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Media brothers love life as soda jerks

■ Penncrest grads with penchant for antiques mark anniversary of old-fashioned ice cream parlor.

PHILADELPHIA - Two brothers from Media are celebrating their first anniversary as owners of a unique, old-fashioned ice cream parlor in the Old City section of the city.

Ryan and Eric Berley, both graduates of Penncrest High School, will celebrate the first anniversary of The Franklin Fountain from 2-6 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 25.

The Franklin Fountain, 116 Market St., is a recreated early 1900s ice cream parlor which utilizes the 1898 building's pressed tin walls and ceiling, and decorated penny-tile mosaic floor to create a taste of the past.

The Berley brothers and their staff appear daily dressed as 1910 soda jerks. Seltzer water, dispensed from an authentic art nouveau-style lamp with a Tiffany shade, is used for the homemade sodas. The menu's ice cream concoctions are taken from turn-of-the-century cookbooks.

Sunday's celebration - billed as "Founders Day" - features appearances by actors impersonating Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln.

The Berley brothers drew on these founding fathers for inspiration in preserving a taste of America's past in their old-fashioned ice cream parlor.

Ryan and Eric wrote that: "Benjamin Franklin inspired (them) early on in their concept through his simple and practical advice. Thomas Jefferson, the first gourmand in the White House, imported French culinary traditions and popularized ice cream in America. Throughout his tumultuous presidency, Abraham Lincoln embodied the values and wisdom any business leader can learn from."

Franklin will speak at 2:30 p.m. on "Wisdom for Businessmen." Jefferson will speak about "The Gastronomy and Lifestyles of France and their Influence on America." At 3 p.m. Abe Lincoln will discuss "Leadership."



Ryan and Eric Berley, brothers from Media, are marking their first anniversary as owners and operators of The Franklin Fountain, an old-fashioned ice cream parlor in the Old City section of Philadelphia.

Live Revolutionary War music will be played throughout the day by members of the Philadelphia Fife and Drum Corps. From 4-6 p.m. the John Breslin Dixieland Jazz Band will perform swinging numbers on the Market Street sidewalk. Local magician Francis Menotti will demonstrate magic tricks.

Ryan and Eric Berley are the sons of Robert and Carole Berley of Upper Providence, both avid antique collectors. Carole has been buying and selling antiques for almost 30 years. So the boys grew up with an interest in artifacts from the past.

In 2003, the brothers decided to team up to open an

The Franklin Fountain

■ The Franklin Fountain, owned by Ryan and Eric Berley, is located at 116 Market St., Philadelphia, in the Old City section. Open from noon-11 p.m. daily. For information call (215) 627-1899 or visit www.franklinfountain.com. The "Founders Day" anniversary celebration runs 2-6 p.m. Sunday.

ice cream parlor on the first floor of the Market Street building they owned and renovated.

Eric was graduating from William and Mary College and Ryan was working as an antiques trader and consultant to Freeman's auctions.

They took a road trip to the National Ice Cream Retailer's Convention in New Orleans, La.

Next, they attended the annual convention of the Icecreamers, a passionate international group dedicated to preserving the history of ice cream and soda fountains.

They opened the Franklin Fountain in the summer of 2004.

Their philosophy is printed on a sign under a portrait of Ben Franklin: "The Franklin Fountain aims to serve an experience infused with ideals, drizzled in drollery and sprinkled with the forgotten labors of the American past."

Members of the public are invited to Sunday's anniversary celebration.