



Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

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November 2022

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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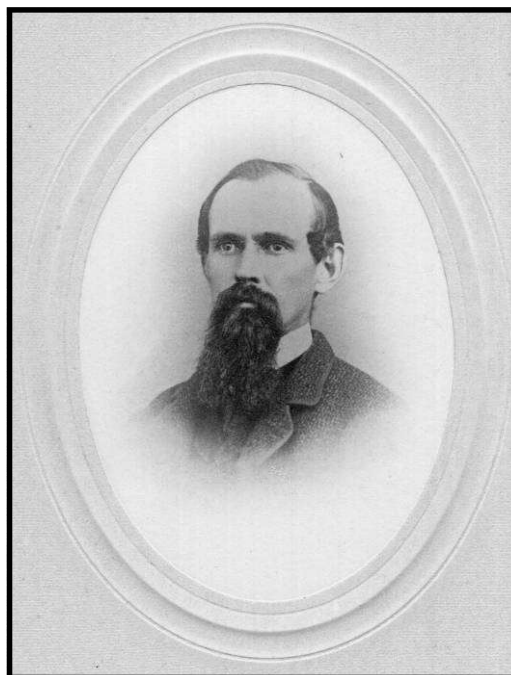
Jeffery G. Harmon

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Source: The Sykes Family

Henry D. Sykes

By Jeffery G. Harmon

Henry Sykes was a Civil War veteran, and a Murrieta pioneer. He brought his family to the valley and settled here for about sixteen years. Together they farmed the land and operated a hotel. However, Henry's wanderlust would compel him to move on to new opportunities, but a few of his children would remain and carry on his legacy.

Henry David Sykes was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on February 3, 1833. He was the

son of Joseph and Sarah (Grace) Sykes, who were English immigrants. When he was a child, his parents moved to Gloucester County, New Jersey and settled on a farm. In 1856, he moved to Shelby County, Illinois and then later moved to Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas.

When the Civil War broke out, he returned to Illinois and enlisted as a member of Co. E, 32nd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment. His unit travelled all



The Henry Sykes family in front of the Fountain House Hotel.
(Source: Murrieta, Old Town, New Town)

over the South during the war. He was wounded in the thigh at the Battle of Shiloh on April 6, 1862. After leaving the hospital he rejoined his unit.

He participated in the Meridian Campaign, traveling from Vicksburg to Meridian, Mississippi. He then participated in Sherman's March from Atlanta to the capture of Savannah, Georgia. At the end of the war, he was mustered out at Fort Worth, Kansas. He was honorably discharged as a corporal at Springfield, Illinois

After the war, Henry

married Sarah Lucida Kelley on August 30, 1870 in Douglas County, Kansas. Sarah Kelly was born June 22, 1852 in Fort Wayne, Allen County, Indiana. She was the daughter of Henry and Hannah (Beard) Kelley.

Henry started a farm eight miles from Baldwin City, Kansas. He raised corn and hogs. While living there, he saw two crops eaten up by grasshoppers. By 1880, Henry and Sarah lived in Willow Springs, Douglas County, Kansas. Their first five children were born in Kansas. Seven more children

were born in California. .

The Sykes moved from Kansas to El Monte, California in 1883 and purchased 120 acres and farmed it for one year. They then moved to Pomona, California and farmed for a few more years. In 1888, the family moved to Murrieta. Henry purchased a 154 acre ranch on Hayes Avenue, north of Tenaja Road. He and his sons farmed the land and shipped their crops by rail to the city markets.

In 1893, Henry Sykes purchased the Fountain House Hotel. The hotel was built be-

tween 1884 and 1885 and was located next to the railroad tracks. The hotel served as a meal stop for the railroad. When Henry owned the hotel, his nine daughters cooked and served the meals to the hotel guests and the train passengers. They also made the beds, did the laundry, and cleaned the hotel.

In 1904, Henry's son, Amos, purchased the family ranch for \$1,500. Henry then used the money to purchase a ranch in Mount Bullion, Mariposa County, California. Within a year, he had moved to his new property.

Three years later, Henry purchased an apple orchard in

Soquel, Santa Cruz County, California. Henry and Sarah and several of their children moved north to their new home. In the same year, Henry rented the Fountain House Hotel to Mrs. Katie Sleeper, who later purchased it in December 1912.

Henry sold his apple orchard in 1912 and moved to Paso Robles, San Luis Obispo County, California. After a few years, the Sykes moved back to Santa Cruz, California. In 1920, all the Sykes family members gathered to celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of Henry and Sarah.

Four years later, Henry died on September 28, 1924 at

the age of 91. Sarah died on March 1, 1946 at the age of 93. They were laid to rest in Oakwood Memorial Park in Santa Cruz, California. At the time of Sarah's death, she was survived by eleven children, thirty-two grandchildren, forty-three great-grandchildren, and five great-great grandchildren.

After Henry Sykes left the valley, a few of his children remained in Murrieta. His descendants have resided in Murrieta for over one hundred years. The Sykes family has contributed greatly to the growth and prosperity of the area honoring the legacy of their patriarch, Henry Sykes.



The Sykes children on May 18, 1906
 Back Row: Jane, Amos, Grace, Sadie, Harvey, and Mollie
 Front Row: Elsie, Walter, Lois, Mabel, Olive, and Rose
 Source: E. Hale Curran Collection



In Memory of
Mary Alice (Rail) Boyce
(1934 ~ 2022)



My sister, Mary Alice Rail Boyce, who wrote the history of Murrieta, MURRIETA, OLD TOWN - NEW TOWN, passed away Sunday early morning after a long decline in her health. She was a native of Murrieta and graduate of both Murrieta Grammar School and Elsinore High School.

She was the daughter of Floyd and Isabella Rail, owners of the Murrieta Grain Elevator and granddaughter of early Murrieta pioneers Charles and Mary Rail whose farm is now the site of Rail Ranch School.

Her maternal grand-

mother was Cora Stollar who was the custodian of the Murrieta Grammar School and caretaker of Laurel Cemetery.

She was a member of the Methodist church and during her teen years worked at Harry Winter's, Winters Drive-in.

She attended Palomar College and graduated with a degree in elementary education from San Diego State University. She taught grade school in Escondido for many years before retiring.

She is survived by her husband Gordon Boyce, two brothers, Homer and David and

sister, Cora Lee Brannon. She is survived by two daughters, Julie and Donna and son Curtis and their families.

Mary Alice had fond memories of growing up in what was a very small town of Murrieta when it was barley, corn and watermelon fields where now is City Center. Running barefoot through the irrigation ditches looking for pollywogs was great fun. She will always be remembered by her family for her quick wit and big smile!

Homer Rail

Museum Update

The museum hosted the October exhibit, "A Tribute to the Lakeman House" by Aimee Edgeworth. The exhibit featured artifacts and collectibles from the Lakeman House. It also showcased items from the Victorian Era of the 1890s. This exhibit was a great success.

In November, there will be a new exhibit, "Murrieta Veterans, Past and Present". This exhibit will honor veterans that have served with displays about their service.

We are participating on the first Thursday of every month at the Murrieta Downtown Market Night. Our booth is located on Washington Ave. and Juniper Street next to Ray's

Café. This has been a great outreach for our Historical Society, the Museum and the City of Murrieta.

I would like to thank all of my Board Members and volunteers that are helping with the 3rd grade school tours and Scout Troops tours. I am enjoying seeing these students bring back their families to show them the museum and tell them facts of what they learned.

The museum is looking for volunteers to help with upcoming events and museum hours. If you are interested, please contact us.

Starting January 2023, The Murrieta Genealogy Group will be meeting monthly on the first Saturdays from 9am-10am

at the museum. Community members of any age are invited to participate in family history research and discussion. The group is for all skill levels, from beginners to expert. Bring your electronic devices to work on your own family tree, or bring your family history files that need figuring out. It is a casual workshop intended to engage those who are interested in exploring genealogy. This group will be hosted by Aimee Edgeworth with Pearl Center for Creative Arts.

We would like to wish you and your family a joyous holiday season.

Annette Jennings

Murrieta Museum Director



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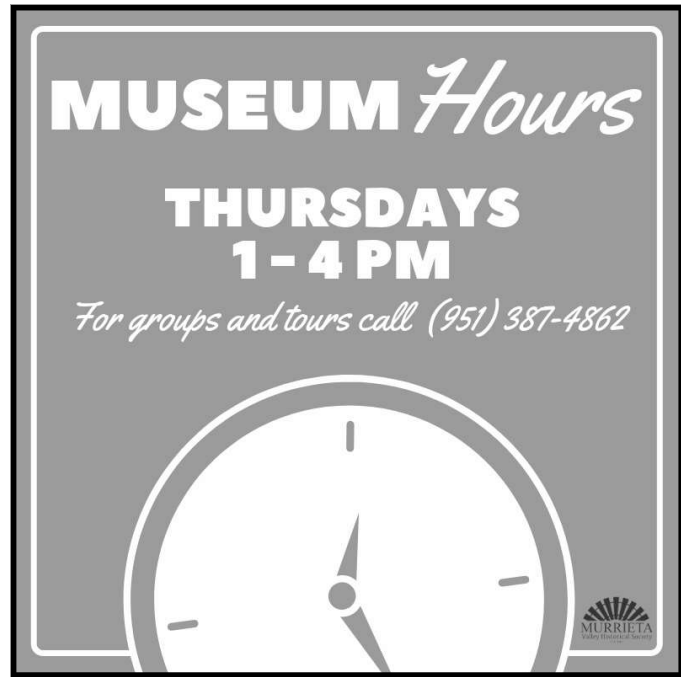
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Next General Board Meeting TBA

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



MUSEUM Hours
THURSDAYS
1 - 4 PM
For groups and tours call (951) 387-4862

The sign features a large clock face graphic and the Murrieta Valley Historical Society logo in the bottom right corner.

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

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JOIN ONLINE!
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\$300 / ANNUAL

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