, she was involved in other civic groups. She served as secretary of the Murrieta Cemetery board for twenty three years, and was a past president of the Riverside County Postmasters Association and served as secretary for that association for several years.

Postmistress Tarwater retired and on Saturday, August 19, 1961, Postmaster Murrel C. Jensen succeeded her.

Postmaster Jensen served from August 19, 1961 to August 19, 1981. Chuck Jenson stated, "His official certificate for being accepted as Postmaster of Murrieta, California was signed by President John Fitzgerald Kennedy."

Hale Curran continued in her role as clerk. She retired on December 30, 1966, after serving thirty-one and half years. Other clerks that worked for Postmaster Jensen were Lucy Dunham and Dorothy Renon. Gene Snow of Elsinore, California was the Rural Route carrier.

"Postmaster Jensen resided on the corner of First and C St., only a block from the post office. He was a native of South Dakota and had lived in Murrieta for many years. He was employed at Guenther's Murrieta Hot Springs Resort for seven years. "(LEVS)

Murrel, his wife, Victoria Termine Allen Jenson and her parents, Sarah and Sam Termine ran the B-Bar-H Café in Temecula for a number of years. Murrel then owned and operated the meat department in the M & M Market in Temecula for two years and had been employed by the Division of Forestry in Temecula. Murrel and Victoria had one son, Chuck, who was an 8th grader in the Murrieta School. They had three stepchildren, Skip Allen, Paulette Allen Lee, and Bonita Jensen Wagner.

Mrs. Ethel Holl, a kindergarten teacher, would bring her students to the post office in February each year. She would have the students' parents mail their child a Valentine card. When the children arrived, Postmaster Jensen would deliver the cards to each of the students. Then he would give the students a tour of the post office and explain his duties and operations.

Postmaster Jensen died on May 13, 1981, and was laid to rest in the Laurel Cemetery, in Murrieta.

"Postmaster Shirley Collins was appointed in 1981. Two clerks, Dorothy Renon and Dorothy Bush, assisted. The post office had been a first class office since 1982. Murrieta was second in line on a waiting list for a new postal facility. There was a need for more post office boxes, off-street parking, and a much larger work space.

In December 1985, Murrieta celebrated the dedication of a new, 3,685 square-foot post office at 24930 Washington Avenue. A fifty-year time capsule, buried on the site, is to be opened in the year 2035. At this time, the post office served about 3,000 customers in Murrieta, Murrieta Hot Springs, Bear Creek and La Cresta.

By 1995, the postal staff had increased to eleven clerks and thirty route carriers, and served over 42,000 customers." (Boyce)

Today, as the population continues to grow, the Murrieta Post Office continues to change and expand its services. It is hard to imagine what the Murrieta postal system will look like in a hundred years.

Sources:

Murrieta: Old Town, New Town, A Community History by Mary Alice Rail Boyce.

Lake Elsinore Valley Sun, September 7, 1961.

Additional research by Pam Malnar, Additional information provided by Chuck Jensen

Museum Update

Greetings,

There was a full house for President Jeffery Harmon's three presentations on the Mexican American War in Southern California. His fourth presentation will be on November 14th at 10 a.m. at the museum.

We are excited that the 3rd Grade School tours will begin in October. We appreciate our volunteers for returning for these events.

Guests from Ivy Park Assistant Living took a tour of the museum.

Recently, we were contacted by a descendant of Ezequiel Murrieta living in Spain who wanted to share with us his family's history.

He has sent us a picture of a painting of Ezequiel, the Murrieta family genealogy chart and a digital copy of 23 letters written by Juan to his brother Ezequiel. We are excited to continue to learn more about the Murrieta family.

Please keep an eye out for the upcoming 2027 Murrieta Elementary and Elsinore High School Reunion

For the month of November, please visit the museum for "Remembering our Veterans" Display

The Murrieta Rod Run will be held on October 9th & 10th. Please stop by on our booth next to the church on B Street.

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

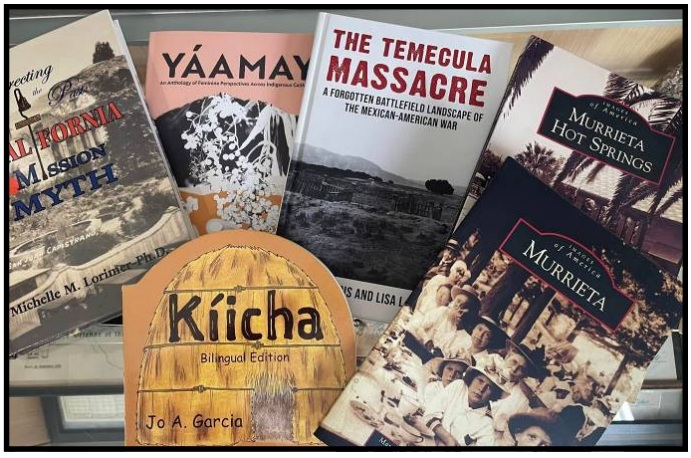
Thank you,

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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