

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Library Company Highlights the American Republic's Black Founders in Online Exhibition

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – February 1, 2013 – Originally on view in the Library Company's Louise Lux-Sions and Harry Sions Gallery, *Black Founders: The Free Black Community in the Early Republic* has been reimagined as an online exhibition. Like its physical counterpart, this exhibition also focuses on the remarkable individuals who helped shape life for free blacks in the early Republic.

Black Founders chronicles the struggle for freedom from the end of the Revolution to 1830, when the first national convention of African Americans was held. Drawing on the Library Company's rich collections, the exhibition brings together books, pamphlets, and newspaper articles by black leaders from this period. Highlights from the exhibition include engravings and illustrations of leaders of the early black church; Prince Saunders' *Haytian Papers*, which documents his efforts to promote the first independent black nation; and *Observations on the Inslaving, Importing and Purchasing of Negroes*, the first of many antislavery pamphlets by Anthony Benezet, who—as a member of the Library Company—likely used works from our collections as his sources in depicting the horrors of the slave trade.

In addition to featuring the Library Company's collections, *Black Founders* also brings together objects from the American Antiquarian Society, the Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts at Drexel University, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, and President's House Philadelphia.

Through online exhibitions, the Library Company is able to reach and educate larger audiences about its collections. To view the *Black Founders* exhibition, visit www.librarycompany.org/blackfounders. Like *Black Founders*, many other exhibitions that were previously on view at the Library Company can be viewed online at www.librarycompany.org/collections/exhibits.

Library Company Program in African American History

The Library Company houses the nation's most important collection of African American literature and history before 1900. Comprising more than 13,000 titles and 1,200 images from the mid-16th to the late-19th centuries, the African Americana holdings include books, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, broadsides, and graphics documenting the western discovery and exploitation of Africa; the rise of both slavery and antislavery movements in the new world; the development of racial thought and racism; descriptions of African American life, slave and free, throughout the Americas; slavery and race in fiction and drama; and the printed works of African American individuals and organizations.

The Program in African American History (PAAH) was created in 2007 to formalize the Library Company's pioneering contributions to the study of African American history, providing leadership in promoting the scholarly study of African American history before 1900 and sharing the scholarship produced with an engaged public. With incomparable collections, a stellar reputation in the world of research libraries, a distinguished network of fellowship alumni and advisors, and institutional relationships with a diverse range of educational and cultural institutions, we are uniquely placed to advance understanding of the lives of people of African descent living in the Americas from the 17th through the 19th centuries.

The Library Company of Philadelphia

The Library Company of Philadelphia is an independent research library specializing in American history and culture from the 17th through the 19th centuries. Founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin, the Library Company is America's oldest cultural institution and served as the Library of Congress from the Revolutionary War to 1800. The Library Company was the largest public library in America until the Civil War and includes the extensive personal libraries of such prominent early American bibliophiles such as James Logan. Open to the public free of charge, the Library Company houses an extensive collection of rare books, manuscripts, broadsides, ephemera, prints, photographs, and works of art, and the second largest holding of early American imprints. Particular strengths of the collection include economic history, women's history, African American history, history of medicine, history of philanthropy, and visual culture. To find out more, please visit www.librarycompany.org.

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