



Media preview: Thursday, August 10, 3 pm
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Chabot Observatories: A View to the Stars
Opens at Chabot Space & Science Center, August 12, 2006

—New Permanent Exhibition Celebrates 123-Year History—

27 July 2006 -- (Oakland, CA) — Chabot Space & Science Center’s new permanent exhibition, *A View to the Stars*, opens to the public on Saturday, August 12, and allows visitors to share a nighttime experience of the historic observatory during the museum’s daytime hours. The 2,800-square-foot exhibition spans the three observatories and recounts the 123-year history of Chabot and its telescopes. The exhibition contains a combination of informative graphic panels, multimedia kiosks, interactive computer programs, hands-on stations and historic artifacts. The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the exhibit is scheduled on Thursday, August 10, from 3-5 pm during a VIP and press Founder’s Day event. The event will also honor those who have been instrumental in founding the new Chabot, including “mad-scientist” Kinglsey Wightman, who served as Chabot’s director from 1947 – 1991.

Chabot is one of the oldest public observatories in the United States. The original observatory opened in 1883 and was located in downtown Oakland in Lafayette Square. It has since moved twice and is currently situated in the Oakland Hills, where it houses three telescopes that are open to the public: the original refracting 8-inch Alvan Clark telescope, named “Leah,” built in 1883; the 20-inch refractor telescope, named “Rachel,” built in 1915; and the newest 36-inch reflecting telescope, named “Nellie,” which opened in 2003. The meridian transit telescope, used to set the official time for Oakland from 1885-1915, is on display in Astronomy Hall. When it was in operation, it automatically rang a bell at Oakland City Hall twice a day.

“The Bay Area should be very proud of Chabot’s 123 years of service in civic science,” commented Executive Director Alex Barnett. “Millions of people have had their first look at Saturn through the telescopes. I know many people today that fondly remember their visits to the old Chabot on Mountain Boulevard and now come back with their children to our current site.”

The telescopes have been used for significant research, from studying eclipses to looking for planets around other stars. Included in the exhibition are astronomical photographs taken through Chabot’s telescopes, along with historical images and artifacts from the institution’s first century of operation. Interactive computers allow daytime visitors to “look through” a telescope at an ideal Oakland night sky and try their skill at locating astronomical targets. Hands-on exhibits let visitors experiment with light sources, mirrors, and lenses to understand how telescope optics create images of distant objects.

The multimedia kiosks recount Chabot's history and include the accomplishments of Chabot's first director, Charles Burckhalter, whose turn-of-the-century eclipse photographs earned him worldwide recognition. The kiosks also feature stories of the Eastbay Astronomical Society and its ongoing support of the observatory.

Chabot has played an important integral part of the culture and history of the Bay Area. Its archives contain a treasure chest of Bay Area anecdotes, including patriotic stories of the everyday folks who were searching the skies for Sputniks in Operation Moonwatch, the lectures given by early directors about their travels to exotic parts of the world, and the nuisance of the cows that got loose on observatory grounds.

Major funding for the \$350,000 project was provided by Proposition 40 funds from California's Historical and Cultural Resources Preservation Program. Additional funds were provided by voter approved bonds from Measure G. The project also includes improvements to the observatories that will allow Chabot to conduct classes for elementary and secondary students from Bay Area schools.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Chabot Space and Science Center, a Smithsonian affiliate, is a 501c3 nonprofit interactive science center focusing on astronomy and the inter-relationships of all the sciences. Its observatory, planetarium, exhibits, and natural park setting are a place where a diverse population of students, teachers, and the public can imagine, understand, and learn to shape their future through science. The Center is located at 10000 Skyline Blvd. in Oakland's Joaquin Miller Park. **Summer hours, July 5 – Sept 5:** Tues – Thurs, 10 am–5pm; Friday & Saturday, 10 am–10 pm; Sunday, 11am–5 pm. Closed Mon. General admission, including free parking and a daytime planetarium show, is \$13.00 for adults, \$10.00 Seniors and Students, \$9.00 Youth (4 – 12). Children under 3 are admitted free. Friday & Saturday evening planetarium shows and large format movies in the MegaDome Theater are \$8.00 adult, and \$7.00 Youth & Senior. Telescopes are open for Free Public Viewing Fridays & Saturdays from dusk – 10:30 pm, weather permitting. Tickets may be purchased at the door, or by calling (510) 336-7373.

For more information, call (510) 336-7300, or visit www.chabotspace.org

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