The Ann Arbor District Library is pleased to present a special exhibit:
Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World

Wednesday, May 4 – Friday, July 8, 2011
Downtown Library
Multi-Purpose Room & 3rd Floor
343 S. Fifth Avenue, Ann Arbor

Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World was organized by the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary, Philadelphia, and the American Library Association Public Programs Office. The traveling exhibition for libraries has been made possible by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: great ideas brought to life.

The traveling exhibition is based on a major exhibition of the same name mounted by the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Franklin’s birth. The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary is a nonprofit organization established through a major grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts to educate the public about Franklin’s enduring legacy.

For more information, visit: aadl.org/Ben

Exhibit Panel Number One

Scientist, inventor, diplomat, philanthropist, entrepreneur and printer, Benjamin Franklin was one of the most remarkable Americans of any generation. Franklin was drawn to reading, writing and—most famously—printing, in order to communicate his ideas and to influence those around him. He is perhaps best known to Americans through the clever maxims in his Poor Richard’s Almanack. In the very first edition of the Almanack in 1733, Franklin appears to have predicted the path of his life and diplomatic career when he wrote, “A fine genius in his own country, is like gold in the mine.”

This exhibit reveals Franklin’s world on both sides of the Atlantic. An “American original,” Franklin had an extraordinarily accomplished life which, like gold taken from the mine, was valued and appreciated both at home and abroad. Travel with him from his humble family home in Boston to the
lofty political, social and scientific circles of 18th century London and Paris, and you will come to understand how important Franklin was in helping to shape the history of the United States and the identity and character of the American people.

**Portrait of Benjamin Franklin, 1738–1746**
Robert Feke
Harvard University Portrait Collection, Cambridge, MA
Bequest of Dr. John Collins Warren, 1856
Descended in the family of John Franklin
Photo by Katya Kallsen

Widely accepted as the earliest known likeness of Benjamin Franklin, this portrait has occasionally been thought to have been of his brother John, since it descended in John’s family. Robert Feke—a painter who worked in Boston, Philadelphia, and cities in between—portrayed Franklin as a well-to-do gentleman in a traditional pose. While the portrait was being done, Franklin was probably approaching retirement from his printing business, by which time he had already acquired an ample fortune.

**Poor Richard, 1733**
Philadelphia: Printed and sold by B. Franklin, [1732]
Rosenbach Museum & Library, Philadelphia
Photo by Peter Harholdt

Benjamin Franklin made his living as a printer until he retired in 1748 to devote his life to politics and scientific research. Among his successful printing ventures in 18th century Philadelphia were a newspaper, books, and many pamphlets and broadsides. Late in 1732, he published the first in a series of almanacs titled *Poor Richard’s Almanack*. Entertaining prefaces and revised and improved proverbs made Franklin’s almanacs different from others on the market. “I endeavored to make it both entertaining and useful,” Franklin said. *Poor Richard’s Almanack* was one of the most widely circulated English language periodicals of the 18th century.

**Top Portion of a Lightning Rod, ca. 1756**
Designed by Benjamin Franklin
The Frankliniana Collection
Curious about a wide range of subjects, Franklin was highly regarded in America and abroad for his investigations into various scientific phenomena. In 1746, he began experimenting with static electricity, encouraged by developments in Europe. Over the course of several years, Franklin and his colleagues discovered that sharp-pointed metal placed high on a building or ship and grounded with copper wire, could effectively draw out of storm clouds electrical charges that might otherwise have caused damage or injury below. This lightning rod, from the Wister house on High Street (now Market Street), in Philadelphia, is believed to be one of the earliest lightning rods erected by Franklin.

*I have sometimes almost wished it had been my Destiny to be born two or three Centuries hence. For Inventions and Improvement are prolific, and beget more of their Kind. The present Progress is rapid. Many of great Importance, now unthought of, will before that Period be procur’d; and then I might not only enjoy their Advantages, but have my Curiosity satisfy’d in knowing what they are to be.—*Benjamin Franklin to the Reverend John Lathrop, 1788

**Seal of the Library Company, 1731–1733**

Philip Syng, Jr.
Library Company of Philadelphia
Photo by Peter Harholdt

Franklin and his colleagues in the Junto Society founded the Library Company of Philadelphia in 1731 as a place where citizens could improve themselves through self-education. This subscription library was the first of numerous civic enhancements Franklin initiated throughout his life. He went on to organize the first firefighting brigade in the city, the colonies’ first successful property insurance company, and “The American Society for Promoting and Propagating Useful Knowledge,” which became the American Philosophical Society. Franklin’s dual goals of establishing a college and a hospital were realized with the founding of the Philadelphia Academy, later the University of Pennsylvania, in 1751, and the Pennsylvania Hospital in 1752.
This was one of Benjamin Franklin’s favorite likenesses, commissioned by a friend from Chamberlin, a leading British portraitist. It shows Franklin as the world first knew him: the man who tamed lightning. His fame as a scientist provided an introduction to individuals and groups in England and France who were essential to the success of his diplomatic missions there.

Chart of virtues: “Temperance”
Based on an illustration from the manuscript of Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography, 1771–1789
The Huntington Library, San Marino, California

As a young man, Benjamin Franklin began a “bold and arduous Project of arriving at moral Perfection.” He drew up a list of 13 virtues, and made “a little book in which I allotted a Page for each of the Virtues.” Franklin devoted a week to practicing each virtue and marked every lapse with a black spot. On this page from his autobiography is an example of his chart for the virtue of “Temperance.” It shows that Franklin succeeded with his chosen virtue that week, but had a good deal of trouble with “Silence” and “Order.” The other virtues he valued were Resolution, Frugality, Industry, Sincerity, Justice, Moderation, Cleanliness, Tranquility, Chastity and Humility. To be humble, he advised, “Imitate Jesus and Socrates.”

Glass Armonica (English), 1761–1762
Built by Charles James; owned by Benjamin Franklin
The Frankliniana Collection, The Franklin Institute, Inc., Philadelphia
Descended in the family of William Bache
Photo by Peter Harholdt

Benjamin Franklin’s inquisitive mind, commitment to furthering the common good, and lifelong interest in science and practical solutions to problems, led
him to discoveries in areas as diverse as electricity, health and medicine, oceanography and geology. He once chased a dust-devil for miles on horseback to learn more about its characteristics. Among his many inventions were swimming paddles, a flexible catheter and bifocal lenses. Franklin loved music and singing; his own favorite invention was an adaptation of musical water glasses called the glass armonica, which produced sounds when moistened fingers touched the rims of glass bowls. Mozart, among others, composed music for the armonica.

Constitution of the United States
[Philadelphia: Dunlap and Claypoole, 1787]
Printed, with Benjamin Franklin’s handwritten annotations
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia
Owned by Benjamin Franklin
Photo by Frank Margeson

Benjamin Franklin was a master diplomat and negotiator who rarely misstepped in his dealings with national leaders and foreign governments. Franklin was older than most of the other Founders, and was the only person to have signed five of America’s key founding documents: the Albany Plan of Union (1754), the Declaration of Independence (1776), the Treaties of Amity and Commerce with France (1778), the Treaty of Paris (1783) and the U.S. Constitution (1787). This illustration shows the first printing of the Constitution as adopted by the Constitutional Convention, with Franklin’s handwritten notes in the margins.

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.

Benjamin Franklin’s Epitaph, n.d.
Yale University Library
New Haven

Exhibit Panel Number Two

Character Matters
Born in 1706 into a large family of Boston tradesmen, Benjamin Franklin learned early that hard work, thrift, integrity and self-discipline were important personal virtues. Though Franklin attended school for only two years, he turned to books for reference, self-education, and delight. He was well-read in the religious and moral teachings of Boston’s Puritan leadership, and as a young boy, he worked hard to perfect his writing style, often imitating the essays of renowned authors.

At the age of 12, Benjamin was apprenticed to his older brother James, a printer. Franklin learned the trade easily and well, but he chafed at the restraints imposed upon him by the apprenticeship. Brilliant, ambitious and independent, he ran away from Boston when he was only 17. He traveled first to New York, but finding no work there, he continued on to Philadelphia.

After arriving in Philadelphia in 1723, Franklin worked to establish himself as a printer. Over the next 25 years, he expanded his network of personal friends and business connections both in the colonies and in England and became a prominent citizen. In addition to printing, Franklin and his wife, Deborah, sold stationery and dry goods from their shop, which was located near the corner of Second and Market Streets in Philadelphia.

Being ignorant is not so much a Shame, as being unwilling to learn.—Poor Richard’s Almanack, 1755
Seeking Opportunity
In Benjamin Franklin’s time, apprenticeships were the common method by which a young man learned a trade. Fathers most often paid to have their sons apprenticed, and the more lucrative the trade, the higher the fee. Upon completion of an apprenticeship—which generally lasted until the age of 21—a worker was free to move to wherever there was business. Given the small population of the colonies, markets for skilled labor were limited, and movement between cities was common. Franklin’s talent and ambition made his printing apprenticeship with his brother James difficult. Looking back, in his autobiography, Franklin admitted that he had been a sometimes “saucy and provoking” boy. Rather than finish his contract, he ran away from Boston to look for a city in which his talent might flourish. On September 23, 1723, he sailed secretly for New York, looking for work with a local printer. Finding no position, but advised there might be work in Philadelphia, he traveled to that city.

The New-England Courant, No. 43, May 21–28, 1722
Boston: James Franklin, 1722
New York State Library Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany
Photo courtesy of New York State Library Manuscripts and Special Collections

The New-England Courant, published by Benjamin Franklin’s brother, James Franklin, was the second newspaper to appear in America. Besides news, it contained essays on controversial subjects by local writers. It often offended authorities, and James spent time in jail because of it. In this issue from May 1722, a writer named “Silence Dogood” coyly suggests that if women are seen as idle and ignorant it is because men have kept them from learning. “Silence Dogood,” supposedly the middle-aged widow of a country minister, was in fact a persona adopted by sixteen-year-old Benjamin Franklin to criticize authorities and propose projects to “do good” for society.

A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty
Anthony Collins
London: R. Robinson, 1717
Library Company of Philadelphia
Benjamin Franklin was an enthusiastic reader even as a small boy: “From a Child I was fond of Reading and all the little Money that came into my Hands was ever laid out in Books.” Franklin also enjoyed borrowing books, which he was “careful to return soon and clean.” He read John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Plutarch’s *Lives*, the philosophical works of John Locke, and Anthony Collins’s *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty*, all of which informed his thinking for years to come.

**Magic Squares**
In school, Franklin had “twice fail’d” mathematics, but as a young man he enjoyed “magic squares” — brainteasers in which every horizontal, vertical, and diagonal row adds up to the same number. He later built them to pass the time while listening to debates in the Pennsylvania Assembly, creating squares of 8 by 8, 16 by 16, and even a magic circle. Franklin admitted that he had dabbled in the construction of these puzzles at a point when he ought to have been “employed more usefully.” Today, playing magic square games is making a strong comeback; one variation is known by its Japanese name, sudoku.

**Printer**
Within just a few years of arriving in Philadelphia, Franklin had established his own shop, printing jobs for many customers and publishing his newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, and *Poor Richard’s Almanack*. Franklin was honest and hard-working, and his growing reputation soon attracted customers away from rival printers. To expand, Franklin set up several of his former apprentices—for a share of their profits—with printing equipment and capital, enabling them to start their own businesses elsewhere in the colonies.

Although Franklin spent the second half of his life as a diplomat and gentleman of leisure, he remained proud of his roots as a tradesman. For Franklin, “leisure” meant the freedom to pursue his many other interests, a freedom bought by years of devotion to the craft of printing. Perhaps this is why, of all his many accomplishments, he most wished to be remembered as “B. Franklin, Printer.”
This is the oldest surviving painting of a North American urban center. While it distorts a few of the buildings, the scene represents what Benjamin Franklin may have seen when he first arrived in Philadelphia in 1723.

**M.T. Cicero's *Cato Major***
Translated by James Logan
Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin, 1744
Rosenbach Museum & Library, Philadelphia
Photo by Peter Harholdt

Franklin printed this book at his own expense to flatter James Logan, William Penn’s secretary and one of Pennsylvania’s most powerful and learned men. *Cato Major* is considered to be the finest example of Franklin’s printing.

**Ink Balls, ca 1740**
The Frankliniana Collection, The Franklin Institute, Inc., Philadelphia
Owned by Benjamin Franklin; descended in the Bache family
Photo by Peter Harholdt

With an ink ball in each hand, a printer picked up the sticky ink from an ink stone and then applied it to metal type with a dabbing, rolling, and beating motion before the press was pulled to make a print. These ink balls, made of wood, wool and sheepskin, belonged to Franklin.

L’Operation de la casse (*Composing Room*)

**In Denis Diderot et al., *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences,des arts et des métiers*, 1761–89**

Library Company of Philadelphia
The printer/compositor second from the left in this illustration is using ink balls to apply ink to metal type before a print is pulled. Benjamin Franklin’s printing workshop would have been outfitted in a similar manner.

Publisher
Franklin also achieved financial success as a publisher, and it is through his publishing activities that he gained early fame. He lured customers away from his rivals by spicing up the content of his newspaper and almanacs. He used his press to initiate debates that kept readers coming back for more. However, Franklin allowed no libel or personal abuse in his publications, avowing “that having contracted with my Subscribers to furnish them with what might be either useful or entertaining, I could not fill their papers with private Altercation…without doing them manifest Injustice.”

The Pennsylvania Gazette, no. 422, January 6-13, 1736/37
Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin, 1736/37
Rare Book & Manuscript Library
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
Photo by Peter Harholdt

Owned, edited, and printed by Franklin from 1729 to 1748, The Pennsylvania Gazette was known for its humor, originality and strong influence on public opinion. It was the centerpiece of Franklin’s printing business and the key to his success.

Poor Richard improved…, 1757
Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin, [1757]
The Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

This was the last Poor Richard's Almanack written by Franklin. It featured “Father Abraham’s Speech,” which was later published as The Way to
Wealth. Franklin wove many of the best aphorisms from the previous 25 years of Poor Richard into the work, among them “But dost thou love Life, then do not squander Time, for that’s the stuff Life is made of.”

Deputy Postmaster
Appointed joint deputy postmaster for the colonies in 1753, Franklin worked with William Hunter and then John Foxcroft to modernize and improve the colonial postal system. Having personally inspected many of the post offices, Franklin helped plot the best postal routes, introduce home delivery, improve postal accounting procedures, create a dead-letter office, and accept customer credit. During his tenure, the colonial postal system turned a profit for the first time.

Post-Master’s Bill, ca. 1745
Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia

Franklin devised a number of ways to make the post office more efficient. He designed and printed this form to help standardize and improve the postal accounting system.

Odometer or Wayweiser
(American or French), ca. 1763
The Frankliniana Collection, The Franklin Institute, Inc., Philadelphia
Owned by Benjamin Franklin
Photo by Peter Harholdt

Franklin is often credited with inventing the odometer, but similar devices had already been used by carriage drivers in England and France to determine fares. This odometer may have been of Franklin’s design; it appears to have been created by an American clockmaker. Fitted to the wheel of his carriage during his inspection of post offices in 1763, the odometer registered 1,600 miles.
Franklin’s relationship with his common-law wife, Deborah, was affectionate and loyal, if not particularly romantic. Deborah was involved in all aspects of the family’s business, managing the Franklins’ printing and stationery shop and all its accounts. She raised their children William, Francis, and Sally in a crowded home typical of 18th-century artisans. Deborah and her husband lived apart for long periods of time when he was overseas on diplomatic assignments. He was absent from Philadelphia for a total of 30 years.

Although William was Franklin’s illegitimate son, Deborah brought him up as part of the family. Francis, their first child together, contracted smallpox as a toddler and died, which caused his parents deep and lasting grief. Their youngest child, Sally, was only 14 when Franklin was dispatched to London by the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1757, but she adored him and looked after him when he returned to Philadelphia as an old man. She bore all but one of the Franklins’ eight grandchildren; their other grandchild was William’s son. Franklin’s grandsons occasionally accompanied him on his diplomatic travels.

**Portrait of Deborah Read Franklin, 1758–1759**
Benjamin Wilson, after an unknown American artist
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia

Deborah Read Franklin (1708–1774) was Benjamin Franklin’s common-law wife for 44 years, beginning in 1730. She died while her husband was living in London, negotiating with the British government on behalf of the colonies. This portrait hung in Franklin’s London apartments. Franklin once sent Deborah an English beer jug with this message: "I fell in Love with it at first Sight for I thought it look'd like a fat jolly Dame, clean and tidy, with a neat blue and white Calico Gown on, good natur'd and lovely, and put me in mind of—Somebody."

**Portrait of William Franklin, ca. 1790**
Mather Brown
Private Collection

William Franklin (1730–1814) received the finest education available in Philadelphia and traveled extensively at home and abroad with his father.
Aided by his father’s reputation and power, he rose to become the last colonial governor of New Jersey. Much to the dismay of the elder Franklin, William remained loyal to Britain during the Revolutionary War. In 1782, he left for England with other loyalists, never to return.

Portrait of Francis “Franky” Folger Franklin, ca. 1736
Samuel Johnson
Private Collection

Francis Folger Franklin (1732–1736) died of smallpox at the age of four. This posthumous portrait of him (probably based on Benjamin Franklin’s own image) was considered a family treasure. After "Franky's" death, his grieving father urged Philadelphians to inoculate their children against this dread disease. Franklin’s endorsement of inoculation helped save many lives.

Portrait of Sarah “Sally” Franklin Bache, 1813
Rembrandt Peale, after John Hopper
Private Collection

Sally Franklin (1743–1808) married Richard Bache in 1767; they had eight children, one of whom died in infancy. Sally was her father’s housekeeper after her mother died; she became Franklin’s hostess and caregiver when he returned from France in 1785. At that time, they all lived in the house Benjamin Franklin and Deborah had built in Philadelphia 20 years earlier.

Exhibit Panel Number Three

Civic Visions
Even as a young tradesman, Benjamin Franklin sought to better himself and his community. He organized the Leather Apron Club, later called the Junto—a small group of fellow tradesmen and artisans committed to mutual improvement. At their weekly meetings they asked how they “may be serviceable to mankind? to their country, to their friends, or to themselves?” Their answer was found in the Junto’s actions. Franklin and his colleagues helped establish a lending library, firefighting brigade, university, learned society, militia, hospital, and insurance company. By the time of Franklin’s
death, Philadelphia had become a leading social, cultural and political center, called “The Athens of the Western World” by some.

Franklin’s lifelong efforts to improve himself and the world around him stemmed from the same ambition and intellectual energy he had demonstrated as a printer and as a young boy. His commitment to public service also built upon his sociable nature: Franklin was a true philanthropist. He believed that society’s many challenges required mutual action, collaboration, and generosity. These qualities, for Franklin, defined citizenship—in the colonies and in the young republic.

_The noblest Question in the World is What Good may I do in it?_—Poor Richard’s Almanack, 1737

**Improving the Self**  
Benjamin Franklin placed great value on self-improvement. He believed that integrity and moral responsibility were the backbone of a successful life and a strong community. A lifelong learner, Franklin taught himself to read French, German, Italian, and Spanish, on top of the Latin he had learned as a child. To help others educate themselves, he and his fellow Junto members founded the Library Company of Philadelphia, America’s first subscription library, and the University of Pennsylvania, America’s first nonsectarian college. Franklin believed that, above all, education should be useful, with an emphasis on character, hard work, and bodily and spiritual health.

_“Lion’s Mouth” Box, ca. 1750_  
Library Company of Philadelphia

The breadth of the collection of books at the Library Company of Philadelphia was unique compared to the college libraries of the day, which focused on theology. Library Company books were selected by the readers themselves, reflecting their own interests and aspirations. They inserted their suggestions for books through the “Lion’s Mouth.”

**James Morris's Receipt for his “Partnership” in the Library Company**  
Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin, 1732  
Library Company of Philadelphia
For an initial payment of 40 shillings and an annual renewal fee of 10 more, subscribers could borrow books from the Library Company; subscription fees were used to buy more books. Since working people at the time often earned only 10 shillings per week, Franklin could find no more than “Fifty Persons, mostly young Tradesmen, willing to pay down for this purpose.” Within 10 years, however, the number of subscribers had doubled and book holdings had increased from 40 to nearly 400.

The Philadelphia Academy
Benjamin Franklin’s self-education and his lifelong religious tolerance led him to challenge the classical and theological approach to learning which was dominant in the eighteenth century. Soon after his retirement from the printing business in 1748, he helped found the Philadelphia Academy, which later became the University of Pennsylvania, America’s first non-sectarian university. Unlike Harvard and Yale, the school was not intended to educate children of the elite and train new ministers. Rather, it was to be a progressive institution based in the liberal arts, serving diverse classes and religious groups, and encouraging a public-spirited curiosity in its students.

Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania
Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin, 1749
Library Company of Philadelphia
Photo by Peter Harholdt

Franklin wrote this pamphlet in support of establishing Philadelphia’s first academy of higher learning, wherein he declared that “the great Aim and End of all learning” is “to serve Mankind, one’s Country, Friends and Family.” He specified who should attend and what should be taught, supporting his arguments with lengthy quotations from John Locke, John Milton and other theorists. Additionally, Franklin set forth in this work his recommendations for students about diet, regular exercise, and the benefits of swimming.

Protecting the Citizens
Within just a few years, Franklin, with a group of like-minded citizens, helped found the Pennsylvania Hospital, America’s first public hospital; the
Union Fire Company, Philadelphia’s first volunteer fire brigade; and the Philadelphia Contributionship, America’s first property insurance company.

No useful project to improve the community was too small for Franklin’s attention, from inventing a new street lamp that was easier to repair and clean, to designing his Pennsylvanian fire-place, which was meant to conserve fuel and prevent tragic house fires. He knew well that a fire could threaten a whole Philadelphia neighborhood with destruction.

Franklin’s enduring concern for the general welfare of his fellow citizens was reflected in such diverse activities as his campaign to improve urban sanitation, as well as the formation of an all-volunteer militia to defend against the threat of war with France and its Native American allies.

*The Good particular Men may do separately . . . is small, compared with what they may do collectively.*—Benjamin Franklin, “Appeal for the Hospital,” 1751

**Draft of the Cornerstone Inscription for the Pennsylvania Hospital, 1755**
Benjamin Franklin
Pennsylvania Hospital Historic Collections, Philadelphia
Photo by Peter Harholdt

The cornerstone for the Pennsylvania Hospital, designed by Benjamin Franklin, was laid in 1755. The draft wording for the inscription is in Franklin’s hand. It reads, in part, “In the Year of Christ, 1755; George the second happily reigning (For he sought the Happiness of his People) Philadelphia flourishing (For its inhabitants were publick-spirited), This Building, By the Bounty of the Government And of many private Persons, Was piously founded, For the Relief of the Sick and Miserable.” Patients were first admitted to the hospital in 1756.

**A South-East Prospect of the Pennsylvania Hospital, 1761**
Drawn by Montgomery and Winter, engraved by Steeper & Dawkins
Jay T. Snider Collection, Philadelphia
The brick building of the Pennsylvania Hospital, completed in 1755, still stands today on its original site at 8th and Pine Streets in Philadelphia. This engraving was made to stimulate public interest and was sold to raise funds for building the hospital.

**Front plate of Pennsylvanian Fire-place, ca. 1760**
John Bartram Association Collection, Bartram’s Garden, Philadelphia

The Pennsylvanian Fire-Place, or “Franklin’s Stove,” as it was called, was designed to heat a room evenly without having a hazardous open hearth, the cause of many fires. This portion of a Franklin stove front plate was excavated at the former home of Franklin’s friend John Bartram in southwest Philadelphia. The 16-ray sunburst design was one of two decorative patterns Franklin used on his stove.

**“Profile of the Chimney and Fire-Place,”**
From Benjamin Franklin, *An Account of the Newly Invented Pennsylvanian Fire-Places…*
Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin, 1744
Library Company of Philadelphia
Photo by Peter Harholdt

In the “Franklin Stove,” cool fresh air was drawn from a hole in the bottom plate into the enclosed air box. Warm smoke from the burning fuel flowed around the air box and heated it. Once hot, the fresh air exited into the room through holes in the side plates. The smoke, after passing around the enclosed air box, flowed through a passage and up the flue.

**Fire Bucket** (American), Late 18th-Early 19th Century
Inscribed “Library Company of Philadelphia”
Library Company of Philadelphia
Photo by Peter Harholdt

Franklin organized 20 men into the Union Fire Company in 1736. Volunteer firefighters were required to own several of these leather buckets to help fill engines to fight fires. Institutions and businesses such as the Library Company also owned buckets and kept them in good repair so staff could quickly respond to the outbreak of a fire.
Side-crank Fire Engine (English), 1753
Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History,
Behring Center, Washington, D.C.

In 1731, after Philadelphia had suffered its first major fire, the city council ordered three fire engines—one from Anthony Nichols, a local mechanic, and two from London. In 1735, Franklin noted, “We have at present got Engines enough in the Town, but I question, whether in many Parts of the Town, Water enough can be had to keep them going for half an Hour together.” The large number of people needed to man the bucket brigade to fill the engines with water prompted the founding of the Union Fire Company in 1736.

Exhibit Panel Number Four

Useful Knowledge
Throughout his life, Benjamin Franklin’s curiosity and hands-on approach to his surroundings attracted him to science or “natural philosophy,” as it was then called. A true man of the Enlightenment, Franklin’s reasoning was practical and observation-based, and he shared his theories in letters to international contemporaries and colleagues. Franklin firmly believed that scientific knowledge should directly benefit society, so he never patented his inventions and always sought useful applications for the theories he developed.

Franklin’s studies of electricity, including the legendary kite and key experiment, remain his most important and best known scientific achievements. Although he personally placed a higher value on public service than on science, it was his scientific status that gave him the connections he needed to succeed in politics and diplomacy.

When Franklin saw an unmet need, he often created or adapted a device to satisfy it. Visitors to Franklin’s house reported on the useful “curiosities” they saw there, such as a chair/stepstool, tilt top table/firescreen, and “long-arm” pole to reach books on high shelves. Franklin is also credited with having invented bifocals and an early form of swimming fins, among many other
devices. Franklin was a swimmer all his life and taught others to swim as well.

**Bifocals**  
Design suggested by Benjamin Franklin  
Frankliniana Collection  
The Franklin Institute, Inc., Philadelphia

Franklin’s eyesight worsened as he grew older and he eventually needed glasses. His idea for “double spectacles” solved a problem he described as follows: “…the same Convexity of Glass, through which a Man sees clearest and best at the Distance proper for Reading, is not the best for greater Distances.” Wearing the spectacles, Franklin said “…I have only to move my Eyes up or down, as I want to see distinctly far or near, the proper Glasses always being ready.”

**A Society of “Ingenious Men”**  
In an era before widespread public education, private discussion groups and learned societies were vital to a nation’s cultural and intellectual growth. Benjamin Franklin’s Junto had already demonstrated how much friends committed to one another’s mutual improvement could accomplish. In 1743, Franklin drew up a proposal to create an inter-colonial Junto of sorts: a network of scientists and philosophers who would share news of their discoveries by post.

This idea became the American Philosophical Society, the oldest learned society in America. Modeled after London’s Royal Society and Dublin’s Philosophical Society, it would grow to include a host of prominent Philadelphia intellectuals, founding fathers George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, and international figures such as the Marquis de Lafayette. The Society provided a forum for exchanging ideas and pooling skills and knowledge, and its members particularly strove to promote American science and invention. Today it still plays an active role in America’s intellectual life.

**Back of the State House, Philadelphia, 1799**  
William Birch and Thomas Birch  
The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
On the right behind the trees is the hall of the American Philosophical Society, completed in 1789, a year before Benjamin Franklin’s death. Franklin and his colleagues proposed the idea for the society in 1743 to encourage learned people to converse about matters that would benefit their own lives, their communities, and “Mankind in general.” It was not until the 1760s that the plan was fully realized; Franklin was elected president of the society in 1769.

Illustration of *Franklinia Altamaha*, ca. 1786
Engraving by James Trenchard, after William Bartram
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia

Named after Franklin, this flowering tree was discovered along the Altamaha River in Georgia in 1765 and saved from extinction. The plant, one of John and William Bartram’s most famous botanical discoveries, was subsequently illustrated in William Bartram’s *Travels through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida* (Philadelphia: Printed by James & Johnson, 1791). Benjamin Franklin and John Bartram were good friends and fellow natural philosophers.

*It is … proposed …That One Society be formed of Virtuosi or ingenious Men residing in the several Colonies, to be called The American Philosophical Society; who are to maintain a constant Correspondence.—*Benjamin Franklin, *A Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge*, 1743

**Mastodon tooth fossil**
Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia
Photo by Peter Harholdt

Found near the underground ruins of Franklin’s home on Market Street, this tooth matches the description of a “large pronged” tooth sent to Franklin in London in 1767 by Indian agent and land speculator George Croghan. The fossil was reportedly discovered near the Ohio River at a place called “The Great Licking Place,” now known as Big Bone Lick, Kentucky.
A Gentleman’s Laboratory
In an era when scientists were almost always wealthy male amateurs, scientific breakthroughs occurred—frequently by chance—in home laboratories. Enthusiastic natural philosophers, including Benjamin Franklin, would often demonstrate electrical experiments on their newly-purchased equipment as an entertaining party trick.

The home laboratory equipment itself varied widely. Glass tubes, for instance, could be rubbed with wool or fur to produce an electrical charge. Lightning bells, Franklin’s own invention, were connected to an insulated rod atop a building; they would ring whenever an electrified cloud or lightning was nearby. Laboratories might also contain thermometers, pneumatic air pumps, magnets and experimental clocks, all depending on the interests and resources of the natural philosopher who owned the lab.

*What signifies knowing the Names, if you know not the Natures of Things.*—Poor Richard’s Almanack, 1750

**“Electrical battery” of Leyden jars, 1760–1769**
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia
Owned by Benjamin Franklin
Photo by Peter Harholdt

This set of Leyden jars—made of glass, metal and wood—descended in the family of Francis Hopkinson, a philosopher friend of Franklin’s. The Leyden jar was the world’s first capacitor. With metallic conductors mounted inside and outside a glass jar (the insulator), a Leyden jar could store and transport the electric charge that was produced by rubbing a glass tube with wool or fur.

**Electrical Fire**
The study of electricity was the most spectacular and fashionable branch of Enlightenment natural philosophy. Franklin was immediately fascinated when the Library Company’s British agent, Peter Collinson, sent him a glass tube used to generate static electricity. Franklin taught himself to perform basic electrical “tricks” with it and was soon immersed in trying to understand how this surprising phenomenon worked.
Through his electrical investigations, Franklin developed important new theories, complete with new terms and instruments to describe and demonstrate them. As usual, his concern centered on developing useful applications for his discoveries: the result was a lightning protection system that is still in use today, notably on St. Paul’s Cathedral in London.

Franklin’s electrical experiments were known all over Europe, at first through his personal correspondence and then through publications initiated by colleagues abroad. Later, Franklin’s international fame as a scientist would give him the status and the political access he needed to succeed as one of America’s premier diplomats.

**Electrical Apparatus, 1742–1747**
Designed by Benjamin Franklin, made by Philadelphia-area craftsmen, including Wistarburgh Glassworks, N.J.
Owned by Benjamin Franklin; presented to the Library Company by his grandson Benjamin Franklin Bache in 1792.
Library Company of Philadelphia

Franklin used this wood and iron apparatus to generate static electricity for his experiments; the electricity was drawn off the glass sphere by metallic points.

**Static electricity tube, ca. 1747**
The Frankliniana Collection,
The Franklin Institute, Inc., Philadelphia
Photo by Peter Harholdt

This glass tube was given to Benjamin Franklin by his friend Peter Collinson, the British agent for the Library Company of Philadelphia.

**Experiments and Observations on Electricity**
Benjamin Franklin
London: E. Cave, 1751
The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
Photo by Peter Harholdt
In the 1740s, Franklin corresponded with British merchant and naturalist Peter Collinson about his electrical experiments in Philadelphia. Collinson and Quaker physician John Fothergill compiled the letters into a book and arranged for its publication in 1751. Following its first appearance in London, *Experiments and Observations on Electricity* was reprinted in five editions and translated into several languages, including French, German, and Italian. Franklin himself edited and published the fourth edition in 1769.

A View of the State House in Philadelphia (now Independence Hall)
Unknown Artist
London: *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, September 1752
Courtesy of E. Philip Krider

The lightning rod on the tower of the State House was probably the first “Franklin” rod ever attached to a building for lightning protection. It protected the structure for 208 years with only one recorded instance of lightning damage.

Thunder House, late 18th century
Bakken Library and Museum, Minneapolis

Franklin encouraged the Reverend Ebenezer Kinnersley, a friend and leading electrical experimenter, to become a traveling lecturer on electricity. In his sensational but educational lectures, Kinnersley used “thunder houses,” model buildings which vividly demonstrated the protective effects of grounded lightning rods. A thunder house was filled with gunpowder and equipped with a rod that could be grounded or ungrounded. When a spark was applied to the grounded rod, the charge would pass through the house without harm. But a spark applied to the ungrounded rod would ignite the gunpowder, blow the roof off the house, and flatten the four walls in a fiery explosion.

(Background)
Benjamin Franklin Drawing Electricity from the Sky, ca. 1816
Benjamin West
Philadelphia Museum of Art, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Wharton Sinkler, 1958
Photo by Graydon Wood
In his day, England’s most celebrated painter, Benjamin West, first met Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia, years before he painted this dramatic image. The small portrait was a study for a larger painting—never completed—intended for the Pennsylvania Hospital.

**Shipboard Amusements**

Never one to waste an opportunity or to pass the time unoccupied, Franklin used his multiple transatlantic journeys to England and Europe—which lasted weeks in each direction—to study the natural phenomena around him. He carefully recorded his observations, keeping journals filled with details documenting the origins of storms, the formation of lightning, and the effects of oil on water. Franklin’s fascination with maritime weather led him to include meteorological information in his *Poor Richard’s Almanack*, helping both travelers and colonial farmers prepare for shifting weather patterns. Franklin also studied the transatlantic path of the Gulf Stream, charting its route with his cousin Timothy Folger, a Nantucket whaling captain.

**Chart of the Gulf Stream**

Engraved by James Poupard
from Benjamin Franklin,
“Maritime Observations”
in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 1786
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia

Franklin was asked by English colleagues why it took ships less time to go from North America to England than the other way around. In response, he and his cousin charted the dimensions, course and strength of the Gulf Stream. They published the chart along with instructions on how to avoid the opposing current when sailing from Europe to North America. Their surprisingly accurate map has been widely used by seamen of many nations, reducing the lengthy ocean crossing and spurring interest in the mysteries of the Atlantic.

**Exhibit Panel Number Five**

**World Stage**
Benjamin Franklin was a master diplomat and negotiator, exercising restraint, flexibility, and compromise to bring opposing visions into accord. Whether negotiating with Native Americans in western Pennsylvania or with the great powers of England and France, Franklin drew on strategies of collaboration and mutual self-interest to forge alliances that shaped the future of America.

Franklin became a powerful force in the fight for independence after initially seeking to avoid war with England. He traveled to France to seek aid for America’s struggle and remained there throughout the Revolutionary War. In Paris, Franklin capitalized on his brilliant reputation and personal charm; his humble demeanor and natural wit served the American cause well, and he forged strong transatlantic ties. In the end, this international alliance resulted in victory after a wrenching war—and a long and abiding friendship between France and the United States.

As a statesman 20 to 30 years older than other American Founders such as George Washington, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, Franklin was the only person to have signed five of America’s key founding documents: the Albany Plan of 1754; the Declaration of Independence (1776); the Treaties of Amity and Commerce with France (1778); the Treaty of Paris (1783); and the United States Constitution (1787).

**Portrait bust of Benjamin Franklin, 1779**
Jean Antoine Houdon

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Purchased with a generous grant from the Barra Foundation, Inc., matched by contributions from the Henry P. McIlhenny Fund in memory of Frances P. McIlhenny, the Walter E. Stait Fund, the Fiske Kimball Fund, and with funds contributed by Mr. and Mrs. Jack M. Friedland, Hannah L. and J. Welles Henderson, Mr. and Mrs. E. Newbold Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Mark E. Rubenstein, Mr. and Mrs. John J. F. Sherrerd, The Women’s Committee of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Marguerite and Gerry Lenfest, Leslie A. Miller and Richard B. Worley, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Nyheim, Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Fox, Stephanie S. Eglin, Maude de Schauensee, Mr. and Mrs. William T. Vogt, and with funds contributed by individual donors to the Fund for Franklin, 1996

Photo by Graydon Wood
Jean-Antoine Houdon was the leading portrait sculptor of the 18th century. Though it is uncertain whether Franklin formally sat for Houdon, the two probably met on various occasions at events in Paris. This marble bust is considered to be the one that best captured Franklin’s character as well as his likeness.

*Would you persuade, speak of Interest, not of Reason.—Poor Richard’s Almanack, 1734*

**Albany Plan of Union, 1754**

In 1754, as Britain and France struggled for control over North America, Benjamin Franklin proposed the Albany Plan of Union to unite the British North American colonies for their common defense. His plan called for the creation of a legislative body that would have the power to control commerce and to organize defense in the face of attacks by the French or their Native American allies. The plan was rejected by both the colonists and the British Crown. The Crown worried that the plan would create a powerful colonial bloc that might prove difficult to control, while the colonists themselves did not yet recognize the value of inter-colonial unity. Meanwhile, France and Britain entered into a full-blown imperial war, which lasted until 1763.

Although his plan was not adopted, Franklin’s inclination to forge partnerships and his aversion to conflict remained characteristic of his approach to civic life, science, and diplomacy. His negotiating skills were further called into service in 1757, when he was selected to represent colonial interests in England. Franklin would spend much of the next 30 years of his life living abroad—first in London seeking to maintain unity with England, and then in Paris building an alliance to secure American independence.

*“Join, or Die”*

from *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 9, 1754
Designed by Benjamin Franklin
Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin, 1754
Library Company of Philadelphia
In May 1754, just before he proposed the Albany Plan of Union, Franklin published this cartoon of a rattlesnake cut into pieces. It illustrated an editorial urging the colonies to join together against the French. This image remained popular, reappearing in the period leading up to the Revolutionary War as a symbol of the strength of colonial unity against Great Britain.

*Union of the Colonies is absolutely necessary for their Preservation.*—Benjamin Franklin, *Reasons and Motives for the Albany Plan of Union*, 1754

**Declaring Independence**

Benjamin Franklin represented colonial interests in England beginning in 1757. From his base there, Franklin was out of touch with the mood of his countrymen and seriously underestimated the intensity of colonial anger against the Stamp Act of 1765, which required a broad array of documents and publications to carry a tax stamp to raise revenues for Britain. In a rare diplomatic misstep, he continued negotiating towards a compromise concerning the act—but the tensions between the colonies and Great Britain had already become irreconcilable.

In 1774, in the wake of the Boston Tea Party and in the midst of colonial cries of “no taxation without representation,” Franklin was summoned by solicitort-general Lord Wedderburn to appear before the British Privy Council. There he was accused of treason against the Crown and publicly humiliated. He remained silent throughout the ordeal. This was a moment of epiphany for Franklin, as he came to realize that compromise with Britain—for once—was unlikely to carry the day. He soon left London for the colonies where he added his voice to the growing insurgency. On July 4, 1776, the American colonists declared their independence from Britain.

*We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.*—*Declaration of Independence*, 1776

**Declaration of Independence**, June 1776
Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1776
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia
On July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress voted unanimously to adopt the Declaration of Independence based on Thomas Jefferson’s draft. John Dunlap, the official printer for the Congress, worked through the night and into the next morning, printing the text of the Declaration onto broadsides, which served as flyers and posters. Early on July 5, John Hancock dispatched the broadsides to be read, posted and reprinted in order to announce the colonies’ independence from Britain. Only 21 copies of the broadside survive today.

**Congress Voting Independence, 1784–1801**
Begun by Robert Edge Pine and finished by Edward Savage
Atwater Kent Museum of Philadelphia
Historical Society of Pennsylvania Collection

Robert Edge Pine’s painting is considered one of the most realistic renditions of this historic event. Several key political figures can be identified in the painting, including the members of the committee to draft the Declaration. Thomas Jefferson is the tall figure depositing the Declaration of Independence on the table. Benjamin Franklin sits to his right. Fellow committee members John Adams, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston stand behind Jefferson. John Hancock is behind the table in the center.

**Forming Alliances**
The fledgling American army was no match for Britain’s well-established military might. In the fall of 1776, Franklin was sent overseas to negotiate a military alliance with the French. In France he capitalized on his scientific fame, networking enthusiastically within the Paris social scene. Franklin attended meetings of the Freemasons and developed friendships with the Marquis de La Fayette and Caron de Beaumarchais, both strong supporters of the American cause. He recognized that to win the cooperation of the French he had to understand their interests and remain humble in demeanor. By wearing a fur cap rather than an elaborate wig, for instance, Franklin cultivated an image of personal modesty and rustic charm. His strategy paid off. Franklin soon won the support of the foreign minister Comte de Vergennes and King Louis XVI, and in 1778 the Treaty of Amity between America and France was signed.
This was one of the first images of Benjamin Franklin available in France, made within a few weeks of his arrival. It referred to Franklin as the “New World Ambassador,” and was reproduced on countless souvenir objects. Franklin wrote to a friend, “Figure me…very plainly dress’d, wearing my thin grey strait Hair, that peeps out under my only Coiffure, a fine Fur Cap, which comes down my Forehead almost to my Spectacles. Think how this must appear among the Powder’d Heads of Paris.”

Franklin appealed to the French king for loans and gifts to buy arms, clothing, shoes and other supplies needed by the American army. These loans and French military and naval help played a vital role in the final outcome of the Revolutionary War.

Congress sent Franklin this detailed, 38-page list of supplies to acquire in France. It specified items essential to outfitting and sustaining the American troops, ranging from arms of all sorts to bolts of cloth for uniforms, cooking pots, fifes and drums, and goods for Native American allies—all of which then had to be smuggled across the Atlantic, often via the Caribbean. The first ship loaded with goods was captured at sea by a British gun boat. The bounty was sold at auction in London and Franklin had to start all over again. Ultimately, however, he succeeded, and the supplies made their way to America.
Treaty of Amity, 1778
In 1778, the Treaties of Amity and Commerce (commonly known as the Treaty of Amity) produced a strategic alliance between the United States and France in which each nation agreed to aid one another in the event of British attack. Already at war with Britain, the new American nation needed significant support in the form of loans, military supplies, and troops. The Treaty officially brought France into the American Revolutionary War, providing aid at a crucial time and ultimately enabling the Americans to win their fight for independence. Negotiating the Treaty on behalf of the United States were Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, Arthur Lee, and Conrad Alexander Gerard.

There shall be a firm, inviolable and universal Peace, and a true and sincere Friendship between the most Christian King, his Heirs and Successors, and the United States of America.—Treaty of Amity, 1778

Franklin at the Court of France
Engraving by William Overend Geller after André-Edouard, Baron Jolly, 1853
Collection of Stuart E. Karu
Photo by Peter Harholdt

This print portrays Benjamin Franklin at Versailles in 1778, at the moment when he, along with the other American Commissioners, was presented to Louis XVI a few days after the Treaty of Amity was signed.

Treaty of Alliance [Treaties of Amity and Commerce]
Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1778
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia
Photo by Frank Margeson

The Treaty of Alliance, part of the Treaty of Amity, provided French military and financial assistance for the “Thirteen United States of America” in their war of independence from Britain.

Mastering Diplomacy
During his diplomatic mission to France from 1777 to 1785, Benjamin Franklin frequently entertained friends, spies, and fellow statesmen at his
residence in the Paris suburb of Passy, while pursuing his passions for chess, music, conversation and the Parisian way of life. Franklin was popular with the French, but he was not so popular with other representatives of the new American government in France, most notably John Adams. Adams criticized Franklin’s methods of requesting aid for the American cause, saying Franklin was being subservient; Adams favored a more aggressive approach.

But Franklin’s continued popularity with the French helped guarantee his next diplomatic achievement, the 1783 Treaty of Paris, officially ending America’s Revolutionary War with Great Britain. To this challenge, Franklin brought a supple and flexible mind and a refined appreciation of the needs of the other parties to the accord. Franklin used his understanding of French and British interests to negotiate a treaty to secure peace that was acceptable to all sides. As the negotiations neared conclusion, Franklin wrote to his British friend, Sir Joseph Banks, “There never was a good War, or a bad Peace.”

*Life is a kind of Chess, in which we often have Points to gain, & Competitors or Adversaries to contend with. . . . The Game is so full of Events . . . that one is encouraged to continue the Contest to the last, in hopes of Victory from our own Skill.—Benjamin Franklin, The Morals of Chess, 1779*

**Chess set** (French), 1750–1780
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia
Photo by Peter Harholdt

Benjamin Franklin loved chess and often played late into the night by candlelight. His landlord in France claimed that Franklin had a habit of drumming his fingers on the table when a partner took too long to make a move. This pearwood chess set was owned by Franklin; the height of the pawn is 3 5/8 inches.

**Treaty of Paris, 1783**
Although the Revolutionary War ended with the American victory at Yorktown in the fall of 1781, the terms of peace between Britain and the United States were not formalized until September 3, 1783, when the Treaty of Paris was signed. In the two years between the end of hostilities and the
signing of the Treaty, the American negotiators—Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay—worked with their British, French, and Spanish counterparts to shape a treaty that guaranteed American sovereignty. The Treaty gave formal recognition to the United States, established its national boundaries, and provided for the evacuation of British troops.

*His Brittanic Majesty acknowledges the said United States . . .to be free sovereign and independent.*—*Treaty of Paris, 1783*

**The Definitive Treaty between Great Britain, and the United States of America**  
Signed at Paris, the 3rd day of September 1783 (Treaty of Paris)  
Passy: 1783  
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia  
Photo by Frank Margeson

This copy of the Treaty of Paris features one of the first uses of the seal of the United States of America.

**Miniature portrait of Louis XVI, 1784**  
Louis Sicardy  
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia  
Photo by Frank Margeson

Louis XVI presented this miniature portrait to Benjamin Franklin upon Franklin’s retirement in 1784 as America’s first Minister Plenipotentiary to France, an office he had assumed in 1778. The portrait was originally surrounded by a crown and a circle of 48 diamonds, but Franklin’s daughter Sally, who inherited the miniature, sold many of the diamonds to finance a trip to Europe.

**Exhibit Panel Number Six**

**Franklin’s Legacy**  
Benjamin Franklin returned to America from France in 1785 and within two years was once again at the center of the effort to define and shape the new nation. In 1787, suffering from poor health and often excruciating pain, Franklin became the oldest member of the Constitutional Convention at age
81. His experience as a seasoned negotiator served the Convention well. He drew on his pragmatism and desire for unity to play a significant role in brokering the “Great Compromise,” which produced a legislature of two houses, one elected in proportion to population and one with equal representation from each state.

Franklin spent his last years attempting to finish his autobiography, something he had begun during the Revolution. Published after his death, the autobiography does not cover his entire life. Nevertheless, it has been reproduced in more languages than any other American memoir, and has not been out of print since its first publication, in French, in 1791.

Since his death in April 1790 at the age of 84, Benjamin Franklin has been memorialized, revered, romanticized, criticized, spoofed, and made into an advertising and financial icon. His face and figure have been depicted in every medium—stone, paint, film, cartoon, the Internet—and can be seen on billboards and building facades, postage stamps, and the $100 bill. His name evokes many qualities—imagination and curiosity, hard work and ambition, tolerance and open-mindedness, wit and entrepreneurial ingenuity—qualities that have contributed greatly to the formation of an American identity and American values. Interest in Franklin remains high throughout the world, and the quest by historians to better understand the complex person behind the images continues.

Constitution of the United States, 1787
The first three words of the Constitution—“We the People”—embody its most striking feature: ultimate political authority resides not in the government or in any single government official, but rather in the people. The new system of government established by the Framers of the Constitution was based on republican principles. Power was to be distributed among three separate but interdependent branches: the legislative, the executive, and the judicial. Under an elaborate system of checks and balances, each branch has the power to control and check the powers of the other two branches. The Framers further divided power between the federal government and the states. In 1791, Americans added a list of 10 individual rights to the Constitution; these are known as the Bill of Rights. Since that time, another 17 amendments have been ratified for a total of 27.
Constitution of the United States
Philadelphia: Dunlap and Claypoole, 1787
Printed broadside with Benjamin Franklin’s handwritten annotations
Owned by Benjamin Franklin
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia
Photo by Frank Margeson

This is the first printing of the Constitution as adopted by the Constitutional Convention in 1787, with Benjamin Franklin’s handwritten notes in the margins.

When a broad Table is to be made, and the Edges of Planks do not fit, the Artist takes a little from both and makes a good Joint. In like Manner here both Sides must part with some of their Demands, in order that they may join in some accommodating Proposition.—Benjamin Franklin at the Constitutional Convention, 1787

Benjamin Franklin and Slavery
Benjamin Franklin was a slaveholder for most of his life—there are several enslaved Africans mentioned in his correspondence. But in his final years, he became an avid proponent of abolition, feeling that slavery could not co-exist in a society that wished to consider itself “free.” He wrote in his 1757 will “that my Negro Man Peter, and his Wife Jemima, be free after my Decease,” but they died before him; Franklin did not own any slaves at the end of his life. In his final will he stipulated that his son-in-law, Richard Bache, should not receive his inheritance unless he freed his slave, Bob. Franklin also served as president of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage, and he wrote letters and petitions to end the practice of slavery.

Am I Not a Man and a Brother? ca. 1790
Anti-slavery medallion designed by William Hackwood
Made by the Wedgwood Factory
American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia

Josiah Wedgwood produced these stoneware medallions in England to raise money for the abolitionists’ cause. In 1788, some of the medallions
were sent to Franklin in Philadelphia. The image became so popular that it was replicated in many formats, including buttons, sashes, and decorations on cups and pitchers. Franklin thought the medallions were as effective as pamphlets in drawing attention to the issue of slavery.

**An Address to the Public**
From the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery
Philadelphia: Francis Bailey, 1789
Library Company of Philadelphia
Photo by Peter Harholdt

As President of the Society, Franklin wrote this address the year before he died to raise funds to help emancipated Blacks become self-supporting.

**Franklin’s Autobiography**
Though he never finished writing it, Franklin’s autobiography is the most widely published memoir in history and has never gone out of print. It is generally acknowledged as one of the great autobiographies of the world. In this work, which he started as a letter to his son, William, Franklin offers the story of his rise to prominence in Philadelphia and his shrewd observations on the culture and life of the Colonial and early Revolutionary periods in America. The memoir documents Franklin’s achievements, details his struggles with personal improvement, explains his belief in virtue, and exemplifies his ceaseless self-questioning. Franklin wrote the first five chapters in England in 1771, resumed writing in Paris in 1784–85, and concluded in 1788 after he returned to the United States. The autobiography ends in 1757 when Franklin was 51 years old.

**Mémoires de la vie privée de Benjamin Franklin**
Benjamin Franklin
Paris, 1791 (First French edition)
Collection of Stuart E. Karu
Photo by Peter Harholdt

A year after his death, Franklin’s manuscript autobiography, which covered the first 51 years of his life, was translated into French and published in France. The edition was followed by versions in Swedish (1792), English (1793), an American edition (1794), and eventually dozens of others.
The Private Life of the Late Benjamin Franklin, LL.D.
(first English version of the Autobiography)
Benjamin Franklin
London: Printed for J. Parsons, 1793
Collection of Stuart E. Karu
Photo by Peter Harholdt

This is the title page of the first English edition of Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography.

Portrait of Benjamin Franklin, 1787
Charles Willson Peale
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia
Bequest of Mrs. Sarah Harrison (The Joseph Harrison, Jr. Collection)
Photo courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

This is the last known life portrait of Benjamin Franklin, painted at age 81, three years before he died. During his life, Franklin had contributed to the building funds of churches of every denomination in Philadelphia. At his funeral, all the ministers, preachers and priests in Philadelphia, along with the city’s rabbi, linked arms and marched with Franklin’s cortege to his burial place in Christ Church cemetery. Twenty thousand Philadelphians and visitors accompanied them.

Fear not Death; for the sooner we die, the longer shall we be immortal. — Poor Richard’s Almanack, 1740

“Fugio” Penny, 1787
Collection of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Photo by Peter Harholdt

The first coins issued by the authority of the United States were based on an earlier design suggested by Franklin. His design, which was also used on currency issued in 1776, showed the chain of union between the 13 states. The obverse of the brass and copper coin shows a sundial with the
legend “Fugio [I fly] 1787 Mind your business” and the reverse reads, “We are one United States.”

*WE THE PEOPLE of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common Defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.—Constitution of the United States of America, 1787*

**Sheet of 100 Franklin Half-cent Stamps**
Signed by postal officials and others, 1938
Frankliniana Collection
The Franklin Institute, Inc., Philadelphia

Benjamin Franklin experienced a surge of popularity during the 1930s, when this stamp was issued to commemorate the opening of the Benjamin Franklin National Memorial at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia.

*The Art of Making Money Plenty in every Man’s Pocket; by Doctor Franklin*
New York and Hartford: E.B. and E.C. Kellogg, ca. 1847
Collection of Stuart E. Karu
Photo by Peter Harholdt

This humorous version of Franklin’s precepts has been a popular souvenir since it was first published in 1791.

**(Background)**
**Seated statue of Benjamin Franklin, 1906–1911**
James Earle Fraser
The Franklin Institute, Philadelphia
Photo courtesy of Lisa Godfrey

This massive statue of Benjamin Franklin is located in the rotunda of the Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, as the focal point of the Benjamin Franklin National Memorial, dedicated by Congress in 1976. The statue is 20 feet high and weighs 30 tons.
Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World is a national traveling exhibition for libraries organized by the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary and the American Library Association Public Programs Office. It is based on a major exhibition of the same name mounted by the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Franklin’s birth. To learn more about the Tercentenary exhibition, please visit http://www.benfranklin300.org/

The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary, a nonprofit organization supported by a major grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, was established to mark the 300-year anniversary of Benjamin Franklin’s birth (1706-2006) by educating the public about Franklin’s enduring legacy and inspiring renewed appreciation of the values he embodied. The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary was founded in 2000 by a consortium of five Philadelphia cultural institutions: the American Philosophical Society, The Franklin Institute, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the University of Pennsylvania.

The traveling exhibition for libraries has been made possible by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: great ideas brought to life.

Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this exhibition do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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