



Ridge Route Communities  
**MUSEUM**  
& Historical Society

SUMMER 2021

# The Ridge Route Rambler

We're nuts  about history.

Editors: Chandra Sargent Mead & Bonnie Ketterl Kane

## HOTEL HEYDAY . . .

This is the second article in this series as we celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of Hotel Lebec. In the last issue we talked about the founding of this grand hotel, and now we offer some stories of events during the heyday of this amazing gathering place.

The New Year's Eve celebration of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1924 was a festive affair at the Hotel with over one hundred couples attending at \$5 a person. A chef was brought from the Waldorf Astoria in New York City and a jazz orchestra provided the music. The Bakersfield newspaper of Thursday, January 1<sup>st</sup> read:

*"Many prominent personages, that form the official as well as the social life of Bakersfield, appeared in the throng of dancers. The tables were tastily decorated and the ballroom was attractively appointed."*



In August of 1925 a nine hole golf course was opened out in front of the Hotel with boxing celebrity, Jack Dempsey, world heavy weight champion from 1919-1926, teeing off the first ball.

The BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN article of August 14<sup>th</sup> read:

*"Mr. and Mrs Jack Dempsey, attracted by the perfection of the Hotel Lebec golf course and the scenic beauty of the low rolling hills sloping into the crystal blue lake, will participate in the opening of the course Sunday and attend the sports dinner-dance Saturday evening at the Lebec Lodge. The general public has been invited to participate in the Saturday evening dinner-dance and to take part in the contests and festivities of Sunday."*

A few days later the paper reported:

*"Jack Dempsey, well known prize fighter, who was invited to help open the course, took a mighty sweep at the gold ball which trickled down the fairway – for a few yards.*

*There was a repressed giggle among the spectators, who were dressed as brilliant as butterflies in sports clothes. Dempsey was no more successful in his second try, but in his third effort, he broke the spell and the nine-hole golf course was formally opened."*



Numerous film-land greats were said to have stayed at the Hotel over the years that followed, among them Clark Gable and Carole Lombard, Bing Crosby, Jerry Colona, Clara Bow, Rex Bell, Spade

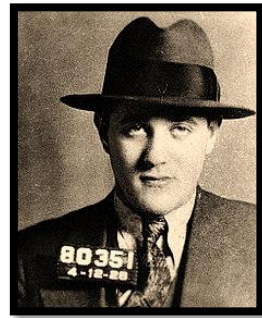
Cooley and Rochester from the Jack Benny Show.



Another regular at the Hotel was Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle whose good friend, Max Sennett, had a mountain home over by the present Quail Lake. The two men had done early silent films together.

During Prohibition and the Great Depression, in order to survive in the remote location, the Lebec Hotel developed some notoriety, becoming popular for its gambling, prostitution and the bootleg liquor that was stored under the floor of a nearby cabin.

The Hotel also became the playground of underworld figures such as Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel – who reportedly brought organized crime to the



West Coast. The rooms over the lobby were illegally outfitted with slot machines, crap and roulette tables along with a membership card that entitled you to all the rights and privileges of "Club Lebec". It was said that the "ladies of the night" occupied rooms on the lower level.

The late 1930's and into the 1940's the Hotel was the place to go to hear the Big Bands of that era. During the World War II years, the big name bands traveled between San Francisco and Los Angeles entertaining the troops. Most of them had an arrangement with the Lebec Hotel to do one night stands in exchange for free lodging during their travels. It was actually an opportunity for the band to hold a practice that local folks and many from Bakersfield would come to listen to and dance. One fellow stated:

*"What an experience! It will never be equaled. the hey-day of big time orchestras right in Lebec."*

Museum supporter, Judi Curtis Petersen – of the local pioneering Curtis family, has shared this wonderful memory of a New Year's Eve at the Hotel after the war years. Judi wrote:

*"I believe it was New Year's Eve 1948 or 49. My parents, Roy and June Curtis, and my grandparents, Roy and Millie Curtis were all dolled up for the dance. Dancing was something I had only seen them do in our living room, but this was something special.*

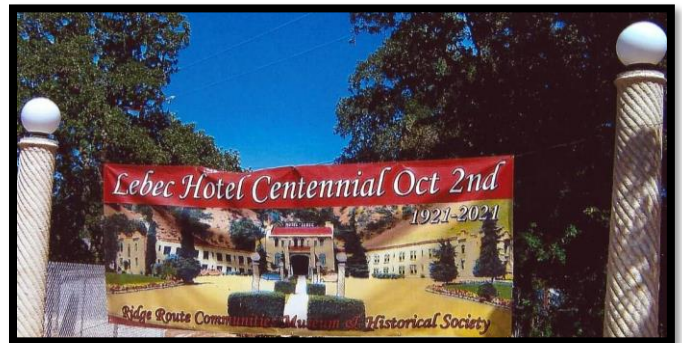
*I remember Daddy driving up the long driveway lit with lights with large white globes and seeing folks dressed in their grandest outfits. Then upon entering the ballroom we saw these huge sparkling chandeliers and beautiful carpet*

*My brother and I were allowed to go with them this particular night as there was entertainment for the children in another area of the Hotel. As a child I remember seeing my very first movie picture that night. We saw 'Snow White' and what a grand time we had. It was truly a FAIRYTALE evening."*



We have received other such wonderful memories of the Hotel from those interviewed over the years, such as honeymoons there, stranded in snow storms there, etc., but we would like many more. So please send us your memories of the times and events at the hotel so we can share them at our Centennial Celebration – and add them to the museum files to be read many years from now. We thank Judi Petersen for her kind remark of thanking all of us who have and do work so hard to keep local history alive.

See the flyer included in this newsletter. It's your invitation to join us in celebrating the opening of the fantastic Lebec Hotel 100 years ago.



## PROPERTY APPEAL . . .

An amazing opportunity has been presented to us and we are asking our supporters to help us make it happen. The property west of the museum, with the old barn on it, may become available to us. We have located some partial funding for the purchase, but need thousands more. We are applying for grants, but they don't often fund land purchases. If you are one of our loyal supporters who see the value in adding this land to the museum facility and its future, please let us know.

Adding that property will greatly benefit the future development as well as parking for the (your) museum. The barn would be so important to our biggest fundraising event of the year, the Great American Yard Sale. We will be able to use the barn for storage and hold the sale on the grounds around it.

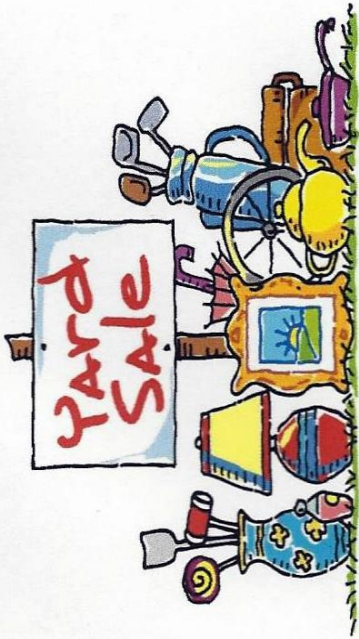
Funds are needed not only for the purchase of the property but leveling the land, putting up fencing and making repairs to the barn. We, your dedicated museum volunteers, are asking for your support in keeping local history alive – forever .





RIDGE ROUTE COMMUNITIES MUSEUM  
ANNUAL FUNDRAISING

## GREAT AMERICAN



### LABOR DAY WEEKEND

SATURDAY, SUNDAY, MONDAY

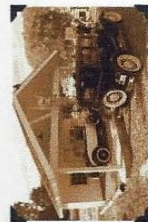
**SEPTEMBER 4,5,6:** 9 a.m. TO 4 p.m.

**3515 PARK DR., FRAZIER PARK**

(BEHIND THE POST OFFICE)

IF YOU CAN HELP OUT BY DONATING ITEMS,

PLEASE LEAVE THEM ON THE PATIO  
AT THE MUSEUM ANYTIME IN AUGUST  
OR CALL FOR PICKUP (245-7747)



Ridge Route Communities  
**MUSEUM**  
& Historical Society

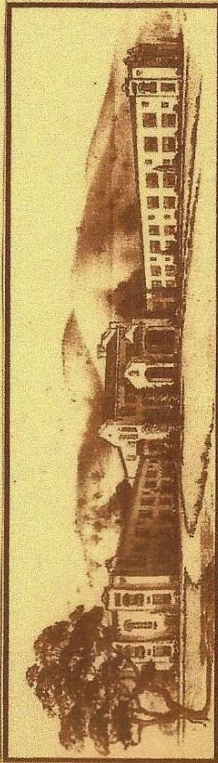
**OCTOBER 2ND, 2021**

THE RIDGE ROUTE COMMUNITIES MUSEUM STAFF  
INVITES YOU TO A

## CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

OF THE

**LEBEC HOTEL 1921-2021**



Catered dinner on the lawn of the  
**TEJON RANCH HEADQUARTERS GUEST HOUSE**

Very informative Program &  
Music of the Big Band Era

Tours of the house

Come in 1920's attire if you would like

Advance Reservations of \$50 a person required  
Sign up at the Museum  
or Call 661-245-7747

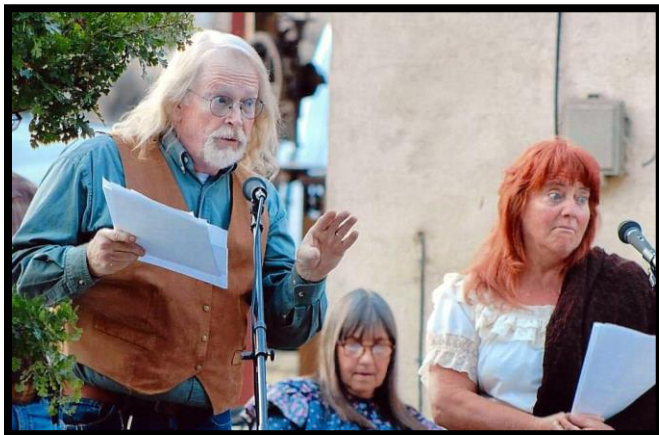


## LIVING HISTORY THEATRE . . .

Here are photos from our very successful "HEAP OF LIVIN'" dramatic reading performed by our all-volunteer museum staff shown below: Don Billesbach, Kevin Woten, David Stenstrom, Jim Mason, Steve Jay, Kaylin Paschall, Bethel Billesbach, Bonnie Kane, Diana Andrews, Barbara Bouman Jay & Debra Manoogian. Heap of Livin' is "Dora" McKenzie Atmore Gentry's journal of three generations of life in Gorman and the surrounding area. This was the third in this year's summer evening series of "Programs On The Patio", sponsored by the Putnam Family of Bakersfield and Janet Soohoo of Granada Hills.



Wild Mountain Thyme Celtic musicians



Also benefiting from our Sponsorship Program is the refurbishment of the museum gas station, sponsored by Tony Waters of Ventura. Shown below is Shane Lefler doing the painting for us (your sponsorship dollars at work).



Another sponsorship this year, also given by Tony Waters, benefited our Spring **Ridge Route Tours**. Call the museum for reservations for the Fall tours scheduled on **September 18 and October 9**.

## ANNIVERSARIES . . .

As we celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> year as a historical society this year, we send our congratulations to the Kern County Historical Society as they celebrate their 90<sup>th</sup> year. In the early years of the KCHS, they were instrumental in restoring Fort Tejon locally and have placed some 72 historic markers throughout the County. As to our Ridge Route Communities Historical Society, we successfully started the museum 23 years ago in a storefront in Lake of the Woods, moved to our present location in Frazier Park in 2003 and with your support, are looking forward to leaving a legacy for generations to come.

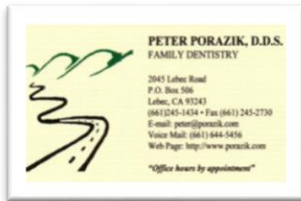
*MANY THANKS TO*

*Tejon Mountain Village* 

*FOR THE PRINTING OF OUR NEWSLETTER*



# PLEASE SUPPORT THE BUSINESSES THAT SUPPORT US!!!



THANK YOU TO  
SCOTT & BARBARA ROSEN  
OF FRAZIER MOUNTAIN  
INTERNET  
FOR THEIR SERVICES & SUPPORT

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



## IN APPRECIATION . . .

Because of the pandemic, our annual staff appreciation dinner was delayed this year from our usual New Year's gathering to a picnic on the patio in June – enjoyed by all.

At the event the museum historian & curator, Bonnie Kane, gave special recognition and awarded a Life Membership to the museum's volunteer office administrator, Chandra Sargent Mead. Chandra came to us from her job as an air traffic controller. She has continued that skill in controlling the many responsibilities she has taken on – such as board secretary, bookstore manager, newsletter production, membership records and event planning. We give her our sincere thank you for her ten years of service and look forward to many more years ahead . . .

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><b>Donations</b> Any value is appreciated</p> <p><b>Membership</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>Personal</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Senior (62+)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$25 General</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 General Gold</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Lifetime</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$750 Lifetime Couple</p> </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>Business</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Silver</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Gold</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Platinum</p> </td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Sponsorship</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>Events &amp; Exhibits</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Speaker</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Tea</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Patio Evening</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Tour</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$300 Tour w/ Lunch</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Destination Dinner</p> </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Cuddy Cabin</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$750 Gas Station</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Chumash</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$2,000 Landscaping</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000 Irrigation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$4,000 Lebec Patio</p> </td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Acquisitions</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Prehistoric</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000 Chumash</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$6,000 Bell Tower</p> </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 East side property</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 Barn property</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 2<sup>nd</sup> Exhibit Hall</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><b>Personal</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Senior (62+)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$25 General</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 General Gold</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Lifetime</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$750 Lifetime Couple</p>	<p><b>Business</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Silver</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Gold</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Platinum</p>	<p><b>Events &amp; Exhibits</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Speaker</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Tea</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Patio Evening</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Tour</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$300 Tour w/ Lunch</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Destination Dinner</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Cuddy Cabin</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$750 Gas Station</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Chumash</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$2,000 Landscaping</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000 Irrigation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$4,000 Lebec Patio</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Prehistoric</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000 Chumash</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$6,000 Bell Tower</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 East side property</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 Barn property</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 2<sup>nd</sup> Exhibit Hall</p>	<p><b>Mail-in Form</b></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><b>Ridge Route Communities Museum &amp; Historical Society</b> 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](mailto:info@ridgeroutemuseum.org)

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

## RIDGE ROAD REPORT ...

Michael Ballard of the Ridge Route Preservation Organization has announced that they are finally able



to schedule a clean-up day on the old Ridge Road again. This clean-up will be on the south end of the road at what is known as "Swede's Cut" where a great deal of debris has fallen and threatens to close off that pass.

Those interested in helping are asked to meet on Saturday August 28<sup>th</sup> in the parking lot of "Mike's Diner" in Castaic at 8 a.m. RSVP to the Ridge Route Preservation web site ([www.ridgeroute.org](http://www.ridgeroute.org)) for further information. Membership in the organization is required due to USFS volunteer requirements, which can be done on-line as well.

**HELP!!!!** We're open again, but you can still help by:



**RECYCLING** your used printer cartridges (you can leave them on our doorstep), or  
**RENEWING** your membership early, or **SPONSORING** an event or exhibit, or  
**BUYING** from our website. Find out about local people, places and things. or  
**DONATING**, just because!

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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](http://www.ridgeroutemuseum.org)  
Museum Email: [rrchs@frazmtn.com](mailto:rrchs@frazmtn.com) or [info@ridgeroutemuseum.org](mailto:info@ridgeroutemuseum.org)

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

**PLEASE CHECK YOUR  
LABEL FOR MEMBERSHIP  
RENEWAL DATE!**