



Historical Society
of Pennsylvania

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release
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“Electrifying” Event at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Learn about the history of neon signage in Philadelphia

Philadelphia, PA (April 6, 2009) — From McGillin’s Old Ale House to Levis Hotdog—neon signs have helped illuminate many Philadelphia landmarks. The city has been a major manufacturer of creative neon signage since the 1930s. Len Davidson, curator of the Neon Museum of Philadelphia and author of *Vintage Neon*, will discuss the history of this electrifying folk art at 6 p.m. April 15 at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

This free event is open to the public. RSVP at 215-732-6200 ext. 412 or events@hsp.org.

Davidson has collected and/or preserved more than 200 vintage signs, including Reading Terminal Market, Pat’s Steaks, Levis Hotdog, and McGillin’s Old Ale House. Thirteen of Davidson’s signs are on display at the Center for Architecture at 1218 Arch Street. Many signs are also pictured at www.DavidsonNeon.com.

During the middle of the 20th century, neon signs turned North America's cities and roadside into a luminous wonderland. Add in the magic of animation, and signs became spectaculars. These unforgettable depictions of exploding bowling pins, crashing cars, baton twirling majorettes, and lassoing cowboys were fodder for legend and lore.

Neon displays are becoming increasingly common across the United States and Canada, as cities try to preserve their few remaining neon treasures. Philadelphia has been at the forefront of this movement, and there are several initiatives to create a sign district in the city, as well as to display more of the museum’s collection. Unlike 19th-century wooden and metal shop signs that have overwhelmingly disappeared, it is hoped that our 20th-century neon treasures can be saved.

The attached images can be credited: Courtesy of the Neon Museum of Philadelphia. For more information or to arrange an interview with Len Davidson, contact the society’s coordinator of communications, Lauri Cielo, at (215) 732-6200 ext. 233 or lcielo@hsp.org.

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About the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Founded in 1824 in Philadelphia, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (www.hsp.org) collects and shares the stories of Pennsylvania. It is home to some 600,000 printed items and more than 21 million manuscript and graphic items. Its unparalleled collections encompass more than 300 years of America's history—from its 17th-century origins to the contributions of its most recent immigrants. The society's remarkable holdings together with its educational programming make it one of the nation's most important special collections libraries: a center of historical documentation and study, education, and engagement.

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