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Town preferd Sound to Sence if so they ought not to judge for themselves however I, avoided giving them any expectations of a Bell or Books I knew they had no right to either, it must & ought, depend on your pleasure I, believe Books will be much more acceptable, for they are poore, & in my Opinion, don't need a bell any more than a toad needs a tail, if they should have a Bell they must have a ringer & yt would be a living expence.' " Franklin's sister Jane Mecom also makes reference to the books in a letter written to him. It seems she wanted a copy of the list of books so that she might use it to direct her own reading. In a letter in December, 1785, Williams complained to Franklin that the books had not arrived. (Historical Book, p. 17)

The Great Controversy

*T*he books finally arrived some time before June 22, 1786, for on that date Nathaniel Emmons and Hezekiah Fisher wrote a thank you letter to Franklin; and in 1787 Emmons's sermon delivered on the occasion of the arrival of the books was published in Providence. (Historical Book, p. 17.)

By 1787, however, the great controversy over who should be allowed to use the books had begun. By a September 26, 1788, vote, the town reconsidered an earlier decision "confining the donation of books sent by Benjamin Franklin to the parish." (Peirce, unnumbered page in manuscript). Earlier, in a September 8, 1788, letter to Benjamin Franklin, five citizens of the town wrote asking him if it had been his intention that only those who attended and supported the Congregational Church in the town (Emmons's church) could use the Franklin library. The Congregational Church was, of course, the only church in town at the time. It seems that some people in town had interpreted a letter that may have accompanied the donation in that way. The citizens writing to Benjamin Franklin indicated that several families lived so far from the Franklin church in the center of the town, that it was more convenient for them to attend other Congregational churches located in nearby communities, closer to their homes. In fact, they state that the town meeting had granted them permission to do so.