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Neurological stamp

Benjamin Franklin (1706-90)

Denied a formal education beyond the age of 10 because of his family's poverty, Benjamin Franklin nevertheless, had many careers—including those of printer, author, philosopher, diplomat, scientist and inventor. He was fortunate not to die prematurely in 1752 when he performed his famous, but hazardous, experiment with a kite during a thunderstorm.

Franklin became the first person to identify lightning as an electrical discharge and as a result of his invention of lightning rods, he saved countless buildings from destruction. The simple terms charge, battery, plus, minus, negative, positive, armature and conductor were invented by him.

His contributions to medicine included serving on a committee with Lavoisier to investigate mesmerism, and inventing bifocal lenses and the flexible catheter. In his letters he discussed lead poisoning, deafness, and the infective nature of colds, and infections from corpses. He wrote a famous discourse on gout, a disease from which he suffered for 41 years. His medical knowledge and rules on health were first published in *Poor Rishard's Almanac*, in 1732. He also carried out research on the physiology of circulation and respiration, wrote extensively on the dilatation of the cardiac ventricles, a cure for yaws and the cause of fevers. Among his large number of inventions are the rocking chair and an efficient stove.

For a time Franklin was Postmaster General of Philadelphia. He was instrumental in forming the academy



that later became the University of Pennsylvania and was the principal founder and first president of the Pennsylvania Hospital (1751), the oldest independent hospital of the American Colonies.

Franklin has been frequently portrayed on postage stamps but in 1976 he was shown with a map of North America on a stamp commemorating the USA's bicentennial. (Stanley Gibbons 1667, Scott 1690).

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