I love Long Beach. It’s where I grew up and came of age and now, with a well-traveled lifetime of comparative experience, I’ve come to deeply appreciate its rich history. It was thus with a sense of delight that I accepted a commission in 2007 from the Farmers and Merchants Bank of Long Beach to write a book celebrating F&M’s centennial. It was a wonderful experience, one that brought me back to my roots and allowed me entrée to one of Long Beach’s oldest and most distinguished businesses.

It also introduced me to the late Ken Larkey, a treasure of a man who not only founded our museum but also possessed an encyclopedic knowledge of all things Long Beach.

Driving around town with Ken was like touring Philadelphia with Benjamin Franklin. He knew everything! “Here’s where the Balboa Studio’s were located,” he’d say. “And that building? It used to sit on the site of the Villa Rivera. It was moved up the street as part of the deal when the land was sold. And right there was where the Hotel Virginia stood. See those trees? John Bixby planted them...” and on and on.

Ken never tired of talking about his beloved city, and I never tired of listening. When he passed away in 2011 it was as if a library had burned down.

Recently, I spent some time with Marshall Pumphrey, Ken’s successor and current president and keeper of the flame for our museum. Like Ken, Marshall loves to drive around Long Beach and soak in the history. On this outing, we stopped at Roxanne’s Lounge & Grill in the historic California Heights to see the beautiful mahogany church pews from the old First Christian Church on display in their Exhibition Room. But I found that Roxanne’s has much more to offer.

 Owned and operated for the four years by Robert Molina, a young, dynamic entrepreneur, Roxanne’s is vintage Long Beach. “The building was built in 1944 as two separate spaces,” Robert said of the historic building. “A man named Chuck Heckle and his wife knocked out a wall and ran one of the city’s two ‘Cook Your Own Steak’ restaurants for the next 50 years.”

Although not a native, Robert is a devoted Long Beacher. “I’ve been coming here since I was five,” he said. “My family would come from East LA to visit my grandmother and it was she who opened the door to the Long Beach that I fell in love with.”

In years past, when Long Beach was the nation’s silent film capitol, notable actors like W.C. Fields, and Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle plied their craft at the local Balboa Studios. A gilded nightlife also thrived, marked by fine music, partygoers dressed to the nines and high-tone night clubs that served classic cocktails prepared by master mixologists.

“A lot of that lively nightlife evaporated,” says Robert, “starting in the 20’s with prohibition. I opened Roxanne’s (named after his four-year-old daughter Penelope Roxanne) to recapture and pay tribute to the times when the nightlife was full of class and excitement.”
Roxanne’s consists of a main dining room and bar, plus an outside patio displaying several large vintage photographs of the town. But it is the Exhibition Room that harkens to a time when making a cocktail required the skills of an artist and drinking one—especially for a lady—was a little bit wicked. Admittance to the sanctum is by reservation only. Parties are limited to eight guests and proper attire is required; business casual is fine but many dress-up, some in period attire, thereby adding to the ambiance. To gain entry, one steps into a wood-paneled 1940’s telephone booth that once adorned the foyer of the Los Angeles Coliseum (complete with an old-fashioned phone with a separate ear piece and transmitter). After pressing a call button and whispering your reservation number, the back panel of the booth silently opens and you are allowed to duck inside. It’s all very “speakeasy” – and exceptionally hip.

Once inside, time is off the clock. The dark walls are a museum of old photos offering a journey through the history of Long Beach’s drinking establishments, starting with the town’s first tavern owned by Dennis McCarthy on Pine Avenue in the 1880’s to the classic Tiki-Space-Age Java Lanes Bowling Alley, with the sultry “Room of the Three Goddesses”.

Behind the marble bar, mixologists (there are no bartenders) sport vests, ties and fedoras while leggy cocktail waitresses strut the room dressed like 1920 flappers. For a bird’s eye view, climb the wrought iron serpentine staircase that leads to a narrow catwalk overlooking the room. Against one wall is an upright piano played by a wonderful lady whose deep repertoire ranges from ragtime to jazz, to the blues and booze of Rick’s Café in the immortal film, Casablanca. Images of dapper men in double-breasted suits with a rose in the lapel, spectator shoes, and classy dames—all beautiful and sexy and a little bit risqué are easily conjured.

“I have a passion to rejuvenate the upper class drinking community lost to history,” says Robert. “I wanted to put Long Beach back on the map for a fine, perfectly mixed cocktail in a special room that honors the colorful history of our town. I like to think that I’ve done so.” One passage through the secret phone booth to the Exhibition Room will convince all comers that he has.

ARTIFACTS

**Photo of Gem’s Original Belmont Shore Store**
Circa 1959

**Mahogany Church Pews**, circa 1920s
From the First Christian Church, circa 1894

**1930s 12’ Redwood Surfboard**
Used by the LB Lifeguards

**1930s Cast Iron Mailbox**
Restored by Burke’s Auto Body

**1940s Solid Brass Fire Hydrant**
Made by LB Iron Works for the LBFD

**Early 1900s Dr. Hubbell Rectal Dilator**
Vintage Drug Store Quackery

**Assorted Museum Treasures**

**1930 Cyclone Racer Roller Coaster Car**
Restored by Mike Cincola & Larry Osterhoudt

**McGruder’s Salt Water Taffy Sign**

**Pike Parking Lot Neon Sign**

**Pike’s Midway Penny Scale**

**Assorted Museum Treasures**

**1951 Del Mar Hotel Telephone Switchboard**

**1950s Mobil Gas Pump**

LOCATION

**Gem’s Shoe Repair**
4922 East Second Street, (562) 439-7524

**Exhibition Room at Roxanne’s Lounge & Grill**
1101 East Wardlow Road

**Polly’s Gourmet Coffee**
4606 East Second Street

**Shore Business Center**
5318 East Second Street

**Anderson Paint & Hardware**
714 Pine Avenue

**Rubber Tree**
5018 East Second Street

**Looff’s Lite-A-Line**
2500 Long Beach Boulevard

Seaside Printing Company, Inc.
1220 East Fourth Street
LONG BEACH FIREFIGHTER’S MUSEUM
1445 Peterson Avenue
(562) 570-8628 or (562) 599-3985
LBFDmuseum@verizon.com
Located in an original 1925 Fire Station, the Museum opened in 1980 and depicts the evolution of fire fighting in Long Beach.

LONG BEACH LIFEGUARD MUSEUM MARINE STADIUM
First local lifeguard museum, established in 1988. Contact mpumph@verizon.com for more information.

UNIQUE LONG BEACH MUSEUMS

• Original LBFD Call Box, Circa 1950. Donated by the LB Fire Fighter’s Museum. Burke’s Auto Body is restoring and it will be displayed at Anderson’s Paint & Hardware.

• 1913-18 Vintage Balboa Film Studio Photographs will soon be on display at Modica’s Deli, in the Cooper Arms, circa 1924, 455 East Ocean Blvd., (562) 435-7011

NEW LONG BEACH HISTORY BOOKS
Contact the author or Amazon.com for more information.

The Long Beach Pike, Patricia Ann Stockdale
Prohibition Madness: Life & Death In & Around Long Beach, 1920-1933, Claudine Burnette
Seal Beach: A Brief History, Larry Strawther

The Long Beach Heritage Museum also has the following books for sale at Anderson Paint & Hardware:

• 1902 Long Beach Fire Department Souvenir Book - $10
• Long Beach Souvenir Picture Postcard Album – 1900-1960s - $10
• Souvenir Picture Postcard Album of the Long Beach Pike - $15
• 1932 Long Beach Souvenir Book - $15
UPCOMING EVENTS

Please check our website, www.LongBeachHeritageMuseum.org, or email Marshall at MPUMPHR@aol.com to confirm event times and locations.

Mixer & Movie Night
Featuring a Vintage Movie filmed in
Long Beach - Drake Park, 908 North Park Circle
Sunday, May 24 3 pm - ?

Sugar Beet Festival, Los Alamitos
Saturday, June 6 8 am-2:30 pm

Belmont Shore Sidewalk Sale*
Saturday, July 25 10 am-3 pm

LAX/Long Beach Airliner Expo
Saturday, Aug. 15 9 am-3 pm

Belmont Shore Car Show*
Sunday, Sept. 13 9 am-3 pm

Belmont Shore Art walk & Sidewalk Sale*
Saturday, Oct. 17 11 am-3 pm

Los Angeles Archives Bazaar
Saturday, Oct. 24 9 am-5 pm
Doheny Memorial Library, USC Campus

*LBHM Booth at Fromex Photo, Second Street & LaVerne

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LONG BEACH HERITAGE MUSEUM

Membership Application

First Name ________________________ Last Name ______________________ M.I. _________
Address ________________________________________________________________________
City ____________________________________________ State _________ Zip ______________
Home Phone ____________________________ Work Phone _____________________________
Email __________________________________________________________________________

☐ For $20.00, I would like to help preserve the Heritage of Long Beach. Please add me as a member
☐ I would also like to make a Contribution to the Building Fund in the amount of:
   ☐ $25 ☐ $50 ☐ $100 ☐ $500 ☐ $1000 ☐ Other $____________

☐ I am interested in volunteering or serving on a committee.
   Please have someone contact me at the
   ☐ phone number or
   ☐ email address listed above.

Please mail this application with payment to:
Long Beach Heritage Museum
5318 E. 2nd St # 331
Long Beach Ca. 90803

As a Member of the Long Beach Heritage Museum, you will receive:
✓ A FREE copy of the Long Beach Heritage Museum Book
✓ A FREE subscription to the Long Beach Heritage Museum Bi-Annual Newsletter
✓ VIP Invitations to LBHM events
✓ 20% discount on LBHM Books and merchandise

Your membership dues also provide needed funding for the Long Beach Heritage Museum and their ongoing efforts to preserve and exhibit items which represent the colorful history of Long Beach.