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August 22, 2012
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Photos available: Ray Raphael headshot, and cover art of his book “Mr. President”

David Library Lectures Return September 27
Series Will Focus on Presidential Politics

WASHINGTON CROSSING, PA -- The David Library of the American Revolution’s Fall 2012 lecture series, “The Making of the American Presidency,” will endeavor to put presidential politics and campaigns in historical perspective this election year, with a look at the origins of presidential elections in the United States, the earliest Presidents, and America’s long history of partisan politics.

The series will begin on Thursday, 27 at 7:30 with Partisanship and the “Electoral College”: What the Founders Didn’t Want and Didn’t See Coming, presented by Ray Raphael, author of People’s History of the American Revolution, Founders: The People Who Brought You a Nation and Mr. President: How and Why the Founders Created a Chief Executive.

“The framers created the presidency to counter the ‘spirit of party’ they expected to prevail in Congress,” says Raphael. “They also invented a very peculiar way to elect the president, hoping that their ingenious method would somehow transcend politics. Yet inadvertently, by fashioning a single office that appeared to embody the nation, the framers forced political groups to coalesce into two major parties, each putting forth a candidate. Elections turned into must-win, zero-sum games in which each side denigrated the opposing candidate: Adams was allegedly a Monarchist, Jefferson a Deist and Jacobin revolutionary. This game turned supposedly impartial presidential electors into political pawns.”
Raphael is basing his talk on his new book, *Mr. President: How and Why the Founders Created a Chief Executive*. In the lecture, he will trace the birth and early evolution of the presidency, starting at the Constitutional Convention, growing stronger during Washington’s two terms in office, and being challenged by the tumultuous election of 1800, when the system of presidential selection was gamed for partisan purposes and the House of Representatives took thirty-six ballots to determine a winner. “In the founders’ own time,” notes Raphael, “we see the genesis of the bifurcated political system that haunts us today.”

Author and educator Ray Raphael has taught at College of the Redwoods and Humboldt State in California. In the early 1990s, while preparing curriculum for his United States history courses, he became keenly interested in the history of common people during the American Revolution. Stimulated by a year-long grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities, he traveled to archives all over the United States to pursue this interest. Since that time he has been passionately engaged with the Revolution and the nation’s founding, with all its historic, philosophical, and political implications.

Other lectures in this series include:

*Love and Honor: American Patriotism and Popular Culture in the War of 1812* by Nicole Eustace, author of *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism* on Sunday, September 30 at 3:00 PM.

*Red, White and Blue: George Washington for President* by Bruce Chadwick, author of *George Washington’s War* and *The General and Mrs. Washington* on Thursday, October 25 at 7:30.

*The First Culture War: The Presidential Election of 1796 and the Origins of American Politics* by Jeffrey Pasley, Associate Professor of History at the University of Missouri, Sunday, October 28 at 3:00.

*“Change We Can Believe in,” 1800 Version* by Herbert Sloan, the Ann Whitney Olin Professor of History at Barnard College and author of *Principle and Interest: Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Debt* on Sunday, November 11 at 3:00.

David Library lectures are admission free, but reservations are required. Call (215) 493-2233 ext. 100 or email rsvp@dlar.org. All lectures are held in Stone Hall in the Feinstone Conference Center on the David Library campus, which is located at 1201 River Road (Rt. 32) in Washington Crossing, PA, 1.3 mi. from the Washington Crossing Bridge. The David Library’s Fall Lecture Series is being underwritten by a generous grant made by the Bucks County Commissioners.

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