COME CELEBRATE OUR MUSEUM!

After a year and a half of shut downs, closures and partial reopenings, The Kern County Museum is inviting the community back for the first annual “Homecoming Celebration,” Sunday September 26th from 10 AM to 2 PM. Museum members will have a special 9 AM entry time and program. Adult admission is only $5.00 and children are free. Food and beverages will be available for purchase. Since Pioneer Village is an outdoor venue, we will be able to maintain pandemic proximity precautions and social distancing.

The Museum will use the “Homecoming Celebration” to show off more than 30 new construction and restoration projects in Pioneer Village, the Lori Brock Discovery Center and special exhibitions. Costumed docents will give tours and allow the community access to a number of spaces that have been closed during the height of the pandemic.

“We have a lot of to be proud of,” said Executive Director Mike McCoy. “We have been working hard for the last four years to really raise the bar on our existing exhibits and to create new ones like the Watson Transportation Exhibit. If you haven’t been to the museum is a couple years, I think you are going to be very surprised at all of the work our team has accomplished.”

The Museum will also share its new Museum digital tour program and the Story Trails project that enhances the visitor experience for our young visitors. “We are thrilled with our five new exhibits in the Lori Brock Discovery Center,” said Education Manager Nancy Kelly. “We will have several activities and crafts for children on Homecoming. Come see Dino Dig, STEAM Town, and Power Lab. We think you will be amazed!”

For more information on Homecoming, check out the Museum’s website at www.kerncountymuseum.org or call 661-437-3330. We will be honoring the Kern County Health guidelines. Masks are encouraged but not required for the outdoor spaces. All exhibits will respect social distancing.
Our Museum is very pleased to announce that the popular neon courtyard that serves as the entry way to the Watson Transportation Exhibit is now the “Mission Bank Neon Plaza.” Thanks to a very generous donation from the Batey Family, the plaza space has been enlarged by 3,000 square feet, new decorative fencing installed and twenty new neon signs have been added to the collection. The Batey Family has a close association with Mission Bank and would like to honor their work in our community.

With the new support from the Batey Family, the Plaza has added iconic signs like Sinaloa’s Mexican Restaurant, Hoyett’s Drive In, and Vincent’s Cyclery. Other signs that are being readied for the plaza include Cone’s Health Food, Fiero’s Shoe Repair, Medeiros’s Auto Electric, and the Downtowner Hotel. The famous Gottlieb’s Seat Cover City sign is on hold due to its enormous size.

Former Museum Executive Director Carola Rupert Enriquez first envisioned the plan for a neon courtyard on the west side of the Museum’s 16 acres 20 years ago. Carola saw that many of the iconic neon signs were being taken down when buildings changed hands or were being replaced with illuminated plastic signs. Carola’s husband John furnished the sweat equity by managing the pouring of the cement plaza and eight signs were originally donated. Some were real show stoppers like the Silver Fox Lounge and the Far East Café. Some were more modest like the Rexall Drug sign from Shafter or the Top’s Market sign. The plaza soon became a popular events venue and the backdrop for classic car shows and gatherings.

We recently received a call from the curator of History San Jose, an outdoor history museum. He said he heard of our recent expansion and would like to come visit in anticipation of their own neon plaza being built in 2022. We also received a call from Modesto where a new museum is being created to honor the car cruising culture of the 1950’s and 60’s. Their design team is coming up for a visit as well. The old saying that “imitation is the greatest form of flattery” says a lot about our Mission Bank Neon Plaza. If you have not seen our sign collection in a while, come on out, preferably at night, and see the reminders of Kern County’s past lit up in bright neon lights.
PastPerfect is a cataloging software used by over 11,000 historical institutions worldwide, and the Kern County Museum has joined that growing number! The cloud-based version of PastPerfect allows museum employees to access the inventory of collections from anywhere. Moving on from the paper-based inventory system of our collections is a significant step in the right direction. It will narrow down the time it takes staff to find where our artifacts are located and learn their background information.

Through the help of five CSUB interns and three generous volunteers, the museum is working hard to inventory our collections with up-to-date photographs of each item to be cataloged in PastPerfect. The basement and the research center are the main areas of focus currently. The basement houses a range of artifacts such as paintings, clothing, fossils, Native American artifacts, and oversized archival items. The focus in the research center is on inventorying and digitizing photographs, which is our most requested thing to see by the public and researchers alike.

The PastPerfect software will also allow for public access to the museum's collections. Requests to see photographs within the museum's archives come in daily, and through this software, the public will be able to view our collections online at their convenience. Making history available for the community is a large part of the museum's mission. By providing online public access to our collections, we are moving in the right direction of accessibility.

Accession records dating back to the museum’s founding will have to be manually entered into the software before individual inventories can be entered. However, bringing the museum’s cataloging process into the 21st century will prove to be beneficial in the long run. A special thanks goes out to our interns and volunteers that have been crucial to this enormous project!
The Junior League of Bakersfield donated $50,000 in 2016 to renovate the interior of the Lori Brock Discovery Center. Their intention was to freshen up the interior activity spaces, remodel the kitchen and to make the building more kid friendly. The Museum upgraded electrical service, flooring, wall finishes and a new kitchen. After catching its’ breath, the Museum staff noted that the interior of the building was still not inviting to children. “We were a quart low on pizzazz,” said Director Mike McCoy. “We really needed to think like six year olds and make the place fun.” McCoy and his team then visited eight popular children’s museums around the state and brought back dozens of ideas.

Thanks to significant grant support from Chevron USA, the entire Discovery Center has been completely transformed over the last four years. Arts Express was the first addition. The messy art area helps students explore visual arts and crafts. Next was the STEAM Town exhibit that created a dozen tech career vignettes ranging from Luigi’s Restaurant to Alta One Credit Union to Fire Station #2. “We have a working ambulance and hospital, a crime lab and a little farm,” said Education Assistant Lisa Wilson. “Kids can be fire fighters, builders or car mechanics.”

Power Lab was added in 2020 with custom built video games that teach older children about how power is generated. The new space imagines a mad scientist’s lab with wild murals and engaging music. Out of the Lab’s glass doors is now Dino Dig, an interactive learning area for young paleontologists who dig up real bones. And finally there is Applause! a performing arts space donated by the William And Florence Wheeler Foundation with concerts and puppet shows coming soon.

With fresh exterior paint in June of 2021, a new iron gate entry from the parking lot and a grand entrance arbor, the Lori Brock Discovery Center is ready for another generation of Kern County Kids. Check out our website to see upcoming events and activities!

www.kerncountymuseum.org
IT'S HAPPENING AT THE VILLAGE

UPCOMING EVENTS
SEPTEMBER 26TH
The entire community is invited to the Museum’s Homecoming Celebration Sunday September 26th from 10 AM to 2 PM. Museum members will have a special preview at 9 AM. Docents will host more than 20 restored buildings and new projects. Special admission is $5.00 for adults and children under 12 free. Food and drink will be available for purchase.

VILLAGE FLEA
Everyone’s favorite antique and all things vintage show will be back for the fall. The popular family event will feature more than 70 antique and crafts vendors, music, and food for purchase. A special discounted admission of $5.00 for adults and children under 12 are free. Gates open at 8 AM and the event winds down by 4 PM.

Safe Halloween At The Kern County Museum
Unfortunately, the popular Safe Halloween event has been cancelled. The event will be back better than ever October 30 and 31 in 2022.

HALLOWEENVILLE
OCTOBER 1ST THROUGH 31ST
A community partner is hosting a special attraction at the Museum during October called “Halloweenville.” You can pick out a pumpkin, take a ride on the Spooky Hayride, play Ghosts versus Ghouls Laser Tag, Shoot a Zombie, Climb the Wicked Rock Wall, or Bounce in Casper’s Zone, Halloweenville is sure to have something fun for everyone. Entrance into Halloweenville is $10 per person (children 2 and under are free). All activities are included except for the Haunt and includes 10 paintballs per paid entry.

Halloweenville Ticket Types
Pumpkin patch - Free entry
Halloweenville - $10 per person (children 2 and under are free) includes 10 paintballs per paid entry (does not include the Haunt)
Scare Valley - $25 per person Friday/Sunday
Scare Valley - $30 per person on Saturdays
Scare Valley tickets are good for one time through the haunt and unlimited access to Halloweenville activities including 10 paintballs per paid entry.
COMMUNITY DONORS ARE THE SECRET INGREDIENT!

The Kern County Museum has been working hard the last few years to paint, repair and stabilize the 60 historic structures that make up Pioneer Village. Many of the buildings are more than 100 years old with the expected dry rot and peeling paint that comes with old age. A falling roof or sagging foundation triggers a dozen other problems if not repaired as part of a routine maintenance schedule.

The latest restoration project is the Surveyor’s Office. The 120 year old building was brought to the Museum 55 years ago and was a field survey office for the Miller Lux land empire. The office was in serious need of roof repair, new exterior paint, and porch reconstruction. Thanks to a generous donation from the Nickel Family, Museum staff brightened up the office’s interior, provided a new sign and completely restored the outside of the building. The Nickel Family have deep roots in our region as descendants of Henry Miller of Miller and Lux making the project a great fit.

Museum Maintenance Lead Eddie Valdez and his team have completed more than 30 restoration projects and new exhibits in the last four years. They range from small projects like the Carpenter’s Shop to large installations like the Watson Transportation Exhibit. Some projects like the Metcalf House and the Bena Depot had been on hold for years and are finally completed. “We have gone through about a thousand gallons of paint,” said Eddie.

If individual donors or local businesses would like to follow the lead of the Nickel Family, the Kern County Museum has 14 projects that are currently unfunded. They would range in price from $2,000 for the Assay Office to $25,000 for St. John’s Episcopal Church. They include:


Email the Museum’s Director Mike McCoy at mmc-coy@kerncountymuseum.org if interested in sponsoring a building’s restoration.
Gayle Batey has been the fairy godmother of the museum for a number of years. A former teacher, the Vanderbilt University grad still has a soft southern accent and takes a lot of interest in Museum projects and programs. And Gayle always puts her money on the line when a project is moving forward. The centerpiece for the Museum’s events schedule is the beautiful Batey Gardens that were imagined and developed by the Batey Family in 2013. Sitting at nearly an acre, the gardens are full of color, formality and provide a gracious venue for weddings, corporate parties and museum events. Gayle has been known to pull a weed or two in her garden and to regularly visit checking on her favorite plants.

Gayle also has nearly perfect timing. When the museum was struggling financially a few years ago, she called and offered a “Christmas Gift” to all museum employees. The bonus checks were delivered in plenty of time for staff members to finish their holiday shopping. In 2020, in the midst of the pandemic and zero revenue for the museum from cancelled events, Gayle sent over a surprise donation and said to put it in “the general fund for expenses.” This was completely unexpected and much appreciated.

If you talk to other non-profit directors in our county or to local educators, they all have their Gayle Batey stories. She has received a number of honors for her charitable work with her late husband Ben and now her son Bryan who has served as a Museum board member. Gayle brushes compliments aside and says that this is just the way she was brought up. And much like her beautiful garden, she is full of color and is always gracious to everyone. Thank you Gayle for being a friend to the Kern County Museum!