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PHL Airport Exhibit Celebrates Philadelphia's History of Innovation

About Philadelphia: City of Firsts pays homage to inventions and institutions that started here

PHILADELPHIA – Philadelphia is famous for its many historical treasures and some of the most important events in our nation's beginnings. The city is also proud to boast an impressive legacy as the place where so many events, inventions and institutions had their origins.

A new exhibit at Philadelphia International Airport (PHL), *About Philadelphia: A City of Firsts*, celebrates the city's historic American firsts through a captivating photographic display. The exhibit, located in Terminal A-East and accessible to ticketed passengers, was unveiled on July 2 as part of Wawa Welcome America's! official program. It will be on display until June 2016.

City officials including Mayor Michael A. Nutter, Wawa Welcome America! Executive Director Desiree Peterkin-Bell, and Airport CEO Mark Gale participated in the festivities, which were attended by special guests associated with institutions, events and inventions that had their beginnings in Philadelphia.

"Philadelphia's firsts are extensive and wide ranging from horticultural and medical advancements to human rights, consumer culture, the arts, and technology," said Mayor Nutter. "*About Philadelphia* represents a small sampling of the City's indelible contributions to the nation's past and present."

In addition to some of the city's well-known firsts -- the first lending library, the first hospital, the first university, and the first art museum -- the exhibit also illustrates rare known firsts such as the first U.S. Mint, the first African Methodist Episcopal Church, the first women's medical college, and the first city to host America's World's Fair. The special guests included:

Andy Baker, Chief Operating Officer of the Philadelphia Zoo, America's first which opened on July 1, 1874; Ann Bassett, Michael Strange and Eric Bassett, descendants of Lewis Dubois Bassett, who in 1861 founded America's oldest ice cream company; Del Conner, great-great-great grandson of Dr. Philip Syng Physick, who invented American soda in 1807; and Sally Elk, President and CEO of Eastern State Penitentiary, the first U.S. prison to reform and rehabilitate offenders rather than punish them.

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Robert Bogle, President and CEO, and Irving Randolph, Managing Editor, of the Philadelphia Tribune, America's oldest paper serving African American readers since the 1880s; Doris Parent, Senior Director, Corporate and Foundation Relations, and Katherine Blodgett, Vice President of Public Relations and Communication of the Philadelphia Orchestra, which in 1948 became the first orchestra to broadcast on live TV.

Mark Segal, founder of the Philadelphia *Gay News* and LGBT activist, and Christopher Bartlett, William Way LGBT Community Center executive director, were present to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first Reminder Day demonstration held in Philadelphia that became the first sustained national effort to focus attention on discrimination faced by the LGBT community.

Chris Owens, executive director, and Mark Tuttle, board member, of Historic Rittenhouse Town, the industrial village where the first British North American paper mill was built in 1690; Maitreyi Roy, executive director, Bartram's Garden, whose roots date to 1728 making it the oldest surviving botanic garden in the United States.

"Philadelphia has a legacy of innovation, and thus a long list of firsts it can claim. Many of our nation's first institutions, now centuries old, still exist here. This week's celebration of our nation's birthday makes it the most fitting time to present this wonderful exhibit to the traveling public from all over the world," said Gale. "I would like to acknowledge Leah Douglas, the Airport's Chief Curator, for her creativity and initiative in putting together this great exhibit."

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Mayor Michael A. Nutter (center) and Airport CEO Mark Gale (left) explore the new exhibit About Philadelphia: A City of Firsts.

This year, Philadelphia International Airport celebrates the 75th anniversary of its commercial air service. In 1940, the Airport served 40,000 passengers flying to a handful of cities. Today, more than 30 million passengers travel annually to 131 destinations around the world.

Philadelphia International Airport is owned and operated by the City of Philadelphia. The Airport is a self-sustaining entity that operates without the use of local tax dollars. It is one of the largest economic engines in Pennsylvania, generating an estimated \$14.4 billion in spending to the regional economy and accounting for more than 141,000 jobs.