



# Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

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November 2021

*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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The Gibbons Service Station and Lunch Counter at the corner of Washington Avenue and A Street. The Murrieta Methodist Church can be seen behind it. (Photo Courtesy of the Gibbons Family)

## The Gibbons Family

By Jeffery G. Harmon

Virgil Gibbons owned and operated a service station, lunch counter, and a small country market at the corner of A Street and Washington Avenue from 1934 to 1943. Though the Gibbons family's time in Murrieta was brief, they were active in the community and contributed to the area's prosperity.

Virgil Tidball Gibbons was

born November 4, 1877 in Warren County, Iowa. He was the son of William and Fannie (Tidball) Gibbons. William and Fannie had twelve children, but only seven lived to adulthood. At the age of 27, Virgil asked Mamie Rodgers to marry him and she said yes. She was born November 15, 1880 in Lacona, Warren County, Iowa. She was the daughter of Albert and Alice (Clevenger) Rodgers.



Virgil, Mamie, Dana, and Homer Gibbons  
(Photo Courtesy of the Gibbons Family)

As a young, engaged couple, Virgil and Mamie left Iowa together and settled in Los Angeles County where they were married on August 23, 1906. A year later, they returned to Lacona, Iowa. Their daughter, Dana, was born there on August 14, 1908. They decided to return to California, and settled in Sawtelle. Their son, Homer, was born May 2, 1910 in Los Angeles County. They then purchased a fruit ranch in Lankershim (present day North Hollywood).

In August 1916, the Gib-

bons traded their home for a 160-acre ranch located on the eastside of Wildomar, California. They named their ranch the Spring Water Ranch. Virgil's sister, Rosie, and her husband, Frank Shupe, moved to the ranch as well. The Gibbons' children, Dana and Homer, were enrolled at the Wildomar Grammar School. They had a horse and a two wheeled cart that they drove to school each day.

Mamie Gibbons was active in the community. She became a member of the Methodist Church. She joined the Ladies

Aid Society and hosted meetings at her house. She was elected president of the Wildomar Parent Teachers Association in 1918.

Frank Shupe and his family left Wildomar in 1917 and bought twenty acres in Murrieta. Then in February 1919, Virgil Gibbons traded his Wildomar ranch to William R. Stokes for a home in Los Angeles. During the 1920s and into the 1930s, Virgil worked in the grocery industry in the Los Angeles area.

The Gibbons visited the Shupe family in Murrieta for many years. It may have been during one of these visits that Virgil learned of a business opportunity. On December 1934, Virgil Gibbons bought a Murrieta service station and garage from Harry Sherman.

Virgil converted the garage into a lunch counter and a small country market. He also set aside some land for an auto park, which was a small campground where motorists could pitch a tent or park a camper overnight. Virgil and Mamie worked together to make their business a success.

Meanwhile, Homer remained in Los Angeles, and Dana had moved to Palmdale. Homer married Bertha Johnson in November 1936 in Los Angeles. They had four children, but one died in infancy. Homer's family moved to Murrieta in 1938 and he worked with his parents for a short time. Dana married Edwin Rosecrans on



September 23, 1939 and they settled in Lancaster. They had one son.

Sadly, Mamie Gibbons died on July 6, 1943. Heartbroken, Virgil sold his business to Dale Cutlip and left Murrieta. He moved to Lancaster where his daughter and her husband lived. He worked with his son-in-law, Ed, on a surveying party for Los Angeles County for four years.

On December 9, 1948, Virgil married Mrs. Carrie (Lamotte) Tibbetts. The small ceremony took place in Murrieta in Mrs. Hattie (Lamotte) Wilcox's home. Virgil and Carrie settled in Corona, where Virgil's son, Homer had a garage business. On March 25, 1956, Carrie had a stroke and died. Virgil then married Imogene (Jenkins) West in 1958. They had been



Virgil Gibbons business card (Photo courtesy of the Gibbons Family)

schoolmates and Imogene was a friend of Mamie's. Virgil died on January 29, 1967 at the age of 90.

The Gibbons came to Murrieta to raise their families and earn a living. Virgil and Mamie Gibbons ran their service

station for nine years while traffic flowed along Highway 395 (Washington Ave). Though their names have faded away from memory, a few photographs and stories remain to remind us of their time living in Murrieta.



From left to right: Ed Rosecrans, Bertha (Johnson) and , Homer "Gibbs" Gibbons, Mamie and Virgil Gibbons (Photo courtesy of the Gibbons Family)

## 100 Years Ago

November 2 – The Murrieta Elevator Company have sold a drill to H. D. Smohl and W. H. Brown, also two double disks this week. Reductions in prices are enabling ranchers to get better farming machinery.

Stoner & Tarwater shipped a carload of Gyp corn this week. Corn is selling for \$1.32 per hundred.

November 3 – Many carloads of fertilizer are being loaded here this fall by several different firms for orange and lemon groves.

November 9 – Roy Thomas and Clare Stager are cleaning seed grain at the elevator this week and hauling it to the Santa Rosa ranch where they expect to begin seeding.

November 16 – The funeral Friday afternoon of Mrs. Katie E. Sleeper, of the Fountain House, was probably the largest ever held in Murrieta. Mrs. Sleeper was 60 years old and had been ill for something like two months. She is survived by a brother, Van Hale, and a niece, Miss Hale Sykes, who mourn her loss. Rev. N. N. Bormose conducted a short service. The flowers were beautiful and so many contributed by friends.

November 30 – Frank Shupe is helping Fred Cooper on his new house this week. The Coopers expect to move in soon.

December 7 – Murrieta was treated to a real Santa Ana wind and dust storm Saturday and Sunday, the worst that has visited this valley in years, but no

damage was done except a few chicken houses blown over.

The Boy Scouts held their first meeting at the parsonage Saturday afternoon at 2:30, and Clifford Anderson, scout master, was installed. The troop has 15 boys from Murrieta and Wildomar.

Frank Fezler was badly bruised and an ankle sprained Saturday evening, supposedly by his horse falling on the cement road. He was unconscious when found, but is able to be out on crutches.

December 20 – The Christmas tree at the Methodist church Saturday night drew a large audience. The program was cut short by the inclemency of the weather. The tree was very pretty for which the church is thankful to Harry Winters, who furnished it.

December 21 – L. E. Dickerman of Riverside is in charge of the depot here while O. W. Miller, agent, is recovering from the grippe.

Saturday evening, December 10<sup>th</sup>, gentle showers began to fall and have been continuing until this present writing, and 10 ½ inches of rain has fallen and given this part of the country a thorough soaking. The river is full and the canyon back of Miller's is full and overflowing. This Christmas gift to all ought to make everyone very thankful.



Virgil and Homer Gibbons on the right with two unidentified men on the left at the service station.

(Photo courtesy of the Gibbons Family)



# Museum Update

The Museum has had a booth on the first Thursday of every month at the Murrieta Downtown Market Nights. We have photo albums on display, as well as books, note cards, post-cards and Historic Highway 395 stickers for sale. The Murrieta Downtown Market Night is located on Washington Ave between C Street and B Street.

Excel Landscape donated their time to get the sprinklers installed for the Al Vollbrecht's Memorial Garden and Yojiro Iba is planting a Hiroshima Peace Tree, historical rose bushes, and

other favorite plants that Al loved. The memorial garden will be located near the front of the museum.

Pat Jennings has scanned over 1,200 photos from pioneer residents and President Jeffery Harmon has scanned many other documents to add to the museum's collection.

We are happy to say the Murrieta Elementary School 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class will tour the museum to learn the history of Murrieta. The teachers and students will be taking a walking tour of the Historic Downtown Murrieta and

experience hands on displays and learn how to make rope.

We would like to thank all of our volunteers who open the museum and for helping us with the school tours. We couldn't do this without you.

The museum continues to offer private tours for groups and school class tours. For an appointment please call 951-387-4862

Thank you,

Annette Jennings,

Museum Director

**MARKET NIGHTS**

**YEAR ROUND**  
1st & 3rd Thursday

**UPCOMING DATES:**  
NOV 4    DEC 16  
NOV 18    JAN 6  
DEC 2    JAN 20

**5-9PM**  
Washington Ave  
Murrieta 92562

sponsored by  
**Downtown Murrieta 395**  
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### 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](http://MURRIETAHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG)

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- \$150 / LIFE

### FAMILY

- \$35 / ANNUAL
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