

# Franklin Gazette

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*"If your head is wax, don't walk in the Sun." Poor Richard, July 1749.*

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## President's Message

By Roy E. Goodman

The names Meryl Streep and Benjamin Franklin are rarely uttered in the same sentence, but that was not the case on Friday April 25, 2008. I was privileged to be among the 1600 attendees at the Smithsonian's Baird Auditorium of the Natural History Museum, when Ms. Streep was awarded the Benjamin Franklin Laureate Prize for Creativity. FOF Laurie Kahn-Leavitt (Chair of the Junto, the Executive Committee of the Creativity Foundation [[www.creativity-found.org](http://www.creativity-found.org)], since the death of her father, FOF and founder of this organization, B. Franklin Kahn) presented the award. The important role of creativity was eloquently conveyed by Ms. Streep. Her acceptance speech on how creativity can be nurtured and cultivated, especially in the arts, was followed by audience questions.

Equally edifying was the acknowledgement of six Legacy Prize awardees, a gifted group of students from across the country, selected from the finalists of the Intel Science search and History Day competition. They hailed from the Longy School of Music, Cambridge, Mass., the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, D.C., Phillips Brooks House at Harvard, and the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

Saturday morning's round table discussion, a lively interchange, featuring the Legacy awardees, was led by Ms. Streep and the Junto members. The Legacy silver prize medals, presented following the discussion, are

similar in design to the historic Boston School medal, an award funded by Franklin's bequest.

As always, I took opportunities to highlight Franklin's interests to those gathered for the occasion. Issues of the **Franklin Gazette** were distributed, and copies of **Dear Doctor Franklin: E-mails to a Founding Father**

**about Science, Medicine and Technology**, by FOF Stuart Green were made available. The **Papers of Benjamin Franklin** and its digital edition were often mentioned, too.

I would like to acknowledge several other Friends of Franklin who are seminal forces in the Junto and Creativity Foundation's Executive Committee. Dudley Herschbach of Harvard University, a Nobel laureate in chemistry, has been a dedicated promoter of science education, both in conjunction with the Intel Science Search, as well as in his role with the Creativity Foundation. Jim Pruett, pianist, musicologist, educator, and retired Chief of the Music Division of the Library of Congress, noted that as rich as his professional career's rewards have been, "few can match those deriving from mentoring students towards a life of the mind and intellectual inquiry."

Laurie Kahn-Leavitt and Foundation Director, Lorely Crewe-Halici, shared with us that the Creativity Foundation and its programs are still evolving. I urge all to participate in the many splendid ways our Friends enrich diverse communities with programs and events, especially those that promote mentoring.



Wedgwood ceramic medallion of Franklin.  
Courtesy of the American  
Philosophical Society.



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# Poor Richard's Wealth: An Estimate

*By Professor Joshua L. Rosenbloom, The University of Kansas*

*Editor's note:* We wish to thank both Professor Rosenbloom, and Friend John Walburn for this contribution, which had its genesis in John Walburn's question about the value of Franklin's income in today's dollars. Gordon Wood, in his *Americanization of Benjamin Franklin*, estimated it at 2,000 pounds Sterling per year. Professor Rosenbloom has given permission to share his ideas with the readers of the *Gazette*. Here is how Professor Rosenbloom satisfied John Walburn's curiosity:

Dear Mr. Walburn,

I'm happy to update the calculations I did for you earlier. I would like to begin by referring all your interested readers to the website [measuringworth.com](http://measuringworth.com)\* which is the source of most of the data on which my calculations are based, and which provides an extensive discussion of how to compare values over time. In addition I also used data from *Historical Statistics of the United States*, millennial edition (Cambridge University Press), which is available both in print and on-line.

To gauge the value of Benjamin Franklin's income I first converted the figure of 2000 pounds sterling annual income, as estimated by Gordon Wood and others, to dollars at the prevailing rate of 4.44 dollars per pound. I then made two calculations. The first adjusts only for changes in prices (inflation) as measured by the consumer price index (CPI). From 1740 to 2007 the

CPI has increased by a factor of 39 (in other words an item priced at the equivalent of \$1 in 1740 would cost \$39 today). Making this adjustment alone implies that one would need about \$347,000 today to purchase goods equivalent to those that Franklin could have purchased in 1740.

The second approach that I used compares Franklin's income to that of the average person in 1740 as reflected by gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. I calculated that his income was approximately 214 times as large as the average per capita GDP in colonial America. Today per capita income is roughly \$45,000. An income 214 times as large as today's GDP per capita would be about \$9.8 million.

These two calculations reflect different ways of looking at the comparison you have requested. I want to emphasize that there is **no one correct answer**. In terms of purchasing power both answers are probably an overstatement in the sense that a consumer with \$347,000 today has access to many items—antibiotics, jet travel, computers, television, central heating—that could not be purchased at any price in Franklin's age. Nonetheless, the comparison relative to GDP per capita indicates that compared to the people of his time, Franklin was quite fabulously well-off.

\*<http://www.measuringworth.com/index.html>

## Featured Book from Diane Publishing

*Benjamin Franklin: Electrician: In Celebration of the Two Hundredth Year of the Nation He Helped Found*, by Bern Dibner, 1976, 48 pages, paperbound.

This volume was issued in 1976, on America's 200th birthday. The one person that was most discussed was Benjamin Franklin — printer, postmaster, ambassador and counselor. He is also among the Founders of the science of electricity. This volume shows how Franklin's contributions to its understanding

and subsequent mastery were, in both its theory and experimental demonstration, a task that compelled conviction and subsequent implementation. Although Franklin actively engaged in science for only 6 or 7 years, he was drawn to it throughout his whole life as an intellectual challenge. After he was 40 years old, he devoted a major interest to his chosen science — electricity — which resulted in his formulation of the fundamentals of electrical science. Illustrations. Original price \$20.00; Member's Price only \$15.00



# In His Own Words:

## *Silk Diplomacy*

Franklin's tender regard for his daughter, Sally, who married Richard Bache, and her devotion to her father are well known. But one bumpy episode in their relationship occurred while Franklin was in France during the Revolution. Sally, back in Philadelphia, wrote innocently to her father on September 14, 1779. French minister Gérard was returning to France, and he agreed to include in his baggage a box for Franklin. The box, Sally told her father, contained "Squirrel skins for Temple [Franklin's grandson, William Temple Franklin] in which is a parcel of news papers for you, and a peice of homespun Silk which I have long wish'd to send you for the Queen whose character I admire. ...I could not presume to ask her acceptance of it from myself, but from you it may be agreeable, it will shew what can be sent from America to the Looms of France—" Sally was pregnant for the fifth time, and was only a few weeks away from delivery. She



Engraving of Sarah Franklin Bache  
possibly after portrait by John Hoppner.  
Courtesy of the American  
Philosophical Society.

intended to name the baby after the Queen of France, should the child turn out to be female. Sally's feelings had been hurt by a reprimand from her "dear Papa...for wishing for a little finery". She is sure he would not have administered it "if he knew how much I have felt it". She goes on to explain how she was invited to spend the day with George and Martha Washington, and only wished to make an appearance that would not disgrace her family. Her long letter goes on to explain how difficult it is to clothe her family and how expensive everything has become with the depreciation of American currency. Sally and her household have had to supply the deficit. "My Maid is now spinning Woll for winter stockings for the whole Family, which will be no difficulty in the Manufacturing as I knit them myself".

In a letter of September 16 to Temple, Sally went into even more detail about her difficulties: she had left the makings for 40 yards of linnen with weavers in Lititz a year earlier, and just received a letter telling her that she wouldn't have the finished product for yet another year. She would be so much obliged to Temple if he could only send her just a few things from France... On the list were writing materials (everything from "paper down to sand"), a small pocket book, a good pen knife, scissors, needles (including darning needles), thread in different colors, and "a small quantity of Muslin" or other materials for making caps "as I now am grown too old to go without", a work basket, bed and pillow ticking, dishes, plates, knives and forks, and some "common handkerchiefs".

Franklin, unswayed by Sally's sad lack of basic domestic necessities in war torn America, rebuked her once more when he received the silk. Moreover, he took offense at her response to the news that he had sent her young son, Benny, hundreds of miles away to a boarding school in Geneva (she had actually said that she approved of his decision, but wished that her son and her father were

both back home, because she missed them). Here is his sharp letter of March 16, 1780:

Dear Sally,

I received your kind Letters of Sept. 14. and 25th. You mention the Silk being in a Box with Squirrel Skins, but it is come to hand without them or the Box. Perhaps they were spoilt by the Salt Water & thrown away; for the Silk is much damaged and not at all fit to be presented as you propose. Indeed I wonder how having yourself scarce Shoes to your Feet, it should come into your Head to give Cloathes to a Queen. I shall see if the Stains can be cover'd by Dying it, and make Summer Suits of it, for myself, Temple & Benny. I send some of Ben's Letters inclosed to his Father. He is well taken Care of, and well contented. But I fancy you had rather he should be with me. Perhaps I may therefore recall him [Benny remained in Geneva for more than three more years]. Tho' I really think he is better at Geneva for his Learning. Many Persons of Quality here, send their Sons there, for the same Reason tho' the Religion [in Geneva] is different [from here].

I am glad to hear the Weaving Work is so hard to get done. Tis a Sign there is much Spinning. All the Things you Order will be sent, as you continue to be a good Girl, & spin & knit your Family Stockings.

My Health & Spirits continue and I am ever, Your affectionate Father.

B Franklin

*Editor's note:* Sally's letters can be read in full. They are published in vol. 30 of *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, and they are a part of the digital edition of the Franklin Papers available on line at <http://www.franklinpapers.org>.



# *Benjamin Franklin's Efforts to Promote Sericulture in North America*

*By Dave Wang, St. John's University*

Americans have always loved silk. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century the United States had become the leading customer for raw silk, and New York the leading international center for the silk trade. According to the Silk Association of America's report, the United States imported about 60% of the total trade internationally. Benjamin Franklin, one of the great founding fathers of the United States, would be made very happy by the fashion headlines that announced that Alice Roosevelt's wedding gown was made of American silk, or that the selection of a new range of colors of silk for the inaugural gown of Mrs. Woodrow Wilson and her three daughters sent the American silk manufacturers into ecstasy.

Benjamin Franklin worked tirelessly and consistently to promote sericulture, or silk production, in North America. As early as 1729, at the age of 23, Franklin proclaimed the value of silk production to the economic and social progress of the colonies. He told his fellow colonists that if they thought that "raising Wheat proves dull, more may (if there is Money to support and carry on new Manufactures) proceed to the raising and manufacturing of silk." He told the colonists,

If it is asked, what can such farmers raise, wherewith to pay for the manufactures they may want from us? I answer, that the inland parts of America in question are well-known to be fitted for the production of hemp, flax, potash, and above all silk.

In order to support his proposal, Franklin used the success of sericulture in China as an example to urge the colonists to engage in the business. He told them sericulture was so developed in China that that country "clothes its Inhabitants with Silk, while it feeds them plentifully and has besides a vast Quantity both of raw and manufactured [silk] to spare for Exportation."

Franklin realized that the example of China was not persuasive enough to

propel the development of sericulture in North America. People would say that sericulture had a long history in China, at least 2500 years. His argument for the introduction of sericulture depended on the experience of other countries that had adopted Chinese-style sericulture successfully. In 1749 Franklin learned about a Derby silk factory. He published his description of the achievements of the British proprietor in *Poor Richard*: "there are 26,586 wheels, 97,746 movements; 73,728 yards of silk wound every time the water-wheel goes round, which is three times every minute; 318,504,960 yards of silk in one day and night; and consequently 99,373,547,550 yards of silk in a year."

For the purpose of inspiring the colonists' interest in launching sericulture in the colonies, Franklin relayed the chronology and dissemination of silk culture that had begun thousands of years earlier to the readers of the *Poor Richard*, and brought the story up to the eighteenth century, reminding his audience that sericulture in America had its roots in faraway China. He wrote an essay entitled "MEMOIRS of the Culture of SILK" based on his research. Franklin told his readers,

About 2500 Years before Christ, the Empress Siling began the Culture of Silk in China, where it was confined near 2000 Years, before it reached India and Persia.

A.D. 555 This Silk Culture first brought into Greece, particularly Athens, Thebes, and Corinth.

1130 Roger, King of Sicily, established it at Palermo and Calabria, by Work men brought from Athens and Corinth, at the Time of the Crusades.

1300 The Italians received it from Sicily.

1600 It was established in France.

1740 Begun in America.

Franklin further pointed out the potential contribution of sericulture to the economic vitality of the colonies. Sericulture had been an important economic factor in China and, he assured his readers, it would be a great contribution to the colonies' economic life.

That Part of the Imperial Revenue in China paid in Silk, amounts to above 955,000 lb. Troy, and perhaps this is not the twentieth Part of the Produce of that Empire. One Million of Trees disposed into Mulberry Walks, in Pennsylvania, would in a few Years, enable a yearly Remittance to Great-Britain of a Million Sterling, and no Ways interfere with the other necessary Branches of Labour in the Community.

Knowing the history and understanding the economic significance of sericulture were important for its promotion. However, more important was to provide colonists with Chinese technology for sericulture. Without this technology, the development of a silk industry in North America would be impossible. Franklin paid particular attention to silk cultivation techniques in China. Mulberry tree leaves are vital to the health of silkworms and the production of silk. Over a long period of time the Chinese had developed ways to keep the leaves good for silkworms. Franklin had learned these through his studies. He told the colonists that the Chinese "prune their Mulberry Trees once a year as we do our Vines in Europe, and suffer them not to grow up to high Trees, because thro' long Experience they have learn'd that the leaves of the smallest and youngest Trees make the best Silk." He also told the colonists how to find "a good deal on the Chinese Management of the Silk Business."

Franklin tried to address every aspect of Chinese technology as it related to silk cultivation. He provided the colonists with all the related information he could



discover. On December 7, 1763, Franklin sent Ezra Stiles "the Prints copied from Chinese Pictures concerning the Produce of Silk". In 1764, Franklin followed up, seeking to ascertain that Stiles had received "a Set of Chinese Prints, or rather Prints taken from Chinese Pictures, relating to the Culture of Silk in that Country." In February, 1772, Franklin told Cadwalader Evans that he had some information on the cultivation of silk in the form of pictures. He told Evans, that "Dr. Fothergill has a number of Chinese drawings, of which some represent the process of raising silk, from the beginning to the end." Franklin said that he had tried to obtain the pictures and Dr. Fothergill promised to "send them as a present to the Silk Company." In 1773, Franklin tried to make an arrangement for Joseph Clark, an expert in silk manufacture, to go to Philadelphia to help with the development of its silk industry. He wrote in a letter to the Committee of the Managers of the Philadelphia Silk Filature:

I beg leave to recommend him [Clark] to the Notice and Encouragement of the Silk Committee, as far as they may find him deserving. For tho' it may be most advantageous for our Country, while the Bounty continues so high, to send all our raw Silk hither; yet as the Bounty will gradually diminish and at length cease, I should think it not amiss to begin early the laying a Foundation for the future Manufacture of it; and perhaps this Person, if he finds Employment, may be a means of raising Hands for that purpose.

With Franklin's encouragement, sericulture started in Pennsylvania. In November 1771, the Managers of the Philadelphia Silk Filature reported to Franklin the progress of the silk industry there. According to the report, "Managers of the Contributions for promoting the Culture of silk in Pennsylvania" had achieved such a great success that "in the course of the last Season," they had secured "at the Filature erected here such a quantity of Cocoons as have produced about 155 lbs. of raw Silk proper for Exportation."

There was no easy road for the development of a colonial silk industry in

North America. Franklin realized that the leaders of the new industry needed constant support and encouragement. He urged them not to be discouraged by difficulties:

I hope our People will not be disheartened by a few Accidents, and such Disappointments as are incident to all new Undertakings, but persevere bravely in the silk Business till they have conquer'd all Difficulties. By *Diligence and Patience the Mouse ate in twain the Cable*. It is not two Centuries since it was as much a Novelty in France as it is now with us in North America, and the People as much unacquainted with it.

The ultimate goal for an industry is to find a market for its product. It was no different for the silk industry. Franklin personally acted as middleman for transactions involving silk produced in North America:

Two Months Time was given to the Buyers, and I have now received the Money. You may therefore draw for the Ballance of the Account £210 10s. 5½d. on me, or in Case of my Absence on Browns & Collinson, Bankers, with whom I shall leave an Order to honour your Bill. I hear by several Hands that our Silk is in high Credit; we may therefore hope for rising Prices, the Manufacturers being at first doubtful of a new Commodity, not knowing till Trial has been made how it will work.

With a very busy schedule in Europe, Franklin did not have time to find potential buyers; therefore, he worked with brokers in promoting the sale of silks. One time he told the silk company that

Our Silk will be sold next Thursday. The Broker was with me yesterday and tells me he thinks it improv'd in the Winding Part, and that some of it is equal to almost any brought to Market here. He has sorted it into 4 Parcels, according to his Opinion of its Difference in

Perfection. I inclose his Advertisement, and as soon as I can get it shall send his Account of Sales.

In 1782, at the age of 76, Franklin was still concerned about marketing silk produced in North America. He shared his own experiences with selling American silk abroad with Edmund Clegg. He told him that "When I was in London I had several Trunks of it consign'd to me for sale, and I remember it fetched at a publick Sale as high a Price within 6d. in the pound weight, as the Italian sold at the same time."

Franklin's efforts in promoting silk production in North America won him appreciation and respect from the silk entrepreneurs. Rebecca Haydock Garrigues, a businesswoman in Philadelphia, expressed her feelings, saying "I shall always esteem myself much obliged by Doctor Franklin's kindness, in taking so much Trouble as he has done in getting the Silk made." The Committee of the Managers of the Philadelphia Silk Filature were moved by Franklin's efforts and showed their appreciation in a letter to him, "We are sensible how much the promoters of the Culture of Silk are Obligated to Doctor Franklin for the trouble he has taken in the business; in their behalf, we thankfully Acknowledge it, and remain with perfect Esteem, his Assured ready Friends."

Franklin had promoted sericulture throughout the colonies: to have silk grown in Philadelphia and New England was not enough. He tried to encourage production in Carolina and further south, "there is good hope for silk, as mulberry trees can grow even in New England. The bounty for silk culture continues." In order to promote sericulture in New Jersey, he wrote to his son from London in May 1772; "I am glad to find such a Progress in [the making?] of Silk in Pennsylvania. I hope your Pro[vince will] take a Part in it. I think you sh[ould] encourage the raising Cocoons in all your Towns."

In 1831, more than 40 years after Benjamin Franklin's death, J. H. Cobb published a manual on sericulture. The Congress of the United States bought copies of the manual and distributed it to its members. From that point on, "there was a determined effort to establish silk culture on a firm basis in the United

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# Franklin, Lincoln and the Abolition of Slavery, Part II

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

Franklin, during the Constitutional Convention, was president of Pennsylvania's Supreme Executive Council (effectively governor of the state) and head of his state's delegation to that assemblage. Shortly after the convention ended, however, Franklin returned to private life, at least for a while, retiring from Pennsylvania's presidency on November 5, 1788. By then, Franklin was already president of an organization started ten years earlier by righteous-minded Quakers called *The Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully held in Bondage and for Improving the Condition of the African Race*. The group's stated objective was "to use such means as are in their power, to extend the blessings of freedom to every part of the human race."

As soon as his government administration duties ended, Franklin got down to the business of abolishing slavery. He used his considerable energy, skill, and prestige to make things happen. In 1788 Franklin sent identical letters to the governors of New Hampshire, Connecticut and Delaware noting his society's "great distress that a considerable part of the Slaves who have been sold...have been imported in vessels fitted out in the State over which your Excellency presides." He hoped that the governors' "influence will be exerted hereafter to prevent a practice which is so evidently repugnant to the political principles and forms of Government lately adopted by the Citizens of the United States..." Franklin enclosed with such letters the Abolition Society's constitution and Pennsylvania's recently enacted anti-slavery laws. Samuel Huntington of Connecticut sent back a typical reply. First he assured Franklin that the Connecticut legislature had already "taken effectual measures to abolish Slavery in this State." After that,

Huntington promised that he would "prevent the nefarious practice of importing Slaves into the United States, by Vessels fitted out in this State."

Franklin also attempted to halt the transatlantic slave trade by asking some of his friends in Europe to do what they could within their own countries. He

project with a level of commitment equaling his dedication to civic achievement during his earlier tradesman days. In November 1789, Franklin issued "An Address to the Public" in which he called slavery "such an atrocious debasement of human nature" that eliminating it without proper preparation could "open a source of serious evil." He went on to say, "The unhappy man, who has long been treated as a brute animal, too frequently sinks beneath the common standard of the human species." To prevent this from happening, the society planned "To instruct, to advise...to furnish them with employments...to procure their children an education calculated for their future situation in life." Doing all this requires "considerable pecuniary resources," so Franklin ended the address with an appeal for "any donations or subscriptions of this purpose..."

Franklin's anti-slavery campaign, however, did far more than raise money. Recall that the nation's new constitution put off for 20 years any laws limiting slavery. This would allow Congressmen to set the matter aside and deal with more pressing questions, such as how to pay off national debts, what kind of federal monetary policy was needed, and whether to maintain a standing army during peacetime. Therefore, when petitions from Quaker groups in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania arrived in the First Congress on February 11, 1790, calling for a halt to transatlantic slave importation, they were briefly discussed in committee and then set aside. The constitution's prohibition prevailed.

The following day, however, a third petition arrived that could not be ignored. This document, from the *Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery*, was signed by the nation's patriarch, Benjamin Franklin. It went far beyond the rather



The Slave Emancipation Society Seal. This medallion by William Hackwood was produced in 1787 by Josiah Wedgwood for the Slave Emancipation Society.

informed Revolutionary War hero Lafayette that, "The final purposes of our Society are the suppression of the Slave trade & the gradual abolition of slavery itself." He told Lafayette that right-minded Englishmen have submitted "pathetic & nervous Petitions to her Parliament to abolish this iniquitous traffic" but because of "national prejudices & jealousies" nothing favorable would likely happen in England "untill France concurs in it." He therefore asked Lafayette to request that the King help end the "disgraceful Commerce in the human Species."

Franklin approached the anti-slavery



timid call of the Quaker petitions to stop importation of slaves. Instead, Franklin's document raised religious and moral issues to condemn slavery altogether. He proclaimed, "That mankind are all formed by the same Almighty Being, alike objects of his Care, and equally designed for the Enjoyment of Happiness the Christian Religion teaches us to believe, and the Political Creed of America fully coincides..."

Franklin's petition reminded Congress that they had been given power for "promoting the Welfare and securing the blessings of liberty to the People of the United States" and declared "that these blessings ought rightfully to be administered, without distinction of Color, to all descriptions of People." The document asked Congress for "the Restoration of liberty to those unhappy Men, who alone in this land of Freedom are degraded into perpetual Bondage...groaning in servile Subjection..." Franklin's signature at the bottom of the petition, seemingly larger than usual, insured open debate on the subject. And debate they did: Congress sat as a Committee of the Whole to consider the petition. The discourse laid out the issues that continued to come up with increasing animosity for the next 70 years. Indeed, Franklin opened a can of worms that Congress could not close. At the time, however, the balance between free and slave states shackled progress towards emancipation.

Although Franklin was feeling his age by 1790, his bladder stone and gout limiting him to a bed-and-chair existence, he nevertheless composed one of his most effective satires, mocking slave-owners by literally putting the shoe on the other foot. Writing as "Historicus" in a

letter to the editor of *The Federal Gazette*, Franklin facetiously reproduced a speech he said was made a hundred years earlier by Mehemet Ibrahim, an Algerian Moslem leader. Ibrahim objected to a petition asking the Algerians to stop seizing Christians on ships and enslaving them. Ibrahim asked, "If we cease our cruises against the Christians...who, in this hot climate, are to cultivate our lands? Who are to perform the common labours of our city, and in our families? ...And is there not more compassion and more favour due to us Mussulmen, than to these christian dogs?" Raising issues identical to those filling the chambers of Congress, Ibrahim wanted to know, "If then we cease taking and plundering the Infidel ships, and making slaves of the seamen and passengers, our lands will become of no value for want of cultivation; the rents of houses in the city will sink one half...who is to indemnify their masters for the loss?"

Ibrahim worried that the Christian slaves "will not embrace our holy religion" and asked, "must we maintain them as beggars in our streets; or suffer our properties to be the prey of their pillage?" He further claimed that, "men accustomed to slavery, will not work for a livelihood when not compelled."

Franklin, through Ibrahim, even took a swipe at the absolute monarchies of Europe. He wrote, "Were they not slaves in their own countries? Are not Spain, Portugal, France and the Italian states, governed by despots, who hold all their subjects in slavery, without exception?...Is their condition then made worse by their falling into our hands? No, they have only exchanged one slavery for another: and I may say a better: for here they are brought into a land where the

sun of Islamism gives forth its light, and shines in full splendor, and they have an opportunity of making themselves acquainted with the true doctrine, and thereby saving their immortal souls." Ibrahim, at the conclusion of his speech, recommended rejecting the "detestable proposition" that Christian slaves be freed, "And it was rejected accordingly."

Twenty-five days after his anti-slavery satire appeared in print, Benjamin Franklin passed away, his final mission unfulfilled. After Franklin died, the slavery debate's rhetorical volume muted. Neither side had a sufficient majority to move the issue in one direction or the other. The big fear, for both the pro- and anti-slavery forces in Congress, was that new states entering the union could, depending upon their orientation, tip the balance in an adverse way. The Northwest Ordinance (left intact from the Articles of Confederation), for instance, banned slavery in territories north of the Ohio River. When the union reached 22 states in 1819, half were free and half slave, insuring further stalemate on any emancipation proposal. As Federal territories requested statehood, one side or the other of the slavery issue would object, depending on the incoming region's slave issue status. The Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850, and the Nebraska-Kansas Act were all attempts to maintain a balance, more or less, on the slavery issue.

The singular event that, more than any other, energized emancipation forces was a Supreme Court decision regarding Dred Scott, a slave whose master had died. Since Scott spent time with his owner in Illinois and in Wisconsin territory

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## Sericulture

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States. This interest in silk culture soon led to what was known as the 'Mormus multicaulis craze.'

Franklin's contributions to sericulture in North America were important. Why did Franklin make such a great effort to

promote the sericulture in North America? The readers who are familiar with Franklin know that silk was used in Benjamin Franklin's scientific research in the field of electricity. In 1752 Franklin made an important experiment in order to understand the nature of electricity. The most renowned part of his apparatus—which is still one of the symbols associated today with his name — was the silk kite. Franklin realized that, "Silk is

fitter to bear the Wet and Wind of a Thunder Gust without tearing." However, this useful application of silk was only part of the story. From his correspondence with the Committee of the Managers of the Philadelphia Silk Filature, we can deduce that Franklin held the silk industry in high regard. In Franklin's mind, sericulture had the potential to provide "great service to our country."



# Lincoln & Franklin

*continued from page 7*

(both non-slave regions) and had two children in those places with his new wife (also a slave), he sued the heirs to his master's estate for his freedom when he was moved back to Missouri. A Missouri State Court denied Scott his freedom but determined that he could sue in Federal Court if he chose to. Scott and his wife did just that, but lost in Federal District Court as well. Scott, in 1857, appealed his case to the U. S. Supreme Court.

In a split decision that has forever stained the entire era, a majority of the high court's justices ruled that Scott, as a slave, was not a citizen and therefore had no right to sue in Federal Court. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, author of the majority opinion, further stated that *all* blacks (whether slave or free) never were, and would never be, citizens of the United States. The Court's majority went even beyond the issues in the Dred Scott matter. They also declared unconstitutional the provision of the Missouri Compromise that precluded slavery in the Western territories.

It didn't take long for lawyers, especially those in Illinois where the Scotts spent some time, to realize the implication of the Dred Scott decision: If a slave couple (like the Scotts) leave their master, escape to Illinois and have children there, both the parents and their offspring still belong to their owner, just as would a pair of errant horses that wandered into Illinois, plus their new foals. This meant that some persons born in Illinois were not, in reality, free, making Illinois a *de facto* slave state.

A group of young attorneys living and working in Springfield, the Illinois capital, thereafter became active in politics, determined to somehow reverse the Supreme Court's Dred Scott ruling. They prevailed upon one of their number, the eloquent Abraham Lincoln, to carry the torch of Illinois freedom into the political arena via the new Republican Party. (They even promised to sustain his law practice while Lincoln was on the stump.) Lincoln challenged Democrat Stephen Douglas for the U.S. Senate seat for Illinois. A substantial portion of the debates between Lincoln and Douglas revolved around the Dred Scott decision and the related issues of free vs. slave statehood for entering territories.

Lincoln, in a typically long-winded pre-Fourth of July (1857) speech claimed that, "the Dred Scott decision was, in part, based on assumed historical facts which were not really true." He went on to paraphrase the opinion of dissenting Justice Benjamin Curtis who pointed out that, at the time the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution were approved, five of the original thirteen states had free black men who, like whites, could vote to either accept or reject the Declaration and the Constitution. Therefore, the phrase in the Constitution stating that it "was ordained and established by the people of the United States" meant *all* persons with the right to vote "upon the question of its adoption." Since whites and free blacks had equal votes in the states permitting such suffrage, the blacks, by having the capacity to approve the documents, clearly established themselves as citizens in the new nation.

In his very first debate with Douglas, Lincoln argued that the people of Illinois, not the Supreme Court, had the right to determine the status of persons born within the state's own borders. He said that, "Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Madison, Hamilton, Jay, and the great men of that day, made this Government divided into free States and slave States, and left each State perfectly free to do as it pleased on the subject of slavery."

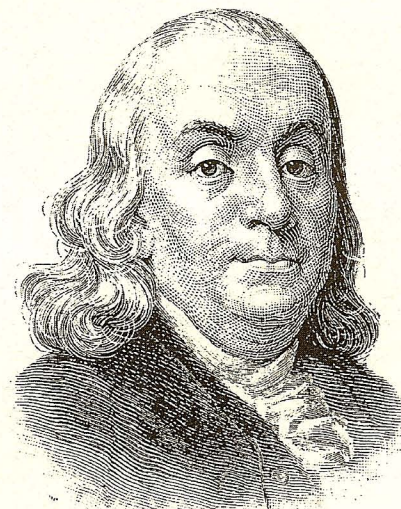
Douglas won the Illinois Senate seat that year, but the debates launched Lincoln to national prominence within the Republican Party. Before he became the party's standard-bearer for the presidency, however, aspiring candidate Lincoln was invited by the abolitionist minister Henry Ward Beecher (brother of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* author Harriet Beecher Stowe) to deliver a speech in New York City. At first, Beecher planned the oration for his Brooklyn church, but widespread curiosity about Lincoln caused a venue change to the Cooper Institute (now Cooper Union), a facility large enough to hold the 1,500 people who ultimately showed up.

Among those attending Lincoln's February 27, 1860 lecture at Cooper Institute were Republican Party bigwigs Horace Greeley and William Cullen Bryant, who wanted to see if Lincoln might make a more suitable presidential candidate than the current frontrunner, New York Senator William Seward.

Lincoln spent months preparing the address. His Springfield law partner,

William Herndon, noted that, "No former effort in the line of speech-making had cost Lincoln so much time and thought as this one." Herndon said that the presentation was "in some respects like a lawyer's brief," complete with supporting footnotes in the printed version.

Lincoln attacked his former (and future) debating foe, Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas, for his position supporting slavery in the Federal territories. Lincoln started by first quoting a statement Douglas made in a Columbus, Ohio speech claiming, "Our fathers, when they framed the Government under which we live, understood this question just as well, and even better, than we do now." Lincoln next asked (and answered), "Who were our fathers that framed the Constitution? I suppose the 'thirty-nine'



who signed the original instrument may be fairly called our fathers who framed that part of the present Government." He then described as many of the signers' positions on the issue of slavery as he had been able to discover. Using carefully documented evidence from their public pronouncements on the subject, Lincoln proved that a majority of "our fathers" opposed the spread of slavery from the original slave states. The strongest opponents of all, Lincoln said, "were several of the most noted anti-slavery men of those times—as Dr. Franklin, Alexander Hamilton and Gouverneur Morris." Lincoln's supporting footnote for this assertion included "Franklin's Petition to Congress for the Abolition of Slavery" of February 1790. Moreover, Lincoln, in that footnote, quoted Franklin's core demand: "That you will be pleased to



countenance the restoration of liberty to those unhappy men, who alone in this land of freedom are degraded into perpetual bondage, and who, amidst the general joy of surrounding freemen, are groaning in servile subjection; that you will devise means for removing this inconsistency from the character of the American people; that you will promote mercy and justice toward this distressed race; and that you will step to the very verge of the power vested in you for discouraging every species of traffic in the persons of our fellow-men."

A New York newspaperman reported that, "No man ever before made such an impression on his first appeal to a New York audience." Lincoln's Cooper Institute speech helped propel him into the Republican Party's presidential



candidacy. During that campaign, Republican Party workers circulated the printed version of the Cooper Institute presentation, ensuring wide distribution of Lincoln's (and Franklin's) viewpoint.

The rumblings of secessionism filled the halls of Congress during the 1860 presidential campaign. After being elected President, Lincoln, in his First Inaugural Address, told southerners, "In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you....You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve, protect and defend it."

Benjamin Franklin's 1790 Petition to Congress, aimed at "the gradual abolition of slavery," finally achieved its objective

75 years and 600,000 casualties later. The U.S. Constitution's Thirteenth Amendment (1865) reads simply, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

Franklin's role in the abolition movement proved pivotal by opening the issue to Congressional debate. To achieve this end, Franklin employed the same sequence of steps he used to create Pennsylvania Hospital and other enterprises: 1) Establish or take over a group dedicated to the goal. 2) Solicit public support through newspaper articles. 3) Raise money for the effort. 4) Write letters to important persons about the mission. 5) Petition the ruling powers for action. If these measures didn't work, Franklin went to plan B: Publicly mock the opposition with biting satire and then repeat steps 4, and 5.

Franklin's effort to drum up public backing for abolition included every means an experienced media mogul would likely employ, including themed jewelry as a fashion statement. Just as today's AIDS and breast cancer groups sell easily identifiable adornments to their supporters, in the late eighteenth century cameos depicting human bondage were worn as ornaments by ladies who espoused abolition. The British started the fad. When the potter and anti-slavery activist Josiah Wedgwood joined the *Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, he had his designer create a white-on-black cameo of the group's seal. It depicted a kneeling African slave—chains and shackles around his wrists and ankles, arms raised in prayer—surrounded by the words, "Am I not a man and a brother?" Wedgwood's factory made many such cameos, which abolitionists mounted in bracelets, brooches, tie-pins and combs. It was an effective emblem for the enlightened. (England abolished slavery in 1807.)

Wedgwood and Franklin knew each other quite well; both had been elected to the Royal Society. (Years before fabricating the anti-slavery piece, Wedgwood made a lovely white-on-white cameo honoring Franklin for his achievements.) In 1788, Wedgwood, on learning that Franklin had assumed command of the Pennsylvania abolition group, shipped the venerable philosopher

some of the anti-slavery medallions. Wedgwood wrote in the accompanying letter that he was sending Franklin "a few Cameos on a subject which...is daily more and more taking possession of men's minds on this side the Atlantic as well as with you." Wedgwood told Franklin that it gave him "great pleasure to be embarked on this occasion in the same great and good cause with you, Sir, and I ardently hope for the final completion of our wishes."

Franklin thanked Wedgwood for the "valuable Present of Cameo's, which I am distributing among my Friends." He predicted that the kneeling figure "may have an Effect equal to that of the best written Pamphlet, in procuring Favour to those oppressed People." Franklin was right, of course. The cameo, its motto, and its image became as popular among American abolitionists as it was for their counterparts in England. Soon everything from painted silks to snuffboxes depicted what Franklin called "the suppliant." (Today, the image is available on t-shirts, mugs and mouse pads.) Sojourner Truth, an ex-slave who became an activist preacher and abolitionist, modified the suppliant's "Am I not a man and a brother" motto to "Ain't I a woman" during an 1851 speech in Ohio. (She wanted to emphasize the double burden female slaves endured.) Abraham Lincoln invited Truth to the White House in 1864 to thank her for recruiting blacks to fight for the North during the Civil War and to compliment her on the Ohio presentation as well.

Today, some malign Franklin for having owned slaves and for advertising slaves in his newspaper. It would be more appropriate, instead, to applaud Franklin for his transformation from slave owner to abolitionist—and an aggressive one at that—who spent the last three years of his life trying to end what he called the "atrocious debasement of human nature." If Franklin returned to the United States today, he would first be welcomed home by Philadelphia's mayor, a man of African ancestry. Later, Franklin would meet to discuss foreign affairs with the black woman who serves as the nation's Secretary of State. He would eventually learn about Abraham Lincoln, his Cooper Institute speech of 1860, and the Civil War. And, although horrified by the extent of the bloodshed, Franklin would commend the outcome, for it represents the worthy culmination of his last public undertaking.





## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**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](http://www.sama-art.org). On June 28, a special Franklin Day will be held at the museum.

## FRANKLIN TIDBITS

**Franklin has style:** Benjamin Franklin House, London, that is. It was the location for an episode of the TV show, "British Style Genius", a BBC documentary.

**Franklin and the Media** was the subject of a symposium held in Paris on May 16. "From Benjamin Franklin Up to the Present Day: Has the Media Lost Its Power?" was sponsored by the Fondation Singer-Polignac. It was organized by Laurence Chatel de Brancion and Ellen Hampton of the Franklin Committee. The opening session featured Ellen Cohn, Editor-in-Chief of *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* who spoke on "The Media in the Eighteenth Century and the Success of Benjamin Franklin".

**New Franklin Award:** On April 8 the Secretary of State honored the recipients of the State Department's inaugural Benjamin Franklin Awards for Public Diplomacy. The winners were chosen "for their outstanding leadership in advancing America's ideals through public diplomacy by offering a positive vision of hope and opportunity rooted in America's belief in freedom, justice, opportunity and respect for all." The award, according to Secretary Rice, was named for Franklin because "Few individuals displayed the true character of America to the world better than Benjamin Franklin." The awards are, she told her audience, designed to "highlight the exceptional and to inspire others." Awards were given in four

**July 4** 4th of July Party, 12-2 PM, Benjamin Franklin House, London.

**July 15** Archaeology Family Day, Benjamin Franklin House, London.

**October 17-18, 2008.** Benjamin Franklin and the Invention of America. Two day symposium by Humanities West at the Herbst Theatre, San Francisco, featuring lectures by Gary Nash, professor emeritus, UCLA, **Jessica Riskin**—(Associate Professor, History, Stanford), **Jack N. Rakove**—(Professor of History, Stanford University and Pulitzer Prize Winner), *The Invention of Ben Franklin*; **Dee Andrews** (Professor and Chair, History, CSU East Bay), **GLASS-ICAL MUSICK**; **Dennis James**—(Musica Curiosa and performance by the London Quartet). See <http://www.humanitieswest.org/currentBen.html> for more information.

**January 16, 2009.** Celebration! of Benjamin Franklin, Founder. Annual event commemorating Franklin's birthday with a

categories: non-profit, academic, corporate, and individual. An international conflict resolution organization, *Search for Common Ground*, won in the non-profit category. The organization produces "well-crafted and entertaining TV, radio, and Internet programs...[that communicate] messages of conflict resolution, mutual respect, and tolerance, to mass audiences around the world." The winner in the academic category was the *University of Southern California*, for their Center on Public Diplomacy. The Center is a research and professional training facility "dedicated to furthering the study and practice of public diplomacy." The institution created the first graduate-level program devoted exclusively to public diplomacy. Corporate giant *Johnson & Johnson* was honored for their sponsorship of "Safe Kids Worldwide," a non-profit global network of organizations in 17 countries whose mission is to prevent accidental childhood injury. The support of Johnson & Johnson effects families world-wide through education, research into child safety, and advocacy for legislation relative to child safety. World-famous musician *Dave Brubeck* won the individual category for his exemplification of cultural diplomacy. His seven-decade career has included countless hours and thousands of concerts introducing the language of jazz to generations around the world. 2008 marks the 50th anniversary of Brubeck's first tour for the Department of State. Brubeck's contributions inspired the University of the Pacific to establish an Institute in his name that will attempt to build on "his dedication to music, creativity, education, and the advancement of

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](http://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.

The traveling exhibit, *Benjamin Franklin in Search of a Better World*, may be coming to a location near you. Check the Tercentenary's website for future locations: [http://www.benfranklin300.org/traveling\\_library\\_exhibit.html](http://www.benfranklin300.org/traveling_library_exhibit.html).

important social issues, including civil rights, environmental concerns, international relations, and social justice."

## READING FRANKLIN

Alan Gibson, *Understanding the Founding: the Crucial Questions* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2007).

Gregg L. Lint et al., eds., *Papers of John Adams* (Harvard University Press, 2008), Volume 14. This volume covers November, 1782 through May, 1783, a period when Adams was interacting almost daily with Franklin. Both men were named to an American Commission for making peace with Great Britain and this volume opens with Adams' return to Paris to join Franklin and John Jay in negotiating the peace that would end the Revolutionary War.

Andrea Wulf, *The Brother Gardeners: Botany, Empire and the Birth of an Obsession* (William Heinemann, May, 2008). The author tells the interconnected histories of Philip Miller, Carl Linnaeus, Daniel Solander, and two particular friends of Franklin, Peter Collinson and John Bartram. These five men were responsible for generating interest in gardening, an obsession that had its roots in the eighteenth century, but one that remains one of the hallmarks of England in the present day.

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# Franklin Math Puzzlers

Compiled by Aziz S. Inan

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

**Problem # 7. Independence Day-4th of July.** Consider 4th of July Independence Day to be an eight-digit number given by 07041776. Split this number in the middle into two four-digit numbers and write each number using four 4's and arithmetic operations.

**Solution to Problem # 6.** Ben and his

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

**Answer: 29.**

**Solution:** Let  $x$  be represented by the two-digit number  $AB$  such that  $x = 10A+B$ . Then,  $10B+A+10A+B = 11 \times (A+B) = 121$  from which  $A+B = 11$ . Assuming Ben's and his grandpa's ages to be at least 30 years apart, there are only two

possibilities, either  $A = 2$  and  $B = 9$ , or  $A = 3$  and  $B = 8$ . If grandpa was 38 years old in 1735, then Ben would be 38 years old in  $1735 + 45 = 1780$  which means Ben was born in  $1780 - 38 = 1742$  which is not divisible by 38. Therefore, grandpa was 29 years old in 1735, Ben was 29 years old in  $1735 + 63 = 1798$ , this means Ben was born in the year  $1798 - 29 = 1769$  and yes, 1769 is divisible by 29! "Ben" in this problem is Benjamin Franklin's grandson, Benjamin Franklin Bache, who was born on August 12, 1769 and died of yellow fever at age 29 on September 10, 1798.

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