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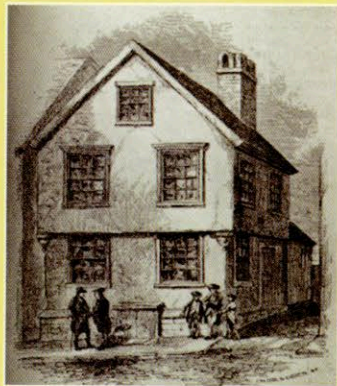


## The Life of Benjamin Franklin

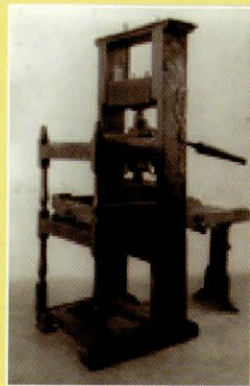
★ *Founding Father* ★



## Benjamin Franklin: Biography



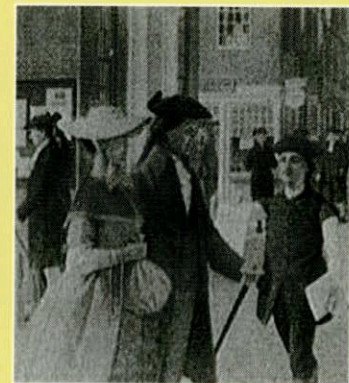
Benjamin Franklin Birthplace site,  
17 Milk St., Suffolk County, MA,  
HABA, MASS, 13-BOST, 103-\*



Franklin's printing press in the  
Division of Graphic Arts,  
Smithsonian Institution,  
LS-USZ62-90299\*



Franklin the printer, LC-D419-176\*\*



Young Franklin selling his ballads in the  
street, LC-D419-170\*\*

***“Our new constitution is now established, and has an appearance that promises permanency; but in this world nothing ca***

Benjamin Franklin, known as one of our Founding Fathers, was born in Boston Massachusetts on January 17 to Abiah Folger and Josiah Franklin, a homemaker and a tradesman. Franklin, the eighth child of ten to Abiah, also shared his life with seven other siblings from his father's first wife Anne, who died from childbirth complications. Franklin's father had clergy aspirations for young Franklin and enrolled him in a grammar school at the age of eight. However, although savvy in reading and writing, Franklin had troubles grasping arithmetic and as a result was removed from the school. With his future as a minister dependent on an education, he was now without a learned trade, so he helped in his father's soap and candle making business before gaining work in 1718 as an apprentice in his elder brother's print shop at the age of 12. Franklin's father had Franklin sign a contract that committed him to work for his brother for the next nine years.

During the time he worked for his brother, he was motivated by aspirations of becoming a writer and wrote stories in his brother's newspaper, the New England Courant. Worried that his brother would not publish his works, he adopted the pseudonym 'Silence Dogwood' and slipped the stories underneath the door of his brother's print shop. At the age of sixteen, his stories were published and received wide acclaim. After, his brother discovered him to be 'Silence Dogwood' their relations became strained, thus young Benjamin left Boston and his apprenticeship in September 1723.

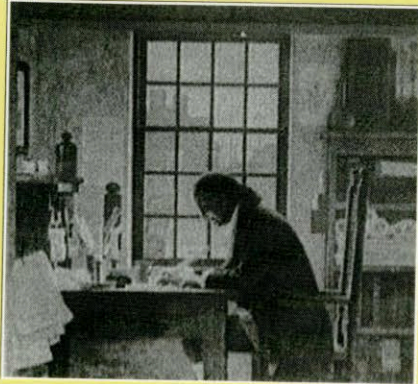
Stopping first in New York, he soon departed once he learned that no printing positions were available and headed for Philadelphia, where he gained a job as a journeyman printer in the shop of Samuel Keimer—one of two printers in Philadelphia. He stayed at a boardinghouse next door to the shop and met his future wife, Deborah Read, who was the innkeeper's daughter. Shortly after gaining employment, Franklin's family wrote to request that he return home to Boston. Franklin wrote back stating his aspirations and intentions to stay in Philadelphia. Franklin's brother-in-law, showed the letter Franklin had written to a friend, Governor Keith of Pennsylvania, who was impressed with Franklin's intelligence and mastery of words. The Governor met with Franklin and asked him to create another printing business in Philadelphia, promising him the printing of all official government documents. Not having the capital to start the business, 18-year old Franklin returned home with a letter from the Governor stating the situation. Upon his father's refusal to help with funding the printing shop, Governor Keith told Franklin that he would provide him with the funds to establish a printing business.

Upon the insistence of the Governor, nineteen year-old Franklin traveled to London to establish business connections and purchase press, types and other equipment. However, once Franklin arrived in London the Governor did not provide letters of recommendation or funds as promised, with the reason and explanation unbeknownst to Franklin. Despite the circumstance, he found work at Samuel Palmer's printing office where he worked until gaining employment with Watt's, a famous printer at the time.

\*Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

\*\* Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Company Collection





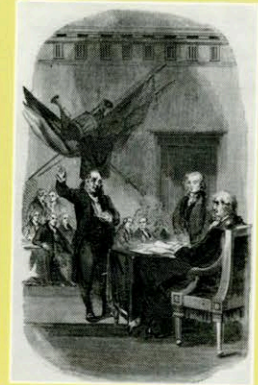
Franklin, editor and writer, LC-D419-169\*\*



Franklin's experiment with the kite,  
LC-D419-175\*\*



Franklin writing the Declaration of  
Independence, 1776,  
LC-USZC4-9904\*



Franklin at the National  
Convention, LC-USZ6-1737\*

*n be said to be certain, except death and taxes." - Benjamin Franklin*

While working in London he took advantage of the liberal nature of society, and published a pamphlet in which he refuted the tenets of *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, by William Wollaston and asserted the existence of fate and the nonexistence of free will. Franklin lived and worked in London during a time that experienced violent brutalities and murders that had come with the end of the King George I reign. Despite the violent nature of the time, he remained in London for two years before returning to Philadelphia. On July 23, 1726 Franklin departed London with his wife.

On July 23, 1726 Franklin departed London with limited funds, to return to the colonies of America. Arriving in Philadelphia on October 11, 1726, Franklin began his one-year tenure as a salesman at Thomas Denham's shop, a store that sold imported goods from England. A short time after, both Franklin and Denham contracted deadly diseases—Franklin, contracting pleurisy, recovered, while Denham, not as fortunate, passed away. Unemployed, Franklin returned to work for Keimer as the print shop manager, training the inexperienced workers. While employed with Keimer, Franklin aided in the design of the first paper bills created in the colonies and constructed the first copper plate press in America. After verbal disputes with Keimer over pay, Franklin left and opened his own printing business in partnership with Hugh Meredith, using the capital of Hugh's father in 1726. A year later, Franklin started a formal discussion group with 12 of his acquaintances that met on Friday evenings to discuss political, religious and business matters. The group called themselves the Junto, and the organization lasted approximately forty years. Franklin's printing business venture turned out to be a

success and he later purchased the rights to the failing weekly paper of his old boss Keimer, renaming it The Pennsylvania Gazette in 1729, eventually putting his former employer out of business. He also became the sole owner of the print shop, purchasing the entire share of Hugh Meredith, who Franklin never saw as contributing much to the business. During this time, Franklin formulated a quest for moral perfection, creating a list of four resolutions to follow—frugality, honesty, sincerity, and diligence—which he later formulated into a list of thirteen virtues, practicing one per week for thirteen weeks and then repeating the cycle.

In 1930, Franklin's romantic fairs resulted in accepting Deborah Read as his common-law wife, when he fathered an illegitimate son, William. The identity of Williams mother remains unknown; some have claimed her to be either a servant in Franklin's house or Deborah Read. Before he had departed for London at age 19, he had promised Deborah Read his hand in marriage upon his return. Thus, four years after returning to Philadelphia, Franklin declared Deborah Read his common-law wife. Deborah assisted Franklin in his print shop, cleaning and stitching the papers and also operated a general store out in front of the print shop. The two shared the birth of two children—son Francis and daughter Sarah. Because she feared ocean voyages, she and Franklin would spend most of their married years apart.

In the early to mid 1700's Franklin made several contributions to the Philadelphia community, founding and establishing: the first subscription library, the first volunteer



firefighter club, the first public hospital, the first street cleaner, the first fire insurance company, the first postal systems, the Pennsylvania Academy and College (now known as the University of Pennsylvania), a Pennsylvania militia, and a bill that eventually led to municipal police forces controlled by a city government. During this time, Franklin also published *Poor Richard's Almanack*, as a tool for educating the public. During the 1730's Franklin lost his four-year old son Francis to small pox and his brother James to a terminal illness. Upon his brother's death, Franklin took his ten-year old nephew in his care. Amongst his losses, in 1736, he was elected clerk of the state legislature and appointed as post-master the following year.

Twelve years later, in 1748, Franklin's success in the printing business, afforded him an early retirement to pursue his interest in science and politics. The years that follow are filled with many inventions: the Franklin stove, to improve heating and reduce fire hazards in Philadelphia, the lightning rod to prove that lightning was naturally-occurring electricity that could be drawn from the clouds, bifocals to overcome his combined myopia (nearsightedness) and hyperopia (farsightedness), a catheter to treat his ill brother, a glass Armonica (made a profound influence on classical music), as a means to refine and enjoy his fondness of playing musical instruments, and an odometer to help measure mileage and determine the best mail routes in Philadelphia. In 1752, he conducted his famous kite experiment with his son William. He constructed the kite with a sharp metallic wire on top, and tied a key at the end of the string with a silk ribbon. He flew the kite on a stormy day and when lightning struck the kite, electricity streamed down toward the key. His experiments on electricity gained him international acclaim. Franklin also coined the electrical terms: battery, positive/negative, and charge. Aside from studying electricity, Franklin also studied weather, formulating models to describe the progression of weather systems, studied medicine, formulating theories on human circulation, and studied agriculture, formulating ways to improve agriculture techniques.

Franklin also became involved in colonial politics, serving in the Pennsylvania Legislature. During his tenure in the legislature, he took an active political role in the French and Indian War, creating the Albany Plan of Union that detailed the financing of an army through levying taxes—rejected by the colonial assemblies—and lobbied for the protection of innocent Native Americans—rejected by the heirs of William Penn (ruled the colony of Pennsylvania). During the war, Franklin also took an active military role, assisting General Braddock with military advice and supplies (arranged the Pennsylvania farmers to supply their wagons to the army in exchange for money). Franklin also commanded a volunteer militia of the northwestern frontier in the war against French Canada, and oversaw the construction of a wooden fort, before he was then called to serve as a statesman to London in 1757 to negotiate with the proprietors of Pennsylvania. Unsuccessful in his negotiations, Franklin returned from London in 1762. Upon his return, he was elected into the Pennsylvania legislature and gained appointment as Deputy Postmaster General of North America. As postmaster, Franklin improved mail services and established 24-hour service between Boston, New York and Philadelphia. Franklin later served as Speaker of the Pennsylvania legislature before he departed for England to spearhead the petition to have the King of England take control of the Pennsylvania government and overrule William Penn's heirs. Unsuccessful in his

attempts to oust the rule of Penn's heirs, he stayed in England for ten years serving as a colonial representative in England, serving the colonies best interest and protesting the Stamp Act of 1765. While in England, Franklin was charged in 1773 with stealing and publishing Massachusetts Governor Hutchinson's confidential government letters as a ploy to become the next Governor of Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> The British government was outraged and brought sixty-eight year old Franklin before the Lord's Committee of His Majesty's Privy Council for Plantation Affairs, for which he was required to stand for an hour and a half in Parliament to face his allegations. Franklin's reputation damaged, he was dismissed as postmaster general of the colonies. Another unfortunate occurrence followed the next year, when he lost his wife, who he had not seen in over 10 years, to a stroke. Thus, with his wife's death and his disgrace before Parliament, he headed back to the colonies in 1775, which was the beginning of the Revolutionary War. Upon his arrival in Philadelphia, he was chosen as a delegate in the Second Continental Congress. At the assembly in July of 1775, Franklin presented Congress with the first written plan for a new national government, the "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union." During this time, Franklin once again served as postmaster of the colonies, and also chaired the Committee of Safety—organizing, and training a militia to resist the British forces. On July 2, 1776 Franklin served on a committee with Jefferson and Adams to formulate the Declaration of Independence, offering a few alterations to Jefferson's final draft. When Britain refused to adhere to The Declaration of Independence, a five-year battle amongst the colonies and England endured, and Franklin traveled abroad in attempt to gain militant and financial support from France. As Ambassador to France, Franklin signed the Treaty of Alliance with France in 1778 that pledged France's monetary and military support and was one of five American representatives at the peace conference that resulted in the formation of the Treaty of Paris of 1783. After nine years as Ambassador to France, Franklin requested leave from his diplomatic duties in order to return home to the colonies. Thomas Jefferson was appointed in his place, and Franklin returned to Pennsylvania, where he was elected President of Pennsylvania. In 1787, Franklin engaged in his last political endeavor as a Pennsylvania delegate at the Constitutional Convention that formed a new government under a Constitution. In his last years, Franklin supported the abolition of slavery, although once a slave owner, as he realized that it was morally wrong. Franklin left his autobiography with one of his last visitors, Thomas Jefferson, and passed away at the age of 84 on April 17, 1790. Over twenty thousand people attended Franklin's funeral on April 21. Franklin willed £1000 in trust for 200 years to Boston and Philadelphia; during which the cities used it for loan programs to residents and mortgage loans from 1940-1990. Upon the trust's maturation, Philadelphia used the money for scholarships for local highschool students and establish a trade school, the Franklin Institute of Boston. Benjamin Franklin continues to be respected as a founding father of the United States of America. Throughout his life he served as a scientist, inventor, author, publisher, journalist, diplomat, public servant, printer, abolitionist, philanthropist and economist.

<sup>1</sup>Hutchinson Letters Affair: Began in December 1772 when Franklin anonymously received a packet of letters that were written to the British government by Massachusetts Governor Thomas Hutchinson. In the letters, Hutchinson denounced colonial liberties and urged Britain to send troops to fight the American rebels in Boston. Franklin made his American friends and colleagues aware of the situation and allowed them to read the letters on the condition that they not be circulated or published. However, the letters were published in 1773 in the Boston Gazette. Angry citizens of Boston forced Hutchinson to flee to England. The British government demanded to know who leaked the letters and in December of 1773, three innocent men were accused. In order to protect them, Ben admitted his guilt.

<sup>2</sup>An assembly of political leaders met to discuss the colonies wish for independence from Britain



## *Benjamin Franklin: His Thirteen Virtues & Inventions*

### *The 13 Virtues*

**Temperance**—moderation in food and drink

**Silence**—mention only important matters

**Order**—proper organization of time and space

**Resolution**—accomplishing one's responsibilities

**Frugality**—purchasing only worthwhile items and wasting nothing

**Industry**—making the most of one's time and energy

**Sincerity**—being honest and forth right

**Justice**—practicing impartiality and refusing to wrong others

**Moderation**—avoiding extremes

**Cleanliness**—using good hygiene under sanitary conditions

**Tranquility**—remaining calm and composed despite life's obstacles

**Chastity**—refusing to allow sex to interfere with one's life

**Humility**—avoiding excess pride and haughtiness

### *Inventions*

- ❖ Bifocals
- ❖ Catheter
- ❖ Franklin Stove
- ❖ Glass Armonica
- ❖ Lightning Rod
- ❖ Odometer

## *Benjamin Franklin: Personal Trivia*

**Birth Name:** Benjamin Franklin **Birth Date:** January 17, 1706 **Birthplace:** Boston,

Massachusetts **Hometown:** Philadelphia **Parents:** Abiah Folger and Josiah Franklin

**Nickname(s):** Founding Father **Education:** Self taught, less than 2 years of formal education; Honorary degrees from the University of St. Andrews, Cambridge, Oxford, and the

University of Edinburgh **Career and Public Service:** Clerk of the State Legislature;

Postmaster of Philadelphia; Deputy Postmaster General; Representative of the Pennsylvania Assembly; Second Continental Congress delegate; Speaker of the Pennsylvania Legislature;

Committee of Secret Correspondence; Minister to France; President of Pennsylvania **Married:**

1730 **Wife:** Deborah Read Rogers **Children:** William, Francis Folger, and Sarah (Sally)

**Religion:** Deism **Publications:** Poor Richard: An Almanack; Experiments and Observations on Electricity; Way to Wealth

### *Key Establishments*

- ❖ Proved the existence of electricity
- ❖ First to propose the idea of Daylight Savings Time
- ❖ Only founding father in the Swimming Hall of Fame
- ❖ Established first subscription library
- ❖ Helped found the first public hospital in America (Pennsylvania Hospital)
- ❖ Organized the first volunteer fire fighting club in 1736
- ❖ Developed America's first fire insurance company in 1752
- ❖ Established postal systems that are the foundation of today's U.S. Postal Service
- ❖ Constructed the first copper plate press for printing paper currency
- ❖ One of the first to chart the Gulf Stream
- ❖ Credited with creating first political cartoon
- ❖ Helped found the Pennsylvania Academy and College in 1743
- ❖ Helped organize a Pennsylvania militia in 1747
- ❖ Negotiated and signed a Treaty of Alliance between France and the United States in 1778
- ❖ Signed the Treaty of Paris, which ended the war with England



- ❖ Co-authored the first treaty of friendship between Germany and America in 1783
- ❖ Negotiated the first treaty of commerce between Sweden and the United States
- ❖ President of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery

## *Interesting Facts*

- ❖ Taught self to swim and contemplated becoming a swim instructor
- ❖ Experimented with vegetarianism to save money to buy more books
- ❖ Crossed the Atlantic 8 times
- ❖ Spent 27 years abroad
- ❖ Learned French late in his life
- ❖ An early proponent of physical fitness
- ❖ Advocated the advantages of fruit in maintaining healthy skin and gums; coined phrase: "An apple a day keeps the doctor away."
- ❖ Portrait adorns the \$100 bill and the half dollar from 1948-1964
- ❖ Helped establish a printer who founded the Montreal Gazette<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ Owned 2,000 acres in Nova Scotia, an Eastern province of Canada
- ❖ Published a pamphlet in 1760 titled "The Interest of Great Britain Considered with Regard to her Colonies and Acquisitions of Canada and Guadeloupe," which argued for the strategic importance of England maintaining possession of Canada
- ❖ Published the first German-American newspaper, the Philadelphische Zeitung
- ❖ Published the first German hymnbook printed in America
- ❖ Wanted to live in England, but his wife Deborah refused to cross the Atlantic Ocean
- ❖ France was the site of the first experiments proving Franklin's theories of electricity
- ❖ Swedish scientist G. Wilhelm Richmann was killed by lightning in St. Petersburg while trying to duplicate Franklin's experiments with lightning in 1753
- ❖ Franklin knew Chinese silkworms could produce fabric without using many resources
- ❖ Introduced Scotch kale, Chinese silk and rhubarb, and Swiss barley to the colonies
- ❖ Member of the Freemasons
- ❖ Wrote his own epitaph at age 21
- ❖ Wanted the turkey vs. the eagle as the emblem for the new American nation

<sup>3</sup>The oldest continuously published newspaper in North America

## *Honors/Awards*

- ❖ Awarded the prestigious Copley Medal by the British Royal Society 1753
- ❖ Inducted into the Royal Society in London as well as the Royal Society of Arts 1756
- ❖ Elected to the Royal Society of Edinburgh as an honorary fellow in 1783
- ❖ Elected to the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg
- ❖ Honorary degrees from the University of St. Andrews, Cambridge, Oxford, and the University of Edinburgh
- ❖ Member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh 1783
- ❖ Honored by the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society 1785
- ❖ Honored by the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh in 1759
- ❖ Received honors from the Medical Society of London 1785
- ❖ Received honors and memberships from a number of Italian and French societies
- ❖ After death in 1790, the French National Assembly declared a national month of mourning in respect for the man that they called "the genius who Freed America and shed torrents of light upon Europe."
- ❖ College founded in 1787 in his name: Franklin College<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Now known as Franklin and Marshall College



## Benjamin Franklin: Timeline

**1706**

Born in Boston, Massachusetts on January 17

**1718**

Began apprenticeship in his brother James' printing shop in Boston

**1723**

Age 17, left his family in Boston and moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**1727**

Franklin's "Leather Apron Club" (Junio)

**1729**

**1717**

Invented swimming fins

**1722**

Wrote Silence Dogwood Letters

**1726**

Returned to Philadelphia  
Created a virtue book of self-improvement (13 virtues)

**1728**

Opened his own Printing

**1724**

Moved to London, continuing his training as a printer

\*Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

\*\* Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Company Collection

<sup>1</sup>Originally called the "Leather Apron Club" it became known as the Junto—a club for business, friendship and conversation. Lasted 30 years.

o) formed<sup>1</sup>

urchased the Pennsylvania Gazette with a partner

**1731**

Son William born  
Found the first circulating Library

**1732**

Son Francis born  
Published the annual Poor Richard: An Almanack

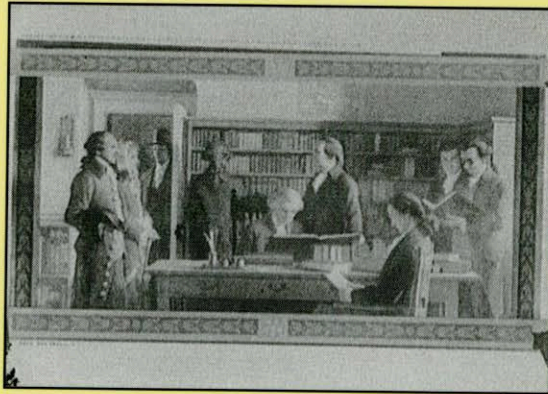
**1736**

Son Francis died  
Found the Union Fire Company in Philadelphia<sup>2</sup>

**1740**

Officia

Office in Philadelphia



Franklin opening first subscription library in Philadelphia,  
LS-D418-28058\*\*

**1730**

Became sole owner and publisher of the Pennsylvania Gazette  
Married Deborah Read Rogers

**1733**

Brother, James died and took his 10 year old nephew under his care

**1737**

Appointed Postmaster of Philad

<sup>2</sup>First volunteer firefighting organization



**1744**

Published the "Pennsylvania Fire-Place"<sup>5</sup> pamphlet to sell the stove design he created

**1745**

Death of his father, Josiah Franklin

**1750**

Invented the Lighting Rod

**1750-1764**

Served on the Pennsylvania Assembly

**1751**

Published his book  
and Observation  
London  
Help found the Pe  
(the first public h

**1748**

Retired from printing business and made David Hall a partner in the business<sup>7</sup>  
Purchased a farm near Burlington, New Jersey<sup>8</sup>

**1747**

First writings of electrical experimentation  
Organized the first militia<sup>6</sup>

**1743**

Daughter Sarah born (also known as "Sally")  
Correctly theorized that the direction of the prevailing wind is not necessarily the direction of the storm's movement<sup>3</sup>  
Drafted a proposal for the formation of an academy<sup>4</sup>

**1752**

Kite experimen  
existence of  
Mother died Aug  
Found first Ar

<sup>3</sup>First known instance in which the movement of a storm system as a whole was recognized

<sup>4</sup>Opened in 1751 and became known as the University of Pennsylvania

<sup>5</sup>A few design flaws were corrected by a later inventor and the improved design of the "Franklin stove" is still used today

<sup>6</sup>Proposed the formation of a Philadelphia militia in a pamphlet called "Plain Truth"

<sup>7</sup>Printing business and profits from his Poor Richard's Almanack gave him the financial freedom to pursue scientific experiments

<sup>8</sup>Intended to live full time, but returned to Philadelphia after a few months



**1753**

Appointed Deputy Postmaster General<sup>9</sup>  
Awarded Copley Medal<sup>10</sup>

Experiments  
on Electricity in

(Pennsylvania Hospital  
first hospital in America)

**1758-1770**

Way to Wealth published  
Invented the glass armonica<sup>12</sup>  
Traveled to London & France  
Elected member to Royal Society of Sciences  
Elected president of the American Philosophical Society  
Appointed agent for Massachusetts

**1754**

Proposed Albany Plan<sup>11</sup>

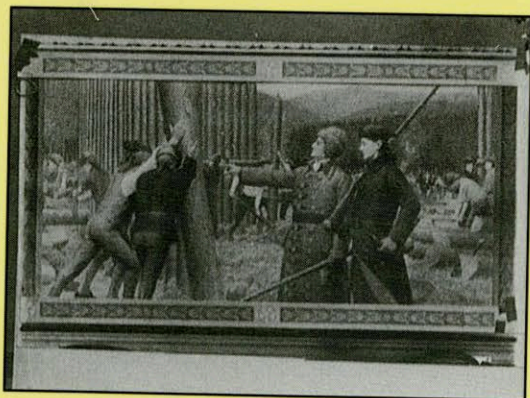
**1774**

The Hutchinson Letters Affair damaged Franklin's Reputation  
Privy Council Hearings  
Wife died while in London

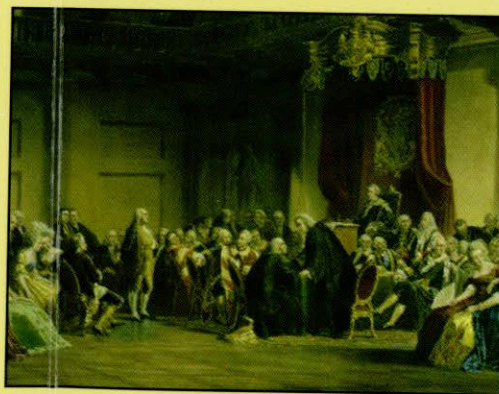
**1775**

Returned to Philadelphia  
Appointed to the Committee of Secret Correspondence<sup>13</sup>  
of the Continental Congress  
Submitted Articles of Confederation of United Colonies

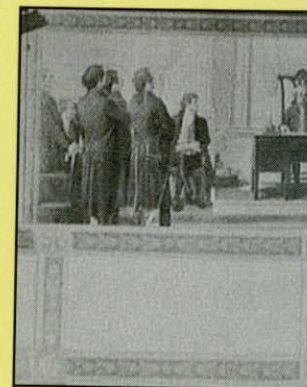
**1778-1782**



Franklin directing building of stockade fort, LCFF-D419-182\*\*



Franklin standing before the Lords in Council, presenting concerns of the American colonists, Whitehall Chapel, London, LC-USZC4-5296\*



Franklin signing the Declaration of Independence

**1757-1770**

Served as a representative of the Pennsylvania Assembly in Britain  
Petitioned the King of England for the right of colonies to levy taxes on proprietary lands

**1776**

Signed the Declaration of Independence  
Presided at Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention  
Sailed to France as American Commissioner

<sup>9</sup>Held until 1774 when the Crown dismissed him for his political beliefs

<sup>10</sup>Highest award from the Royal Society of London (equivalent of today's Nobel Prize)

<sup>11</sup>Plan for uniting the colonies into a confederation for mutual protection under a 'grand council'

<sup>12</sup>Mozart and Beethoven composed music specifically for Franklin's instrument

<sup>13</sup>Mozart and Beethoven composed music specifically for Franklin's instrument

<sup>14</sup>Colonies first foreign intelligence operation



negotiated and signed Treaty of Alliance with France  
 appointed Minister to France  
 negotiated the Treaty of Peace with Great Britain with John Adams and John Jay

**1790**

Died at age 84 in Philadelphia on April 17

**1783**

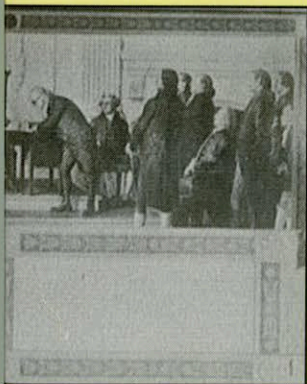
Watched the Montgolfier brothers become the first men to fly in a balloon in Paris

**1787**

President of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery<sup>14</sup>  
 Served as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention

**1784**

Negotiated treaties with Prussia and other European countries  
 Disproved Viennese physician Mesmer's claim of 'animal magnetism'  
 Invented bifocals while living in Paris



Independence, LC-D416-28060\*\*

**1785**

Returned to Philadelphia and Served as President of Pennsylvania



Franklin's tomb, LC-D4-33869\*\*

nce  
 nal Convention  
 issioner

<sup>14</sup>One of the first abolitionist organizations