



# Rancho Bernardo Historical Society Newsletter



Volume XV, Issue 2

## Our New Grand Entrance

By Rich Thorpe

For the past two years, we've been renovating the museum entrance, and it's finally complete. Thanks to San Diego County Supervisor Kristin Gaspar, we received a grant last year for new doors to accommodate our mud wagon stage coach. This year, our grant allowed us to replace the damaged donor bricks beneath the doors, then reconstruct the original 75-ft pergola across the length of the building.

The Bernardo Winery's matriarch, Veronica Hall-Rizzo, is ecstatic with the result, saying "The building finally has its eyebrows again!" The original pergola was demolished in the early 1990s as the commercial tenant at that time preferred the "extra light." The front remained bare for the next two-plus decades, much to Veronica's yearning to walk beneath the old grape vines.

Of course, extra light is the enemy of a museum. It deteriorates photographs, paper displays, and artwork.

Our new doors have UV-blocking film on the glass, and the pergola will help even more. We also finished the interior wall around the doors once the electrical work was done for the new exterior lights on the pergola. And we finally installed a system to drain the pond that forms at the entrance whenever it rains.

Veronica's son, Ross Rizzo, Jr., Bernardo Winery president and winemaker, led the design and reconstruction project. He said "I wanted it to be consistent with the winery's historic look and match the pergola in front of our restaurant. So we used old telephone poles and rough sawn timbers - nothing fancy, just functional." (Or as Ross usually says, winery good!) As soon as it was up, his work crew added pieces of rusty "winery art," everything from old barbed wire to antique ice tongs. After all, the entire place is as much a museum as the oldest continuously operating winery in Southern California.

(See Grand Entrance-Page 7)



Veronica Hall-Rizzo and son Ross Jr.



Arturo Beltran, the winery's electrical engineer, installs new lighting on the pergola.



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#### RANCHO BERNARDO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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non-profit organization

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#### RB HISTORY MUSEUM

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## President's Message - Who We Are

By Rich Thorpe

The title of this message was chosen well before the COVID 19 pandemic erupted. I wanted to address who we are as an organization, where we came from, and where we're going. Since then, the Bernardo Winery has shut down, and hence the museum, along with the lifeblood of our society and economy. We are literally sheltering-in-place, a term typically related to weather or human-produced disasters.

How we survive this crisis depends on who we are as a nation and as a community. Without diminishing the present situation, Rancho Bernardo has proven its ability to overcome disasters. While living on the East Coast, my wife and I watched in horror as the 2007 Witch Creek Fire inundated national TV. Our close friends in Scripps Ranch, who survived the 2003 Cedar Fire, updated us on the thousands evacuated and hundreds of homes destroyed. We decided Rancho Bernardo was a community of courage, one in which we might like to live someday.

So, what is the RB Historical Society? We are a non-profit organization, dedicated to preserving local history and increasing public awareness through programs and outreach. RB was one of the first modern planned communities in the U.S., and our founders wanted to record its unique development and history.

The Bernardo Winery, oldest operating winery in the county (founded in 1889), provided our first venue in 2005, a humble 8x15 foot storage shed. Were it not for its late owner Ross Rizzo, his son Ross Jr., and their staff, our fledgling museum would have gone up in flames in the Witch Creek Fire. According to Poway firefighters, the Rizzos not only saved the winery, but the entire neighborhood.

We are a transparent organization, in both operations and finances. Our two major fundraising events for 2020 have been cancelled, amounting to a revenue shortfall of about \$15,000. While we have a highly favorable, long-term lease at the winery, our expenses are over \$30,000 a year. I hesitate to ask you for financial help during this period of hardship and uncertainty. The past generosity of some major donors will see us through the year.

However, when this crisis passes, you can contribute through an annual membership, a lifetime membership, or a donor brick at our renovated museum entrance. I also invite you to participate in our monthly board of directors meeting, held the second Monday of each month at the museum. You also can volunteer as a docent, work in our archives, and attend our free monthly lectures and annual community events. Meanwhile, please enjoy our website, browse the thousands of photos, posters, flyers, articles, and other memorabilia that tell you who we are.



*Ribbon cutting for the opening of our first museum at the Bernardo Winery.*

# A Look Back at the Pancake Festival

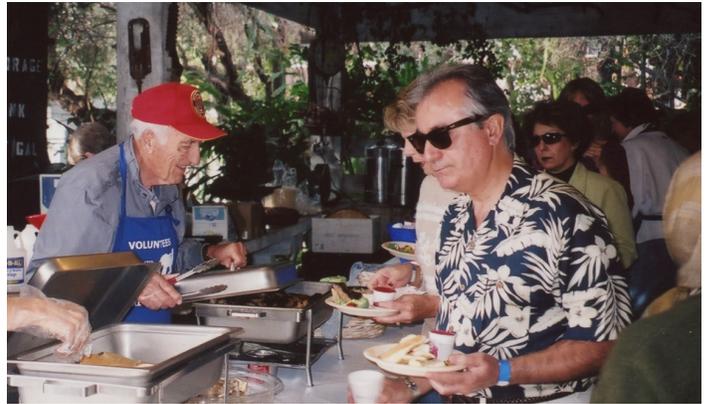
By Nancy Canfield

In 2005, the RB Historical Society began to raise funds to build a museum at the Bernardo Winery on land offered by the winery owner, Ross Rizzo, Sr. A pancake breakfast to be held at the winery was planned as an outreach to the community in addition to being a fundraiser. Pancakes and sausage links, expertly prepared by the Kiwanis, plus yogurt, fruit, coffee and juice were served. We were entertained by Dixieland music, offered places to sit under the trees, and a chance to meet neighbors. It seemed like a good idea to do it on Veteran's Day. All active military and veterans would dine for free.

After the first year, the festival date was changed to Memorial Day. From the beginning, the food was donated and the low-cost breakfast was sold to cover other expenses such as the band, advertising, and furniture rental. A raffle was added, and prizes donated to help raise funds. Each year, a military person of distinction was honored. A nest egg began to grow not only for the building fund but also to support the historical society and its collections and exhibits. Tile painting was added for kids and adults. We also set this up as a time to scan photographs of RB veterans for our new Wall of Honor.

In 2008, Ross Rizzo Sr. passed away. The land to be built on was no longer available. An already-standing building was renovated, and the museum took shape. The idea developed that it would be nice to have the Pancake Festival at Webb Park, on Memorial Day, alongside the Veteran's Memorial. As the Pancake Festival grew, the VFW's Memorial Day event blossomed as well.

While the Pancake Festival is cancelled for this Memorial Day because of virus concerns, we hope to reschedule. But if that doesn't work out, we'll see you on Memorial Day 2021!



2011



2016



2018



2019

# A View Inside the Rancho Bernardo History

## Featured Exhibit

This rotating display focuses on a particular moment in Rancho Bernardo's history.

## History of the Bernardo Winery

This exhibit looks at the Bernardo Winery, the oldest continuously operating winery in Southern California and, since 2005, the home of the Rancho Bernardo Historical Society.

## Timeline of Historical Events

Our timeline highlights significant milestones in 4,000 years of local history.

## Mexican American War Exhibit

This display focuses on the Battle of San Pasqual, which took place within the area and was a pivotal engagement in the war that transformed Mexico and the United States.



# Museum at the Historic Bernardo Winery

## Mudwagon Replica

The flagship of the museum, our full-sized replica of a mudwagon-type stagecoach allows visitors to climb aboard and experience the feel of late 1800s stage travel.

## Wall of Honor

Begun in 2006, our Wall of Honor salutes community members who have served their country.

## Research Library

Our library offers an extensive collection of books about Rancho Bernardo and Southern California history.

## Window on the Community

This display spotlights RB's community organizations with items showcasing their history, goals and projects.



# San Diego's New County Archives Facility

By Peggy Rossi

You may have to wait a while to see it or use it but San Diego County opened its first-ever archives with an official ribbon cutting on March 12. The county also hired its first-ever archivist. From the County of San Diego Communications Office website:

“Historic documents dating back 170 years now have a dedicated space of their own. Some 4,400 cubic feet of archival records and microfilm moved from offsite storage to a repository with its own generator, heating and air conditioning system, state of the art fire suppression system and secure access. Documents include maps, deeds, historic birth, marriage and death certificates, and other official records dating back to 1850,” said Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk Ernest J. Dronenburg, Jr. “The archives will offer county residents and other users the opportunity to conduct research and view publicly available documents, either electronically or by appointment, based on their physical condition.”

Vince and I were lucky to wrangle an invitation to a soft opening in early February which featured a behind the scenes tour for various members of the history community. We can vouch that it is a beautiful facility. Unfortunately it closed almost as soon as it opened due to the Covid-19 virus shut-downs but when it re-opens, it will be a wonderful spot for local history research. It is located at 10144 Mission Gorge Road, Santee. It is free to use, and there is plenty of parking.

In the meantime, you can take a look at some digitized historic documents at the city of San Diego's digital archives at <https://www.sandiego.gov/digitalarchives>, or the photographs and journal articles available for free at the San Diego History Center website at <https://sandieghistory.org/>. And last but not least, visit our website for your own local history at <https://rbhistory.org/>.



*The entrance to the new San Diego County Archives in Santee.*



*INSET: A dedicated room for fragile maps and oversized items with special aerated drawers.*

# Help the RB Historical Society when you shop AmazonSmile

By George Leitner

AmazonSmile is a simple way for you to support Rancho Bernardo Historical Society every time you shop at Amazon at no extra cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, Amazon will donate 0.5% of your purchase price.

To shop at AmazonSmile simply log on to smile.amazon.com (not amazon.com) from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. Your username, password, shopping cart, Prime membership and other account settings are all the same. On your first visit to smile.amazon.com select Rancho Bernardo Historical Society as your charitable organization. Then every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.com will result in a donation. We receive quarterly deposits of all Smile donations directly to our bank account.

Thanks for being a part of our various ongoing efforts to preserve and share Rancho Bernardo history.

## Grand Entrance *(Continued from page 1)*

If there is any silver lining to this pandemic cloud, it might be that the winery has kept some of its staff employed to finish projects like the pergola and other renovations that otherwise would have waited months during normal business. We are deeply grateful for the new “grand entrance” to our museum, and hope you will visit us and the winery when it is safe to do so.



Manuel Guzman, Winery Foreman finishing the interior wall around the entrance.



Maxwell Pewitt, Veronica's grandson, installs the essential antique winery art.

## Thanks for Helping

Fill out the form below and mail to the P.O.Box noted below. Or you can apply online at

[www.rbhistorical.org/support](http://www.rbhistorical.org/support)

### I Would Like to Become a Member:

- Student (\$10)
- Individual (\$25)
- Family (\$45)
- Patron (\$100)
- Corporate (\$250)
- Life\* (\$500)
- Benefactor\* (\$1000)

\* One time donation. No annual renewal required.

- Please renew my current membership

### I Would Like to Donate to the Society:

- Donation Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Please keep my donation anonymous
- My place of business has a matching gift program  
Please contact me for details

### I Would Also Like to:

- Become a Docent
- Volunteer in the museum
- Help raise money
- Volunteer at events

### Please Provide Your Information:

(List both names for Family Memberships)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address : \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

My check is enclosed for: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to, and mail check along with this form to:

**RANCHO BERNARDO HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
P.O. Box 27314 San Diego, CA 92198-7314

- Please bill my credit card:
  - Visa
  - Master Card
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  - AMEX

Card No: \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_

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Rancho Bernardo Historical Society  
P.O. Box 27314  
San Diego, CA 92198-7314

## Become a Docent and Help Us Share the History of Our Area.

One we reopen we'd love to have your help. We thank you for your membership and support. Without it, we could not do our work of sharing RB history. If you care about history and enjoy meeting people, consider taking your support to the next level.

We need docents – those people who greet visitors and answer questions in the museum. You will have the opportunity to welcome visitors, not only from Rancho Bernardo, but from all over the world. Donating a few hours a month can make a difference, allowing us to be open more often.

No prior experience is necessary; only your enthusiasm to share the RB legacy. Training will be provided. Please contact Jane Harmon via [rbhistory1@gmail.com](mailto:rbhistory1@gmail.com) if you have questions or would like to volunteer.

## THANKS 2019 PANCAKE FESTIVAL SPONSORS

### Silver

- The Remington Club
- Windermere Homes & Estates

### Bronze

- Benchmark Mortgage
- Casa de las Campanas
- George Cooke
- North County Gymnastics
- Silvergate RB

### Special Thanks

- Albertsons
- Barons Market

- Bernardo Moving & Storage
- Boy Scout Troop 685
- Courtyard Marriot
- Del Norte Honor Society
- Del Norte Key Club
- Elements Cafe
- Escondido History Center
- Girl Scout Troop 8157
- Hamburger Factory
- Jewel & Vine
- Kiwanis Club RB
- Mt. Carmel Key Club
- Nancy Canfield
- The Original Pancake House
- Rancho Bernardo Inn
- Shea Realty
- Youth Philharmonic Orchestra

## Additions to Our Collections

We constantly update our collections with donated items. To see a listing of our latest additions visit our website [www.rbhistory.org/museum](http://www.rbhistory.org/museum) or contact Peggy Rossi via [rbhistory1@gmail.com](mailto:rbhistory1@gmail.com)