

# Journalism Milestones

—Arnold Cheyney

## Benjamin Franklin Bache

Sarah Franklin, daughter of Benjamin Franklin, married Richard Bache.

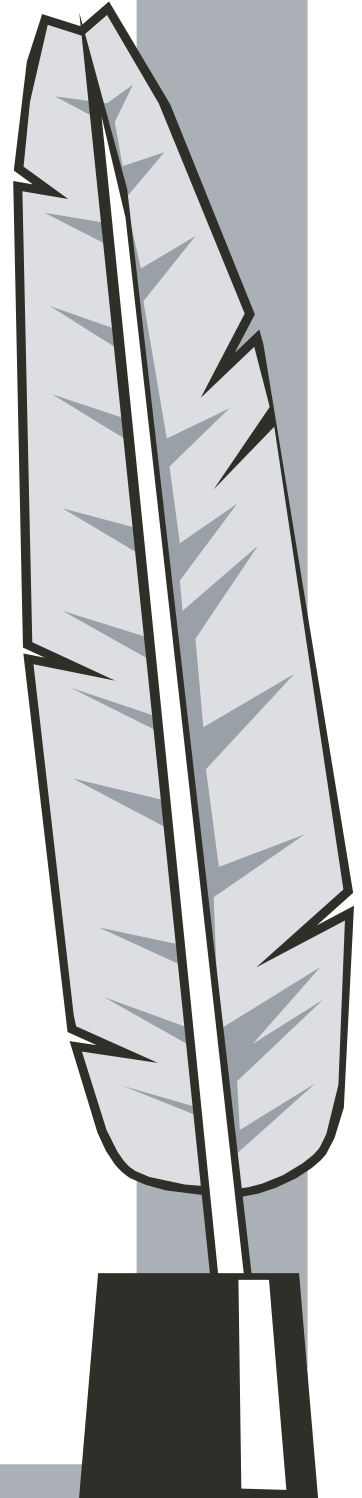
Their son, born in the elder Franklin's house in 1769, was named after Sarah's father—statesman, inventor, scientist and publisher. Benjamin Franklin was delighted with his grandson.

When the boy was seven years old, his grandfather took him to France where Franklin serviced as one of three commissioners during the Revolutionary War. For nine years the boy was educated in Europe. His first years were spent in Paris where he became fluent in French. Later, he went to school in Geneva, Switzerland. By 1783, his grandfather brought him back to Paris where he worked with a printer. It was there that Benjamin Bache was introduced into the printing and publishing business. In 1785, the two returned to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Back in America, Benjamin Bache went to the University of Pennsylvania and in 1778, received a bachelor's degree. His grandfather made him manager of his printing house. Bache published school textbooks and Bible stories. When Benjamin Franklin died in 1790, he left his grandson his printing supplies, equipment and an inheritance that enabled him to publish a newspaper. Benjamin Bache named it the General Advertiser, and Political, Commercial, Agricultural and Literary Journal. This he shortened a year later to General Advertiser. The newspaper as published six days a week. Benjamin Bache had a strong belief in freedom of the press.

At age 22, he married Margaret Markoe. They had four children. When Bache was away from home, Margaret took over the publishing of the newspaper. At that time, the American seat of government was in Philadelphia. It took ten years for Washington D.C. to be built to house the offices of the president, Congress and other federal departments. Bache's newspaper covered the debates and proceedings of the new U.S. government.

By 1794, Benjamin Bache gave his newspaper a new name—the Aurora and General Advertiser. The newspaper became known simply as the Aurora and



ran unfavorable news about President George Washington and the Federalist Party. (The Federalists favored a strong central government.) Bache was arrested and charged with "libeling the president and the executive government." He posted bail but died in a yellow fever epidemic before a trial was held. He was twenty-nine years old.

Benjamin Franklin Bache fought for freedom of the press and open government. In eight years, he built the Aurora from 400 to 1,799 paid subscribers. More people read the Aurora than just the paid subscribers because the newspaper was also placed in public reading rooms and passed along from one person to another.

## Language Arts

Choose a paragraph in the biography that is most interesting to you. Explain to your classmates why you chose that one.

Margaret Bache described her husband as "a man inflexible in virtue, unappalled by power or persecution..." Write this description in your own words. Whom do you know who fits this description? Discuss the attributes of this person you know with family and friends.

## Social Studies

What two presidents of the United States were named after Benjamin Franklin?

## Health

Use reference materials to find out about Yellow Fever. Tell your classmates how the disease is transmitted from one person to another, its symptoms and how it is now prevented.

## Answers:

**Social Studies:** Franklin Pierce and Franklin Roosevelt.

**National Learning Standards Addressed:** Language Arts #4 Adjustment of the use of spoken, written and visual language ... to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences. #12 Use of spoken, visual and written language for ... learning, enjoyment, persuasion and the exchange of information. (National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association List of Standards for the English Language Arts, 1996.) Science/Technology Levels K-12 Personal health. Abilities of technological design. Structure and function in living systems. (National Academy Press, National Science Education Standards, 1996.) Social Studies Strand I Culture. (Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, National Council for the Social Studies, 1999.)