



The Big Fresno Fair Museum Celebrating the Past, Present & Future

First debuted in 2013, The Big Fresno Fair Museum showcases a variety of aspects of The Big Fresno Fair throughout its 138-year history – taking visitors on a trip down memory lane and providing younger generations a glimpse of what Fair life was like far before they were born. To date, historical items that have been received range from old programs and trophies to a blue ribbon from 1909.

At this year's Fair, the Museum will be open to the public daily until 8:00 p.m.

Currently, there are more than 4,600 items on display in the Museum highlighting the rich history of The Big Fresno Fair. Below are highlights of just a few of the items currently on display.

1. 17 custom, hand-painted murals depicting various historic moments during the Fair's 138-year history including the First Air Express Flight in 1912 delivering the Fresno Morning Republic newspaper.
2. 42 historical photos from the Claude C. "Pop" Laval collection which were hand-selected, each containing a description and historical facts about a moment in the Fair's history.
3. The first known moving film of The Big Fresno Fair will be playing continuously in the Museum providing a glimpse of Fair-life in 1930; this film was taken by famed photographer Pop Laval.
4. A 100-year-old Fair Banner, along with other banners on display throughout the Fair's history.
5. The original phone switchboard from The Big Fresno Fair.
6. A Pop Laval photograph of J.E. O'Neill, an 18-year Fair board member and the person who donated the building that currently houses the Museum, at the Fair's grandstand in uniform on his horse as part of the Sherriff's posse in 1939 & 1941.
7. First-ever built cotton candy machine dating back to 1921, donated by longtime Fair concessionaire Dan Duggan.
8. A 1930 popcorn machine also donated by Dan Duggan.
9. First-ever Round Robin trophy in 1950 from the Livestock Pavilion donated by the family of Don Laub, which includes a photo of Don Laub being presented the Round Robin trophy by J.E. O'Neill.
10. Two wheels and the harness from a cultivator dating back to 1890 donated by the Caglia Family.
11. An 1870 horse saddle used in Fresno County to round up the cattle donated by the Caglia Family.
12. The oldest Blue Ribbon dating back to 1909.
13. The oldest Fair Program dating back to 1916.
14. A variety of old Fresno Fair posters with the oldest one dating back to 1923.
15. A replica built to scale of the original 1890 Grandstand along with a Pop Laval photo of the actual Grandstand in its heyday.
16. The first-ever Cross City Race Trophy from 1914, including a photo of the winner Oliver Millard receiving his trophy. Also on display is a quilt made up of 23 years of Cross City race t-shirts.
17. Many people don't know this, but in 1889 Wyatt Earp raced his team of horses at the Fresno Fair, and in the Museum is a mural displaying this little-known fact.
18. The beginning of the Fair's Museum Library has begun to take shape with the latest donation from the O'Neill family – a book on J.E. O'Neill titled, "A Mountain Never Too High."



19. A variety of photos of notable community members and businessmen of their days showing or competing at the Fair. Those photos include but are not limited to:
 - Jim Costa in his 4-H uniform
 - John Harris during his University of Davis days
 - Mary Ann Ricchuiti when she was Miss Fresno County
 - Pat Ricchuiti in his FFA uniform.
 - Bob Smittcamp showing his Champion Steer
 - Carolee Boele when she was Dairy Princess
 - Dr. Monte Persons when he was showing his Champion Steer
 - Dr. Troy Ford when he was showing his Champion Steer
20. The beginning of the Fair's Museum Library has begun to take shape with the latest donation from the O'Neill family – a book on J.E. O'Neill titled, "A Mountain Never Too High."
21. The oldest racing programs on record from the Fresno Fair – one from 1942 and the other from 1948.
22. On display in the Museum are a variety of articles from the Fresno Bee as well as the Fresno Morning Republic – one of the highlighted articles is a 1925 article in the Fresno Morning Republic about the Fresno Fair's race track.
23. The oldest harness racing award known from 1909.
24. On display in the Museum are old Fair ads that ran in the Fresno Bee dating back to 1939.
25. An old ticket booth reminiscent of those used in the early Fair days donated by the Caglia Family.
26. Russell Baze, who had the greatest number of victories for any other jockey in history, personally visited the Museum during the 2013 Fair to donate his riding boots and a silk that he wore during his many Big Fresno Fair victories.
27. Dating back to 1909, stalwart daredevils and well-wishers raced their motorcycles in the Grandstand. Sometimes so stripped of accessories, they had to be towed to start their motors and often had no braking capabilities. A 1993 Japanese Motorcycle was generously lent to the Museum by Jerry Turner and family to remember this big part of Fair entertainment history.
28. A 1926 Star generously lent by Al James Reid Ranches is on display on the roof the Museum.
29. The documentary-style video, Heritage Talks, will remain playing continuously in the Museum providing a glimpse of the rich history the Fair has played in the lives of community members ranging from past Building Superintendents, Board of Directors and longtime staff members to longtime concessionaires and horse racing enthusiasts who have led The Big Fresno Fair track to become one of the most popular in the State. Their testimonials and stories are what brings Heritage Talks and, in turn, the Museum to life!

"A lot of work has gone into collecting items, and continues to be put in, for The Big Fresno Fair Museum," said John Alkire, CEO of The Friends of the Big Fresno Fair and the driving force behind the Museum. "This has resulted in some incredible items, stories and photos that offer a glimpse at the richness of our Fair's and Fairground's history."

The Big Fresno Fair Museum provides a way for the community to remember and learn about the history of the Fair, preserving and protecting this rich Valley tradition and what it means to Fresno County residents. The Big Fresno Fair was and continues to be a tradition for Valley families. To support The Big Fresno Fair Museum, please email admin@fresnofof.org. Your donation is tax deductible through the Fair's non-profit Foundation, Friends of the Big Fresno Fair.