

## VETERANS MEMORIAL RETURNS TO LOCAL OWNERSHIP

The American Legion Hall in Crockett, a memorial to World War I soldiers, has been transferred from County ownership and now belongs to Crockett. The District Board of the Crockett Community Services District (Crockett CSD) formally accepted the deed to this historic property on October 28.

The Legion Hall (officially named Memorial Hall) occupies a prominent site at the corner of Alexander and Pomona. It was built by ~~C&H Sugar Company~~ and dedicated in 1925 to honor the soldiers of World War I and the American Legion. Building contractor Frank H. Kress and many of his workers were members of the American Legion or the Spanish American War Veterans. A bronze plaque at the entrance, bearing the names of twelve local men who died in the Great War, was dedicated by Crockett Post No. 33 of the American Legion.

Inscribed on the outer walls of the memorial are famous sayings by four of America's war presidents. "To be prepared for war is one of the most effective means of preserving peace." - George Washington. "Do not destroy that immortal emblem of humanity - the Declaration of Independence." - Abraham Lincoln. "We want no wars of conquest; we must avoid the temptation of territorial aggression." - William McKinley. "There are no days when we should be more patriotic than on other days." - Woodrow Wilson.

This octagonal building is far more spacious than passers-by would suspect. Beneath the ground floor meeting hall is another full floor housing a kitchen and dining hall. Over the years it has served both the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and older residents of Crockett can remember weddings, dances and other functions held there. In recent years, it has been leased to a World War II submariners group, but it has been vacant for the past year.

County Supervisor Gayle Uilkema approached Crockett CSD last spring on possibly receiving this property, which the county could not afford to maintain. To gauge local interest, Crockett CSD held an open house on Memorial Day and invited residents to comment on whether to accept the property. A throng of around 300 people eagerly toured the Legion Hall and filled out questionnaires. Well over 99% of respondents supported the acquisition and repair of the memorial, and dozens of public uses were proposed for it. This strong support encouraged the District Board to step forward as the new owner and steward of the memorial. A formal key exchange between Supervisor Uilkema's office and Crockett CSD occurred on November 7 as part of ConocoPhillips' "Walk of Honor" across the Carquinez Bridge in support of veterans.

The preliminary plans of Crockett CSD call for simultaneous efforts on parallel tracks. The inspection track is already underway. Volunteers will inspect, measure and photograph every aspect of the memorial. The outreach track will encourage residents to volunteer ideas, time and energy to the project and will seek grants and donations. The restoration track will conduct engineering review and manage construction efforts. Equally important, the community use track will develop and propose a range of public uses of the property including use by veterans.

Many thanks to Larry Schwafel for decades of volunteer grounds maintenance at the Legion Hall! New volunteers are also needed, and some have been quick to step forward. Mike Kirker is photographing every part of the building for historical record. Darcy Trask and Frances Dahl have volunteered to help with building measurements. Musician Jim Nunally has volunteered to test the acoustics. Bud Burlison has volunteered to inspect the electrical wiring. And, Scott Lawton wants to form a local veterans group. We'll need others to help clean the interior, do

minor repairs and other such tasks. Who would like to paint the flagpole?

For those more interested in research, we need volunteers to document the history of the Legion Hall and the various ways it has been put to use over its lifetime. We need people to document the memories of citizens who remember attending functions there long ago and who may have photographs of such events. We need others to build contact information for local veterans alive today as well as veterans' organizations operating today. Has anyone local ever served with the USO or have an interest in it? Does anyone local have knowledge of color guards and other such ceremonial groups available today for assistance with events? Do you have flags or military memorabilia you would consider donating to this project? Please come forward at any time to join us in this adventure.

Crockett CSD intends to treat the Legion Hall with patience, care and respect. Crockett has the professional skills needed to return this memorial to its former glory. Some of the architectural features that disappeared years ago will be uncovered and restored. These include tall windows and a copper roof. Local veterans will be encouraged to participate every step of the way. This could open the way to establishing a training program or support program for veterans who need help reentering the civilian workforce after duty overseas. Anyone interested in supporting this worthy project in any way is invited to contact Crockett CSD at (510) 787-2992 or [manager@town.crockett.ca.us](mailto:manager@town.crockett.ca.us)

We are now building a mailing list of people who want to be kept informed about this project. Many signed up at our open house on Memorial Day. Anyone local may ask to be included by sending his or her contact information at any time. We will also send a speaker to any local organization on request. Working together we can all take pride in restoring this historic asset for continuing public benefit!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL!

Kent Peterson  
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Crockett CSD  
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