

# Franklin Gazette

Volume 12, Number 3, Fall 2002

Friends of Franklin, Inc. P.O. Box 40048, Philadelphia, PA 19106

Visit: [www.benfranklin2006.org](http://www.benfranklin2006.org)

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"Distrust & Caution are the parents of security." Poor Richard, July 1739

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## President's Message

by Ralph Gregory Elliot

It's Franklin here, Franklin there,  
Franklin, Franklin everywhere.

These lines are written in the warm afterglow of several days' immersion in the life and times of Benjamin Franklin, examined in situ in his Philadelphia as part of the Friends' tour "Benjamin Franklin's Philadelphia—Then and Now", the most recent of the Friends tours of sites where Franklin lived and visited that have included London, Paris, Scotland and, domestically, Philadelphia, Boston, Williamsburg and Washington. A trip to the Huntington Library in Pasadena, repository of so much Frankliniana, is next, in mid-February 2003. These trips bring together both as audience and as speakers some of the most knowledgeable Franklinistas in the world (so many of them also Friends) and open up venues and collections not otherwise accessible to the public specially for the Friends as the world's premier Franklin organization and celebrant.

Philadelphia illustrated the point. At the Masonic Temple we were given a special tour of its meeting rooms, and Franklin-related artifacts from the archives were exposed to our view by its curator and head librarian. At lunch we were regaled with a talk by Friend Stuart Green, M.D., of California on "Benjamin Franklin and the Elam Brothers, Quaker Merchants of Leeds", discussing how the helpfulness to Franklin of one brother while Ben was in England led to Franklin's involvement with another, less mentally stable, brother over 20 years later in Philadelphia. We visited one of the institutions still thriving that Franklin was instru-

mental in founding, The Philadelphia Contributionship, a property insurance company; and yet another, the American Philosophical Society, where we were greeted by its Librarian, Ted Carter (whose sudden and untimely death the following week is a great loss to us all) and heard a presentation on the National Constitution Center due to open in mid-2003 in Philadelphia and viewed an exhibit of early scientific instruments.

At the Franklin Institute, whose President, Friend Dennis Wint, greeted us in the national memorial to Franklin, John Alvit, its Curator, provided a white-gloved behind-the-scenes presentation of the choicest pieces from the Institute's Frankliniana collection, a private viewing replicated at the Philadelphia Museum of Art by Danielle Rice, its Associate Director of Programs and Liaison for the Franklin Tercentenary Celebration and at another Franklin-founded institution, Pennsylvania Hospital.

The quality of our speakers demonstrated the level of respect enjoyed by the Friends as an organization. Friend Jim Srodes, whose recent biography of Franklin is in bookstores everywhere, spoke on "Ben Franklin — The Man

Who Invented Himself". Our national treasure, Claude Lopez (seen above), filled a Belgian restaurant named Brigid's (I know, I know, Brigid is Irish but the cuisine was Belgian. Go figure.) to an overflowing standing-room-only tribute to her as she told the story of Ben and William's 1761 visit to Flanders, a trip from which Ben hurriedly returned to London for the coronation of George III. And Ron Blumer and Muffie Meyer, respectively series writer and producer/director at Middlemarch Films, described to us in film excerpts and words the making of their upcoming PBS series



cont. pg. 2



# Franklin Gazette

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## President's Message

*cont. from p. 1*

*Benjamin Franklin*, to be broadcast nationally on Tuesday, November 19 from 9-11 p.m. EST and Wednesday, November 20 from 9-10:30 p.m. EST — must-see TV.

We were also brought up to date on the developing plans for a worldwide exhibit on Franklin by Conover Hunt, Executive Director of the consortium of five institutions planning for the event, scheduled to open for its first venue at the Institute in October 2005 and then to travel here and abroad in future years as part of tercentenary celebrations. Conover continues to encourage all Friends with collections of Frankliniana or knowledge of others' collections to let her know of these, since a major aspect of the consortium's work will be to catalogue all known Franklin-related artifacts and materials. She also brought the good news that the period of gestation for the national Tercentenary Commission had successfully concluded with the President's July signature on the bill creating it.

Mary, Countess of Bessborough and Lady Joan M. Reid were also part of the tour, the one instrumental in raising funds for the restoration of Franklin's home during his 16 years in London at 36 Craven Street, and the other the driving force behind its actual restoration. They reported that Phase I, ensuring the structural survival of the 1730's building, was completed on time and within budget; and that Phase II is well underway, with a view to opening the house in 2003 as a dynamic museum and educational facility, using such things as live performance, recorded dialogue, special lighting and sound, hands-on science offerings for children and symposia.

The Friends are enthusiastically gearing up for the tercentenary celebration, too. Resuming our traditional role as a presenter of symposia and lectures, we shall co-sponsor with the American Philosophical Society a talk at the Society on Monday, December 30 at 10:00 a.m., by Professor James Campbell of the University of Toledo on "Franklin as a Philosopher". Admission is free. As soon as the tercentenary consortium web site is on-line, it will be a link to our web-site, as ours will be to its.

And finally, in closing, let me commend to your bibliophilic delectation the eminently-readable new book published by Yale University Press entitled, straightforwardly, *Benjamin Franklin*. Written by the dean of American colonial historians, Edmund Morgan of Yale, it follows the development of Franklin from his Philadelphia years of work and good works through his English and French years, culminating in his last five years in Philadelphia — a clear-eyed and not blindly uncritical assessment of the man as a developing and evolving human being. In his talk to Yale's incoming Class of 2006 this fall, President Richard Levin made Franklin his theme and Morgan's book his inspiration; and urged upon the assembled freshmen three characteristics of Ben worthy of their emulation: "his relentless curiosity", his "tenacity in maintaining an independent point of view, and at the same time, his flexibility to modify his opinions in the face of evidence", and "his devotion to public service". We would all do well to conform our lives to these commendable traits.



## Successful Fund Drive for the Friends

Ralph Elliot

The Friends' first-ever fund drive has been a tremendous success, netting the organization \$10,000 in fresh funds to support our programs and initiatives in the run-up to Ben's 300th birthday in 2006. Clearly, dues income alone will not sustain this organization, so that the infusion of funds from a special campaign—now to become an annual Spring feature of the Friends—is essential. Some 27 of our members, or almost 15% of the total, responded to the call. Special thanks, however, go to seven of them, without whose significant contributions and challenge pledges we would not have approached \$10,000. I hope that in the 2003 fund drive we can at least double the percentage of members contributing (and, perhaps, double the contribution total itself). Heartfelt thanks to all who gave to this worthy cause.



## Tercentenary to Document Frankliniana

As a part of the \$4 million grant awarded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Franklin Tercentenary Consortium will compile a catalogue of surviving materials known to have belonged to or been closely associated with Benjamin Franklin. Ms. Kate John Snider has been named Associate Curator of Frankliniana to perform the work.

Snider graduated Magna Cum Laude in American History from Franklin & Marshall College, where she was named to Phi Beta Kappa. She received her MA in Early American Culture in the Winterthur

Program at the University of Delaware. Her major exhibitions include curation of "Historic Maps of Lancaster County" (May-November, 2002) and serving as curatorial assistant for "An American Vision: Henry du Pont's Winterthur Museum," currently on view at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

She has published articles in *Winterthur Portfolio*, *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, and the *Pewter Collector's Club Bulletin*, and contributed to *An American Vision* and *Exhibiting the Visual Culture of American Religions*.

"Associated objects often lost their histories as they pass from one generation to another," said Tercentenary Executive Director Conover Hunt. "Records relating to objects owned by the other Founding Fathers are being maintained at their historic homes. Absent a surviving American Franklin house, we feel that the Franklin Institute, the official National Monument to the great scientist and statesman, is the appropriate keeper of these files."

The project curator will enter detailed information from both private and public collections into a central custom-designed computer database, which will also contain a digital image of the artifact. Data from many standard collections management programs can be transferred directly. This curatorial material, plus confidential information about each object's provenance, current owner, previous conservation and present condition will then be copied and stored in a special fire-proof archive housed at the Franklin Institute under strict curatorial control. Owners will be encouraged to submit updates so that the status and location of

these objects can be maintained for generations to come.

Information of a non-confidential nature will be made available to researchers via the web and through updated inventory print-outs. In keeping with national archival standards, large institutional or private holdings of original manuscripts will be described by collection, with less individual detail to each manuscript. Detailed information about size, date of manufacture, materials, maker and Franklin association will be taken for original Franklin-owned objects and surviving paintings, prints, drawings and sculptures produced in or before 1792.

"Assessing the condition of surviving objects is an important part of the project," said Snider. "Pew has allocated funds to pay for the restoration of those items most in need of repair. During my examination of each object, I will make note of any deterioration. This information will then be forwarded to a special conservation committee to determine the priorities for restoration, which will only be performed with the permission of the owner." Only those conservators who meet professional national standards will be awarded the work.

Institutions and collectors owning original Franklin materials, or knowing the location of such items, are encouraged to call Conover Hunt at the Tercentenary office, located at 222 N. 20th Street, Philadelphia 19103. 215-448-0983. The office will then schedule a site visit with Ms. Snider, who will use measuring tools, a laptop computer, a portable scanner and a digital camera for her examinations. The Tercentenary hopes to schedule all site visits by the end of 2002.





# The First Lightning Rods

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## Introduction

This Fall marks the 250th anniversary of the first application of tall, iron rods to protect ordinary structures from lightning. The idea for this invention grew out of the Philadelphia experiments and observations on electricity that were led and communicated by Benjamin Franklin,<sup>1</sup> and these experiments also led to the sentry box and kite experiments<sup>5</sup> that proved once and for all that thunderclouds are electrified and that lightning is an electrical discharge. The latter discoveries validated the key assumptions that lay behind Franklin's supposition that tall, grounded rods would protect structures from lightning damage. Here, we will trace how these ideas evolved and the design of the first protective rods, and then we will describe some key improvements that Franklin made to his design, after experience was gained through practice in the years from 1752 to 1762.

## Experiments and Observations in Philadelphia

Benjamin Franklin and his colleagues<sup>6</sup> began experimenting with static electricity in about 1746, after they saw some electrical demonstrations and parlor tricks that were then popular in Europe. They received apparatus from Peter Collinson, a Fellow of the Royal Society of London, and instructions on how to use it came from an article in *The Gentleman's Magazine* published in London.<sup>7</sup> Their initial experiments were described in a series of five formal letters that Franklin sent to Collinson in the years from 1747 to 1750, and lightning is mentioned in most of them in one way or another. In April 1751, Collinson published these letters in a small (86-page) pamphlet entitled *Experiments and Observations on Electricity, made at Philadelphia in America, by Mr. Benjamin Franklin, and Communicated in several letters to Mr. P. Collinson, of London, F.R.S.*; this was soon translated into French and later into German and other languages.<sup>1</sup>

In the first paragraph of the first letter,<sup>10</sup> Franklin described "the wonderful effect of pointed bodies, both in *drawing* off and *throwing* off the electrical fire." He showed that discharges to and from points work quickly and at considerable distances, that sharp points work better than blunt points, that metal points work better

than dry wood, and that the pointed object should be touched (*i.e.*, *grounded*) in order to obtain a maximum draw effect. Next, Franklin introduced the idea that rubbing glass in a friction machine does not actually create electricity; rather, at the instant of friction, the glass simply takes "the thing" out of the rubbing material. Whatever is added to the glass, an equal amount is now missing from the rubber. The terms *plus* and *minus* were used to describe these electrical states, and the glass was assumed to be electrified *positively* and the rubbing material *negatively*. The letter concludes with a comparison of lightning to electrical flashes on a gilded china plate or on the gold trim of a leather book.

In the second letter,<sup>11</sup> Franklin combined the concept of equal positive and negative charges with an assumption that glass is a perfect insulator and described the electrical behavior of a Leyden jar, the first electrical capacitor. He noted the importance of grounding in both charging and discharging the jar, and he made an analogy between electricity and lightning when he described a discharge through the gold gilding on the cover of a book that produced "a vivid flame, like the sharpest lightning."

In his third letter,<sup>12</sup> Franklin began to use terms like *charge* and *discharge* in describing the Leyden jar and showed that the electrification of such a device resides entirely in the glass. Next, he described an *electrical battery* wherein several capacitors were charged in series "with the same effort as charging one" and then discharged in parallel to provide the force of all at once "through the body of any animal forming the circle with them." Later, Franklin used such a battery to simulate the effects of lightning in a variety of materials.

In the fourth letter,<sup>13</sup> Franklin introduced the concept of the *sparking* or *striking distance*. If two gun barrels that are electrified "will strike at two inches distance, and make a loud snap; to what great a distance may 10,000 acres of electrified cloud strike and give its fire, and how loud must be that crack!" Based on his previous experience with the power of points, Franklin then speculated that when an electrified cloud passes over



a region, it will draw electricity from and discharge to high hills and trees, lofty towers, spires, masts of ships, chimneys, etc. This supposition led to some practical advice that is still valid today; namely, that it is dangerous to take shelter under a single, isolated tree during a thunderstorm; it is safer to remain in an open field. Franklin also suggested that it might be safer to stay in the open because there one's clothing will tend to be wet, and wet clothes will provide a conducting path to ground that is outside the body. His laboratory analogy was "a wet rat cannot be kill'd by the exploding electrical bottle, when a dry rat may."

In the fifth letter,<sup>14</sup> Franklin attempted to explain the power of points. He described how discharges between smooth or blunt conductors occur with a "stroke and crack," whereas sharp points discharge silently and produce large effects at greater distances. He then described what he viewed to be a "Law of Electricity;" namely, that points will tend to "draw on and throw off the electrical fluid with more or less power, and at greater or less distances, and in larger or smaller quantities in the same time" as the angle of the point is more or less acute. Given Franklin's obvious interest in lightning and the power of points, it was a short step to the lightning rod:

"I say, if these things are so, may not the knowledge of this power of points be of use to mankind; in preserving houses, churches, ships, etc. from the stroke of lightning; by directing us to fix on the highest parts of those edifices upright rods of iron, made sharp as a needle and gilt to prevent rusting, and from the foot of those rods a wire down the outside of the building into the ground; or down round one of the shrouds of a ship and down her side, till it reaches the water? Would not these pointed rods probably draw the electrical fire silently out of a cloud before it came nigh enough to strike, and thereby secure us from that most sudden and terrible mischief!"<sup>15</sup>

Clearly, Franklin's initial supposition was that the silent discharges from one or more sharp, metallic points might reduce or eliminate the effects of any electricity in the cloud aloft and thereby reduce or eliminate the chances of being struck by lightning. From his earlier experiments, Franklin knew that point discharges worked best when the conductor is grounded, and he also knew that tall objects were preferred places for lightning to strike. Therefore, even if the point dis-

charges did not neutralize the cloud, a tall, grounded conductor would provide a safe path for the lightning to go to ground.

In the very next paragraphs, Franklin made the following proposal:

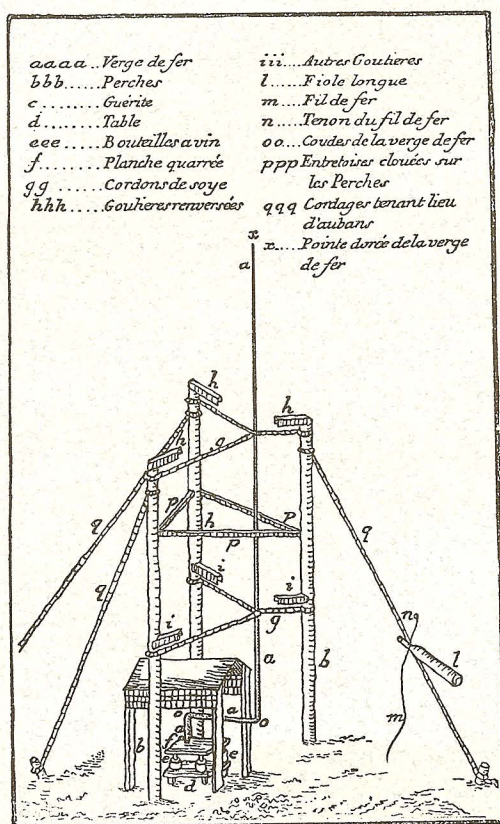
"To determine the question, whether the clouds that contain lightning are electrified or not, I would propose an experiment to be try'd where it may be done conveniently.

On the top of some high tower or steeple, place a kind of a sentry box (see Figure 1) big enough to contain a man and an electrical stand. From the middle of the stand let an iron rod rise, and pass bending out of the door, and then upright 20 or 30 feet, pointed very sharp at the end. If the electrical stand be kept clean and dry, a man standing on it when such clouds are passing low, might be electrified, and afford sparks, the rod drawing fire to him from the cloud. If any danger to the man be apprehended (tho' I think there would be none) let him stand on the floor of his box, and now and then bring near to the rod, the loop of a wire, that has one end fastened to the leads; he holding it by a wax-handle. So the sparks, if the rod is electrified, will strike from the rod to the wire and not affect him."<sup>16</sup>

It should be noted that the purpose of the sentry box (and also the kite) experiment was to determine if thunderclouds are electrified; for this, the rod (or the conducting kite string) must be carefully *insulated* from ground. For lightning protection, the rod should be *grounded*.

People in London were amused when Franklin's suggestions about electrical rods were read to the Royal Society, and they did not publish them in their *Philosophical Transactions*. Unbeknownst to Franklin or Collinson at the time, on May 10, 1752, a retired French dragoon acting on instructions from Thomas-François Dalibard, the translator of Franklin's book from English into French, succeeded in drawing sparks from a tall iron rod that was carefully insulated from ground (see Figure 1) at the village of Marly-la-Ville near Paris.





**Figure 1.** The apparatus used in the sentry box experiment at Marly-la-Ville, France. The rod was about 13 m (40 ft) tall and was insulated from ground by the wine bottles, e. (From *Expériences et Observations sur L'Électricité....* Trad. de l'Anglais par M. Dalibard, Seconde Édition, Paris, Vol. II, 1756, p.128.)

The sparks drawn at Marly-la-Ville proved, for the first time, that thunderclouds are electrified and that lightning is an electrical discharge. This experiment was sensational and was verified within days by Delor in Paris and soon by many others throughout Europe. When Dalibard and Delor reported their results to the French Academy of Sciences, they acknowledged that in doing these experiments, they had followed the path that Franklin had traced for them "...En suivant la route qu'il nous a tracée, j'ai obtenu une satisfaction complète."<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile in Philadelphia, Franklin drew sparks from the conducting string of his famous kite (insulated from ground by silk ribbon) in June or July, 1752, after the success at Marly-la-Ville but before he knew about it.<sup>5</sup> People in London were surprised by the experiment at Marly-la-Ville, and the following year the Royal Society of London awarded Franklin its Copley gold medal.

Several authors have noted that Franklin was not the first to compare sparks with lightning nor to hypothe-

size that lightning might be an electrical discharge.<sup>18-21</sup> In fact, almost every experimenter who had described electrical discharges before Franklin had, at one time or another, mentioned the analogy with lightning. Franklin's unique contributions were the suggestions (a) that tall, insulated rods could be used to determine if thunderclouds are electrified and (b) that tall, grounded rods could be used to protect against lightning damage. After Franklin heard about the success at Marly-la-Ville, he installed a tall, insulated rod on the roof of his house to study the characteristics of thunderstorm electricity. The conductor ran down a stairwell to ground but had a gap in the middle, as shown on the left of Figure 2. A small ball was suspended between chimes mounted on each end of the gap, and the ball was placed so that the chimes would ring whenever an electrified cloud passed overhead. Franklin used this apparatus to determine the electrical polarity of thunderclouds and to compare the properties of atmospheric electricity with the electricity that was generated by friction. He found that the two electricities were the same and "...that the clouds of a thundergust are *most commonly* in a negative state of electricity, but *sometimes* in a positive state,"<sup>22</sup> a result that was regarded as definitive for the next 170 years. At this time, Franklin thought that all discharges went from positive to negative so he concluded "that for the most part in thunder strokes, 'tis the earth that strikes into the clouds, and not the clouds that strike into the earth."<sup>22</sup> Judging by his later correspondence, Franklin was fascinated by this discovery, and he postulated that the effects of a lightning discharge would be very nearly the same whether the current flowed up from the ground or down from the cloud.



**Figure 2.** Benjamin Franklin shown next to the appa-



tus that he used to study thunderstorm electricity. A grounded rod of the 1762 design is shown in the background on the right. (An 18th century engraving after a painting by Mason Chamberlain, 1762.)

From 1749 to 1753, Rev. Ebenezer Kinnersley, a leading electrical experimenter and friend of Franklin, traveled the east coast of North America giving lectures and demonstrations on electricity.<sup>23</sup> He told people that lightning is an electrical discharge, and he showed them how grounded rods would protect model houses from sparks that simulated lightning. These lectures were advertised widely and constitute the first public disclosure that grounded rods will protect buildings from lightning damage.

### **First Lightning Protection System**

In the late fall of 1752, Franklin published the following paragraph in *Poor Richard's Almanack* for 1753:

"How to secure houses, etc. from Lightning

It has pleased God in his goodness to mankind, at length to discover to them the means of securing their habitations and other buildings from mischief by thunder and lightning. The method is this: Provide a small iron rod (it may be made of the rod-iron used by the nailers) but of such a length, that one end being three or four feet in the moist ground, the other may be six or eight feet above the highest part of the building. To the upper end of the rod fasten about a foot of brass wire, the size of a common knitting-needle, sharpened to a fine point; the rod may be secured to the house by a few small staples. If the house or barn be long, there may be a rod and point at each end, and a middling wire along the ridge from one to the other. A house thus furnished will not be damaged by lightning, it being attracted by the points, and passing thro the metal into the ground without hurting any thing. Vessels also, having a sharp pointed rod fix'd on the top of their masts, with a wire from the foot of the rod reaching down, round one of the shrouds, to the water, will not be hurt by lightning."<sup>24</sup>

*Editor's Note: Part 2 of The First Lightning Rods will appear in the winter issue. Full references will be reprinted at the end of the second installment.*

### **Notes and References**

[1] Cohen, I. Bernard, *Benjamin Franklin's Experiments: A New Edition of Franklin's Experiments and Observations on Electricity*, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, MA, 1941.

[2] Cohen, I. Bernard, *Franklin and Newton: An Inquiry into Speculative Newtonian Experimental Science and Franklin's Work in Electricity as an Example Thereof*,

Am. Philos. Soc., Philadelphia, PA, 1956, Part Four.

[3] Heilbron, J. L., *Electricity in the 17th and 18th Centuries: A Study of Early Modern Physics*, Univ. California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1979, Part Four.

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[5] Cohen, I. Bernard, *Benjamin Franklin's Science*, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, MA, 1990, Chapter 6.

[6] Principally Ebenezer Kinnersley, Philip Syng, and Thomas Hopkinson.

[7] Lemay, J. A. Leo, *Ebenezer Kinnersley: Franklin's Friend*, U. Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1964, 54-59.

[8] Principally by Georg Mathias Bose, Christian August Hansen, and Johann Heinrich Winkler.

[9] Heilbron, J., Franklin, Haller, and Franklinist History, *Isis*, 68, 1977, 539-549.

[10] Franklin documents have been taken from *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, Ed. by L. W. Labaree, W. B. Willcox, C. A. Lopez, B. B. Oberg, E. R. Cohn *et al.*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, Vol. I, 1959 to Vol. 35, 1999 with some capital letters suppressed to conform with modern usage. In the following notes, these volumes will be referred to as *BF Papers*; the volume number will be in italics, and the page numbers will be inclusive. The text of the first letter is in *BF Papers*, 3, 126-135.

[11] *Ibid.*, 3, 156-164.

[12] *Ibid.*, 3, 352-365.

[13] *Ibid.*, 3, 365-376.

[14] *Ibid.*, 4, 9-34

[15] *Ibid.*, 4, 19.

[16] *Ibid.*, 4, 19-20.

[17] *Ibid.*, 4, 303.

[18] Cohen, 1941, op cit., 21-56.

[19] Cohen, 1956, op cit., Chapter 11.

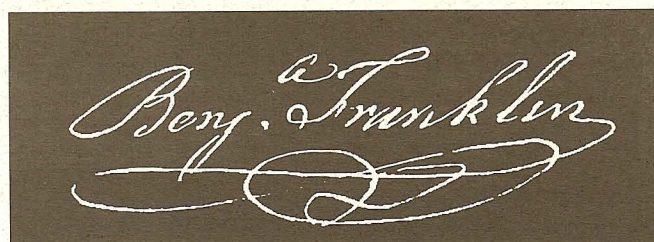
[20] Heilbron, 1979, op cit., Chapter 13.

[21] Cohen, 1992, op cit., Chapter 6.

[22] *BF Papers*, 5, 71.

[23] Lemay, op cit., 62-81.

[24] *BF Papers*, 4, 408-409.





## NOTES FROM OUR READERS

### Benjamin Franklin & Project Integrity

Over the past three years, Friends of Franklin members John Walburn, a retired school teacher, and Jim Hillesheim, Professor of Education, University of Kansas—along with other advisors and contributors—have been creating a website focusing upon the importance of individual and community integrity.

Called Project Integrity, the website consists of three segments, In The Home, In The School, and In The Workplace; with each segment offering integrity-building resources and activities that we believe can be helpful to those parents, teachers and employers who wish to be proactive in furthering the goals and objectives represented by Project Integrity.

Benjamin Franklin, the "Project's" role model, is cited numerous times throughout the website's 476 "pages". To see how Franklin is utilized, Friends of Franklin members can log on to [www.projectintegrity.org](http://www.projectintegrity.org), then click on In The School. When the master education menu appears, click to the Superintendent & Principals menu. Members are invited to investigate the variety of integrity-building resources that we have assembled, many of which were inspired

by, or directly based on, the works of Benjamin Franklin.

Each school menu contains references to Franklin, as does the parental menu (In The Home), and the business menu (In The Workplace). In addition, numerous links take the viewer to a special Franklin inspired page that provides a brief explanation of what is meant by the terms "Individual Integrity" and "Community Integrity."

Members are invited to offer suggestions about ideas/materials/resources/ contacts pertaining to Franklin's promotion of virtue, and his "good deed" contributions to society—suggestions that we can consider for incorporation into our Project Integrity website. A recent example is Frank A. Davis' "Franklin's Bold and Arduous Project In English Composition." (See *Franklin Gazette*, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 7, Summer 2002.)

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### The Declaration of Independence and the Polly Baker Parable

In the recent uproar about the phrase "under God" in the pledge of allegiance to the flag, politicians and pundits have emphasized that the Declaration of Independence refers to God. However, it seems to have been overlooked that this actually occurs in a quaint phrase, "the laws of nature and of nature's God." In the age of Enlightenment, Thomas Jefferson and his colleagues appear to have appealed to "nature" as the ultimate source of rights, human and divine.

Among scholars who have examined antecedents of this phrase, an astute study has been made by I. Bernard Cohen, an eminent historian of science at Harvard. In his *Science and the Founding Fathers* (Norton, 1995), Cohen traces several similar phrases that were familiar to Jefferson. A striking instance occurs in a mythical story, invented by Ben Franklin and "widely printed in English and America...in the years before the revolution." This reports the trial in Boston of Polly Baker, an unwed mother of five children, each with a different father. In defending herself against the charge of fornication, Polly delivered an eloquent speech, asserting that she had obeyed the "great command of Nature, and of Nature's God."

Ben Franklin, as a member of the drafting committee advising Jefferson, likely was amused that defiant words he'd given Polly to make her case a quarter century earlier were invoked in the Declaration of Independence. Perhaps Ben's parable of Polly Baker should give pause to those who today advocate a literal interpretation of political scriptures.

Dudley Herschbach

### *In Memoriam*

**Edward C. Carter, II**

Died October 1, 2002

Teacher, Scholar and Strong Supporter  
of Franklin and His Works.

His contributions will be greatly missed.

*Further information about Dr. Carter's accomplishments and the upcoming memorial service on November 7, 2002 may be found on the American Philosophical Society's web site: [www.amphilsoc.org](http://www.amphilsoc.org).*



# FRANKLIN TIDBITS

## Back to School: In Search of Benjamin Franklin

The Alliance for Lifelong Learning, a partnership among Oxford, Stanford, and Yale Universities offers on-line non-credit courses in a number of different disciplines. This fall, a new entry in their class catalogue may be of interest to Friends of Franklin. Entitled "In Search of Benjamin Franklin" and taught by Edmund S. and Marie Morgan, the course features weekly on-line discussions based on readings from Franklin's writings and Professor Morgan's recently published biography. The six-week course (Oct. 28-Dec. 8) will have Live Chat sessions and will cover a variety of topics in a lively and informal setting. After the

first introductory session, the themes will be: "A Man for All Seasons," "A Vision of Empire," "Right Makes Rights," "Winning American Independence," and "A Vision of a Better World." For more information, check the Alliance for Lifelong Learning web site: [www.allearn.org](http://www.allearn.org)



## New Franklin Play Premieres

Veteran Broadway actor Merwin Goldsmith portrayed Ben Franklin in the world premiere of *Franklin of Philadelphia* at the Sandy Spring Museum for the Sandy Spring Theater Group in Sandy Spring, Maryland. *Franklin of*

*Philadelphia*, written and directed by Emmy Award-winning writer, Alexander Marshall, is a 90 minute visit with one of the greatest and most diversified Americans of all time. The play offers the audience an opportunity to learn more about Franklin. "He was such a towering figure and extraordinary human being...", said Goldsmith, "His example of virtue and the just cause is something that resonates for our time-especially in the present world climate." The play opened for six performances only on October 18, 2002.

*Editor's note: It is hoped that the play will travel. If further information is received we will include it in future issues of the Gazette.*

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## Seeking Information on Thomas Franklin

Do you know this man? He is Thomas Franklin, our ancestor (1792/3 to 1840).

From the middle of the 19th century five generations of our family have been brought up to believe that Thomas Franklin was descended from a brother (or cousin) of Benjamin Franklin. Some have been named 'Franklin' or 'Benjamin' after their famous ancestor. Until now no one has sought to prove or disprove this belief. Surely it cannot all be a myth? My daughter and I have set ourselves the task of finding out the truth of the matter. Are there any among the 'Friends of Franklin' who might be able to help us? The facts we know for certain are set out below.

Thomas Franklin was apprenticed at an early age to Clowes, a well-known printing firm in Southwark, London. He was later to become a compositor and also something of an inventor to

the trade according to written evidence of a grandchild. Unfortunately Clowes' records were all destroyed during the London Blitz and it has proved impossible to follow this up.

Thomas was also a Methodist Class leader and local preacher. It is recorded that he preached the first sermon at the new Brixton Hill chapel in 1824. He married Ann Hudson at the church of St George the Martyr in Southwark on 21st February 1814. They had seven children, of whom six died young: Hannah, John, Thomas, Mary and Ann all in infancy and Samuel (also known as Benjamin) at the age of 12. Only the youngest child, Rachel, survived to adulthood. She was born on the 8th February 1830, married George Pedley, had 14 children and lived to the age of 89.

Thomas Franklin died on the 24 April 1840 at Canterbury Place, St Mary Newington, London. His death was recorded as due to tuberculosis, a common end for those in the printing industry. His age was given as 48 years. The vital details that we have

so far been unable to trace are the place and date of his birth and the names of his parents.

There is a strong possibility that answers may be found in the area around Northampton and Oxford where Benjamin Franklin's uncles and cousins who remained in Britain were mainly living at the time. We have found a Thomas Franklin in the International Genealogy Index (IGI) who was born in the right year and whose family can be traced for three generations in the Oxford area. This Thomas was the son of Richard and Martha Franklin of Dorchester. But there are others in Essex, Bedford, London, and perhaps in the States, so we can't be sure that this is our man.

If any 'Friend of Franklin' is able to help us solve the problem, or even give us another lead, Rachel and I would be very grateful.

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## "Benjamin Franklin's California"

California here we come! The Friends of Franklin tour dates for "Benjamin Franklin's California" are set for Tuesday, February 18th through Saturday, February 22nd, 2003.

Meet new Friends and reunite with those who have traveled on other Franklin excursions as we are welcomed by our west coast Friends. Experience a specially designed, full-day tour and visit at Huntington Library, home of Franklin's Autobiography. We will also visit our California Ben Franklin, Gene Collins, at Knotts Berry Farm where there stands a replica of Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. Gene will entertain and guide us through this journey back to the mid-1700's as we spend time with Ben Franklin. Friend, Mark Barbour, will open the doors of the International Printing Museum where we will see Ben Franklin's working colonial printing shop as well as the museum's collection of antique printing machines and artifacts covering 500 years of history.

Franklin presenters will include Life Friend, Robert Middlekauff, Ph.D., author of *Benjamin Franklin and his Enemies*, and the Preston Hotchkis Professor of American History at the University of California, Berkeley. Nian-Sheng Hwang, Ph.D., author of *Franklin's Father Josiah: Life of a Colonial Boston Tallow Chandler, 1657-1745*, and who teaches history at the California State University Channel Islands, will present "It all began with one sentence: a historian's search for Franklin's father Josiah." Life Friend, Pamela Hartsock, Ph.D., will present facets of her dissertation, an historical and cultural study of printed and electronic American, international, and children's editions of Franklin's narrative. And, our California Friend, Stuart Green, M.D., who recently presented at our Franklin Philadelphia tour, will lecture in California as well. Look for full details and brochure within the next few weeks.



## Calendar of Events

### November 18, 2002.

Benjamin Electricity Party, 7:00-9:00 p.m. at The Bakken co-sponsored by The Minnesota Humanities Commission & Twin Cities Public Television. Free admission, but space is limited. Contact 651.772.4257.

### November 19-20, 2002

PBS will air its new series, *Benjamin Franklin*. The series depicts Franklin's life from his early days in Boston through his days of printing and civic responsibility in Philadelphia and ultimately his contributions and responsibilities as a Founding Father, scientist and American diplomat.

### December 30, 2002

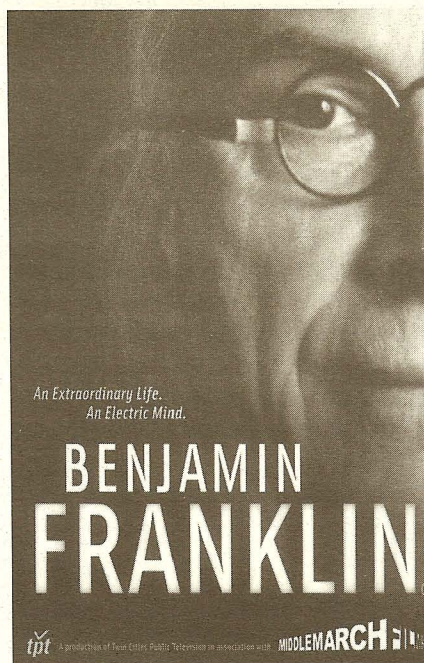
"A Philosophical Appreciation of Benjamin Franklin," lecture by Professor James Campbell, 10am-noon at the American Philosophical Society Library. This presentation is designed to appeal to and bring together academic philosophers who will be attending the American Philosophical Association meeting and the general public. By exploring Franklin's life and writings about topics such as science, religion and political life, Dr. Campbell will show how they demonstrate Dr. Franklin's commitment to improving the social life of the community through the discovery and dissemination of the types of wisdom philosophers have always pursued. Contact Roy Goodman, 215.440.3408 for further information.

### January 17, 2003.

Benjamin Franklin, Founder Celebration! Philadelphia. 2003 marks the 250th anniversary of Franklin's appointment as Deputy Postmaster General of North America. This year's event will focus on the interchange of information in the colonies and today. Friend James Srodes will be a guest speaker at the morning seminar, which will be followed by a procession to Franklin's grave and luncheon.

### February 18-22, 2003.

Friends of Franklin Excursion to California. For more information, contact Kathy DeLuca at 856.979.1613.



## SPECIAL BULLETIN!

Edmund Morgan will appear on CBS' Sunday Morning on November 17, 2002, to discuss his new biography of Franklin. He also appeared on the October 22nd episode of the Charlie Rose Show. Check local listings for airtime & possible rebroadcasts.



## Special Thanks to Our Life Members!

William D. Anderson, Jr.  
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Ehsan Zayan  
London, UK

## Welcome and Thanks to New Members!

### Sustaining Friend:

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Springfield, PA

Walter Isaacson  
Bronxville, NY

Winston Newell  
New Orleans, LA

### Friends:

Conover Hunt  
Philadelphia, PA

Mary, Countess of Bessborough  
Philadelphia, PA

Thomas J. Pruno  
Marlton, NJ

Elizabeth E. Whitehead  
New York, NY



The Friends of Franklin Organization is seeking speakers on Franklin and various aspects of his life. If you are interested in sharing your research with other members of the Friends please contact Kathy DeLuca at 856.979.1613

Visit the  
Friends of Franklin website:  
[www.benfranklin2006.org](http://www.benfranklin2006.org)



## Join Friends of Franklin!

Would you like to become an official member of the Friends of Franklin organization? Do you have a friend or relative who might wish to join, or who would appreciate a gift membership? All individuals, scholars, students, collectors, and Franklinophiles, as well as institutions, are invited to become members of the Friends of Franklin at the following membership rates:

Life Members	\$1,000	Sustaining Friend	\$100
Institutional Members	\$1,000	Franklin Friend	\$50
Supporting Friend	\$ 250	Student Members (full time only; photocopy id)	\$20

### YES, I'd like to join the Friends of Franklin!

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Method of payment: Personal check \_\_\_\_\_ or Money order \_\_\_\_\_ (Made payable to Friends of Franklin, Inc.)

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send to: Friends of Franklin, Inc., PO Box 40048, Philadelphia, PA 19106

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