


# Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin	
	
6th President of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania	
In office October 18, 1785 – December 1, 1788	
Preceded by	John Dickinson
Succeeded by	Thomas Mifflin
23rd Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly	
In office 1765–1765	
Preceded by	Isaac Norris
Succeeded by	Isaac Norris
United States Minister to France	
In office 1778–1785	
Appointed by	Congress of the Confederation
Preceded by	<i>New office</i>
Succeeded by	Thomas Jefferson
United States Minister to Sweden	
In office 1782–1783	
Appointed by	Congress of the Confederation
Preceded by	<i>New office</i>
Succeeded by	Jonathan Russell
1st United States Postmaster General	
In office 1775–1776	
Appointed by	Continental Congress
Preceded by	<i>New office</i>
Succeeded by	Richard Bache
Personal details	

<b>Born</b>	January 17, 1706 Boston, Massachusetts Bay
<b>Died</b>	April 17, 1790 (aged 84) Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
<b>Nationality</b>	American
<b>Political party</b>	None
<b>Spouse(s)</b>	Deborah Read
<b>Children</b>	William Franklin Francis Folger Franklin Sarah Franklin Bache
<b>Profession</b>	Scientist Writer Politician
<b>Signature</b>	

**Benjamin Franklin** (January 17, 1706 [O.S. January 6, 1705<sup>[1]</sup>] – April 17, 1790) was one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. A noted polymath, Franklin was a leading author, printer, political theorist, politician, postmaster, scientist, musician, inventor, satirist, civic activist, statesman, and diplomat. As a scientist, he was a major figure in the American Enlightenment and the history of physics for his discoveries and theories regarding electricity. He invented the lightning rod, bifocals, the Franklin stove, a carriage odometer, and the glass 'armonica'. He formed both the first public lending library in America and the first fire department in Pennsylvania.

Franklin earned the title of "The First American" for his early and indefatigable campaigning for colonial unity; as an author and spokesman in London for several colonies, then as the first United States Ambassador to France, he exemplified the emerging American nation.<sup>[2]</sup> Franklin was foundational in defining the American ethos as a marriage of the practical and democratic values of thrift, hard work, education, community spirit, self-governing institutions, and opposition to authoritarianism both political and religious, with the scientific and tolerant values of the Enlightenment. In the words of historian Henry Steele Commager, "In a Franklin could be merged the virtues of Puritanism without its defects, the illumination of the Enlightenment without its heat."<sup>[3]</sup> To Walter Isaacson, this makes Franklin "the most accomplished American of his age and the most influential in inventing the type of society America would become."<sup>[4]</sup>

Franklin, always proud of his working class roots, became a successful newspaper editor and printer in Philadelphia, the leading city in the colonies. He was also partners with William Goddard and Joseph Galloway the three of whom published the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, a newspaper that was known for its revolutionary sentiments and criticisms of the British monarchy in the American colonies.<sup>[5]</sup> He became wealthy publishing *Poor Richard's Almanack* and *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. Franklin gained international renown as a scientist for his famous experiments in electricity and for his many inventions, especially the lightning rod. He played a major role in establishing the University of Pennsylvania and was elected the first president of the American Philosophical Society. Franklin became a national hero in America when he spearheaded the effort to have Parliament repeal the unpopular Stamp Act. An



Statue of Franklin in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.

accomplished diplomat, he was widely admired among the French as American minister to Paris and was a major figure in the development of positive Franco-American relations. For many years he was the British postmaster for the colonies, which enabled him to set up the first national communications network. He was active in community affairs, colonial and state politics, as well as national and international affairs. From 1785 to 1788, he served as governor of Pennsylvania. Toward the end of his life, he freed his slaves and became one of the most prominent abolitionists.

His colorful life and legacy of scientific and political achievement, and status as one of America's most influential Founding Fathers, have seen Franklin honored on coinage and money; warships; the names of many towns, counties, educational institutions, namesakes, and companies; and more than two centuries after his death, countless cultural references.

## Ancestry

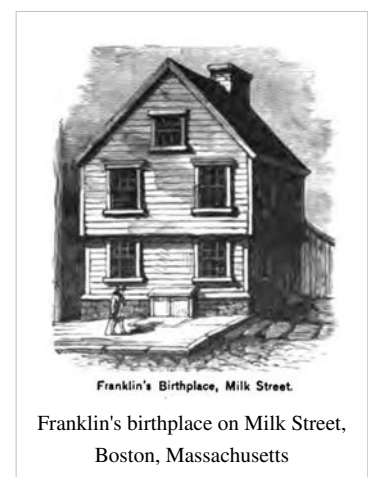
Franklin's father, Josiah Franklin was a tallow chandler, a soap-maker and a candle-maker. Josiah was born at Ecton, Northamptonshire, England, on December 23, 1657, the son of Thomas Franklin, a blacksmith-farmer, and Jane White. His mother, Abiah Folger, was born in Nantucket, Massachusetts, on August 15, 1667, to Peter Folger, a miller and schoolteacher and his wife Mary Morrill, a former indentured servant.

Josiah Franklin had 17 children with his two wives. He married his first wife, Anne Child, in about 1677 in Ecton and emigrated with her to Boston in 1683; they had three children before emigrating, and four after. After her death, Josiah was married to Abiah Folger on July 9, 1689, in the Old South Meeting House by Samuel Willard. Benjamin, their eighth child, was Josiah Franklin's 15th child and tenth and last son.

Ben Franklin's mother, Abiah Folger, was born into a Puritan family among those that fled to Massachusetts to establish a purified Congregationalist Christianity in New England, when King Charles I of England began persecuting Puritans. They sailed for Boston in 1635. Her father was "the sort of rebel destined to transform colonial America";<sup>[6]</sup> as clerk of the court, he was jailed for disobeying the local magistrate in defense of middle-class shopkeepers and artisans in conflict with wealthy landowners. Ben Franklin followed in his grandfather's footsteps in his battles against the wealthy Penn family that owned the Pennsylvania Colony.

## Early life

Benjamin Franklin was born on Milk Street, in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 17, 1706<sup>[1]</sup> and baptized at Old South Meeting House. Josiah wanted Ben to attend school with the clergy, but only had enough money to send him to school for two years. He attended Boston Latin School but did not graduate; he continued his education through voracious reading. Although "his parents talked of the church as a career"<sup>[7]</sup> for Franklin, his schooling ended when he was ten. He then worked for his father for a time and at 12 he became an apprentice to his brother James, a printer, who taught Ben the printing trade. When Ben was 15, James founded *The New-England Courant*, which was the first truly independent newspaper in the colonies. When denied the chance to write a letter to the paper for publication, Franklin adopted the pseudonym of "Mrs. Silence Dogood", a middle-aged widow. "Mrs. Dogood"'s letters were published, and became a subject of conversation around town. Neither James nor the *Courant's* readers were aware of the ruse, and James was unhappy with Ben when he discovered the popular correspondent was his younger brother. Franklin left his apprenticeship without permission, and in so doing became a fugitive.<sup>[8]</sup>



At age 17, Franklin ran away to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, seeking a new start in a new city. When he first arrived he worked in several printer shops around town. However, he was not satisfied by the immediate prospects. After a few months, while working in a printing house, Franklin was convinced by Pennsylvania Governor Sir William Keith to go to London, ostensibly to acquire the equipment necessary for establishing another newspaper in Philadelphia. Finding Keith's promises of backing a newspaper to be empty, Franklin worked as a typesetter in a printer's shop in what is now the Church of St Bartholomew-the-Great in the Smithfield area of London. Following this, he returned to Philadelphia in 1726 with the help of Thomas Denham, a merchant who employed Franklin as clerk, shopkeeper, and bookkeeper in his business.<sup>[8]</sup>

In 1727, Benjamin Franklin, then 21, created the Junto, a group of "like minded aspiring artisans and tradesmen who hoped to improve themselves while they improved their community." The Junto was a discussion group for issues of the day; it subsequently gave rise to many organizations in Philadelphia.

Reading was a great pastime of the Junto, but books were rare and expensive.

The members created a library, initially assembled from their own books. This did not suffice, however. Franklin then conceived the idea of a subscription library, which would pool the funds of the members to buy books for all to read. This was the birth of the Library Company of Philadelphia: its charter was composed by Franklin in 1731. In 1732, Franklin hired the first American librarian, Louis Timothee. Originally, the books were kept in the homes of the first librarians, but in 1739 the collection was moved to the second floor of the State House of Pennsylvania, now known as Independence Hall. In 1791, a new building was built specifically for the library. The Library Company is now a great scholarly and research library with 500,000 rare books, pamphlets, and broadsides, more than 160,000 manuscripts, and 75,000 graphic items.



Benjamin Franklin (center) at work on a printing press. Reproduction of a Charles Mills painting by the Detroit Publishing Company.

Upon Denham's death, Franklin returned to his former trade. In 1728, Franklin had set up a printing house in partnership with Hugh Meredith and the following year became the publisher of a newspaper called *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. The *Gazette* gave Franklin a forum for agitation about a variety of local reforms and initiatives through printed essays and observations. Over time, his commentary, and his adroit cultivation of a positive image as an industrious and intellectual young man, earned him a great deal of social respect. But even after Franklin had achieved fame as a scientist and statesman, he habitually signed his letters with the unpretentious 'B. Franklin, Printer.'<sup>[8]</sup>

In 1731, Franklin was initiated into the local Masonic Lodge. He became Grand Master in 1734, indicating his rapid rise to prominence in Pennsylvania.<sup>[9][10]</sup> That same year, he edited and published the first Masonic book in the Americas, a reprint of James Anderson's *Constitutions of the Free-Masons*. Franklin remained a Freemason for the rest of his life.<sup>[11][12]</sup>



Franklin's birthplace site directly across from Old South Meeting House on Milk Street is commemorated by a bust above the second floor facade of this building

## Common-law marriage to Deborah Read



Deborah Read Franklin  
(c. 1759). Common-law wife of Benjamin Franklin



Sarah Franklin Bache (1743–1808). Daughter of Benjamin Franklin and Deborah Read

At the age of 17, Franklin proposed to 15-year-old Deborah Read while a boarder in the Read home. At that time, Read's mother was wary of allowing her young daughter to marry Franklin, who was on his way to London at Governor Sir William Keith's request, and also because of his financial instability. Her own husband had recently died, and Mrs. Read declined Franklin's request to marry her daughter.<sup>[8]</sup>

While Franklin was in London, his trip was extended, and there were problems with Sir William's promises of support. Perhaps because of the circumstances of this delay, Deborah married a man named John Rodgers. This proved to be a regrettable decision. Rodgers shortly avoided his debts and prosecution by fleeing to Barbados with her dowry, leaving Deborah behind. Rodgers's fate was unknown, and because of bigamy laws, Deborah was not free to remarry.

Franklin established a common-law marriage with Deborah Read on September 1, 1730, and besides taking in Franklin's young, recently acknowledged illegitimate son, William, together they had two children. The first, Francis Folger Franklin, born October 1732, died of smallpox in 1736. Their second child, Sarah Franklin, familiarly called Sally, was born in 1743. She eventually married Richard Bache, had seven children, and cared for her father in his old age.

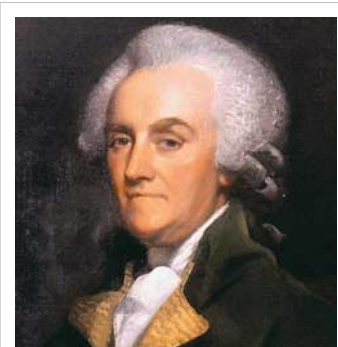
Deborah's fear of the sea meant that she never accompanied Franklin on any of his extended trips to Europe, despite his repeated requests. However, Franklin did not leave London to visit Deborah even after she wrote to him in November 1769 saying her illness was due to "dissatisfied distress" from his prolonged absence.<sup>[13]</sup> Deborah Read Franklin died of a stroke in 1774, while Franklin was on an extended trip to England.

## Illegitimate son William

In 1730, at the age of 24, Franklin publicly acknowledged an illegitimate son named William,<sup>[14]</sup> who would eventually become the last Loyalist governor of New Jersey. While the identity of William's mother remains unknown, perhaps the responsibility of an infant child gave Franklin a reason to take up residence with Deborah Read. William was raised in the Franklin household but eventually broke with his father over opinions regarding the treatment of the colonies by the British government. The elder Franklin could never accept William's decision to declare his loyalty to the crown.

Any hope of reconciliation was shattered when William Franklin became leader of The Board of Associated Loyalists—a quasi-military organization, headquartered in British-occupied New York City, which, among other things,

launched guerilla forays into New Jersey, southern Connecticut, and New York counties north of the city.<sup>[15]</sup> In the preliminary peace talks in 1782 with Britain "...Franklin insisted that loyalists who had borne arms against the



William Franklin

United States would be excluded from this plea (that they be given a general pardon). He was undoubtedly thinking of William Franklin."<sup>[16]</sup> William left New York along with the British troops. He settled in England, never to return.

William Franklin himself had an illegitimate son, William Temple Franklin, Franklin's only patrilineal grandson. William Temple Franklin was born out of wedlock on February 22, 1762 in Middlesex. His mother was not Elizabeth Downes, whom William later married; she has never been identified. Dr. Franklin insisted that his grandson be brought to Philadelphia, and he was raised there.

Temple Franklin served as secretary to his grandfather during his mission to Paris during the Revolutionary War. He died there in 1823 and was buried in the famed Père-Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.

### Success as an author

In 1733, Franklin began to publish the famous *Poor Richard's Almanack* (with content both original and borrowed) under the pseudonym Richard Saunders, on which much of his popular reputation is based. Franklin frequently wrote under pseudonyms. Although it was no secret that Franklin was the author, his Richard Saunders character repeatedly denied it. "Poor Richard's Proverbs," adages from this almanac, such as "A penny saved is twopence dear" (often misquoted as "A penny saved is a penny earned") and "Fish and visitors stink in three days" remain common quotations in the modern world. Wisdom in folk society meant the ability to provide an apt adage for any occasion, and Franklin's readers became well prepared. He sold about ten thousand copies per year (a circulation equivalent to nearly three million today).<sup>[8]</sup>

In 1758, the year he ceased writing for the Almanack, he printed *Father Abraham's Sermon*, also known as *The Way to Wealth*. Franklin's autobiography, begun in 1771 but published after his death, has become one of the classics of the genre. Daylight saving time (DST) is often erroneously attributed to a 1784 satire that Franklin published anonymously.<sup>[17]</sup> Modern DST was first proposed by George Vernon Hudson in 1895.<sup>[18]</sup>

### Inventions and scientific inquiries

Franklin was a prodigious inventor. Among his many creations were the lightning rod, glass armonica (a glass instrument, not to be confused with the metal harmonica), Franklin stove, bifocal glasses and the flexible urinary catheter. Franklin never patented his inventions; in his autobiography he wrote, "... as we enjoy great advantages from the inventions of others, we should be glad of an opportunity to serve others by any invention of ours; and this we should do freely and generously."<sup>[19]</sup>

His inventions also included social innovations, such as paying forward. Franklin's fascination with innovation could be viewed as altruistic; he wrote that his scientific works were to be used for increasing efficiency and human improvement. One such improvement was his effort to expedite news services through his printing presses.<sup>[20]</sup>



Glass Armonica

### Atlantic Ocean currents

As deputy postmaster, Franklin became interested in the North Atlantic Ocean circulation patterns. While in England in 1768 he heard a complaint from the Colonial Board of Customs: Why did it take British packet ships carrying mail several weeks longer to reach New York than it took an average merchant ship to reach Newport, Rhode Island – despite the merchantmen having a longer and more complex voyage because they left from London, while the packets left from Falmouth in Cornwall?

Franklin put the question to his cousin Timothy Folger, a Nantucket whaler captain, who told him that merchant ships routinely avoided a strong eastbound mid-ocean current while the mail packet captains sailed dead into it, thus fighting an adverse current of 3 miles per hour (5 km/h). Franklin worked with Folger and other experienced ship captains, learning enough to chart the current and name it the Gulf Stream, by which it is still known today.

Franklin published his Gulf Stream chart in 1770 in England, where it was completely ignored. Subsequent versions were printed in France in 1778 and the U.S. in 1786. The British edition of the chart, which was the original, was so thoroughly ignored that everyone assumed it was lost forever until Phil Richardson, a Woods Hole Oceanographer and Gulf Stream expert, discovered it in Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in 1980.<sup>[21][22]</sup> This find received front page coverage in the *New York Times*.<sup>[23]</sup>

It took many years for British sea captains finally to adopt Franklin's advice on navigating the current; once they did, they were able to trim two weeks from their sailing time.<sup>[24][25]</sup> In 1853, oceanographer and cartographer Matthew Fontaine Maury reminded that Franklin only charted and codified the Gulf Stream, he did not actually *discover* it:

Though it was Dr. Franklin and Captain Tim Folger, who first turned the Gulf Stream to nautical account, the discovery that there was a Gulf Stream cannot be said to belong to either of them, for its existence was known to Peter Martyr d'Anghiera, and to Sir Humphrey Gilbert, in the sixteenth century.<sup>[26]</sup>

## No longer a printer

In 1743, Franklin founded the American Philosophical Society to help scientific men discuss their discoveries and theories. He began the electrical research that, along with other scientific inquiries, would occupy him for the rest of his life, in between bouts of politics and moneymaking.<sup>[8]</sup>

In 1747, he retired from printing and went into other businesses.<sup>[27]</sup> He created a partnership with his foreman, David Hall, which provided Franklin with half of the shop's profits for 18 years. This lucrative business arrangement provided leisure time for study, and in a few years he had made discoveries that gave him a reputation with educated persons throughout Europe and especially in France.

## Electricity

His discoveries resulted from his investigations of electricity. Franklin proposed that "vitreous" and "resinous" electricity were not different types of "electrical fluid" (as electricity was called then), but the same electrical fluid under different pressures. He was the first to label them as positive and negative respectively,<sup>[28]</sup> and he was the first to discover the principle of conservation of charge.<sup>[29]</sup>

In 1750 he published a proposal for an experiment to prove that lightning is electricity by flying a kite in a storm that appeared capable of becoming a lightning storm. On May 10, 1752 Thomas-François Dalibard of France conducted Franklin's experiment using a 40-foot (12 m)-tall iron rod instead of a kite, and he extracted electrical sparks from a cloud. On June 15 Franklin may possibly have conducted his famous kite experiment in Philadelphia, successfully extracting sparks from a cloud. Franklin's experiment was not written up with credit<sup>[30]</sup> until Joseph Priestley's 1767 *History and Present Status of Electricity*; the evidence shows that Franklin was insulated (not in a conducting path, where he would have been in danger of electrocution). Others, such as Prof. Georg Wilhelm Richmann were indeed electrocuted during the months following Franklin's experiment.

In his writings, Franklin indicates that he was aware of the dangers and offered alternative ways to demonstrate that lightning was electrical, as shown by his use of the concept of electrical ground. If Franklin did perform this experiment, he may not have done it in the way that is often described, flying the kite and waiting to be struck by lightning, as it could have been dangerous.<sup>[31]</sup> Instead he used the kite to collect some electric charge from a storm cloud, which implied that lightning was electrical.

On October 19 in a letter to England explaining directions for repeating the experiment, Franklin wrote:

When rain has wet the kite twine so that it can conduct the electric fire freely, you will find it streams out plentifully from the key at the approach of your knuckle, and with this key a phial, or Leiden jar, maybe charged: and from electric fire thus obtained spirits may be kindled, and all other electric experiments [may be] performed which are usually done by the help of a rubber glass globe or tube; and therefore the sameness of the electrical matter with that of lightening completely demonstrated.<sup>[32]</sup>

Franklin's electrical experiments led to his invention of the lightning rod. He noted that conductors with a sharp rather than a smooth point were capable of discharging silently, and at a far greater distance. He surmised that this knowledge could be of use in protecting buildings from lightning by attaching "upright Rods of Iron, made sharp as a Needle and gilt to prevent Rusting, and from the Foot of those Rods a Wire down the outside of the Building into the Ground;...Would not these pointed Rods probably draw the Electrical Fire silently out of a Cloud before it came nigh enough to strike, and thereby secure us from that most sudden and terrible Mischief!" Following a series of experiments on Franklin's own house, lightning rods were installed on the Academy of Philadelphia (later the University of Pennsylvania) and the Pennsylvania State House (later Independence Hall) in 1752.<sup>[33]</sup>

In recognition of his work with electricity, Franklin received the Royal Society's Copley Medal in 1753 and in 1756 he became one of the few 18th century Americans to be elected as a Fellow of the Society. The cgs unit of electric charge has been named after him: one *franklin* (Fr) is equal to one statcoulomb.

## Wave theory of light

Franklin was, along with his contemporary Leonhard Euler, the only major scientist who supported Christiaan Huygens' wave theory of light, which was basically ignored by the rest of the scientific community. In the 18th century Newton's corpuscular theory was held to be true; only after Young's famous slit experiment (1803) were most scientists persuaded to believe Huygens' theory.<sup>[34]</sup>

## Meteorology

On October 21, 1743, according to popular myth, a storm moving from the southwest denied Franklin the opportunity of witnessing a lunar eclipse. Franklin was said to have noted that the prevailing winds were actually from the northeast, contrary to what he had expected. In correspondence with his brother, Franklin learned that the same storm had not reached Boston until after the eclipse, despite the fact that Boston is to the northeast of Philadelphia. He deduced that storms do not always travel in the direction of the prevailing wind, a concept that greatly influenced meteorology.<sup>[35]</sup>

## Concept of cooling

Franklin noted a principle of refrigeration by observing that on a very hot day, he stayed cooler in a wet shirt in a breeze than he did in a dry one. To understand this phenomenon more clearly Franklin conducted experiments. In 1758 on a warm day in Cambridge, England, Franklin and fellow scientist John Hadley experimented by continually wetting the ball of a mercury thermometer with ether and using bellows to evaporate the ether.<sup>[36]</sup> With each subsequent evaporation, the thermometer read a lower temperature, eventually reaching 7 °F (−14 °C). Another thermometer showed the room temperature to be constant at 65 °F (18 °C). In his letter *Cooling by Evaporation*, Franklin noted that "one may see the possibility of freezing a man to death on a warm summer's day."

## Temperature's effect on electrical conductivity

According to Michael Faraday, Franklin's experiments on the non-conduction of ice are worth mentioning although the law of the general effect of liquefaction on electrolytes is not attributed to Franklin.<sup>[37]</sup> However, as reported in 1836 by Prof. A. D. Bache of the University of Pennsylvania, the law of the effect of heat on the conduction of bodies otherwise non-conductors, for example, glass, could be attributed to Franklin. Franklin writes, "...A certain quantity of heat will make some bodies good conductors, that will not otherwise conduct..." and again, "...And water,



though naturally a good conductor, will not conduct well when frozen into ice."<sup>[38]</sup>

## Oceanography findings

An aging Franklin accumulated all his oceanographic findings in *Maritime Observations*, published by the Philosophical Society's *transactions* in 1786.<sup>[39]</sup> It contained ideas for sea anchors, catamaran hulls, watertight compartments, shipboard lightning rods and a soup bowl designed to stay stable in stormy weather.

## Economics

Benjamin Franklin, in his capacity as a farmer, wrote at least one critique about the negative consequences of price controls, trade restrictions and subsidy of the poor. This is succinctly preserved in his letter to the London Chronicle published November 29, 1766 titled 'On the Price of Corn, and Management of the poor'.<sup>[40]</sup> Economics was only generally recognized as a science with the publishing of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* which was published 9 years later.<sup>[41]</sup>

## Musical endeavors

Franklin is known to have played the violin, the harp, and the guitar. He also composed music, notably a string quartet in early classical style, and invented a much-improved version of the glass armonica, in which the glasses rotate on a shaft, with the player's fingers held steady, instead of the other way around; this version soon found its way to Europe.<sup>[42]</sup>

## Chess

Franklin was an avid chess player. He was playing chess by around 1733, making him the first chess player known by name in the American colonies.<sup>[43]</sup> His essay on the "Morals of Chess" in *Columbian* magazine, in December 1786 is the second known writing on chess in America.<sup>[43]</sup> This essay in praise of chess and prescribing a code of behavior for it has been widely reprinted and translated.<sup>[44][45][46][47]</sup> He and a friend also used chess as a means of learning the Italian language, which both were studying; the winner of each game between them had the right to assign a task, such as parts of the Italian grammar to be learned by heart, to be performed by the loser before their next meeting.<sup>[48]</sup> Franklin was posthumously inducted into the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame in 1999.<sup>[43]</sup>

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## Public life



Benjamin Franklin by Benjamin Wilson, 1759.

In 1736, Franklin created the Union Fire Company, one of the first volunteer firefighting companies in America. In the same year, he printed a new currency for New Jersey based on innovative anti-counterfeiting techniques he had devised. Throughout his career, Franklin was an advocate for paper money, publishing *A Modest Enquiry into the Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency* in 1729, and his printer printed money. He was influential in the more restrained and thus successful monetary experiments in the Middle Colonies, which stopped deflation without causing excessive inflation. In 1766 he made a case for paper money to the British House of Commons.<sup>[49]</sup>

As he matured, Franklin began to concern himself more with public affairs. In 1743, he set forth a scheme for The Academy and College of Philadelphia. He was appointed president of the academy on November 13, 1749, and it opened on August 13, 1751. At its first commencement, on May 17, 1757, seven men graduated; six with a Bachelor of Arts and one as Master of Arts. It was later merged with the University of the State of Pennsylvania to become the University of Pennsylvania.

Franklin became involved in Philadelphia politics and rapidly progressed. In October 1748, he was selected as a councilman, in June 1749 he became a Justice of the Peace for Philadelphia, and in 1751 he was elected to the Pennsylvania Assembly. On August 10, 1753, Franklin was appointed joint deputy postmaster-general of North America. His most notable service in domestic politics was his reform of the postal system, with mail sent out every week.<sup>[8]</sup>

In 1751, Franklin and Dr. Thomas Bond obtained a charter from the Pennsylvania legislature to establish a hospital. Pennsylvania Hospital was the first hospital in what was to become the United States of America.



Pennsylvania Hospital by William Strickland, 1755

In 1753, both Harvard and Yale awarded him honorary degrees.<sup>[50]</sup>

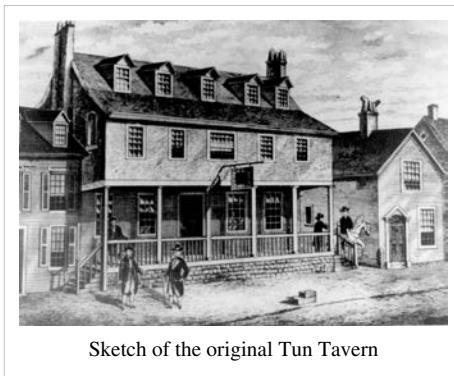
In 1754, he headed the Pennsylvania delegation to the Albany Congress. This meeting of several colonies had been requested by the Board of Trade in England to improve relations with the Indians and defense against the French. Franklin proposed a broad Plan of Union for the colonies. While the plan was not adopted, elements of it found their way into the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution.

In 1756, Franklin organized the Pennsylvania Militia (see "Associated Regiment of Philadelphia" under heading of Pennsylvania's 103rd Artillery and 111th Infantry Regiment at Continental Army). He used Tun Tavern as a gathering place to recruit a regiment of soldiers to go into battle against the Native American uprisings that beset the American colonies. Reportedly Franklin was elected "Colonel" of the Associated Regiment but declined the honor.

Also in 1756, Franklin became a member of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce (now Royal Society of Arts or RSA, which had been founded in 1754), whose early meetings took place in coffee shops in London's Covent Garden district, close to Franklin's main residence in Craven Street.

The Craven street residence is the only of his residences to survive. It opened to the public as the Benjamin Franklin House museum on January 17, 2006.

After his return to America, Franklin became the Society's Corresponding Member and remained closely connected with the Society. The RSA instituted a Benjamin Franklin Medal in 1956 to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Franklin's birth and the 200th anniversary of his membership of the RSA.



Sketch of the original Tun Tavern

In 1757, he was sent to England by the Pennsylvania Assembly as a colonial agent to protest against the political influence of the Penn family, the proprietors of the colony. He remained there for five years, striving to end the proprietors' prerogative to overturn legislation from the elected Assembly, and their exemption from paying taxes on their land. His lack of influential allies in Whitehall led to the failure of this mission.

Whilst in London, Franklin became involved in radical politics. He was a member of the Club of Honest Whigs, alongside thinkers such as Richard Price, the minister of Newington Green Unitarian Church who

ignited the Revolution Controversy. During his stays at Craven Street between 1757 and 1775, Franklin developed a close friendship with his landlady, Margaret Stevenson and her circle of friends and relations, in particular her daughter Mary, who was more often known as Polly.

In 1759, he visited Edinburgh with his son, and recalled his conversations there as "the *densest* happiness of my life".<sup>[51]</sup> In February 1759, the University of St Andrews awarded him an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree and in October of the same year he was granted Freedom of the Borough of St. Andrews.<sup>[52]</sup>

In 1762, Oxford University awarded Franklin an honorary doctorate for his scientific accomplishments and from then on he went by "Doctor Franklin." He also managed to secure a post for his illegitimate son, William Franklin, as Colonial Governor of New Jersey.<sup>[8]</sup>

He also joined the influential Birmingham based Lunar Society with whom he regularly corresponded and on occasion, visited in Birmingham in the West Midlands.

At this time, many members of the Pennsylvania Assembly were feuding with William Penn's heirs, who controlled the colony as proprietors. Franklin led the "anti-proprietary party" in the struggle against the Penn family, and was elected Speaker of the Pennsylvania House in May 1764. His call for a change from proprietary to royal government was a rare political miscalculation, however: Pennsylvanians worried that such a move would endanger their political and religious freedoms. Because of these fears, and because of political attacks on his character, Franklin lost his seat in the October 1764 Assembly elections. The anti-proprietary party dispatched Franklin to England to continue the struggle against the Penn family proprietorship, but during this visit, events would drastically change the nature of his mission.<sup>[53]</sup>



Join, or Die: This political cartoon by Franklin urged the colonies to join together during the French and Indian War (Seven Years' War).

## Europe years

In London, Franklin opposed the 1765 Stamp Act, but when he was unable to prevent its passage, he made another political miscalculation and recommended a friend to the post of stamp distributor for Pennsylvania. Pennsylvanians were outraged, believing that he had supported the measure all along, and threatened to destroy his home in Philadelphia. Franklin soon learned of the extent of colonial resistance to the Stamp Act, and his testimony before the House of Commons led to its repeal. With this, Franklin suddenly emerged as the leading spokesman for American interests in England. He wrote popular essays on behalf of the colonies, and Georgia, New Jersey, and Massachusetts also appointed him as their agent to the Crown.<sup>[53]</sup>

In September 1767, Franklin visited Paris with his usual traveling partner, Sir John Pringle. News of his electrical discoveries was widespread in France. His reputation meant that he was introduced to many influential scientists and politicians, and also to King Louis XV.<sup>[54]</sup>

While living in London in 1768, he developed a phonetic alphabet in *A Scheme for a new Alphabet and a Reformed Mode of Spelling*. This reformed alphabet discarded six letters Franklin regarded as redundant (c, j, q, w, x, and y), and substituted six new letters for sounds he felt lacked letters of their own. His new alphabet, however, never caught on and he eventually lost interest.<sup>[55]</sup>

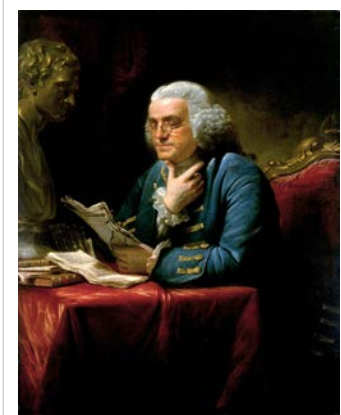
In 1771, Franklin made short journeys through different parts of England, staying with Joseph Priestley at Leeds, Thomas Percival at Manchester and Dr. Darwin at Litchfield.<sup>[56]</sup> Franklin belonged to a gentleman's club (designated "honest Whigs" by Franklin), which held stated meetings, and included members such as Richard Price and Andrew Kippis. He was also a corresponding member of the Lunar Society of Birmingham, which included such other scientific and industrial luminaries as Matthew Boulton, James Watt, Josiah Wedgwood and Erasmus Darwin. He had never been to Ireland before, and met and stayed with

Lord Hillsborough, whom he believed was especially attentive, but of whom he noted that "all the plausible behaviour I have described is meant only, by patting and stroking the horse, to make him more patient, while the reins are drawn tighter, and the spurs set deeper into his sides."<sup>[57]</sup> In Dublin, Franklin was invited to sit with the members of the Irish Parliament rather than in the gallery. He was the first American to be given this honor.<sup>[56]</sup> While touring Ireland, he was moved by the level of poverty he saw. Ireland's economy was affected by the same trade regulations and laws of Britain that governed America. Franklin feared that America could suffer the same effects should Britain's "colonial exploitation" continue.<sup>[58]</sup> In Scotland, he spent five days with Lord Kames near Stirling and stayed for three weeks with David Hume in Edinburgh.

In 1773, Franklin published two of his most celebrated pro-American satirical essays: *Rules by Which a Great Empire May Be Reduced to a Small One*, and *An Edict by the King of Prussia*.<sup>[59]</sup> He also published an *Abridgment of the Book of Common Prayer*, anonymously with Francis Dashwood. Among the unusual features of this work is a funeral service reduced to six minutes in length, "to preserve the health and lives of the living."<sup>[54]</sup>

## Hutchinson letters

Franklin obtained private letters of Massachusetts governor Thomas Hutchinson and lieutenant governor Andrew Oliver that proved they were encouraging London to crack down on the rights of Bostonians. Franklin sent them to America where they escalated the tensions. Franklin now appeared to the British as the fomenter of serious trouble. Hopes for a peaceful solution ended as he was systematically ridiculed and humiliated by Solicitor-General Alexander Wedderburn, before the Privy Council on January 29, 1774.<sup>[60]</sup> He left London in March 1775.<sup>[54]</sup>



Franklin in London, 1767, wearing a blue suit with elaborate gold braid and buttons, a far cry from the simple dress he affected at the French court in later years. Painting by David Martin, displayed in the White House.

## Coming of Revolution

In 1763, soon after Franklin returned to Pennsylvania, the western frontier was engulfed in a bitter war known as Pontiac's Rebellion. The Paxton Boys, a group of settlers convinced that the Pennsylvania government was not doing enough to protect them from American Indian raids, murdered a group of peaceful Susquehannock Indians and then marched on Philadelphia. Franklin helped to organize a local militia to defend the capital against the mob, and then met with the Paxton leaders and persuaded them to disperse. Franklin wrote a scathing attack against the racial prejudice of the Paxton Boys. "If an *Indian* injures me," he asked, "does it follow that I may revenge that Injury on all *Indians*?"<sup>[61]</sup>

## Declaration of Independence

By the time Franklin arrived in Philadelphia on May 5, 1775, the American Revolution had begun with fighting at Lexington and Concord. The New England militia had trapped the main British army in Boston. The Pennsylvania Assembly unanimously chose Franklin as their delegate to the Second Continental Congress. In June 1776, he was appointed a member of the Committee of Five that drafted the Declaration of Independence. Although he was temporarily disabled by gout and unable to attend most meetings of the Committee, Franklin made several small changes to the draft sent to him by Thomas Jefferson.<sup>[54]</sup>



John Trumbull depicts the Committee of Five presenting their work to the Congress.<sup>[62]</sup>

At the signing, he is quoted as having replied to a comment by Hancock that they must all hang together: "Yes, we must, indeed, all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately."<sup>[63]</sup>



## Postmaster



Benjamin FranklinThe first US Benjamin Franklin#Franklin on U.S. Postagepostage stamp, 1847

On July 26, 1775, the Second Continental Congress established the United States Post Office and named Benjamin Franklin as the first United States Postmaster General. Franklin had been a postmaster for decades and was a natural choice for the position.<sup>[64]</sup> Franklin had just returned from England and was appointed chairman of a Committee of Investigation to establish a postal system. The report of the Committee, providing for the appointment of a postmaster general for the 13 American colonies, was considered by the Continental Congress on July 25 and 26. On July 26, 1775, Franklin was appointed Postmaster General, the first appointed under the Continental Congress. It established a postal system that became the United States Post Office, a system that is still in use today.<sup>[65]</sup>

## Ambassador to France: 1776–1785

In December 1776, Franklin was dispatched to France as commissioner for the United States. He lived in a home in the Parisian suburb of Passy, donated by Jacques-Donatien Le Ray de Chaumont who supported the United States. Franklin remained in France until 1785. He conducted the affairs of his country towards the French nation with great success, which included securing a critical military alliance in 1778 and negotiating the Treaty of Paris (1783).

Among his associates in France was Honoré Gabriel Riqueti, comte de Mirabeau—a French Revolutionary writer, orator and statesman who in early 1791 would be elected president of the National Assembly. In July 1784, Franklin met with Mirabeau and contributed anonymous materials Mirabeau used in the first work to which Mirabeau signed his name—*Considerations sur l'ordre de Cincinnatus*.<sup>[67]</sup> The publication was critical of the Society of the Cincinnati, viewed by Franklin and Mirabeau as a “noble order” inconsistent with egalitarian ideals.<sup>[68]</sup>

During his stay in France, Benjamin Franklin was active as a freemason, serving as Grand Master of the Lodge Les Neuf Sœurs from 1779 until 1781. His number was 24 in the Lodge. He was also a Past Grand Master of Pennsylvania. In 1784, when Franz Mesmer began to publicize his theory of “animal magnetism”, which was considered offensive by many, Louis XVI appointed a commission to investigate it. These included the chemist Antoine Lavoisier, the physician Joseph-Ignace Guillotin, the astronomer Jean Sylvain Bailly, and Benjamin Franklin.<sup>[69]</sup>

Franklin also served as American minister to Sweden, although he never visited that country. He negotiated a treaty that was signed in April 1783. On August 27, 1783 in Paris, Franklin witnessed the world's first hydrogen balloon flight.<sup>[70]</sup> *Le Globe*, created by professor Jacques Charles and Les Frères Robert, was watched by a vast crowd as it



Franklin, in his fur hat, charmed the French with what they saw as rustic new world genius.<sup>[66]</sup>

launched from the Champ de Mars (now the site of the Eiffel Tower).<sup>[71]</sup> This so enthused Franklin that he subscribed financially to the next project to build a manned hydrogen balloon.<sup>[72]</sup> On December 1, 1783 Franklin was seated in the special enclosure for honoured guests when *La Charlière* took off from the Jardin des Tuileries, piloted by Jacques Charles and Nicolas-Louis Robert.<sup>[70][73]</sup>

### Constitutional Convention

When he finally returned home in 1785, Franklin occupied a position only second to that of George Washington as the champion of American independence. Le Ray honored him with a commissioned portrait painted by Joseph Duplessis that now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. After his return, Franklin became an abolitionist, freeing both of his slaves. He eventually became president of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society.<sup>[74]</sup>

In 1787, Franklin served as a delegate to the Philadelphia Convention. He held an honorary position and seldom engaged in debate. He is the only Founding Father who is a signatory of all four of the major documents of the founding of the United States: the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Paris, the Treaty of Alliance with France, and the United States Constitution.



*Franklin's return to Philadelphia, 1785, by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris.*

In 1787, a group of prominent ministers in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, proposed the foundation of a new college to be named in Franklin's honor. Franklin donated £200 towards the development of Franklin College, which is now called Franklin & Marshall College.

Between 1771 and 1788, he finished his autobiography. While it was at first addressed to his son, it was later completed for the benefit of mankind at the request of a friend.

In his later years, as Congress was forced to deal with the issue of slavery, Franklin wrote several essays that attempted to convince his readers of the importance of the abolition of slavery and of the integration of blacks into American society. These writings included:

- *An Address to the Public*, (1789)
- *A Plan for Improving the Condition of the Free Blacks* (1789), and
- *Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim on the Slave Trade* (1790).

In 1790, Quakers from New York and Pennsylvania presented their petition for abolition. Their argument against slavery was backed by the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society and its president, Benjamin Franklin.

### President of Pennsylvania

Special balloting conducted October 18, 1785 unanimously elected Franklin the sixth President of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, replacing John Dickinson. The office of President of Pennsylvania was analogous to the modern position of Governor. It is not clear why Dickinson needed to be replaced with less than two weeks remaining before the regular election. Franklin held that office for slightly over three years, longer than any other, and served the Constitutional limit of three full terms. Shortly after his initial election he was reelected to a full term on October 29, 1785, and again in the fall of 1786 and on October 31, 1787. Officially, his term concluded on November 5, 1788, but there is some question regarding the *de facto* end of his term, suggesting that the aging Franklin may not have been actively involved in the day-to-day operation of the Council toward the end of his time in office.

## Virtue, religion, and personal beliefs

Like the other advocates of republicanism, Franklin emphasized that the new republic could survive only if the people were virtuous. All his life he explored the role of civic and personal virtue, as expressed in *Poor Richard's* aphorisms. Franklin felt that organized religion was necessary to keep men good to their fellow men, but rarely attended religious services himself.<sup>[75]</sup> When Franklin met Voltaire in Paris and asked this great apostle of the Enlightenment to bless his grandson, Voltaire said in English, "God and Liberty," and added, "this is the only appropriate benediction for the grandson of Monsieur Franklin."<sup>[76]</sup>

Franklin's parents were both pious Puritans.<sup>[77]</sup> The family attended the old South Church, the most liberal Puritan congregation in Boston, where Benjamin Franklin was baptized in 1706.<sup>[78]</sup> Franklin's father, a poor chandler, owned a copy of a book, *Bonifacius: Essays to Do Good*, by the Puritan preacher and family friend Cotton Mather, which Franklin often cited as a key influence on his life.<sup>[79]</sup> Franklin's first pen name, Silence Dogood, paid homage both to the book and to a famous sermon by Mather. The book preached the importance of forming voluntary associations to benefit society. Franklin learned about forming do-good associations from Cotton Mather, but his organizational skills made him the most influential force in making voluntarism an enduring part of the American ethos.<sup>[80]</sup>

Franklin formulated a presentation of his beliefs and published it in 1728.<sup>[81]</sup> It did not mention many of the Puritan ideas as regards belief in salvation, the divinity of Jesus, and indeed most religious dogma. He clarified himself as a deist in his 1771 autobiography,<sup>[82]</sup> although he still considered himself a Christian.<sup>[83]</sup> He retained a strong faith in a God as the wellspring of morality and goodness in man, and as a Providential actor in history responsible for American independence.<sup>[84]</sup>

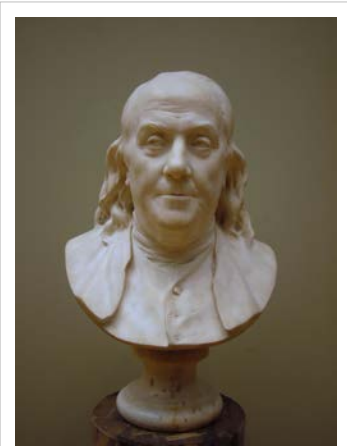
It was Ben Franklin who, at a critical impasse during the Constitutional Convention in June 1787, attempted to introduce the practice of daily common prayer with these words:

... In the beginning of the contest with G. Britain, when we were sensible of danger we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine Protection. — Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a Superintending providence in our favor. ... And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? or do we imagine that we no longer need His assistance. I have lived, Sir, a long time and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth — that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings that "except the Lord build they labor in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel: ...I therefore beg leave to move — that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the Clergy of this City be requested to officiate in that service.<sup>[85]</sup>

However, the motion met with resistance and was never brought to a vote.<sup>[86]</sup>

Franklin was an enthusiastic supporter of the evangelical minister George Whitefield during the First Great Awakening. Franklin did not subscribe to Whitefield's theology, but he admired Whitefield for exhorting people to worship God through good works. Franklin published all of Whitefield's sermons and journals, thereby boosting the Great Awakening.<sup>[87]</sup>

When he stopped attending church, Franklin wrote in his autobiography:



A bust of Franklin by Jean-Antoine Houdon



...Sunday being my studying day, I never was without some religious principles. I never doubted, for instance, the existence of the Deity; that He made the world, and governed it by His providence; that the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man; that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished, and virtue rewarded, either here or hereafter.<sup>[88][89]</sup>

Franklin retained a lifelong commitment to the Puritan virtues and political values he had grown up with, and through his civic work and publishing, he succeeded in passing these values into the American culture permanently. He had a "passion for virtue."<sup>[90]</sup> These Puritan values included his devotion to egalitarianism, education, industry, thrift, honesty, temperance, charity and community spirit.<sup>[91]</sup>

The classical authors read in the Enlightenment period taught an abstract ideal of republican government based on hierarchical social orders of king, aristocracy and commoners. It was widely believed that English liberties relied on their balance of power, but also hierarchal deference to the privileged class.<sup>[92]</sup> "Puritanism ... and the epidemic evangelism of the mid-eighteenth century, had created challenges to the traditional notions of social stratification" by preaching that the Bible taught all men are equal, that the true value of a man lies in his moral behavior, not his class, and that all men can be saved.<sup>[93]</sup> Franklin, steeped in Puritanism and an enthusiastic supporter of the evangelical movement, rejected the salvation dogma, but embraced the radical notion of egalitarian democracy.

Franklin's commitment to teach these values was itself something he gained from his Puritan upbringing, with its stress on "inculcating virtue and character in themselves and their communities."<sup>[94]</sup> These Puritan values and the desire to pass them on, were one of Franklin's quintessentially American characteristics, and helped shape the character of the nation. Franklin's writings on virtue were derided by some European authors, such as Jakob Fugger in his critical work *Portrait of American Culture*. Max Weber considered Franklin's ethical writings a culmination of the Protestant ethic, which ethic created the social conditions necessary for the birth of capitalism.<sup>[95]</sup>

One of Franklin's famous characteristics was his respect, tolerance and promotion of all churches. Referring to his experience in Philadelphia, he wrote in his autobiography, "new Places of worship were continually wanted, and generally erected by voluntary Contribution, my Mite for such purpose, whatever might be the Sect, was never refused."<sup>[88]</sup> "He helped create a new type of nation that would draw strength from its religious pluralism."<sup>[96]</sup> The first generation of Puritans had been intolerant of dissent, but by the early 18th century, when Franklin grew up in the Puritan church, tolerance of different churches was the norm, and Massachusetts was known, in John Adams' words, as "the most mild and equitable establishment of religion that was known in the world."<sup>[97]</sup> The evangelical revivalists who were active mid-century, such as Franklin's friend and preacher, George Whitefield, were the greatest advocates of religious freedom, "claiming liberty of conscience to be an 'inalienable right of every rational creature.'"<sup>[98]</sup> Whitefield's supporters in Philadelphia, including Franklin, erected "a large, new hall, that...could provide a pulpit to anyone of any belief."<sup>[99]</sup> Franklin's rejection of dogma and doctrine and his stress on the God of ethics and morality and civic virtue, made him the "prophet of tolerance."<sup>[100]</sup> While he was living in London in 1774, he was present at the birth of British Unitarianism, attending the inaugural session of the Essex Street Chapel, at which Theophilus Lindsey drew together the first avowedly Unitarian congregation in England; this was somewhat politically risky, and pushed religious tolerance to new boundaries, as a denial of the doctrine of the Trinity was illegal until the 1813 Act.<sup>[101]</sup>

Although Franklin's parents had intended for him to have a career in the Church,<sup>[7]</sup> Franklin as a young man adopted the Enlightenment religious belief in deism, that God's truths can be found entirely through nature and reason.<sup>[102]</sup> "I soon became a thorough Deist."<sup>[103]</sup> As a young man he rejected Christian dogma in a 1725 pamphlet *A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain*,<sup>[104]</sup> which he later saw as an embarrassment,<sup>[105]</sup> while simultaneously asserting that God is "all wise, all good, all powerful."<sup>[105]</sup> He defended his rejection of religious dogma with these words: "I think opinions should be judged by their influences and effects; and if a man holds none that tend to make him less virtuous or more vicious, it may be concluded that he holds none that are dangerous, which I hope is the case with me." After the disillusioning experience of seeing the decay in his own moral standards, and those of two friends in London whom he had converted to Deism, Franklin turned back to a belief in the importance of organized

religion, on the pragmatic grounds that without God and organized churches, man will not be good.<sup>[106]</sup> Moreover, because of his proposal that prayers be said in the Constitutional Convention of 1787, many have contended that in his later life, Franklin became a pious Christian.<sup>[107][108]</sup>

At one point, he wrote to Thomas Paine, criticizing his manuscript, *The Age of Reason*:

For without the Belief of a Providence that takes Cognizance of, guards and guides and may favour particular Persons, there is no Motive to Worship a Deity, to fear its Displeasure, or to pray for its Protection....think how great a Proportion of Mankind consists of weak and ignorant Men and Women, and of inexperience'd and inconsiderate Youth of both Sexes, who have need of the Motives of Religion to restrain them from Vice, to support their Virtue, and retain them in the Practice of it till it becomes habitual, which is the great Point for its Security; And perhaps you are indebted to her originally that is to your Religious Education, for the Habits of Virtue upon which you now justly value yourself. If men are so wicked with religion, what would they be if without it.<sup>[109]</sup>

According to David Morgan,<sup>[110]</sup> Franklin was a proponent of religion in general. He prayed to "*Powerful Goodness*" and referred to God as "the infinite". John Adams noted that Franklin was a mirror in which people saw their own religion: "The Catholics thought him almost a Catholic. The Church of England claimed him as one of them. The Presbyterians thought him half a Presbyterian, and the Friends believed him a wet Quaker." Whatever else Franklin was, concludes Morgan, "he was a true champion of generic religion." In a letter to Richard Price, Franklin stated that he believed that religion should support itself without help from the government, claiming; "When a Religion is good, I conceive that it will support itself; and, when it cannot support itself, and God does not take care to support, so that its Professors are oblig'd to call for the help of the Civil Power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one."<sup>[111]</sup>

In 1790, just about a month before he died, Franklin wrote a letter to Ezra Stiles, president of Yale University, who had asked him his views on religion:

As to Jesus of Nazareth, my Opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think the System of Morals and his Religion, as he left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is likely to see; but I apprehend it has received various corrupt changes, and I have, with most of the present Dissenters in England, some Doubts as to his divinity; tho' it is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it, and I think it needless to busy myself with it now, when I expect soon an Opportunity of knowing the Truth with less Trouble....<sup>[8]</sup>

On July 4, 1776, Congress appointed a three-member committee composed of Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams to design the Great Seal of the United States. Franklin's proposal (which was not adopted) featured the motto: "Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God" and a scene from the Book of Exodus, with Moses, the Israelites, the pillar of fire, and George III depicted as pharaoh. The design that was produced was never acted upon by Congress and the Great Seal's design was not finalized until a third committee was appointed in 1782.<sup>[112][113]</sup>

## Thirteen Virtues

Franklin sought to cultivate his character by a plan of 13 virtues, which he developed at age 20 (in 1726) and continued to practice in some form for the rest of his life. His autobiography lists his 13 virtues as:

1. "Temperance. Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation."
2. "Silence. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation."
3. "Order. Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time."
4. "Resolution. Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve."
5. "Frugality. Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing."
6. "Industry. Lose no time; be always employ'd in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions."
7. "Sincerity. Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly."
8. "Justice. Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty."
9. "Moderation. Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve."
10. "Cleanliness. Tolerate no uncleanness in body, cloaths, or habitation."
11. "Tranquility. Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable."
12. "Chastity. Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation."
13. "Humility. Imitate Jesus and Socrates."

Franklin did not try to work on them all at once. Instead, he would work on one and only one each week "leaving all others to their ordinary chance". While Franklin did not live completely by his virtues and by his own admission, he fell short of them many times, he believed the attempt made him a better man contributing greatly to his success and happiness, which is why in his autobiography, he devoted more pages to this plan than to any other single point; in his autobiography Franklin wrote, "I hope, therefore, that some of my descendants may follow the example and reap the benefit."<sup>[114]</sup>



Franklin bust in the Archives Department of Columbia University in New York City

## Franklin on U.S. Postage

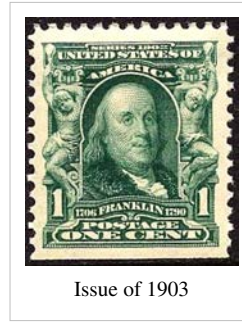
Benjamin Franklin is a prominent figure in American history comparable to Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln and as such he has been honored on US Postage stamps many times. The image of Franklin, the first Postmaster General of the United States, occurs on the face of U.S. Postage more than any other notable American, save that of George Washington.<sup>[115]</sup> Franklin appeared on the first U.S. postage stamp (displayed above) issued in 1847. From 1908 through 1923 the U.S. Post Office issued a series of postage stamps commonly referred to as the Washington-Franklin Issues where, along with George Washington, Franklin was depicted many times over a 14-year period, the longest run of any one series in US postal history. Along with the regular issue stamps Franklin however only appears on a few commemorative stamps. Some of the finest portrayals of Franklin on record can be found on the engravings inscribed on the face of US postage.<sup>[115]</sup>



Issue of 1861



Issue of 1895



Issue of 1903



Issue of 1918

## Death and legacy

Franklin died on April 17, 1790, at age 84. Approximately 20,000 people attended his funeral. He was interred in Christ Church Burial Ground in Philadelphia. In 1728, aged 22, Franklin wrote what he hoped would be his own epitaph:

The Body of B. Franklin Printer; Like the Cover of an old Book, Its Contents torn out, And stript of its Lettering and Gilding, Lies here, Food for Worms. But the Work shall not be wholly lost: For it will, as he believ'd, appear once more, In a new & more perfect Edition, Corrected and Amended By the Author.<sup>[116]</sup>

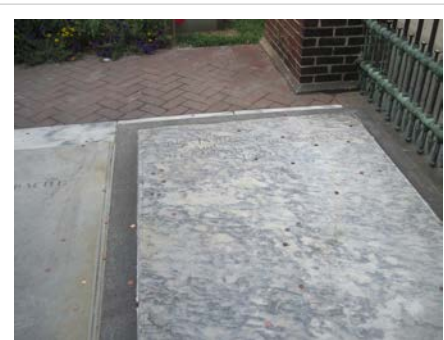
Franklin's actual grave, however, as he specified in his final will, simply reads "Benjamin and Deborah Franklin."<sup>[117]</sup>

In 1773, when Franklin's work had moved from printing to science and politics, he corresponded with a French scientist, Jacques Barbeu-Dubourg, on the subject of preserving the dead for later revival by more advanced scientific methods, writing:

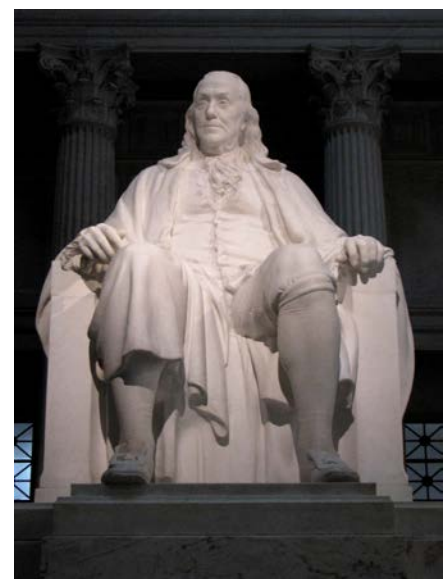
I should prefer to an ordinary death, being immersed with a few friends in a cask of Madeira, until that time, then to be recalled to life by the solar warmth of my dear country! But in all probability, we live in a century too little advanced, and too near the infancy of science, to see such an art brought in our time to its perfection.<sup>[118]</sup> (Extended excerpt also online.)<sup>[119]</sup>

His death is described in the book *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*, quoting from the account of Dr. John Jones:

...when the pain and difficulty of breathing entirely left him, and his family were flattering themselves with the hopes of his recovery, when an imposthume, which had formed itself in his lungs, suddenly burst, and discharged a quantity of matter, which he continued to throw up while he had power; but, as that failed, the organs of respiration became gradually oppressed; a calm, lethargic state



The grave of Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Memorial marble statue, Benjamin Franklin National Memorial

succeeded; and on the 17th instant (April 1790), about eleven o'clock at night, he quietly expired, closing a long and useful life of eighty-four years and three months.<sup>[120]</sup>

A signer of both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, Franklin is considered one of the Founding Fathers of the U.S. His pervasive influence in the early history of the United States has led to his being jocularly called "the only President of the United States who was never President of the United States."<sup>[121]</sup> Franklin's likeness is ubiquitous. Since 1928, it has adorned American \$100 bills, which are sometimes referred to in slang as "Benjamins" or "Franklins." From 1948 to 1963, Franklin's portrait was on the half dollar. He has appeared on a \$50 bill and on several varieties of the \$100 bill from 1914 and 1918. Franklin appears on the \$1,000 Series EE Savings bond. The city of Philadelphia contains around 5,000 likenesses of Benjamin Franklin, about half of which are located on the University of Pennsylvania campus. Philadelphia's Benjamin Franklin Parkway (a major thoroughfare) and Benjamin Franklin Bridge (the first major bridge to connect Philadelphia with New Jersey) are named in his honor.

In 1976, as part of a bicentennial celebration, Congress dedicated a 20-foot (6 m) marble statue in Philadelphia's Franklin Institute as the Benjamin Franklin National Memorial. Many of Franklin's personal possessions are also on display at the Institute, one of the few national memorials located on private property.

In London, his house at 36 Craven Street was first marked with a blue plaque and has since been opened to the public as the Benjamin Franklin House.<sup>[122]</sup> In 1998, workmen restoring the building dug up the remains of six children and four adults hidden below the home. *The Times* reported on February 11, 1998:

Initial estimates are that the bones are about 200 years old and were buried at the time Franklin was living in the house, which was his home from 1757 to 1762 and from 1764 to 1775. Most of the bones show signs of having been dissected, sawn or cut. One skull has been drilled with several holes. Paul Knapman, the Westminster Coroner, said yesterday: "I cannot totally discount the possibility of a crime. There is still a possibility that I may have to hold an inquest."

The Friends of Benjamin Franklin House (the organization responsible for the restoration) note that the bones were likely placed there by William Hewson, who lived in the house for two years and who had built a small anatomy school at the back of the house. They note that while Franklin likely knew what Hewson was doing, he probably did not participate in any dissections because he was much more of a physicist than a medical man.<sup>[123]</sup>



Franklin on the Series 1996 hundred dollar bill



Franklin on the Series 2011 hundred dollar bill



A commemorative stamp of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics issued in honor of Benjamin Franklin's contributions to politics and science on the 250th anniversary of his birth in 1956

## Bequest

Franklin bequeathed £1,000 (about \$4,400 at the time, or about \$55,000 in 2010 dollars) each to the cities of Boston and Philadelphia, in trust to gather interest for 200 years. The trust began in 1785 when the French mathematician Charles-Joseph Mathon de la Cour, who admired Franklin greatly, wrote a friendly parody of Franklin's "Poor Richard's Almanack" called "Fortunate Richard." The main character leaves a smallish amount of money in his will, five lots of 100 *livres*, to collect interest over one, two, three, four or five full centuries, with the resulting astronomical sums to be spent on impossibly elaborate utopian projects.<sup>[124]</sup> Franklin, who was 79 years old at the time, wrote thanking him for a great idea and telling him that he had decided to leave a bequest of 1,000 pounds each to his native Boston and his adopted Philadelphia. As of 1990, more than \$2,000,000 had accumulated in Franklin's Philadelphia trust, which had loaned the money to local residents. From 1940 to 1990, the money was used mostly for mortgage loans. When the trust came due, Philadelphia decided to spend it on scholarships for local high school students. Franklin's Boston trust fund accumulated almost \$5,000,000 during that same time; at the end of its first 100 years a portion was allocated to help establish a trade school that became the Franklin Institute of Boston and the whole fund was later dedicated to supporting this institute.<sup>[125][126]</sup>

## Exhibitions

"The Princess and the Patriot: Ekaterina Dashkova, Benjamin Franklin and the Age of Enlightenment" exhibition opened in Philadelphia in February 2006 and ran through December 2006. Benjamin Franklin and Dashkova met only once, in Paris in 1781. Franklin was 75 and Dashkova was 37. Franklin invited Dashkova to become the first woman to join the American Philosophical Society and the only woman to be so honored for another 80 years. Later, Dashkova reciprocated by making him the first American member of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

## Places and things named after Benjamin Franklin

Further information: List of places named for Benjamin Franklin

As a founding father of the United States, Franklin's name has been attached to many things. Among these are:

- The State of Franklin, a short-lived independent state formed during the American Revolutionary War
- Counties in at least 16 U.S. States
- The city of Franklin, the parish seat of St. Mary Parish in south Louisiana
- Several major landmarks in and around Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Franklin's long time home, including:
  - Franklin and Marshall College in nearby Lancaster
  - Franklin Field, a football field once home to the Philadelphia Eagles of the National Football League and the home field of the University of Pennsylvania Quakers since 1895
  - The Benjamin Franklin Bridge across the Delaware River between Philadelphia and Camden, New Jersey
  - The Franklin Institute, a science museum in Philadelphia, which presents the Benjamin Franklin Medal
- The Sons of Ben soccer supporters club for the Philadelphia Union
- Ben Franklin Stores chain of variety stores, with a key-and-spark logo
- Franklin Templeton Investments an investment firm whose New York Stock Exchange ticker abbreviation, BEN, is also in honor of Franklin
- The Ben Franklin effect from the field of psychology
- Benjamin Franklin Shibe, baseball executive and namesake of the longtime Philadelphia baseball stadium
- Benjamin Franklin "Hawkeye" Pierce, the fictional character from the M\*A\*S\*H novels, film, and television program
- Benjamin Franklin Gates, Nicolas Cage's character from the National Treasure films.
- Several US Navy ships have been named the *USS Franklin* or the *USS Bonhomme Richard*, the latter being a French translation of his penname "Poor Richard". Two aircraft carriers, USS Franklin (CV-13) and USS Bonhomme Richard (CV-31) were simultaneously in commission and in operation during World War II, and



Franklin therefore had the distinction of having two simultaneously operational US Navy warships named in his honor.

- *Franklinia alatamaha*, commonly called the Franklin tree. It was named after him by his friends and fellow Philadelphians, botanists James and William Bartram.

## Ancestors of Benjamin Franklin

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