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Contact: Kevin Herglotz
415-874-9650
kevin@hpastrategies.com



CALIFORNIA
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NEW EXHIBITION FEATURES SOCIAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY TO CROWD-SOURCE A NEW HISTORY DURING YEAR OF THE BAY

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. (April 2, 2013) – San Francisco’s venerable 142-year-old California Historical Society is embracing 21st-century technology to celebrate the Year of the Bay in 2013, by offering its extensive collections to a crowdsourcing experiment in its gallery and at yearofthebay.org.

In a year that is bringing the high-profile America’s Cup yacht races to the Bay, the opening of a new Bay Bridge span, and the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Port of San Francisco, the California Historical Society is staging an experimental exhibition of many items from its collections not publicly exhibited before. Many of these artifacts -- photographs, paintings, and documents -- present historical mysteries still to be solved. The historical society is welcoming the public into this rich collection of materials to contribute their own stories, knowledge, photographs, and other sources to create a richer, more diverse history of the San Francisco Bay.

Entitled “*Curating the Bay: Crowdsourcing a New Environmental History*,” the exhibition takes risks by asking visitors to fill in the blanks rather than presenting them with a finished narrative. It opens up the process of curating — usually reserved for trained professionals — to the public both in the exhibition and online as part of yearofthebay.org, a dynamic crowdsourcing experiment with researchers at Stanford University and Historypin, an innovative global social technology partner.

The exhibition represents history in formation and invites visitors to be part of making history in the Bay Area. The interactive nature of the exhibition is apparent from the moment visitors enter the California Historical Society, where they will see a large work table at which they can bring their own historical photographs, maps, and other documents, then scan and upload to the Year of the Bay website. Dynamic workshops and events will also bring groups in to share their materials throughout the exhibition.

Visitors will take a voyage of discovery through an exhibition that brings more than 250 objects, ranging from the journal of Chester Smith Lyman who arrived through the Golden Gate in 1847, to a catalogue of beach and water lots auctioned on the San Francisco waterfront in 1851, a 19th-century painting of a hay scow plying the San Francisco Bay by Julian Rix, an early 20th-century map of Solano County showing a scheme for building a salt water barrier across the mouth of the Sacramento-San Joaquin delta to hold back fresh water, and the marked-up manuscript of an influential article proclaiming “1969—The Year We Save, or Lose, San Francisco Bay.”

Some of these items tell a familiar story of the history of the San Francisco Bay, but others are enigmas meant to inspire what the organizers call “collaborative mystery solving” to uncover the rich, diverse, complicated history of the San Francisco Bay. All of which is reflected in the documents, photographs, maps, journals, and art work in the collections of the California Historical Society.

“This is a great experiment for us as we open up the historian’s toolkit to all who are interested and test new ways to do the very work of history and engage with our collections,” said Dr. Anthea Hartig, Executive Director of the California Historical Society. “We look forward to seeing how the public’s contributions to *Curating the Bay* through the interactive website will amplify and stretch the exhibition’s content.”

Guest curator Jon Christensen, a historian who is also coordinating the larger Year of the Bay crowdsourcing project at Stanford University, added, "This is public history in a new, dynamic form. We hope the exhibition will inspire visitors to help us explore some of the untold stories that could be uncovered through the historical society's collections."

Curating the Bay: Crowdsourcing a New Environmental History will be the second exhibition in a new programming initiative for the California Historical Society, called *Curating California*, designed to expose the collections and holdings of the California Historical Society to a wider public and to engage new audiences in exciting dialogues about California histories.

The *Curating the Bay* exhibition will officially open on Sunday, April 7th, 2013 from 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. with a celebration that will include a live musical performance, reception and Historypin demonstrations. The exhibition will be featured at the California Historical Society galleries located in San Francisco at **678 Mission Street from April 7, 2013 to August 25, 2013**. The CHS galleries and Ten Lions Book Store are open to the public Tuesday through Sunday from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. **Admission is FREE** with a suggested donation of \$5.00. For more information about the exhibition, school tours and events visit www.californiahistoricalsociety.org or call 415-337-1848.

This exhibition has been generously supported by our funding sponsors: S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, Placer Partners, Port of San Francisco, and Wells Fargo. Exhibition partners include: Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis at Stanford University, EcoCenter at Heron's Head Park, Golden Gate Audubon, Heyday, Historypin, Literacy for Environmental Justice, Port of San Francisco, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, and San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. In-kind support is being provided by: The CBW Group, Hafner Vineyard, Herglotz Public Affairs, Lagunitas Brewing Company, and Sherwin-Williams. Institutional support to CHS is provided from the Hearst Foundation, Hewlett-Packard, The James Irvine Foundation, and San Francisco Grants for the Arts.

About Jon Christensen: Jon Christensen is an adjunct assistant professor and Pritzker fellow in the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability and the Department of History at the University of California, Los Angeles; editor of *Boom: A Journal of California*, published by the University of California Press; and a member of the board of trustees of the California Historical Society. Formerly, he was executive director of the Bill Lane Center for the American West at Stanford University. An environmental journalist and science writer for 30 years, his work has appeared in newspapers, magazines, journals, and radio and television shows. Currently he is organizing a collaborative project with libraries, museums, archives, nonprofit organizations, scholars, researchers, the media, and the public to crowd-source a new public environmental history of the Bay Area during the Year of the Bay in 2013. Reach him at jonchristensen@ioes.ucla.edu, 650.759.6534.

About the California Historical Society: Founded in 1871, CHS is a membership-based, non-profit organization that inspires and empowers Californians to make the past a meaningful part of their contemporary lives. CHS was designated the official California State Historical Society in 1979. Headquartered in San Francisco, CHS is home to one of the four major research collections on California history in the state, including over 35,000 volumes of books and pamphlets, more than 4,000 manuscript collections, and some 500,000 photographs documenting California's social, cultural, economic, and political history and development. In Los Angeles, CHS also maintains an incomparable photograph collection at the University of Southern California and a remarkable fine art and costume collection at the Autry National Center.

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