

Ag museum window to past

Collection includes farming implements, schoolhouse, depot

By **JANICE AUSTIN**
For South County Life

In the late 1960s, a group of south Monterey County farmers noticed their history turning to rust in people's yards. Wanting to stop the deterioration, they decided a museum was in order and began collecting and storing items for display.

These collections continued to grow and expand — including buildings — into what is now the Monterey County Agricultural and Rural Life Museum, which opened in 1981.

Located in San Lorenzo County Park in King City, the museum pays tribute to local history.

The museum houses collections of agricultural related implements, house furnishings and historical objects. The complex consists of six buildings: the Exhibit Barn, the History of Irrigation Museum and four historic structures moved to the park from their original locations: the Olson Blacksmith Shop, the historic Spreckels House (1898), La Gloria Schoolhouse (1887), and the King City Train Depot (1903).

Each building is furnished with artifacts from the last quarter of the 19th century through World War II. The outside exhibits include antique farm equipment dating from the late 1800s. The main Exhibit Barn features displays that trace the development of Salinas Valley agriculture and rural life from the late 1700s to 1940.

"Because of the history of agriculture in the area, the museum plays a huge role in south county," said Sharon Warren, museum office manager.

'A real nice museum'

Goals of the museum include preservation of artifacts, interpretation of museum exhibits, collections and historic structures and dissemination of information about the history of farming and agriculture in the Salinas Valley.



SCOTT MACDONALD/SOUTH COUNTY LIFE

The Exhibit Barn at the Monterey County Agricultural & Rural Life Museum in King City houses a variety of early transportation vehicles.

IF YOU GO

■ **WHAT:** Monterey County Agricultural & Rural Life Museum

■ **WHERE:** San Lorenzo County Park, 1160 Broadway, King City. Take the Broadway exit from Highway 101 and follow the signs.

■ **HOURS:** The Exhibit Barn is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day and the day after. The Spreckels House, Schoolhouse, Train Depot and

The museum is supported by donations, membership dues and fundraising events. The board of directors and volunteers raise more than \$50,000 a year to operate the museum.

Fundraising events include an annual clam chowder dinner at the Salinas Valley Fairgrounds, an ag tour and the Fourth of July Valley Heritage Day.

"It's a real nice museum," Warren said. "We have equipment from way back when. Everyone who has been here has enjoyed looking at the items."

On a self-guided walk through the Exhibit Barn, you will step back in time and view the development of Salinas Valley agriculture and rural life from the late

1700s through the 1900s. Olson Blacksmith Shop, all historic structures, are open Fridays, noon to 4 p.m. Saturdays and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sundays.

■ **COST:** There is no charge to visit any of the museum buildings. There is a day-use fee to enter the park of \$5 per car Monday through Friday and \$6 Saturday and Sunday. Seniors and people who walk into the park admitted free.

■ **INFORMATION:** Call 385-8020 or visit www.mcarlm.org.

1700s through the 1900s.

You'll see surreys, cultivators, plows, seeders, potato planters, a milking machine, butter churn, old gas pump, sickles, hoes, barbed wire, brands and horse clippers "also used to cut the Greenfield boys' hair."

The Spreckels House was built in 1897 on the Spreckels Sugar Co.'s Ranch No. 1. The 24-foot by 26-foot house cost \$1,960. Furnished with antiques from the era, you'll see a child's wicker training potty, a wicker crib, clothing, turn-of-the-century furnishings and a vacuum cleaner run by a manual pump.

Visit old-time store, school

You can step into a post office

and see when mail was delivered for 2 cents per ounce.

At the General Store, you'll see Dr. Blumer's Brain Builders, which sold for 50 cents, Peter's Blood Purifier and Dr. Blumer's White Liniment "for man or beast."

La Gloria School, established in 1873 five miles southeast of Gonzales, was built by local hands and operated until the 1960s. The blackboard reveals initials and a date of 1886 etched by a long-ago student.

Posted copies of teachers' rules include: "skirts slit to expose the ankles are forbidden at all times," and "immediate dismissal for going to dance halls, marriage or other unseemly behavior by women teachers."

The school had two doors, segregated for boys and girls, as well as separate playgrounds.

There also is an outhouse that can seat three at a time.

Built in 1903, the King City Depot operated until the 1980s. Original furnishings include a bench, clock, stove, luggage and mail pick-up poles.

"The irrigation building shows the different stages of the water preservation in south county," Warren said. "I think having the museum has a huge impact here in King City."