

STATEMENT AND REPORT
OF THE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES,
KERN COUNTY MUSEUM

CONTENTS

1. Statement by Board of Trustees, Kern County Museum, to the Supervisors and Taxpayers of Kern County.
2. Description of Buildings and Inventory of Other Exhibits at the Pioneer Village.
3. Map of Layout of Entire Kern County Museum Grounds.

STATEMENT BY BOARD OF TRUSTEES, KERN COUNTY MUSEUM

Pursuant to recommendation by Mr. A.W. Noon, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, of Kern County, and in conformance with the expressed desires of the remainder of the Board, this restatement of the purposes of Kern County Museum is being prepared; one copy is being furnished each supervisor, and an illustrated reference copy is being submitted for filing with the Clerk of the Board.

Kern County Museum was established more than six years ago by county ordinance and is a public, county-owned, tax-supported institution. It was organized for the purpose of educating the varied citizenry of Kern County to the intrinsic values of our past history. As a supplement to our county educational system, it has had untold effect.

The establishment of Kern County Museum was the result of many years of hard work on the part of Kern County Historical Society and other cooperating organizations, including the local Native Sons and Native Daughters. The details of organization are indicated above and it need only be pointed out here that a Board of fourteen trustees was appointed and a half-time Director hired. At the end of the first year the Directorship was made full time and has so continued since.

During this past fiscal year more than 14,000 school children visited the Museum in supervised groups. They came by busses from as far distant as 125 miles. They were furnished with mimeographed historical data before they came,

and upon returning to their schools, wrote of what they had seen and learned. More than 6,000 additional adults and unsupervised children attended the Museum programs and saw the exhibits. During the Kern County Fair many thousands of uncounted and unrecorded persons saw the Kern County Museum exhibit.

It has been suggested that a budget of approximately \$33,000 last year was too heavy a charge to write off against an attendance of 20,000 or more. It should be known that only about one-fourth of our budget was expended in presenting exhibits to the public. The rest went into permanent investments of all kinds. Some of this was expended in purchasing equipment, but most of it was spent in assembling and storing hundreds of items which will be used over and over again for hundreds of years to come. One-fourth of last year's budget was spent in moving and reinstalling the Whilton collection.

It should also be known that during this past year about one thousand dollars in cash was donated for the purpose of securing and moving the Rosedale Church to the Pioneer Village grounds. Within the past month, Mr. Carl Melchor, Superintendent of Kern County Land Company, has donated to the Museum along with a fine selection of old flouring mill equipment, fine used timber and lumber needed to restore our old County Court House and Jail and with a salvage value to us of not less than \$900. Other smaller donations of materials are continually coming in. These will all increase yearly as the work of the Museum gains momentum.

It has also been suggested that large endowments or gifts might be of material aid in establishing and operating the Museum. At our present state of development, such acquisitions are not easily acquired. The securing of the thousand dollars for the Rosedale Church occupied almost the entire time of the Director for about three months, an expense about equal to his salary for that period of time. In time, substantial endowments are certain to come. One of the important tasks of Museum officials is to see that they do not have attached to them strings that largely offset their value to museum work.

From the beginning, Kern County Museum has been housed in the County Chamber of Commerce Building at the old fair grounds on North Chester Avenue. At first, the northeast quarter of the main floor was devoted to the Museum. As the collection and use of it by thousands of school students outgrew this area, the entire basement was turned over to the Museum. This area was cleared of many tons of refuse and debris by the Museum Director and a temporary office established there. A detailed system of cataloguing and recording was worked out and the Museum launched with a systematic and complete plan of operation. Director Latta was authorized by the Board of Trustees and by the Supervisors of Kern County to visit the various museums in counties adjacent to Kern and elsewhere, and work out an overall plan for developing a Museum which would be a credit to Kern County and worthy of the effort and expense connected with such an institution. It is with the initiating of this plan and the developing of it into the present Kern County Museum that this report is principally concerned.

In the beginning, it was recognized that there was not room in the present building for both the Chamber of Commerce and the Museum. Consequently, the Board of Supervisors planned to ultimately house the Chamber of Commerce in another building and to turn the entire present building over to the Museum. This is still the plan under which both institutions are operating and which it is hoped can be consummated sometime in the near future.

Soon after Kern County Museum was established in this present building, the opportunity presented itself to secure for Kern County all of the old personal and household effects of Colonel Thomas Baker, who was actually the founder of Kern County, as well as the City of Bakersfield. This consisted of fine old furniture and other house furnishings carried across the plains or shipped around Cape Horn in 1850 by Colonel Baker. Colonel Baker's descendants composed of Mrs. Charlotte Jameson and her two sons, Myron and Kenneth, required that the material be kept together and exhibited as a unit. Such could not be done at that time.

Mr. Myron Jameson, who acted as spokesman for the others, went so far as to agree that if the Museum could have the use of one room, namely the room upstairs in the southeast corner of the building in which to store the material until exhibit space could be provided, the family would be willing to give title to the historical material at that time. A meeting was immediately held with Chamber of Commerce officials, who decided that the room in question could not be released. Several plans were suggested, with the idea of obtaining

possession of the material, but none of them were acceptable to everyone, so the material was lost, part of it moved out of the state, and all of it distributed among the Baker descendants.

It was while the above study was being made of a proper means of preserving and displaying the Colonel Baker belongings, that the present plan for a Pioneer Village was decided upon. One study made at that time concerned the erection of an additional room to the present Museum building. It was found that a room of the type necessary would cost approximately \$45,000. This was not to be a large room, merely one sufficient to house and display furniture and effects for a pioneer kitchen, living room and bedroom. The Board of Trustees of the Museum, and particularly the committee members who were studying the matter, were faced with the fact that the development of a General History Museum for Kern County was going to be an expensive project, unless some cheaper means could be found of housing and exhibiting the material.

At about this time the attention of the Director was drawn to two projects which gave promise of solving the above problem. One of these was the movement at the Haggin Memorial Museum, in San Joaquin County to house and care for almost exactly the type of exhibit that had been offered to Kern County by the descendants of Colonel Thomas Baker.

A fine old home with its entire contents was donated to the Haggin Museum with the idea that it would be moved to the grounds and set up as a complete exhibit of home life in

San Joaquin County during the 1850's. The Director of the Museum and his committee found that there was no room on the Museum grounds to develop such a project.

Every means was exhausted by the Haggin Museum to acquire more grounds and to preserve a number of old buildings which would complete the cross-section of the social life of that period. Perhaps it would be well to state here what was finally done. A large concrete building of approximately 20 cubicles was built at great expense and in these cubicles are now being housed a pioneer living room, dining room, kitchen, blacksmith shop, fire house, drug store and other similar exhibits. This is admitted by the Director of that Museum not to be the proper way to display such material, but it appeared at that time to be the only solution, as the Museum had been built into a blind alley where there was no room for extension of any sort and where costs of moving to a new site were prohibitive. This is a situation in which the officials of almost all museums have eventually found themselves. The Trustees of Kern County Museum are struggling to avoid such a result.

The second project which the Director investigated at some length was a restoration at Little Rock, Arkansas, where a group of historical-minded citizens brought about the preservation and restoration of the original Territorial Capitol. Almost all of the contemporary buildings, including the Governor's house, first print shop and about ten other structures were incorporated into what is known as the "Arkansas Historical Restoration". The expense incurred in this work

and the problems of supervision and admissions were studied first-hand by Director Latta and a great many things learned of tremendous value to us in Kern County. Last November, and subsequent to the completion of this restoration, the Director of Kern County Museum again visited the Arkansas Restoration and learned that it was working out according to plans and was already established as a complete success.

Discussion of tentative plans for the Pioneer Village with heads of museums throughout California established the fact that they would all like to do something of the kind if it were not for lack of space. The feasibility of the project, its great educational value and the moderate expense at which a great amount of historical material could be presented were freely admitted. One Director stated that all museums had many disassociated articles which had become mere relics, curios, or oddities simply because there was no related material to be displayed with them. As single items, these had almost no educational value, especially to younger people. Older people who had seen functioning the entire society from which they came could understand them, but, unless they were accompanied by a major portion of their contemporary articles, they were not worth housing. It was pointed out that a Pioneer Village was the only practical means of preserving an adequate cross-section of our social and economic life.

As a part of these studies, the Board of Trustees of Kern County Museum held a number of meetings. While these meetings were in progress, the Director was approached by members of the A. Weill family and offered the old Weill home,

which then stood in Bakersfield at the southeast corner of the intersection of 17th and H Streets. This home, complete with furnishings, was offered as a donation to Kern County Museum.

So much time was lost in obtaining the necessary space at the Museum that the Weill family found themselves unable to go ahead with their proposal to set the old home up as a memorial to their parents; Mr. Weill, in the meantime having passed away. But they did agree to donate the old building, constructed in 1884, and most of the furniture in it. As a result, the building was prepared for moving by the Museum staff and moved to the village site by M & M Moving Company of Bakersfield. There it was reroofed by the Museum staff and placed on a temporary site where it can easily be shifted to a permanent site when the north area of the Museum grounds is released by the Fair Association.

Development of this plan depended upon the Fair Association releasing space in the south area of the Fair Grounds, space which was used for one week once a year by the carnival. As this space was not released, the matter of acquiring the Weill home was delayed. The result of all these meetings and the study which they made, impressed everyone connected with the Museum with the fact that for the cost of one wing on the present building, an entire Pioneer Village could be developed. Plans were drawn by Director Latta outlining such a village, and patterned after the old original County Seat at Havilah, of which the Museum was fortunately in possession of a map. This work was followed by the preparation of more plans, which consisted of improvements on the

original. A list was made of the buildings which might become available and which could be distributed in a Pioneer Village which was to represent the early history of Kern County.

At this time, and before any publicity had been given the plan, it was learned that the old, original Kern County Court House, built in 1866, was standing in an abandoned condition on Caliente Creek below Lorraine. The owners of the building were willing to part with it at a very reasonable figure. The Museum Trustees sent a committee to the site to see the old structure. They decided that it was worthy of preservation.

By this time the County Planning Commission had prepared from the sketches submitted to them, the final plan which appeared to be acceptable to everyone concerned. All organizations thought to be interested in this movement were called to the Chamber of Commerce Building for a meeting. Organizations attending were: Kern County Board of Supervisors, all of whom were present; County Parks Department; County Recreation and Cultural Commission; Kern County Museum Trustees, of whom a majority were present; Kern County Planning Commission; Kern County Historical Society; Native Daughters and Native Sons.

The matter was gone into in detail with the result that the Board of Supervisors authorized the establishment of a Pioneer Village and the assembling of material for the same, including the acquisition of the Weill home and the first Court House. The Board approved and adopted the plan prepared by the Kern County Planning Commission. This was revised to

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include minor changes to conform with improvements on the grounds, and on April 8, 1948, was signed by the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, W. R. Woollomes; Vice-Chairman of the Museum Trustees, R. W. Loudon; Chairman of the County Planning Commission, W. B. Morgan; Park Superintendent, P. L. Branson; and Recreation and Cultural Commission Chairman, Mrs. Frank E. Stark. This plan has become the official layout for the Pioneer Village and the Staff and Trustees of the Museum have since that date been working toward the development of the same.

Director Latta and Museum Technician John Garcia, proceeded to take the old Court House down in sections and move it to the village grounds, where it has since been in storage.

In 1947, Mr. Hugh Allen, then Superintendent of Kern County Land Company, donated to the Museum the old log home built in 1868 by the Barnes family on the Canfield Ranch near the eastern tip of Elk Hills. This was dismantled and stored at the Museum for two years. During this past year, it was erected on its permanent site in the Pioneer Village and has recently been covered with split shakes. There has been added to it a stone fireplace and chimney similar to that with which it was originally equipped.

During last year attention was called to the little church at Rosedale, which the owner was planning to demolish. This was the only church near Bakersfield suitable for the village exhibit, it being small and of interesting architecture. Having been built prior to 1890, it was one of the

oldest churches left in the County. Pioneers of the Rosedale district contributed almost \$1,000 toward the cost of purchasing and moving this building to the site of the Pioneer Village. It was necessary to saw the building in half horizontally, just above the windows, set the top half on the ground, and move it in two sections. This preparation was done almost entirely by Pete Barrios of the Museum staff, under the supervision of Director Latta, and assisted by workers from the Kern County Industrial Farm and Kern County Jail. It was a major undertaking, as the Museum had very little equipment with which to handle such heavy materials. It was accomplished without mishap, however, and resulted in saving about \$300 for the County. M & M Moving Company moved the two portions to the village site. The Museum staff assisted cranes in setting the top half back in place and fastening it securely into position. At present, this building is under course of restoration and can easily be shifted to its permanent site when the Fair Association releases to Museum use the entire area which the Pioneer Village will cover.

An interesting little wooden jail has been secured for the village. It was built at Delano in 1875 when the railroad was being extended from that place to Bakersfield and was carried on a flat car along with the construction crew until the construction reached Caliente. Subsequently, the jail was removed to East Bakersfield and was used there by police for locking up prisoners arrested in that area. It is complete and well preserved and needs only to be reroofed. It is

planned to roof it with sugar pine shakes such as were commonly used at the time in which the Jail was built.

Last acquisition at the Pioneer Village was the Blacksmith Shop from the Calloway ranch, built about 1875, and donated by Mr. Carl Melcher, Superintendent of Kern County Land Company. This has also been moved to the Pioneer Village and is used to store a portion of the material to be used in outfitting the various buildings proposed to be located in the village. This material is quite extensive and is at present stored at three places: in and about the quonset hut on the southeast corner of the village grounds, in a section of the old O.P.A. Building north of the village grounds, and in a building at Minter Field. The building at Minter Field is at present housing only wagons and large material to be used in setting up the Pioneer Ranch proposed to be established at the Pioneer Village. Much other material has been assembled and more will have to be assembled in order to outfit the twenty or more buildings proposed for the village. Appended hereto is a list of those buildings, together with a brief inventory of the material collected to go into them, as well as that still remaining to be collected. During the past two years groups from the schools and many others have been visiting the buildings assembled at the village. They have proved of great interest and educational value in connection with the Museum program.

The collection of wildflowers and other plants from the Whilton Florafaunium has been removed to the Museum and installed in the Reading and Library Room upstairs in the

southwest corner of the building. At Lebec this exhibit occupied more than 3,000 square feet of floor space, and was exposed to the light and air, both of which were rapidly deteriorating it. The Museum staff prepared a cabinet across the north wall of the above room and installed these specimens in it so that they were practically excluded from the light and kept at a temperature and humidity favorable to them. They now occupy less than thirty square feet of floor space. The Museum staff also arranged them in alphabetical form within families and prepared an extensive index of them, both by common name and scientific name. There are approximately 1600 specimens now in this cabinet, and the number when the work is completed will total about 2,000. The wildflower collection is not on exhibit, but is for study and research; and with the indices students from colleges and high schools and other educational institutions can at any time easily find what they want. The Whilton Collection represents much of the flora and fauna of the entire western United States.

This brings us to one phase of museum service which has not been stressed so far----that of the certainty that at sometime in the future, and in a future probably not too distant, Kern County is going to have a fully-accredited four-year college; in fact, a study of such an institution has already been made and efforts are now being directed toward bringing it about. As an interpretation and detailed presentation of the historical collections at this and any other museum, library and research material such as the above described display of wildflowers and plants becomes

vitally important. No college library or any other school library collects the type of library material or study material that is peculiar to a museum. Their staffs are not trained in that work and it is not a function of theirs at any college. It is one of the far-sighted duties, and probably not one so easy to sell to our authorities, to assemble and maintain the type of historical library of study material which we have started here at Kern County Museum.

It has been suggested that probably Kern County Museum should limit collections to the geographical area which is Kern County. It is difficult for the Museum Trustees and staff to understand this line of reasoning. The Whilton Collection, recently purchased by the Supervisors of Kern County, was collected over the entire state of California. No museum limits itself to material collected within the county in which it is located. All museum material and all education derived from it is tied into the whole of American society and must not only continue to be so tied, but must certainly be tied in more definitely in the future than it has in the past. Social, political and economic history, contemporary and past, of the entire United States presents a unique experience in the histories of civilizations since the beginning of the world.

Should this civilization continue to fruition, every exhibit such as Kern County Museum possesses is going to be studied by all peoples and become of intense value to them. If it is not allowed to survive, the history of our experiment is going to be of still more value to all people in the

world, and every fragment of our culture will be studied by all people seeking a solution to their social, political and economic problems.

It should be pointed out here that our Museum was organized late in the history of our country. Much material that at one time existed in Kern County is gone and we must go outside of our county to replace it. Present and past residents of Kern County have come from the entire world. Collections in Kern County Museum must present a broad picture in order to integrate such a varied citizenry.

Due to the tremendous size of Kern County and the great distances which must be covered in traveling from the outlying areas to and from Bakersfield, it has been recognized from the beginning that there must eventually be maintained historical exhibits of some sort at other places besides the main Museum Building in Bakersfield.

About one year before Kern County Museum was organized, the Lions Club and other organizations at Randsburg, led by Paul Hubbard, Cecil Wise, Max Hess, James Nossner and others, organized at Randsburg a desert museum. Three years ago their collections of exhibits together with the property and buildings standing on it, were deeded to Kern County and became a part of Kern County Museum. Up until this past year, this branch museum was administered entirely on a voluntary basis by Mr. Hubbard and one or two others. At that time, Mr. John Maxwell volunteered to keep the museum open on week ends and during holidays, and has been quite active in that work since then.

Two years ago several prominent citizens and pioneers led by Mr. Norman Houze, proposed that the old adobe building at Glennville be acquired and restored. This building stands within a few feet of the highway to Greenhorn Summit and is one of the oldest structures in Kern County. It was in very bad shape and in one or two years most of the walls would have fallen down. Director Latta, with the aid of one museum helper and labor from the Kern County Industrial Farm, went to Glennville and restored this old building. In the meantime the owner, Mr. Hal Duval, donated to Kern County about two acres of ground surrounding the old adobe. Upon this site has since been constructed a county fire station located quite close to the old building.

The walls of the old adobe were completely restored, and the entire building reroofed with new cedar poles cut by the Museum staff on Greenhorn Mountain and transported to the place by truck, and covered with split sugar pine shakes. This building is now used only as a tool house for the Fire Department, but is planned to be used as a reading room and to house a number of historical exhibits from the vicinity of Glennville. It is now in the process of being made an official Historic Landmark of California.

During this past year, there have been inquiries for a similar exhibit building on or near the county branch library at Tehachapi. A similar request has also come from Kernville. Nothing, however, has as yet resulted from these. It is probable that eventually the same demands will be made from the West Side and from the northern part of the county,

involving the communities of Shafter, Wasco, McFarland and Delano.

When Kern County Muscum was first activiated, Director Latta hired as his first assistant, one full-time and two part-time full blood Yokuts Indians. Due to the fact that the early history of the county was Indian history, and that there was available little information about these people, it was considered extremely important to gather all material possible concerning them. These people included John Garcia, a World War II veteran who spent almost two years on the Muscum staff as a museum technician trainee; his brother, Joe Garcia; and Henry Lawrence, whose father was born on the site of Bakersfield before white people came to the territory. Mr. Lawrence is still living and is almost 90 years of age. It is probable that no other museum in the history of the world ever did have, or ever will have at any time three-fourths of its staff composed of full blood aborigines of the locality in which it was operating. With the aid of these people, an excellent background exhibit was prepared concerning the Indians of this area. Our first museum publication, Handbook of Yokuts Indians, published from data collected by Director Latta over many years of time, was a direct outcome of the early work. From this report, those familiar with the work that has been done will agree that it is probable that no museum ever accomplished so much in so short a time and at so little expense as has been done by Kern County Museum since July 1, 1945.

Mr. Pete Barrios, Museum helper, with his wife Clara and sons Mark and Jimmy, live in two small cabins on the

Pioneer Village grounds. They are full blood local Indians. Mr. Barrios is deputized by the Sheriff of Kern County and handles the Industrial Farm and County Jail prisoners used as common laborers at Kern County Museum. This family receives the use of two small cabins as their quarters, in return for acting as caretakers on the Pioneer Village grounds. As the plan develops, other employees can be similarly established about the place so that it will be properly cared for at all times.

Mr. Henry Dasch and Mr. Arthur Huffman are master mechanics and handle the construction and restoration work both at the main Museum Building and at the Pioneer Village. They are older men and have been selected because they understand the older types of construction involved in the restoration work. They have constructed all of the partitions, cabinets, and show cases in the basement of the main building, as well as the large steel-framed cases upstairs built to exhibit the large dioramas from the Whilton Collection, including the buffalo, bear, wolverine, mountain lion, fox, coyote, wild cat, and the elk, antelope, deer and smaller animals. With the help of Mr. Barrios and the labor he brings in, these men are capable of doing everything in their line necessary at the Museum.

Miss Joy Rains is Secretary and Stenographer at the Museum. She photographs, repairs, records, catalogues and files all small materials that come to the Museum and is one of our most energetic, alert and valued employees.

Mr. Harold Merriam works at the Museum, half-time as janitor and half-time in setting up the Whilton Collection

exhibits in natural habitat groups. Mr. Merriam is an accomplished artist and is doing an excellent job at this. He is taking the place of a man who would demand several times the present salary.

Mr. F. F. Latta has already been mentioned as Director of Kern County Museum since its organization.

Mr. Richard C. Bailey was obtained in July, 1948 to handle the demonstration programs and work with the schools in Kern County. This work was begun by Director Latta as soon as he took over the Directorship and was soon developed to a point where a full-time worker was needed in that field. Mr. Bailey was selected by Director Latta because he was using museum material in his classes where he was teaching at Mountain View Elementary School and thoroughly understood the work he was hired to do.

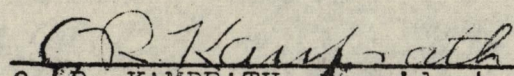
The above completes a listing of the present Museum staff, which is complete insofar as the present plans for the Museum are concerned. Our staff being complete, we are over the most difficult part of our road, and it will be a number of years before additions will be necessary along that line. This staff has been selected with the idea of doing our own work. Nothing assigned to them is "farmed out". All manner and type of work can and will be handled by the employees on the job. The only exception is an occasional piece of routine work which can be handled by local contractors or mechanics and which will be turned over to them. One such example was the foundation for the pioneer log home. Another was the construction of the fireplace and chimney in

the same home; another the putting on of shakes on the roof of the same home. This was routine work and it was not desirable or necessary to tie up our staff with that work when they were sorely needed to carry on other work which mechanics unfamiliar with old construction could not do.

Concerning the future development of Kern County Museum, this Board of Trustees believes the answer has been very fully given in the foregoing report. No great development is planned or expected, although emergency work certainly will come up each year, but can surely be handled at small expense and with no fear of disrupting our over-all plan.

This report is the result of a thorough study made at the request of the Board of Trustees, Kern County Museum. Director Latta was instructed to furnish the necessary data, which was organized and prepared for the Board of Trustees by the Executive Board. Each member of the Board of Trustees was furnished with a complete copy for their close study. They then met on March 21, 1951 and adopted this complete report as their official declaration of the past history and policy of Kern County Museum and of the aims and plans for the future.

Hoping that this report, including the description of buildings and inventory collected and planned to be collected for the furnishing of them is satisfactory, the Executive Board, Kern County Museum Board of Trustees hereby unanimously subscribes this 22nd day of March, 1951:


O. R. KAMPRATH, President
Executive Board
Kern County Museum Board of Trustees

W. H. Hitchcock

W. H. HITCHCOCK, Vice-President
Executive Board

Mrs Georgia Sanders

MRS. GEORGIA SANDERS, Secretary
Executive Board

R. W. Loudon

ROY LOUDON
Executive Board

E. L. Harman

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