



"I have written Dr. Price of London, requesting him to make a choice of proper Books to commence a Library for the use of the Inhabitants of Franklin."

Seven years later someone in the town (who it was is not documented) approached Benjamin Franklin reminding him of the great honor a small town of farmers in Massachusetts had bestowed upon him. It seems that the citizens of Franklin felt it was time for Benjamin Franklin to respond to that honor. He could, they thought, donate a bell for a steeple the town intended to build on its new meeting house. In a letter he wrote to Dr. Richard Price, Benjamin Franklin responded that the "country people" of Franklin should spare "... themselves the Expense of a Steeple at present, and that they would accept a gift of Books instead of a Bell, Sense being preferable to Sound." (A copy of the letter is included in this booklet.)

Further mention of the donation is made in several letters written in 1785. In April Franklin wrote to Jonathan Williams, Jr., his grand-nephew, concluding his letter with these words, "I have written Dr. Price of London, requesting him to make a choice of proper Books to commence a Library for the use of the Inhabitants of Franklin. They will be sent directly from thence." (Blake, p. 70) On May 3rd Williams wrote to Franklin's son William, "Remember me most dutifully and affectionately to the Doctor, tell him I have seen Dr. Price, who will in a few days give me The List of Books for Franklin Township." (Historical Book, p. 17)*

On June 3, 1785, Richard Price wrote to Franklin, "Mr. Williams has given me much pleasure by calling upon me and bringing me a letter from you. I have, according to your desire, furnished him with a list of such books on government as I think some of the best, and added a present to the parish that is to bear your name, of such of my own publications as I think may not be suitable. Should this be the commencement of parochial libraries in the States, it would do great good." (Historical Book, p. 17)

And on June 12, 1785, Jonathan Williams, Jr., gives us another insight into the donation, "I find by your letter to your Sister I, did not do what you expected viz. advise whether the People of Franklin

*References indicate the sources listed in the bibliography. We will use the author's last name or the first words of the title and page numbers.

