



Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 8, Issue 1

January 2023

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.

2022 Officers

President Jeffery G. Harmon
Vice President Annette Jennings
Secretary Carol Sierra
Treasurer Pamela Malnar

Directors

Connie McConnell, Pat Jennings,
Ashley Jennings Bigay

Committee Chairs

Museum Director
Annette Jennings
Research & Preservation
Jeffery Harmon
Public Relations
Connie McConnell
Membership
Pamela Malnar
Program Speakers
Annette Jennings, Jeffery Harmon
Virtual Assistant
Ashley Jennings Bigay
Events/Education
Pat Jennings
Newsletter Editor
Jeffery G. Harmon

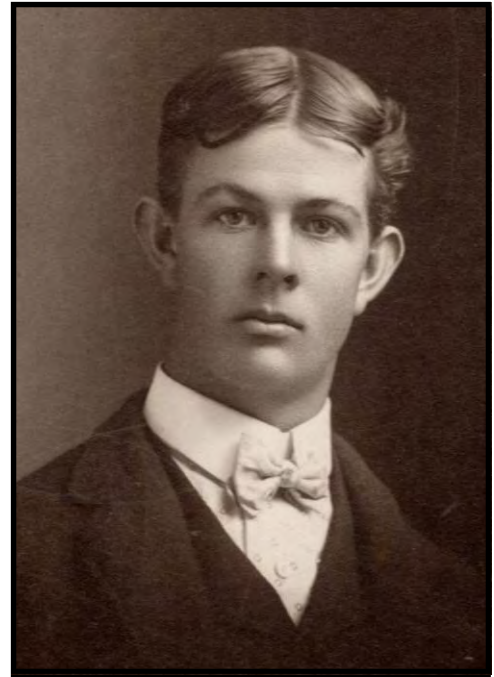
A publication of the
Murrieta Valley Historical Society
Email:
info@murrietahistoricalsociety.org

Amos J. Sykes By Jeffery G. Harmon

Sykes Park is located on Hayes Avenue across the street from Thompson Middle School. The park is a small remnant of the Sykes Ranch where Amos and Dovie Sykes raised their children. On the ranch Amos Sykes planted crops and established a small dairy farm. The Sykes family also served the community and the ranch became a place for people to gather for social gatherings, picnics, recreation and Easter celebrations. Sykes Park was established to remember the lasting legacy of the Sykes family.

Amos Joseph Sykes was born November 2, 1879 in Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas. He was the son of Henry and Sarah (Kelly) Sykes. When he was about four years old, the Sykes family moved to California. By 1885, his father purchased a 154- acres along Hayes Avenue, north of Tenaja Road and established the Sykes Ranch.

Amos grew up on the ranch. In 1893, his father purchased the Fountain House Hotel. While most of the Sykes family worked at the hotel, Amos continued to work on the ranch. At 16, he carried the mail on horseback from the Murrieta post office to



Source: The Sykes Family

the post office at the Coleman Ranch near Fallbrook. In 1904, Amos purchased his father's ranch for \$1,500. He then built a home and a water tank on the ranch. He soon began courting Dovie Miller.

Dovie Myrtle Miller was born on February 1, 1888 in Murrieta, California. She was the daughter of William and Olive (Tower) Miller. Amos and Dovie married on March 15, 1906 at the Murrieta Methodist Church. To this union, four children were born, Howard (1906), Joyce (1909), Mary (1910) and Sylvia (1913). The Sykes children grew up and worked on the farm and attended the Murrieta Grammar School.



The Sykes Ranch reservoir, tank house, and farm house. The reservoir was built around 1924. It was 109 feet by 54 feet and 6 feet deep. Source: The Sykes Family Collection

Amos Sykes raised oats, alfalfa hay, and seventeen varieties of grapes. He also made many improvements on the ranch. He planted a grove of eucalyptus trees along the Murrieta Creek in 1908. He then began investing in cows in 1914. A year later he built a cow barn under the shade of the eucalyptus trees. The barn had a capacity of fifteen cows and twenty tons of loose hay. His dairy operation provided fresh milk and cream to the Murrieta residents.

In 1921, Amos built a large tool and machine shop on the ranch. Around 1924, Amos Sykes and his children dug a large reservoir next to the farmhouse. A tank house was built and a windmill pumped water into the reservoir. Amos had planted alfalfa on his land. When the reservoir would fill

with water, he would open up the reservoir gate, and flood the alfalfa field, providing ample water for the crops.

The reservoir quickly became a swimming hole for the Sykes family and all the children of Murrieta. On hot summer afternoons, children would gather around the reservoir and dive in to escape the heat. The Sykes family often hosted swim parties and weenie roasts for the young people.

In the 1930s, Amos Sykes bought a large barn in Perris. The barn was disassembled and transported to the Sykes Ranch. The barn was reassembled and built next to the eucalyptus grove. According to the family, it was the largest barn in the Murrieta Valley at this time. A large circular cement water trough was placed in front of the

barn, to provide water for the livestock.

On a hill overlooking the Sykes Ranch, Amos Sykes erected a large wooden cross. This became a gathering place for the annual Easter Sunrise Service for the Murrieta Methodist Church.

Amos was civic minded and participated in several community organizations. He served as a trustee of the Murrieta Grammar School for eight years. During his tenure, the school board lobbied for a new school building to be built. The new Murrieta Grammar School was completed and opened in 1920.

He was a committee member when the first Boy Scout Troop was formed in Murrieta in November 1921. His two sons, Howard and Joyce

were scouts. In 1938, he was appointed a trustee of the Murrieta Cemetery District. He was also an active member in the Murrieta Farmers Bureau and the local Grange. The Sykes family was lifelong members of the Murrieta Methodist Church. They hosted the church choir practices at their home.

Amos had also purchased about 160 acres from Eli E. Barnett. The land extended from Cherry Street on the north to the Santa Gertrudis Creek to the south. It was to the east of Murrieta Creek and stretched to the modern day freeway. This was known as the Sykes Lower Ranch. Amos raised potatoes and oats on this land. He had a hay barn located at Jefferson Avenue near the Santa Gertrudis Creek.

Amos Sykes died on November 14, 1954. He was laid

to rest in the Laurel Cemetery, in Murrieta. Dovie Sykes continued to live at the Sykes Ranch. However, she sold the Lower Ranch, reducing the farming operations. Her son, Howard, and his children continued to run the daily operations at the Sykes ranch. Dovie died on October 16, 1961 and was laid to rest beside her husband.

Following his mother's death, Howard Sykes sold the Sykes Ranch. As the years passed, the ranch had several owners before it was finally sold to a developer. The ranch buildings fell into disrepair and the reservoir was eventually filled in with dirt and buried.

The abandoned Sykes farmhouse was vandalized beyond repair and torn down on August 15, 2005. All that remained was the foundation. The large windmill came crashing

down, and the tank house was torn down. The cement base was left alone, resembling a bombed out military bunker. Two young neighborhood boys tied a tire swing to the large beam pole of the Sykes barn. The pole snapped and the roof collapsed. The boys escaped unharmed, but the barn was torn down. The large circular cement trough still marks the barn's location.

Most of the Sykes Ranch is now covered with rows of tract homes. Sykes Park is all the remains of the former ranch. Visitors to the park see the remnants of the ranch, and wonder about the property's history. A future project is planned to install plaques at the park in order to share the Sykes family history. Through preservation efforts the legacy of the Sykes family will be shared with future generations to come.



Amos Sykes stands in front of the Sykes Ranch barn. The eucalyptus grove is behind the barn. Source: The Sykes Family Collection



In Memory of
Marvin D. Curran
1928 ~ 2022

Retired Murrieta Fire Chief Marvin Duane Curran, 93, passed away November 20th, 2022 in Murrieta California.

He was born in Los Angeles, CA on December 15th, 1928.

Marvin was a life long resident of Murrieta, US Army Veteran, dedicated public servant and a founding member of the Murrieta Fire Dept. He enjoyed traveling, watching Nascar and telling stories about the good old days.

Marvin was married to Alta Latimer Curran for 34 years. She passed away November 13th, 2022.

He is survived by 3 children and their spouses and families. (Hale) & Andrew Pencil, (Kelly) & Graham Webster, (Richard) & Lori Curran and a stepson Paul Latimer.

In lieu of flowers donations can be made to the Murrieta Valley Historical Society.



In Memory of Jack R. Samaniego
1938 ~ 2022
Eulogy excerpt by Patricia

Jack Samaniego was born in Saticoy, California, but spent his formative years in Murrieta. He, his older sister, Ramona, and younger brother, Leo, were raised by a loving mother and father, Lola and Patrick, on a small farm where at an early age he learned the value of hard work, how to cultivate the land, and care for animals. As a kid, he often rode his bike after school to hang out at the local garage to watch young mechanics repair car engines and teenagers soup up their hot rods. He watched and listened and did little to disturb his front row seat that allowed him to learn an intriguing new craft.

A bit shy of his 18th birthday, he enlisted in the United States Army. He was stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington, Scofield barracks in Hawaii, and Fort Bragg in North Carolina. He served as a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne. He was a patriot and proudly served his country. When I asked how he came to be a paratrooper, he said, "I didn't like to run."

Following the service, he returned to Ventura County where he met my mother, Cruz Flores. They were married and had two daughters, Patricia and Ann.

Later in life he met his lifelong partner, Sally. They were married and made a good team. Their devotion to each other was rock solid. Recently, he said they were the best 40 years of his life.

Museum Update

Happy New Year! We are looking forward to seeing what this year will bring to the museum.

This past year, we have hosted six, 3rd grade classes and other organizations with a tour of the museum. Included in the tour there were six different hands on displays, a walking tour of the Historic Downtown District and a reenactment of Mr. Perris. Also the Downtown Market Night has offered the Murrieta Valley Historical Society a space for us to provide historical information, to connect with the community, and to promote the museum.

Beginning on the first Saturday of each month at the museum, Society member, Aimee Edgeworth will be hosting a genealogy group. Participants will be able to do family history research and have discussions in this casual workshop setting intended to engage all ages of people who are interested in exploring their genealogy.

Some of the upcoming events at the museum will be historical and informative presentations, school tours and historical walking tours of the Downtown District.

Special thanks to all of you for your continuous support and we are looking forward to seeing you at the museum. The museum is open on Thursdays from 1-4 pm and on the first and third Saturdays from 10 am-2 pm. If you would like to make an appointment to visit the museum on a specific day or if you would like to schedule a walking tour, please call us at 951-387-4862.

Thank you.

Annette Jennings

Museum Director



*Happy
New Year*

THE Shootist 

Southern California's Premier
Full Line - Full Service Gun Shop

24910 Washington Avenue
Historic Downtown Murrieta

951-698-7543
www.TheShootistGuns.com



SANTA ROSA WEST

Santa Rosa West Association



Pearl
Center for Creative Arts
Where history and art come to life.

PearlC4CA@gmail.com
Follow @PearlC4CA

Murrieta Valley Historical Society
P.O. Box 1341
Murrieta, CA 92564

Phone: 951-387-4862
E-mail: info@murrietahistoricalsociety.org

Next General Board Meeting TBA

General Board Meetings are virtual in a Zoom meeting format. Anyone interested in joining us, please send an email to info@murrietahistoricalsociety.org and we will email you the Zoom link before the meeting



The Murrieta Museum,
41810 Juniper Street
at Hunt Memorial Park.

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY

JOIN ONLINE!
MURRIETAHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

INDIVIDUAL

- \$25 / ANNUAL
- \$150 / LIFE

FAMILY

- \$35 / ANNUAL
- \$250 / LIFE

SENIOR / STUDENT

- \$15 / ANNUAL
- BUSINESS**
- \$200 / ANNUAL

SPONSORSHIP

- Name on our website
- Business website linked to our resource page
- Business logo on all major event press information

\$300 / ANNUAL

First name _____
Last(Family) name _____
Business _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Email _____

CHECKS PAYABLE TO: MURRIETA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

murrietahistoricalsociety.org
info@murrietahistoricalsociety.org
(951) 387-4362
PO Box 1341, Murrieta, CA 92564