IN 1801, in his last book, *Le Voyage dans la haute Pensylvanie et dans l'état de New York*, Crèvecoeur cited Franklin three times as a source for information. The two men had known each other during the last years of Franklin's life, from 1782 to 1790, and had corresponded frequently. Consequently it is not surprising to see Franklin's name on the list of prominent Americans whom Crèvecoeur acknowledged as authorities for much of the material used in the *Voyage*. One must be careful, however, about accepting as true Crèvecoeur's statements concerning his authorities, for the author of the English *Letters from an American Farmer* and *Sketches of Eighteenth Century America* frequently did not in his *Voyage* tell the truth about his sources and sometimes did not even name them. It can be shown, for instance, that the *Voyage* used Dr. William Smith and William Bartram for material claimed to have been taken from a certain Frederick Hazen and a certain Senator B ** * of Georgia; it can also be shown that, along with other books, Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* and Jonathan Carver's *Travels* supplied Crèvecoeur with other data for which no source was named.

The fact that Crèvecoeur's *Voyage* is not entirely original—though most of it undoubtedly was based on the author's own experiences—is not extremely important, for one does not need to read long in the early travel literature of America to discover how

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much the writers of that genre plagiarized each other. What is important is the fact that Crevecoeur's unusual and peculiar habit of making misleading statements about his sources has led many biographers of Benjamin Franklin into what is certainly an error.

Two of the three passages attributed by Crevecoeur to Franklin were taken from prominent books on America, and the third, though it came from Franklin, was obtained under conditions other than those stated in the *Voyage*. In a discussion of the northwest winter winds that bring such cold weather to the eastern states, Crevecoeur asserted that, "Un jour que je demandais au docteur Franklin quelle pouvait être la cause d'un effet aussi puissant, voici ce qu'il me répondit." But the doctor's supposed reply—an analysis of the origin of the winds in question—turns out to be a close reworking of a passage in Carver's *Travels*.

Elsewhere the *Voyage* has a three-page essay on the Gulf Stream, the contents of the essay coming, the author said, from Benjamin Franklin. Crevecoeur, to show his one-time friendship with the great man, prefaced his treatise with the statement, "J'ai souvent entendre dire à ce personnage. . . ." However, the material in the *Voyage* is simply a translation sometimes free, often word for word, of a part of Franklin's paper read before the Philosophical Society on December 2, 1785, when Crevecoeur was in France. This paper, entitled "Maritime Observations," was translated and published in France in 1787, accompanied by Franklin's chart of the Gulf Stream, drawn at the later date. Crevecoeur evinced a knowledge of the chart when he outlined the complete course of the Stream, giving information not contained in Franklin's original paper.

These two instances of Crevecoeur's misstatements about his use of Franklin have been given in order to show that the author of the *Voyage*, writing in French for Frenchmen, was inclined to make a display of his former friendship with Franklin, the American most popular in France. The third use of Franklin's name is

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evidently another attempt at display and is the cause of the error in a number of Franklin biographies.

In the second chapter of the first volume of the *Voyage*, Crèvecoeur claimed to have made a journey to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1787 in the company of Benjamin Franklin to attend the ceremonies at the founding of Franklin College. While there, the aged governor was supposedly persuaded to air his views on three subjects: (1) the origins of the North American Indians, (2) the possibility of their being native to the western hemisphere, and (3) the newly discovered remains of ancient fortifications and tombs. This chapter, an essay on some of the most discussed subjects of the day, has been used by Franklin scholars to help fill the gaps in his last years. The only part of the *Voyage* to have been translated and published in English, it was inserted in Duyckinck’s well known anthology,\(^6\) transferred in its entirety from there to one biography of Franklin,\(^7\) and then adopted as an important source of material for other biographers.\(^8\) Carl Van Doren, the latest and best biographer, was the first to discover that Franklin could not have been in Lancaster on June 6, 1787, since on that day he attended a meeting of the Executive Council in Philadelphia and ate dinner with George Washington.\(^9\) Another scholar has pointed out that Crèvecoeur himself could not have attended the ceremonies at Franklin College because on June 6, 1787, he was on a ship sailing from France to America.\(^10\)

Though neither Franklin nor Crèvecoeur was at Lancaster for the dedication of the college, Crèvecoeur could easily have read of the event in the newspapers and assumed that Franklin was present. At any rate, he adopted the time, the place, and the man and invented the speech by using facts from earlier books on America.

Among the sources most used by Crèvecoeur in the *Voyage* are William Bartram, Jonathan Carver, and Gilbert Imlay, who included in his book writings by Filson, Hutchins, and Heart. These

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\(^{8}\) Cf., for example, Bernard Fay, *Franklin, the Apostle of Modern Times* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1929), p. 507.


writers provided the materials used in the composition of the speech said to be Franklin's. Franklin, no doubt, knew Carver's book, but Bartram did not publish until 1791 and Imlay not until 1792, both dates later than Franklin's death but previous to the publication of Crèvecoeur's *Voyage.*

The discussions of the first two of the three subjects Franklin was supposed to have treated are short and amount to a simple retelling of the then current theories and knowledge concerning the Esquimaux, the southern Indians and their emigration from Mexico, and the Bering Strait crossing and eastward migration of the other Indians. For his third topic, ancient fortifications and mounds, the venerable speaker is reported to have stated that he would repeat the "reflections which occurred" to him while "reading the papers lately presented to our philosophical society by Generals Varnum and Parsons, and Captains John Hart and Sergeant." The "reflections" turn out to be largely a collection of facts, facts so ordered that even a Franklin would need quite a few notes in his hands to give them, and the arrangement is found to be such that Imlay—chiefly Heart and Filson—and Bartram would have to be used in taking the notes. The following sample quotations will show that the information had to be the result of

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That Crèvecoeur knew Filson's *Kentucky* and Hutchins' description of the Ohio country before he could have seen them in Imlay is attested by his footnote on the *Kentucky* in his *Lettres d'un cultivateur américain* (Paris: Cuchet, 1787), III, 422, and by his description of Hutchins' book in *ibid.,* pp. 393-94. Cf. Rice, *op. cit.,* p. 32, for the account of Crèvecoeur's part in the publication of Filson in French as *Histoire de Kentucke* (Paris: 1785).

Heart's first paper on the antiquities of North America was published in the *Columbian Magazine.* Cf. Gilbert Imlay, *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* (London: 1792), p. 297. Crèvecoeur reproduced it as part of the eighth chapter of Volume Three of the *Voyage.* The second essay by Heart, the one written for Imlay's book, is the one Crèvecoeur had Franklin give evidence of knowing. It does not repeat the material contained in the earlier paper. O. F. Emerson, "Notes on Gilbert Imlay, Early American Writer," *PMLA, XXXIX* (June, 1924), 406-39, quotes from Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters from Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (London: 1796) to show that she was a friend of Crèvecoeur's and that Imlay and the American Farmer were acquaintances. Emerson attempts to show the similarity between Imlay's *Description* and Crèvecoeur's earlier *Letters,* a similarity not nearly so obvious as that between the *Description* and the later *Voyage.*

Duyckinck, *op. cit.,* p. 176. Since Duyckinck's English translation of the speech attributed to Franklin is much more easily obtained than the original French version, all references to the speech in the present paper, unless otherwise stated, will be made to Duyckinck.
careful documentation and could not have been thrown off ex-
temporaneously.

Almost the whole of the peninsula of Muskinghum is occupied by a vast fortified camp. It is composed of three square enclosures; the central one, which is the largest, has a communica-
tion with the former bed of the river, whose waters appear to have retreated nearly three hundred feet. These inclosures are formed by ditches and parapets of earth. (Duyck-
ink, p. 176.)

Two other camps have been likewise discovered in the neighborhood of Lexington. The area of the first is six acres, that of the second, three. The fragments of earthenware which have been found in digging are of a composition unknown to our Indians. (Ibid.)

On Paint Creek, a branch of the Scioto, there has been found a series of these fortified inclosures, extending as far as the Ohio, and even south of that river. (Ibid.)

Similar works have been discovered on the two Miamis, at a distance of more than twenty miles, and likewise on Big Grave Creek. These last are only a series of elevated redoubts on the banks of these rivers at unequal distances apart. (Ibid.)

These works on the Muskinghum are very extensive, and evidently mark the ingenuity of man in very remote and former ages. They consist of three distinct squares, communicat-
ing with each other by a covered way, and again by another covered way 200 yards in length, connecting the largest and principal square with the old bed of the Muskinghum river, whence the present river is distant, in some places, about 100 yards. These squares are formed by a ditch and parapet. . . . (Imlay, p. 21.)

In the neighborhood of Lexington, the remains of two ancient fortifica-
tions are to be seen, furnished with ditches and bastions. One of these contains about six acres of land, and the other nearly three . . . Pieces of earthen vessels have been plowed up near Lexington, a manufacture with which the Indians were never ac-
quainted. (Filson in Imlay, pp. 368-69.)

. . . on a branch of the Scioto, called Paint creek, are works much more considerable than those at Grave creek, or Muskingum, a mound much larger, a greater variety of walls, ditches, and enclosures, and covering a much greater extent of country; that they continue for nearly 60 miles along the Scioto to its junction with the Ohio. (Heart in Imlay, p. 298.)

The next works of note are on the great Miami, about 20 miles from its junction with the Ohio. (Ibid.) . . . The works at Grave creek . . . are very similar to those at the mouth of Muskingum. The continuation of works each way consists of square

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33 The statement here is confusing, though Duyckinck translated the original (Voyage, I, 31) correctly, for Crevecoeur should have said, in reference to the great Miami, "at a distance of more than twenty miles from its mouth," as he did say elsewhere. (Voyage, I, 361.)

34 That part of Heart's description of the works at Big Grave Creek not used here was used in a note by Crevecoeur. (Voyage, I, 361-62.) Following the description of the works at Big Grave Creek, Crevecoeur had Franklin mention briefly the embankments along the Mississippi River, at Byo Pierre and at Lake Peppin. His information perhaps came from Imlay, pp. 298-99, and from Carver, p. 35, whom he speaks of as having discovered the entrench-
ments at Lake Peppin.
The barrows lately discovered in Kentucky and elsewhere, are cones of different diameters and heights; ... The first row of bodies lies upon flat stones, with which the whole of the bottom is paved: these are covered over with new layers, serving as beds for other bodies placed like the former, and so on to the top. As in the fortifications on the Muskinghum, we meet with no signs of mortar, and no traces of the hammer. (Ibid.)

Near Lexington are to be seen sepulchres, full of human skeletons, which are thus fabricated. First on the ground are laid large broad stones; on these were placed the bodies, separated from each other by broad stones, covered with others, which serve as a basis for the next arrangement of bodies. In this order they are built, without mortar, growing still narrower to the height of a man. (Filson in Imlay, p. 324.)

The next part of the speech attributed to Franklin is a listing of all the ancient works in the southern part of what is now the United States, with brief comments on the type of works found at each place. Crévecoeur here apparently summarized another essay on Indian antiquities found in the same volume of the Voyage.

At the conclusion of his review of all the known Indian antiquities east of the Mississippi River, Franklin—or, rather, Crévecoeur—made a number of comments and posed a number of questions which are said to be unanswerable. Heart, in Imlay, had made the same comments and asked the same questions.

At what period, by what people, were these works constructed? What degree of civilization had this people reached? Were they acquainted with the use of iron? What has become of them. (Duyckinck, pp. 176-177.)

Who these inhabitants were, who have left such traces; from whence they came, and where they now are; are questions to which we never, perhaps, can find any other than conjectural answers. (Heart in Imlay, p. 299.)

This ancient people must have had chiefs, and been subject to laws; for without the bonds of subordination, how could they have collected and kept together so great a number of workmen? They must have been acquainted with agriculture, since the products of the chase would never have sufficed to support them. (Ibid., p. 177.)

... the people who constructed them were not altogether in an uncivilized state: they must have been under the subordination of law, a strict and well-regulated police, or they could not have been kept together in such numerous bodies ... they were not constructed by people who procured the necessaries of life by hunting: a number sufficient to carry on such works never could have subsisted in that way. (Ibid.)
... this people must have been much further advanced in civilization than our Indians. (Ibid.)

... this country was formerly inhabited by a nation farther advanced in the arts of life than the Indians. (Ibid., p. 200.)

When he had finished his discourse on the Indians and their antiquities, Franklin is said to have pondered the possibilities to be unearthed in a continuance of such studies. "What a field for reflection!" he mused. "Were it not for my advanced age, I would myself cross the mountains to examine those old military works." Parton, the first Franklin biographer to accept Crèvecoeur's statements as being authentic, concluded his printing of Duyckinck's translation of the speech with the observation that a display of such knowledge at such an advanced age could only be "an argument for the immortality of the soul."15

15 Parton, op. cit., II, 559.