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# Alive!

## A Victorian Christmas

All are invited as Rec and Parks' Banning Museum returns to a bygone era for Victorian Christmas Dec. 7-8.

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Rec and Parks employees and volunteers recreate the Victorian era for the annual Banning Christmas event.

Alive! photo by Gary Florin, Rec and Parks



City Employees Club of Los Angeles  
120 West 2nd Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

## LAPD's Bravest



Police Department honors its heroes

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Celebrate

# A Victorian Christmas

Rec and Parks

The Banning Museum hosts annual Victorian Christmas celebration Dec. 7-8.

Photos by Gary Florin, Rec and Parks, and courtesy Banning Museum. Interview photos by Tom Hawkins, Club Photographer.

The community is invited to welcome the holiday season at the Banning Museum's Annual Victorian Christmas Celebration and Open House, scheduled from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Dec. 7-8 at the Banning Museum, 401 E. "M" St., in Wilmington.

This free event is open to the public and promises to be a weekend to remember. Visitors will enjoy period entertainment, tours of the museum decorated in holiday splendor, refreshments, a children's craft and a horse-drawn trolley ride between the Banning Museum and Drum Barracks Civil War Museum, which is also presenting a Christmas event that weekend, *A Civil War Christmas*.

In anticipation of the 150th anniversary of the completion of the Banning Mansion, guests will be invited

You're Invited!



**Banning Museum  
Victorian  
Christmas**

Saturday and Sunday  
**Dec. 7-8**  
11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

The Banning Museum  
401 East "M" Street  
Wilmington



**Free Admission!**

to tour a special exhibit, "150 Years in the Making, 1864-2014." The exhibit reflects upon three separate eras of the mansion: the Banning years, the City years and the Friends years.


Back by popular demand, the event will feature local food and craft vendors. A blacksmith will be at the Drum Barracks. As a special treat, a Queen Victoria re-enactor will receive guests for the two days, and Jolly St. Nick will pose for photos with the kids.

The Banning Museum is a Rec and Parks facility, operated in cooperation with Friends of Banning Museum, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to "Preserve History, Promote Education, and Inspire Entrepreneurial Spirit."

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 Pictured from Victorian Christmas events in previous years include employees and volunteers in Victorian costume, a horse-drawn carriage ride, 11 interior rooms decorated for the holiday and, of course, a visit from Santa Claus.





## The Alive! Interview

# A Simpler Family Christmas

On Nov. 13, Club CEO John Hawkins and Alive! editor John Burnes sat down with Michael Sanborn, Director of the Banning Residence Museum, to talk about the museum's Victorian Christmas celebration and the museum in general. The interview took place in the museum.



**Alive!** Michael, thanks for meeting us today. First, tell us your history with the museum and the City.

**MICHAEL SANBORN:** I have been with the museum almost 18 years. Our nonprofit group, Friends of Banning Museum, has been with us since 1972. We work together; it's a team effort that allows us to do things like Victorian Christmas, our school programs, our lecture series, our changing exhibits, all of that good stuff.

**How did you start here, and how did you get to be the director of the museum?**

**MICHAEL:** Way back in 1990 I was working on my Master's degree in historic preservation at Cal State Dominguez Hills. I needed to do an internship, so I cold-called at the door of the museum, and basically I've been here ever since. I was fortunate enough to be able to do an internship with their historic photograph collection, and when the opening came for historic site curator I applied for it. I was fortunate enough to get it, and so it's just kind of evolved since then. I've been very fortunate.

**Where are you from?**

**MICHAEL:** Harbor City, which is the town next door to Wilmington. I've been here my whole life.

**Did you hang out here at the museum or on the grounds growing up?**

**MICHAEL:** One of my very first field trips that I ever remember was going to the Cabrillo Aquarium, which is in San Pedro next door. On the way home, the school bus stopped at the [Banning] park and let the kids out to just run around and have lunch. However, the house wasn't open as a museum then, and I can remember vividly being on the front porch and looking through the side windows of the front door and seeing absolutely nothing inside; it was just white hallway. In the back of my mind, I thought boy, I really want to get in there and see the rest of the whole house. That was the very first time I saw the place, and that had to be 1968 or 1969.

**This is more than a profession for you. The Banning Residence Museum means a lot to you.**

**MICHAEL:** It does. It's a very important part of the harbor's history, as Phineas Banning was the founder of the harbor including the infrastructure. But it's also very relevant to all of Los Angeles because without his endeavors of connecting the harbor to L.A. and then to the West and the rest of the world a lot may have happened differently with regards to San Pedro being the major port of call versus San Diego. It has a big history, and he is really one of the unsung heroes of Los Angeles. So it's really rewarding to get his accomplishments out to the countless schoolchildren we have every year and the general public who come through.

### Old-Time Christmas

**Tell us about the Victorian Christmas event. It's been around for a long time...**

**MICHAEL:** It has...

**... and it's very popular.**

**MICHAEL:** Originally it started as a luminary festival in the 1970s and through most of the '80s. They wanted to evolve that, thinking, let's do the entire inside of the house into what Christmas would have looked like in a typical late Victorian way.

**When you say "luminary" you're talking about...**

**MICHAEL:** Lighting the outside, just decorating the outside and

**Is it one of the most popular events you host through the year?**

**MICHAEL:** As far as a community open house, it's definitely our most popular. If it's a good weekend, we'll host 1,200 people a day during a four-hour period, which is an incredible amount of people for us to get through the house, especially with all the stairs and rooms that you have to get through.

Other events that we do through the year are completely different but very popular as well. We do a lot with school programs; we do a summer concert for Phineas Banning's birthday in August; for Valentine's Day we do a Victorian Tea and Tunes, a luncheon in our barn, which is also very popular; and then two weeks a year we do a complete living history program – we turn the whole campus here back to the 1880s. Our school kids come in and actually see everything from blacksmiths to spinning wool to washing clothes to making butter, so it's a whole day that you would have experienced as a child back then. But as far as a community open house, the Victorian Christmas for us is our most popular.

**Do people come from all over the area for it?**

**MICHAEL:** Yes. Last year a whole busload came up from San Diego. They come from Santa Barbara and from the Inland Empire, and we get a lot of repeat families. In fact there are a couple of families who come every year and make a point of taking their Christmas card picture in front of the house. We have a lot of repeat people who come and say, "This is the kickoff to our holidays." After they leave here they're all charged up and they're ready to handle the holidays.



Banning Museum Director Michael Sanborn (left) and Club CEO John Hawkins walk the beautiful Banning Residence grounds.

allowing people to come in at night for special tours, offered only for a very short time in December. Since about 1987 we've been decorating the inside of the house; the luminaries went away and the whole concept of Victorian Christmas grew from that.

**Give me an overview of what I can expect at the Victorian Christmas event.**

**MICHAEL:** You're going to experience the way the house would have looked in the late Victorian period. Christmas wasn't celebrated and recognized the way it is today with the commercial aspect, so it's a simplified but more of a family version, so it's very intimate. When you come through the house, the commercial part is not really there. We try to stress the importance of family, having the dining room set up for a family dinner with friends and family. The bedrooms have minimal decorations but with a family sense of what they would be doing in the rooms; we do that through mannequins and the decorations. The outside of the house is plain, without lights, but with lots of wreaths and things like that.

You're also going to experience traditional dancing. We have dancers who will grab members of the public and bring them in, and they'll do dance sessions.

We also offer a horse-drawn trolley that will take our visitors two blocks down Banning Boulevard to the Drum Barracks Civil War Museum, which does a drum barracks Civil War Christmas. That trolley takes about 25 people at a time back and forth all day long.

There's another thing that's a lot of fun, and it involves the kids. We will have Santa out front in a carriage, so the kids can talk to Santa and get their picture taken with him. We also have a one-room "schoolhouse" that offers an opportunity for the kids to

Michael Sanborn, Director, Banning Museum.



have the schoolmarm help them with a letter to Santa.

And then also in our stagecoach barn we'll have an arts and crafts table where they can make a Victorian ornament that they can take home and put on their tree. It's a good little memento for them. With that ornament we have people who come back every year because they keep adding to their tree.

**With the Victorian era, what year are we talking about, maybe 1880 or so?**

MICHAEL: Yes, that's a really good benchmark for it because Christmas is just starting to take off at that point. Christmas for America really doesn't take off until the 1920s and '30s and '40s, where it just keeps evolving. So back in the 1880s it was a very simplified but yet a very family-oriented event.

**A lot of the traditions and things that we think about as very traditional Christmas actually come out of that era.**

MICHAEL: Yes, absolutely.

**It's very Dickens and A Christmas Carol.**

MICHAEL: Absolutely. The decorated tree comes out of that of course... the stockings come out of that, and wreaths and food also comes out of that. When you left someone's house, they gave you a gift of a baked good for the trip home because you were traveling a great distance by a carriage, by a stagecoach or by train to visit relatives.

**I think there was wassail at that time, too...**

MICHAEL: Wassail, punches, carols, all of that, exactly.

**Some people would even say that Dickens really kind of invented our modern idea of Christmas.**

MICHAEL: He did. A Christmas Carol was a very popular book back then.

**Why do we long for that era? Because it's simpler? Is it richer; is it more family-oriented?**

MICHAEL: You nailed it. It is just a simpler, less confusing time. It's something that is centered around being thankful, having your family with you. It doesn't have that commercial bombardment. Before Thanksgiving, you're hit with Christmas all the way until Christmas. This is a way to actually get away from that. You're looking at the holiday with a completely different perspective, and a lot of people enjoy seeing a simpler time. And people come to see the house decorated – they'll bring sketchpads and try to capture the flavor of one of the larger rooms to give them simple ideas.

**This is an enormous house. How many of the rooms do you decorate?**

MICHAEL: Well, the house has 17,000 square feet, and we decorate 11 rooms.

**Eleven rooms, and some of those are very large.**

MICHAEL: Especially the first floor. Those are all the big public rooms, the grand rooms. Every one except the office gets a good Victorian shining.

**Do you also have a marketplace of small gifts and candies and foods and things like that?**

MICHAEL: We do, and that's down in our lowest level of the home, which used to be a ballroom.

### The Christmas Connection

**I noticed in some of the pictures that for Victorian Christmas you get dressed up. You also wear a period costume.**

MICHAEL: Yes. That's fun.

**Why do you love it so much?**

MICHAEL: It takes you back. We actually have whole volunteer groups, and all they do is re-create costumes. They make them; they research down to the stitching. We have a lot of people who really enjoy it. I encourage people to have fun. It brings them to a different time in their mind.

**Victorian Christmas is a real tradition, isn't it? It seems like families can hardly have a Christmas now or at least a celebration of it without going to this event.**

MICHAEL: Yes. We like to think so. We get a lot of people who come back and say, "Thank you. This is the kickoff for my holidays. We love coming here," and so it makes us feel good.

**Does this kick off your holidays?**

MICHAEL: It does, and by the time December is done, I'm happy. I get a lot of satisfaction out of the people who come here because they like to make this an annual event. We talk to many wonderful and nice people who will come up and say, "Thank you for what you guys do here. Thank you for taking care of this house and encouraging the learning of the history, the preservation, all of that."

**Michael, thank you very much for this interview.**

MICHAEL: You're welcome. My pleasure.



ABOVE: Michael Sanborn joins the Victorian fun.

LEFT: Employees and volunteers create a festive atmosphere for the event.

### The Museum's Importance

**Why is the Banning Residence Museum important to L.A.?**

MICHAEL: I'll answer it in several ways. Architecturally, it's Greek Revival, and we are the best example of Greek revival architecture in California as a residence. When you see Greek revival it's usually a courthouse. Everything is balanced, the number of columns, the number of windows. It's very mathematically designed, and so as a home it's very unusual.

We are also the oldest wooden home in Los Angeles.

And then, third, it's the family history. This is the guy who brought the railroad to town and who connected L.A. with the telegraph system. This is the guy who raised private dollars to create the harbor, to dredge it, to build a breakwater and to build a lighthouse. I don't think a lot of people realize that.

He's also credited for establishing a lot of the roads that we use, stage roads for freight wagons. He built them to move goods from the harbor to Los Angeles and then points beyond. There's a distance of 26 miles from the harbor to downtown, and there's no other place like that in the state. He spent his life working to improve that system and then letting others use it.

## About Rec & Park's Banning Museum

The Banning Museum sits in the heart of Wilmington. Phineas Banning –entrepreneur, the founder of the city of Wilmington, and "the Father of the Port of Los Angeles" – built the 23-room residence in 1864. Subsequent generations lived in it until 1925; in 1927 the residence, stagecoach barn, and the surrounding 20 acres of parkland were acquired by the City of Los Angeles.

The residence fell into disrepair over the decades, but the Friends of Banning Park (now called the Friends of the Banning Museum) spearheaded by Phineas's great-granddaughter, Nancy Banning Call, restored the mansion to its original Victorian beauty.

The Banning Museum engages visitors in a living history experience, showing how the family lived, worked, and entertained. Through its educational programs, it gives third, fourth and fifth-graders opportunities to experience life in the 19th century, enriching their curriculum.



### History of the Banning Residence

The Banning Residence was built in 1864. This home's construction symbolized Phineas Banning's confidence in the future of his community.

The 23-room residence remains the finest example of domestic Greek Revival architecture in Southern California. The house interiors have been carefully restored to their Victorian beauty, and 18 rooms are open to the public.

Rooms reflect decorative elements added during 60 years of family residence and demonstrate the eclectic nature of a home lived in by several generations.

The house and surrounding 20 acres of parkland were acquired by the City of Los Angeles in 1927. The Residence is a city, state, and National Historic Landmark. Rec and Parks manages the residence, stagecoach barn, and gardens in cooperation with Friends of Banning Museum, a private nonprofit corporation. Friends of Banning Museum develops the historical aspects of the museum and raises funds for its continuing restoration and educational programs.

**Banning Museum Regular Tours:**

Throughout December

Tuesday – Thursday:  
12:30, 1:30 and 2:30 p.m.

Saturday – Sunday:  
12:30, 1:30, 2:30 and 3:30 p.m.

Closed Christmas Day

Cost (regular tours):  
\$5 (suggested donation);  
\$1 for children)

**Information:**  
(310) 548-2005 or  
[www.thebanningmuseum.org](http://www.thebanningmuseum.org)



First row, from left: Amelia Marucut; Fred Rivera; Linda Granados, President, LAFACE; Consul General Hellen Barber de la Vega, Philippine Consul General; Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell; artists Bobby Romero and Alex Gantioqui; Cora Soriano, Retired; and Criselda Dollano. Second row: Rea Lazo, Jessica Lee, Cesar De Vera and Councilmember Felipe Fuentes.



From left: Mildred Jacla, Joan Alexandria Tagle and Angelo Yenke.



From left: Philippine Consul General Hellen Barber de la Vega, Linda Granados, and Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell.



From left: Philippine Consul General Hellen Barber de la Vega, Linda Granados, Cora Soriano, Alex Gantioqui, Bobby Romero, Cesar De Vera, Jessica Lee and Lilia Liclican.



Philippine Consul General Hellen Barber de la Vega, Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, Councilmember Jose Huizar, Linda Granados, Cora Soriano, Mildred Jacla, and Joan Alexandria Tagle.



From left: Amelia Marucut, Rea Lazo, Fred Rivera, Philippine Consul General Hellen Barber de la Vega, Jessica Lee, Linda Granados, Cesar De Vera, Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, Councilmember Felipe Fuentes, Bobby Romero, Alex Gantioqui, Cora Soriano and Criselda Dollano.



From left: Councilmember Huizar, Philippine Consul General Hellen Barber de la Vega, Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, Lilia Liclican, Linda Granados, Cora Soriano and Mildred Jacla.



Alex Gantioqui, artist; Amelia Marucut, Second Vice President, LAFACE, Club Member; Cesar De Vera, artist; Hellen Barber de la Vega, Philippine Consul General; and Bobby Romero, artist.



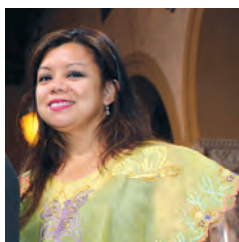
From left: Alex Banares, Criselda Dollano, Cora Soriano, Rea Lazo, Mildred Jacla, Jessica Lee, and Lilia Liclican.



First row, from left: Councilmembers Jose Huizar and Mitch O'Farrell, Philippine Consul General Hellen Barber de la Vega, Linda Granados, Cora Soriano, Mildred Jacla, and Joan Alexandria Tagle. Second row: Jessica Lee and Rea Lazo.



Philippine Consul General Hellen Barber de la Vega, Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, and Linda Granados.



Joan Alexandria Tagle.

## LAFACE

Story by Amelia Marucut, Joan Alexandria Tagle, Linda Granados and Mitch O'Farrell; Photos by Gedina Bergstrom, Club Counselor



# Filipino Heritage Month

Filipino Employees Association hosts a reception and ceremony to mark the month.

The Los Angeles Filipino Association of City Employees (LAFACE) hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony and reception Oct. 11 to formally open the all-Filipino art exhibit at the Los Angeles City Hall's Henry P. Rio Bridge, and to celebrate the Council Proclamation of October as Filipino American Heritage Month. Philippine Consul General Hellen Barber De La Vega joined Councilmembers Mitch O'Farrell and Felipe Fuentes; LAFACE President Linda Granados and LAFACE board members; the artists - Bobby Romero, Cesar De Vera and Alex Gantioqui; and Ms. Philippines-USA beauty contestant Jessica Lee.

The event was organized largely by LAFACE Vice President Amelia De Castro-Marucut, Management Analyst II, Economic and Workforce Development, working closely with Angelo Yenke, Field Deputy for Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell (LAFACE's co-sponsor for the exhibit), Cultural Affairs, and other groups. The art exhibit was open to the public during October.

First established in 1988 by the Filipino American National Historical Society, the Filipino American Heritage Month (aka Filipino American History Month) was recognized statewide in California in 2006 (also marking the centennial celebration of Filipino migration into the United States), and nationally in 2009 after a Congressional Resolution.

The Filipino-American Heritage Month's art exhibit was one of the major events that LAFACE sponsors, in addition to providing numerous examination preparation training classes year round, and its annual picnic and Christmas party. LAFACE conducts these events to fulfill its major mission objectives: the advancement and expansion of career opportunities for Filipinos and other minorities in City service (empowering City employees by providing needed training and access to resources) and the promotion of the Filipino culture and heritage to enrich the ethnic and cultural diversity in Los Angeles (strengthen relations and understanding among diverse LA residents by sharing different aspects of culture - art, food, literature, music, dance, etc.). By extension, these events also provide opportunities for mainstream representation of Filipino Americans, reflecting their varied careers, positions, contributions and roles in today's Los Angeles. As Council Member Mitch O'Farrell said to the Filipino artists: "Through your talent, you are not only helping preserve and promote Filipino culture in the City, you are also inspiring the next generation of Filipino-Americans."

In addition to cultural and training events, LAFACE also awards scholarships at its Christmas party to deserving students, funded partially by membership/training fees and fundraising events and donations. Additional cultural events are being planned in the year ahead - for updates please check out [www.laface.us](http://www.laface.us).



Councilmember Felipe Fuentes.



Mr. LA, Councilmember Tom LaBonge, Club Member.



From left: Councilmembers Joe Buscaino and Gil Cedillo.



From left: Councilmembers Mitch O'Farrell and Jose Huizar.



Bobby Romero, artist.



Alex Gantioqui, artist.



Cesar De Vera, artist.