



**HERITAGE
FRESNO**

Enriching the future by preserving the past.

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August 2013 • Volume X, Number II

"My Brain is Cloudy, My Soul is Upside Down..."

Bob Wills' Triple B Ranch

Bob Wills, the "King of Western Swing," is part of the rich cultural and musical heritage of Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley. From 1945-1950 he owned an 80-acre ranch, the "Triple B," on the eastern edge of the city. Texas born Wills was the most popular country musician during the 1930s and 1940s and was ultimately inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame, the Jazz Hall of Fame, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, was posthumously granted a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award (2007) and is one of only four country music stars to be featured on a U.S. postage stamp. Wills and his band, the Texas Playboys also appeared in numerous Hollywood films, including the 1940 *Take Me Back to Oklahoma* with Tex Ritter.

So what's the Fresno connection? In 1943, Wills moved to Hollywood following a short stint in the Army and reorganized the Playboys. The band had a huge following among the thousands of "Okies" from the Southwest who relocated to California during the Depression and World War II. The Texas Playboys often played dances at the Big Fresno Barn and apparently Wills liked what he saw here in Fresno. He was first and foremost a country boy and farmer and had been looking for a place to put down roots. He moved his wife and young son to the Triple B in June, 1945, and by 1946, he had acquired 30 head of quarter mares and a stud and was looking to purchase hogs and cattle as well. According to his daughter Carolyn, his happiest years were here in Fresno where he hoped to retire.

"My brain is cloudy my soul is upside down..." It is easy to visualize Wills and lead singer Tommy Duncan, sitting on the front porch of the Triple B, working out the lyrics to this great song. "Brain Cloudy Blues" is one of many composed and recorded by Wills and the Texas Playboys during their tenure here in Fresno. Wills reluctantly sold the ranch in 1950 and for the next several years, rodeo star Lex Connelly lived there with his family. ***Please see Triple B Ranch on page 2...***

Mark your Calendar . . . Two events this fall!

Monday, September 30th at 7:00 p.m.

"The Valley's Architectural Heritage"

Local historian Bill Secret, Jr. will expatiate on a PowerPoint presentation — A Regional Architectural Survey of major buildings and sites from Stockton to Bakersfield. Of particular interest, he will bring attention to grand, landmark theaters and hotels. This meeting will take place at the Woodward Regional Library, Champlain & Perrin Avenues. Light refreshments will be served at 6:30 p.m. prior to Mr. Secret's 7:00 p.m. presentation. Free & open to the public.

Co-sponsored by the Fresno County Public Library and Heritage Fresno.

Saturday, October 19th at 10:30 a.m.

Tour of Armenian Town Homes — Lecture — Lunch, featuring Armenian Cuisine

Tour the five, little homes that have been carefully restored to recall the history of the Armenian citizens of Fresno's past. We will then move to the social hall of the architectural jewel, Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, 2226 Ventura at M Streets, to hear a program, a brief history of Armenian Town and the restoration of the homes. A delicious, Armenian lunch will be prepared for our "tourists." If you would like to be one of the tourists and enjoy lunch, you may enclose \$15.00 per person in the envelope provided in this newsletter. We hope to see you at both events!

HERITAGE FRESNO

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Heritage Fresno Mission Statement

Heritage Fresno is dedicated to preserving historic sites, districts, buildings and objects. We encourage research and education in the field of historic preservation. We help insure that preservation law is upheld.

Ways to accomplish this goal are by

Research and publication of educational material on history and architecture of historic buildings, historic districts and sites.

Upholding Preservation Law to protect the public's interest in preservation of historic buildings, sites, districts and objects.

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www.heritagefresno.org



Near completion!

The five, little homes that are the last remnants of "Old Armenian Town" are very close to complete restoration. Landscaping will add much to the layout, but as you can see in the photos, the beautiful window and porch features that made them so attractive have been faithfully restored! Architect Michelle Randall has worked with the City of Fresno to make this happen.

We hope you will be able to join us on October 19th to see these homes up close. Several speakers will be on hand prior to lunch to talk about details of the restoration effort.

Many thanks to Karana Hattersley-Drayton, Historic Preservation Project Manager, City of Fresno for her assistance in bringing this project to fruition!

Triple B Ranch, continued from page 1.

The vernacular one story wood frame house, outbuildings and alleé of olive trees were included in property purchased several years ago by Granville Homes for a proposed tract development. In August, 2011, the site was identified by local country music aficionados as that of Wills' Triple B Ranch. Through research and cross-checking, City staff was able to confirm the location, in part through photos and oral history from Wills' daughter Carolyn, who was born on the ranch in 1946. Unfortunately the property had already been environmentally assessed and the developer was unwilling to include the ranch in the project footprint. However, a local family with roots in Oklahoma and country music, has negotiated an agreement with the developer, and the ranch house is being relocated to a 20-acre parcel south of Prather, where it will serve as a museum of country music and a tribute to Wills.

Karana Hattersley-Drayton (Historic Preservation Project Manager, City of Fresno)

Meet the new member of our Heritage Fresno Board of Directors!

Heritage Fresno welcomes Kris Clarke, Ph.D. to the Board of Directors. Kris is an Associate Professor of Social Work Education, California State University, Fresno. She has worked as a docent at the University of Helsinki, Finland and was an appointed member of the Mayoral Blue Ribbon Commission on Affordable Housing from 2009—2011.

Dr. Clarke studied at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, where she received her BA in English. She continued studies at the University of Tampere, Finland, receiving a Master of Social Science degree; then a Licentiate in Social Work, and completed her Doctor of Social Science in Social Work in 2005.

Kris brings depth and dedication to the Preservation of Fresno's Historic Resources. She is presently working on a project to interview and preserve oral histories of Fresno's Chinese-Americans. She has recently toured the underground tunnels of Fresno's Chinatown with Historic Preservation Project Manager, Karana Hattersley-Drayton. Kris brings her CSUF students to historic districts in Fresno for Saturday tours. The students are then challenged to write a "reflection paper." Welcome, Kris!

Winston Churchill said: "We shape our buildings and then our buildings shape us."
Contributed by Roger B. Taylor, Heritage Fresno Board Member

----- **Heritage Fresno Donors - August 1, 2012 through July 31, 2013** -----

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Heritage Fresno appreciates your support and generosity for the cause of historic preservation. All contributions are tax deductible as Heritage Fresno is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization registered with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and the California State Franchise Tax Board. All donations will be gratefully acknowledged in our newsletter.

Bring your photos!!! When we gather on September 30th for the presentation by Bill Secrest, Jr. (See page 1 for details.), we welcome photos that you would like to share with the attendees at the meeting. Bring your photos of grand, landmark theaters, hotels and other historic buildings that you think might be of interest to others. We will have a board available for posting. If you have questions about this you may call our Heritage Fresno number: (559) 243-5848. Thank you in advance for your interest!

Campaign to help prevent the destruction of the Fulton Mall— Downtown Coalition

Our preservation colleagues, The Downtown Coalition, have asked for our assistance in helping to preserve the Fulton Mall.

If you have read the inserted flyer "Help Us Prevent the Destruction of Fulton Mall" and would like to help the The Downtown Coalition in their campaign, please fill out the bottom portion of their flyer, make your check payable to **1000 Friends of Fresno**, and mail your information and the check to: **1000 Friends of Fresno, 4781 E. Gettysburg Ave., Fresno, CA 93726.**

Please note that the **enclosed envelope** is addressed to **Heritage Fresno** and is intended for use in sending donations to Heritage Fresno or to reserve lunch on October 19th.



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Our Heritage Fresno website is a work in progress. Your patience is appreciated.

What we are about—Heritage Fresno is dedicated to preserving historic sites, districts, buildings and objects. We encourage research and education in the field of historic preservation.
We help insure that preservation law is upheld. If you support our goals, we would appreciate your active interest and financial support. We thank you for your participation in the cause of preservation in Fresno!

HERITAGE FRESNO

Membership Form

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Thank-you for your contribution to Heritage Fresno!
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 All donations are tax-deductible.
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Membership Information:
(559) 243-5848