



**BROOKLYN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
150 YEARS**

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**BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY AWARDED GRANT FROM NATIONAL ENDOWMENT
FOR THE HUMANITIES**

*BHS embarks on creating digital components for its first long-term exhibition in
satellite DUMBO location*

December 21, 2015 Brooklyn, NY— Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS) has been awarded a grant of \$300,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for its forthcoming exhibition, *Waterfront*. This long-term transmedia exhibition and visitor experience will bring the dynamic story of Brooklyn’s waterfront to visitors at BHS’s new satellite location in Empire Stores in DUMBO, set to open in 2016. *Waterfront* will immerse visitors in the engaging and deeply relevant history of Brooklyn’s waterfront and cast them as influential players in shaping its future.

“*Waterfront* embodies NEH’s mission to preserve cultural heritage, promote scholarship, and make the best of America’s humanities ideas available to all citizens,” said Karen S. Mittelman, NEH Director of the Division of Public Programs. “BHS is a leader in historical stewardship. We are pleased to award this grant that will bring to light valuable lessons from Brooklyn’s past as they relate to its present-day.”

Water Log and Visitor Vistas, the digital features of *Waterfront* made possible by NEH funding, will be developed to serve local residents as well as national and international visitors. These components will serve as foundational features of *Waterfront*, immersing visitors in the area’s history and allowing museum-goers to interact with BHS collections in new and exciting ways. The exhibition will anchor BHS’s new presence in Empire Stores, a former warehouse which once stored countless tons of coffee, sugar, jute, and animal hides when Brooklyn was one of the largest commercial waterfronts in the world. Following Brooklyn’s deindustrialization, Empire Stores was shuttered in the mid-20th century, but has recently been adapted for restaurant, retail, and office space. When it opens, BHS DUMBO will be the only cultural institution in the complex, providing the public with cutting-edge historical interpretation and design within a monumental 19th-century building.

Creating an immersive experience with projected images, Water Log will employ visual storytelling to introduce visitors to the sweep of Brooklyn’s waterfront history. Activating all features of the room – floor,

ceiling, windows – Water Log will literally wrap visitors in a series of environments from prehistory to the recent past that existed in the very spot on which they now stand, revealing the many roles that the waterfront has played over thousands of years. On the other side of the gallery, Visitor Vistas, a touch-screen interactive, will feature hundreds of waterfront images from BHS’s historic collections in a two-sided display system that will replicate the flow of the tidal estuary outside. At five work stations, visitors will be able to select, group, edit, and collage digitized images from BHS collections and send their own creations through the tide.

“We are grateful to NEH for supporting this project that will celebrate the history and changing physicality of Brooklyn’s waterfront,” notes BHS President, Deborah Schwartz. “Furthermore, we are thrilled that this exhibition of scale and note will anchor Brooklyn Historical Society DUMBO in its new home in Empire Stores, where it will be the sole cultural institution. *Waterfront* will position BHS to play a central role in debates about the present and future development of Brooklyn’s waterfront and waterfronts around the world.”

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation.

About Brooklyn Historical Society

Founded in 1863, Brooklyn Historical Society is a nationally recognized urban history center dedicated to preserving and encouraging the study of Brooklyn's extraordinary 400-year history. Located in Brooklyn Heights and housed in a magnificent landmark building designed by George Post and opened in 1881, today's BHS is a cultural hub for civic dialogue, thoughtful engagement and community outreach.

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