Ridge Route Communities
MUSEUM
& Historical Society

Winter 2024

The Ridge Route Rambler

We're nuts about history.

SNOW STORIES

Snow along Hwy. 99 in Lebec in 1954

Most of us weren't around then, but one of the biggest snow storms in our modern day history happened in January 1962. It was said to be the worst storm since the 1940's. Our local historian at that time, Grace Bradley, wrote: "The Kern County road grader broke down while on the county road between Highway 99 and Frazier Park. The Ventura County grader was joined by that of the Ridgelite Plant (now Arcosa) in clearing Frazier Park streets as well as the road between here and Cuddy Valley. Men came from the Mettler, Arvin and Greenfield fire stations to help clear snow. For the first time in anyone's memory here a rotary snowplow is being used to remove the snow from the 'Mt. Pinos Forest Highway'. It is on loan from the Greenfield County Road Department. The extra equipment was brought in when the workers here were unable to cut the five feet of icy snow with their usual equipment. The local county road equipment was able to open the Mt. Pinos Road as far as Camp McGill at which point the rotary plow was needed to continue the three miles to the top of the mountain. Five of the ten parking lots along the road and space for about ten buses at the top were cleared.

Frazier Park School children were bused to Mt. Pinos to see the work the rotary plow had done.

"AND THEN CAME "THE SNOWBUNNIES", Grace Bradley reported: "Residents are trying to recuperate today from an invasion of 30,000 persons who drove up to enjoy the snow. Traffic counters estimated that 15,000 "snow bunnies" got up to Mt. Pinos before officers stopped traffic, while an equal number frolicked from Frazier Park to Lockwood Valley. District Forest Ranger Jack Williams reported that the total count of persons using forest facilities for the entire year of 1961 was only 11,000. Extra Sheriff deputies and California Highway Patrolmen were called in from Bakersfield. There were traffic jams from the top of Mt. Pinos all the way down to Hwy. 99 where traffic was stopped a few times with people stopping to play in the snow."

The parking situation at the top of Mt Pinos!

Parking at the top of Cuddy Valley

"One Frazier Park resident died shoveling snow. An enterprising young man on Mt. Pinos, in light clothing, survived the night of the storm by managing to build a fire with the one match he had in his pocket – feeding the fire all night to stay alive. At daybreak he was able to hike down to Cuddy Valley to the home of Wesley and Julia (Cuddy) Darling, where he was warmed and fed." In an additional newspaper clipping by Grace Bradley, she told of an effort by Frazier Park residents to ban snowball throwing in the community as the weekend influx of "snow bunnies" had caused snowballing at signs, cars, homes, livestock, etc.

IT'S A TRIPLE CENTENNIAL YEAR

In the last issue of the "Rambler" we told the story of Frazier Park which will be 100 YEARS OLD this year. Two other settlements will also be 100 years old this year, Lake of the Woods and Lockwood Valley.

The LAKE OF THE WOODS subdivision was begun in 1925 by Don and Florence Cuddy on their ranch land to the east of their home – land that had been homesteaded by Don's father, John Fletcher Cuddy, in the mid-1800's. Because of the good flow of water from nearby springs, from the stream coming from the Cuddy Ranch to the west and Cuddy Valley to the north, they named the area "Lake of the Woods" for the lake they hoped those streams could establish. With the help of an earthen dam (in the area of the present Cuddy Hall), the lake was established by the 1930's, despite many dry years. An article in the October 23, 1925 issue of the BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN told of the beginning stages of the lake. It read:
"Not stopping at Frazier Mountain Park, we continued for five miles to Lake of the Woods or what will be the lake. The bracing mountain air called for lunch and we ate in sight of the dam being constructed for the lake. The structure, which is now in its first stages of construction, will have a width of 65 feet at the bottom, 35 feet at the top and a length of 635 feet, we were told by workmen."

One of the first families, (possibly the very first) to settle in the little vacation home subdivision, was the Newman family. Roy and Esther Newman lived in Bakersfield when they registered their names at a Lake of the Woods real estate booth at the Kern County Fair in about 1925 or 26. Naturally they were the winners of a "reduced price lot", (as were everyone who registered!) so they came up, picked out a lot and bought it. The Newmans are known to have built the first cabin, just one room, in Lake of the Woods. They used their little cabin as a vacation home for about ten years, with no electricity or water. When the family stayed at the cabin, Roy would take part-time jobs such as construction work, hauling timber from the upper sawmill on Mt. Pinos and at Fife's General Store in Frazier Park. Roy later became a well-known contractor locally.

A later ad in a 1926 issue of the BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN invited residents to come and stay at the Cuddy Ranch and enjoy the neat, clean bedroom cottages and a new dining room – at a

Newman cabin – the first in Lake of the Woods
(Newman Family Photo)

mile high ranch and view the cabin lots for sale. When the developer absconded with the Cuddy's funds, followed by the Depression, Don Cuddy's death and World War II, the subdivision idea was put on hold until the mid-1940's.

Out in LOCKWOOD VALLEY, several early homesteaders who had proved up their land were ready to give up the rugged lifestyle and sold their land to developers. One of those homesteaders, Bill deLancey, wrote the following of these developments: "When we saw Don Cuddy he said: 'Have you heard about the cabin building subdivision that's being developed in the Lockwood?' News such as that seemed too incredible. In our hearts we knew it must be so, but new houses in the Lockwood? A subdivision? And new roads? All the way home we tried to assimilate this thought which turned out to be solid fact. From then on, for several months, we lined our pockets with money, working for the sub-dividers, not one subdivision, but three! We helped survey for roads, then put many of them through with our tractor, particularly the streets inside the subdivisions. While the money we made out of it was welcome, that 'wilderness' feeling of this last holdout of the Old Southwest had started its inevitable fade-out. Lockwood Valley had reached a landmark of change that didn't sit too well with me. Too many people coming in and too many straight roads to kill the charm of old winding trails through the sage and pinyon."

OPENING
LOCKWOOD PARK
"The Catskills of Southern California"
ATKINS REALTY CO.

"Lockwood Park" poster

The first one, "Lockwood Park" opened in 1925 and William deLancey moved away soon after. The posters advertising Lockwood Park proclaimed it was the "Catskills of Southern California" with wooded slopes surrounding it for some of California's greatest hunting, fresh flowing mountain streams full of trout and gold fields within a few miles. Cabin sites could be bought for $2 down and $2 a week for a total of $50.

The "Lebec Forest" subdivision was and still is located at the top of "School House Hill", so called for the school once located at the western end of the grade. The advertising for Lebec Forest has not yet been located, nor has information on the third sub-division.

Look for plans to celebrate these Centennials in the next newsletter and The Mountain Enterprise. Our Chamber of Commerce and Mountain Memories are also making plans for these 3 town Centennials.

2024 VISITORS

In checking our visitor log we found we had some 1200 visitors this year – most coming from all over California as well as Oregon, Colorado, West Virginia, Hawaii, Mexico, Massachusetts and even the Ukraine.

DECEMBER LIGHTS

We try each year to make our light display better and better. This year we added a "Lebec Hotel" display on the patio between the Hotel lamp posts. We tried to re-string the lights in our huge cedar tree as we did the first year, but we were unable to get a bucket truck or manlift to get the lights all the way to the top. Hopefully next year!

RRCM & RRPO

The Ridge Route Communities Museum has offered the Ridge Route Preservation Organization the use of the museum facilities for meetings and the storage of records. These two organizations have worked closely together to preserve the history of the wonderful old first paved road between Los Angeles and Bakersfield. More information on both their organizations may be found on-line.

A RECENT BELL PROJECT DONATION STORY

One of our dedicated, former museum volunteers has made a donation to the "Rehome the Fire Bell" project. What is special about this is that she made the donation in memory of her grandfather who had donated a bell to the St. Bernard Catholic Church in St. Bernard, Nebraska many years ago . . .

SOME BOOKSTORE OFFERINGS

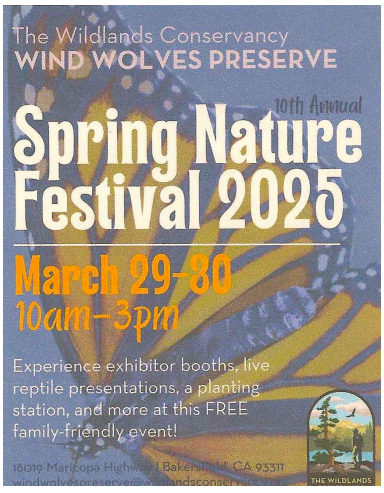
Here are some of our local history books that we offer. They are available in store and on our website via PayPal. If neither of those options work for you, contact us to make arrangements for payment by check. All prices include sales tax:

A View from the Ridge Route- The First Peoples	$19
A View from the Ridge Route -Fort Tejon	$20
A View from the Ridge Route - The Ranchos	$21
A View from the Ridge Route -The Resources	$28
A View from the Ridge Route -The Roadways	$27
All five View books ($10 discount)	$105
Growing Up on Wheeler Ridge	$7
Self Guided Tour of the Ridge Route	$8
Self Guided Earthquake Tour	$7
Homesteader's Heyday-new edition	$15
Heap of Livin'	$22
Heap of Eatin' (local cookbook)	$12
Gov.Joseph Gale & his Indian First Lady	$35
A Short History of the Ridge Route	$11

We have many other titles as well as t-shirts, mugs, postcards, pamphlets, maps and much more available in store.

EVENTS

We are working on our 2025 calendar. Our pine needle basket weaving class will be **March 15**th, and we will have a booth at the Wind Wolves Festival **March 29-30** (see below). We plan to have speakers in June and Ridge Route tours in the spring and fall. We are working on Centennial plans for **June 21**. Expect more details in the next issue of the Rambler.



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For more information please contact us at **661-245-7747** or info@ridgeroutemuseum.org

Donations

☐ $ _____ (Any value is appreciated) for _____

Membership

Personal	Business
☐ $15 Senior (62+)	☐ $50 Silver
☐ $25 General	☐ $100 Gold
☐$500 Lifetime	☐ $250 Platinum

Sponsorships

☐ $50 Speaker	☐ $1000 Gold Level Bell Fund
☐ $75 Tea or Basket Class	☐ $2,000 Chumash Exhibit
☐ $100 Patio Eve. Program	☐ $3,000 Cuddy Cabin
☐ $500 December Lights	☐ $5,000 Grounds
☐ $500 Silver Level Bell Fund	☐ $10K Exhibit Hall Fund

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Ridge Route Communities Museum & Historical Society
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Open: Fri-Sun 12:00pm - 4:00pm •
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* Ridge Route Preservation Organization board member.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!

We desperately need volunteers to help docent during the hours that we are open (Fri. Sat. Sun. 12-4). So if you have some free time, and are interested in history, please contact us. Training will be provided.

VISIT OR CONTACT US

Location:	3515 Park Drive Frazier Park, CA
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NEWSLETTER

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