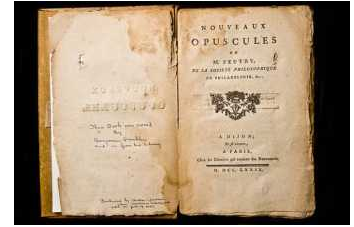




HISTORY MADE PERSONAL

Book from Benjamin Franklin's Personal Library By Gene Pisasale



One of the best known and loved of the Founding Fathers, Benjamin Franklin was a scientist, philosopher, diplomat, statesman- and a voracious reader. In short, he loved learning, exploring, widening his perspectives and gaining new insights by continually encountering new people, places and things. Chris Sanderson was in some ways the same kind of man. Chris enjoyed meeting people from all walks of life, learning from their experiences and saving pieces of Americana from his thousands of interactions over the more than eight decades of his life.

Sanderson collected things from around the country and all over the world which he felt were important in helping people gain an understanding of history. The Sanderson Museum in Chadds Ford holds roughly 18,000 artifacts, including a book from the personal library of Benjamin Franklin. The book is titled “Nouveaux Opuscules” (from the French and Latin meaning “new minor work”). The book stands behind glass in a tall cabinet within the Chadds Ford Room of the museum, just above a photo of Teddy Roosevelt taken for his inauguration as President on March 8, 1905. On the reverse side of the title page is stated “This book was owned by Benjamin Franklin and is from his library”, purchased by Christian C. Sanderson on June 18, 1947. Our research shows that the book was sold to Chris at the Nannie T. Bache sale for \$4.00. Underneath the book title is written “Signed January 17, 1956- the 250th anniversary of the birth of Benjamin Franklin.”

Deciphering the clues which link this book to Benjamin Franklin is even more fascinating. When Franklin died in 1790, his personal library was bequeathed to one of his grandsons, who quickly sold the collection. The books eventually landed in the inventory of a Philadelphia book dealer. The dealer was frustrated that the books would never sell and disposed of many of them at auction for ridiculously low prices.

In the 1950's, Edwin Wolf II worked to reacquire and identify Franklin's original collection, but struggled to determine a way to authenticate the books. He began noticing a mysterious set of notations within books he believed belonged to Franklin. Inside each volume were the letters “C” and “N”, each followed by a number. After a lengthy examination of thousands of books, Wolf determined that the annotations were Franklin's ‘shelfmarks’- “C” indicating the case or shelf in Franklin's bookcase where the book was held, “N” for the number or placement on the shelf. After Wolf's death, Kevin J. Hayes took up the task, locating close to 4,000 titles that were part of the collection of this great American patriot. Most of the books are scientific or philosophical in nature, with very few novels- different from the collections of many people from his time period.

As Chris cherished pieces of our heritage, gaining possession of one of Franklin's books was special to him, as it represented a link to the men who made this nation possible. The founders of this republic left an indelible imprint on our country and the world. Along with their memories, the collection of one man, Chris Sanderson, keeps our past very much alive. Visit the Sanderson Museum - A Man's Life, A Nation's History at 1755 Creek Road (old Route 100) in Chadds Ford, PA just north of Route 1 or on-line at www.SandersonMuseum.org. For information on the author of this article, visit www.GenePisasale.com.