

Anacortes Antique Machinery Show

ANTIQUA MACHINERY SHOW ENDS TWENTY YEAR RUN IN 2015

After two decades of entertaining and educating the public, organizers of the machinery show decided to bow out after the 2015 show held on Saturday, September 12 at 6th Street and T Avenue in Anacortes.

It was in 1996 that Anacortes Museum Director Karen Marshall and Francis A. Orr realized that many of the citizens living in Anacortes had no idea of its industrial, maritime and agricultural history. Many of the contiguous states were holding farm reunions featuring the early methods and machinery of farming. Karen and Frank agreed that something along these lines might be just the thing to showcase Anacortes history.

Educate

The first event was scheduled on the Museum grounds on September 21, 1996. There were three exhibitors and 450 attendees. With no room to grow, the Anacortes Antique Machinery Show moved to the corner of 9th and Q and then to its final local at Market and 6th. After two decades of entertaining and educating the public, the 20th and final show was held at this location on September 12, 2015. Close to 4000 people attended and there were some 90 exhibitors.

Machinery buffs from across the Northwest came to the show, hauling tons of gas, steam and kerosene-fueled machines large and small. Featured equipment included tractors, steam and other antique machinery, gas engines, models, logging tools, steamboats, fire trucks, motorized bicycles, steam whistles and much more. These engines were the technology that powered mills, factories and farms of days gone by. There was a visual and auditory feast for the senses; engines chugged, thumped and whistled while steam puffed out of smoke stacks. Calliope music gave the shows a carnival atmosphere.



Exhibitors were encouraged to bring working exhibits as a unique way to educate both young and old in the procedures and equipment that made America a great industrial nation. Clarence Ricks was an exhibitor from the first show to the last. His wife, Lois, participated in a number of the shows demonstrating knife sharpening, chair caning and other crafts.

Small steamboats, belonging to members of the Northwest Steam Society, started showing up in later years. While most of them were on trailers and able to participate in the machinery parade, a number were in the water and able to give rides. Anacortes resident Fred Beeks used to launch his steamboat from the Washington Park ramp.



Machinery Show...

The most notable attendee, was the “Burma Queen,” built in Germany as a harbor police boat. She was steamed from the Kingston Harbor to Anacortes arriving at 5:00 a.m. On a moonless night her running lights and engine room sounds, including signal bells, made a never to be forgotten impression as she entered Cap Sante harbor.

The largest attendee was also a boat (but not in the water). The Anacortes Museum waived the entrance fee to the *W.T. Preston* during the show. In 2015, some 290 visitors walked her decks learning about her history and her mission for the Corps of Engineers.



The show always included a lot of antique gas engines but there was only one engine-powered outhouse.



Entertain



Passing away at the age of 101, Russell Hibler outlasted the show. He was a participant in most of them with exhibits of his steam cars (full size and model) and marine steam engines that he had built for his steamboats. He even had a steam powered outboard!

While machinery is mostly a male endeavor, the Show tried hard to provide things of interest for the women and the young people. In addition to the machines, the women got to see quilting, spinning and sewing exhibits. The kids had hands-on fun hammering golf tees into potatoes and nails into stumps, or tried to pump the water out of a barrel with an antique hand pump. There were also hay rides and train rides. Coloring pictures could sometimes be a real mess.



For the last three years, Keith Sternberg of Lopez Island, provided rides on some 200' of track on the 1.5" scale locomotive that he built. Through the auspices of Antique Machinery Show Vice President, Eric Erickson, The Issaquah Historical Society, annually loaned the show its hand powered rail car and trailer. Going back and forth on 400' of track, it provided rides for young and old. The oldsters could remember Buster Keaton pumping one of these hand cars in “The General.”

Machinery Show...



Most of the twenty shows would feature a blacksmith. Wayne Lewis of Coupeville, was a long time participant followed by Mark Tibbles and his son Andrew.

The shows gave visitors a great opportunity to see how the machines operated, to meet and talk with the owner/operators, and learn why these marvels were such a vital part of everyday life not so many years ago. Back in those days, the steam whistle ruled, blowing when it was time to go to work, break for lunch, finish for the day or respond to an emergency like a fire.

The winner of the Grand Prize for both crowd pleasing and for all out effort had to be Doug Blackburn. Doug loved to bring his 1899, horse drawn steam fire engine, hauling it all the way from LaCenter.



He finally reached the top when the show was able to provide him with a horse team, enabling him to lead the parade that was started in the last few years.

Parades



The seventeenth show featured a fire truck parade that included the 1899 fire engine featured in the movie "Hello Dolly" and the Anacortes Fire Department's newly restored 1924 American LaFrance fire truck.



Fun!

Second prize would go to Nels Lagerlund of Burlington whose twelve-ton 40 HP J.I. Case steam tractor was a consistent crowd pleaser.



Machinery Show...

Tractors, steam and gas engines, wood turners, blacksmiths, steamboats and cars, electric machinery, wood splitters, rock crushers, pumps, models, spinning and weaving, lots of "I remember when," or "Grandpa had one of those," were all part of 20 years of the Anacortes Antique Machinery Show. Admission was never charged and exhibitors were rewarded with a brass plaque or belt buckle from the Anacortes Brass Works.



The Anacortes Museum worked with the Anacortes Antique Machinery Show organization, providing assistance with membership lists, publicity and registration. Support also came from the City of Anacortes, the Port of Anacortes, Ace Hardware, Sebo's Hardware, the Anacortes Noon Kiwanis and Morning Kiwanis clubs, the Depot Market and many private donations.

A museum retains the history of a city, especially one like Anacortes where few of its 14,000 residents grew up here. As Francis Orr reminds us, "How can you know where you are going, if you don't know where you have been?"



Machinery Show...



Tommy Thompson's Train



Members of the group had hoped to hand over the event to a younger generation, but were unable to find young machinery buffs with the time and passion to carry on. Instead, the group members discontinued the show and have turned their focus to rail-road-related projects, turning their 501c3 into the Anacortes Railroad.

It has been the museum's privilege to get to know these interesting and passionate machine enthusiasts and to work with them over the years.

Thanks for the memories!

Prepared by Anacortes Museum Staff with input from Francis A. Orr and Eric Erickson