San Diego Landmark Celebrated its 75th Anniversary

The historic San Diego Ford Building, home to the San Diego Air and Space Museum, was originally built to house the Ford Industrial exhibition for the California Pacific International Exhibition of 1935-36, turned 75 on May 29, 2010.

San Diego’s Ford Building was constructed in 1935 for the California Pacific International Exposition and housed the Ford Motor Company’s industrial and automotive display. Ford was the largest exhibitor at the exposition, investing $2 million (equivalent to more than $31 million in today’s dollars) to build a showcase for its 1935 line of automobiles and new V-8 engine. Construction began on a 24-hour a day, 7-day a week schedule and was finished in 88 days. The large exhibit building was designed by the noted industrial designer Walter Dorwin Teague. The building he designed was a masterpiece of “Streamlined Moderne” architecture. This innovative design made the Ford structure stand out at the exposition, since the rest of the exposition buildings were designed in Spanish Renaissance. Consequently, the Ford building became the centerpiece of the 1935-1936 exposition.

The building entrance introduced people to the “Court of the Pacific Nations” with two 40-foot high murals, “the Spirit of Asia” and “the Spirit of America.” Further inside, the building featured large industrial exhibits that took visitors through the process of making a V-8 Ford engine. Especially popular was the exhibit where a Ford worker would assemble and disassemble a Ford V-8. Outside the building was the Ford Music bowl, now known as the Starlight Theatre. Here visitors could listen to free concerts throughout the 1935-1936 exposition.

One of the major highlights of the exposition was Ford’s “Roads of the Pacific”. Visitors could take a tour along different Pacific roads in a new Ford V-8 model. Young Ford-trained drivers drove the vehicles while educating passengers about the virtues of the new Ford cars and the history of the Pacific roads. Over 4.8 million people visited the California Pacific International Exposition with a reported 2.5 million people visiting the Ford exhibit. The “Roads of the Pacific” drew an estimated 480,000 visitors in 1935. The Ford exhibit closed for 1936 and the building was renamed the Palace of Transportation. While not as successful as the Ford exhibit it still remained a popular attraction in 1936.

Message from the Head Archivist

Online Exhibition Series. In an effort to raise awareness of our collections, the Library & Archives will be doing a series of online exhibitions. All exhibitions will focus on San Diego’s history. The first to be presented online, scheduled to launch on May 29th, 2010, honors our historic Ford Building. The next in the series will be in celebration of the 75th anniversary of Consolidated Aircraft Corporation (later Convair), which relocated to San Diego and opened its doors here on October 20, 1935. Founded by Rueben H. Fleet in 1923, after Convair relocated to San Diego, it became one of the most significant aircraft manufacturers in American history. The Convair online exhibit will launch in October 2010. The last scheduled 2010 exhibition will focus on San Diego’s contributions to Naval Aviation. Starting in 1911, San Diego’s North Island was home to one of the nation’s first aviation schools, training the Navy’s first aviator, Theodore Ellyson. Today NAS North Island is part of the largest aerospace-industrial complex in the Navy and is headquarters for the Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet. For more information on these online exhibits contact the Library & Archives or visit us on the Museum website.
San Diego’s Ford Building was one of five buildings designed for the Ford Motor Company to be used as exposition halls during the 1930s. Today, the San Diego structure is the last remaining Ford building in existence. The building is listed on the San Diego City Historical Site Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

**Upcoming Publication.** In honor of the 75th anniversary celebration, the Museum is pleased to announce the release of a new book. *Wheels to Wings: San Diego’s Ford Building* chronicles the complex and fascinating history of San Diego’s Ford Building. *Wheels to Wings* is a limited edition print available for purchase in the Museum Store or online at [www.sandiegoairandspace.org](http://www.sandiegoairandspace.org). Retail price is $15.

Ms. Villar was born in New York state (where her parents immigrated from Argentina), and her family moved to northern California when she was only 6 months old. Her parents were the first to instill in her a love of museums, and both are supporters of education inside and *outside* the classroom. As such, travels often included taking Stephanie and her younger brother to fantastic museums. When her family moved to San Diego in 2001, one of the first places they visited was Balboa Park and it quickly became one of Stephanie’s favorite sites in the city. Thus inspired, Stephanie is looking to continue her education in Museum Studies. She enjoys photography and loves to read and write; attributes that make her very much at home in our Library & Archives.

Her first task was identifying, cataloging and digitizing a private collection of slides taken at Lindbergh Field. After quickly completing this job, Stephanie has moved on to the daunting task of caring for our large collection of 35mm aircraft slides. Next time you are in the Library & Archives, say hello to Stephanie. You will quickly see why we are very lucky to have this talented young lady as a member of our L&A family.

**SDASM Leading the Effort of Digitizing Aerospace History for Future Generations**

To preserve and make more accessible the Library & Archives moving and still image collection, the staff of the San Diego Air & Space Museum, with assistance from the Balboa Park Online Collaborative (BPOC), have stepped up their comprehensive program of digitization. This process is being made possible, in large part, by a generous grant from the Legler Benbough Foundation.

The SDASM Library and Archives houses one of the largest and most unique collections of air and space moving and still image collections in the world. The collection includes images of approximately 95% of aircraft that were ever conceived. Other highlights include the complete history of PSA Airlines, a large AVG photo collection, rare Lindbergh photos, original Spirit of St. Louis flight film and a video history of Convair. Our complete collection contains over two million photos, negatives, slides and transparencies, along with several thousand films and videos.

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**Improving our Collection Storage Areas**

Last year the Library & Archives began a fundraising campaign to raise $90,000 to install environmental controls in all the collection storage rooms. Because of the age of the building, there were no existing temperature or humidity controls. As a priority project to prolong the life of the collection, the Museum successfully raised the funds and is waiting for permits to begin the project. Thank you to everyone who helped make this possible.

**Volunteer Spotlight**

The Library and Archives has recently been lucky enough to acquire the services of a knowledgeable and eager intern, Stephania Villar. Although she has been working in the archives only a few short months, Stephania has already contributed immensely to our digitization effort.
The digitization process has two primary goals: preservation and accessibility. After being identified and cataloged, the photos, films, and videos are converted to files which are then stored on hard drives. These files can be backed up to multiple sites, so if an original is destroyed (as is what happened in the 1978 Museum fire) the images are preserved. In addition, digitization allows for greater accessibility—visitors, staff, researchers, and the press can readily view the collection either at the Museum or via the internet.

Our digitization process started about 10 years ago, and was primarily done by dedicated Library volunteers (Dick Shied, Dennis Stewart, Miles Todd and Nick Galatis). However, with limited volunteer/staff time and equipment, only so much could be accomplished, and because these materials degrade quickly, time was of the essence.

The recent grant provides funding for a full time Library & Archives staff member dedicated to overseeing the main steps of digitization. Former Assistant Archivist, Alan Renga, will head this project as Photo Archivist, and will be assisted once again by volunteers and interns. In addition to providing us with their technical expertise, the Balboa Park Online Collaborative has purchased high speed digitization equipment which the Air & Space Museum can utilize.

To make our photo collection more accessible, the L&A has begun to upload its digital images onto Flickr.com. By granting access to the collection online with Flickr.com, anyone from around the world can view, tag and comment on the images, thereby adding valuable content and context to the collection. To date, sixty-four thousand images have been uploaded, and more than 100,000 should be online before the end of the year, making the SDASM owner of one of the largest online collections of aviation images in the world. Please contact the Library & Archives staff for more information, or to see how you can help with this important preservation effort.

**Coming Soon**

Offered for sale in the Museum’s store, *The Convair Advanced Designs* book by Robert Bradley covers the predesigns, proposals, and designs studies conducted by the San Diego Division of Convair during the period of 1923 to the mid-1960s. Included are the seaplanes and the bomber projects and programs accomplished at this Division. The source material for this book was found in the extensive historical archive materials at SDASM, donated by General Dynamics when they closed their San Diego Division. The book was written by a long time Convair/GD veteran, who since his retirement has been a volunteer in the SDASM Library & Archives.

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**Welcome to the Newest Library & Archives Staff Member**

We have a new addition to the Library & Archives staff. Please join me in welcoming Nelson Chase as the new Library & Archives’ Research Assistant. Nelson will be assisting Museum staff, volunteers, researchers, students, and members of the general public in accessing and interpreting contents of the collection. Nelson joined our staff after Alan took on a new assignment as the Photo Archivist, working on a special 2-year digitization project.

Nelson is a native to San Diego with a passion for aviation and local history. He received a B.A. in History with a minor in Theology and Religious Studies and is currently completing his Master’s degree in History, both from the University of San Diego. As an undergraduate, Nelson was an archival intern at the San Diego Historical Society.

Prior to joining the SDASM staff, Nelson worked as a Graduate Assistant in the Office of Financial Aid at the University of San Diego and also as a substitute teacher for the Cajon Valley School District. He served in the United States Army and is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom.
SDASM’s Library & Archives is Now on Facebook!

The Museum’s Library & Archives is joining the social network revolution. Volunteers, Interns, and Friends of the Library & Archives can now follow us on Facebook and on our new blog. Our Facebook page is facebook.com/SDASMLA and our blog is blogs.sandiegoairandspace.org/library.

By becoming a fan and following our blog, you can stay up to date with the latest news, volunteer information, publications, and photos of the Library & Archives.

Recommend us to all your family and friends, and help spread the word about our mission to “Collect... Preserve...and Make Available” Aerospace history.

Open for Research

The SDASM Library & Archives collection is accessible for research. Staff and/or volunteers are available for assistance. Appointments should be made in advance by calling 619-234-8291, x125, or emailing nchase@sdasm.org, prior to your visit. Information can often be pulled prior to your visit if we are aware of your research request. Contact the Library & Archives staff for research rules and regulations.

SDASM Library & Archives
Hours of Operation

Tuesday to Friday, 10:00am – 4:00p.m.
(Closed on Mondays, weekends, federal holidays, and for some special Museum functions)