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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

History San José Presents *A Breath of Plein Air*

**An Exhibition of Painting of Santa Clara Valley by Local Artists
Exhibit Opens May 2th at the
Leonard & David McKay Gallery**

San José, California – March 20, 2008

History San José presents *A Breath of Plein Air* exhibit at the Leonard and David McKay Gallery at the Pasetta House in History Park at Kelley Park from Friday, May 2 through September 21, 2008.

The art of *plein air* painting, a French word meaning “in the open air,” became popular in the mid-1800’s, with the invention of paints in tubes. Prior to that paint was made by hand and easels were less portable. French impressionists, and later the Russian and American impressionists, set the stage as the popularity of natural lighting in painting increased— the outdoor style continues to be a popular form of expression. This is particularly the case in Santa Clara Valley, where the weather is excellent most of the year.

“*Plein air* is a great way for artists to slow down, commune with nature, relax and truly enjoy the beautiful scenery and weather of our area,” said Sarah Puckitt, Curator of Art and Photography at History San José. “These works demonstrate the beauty that remains in the Santa Clara Valley despite rapid urbanization.”

This competition for a group exhibition was open to all visual artists, 18 years or older, residing in the Santa Clara/Silicon Valley working in the *plein-air* method. Artwork produced within the last three years illustrates scenes of San José, Santa Clara or Silicon Valley. The exhibit includes 54 pieces painted by 25 local artists, from Saratoga, Campbell and San Jose to Los Altos Hills, Palo Alto and Woodside.

Nancy Patka, a Saratoga artist and teacher of *plein air* painting said, “During the course of any day there are countless sources of inspiration. It could be the way the light moves across a scene...or the character of a great old building.” Two of her pieces are in the show, and depict heritage orchards.

“The theme of capturing interesting images of local history before they disappear is central to my art,” said Carol Lois Haywood, of Sunnyvale. She has a piece entitled “Alviso Ranch” in the exhibit.

Adds Puckitt, “It is a very healthy way to focus on nature while staying in the moment.”

Plein Air Days at History Park, Sundays in which artists are invited to paint outdoors within the park setting, will be held on May 4, June 15, July 20 and August 17.

The exhibit, *A Breath of Plein Air*, is sponsored by Robert J. Bettencourt, Casto Travel, Heritage Bank of Commerce, and an anonymous donor.

The Leonard and David McKay Gallery in the Pasetta House is open Fridays through Sundays from noon to 5 p.m. at History Park at Kelley Park, 1650 Senter Road between Phelan and Keyes.

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About History San José:

History San José (HSJ) is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and sharing the continuing history of the Santa Clara Valley. HSJ manages one of the largest and most comprehensive regional history collections in the State of California, from 1784 Spanish governmental records to twenty-first century Silicon Valley technology.

History Park at Kelley Park, located at 1650 Senter Road, is a 14-acre park featuring a town atmosphere, with free rides on historic trolleys, exhibit galleries and 27 historic buildings, including a Museum Store and O’Brien’s Café, with an ice cream parlor and candy store. History Park is open Tuesday through Sunday, 12 noon – 5:00 p.m. Admission is free.

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