



PHILADELPHIA, PA — October 1, 2026
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ROWING'S ARTIFACTS AND STORIES HAVE A NEW HOME: THE ROWING HISTORY PROJECT OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES

Born on Philadelphia's historic Schuylkill River, a new initiative is bringing rowing's photographs, artifacts, voices and untold stories together—and inviting the rowing world to join in.

Along the banks of Philadelphia's Schuylkill River, generations of rowers have launched from the same docks, raced beneath the same bridges and added their own chapters to a rowing tradition that stretches back centuries. Some of those stories are famous. Thousands more are waiting to be discovered.

Today, the **Head of the Schuylkill Regatta (HOSR)** officially launches **The Rowing History Project (RHP)**, an ambitious effort to discover, preserve and share the photographs, objects, voices and stories that tell the history of rowing—and to ensure they are not lost to time.

What began in 2020 as an effort to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Head of the Schuylkill Regatta has evolved into a much broader mission: to help ensure that rowing history—much of it tucked away in boathouses, club archives, personal collections, scrapbooks, attics and memories—is preserved and made accessible for generations to come.

Rooted in Philadelphia, home to one of the richest and most storied rowing traditions in the United States, the RHP begins with the history of Boathouse Row, the Schuylkill River and the surrounding rowing community. But its vision reaches far beyond Philadelphia.

The Project invites rowing clubs, organizations, athletes, coaches, historians, families, collectors and rowing communities across the country and abroad to help identify, preserve and share their own pieces of rowing history.

It is hanging on boathouse walls. Packed into boxes. Tucked into scrapbooks and photo albums. Engraved on trophies. Stored in club archives. Passed from one generation of rowers to the next. And much of it is disappearing, decaying or inaccessible.

The Rowing History Project wants to change that.

“Rowing has an incredible history, but so much of it exists in places most people will never see—and in stories that may disappear if we don't record them,” stated RHP team member Rick Stehlik. “The Rowing History Project is about finding those stories, preserving them and creating a place where the entire rowing community can experience the collective story.”

MORE THAN A MUSEUM

At the heart of the RHP is the creation of a dynamic **virtual museum of rowing history**—a place where visitors can explore historic photographs, race programs, documents, trophies, equipment, video, audio recordings, oral histories and other objects that illuminate the sport's past.

But this will not be a museum where history simply sits behind glass. The goal is to bring rowing history to life. Visitors might discover the story behind an old racing shell, hear a rower describe a race from decades ago, explore photographs from a long-forgotten regatta, or learn about the people whose contributions helped shape a club, a river or the sport itself.

The Project is also working to raise awareness about the importance of caring for rowing's physical history. Many historically significant photographs, documents, trophies, equipment and other artifacts remain stored in conditions where they may be vulnerable to deterioration, damage or loss.

The vision is both local and expansive: **preserve the history where it lives, while connecting those individual stories to the larger story of rowing.**

THE HISTORY HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

One of the discoveries that helped inspire the Project was just how much important rowing history remains hidden away. Historic photographs, correspondence, race records, trophies, equipment, club documents and memorabilia can be found throughout rowing organizations and private collections. Some materials have been carefully preserved. Others have spent decades in closets, basements, attics and storage rooms, where age, moisture, light and improper storage can slowly take their toll.

The RHP wants to help rowing organizations recognize the historical value of what they already have. Through education, collaboration and shared resources, the Project will encourage clubs and rowing organizations to inventory their collections, identify historically important materials and learn practical ways to care for them.

THE STORIES YOU CAN'T FIND IN A TROPHY CASE

Objects tell only part of the story.

The Rowing History Project is equally committed to preserving the **voices of rowing**—the memories, traditions, personalities and experiences that rarely make their way into official race results or record books.

At the 2025 Head of the Schuylkill Regatta, the Project began capturing those voices through **The Rowing History Project Story Booth**, where members of the rowing community were invited to sit down and share their stories in brief recorded interviews.

The premise was intentionally simple: **Share your story. Preserve our rowing legacy.**

Those oral histories will become an increasingly important part of the Project, capturing firsthand accounts from rowers, coaches, coxswains, officials, volunteers, boat builders, club members and others whose experiences have helped shape the sport.

Because rowing history isn't only about who crossed the finish line first. It is also about the early mornings. The coaches who changed lives. The teammates who became lifelong friends. The boats that carried generations of crews. The traditions passed down inside a boathouse. The races people still talk about decades later.

Those stories are history, too.

BORN IN PHILADELPHIA. BUILT FOR THE ROWING WORLD.

Few places offer a more fitting starting point than Philadelphia. The Schuylkill River and its iconic Boathouse Row have played an extraordinary role in the development of American rowing. Generations of athletes have trained, competed and gathered here, creating a living connection between rowing's past and present.

The Head of the Schuylkill Regatta has been part of that tradition since 1970.

Now, the RHP is using that Philadelphia foundation to begin something designed to reach much farther. Rowing clubs, schools, universities, regattas, associations, museums, historians, families, athletes and collectors from across the country and around the world are invited to participate.

"Philadelphia may be our starting point, but this is not just Philadelphia's story," said Chris Doyle. "Every rowing community has photographs, objects, traditions and people whose stories deserve to be preserved. We want the RHP to help connect those histories."

OUR HISTORY IS STILL BEING WRITTEN

Every generation inherits the history of the rowers who came before it. The RHP believes this generation also has a responsibility—and an extraordinary opportunity—to preserve that history for the rowers who will come next.

Rowing has always been about moving forward.

The Rowing History Project is making sure we bring our history with us.

ABOUT THE ROWING HISTORY PROJECT

The Rowing History Project is an initiative of the Head of the Schuylkill Regatta dedicated to discovering, documenting, preserving and sharing the history and stories of rowing. Established in 2020 in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the Head of the Schuylkill Regatta, the volunteer-driven Project is building a virtual museum of rowing photographs, documents, artifacts, video, audio and oral histories while providing education and resources to encourage rowing organizations to identify and preserve the historical materials in their care. The Project began with Philadelphia's rich rowing heritage and invites rowing organizations, historians, athletes and communities throughout the United States and abroad to participate in preserving and sharing the sport's collective history.

ABOUT THE HEAD OF THE SCHUYLKILL REGATTA

Founded in 1970, the Head of the Schuylkill Regatta is one of the largest rowing competitions in the United States, welcoming athletes of all ages and levels to Philadelphia's historic Schuylkill River. HOSR celebrates competition, community and Philadelphia's enduring place in the history and future of rowing.

MEDIA CONTACT

Jennifer Wesson

The Rowing History Project

Executive Director, Head of the Schuylkill Regatta

Email: rowingarchives@hosr.org

Phone: 609.634.4611