## Chicago History Museum

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Media Contact:

Nicholas Glenn | Communications Coordinator | 312-799-2161 glenn@chicagohistory.org

## <u>Unexpected Chicago: The Power of the Purse</u> John Hancock's Billfold on Display

(CHICAGO) – On July 4, 2012 the Chicago History Museum will display the billfold of John Hancock in the ongoing *Unexpected Chicago* exhibition. Easily recognizable by his standout signature on the Declaration of Independence, this wealthy Boston merchant was one of the most prominent founding fathers of the United States of America. This revolutionary artifact will be displayed starting Wednesday, July 4, 2012 through the end of August and will likely never be placed on display again.

He was a political revolutionary who often hosted rallies to keep the fight for American independence on the minds of those up and down the social ranks. Then, like today, the power of the purse, in this case Hancock's purse, tremendously affected political change. From the beginning, political sponsorship and lobbying have been hardwired into the American way.

This fragile piece of early American history, Hancock's billfold became part of the Museum's collection in 1920, acquired from the estate of candy magnate and collecting virtuoso Charles F. Gunther. Visitors can view Hancock's billfold in the *Unexpected Chicago* exhibition and then can view a first printing of the Declaration of Independence, which bears Hancock's name, in the ongoing *Facing Freedom* exhibition.

This piece of American history is one of the many treasures in the Chicago History Museum's collection of over 22 million artifacts featured as a part of the *Unexpected Chicago* exhibition. This world-class collection holds the second largest costume collection in the world including clothing and accessories, and has thousands of linear feet of archives and manuscripts that make up the equivalent of 49 football fields or 12 Willis Towers.

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Even the smallest donation helps share Chicago's unique history with the world, and enables the Museum to offer the city's history to the public in surprising and fascinating ways. For more information on how to see this unexpected treasure and donate to save this and other historic gems visit chicagohistory.org/unexpectedchicago.

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The Chicago History Museum, a major museum and research center for Chicago and American history, is located at 1601 N. Clark Street. The Museum can be reached by CTA buses 11, 22, 36, 72, 73, 151, and 156. Parking is conveniently located one block north of the Museum at Clark and LaSalle Streets (enter on Stockton Drive). Admission to the Museum is \$14 adults with audio tour, \$12 seniors/students with audio tour, free for children 12 years and younger. Please call 312.642.4600 or visit us at www.chicagohistory.org. The Chicago History Museum is affiliated with the Chicago Historical Society and acknowledges the Chicago Park District's generous support of all the Museum's activities.