

# **Gustine Historical Society**

**By Patricia Snyder Snoke**

**The goal of the Gustine Historical Society is to preserve, protect and present the history of Gustine and its surrounding areas. It is a dynamic, rural organization of volunteers. The Gustine Historical Society was incorporated on December 21, 1983 and operates the Gustine Museum and the Wilbur and Irene Gomes Gustine History Center. Six times a year it publishes The Magpie, the official newsletter of the Gustine Historical Society.**

**[www.gustinehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.gustinehistoricalsociety.org)**

## **Gustine Museum**

**397 Fourth Street**

**Highway 33**

**Gustine, 95322**

**Phone (209) 854-2344**

**[gustinemuseum@gustinehistoricalsociety.org](mailto:gustinemuseum@gustinehistoricalsociety.org)**

**The Gustine Museum is housed in the former Merced County Justice Courthouse/Jail building. Built in 1911, this historic building served the City of Gustine until abandoned in 1980, when the Police Department moved to new quarters. It was leased to the Gustine Historical Society in 1985. After extensive costly restoration, it reopened in 1990 as the Gustine Museum. In 1996 the building was designated a California Point of Historic Interest. The Gustine Museum has been described as one of the finest small town museums in northern California.**

**Open Thursdays and Sundays**

**1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

**-Admission Free-**

# **Wilbur and Irene Gomes Gustine History Center**

**323 Sixth Street  
Gustine, CA 95322  
Phone (209) 854-6455**

**[gustinemuseum@gustinehistoricalsociety.org](mailto:gustinemuseum@gustinehistoricalsociety.org)**

**The History Center, dedicated July 4, 1997, was made possible as a gift from longtime Gustine activists Wilbur and Irene Gomes. The center features an archival library, Gustine newspapers from 1911, West Side obituaries, histories, biographies, maps, Gustine school annuals and registers, California history, Indian lore and an extensive photographic collection.**

**Open Thursdays and Sundays  
1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
or by appointment by calling  
(209) 854-3120**

## **Gussie**

**Henry Miller, the cattle baron and the founder of Gustine, left many monuments to his memory in various parts of the state. However, the city of Gustine, named for his beloved daughter, Sarah Alice “Gussie”, stands today as living testimony to one of the most powerful and picturesque figures of the old west.**

**Sarah Alice Miller was born in 1871 and delighted her father by dressing in frilly dresses. He nicknamed her “Gussie” which was the term of dressing or getting “gussied up.” Very much like Henry Miller himself, she always wanted to be out among the cattle. Her one delight was to ride horse back. Henry Miller idolized her. Gussie was Henry Miller all over again.**

**On June 13, 1879, Gussie, aged 8 and her older sister Nellie were riding horse back near the Bloomfield ranch near Gilroy. Her galloping horse suddenly broke his stride as a foreleg sank into a gopher hole. She was pitched headfirst to the ground and instantly killed. After the tragedy, Henry Miller’s mind was constantly on his little girl. Blaming himself, he would stand in the road where the tragedy occurred and curse at the top of his voice. Finally, he suffered a nervous breakdown, which necessitated a complete rest. This was obtained by a trip to Europe, back home to the land of his birth.**

**All the rest of his life, wherever he went, he carried with him a picture of Gussie. Once Henry Miller was held up and robbed. He had a fine engraved watch that contained Gussie’s picture. Miller told the robber, “Just let me take that picture out.” The robber let Miller remove the picture. Miller told him he could have the watch and his money and “I’ll never bother you.”**

**He also had a small portrait framed and glassed and kept on his bureau. Before going to bed, he would kiss the photo good night. From time to time, his housekeepers were said to have to wash tear stains from the glass. Henry Miller had lost forever his greatest treasure.**