



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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The Rail Pump House,
Photo by author (March 11, 2020)

The Rail Pump House By Jeffery G. Harmon

The Rail pump house is located on a grassy knoll on Jefferson Avenue between Murrieta Hot Springs Road and Ivy Street. It is a small rock structure that has fallen into ruin. Some people think it was the Murrieta jail, or maybe it was an old rock house. However, the structure was built around 1939 to store well water for the Rail property.

Joseph Charles Rail owned the twenty acres where the pump house is located. Around 1936,

Charles Rail began making improvements on the property. He built a small cottage and rented it to a couple that worked at Guenther's Murrieta Hot Springs Resort.

Clarence Rail was about ten or eleven years old when he helped his grandfather, Charles, build the pump house. Local rocks were gathered to be used as building materials. Clarence mixed the cement and hauled it to the site. He helped his grandfather build the walls by stacking the rocks and ap-



The pump house was divided into two parts: the back half was the water cistern and the front half was the cold storage. The cement roof has collapsed and the door was removed.

plying the cement. The pump house was built next to a windmill that pumped water up from a six foot well.

The structure was divided in half. On one side was the tank that held the well water. The water was then gravity fed to the cottage for domestic purposes. The second half was used as a cold storage in order to store perishable foods. Charles Rail planned on building a wood

tank above the pump house to hold more water. He had purchased redwood for the project, but never built the tank. Instead a cement roof with metal reinforcement was built.

Years later Clarence bought the property from his grandfather. Clarence did not live in the rental cottage. He boarded it up and left it vacant. The cottage became a place for vagrants and vandals. Around

1957 the county ordered Clarence to tear down the cottage because it was a danger to the community. He had the structure removed over the weekend. On Monday he got in trouble with the county officials because he didn't file a permit before he demolished the cottage.

Later on Clarence was running a tractor on the property, disking the field. It had been a wet year, and the ground was muddy. Suddenly his tractor got stuck in the mud. His father had taught him that if that situation arose, Clarence was to detach the disc tool from the tractor. He followed the instructions, but the tractor continued to sink.

Clarence went to his father's house and asked him for help. When they returned to the tractor, only the exhaust pipe could be seen. They spent six to eight hours digging out the entombed tractor. They removed the redwood door off of the pump house and placed it under the tractor's treads. Slowly the tractor broke free, but the door was left buried under two feet of dirt.

In the 1960s, the valley's water table dropped a hundred feet due to the multiple horse ranches and their deep wells that had been established in Murrieta. The Rail well went dry and the pump house was abandoned. Over the years, the cement roof collapsed, and the structure fell into ruins.

The Rail pump house has been a Murrieta landmark for

over eighty years. As the City of Murrieta grew, shopping centers and office buildings were built around the ruins and the twenty acre site. Recently a developer has purchased the former Rail property and is planning to develop the site for commercial use. It appears the pump house may be demolished in the near future. Soon all that will remain of the structure are a few photographs and a couple of stories.

One year ago: On April 28, 2019, Marvin Curran and Alice Vose cut the ribbon and officially opened the Murrieta Museum. Also pictured: City Councilman Randon Lane, and County Supervisor Chuck Washington.



Museum Update

The museum has been closed since March 13th due to the Riverside County Health Department's public safety recommendations. We hope that you and your family are safe and healthy during this challenging time.

Dudley and Calvin Sykes have loaned to the museum some historical items from their family collection for a temporary exhibit. It will be ready for public view when we are able to reopen.

The museum also has a display in the Murrieta Public Library's Heritage Room.

The historical society has purchased the Past Perfect Archive Software and a laptop with a grant we received. I have started to archive the museum's collection.

We would like to thank the City of Murrieta's Public Works Department. The staff has hung up the museum directional signs around town. We appreciate it.

The first year anniversary for the opening of the Murrieta Museum was in April. We were to celebrate this occasion at the Annual Firemen's BBQ. Unfortunately, all public events were cancelled. We would like to

thank all our volunteers, our board, our society members, and all of our donors for making this first year a great success. We look forward to the day when we can reopen and celebrate this milestone with you.

Please visit our website at murrietahistorical-society.org and under events you will see we have the Murrieta Valley Historical Society's presentations and past newsletters for your enjoyment.

Thank you,
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Museum Director

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Next General Board Meeting

TBA

At the Murrieta Museum

41810 Juniper Street

(At Hunt Memorial Park)

All members welcome to attend



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

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