

The Story of Jean-Pierre Blanchard: America's First Air Mail to Deptford, N.J. 1793

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This article outlines the career of pioneer French balloonist J.P. Blanchard with particular emphasis on his flight from Philadelphia to Deptford, N.J., carrying a safe passage letter from George Washington.

Highlights include:

- His early flights in Europe, and one across the Channel carrying a letter from Franklin's son (William) to his own son, staying with his grandfather Benjamin, near Paris.
- Blanchard's correspondence with Benjamin Franklin who was intrigued by ballooning
- Blanchard's 1792 journey to America to demonstrate his balloon
- His 1783 liftoff from Philadelphia's Walnut Street Prison Yard, witnessed by Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Monroe, carrying Washington's letter of safe passage.
- The descent from a mile high flight of 15 miles to a clearing in New Jersey, a farmer's fears, and the arrival of others who conveyed Blanchard and his balloon back to Philadelphia
- The subsequent Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic
- Jefferson's interest in ballooning, and Blanchard's unsuccessful effort to elicit funds from him
- Blanchard's lack of financial success in America, his return to France, and eventual ballooning-related death.