

NOT EVEN PAST



California's Gold Rush in Pictures: The New Archive (No. 15)

Tweet

by Charley Binkow

Using digital collections can be a daunting task. With hundreds of thousands of documents, unless you know what you're looking for, an online archive can look like one giant blur. Calisphere's collection on the [California Gold Rush](#) is a great collection that offers something to both archive experts and first timers.



GOLDEN GATE MINING CLAIM

"Excavation of River Gravel," Butte County, CA (UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library)

THE PUBLIC HISTORIAN

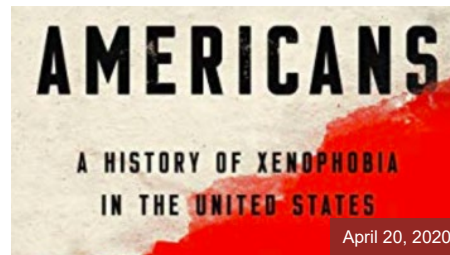
Making History: Houston's "Spirit of the Confederacy"



[More from The Public Historian](#)

BOOKS

America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States by Erika Lee (2019)



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DIGITAL HISTORY

Más de 72: Digital Archive Review



"Jennie Hastings — Photo Number 13278 — An old time San Francisco pickpocket; also a grand and petty larceny thief of the old school." (UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library)

The archive is usefully broken into subsections, each as interesting as the next. From [Murder and Mayhem](#), to [Diversity in the Changing State](#), to, my personal favorite, [Environmental Impact](#), one can find a wide range of fascinating history in this collection. Each subsection includes a synopsis detailing its significance within the collection and California history as a whole. The collection is very well organized and easily navigable. Having the synopses make the documents come to life in a whole new light. Photographs show the effects of devastating [earthquakes](#); flyers warn criminals of the [vigilance committee](#); and pictures give us an image of a young San Francisco, one that looks considerably different from the one we know today.



[More from Digital History](#)

FILMS & MEDIA

[Ayka \(Dir: Sergei Dvortsevov, 2018\)](#)



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TEXAS

[A \(Queer\) Rebel Wife In Texas](#)



Destruction on San Francisco's Clay Street after the 1906 earthquake (UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library)



March 11, 2020

More from Texas



An underground opium den in San Francisco (UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library)

Possibly most exciting is the archive's potential for learning. Each subsection details just how the collection relates to specific state education standards, which makes it easy for students as young as grade four to access archives for classes and interact with history through primary documents. Instead of just reading textbooks, students can build their own conclusions based on the primary documents in a navigable way. They can learn the differences between Daguerreotypes, photographs, and lithographs, for example. They can study newspaper [clippings](#) from the era and compare them to the ones of today. But the site is not just for beginning historians. Advanced students and even professional historians can use the site's rich collection for more nuanced research. Calisphere is the new archive that can both intrigue history experts and inspire a new generation of historians.



Catch up on the latest from the New Archive series:

Henry Wiencek found a [digital history project that not only preserves the past, but recreates it](#)
And Charley Binkow perused some [incredible photographs of Egypt snapped by European travelers](#)

Posted May 8, 2014

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