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Duarte Historical Museum Looks Back to the Future

BY RUTH LONGORIA
KINGSLAND

If you've a hunger and thirst for knowledge, you might want to drop by the Duarte Historical Museum, where a new exhibit, designated "The Next 400 Years," offers patrons a chance to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible.

The museum, located at 777 Encanto Parkway, in Duarte's Encanto Park, offers an array of displays on everything from famed bandleader and former Duartian, Glenn Miller to the 1938 flood, the history of the area's citrus industry, and a Route 66 exhibit.

The King James Version (KJV) exhibit is the compilation of many items on loan from Duarte's surrounding area residents and Azusa Pacific University, and was created by Neil Earle, 64, a Duarte historian, resident, and senior pastor of Grace Communion International in Glendora.

Claudia Heller, president of the Duarte Historical Society, said the Bible display isn't a "typical" exhibit at Duarte's museum.

"We have our regular exhibits and revolving displays of local people's hobbies and interests, but this really is Mr. Earle's passion and he's a wealth of knowledge, so we're glad to have [the exhibit] here," Heller said.

The exhibit displays not only a 1770 German Bible (on loan from Susi Albrecht of Glendora), and an 1898 King James Bible (loaned by Phyllis and Russell Duke of Duarte), but also offers photos, drawings, books, magazines, and other memorabilia with information of people and events leading up to the creation of what's known as the "authorized version" of the Bible.

In addition to Earle



Duarte resident Neil Earle stands with a portion of his King James Version Bible "The Next 400 Years" exhibit at Duarte Historical Museum. The exhibit, which is on display now through the end of February celebrates the 400th anniversary of the KJV Bible. -Photo by Ruth Longoria Kingsland

making himself available to share his plethora of knowledge during museum hours for the duration of the exhibit, which runs through February, he also provides a DVD of the history of the King James Bible, which can be viewed at the museum.

There also are fact sheets, a "Bible Bloopers" — that includes a quote from a 1631 "Wicked Bible," where the word "not" is omitted in the commandment "Thou shalt [not] commit adultery" — and a "Family Tree" that provides a timeline of how the KJV translation was something of a byproduct of the original 50- to 367 A.D. handwritten manuscripts and Latin, Greek and German versions, as well as

the 1520s New Testament of William Tyndale.

Listening to Earle talk, one can envision the fascinating events prior to the creation of a "common man's" Bible, including King Henry VII's orders to strangle and burn at the stake Tyndale, due to the King's belief the non-Catholic version was heresy.

Tyndale's last words were: "Oh God, open the King's eyes," Earle said.

There are now translations of the entire Bible in hundreds of languages, and partial translations in thousands of languages; however, it took King James, son of Mary Queen of Scots, creating an about 50-member "dream team" of the best theological

minds in England (except Catholic) for that first Bible that "read well in church and also spoke with authority," to become reality, Earle explained.

"King James was not the most admirable king, but the King James Version turned out to be his crowning achievement," Earle said.

Earle's fascination with Biblical history began as a child.

He was born in New Foundland, Canada, and grew up in the Anglican belief. Earle credits television with spurring his passion for history, beginning with watching the 1960's Winston Churchill series "The Valiant Years," and Walter Cronkite's "The 20th Century."

Earle earned a master's degree in history from the University of Toronto and later earned a master's in theology from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena.

Putting together his KJV Bible exhibit took several years, Earle said.

Because he has such a passion for the Bible and history, Earle said, he plans to make himself available to speak after the museum exhibit ends to speak at local schools and churches. Earle can be contacted at 626-256-4919 or by email at: Neil.Earle@gci.org.

The Duarte Historical Museum is free and open from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. the first- and third- Wednesdays of each

month.

Although the museum wasn't formally open on Thursday, John Kensington, 66, of San Dimas took the opportunity of Earle's morning interview with the Duarte Dispatch at the museum to step inside for a few moments while on a walk in the park, and view some of the exhibits.

"This is nice, I could spend two or three hours in here," Kensington said, as his eyes were drawn to the KJV Bible exhibit.

"This is amazing — my eyes almost popped out," he added, as he looked at the old Bibles. "I've never seen anything like it; it's fantastic."



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