

# THE EMPEROR NORTON TRUST

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## PRESS RELEASE

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## The Emperor's Bridge Campaign Takes a New Name: The Emperor Norton Trust

The Emperor's Bridge Campaign, a San Francisco-based organization that works on a variety of fronts to advance the legacy of Joshua Abraham Norton (1818–1880) — better known as the 19th-century eccentric and sometime visionary, Emperor Norton — has taken a new name: **The Emperor Norton Trust**.

The new URL of the organization's official website is:

[www.EmperorNortonTrust.org](http://www.EmperorNortonTrust.org)

The name change has been implemented on the organization's website and Twitter feed, and is pending on Facebook. Social media URLs have been updated to:

Facebook — <https://www.facebook.com/EmperorNortonTrust>

Twitter — <https://twitter.com/EmpNortonTrust>

The change is an endeavor by the group to better communicate and promote its mission and programming — which long has included a wide range of original research; documentation; education; and advocacy related to the life and legacy of the figure fondly known as "the Emperor" by those who revere him.

The organization was founded as The Emperor's Bridge Campaign in September 2013, to carry forward the call of founder John Lumea's August 2013 Change.org petition urging the California state legislature to authorize "Emperor Norton Bridge" as an honorary name for the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. In 1872, Emperor Norton issued three newspaper Proclamations setting out the original vision for what opened as the Bay Bridge in November 1936.

The petition remains open and now has more than 6,100 signatures.

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In 2014, the group repositioned its bridge-naming project as "a campaign within the Campaign" and began to build out the broader mission that it has been pursuing ever since.

Via its website and blog, the organization has produced and published:

- A **biographical essay** on Emperor Norton.
- The **most comprehensive collection of photographs** of the Emperor.
- **More than 90 deeply researched and expansively illustrated articles** on Emperor Norton's life and legacy – using original sources.
- An interactive and annotated **Emperor Norton Map of the World**, detailing nearly 60 places where the Emperor lived, worked and frequented, as well as a dozen sites of public art related to the Emperor.
- A digital **ARchive of Emperor Norton in Art, Music & Film (ARENA)** – including annotated images of more than 140 paintings, drawings, engravings, illustrations, comics and sculptures of Emperor Norton, from c.1861 to the present; as well as videos of four dramatic film depictions of the Emperor, produced between 1936 and 1966, presented in partnership with the Internet Archive.

Current projects include:

- Producing a **limited-edition vinyl/mp3 compilation album of 16 "Emperor songs"** – songs about, or inspired by, Emperor Norton (the "Music" part of the Archive).
- Researching, curating and writing a **book of selected Proclamations of Emperor Norton**.

The group has presented numerous historical talks and walks on various aspects of Emperor Norton's life and legacy.

The organization also has pioneered a number of public events commemorating and celebrating the Emperor. This includes:

- **Emperor Norton's Birthday Party** – February 4th – Inaugurated in 2015.
- **Empire Day** – September 17th – Inaugurated in 2015. This holiday marks the anniversary of Joshua Norton's original Proclamation declaring himself Emperor in 1859.
- **The Tannenbaum Toast** – Second Sunday in December – Inaugurated in 2013. This Yuletide festivity is inspired by the apocryphal legend that the monumental tree that has been raised in Union Square, San Francisco, for this and the last 36 holiday seasons – and, before that, only twice, in 1929 and 1930 – was Emperor Norton's idea. (Seems it wasn't!)

The group's first major research project, conducted in late 2014 and early 2015, **established 4 February 1818 as the most likely date of Emperor Norton's birth.**

In early 2018, the organization led San Francisco's public celebration of the Emperor's bicentennial, by producing **Emperor Norton at 200** – a series of talks, exhibits and special events in honor of the Emperor's 200th birthday.

The group's institutional partners in producing individual events for this series included: the City and County of San Francisco; San Francisco Recreation and Parks; the California Historical Society; the Mechanics' Institute; the San Francisco Public Library; and the Society of California Pioneers.

At the organization's request, the City lit two of its most prominent landmarks – City Hall and Coit Tower – in gold on the evening of 4 February 2018.

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As The Emperor's Bridge Campaign, the organization has been covered by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *San Francisco Examiner*, the *Wall Street Journal* ("the boldest efforts to honor the Emperor"), the *Los Angeles Times*, KQED, *Mother Jones*, the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, NBC Bay Area, CBS Bay Area, *SF Weekly*, SFist, Atlas Obscura and many others.

See Press page at [www.EmperorNortonTrust.org/about/press](http://www.EmperorNortonTrust.org/about/press).

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Founder John Lumea notes:

"It's important to have 'Emperor Norton' in our name, so that it will be as clear as possible which Emperor we're talking about.

"As to 'Trust': From the beginning, our stated vision has been to be recognized as 'the leading public resource on Emperor Norton.' Over the past six years, we have created and shared a significant and authoritative repository of knowledge about the Emperor and his legacy that distinguishes us as the only organization or project that is engaging in Norton research in a truly focused and persistent way.

"So, one could think of **The Emperor Norton Trust** as a 'brain trust' for the Emperor.

"We also are inspired in our choice of name by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which works to preserve historically significant buildings and places. In many respects, **The Emperor Norton Trust** is a preservation project. Just as architectural preservationists often have to peel away architectural accretions and put back lost, destroyed and forgotten elements, in order to reveal an original building, we have been unflinching in trying to identify and peel back *mythological* accretions to the Emperor's story, and to bring to public attention parts of his story that have been unknown or unreported, so as to reveal the truest possible picture of the historical Emperor Norton – understanding, of course, that a certain amount of myth is key to the Emperor's power as a cultural touchstone.

"We hope that **The Emperor Norton Trust** is a simple and direct name that will more faithfully reflect what we're about.

"And, yes, we still want "Emperor Norton Bridge" as an honorary name for the Bay Bridge – and will continue to work to make it so."

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