



# Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 11.

November 2017

*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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## John M. Beeler

By Jeffery G. Harmon

John M. Beeler owned and operated a Murrieta bakery at the intersection of Washington Avenue and B Street from 1913 through 1917. Not only was he a successful baker, but he was also a civic leader who helped promote Murrieta's agricultural products at the annual Riverside County Fair. His leadership led to Murrieta's success in receiving recognition and top rewards in the community exhibit competition in 1916.



Murrieta baker, John M. Beeler (Source: E Hale Curran Collection)

John M. Beeler was born March 29, 1880 in Washington, Pettis County, Missouri. He was the son of Joel H. Beeler, Sr. and Mary C. Julian Beeler. His younger brother, Joel Henry Beeler, Jr., at the age of eighteen, had moved to Riverside County around 1900 and worked for William H. Sanders as a farm laborer. Joel, Jr. would eventually settle in the Winchester area and become a dry grain farmer.

John married Lucia E. Paige, of Missouri in 1905. They had one daughter, Beulah V. Beeler, born April 9, 1906 in Kan-

sas. Around 1907, John Beeler moved to California and joined his brother. In 1910, John and his family were living in Beaumont working for Winslow G. Haslam. The Beeler family may have been related to the Haslam family who had settled in Winchester many years earlier.

By 1913, John Beeler had purchased the Old Mac Holland property five miles southwest of Winchester. He had established himself as a dry grain farmer, but may not have been satisfied. In August 1913, John Beeler had an-



In 1917, Dr. John Sturgess stands on the eastside of Washington Avenue. North of him is the Murrieta bakery sign at the corner of B Street. (Source: E Hale Curran Collection)

nounced that he was moving his family to Nebraska. A large auction was held on September 3, 1913 in which he sold all of his livestock and farm implements. After the auction, instead of moving to Nebraska, John surprised his friends and purchased the Murrieta bakery from George Griffis.

George and Carrie Griffis opened the Murrieta bakery and a fruit stand around May 1912. One year later, Carrie Griffis suffered a paralytic stroke. She went to stay and recover with her daughter, Mrs. Kathryn Thomas in Los Angeles. By the end of the summer George Griffis decided to sell his bakery to John Beeler and care for his ailing wife. In December 1914,

Carrie Griffis suffered a second stroke. She died on January 20, 1915 and was laid to rest in the Laurel Cemetery.

The Murrieta community welcomed the new owners of the Murrieta bakery.

“Our new bakery run by Mr. and Mrs. John Beeler is doing fine. Mr. (Benjamin) Tarwater and Mr. (Bert) Small have very kindly given them over the bread bus, and we believe they will have a good trade. They are worthy people.” (September 19, 1913, Riverside Daily Press)

The Beeler family par-

ticipated and joined the local social clubs. Lucia Beeler joined the Ladies Aid Society in November. Later she would be elected the society’s treasurer. In January 1914, John and Lucia became members of the Murrieta Methodist Episcopal Church. Then John was nominated president of the Epworth League for one year. At the May league meeting, the largest crowd ever assembled enjoyed cake and ice cream at the Murrieta bakery.

Joel Beeler, Sr., John’s father, died on July 18, 1910 in Pettis County, Missouri. Mary Beeler, John’s mother, came to California to visit her children in September 1914. It had been nine years since she had seen John and even more time had

passed since she had seen Joel, Jr. After the harvest was complete, John and his mother went to Winchester to visit Joel, Jr. and his family. Mary Beeler then traveled to visit her daughter, Mrs. Minnie Gandy in Pasadena, and stayed until February before she returned to Missouri. Mary died in 1944 at the age of 92 and was buried beside her husband.

John and Lucia Beeler soon became involved with the annual Riverside County Fair that provided local towns the chance to display their crops, and homemade products in order to create interests in agricultural development and growth. By 1915, Murrieta formed a committee to create a community display for the fair.

“Committees have been appointed as follows: Mrs. John (Lucia) Beeler, chairman of the general committee on exhibits; George L. Black, booths and decorations; John Beeler, farm products; Mrs. Anita Hadsell, fancy work; Mrs. Clifford Anderson, fruit.” (September 22, 1915, Riverside Independent Enterprise)

Murrieta farmers brought over 118 varieties of farm produce to John Beeler’s bakery. During the week of the fair, the committee decided to ask local businesses to close so residents could attend the event. An estimate one hundred Murrieta residents attended the fair that year.



Murrieta Community Dry-Farming Exhibit at the Riverside County Fair. It is possible John Beeler is standing on the left  
(Source: E Hale Curran Collection)

The Murrieta fair exhibit was a huge success. The exhibit proved that even though Murrieta was a dry farming community, the people were still capable of producing incredible products. Despite their efforts, the judges awarded the first place blue ribbon to Glenavon, an irrigated community. Murrieta placed second. Later there was some discussion to have two distinct awards for the following year, one for an irrigated community and one for a dry farming community, but no decisions were made.

In January 1916, John M. Beeler was named a director for the Riverside District Fair Association. He braved a rainstorm to travel to Riverside to an-

nounce Murrieta was already preparing for the annual fair. John and the Murrieta residents were determined to place first in the community display that year.

Meanwhile, in March 1916, John Beeler expanded his business by building an ice house next to the bakery. The project was completed by mid April. He ordered two tons of ice to be delivered and then he sold it along with his bakery goods. Murrieta residents could then purchase ice and make homemade ice cream during the hot summer days.

At the fair committee’s April meeting the following residents were named for 1916:

“Booth, G. L. Black and

# Auction Sale

The undersigned will offer at **PUBLIC AUCTION** at the **OLD MAC HOLLAND PLACE**, five miles southwest of Winchester, on

**Thursday, September 4**

at 2 p. m. sharp the following stock and machinery:

ONE BAY HORSE, 1500 LBS.  
 ONE BAY HORSE, 1300 LBS.  
 ONE ROAN MARE, 1400 LBS.  
 ONE BAY MARE, 1100 LBS.  
 ONE HORSE COLT, 5 MONTHS OLD.  
 ONE MARE COLT, 5 MONTHS OLD.  
 ONE 3½ WAGON.  
 ONE GANG PLOW.  
 ONE PLANET JR. CULTIVATOR.  
 ONE BUGGY.  
 ONE 12 INCH PLOW.  
 ONE 3-SECTION HARROW.  
 TWO SETS CHAIN HARNESS.  
 STRETCHERS, FIFTH CHAINS, ETC.

**JOHN BEELER, Owner**

A. G. HULL, Auctioneer

F. T. LINDENBERGER, Clerk.

When John Beeler quit dry-farming, he sold his livestock and equipment at a public auction and planned to move to Nebraska.

Instead he used the money to buy the Murrieta bakery  
 (Source: August 29, 1913, Hemet News)

Dave Buchanan; fruit, Mrs. B. Anderson, Mrs. R. V. Brown, M. W. Thompson and Rev. Keifer; vegetables and plants, Dora Dinwiddie; farm products, Roy Southard, Ross Rail, J. S. Thompson; fancy work, Mrs. M. Dodd, and Mrs. G. L. Black; finance, John Walters, W. K. Tarwater; recording secretary, Mrs. J. Beeler" (April 11, 1916, Riverside Independent Enterprise)

The Annual Riverside County Fair came in October 1916 and John Beeler and the

Murrieta residents began assembling their community exhibit.

"Plans have been made to include practically everything grown on the ranches of the valley in this display. It will be an exposition of the great dry-farming possibilities of sections of Riverside County and will undoubtedly be intensively instructive and interesting. The space taken is 20 X 47 feet, and every bit of it will be carefully utilized to show what Murrieta is doing and can do." (October 5, 1916, Riverside Daily Press)

Murrieta's exhibit titled, "Dry Farming Show of Varied Products" was a major attraction at the fair that year. The judges cast their vote and Murrieta won first prize and \$150. John Beeler, chairman and general director of exhibits and the Murrieta committee were proud of the residents' contributions and efforts.

In January 1917, John Beeler was re-elected as a director of the fair association. One month later he was re-elected to chair the Murrieta fair committee. He was also elected president of the Murrieta Chamber of Commerce. Then in March, things began to change for the Beeler family.

John Beeler purchased another bakery in Fallbrook. He reassured the community that his family would be able to operate two bakeries through the summer. In April, he missed the monthly fair committee meeting held at the bakery. Vice chairman, M. W. Thompson conducted the meeting. Establishing the new bakery was more than John could handle by himself. He brought Mr. Holcomb with him to assist in the operations.

At the May fair committee meeting, John Beeler was again absent and Thompson again led the proceedings. It had become apparent that John would not be able to continue his involvement with the fair. He stepped down as chairman of the fair committee. M. W. Thomp-

son replaced John Beeler and was assisted by Charles Hadsall and George L. Black.

During the summer of 1917, the Beeler family moved to Fallbrook. Mrs. Coleman took over the Murrieta bakery operations. It is unclear if she was working for John Beeler or if she was leasing the bakery. In October, she moved out and the bakery closed. Afterwards John began moving his things to Fallbrook.

Up until its closure, the bakery was used for the staging area for the county fair exhibit. Even with John Beeler's absence, Murrieta produced an

even larger exhibit than the previous year. In the end though, the judges awarded Glenavon first prize and Murrieta second prize.

As time passed John Beeler and his family would visit their friends in Murrieta every few years. They visited Joel, Jr. and his family in Winchester at least once a year. By 1922, John sold the Fallbrook bakery and moved his family to San Diego. In that same year, his daughter, Beulah Beeler, married Leroy G. Sewell.

Lucia Beeler passed away March 15, 1931 and was laid to rest in Greenwood Me-

morial Park in San Diego. Two years later, John Beeler married Mrs. Rose Bense.

They were married for almost thirty years. John M. Beeler died on October 6, 1963 and was laid to rest beside his first wife.

Though the Beeler family lived and operated a Murrieta bakery for only four years, their contributions to the area were valuable. Their work in the community exhibits at the county fair helped to bring recognition and agricultural interests to the valley. They were more than a baker family; they were supporters and promoters of Murrieta.



**Honor your hero**  
**Support local history**

Murrieta Valley Historical Society is an official affiliate of Murrieta Rotary's Field of Honor. And as such, the society is asking you to honor a personal hero and support local history while doing so by becoming a flag sponsor.

Sponsors dedicate flags by placing names on a yellow ribbon attached to the more than 2,200 flags that will fly over Town Square Park during the 9th annual event Nov. 4-11. After the event, sponsors may claim the flags, their ribbons, the pole on which they flew and a piece of rebar that held the pole erect.

**The flag packages are \$35 each. And for each one sold through our historical society, our organization will receive \$10.**

Order your flag online at [murrietafieldofhonor.com](http://murrietafieldofhonor.com). When you check out, there will be an opportunity at the end of the process for you to credit the historical society for referring you to the site.

Help us develop Murrieta's first historical museum by sponsoring a flag.

For questions, contact Annette Jennings at [ajennings3@hotmail.com](mailto:ajennings3@hotmail.com) or Al Vollbrecht at [avollbrecht@verizon.net](mailto:avollbrecht@verizon.net).



Check out the Field of Honor web site for activities scheduled during the week.

- 5K fun ride benefiting veterans services
- Ceremonies honoring first responders
- Chalk art painting
- Field trips by local 5th graders
- A evening concert by middle school choirs

**VETERANS**  
**DISPLAY**

**ALL MONTH IN NOVEMBER | MURRIETA PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
**8 TOWN SQ., MURRIETA, CA 92562**

Murrieta residents have answered the call to arms for over 130 years. This month we honor and remember Murrieta's veterans who have left our valley and served our nation from World War I to the present day. We also remember those on the home front who stood vigilant, performing civic duties. Let this exhibit be a reminder that Murrieta stands ready to defend our country and supports the military men and women serving on the frontline and their families at home.

HOSTED BY THE  
MURRIETA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
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Photo by Doree Baskin on iStockphoto

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**Next Monthly Board Meeting:**

Monday, December 4, 2017 at 5:30 p.m.

Honeycutt Farms Family Restaurant  
40477 Murrieta Hot Springs Road, D2  
(In the Alta Murrieta Shopping Center)

All members welcome to attend



# BEHIND THE GLASS

A LOOK INTO THE  
MURRIETA PUBLIC LIBRARY'S  
HERITAGE ROOM COLLECTION.

MONDAY,  
NOVEMBER 13  
6 PM

MURRIETA PUBLIC LIBRARY'S COMMUNITY ROOM  
8 TOWN SQ. MURRIETA, CA 92562  
NEAR ADAMS AND KALMIA

Join Librarian and Archivist,  
Laura Davis, as she explains the  
collection in detail and how to  
access the collection in the  
Heritage Room.



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## Membership Application

**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:  
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Address:  
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Phone number:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Membership:  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Checks payable to:  
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Society

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