Often called the jewel of Bakersfield’s downtown, the Kern County Museum’s Batey Garden is a popular venue for weddings, community festivals and corporate events. It has been home to bounce houses for Halloween, skating rinks for Christmas and elegant weddings for lucky couples. Framed with mature trees and colorful landscape, the garden has a white pavilion in the center and provides a beautiful green space for those special occasions.

The beautiful garden was just a bare dirt lot a few years ago. Community booster Gayle Batey and Museum Board Chair Bob Larude did some brainstorming ten years ago and agreed something could be done to enhance the Museum’s grounds. Bob was also the Head of Kern County Parks and Rec at the time so a green space was a natural. Creating a garden that future citizens could enjoy certainly was supported by the Batey Family with their wonderful track record of civic engagement and investment.

Thanks to the ongoing generosity of the Bateys, the garden is constantly being improved with new ornamental plants, decorative fencing and most recently event lighting. “Many of our guests, especially at weddings, were always requesting Italian string lights and more bright spots. We are very pleased that we have added decorative lights to make these special occasions magical,” said Events Manager Brenna Charatsaris. “Stay tuned,” she continued. “We are not done yet and the space is always evolving.”

The Museum staff have plenty of stories about family matriarch Gayle Batey stopping by the Museum and checking in on her garden. “Keeping things alive during the summer drought has been a challenge,” said Museum Maintenance Coordinator Eddie Valdez. “Our crew keeps a close eye on the plants and trees to make sure they are doing well. We want to make sure Mrs. Batey is happy.”
My first date with my wife Susan was a success because I was able to identify much of her pottery collection. Susan is a long time collector and antique dealer. She was taken aback when I knew her Hull from the Royal Copley. It turned out, knowing Fostoria from Fiesta Ware was the way to this girl’s heart. I was raised at the local swap meet and weekend garage sales by a Mother who was a pottery collector (McCoy Pottery) and a Dad who was a dedicated picker. As long as Susan and I are rummaging in old attics and barns, the marriage will be successful.

As an antique picker, one of the first moves I made as director of the Museum in 2017, was to bring back the bi-annual antique fair. The Old Time Peddler’s Fair was the high point for local antique dealers for many years until it moved away to another venue. Our museum team renamed the fair The Village Flea, and came up with some iron clad rules:

#1 KEEP IT AFFORDABLE FOR THE COMMUNITY AND VENDORS.
#2 MAKE IT FUN WITH MUSIC, FOOD AND BEVERAGES.
#3 ALLOW SOME SELECTED CRAFT VENDORS BUT FOCUS ON ANTIQUES.
#4 OPEN UP THE VILLAGE SO VISITORS CAN ALSO SEE OUR WONDERFUL EXHIBITS.
#5 KEEP IT TO JUST A SINGLE DAY IN THE SPRING AND A SINGLE DAY IN THE FALL.

So far this formula has been working. We have grown Village Flea to 70 vendors and average about 3,000 fair goers to each event. The definition of antique has shifted to include items from the 1950’s and 60’s (Mid Century) and modern decorator items. We do not allow new merchandise and avoid the swap meet vibe. As local dealer Jay Robertson says…"It’s a beautiful outdoor setting with quality vendors and a wide range of collectibles. There is something for everyone!"

SEE YOU ALL SUNDAY OCTOBER 9TH
8:00 AM to 4:00 PM for the fall Village Flea!
After a long pandemic hiatus, the popular Museum lecture series is back for the Fall of 2022 and free to museum members. Held in historic Standard School on Wednesday nights each month at 6 PM in the fall and spring.

2022 Fall Lectures ...

October 19th ~ Stephen Montgomery
The Southern Pacific Depot: Saving the Landmark and a Community

Join Stephen Montgomery as he discusses the future of the historic Southern Pacific Depot in East Bakersfield and its relationship to the community of Old Town Kern. While working for the Southern Pacific Railroad, Steven worked in plan production for a number of local architects, contractors and private clients. He has lobbied successfully for the preservation of historic buildings in our community.

November 9th ~ Barry Zoeller
Tejon Ranch; The Land of Many Uses

Established in 1843 as a Mexican land grant, Tejon Ranch has seen its share of trappers, settlers, outlaws and soldiers. Pioneers such as Jedediah Smith, Kit Carson and John C. Fremont explored Tejon’s frontier. With additional land purchases by General Edward Fitzgerald Beale, the Ranch grew into the treasure that it is today. Barry Zoeller, a Senior Vice President for Tejon Ranch, will share the incredible history.

December 7th ~ Dr. Mike McCoy
A Western Destiny; The Lives of the Kern Brothers

Edward, Benjamin and Richard Kern left their comfortable family home in Philadelphia in the 1840’s to explore the Rocky Mountains and the newly opened West. Their lives of adventure, new vistas and tragedy are symbolic of Western Expansion. Dr. Mike McCoy, Executive Director of the Kern County Museum, will share the colorful story of the Kern Brothers.
Welcome! to Maria Guerrero, the Lori Brock Discovery Center’s new Education Coordinator. Maria has a terrific background working with children and an AA from Taft College and BA from CSU Bakersfield both in Child Development. Maria is a graduate of Shafter High School and was excited to apply for the position remembering a special field trip to Pioneer Village when she was in grade school. “I saw the Howell House and all of the old buildings and fell in love with the Museum,” she said.

Maria is busy planning for a full schedule of Fall School Tours. After a nearly two year pandemic hiatus, the Discovery Center welcomes back children from the 44 local school districts and also students from adjoining counties. “There are 14,000 4th graders in Kern County,” said Maria. “They are all studying California history and we want to make sure they learn about our county by visiting Pioneer Village and Lori Brock. California History Day is being planned for the Spring of 2023 and is always a hit!”

Maria is also starting a children’s Kinder Koncert series this fall with local musicians who perform and educate children about music. The concerts will be focused on smaller children, five years to nine years, and held on the new Applause! Concert Stage behind the Discovery Center. Concerts are planned for the Spring of 2023 including blue grass, classical and jazz.

Maria encourages all parents and grandparents to check the Lori Brock section of the Kern County Museum’s website www.kerncountymuseum.org for the Calendar of Events. “Come check out Dino Dig, our Power Lab, and STEAM Town,” Maria said. “We know your kids will have a blast learning new things.”

www.kerncountymuseum.org
FALL
VILLAGE FLEA

The Central Valley’s largest outdoor fair for antiques, vintage décor and collectibles will be in historic Pioneer Village Sunday October 9th from 8 AM to 4 PM. Admission is only $5.00 for adults and children 12 and under are free. More than 70 vendors will be making deals on furniture, art work, decorator items and seasonal crafts. With music, food vendors and beverages, it is a great day with family.

Safe Halloween

After a two year pandemic close, Bakersfield’s favorite spooky event will be back October 30 and 31st from 5 to 9 PM. Little ghosts and goblins can visit more than 50 special stations for treats. There will also be music, food and a safe environment for family fun.

A DAY IN THE WILD WEST

Sunday . 2022
Nov 13th
9-2 pm

Bad hombres, bank robbers and saloon gals return to Pioneer Village for a Day in the Wild West Sunday November 13th from 9 AM to 2 PM. Using 50 historic buildings as a back drop, there will a bank robbery, gun fights and gold panning.

Christmas Market

The wonderful tradition of Europe’s Christmas Markets comes to Pioneer Village December 10 and 11th. Celebrate the yuletide season with handcrafted items, holiday caroling, special treats and hot beverages.
The Weller Ranch House was brought to the museum in 1957 as a donation from Raymond F. Stockton and Marjorie M. Stockton. Marjorie was William and Irena Weller’s granddaughter. Thanks to a generous donation this summer by the Harry and Ethel West Foundation, the 140 year old structure received a fresh coat of exterior paint, the porch was repaired and a new wheelchair ramp installed. A roof leak a couple years ago did significant interior damage. The entire interior has been repaired with new wall treatments and a thorough cleaning. A new viewing area has been added.

Pioneer Village has a number of structures that are important reminders of the old Rosedale Colony that was established by the Kern County Land Company in the 1870’s west of Bakersfield. Actively marketed on the East Coast and in England, the agricultural commune with 20 acre plots, had a short but colorful history. Our Museum’s windmill, barn, Weller Ranch House and the beautiful red St. John’s Episcopal Church from the English Colony, all remind visitors of a time when the second California gold rush was in farming.

In 1898, William and Irena Weller migrated from Michigan to Kern County with their children, Amos and Alma, settling in the growing farming community of Rosedale that was brought to life by the Calloway Canal. William and Irena lived in this small board and batten style house originally located on their farm west of Bakersfield.

In 1899, Amos Weller purchased a store dealing in general merchandise from W. R. Sheppard for $1.00. By 1910, William worked as a clerk in his son’s store while Irena tended to their home. Their small ranch and the store were profitable and the Weller Family’s operation was a welcome stopping place on the long road from Western Kern County to the town of Bakersfield. The store structure is still on Rosedale Highway.
Director Mike McCoy still remembers a phone call in June of 2020 from Steve Bass. Steve relayed the message that the historic Noriega Hotel Restaurant was closing its doors as a victim of the pandemic. He said the owners of the 100 year old restaurant were willing for the classic bar and its mirrored back bar to come to the museum.

McCoy jumped in his car and drove to East Bakersfield for a meeting with the restaurant’s owners the Elizalde Sisters. The negotiations were arranged by Steve and his brother-in-law Larry Errera. After a little discussion back and forth, the incredible bar was soon promised a new home in the Trolley Car Room in the Watson Transportation complex. Steve and Larry then organized a team of volunteers to move the mammoth bar across town to the Museum.

 Needless to say, the Museum and the entire community were so very sad to hear Steve Bass lost his battle with cancer in June 2022. A long time teacher in Kern County, Steve was also an active well-respected historian. When Steve married into the Errera Family, he also married into the vibrant Basque community of Kern County. He soon began to conduct research on Basque culture and history culminating in a popular book The Basques of Kern County penned with George Ansolabehere.

Steve always kept the Kern County Museum in his sights, whether it was rescuing the Noriega Bar or doing a lecture on the annual sheep migration with CSUB professor Steve Gamboa. On one of his last visits to the museum in May, Steve brought a pickup load of artifacts from his private collection. Railroad signs, sheep camp artifacts and a rare porcelain sign advertising a $50 reward for sheep rustlers are now part of our permanent collection. All the best to Steve’s wife Judy Errera Bass and his sons Brian and Greg. Our friend and patron Steve Bass will certainly be missed.