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## HOME OF THE GIANT BURGER

*Sign*



BARBARA ANDRE  
ANSOLABEHRE AND  
PAUL ANDRE VISIT  
THEIR FAMILY'S SIGN  
AT THE MUSEUM.

THEIR FAMILY IS  
SPONSORING THE  
RESTORATION FOR  
THE NEON  
COURTYARD.

Museum volunteer Di Sharman put in an urgent call to Director Mike McCoy just before Halloween. "Do you want the Andre's Drive In Sign," she asked? McCoy replied that he didn't think it was available. "Well... I have the sign and want to donate it," Sharman said. The Museum staff was absolutely thrilled!

The Andre Family operated two drive in restaurants in Bakersfield for many years on Brundage just off Chester Avenue and on Niles Street. Their slogan was "Home of the Giant Burger". Long time Bakersfield residents will remember the French burger, crispy fries, the fruit pies, Big Boy Burritos and their famous milk shakes that were originally 25 cents.

Joe and John Andre ran the restaurants for decades with sister Mary with their crisp red striped shirts and paper caps. The Brundage location was a favorite hangout when the 1950's and 60's car cruise culture rumbled up and down Chester Avenue. John and Joe were also famous for charitable work in the community and there are stories of Joe handing sacks of food out the back door to a family when they couldn't pay.

The 14 foot wide large metal sign depicting a hamburger was nearly lost to history. Jimmy Murrell was driving down Niles Street and saw the sign on the ground. He immediately called his mother Anna Reading-Carey who is active in Citizens Preserving History. The sign was headed for the scrap yard in a couple hours. Anna's friend Di Sharman then jumped in and purchased the sign from the property owner. For Anna it was personal...she worked at the drive-in back in the early 1970's. "I'm so excited the sign is at the Museum," Di Sharman said. "This is a piece of local history. It needed to be saved."

Paul Andre, his sister Barbara and her husband Fred Ansolabehere, stopped by the Museum to see the iconic sign after its arrival. The Andres left the drive-in business 30 years ago but still have fond memories of the family run business. "Our Uncle John was thrilled to hear the sign will be at the museum," Paul said. The Andre Family also agreed to support the cost of restoration and mounting. "The sign will now be restored and have a prominent place in the Neon Courtyard," said Event Coordinator Brenna Charatsaris. "What a wonderful addition to the neon collection!"





# from the DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY DR. MIKE MCCOY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



## SOLAR PROJECT



The Museum is very pleased to announce we have completed a year-long planning, engineering and installation solar project inside Pioneer Village. Operating under a power purchase agreement with P.G. & E., the new solar array should offset the electrical use to nearly zero. The PPA opportunity came about in 2006 when the legislature passed AB 1969 that ordered the development of renewable generation of power. Our partner A.C. Electric brought a lot of local experience to the project working with public agencies

The Kern County Museum operates as a non-profit and always has a sharp eye on the financial bottom line. In the quest for lowering expenses and increasing revenue, the Museum has explored solar power for several years as a way of mitigating our \$150,000 annual utility bill. Homeowners know that while spring and fall are temperate in Bakersfield, the high heat of the summer can bring some shocking news to the mailbox via electric bills. Imagine getting a bill for \$20,000 for one month's usage? The PPA and partnership with A.C. Electric were the keys to getting the project completed. The cost savings from this project will go a long way in the Museum's goal of being financially solvent.

One consideration that had held up a solar project was making sure it did not compromise the historic visual aesthetics of Pioneer Village. An early plan called for creating a solar array on the back of the property but still clearly visible to visitors. This was deemed unacceptable to museum staff.

The completed solar project is mounted on the top of the Black Gold exhibit, the Curatorial Storage Building and the Watson Transportation Exhibit. These large structures have flat roofs that effectively hide the solar modules. Except for a new control panel on the back side of the Black Gold building, there is no visible evidence that the museum is generating power. Main Street still looks like 1910 early Bakersfield. The only evidence of solar will be when the newly amended utility bill hits the Business Office missing a few zeroes.



# COLLECTIONS CORNER



THE CABOOSE WAS FEATURED IN A RECENT VIDEO INCLUDING THE INTERIOR.



NORRIS SCHOOL WAS THE FIRST EXHIBIT IN THE VIDEO SERIES.



**JUNIOR TOBIAS**  
MAKING THE MUSEUM FAMOUS

How do you keep a museum relevant and in the public eye when you are shut down for a pandemic? School tours were eliminated for the year. Weddings, concerts, lectures and corporate parties were cancelled for the season. Popular events like Village Fest, the Menudo Cook-Off and the Vintage Limited Car Show were all deleted from the calendar.

Enter local photographer Junior Tobias. The Bakersfield Christian High and Cal State Bakersfield grad was shooting a wedding at the Museum before the shutdown. He said that if the Museum ever needed any photography or videography, he would be willing to work at a steep discount. His busy Junior Photography business was booked up for the year but he loved working in the Village. "I love all the history," he said.

The Museum asked Junior to create a series of 20 short videos that highlight different structures and projects in the Village. Most of the videos are only 20 seconds long but they give a short description of the building and its significance to local history. Junior also goes inside many of the structures that are normally closed to the public. This provides an inside peek at period furnishings and historical objects.

The Museum has been working hard with the restoration or construction of 26 buildings in the last three years. Junior's videos are a good reminder of the new additions to the Museum and the refurbishment of existing exhibits. After music and graphics are added, the finished product is then posted on Face Book and on the Museum's website. The videos are getting a lot of "hits" by the public and positive comments.

The Museum will also explore bringing back the promising Hometown History series it had started before the pandemic restrictions. Junior has agreed to assist with this project and to continue to support the Museum with his creativity and camera. Check out his Museum videos on our Face Book page and on our website [www.kerncountymuseum.org](http://www.kerncountymuseum.org).



# EDUCATION STATION

## applause

Nancy Wheeler called the Museum last spring and asked about making a gift to support our projects and programs. Her family's William and Florence Wheeler Foundation has been active helping Kern County non-profits for years. Nancy said that her father had donated time with the Museum's locomotive restoration a number of years ago and that her mother had been a volunteer in the Lori Brock Discovery Center.

The Museum staff recommended that the Wheeler Foundation support the restoration of the Bena Depot next to the locomotive in honor of her father. We also recommended the creation of a performing arts space at the Lori Brock Discovery Center in memory of her mother. Both of these projects were long time goals of the Museum but had been put on hold awaiting funding.

Calling the new space Applause! Museum staff took over an unused patio area behind Lori Brock's main building. They constructed a shade cover and installed theatrical lighting. A large ceiling fan was added for the warm summer months. Local designer Gary Prendez and artist Danny Chavez then created a permanent stage foyer with faux curtains. A dramatic backdrop was created with a woodland theme that will be erected behind the 12 foot wide stage. Museum staff polished the concrete floor and several dozen colorful chairs were purchased. The space is a wonderful addition to Lori Brock.

The Museum staff is now planning children's musical concerts, dance events and small theatricals when pandemic restrictions lift. With Applause! right next to the playground and connected to STEAM Town, the new area will see lots of traffic in the future. "A reminder that the "A" in STEAM stands for arts," Museum staffer Shannon Fowler said ...

***"Being able to bring children's music, theater and dance to the Lori Brock will be wonderful!"***







After a year of work, the Kern County Museum's Trolley Station is ready for parties! The addition of the historic Noriega Bar was the finishing touch to the popular rental space. The room brings back memories of old Kern County with early railroad graphics and a station times table. Party goers will feel if they are taking a quick break from the rails before heading East on the Santa Fe Chief. Easily accommodating 100 guests, the room also features easy rear door access for caterers and a butler's pantry. The Noriega Bar and its decorative back bar were added in the summer of 2020 when the 100 year hotel and restaurant closed their doors. Now ready for another generation of revelers, the bar is the perfect gathering point for any event.

The Trolley Station opens into the classic Neon Courtyard and its collection of 20 historic Kern County signs. When lit at night, the courtyard accommodates another 150 guests with the classic Sonora Filling Station framing the scene. Rental rates for the Trolley Station are Monday to Thursday \$800, Friday and Sunday \$1,400 and Saturdays are \$1,850. The Trolley Station is only \$1,000 when rented with the Neon Courtyard. The Museum offers off season prices of \$ 1,400 for January and February and July and August. Email the Museum's Events Manager Brenna at [bebe@kerncountymuseum.org](mailto:bebe@kerncountymuseum.org) for more information.







# RESTORE *and* REFURBISH



**AN EARLY BAKERSFIELD AND KERN STREET CAR IDENTICAL TO THE ONE IN THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTION.**

The Kern County Museum acquired a vintage Bakersfield streetcar back in 1980 after it had sat in a residential back yard for 50 years. Much of the interior had been gutted, seats removed and several bad attempts had been made to paint the interior. It was basically a shell of the shiny new trolley car that had first come to Bakersfield in 1912. The Museum put the car into storage and out of public view.

Thanks to a generous gift from the Ben H. and Gladys Arkelian Foundation and the Harry and Ethel West Foundation, the Museum has started the restoration of Car # 10. The Museum is grateful for advice from the Southern California Railroad Museum. They have a restored 1906 Bakersfield Trolley in their collection. We do know that the project will be a challenge and will take time. Local contractor Joe Moore will take the lead on woodwork and Museum staffer Eddie Valdez will be the painter.

For the back story, The San Joaquin Light and Power Company purchased the Bakersfield and Kern Electric Railway Company in 1910 and went to work improving the lines and cars. Under the management of J.F. Turner and V.N. Mickelberry, new heavy rails were set, an overhead wiring system was installed and six new cars were ordered. Car #10 that is now at the museum was built by the American Car Company of St. Louis and delivered to Bakersfield in February 1912.

The six new cars were 42 feet in length, could hold forty passengers, and weighed 17 tons. The design was of the "California" style. This meant that there was open seating on the front and back with an enclosed section in the center. They were each powered by two 550 volt electric motors. The car typically ran with a motorman and a conductor.

Number 10 had a working life span of 21 years rolling back and forth between downtown Bakersfield and the town of Kern (East Bakersfield). Many children rode the electric line to school and trolley car parties were popular during the Roaring 20's. Car #10 could be hired for the evening and a group of revelers could cruise the streets of Bakersfield popping their champagne corks at onlookers. In 1933, Number 10 was offered for sale as salvage and bought by a local resident for \$300 to serve as an extra room on a house. We are fortunate that the car is now in the Museum's collection and will be showcased in the Trolley Car Station.

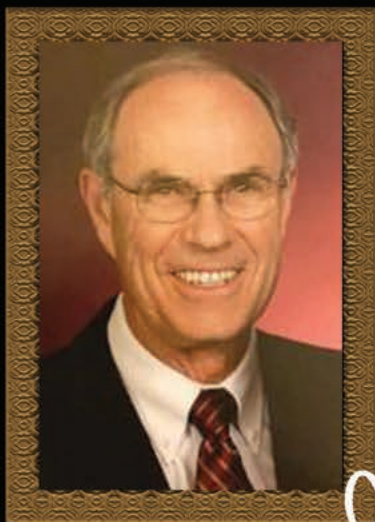
**MUSEUM STAFFER EDDIE VALDEZ PREPARING THE INTERIOR FOR WOOD WORK.**



**100 YEAR OLD GRAPHIC IS STILL VISIBLE**

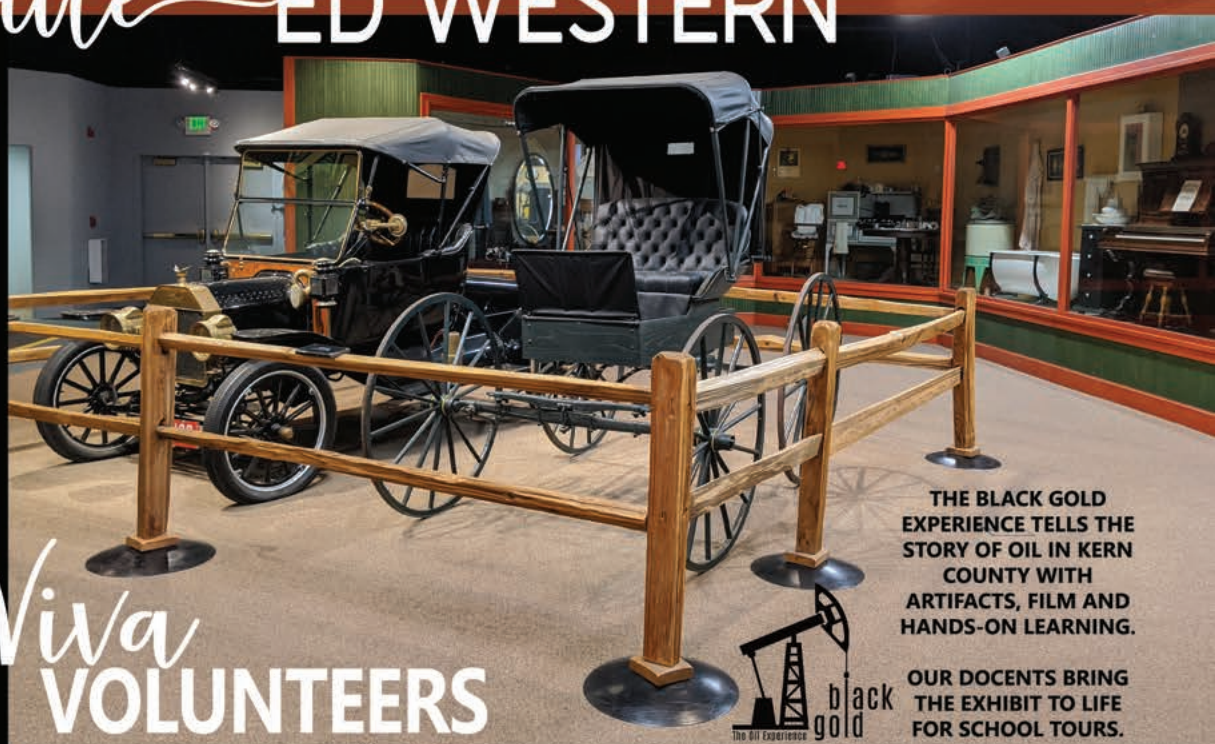


# a tribute ED WESTERN



THANK  
YOU ED!

Viva  
VOLUNTEERS



The Museum was saddened to hear of the passing of long time volunteer Ed Western this past October. Ed was one of our most active and reliable volunteers and was the mainstay in the Black Gold Experience. Ed was great with school children, trained other volunteer docents and was always willing to give staff some new ideas on how to improve Black Gold and the Museum.

Ed was a native of Missouri and a graduate of Tulsa University with a degree in Petroleum Engineering. He set aside his professional career to serve as an officer and navigator in the United States Air Force. After he left the service, he began his work in the oil industry moving 21 times in his early career. Ed always said living in Puerto Rico was a highlight.

Ed and his wife Cynthia travelled all over the world and finally settled in Bakersfield where he was a project manager for Aera Energy for 30 years retiring in 2005. Ed was able to take his extensive knowledge of oil exploration and production and make engineering easy for young people to understand. School groups that took the Black Gold tour with Ed all commented on his humor and depth of knowledge. Ed was passionate about energy and oil in Kern County but also about conservation," said Museum Director Mike McCoy. "Ed was an experienced scout leader and Sunday school teacher so communicating with young people came naturally to him. He will be missed every day."

Ed would want the community to know that volunteering at the Kern County Museum was fun, rewarding and interesting. "You can't play golf all the time," he would say. "These kids will never look at a gas station or an oil pumping rig the same after taking my tour." If you have an interest in the oil industry or experience working in the field, email [shannon@kerncountymuseum.com](mailto:shannon@kerncountymuseum.com). We are always looking for historic docents and volunteers.







**3801 CHESTER AVENUE  
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

# MUSEUM HOURS

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

**CLOSED  
MONDAY & TUESDAY**

[WWW.KERNCOUNTYMUSEUM.ORG](http://WWW.KERNCOUNTYMUSEUM.ORG)

# 2021

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

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