

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Photos from the Free Library of Philadelphia’s Centennial Exhibition and Historical Images of Philadelphia Collections Made Available on *PhillyHistory.org* for the First Time

Popular Geographically-enabled Website Now Holds Seven Collections from Three Philadelphia Agencies and is Still Growing

Philadelphia, April 14, 2010 – [The Philadelphia Department of Records](#) and [Azavea](#) announced today that [PhillyHistory.org](#) (www.phillyhistory.org), the online geographically-enabled database of the Philadelphia City Archives’ collection of historic photographs and maps, has just added over 1,600 photographs from the [Free Library of Philadelphia](#)’s Centennial Exhibition and Historical Images of Philadelphia collections. This new addition brings the whole collection on *PhillyHistory.org* to over 79,000 photos and maps available for the public to search, use for research, share with friends, and purchase. Featuring images ranging from a crowd of tens of thousands gathered for the Centennial Exhibition opening to a panorama of the city in 1870, the photographs show the bustling, diverse communities of Philadelphia in the late nineteenth-century.

The [Philadelphia Department of Records](#), who manages the City Archives, was one of only four recipients in the country to receive a grant as part of the [Advancing Knowledge: The IMLS/NEH Digital Partnership](#) grant program, to support the addition of the Free Library images. To date, three Philadelphia agencies - the Department of Records, the [Philadelphia Water Department](#), and the Free Library of Philadelphia - have joined the *PhillyHistory.org* site and are contributing seven different collections of historic maps and images. It is the Department of Records’ hope that other Philadelphia institutions will join *PhillyHistory.org* and provide increased public access to previously hidden archival collections.

“I am thrilled by the amount of enthusiasm we have received from other agencies. By collaborating, we are all able to not only showcase our beautiful collections for public access but also to preserve them for future generations. It is my hope that *PhillyHistory.org* will set an example of how a city-wide consortium of collections can operate together and be successful.” – Joan Decker, Commissioner, Department of Records

Thanks to a sophisticated collection management system, powered by [Sajara®](#), a geographic digital collection management system built by Philadelphia-based GIS software firm [Azavea](#) (formerly Avencia), each collection can be managed separately. Each agency can upload assets to the site, edit metadata, geocode (assign latitude and longitude) their assets, retrieve usage information and sales, and receive collection-based error reports. Authorized users have access to only the collections from their institution, making the system ideal for a consortium of organizations that might not have the funding to build their own web-based digital collection.

“By partnering with *PhillyHistory.org*, we hope to expose more individuals from Philadelphia and around the globe to the vast and diverse digital resources held by the Free Library of Philadelphia,” said Siobhan A. Reardon, President and Director of the Free Library. “Our website, [freelibrary.org](#), is full of rich content, from images like the ones we have shared on *PhillyHistory.org* to downloadable books, music, and movies, and we trust that this partnership will help us further promote all that the Free Library offers online.”

With an average of 14,500 unique visitors per month and 4,700 registered users who can tag favorite assets, save searches, be notified when *PhillyHistory.org* adds new photos, share assets, and leave comments on images, the site is heavily used and has attracted the attention of historians, genealogists, researchers and history buffs in Philadelphia and around the world.

“This website is fantastic ... It's so important to preserve all those pictures and restore them and make them available to everyone. Makes me love my adoptive city even more. Keep up the good work and thanks for doing this!” – *PhillyHistory.org* user

Freed from their archival boxes, the collections have made their way to the web and to the streets of Philadelphia via a location-aware [iPhone application](#) (<http://phillyhistory.org/i/>), enabling users to compare historic images to their present location. To further help people see the past all around them, the Philadelphia Department of Records has recently been awarded a second grant, a [NEH Digital Humanities Start-Up](#) grant, to develop a prototype augmented reality application with the assistance of Azavea. Utilizing a combination of the GPS and camera technologies available on smart phones, this mobile phone application will enable users to view the historic photographs from *PhillyHistory.org* as overlays on the current urban landscape.

To view the photographs and maps contained in *PhillyHistory.org*, please visit www.phillyhistory.org. To search particular collections, select the ‘Collections’ search item on the search page. To request interviews, high-resolutions photographs, and more information about the *PhillyHistory.org* project or the technology that underlines it, please contact Abby Fretz at (215) 701 – 7503 or e-mail afretz@azavea.com

About Azavea (formerly Avencia)

[Azavea](#) is an award-winning geospatial analysis (GIS) software development firm specializing in the creation of location-based web and mobile solutions, as well as geospatial analysis services to enhance decision-making processes. Azavea is committed to working on projects with a strong social value component in order to promote the emergence of more [dynamic, vibrant, and sustainable communities](#). Each of Azavea's projects, products and pro bono engagements showcases this commitment. Azavea is a certified [B Corporation](#). For more information, visit www.azavea.com

About the Philadelphia Department of Records

The Home Rule Charter of 1952 established the [Department of Records](#) to ensure that Philadelphia's municipal records are appropriately controlled and managed. The Department sets records management standards and procedures for all departments, boards, commissions and agencies, and it manages key central recordkeeping operations and services such as the City Archives, the Records Storage Center, the Recorder of Deeds and the Central Reprographics Services. www.phila.gov/Records/

About the Philadelphia Free Library

[The Free Library of Philadelphia](#) system consists of 49 branches, three regional libraries, the Parkway Central Library, and the [Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped](#). With more than 6 million visits annually, the Free Library is one of the most widely used educational and cultural institutions in Philadelphia. www.freelibrary.org

About the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

This project is supported jointly by the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) and the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#).

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute's mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. To learn more about the Institute, please visit www.imls.gov.

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities. NEH grants enrich classroom learning, create and preserve knowledge, and bring ideas to life through public television, radio, new technologies, museum exhibitions, and programs in libraries and other community places.

Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this website do not necessarily reflect those of the Institute of Museum and Library Services or the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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