



Historic Bakersfield & Kern County, California

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How Bakersfield Saved Its Past, v2

By Gilbert P. Gia

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At a banquet held in 1888 in Bakersfield, Gen. Edward F. Beale told the story of a living cenotaph in the form of an ancient oak on his Tejon Rancho.¹ Many years earlier someone had emblazoned the tree with a roughly-lettered, deeply-cut inscription that Beale thought would last as long as the tree itself because the bark had nearly overgrown it “as if nature

¹ The life of Edward Fitzgerald Beale (1822-1893) is well documented online, but here are some highlights. In 1846 when he was a midshipman with the US Navy, he was injured in a skirmish between U.S. and Mexican forces. Beale’s military assignments took him several times across the continent and soon earned him renown as an explorer and frontiersman. After the war he worked for W.H. Aspinwall (founder of Pacific Mail Steamship Company) and for Commodore Robert F. Stockton (2nd Military Governor of California, 1846-1847), both of whom owned large properties in the state. In 1853 President Millard Fillmore appointed 31 year-old Beale as Superintendent of Indian Affairs for California and Nevada, an appointment based on Beale’s familiarity with California and his personal connections. In 1861 President Abraham Lincoln appointed Beale Surveyor General of California and Nevada, and that post helped him acquire historic Mexican land grants. Following the Civil War he divided his time between the East Coast and one of those properties in particular, Rancho El Tejon. In 1876 he was appointed U.S. minister to Austria-Hungary, a post he left after nine months. In Beale’s later years he was prominent in the District of Columbia and a celebrity in Kern County. From early youth Beale was interested in history, especially the history of great men. (Gerald Thompson, *Edward F. Beale and the American West*, U. of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1983); Beale was a member of the Society of California Pioneers. (Thompson, op. cit.); The Society of California Pioneers was founded at San Francisco in 1850. (Los Angeles Daily Herald, Jan 3, 1874 and California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences, Oct 19, 1871)

herself were inclined to aid in preserving the memory of our first pioneer."²

Beale conclude his talk by advising Bakersfield that its history was worthy of study and worthy of preservation.³



² Kern County Californian, Apr 14, 1888. All quoted passages in *How Bakersfield Saved Its Past* match their sources exactly, including capitalization and punctuation. As late as 1934 the Bakersfield Californian did not capitalize *river* and *county* in the terms Kern River and Kern County.

³ The Jan 3, 1874 Los Angeles Daily Herald wrote that pioneer associations were being established in California as early as 1849; The June 23, 1883 Kern County Californian referred to a "most interesting" series of sketches and episodes of early days of California, written by pioneers "or taken from their lips," that would be in the July issue of Overland Magazine.

In the summer of 1889 a diverse assemblage of “husbands, wives, men, maidens, little children, and jewel of a cook”⁴ calling themselves the Foxtail Rangers left Bakersfield, as was their habit, to visit the cool climes of old Fort Tejon, but this time their goal was to find the tree that Beale described.⁵ Years later, a member of the party recalled how it was found. “One day there, she [*one of the group*] spied a place on a large oak where



⁴ The April 9, 1922 Morning Echo quoted a letter dated Mar 30, 1922 and addressed to Henry A. Jastro from a Charles E. Sherman of Lawrence, New York who in the 1890s was an employee of the Bakersfield Echo. Sherman, referring to the mid-July 1890 edition of the Echo, recalled how the Foxtail Rangers accomplished their journey to the fort. “Fort Tejon was invested by gradual approaches in the nature of an evening drive to the James Ranch – 10 miles from town; and a rest of the people and teams until early dawn; next a trip across the plains before yet the sun had time to cause discomfort; an early breakfast in the middle Canyon of the Grapes beside a babbling mountain brook, and ere anon a safe arrival at the Fort – the place in early days resounding to the tramp of armed men, now a sylvan platitude.” The Echo first appeared on August 5, 1886 as the four-page Weekly Kern County Echo. Extant issues of it are from January 24, 1902 through March 21, 1928.

⁵ An image of the seated group, shown above, appears in Camille Gavin’s *Dear Cora, A Personal History of Bakersfield’s Early Days* (iUniverse, 2007 ISBN 978-0-595-45599-7). Gavin wrote that it was part of a souvenir album presented to her grandparents, Howard Philip Bender and Cora Frances McGrann, on the occasion of their wedding as a memory of trip with the Foxtail Rangers to Ft. Tejon in 1889. “A note that accompanied the album was addressed to ‘Our Friend Cora,’ and signed by Gertrude Borgwardt, Bessie Houghton, Mrs. H.L. Borgwardt, Ida Hughes, W.E. Houghton, Mr. and Mrs. D.A. Leonard, H.L. Borgwardt, Jr., Albert Moultry, Ella S. Houghton, Jessie E. McLeod, Jose Peralta, Bertha Said, and Charles E. Sherman.” Gavin, op cit., p. 278; In 1916 Mrs. Ella Houghton “showed a pin, the emblem of the Rangers’ Club, which is made in the design of a foxtail and a marsh flower.” (Bakersfield Californian, May 31, 1916); *Caltha palustris* was probably the flower.

the bark a long time ago had been cut away, and through the opening a portion of the letter 'e' could be seen.”^{6 7} “It was found that the old wood had rotted away from the embrace of the new, leaving quite a cavity. Into this hole, one of the ladies of the party put her hand and felt the letter in relief. The result was, that the new growth, with bark and wood together nearly three inches thick, was cut away from the old scar, and there in relief was nature’s stereotype of man’s inscription to Peter Lebeck.”⁸

A fragment of the bark was taken to Bakersfield and a letter sent to Gen. Beale at Washington “informing him of the incident and the removal of this small portion from his extensive possession, the Rancho El Tejon.”⁹ In his reply “Beale graciously donated the relic to the finders, and offered to fill the space of the original inscription with a facsimile in marble but only if

⁶ Bakersfield Californian, May 31, 1916. “The bark had grown back into the letters of the inscriptions so that when it was removed it showed plainly the words reversed. Currently on loan from the Kern County Historical Museum in Bakersfield, the Lebeck inscription on a portion of the bark can still be seen today at the Fort Tejon Visitors Center.” (www.scvhistory.com/scvhistory/pollack0909lebeck.htm).

⁷ The Sep 29, 1901 Los Angeles Herald reported that Kern County Sheriff Henry L. Borgwardt, Jr. was with a party of hunters in June 1889 when he found the tree. According to the article, a month after that a “party of explorers who had heard the story went to the scene and dug down at the foot of the tree.” The Herald’s columnist M. Blair Coan next described the the opened grave which contained a decapitated bear and a decapitated man -- each with the head of the other. Found with them, Coan wrote, were spurs and a six-shooter. Wikipedia’s note about six-shooters: Samuel Colt (Jul 19, 1814–Jan 10, 1862) invented a revolving-breech loading handgun [six-shooter]. Patent Arms Manufacturing of Paterson, New Jersey, was chartered by the New Jersey legislature on March 5, 1836. Colt was granted US patent (No. 1304) on August 29, 1836. By the end of 1837 the Arms Company had made over 1,000 weapons, but there were no sale of them owing to the national economic Panic of 1837.

⁸ Morning Echo, Apr 9, 1922

⁹ Truth Magazine, Aug 10, 1898 as reprinted in Historic Kern, Quarterly Bulletin of the Kern County Historical Society, vol 28, no. 4, Dec 1979; “During its 25-year existence (1881-1905), *Truth*, in contradiction to its name, was ever changing. In fact, it had *seven* distinct incarnations. It is remembered today for two of them, when it was a weekly full-color humor magazine from 1891 to 1898 and when it was a sumptuously illustrated monthly from January 1899 to 1901.”

(Richard Samuel West (<http://john-adcock.blogspot.com/2012/07/truth-was-ever-changing-weekly-1881-98.html>)

anyone was 'sufficiently interested to verify the authenticity of the fact it recited.' "¹⁰

In the summer of 1890, recalling the custom of burying the dead with their heads to the east, the Rangers brought shovels with them. Standing before the Lebeck tree the captain said,

"Comrades, as we well know, the attempt before us is one which has had serious consideration and is dear to our hearts. When General Beale suggested that an effort should be made to discover, if possible, any relics of the first recorded pioneer of Kern county, and promised in the event thereof to have a facsimile of the original inscription done in marble and placed upon this tree at the head of Peter Lebeck's grave, he voiced the unanimous wish of us all. We are here today for that purpose and not as vandals, but with tender hearts do we now intend to make an attempt to uncover the remains of Peter Lebeck. The adjutant will now read that extract from General Beale's speech at the banquet tendered to him two years ago."¹¹

¹⁰ See also Bakersfield Californian, May 31, 1916. "Peter Lévesque's Tragic Demise Is Recited to Children of the Shelter" ; Morning Echo, Apr 9, 1922

¹¹ Morning Echo, Apr 9, 1922. The entire account, which appeared on pages one and four, was signed " W.E. Houghton, Captain. Attest: C.E. Sherman, Post Chaplain. Bakersfield, Calif., July 31, 1890."; Bakersfield Californian, May 31, 1916; Revealed at a depth of four feet was a human skeleton nearly six feet in length and broad in proportion. The left arm was folded on the rib cage. The left hand, right forearm, and both feet were missing, as well as a right, lower molar. (Morning Echo, Apr 9, 1922); Lebeck's remains were respectfully recovered.



A review of contemporary newspapers suggests that this was the first organized pursuit of Kern County history. ¹² Because of the tree's importance, some background about it follows. For additional information, see Appendix.

The first recorded observation of the Lebeck Tree was in fall 1847 when a scribe of the passing Mormon Battalion wrote, "Peter Lebeck who was killed by a grizzly bear on the 17th of October 1837. The bones of the bear, which

¹² Kern County Courier, Jan 25, 1873: "When we came here in 1866 there were about 12 voters and ten families and the whole population was under 100 counting all people between the mountains from Fort Tejon to White River." (Margaret Aseman Cooper Zonlight's Land, Water and Settlement in Kern County, California, 1850-1890) Arno Press, New York Times Co, NY, 1979. The work was the author's 1954 M.A. thesis, "Management of Public Lands in the United States" U. of California, 1954; By 1870 Bakersfield's population was between 400 and 600. (Kern County Weekly Courier, Nov 1870; Sep 14, 1870); Local population declined between 1880 and 1886, which was the time when almost no land was for sale. Kern County then lost one percent of its population, while in the same period the populations of Tulare and Fresno Counties increased 66% and 89%. (Zonlight, op. cit.); After July 28, 1888 -- date of the Haggin & Carr v. Miller & Lux water settlement -- the population Kern County's population increased. (Los Angeles Times, Jan 21, 1889); By 1890 Bakersfield's population was 2,637 and Kern City's was 625. (Kern County Californian, Jul 12, 1890)

was killed by Lebeck's comrades, were lying on the ground near by."¹³ The next account was in 1853 when a Lt. R.S. Williamson encamped there with a U.S. expedition. He wrote, "One of the large oaks bears the following inscription, cut deeply into the hard wood: 'Peter le Beck, killed by a bear, Oct. 17, 1837.' A broad, flat surface was hewed upon the trunk, and well smoothed off before the letters were cut. It is a durable monument."¹⁴ The next account was written in 1867 when another federal expedition encamped near the tree. The official artist, Möllhausen, who was a German,¹⁵ wrote about the Lebeck Tree on two different occasions.¹⁶ His first is here as translated from the German.¹⁷

"The two graves shown to me were about 20 years apart in age.

The first was located in the middle of Fort Tejon's parade field in

¹³ Daniel Tyler, *A Concise History of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War, 1846-1847*, (Salt Lake, 1881). That the bear's bones were not strewn about on the open ground after ten years is noteworthy.

¹⁴ *Reports: Explorations And Surveys To Ascertain The Most Practicable And Economical Route For A Railroad From The Mississippi River To The Pacific Ocean, Volume V. Made Under The Direction of the Secretary of War in 1853-54 According To Acts Of Congress Of March 3, 1853, May 31, 1854, and August 5, 1854*, pg 47, Washington, Beverly Tucker (printer) 1856

¹⁵ In a letter dated August 1, 1858, Smithsonian collector John Xanthus wrote that Möllhausen was present at Fort Tejon for several weeks. (Ann Zwinger, *John Xanthus, the Fort Tejon Letters*, U. of Arizona Press, Tucson (1986), p. 156, 191)

¹⁶ When Möllhausen's widow was interviewed in the early 20th Century she displayed a scrapbook of her husband's magazine articles. Preston Albert Barba translated the following Möllhausen story into English: "Die Grabeiche is a splendid tale of the trappers in the days of the St. Louis trading company. Josias, the trapper, tells the story to the author while the latter is lingering, sketch-book in hand, near Fort Tejon. Josias tells of the Indian maiden Hummingbird whose three suitors, Josias, Peter Lebeck, and a Mexican, Antonio, entered a contest in the throwing of the lasso and in shooting for the possession of the maiden. Peter Lebeck wins, but the latter Antonio, while the three are lassoing a great grizzly bear, and Peter has gone forward to thrust a knife into him, out of envy cuts his own lasso, thus giving the bear freedom, and Peter is killed. Old Josias again suggests Cooper's Natty Bumppo." (Preston Albert Barba, *Balduin Möllhausen the German Cooper, Americana Germanica*, vol 17, U. of Pennsylvania, 1914). Many Möllhausen works are said to have been destroyed during WWII. Die Grabeiche might no longer exist in its original printing.

¹⁷ Balduin Möllhausen, *Reisen in die Felsengebirge Nordamerikas* (1861).

Möllhausen's account was not found in English translation. This translation is by Gilbert P. Gia.

the shadow of a massive oak tree, which took the place of a gravestone. Although the bark had much overgrown the inscription, and it was hard to read, I made out the deeply-cut words 'Peter le Beck, killed by a bear on October 17, 1837.' So here in the wild forest, bold Canadian trappers had scraped away foreign soil, buried their unfortunate comrade, and carved his name into the trunk of the living, green tree."¹⁸

Möllhausen continued, "Twenty years later, a hundred steps away from that spot, a worthy young American woman had stood at the grave of her husband, an officer who had become ill and died unexpectedly. A white, wooden barrier surrounded his gravestone, which bore a gilded, artfully-inscribed epitaph. I have forgotten exactly what it said, but I have not forgotten the words that the solitary widow had written with lead pencil on one of the pickets. The message reflected a world of misery and pain. I was told that when the grieving wife prepared to leave the fort she begged the officers to someday send her a picture of her husband's grave."¹⁹

"A year passed, and then I arrived. The soldiers, remembering their promise, asked me to draw the lonely resting place. I willingly took up the task, drew the picture using my best skills and added a view of the fort with its buildings and the surrounding, massive oaks. Perhaps twenty years hence a great town will be here, and the soldier's marble marker will be part of

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

the town's foundations and the oak tree used in the town's buildings." ²⁰

The discovery by the Fox Tail Rangers promoted interest in Kern County history. In spring 1891 several Bakersfield women formed a chapter of the Native Daughters of the Golden West,²¹ and weeks after that the Kern County Californian found it newsworthy to report the illness of Alexander

²⁰ The German text is this: "Auch zwei Gräber wurden mir in Fort Tejon gezeigt, zwei Gräber, die in ihrem Alter nur zwanzig Jahre auseinander sind, dabei aber verschiedenen Zeitaltern anzugehören scheinen. Das erste Grab befindet sich mitten auf dem Hof des Forts, im Schatten einer riesenhaften Eiche. Der schöne Baum vertritt die Stelle des Leichensteins, und auf seinem Stamm liest man an einer Stelle, wo die Rinde entfernt wurde, die mit einem Beil tief eingemeißelten Worte: »Peter le Beck, killed by a bear, Octbr. 17. 1837 (Peter le Beck, getötet von einem Bären am 17. Oktober 1837).« Die Rinde ist schon wieder über einige Buchstaben hinweggewachsen, so daß man die Worte nur noch mit Mühe zu entziffern vermag. Dort also, in der Urwildnis, scharften einst kühne kanadische Trapper ihren verunglückten Kameraden in die fremde Erde und schrieben mit Eisen seinen Namen auf grünendes Holz."

"Zwanzig Jahre später stand, einige hundert Schritt davon, eine den gebildetsten Ständen angehörige junge Amerikanerin am Grab ihres Gatten, eines Offiziers der Besatzung, der einer Krankheit erlegen war und nach kurzem Aufenthalt in dem neuerrichteten Posten ebenfalls in die fremde Erde gesenkt wurde. Ein weißes Gitter umgibt den kunstvoll behauenen Grabstein mit der vergoldeten Inschrift; die Inschrift habe ich vergessen, aber nicht die Worte, welche die scheidende Gattin mit Bleistift auf eine der weißen Latten schrieb; sie schienen eine Welt voll Kummer und Schmerz zu enthalten. Als die trauernde Witwe in ihre Heimat zurückkehren wollte, bat sie die Offiziere des Postens, wenn sich die Gelegenheit bieten sollte, ihr ein Bild vom Grab ihres Gatten zu verschaffen."

"Ein Jahr war seitdem verflossen. Eingedenk ihres Versprechens forderten die Offiziere mich auf, eine Skizze von der einsamen Ruhestätte zu entwerfen. Mit Freuden übernahm ich den Auftrag, zeichnete nach besten Kräften das gewünschte Bild und fügte demselben noch eine Ansicht des Militärpostens mit all seinen Häusern und Eichen bei. Nach abermals zwanzig Jahren steht wohl schon eine große Stadt dort, und die marmorne Gedenktafel des Soldaten befindet sich vielleicht im Fundament desselben Hauses, zu dem die Grabeiche des Jägers die Balken hergegeben hat.";

"Möllhausen's narrative of Ives's Colorado River Expedition of 1857-1858 has evidently never been published in English." [Carl Wheat, *Mapping the Trans Mississippi West* (three volumes): Institute of Historical Cartography, San Francisco, 1959]

²¹ Daily Californian, Apr 2, 1891

Montgomery, a well-known San Franciscan who was president of the Society of California Pioneers.²²

Bakersfield's first pioneer group was formed in 1892, but it was not for Kern County pioneers. Rather, it was for people from El Dorado County who had moved to Kern County. The Californian announced, "All former residents of said County are respectfully invited to attend. – [signed] E. Willow, Chairman, I.L. Miller, Sec'y"²³ Some days later Editor J.M. Reuck, who had recently bought the Daily Californian,²⁴ criticized the El Dorado group, calling it a "species of fetishism."²⁵

"He [*the Pioneer*] has not been the implement in the hands of Providence for bringing about a high state of development and civilization, except in the way of roughly breaking an opening through the wilderness, for the keen vision of the more practical and progressive to follow; and whatever may have been his services in the past, his attitude at the present is more apt to be one of obstruction; a fit representation of the senility of old age, drawing its shrunken limbs together, mumbling over the memories of the past and viewing with alarm the desecration of its old land marks through modern innovation."²⁶

"After all, is not this veneration of pioneers in pioneer days a species of fetishism, unworthy of a progressive age? What have the pioneers done but rough through a way for the real brain and

²² Kern County Californian, Apr 22, 1891

²³ Daily Californian, Mar 26, 1892

²⁴ Lynn Hay Rudy, *Granddad: Hugh A. Blodget in Early Bakersfield*. Jenner, California, 1990

²⁵ Daily Californian, Mar 31, 1892 (J.M. Reuck was editor and proprietor)

²⁶ Ibid.

brawn of progress to enter? And just so far as a community hugs the traditions of the past to the exclusion of the living issues of the present, so far will it be distanced in the race with its more practical competitors. California has been particularly cursed with this mistaken reverence for the past, and where the sentiment has been strongest, the comparative progress and development has been least.”²⁷

“The pioneer is still with us, and occasionally gives a spasmodic kick at the newcomer, to prove that he still lives; but he begins to move uneasily on his stool of repentance, with a growing suspicion that his occupation as a prophet is departing if not gone.”²⁸

Some days later the El Dorado group wrote its constitution and bylaws and set a date for a picnic.²⁹ Short weeks later the Californian meekly wrote, “The society has grown wonderfully since its inception, and the picnic will be a grand affair.”³⁰

The word *pioneer* took on a commercial angle when S.W. Fergusson, general manager of the Kern County Land Company, stressed that the upcoming Chicago World’s Fair was a once-in-a-century opportunity for Kern County to advertise its products to the world.³¹ He noted that communities near

²⁷ Daily Californian, Mar 31, 1892

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Daily Californian, Apr 14, 1892. Committee members were Jay W.P. Laird, I.L. Miller, H.P. Olds, and D.H. Price, and a Crawford, without initials. What became of El Dorado County Pioneers Society was not discovered.

³⁰ The Californian, Apr 30, 1892

³¹ From Sep 1890 to 1896 Samuel W. Fergusson (later spelled Ferguson) was General Agent for the Kern County Land and Water Company.; The Chicago World's Fair, or Chicago Columbian Exposition, was held from May through October 1893 in

and far were then self-promoting, and he “saw no reason why California should not go them all one better, and have other events in her credit.” California Admission Day was certainly appropriate, but Kern County “should have at least two other celebrations.”³² Added were California Exhibitor Day and California Pioneer Day.³³

Kern County at the time had no pioneer society, but Fergusson – with the power of the land company behind him – took steps to make sure Kern County would have its society. A Bakersfield newspaper enthused,

“It has recently been suggested that a society of pioneers should be formed in Kern County. Of all the gifts with which humanity has been endowed, memory is one of the chiefest and pleasantest, for it has the faculty of forgetting all past ills and garners only the pleasures of the past. And so, if a society of pioneers were formed, nothing could be pleasanter to old-timers than recalling the past. Moreover, with such a society, there would be gathered while yet there is time, records, history and legends, which in another decade would be valuable, and their loss would be a public calamity. By all means let us have a society of Kern County Pioneers.”³⁴

Weeks later the Californian wrote, “The formation of a Society of Pioneers naturally quickens memory, and some of the rare good things of days gone by are being talked over again. One of the best of the antique curios is the

celebration of the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the New World.; Daily Californian, Jul 18, 1893

³² Daily Californian, Jul 18, 1893. Arguably, Kern County government in that period genuflected to the needs of the Kern County Land Company.

³³ Another proposed celebration day was California Exhibitors Day.

³⁴ Daily Californian, Mar 5, 1894

verdict and action of a coroner's jury in what is now Kernville but then in the 60s was known as Whiskey Flat." ³⁵ The newspaper followed those words with a humorous anecdote about the first county seat.³⁶

Some months later, 24 Bakersfield residents formed the Society of Kern County Pioneers³⁷ made up of those who had arrived here before 1870. For the next 20 years they hosted historical talks and conducted formal dinners and dances.³⁸ And sometimes they conducted funerals.³⁹ In 1911 the society produced its only publication, *Bakersfield of Early Days*, "the text of which is a poem by B.K. Said, in which the names of the pioneers and the dates of their arrivals here are recorded in pleasing rhyme. The booklet is illustrated

³⁵ Daily Californian, Mar 28, 1894 "Pioneer Reminiscences"

³⁶ *Kern County Pioneer Recollections* (Nicholas Patrick Scanlan, ed., Kern County Library, 1985) attributes the humorous story to Frank C. Tibbetts (1874-1936). Scanlan's attribution was probably from a letter dated Feb 7, 1932 from E. A. Schaper, M.D., Superintendent of Keene Stony Brook Tuberculosis Sanitarium as addressed to Herman Spindt, principal of Kern County High School. Spindt was a local historian, as well. Under County of Kern letterhead, Dr. Schaper wrote, "Dear Mr. Spindt, as you requested, we are enclosing copies of some of the Kern County reminiscences written by Frank C. Tibbetts, one of our patients." (*Keen*, Vertical File, Beale Memorial Library, McGuire Local History Room)

³⁷ Daily Californian, Apr 21, 1894. The society was formed April 20, 1894. Members' names and dates of membership are as follows: 1st group, May 18, 21, 1894: Mr. and Mrs. Ferdinand A. Tracy, Mrs. E. Wilbur, Mrs. Leonora Cross, Mr. and Mrs. G. Sanger, Henry Miller, W.C. MacFarland, George B. Chester, John Barker. 2nd group, Mar 20, 1897: Mr. and Mrs. H.F. Condict. 3rd group -- (San Francisco Call, Nov 7, 1897): Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Patz. 4th group -- Jan 8, 1898: S.W. Wible, Mrs. H.H. Fish, Mrs. Julie; R. Wilkinson, W.H. Scribner, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Bona; Mr. and Mrs. D.C. Maddux. 5th group -- Sep 24, 1902: Emile Chauvin of Delano. 6th group -- Mar 27, 1904: Walter James, H.S. Blodgett. The society changed its bylaws to admit those who were in the county as late as 1880 instead of as late as 1875 (Daily Californian, Apr 9, 1904. 7th group -- Jan 20, 1906: S.P. Wible, Mr. and Mrs. S.J. Drury, Mr. and Mrs. B.K. Said, Mr. and Mrs. Lesser Hirschfeld, Mrs. H.A. Blodgett, Mrs. Willow, Walter James, John Barker, H.A. Jastro, C. Brower. 8th group -- Bakersfield Californian, Sep 28, 1916: Jamison, Natalie, Scott, Roberts, Mrs. Mary Glenn. (Single surnames did not have preceding initials.)

³⁸ Daily Californian, Jun 17, 1898

³⁹ Daily Californian, Sep 26, 1895 (Vining Barker); Daily Californian, Sep 24, 1902 (Emile Chauvin); Bakersfield Californian, Sep 28, 1916 (Mrs. Mary Glenn)

with an excellent service of pictures of Bakersfield and Bakersfield residents in the pioneer days.”⁴⁰

Social Groups and Local History

In 1903 the California Federation of Women’s Clubs invited the superintendent of Kern County schools develop a list of historic sites deserving of recognition and preservation.⁴¹ The federation could have asked the same of the many social organizations in Bakersfield because most of them had an interest in local history. The ardent history buffs could influence several clubs; Some members of the Society of Kern County Pioneers were also members of the Native Sons of the Golden West or the Native Daughters of the Golden West. Those connections were evident in 1903 when the Tejon Parlor, Native Daughters of the Golden West entertained members of the Society of Kern County Pioneers at the Woman’s Club Hall in Bakersfield.⁴²

Many local and statewide historical societies had already formed by the mid-1920s, and in 1925 both the San Joaquin County Pioneer Historical Society and the Los Angeles Historical Society filed articles of incorporation with California Secretary of State Frank C. Jordan.⁴³ A common activity among

⁴⁰ Morning Echo, Dec 19, 1911, “Bakersfield of Early Days. Told in Poem and Pictures Prepared by Pioneers of Kern County. The price of the book with a soft leather binding, \$2.00, or with paper, \$.50. It is expected that these prices will about cover the cost of printing, binding and making the halftones, but if there is any surplus it will be devoted to charity or to some were for the public purpose. It is not the expectation that anyone will make any profit out of the work.” Online bookstores and libraries do not date Bakersfield of Early Days. Beale Memorial Library has a copy.

⁴¹ Daily Californian, Jul 21, 1903

⁴² Daily Californian, Sep 11, 1903

⁴³ Bakersfield Californian, Feb 16, 1928 (by news wire from Sacramento, Feb 16)

societies was the placement of historical markers. Editor Albert W. Mason of the Bakersfield Morning Echo wrote in 1920,

“Mr. W. A. Howell is the Kern County representative in this [California Landmarks] association, and he will have the support of the people here who sincerely believe that the state should preserve the historical features of its early days. And this calls to mind the needs for a landmarks association in Kern County. The Bakersfield women’s club civics committee has stimulated interest in Fort Tejon, and made headway with the support of the Board of Supervisors. There are numerous other landmarks that could be preserved, A Kern County historical and landmark society could do a world of good deeds in Kern County, and they would be backed by popular opinion, and all that is needed is to start it.”⁴⁴

Collectors of Kern County antiquity continued their acquisitions, but the local trend in the 1920s was donation of historical objects to the County of Kern or to the City of Bakersfield, in which cases the public libraries became historical repositories. When an old map of Havilah was presented to the county in 1921, librarian Julia Babcock observed, “Too many valuable records and interesting archives have been lost to this county because of lack of a central agency for the collection of such

⁴⁴ Morning Echo, Dec 12, 1920. In 1897, under the auspices of the California Board of Trade, “a central California Landmarks Club was organized for the purpose of preservation of historical landmarks [*places*].” (San Francisco Call, Nov 12, 1897)

records.”⁴⁵

In 1923 local history linked with patriotism when the Bakersfield Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution unveiled a bronze tablet at Fort Tejon. “The preservation and marking of historical spots,” wrote The Californian, “is of vast importance, making the knowledge of the events of our country’s history easy of access, and through this knowledge the interest and the pride of the American people will be aroused, and a deeper appreciation of, and loyalty to our country ensue.”⁴⁶ That concept was repeated in 1925 when Knights of Columbus traveled to San Francisco for the annual knights’ pageant. The Californian wrote, “The color and romance of the Golden State, traced from the days of the early missions, down through the years, to the present generation, will be realistically portrayed in a brilliant California pageant of singing, music and dancing.”⁴⁷

In that year, too, the Knights of Pythias sponsored a high-school history contest that used Kern County as its focus. The Californian wrote supportively, “Prizes are well worth the while, as well as the knowledge to be gained.”⁴⁸ Those worth-while prizes are not known today, but the contest might have influenced the formation of a history-orientated dramatics club in 1926 at the high school. “The plan is to have the club meet in the evening, and historical games will be played and historical skits will be presented.”⁴⁹

For both patriotic and economic reasons, businesses of 1927 Kern County supported public funding of Fort Tejon and Red Rock Canyon as California

⁴⁵ Bakersfield Californian, Jun 2, 1921

⁴⁶ Bakersfield Californian, Nov 10, 1923

⁴⁷ Bakersfield Californian, Jan 28, 1925

⁴⁸ Bakersfield Californian, Oct 28, 1925

⁴⁹ Bakersfield Californian, Jan 18, 1926

state monuments. The California wrote,

“A survey of historic sites throughout California is being made by a special committee of the California Historical Society. Tourist travel every year brings more than \$150,000,000 to California, the society points out. These visitors are drawn here partly by our regions of scenic grandeur and partly by the romantic traditions and historic associations of California, represented today by historic sites, many of which will be obliterated or else exploited for private purposes, unless the state takes steps to preserve them.”⁵⁰

Stirrings: A Kern County Museum

The county’s museum on North Chester Avenue today owes its origin to the Bakersfield Lion’s Club, the Kern County Historical Society, the Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce, and the Kern County Board of Supervisors.⁵¹ But its very earliest catalyst traces back to 1901-- before there was a chamber of commerce -- when the Southern Pacific Railroad refused to supply Bakersfield businessmen with a dedicated mail car. ⁵² The Daily Californian stumped for a chamber of commerce -- which would allow business to speak with one voice – but after its effort fizzled, the newspaper’s editor groused

⁵⁰ Bakersfield Californian, Oct 27, 1927. Governor C. C. Young signed the bills in May 1927, and the State Park Bond Act was approved in the 1928 general election. Each dollar of state funds for parks would be matched by funds or by land from local or private sources. The Mar 5, 1927 Bakersfield Californian wrote that the “First Kern County Museum” was built by the Kern County Sports Club at its Bakersfield headquarters and at its headquarters on Mt. Breckenridge. The two museums appeared to have mostly horticultural emphasis.

⁵¹ The Kern County Museum’s address is 3801 Chester Avenue, Bakersfield, California

⁵² Daily Californian, Apr 2, 1901

that when Stockton wanted a chamber of commerce, one was launched with 600 members almost immediately.⁵³

Success, it turned out, depended on who was doing the asking because when leading Bakersfield businessmen asked for a chamber of commerce, financial contributions poured in.⁵⁴ The value of Bakersfield's new Chamber of Commerce was proven four months later when Native Sons of the Golden West booked their convention here. Bakersfield's population was then about 6,000, and the convention attracted more than 1,000 visitors.⁵⁵

In late 1927 the Chamber of Commerce moved from its north-wing office at City Hall to a newly-built exhibition building on the county's fairgrounds,⁵⁶ but the move was temporary because a building was going up nearby exclusively for the chamber.⁵⁷

The piece of weathered bark removed from the Peter Lebeck tree at Ft. Tejon soon made its way into public ownership,. For next couple of decades the accumulation of such historical objects steadily grew. Sometime in the early 1930s the city's artifacts housed in the old Beale Memorial Library on Chester Avenue were moved to the basement of the county courthouse on Truxtun Avenue.⁵⁸ Available space for history was filling up.

⁵³ Daily Californian, Jan 22, 1902

⁵⁴ Daily Californian, Jan 30, 1902

⁵⁵ Daily Californian, Apr 30, 1903. Charles Lummis founded the Landmarks Club of Southern California in 1895 for the preservation of historic sites. (Charles F. Lummis Memorial Association, www.loomis.8k.com/page7.html); "The Landmarks Club has reroofed nearly an acre and a half of mission building. Except for its work, nothing would be left today at the Missions San Juan Capistrano, San Fernando and Pala." (Van Nuys News, Apr 14, 1916); Native Sons of the Golden West established the California Historic Landmarks League on May 21, 1902 for the purpose of placing memorial tablets. (Daily Californian Apr 30, 1903)

⁵⁶ The exhibition building was on the grounds of today's Kern County Museum.

⁵⁷ Bakersfield Californian, Nov 18, 1927

⁵⁸ In 1923 Bakersfield Library, and its collections, merged with Kern County's library system. The history collection in the old Beale Memorial Library was removed and

In late 1927 the Lions Club's president, Whit C. Barber, announced that the club favored the creation of a county-supported museum, and he added that the Kern County Chamber of Commerce had offered to house historic artifacts in its building as soon as completed.⁵⁹ But the ultimate destination of the museum pieces, said Barber, was "in the county library building when it is constructed."⁶⁰ By that time the Kern County Board of Supervisors already had set into motion plans for a new, county library, but when its bond measure came to a vote (four years later), the public turned it down.⁶¹

Whit C. Barber – who was also chairman of the Lion's museum committee – could not have seen that coming. He went on to invite the public to donate historic objects for a future county museum, "which will perpetuate the history of the county for the benefit of posterity." Namely, the Lions asked for "old historical documents, letters of interest, early newspapers, early photography, weapons and articles associated with the development and romance of the county."⁶² Barber promised that "all pieces donated will be marked for all time with the donor's name and will be carefully preserved."⁶³ Aiding in the collection of objects were chamber secretary Lawrence Nourse and "I.E. Porter of the Lion's Club, whose telephone number is 2674-

housed in the basement of the county courthouse. The old library became a children's library. It was demolished in 1953. (Bakersfield Californian, Dec 18, 1953)

⁵⁹ Bakersfield Californian, Dec 10, 1927. The Oct 4, 1928 the Bakersfield Californian credited Kern County Horticultural Commissioner Whit C. Barber as the originator of the idea to create a Kern County museum.

⁶⁰ Bakersfield Californian, Feb 23, 1928

⁶¹ In the election of 1934, 33 percent of registered voters turned out to vote. The library bond (to be paid back at 4% per annum) needed 2/3rds majority, or 8,300 votes to carry, but it received less than a simple majority.

⁶² Bakersfield Californian, May 5, 1928

⁶³ Bakersfield Californian, Dec 10, 1927

J.”⁶⁴ In late 1929 the Kern County Board of Supervisors allowed the Lions to legally store their collected historical pieces in the new Chamber of Commerce Building, but supervisors emphasized it was for storage only.⁶⁵

The Kern County Historical Society

In spring 1930 the Lions Club’s Landmarks Committee met with the state chamber of commerce to choose 16 locations reflective of Kern County history.⁶⁶ At that meeting, Lions member Harrison Elliot moved that the Landmarks Committee “perpetuate itself as a permanent organization to be known as the Kern County Historical Society,”⁶⁷ and the motion carried. Herman A. Spindt was named temporary chairman, and Mr. Jewett, Mr. Clarke and Mrs. Hugh Allen were appointed to the membership committee.⁶⁸ The Bakersfield Californian lauded the action,

“Only through such an organization can the early history of the county, the history that centered about areas that are now less sparsely populated, be perpetuated. It were a pity to have that history and what it means lost to this and the coming generations. A society such as that contemplated will perform a very important function, and unquestionably there will be attracted to it scores and hundreds of people in sympathy with

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Bakersfield Californian, Nov 16, 1928

⁶⁶ Bakersfield Californian, Mar 15, 1930. Chairman Herman A. Spindt was principal of Kern County Union High School.

⁶⁷ Bakersfield Californian, Mar 15, 1930. Note: The May 22, 1937 Bakersfield Californian (pg 6) wrote that the Landmark Committee “merged into the Historical Society” on March 18, 1931.

⁶⁸ Mr. Clarke was Dwight L. Clarke. Mr. Jewett was probably Hugh S. Jewett.

its aim and aspirations. " ⁶⁹

The society's first general meeting was held on the evening of April 24, 1931 in the Spanish ballroom of Hotel El Tejon, and the guest of honor was Dr. Herbert E. Bolton of the University of California at Berkeley, whose talk was entitled "Don Pedro Fages." ⁷⁰ Afterward, Dr. Bolton presented the society with its "first notable document, which was a transcription of a hitherto unknown diary of Commandante Pedro Fages, as discovered and translated by Professor H.E. Bolton." Alfred Harrell was elected society president, and Dwight L. Clarke was elected vice-president. Recording secretary was Kern County Librarian Julia G. Babcock, corresponding secretary was Mrs. Hugh Allen, and elected as curator was Jesse Stockton of the high school faculty.⁷¹ The society was launched, but in the span of only a few years the public forgot that the Lions Club was the parent of the Kern County Historical Society.

Longtime Kern County residents might recall that the basement of the Chamber of Commerce building once housed the county museum. But that building originally had no basement. By 1934 several county offices crowded into the new building, and talk turned to excavating a basement for more space. County engineer H. G. Pope assessed the proposal and concluded that "excavations would seriously weaken the foundations of the building. A further danger would occur in the event of flood waters from the Kern river sweeping over the area."⁷² Nevertheless, some months afterward

⁶⁹ Bakersfield Californian, Mar 19, 1931

⁷⁰ Bakersfield Californian, Apr 16, 17, 25, 1931. In April the society had not yet incorporated.

⁷¹ Bakersfield Californian, Apr 25, 1931

⁷² Bakersfield Californian, Dec 10, 1934.

a rough basement was dug anyway.⁷³ In May 1935 the Kern County Grand Jury recommended that the subterranean space be “cemented and completed to allow for storage and adequate protection of Chamber of Commerce and fair association property which, for the lack of space, is not being properly taken care of.”⁷⁴ That work was done.

In 1940 president of the historical society Ardis Walker stood before the board of supervisors and asked that the Kern County Historical Society be established as an official agency of county government. Furthermore, he asked thme to appoint a paid historian, a museum curator, and assign floor space in the Chamber of Commerce building for an official, county museum.⁷⁵ Walker concluded his request by observing that the influx of newcomers into the county made it “increasingly important that traditions of the county be instilled in the citizens.”⁷⁶ Weeks later, society vice-president Bernard C. Ely watched the board approve only one of the items: The use of the basement as a museum, but only “until such time as other facilities are available.”⁷⁷

Public access to the basement collection was then south from the fairgrounds parking lot to concrete steps behind the chamber building, and once people were down in the basement they had to watch for low-hanging

⁷³ This work was probably done by either the State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA) that was created in 1933, or by the California State Relief Administration (SRA) that was created in 1935. Both provided unemployment relief in the form of jobs during the Great Depression. In early 1935 adobe stables and an earthworks grandstand were constructed on the county fairgrounds north of the Chamber of Commerce Building. (Bakersfield Californian, Apr 4, 1935). The depth of the basement might have been limited by the existing water table.

⁷⁴ Bakersfield Californian, May 29, 1935

⁷⁵ Alfred Harrell wrote in an editorial a few days later, “We have much of historic worth in the county, and it is timely now to begin to assemble it.” Bakersfield Californian, Nov 13, 1940

⁷⁶ Bakersfield Californian, Nov 11, 1940. The immigrants were Dust Bowl arrivals.

⁷⁷ Bakersfield Californian, Dec 16, 1940

steam pipes.⁷⁸ The cramped space was a museum of sorts, but it was not yet an official county museum. Still, the gift of space made it possible for the society to continue to acquire items which might otherwise have been lost to museums and institutions outside the county.⁷⁹

About a year later the society became aware of Sections 5120-5132 of the California Public Resources Code, which stated that county supervisors could establish historical societies as agencies of county government. The Kern County Historical Society then went before the board, asked for such official action, and offered its collection of historical resources to the Frontier Days Association, the Kern County Livestock Show, Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, chambers of commerce, newspapers, public schools and libraries and other such institutions and organizations. The society added that a publicly-supported museum would “furnish a much-needed background [*history*] for the rapidly growing and diverse population of Kern county.”⁸⁰ Included in its petition was the request for a full-time, paid museum curator.

Supervisors approved every request and instructed county counsel to prepare an ordinance calling for the creation of an official Kern County museum;⁸¹ however, the paperwork was unfinished by December 7, 1941, and WWII put the whole business on hold. The basement was closed for nearly three years.⁸²

⁷⁸ Bakersfield Californian, Dec 29, 1951

⁷⁹ In 1929 the chamber building had ample space for the historical collection. (Bakersfield Californian, Jan 16, 1929)

⁸⁰ Bakersfield Californian, Feb 26, 1941

⁸¹ Bakersfield Californian, Mar 3, 1941. Frank F. Latta, former president of the society, stated that museum space in the Chamber of Commerce Building would be adequate for the next two or three years.

⁸² Bakersfield Californian, May 12, 1941; Jun 3, 1967

In mid-1944 county counsel Norbert Baumgarten prepared an agreement authorizing the society to use the basement of the Chamber of Commerce as an official Kern County museum,⁸³ and months later supervisors appointed a 15-seat museum board that drew its membership from six Kern County communities. The Californian wrote, "The new directors are responsible for establishing and maintaining a museum for the artifacts and relics of early Kern county and historical papers and documents."⁸⁴

In 1947 the Chamber of Commerce Building housed the Kern County Recreation and Cultural Commission, the Farm Bureau, the Fifteenth District Agricultural Association, and the new Kern County Museum, which still occupied the basement.⁸⁵ Two years later a Navy and Marine Corp recruiting office moved in upstairs.⁸⁶

During this period the historical society contributed about 100 photographs of early Bakersfield people and their buildings to the county museum.⁸⁷

Those few shoe boxes did not take up much space, but the museum was getting crowded. In 1949 the Bakersfield Californian advised, "The county museum should have more space and adequate headquarters in which to display properly and attractively the many historical treasures in its possession. The museum performs a valuable and important educational service."⁸⁸

⁸³ Bakersfield Californian, May 29, 1944

⁸⁴ Bakersfield Californian, Sep 15, 1944. Clarence Cullimore, Sr., was named chairman. Precisely when the society donated its entire collection to the county was not found.

⁸⁵ Bakersfield Californian, Mar 29, 1947

⁸⁶ Bakersfield Californian, Sep 12, 1949

⁸⁷ Kern County Employees [newsletter], Nov 1948

⁸⁸ Bakersfield Californian, Aug 22, 1949. In the Mar 25, 1950 Bakersfield Californian, F.F. Latta was identified as curator of the museum.

In 1952 Kern County supervisors dissolved the Kern County Chamber of Commerce and reinstated it in the county courthouse as the Kern County Board of Trade.⁸⁹ With the chamber absent from its old building, the museum's curator visualized displays of historical exhibits across the entire 5,500-foot main floor and balconies. Credit for allowing the museum to utilize the whole building goes to county supervisor John Holt who moved that it be turned over to the county museum for its exclusive use. Supervisors agreed.⁹⁰

The county budget for 1952-1953 called for improvements to the museum's basement. The floor was lowered 12 inches, a gas heating system replaced the low-hanging steam pipes, and a narrow, inside stairwell was installed between the main floor and the basement.⁹¹

Soon after that the first of two powerful earthquakes struck Kern County. Estimated damage to county buildings was \$5,000,000, and the cost to repair the museum was estimated at \$40,000.⁹² The building remained open to the public during repairs, and in time the old building which curator and director F. F. Latta called the most unique of its kind west of the Mississippi was eventually made whole.⁹³

Today's 2015 Kern County Museum sports an attractive new paint job. The building's architect, Charles H. Biggar, would be delighted to know that after 87 years it continues in public service. Alfred Harrell's words from 1934 remain appropriate today: "Kern county has a rich treasure house of

⁸⁹ Bakersfield Californian, Jul 15, 1952

⁹⁰ Bakersfield Californian, Jul 16, 1952

⁹¹ Bakersfield Californian, Jul 15, 1952

⁹² Bakersfield Californian, Aug 27, 1952. The cost of repair is equivalent to about \$350,000 today.

⁹³ Bakersfield Californian, Dec 31, 1952

history. On such a background its citizens have a right to be proud of its place in the state. The influence of the past is part of the cultural training of each new generation and makes for higher standards of citizenship."⁹⁴

APPENDIX

Peter Lebeck: An Answer from Academia

California historian Walt Wheelock discounted the popular opinion that Lebeck was connected to the Hudson Bay Company. Instead, he postulated that Lebeck was a member of a band of French Canadian and Native American opportunistic bandits known as the Chalifoux Gang. "Wheelock's thesis appears in a 1982 volume titled *The Westerners Brand Book, 16*, published by The Westerners Los Angeles Corral and edited by Raymond F. Wood. His chapter is titled *New Light on Peter Lebeck*." ("Peter Lebeck and the Foxtail Rangers" by Richard E. Brown, *Historic Kern, Quarterly Bulletin of the Kern County Historical Society, Bakersfield, California*, v. 36, no. 3, Sep 1987). Richard E. Brown also wrote that Wheelock mentioned Colorado Springs writer Janet Lecompte whose research indicated that the Chalifoux Gang was present in Grapevine Canyon in October 1837. ("Jean-Baptiste Chalifoux", *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West, Vol 7*, Arthur H. Clark Co., Glendale, California 1968).

Peter Lebeck: An Answer from McKenzie Ranch

In 1956 the Kern County Historical Society hosted a field trip that included a visit to the McKenzie Ranch on Cummings Mountain where historian Richard C. Bailey spoke with Mrs. Henry [Virginia McKenzie] Dantiacq whose brother was David E. McKenzie, Jr. Bailey wrote, "And speaking of Lebeck, Mrs. Dantiacq confirmed the story told me not long ago by Guy Hughes, 'Yes,' she told us, 'my grandfather was out hunting in the same vicinity where Peter Lebeck was killed by a grizzly bear in 1837. He and another man found him dead and they carried him back to where Fort Tejon was later built and buried him under an oak tree!' It was her impression that Lebeck was living there at the time and was not a 'tourist' as so many accounts state." ("Retracing the Tejon Immigrant Trail," Richard C. Bailey, *Historic Kern*, Sep 1956).

The US Census allows some evaluation of the story. Virginia's father was David Ernest McKinzie (1873-1957). In 1904 he married Mabel who was born in 1873 in Michigan. David's father (who was Virginia's grandfather) was David McKinzie (1830- c.1875) born in Alabama. He was a Mexican War

⁹⁴ Bakersfield Californian , Jan 8, 1934

veteran who served with Highsmith's 1st Mounted Texas Volunteers. The 1860 US Census taken July 25, 1860 found David McKinzie in Tejon Township, Los Angeles County, Post Office Fort Tejon. The 1870 US Census, Kern County Township No. 4, Post Office Tehachapi, listed a "David McKenzy," 40, from Texas and married to a Susan, 35, also from Texas. In the family was a two year-old son named David. The census of 1880 lists a Dave McKenzie, 33, born in Alabama and married to a Laressa, 45. In the family was a seven year-old male named David. Laressa applied for Mexican War widow benefits in 1900.

This information suggests that in 1837, the year Peter Lebeck died, Virginia's Grandfather David McKinzie was seven years old and living in Alabama. However, as a man of 30 working around old Fort Tejon, he no doubt saw the Lebeck tree.

Peter Lebeck: An Answer from The Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus

The following pamphlet, published about 1966, is a tongue-in-cheek account of the life of Peter Lebeck: ⁹⁵

The Genuine True Authentic History of Peter LeBeck by Dick (Barnum) Bailey, Illustrations by Walter Stewart. Publication Number II, Published by The Buena Vista Pioneer Society for E Clampus Vitus, Peter Lebeck Chapter, 1866

Richard Bailey, aka "Dick (Barnum) Bailey," was the 1948-1949 president of the Kern County Historical Society. Chris Brewer, g-g-grandson of Col. Thomas Baker, published the pamphlet. Regarding "The Buena Vista Pioneer Society," prior to the official organization of Kern County in 1866, Col. Baker proposed that the new county be named Buena Vista County.

Presidents of the Kern County Historical Society

1931-1932 Alfred Harrell

1932-1934 William Van Ewert

1934-1935 Herman A. Spindt

1935-1936 Jesse Stockton

⁹⁵ The group's motto, Credo Quia Absurdum, is generally understood as meaning "I believe it because it is absurd." (Wikipedia)

1936-1938 Roy W. Loudon
1938-1940 Frank F. Latta
1940-1943 Ardis Walker
1943-1945 Clarence Cullimore
1945-1947 Peter N. Root
1947-1948 Orville Armstrong
1948-1949 Richard Bailey
1949-1950 Glendon J. Rogers
1950-1951 W. Harland Boyd
1951-1952 Genevieve K. Magruder
1952-1953 J. Lee Mountain
1953-1954 Richard C. Bailey
1954-1956 Lester McDonald
1956-1958 Henry Raub
1958-1960 Ralph Kreiser
1960-1961 Georgia S. Sanders
1961-1962 Richard Hosking
1962-1963 Fred A. Miller
1963-1965 John B. Dowty
1965-1966 William G. Rea
1966-1967 Eva F. Granados
1967-1969 Eugene Burmeister
1969-1970 Louis Wakefield
1970-1971 Ted Freeland
1971-1972 Norman Berg
1972-1973 George Gray
1973-1975 Genevieve K. Magruder
1975-1977 Vicki Araujo
1977-1979 Trent C. Devenney
1979-1980 Mary Ming
1980-1981 Dorothy Bailey
1981-1982 Marje Rump

1982-1984 Curtis Darling
1984-1986 Richard Crowe
1986-1987 Betty Cook
1987-1989 John Ludeke
1989-1991 Mildred Wiebe
1991-1993 William Hample
1993-1995 Ernest Conant
1995-1997 Joseph Anderson, Jr.
1997-1998 Jerry Glover
1998-1999 Jerry Ludeke
1999-2000 Jerry Glover
2000-2001 Don Arnot
2001-2003 Jeff Nickell
2003-2005 Hazel Rees
2005-2006 Randall Beeman
2006-2008 Lori Wear
2008-2010 Gilbert P. Gia
2010-2012 Ken Hooper
2012-2014 Richard Jarrett
2014- 2016 Mike Warner

Chronology of Kern County Historical Society Publications
Compiled by Gilbert P. Gia, October 2015

Introduction

The society sells the publications starred below. Most were published solely by the society; Exceptions are noted. The explanatory text shown in quotation marks was taken from the works themselves or from online sources.

At question is the relationship between the society's monographs and publications. Two monographs are shown here, and their numbering suggests there were many others not included in this list. Most of the society's publications were not assigned numbers. Was the chronological sequence of publications taken into consideration when these two monographs were assigned numbers? The front-matter of *Kern County Courier, 1856-1876: A Newspaper in a Period of Economic and Political Transition* designates it as the "Thirtieth Annual Publication." Curiously, that title is thirteenth in this list of publications. Was a typographical error made in writing thirtieth for thirteenth? If so, then this list is probably complete.

Historic Kern is the society's quarterly publication, which has been in continuous issue since September 1949. A nearly-complete collection is held by the McGuire Local History Room, Beale Library. Some issues of *Historic Kern* also appear on the society's website, www.kchistoricalociety.org. The *Grapevine* is the society's monthly newsletter of upcoming events.

The Publications

1935 – Kern County Historical Society First Annual Publication: *In the South San Joaquin Ahead of Garces*. Herbert Eugene Bolton. [The Bakersfield Californian of March 26, 1935 wrote that this publication was a monograph.]

1936 – Kern County Historical Society, [Second Annual Publication] *El Camino Viejo á Los Angeles: an Address Delivered before the Kern County Historical Society February 20, 1933*. Frank F. Latta

1937 – Kern County Historical Society, Third Annual Publication. Alfred Harrell; Thomas A. Baker; Stonewall A. Woody

1938 – Kern County Historical Society, Fourth Annual Publication. Ardis Manly Walker

1939 – Kern County Historical Society, Fifth Annual Publication. Herman Adolph Spindt and Frank F. Latta

1941 – *Old Adobes of Forgotten Fort Tejon*. Clarence Cullimore, Sr...
"Published by the Kern County Historical Society and the County of Kern through its Chamber of Commerce"

1944 -- Kern County Historical Society, Publication Number Seven, *Story of Colonel Thomas Baker and the Founding of Bakersfield*. Naomi E. Bain.
"Published through the Cooperation of Kern County Historical Society, Kern County Chamber of Commerce. Printed by the Bakersfield Californian." N.E. Bain delivered her unpublished M.A. thesis *Story of Colonel Thomas Baker*

and the Founding of Bakersfield (U. of Southern California, 1941) before the Kern County Historical Society on January 26, 1942.

1947 -- Francisco Garces Pioneering Padre. Ardis Walker. "Kern County Museum & the Kern County Historical Society"

1950 -- Arvin. Betty Borden. [The October 23, 1950 Bakersfield Californian wrote that this work was a monograph]

1950 -- Upper San Joaquin Valley 1772-1870. G.K. Magruder

1951 -- Collectors Choice: The McLeod Basket Collection. Richard Bailey

1952 -- Land of Havilah, 1854-1874: the Story of Keyesville, Kernville, and Havilah, in the Kern River County, California. William Harland Boyd

1953 -- Edward M. Kern: The Travels of an Artist-Explorer. William Joseph Heffernan

1955 -- San Joaquin Vignettes: The Reminiscences of Captain John Barker. William Harland Boyd and Glendon J. Rodgers (editors)

1956 -- Kern's Desert. Erma Pierson

1957 -- Spanish Trailblazers in the South San Joaquin, 1772-1816. Jesse Stockton; Glendon J. Rodgers; William Harland Boyd

1957 -- Heritage of Kern. Richard Bailey

1958 -- The McKittrick Ranch. Calhoun Collins

1959 -- Explorations in Kern. Richard Bailey

1959 -- A Journey into the Past, Official Museum Guide Book. John B. Dowty and Richard C. Bailey

1960 -- General Beale's Sheep Odessey [*sic*]: An Account from Original Sources of a Nomadic Sheep Drive in 1879 from Kern County, California, Over Uncharted Desert Trails and Across Turbulent Mountain Streams to Green River, Wyoming. Earle Crowe

1960 -- Historic chronology of Kern County. Richard C. Bailey. (Kern County Historical Society and the Kern County Museum)

1961 – Kern County Panorama, a Pictorial Sketch of Kern County from 1866 to 1900. Ralph F. Kreiser; Thomas Hunt (Kern County Historical Society and the Kern County Museum)

1965 -- History of Kern County, California. With Illustrations, Descriptive of Its Scenery, Farms, Residences, Public Buildings, Factories, Hotels, Business Houses, Schools, Churches, and Mines, from Original Drawings, with Biographical Sketches, Wallace W. Elliot & Co., San Francisco, 1883. (A reprint)

1965 -- History of Research at Sharktooth Hill, Kern County, California. Edward D. Mitchell

1966 -- A Centennial Bibliography on The History of Kern County, California; Selected and Annotated Books and Pamphlets and Including a Synoptic History of Kern County. William Harland Boyd and Ralph F. Keiser. (Kern County Historical Society and Kern County Museum)

1967 -- A History of Kern County Library. Louise Blanford. ("A special publication of the Kern County Historical Society, in co-operation with the Kern County Library and the Kern County Museum")

1967 -- Kern County Place Names. Richard C. Bailey

1968 – Kern County Courier, 1856-1876: A Newspaper in a Period of Economic and Political Transition. Barbara Boyd Voltmer; "Thirtieth Annual Publication of the Kern County Historical Society and the County of Kern through Its Museum. Copyright 1968 by the Kern County Historical Society 3801 Chester Avenue, Bakersfield, California 93301"; Voltmer p. vi.: "Valuable assistance was also extended to me by the members of my committee for a Master's Degree in Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley."

1969 -- History of the Office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools. Edmund Ross Harrington. (Kern County Historical Society and the County of Kern through Its Museum) This publication is a small part of Harrington's doctoral dissertation "A History of the Organization and Administration of Kern County Schools" (U. of Southern California, 1963). A copy of that thesis is held by the office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools.

1971 -- History of the Kern County Land Company. Norman Berg

- 1976 -- An illustrated History of Kern County. John M. Brock**
- 1977 -- * Kern County Wayfarers, 1844-1881. William Harland Boyd (Kern County Historical Society and the Kern County Museum)**
- 1978 -- Lest We Forget: the History of the French in Kern County. Mary Grace Paquette**
- 1978 -- * Land Policies in Kern County. Paul Wallace Gates. "p. 3: I have drawn heavily on my History of Public Land Law Development." History of Public Land Law Development was printed in 1968 by the U.S. Government Printing Office and is considered Gates's magnum opus.**
- 1980 -- Kern County Tall Tales: Selected Folk History. William Harland Boyd, (editor)**
- 1982 -- Inside Historic Kern: Selections from the Kern County Historical Society's Quarterly, 1949-1981, William Harland Boyd, John Ludeke, and Marjorie Rump (editors)**
- 1982 -- * Basques to Bakersfield. Mary Grace Paquette**
- 1983 -- * Stagecoach Heyday in the San Joaquin Valley 1853-1876. William Harland Boyd**
- 1984 -- Lawrence Weill's Bakersfield. Lawrence Weill**
- 1991 -- * Historical Site Markers - Kern County. William G. Hample; Robert Crabtree**
- 1997 -- * Lower Kern River Country, 1850-1950: Wilderness to Empire. William Harland Boyd**
- 2000 -- * Kern County's Desert Country. William Harland Boyd**
- 2002 -- * The Chinese of Kern County, 1857-1960. William Harland Boyd**
- 2003 -- * Kern County Place Names, Second Edition. Curtis Darling**
- 2007 -- Historic Union Cemetery: 1872-1907. John D. Codd and Shirley Jackson**
- 2008 -- * Curtis Darling's Postcard Collection. Don Arnot and Jeff Nickell**

Titles Sold But Not Published by the Society

1985 -- * Kern County Pioneer Recollections. Nicholas Patrick Scanlon, editor, (Kern County Library)

1999 -- * Life on the Elk Hills Oil Field. Cindy L. Baker, (California Department of Energy)

2011 -- * Life of Richard Hudnut: The Findings of an Historical Search. "Second Printing, Including the Supplement" Herbert B. Hudnut, Jr., M.D. (Glens Falls Publishing, Glens Falls, NY, 2004).

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