

Yes, we all know who Benjamin Franklin is, but, even if we didn't, we could certainly find out easily enough just by collecting covers—he's all over the place! Banks! Savings & Loans! Hotels! Stamp covers! Various sets about historic Americans!...As well he should be! The guy was a true Renaissance man (even though the Renaissance was already over by that point).

He lived from 1706 to 1790 and was one of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America. A noted mathematician, Franklin was a leading author and printer, satirist, political theorist, politician, scientist, inventor, civic activist, statesman, and diplomat. As a scientist, he was a major figure in the Enlightenment and the history of physics for his discoveries and theories regarding electricity. He invented the lightning rod, bifocals, the Franklin stove, a carriage odometer, and the glass 'armonica'. He formed both the first public lending library in America and first fire department in Pennsylvania. He was an early proponent of colonial unity, and as a political writer and activist he supported the idea of an American nation. As a diplomat during the American Revolution, he secured the French alliance that helped to make independence of the United States possible.

And, Franklin is credited as being foundational to the roots of American values and character, a marriage of the practical and democratic Puritan values of thrift, hard work, education, community spirit, self-governing institutions, and opposition to authoritarianism both political and religious, with the scientific and tolerant values of the Enlightenment. In the words of Walter Isaacson, this makes Franklin, "the most accomplished American of his age and the most influential in inventing the type of society America would become."

Franklin became a newspaper editor, printer, and merchant in Philadelphia, becoming very wealthy,



Franklin

writing and publishing *Poor Richard's Almanack* and the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. Franklin was interested in science and technology, and gained international renown for his famous experiments. He played a major role in establishing the University of Pennsylvania and Franklin & Marshall College and was elected the first president of the American Philosophical Society. Franklin became a national hero in America when he spearheaded the effort to have Parliament repeal the unpopular Stamp Act. An accomplished diplomat, he was widely admired among the French as American minister to Paris and was a major figure in the development of positive Franco-American relations. From 1775 to 1776, Franklin was Postmaster General under the Continental Congress and from 1785 to 1788 was President of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania. Toward the end of his life, he became one of the most prominent abolitionists.

His colorful life and legacy of scientific and political achievement, and status as one of America's most influential Founding Fathers, has seen Franklin honored on coinage and money [and matchcovers!]; warships; the names of many towns, counties, educational institutions, namesakes, and companies; and more than two centuries after his death, countless cultural references. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Franklin]

Wow! No wonder the guy is famous! I actually collect Ben Franklin covers, myself. They comprise one of many sub-categories in my Historical Figures collection. I have hundreds of persons in that collection, but there are only two or three others that can compete with the numbers of Franklin covers I continue to gather. I have 64 currently, all the usual sizes, but, as yet, I haven't seen any Franklin boxes or 10-strikes.

