



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 Colton Grain & Milling Company in Colton, California
(Source: Internet)

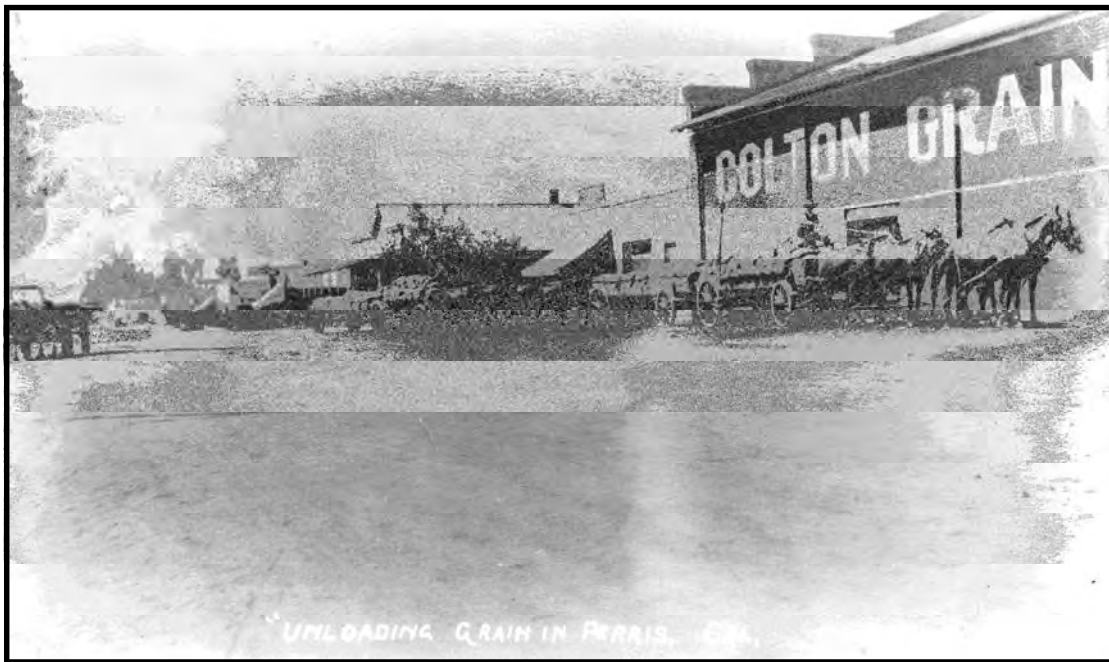
William E. Burr, Grain Buyer

By Jeffery G. Harmon

Murrieta was a large dry farming community. The farmers depended on the railroad to transport their harvest to the Southern California milling companies where the grain would be transformed into flour, seed, or livestock feed. Yet one man stood between the farmer and the mill, and he was known as a grain buyer. He was the mill's representative in the field, and both the farmer and the company depended on this salesman to negotiate a fair market price for the farmer, and to generate a profit for the company. William E. Burr was a successful

grain buyer, and his services were appreciated by Murrieta farmers for over twenty years.

William E. Burr was born April 16, 1856 in Middletown, Connecticut. He married Hannah M. Chattaway and they had one son, William C. Burr. By 1890, the family had settled in Santa Ana, California where William found work with the Olive Milling Company. At least once a month he would travel to Riverside and stay at the Holyrood Hotel. He would then take the train east to San Jacinto or as far south as Murrieta.



The Colton Grain and Milling Company's Perris warehouse
(Source: The Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association)

He befriended everyone he met, and developed close ties with the farmers and the communities.

After working for the company for many years, William Burr took a position with the McNear mills of Contra Costa in June 1901. He worked for the company for a short time. In 1903, he and his family moved to Colton where he had purchased a home. He was offered a position with a newly established milling company. The Colton Grain and Milling Company, an affiliate of the large Globe Mills Company in Los Angeles, was incorporated in April 1903. The company manager was Emil J. Eisenmayer, the mill's engineer was C. J. Rice, and William E. Burr was the bookkeeper and salesman.

William Burr immedi-

ately began visiting Hemet, Diamond Valley, and Auld Valley purchasing grain for the new mill. He used his old contacts and strategies from his time with the Olive Milling Company to secure the success of the new mill.

The Colton Grain and Milling Company needed to immediately secure warehouses for the coming harvest. In Perris, the company purchased the former Nance commercial building located at the northwest corner of 4th and D Street near the railroad tracks in April 1905. The building had been gutted by fire and only the walls remained standing. The brick wall ruins were utilized in the construction of the company's new warehouse. S. V. Gates was hired as its manager and he told reporters that the warehouse would be opened in time for the harvest

season.

Colton Mill then purchased empty lots 4, 5, and 6, block 2 in Winchester in order to build a warehouse near the railroad tracks. It would have the storage capacity of 25,000 sacks of grain. Mr. Patterson was placed in charge.

Next the company leased space in the Olive Milling Company's warehouse in Murrieta. Civil War veteran and early Murrieta settler, Henry Zimmerman was named the warehouse manager. The warehouse was located at the southwest corner of B Street and New Clay Avenue near the railroad tracks.

William Burr visited the farmers in May to interview them, inspect their fields and take orders for grain sacks. In 1905, the Colton Mill sold 500,000 grain sacks to area

farmers. In August, during the height of the harvest season, manager E. J. Eisenmayer took an automobile inspection tour with William Burr. At one stop they saw 12,000 stuffed grain sacks stacked in a farmer's field. During their tour, they purchased grain, and made arrangements to have it transported to the company's warehouse where it would wait to be loaded onto a box car and sent to the Colton mill.

After the harvest, William Burr traveled to San Jacinto, Hemet and other locales and took purchase orders from merchants. The Colton Mill produced A1 Flour and Burr's job was to get it to market. He was described as a genial traveling salesman, and merchants proudly advertised A1 Flour in their stores and newspapers.

The next year the Colton Milling Company had large steel tanks installed to expand its storage in order to handle the increasing harvest yield.

"The capacity of the mill is 250 barrels of flour, 50 barrels of meal and 50 tons of rolled barley per day which is marketed largely in San Bernardino and Riverside counties and in Arizona. This is one of the leading institutions of Southern California." (April 13, 1906, Hemet News)

William Burr purchased Lot 10, Block 9 in Murrieta in December 1906. There was a small building on the property and it is possible he used it as an

office. If he worked in Murrieta for a few days, he would stay at the Fountain House Hotel.

One of the reasons Burr was a successful salesman was because of the relationships he forged throughout his career. One example would be his life-long friendship with Murrieta dry farmers, the Sykes family. On January 8, 1907, William and Hannah Burr attended the wedding of Rose Sykes and Irvin Culp at the Murrieta Methodist Episcopal Church. The Burr family gave the newly wedded couple silver tea spoons as a wedding gift.

Though his relationships within the communities were part of his charm, he was also a successful investor. Burr's business partner, E. J. Eisenmayer, had invested in several land companies, and other business ventures related to the milling industry. William Burr followed his partner's strategies. For example, the Riverside Milling and Fuel Company was incorporated in February 1905. Eisenmayer invested \$3,000 and Burr invested \$1,500 in the new company.

The Nuevo Land Company filed articles of incorporation in April 1907. E. J. Eisenmayer was named a director and William Burr was a stockholder. The new company produced grain that was sent to the Perris warehouse and sold exclusively to the Colton Mill. It was a lucrative investment. In one week alone, the land company shipped 15 cars of wheat by rail to the

Colton mill.

Another company that the business partners invested in was the Colton Poultry Supply Company. It was incorporated by 1908 and both men invested \$500 in the company. With his growing success, William Burr was soon able to purchase a new automobile.

Burr took his own auto tour of the county fields in April 1908. Later that year he hired Henry Zimmerman's son-in-law, James Witcher, to manage the Winchester warehouse. During the harvest season, both Zimmerman and Witcher took separate auto trips with Burr to inspect the grain that would be transported to the company's warehouses.

In 1909, the Colton Mill built a barley mill north of their Perris warehouse on D Street. It was 18 x 86 feet, three stories high, and constructed of corrugated iron with a cement floor. It was completed in September 1909 in time for the harvest. In the first year it processed 40 tons of barley per day. Eisenmayer and Burr inspected the barley mill during its first three months of operation.

In December 1909, after serving as the mill manager for seven years, E. J. Eisenmayer was promoted to vice president of Globe Mills in Los Angeles and general manager for the Pacific Coast region. William Burr was appointed manager of the Colton Mill Company. He sold his Murrieta lot in February



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Globe Grain & Milling Co.

"A 1" Flour advertisement
 (Source: January 8, 1915, RIE)

1910. His visits to Murrieta were few for the next two years as his duties kept him in Colton, Perris and San Jacinto managing operations and sales.

As his fortunes grew, he continued to invest. William Burr purchased the New England Bakery in Riverside in April 1911. He did not work at the bakery, but possibly leased it to a baker. The bakery may have used A1 Flour exclusively. A year later he invested in another business venture.

In April 1912, he purchased the old Murrieta pool hall on the fractional part of lots 11 and 12, block 4. This was at the southeast corner of the intersection of First Avenue and B Street.

"Mr. Burr, the present owner, is having the old pool room building papered and painted. Van Hale of Florence is doing the work." (May 4, 1912, Riverside Daily Press)

The small building may have been a commercial investment. A barber leased the building and established a shop.

After two years of managing the Colton mill, William Burr returned to the road visiting the farmers and their fields. When he traveled from town to town, his wife and son remained in Colton. On a rare occasion in August 1912, Hannah Burr accompanied her husband on one of his business trips and they stayed at Hotel Hemet. However, she did not return with him the next month when he returned to San Jacinto to complete the sales of A1 Flour.

Tragedy struck the Colton mill in November 1912 when a fire destroyed a Colton warehouse the company was leasing. The Colton Poultry Supply Company, who had product stored in the building, reported a loss of several thousand dollars. This was the beginning of a difficult time for the company.

The next year the harvest was light, and purchasing grain for the company was a challenge. William Burr reported to the newspaper that grain yield was low in 1913.

"The crop in Perris, San Jacinto and Murrieta country, as far as the wheat and barley is concerned is very light in comparison with last year. The Colton mill sold 400,000 empty grain sacks in the county last year. This year, we have not sold 50,000, the difference giv-

ing an idea of the shortage of the grain harvest." (August 12, 1913, Riverside Independent Enterprise)

He traveled to Murrieta in July and Auld Valley in August in order to buy as much grain as possible and had it shipped to Colton. After the harvest, William and Hannah Burr traveled once more to Hemet together and stayed at Hotel Hemet in October. William Burr received the purchase orders from the local merchants and then had A1 flour shipped to them.

The Globe Warehouse Company was formed in June 1914 in order to separate the warehouses and the milling operations. The company purchased seven warehouses from the Globe Mills in Los Angeles and three from the Colton Mills. Globe Mills then absorbed the Colton Mills and its name was changed to Globe Mills.

Meanwhile in May 1914, William Burr purchased lots 1 and 2, block 4 from Miles W. Thompson. These lots were on the southwest corner of B Street and Washington Avenue. He then made improvements at the Murrieta warehouse.

"W. E. Burr, of the Colton mills, has had warehouse No. 5 at Murrieta recovered with galvanized iron and 2x4 sheeting. He is also fixing up a room 10 by 20 adjoining the barber-shop for an office. He owns the building." (June 20, 1914, Riverside Daily Press)

William also visited the Perris warehouse weekly in July. He then bought grain from farmers in Auld Valley. The grain prices were low that season and so the grain was held in the Perris and Winchester warehouses as farmers waited for the prices to rise.

As time passed, William continued to make improvements on his Murrieta property.

"W. E. Burr has improved his property on Main Street (B Street) by having a garage built for his machine, and by re-shingling the other buildings." (October 2, 1914, Riverside Daily Press)

Another fire struck the Colton Mill in July 1917. The cause was attributed to defective electric wiring. The fire destroyed the second and third floors with an estimated loss of \$25,000. The mill had to be rebuilt and new equipment purchased from the east. Once the repairs were made, barley rolling began again in November 1917 and by January 1918, flour production resumed.

In May 1919, William Burr sold his lots on First Avenue and moved his offices to his Washington Avenue lots. He hired Jack Hamilton, a local carpenter, to build his new office.

"Van Hale has purchased the property belonging to Mr. Burr on Main Street. W. E. Burr has moved his garage onto his corner lot on Washington Avenue and will build an office later." (May 24, 1919, Riverside

Daily Press)

Traveling a hundred miles or more to the many area communities made the grain buyer's occupation dangerous. During visits to towns and fields, accidents could occur whether traveling by train or automobile. Emil J. Eisenmayer, William Burr's business partner, was killed in a car crash near Camarillo, California in March 1920. He was 49 years old. Burr had been his business partner for over seventeen years and his death was difficult to accept.

William Burr's work continued, but times were changing and new agricultural methods were being developed. The Murrieta grain elevator was constructed in 1918 in order to combat the high prices of grain sacks during World War I. After the war, farmers continued to purchase grain sacks from Globe Mills. As the years progressed though, farmers converted from grain sacks to storing their crops at the grain elevator.

By 1923, the Murrieta warehouse was discontinued as the company began to rent space at the grain elevator. The warehouse was sold in July 1925 to Lusk & Meyers of Oceanside. The new owners converted the warehouse into a packing house for lettuce.

William E. Burr died in March 1928, and was buried in the Santa Ana Cemetery. His wife Hannah died four months later. Burr's Murrieta office and property was sold to John

Egelund, who removed the building. Burr's son, William C. Burr, followed in his father's footsteps. He was a salesman for the Globe Mills for over twenty-three years. William C. Burr's daughter, Lois Rosamond Burr married Frederick William Newport, the son of William Newport, one of Riverside's largest dry grain farmers.

The railroad was removed from Murrieta in 1935, but the grain elevator remained in operation until 1983. Grain buyers continued to return to Murrieta at the beginning of each year's harvest season. However, only one grain buyer, William E. Burr, was remembered over the years. William Burr contributed greatly to the success of the Murrieta farmers, and provided great customer service to all those he did business with. His legacy should never be forgotten.

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"A 1" Flour advertisement
(Source: June 12, 1903, Hemet News)

Museum Update

By
President Jeffery Harmon

The 71st Annual Murrieta Firefighters BBQ was held April 22, 2018. We had hoped to have had the museum open on that day, but we are still in the processing of sprucing up the museum. We had a large booth in front of the museum and we welcomed old and new friends alike. The number one question we were asked during the event was, "When is the museum going to open?"

First the museum needed a fresh coat of paint. Board members, Connie Cain McConnell and Jenny Mayoral went to Dunn-Edwards Paints and spoke with the manager about the museum project. They received a generous discount on the paint and supplies.

Then during the last weekend in March, the Mayoral family, Pancho, Ulises, Mindy and April along with board member, Al Volbrecht, painted the museum's exterior. Today, the historic white house gleams in the sunshine and the windows and trim sport a soft blue color that highlights the architectural features of the house. We would like to say thank you to our volunteer paint crew.

Pat Jennings completed the repairs on the roof and patched the chimney and ac unit. Then Pat Jennings, and Pancho and Ulises Mayoral re-



paired the ceiling and the damaged wall from the leaky chimney. Once the repairs are complete, then the volunteer paint crew will begin on the museum's interior.

Mayor Jonathan Ingram visited with Pat Jennings at the

museum on April 9th to hear how the museum's preparations were progressing. Pat shared that one of the challenges the project has faced is retaining an engineer to draft a diagram of the proposed ADA ramp. Mayor Ingram offered to secure an engineer and assist in getting the ramp construction moving forward. We are grateful for the mayor's support and we are looking forward to the museum's opening day.

Now we need to roll up our sleeves and get back to work. Please consider making a donation today. If you are a business owner, please consider sponsoring our efforts. We need to raise \$8,000 in order to open this museum. If you are skilled in fundraising efforts, please step forward, we need your help. Together we can preserve and protect our history. Join us today!





\$8,000 Donation Goal

The Society needs an estimated \$8,000 to install a new access ramp to the museum. The museum cannot open until the ramp is installed.

Donations can be made through our Go Fund Me page. If you are a business owner and you would like to sponsor or contribute to the project, please contact us.

Thank you for supporting our City's heritage.

If you have an questions or suggestions please let us know. Phone: 951-387-4862



<https://www.gofundme.com/murrietamuseum>

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Next Monthly Board Meeting:
Monday, May 7, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.
Murrieta Museum
41810 Juniper Street
(At Hunt Memorial Park)
All members welcome to attend

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION 1918-2018

MURRIETA'S GRAIN ELEVATOR

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