



## American Giants Museum – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- 1. What is the purpose of the American Giants Museum?** – The American Giants Museum tells the story of International Fiberglass Company, the company responsible for making hundreds of giant and oversized, fiberglass figures used as roadside advertising from 1963 through the early 1970s.
- 2. What is International Fiberglass Company? Where was it located? What years was it in operation?** – International Fiberglass Company was a fiberglass molding company located in Venice, California. It operated between 1963 and 1974. The company was formed when Steve Dashew purchased another company called Prewitt Fiberglass Animals and acquired the original molds created by Mr. Prewitt.
- 3. What kinds of products did International Fiberglass Company manufacture and how much did they cost?** – In its 10 years of production, International Fiberglass made hundreds of oversized figures, including cowboys, Indians, astronauts, giant chickens, dinosaurs, Yogi Bears, and tigers. Giants sold for \$1,800 to \$2,800 (\$18,000 to \$20,000 in current dollars).
- 4. How were/are the American Giant figures made?** – Giant statues and other figures originally made by International Fiberglass used molds that formed fiberglass into the many varied shapes made by the company. Joel Baker owns some of the original International Fiberglass Company molds, which allows him and his crew of fiberglass specialists to make new American Giants, as well as replacement parts for original ones. Their restoration work includes sanding, fiberglass repair, internal structure manufacturing as well as painting and airbrush work.
- 5. Why is the American Giants Museum located in Atlanta, Illinois?** – Joel Baker stopped in Atlanta, IL in 2011 to visit the town's Bunyon Giant. When he did, he met Bill Thomas, who he told about his dream to someday establish an American Giants Museum – somewhere – that could house his collection of original International Fiberglass Company artifacts [full-sized giants, other fiberglass figures, company photos/documents, etc.]. Bill and the other members of the Atlanta Betterment Fund organization, decided to work with Joel on his dream and create the American Giants Museum – which they eventually did 11 years later.
- 6. When was the American Giants Museum built? Who built it? Who owns it? Who operates it?** – The American Giants Museum was constructed in the Fall of 2022 and opened the Spring of 2023. The Atlanta Betterment Fund organization [a not-for-profit civic group] owns the building and lot on which it stands. The Atlanta Betterment Fund operates the American Giants Museum in collaboration with the City of Atlanta and its Tourism Director who manages its group of volunteer docents.
- 7. Who is Joel Baker and what is his relationship to the American Giants Museum?** – Joel Baker, founder of American Giants, has been searching for and restoring giants and other figures originally manufactured by International Fiberglass since 2011. In addition to his full-time job in television production, Joel owns and manages American Giants Restoration – the business he created to find, save, and restore these icons of American roadside advertising. Along the way he acquired International Fiberglass molds, company literature, and photos. The American Giants Museum in Atlanta exists thanks to the generosity and passion of Joel and his restoration crew who, in his own words, “...Just dig these crazy, huge, roadside wonders.”
- 8. What are “Muffler Men”?** The large statues made by International Fiberglass were originally designed as Paul Bunyan figures. They earned the nickname “Muffler Men”, however, when muffler companies began using them to hold oversized mufflers in their hands as part of the roadside advertising campaigns of these businesses.
- 9. Who owns the Giants and other artifacts found at the American Giants Museum?** – Joel Baker owns the giants, body parts, and other objects displayed at the American Giants Museum. He and the Atlanta Betterment Fund organization have a loan agreement which allows them to be exhibited in Atlanta.

**10. Does it cost to get into the American Giants Museum?** – There is no charge to visit the American Giants Museum, but donations are gratefully accepted.

**11. Why does the American Giants Museum building look like an old Texaco gas station?** – The Texaco Big Friend [arriving Spring 2023] is the largest – and one of the rarest – giants included in the exhibits found at the American Giants Museum. Given its prominence, the decision was made to base the design of the American Giants Museum on the look of a circa mid-1960s Texaco service station – so the Big Friend would feel at home. More can be learned about the story of the Texaco Big Friend via the Big Friend interpretive panel inside the American Giants Museum.

**12. Can original giant figures manufactured by International Fiberglass Company still be purchased?** – Yes, original giants and other figures made by International Fiberglass can be purchased. For quotes and pricing please contact Joel at [info@usagiants.com](mailto:info@usagiants.com)

**13. Can new giant figures be made and purchased?** Joel Baker and his fiberglass team can make new American giants and other figures, using original International Fiberglass molds. For quotes and pricing please contact Joel at [info@usagiants.com](mailto:info@usagiants.com)

**14. Is the Texaco Banjo Sign located outside the American Giants Museum original or a reproduction?** – Located on the grounds of the American Giants Museum, the circa 1959 Texaco Banjo Sign is an original.

**15. What is the Route 66 Land of the Giants Rest Stop?** – The grounds outside the American Giants Museum, on which stand the museum's collection of American Giant statues have been designed as the "Route 66 Land of the Giants Rest Stop". The area provides a park-like setting, with picnic tables, a circa 1936 bubbler water fountain, and access to free wireless service, along with interpretive signage for each of the giants displayed there. [Picnic tables, bubbler fountain and wifi, etc. will be installed in Spring 2024.]

**15. What is the history of the Snerd Giant located in the Route 66 Land of the Giants Rest Stop? Is he modeled after Mad Magazine's Alfred E. Newman character?** The Snerd giant was likely made between 1966-1970, during a period when International Fiberglass Company began altering its original Muffler Man design to provide its customers more new options. He is modeled after Mortimer Snerd, one of the dummies, used by famed comedian and ventriloquist, Edgar Bergen, in the 1930s-50s. The Snerd is not modeled after the Mad Magazine Alfred E. Newman character, though the resemblance is strong.

**17. What additional giants will be added to the Route 66 Land of the Giants Rest Stop? When will they arrive?** Between now and the 2026 Centennial of Route 66, up to six more giants will be added to the grounds of the American Giants Museum, including the Texaco Big Friend, an American Indian Chief, a Viking, a Bunyan Giant, and a Cowboy figure. There is also a Papa Burger in Oglesby, Illinois and a Uniroyal Tire Gal in Peoria, Illinois among others.

**18. Are there other American Giants in Illinois or elsewhere in the U.S.A.?** – Along Route 66, the Gemini Giant is in Wilmington, Illinois and the Lauterbach Giant is in Springfield, Illinois. The interpretive panel next to the Bunyon Giant, across the street from the American Giants Museum, provides additional information regarding these two statues.

**19. What, if anything, was located on the corner lot where the American Giants Museum now stands?** From the 1920s thru the 1940s, a Deep Rock service station sat at an angle – just like the American Giants Museum does today – on this corner of Arch and Vine Streets. The lot was vacant when the Atlanta Betterment Fund organization purchased it in 2022.

**20. Where did the heads hanging from the American Giants Museum ceiling come from?** Joel Baker provided the Snerd, Uniroyal Gal, and Waving Giant heads for display. Each is new, having been made by Joel's team using original molds from International Fiberglass Company.