

Franklin Gazette

Volume 18, Number 1, Spring 2008

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Visit: www.friendsoffranklin.org

"Want of Care does us more Damage than Want of Knowledge." Poor Richard, July 1746.

President's Message

By Roy E. Goodman

Princeton's Morven Museum & Garden, hosted the Friends for a delightful March 9th, Sunday afternoon tour of the site and my exhibit, **Ben Again!** Morven is a National Historic Landmark operated in cooperation with the New Jersey Department of State.

For 250 years, the residents of Morven have provided a legacy of leadership in public service, industry, and cultural pursuits. It was built in the 1750s by Richard Stockton on land granted to his grandfather by William Penn.

Stockton served on the Royal Governor's Council and Supreme Court of New Jersey. Increasingly skeptical of British policies, in 1776 he was appointed one of five delegates to the Continental Congress where he signed the Declaration of Independence. Stockton tied William Livingston in the vote for New Jersey's first state governor and graciously stepped aside for Livingston. During the British campaign in New Jersey, Morven was ransacked and Richard Stockton was captured and imprisoned. After his release he took no further part in the struggle. His wife Annis Boudinot Stockton, a well-read woman, and accomplished poetess, wrote a moving tribute on learning of Franklin's passing in 1790. Friend Eleanor Gesensway's piece in the Spring, 2007 issue of the **Gazette** reveals much about the many links between the Franklins, Stocktons, Rushs and Boudinots.

A portion of my collection of Franklin memorabilia, curated by Sherry Bufano and enhanced by a selection of her **Franklin Maxims**, created for the Franklin 300th celebration, were displayed in 5 rooms of Morven. The

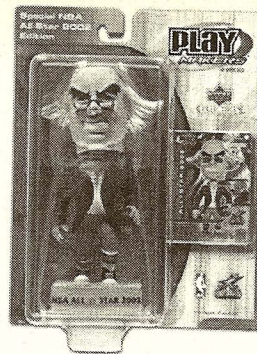
ephemeral nature of my Frankliniana is meant to be humorous, somewhat irreverent, quirky, eclectic and above all appeal to young and old alike. This pop culture amalgamation of advertising materials, bobble head dolls, children's books, and even the numerous library catalog drawers with Franklin entries, recently discarded by the American Philosophical Society, in favor of our online resource, surely amused the exhibit visitors. In addition, a 4 minute video, **Ben Franklin: An American Brand**, incorporated music, video, and commentary on Franklin, America's most accessible Founding Father.

Ben Again! is my take on collecting ephemera and reflecting on the part it plays in understanding American culture. Richard McKinstry, Librarian, Winterthur Museum, offers thoughtful suggestions on "Why Ephemera Matters" along with a bibliography and online resources, that teachers and students can use in examining the topic.

From April 18 through July 20, 2008, the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, Loretto, PA (www.sama-art.org) will host **Cents & Sensibility: Benjamin Franklin & Popular Culture**, an expanded exhibition of my collection, along with unique items formerly owned by the late Benjamin Franklin Kahn. A Google book search for "Cents & Sensibility" provides the digitized images of the two Lancaster, PA, Franklin exhibits Sherry Bufano &

I curated for the Franklin 300th.

Bringing Franklin to new audiences is a pleasant task I eagerly pursue. As **Poor Richard** remarks, "Paintings and fightings are best seen at a distance." Yes, Ben, I am taking you on the road, and hopefully making new Friends in the process.



Modern ephemera from the exhibit "Cents & Sensibility: Benjamin Franklin & Popular Culture," Franklin & Marshall College, 2006: A pin from the Hard Rock Cafe in Philadelphia, and a bobblehead commemorating the 2002 NBA All-Star Game held in the same city.

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Dear Doctor Franklin Benefits Friends

Friends of Franklin, Inc. has just embarked on a new venture, one that involves traveling through somewhat uncharted waters while offering a clear vision of our ultimate objective. We have, for the first time, sponsored the publication of a book about Benjamin Franklin. We've joined our partner, Diane Publishing Company, to develop a product we hope will enable Friends of Franklin to further its mission of disseminating knowledge about our illustrious Founding Father. The project evolved after the Board of Directors met at Doug Hall's brain-storming retreat in Cincinnati a couple of years ago. A question arose: How can we offer something of value to members of Friends of Franklin beyond an annual trip to places visited by the great philosopher? (Our website offerings evolved from these discussions.)

At that meeting, Board member Stuart Green mentioned that he was writing a book about Franklin's interest in science and medicine that might, somehow, further the objectives established at the retreat. Subsequently, Stuart donated the book's copyright to Friends of Franklin and arranged Foundation support for initial publishing costs. The agreement specifies that all of the proceeds from *Dear Doctor Franklin: Emails to a Founder Father about Science, Medicine and Technology* go to charity, the bulk of it coming to our organization. He also asked that a copy be sent to all members of Friends of Franklin upon paying their annual dues for 2008. Life members will automatically receive a copy, as will any new member joining our group (a \$24.95 value).

Stuart's book is a bit unusual because it's in the form of emails to Franklin, updating him on developments in those sciences that held his interest. Before Franklin died, he wrote that flies who drown in wine could be revived by putting them out in the sun. He

proclaimed: "I should prefer to any ordinary death the being immersed in a cask of Madeira wine...to be then recalled to life by the solar warmth of my dear country!"

Dear Doctor Franklin assumes that the great patriot, right before he "died," was immersed by his doctor in a barrel of Madeira wine and buried somewhere in Philadelphia. (In this scenario, the corpse in his Arch Street grave belongs to a nameless pauper who expired around the same time as Franklin's so-called death.)

Stuart wrote the emails on the assumption that Franklin would soon be found and need an update on how his conjectures, inventions and ideas have turned out two hundred years after he proposed them. In the book, Stuart also assumed that Franklin would spend his first few weeks after disencaskment at the Pennsylvania Hospital where he would have time to read the messages. (At the end of *Dear Doctor Franklin*, Stuart reluctantly admits that his conjecture about the Founding Father's faked demise is "neither sustained nor refuted"; therefore, no words are put in his mouth.)

The "official" publication date for *Dear Doctor Franklin* will be Fourth of July, 2008, although the book is already listed on Amazon.com.

Stuart wrote *Dear Doctor Franklin* to expose readers to the astounding breadth and depth of Benjamin Franklin's interest in science and medicine. Today, Franklin is regarded as the father of charged particle physics, a founder of weather science, a pioneering oceanographer, and an encourager of early "pneumatic" chemists (who broke from alchemy to create modern chemistry).

Few today realize that Franklin also offered a Theory of the Earth resembling

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Caitlin Fitz wrote the article on Franklin and Brazil in the Winter 2007 of the *Gazette*. We neglected to include her institutional affiliation. Ms. Fitz is a doctoral candidate at Yale University and we were delighted she submitted this to us for publication.

Franklin's 302nd Birthday Celebration

More than 150 Franklinophiles gathered in Philadelphia on January 17, 2008, to celebrate Benjamin Franklin's 302nd birthday, an event hosted by Celebration! of Benjamin Franklin, Founder. Each year the group focuses upon a facet of Franklin's life. This year's theme was Franklin's Legacy: Women in Science, in commemoration of the 35th anniversary of Title IX.

Dr. Ruth Patrick, one of the world's leading limnologists and ecologists, and Dr. Virginia Lee, an internationally recognized authority on neurodegenerative diseases were this year's honorees and recipients of the Franklin Founder award. Events included a morning symposium at which Dr. Lee spoke on her recent research as well as Dr. Susan Branson, who lectured on "American Women and Enlightenment Science." A procession from the American Philosophical Society Library to Franklin's grave at the Christ Church burial ground followed where Celebration chairman, Donald U. Smith recalled the far reaching impact of Franklin's interest in science.

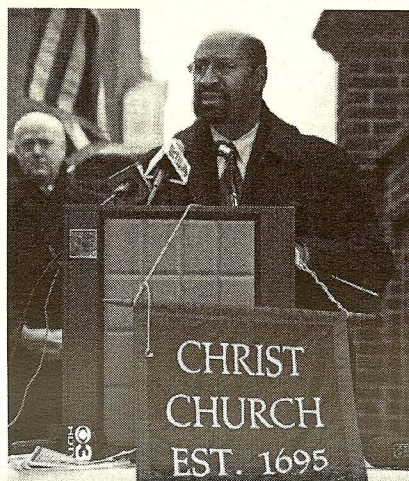
...We are gathered to celebrate the 302nd birthday of Dr. Franklin, and this year we recognize yet another aspect of his genius – fostering curiosity and achievement by women. Over the last few years we have celebrated other sides of his genius – Building the City, Ethical Thoughts and Actions, Creation of the Postal System,

and Inventing the Political Cartoon among others.

Our theme in 2008 is "Franklin's Legacy: Women in Science". Though such terms as Limnology and Ameloid had not yet been coined, Dr. Franklin would have grasped their significance, and would have been excited by the research being done today. I believe he would have understood us better

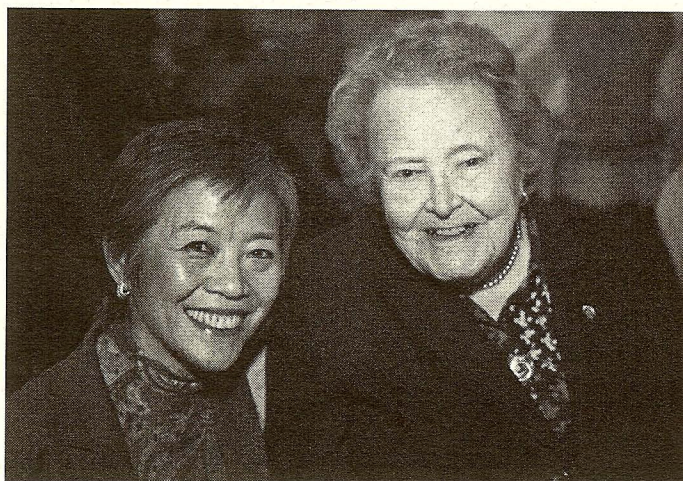
than he expected. And so we feel we understand him – this great American. We are honored to pay our respects.

Luncheon at the Down Town Club followed where the Franklin Bowls were awarded to Dr. Patrick and Dr. Lee. For more photos of this event visit the website: www.ushistory.org/Celebration.



Above, Mayor Michael Nutter speaking at Christ Church Burial Ground, and color guard in procession. Photos by Doug Heller.

Bottom left, Dr. Virginia Lee (left) with Dr. Ruth Patrick, and Franklin grave with pennies. Photos by Stuart Watson.



Franklin, Lincoln and The Abolition of Slavery

Part I

By Stuart A. Green, M.D., University of California, Irvine

Benjamin Franklin fired the first shot of America's Civil War and Abraham Lincoln absorbed the last. The gunfire was, of course, about slavery. We find it impossible today to accept the institution of slavery or even understand how one group of humans could ever place another in such a degrading status. Yet, through the course of history, slavery has been the rule rather than the exception. In ancient Rome, for example, one third of the population was enslaved; a similar situation existed in Athens or Thebes centuries earlier. Most slaves were acquired through military capture. Rather than be slaughtered, the conquered chose salvation through servitude at the mercy of the victorious. Slaves were the living dead, without rights enjoyed by citizens, valued only for their labor.

There usually existed a religious justification for slavery as well. The belief that one's birth station is predestined by heavenly powers served the interests of sovereigns and slave-owners alike. Monarchs in all eras, including our own, claim supernatural ordination: "*Dieu et mon droit*" (God and my right) was the motto of French kings. Japanese emperors asserted their personal divinity. Popes crowned Europe's rulers. Indeed, the convenient mutual support arrangement between church and state, high priest and king, caliph and sultan, shaman and chief, has been a fact of life since the beginning of human existence. Under such circumstances, the nobility, the middling sorts, and the lowly born all understood their place in the divinely ordained structure of society.

In an absolute monarchy where a king can, on a whim, order "off with his head," everyone is a slave. A Russian czar, for instance, owned everything and every person in his realm. Power over life and death implies such ownership. In our own time, we need

not seek permission to "put to sleep" a dog or cat that keeps wetting the carpet, because animals are property, without an independent right to life. And so it was with American slaves. In pre-Civil War Virginia, a master who beat his slave to death could not be charged with murder, or even manslaughter, because the law assumed the death was accidental. After all, slaves were property and who would purposefully destroy their own property?

Involuntary servitude still exists today. Outright slavery—master and chattel—occurs in the deserts of Somalia and other places in Africa. Indentured servants, often children sold by their parents, weave rugs and gather firewood in India and Pakistan. Pre-teen sex slaves earn fortunes for their Thai owners as prostitutes. Altogether, 55 million people now live in some form of modern slavery, unable to control their own labor or to come and go as they please.

Benjamin Franklin's father indentured him, for a predetermined period of time, to his brother James—a form of servitude from which there was no legal escape. Many Europeans arrived in colonial America as indentured servants, trading seven years' labor for a prepaid passage across the Atlantic. African slaves, of course, received nothing in exchange for their services, which lasted a lifetime—unless liberated by their owners. Once free, however, an industrious former slave could purchase land on credit, work it successfully and eventually buy his own slaves to help in his fields. In fact, some black slave owners even had white (usually Irish) indentured servants, although there were no white lifelong slaves in British North America.

Slavery was far more common in colonial North America than most people realize. Tens of thousands of slaves lived in Pennsylvania, New

York, New Jersey and other northern colonies. As a young businessman, Franklin owned a couple of slaves for a time. Moreover, his *Pennsylvania Gazette* frequently advertised slaves for sale. The justification for slavery in North America (and throughout Europe for nearly two millennia) revolved around the status of Africans as either "beasts" or infidels—heathens who didn't know Christian teachings and hadn't been baptized. This stance led to heated debates about what happened when missionaries Christianized Africans, either before they were captured in their homeland or after they were already enslaved. Each denomination dealt with the issue in its own way, often influenced by the economic needs of its congregants. In principle, however, many sects prohibited importing blacks who were already Christians before capture in Africa.

Gradually the notion took hold among certain sects, especially those in northern colonies, that blacks who converted to Christianity should be freed from bondage. Quakers were among the first to insist on this principle, excommunicating Meeting House members who held Christianized slaves. This, in turn, fueled missionary zeal among those who saw slavery as ungodly. They set up schools to teach blacks the reading skills needed to study and absorb the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In 1758, a School for Negroes was opened in Philadelphia. Within two years, missionaries in several others colonies offered similar instruction. Many slave owners disparaged such schools, claiming that Africans were incapable of learning to read or write. Franklin, however, came to the opposite conclusion. In 1763 he visited one

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Benjamin Franklin and the Great Wall of China

By Dave Wang, St. John's University

The second kind of security—A security of our planters from the inroads of savages, and the murders committed by them—will not be obtained by such forts, unless they were connected by a wall like that of China, from one end of our settlements to the other.

—Benjamin Franklin, *The Interests of Great Britain Considered* . . . (1760)

A feeling of insecurity dominated the colonists' lives in North America from the mid-eighteenth century to the founding of the United States. The conflicts between the Indians and colonists and the fear of becoming a pawn of British or French designs for international power contributed to this

feeling. Some leading colonists, among them Benjamin Franklin, worked hard to keep the colonies safe. In this critical time, Franklin introduced the notion of a defensive wall, similar to the Great Wall of China, into the public debate. He recommended the strategy of building an American Great Wall as the most efficient way to protect the thirteen colonies.

Like a giant dragon, the Great Wall of China stands in the north of China. As the world's largest structure, it stretches over approximately 6,400 km (4,000 miles). It has always been regarded as the symbol of ancient Chinese civilization. According to a report, over 81% of foreign tourists elected to visit the Great Wall of China over all other historical destinations.

During the period from the fifth century BC to 221 BC, called the Spring and Autumn Warring Periods by historians of China, various kingdoms built fortifications at strategic points to protect their territories. In 221 B.C., Emperor Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor to unify China, had sections of earlier fortifications extended to form the Great Wall—a coordinated defensive system against raids by Hunic, Mongol, Turkic and other nomadic tribes from the north. Construction continued for more than a thousand years, up to the Ming dynasty (1368–1644 AD), by which time the Great Wall had become the world's

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In His Own Words: *Benjamin Franklin, Builder of Fortifications*

Last fall a Franklin letter was offered for sale, and Friend Charles Hargis notified the editorial offices of *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* that it was being sold. In volume 6 of the Yale edition this letter, written on Jan. 26, 1756 by Franklin to his friend Samuel Rhoads, had originally been transcribed from an 1867 issue of *The Historical Magazine*, but now the autograph letter signed has come to light.* A letter in Franklin's hand is always a cause for celebration, even if the text is already known. This letter, from Franklin's vigorous middle age, when he took charge of organizing the fortifications of the Pennsylvania frontier in Northampton County against Indian attacks, documents a different facet of his abilities than is usually presented. At first Franklin was one of three commissioners in charge of organizing defenses, dispensing arms and getting military companies to begin constructing blockhouses, and after January 5,

1756 he was put solely in charge of directing the defense of the Northampton frontier, at the head of 500 troops. Samuel Rhoads, to whom this letter was addressed, was a Philadelphia carpenter and builder. "The Wrights," mentioned in the postscript, were Franklin's Quaker friends John, James, and Susanna, who lived in present day Columbia, Pennsylvania (Lancaster County).

Fort Allen, Jan. 26. 1756.

Dear Friend

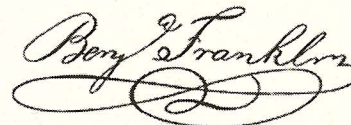
I am extremely oblig'd by your kind Concern express'd for my Safety & Welfare. We march'd hither with the greatest Caution, thro' some passes, however, in the Mountains, that were very dangerous, if the Enemy had oppos'd & we had been careless. Hitherto God has bless'd & preserv'd us. We have built one pretty strong Fort, & by the End of next Week, or in ten Days, hope to finish two more,

one on each side of this, & at 15 Miles Distance [Forts Allen, Norris, and Franklin]. These I suppose will compleat the projected Line from the Delaware to Susquehanah.— I then purpose, God willing, to return homewards and enjoy the Pleasure I promise myself, of finding my Friends well. Till then, adieu; Yours affectionately
B Franklin

Mr Rhoads.

My love to all the Wrights.

*One page of the letter is reproduced in the Bauman Rare Books' *American Experience: 1589-1990*, item #22.



Great Wall of China

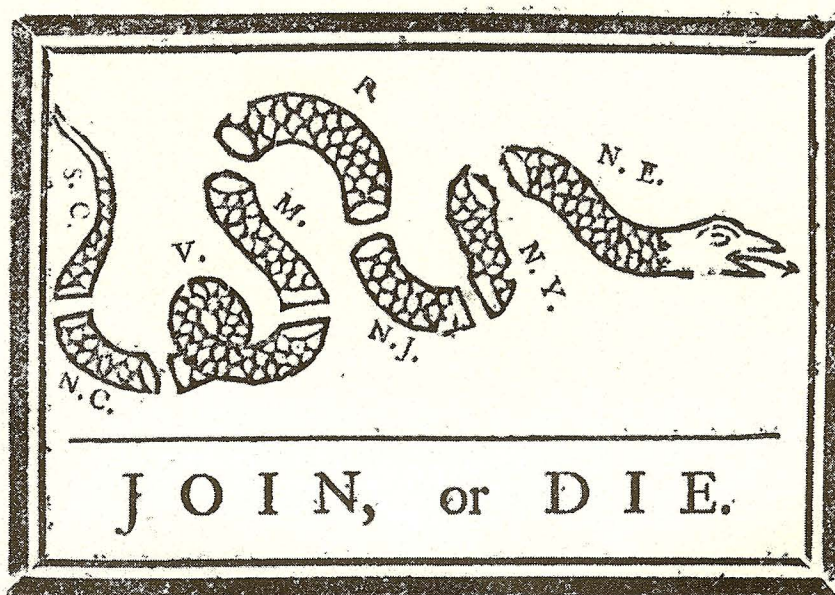
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largest military structure. The Great Wall played an important role in the evolution of Chinese civilization. Like a giant belt, the wall tied China together and kept this enormous country unified from ancient, medieval times to the modern era. The importance of unification has been a continuing theme since the construction of the Great Wall.

The eighteenth century saw the rapid growth of the British colonies in North America. In 1700, the Caucasian population in the English colonies reached 250,000. Twenty years later, the number was almost doubled. However, this period was full of various hardships and conflicts. In 1754, the French and Indian War started in the Ohio River Valley. The colonists constructed some fortifications to protect their property. In May, George Washington led some colonists in the construction of Fort Necessity in the Ohio territory after victory over the French. Two months later, after being attacked by numerically superior French forces, Washington surrendered the fort and retreated. In July, 1758, another devastating reverse occurred for the colonists, this time at Lake George, in northeastern New York. At that battle, nearly two thousand men were lost in a fight against French forces at Fort Ticonderoga.

Protection against Indian raids and the Native Americans' French allies became a major concern of the colonies. Some colonists saw a need to create a political union. They sent delegates to Albany, New York, to discuss a plan of union; Benjamin Franklin was among the representatives at that meeting and in 1754 he proposed such a plan. However, this plan met with opposition in the colonial assemblies. The fear of burdensome taxation "caused them to reject the plan of union." The plan was never "sent to England for approval." Frustrated, Franklin lamented, "Everybody cries, a union is absolutely necessary, but when they come to the manner and form of union, their weak noddles were perfectly distracted."

Without a strong and united



One of America's first political cartoons, "JOIN, or DIE," was first published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on May 9, 1754.

Reproduced by courtesy of the Library of Congress.

defense, isolated and independent colonists depended on forts to safeguard their lives and livelihoods. Some in the English Parliament thought that the colonies would be "sufficiently secure", if they would "raise English forts". Benjamin Franklin asserted that the security of the colonists "will not be obtained by such forts" unless they should be connected into "a wall like that of China, from one end of our settlements to the other" Franklin examined the situation between the colonists and the Indians. Here is his analysis:

They [the Indians] go to war, as they call it, in small parties, from fifty men down to five. Their hunting life has made them acquainted with the whole country, and scarce any part of it is impracticable to such a party. They can travel thro' the woods even by night, and know how to conceal their tracks. They pass easily between your forts undiscover'd; and privately approach the settlements of your frontier inhabitants. They need no convoys of provisions to follow them; for whether they are shifting from place to place in the woods, or lying in wait for an opportunity to strike a blow, every thicket and every stream furnishes so small a number with sufficient subsistence. When they have surpriz'd separately, and murder'd and scalp'd a dozen families, they are gone with

inconceivable expedition thro' unknown ways, and 'tis very rare that pursuers have any chance of coming up with them. *In short, long experience has taught our planters, that they cannot rely upon forts as a security against Indians* [author's emphasis].

In describing the dangers faced by the colonists, Franklin sought, through his vivid prose, to alert the British public to the seriousness of a situation that no one back in Britain had experienced. Franklin, in advancing the idea of an American Great Wall demonstrated his knowledge of China. The strategies ascribed by Franklin to the Indians were exactly the same as those used by nomadic intruders in their plundering of Chinese settlers. The patterns of warfare that the colonists confronted in North America were similar to the situation the Chinese faced before the completion of the Great Wall. In fact, Franklin knew not only of the wall's history, function, and influence on Chinese history, but also the environment surrounding the Great Wall.

Franklin's recommendation shows that he used his understanding of Chinese civilization in developing answers to the problems of the thirteen colonies. It also reveals Franklin's great political wisdom. Regardless of whether or not Franklin's recommendation was

adopted, the colonies would benefit from it. If his recommendation was adopted, the security of the colonies would be strengthened. Conversely, if his suggestion was ignored, Parliament would be forced to confront the seriousness of the colonists' plight and adopt an aggressive policy to protect British subjects in North America. Franklin had worked hard to mobilize the fight against the French in Canada. Believing that "now all the kinds of security we have mention'd are obtain'd by subduing and retaining Canada," Franklin claimed further that "the foundations of the future grandeur and stability of the British empire lies in America."

Franklin's suggestion of the building of a Great Wall of America was more than a simple military solution to maintain the physical safety of the colonies. Franklin's motivation was also to move toward a union of the colonies. His snake cartoon, widely circulated in the colonies, expressed his belief in the importance of that union. Franklin hoped that a Great Wall in North America, like the Chinese one, could play the role of a

unifier that tied the colonies together. As his caption starkly stated, union was a matter of life or death to them: "Join or Die".

Chevalier de Kermorvan, a French officer fighting on the American side during the Revolution, criticized the effectiveness of the Great Wall of China in a letter to Franklin. Kermorvan told Franklin that it was useless, for the Great Wall of China "did not preserve this empire from being conquered by the Tartars [qui n'a pas préservé cet empire d'estre conquis par les tartares]." Franklin's response has not been found, but perhaps he knew, as historians of China do, that the real reason that the Manchu (Tartar) people entered China proper unopposed was not because the Great Wall was useless, but because there was an understanding between the Manchus and the Han Chinese, the defenders of the wall. Kermorvan, who had been placed in charge of constructing fortifications early in the war, was notorious for his criticism of the strategies adopted by the Americans, and he did not see out the war in American service as did many of his countrymen.

Franklin did not raise the notion of a Great Wall during the Albany conference, but in his pamphlet, *The Interests of Great Britain Considered*, published several years later. He understood clearly that the tax burden that would be the outcome of construction of such a wall would not be acceptable to the colonies. On the other hand, if the Parliament approved the plan, the colonies would not directly assume the burden of the expenditure, and the union would grow along with the wall.

As we know, the construction of such a wall was not voted by Parliament. Had Franklin's recommendation been adopted, the colonies might not have been pushed into open rebellion and Franklin might not have become a charismatic leader of the independence movement. However, Franklin's idea demonstrates his willingness to use positive lessons drawn from Chinese civilization to build a unified and strong society in North America.

The author acknowledges with thanks Pamela Hartsock's suggestions for this paper.



Franklin, Lincoln

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such school supported by an offshoot of the *British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*. He wrote about the experience to a British friend, saying that he had "visited the Negro School...and had the Children thoroughly examin'd." Franklin reported, "They appear'd all to have made considerable Progress in Reading for the Time they had respectively been in the School, and most of them answer'd readily and well the Questions of the Catechism; they behav'd very orderly, show'd a proper Respect and ready Obedience to the Mistress, and seem'd very attentive..." Franklin concluded, "from what I then saw, [I] have conceiv'd a higher Opinion of the natural Capacities of the black Race, than I had ever before entertained. Their Apprehension

seems as quick, their Memory as strong, and their Docility in every Respect equal to that of white Children." Franklin seemed uncomfortable with his earlier notions about the learning capacity of Blacks. He wrote, "You will wonder perhaps that I should ever doubt it, and I will not undertake to justify all my Prejudices, nor to account for them." His ideas about slavery gradually evolved thereafter, especially while spending time in Europe with leading intellectuals and clergymen, the Quakers in particular. In the process, Franklin transformed himself from a slave owner into his new nation's most prominent abolitionist. In like manner, Pennsylvania and other northern states gradually eliminated slave ownership within their borders whereas the southern states did not.

During the 1787 Constitutional Convention, the issue of slavery almost sank the ship of state before it ever sailed. Because the delegates knew

that a unified central government was essential for progress and security, they realized that they could not come to any conclusion about the legality of slavery in North America without creating an irreparable schism between northern and southern states. For this reason, the delegates chose to "table" any possible anti-slavery legislation for 20 years. Section 9, Clause 1 of the Constitution reads, "The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight..." Thus, by setting aside the matter of slavery, convention delegates joined to form a union.

Editor's Note: The next installment of Stuart Green's article, "Franklin, Lincoln and The Abolition of Slavery," will appear in the Summer 2008 issue of the Gazette.

Franklin Abroad

A Successful Hoax

In the fall of 1782 American merchant Elkanah Watson, Jr. left Paris for a visit to England. He saw Franklin in Paris before departing, and feared that it might be their last meeting. Franklin was in the grip of a terrible illness, one Franklin himself believed he might not survive. The young man had grown fond of his older friend, and had had the opportunity of knowing him well during his sojourn in France; he appreciated his older friend's accomplishments, and his stature as a great scientist and as America's diplomatic representative, but he also delighted in Franklin's humorous side.

Upon Watson's return to Paris in December, he paid a call on Franklin, and brought him a recent London newspaper that "very much amused" the American minister. The paper announced the death of Benjamin Franklin! The two men shared the joke—the younger doubtless with some relief—and the older, after he finished chuckling, told Watson that it was the third time during his French mission that the London papers had "buried him alive".

Perhaps it was this conversation that sparked an idea in Watson's head. After all, if you could be declared dead in one place when you were not, why couldn't you turn up—apparently alive—somewhere where you were not? And where better to appear than in the city where the press had notified the public of your death? In this spirit, Watson created a life-size figure of Benjamin Franklin, using one of Patience Wright's sculptures for the head. In December, 1782, he asked William Temple Franklin to send him one of the American minister's old suits and Temple obliged. The outfit was intended to enhance the deception Watson had already successfully practiced on a small scale during his stay in London, making Doctor Franklin seem to be in London when he was actually in Paris. He placed Wright's sculpture, with a nightcap on its head, on a figure dressed in a morning gown and slippers. This mannequin fooled a stream of visitors, including dramatist

Frederick Reynolds, who had once seen Franklin face to face, and his father, who had known Franklin during his years as colonial agent in London. In the port city of Nantes Watson refined his hoax, setting the faux Franklin in the corner of a large room seated behind a table on which was set an open atlas and some mathematical instruments. He disguised the missing hands by throwing a handkerchief over the cuffs, and rigged the figure to move by attaching it to wires manipulated by a friend hiding in a nearby closet. The ladies and gentlemen of Nantes, including the local mayor, were invited to visit "Franklin" and pay their respects when the scene was illuminated only by candlelight.

In late March, 1783, Watson took his leave of France and relocated to London, where he established a branch of his mercantile house. By late April Watson had leased three warehouses in Billiter Square, Aldgate. There, his "Franklin" was augmented by a companion figure, an Elkanah Watson, its waxen head also the work of Patience Wright. He arranged the pair facing each other in a seated position, as if in conversation, and they were so convincing that people entering the room were moved to greet them. He boldly tested his hoax in another way, this time on the unsuspecting inhabitants of a neighborhood where Franklin had been a familiar figure before the war. Here's Watson's first person version of what happened next:

"I placed the figure in full dress, with the head leaning out of the window, apparently gazing up and down the square. He...was at once recognized. Observing a collection of people gathering at another window, looking at him, I ordered him down.

The morning papers announced the arrival of Doctor Franklin at an American merchant's in Beliter square, and I found it necessary to contradict the report. In the interval, three Boston gentlemen who were in the city, expressed a wish to pay their respects

to the Doctor. I desired them to call in the evening, and bring their letters of introduction, which they had informed me they bore, expecting to see him at Paris. I concerted measures with a friend, to carry the harmless deception to the utmost extent on this occasion. Before entering, I apprised them that he was deeply engaged in examining maps and papers, and begged they would not be disturbed at any apparent inattention. Thus prepared, I conducted them into a spacious room. Franklin was seated at the extremity, with his atlas, &c., & c., and my friend at the wires. I advanced in succession with each, half across the room, and introduced them by name. Franklin raised his head, bowed, and resumed his attention to the atlas. I then retired, and seated them at the further side of the room.

They spoke to me in whispers: "What a venerable figure," exclaims one. "Why don't he speak," says another. "He is doubtless in a reverie," I remarked, "and has forgotten the presence of his company; his great age must be his apology. Get your letters, and go up again with me to him." When near the table, I said, "Mr. B—, Sir, from Boston." The head raised up. "A letter," says B—, "from Doctor [Samuel] Cooper." I could go no further. The scene was too ludicrous. As B. held out the letter, I struck the figure smartly, exclaiming, "Why don't you receive the letter like a gentleman?" They were all petrified with astonishment, but B. never forgave me the joke."

Watson had even more ambitious plans for playing tricks on gullible Londoners. In a letter of April 19, 1783, he explained to Temple that he and Patience Wright had dreamed up a new twist on the hoax; they would build an automaton "Franklin" that would move through the means of clockwork machinery, and the figure would "grind out electricity" by turning the crank of

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FRANKLIN TIDBITS

Franklin on TV: HBO's miniseries on the life of John Adams airs March 16-April 27. Watch a preview and see some stills of the stars in costume: <http://www.hbo.com/films/johnadams>. As you might expect, Franklin will play a significant role. But is John Adams rolling over in his grave over the subtitle? The phrase in question is "Join or Die," the title of Franklin's famous snake cartoon, which highlighted the commonality of interest of the thirteen colonies. Might Adams' ghost resent the show's writers borrowing a caption that is associated with his nemesis to characterize the life of this American patriot?

Franklin monument at risk? Recent stories in the press have revealed that Sir Edward Newenham's former country estate outside of Dublin, Ireland, has been sold to property developers. Newenham was an admirer of Franklin's, and he and his family visited the great man in France in 1782. His house, Belcamp, still stands. In recent years it was used as a secondary school that was run by a religious order, but that is now closed for good. On Sept. 16, 1783, Newenham wrote to his friend of his plans to erect a lasting memorial to their friendship: "My Villa

will be honoured with a pillar, to remind Posterity of Thy transcendent Virtues—".

Benjamin Franklin House Outreach: The house that Franklin occupied on Craven Street in London is now a busy museum. To share the Franklin experience, Benjamin Franklin House has mounted videos on the popular YouTube internet site, and there is a Benjamin Franklin page on the well known social networking site, facebook.com.

READING FRANKLIN

Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography*. The Kindle (Amazon.com's new electronic book reader) edition of what the publisher calls "the first book to belong permanently to literature." This edition can be wirelessly downloaded from Amazon.

Eric Burns, *Virtue, Valor & Vanity: the Founding Fathers and the Pursuit of Fame* (Arcade Publishing, 2007).

James C. Bouffard, *The Entrepreneurial Ben Franklin* (Lynn Paulo Foundation, 2007).

Steve Coffman, Zack Coffman, and Scott Di Lalla, *Founders v. Bush: a*

Comparison in Quotations of the Policies and Politics of the Founding Fathers and George W. Bush (One World Studios, 2007).

William Pepper, *The Medical Side of Benjamin Franklin* (Kessinger Publishing, 2007).

Joan Reid, "Franklin and Slavery" *Craven Street Gazette*, issue 13 (2007/2008). http://benjaminfranklinhouse.org/site/sections/craven_st_gaz.htm

"The Summer of Acid Rain; 18th-Century Climate Change," *The Economist*, Dec. 22, 2007 issue. Franklin was among those who observed the strange weather of 1783-1784 and speculated—accurately—on its cause. A must read for anyone interested in Franklin's scientific contributions.

Forthcoming

Finn Pollard, *The Literary Quest for an American National Character* (Routledge, May 15, 2008).

For the derivation of Benjamin Franklin's name click on Juan Cole's Feb. 27 post, entitled "Barack Hussein Obama, Omar Bradley, Benjamin Franklin and Other Semantically Named American Heroes": <http://www.juancole.com/2008/02/barack-hussein-obama-omar-bradley.html>

Doctor Franklin

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modern plate tectonics; that he proposed electroshock therapy for "melancholia" two century before Ugo Cerletti; and that he was the first to suggest that atmospheric ash from volcanic eruptions might cause weather changes. Franklin, through an ingenious analysis of simultaneous reports from multiple sources, was the first to conclude that storms travel from southwest to northeast across North America.

Benjamin Franklin was an early supporter of the notion that microscopic beings could cause contagious diseases. He advocated

exercise and fresh air at a time when many people stayed shut up indoors when not working. Franklin insightfully suggested that digestion of food might involve processes akin to combustion of flammable substances.

Franklin played a role in the early development of steam engines, recognized the military potential of aircraft (specifically balloons), and commented on the future of space travel. Additionally, Stuart traces the origins of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection through Robert Malthus' *Essay on Population*, which in turn was influenced by a 1751 Franklin publication about population growth and competition for resources.

Most significantly, Benjamin Franklin, whose electricity experiments

led him to invent the lightning rod, became the first true Baconian scientist—one who employs scientific research for mankind's benefit. Indeed, taming the lightning bolt altered man's relationship with both the natural and the supernatural worlds.

We encourage members of Friends of Franklin to send their thoughts on *Dear Doctor Franklin* to us, both in-depth analysis and pithy summaries that might be used for marketing the book. (Email the comments directly to our president, Roy Goodman, at rgoodman@amphilsoc.org as soon as possible.)

If this venture proves successful, we can expect others like it in the future.

Successful Hoax

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an electrical machine that Watson owned. No doubt this daring idea was inspired by the contemporary mania for automata—what we now know as robots. Eighteenth-century audiences crowded in to see such wonders as von Kempelen's chess-playing Turk (another hoax), Vaucanson's mechanical flute player, and Mical's talking heads.

No reports of this particular version of Watson's hoax have been found. Was Watson successful in executing his plan for an automated Franklin? Did Watson ever reveal his pranks to Franklin? What would Franklin have done if he had? Perhaps they would have shared a laugh, as they did over Franklin's reported death.

We have no accounts of Watson practicing his hoax on American shores. The wax head was broken after he returned to the United States, but Franklin's suit was donated by Watson to the Massachusetts Historical Society, and it is pictured in vol. 38 of *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, opposite p. 501.

For a complete recounting of the story of Watson's Franklin figure, see Charles Coleman Sellers' *Patience Wright: an American Artist and Spy in George III's London* (1976).

Featured Book from Diane Publishing

Benjamin Franklin in American Thought & Culture, 1790-1990, by Nian-Sheng Huang. American Philosophical Society, Memoir 211, 1994, 270 pp., paperback. List Price \$20.00, Member's Price \$15.00 + \$3.00 shipping = \$18.00.

An exploration of Benjamin Franklin's diverse legacies in American life from 1790, the year of his death, to 1990. This book also focuses on the intricate relations between the functions of images & perceptions in society on the one hand & the changing social & cultural conditions that have constantly affected the alterations of those images & perceptions on the other. Includes a Selected Bibliography. Illustrations.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 10- May 23, 2008. *Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World* exhibit at the Providence Public Library. Traveling exhibit for libraries based on the Tercentenary show and sponsored by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Speakers associated with this exhibit include:

April 20, 2008: Philip Dray. Meet the author of *Stealing God's Thunder. Benjamin Franklin, Lightning Rod and the Invention of America.*

April 20, 2008: Glass armonica performance by Cecilia Brauer, member of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra.

April 27, 2008: Ellen Cohn, Editor of the Franklin Papers speaks on "The Historian as Detective: Solving the Mysteries in Franklin's Papers."

May 4, 2008: Robert Allison, chair of the History Department at Suffolk University presents his lecture: "Benjamin Franklin:

How to Create a Better World."

May 12, 2008: Martha Elena Rojas, Assistant Professor of English, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, will speak on "Imprinting the New United States: Benjamin Franklin's Seals and Medals".

All are at the Providence Public Library. For detailed information visit: <http://www.provlib.org/happening/events/exhibit.html>

April 18-July 20, 2008: Friend Roy Goodman's traveling exhibit, *Cents & Sensibility: Benjamin Franklin & Popular Culture*, will be on display at the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, Loretto, PA. For more information visit: www.sama-art.org

January 16, 2009. Celebration! of Benjamin Franklin, Founder. Annual event commemorating Franklin's birthday with a seminar, procession to his grave at the Christ Church Burial Ground, and luncheon at the Down Town Club in Philadelphia. For more information contact Carol Smith, 856-429-8331 or see: www.ushistory.org/Celebration.

Ongoing:

Through August 10, 2008. Two exhibits: *French Founding Father: Lafayette's Return to Washington's America*, and *A Son and His Adoptive Father: The Marquis de Lafayette and George Washington*. The New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West, N.Y., N.Y.

Franklin Math Puzzlers

Compiled by Aziz S. Inan

Editor's Note: Here is the latest Franklin math puzzle presented by Aziz Inan (ainan@up.edu) and the solution to the problem posed in the winter issue of the *Gazette*.

Problem # 6. Benjamin Franklin and his grandfather. Ben lived during the eighteenth century. At the time he died at age x , if his grandfather were alive, their ages would have been the reverse of each other and added up to 121. His grandfather was x years old in 1735. If Ben's birth year is divisible by x , what is x ?

Solution to Problem # 5. What are the number of pages in the first edition of *Experiments and*

Observations on Electricity?

The first edition of Franklin's book entitled *Experiments and Observations on Electricity* was published in London in 1751. It has x numbered pages where x falls short of one hundred by the sum of its digits. What is the number x ?

Answer: 86.

Solution: Let AB represent the two-digit number x such that $x = 10A+B$. Then, $10A+B = 100-(A+B)$ or $11A+2B = 100$. Solving this equation yields $A = 8$ and $B = 6$, therefore, $x = 86$. Note that this book has five editions, published in the years 1751, 1754, 1760, 1769 and 1774 where the fifth edition has 514 numbered pages.

Be sure to visit the Friends of Franklin website: www.friendsoffranklin.org

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