



Press Release  
Contact: Ralph Lewin, Executive Director  
415/393-0117 rlewin@milbrary.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **NEH Announces \$500,000 Grant for the Mechanics' Institute**

*Grant award supports efforts to repair and restore San Francisco landmark.*

San Francisco, CA (September 16, 2018)

Mechanics' Institute has received a \$500,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to help support efforts to raise funds to repair and restore the brick façades and steel framing of its landmark 1910 Beaux Arts building.

The grant requires a 3-1 match, so the Mechanics' Institute will be required to raise at least \$1.5 million.

Ralph Lewin, Executive Director of the Mechanics' Institute, said, "This grant recognizes the national importance of this San Francisco institution and will help ensure that this treasure is here for future generations."

"The projects receiving funding today strengthen and sustain the cultural life of our nation and its citizens", stated NEH Chairman Jon Parrish Peede.

The Mechanics' Institute was founded in 1854 to serve the educational and literary needs of the Bay Area. Its leaders were instrumental in the foundation of San Francisco's Public Library and the University of California; partnering with the latter to offer lectures and classes for over fifty years. The Institute's community has included some of the Bay Area's most ingenious personalities such as Emperor Norton, Eadward Muybridge, Jack London, John Muir, Andrew Smith Hallidie, Gertrude Stein, and contemporary writers such as T. J. Stiles and Maxine Hong Kingston.

The Mechanics' Institute building that was built on Post Street in 1866 was destroyed in the earthquake and fire of 1906. The current building was designed by Albert Pissis, a leading architect of the time. Pissis was an immigrant from Mexico who had studied architecture at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and returned to San Francisco to design some of the city's best-regarded examples of Beaux-Arts architecture, including the James Flood Building and The Emporium Department Store.

The Mechanics' Institute continues to be a leading cultural and literary hub. Its 9-story building serves its nearly 5,000 members with a magnificent library of 150,000 books, the oldest chess club in the United States, and a full calendar of intriguing events. It also houses a diverse community of tenants which include Litquake, Zyzzyva, the International Wizard of Oz Club, and filmmaker Tiffany Shlain.

Today the Institute is described by the San Francisco Chronicle as "a beacon of what a cultural institution can be for all citizens" and with this grant its future looks bright.

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57 Post Street, San Francisco, CA