

Community Events & Programming Guide  
Celebrating our Country's 250 years of  
innovation in Franklin, Massachusetts 2025

*First Edition*

TOGETHER, LET'S HONOR THE PAST, CELEBRATE THE PRESENT AND INSPIRE THE FUTURE.

## FIRST EDITION FRANKLIN MA250

As we join Massachusetts in commemorating 250 years of American history, Franklin stands at the heart of this momentous celebration. The Town of Franklin Massachusetts rich legacy—home to America's first public lending library and a symbol of progress through education, culture, and civic engagement—reminds us that the stories of the past shape the communities of today.

The Town of Franklin Department of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy asked community organizers to submit their 2025 programming for inclusion in the #FranklinMA250 program booklet. This booklet acts as both a program guide as well as sharing snippets of Franklin's extensive community history.

Programs shared in this booklet (and throughout the Franklin community) are committed to building inclusive, meaningful experiences that reflect the complexity of our shared history.

This first booklet publication has been stylized as a 'vintage academic yearbook,' highlights programs that align with the overarching historical relevance to national MA250 campaign.

Visit [Franklinculture.org](http://Franklinculture.org) to see a full listing of events and programs within Franklin.

Programs are accompanied by a MA250 'Community badge' or sticker, which can be picked up at the events and placed into your yearbook! Shared below are the categories of each badge.



### HISTORIC LEGACY

Programs that celebrate local or state history, such as reenactments, historic tours, or educational talks about key moments in Massachusetts' past.

### INNOVATION & INDUSTRY

Events that highlight the state's impact on industries like technology, education, healthcare, or sustainable practices, linking to Massachusetts' legacy of innovation.

### REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT

Programs focusing on the Revolutionary War era, exploring themes of freedom, independence, and civic responsibility.

### CULTURAL HERITAGE

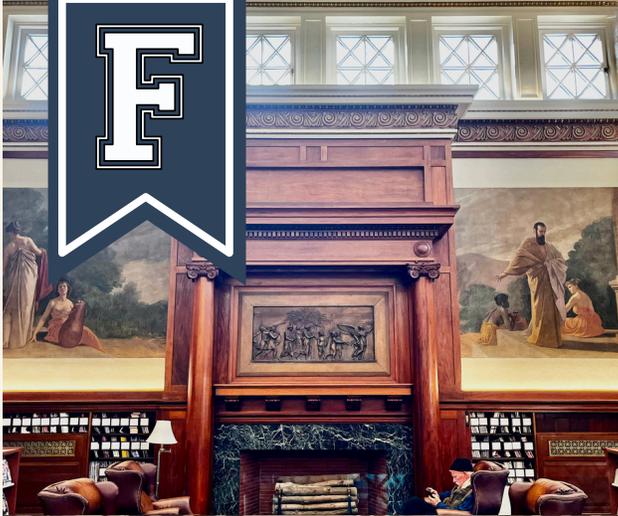
Celebrations of Massachusetts' diverse communities, arts, and traditions, including music, dance, festivals, and culinary experiences.

### ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Events centered on Massachusetts' natural beauty, promoting sustainability and conservation efforts through outdoor activities, clean-up efforts, or green initiatives.

### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Programs that encourage community involvement, from voter education to neighborhood improvements, embodying the democratic ideals of the Revolution.



Ray Memorial Library, Franklin, Mass.



## Visiting Resources



Franklin Walking Routes



Visiting Franklin's Cultural District Includes parking, dining suggestions, and more!



# MA250

## THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP & SUPPORTERS

"I am thrilled to join everyone in Franklin in celebrating our Commonwealth's 250th anniversary, an amazing milestone. Franklin is a beautiful and dynamic place, full of history, culture, and innovation. As the town grows and evolves, its rich and vibrant tradition of scholarship and community continues to be embraced and uplifted.

It is a distinct honor to represent Franklin in the Massachusetts Senate. I'm proud to have supported historic cultural programming and contemporary public art that highlights the town's character and enhances its community spaces, and secured state funding for the town's cultural festival. Franklin's storied history, wonderful people, and limitless potential make it an amazing venue to celebrate Massachusetts' first 250 years and to look ahead to the many years to come!" Senator Rebecca L. Rausch

"Franklin - the home of the first public library in America and birthplace of Horace Mann -- is a town rich in history and exemplifies the spirit of the American Revolution - freedom, independence, and civic responsibility. The 250th anniversary reminds us of the courage and determination of those who fought for freedom and laid the foundation of our great nation. It is also a time for us to come together as a community to reflect on our shared heritage and look forward to the next 250 years of progress and unity. I look forward to journeying with you over the next two years!" Representative Jeff Roy

## A MESSAGE FROM THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Dear Residents and Friends,

As Franklin embarks on the exciting path toward celebrating our nation's 250th anniversary in 2025 and 2026 alongside the "Massachusetts 250" campaign; we are also eagerly looking ahead to our own town's monumental milestone—Franklin's 250th birthday in 2028. This historic event offers us an extraordinary opportunity to reflect on the incredible journey of our country, while also celebrating the unique role Franklin has played in shaping that story.

Franklin, with its deep roots in history and its thriving cultural spirit, has always been a beacon of resilience, creativity, and community. From being home to the first public lending library in America to the vibrant cultural district we proudly showcase today, Franklin has continuously embodied the very essence of our nation's values—innovation, unity, and progress.

As we look toward 2028, we are filled with anticipation and excitement for the events and initiatives that will bring our 250th anniversary to life.

Thank you for being part of this vibrant community. Together, we honor our past, celebrate our present, and look forward to a bright future as we approach this exciting milestone.

With pride and anticipation,

Jamie Helen, Town Administrator

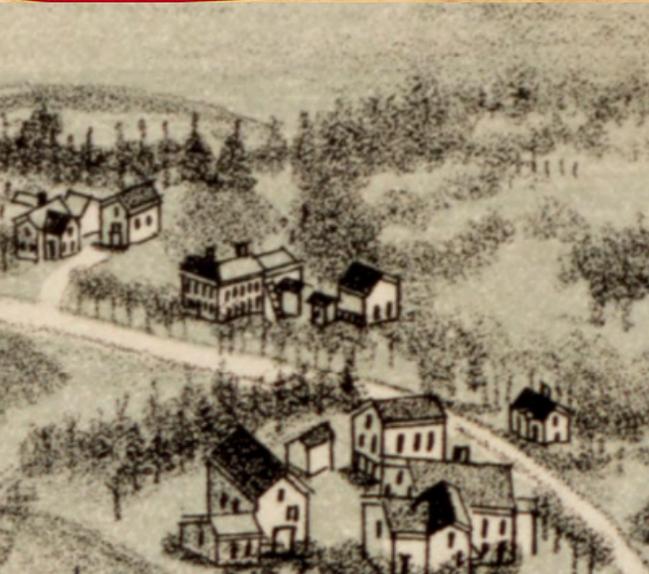
## FRANKLIN'S FIRST PUBLIC ART PRESENTED AT THE FRANKLIN PUBLIC LIBRARY

In 1901, muralist Tommaso Juglaris was commissioned to create artwork for the newly constructed Ray Memorial Library in Franklin, Massachusetts, a project spearheaded by his former student and friend, Henry Hammond Gallison. Gallison persuaded the Ray sisters, daughters of a wealthy woolen mill owner, to honor their late parents, Joseph and Emily Ray, by funding the library's construction. Designed to emulate an ancient Greek temple, the building reflected classical ideals of knowledge and civic virtue, themes that were echoed in Juglaris's mural work.

Within the Reading Room, Juglaris painted murals that celebrated the intellectual and civic achievements of Greek civilization, depicting iconic figures and allegorical scenes that symbolized the pursuit of knowledge, democracy, and cultural enlightenment. His work extended to the Memorial Hall, where he designed friezes to complement the building's classical architecture, reinforcing the Greek ideals of public service and education. Together, these artistic elements elevated the library to a space not only of learning but also of profound cultural inspiration, rooted in the timeless legacy of ancient Greece.



FRANKLIN'S FIRST PUBLIC ART PIECE, COMMISSIONED BY TOMMASO JUGLARIS ON DISPLAY AT THE FRANKLIN PUBLIC LIBRARY



## THE HISTORY OF FRANKLIN'S REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT

Franklin, originally part of the larger town of Wrentham, became its own town in 1778 after years of petitioning. Beginning in the early 1770s, residents in the western part of Wrentham expressed growing frustration with the difficulty of traveling to the town center for meetings, particularly those related to Revolutionary War efforts and local governance. The long distances and poor travel conditions made participation in civic matters nearly impossible for many.

Residents petitioned Wrentham several times to establish a separate town, but these requests were repeatedly denied. However, by 1778, as the pressures of the Revolution mounted, the need for accessible governance became critical. In response to the persistent appeals, the General Court of Massachusetts finally granted the western district independence on February 16, 1778.

The new town was named Franklin in honor of Benjamin Franklin, symbolizing the residents' shared values of independence and intellectual progress. This decision allowed for more effective local governance and strengthened the community's ability to contribute to the Revolutionary cause.

## FRANKLIN, MASSACHUSETTS EST. MARCH 2ND 1778

In the spirit of this legacy, Franklin already boasts a range of community programs that celebrate its history, arts, and culture. As we approach the Massachusetts 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution, we are working collaboratively to weave these existing programs into the broader MA250 celebrations.

By aligning local events, historical initiatives, and marketing campaigns with this statewide effort, Franklin will amplify its unique Revolutionary heritage and bring its story to a larger audience, ensuring the community's contributions to freedom and independence remain at the forefront of this historic commemoration.

Pictured: Engraving from one of Ben Franklin's book donations & snippet of the 1868 Franklin Map.



Scan the QR Code to read more of Franklin's History via "A History of the Town of Franklin, Mass: From Its Settlement to the ...By Mortimer Blake"





# JANUARY 2025



The Franklin Historical Museum | 80 West Central Street  
Open Weekly: Saturday 10am-1pm and Sunday 1-4pm.  
See programs below for special hours. Unless otherwise stated, the museum & shared programs are free and open to the public.

“Ben Franklin Book Week was born in 2024 as "A Community Rediscovery of Ideas, Literature, and the Shared Gift of Language." In its second year, this annual event, now the whole month of January, celebrates the birth month of Benjamin Franklin, America's most inspiring 'founding father.'

Ben's gift of books to the town of Franklin led to creation of the First Free Public Lending Library in North America and set the tone for Franklin's history ever since.

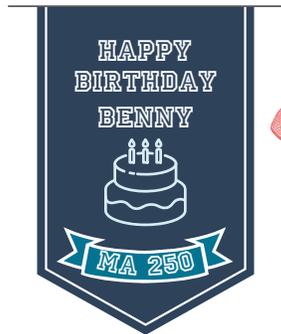
Ben Franklin Month recognizes the town's ongoing book- and learning-friendly culture and the many other ways Franklin has inspired and continues to inspire creative endeavors with a growing slate of events and activities! Ben Franklin Month is led by the Franklin Historical Museum, with support from Franklin Public Library, and Dean College with grant funding provided by Mass. Cultural Council through the Franklin Cultural District Committee.”  
Alan Earls, Franklin Historical Commission Chair



Scan the QR Code to visit BenFranklinBookWeek.com

NOTABLE DAYS  
NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT APPRECIATION DAY, JANUARY 9TH

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY  
3RD MONDAY OF THE MONTH



1 / 17 / 1706  
319 YEARS YOUNG

## FRANKLIN'S PUBLIC LIBRARY | 118 Main Street

Monday January 6th 4pm | Petite Picassos  
Celebrate Ben Franklin's birthday with Miss Lily by creating a painting of his famous Kite Experiment! This paint party is a great fit for children ages 6 through 12! All materials will be provided. Registration is required!

Saturday, January 11th 1-3pm | Ben Franklin Week Kickoff Concert!  
It's Ben Franklin's birthday Week and the Library is kicking it off with a rocking good time with Franklin Underground in Concert! Listen and dance while getting the inside scoop on all the great events going on all around Franklin as we celebrate our namesake!

Friday, January 17th, 1pm | Ben Franklin's Birthday Bash  
Join us as we celebrate the birthday of Ben Franklin himself! Music, games, costume contests, and more! No registration required!

Friday, January 17th, 1-5pm | BIG Library Book Sale

Saturday, January 18th 1pm | Adult Paint Party  
Grown Ups! Are you feeling creative? Celebrate Ben Franklin's birthday with Miss Lily by creating a painting inspired by him! All materials will be provided. Registration is required!

Ongoing for the month of January:

Franklin-ventions: Revolutionary Ideas in Franklin Industries and a look at Ben Franklin's famous inventions.

'Ben Gave us Books and We Gave the World Books.' Display of Franklin-authored books, past and present.

Thursday, January 9th, 6:30pm | JUNTO A Non-Fiction Book Club. Inspired by Ben Franklin's famous Philadelphia reading group, the Junto! The January Book is Think Again by Adam Grant.

Saturday, January 11th, 11am-3pm | Ben Franklin Week Kickoff Concert at the Franklin Public Library with popular local favorite, Franklin Underground!

Sunday, January 12th, Starting at 1:15pm | Second Sunday Speaker Series

Friday, January 17th, Ben Franklin's Birthday | In Collaboration with the Franklin Public Library

Saturday, January 18th | Short Franklin-related films.

Sunday, January 19th | "Music at the Museum," Come learn about and experience the lively musical, 'Ben Franklin in Paris,' that ran for 215 performances on Broadway (1964-5)!

Wednesday, January 22nd | Dean College Student History Reception at Franklin Historical Museum

Thursday, January 23rd, 1:30-8pm | Ben Franklin Autobiography LIVE Readathon. Come and participate!

Sunday, January 26th, 1:30pm | Dean College Marvin Chapel [Located on the Second Floor of the Chapel ] 99 Main Street, Franklin MA, 02038  
Vera Meyer and Ben Franklin's Glass Armonica at Marvin Chapel, Dean College at approximately 1:30. Among Ben Franklin's most amazing inventions is the glass armonica (or harmonica).

Thursday, January 30th | Min Chen, Assistant Dean of Admissions at Boston's Benjamin Franklin Cummings Institute of Technology—a two-year college founded with a bequest from Benjamin Franklin—will host back-to-back afternoon sessions at Franklin High School and Tri-County Vocational School.

“Benjamin Franklin believed that the only way to sustain a democracy was to educate its citizens, so our books were carefully selected for the purpose of elevating the intellect of the tradesmen, farmers, and other country folk of Franklin.

For the most part, the books contain the ideas and ideals of the philosophers of Enlightenment era—beliefs should be backed up by reason, everyone is entitled to personal liberty, religious freedom, and a representative government making fair and sensible laws. Oh, and a couple of juicy best sellers...I'm looking at you Pilgrim's Progress!

And these books became the seeds from which mighty trees, like Horace Mann, would grow. I think Dr. Franklin, if he were here today, would be very pleased with the results of his investment.”

Vicki Buchanio Earls  
Head of Reference Services  
Franklin Public Library

Scan the QR Code to view CBS News Segment, "It happens Here" Featuring Franklin The Home of the First Public Library in America"





# FRANKLIN SUPERLATIVE MOST LIKELY TO BE REMEMBERED

Celebrating Franklin's historic landmarks and legacies.

# 116

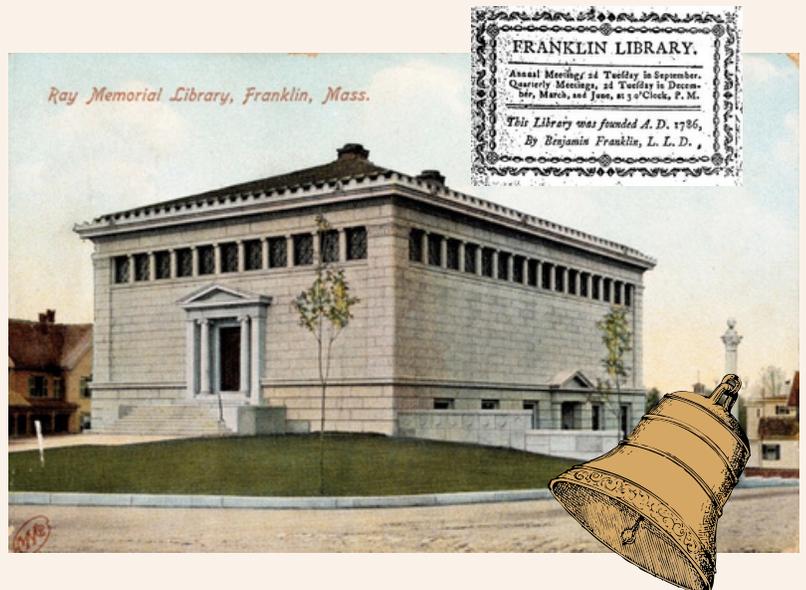
ABERNETHY'S SERMONES, TWO VOLUMES  
 ADDISON'S EVIDENCES, ONE VOLUME  
 AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONS, ONE VOLUME  
 AMERICAN PREACHER, FOUR VOLUMES  
 AMES' ORATION, ONE VOLUME  
 BACKUS' HISTORY, ONE VOLUME  
 BARNARD'S SERMONS, ONE VOLUME  
 BARROW'S WORKS, TWO VOLUMES, FOILIO  
 BELLAMY'S PERMISSION OF SIN, ONE VOLUME  
 BELLAMY'S TRUE RELIGION, ONE VOLUME  
 BLACKSTONE'S COMMENTARIES, FOUR VOLUMES  
 BRAINERD'S LIFE, ONE VOLUME  
 BURKETT ON PERSONAL REFORMATION, ONE VOLUME  
 CAMBRIDGE PLATFORM, ONE VOLUME  
 CHEAP REPOSITORY, TWO VOLUMES  
 CHRISTIAN HISTORY, TWO VOLUMES  
 CLARK'S WORKS, FOUR VOLUMES, FOILIO  
 COOPER ON PREDESTINATION, ONE VOLUME  
 DICKINSON ON THE FIVE POINTS, ONE VOLUME  
 DODDRIDGE'S LIFE, ONE VOLUME  
 DUCHAL'S SERMONES, THREE VOLUMES  
 EDWARDS ON RELIGION, ONE VOLUME  
 EMMON'S SERMONES, ONE VOLUME  
 ERSKINE'S SERMONS, ONE VOLUME  
 FITCH'S POEM, ONE VOLUME  
 FORDYCE SERMONS, ONE VOLUME  
 FUFILLING THE SCRIPTURES, ONE VOLUME  
 GORDON'S TACITUS, FIVE VOLUMES  
 HEMMINGWAY AGAINST HOPKINS, ONE VOLUME  
 HISTORY OF REBELLION, ONE VOLUME  
 HOADLEY'S WORKS, THREE VOLUMES, FOILIO  
 HOPKINS ON HOLENESS, ONE VOLUME  
 HOPKINS SYSTEM, TWO VOLUMES  
 JANEWAY'S LIFE, ONE VOLUME  
 LARNDER ON THE LOGUS, ONE VOLUME, EIGHT VOLUMES  
 LAW ON RELIGION, ONE VOLUME  
 LIFE OF BARON TRENK, ONE VOLUME  
 LIFE OF CROMWELL, ONE VOLUME  
 LOCKE'S WORKS, FOUR VOLUMES, OCTAVO  
 LYNDSEY'S APOLOGY AND SEQUEL, TWO VOLUMES  
 MONTEQUIEN'S SPIRIT OF LAWS, TWO VOLUMES  
 MORAL REPOSITORY, ONE VOLUME  
 NEEDHAM'S FREE STATE, ONE VOLUME  
 NEWTON ON THE PROPHEESIES, THREE VOLUMES  
 PILGRIM'S PROGRESS, ONE VOLUME  
 PRICE AND PRIESTLY, ONE VOLUME, OCTAVO  
 PRICE ON LIBERTY, ONE VOLUME  
 PRICE ON PROVIDENCE, ONE VOLUME  
 PRICE ON THE CHRISTIAN SCHEME, ONE VOLUME  
 PRICE'S MORALS, ONE VOLUME  
 PRICE'S SERMONS, ONE VOLUME  
 PRIDEAUX'S CONNECTIONS, FOUR VOLUMES  
 PRIESTLEY'S INSTITUTES, TWO VOLUMES  
 PRIESTLY'S CORRUPTIONS, TWO VOLUMES  
 RIDGLEY'S WORKS, TWO VOLUMES, FOILIO  
 SHEPARD'S SOUND BELIEVER, ONE VOLUME  
 SPECTATORS, EIGHT VOLUMES  
 STENNET'S SERMONS, TWO VOLUMES  
 STODDARD'S SAFETY OF APPEARING, ONE VOLUME  
 SYDNEY'S WORKS, ONE VOLUME, OCTAVO  
 THE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN DONATION  
 THOMAS' LAWS OF MASSACHUSETTS, ONE VOLUME  
 WATSON'S TRACTS, SIX VOLUMES  
 WATTS ON PASSONS, ONE VOLUME  
 WATTS' LOGIC, ONE VOLUME  
 WATTS' ORTHODOXY AND CHARITY, ONE VOLUME  
 WEST AND LITTLEON ON THE RESURRECTION, ONE VOLUME  
 YOUNG'S NIGHT THOUGHTS, ONE VOLUME

## FRANKLIN PUBLIC LIBRARY 118 MAIN STREET

In 1778, a newly incorporated town in Massachusetts made a bold and symbolic choice to name itself Franklin in honor of Benjamin Franklin, the renowned statesman, inventor, and advocate for education and civic responsibility. As a gesture of gratitude, the town's residents requested a church bell from Franklin. However, in a thoughtful and pragmatic move, Franklin instead donated 116 books, emphasizing the value of knowledge over ceremony. This generous gift laid the foundation for what became the first public library in the United States, as Franklin's town meeting voted in 1790 to make these books available to all residents, free of charge.

This pioneering decision exemplified the ideals of the Enlightenment and Franklin's belief in the transformative power of education. The original collection included works on science, philosophy, and practical knowledge, reflecting Franklin's vision for an informed and capable citizenry.

Over time, the library grew, and in 1904, the Ray family donated the Ray Memorial Building, providing the first permanent home for the collection. The Franklin Library Association managed the library until 1981, when the Town of Franklin assumed responsibility, establishing the Franklin Public Library as a municipal department. Today, the Franklin Public Library continues to serve as a symbol of the town's commitment to education, innovation, and community, honoring the legacy of its namesake, Benjamin Franklin.



Ben,  
 Great Birthday Party! Looking forward in hearing about your inventions! xoxo  
 Franklin Historical Museum

VISIT THE FRANKLIN  
 CULTURE OUR WEBSITE  
 FOR MORE DETAILS



# FEBRUARY 2025

APPRECIATION AND  
AWARENESS  
BLACK HISTORY MONTH

PRESIDENT'S DAY  
3RD FEBRUARY OF THE  
MONTH

NOTABLE DAYS  
NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY  
| SIGNING OF THE 13TH  
AMENDMENT

PRESIDENT'S DAY  
3RD FEBRUARY OF THE  
MONTH

Franklin Public Library  
118 Main Street

Tuesday, February 4th. 7-8pm | Friends of Franklin Public Library Book Club.  
Friends of Franklin Library Community Room. Come join a book club hosted by  
the Friends of the Franklin Public Library!

The Franklin Historical Museum  
80 West Central Street | Saturday 10am-1pm and Sunday 1-4pm

Ongoing Exhibitions, Ending on February 23rd:

- Franklin-ventions: Revolutionary Ideas in Franklin Industries
- 'Ben Gave us Books and We Gave the World Books'

Sunday, February 9th Sunday Speaker Series: Dean College Professor. Dr. Rob Lawson,  
presents "History in Our Backyard!"

Sunday, February 16th, 1:15pm | "Third Sunday" Music at the Museum program - In honor  
of Black History Month the museum will show the short film, The Cry Of Jazz, a 1959.

Thursday, February 20th, 4-6pm | 'Pop Up' Exhibition - "This Love" Collection of mixed  
media artwork created by Artist Amy Adams. It is an interpretation of poems collected,  
childhood memories, and forms of love.



Learn more by  
scanning  
the QR Code



## FRANKLIN FIRE HEADQUARTERS 40 WEST CENTRAL STREET

February 19th, 3-4:30pm | EOC Classroom

This class teaches participants how to recognize cardiac arrest and effectively perform hands-only CPR in order to save a life. This class is for educational purposes only and participants will not receive a CPR certification. Sign up in the QR Code.



Learn more by  
scanning  
the QR Code



## Safe Coalition 31 Hayward St, Franklin, MA

SAFE is a nonprofit dedicated to compassionate, judgment-free support for individuals impacted by substance use, mental health challenges, and related concerns

Ongoing Wednesday's

SAFE Office | WhyTry is a free, one-day prevention program for any youth open to learning about decision-making and building personal resiliency. This program equips students with practical, evidence-based tools to build resiliency, improve problem-solving, strengthen relationships, and foster motivation for success. See QR code for details on how to participate.

Ongoing Friday's, 8:30am-12pm

SAFE Café | Our weekly coffeehouse is open to anyone who would like companionship, judgement-free conversation; a chance to meet our staff, tour the office, get more info on what SAFE does & how to get involved; or just a place to hang out Friday mornings with a warm cup of coffee.

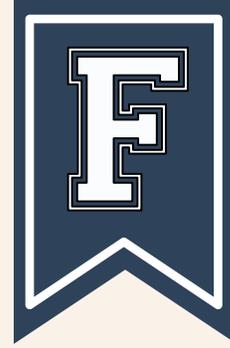


Learn more by  
scanning  
the QR Code

# THE FRANKLIN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

The Franklin Historical Museum was originally founded in 1972 at the former Old South Congregational Meeting House on Washington Street. It was intended to be a way to collect and preserve the history of the Town of Franklin and moved to its current building, the town's original, Town Hall, in May of 2010. It houses a collection of approximately 4,000 objects dating from the last 300 years to the present, including furniture, paintings, textiles, agrarian tools, photographs, instruments, and historical documents. Some items related to indigenous peoples are believed to be much older. The building itself was constructed in 1842.

The programs and exhibitions of the FHM tell the stories of the Town with the aim of bolstering a greater understanding and enduring respect for its peoples and its history. The Museum's programs usually include a monthly Second Sunday Speaker Series, elementary school field trips, and participation in Town cultural festivals such as the annual Harvest Festival. The permanent exhibits housed in the FHM include a timeline of Town history, a tribute to Town veterans, a Federal Parlor room based on one of the Town's oldest home, and a timeline of the life of its most famous son, Horace Mann, who was born in Franklin in 1796. The FHM also creates temporary and revolving exhibits which have included Franklin Bridal Gowns, Military Uniforms Then and Now, A Tribute to Eddie Grant (Major League Baseball player born in Franklin who died a hero in World War I), Elections in Franklin, and Women in Franklin.



## FRANKLIN SUPERLATIVE MOST LIKELY TO BE REMEMBERED

Highlighting programs or events that bridge Franklin's history with its future.

Learn more by scanning the QR Code



### FRIENDS OF THE FRANKLIN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Paula Vozzella - President  
Warren Revell - Vice President  
Debbie Pellegri - Treasurer  
Sandra Howard - Secretary  
Elaine Costello  
John Yoder



### THE FRANKLIN HISTORIC COMMISSION

- Alan R. Earls, Chair
- William J. Lee, Secretary
- Randy La Rosa, Member
- Phyllis Malcom, Member
- Scott Mason, Member
- Paul M. Pisani, Member
- Janice K. Prentice, Member

The Historical Commission provides for the preservation, protection, and development of the historic and archaeological assets of Franklin. Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 PM in the Library Room of the Franklin Historical Museum, 80 West Central St.

The activities of the commission encompass many areas including: research on places of historical or architectural value, working with the State Archaeologist in conducting surveys and reporting on sites, supporting educational activities, establishing historic districts, providing information for genealogical searches, and operating and maintaining the Franklin Historical Museum.



Learn more by scanning the QR Code

# MARCH 2025

APPRECIATION AND AWARENESS  
WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH



Learn more by scanning  
the QR Code

**Franklin Historical Museum**  
80 W Central Street

Ongoing | Scale Model of Franklin Train Tracks c.  
1932 Exhibit, created by Scott Mason

Sunday, March 2 | Town of Franklin's 246th  
Birthday

Saturday, March 8th | International Women's Day

Sunday, March 9th | Second Sunday Speaker Series  
PROB Joe Landry



## The History of Straw Hat Making in Franklin

In the early 19th century, Franklin, Massachusetts, became a center for straw hat manufacturing, a craft that showcased the ingenuity and entrepreneurship of its residents—particularly two women, Betsy Metcalf and Louisa Harding. These visionary women are credited with starting the straw hat making trend that would significantly impact Franklin's local economy.

In 1798, a young Betsy Metcalf crafted her first straw hat, using local materials and a technique she adapted from observing imported bonnet styles. Her innovative design was practical, fashionable, and affordable, quickly catching the attention of others in the community. Inspired by Metcalf's success, Louisa Harding expanded the practice, organizing local women into small-scale production groups. Together, they turned hat making into a cottage industry that offered supplemental income to families in the area.

Straw hat making soon became a thriving local enterprise, with Franklin women braiding straw and weaving it into hats that were in demand across New England. This work provided a rare opportunity for women to participate in the economy during a time when their roles were largely confined to the domestic sphere.

The craft flourished for decades, with Franklin gaining a reputation for its high-quality straw hats. The efforts of Betsy Metcalf and Louisa Harding not only sparked a local economic trend but also highlighted the potential of women as entrepreneurs and contributors to community growth. Today, their legacy endures as a symbol of Franklin's entrepreneurial spirit and the pivotal role of women in shaping its history.



Buy your tickets to the Black Box Theater, "Little Women" coming up in June 2025.

Note about collaborative Exhibition presented by the Franklin Historical Museum

1798-1840'S

- Betsy Metcalf, a young Franklin resident, crafts her first straw hat using locally sourced materials. Her innovative design inspires others in the town to take up straw hat making.

Early 1800s:

- Louisa Harding expands on Metcalf's work, organizing women into small-scale production groups, turning straw hat making into a cottage industry in Franklin.

1820s-1830s:

- The demand for straw hats grows, and Franklin women begin producing hats for sale in nearby cities. This early cottage industry becomes a key economic activity for the town.

1840s:

- The success of home-based hat making leads to the establishment of small workshops. These workshops centralize production, increasing output and improving quality control.

1850'S-1890'S

1850s:

- Larger hat manufacturing factories begin to emerge in Franklin, responding to the growing market demand for straw hats. This marks the transition from a cottage industry to industrial-scale production.

1860s:

- The Civil War era creates new opportunities for Franklin's hat manufacturers, as straw hats become popular accessories for women in the North.

1870s-1880s:

- Franklin is recognized as a regional hub for hat manufacturing, with several factories employing both men and women. Straw hats are exported beyond Massachusetts, enhancing the town's reputation in the industry.

1890s:

- Changes in fashion trends begin to impact the demand for straw hats. Some factories diversify their products or close operations as the industry faces challenges.

1900'S

Early 1900s:

Hat manufacturing in Franklin declines as new fashion trends favor different materials and styles. Industrial advances also shift production to larger urban centers.

Today:

While the hat manufacturing industry no longer thrives in Franklin, the town remembers its unique contribution to regional commerce. Betsy Metcalf and Louisa Harding's pioneering efforts remain a celebrated part of Franklin's history, showcasing the resourcefulness and entrepreneurial spirit of its residents.

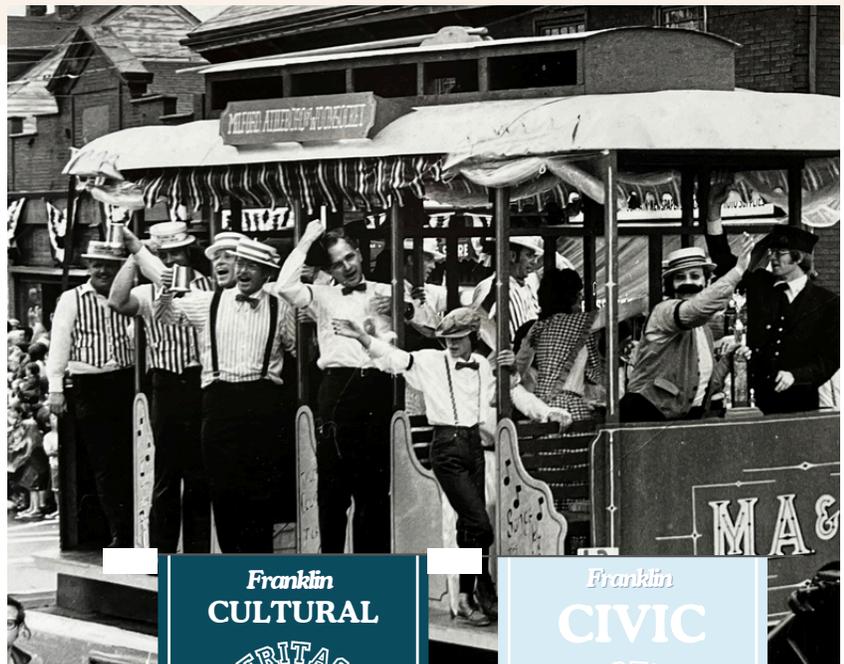
This timeline highlights the rise and eventual decline of Franklin's hat manufacturing industry, reflecting both the town's ingenuity and its ability to adapt to changing economic landscapes.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION  
MARCH 5TH, 2025

The Town of Franklin is excited to welcome Michael Bobbitt, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and Emily Devlin, LICSW, Head of Strategic Partnerships & Clinical Innovation at Art Pharmacy, for a Community Conversation on how the arts can play a vital role in supporting health and well-being in Franklin.

With funding from the Town's opioid settlement funds, Franklin is launching Art Pharmacy—a nationally recognized program that connects individuals to arts and cultural engagements as a tool for healing, social connection, and overall wellness. The Town's is piloting a program in Franklin specifically for substance use prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery support.

We are seeking partners from across Franklin's arts, culture, and social services sectors to help bring these programs to life. Whether you're part of a cultural organization, a wellness or mental health provider, a social services agency, or a business focused on community well-being, this is an opportunity to collaborate and make a difference.



Learn more by scanning the QR Code

