



The Library Company OF PHILADELPHIA

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Library Company of Philadelphia Celebrates “Juneteenth” with a Freedom Forum of Area Scholars

Philadelphia: June 3, 2009 – The Library Company of Philadelphia will hold its third annual Juneteenth Freedom Forum on June 19th. “Juneteenth” commemorates June 19th, 1865, when Union forces occupying Texas first formally announced to the slaves that they were

free under the Emancipation Proclamation. June 19th instantly became an African American day of celebration, spreading throughout the country in the ensuing years. In recent times, Juneteenth has grown to encompass freedom celebrations among both whites and blacks in numerous states and cities.

The Library Company program features three area historians discussing the struggle for freedom and equality by African Americans, slave and free, in the era of the Civil War and beyond.

Dr. Robert Francis Engs, (emeritus Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania), in his presentation “Who Freed the Slaves? The Black Revolutionary Struggle for Freedom,” will discuss how the massive uprising of slaves in abandoning the plantations constituted an abolition of slavery on the ground by the slaves themselves and welded the cause of complete emancipation to the often hesitant Union forces.

For many African Americans of the time, particularly the nearly 200,000 who served in the Union army, Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox on April 9, 1865, marked the death of slavery and constituted a Freedom Day as much as Juneteenth. Dr. Elizabeth Varon (Professor of

History and Associate Director, Center for the Humanities, Temple University) will discuss how black activism gave April 9 a special celebratory meaning for African Americans and will link it to Juneteenth in her presentation, “From Appomattox to Juneteenth: Lee’s Defeat and the End of Slavery.”



View of Transparency in Front of Headquarters of Supervisory Committee for Recruiting Colored Regiments . . . in Commemoration of Emancipation in Maryland, November 1, 1864. Wood engraving (Philadelphia: Ringwalt and Brown, 1864).

Continuing the theme of freedom commemorations, Dr. Randall M. Miller (Professor of History, St. Joseph's University), in his presentation "Juneteenth, Before and After: African American Freedom Celebrations, Historical Memory, and Contemporary Activism," will discuss how African Americans used Juneteenth and other black freedom celebrations before and after to forge an African American identity and define their role in the larger American experience.

This event is sponsored by the Library Company's Program in African American History with support from The Albert M. Greenfield Foundation. We hope you will join us for what promises to be an evening of thoughtful and provocative commentary and lively discussion. Reception at 5:30 p.m., program at 6:00. The event is open to the public free of charge, but seating is limited and advance registration is requested. To register, phone 215-546-3181, or e-mail lpropst@librarycompany.org.

Background Information about the Library Company

The Library Company of Philadelphia is an independent research library concentrating on American society 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, it 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.

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