

# Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

November 2016

Volume 1 – Issue 8

*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 Burnett House,  
January 16, 2016, Photo by Jeffery Harmon

## **Abram B. Burnett**

By Jeffery Harmon

When the town of Murrieta was established in 1884, milled lumber was needed by the new settlers. The few trees that grew in the area were oak and cottonwood trees. The nearest sawmill was 35 miles to the northeast in San Jacinto. When Abram Burnett arrived in Murrieta about 1885, he established the Murrieta Lumber Company to meet the growing town's needs.

Abram B. Burnett was born January 23, 1839 in New York State. He was the son of Franklin and Mary Ann Burnett. As a young man, Abram began to work for the railroad and lived in Rutland, Vermont. When the Civil War broke out, Abram enlisted as a private in Vermont's Company K of the 12<sup>th</sup> infantry. He served from August 24, 1862 to July 14, 1863.

"His regiment served in and around Washington, D.C., during that time, protecting the Union capital. Burnett and his company were marching toward the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863, but were diverted and sent to protect ammunition trains." (John Hunneman, May 24, 2011, Press Enterprise)

After the war, Abram moved to Vandalia, Fayette Co., Illinois. On May 5, 1874 he married Rachel Marian Davis. Rachel was the daughter of Daniel and Mary (Scott) Davis. Evidence suggests that Abram and Rachel followed the Davis family to Murrieta between 1884 and 1885. In 1886, Rachel's mother died and was buried in the Murrieta Cemetery.

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# **Calendar** **Of Events**

## **Next Monthly Meeting**

President Jeffery Harmon  
will present:  
The History of  
Highway 395

From The Inland Highway  
to the Three Flags  
Highway to the  
Cannonball Highway  
To the Interstate  
Learn how the highway  
transformed Murrieta

Monday, November 14<sup>th</sup>  
at 6:00 p.m. at the  
Historic Hunt House  
41810 Juniper St.  
In  
Hunt Memorial Park

## **Local Events**

Murrieta Public Library  
Community Room  
Speaker Showcase  
Tuesday, November 1st  
6:00 p.m.

**John Hunneman**  
Speaker Presentation:

Mr. Hunneman, a journalist and  
columnist for over a quarter of a  
century, covering the events of  
Riverside County, will talk  
about his knowledge of  
Murrieta, and its changes  
through the years.

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Abram bought five acres at the northeast corner of Washington Avenue and Juniper Street. He ordered a home kit from a catalog and had it shipped by train to Murrieta. After the package arrived, D. N. Buchanan and A. R. Doolittle constructed the Victorian farm cottage. The home is considered the second oldest surviving structure in the Historic Downtown area.

Abram Burnett was an agent for the Russ Lumber and Mill Company. In 1887, Burnett's Murrieta Lumberyard was located at the southeast corner of Washington and Juniper Street.

Abram was civic minded and contributed to the growth and prosperity of Murrieta. He, along with other civic leaders, purchased ten acres of land for a dollar from the Temecula Land and Water Company to establish the Murrieta Cemetery. He was also a trustee of the Murrieta Methodist Episcopal Church in June 1886.

When the Murrieta Historical Society was formed in May 1885, Burnett was nominated to be its president. The purpose of the society was, "to take meteorological observations and to record current events of the colony."

In 1894, Abram Burnett was named a director of the Riverside County Board of Trade. The purpose of the board was "to encourage commerce, to stimulate home manufacture, to assist in securing a market for our products, to induce immigration and the settlement and cultivation of our lands, to assist in the development of the material resources of the region, and to promote the business interests of Riverside County." (March 15, 1894 Riverside Daily Press)

In 1896, he served as a clerk for the Murrieta polling place. During that same year, he served on the Riverside County Republican Committee.

By the fall of 1898, there was a livestock feed shortage in the valley. Abram Burnett made arrangements to have a supply brought into Murrieta.

*"A. B. Burnett has two cars of Kansas corn coming, which is mostly sold, but he will have a third car. Corn at 97 1/2 c by the ton or \$1 by the single cent, is cheaper than wheat or barley in California this year."* (October 28, 1898, Riverside Daily Press)

A year later at his funeral, his generosity was remembered.

*"Last autumn, when there was a shortage of feed with the farmers, he had several carloads of corn shipped from the East and supplied them at about cost."* (May 13, 1899, Riverside Independent Enterprise)

In April 1899, Abram and Rachel traveled to attend the San Pedro Harbor Jubilee celebration, an occasion marked as the beginning of the harbor's construction. During their visit, Abram became ill. He died on his 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, May 5, 1899. Charles L. Davis, Rachel's brother, traveled to Los Angeles to bring Abram's body back to Murrieta.

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## MEMBERSHIP

### Individual

Annual \$25.00  
Lifetime \$150.00

### Family

Annual \$35.00  
Lifetime \$250.00

### Senior/Student

Annual \$15.00

### Business

Annual \$200.00

### Sponsorship

Annual \$300.00

Membership dues are  
for one year and will be  
up for renewal the  
month you joined

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Checks payable to:  
Murrieta Valley  
Historical Society  
Mail to: P.O. Box 1341  
Murrieta, CA 92564

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*“The funeral services were held at the (Methodist) church on Tuesday at 10 o’clock. The house was not large enough to hold the many friends who attended. Rev. Judy preached a good sermon, after which most all present went to the cemetery, where a part of the Masonic burial service was read by Father Bollen, who is the highest in that order in this part of the country. The decorations at both the church and the grave were beautiful and profuse.” (May 12, 1899, Riverside Daily Press)*

Abram was laid to rest next to his mother-in-law, Mary Davis in the Murrieta Cemetery.

The Burnetts never had any children. After Abram’s death, Rachel Burnett moved to Long Beach, California to live near friends and family. She rented her former Murrieta home to ex-County Supervisor Henry Clay Thompson. Thompson rented the Burnett house for three years.

In 1903, Rachel sold the house to Earnest F. Lakeman of Los Angeles. Henry Thompson moved across the street and began building a new home at 24771 Washington Avenue. Thompson also bought two vacant lots next to his new home from Rachel Burnett.

Rachel lived to be 94 years old. She died on October 1, 1942 at the Hollenbeck Home for the Aged in Los Angeles. Her final resting place is unknown at this time.

Today the Burnett home at 24770 Washington Avenue stands as a reminder of an early Murrieta pioneer. Abram B. Burnett was a veteran of the Civil War, and a civic minded man who contributed to the development and prosperity of Murrieta’s early growth. His service should be honored and remembered and shared with future generations.

## 100 years ago

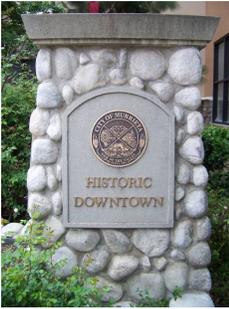
On Wednesday afternoon at 3 o’clock at the home of the bride’s parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. V. Thompson, the wedding of their eldest daughter, Miss Hazel, to Ross Rail, was solemnized. The guests were the relatives of the two young people and a few friends. The wedding march was played by Miss June Thompson. The bride and groom attended by Ira Rail and Miss Marjorie Hibbel, of Los Angeles were met under a bower of ferns and roses by Rev. E. H. Kiefer, who read the marriage ceremony. Congratulations followed and a dainty lunch of ice cream and cake was served.

The happy couple left by auto in a shower of rice and drove to the home of the groom’s parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Rail, where they were given a charivari by their friends. The company was treated to cake and chocolate and the evening was spent in music and conversation. Mr. and Mrs. Rail will be at home to their friends in their new home east of town after November 1.

(November 2, 1916, Riverside Daily Press)

## New Members

Al Vollbrecht  
Dr. David M. Elliot and  
Dr. Anne J. Miller  
John Hunneman  
Polly Filanc



## MURRIETA HISTORY MUSEUM

It is the desire of the Society to establish a museum in Murrieta's Historic Downtown in order to preserve and present the rich and diverse history of our city.

The Society is in need of a building space donation for our non-profit group.

Please contact us if you have suggestions or contributions.

# *President's Message*

## Jeffery Harmon

On September 12, 2016, the Murrieta Valley Historical Society gathered at the Historic Hunt House. It was a special night; a night that we honored eleven Murrieta pioneers for their dedication to preserve Murrieta's history and to pass on their knowledge to the next generation. It was like a family reunion, where old friends saw each other again after many years had past. Stories were shared, and smiles were exchanged. As I stood before this group of people, it was like being in the presence of a priceless living library stacked with the knowledge of Murrieta's history.

As the evening progressed, I read a short biography on each of our honored guests. Then they were presented with a lifetime membership certificate. After the ceremony I was to give a talk on Mrs. Inez Hunt who had donated the house we were meeting in along with the five acres now known as Hunt Memorial Park. Unfortunately, the laptop froze and I had to improvise. Audience members, who knew Mrs. Hunt personally, contributed to the presentation, enriching our knowledge and understanding of this generous woman.

As the meeting came to a close, several people approached us and offered to donate historical items to the society. Unfortunately, because we do not have a museum, we are unsure where to store donated items. It is imperative that a solution be found before these historic artifacts, documents, and photos are lost in a moment. We are in need of a temporary building for a museum until a permanent structure can be built.

If you have not joined the Murrieta Valley Historical Society, do not wait any longer, join today! Your membership helps us to continue financing the Society's efforts to preserve Murrieta's legacy, to promote our history and to educate the next generation. Also, with the Christmas season fast approaching, consider giving a society membership as a gift to a family member or friend. As our membership continues to grow, our voice becomes stronger and we are able to declare that Murrieta's history is important and needs to be preserve.

I would like to say thank you to all those that volunteered and donated funds to make our first general meeting a night to remember. I am excited for great things to come for our city and for our society in preserving our past.