

Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 10.

October 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 Murrieta Grammar School (Source: E Hale Curran Collection)

The Murrieta Grammar School (1920~1956)

By Jeffery Harmon

The second Murrieta Grammar School was constructed in 1920 in order to accommodate the growing student populations. For thirty-six years, Murrieta students attended first through the eighth grade classes at this school. The school auditorium was not only used for school functions and fundraisers, but local clubs and civic organizations also utilized the facilities. The Murrieta Gram-

mar School served both as an educational center and as a community center as the town continued to develop.

The first Murrieta Grammar School was built in 1885 near the intersection of Second Avenue and B Street. In 1900, a second classroom was added to accommodate the growing student population. In December 1913, the Santa Gertrudis School District was



The First Murrieta Grammar School built in 1885.
(Source: E. Hale Curran Collection)

formed out of the southern portion of the Murrieta School District. It was hoped that this new district would lower the student population in the Murrieta School District.

The Santa Gertrudis School District merged with the Pujol School District in July 1914 creating Riverside County's first union school, the Temecula Union School District. Bonds were voted and approved by the residents in order to build a new school building. The Temecula Union School was designed by leading Riverside architect G. Stanley Wilson and constructed in 1915.

In March 1917, Riverside County Superintendent of Schools Raymond Cree visited the Murrieta Grammar School. He found three teachers attempting to teach a large group of students in two classrooms.

Cree explained, "There

are two rooms with three teachers, and were it not for the fact that both rooms are unusually large, the school building would not be able to house the pupils. Miss Lela Vaught is principal, while Ruth Laswell has charge of the intermediate grades with her mother, Mrs. Emma L. Laswell teaching the tots of the primary department." (March 21, 1917, Riverside Independent Enterprise)

Superintendent Cree began making plans to construct a larger grammar school in Murrieta. His plans changed when President Woodrow Wilson declared war on Germany in April 1917. All money and construction materials were diverted to the war effort for the next two years. The overcrowded Murrieta school year ended the third week in May with no one knowing when a new school would be built.

The war did cause a drop

in the Murrieta school population during the 1917 – 1918 school year. Families moved out of the area to join the work forces in war related factories in the larger cities. Residents began to wonder if it was necessary to build a new school building.

In 1919, the new county superintendent Ira Landis worked to get the new school built. On May 17, 1919, Murrieta residents voted by a two-thirds majority to approve a \$14,000 bond issue for the construction of the new grammar school. Riverside architect G. Stanley Wilson designed the new school building which included three classrooms and an auditorium.

Bids for the bonds were opened by the county supervisors on June 18th. The William R. Staats Company in Pasadena purchased the bonds with accrued interest and premium of \$1,026.

School trustees M.W. Thompson, Amos J. Sykes, and Thomas R. Wickerd met with Ira Landis on August 4th to discuss the school's construction project.

L. C. Waldman of Riverside was awarded the contract to build the new school. The original 1885 school house was torn down in August 1919 and the new school was built in its place. The construction project took over six months to complete.

On September 15, 1919, the new school year began and the student classrooms were held in two separate buildings. The

Guild Hall, owned by the Episcopal Church was used for half of the students, and the two-story Harvey building was used for the other students. Miss Edith H. Britton, the school principal, was in charge of the older grades. Mrs. Emma Laswell returned to be in charge of the primary department.

As construction began, material prices started to increase, which threatened to stop the project. Local residents volunteered their time and services in order to lower labor costs. For example, Murrieta resident Charles Hadsall hauled sand from the Murrieta Creek to the job site.

The new Murrieta Grammar School was completed by January 1920.

The building contains three rooms and a handsome auditorium seating 200 persons. There also is a teacher's room, a library, and a kitchen. A feature of the auditorium is the spacious stage.

The design used was of a Spanish type, the building material was reinforced concrete, the walls are of hollow tile, and the roof of rich red tile. (January 26, 1920, RIE)

Though the building was complete, it would be another month before the teachers and students would occupy it. In February, *about twenty men gave a day's work to fix the school grounds and their wives furnished the dinner at the hall.*

A fund has been raised

by the citizens of Murrieta to help pay for the plumbing at the schoolhouse. (February 24, 1920, RIE)

A week before the school dedication, Murrieta citizens worked at the school grounds.

The ladies and some men worked at the school house last Saturday and again Tuesday, leveling the yard, moving the barn and cleaning the windows. (March 12, 1920, RDP)

On March 20, 1920, the new Murrieta Grammar School was dedicated. A supper was served followed by an entertainment program given under the direction of Miss Britton and Mrs. Laswell.

The program consisted of music by the Murrieta orchestra, plays and songs by the school children and instrumental and

vocal solos and quartets. G. Stanley Wilson, the architect, spoke on "Finances"; Ira C. Landis, county superintendent of schools, on "Building of Character"; Joseph F. Daniels, county librarian, is always the comic speaker of the evening, whose mind seemed to be on the splendid supper that followed later. William Collier of Wildomar spoke on "The First School in the Valley." (March 26, 1920, RDP)

Improvements continued to be made after the dedication. New chairs were installed in the auditorium. The Woman's Club held an ice cream social in order to purchase three portable gasoline lamps for the auditorium.

The school year came to a close at the end of May and the students held a year end program in the auditorium. The new



The Murrieta Grammar School in ruins.
(Photo taken January 17, 2018)



Standing on the north side of the school
peering along the school hallway.
(Photo taken on September 16, 2016)



The west side of the school, looking south
towards the auditorium.
(Photo taken on September 16, 2016)

Murrieta Grammar School served the community for thirty-six years. Then in 1956, state officials closed the school due to updated building construction standards. In 1958, a new campus was built on Adams Avenue and the old grammar school was

sold in 1961.

From 1920 through 1956, Murrieta students attended classes at the Murrieta Grammar School. The auditorium served both the school and the community. Sadly a fire gutted the for-

mer school building in October 1984 and today it lies abandoned and in ruins. The future of this historic site is uncertain, but it is hoped that this iconic school building will be restored and preserved so that it may continue to serve the community.

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

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Museum Update

By Annette Jennings, Museum Director

It has been a busy month for the Museum! We have acquired from several sources many items of local historical significance. This includes a large clay Olla from a requested anonymous donor. We are currently in the process of stabilizing this artifact for display at the Museum in a case donated by Don and Rea Douglas, proprietors of the Little House of Treasures. Other donated items include a collection from a local family that had ties with the Guenther's Murrieta Hot Springs Resort. This collection of donated items includes many historical documents and records.

Speaking of the Hot Springs, our fundraising event on September 12th was a big success! The event produced a little over \$1,000 for the museum and we received many positive com-

ments from the participants. A big thanks is due to Cavalry Conference Center for their support and for a fine meal.

Currently we have another Eagle Scout working on two mobile exhibit tables to be used for children's hands on activities. He also may be able to paint the window security bars. I have recently met with another Eagle Scout for a proposed project to build a couple of display cases for our Museum. I am expecting to hear from him soon if he is able to take on this project.

We are currently waiting for a check from Waste Management so we that we can begin construction on our ADA compliant ramp. Through the support of Larry Cottingham and his friends we have received a large portion of the funds to

meet our goal for construction.

This afternoon Connie McConnell and myself will be meeting with a representative from Lowe's to finalize a potential donation of window covers for the Museum. This effort was spearheaded by Connie. Thanks Connie.

Ashley Jennings-Bigay our Virtual Coordinator is currently updating our website. The updates will include reworking the website to show progress and updates on Museum Projects. She will also be adding a page that will include museum policies and new collections.

Again, we would like to express our gratitude to all those that have donated funds, or volunteered their time and services. Thank you.

The logo for GoFundMe, featuring the word "gofundme" in a stylized font with a sun icon above the "e".

Donate Now

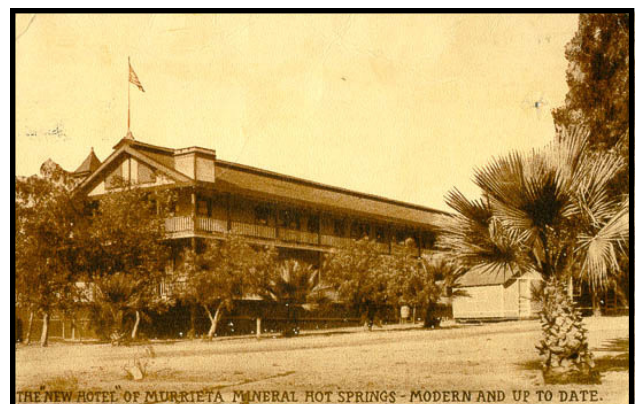
The logo for Little House of Treasures, featuring a decorative floral design above the text "Little House of Treasures" in a script font, with "Antiques, Vintage Goods, Home Decor" in a smaller font below it.

Don & Rea Douglas

24980 Washington Ave.
Murrieta, CA 92562

951-304-1981/cell 951-970-3329
FB:LittleHouseofTreasuresMurrieta

Historic Murrieta Hot Springs Resort Dinner & Tour, September 12, 2018





Let's raise a flag...

and help the
Murrieta Valley Historical Society
open the new Murrieta Museum.

Become a flag sponsor for the annual **Murrieta Rotary Field of Honor**, the mass display of American flags posted in honor of those who render "service above self." And help the MVHS open that long-wished-for community museum.

This year's event runs from **Nov. 10- 17** at Murrieta's Town Square Park adjacent to city hall.

Yellow ribbons attached to the flags bear the names of those honored and carry two lines of dedication info.

At the end of the event, sponsors may claim the flags and ribbons as well as the poles on which they flew and a piece of rebar that holds up the poles.

Sponsorships are \$35 each. When ordering, you may give credit to the Field of Honor Affiliate that solicited your sponsorship, and that group will receive \$10 to support their work.

For more information contact: Al Vollbrecht at
avollbrecht@verizon.net or 951-440-6595

To order online:

Go to **murrietafieldofhonor.com** and click on the flag sponsorship box. You'll have an opportunity to credit your Affiliate as you complete your order.

Or...mail this form with check or give to your Affiliate for handling:

Fill out a paper order here and return to your Affiliate by Nov. 1, 2018. Or mail with your check to Murrieta Rotary Foundation, 25060 Hancock Ave., #103-365, Murrieta, CA 92562.

Name of honoree: _____

Dedication info (35 characters per line): _____

Your name _____ Telephone _____

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Referring Affiliate: **Murrieta Valley Historical Society** _____

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info@murrietahistoricalsociety.org

Next Monthly Board Meeting:

Monday, October 1, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.

Murrieta Museum

41810 Juniper Street

(At Hunt Memorial Park)

All members welcome to attend

THE MURRIETA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS,
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THE VIETNAM WAR

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2018 | 6 PM

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