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## The Library Company of Philadelphia Takes a Look at Crime

**Philadelphia: December 19, 2011** – Drawing on books, pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, prints, photographs, and ephemera in the Library Company’s collection, guest curator Wendy Woloson explores underground urban commerce in early America in our upcoming exhibition “Capitalism by Gaslight: The Shadow Economies of 19th-Century America.” The exhibition focuses on the ways many Americans earned their livings outside the spheres of wholesale and retail commerce, conducting economic transactions in illicit and semi-legal ways.



Thomas Crehore. Playing cards. [Dorchester, ca. 1820].

Crime was certainly nothing new to Americans, and reports of highway robberies and stolen goods appeared in newspapers from their first issues on colonial soil. Yet the profound and relatively rapid shifts in the country’s economic structure and demographic patterns after the Revolution contributed to the flourishing of both legal and illegal commerce. Woloson explores these changes using the Library Company’s rich collections of Americana.

An interactive portion of the exhibition features electronically displayed pamphlets, as well as a recipe book containing instructions for making one’s own whiskey at home, that visitors can page through. Visitors will leave the Library Company with a small reminder of the show, a trade card with a biography of someone who operated in the commercial underworld.

From pick-pocketing to gambling, counterfeiting to prostitution, “Capitalism by Gaslight” describes the myriad ways people participated in an earlier, shadowy realm of commerce that required a surprising degree of creativity, cunning, and financial acumen. This exhibition will be on display from Monday, January 17, through Friday, August 24, 2012.

**A press opening will be held on Tuesday, January 24th at 4:30 p.m.**

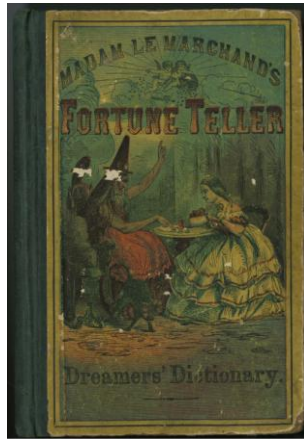
### Background Information about the Library Company

The Library Company of Philadelphia is an independent research library concentrating on American history and culture from the 17th through 19th centuries. Free and open to the public, the Library Company houses an extensive non-circulating collection of rare books, manuscripts, broadsides, ephemera, and works of art. The mission of the Library

Company is to preserve, interpret, make available, and augment the valuable materials within our care. We serve a diverse constituency throughout Philadelphia and the nation, offering comprehensive reader services, an internationally renowned fellowship program, an online public access catalog, and regular exhibitions and public programs. Located at 1314 Locust Street, Philadelphia the Library Company is open to the public free of charge from 9:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Monday through Friday. The Library Company can be found online at [www.librarycompany.org](http://www.librarycompany.org).



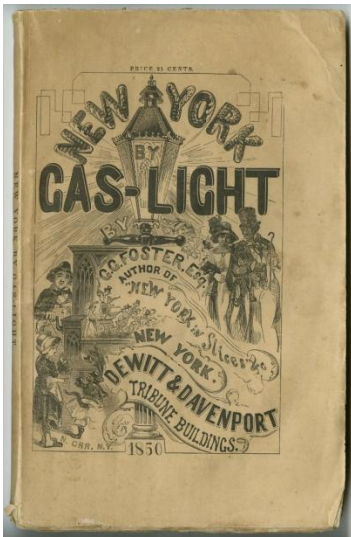
*The Prodigal Son Revelling with Harlots.* Hartford: D. W. Kellogg & Co., 1838.



Madame Le Marchand. *Le Marchand's Fortune Teller, and Dreamer's Dictionary.* New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1863.



"Rat Pit," Edward H. Savage. *Police Recollections; or Boston by Daylight and Gaslight.* Boston: John P. Dale & Co., 1873.



George C. Foster. *New York by Gas-Light and Other Urban Sketches: With Here and There a Streak of Sunshine.* New York: Dewitt and Davenport, 1850. (On loan from Special Collections of the University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware)