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This bear was hand-made 22 years ago for valley resident Wolf Oertel's 40th birthday.

Museum to celebrate teddy bear's history

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When Ideal Novelty Toy Co. owners Rose and Morris Michtom asked Theodore Roosevelt in 1902 if they could create a toy called "Teddy's Bear," he had a response that was unknowingly shortsighted:

"I don't think my name is likely to be worth much in the toy bear business, but you are welcome to use it."

Little did the then-president of the U.S. realize that his eponymous bear would become one of the most popular toys in the world.

Starting Sunday, the Santa Ynez Valley Historical Museum is showcasing the popularity of the children's toy with the opening of its newest exhibit, "The History of the Teddy Bear."

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The museum, at 3596 Sagunto St., will open its bear exhibit and hold its annual holiday party from 3 to 5:30 p.m. Sunday. The exhibit will be open through mid-February.

"We wanted to bring in families and children, and we thought this was a great holiday theme," explained Chris Bashforth, the executive director of the museum.

The expansive exhibit holds more than 100 bears — small ones, large ones, popular ones like Pooh and Paddington. There are bears made to look like English Bobbies and Canadian Mounties. Some bears have berets and hats, others are made of patchwork fabric. One bear sits in an antique highchair, with a cowboy hat and sign that indicates it was hand-made 22 years ago for valley resident Wolf Oertel's 40th birthday. One bear is embroidered with the markings that denote the 100th anniversary of the teddy bear.

"We thought it would be fun to chronicle the history of teddy bear, since we're a historical museum," Ms. Bashforth said.

The bears were loaned to the museum by Susan Quinlan, who owns a Doll and Teddy Bear Museum on West Canon Perdido Street in Santa Barbara. The museum houses one of the largest displays of dolls and teddy bears in the world.

The exhibit offers an amusing explanation of the origin of the toy, as

Teddy bears as far as the eye can see



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Bears of all sizes and shapes are on display at the Santa Ynez Valley Historical Museum.

well as a history that involves the creation of the popular German Steiff bear.

In addition to showing off the new exhibit, the holiday party will include festive treats, valley wines and hot mulled cider. There will be a cookie-decorating craft for children and carriage rides around the township.

At 3 p.m., the Rio Carolers will sing seasonal songs, while at 4:30 p.m., the Misty Isles Consort will play Celtic Christmas music. The Consort trio consists of valley residents Ellen Beckerman on Celtic harp, Joe Dickerson playing the recorder, flute and

bodhran and Teresa Mcneil MacLean playing guitar and singing vocals.

Elsewhere at the museum, a new art exhibition called "Celebrate the Valley" includes the work of the studio artists taught by Gene Inglis-Ward, a valley instructor and artist.

The works, which are for sale, will be on display at the museum's Carriage House.

Tickets to the holiday party are \$5 for non-members. The event is free to museum members and children younger than 12.

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