

For Immediate Release: July 15, 2005

New Skimmer Vessel Commissioned to Improve Water Quality -
Ceremony commemorates a 200 year-old invention that was truly ahead of its time

Philadelphia - The Philadelphia Water Department, in partnership with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, the Oliver Evans Chapter of the Society for Industrial Archeology and the Atwater Kent Museum, is celebrating 200 years' worth of efforts to clean the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers on Saturday, July 16, 2005 at 10:30 a.m.

There is a strong connection between the health of the rivers and Philadelphians since all of the City's drinking water comes from these rivers. On Saturday, July 16, the Philadelphia Water Department will christen and commission a new skimmer vessel, the S.S. R.E. Roy, designed to remove trash once again from the rivers, continuing the work begun two centuries ago.

In July 1805, the first motorized vehicle in America rolled up Market Street sparking a long-standing tradition of revitalizing Philadelphia's Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers. The *Orukter Amphibolos*, invented by Oliver Evans, was a steam-powered dredge commissioned by the Philadelphia Board of Health to clean up pollution around the docks on the Delaware River, which they felt contributed to disease. Wheels were temporarily added to move it from the shop to the river.

The events commemorating the *Orukter Amphibolos*'s 200th anniversary will begin at the Atwater Kent Museum. A proclamation from Mayor John F. Street will be presented to Philadelphia Department of Public Health Commissioner John Domzalski and Philadelphia Water Department Commissioner Bernard Brunwasser announcing Orukter Amphibolos Day in Philadelphia. The Society for Industrial Archeology will comment on the importance of what might be considered the first automobile. Steve Lubar, formerly of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, will then give a presentation on Oliver Evans and his amazing mud machine, the *Orukter Amphibolos*.

Guests will then board busses, while members of the Oliver Evans Chapter will board an appropriately decorated Ride The Ducks vessel, as it resembles the original *Orukter Amphibolos*. They will tour up Market Street and around City Hall re-enacting the original route of the *Orukter Amphibolos*. The Ride The Ducks vessel will then move into the Delaware River at Penn's Landing to meet the new skimmer vessel, the S.S. R.E. Roy. The Ride The Duck vehicles used for the popular sightseeing tours on land and sea are 1945 era Army DUKW's that have been converted into comfortable, reliable, open-air vehicles accommodating 37 passengers each.

The public is invited to join in these festivities. Anyone who is interested in attending may contact Liz Oakley of the Atwater Kent Museum at 215-685-4825.

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