

MONTEREY DEPOT CELEBRATING TWO-YEAR MILESTONE MONDAY

by Amy Davis

MONTEREY — Come Monday, the Monterey Depot Museum will have lots to celebrate.

Not only will it have reached its second birthday, it'll be opening a new railroad research library — and possibly have a caboose on the grounds.

“Sometime over the weekend, we’re supposed to have it delivered,” said curator Ken Hall, referring to a 1969 Gondola caboose once used by the Norfolk and Western Railroad. “That was to coincide with the two-year birthday celebration.”

The caboose, which had been stored in Oak Ridge, was purchased last year by the



Monterey Depot Historical Society for \$23,500 from a private owner in Texas.

(Ann Watson, assistant curator at the Monterey Depot Museum, looks over some exhibits. The depot will celebrate its two-year anniversary Monday at 11 a.m. with the unveiling of a new railroad research library and possibly a new

caboose on the grounds. Ty Kernea | Herald-Citizen)

Once it arrives, it'll rest on a 50-foot section of track donated by the Nashville and Eastern Railroad.

That arrival — along with the opening of the railroad research library — makes for a festive way to mark a big occasion, as Monday's celebration at 11 a.m. is exactly two years to the day from when the depot held its grand opening on Feb. 24, 2012.

Since that time, plenty of visitors have explored the grounds — 15,431 so far. So, for Hall, it's been a busy two years.

“Originally, we figured we'd have four to five thousand a year, and we've gone way above that,” he said.

Hall is especially thrilled at the prospect of the 187 books that make up the depot's new railroad research library.

“We have probably what is one of the few railroad research libraries in the country,” he said. “We got the books in October, but it just took us a while to get everything set up.”

The collection had been donated by Illinois railroad enthusiast Stu Mackay, whose photo will be displayed along with the books, all of which will be unveiled Monday.

“People will be able to come in and research most any of the railroads in the United States — past and present, steam to diesel,” Hall said, noting that the research library also has some DVDs.

“It will bring in people from across the country wanting to do research. It will also give the local children a grand opportunity to research and learn more about their history.”

In its short two years as a museum, the Monterey depot has also won several awards, including two from the Tennessee Association of Museums in 2011 and 2012.

“And we’re up for one in 2013,” Hall added, referring to the depot’s exhibit on the 50-year anniversary of the John F. Kennedy assassination.

The depot has also received a Cookeville-Putnam County Clean Commission award as well as an Ovation award for tourism advertising.

“None of it could have been done without all the volunteers we have and the support of the city government for the past six years,” Hall said.

“Community support is what keeps it strong and viable.”

Hall, who is Monterey’s cultural administrator, also pointed out the depot’s economic impact.

“You’re pulling people off the interstate,” he said. “Generally, it’s people who are retired or soon-to-retire who have the time to explore and have the income to spend.

“They come into the depot, and we direct them to local restaurants and businesses. So it’s had an impact.”

The depot has made an impact on its visitors as well.

“Something I find really neat is people who come off the interstate who we show around end up sending us items to display,” Hall said.

“That happens quite a bit. Every month, something comes in from somebody we gave a tour to who thought enough of the depot to share their things.”

It’s meant the depot has had to up its number of display cases to around 22, which is 12

more from when it opened two years ago.

Another popular addition has been the large HO scale model train exhibit — a replica of Monterey in the 1950s.

But the depot offers more than train history.

“We’re also a regional history museum, so we’ve got a lot on the history of Monterey High School, the former Monterey hospital and memorabilia from the Monterey Fire Department,” Hall said. “We’ve also got a lot of items on the war effort — everything from the Revolutionary War up to Afghanistan.”

The depot, located at One East Depot St., is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday from 1-4 p.m., offering guided tours for each visitor, and admission is free. To learn more, call 931-839-2111.

What’s next for the Monterey depot?

“Immediate plans are, once we get the caboos on the property, to start restoring it,” Hall said, noting that the cost would be around \$15-\$20,000 over a period of time.

“I’m real excited about that.”

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