Land of Extremes

A long road
nears its end,
as museum comes to life.

Imperial Valley Desert Museum

1969: IVC establishes Department of Anthropology.


1972: Jay von Werlhof hired by IVC.

1973: Building condemned owing to earthquake.

1975: Museum building completed.

1979: Act of Congress

1987: Desert Museum

1990: Museum expansion

1994: Museum moves to Ocotillo.

1995: Building received

2000: Museum re-curation of the IVC archaeological

2005: SCHC grant awarded to museum building

QUESTIONS?

EDITOR’S NOTE: A series of stories on the history of our desert and the efforts of the Imperial Valley Desert Museum to tell that story will run through October. lengthening the Tuesday page until a new crop of interns returns in the fall connected to the 5th annual journalism program.

LAND OF EXTREMES

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ver the next year, the Imperial Valley Desert Museum will be fabricating and installing a permanent exhibit called the Land of Extremes. It will be an exhibit on the human adaptation to the desert environment.

That is just a big way of saying that it is really hard to live somewhere that is so hot and has so little water ... but people have been doing it for more than 10,000 years.

Telling the story, in fact, has been one of the primary objectives of the Imperial Valley Desert Museum Society since its incorporation in 1974. For the society, this is a major component of its mission as the museum.

In the summer, this story will unfold in a series of articles that will be included in the Saturday edition of the Imperial Valley Press.

The Imperial Valley Desert Museum has been a dream for more than four decades.

The museum in Ocotillo opened in March 2012 after more than 13 years of construction. Since that time, more than 5,000 people have come out to Ocotillo for programs and activities.

In December 2013, the museum became an approved curation facility for federal archaeological collections.

Soon, we will achieve the dream of being a fully functioning and operationally vated cultural and educational activities throughout the Valley.

The main objectives were the preservation and investigation of cultural and environmental opportunities of the Imperial Valley.

The society promoted the idea that Imperial County hold “key to the anthropic man in the Western Hemispheres.”

That is just a big way of saying that the story of how people adapted to living in such an extreme environment is exciting.

IMPERIAL VALLEY DESERT MUSEUM

The museum was ahead of its time in Southern California because it documented more than 10,000 additional sites. Under the direction of Michael Barker and Jay von Werlhof, both anthropology professors at IVC, the college operated a small museum in downtown El Centro.

The museum was ahead of its time for the Imperial Valley, with an outstanding archaeological program run by the college and a 14-person laboratory, one of just three in California.

But in 1979, the downtown building was destroyed in an earthquake. I am not sure I know the path that led by also.

Von Werlhof came to touch at the IVC in 1973. When he arrived in the Valley, there were 100 recorded archaeological sites. Over the next several years, he documented more than 10,000 additional sites.

Under his direction, the Imperial Valley Desert Museum Society managed cultural and educational activities throughout the Valley.

The main objectives were the preservation and investigation of cultural sites that permitted to early man. The society promoted the idea that Imperial County hold “key to the anthropic man in the Western Hemispheres.”

To many people in the county, this has been a long time coming, but success of finally getting the museum open was a grassroots organization behind the museum.

It is an exciting time at the museum.

The story of how people adapted to living in such an extreme environment is exciting. It is a story that still affects those of us living in the Valley today.

In the coming months the society will unveil at the Desert Museum as construction of exhibits gets underway.

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It is an exciting time at the museum. Finally, we can truly say it used to be a dream.

Make sure to buy a square foot of the new museum for $5 or $1,200 were sold.

This prehistoric artifact collection is one of the most significant collections in Southern California because the artifacts span the lifeways of the earliest people in our region.

When von Werlhof led students into the desert, he taught that people began living here 10,000 to 12,000 years ago.

In recent months, an archeological site in Jacumba was positively dated to 1,400 BCE.

Remember, this week is Design of the new permanent exhibit called the Land of Extremes.

TOP: Jay von Werlhof records a geophyp as part of an Imperial Valley College course.

ABOVE: Design of the new permanent exhibit called the Land of Extremes.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NEAL V. HITCH

ABOVE LEFT: Original concept sketch of the new Desert Museum to be built in Ocotillo.

ABOVE RIGHT: Original IVC Desert Museum on Main Street in El Centro prior to 1979 earthquake.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NEAL V. HITCH