Benjamin Franklin.

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Political leader

- **Born:** January 17, 1706
- **Birthplace:** Boston, Massachusetts
- **Died:** April 17, 1790
- **Place of death:** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Some people consider Benjamin Franklin to be one of the greatest Americans who ever lived. He is certainly famous for his experiments with electricity , especially flying a kite during a thunderstorm.

An engraving of John Adams; Roger Sherman; Robert R. Livingston; Thomas Jefferson; Benjamin Franklin; Drafting the Declaration of Independence engraving with Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, Livingston Library of Congress

Besides his famous kite experiment, Franklin had a part in many other famous events in American history.

Franklin was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 17, 1706. His father was a soap and candle maker. Franklin had very little schooling, but he was very interested in books and in reading.

Benjamin Franklin served as an apprentice in his brother's print shop and worked hard in order to own his own print shop. Franklin opened his shop at the age of twenty-two and also began a newspaper called the *Pennsylvania Gazette* .

Franklin became a very important figure all around the fast-growing American colonies. In 1727, Franklin began a debating club called the Junto, and he later started the American Philosophical Society in 1743. He helped to found the first hospital in America and the University of Pennsylvania.

Franklin became devoted to public service. He was clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly from 1736 to 1751. He then became a member of the Assembly and served from 1751 to 1757 and from 1762 to 1764. He served as postmaster of Philadelphia from 1737 to 1753. Franklin developed a simple and accurate way of keeping post-office accounts, which helped create

Benjamin Franklin. Copy of painting by Joseph Duplessis, ca. 1794-1802. National Archives and Records Administration

faster mail service and to provide a system for reducing lost mail. He was then appointed deputy postmaster general for the colonies.

Not only was Franklin dedicated to public service, he was also an active inventor his entire adult life. One of his most famous inventions was the Franklin stove. This stove helped heat houses more thoroughly.

Franklin never got a patent for his invention which allowed the stoves to be made cheaply so that many people could afford them.

Franklin conducted experiments on electricity in a laboratory in his home. Some of his principles became the basis for modern electrical theories. He sent his work to the Royal Society of scientists in London. His work was so impressive, he won the Copley Medal in 1753 and was elected to the Royal Society in 1756.

Franklin's experiments with lightning are certainly his most famous experiments. Franklin and his son flew a kite during a thunderstorm and brought a charge of electricity down the kite's wet string. He placed a key at the end of the string and noticed electrical sparks when he touched the key. These experiments proved that lightning was electricity.

Franklin finished his experiments by inventing the lightning rod which helped to protect buildings from lightning bolts. He received honorary degrees from Harvard and Yale for his scientific accomplishments.

Franklin was very dedicated to hard work and to acquiring knowledge. During his lifetime, he spent countless hours reading, writing, and teaching himself all he could. He is known as a model for the great American success story because he worked his way from a poor family to become a very wealthy and famous person.

Franklin's Inventions Include:

- bifocal lens • Franklin wood stove • lightning rod • odometer

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By Phyllis Barkas Goldman

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