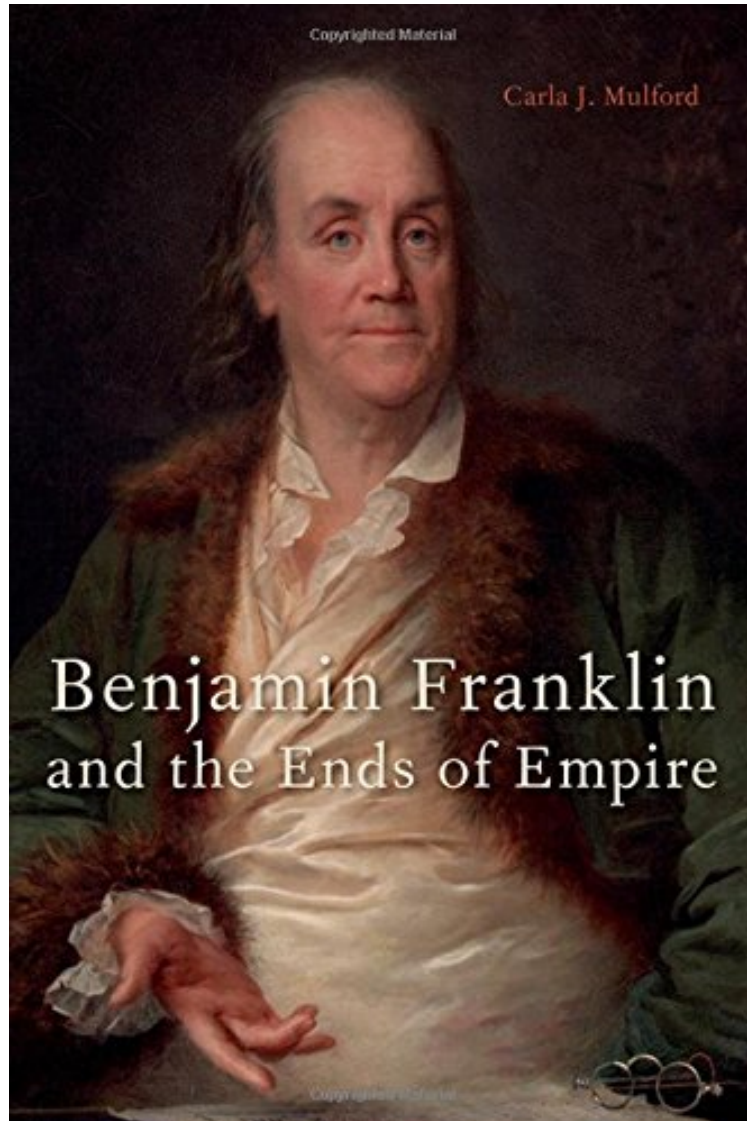


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## Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire

Carla J. Mulford

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**Carla J. Mulford : Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire:

0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Daymon W. Nicholasfast shipping book better than I expected3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An Important Look at the Development of One Inventor of AmericaBy Ted LehmannBenjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire by Carla J. MulfordBenjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire (Oxford University Press, 2015, 448 pages, \$65.00/\$34.45 is a literary biography, which, unlike

traditional biography, places its emphasis on what a person thought and how those ideas were formed throughout a life of reading, and writing and conversation. Thus the impact of an individual is presented through his internal life rather than more conventionally through what happened and how it was accomplished. As such, the book that results is not usually filled with high drama. Carla Mulford's thorough and challenging assessment of Benjamin Franklin, as his ideas about being a Boston-born Briton developed during his long and eventful life in the colonies, as a diplomat in England and France during the eighteenth century, however, creates an internal drama in the reader as Franklin grows and changes, emerging as the intellectual center of the events surrounding the invention of America. Mulford thoroughly traces Franklin's rich family background in England as they struggled to maintain their conscience and religious liberty in a time of revolutionary unrest that resulted in the beheading of a king and the long struggle between Catholic and Protestant elements. His family were dissenters enough to seek to move to Massachusetts and associate themselves with the Puritans in the late seventeenth century. Franklin (born in 1706) was apprenticed to his brother James, a printer, when he was twelve years old and soon emerged as a skilled writer, growing from his voracious reading. His vocation merged with his internal views of the world as he precociously began writing about the turmoil bubbling up in Boston. He moved to Philadelphia when he was merely seventeen, established his own print shop, which remained the base for publishing his writings. Mulford follows the outcome of his reading and thinking as he transits from a local political and social voice to world fame as a scientist, diplomat, ideologist, and political thinker. Throughout his long life, he continued to develop his ideas about conscience, the root of wealth in the labor of the hands and fields, the importance of religious liberty, and the responsibility of the state to function for the good of the governed. The Ends of Empire in the title of Mulford's book refers not to the revolutionary period leading to the establishment of the United States, but to the purposes that empire should fulfill as it spreads and broadens its influences. Thus, as the British Empire became increasingly hierarchical it tended to function to enrich itself and those at the top of its lofty pyramid, viewing the inhabitants of its colonies in America, India, the Caribbean, and Ireland as the source of its income and wealth rather than as semi-independent entities which should be equally represented in the emerging parliamentary system of the home country. Rather than enriching the mother country through their abundance, they were seen as the source of raw material to be exploited as they subjugated themselves to the home country. Throughout her detailed discussions of Franklin's efforts to continue to stress freedom of conscience, the primacy of agriculture over manufacturing, the importance of maintaining governance growing from close attention to the governed, and the rights of the governed to regulate their own governance through taxing themselves, Mulford charts his increasing frustration at trying to get people in England to understand and appreciate the colonies while having little or no experience of how they actually functioned. Without a clear and living experience of the threat of Indian forces to the West, the difficulties posed by the French, and the independent cast of ordinary Americans who had lived and thrived in an independent fashion, the British governing upper classes and royalty could not (or would not) respond with a world vision leading toward a cooperative empire. Franklin's emerging awareness and influence is presented through his voluminous writings (both public and private) as well as his ability to read and connect to the major thinkers of both history and his own time to develop a comprehensive view of the role of liberty and conscience in nation building. Meanwhile, the events in Franklin's life form a framework for his emerging ideas and his struggles to awaken Britain to its own potential for greatness as well as to reconcile his original love of his homeland with his emerging vision of the necessity of independence, both personal and national. Carla J. Mulford is Associate Professor of English at Penn State University and founding President of the Society of Early Americanists. She has served on the editorial boards of numerous scholarly journals. She teaches and does research in early modern, American, Native American, early African American, and environmental studies. Across her career at Penn State, she has published ten books and over sixty articles and chapters in books on a variety of subjects. She has been a Franklin scholar since completing her doctoral studies at the University of Delaware under J. A. Leo LeMay. She has supervised the doctoral dissertations of a number of scholars who have gone on to careers at other universities. She is recognized as a top Franklin scholar. Carla is also my sister-in-law. Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire (Oxford University Press, 2015, 448 pages, \$65.00/\$34.45) is a fine and carefully focused consideration of the influences on Benjamin Franklin's thinking as he became one of the most important political and social theorists as well as a founder of the American idea. It is not a beginner's book about Franklin. Readers seeking to delve deeply into the life of his mind should become thoroughly familiar with his life, first. Franklin biographies by H.V. Brands and Walter Isaacson have been useful to me. Mulford's book, however, will lead you deeper into the world of the mind inhabited by Benjamin Franklin. Her book opened for me a vast and important understanding of some of the factors brought together to create the nation we now have. Some of Mulford's sections are, at least for me, more slow moving than others, as charting the development of thought takes greater time and attention than the events those ideas move. While at times requiring greater concentration and attention, the effort proves worthwhile, as Franklin's complex mind emerges, demonstrating his passion for freedom of conscience, personal liberty, and political self-determination develop from his humble beginnings and flower in his old age with the former being the parents of the latter. This is a scholarly volume, but the eighty pages of notes, footnotes, and bibliography do not intrude on an enjoyable and thorough reading of the content in the text. I highly recommend this book for serious readers seeking to extend their knowledge of Franklin

specifically or the important roots of the American experiment in self-government. I own the book, which was a gift to me. If you decide to purchase this title, please order it through the portal on my blog at Ted Lehmann (dot) blogspot (dot) com

Drawing from Benjamin Franklin's published and unpublished papers, including letters, notes, and marginalia, *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* examines how the early modern liberalism of Franklin's youthful intellectual life helped foster his vision of independence from Britain that became his hallmark achievement. In the early chapters, Carla Mulford explores the impact of Franklin's family history - especially their difficult times during the English Civil War - on Franklin's intellectual life and his personal and political goals. The book's middle chapters show how Franklin's fascination with British imperial strategy grew from his own analyses of the financial, environmental, and commercial potential of North America. Franklin's involvement in Pennsylvania's politics led him to devise strategies for monetary stability, intercolonial trade, Indian affairs, and imperial defense that would have assisted the British Empire in its effort to take over the world. When Franklin realized that the goals of British ministers were to subordinate colonists in a system that assisted the lives of Britons in England but undermined the wellbeing of North Americans, he began to criticize the goals of British imperialism. Mulford argues that Franklin's turn away from the British Empire began in the 1750s - not the 1770s, as most historians have suggested - and occurred as a result of Franklin's perceptive analyses of what the British Empire was doing not just in the American colonies but in Ireland and India. In the last chapters, Mulford reveals how Franklin ultimately grew restive, formed alliances with French intellectuals and the court of France, and condemned the actions of the British Empire and imperial politicians. As a whole, Mulford's book provides a fresh reading of a much-admired founding father, suggesting how Franklin's conception of the freedoms espoused in England's ages old Magna Carta could be realized in the political life of the new American nation.

"Mulford's *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* is the fruit of a lifetime's study of the statesman and polymath, a polemically engaged and bold attempt to lend coherence to a famously multifaceted career."--The New York of Books "By adding an analysis of what Franklin read to what he wrote, Mulford has crafted a remarkably comprehensive account of Franklin's thinking about the British Empire. The result is a fresh and illuminating study of one of early America's most written-about figures. By embedding Franklin the writer in the literature that he and his contemporaries read, Mulford brings Franklin the thinker back to life in ways that no other recent biographer has managed to do. In so doing, she has produced a wonderful tribute to a figure who remains as fascinating and compelling today as he was in his own lifetime."--Early American Literature "One might reasonably ask if anything new can be written about Benjamin Franklin. Carla J. Mulford's *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* answers that question with a resounding "plenty." Mulford begins this stimulating and engaging "literary biography" with her self-proclaimed "preoccupation" with Franklin's 1768 articulation of civil liberty. Mulford's thorough and thoughtful analysis of his evolving intellectual commitment to American liberty has made me an admirer of Franklin the politician."--The Journal of American History "Mulford argues persuasively that [Benjamin Franklin] formulated a bundle of assumptions about colonial rights and imperial power as a young man. Over time his thinking evolved, but the fundamental principles remained unchanged. This is a significant claim, since in Mulford's telling Franklin developed a coherent theory of colonial sovereignty well before the final revolutionary crisis." -- Times Literary Supplement "[T]he most thorough study of Franklin's thinking to date.... It is engaging, thoughtful, and thought-provoking. Methodologically, it breaks new ground as a "literary biography." It helps to rehabilitate Franklin as a serious thinker on society, politics, and empire and not simply as a genial spouter of aphorisms and popular wisdom. Perhaps most important is the contribution it makes to our understanding of the origins of the American Revolution." -- William and Mary Quarterly "Given Mulford's methodology, this book should interest not only historians and scholars of colonial and US history but also those who study biography as a genre. Impeccable scholarship and an accessible style mark this sound effort."--CHOICE "What new can be said about Benjamin Franklin? Plenty, proves Carla Mulford in this engaging literary biography. Applying twenty-first-century sophistication to themes long unfashionable in literary and scholarly historical circles - liberalism, government, American identity- *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* is essential for anyone interested in the political and cultural origins of the United States."-Daniel K. Richter, author of *Before the Revolution: America's Ancient Pasts* "Carla Mulford's sweeping study reveals aspects of Benjamin Franklin's intellectual life that have been given relatively short shrift by previous scholars. Most scholars view Franklin as something of a chameleon, even accusing him of having no 'inner core.' Highlighting continuities (rather than changes) in his thought, *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* stands as a much-needed corrective. Mulford painstakingly traces the intellectual roots of Franklin's complicated views, giving credit to those who came before him, to help us understand exactly how he arrived at his ideas about economy and empire."-Sheila Skemp, author of *The Making of a Patriot: Benjamin Franklin at the Cockpit* "In *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire*, Carla Mulford draws on a lifetime of study in order to situate Franklin's political and economic thinking in its Atlantic context. Her detailed discussion of the intellectual currents through which Franklin moved, during his rich

career, makes plain the uncanny modernity of his mind."-Douglas Anderson, author of *he Unfinished Life of Benjamin Franklin* "Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire is an important book. It is engaging, thoughtful, and thought-provoking. Methodologically, it breaks new ground as a 'literary biography.' It helps to rehabilitate Franklin as a serious thinker on society, politics, and empire--and not simply as a genial spouter of aphorisms and popular wisdom. Perhaps most important is the contribution it makes to our understanding of the origins of the American Revolution." --  
William and Mary Quarterly About the Author Carla Mulford is Professor of English at the Pennsylvania State University and the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Franklin*. She is also the founding president of the Society for Early Americanists.