Benjamin Franklin Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2000

Contact information: http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact

Catalog Record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm73021451

Additional search options available at: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms003048

Prepared by Division Staff
Revised and expanded by Donna Ellis

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2003
Revised 2018 January
Collection Summary
Title: Benjamin Franklin Papers
Span Dates: 1726-1907
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1770-1789)
ID No.: MSS21451
Creator: Franklin, Benjamin, 1706-1790
Extent: 8,000 items
Extent: 40 containers
Extent: 12 linear feet
Extent: 12 microfilm reels
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm73021451
Summary: Statesman, publisher, scientist, and diplomat. Correspondence, journals, records, articles, and other material relating to Franklin's life and career. Includes manuscripts (1728) of his Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion; negotiations in London (1775); letterbooks (1779-1782) of the United States legation in Paris; records (1780-1783) of the United States peace commissioners, including journals kept by Franklin and Richard Oswald; and papers (1781-1818) of Franklin's grandson, William Temple Franklin (1760-1823).

Selected Search Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People
Adams, John, 1735-1826--Correspondence.
Bache, Richard, 1737-1811--Correspondence.
Carmichael, William, -1795--Correspondence.
Cushing, Thomas, 1725-1788--Correspondence.
Dumas, Charles Guillaume Frédéric, 1721-1796--Correspondence.
Franklin, Benjamin, 1706-1790.
Franklin, Williaim Temple, 1760-1823. William Temple Franklin papers.
Hartley, David, approximately 1731-1813--Correspondence.
Hewson, M. S. (Mary Stevenson)--Correspondence.
Ingenhousz, Jan, 1730-1799--Correspondence.
Jay, John, 1745-1829--Correspondence.
Jones, John Paul, 1747-1792--Correspondence.
Lafayette, Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert Du Motier, marquis de, 1757-1834--Correspondence.
Lansdowne, William Petty, Marquis of, 1737-1805--Correspondence.
Laurens, Henry, 1724-1792--Correspondence.
Morris, Robert, 1734-1806--Correspondence.
Oswald, Richard, 1705-1784. Richard Oswald papers.
Sartine, Antoine de, comte d'Alby, 1729-1801--Correspondence.
Vergennes, Charles Gravier, comte de, 1719-1787--Correspondence.
Washington, George, 1732-1799--Correspondence.
Whitefield, George, 1714-1770--Correspondence.
Williams, Jonathan, 1750-1815--Correspondence.

Organizations
Great Britain. Treaties, etc. United States, 1783 September 3.
United States. Continental Congress.

Benjamin Franklin Papers
United States. Legation (France) U.S. Legation (France) letterbooks. 1779-1782.
United States. Postmaster General.

Subjects
Diplomatic and consular service, American--France.
Postal service--United States.

Places
France--Foreign relations--United States.
Great Britain--Foreign relations--United States.
United States--Foreign relations--1775-1783.
United States--Foreign relations--France.
United States--Foreign relations--Great Britain.
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Peace.
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783.

Titles
Benjamin Franklin Papers at the Library of Congress

Occupations
Diplomats.
Publishers.
Scientists.
Statesmen.

Provenance
The papers of Benjamin Franklin, statesman, publisher, scientist, and diplomat, were given to the Library of Congress by
transfer, gift, and purchase, 1903-1968. An addition was transferred from the Library of Congress archives to the collection
in 1989.

Processing History
The papers of Benjamin Franklin were arranged and described in 1968 and prepared for microfilming in 1972. The finding
aid was revised in 2000.

Additional Guides
The papers have been described in Benjamin Franklin, A Register and Index of His Papers in the Library of Congress
(Manuscript Division Reference Department: Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 1973) and in the Library's publication
List of the Benjamin Franklin Papers in the Library of Congress compiled in 1905 by Worthington C. Ford. An index of
selected correspondence is available in the Manuscript Division Reading Room and as a PDF document.

Related Material
Franklin correspondence can also be found in other collections in the Manuscript Division of the Library, including
the Peter Force Collection and the papers of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Edmond Charles Genet, James
McHenry, Silas Deane, and Andrew Ellicott. Other Franklin items in the Library are in the Mrs. Archibald Crossley
Autograph Collection, the J. Pierpont Morgan Book of Signers, the Gaston Tissandier Collection, and the reproductions
from archives in Great Britain (Public Record Office) and France (Ministère des Affaires Etrangères).
Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Benjamin Franklin is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Benjamin Franklin are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Microfilm

A microfilm edition of part of these papers is available on twelve reels. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the microfilm edition as available.

Online Content


Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, Benjamin Franklin Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1706, Jan. 17</td>
<td>Born, Boston, Mass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1718-1723</td>
<td>Apprenticed as a printer to his brother James Franklin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1727</td>
<td>Founded the Junta, a debating club, Philadelphia, Pa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1728</td>
<td>Wrote <em>Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1729</td>
<td>Purchased <em>Pennsylvania Gazette</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1730</td>
<td>Married Deborah Read Rogers (died 1774)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1732-1758</td>
<td>Published <em>Poor Richard</em>, 1732-1747, and <em>Poor Richard Improved</em>, 1748-1758, commonly known under collective title <em>Poor Richard's Almanack</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1736-1751</td>
<td>Clerk, Pennsylvania Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1740</td>
<td>Invented the Pennsylvania fireplace (Franklin stove)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1743</td>
<td>Proposed formation of the American Philosophical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1751</td>
<td>Founded with others, the Academy for Education of Youth (now University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Founded Philadelphia City Hospital, Philadelphia, Pa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Published letters to Peter Collinson, <em>Experiments and Observations on Electricity</em>. London: Printed and Sold by E. Cave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1751-1764</td>
<td>Represented Philadelphia at the Pennsylvania Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1754</td>
<td>Represented Pennsylvania at the Albany Congress</td>
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Scope and Content Note

The papers of Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) span the years 1726 to 1907, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1770-1789. Consisting of correspondence, journals, records, articles, and other material, the collection reflects Franklin's many interests and activities.

Series I relates chiefly to Franklin's mission to France to obtain diplomatic recognition of the rebellious colonies as well as financial and military aid and to participate in the peace negotiations in Paris and London preceding the Treaty of Paris in 1783. The series contains seventeen interrelated volumes chiefly pertaining to Franklin's years in France. Six are letterbooks of the United States legation in Paris, 1779-1782. Other volumes include letters in French to Franklin, 1777-1780; records of the peace commissioners, 1780-1783; negotiations in London, 1775 (original and Franklin's corrected transcript); and Franklin's correspondence with David Hartley, 1775-1781. Single volumes include the Craven Street, London, letterbook, 1772-1773, one of the few pre-Revolutionary Franklin letterbooks to survive; the signed Petition of the First Continental Congress to the King, 16 October 1774; and Richard Oswald's journal concerning the peace commission, 1782.

Series II has been described in the Library's publication List of the Benjamin Franklin Papers in the Library of Congress compiled in 1905 by Worthington C. Ford. Of the fourteen volumes in this series, eleven represent a selection of Franklin's correspondence, 1726-1790 made by William Temple Franklin prior to his departure for London in 1791. The letters bear many editorial annotations, deletions, and other changes made by William Temple Franklin before publication of his three-volume work. This series also contains a volume of notes entitled “Medical, Nature Printing and Addenda” and two volumes of William Temple Franklin's papers.

Series III represents a miscellaneous group of Benjamin Franklin items gathered by the Library. It includes the original manuscript of Franklin's Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion; his correspondence with M. S. Hewson, 1760-1779; a facsimile copy of his ledger as postmaster general, 1775-1778; his correspondence with Jan Ingenhousz, 1777-1785; and other papers, 1728-1841 and undated.

Series IV includes copies of items held by other institutions and transcripts of material from Series I and II which is not on the microfilm of the Library's Benjamin Franklin Papers.

The Addition consists of a letter, 1753, from Franklin to George Whitefield concerning the importance of “good works” in the Christian faith. The letter written in an unknown hand is a print made from a microfilm in the American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in five series:

- **Series I, 1772-1783**
- **Series II, 1726-1818**
- **Series III, 1728-1841**
- **Series IV, 1744-1907**
- **Addition, 1753**
## Description of Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 1-16 REEL 1-4</td>
<td><strong>Series I, 1772-1783</strong></td>
<td>Letterbooks, journals, records of negotiations, a petition, and correspondence. Indexed by name of writer or recipient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 17-30 REEL 5-12</td>
<td><strong>Series II, 1726-1818</strong></td>
<td>General correspondence and miscellaneous papers of Benjamin Franklin and correspondence and other papers of William Temple Franklin. Indexed by name of writer or recipient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 31-32 REEL 12</td>
<td><strong>Series III, 1728-1841</strong></td>
<td>Literary and scientific articles, memoranda, correspondence of Benjamin Franklin and William Temple Franklin, and miscellany.</td>
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<td>Arranged chronologically and indexed by name of writer and recipient.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 33-39 not filmed</td>
<td><strong>Series IV, 1744-1907</strong></td>
<td>Copies of correspondence and miscellaneous material from collections outside the Library of Congress.</td>
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<td>Arranged chronologically and indexed by name of writer and recipient. Transcripts of material from Series I and II are unarranged and unindexed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 39</td>
<td><strong>Addition, 1753</strong></td>
<td>Copy of a letter from Franklin to George Whitefield.</td>
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Benjamin Franklin Papers
## Container List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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| BOX 1-16 REEL 1-4 | **Series I, 1772-1783**  
Letterbooks, journals, records of negotiations, a petition, and correspondence. Indexed by name of writer or recipient. |
| BOX 1 REEL 1   | Records of the United States legation, Paris, France  
Letters in French to Franklin, 1777-1780 (vol. 1)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 2 REEL 1   | Letterbooks  
1779 (vol. 2)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 3 REEL 1   | 1779-1780 (vol. 3)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 4 REEL 1   | 1780 (vol. 4)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 5 REEL 2   | 1781 (vol. 5)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 6 REEL 2   | 1781 (vol. 6)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 7 REEL 2   | 1782 (vol. 7)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 8 REEL 2   | Peace commissioners  
1780-1783 (vol. 8)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 8a REEL 2  | 1780-1783 (vol. 8a)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 9 REEL 2   | Commissioners to France, 1776-1779 (vol. 9)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 10 REEL 3  | Petition of the Continental Congress to the King, Philadelphia, Pa., 1774, Oct. 26 (vol. 10)  
Digital content available |
Digital content available |
| BOX 12 REEL 3  | Oswald, Richard, journal, peace commission, 1782 (vol. 12)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 13 REEL 3  | Franklin's journal, peace commission, 1782 (vol. 13)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 14 REEL 4  | Negotiations in London, England, 1775  
Original autograph (vol. 14)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 15 REEL 4  | Transcript corrected by Franklin (vol. 15)  
Digital content available |
## Series I, 1772-1783

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| BOX 16 REEL 4 | Correspondence with David Hartley, 1775-1781 (vol. 16)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 17-30 REEL 5-12 | Series II, 1726-1818  
General correspondence and miscellaneous papers of Benjamin Franklin and correspondence and other papers of William Temple Franklin.  
Indexed by name of writer or recipient. |
| BOX 17 REEL 5 | 1726, July 22-1774, May 21 (vol. 17)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 18 REEL 5 | 1774, June 10-1777, Sept. 4 (vol. 18)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 18 REEL 6 | 1777, Sept. 7-1778, Oct. 9 (vol. 18)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 19 REEL 6 | 1778, Oct. 20-1781, May 1 (vol. 19)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 20 REEL 7 | 1781, May 4-1782, Jan. (vol. 20)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 21 REEL 7 | 1782, Jan.-1784, Jan. 6 (vol. 21)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 22 REEL 8 | 1784, Jan. 12-1785, May 23 (vol. 22)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 23 REEL 8 | 1785, May 26-1786, Dec. 10 (vol. 23)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 24 REEL 9 | 1786, Dec. 15-1789, Mar. 2 (vol. 24)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 25 REEL 9 | 1789, Apr.-1790, undated (vol. 25)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 26 REEL 10 | Undated (vol. 26)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 27 REEL 10 | Miscellaneous material in French, 1778-1786, undated (vol. 27)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 28 REEL 10 | Medical, Nature Printing and Addenda, 1781-1785, undated (vol. 28)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 29 REEL 11 | Franklin, William Temple, papers  
Correspondence, 1781-1818, undated (vol. 29)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 30 REEL 11 | Correspondence and miscellaneous material, 1814-1818, undated (vol. 30, pt. 1)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 30 REEL 12 | Correspondence and miscellaneous material, 1814-1818, undated (vol. 30, pt. 2)  
Digital content available |
| BOX 31-32 REEL 12 | Series III, 1728-1841  
Literary and scientific articles, memoranda, correspondence of Benjamin Franklin and William Temple Franklin, and miscellany.  
Arranged chronologically and indexed by name of writer and recipient. |
<p>| BOX 31 REEL 12 | Miscellaneous material |</p>
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<th>Container</th>
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<td>BOX 32 REEL 12</td>
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<td>BOX 33-39 not filmed</td>
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<td>Copies of correspondence and miscellaneous material from collections</td>
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<td>Transcripts of material from Series I and II are unarranged and unindexed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 33</td>
<td>Reproduction and miscellaneous material</td>
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<td>1744-1775</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 34</td>
<td>1776-1907, undated</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 35-39</td>
<td>Unarranged transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 39</td>
<td>Addition, 1753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Copy of a letter from Franklin to George Whitefield.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 39</td>
<td>Letter (copy), Benjamin Franklin to George Whitefield, 1753</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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