

The KERN COURIER

2020 FALL EDITION



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Noriega Hotel Bar Legacy

When the Museum got a call this spring from a local historian, Director Mike McCoy thought it was time to reorder more books on the history of the Basque. Steve Bass had some sad news. After 89 years of operation, the Noriega Hotel was ceasing operation. For good.

"I was absolutely heartsick," said McCoy. "I have a photo of me in the dining room when I was two years old. It was always our go-to place for out of town guests and Friday lunch." Bass explained the pandemic shut down was the final straw after increased security costs, raised rent and just the everyday costs of doing business. The James Beard Award winning restaurant was done.

Bass made the Museum an offer. He said the Elizalde family wanted to keep the historic bar and back bar in Kern County. Bass did say there would be a lot of expense in uprooting the large bar after 80 years on Sumner Street. McCoy soon had the support needed to move the bar to the museum. Local businesswoman Mary Trichell and the Wheeler Family Foundation made immediate large contributions. Charles and Richard Knight and about 50 other individual donors donated as well. McCoy promised any leftover donations would go for an upcoming restoration of the French Bakery.

Having a July 1st deadline, a team of volunteers went to work taking the bar and back bar apart and building a transportation crate for the move. Local history buffs Bass and Larry Errera provided guidance on the disassembly. Turner Trans Lift came out two consecutive days to move the bar and back bar onto flatbeds for the ride across town. The Crane company, family owned and operated for 70 years, said to "not worry about the bill." Matt Woessner said their company was "all about giving back to the community."

Now where to put the 100 year old bar? Two years ago the museum had cleared out a storage area adjacent to the proposed Watson Transportation Exhibit creating an indoor events area next to Neon Courtyard. The Trolley Car Station has proven to be a popular spot for corporate parties and community gatherings. By a bit of luck, the Noriega Bar was an exact fit for the space. McCoy said "I wish the bar was still on Sumner Street and we were going to Noriega's for dinner tonight. If the bar has to go somewhere, the Trolley Car Station is the best option. We promise we will take care of it and honor the wonderful legacy of the Elizalde family."



THE NORIEGA HOTEL BAR ON SUMNER STREET



THE FAMOUS BAR BEING LOADED BY TURNER TRANS LIFT FOR ITS RIDE ACROSS TOWN TO THE TROLLEY CAR STATION



VOLUNTEER BILLY UNDERHILL WORKING ON THE DISASSEMBLY

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY DR. MIKE MCCOY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Kern County Museum was on a real win streak for 2020. We had the year completely booked for corporate parties, weddings and special events. All of our community festivals were on the calendar and ready to go. Our Box Car Music Festival was lining up its talent and our Village Fleas were planning on Spring and Fall antique fairs. After 50 years of promises, the museum finally cut the ribbon on the Watson Transportation Exhibit. For the first time in recent history, the museum was solidly in financial black ink.

A week after opening the Watson Exhibit to the public on March 12th, the museum was forced to shut down due to COVID-19. Our events Director Brenna Charatsaris scrambled to move the complicated events calendar with all of its complexity into the Fall of 2020. The Board of Directors had to decide what would staffing look like during a shut down and the loss of most of the year's revenue? What were essential jobs at the museum? What cuts would we have to make?

Fortunately, board member Sheryl Barbich rolled up her sleeves and drafted a winning Paycheck Protection Program grant. Longtime donors like Mrs. Gayle Batey sent in donations for the general fund. Several grants arrived that kept staff working on restoration projects and new programs. When the restrictions were eased for outdoor museums, we cautiously opened our doors back up but with limitations on indoor space and a mask requirement. Summer is always our slowest season but just being able to be open partially was welcome news to the staff.

As we move into the fall season, we are still very much wounded. We will be able to host our Village Flea antique event October 4th but without food. Safe Halloween is cancelled. The popular Village Fest was also taken off the calendar. The popular Lori Brock Discovery Center is closed, so is Black Gold and Watson Transportation since they are indoor exhibits.

We are asking all friends of the museum to consider a gift for our Annual Campaign that will begin this fall. As you can see from reading The Courier, we are doing great work and making a lot of positive improvements to our 75 year old museum. Your gift will allow us to keep the positive momentum going and be ready when our visitors return. We have some very exciting plans on the drawing board for 2021 and have shown we are worthy of your investment.

Take care of yourselves during these trying times and feel free to drop by the museum for a visit Wednesday to Sunday 9 AM to 3:30 PM. Bring a mask and see the things we have accomplished for the community. We are still here and we are still working hard. ☺



Consider a Gift

Annual Campaign



coming this fall

the **KERN COURIER**

COLLECTIONS CORNER



FRANK AND
DEMI HINMON

Two years ago, the Museum got a call from local collector Frank Hinmon. He had a private auto museum at his home and wanted to downsize his collection. He offered the Museum a completely restored dragster.

And not just any dragster...the Warren Coburn Ridge Runner! One of the fastest vehicles on the planet back in the 1980's. Of course the museum agreed to the gift and the dragster is now one of the most popular artifacts in the Watson Transportation Exhibit. When museum staff went to check on the vehicle, he told them that his collection of local neon signs was "in his will for the Kern County Museum."

Fast forward to August 2020 and Frank called again. He had decided his sign collection should be seen by the public and wanted to make a gift to the museum "right away." Our museum staff scrambled and were able to pull together the resources to make the gift happen immediately. Thanks to Jared Webb at CN Signs during the last week of August, his crew pulled down a dozen classic neon signs from Kern County's past.

Frank had focused on automotive signs but had other signs of interest. The signs were already restored, in working condition and could go right up into the Museum's neon courtyard. "This was a major gift," said Maintenance Lead Eddie Valdez. "We have all seen these signs when we were kids. It's great they are staying in Bakersfield."

The museum gets regular phone calls with offers of "free" neon signs or signs for sale. The problem is the expense of taking them down with a crane, restoring the electrical system, repairing the neon and painting them. Then the sign has to be erected onto a pole or wall with electrical service. The recent acquisition of the free Amestoy's Tavern sign ended up costing nearly \$10,000. Thanks to local donors, the museum was able to make this happen.

In the case of the Hinmon collection, the Ben H. and Gladys Arkelian Foundation and the Harry and Ethel West Foundation came through like troopers with a timely donation to support the new signs. They are now up in the courtyard and two made it into the Watson Transportation Exhibit. A huge thanks to Frank Hinmon and his generosity! 🕶



EDUCATION STATION


The Lori Brock Discovery Center has been on a roll. A hands-on messy creative zone called Arts Express was completed two years ago. The former Kids City room was then transformed into STEAM Town, a place where youngsters can explore technical careers in mini versions of Bakersfield businesses. Cook lunch at Luigi's Café? Build a house with Batey Construction? Slide down the pole at Firehouse #2?

No problem!

And now older kids ages 7 to 12 can learn about how power is generated in Power Lab. Thanks to a generous grant from Chevron, the mad scientists laboratory features five custom made video games. They tell the story of power in Kern County from water to wind to solar to hydrocarbon.

Each game is highly interactive and calls upon the young visitor to be creative, think fast and have quick reactions. Two Bit Circus from Los Angeles, a non-profit that supports STEAM education, pulled out all of the stops on designing the room's components. Project Lead Justin Finuliar made sure the room was incredibly fun and full of teachable moments.

Education Assistant Nancy Kelly was on hand recently for the staff training by Two Bit Circus. The combination of bright lights, music and game sound effects were almost overwhelming. "This will be the place to be in Bakersfield if you are 10 years old," she said. The room is decorated with the mad scientist theme by local artist Danny Chavez better known to his fans as "Melt." His rendition of classic science themes with power elements and bright color make the room come alive for young visitors.

"It will be nice when the restrictions lift and Lori Brock returns to normal," Kelly said. "We can't wait for the kids to walk into this room and start to play these games." 



It's Happening at the Village!

FALL VILLIAGE FLEA!

Bakersfield's favorite show for everything vintage, Village Flea, is returning to Pioneer Village Sunday October 4th from 8 AM to 4 PM. Thanks to guidance from the Kern County Health Department, the popular event will be allowed to move forward with some restrictions.

Due to the pandemic guidelines, all entrants and vendors must wear a mask while at the event. Vendors will be spaced 10 feet apart and moved onto the surface roads and out of the common green spaces. There will be a restriction on food being prepared at the event but bottled water and beverages will be available. "All vendors and guests are encouraged to pack a lunch and enjoy a picnic on our grounds," said Events Manager Brenna Charatsaris. "We will have some beverages and packaged snacks but no food will be prepared."

The popular antique and vintage fair is in its third year but had to cancel this spring at the beginning of the COVID-19 restrictions. It is expected that the 70 plus vendors will be ready to make some deals after a quiet antique sales year. Dixie Brewer of In Your Wildest Dreams vintage and estate sales said that 2020 has been very difficult. "It has been a real downer. People have not been able to get out and do the things they love. We are so glad the Museum will move forward with Village Flea. It is always one of our favorite events of the year."

Village Flea features collector items, antiques and vintage goods. It does not allow new items or used modern items. "We are not a garage sale," said Charatsaris. "People come to Village Flea to find those home decorator treasures you can't find in stores. And the prices are so good!"

If you are interested in being a vendor and selling at the Village Flea, contact bebe@kerncountymuseum.org for more information.

JOIN US!



**VILLAGE
FLEA**

AT THE KERN COUNTY MUSEUM

**SUNDAY
OCT 4
8 AM - 4 PM**



**VINTAGE GOODS
ANTIQUES**

Collectibles | Art
Handmade Items | Clothing
Glass | AND More



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



THE LAND OFFICE

The 16 acre Pioneer Village with its 60 historic buildings, four exhibition halls and new events areas, has been called the crown jewel of Bakersfield. Keeping the diamonds shining in this crown though takes a lot of hard work. The museum has been engaged in a very aggressive restoration plan for the historic buildings for the last three years and is working toward touching every building in the next five years.

The Land Office was formerly an old cook shack that was on the historic Rudnick Ranch and then dragged to the village and reimagined as a real estate office of 1900. Like many of the buildings in the village, there was peeling paint, stained wall paper and degraded flooring.

Thanks to a donation from local real estate investor Bill Edmonds, the Land Office is now ready for another 50 years of land sales. Museum staff replaced the damaged flooring, patched and painted the metal roof and gave the 100 year old structure several coats of white paint. "Bill made the mistake of dropping by to say hello," said Director Mike McCoy. "We are old friends from church and I knew he loved old buildings. The Land Office looks terrific. "

THE BENA DEPOT

Bena Depot is one of the most iconic structures at the museum. Originally located a few miles west of the Tehachapi Loop, the small freight depot with its telegraph station helped guide trains over the mountains. It came to the museum in 1961 and has needed some TLC for many of those 60 years. Thanks to a very generous donation from the Wheeler Family Foundation, the Depot has been transformed. The freight platform was replaced with all new lumber, a ramp was added and the rear porch was rebuilt. After some research with state train experts, the station received two coats of Southern Pacific Colonial Yellow. Trimmed with SP Brown, the station is ready to take on freight for the ride down the hill to Bakersfield. 🚂



Viva

VOLUNTEERS

LIVIA KAO & LOUIS YEN

Chumei Ho from the Sun Yat Sen Library in Guangzhou China contacted our museum in 2019. She was interested in the Chinese document and artifact collection at our museum. The library's PasNOW project is a China based initiative that is seeking to publish historical Chinese language archives that are currently in American museums and libraries.

The first step was to catalogue the Kern County's collection of 50,000 documents. This required hands-on translation of the documents' title, dates, authors and a summary of contents. Local Chinese community member Quon Louey recommended Livia Kao a retired insurance executive in Bakersfield. Livia agreed to take on the project. Livia was raised in South Korea but is Chinese. She graduated from National Taiwan University in Taiwan and came to the United States in 1978. She asked retired Kern County music teacher Louis Yen to assist. Louis was born in Guangzhou and raised in Hong Kong.

The main challenge was that most of the letters were hand written and difficult to read since they were written in cursive form. Most letters did not have punctuation, and it was difficult to determine where the sentences started or ended. There was also a mixture of Mandarin, Cantonese, and English vocabulary. Many of the letters and hand written documents were also written in regional dialects with different calligraphy styles than modern language.

The timeline of the documents Livia and Louis have translated so far were from the late Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China (1860 – 1930). The documents from Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party) described the war. Livia and Louis began to work through the boxes of documents. Working from Livia's house, they kept up a dedicated schedule this year through the spring into summer.

One set of personal letters painted a picture of a large family who all appeared to work in the same businesses, one in Bakersfield and one in San Francisco. It appears the owner, Mr. Chow Wen Pei (周文培) was involved in many activities, including a leadership role in the Kuomintang. In general, men came to and worked in the US and sent money back to China to support their families. Letters vividly tell how unstable China was at the time and how the families needed support from the family members living in the US.

The Sun Yat-sen Library had planned on hosting a conference in Guangzhou this year for the museums, libraries and private collectors that contributed to the project. The pandemic however sidelined the conference. They are hopeful a representative from our museum can attend the conference in 2021. Livia said "All in all, I found this project very interesting and am very thankful that I am able to help out."



LIVIA KAO



LOUIS YEN



MENU COVER

VILLAGE FLEA

AT THE KERN COUNTY MUSEUM

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

SUNDAY
OCT 4
8 AM - 4 PM



MUSEUM
HOURS

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

CLOSED
MONDAY & TUESDAY



FALL EDITION **2020**

CLOSED OCCASIONALLY FOR SPECIAL
EVENTS AND PRIVATE FUNCTIONS

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



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