



Volume 60

Issue 3

TELESCOPE

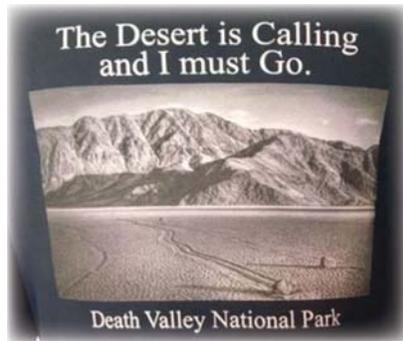
The Official Newsletter of the Death Valley Natural History Association

Fall/Winter 2015

The Desert is Calling and I Must Go

By Dan O'Brien, DVNHA Board Chair

When I saw this T-shirt in our DVNHA bookstore I knew I had to get it. It struck a visceral nerve, a truth, an elated and liberating feeling that is evoked from just how expansive and important this region is. Life is all around this valley: plant life, vertebrates, invertebrates, water, trees, cacti, and fungus, all struggling, evolving and coexisting; a metaphor for our human presence here.



The size and variety of Death Valley features continues to humble me as I examine some of them. I know I don't have the scientific mind to memorize and recite all the genus species, but I appreciate it just the same. Twenty years ago, I first came here with a biology group from San Jose State University on their annual spring break trip. I got hooked on Death Valley's complexity and so many seemingly foreign things. As I have returned every year with this group and with our DVNHA board, there are always new discoveries to be made and connections to be understood.

Our 10th Death Valley History Conference in November was a big success. Twenty presenters wove their tales on legendary miners and explorers, explored the path of Manly and Rogers, and famous women who made a difference in this harsh environment. We had talks on railroads and automobiles in the Death Valley region, movie making, famous photographers and the charcoal industry. We also learned how Devils Hole became part of Death Valley National Park and how location probability mapping is used to track human impact over time. Some 135 attendees enjoyed gorgeous 70° weather.

On Sunday, many of our conference attendees were able to tour Ryan Mining Camp, private property cared for by the Death Valley Conservancy just outside the Park. Ryan is currently being restored to its former glory. We'd like to give thanks to Scott Smith, Superintendent of Ryan Camp Operations, who was so gracious in showing the work they are doing to "preserve what is left and restore where possible." For further information about the DVC, Ryan, or how to be able to tour this property please visit their website: deathvalleyconservancy.com.

A tour of Keane Wonder Mine was also conducted. Several structures remain at this historic gold mine site, including the remains of an aerial tramway. The National Park Service closed the site to visitor entry in 2008 due to



History Conference participants near Keane Wonder Mill. Photo courtesy, Bob Greenburg.

concerns over tramway stability, mine openings, and mill tailings. Since that time, NPS has stabilized the tramway, mitigated mine openings, and is now working on addressing the content of the tailings, with the goal of eventually reopening the site to the public. At this time, entry is allowed only with a NPS guide.

At the Conference we were also to hear an update from NPS on the Scotty's Castle flood event of October 18, 2015 and the clean-up efforts underway. The DVNHA board decided to focus and emphasize the Scotty's Castle capital campaign to raise funds for the behind-the-scenes needs that are so vital for this treasure's continued use and enjoyment. We raised about \$9,000 at this event and over \$12,000 total since the rain incident first took place! Our board was given the chance to view the flood damage in person via an escorted tour by the DVNHA Chief of Interpretation, Linda Slater. It convinced us all the more that our preservation contributions do make a difference. Our continued partnership provides a convenient mechanism to help make improvements that fall outside NPS's normal operating budget.

All in all, it was a great weekend connecting with many aficionados of this incredible national park and its history. We look forward to the future publication of the 10th Death Valley History Conference Proceedings for all to enjoy. Stay tuned for the next Science Conference scheduled for 2017. We'll see you there!

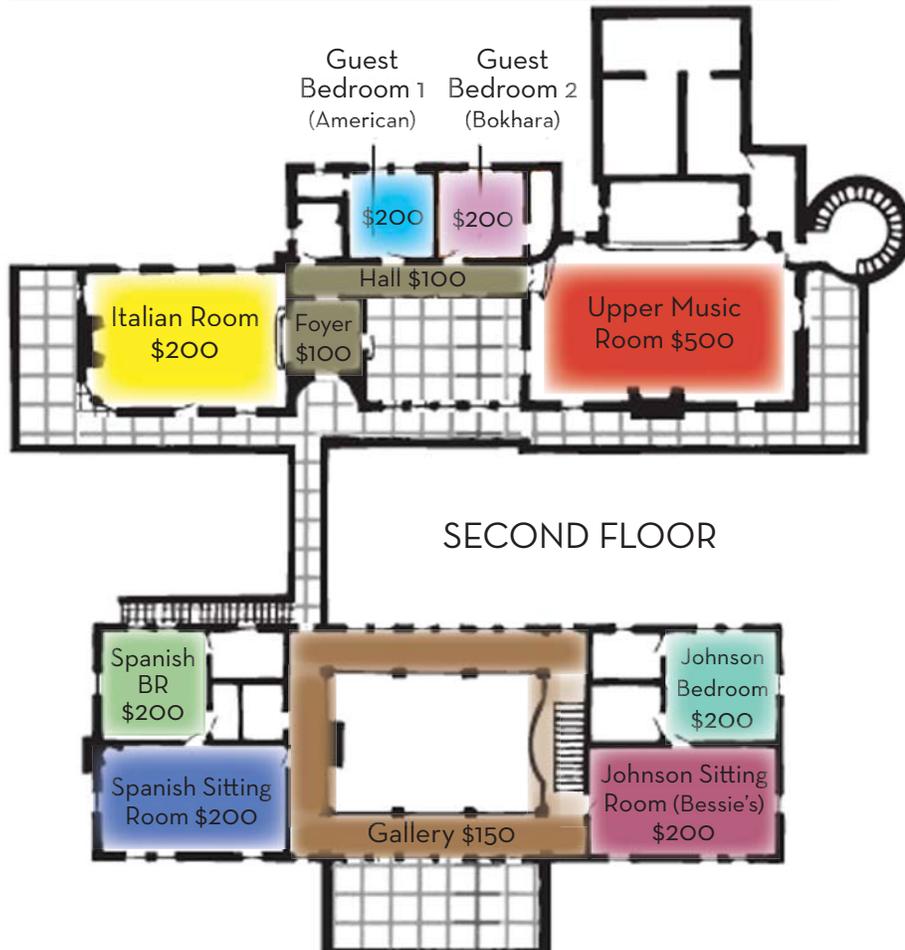
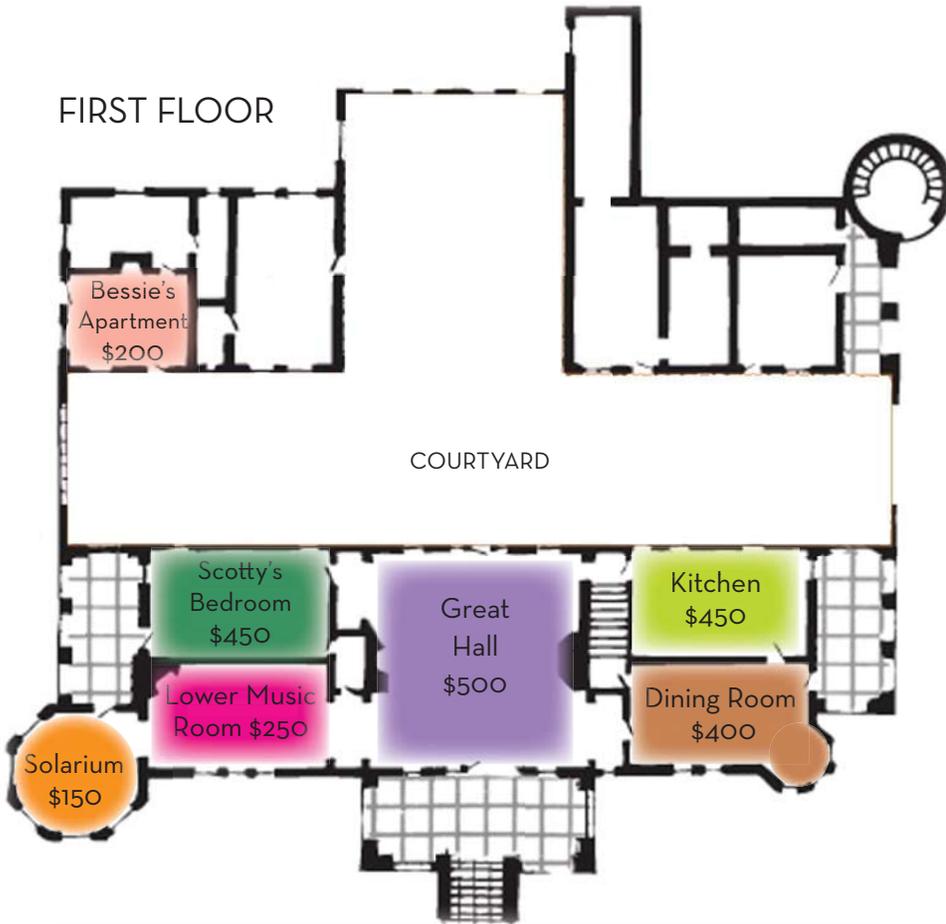
SAVE SCOTTY'S CASTLE

Adopt-a-Room Program

Scotty's Castle has over 12,000 square feet and more than 25,000 items within its collection. Provide flood relief and help fund preservation and restoration projects by adopting a room today!

You can choose to remain anonymous or have your name listed as an official adoptive room supporter each year you sponsor a room within the Castle. Names will be published on our website: dvnha.org.

As a supporter, you can also choose to receive updates on restoration and preservation work at Scotty's Castle, simply by providing your e-mail address.



- \$100 - Annex Foyer
- \$100 - Annex Hallway
- \$150 - Solarium
- \$150 - Gallery (The 2nd Floor Walkway)
- \$200 - Bessie's Apartment
- \$200 - Guest Bedroom 1 (American)
- \$200 - Guest Bedroom 2 (Bokhara)
- \$200 - Italian Room
- \$200 - Spanish Bedroom
- \$200 - Spanish Sitting Room
- \$200 - Johnson Bedroom
- \$200 - Johnson Sitting Room
- \$250 - Lower Music Room
- \$400 - Dining Room
- \$450 - Kitchen
- \$450 - Scotty's Bedroom
- \$500 - Great Hall
- \$500 - Upper Music Room
- \$5,000 - Whole House

*All contributions go toward the Scotty's Castle Historic Preservation Fund to be used where Scotty's Castle needs it most. Contributions are tax deductible. Your donation receipt will be provided by mail.

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear DVNHA Members and Friends,

By Mike Reynolds, National Park Service
Death Valley National Park

I am happy to be back in Death Valley. I had the honor of moving back to the park in May of this year after 10 years away.

And what a busy six months it has been! As many of you have heard, we had quite an October in Death Valley. During the period between October 4 and October 18 the park received more rain than any other October on record. That rain had a number of effects. It heavily impacted our infrastructure; there was extensive damage to several roads including south Badwater, Jubilee Pass, West Side, and the Bonnie Claire roads. It inundated most of the buildings at Scotty's Castle with mud and debris and destroyed the utility systems there. It is important to

"I am excited by the chance to further the NPS mission in Death Valley and humbled by the opportunity to serve the visitors, resources, and staff at the park."

Death Valley is a world class resource."

The assessment, clean up, and recovery began right away. Our staff have been working very hard to open roads and services as quickly and safely as possible. We have also had a great deal of support from the National Park Service and other parks throughout the country. With a few notable exceptions such as Scotty's Castle, most of the park is now open for visitors.

2016 is a very exciting time to visit Death Valley National Park! In addition to the interesting impacts from the flooding, it is also the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service and we are planning a few special activities throughout the year.

It is best to visit our Facebook page or website for current conditions and activities, or talk to a ranger at the visitor center and they will be happy to help you.

We ask all of you for your patience and understanding during this trying time. We are very lucky to have DVNHA as a partner as they have been supporting us in a number of ways as we navigate our recovery. We very much appreciate this partner support!



Superintendent Mike Reynolds succeeds Kathy Billings who recently retired. Reynolds has worked for the National Park Service for 20 years. He comes to us from Lava Beds National Monument and the Tule Lake Unit of World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument where he served as Superintendent. He has also served at Big Bend, Great Smoky Mountains, Yellowstone, Death Valley and also spent three and a half years as superintendent at the National Park of American Samoa. Reynolds has a BS in Math and Business Operations from Indiana University and an MS in Outdoor Recreation from Arizona State University. We are happy to welcome him back to Death Valley National Park!



DEATH VALLEY
NATURAL HISTORY
ASSOCIATION

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TELESCOPE

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Join us in a second century of stewardship as the National Park Service celebrates its 100th Anniversary in 2016! We have an assortment of Centennial commemorative items including: pins, patches, magnets, stickers, military and baseball style caps, and T-shirts! Shop with us online at: dvnha.org/opencart or give us a call at

1 800-478-8564 ext 10.

2016
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CENTENNIAL



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FROM THE DIRECTOR

By David Blacker, Executive Director

No one died! That was the thought that kept going through my head as I walked down to what was left of the Scotty's Castle parking lot last October. There was an eerie quiet, broken only by the sound of the spring that was now running through the middle of the parking area. To my left, the picnic area and lawn were gone. Some of the picnic tables would be found far down the wash. To the right, was a large debris flow that stretched farther up the canyon, big blue pipes that used to be part of the water system were scattered around like twigs. At the front door of the historic garage (visitor center) was one of our postcard displays washed out of the building by the wall of water and mud that had come through a broken door and window on the back of the building. The inside was full of mud more than two feet deep and the place smelled like a swamp. When I stepped back outside I stared at Scotty's Castle, but I was too overwhelmed to really conceive what had happened.

That was just a few days after the flood event that hit Scotty's Castle on the night of October 18th. What we know now, is that this was the largest flood event to hit the Scotty's Castle area in recorded history. The Bonnie Claire road from Ubehebe Crater turn off to the NV state line is destroyed as well as the water, sewer, electrical, and communications systems. The historic items in the collection including furnishings, documents, and even the organ will need to be moved to a climate controlled facility until the infrastructure can be replaced.

As Abby Wines, the Scotty's Castle Supervisor, said in our latest update video, "Scotty's Castle is closed now, but it will reopen". The cost is estimated to be \$40-50 million and my guess is it will be at least a year before Scotty's Castle can be opened to the public in some way. All of us at DVNHA are working very hard to support our park partners in the preservation and restoration of Scotty's Castle, but we can only help as much as we have money to do so. It would not take as much as you think. \$10 a month from each member for the next year would build a fund of more than \$100 thousand to help with stucco repair and replacing damaged curatorial equipment. I know that we can count on our members and their love of this incredible place to help.

David



Now dry, floodwaters filled the never-completed swimming pool on October 18th, 2015. The house itself suffered relatively minor damage, but adjacent outbuildings: Longhouse, Hacienda, and Garage (home of the modern day Scotty's Castle Visitor Center) were filled with mud up to four feet deep. Additionally, the parking area, picnic ground, the road, and all utilities were completely destroyed leaving the Castle without water or power. This entire collection is without climate control. NPS is moving the most fragile collection items to other curatorial storage until the HVAC system is operational again. Visit us online to see recovery update videos: dvnha.org or via our Youtube channel: *Death ValleyNHA*.



SAVE SCOTTY'S CASTLE



HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUND

**Make your check payable to:
DVNHA**

Yes, I want to help save Scotty's Castle.

(I understand that my donation will be restricted for Scotty's Castle preservation to be used for whatever project needs funding most!)

Adopt-a-Room within the Castle

- \$100 - Annex Foyer
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- \$450 - Scotty's Bedroom
- \$500 - Great Hall
- \$500 - Upper Music Room
- \$5,000 - Whole House

Donate a different amount \$ _____

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Expiration

Tax receipt will be sent to you by mail.