

The KERN COURIER

2020 SPRING EDITION



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2020
HAPPY NEW YEAR



50 YEAR PROMISE *Honored*

In a Bakersfield Californian article from February 1967, it was noted that 16 carriages and wagons were gifted to the Kern County Museum by the Harry West Family. Mr. West, a farmer and rancher in the Shafter area, was an avid collector of early horseless conveyances. After his death, his widow Ethel West and her son Charles felt the museum was a natural showcase for the extraordinary collection. The vehicles were kept at the Kern County Fairgrounds for a period of time before being moved to the museum grounds and storage. The museum always intended to put the collection on display, especially since another 30 vehicles from other donors added to the collection. Time went by and the collection sat in storage for 50 years.

Fast forward to the present and the gift of a significant financial gift from former Kern County Supervisor Ray A. Watson. His gift pulled the trigger on getting a large 12,000 square foot warehouse repurposed into an exhibition hall. New doors, plumbing and electrical were added including a fire suppression system. In the last two years, the project went into overdrive with additional funding from the West Foundation and Arkelian Foundation. A large grant from the Virginia and Alfred Harrell Foundation, along with financial support from the Ellen Baker Tracy Guild, made the project a reality. The final piece of the funding puzzle were individual gifts from 40 separate donors.

The Kern County Museum is very pleased that the 50 year old promise to the West family has been honored and the Ray A. Watson Transportation Exhibit is now completed. A gala ribbon cutting was held on March 12th for donors and local elected officials. The exhibition hall features 40 vehicles including a Wells Fargo Stage Coach, early automobiles and a 19th century hearse. Large graphics show Kern County of yesteryear and showcases share smaller artifacts like tools and repair manuals. Thanks to architect Steve Kieke and designer Gary Prendez, the exhibition has the "wow factor" that truly honors such an incredible collection.



RAY WATSON CUTS THE RIBBON ON THE LONG AWAITED TRANSPORTATION EXHIBIT WITH MUSEUM BOARD MEMBERS

THE 12,000 SQUARE FOOT EXHIBITION HALL FEATURES
40 EARLY CARRIAGES, WAGONS AND AUTOMOBILES



FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY MIKE MCCOY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



An iconic symbol from Bakersfield's past has finally been put in the spotlight in our museum's neon courtyard. The famous army missile that sat ominously on the top of the Padre Hotel for decades has finally been erected at the museum. The missile was given to our museum by the new owners of the Padre Hotel prior to their multi-million dollar restoration in 2010. It has been languishing in our maintenance shop for years before being restored and mounted by Juarez Construction in March.

Some quick local history... Milton "Spartacus" Miller owned the Padre Hotel for 40 years. He had several long running disputes with the City of Bakersfield over code enforcement and other issues. When the city required fire sprinklers in the building, Miller declared war. He hung huge metal signs from the hotels windows and allegedly pointed the army missile at City Hall 300 yards away. At one point Miller had a warrant out for his arrest. He showed up at the police station wearing traditional prison striped pants and shirt.

Miller later was elected to the city council and still ran his hotel with its infamous piano lounge until his death in 1999. The large protest signs remained in place. The army missile remained on the roof. A former recruiting tool used by the U.S. Army, the missile is now a wonderful edition to our collection of landmark signs and artifacts. We think Mr. Miller would be very proud that his cantankerous history is being honored. ☺



COLLECTIONS CORNER

I grew up going to the Kern County Museum and I could not be more thrilled to be part of the team. I had the great fortune of attending two schools whose original schoolhouses reside on the village grounds- Standard School and Norris School. From Norris, I went on to North High School where I was in AVID and the Varsity Reading Team, finally graduating as a Star in 2008. I chose to stay in town and attend Bakersfield College where I sat on the student government as Activities Liaison from 2009-2010, earning my AA in both history and anthropology. In my spare time, I worked with the Kern Literacy Council, teaching adults to read, and at the Lori Brock Learning Center.



Welcome Bethany!

I transferred into University of California, Davis, where I earned my bachelor's in history, with a focus on American History. During my time there, I interned at an independent publishing company, worked at the Mondavi Theater of Performing Arts, and enjoyed my time in the Classics Honor Society after becoming fluent in Latin. After graduating in 2012, I chose to come back to Bakersfield where I volunteered with Marley's Mutts Dog Rescue and the Kern County Library. I also worked as an online researcher while attending San Jose State University and earning my Master's in Library and Information Science.

During and after graduation, I worked with a few different companies on digitizing their records which quickly became one of my specializations, along with research. In 2016, the opportunity became available to work at a local non-profit- the Southern Sierra Council, Boy Scouts of America. I dove in and loved my time there, ultimately becoming the Development Director for the council. It was in the parking lot of that office that I met Director Mike McCoy for the first time! We spoke of doing an exhibit for the Southern Sierra Council's Centennial year, and while installation, Nicole Bollinger, Community Engagement Extraordinaire, told me of the curator position - and the rest, as they say, is history! 🕶

I am honored to have been chosen as Curator of the Kern County Museum and truly look forward to working with and serving the community in my new capacity. — Bethany Rice

EDUCATION STATION



POWER LAB

If you thought STEAMTOWN was a smash hit, just wait until you see the newest exhibit coming soon to Lori Brock Discovery Center! It's called POWER LAB, and it will be a wonderful addition to Lori Brock. Whereas STEAMTOWN was intended to charm and teach the little ones, POWERLAB is intended for children seven to twelve years old.

POWER LAB has a mad scientist theme, and the former Master Annex has been absolutely transformed. Two Bit Circus, a well-known design company from Los Angeles, is building the exhibit, which will contain six interactive energy stations, each designed to fully engage our young guests. Each station will help tell the story of Kern County energy in an exciting and memorable way.

CAMP DISCOVER SUMMER 2020

What will your children do during Bakersfield's long, hot summer? We're calling all five to ten-year-old kids to come and join us for another fun-filled summertime at Lori Brock Discovery Center. Campers will join us Monday through Friday mornings from 7:30 am to 12:00 noon for a busy and engaging time. Each day, campers can expect a morning stretch, a science experiment, and a related craft. There will be stories, music, and a costume contest. Idea Lab, STEAM experts, will be working with our campers for an hour each day, as well! We're so happy to have our all-star counselors returning, too! Dates for Camp Discover will be announced soon. Contact Shannon for more information at shannon@kerncountymuseum.org.

Note: Idea Lab will offer a 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm option, which will require separate registration.

Camp Discover 2020 Camperships

Would you like to help an economically-challenged child attend Camp Discover? Your donation of \$120.00 will allow one student to have the joy of attending Camp Discover for one week. We are now accepting camperships for Summer 2020. If you are interested in donating that amount, or any amount, to sponsor a five to ten-year-old child, please contact Shannon at shannon@kerncountymuseum.org. Your help would be appreciated!



DISCOVER. LEARN. PLAY.

A HIGH WIRE ACT

BHS WATER TOWER MURAL

In the Winter of 2019, a group of Bakersfield High Alumni and the Parent Booster Group approached the museum with the idea of creating an Alumni Plaza for the base of the well known BHS Water Tower. The tower had been brought to our museum several years ago when a stadium and campus remodel called for its demolition. The group went to work with then BHS Principal David Reece and quickly raised the needed dollars for a beautiful plaza. The group held a ribbon cutting and dedication in the Spring of 2019.



In the winter of 2020, a group of alumni from the class of 1959 called the museum and announced they had raised a significant sum of money to re-do the faded mural on the large tank. Local business man Bob Varner met with museum staff on behalf of his



graduating class and agreed to the original 1940's Block B for the East facing side of the tank. They also agreed on the West side of the tank would be the original block B with JC and HS noting that Bakersfield Community College was on the site as well. A plaque noting their gift will be placed on the base of the tower.

Local artist Tony Saldana agreed to do the art work. When asked if he minded working so high up in the air, he laughed and said "No...I like working up high...no one bothers me or gives me criticism!"

A huge thank you to the parent club, alumni group and the Class of 1959 for the final touches to this incredible project. 🙏



RESTORE AND REFURBISH

THE GREEN FROG SIGN

A number of local residents lamented the gift of the wonderful Green Frog Market neon sign to the Museum of Neon Art in Glendale a number of years ago. The large multi-colored sign tips his hat and says "Howdy Folks." To be fair to the former owners of Green Frog Market, the Glendale museum receives nearly several hundred thousand visitors a year. The Green Frog sign welcomes visitors as one of the main artifacts in their entry hall. At the time of the gift, the owners did not feel our local museum was up to the challenge of restoring and mounting the sign. They felt the sign could best be enjoyed in the Glendale museum. Despite calls for its return to Kern County, along with the mysterious Trout's Tavern sign, the Green Frog sign is permanently residing in Glendale.

Last year our museum became aware of a second Green Frog sign still in Kern County in private hands. After a long negotiation, the Kern County Museum is very proud that the second Green Frog sign is now the centerpiece of the Neon Courtyard. The eight foot in diameter orange sign also is neon and features a green frog tipping his hat to visitors. A huge thank you to Rusty Taylor of Sign Solutions for the very fast restoration and mounting. Thank you to Scott Hair and The Green Frog family for their gift to the museum. And a final thank you to the West Foundation and the Arkelian Foundation for their financial support for restoration. We now have our own Green Frog welcoming visitors to the Ray A. Watson Transportation Exhibit and Neon Plaza. Howdy Folks! 🐸

HOWDY FOLKS!



Viva VOLUNTEERS

KEITH MONTGOMERY

When Keith retired as a teacher in the Standard School District several years ago, he caught up on his to-do list at home and got used to the idea of “every day being Saturday.” After a period of time though, Keith started looking around for places to volunteer his time. Active in Sons in Retirement, he reached out to the museum to see if they needed any help.

Luckily for the Kern County Museum, Keith is a regular volunteer every Monday working on the grounds and in facilities maintenance. Blessed with a green thumb, Keith and his friend Steve Humphreys, prune roses, weed flower beds and spruce up the 16 acres of lawn and shrubbery. Rain or shine, Keith can be found raking, hoeing and trimming. Full time Village groundsman Ruben Escalante calls Keith and Steve his “saviors” because they often take on jobs he doesn’t have time to do. Just mowing the 16 acres and repairing all of the irrigation systems is a full time job. Having two hard working volunteers sprucing up the ornamental shrubs and trees really makes a difference.

Keith has also helped the Maintenance Team with light construction and repairs on the 60 buildings in the village. His gift however, is with the shrubs and flower beds. He often jokes that spending an active day at the museum doing gardening is saving him money on a gym membership.

If you are interested in being a volunteer at the museum, please call Shannon Fowler at 661-437-3330 or by email at shannon@kerncountymuseum.org. We are currently training historical tour guides, costume specialists, docents for the Black Gold Exhibit and the Ray A. Watson Transportation Exhibit. And we are always looking for craftsmen and gardeners like Keith who don’t mind getting their hands dirty for a good cause.





Upcoming EVENTS

2020 SPRING EDITION

Spring Comes to the Museum

With the outbreak of the Cov-Id 19 virus, the Kern County Museum has been closed to the public since the week of March 16th. We have been forced to cancel, postpone or reschedule all of our spring events. Meanwhile the Village is in full bloom and Spring has returned. Please keep the Museum and Village in mind when planning future events and activities. We are looking forward to life returning to normal and bringing programs and events back to our beautiful grounds.



MUSEUM
HOURS

TUESDAY - SATURDAY
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

SUNDAY
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM



2020

CLOSED OCCASIONALLY FOR SPECIAL
EVENTS AND PRIVATE FUNCTIONS

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

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