

THE SCHEMES OF PUBLIC PARTIES: WILLIAM ALLEN, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN  
AND THE COLLEGE OF PHILADELPHIA, 1756

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## ABSTRACT

Chief Justice William Allen and Benjamin Franklin met hundreds of times prior to Franklin's departure to London in 1757, and yet very little has been written about Allen. For over twenty years, Franklin and Allen worked closely on a variety of municipal improvements: the library, the hospital, the school, the fire company and many other projects were the first of their kind in America. And while Allen was Franklin's main benefactor for close to twenty-five years --it was Allen's endorsement of Franklin that got him his job as Postmaster-- Franklin mentions him only twice in his *Autobiography*. As the richest man in the Pennsylvania and the leader of the Proprietary Party, the historical silencing of such a powerful figure is usual. This thesis examines the relationship between Allen and Franklin and offers an explanation of William Allen's lack of posterity and near-total absence from colonial American history.

On May 16, 1756 an Allen led coalition of trustees in a vote to fire Franklin as President of the College and Academy of Philadelphia, an institution, a school Franklin founded and would later become the University of Pennsylvania. Occurring at the politically charged onset of the French and Indian war, it was a slight that Franklin resented for the balance of his life. It ended a period of collaboration between Allen and Franklin. Once the best of friends, following the vote Allen and Franklin became bitter enemies.

The bulk of the primary documents for this work reside at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the American Philosophical Society and on-line at [franklinpapers.org](http://franklinpapers.org), [yale.edu/franklinpapers](http://yale.edu/franklinpapers) and [sceti.library.upenn.edu/franklin](http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/franklin). Benjamin Franklin has been

the subject of dozens of secondary works, but none of them provide more than cursory details of his relationship with William Allen. There is a broad range of works on colonial Pennsylvania politics that provided a context for this paper's actors and activities, but their analysis also understates Allen's role. The biographies of William Allen, while quite useful, include only that work by other graduate students and chapters of published reference books.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are several friends and scholars that helped with this thesis. From my first graduate course at Temple University, Susan Klepp supported the idea of this thesis and my ability to write it. There are few editors of colonial Pennsylvania history with more skill and incite than Dr. Klepp, and I am but one of hundreds of students that have benefited by her mentoring.

Travis Glasson taught me that there is very little colonial American history that operates outside an Atlantic historical context; this and many other big ideas leave me in his debt. I was very lucky to have Craig Horle and Joseph Foster available to me. Their office at Temple University was a veritable colonial American research factory and they shared their copious files on William Allen with me. Email exchanges with University of Pennsylvania Archivist Mark Lloyd and the late J.A. Leo Lemay convinced me I was onto something unique: a truly new Benjamin Franklin thesis.

As one of the premier Franklin scholars in America, I could not have had a better advisor than David Waldstreicher. His generosity, teaching skill and writing advice made me think like a historian. It is an identity I surely would have not come to on my own.

My wife Barbara O'Connell, my mother Carolyn Berry and my good friend Adam Brodsky read and improved this work in many significant ways. For all of these folks, I am deeply grateful.

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE SCHEMES OF PUBLIC PARTIES

On May 11, 1756, the board of directors at the Academy and College of Philadelphia held an election to fire their founder and President, Benjamin Franklin. It is an incident that has been glossed over by virtually every historian of eighteenth century America, each of the institutional histories of the University of Pennsylvania and by all of Franklin's biographers. By intentionally omitting negative information about his demise, or at most addressing the incident superficially, history has followed Franklin's own lead for over 250 years. In his *Autobiography*, Franklin leaves out all mention of his removal by the vote of his one-time friends on the school board; Franklin obfuscated the political dimension of the event and its meaning to him both personally and professionally. A tool that effectively shaped his legacy, Franklin's *Autobiography* also forever marginalized the significance of Pennsylvania's Chief Justice, William Allen, the architect of the vote and among the most powerful people in the history of colonial Pennsylvania.

Historians have lamented that the revolutionary period is not covered by the *Autobiography*: it makes little reference to anything after Franklin's departure from Philadelphia in 1757, an exit hastened by the vote. It does, however, cover with varying detail the 25-year period during which Franklin and Allen were quite close. There has been, of course, much written about the Revolutionary period -- much more than the years covered by this thesis and Franklin's *Autobiography*. Franklin's voice is not nearly so absent in revolutionary narratives as it is dominant in describing eighteenth century



Philadelphia. While Franklin was but one of many of the nation's founders, he was the preeminent colonial publisher and chronicler of early eighteenth century affairs in Pennsylvania.

With a minimizing effect, the *Autobiography* offers very little about the constitutional crisis in Pennsylvania that grew at the onset of the French and Indian War. These were unpleasant times for Franklin. Franklin's betrayal by his associates at the College and Academy of Philadelphia was a political expression inspired by his opposition to the province's proprietor, Thomas Penn.<sup>1</sup> The autobiographical writings relevant to education and the school focus only on a pedagogical conflict between ornamental learning and practical education. These theoretical elements guided his earliest discussions in the Junto, Franklin's Friday night self-improvement society, as well as in the academy's founding essays.<sup>2</sup> The notion of an English school was a popular topic throughout colonial America and specifically at the Academy of Philadelphia. But, through a series of compromises that Franklin participated in with board member/parents, a balance was struck between the Academy's Latin and English

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter the school is referred to as "the College" or, if before the charter of the college on March 7, 1755, "the Academy."

<sup>2</sup> Discussed further below, the Junto was a weekly discussion and self-improvement group started by Franklin while still at Keimer's Printing in 1727. "Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania" was published Sat, September 13, 1749 and became the mission statement for the new school. Leonard W. Labaree and others, eds., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 3 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 397-429. Six years prior, he had written a paper that Franklin biographer J.A. Leo Lemay thinks was discussed at the Junto. J.A. Leo Lemay, *Life of Benjamin Franklin, Volume III* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008), 177. Franklin refers to this early draft in his autobiography. "I therefore in 1743, drew up a Proposal for establishing an Academy.... (Not having) time suitable for such a Trust, I let the Scheme lie a while dormant." J.A. Leo Lemay & P.M. Zall, eds., *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, a Generic Text*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), Part Three, 108. This was followed up with a clarifying sketch in 1750, "The Idea of an English School." *Franklin Papers*, vol. 4, 101-108.

schools. As one of those parents and the school's biggest patron, no one was more central to this curriculum conflict than William Allen. And yet the *Autobiography* makes no mention of him in connection to the school. The Academy of Philadelphia was clearly one of the proudest achievements for both men.

Given their animosities after the vote of the college's board of directors, it is not hard to imagine Franklin intentionally slighting Allen for posterity, playing down Allen's role in pre-revolutionary Philadelphia and in Franklin's day-to-day life. Despite *hundreds* of meetings with Allen during this period, Franklin only twice mentions him in his *Autobiography*.<sup>3</sup> The first of these is in Part One, a section written in 1777 while Franklin was on vacation in a country village south of Winchester, England.<sup>4</sup> It is a reference to 44 years earlier when, prior to opening his own press, he handled a job for Samuel Keimer printing New Jersey's currency. It is in this capacity that he first met Allen.

I made an acquaintance with many principal people of the province. Several of them had been appointed by the Assembly, a committee to attend the press, and take care that no more bills were printed than the law directed. They were therefore, by turns, constantly with us, and generally he who attended brought with him a friend or two for company. My mind having been much more improv'd by reading than Keimer's, I suppose it was for that reason my conversation seem'd to be more valu'd. They had me to their houses, introduced me to their friends, and show'd me much civility.... We continu'd there near three months; and by that time I could reckon among my acquired friends, Judge Allen, Samuel Bustill, the

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<sup>3</sup> Search performed at <http://etext.virginia.edu>. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library.

<sup>4</sup> Ormond Seavey, *Becoming Benjamin Franklin: The Autobiography and the Life* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Press, 1988). Franklin started writing the *Autobiography* in 1771, some 15 years after the school board vote. That first section of the manuscript remained in Philadelphia during the Revolutionary War when he resumed the project while serving as the American Ambassador to France in 1784. His last entries began in August 1788, just months before he ended his career of public service as president of Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania. See also Lemay, *Autobiography*, xix-xxiii.

secretary of the Province, Isaac Pearson, Joseph Cooper, and several of the Smiths, members of Assembly, and Isaac Decow, the surveyor-general. . . . These friends were afterwards of great use to me, as I occasionally was to some of them. They all continued their regard for me as long as they lived.<sup>5</sup>

This last line is utterly false as it pertains to Franklin's relationship to Allen when he was reflecting on it in 1777, many decades after the two men met. Numerous documents show that after the May 1756 vote, Franklin and Allen shared only mutual contempt for one another.<sup>6</sup>

The other *Autobiography* mention of Allen appears in Part Three, which Franklin completed between August and October 1788--when he was 82 years old. It is a perfunctory listing of Allen and two other gentlemen while on a trip (most likely in William Allen's carriage) to New York in 1747. There, they wined and dined Governor deLancey to secure cannon for the Associators, a Franklin scheme to defend the province (discussed further below).<sup>7</sup> As a connoisseur and major importer of wines, Allen must have been more pivotal to this event than Franklin lets on.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, Colonel Lawrence, William Allen, Abram Taylor, Esqr., and myself were sent to New York by the associators, commission'd to borrow some cannon of Governor Clinton. He at first refus'd us peremptorily; but at dinner with his council, where there was great drinking of Madeira wine, as the custom of that place then was, he softened by degrees, and

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<sup>5</sup> *Autobiography*, Part One, 57.

<sup>6</sup> Many of these are cited below as appropriate to an epilogue that discusses Franklin's exit from Philadelphia following the vote.

<sup>7</sup> The deal with made with Governor deLancey, not Governor Clinton as Franklin remembers in his *Autobiography*.

<sup>8</sup> Ruth Moser Kistler, "William Allen, Provincial Man of Affairs," *Pennsylvania History* 1, no. 3 (July 1934): 167.

said he would lend us six. After a few more bumpers he advanc'd to ten; and at length he very good-naturedly conceded eighteen.<sup>9</sup>

Imagining several days spent in close quarters on colonial roads, the Associators trip to New York is one of many excellent examples of how close Allen and Franklin were, as well as how Franklin's *Autobiography* diminishes Allen's role in his projects. It is also a unique anecdote of Allen and Franklin, both known for their temperate views on alcohol, essentially getting drunk together.

As a chronicler of local events, Franklin recognized Allen's prowess as a host on other occasions. As Mayor of Philadelphia for a single term, Allen hosted a celebration for the opening of the Pennsylvania State House. In the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Franklin wrote:

Thursday last William Allen, Esq; Mayor of this City for the Year past, made a Feast for his Citizens at the Statehouse, to which all the Strangers in Town of Note were also invited. Those who are Judges of such Things, say, That considering the Delicacy of the Viands, the Variety and Excellency of the Wines, the great Number of Guests, and yet the Easiness and Order with which the whole was conducted, it was the most grand and the most elegant Entertainment that has been made in these Parts of America.<sup>10</sup>

Writing what he referred to as his "memoirs" many years later, Franklin was reconstructing the image of a self-made man. While this version of his legacy recognizes the help of many people as young man, the invaluable patronage of William Allen had no room in the *Autobiography*. By contrast, a search of Franklin's Papers prior to 1756 reveals dozens of references to William Allen. Many of these simply list his name

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<sup>9</sup> *Autobiography*, Part Three, 110.

<sup>10</sup> *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 30, 1736.

among others as a trustee of the College and Academy,<sup>11</sup> the Pennsylvania Hospital,<sup>12</sup> the Pennsylvania Lottery,<sup>13</sup> the Library,<sup>14</sup> and the St. Johns Lodge of Freemasons.<sup>15</sup> Others take on the more personal tone of friends and partners,<sup>16</sup> and still others employ the deferential language used towards one's patron.<sup>17</sup>

Prior to the May 1756 vote, Franklin's advancement in Philadelphia had been greatly assisted by the patronage of more than a few gentlemen. Franklin's prior experiences in London in the 1720s had largely "defined (his) relationships of credit and debt, trust and betrayal."<sup>18</sup> A practical ethic thoroughly informed his return to Philadelphia as a printers' apprentice; as the printer and clerk of the assembly; as the

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<sup>11</sup> "Constitutions of the Academy of Philadelphia," November 13, 1749, *Franklin Papers*, vol. 3, 421-428. "Subscriptions to the Academy," November 14, 1749, *Franklin Papers*, vol. 3, 428-429. "Charter of the Academy of Philadelphia," July 12, 1753, *Franklin Papers*, vol. 5, 7-11 "College of Philadelphia: Additional Charter," May 14, 1755, *Franklin Papers*, vol. 6, 28.

<sup>12</sup> "Some Account of the Pennsylvania Hospital," May 28, 1754, *Franklin Papers*, vol. 5, 283-330.

<sup>13</sup> "Scheme of the First Philadelphia Lottery," December 5, 1747, *Franklin Papers*, vol. 3, 223-224. "Scheme of the Second Philadelphia Lottery," June 2, 1748, *Franklin Papers*, vol. 3, 288-296.

<sup>14</sup> "Agreement of Directors of Library Company," May 22, 1738, *Franklin Papers*, vol. 1, 321-322. "Library Company: Acceptance of the Charter," May 3, 1742, *Franklin Papers*, vol. 2, 347.

<sup>15</sup> "Subscription to Freemasons' Hall," Mar 13, 1754, *Franklin Papers*, vol. 5, 236.

<sup>16</sup> Franklin to Richard Peters, September 17, 1754. "Mr. Elphinston, has a secret Art, by which he teaches, even a veteran Scrawler, to write fairly in 30 Hours. I have often heard you laugh at the Secretary's Writing, and I hope he will take this Opportunity of mending his Hand.... I have heard our good Friend Mr. Allen sometimes wishing for a better Hand; this may be a good Opportunity for him to acquire it easily. His Example and yours would be the Making of the Artist's Fortune." *Franklin Papers*, vol. 5, 431-432.

<sup>17</sup> Franklin to William Smith, May 3, 1753. Giving Smith advice on interviewing for the Academy's Provost's position, Franklin wrote, "Mr. Allen has been out of Town these 10 days; but, before he went, directed me to procure him 6 of your Pieces... I shall only say, that you may depend on my doing all in my Power to make your Visit to Philadelphia agreeable to you. Yet me thinks I would not have you omit bringing a Line or two to Mr. Allen. If you are more notic'd here on Account of such Recommendation, yet as that Recommendation will be founded on your Merit, known best where you have so long resided, the Notice may be esteem'd to be as much 'on the Score of something you can call your own,' as if it were merely on Account of the Pieces you have written." *Franklin Papers*, vol. 4, 475-476.

<sup>18</sup> Alan Houston, *Benjamin Franklin and the Politics of Improvement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 23.

facilitator of municipal improvements like the school, fire company, hospital, library; and as a retired business owner and Colonial Postmaster. Franklin relied on the cultivation of human relationships to advance his public image.

In this regard, no relationship was more important to Franklin's advancement than that with William Allen. Only weeks before the May 11<sup>th</sup> vote at the College, Franklin's rapport with Allen, the richest man in town, was a pivot point for nearly all of his projects and proprietary appointments. As Franklin's main benefactor for 25 years, Allen was far and away the biggest contributor of time and money to Franklin's municipal improvement projects. Many of the ideas at Franklin's Junto meetings developed into projects that solicited Allen for funding. Allen was not only a main sponsor of the Library, the Volunteer Fire Company, the Hospital and the School, he was also an officer of the Franklin-initiated lotteries that supported these institutions. He sat on the board of directors for most of these organizations and faithfully attended their meetings. They were mason brothers together in the St. John's Lodge. Allen was the province's largest slave owner and would purchase advertising space in Franklin's newspaper offering rewards for their return when they ran away or offering them for sale as his ships brought them in from the Caribbean. Allen was the most "prominent among those handling 'parcels' of slaves that arrived with the molasses and sugars in the 1750s."<sup>19</sup> Franklin set up a storefront to work with such human merchandise, often on a bartered basis for advertising. "Between one-fifth and one-quarter of the paper's advertisements directly

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<sup>19</sup> Theodore Thayer, "Town into City, 1746-1765," in *Philadelphia: A 300 Year History*, Russell Frank Weigley, Nicholas B. Wainwright, Edwin Wolf, eds. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 75.

concerned unfree labor.”<sup>20</sup> Allen and Franklin made more money together than has been disclosed.

As a botanist and art collector, Allen shared with Franklin a purveyance of trans-Atlantic culture. Professionally, Allen’s support of Franklin was unqualified from their earliest days together in Philadelphia through the time of the college vote. Along with his father in law, Assembly Speaker Andrew Hamilton, Allen helped Franklin get government printing jobs early in his career. Chief Justice Allen’s endorsement was key to Franklin’s appointment to both the Provincial Postmasters job (allowing him to retire from the printing business in 1748) and the Colonial Postmasters job in 1753.<sup>21</sup>

History has granted Franklin primacy in these achievements and contributions largely because heuristic writers have accepted Franklin’s cues in an uncritical manner. But for those living in Philadelphia in the 1730s and 40s, Allen’s public stature dwarfed that of Franklin’s. Franklin himself deferred to Allen’s preeminence frequently, but the following poem printed in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* goes beyond deference. In “William Allen Poem,” Franklin’s friend is hailed as being without pride and ambition. One might suspect Franklin of satire here, but written in 1737, Franklin was courting the patronage of Allen.

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<sup>20</sup> David Waldstreicher, *Runaway America: Benjamin Franklin, Slavery and the American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 24. See also Billy G. Smith, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1790* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989) \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>21</sup> Franklin turned over the day-to-day operations of the printing business to David Hall, but continued to compile *Poor Richards Almanac*, write articles for the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and publish various pamphlets. Lemay, *Vol. 3*, 500. Franklin made his application for the Colonial Postmaster position through his friend Peter Collinson. But in the May 21, 1751 letter that accomplished this, Franklin recognizes not only Allen’s powerful endorsement, but also his willingness of Allen to post a £200 bond on Franklin’s behalf. *Franklin’s Papers*, vol. 4, 134-135. Carl Van Doren, eds. *Benjamin Franklin’s Autobiographical Writings* (New York: Viking Press, 1945), 77. In this work, Van Doren recognizes a wide variety of Franklin’s writings as autobiographical, but not a part of the *Autobiography*.

William Allen Poem

But who is He, whom PHILADELPHIA'S Shore  
Claims as her Son, yet long his Absence bore;  
Who now to bless his Native land appears;  
Of Wit and Judgement ripe, in blooming Years;  
Yet of his Worth not conscious or elate,  
Rich without Pride, without ambition Great:  
'Twas he that raised my drooping Muse anew;  
This Verse at least to Gratitude is due.  
I know he wants me not to chant his Fame,  
Yet none can sure the officious Poet blame  
Who swells his humble Song with ALLEN'S name.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 1, 1737.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE MARGINALIZATION OF WILLIAM ALLEN

In one of the most popular treatments of the Allen/Franklin relationship, Carl Bridenbaugh likewise blames the *Autobiography* as part of William Allen's faded role in history. "Forgotten by posterity because he espoused the losing side of the conversation in the War for Independence, [Allen] was quietly ignored in the *Autobiography* because of the personal dislike and political antagonism of its author."<sup>23</sup> Other Tory Philadelphians however, like Joseph Galloway, have enjoyed a much higher historical profile than Allen.<sup>24</sup>

There is a third contributing factor to Allen's historical obscurity. Beyond people's dependence on him as a patron, business associate, ally or family man, William Allen was a thoroughly unlikable person. Had he been more personally attractive, he may have overcome his fall-out with Franklin and his loyalty to King George III. There have been only four dedicated biographies of William Allen, but these are not full-length monographs, nor are they interested in the college vote. Only one of them was published in the past 50 years.<sup>25</sup> Each contributes to the image of William Allen, the man, and has

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<sup>23</sup> Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, *Rebels and Gentlemen: Philadelphia in the Age of Franklin* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1942), 184.

<sup>24</sup> There are no biographical studies on Allen comparable to other Tories, like John H. Ferling, *The Loyalist Mind: Joseph Galloway and the American Revolution* (State College PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977); or Benjamin H. Newcomb, *Franklin and Galloway: A Political Partnership* (Hartford: Yale University Press, 1972).

<sup>25</sup> In 1877, "Chief Justice William Allen" by Edward F. deLancey appeared in the second-ever issue of *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. Expanding on an article printed in the June 1938 issue of *Pennsylvania History*, Ruth M. Kistler's Master's thesis, "William Allen, Founder of Allentown," was

had to deal with the scant amount of historical material to work with: Allen did very little to shape his historical image. In his Ph.D Dissertation, Norman Cohen notes that Allen's "thoughts must be learned from his actions. These actions reveal a classical and conservative mold."<sup>26</sup> He was a colonial gentleman who aspired to be an English aristocrat first. In the end, he outlived the world of his own creation.<sup>27</sup>

Both Cohen and Ruth Moser Kistler subjectively analyze paintings of Allen. The Chief Justice was the main patron of Benjamin West while the painter was honing his skills in Europe. Allen "supported many talented men (like Franklin and West) and expected their loyalty."<sup>28</sup> In appreciation, West had Allen sit for a portrait in 1760. The image is of an obese patrician "dressed as an English gentlemen (with) periwig, laced cuffs, vest stretching across the girth of his stomach, and a white scarf neatly tucked underneath his multiple chins."<sup>29</sup> Kistler, always more positive about her subject than Allen's other biographers, generously notes "the whole figure and attitude are that of self possession, shrewdness, energy, as well as boundless determination."<sup>30</sup>

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included in the 1962 issue of *The Proceedings of the Lehigh Valley Historical Society*. The most thorough of the Allen biographies, identifying most of the primary sources, is Norman S. Cohen, "William Allen, Chief Justice of Pennsylvania 1704-1780," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1966). Craig Horle and Joseph Foster looked over many deeds and business papers in creating a substantial William Allen entry in *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania: A Biographical Dictionary, Volume Three 1757-1775* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2005), 231-280.

<sup>26</sup> Cohen, "Allen" Dissertation, ii.

<sup>27</sup> Cohen, "Allen" Dissertation, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Susan E. Klepp, "Encounter and Experiment: The Colonial Period." *Pennsylvania, A History of the Commonwealth*, eds. Randal M. Miller and William Pencak, eds. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 89. This text book page includes a portrait that is very similar to West's painted in 1750 by Robert Feke.

<sup>29</sup> The painting hung in Independence Hall for years. It is now owned by the University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>30</sup> Kistler, "Allen" thesis, 7.

Allen was known as “The Great Giant” not only for his physical and political presence, but also for his temper. As an example, Cohen offers “in debate, [Allen] would storm and rage or resort to coarse sarcasm. He used his huge bulk to overwhelm his opponents, more as a brawler than as a public speaker.”<sup>14</sup> When excited he would stutter, and this would worsen as he became enraged. His manner was insolent, his rhetoric, “tedious.”<sup>31</sup> Prone to impatience, he would pace back and forth in front of unwanted guests until they left his presence. As a dinner guest at Allen’s home in Mt. Airy, John Adams found him to be “droll.” By most accounts, William Allen was a man who “hid the natural dullness of his disposition behind the artificial screen of gentility.”<sup>32</sup>

Mentioned above, Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh include a brief sketch on Allen in *Rebels and Gentlemen*. It contains no sources, but one can assume that they reviewed “The Burd Papers,” the only known collection of William Allen’s writings.<sup>33</sup> After Allen’s death in 1780, these passed through successive generations of the family of Edward Shippen, also a prominent colonial merchant and the executor of Allen’s will. These manuscripts reveal a writing style that is banal and redundant.

Because these 187 letters were written between 1753 and 1770, they reinforce Allen’s contentiousness with Franklin and very little of their collaborations—nearly all of

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<sup>14</sup> Cohen, “Allen” Dissertation, 14.

<sup>31</sup> Samuel Foulke, “Journal of the Pennsylvania Assembly, 1761-1762,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 7 (1894): 408-412.

<sup>32</sup> Cohen, “Allen” Dissertation, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Lewis Burd Walker, ed., *The Burd Papers: Extracts from the Chief Justice William Allen’s Letterbook* (Pottstown, 1897).

the municipal improvements they worked on together, as well as Allen's patronage of Franklin, took place prior to the older letters in the collection.<sup>34</sup> Allen's venom toward Franklin is nowhere better expressed than in the appendix of this collection where he and others opposed the 1764 appointment of Franklin as the Assembly's agent in London. Franklin's terse reply to this protest is included in the Burd collection.<sup>35</sup> It is this exchange that makes *The Burd Papers: Extracts from the Chief Justice William Allen's Letterbook* the primary source used most often to depict the relationship between the two men.

Edward F. deLancey's article is a minor piece using Allen's children's diaries. It documents the demise of Allen's empire as a Tory in the revolution, but with nowhere near as much detail as Craig Horle's chapter on Allen. Exaggerating Allen's intellectual capacity while validating an unmatched prowess for business, the article is a nineteenth century celebration of aristocratic qualities. DeLancey identifies with his subject as a kinsman: Allen's youngest daughter Margaret married the eldest son and namesake of New York Governor James DeLancey.

Ruth Moser Kistler was a social studies teacher at William Allen High School in Allentown Pennsylvania, a calling that would beg the writing of the first significant biography on Allen. In successive chapters, her master's thesis isolates Allen's business interests as a merchant, iron master and land speculator. She does the same with his roles in public life as a councilman, as Philadelphia's Mayor, as Provincial Recorder,

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<sup>34</sup> In a November 5, 1753 letter to business associates in Guernsey England, Allen digresses from shipping details to endorse Franklin as North American Postmaster, and to offer to pay his bond. It is the only pre-college vote reference to Franklin in the collection. *The Burd Papers*, 10.

<sup>35</sup> *The Burd Papers*, 81-131.

Assemblyman, Boundary Commissioner and as Pennsylvania's Chief Justice. *The Burd Papers* are the primary source most often cited, but she also reviews the deeds involved with the development of Northampton and Lehigh Counties.<sup>36</sup> It is Kistler who offers the first comment on the Franklin/Allen relationship.

Before the problem concerning the change in government arose the men were best of friends. Through the influence of Allen and his friends Franklin was raised from obscurity to a position of influence in the colony, by receiving appointments as printer of the province, clerk to the House, and Postmaster General of all of North America. This last... at a salary of £600 per year.<sup>37</sup>

This sort of affiliation between a primary subject and Franklin is common among historians and those with a commemorative agenda. The Philadelphia Masons celebrate Franklin's birthday each year, but none attended his funeral, as he was not welcome with the new clique at the end of his life. Franklin was a member of the "modern" sect of freemasons. While he lived in Europe, the moderns were displaced by the "ancients." The two memberships rarely merged, and yet today's masonry celebrates Franklin as one of their own.<sup>38</sup> In a similar mode, historians of the University of Pennsylvania portray their founder's affiliation with the school as uninterrupted.<sup>39</sup>

While they were indeed the best of friends for over twenty years, Kistler makes no mention of the projects that Allen and Franklin worked on together. And the schism

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<sup>36</sup> Kistler is the first to connect Allen's pre-purchase (from the Delaware Tribes) warrants of land to the infamous Indian Walk. Kistler, "Allen" thesis, 18.

<sup>37</sup> Kistler, "Allen" thesis, 35. £600 per year is worth £51,096 (or \$78,988.92 US) in 2010 currency value. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency>, April 12, 2010

<sup>38</sup> Steven C. Bullock, "The Revolutionary Transformation of American Freemasonry, 1752-1792," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 47, no. 3 (July 1990): 318-356.

<sup>39</sup> Discussed at length below.

“concerning the change in government” occurs late in Kistler’s analysis. Here, Allen’s split with Franklin is initiated by Allen in a May 18, 1758 letter to his agent in London.

(Franklin) is a very artful imitating fellow and very ready at expressing it. I am informed, notwithstanding his smooth behavior, that he gives our people the disadvantageous impression of Mr. Penn, who, he says, is determined to deprive them of all of the privileges they derived from his father and upon the whole suggests everything that a very bad heart is capable of doing, in order to inflame them still more against the proprietary family.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, Kistler’s coverage of the French and Indian War omits the critical details of the constitutional crisis that ended Allen and Franklin’s work together. The college vote is only one of many of such details missing from her paper.

Of the Allen biographers, only one has had the advantages of modern research techniques: Craig Horle’s 50 page biography of Allen is copious in its examination of Allen’s complicated business dealings, his votes in the Assembly and other interests.<sup>41</sup> Allen is described as a shrewd businessman, to a point of obsession. As the owner, or part owner, of 30 ships, he engaged in the unseemly business of privateering— the pirate-like, high seas seizures of foreign (Spanish, French, Dutch, etc.) merchant ships. And he created various partnerships to circumvent laws and liabilities. Abram Taylor was the royally appointed Duties Collector on the Delaware and a partner in “William Allen and Company.”<sup>42</sup> It was in this nefarious relationship that illegal, duty-free French sugar and

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<sup>40</sup> Allen to Ferdinand Paris, the proprietary agent in London, May 18, 1758. Penn Papers Vol. 9, 5 at the Historical Society of Philadelphia (HSP). Kistler, “Allen” thesis, 36.

<sup>41</sup> Drs. Horle and Foster have been kind enough to share with the author their extensive file of primary documents on Allen.

<sup>42</sup> Taylor was also one of the founding trustees of the school, although he was absent the day of the vote. [http://www.archives.upenn.edu/people/1700s/taylor\\_abram.html](http://www.archives.upenn.edu/people/1700s/taylor_abram.html).

molasses was able to undercut the British imports in the Philadelphia market. Horle's image of Allen is painted by a succession of such transactions.

Although Allen was the colony's leading Presbyterian, Horle notes that many of his fellow churchmen were "not his kind of people, that is men of great wealth and considerable status."<sup>43</sup> As a rule, while taking into account incidents where "Allen's fiery temper, combined with his strong proprietary connections"<sup>44</sup> would irritate even family members, Horle avoids subjective assessments of Allen's personality. In Allen there was a work ethic that belied the image of the fat patrician.

In essence, William Allen, a wealthy, well-connected, loving father, busy philanthropist, and civic and religious activist could have lived a gentlemanly life of leisure, as did many members of the English upper class that he had known in his youth. Instead he chose to become extremely active in Pennsylvania's turbulent political and legal milieu.<sup>45</sup>

From the spring of 1755 to the spring of 1756, this turbulence of events in Pennsylvania picked up a pace that none of the participants could actually have anticipated or controlled. Beyond the full engagement of the province in the French and Indian War, it was a period that would end the Philadelphia era of Franklin's career. Likewise tested, this was a period when William Allen's business interests were threatened and, as with similar circumstances earlier, his political acumen would prove inferior to his business sense. To understand the mutual sense of betrayal in this conflict,

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<sup>43</sup> Horle, *Vol. III*, 266. Many of these Scotch Irish Presbyterians were his also his tenants and assembly constituents. "His haughty manner, imitative of the English Gentlemen, must have repelled these backwoods Scotch Irish." Cohen, "Allen" Dissertation, 13.

<sup>44</sup> Horle, *Vol. III*, 261.

<sup>45</sup> Horle, *Vol. III*, 243.

one has to look to the social, economic and political orbit of William Allen, as well as his sponsorship of Benjamin Franklin.



## CHAPTER 3

### ANDREW HAMILTON AND TWO YOUNG MEN IN LONDON

Although the relationship between William Allen and Benjamin Franklin began in Pennsylvania, both operated in a British Atlantic context. Letters of introduction and credit were vital to any young man in the British Atlantic world of the eighteenth century, but for Allen and Franklin these connections functioned within the parameters of their individual class status.

Patronage and the pursuit of patronage was a dominant strategy at this point in Franklin's life; without it, the fifteenth child of a candle maker and soap boiler had little chance of advancement. As a nineteen year old journeyman printer, Franklin had left his brother's press in Boston, and later that of Samuel Keimer's in Philadelphia, because he thought himself capable of running his own printing business. He had in fact run James Franklin's Boston publishing company as a teenager, when his older brother was found guilty of sedition.<sup>46</sup> The public business of printing would rely on the private considerations and loyalties of his more powerful and class-emboldened associates.

While a student in London from 1720 to 1726, William Allen had lived the lifestyle of a grandee son: enjoying a generous allowance; going to just enough classes at the Middle Temple, one of the English Inns of Court (and later at Clair Hall, Cambridge

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<sup>46</sup> James Franklin was jailed for publishing an article in the *New England Courant* that suggested the Massachusetts General Court had conspired with pirates. In jail from June 12 to July 7, 1722, his indentured brother ran the paper. During this time, Benjamin Franklin wrote and published the series of "Silence Dogood" letters, perhaps his best-known satirical work. *Autobiography*, Part One, 15-19.

University) to be considered a English trained lawyer; touring the continent and meeting other young gentlemen of similar means.<sup>47</sup> It can be presumed that Allen had mercantile career aspirations and was in England to develop the type of business relationships that were the foundation of all eighteenth century British Atlantic commerce. Among these acquaintances were William Penn's sons, John, Thomas and Richard. At this point in time, the cash-poor estate of the late William Penn was in a state of inter-family litigation.<sup>48</sup> While legal issues between William Penn Jr. and Lady Callowhill were twisting their way through an official process in London, William Keith, the rogue Deputy Governor of Pennsylvania, and his political opponent James Logan, battled for control in Philadelphia. Logan was the Proprietary Council's Secretary, Director of the Land Office, and confidant of the Proprietor's widow, Hannah Callowhill Penn. For the first 50 years of the province's existence, Logan was the most powerful man in Pennsylvania. A young William Allen correctly chose the Logan side of this fight and established a relationship with the victorious faction of the Penn family, a friendship that would have a profound influence on his fortunes and upon the province until the revolution.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Horle, *Vol. III*, 232. Cohen, "Allen" Dissertation, 7-9. Kistler, "Allen" thesis, 7-8.

<sup>48</sup> William Penn, Jr., the oldest son from the founder's first marriage, challenged the will of his father which left everything to his second wife Hannah Callowhill Penn. Continuing with the argument of primogeniture, the founder's grandson, Springett Penn, took up the case after William Penn Jr.'s death in 1720. "Lady Callowhill" died in December 1726, but in July 1727, the Court of the Exchequer settled the case in favor of her three sons. But the consolidated power of the proprietorship would not be complete until the fall of 1746, when Thomas Penn became the Chief Proprietor upon the death of his older brother, John Penn (not to be confused with John Penn Jr. the future Governor nor Thomas Penn's son John).

<sup>49</sup> "While in England Allen had become personally acquainted with the proprietors of Pennsylvania, John and Thomas Penn, an acquaintanceship that would prove propitious for his future as well as theirs, and he had doubtless established important mercantile connections." Horle, *Vol. III*, 232.

Allen returned to Philadelphia in 1726 to bury his father.<sup>50</sup> William Allen, Sr. left several businesses to his wife and sons. City tax records show the elder Allen to have been in the 93<sup>rd</sup> percentile of taxpayers, his business interests dovetailing into one another in an uncommonly sophisticated manner. William Allen, Sr. was a merchant with significant factoring<sup>51</sup> connections in England. His son, William Jr., took over a well-financed operation and created a variety of companies in which he sold shares--real estate partnerships, mining and refining corporations, shipping and commodity trading firms. It was to become a portfolio of integrated commercial interests that would eventually make him the wealthiest man in Pennsylvania.

His father left him Delaware riverbank properties rigged with wharfs, as well as partnerships in, or the outright ownership of, four ships. William, Jr., with sea captain/partner James Turner, grew this shipping business into a commercial fleet of 23 ships ranging from 30 to 130 tons. Allen would later inherit from his wife's father even more waterfront property with more shipping and storage capacity.

The relationship with the Proprietors would pay off handsomely because, as Thomas and John Penn needed liquidity to maintain their standing in English society, their only asset was provincial real estate. From the proprietors, Allen bought 64,000

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<sup>50</sup> Cohen, "Allen" Dissertation, 7-9. Allen would be a "student" from August 1720 until his father's death in September 1725. Returning to Philadelphia briefly to settle his father's will and shore up political relations with James Logan, he returned to London in 1728. On November 27, 1729 his arrival back in Philadelphia was announced in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*.

<sup>51</sup> "Factoring" is an accounting service that was essential for eighteenth century American merchants. For a fee or a percentage, a factor would assume the responsibility of payment, with all the risk and without recourse, between buyer and sellers. Allen would be paid by his factors in England for products he shipped there. His factors there would also collect from Allen for products that he took back to America. This was the primary system of credit in the British Atlantic world.

acres of “unlocated” lands that he would survey and develop.<sup>52</sup> A considerable part of Allen’s real estate operation also involved the collection of rents and the holding of mortgages.<sup>53</sup> Allen was an early champion of the vertical monopoly: on his lands were his coalmines, which fed his foundries, which produced his pig iron, which he exported on his ships docked at his wharfs. All of this activity produced earnings that were calculated at his counting house. His laborers were frequently his tenants or slaves.

It is not known if Allen met Penn’s lawyer, Andrew Hamilton while they were both in London. Upon Allen’s final return to Philadelphia in 1729, they would become the closest of political allies. Allen would marry Hamilton’s daughter Margaret and endorse his son James in a variety of social and political ways.<sup>54</sup> At Hamilton’s direction, Allen purchased the land on the south side of Chestnut Street between Fifth and Sixth Streets. On that parcel of land, Hamilton designed and, with Allen and the Assembly, financed the building of the Pennsylvania State House, now known as

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<sup>52</sup> Horle, *Vol. III*, 233. This was largely real estate that had not been actually bought from the natives who lived there. The authorizing Land Office, run by James Logan and later Richard Peters, operated in limbo during the proprietary litigation, which continued until 1741. This was a way for insiders to get a good deal and for Thomas and John Penn to get needed cash. Allen would go around Logan and his Land Office to make these deals directly with the Penns. While minimizing Allen’s role, the best-researched piece on the illicit sale of Indian land is Francis Jennings’ “The Scandalous Indian Policy of William Penn’s Sons: Deed and Documents of the Walking Purchase,” *Pennsylvania History* 37 (January 1970): 19-39.

<sup>53</sup> Horle, *Vol. III*, 231-280.

<sup>54</sup> Eighteenth century marriages among professional/merchant class families had a power of their own. Competing for the hand of Margaret Hamilton was Isaac Norris. Norris, a Quaker Grandee associated with defense-minded wing of the “Old Party,” and Allen were bitter rivals throughout the period. While Franklin brought the two men together for projects like the Pennsylvania Hospital, Franklin’s alliance with Norris in the 1750s would become an irreconcilable problem for Allen leading up to the college vote. “A young Lady of great Merit,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 20, 1734. Margaret Hamilton may have had some say in her nuptials. Had Norris fared better with Ms. Hamilton, Allen’s power would have been diminished.

Independence Hall.<sup>55</sup> Although very different in character, Hamilton's patronage of Benjamin Franklin would be nearly as effective as his kinship with Allen. Unlike Allen and Hamilton's probable introduction, Franklin met Hamilton while all three of them were in London.

Governor Keith had spotted the clever apprentice printer in Philadelphia and had cultivated a relationship with Franklin by inviting him to his home and sponsoring him in one of Philadelphia's political societies, The Tiff Group.<sup>56</sup> Franklin recalled that Keith's "setting me up was always mentioned as a fixed thing."<sup>57</sup> Operating under the false patronage of William Keith, Franklin's first of eight trips across the Atlantic was to purchase a printing press. With an understanding that letters of introduction and credit were on board, Franklin sailed out of New Castle on the *London Hope*, November 5, 1724. When he arrived on Christmas Eve and was allowed by the ship's Captain to fish-out the crucial letters, Franklin found none that were addressed to him: Keith had sent him on a fool's errand. Franklin would soon realize that Keith had no worthy reputation to generate letters of credit.

According to Franklin, his *Autobiography* being the only account of Keith's scam, he took several of the letters from the ship's hold that had some promise of containing support—one to a printer and another to a stationer—and offered to deliver them. One letter revealed a scheme by Keith against his political rival Andrew Hamilton. Whether

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<sup>55</sup> Craig Horle, Joseph Foster, et. al., eds. *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania: A Biographical Dictionary, Volume Two 1710-1756* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2005), 428.

<sup>56</sup> J.A. Leo Lemay, *The Life Of Benjamin Franklin: Journalist 1706-1730 Vol. I* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2002), 353.

<sup>57</sup> *Autobiography*, Part One, 39. Lemay, *Vol. I*, 257.

Franklin opened this letter on his own or (as his autobiography claims) had the stationer-addressee read it to him is immaterial. When Hamilton, who had originally been scheduled to sail aboard the same ship as Franklin, finally arrived in London, Franklin called on him and gave him the letter.<sup>58</sup> Franklin recounted that Hamilton “thanked me cordially, the Information being of importance to him. And from that time he became my friend, greatly to my Advantage afterwards on many Occasions.”<sup>59</sup> If Franklin’s class transcendence began when he ran away from his brother’s indenture in Boston, it took an even bigger leap with his acquaintance of Andrew Hamilton at the beginning of 1725.

Hamilton had recently resigned as Pennsylvania’s Attorney General and was in London as the personal attorney to Hannah Callowhill Penn. Lady Penn considered Hamilton’s own letters of reference from James Logan.<sup>60</sup> The Penn’s new attorney was already considered the “father of the judiciary system in Maryland” for his work prior to his arrival in Philadelphia in 1714.<sup>61</sup> David Lloyd had a similar legacy in Philadelphia and upon Hamilton’s return at the end of 1726, he, James Logan and Hamilton reunited to oust Sir William Keith.

In June 1727, Hamilton would be appointed to the lucrative position of City Recorder, a post he would hold until his death in 1741 with Allen as his successor. In league with Jeremiah Langhorne, Hamilton was also in that year elected to the Assembly

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<sup>58</sup> Franklin and his traveling companions enjoyed the stateroom cabin and provisions that had been reserved for Hamilton and his son James.

<sup>59</sup> *Autobiography*, Part One, 42. Lemay, *Vol. I*, 268.

<sup>60</sup> Logan wrote to a trustee of the Penn family that Hamilton had operated “very heartily in the interest of the Proprietor” and was “a very able lawyer and faithful to his client.” Horle, *Vol. II*, 422.

<sup>61</sup> Burton Alva Konkle, *The Life of Andrew Hamilton, 1676-1741* (Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1941), 27.

by the voters of Bucks County. Two years later, Hamilton would be elected Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly for the first of seven terms, many of which ran concurrently with the same position in the Lower Counties Assembly.<sup>62</sup> With such political power came positions on virtually every issue facing the province, and with such positions came both allies and enemies.<sup>63</sup>

On many of the public issues, Franklin's main competitor Andrew Bradford used *The American Weekly Mercury* to slander Hamilton. Against each of these personal attacks, Hamilton could count on Franklin and the power of his newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. As Bradford lost government printing contracts to Franklin, he became more and more a virulent enemy of Hamilton. Although personal attacks published in the *Mercury* would cost Hamilton his seat as Assembly speaker for a single term in 1733, articles by Franklin's *Gazette* persistently countered these attacks, and Hamilton regained his seat the following session.<sup>64</sup>

Taking sides against the Bradford publishing family was not limited to Philadelphia for either Hamilton or Franklin. The Philadelphia lawyer's most famous case was in defense of John Peter Zenger, a German-born printer/publisher of the *New York Weekly Journal* and the sole competitor in New York City of William Bradford, Andrew Bradford's father. In 1735, Zenger published some unkind things about New York's Governor and was arrested for libel. Hamilton eloquently and successfully (though with little or no basis in existing law) argued before the New York State

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<sup>62</sup> Horle, *Vol. II*, 423.

<sup>63</sup> Such alliances were social as well as political--Langhorne and Allen shared a keen interest in racehorses.

<sup>64</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 16, 1733.

Supreme Court that the freedom of the press should be an American standard and that juries should be able to interpret the law. William Bradford's *New York Gazette* supported Governor Cosby's legal maneuvers throughout the proceedings and that coverage was reprinted and supplemented 100 miles south of the trial in *The American Weekly Mercury*. Following Hamilton's victory, Franklin published and sold *A Brief Narrative of the Case and Tryal of John Peter Zenger* in celebration of his patron's win.<sup>65</sup> The case and Franklin's treatment of it had an impact that was "clearly in the realm of political, not legal, theory; Hamilton's argument that governments could be legitimately criticized by their citizens prefigured American revolutionary thought."<sup>66</sup> With this argument, Hamilton became Colonial America's most noted defender of a press protected from sedition and libel laws.

There are many examples of Franklin's cultivating relations with the city's power brokers while simultaneously championing the cause of the common man. The earliest and best of these can be found in his position on paper money, an issue at the center of the political intrigue that would oust him from the College of Philadelphia 27 years later. Franklin's involvement began in 1729 with his pamphlet "The Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency." Prior to this time, this was a cause framed by the politics of Governor William Keith against his pro-business adversaries. The populist need for paper currency was a cornerstone of Keith's political platform.

Approved by both proprietary claimants, Hannah Penn and Springett Penn (son of the recently the deceased William Penn, Jr.), Patrick Gordon replaced Keith as Lieutenant

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<sup>65</sup> *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 8, 1737

<sup>66</sup> Horle, *Vol. II*, 434.



Governor in 1726.<sup>67</sup> Keith became a seditious and unsuccessful candidate for Speaker of the Assembly. Following Hannah Penn's death, Gordon not only represented her son Thomas Penn's position against the Assembly authorized currency bill, but along with Executive Council member Hamilton opposed any Keithian causes.<sup>68</sup> Hamilton was a "staunch opponent of paper money" even as he administered its issuance as a director of the Loan Office from 1730-1738.<sup>69</sup>

On this topic in the Junto, Franklin took an opposing position. In terms of self-interest, he was undeniably the best currency printer in the area, so it was logical that he would find an argument for its production. More paper currency meant more business. But it was the logic of his economic argument that probably softened Hamilton's position. Here was a dynamic that would be repeated over and over until it was met with the retribution of the college vote: Franklin, while always deferential to his powerful and moneyed friends, did not always take supplicant positions on their issues as expected of other proprietary placemen.

Our Debates possess'd me so fully of the Subject, that I wrote and printed an anonymous Pamphlet on it, entitled, *The Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency*. It was well receiv'd by the common People in general;

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<sup>67</sup> The official position of Lieutenant Governor is frequently referred to as "Governor" due to its local executive function. The Proprietor held the actual title of Governor, but was/is rarely referred to as such.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas was Hannah Penn's youngest son and the future uncontested Proprietor. Unlike his benevolent father, Thomas Penn "thought solely in terms of the profit that could be derived from the province." Ralph C. Ketcham, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), 92. In this avarice, Thomas Penn differed from supporters like Allen. Penn opposed Franklin/Allen positions on currency, the library, the school and hospital. Penn moved to Philadelphia in 1732 and for 19 years worked on the border dispute with Maryland, improved rent collections in the land office and engineered the "Walking Purchase" swindle of the Delaware Indians. Allan Tully, *William Penn's Legacy; Politics and Social Structure in Provincial Pennsylvania, 1726-1755* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994), 11-22. For a more forgiving portrait of Thomas Penn, see William Hanna, *Benjamin Franklin and Pennsylvania Politics* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1964), 15-18.

<sup>69</sup> Horle, *Vol. II*, 427.

but the Rich Men dislik'd it; for it increas'd and strengthen'd the Clamour for more Money; and they happening to have no Writers among them that were able to answer it, their Opposition slacken'd, and the Point was carried by a Majority in the House. My Friends there, who conceiv'd I had been of some Service, thought fit to reward me, by employing me in printing the Money, a very profitable Jobb, and a great Help to me. This was another Advantage gain'd by my writing.<sup>70</sup>

Hamilton directed the printing of Delaware's and, later, Pennsylvania's currency to Franklin's new printing firm. Franklin recalled that he obtained "thro' my Friend Hamilton the Printing of the New Castle Paper Money, another profitable Jobb, as I then thought it." So while Franklin claims that it was "well receiv'd by the common People in general; but the Rich Men dislik'd it," he is downplaying the patronage of the rich men he consistently pursued and won over to his way of thinking. He also discounts the support for paper money by William Allen and other wealthy merchants.

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<sup>70</sup> *Autobiography*, Part One, 67.

## CHAPTER 4

1730

Franklin would the ranks of these wealthy merchants through their patronage. Hugh Meredith was working with Franklin at Keimer's print shop when Franklin had his final falling out with his boss. Seeing Franklin's talent, Meredith got his father to finance press works for a new printing concern. However, Franklin's business partnership and friendship with the Merediths did not fare well in 1730. Hugh Meredith became mired in his alcoholism as Simon Meredith, Hugh's father, defaulted on the loan for the press, and they were sued. With help from friends, Franklin bought out the Meredith's stake in the enterprise.<sup>71</sup> Within months of being elected Speaker, Hamilton replaced Bradford with Franklin as the official printer for the Pennsylvania Assembly. Franklin was 24 and it was this contract that really launched his practice.

At 26 years old, Allen became a proprietary office holder, being named a Justice in the Court of Oyer and Terminer of Bucks, Chester and Philadelphia Counties. Having taken a seat on the city council upon his return, he was chosen to be an Alderman in 1730. In that same year, Allen was also elected to his first term in the Pennsylvania Assembly. Allen's future father-in-law, Andrew Hamilton, had just been elected to the first of nine terms as the speaker of the Assembly. About this time, Allen met and began courting the speaker's daughter, Margaret.

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<sup>71</sup> David Freeman Hawke, *Franklin* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 37-39.

In 1730, Franklin also became involved romantically, though in a form that exhibited their differences of class. The Godfrey family was subletting at his Second and High Street residence/business. When Mrs. Godfrey tried to set Franklin up with a friend's daughter, her family rejected Franklin's demand for a dowry (with the perception there was little future in printing). Franklin married another woman, Deborah Read Rogers. It was by necessity a common-law marriage because the whereabouts of her first husband was unknown. In another courting complication, Franklin's illegitimate one (or two)-year-old son William moved in with them.<sup>72</sup>

Their contrasting paths notwithstanding, it was a time full of potential for both men in the Pennsylvania Assembly. As the probate litigation continued among William Penn's heirs, the still weak and undefined nature of the proprietorship favored legislative power over executive prerogatives. An Anglican like Hamilton was able to preside over the Quaker dominant Assembly, because the founder's notion of religious diversity still held sway. Within that government, a young Presbyterian like Allen could take committee assignments and participate in legislation because all the members of the assembly were rich men, first and foremost. And the ambitious printer, consumed in a flurry of his own youthful professional and personal transitions, could transcend class distinctions by developing alliances, expressing big ideas and taking advantage of opportunities. In 1730, the Pennsylvania Assembly was an organization at peace with itself in an equally peaceful world.

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<sup>72</sup> Lemay, *Vol. II*, 3-8. Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Viking Press, 1938), 92-93.

## CHAPTER 5

### JUNTO, WEEKLY. ST. JOHN LODGE MONTHLY.

Clubs in British America always formed within taverns and coffee houses and were the birthplace of many schemes.<sup>73</sup> “When Philadelphia clubs and societies chose tavern venues for feasts and celebrations, they looked at the character of the landlord as well as the amenities of his house.”<sup>74</sup> Seeking legitimacy for their cause or affiliation, the selection of a venue was important for clubs given the Philadelphia’s social environment.

Although Philadelphia ... contained a number of houses that boasted the name ‘tavern,’ a number of these were alehouses, simple dwellings with a barrel of porter in the hall and two extra beds for the guests.... These were minor temples of vice, where prostitution, drunken disorder, and riot might break out.<sup>75</sup>

Whether upstanding or seditious, these facilities operated on a London model that Franklin and Allen would have recognized from their time abroad. These venues were successful by catering to specific clientele, and as public spaces, they were a key component of popular culture: a conduit for discourse that could not take place in churches or the halls of government.

A little over a year after returning to Philadelphia, Franklin started a discussion group of young working men called the Junto. On Friday evenings for thirty years

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<sup>73</sup> David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 176.

<sup>74</sup> Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch & Revolution; Taverngoing & Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1999), 63.

<sup>75</sup> Shields, *Civil Tongues*, 56.

(unless some other activities were pressing), this group of young intellectual tradesmen met and conjured up a variety of projects.<sup>76</sup> Franklin's Friday night Junto first met at the Indian King Tavern on High Street, just around the corner from his Samuel Keimer's print shop on Second Street. Different from the promiscuous common rooms of the times, the Indian King and the Bear Tavern (where the Library Company would also often meet) were owned by Nicholas Scull, a surveyor in the employ of William Allen.<sup>77</sup>

Unlike like the public spirit of the tavern based club, the Junto was "touched by Masonic principles: it was intended to be secret and exclusive."<sup>78</sup> Sometime in 1728, the group moved to a room set aside by Junto member Robert Grace.<sup>79</sup> Franklin's printing company operated out of the first floor of the same building at 131 High Street, and Franklin's residence was upstairs.

Something of a formula developed for turning the Junto's discussions into ideas and then institutions. First, the ideas would be discussed and refined at the Junto. Members were required to write and present papers on a wide range of topics. Articles would then be printed as free pamphlets and, after Franklin's October 2, 1729 purchase of

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<sup>76</sup> Lemay, *Vol. I.* 332-356.

<sup>77</sup> By 1752, there were 120 taverns licensed in the City of Philadelphia. Edward Potts Cheyney, *History of the University of Pennsylvania, 1740-1940* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1940), 7. Scull would become a Proprietary Party placeman as Surveyor General of the province and would excuse himself from Junto, Library Company and Freemason meetings in 1937 to direct the Walking Purchase swindle of Delaware Indian tribes living in what is now called Allentown. As the main landowner in this land grab, in 1762 William Allen laid out the grid that became the town that bears his name Allentown, Pennsylvania. Kistler, Master's thesis, 16-19. Allen's real estate deals are discussed, deed-by-deed in Horle *Vol III*, 232-234.

<sup>78</sup> Esmond Wright, *Franklin of Philadelphia* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1986), 37.

<sup>79</sup> As an iron producer, Grace was something of a competitor of William Allen and his partner, Joseph Turner. Grace would produce the first Franklin Stove, a freestanding cast iron stove that was safer and more fuel-efficient than fireplaces. "An Account of the new-invented Pennsylvania Fireplaces" was published in 1744 to promote the demand. There is no record of Allen's feeling slighted by this loyalty. [www.ideafinder.com/history/inventions/frankstove.htm](http://www.ideafinder.com/history/inventions/frankstove.htm) (February 20, 2010).

the failing newspaper from Samuel Keimer, they would find an audience in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. Funds would then be solicited through lotteries and subscriptions. Finally, a charter would be drafted and endorsed by the major subscribers. It was an effective strategy that began with the library in 1731 and found maturity with the academy and the hospital 25 years later in what could be called the Franklin Age of Municipal Improvements.<sup>80</sup>

While the ideas were bold for colonial America, they were transatlantic in origin. The public library, the hospital for the sick poor, practical curriculums in non-sectarian schools, insurance cooperatives, fire companies—all these “Franklin firsts” had antecedents in England.<sup>81</sup> Each involved the support of men of means who were dedicated to municipal improvements. Franklin’s pals in the Junto, while dedicated and engaging, did not wield the type of influence to institutionalize ideas in eighteenth century Pennsylvania. The Junto would need to become a sister organization of another cadre of men.<sup>82</sup> For Franklin, this meant becoming a Freemason.

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<sup>80</sup> It would seem likely that certain parts of *Poor Richards Almanac*, which started in 1732 and became a one of the most popular publications of its time, also came out of the trans Atlantic influenced banter at the Junto.

<sup>81</sup> The eighteenth century English voluntary hospital movement is perhaps the best example of Franklin’s borrowed wisdom; Pennsylvania Hospital fits follows this social trend of over twenty similar (and pre-existing) British institutions. William H. Williams, *America’s First Hospital: The Pennsylvania Hospital, 1751-1841*. (Wayne, PA, 1976). John K. Alexander, “Institutional Imperialism and the Sick Poor in the Late Eighteenth Century Philadelphia: The House of Employment vs. The Pennsylvania Hospital”. *Pennsylvania History* (1984, Vol. 51 (2) 101-117. John K. Alexander, *Render Them Submissive: Responses to Poverty in Philadelphia, 1760-1800* (Amherst, MA, 1980).

<sup>82</sup> Alfred Owen Aldridge, *Benjamin Franklin, Philosopher & Man* (New York: Lippincott Company, 1965), 44.

Franklin had learned about the Masons while a journeyman printer in 1725-1726.<sup>83</sup> “In London, Franklin had noted the importance and influence of the Freemasons and, after the St. John’s Lodge had been set up in 1730, he decided that membership would be valuable.”<sup>84</sup> The *Pennsylvania Gazette* covered English Masonic events in its August 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 1730 issues. These articles show Franklin was well aware of ‘the craft.’ Freemason membership would be valuable to projects like the library, which, while failing to gain traction as a Junto-only initiative, flourished with the subscriptions of Franklin’s brother masons. It is also clear that, as business referrals were, “the purpose of membership for everyone involved, his fellow Freemasons would send business Franklin’s way: Masonic connections may have been behind Franklin’s success in winning work from the provincial government.”<sup>85</sup>

In June 5, 1730, the Duke of Norfolk, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England appointed Daniel Coxe Provincial Grand Master of New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland.<sup>86</sup> On June 24, 1731, the first Grand Lodge of Freemasons met at the Tun Tavern on Water Street.<sup>87</sup> Franklin wanted to join but was not asked. Coaxing members,

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<sup>83</sup> Julius Friedrich Sache, *Benjamin Franklin as a Freemason* (Philadelphia, 1906), 7.

<sup>84</sup> Ronald Clark, *Benjamin Franklin, A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1983), 43.

<sup>85</sup> H.W. Brands, *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 113-114.

<sup>86</sup> Henry Wilson Coil, Jr., *Freemasonry through Six Centuries, Volume I.* (Richmond, VA: Macoy Publishing, 1967), 249. Coxe probably didn’t return to America before he was toasted as the Grand Master of North America at the Grand Lodge London meeting on January 29, 1730/31.

<sup>87</sup> There is some question about the exact tavern at which the masons met. Franklin referred to it as the “Sun Tavern” in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. Lemay refers to the meeting place as the “Sun Tavern” but others follow the assertion by Scharf & Westcott that this was a typesetting error by Franklin. John Thomas Scharf & Thompson Westcott, *The History of Philadelphia 1609-1884, Vol. 3* (Philadelphia, L.H. Everts, 1884), 2046. Although there was a “Sun Tavern” on Second Street where the first antislavery



on December 30<sup>th</sup> Franklin republished an article from London that made fun of the Freemasons.

As there are several lodges of Freemasons erected in this province, and people have lately been much amus'd with conjectures concerning them, we think the following account of Freemasonry from London will not be unacceptable to our readers.... The whole appears so childish and ridiculous, that this is probably the case, THEIR GRAND SECRET is *that they have no Secret at all*.<sup>88</sup>

It was a ploy to get the Masons' attention and it worked. At their very next meeting, on January 4, 1731/32, Franklin was admitted membership into the St. Johns Lodge of the Freemasons, and would meet with his mason brothers the first Monday of nearly every month until he left Philadelphia in 1757.<sup>89</sup> The Worshipful Grandmaster of the lodge at this time, and someone who likely also made most of those meetings, was William Allen.<sup>90</sup>

In a broad sense, English freemasonry was philosophically driven by the radical enlightenment dating back to the fourteenth century. Its political dimensions were less

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society in America was founded, Peter Thompson agrees that mention of the Sun Tavern, as the home of the Masons was a misprint or an error by the editors of Franklins Papers. Thompson, *Rum, Punch*, 223.

<sup>88</sup> Lemay, Vol II, 86. In a chapter dedicated to Franklin's Freemason membership, Lemay compares the London *Daily Journal* article with the supposed reprint in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* to disclose that Franklin edited and supplemented the piece heavily. The "No Secret at all" line is a Franklin creation.

<sup>89</sup> Until 1753, the new year in the British Empire began on March 25<sup>th</sup> according to the Julian calendar. For centuries, the protestant world had resisted the Catholic originated Gregorian calendar that took leap year into account. All dates from January through March 24<sup>th</sup> in this period would have the appendage of two years: the year of the times followed by the year we know now—the one that starts with January 1<sup>st</sup>. This makes for confusion in studying eighteenth century British American history. Cox would have named Grand Master one day before Franklin's 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday, January 30, 1731, but is referred to as January 30, 1730/31.

<sup>90</sup> St. Johns Lodge "Libr B" at the Historical Society of Philadelphia is a log of monthly meetings from June 1731 to 1735, with entries more sporadic and ending in 1738. In a secret society like the Masons, it is hard to know exactly what dates certain members attended. It is harder still for a historical figure like Allen who left no diaries.

clear. Suspicions swirled around the Masonic involvement in both the 1715 and 1745 Jacobite attempts to restore the Stuart monarchy in England.<sup>91</sup> And later, in 1778, Franklin participated in Voltaire's initiation into the Lodge of Nine Sisters in Paris, which would later be a catalyst for the French Revolution. In America, Masonic lodges had none of the antiestablishment stigma of their European counterparts; in Philadelphia and Boston, the lodges began as the business networking groups and benevolence societies of well-to-do gentlemen.

The composition of the St. John's Lodge did not, however, start that way: Allen and Franklin were the only intellectuals in the lodge in 1732 with bricklayers and other tradesmen filling in the membership. In a confederation of men in Allen's social milieu with common men possessing elements of Franklin's curiosity and ambition, the profile of lodge members would evolve. As the artisan and lesser merchant classes experienced cultural and economic expansion, their aspirations to the social distinctions and cosmopolitanism offered by Masonry were quite attractive. The Lodge provided a means of redefining social positions and claiming a level of citizenship previously reserved for gentlemen of wealth.<sup>92</sup>

Whereas the Junto membership was limited to a number of twelve, the Mason lodge was limited only by the sponsorship of newcomers by members. The Junto ran "side-by-side as it were with the craft of masonry, producing the Library Company in

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<sup>91</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons Forging a Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 72.

<sup>92</sup> Bullock, "Revolutionary Transformation," 350.

1731 and the American Philosophical Society in 1743.’<sup>93</sup> The connection between the two was, by design, obscure.

We had from the Beginning made it a Rule to keep our Institution (the Junto) a Secret, which was pretty well observ’d. The Intention was, to avoid Applications of improper Persons for Admittance, some of whom perhaps we might find it difficult to refuse. I was one of those who were against any Addition to our Number, but instead of it made in writing a Proposal, that every Member separately should endeavour to form a subordinate Club, with the same Rules respecting Queries, &c. and without informing them of the Connexion with the Junto.<sup>94</sup>

For Franklin and other Junto members, this subordinate club was the Masons. Men like Allen would have fallen into the category of one whom Franklin might have found ‘difficult to refuse’. Civic projects that started in the Junto could meet their fruition including wealthy men outside the small Friday evening cohort. Within a few years of Franklin’s admittance into the lodge, a procession of the most powerful men in the province had also joined the Masons: Andrew Hamilton’s son and future Pennsylvania Governor, James Hamilton; the oldest son of the largest merchant family in Philadelphia, James Shippen; Franklin’s future founding collaborator on the Pennsylvania Hospital project, Dr. Thomas Bond.<sup>95</sup> Members of the Junto joined as well: Thomas Hopkinson, a lawyer and founder of both the Union Fire and Library Companies; Phillip Syng, a silversmith involved in most of Franklin’s civic and electricity projects; merchant and proprietary officeholder William Coleman, a board member of virtually all of the

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<sup>93</sup> Sache, *Franklin as a Freemason*, 17.

<sup>94</sup> *Autobiography*, Part Three, 99.

<sup>95</sup> Melvin M. Johnson, *The Beginnings of Freemasonry in America; containing a reference to all that is known of FREEMASONRY in the Western Hemisphere prior to 1750 and short sketches of the lives of some Provincial Grand Masters*. (New York: George H. Doren Company, 1924), 112-113.

civic improvements and who, along with Robert Grace, financed Franklin's printing business following Meredith's default.

Franklin took the organization that Allen started and turned it into a networking juggernaut. Returning to his hometown of Boston in the fall of 1733, Franklin met with a tailor named Richard Price, the Grandmaster of the newly formed lodge in Boston.<sup>96</sup> By 1723 in England, Rev. James Anderson had compiled "The Constitutions and Regulations of the Grand Lodge of England" and it is likely that Franklin acquired a copy of this freemason tome from Price.<sup>97</sup> Back in Philadelphia a short time later, Franklin added the "Anderson's Constitutions" to his product line of publications. New members of the lodge were rather obliged to come to Franklin to receive their personal copy, whether a gilded version (as sold to Thomas Penn for £6 in November, 1734) or more modestly priced versions with a plain leather cover.<sup>98</sup> Thus Franklin became an authority on all things Masonic and was elected Provincial Grandmaster in 1734. With his new title, he sold the 70 copies of the Constitutions back to the lodge in Boston.

In the summer of 1737 a scandal broke out that would make the "secret society" far more discreet. Daniel Rees was a dim-witted apprentice in the service of Dr. Evan Jones, a pharmacist in town and a freemason brother of Franklin and Allen's. Rees wanted to be a Freemason and Jones and his lawyer, John Remington, thought it would

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<sup>96</sup> An arcane, but heated argument has raged for years over whether Philadelphia or Boston had the first Masonic lodge. This meeting and others, where Franklin appears to recognize Price's primacy, is the basis of Boston's claims, represented in the writings of Melvin M. Johnson. Coil makes the case that the St. John's Lodge was first. Coil, *Six Centuries*, 23-42. This writer's analysis of Franklin's behavior in all of his Freemason dealings was one of self-interest. If he could get more out of Boston by deferring to their authority, he would have. And he did.

<sup>97</sup> Johnson, *FREEMASONRY*, 30.

<sup>98</sup> Johnson, *FREEMASONRY*, 123.

be funny to hold a mock initiation ceremony. Franklin had been appointed by the Court of Common Pleas (where Allen served as a magistrate) to arbitrate a case involving Jones. Prior to a hearing with Jones and Remington, they recounted their sham on Rees and shared with the arbitrators their plans for more shenanigans. Franklin asked for the sacrilegious oath that they planned to administer, and he received it in the jestful manner intended.

In their subsequent hazing, Jones and Remington inadvertently set Mr. Rees on fire and the apprentice died of his injuries. Jones and Remington were tried for murder in Allen's court. With prior knowledge of the ritual, Franklin was compelled to testify on behalf of the prosecution, if only to refute that he was complicit in the planning of the ritual. His nemesis Andrew Bradford put the Freemasons on trial in his paper, *The American Mercury*, and slandered Franklin specifically. A return volley from the *Gazette* was not different in its dynamic than any number of issues used by the two publishers before or after the Rees Affair.

It is not clear how Judge Allen's conduct of the trial, himself a prominent local Freemason, cleared Franklin or the St. John's Lodge, but after Jones and Remington were found guilty of manslaughter, there exists very few entries in the group's log, "Libr B."<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> "Libr B," HSP. Van Doren is the first of Franklin biographers to mention the Rees Affair. Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin*, 132. See also James A. Sappenfield, "The Bizarre Death of Daniel Rees and the Continuity of Franklin Criticism," *Early American Literature*, 4, No. 2 (Fall, 1969): 73-85. Sappenfield's account is a far more academic treatment than those of the mason-historians Sache, Johnson and Coil. Lemay extensively uses Sappenfield's account, but clears Franklin of complicity. Making no mention of Jones' affiliation with the St. John's Lodge, he treats Bradford's criticism of the masons lightly. Lemay, *Vol. II*, 288-298. Waldstreicher uses this event to show how by 1738, Franklin has fully transcended his class identity from an indenture to a businessman. His sympathies for Rees, an ambitious indentured servant like his former self, are non-existent, outweighed by concerns for the type of public image required of eighteenth century businessmen. Waldstreicher, *Runaway America*, 111-112. Of these, only Sappenfield mentions the involvement of Judge Allen, but not as an associate of Franklin and not as a Freemason.

Johnson asserts that, “The prejudice induced by the mock initiation...was so great that the activities of the fraternity of Pennsylvania ceased so far as we can learn until June 28, 1749.”<sup>100</sup> While this may be technically true, masons continued to attend Library Meetings and were a part of the formation of the Union Fire Company, City Watch and the Insurance Society.

Following the Rees affair, the closing of the Freemasonry ranks included a pursuit of lodge authentication. Not just anybody should be able to claim to be a Mason. Boston Freemason records show that Franklin visited them on June 8, 1743.<sup>101</sup> He had perhaps three agenda items for his Boston brothers. First, the Rees trail was covered by Bradford’s allies at the *Boston Evening Post*, *The New England Weekly Journal* and *Boston Weekly Newsletter*, so Franklin may have still been repairing his Masonic reputation.<sup>102</sup> On this trip he also put a good word in for William Allen. At their very next meeting, Allen was admitted to the Boston Lodge, though there is no record that he ever attended a meeting or was ever even in Boston. As a business asset, it is also not clear if Allen worked with any of Boston’s Freemasons in any of his numerous business transactions. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the Boston lodge had a certification power that kept Franklin coming back. There was a distinction to be made between the upscale networking clubs like the St. John’s Lodge, seeped in Masonic principle and tradition, and rogue Mason dinner clubs. Franklin’s relationship with the Boston group

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<sup>100</sup> Johnson, *FREEMASONRY*, 205. Sache claims the lack of Masonic coverage in the *Gazette* after Rees was due to Franklin’s delegation of those decisions to non-Masonic assistants. Sache, *Franklin as a Freemason*, 80.

<sup>101</sup> Johnson, *FREEMASONRY*, 273.

<sup>102</sup> Lemay, *Vol. III*, 295. Johnson, *FREEMASONRY*, 176.

continued to be strong and in June 1749, they named Franklin Provincial Grand Master for of all of Pennsylvania. Pursuing a similar goal with his connections in England, William Allen was named Provincial Grand Master by Lord Byron. In March of 1750, Franklin yielded to Allen in a non-contentious manner.<sup>103</sup> The transfer of power from Franklin to Allen was either an act of pragmatic deference or an arrangement that was pre-orchestrated. Recognizing Allen as the real founder and likely his own sponsor for entry into the St. John's Lodge, Franklin may not have wanted to raise the notorious ire of Allen at this point in his career. Just as likely, Allen and Franklin were working for the same thing—legitimacy for their lodge. While complementary to the power struggle themes of this thesis, in 1749 Franklin still required Allen's support on too many projects for him to have risked a coup among Pennsylvania's Freemasons.

At the beginning of their fall-out in the summer of 1755, Allen and Franklin celebrated one of their most formidable collaborations. In a St. John's day parade, they celebrated the opening of the St. John's Masonic Hall, a building planned and built for over three years on the south side of Norris Alley (now Sansom Street) between Second and Front Streets.<sup>104</sup> As the earliest of Franklin's projects would involve William Allen as a mason brother, so did their last project together, the new Masonic lodge.

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<sup>103</sup> Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin*, 132. Coil, *Six Centuries*, 120.

<sup>104</sup> Sache, *Franklin as a Freemason*, 90. Lemay *Vol. III*, 438-440.

## CHAPTER 6

### 1739-1749: ALLEN'S BEHAVIOR IN PUBLIC

To understand the contentious behavior of William Allen in the mid 1750s, as well as Franklin's political ascent, one needs to look at the prior decade and Allen's feud with the Quaker assembly. This fight began after the abdication of the Proprietary Party from the legislature in 1739. Andrew Hamilton's retirement, as well as the decisions of his son James and Allen to not seek a tenth term was based in a desire to concentrate on their businesses. They mistakenly believed that they could return to political office whenever they wished. The depth of Allen's enmity to the Quakers in the 1750s stemmed from his political failure to reenter the Assembly in 1740 and 1741. Allen was investigated for his role in the election riot of 1742 by sailors presumably in his employ. He was tried by Quaker politicians in a humiliating episode.<sup>105</sup> His reputation as "a bully" was further compounded by the dangerous but lucrative practice of trading under truce with Spanish ships during King George's War.<sup>106</sup> It was an illicit activity that defined Allen's primary loyalties and was condemned by both Proprietary and Quaker politicians.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Norman S. Cohen, "The Philadelphia Election Riot of 1742," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 92 (July, 1968): 306-309. Cohen leaves some room for doubt concerning Allen's culpability for the riot. As the largest employer of sailors in Pennsylvania, it's hard to imagine their political actions on his behalf were made without his and/or Turner's consent. A search of port documents, however, does not reveal any of Allen or Turner's ships docked on the Delaware during the riot.

<sup>106</sup> In this scheme, British merchant vessels would rendezvous at sea with Spanish merchants to ostensibly to exchange prisoners. Their real purpose was to circumvent the high prices and slow markets associated with the war economy. In this way, Allen brought cheap Spanish Caribbean goods (sugar, molasses, slaves, etc.) to market in Philadelphia.

<sup>107</sup> Horle, *Vol. III*, 248.



In 1740, the impact that the war had on Philadelphia and its specific threat to Allen's commercial interests inspired a defense-oriented political platform.<sup>108</sup> Out of religious conviction, the Quaker party refused to fund the military defense of the Province. This and the authority to print paper money were at the center of the battle between the governor and the legislature. These circumstances would be repeated when Allen's real estate interests were similarly threatened in his conflict with the pacifist Quaker Assembly in 1755-1756. The impasse in both periods, though with different levels of satisfaction for Allen, would be mitigated by Benjamin Franklin.

In response to the threat posed by England's European enemies, Franklin wrote and published a pamphlet called *Plain Truth* that addressed the stalemate over defensive measures. It is a document that echoes the same aggressive lack of deference shown to Franklin's proprietary sponsors in *The Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency*. Having served the Quaker grandees in the Assembly for over 10 years as the Clerk of the Assembly, he understood their concerns. By this time he had also worked on municipal improvements with his Mason brothers, proprietary office holding merchants like Allen, who were outside the Assembly.<sup>109</sup> Following a dismissal of the Quaker position on defense in the province, *Plain Truth* turns to lambaste the same proprietary placemen he needed for support on his various municipal improvements.

And is our Prospect better, if we turn our Eyes to the Strength of  
the opposite Party, those Great and rich Men, Merchants and others, who

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<sup>108</sup> King George's War (also called War of Jenkins' Ear) war was the early part of the larger War of Austrian Succession, 1739-1748.

<sup>109</sup> By this time Franklin had had Allen and other Proprietary Party member's full support in starting the Library Company (July, 1731), the Union Fire Company (December, 1736) and the American Philosophical Society (May, 1744).

are ever railing at Quakers for doing what their Principles seem to require, and what in Charity we ought to believe they think their Duty, but take no one Step themselves for the Publick Safety? They have so much Wealth and Influence, if they would use it, that they might easily, by their Endeavours and Example, raise a military Spirit among us, make us fond, studious of, and expert in Martial Discipline, and effect every Thing that is necessary, under God, for our Protection. But Envy seems to have taken Possession of their Hearts, and to have eaten out and destroyed every generous, noble, Publick-spirited Sentiment. Rage at the Disappointment of their little Schemes for Power, gnaws their Souls, and fills them with such cordial Hatred to their Opponents, that every Proposal, by the Execution of which those may receive Benefit as well as themselves, is rejected with Indignation.<sup>110</sup>

*Plain Truth* negotiated Quaker approval of a voluntary militia, the Associators, which recognized conscientious objection and non-participation of Quakers. On the other side of the political aisle, Franklin's "shaming" of Allen in *Plain Truth* worked.<sup>111</sup> Franklin's ingenuity in this matter gathered the support of many of Thomas Penn's supporters, although not Penn himself. William Allen ran the lottery that funded the project in similar fashion to previous municipal improvements. As recalled in his *Autobiography* (and detailed above), it is at this point that Franklin and Allen traveled to New York with revenues from the Associators lottery in order to buy cannons from, and drink with, the Governor of New York. The battery of 20 cannons would be built on property owned by Allen in Wicaco (now Pennsport, South Philadelphia).<sup>112</sup> Penn reacted in a threatened manner. "This association is founded on a Contempt of Government, and cannot end in anything but Anarchy and Confusion," said the

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<sup>110</sup> "Plain Truth," Franklin Papers, vol. 3, 188-204. Printed in *Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 17, 1747.

<sup>111</sup> Houston, *Politics of Improvement*, 77.

<sup>112</sup> Horle, *Vol. III*, 249.

Proprietor. The Association's supporters, especially Franklin but his placeman as well, were guilty of "little less than Treason."<sup>113</sup>

1748 marked a new era in the constitutional conflict between the Quaker dominated Pennsylvania Assembly and the Executive Council directed by the now sole Proprietor, Thomas Penn.<sup>114</sup> William Allen's brother-in-law, James Hamilton, was named Governor by Penn. As a member of Hamilton's Executive Council, Allen was brought closer to the fight than he had been since his disgrace in 1742.

Also in this year, a 42-year-old Franklin retired from the day-to-day operations of his printing business to focus on civic duties and scientific research. His partner David Hall would continue to take political and editorial direction from Franklin in the publishing of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. With more available time, Franklin gained even more patronage and appreciation from Allen. Conversely, Franklin's reliance on Allen would become less absolute. This would be manifest in the concurrent ideas of a non-denominational school and a voluntary hospital for the working poor.

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<sup>113</sup> Penn to Peters, March 30, 1748. Franklin Papers, Vol. 3, 180. Alan Houston argues that this foiled a gambit by Penn in his constitutional battle with the Quaker Assembly—the Association got the Quakers out of a their responsibility to arm the province. Houston, *Politics of Improvement*, 100-101.

<sup>114</sup> John Penn, Thomas's brother, died in 1746 making Thomas the sole heir of the province. Thomas Penn would remain in Pennsylvania until 1751, when, with his family fortune restored, he returned to England. There, he would renounce the Society of Friends and join the Church of England.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE ACADEMY OF PHILADELPHIA: FOUNDERS AND FATHERS

In 1743, Franklin presented the Junto with some ideas for an academy and charitable school. Though none of these writings have survived, Franklin indicates that he modified his concept before issuing *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania*.<sup>115</sup> As with their other public works projects, the next task was to target the men most likely to fund the enterprise. As a fellow mason, an advertising customer of the *Gazette* and a high profile patron of many other municipal improvements, Franklin undoubtedly had William Allen at the top of this list. Franklin solicited subscriptions ranging from £6 to £75 and with the province's Attorney General, drafted a constitution for the school.<sup>116</sup> On November 11, 1749, led by Allen and Franklin, 23 of these men ratified a constitution and became the institution's first board of directors.<sup>117</sup>

For Allen, the incentive to participate in the school was greater than with any of the previous projects he had sponsored. In the 1740s, urban Quakers, in keeping with their increasing gentility, generated schooling that emphasized the work of the "Latin School" at the expense of the English Department. For a period of time, and perhaps only on certain occasions, Allen would load his sons Andrew, James and John into the coach for a ride into town. Bridenbaugh describes how the Quakers facilitated one of

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<sup>115</sup> *Autobiography*, Part Three, 108.

<sup>116</sup> Thomas Harrison Montgomery, *A History of the University of Pennsylvania from its Foundation to 1770* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1900), 51.

<sup>117</sup> There were not 24 directors as is universally cited. James Logan was not present and although he was one of the founding board members, he never attended a board meeting. His approval of the Charter would have been by proxy and, as a Quaker; he would not have taken the oath required of other board members.

Allen's fatherly duties: on the way to the Common Pleas Courthouse at Second and High Streets, his finest of coaches would pull up to the no-frills Quaker School House to deliver them to the Latin School.

By mid century, the overseers, influenced by the desire of urban Quakers to acquire the classical hallmarks of their increasing gentility, were tending to emphasize the work of the "Latin School" at the expense of the English Department. This attracted people like Allen to enroll his sons.<sup>118</sup>

During and after the election riot disturbances, both Allen and the Quaker schoolmasters must have found this arrangement to be a very unsettling. So when the prospect of a non-sectarian school providing classical training became a real possibility, Allen was very interested. And as a real estate mogul, he was in a unique position to help. The "New Building" at Fourth and Arch Streets was intended to hold the popular sermons of George Whitefield when he was in town and provide for a charity school when he was not. As this location of the Academy of Philadelphia was not ready for the first school year, Allen provided one of his warehouses for the students and masters as a temporary space for classes.<sup>119</sup>

The following page lists the 24 original trustees (including Logan) and their contributions to the school. William Allen's participation on the Board of Trustees of The Academy of Philadelphia was that of an inspired parent. He not only placed his own sons in the Academy but, from 1751 to 1756, he sponsored eight other boys as well. As example of Allen's generosity, when Trustee William Plumstead could no longer afford

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<sup>118</sup> Bridenbaugh, *Rebels and Gentlemen*, 32.

<sup>119</sup> Gordon, "College" Dissertation, 92.

Table 1.  
Founders And Fathers

	<b>Original Trustees</b>	<b>Tuition Terms: 1751 1755</b>	<b>Parent</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Initial Subscriptions</b>
1	William Allen	33	Parent: John, Andrew, James	Philamen Chew, Nathaniel Irish, James Heath, William Kendall, Josiah Martin, William Martin, Samual Martin,	£75
2	Thomas White	22	Parent: William	John Hall, Basil Dorsey, Aqila Paca, William Paca, Alexander Lawson	£6
3	Thomas Lawrence	16	Parent: Thomas Jr	John Harris Cruger, Abraham Walton, Gerard Walton, Josphe Reed	£15
4	Thomas Bond	14	Parent: Thomas Jr, John,	Samual Chew, John Chew, Nottley Young, Samuel Stringer	£15
5	Richard Peters	13	Parent: William, Richard Jr.	Charles Allen, Henry Lowes, Thomas Mackerel, William Thomson	£10
6	William Plumbstead	12	Parent: Thomas	John Snow, George Good, George Davis, William Davis	£15
7	John Inglis	11	Parent: John Jr., Samual I;	George Huston, Benjamin Wynkoop	£10
8	Tench Francis	10	Parent: Turbot	Tench Tilghman, James Ward	£10
9	Philip Syng	9	Parent: Joseph Syng	James Bright, Josiah Langdale;	£6
10	Charles Willing	8	Parent: Charles Jr., Richard		£15
11	William Shippen	7	Parent: Joseph, John		£10
12	Thomas Hopkinson	5	Parent: Francis		
13	William Masters	5	Parent: William Jr		£20
14	Sam McCall	5	Parent: John		£15
15	Benjamin Franklin	4		Samuel Parker, John Porter, Edward Pryce Wilmer	£10
16	Phineas Bond	3	Parent: Thomas	Thomas Weams	£10
17	Lloyd Zachery	1		John Darland	£20
18	William Coleman	0			£10
19	Thomas Leech	0			£6
20	James Logan	0			
21	Joshua Maddox	0			£10
22	Robert Strettels	0			£10
23	Abraham Taylor	0			£15
24	Joseph Turner	0			£50

to sponsor George and William Davis, Allen picked up their sponsorships.<sup>120</sup> He was also the biggest subscriber at the onset of the schools planning in 1749.<sup>121</sup> He was the architect of a large donation from the City Corporation. With this largess, William Allen would have had a sense of entitlement when it came to the affairs of the school and its Board of Trustees.

Half of the school board members who (including the unlisted Thomas Cadwalader who was not an original trustee) voted on May 11<sup>th</sup> were fathers of students attending the institution. They were happy with William Smith's direction of the school. Although Franklin had been an admirer of Smith's treatise on education, *A General Idea on the College of Marania*, and had aggressively recruited him to run the school, by the spring of 1756 Smith and Franklin were quite openly at odds with one another. An ambitious Anglican minister, Smith curried favor with Thomas Penn and William Allen by writing incendiary partisan pamphlets that attacked Franklin and the Quaker ruled Assembly.

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<sup>120</sup> Tuition Book, University of Pennsylvania archives.

<sup>121</sup> Montgomery, *History of the University*, 157.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE SIX-SIDED FIGHT AND THE PREASURES OF WAR

Shortly after the chartering of the College, events in the province produced a complicated fight between its Chief Proprietor Thomas Penn; Governor James Hamilton and his successor Robert Morris; the traditional anti-war faction of the Quaker Party led by Israel Pemberton; the more practical and larger wing of the Quaker Party led by Isaac Norris; the Proprietary Party led by William Allen and Richard Peters, who at various points could support neither Penn nor his governors; and Franklin, whose rising political equity would run out of middle ground to mediate the differences between the contesting parties. By the mid-50s, at their most basic level, these issues were two-fold: authority over spending bills and the colonial Indian policy.

The first of these issues had a direct effect on the proprietor's support of the academy and the hospital. Pennsylvania Hospital and the Academy had interconnecting roles in the political conflicts between the Proprietor Thomas Penn and the Quaker dominated Assembly. In 1751, the matching funds bill that was passed by the Assembly had the effect of challenging the Proprietor's authority.<sup>122</sup> Thomas Penn had instructed

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<sup>122</sup> Franklin congratulates himself on this ingenuity in his *Autobiography*, Part Three, 122-123. But as with many "Franklin firsts," the plan for "the government to match funds raised by private contributions was not new. In London in 1544, funds for St. Bartholomew's Hospital were raised in this manner." Williams, *America's First Hospital*, 152. This was the period between King Henry VIII seizure of the hospital from the Catholic Church and the rechartering of hospitals in 1546. In turning the St. Bartholomew over to the city, "some of the property of the hospital was granted with it, but the house needed to be refurnished, and to a large extent to be re-endowed, and the citizens made liberal donations to this work." William Page, ed. 'Hospitals: St Bartholomew', *A History of the County of London: Volume 1: London within the Bars, Westminster and Southwark* (London, Victoria County History, 1909), 520-25.



his Governor to pass no more money bills until he had “veto power over any expenditures the Assembly planned for the income.”<sup>123</sup> He was denied this veto as it would have been unseemly to kill the funding of a badly needed hospital. Penn’s attempts to control the management of the hospital were rebuffed.

To soothe his benefactor, Executive Council Secretary Richard Peters offered Penn oversight of the school through a proprietary charter. Leaving the constitution of the school intact, Penn also supported the Academy’s Charter of 1751 with needed money. His designs to control the institutional development of the city would become more meddlesome with Provost William Smith as his advocate. The funding and management of the hospital, like the militia in 1747, were primarily the doings of Benjamin Franklin in his growing role as the proprietor’s main antagonist.

In response to the French capture of Fort Duquesne the previous April, General Edward Braddock arrived in America on February 18, 1755. Through Lord Cumberland, Braddock was informed of Thomas Penn’s position against the Quaker-led assembly. None of the paper money or spending bill nuances of the local politics meant anything to Braddock. The pacifists were impeding his mission, and he was furious. At the same time, the Quaker Society of Friends in London were concerned their own legislative prerogatives were being threatened through a non-adherence to the Crown’s foreign policy. Currying favor with the War ministry, both the Proprietary Party and the Quaker Party, which was no longer exclusively a bastion of Quaker Friends, knew that the future of the province was at stake.

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<sup>123</sup> Gordon, “College” Dissertation, 34.

In March 1755, Governor Morris called upon the Assembly to pass an appropriation bill. The Assembly required that any spending bills would need the Governor to sign a paper money bill that was the life-blood of the Assembly's power; this had been stalled for many years. Franklin engineered a bill that used Quaker credit to issue £15,000 for "the King's use" as support for Braddock. This transpired without the participation of Governor Morris, a maneuver that cast the recalcitrant proprietor as the problem. It was also in the form of non-military support, so the Quaker-principled legislators could remain unconflicted.

To be able to sort through this six-sided fight, it is important to distinguish between the interests of the Proprietor Thomas Penn, the Governor Robert Hunter Morris (who succeeded James Hamilton) and the Proprietary Party headed by William Allen. For years, the issue of constitutional authority on spending bills had been one of precedence for Penn. His governors had handled Penn's instructions differently: Hamilton had hid the Proprietors intentions while Morris was belligerent with them. Unlike most of the merchant office holders, for whom the proprietary fees represented a significant amount of their income, William Allen donated his stipend as Chief Justice to charity.<sup>124</sup> Allen was able to operate independently and, as was the case in the War of Jenkins' Ear in the 1740s, his commercial interests were paramount as the French and Indian War approached.

Following the "walking purchase" and other indignities, displaced Delaware Indian groups allied with the French in the Ohio River Valley. Attacks on British

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<sup>124</sup> Bridenbaugh, *Rebels and Gentlemen*, 312.

settlements were gruesome and politically explosive. In 1754, the French seized Fort Duquesne at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers in present day Pittsburgh and were poised to block western expansion by British merchants and speculators from Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. Following the military defeat of one of these speculators, a young George Washington, a multi-theater war broke out between France and England. In the first volley of what would become the largest ever projection of military power across the Atlantic, the British sent Edward Braddock to command an assault on the French in western Pennsylvania.<sup>125</sup>

With vast land holdings in Lancaster, Allen set aside the political one-upsmanship going on in Philadelphia to support Braddock's Western Pennsylvania campaign. In concert with the Assembly's April bill, Franklin convinced Allen to direct the constables and court officials under his supervision in Lancaster to procure needed provisions, wagons and horses for Braddock's war effort. By being in contact directly with Braddock's supply officers, Franklin took a disproportionate amount of the credit from Allen, whose contribution was behind the scenes.<sup>126</sup> Concurrent with the building of the new Masonic lodge, it would be the last thing on which they would ever work on together. As the rhetorical war between William Smith and Benjamin Franklin escalated, as well as that between Governor Morris and the Franklin led Assembly, the potential for any future projects between Franklin and Allen soured.

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<sup>125</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America: 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000).

<sup>126</sup> Van Doren and Ketcham give Franklin all the credit for supplying Braddock. It was this very same perception at the time that upset Allen so much. Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin*, 230. Ketcham, *Benjamin Franklin*, 93-94.

In April of 1755, the pamphlet “A Brief State of the Province of Pennsylvania” became the talk of the town. An anonymously written and London published pamphlet, the Proprietary Party’s position against the Quaker stance on defense spending was articulated here in a most provocative manner. Calling the Quakers’ conduct “political intrigues under the mask of religion,” the treatise also falsely attacked the Quakers’ German allies as being in league with the French. It suggested that without a law banning “such ignorant, proud, stubborn Clowns” from government, the province would surely fall to the French and the Catholic Church.<sup>127</sup>

The Quaker Party responded in two ways. The pamphlet supported Governors Hamilton and Morris’s particular position on tax bills, a parochial issue which was not an issue in England; thus Isaac Norris and the practical wing of the Old Party suspected that it had not been written in London but by members of the local Proprietary Party, if not Governor Morris himself. A Franklin/Norris political strategy formed in order to counter this proprietary bigotry. The more devout elements of the party, led by Israel Pemberton, moved towards a stricter adherence to Quaker principles and a closing of the ranks. Some would decline to seek reelection in 1755. Others, including Pemberton, would resign mid-term in June 1756 and leaving all public life outside the Society of Friends.

In May of 1755, the Assembly asked Franklin to write a response to the Governor’s disparaging letter on the independent spending bill for which the Assembly was getting full political credit. He wrote:

On the whole; while we find the Governor transforming our best Actions into Crimes; and endeavouring to render the Inhabitants of Pennsylvania

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<sup>127</sup> Francis Jennings, *Benjamin Franklin, Politician; The Mask and The Man* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company 1996). 106-107.

odious to our gracious Sovereign and his Ministers, to the British Nation, to all the neighbouring Colonies, and to the Army that is come to protect us; we cannot look upon him as a Friend to this Country.<sup>128</sup>

It was language that must have outraged Allen because his assistance in supplying Braddock was done in a non-partisan spirit. Franklin was essentially labeling Morris a traitor as well as crediting the Friends in the Assembly with supplying Braddock. Allen's anti-Quaker position hardened; his antipathy for Franklin became irresolvable.<sup>129</sup>

The connection between the school and the onset of the 'paper war' was not yet apparent to Franklin. In a letter to Peter Collinson in June of 1755, Franklin was still buoyant about the school and his Provost William Smith. He told Collinson, "Our Academy goes on very well. Our Friend Smith will be very serviceable there." In the same letter, however, Franklin is weary of the fight between his two sets of friends.

I send you ... our late Votes. In yours of Aug. 4, you express your Concern that such trifling Punctilio's in our Publick Affairs should obstruct necessary Measures. You will see more of the same Trifling in these Votes, on both sides. I am heartily sick of our present Situation: I like neither the Governor's Conduct nor the Assembly's, and having some Share in the Confidence of both, I have endeavour'd to reconcile 'em, but in vain, and between 'em they make me very uneasy.<sup>130</sup>

On July 9, 1755 the stakes were raised by the defeat of Braddock. The funding of defensive measures for the province took the impasse on spending bills to a much higher level. Dr. Fothergil and other London Quakers urged their brethren in the Pennsylvania

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<sup>128</sup> Pennsylvania Assembly Reply to the Governor, May 17, 1755. *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives, 1754-1755* (Philadelphia, 1755). Franklin Papers, vol. 6, 262.

<sup>129</sup> Interestingly, Franklin and Morris remained friends, sharing meals frequently at night, and then returning to the political scrum the next day.

<sup>130</sup> Benjamin Franklin to Peter Collinson, June 26, 1755. Franklin Papers, Vol. 6, 216.

Assembly to either support the defensive measure or face exclusion.<sup>131</sup> A £50,000 spending bill was passed that for the first time included, at Franklin's insistence, the taxing of Proprietary lands. Again seen as a bad precedent for Penn, Morris rejected the bill, again appearing to obstruct the passage of a defense bill. While the petitions for help from the frontier piled up, the Proprietary Party started a campaign of retribution to have Franklin removed as Postmaster. The *Brief State* and the taxation of proprietary lands sharply polarized the province leading up to the October 1755 elections. Both the Militia Bill and the spending bill remained in limbo.

Despite inflammatory fear mongering and anti-Catholic campaigning by Richard Peters, William Smith and others in the Proprietary Party, the October 1755 election was a resounding victory for the Quaker Party. Holding on to its Philadelphia seats in the Assembly and replacing old Quakers with new, the Quakers also picked up seats in the out-laying areas. Westerners, primarily German and Scotch Irish tenants, rejected their landlords' interests as represented by the Proprietary Party.

At this stage, a furiously paced drama unfolded with Franklin at his political zenith. Following the defeat of Braddock, Secretary of State Thomas Robinson told Penn that his failure to support the defense of the province would hurt his position in Parliament.<sup>132</sup> The Assembly passed Franklin's Militia Bill on November 25, approving £60,000 for defense. The spending bill included a tax on proprietary lands; however, this

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<sup>131</sup> Jennings, *Benjamin Franklin*. 108.

<sup>132</sup> Ralph Ketcham, "Conscience, War, and Politics in Pennsylvania, 1755-1757" *William and Mary Quarterly*, (July 1963): 421.

was replaced by a “gift” from Thomas Penn.<sup>133</sup> In a legislative slight of hand, the £5,000 gift from Penn ended up being in the form of uncollectible quitrents. Infuriated, Franklin was not able to stop the gift’s acceptance “in lieu of a tax.”

The Militia Bill of 1756 had many of the same features of the Associators Bill in 1749: the direct election of officers, the recognition of conscientious objection and the lack of a disciplinary code. And with the October scalping of 13 settlers and the abduction of 12 of their children, the urgency for defensive measures reminded Pennsylvanians of the Christiana attacks by the Spanish raiders that created an urgency for defensive measures in the 1740s. Penn had vigorously opposed the Associators in 1749 and Franklin’s role in its formation, saying of Franklin,

He is a dangerous Man and I should be very Glad he inhabited any other country, as I believe him of a very uneasy Spirit, however he is a Sort of Tribune of the People, he must be treated with regard.<sup>134</sup>

While the Associators had elected Allen a post of Colonel in its previous incarnation, Allen called the 1755 version of the militia “a solemn farce.”<sup>135</sup> Like the October Assembly election, the class composition of this militia promised not to favor the Proprietary Party. But significantly, and for the first time ever, Pennsylvania had both an army and the means to supply it.

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<sup>133</sup> *Penn Papers*, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Thomas Penn to Robert Hunter Morris, September 19, 1755.

<sup>134</sup> Regarding the Associators of 1749, see above, page 53, and Houston, *Politics of Improvement*, 60-105. Thomas Penn to Robert Hunter Morris, September 19, 1755. *Penn Papers*, HSP. Robert Middlekauff, *Benjamin Franklin and his Enemies* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), 35.

<sup>135</sup> William Allen to Fernando Paris, November 25, 1755. *Burd Papers*, 30.

The anonymous paper war would escalate in the fall of 1755. Franklin still did not believe Smith to be the Author of the *Brief State*: “Our Friend Smith is not thought here to be the Author of the Pamphlet you mention.”<sup>136</sup> Emboldened by the election, the writers continued to attack the piece. December’s anonymously written “Tit for Tat” attacked the *Brief* and implicated Smith in its authorship.<sup>137</sup> A likewise-anonymous piece called the “XYZ Dialogue” defended the Militia Act in a language similar to Franklin’s.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Benjamin Franklin to Richard Jackson, Oct. 7, 1755. *Franklin Papers*, vol. 6, 217.

<sup>137</sup> Ralph L. Ketcham, “Benjamin Franklin and William Smith: New Light on an Old Philadelphia Quarrel,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (April, 1964): 425.

<sup>138</sup> “A Dialogue between X, Y, and Z,” *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 18, 1755. *Franklin Papers*, vol. 6, 295-306.



## CHAPTER 9

### OUT OF TOWN

Furthering his patriotic image, Franklin traveled to the frontier with his son William (now 28 and Clerk of the Assembly) as his aide to build forts and organize defenses. Away from Philadelphia, December 18<sup>th</sup> to February 5<sup>th</sup>, Franklin returned to that persona that some of his proprietary friends, and even Governor Morris, could appreciate. He was conciliatory, actually building and dedicating a fort to Allen in Western Pennsylvania. “This Day we hoisted your Flag, made a general Discharge of our Pieces, which had been long loaded, and of our two Swivels, and named the Place Fort Allen in Honor of our old Friend.”<sup>139</sup> This letter clearly shows that, within three months of the Allen-directed school vote, Franklin still thought of Allen in positive terms.

Allen however was no longer feeling reciprocally practical nor generous toward Mr. Franklin. Forced through the election to find ways to work with the Pemberton faction of the Old Party, Allen was loathing politics.<sup>140</sup> In a letter to Penn, Richard Peters lamented, “It is a Pity that Mr. Allen is in so bad a humor, for I think with Prudence and a decent and honorable coalition of his and the Quakers Interest, all Mr. Franklin’s Schemes may be frustrated.”<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Franklin to “unspecified” from Fort Allen, at Gnadenhutten Jan. 25, 1756. *Franklin Papers*, vol. 6, 367.

<sup>140</sup> The Pemberton faction adhered to the peace testimony of the Quaker Meeting and opposed the more defense oriented Norris faction that worked with Franklin.

<sup>141</sup> Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, January 5, 1756. Penn Papers, HSP.

Upon his return from fort building, Franklin was elected Colonel in the City Regiment provided by the new Militia Act and the conflict was renewed. Governor Morris delayed Franklin's commission so that Smith could organize a rival militia. The polarization over the issue of proprietary estate taxes carried harsh rhetoric that marked a pre-election stalemate. With both Smith and Franklin camps arming themselves, the situation had a potential to escalate into a civil war. On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Franklin mustered his troops to confront Smith's group, who was ironically using the name of Franklin's old militia, "the Associators." Smith's anti-pacifist, anti-militia cadre scheduled a rally at the College of Philadelphia. Leading an armed regiment a quarter mile through town to the school, Franklin's 600-700 men greatly outnumbered Smith's group causing the latter to lock the doors and disperse.<sup>142</sup> It was a ridiculous confrontation.<sup>143</sup> Borrowing from Francis Jennings' portrayal of the event, it featured a bald and bespeckled philosopher leading a rag-tag bunch of marginally armed, untrained, un-uniformed and certainly non-academic youth to a school that he had founded and was still president of—for a showdown that never happened. A week later, Franklin's militia officers would escort him, swords drawn, on a parade out of the city. This began Franklin's six-week trip of post office business.

It was a working vacation, and Benjamin Franklin was basking in the glory of the season. "I find my self in the midst of Spring; Peaches on the Trees as big as Kidney

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<sup>142</sup> Jennings, *Benjamin Franklin*. 136. Hawke, *Franklin*, 145.

<sup>143</sup> For a more serious view, Ketcham, "Conscience, War," 426.

Beans, and Asparagus on the Tables they say they have had these three Weeks.”<sup>144</sup>

While on a trip with his slave Peter and Co-Postmaster Robert Hunter, Franklin wrote his wife Deborah from Williamsburg. “[I] have been well ever since [leaving], quite clear of the Dizziness I complain’d of, and as gay as a Bird, not beginning yet to long for home, the Worry of perpetual Business being yet fresh in my Memory.”<sup>145</sup> He attended a reception with Colonel George Washington; at another made, the acquaintance of Virginia statesman George Wythe; and received an honorary degree from William and Mary College. It was a journey that must certainly have had a restorative effect on Franklin.<sup>146</sup> Philadelphia’s “perpetual business” had been wearing on him.

Franklin’s political acumen had been tested over the past year, running the gauntlet between separate sets of friends and allies on a wide range of provincial issues. This competition had been successfully navigated by Franklin for many years, but at the onset of the French and Indian War the issues between Pennsylvania’s Quaker and Proprietary parties had presented him with an insurmountable polemic. Since the defeat of General Edward Braddock the previous summer, the decade old power struggles between the Assembly and the Proprietor had taken on a more dire significance. At stake was the fundamentally constitutional issue of whether Pennsylvania would continue as a proprietary holding or would the government need to become a more functional royal colony.

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<sup>144</sup> *Franklin Papers*, Benjamin Franklin to Deborah Franklin, March 25, 1756. *Franklin Papers*, vol. 6, 427.

<sup>145</sup> *Franklin Papers*, Benjamin Franklin to Deborah Franklin, March 30, 1756. *Franklin Papers*, vol. 6, 429.

<sup>146</sup> Hawke, *Franklin*, 146-147.

The doctrinal pacifism of Pennsylvania Quakers, enforced politically by the sect's annual meeting, presented a governing dilemma for Isaac Norris, Israel Pemberton and the Quaker elites who had, since the inception of the province, dominated its legislative process. Distrusting of the Executive Council and the Governor, they had steadfastly refused to appropriate war funding until the previous fall. While unable to prove it, the Quaker Party suspected that the proprietor had instructed a succession of Governors to sign no bills authorizing issuance of paper currency, which was the life-blood of the Assembly's power. The political stalemate was viewed with outrage by cash-starved entrepreneurs as well as western Pennsylvania settlers under attack by Indians.

Having been fooled by Thomas Penn with funding that was an illusion, Franklin and the Assembly developed a new position that advocated a divestment of proprietary powers and a take over of Pennsylvania by the Crown. As the Assembly's agent in London following his departure from Philadelphia in 1757, Franklin advocated the divestment of the proprietor. But in the spring of 1756, Franklin still hoped for a middle ground. Indeed, his political power as leader of the Quaker Party was rooted in his ability to find acceptable compromises between the peace testimony of Quaker pacifism and the Proprietary Party's claims that Quakers were unfit for public service in times of war.

While not physically present, Franklin was never far from the center of these political controversies. In Franklin's absence, the Mutiny Act was passed by the Pennsylvania Assembly on April 15, 1756. It was "an Act for regulating the Officers and Soldiers commissioned and raised by the Governor for the Defence of this Province," and was a response to criticism of the voluntary Militia Act passed by the Pennsylvania

Assembly November 25, 1755. With that contentious legislation, Franklin was accused of becoming a “military dictator” by proprietary forces.<sup>147</sup> The militia that he legislatively created (and organizationally headed) had no military regulations or disciplinary code.<sup>148</sup>

When he returned from his working vacation six weeks later, Monday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, the acrimony had resumed. In his presumed absence, the very next morning, the Board of Directors at the College voted to replace Franklin as their president. Franklin had held that title for seven terms, since the school’s inception. The vote was a slight that Franklin would resent for the rest of his life.

Franklin’s absences from the College and Academy’s board meetings were ostensibly the reason for the change. But that is not the way Franklin saw it. From London three years later, Franklin wrote one of the school’s teachers about his demise.

Before I left Philadelphia everything to be done in the Academy was privately preconcerted in a cabal, without my knowledge or participation, and accordingly carried into execution. The Schemes of Public Parties made it seem requisite to lessen my Influence wherever it could be lessened. The Trustees had reap'd the full Advantage of my Head, Hands, Heart and Purse, in getting through the first Difficulties of the Design, and when they thought they could do without me, they laid me aside.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Hanna, *Pennsylvania Politics*. 110-116.

<sup>148</sup> Another relevant example of Franklin’s legislative power, even while he was gone that spring, is the Pennsylvania Assembly’s passage on March 9, 1756 of a Franklin bill to provide night watchmen and street lighting for Philadelphia. It would be among the last on a long list of municipal improvements initiated by Franklin, promoted by his printing business and sponsored by his connections in the elite circles of Philadelphia society.

<sup>149</sup> Franklin to Ebenezer Kinnersley, July 28, 1759. *Franklin Papers*, vol. 8, 415. In the late 1740s, Ebenezer Kinnersley worked with Franklin on various electricity experiments. In the fall of 1753, as president of the Academy of Philadelphia, Franklin hired Kinnersley to be the rector of the Academy’s English School. While an innovative scientist, he was, by all accounts, not a very good teacher. In a 1759 letter that has since been lost, Kinnersley wrote his friend in England. He may have referenced the poor shape of the English School, as it elicited this response from Franklin. The manuscript of this has not been

The May 11<sup>th</sup> vote had marked the end of this relationship and Franklin's primary occupation with local Philadelphia issues. Leaving within the year of the vote, Franklin would spend less than two of the next 18 years in Philadelphia. Coinciding with his admission into the Royal Society for his discoveries in electricity, Franklin graduated from a local political figure to an international celebrity. No longer a conciliator between the pro and anti-proprietary interests, Franklin at this point takes up the cause of the Royal takeover of Pennsylvania.

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found: the *Papers* editors note "MS not found; reprinted from *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XIII (1889), 247-8.

## CHAPTER 10

### HISTORIANS MISS THE MEETING

The May 11, 1756 vote at the College is a significant omission in the history of Franklin. It is not treated as the end-of-an-era in his life. While many of Franklin biographers cover their subject's March through May 1756 trip on "post office matters," as well as the legislative wrangling over the French and Indian war raging in Western Pennsylvania, very few put these issues into the context of the vote by the Board of Directors of the College to remove Franklin as their President.<sup>150</sup> In fairness to these historians, their subject tasks them with a lot of life to cover. And yet despite so many Franklin histories, his exit from day-to-day politics in Pennsylvania remains under-treated.

As a historiographical category separate from that of the Franklinists, each of the institutional histories of the University of Pennsylvania, the school that evolved out of the College of Philadelphia after the revolution, portray the May 11<sup>th</sup> meeting as something that it was not. By definition, an institutional history of a school must focus on

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<sup>150</sup> With only a couple of exceptions, the major biographies of Franklin (those that discuss Philadelphia politics of 1755/56) do not refer to the May 11<sup>th</sup> vote. These include: Alfred Owen Aldridge, *Benjamin Franklin Philosopher and Man*. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1965); H.W. Brands, *The First American*; Hanna, *Pennsylvania Politics*; Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin, An American Life*. (New York: Simon and Schuster 2003 2003); Edmund S. Morgan, *Benjamin Franklin*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin*; Gordon S. Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin*. (New York: Penguin Press, 2004); Esmond Wright, *Franklin of Philadelphia*. (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1986). Ronald Clark, *Benjamin Franklin: A Biography*. (New York: Sterling Publishers, 1983); Robert Middlekauff, *Benjamin Franklin and His Enemies*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

The exceptions: Hawke, *Franklin* and Francis Jennings, *Benjamin Franklin, Politician*. Both Hawke and Jenkins recognize the political motives in the vote.

educational theories, curriculum and facility management issues. But most of these writings also seem to attempt to preserve the school's uninterrupted association with Franklin.

Thomas Harrison Montgomery's heuristic account of the University of Pennsylvania claims that Franklin *resigned* from the board.<sup>151</sup> While this was the standard interpretation of the May 11<sup>th</sup> board meeting for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is clear that Franklin did not leave the board voluntarily. Forty years after the Montgomery volume, this misconception was reinforced by the next major history of the school. Giving no political weight to the board's motives in 1756, Edward Potts Cheyney also claimed Franklin "yielded" the presidency.<sup>152</sup>

Several dissertations round out the field of University of Pennsylvania institutional histories, but only William Turner, a philosophy student at Penn, includes a mention of the vote.<sup>153</sup> His account postures Franklin much like Montgomery's: as a

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<sup>151</sup> Montgomery, *History of the University*, 272. Montgomery was hired by the University to write this book. And while Franklin's resignation is unsubstantiated, Montgomery's biographical sketches of the schools founders are indispensable.

<sup>152</sup> Cheyney, *History*, 109. Cheyney's *History* pushes the political furor of 1756 back to 1758. In this account, the outside issues are inconsequential to Franklin's replacement as president. Referring to William Smith's legal troubles with the Assembly in 1758, Cheyney reveals "Franklin was passing from a position of conciliator between parties to the recognized position of principle supporter of colonial against Proprietary claims. He was no longer President of the Board of Trustees of the College, having yielded that position to Mr. Peters in May 1756..." Having left Philadelphia for London in 1757, Franklin was long gone as a conciliator by 1758.

<sup>153</sup> William L Turner, "The College, Academy and Charitable School of Philadelphia: The Development of a Colonial Institution of Learning, 1740-1779." (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1952). Ann Dexter Gordon, "The College of Philadelphia 1749-1779: Impact of an Institution." (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1975). Gordon is the standard bearer of the school's histories, but she does not cover the May 11<sup>th</sup> vote. George W. Boudreau, "The Surest Foundation of Happiness: Education and society in Franklin's Philadelphia" (Ph.D. Diss., Indiana University, 1998), speaks more to the philosophical underpinnings of Franklin's role in starting the school and doesn't discuss the May 11, 1756 vote.



great man involved in so many great works that he did not have time for the academy or the college. So, although “he maintained a lively interest [he was so busy that] at the meeting of May 11, 1756, he turned over the presidential gavel to his colleague, Richard Peters who was elected to succeed him.”<sup>154</sup>

The meeting minutes clearly show that Franklin was not present to turn over anything.<sup>155</sup> Those at the meeting surely thought that he was still out of town. It would not be until 1964 that a historian would challenge the idea that Franklin and the College split amicably. Following up on a well-balanced and useful article on the Pennsylvania politics of 1755-1757, Ralph Ketcham wrote an article that ran a scorecard on the Franklin vs. William Smith “paper war.”<sup>156</sup> Smith was introduced to the Academy by Franklin in 1753 and, with the Proprietor’s chartering of the college, became the school’s provost in 1755. As a vitriolic advocate of the Proprietor Thomas Penn, Smith’s friendship with Franklin ended some months prior to Franklin’s expulsion from the school board. Smith’s enmity fueled the May 11<sup>th</sup> vote. In a footnote, Ketcham calls Montgomery’s supposition of Franklin’s resignation “a questionable conclusion in view of his later resentment at having been pushed out of Academy affairs.”<sup>157</sup>

Franklin’s “later resentment” finds expression over a period that spans from a few months, to a few years, to within months of his death over 30 years later. In her institutional history of the University of Pennsylvania, Ann Dexter Gordon’s dissertation

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<sup>154</sup> Turner, “Development” Dissertation, 304.

<sup>155</sup> May 11, 1756, Trustees’ Minute Books, University of Pennsylvania archives.

<sup>156</sup> Ketcham, “Conscience, War,” 416-439.

<sup>157</sup> Ketcham, “Benjamin Franklin and William Smith,” 151.

gives weight to these writings to support the idea that the curriculum conflict was a *primary* factor in Franklin's problems with the school's Board of Directors. The amount that Franklin wrote on these pedagogical issues make them seem to be at the heart of Franklin's own assessment of his demise; however, his writings on the matter actually contribute to the misdirection of the historical accounts.<sup>158</sup> In "Tract relative to the English School in Philadelphia," an unpublished 6,000-word blast of venom (dated a month after his death, but written the summer before), Franklin rehashes the curriculum issues at the school's founding.

It appears by this time pretty clearly from our own Minutes that the original Plan of the English School has been departed from; that the Subscribers to it have been disappointed and deceived, and the Faith of the Trustees not kept with them; that the Publick have been frequently dissatisfied with the Conduct of the Trustees and complained of it; that by the niggardly Treatment of Good Masters, they have been driven out of the School, and the Scholars have followed, while a great Loss of Revenue has been suffered by the Academy; so that the numerous Schools now in the City owe their Rise to our Mismanagement, and that we might as well have had the best Part of the Tuition Money paid into our Treasury that now goes into private Pockets. That there has been a constant Disposition to depress the English School in favour of the Latin; and that every Means to procure a more equitable Treatment has been rendered ineffectual; so that no more Hope remains while they continue to have any Connection.  
<sup>159</sup>

Citing motives of the board members' "constant Disposition to depress the English School in favour of the Latin," Franklin avoids the real (and perhaps personal) issues behind the reciprocal hostility that bubbled over on May 11, 1756.

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<sup>158</sup> This is evident in Gordon's treatment of the early college. Gordon, "College" Dissertation, 47-82.

<sup>159</sup> *Franklin Papers*, "Unpublished, 1788-92." [www.franklinpapers.org](http://www.franklinpapers.org) (Feb. 14, 2010).

## CHAPTER 11.

### MOTIVATIONS: FRANKLIN'S ABSENTEEISM VS. ALLEN'S POLITICS

The notion that Franklin's absenteeism was the primary cause of his dismissal is offered in both the oldest and most recent analyses of the vote. Attentive to the board meeting minutes throughout his 1900 work, Montgomery quotes the May 11, 1756 minutes to suggest that Franklin's absenteeism was the reason for his replacement as President. "His (Franklin's) many absences of late brought some inconvenience to the Trustees, and at the meeting of 11 May 1756, while he was in Virginia, the annual election recurring afforded the opportunity for electing Dr. Peters President for the ensuing year."<sup>160</sup>

J.A. Leo Lemay was perhaps the most detail-oriented of Franklin biographers. In *The Life Of Benjamin Franklin: Journalist 1706-1730* and *The Life of Benjamin Franklin: Printer and Publisher, 1730-1747* students can practically trace Franklin's life on a day-to-day basis. Prior to the release of *The Life of Benjamin Franklin, Volume III* in October 2008 (sadly, also the month of his death), Dr. Lemay shared his analysis with the graduate student/author of this paper. While recognizing the political and pedagogical reasons for Franklin's removal, Lemay gave primacy to his absenteeism as the justification for the May 11<sup>th</sup> vote. "Of the eleven 1753 meetings, (Franklin) missed four. In 1754, he was gone for eight months, missing seven of the nine meetings. In

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<sup>160</sup> Montgomery, *History of the University*, 272.

view of that record, it is surprising that he was reelected President on 10 June 1755.”<sup>161</sup> Like Montgomery, Turner and Cheney, Lemay seems to take the board minutes at their word. Franklin “lost his influence on the board and was replaced by Peters primarily because he had too many duties that took him out of town for extended periods, especially the position of joint deputy postmaster general of North America. His absences hindered the duties of the trustees.”<sup>162</sup>

The attendance records reflected in the minutes of the board do not support this view. Any “attendance problem” analysis has to be based on the Board Meeting Minutes. These dispassionately list each meeting’s attendance and the broadest form of its agenda. Looking at the attendance of the board members specifically for the year between May 1755 and 1756, Franklin’s attendance is not exceptional: only slightly below the average for board members.<sup>163</sup>

While Franklin had been to only one meeting since they reconvened from the summer break in December, his main adversaries on the board, William Allen and Richard Peters, had been to only two meetings: the April meeting, where one might suspect the “cabal” was orchestrated by the anti-Franklinists, and the May 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The widely accepted idea that Franklin was replaced as President for attendance reasons is highly suspect when considering the attendance record of Franklin’s successor Richard Peters. Peters was in fact Franklin’s original choice to run the school in 1749. Those were friendlier times. Of the gentlemen who voted, only half of them had more

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<sup>161</sup> Lemay, *Vol. III*, 208.

<sup>162</sup> Lemay, personal email to author, April 12, 2008.

<sup>163</sup> Trustees’ Minute Books, University of Pennsylvania archives.

Table 2.  
College of Philadelphia Trustee Attendance

<i>Trustees</i>	<i>May 13, 1755</i>	<i>June 10, 1755</i>	<i>June 30, 1755</i>	<i>July 11, 1755</i>	<i>Dec. 9, 1755</i>	<i>Jan. 13, 1756</i>	<i>Feb. 10, 1756</i>	<i>Mar. 9, 1756</i>	<i>Apl. 13, 1756</i>	<i>May 11, 1756</i>	<i>May 1755 - May 1756 10 Meetings</i>	
William Allen	1			1					1	1	4	40%
Phineas Bond		1	1	1							3	30%
Thomas Bond	1	1	1	1			1				5	50%
William Coleman	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	9	90%
Tench Francis	1		1								2	20%
Benjamin Franklin	1	1	1	1	1						5	50%
John Inglis	1	1	1	1	1				1	1	7	70%
Thomas Leech	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9	90%
Joshua Maddox	1		1	1	1	1	1		1	1	8	80%
William Masters		1		1					1	1	4	40%
Sam McCall					1	1				1	3	30%
Richard Peters	1	1	1	1					1	1	6	60%
William Plumbstead											0	0%
William Shippen	1	1		1		1			1		5	50%
Robert Strettels		1		1		1			1	1	5	50%
Philip Syng		1									1	10%
Abraham Taylor		1	1								2	20%
Joseph Turner		1					1		1	1	4	40%
Thomas White	1			1	1	1	1	1		1	7	70%
Lloyd Zachery		1									1	10%
Thomas Cadwalader	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	1	8	80%
James Hamilton	1	1			1					1	4	40%
Alexander Stedman	1	1	1	1	1	1				1	7	70%
John Mifflin	1		1	1	1		1	1	1		7	70%
Average Attendance of the 24 Trustees											4.83	54%
Meeting Size	15	16	13	16	11	8	8	3	12	14	11.22	

than a one meeting advantage over Franklin for the preceding 12 Months. It is unlikely therefore that they would have individually had an issue with Franklin's attendance, because as busy merchants, theirs was no better. And in addressing the purported

problem of Franklin's attendance on May 11<sup>th</sup>, the board also voted to give the Senior Trustee presidential powers in the absence of the president. As Peters was the Senior Trustee, this would have solved the attendance problem without removing Franklin.

While Franklin had been to only one meeting since they reconvened from the summer break in December, his main adversaries on the board, William Allen and Richard Peters, had been to only two meetings: the April meeting, where one might suspect the "cabal" was orchestrated by the anti-Franklinists, and the May 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The widely accepted idea that Franklin was replaced as President for attendance reasons is highly suspect when considering the attendance record of Franklin's successor Richard Peters. Peters was in fact Franklin's original choice to run the school in 1749. Those were friendlier times. Of the gentlemen who voted, only half of them had more than a one meeting advantage over Franklin for the preceding 12 Months. It is unlikely therefore that they would have individually had an issue with Franklin's attendance, because as busy merchants, theirs was no better. And in addressing the purported problem of Franklin's attendance on May 11<sup>th</sup>, the board also voted to give the Senior Trustee presidential powers in the absence of the president. As Peters was the Senior Trustee, this would have solved the attendance problem without removing Franklin.

The school's charter called for the election of officers for "terms annual."<sup>164</sup> At the election meeting of June 10, 1755, a majority of the 16 members present reelected Franklin. Whether or not the May 1756 election was announced to the entire board before the meeting seems questionable: The April 13, 1756 meeting minutes do not

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<sup>164</sup> The new charter was entered into the Academy Board Minutes of April 11, 1755. Trustees' Minute Books, University of Pennsylvania archives.

reveal any such election announcement, but it is certain that the May 11, 1756 election occurred one month early. The May 11, 1756 election took place 11 months into Franklin's seventh and final term.

The hostility of Franklin's former friends, fueled by his rise in the Assembly and their belief that he owed them for years of their patronage, created an environment where having *any meetings at all* was difficult. University of Pennsylvania Archivist Mark Lloyd points to a gap of five months following Franklin's reelection in 1755.

The Trustees typically did not meet in the summer months and in many years there are no recorded meetings between June and October, but the gap in 1755 does appear to be unusually long. The suggestion that there may have been meetings during this period is strengthened by the observation that pages 63 and 64 of the minute book were left blank, as if some minutes were intended for that space. Nevertheless it appears to me that the right answer is that the Trustees did not meet at all during this five-month interval and that the cause for this may have been the extremely heated political conflict that was waged between Franklin's "Quaker" party and the Proprietary party during this time.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Mark Lloyd, personal email to author, May 8, 2006.

## CHAPTER 12

### THE VOTE AND ITS RESULTS

There was no polling of the board of directors' vote against Franklin, but the minutes of the May 11, 1756 meeting do include its attendance. It was a vote that was dictated by the board members' proximity to proprietary favor and by looking at the attendance, one can deduce how the voting went. Just as important as who *was* there is the list of trustees who *weren't* there: At the May meeting of the school board Franklin was missing support. The roster of those who voted does not include the Drs. Thomas and Phineas Bond, William Shippen, and Lloyd Zachary who were concurrently working with Franklin on the formation of Pennsylvania Hospital.<sup>166</sup> While Allen was a major contributor to the hospital, its simultaneous development was far less political than that of the school.<sup>167</sup> Also absent from the meeting of May 11 was Franklin's old Junto friend and collaborator in his electrical experiments, the silversmith Phillip Syng. The minutes imply that the only type of board meeting Syng might attend would be one where he voted to support his friend Franklin.<sup>168</sup>

First considered here are those who were in attendance and on whom Franklin could have counted. While there is no sure way to know how any of the trustees voted, if

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<sup>166</sup> The hospital opened in 1751. All four of the Doctors were present and certainly voted for Franklin in the "scheduled" June 10, 1755 board election. Trustees' Minute Books, University of Pennsylvania archives.

<sup>167</sup> The hospital was also a political venue that pitted Franklin against the Proprietor, but Franklin's broad alliances in the hospital project gave him the upper hand.

<sup>168</sup> Syng was at the June 10, 1755 meeting (his only meeting of the year) and certainly would have voted for Franklin. Trustees' Minute Books, University of Pennsylvania archives.



William Coleman voted to remove Franklin, Franklin never knew about it. In his *Autobiography*, Franklin remembers Coleman as

A Merchant's Clerk, about my Age, who had the coolest clearest Head, the best Heart, and the exactest Morals, of almost any Man I ever met with. He became afterwards a Merchant of great Note, and one of our Provincial Judges: Our Friendship continued without Interruption to his Death upwards of 40 Years.<sup>169</sup>

As board of trustees' secretary from the beginning, all of the boards meeting minutes, including those of May 11, 1756, are in Coleman's hand. While a proprietary placeman, patronage that may have obligated him to vote with the Allen/Peters faction that day, Coleman knew better than anyone how much the school meant to Franklin. As an original Junto member he had been involved with every one of Franklin's municipal improvement projects over the previous 30 years. If anyone placed a vote for Franklin that day, it was Coleman.

As one of the first physicians of Pennsylvania Hospital, French-trained doctor and London-trained surgeon Thomas Cadwalader was one of the most significant medical talents in colonial America.<sup>170</sup> He attended 30 meetings of the Board of Trustees through May 1756 and no small part of his role on the board was that of a parent: His sons Lambert and John Cadwalader attended the Academy from its inception as well as the College of Philadelphia.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> *Autobiography*, Part One, 62.

<sup>170</sup> *Penn in the Age of Franklin*: "Penn in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century," University of Pennsylvania archives; and Montgomery, *History of the University*, 159.

<sup>171</sup> See Role call chart above, page 80. Tuition Book, University of Pennsylvania archives.

Cadwalader connected with Franklin on several levels. A Quaker physician, Cadwalader followed in the steps of John Logan as a book collector.<sup>172</sup> With Franklin, he helped start the Library Company, was a member of the American Philosophical Society and the Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge. Concerned with the issue of the colony's defense leading up to the French and Indian War, he shared Franklin's frustration with the Quaker-controlled Assembly's refusal to allocate funds for a militia. An indication of how Dr. Cadwalader may have voted on May 11, 1756 might be found in the controversy between the English and Latin Schools. In a series of contentious board meetings in 1752, he did not support the exorbitant pay of Francis Alison, the school's Latin Master and a fellow Presbyterian of William Allen's.<sup>173</sup> This would have put him at odds with the Allen/Peters faction long before the vote. And without the obligations of proprietary patronage, there is no reason to think Dr. Cadwalader voted to oust Franklin.

William Masters, who came down from his Northern Liberties neighborhood to attend the meeting of the trustees that day, had been working with Franklin as the provincial assembly's commissioner to spend money designated for the defense of the province of Pennsylvania for over a year.<sup>174</sup> Owner of the Globe Mill at Third and Germantown, Masters was one of the wealthiest men in town and did not rely on his income as a proprietary placeman. He and his wife, the daughter of deceased trustee Thomas Lawrence, had sent their son, William Junior, to the Academy as one of its

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<sup>172</sup> Bridenbaugh, *Rebels and Gentlemen*, 94 and 267.

<sup>173</sup> Trustees' Minute Books, University of Pennsylvania archives.

<sup>174</sup> *Penn in the Age of Franklin*: "Penn in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century," University of Pennsylvania archives; and Montgomery, *History of the University*, 68

original students and young William was at that point enrolled at the College. Thomas Lawrence was a Junto member and one of Franklin's closest friends. William Masters was likely a yes vote for Franklin.

The board composition had changed over the years, from those Franklin could count on, to elitists willing to play politics with the activities of the school. In 1754 Alexander Stedman replaced Franklin loyalist Thomas Lawrence on the board.<sup>175</sup> As an appointed judge, a vestryman, a friend of Governor Morris and an auditor of Franklin's accounts of horse and wagon owners from the Braddock campaign, Stedman was as Anti-Franklin as anyone on the board. He would later replace Coleman as President Judge of the Province.<sup>176</sup> Stedman was very likely to have voted with the Allen/Peters faction to oust their founder.

Thomas Leech spent thirty years representing Philadelphia County in the provincial assembly. While also a vestryman and a warden at the Christ Church, he was one of the Anglicans who on political matters, sided with Franklin.<sup>177</sup> In a letter to Thomas Penn, Richard Peters, only weeks before the vote, had complained that Franklin had "made puppets of old churchman...they are Franklinists and will go which way he pleases to direct... Plumstead, Inglis and McCall are immune, but Thomas Leech for one

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<sup>175</sup> Trustees' Minute Books, University of Pennsylvania archives.

<sup>176</sup> *Penn in the Age of Franklin*: "Penn in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century," University of Pennsylvania archives; and Montgomery, *History of the University*, 214

<sup>177</sup> *Penn in the Age of Franklin*: "Penn in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century," University of Pennsylvania archives; Montgomery, *History of the University*, 82.

was conspicuous among the poisoned.”<sup>178</sup> Identified as such, Leech was likely a Franklin vote.

While Plumstead was not present at the meeting, John Inglis and his wife’s brother Sam McCall were. As the proprietor-appointed Deputy Collector of the Port of Philadelphia,<sup>179</sup> Inglis would have been complicit in Allen’s duty-free shipping schemes. His predecessors at that post had been partners in one of Allen and Turners many companies. As Inglis’ business partner, McCall would have also been in privy to Allen’s operation at the port. Further, McCall had just been appointed by Governor Morris to a commission to settle the accounts of General Braddock. Allen had a reasonably big stake in creating these accounts while Franklin took more than his share of bows for supplying Braddock. As both were proprietary placeman and merchants with shipping ties to William Allen, Inglis and McCall would have sided with the Allen/Peters faction.

Proprietary appointments, like judgeships, were invaluable and demanded commensurate loyalty. Joshua Maddox was a successful merchant, a Warden of Christ Church and a proprietor appointed judge of various county courts.<sup>180</sup> Likewise, Thomas White was named a Justice of the Peace in Philadelphia County by the proprietors in 1752.<sup>181</sup> White was extremely involved as parent in the school, sponsoring more boys

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<sup>178</sup> Gordon, “College” Dissertation, 82. Richard Peters to Thomas Penn April 25, 1756 and April 29, 1756. *Penn Papers*, HSP.

<sup>179</sup> *Penn in the Age of Franklin*: “Penn in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century,” University of Pennsylvania archives; and Montgomery, *History of the University*, 66.

<sup>180</sup> *Penn in the Age of Franklin*: “Penn in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century,” University of Pennsylvania archives; and Montgomery, *History of the University*, 104.

<sup>181</sup> *Penn in the Age of Franklin*: “Penn in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century,” University of Pennsylvania archives; and Montgomery, *History of the University*, 105.

than anyone but Allen.<sup>182</sup> It would seem likely that Maddox and White voted for their self-interest and against Franklin.

One of the trustees that cannot be polled with as much precision is Robert Strettel. Franklin makes no mention of him in his papers. He was “known as a liberal member of the Society of Friends, and a man of cultural and literary taste.”<sup>183</sup> Countering this possible-Pro Franklin profile, Strettel was also a member of the Common Council of the City of Philadelphia, a member of the Governor's Council and Mayor of Philadelphia. There's really not enough known about Strettel's politics at the time to know which way he might have voted.<sup>184</sup>

The rest of the votes are quite clearly for the Allen/Peters faction and because they were the gentlemen most familiar to Franklin, it is their betrayal that probably stung the most. James Hamilton was the only native-born Governor in colonial Pennsylvania. As William Allen's brother in law, he succeeded Franklin as Provincial Grand Master of the St. John's Lodge and was one of the first Presidents of the American Philosophical Society.<sup>185</sup> As Governor, Hamilton was bound by the Proprietor's instructions to veto spending bills, yet he was persuaded by his Executive Council to keep those instructions

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<sup>182</sup> See chart on page 55 above.

<sup>183</sup> *Penn in the Age of Franklin*: “Penn in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century,” University of Pennsylvania archives; and Montgomery, *History of the University*, 104.

<sup>184</sup> *Penn in the Age of Franklin*: “Penn in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century,” University of Pennsylvania archives; and Montgomery, *History of the University*, 86.

<sup>185</sup> John W. Jordan, *Colonial and Revolutionary Families of Pennsylvania*. (New York: Clearfield, 1911), 524.

secret during his term, 1748-1754. Pitted directly against the rising tide of acrimony from the Quaker Assembly, Hamilton's vote against Franklin was a furious one.

Joseph Turner was a sea captain who assisted William Allen, Sr. in the 1720s and was the executor of the elder Allen's will. William Allen, Jr. was involved with Turner in dozens of enterprises over the next 30 years—from iron factories and mining ventures, to partnerships in real estate deals and privateering ventures. A bachelor, Turner's role on the school's board of directors was to serve Allen. On May 11, 1756 there can be no doubt that he did.

Richard Peters was a bureaucrat. Faithfully reporting on the drama to Penn, Peters' perceptions of the events are basic to the history of the period. His reporting of the vote to Penn leaves no doubt of its political motivation.

I told them that they were doing a wrong thing and it would be construed that Party was introduced by them first into the Academy, and so it really was so far that Mr. Franklin was deemed Head of one Party and Mr. Allen of the other and just at this time a change was made.<sup>186</sup>

While this suggests that Peters may have abstained with the outcome a certainty, Peters was weary of Allen's power and moods. What the board needed was an operations man, not a leader. Peters filled that role nicely for the majority of the board and it was that type of glad-handing appreciation Peters lived for.

Here then is how the vote to remove Benjamin Franklin as President of the College and Academy of Philadelphia may have looked had each of the trustees been polled.

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<sup>186</sup> Richard Peters to the Proprietors, June 26, 1756. Peters Papers, HSP.

Table 3.  
Projected Polling of Trustee Votes to Fire Franklin

An Estimated Polling of the Votes for  
President of the Board of Trustees for the  
College, Academy and Charitable School  
of Philadelphia:  
May 11, 1756.

Trustee	Vote
William Allen	Peters
Thomas Cadwalader	Franklin
William Coleman	Franklin
James Hamilton	Peters
John Inglis	Peters
Thomas Leech	Franklin
Joshua Maddox	Peters
William Masters	Franklin
Sam McCall	Peters
Richard Peters	Peters
Alexander Stedman	Peters
Robert Strettels	Unclear
Joseph Turner	Peters
Thomas White	Peters

Peters - 10 Votes

Franklin - 4 Votes

Unclear - 1 Vote

It is impossible to be certain about each trustee's motivation for voting the way they did. Nearly all of them had a relationship with Franklin that spanned decades. There can be little doubt that the occasion was politically charged and that it sought loyalty to either Allen or Franklin.

Franklin was allowed to remain on the board, but was outraged at not being

consulted on the fall addition to the Board of proprietary placeman Benjamin Chew. The following January Franklin left Philadelphia to represent the Assembly in London, unsuccessfully seeking to strip Thomas Penn of his proprietary powers. The relationship between Allen and Franklin was permanently damaged. Increasingly, Allen displayed some of the courser aspects of his personality. Kistler points out that

(Allen's) hatred toward Franklin grew more poignant year after year. In a letter to Barclay, February 15, 1762, Allen said. 'One would fain hope his almost insatiable ambition is pretty near satisfied by his parading about England and at the province's expense for these near five years past, which now appears in a different light to our mock patriots than formerly.'<sup>187</sup>

During the Assembly election of 1764, while Franklin was in London, Allen slandered Franklin to Thomas Penn:

I must assure you that he has been for many years and still is the chief author and abettor of all the seditious practices in government and is continually infusing in to the people's ears his Republican Anarchical Notions, being a printer he has published the most virulent pamphlets against the government, among the rest you have no doubt have seen that which he calls your epitaph, he is a very artful man and can color the worst designs with very specious glasses.<sup>188</sup>

Franklin regained his seat in the Assembly in the next election and, as the country moved towards its split with Britain, he represented a number of colonial American assemblies in England. As the time for revolution approached in Philadelphia, Allen wrote what was at the time a significant treatise. In his pamphlet *The American Crisis*, Allen sought to find common ground with American representation in Parliament. In it Allen accuses Franklin of complicity in the enforcement of the Stamp Act and added,

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<sup>187</sup> Kistler, "Allen" thesis, 36.

<sup>188</sup> *Burd Papers*, 56. Allen to Thomas Penn, October 2, 1764. *Penn Papers*, HSP.



“What can be more base, more despicable and treacherous than his conduct?... It seems in some sense a disgrace to be acquainted with him.”<sup>189</sup>

Franklin had reversed himself on the Stamp Act many years before in what was not to become an historical moment. In control of both his and Allen’s legacy, Franklin may have had the last word in a letter to his wife eight years before:

That pious Presbyterian Countryman of mine [whom you] say sets the People a madding, by telling them [that I] plann’d the Stamp Act, and am endeavo[uring to] bring the Test over to America, I thank him he does not charge me (as they do their God) with having plann’d Adam’s Fall, and the Damnation of Mankind. It might be affirm’d with equal Truth and Modesty. He certainly was intended for a Wise Man; for he has the wisest Look of any Man I know; and if he would only nod and wink, and could but hold his Tongue, he might deceive an Angel. Let us pity and forget him.<sup>190</sup>

And history has done just that. William Allen was swept away after the revolution, with Franklin’s deliberate grip on the broom.

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<sup>189</sup> William Allen, *The American Crisis*, (Philadelphia, 1773) 17-19.

<sup>190</sup> *Franklin Papers*, Benjamin Franklin To Deborah Franklin, Nov. 9, 1765. *Franklin Papers*, Vol. 12, 360.

## CHAPTER 13

### THE GHOST OF WILLIAM ALLEN

Looking over the following bibliography citing close to one hundred historians, each with superior credentials and a far greater investment of time and effort than this author, it is preposterous to think that this story has been overlooked. But it has. On May 11, 1756, the Trustees of the College of Philadelphia, proprietary placemen who Franklin had worked with closely for over twenty years, turned on him. Being fired as President of the school he had founded was one of the greatest political defeats of his career. Franklin never again engaged in the type of municipal improvements that the school represented, and it marked an end to an important part of his and the city's history: The Franklin Era of Municipal Improvements. Franklin responded in two ways: He left Philadelphia and set out to marginalize William Allen, one of the most prominent citizens in colonial America.

In fairness to the Franklinists who have preceded this author, addressing these events has certainly not been a requirement for the creation of solid historical product. As an example, Ronald Clark's *Benjamin Franklin: A Biography* does an excellent job covering this period by examining Franklin the scientist. This paper includes none of that. Two hundred and thirty years after his death, there is still so much to Franklin's life that continues to interest both researchers and readers of American history.

This paper does not attempt to replace the institutional histories of the University of Pennsylvania or even Franklin's role with the school; that would involve a much bigger role for William Smith, whose fund raising efforts for the school were thwarted by

Franklin in London in 1758. A smug William Smith would give Franklin's eulogy. A new Franklin/University of Pennsylvania would need to address the revolution's effect on the school and Franklin's return to the school board at the end of his life. But the existing histories need to be revised: none of them talk of Franklin's dismissal as the institution's president in 1756.

Arguments can be made to refute the basics of this "Schemes of Public Parties" thesis. Did Franklin have better things to do than serve as President of a fully functioning school? He did. At any given point he could have been involved in dozens of different pursuits. These activities, however, had nothing to do with the vote: Franklin was fired before the end of his term as political retribution. Did Franklin rail at many issues that displeased him late in life? The resentment he held regarding the school for the remainder of his life was not unique: exposing the many shortcomings of human nature seems to have been a favorite pastime throughout Franklin's long life. Was the vote May 11, 1756 Franklin's only incentive for leaving Philadelphia? It was not. Franklin's push for a royal takeover of Pennsylvania started the fall before the vote and his duty to that mission may have taken him to London with or without the betrayal of his friends. His admission to the Royal Academy of Science in London was concurrent to the vote and was a huge incentive for him to grab international acclaim.

So, what makes this thesis special? While original, the idea of a "Franklin Era of Municipal Improvements" is really only a conceptual gimmick of historical packaging. The work on these Philadelphia institutions has been done by others.

In every historical treatment of this period, the silencing of William Allen's

relationship with Franklin is indisputable. Even as one of the best historians of colonial Philadelphia specifically writes about historical memory, William Allen has been erased. In what to this writer is a brilliant work, Gary Nash writes in *First City* about the “power of buildings and civic observances to connect the present with the past.”<sup>191</sup> Yet his description of the near demise of the Pennsylvania State House and its meaning to the public’s understanding of the past does not even mention William Allen. Allen owned the lot on Chestnut between Fifth and Sixth Streets, was a mayor and assemblyman who fought to keep the capital in town, and financed the project for over thirty years. Nash dedicates an entire chapter to the vibrancy of Philadelphia’s colonial seaport, but does not include any mention of that economic hub’s number one operator. Similarly, how can an institutional history of a major university omit the dismissal of its founder? How can a biography, focusing on Franklin’s political career in the 1750s, not even mention the vote of May 11, 1756? Michel-Rolph Trouillot offers a framework to discuss this construction of history, where what is not said may be as important as what is accepted as historical “fact.”

Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of retrieval (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance).<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Gary Nash, *First City: Philadelphia and the Forging of Historical Memory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002) 1-8, 14, 60, 87, 139, 279-80. In Nash’s only reference to Allen in *The Urban Crucible*, he mischaracterizes him as “a man who had risen from sugar boiler to wealthy merchant.” Gary Nash, *The Urban Crucible, The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979) 180.

<sup>192</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past, Power and Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) 26.

As one of the richest men in America, the Chief Justice of the province, a pirate, a violent politician, the province's second biggest landlord, the town's most visible Presbyterian, Pennsylvania's biggest slave owner, a loud mouth and a man people feared, William Allen was at the "moment of fact creation" the biggest historical figure in colonial Pennsylvania. No one was more powerful or more recognized. Franklin saw this and made good use of it for many, many years.

There is a huge gap of time between this "moment of creation" and "the moment of retrieval." It is in this gap that Franklin's agenda to silence Allen for posterity was easily realized. Franklin's last writing sessions of his memoirs were in 1788, and his grandson William Temple Franklin did not release the first version until 1816.<sup>193</sup> Refusing to acknowledge Allen after the American Revolution and saying next to nothing about the hundreds of meetings he had with him during the period covered by his *Autobiography*, Franklin effectively eliminated Allen as a historical actor. As the *Autobiography* grew to become the main archive of the period, Allen vanished from the historical narrative.

The history behind the May 11, 1756 vote is similar in its gap between the "making of sources" to the "making of archives." Until Montgomery and Wood each wrote about the University's founding at the turn of the twentieth century, the vote was lost in the minutes of the college trustees. But the silencing of the vote was very different than history's treatment of Allen. Choosing the "significance" in these institutional histories was a very slanted affair, with University-paid writers favoring the public

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<sup>193</sup> Lemay, *Autobiography*, 17.

relations benefits of being connected to Franklin over the crass political nature of its early operations.

William Allen is a ghost in American history. This may not have been the case had Allen taken the patriot side in the American Revolution. His “retrospective significance” would neither have relied on Franklin’s recognition nor the republican historiography that has treated colonial Pennsylvania as a vehicle for “getting to the revolution.”<sup>194</sup> As a Tory, Allen lost nearly all of his wealth and died a forgotten man.

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<sup>194</sup> There are many of these but two popular treatments of Franklin, the founder stand out: Gordon Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Penguin Group, 2004); and Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin, An American Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003).

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