



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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Loretta, Bruce, and Dianne Erdel at the Erdel Service Station on Highway 395 in Murrieta, (Photo courtesy of Loretta Barnett)

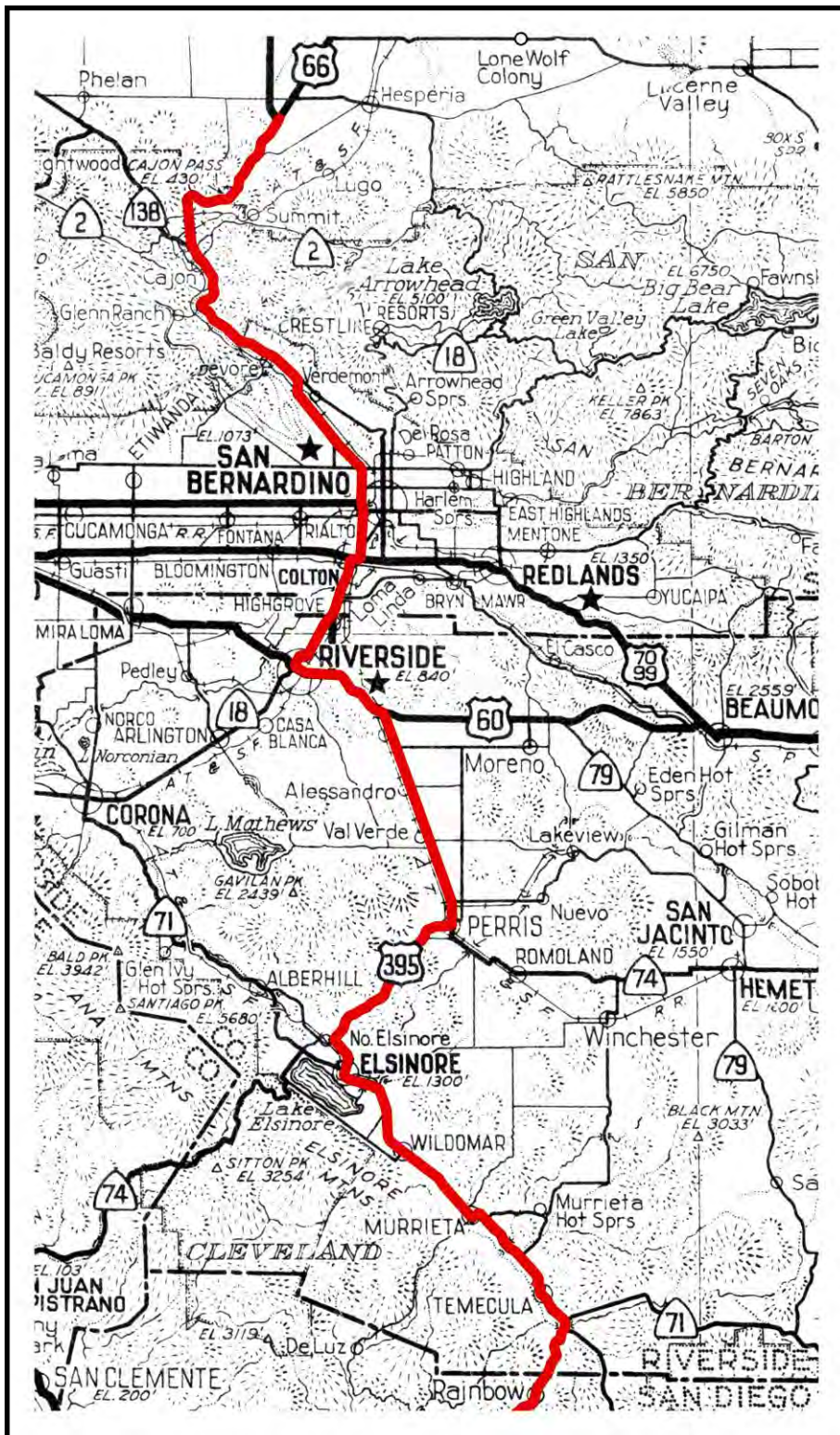
The Historic Highway 395

By Jeffery G. Harmon

In 1949, a young couple and their friends from Los Angeles drove their car south on Highway 395 to the Murrieta Hot Springs Resort. They traveled down Washington Avenue and then turned left onto Ivy Street. They stopped to fill up their gas tank at the Erdel Service Station. Clayton and Nadine Erdel greeted the couple and Clayton asked if he could

look under the car's hood. Nadine began filling up the gas tank. After their car was serviced, the couple decided to get lunch next door at King's Café before they continued on their journey. This was just a glimpse of life along Highway 395 in Murrieta.

The first cement highway to be paved through Murrieta was the Inland Highway, which was



Highway 395 (1934 ~ 1955) from Temecula to the Cajon Pass
 (Source: The American Auto Club)

completed in 1916. Soon the Murrieta business district began to shift away from the railroad and began to establish itself along the highway's corridor on Washington Avenue and Ivy Street. In August 1931, a portion of the Inland Highway from Lake Elsinore through Murrieta to Temecula was designated California State Highway 71.

A group in Lancaster, California was interested in establishing a highway in Eastern California to rival the Pacific Coast Highway in the west. "PCH" was nicknamed the "Two flags highway" connecting California to Mexico. The Eastern group decided to one up "PCH" and called the new proposed highway the "Three Flags Highway" with the goal of connecting Mexico, America, and Canada.

When the "Three Flags Highway" representatives met with Riverside civic leaders, they had discussed the highway route going to Mexico via the Imperial Valley. However, the civic leaders informed them about the Inland Highway and that there were many business owners already established on the old route that would be great boosters for the new highway project.

In 1934, Highway 395 a 1,305-mile highway, was established. It would later be known as the Mother Road of the West. Highway 395 and Highway 71 were co-signed through Murrieta and soon more businesses began to be established in the area.

Highway 395 played a



Harold's Club was over 500 miles north of Murrieta on Highway 395. The club advertisement was painted on Clifford Thompson's barn, which was located on the corner of Washington Avenue and Ivy Street. (Source: E. Hale Curran Collection)

key role in National Defense during World War II. Due to possible enemy warships attacking military movements along the Pacific Coast Highway, troops and materials were transported on Highway 395. Marvin Curran, a lifelong resident, stated that when a military convoy came down Washington Avenue, no one could cross the street until it passed. When asked how long did it take for the convoy to pass through town, he replied, "It took several hours."

Though Highway 395 provided cover for military operations, it also was a very slow route. The highway passed

through every small town's business district, and it twisted and turned through the hill country. A realignment of Highway 395 from Escondido to Temecula was begun by the Moosa Canyon Prison Labor Camp before the war. All California road camps were closed during the war except two. The military deemed that the Moosa Canyon project vital and work continued until it was completed in 1949.

The new realigned Highway 395, bypassed Fallbrook, Bonsall, Vista, and San Marcos and provided a direct link between Escondido and Temecula. (This is known today as "Old Highway 395" and parallels In-

terstate 15)

From 1950 to 1955, Highway 395 was realigned through Menifee Valley providing a direct link to March Air Field. By 1955, the new highway bypassed Lake Elsinore, Wildomar, and Murrieta. However, Highway 71 continued to serve the valley for a few more years.

Between 1955 and 1959, Highway 71 was realigned between Alberhill and Murrieta. This would be the modern route of the southbound lanes of Interstate 15. By 1960, all highway traffic had shifted away from the small town business districts,



Historic Highway 395 sign and emblem on the corner of Washington Avenue and Ivy Street. (Photo by Jeffery Harmon, February 13, 2018)

and allowed motorists to drive on by.

However, businesses shifted with the new highway. For example, Warren Winter, a Murrieta resident, opened up a service station and café at the intersection of Highway 395 and Elm Street, just north of the present day Warm Springs Mobile Home Park.

Clayton Erdel sold his Murrieta station and opened a new station in Menifee at the intersection of Highway 395 and Scott Road next to the Chub's restaurant. Marvin Curran then took over the Erdel station. Even though the highway had left Ivy Street, Marvin stated that business was still really good at his station in the early 1960s.

In 1969, Highway 395 was decommissioned south of Hesperia, California. Construction of Interstate 15 had begun in San Diego County and was slowly moving north. By the 1970s, construction of Interstate 15 and 215 freeways in Riverside County had begun to replace Highway 395. The new interstate eventually led to the housing boom of the 1980s and 1990s.

Today modern Highway 395 extends from Hesperia to the Canadian border, but the historic highway in Southern California seemed all but forgotten. Then in 2008, California legislators designated Highway 395 a historic route. Over 134 commemorative signs were installed throughout San Diego and Riverside counties through local

governments, fundraisers and donations.

Preserving the historic highway provides an opportunity for economic revitalization for the family businesses, and to increase tourism in many of the Main Street towns along the original route. So pull off the interstate, slow down, and take a drive on the Historic Highway 395.



Museum Update

Greetings,

The Museum has been busy with different events and outreach programs. We have also been learning a new archive program thanks to our new member, Lynda Fujino.

Recently, Aimee Edgeworth requested a grant for the Society and we received \$500. With the grant we purchased Historic Highway 395 t-shirts to sell at the Annual Murrieta Rod Run. Thanks Aimee!

Shout out to the Casey Davis Family, who was past residents of Murrieta and now of Arkansas City, Kansas. Thanks to their generous donation to the Society, we were

able to have ten historical markers made into sidewalk stickers. All ten have been installed at sites in the Historic Downtown and people are enjoying them very much. We would like to give special thanks to Councilmember Ron Holliday and the City of Murrieta for their support.



Sample of the sidewalk sticker

Save the Date: There will be a Holiday Open House at the museum on Saturday, December

9th from 10 am-2 pm. Refreshments will be served. We hope that you can stop by and visit us.

As always, none of this can be done without our Board Members, volunteers and members. We greatly appreciate everyone. We would like to wish everyone a great rest of the year.

Thank you,
Annette Jennings,

Murrieta Museum Director

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**Next General
Board Meeting
on**

November 13th 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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