

Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center City Council Report

January 2015

Introduction

The Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center was founded in 2008. The museum preserves and displays the art and history of our community. We serve about 23,000 visitor each year at the museum and through our website. We contract with the City of Calico Rock to provide visitor center services, which include a public restroom, visitor information, and public meeting space. Because the city does not have a website, we provide website services that promote relocation and visitor information. We field thousands of phone calls each year. Our onsite visitors primarily come from Arkansas, Texas, Missouri and Tennessee, but they have come from every state in the nation. We have had visitors in 2014 from Israel, New Zealand and Brazil.

The museum provides educational programs for elementary school classes on a regular basis using retired professional educators. We host public events that draw thousands of people into Calico Rock each year. All of these events, as well as museum admission, is always free.

We partner with local artisans to sell their handcrafted items in the museum gift shop which stimulates our local economy, helps support the museum operations, and adds sales tax revenue for the city.

It is an honor and privilege to provide the one of the finest small museums in the country to Calico Rock. We value our partnership with the city of Calico Rock and look forward to many years of working together to continue improving our community.

December Monthly Statistics

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----|--------------------|----|
| Visitors | 420 | Meeting Attendance | 34 |
| Special Functions | 642 | | |

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|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Visitor Contacts: 1,396 | Cooperative Sales: \$2,290 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

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| 2014 Total Visitor Contacts: 23,195 |
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We closed 2014 with a 5% increase in cooperative gift sales and visitor contacts were on par with those of 2013, despite extremely poor weather in the first two months of the year. We have been tracking data for the past three years and realize a growth trend in both the visitor contacts, especially usage of our website, and in gift sales. The gift sales, in my opinion, offer some of the best indications of success. Why?

Visitor contact data shows who enters the building, who clicks on a website, or who makes a telephone call. But, they don't reveal how long someone stays in the building, if they are looking at exhibits, or if they are, let's say, just using a public restroom and maybe getting a few brochures. The sales data goes deeper. It shows that these visitors are spending enough time that they are finding merchandise they want to buy. This is significant. When we combine the number of brochures taken each year, we see a greater image of success.

Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center City Council Report

February 2015

January Monthly Statistics

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----|--------------------|----|
| Visitors | 315 | Meeting Attendance | 15 |
| Special Functions | 0 | School Programs | 50 |

Total Monthly Visitor Contacts: 380

News and Information

The unseasonably good weather in January increased our visitor attendance over previous Januarys and drove up our gift shop sales, as well. The gift shop did over \$1,100 in sales in January, which is three times higher than any previous January. As I like to tell the council, the gift shop sales are, in many ways, a better indicator of the value of the visitor center. This is because it shows that someone is actually spending time in the center looking at brochures, touring the museum exhibits, and shopping for items. A purchase indicates far more time is being spent by visitors than just using a bathroom or stopping by to get directions. It indicates a time investment, as well as their purchase.

As with prior years, we are using January and February to accomplish much-needed refurbishment projects at the museum as well as our new facility. The new facility, the Printing Press Café & Ice Cream Parlor will open in March. This facility will be managed by Lori Tibbitts and will operate independently of the museum & visitor center, although the proceeds from the venture will help support the overall museum and visitor center missions. We are excited about this venture and the promise it holds for generating funds for the museum foundation, continuing the revitalization of Main Street, and growing our local economy.

Upcoming Events

Our focus is on the upcoming Bootlegger Daze event scheduled for Saturday, March 14. The event will include music, vendors, and a shoot-out skit on Main Street. It's a great weekend to kick-off our 2015 tourism season.

In late February, our executive director, Gloria Gushue, will attend an Awards Selection Committee Meeting. She was named to the committee for the Arkansas Museums Association this year, which is tasked with selecting winners for the prestigious awards presented at the association's conference in March. She has also received two recommendations (one from the director of the Arkansas Arts Center in Little Rock) for a position on the AMA board of directors. These are prestigious recognitions for her, our museum and community.

Closing Thoughts

On behalf of our board, staff, volunteers, and citizens, thank you for your support. Feel free to contact me if you have a question, concern or idea at 870-373-0083.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/ Steven Mitchell
Chairman

Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center City Council Report

March 2015

February Monthly Statistics

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----|--------------------|----|
| Visitors | 262 | Meeting Attendance | 20 |
| Special Functions | 0 | School Programs | 37 |

Total Monthly Visitor Contacts: 319

News and Information

Unlike January's unseasonably good weather, February provided seven days of snow and ice in the already short month. Even so, our guest attendance was on par with last year when we also saw lots of bad weather. As I write this report to you, we are preparing for another forecast winter storm. However, we continue planning for tourist season to begin within the next few weeks.

As I reported to you last month, artifacts from our museum are being exhibited along with artifacts from 33 other museums across the state at the state Capitol. Our friends in the Secretary of State's office and from museums around the state report the artifact that has received the most interest and attention is the homemade diving helmet on loan from our museum. This helmet was found by Charlie Wilson several years ago and was used by local men, likely a farmer, who use the helmet to dive into the White River looking for mussel shells and pearls. We hope this interest will drive folks to visit our museum and, ultimately, our town.

The Ozark Gateway Tourism Council estimates our museum has provided a \$2 million impact on our local economy over the past three years. They make these estimates for various tourist attractions in the region.

Upcoming Events

Bootlegger Daze is scheduled for Saturday, March 14. Bryan Hayes and the Retrievers, from Memphis, will provide live music on Main Street; the Peppersauce Players will conduct a Revenuers and Moonshiners performance at 11:00 a.m.; and lots of vendors will provide a fun atmosphere for our visitors. We will also show *The Bootleggers* movie, which was Jaclyn Smith's first starring role, in the museum art gallery.

Every museum event is free to the public and this year we have provided booth space for vendors and civic organizations at no charge. We consider events like these an important part of our work to increase tourism, build our economy, and welcome visitors.

As always, if we can serve the citizens of Calico Rock better feel free to call me anytime at 870-373-0083. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,
Steven Mitchell
Chairman
Board of Trustees

Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center City Council Report

April 2015

March Monthly Statistics

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----|--------------------|----|
| Visitors | 498 | Meeting Attendance | 15 |
| Special Functions | 550 | | |

Total Monthly Visitor Contacts: 1,063

News and Information

Despite the dismal weather on Bootlegger Daze weekend, we had a lot of people come to town for the festivities. To give the vendors who were unable to come out on Bootlegger Daze an opportunity to turn lemons into lemonade, we held our first “The Weekend After” event. We allowed vendors to set up the next weekend and had other activities. In all, we had 550 people in town for the two weekends, so we were pleased with the turn-out despite the bad weather.

We will open the Printing Press Café & Ice Cream Parlor later this month. We are hopeful this new venture complements the other businesses in town and fosters a spirit of community and revival, especially in our Historic Main Street District.

Upcoming Events

Our museum is one of a dozen sites throughout the state to conduct an Arkansas Heritage Month activity in May. On May 9, we will host a public program entitled, *The Captain’s View: Different Landscape, a Common Heritage*. The program will show the public how the geography helped make Calico Rock an economic center and spur growth in the entire region. Everyone is invited to attend.

The weekend of June 12-13 will bring lots of folks to town for the Lions Club Rodeo and the All-School Reunion. While we aren’t directly involved in these events, we will provide enhanced visitor services to folks coming to town that weekend.

As always, if we can serve the citizens of Calico Rock better feel free to call me anytime at 870-373-0083. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,
Steven Mitchell
Chairman
Board of Trustees

Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center City Council Report

May 2015

April Monthly Statistics

Visitors 1,113 Meeting Attendance 20

Total Monthly Visitor Contacts: 1,133

News and Information

Our visitors were up 50% in April 2015 over April 2014. We credit this increase to lower gasoline prices, a strengthening economy, and all of the activity on Main Street.

By the time you read this report, we will have opened the Printing Press Café & Ice Cream Parlor on May 5. We see the Café as an extension of the visitor center, not just a revenue stream. We believe the café will support increases in traffic and sales on Main Street, but we also believe the individuals working in the café have an important role in welcoming visitors to town. All of our staff are expected to uphold high standards of customer service, but they are also ambassadors for the community.

In addition, the café, we believe, will generate increased sales tax revenue for the city. Over the past five years, the Foundation has spent \$500,000 and the majority of that money has been spent locally on supplies, contractors, labor, and programs. Even when we buy things online, we generate local sales tax via internet sales.

Following the death of her mother, Lori Tibbitts decided to leave her position with the café to spend more time caring for her dad, Gene Lockie. We have identified temporary staff and volunteers for our front-of-the-house operations, but we are relying on Gloria's extensive experience in supervising the operation. We appreciate your understanding as we work through this issue and move forward with an individual that will represent the community and serve our customers well.

Finally, while we see the café as an important revenue stream, we will not neglect our role in representing the entire community of businesses. We will continue to recommend the many fine restaurants in our area to visitors.

Upcoming Events

The weekend of June 12-13 will bring lots of folks to town for the Lions Club Rodeo and the All-School Reunion. While we aren't directly involved in these events, we will provide enhanced visitor services to folks coming to town that weekend.

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Respectfully submitted,
Steven Mitchell
Chairman
Board of Trustees

Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center City Council Report

July 2015

June Monthly Statistics

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|-----------------|-------|--------------------|----|
| Visitors | 1,310 | Meeting Attendance | 45 |
| Summer Day Camp | 20 | | |

Total Monthly Visitor Contacts: 1,375

Growth

For the second month, we have seen increased visitors and sales. In June, our visitor contacts were up 52% and gift shop sales were up 5% over a year ago. We attribute a large part of that increase to the opening of the Printing Press Café. Our theory had been that if we had food Downtown, people would stop and shop. As noted last month, our business neighbors have seen similar increases.

The café itself is exceeding all of our initial sales projections and our staff are doing exactly what we intended for them to do, serving as an extension of our visitor center in welcoming people into town.

Explore Calico

As part of our partnership with the city, we are launching the **Explore Calico** campaign. The main feature is a new website we launched in late June that includes every business that has a city business license in Calico Rock. Visitors can click the business to be linked directly to the business's website. The business phone number is also listed. The website has beautiful pictures and information about Calico Rock. The website has had 465 unique visitors in the first week.

The web address is www.explorecalico.com.

In the first two weeks of July, every business licensed to operate in Calico Rock will receive a personal visit from our leadership introducing them to the website, showing them the free services we offer to their business, and telling them about our partnership. During the visit, we will make sure the information we listed on the website is correct and obtain any brochures they have for their business to put in our Visitor Information Center at the museum. We believe this visit will be key to open the door for better relations between the museum/visitor center and our local businesses.

It is also another way the museum is serving the city of Calico Rock through our visitor center services partnership. And, all of it is ABSOLUTELY FREE to the businesses.

Chamber of Commerce

In late 2012, the city and museum foundation entered into a contract to provide visitor center services. At that time, the foundation asked permission to "subcontract" and provide services to the Chamber of Commerce, because they had no place to operate or money to do so. The council granted that request.

Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center City Council Report

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The museum foundation provides a shared telephone number, answers and fields telephone inquiries, provides file storage, provides meeting room space, window signage, a mailing address, and a home base for the Chamber of Commerce. The foundation has offered other services as part of our agreement, including development of a Chamber website, but they have not accepted those offers in the past. In exchange, they paid the foundation \$100 per month. During the time when the Chamber had no money, the foundation reduced the amount due to \$50 per month.

On June 29, the Chamber of Commerce board of directors voted to end the partnership between the museum and Chamber. The Chamber will be relocating their offices to the historic Barbershop Building on lower Main Street owned by Dean and Peggy Hudson. We have been told the Chamber hopes to develop a greater presence in the community by this move. As such, the Chamber of Commerce will no longer be “subcontracted” with the museum foundation as of June 30.

While the foundation hates to see any partnership end, we wish the Chamber the best of luck in this new endeavor. And, we thank the council for allowing the museum foundation to have this partnership over the past three years.

Growing Relationships

The museum continues to work on growing relationships within the community, including supporting the work of the other civic organizations in town. During the Lions Club Parade, the café remained open late for parade goers to have a cool place to enjoy a nice treat afterwards. We are installing new water hydrants to assist the 20/20 group teams that water the beautiful flowers along Main Street. And, we continue to develop our partnership with the local artisan cooperative.

It is always the museum’s goal to be a good neighbor and helpful part of the community.

Upcoming Events

We have scheduled a Pioneer Living workshop in Rand Park on Tuesday, July 7; the next Summer Day Camp on Friday, July 10; and the Grand Opening for the Printing Press Café on Saturday, July 11.

As always, if we can serve the citizens of Calico Rock better feel free to call me anytime at 870-373-0083. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Mitchell
Chairman
Board of Trustees

Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center City Council Report

August 2015

July Monthly Statistics

| | | | |
|------------------|-----|--------------------|----|
| Visitors | 946 | Meeting Attendance | 50 |
| Summer Day Camps | 50 | | |

Total Monthly Visitor Contacts: 1,046

Growth & Success

We had tremendous attendance at our Summer Day Camps during the month of July. These were free day camps sponsored by Entergy Arkansas. We provided each child with complimentary lunch and they did lots of craft activities while learning about our history.

In August, we will welcome all of the teachers from Calico Rock Elementary School and Arrie Goforth Elementary School at Norfolk for history and art professional development programs before school starts. We look forward to continuing these partnerships this school year.

Serving Our Local Businesses

Our new website, www.explorecalico.com, has generated **1,032** in visitors during its first month in operation. We have submitted the site to various search engines for greater exposure. The feedback from business owners has been extremely positive.

During our visits with business owners in July, they were thrilled with the work the visitor center is doing on their behalf and equally as thrilled to know the benefits they are receiving for their city business license above and beyond the services the city provides including streets, water, sewer, etc.

We are also promoting various businesses throughout town in our e-mail communications and working on ways that we can spotlight our local businesses for the community.

Upcoming Events

We are devoting considerable energies toward the upcoming Mountain Man Rendezvous on September 11-12.

As always, if we can serve the citizens of Calico Rock better feel free to call me anytime at 870-373-0083. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Mitchell
Chairman
Board of Trustees

Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center City Council Report

September 2015

August Monthly Statistics

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------|--------------------|----|
| Visitors | 1,071 | Meeting Attendance | 10 |
| Teacher Program | 30 | | |

Total Monthly Visitor Contacts: 1,111

Growth & Success

This month, we welcomed 30 teachers from Calico Rock Elementary School and Arrie Goforth Elementary School at Norfolk for history and art professional development programs. As a result, we have already scheduled our first educational program for the Calico Rock Fourth grade. It will be our first experience in conducting a science-based educational program on earthworms, which is part of the state standards.

Despite the dismal weather and return to school, our attendance is up about 2% over last year and our sales at the gift shop and café remain strong. Museum operations are producing over \$15,000 per month in taxable sales which directly benefit the city and boost the economic impact of the museum.

One local business recently told us their sales were up 22% since the café opened.

Explore Calico

Our new website, www.explorecalico.com, has generated **1,697** unique visitors since it began two months ago.

Upcoming Events

We are devoting considerable energies toward the upcoming Mountain Man Rendezvous on September 11-12. The city has designated that Saturday as City Wide Yard Sale and we have been promoting this through our press releases and website.

As always, if we can serve the citizens of Calico Rock better feel free to call me anytime at 870-373-0083. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Mitchell
Chairman
Board of Trustees

Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center City Council Report

October 2015

September Monthly Statistics

| | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
| Visitors | 1,350 | Meeting Attendance | 30 |
| Educational Programs | 60 | Mountain Man Rendezvous | 1,500 |

Total Monthly Visitor Contacts: 2,940

Increased Traffic and Business

In September, the visitor center saw a 14% increase in visitors over last September and we had an 11% increase in café taxable sales over August. One of our Main Street neighbors reports a 37% increase in their business' taxable sales for this year. We continue to see growth in both foot traffic and taxable sales since the opening of the café.

Mountain Man Rendezvous

The 2015 Mountain Man Rendezvous and Native American Day saw an increased attendance over last year for the three-day event. Our estimates show that attendance was greater than 1,500 people. With the growth of the rendezvous, our plan is to move all of the events and activities into Rand Park next year. Parking will be a challenge, so we are currently planning to use parking at churches and other locations in town and run a shuttle bus into the park. The City Wide Yard Sale, we believe, added to the draw for the event.

Explore Calico

Our new website, www.explorecalico.com, has generated **2,409** unique visitors since it began three months ago, an average of 800 visitors per month!

Exhibit Enhancements

We are planning a number of enhancements to existing and new exhibits this winter, including the impact of farming on the area, a more historically accurate depot exhibit, and finalizing our Veterans exhibit.

Upcoming Events

We would like to thank the city for having the parking spaces striped on Main Street. It really makes the street look nice and improves parking.

As always, if we can serve the citizens of Calico Rock better feel free to call me anytime at 870-373-0083. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Mitchell
Chairman
Board of Trustees

Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center City Council Report

November 2015

October Monthly Statistics

| | | | |
|----------------------|-------|--------------------|----|
| Visitors | 1,268 | Meeting Attendance | 25 |
| Educational Programs | 46 | | |

Total Monthly Visitor Contacts: 1,339 (22% Increase Over 2014)

Main Street Destination

Our Historic Main Street is becoming a destination. In October, we got a call from a bus tour company that had heard about us and wanted to stop in for lunch and a visit that day. The 26-member tour had lunch at the Printing Press Café, shopped at the Main Street businesses, and toured our history museum. They loved the historic feel of our town and our history museum.

You will note that we have seen a 22% increase in the museum attendance. These visitors aren't just using the restroom and leaving for someplace else, they are touring our exhibits, learning about our history, shopping in our stores, and eating lunch in our cafes. They are spending money and time in Calico Rock.

Explore Calico

The Explore Calico website (www.explorecalico.com) has generated **2,971** unique visitors since it began! We are adding menus for each of our local restaurants on the website over the next month.

Good Neighbor

We believe it is part of our duty, under our contract, to serve our community, help our local businesses, and be a good neighbor. We recently refurbished the ramp on upper Main Street and hope to refurbish the wooden stairs this winter.

Christmas Living Windows & Parade

The Christmas Living Windows and Lighted Parade will be Saturday, December 12th. The windows provide a fun way for folks to explore Main Street and be entertained through historic Christmas scenes. The lighted parade features our fire department, first responders, local businesses and civic groups and is a lot of fun.

Upcoming Events

As always, if we can serve the citizens of Calico Rock better feel free to call me anytime at 870-373-0083. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Mitchell
Chairman
Board of Trustees