

Volume 1, Issue 1

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# Tulare County Museum Museum Matters

## Inside this issue:

From the Collection 1

Special Shout-Out 2

Three Cheers 2

Save the Date 3

Historical Highlights 3

Super Sleuths 4

Curator's Corner 4

## From the Collection

This issue's featured artifact is the Clock Tower. The first clock tower, built in 1885, was part of the Bank of Visalia which stood at the corner of Church and Main Streets. The original design was constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century style. It stood about three stories high, with three clock faces on the third story. The inside of the tower housed the Seth Thomas clock, which was manufactured in Connecticut on March 23, 1885.

In 1906, after the devastating earthquake that damaged San Francisco, the clock suddenly stopped from the aftershock the quake caused. The Bank of Italy, purchased the Bank of Visalia, and was working towards getting a new building. In the early 1920's, the plans were finished and the Clock Tower was removed.

It was not until 1971 that the public got to see the old clock once again. After storing it for many years, the City of Visalia donated it to the Tulare County Museum. Mr. Frank Kiler, an instructor at College of the Sequoias, restored the clock and it was placed inside a new tower at Mooney Grove Park. This building was funded by the Rivers Family in honor of their father, Jim Rivers.

In 2012 the Tulare County Historical Society funded a restoration of the tower housing the clock. In March 2013, the Clock Tower was refurbished and the Seth Thomas clock can once again be admired and heard throughout the Park. Stephen Stoops and Dean Tolbert dedicated many hours to repairing the faces and mechanism inside to ensure that the clock accurately keeps time. In January of this year, Juan Antonio Diaz Hernandez restored the clock mechanism to its original glory with a thorough cleaning and a paint job. We are still winding it twice a week and it chimes on the hour. We are so thankful that together we have been able to preserve this history!



**Clock after restoration in 2012**



**Clock mechanism before restoration**



**Clock mechanism after restoration**

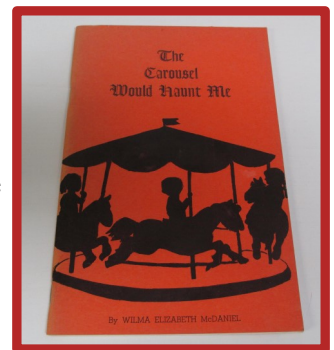
## Special Shout-Out:



The Tulare County Library has worked with the Tulare Historical Museum and the Tulare County Historical Society to honor Wilma McDaniel, local poet, with the first Literary Landmark award in our Central Valley.

The Literary Landmark Award was started in 1986 to encourage the dedication of historic sites nationwide and it is now administered by United for Libraries, a division of the American Library Association. Other notable Literary Landmarks in California include plaques honoring Dashiell Hammett, Jack London, the Beat Poets, and now Wilma McDaniel as the first woman Literary Landmark awardee. A plaque will be placed at the Tulare Historical Museum to honor her.

Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel (1918-2007), known as “The Okie Poet,” is an acclaimed folk poet and Tulare’s Bicentennial Poet and Poet Laureate. Born near Stroud, Oklahoma, Wilma at age 8 began writing poetry on scraps of paper and cardboard for later publication. McDaniel’s family moved to the San Joaquin Valley during the Dust Bowl and settled in Tulare, California. Her childhood in Oklahoma, the Dust Bowl migrant experience, and living in Tulare County influenced her evocative, plain language poetry. She published over 50 books of poetry, including *The Carousel Would Haunt Me*, *Walking on an Old Road*, and many more.



**The Carousel Would Haunt Me**

### Three Cheers for Volunteers:



**Bob & Stan with the restored windmill**



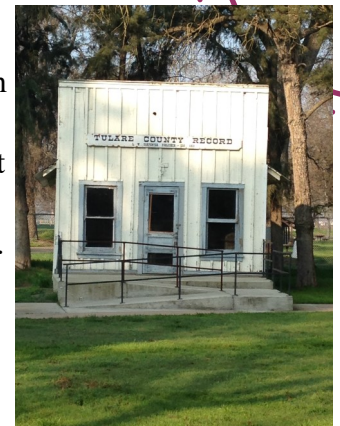
**Stan putting the finishing touch on Surprise School**

A BIG thank you to our volunteers Bob Grieb and Stan Hawkins for restoring Visalia’s first jail. They have cleaned, reinforced and painted the exterior, bringing it back to life. Bob and Stan have been working with the Museum for three years on several restoration projects. Previous projects of theirs include: restoration of the windmill, painting the exterior of Surprise School, and stabilizing the porch of the Emken House and painting the exterior.

They are now working on restoring the Record Building, which was established on June 25, 1859. This building was moved to the Museum grounds prior to 1973 and it had originally served as the Ducor Library and the Ducor Women’s Club.



**Restored Jail**



**Record Building**



**Bob working on the Emken House**



## Save the Date:

The historical society had hoped to have their annual fundraiser at the museum on October 11, however, with the COVID-19 situation, the current guidelines that must be adhered to make sure everyone remains safe, and so many other



2019 Fundraiser Event

unknowns, it might be difficult to move forward with the 2020 BBQ. Even though the fundraising may not take place this year, the support you have given over the years is much appreciated! These fundraisers are vital for our restoration projects at the Museum. Our past fundraisers have helped to fund the restoration of the Southern Pacific caboose, the Clock Tower, the Masonic Façade, the Main Street Gallery and last year we contributed funds to our Agricultural Equipment Restoration Project.



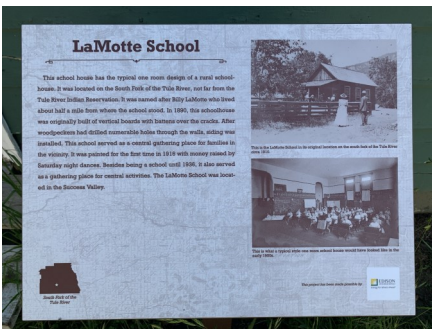
The band Run For Cover performs for guests at our 2019 fundraiser event

## Historical Highlights

- We have added items to our aviation exhibit that have recently been donated to the Museum by Jeff Dearborn. Some of these items include two flight suits, a helmet and an oxygen tank. In the summer of 1939 nine civilian Primary schools were issued war department contracts. By 1942 the number of civilian Primaries had grown to 62. Tulare County's Rankin Field began training Army pilots in the spring of 1941 and Sequoia Field began in the fall of that year. This history is a big part of our exhibit!



- New signs have been installed throughout the Museum to give information on our structures, such as where they were originally located with photos. These will serve as a guide throughout our grounds during your visit. This project was made possible by a grant. Thank you Edison International for your support!



- Thanks to Tulare County students, we had another beautiful display of poppies in honor of Veterans Day. In the month leading up to Veterans Day, our students wrote letters to our veterans and active service members on the red poppies they cut out themselves. On May 25, Memorial Day, we will send those letters out through the A Million Thanks Program. Please check our website this fall to see how you can participate this year. Thank you to all of the schools that participated last year!





## Super Sleuths Needed!

If you are missing baseball season, this might cheer you up! This is a photo of the baseball team from Surprise School back in 1950. Do you recognize anyone in this photo? This photo will be posted on the Museum Instagram and Facebook page so you can comment there or email us at [tularecountymuseum1948@gmail.com](mailto:tularecountymuseum1948@gmail.com) with any clues you might have. Put on your Sherlock hat and get out your magnifying glasses to help the museum solve the mystery of who is in this picture!

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<https://tularecountymuseum.org/museum/>

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## Curator's Corner

Hello history heroes,

I am pleased to introduce you to our very first newsletter! This newsletter will hopefully give you more insight into the Museum and what goes on behind the scenes. Our museum staff works together with our volunteers to ensure that your visit is an enjoyable one. We are continually working to restore, update and create exhibits so there is plenty of local history to learn about for our visitors. We hope that when it is safe for the Museum to open again you will visit us to see all of the new things happening! Until then stay safe and check in with our website and Facebook page for updates. ~Amy King

