



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

MS-53: Moses J. Gries Papers, 1850-1934 (bulk 1890-1930).

Series D: Sermons and Addresses, 1893-1917, undated.

Box
4

Folder
8

Item
1

“Benjamin Franklin - 200th Anniversary,” 1906 January 14.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the
American Jewish Archives website.

Sunday, January 14, 1906.

Benjamin Franklin - 200th Anniversary.

"A nation has no possession so valuable as its great men, living and dead; for they inspire it with noble impulses to noble achievements." Benjamin Franklin's life story is an inspiration to every American - to boy and youth and man. He was a self-made man of the highest type. He was born in Boston, January 17, 1706; went to school two years from eight to ten; from ten to twelve years helped at home, cutting candle wicks and the like; at twelve was apprenticed as a printer; at sixteen was a publisher and editor; at seventeen ran away from home to fight his own way in the world.

He entered Philadelphia with only a dollar in his pocket. He must have presented a striking picture, walking the street with a roll under each arm and eating another, his pockets stuffed with shirts and with stockings. Thus he had his first meeting with Deborah Reed, who was to be his future wife.

It is impossible to picture Franklin - the many-sided man, - printer, almanac-maker, humorist, practical philosopher, man of business, man of letters, man of science, citizen, patriot, diplomatist, statesman. Franklin was a good citizen. He was public-spirited. He fought and toiled for the betterment of his city. He organized the first debating society for mutual culture, and he founded the first public library. He organized the Union Fire Company, the first in Philadelphia, and established an academy, from which there has developed the University of Pennsylvania. Franklin was a man of science. Every one remembers his famous experiment with the kite, to prove the electric origin of lightning. It is very simple to us who marvel at nothing. Franklin's paper on the sameness of lightning with electricity, was laughed at by the Royal Society of England. Later, they honored him and he was welcomed by the most distinguished men of science in Europe.

His most interesting Autobiography reveals his true character. Astonishing is his deliberate aim toward perfection. His self-discipline is a lesson to every man.

He was a man of letters, and might have won distinction in the literary

world. Simplicity was the chief characteristic of his literary style. He sent his shaft of truth direct to the mark. His Sayings of Poor Richard, under the title -"The Way to Wealth" - has been translated into all languages and has been published in hundreds of editions. It has been said with truth, that Poor Richard, who was none other than Benjamin Franklin himself, was the school-master of the young nation. It is surprising to discover how many of the current nuggets of wisdom were the coinage of Franklin's brain. Most of us, without knowing it, are still quoting the sayings of "Poor Richard."

Franklin was a statesman. As early as 1754 he presented the plan for the union of all the Colonies under one government, for defense and for other important purposes. He was America's chosen representative at the Court of England. In 1776, at the age of seventy, he was America's representative to France. He was not a soldier on the field of battle, but, in the Courts of Europe, he won battles and victories equally important. Invaluable was his service through the war of the Revolution. He secured money and men, arms and supplies and ships, and finally, recognition of independence from France. Bancroft, the historian, calls him the greatest diplomat of his century. In 1783, his was the happiness to sign the Treaty of Paris.

He had rare political wisdom. He drafted the Articles of Confederation, which was the first true step toward a national union. Historians believe that he made possible the union of the colonies by his compromise, that all states, small and great, should be equal in the Senate, and should have representation according to population in the House.

No figure in American history is more striking than the eighty year old patriot, crowning the work of a life-time by helping to make the Constitution of the United States.

Fifty years he served his country at home and abroad. He lived happily and died on the 17th of April, 1790, at 84 years and 3 months. Washington and Franklin are the two "world personages of the Revolution".