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**MCCA, City of Boston and Historic Tours of America partner to re-open
historic Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum
*Deal re-establishes one of America's most historic sites***

James E. Rooney, executive director of the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority, today announced a unique partnership with the City of Boston and Historic Tours of America that will return the historic Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum to the Congress Street Bridge and re-establish one of America's most historic sites in Boston.

"For years, this great city marked the events surrounding the Boston Tea Party – one of its most famous events - with a plaque and little more," said Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino. "Now, thanks to this unique collaboration between the city, the MCCA and Historic Tours of America, the Boston Tea Party will have a permanent home that will show visitors from around the globe what this singular event meant to the future of America and the world."

The new Tea Party Ships & Museum will be themed around the historic event, which took place nearby at what is today 470 Atlantic Avenue on Dec. 16, 1773, when colonists protested after officials in Boston refused to return three shiploads of taxed tea to Britain. Rather than let the tea be unloaded, a group of colonists loosely disguised as Mohawk Indians boarded the ships and destroyed the tea by throwing it into Boston Harbor. The incident was the colony's first organized act of insurrection and remains an iconic event of American history, beginning a series of escalating protests that led to the start of the American Revolutionary War in 1775. The new site will include a chance for visitors to re-enact the protest. It will also include a tavern and a tea room that will be accessible to the general public, as well as a restaurant that can be used as event space.

Tours at the museum will start in a mini-replica of the Old South Church where the colonial protesters met before marching to Griffin's Wharf on Dec. 16, 1773. Tickets will assign identities to all guests as they play a role in the reenactment of the Tea Party with live actors before marching to the ships and throwing boxes of tea overboard into the Fort Point Channel.

The Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum will open with two replica ships – the Eleanor and Beaver. A third ship – the Dartmouth – will be built on site at a later date. The site will also contain a gift shop and museum, featuring the Robinson Tea Chest, one of only two surviving authentic tea chests from the Boston Tea Party.

Chris Belland, CEO of Historic Tours, said once complete, the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum will offer the Dartmouth ship to school groups for hands-on demonstrations and education about life on an 18th century merchant vessel, including knot tying and food preparation. Plans are also underway to offer the Boston Tea Party experience to local schools as part of their history curriculum.

“Not only is this a good investment for the city, the state and the MCCA, but it is a worldwide marketing tool for all,” said Rooney. “The Boston Tea Party commemorates one of this city’s and this country’s most famous revolutionary events. Re-building it solidifies Boston’s true role as the birthplace of America and offers us a touchstone to our historic past.”

The former Tea Party Museum was destroyed in August 2001 after being struck by lightning and catching fire. After delays getting the site rebuilt, another accidental fire in 2006 destroyed what remained of the structure. In recent years, with the downturn in the economy and a tough credit market, financing for the project dried up. Currently, there is nothing in Boston to commemorate the Boston Tea Party, one of this country’s most iconic events. The partnership announced today fills this historic void. The new Tea Party Ships and Museum is expected to open winter/spring of 2012. Once complete, the site is expected to generate some 400,000 to 500,000 visitors annually, quickly making it one of the country’s top tourist destinations.

“This project would have not have happened with out the partnership of the MCCA and the City of Boston,” said Shawn P. Ford, vice president of Historic Tours of America. “This will become the centerpiece of the rebirth of the Fort Point Channel district and one of Boston’s busiest attractions, helping to stimulate future growth in our tourism industry.”

The MCCA has pledged an investment of \$18 million to help finance the \$25 million project, which is expected to turn a profit for the state authority based on an average payment of \$1.1 million annually for the first five years, then \$1.3 million annually over the remaining 18 years. The City of Boston and the Boston Redevelopment Authority have authorized a grant of \$3 million to the project from development mitigation funds paid to the City by Boston Properties as part of its Atlantic Wharf project. Historic Tours will provide the remaining \$4 million to complete the funding.

Also, as a result of this agreement, 5 percent of the proceeds from admission tickets sales will be deposited in the Convention Center Fund, generating an additional \$210,000 per year for the state. All in, over the 23-year term of the agreement, the MCCA will earn back over \$51 million from its \$18 million investment.

Through this investment and loan agreement with Historic Tours of America, the MCCA will also have use of the Tea Party Ships & Museum event space and will promote the site as part of its marketing to future conventions and meetings, allowing the MCCA to further extend both its profit and the city’s image. The MCCA and Historic Tours are

also finalizing a component of the partnership that will allow the MCCA to book and manage events as well as provide catering services at the site.

About the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority (MCCA)

The Massachusetts Convention Center Authority owns and oversees the operations of the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, the John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center, the MassMutual Center in Springfield, MA and the Boston Common Parking Garage. The MCCA is currently in the midst of its Top 5 campaign to launch Boston into the top five convention destinations in North America. For more information, go to www.t5boston.com.

About Historic Tours

Historic Tours of America (HTA) has operated Old Town Trolley Tours in Boston since 1984. HTA also operates sightseeing tours in Key West, Florida, St. Augustine, Florida, Savannah, Georgia, Washington, DC and San Diego, California. As the “Nation’s Storyteller”, HTA has also expanded the scope of its sightseeing tours and historic attractions, operating the Harry S. Truman Little White House in Key West (the only presidential home in the state) which is owned by the State of Florida, the Key West Aquarium, the Key West Shipwreck Treasures Museum, the Oldest Jail in St. Augustine, the St. Augustine History Museum and the San Diego Old Town Market Museum in Casa de Aguirre. HTA owns and operates 19 retail and food service businesses in conjunction with their sightseeing and museum operations. Its web-based ticket sales organization, Trusted Tours & Attractions (www.trustedtours.com), sells tickets to over 500 attraction venues in 22 states. For further information please refer to www.historictours.com or www.trolleytours.com.

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