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FASHIONING PHILADELPHIA – THE STYLE OF THE CITY, 1720-1940

Exhibition on Philadelphia Fashion History Opens July 20

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – July 8, 2015 – The Library Company of Philadelphia will present over 200 years of fashion history in its newest exhibition, which opens July 20. *Fashioning Philadelphia – The Style of the City, 1720-1940* tells the largely unheralded story of Philadelphia's contributions to the early fashion industry. Curated by Wendy Woloson (Assistant Professor of History, Rutgers University), *Fashioning Philadelphia* will feature prints, photographs, books, ephemera, and artifacts from the Library Company's premier collection of historical materials. The exhibition is on view through March 4, 2016.

The exhibition highlights Philadelphia's many important contributions to making clothing and shaping style over two centuries, which have largely been forgotten today. Home to modest Quakers, prosperous free blacks, well-heeled international transplants, and working classes of all sorts, Philadelphia was America's most cosmopolitan city from the late 18th through the 19th century. Chestnut Street in particular enjoyed a reputation for being as fashionable as the grand thoroughfares of Paris and London. In addition, Philadelphia was a manufacturing powerhouse that supported industries producing textiles, leather goods, and accessories. The city was also a major publishing center – women's magazines such as *Godey's Lady's Book* helped shape popular fashions and then disseminate them throughout the country. Philadelphia retailers, including Wanamaker and Strawbridge & Clothier, erected lavish department stores – dream palaces of consumption – in the heart of the city.

To tell this particular story, *Fashioning Philadelphia* draws on the Library Company's rich collections of historical materials. Among many other items, it includes several portraits of Benjamin Franklin ("Philadelphia's first fashionista"), hand-colored fashion plates showing men and women wearing the latest styles, tailoring patterns, contemporary views of Chestnut Street, interior views of the Stetson hat factory, architectural renderings of major department stores, and small artifacts such as 19th-century sunglasses and ladies' boots.

By showing depictions of Philadelphians from all walks of life, from prosperous free African Americans to the laboring poor, gang members to Quakers, the exhibition also presents a social history of the city, and of urban America in general, as it changed over two centuries.

Fashioning Philadelphia – The Style of the City, 1720-1940 is free and open to the public, July 20, 2015 – March 4, 2016, Monday - Friday, 9 am to 4:45 pm. The exhibition and its accompanying programming are supported by funds from the Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation. For the latest events associated with this exhibition, visit librarycompany.org/events.

The Library Company of Philadelphia

Founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin, The Library Company of Philadelphia is an independent research library specializing in American history and culture from the 17th through the 19th centuries. The Library Company is America's oldest cultural institution and served as the Library of Congress from the Revolutionary War to 1800. It was the largest public library in America until the Civil War and includes the extensive personal libraries of such prominent early American bibliophiles 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 one of the world's largest holdings 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. The Library Company promotes access to these collections through fellowships, exhibitions, programs, and online resources. To find out more, please visit www.librarycompany.org.

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