



Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 8.

August 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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A publication of the
Murrieta Valley Historical Society

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Riverside County Court House (Source: eBay postcard)

Southard vs. Thomas Case 1925

By Jeffery Harmon

On September 21, 1925, at 8:30 p.m., Roy Southard began arguing with his passenger, Roy Thomas, while driving on the cement highway between Murrieta and Elsinore. A fight broke out in the car and at some point, Roy Thomas was knocked unconscious. He was admitted to the Riverside Community hospital with a fractured skull. Roy Southard was arrested and placed in the Riverside county jail. Then authorities waited for Roy Thomas to awake in order to formally charge Roy Southard. After a week laying in a coma, Roy Thomas succumbed to his injuries and died on Septem-

ber 28th. Roy Southard was immediately charged with murder.

Roy Walter Southard was born January 29, 1890 in Kirwin, Kansas. He was the son of Walter and Mary (McFadden) Southard. Walter Southard purchased land at the southwest corner of Ivy Street and Adams Avenue in 1893. The Southard family moved from Redlands, California to Murrieta in 1895. Walter and Mary had five children: Ella, Pearl, Edith, Maude, and Roy. Walter Southard was a farmer, but he also had a lifetime license as a local pastor for the Methodist Episcopal Church. He

often conducted church services in Murrieta and Wildomar when the assigned pastor was unable to attend.

Roy Southard completed the eighth grade at the Murrieta Grammar School in 1906. During World War I, Roy was drafted and sent to Camp Lewis, Washington on July 22, 1918. He was still in military training when the war ended in November. He was discharged in January 1919.

After he returned home, he found work hauling ore from the silica mine northeast of town for a short time. By the summer he formed a partnership with Urban Tarwater, son of local merchant, Benjamin Tarwater. Roy and Urban grew alfalfa, and bought a thresher to extract the seeds. They sold and shipped the alfalfa seeds by truck to the Germain Seed Co. in Los Angeles.

Tarwater and Southard expanded their land holdings and began water developments. In the summer of 1921, they hired Willis Maydole to construct a large reservoir east of town near a big spring. The reservoir may have been used in flood irrigation for their alfalfa fields.

In the 1920s, there were oil prospectors leasing land in Murrieta. Roy and Urban went to Los Angeles to see about investing in a well boring outfit to search for oil on their land. The cost may have been too high, because there is no mention of them oil prospecting. However they did mine clay,

silica and feldspar and shipped it by train.

Urban Tarwater sold his interests in the Tarwater store to his father and brother, Earl in August 1924. He had been in real estate and mining, but decided to focus on his ranch. A year later, his business partner, Roy Southard, was in the county jail for the murder of Roy Thomas.

Roy Charles Thomas was born May 1, 1884 in California. He was the son of Moyd and Christina (Hutz) Thomas. Roy and his brother, Moyd Thomas, Jr. settled in the Winchester area. On September 12, 1918, Roy Thomas registered for the draft. On his application he stated he was operating a farm in the Auld Valley. He was married to Jane Joy, but they had no children. In March 1925, Roy Thomas was convicted of the illegal manufacturing and transporting of liquor.

Roy Thomas, who was listed as a special deputy sheriff, was running a bootlegging operation, providing liquor to clients in Los Angeles. He was arrested at five in the morning on the Mission Road/Inland Highway near Wineville. His car was loaded with "bonded" whiskey. He was using the alias, Ralph W. Tucker of San Bernardino. When the officer approached, Roy abandoned his alias and confessed who he was. He stated that he was transporting illegal liquor in order to pay off debts on his land.

At the arraignment, Roy Thomas pleaded guilty to his

crime. He paid a \$500 fine and was sentenced to six months in the county jail. After serving his time, he returned to his ranch in Murrieta. Shortly afterwards, he was given a ride in Roy Southard's car, but what happened next is based solely on Southard's testimony.

"So far as can be learned, the two men engaged in a battle in the Southard car at a point not far from Murrieta. After fighting at close quarters, it is thought Southard forced Thomas out of the car. Whether (Thomas) was afterwards struck by the Southard car so that he suffered the basal fracture of his skull remains to be discovered by investigation now being conducted." (September 22, 1925, Riverside Daily Press)

Roy Southard transported the unconscious man to the Thomas ranch and informed Mrs. Thomas that her husband had been hurt. Dr. A. Brimhall of Elsinore was summoned and he attended to Thomas' wounds. Roy Thomas was then transported to the Riverside Community hospital for further treatment. He remained in a coma for a week and then died. He was interred in the Evergreen Memorial Park and Mausoleum in Riverside.

According to the coroner's report, Roy Thomas' death was caused by a blow over the left eye which caused a cerebral hemorrhage. There was also a bruise on the abdomen and various other marks on his body.

Roy Southard was ar-

raigned before Justice Leonard J. Difani on October 2nd. The preliminary hearing was set for Friday morning, October 7th. The next day Southard was bound over to the superior court on the reduced charge of manslaughter. With his charges reduced, Southard was able to post bond of either \$5,000 cash or a \$10,000 property bond. He was scheduled to be arraigned in superior court on October 17th. However, Judge W. H. Ellis re-scheduled the proceedings to October 24th.

At the arraignment, Roy Southard pleaded not guilty to the charge of manslaughter. His jury trial was set for November 7th at which time 50 names would be drawn in order to assemble a juror panel. On that day though, Judge Benjamin F. Warmer of San Bernardino took the bench during Judge Ellis' absence and the juror selection was postponed until November 16th.

Finally, the jury trial was scheduled to take place on April 20, 1926. Roy Southard was out of jail on a \$5,000 bond waiting for his day in court. His father began selling plots of land to cover the growing legal costs of the trial. Then on January 12, 1926, Walter Southard died at the Riverside hospital without

learning the final verdict for his son. It is possible that the stress of the trial may have been too much for him, and his health suffered.

In April, Judge George R. Freeman, on a recommendation from District Attorney Albert Ford, released Roy Southard of all charges. The victim, whose testimony could have convicted Southard, had died without a confession. There were no other witnesses to the altercation. The final ruling was that Thomas' death was caused by his own carelessness.

Afterwards Mary Southard, Roy's mother, subdivided a strip a land that they owned along Ivy Street between Plum and Washington avenues. It is possible that she sold these lots in order to pay off her son's legal fees, or to pay off her husband's funeral expenses. In July, Roy Southard donated new doors to the Murrieta Methodist Episcopal Church in memory of his father, Rev. Walter J. Southard.

Almost ten months after her husband's death, Mrs. Jane Thomas died on July 31, 1926 in Prescott, Arizona. Her death was caused by an infection she received after she had some dental work. She was interred in the

mausoleum at Mountain View Cemetery in San Bernardino. Her mother, Mrs. Ella Joy, filed to be executor of her estate, which was valued at \$10,000. Next, Mrs. Ella Joy sued Southard for \$25,000 for negligent operation of a motor car that caused the death of Roy Thomas. The results of this case are unknown.

After the trial Roy Southard continued to farm and to work in real estate in Murrieta. On December 31, 1951, he married Mrs. Edna (Ayles) Hale. He died on July 27, 1964 at his home and was laid to rest in the Elsinore Valley Cemetery.

There were those in Elsinore and Murrieta who believed they knew what Southard and Thomas were arguing about, but no one came forward. What transpired on the night of September 21, 1925 may never be known. Roy Thomas may have been physically struck by Southard or he may have been hit by Southard's car. Evidence suggests that Roy Southard's actions led to Thomas' unintentional death. For the courts to declare that Thomas's death was caused by his own carelessness is a terrible injustice, but without a witness' confession, the case was closed and the story faded away in time.



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Museum Update

By President Jeffery Harmon

On July 5th, Robert Vose cleaned the museum's carpet. On November 12, 2018 at 6 p.m. at the Murrieta Public Library he will be sharing his military experiences while he was serving in Vietnam.

We would like to thank Larry Cottingham and his associates, Rick and Paul, for volunteering their time, and donating materials in order to repair the back porch of the museum. They also replaced damaged boards along the foundation. We appreciate their support and services to the community.

Scout Brendan Brady and his parents met with Pat and Annette Jennings and I on July 29th, to discuss a proposed Eagle Scout project for the museum. The project may include repainting the bars on the windows, and creating two mobile exhibit tables to be used for hands on outdoors activities. We appreciate Brendan's enthusiasm to contribute to the community and to help with the museum. We look forward to Brendan completing his Eagle Scout project.

We still need to raise money for the new access ramp. In September we will be hosting

a fundraiser dinner at the Historic Murrieta Hot Springs Resort. We hope you will join us for a memorable evening complete with a tour of the historic grounds.

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.



The wood on the museum's back porch was water damaged and deteriorating. The volunteers removed the wood and replaced it with a synthetic material that looks like wood, but is durable and will last for many years to come. They not only volunteered their time in making the repairs, but they also purchased and donated the materials. Thank you.

Photo Above: Before the work began. Photo to the Left: Installing the new porch deck.



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

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



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Next Monthly Board Meeting:

Monday, August 6, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.

Murrieta Museum

41810 Juniper Street

(At Hunt Memorial Park)

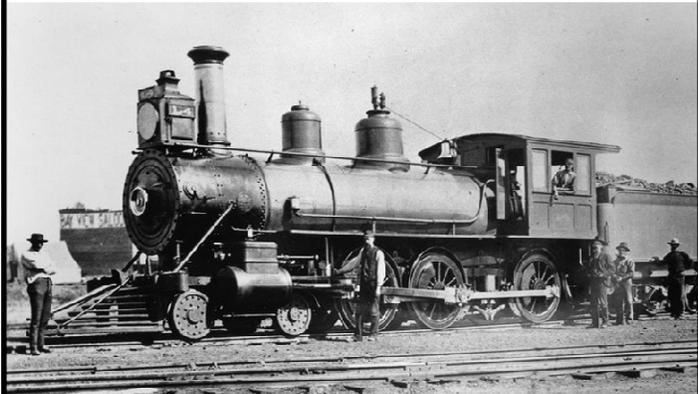
All members welcome to attend

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

MURRIETA'S RAILROAD

HISTORIAN AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NATIVE, PAUL J. PRICE, WILL SPEAK
ON MURRIETA'S RAILROAD HISTORY FROM CONSTRUCTION TO DESTRUCTION.

Monday, September 10, 2018 | 6 PM
Murrieta Public Library, 8 Town Square



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