

Press Release

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Images available upon request or at www.losaltoshistory.org

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The Los Altos History Museum Presents

“Shaped By Water – Past, Present & Future”

On Exhibit October 8, 2011 – April 22, 2012

Opening Weekend at the Museum | October 15 & 16, 2011 | 12:00-4:00 p.m.

Opening Reception | October 15, 2011 | 6:00-8:30 p.m.

LOS ALTOS, CA — September 8, 2011 — The role of water in shaping the history of Santa Clara Valley – and how its usage will shape our future moving forward – will be showcased in the Los Altos History Museum’s upcoming exhibition, *“Shaped by Water – Past, Present & Future,”* October 8, 2011 – April 22, 2012. Through photographs, art, stories, and interactive activities, visitors will gain a greater appreciation of the role water plays in our lives – and learn new ideas to protect and preserve this essential resource. To further augment the exhibition, the Museum will present an inspiring slate of educational programs and events throughout the course of the exhibition. Opening weekend activities for *“Shaped by Water – Past, Present & Future”* will run October 15-16, 2011, from 12:00-4:00 p.m. and feature [Riveropolis](#), an interactive 30 foot long kinetic “social sculpture” and waterway installation where visitors of all ages can celebrate the joy of water through play and other hands-on activities. The public is also invited to attend the opening reception for the exhibition at the Museum on Saturday, October 15, 2011, from 6:00-8:30 p.m. The Los Altos History Museum is located at 51 S. San Antonio Road, Los Altos, California. Museum hours are Thursday through Sunday, noon to 4:00 p.m. Admission is free. For ongoing information and the latest updates to exhibition programming please visit www.losaltoshistory.org.

About “*Shaped by Water – Past, Present & Future*”

“*Shaped by Water – Past, Present & Future*” inspires a deep connection to this precious and essential resource through indoor and outdoor exhibits that incorporate artifacts, stories, photographs, maps and artwork by San Francisco Bay Area–based artists. The story of water in this region is told from a historical perspective beginning with the indigenous tribal people up to modern day through a comprehensive and interactive exhibition experience. It underscores how each period in our local history has been characterized by a changing relationship between humans and water. For example, the tribal people had an intimate relationship to water and moved around in response to the wet and dry seasons. This historical period is showcased in a native landscape and shelter installation that documents how water supported their life needs while they lived near creeks and the bay. A special sound station will feature three recorded tribal stories about water.

New immigrants to Santa Clara Valley brought dramatic changes in water usage and management beginning with the Spanish missionaries who built small rock dams on creeks, and irrigation ditches. The Mexicans further transformed the watershed through their ranching practices. Later, immigrants from the eastern United States brought even more significant changes during the Gold Rush with the proliferation of agriculture and digging of wells. The exhibition highlights this period with an interactive model of a groundwater artesian well along with panels describing the environmental impacts of the Spanish expeditions, Mexican ranchos, and the Gold Rush.

As our region entered the era known as the “Valley of Hearts Delight,” windmills and water tanks dotted the landscape and the rapid depletion of groundwater made a more organized water infrastructure necessary. Conserving local surface water in reservoirs was one of the major accomplishments of this time. Among the highlights visitors can view documenting this period are original film footage of the Santa Clara Valley 1937 flood, as well as panels with historic dam building photographs and charts showing the dramatic drops in groundwater levels due to the pumping of water for thirsty farms.

The post-World War II boom brought even larger water infrastructure projects. The massive state and federal water projects and water treatment facilities transformed the availability and use of water. As the population of the Santa Clara Valley grew in the post-World War II boom, the Valley went from being completely self-sufficient using local water to 50-100 percent reliant on imported water. The “business” of water and water companies became necessary to help manage community water needs and conservation efforts.

Current consumption patterns can be explored in exhibits that uncover the amount of water needed to produce our foods to current and future trends in local water consumption. An outdoor display will show visitors in actual gallons how much water they use on a daily basis. Interactive maps will be displayed where at a push of a button visitors can find out where their water comes from, as well as locate local reservoirs. Environmental concerns such as pollution of groundwater and surface water, Superfund sites, and water waste treatment processes are also emphasized. A map will help local visitors identify what watershed they live in and there will be a “Creek Stories” bulletin board where visitors can write down stories of their experiences with our local creeks.

Looking into the future, our growing population and changes in rainfall patterns have the potential to severely impact our water supply. The exhibition outlines future challenges and outcomes with concrete ideas to reduce consumption, reuse, and recycle water. Visitors will be able to view demonstration installations of a laundry-to-landscape gray-water wetland, rain-water harvesting systems, and a residential green roof. A fun, interactive fish ladder display teaches young and old visitors alike about the important role of fish ladders. Resources and ideas for action will be provided to visitors to continue and extend their thoughtful use of water.

The Museum will also display water-related artwork by San Francisco Bay Area-based artists that further expand the story of our connection with water including “*Wetland Washing Machine*” by Mark Brest van Kempen, “*Barreled by Plastic*” by Kathleen Egan; and “*46,000 and counting*” by Judith Selby-Lang and Richard Lang. Two off-site water-related art happenings are also scheduled. “*Reflections on Water*” a multimedia art exhibit will be displayed in conjunction with the exhibition at the Los Altos Library from November 1-30, 2011. “*Watershed Sculpture at Adobe Creek: An Inquiry into Ecological Restoration*” with artist Daniel McCormick at the Redwood Grove in Los Altos, (scheduled January 13-16, 2012), will engage the community to build a bio-engineered willow sculpture to restore a creek bank along Adobe Creek.

“Our critical connection with water and its historical impact on this region to date made it a perfect fit for the Museum’s programming,” said volunteer Linda Gass, *Shaped by Water* Exhibit Chair and a Los Altos, California-based artist whose art addresses water issues in California and the American West. “Our main goal for *Shaped by Water* is to educate the community about the past, present, and future of water while inspiring appreciation and action for this precious resource. Development of this exhibition was a huge undertaking and our team of museum and community volunteers have put thousands of hours into researching and building what you will see.”

Associated Programming and Events (Fall/Winter)

The *Shaped by Water* exhibition goes beyond the Museum’s walls with an inspiring slate of programs, events and community engagement scheduled throughout the course of the exhibition. Programming includes lectures, films, workshops and tours. The following Fall/Winter programming complements the exhibition content and is scheduled through January 2012. Additional programs and events through April 2012 will be announced at a later date. For ongoing information and the latest updates to exhibition programming visit www.losaltoshistory.org.

Tree Building Workshop for Riveropolis Installation

September 24 & 25, 2011 12:00-4:00 p.m.
with artist *Gregory Gavin*
Los Altos History Museum courtyard

Wheat Grass Planting for Riveropolis Installation

October 9, 2011 12:00-2:00 p.m.
with artist *Gregory Gavin*
Los Altos History Museum courtyard

The Neutra House Architecture Speaker Series: Sustainability

October 13, 2011, 6:00 p.m.
Charles Davis, architect for the Monterey Bay Aquarium
Hillview Community Center, Social Hall
\$20 general admission www.neutrahouse.org

Reflections on Water: Multimedia Art Exhibit

November 1-30, 2011, Library Hours
Reception - November 8, 2011, 6:30-7:30 p.m.
Los Altos Library www.santaclaracountylib.org/

Rainwater Harvesting Workshop – DATE CHANGE

November 5, 2011, 1:00-4:00 p.m.
Arnie Thompson, Acterra
Redwood Grove, Los Altos
\$35 Registration limited. Register at www.acterra.org/stewardship

Significance of the Watershed in Ancestral Ohlone Culture

November 8, 2011, 7:30-9:00 p.m.
Mark Hylkema, Archeologist, California State Parks
Art Exhibit reception preceding at 6:30 p.m.
Los Altos Library, Program Room www.santaclaracountylib.org/

**Community Build of Daniel McCormick's Watershed
Sculpture at Adobe Creek**

January 13-16, 2012*
Redwood Grove, Los Altos
Registration limited. Register at www.acterra.org/stewardship
*weather permitting - check website for up-to-date information

This exhibition and associated programming was made possible by the generous financial support from the [Los Altos Community Foundation](#), [California Water Service Company](#), [Morgan Family Foundation](#), [Purissima Hills Water District](#), [San Jose Water Company](#), [Santa Clara Valley Water District](#), [Kiwanis Club of Los Altos](#), [Fugro Consultants](#), [Rana Creek](#), [GreenTown Los Altos](#) and ongoing support from the City of Los Altos and the members of the Los Altos History Museum. The Museum would also like to acknowledge community support for this exhibition from its partners including members of [Acterra](#), [Committee for Green Foothills](#), Los Altos Hills Water Conservation Committee and others.

About the Los Altos History Museum

The Los Altos History Museum is dedicated to collecting, preserving, and interpreting the history of the Los Altos area. Permanent exhibits include:

- **“Crown of the Peninsula: Los Altos Land Use Over Time”** – Features interactive displays on the Ohlone, rancho days, people-of-note, orchard days, Silicon Valley beginnings and our railroad history (free audio tour).
- **J. Gilbert Smith History House** – A 1905 shingled Craftsman-style house featuring period furnishings, toys and decorative arts, interpreted in the era of the Great Depression.
- **Outdoor Agricultural Exhibits** – Features a 1915 tank house, antique farm equipment, walnut hullers and tools for cutting, sulfuring and drying apricots.

The Museum is a partnership between the Association of the Los Altos History Museum, a private non-profit (501)(c)(3) organization and the City of Los Altos. The Los Altos History Museum and J. Gilbert Smith House are open Thursday through Sunday, from noon-4:00 p.m. and are located behind the main library at 51 So. San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA 94022. Admission is free. For further information visit www.losaltoshistory.org or call 650-948-9427.