

**THE AGE OF INVENTION; A
CHRONICLE OF
MECHANICAL CONQUEST**

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The age of invention; a chronicle of mechanical conquest by Holland Thompson

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HOLLAND THOMPSON

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS volume is not intended to be a complete record of inventive genius and mechanical progress in the United States. A bare catalogue of notable American inventions in the nineteenth century alone could not be compressed into these pages. Nor is it any part of the purpose of this book to trespass on the ground of the many mechanical works and encyclopedias which give technical descriptions and explain in detail the principle of every invention. All this book seeks to do is to outline the personalities of some of the outstanding American inventors and indicate the significance of their achievements.

Acknowledgments are due the Editor of the Series and to members of the staff of the Yale University Press—particularly, Miss Constance Lindsay Skinner, Mr. Arthur Edwin Krows, and Miss Frances Hart—without whose intelligent

assistance the book could not have been completed in time to take its place in the Series.

H. T.

COLLEGE OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

May 10, 1921.

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THE AGE OF INVENTION

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CHAPTER I

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND HIS TIMES

ON Milk Street, in Boston, opposite the Old South Church, lived Josiah Franklin, a maker of soap and candies. He had come to Boston with his wife about the year 1682 from the parish of Ecton, Northamptonshire, England, where his family had lived on a small freehold for about three hundred years. His English wife had died, leaving him seven children, and he had married a colonial girl, Abiah Folger, whose father, Peter Folger, was a man of some note in early Massachusetts.

Josiah Franklin was fifty-one and his wife Abiah thirty-nine, when the first illustrious American inventor was born in their house on Milk Street, January 17, 1706. He was their eighth child and Josiah's tenth son and was baptized Benjamin.