



For Immediate Release
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***PhilaPlace Web Site Launches New Mapping Feature
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PHILADELPHIA (March 9, 2010) PhilaPlace—an interactive Web site that connects stories to places across time in Philadelphia’s neighborhoods—announces an exciting new mapping feature to be unveiled March 26, 2010. On the PhilaPlace “Map” page at PhilaPlace.org, visitors can click on the new “Streets” tab and view enhanced historical maps that reveal in-depth patterns of change over time for specific blocks in South Philadelphia and Northern Liberties neighborhoods. Land-use and census data recreate details and activities on a street, house by house, business by business, for South 4th Street’s “Fabric Row;” the South 9th Street market; the neighborhoods destroyed by the construction of Interstate 95; and the historically African American settlement on Wallace Street in Northern Liberties once known as Paschall’s Alley.

“Through visual representations overlaid on the contemporary and historic maps, visitors can see with a glance how key areas at certain points in time changed in terms of ethnic make-up, land use, and occupation,” explained Joan Saverino, PhilaPlace project director. For instance, the map for the blocks of South 9th Street shows the dramatic rise in Italian immigrant households in the decade between 1880 and 1900. The I-95 map recreates several square blocks of Front Street as they existed in 1963, before construction began on the Interstate. The entire I-95 swath displaced hundreds of families and destroyed homes including all but a few of the earliest wooden 18th-century houses in what is now Queen Village. “We will add more contextual information in the future...this is a pilot for what we would like to demonstrate on a larger scale, too,” said Saverino.

The maps were produced by one of PhilaPlace’s key partners, Amy Hillier, Assistant Professor, Department of City and Regional Planning, University of Pennsylvania, and undergraduate and graduate students who worked under her supervision.

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The Web site, www.PhilaPlace.org, was launched last December by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The site 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. The site uses a multimedia format, including interactive maps (both contemporary and historic), text, photographs, and audio and video clips. PhilaPlace features approximately 200 neighborhood stories told through text, audio and video. Visitors to the site can contribute new content on an ongoing basis and have the ability to map their own stories in place and time. The site also includes K-12 lesson plans for teachers. More than a Web site, PhilaPlace engages diverse communities through local programs, teacher workshops, trolley tours, exhibits, and printed neighborhood guides.

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.

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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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