

Dear Friends,

It's been an exciting month at Benjamin Franklin House as we begin to receive tenders for the first stage of work upcoming, which includes conservation. Next month, I'll share news of on-site activity(!) and also more about our approach to conserving the original 18th century spaces that have served as a backdrop for so many momentous events. And they will again!

*** Spotlight on the Historical Experience**

This month I'd like to 'Spotlight' the Historical Experience, one of our key offerings after opening (along with the Student Science Centre and Scholarship Centre). The Historical Experience will combine live interpretation and state of the art sound and lighting. Designed in collaboration with leading museum planners, Event Communications, our unique 'museum as theatre' approach has been well received in extensive consultations, including with museum colleagues, educators, and future visitors.

At the close of their time in the introductory Seminar Room, guests will encounter Polly Hewson, daughter of Franklin's landlady who became a 'second daughter' to Franklin. She will assume visitors are there to see Franklin on his last night in London when he had to leave or risk arrest. The visitor will experience a sense of the complexity of the man and the London times in which he lived: food, health, botany, and daily living in the basement kitchen; social and personal relationships, musical inventions and political tension on the ground floor; scientific work, political triumphs and woes, and a hurried return to America in the face of the looming War of Independence on the first floor.

The dramatic tapestry, with the words of Franklin woven throughout, will remove the traditional abstraction between museum and visitor and bring a sense of the urgency and innovation that characterised Franklin's life in Britain. It will encourage critical thinking and bring an important part of history to life - the Age of Enlightenment - revealing Franklin's belief in the interconnection of experimentation with personal and social responsibility.

*** Meeting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA)**

This month I had a visit with Nick Barter, head of RADA, as we hope to have a link between RADA and Benjamin Franklin House. We'll need lots

of Pollys for the Historical Experience and for Nick's students, this would signify a 'day job' in London's famed theatreland, The West End.

Nick had a chance to review the script by talented writer Pat Lower. Here's an excerpt from the action in the 'Card Room' which will focus on Franklin's private interactions:

SOUND OF LIGHTNING STRIKE

Polly: When in 1765 the Stamp Act was introduced Dr. Franklin did not foresee the explosion of riots that would occur in America and his wife Deborah wrote to tell him that his home in Philadelphia was in danger of being burned.

Sounds of rioting bricks through windows etc. lights flicker.

Deborah: Ben, I have been under pressure to leave my house, but I have stayed. I ordered some sort of defence upstairs, such as I could manage myself. If any come to disturb me I would show a proper resentment and I should be very much affronted. God bless you and keep you, is the prayer of yours forever. Deborah Franklin.

Franklin: Debbie, My dear child I am much behind hand in answering my letters. I am well; 'tis all I can say at present except that I am just now made very happy by a vote of the Commons repealing the Stamp Act. I honour much the spirit and courage you showed and the prudent preparations you made in that time of danger.

* Other News

- To advance the \$100,000 US Challenge by one of our prominent US donors, we have made an application to the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Foundation (IEEE) who provided our first major gift toward opening the House to the public in 2000. The IEEE Foundation gave us \$100,000 to advance conservation of Franklin's laboratory and to carry out Student Science Centre designs.

- Our very own Franklin historian, Lady (Joan) Reid, gave a lecture on one of our original artefacts, Jean-Jacques Caffieri's 18th century bust of Benjamin Franklin.

- We have a new face at Benjamin Franklin House, James Gray, who recently completed museum and education studies. He will serve as

project administrator, joining Franklin House scholar and project coordinator, Michael De Guzman. They help give the House life on a daily basis and contribute to all the behind the scenes project work from correspondence to research.

- Mark your diaries: we have a new and improved date for the 2005 Benjamin Franklin House Symposium, 'Benjamin Franklin, Design and Innovation - **Thursday, 27 October from 4 - 9 pm**. While we will look at Franklin and his contributions to design and invention, the Symposium will be an opportunity for a contemporary discussion featuring inventors, architects, scientists and more.

And don't forget **Tuesday, 17 January 2006**, our opening Gala celebration at London's Banqueting Hall. I'll provide more details next month.

Thank you for your kind consideration!

With all best wishes,

Márcia

Dr. M. Balisciano
Director
Benjamin Franklin House
36 Craven Street
London WC2N 5NF
+44 (0)20 7930 9121 - telephone
+44 (0)20 7930 9124 - facsimile

P.S. Have ideas you want to share? Contact us. And if you'd like to support the US Challenge or our UK endowment fund to secure the House's long-term future, we can receive \$ cheques made payable to Benjamin Franklin House Foundation, our US 501 (c) (3) affiliate (all donations are tax deductible for US tax payers), or £ cheques made payable to Friends of Benjamin Franklin House, sent to the address above.