

# Franklin Gazette

Volume 19, Number 3, Fall 2009

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

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

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*"When you're good to others, you are best to yourself."* Poor Richard, September, 1748

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## President's Message

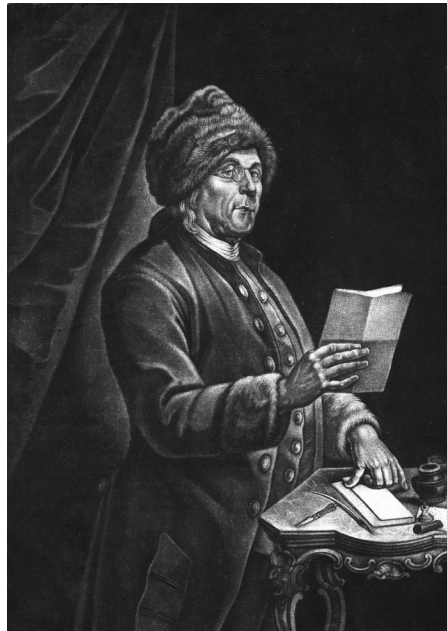
By Roy E. Goodman

Those Friends interested in exploring early American history and literature on the web should peruse [www.Common-place.org](http://www.Common-place.org). Its website notes that it is a bit friendlier than a scholarly journal, but somewhat more scholarly than a popular magazine. *Common-place* speaks and listens to scholars, museum curators, teachers, hobbyists, and just about anyone interested in American history before 1900.

A broad range of topics is included from architecture to literature, from politics to everyday life. While there are some pieces specifically on Franklin, what should prove enlightening to the Friends is the contextual information about everyday life in his time.

Franklin, more than just about any other 18<sup>th</sup>-century American, mingled with as diverse a group of acquaintances and correspondents imaginable. The variety of *Gazette* articles and Franklin news is evidence enough to keep us captivated and curious readers. Indeed, we are also very fortunate to have the *Franklin Papers* available for the exploration of whatever various aspects of the Founder's life that we choose.

Making Franklin and his times relevant to diverse audiences is a constant challenge. Educators and the media employ new technologies to present both formerly ignored and commonly known material in classrooms, exhibits, websites/ blogs, video/film/theater, and print. Today, everyone is faced with information overload, unlike the situation in Franklin's time. How do we reach our audience? How can we be sure the information we present is authentic? Yet, conveying the essence of wisdom or value



is still the educator's fundamental task and, having these principles appreciated and understood by the audience is also the goal of instructive content.

*Common-place*, along with the *Franklin Papers* and the *Franklin Gazette* reward readers with a better understanding of the 18th century, and provide a window onto the details of every day life in a different age than our own--the little things--which had as great an impact on people as they do today.

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*Benjamin Franklin*

*Engraved by Justus Chevillet.*

*Courtesy of the American Philosophical Society.*

### In Memoriam: Frank B. Jones



Frank B. Jones, a long time member of the Friends, and its second president, passed away in Bloomington, Indiana, on August 26, 2009, at the age of 86. Frank, one of the founders of the Friends, was a lifelong promoter of all things Franklin. Both in his career as Director of Alumni Affairs at Indiana University and as a director of the Benjamin Franklin Guild of the *Saturday Evening Post*, Frank did much to make the world aware of the unique career and achievements of America's most

renowned Founding Father. *Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790: A Chronology of the Eighteenth Century's Most Eminent Citizen*, published by Kendall/Hunt for the Friends in 1996 was compiled by Frank with the able assistance of Friend of Franklin George F. Waters.

Frank also received the Benjamin Franklin Award of the Benjamin Franklin Literary and Medical Society in recognition for his contributions to the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Treaty of Paris in 1983. The *Gazette* encourages those of you wishing to share recollections of Frank to send them to our editor Carol Smith, [cwsmith@verizon.net](mailto:cwsmith@verizon.net).

## Franklin Gazette

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# Franklin in Literature - Past and Present

by Eleanor Gesensway



Recent readings reminded me of the pervasive influence of Franklin's life and writings on writers and thinkers through the years up to the present day.

In 2006, the highly respected environmental advocate, Michael Pollan, wrote *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. In it, he investigates the way we eat, the way we live, the choices available to us, and the choices we make.

In Section 1: The Steakhouse Dialogues of Chapter 17: The Ethics of Eating Animals, Pollan writes, "The meat eaters' first line of defense is obvious: why should we treat animals any more ethically than they treat one another? Ben Franklin actually tried this tack long before me. He tells in his autobiography of one day watching friends catch fish and wondering, 'If you eat one another, I don't see why we may not eat you.' He admits, however, that this rationale didn't occur to him until the fish were in the frying pan, beginning to smell 'admirably well.' The great advantage of being a 'reasonable creature,' Franklin remarks, is that you can find a reason for whatever you want to do." (p.310, Penguin Press)

A few pages later in Section 6: The Vegan Utopia, Pollan questions, "Are there good enough reasons to give up my vegetarianism? Can I in good conscience eat a happy and sustainably raised chicken? I'm mindful of Ben Franklin's definition of a reasonable creature as one who can come up with reasons for whatever he wants to do." (p.327)

Going backward in time, space and genre, I came across a most unexpected reference by the Russian, Nicolai Gogol. In his masterpiece, *Dead Souls*, (1842) the hero, Chichikov, travels around the countryside trying to convince landowners to sell him their deceased serfs who are buried on their estates. On one of his quests, he visits colonel Koshkaryov who complains "of the difficulty he had found in making the peasants understand that there are higher pleasures to be derived from enlightened luxury and art;..." He, however, is determined to continue to work "to achieve a state of affairs in which

his peasants, while continuing to plough, would read a book about Franklin's lightning conductors, Virgil's *Georgics* or some work on the Chemical Properties of the Soil." (p.379, George Reavey, translator, W.W. Norton & Co.)

Joseph O'Neill, born in Ireland, raised and educated in Holland and England, and currently living in New York City, received the 2009 Pen/Faulkner Award for Fiction for his third novel, *Netherland*. It is the story of Hans, an ex-pat European and Chuck, a Trinidadian entrepreneur who meet and bond while playing cricket in post 9/11 New York. "Every summer the parks of this city are taken over by hundreds of cricketers but somehow nobody notices. It's like we're invisible....But I say we must claim our rightful place in this wonderful country. Cricket has a long history in the United States, actually. Benjamin Franklin himself was a cricket man." (p.16, Pantheon Books)

As their friendship grows, we learn of Chuck's "interest in naturalism, birds especially, [which] went back to his youth in Trinidad." Although he approved of Congress's decision to declare the bald eagle the national symbol, he was aware that not everyone agreed with the decision. He informed his friend that "Benjamin Franklin thought the turkey a better choice and considered the bald eagle---a plunderer and a scavenger of dead fish rather than a hunter, and timid if mobbed by much smaller birds---an animal of bad moral character and in fact a coward." (p.75)

Finally and most recently, in The Arts section of the April 13, 2009 issue of *Newsweek*, Jeremy McCarter reviewed the speech given by Wynton Marsalis at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Marsalis, trumpeter extraordinaire and director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, was invited to speak about the Arts and Public Policy. He entitled his speech, "The Ballad of the American Arts." In it, he surveyed how our country has used "homegrown arts to make us into one people, to teach us who we are." Mr. McCarter found that Marsalis made "surprising connections, praising Ben Franklin and Charlie Parker in turn for being 'the living embodiment of down-home sophistication.'" (p.14)

# Friends' News from Around the World



*Friends of Franklin in Albany*

## The Friends of Franklin Visit Albany

**September 30 –  
October 3, 2009**

By Margit Batchelor

Dining in an historic Dutch structure, admiring Persian-influenced architecture, riding with "Henry Hudson," enjoying a spin on a mid-nineteenth-century carousel, touring a historic battlefield, AND last but not least, seeing original Franklin documents - where could one enjoy all that in 4 days? Only with the Friends of Franklin, of course!

The most recent adventure took the Friends to the Hudson River Valley. What better time to visit than the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's arrival in Albany?

We set up camp ("Crowne Plaza") in the center of Albany, our home base. The first day took the group to Schuyler Mansion, the former home of Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler, a hero of the American Revolution. Franklin visited him in Albany in 1776.

Next followed a guided tour of the N.Y. State Capitol, an impressive structure. We topped off the day with a festive Welcome

dinner in the oldest intact building in Albany (1730), the Quackenbush House, built by a Dutch settler. Historian Stefan Bielinski shared his knowledge of Albany's Dutch heritage and gave us a glimpse into Franklin's Albany connections, including his important role in the 1754 Albany Congress.

The next morning found us on our way to Clermont, Robert R. Livingston's beautiful estate, set in the midst of gardens, and overlooking the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains. This spectacular Georgian house was home to seven generations of the socially and politically influential Livingston family. Livingston was secretary of foreign affairs, and had much business with Franklin. Robert Fulton's first successful steamboat set off from the dock at Clermont - a joint venture with Robert Livingston.

Still in Mansion mode, we headed down the east bank of the river to Olana. Set majestically on a hilltop offering splendid river and mountain views, the exotic villa was the home of celebrated Hudson River School artist Frederick Church, who designed this Persian-style confection and the surrounding landscape in 1870.

Treasures were awaiting us the next day at the N.Y. State Museum and Library in Albany: The Friends were treated to a special exhibit of Franklin's works. From "Causes and Cures for Smoky Chimneys" to a transcript of Franklin's testimony

before the English Parliament opposing the Stamp Act, it was right at our fingertips. Senior Librarian Paul Mercer was our guide, and he actually encouraged us to turn the pages of these priceless volumes.

The next morning, we were whisked away to Johnstown in the Mohawk Valley. Johnson Hall was the Colonial home of Sir William Johnson - Indian trader, statesman, diplomat and empire builder. Johnson was superintendent of Indian Affairs for the northern Colonies and a very influential member of the 1754 Albany Congress, who attended in full Indian regalia. We enjoyed a private tour of this "Georgian House of Wood made to look like Stone" furnished as it would have been in Johnson's time. This was the site of countless conferences with the Iroquois.

A guided tour of the Saratoga Battlefield filled this sunny fall afternoon. After a brief stop at the excellent visitors' center, we were joined by our guide, outfitted in the French-Canadian garb worn by Indians and British irregular troops alike at the 1777 battle that changed the course of the Revolutionary War. James Hughto, a descendant of those French-Canadian soldiers, taught us a thing or two about battle tactics at the frontier.

Too soon, it was time for our farewell dinner, followed by Kate Ohno's entertaining and enthusiastic presentation on Franklin's visits to the Albany area.

More exciting trips are in the works!

# Champlost: Estate of the Fox Family and Repository for Franklin's Papers

By Valerie-Anne Lutz van Ammers,  
American Philosophical Society

*The "Repository" for Franklin's Papers Prior to Their Acquisition by the American Philosophical Society and the University of Pennsylvania*

At first glance the country estate of a Philadelphia Quaker family seems to have little to do with Benjamin Franklin. But the Fox family home, known as Champlost since the early nineteenth century, housed Benjamin Franklin's personal and professional papers for decades after Franklin's death until Charles Pemberton Fox donated a large portion of them to the American Philosophical Society in 1840.

The story begins with Franklin's departure for London in 1765 when Franklin left his papers for safekeeping at Trevoise, the Bucks County estate of his friend Joseph Galloway. The house, now known as the Growden Mansion, still stands in what is today Trevoise, Pennsylvania. Galloway's home, formerly owned by his father-in-law Lawrence Growden, was raided at least twice during the Revolution by both British troops as well as the Continental Army. One can only surmise that the British were looking for important manuscripts and that the Continental Army knew that they were ransacking the home of one of the most prominent Loyalists in the Colonies.

Franklin's papers had been kept in the fireproof vault in an outbuilding; this was broken into, and the papers were later found scattered about the grounds. Franklin sent his son-in-law Richard Bache to Trevoise to salvage whatever he could. Bache brought back the papers that he could find, which were in many cases muddled and torn, but fortunately a good number were saved, with the exception of Franklin's letterbooks (bound books containing copies of letters sent). Upon Franklin's death, his grandson, William Temple Franklin, inherited his grandfather's private papers. Temple took some of the manuscripts to London to work on a published edition of his grandfather's works, and left the rest with his friend and contemporary George Fox.

Fox's family's country estate consisted of a large tract of about 200 acres, located near what is today the Fern Rock Transportation Center in the Olney

section of Philadelphia. The property was first cultivated by John Worrell, a Quaker who came to Philadelphia with William Penn. Worrell sold the farm in 1722 to James Portues, a founding member of the Carpenters' Company. Portues also had arrived in Philadelphia with Penn and was responsible for the design and construction of Penn's mansion on Second Street above Walnut.

Portues was also a friend of Joseph Fox, father of George Fox. A fellow member of the Carpenters' Company and a long-time and active member of the Pennsylvania Assembly, Joseph Fox was appointed speaker of that body in 1765, and shortly thereafter he appointed Benjamin Franklin as the colony's agent to England. Fox was a Quaker when he married and his death was noted in meeting records, but he had been disowned in 1756 for having violated the Friends' testimony against war by not joining them in their objection to the French and Indian War.

In 1770, Fox built a stone house on the property that would later be christened Champlost. Despite his service to Pennsylvania and his signing of the oath that renounced allegiance to George III (which many other Quakers did not sign), Fox was accused of Loyalist sympathies and his house was burned in November, 1777. When Fox died in 1779, the property was inherited by his son, also named Joseph, who rebuilt the house. When Joseph died in 1784, the estate passed to Samuel Fox, brother to both George Fox and the younger Joseph.

George Fox had a close association with Franklin; in 1780 when he left to visit France he received a warm letter of introduction to the American minister in Paris. There, he studied French and was awed by French society and the lavish residences of the capital. When he inherited the family home in 1808 he christened it "Champlost" in honor of the estate of the Duke de Champlain near Paris. Fox was inspired to create an American version of a French country



*"Champlost" from the Castner Scrapbook  
Volume 25, page 81*

*From: The Print & Picture Collection,  
Free Library of Philadelphia*

estate, with elaborate gardens and glass-walled conservatories.

Fox was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society in 1784 and later would serve at various times as a trustee of the University of Pennsylvania, a representative to the city assembly, and director of the Bank of the United States.

A colorful account of Fox's near-death experience in France and how it influenced his naming of the estate is given in Townsend Ward's "Second Street and Second Street Road and its Associations." Some details of the account are inaccurate, but it is charming nonetheless.

"On his travels abroad he (George Fox) was a long time in France, and there in 1780 at the dinner-table at the Chateau of the Count de Champlost was seized with illness. He was removed at once to Paris, and after a time died, as was supposed, and was consigned to the care of the Capuchins to be buried. A little warmth in his hands being perceptible led to the application of restoratives, by which he was revived. On his return he gave to this beautiful seat the name of the French place he had cause to remember so well."

Charles Pemberton Fox inherited Champlost from his father George in 1828. Franklin's papers remained in a garret there, known to scholars, but unused until Bostonian Jared Sparks arrived in Philadelphia in 1831 seeking material for his *Writings of Washington* and other works on the Revolutionary era. Sparks learned about the cache of Franklin papers from a friend at the American Philosophical Society, lawyer and statesman Henry D. Gilpin, who escorted him to Champlost and introduced Sparks to its owner. There Sparks found several trunks and boxes of Franklin's books and papers, along with electrical apparatus, drawings, and a great variety of other things in complete disorder.

*continued on p. 5*



*"Champlost" today*  
*Photo by Nils van Ammers*

Six years later, after Sparks had embarked upon editing his edition of Franklin's writings, Charles Pemberton Fox invited him to use the papers in storage at Champlost. Sparks examined the papers more closely on this visit, selecting two trunks of papers, which the Fox family allowed him to borrow to study and copy. In 1840, Sparks urged Fox to donate the papers, which represented about 13,000 pieces, to the American Philosophical Society. In a letter to Society Librarian John Vaughan on September 17, Fox wrote that "Upon conversing with my sisters regarding the papers of Dr. Franklin, bequeathed by William T. Franklin Esq. to my father, we have concluded that they cannot be better disposed of than by presenting them to the society of which he was the founder."

The saga of the Franklin Papers at Champlost does not end there, however. Some papers, perhaps ones overlooked or not selected by Sparks, remained in the garret above a stable at the Fox estate. Mary D. Fox, sister of Charles, decided to sell the old papers to a paper mill to help finance the purchase of a new carpet in 1862. A houseguest, a certain Mrs. Holbrook, noticed that some of the papers

mentioned Franklin. Horrified that these were being carted off for pulping, Mrs. Holbrook asked to take some for herself, but not before one barrel already had gone to the paper mill. In 1903 this group of items was donated to the University of Pennsylvania by Mrs. Holbrook's son, George O. Holbrook; this gift was facilitated by Philadelphia physician S. Weir Mitchell.

After the death of Charles Pemberton Fox in 1866, his sister Mary continued to live at Champlost until her death in February, 1895. Following Miss Fox's death, caretaker Joseph Farrell and his family, who had already lived in the house for forty-five years, continued on in the same role and his daughter's wedding reception was held at the estate. During the summer the house was occupied by the T.B. Club, an organization of young working women. In 1902, it was sold to pay the debts of the estate and was purchased by a representative for Frances Butler Leigh, wife of James Wentworth Leigh, and daughter of Pierce Butler and the famous actress Fanny Kemble. Kemble's estate was adjacent to Champlost. Frances Butler Leigh regretted that the Fox family house and the original 1722 farmhouse first occupied by John Worrell could not be preserved.

A portion of the original Champlost estate is still preserved in the form of the 23-acre Fisher Park in the Olney section of Philadelphia. Joseph Wharton, founder of Swarthmore College, the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, and a co-founder of Bethlehem Steel, indicated his intention to purchase the property in 1904, and in December, 1908, he decided to bequeath it to the City of Philadelphia as a Christmas present for use as a park. The *Annual Report* of the City Parks Association records that the park was to be named in memory of his mother, Deborah Fisher Wharton. He died in January, 1909, before his wishes could be carried out, but his daughters made the donation in December, 1910. The main house, located in the center of the property, near the present intersection of 5th Street and Champlost Avenue, was demolished to make way for an extension of Fifth Street.

Champlost, owned by the Fox family for over 150 years, is remembered today largely because of the naming of Champlost Avenue, which bisects the former estate. Fisher Park is located in the 6000 block of North 5th Street near West Champlost Avenue.

# Franklin and Mortgages

By Robert E. Wright, Stern School of Business, New York University  
Part II

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*Editor's note: In the summer, 2009 issue of the **Gazette** Professor Wright introduced us to the financial history of the Colonial period, with particular emphasis on the mortgage crisis of the 1760s, in which many Colonists were severely hurt. Here is a recap of Part I.*

The types of mortgages then available were three: government mortgages, private mortgages callable by the lender after at most a few years, and private perpetual interest only mortgages called ground rents. In Franklin's time, ground rents were considered gilt-edged securities, as safe as British, and later U.S., government bonds. Ground rents differed from the subprime interest only mortgages of the present day in two important respects; first, ground rents had a much lower loan to value (LTV) ratios – from 25 to 75 percent generally -- so borrowers lost a bundle of their own money if they defaulted. Second, the owner of the ground rent payment stream had substantial recourse, including writs that empowered sheriffs to enter the property and take away and auction off goods to the value of the debt owed. If necessary, the ground lord could take title to the land and imprison the debtor until all debts and damages had been repaid. Few people were so daft as to suffer such a melancholy fate by defaulting on a mere interest payment.

Professor Wright argues that interest only loans *per se* are **not** evil and hence should **not** be banned or regulated into obscurity. Rather, the real culprits are high loan to value mortgages, regardless of the amortization schedule, and the lack of recourse in case of default. High loan to value means that even modest decreases in prices give borrowers ample incentive to default. The lack of recourse means that borrowers will be willing to take on much greater levels of speculative risk as all they have to fear is losing a property they personally have invested little or nothing in.

Franklin and his fellow Philadelphians did not enjoy mortgage markets that were superior to ours in every way. The short-term callable mortgage, the other type of private mortgage product available, was, in fact, a disaster waiting to happen. And happen that disaster did, in the 1760s. The callable mortgage was so bad, in fact, it played a major if hitherto unappreciated

role in the Imperial Crisis that ultimately culminated in 1776 with the Declaration of Independence.

The pathetic record of those harmed by the collapse of the mortgage market can be traced in the newspapers of the day.

Some of those who lost their property were clearly poor farmers.

... will be sold, by public **vendue** ... a certain log messuage and tenement, and track or piece of land, situate in the township of Douglass, in the county of Philadelphia, containing 27 acres of land, having besides the messuage, a log barn thereon erected ... taken in execution ...

Bucks county, December 26, 1767. ... will be sold, by public **vendue** ... ten acres of LAND, with a log house ... late the property of James Dougherty; seized and taken in execution ...

Others were members of Philadelphia's laboring classes.

... will be sold by public **Vendue** ... two certain Lots of Ground, situate in the District of Southwark aforesaid, containing in Front on Swanson street 30 Feet, and in Length or Depth 90 Feet, with an unfinished Tenement, and a Frame Stable thereon erected ... seized and taken in Execution ...

... will be sold by public **vendue** ... a certain two story brick kitchen, frame blacksmith shop, and lot or piece of ground thereunto belonging, situate on the east side of Third street, in the city of Philadelphia, containing in front, on said street, 19 feet 9 inches and in length of depth 75 feet ...

Widows were not immune.

New Castle County, August 25, 1766. ... will be exposed to Sale at public **Vendue** ... a certain large two Story Brick Messuage, and Lot of Ground, as also three other Lots, adjoining the Lands of Isaac Dushane, and others, all situate in the Town of St. George, and very commodious either for Tavern or Store; late the Property of the Widow Britt, seized and taken in Execution...

Mortgaged slaves were also victims of the bursting bubble:

On Monday, the 27th Instant, at John Downing Tavern, in East Caln Township, Chester County, at Three o'Clock, will be sold by **Vendue** , two likely, young, able NEGROE MEN, both excellent Farmers;

late the Property of Peter Valeau, seized in Execution, and to be sold by JOHN MORTON, **Sheriff** .

Morton, by the way, later signed the Declaration of Independence.

The rich, including professionals and merchants, suffered as well:

... will be sold, by public **vendue** ... a certain two story brick messuage or tenement, and two lots or pieces of ground thereunto belonging, situate in Marcus Hook, in the township of Lower Chichester, containing in front 40 feet each lot, and in depth 200 feet each, bounded by land of John Crawford; late the estate of Doctor Luke Scanlan; seized and taken in execution ...

BY Virtue of an Order of the Court of Common Pleas, for the County of Philadelphia ... will be sold by public **Vendue** , ... sundry Goods; consisting of A very large and neat Collection of MODERN BOOKS, Stationary Wares, Jewellery, and various other Articles, late the Property of ... James Rivington

Numerous farmers of substantial means also lost their farms:

... will be sold by publick **Vendue** ... A valuable Plantation, situate in the Township of Little Britain, in Lancaster County, containing 600 Acres of Land, with a good Dwelling house, Still house, Malt house, and other good Office Houses; a good bearing Orchard, and 20 Acres of fine Meadow, watered with a large Stream. The House under Licence for a House of Entertainment, where four great Roads meet, viz. from York Town to Christine Landing, from Lancaster to Annapolis, and divers Landings on the Head of Chesapeak Bay. Also on the said Tract, about Half a Mile from said Dwelling house, a compleat Merchant Mill, a good Stone House, two Stories high, 50 Feet by 30, two Pair of Stones, new rebuilt, every Thing done off in the best and compleatest Manner for Merchant and Country Work, and well situated for the same, with a constant Stream in the driest Seasons; about 27 Miles from Christine Landing, and within 10 Miles of navigable Water on Sasquehannah. The Property of James Gillespy, seized and taken in Execution by JOHN HAY, **Sheriff** .

Numerous ads suggest that every last scrap of property was up for sale:

TO Be sold at publick **Vendue** ... A Plantation ... also a Forge for making Bar iron, with 3 Fires, Coal houses, and Houses for Workmen to live in near the Forge, which is on the fine Stream called Alametunk, in a fine Part of the Country for Wood for making Coal. Also sundry Negroes, Men, Women and Children; Cows, Horses and Mares, one Iron bound Waggon, Sheep, Hogs, Feather Beds and Bedding -- AND HERE IS THE PHRASE THAT GETS ME -- with sundry other Household Goods too tedious to mention here; late the Property of Christopher Beckman, seized and taken Execution ...

Even crops in the field could be seized and sold:

Chester, September 21, 1766. ... Also will be sold, the Day and Place aforesaid, Cows, Horses, Beds and Bedding, a Quantity of Wheat in the Sheaf, about 18 Acres of good Indian Corn in the Ground, with Implements of Husbandry, &c. late the Property of John Roberts, seized and taken in Execution ...

Industry also stumbled:

... will be exposed to sale, by public **vendue** ... at Martick Furnace, in Lancaster county, the said furnace and forge together with upwards of 3,400 acres of land, thereunto belonging: The improvements at both furnace and forge are very good, viz. at the FURNACE, a good dwelling house, stores, and compting house, a large coal house, with eight dwelling houses for the labourers, a good grist mill, Smith and Carpenter shops, 6 good log stables, with 4 bays for hay, a number of pot patterns, and some flasks for ditto, stove moulds, &c. &c. a good mine bank, abounding with plenty of ore, so convenient, that one team can haul three loads a day, about 15 acres of good watered meadow, and as much adjoining may be made: The FORGE is about 4 miles distant, now in good order, with four fires, two hammers, and very good wooden bellows, a dwelling house, store and compting house, with six dwelling houses for the labourers, two very good coal houses, large enough to contain six months stock, three stables, Smith and Carpenter shops, two acres of meadow made, and about 1500 cords of wood cut in the woods at both places; there is plenty of water at said works in the driest seasons, and they are situated in a plentiful part of the country, where they can be supplied with necessaries on the lowest terms: ... seized and taken in execution ...

Ships went under the gavel as did entire islands:

... will be exposed to Sale, by public **Vendue**, an undivided Moiety of all that Island, called Little Tinicum, situate in the

River Delaware, opposite Great Tinicum, ... seized and taken in Execution at the suit of James McIlheney, and to be sold by SAMUEL BLACKWOOD, **Sheriff** .

Not even brewers were immune, which must have shocked Franklin, who while no alkie was far from a teetotaler.

... will be sold by public **vendue** ... the undivided moiety or equal half part (the whole into two equal parts to be divided) of and in a certain two story stone messuage or tenement, brew house and utensils of brewing, blacksmith shop, malt house and malt mill, and tract or piece of land, situate in the township of Abington, in the county of Philadelphia, containing 11 acres, and 93 perches; ... late the estate of Henry Forst, jun. seized and taken in execution ...

Figure 1, an index of sheriff's sale advertisements in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware during the 1760s, illustrates the scale of the destruction. By 1767, sheriff's sales were 13 times more common than in the decade's first three years. The sharp falloff in 1768 was due to a marginally improved economy and the fact that no blood remained to be squeezed from the stone. In most instances, it no longer paid to sue because forced sales yielded so little. For example, Peter Schuck of Hardwick, New Jersey, tried to collect on his accounts receivable by suing 25 of his debtors but in only 4 cases did he succeed in getting any money at all. "The rest I must get it by Execution," he glumly recounted. That outcome was so "very hard" he refused to file any more suits. "Such a time as never was known among people fore ther[e] is never a week but ther[e] are Some vendues of the Sheriffs and Constables So that I am Discouraged to Sue any more unless it is them which I think I am in Danger of loosing any money."

Apparently, Schuck was not alone. The increasing desperation of the sheriff sale advertisements themselves tell the tale:

"The Purchaser may have a considerable Time for the Payment of Three Hundred Pounds of the Purchase Money, paying Interest for the same."

"The purchaser on payment of 130 l. and giving the premises in security, may have reasonable credit for the remainder."

"Six Months Credit will be given for the major Part of the Purchase money."

"The purchaser of the above premises, on giving good security, may have credit for one half of the purchase money."

"Whereas there is a Mortgage on the Premises for One Thousand Pounds Principal, I am directed by the Mortgagee to inform the Purchaser, that his Money will not be wanted for two or three Years, mortgaging for Security."

"By consent of the plaintiff in the above suit, the premises will be sold on the following conditions, viz. the purchaser to pay one fourth part of the purchase money at the signing the deed, and the remainder in three years from the day of sale in equal yearly payments, with giving security, and paying interest."

"The purchaser, on paying down 125 l. may have a considerable time for the payment of the remainder, paying interest, and giving security, if required."

Even on such generous credit terms, many properties remained unsold because no bidders appeared or those who did could not raise the down payments that creditors demanded. In addition, some of those with cash refused to buy their neighbors' lands on the cheap.

Historians have long known about the macroeconomic disturbances of the 1760s but they underestimated their severity and missed their connection to the Imperial Crisis. All the ideological musings in the world, I contend, would not have turned the Stamp Act into the major turning point in Imperial relations that it proved to be. I uncovered intriguing evidence of this not long ago at the New Jersey Historical Society in Newark. Intermingled with a manuscript source on New Jersey's monetary policy in the late 1780s was a much earlier document, probably from 1768, that clearly noted the marginal nature of the Stamp Act: "I must observe that it is not the Stamp Act or New Duty Act alone that had put the Colonies so much out of humour -- tho the principal Clamour has been on that Head -- but *their distressed Situation had prepared them so generally to lay hold of these Occasions.*" *In other words, the Stamp Act was the straw that broke the camel's back, a camel already groaning under the weight of British macroeconomic mismanagement. Similarly, in his February 1766 hearing before the House of Commons Franklin explicitly fingered the trade restraints and currency act for the colonists' ill humor.*<sup>1</sup>

Apparently Franklin was not personally hurt by the real estate bubble and subsequent dislocations but he certainly knew of them, despite his extensive transatlantic travels. In March 1763, soon after returning to Philadelphia from London, Franklin noted that the "Rent of old Houses, and Value of Lands" had "trebled in the last Six Years."<sup>2</sup> In 1771, Stephen Crane of New Jersey reminded Franklin that "the landed Property of this Province, is reduced to near one half, the Value it was, seven or eight Years past." Crane went on to describe the high taxes and dearth of cash that plagued the colonies.<sup>3</sup> The following year, Franklin learned that

because of “the Sudden Change that took place in the Sale of Lands, ... and a Great Scarceity of Cash after the last War render’d lands almost unsaleable,” William Alexander of New York, a.k.a. Lord Stirling, was reduced to offering some of his considerable real estate holdings as prizes in a private *lottery*!<sup>4</sup>

Franklin apparently did not fancy callable mortgages, instead favoring ground rents and fixed-term amortizing mortgages. He purchased several Philadelphia properties on ground rent and serviced them for decades before extinguishing them by buying the contracts from the ground lord.<sup>5</sup> The lesson here is that borrowers ought to have the right to purchase their mortgages from the lender. In addition to serving as a refinancing mechanism, such a right prevents mortgage values from sinking unreasonably low in the secondary market. During the recent crisis, some mortgage backed securities in the United States sank to about 20 cents on the dollar. In Denmark, where borrowers can more easily purchase their own mortgages, the mortgage markets have withstood the shock in good stead

because homeowners bought up their own mortgages well before they hit 20 percent of their face value.

In his 1767 essay “Remarks and Facts Concerning American Paper Money,” Franklin suggested “lending small Sums to

The takeaway here, I believe, is that even governments can lend profitably on mortgage if they do not murder commonsense by making high LTV loans to persons of limited means. But even large, sophisticated financial institutions

***“the landed Property of this Province is reduced to near one half the Value it was seven or eight Years past.”***

**Stephen Crane to Franklin, 1771**

Beginners on easy Interest, to be repaid by Installments.” That sounded much like the mortgages granted by the General Loan Office or GLO, a government agency much praised for providing Pennsylvanians with mortgages on reasonable terms, reasonable both for the borrowers and for non-borrowing taxpayers. For 40 odd years, the provincial government subsisted almost entirely on a liquor tax and the profits from the GLO, which made 50 percent LTV loans at 5 percent to thousands of safe Pennsylvania borrowers.<sup>6</sup>

with their own money at stake cannot lend profitably at high LTV to NINJA borrowers who are not personally responsible for repayment – for the uninitiated, by the way, NINJA refers to borrowers with no income, no job or assets. If the government wants to increase the percentage of people who own their homes, it ought to think of ways of increasing after tax incomes and savings rates and lowering construction costs. I have plenty of thoughts on both, as did Franklin, but will have to save them for another time.

Sheriff's Sales Advertisements in the Middle Atlantic Colonies, 1760-1769

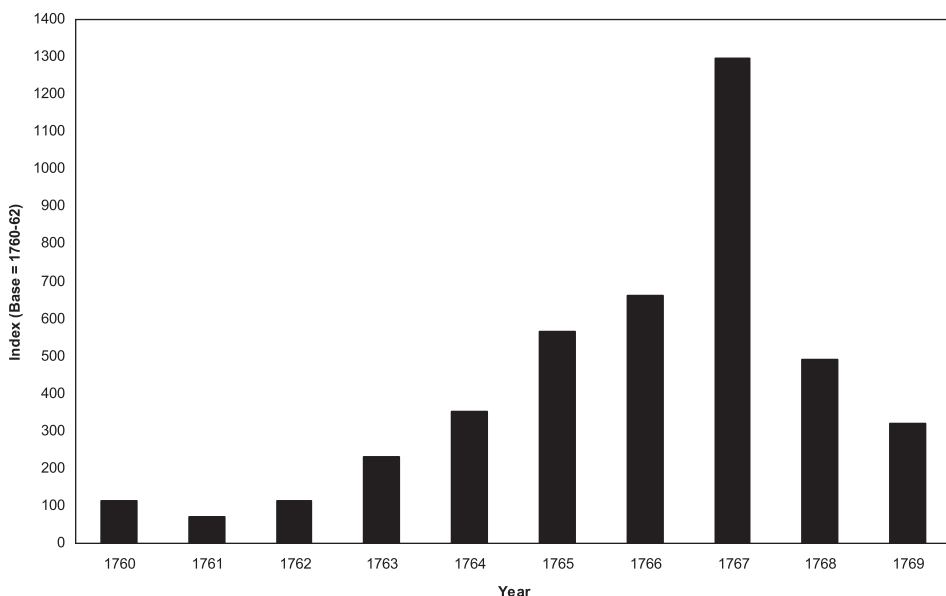


Figure 1

## Notes

(Endnotes)

- 1 As quoted in Skousen, ed., *The Completed Autobiography by Benjamin Franklin*, ii, p. 37. See pp. 41-42 for the Commons testimony.
- 2 Benjamin Franklin to Richard Jackson, March 8, 1763, *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, x, 209.
- 3 Stephen Crane to Benjamin Franklin, June 22, 1771, *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, xviii, 34-6.
- 4 William Alexander to Benjamin Franklin, June 30, 1772, *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, xix, 191-2.
- 5 <http://www.english.udel.edu/lemay/franklin/1741frame.html>; Deed, December 13, 1775, *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, xxii, 302.
- 6 Mary Schweitzer, *Custom and Contract: Household, Government, and the Economy in Colonial Pennsylvania* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

# In His Own Words

## How to Make Wine: “Make Advantage of the Blessings of Providence”



As Franklin was, we are always anxious to share practical and useful information. We offer this timely article from *Poor Richard*, 1743. At a time when the world financial crisis has made frugality chic, there are many vessels of home-bottled beverages in American cellars. Our times are not so different from Franklin's.

Although there was no wholesale conversion from beer to wine following the publication of this recipe in 1743, Americans certainly appreciated wine, and European wines were among the imports of the American colonies for decades before the Revolution. David Hancock's new book, *Oceans of Wine*, chronicles how commercial networks “expanded into social and political systems that became the conduits not only for wine, but also for ideas about reform, revolution, and independence.” (Yale University Press, August, 2009).

A number of recipes are among Franklin's papers, but no manuscript version of this one survives. Eager readers will ask if Franklin actually did make homemade wine—did he go out to gather wild grapes, as described here? Did he stain his feet with the juice as he counsels his readers in this piece? What were the results of the experiment? Obviously palatable enough to share with his readers! Is there a bottle of his homebrew still extant? Is one sitting in the cellar of some oenophile or among some collection rare Frankliniana?

“Friendly READER,

“Because I would have every Man make Advantage of the Blessings of Providence, and few are acquainted with the Method of making Wine of the Grapes which grow wild in our Woods, I do here present them with a few easy Directions, drawn from some Years Experience, which, if they will follow, they may furnish themselves with a wholesome sprightly Claret, which will keep for several Years, and is not inferior to that which passeth for French Claret.

“Begin to gather Grapes from the 10<sup>th</sup> of September (the ripest first) to the last

of October, and having clear'd them of Spider webs, and dead Leaves, put them into a large Molosses- or Rum-Hogshead; after having washed it well, and knock'd one Head out, fix it upon the other Head, on a Stand, or Blocks in the Cellar, if you have any, if not, in the warmest Part of the House, about 2 Feet from the Ground; as the Grapes sink, put up more, for 3 or 4 Days; after which, get into the Hogshead



bare-leg'd, and tread them down until the Juice works up about your Legs, which will be in les than half an Hour; then get out, and turn the Bottom ones up and tread them again, a Quarter of an Hour; this will be sufficient to get out the good Juice; more pressing wou'd burst the unripe Fruit, and give it an ill Taste: This done, cover the Hogshead close with a thick Blanket, and if you have no Cellar, and the Weather proves Cold, with two.

“In this Manner you must let it take its first Ferment, for 4 or 5 Days it will work furiously; when the Ferment abates, which you will know by its making less Noise, make a Spile-hole within six inches of the Bottom, and twice a Day draw some in a Glass. When it looks as clear as Rock-water, draw it off into a clean, rather than new Cask, proportioning it to the Contents of the Hogshead or Wine Vat;\* that is, if the Hogshead holds twenty Bushels of Grapes, Stems and all, the Cask must at least, hold 20 Gallons, for they will yield a Gallon per Bushel. Your Juice or Must \*\* thus drawn from the Vat, proceed to the second Ferment.

“You must reserve in Jugs or Bottles, 1 Gallon or 5 Quarts of the Must to every 20 Gallons you have to work; which you will use according to the following Directions.

“Place your Cask, which must be chock full, with the Bung up, and open twice every Day, Morning and Night; feed your Cask with the reserved Must; two Spoonfuls at a time will suffice, clearing the Bung after you feed it, with your Finger or a Spoon, of the Grape-stones and other Filth which the Ferment will throw up; you must continue feeding it thus until Christmas, when you may bung it up, and it will be fit for Use or to be rack'd into clean Casks or Bottles, by February.

“N.B. Gather the Grapes after the Dew is off, and in all dry Seasons. Let not the Children come at the Must, it will scour them severely. If you make Wine for Sale, or to go beyond Sea, one quarter Part must be distill'd, and the Brandy put into the three Quarters remaining. One Bushel of Grapes, heap Measure, as you gather them from the Vine, will make at least a Gallon of Wine, if good, five Quarts.

“These Directions are not design'd for those who are skill'd in making Wine, but for those who have hitherto had no Acquaintance with that Art.

\**Vat* or *Fatt*, a Name for the Vessel, in which you tread the Grapes, and in which the Must takes its first Ferment.

\*\**Must* is a Name for the Juice of the Vine before it is fermented, afterwards 'tis called Wine.”



## Calendar of Events

### November 27, 2009-July 4, 2010

The Minnesota History Center is mounting a small version of the Franklin tercentennial exhibit, "Benjamin Franklin in Search of a Better World" and the Bakken Museum in Minneapolis is reviving their exhibit on the Franklin and lightning rod. The tercentennial exhibit will travel to other venues according to the following schedule:

**December 16, 2010-March 13, 2011**  
Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, CA

**April 14-July 31, 2011**  
Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh

**September 2, 2011- January 8, 2012**  
Gerald Ford Museum, Grand Rapids, MI

**February 10-May 6, 2012**  
National Archives, Washington, DC.

### December 3, 2009

Lady Joan Reid, "Franklin and Climate Change" Benjamin Franklin House, 36 Craven St., London. Tickets £5/£3.50. Reserve a place by emailing [info@BenjaminFranklinHouse.org](mailto:info@BenjaminFranklinHouse.org)

### January 15, 2010

Celebration! of Benjamin Franklin, Founder. Contact Carol Smith, [cwsmith@verizon.net](mailto:cwsmith@verizon.net) for more information or visit : [www.ushistory.org/celebration](http://www.ushistory.org/celebration)

### January 25, 2010

Sally Jones, "Poor Richard's Almanack and how Franklin perfected the Genre" Benjamin Franklin House, 36 Craven St., London. Tickets £5/£3.50. Reserve a place by emailing [info@BenjaminFranklinHouse.org](mailto:info@BenjaminFranklinHouse.org)

### February 22, 2010

Deidre O'Sullivan Winks, "Franklin, his sister Jane and friend Polly" Benjamin Franklin House, 36 Craven St., London. Tickets £5/£3.50. Reserve a place by emailing [info@BenjaminFranklinHouse.org](mailto:info@BenjaminFranklinHouse.org)

## Franklin Tidbits

**Franklin and Journalism:** Franklin shows up pretty often in the blogosphere, but the humor web site, [cracked.com](http://cracked.com), is a little bit of an unusual place to find a criticism of his work. Two of his journalistic endeavors were featured in Erica Cantin's Aug. 27, 2009, story, "The 5 Ballsiest Lies Ever Passed Off as Journalism," which describes two of his hoaxes. Perhaps Ms. Cantin would be interested in Ralph Lerner's new book, mentioned in "Reading Franklin" in this issue?

**Franklin's Innovations in Printing Colonial Currency** was the title of Ellen R. Cohn's talk at the annual meeting of the Northeast Kingdom Typographical Congress in Portland, Maine in August. The theme of this year's meeting was Printing Currency.

**Franklin and Thomas Paine:** London was the setting for a September symposium, Transatlantic Revolutionaries: Jefferson and Paine in America, Britain and France. Philipp Ziesche, Assistant Editor of *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, spoke on "Paine, Franklin, and the Fate of Radical Cosmopolitanism," at Franklin's former residence on Craven Street, now Benjamin Franklin House.

**Franklin in the Digital Age:** You can follow the news from Benjamin Franklin House, Franklin's home in London, on Twitter.

**Franklin on Stage:** Franklin impersonator Christopher Lowell presented "An Evening with Benjamin Franklin" at the Crystal Theater in Norwalk, Conn. on Oct. 17. His monologue was followed by a question and answer session with the audience. For a live clip from one of his performances, click on <http://www.benfranklinlive.org>

**Franklin's work on electricity highlighted at the American Philosophical Society:** Peter Silverberg, a member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), discovered to his dismay that Franklin's work on electricity had never been memorialized in his adopted hometown. This member of the world's largest technical society decided to remedy the situation, and on August 7, before a standing-room only crowd, a plaque honoring the great man's *Experiments and Observations on Electricity* was unveiled. It will hang in the Library of the APS.

## Reading Franklin

Bernard Fay, *Franklin: the Apostle of Modern Times* (Kessinger Publishing, July, 2009). The 1929 edition, long out of print, has been reissued.

Peter Heering, Oliver Hochadel, and David J. Rhees, *Playing with Fire: Histories of the Lightning Rod* (American Philosophical Society, October, 2009). *Transactions of the APS*, vol. 99, part 5. Co-edited by Friend of Franklin, David Rhees.

Steven Johnson, "Green Ben: 250 Years Ago, Benjamin Franklin Started Thinking a Lot Like Al Gore. No One Listened to Him Either," *American History*, **xliv** (2009), 26-33. Johnson reviews the evidence for considering Franklin an environmentalist and a pioneer in the area of ecosystem science. It is the cover story for the August issue, which also includes a short illustrated article on Franklin's design of the fugio cent coin on p. 19: "Citizen Ben's Coin for a New Realm".

Ralph Lerner, *Playing the Fool: Subversive Laughter in Troubled Times* (University of Chicago Press, November, 2009). The publisher describes Lerner's work, which considers the work of six writers (one of them Franklin), as elucidating "the strategies these men employed to persuade the heedless, the zealous, and the overtly confident to pause and reconsider." Paul Rahe says that this book "tickles the fancy and tempts the mind."

Charles Turzak, *Benjamin Franklin: A Life in Woodcuts* (Dover Publications, paperback, December, 2009). This is a reproduction of the marvelous 1935 book, *Benjamin Franklin: a Biography in Wood Cuts* by graphic artist Turzak (1899-1986), with text provided by his wife Florence. Prof. David A. Berona of Plymouth State University, an expert on wordless books and woodcut novels, has written a new introduction. Turzak attended the Art Institute of Chicago and was employed by the Federal Art Project under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression. Turzak's stunning black and white wood block prints are a visual biography, while the brief text relies heavily on quotes from Franklin's own writings. For more information on the artist's fascinating career, click on: <http://home.earthlink.net/~turzak1/index.html>

Friend Chuck Hargis kindly draws the attention of all interested Friends to an article by Ianthe Jeanne Dugan in the Oct. 1 issue of the *Wall Street Journal* on Auray, France, the village that welcomed Franklin's return to the Old World in December, 1776. To read the article on this charming town in Brittany click on <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703787204574445071420232450.html>

# Math Puzzlers

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

**Problem # 11. Biography book.** A biography book about Ben Franklin has  $x$  number of pages. If ten less than ten times the sum of the digits of  $x$  equals their product and if five times  $x$  equals the square of the birthday number of the author in the year he died, what is the number of pages in this book?

Source: Inan. Answer: 845. Please note that the dot that appears in several places in the solution of Problem # 11 means multiplication. I didn't want to use  $x$  for multiplication because I thought it will get mixed up with the variable  $x$ .

Solution: Since 5 times  $x$  is a square number,  $x$  must be divisible by 5; therefore, the ones digit of  $x$  must either be 5 or 0. If  $x$  is a two-digit number represented by  $AB$ , then, the digits of  $x$  must satisfy  $10(A + B) - 10 = A \times B$ , or rewriting,  $A = 10(B - 1)/(B - 10)$ . Trying  $B = 0$  and 5, we find out that only  $x = 10$  satisfies this equation, but 5 times  $x$  which equals 50 is not a square number. Therefore, no two-digit solution exists. If  $x$  is a three-digit number represented by  $ABC$ , then, the digits of  $x$  must satisfy  $10(A + B + C) - 10 = A \times B \times C$ , or rewriting,  $A = 10(B + C - 1)/(B \times C - 10)$ . Using  $C$  to be either 0 or 5, we find out that  $x = 100, 485, 565, 655, 845$  satisfies this equation. Since 5 times  $x$  must be a square number, the correct answer is  $x = 845$  since  $5 \times 845 = 4225 = (65)^2$ . As an aside, the title of this biography book is *Benjamin Franklin* and the author's name is Carl Van Doren (1885-1950). This book was published in 1938 and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1939. Carl Van Doren died on July 18, 1950, 54 days before his 65th birthday on September 10th.

**Problem # 12. Ben's voyage.** Ben Franklin's return voyage from London to Philadelphia in 1726 took one more than an integer number which equals the square of the sum of its digits. How many days was his voyage?

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