



# Murrieta Valley Historical Society Newsletter

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December 2017

*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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(Source: E Hale Curran Collection)

## The Ainsworth & Fallis General Store

By Jeffery G. Harmon

Benjamin D. Ainsworth and his brother-in-law, Frank Fallis operated the Ainsworth & Fallis General Store in Murrieta from 1895 to 1904. Though their time was brief, the merchants ran a successful business and provided Murrieta residents with goods and services needed for their homes and livelihood.

The Colerick Brothers established the first general store in Murrieta inside a tent in 1885.

They built a store in 1886 at the southwest corner of Clay and A Streets just north of the Fountain House Hotel. After ten years in business the Colerick Brothers sold their store and stock to Ainsworth & Fallis for \$1500 in July 1895.

Benjamin Daniel Ainsworth was born November 1850 in Oglethorpe County, Georgia. He was the son of James Thomas and Winifred Murphy Ainsworth. He first married Ella A. Lester on January



The Fallis Brothers General Store on Main Street in Fallbrook, California in 1894

(Source: Photo Courtesy of the Fallbrook Historical Society)

9, 1873 in Decatur County, Georgia. They had three children: Lester B., Frank, and Julia A. Ella died on August 23, 1880 in Thomasville, Thomas Co., Georgia.

Benjamin then married Flournoy "Fonnie" Elizabeth Fallis on June 3, 1885 in Thomas Co., Georgia. They had one child, Birdie A. born May 3, 1887. Fonnie Fallis was the daughter of Flournoy C. and Louisa M. Ginn Fallis. Her brothers, Eugene P. and Frank L. moved to California before 1888 and opened the Fallis Bros. General Store in Fallbrook. Benjamin and Fonnie Ainsworth would join them in May 1895.

Eugene P. Fallis was

born January 1858 in Kentucky. He married Carrie A. Eastman. They had one son, Florian, who died April 22, 1893 at the age of nine months. He was buried in the Odd Fellows Cemetery in Fallbrook.

Frank L. Fallis was born in June 1860 in Kentucky. He married Eloise "Ellie" Pittman. They had three children: Carl, Harry P., and Cora L. Carl died October 24, 1888 at the age of two and was buried in the Odd Fellows Cemetery in Fallbrook.

Benjamin Ainsworth bought a home in Murrieta and Frank Fallis moved his family from Fallbrook to Murrieta to assist in the store operations. Frank may have provided most

of the funding for the Murrieta general store. He also had connections with area suppliers that helped make the start of the business a success.

Frank's parents, Flournoy and Louisa moved from Georgia to Fallbrook the same year as the Ainsworth family. Flournoy Fallis had been a wholesale dealer in Georgia. Grandpa and Grandma Fallis, as they were known in Murrieta, visited the area on many occasions. Grandpa Fallis would sometimes run the Murrieta store when his help was needed.

The Ivy Leaf Club was established at the Ainsworth residence in December 1896. It was a weekly social gathering

where members read books or poetry, did recitations and enjoyed music. The club met in different members' homes each week. In February 1897, the club met at Frank Fallis' residence.

In April 1897, an announcement was made of the upcoming wedding of Julia A. Ainsworth to Charles L. Smohl. Charles was the son of Jennie Davis and the step-son of Aaron Garinger. Charles and Julia were married at the Murrieta Methodist Episcopal Church on April 29, 1897.

"They were made man and wife by Rev. J. M. Richmond. The church was beautifully decorated with roses and cypress festooned about and a lovely arch of orange blossoms and cypress. The bride wore a cream colored serge and the groom the conventional black. They are both well and favorably known in Murrieta and their many friends join in extending hearty congratulations to the happy couple as they take up the duties of their new relation. May the thorns be few and the roses many along their pathway through life." (May 4, 1897, Riverside Independent Enterprise)

Charles and Julia had one child, Alice Ellie Smohl. Charles was a dry grain farmer in the Auld Valley. On occasion, he would work at the Murrieta store when his father-in-law was out of town for business or a vacation.

Frank Fallis and his family moved back to their old home in Fallbrook in July 1897. Frank continued to help with the Murrieta store when the need arose. He also worked at the Fallbrook store assisting his brother, Eugene.

The Ainsworth family was members of the Methodist Church. In October 1898, Benjamin Ainsworth was elected superintendent of the Sunday school. In 1901, at the end of a three week revival at the church, Birdie Ainsworth professed her conversion and was accepted by the church on probation.

Grandpa Fallis died from heart disease on May 25, 1900 and was interred in Los Angeles. He was remembered by Murrieta residents as a jolly, pleasant man with a good natured disposition.

Rev. Mark B. Shaw shared his memories of his former parishioner.

"Mr. Fallis was one of Morgan's raiders during the Civil War, but so highly was he held by the veterans of the other side that he has been for many years an honorary member of the G.A.R." (May 26, 1900, San Bernardino Sun)

Following his death, Grandma Fallis moved to Murrieta and was cared for by her daughter, Fonnice.

That year Eugene P. Fallis bought land in Bakersfield and began drilling for oil. Eugene formed an oil company when he struck oil in June 1900.

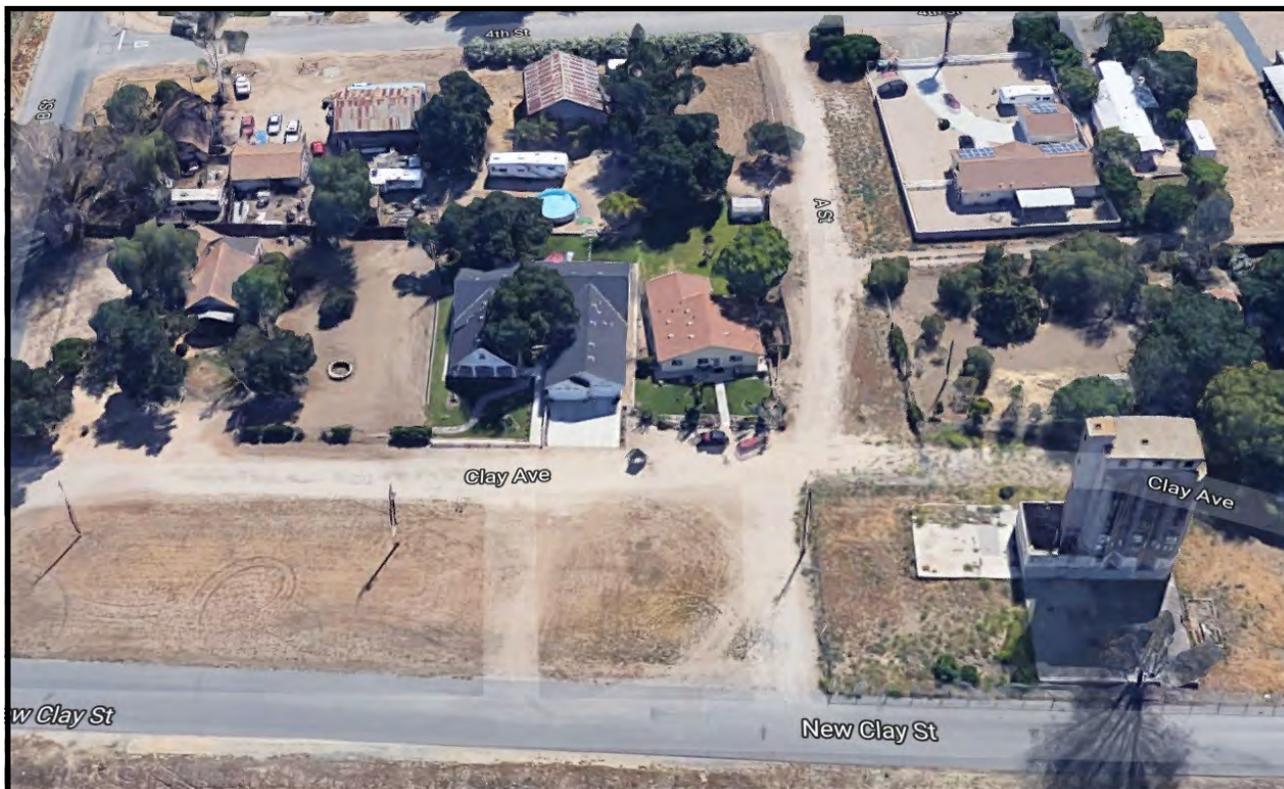
He came to Murrieta and gave a talk hoping to gain investors. Frank Fallis had to take over full operations of the Fallbrook store while Eugene worked for his new company in Los Angeles.

Frank Ainsworth, Benjamin's son, moved from Georgia to California in October 1900. He went to work at the Fallis Bros. General Store in Fallbrook. While living there, Frank married Faith Anderson on June 24, 1903. Afterwards they settled in Los Angeles.

In the summer of 1902, Homer Cyrus Wilson clerked at the Ainsworth & Fallis General Store, while Benjamin Ainsworth took his family on a six week vacation. Homer was a school teacher and had the summer off. He had taught at the Pujol School in Temecula during the 1897 - 1898 school year. The next year he was principal of the Murrieta Grammar school, teaching the upper grade students. Birdie Ainsworth was possibly his student at this time. She passed the eighth grade exam in 1903.

In 1907, Birdie Ainsworth, age 20, married Homer Wilson, age 30. Later they moved to northern California and settled in Fresno where Homer was the District Superintendent of the Fresno Unified School District.

Eugene Fallis left for New York City on October 2, 1902. He and George P. Bartlett were offered positions in a large land deal in Columbia,



The Ainsworth & Fallis General Store was located at the intersection of Clay and A Street. The two houses on the green lawns marks the location of the store. The ring to the left is the fountain remnants of the Fountain House Hotel. The grain elevator is to the northeast of the identified property. New Clay Street was the railroad path. (Source: Google Maps)

South America. They believed they would be gone for six months, but the business deal fell through and the men returned home.

Shortly before he left, George Bartlett had sold his business, the Bartlett & Scott Hardware store, to the Fallbrook Hardware Store in October 1902. The Fallbrook Hardware Store was then renamed the Fallbrook Mercantile Company. This company then absorbed the Fallis Bros. General Store in January 1903. Eugene Fallis was named manager of the new business and Frank Fallis announced his retirement.

One year later, in February 1904, a fire broke out in the Mercantile Company block and destroyed several businesses.

“Part of the block was occupied by Fallis Bros. with a general store. They carried a stock estimated at \$5000; by Dr. S. A. Freeman with a drug store, his stock being estimated at \$2500; also by Mr. Demelius, the barber, and by A. H. Fish, the shoe dealer.” (February 10, 1904, San Diego Evening Tribune)

With the loss of the Fallis Bros. general store, it is doubtful Eugene Fallis rebuilt the store. Months after the fire, he began

selling off his landholdings and later moved to Los Angeles.

Benjamin Ainsworth sold the Murrieta general store to W. P. Barnett for \$200 in May 1905. Then Benjamin and Fannie Ainsworth moved to Hanford, Kings County, California. Homer and Birdie Wilson were living with them in 1910.

Frank Fallis sold his Fallbrook landholdings and moved to Oakland, California in 1910. At the time, his son, Harry, along with his wife, Geneva, was living in Berkley. By 1920, Frank and Ellie were living in Ramona, San Diego County, California.

Eugene Fallis died August 3, 1925 and was buried in the Evergreen Cemetery in Los Angeles. His wife died in 1938 and was buried by his side. Frank Fallis died on March 15, 1930 in San Diego County. He was buried in the Odd Fellows Cemetery in Fallbrook. His wife died in 1951 and was buried by his side.

On July 27, 1933, Benjamin D. Ainsworth died in Fresno, California and was bur-

ied in Belmont Memorial Park. His wife, Fannie, died on May 2, 1960 and was buried beside her husband.

After the Ainsworth & Fallis General Store changed owners, so did its name. Then the Murrieta business district shifted away from the railroad to the new Inland Highway on Washington Avenue. The general store's location soon fell out of favor and closed. In 1933, Mike Mance tore down the aban-

doned building and built a two-story home for his family, which still stands to this day.

The Ainsworth & Fallis General Store was operated by two families for almost ten years. Their contributions to the growth of Murrieta at the turn of the century have been mostly forgotten. Today all that remains of the Ainsworth & Fallis General Store is a single photograph.

## **BODIE: GOOD TIMES & BAD**

BY NICHOLAS CLAPP AND PHOTOGRAPHER WILL FURMAN

BOOK REVIEW BY JEFFERY HARMON

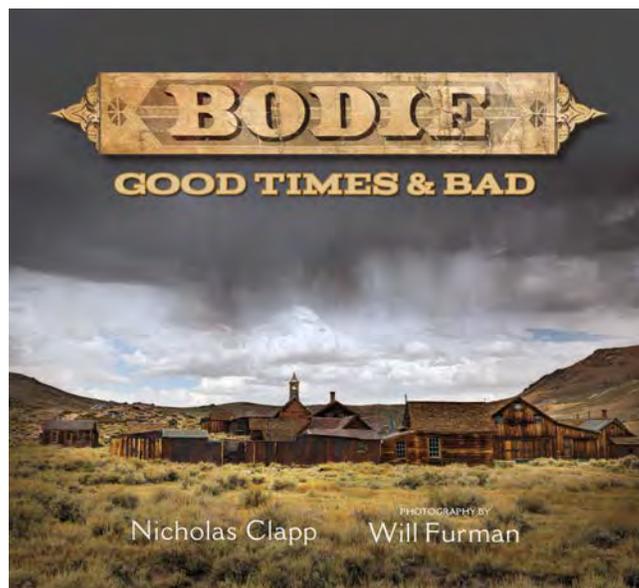
Nicholas Clapp's book, "Bodie: Good Times & Bad", is not a dime novel narrative spinning fanciful tales of murderous gunmen and tragic saloon girls in this Wild West gold mining town. Instead Clapp weaves a tapestry of the American lives, both criminals and citizens that broke ground at Bodie, building homes and creating a modest living. Clapp shares memorable community moments such as snowball fights, a 4th of July celebration, and the townsfolk's excursion to the foothills of the Sequoia Mountains. Clapp demonstrates that the American spirit continued to forge ahead as fortunes rose and fell in Bodie.

Photographer Will Furman uses a unique technique that he calls, "inside out". His images challenge one's perspective by capturing a reflective scene within a scene. The photos command one to go beyond the stereotypical viewpoints of a ghost town, and to reflect on the lives of those that once called Bodie home.

Clapp and Furman's collaboration is a pleasant journey. It will tug at the heart, beckoning adventurers to visit Bodie State Historic Park, to step into the shoes of the past, and to listen for the echoes

of yesteryear. For those that enjoy tales of the American West or for those searching for a travel destination, I recommend Nicholas Clapp's book, "Bodie: Good Times & Bad".

Bodie State Historic Park is located in Northern California off of Highway 395.



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**Next Monthly Board Meeting:**

Monday, December 4, 2017 at 5:30 p.m.

Honeycutt Farms Family Restaurant  
 40477 Murrieta Hot Springs Road, D2  
 (In the Alta Murrieta Shopping Center)

All members welcome to attend

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