

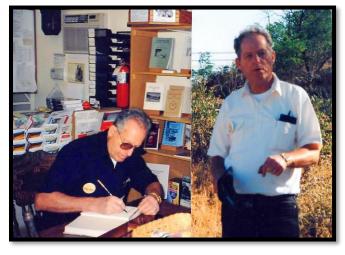
# The Ridge Route Rambler



Editors: Chandra Sargent Mead and Bonnie Ketterl Kane

## 2020 ON THE RIDGE ROUTE ROAD

With Harrison Scott stepping down from his leadership responsibilities with the "Ridge Route Preservation Organization", the very capable Mike Ballard has stepped up and taken over. Mike does a great job of monthly posts on the Preservation website, <a href="https://www.ridgeroute.org">www.ridgeroute.org</a>, which you may read or receive.



Harrison Scott ("Scotty") who began his efforts to preserve the road back in the early 1990's

To catch you up, Mike Ballard has been working for many months on obtaining a Volunteer Service Agreement with the Angeles National Forest so that he might schedule and lead groups in basic maintenance of the road. In December, an Agreement was signed with the Angeles National Forest and Mike has received keys to the gates. He is looking forward this spring to the first work party on the road in several years, so check their website for that. He is also making trips along the road, as the weather allows, to assess what to accomplish and when. Let Mike know if you would like to be added to the list of volunteers. These outings are not only a chance to work for a worthy cause, but learning adventures as well.





Past RRPO work parties



Ridge Route road needing clearing or repairs at (Swede's Cut)

Opening of the road once again has been a work in progress for decades - mostly to establish ownership and responsibility for it. Mr. Ballard feels all the issues are surmountable, but he needs to know the public is behind him and his team in the effort. This very scenic roadway, the museum's namesake, is as important to the 21st Century as it was in the early 20th Century. The history of this very unique and historic road must be saved, so that generations to come can see the way things were. A picture may say a thousand words, but driving the actual roadway says many times more. Mr. Ballard urges that we write to our representatives and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, and express concern for the future of this "engineering marvel" of the 1920's.

#### A NEW YEAR - A NEW DECADE

Back in the late 1990's, our first five years of start-up were highly supported by many who were descendants of the founders of our area. As we came into the new century, we quickly moved the museum from a tiny storefront in Lake of the Woods to our slightly more spacious property in Frazier Park. Our supporters have grown from those early descendants to those who love history and want to preserve it for generations to come.



First museum storefront in Lake of the Woods

By this third decade (already!!) of the 21st Century, we have grown more than expected and have found our property is not so spacious. So, we are pushing our dreams toward some needed expansions – not to expand beyond our means, but to add a larger exhibit area to our current building, more parking and outdoor exhibits.



2019 Museum in the snow

Our wonderful patio is coming along, in two phases thus far. A couple of years ago we were able to define the area with sitting walls that also serve as retaining walls. This past year the interior space of the patio was beautifully paved.

The next phase for our outdoor learning center will be to improve on the landscaping around it, and repair and expand the sprinkler system. The final phase to complete the patio project, with the magic of additional funding of course, will be to turn the patio into a memorial to the old and magnificent Lebec Hotel, complete with a mural on the south end of our building, plaques to commemorate events and famous people there and an original Lebec Hotel sign or two. All this will be in preparation for a very special event we are planning for the 100th anniversary of the opening of the hotel in 1921.



The construction of the Lebec Hotel in 1920

We had a busy year in 2019. Our fundraising Yard Sale brought 400 or so folks to the museum and amplified the needed money to run our facility. We had speakers, classes, evening talks on the patio, booths at events and six tours – for the public, staff and private groups. AND, once again finished the year in the "black"!!!

We have a staff full of ideas for 2020! Of course, there will be speakers, classes, evening talks and events on the patio, booths at events as before. In addition to the Ridge Route Tours, we hope to have tours of the San Andreas Fault, the Los Angeles Aqueduct, up on Frazier Mountain and possibly Mutau Flats.

We have a lot to do to keep up with all the proposed development in our mountain area and have already started files on the proposed communities of Grapevine, Tejon Mountain Village and Centennial – all which will probably begin in this decade. We thank you for supporting our commitment to the future . . .

New to our museum staff is Lori Woten who will be out and about photographing lots of "then & now" locations. She will also work with the file photos

to find interesting views to share in our future newsletters.

#### **2019 VISITORS**

We had 1604 visitors to the museum in 2019; close to our all-time record. It seems this year that more of our visitors were from places within an hour or two drive, but we also had folks from Abbotstown and Pittsburgh, PA, Bloomington, IN, Plains, MT, Canton, KS, Portland, Newburg and Eugene, OR, Spokane and Longview, WA, Baltimore, MD, Milford, CT, Flagstaff, AZ and Michigan. We had out-of-country visitors from London, England, Sydney, Australia, and Bavaria, Norway, Ukraine, Germany, El Salvador and Czechoslovakia. Wherever you're from, we love having you come to see us, and your friends are always welcome.

### **OUR FRAZIER MOUTAIN COMMUNITIES 100 YEARS AGO!!**



LEBEC: Records indicate that at some time in the early 1900's, Thomas O'Brien purchased over 4,000 acres of land in the Lebec area that was a part of the Haggin & Carr Ranch's mountain grazing lands. With the construction of the new Ridge Route Highway #4 in 1915, O'Brien moved the cabins and garage from a small resort that had been in front of Fort Tejon, to the hillside behind his store and added more cottages to serve as employee residences. Snuggled next to Interstate 5, Lebec has grown to 1,468 people.



#### GRAPEVINE:

The settlement of "Grapevine" quickly grew from its beginnings as the workplaces and homes for gas, oil and electric company workers and their families. The new Ridge Route Road made it an important stop for services before or after traveling the once quiet and serene Grapevine Canyon. Today the town is gone, only a few gas stations, hotels and restaurants left. But it will soon be resurrected, when Tejon Ranch begins building its 12,000 home project at the base of the grade.



#### **NEENACH:**

Although not much more than a wide spot on Highway 138 today, Neenach is a long existing settlement out in the Antelope Valley that was established by the surrounding homesteaders, ranchers, farmers and gold prospectors. The Neenach post office had its beginnings as a sheepherder's wagon. The postmaster took the wheels off the wagon, built a foundation and later added on to it, expanding the post office with a store.

Neenach was an important roadside stop before the Ridge Route Road was built. When automobiles came on the scene, a driver would ship cans of gasoline via mail wagon to stops along the route he planned to drive, so as to keep the vehicle going. Many locals

would come to Neenach to see an automobile on the day it scheduled to go through. Construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct between 1905 and 1913, which brought water from the distant Owens Valley to the San Fernando Valley, was important to the area.



#### GORMAN:

Today population 15, Gorman is probably the oldest continually used highway road stop along today's Interstate 5. When Mary Ralphs' husband, Oscar, died in 1922, Mary was left to run their business concerns and raise their nine children on her own. With the help of her children, she would churn butter to sell to other road stops along the Ridge Route, take in boarders and feed 25-30 people for meals. Her oldest son, Lloyd, soon took over the family businesses and on June 1, 1923, he opened a Standard Oil service station (shown at the right in this photo). It was Standard Oil's first station in the state not located at a railroad site.



#### WHEELER RIDGE:

In 1921, George Andrew "Andy" Wheeler and his partner, Dan Murphy, bought 28 acres at the east end of the ridge north of Grapevine Canyon. Wheeler and Murphy were promoters hoping to create a new town in the center of the county's newest oil field. With the laying out of streets and boulevards, and the construction of some business buildings, the town of "Wheeler Ridge" was born. The photo shown is a little later, possibly in the 1930's. The town is nothing but a couple of foundation slabs today, largely gone under the interstate highway.

## **ATTENTION!!!**

We are rolling out **new membership rates** and sponsorship opportunities to help support the museum. We have added a Gold level General membership, as well as three levels of Business membership, Silver, Gold and Platinum. We have increased Lifetime memberships for an individual to \$500 and now offer a Couple's Lifetime membership for \$750. And now you can sponsor events and exhibits. See the insert for details.

# PLEASE SUPPORT THE BUSINESSES THAT SUPPORT US!!!

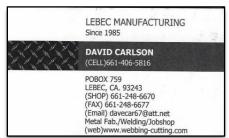






Snedden Ranch P.O. Box 129 Maricopa, CA 93252 (661) 747-5646











THANK YOU TO

SCOTT & BARBARA ROSEN

OF FRAZIER MOUNTAIN
INTERNET

FOR THEIR SERVICES & SUPPORT





MANY THANKS TO



FOR THE PRINTING OF OUR NEWSLETTER!!!

#### **2020 EVENTS**

Our first event will be a speaker on Saturday February 29 at 7:00. Barbara Schultz will be speaking on her new book "Pioneering Aviation in Kern County",



which includes several fields and events in our area. Her autographed book will be on sale at the event. Donations are always welcome.



Saturday March 21 at 10:00 will be the first class of the year, on Pine Needle Basket Weaving. \$15 covers cost of materials, please call to make a reservation.

We are planning the first of this year's tours on

Saturday **April 18** at 10:00, along the Ridge Route Road.

\$15 covers handout materials, please call for reservations.



Later in the year, we are planning two Teas (one in June and one in December), History on the Patio Programs on Saturdays in July, a class on rib basket weaving in August and a class on corn husk wreaths in October, our Yard Sale on Labor Day weekend and the Night at the Museum in October. More speakers and tours are in the making. Check back for dates and details.

#### WHAT IS IT?

One of our visitors has identified this previously unidentified artifact for us. Now it's your turn.

Send your guess to info@ridgeroutemuseum.org and we will print the name of the first person to guess correctly in the next issue.



Museum Location: 3515 Park Drive, Frazier Park, CA

Museum Hours: Fri. Sat. & Sun. Noon-4:00; Summer Noon-5

**Museum Phone**: 661-245-7747

Museum Website: <u>www.ridgeroutemuseum.org</u>

**Museum Email**: <a href="mailto:rrchs@frazmtn.com">rrchs@frazmtn.com</a> or info@ridgeroutemuseum.org

RIDGE ROUTE COMMUNITIES MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY P.O.BOX 684 FRAZIER PARK, CA 93225