

Benjamin Franklin: 1706 - 1790

Bro. Benjamin Franklin was the city of Philadelphia's greatest citizen of all time: printer, writer, artist, publisher, philosopher, scientist, inventor, soldier, diplomat, abolitionist, founder of a half-dozen Philadelphia institutions, influencer of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and more. Benjamin Franklin was one of the most practical, prudent, dynamic, and influential men of his time. He left more than a legacy; he left a litany of legacies that more than two centuries later continue to benefit mankind and are destined to serve for posterity. Accordingly, "Franklin Legacy Society" is the appropriate name today for those persons whose caring will craft legacies for generations to come.

At 17, Ben left a printing apprenticeship in Boston and started his printing business in Philadelphia, published *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, and gained recognition with his *Poor Richard's Almanack*. During the early years of his career, he organized a literary club that evolved into the American Philosophical Society, laid foundations for what became the Philadelphia Library, initiated the first formal fire company, was instrumental in improving the lighting of city streets, invented the Franklin stove, and flew his famous kite. In 1748, he sold his business and turned to public life.

In public affairs at home and abroad, he forged lasting relationships, influenced decisions, and acted to shape the future. He was Pennsylvania's delegate to the Albany Congress in 1754 and then he worked in England for five years relative to the enforcement of taxes in Pennsylvania. In 1766, the House of Commons summoned him to England to explain colonial opposition to the Stamp Tax. When war was inevitable in 1775, he returned to Philadelphia where, in due course, he served as a member of the second Continental Congress, was on the committee to draft the Declaration of Independence and was one of its signers. He helped to negotiate a treaty with France and was sent to negotiate peace with Great Britain.

About a month after his 25th birthday, Franklin became a Mason, joining St. John's Lodge which met at Tun Tavern in Philadelphia. By the next year, he had drafted the lodge's bylaws and was elected Junior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. He then served his first term as the Grand Master in 1734, the same year that he published Anderson's *The Constitution of the Free-Masons*, the first Masonic book printed in America.

He was appointed Provincial Grand Master in 1749; then in organizational changes a year later, he was appointed Deputy Grand Master. He served on a committee to build the first Masonic building constructed in America, the "Free-Mason's Lodge" in Philadelphia, and took a prominent part in its dedication in 1755. In 1760 he was named Provincial Grand Master of Philadelphia.

As he traveled frequently on diplomatic missions, Franklin visited lodges in England, Scotland, and France. He became active with lodges in France: serving two years as Master of the Lodge of the Nine Sisters, as honorary Master of the Respectable Lodge de Saint Jean de Jerusalem, and as an honorary member of the Loges des Bon Amis of Rouen.

