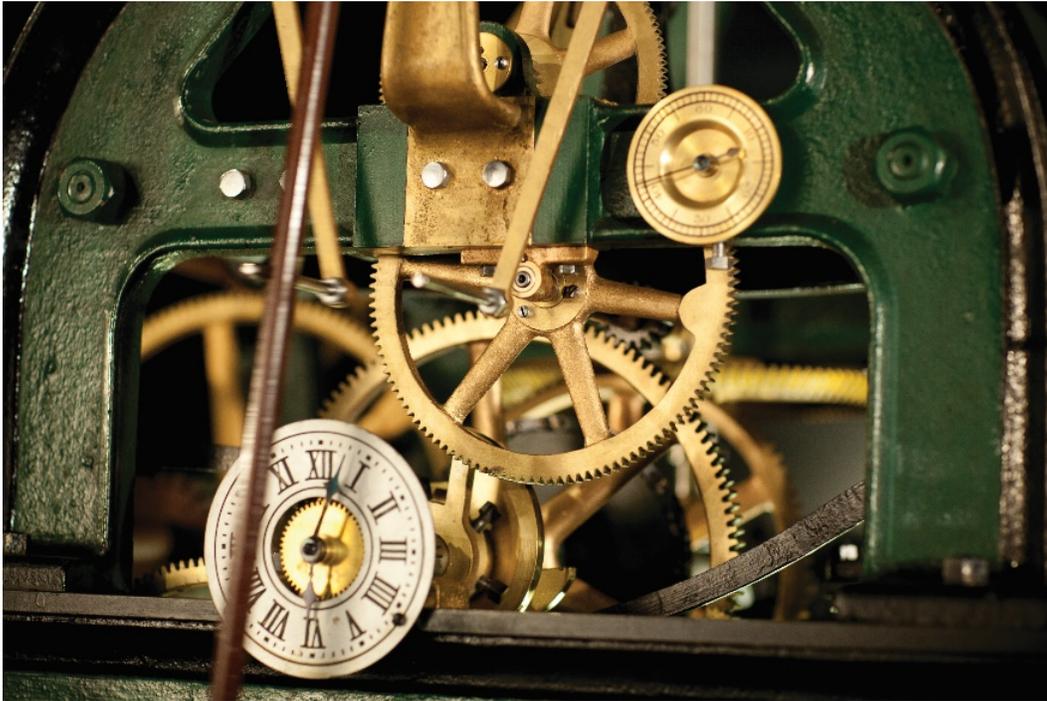


2015 Governor's Historic Preservation Awards

Santa Barbara County Courthouse Clock and Gallery



The Santa Barbara County Courthouse holds the distinction of being a local City Historic Landmark (1982), California Historical Landmark (2003) and a National Historic Landmark (2005). The complex has received the accolades of its community and is among very few *buildings* referred to on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives as having "soul." The Courthouse's tower clock has been ticking and marking the time for the community since first being installed in 1929. It is among the few truly mechanical clocks remaining in operation in the United States.

In 2011, having heard about the Santa Barbara County Courthouse clock, Dr. David Bisno, retired ophthalmologist and timepiece enthusiast, made a tour of the clock. The garage-sized room that houses the aged timepiece was also doubling as a storage room for miscellaneous parts and pieces of artifacts removed from the courthouse. After pushing his way through the assembled debris, Bisno found himself standing in front of a fully functional mechanical timepiece. After his visit he set out to determine how such a timepiece could be made available to the general public. He contacted a friend, Dick Schall, Robert Ooley, FAIA (county architect), and Mostyn Gale (the courthouse clock master), for a meeting to scope out a project that proposed to convert the room into a "pocket" museum of time. Once the scope of the conversion had been developed, a cost estimate of the project was created. Bisno and Schall then decided that they would privately fund the entire conversion project.

The project adhered to the Secretary of the Interior Standards, with a preservation treatment followed for the clock and a rehabilitation treatment for the gallery conversion. The scope of the work included the installation of a 60-foot painted mural of the history of timekeeping, fiber optic ceiling, tiled floor, tempered glass walls, electronic monitoring technology and lighting systems. While the clock was designed to strike bronze bells, none were ever installed due to cost while the building was under construction in 1929. As part of the museum exhibit, facsimile bells were made using the original, never-installed bell hammers, to simulate the sense and sound of bells during the chime and hour functions. The clock gears were repaired and the clock mechanism, following plans of its manufacturer, Seth Thomas Clock Company, was rotated 180 degrees to allow ADA compliant access into the gallery. Also, as part of the project, a color brochure was produced, as well as gift cards which are sold to help generate the minor funds needed to maintain the gallery. A short video about the operation of the courthouse clock also was produced.

The project involved community members: contractors, designers, suppliers, clock collectors, and city and county staff and volunteers. Since completion of the gallery in 2012, courthouse docents have hosted visitors from around the world. Hundreds of time enthusiasts, tourists and local school groups, have visited the clock gallery to watch the tower clock strike the hours and learn about its history. The sale of interpretive brochures and note cards not only provides captivating information, but also helps to fund the operations of the gallery. The Bisno Schall Clock Gallery has been lauded as a great example of public-private partnerships for the benefit of the community.

Visit the [Bisno Schall Clock Gallery website](#).