

**[Prospectus for Mr. Franklin and The Papers of Benjamin Franklin.] Chicago, The Lakeside Press, 1956.**

Benjamin Franklin Printer

*The Lakeside Press*

R. R. DONNELLEY & SONS COMPANY *is honored to serve as printers and binders for both MR. FRANKLIN a handsome book commemorating the 250th anniversary of Franklin's birth; and THE PAPERS OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN a work to run into many volumes and involving the extensive program of collecting, editing, and publishing described on the following page*

**MR. FRANKLIN The Anniversary Book**

To Mark the 250th anniversary, on January 17, 1956, of Benjamin Franklin's birth, Yale University Press has published and made available through bookstores a special volume entitled Mr. Franklin : *A Selection from His Personal Letters* . For this book the editors of the PAPERS selected twenty-nine notable letters by Franklin that serve admirably to illustrate his interests, his genius in human relations, and his attitude toward life. The book has a general introduction and brief prefatory comments with each letter, but no footnotes. The text is accompanied by six illustrations in full color, the design was handled in excellent taste, and the printing and binding were done at The Lakeside Press. The price of Mr. Franklin being quite moderate, it is expected that the book will reintroduce Franklin to a wide public in terms of the warmth, color, and richness of his personality.

**THE PAPERS OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN A Fifteen-year Project**

This Undertaking was announced early in 1954 by the late Owen J. Roberts, President of the American Philosophical Society (founded at Philadelphia in 1743 by Franklin himself) and former Justice of the United States Supreme Court; and A. Whitney Griswold, President of Yale University. The two institutions named, themselves owners of two of the largest collections of Franklin material, are joint sponsors of the project, which is already well advanced under the editorship of Leonard W. Labaree, Farnam Professor of History at Yale, and Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., former Boyd Lee Spahr Professor of American History at Dickinson College. The project was made possible by grants from the Society and from Time, Inc., on behalf of *Life* Magazine.

It is expected that the complete collection of the Franklin Papers will require twenty-five to thirty volumes, the first of which will be ready for printing and binding in 1959. Responsibility for the design will be shared jointly by Alvin Eisenman, Typographer of Yale University Press and Chief Critic in Graphic Design at the Yale School of Fine Arts; and Walter L. Howe, Director of Design at The Lakeside Press.

### Colonial Printer with Modern Enterprise

*" He that hath a trade hath an estate, and he that hath a calling hath an office of profit and honor ."*

These Words , from *Poor Richard's Almanack* of 1757, fall pleasantly upon the ear. They have a certain eighteenth century quaintness, a swing and rhythm suited to the best of proverbs, and a quotable quality that goes far to explain the immense popularity of Poor Richard in his day. The full force and meaning of this wise saying does not strike us, however, until we consider it in the light of Franklin's own achievements as a printer and his remarkable success as a man of business.

### *Franklin Goes into Business for Himself*

In 1728 the twenty-two-year-old Franklin ended his years of employment by others and opened his own shop. In 1729 he bought a decrepit, badly printed rag of a weekly bearing the cumbersome name, *The Universal Instructor in All Arts and Sciences; and Pennsylvania Gazette* . It was characteristic of Franklin to simplify—he shortened it to the *Pennsylvania Gazette* . He filled it with lively news, with interesting and amusing articles, and with advertising that was soon to become highly profitable. Circulation grew to 10,000, the largest at that time in America.

In 1730 Franklin became the Pennsylvania public printer—helped thereto by his reputation for efficiency and honesty, and a fund of good will earned in good part through his tireless public service over several years.

### *Poor Richard*

In 1732 he published the first *Poor Richard's Almanack* (for the year 1733). Here was another success in a day when homely wit and wisdom had the power to draw pennies out of thin purses, and when any hint or clue that might help the citizen to better himself in the world was read, pondered, and discussed around fireplaces of winter evenings.

When the best of *Poor Richard* was eventually anthologized, Franklin not only broke into American literature but did much to lay the foundation for his financial independence.

### *Franklin Branches Out*

Evidence of the Philadelphia printer's judgment and his skill at choosing associates is found in his courageous program of business expansion. Acting as a silent partner with another craftsman, he opened a printing office in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1731, and another in New York in 1742. Eventually, he had printing offices or "outlets" of one sort or another in most of the English colonies in America. In 1748 he formed with David Hall, a Scotch journeyman, a partnership that was to last eighteen years, profitable for both.

It is recorded that income from the business ran to £1,000 yearly. Considering the standards of living and the purchasing power of money at that time, Franklin was free now to turn to public service and to scientific and other interests without much occasion for financial worry. From the printing trade he had secured a competency that was to sustain one of the most brilliant and useful public careers in American history.

### A Founding Father of Our Republic Remains at Heart a Lover of Printing

The Declaration of Independence signed and the Revolution in progress, Franklin arrived in France during December, 1776, to represent the embattled Americans at the French court. He came with enormous prestige as a scientist and liberal philosopher. But, with characteristic good sense and a mind intent on the tasks that lay before him, he chose to withdraw into comparative quiet at Passy, near Paris. Besides securing financial help from the French government, and eventually an alliance, Franklin drew upon all his resources as a newspaper man and publicist to combat British propaganda, and, through a series of celebrated and remarkably clever hoaxes, to embarrass the government of George III.

At Passy Franklin established a private press, and we find in his letters and elsewhere evidences of his continuing interest in printing, including such printing types as those cut by Baskerville, Bodoni, Caslon, Didot, and Fournier. *A modification of one of the Fournier faces—that, incidentally, which was supplied by Fournier for Franklin's press at Passy—will be cut by Monotype with the advice of Stanley Morison and certain assistance from Cambridge University Press in England, and used in printing the Papers*. Franklin showed a keen interest also in the fine books made in Europe. We find him writing in December, 1781, of the rivalry between such master bookmakers as Didot of Paris and Ibarra of Madrid. He admired both, but was reluctant to make positive statements about their comparative merits. His good sense told him that though masterpieces differ widely, each may still be superb in its own right.

*The Writings of Benjamin Franklin Remain Surprisingly Readable*

Anyone who supposes that the letters and other writings of Franklin are composed in a rigid eighteenth century mold will be delightfully surprised when he dips into the selection of letters included in MR. FRANKLIN. Two centuries may indeed bring differences in modes of expression. But most of what Franklin wrote has an almost timeless simplicity, a persistent concreteness, a play of wit and humor, and a love of story that set him apart from most of the writers of his time.

The following incident from one of the letters in the book illustrates beautifully Franklin's understanding of character and his sense of humor. When on his mission in England in 1760, he wrote a letter to John Baskerville, the type designer, whose type in modified form is still one of the most useful of all book faces today. Franklin related that a gentleman who considered himself "a connoisseur" of typography called on him and complained that the Baskerville type could not be compared with Caslon in point of readability. He said that he could not read a line of Baskerville without eye-strain. Even a few lines of this new-fangled type gave him a headache.

When this gentleman visited him again in a few days, Franklin could not resist playing a prank. He stepped into a closet, and tore the identifying heading from a *Caslon* specimen sheet, which he then laid before the critic, asking him to explain exactly what was wrong with the type. Completely fooled, the "connoisseur" went into great detail over such fancied defects as the height of the letters, the excessive thinness in the strokes, and the alleged disproportion generally.

"I spared him that Time," Franklin concluded, "the Confusion of being told, that these were the Types he had been reading all his Life, with so much Ease to his Eyes; the Types his adored Newton is printed with, in which he has pored not a little; nay, the very Types his own Book is printed with, for he is himself an Author, and yet never discovered this painful Disproportion in them, till he thought they were yours."

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## Why the Donnelley Organization Looks Forward with Enthusiasm to Its Part in This Program

It is the occasion for much satisfaction to us to serve in the design and physical production of this great scholarly, cultural, and patriotic publication, THE PAPERS OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. Even "beyond the stipulation of the bond" we intend to leave nothing undone that will assure the excellence of this work that is to serve the American people for generations to come. Our organization expects, in a manner of speaking, to act for a decade or more as printers to the Wisest and Most Famous of American Printers. Some of Benjamin Franklin's principles, wisdom, calm judgment, and high patriotism are certain, we think, to rub off on any body of craftsmen that labors so long within the orbit of his influence. Almost surely, we shall add something thereby to our strength and resources for serving all our customers.

*The Lakeside Press*

R. R. DONNELLEY & SONS COMPANY

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