

Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

December 2016

Volume 1 – Issue 9

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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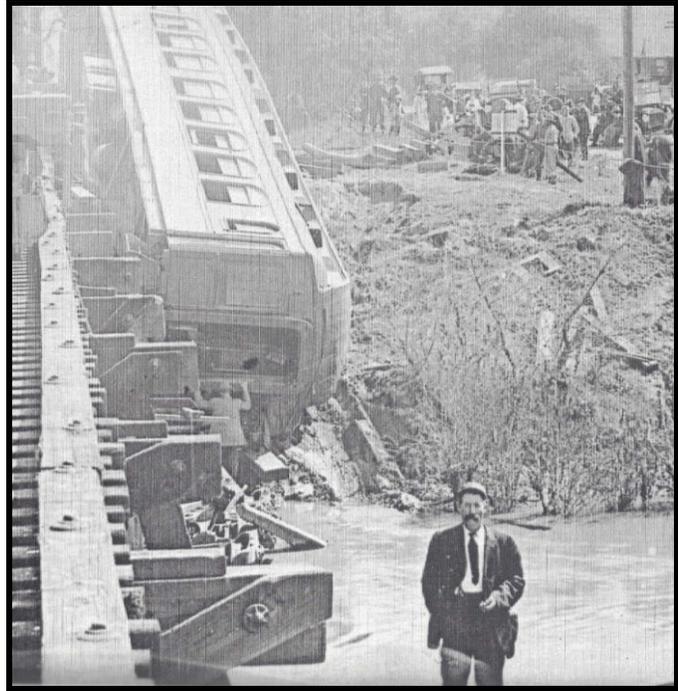
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John H. Burrell poses for a souvenir photo at the scene of the Elsinore train derailment,
Source: Ancestry.com

The 1915 Elsinore Train Derailment

By Jeffery Harmon

The Friday noon skies were clear as the southbound Santa Fe train rolled out of the western end of Railroad Canyon towards Elsinore on March 5, 1915. The winter storm had passed and the train's passengers could feel that spring was coming soon. Several people were traveling to the Murrieta Hot Springs Resort for a time of rest and rejuvenation. Conductor William H. Haynes, who had worked for the Santa Fe for twenty-five years, gazed at his pocket watch and realized the train would arrive at 12:02 p.m. at Elsinore Station. No one on board knew that their lives were in danger.

The train left the main line at Elsinore Junction and connected with the Elsinore branch that traveled northwest to Elsinore station. Elsinore Junction was near the southern bank of the San Jacinto River near the modern day location of the McDonalds restaurant at the intersection of Mission Trail and Diamond Drive. The train was pulling a heavy boxcar followed by a passenger coach. As the locomotive and the boxcar rolled over the connecting track, it is believed that the track's joints separated less than an inch, enough to derail the passenger car.

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Calendar **Of Events**

Next Monthly Meeting

Carl Love, author of the book, "From Two Lanes to the Fast Lane", will be speaking about changes in the Temecula Valley over the past twenty-five years.

On
Monday, January 9th
at 6:00 p.m. at the
Historic Hunt House
41810 Juniper St.
In
Hunt Memorial Park

Daily Greeting

Step into the sunshine, friend,
On this cool December morn,
When the King of Day was
born.

Step into the sunshine, friend,
From the place of the forlorn.
There's hope and courage, I
contend,
In the face of a new-born morn.

Step into the sunshine, friend,
Of this Merry Christmas morn,
For joy came in that shall never
end,
When the King of Light was
born.
Mary E. Kiefer, Murrieta, CA
December 24, 1915
Riverside Daily Press

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Conductor Haynes may have felt the unfamiliar vibrations under his feet. He had traveled hundreds of miles on the tracks and knew every rhythm and rocking sensation. The passenger coach rode the top of the rail, and then fell on the other side, riding the railroad ties. Alerted by the quick jolt and the drumming vibration, Haynes looked out the window for answers. As the train was approaching the San Jacinto River Bridge, the passenger coach left the track.

He immediately pulled the bell cord, alerting Engineer Guy Fish. As the brake was pulled, the engineer leaned out and looked back in time to see the passenger coach climb the low guard rail of the wooden trestle bridge. The weight of the passenger car caused the car to tip over the guard rail, detaching it from the train and plummeting to the creek below.

Chaos ensued as the passenger car tipped over to one side and fell, stopping ten inches from the water, wedged between both sides of the riverbank. Windows shattered, men, women, and children screamed. Mr. Edward B. Branick, a sixty-seven year old Los Angeles man, was crushed and died instantly. Brakeman Ralph Vader leaped from the engine and ran into town calling for the residents to help rescue the passengers.

Merchants quickly closed their stores and rushed to the scene. The two resident doctors were summoned. The local hotels became makeshift hospitals. Mrs. M. A. Gardner, of the Lake View Inn, took in five of the injured. O. M. Amsbury, of the Bundy Hotel, took in six people, and the remaining passengers were taken to the Hotel Elsinore. On Saturday, the Santa Fe Company sent railroad physicians, Chief Surgeon Dr. N. A. Morrison of Los Angeles, and Dr. Bailey of San Bernardino on a relief train to Elsinore. Accident victims that were able to be moved, including Conductor Haynes, were transported to the company hospital in Los Angeles. A few victims, including Mrs. W. E. Miller of Highmore, South Dakota, were too injured to move and remained in Elsinore. As word of the accident spread, spectators descended on the overturned train and some took souvenir photos.

Mr. Branick's two brothers traveled to Elsinore to identify his body and make funeral arrangements. Mr. Branick owned a theater in Los Angeles and was not married. He was laid to rest in the Elsinore Cemetery in an unmarked grave.

A few days after the accident, passenger Samuel Rossa filed a \$50,000 lawsuit against the Santa Fe Company. The result of the lawsuit is unknown, but it is believed the company paid the victims out of court. A week later, T. H. Rhoads and Halil Festigh, who had suffered minor injuries, settled with the company; one received \$50 and the other \$175. Rhoads and Festigh then decided to return to their travels and soon they arrived safely at the Murrieta Hot Springs Resort.

The Santa Fe Company sent a maintenance team that worked all weekend dragging the passenger car out of the riverbed. The steel frame held together, and after a few repairs in San Bernardino, the car would be placed back in service. Investigators walked the area and located where the passenger car left the track. They believed that the

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MEMBERSHIP

Individual

Annual \$25.00
Lifetime \$150.00

Family

Annual \$35.00
Lifetime \$250.00

Senior/Student

Annual \$15.00

Business

Annual \$200.00

Sponsorship

Annual \$300.00

Membership dues are
for one year and will be
up for renewal the
month you joined

Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact: _____

Membership: \$ _____

Checks payable to:
Murrieta Valley
Historical Society
Mail to: P.O. Box 1341
Murrieta, CA 92564

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combination of a worn track, and soil softened by the winter rains, led to the track defect. Repairs were quickly made on the damaged trestle bridge and the track was replaced with the ground packed underneath. Within a short time, regular train service resumed on the Elsinore branch.

After convalescing for several months, Conductor William Haynes returned to Temecula in June 1915. Haynes returned to work, riding the rails between Temecula, Murrieta, Elsinore and San Bernardino. Six years after the accident, on June 1, 1921, Haynes retired and lived out the remainder of his life in Temecula. He died in June 1925 and was buried in the local cemetery.

Fortunately for the railroad company, there were no further accidents along the line. In the 1920s, the railroad extended the Elsinore branch from Alberhill to Corona. The Railroad Canyon route was then abandoned due to flooding. In 1935, the railroad south of Elsinore Junction was discontinued and the San Jacinto River Bridge became obsolete. Today there is no evidence or memorial of that fateful day in 1915. It is an event that should be remembered, for it was a moment when the community came together to help those in need in a time of tragedy.

100 years ago

Attacked by a wounded buck, menaced by mountain lions, endangered by rattlesnakes and near death by thirst while lost are features of a story of a night and day spent by William A. Stafford of Tustin in the wilds of the Santa Rosa Mountains near Murrieta.

Stafford was hunting with A. V. Wilson and Earl Horton of Murrieta when they stirred up a big buck. The men became separated. Stafford did not return to camp that night and it was nearly dark the next day before he staggered into William Christlow's ranch, his tongue swollen from thirst, his clothing in tatters and with a tale of adventure.

"I followed the buck," he said, "and wounded him in some brush. In his efforts to get away, he ran at me, knocked me down and trampled on me. I crawled into a place between two rocks where he could not reach me. The buck was wounded, and died within 20 feet of where I was. By that time it was almost dark, and I did not know the way back to camp, so I decided to stay all night.

"About 3 o'clock I heard mountain lions tearing at the carcass of the buck. I was going to shoot, but I found that I was out of ammunition. With the mountain lions so close to me, I made no move until a rattlesnake crawled into the place. I decided to leave. I stumbled, and rolled down the side of the mountain for some distance. When morning came I decided to try to reach San Mateo canyon. By 10 o'clock I was crazed with thirst. I crawled and tumbled down a rough canyon and finally came out at the Christlow ranch." (October 2, 1916, Riverside Daily Press)

New Members

John & Elise Malkowski
Theresa Whitaker
Bill & Julie Zimmerman
Cheryl Mowles
Natalie Rudolph
Luciano and Terry Bracci



MURRIETA HISTORY MUSEUM

It is the desire of the Society to establish a museum in Murrieta's Historic Downtown in order to preserve and present the rich and diverse history of our city.

The Society is in need of a building space donation for our non-profit group.

Please contact us if you have suggestions or contributions.

President's Message

Jeffery Harmon

As I write this, Thanksgiving Day is just a day away. It is a time to stop and give thanks for all the many blessings in our lives. This has been an incredible year with the founding of the Murrieta Valley Historical Society.

I want to say thank you to Pat and Annette Jennings, Ashley Bigay, Jenny Mayoral, Carol Sierra, Connie McConnell, and Al Volbrecht for all their efforts in creating a firm foundation and spending countless hours navigating all the paperwork and decisions that go into the formation of a historical society.

I want to say thank you to the Historic Downtown Murrieta Association (HDMA) for passing the baton to us. We hope to continue your vision for the preservation and promotion of the area.

I want to say thank you to Darell and Rebecca Farnbach and the Temecula Valley Historical Society for their guidance and assisting us in receiving a grant that will enable us to purchase equipment and other resources necessary to fulfill our mission statement.

I want to say thank you to our City Council and City staff for meeting with us and creating strong working relationships and communications so that we can work together to celebrate our area's heritage.

I want to say thank you to Laura Davis and the library staff for their efforts and support in preserving Murrieta's history.

Finally, I want to thank each and every one of you who have become members of our historical society. With your support, we are able to continue preserving and sharing our history for years to come.

As we look forward to the Christmas Season, please consider a gift membership for a friend or family member. A membership will be a present that will be enjoyed throughout the coming year.

As the New Year comes upon us, we look forward to the plans we have made. The Society hopes to participate in many City events in 2017 and we are in need of many volunteers to help in planning and participating. If you are willing to assist us for an hour or more, please let us know. The more we are seen and heard, the more opportunities we have to increase our membership and to continue fulfilling our mission.

My hope for 2017 is that the Society can open a museum where students, residents and tourist can come and learn about Murrieta's amazing history!

As always, thank you for supporting the Murrieta Valley Historical Society. On behalf of the Board, we wish you a Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy and Safe New Year. Thank you!