Benjamin Franklin (1706-90)
SEE FRANKLIN OF PA GENEALOGY

1706  Jan 17 (Old Style Jan 6) born in Boston, 10th son of soapmaker/candlemaker; eventually 17 kids
1710s  reads at early age; formal education ends age 10
1718  apprenticed to brother James as printer; through 1723; developed writing skill, including poetry
1721  founds New-England Courant weekly newspaper, modeled on England’s The Spectator when 16 years old
1722  writes 14 essays signed “Silence Dogood”; but James gets into trouble for Ben’s the Courant and has to fire him so Ben can be formal editor of paper and take the heat; bitter quarrel a few months later and Ben walks out
1723  unemployed in Boston and NYC, he moves to Philadelphia; buys three loaves of bread for 3 pennies, walks up Market Street and meets future wife Deborah Read before her door; rooms with Reads and works as a printer
1724  makes acquaintance of Philadelphia governor Sir William Keith, who advises him to raise capital in Boston for a business; Ben’s father declines, but Keith bankrolls his passage to England to meet London stationers and booksellers; sails on London Hope ship in Nov but discovers en route that Keith is unreliable
1725  works as a printer in London
1726  returns to Philadelphia to work in store of merchant Thomas Denham
1727  Leather Apron club or Junto to discuss morals, politics, natural philosophy, business matters; eventually will propose a paid city policy force and volunteer fire department
1728  Denham dies; Franklin sets up printing partnership with a friend; borrows money 1730 to buy out partner
1729  Franklin’s big break is securing printing of PA’s currency, in part by writing A Modest Enquiry in the the Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency; later becomes public printer for NJ, DE, MD
1729  also begins publishing Pennsylvania Gazette newspaper
1730  sires son William by a prostitute; marries Deborah Read (she’d married but first husband deserted her) by common law on Sept 1; marriage lasts till her death 1774; one son dies at age 4 but daughter Sarah outlives them both
1731  organizes Library Company of Philadelphia
1732  begins publishing Poor Richard’s almanacs (through 1757)
1730s  as Franklin’s wealth builds, invests in real estate and printing partnerships in Carolinas, NY, British West Indies
1736  becomes clerk of PA legislature (through 1751)
1737  becomes postmaster of Philadelphia (until 1753)
1743  call for “constant correspondence” of men with scientific interests in colonies leads to American Philosophical Society later that year
1746-47  investigates electricity after friend sends electrical machine from England to the Library Company; will fly kite in electrical storm
1748  silent partner in printing firm of Franklin and Hall; makes average annual profit over next 18 years of 500 pounds
1748  Organizes militia to defend colony against possible French and Spanish invasion in form of privateers on Delaware River
1749  publishes Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsilvania (sic), which leads 1751 to Academy of Philadelphia, which develops into University of Pennsylvania
1751  published Experiments and Observations on Electricity (translated into French, German, Italian); this helps to spread his fame not only in America but Europe
1753  deputy postmaster general for all northern colonies
1754  French and Indian war begins; need treaty with wavering Iroquois allies; Congress at Albany of delegates from New England, NY, PA, MD; Ben Franklin of PA presents Plan of Union (originally drawn up 1751) and approved July 10, as amended by Thomas Hutchinson of MA.; Union of all colonies except Georgia and Nova Scotia under a president general appointed and paid by Crown; grand council elected by colonial assemblies with legislative power subject to approval of president general and Crown; president general and grand council to control Indian affairs, including new purchases “not now within the bounds of particular colonies.” But colonies and London reject Plan of Union; Board of Trade proposes Aug 9 a single C-in-C and a commissary of Indian affairs; thus Braddock comes to be C-in-C etc. for war that then spreads to Europe
1755 a near personal financial catastrophe occurs when Franklin promises to cover potential loss of horses and wagons supplied by PA farmers to General Edward Braddock during his march on Fort Duquesne, where Braddock is ambushed and killed; eventually, PA gov’t covers the 20,000 pound loss

1757 chosen by PA legislature to go to London (until Aug 1762) to negotiate with Penn family to tax their lands in PA to raise revenue to defend colony against French and Indians during war; Penns eventually agree to taxation of improved lands but not un-surveyed

1760 In London, writes The Interest of Great Britain Considered with Regard to Her Colonies and the Acquisitions of Canada and Guadalupe, in which urges annexation of Canada instead of leaving Canada in French hands, as some English want, as check on 13 colonies

1763 illegitimate son William becomes royal governor of New Jersey and will remain so until 1776 when taken prisoner by revolutionaries; permanent estrangement with father

1764 returns to London to negotiate for a new charter for PA to turn colony into a Crown Colony, which legislature wants over Penn family objection

1765 opposes Stamp Act because believes colonial legislatures, as representative of people, should control internal taxation; however when law passes, he orders stamps for Franklin and Hall, infuriating people; back in Philadelphia, Deborah Franklin has to call in friends to defend the house; Franklin in London changes position to lobby ferociously for repeal

1766 Parliament does repeal Stamp Act by March 18 after testimony before British House of Commons by Franklin, agent for PA, and others of colonial contribution to late French and Indian war; Ben answers 174 questions, insisting on right of colonial legislatures to control internal taxation; but Parliament also passes Declaratory Act stating authority to make laws binding “in all cases whatsoever” on colonies

1767- he publishes dozens of articles on the continuing controversies

1774 Jan 30; Franklin dismissed as Deputy Postmaster General for America and denounced before Privy Council by Solicitor General Alexander Wedderburn for making public letters written by Hutchinson before becoming governor of MA; also Andrew Oliver; in MA, Hutchinson dissolves General Court before that body can impeach Oliver for accepting salary from the British Crown

1775 March; Franklin returns to Philadelphia from London; becomes delegate to 2d Continental Congress; but his son William becomes royal governor of NJ

1776 April; North Carolina and Virginia (in May) authorize delegates to vote in Congress for Independence; June; Jefferson, Franklin, J Adams, Robert R Livingston, and Roger Sherman form committee to write Declaration of Independence, which Jefferson largely does

1776 Sept 11; the British send captured General Sullivan to Congress to arrange peace conference; Franklin, Adams, Edmund Rutledge confer with Lord Howe on Staten Island; reject demand to revoke Declaration of Independence

1776 Sept 26; Congress appoints commissioners to negotiate treaties with European powers; Silas Deane already there, Franklin and Jefferson, who declines in favor of Arthur Lee, already in Europe; Congress authorizes borrowing up to 2 million pounds from Euros

1777 Franklin in Paris makes sensation with fur hat, spectacles, wit, etc.; remains in Paris to 1785

1777 Dec 15; hearing of Battle of Saratoga debacle, British Lord North sends reps to Paris to negotiate with Silas Deane and Franklin; talks continue to Jan 6, 1778; Americans still demand full independence, which French, worried about a British-US deal, recognize on December 17

1777 Feb 6; Franco-American alliance after 4 weeks of talks; 1) treaty of amity and commerce with most-favored-nation status; 2) treaty of alliance to be effective if and when war broke out between France and Britain; aim is to keep US fully independent; US permitted to conquer Canada and Bermuda; France to seize Br West Indies; no independent peace with Britain or truce unless other agrees; Congress ratifies May 4

1778 Sept 14; Franklin is named US minister to France

1782 Nov 1; Adams, Jay, and Franklin decide to disregard instructions by Congress to consult fully with French; Nov 5 prelim agreement mostly set; 1) British recognize US independence, 2) basic boundaries set, 3) US right to fish off Newfoundland and Nova Scotia as well as “liberty” to dry and cure fish on unsettled Labrador shore, Magdalen Islands, and Nova Scotia; 4) all debts due creditors were valid; 5) Congress “earnestly recommend” to states full restoration of rights and property of Loyalists; 6) hostilities cease and all British forces evacuated “with all convenient speed”
1782  Nov 30; preliminary articles of peace signed
1784  States refuse Congress 15 year grant of power to regulate commerce; thus when Jefferson arrives in Paris July 31 to serve with Adams and Franklin as commissioners to negotiate commercial treaties, they are ineffective
1785  Franklin returns to Philadelphia; painful gall stone in bladder makes travel by carriage to Le Havre an agony and he is carried in a litter
1787  May 25; Constitutional Convention opens in Philadelphia with quorum of 7 states; only RI ignores summons; 55 delegates included Washington and Franklin, Madison and Mason from Virginia, Gouvernor Morris and James Wilson of PA, Roger Sherman of CT, Elbridge Gerry of MA; Washington named president unanimously; pledge of secrecy on debates kept because meager notes by William Jackson as secretary and Madison’s notes not published until 1840
1787  Franklin favors an executive committee instead of a president; also wants unicameral legislature; but does get everyone to agree at the end to make approval of new Constitution unanimous
1788  Bedridden and in pain, he resorts to opium
1790  April 17; dies in Philadelphia; huge funeral; tributes from French; “He snatched the lightning from the skies and the sceptre from tyrants.”