Planning begins for San Diego Innovates

On December 17, 2010, San Diego History Center hosted a planning workshop, or charrette, for San Diego Innovates, an exhibition set to debut in 2012.

Facilitated by Janet Kamien, an exhibition planning consultant, the session yielded a wide variety of topics and themes that will be further developed as the exhibition takes shape. Influenced heavily by the scholarly research of Professor Mary Wolshok and Professor Abe Shragge, San Diego Innovates will celebrate the history of local entrepreneurs while highlighting the work of contemporary inventors and researchers.

Wolshok and Shragge opened the charrette with a detailed history of local innovation dating as far back as the late 19th century. Following the historical overview, participants began discussing well-known inventions, products, and applications that were first developed in San Diego. The relationship between innovation in the science and technology field versus other fields such as education, the arts, merchandising, was also discussed.

The discussion came to an end with the identification of local companies and individuals who have, throughout the years, played a key role in the development of new and ground-breaking products; pivotal innovative moments in local history were also identified.

A number of great ideas and topics surfaced as a result of this planning session, but there will be some challenges in making sure that the exhibition is inclusive of all residents in our community. With a dedicated and highly enthusiastic advisory committee, San Diego Innovates will truly be a unique, interactive exhibition.

• Nicholas Vega, Director of Exhibitions
Major New Grant Will Enhance Access to the History Center’s Rich Archival Holdings

In the last issue of our newsletter, I reported that we had applied for a major grant to enable us to create finding aids, or guides, to 133 of our archival collections and to post those finding aids on the web. Now I am extremely pleased to report the wonderful news that we have received an award of $162,024 from the Council for Library and Information Resources (CLIR) to carry out the two-year project.

The 133 archival collections contain material dating from the early 19th century to the present that relate to both San Diego and nearby Baja California. Once made accessible, the collections will shed light on the region’s social, economic, and political history. CLIR is a professional organization that is actually serving as a conduit for funding that is being provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. This is the third year in which grants have been made through the program, which is called Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives. The History Center is very pleased to join the prestigious institutions that have been the recipients of past awards. In our own state, those institutions have included the Bancroft Library, the California Historical Society, the Getty, and the University of Southern California. Other recipients outside California have included the Newberry Library, the Smithsonian Institution, Yale University, Harvard University, and the Library of Congress. This year awards were made to only 17 out of 92 grant applicants nationwide. The fact that the program is so very selective underscores the national importance of the History Center’s research collections. The CLIR award, together with other collection-related grants we have received recently from the Institute of Museum & Library Services and the National Endowment for the Arts, will enhance our ability to secure similar awards from additional funders in the future. A wonderful team of individuals helped to assemble the History Center’s successful proposal. History Center Archivist Jane Kenealy carefully selected the collections that will be the focus of the project. USD Professor of History Iris Engstrand helped build the case for the collections’ historical importance as did Professor Robert Senkewicz of Santa Clara University and The Huntington Library’s Director of Research, Robert Ritchie. USDC librarian Brad Westbrook, who is one of the designers of a software package used by libraries everywhere to catalog archival collections, helped design the work plan. We anticipate that important material will come to light as the 133 collections are processed. Stay tuned!

Best wishes,

* David M. Kahn, Executive Director
Norman Baynard Photograph Identification Project Update

Research and cataloging continues on the Norman Baynard Photograph Collection which documents South San Diego’s African American community from 1939 through 1980. Five hundred images have now been digitized and cataloged and this information will be shared with the public at community meetings beginning in February.

It is anticipated that these meetings will bring out more details and stories about the people and places in the images and result in a fuller picture and a deeper understanding of life in San Diego, predominately in Logan Heights.

The initial grant for this project was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and additional funds have been provided by the Irvine Foundation, the Billingsley Foundation, Union Bank, and the Heller Foundation. These funds will not only support enhanced access to the collection, but will make community meetings, public programs, and exhibitions in the summer a reality.

Sylvia M’Lafi Thompson has recently been hired as the Baynard Project Consultant. With 20 years professional experience in the administration, development and implementation of arts and culture programming and strategies Ms. Thompson brings a great deal of experience and knowledge to this position. She will be organizing community meetings, scheduling video interviews with community members, and raising awareness of the project.

To find out more, including community meeting times and places, please visit our website at www.sandiegohistory.org/baynard or contact Ms. Thompson at thompsoncompany@aol.com or (619) 405-2162.

• Chris Travers, Director of the Photograph Collection

• Sylvia M’Lafi Thompson has been hired for this project. Photo by: Randy Rovang..

James (Jimmy) Liggins, preacher c. 1950 from the Baynard Collection.
Costume Council Celebrates the Opening of Dressing the Part

San Diego History Center’s Costume Council hosted a gala reception in conjunction with the opening of the interactive exhibition, Dressing the Part: Costume Design at the Old Globe. Guests were able to have the first look at the exhibition, which features exquisite costumes from the Old Globe’s costume collection and interactive displays highlighting costume creation and character transformation. Many thanks to the honorary chairs, Karen Cohn and Sheryl White, who helped to make the event so successful.

• Christine D. Deardorff, Director of Development

African American Photography experts to assess Norman Baynard Collection

We are pleased to welcome three leading experts in African American studies and photography to the History Center on January 20, 2011 to assess the content of the Norman Baynard Collection of African American images. Dr. Deborah Willis, Professor and Chair of the Department of Photography and Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, will be joined by Dr. Camara Holloway, Assistant Professor of late 19th & early 20th century American Art at University of Delaware, and Dr. Cristin McVey, Department of Sociology, University of California, San Diego, to explore the local and national significance of this unique portrait photography captured from the 1930s through 1980s. A reception for members and the general public will be held that evening. Following the reception, Dr. Willis will present an illustrated talk entitled Posing Beauty: African American Images from the 1890s to the Present. She will also be discussing selected images from the Baynard Collection. For additional information, please call (619) 232-6203 ext. 129.

• Gabe Selak, Public Programs Manager
Above: San Diego Harmony Ringers perform at the History Center to celebrate the park-wide December Nights. Photo by: Madison Johnston

Left: A young visitor learns about theatre make-up techniques at the Dressing the Part program, Grandparents & Me Theatre Workshop: All About Face! Photo by: Gabe Selak

Above: Spanish guitarist Eric Symons performs at our Serra concert series, Guitar Through the Ages. Photo by: Tam Joslin

Above: Courtroom Sketch Artist, Debbie Krentz Johnson shares a perspective on the art of courtroom sketches. Photo by: Gabe Selak

Above: The Serra Museum celebrates Native American heritage with a performance by the Kupa Song and Dance group from the Pala Band of Mission Indians. Photo by: Tam Joslin

Left: Mary Sadler, Jim Davie and Betty Peabody attend the Annual Member Meeting.
Grant received from WD-40 for K-12 Transportation

In conversations with teachers, they often cite the cost of bus transportation as the main obstacle that prevents them from being able to bring their classes to San Diego History Center. Thanks to a grant from the WD-40 Company, the Education Department can now subsidize the transportation costs of schools that might not otherwise be able to visit our museums. With the WD-40 grant, as well as other funds set aside for this purpose, SDHC hopes to subsidize transportation costs for up to 30 schools by the end of the current school year.

*Marinta Skupin, Director of Education

Park-Wide Audience Research Study

San Diego History Center recently participated in a park-wide, first-of-its-kind survey to get to know our visitors better.

“Evaluating the Balboa Park Experience” was organized and overseen by the Balboa Park Learning Institute, in collaboration with Audience Focus, a professional evaluation company. San Diego History Center, along with 11 other institutions in Balboa Park, participated in the a ten-month project by designing and conducting a visitor survey to measure the ways in which visitors to Balboa Park benefit from their experiences here.

During the summer of 2010, SDHC staff members and volunteers collected 600 visitor surveys. Between May and September, the 12 participating institutions gathered almost 10,000 surveys collectively. Completed surveys were interpreted by Audience Focus and preliminary results were introduced at a symposium in Balboa Park in early November.

In addition to giving us very good insight into who our visitors are, what their motivations are for visiting San Diego History Center, and how they rate their experiences here, the results can also be interpreted and compared park-wide, since all institutions used the same survey instrument. This adds a valuable feature to interpreting the data and to using it to base future decisions on. Ongoing analysis of the data is currently taking place.

*Marinta Skupin, Director of Education
San Diego History Center honors Sol Price as History Maker of the Year

San Diego History Center’s 2011 History Maker of the Year honor is being awarded, posthumously, to businessman and philanthropist Sol Price.

Mr. Price revolutionized retailing twice during his lifetime, first in the founding and development of FedMart Stores and later with the creation of Price Club which spawned a revolution in retail merchandising. In addition to his seminal work in the business world, Mr. Price gave his time, energy and financial resources to the community of San Diego through his many charitable endeavors.

The Costco-themed event will be held at the Town and Country Resort and will honor Mr. Price’s legacy. Funds raised will go to support San Diego History Center. Tickets begin at $75 and sponsorships are still available.

For more information about the event, contact Events Coordinator Joe Gregore at (619) 232-6203 ext. 109 or at events@sandiegohistory.org

We hope to see you there!

History Center Launches Redesigned Website

San Diego History Center recently launched its redesigned website, www.sandiegohistory.org. The site was created by Balboa Park Online Collaborative, an organization created to enhance technology for the Park’s institutions.

The History Center’s website is one of Balboa Park’s most visited, attracting about 50,000 visitors per month and 150,000 page views per month. Linda West from the Balboa Park Online Collaborative did the bulk of the redesign work, converting thousands of pages and images. The biggest challenge was the sheer size of the website which contains more than 35,000 pieces of content, including pages, images, and PDFs.

BPOC has been transferring many of its members’ websites to Drupal, an open source content management system, to simplify administration, design, and authoring of content. The common platform will also make it easier to use park-wide tools such as a shared calendar system.

The History Center is also working with the Collaborative to digitize photographs, journals, and other collections objects. A rapid image capture workstation, located at SDHC, can create hundreds of digital images per day.

“We were very excited to work with San Diego History Center’s staff to re-launch their website on the Drupal platform,” said Rich Cherry, Director of the Balboa Park Online Collaborative. “We have launched eight websites and two video portals since our project started in early 2009, but this was the largest website transfer we have completed.”

• Maren Dougherty, Senior Editor, Balboa Park Online Collaborative
• Jessica Schmidt LaFave, Development and Donor Relations Associate

Remembering Mary Hollis Clark

San Diego History Center is sad to announce the loss of a generous supporter and member, Mary Hollis Clark. A Georgia native who moved to San Diego in 1946, Mrs. Clark was a significant fundraiser and civic leader in the community. She and her husband, the late James Dallas Clark, received the medal for Distinguished Philanthropy from the American Association of Museums in 1998. Mrs. Clark was a longtime contributor to San Diego History Center and she will be missed.
January
17 History for Half Pints: Let It Snow!
20 Lecture: Posing Beauty: African American Images from 1890 to the Present, Dr. Deborah Willis
22 ARTrip, Rancho Santa Fe
22 Big Bay Whale Days, Embarcadero
25 San Diego NOW: Changing Face of Congress & Impact on San Diego

February
2 Tour: The Old Globe Technical Center
5 New & Renewing Member Reception
9 Tour: Behind-the-Scenes at The Old Globe Theatre
15 San Diego NOW: Love & Marriage Then & NOW
19 Beauty and the Beast Song & Dance Party
21 History for Half Pints: What Does Mr. Groundhog Say?
22 Lecture/Book signing: The Sounding, David Klauber
26 Bus Trip: LACMA and FIDM, Los Angeles

March
9 Historic Places: Celebrating Irving Gill, Thomas Hines
18 Lecture/Book signing: Pio Pico: The Last Governor of Mexican California, Carlos Salomon
19 It’s a Mask-querade! Theatre Workshop
19 Balboa Park-wide Science Family Day: The Science of History
21 History for Half Pints: Buzzing About Bees!
26 History Makers 2011
30 San Diego NOW

For more information about our events or to make a reservation, call (619) 232-6203 ext. 129 or visit us online at www.sandiegohistory.org/calendar. All locations are San Diego History Center in Balboa Park unless otherwise noted. Programs are subject to change or cancellation.