

BARBARA SCOTT'S
MEMORIES AND HISTORY
BONITA MUSEUM THRU 2018

BARBARA SCOTT'S BONITA MUSEUM MEMORIES

AS OF NOVEMBER 30, 2018.

The following is my knowledge of the history of the Bonita Museum with a little help from Richard and Zola Pena and Carol Hammond.

Richard and Zola, Carol Hammond had the idea to of creating a Museum in Bonita in the '80s. According to Carol Hammond, the Museum was established as a 1987 Bonitafest function. It was housed in the shopping center at 4108 Bonita Road. Photographs of the South Bay, memorabilia from past Bonitafests, the Bonita-Sunnyside Fire Department and the dairy industry were displayed. A reception was held for the Bonitafest dignitaries, the families of the long gone dairy industry and the community.

After a very successful Bonitafest weekend, the museum continued to flourish under the sponsorship of the Bonita Business and Professional Association (BBPA) and the County's Community Enhancement Fund.

In January, 1992, a fire destroyed the museum and much of the shopping center. Most of the historical collection was saved through the efforts of many volunteers, and then was stored in their garages. A "trunk museum" was established. Photographs were carried to the local schools in trunks of cars and the teaching of our history continued.

In July, 1992, the Bonita Historical Society was incorporated. Regular Board of Trustee meetings were held as stated in the organization's By-laws.

Through the generosity of the members of the Bonita Sunnyside Fire Protection District Board of Directors the old firehouse at 4035 Bonita Road was made available for use by the Bonita Historical Society. The museum's first reception at the new location was an "As It Is" Party in December, 1992. A "Grand Opening" was held in January, 1993. The Bonita Museum and Historical Society was housed in that building until 2005 when its own building was built within the new Bonita-Sunnyside Library complex next to the new Safety Center at 4355 Bonita Road where it remains today.

Until recent years there were only 5 members of the Board with Vicki DeLong, Director, and Mary Oswell, Volunteer, managing the Museum.

In, I believe 2003, Supervisor Greg Cox called Scott and Barbara Scott with the idea he had of building a freestanding building for the Museum close to the Chula Vista Golf Club. He asked them to help raise \$250,000 in matching funds throughout the community. Scotts' raised (with the leadership of Supervisor Cox) three times that amount which included many in-kind donations. The new Museum finally opened in 2005. The Museum is leased by the County of San Diego but it is on City of Chula Vista land.

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As we were beginning the campaign to raise the money, Dale and Audi Lawson called the Museum to make a 'small' donation. We (Scott, Barbara Scott; Carol Hammond, Richard Pena) met them at the Museum, (Old Fire Station) Scott and Barbara Scott, Carol Hammond and Richard Pena) to discuss the "small" donation. Lawsons had no idea a new Museum would be built. The more Scott told them the plans, the more interested Lawsons became to donate, not only a "small" donation but also their entire estate. Scott and Barbara continued to be in contact with Lawsons making sure the legality of the estate was set in place. They were successful with selecting an accountant, attorney, then convincing them to have it managed through San Diego Foundation. In addition to the money, they donated all of Audi Lawson's Art (a lot juried), household items (dishes, silverware, etc.). Soon after all paperwork was signed, Dale Lawson passed away. Scott and Barbara became Trustees of not only their estate but Audi, personally. They were very trusting people especially because they did not know the Scotts at all when they named the Scotts Trustees. Scotts took very good care of Audi. She passed away 3 - 4 years ago. Twice a year the Museum receives the income from the Dale and Audi Lawson Trust. Also, within the Agreement with San Diego Foundation, it is stated her work will be on exhibit each year. Her first show was curated by Mary Oswell with not only her art work but also their personal history.

Audi Lawson was an accomplished juried artist and graceful ballroom dancer. Dale received many accolades working for Rohr many years. Dale's wish was to have the Museum named after Audi so as soon as the signs were placed he passed away.

Audi and Carol Freno had a couple of showings at the old Museum.

Corky McMillin Companies donated a substantial amount, a portion of it was for Mary Oswell to curate the McMillin show, which opened the new museum.

Barbara became a Board member while museum was still in old Fire House as Secretary. Barbara has kept active all these years (especially to oversee the money). So many of Scotts' friends and business associates donated, Barbara wanted to make sure the money was managed properly.

In kind donations included Keith and Lucille Atherton's granddaughter, Anna Stump, creating something in honor of her grandfather (He had been a board member of the Bonita Sunnyside Fire Protection District before his passing). She created the display in the patio, which has antique fire equipment.

The "bench" also on the patio was donated by Glen Abbey Mortuary. There is a time capsule in it. The opening date is 2030.

The reason for the curb cut in front of patio is because originally the '50s fire truck was to be stored at the Museum. It became too awkward, as the firefighters needed to keep it shined up everyday, so that never happened.

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The bricks, tiles and signage at the museum were part of the money raising campaign. Some of the display cabinets and many other items in museum were also donated. Audi's art storage cases are being used in the back storage area. I believe her art is now being stored in a mini-warehouse we have in Eastlake.

Supervisor Greg Cox at the end of campaign "found" extra money to purchase office furniture, computers, etc.

The original lease with the County was for 10 years with two 5-year options. As our rent continued to increase and we were struggling with internet service, we needed to get some help from the County. Barbara Scott kept in close contact with Supervisor Greg Cox (Board of Supervisors). The Board of Supervisors was able to connect the Museum with the County Library System. We now have a 30-year lease, which coincides with the City of Chula Vista land lease with the County, which includes the Library and the Safety Center. Thru this effort, we now have good internet (WiFi) service within the Museum. Even though we are connected to the County Library System internet, we have our own secure site. Our rent now includes rent, internet (WiFi) utilities. Each November we have a Cost of Living increase.

With growth, have hired a new director (Wendy Wilson-Gibson), and our exhibits and fundraisers are changing. Mehl Lawson, no relation to Audi and Dale, has been a strong supporter of museum. His presence and support is continuing to be very valuable.

The two Grants we continue to receive from the County of San Diego are:

1. Community Enhancement Fund. This Grant has been about \$20,000 each year. This Grant is used for payroll, insurance, office expenses. It has helped the Museum to use the fundraising funds to grow the Museum.
2. Neighborhood Reinvestment Grant: This Grant is about \$3,600 each year. This Grant has no restrictions for use.

The Board of Directors has grown from five members to currently 15 members. We have a very business-minded board now, which is helping the Museum to continue to grow, along with several working Committees. All is great. The Museum is continually adding volunteers; but is always in need more volunteers and docents.

With the Bonita Business Professional Association disbanding the Museum has taken over the management of the Safety Center and the Arnell Hamilton Scholarship Fund. The SD Foundation oversees the Scholarship Fund before the Museum committee chooses the recipients.

We are in the process of become Accredited. Because of our close relationship with the Library we work very closely with library and their functions. They use the

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Museum from time to time to expand the activities and visa versa with the Museum using the Community Room. The Museum, in conjunction with the Library, has taken over Christmas tree lighting with fire truck and Santa. The annual Magi exhibit is a donation from Dr. Teller (a teacher in SUHS district). He (when alive) showed the Magi's for years before donating his collection to the Museum. There are some valuable pieces.

I know I have not remembered everything, but I know I will from time to time. I'm excited about the future of the Museum and our continued growth.

Barb Scott