

**Volume 11**

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**Benjamin Franklin - IV**

**Lead: In late 1776 Benjamin Franklin, accompanied by two grandsons, was sent as the United States' first ambassador to France. His skillful diplomacy secured that nation's support and therefore the success of the American Revolution.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: When Ben Franklin arrived in Paris he was the best known American in Europe. His writings and experiments on electricity had been celebrated for**

years, his epigrams were widely quoted and he was feted by society matrons, diplomats, scientists and ordinary citizens. Franklin was on a mission, however, and by the New Year he had engaged the French foreign minister in secret negotiations over a proposed alliance. Franklin used his fame and popularity to great advantage and played upon French dreams of retribution for repeated losses during the eighteenth century to the growing British Empire. He was convinced the French would help the Americans if the cause did not seem a hopeless one.

The breakthrough came in fall 1777 when news reached Paris of the crushing defeat of British General

**John Burgoyne's army at the Battle of Saratoga. The American revolt was not going quietly into the night. In February 1778 treaties of alliance were signed. French loans, troops and naval forces were soon in the service of George Washington and the revolutionists. Franklin remained in France for negotiations until 1785. His counsel at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 led to the great compromise which provided for a House of Representatives proportioned by population and a Senate with equal representation from each state. Franklin died, honored and admired at the age of 84 in 1790.**

**Research assistance by David**

**Toberman. At the University of  
Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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