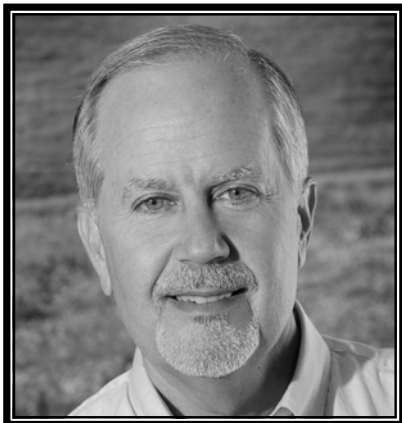


Tejon Ranch founders have any local ties

Tejon Ranch dates back to 1843, 23 years before Kern County was formed. While many in the community understand the historic connection between Kern County and Tejon Ranch, fewer people are aware of Tejon's ties to the city of Bakersfield. This "awareness gap" was readily apparent at last week's ceremony kicking off the Kern County Museum's **Clock Tower** Holidays celebration.



This year's holiday celebration at the Museum has special significance for Tejon Ranch. The theme, "**Clock Tower** Holidays," recognizes the 100th anniversary of the building of the Beale **Clock Tower**, one of Bakersfield's most visible historic landmarks. The **clock tower** stood at the intersection of Chester Avenue and 17th Street in downtown Bakersfield from 1904 until it was damaged in the 1952 earthquake.

The **clock tower** was torn down and in 1964 it was rebuilt where it currently stands, on the front lawn of the Kern County Museum on North Chester.

Why does the Beale **Clock Tower** have special significance to Tejon Ranch? That's a question you might be asking, as did many at the recent kick-off of the holiday celebration.

The answer is very simple. The Beale **Clock Tower** was a gift from Tejon Ranch to the city of Bakersfield. It was presented to the city by Truxtun Beale, the son of Ranch founder, Gen. Edward Fitzgerald Beale. By 1904, Truxtun had become the second-generation owner of Tejon Ranch, and built the **clock tower** in honor of his mother, Mary Elizabeth Beale.

I'm not surprised that many people did not know of Tejon Ranch's connection to the Beale **Clock Tower**. A little confession is in order. Until I went to work for Tejon Ranch and learned more about the history of the Ranch, I didn't know of all of our ties to Bakersfield.

In addition to the **clock tower**, the Beale family sponsored Bakersfield's first public library, and now, appropriately, the Beale Memorial Library sits on Truxtun Avenue. Beale Avenue and Beale Park also mark Tejon Ranch's ties to Bakersfield. Those ties have grown even stronger in recent years, with the Tejon Ranch Plaza at CSUB's School of Business and Public Administration, the statue of wild horses in front of Centennial Garden, and the Tejon Ranch Sculpture Garden at the Bakersfield Museum of Art.

Why is there an "awareness gap" when it comes to local history? It's probably because most of us, myself included, haven't made a real effort to learn about our history. The information is available. The staff and volunteers at the Kern County Museum do a great job.

Vivian Tucker's "Spirit of History" reports on local television are delightful. But how many of us have availed ourselves of the opportunities to learn more about the city and county we call home?

Whether you are a newcomer to Bakersfield or have been here for decades, it's not too late to get started. And it's easy.

This holiday season, make it a point to attend the "**Clock Tower** Holidays" at the Kern County Museum. You'll undoubtedly find it entertaining, enjoyable and educational.

Barry Zoeller is vice president of corporate communications of the Tejon Ranch Co. Community Voices is an expanded commentary that may contain up to 500 words. The Californian reserves the right to reprint commentaries in all formats, including on its Web page.

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