I Discovery of the Lightning Conductor Timeline

Source Cited: Anderson, Richard. ***Lightning Conductors***. London: E&FN. Spon, 1880.

1746: Franklin hears Dr. Spence's discourse on electricity sparking his fascination with its properties (11).

1747: famous electricians in England, Holland, France, and Germany are said to be drunk under the discharge of electric guns from batteries (13).

1748: Franklin gives up his printing press to pursue experiments in electricity (14).

1749: Franklin extract dated November 7 connects properties of electricity to lightning in respect of giving light, color, direction, motion, in melting metals, in firing inflammable substances, and sulpherous smell (16).

1751: Franklin publishes "New Experiments and Observations in Electricity, made at Philadelphia, in America" (19).

1752: May 13 first verification of Franklin's report at Marly- La-Ville.

July 4: Franklin demonstrates need for lightning conductors for the protection of person and buildings with his "kite experiment" and receives world recognition (24).

Summer:Franklin erects first lightning rod over house in Philadelphia made entirely of iron with a sharp point on top projecting seven or eight feet above roof (25).

1758: adevrtisements for electric conductors appear in Poor Richard's Almanac (28).

1762: Watson erects first Franklin rod in London (38).

1768: Ben Franklin's rod first set up over dome of St. Paul's Cathedral (40).

1772: Cavendish and Franklin's report emphasizing the imporrtance of an underground connection.

1777: Partheon experiment in lightning proves Franklin rods sharp points more effective than King George III's lightning rods igniting 25 year controversey (42).

II The Modern Prometheus: Bringing Fire From Heaven

Although referred to at the time as a "dealer of rags and goosefeathers" by members of the Royal Society in London (17), Benjamin Franklin contributed greatly to the scientific understanding and construction of lightning conductors. A man of great common sense and practicality, he constructed a straight road from the earth to the clouds out of a silk kite, yarn, and Leyden jar (22). Franklin observed that: electricity would run its course more easily through sharply pointed metals, contained positive and negative divisions, and could be linked with lightning (15). Although later able to convicne the Royal Society of the merits of lightning rods after a 1776 experiment involving the famous story of the kite, the royal court faction and conservatives of England visualized republicanism in the construction of lightning rods designed by a representative of the disaffected American colonies (41). King George III was entirely against points and in favor of rounded balls as attractors of electricity. He ordered a cannon ball of large size to be placed on the top of a conductor on the top of the Royal palace at Kew (41). The controversey

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