

Revolutionary Governors Historical Sketches

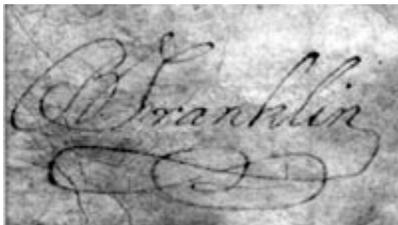
Benjamin Franklin

Term 56 & 63, 1775-1776 & 1785-1788, born in Suffolk County, Massachusetts



We were very excited during the January 2001 exhibit to have on loan to AAMI from Matilda Sloan Wine and John Wine of Greencastle, the signature of Benjamin Franklin that's on a land deed belonging to the Sloan family. The land is still in the Sloan family's possession.

Benjamin Franklin made his appearance in Philadelphia as a seventeen-year old runaway from Boston and quickly became a journeyman printer. Not long after arriving, he became known to Governor Keith who made him a proposition to become the public printer. Franklin became the leading printer and publisher for all the middle colonies.



Franklin was elected to the Assembly where he served as clerk of the Assembly and assumed command of the Country party.

He was handed the task of providing military defense for Pennsylvania. This was not an easy task because pacifist Quakers controlled the Assembly who were also concerned with the preservation of their political power. The financial situation of the colony was also affected. This was because of the money bills (to print paper money and to tax the proprietors) that were passed by the Assembly, but rejected by the Crown and the proprietors.

In 1747 the Association, a militia, was established through a unique fund raising plan – a 20,000 pound public lottery – established by Franklin. The Association was given three thousand pounds from the lottery for building defenses along the Delaware.

In 1753 Franklin was appointed deputy postmaster general.

Franklin was instrumental in breaking the Quaker monopoly by forcing a vote on the militia bill of November 26, 1755. Pennsylvania was well under siege by the French and Indians and could not protect itself. The British forces failed and Pennsylvania citizens, often led by the Germans, were demanding that the Assembly do something. Although the passage of the bill did little to change the state of self-defense, it did change the balance of power in the Assembly. 60,000 pounds was appropriated for defense purposes – the result being a line of forts built every twenty miles between Easton and Mercersburg.

Benjamin Franklin served two terms as governor of Pennsylvania. Of the eight terms during the Revolutionary era, Franklin served the first and last terms being one of seven men to hold the position during that time.

Utter political confusion permeated the colony during Franklin's first term as Pennsylvania's first Revolutionary governor. The Assembly named the General Committee of Safety to supervise all military activity and to defend the province as circumstances required. This committee met for the first time on July 3, 1775 and named Benjamin Franklin as its president. In Philadelphia, on July 4, 1776, the meeting of the Continental Congress chartered our nation's freedom. Franklin was one of three of the seven Pennsylvania delegates to vote in favor of the Declaration of Independence. Two voted against and two absented themselves. Franklin was a signer of the Declaration of Independence as well as the Federal Constitution and the treaty of peace with England. Pennsylvania's State House became the nation's Capitol now known as Independence Hall.

On July 15, 1776, Franklin chaired the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention when it opened. The turbulent political turmoil in both Pennsylvania and the colonies, as a whole, prompted the sudden seizure of power by the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention. This was also responsible for the document it produced, a charter aptly described as "the most democratic constitution yet seen in America," – that of Pennsylvania.

Franklin's second term was under much different circumstances. Concern for economic survival had overtaken the enthusiasm for independence. Franklin was almost eighty years of age by this time now known as a diplomat, a compromiser, and a practical man. During this time, he was appointed as a delegate to the national convention which framed the Constitution of the United States. He was Ambassador to France, the founder of the University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Hospital – the oldest hospital in America. Franklin was brilliant and hardworking, a scholar, author, discoverer and inventor. Franklin College (now Franklin and Marshall), in Lancaster was named for him.

Benjamin Franklin died two years after he left office as governor of Pennsylvania for the second time.

About the document: The Franklin document, displayed here, is a warrant awarding ownership of a tract of land in Air Township, Bedford County, to William Sloan and his heirs. "In witness where of the Excellency Benjamin Franklin Esq. President of the Supreme Executive Council hath hereto set his hand and caused the seal to be hereto affixed in council the sixth day of February in the year of our Lord 1787 of the Commonwealth the Eleventh."

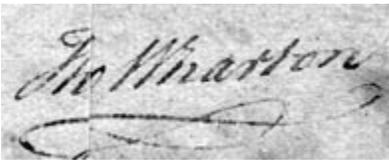
Thomas Wharton Jr

Term 58, 1776-1778, born in Philadelphia County



Thomas Wharton was Pennsylvania's first governor under a Commonwealth Constitution. He entered his term amidst the booming of cannon and patriotic cheers of those who had just declared their independence. The American Revolution was raging. Philadelphia was the capitol of Pennsylvania and of the Nation. Women and children had already been evacuated from Philadelphia, as well as other heavily populated areas.

Events of the day included: Washington fighting at Brandywine; Lafayette was wounded; and the British occupied Philadelphia for a while. Because of the occupation, the Federal government moved to Lancaster and York and the Commonwealth government moved to Lancaster sending its books and papers to Easton. Then the dark days of the events at Valley Forge came.



Wharton, the fifth governor to do so died during office while on duty in Lancaster in May 1778. He was given a full-military funeral in accordance with the high office that he held.

About the document: This document was used as a receipt on four different occasions. On the front of the document it says, "Ric'd (received) Nov. 27.1759 of Jacob Barge the sum of Twenty five shillings being for a quarter rent of a lott and stable on Market Street and Fifth Street due this day. (British Pound) L1.5.0 (signed) Tho Wharton"

And below that, " Rec'd Feby 1 1760 of Jacob Bartch eight shillings (L0.8.0) for lamp tax _n Hath_ (signed) Magie Collor

Received the 27th of 2 mo 1760 of Jacob Barge eight pounds in full for a Quarters Rent for the house he now lives in due this day. (signed) Hannah Moore"

On the back of the document, handwritten twice is, "Rec'd (received) the 27 of the 8th mo 1759 of Jacob Barge eight pounds in fule (full) for a Quarter Rent for the house he now lives in due this day. (signed) Elizabeth Moore

George Bryan

Term 59, 1778-1778 (seven months), born in County Dublin, Ireland



Bryan, born in County Dublin, Ireland, was Governor for seven months in 1778, becoming acting president upon the death of Thomas Wharton, Jr. who preceded him as Governor.

Pennsylvania's Constitution of 1776 was primarily written by George Bryan, James Cannon, and Benjamin Franklin. It revolutionized

Pennsylvania it by transforming it from a colony of Britain to a commonwealth independent of rule by anyone other than its citizens. These men who created it and those who defended it were known as Radicals or Constitutionals.



It was during his term that Philadelphia again became the capital of both Pennsylvania and the Federal government. Bryan included in his address to the Assembly his forceful anti-slavery beliefs and ideals. His passion for the abolition of slavery continued after his short tenure as Governor when Bryan became an elected member of the Assembly. In 1780 Bryan introduced a measure that would eventually abolish slavery in the Commonwealth. The act passed under his persistent lobbying and became the first state law of its kind. After his service as an elected representative, he was appointed in 1780 to a judgeship of Pennsylvania's Supreme Court.

About the document: This document, dated October 12, 1782, contains the signatures of Thomas McKean and George Bryan, both of whom served as Governor of Pennsylvania. The document is a warrant to David Rittenhouse, Esquire, who at the time was Treasurer of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Rittenhouse, a world-renown, self-taught mathematician and astronomer, and close friend of Franklin, served as Pennsylvania's executive for fourteen days during the interim and critical period beginning on July 24th. The Pennsylvania Convention appointed on this date a twenty-five-member Council of Safety which nullified the proprietary government (Penn family) and became the executive department.

The document requests Rittenhouse to pay four pounds and ten shillings to William Augustus Attlee, Esquire, Second Justice of the Supreme Court for the traveling expenses of his servant from Lancaster to Philadelphia and back to attend a session of the Supreme Court that began on September 24, 1782.

This warrant, with two Pennsylvania Governors' signatures, was added to the collection when it was given to Allison-Antrim Museum in December 2001 by Thomas Brumbaugh.