

2017 Governor's Historic Preservation Awards

**The Galleon *San Salvador*:
Creating a Seaworthy Replica of California's Ship of Origin**



On September 28, 1542, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo's fleet of three ships, including the flagship *San Salvador*, entered what is now San Diego Bay, initiating the first contact of Europeans with the land and inhabitants of what would ultimately become America's Pacific coast.

The Maritime Museum of San Diego's undertook the ambitious project of constructing a seaworthy replica of the *San Salvador*, with the intent of using the ship as a working visual tool for teaching the public about the early maritime history of California and the Pacific coast. The first challenge in fabricating *San Salvador* after nearly five centuries was bound up with the fact that no plans, depictions, or descriptions of the ship existed. To develop as accurate and faithful an understanding of the original *San Salvador's* design and type, academic, museum, and naval experts were consulted as was nautical archaeological information, and primary source documents on Spanish ship construction. *San Salvador* today is a fascinating synthesis of very old knowledge, and thoughtful use of modern materials, methods, and technologies.

Recognizing the public benefit to be derived from the *San Salvador*, the Museum and its project partners determined that the *San Salvador* reconstruction should be a community based endeavor, drawing on the talents and labors of people from across the United States, and internationally. Hundreds of people of every age, gender, background, and skill level, gave an impressive 100,000+ hours of time to the project, taking on every task that was asked of them. The project also benefited critically from partnerships with The City of San Diego, the Port of San Diego, and the National Park Service Cabrillo National Monument (NPS). NPS, in partnership with the Museum, developed an educational curriculum that was used at the build site with school groups and the public. This partnership has continued and exists today in collaborative educational programming and mutual promotion.

The *San Salvador* will sail the length of California again, representing a unique collaborative effort between individuals, organizations, and agencies to recreate a tangible feature of California's early heritage, and fostering discussions about the social, cultural, and economic complexities of the state's past and present.

Learn more about the [San Salvador project](#).