

# Benjamin Franklin: Portrait of a Caring Man

(1706 - 1790)

Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1706. When he was 17 he moved to Philadelphia. By that time, he spent a lot of his time reading and writing. As an accomplished author, philanthropist, inventor, political leader, Philosopher, diplomat, scientist and printer, he was respected by many people.

Benjamin Franklin had many talents and interests. He was always thinking and asking questions about life and the world around him. Franklin wanted to help people and his community. He felt that people had certain rights and that those rights should be respected.

Franklin also believed that there should be a strong federal government. In 1775 he was one of the members of the Continental Congress. This was the first organized governmental body of the Thirteen Original Colonies. The Declaration of Independence was written by Benjamin Franklin and many other important men at this meeting.

Mr. Franklin was a very successful businessman also. He owned his own printing business and general store. **He used his printing press to print his famous book Poor Richard's Almanack (sic).** Many of the lessons that he learned throughout his life he included in this book.

Franklin continually worked on improving himself. He also felt that it was important to improve the lives of others and help care for them. He was the first person to organized fund raising events to raise money to help those in need. Franklin gave a lot of his own money to many worldwide causes.

As an inventor, he was constantly trying to make life a little easier for people. Some of the things that he invented were a stove that could be used for cooking and heating at the same time, bifocal glasses and the lightening rod.

Franklin held many public offices throughout his life. One of his most famous jobs he held was Deputy Postmaster General for the colonies. Our present day postal system dates back to the colonial days. The duties of the Postmaster General included seeing that the postal system ran smoothly. This is still true today over 200 years later.

Even though Mr. Franklin owned two slaves, he eventually set them free because he realized that no one should own another person. When he freed his slaves, he became an abolitionist. An abolitionist is someone who supports getting rid of something that is bad or wrong. He became president of an abolitionist group that fought against slavery.

When he died in 1790, over 20,000 people attended his funeral.



### Some Examples from Poor Richard's Almanack

- "Doing nothing for others is the undoing of ourselves."
- "A good example is the best sermon."
- When asked what was the best way to get ahead in the world, he said,  
"The nearest way to come to glory, is to do that for conscience which we would do for glory."
- Franklin said that the noblest question in the world was:  
"What good may I do in it?"
- The importance of caring and public service runs throughout his work.  
"Sell not virtue to purchase wealth nor Liberty to purchase power,"  
"The poor have little, beggars none, the rich too much, enough not one,"  
"To bear other people's afflictions, every one has courage enough, and to spare."

