Franklin was indeed a mischievous, flirtatious, and fun-loving man who enjoyed life. At the close of his 29 April 1749 letter to Collinson, he combined humor with physics in describing the termination of the season’s electrical experiments:

Chagrined a little that we have been hitherto able to produce nothing in this way of use to mankind; and the hot weather coming on, when electrical experiments are not so agreeable, is proposed to put an end to them for this season, somewhat humorously, in a party of pleasure, on the banks of the Skuylkil. Spirits, at the same time, are to be fired by a spark sent from side to side through the river, without any other conductor than the water; an experiment which we some time since performed, to the amazement of many. A turkey is to be killed for our dinner by the electrical shock, and roasted by the electrical jack, before a fire kindled by the electrified bottle: when the healths of all the famous electricians in England, Holland, France, and Germany, are to be drank in electrified bumpers, under the discharge of guns from the electrical battery.

Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790: his 300th birthday occurred on January 17, 2006. We remember the anniversary of his birthday to honor him as a sage of the Enlightenment, philosopher of science, communicator of ideas, jolly good fellow, Frammer of American democracy, and America’s First Physicist.

— by Dwight E. Neuenschwander

Acknowledgements
The assistance of Bo Hammer and Virginia Ward of the Franklin Institute is greatly appreciated.

Bibliography
B. Franklin, The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (available from numerous publishers, in many editions over the years. Written by Franklin in 1771 as a letter to his son);

Fig. 4. Cover page of one of Franklin’s letters to Peter Collinson.