

Benjamin Franklin Bache diary, 1782-1785
1782-1785
Mss.B.B122d

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Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Creator	Bache, Benjamin Franklin, 1769-1798
Title	Benjamin Franklin Bache diary, 1782-1785
Date [inclusive]	1782-1785
Call number	Mss.B.B122d
Extent	1.0 Volume(s)
Extent	1 volume.
Location	LH-MV-E-14
Language	English
Container	1
Abstract	This volume is a record of a schoolboy's life in Switzerland, with comments on his life in Passy with his grandfather, Benjamin Franklin.

Background note

Benjamin Franklin Bache, grandson of Benjamin Franklin, was a journalist and printer. Entries for 1784 were printed by Bernard Faÿ, "Paris, à la fin de l'ancien régime, vu par un petit garçon de Philadelphie," *Franco-American Review* 1(1936-37):317.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society

Provenance

Acquisition Information

Purchase of Franklin-Bache Collection from Mrs. Franklin Bache and accessioned, 3/24/1936.

Original Location

Location of the original is unknown.

Indexing Terms

Genre(s)

- Diaries
- Diaries.
- Travel Narratives and Journals

Geographic Name(s)

- Switzerland -- Description and travel.

Personal Name(s)

- Franklin, Benjamin, 1706-1790

Subject(s)

- American Revolution
- Americans Abroad
- Diplomatic History
- Education
- International Travel
- Printing and Publishing
- Travel

Other Descriptive Information

This is a translation of Benjamin Franklin Bache's diary that he kept while in Europe during the American Revolution. Bache traveled there as a young child when his grandfather, Benjamin Franklin, served as the American envoy to France. Bache spent nine years in Europe and during that time, received schooling in Passy and Switzerland. The journal begins with an account of his time in Switzerland and ends with his time with his grandfather in Passy. There are numerous stories and anecdotes in this journal. Some bear only on Bache's experience as a child and teenager in Europe. In Switzerland, among other things, Bache witnessed an execution by firing squad, saw a seven-foot tall giant, and was attacked by a watchdog at a Chateaux. While in Passy, Bache received instructions on printing, witnessed numerous ballooning experiments, visited famous sites in Paris, and recorded some comings and goings of prominent guests. Some of these entries from Passy provide insight into Franklin's time in Paris, including a detailed account of the well-known scientific examination Franklin conducted on animal magnetism (hypnosis). Originally in French, this English translation of his journal along with the Benjamin Franklin Bache Collection (Mss.B.B122) provides a clear account of Bache's time in Europe during the Revolution.

Upon returning to Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin Bache became a prominent printer in Philadelphia during the early republic. Bache was the son of Sarah (née Franklin) Bache, daughter of Benjamin Franklin, making him a grandson of Benjamin Franklin, his namesake. Bache was taken under the wing of Franklin at an early age. He traveled with Franklin to France during the American Revolution when Franklin was American envoy to the French government. While there, he was received formal schooling and then studied printing under the tutelage of Franklin who was operating a private press in France.

After returning to Philadelphia in 1787 – and after a few failed business ventures – Bache successfully established a newspaper, first called the General Advertiser and then the Aurora. Bache quickly found success by making his paper a partisan one. He and his newspaper were ardent critics of Federalists and both the Washington and Adams administrations. Bache's journalistic efforts ended up putting him in hot water in 1794, when he was arrested for treason for being suspected of helping French agents during the XYZ Affair. Bache was exonerated on the charges of treason, but faced libel charges. He vowed to strenuously fight the charges and hoped to use his case to establish press freedoms, but he never had the opportunity, dying amidst the yellow fever epidemic of 1798.

Bache's paper, the Aurora, was one of the most prominent in the early republic, and he played a central role in establishing the newspaper as an important institution of American politics.