

Press Room

Making Legends: Victoria Bailey Traces La Quinta's Past

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Preserving history in print is a labor of love for Victoria Bailey. While living in northern California, Bailey published eight books a year on various topics from healthcare to hospitality, including a luxurious volume celebrating 150 years of incorporation of the city of San Francisco.

When a move to the Coachella Valley became eminent, Bailey joined several local chambers of commerce and historical societies prior to relocating, to get a jump on learning about the area, its history and its resources. What she discovered in her research was that there weren't many coffee table books available (outside of Palm Springs) about local communities and the depth of history within them.

The Birth of a book

I met Victoria Bailey shortly after she had moved to the valley in 2002, settled in La Quinta and founded Desert Springs Publishing. Since then, I've worked on three books with her, one an overview of the Coachella Valley, another to mark the 75th year of incorporation of Indio, and most recently "La Quinta – Legend in the Making," due to be released in mid-April as part of the City of La Quinta's 25th anniversary celebration.

Bailey and her husband, Michael Morein, love their new hometown of La Quinta. Says Bailey, "We looked all around the area but felt like La Quinta was the close-knit, friendly and innovative community we wanted to be a part of." Serving for three years on the board of the La Quinta Chamber of Commerce, Bailey started laying the foundation for her latest book project.

With the success of the Indio book under her belt, Bailey made a presentation to the La Quinta City Council to compel them to undertake a similar project. The proof was in the printing, as her best sales tool was the high quality of the books published. Bailey has also developed a strong relationship with the 100-year-old Hong Kong printing plant that printed the first Betty Crocker cookbook and currently prints the Harry Potter books.

With quality and capability on her side, Bailey secured a contract to produce the La Quinta volume. I came on board as the writer, along with graphic designer John Kirkpatrick, contributing writer Karen Oppenheim and editorial consultant Becky Kurtz.

Says Bailey, "I was part of a large creative team in San Francisco, and I missed that when I moved here. In order to do these local books, I put together a great team of editorial and graphic design professionals that could help me turn the concepts into reality.

Serendipity

On the night before the manuscript had to be FedExed to Hong Kong for printing, Bailey stopped in to see Kay Wolff, widow of La Quinta's first mayor, whom I had interviewed earlier. During their visit, Wolff produced a photo of herself with husband Fred standing under the official La Quinta city limit sign reading, "Population 4,701." For Bailey, that was one of the best "gets" in the book.

When I asked Victoria what the most interesting thing was that she learned during the La Quinta book project, she had a couple of thoughts. She loves the fact that part of the community's dramatic mountain backdrop includes the second largest rockslide in North America and the fifth largest in the world, behind Trilogy Country Club.

She was also fascinated by the fact that cotton was grown where PGA West stands today, and a produce packing house was located near the La Quinta Hotel. Above all, though, Bailey loved meeting a wide variety of people. "I'm thrilled to have met so many interesting people, from pioneers to elected officials and everyday folks," she says. "Each and every one of them made an important contribution that helped make La Quinta what it is today.

Chronicling History

Setting about to chronicle history is a large and delicate undertaking. From the beginning, Victoria and I agreed we would do our best to highlight the contributions of individuals and interpret their stories with the understanding that facts are often colored by the memories of those who lived them. Our goal was to show how people make a difference in any important endeavor.

While I was busy pouring over the wealth of documents made available by Louise Neeley at the La Quinta Historical Society, Victoria was out and about meeting long-time residents, gathering their stories and looking for dynamic photos and images to illustrate the book. She is always on the lookout for photos that have never been published before. Sometimes, those treasures come early in the process. Other times, they reveal themselves at the last possible opportunity.