



THE AMAZING BEN FRANKLIN AND BEN'S BRIDGE

The Ben Franklin Bridge connects the cities of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Camden, New Jersey. It is the oldest of all the bridges crossing the Delaware River in the Philadelphia area.

When this bridge first opened to cars and other traffic in 1926, it was called the Delaware River Bridge.

But in 1955, it was given the name of the American *patriot*, Ben Franklin.

Ben Franklin was born in Boston on January 17, 1706. His father made candles and soap and his older brother James was a printer who printed a newspaper. When he was 12, Ben worked for his brother and that is where he got into trouble.

Young Ben loved to write. He wrote many wonderful letters to his brother's newspaper. Some of the letters had wise and wonderful sayings such as "A penny saved is a penny earned." Ben signed these letters with the name of Mrs. Silence Dogood.

When these letters were printed, it made the newspaper very popular. But it made Ben's brother James very angry when he found out the truth.

So Ben ran away to Philadelphia when he was 17 years old.

In Philadelphia, Ben worked as a printer for a few months before traveling to London, England to learn more about the printing business. But he was not happy there.

At age 20, he left London and returned to Philadelphia, the place that became Ben's home for the rest of his life. He spent many years traveling to France and England but Philadelphia always remained his home.

Ben lived with his wife and children on Market Street near the Delaware River, near where Ben's bridge was later built.

While he was in Philadelphia, he was very busy. Ben started the first library, the first fire company and the first post office. He also was an inventor who invented binoculars, the rocking chair, the lightning rod plus many other things. Ben's inventions helped doctors and scientists make important discoveries. He was known all over the world for his good ideas and ability to help others.

But most important is the fact that Ben Franklin helped to create our new country.

Since the early 1600s, America was a *colony* that was controlled by England. But in 1775, many brave men got together because they were unhappy with the way America was being treated by England and its King.





THE AMAZING BEN FRANKLIN AND BEN'S BRIDGE CONTINUED...

They made a plan to end the English King's control.

Ben Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and George Washington joined with other patriotic Americans to break away from England's rule. The group that made this courageous decision to break away was called the Continental Congress.

These men who fought and worked hard to win America's freedom are also known as our *Founding Fathers*.

One of the Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson, wrote an announcement that told England, and the whole world, that America would not take orders from King George of England. America wanted *independence*.

This announcement was called the *Declaration of Independence*. It was read to the citizens of Philadelphia on July 4, 1776.

Ben Franklin was an important Founding Father. He was very wise about the world because he spent many years living in England and in France.

The new United States government sent Franklin to France so he could help us become allies, or friends, with other countries. When he came back home, he again helped the Founding Fathers write our *Constitution* which was approved in 1787.

He died in Philadelphia on April 17, 1790 at the age of 84. Ben is buried in Christ Church cemetery. Many coins lay on top of his grave because visitors who come to see him toss pennies in honor of this great man.

