NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

William Penn’s Other Statue

On October 2, 1967, Sir Francis Dashwood, Bt. of West Wycombe Park, Buckinghamshire, England, wrote the following letter to “The Curator,” Philadelphia Museum:

There is a statue of William Penn on top of your City Hall. I believe it originally came from the roof of Sawmill House, a building erected in about 1770 in the Park here. The building was probably the work of Nicholas Revett, who was employed by Sir Francis Dashwood, Lord le Despencer. The statue was removed by Repton in about 1801, when it went to Stoke Park near Slough. From there, I believe it went to Philadelphia in 1806.

I wonder if you could confirm that this information is correct?

In due course this letter was referred to the writer and Sir Francis was informed that Penn’s statue on City Hall is the work of Alexander Milne Calder, that it measures thirty-seven feet in height and weighs 53,348 pounds, and was raised in sections to its present position in November, 1894, and thus could have nothing to do with Sawmill House at West Wycombe Park.

After casting about to locate another statue of William Penn, the one on the grounds of the Pennsylvania Hospital came to mind and this proved to be the statue from Sawmill House. While much information concerning this statue has been published, certain corrections and additions to its history are in order.

John Fanning Watson in his Annals of Philadelphia recorded that “The statue of Penn in the Pennsylvania Hospital must be regarded as a very accurate representation. It was executed in whole or in part by Bacon, the best statuary of his day. It was cast originally for Lord le Despensor [sic] and laid aside by his successor, Sir John Dashwood. It was afterwards purchased by John Penn, who about forty years since, made it a present to the Hospital in Philadelphia.”

1 Humphrey Repton (1752–1818) was a celebrated landscape architect.
2 John F. Watson, Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1927), I, 112, and III, 331. Watson’s manuscript for the initial edition of this publication was completed in 1830. Thus the writer had firsthand information on many events he reported.
Dr. James Mease in his *Picture of Philadelphia in 1811* observed: “In the front yard, fronting the south side of the house, is a leaden statue, bronzed, of William Penn, on a marble pedestal, who is represented holding a scroll; having part of the first sentence of the ‘Charter of Privileges’ inscribed on it. The statue was presented by Mr. John Penn, now of London, to the hospital in the year 1801.”

Dr. Thomas G. Morton, historian of the Pennsylvania Hospital, quoted a letter from Benjamin Franklin dated London, February 5, 1775, as follows: “A friend of mine, Lord Le Despencer, has lately erected at Wycombe, his fine Country Seat, a noble Statue of William Penn, our Founder, holding in his hand a scroll on which is the enclos’d Inscription in gold Letters. I think such a Statue would well become a Niche in some Part of the Statehouse next the Garden. It might be had for about 50 £.”

Dr. Morton went on to state “Lord le Despencer’s successor was no admirer of Penn and sold the statue for old metal. It subsequently found its way to a junk shop where John Penn saw it and bought it for presentation to the hospital where it has since stood, holding the charter of our Commonwealth in perpetual remembrance of his famous treaty, which was never signed and never broken.”

Morton also reported that “About 1850, during a severe storm, the statue was blown over and fell prostrate. It was found, upon examination, that the support of one foot had become corroded and decayed. In order to restore it to its former position, it required a

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4 This date, 1801, is in error. The minutes of the Board of Managers of the Hospital, for Sept. 24, 1804, state “A statue in lead of William Penn, is arrived in the ship Pigou from London, being the gift of John Penn in lieu of a Portrait which he at first proposed, but no letter accompanies it, or bill of lading. Joseph Lownes and Samuel Coates are appointed to enter it at the Custom House, and see that it is brought to the Hospital.” The gift was formally acknowledged in a “John Penn Esquire, Esteemed Friend” letter of Nov. 26, 1804, signed by Josiah Hewes, President, and Samuel Coates, Secretary. In the Archives of the Pennsylvania Hospital there is a letter from Samuel Coates to Penn dated Nov. 5, 1803, in which Coates writes that the portrait should measure “9 feet 4 Inches one way & 6 feet 4 Inches the other.” It is not known why Penn changed his gift from portrait to statue.


6 Archives, Pennsylvania Hospital. According to Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1938), 418, 420, 437–440, Franklin visited Lord le Despencer at West Wycombe in October, 1772, and in the summers of 1773 and 1774. His letter of 1775 was doubtless written after the last visit.
high heel and sole, the statue was then securely placed upon the pedestal again, and since that time has remained there facing Pine Street in the centre of the lawn on the south front of the Hospital."

Dr. Francis R. Packard, a more recent historian of the Hospital, declared that John Penn (1760-1834) saw the statue in a "junk shop in London, purchased it and presented it to the Hospital." He also commented that "just as the statue of Benjamin Franklin which stood on the front of the old building of the Library Company of Philadelphia on Fifth Street, was said to descend from its pedestal at midnight and, seated on a neighboring fireplug enjoy a mug of beer, so William Penn, it was asserted, used to descend from his pedestal and walk about the Hospital grounds. Penn, however, was said to only take his promenade as the clock struck midnight ushering in the New Year."

The Penn statue was executed, according to Watson, by "Bacon, the best statuary of his day." If this is correct, Watson must have been referring to John Bacon, the elder, R.A., 1740-1799, who, c. 1780, executed a bust of Sir Francis Dashwood II, Lord le Despencer, for the Mausoleum of West Wycombe Park. This bust is included in the long list of the elder Bacon’s works assembled by Rupert Ginnis. Thus a relationship of patron and artist must have existed between Sir Francis and John Bacon allowing us to surmise that John Bacon, the elder, was indeed the sculptor of the Penn statue. Oddly enough, Ginnis’ list of the elder Bacon’s works does not include the Penn statue, but this may be due to the fact that it left England and has not figured in the records.

Watson could hardly have been referring to John Bacon, the younger (1777-1859), who exhibited a bust of "the late Lord Le Despencer" at the Royal Academy in 1810, since he was only two years old when Franklin reported seeing the Penn statue at West Wycombe in 1775. As the elder Bacon, by the standards of his time,

7 Francis R. Packard, Some Account of the Pennsylvania Hospital (Philadelphia, 1938), 92-93.
8 Franklin’s Library Company of Philadelphia occupied a site on Fifth and Library Streets from 1789 to 1884. The façade of the present Library of the American Philosophical Society on this site reproduces the original design, even to a copy of Lazzarini’s statue of Franklin by Lewis Iselin. The Lazzarini original is still owned by the Library Company of Philadelphia.
can be considered "the best statuary of his day," it thus seems probable that he was the sculptor Watson had in mind.

The writer has not been able to trace the source for Dr. Morton’s statement that John Penn found the statue of his grandfather in a London "junk shop" and he tends to disbelieve the story. Watson makes no mention of it, although he states that John Penn frequently wrote to him on a variety of subjects. Also, since John Penn had been in Philadelphia from 1783 to 1788, he could have known of Franklin’s letter, cited above, and upon his return to England, as a near neighbor of West Wycombe Park, he could have purchased the statue from Lord Le Despencer’s son, Sir John Dashwood, after its removal from Sawmill House c. 1801.

Following his American visit, John Penn was a resident of Stoke Poges Park, Buckinghamshire, until his death in 1834. In 1789, he tore down most of the house which his father, Thomas Penn, had purchased in 1760, and erected a new mansion designed by Robert Nasmith. It was there that Humphrey Repton, who did some work on the grounds of West Wycombe Park and knew the Penn statue prior to its removal from Sawmill House, described it as follows:

On the summit of another building, viz. a saw-mill in the park, was a figure of a man in a brown coat and a broad brimmed hat, representing the great Penn of Pensilvania [sic], which being much larger than the natural proportion of a man, yet having the appearance of a man upon the roof of the building, diminished the size of every other object by which it was surrounded. It has since been removed, and is now in the possession of Mr. Penn at Stoke Pogies [sic] where, placed in a room, it seems a colossal figure.

Sawmill House was built by Nicholas Revett (1720–1804) who, with James Stuart (1713–1788), was sent to Greece by the Society of Dilettanti, of which Lord le Despencer was a prominent founder-member, to study and measure the antiquities of Athens. Revett made at least two designs for the building but evidently changed them to that shown in the painting by Thomas Daniell (1749–1840)

which shows the Penn statue on the central pavilion of Sawmill House flanked by smaller figures of the Hay Master and Hay Mistress on the end pavilions. The present Sir Francis writes that "the roof of this house (our house, not Sawmill House) was covered with statues and urns but they are all shown as having been removed by 1781 when Daniell carried out his series of oil paintings of the house and garden. He also writes that he doubts that the Penn statue was bronzed because "all statues here are of lead which was sometimes painted white to resemble stone or were of stone." Repton, however, speaks of "a figure of a man in a brown coat" which might indicate that the statue was either bronzed or painted in some fashion.

As for the statue itself, it stands about six feet in height on a white marble pedestal three and a half feet high, provided for it when it was put in place around 1805. The condition shows the wear of years. It is cast in lead, but if once "bronzed" this finish has long since disappeared in favor of many coats of black paint which have tended to soften the modelling. Penn's pose, with head lowered, may be due, in part, to some sagging over the years but it may also have been a deliberate choice of the sculptor in view of the fact that the figure was to be placed on the roof of Sawmill House. In other words, Penn would have been looking in a downward direction.

Josiah Hewes and Samuel Coates in their letter of acknowledgment of November 26, 1804, wrote John Penn: "Immediately after its arrival, some young men of our City, who are friends of your family, requested the liberty of raising, gratuitously, for this purpose, a pedestal of white marble of Pennsylvania, to be fixed on the Green at the South front of the Hospital, with suitable Inscriptions to record the birth of William Penn, the memorable era when he founded the Province of Pennsylvania and the time of his death." By an earlier plan "Joseph Lownes, Paschal Hollingsworth and Samuel Coates, are to place it in a Nitch, to be made over the front

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14 Minutes, Board of Managers, Pennsylvania Hospital, Nov. 26, 1804.
Door, on the South Side of the Center building, or on a pedestal, on the grass placed before said door, as they may approve, on which pedestal they are to have inscribed such descriptions as are approved [by] them, after consulting those persons whose Judgement they may think fit to rely on this Occasion. . . .”

It is quite certain that Alexander Milne Calder knew of this statue and that his design for his City Hall bronze was influenced by it. If we are correct in concluding that John Bacon, the elder, was the sculptor of the Hospital’s statue, his portrait could only have been an ideal one since Penn had died in 1718. However, since he was closer to Penn’s era, he may have been better able to arrive at a “very accurate representation,” as Watson claims. Because authentic life portraits of Penn are much in dispute, Calder must have welcomed Bacon’s version as a model to start with. He took the motif of the charter and modified it. Elements of costume were also appropriated or modified. Both statues stand as worthy memorials to the great Founder of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

**Philadelphia Museum of Art**

HENRI MARCEAU

**Benjamin Franklin: Gunrunner?**

Benjamin Franklin is probably one of the most famous and least well-understood historical figures in all of American history. This condition is not to be laid to his having been ignored by historians nor to the paucity of information about his life. It is a shame therefore that a recent book, by a promising young historian working on one of the most difficult periods of Franklin’s life, should not only fail to advance our understanding of the man but actually hamper the work of placing him in the world he inhabited.

The work under discussion is Cecil B. Currey’s *Road to Revolution: Benjamin Franklin in England, 1765–1775*, which has been reviewed by John J. Zimmerman in this Magazine, Volume XCIV (1970), 551–553, and by Ralph Ketcham, *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXVI (1969), 629–631, in the most comprehensive evaluations that

15 Ibid., Oct. 29, 1804.
I have seen. To borrow from Ketcham, Currey's thesis is "that Franklin was a diabolical radical fomenting trouble between colonies and mother country largely out of frustration and personal pique."

The author's thesis rests upon minuscule tangible evidence and is persistently argued in the face of a great deal of contrary data that is ignored. One of his most controversial but consistently advanced arguments is that Franklin was a gunrunner for years before the Revolution erupted in bloodshed in 1775. One cannot always be entirely certain just what is being asserted and what is merely implied, but the flavor of the author's elusive claims, methods, and language can be judged from the following quotations: "details about Franklin's arms smuggling are as conjectural as the time of its origin" (p. 343); "It is indisputable that Franklin was involved in gunrunning for a substantial period. Documentation which would flesh out this skeletal knowledge is almost wholly lacking" (p. 348n); "Franklin was careful to lay down a smoke screen covering his illegal smuggling operations" (p. 349).

Almost the sole piece of solid evidence which the author offers to support his interpretation is a document which purportedly demonstrates that Franklin was known to the British government to be a dangerous character and that in 1771 he was on the verge of being arrested, apparently for conspiring against England. A letter is produced to support the contention that "Doc. Franklin" was mixed up with a British lawyer and a British navy captain to hustle him out of the country so that Franklin could escape arrest. How Franklin—a Crown employee—could have managed that feat by taking passage on board a ship of war to America is never explained. How he ultimately managed to escape arrest is also ignored, although it is suggested that Franklin avoided the authorities during this period of hot pursuit by steering clear of London, apparently the only place in Britain where the King's writ ran. However, Franklin was so foolish (while skipping about the British isles during this period) as to have made a four-day visit—unnoted by the author—to the home of Lord Hillsborough, the American Secretary of State who was Franklin's most determined enemy and apparently the man who would have most enjoyed seeing him in irons.¹

It is odd that so much importance should have been attached to a single document. It is thrice alluded to during the earlier parts of the book to prepare the reader for the disclosures that are to follow, and it is elaborated with four pages of exegesis when it is introduced as evidence against the venerable doctor. This letter of Captain Edward Hughes to Joshua Sharpe, April 28, 1771, is quoted in full and it merits quoting again.\(^2\)

I was duly favored with your letter of the 9th Inst. Since which have not heard a Syllable from Doc.' Franklin, but of him, that he is taking his Measures to return to America in the Squadron of Admiral Montague. Tho he promises not to stirr without my previous knowledge, his conduct has the appearance of making that notice so short as will probably be ineffectual, that I will not rely on these assurances, therefore earnestly beg the favour you will act for me in this affair respecting Mr. Franklin, as you would were it your own case, but I must pray it may be still & quiet as possible, not to expose him but to Secure us, & to do all that is proper without delay. I think \textit{when he is arrested} his friends will find such Security you approve, rather than lett him be detained here. I intend waiting on you at Chambers next Thursday & am ever

Dear Sir

Your obliged Humble Serv\(^4\).

What the author failed to discover, however, is that Mr. Sharpe also received another letter, dated April 8, 1771, from Michael Francklin, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia.\(^3\) Its contents make it unmistakably clear that he is the subject of the much heralded letter cited above. There should have been no mistaking this fact in the first instance. The letter above is as it appears in \textit{Road to Revolution}, not as it was written by Edward Hughes. A check of the actual document shows two significant variations. On lines two and seven the words "Doc.' Franklin" and "Mr. Franklin" should read "Mr. Francklin" and "Mr. Francklin."

The author again places Franklin in a poor light when, in arguing that "those in England in a position to know believed Franklin

\(^2\) \textit{Road to Revolution}, 277. Italics not in the original.

\(^3\) Michael Francklin to Joshua Sharpe, Apr. 8, 1771, P.R.O., Colonial Office Group, Class 217, calendared in “B. F. Stevens’s Catalogue Index of Manuscripts in Archives of England, France, Holland and Spain Relating to America, 1763-1783,” Chronological Index, vol. 21, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. See also the 1894 \textit{Report on Canadian Archives} (Ottawa, 1895), 304, where the letter is dated Apr. 18, 1771, and cited under the old P.R.O. designation A. & W. I., vol. 597, p. 215.
responsible for much of the trouble between the metropolis and the colonies," he quoted the following sentence from a 1774 pamphlet by Matthew Robinson-Morris: "Our colonies might be well enough were it not for Dr. Franklin, who has with a brand lighted from the clouds set fire to all America." As it is presented one would never guess that Robinson-Morris's statement was merely rhetorical. It was actually made only to be contradicted, to demonstrate that the North ministry was guilty of spreading such propaganda to evade responsibility for the American crisis. The passage, awkward and prolix, continued: "No Governments ever care to acknowledge the people to be fairly against them. . . . The sycophants of Ministers, endeavour therefore to throw on the artifice and influence of individuals, all discontent, or dissatisfaction of the Public. Mr. Wilkes moves England, and Dr. Franklin America; as if we had here no feeling, but through the first, and they had there neither eyes, or ears, but by the latter. . . . It is idle and childish to be crying out against this or that private person. The truth is, that whenever governments heap up combustibles, there will always be found a hand to put the match to them. . . ."

Whatever historians may one day learn about Franklin's activities in England prior to 1775, it is clear that neither of the items cited above can be used to support the contention that he was a gunrunner and incendiary.

Library of Congress

PAUL H. SMITH

Road to Revolution, 115.


M ore than seventy years ago a satire entitled "A Farce" appeared in the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography. At the time of its publication the author was correctly identified as that Rhode Island poetaster and Congressman

"A Farce," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, XII (1888), 501–503. At that time this manuscript was in the possession of Ellery's granddaughter, Miss Henrietta C. Ellery. Some time after its publication she presented it to the Houghton Library at Harvard University, where it remains today in the Autograph File.
William Ellery. The editor was also able to place the date of the satire to the spring of 1780, but he was not able to determine for whom or what purpose it was written, and he asked his readers if they could supply him with further information. After examining some of Ellery’s other political verses as well as the Journals of the Congress for the spring of 1780, the answer to these questions can now be provided. Ellery was satirizing some of the more sybaritic members of Congress who were trying to adjourn that body from Philadelphia and build a new capital elsewhere.

On December 1, 1779, Ellery made a motion relative to the removal of Congress from Philadelphia. For some time he had disliked that city both from the great expense of living there as well as the luke-warm support its citizens gave to the American cause. Two years prior, during the spring of 1777, he had written some verses chiding Philadelphians for their lack of patriotism:

Commissioners to the People of P———a.

Attend all ye people of every degree
No longer pretend that your Country you’ll free.
Declare for your Treasons a hearty Contrition
Regard as you tender your lives admonition
Ere too late to flee from impending Perdition.
Who like me to the thing Allegiance will swear
And future Submission to Congress forbear.
Leave all his old Friends to Parliaments Fury
Let Rebels be hanged without Judge or Jury.
Escapes condemnation to gibbet or halter
Nor needs forfeiture fear unless times should alter.

Now, after two years, the Philadelphians support of the Revolution was no longer the most important question in Ellery’s mind when it came to judging that city. The crucial question was financial. Philadelphia, always in advance of the rest of the nation when it came to depreciation and speculation, had become less and less appealing as a capital city to many congressmen who had come to

2 JCC, XV, 1339. The exact wording of the motion is not recorded in the Journals; however, as latter developments clearly indicate, the motion obviously was intended to adjourn Congress from Philadelphia.

3 William Ellery, “Commissioners to the People of P———a,” Chamberlain Papers, Boston Public Library.
feel personally the effects of depreciation.4 Two days after Ellery’s motion, Congress resolved that they would indeed remove themselves from Philadelphia on the last Saturday of April.5 However, while Congress might agree on where they should not be, they could not agree on where they should go; that part of the question was postponed until the first Monday in January.6 When that Monday arrived, January 3, 1780, the Congress, over Ellery’s objections, again postponed the matter—this time until the last Monday in February.7 After still another postponement, again over Ellery’s objections, the issue finally came to the floor on March 22.8 Apparently, the Congress was deadlocked over the question of where to move, and an attempt was made to repeal Ellery’s motion entirely, thus reverting to the status quo ante.9 When Robert Livingston moved to postpone consideration of the repeal, Ellery called for the yeas and nays on the question.10 Probably realizing that he had the votes to prevent repeal, Ellery voted against postponement.11 Livingston’s motion lost and Ellery’s resolution was sustained by a heavy margin with only the two Carolinas voting for repeal.12 Having decided to leave Philadelphia, but divided on the question of where to go, Congress appointed a committee. The charge to the committee was much broader than just finding a suitable location for Congress, for they were “to report a proper place where buildings may be

4 The French General and aristocrat the Marquis de Chastellux called Philadelphia “the great sink wherein all the speculation of America terminates and mingles.” Marquis de Chastellux, Travels in North America in the years 1780, 1781, and 1782, Howard C. Rice, trans. (Chapel Hill, 1963), I, 181. For examples of congressional complaints about Philadelphia see: Samuel Huntington to Jeremiah Wadsworth, July 22, 1779, Edmund C. Burnett, Letters of the Members of the Continental Congress (Washington, 1923), IV, 335; Francis Lewis to George Clinton, Aug. 18, 1779, ibid., 382; William Floyd to George Clinton, Dec. 21, 1779, ibid., 544; Nathaniel Peabody to Josiah Bartlett, Dec. 24, 1779, ibid., 549. During the winter of 1779–80 depreciation had reached a point where it took nearly fifty dollars of Continental currency to purchase one dollar of specie. E. James Ferguson, The Power of the Purse (Chapel Hill, 1961), 32.
5 JCC, XV, 1344.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., XVI, 9.
8 Ibid., 277.
9 Ibid.; James Lovell had concluded a month earlier that he was “well satisfied that we shall not move at all.” James Lovell to Samuel Adams, Feb. 28, 1780, Burnett, Letters, V, 54.
10 JCC, XVI, 277.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 278.
provided for the reception of Congress, together with an estimate of the expense of providing such buildings and the necessary offices for the several boards." Ellery was aghast at this proposed extravagance. He was certainly not opposed to moving, but the construction of buildings and offices did not meet his approval, and almost alone he stood against these measures. Not a single state voted against the appointment of the committee and only two other members of Congress joined Ellery in opposition to these plans. The two men, both New Englanders, were Nathaniel Folsom of New Hampshire and George Patridge of Massachusetts. The committee did not make a report during this session and for a time at least the issue of leaving Philadelphia was left unresolved.

The apparent desire on the part of certain members of Congress to improve their physical surroundings, either in Philadelphia or elsewhere, with "buildings and the necessary offices for the several boards" gave Ellery cause for concern. He knew that his constituents would not look indifferently on any attempt by Congress to aggrandize to itself more prestige and power, whether it be in the form of new buildings or increased requisitions. Indeed, it was already evident, and had been since the first Congress, that Rhode Island and her sister states were not likely to grant money to Congress for any reason, let alone for something as superfluous as the construction of new buildings. Ellery, realizing what the folks back home would think and recognizing the absurdity of expending money on public works projects when their finances were near total collapse, strongly opposed these improvident measures. To attack them he used his most devastating weapon—satire. This he presented in the form of a poetical dialogue entitled "A Farce," a satirical exchange in which Whiggo, the protagonist, castigates his two brethren, Glorioso and Pomposo, for their pursuit of worldly comforts rather than being satisfied with a more republican simplicity.

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13 Ibid., 278-279.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.