



Rocky Flats Cold War Museum

For immediate release:
For further information contact:

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Kim Grant, President, 720-898-7125

Rocky Flats Cold War Museum Secures Land for Museum Site

The Rocky Flats Cold War Museum recently received a donation offer of 1.4 acres of land near the former nuclear weapons production plant site from board member Charles Church McKay, and is now aggressively making plans to develop the site and create a museum next to a future wildlife refuge created by Congress.

McKay, a local rancher and developer, is the nephew of Marcus Church whose family land was purchased by the federal government in 1951 under threat of condemnation, to build the nuclear weapons plant. The plant was officially closed in October 2005 by the U.S. Department of Energy and Kaiser-Hill, LLC, after an extensive Superfund cleanup.

The proposed land donation for the museum is between Golden and Boulder east of State Highway 93 near the west entrance to the plant in unincorporated Jefferson County.

Kim Grant, president of the museum board, said, "We are very grateful for Charlie McKay's generosity. This donation represents an important private sector contribution to the project that will keep us on target with our development and fundraising efforts."

The property was offered to the board on the condition that the museum was to be planned, financed, designed and ready for groundbreaking by January 1, 2008, Grant said. A billboard was installed in late February announcing the planned museum site, and committees have begun the intensive planning process.

The museum board had expressed its goal of locating the building next to the site. "This site is perfect, because the site and its historic context are critical in helping to tell the story of the plant and its role in the Cold War," Grant said.

The purpose of the Rocky Flats Cold War Museum is to document the historical, social, environmental and scientific aspects of the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant, and to educate the public about Rocky Flats, the Cold War and their legacies through preservation of key artifacts and development of interpretive and educational programs.

Museum board members want to cover all aspects of Rocky Flats' history, ranging from production of weapons components, discoveries, patents and scientific breakthroughs that occurred at the plant to ongoing concerns relating to residual contamination, health effects and

community activism and protest at the plant. They also hope to host traveling Cold War history exhibits from other museums around the country.

“We want to help visitors understand the strongly polarized opinions people have held in the post-war era about nuclear weapons and war, and to see Rocky Flats in that local and global context,” Grant explained. “It is important to tell this fascinating, but contentious history in a way that is balanced and fair to all sides of the story.”

Since the museum was incorporated in 2001, the group has raised more than \$300,000 including donations from Kaiser-Hill, the State Historical Fund, and numerous private individuals. The museum is also requesting a federal appropriation to support its development.

The museum board has conducted a feasibility study, collected many artifacts as the weapons plant was being demolished and began an oral history project to save the stories and building histories from former workers and others. The board also set up a speaker’s bureau to make presentations to interested civic clubs and community organizations.

Volunteers have saved hundreds of photographs, films and documents covering everything from site dedication to anti-war protests as well as several large cargo containers full of memorabilia donated by former plant workers, contractors, government agencies, retirees and activists. Collections include glove boxes like the ones used to handle the manufacture of plutonium “triggers” for nuclear weapons and other safety and scientific equipment from the site.

Nearly 80 oral histories of former plant workers, political leaders, regulators and others have been videotaped for the museum, in cooperation with the Maria Rogers Oral History Program at the Carnegie branch of the Boulder Public Library, using a State Historical Fund grant. These oral histories and their related bibliographic records and transcripts can be accessed at www.bplcarnegie.org/oralhistory.

The Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant began operations in 1952. It was the only site in the country developing the plutonium triggers, which were shipped to Texas for assembly into weapons for the nation’s defense. Production ceased in 1989 following an FBI raid. Once it was determined that no additional production would take place on the site, cleanup began.

A few other nuclear plant museums exist around the country, Grant said, but most of them deal “more literally” with just that site’s nuclear production or focus primarily on the Manhattan Project which created atomic bombs used in World War II. The nearest museums are located in New Mexico, Missouri and Nevada. Others are being developed in communities that host or have hosted nuclear sites.

Visit www.rockyflatscoldwarmuseum.org for more information or to volunteer to serve on one of the newly created committees. Donations for the museum may be sent to Rocky Flats Cold War Museum, P.O. Box 871, Arvada, CO 80001-8101.

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