

Dear Friends,

"He that can have patience can have what he will" is a quote attributed to Benjamin Franklin. Those of us behind the scenes at 36 Craven Street, and all of you as keen observers, have certainly been patient - and persistent - in the goal of realising Benjamin Franklin House as an 18th century space designed to bring history, science, education, Anglo-American relations, and scholarship to life for a 21st century public.

This Grade I Georgian building, where Franklin lived for nearly 16 years on the eve of the American Revolution, is finally undergoing the exciting transformation it has long deserved thanks to this month's BIG news: with all required documentation submitted and accepted, we received official permission (the 'PM1' sign-off I referred to last month) from the Heritage Lottery Fund to begin final conservation of the three floors still derelict, and construction and buildout of the Historical Experience, Student Science Centre and Scholarship Centre!

Accordingly, the very next day we went out to tender on the conservation and electrical 'packages' to potential contractors. Once tenders are in hand they will be reviewed by our tender committee and the Benjamin Franklin House Board. And on-site work will begin in May!

Here is a summary of some other highlights of the last month:

\* As mentioned last month, our gala opening celebration will take place on Ben's 300th birthday, **Tuesday, 17 January 2006** at London's historic Banqueting Hall. We are hoping that the British Prime Minister will formally open the House and be in attendance for the festivities. To that end we held a meeting with the Prime Minister's office and a decision we are told is likely 'in weeks rather than months.' We are also asking a high-level American and French counterpart to join us - in honour of the trilateral relations between the United States, Britain, and France in which Franklin played a part. Please save the date now and plan to be with us too!

\* US Challenge Update - Our principal American supporter has made a \$100,000 pledge if we can raise \$100,000 from US donors and this has spurred our approach to many potential donors. We have had several expressions of interest including from our first major contributor to Phase II - opening the House to the public - the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Foundation who gave us a gift in 2000 of \$100,000 which allowed us to pursue conservation work in Benjamin Franklin's laboratory on the first floor (completed by the close of 2002), a key room on the Historical Experience, and designs for the Student Science Centre. Many thanks to those who have made contributions toward the challenge. If you would like to help in this effort we can receive \$ cheques made payable to Benjamin Franklin House Foundation, our US 501 (c) (3) affiliate, sent to 36 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NF, UK; all donations are tax deductible for US tax payers. We must remember, of course, that as Ben said, "Money is of a

prolific generating nature."

\* Our talented Benjamin Franklin House scholar, Michael DeGuzman, now studying for a Masters degree in photography at the Chelsea College of Art is undertaking a detailed photo and video documentation of the transformation process at 36 Craven Street. He began his work in 2002 and has a detailed catalogue of images of the conservation work already complete on the ground and first floors. This work forms part of 36 Craven Street's important historical record. Many of them will feature on a new Benjamin Franklin House website due to launch over the next few months.

\* Jim Lehrer, best known as one of America's most respected broadcast journalists, a great friend of Benjamin Franklin House surprised us with an advance copy of his new novel, The Franklin Affair. It features a trip to 36 Craven Street by the book's main protagonist, a Franklin scholar, embroiled in a web of intrigue. It is due for general release in May and no doubt will encourage many readers to learn more about Benjamin Franklin House.

\* You may not be aware but for several years the American Institute of Architects UK chapter uses Benjamin Franklin House as their mailing address and help support the salary of our project administrator, who also serves as the AIA's UK Chapter Executive.

\* After making due with our work horse PC at the Craven Street office we have finally upgraded to a new computer system. This will make communications - like these countdown emails - even easier. If there is anyone you believe we should include on our distribution list, just let us know.

\* Please save the dates:

**Wednesday, 19 October 2005**, Benjamin Franklin House Symposium - Benjamin Franklin, Design and Innovation - 4-9 pm (including a buffet dinner), at the Royal Society of Arts, London

**Tuesday, 17 January 2006**, Benjamin Franklin House Gala Opening Celebration - 7:30 pm, The Banqueting Hall, Whitehall, London

Until next month, thank you for belief and support.

With all best wishes,

Márcia

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