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Alliance of Monterey Area Preservationists

MEDIA ADVISORY: November 19, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Who: The Alliance of Monterey Area Preservationists and County of Monterey

What: Presentation of the gift of a bronze National Register Plaque for the Old Monterey County Jail to the Monterey County Supervisors, followed by unveiling of the plaque, entertainment, refreshments, and historical display.

When: Tuesday, December 4, 2018 11am to 1pm

Where: 11am, Supervisor's Chambers, 168 West Alisal Street, Salinas CA
& 11:45am to 1pm, Old Monterey County Jail, 142 West Alisal Street, Salinas CA

The Alliance of Monterey Area Preservationists is pleased to present to the County of Monterey a bronze National Register of Historic Places plaque for the Old Monterey County Jail. A formal presentation will be made on Tuesday, December 4th, 2018 at 11am to the Monterey County Supervisors followed by an unveiling of the plaque on the Old County Jail at 142 Alisal Street, Salinas at that will include entertainment from members of El Teatro Campesino, refreshments, and historical display. This event is free and open to the public.

The History: The Old Monterey County Jail was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2004 for its connection to a singular event which occurred in this building: the incarceration of Cesar Chavez on December 4th, 1970 for his refusal to call off a lettuce boycott. The fact that Chavez was jailed in pursuing what he believed was a Constitutional right focused national attention on the Jail and on his organizing efforts and helped to change the course of farm labor working conditions nationwide. This was the only time in his life Chavez was jailed, and it became an event of exceptional national significance with visits by notable civil rights leaders including Coretta Scott King and Ethel Kennedy and coverage by major network news programs.

The jailing and subsequent release of Chavez drew national attention to what was previously a regionally instigated boycott. When the California Supreme Court ordered his release from jail on Christmas Eve, 1970, Chavez realized that the grower boycott would become one of his most effective organizing tools—creating a tremendous impact on the market for both grapes and lettuce and putting pressure on growers to sign union contracts.

The Building: The Monterey County jail was built in 1931, and is a good example of Gothic Revival architecture during the Art Deco Period. While commonly employed in nineteenth century churches, collegiate buildings, and prisons, this style was not in wide use in the 20th century. Both the administration section of the building and the cellblock were designed in this style by San Francisco architects Reed and Corlett in 1931. Three additions since the original construction were done by the Salinas firm of Belli, Fox and Kuska, completed during the 1950's. Both the cellblock and the administration portion of the building retain a high degree of integrity relative to 1970, the date of Chavez' incarceration.

The Program: On October 10, 2017, the Monterey County Supervisors voted unanimously to begin a search for an appropriate adaptive re-use for the Old County Jail. The Alliance of Monterey Area Preservationists (AMAP) is in full support of a new use that is beneficial to the county economy and citizens. AMAP hopes the Old Jail will become included in the proposed Cesar Chavez National Historical Park joining the other five Chavez related national historic landmark sites in California and Arizona, from San Jose to Phoenix. A National Register plaque will give the Old Jail the distinction it deserves, on the anniversary of its significant event.

About AMAP: The Alliance of Monterey Area Preservationists aims to educate the community about the value of recognizing, preserving, securing and displaying the Monterey area's historic assets for public benefit; to support activities which interpret and share Monterey's rich cultural heritage with residents and visitors; and encourage residents to be advocates for ideas, programs and plans which contribute to the understanding of the Monterey area's cultural, ethnic, artistic, and architectural legacy.

Advocates for Monterey County's Historic Treasures

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