



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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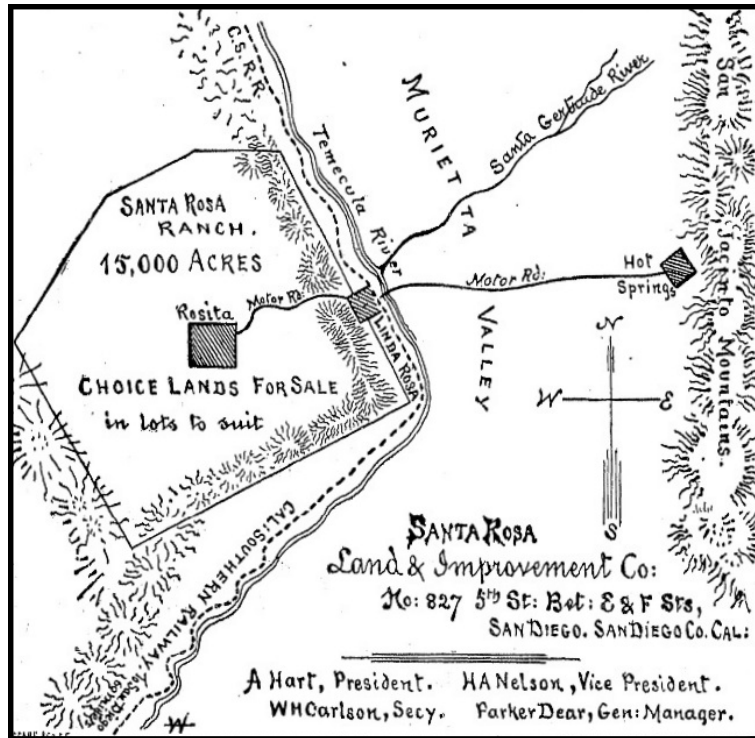
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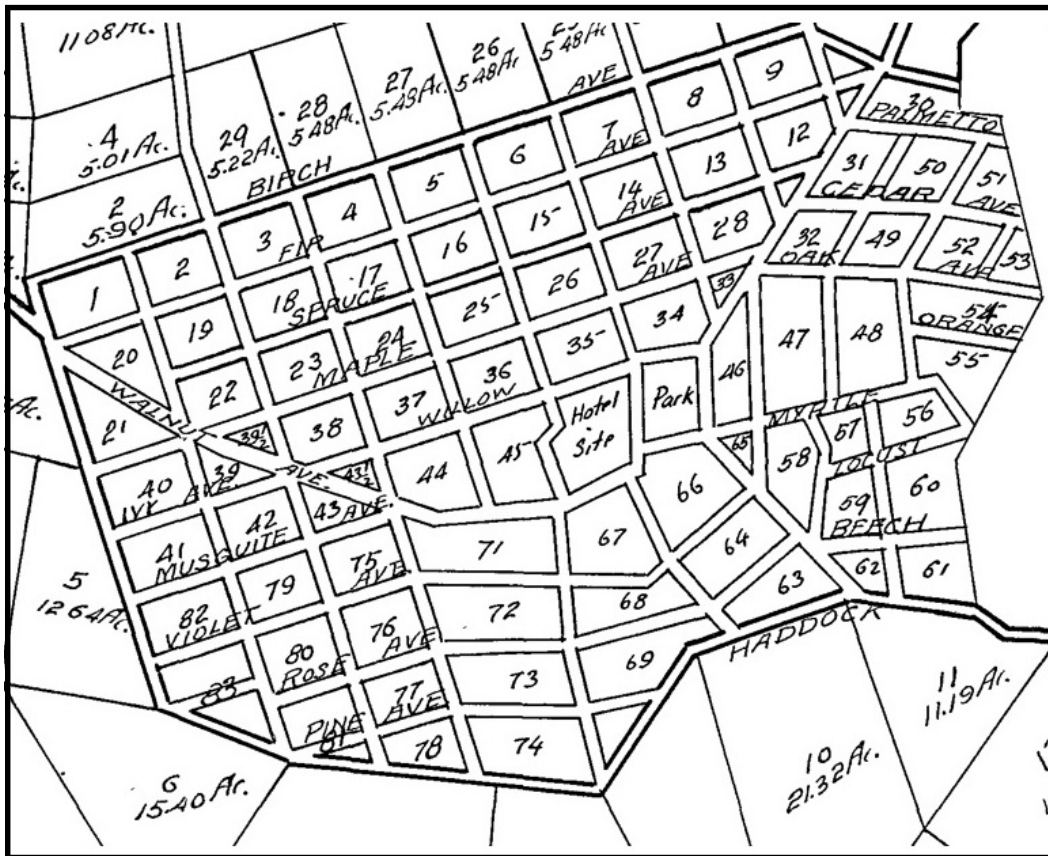
Santa Rosa Land & Improvement Co. advertisement for the town of Rosita. Source: November 2, 1887, The Daily San Diegan

The Town of Rosita by Jeffery G. Harmon

The town of Rosita was established in the western hills above Murrieta on the Rancho Santa Rosa land grant in 1887. It was formed at the same time as the town of Linda Rosa by the Santa Rosa Land and Improvement Company. Its remote location and distance from the railroad doomed the town to failure. However, a few people did buy lots, built homes and settled in the fledgling

town.

The town forefathers envisioned potential buyers disembarking at the Linda Rosa train depot and traveling up the Lambert Grade to Rosita. However, the railroad never made Linda Rosa a scheduled stop. Visitors would either have had to disembark at the Murrieta train depot and travel four miles to Rosita, or disembark at the Temecula station eight miles



The town center of Rosita included a site for a hotel and a park, but no evidence shows they were built. Surrounding the town were larger lots for farming and ranching. (Source: Riverside County Assessor's Map, 1920-1926, Riverside County Archives.)

further south.

The town center was laid out in a semi-grid pattern with east to west streets named after trees such as Birch, Fir, and Spruce. A hotel site and an adjacent public park were planned, but there is no evidence that the hotel was ever built. Surrounding the town site were 20 to 30 acre plots of land. On the perimeter of the town were 50 to 85 acre lots that had the potential for farming or livestock.

One of the first families to settle in the town of Rosita was the Goodman family. Charles W. Goodman was born December 16, 1869 in Dongola,

Union County, Illinois. He was the son of Dr. Mumford Moses and Mary Anna (Willard) Goodman. He moved to California and purchased a town lot in Rosita.

In 1890, Charles' father had died. His mother, Mrs. Mary Goodman and his sister, Frances, moved to California and purchased a town lot in Rosita. The Goodman family owned 41.52 acres and planted an orchard.

The town of Rosita transitioned from San Diego County to Riverside County in May 1893. A post office was established in Rosita in September

and Charles Goodman was named postmaster. Mail was delivered to the hill country by horseback. There were only a few residents in the town, so there probably wasn't enough mail to keep the post office opened for very long.

In 1898, Charles installed a gasoline engine to pump water into a 5,000 gallon tank in order to water his orange, lemon, fig and olive trees. At harvest time, Charles would load his crop in his wagon and travel to Murrieta to sell his fruit. He would also take orders from Murrieta customers, and return within a week with their requests.

On January 28, 1908, Frances Goodman married James W. Gordinier and settled with him and her mother in Los Angeles, California. A year later, Frances and her mother, Mary, sold their town lots to Charles. Charles then sold all the Goodman property in the town of Rosita to John Walter in 1910 and moved to Los Angeles.

There were only five houses in the town of Rosita in 1900. One home was owned by William Walker. He was born in England on January 13, 1849. He married Eliza Dear, sister of Parker Dear in Jersey City, New Jersey on September 22, 1874. They had one son, Frank L. Walker born March 27, 1875.

The Walker family moved to California and bought property in the town of Rosita, just south of Parker Dear's residence on the Rancho Santa Rosa. They built a home, planted an orchard and made a modest living.

William Walker died on December 7, 1906 and was buried in the Laurel Cemetery in Murrieta. Eliza and her son continued to live in the area until Eliza died in 1935. She was laid to rest beside her husband. Frank never married and died in 1940 at a Riverside hospital after a long illness and buried beside his parents.

Antonio Damiano, a Sicilian immigrant, bought the former Goodman property around 1917. Antonio was born in Piena del Greci, Palermo, Sicily in 1884. He married Maria Stassi

in January 1907. Their first son, Luca, was born in December. The Damiano family moved to America in 1908 and by 1910 had settled in Los Angeles, California. Antonio and Maria had seven more children while living there.

Antonio moved the family to the former town of Rosita shortly after purchasing the property. He farmed the land and tended the old Goodman orchard. In February 1927, Antonio traded his mountain ranch to C. C. Smith for some Los Angeles property. Then the Damiano family moved back to Los Angeles. Then in 1930, Antonio repurchased his property in Rosita.

During prohibition, Antonio became a bootlegger in order to support his family. On December 2, 1930, Riverside County Sheriff Clem Sweeters led his dry squad in a pre-holiday drive against liquor traffic. Antonio sold a bottle of brandy to an undercover operative. A raid was made at his Murrieta home and 200 gallons of wine and a quantity of brandy was destroyed by officers. Antonio was arrested and brought before Judge William Thorne in the Murrieta court for a preliminary hearing.

Judge Thorne fined Antonio \$1000 or six months in jail for his crime. A partial payment was probably paid and Antonio was released. Two months later, Deputy Sheriff Roger Knowlton led a drive against bootleg activities in the Murrieta district. Oliver K.

Chrisman, Arthur L. Brown, and Antonio Domiano were arrested on liquor charges.

Antonio was released from the county jail on a \$500 bond and ordered to appear before Judge Thorne for a preliminary hearing. Because of his prior arrest in December, his case was supposed to be tried in Riverside's superior court. However, Judge Thorne dismissed the December charges and fined Antonio \$500 for his recent crime. He paid \$200 of the fine, with the rest due on June 1st.

After Prohibition ended in 1933, bootlegging was no longer a lucrative crime. Antonio sold his Rosita property that year to L. L. Grismer. He bought the old Indian school farm in Perris and continued farming to support his family.

One of Rosita's last resident was William Saxman. John Walter sold several town lots to Saxman by 1919. The former Lambert Grade that led from Murrieta to Rosita was renamed the Saxman Grade. In the 1930s, the WPA (Works Progress Administration), made improvements on the Saxman Grade leading from Murrieta up to the Saxman Ranch and the town of Rosita.

In the end, the town of Rosita wasn't a success. When the Santa Rosa Company failed, the San Francisco Savings Union acquired the unsold lots of Rosita. The lots were then sold to the Cosmos Land & Water



The Rancho Santa Rosa was subdivided and the town of Rosita was in the Santa Rosa Vieja subdivision. The town was south of Murrieta and west of the towns of Linda Rosa and Temecula. The black and white line on the map is the California Southern Railroad and Rosita only had one road leading to a train station. The Parker Dear's residence, owner of the rancho is labeled and below Dear's residence is the name Goodman, for Charles Goodman, Rosita resident.

Source: Map of San Diego County by T. D. Beasley, 1890, Library of Congress

Company by 1897. Cosmos may have used the land for farming or for grazing cattle. Cosmos sold the property to the Pauba Ranch Company about 1900.

In 1904, Walter Vail purchased the vacant town lots of Rosita for the Empire Land & Cattle Company. The land became part of the Vail Ranch operation. Cattle were driven up into the mountains to graze and to become fat. Then the cattle was driven back down into the

valley and shipped by train to market.

The Vail Ranch sold in 1964, and the former town of Rosita became part of the Rancho California Development. Through the years, large scale custom homes began to appear on large subdivided acres on the former town site. Rancho California Road became the first paved road to connect Rosita with Temecula.

Rosita may have failed

because of its remote location. The town was not located near the railroad, nor were there enough roads to reach the town. It may have also failed because it was established at the same time as the town of Linda Rosa. The company promoted Linda Rosa extensively, but rarely advertised for the town of Rosita. Today Rosita may be a forgotten town, but it still has stories to share about those that once called it home.

Museum Update

Greetings,

The Museum has been keeping busy with receiving and archiving artifacts. If you have any photos you would like to share, we can scan them for you. We would love to add your photos to our collection and share your family's stories with our visitors.

Pat Jennings took his 1937 tractor to the Murrieta Public Library for "Read a book day about tractors" and afterwards the children's got to sit on the tractor and have a photo op. The tractor was bought brand new and was used on the Rail ranch

in Murrieta for many years.

I would like to thank Lynda Fujino, Pam Malnar, Terri Whitaker, Jeffery Harmon and Pat Jennings for volunteering at the museum. I appreciate every one of you.

When you go to the Historic Downtown Murrieta, look for the large stickers with QR Codes on the sidewalks. Once you see one take a photo of the QR Code and it will take you directly to the history of the site.

Please consider becoming a member and help support our local history. With each membership you will receive a

tote bag with goodies inside and a monthly newsletter on the local history. You can become a member by going to our website: murrietahistory.org

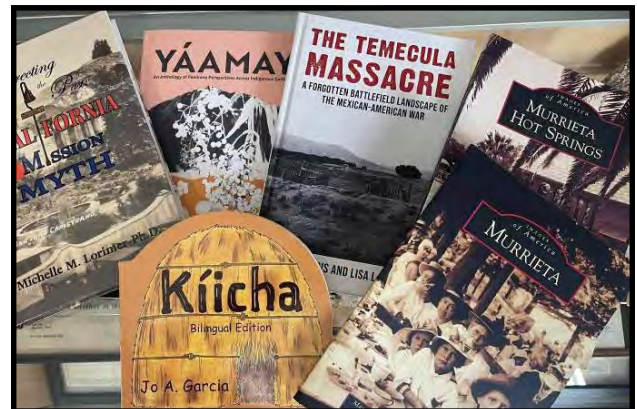
We offer private museum tours by appointment, private walking tours and historic presentations. If you would like to become a volunteer for the museum contact us.

If you have any questions, please call us at: 951-677-7758

Thank you,

Annette Jennings,

Murrieta Museum Director



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**The General
Monthly Board Meeting
is held on the second
Monday 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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