

## Celebrate African American Independence at HSP!



The Rescue of Jane Johnson and Her Children. From William Still, *The Underground Rail Road* (Philadelphia, 1872).

### Juneteenth and Philadelphia's African American History

On June 19th of 1865, Union General George Granger took charge of the state of Texas and informed the nation's last remaining slaves of their freedom, almost two and a half years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. The following year, African Americans began celebrating Juneteenth—the anniversary of this historic day. Juneteenth has

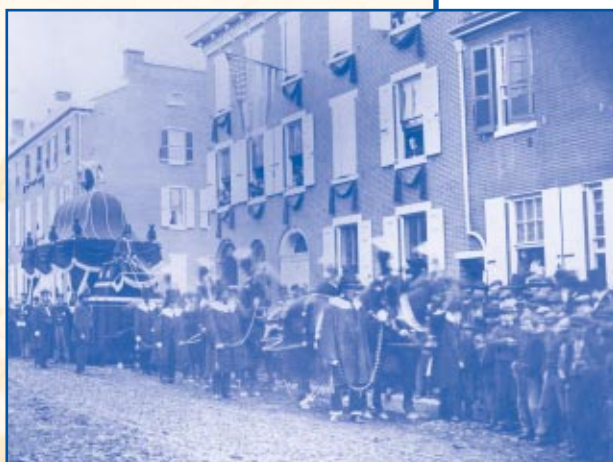
a special meaning in Philadelphia, where we can commemorate a long and storied history of African American achievement and leadership.

Even before the days of the early American republic, Philadelphia was home to the largest free black community in the future United States. While many black craftsmen and artisans were enslaved, free blacks in the city gradually extended the scope of their community's freedom of action. By the days of the Civil War, many free blacks had built successful careers as business owners; they had established and taught in schools and were reaching out to the community through self-help organizations. Articulate and dedicated, they provided speakers and leadership to countless groups of freed slaves and fraternal organizations and established Philadelphia as an important stop on the Underground Railroad. They sent missionaries and teachers to work in new churches and schools in communities being built by former slaves, and the region became a primary center for the recruitment and training for the United States Colored Troops and their officers. Philadelphia's African American past encompasses a wealth of experiences, and HSP is proud to hold collections that document many of the stories that make up this complex history.

To commemorate these historic contributions and to share our important collections, HSP has joined with the Civil War History Consortium and a variety of partners to plan four days of Juneteenth activities, taking place between June 16th and 19th, at venues across the city. To begin our celebration, HSP will lend one of our most treasured items, a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln, to the African American Museum as it celebrates the thirtieth anniversary of its opening. Join us on Monday, June 19th, at 9:30 a.m., for a special ceremonial procession led by United States Colored Troops re-enactors as they escort a horse-drawn carriage carrying this historic document from HSP to the museum at Seventh and Arch streets. The Third United States Colored Infantry re-enactors will provide a military honor guard, and actors representing nineteenth century heroines Harriet Tubman and Lucretia Mott will accompany the document in the processional.

Come back to HSP in the afternoon for a special Juneteenth open house, beginning at 2 p.m. with a look at rarely seen items highlighting Philadelphia's African American past, including the Emancipation Proclamation, William Still's original Underground Railroad journal, and selections from the Pennsylvania Abolition Society papers. A special performance of *In Sun and Snow*, a 10-minute play based on the diaries (held at HSP) of two young women who lived in Philadelphia during the Civil War, will follow at 4:30 p.m. (See following article.)

Leading co-sponsors of Juneteenth 2006 include the Greater Philadelphia Tourism & Marketing Corporation, the Juneteenth Coalition and the United States Colored Troops, along with many local museums and historic sites. Be sure to visit [www.civilwarconsortium.org/juneteenth/](http://www.civilwarconsortium.org/juneteenth/) to learn more about the citywide celebration and the history of the Civil War in Philadelphia. ♦



Abraham Lincoln's funeral cortege passes through Philadelphia. From the Society Photo Collection.

### Similar Lives, Remarkable Differences: HSP Diaries Inspire a Philadelphia Playwright

Writer Mary Hagy never expected that locking herself out of her house on a rainy summer day in 2004 would prove to be a lucky event. Unwilling to waste her afternoon, Hagy decided to escape the weather with a visit to HSP. She had long been contemplating the experiences of African Americans in Philadelphia during the Civil War era, and she'd been told that HSP might have some documentation that would help her tell their stories. She was surprised to find, however, that the library provided much more than shelter from the downpour: hidden on HSP's shelves was the inspiration she had been looking for. As the rain fell outside, Hagy pored over the diaries of Emilie F. Davis and Margie B. Howell, two young women chronicling their day-to-day experiences during the last days of the Civil War. Studying the manuscripts through a magnifying glass, Hagy knew she had found the raw materials for her next play.

Both middle-class ladies from strong, affluent families, Emilie and Margie filled their diaries with the stories of their active social calendars and their impressions of events in Philadelphia and beyond. But there was one significant difference: Margie was white; Emilie was of color. "The

diaries told me these two girls led very similar lives," Hagy says, "so similar that you wouldn't know they were of different race. They lived in the same city, not far from each other—but you know that when Emilie stepped outside her door, her life was not the same as Margaret's." The diaries made a tremendous impact on Hagy: "I knew I had to do something with them," she says.

She began to write, and the result was her extraordinary play, *In Sun and Snow*. Based on the two diaries, the play juxtaposes the experiences and observations of the two girls as they recount their impressions of the fall of the South and Lincoln's

assassination, and finally brings them together as they attend his funeral procession. Shedding light on a different side of the African American experience and a pivotal time in American history, the play reveals not only the unexplored success of Philadelphia's African American middle class, but through the contrasting narratives, it explores the undeniable challenges that faced members of this vital community.

Hagy received a commission from People's Light and Theatre to complete *In Sun and Snow* in May 2005, and they play has been performed there and at several other local venues since its opening. As part of Philadelphia's Juneteenth celebration, the play (featuring original music by Robert Medcalf) will be produced by the Walnut Street Theater and performed at venues around the city. A special presentation will take place at HSP's building during our Juneteenth open house, June 19th, at 4:30 p.m. The performance is free and open to the public. Don't miss your chance to see this remarkable play and experience the inspiration that can be found in our collections! For more information, contact HSP at 215-732-6200 ext. 214. ♦

### The Leland-Boker Emancipation Proclamation

The signed copy of the historic Emancipation Proclamation that HSP is lending to the African American Museum for its Juneteenth celebration is one of two copies held in our archives. The Leland-Boker edition of the Proclamation was signed by Abraham Lincoln, Secretary of State William Seward, and John Nicolay (private secretary to the president); these copies were created to be sold as souvenirs at the Philadelphia Great Central Sanitary Fair of June, 1864. The fairs were held to raise money for sick and wounded soldiers and to improve conditions in military camps.

A recent independent survey of existing copies reveals that there are twenty-two (of the forty-eight original signed copies) known to still be in existence. HSP's copies were recently conserved thanks in part to a federal Save America's Treasures grant and the generous support of The Treasures Society. Don't miss the opportunity to see these unique documents up close on June 19th! ♦

# HSP Designated Official Historical Society of the City and County of Philadelphia

HSP has worked actively to preserve and share Philadelphia's past since 1824, caring for the stories of its people and places, and collaborating with many partners to explore our history. While our local government has provided meaningful operating support for the institution through the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, until this year HSP had never received formal recognition for its important role in Philadelphia's historical community.

Thanks, however, to the leadership of Councilman Frank DiCicco and his colleagues, City Council passed a resolution on March 9th, 2006, designating HSP as the official historical society of Philadelphia. The resolution, introduced by Councilmembers DiCicco and Frank Kenney and sponsored by DiCicco, Kenney, and Council President Anna C. Verna, details HSP's many assets and accomplishments and provides HSP with an opportunity to pursue support from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania through the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Please join us in thanking the members of City Council for their recognition of HSP's efforts to preserve our cultural heritage! ❖

## Helping Share Our History

On May 4th, HSP's staff celebrated Isabelle Clouser's ninetieth birthday and her many years as a volunteer in the library. Isabelle started at HSP in the winter of 1997, helping behind the scenes while the building was undergoing renovations and was closed to the public. Her first project involved dismantling genealogical scrapbooks and placing the contents in acid-free folders and boxes. Thanks to her interest in genealogy and her love of history, Isabelle has continued to volunteer at HSP. "I'm so glad there's a place like HSP," she says, "and I'm happy I can do something to help."

Over the years Isabelle has contributed to a variety of important efforts. She has taken advantage of her previous experience as an indexer to analyze who is using our collections and how: for example, she tallied hundreds of call slips to determine which items should be stored downstairs because they are most often requested. Presently she provides monthly demographic statistics on our Ready Reference and Front Desk registration. She also checks in serials and monographs as they arrive back from the bindery and prepares shelflist cards for filing.

Isabelle is an accomplished business woman, community volunteer (primarily with the League of Women Voters), and world traveler.

There is hardly a corner of the globe that she has not ventured to. She loves to tell stories of her time visiting the Great Wall of China, at the Taj Mahal, sailing down the Nile, or in the Soviet Union.

Thanks to Isabelle's efforts, many of HSP's valued collections and volumes are safe and accessible to researchers, and we understand more about how our library is used so we can provide better service. Everyone at HSP is extremely grateful to Isabelle for her many years as a volunteer. Thanks, Isabelle, for your time, talent, and dedication! ❖



Isabelle Clouser's birthday celebration

## Newly Available Collections:

Postcards from the Perot Family Papers (Collection 1886), processed under a grant from the A.W. Mellon Foundation.

In 1918, T. Morris Perot Jr., a Philadelphia businessman and president of Francis Perot's Sons Malting Company, donated five thousand dollars to the war relief efforts of the Auxiliary Hospital in Moret, France, and participated in convent fundraisers by purchasing postcards

handcrafted by the hospital's nuns. These postcards are unique, hand-drawn, figure-in-nature scenes in which the figures are colored and highlighted by used stamps.

To learn more about the Perot family and this collection, access the finding aid online at <http://www.hsp.org/files/findingaid1886perot.pdf>. ❖



## Celebrate Juneteenth at HSP! Join us on June 19th, 2006



United States Soldiers at Camp William Penn, Philadelphia

Look inside to learn more about special events at HSP and across the city commemorating freedom and the achievements of Philadelphia's African American community. ❖