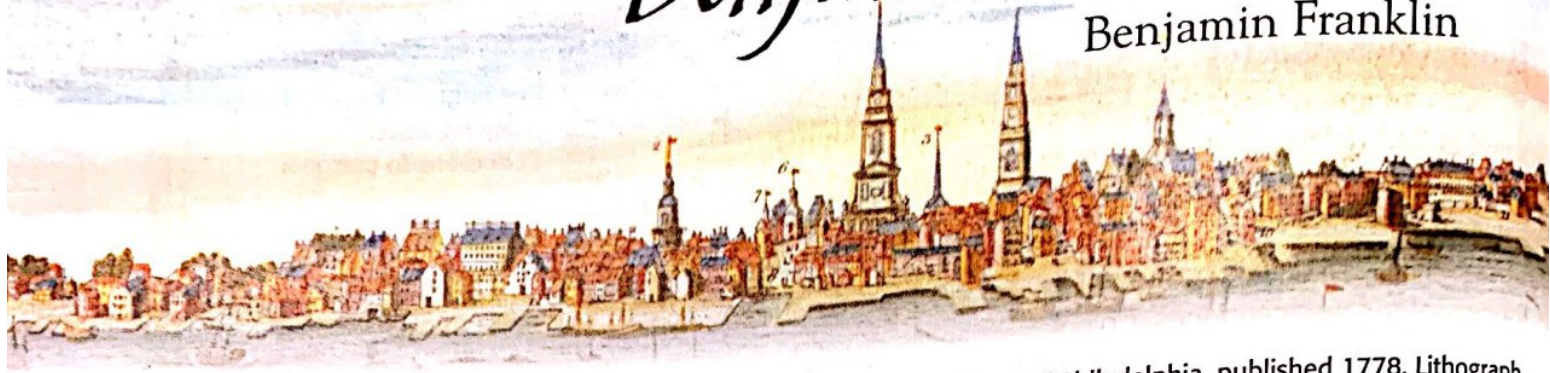


# from *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*

Benjamin Franklin



East Prospective View of Philadelphia, published 1778. Lithograph.

In the evening I found myself very feverish and went to bed; but having read some where that cold water drunk plentifully was good for fever, I followed the prescription and sweat plentifully most of the night. My fever left me, and in the morning, crossing the ferry, I proceeded on my journey on foot, having fifty miles to go to Burlington,<sup>1</sup> where I was told I should find boats that would carry me the rest of the way to Philadelphia.

It rained very hard all the day; I was thoroughly soaked, and by noon a good deal tired; so I stopped at a poor inn, where I stayed all night, beginning now to wish I had never left home. I made so miserable a figure, too, that I found, by the questions asked me, I was suspected to be some runaway **indentured** servant and in danger of being taken up on that suspicion. However, I proceeded next day and got in

1. Burlington, New Jersey, is not far from Philadelphia, on the opposite side of the Delaware River.

**Autobiography** What does Franklin reveal about himself in this passage?

## Vocabulary

**indentured** (in den' chərd) *adj.* bound by contract to serve someone for a time

the evening to an inn within eight or ten miles of Burlington, kept by one Dr. Brown. He entered into conversation with me while I took some refreshment, and finding I had read a little, became very obliging and friendly. Our acquaintance continued all the rest of his life. He had been, I imagine, an **ambulatory** quack doctor, for there was no town in England nor any country in Europe of which he could not give a very particular account. He had some letters,<sup>2</sup> and was **ingenious**, but he was an **infidel**, and wickedly undertook, some years after, to turn the Bible into doggerel<sup>3</sup> verse,

2. Here, *letters* means "education or knowledge, especially of literature."

3. English poet Charles Cotton (1630–1687) wrote a *doggerel* version, or parody, of Virgil's epic poem the *Aeneid*.

**Analyze Voice** What do Franklin's word choice and tone suggest about his attitude toward his new friend?

## Vocabulary

**ambulatory** (am' byə lə tōr' ē) *adj.* moving from place to place

**ingenious** (in jēn' yəs) *adj.* exhibiting creative ability; inventive

**infidel** (in' fə del') *n.* an unbeliever





*Benjamin Franklin, Printer*, c. 1928. John Ward Dunsmore. Oil on canvas, 28 x 36 in. The New York Historical Society, New York.

**View the Art** As a colonial tradesman, Benjamin Franklin printed everything from translations of Cicero to hymnals to paper currency. What might Franklin have been discussing with the other people in this scene?

as Cotton had formerly done with Virgil. By this means he set many facts in a ridiculous light, and might have done mischief with weak minds if his work had been published; but it never was.

At his house I lay that night, and arrived the next morning at Burlington, but had the **mortification** to find that the regular boats were gone a little before, and no other expected to go before Tuesday, this being Saturday. Wherefore I returned to an old woman in the town, of whom I had bought some gingerbread to eat on the water, and asked her advice. She proposed to

lodge me till a passage by some other boat occurred. I accepted her offer, being much fatigued by traveling on foot. Understanding I was a printer, she would have had me remain in that town and follow my business, being ignorant what stock was necessary to begin with. She was very hospitable, gave me a dinner of oxcheek with great good-will, accepting only of a pot of ale in return; and I thought myself fixed till Tuesday should come. However, walking in the evening by the side of the river, a boat came by, which I found was going toward Philadelphia with several people in her. They took me in, and as there was no wind we rowed all the way; and

### Vocabulary

**mortification** (mor' tə fi kā' shən) n. feeling of shame, humiliation, or embarrassment

**The Road to Independence** How does this description reveal the spirit of people who will fight for independence?



about midnight, not having yet seen the city, some of the company were confident we must have passed it and would row no further; the others knew not where we were, so we put toward the shore, got into a creek, landed near an old fence, with the rails of which we made a fire, the night being cold, in October, and there we remained till daylight. Then one of the company knew the place to be Cooper's Creek, a little above Philadelphia, which we saw as soon as we got out of the creek, and arrived there about eight or nine o'clock on the Sunday morning and landed at Market Street wharf.

I have been the more particular in this description of my journey, and shall be so of my first entry into that city, that you may in your mind compare such unlikely beginnings with the figure I have since made there. I was in my working dress, my best clothes coming round by sea. I was dirty, from my being so long in the boat. My pockets were stuffed out with shirts and stockings, and I knew no one nor where to look for lodging. Fatigued with walking, rowing, and the want of sleep, I was very hungry; and my whole stock of cash consisted in a single dollar, and about a shilling<sup>4</sup> in copper coin, which I gave to the boatmen for my passage. At first they refused it, on account of my having rowed; but I insisted on their taking it. Man is sometimes more generous when he has little money than when he has plenty; perhaps to prevent his being thought to have but little.

I walked toward the top of the street, gazing about till near Market Street, when I met a boy with bread. I had often made a meal of dry bread, and inquiring where he had bought it, I went immediately to the baker's he directed me to. I asked for biscuits, meaning such as we had at Boston; that sort, it seems, was not made at Philadelphia. I then asked for a threepenny loaf and was told they had none. Not knowing the different prices nor the names of the different sorts of bread,

4. A *shilling* is a British coin equal to one-twentieth of a pound.

I told him to give me threepenny worth of any sort. He gave me accordingly three great puffy rolls. I was surprised at the quantity, but took it, and having no room in my pockets, walked off with a roll under each arm and eating the other. Thus I went up Market Street as far as Fourth Street, passing by the door of Mr. Read, my future wife's father; when she, standing at the door, saw me, and thought I made, as I certainly did, a most awkward, ridiculous appearance. Then I turned and went down Chestnut Street and part of Walnut Street, eating my roll all the way; and coming round found myself again at Market Street wharf, near the boat I came in, to which I went for a draught<sup>5</sup> of the river water; and being filled with one of my rolls, gave the other two to a woman and her child that came down the river in the boat with us and were waiting to go further.

Thus refreshed I walked again up the street, which by this time had many clean-dressed people in it, who were all walking the same way. I joined them, and thereby was led into the great meeting-house of the Quakers,<sup>6</sup> near the market. I sat down among them, and after looking round a while and hearing nothing said,<sup>7</sup> being very drowsy through labor and want of rest the preceding night, I fell fast asleep and continued so till the meeting broke up, when some one was kind enough to rouse me. This, therefore, was the first house I was in, or slept in, in Philadelphia. 🍷

5. Here, *draught* means "a gulp" or "a swallow."

6. *Quakers* are members of the Society of Friends, a Christian religious group founded in the seventeenth century.

7. Quaker religious meetings often include long periods of silence.

**Analyze Voice** What does Franklin reveal about his personality with this passage?

**Autobiography** Why might have Franklin chosen to include this detail in his autobiography?