

Rumford

The outrageous benefactor of Harvard

Eric Sartori

This is the first french biography of a man honored in his lifetime, now unfairly forgotten : **Benjamin Thompson** (1753-1814), son of a farmer of the American colonies - but he fought on the English side during the Independence War ; a spy and a sometimes brutal mercenary – but he became **Count Rumford of the Holy Roman Empire**, Minister of war in Bavaria, and finally member of the Institute (Academy of science) in France for his outstanding scientific discoveries.

Prolific inventor, successful industrial, philanthropist leader, misanthropic benefactor, he was probably the first to be defined as a "citizen of the world". Great statesman and brilliant scientist, one of the greatest physicist and experimenter in history of science, he was also impassioned to the practical applications of his theories and experiments; we owe him the optimal design of fireplaces, central heating steam, coffee machines and modern stoves. Forceful social reformer, he eradicated begging in Munich and created the *English gardens* in 1789 – the first large urban public park in the heart of a city - and developed "the Rumford soup" which saved the famine many poor Europeans during Napoleon wars.

We owe him nothing less than the modern theory of heat as molecular movement; he came to France to expose his theory which replaced that of Lavoisier and... married Lavoisier widow.

He created the *Royal Institution* and medal Rumford in England, the *Rumford Prize* in the United States, and made to Harvard a proposal that could not be refused... the Rumford Professorship for the Application of Science to the Useful Arts.

Personality of dazzling ambivalence – eulogies such as Cuvier's, are jewels of ambiguity - **the unique American Count** deserves to come out of oblivion. His extraordinary life is told by **Eric Sartori** with his fluid writing, his shimmering style and deliciously *dry* humor.

AUTHOR

Eric Sartori, born in 1957, is a graduate of Ecole Supérieure de Physique et Chimie, doctor of science, and is working in pharmaceutical research.

Passionate about science and history of science, he is the author of various articles and of several historical books including *Histoire des grands scientifiques français*, Plon, 1999, reissued Tempus, 2013 and *L'Empire des Sciences, Napoléon et ses savants*, Ellipse, 2003, reissued 2014.

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