



Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 7.

July 2018

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 Washington Avenue Bridge

(Photo by author, October 9, 2011)

Washington Avenue Bridge (1939 - 2018)

By Jeffery Harmon

The Washington Avenue Bridge, located near the intersection of Washington Avenue and Brown Street, was the oldest surviving bridge in Murrieta. The bridge was built seventy-nine years ago and survived multiple floods. On May 17, 2018, the new Guava Street Bridge south of Washington Avenue was officially opened. This new bridge was constructed to replace the obsolete Washington Avenue Bridge. On

June 4th, a wrecking crew descended on the old bridge and began removing the structure.

The Inland Highway, the precursor to Highway 395, was paved to the San Diego County line by December 1915. The highway was routed south down Washington Avenue and then turned east on Ivy Avenue. It then traveled south along Jefferson Avenue to Temecula. One reason the highway commission shifted the highway from



The B Street Bridge collapsed during the Flood of 1978

(Source: E. Hale Curran Collection)



View of the Murrieta Creek from the Washington Avenue Bridge during the Flood of 1978. Note the 1939 Bridge Date Stamp.

Source: The Alice Vose Collection

Washington to Jefferson was because of the Washington Avenue Bridge. By avoiding this creek crossing, the commission eliminated future bridge construction and maintenance costs.

The Washington Avenue Bridge spanned the Murrieta Creek and was first constructed of wood. A devastating winter storm hit the region in early 1916. The Temecula town site was flooded and the Washington Avenue Bridge was washed away by the floodwaters. The extensive storm damage throughout the county delayed rebuilding the bridge for about four years.

When county funding became available in 1920, Murrieta residents hoped that the county would construct a cement bridge at the Washington crossing. Unfortunately, the county quickly installed another wood bridge in early 1921. Residents knew that the new bridge would not survive another flood, and began to wonder if county officials would ever recognize the need for a permanent structure.

In 1938, a winter flood swept away the Washington Avenue Bridge. The city of Riverside also suffered devastating losses when floodwaters roared down the Santa Ana River. During this time there were many government programs available because of the Great Depression. Riverside officials planned to go to Sacramento to request emergency funding. Representatives from Temecula and Murrieta scrambled to Riverside and added their

towns' needs to the county's list.

The government approved a special state emergency appropriation for Riverside County. Projects were then organized to begin the rebuilding process. Tucked in that financial packet was \$10,000 allocated for the construction of a cement bridge on Washington Avenue. County Surveyor A. C. Fulmor submitted the bridge plans to the Board of Supervisors who then approved its design on April 17, 1939.

The bridge was 169 feet long, 28 feet wide, with 24 feet of road surface. Three piers were to be installed in the creek bed to support the bridge span. It was realigned from its original position in order to provide a shorter distance across the creek thus reducing the cost. Fifteen contractors placed bids for the bridge construction project. T. C. Prichard, a Riverside contractor, was the lowest bidder at \$8,678.30, and he was awarded the contract.

The bridge was completed by the first week in October, but there was no public access to it because the new approaches to the bridge were not completed. The realignment of Washington Avenue was a separate construction project. Three acres were condemned to create the approach to the bridge. Washington Avenue would be curved north of Brown Street in order to align with the completed bridge. The county road department began work on the realigned approaches at the

end of August and completed the project by the end of October.

The new Washington Avenue Bridge was opened to the public in November 1939. Murrieta residents rejoiced because they knew that the bridge was strong enough to face the seasonal flood waters. The bridge withstood many more floods including the Flood of 1978. However, the B Street Bridge further north was swept away by floodwaters during that time. The Washington Avenue Bridge also survived the Flood of 1993, which flooded the historic districts of Temecula and Murrieta.

Sadly though, the bridge's design helped create flooding upstream. The pylons that were installed in the creek bed to support the bridge collected debris during the floods which created a makeshift dam. Water would then backup at the bridge, causing flooding further north.

In Temecula, the 1945 Main Street Bridge had an identical design to the Washington Avenue Bridge. The Main Street Bridge was replaced by a free-span steel trestle bridge in 2014. The new design removed the pylons from the creek bed, eliminating the potential of collecting debris.

When the new Guava Street Bridge in Murrieta was constructed in 2018, it too

was a free-span bridge with no pylons. The bridge construction project cost \$7.2 million. With the removal of the Washington Avenue Bridge and its pylons, the creek's waters will flow south unobstructed to the Santa Margarita River.

Now that the Washington Avenue Bridge has been removed, the oldest surviving bridge in Murrieta is the B Street Bridge built in 1978. However, this bridge has pylons embedded in the creek and will have to be replaced sometime in the future.

The Historical Society and Murrieta residents mourn the loss of the historic Washington Avenue Bridge. The preservation of life and property supercedes historic preservation. Fortunately, the City of Murrieta was able to preserve the bridge's date stamps which were donated to the Murrieta Museum. A piece of the old bridge will live on in order to preserve the stories it has carried for seventy-nine years.



The bridge stamps were removed and donated to the Murrieta Museum

Photo by author, June 4, 2018

Museum Update

By President Jeffery Harmon

We would like to say thank you to lifetime members Don and Rea Douglas for their donation of two display cases for the museum. Don was kind enough to transport them to the museum for us.

On June 25th, a team of volunteers met at the Historic Tarwater House and received several pieces of furniture donated by Gary Bryant in memory of his mother, Alyeen Gibbo. We received two antique lawyer book cases, a wood book case, a dining room table and six chairs, a two drawer file cabinet, and a desk.

The desk is one of my treasured pieces. Alyeen Gibbo was a founding member of the Citizens for Historic Murrieta (1991-2013). This group was responsible for preserving the

historic ten acres where the Murrieta Train Depot and the Murrieta Grammar School were located. The ten acres have been set aside as the future Pioneer Park thanks to their efforts.

On this desk Alyeen Gibbo fought to preserve Murrieta's historic properties. Whenever the local newspapers needed information or a quote, they would call her. With the desk installed in the Archive Room at the Murrieta Museum, we will continue to honor her legacy by preserving and recording Murrieta's amazing history.

The startup cost for the museum is estimated at \$18,000. This includes archive materials, computer software, and many more items. It is imperative that we continue to raise funds in or-

der to have a successful museum.

On September 12, 2018, we will host a fundraiser dinner and tour at the Historic Murrieta Hot Springs Resort. Please get your tickets early, they are selling fast. If you have a group, consider purchasing a table. Please see the ad, or our website for more details about this exciting evening.

Again, we would like to express our gratitude to all those that have donated funds, or volunteered their time and services. We are confident that we will have this museum open in the near future. We look forward to welcoming all our guests and sharing with them the vibrant history of the Murrieta Valley. Thank you.

\$8,000 Donation Goal



<https://www.gofundme.com/murrietamuseum>

UPCOMING FUNDRAISER

MURRIETA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
INVITES YOU TO:

A DINNER & TOUR AT THE HISTORIC MURRIETA HOT SPRINGS

RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!
TABLES AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE.

DETAILS

Wednesday, September 12, 2018

Starting at 6 PM

Dinner and Tour of the Historic Murrieta Hot Springs
39405 Murrieta Hot Spring Road, Murrieta Ca

Prices:

\$40/PP for Paid Members

\$50/PP for Non Members

\$400 for a Table of 8 (includes name/business on table)

Menu:

House Salad with Ranch Dressing

House Rolls

Grilled Tri Tip (no substitutions)

Baked Potato with Sides

Asparagus with Roasted Grape Tomato

Blueberry Crisp for Dessert

-Limited space-


RSVP by September 1, 2018

Purchase your tickets at:

murrietahistoricalsociety.org/dinnertour/

-or-


Through Check: MVHS P.O. Box 1341 Murrieta Ca 92564



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We would like to thank Tony Trafton and his partner, Stacy Munoz for inviting us to video record Murrieta's historical places and people. To view the videos, visit Murrieta Lifestyles on Facebook



Janice G. Rumsey
photographer
951-551-0332

Weddings • Location Portraiture • Events
janicerumseyphoto.com

We would like to thank Janice Rumsey for volunteering her professional services to photograph Murrieta's historical sites, and the historical society's ongoing activities.

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Next Monthly Board Meeting:

Monday, July 2, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.

Murrieta Museum

41810 Juniper Street

(At Hunt Memorial Park)

All members welcome to attend


THE MURRIETA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS.
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MURRIETA PUBLIC LIBRARY:


THE HISTORY OF HENRY FORD AND THE MODEL A


PRESENTED BY MODEL A ENTHUSIAST AND PAST-PRESIDENT OF THE
TEMECULA VALLEY MODEL A CLUB, RUDY PEREZ.

LEARN ABOUT THE FAMOUS INVENTOR AND BUSINESS MAN AS WELL AS TOURING A FEW
MODEL A'S, ONE OF WHICH USED TO BE PRESIDENT HOOVER'S PRESIDENTIAL CAR.

MONDAY, **July 9, 2018** | STARTING AT **6 PM** | 8 TOWN SQUARE
Murrieta Public Library



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(951) 387-4862 | MURRIETAHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

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