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For Immediate Release

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**Hoboken Museum Receives Generous \$2,000 Gift from
Hudson County Homing Pigeon Club**

*Hoboken's role in competitive pigeon racing is celebrated in new oral history chapbook
based on recollections of HCHPC members Vinnie Torre and Lynne Earing*

Hoboken, N.J. – February 23, 2010 – The Hoboken Historical Museum is pleased to announce a generous gift of \$2,000 from the Hudson County Homing Pigeon Club, a portion of which will support the ongoing Hoboken Oral History Project, a joint project of the Hoboken Historical Museum and the Friends of the Hoboken Library. Museum Director Bob Foster and Board President Carol Losos visited the HCHPC in January to formally accept the donation from club president Vinnie Torre, with members Lynne Earing, James Corso and John Baginski. (*photographs available*)

Vinnie Torre, who maintains the last active homing pigeon loft in Hoboken, and about eight members from nearby towns are keeping alive a proud history of a competitive sport that is still practiced around the world, but which has dwindled nearly out of sight in modern Hoboken. At one time, roofs of Hoboken's brownstones and apartment buildings hosted more than 70 pigeon lofts, and HCHPC's membership exceeded 70 dues-paying members.

This year, the club is reviving its nationally renowned race, the Hoboken One-Bird Derby, this fall, October 29 – 31, a tradition that dates back to 1922, when the club was founded. In the late 1960s – 1970s, Hoboken was one of the hot spots of the competitive racing pigeon community, sponsoring the Hoboken One-Bird Derby, which drew competitors from across the country and another 20 races during the year. Half were in the spring for the veteran birds, and half in the early fall for the young birds.

Hoboken's HCHPC moved to its current club headquarters at 358 Newark Street in 1946. The building continues to serve as a club meeting place, but also doubles as a

rehearsal and recording studio for local musicians. The sport has faded with the proliferation of municipal restrictions, and also of hawks, a dire threat to even the speediest of the elite racers. Club members hasten to explain that their “thoroughbreds of the sky” are carefully bred and cared for, sharing little with the common feral birds that populate urban centers like Hoboken.

The sport is still enthusiastically followed in other countries, with million-dollar purse races in South Africa and Asia, and enthusiasts in Belgium, Holland and the United Kingdom. Pigeon racing fans include the Queen of England, actor Jimmy Smits and boxer Mike Tyson. It featured prominently in the movie “On the Waterfront,” which was filmed on location in Hoboken, including the rooftop coops on tenement buildings.

On **Sunday, March 14 at 4 p.m.**, the Museum will release its twentieth oral history chapbook, *The Pigeon Guys: Recollections of Vinnie Torre and Lynne Earing, on Sunday*. Please join us at the Museum, 1301 Hudson Street, for this free event, during which copies of the chapbook will be distributed, refreshments served, and stories told about Hoboken’s pigeon flyers—past and present.

Vinnie Torre has been racing pigeons since the mid-1950s, when veteran “pigeon guys” passed along their skills, and occasionally their birds, to “the kid.” During the local club’s dormant years, Vinnie continued to raise and train birds at his “Hillside Loft,” and to enter and win races state- and nationwide. In the late 1990s, he met Lynne Earing, a Bayonne animal lover who was soon sharing his life and his enthusiasm for the sport. It did not take long for Vinnie to build “Lynne’s Loft,” alongside his own.

Lisa Sartori interviewed Vinnie Torre and Lynne Earing on Vinnie’s roof last spring. The transcript of their interview, from which the chapbook was derived, has been deposited in the collections of the Hoboken Public Library and the Hoboken Historical Museum. Holly Metz edited the interview, Kevin McCloskey contributed drawings, Robert Foster added photographs, and Ann Marie Manca designed the chapbook. Please do visit the Museum on March 14 and celebrate its release with us.

About the Hoboken Historical Museum

Founded 1986, the Museum’s mission is to educate the public about Hoboken’s history, diverse culture, architecture and historic landmarks. In 2001, the Museum moved into one of the oldest buildings on the waterfront, in the former Bethlehem Steel shipyard, at 1301 Hudson St., Hoboken, where it maintains a series of rotating exhibits. The Museum is open six days a week, 2 – 7 pm on Tues. – Thurs., 1 – 5 pm on Fridays, and noon – 5 pm on weekends. It offers special exhibits, tours, events and lectures, as well as educational programs for adults and children on a weekly basis. An updated schedule of events and an online catalog of many items in its collections are available at www.hobokenmuseum.org. The Museum is a not-for-profit tax-exempt 501(c) entity.

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