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**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S 'REAL PIRATES' EXHIBITION
TO OPEN AT THE FRANKLIN ON MAY 31**
**Interactive Exhibition Showcases Treasure and Artifacts from First Fully Authenticated
Pirate Ship Discovered in U.S. Waters**

PHILADELPHIA (May 29, 2008)—“Real Pirates: The Untold Story of the *Whydah* from Slave Ship to Pirate Ship,” a touring exhibition organized by National Geographic and Arts and Exhibitions International (AEI) LLC will make its northeast debut Saturday, May 31 in the Mandell Center at The Franklin and run through November 2. The exhibition explores early 18th-century piracy with more than 200 artifacts recovered from the ocean floor.

From the producers of the recent blockbuster exhibition “Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs,” “Real Pirates” tells the true story of the *Whydah* — a real pirate ship that sank off the coast of Cape Cod nearly 300 years ago — and showcases treasure chests of coins and gold, jewelry, weaponry such as cannons, pistols, and knives, and a replica of the actual ship that visitors can board. “Real Pirates” provides visitors with an unprecedented glimpse into the unique economic, political and social circumstances of the early 18th-century Caribbean. The exhibition is highlighted by the compelling stories of the diverse people whose lives converged on the vessel before it was sunk in a fierce storm off the coast of Cape Cod, Mass. on April 26, 1717.

An audio tour has been created for children to complement the exhibit experience. The audio tour is \$6, but free to all children under 12, as well as for adults accompanying visitors with youth tickets. Kids also can try their hands at raising a pirate flag, tying real sailors' knots, and looking through a telescope to find ships with treasure on board.

When the *Whydah* was located by underwater explorer Barry Clifford in 1984, it became the first fully authenticated pirate ship to be discovered in American waters. Clifford is still actively excavating the wreck site and continues to bring treasures to the surface every year.

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“Discovering the *Whydah* was the most exciting moment in my career,” said Clifford. “The sheer volume of artifacts the *Whydah* carried, from more than 50 other ships captured by the pirate captain Sam Bellamy and his men, provides a rare window into the otherwise mysterious world of 18th-century pirates. I see this exhibition as the culmination of my many years of work. Most importantly, it is a chance to bring the real story of pirates to the public as it's never been told before — through real objects last touched by real pirates.”

“Real Pirates” relates the stories of four members of the *Whydah* crew — actual people who ended up on the same pirate ship for very different reasons — such as John King, the youngest known pirate on board the *Whydah*, who was believed to be younger than 11 at the time of the shipwreck. When the ship he was traveling on with his mother was taken over by Bellamy, young John insisted on taking up with the pirate crew, despite his mother’s objections.

A dozen multimedia galleries showcase the reality of the slave trade in West Africa and the economic prosperity in the Caribbean in the early 18th century, the *Whydah*’s journey, the ship’s capture by Bellamy, the violent storm that sank the ship, its discovery by Clifford, and the recovery and conservation of its artifacts.

“Real Pirates’ brings to life the stories, adventure and hardships of an era in American history in a way that captivates the imagination of the whole family,” said Dr. Dennis Wint, president and CEO of The Franklin.

Artifacts include pirate dress items, daily objects used aboard the ship, weaponry, jewelry and treasure from all over the world, including authentic coins that visitors can touch.

One of the most striking artifacts that will be on view is the ship’s bell, inscribed “Whydah Galley 1716,” which was used to authenticate the shipwreck site as that of the *Whydah*.

The exhibition began its five-and-a-half-year U.S. tour at Cincinnati Museum Center last summer. Philadelphia is the second of 10 cities the exhibition will visit.

***Whydah* History**

The three-masted, 300-ton galley *Whydah* was built as a slave ship in London in 1715 and represented the most advanced technology of her day. She was easy to maneuver, unusually fast and, to protect her cargo, heavily armed. She was built to transport human captives from the West Coast of Africa to the Caribbean, but only made one such voyage before being captured by pirates.

In February 1717, after the slaves were sold in the Caribbean, the *Whydah* was captured off the Bahamas by Sam Bellamy, one of the boldest and most successful pirates of his day. Bellamy and his crew hoisted the Jolly Roger — the slave ship was now a pirate ship.

Just two months later, on April 26, 1717, in one of the worst nor'easters ever recorded, the *Whydah*, packed with plunder from more than 50 captured ships, sank off the Massachusetts coast. All but two of the 146 people on board drowned.

“This was a unique period in our history,” said Jeffrey Bolster, professor of early American and Caribbean history at the University of New Hampshire. “Through the cache of artifacts brought to the surface by Clifford and his team, we see a world generally undisclosed, one in which the Caribbean was the economic center and values were very different, an era before civil rights, before individual liberties and before democracy was institutionalized. Without the slave trade and the wealth of the region, piracy would not have existed. This is a story of the making of America — a true story more powerful than fiction.”

Bolster is a member of an advisory panel composed of academic and other scholarly experts that was created by exhibition organizers to review and provide feedback on proposed content for the exhibition.

In 1984, some 270 years after the *Whydah* sank, Clifford found the first remains of the ship. In a recovery operation that spanned more than two decades, Clifford and his team have brought up thousands of artifacts, not only gold and silver, but everyday objects that shed light on this tumultuous period of American and world history.

Ticket Information

More information about the exhibition and how to purchase tickets is available at www.piratesexhibit.com or www.fi.edu.

About National Geographic

The National Geographic Society is one of the world's largest nonprofit scientific and educational organizations. Founded in 1888 to “increase and diffuse geographic knowledge,” the Society works to inspire people to care about the planet. It reaches more than 300 million people worldwide each month through its official journal, National Geographic, and four other magazines; National Geographic Channel; television documentaries; radio programs; films; books; DVDs; maps; and interactive media. National Geographic has funded more than 8,700 scientific research projects and supports an education program combating geographic illiteracy. For more information, visit www.nationalgeographic.com.

About Arts and Exhibitions International

A division of Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG), AEI was founded in 2003 by president John Norman and international vice president Andres Numhauser. AEI currently produces the award-winning exhibition “Diana: A Celebration” in association with the Althorp Estate in the United Kingdom as well as the traveling blockbuster exhibition “Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs.” Norman and Numhauser have nearly 40 years’ combined experience in the entertainment and exhibition business, working over the years on such projects as “Titanic: The Artifact Exhibit” and “Saint Peter and the Vatican: The Legacy of the Popes.” The company has relationships with the most important museums in the world and has presented traveling exhibitions on four continents. For more information, log onto www.artsandexhibitions.com.

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About The Franklin

Founded in honor of America's first scientist, Benjamin Franklin, The Franklin Institute is a renowned and innovative leader in the field of science and technology learning, as well as a dynamic center of activity. It is dedicated to creating a passion for science by offering new and exciting access to science and technology in ways that would dazzle and delight its namesake. For more information, please visit www.fi.edu.