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Sharing Stories from the City of Neighborhoods *PhilaPlace Web Site Set to Launch in December 2009*

PHILADELPHIA (Dec. 1, 2009) – The Historical Society of Pennsylvania has announced that PhilaPlace – an interactive Web site that connects stories to places across time in Philadelphia’s neighborhoods – will officially launch on December 9, 2009. The site, located at www.PhilaPlace.org, weaves stories shared by ordinary people of all backgrounds with historical records to present an interpretive picture that captures the rich history, cultures, and architecture of our neighborhoods – past and present.

“PhilaPlace takes on the challenge of how to represent the dynamic and layered meanings and experiences of place over time,” explains Project Director Joan Saverino, Ph.D. “The site connects diverse audiences capturing the memories of Philadelphia residents who share their own experiences in words and pictures. PhilaPlace is particularly unique in that it encourages new historical and cultural interpretations and interconnections between community stories and the historical record. It creates a virtual, collective memory of each neighborhood, and an enduring record of our heritage.”

The Web site uses a multimedia format – including interactive maps (both contemporary and historic), text, photographs, and audio and video clips. It represents a new model for connecting with audiences – employing the latest digital technologies to share archival collections in an engaging and meaningful way.

At launch, PhilaPlace will feature more than 150 neighborhood stories told through text, audio and video. Initial content will focus on two of Philadelphia’s oldest immigrant and working-class neighborhoods – Old Southwark and the Northern Liberties – with additional neighborhoods to be added in the future. Visitors to the site can contribute new content on an ongoing basis, and will have the ability to map their own stories in place and time.

More than a Web site, PhilaPlace will engage diverse communities through local programs, teacher workshops, trolley tours, exhibits, and printed neighborhood guides. The site itself will also include K-12 lesson plans for teachers.

The project is a collaborative endeavor undertaken by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in partnership with the City of Philadelphia Department of Records, the University of Pennsylvania School of Design, other institutions and community organizations, and members of the community who share their personal stories.

PhilaPlace has been made possible by generous support from The Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, through the Heritage Philadelphia Program; jointly by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the National Endowment for the Humanities; the Pennsylvania Humanities Council; the Federal-State Department of Education; Southwest Airlines; the Connelly Foundation; Samuel S. Fels Fund; and the Walter J. Miller Foundation.

For additional information, please contact Joan Saverino, Project Director, at 215-732-6200, ext. 246 or jsaverino@hsp.org, or Melissa Mandell, Project Coordinator, at ext. 227 or mmandell@hsp.org.

About the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Founded in 1824 in Philadelphia, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania is one of the oldest historical societies and one of the largest family history libraries in the nation. HSP is second only to the Library of Congress for material on the nation's founding and is the country's third most comprehensive collection for genealogical study. Following a merger with the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, the society is also a leading repository of immigrant and ethnic history. With more than 21 million records including manuscripts, graphics, and books that span over 350 years of history, HSP is an invaluable resource for historical research.

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