NEW TRANSPORT EXHIBIT MOVING ALONG!

The long awaited Raymond Watson Transportation Exhibit is under construction and moving toward a summer of 2019 completion date. Originally envisioned as a showcase for the museum’s collection of horse drawn vehicles and early automobiles, the project was jump started by a significant contribution from former Kern County Supervisor Ray Watson several years ago. The original funding supported a fire suppression system, plumbing upgrades, and ADA compliance measures. Air conditioning was added in 2018 along with video surveillance.

“The project is now in two phases,” noted Executive Director Mike McCoy. “The first phase is a 3,000 square foot trolley car station that can be used for events and provides a dramatic entrance to the main hall.” Funding for the first phase came from a very generous grant from the Harry and Ethel West Foundation and the Ben H. and Gladys Arkelian Foundation. The room features an original trolley car that used to run from the Santa Fe Station downtown Bakersfield to the train station in Old Town Kern. This phase is almost complete and is just waiting for specialty lighting and finish work. “We now have an exciting indoor entertainment space for up to 80 guests,” McCoy added.

The second phase is the main 16,000 square foot exhibition hall. The large space will showcase a permanent display of 30 vehicles mostly from the Harry West Collection. A significant grant from the Virginia and Alfred Harrell Foundation has provided the largest piece of the funding puzzle to complete the project. “A number of other individual donors have also stepped forward to sponsor vehicles,” McCoy said. “These funds will provide finishing touches for signage, vehicle prep and interpretive displays.” The center of the hall will remain an open space so that special rotated exhibitions can be mounted of up to 20 other vehicles from local collectors.
Over the years the museum has created an outstanding collection of vintage neon signs from our community. Historic businesses have been sold or relocated to new locations and their signs have been offered to our museum. In many of these cases unfortunately, we have had to say no to acquiring the signs. Taking down a large metal sign with a crane, stabilizing the neon, and then transporting the sign to the museum or a local sign shop is a very expensive undertaking. This first phase in most cases ranges from $3,000 to $5,000. Once the sign is down, the museum has to then create a restoration plan. Painting the old metal with heavy duty industrial paint, reworking the electrical components and then restoring the neon can be another $3,000. The last phase is mounting the sign on a pole and completing the electrical connections. The entire process can run between $6,000 and $12,000.

The museum acquired the Jolly Cone sign from the well known burger stand on Wible Road last year. The business had to be razed as part of the new freeway alignment and the City of Bakersfield offered the sign. It has since been restored and is awaiting the extra dollars for mounting.

Recently the museum was offered the iconic Amestoy’s sign from East Bakersfield when the business announced it was being closed. We initially had to pass because of the cost concerns. Luckily several angels stepped forward with the offer to help. Wes Reece Crane offered to take the sign down for free. Keith Pfeffer of Vital Signs offered to assist with no labor charges. The West Foundation offered financial assistance up to $1,500. Finally a benefactor, who wishes to remain anonymous, offered to cover any other cost relative to restoration and mounting.

The current owner of Amestoy’s On the Hill and the Amestoy Family said the sign can come down in June after a final big party. I am sure Frank and Marie Amestoy would be very pleased that their historic tavern will be remembered. Look for the sign to be in our Neon Plaza by the fall of this year. And thank you to our community for making this happen. 🌟
In December, the Kern County Museum received two wonderful donations pertaining to former Bakersfield mayors: Mary K. Shell and Harvey L. Hall. The donations consisted of photographs, diaries, appointment books, and scrapbooks from Mary K. Shell and a pin-striped suit, shirt, shoes, tie, and cufflinks worn by Harvey L. Hall during his term as Mayor.

Mary Katherine Jaynes was born to Walter and Mary Ellen Jaynes on February 9, 1927. She attended East Bakersfield High School. In 1980, she announced her intention to run for Mayor. Mary K. Shell was the first woman elected to the office of Mayor of the City of Bakersfield. Her inauguration took place on January 5, 1981. During her term as Mayor, Shell founded the Beautiful Bakersfield Committee, established the Historic Preservation Commission, chaired the Sgt. Larry Pierce Memorial Committee, and helped to re-establish the Downtown Bakersfield Christmas Parade. In 1984, Mary K. Shell was elected to the Kern County Board of Supervisors serving three consecutive terms.

UNITY IN OUR COMMUNITY

Harvey L. Hall was born in Los Angeles on January 5, 1941. He was adopted by Clarence and Cecil Hall. Harvey attended local schools including Lowell and Longfellow Elementary Schools, Washington and Golden State Junior High Schools, Bakersfield High School, and Bakersfield Junior College. He started Hall Ambulance Service, Inc. on February 10, 1971. Four years later, Hall introduced the first mobile intensive care paramedic program in Kern County. Harvey Hall announced his candidacy for mayor on the steps of Centennial Plaza on March 30, 1999 and was elected the following year. He promoted the message of “Unity in Our Community”. Hall could often be seen on a Saturday morning picking up litter along local freeways as part of the Mayor Hall Freeway Clean-up project he founded. Harvey L. Hall is the longest serving Mayor of the City of Bakersfield. 📸
The busiest spot at the Kern County Museum has always been the Lori Brock Discovery Center and 2019 promises to be exciting! Along with the popular Frontier Days program with more than 900 students visiting February 21st, we also have new camp programs and a busy school tour schedule. Lori Brock’s interior is also under major construction. Thanks to funding from Chevron USA, the Junior League of Bakersfield, and help from Foothill High School, the four main rooms are being completely refurbished this year.

The first big change was the creation of Arts Express, a hands-on room for children to complete mini masterpieces and be creative. Featuring a model train and the exciting mural work of local artist Roy Goldstein, the room has become a popular attraction for children and their parents. The adjacent classroom has also been remodeled with new interior finishes creating a popular spot for birthday parties and special events.

The largest room in the building is being transformed into STEAM Town, a creative climbable, crawlable space where youngsters aged two to ten can explore careers in science, technology, engineering, arts and math. The mini town will feature a fire station, construction site, a farm, café and a hospital. Individual donors like Kyle Carter, Hall Ambulance, Dignity Health and Foothill High School have signed up to support the project.

The Power Lab is being created in the fourth room for hands-on learning for older children. Special activities will share how power comes from Kern County’s oil and gas industry along with wind, solar and hydraulic sources. A special thanks to our partners at Chevron USA for their leadership on this project.

PROVIDING A SPECIAL PLACE FOR CHILDREN TO LEARN THROUGH PLAY
VILLAGE FLEA RETURNS!
After a successful trial run in October, Village Flea will return to Pioneer Village Sunday March 31, 2019. Hundreds of shoppers visited last October to shop for vintage clothing, furniture, antiques and art work. Dozens of vendors from Kern County’s antique district brought their best merchandise to the Kern County Museum for this inaugural event. A few more vendors will be added this spring but the ticket prices are still $5.00 for adults and children 12 and under are free. Live music will return with food and beverages. “This was a great event,” said local vintage dealer Dixie Brewer. “And everyone had fun!”

THIRD ANNUAL
HAGGARD BOXCAR MUSIC FESTIVAL!
Mark your calendars! You won’t want to miss the third annual Haggard Boxcar Music Festival 2019. In the summer of 2015, the childhood home of the late country music legend, Merle Haggard, was moved to the Kern County Museum. The next spring, thousands of fans attended the first Haggard Boxcar Music Festival where Merle’s children and other talented artists performed the singer’s greatest hits. Thanks to the generosity of Cynthia Lake and other community supporters, the Museum has been able to turn this festival into an annual event.

The third annual Haggard Boxcar Music Festival is scheduled for Saturday, May 11, 2019. The Kern County Museum is excited to welcome the Haggard brothers and their band back to the Pioneer Village Stage. Tickets will go on sale in the early spring.
A new exhibit is coming to the Kern County Museum in 2019 to honor the largest migration of American citizens in our nation’s history. The Dust Bowl Project, thanks to the generosity of the Ellen Baker Tracy Guild, will tell the story of the 2.5 million immigrants who moved to California during the Great Depression of the 1930’s. More than a third of these displaced Americans ended up settling in the San Joaquin Valley. Kern County was the great cross roads of this migration with the former residents of Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas and other plains states putting their mark on our local history.

Three federal labor camps were established in California’s Central Valley by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930’s; Sunset Camp in Weed Patch, the Shafter Camp and the Tulare Camp. The Kern County Museum has acquired a worker housing unit from the Sunset Camp. The small metal building was one of several dozen that housed up to 300 migrant workers beginning in 1937 in the camp on the outskirts of Lamont. The museum is also in the process of acquiring a second housing unit from the Shafter Camp from a private donor. This wooden structure also provided interim housing to migrant workers during the same time period.

The new exhibit will feature the two small houses providing a glimpse of camp life in the 1930’s. The exhibit will also feature a 1920’s automobile that recreates a typical immigrant vehicle that made the 1,000 mile trek from the Dust Bowl region to Kern County. Current plans call for the project to be completed by the fall of 2019.
VIVA VOLUNTEERS!

BY MISTY WHITE, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

It started with a desire to donate a small Victorian house to the Kern County Museum and to remember their mother’s legacy of hard work and kindness. Ten years later Di Sharman and Glenda Rankin, better known as the Hill Sisters, are still actively engaged as historic docents while working to preserve local history. Lavern Hill always said she would like her small vintage house moved to the museum from the Rosedale area. After Di and Glenda did a good deal of detective work, they connected their mother’s house to its original owner J. J. Lopez the former superintendent of Tejon Ranch. This rich local history provided the momentum for the house to move to Pioneer Village in 2008. After a good deal of restoration work, the house was returned to its original 1909 appearance. Glenda and Di enjoy giving tours of the house especially with local schools. Di is a retired teacher and Glenda is an owner of Rankin Ranch in Caliente. “Frontier Days and the living history tours with children are our favorite events,” Di said.

The Hill Sisters were also advocates in the acquisition and move of the childhood home of Merle Haggard to the museum from Oildale. Better known as “the Box Car,” the small white house has become one of the museum’s most popular attractions. “We can’t say enough about Cynthia Lake and her generosity,” said Di of the local philanthropist. “She really made this dream a reality.”

Di and Glenda are very active in the local group “Citizens Preserving History.” The group has a strong focus on research and the preservation of Kern County’s country music heritage. The group has interviewed dozens of local musicians and their families with the help of videographer Chuck Barbee. They often use the Lopez-Hill house as the setting for the oral history project. “This is a labor of love,” Di said recently reflecting on their connection with our museum.

“And preserving our history is important work!”

A TRIBUTE TO A mother’s legacy of hard work and kindness

Lopez-Hill House and
The Hill Sisters

PAGE 7
Historic Standard School

LECTURES 🎨

Wednesdays (6 to 8pm)

February 6
Presidential Visits to Kern County by Lori Wear

February 20
Grocery Stores of Bakersfield by John Codd

March 6
Iconic Bakersfield Landmarks by Lori Wear

March 20
Sunset District by Julie Plata

April 3
Kern County Fair Association Race Track, 1913 - 1940 by Lori Wear

April 17
The Long Journey: Immigration and Naturalization in Kern County, 1866-1930 by Christopher Livingston

May 1
A Look Back at 90 Years of History at Hart Memorial Park by Lori Wear

May 15
The Murder of Mathias Warren by Kris Gray

Saturdays Classes

March 2
How to Preserve Your Family Photographs (10:00am - 12:00pm) by Lori Wear

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