

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (Part 1)

by George Constantourakis

On the occasion of Benjamin Franklin's 300 Birth Anniversary, the USPS issued on April 7, 2006 four commemorate stamps honoring the life of Benjamin Franklin and his achievements as a Printer, Scientist, Postmaster and Statesman. Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston on January 17, 1706, the eighth child of Josiah Franklin (a soap maker) and Abiah Folger Franklin. Franklin's formal schooling came to an end at the age of 10. Two years later in 1718, Franklin entered an apprenticeship in printing under his older brother James.

The stamp honoring Franklin as a Printer (see *Figures 9, 11, 12*) includes a portrait of Franklin in a printer's smock, by illustrator M. Dooling; an issue of *The Pennsylvania Gazette* for Sept. 25 through Oct. 2, 1729; the front of the 1733 edition of *Poor Richard's Almanac*; and a 5 pound currency note printed by Franklin in 1760.

The stamp honoring Franklin as a Postmaster (see *Figure 13*) includes a graphic device used by the *Boston Post Boy* newspaper during the mid 18th century; a colonial postal cover from Marlboro Md. on a 1775 letter to Philadelphia; a colonial era date postmark; and a late 18th century painting of Franklin by Ch. Wilson Peale, after a portrait by D. Martin. The text across the bottom of the stamp reads 'B. FREE FRANKLIN, POSTMASTER', a reference to Franklin's personal franking signature.

The stamp honoring Franklin as a Scientist (see *Figures 17, 18, 19*) includes a 19th century lithograph by Currier and Ives depicting Franklin and his son performing the legendary electricity experiment with a kite; a page from Franklin's 1769 '*Experiments and Observations on Electricity*' depicting water spouts and a 'magic square'; a drawing of Franklin's 'three-wheeled clock' from the late 18th century book *Select Mechanical Exercises* by James Ferguson; and a depiction of Franklin at a writing desk, from a mural by Charles Elliot Mills at the Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology in Boston.

The stamp honoring Franklin as a Statesman (see *Figure 21*) includes a detail from J. Trumbull's famous painting of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, painted between 1786 and 1819; a copy of Franklin's 1754 'Join or Die' political cartoon urging colonial unity; a printed copy of the Declaration of Independence; a pastel portrait of Franklin by Joseph Duplessis painted during the 1780's; and the 1778 Treaty of Alliance with France, which was negotiated and signed by Franklin.

PRINTER

In 1718, at the age of twelve, Ben Franklin first began to learn the business of printing, as an apprentice at his older brother's James printing shop in Boston. James was the publisher of the *New England Currant*. The young Franklin wrote under the pseudonym "Silence Dogood". In 1725, at the age of seventeen, he was a fully skilled printer able to work in any print shop. With this skill, Franklin was able to leave Boston and find work in both Philadelphia and London.

In 1728, at the age of twenty-two, Franklin opened his own printing office in Philadelphia. In 1729, Franklin becomes sole owner and publisher of a newspaper called *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. On Dec. 28, 1732, Franklin published the first edition of his annual *Poor Richard's Almanac*.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 1) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN portrait by Joseph Silfrede Duplessis (on card) painted during the 1780's. Issue: May 19, 1938. For: Presidential issue.

Cancel: Mar. 15, 1954, Boston MASSS (Place of birth).

(Figure 2) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN portrait by Duplessis. Issue: Oct. 20, 1955.

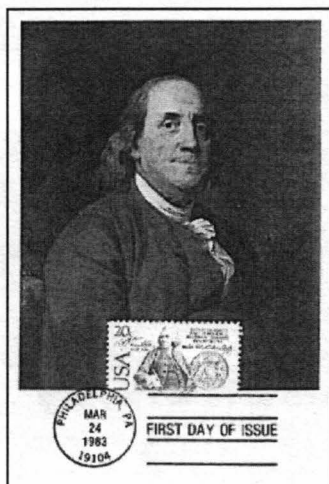
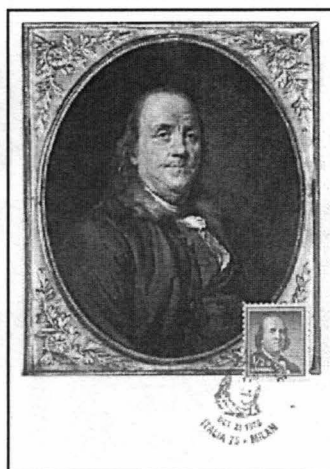
For: Liberty issue. Cancel: Oct. 21, 1976, Milan Italy, special mention: "U.S. POSTAL SERVICE, MILAN - ITALIA '76" concordant illustration (triple).

(Figure 3) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN portrait by Duplessis. Issue: Nov. 71, 1972.

For: Stamp Collecting. Cancel: First Day, New York NY, special mention: "NATIONAL POSTAGE STAMP STATION".

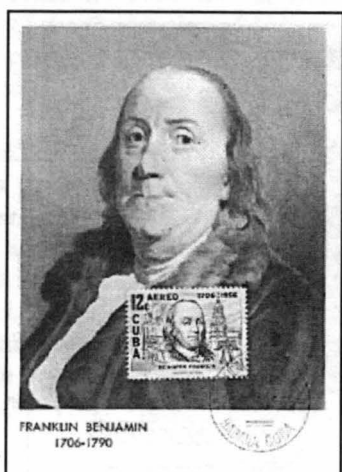
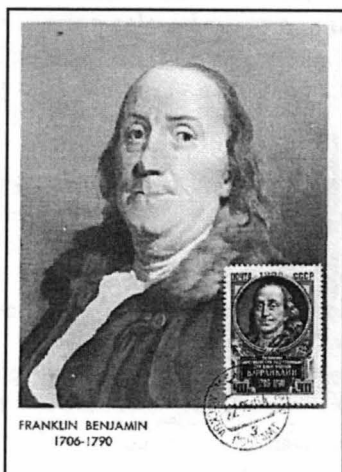
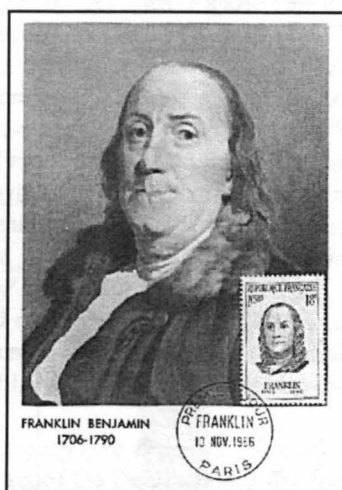
(Figure 4) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN portrait by Duplessis. Issue: Mar. 24, 1983.

For: 200th anniversary of Treaty of Amity and Commerce between USA and Sweden. Cancel: First Day, Philadelphia PA



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (Part 1 - Continued)

Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 5) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. Issue: June 2, 1976.For: Bicentennial of American Independence.Cancel: First Day, Edinbrough, special illustration *Liberty Bell*.(Figure 6) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. Issue: Nov. 10, 1956.For: Famous men who lived in France.Cancel: First Day, Paris, special mention: "FRANKLIN".(Figure 7) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. Issue: Oct. 26, 1956For: 12th Inter-American Press Ass. Conference, Havana.Cancel: Jan. 21, 1959, Havana, Cuba.(Figure 8) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. Issue: Oct. 17, 1956For: Great World Personalities. Cancel: July 22, 1964, Moscow.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 9) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN - PRINTING PRESS.

Issue: Apr. 7, 2006. For: 300th Birth Anniversary.

Cancel: First Day, Philadelphia PA, special illustration: *Franklin's outlined portrait.*

(Figure 10) PRINTING PRESS IN COLONIAL TIMES. Issue: Feb. 13, 1973.

For: American Bicentennial Issue. Cancel: First Day, Portland OR.

(Figure 11) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN - HIS PRINTING SHOP (on card).

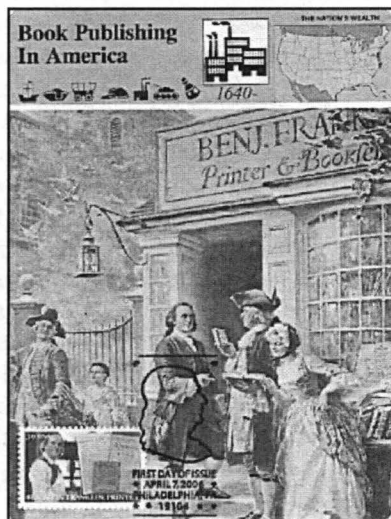
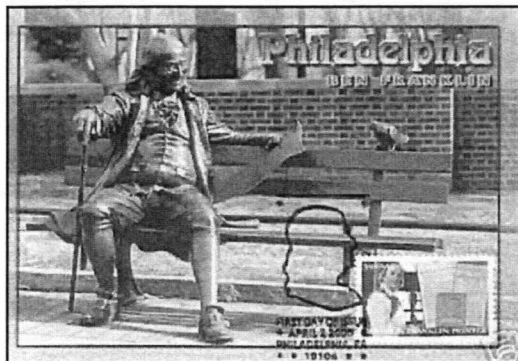
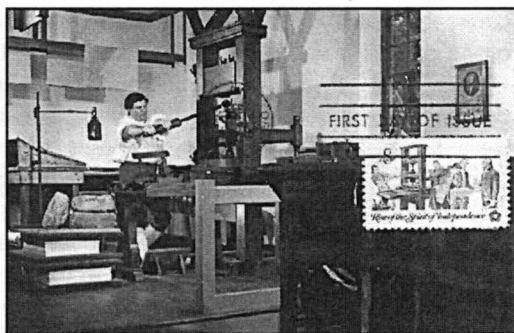
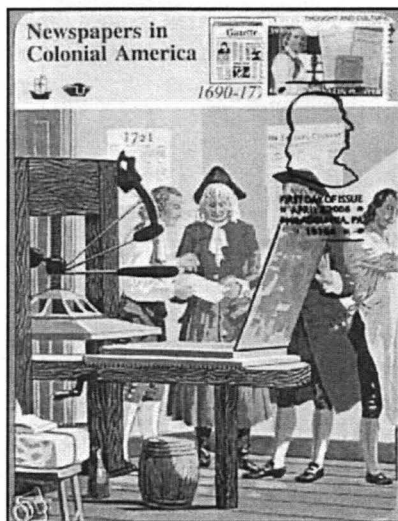
Issue: Apr. 7, 2006. For: 300th Birth Anniversary.

Cancel: First Day, Philadelphia PA, special illustration: *Franklin's outlined portrait.*

(Figure 12) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN READING HIS PAPER (on card).

Issue: Apr. 7, 2006. For: 300th Birth Anniversary.

Cancel: First Day, Philadelphia PA, special illustration: *Franklin's outlined portrait.*



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (Part 1 - Continued)

He had many new ideas for publishing and he is known for printing cartoons, illustrated news stories, and letters to the editor. Franklin believed in the power of the press and used his printing press as a way to bring the news to all people. He used cartoons and pictures so that everyone could understand the news, even people who had not learned to read.

In 1731, Franklin founded America's first circulating library so that people could borrow books to read even though they might not have been able to afford to buy books to read. Again, Franklin wanted to use his printing press to help people understand the world around them. In 1748, Franklin retired from printing.

POSTMASTER

Postal service in the United States was greatly influenced by Benjamin Franklin. In 1737, he was appointed *Postmaster of Philadelphia*. In 1753, he was appointed *joint Deputy Postmaster General of North America*. In 1775, he was elected *Postmaster General of the Colonies*. Through Franklin's efforts, the length of time for mail service between major cities in the colonies was cut in half. In 18th century, most correspondence, was carried by hand by riders (see *Figure 16*). The most reliable postal route in the colonies was by ship along the coast. Roads between the colonies were not well-marked nor well-kept and delivery service was poor. Letters were carried by friends, by slaves, by sea captains and by other travelers. "Post offices" were taverns, inns, and coffee houses where these letter carriers dropped off correspondence for recipients in the area. Transatlantic service (see *Figure 14*) took months and writers could never be certain if letters would reach their final destinations; thus they would make a few copies of a letter and send each by a different ship, hoping that at least one would arrive safely.

As *joint Deputy Postmaster General* for the Crown, Franklin established several notable improvements to postal service. He toured all the major postal offices in the colonies to inspect their operations and to identify ways of improving service. Under Franklin, routes were surveyed, milestones were placed on the main roads and more direct routes were set up between the colonies. Franklin also established faster postal service between Philadelphia and New York by having the weekly mail wagon (see *Figure 15*), travel at night as well as during the day. Franklin also instituted the first rate chart to be used by postmasters. The postal rates were based on distance and weight and standardized throughout the system. Franklin was dismissed in 1774 due to his vocal support of independence for the colonies. However, he left a legacy of postal roads stretching from Maine to Florida, regular mail service between the colonies and England, and a system for regulating and auditing post offices.

In 1763, Franklin's position as *joint Deputy Postmaster General* was extended to include Quebec (see stamp on *Figure 24*); following the Treaty of Paris (1763), that ended the Seven Years' War, and gave Canada to Great Britain. Franklin oversaw the establishment and evolution of an efficient postal system, inaugurating services from Montreal to New York. This allowed European mail service reaching Canada 12 months of the year. In 1775, Franklin was appointed by the Continental Congress as its first *Postmaster General*, a position he served in until late in 1776 when Franklin was called upon to serve in other ways.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 13) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN - POSTMASTER portrait by Duplessis (on card).
Issue: Apr. 7, 2006. For: 300th Birth Anniversary.

Cancel: First Day, Philadelphia PA, special illustration: *Franklin's outlined portrait.*
 (Figure 14) THREE MAST SAILING SHIP (Admirals Farragut & Poerter on stamp)
Issue: Feb. 18, 1837. For: Navy issue.

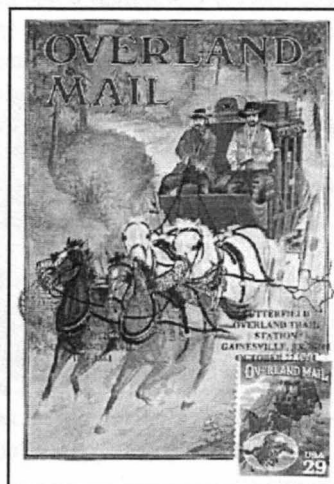
Cancel: Oct. 23, 1954, Washington DC

(Figure 15) OVERLAND MAIL BY WAGON. Issue: Oct. 18, 1994.

For: Legends of the West. Cancel: Oct. 22, 1994, Gainesville TX, special mention:
 "CUTTERFIELD OVERLAND TRIAL" concordant illustration of a Wagon (triple).

(Figure 16) PAUL REVERE, on card: Paul Revere statue as a Mounted Messenger for
 the Whig patriots of Boston. Issue: Apr. 18, 1958.

For: Liberty issue. Cancel: Jan. 8, 2000, Boston MA, social mention and illustration.



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (Part 2 - Continued)

by George Constantourakis

SCIENTIST AND INVENTOR

Franklin was a prodigious inventor. Among his many creations were the lightning rod(1752), the glass armonica(1762), the Franklin stove(1741), bifocal glasses(1783-84), and the flexible urinary catheter. He began the electrical research, along with other scientific inquiries. Franklin proposed that "vitreous" and "resinous" electricity were not different types of "electrical fluid", but the same electrical fluid under different pressures. He was the first to label them as positive and negative respectively and the first to discover the principle of conservation of charge. In 1750, he published a proposal for an experiment to prove that lightning is electricity by flying a kite in a storm. On June 15, 1752 Franklin conducted his famous kite experiment and also successfully extracted sparks from a cloud. Franklin was insulated (not in a conducting path, as he would have been in danger of electrocution in the event of a lightning strike). Franklin was aware of the dangers and offered alternative ways to demonstrate that lightning was electrical, as shown by his use of the concept of electrical ground. Franklin performed this experiment not in the way that is often described, flying the kite and waiting to be struck by lightning, instead he used the kite to collect some electric charge from a storm cloud, which implied that lightning was electrical. See, for example, the 1805 painting by Benjamin West of Benjamin Franklin drawing electricity from the sky. Franklin's electrical experiments led to his invention of the lightning rod. He noted that conductors with a sharp point were capable of discharging silently, and at a far greater distance. He concluded that this knowledge could be of use in protecting buildings from lightning, by attaching "*upright Rods of Iron, made sharp as a Needle... and from the Foot of those Rods a Wire down the outside of the Building into the Ground;*" In 1753, in recognition of his work with electricity, Franklin received the Royal Society's Copley Medal and in 1756 he became a Fellow of the Society.

As postmaster, he went out riding in his carriage to measure the routes and needed a way to keep track of the distance. He invented a simple odometer and attached it to his carriage. Franklin noted a principle of refrigeration by observing that on a very hot day, he stayed cooler in a wet shirt in a breeze. Franklin was interested in how the human body works and looked for ways to help it work better. Ben's older brother John suffered from kidney stones. He developed a flexible urinary catheter that appears to have been the first one produced in America.

In colonial America, most people warmed their homes using fireplace even though it was kind of dangerous. Franklin figured that there had to be a better way. His invention of an iron furnace stove allowed people to warm their homes with less wood and less dangerously. The furnace stove that he invented in 1741, is called a Franklin stove.

Franklin had poor vision and needed glasses to read. He got tired of constantly taking them off and putting them back on, so he decided to figure out a way to make his glasses let him see both near and far. He had two pairs of spectacles cut in half and put half of each lens in a single frame. Now, we call them bifocals (1783-84).

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 17) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN - SCIENTIST, on card: reading at his writing desk, using his *Bifocal Glasses*. Issue: Apr. 7, 2006. For: 300th Birth Anniversary.

Cancel: First Day, Philadelphia PA, special illustration: *Franklin's outlined portrait*.

(Figure 18) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN - SCIENTIST, on card: a 9th century lithograph by Currier and Ives depicting Franklin and his son performing the legendary electricity experiment with a kite. Issue: Apr. 7, 2006. For: 300th Birth Anniversary.

Cancel: First Day, Philadelphia PA, special illustration: *Franklin's outlined portrait*.

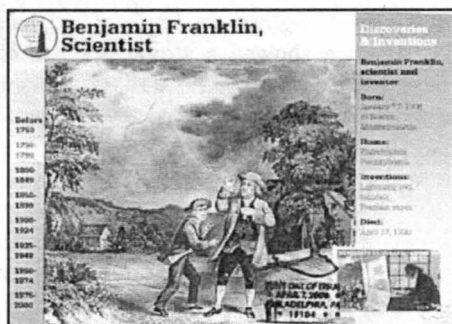
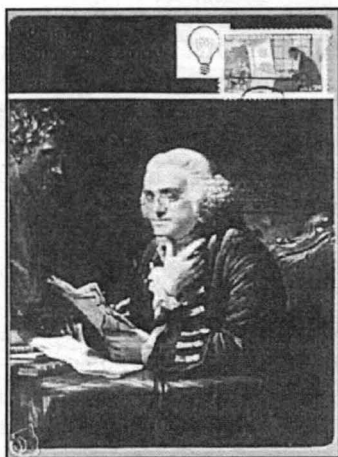
(Figure 19) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN - SCIENTIST, on card: the 1805 painting by Benjamin West of *Benjamin Franklin drawing electricity from the sky*.

Issue: Apr. 7, 2006. For: 300th Birth Anniversary.

Cancel: First Day, Philadelphia PA, special illustration: *Franklin's outlined portrait*.

(Figure 20) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN - SCIENTIST, on card: the 1805 painting by Benjamin West of *Benjamin Franklin drawing electricity from the sky*.

Issue: Jan. 17, 1956. For: 250th Birth Annivers. Cancel: First Day, Philadelphia PA



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (Part 2 - Continued)

Franklin made eight voyages sailing to Europe across the Atlantic Ocean. These long journeys gave him a lot of time to learn about ships and how they worked. In 1784, Franklin suggested following the Chinese model of dividing ships' holds into watertight compartments so that if a leak occurred in one compartment, the water would not spread throughout the hold and sink the ship. In addition, he became very interested in studding ocean currents. Franklin was actually one of the first people to chart the Gulf Stream. He measured its temperature on each of his eight voyages and was able to chart the Stream in detail.

In his old age, he wanted to spend his time reading and studying. He found, however, that it was difficult for him to reach books from the high shelves. Thus in 1785-86, he invented a tool called a long arm to reach the high books. The long arm was a long wooden pole with a grasping claw at the end.

STATESMAN

In 1757, Franklin went to England to represent Pennsylvania. He remained in England to 1775, as a Colonial representative not only of Pennsylvania, but also of Georgia, New Jersey and Massachusetts. Early in his time abroad, Franklin considered himself a loyal Englishman. England had many of the amenities that America lacked. In 1765, America showed a strong opposition to the Stamp Act. Franklin's testimony before Parliament helped persuade the members to repeal the law. While in England, Franklin was growing sick of the corruption he saw in politics and royal circles. Franklin, who had proposed a plan for united colonies in 1754, now would earnestly start working toward that goal. Also when he got a hold of some letters by Hutchinson, the English-appointed governor of Massachusetts, calling for "an abridgment of ... English Liberties" in America. Franklin sent these letters to America where much of the population was outraged. Franklin was then called to the English Foreign Ministry and was condemned in public.

In 1775, Franklin came home. He started working actively for Independence. Franklin was elected to the Second Continental Congress and worked on a committee of five that helped to draft the Declaration of Independence. Though much of the writing is Thomas Jefferson's, much of the contribution is Franklin's. In 1776 Franklin signed the Declaration (see *Figure 22*), and afterward sailed to France as an ambassador to the Court of Louis XVI. Through Franklin's diplomatic skills, the government of France signed a Treaty of Alliance with the Americans in 1778. Franklin also helped secure loans. Franklin was on hand to sign the Treaty of Paris in 1783, after the Americans had won the Revolution. In 1775, Franklin returned to America. He became President of the Executive Council of Pennsylvania. He served as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention and signed the Constitution (see *Figure 23*). In 1789, he wrote an anti-slavery treatise. Franklin died on April 17, 1790 at the age of 84. 20,000 people attended his funeral.

Franklin is one of the Founding Fathers. He used his diplomacy skills to serve his fellow countrymen. His role in the American Revolution was not played out on the battlefields like George Washington, but rather in the halls and staterooms of governments. His clear vision of the way things should be and his skill in both writing and negotiating, helped him to shape the future of the United States of America.

BENJAMIN FRANKLINClockwise from Left:

(Figure 21) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN -STATESMAN Drafting the Declaration of Independence. Ben Franklin, John Adams, Richard Lee and Thomas Jefferson.

Issue: Apr. 7, 2006. For: 300th Birth Anniversary.

Cancel: First Day, Philadelphia PA, special illustration: *Franklin's outlined portrait.*

(Figure 22) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, on Stamp: FRANKLIN, JEFFERSON. on card:

THE SIGNING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE by John Trumbull.

Issue: May 29, 1976. For: Amer. Bicentennial. Cancel: First Day, Philadelphia PA

(Figure 23) THE SIGNING OF THE CONSTITUTION by Howard Chandler Christy in the Capitol. Franklin is in the middle, foreground. Issue: Sept. 17, 1987.

For: 200th Anniversary of the Signing of the Constitution.

Cancel: First Day, Philadelphia PA, special.

(Figure 24) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, on stamp: Marble Bust by anonymous Italian sculptor, after a terra cotta bust by Jean Jacques Caffierri 1777; plus Map of Eastern North America. On card: Drafting the Declaration of Independence. Franklin, Adams and Jefferson in conference. Issue: June 1, 1976. For: American Bicentennial - Join USA - Canada issue. Cancel: First Day, Philadelphia PA.



BENJAMIN FRANKLINClockwise from Left:

(Figure 25) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. Issue: Oct. 20, 1972.

For: Great Americans. Cancel: June 15, 1987. Philadelphia PA, special mention: "WE THE PEOPLE" and his signature.

(Figure 26) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. Issue: May 25, 1976.

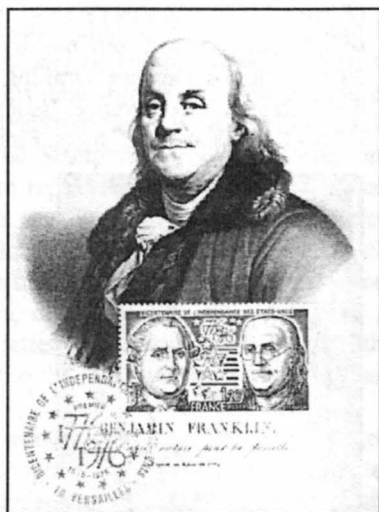
For: American Bicentennial. Cancel: First Day, Versailles, special mention: "1776-1976 BICENTENAIRE DE L' INDEPENDANCE DES ETATS UNIES".

(Figure 27) SIGNING OF THE TREATY OF PARIS 1783. Issue: Sept. 2, 1983

For: 200th Annivesary of the Treaty of Paris. Cancel: First Day, Washington D.C.

(Figure 28) SIGNING OF THE TREATY OF PARIS 1783. Issue: Sept. 2, 1983

For: 200th Annivesary of the Treaty of Paris. Cancel: First Day, Arlington VA, special illustration and mention: "TREATY OF PARIS 1783 STATION".



BENJAMIN FRANKLINClockwise from Left:

(Figure 29) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, Stamp on Stamp.

Issue: May 29, 1997. For: Pacific '97 - 150th Anniversary of Postage Stamps.

Cancel: Sept. 29, 1997, Rome NY, special mention: "150 ANNIVERSARY FIRST POSTAGE STAMPS", concordant illustration (triple).

(Figure 30) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. Issue: May 25, 1985.

For: Ameripex '86 - Chicago. Cancel: First Day, Rosemont IL.

(Figure 31) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN MEMORIAL, 20- foot high marble statue in Philadelphia PA. Issue: May 19, 1938.

For: Presidential issue. Cancel: Apr. 29, 1951, Philadelphia PA.

(Figure 32) BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, marble bust by Houdon (on card). Early and Modern Mail-carrying Vehicles (on stamp). Issue: May 17, 1947.

For: Postage Stamp Centenary issue. Cancel: Feb. 12, 1952, Philadelphia PA.

