



Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 10, Issue 5

September 2025

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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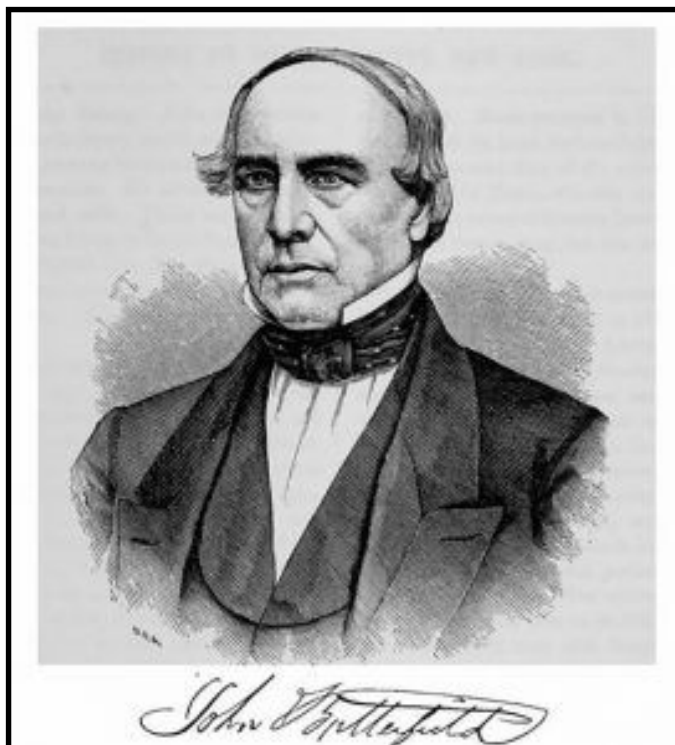
Jeffery G. Harmon

A publication of the

Murrieta Valley Historical Society

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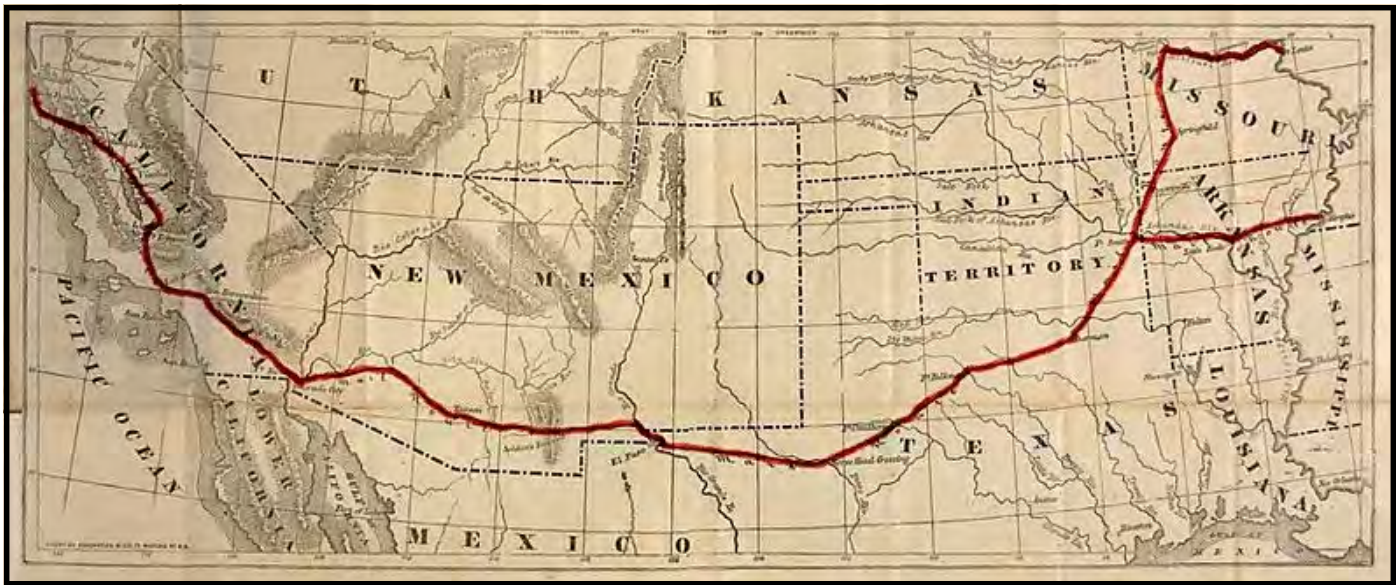
John Butterfield, President of the Overland Mail Company
Photo Source: Internet

The Overland Mail Company by Jeffery G. Harmon

The Overland Mail Company delivered mail and passengers from St. Louis, Missouri to San Francisco from 1858 to 1861. The stagecoach roared through the American Southwest and entered California at Yuma, Arizona. It then raced across the Temecula and Murrieta Valley heading north through California. Though it only operated for three years in the area, it paved the way for future

growth and development of the valley.

The construction of the trail began during the Mexican American War. President Polk ordered General Stephen W. Kearney to march troops through New Mexico and Arizona, to Southern California. General Kearney dispatched Captain James Allen to Iowa to meet with Brigham Young, the leader of the Mormon



The Overland Mail Company Route from Tipton, Missouri to San Francisco, California was an ox bow route that traversed the American Southwest. The long route provided the stage line a year round snow free journey. Photo Source: Internet

Church in order to enlist 500 men for the war. The Mormon Battalion was formed and ordered to follow Kearney's troops. They were assigned to build an army supply road to California.

The Mexican American War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848. Gold had been discovered at Sutter's Mill in Coloma, California on January 24, 1848. News of the treaty and discovery of gold reached Washington D.C. at the same time. Fortune seekers immediately packed up and headed west to the goldfields. The army supply road became known as the Southern Emigrant Trail.

The trail provided prospectors, merchants, and settlers a year round access to California. The California Trail over the Si-

erra Nevada Mountains may have been a shorter route, but the trail closed during the winter season. As more people came to California, the population exploded. Within two years, California became the 31st state on September 9, 1850.

The American government soon realized that they needed to improve communication with California. In 1857, Congress authorized the Postmaster General to contract for mail service from Missouri to California. Advertisements were placed in the newspapers requesting bids and routes for the overland mail service.

There were nine bids, but John Butterfield, president of the Overland Mail Company, was awarded the contract. His route was 600 miles longer than other proposed routes such as a central

route across the continent. However, his route would be able to operate year round because it was snow free. Once he secured the contract, Butterfield had one year to begin operations.

The first phase of the overland route was to place station stops twenty miles apart. On September 14, 1858, the first stage left San Francisco and headed towards St. Louis, Missouri. The journey took 24 days, 18 hours, and 26 minutes to complete. Thereafter, a stagecoach left San Francisco and Missouri twice a week. As the stagecoaches raced across the Southwest, Butterfield's men began constructing phase two.

The second phase of the overland route was to fill in the gaps between stations. A station was established halfway between the original two stations.

For example, in phase 1, a station was established in Temecula and another in Laguna at the Machado Adobe in present day Lake Elsinore, a distance of twenty-one miles. In phase 2, a station was established ten miles north of Temecula and eleven miles south of Elsinore. This was known as the Willows Station.

The Willows Station was established on the Temecula Rancho and Simon Johnson was the station master. Based on mileage, the station would have been located near the intersection of Lemon Street and Washington Avenue in present day Murrieta. Willows went into operation in June 1860. The purpose of the station was to

provide fresh horses for the stage. Butterfield knew that horses began to slow down after running for ten miles. The station allowed the stage to move more quickly through the valley.

The last stage left Missouri on March 18, 1861. The stage line was then transferred to the Central Overland Trail. This was due to the fact that during the Civil War many of the Southwest American residents were sympathetic to the Confederate cause. The new Central trail had strong Union supporters.

The Central Overland Stage ended services in 1869 when the transcontinental railroad was completed. By 1873,

Juan Murrieta had settled in the valley. Nine years later, the California Southern Railroad was built across the valley. The mail was then being delivered by train.

One hundred and sixty-one years later, the American government acknowledged the historic significance of the Butterfield Overland Mail Trail. In 2022, Congress passed a bill designating the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail. The trail is 3,292 miles long and traverses eight states. Soon signs will be installed by the National Park service allowing visitors to travel the historic route and learn about the history of the Butterfield Overland Trail.

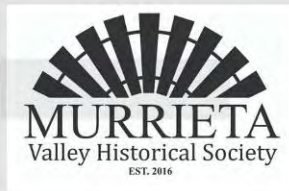


In 1958, the U.S. Post Office issued a commemorative stamp for the centennial celebration of the Overland Mail Company. Photo Source: Internet



Annette Jennings Presents:

THE SOTELLO FAMILY HISTORY IN MURRIETA



At the Murrieta Museum

41810 Juniper Street
Murrieta, Ca

Date & Time :

Saturday, September 27, 2025
10:00 A.M.

For More Information

951-677-7758

info@murrietahistoricalociety.org

Free entry for all visitors.

PARANORMAL NIGHT AT THE *museum*

Experience a Paranormal Night at the Museum with Luminous Path with Love. LaShawn will guide you through how paranormal investigation equipment works, give you the chance to try it out, and answer your questions as we explore the mysteries together.



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2025
BEGINNING AT 7 PM
\$50/PP (AGES 12 AND UP)



41810 JUNIPER STREET,
MURRIETA, CA 92562
PAY ONLINE WITH
QR CODE OR AT
MURRIETAHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG



Museum Update

Greetings,

The Museum staff and our volunteers are preparing for this school year's 3rd grade tours. The students will be learning about Murrieta's rich history and will be participating in hands on educational activities. The students are led on a walking tour of the Historic Downtown District and learn about the people, places and businesses of our shared past.

On September 27th, Annette Jennings will be presenting, "The Sotello Family History in Murrieta." She will share how her family came and settled

in Murrieta. The Sotello family were active members of the community and gave of their time and resources whenever there was a need.

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 bi-monthly newsletter on the

local history. You can become a member by going to our website: murrietahistory.org

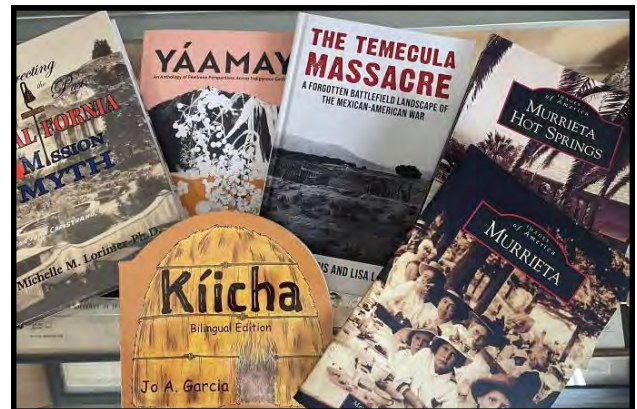
We offer private museum tours by appointment, private walking tours and historic presentations. If you would like to become a volunteer for the museum contact us.

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

Thank you,

Jeffery Harmon,

President





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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.

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY

CIRCLE ONE

INDIVIDUAL

\$25 /ANNUAL

\$150 /LIFE

FAMILY

\$35 /ANNUAL

\$250 /LIFE

SENIOR/STUDENT

\$15 /ANNUAL

BUSINESS

\$200 /ANNUAL

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- Business website linked to our resource page
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