-the-
KERN COURIER
Kern County Museum
BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIA
2022 SPRING EDITION

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THE BAKERSFIELD SOUND



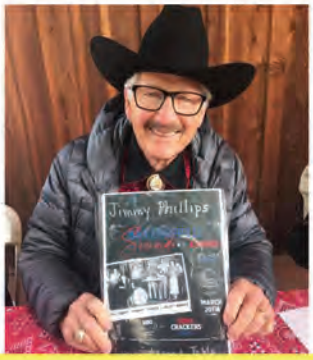
The Kern County Museum was very pleased to dedicate the newest exhibition building The Bakersfield Sound, on March 20th at a gala ribbon cutting. More than 400 music fans came to Pioneer Village to listen to music from the Soda Crackers country band, eat bar-be-que and honor that unique sound that was born in Kern County. Thanks to a competitive grant from the California Department of Natural Resources' Museum Fund, the exciting new exhibition celebrates the unique brand of country music that was created in Kern County honky tonks in the 1950's and 60's.

The museum has been collecting musical instruments, costumes, photographs and architectural artifacts for years. All of these artifacts from the "Bakersfield Sound" had been put into storage with just a few items on display in the main building. Now the collection is open for public viewing. "This was a long held dream of local music fans and our museum," said Executive Director Mike McCoy. "We think visitors to our museum are going to be dazzled."

The western building housing the collection will also serve as a concert stage. Designer Gary Prendez and historian Rachel Hads worked with Juarez Construction to incorporate special lighting, video and sound to make the special artifacts come alive. Local cabinet maker Bill Rundle designed and built the showcases. "The Bakersfield Sound really put our region on the map," said Hads. "This new building will really give you the Bakersfield honky tonk experience."

Local philanthropist Mary Trichell and her charitable foundation made a very generous contribution along with the Ellen Baker Tracey Guild, Kyle Carter, Peggy Darling and David Cole and Kim McAbee Carter. The project also received donations and encouragement from the Bakersfield Country Music Museum board and Citizens Preserving History.

The Tejon Ranch Gallery is also holding a special exhibition this Spring celebrating The Bakersfield Sound. Curated by designer Vicki Farrell, historic photos from the Museum's collection show the people and the places of this unique brand of country music.





Zane and Cooper Adamo from the Soda Crackers with living legend Tommy Hays.

—from the— DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY DR. MIKE MCCOY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As our country emerges from the pandemic lockdown of the last two long years, the Kern County Museum is now able to celebrate the hard work and projects that have been recently completed. Our biggest accomplishment this year has been the completion of the Bakersfield Sound exhibit. A huge thank you to the California Department of Natural Resources for primary funding with additional financial help from other local donors.

We also put the finishing touches this Spring on the restoration of St. John's Missionary Episcopal Church. With new paint, landscaping and much needed carpentry repairs, the project honors the memory of donor Ernie Schroeder. And while we had the paint brushes out, we used nearly 200 gallons of white paint and primer to restore the Kern City French Bakery. Project funded by the Ellen Baker Tracy Guild. And to finish off the Spring construction season, we are completing the Sheep Camp exhibit. Sitting right next door to the French Bakery, the exhibit is the work of Mark Parsons and Dan Hay who worked hard to celebrate our county's Basque heritage.



Eddie Valdez refinishing the 100 year old floor in bakery



Starting the Basque Sheep Camp project

Looking forward to summer, the Museum staff will begin the restoration of the Santa Fe Caboose with funding from Mic and Kay Hall. This will be a major scrape and paint project with a lot of decorative stenciling. We will also paint and restore the Fairhaven Pump House.

Our largest project this year will be the creation of the Yokut Tejon Education Center. The Museum has had a 60 year old interpretive program that teaches children about our Valley's earliest inhabitants. A new 1,600 square foot building will be a gallery, research area and tour center. This project was made possible by the William and Florence Wheeler Foundation, the Virginia and Alfred Harrell Foundation and donations from the Soland, Calliham and Lessenger Families. We are planning on completing the Center by the fall of 2022 in time for school tours.

The Kern County Museum is looking forward to bringing back our community festivals, our popular lecture series and a concert series for young visitors. It has been a very tough two years, but we think the community is going to love our new exhibits and the hard work of our Museum team!

CURATORIAL CORNER



Rachel

MUSEUM HISTORIAN

Kern County Museum

When the Laxague Family decided to build a new brick building for their historic Pyrenees Bakery in 1961 on East 21st Street, they donated the original wooden building to the Kern County Museum. As was typical at that time, the building was "rebadged" by the Museum and used to create a dress makers store and watch repair shop. A number of the buildings in Pioneer Village were repurposed to create a variety of retail and commercial portrayals. For example, the old cook shack from the Piute Meat Packing Company became a "Land Office." A worker housing unit from Hart Park became an "Undertaker's Parlor."

"Mr. Bailey wanted to give the impression of a small American town at the beginning of the 20th century," said Director Mike McCoy. "In some cases this made sense, but in others the original building had historic provenance that merited keeping it as the original use."

This is certainly the case with the bakery building. In the bustling town of Kern in 1910, the bakery was an important business in the largely immigrant community. For the French and Spanish Basque newcomers, a bakery was an important reminder of home. Originally founded by the Gueydan Family in 1893 as the Kern City Bakery and then the French Bakery, Pierre and Juanita Laxague bought the bakery in 1947. The small wood frame building served as the retail showroom for the baked goods and also served as the family's home. The Pyrenees Bakery is still in business 75 years later.





Marianne Laxague & writer Bob Price

This spring, museum staff began turning the building back into a bakery. With the support of long time bakery owner Marianne Laxague and the Ellen Baker Tracy Guild, the exterior was returned to the original white paint with red trim. A new sign was added for the front and the interior was painted white. The front interior was opened back up and returned to a bakery retail area. The Museum hopes to use the new space as a small entertainment area for showers or parties.

Ms. Laxague donated two original oven doors to create a faux bread baking area in the back of the building and the original 20 foot "peels" or bread paddles. She also offered a vintage cash register and a number of historic photos. "Bringing this 100 year old building back to its original purpose was important," McCoy said. "And it is a great reminder of the significant contribution our Basque community made to the development of Kern County."



EDUCATION STATION

After two years of pandemic shutdown, The Lori Brock Discovery Center is back in the school tour business! This spring after the face mask restrictions were lifted, yellow school busses started lining up again on Chester Avenue. Pioneer Village was swarming again with children and teachers.

We are focused right now on outdoor tours in the 16 acre Pioneer Village. The self-guided tours feature our 60 historic structures and a number of exhibition spaces such as the Watson Transportation Exhibit, Black Gold and the new Bakersfield Sound exhibit. Students can go on a scavenger hunt that helps them better engage with local history and really see the exhibits. Teachers and chaperones help guide students through the buildings and learn about Kern County's rich history.



The Museum also hosts the Norris School tour that helps children journey back to the 1890's and to experience the lessons, customs and manners of a one room school house. This tour is guided by a trained docent who helps the past come alive.

The newly revitalized Lori Brock Discovery Center has a number of new exhibits including STEAM Town, the Power Lab, Arts Express and Dino Dig. With terrific support from Chevron USA, the Center has been reimagined and is ready to take young children on a journey of discovery. This tour is self-guided and geared toward children ages three to seven.



The Black Gold Experience is also a guided tour that helps older children learn about Kern's rich history with the oil industry and where energy comes from. Trained guides walk children through exploration, discovery, production, refining and transportation of hydro-carbon resources.

The popular Native American exhibit is on hold until the Fall of 2022. Thanks to a grant from a number of donors, a new facility is under construction. The Yokut Tejon Education Center is slated for completion in the Fall of 2022. It will provide a new space for school tours and also for the exhibition of native American artifacts.

For school tours or private parties, contact nancy@kerncountymuseum.org or call 661-437-3330 ext. 210.

VILLAGE FLEA

The Kern County Museum is coming back strong with two signature events this spring. On Sunday April 24th the bi-annual Village Flea will make a reappearance with vintage furniture, clothing, art work, ceramics and collector's items. Now the largest antiques emporium in the Central Valley, admission is only $5.00 for adults and children 12 and under are free. It is a great family event with food, music and lots of incredible vintage finds. "This isn't your grandparent's antique show," said local antique dealer Gary Prendez. "All the mid-century furniture, vinyl record albums and collector items appeal to 20 and 30 somethings as well as older folks. There is something for everyone." Doors open at 8 AM and the event starts wrapping up at 3:30 PM. Food and drink available for purchase.





GET LIT

Get Lit is a new event for the museum and celebrates the newly expanded Mission Bank Neon Plaza.

Enjoy our beautiful Mission Bank Neon Plaza all lit up on May 13th from 7 PM to 11 PM! We'll have music and a professional photographer to snap your pictures. Margaritas, tacos, and beer will also be available for purchase. Purchase your tickets at the Tejon Ranch Gallery at the Kern County Museum. $30 per person and $25 per Kern County Museum Members.

Spring Events

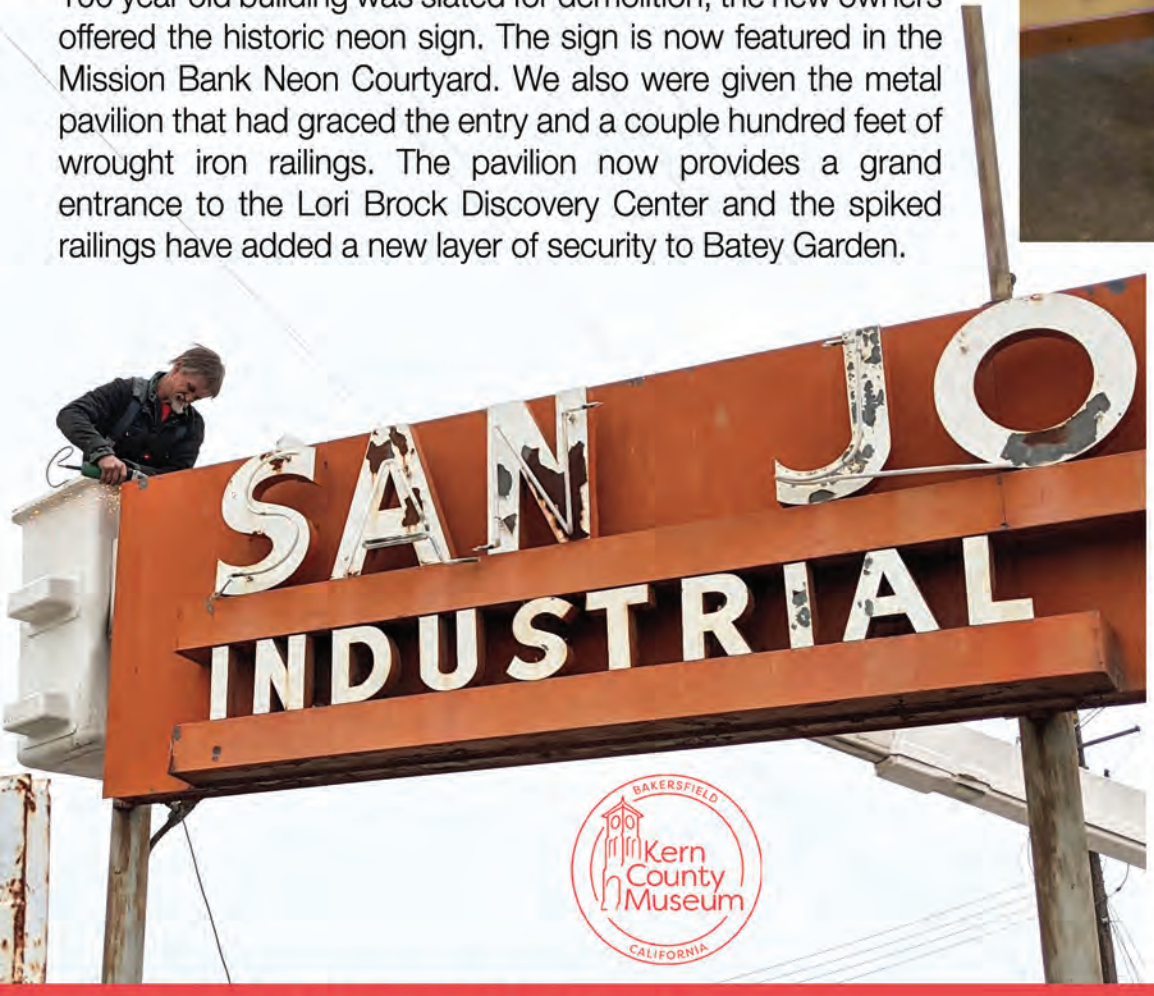
NEW ARTIFACTS

Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the Restoration Shop at the Museum, a number of new artifacts showed up from community donors. "We get offers all the time from community members who want to donate antique furniture, signs, tools and even motor vehicles," said historian Rachel Hads. "Unfortunately most of the time it is stuff that is too modern, not originally from Kern County, or duplicates of other items we already have like pianos or sewing machines."

Last year antique collector Gail Voorhees called and said she had a special item to donate. One of the original carousel horses from Hart Park! 50 years ago the park had a lake with paddle boats, bumper cars, a small roller coaster and a beautiful carousel. Gail had the "provenance" or proof that the horse was an original from Hart Park. The horse is now proudly displayed in the Museum's Aera Gallery.

When the historic Sinaloa's Restaurant closed down and the 100 year old building was slated for demolition, the new owners offered the historic neon sign. The sign is now featured in the Mission Bank Neon Courtyard. We also were given the metal pavilion that had graced the entry and a couple hundred feet of wrought iron railings. The pavilion now provides a grand entrance to the Lori Brock Discovery Center and the spiked railings have added a new layer of security to Batey Garden.





Brian Agnetti called a couple months ago and offered his family's San Joaquin Tractor neon sign from their long time business on California Avenue. The thousand pound mammoth orange sign was craned down and brought to the Museum. It is slated for the Neon Plaza's new extension..

If you have a Kern County artifact that you might consider donating, contact Rachel@kerncountymuseum.org.

Viva VOLUNTEERS



Popular local interior designer Vicki Farrell has been a longtime fan of the Museum. In 2016 she volunteered to do the interior layout of the new Tejon Ranch Gallery. The former gift shop in the entry plaza was being repurposed to a space dedicated to the museum's collection of historic photographs.

There were some challenges. The space was fairly tight and lacked the high ceilings of a traditional gallery space. Vicki creatively use specialized lighting and subdued color to highlight the featured photographs and even created some archival showcases for artifacts. She added some touches to pay homage to Tejon Ranch with cut metal signage and a feature wall of hewn logs. The popular gallery is just the right size for museum visitors to see a specialized collection of themed photographs.

Vicki noticed that with some staffing changes and the museum's staff focused on other projects, the Tejon Ranch Gallery was not keeping up with new exhibits. It had become static and locked into one exhibition. Vicki offered once again to help with the space. She noted that the new Bakersfield Sound exhibit was being dedicated in March. Vicki worked with museum Historian Rachel Hads on a special show devoted to Kern County Honky Tonk culture.

The new exhibit opened the day before the Bakersfield Sound building opened with several dozen images allowing a glimpse of the smoke filled bar rooms of the 1940's and 50's in Kern County. Hard working folks, on an evening out from the farms, ranches and oil fields, smile at the camera leaning against the bar. Other photographs capture dancers, musicians and those warm summer evenings. Long gone honky tonks like the Lucky Spot, the Beardsley Ball Room, The Barn and the infamous Black Board, come alive once again thanks to Vicki's artistry.

Vicki is not done lending her talents to the gallery. She has promised to continue to work with Rachel on a quarterly rotation of images. And with 450,000 historic pictures in the adjacent basement, Vicki Farrell has a lot of material to work with! If you would like to get acquainted with the Museum's historical side and work in the archive, contact rachel@kerncountymuseum.org.



Vicki FARRELL



BAKERSFIELD Kern County Museum CALIFORNIA

THANK YOU

MUSEUM HOURS

WEDNESDAY - SUNDAY
9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

CLOSED
MONDAY & TUESDAY

WWW.KERNCOUNTYMUSEUM.ORG

2022

CLOSED OCCASIONALLY FOR SPECIAL EVENTS AND PRIVATE FUNCTIONS

ALL EVENTS RAIN OR SHINE. PROGRAMS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE

KERN COUNTY MUSEUM
3801 CHESTER AVENUE
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