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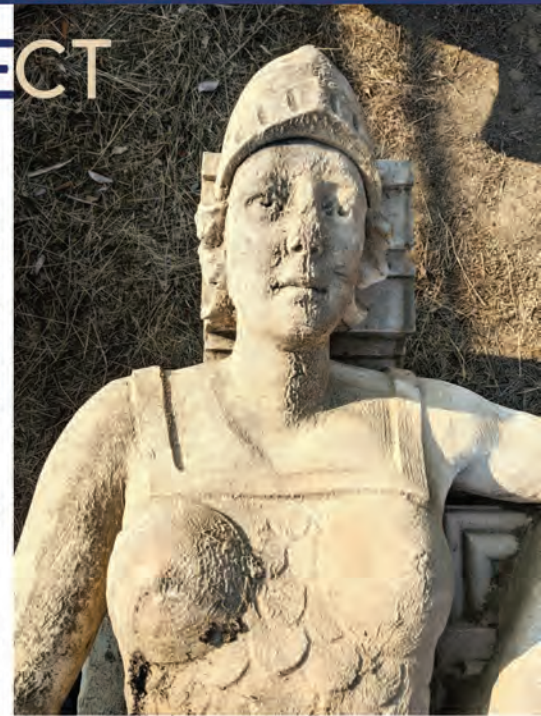
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COURT HOUSE PROJECT

When two historic courthouses in Bakersfield were demolished after the 1952 earthquake, a number of structural elements were rescued. Our museum was lucky to receive several artifacts. The heavy oak tables went to the Museum's board room, large leather law books went into the courthouse exhibit in Pioneer Village. We were able to repurpose the 1876 courthouse's ornamental fence posts with their ball and chains in front of the museum's main building and used two large gates as the entry to Pioneer Village.

Four life sized limestone statues of warrior maidens, who served as sentries over the entrance to the 1916 "new" courthouse, were craned down before the 1953 demolition and put on a farm wagon in the Museum's back lot. The plan was for the four statues to be moved into the museum's main exhibition hall and put on display. A tarp was tossed over them and there they sat on the wagon for 68 years.

Our museum staff came up with a plan this winter to create an exhibit of the four statues from 1916 and the remaining gate posts from the 1876 courthouse. A space was cleared next to the courthouse in the village and an area was created to feature the four warrior maidens. With a donation from the Kern County Bar Association and William Edmonds, a concrete base was poured.



Two more large ornamental gate posts were located in our artifact pile and the smaller ornamental posts. Thanks to help from local contractors Tony Arvizu and Frank Juarez, the new exhibit is open to the public.

Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer checked in recently. A couple years ago she saw the four statues on the old wagon. "I am so glad you completed this project," she said. Something about women armed for combat against evil do-ers must have struck a sympathetic chord with our district attorney!

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
WWW.KERNCOUNTYMUSEUM.ORG

from
the

DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY DR. MIKE MCCOY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



JIM CURRAN
OPERATING
A BRICK
PRESS IN
THE 1940S



A long-time supporter of the museum Jim Curran (James Curran IV) called and asked if we would be interested in the original sign from his family's former Sandstone Brick Company. Sandstone was a longtime firm that had sold out in the 1990's. The sign had been rescued by a family friend and was languishing in a back lot in Rio Bravo. Our museum team inspected the sign and immediately said yes to the gift. Jim said that the Curran family would cover the expense of restoration and mounting.

When young James Curran looked around the raw frontier town of Bakersfield in the 1880's, he knew the town could use some bricks. He had come West from Illinois to visit his uncle in San Francisco hoping the West would help his asthma. He took a river boat south and ended up in the southern San Joaquin Valley. His father had been a brick maker and young Jim knew the business.

Curran soon bought 40 acres east of current Union Avenue and started a brick yard under his own name. The bricks could only be made in the summer months and he had two workers to help. Kern County Land Company's president W.S. Tevis saw bricks being made out of sand and lime in Germany and encouraged James and his partner C.J. Lindgren to change from red clay kiln fired brick to the sandstone process that used steam kettles.

Curran had so much success he incorporated in 1903 with Tevis as the major stockholder along with Lindgren. The initial investment in the company was \$52,000. The young company made their unique bricks until 1918 when they sold their sandstone machinery to investors in China. The company still manufactured red clay bricks until the 1950s but had expanded into lumber and building materials. It is fair to say that Sandstone Brick and Bakersfield grew up together and that the Curran family built Kern County board by board and brick by brick. The Currans also took an active interest in civic affairs and local government.



While the main Sandstone company is now gone, the 20-foot neon sign that once invited contractors and builders to their Truxtun Street location is now in the museum's Neon Courtyard. Jim the Fourth and the Curran family are very pleased that the sign can now be seen by another generation of museum visitors. And history will remember a young man that took a look around the dusty town of Bakersfield 140 years ago and said "I think this place needs some bricks."

CURATORIAL CORNER



Kern County Museum Historian Rachel Hads found out that a number of history majors at CSU Bakersfield were looking for a place to serve internships as part of a course practicum. She connected the dots between the university and the Kern County Museum bringing six upper division students this Spring on a weekly basis to the Research Center. The students are Thomas Moser, Sebastiano Caminiti, Jonathan Roberson, Raquel Escalara, and Ricardo Gone.

With the support of the Virginia and Alfred Harrell Foundation, the Museum built The Research Center in 2016. The center's main intended purpose was a depository for all of the paper collection in the museum's archives. There are more than 400,000 photographs, business and legal ledgers, periodicals, reports and correspondence dating back more than 150 years.

The other intention of the Research Center was to be an active community resource for individuals doing family research or companies looking for the local history of their industry. What has been missing was the manpower to begin the arduous task of digitizing all of these records into a data base.

The student interns are busy this spring with two large tasks. First is the scanning of historic documents building the central data base. So far the interns have inventoried and scanned all of the country music collection's 800 photos and nearly 600 in the general collection. Specific call numbers are being assigned to identify the collection, box, folder and order so that specific photos are now readily accessible.

The other task is the creation of an online inventory of exhibit artifacts. Students are going into the museum's 60 exhibition spaces and taking inventory on housewares, furniture, tools and accessories. Each object is photographed and then entered into the Past-Perfect software. This work is very time consuming and a great use of student intern hours. "I've always been interested in archives so this hands-on experience has been really rewarding," said Ricardo Gone.

For now the Museum is very pleased that the original vision of the Research Center as an active resource for the community is being realized. And this is due in great part to the CSUB student interns.



**INTERN THOMAS MOSER
DOING INVENTORY**

EDUCATION STATION

**KERN COUNTY
MUSEUM**

STORY BOOK TRAIL



The Kern County Museum is always looking for ways to enhance the experience of visitors to the 16 acre village and its 60 historic exhibits. When museum booster Jenifer Pitcher VanAlstein called and offered to write several grants to improve the tour experience of children, Shannon Fowler who works with our children's programs agreed.

We were very pleased that the Bakersfield Association of Realtors and Rotary North agreed to create improved signage in Pioneer Village for young visitors. Now there are several dozen new signs, at a child's eye level, that explain exhibits in easy to understand language. The signs prompt students to think about what it was like to be a railroad engineer on a steam locomotive or to go to school in a one room building with one teacher for eight grades. "The signs really help kids put the 100 year old buildings into context," Shannon Fowler said. "Our goal is to have our Village come alive and to let children do some travel through time."

Called "Story Trails," the new signs also prompt children to think about their own lives. When looking at the majestic Howell House, with its maid's quarters and grand staircase, children are asked about their own house. How have houses changed? How does this house compare to your house? Standing in front of the log cabin, what would it be like to live in a house with your whole family in one room?

The Story Trails project also shares questions in Spanish. The museum's board is committed to being inclusive and being good hosts to our diverse community. Children who speak Spanish as a first language will have the same opportunity to enjoy the new visitation experience. Museum staffer Juan Vizcarra, who just completed his Master's degree in Spanish, completed the translations.

The museum has a few more surprises planned this year for visitors. We are all eagerly waiting for the pandemic restrictions to lift and for our exhibits to fully reopen... including for our youngest visitors. The Museum has been very quiet for a year now without our weekly bus loads of students on school tours.

And a big thank you to Jenifer for helping to create this terrific project!



THANK YOU!

jenifer
PITCHER



ITS HAPPENING AT THE



Village

Kern County's favorite fair for antiques, collectibles and vintage goods Village Flea returns to Pioneer Village Sunday April 18th from 8 AM to 4 PM. This will be the third year of the bi-annual event that draws several thousand attendees to peruse vintage goods, have breakfast or lunch, enjoy music and have a day in the tree lined village.

Admission is only \$5.00 for adults and children under 12 are free. All of the Museum's exhibits will be open offering a glimpse into Kern County's past. Following State guidelines, all vendors and attendees will have to wear masks and be mindful of social distancing. "We promise a wonderful day in the Village with food and drinks available," said Events Coordinator Brenna Charatsaris. "This spring's fair is promising to be our best yet."

Local antique dealer Jay Robertson, who has been at all of the previous Village Fleas, said "You are going to find the unusual and the desirable at great prices in a family setting... we love it!" The 75 dealers offer goods that range from fine glassware to furniture to art.

A new line of items found at the Fair includes vintage clothing, vinyl records, posters and mid-century furnishings. "This is definitely not your grandmother's antique fair," said dealer Gary Prendez. "The young hipster crowd will find cool items for decorating their homes, collectors will find that missing piece they've been looking for and lots of stuff for guys setting up their man caves." The Fair also features local crafts and handmade items.



VINTAGE GOODS | ANTIQUES
Collectibles | Handmade Items | Art
Clothing | Glass | More



VILLAGE FLEA

AT THE KERN COUNTY MUSEUM

SUNDAY
APRIL 18, 2021
8 AM - 4 PM



.....
\$5.00 GENERAL ADMISSION
CHILDREN UNDER 12 FREE
.....

Vendors should contact
Brenna at bebe@kerncountymuseum.org



RESTORE *and* REFURBISH

1916



2021

THE CALIFORNIA CAR MOVES TOWARD COMPLETION

The Museum received the equivalent of a white elephant 20 years ago when a battered old street car from Bakersfield's past showed up on a trailer and was temporarily put into a storage building. That temporary storage turned into years and the museum focused on other projects. Fast forward to 2018 and the storage building was turned into a rental venue.

"We needed another indoor setting for events that we could heat and cool," said Director Mike McCoy. "The 3,000 square foot room was adjacent to the Neon Plaza and connected to the proposed Transportation Exhibit. We decided to create a street car depot themed catering station."

The room was painted a bright southern pacific yellow with brown trim, original doors were added from the historic train depot on Sumner Street and a butler's pantry was built. This was all funded by the Arkelian and West Foundations.

The addition of the historic Noriega Bar really moved the Trolley Station forward and the museum staff took a hard look at the neglected old street car. It was brought to Bakersfield in 1911 and ran back and forth between downtown Bakersfield to Old Town Kern for 30 years. It was now an eyesore and needed attention.

As of the spring of 2021, the California Car is nearly restored. A very talented team of wood workers from JM and Sons literally took the car apart during the winter. More than 100 puzzle pieces were spread all over the floor of the depot. Joe Moore, Mike Rousel and Richard McAuliffe pulled out 100 year old rotten wood windows and recreated them in oak. They pulled out the interior walls and found a trove of objects the motorman had dropped down the window casings like knives, coins, tickets and even a conductor's whistle.

The final phase is now underway of adding back windows with new tempered glass and painting the interior and exterior by the museum's Eddie Valdez. The museum had to remove 100 years of bad paint to get to the original mahogany in the center section and a warm yellow for the front and rear compartments.

Artist Dean Ross will be the final act of Old #10's rebirth. Dean is a talented local artist who works with gold leaf and is expert with pin striping. Having worked on all of the Disney park trains over the years, Dean is looking forward to putting the finishing touches on the year long restoration.

The newly restored street car will be revealed at a public event in the early summer or fall depending on pandemic restrictions. Sitting across from the Noriega Bar, Car #10 will be around for another century to provide a glimpse into early Bakersfield thanks to additional funding from our friends at the Arkelian and West Foundations.



MICHAEL ROUSEL
BUILDING TRIM



NEW ROOF LINE



RICHARD
MCAULIFFE
WORKING ON
WINDOWS

Viva VOLUNTEERS

TONY AND THERESA ANSOLABEHERE



When Tony Ansolabehere retired from the county assessor's office, he immediately got involved in being a community volunteer. He has been an active Rotarian in the Bakersfield East Club including serving as club president. Tony also traveled a bit (Chicago is a favorite place) and finally finished the restoration of a 100 year old car that had been in his family forever. He and his wife Theresa also showed up at the museum asking if they needed any volunteers.

"Tony has a background in computer science so the Curatorial Department was very glad to use his expertise," said Historian Rachel Hads. The Museum is working hard to move from the 20th century to the 21st century with an artifact data base, scanned documents and a searchable file for the collection of 400,000 photos.

Tony and Theresa started with the 20,000 subject cards that listed all of the Museum's artifacts. Contained in a metal file cabinet dating back to the 1940s with a type written filing system. The Ansolabeheres purchased a special scanner for the Curatorial Department that can run index cards.



Tony, with his computer science degree from USC, connected the scanner to an OCR program and an individualized network. Tony and Theresa then scanned in 25,000 old accession record cards using the new scanner. So instead of digging through a wall of yellowing index cards, the Museum's artifacts are easily accessible.

Tony also performed optical character recognition using Google Cloud Vision AI to the card collection. He and Theresa then added another 10,000 electronic accession records. Tony is also advising the museum on the best way to move the photo collection online. "A good model is the Chicago History Museum," said Tony.

Rachel is still investigating the best software that fits the needs of our Museum. Working with CSUB interns, the Museum is now looking at a program called ArchiveSpace. Tony and Theresa enjoy guiding from the side and pitching in to help with the Herculean task of organizing all of the documents one box at a time.



KERN COUNTY MUSEUM
3801 CHESTER AVENUE
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301

WWW.KERNCOUNTYMUSEUM.ORG

MUSEUM HOURS

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

CLOSED
MONDAY & TUESDAY

WWW.KERNCOUNTYMUSEUM.ORG

2021

**CLOSED OCCASIONALLY FOR SPECIAL
EVENTS AND PRIVATE FUNCTIONS**

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