

Franklin Gazette

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The History of The Friends of Franklin

By Martin Mangold, Founding Member,
Board of Directors, The Friends of Franklin, Inc.

Claude-Anne Lopez sat down on New Year's Day of 1978 and typed a response to my fan letter praising *The Private Franklin*. Typewritten letters were then relatively formal, but now seem steeped in personal contact and idiosyncratic details, direct from the gadget on the writer's desk.

Over those years I was not Claude's only correspondent -- fans of her books, lectures and visitors to the *Papers* at Yale alike found her to be a friendly, informative, and energetic Franklinian friend. This led directly to a letter I received dated June 15, 1988. On a perfect impact printer, with cutting edge word processing tools, Stuart Karu began:

"Dear Mr. Mangold: I am writing to you regarding a mutual friend, Benjamin Franklin. Your name was obtained with the help of the staff at the Franklin Papers and from others who share an interest in 'the good Doctor.' During a recent visit to Yale, the dedicated scholars at the Franklin Papers suggested that those of us with a true interest in Franklin should do what he would have done, i.e., form a society to share our mutual interest. That is the purpose of my letter, the establishment of a group of interested Franklinophiles, to be called, 'Friends of Franklin'. (Other name suggestions are welcomed)."

I gained the impression later that the heart of these conversations at Yale were between Stuart and Claude-Anne, and have always considered those two to be the prime movers in the creation of this group.

Follow-up letters from Stuart in July and September reported a good response, "with Philadelphia (appropriately) the preferred site for an initial meeting" to be held in October. In the meantime, Stuart invited the local respondents to meet at his home, which introduced us to his fabulous collection, since the heart of several public exhibitions.

The first meeting of "The Friends of Franklin Society" was held as planned on Friday, October 21, 1988 at the corner of Walnut and 36th streets, third floor, Room 5 of the Faculty Club at Penn. There were 27 attendees listed. After Stuart's opening, each of us made introductory comments. I met Deane Sherman again, that day, a "friend of Claude-Anne." Another highlight of this round was Dr. William Carr introduc-

ing himself as "the oldest delegate" at the meeting, as Franklin was at the Constitutional Convention. A discussion of objectives, goals, names, etc. settled on pursuing the name "Benjamin Franklin Association."

At lunch in Room B, Gordon Myers of Trenton and I performed my "Lament for a Squirrel" taken from Franklin's correspondence with Georgiana Shipley.

After lunch, the briefings: Claude Lopez reported on the *Papers* (volume 27 coming out in December). Leo LeMay reported on plans for his symposium "Reappraising Franklin", Mark Lloyd and Robert Daniels reported on other plans in Philadelphia. The discussion of "Projects for the Friends to Support" sought to strike a balance between the *Papers* of Benjamin Franklin project at Yale and the Craven Street project in London. The decision was made to focus more on the *Papers*, general awareness, and networking through a newsletter.

Finally, Mark Lloyd and Dan Traister gave us an informal tour of Franklin at the University of Pennsylvania. I remember the quiet cold moment as we encountered the large portrait of William Smith. The Friends started out honoring Franklin's legacy, and embracing his grudges.

An Executive committee having been named of Stuart Karu, Ed Carter, Lovell Elliott, Aaron Goldman, Frank Jones, Benjamin Franklin Kahn, Mark Lloyd, Claude Lopez, Marty Mangold, Deane Sherman and Dan Traister, Stuart called us to meet on November 30th at his office near the National Cathedral in Washington. Our agenda included organizational tasks, funding for the Franklin Papers, planning for a full meeting in April 1989, and other business. The bylaws of the Benjamin Franklin Guild were helpful for our discussion. We set membership types and dues, ranging from \$50 annually to lifetime memberships.

On April 15, 1989 our second full meeting of "The Benjamin Franklin Association" was held back at Penn. The Board of Governors and Officers was confirmed, with Stuart Karu, Chairperson, Martin Mangold, Vice Chairperson, Frank Jones, Treasurer and Daniel Traister, Secretary,

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Franklin Feted Around the World

Franklin birthday celebrations took place from coast to coast in January of 2011. In Portland, Oregon, on January 17th Electrical Engineering Professor Aziz Inan from University of Portland had three of his classes make triangular shaped palindrome paper hats to celebrate Franklin's 305th birthday as well as the 300th anniversary of his only palindrome birthday (1-17-1711). On each hat the students taped the special birthday number 1171711 at the center as well as Franklin's palindrome picture taken from Houdon's Franklin bust constructed in 1778.



University of Portland students with Professor Aziz Inan and their palindrome hats.

In Philadelphia on January 21, 2011 Celebration! of Benjamin Franklin, Founder, commemorated Franklin's birthday with its annual symposium, procession to the grave and luncheon. This year's theme, Pennsylvania Politics: Franklin to Rendell, juxtaposed Franklin's political problems with the Penns with today's contemporary issues in Pennsylvania politics. Morning seminar speakers included political columnist Dick Polman, Dr. Joseph Foster from Temple University's history department and Pennsylvania state representative, Josh Shapiro. For more photographs or video of the day's events go to: www.ushistory.org/celebration

In London on January 17th, the Franklin House in Craven Street installed the original blue plaque created by the Royal Society of the Arts in 1896 to mark the home of one of their early and famous members, Benjamin Franklin. Sadly it was cemented into place on the wrong building. A full account of its past and return to Craven Street can be found at [jamihttp://www.benjamin-franklinhouse.org/site/sections/news/default.htm](http://www.benjamin-franklinhouse.org/site/sections/news/default.htm)



Celebration! of Benjamin Franklin, Founder participants march to his grave to lay a wreath and franklinia branches. Photo by Doug Heller

Welcome to New Editors of The Franklin Papers

This past June The Papers of Benjamin Franklin welcomed two new staff members, Associate Editor Robert (Bob) Frankel and Assistant Editor Allegra Di Bonaventura.

Allegra completed a Ph.D. in History from Yale in 2008 and a J.D. from Yale Law School in 2002, during which time she specialized in early American social history and Anglo-American legal history. Her dissertation, a history of family and slavery in New England as told through the experience of one African-American family, will be published by W.W. Norton. At the Franklin Papers, Allegra brings a particular interest in legal, family and domestic issues. She has also been working on Franklin's correspondence with Samuel Chase and Francis Hopkinson.

Robert Frankel joined the Papers of Benjamin Franklin after having served in a similar capacity with two Washington, D.C.-based projects: the Documentary History of the Supreme Court of the United States, 1789-1800, and the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers. He is the author of *Observing America: The Commentary of British Visitors to the United States, 1890-1950* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2007). Bob grew up outside of Philadelphia, graduated from Cornell, and received his MA and PhD in history from Harvard.

Our Front Cover Image Explained

Using a childhood illustration of Benjamin Franklin from Ingri (1904-1980) and Edgar (1898-1986) Parin d'Aulaire's juvenile biography, *Benjamin Franklin* (Doubleday, 1950), Aziz Inan from the University of Portland created the palindrome picture to celebrate the 300th anniversary of Franklin's only palindrome birthday* in his lifetime which occurred on January 17, 1711 (1-17-1711), when he turned five years old.

*A. S. Inan, "Palindrome Dates in Ben Franklin's Life," *Franklin Gazette*, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 4-5, Summer 2010.

The History of The Friends of Franklin

Mr. Lloyd, Mrs. Lopez and Mrs. Sherman.

The first major project concerned out-of-print volumes of the *Papers*. For example, volume 22 of the *Papers* was reported with a current stock of zero. The sales indicated 159 unsold copies, but they were nowhere to be found. This project came to fruition, and I always felt we had a connection to volume 22. There was a committee break-out, followed by briefings on the 1990 conferences.

At lunch, Anne-Stovall Charrier and I performed "POOR RICHARD sings of his Country Wife JOAN", which was, I am quite certain, the first time Franklin's "Plain Country Joan" lyrics were sung to its correct original tune in over a century.

On April 28, Stuart informed us that our offices would be housed at the University of Pennsylvania, and the name "Benjamin Franklin Associates" was too close to a Penn organization, so we were changing our name back to the original "Friends of Franklin." Stuart's July 26, 1989 letter had the new "Friends of Franklin" letterhead, but the enclosure was the real star: Volume I, Number 1 of the *Franklin Gazette*, edited by Claude-Anne Lopez. That first number included photos from our first meeting the previous October, including Ralph Archbold in costume and character.

For twenty years, I have been struck by the beauty of the layout and printing of this newsletter (appropriate for an organization honoring a printer). The newsletters themselves, available elsewhere on this website (www.friendsoffranklin.org), carry the history of our group from these early days to the present.

It's been a pleasure to be a part of the Friends of Franklin through its first 22 years. The technology has evolved, from Claude-Anne's beautiful typing to the published files online today, but the spirit of friendship and shared admiration of "the good Doctor" has been consistent throughout.