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10/14/2006
Philadelphia History

Good morning, this is Mayor John Street. Deep in the depths of the City Archives sit over 2 million photographs illustrating Philadelphia's rich social and cultural history. These photos paint a stunning portrait of Philadelphia through the years dating back to the late 19th century. Vivid shots of ships arriving at dock, horse-drawn carriages on cobble streets, and the historic Eastern State Penitentiary offer a unique perspective on our city's past. The Department of Records has recently developed an innovative website called PhillyHistory.org, to bring these photos to light and make Philadelphia's photo archives available to a worldwide audience. Today, the public can access over 50,000 of these photographs by location, view the photographs online, and purchase prints. This unique website lets you search for photos from your neighborhood or at a particular address and uses maps to illustrate the location of each photograph. These are not simply old pictures; they offer a fascinating glimpse into the life and times of that Philadelphia including citizens from all walks of life. They can enlighten many of our citizens – teachers, students, visitors and researchers, as well those who just want to satisfy their curiosity. Did you know that Market Street was originally called High Street? Street names have been changed over time for a variety of reasons. PhillyHistory.org contains the Philadelphia Historic Street Name Index. Type in the name of any street, current or past, and the Index will tell you all the streets that have used that name, past and present. History buffs will enjoy reading the PhillyHistory blog. Each week, the blog features a new photograph from the archives, telling its story and opening a door to the past. Recent blog entries have discussed the establishment of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, the history of Chinatown and school reforms of the early 1900's. The PhillyHistory blog matches stories of our past to images that bring them to life. PhillyHistory is another example of the city's commitment to the innovative use of technology. PhillyHistory.org is a strong reminder of the richness of our city's past as we move toward a brighter future. In addition to the PhillyHistory website, the Department of Records has developed PocketCulture, a pioneering method of literally bringing Philadelphia's historical and cultural assets to the person on the street. Accessible via any internet-enabled device, PocketCulture lets you type an address and returns a map of the area highlighting attractions and amenities. A great tool for locals and tourists, PocketCulture brings exploration of Philadelphia's neighborhoods and historic districts to a whole new level. With Wireless Philadelphia poised to make the entire city a wireless hot spot for internet use, innovative programs like PocketCulture will be of great value. Visit the PhillyHistory website at PhillyHistory.org and enjoy images from our past, enabled by our commitment to the technologies of the future. From City Hall, this is Mayor John F. Street. Have a great weekend and don't forget to drink your water.

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