

A BENJAMIN FRANKLIN LETTER

By William Frederic Worner

In the Division of Manuscripts in the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C., there is an original letter written by Benjamin Franklin to Edward Shippen, Esq., of Lancaster, Pa. The communication is a short one, and in it the illustrious philosopher and statesman informs Mr. Shippen that he has issued the advertisement, as ordered by the Governor of the Province, a copy of which he inclosed for Edward Shippen's inspection. It would be of interest to learn the nature of the advertisement. He also refers to a road that, obviously, was in need of attention, and which, we assume, was in Lancaster county.

Inasmuch as this letter is one of the very few that Franklin wrote to citizens of Lancaster county, and has, so far as I have been able to learn, never appeared in print, I will quote it in full:

Phila., May 24, 1755.

Sir:—

By the Governor's Direction I issued the inclos'd Advertisement. The Bearers, John Laverty, and Charles Coleman, have agreed to go and work on the Road accordingly. You will be pleased to give them Directions how they are to proceed. My Compliments to your Good Lady and Family. I am, very respectfully Sir,

Your most obed. Servant,

B. FRANKLIN.

Edw. Shippen, Esq.
Lancaster.

In ending his letter with the time-honored phrase "Your most obed. servant," Benjamin Franklin used the term with propriety, since he was at this time a member of the Assembly of the Province; and it is quite probable that his letter was in answer to some request made by Edward Shippen relative to the condition of the road referred to.

It might also be well to state that this letter was written only a few weeks after Franklin had made what, in all probability, was his first visit to Lancaster borough, a fact not generally known. He came to Lancaster for the purpose of securing horses and wagons for the use of Braddock's ill-fated expedition against the French at Fort Duquesne. Immediately upon his arrival in Lancaster he published an advertisement dated April 26, 1755, which brought quick and exceedingly satisfactory results; but, in the end, his efforts were of little value, for General Braddock was disastrously defeated a short time afterward
— July 9th.

ERRATA

Volume 15, page 98, appears the following: "Stephen Smith was the largest stockholder in the Columbia bank of that day, and according to its rules, would have been president had it not been for his complexion. Being thus barred, he was given the privilege of naming the man who became president in his stead." This was included in a monograph appearing in Volume 26, page 177. Mr. H. M. North, Jr., president of the First Columbia National bank says that there is nothing in the records of the institution to substantiate this statement. Correction is therefore made in the interest of historical accuracy.