



TWELVE
FAMOUS
AMERICANS

美国十二名人传略

刘养之·王增选 译



美国十二名人传略

美国麦克米兰公司出版

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河南人民出版社

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河南人民出版社出版
河南省淮阳县印刷厂印刷
河南省新华书店发行

767×1092毫米32开 9.625印张 190千字
1983年9月第1版 1983年9月第1次印刷
印数：1—19,000

统一书号T105·339 定价0.90元

译 者 的 话

这本书是美国麦克米兰公司出版的，介绍了十二个美国名人的生平事迹。他们的共同点是都有理想，有强烈的事业心以及为实现自己的理想而孜孜不倦地工作、学习的坚韧不拔的精神。尽管他们和我们国度不同，社会制度有别，但他们的这些共同点是值得我们借鉴的。

书前的序文中说，之所以选这十二个人的传略汇集成册，有这样几个理由：他们的生平事迹不同寻常而且饶有趣味；他们代表着不同行业；他们生活在美国历史的各个重要时期，每个人都在各自的活动领域内作出了重大贡献，在国际上受到重视。原序中说，书中英语词汇量基本上不超过三千个单词，绝大部分是美国英语中的常用词。我们以为没必要把原序全文译出，因此只把要点介绍在这里。

我们认为（一）这本书选用的传记内容方面广，而且各有其代表性，可以扩大读者的视野，丰富他们的知识；（二）原文文字规范流畅，有助于提高读者的语言水平；（三）书中附有插图，使读者于获得语言知识之外，得到艺术享受。为此，将本书加以注释并译成汉语，以满足读者的需要。

译文中的地名一律按辛华编《世界地名译名手册》（商务印书馆，1976年版）译出。人名采用《新英汉词典》（上

海人民出版社)的译法。

我们的水平有限，错讹之处请读者批评指正。

译 者

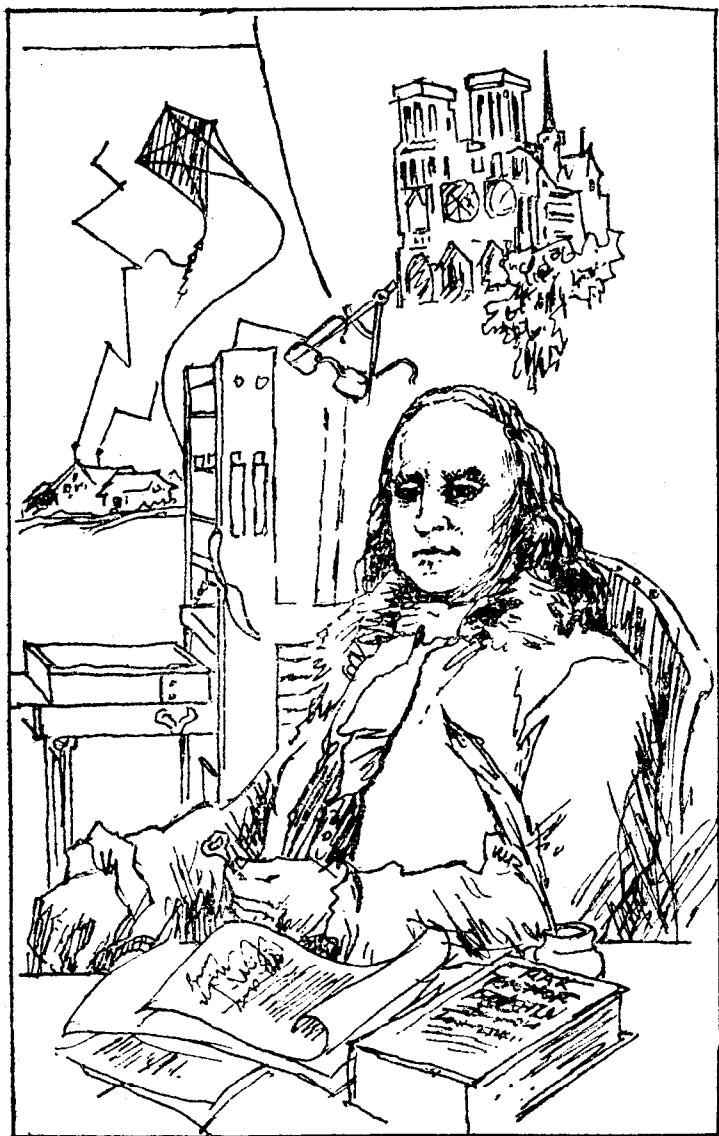
1982年3月

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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN^①

Inventor^② and Statesman

On January 17, 1706, Benjamin Franklin was born on Milk Street in the town of Boston,^③ Massachusetts.^④ He was the youngest son among the seventeen children of Josiah Franklin,^⑤ a candle maker. The whole family worked in the little shop, making candles from the fat of sheep.^⑥

Young Franklin did not like the smell of candles and, when no one was watching, often left the shop to go down to the harbor. Because Boston was the largest port in the American colonies, young Ben was able to see ships from every nation. He tells us in one of his later writings that he had "a hankering for the sea."^⑦ If his father had allowed it, he would have left Boston and become a sailor. Josiah Franklin grew very angry with this troublesome son. He refused to let him go to sea,^⑧ but he gave him his choice between making candles and working^⑨ in the shop of his brother James,^⑩ a printer. Ben

chose printing and signed a paper that required him to work for his brother until he had reached the age of twenty-two.

Ben was a very good printer. He learned very quickly how to manage the presses and put letters together to make words. He liked the printshop chiefly because by working there he could learn more about books. He became friendly with^⑩ other boys of his own age who worked for owners of book-stores. These boys often lent him books at night, if he would promise to return them early the next morning before the shops opened. Many times, Ben sat up^⑪ the whole night reading and studying because he was so eager to learn. Since he had not been able to go to school for very long,^⑫ he had to be his own teacher.^⑬

James gave his brother a bed and his food, but very little money. However, Ben did save a few pennies to buy books. When he had read these books, he sold them and bought others. When the other printers went out at noon to eat a heavy meal in a restaurant, Ben^⑭ remained in the printshop eating very little and spending the rest of his lunchtime with a book.

In 1721, James Franklin began to publish a newspaper, the *New England Courant*.^⑮ Ben had taught

himself to write well by reading good authors.^⑦ He would put down his own thoughts, copying the style of a famous writer, and then would read the author's books again to see how exact his imitation was. He began to write for the *Courant*, pretending to be an old woman called "Silence Dogood." James printed letters from Mrs. Dogood in the *Courant* during the spring and summer of 1722. These letters made fun of various people and things in Boston, and because of them James was put in prison. Even though he would not tell the authorities^⑧ who had written the letters, James was released. Because Ben was afraid of being named as the author of the offensive letters, he decided to leave Boston and go to New York.^⑨

In those days, New York was such a small city that it did not have a newspaper. In fact, there was only one printer. When Ben asked him for a job, he said he did not need help and advised Ben to go on to Philadelphia,^⑩ the largest city in the colonies at that time. Ben arrived in Philadelphia with very little money. The first thing he did was to buy three large loaves of bread. He put two of the loaves under his arms, and ate the other one, walking up the main street of Philadelphia and looking at all the buildings and people. A young woman who saw

how strange and awkward he looked laughed at him. Ben remembered this meeting all his life; Deborah Read,® the young woman, later became Mrs. Benjamin Franklin.

Ben began to work for William Keimer,® a printer. He soon became the best printer in Philadelphia. During his free time, he organized a club. Most of the members were workers, and the club was named for their working clothes, "The Leather Apron." ®

The members met every Friday evening and talked about science, politics, literature, and philosophy. At the end of each meeting the members decided what they would discuss the following week in order to be able to prepare by reading about the chosen subject. Ben proposed that "The Leather Apron" establish a public library® to which people could belong by paying a small amount every month for the use of the library room and new books. This was the first public library in America.

Books were expensive in the colonies in those days, and there were no magazines. The closest thing to the modern magazine was the almanac,® a type of book published every year giving information about the weather to expect and much good advice on planting and harvesting crops. The almanac also noted the days when the sun would be far north or

south, when the moon would be full, and when the tides would be high or low. It included, too, amusing stories and news scattered among the items of information. Ben Franklin began to publish almanacs in 1732. He pretended that they had been written by a person called Richard Saunders. "Poor Richard," as Franklin called him, and his almanacs soon were known all over the colonies. These little pamphlets²⁰ have been translated into almost every known language.

Why was *Poor Richard's Almanac* so popular? First, Franklin was a scientist, and everything that he printed about the stars and planets was correct. In addition to dependable information, there were pieces of verse and many short, wise sayings. Poor Richard believed that people should work hard, save their money, live simply, and be honest. In all sorts of ways he taught the people of all the colonies that the way to build a prosperous country was to be absolutely honest and thorough in whatever they did.

Here are some pieces of advice from *Poor Richard's Almanac*:

A word to the wise is sufficient.

The used key is always bright.

If you love life, do not waste time, for that's what life is made of.²⁰

One today is worth two tomorrows.

Keep your shop and your shop will keep you.®

If you would have a faithful servant, and one that you like, serve yourself.

A small leak will sink a great ship.

If you would know the value of money, go and try to borrow some.

Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other.

Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

In 1737 Benjamin Franklin was named the official postmaster of Philadelphia. This was an important job because sending mail quickly and regularly would help to unite the people of the colonies. Franklin was postmaster for fourteen years, and for a while he was head of the postal system for all of the thirteen colonies. By 1751, when he gave up the job, the combined post offices were able to show a large profit. This was the first time the postal service in America had ever made any money.®

At the same time, Franklin was clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly,® which made laws for the colony. Always thinking of ways to make life better for the citizens of Philadelphia, he planned a fire department, a police force, and a school which later

became the University of Pennsylvania.

In a little book called *Proposals Relating To The Education Of Youth In Pennsylvania* Franklin described some of his ideas. Schools, he thought, should be built near the edge of towns, where there was plenty of room^⑩ for play. The schools should be built near rivers so that pupils could swim every day. The pupils should eat simple, healthful meals together in one dining room.

Nature, as well as education, interested Franklin. He wanted men to apply the laws of nature in practical ways and to correspond with each other^⑪ about what they had discovered concerning plants, animals, agriculture, and the weather. Franklin himself wrote many letters to other colonists about scientific matters. Later, he established the American Philosophical Society, now a great scientific organization with members all over the world. The group, when it began, included a geographer, a mechanic,^⑫ a mathematician,^⑬ and a scientist. Franklin offered to be the secretary. The members met every month and discussed letters that they had received from other members in various parts of the country.

The story of Franklin's kite is known everywhere. He had been experimenting with electricity, and in 1751 had published a paper saying that electricity

and lightning were the same thing. Both were bright, both were the same yellow color, both made a noise, both made crooked flashes,Ⓔ and both would pass through metal.

In order to test his claim, he and his son took a kite made of silk (because it is stronger than paper), and added a long wire to the top and a piece of silk to the end of the string with which he controlled the kite. A metal key was hung where the silk and the string met. They flew the kite up into a thunder storm, keeping themselves dry under a roof. When the kite reached the storm clouds, Franklin noticed that all the loose parts of his string began to stand up and shake. When the kite touched lightning, a spark ran down the string to the key; a rushⒻ of electric sparks began to appear on the key. As the string became wetter, the sparks came faster. They were sparks of electricity. Lightning was indeed electricity.

Franklin decided to use this knowledge in a practical way. He invented the lightning rod.Ⓖ This is a large piece of metal set on the highest part of a building, like the wire on the top of his kite. The rod is connected with the ground by a long wire. If lightning struck the building protected by the rod, it would be caught by the tall rod and would run

down the wire into the ground. There would be no danger of fire.

Franklin also invented the "open" or "Franklin" stove. Most people in his time cooked food and heated their rooms with open fires. This was not a good system, however, because most of the heat went up the chimney instead of out into the room. A person standing close to a fireplace in order to get warm would be hot on one side, cold on the other, and would prevent the heat from reaching other people. Franklin's stove was an open box made of iron. The fire was built inside the box and a pipe carried the smoke up the chimney. The flues^③ were arranged so efficiently that Franklin's stove would heat a room with only one-fourth as much coal or wood as a fireplace. It could be put either against the wall or in the middle of the room.

Franklin is remembered especially for his work in the formation of the United States of America. When the Revolution began, a committee of five men was asked to write a paper explaining to the world their reasons for the war with England. Franklin was one of the members of the committee. In 1776, he and the other members of the committee wrote the famous Declaration of Independence.^④

Very soon after the Revolution began, Franklin