



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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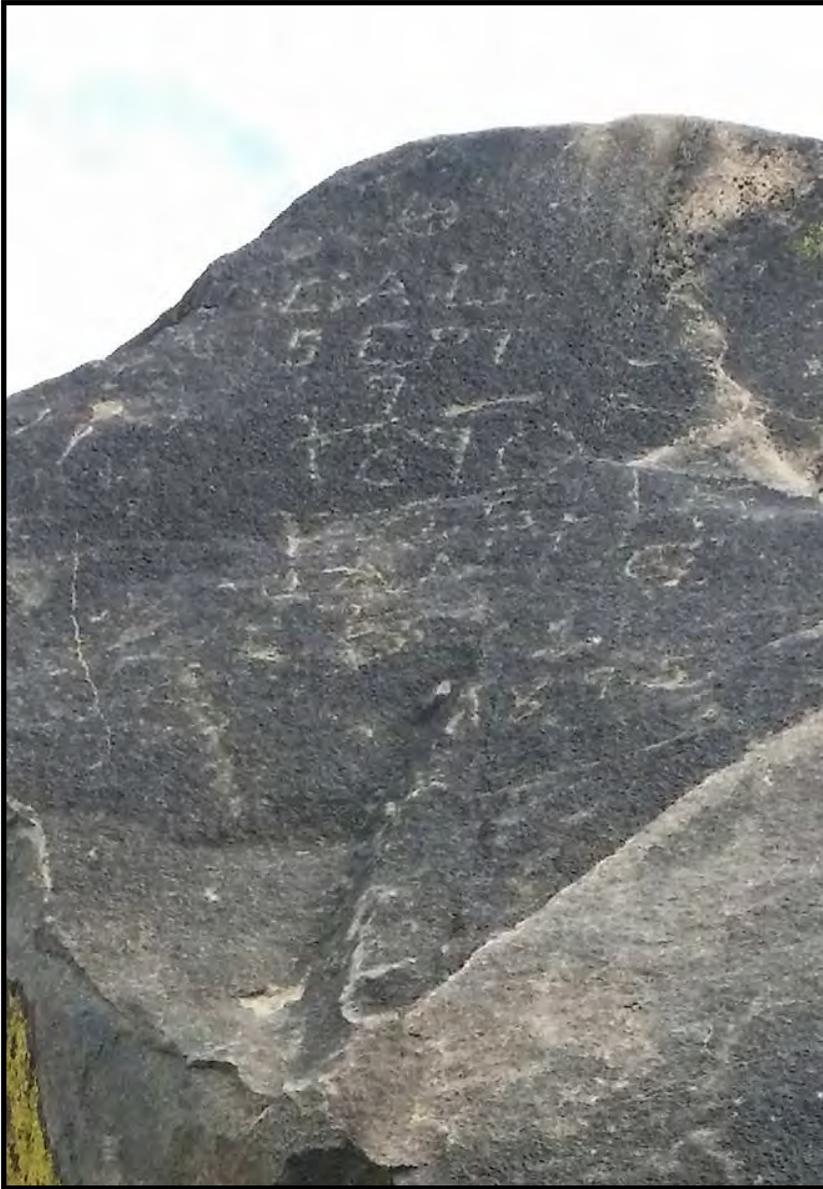
The Leonard Smohl Memorial Rock

By Jeffery Harmon

The Leonard Smohl Memorial Rock was located at the intersection of Briggs Road and Los Alamos Road/Thompson Road. It was on the western edge of French Valley, where several families settled nearby. These early pioneers built farms, planted crops, and olive trees, and made a life for themselves. Their children grew to adulthood on the land, and carved their names into the rock, so that they would not be forgotten. However, the rock is now gone, and only a few stories re-

main. In 1887, Henry Clay Thompson, a widow, and his six children, moved from Kansas and settled on 400 acres of land on the east side of the rock in French Valley. This was known as the Alamos School District. Los Alamos Road was named for the dirt road that led from Murrieta to the Alamos District.

The Thompson families raised crops on their land and then hauled their harvest to the Murrieta



The initials, C. A. G., and the date, September 9, 1890, were inscribed on the rock by Clifford Aaron Garinger.

(Photo by Annie Borel)

train depot. Their wagons rolled passed this rock along the dusty and dirty Los Alamos Road that led through the Hogbacks, a series of hills east of Interstate 215. The road then descended the grade into the Murrieta Valley and to the train tracks in the town of Murrieta.

Henry Clay Thompson was elected a Riverside County supervisor and served from 1895 to 1899. Thompson Road, which began at the rock and ran east, was named for the former county supervisor.

In 1899, Henry turned the Thompson farm over to his

son, Joseph. Henry then moved to Murrieta and rented the Burnett home, now known as the Lakeman House. The Burnett home was owned by Mrs. Rachel (Davis) Burnett, a sister of Mrs. Jennie Garinger.

Aaron Thompson Garinger, Henry's nephew, came to the area by 1886 and eventually settled to the west of his uncle's property. He married Mrs. Jennie (Davis) Smohl around 1887.

Mrs. Jennie (Davis) Smohl was born September 22, 1846 in Dayton, Ohio. By 1870, the Davis family had moved to Illinois where Jennie married John Smohl on May 2, 1871. They had two children, Harry Davis Smohl (1872) and Charley Lewis Smohl (1874). Their marriage ended in divorce. Shortly afterwards, Jennie and her two children moved with the Davis family and settled in Murrieta.

In 1892, Jennie Garinger filed a land patent of a 136.73 acres on the south side of the rock.

Aaron, and his two stepsons, Harry and Charley Smohl, planted the first olive grove in the Alamos district. This grove was located to the west of the rock. The family would harvest the olives, and press some for olive oil, and ship their product by rail to market. They would haul their olives along Los Alamos Road to the Murrieta train depot, just like the Thompson family did.

Aaron and Jennie had one son, Clifford Aaron Garinger, born September 9, 1890 at home near the rock. Clifford carved his initials on the rock, "C.A.G" and under it he carved his birth date. However, when he registered for the draft during World War I, he stated that he was born in 1891. On his draft card Clifford filed for exemption status because he was caring for his parents and running the family farm.

Clifford married Marjorie Wickerd on December 25, 1917 in Murrieta in the bride's family home. They had two daughters, Elizabeth (1923) and Barbara (1927). Clifford's parents died in 1923 and he moved his family to Los Angeles. On December 20, 1930, Clifford died while he was at work.

Jennie's oldest son, Harry Smohl, married Nellie G. Overton on December 25, 1893 at Linda Rosa. They had one son, Leonard Overton Smohl. He was born January 5, 1895 at home near the rock that he carved his name into.

When America entered World War I, Leonard registered for the draft on June 5, 1917. It is possible that before he left for his military service, Leonard stopped at the rock and carved his name. He knew that he might not return from Europe and he wanted to be remembered. He carved, "L. Smohl Murrieta, Cal". He also carved a reverse swastika which was an ancient symbol for peace. Per-

haps it was intended to represent a prayer for peace as he marched off to war.

While in the trenches, Leonard's unit was hit by a German gas attack. He suffered respiratory problems from that attack, but returned back to the states after the war. He settled on the family farm and put the war behind him. However, the injuries he had received continued to inflict him the rest of his life. Leonard died on February 3, 1962 and was laid to rest in the Laurel Cemetery in Murrieta.

At the turn of the century, the Thompson farm had disappeared under a sea of track homes. Thompson Road was

eliminated between Briggs and Winchester roads. A small remnant of the Garinger olive grove still remains in the area, along with a number of olive trees that grow on both sides of Los Alamos Road through the Hogbacks area. The Garinger/Smohl houses and barns have all disappeared. All that remained were two names on a rock at the end of Los Alamos Road. Then on June 17, 2022, the Leonard Smohl Memorial Rock was destroyed as part of Riverside County's Clinton Keith extension road project. Though the rock is gone, the family stories will continue to be told so that their history will not be forgotten.



Inscribed on the rock is L. Smohl, Murrieta, Cal with a reverse swastika. This ancient symbol was a sign of peace.
(Photo by Tony Trafton)



In Memory of
Mary E. (Yoder) Tatton
(1929 ~ 2022)

Our wonderful and beloved mother, grandmother, great grandmother and friend, Mary Evelyn (Evie) Tatton passed away peacefully in her sleep on Saturday, May 28, 2022. She will be dearly missed by her family, friends, and the countless others whose lives she touched.

Evie was born February 28, 1929, in Hemet, CA to a wonderful family. She was the fourth of five children born to Maurice and Anita Yoder. She spent her childhood helping on the farm, playing piano and making music with her sister and three brothers. She loved playing sports, music, and dancing, so it was no surprise that she became a drum majorette and danced in the Ramona Pageant. Most of all, she loved spending time with her family and friends.

Evie attended the University of Redlands where she earned her teaching degree. After graduation she taught elementary school in Redlands, and later in Santa Monica where she would meet her husband-to-be, Bill Tat-



In Memory of
Robert "Skip" G. Dunham
(1940 ~ 2022)



ton. Evie and Bill met on August 26, 1957 while shopping at Vons Market. They were married a year later. They bought a house in Westchester, CA where they raised their four children Bill Jr., Charles, Anita, and Margaret.

Evie loved her family and was a wonderful mother. She had a strong faith and love for the Lord, and she studied the Scriptures daily. She loved gardening and nutrition and helped many people live healthier lives. She played piano beautifully her whole life.

Evie is survived by her brother David, her four children, nine grandchildren and six great grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her mom and dad, her husband Bill, her sister Madena, and her brothers Charles and Joseph.

Internment will be at Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park. A graveside service will be held at 10:30 AM on Sunday, June 5, 2022.

Robert "Skip" Dunham, age 81, a life-long resident of Murrieta, CA passed away on June 8, 2022. Skip was born to Elmo and Ethel Dunham in Murrieta on November 3, 1940, at his family home in old town Murrieta. Skip graduated from Elsinore High School in 1958. He was a member of the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 12, driving a scraper, working all over southern California. This skill came in handy many times as he owned his own tractor and would help out neighbors with damaged dirt roads, or anyone just needing his expertise. He served in the Army, traveling to Alaska, Washington DC, New York, and Washington. Skip was a mentor for many kids, coaching his sons' baseball teams, hauling dirt bikes for races, sharing his knowledge of engines and welding. Mechanically, there was nothing he couldn't fix. Many of these kids looked at him as a 2nd father and stayed in contact with him until his death. Skip was an amazing dancer, if you had the chance to take a twirl around the dance floor at the Stampede, you were indeed lucky! Skip was charming, kind, a good friend, brother, uncle, and father. He will be missed dearly.

Skip is survived by his son Rob (Leann) Dunham, daughter Tracy (Chris) Clemenson, sister Mary (Jim) Kean, niece Terri (Jeff) Whitaker, nephew Steve (Sharon) Kean, sister Betty DeRemer, niece Beth (Ed) Hogan, niece Jolene (Tom) Clark, nephew Jeff DeRemer, brother Bill (Mary Jane) Bleak, grandchildren Joshua (Ariel) Dunham, Ronelle (Mark) Johns, RJ (Amanda) Dunham, Andi Dunham, Ryan Clemenson, and Aidan Clemenson. Additionally, he has 7 great grandchildren. He was predeceased by son Ron Dunham, granddaughter Valerie Dunham, niece Karyn Kean, and nephew Lyle DeRemer.

Services will be at 11, June 17th at Laurel Cemetery, 42800 Ivy St, Murrieta, CA 92562. Public is welcome. In Lieu of Flowers, suggested donations to Animal Friends of the Valley or Murrieta Museum are appreciated.

Museum Update

During the past school year, volunteers took six 3rd grade classes and a couple of private groups on a museum tour, a walking tour of the Historic Downtown Murrieta District and the visitors participated in hands on learning activities.

We are continuing to receive donations of historical items related to Murrieta's his-

tory to add to the museum collection.

We have had booths at several special events in the City of Murrieta. Also once a month we have our booth at the Downtown Murrieta Market Night as an outreach program and it has been successful.

If anyone would like to be a volunteer on a Thursday or any future days at the museum, please contact us at info@murrietahistoricalsociety.org or call us at 951-387-4862

Enjoy your summer,

Annette Jennings

Murrieta Museum Director



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Next General Board Meeting TBA

General Board Meetings are virtual in a Zoom meeting format. Anyone interested in joining us, please send an email to info@murrietahistoricalsociety.org and we will email you the Zoom link before the meeting



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

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