

Phase 2: Place of Promise

One exhibition, four time periods, numerous artifacts...

Nicholas Vega, Senior Curator

With an opening date scheduled for July 19, 2007, *Phase 2: Place of Promise* will showcase a wide variety of items from the San Diego Historical Society's photo, archival and curatorial collections. These artifacts will play an important role in telling the history of early San Diego. They will allow museum guests to experience firsthand the history of the city. The time period for the exhibition will span hundreds of years, beginning with an examination of the Kumeyaay population in the region and ending with the American development of New Town in the 1880s. As a result, the artifacts chosen for display in this exhibition will draw from the Kumeyaay, Spanish, Mexican and early American periods of early San Diego.

The exhibition will look at a number of topics pertaining to the history of the region. The common theme present throughout the gallery, however, will reinforce the idea that the combination of Kumeyaay, Spanish, Mexican and Anglo-American cultures established the foundation of San Diego's history as we



Stagecoach purchased by Elisha Babcock for his Diamond Carriage and Livery Company in 1913. ©SDHS Collection.



Virtual exhibit space in the new permanent gallery in the Museum of San Diego History. ©SDHS Collection.

know it today. Rarely emphasized in contemporary exhibitions, San Diego was, for nearly three hundred years (1542-1821), just as much a part of Spain as are Madrid and Barcelona. After 1822, it was considered to be just as much a part of Mexico as Guadalajara and Mexico City. Additionally, centuries prior to the Spanish and Mexican presence in the area, San Diego was home to a self-sustaining and flourishing Kumeyaay population.

The histories of the Kumeyaay, Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo-American periods will serve as the subject matter for *Phase 2* and the artifacts from the Society's collections will act as the tools in relating the stories to the museum guests. All of the artifacts scheduled for display throughout the exhibition will come from the Society's photo, archive and curatorial collections and many of the artifacts will be on display for the first time at the Museum of San Diego History. Through the artifacts, the museum guest will be able to form a personal relationship to the stories told throughout the gallery. The artifacts exhibited in *Phase 2* will offer a glimpse into the past and will show what life was like in San Diego prior to the twentieth century.

No stranger to the San Diego Historical Society, an 1866 Concord Stagecoach will once again make its return to the Museum of San Diego History. Used primarily to transport passengers, the stagecoach was initially operated by the *Frary and Foster* line and served the communities of El Cajon and Lakeside. In 1913, local businessman and city developer, Elisha Babcock, purchased the stagecoach for his *Diamond Carriage and Livery Company*; in 1925, he presented the stagecoach to the Pioneer Society. After a brief stay with the Pioneer Society, the stagecoach was donated to the San Diego Historical Society in 1930 and shortly thereafter was placed on display until 1980 at the Junípero Serra Museum in Presidio Park.

Restoration of the stagecoach began in 1984 and throughout the process, it was determined that the decoration of the stagecoach had changed with each new owner. In an attempt to restore the stagecoach to its original condition, paint was ordered directly from the Concord Coach Society to ensure historical accuracy. Housed in storage for the past twenty years, the stagecoach will now serve as the icon artifact for the second phase of *Place of Promise*.

Representing the Mexican era, a quilt made by the matriarch of one of Old Town San Diego's most prominent families will also be on display in *Phase 2*. Born in 1814, Juana de Dios Machado Alípez Wrightington was the daughter of José Manuel Machado, the Corporal of the Presidio Company in San Diego, and Serafina Váldez, who was originally from the Presidio of Santa Barbara. The Machado family is one of San Diego's oldest families and was one of the earliest families to settle in the Old Town area. The Machado quilt, kept in the family for many generations, was donated in 1953 to the San Diego Historical Society. Created in 1850 by Juana Machado, the quilt is designed in a medallion style. Plain weave white cotton with a central, circular motif in leaf and modified heart shapes, the quilt also contains a vine-patterned border on all four sides that has been worked in red cotton, plain weave and twill. Some fading has occurred throughout certain areas of the quilt, particularly the red dyed thread; however, the quilt remains in good condition. Measuring sixty-three inches by eighty-two inches, the quilt will definitely serve as a principal artifact within the Mexican period display of the exhibition.

In addition to costume and textile objects, items from the Society's fine art collection are also scheduled for display during *Phase 2*. One such item is an oil painting titled *View from Shirley and DeWitts Addition* by California artist Frank L.



The Machado quilt, kept in the Old Town Machado family for many generations, was donated in 1953 to the San Diego Historical Society. ©SDHS Collection.



An oil painting titled View from Shirley and DeWitt's Addition by California artist Frank L. Heath. ©SDHS Collection.

Heath. Measuring twenty-four inches by forty-four inches, this painting shows an undeveloped Mission Valley at the end of the nineteenth century. Originally from Salem, Oregon, Heath moved to Santa Cruz, California, at a young age where began his career as an artist. Heath traveled through California and established himself as a prominent marine and landscape painter during the 1880s.

View from Shirley and DeWitt's Addition, painted in 1888, depicts a scene of Mission Valley from Linda Vista that, for many today, is unimaginable. Lush, green wild grass covers the Valley's hillsides and floor and the number of residences in the area can be counted on a single hand. Heath's portrayal of a natural and untouched Mission Valley gives us a glimpse into the past and shows what life was like in San Diego during the late nineteenth century.

Phase 2: Place of Promise is made possible through the generous support of members of the San Diego community, including the Heller Foundation of San Diego, the J. W. Sefton Foundation, and other local donors. For information on how to contribute to the mission of the San Diego Historical Society, please contact Executive Director David S. Watson at (619) 232-6203.