# Franklin's Philadelphia

*US History - Unit 2: Colonial America*

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# Learning Targets

- Describe what daily life was like in a colonial city.
- Explain how Franklin turned a club into a public library.
- Explain how a subscription paid for books no one could buy alone.
- Name three civic institutions Franklin helped start.
- Explain how Franklin built the city and also enslaved people.
- Judge how much to trust Franklin's story about himself.

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# A Port City on the Delaware

## A planned city

- Founded in 1682 by William Penn on the Delaware River.
- Laid out on a strict grid between two rivers.
- Named for the Greek words for 'brotherly love.'

## A busy young port

- Ships loaded flour, wheat, and lumber for England.
- New arrivals landed often, looking for work.
- By the 1720s, it was one of the busier colonial ports.

Did You Know: Philadelphia's name means 'brotherly love' in Greek.

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# Runaway to Philadelphia, 1723

| | |
|---|---|
| ✔ **Born in Boston** | Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston in 1706, the tenth son of a candlemaker. |
| ✔ **Bound to his brother** | At twelve, he was bound by contract to his older brother James, a Boston printer, for nine years. |
| ✔ **Apprentice** | A young worker bound by contract to serve a master for a set number of years while learning a trade. |
| ✔ **Runs away, 1723** | Franklin broke that contract and ran away, landing in Philadelphia in October 1723 at seventeen. |

Note: Walking away from a signed work contract was against the law in 1723.

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# Setting Type for a Living

| | |
|---|---|
| **printing press** | A machine that presses inked metal type onto paper to make many copies of the same page. |
| **pamphlet** | A short printed work, cheap to make and pass around, used to argue a case to the public. |

Did You Know: Franklin bought the Pennsylvania Gazette in 1729 and built it into a leading colonial newspaper.

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# Words That Traveled

| | |
|---|---|
| **Poor Richard's Almanack** | Franklin began publishing it every year, starting in 1732. |
| **Wide reach** | It sold widely across the colonies and made 'Richard Saunders' a household name. |
| **Almanac** | A cheap yearly book of calendars, weather guesses, and sayings that most colonial households bought. |
| **Not always original** | Franklin collected and reworded many of the sayings he printed there. |

Did You Know: For many colonial households the yearly almanac was the one book they bought all year.

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# A Club for Mutual Improvement

| | |
|---|---|
| **Junto** | The club of young tradesmen Franklin formed in 1727 to debate questions and help one another get ahead. |

Key Concept: The club's meeting rules required calm debate, not fighting to win.

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# From Club Shelf to Public Shelf

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|---|---|
| ✔ **Members share their own books** | Club members brought books from home to a shared shelf at meetings. |
| ✔ **The shared shelf fails** | Books were damaged or lost, and members grew unwilling to add more. |
| ✔ **Franklin proposes something bigger** | Open a real collection to any paying member, not only club members. |
| ✔ **Subscription library** | A library paid for by members who each contribute money and may borrow from the shared collection. |

Remember: The first plan failed before the better one worked.

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# Turning a Promise Into a Contract

| | |
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| **conveyancer** | A person who writes up legal papers that transfer property or bind people to an agreement. |

Did You Know: Franklin named a real conveyancer, Charles Brockden, who wrote up the library's founding agreement.

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# Fifty Subscribers, Forty Shillings

| What was needed | The number | Why it mattered |
|---|---|---|
| Subscribers needed to start the library | Fifty people | One person alone could not buy a real book collection |
| Payment each subscriber put in at the start | Forty shillings | Enough money, pooled, to order the first books |
| Yearly payment after that | Ten shillings | Kept new books coming after the first purchase |
| People in Franklin's club | About a dozen | Far short of the fifty the plan actually needed |

Remember: It took real effort to find fifty strangers willing to trust a plan on paper.

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# Made Permanent, 1731

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|---|---|
| **charter** | A legal grant that gives an organization official standing and lets it outlive its first members. |

Did You Know: The library's founding articles of agreement are dated July 1, 1731.

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# Buckets, Bags, and Thirty Men

| | |
|---|---|
| ✔ **How it started** | Franklin wrote an essay in 1735 warning Philadelphia about fire; thirty men joined together in December 1736. |
| ✔ **How it worked** | Each man kept leather buckets and linen bags ready at home for a fire. |
| ✔ **Volunteer fire company** | A group of neighbors who agree to keep firefighting gear ready and answer one another's fires without pay. |
| ✔ **It spread** | Other companies across Philadelphia copied the same plan. |

Warning: 'Volunteer' did not mean free of rules - missed duties still cost you.

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# A City of Joined Efforts

| | |
|---|---|
| ✔ **Civic institution** | An organization built and paid for by ordinary residents to serve a whole town rather than one owner. |
| ✔ **A hospital** | Philadelphia's first hospital grew out of the same joining-together method. |
| ✔ **An academy** | An academy for young men later grew into a university. |
| ✔ **Paved and lit streets** | Neighbors pooled money to pave, clean, and light city streets. |

Key Concept: Franklin's real invention was the method, used again and again.

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# Who Was Left Out

- Franklin built Philadelphia's civic life - and was also a slaveholder.
- Franklin and his wife Deborah enslaved at least seven people over the years.
- His newspaper ran ads selling enslaved people and hunting those who escaped.
- A rival Philadelphia printer refused those same ads as morally wrong.
- He later led an abolition society but never freed the people he enslaved.

Remember: This lesson does not let one fact erase the other.

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# Franklin Writing About Franklin

## What the source is

- Written in 1784, more than fifty years later.
- The events described happened around 1730-1731.
- Franklin was about 78; he was 24 when it happened.

## Why to read it carefully

- A memoir is not a transcript of events.
- Franklin chose what to include and leave out.
- The library numbers match outside records.

Tip: A memoir written decades later is still a primary source - just one written with hindsight.

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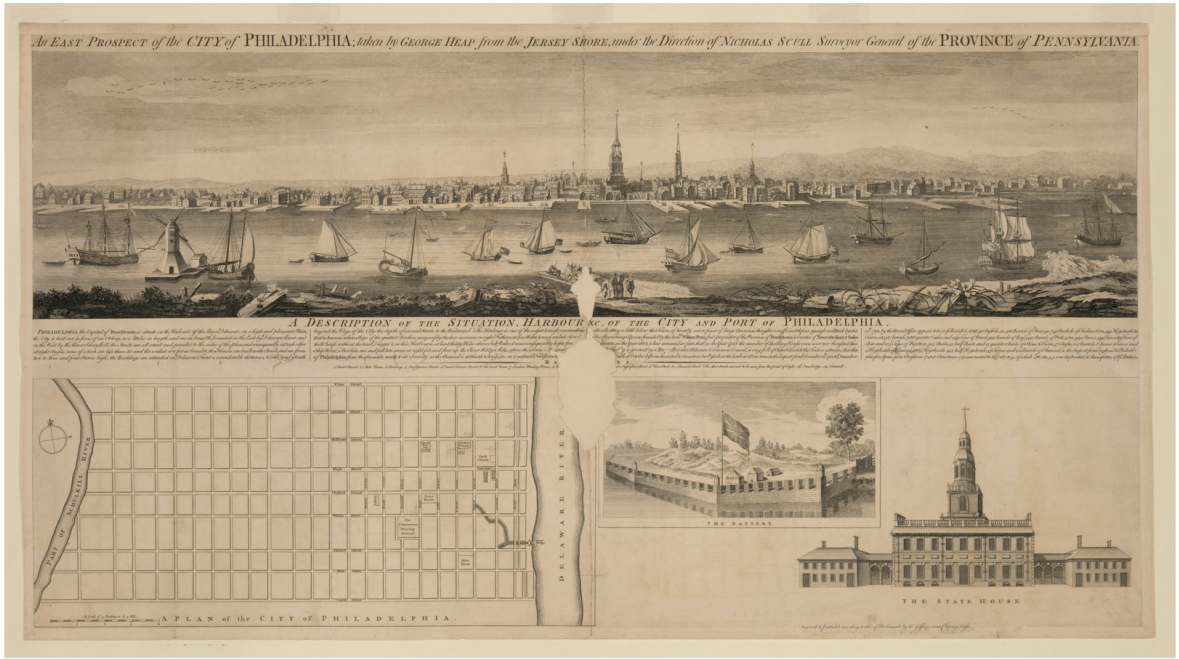
# A City Worth Engraving

- By the 1760s, Philadelphia was one of Britain's busiest ports.
- A London publisher had a wide city view engraved and sold in 1768.
- That is over four decades after Franklin arrived there broke.
- Engravings like this sold to English readers curious about the colonies.
- Philadelphia still followed the same grid Penn laid out in 1682.

Did You Know: This piece was made and sold in London, not Philadelphia.

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# An East Prospect of the City of Philadelphia, 1768




*An East Prospect of Philadelphia, engraved for sale in London, 1768.*

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# Key Takeaways

- Franklin ran away to Philadelphia in 1723 with almost nothing.
- His printing trade gave him money, readers, and a public voice.
- A failed club shelf became a real library once strangers agreed to pay in.
- The same joining-together method built a fire company and more.
- Franklin built civic life and enslaved people in the same years.

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