

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### **Franklin Tercentenary Exhibit at the Penn Library**

On January 17th 2006, the University of Pennsylvania Library opens a stunning new exhibit on education in the Delaware Valley during age of Franklin. The exhibit, *Educating the Youth of Pennsylvania: Worlds of Learning in the Age of Franklin*, is part of the University of Pennsylvania's contribution to the Tercentenary of Benjamin Franklin's birth. The show runs through May 2006 and is free and open to the public.

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Philadelphia, PA - January 3, 2006 - University of Pennsylvania Library - More than 250 years ago, Franklin published his *Proposals for the Education of Youth in Pensilvania*, the pamphlet that led to the creation of the school that became the University of Pennsylvania. In it, Franklin envisioned a new kind of school, one that was secular, practical, and socially engaged. However, neither Franklin's vision nor the school it helped found existed in a vacuum. The exhibit puts Franklin's vision into perspective by presenting a series of glimpses onto a richly diverse set of educators, teachers, students, and schools operating in the Delaware Valley during the 18th century. What did students really do in school? How did they learn? What did they learn? And what didn't they learn?

Even before the Age of Franklin, the Philadelphia area was alive with innovative and inventive schools and school opportunities. The Quakers had already established a series of schools in the region (they were, in fact, called "public schools") that taught children as young as four to those well into their teens and were open to the poor as well as to the rich. Schools for women – some of them run by women – opened along with numerous evening schools for servants and artisans who worked during the day, and numerous church-run "charity schools." The area of Old City, now full of upscale galleries, restaurants, and apartments, may once have been literally crawling with schoolchildren young and old. There were schools for Germans and for African-Americans, Presbyterians and Catholics, and a variety of options for those choosing Franklin's own path, self-education.

The exhibit includes an amazing gallery of recently photographed buildings that once functioned as schooling sites. Although the site of the original Academy and College of Philadelphia (Fourth Street near Arch) is now occupied by a Holiday Inn, dozens of structures from the 18th century remain standing today and are on view in the gallery. Examples include the humble "Beggarstown School" on Germantown Avenue and several octagonal buildings, providing maximum lighting for the one-room school house. During the Age of Franklin there may well have been more than one hundred such structures, all of which suggests the value our forefathers placed on education.

The exhibit makes it clear that, during the age of Penn's founding, colonial Philadelphia was a vibrant urban center teeming with educational opportunities for its diverse and ambitious population.

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*Educating the Youth of Pennsylvania* represents a major collaborative effort bringing together books, manuscripts, and artifacts from dozens of local libraries, archives, historical societies, religious groups, and schools themselves. Over one-hundred items are on display including:

The first editions of Franklin's *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania* (1749) and his *Idea of the English School* (1751).

A never-before seen book printed by Franklin and recently acquired by the Penn Library, *The Friendly Instructor* (1750), which aimed to instruct young men and women in good manners and proper behavior. [See separate Press Release.]

The original manuscript notebook in which Franklin recorded his ideas for the "Junto," his famous club of tradesmen devoted to self-education.

Beautiful examples of "fraktur" calligraphy from the German schools of the area.

Extraordinary samplers made by schoolgirls, including a very rare globe sampler made at the Westtown School in Chester County.

Original student notebooks and examples of student satire and humor.

Scientific instruments and documents from the period, designed for school use.

A photographic gallery of extant 18th-century school buildings in the greater Delaware Valley.

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#### **General Information:**

The exhibit has been curated by John Pollack and the staff of the Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Penn.

A printed catalogue and a web site will be available later in the winter.

**Exhibition dates:** January 17 – May 31, 2006.

**Location:** Rosenwald Gallery, sixth floor, Van Pelt-Dietrich Library, 3420 Walnut Street, Philadelphia PA 19104.

**Hours:** Mon-Fri, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM; Saturdays, noon – 4:00 PM (photo ID required for admission to building; Saturday visitors must make advance arrangements).

For further information and to arrange for tours, contact:

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