

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

*By Charles Willson Peale*

*Courtesy Historical Society of Pennsylvania*

# PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY

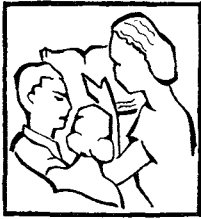
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## FRANKLIN'S PAPERS AND THE PAPERS OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

BY WHITFIELD J. BELL, JR.\*



THE National Historical Publications Commission in 1951 listed sixty-six Americans of various professions and occupations whose papers, in its view, are "of such outstanding importance that they need to be published and ought to be published in the reasonably near future" to provide new insights into American history. At the top of the list was the name of Benjamin Franklin.<sup>1</sup> This judgment was one in which many historians concurred. No American of the eighteenth century, if, indeed, of any century, touched his age, at more points or made a more significant or varied contribution to it than Franklin. His career and character personified the dual orientation of America—as the child of Europe and as something unique in history—and might therefore be expected to explain America to itself and the world. Furthermore, so much material had been brought to light in the preceding half-century, and so much can now be made easily available that lies in small or remote depositories, that Albert H. Smyth's edition of Franklin's writings is no longer adequate, even when supplemented by collections like the Franklin-Jackson correspondence

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<sup>1</sup>National Historical Publications Commission, *A National Program for the Publication of the Papers of American Leaders: A Preliminary Report to the President of the United States* (Washington, 1951), 10-11, 28-29.

and Verner Crane's *Benjamin Franklin's Letters to the Press*.<sup>2</sup> Franklin at mid-century required nothing less than a comprehensive edition of his writings, prepared according to the standards of mid-twentieth-century scholarship.

Such an edition is now being prepared. Individuals had discussed a new edition of Franklin even before the report of the National Historical Publications Commission was issued. That report stimulated discussion in wider circles. In 1953 a plan was drafted, when Yale University, custodians of the rich William Smith Mason Collection of Franklin printed material, approached the American Philosophical Society, custodians of the largest collection of Franklin manuscripts, and proposed a merger which would enable the two institutions to go forward jointly with the preparation of a comprehensive edition of the writings of Benjamin Franklin. To meet the cost of gathering and editing the papers, Yale offered \$425,000, which had been promised to the University for this purpose by *Time*, Inc., on behalf of *Life Magazine*, and the Society, which had spent a quarter of a million dollars in the preceding twenty years to subsidize Franklin studies and buy Frankliniana, voted to add \$175,000 as its share. The two institutions announced their joint sponsorship of the project on the anniversary of Franklin's death, January 17, 1954.<sup>3</sup>

The responsible administrative authority of the enterprise is a board of seven persons, of whom three were appointed by the president of the American Philosophical Society, three by the president of Yale University, and one by the two presidents jointly.<sup>4</sup> As editor the Board appointed Leonard M. Labaree,

<sup>2</sup> Albert H. Smith, ed., *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (10 v., New York, 1905-1907); Carl Van Doren, ed., *Letters and Papers of Benjamin Franklin and Richard Jackson, 1753-1785* (Philadelphia, 1947); Verner W. Crane, ed., *Benjamin Franklin's Letters to the Press, 1758-1775* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1950).

<sup>3</sup> For brief, clear statements on the origin and scope of the project see Leonard W. Labaree, "The Papers of Benjamin Franklin," *Manuscripts*, VII (1954), 36-39, and William E. Lingelbach, "'The Papers of Benjamin Franklin' and the American Philosophical Society," *American Philosophical Society, Proceedings*, to be published in 1955.

<sup>4</sup> The members are William E. Lingelbach, librarian of the American Philosophical Society; Roy F. Nichols, professor of history and dean of the Graduate School, University of Pennsylvania; Richard H. Shryock, director of the Institute of the History of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University; Frederick B. Adams, director of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City; James T. Babb, librarian of Yale University; Chester Kerr, secretary of the Yale University Press, which will publish the volumes; and Walter M. Whitehill, director of the Boston Athenaeum.

Farnam Professor of History in Yale University; and there are an assistant editor, two research assistants, and a secretary. The principal editorial office is at New Haven; the assistant editor's office is at Philadelphia.<sup>5</sup> Additional help of routine character is provided by Yale undergraduate bursary students; and it is likely that much of the transcribing of photostats will be done by other part-time assistants.

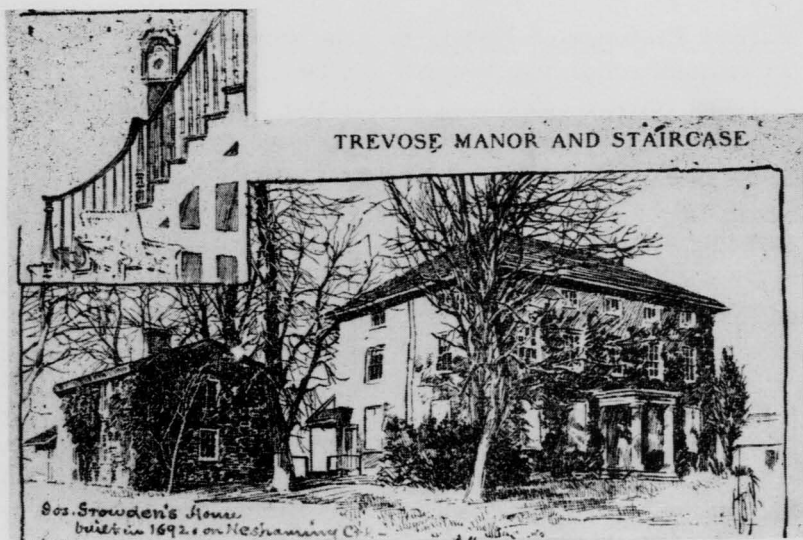
An Editorial Advisory Committee of five scholars has been named by the Administrative Board on nomination by the editor. As their name suggests, their duty is to be consulted by the editors individually and collectively on editorial matters. This committee meets at the call of the editor.<sup>6</sup> There is, in addition, a Co-operating Committee of thirty-one persons, chiefly librarians, scholars, and others interested in Franklin and this project, not only in the United States but in Great Britain and France. It is unlikely that this committee will meet as a body, although its members will be called on for advice and other aid.

The purpose of this vast undertaking is to collect, edit, and publish all the letters, other papers and writings by and to Benjamin Franklin. The editors estimate that between 25,000 and 30,000 pieces are extant. Of this number more than half is in the library of the American Philosophical Society. Impressive as this mass of manuscripts is, it would certainly have been yet more staggering had Franklin's papers not been scattered, and some of them destroyed, during the Revolution, and had his grandson, to whom they were bequeathed, been more careful of them. Indeed, when one recalls the fate of Franklin's papers, the marvel is that any great block of them survives at all.

When Franklin went abroad in the fall of 1776, he entrusted his papers to an old friend of former days, Joseph Galloway. The papers were deposited for safekeeping at Galloway's Bucks County home, Trevoise. A few months later Galloway sought the protection of the British authority in America; in the winter of

<sup>5</sup> The editors will be grateful for information about Franklin letters in print or manuscript. Mr. Labaree's address is 230 Sterling Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.; Mr. Bell's is American Philosophical Society Library, 127 South Fifth Street, Philadelphia 6, Pa.

<sup>6</sup> The committee is composed of Samuel Flaggs Bemis, Yale University; Lyman H. Butterfield, Massachusetts Historical Society; I. Bernard Cohen, Harvard University; Robert E. Spiller, University of Pennsylvania; and Lawrence C. Wroth, John Carter Brown Library, Providence, R. I.



### JOSEPH GALLOWAY'S HOME

*where Franklin's papers were sent for safekeeping but suffered loss, 1778.*

1777-1778 he returned to Philadelphia where Sir William Howe appointed him to several civil posts. Franklin, when he heard that Galloway had thrown in his lot with the British, anxiously inquired "what became of the Chest of Papers I put into Mr. Galloway's Hands. . . . [It] contain'd all my political Correspondence & some valuable Manuscripts."<sup>7</sup> Franklin's apprehensions were not groundless. Trevoſe was sacked and its contents strewn and destroyed. As soon as he learned of the raid, Franklin's son-in-law, Richard Bache,

went up thither, & found that it [the trunk] had been broke open, & emptied, the papers scattered, some in the house & some out of doors, many of the latter having suffered from the weather; I collected all that I could find, put them in the Trunk, & had them brought home, but the Manuscript books you speak of are missing, & I suppose, so are many other valuable papers; what I have recovered shall be taken care of, but they are at present in a confused state.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Franklin to Bache, May 22, 1777, Yale University Library.

<sup>8</sup> Bache to Franklin, June 20, 1781, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. In a letter to her father, October 22, 1778, Sarah Bache had been more reassuring: "the lid was broke open and some few taken off the top." American Philosophical Society.

The loss of his papers was deeply distressing to Franklin. Repeatedly he urged Bache to check further. "Do not you think it possible, by going up into that Country, and enquiring a little among the Neighbours, you might possibly hear of, and recover some of them?" Bache took the suggestion, but without result.<sup>9</sup> Still hoping to recover his papers, Franklin asked his young friend Benjamin Vaughan to call on Galloway, now an expatriate in England; but Galloway knew nothing about them.<sup>10</sup> Except for what Richard Bache recovered from the floors and lawns of Trevoise, Franklin's letters, letter-books, and other manuscripts from the period before 1775 were irretrievably lost.

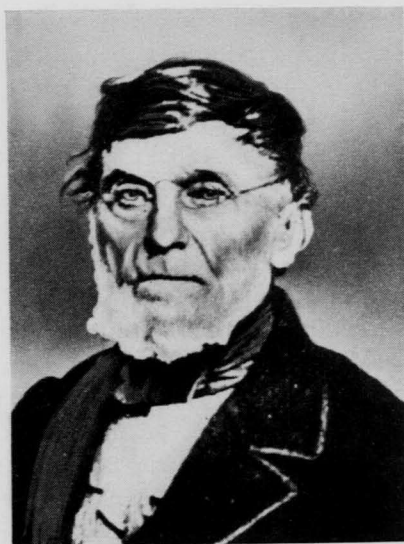
The papers which he accumulated during the nine years of his ministry in France, Franklin brought home in 1785, and these were added to those which Bache had rescued at Trevoise a few years before. When Franklin died in April, 1790, his grandson, William Temple Franklin, inherited his grandfather's papers and books. Temple Franklin divided his literary legacy into two parts. One he carried to London in 1791, intending to publish an edition of his grandfather's works. The other part of Franklin's papers Temple left in Philadelphia with a friend and companion of student days, George Fox. By William Temple Franklin's will in 1823 these Franklin papers passed to Fox absolutely, and from George Fox they descended to his son, Charles P. Fox.

Mr. Fox showed no other interest in the papers than to box and bundle them and place them in a dry place in the garret of Champlost, his country place near the city. Other persons, however, more historically-minded than their owner, were keenly aware of the Fox archive. Henry D. Gilpin told Jared Sparks about the collection when the Bostonian came to Philadelphia in 1831 gathering material for his *Writings* of Washington and other studies of the Revolutionary period. Gilpin introduced Sparks to Fox, who conducted him to Champlost, where he "found several trunks and boxes" of Dr. Franklin's books and papers, together with various pieces of electrical apparatus, drawings, "and a great variety of other things," all "in perfect disorder." Six years

<sup>9</sup> Franklin to Bache, September 13, 1781, Smyth, *Writings*, VIII, 305; Bache to Franklin, December 2, 1781, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Vaughan to Jared Sparks, March 15, 1830, Sparks MSS., Harvard University.

later, when he was well into his edition of Franklin's writings, Sparks made a more extended examination of the Fox collection, organizing and selecting two trunksful, which he took away to study and copy.<sup>11</sup> At Sparks' urging, Mr. Fox presented the entire collection to the American Philosophical Society in 1840. Number-



CHARLES P. FOX OF CHAMPLOST

*who presented the Franklin papers to the American Philosophical Society,  
1840.*

ing upwards of 13,000 pieces, these manuscripts are the cornerstone of the steadily-growing collection of Franklin materials in the Society's library.<sup>12</sup>

Not all the Champlost manuscripts, however, went to the American Philosophical Society. Mr. Fox had previously extracted a hundred letters to Franklin from his wife and other members of his family, which he gave to Dr. Franklin Bache. These letters descended in widening circles through the Bache family until recent years, when many were sold in several public and private

<sup>11</sup> Henry D. Gilpin to Sparks, February 23, 1831; Sparks, Diary, March 11, 1831, April 10, 13, 17, 1837, Sparks MSS.

<sup>12</sup> I. Minis Hays, ed., *Calendar of the Papers of Benjamin Franklin in the Library of the American Philosophical Society* (5 v., Philadelphia, 1908), I, vii-viii.

sales, and acquired by the Society, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and private collectors.<sup>13</sup>

One other lot of letters did not go from the Champlost garret to the American Philosophical Society Library. Some bundles were overlooked when the transfer was made, and became intermingled with the Fox family papers. More than twenty years later, in 1862, the garret was being cleaned and the old papers sold for pulp, when Mrs. Holbrook, a house guest, watching the carting operation, protested that such valuable papers as Franklin's should be preserved. Her host graciously replied that she might have them, if she wished them. Forty years later this collection, numbering upwards of eight hundred printed and manuscript items, was acquired by Dr. S. Weir Mitchell for the University of Pennsylvania.<sup>14</sup>

The fate of that portion of Dr. Franklin's papers which Temple Franklin took to London in 1791 was equally precarious. Its very existence, for a period, was entirely unknown. Jared Sparks, for example, inquired after it vainly. After Temple Franklin had published his edition of his grandfather's works in 1817-1818, the original manuscripts no longer had any value or interest for him, and he deposited them in a chest, which he left with his banker in London. Some time after Temple's death in 1823, his widow claimed the trunk. What she did with its contents is not known. But in 1840 an acquaintance of Temple Franklin, described by Henry Stevens merely as "an officer under government," discovered the manuscripts—or what remained of them—lying on a shelf in a tailor's shop above which Temple and he had once lived. The tailor seems to have found the heavy old paper suited to cutting patterns.<sup>15</sup> This anonymous civil servant recognized the importance and value of Franklin's papers at once, acquired possession, and offered them first to the British Museum, then to the Foreign Office, and finally to a succession of American ministers in London. All were under the impression the collection contained nothing

<sup>13</sup> American Philosophical Society, *Yearbook for 1938* (Philadelphia, 1939), 77-78.

<sup>14</sup> J. G. Rosengarten, "Some New Franklin Papers. A Report . . . to the Board of Trustees," University of Pennsylvania, *Alumni Register*, VII (1903), 498-504. This collection is calendared in Hays, *Calendar*, IV, 399-510.

<sup>15</sup> Herbert B. Adams, *The Life and Writings of Jared Sparks* (2 v., Boston, 1893), II, 521.



Temple Franklin had not printed, and none would buy. About 1850, however, Abbott Lawrence directed the owner of the papers to Henry Stevens of Vermont, now in business in London as a dealer in Americana for the British Museum and several American collectors and libraries. Three days later Stevens bought the Franklin collection.<sup>16</sup>

News of the reappearance of this body of Franklin manuscripts—numbering three thousand pieces—spread immediately to America. Jared Sparks wanted to examine them with a view to publishing a supplement to his own edition; and Stevens was not at first averse from this idea. Meanwhile he was sorting and cataloguing the manuscripts, mounting and binding them in a series of handsome volumes. Before he could send them to Sparks, however, or dispose of them otherwise, Stevens pledged them as collateral for a loan, and for more than twenty years more the papers remained inaccessible to scholars in a London bank vault.<sup>17</sup> No American was sufficiently wealthy or interested to offer Stevens' creditor the £700 necessary to release them; no one offered to buy them. When the creditor died and the loan was called to settle the estate, Stevens had at last to put the collection up for sale. Even now there was no certainty that Franklin's papers would be returned to the United States.

Stevens offered the collection to the United States government for £7,000. William M. Evarts, Secretary of State, urged Congress to acquire the papers, but the bill died in committee. Once more the papers were offered for public sale, and once again the American government expressed a lively interest in them. Persuaded that Franklin's papers belonged to the historical archives of his department, the new Secretary of State, James G. Blaine, instructed the departmental librarian, Theodore F. Dwight, then in Europe for another purpose, to inspect the Stevens Franklin collection and report. "Not one" of the letters was "unimportant," Dwight asserted, recommending that the government acquire the papers. They "are more than relics or antiquarian curiosities," he continued; "they are the veritable records of our history, and are

<sup>16</sup> Henry Stevens, *Benjamin Franklin's Life and Writings: A Bibliographical Essay on the Stevens' Collection of Books and Manuscripts relating to Doctor Franklin* (London, 1881).

<sup>17</sup> Adams, *Jared Sparks*, II, 520-533.

as worthy of a place among the national archives as those of Washington, Jefferson, and Hamilton."<sup>18</sup>

Once more Stevens withdrew the collection, though he had two *bona fide* offers to purchase, and gave the Federal Government the option to purchase until January 1, 1882. Three days before the option expired, Congress appropriated \$35,000 to purchase the collection. The printed works were sent at once to the Library of Congress; the manuscripts remained in the State Department until 1903, when all but the diplomatic correspondence was sent to the Library; and in 1921 the remainder of the Stevens Franklin Collection was deposited in the Library of Congress.<sup>19</sup>

Among the papers Temple Franklin took to London was the manuscript of the most famous of all Franklin's writings, his *Memoirs or Autobiography*. Separated from the rest of the collection, it was lost to sight for three quarters of a century and reappeared with spectacular suddenness in 1867. Franklin sent a copy of his *Memoirs* to his friend the mayor of Passy, M. Le Veillard; he retained the original manuscript, in which he continued to make changes and corrections and to which he added several pages. Temple Franklin, who wanted a clean copy of the manuscript for the printer, exchanged the original in his possession for the fair but partial copy Le Veillard had received from Dr. Franklin; and from this copy Temple Franklin printed his grandfather's autobiography.

Proud of their relations with the great Franklin, the Veillards and their descendants, by the name of Senarmont, had the manuscript *Memoirs* bound, and preserved them carefully with some letters and a pastel portrait by Duplessis. Sir Samuel Romilly saw the manuscript *Memoirs* in 1802; and Henry Stevens tried to buy them in 1850. Otherwise no one knew of their existence. John Bigelow, United States Minister to France in 1865-1866, a man of literary tastes, was convinced that the manuscript was still in France. Several times he presented his reasons to his guests and friends. First by letter, then in person, Bigelow urged his friend Edouard Laboulaye, who had just published a French edition of the *Memoirs*, to make inquiries at Amiens, where Stevens

<sup>18</sup> Senate Miscellaneous Document, No. 21, 47th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 1-3, 96-99.

<sup>19</sup> Worthington C. Ford, "Prefatory Note," *List of the Benjamin Franklin Papers in the Library of Congress* (Washington, 1905), 3-4.

has seen the manuscript. Three weeks after Bigelow's personal request was made, Laboulaye learned who the owner of the manuscript was.

Now in London en route home, Bigelow directed his friend, the *New York Tribune* Paris correspondent, William H. Huntington, to act as his agent, determine just what was in the collection, learn what the owner wanted for it, and negotiate the purchase. Huntington was able and serious, but his manner was irresistibly light-hearted; and his letters to Bigelow bubble with the gaiety and excitement of the chase after these "Franklinicnacs." The business was concluded with dizzying speed. Laboulaye had written Bigelow on January 12; Huntington saw the collection and reported Paul De Senarmont's terms on January 21; on January 27 Bigelow's check for 25,000 francs was delivered, and Huntington received the "Frankliniseries" (an alternative term) and had them packed and sent to London that evening. Bigelow began at once to prepare a new edition of the *Memoirs*. The manuscript, after passing through several hands, finally lodged in the Huntington Library.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to these two large collections of Franklin's papers, there were, of course, groups of letters to members of the family and to friends, like M. Le Veillard, which they and their descendants preserved. The most notable of these collections was that owned by the Bache family, numbering over 1,100 pieces; this collection was purchased by the American Philosophical Society in 1936.<sup>21</sup> More typical of the small groups of family letters were the twenty-eight letters to Bishop Shipley, his wife and daughters, which remained in the Shipley family for more than a century and a quarter until they were sold at Christie's in 1917 as a contribution to the British Red Cross. They are now in the William Smith Mason Franklin Collection at Yale University. Franklin's letters to his sister Jane Mecom were given by Jane to Mrs. Caleb Loring, who owned them in 1833; they disappeared for nearly a century, were sold on the London autograph market in 1928; and were acquired by the American Philosophical Society in 1944.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> John Bigelow, *Retrospections of an Active Life* (5 v., New York, 1909-1913), III, 597, IV, 6-29. A shorter account of this episode can be found in Bigelow, ed., *The Works of Benjamin Franklin* (12 v., New York, 1904), I, 6-24.

<sup>21</sup> American Philosophical Society, *Library: Annual Report for 1936* (Philadelphia, 1937), 20.

<sup>22</sup> Carl Van Doren, ed., *The Letters of Benjamin Franklin & Jane Mecom* (Princeton, N. J., 1950), v-vii.

All these collections, both great and small, suffered steady attrition throughout the nineteenth century, as individual letters were given to autograph collectors and to friends and relations as mementoes of the great man. Temple Franklin apologized to Samuel Starbuck, a connection of Dr. Franklin's Nantucket mother, that he could send him at that time only a letter-press copy of a Franklin letter. "Tho' not actually *penn'd* by Dr. Franklin, it may with great Truth be called, a *second Original*, as being absolutely the very surface of *that* he did write." In a few days, Temple promised, he would send "a real sample" of Dr. Franklin's writing.<sup>23</sup> Some of these single letters, of course, eventually found their way back into public depositories by gift or purchase, as is demonstrated by Franklin letters in the Dreer Collection in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Charles Roberts Autograph Collection at Haverford College, and the Gilbert Collection of Manuscript Letters in the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Others—no one knows how many—were destroyed in the process of providing autographs to collectors who wanted only the signature. "I have but one letter from Dr. Benjn. Franklin, which is written throughout with his own hand," Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse protested to one collector, "and I feel lothe to separate his venerated signature from his highly valued and affectionate Epistle."<sup>24</sup>

The character of Franklin holdings in the depositories of Pennsylvania illustrates the concentration and dispersal of Franklin's papers. There are nearly a thousand items in the University of Pennsylvania, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania has 1,500. About thirty letters and other manuscripts by or to Franklin are preserved at Haverford College. Most of the Franklin manuscripts in the official archives of the Commonwealth were removed in the nineteenth century, although many may be identified in other depositories where they have come to rest. From one to ten letters will be found in institutions as diverse as the Pennsylvania Hospital, Lehigh University, the Moravian Archives, the Delaware County Institute of Science, and the Insurance Company of North America.

One private collection ranked as the equal or superior to all

<sup>23</sup> William Temple Franklin to Starbuck, July 18, 1817, Yale University.

<sup>24</sup> Waterhouse to [---], April 29, 1835, Richmond, Va., Academy of Medicine.

but three or four public collections. During the first third of this century William Smith Mason, then of Evanston, Ill., by persistence and intelligent imagination assembled an impressive mass of Frankliniana; twenty years ago he gave it to Yale University. The Mason-Franklin Collection contains upwards of four hundred autograph letters, including a block of letters from Franklin to Galloway; Franklin imprints; and portraits, prints and statues and medallions of Franklin. To support these items, Mr. Mason assembled a library of nearly 15,000 volumes on Franklin, his period, and his contemporaries. As a center for Franklin studies, the Mason Collection at Yale is second only to the library of the American Philosophical Society, and in some respects not second even to that.<sup>25</sup>

Jared Sparks of Boston was Franklin's first American or English editor who was not either a personal friend like Benjamin Vaughan or a relative like Temple Franklin and William Duane. A gracious but persistent researcher, Sparks published *A Collection of the Familiar Letters and Miscellaneous Papers of Benjamin Franklin* in 1833; the following year he signed a contract to prepare a ten-volume edition of Franklin's writings of all kinds. This work, a contemporary reviewer pointed out, contained twenty-five essays and articles never before printed and thirty-three others which had never appeared before in any edition of Franklin's works, as well as 253 letters not before printed and 154 other letters not in any previous edition.<sup>26</sup> Although some of Sparks' attributions were falsely made, his achievement as a Franklin editor is impressive.

Sparks visited Philadelphia several times on his research. Dr. Franklin's descendants were especially helpful, feeling, as Franklin Bache assured Sparks, "greatly obliged to you for your laudable zeal in undertaking to vindicate his [Franklin's] fame." Peter Duponceau also rejoiced that Sparks' work would put a stop to the disparagement of "Old Ben Lightning Rod" by respectable Philadelphia. "This Country has three great Men of the first class," Duponceau continued, "Washington, Franklin & Fulton. The rest are all twinkling Stars. These three will live forever." J. Francis Fisher, perhaps Sparks' most helpful ally in his Phila-

<sup>25</sup> George Simpson Eddy, "A Ramble Through the Mason-Franklin Collection," *Yale University Library Gazette*, X (1936), 65-90.

<sup>26</sup> Adams, *Jared Sparks*, II, 334-348.

delphia researches and a friend for many years thereafter, put his feeling simply when he deprecated his copying some Franklin letters in his possession as being only his "duty in aid of a national work like the Collection of the Papers of Franklin."<sup>27</sup>

Franklin letters came to Sparks from far beyond Philadelphia and Boston. Benjamin Franklin Stickney, settled in Missouri, sent the editor copies of letters from Franklin to Jane Mecom and to Andrew Stickney, who was Franklin's grand-nephew.<sup>28</sup> Browsing in a bookstore in Vienna, Charles Sumner noticed a Franklin letter in an autograph collection offered for sale, and persuaded the bookseller to let him copy it for Sparks.<sup>29</sup> Most continuously helpful and deeply interested was Benjamin Vaughan, one of Franklin's earliest editors, now an old man in retirement at Hallowell, Maine. In the last letter he ever wrote, on December 6, 1835, he told Sparks he had just turned up a bundle of letters to himself; "but of this more hereafter." He died two days later.<sup>30</sup>

Sparks had his disappointments, blind alleys, and failures. He never found the William Temple Franklin papers. Inquiries at Harrisburg failed to bring forth the papers of Franklin's transactions as agent of the Colony of Pennsylvania in London. The letters Franklin wrote to his Nantucket relation Kezia Coffin were collected and sent to Boston, but were destroyed in the Exchange Coffee House fire before Sparks began his work. Inquiring for Franklin's letters to Granville Sharp, Sparks was told of descendants living "in great affluence" in Gloucestershire; but he seems to have gone no further. The present editors located these letters in 1954. J. Francis Fisher sought Franklin letters at John Bartram's home near Philadelphia; he returned from Kingsessing empty-handed, he told Sparks, as Dr. Benjamin Smith Barton and Dr. James Mease had been prospecting for autographs there before him. If the charge was true, Mease made at least a modest amend when he sent Sparks a copy of a letter of Franklin that had appeared in the *Miner's Journal* of Pottsville in Schuylkill County.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Bache to Sparks, August 14, 1833, Duponceau to Sparks, August 20, 1837, Fisher to Sparks, June 26, 1837, Sparks MSS.

<sup>28</sup> Stickney to Sparks, April 29, 1833, Sparks MSS.

<sup>29</sup> Adams, *Jared Sparks*, II, 348.

<sup>30</sup> Vaughan to Sparks, December 6, 1835, Sparks MSS.

<sup>31</sup> Sparks to J. K. Kane, September 21, 1837; William C. Folger to Sparks, July 30, 1838; Petty Vaughan to Sparks, September 29, October 5, 1837; J. Francis Fisher to Sparks, May 2, 1837; James Mease to Sparks, February 13, 1837; Sparks Diary, June 1, 1830: Sparks MSS.

Not least of the by-products of a reading of the correspondence of Jared Sparks and of other editors who met men and women who knew Franklin, is the sense of intimacy one gets, and can perhaps get in no other way, from the little anecdotes and bits of family gossip and tradition they relate. Benjamin Vaughan tells the touching episode of the Shipley family's visit to Southampton to see Franklin before he sailed home for the last time in July, 1785. Presently Franklin fell asleep in his chair under the hot summer sun, and each of the ladies came forward and kissed the old man in turn and so they quietly took their leave of him.<sup>32</sup> On many occasions when Franklin attended meetings of the Supreme Executive Council, he would regale the members with reminiscences and anecdotes until noon, when his chair came and he went home. "Come, gentlemen," the vice president would say goodnaturedly, "let us come to order; it is time to proceed to business now the president is gone."<sup>33</sup> One of the best stories is Temple Franklin's. Several of his grandfather's Nantucket relations by the name of Folger came to call on the great man at Philadelphia one morning. Franklin invited them to return to dinner at two o'clock. At this the Yankees busily consulted with one another, until their spokesman finally replied, "Well, we will, if we can't better ourselves." Apparently they did "better themselves," for they never reappeared, though Franklin kept dinner waiting an hour for them.<sup>34</sup>

Sparks' methods seem absurdly simple and inexpensive when contrasted with those of modern editors. A century and a quarter ago Sparks calculated that he could support himself while he collected his historical data, publish the books, and make a profit for his publishers; and his confidence was soundly based. He could come to Philadelphia, get himself introduced to owners of manuscripts, ask and receive permission to carry whole volumes back to Boston to copy. From the time he signed the contract for his Franklin until he sent the last sheets to the printer, less than six years elapsed. Things are done differently today.

It is too early in the progress of the present edition of Franklin to do more than indicate procedures and policies in a general way. In the techniques and methods we employ in copying and ac-

<sup>32</sup> Vaughan to Sparks, September 26, 1835, Sparks MSS.

<sup>33</sup> Adams, *Jared Sparks*, I, 475.

<sup>34</sup> William Temple Franklin to Samuel Starbuck, July 18, 1817, Yale University.

cessioning manuscripts and other materials, we are basically indebted to the pioneering planning and experience of Julian P. Boyd and his staff of *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*. We have fewer manuscripts to deal with than Jefferson's editors, but we have no epistolary record; and if we do not have great documents like the Declaration of Independence which must be studied in all the detail their importance deserves, we have vexatious problems in the printed materials which form so significant a part of Franklin's surviving literary output.

All the material is microfilmed or photostated. Where neither of these facilities is available and it is undesirable or impossible to remove the manuscript, Contoura prints serve us. When films are made, these are subsequently enlarged into photostat-like prints. Two prints are made in the case of every manuscript, so that when the editorial work has been completed, complete files of extant Franklin letters will be available at the American Philosophical Society and at Yale University.

The prints are filed chronologically in large envelopes, which also hold editorial data on the particular letter or writing. In three separate files each piece is recorded by accession number, by date, and by the name of the correspondent other than Franklin. From three to eight subject-entry slips are made for each letter and filed in a rapidly expanding index file.

Thus far our energies have been directed principally to finding and copying manuscripts. We have paid little attention as yet to Franklin's printed works. At least another year will be devoted primarily to the search for manuscripts, both in this country and abroad. Thereafter, this phase of our work will grow less important, although, of course, it will never cease entirely. This is not to say that the editors and the Editorial Advisory Committee have not considered the problems which will engross them increasingly in the future. Several basic decisions have been made:

In the first place, we will print both sides of the correspondence. This means that all Franklin's writings which are the product of his thought will be presented in full; and letters and addresses to him will be printed in full, in abstract, or calendared as their nature and importance warrant. Certainly we do not intend to print all the hundreds of petitions for clemency addressed to Franklin in routine as president of the Supreme Executive Council



of Pennsylvania. Two or three should be sufficient, and these have in effect already been selected—petitions on which Franklin himself penned a commentary or direction.

In the second place, the material will be presented in chronological order. Some slight modification of this principle may be necessary for *Poor Richard's Almanacs* and for some of the materials in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*; an exception from the principle will probably be required by the marginalia in Franklin's books and pamphlets. The topical organization was considered by the editors and their advisers but was rejected because it is evidently impossible to present in such a way letters which discuss, as so many of Franklin's do, three or four subjects; and, more important, it was rejected because only by a chronological order can the editors present Franklin growing, Franklin in all his many-sidedness and rich achievement. We are, after all, presenting the writings of Benjamin Franklin, the expression of the mind of an individual man, not commentaries on aspects of eighteenth century culture and politics.

Finally, in the matter of transcription, we intend to follow the middle course between a literal transcription of the manuscripts and a modernization of them. This course, recommended and exemplified by the Princeton edition of Jefferson, is editorially difficult—there are so many decisions; but the editors believe it is the soundest. When questions arise what to do with a particular doubtful capital letter, we will sometimes be able to compare the manuscript with Franklin's own printed version of it, and so follow an authority few will cavil with.

The publication of this twentieth century edition of Franklin's papers should stimulate study of all those aspects of the eighteenth century which Franklin touched. Meanwhile, research into the Franklin sources continues as formerly at the American Philosophical Society and at Yale University, as well as elsewhere. The more Franklin research that goes forward, the more easily and swiftly the editors will be able to accomplish their task. And our task is lightened too, in another way, by the queries eager students have begun to submit: one wants the names of all the York County farmers whose wagons Franklin hired for Braddock's march; another has written to ask whether it is true, as her family tradition has it, that her ancestress danced with George Washing-

ton at a ball in Annapolis while Dr. Franklin played upon his musical glasses.

Less than a year has passed since *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* was announced, less than six months since the professional staff were all assembled and at work. We do not have to be reminded, as we always are by visitors to the offices at Philadelphia and New Haven, how vast the labor is that we have assumed. And we like to believe, as our visitors often graciously say they do, that when this work is completed, a dozen or fifteen years from now, we will have put on the scholars' shelves an indispensable tool for the study of the eighteenth century and the life of Pennsylvania's first citizen, who was also his country's.