



Ridge Route Communities
MUSEUM
& Historical Society

SPRING 2021

The Ridge Route Rambler

We're nuts  about history.

Editors: Chandra Sargent Mead and Bonnie Ketterl Kane

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

.....Bethel Billesbach
Happy Spring! We are happy to announce that through grants from the Kern County Covid Relief Fund, and The Harrell Family Foundation, and YOUR donations, our little community museum has survived the pandemic year. We are looking forward to opening the museum soon, and are cleaning up the grounds, and putting cautionary practices into place in anticipation of your visit.

We decided to put on two Ridge Route Tours this spring, because we are outside and are limiting the number of cars; so they have filled up very quickly!

Welcome to Barbara Bouman of Cuddy Valley, a talented artist, who is a new volunteer helping our historian with filing, acquisitions and soon to be a docent.

Looking forward to opening soon!

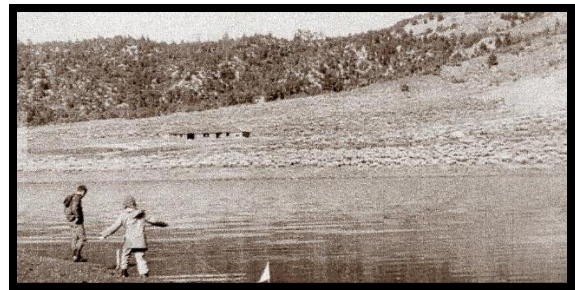


ANOTHER PIONEER PASSES



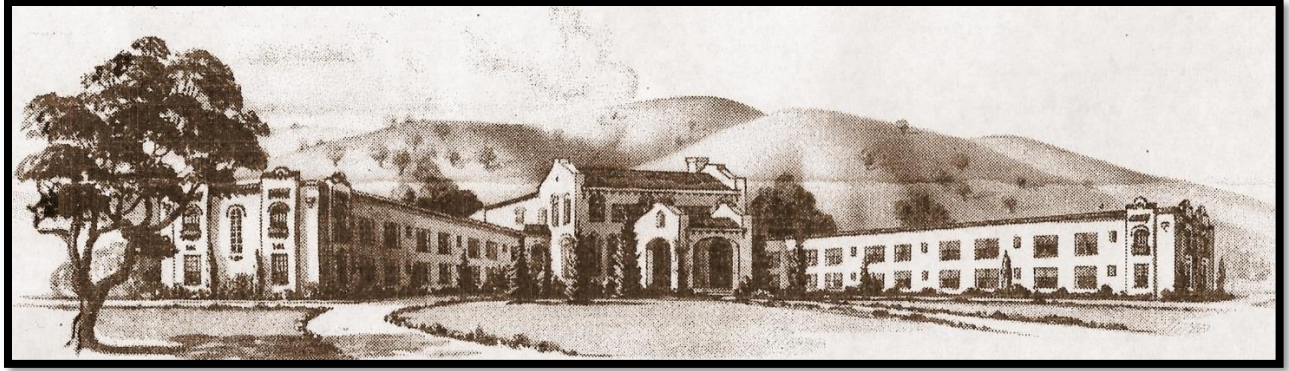
It was just three years ago that we reported on the passing of Cuddy family descendant, Ray Darling. Now we pass along the news that the other half of that loving couple, Carol, has died.

Carol Gardiner Darling's parents, Ralph and Dorothy Gardiner, brought her to this area as an infant, when Ralph went to work at the General Petroleum Plant at Lebec. The family then moved to Alhambra so their daughters could attend school there. They moved back to Lebec in 1945 when Ralph became the foreman in the GP pipeline machine shop. Carol graduated from Bakersfield High School in 1947, then from Bakersfield College with an AA degree in 1949. She married Ray Darling, whom she met at a dance in Gorman, in June of that same year. Ray was also an oil company man, but worked at the Atlantic Richfield Station in Lebec. Together Ray and Carol built their dream home, by themselves, out in Cuddy Valley.



Children playing in Darling Lake with the house that Ray and Carol were building in the distance. (courtesy of Chris Kofman and Stephanie Darling)

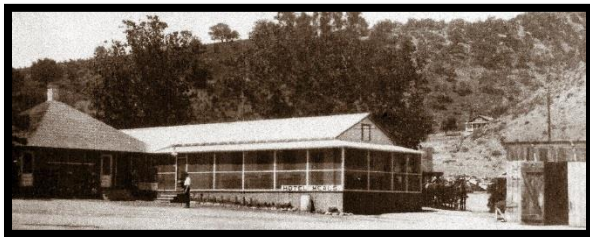
Carol was a dedicated founding member of the Ridge Route Communities Museum & Historical Society.



LEBEC HOTEL CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION PLANNED . . .

It was on May 21, 1921 that the Grand Opening celebration was held at the magnificent "Lebec Hotel" – once the most outstanding building on the entire Ridge Route Road. This is the first in a series of three articles about the Hotel, beginning with its development and the opening event. In the second article this summer we will tell some of the stories of its glorious – and not so glorious-years. The third article in the Fall issue of our newsletter will cover its sad demise.

With the advent of the automobile in the early 1920's, the village of Lebec had become a popular and needed rest stop area. From the late 1800's a sizeable adobe had served as a place where travelers could take a break, get some food and rest their horses. Rooms for rent were added and later a café out front.



The first "Inn" – the adobe building on the left. To the right, is O'Brien's guest room addition with a screened in porch around the building, and stables to the back.

In 1972, the editor of the MOUNTAIN ENTERPRISE, Peggy Albee, recalled the founding of the Hotel as follows:

"The story of the Lebec Hotel goes back as far as 1913 when a Bakersfield saloon keeper who owned land in the Lebec area decided

to build a small inn and tavern there. One day Cliff Durant, the son of the car manufacturer stopped by and the owner of the Inn, Tom O'Brien, interested Durant in building a grander hotel. A grand edifice was agreed upon and opened as Hotel Durant."

The BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN of May 1, 1920 reported someone's comment:

"I note that as many as twenty-five automobiles pass by here every day. I believe that in five years, there will be at least 300 automobiles pass Lebec daily." (Little did they know...)

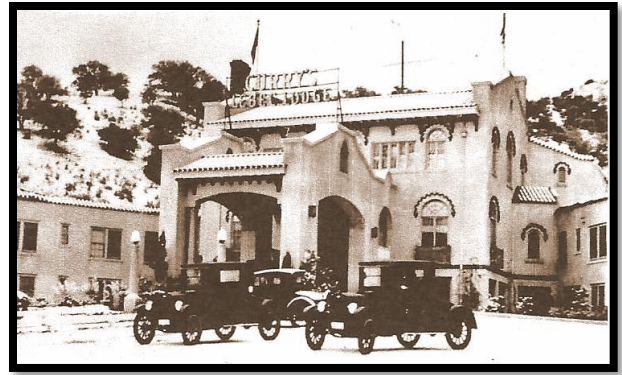
The hotel resulting from the partnership of O'Brien & Durant was in the finest building to ever be built in these mountains. It was constructed back in the canyon behind the little community of Lebec, near where O'Brien's first Inn once sat, which was removed to make room for the hotel.

The BAKERSFIELD MORNING ECHO of October 9th, 1920 reported:

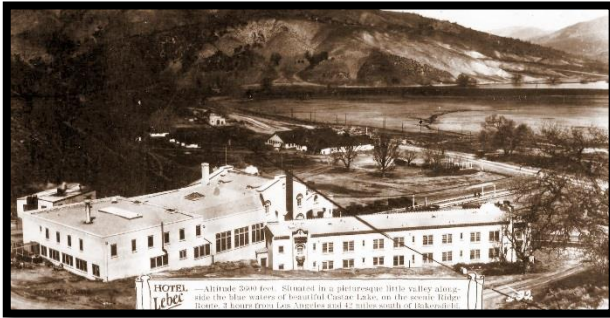
"Spanish mission style of architecture, by Architect Maury I. Diggs of San Francisco, will be observed throughout" (though some equated the architecture to a French chalet - no doubt to reflect Peter Lebecque's influence in the area.) "There will be a large banquet hall suitable for conventions, club dinners and parties. There will be a modern cuisine, and the finest table service in the west will be provided, according to Mr. O'Brien who is an experienced hotel man. Lebec is a center of increasing automobile traffic. Twenty to thirty stages (buses) a day stop there. By far the largest number of travelers via Lebec are the tourists who are coming to California in increasing numbers."



The Lebec Hotel under construction



The front entry of the Hotel, renamed for the next investor, Foster Curry.



The Lebec Hotel from the back, showing the Ridge Route Road in the center (long before Interstate 5!!) and Castac Lake at the far right



The hotel lobby and doorway to the ballroom/dining room

The grand opening on Saturday, May 21, 1921. It was reported in the BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN, recounting an "Inn-keepers Banquet" held on the Thursday evening before:

"The banquet was tendered by R. C. Durant, Thomas O'Brien, owners and builders of the hotel, and Charles A. Cooke, manager, to prominent hotel men (representing major hotels from throughout central and southern California), county officials and newspapermen, who were their invited guests for the occasion.

Despite stormy and threatening weather, the Saturday evening dinner was attended by approximately 300 guests from all sections of California. Because of the flood of reservations which were received for the opening festival a second opening night with special entertainment was held Sunday evening. The Guy Jones Orchestra furnished music during and after dinner both nights."



Ballroom set up as the dining room

Local resident Art Novak, with his bride, Cora and their three-month-old son came to the area for the first time just to attend the big opening. He remembered that there were a lot of Hollywood "stars" in attendance and that he did some gambling upstairs.



One of the guest rooms . . .

The Museum is planning **Programs on the Patio** on Saturday evenings throughout July; some of which will be devoted to the Lebec Hotel. And another of our famous **Destination Dinners**, dedicated to the Hotel's Centennial, is planned for October 2, with samples of the some food that was served at the 1921 Grand Opening dinner and some big band music. Mark your calendars now!!

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS . . .

In 1995, some local history buffs got together and held a 100-year celebration of the community of Lebec – based on when the post office was moved to Lebec. Records indicate that folks settled in the future Lebec area as early as the 1850's when Fort Tejon was established. The post office had been at the fort and other nearby locations until it was moved to Lebec in 1895.

Those history buffs and many others decided that the Frazier Mountain area needed a historical society. In May of 1996 the Ridge Route Communities Museum and Historical Society was formed. The quarterly newsletter was, and is, the "Ridge Route Rambler", named after a short-lived local newspaper from 1936..

ANOTHER ANNIVERSARY . . .

April of this year marked the 175th Anniversary of the granting of the La Liebre Mexican Land Grant. Rancho Liebre (the ranch of the jackrabbits) is located at the southwest end of the Antelope Valley where jackrabbits literally covered the land at that time. The land grant was made to Jose Marie Flores by Governor Pio Pico. Flores represented Governor Pico in the surrender negotiations of Alta California to Commodore Stockton in August of 1846 and then led a revolt against Fremont in October of that same year. Edward Beale purchased La Liebre from Flores

in August of 1855 for \$1,500 – about 3 cents an acre. Beale went on to purchase three more local land grants forming them into today's Tejon Ranch.

HISTORY NUGGET



Fort Tejon was founded in 1854 as the headquarters of the First Dragoons, with the purpose of enforcement for the newly formed Sebastian Indian Reservation at the base of the Canada de las Uvas (Grapevine Canyon). When the Civil War began,

the Dragoons were sent south to protect the harbor of San Pedro. The fort was reoccupied in 1863 by the California Volunteer Cavalry and abandoned for good in 1864 by the California Volunteer Infantry. The site today is a California State Historic Park. Find out more in "A View from the Ridge Route" series.

MEMBERSHIP COMING AND "GOINGS"

We regret to inform you of the passing of Lifetime Members Gary Yaeck and Jim Austin.

On a lighter note, we would like to recognize Dee & Rich Brito as Gold Members, and acknowledge and thank Jane & Jeff Robison and Pat Gaspar & Dene Barrett for their donations.

MANY THANKS TO

Tejon Mountain Village 

FOR THE PRINTING OF OUR NEWSLETTER

PLEASE SUPPORT THE BUSINESSES THAT SUPPORT US!!!

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Business							
Silver	\$50	•		•			
Gold	\$100	•		•	•		1
Platinum	\$250	•		•	•	•	2

Annual Event, Exhibit & Acquisition Sponsorship Opportunities

Events	Cost
Speaker	\$50
Tea	\$75
Patio Evening	\$100
Tour	\$150
Tour w/ Lunch*	\$300
Destination Dinner*	\$500
Speaker	\$50

Events	Cost
Cuddy Cabin	\$500
Gas Station	\$750
Chumash Exhibit	\$1,000
Landscaping	\$2,000
Irrigation	\$3,000
Lebec Hotel Patio	\$4,000
Cuddy Cabin	\$500

Events	Cost
Prehistoric	\$1,000
Chumash	\$3,000
Bell Tower	\$6,000
East Side Property	\$20,000
Barn Property	\$100,000
2 nd Exhibit Hall	\$100,000
Prehistoric	\$1,000

* Discount on purchases of in the museum store.

† Business Card ad in our quarterly Rambler newsletter.

‡ Online Ad post our social media or a post on our website (with link).

* Special Events

We're nuts  about history.

Museum membership, sponsorship, & gifts are tax deductible; please check with your tax preparer or CPA for details. FIN 77-0431597

<p><input type="checkbox"/> \$_____</p> <p>Donations Any value is appreciated</p> <p>Membership</p> <table> <tr> <td>Personal</td> <td>Business</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Senior (62+)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Silver</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$25 General</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Gold</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 General Gold</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Platinum</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Lifetime</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$750 Lifetime Couple</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>Sponsorship</p> <p>Events & Exhibits</p> <table> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Speaker</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Cuddy Cabin</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Tea</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$750 Gas Station</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Patio Evening</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Chumash</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Tour</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$2,000 Landscaping</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$300 Tour w/ Lunch</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000 Irrigation</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Destination Dinner</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$4,000 Lebec Patio</td> </tr> </table> <p>Acquisitions</p> <table> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Prehistoric</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 East side property</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000 Chumash</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 Barn property</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$6,000 Bell Tower</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 2nd Exhibit Hall</td> </tr> </table>	Personal	Business	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Senior (62+)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Silver	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25 General	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Gold	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50 General Gold	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Platinum	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Lifetime		<input type="checkbox"/> \$750 Lifetime Couple		<input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Speaker	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Cuddy Cabin	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Tea	<input type="checkbox"/> \$750 Gas Station	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Patio Evening	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Chumash	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Tour	<input type="checkbox"/> \$2,000 Landscaping	<input type="checkbox"/> \$300 Tour w/ Lunch	<input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000 Irrigation	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Destination Dinner	<input type="checkbox"/> \$4,000 Lebec Patio	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 East side property	<input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000 Chumash	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 Barn property	<input type="checkbox"/> \$6,000 Bell Tower	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 2 nd Exhibit Hall	<p>Mail-in Form</p> <p>Name / Company _____</p> <p>Mailing Address _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>City, State, ZIP _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p>Newsletter Format: <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> US Mail</p> <p>Return to</p> <p>Ridge Route Communities Museum & Historical Society PO Box 684, Frazier Park, CA 93225</p>
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For more information please contact us at 661-245-7747 or info@ridgeroutemuseum.org

Ridge Route Communities Museum & Historical Society
3515 Park Drive
Frazier Park, CA 93225
661-245-7747
ridgeroutemuseum.org
Fri-Sun 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM

COVID-19 Update

We are closed until further notice due to the shelter-in-place order for the COVID-19 virus.

Not being open for the past many months has caused us to see a shortfall in our income. We would be very grateful for donations to help offset this shortfall.

EVENTS

As the next newsletter won't get to you before then, mark your calendars now for the **Programs on the Patio** on all 5 Saturday evenings in July at 7 p.m.

The **Lebec Hotel Centennial Celebration** will be held on October 2. You are welcome to make your reservation for this once-in-a-lifetime Destination Dinner at any time. Payment of \$50 per person will be required by September 15. More details next issue.

And don't forget our Great American **Yard Sale** on Labor Day Weekend, September 4, 5 and 6. We will be taking donations of your unneeded items all month long in August.



AMAZON SMILE

Did you know that you could generate donations while shopping, at no extra cost? Simply start your shopping at smile.amazon.com/ch/77-0431597 to confirm "Ridge Route Communities Museum & Historical Society" as your charity of choice, and Amazon Smile will donate a portion of your eligible purchase price to our organization.

OR open the Amazon app on your phone, in the main menu, open Programs & Features & tap on Amazon Smile, select us (Ridge Route Communities Museum & Historical Society) and follow the instructions to activate Amazon Smile.

HELP!!!! As long as we're not open, here's how you can continue to help:

RECYCLE your used printer cartridges (you can leave them on our doorstep), or

RENEW your membership early, or

SPONSOR an event or exhibit, or

BUY from our website. Find out about local people, places and things. Or

DONATE, just because!



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: www.ridgeroutemuseum.org

Museum Email: rrchs@frazmtn.com or info@ridgeroutemuseum.org

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