



Ben Franklin



Born in Boston in 1706, the fifteenth child of a candlemaker, Benjamin Franklin became a well-known printer in Philadelphia and an active leader in the city. He published Poor Richard's Almanac between 1732 and 1758 and his autobiography in 1818. Through these he gained literary distinction. In the almanac, he shared bits of wisdom with readers and pithy sayings which helped shape the American character. He founded the first privately supported circulating library in America, in Philadelphia. Franklin was a member of the committee which wrote the Declaration of Independence, but spent most of the period of the American Revolution in France. He represented the colonies as the American envoy starting in Paris which ended the war. He also participated in the U.S. Constitutional Convention in 1787, and earned distinction as the oldest delegate in attendance. Franklin's many talents earned him a reputation as "the first civilized American." In addition to his political activities, he supported education and was considered a gifted scientist without peer in the colonies. He proved that lightning was a form of electricity, a discovery that earned him international fame. He also invented bifocal glasses, lightning rods, and the Franklin stove. Franklin formed Junto, or The Leather Apron Society, in 1727, an organization of people of varied backgrounds and skills who came together regularly to discuss issues of the day, needs of the community, and plans to improve the community. Modern day Junto clubs still exist in the U.S.

He helped shape communities by enlightening community members on many different issues through his almanacs and printings, and through his inventions that improved the quality of life for many. Helping write the Declaration of Independence and Constitution, Franklin set in motion ideas that affect communities by shaping the ideas they are built on. As Postmaster, he put in place the Post Roads to improve communication. With his fire brigades and lending libraries, he shaped attitudes of communities as places where people work together for the safety, security, and betterment of the whole community.

