



# Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

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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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Horses grazing at the Murrieta Stud Farm  
(Source: E. Hale Curran Collection)

## The Murrieta Stud Farm

By Jeffery G. Harmon

At Santa Anita Park on April 7, 1979, the starting bell rang out and the gates sprung open releasing the racehorses. Jockey Donald Pierce held firm, as his horse, Flying Paster raced around the track. The thunder of the horses' hooves, and the cheers of the crowd, encouraged the three-year old horse to break from the pack. Within moments, Flying

Paster crossed the finish line winning the Santa Anita Derby. Owners Bernard and Georgia Ridder met the rider and their horse in the winner's circle. The Murrieta native horse was a champion and the Ridders couldn't have been more proud.

Flying Paster was born on February 24, 1976 at the Ridders' Murrieta Stud Farm. They had



Flying Paster, Santa Anita Derby winner, 1979  
(Source: Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

chosen to buy property in Murrieta, because it was located half-way between the Santa Anita and the Del Mar racetracks. Their goal was to breed a better racehorse, to which Flying Paster was a testament to their achievements.

Bernard J. Ridder was born June 29, 1913, into a newspaper magnate family. His grandfather, Herman Ridder, started the family's newspaper business when he acquired the German language Staats-Zeitung newspaper in 1892. As anti-German sentiment increased between the two world wars, Herman Ridder successfully transitioned into English language publishing by acquiring the Journal of Commerce in 1926 in

New York.

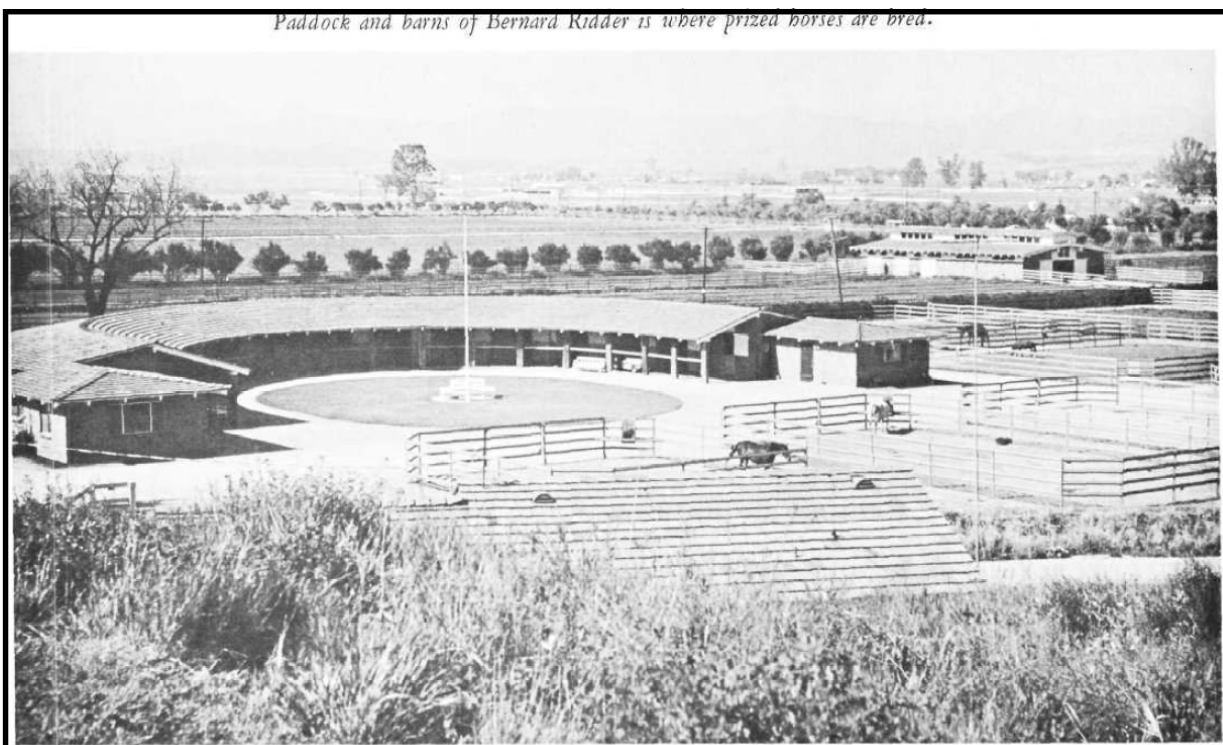
During World War II, Bernard Ridder served in the United States Marines in the Pacific-Asiatic Theater. He entered the war in 1942 as a second lieutenant and left the service in 1945 as a major.

Georgia Buck was born December 5, 1914, in Baltimore, Maryland. Her father, Laurance Buck, invented the square space-saving glass milk bottle. After attending Ethel Walker School in Connecticut, she married Bernard Ridder in New York in 1936.

In 1955, Bernard was offered a job as a publisher for the Pasadena Independent & Star News. Bernard and Georgia

Ridder immediately moved to Pasadena, California so that he could accept the position. Once they were settled, they began visiting the Santa Anita Race Track. They decided to invest in four race horses. However after a few races, they lost three of the four horses to injuries and death. The Ridders were devastated.

Bernard Ridder later explained, "I believed I could breed a better horse than I could buy." He further stated, "I know this thoroughbred breeding enterprise of mine must be a long-range deal. There are no short cuts or royal roads to follow. I must buy the best broodmares I can and send them to the finest stallions available to me. I



A view of the U-Shaped Mare barn, and the Stallion barn in the upper right.  
(Source: Desert Magazine, August/September 1966)

must run my farm here as efficiently as is humanly possible. Nor do I discount the element of luck.”

He then started searching for land in order to start his thoroughbred farm.

“It had to be some place within fairly easy commuting distance of my home base in Pasadena.” Bernard Ridder explained. “I could drive it in less than an hour and one-half from my home over the San Bernardino Freeway by cutting off above Pomona and going through Corona and Elsinore and on down to Murrieta itself.”

He was shown a 112-acre piece of land along the west side of Hayes Avenue between Kalmia and Ivy streets.

He stated, “When I saw the commanding hilltop for the house that settled it. I like to be able to look over everything I’ve built and produced.”

In 1962 Bernard Ridder immediately went to work contracting with Jack and Larry Weir of Weir Brothers Construction. Within a year they built an adobe house that Bernard named, “The House on the Knoll.” The Weir brothers also built the unique adobe horseshoe shaped, Mares Barn.

Other adobe structures that were built for the farm were the foreman’s house, the bunkhouse, and the maintenance shop. The last structure to be built was the Stallion Barn, located on the opposite side of Juniper Street, which bisected the

property.

The Ridders began buying and breeding horses. Georgia was in charge of the pedigrees. She chose the horses to be bred and kept meticulous records. She soon gained notoriety for keen observations and skills matching horses and producing impressive results.

In 1974, Ridder Publications merged with Knight Publications and became the second largest newspaper publication business in the United States behind Hearst Publications. Knight Ridder published 32 daily newspapers in 1974.

Throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s, the Ridders produced several champion horses at the Murrieta Stud





The horseshoe shaped Mare Barn in a dilapidated state.  
(Photo taken by author on September 28, 2019)

Farm. Their greatest success was Flying Paster. He raced from 1978 to 1981 and earned \$1,127,460 during his racing career. Afterwards he was retired to stud duty. He sired 48 racing stakes winners and was California's leading sire from 1987 to 1991. He died on August 22, 1992 at Cardiff Stud Farm in Creston, California.

Bernard Ridder died on July 29, 1983 from cancer at the age of 70 years old. Later Georgia Ridder sold the Murrieta Stud Farm to a developer because her two sons, Bernard Ridder Jr., and Michael Ridder were not interested in continuing the thoroughbred breeding.

After her husband died, Georgia never considered getting out of the horse business. Flying Paster had just been retired to

stud, and she was determined to continue the work. At age 70, Georgia built a new 165-acre ranch, Hidden Springs Ranch in Garner Valley, near the San Jacinto Mountains. She continued to breed horses, and attend the racetracks.

One of her successes was Cat's Cradle, born in 1992, and the daughter of Flying Paster. In 1995, Cat's Cradle won the grade I Acorn Stakes in New York and in the same year was named California's Horse of the Year.

On April 28, 2002, Georgia watched as Public Domain, Flying Paster's grandson won the Pepper Oaks Farm Stakes at Hollywood Park. Two months later, Georgia died on June 14, 2002 at the age of 87.

The former Murrieta

Stud Farm property was purchased by the city of Murrieta in 2009 from the Ridder Family for \$2.3 million dollars which was just 50% of the appraised of \$4.6 million. It was renamed the Murrieta Equestrian Park and made available to the general public. Sadly, due to lack of funding, the former park has fallen into disrepair and may soon be gone.

In the 1960's, Murrieta was nicknamed the Kentucky of the West because of all the thoroughbred horse ranches in the valley. Today the horse ranches have given way to housing developments, the civic center, and industrial use. The former Murrieta Stud Farm is the last reminder of an exciting time in Murrieta's equestrian history.

# Museum Update

Greetings,

The museum is looking forward to the 3rd grade class tours with hand on displays and a Historic Downtown walking tour.

On the first Thursday of every month, we take museum displays to the Murrieta Market Nights, where we enjoy sharing historical information with our community. The museum will also be participating in other upcoming community events.

In late August, we welcomed Mr. & Mrs. Sato, visitors from Japan, who enjoyed the museum and the memorial garden.

The museum partnered with Aimee Edgeworth and her non-profit group, Pearl- A Center for Creative Arts for a fundraiser for the #MurrietaTrainProject. Aimee's goal is to install a train car at Heritage Park next to the former Murrieta Grammar School on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. The train car will be a cultural center, offering art and culture to the community.

The Lace & Locomotives Victorian Steampunk Tea Party fundraiser was a fun and successful event. A portion of the proceeds from the event will be donated to the Murrieta Museum. Shout out to our members

who helped us at this event: Pam Malnar, Connie McConnell, Paul and Kathi Price, Ashley Bigay, Pat Jennings and Jeffery Harmon for opening the museum.

The museum continues to receive artifacts from families for us to add to our archives. These items help keep history alive for our community.

Thank you,

Annette Jennings, Murrieta Museum Director

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**Next General  
Board Meeting  
on**

**September 11th at 5:30 p.m.**

**Please join us at  
the Murrieta Museum**



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

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