

Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

July 2016

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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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100 Years Ago: Big Robbery at Murrieta; Conductor Arrested

By Jeffery Harmon

On Saturday, July 8, 1916, conductor C. A. Wheeler stepped into the Murrieta train station to register his freight. Earlier a courier for the Murrieta Hot Springs Hotel had delivered to the station the weekly cash deposit bag bound for a Los Angeles bank. Station Agent Oliver Miller stepped out of the room to check the freight. His daughter, Silvia Miller, stepped into the next room briefly to attend the mail, leaving the bag worth \$1400 unattended. Wheeler stared for a moment at almost a year's wages. Temptation overcame him and he snatched the bag. He returned to the caboose as the train rolled down to Temecula to pick up more freight.

He first tore the identification tag off the canvas bag and threw it out on the side of the track. Then while the train was in Temecula, he took the bag and stuffed it in the journal box, an axle box near a boxcar's wheels. The train then headed north to Perris, bound for San Bernardino. Allegedly while in Perris, Wheeler took the loot and transferred it to an Alberhill clay car bound for Corona.

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Calendar Of Events

Monthly Meetings

Monday, July 11th
at 6:00 p.m.

Local Events

Murrieta Public Library
Community Room
Tuesday, August 30
6:00 p.m.
Audrey Cilurzo
Speaker Presentation:

Owner of the first commercial vineyard in Temecula and co-author of *Temecula Wine Country*, Mrs. Cilurzo will talk about what it was like when she and her husband, Vincenzo, first moved to the area in 1967, the changes since, and life as a pioneer of the Temecula Wine Country.

Tidbit:

**1916 Eighth Grade
Murrieta Graduates**
Raymond L. North and
Chester James Small
(July 1, 1916, RIE)

Meanwhile, Oliver Miller returned to the counter and discovered the cash deposit was stolen. Through process of elimination, he quickly assumed that the conductor had committed the robbery. He contacted Riverside Agent, J. W. Allinder, who then notified the authorities. Riverside County Sheriff Frank P. Wilson, Fred Johnson and Theodore Crossley drove to Murrieta to investigate the crime. After sorting through the facts, Wilson called authorities and had Wheeler arrested at his final destination in San Bernardino. The conductor was brought into the county jail for questioning.

At first Wheeler denied any involvement in the theft. However, he did confess his crime to his defense attorney, Dickson. Dickson went to Corona, found where the clay had been dumped and began searching for the evidence. Unfortunately, he was unable to find it and informed Wheeler. If the money was found, Wheeler may have believed he would be released. However, without the bag, his next choice was cooperation in exchange for clemency.

Wheeler confessed his crime to the authorities and soon a “treasure hunt” began. Many man hours were spent overturning the clay pile in hopes of recovering the stolen cash, but in the end, nothing was found. Wheeler insisted that was where he placed the money. Authorities began to speculate that the bag fell off the train and was laying in some weeds along the railroad tracks. After the newspapers reported the theory, the public may have joined the search in hopes of fame and fortune.

On August 5, 1916, in the superior court, Wheeler’s attorney informed Judge Hugh Craig that the defense had raised \$1400 to replace the stolen money. He asked for clemency for the defendant and to place him on probation. However, on August 25th, the judge sentenced Wheeler to serve five years in San Quentin for grand larceny. That night, Wheeler took another train ride north escorted by county lawmen. With the case closed, the hunt for the missing loot subsided.

A few weeks later, workmen began to cultivate Dr. F. Cline’s newly fertilized orange grove in Covina. As they were plowing the field, several hundred dollars of gold and silver coins suddenly appeared. Authorities were immediately notified, and an investigation was conducted. Officials concluded that it was possible Wheeler had lied during his confession and had actually placed the stolen loot in a fertilizer car bound for Covina. The fertilizer was then dumped at Dr. Cline’s orange grove.

Authorities wondered if Wheeler had sent them on a wild goose chase in hopes of leniency. Once freed, he would have been able to find the loot and disappear. One fact is for certain, Wheeler knew the difference between clay and fertilizer. In the end, his confession to his crime may have been nothing but “a pile of manure”.

100 Years Ago

July Fourth was a great day with sports and a larger crowd than was ever gathered in this part of the country. There was speaking in the morning by Attorney Thompson of Riverside, Mr. Collier of Wildomar, and Mr. Kiefer of Murrieta. In the afternoon there were all sorts of races with first and second prizes.

Murrieta won from Wildomar in the baseball game by one run. It was a well-played game.

Louis Carrillo, who was hurt at the close of the horse race, was a man past 60 years. He was so anxious to see if it was his son who would be on the winning horse, that he was hit in the head by one of the running horses. Mr. Carrillo was buried at Pala. He had lived here many years.

July 11, 1916 RIE

Coroner Dickson returned this noon from Murrieta where he was called to investigate the case of Louis Carrillo who was killed when he walked out on the track in front of one of the horses in the races at Murrieta yesterday afternoon. Carrillo was knocked down and run over. Concussion of the brain brought sudden death. He died at 5 o'clock yesterday afternoon. Carrillo was a native of California and of Spanish parentage. July 5, 1916 RIE

L. Carrillo, the aged Mexican who was killed by a race horse here on the Fourth, was buried on the sixth at Pala by the side of the grave of his father and grandfather.

July 15, 1916, RDP



**Time Capsule
Unearthing Ceremony**
Celebrating 25 Years of Cityhood

Tuesday, July 12th @ 9:30 AM
Murrieta Fire Station #1 | 41825 Juniper St

Past city council members and civic leaders have been invited to join the community celebration. Light refreshments will be provided. Items discovered in the time capsule will be on display in the Heritage Room at the Murrieta Public Library.

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From the Murrieta Archives:

By Olive Miller

July 8, 1921

A wedding of much interest was solemnized on Tuesday, July 5th, at high noon, when Miss June Thompson and Mr. George James Andrews of Fillmore, were united in marriage at the home of the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. M.W. Thompson, at Murrieta. The impressive ring service was read by the Rev. George Cocking, of the Methodist Episcopal church of Murrieta. Only relatives of the young couple witnessed the ceremony. The charming young bride was beautifully gowned in white satin. She carried a bouquet of white carnations and was unattended.

Her going away gown was a navy blue chiffon velvet tailleur with accessories to match.

Following the ceremony a wedding breakfast was served, immediately after which the bridal pair left for San Diego and Coronado, where they will spend their honeymoon.

The bride, who is the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. M.W. Thompson, is a native daughter of Murrieta, her parents and grandparents having resided there for the past thirty-five years, where they own large and valuable ranch properties.

The bridegroom, who is well and favorably known, is employed by the Seapee Light and Power Company which furnishes juice to the city of Los Angeles.

Mr. and Mrs. Andrews will be at home to their friends in Fillmore, after July 10th.

The best wishes of a large circle of friends from all over this section are being extended to the young couple.

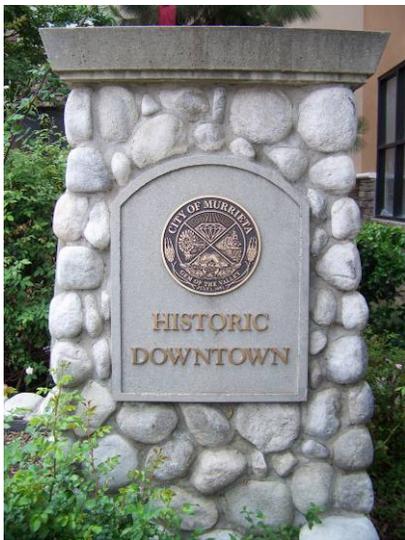
Monthly Meeting Location

The Society is in need of a monthly meeting location that can hold up to fifty people.

The Society has limited funds to pay for a location.

If you have an available monthly meeting space, please contact us as soon as possible.

Thank you.



President's Message

Jeffery Harmon

June was a busy month for the historical society. On June 6, Pat and Annette Jennings gave a presentation at the library titled: *A Pictorial History of Murrieta: Then and Now*. I learned about the Yoder winery that was located where Sam's Club shopping center is today. The event was well attended and received.

The Society was invited to host a booth at the library's Summer Reading Program kickoff party. Pat Jennings shared stories with many children who came to the booth and asked questions.

The Society was also invited by the City to Murrieta's 25th Birthday Bash. Pat Jennings and other members tended the booth. The one exhibit that stopped many people was the toys that students were allowed to bring to school. This provided an opportunity to introduce ourselves and to share Murrieta's history.

Board members also attended several community meetings. They joined a hundred people at the Senior Center to participate in the Downtown Murrieta Area Plan Workshop #1. Here residents were given an opportunity to voice their suggestions and concerns about the future of Murrieta's historic district. I also attended the Murrieta Arts Council forum. This is a newly organized group that wants to bring art and culture to Murrieta. Many wonderful suggestions and concerns were raised during the evening.

In other news, our non-profit status was approved. We opened a bank account and are now ready to accept donations and membership dues.

July will be an exciting month for the Society as we host our first community event, *The Unearthing of the 25-year old Time Capsule*. As we launch our membership drive, we hope that you will become members and join us as we preserve, educate, and promote Murrieta's rich and diverse history. As always, please send us your stories so we can share them in our next newsletters. Thank you.