

“It’s Our Fault, Too”

The 100th Anniversary of the 1906 Earthquake

History San José’s Centennial Exhibition Examines Impact on the South Bay April 11 – December 30 at The Leonard & David McKay Gallery at the Pasetta House

History San José is setting the record straight. The 1906 earthquake, usually known as “the San Francisco Earthquake,” will be the focal point for the centennial exhibition, “*It’s Our Fault Too: The Impact of the 1906 Earthquake on Santa Clara Valley.*” Opening April 11 in *The Leonard and David McKay Gallery* at the Pasetta House in History Park, the show is the only major exhibit on this subject in the South Bay. It will examine the 1906 earthquake as it affected San José and the surrounding Santa Clara Valley.

“Until now, almost all the histories of the 1906 earthquake have focused on the massive disaster that befell San Francisco,” said Jim Reed, Archivist and Curator. “This exhibit adds to the historic record by bringing into focus the fact that the span of the quake extended far beyond that community.”

At the time of the quake, newspaper reports estimated that damage to buildings in San José was some \$30 million, which adjusted for inflation, would approach \$590 million today. The exhibition will showcase the collection of History San José’s Research Library, including photographs, diaries, letters, maps, newspaper accounts, posters, city and county records, and personal reminiscences of that traumatic day and its aftermath.

The exhibition will draw upon other area resources as well, including those of San José Martin Luther King Jr. Library, Stanford University Archives, Mt. Hamilton’s Lick Observatory, the U.S. Geological Survey in Menlo Park, and the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in Los Altos Hills. Most of the material has never been exhibited before.

Histories of the 1906 earthquake barely mention Santa Clara County. Some report deaths and damage at Stanford. Some reports portray the collapse of buildings at Agnews State Hospital, costing more than 100 lives. The local media documents loss of buildings in downtown San José.*

The exhibit will first look at the geology and seismology of the Santa Clara Valley, and of San José and Santa Clara County during the years immediately preceding the quake. A portion of the exhibit will include maps, photos, and newspaper and personal accounts of the damage that resulted from the quake.

The effects of the quake have been researched extensively by geologist, Nan Shostak, a graduate student in geology at San José State University. By examining damage patterns to buildings, and the underlying geological structure, it is hoped that we can learn lessons to prevent or mitigate damage in the future.

The exhibit will then turn to an overview of how communities responded and rebuilt in the aftermath of the tremors. It ends with a display and discussion on what individuals can do to prepare in anticipation of the next, inevitable, major earthquake.

Upcoming events:

History San José’s Family Day: “Take the Shake and Quake Challenge”
Sunday, August 13, noon to 5 p.m.

Earthquake Workshop with Schmahl Science Workshops: April 28 and 29, May 5 and 6, and May 26 and 27. Fridays ,10:30 a.m. – 12 noon, and Saturdays, 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.