



The GILMAN RANCH FLYER

Issue No. 7

Gilman Historic Ranch and Wagon Museum

Spring 2000



MARTHA GILMAN

By Virginia Sisk

The deeds of pioneer men and the mountains they moved are often found in the pages of history. But the stories of pioneer women are often not recorded in the annals of history. Martha Gilman's story is not well known, but she deserves to be remembered for her contribution to San Geronio Pass area history.

Mattie, as everyone called her, was a true pioneer citizen of Banning. She was born in Council Bluffs, Iowa, on April 14, 1850, to Dr. Isaac and Emily Smith. In 1853 Dr. Smith brought his family from Iowa by the overland route, reaching the Cajon Pass by wagon. They continued on to the San Geronio Pass that year and lived for some time at what was known as the Powell Weaver Ranch, north of present-day Beaumont and the original Rancho de San Geronio. They were the first Anglo settlers in the area.

Young Mattie grew up on a ranch bought by her father at the present Highland Springs Resort. This ranch was a stage-coach station for many years before the railroad entered the Pass. Mattie and her four sisters helped their mother on the ranch—Emily was a stern taskmaster. As soon as the girls were old enough, they took over the cooking and milking. Mattie was quoted as saying that when the stage came in late, they would listen and hope no one would want anything to eat because it meant getting up and cooking a meal.

In 1871 Mattie married a young New Englander, James Marshall Gilman, who had purchased the Newton Noble Ranch in 1869. Several of Mattie's and James's writings give a glimpse of their courtship. Gilman writes in his diary dated August 27, 1869, "Went over to Smith's my first call to see the girls, stopped to dinner left about two." Possibly a bit of a romantic, Mattie writes in a letter to her cousin, "I was acquainted with Marsh a year and a half before we were married we used to take moonlight

rides and walks." Another note from Gilman's diary, dated Friday, December 31, 1869, says, "Came in today horseback with Carlos [Carl Smith] girls all went in. Noyse was there. the ball fine, took Mattie, a nice time danced until daylight caught them with a Happy New Year." In a letter written shortly after their marriage, Mattie writes,

I have gone went and done & jumped the matrimonial broomstick would not have done such a thing if it had not been for Marsh Gilman but he must come upset my arrangements with his good looks and winning ways, and I was just goose enough to fall head and ears in love at first sight and that is how it all happened . . . He is as kind and good as any one can be and he is the handsomest man in the county, don't see how I came to get him anyway. it is a mystery to me how he could like plain me . . .

Their union was noted in the *San Bernardino Guardian*, where an article dated January 14, 1871, reads, "It is not sufficient to say, we wish the bride and groom happiness, but we can truly say that we always like, in the words of the poet to see 'Two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one.'" Mattie came to the Gilman ranch as a bride and remained there the rest of her life.

When Mattie came to the ranch, there was no Banning, and no agricultural lands had been developed. This pioneer woman remembered the days when bears roamed the foothills and valley, menacing the cattle that grazed over the vast unfenced acres. She saw the transition of transportation during her 78 years, from the covered wagon and stage coach to the railroad, automobile, and airplane. Mattie raised a large family—eight children in all—and stayed home to take care of the ranch when Marsh was away on business. Many times she was lonely and missed Marsh, as she writes in a letter dated March 28, 1872:

Marsh you would not tell me how long you was to be gone before you left home, why didn't you? was you afraid I would not let you go? I wouldn't if could help it anyway it so awful lonesome here with out you. You must not work too hard or ride too far Marsh and make yourself sick, if not for your own sake for the sake of those that love you. take care of your self and come home as soon as you can. It is raining again the kitchen floor is wet all over . . .

This letter was written when she was 22 and they were living in the old adobe, which also served as a stage stop and was part of the original ranch.

Mattie was an excellent cook. In her early married life she fed the passengers riding the stage and canned the abundant fruit that grew on the ranch. She wrote of canning fruit with her mother, Emily Smith. For the baptisms that took place in the Gilman reservoir, she baked numerous cakes and made homemade ice cream. Her mother's sister, "Aunt Kate," remembered her mouth-watering wild pigeon pie. The Gilman olives were famous up and down the state.

Mattie was a prolific letter writer. Although few of her letters remain, there are many letters existing that were written to her, and almost without exception they begin by thanking her for her last letter and with apologies for not having answered her letter sooner. From the letters she received we know her favorite correspondents were her two sisters, Ida and Em, in the Arizona Territory, Aunt Kate in Kansas, and two cousins, Lida and Henrietta, in Maryland. All were desperate for news from the "West."

Mattie was a woman of strength and dogged determination. In the fall of 1883 Marsh returned to New Hampshire to visit his parents, whom he hadn't seen for 20 years. Mattie was left at home with five young children, pregnant with her sixth, and with a ranch to take care of. Marsh was away for three months and wrote Mattie frequent letters about the business of the ranch. In one, expressing his concern about being gone, he says, "Am felling uneasy about you and the children all of the time . . ." Mattie may have felt the same way, but maintained the family and the ranch without apparent complaint until Marsh's return.

Mattie's mother must have been a strong pioneer role model for her daughters. Two of Mattie's sisters, Ida Smith Genung and Emeline Merriam Noyes, were pioneer women in the early years of the Arizona Territory. Martha Gilman witnessed the transition of the Pass area around the ranch from a wilderness to a cultivated valley that became the town of Banning. She experienced the hardships of a pioneer mother. Nonetheless, her strength and fortitude brought her and her family into the modern era.

Note—Virginia Sisk is the great-granddaughter of Mattie and James Marshall Gilman.

**CURATOR OF
HISTORY
WANTED**

WELCOME CHRISTIE

The Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District now has a new Curator of History. Christie Mitchell will be spending one day each week at the Gilman Ranch overseeing the museum and its collections. Christie comes to us from Stillwater, Oklahoma, where she was working toward an MA degree in Applied History (museum studies) at Oklahoma State University. At the same time she was working as Program Coordinator at the local Sheerar Museum where she was involved in "everything" it takes to run a museum.

Christie is no stranger to our area—she lived in Riverside before going to Oklahoma to further her education. She completed her undergraduate studies at Loma Linda University as a teacher and taught in Riverside before traveling east. She plans to complete her Masters in History Resource (museum) Management at UCR.

Christie is married and lives in Yucaipa with her husband, Mike, and their four-year-old daughter, Kira. Christie enjoys reading, embroidery, and cooking. She thinks that the ranch is a wonderful historical setting and has great potential as a public attraction. ★



FOR THE BIRDS

The Gilman Historic Ranch now has a birding guide. At the request of Site Interpreter Shelley Kibby, Norman H. Mellor, M.D., southland bird expert, compiled a guide listing more than 80 kinds of birds that either inhabit the ranch site or visit it at some time during the year. From Blackbird to Wrentit, the guide tells you whether they are resident or migratory, what season is best for their sighting, and how common they are to the area. Pick up your guide at the museum store—they're free! ★



GILMAN RANCH EVENTS UPDATE

If you missed the Early California Living History Celebration, held at the ranch on the weekend of March 11th and 12th, you missed a whole lot of fun and some great Mexican food. The event was sponsored by the San Geronio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, which was also responsible for the food booth.

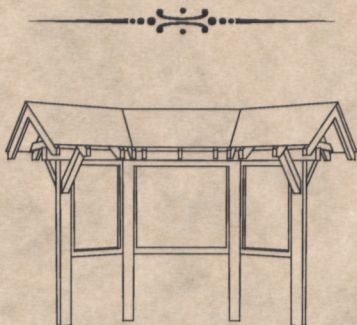
We were entertained by some of the cast members of the Ramona Outdoor Play, who presented scenes from the play and sang and danced. If you have not seen the pageant, this would have been a great opportunity to see the players up close and personal! There were performances by the Cahuilla Bird Singers and Warren Salmon, a cowboy poet. Books by Warren are for sale at the ranch store.

The most exciting part for me was experiencing the stage coach ride with the galloping horses and the dust flying. I think everyone had a great time, and I'm looking forward to next year being even bigger and better.

Our next event is the Mountain Man Living History Encampment to be held September 20th through the 24th. During the week, the event will be open for school children, and the general public is invited to attend on Saturday and Sunday.

The museum is now open every Sunday 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. I hope to see you there!

—Shelley Kibby, Site Interpreter



GARDEN DONATIONS

Bill Deans completed the kiosk in the French Gilman Native Plant Garden in time for the Early California Living History Celebration. The kiosk now has a map of the garden keyed to all the plantings and information about French and the donating of the kiosk in honor of Bill and Lois Deans by their children. Also posted is a list of all the people and organizations who have generously contributed money and plants to the garden. We would like to recognize those people here:

Larry & Dorothy Bailey

Mary Joan Barker

Rudy & Julia Blanchard

Leo & Maxine Chaffin

William & Lois Deans

Annette Diell

Elmer Dragolovich

Arlene Evans

Bonnie Ewing

Dorothy Jost

Robert & Louise Knighton

Edward & Terry Peterson

Mike & Ann Pickett

Sun Lakes Garden Club

Sun Lakes Singles Club

Carolyn Tate



Frank & Barbara Yost in Memory of Ethel Buchanan



Joan Coombs in memory of Philip Coombs



Donald and Helen Lewis, Gordon & Virginia Sisk, and Robert Weinland in memory of Shirley Weinland Hentzel



Harry & Gail Arita, George Barker, Joan Coombs, Evelyn Kay, Clarice Morse, and Martha Stuhmer in memory of Fred Hicks

R_x SARAH'S REMEDIES

French Gilman's wife, Sarah, began teaching school at the Morongo Indian Reservation in the late 1880s. While there she compiled a small book of remedies which she titled *Simple Remedies for Indian Service*. Here are a few of her entries:

Remedy for T.B. Trycotol, for Goiter Orodine—2 tablets per week (1 on Mon. & 1 on Thurs.)

Alcohol is the antidote for carbolic acid burns. Also flour and water or any mucilaginous drinks.

Strychnine—Mustard and water

Acids—Muriatic, Oxalic, Acetic, Sulphuric...Nitric...
Take soap-suds, magnesia or lime-water

Duane Hawverman's Rheumatism cure Longaline

Mercurial ointment for bugs or fish berries. Also coal oil.

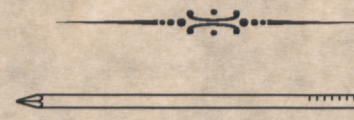
Bad Breath 1 teaspoonful of charcoal every day with an occasional cathartic.

Lightning—Dash cold water over patient.

Fainting—Place on back and sprinkle with cold water

For fresh cuts turpentine is excellent.

Bed bugs carry leprosy.



FOR WANT OF A NAIL...

It is history that teaches us to hope.

—Robert E. Lee

THE GILMAN RANCH FLYER

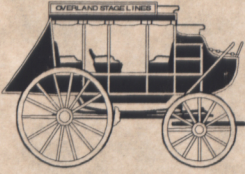


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GILMAN HISTORIC RANCH AND WAGON MUSEUM

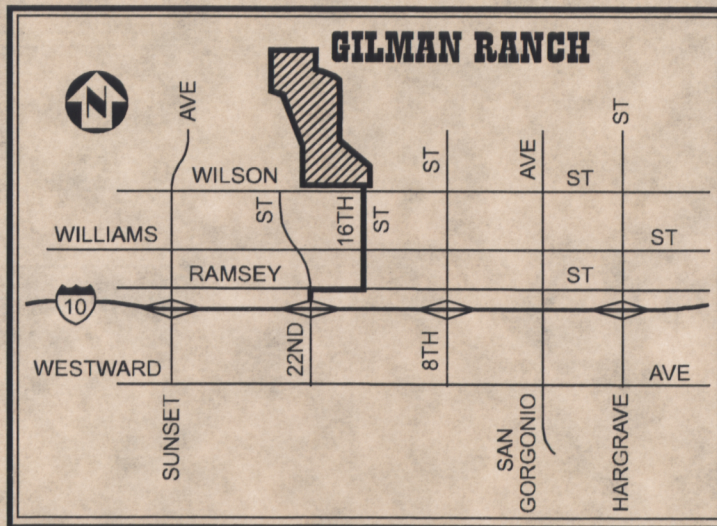
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RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL PARK



AND OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

"To acquire, protect, develop, manage, and interpret for the inspiration, use and enjoyment of all people, a well-balanced system of areas of outstanding scenic, recreation, and historic importance."



The Gilman Historic Ranch and Wagon Museum is located at 16th and Wilson Streets in Banning, CA.