

# THE MAIL CAR

April 2021



Bishop Museum  
& Historical Society  
dba  
Laws Railroad Museum  
& Historical Site  
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## It's Raffle Time!



**Tickets are only \$5 each or 5 for \$20.** Drawing will be held June 15, 2021. Please make checks payable to Laws Railroad Museum PO Box 363, Bishop CA 93515 or log on to [www.LawsMuseum.org](http://www.LawsMuseum.org), click Join Our Family, then One Time Donation. Please note for Quilt Raffle.

For more shopping fun check out our new online store at <https://laws-railroad-museum-historical-site.myshopify.com/>



Pete Watercott

## A Message From The President

As summer 2021 approaches the future looks bright for Laws Railroad Museum and Historical Site! 2020 was a tough year for our community, country, and also our museum. We are grateful to our members and partners for their generous support of Laws Museum through this difficult time. Last year's highlights included our "Non-Event Fundraiser" which earned as much as a Choo-Choo Swap Meet, a matching grant from Death Valley Conservancy to refresh our big sign at the Tri-County Fairgrounds, and the donation of beautiful hand-crafted quilts by Kathryn Daniels and Laurie Morrow, to be raffled in support of the museum. Our administrator, Raven Angeles, diligently secured PPP funding and low interest loans to bolster museum finances. Inyo County announced it was to prioritize Prop 68 funds for improvements at Diaz Lake campground and Laws Museum. This funding for Laws is nearly \$170K for water system and fire suppression improvements.

In mid-March the museum grounds were opened for the public to enjoy. As the pandemic picture brightens, and Inyo County enters the red tier or below, we will have a full opening of the museum and its exhibits. As we move forward, the museum will strive to be in compliance with all State and County guidelines to protect our visitors, volunteers and staff.

Looking forward to the coming months the board recently set building maintenance as our number one priority for the year. The new "Adopt-A-Building" program, will make it possible to dedicate your support to the restoration and maintenance of the building or exhibit most important to you. Volunteers are busy scraping and preparing the rail cars attending the Slim Princess for a new coat of paint. We will look forward to offering Brill Car rides once again this summer, the Curley Fletcher Birthday Poetry Rendezvous returning the last weekend of September, and the Choo-Choo Swap Meet taking place on the first Saturday of October.

Get the most up to date museum information at [lawsmuseum.org](http://lawsmuseum.org), where board member, Ted Williams, has completed a very comprehensive "virtual tour" of all the buildings on the museum grounds!

As everything begins to green up and come to life, it is a great time to visit or volunteer at Laws Museum!

## The Buildings of Laws Museum

by Ted Williams

As a supporter of the Laws Railroad Museum and Historical Site, you are a part of its lineage. You have joined a long line of enthusiasts whose roots go back to 1964 with the formation of the Bishop Museum and Historical Society. Founded initially to save the Laws Depot, Slim Princess train and ancillary buildings from decay, Society members reached out across the Owens Valley to gather and bring together tangible history that now resides at the Laws Museum. Continued on next page.



Circa 1900 ranch house built by the Shaw family on their chicken ranch. Moved from the corner of Brockman Lane and US 395.



**Hoyle's History** It was just another early warm spring day as I opened the gift shop for another slow business day, as we were still coming out of a cold wet winter. Not expecting a lot of people I went about my routine as a vehicle pulled into the parking lot, so as I prepared for the first visitors, Barbara Moss came in the back office door and wished me a "good morning."

The clamorous cow bell rang and there were my first visitors of the day, so I returned the "good morning" greeting to Barbara and walked up front to greet the couple who had walked in. After a brief talk about the museum and giving them a brochure, they told me that they had driven from Florida on a cross country field trip to see the sights, but their goal

was to come to Laws. I was surprised to hear that a three thousand mile trip had ended up here. You know me, and of course I had to know why? They told me there were some family donations here that had been given to Laws years and years ago. They were not sure how much had been donated, but their main interest was in a quilt or tapestry or a shawl that had belonged to the wife's great grandfather from the days of the civil war era. Since it was a slow day, I took them back to meet Barbara to see if we could figure out where in the museum their family donations could be. Some time passed in the office but Barbara emerged to tell me that the item they were interested in was somewhere in the library hanging on a wall. Since the library was closed, I asked if I could go over and let them in. Barbara said "of course" and she would cover till I returned.

As we walked over to the library they told me a story of how during the civil war her great grandfather had been a spy for the north and he had gone into the south on a mission. We walked into the cool, dank, dark library as it had not been opened for some time and you could smell it, then after firing up the swamp cooler, we began our search. Since we were not quite sure what we were looking for we fanned out as I noticed that everything hanging on the walls were mostly pictures and oil paintings of Laws and saw no quilts or tapestries so we started up and down the aisles looking at everything and I have to tell you they were very impressed by what everything in there. I thought to myself, this might be fruitless when suddenly she let out a shriek, "I found it!!" Her husband and I went over to the glass case she was standing in front of and indeed there it was, a greyish/white shawl with a blue border and it was thick as it lay there folded in half. I had no keys to open the glass case so she could touch it or hold it, but there was a nice write-up on a three by five index card, and between the tears she told me what was not on that card. Apparently he was stranded in the south with no way back, so after completing his mission, he put this item on and wrapped it carefully around him and also put on a grey women's wig and successfully made his way north, the rest is history. Small world. Go Sox!!

## The Buildings of Laws Museum

Continued from previous page.

The quest was more than just gathering antiques and period pieces; they would eventually need a place to be displayed. So in a bold move volunteers decided to uproot entire buildings and transport them to the museum. Imagine seeing a full size house being towed down the center of Main Street in Bishop...on an interstate highway.

When you walk the grounds of the Laws Museum, you are surrounded by historic buildings that represent everyday life going back to the late 1880s. From a post office to ranch houses, boxcars to famous movie props, the museum has created an immersive experience. One of the buildings, the Library & Arts Building, originally a Catholic church, looks as if it was built right where it stands...it was not. The entire structure was lifted off the ground from its original location in Bishop and transported intact to the museum, an impressive feat.

A few of the structures at Laws are recreated, built of salvaged materials from old-time buildings that were either demolished or had withered with age. The blacksmith shop, for instance, was constructed of stones from Bishop Pioneer Hardware that sold merchandise as far back as 1900, and was still selling hardware up until around the year 2000. Many of the buildings at Laws are original, and over 100 years old. A complete ranch home (circa 1900) rests on the Museum grounds, filled with period furnishings. The original 1909 "North Inyo Schoolhouse" can also be found here as well. The buildings at the Laws Railroad Museum and Historical Site are not just something read about in the pages of a history book, they are here for you to see and touch. Entering within, you'll be transported back in time with items of everyday life.

As a supporter, you are part of an unending pursuit to collect and maintain a priceless connection to Owens Valley's historic past. See *the buildings* on your smartphone at [lawsmuseum.org/tour](http://lawsmuseum.org/tour).



Love to read? May 15th is your lucky day.

Join us from 10:00 to 1:00 for our used book sale.