Sheila L. Skemp. *The Making of a Patriot: Benjamin Franklin at the Cockpit*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. 184. Paper $14.95.

Shelia Skemp, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Mississippi, argues that prior to January 29, 1774, Benjamin Franklin was a proud man of the British Empire dedicated to mending the divisions between the crown and its North American colonies. It was not until after his disastrous meeting with the Privy Council of George III in a tiny room in Whitehall Palace, known as "the cockpit," that Franklin decided the relationship between England and the thirteen mainland colonies was damaged beyond repair. Skemp reveals just how quickly the hearts and minds of even the most ardent supporters of empire changed forever, and that rebellion was far from a foregone conclusion in the minds of many colonists.

Organized thematically into five chapters and drawing on personal letters and eyewitness accounts, a single formative day anchors the narrative. The first three chapters detail Franklin's public berating by Solicitor General Alexander Wedderburn. Franklin tried to petition for the removal of Massachusetts Governor Thomas Hutchinson and Lieutenant Governor Andrew Oliver, but news of the events later known as the Boston Tea Party decidedly turned the Privy Council against his cause. Skemp then looks at the various men of empire present at Whitehall that day (such as Lord North and Edmund Burke) and the relationships he had developed with them. As the most celebrated man of the colonies, Franklin intended for his earliest machinations—including his attempt to wrest control of Pennsylvania from the Penn family into royal authority—to strengthen the union between the empire and the colonies. Yet various missteps and lapses in judgment in his long and distinguished career eventually led the Privy Council to brand him an incendiary and a rebel.

The final two chapters are dedicated to the aftermath of January 29, 1774 and are the book's weakest. Skemp delves into the realm of counterfactual history and asks her readers to make assumptions not necessarily supported by the facts presented. She argues that competing conspiracy theories from both sides of the Atlantic cemented the idea that all actions made against the

colonies were part of a diabolical plan to subjugate its citizens yet maintains that a majority of colonists remained loyal to England up until the eve of revolution. In addition, she proposes that the incident transformed Franklin into a revolutionary. If that was the case, why did he choose to remain in England until March of 1775? Skemp is silent on this fact, choosing instead to explore the effect Franklin's decision to support the rebellion had on his relationship with his son William, the Royal Governor of New Jersey.

The Making of a Patriot is not a traditional biography and avoids a majority of Franklin's long and distinguished career, concentrating only on the events that brought him to Whitehall Palace that fateful day. It is a beautiful micro-history about a relatively unknown event in American history that will be insightful for early Americanists. By examining one of America's most famous founders' transformation from the crown's loyal subject into one of its most ardent opponents, Skemp reveals that Franklin was a man full of compromises and contradictions, trials and errors, failure and reinvention. The book serves as an example that even the most revered of the American founding fathers was not originally inclined to split with the British Empire.

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