



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

1706-1790

Called "The First Civilized American" by many, Franklin was undoubtedly Europe's best known and most admired American. A printer, publisher, author, inventor, scientist, public servant and diplomat, Franklin's participation in the Declaration of Independence and in the diplomacy of the American Revolutionary War seem to overshadow his other contributions to modern society and science. As a physical scientist, Franklin contributed words which are still used in the theory of electricity (positive, negative, conductor, etc.). Franklin's early involvement in electrical experiments led him to formulate his "one fluid" theory, a hypothesis which accounted for more of the perceived electrical phenomena than any theorem of its time. Writing to Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen, Franklin commented, "The rapid progress true science now makes, occasions my regretting sometimes that I was born too soon. It is impossible to imagine the height to which we may be carried..." Franklin's works, published and unpublished, included scientific treatises, love letters, essays on morals, philosophy and the gentle wisdom of Poor Richard's Almanac. Born in Boston, Franklin died in Philadelphia having established himself the most eminent American of his time.