

A Long Contract

It was agreed that Franklin would work for his brother for nine years in exchange for food, a room, and clothing.

◀ Franklin as a boy working in his brother's printing shop

His Early Years

Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston on January 17, 1706. He taught himself to read the Bible when he was just five years old.

His father hoped he would become a preacher, but this was not a good fit for Franklin. More than anything Franklin wanted to be a sailor. His father said, "No way!"

Franklin's brother James had his own newspaper. Franklin became James's **apprentice** (uh-PREN-tis) when he was 12 years old. This was how he became a printer.

Boston Gazette ▶
from 1721 printed by James Franklin



◀ Franklin working as an apprentice

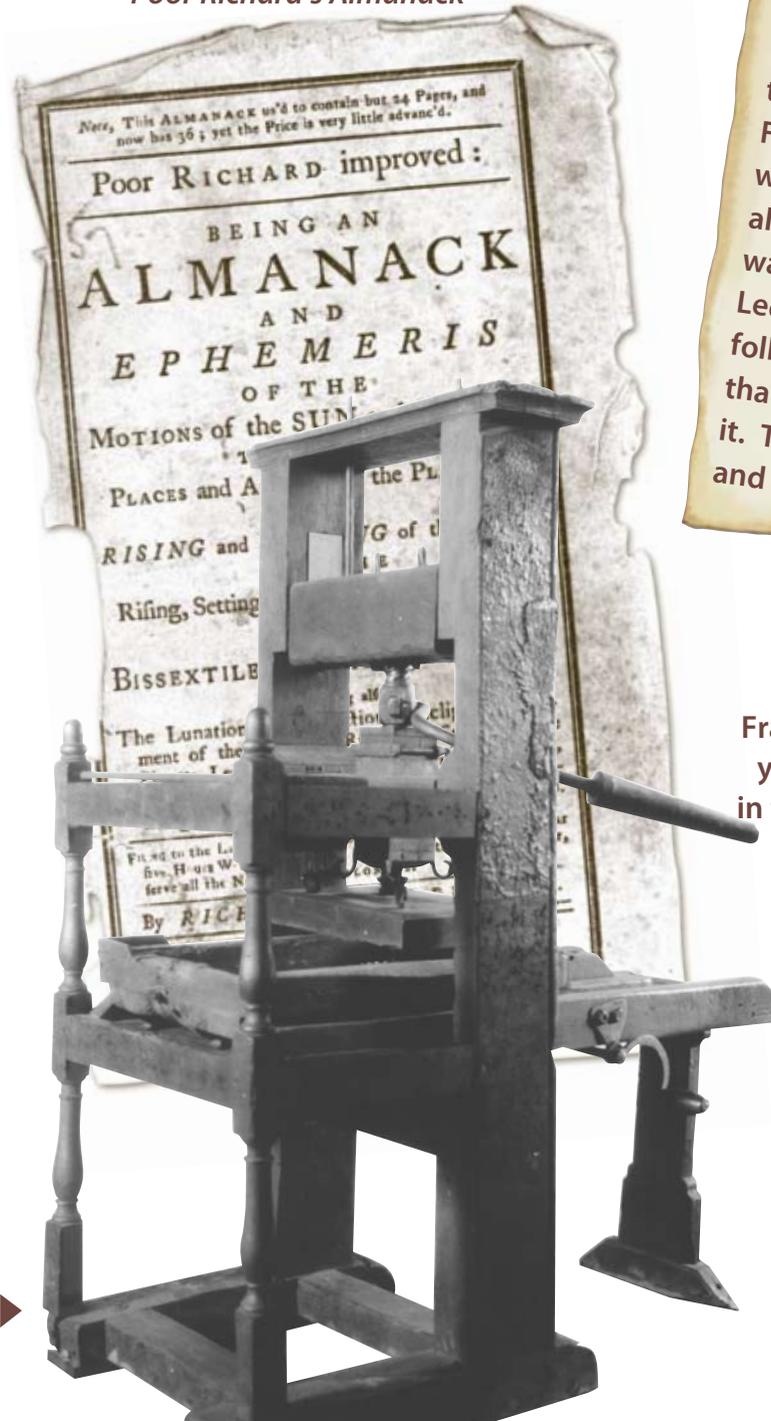
Becoming a Printer

James Franklin received letters signed by Mrs. Silence Dogood. He printed the letters in his newspaper. No one knew who Mrs. Dogood was. She made fun of the latest fashions and social events. Her letters made the newspaper very popular. Little did people know that it was Benjamin Franklin who was actually writing these letters.

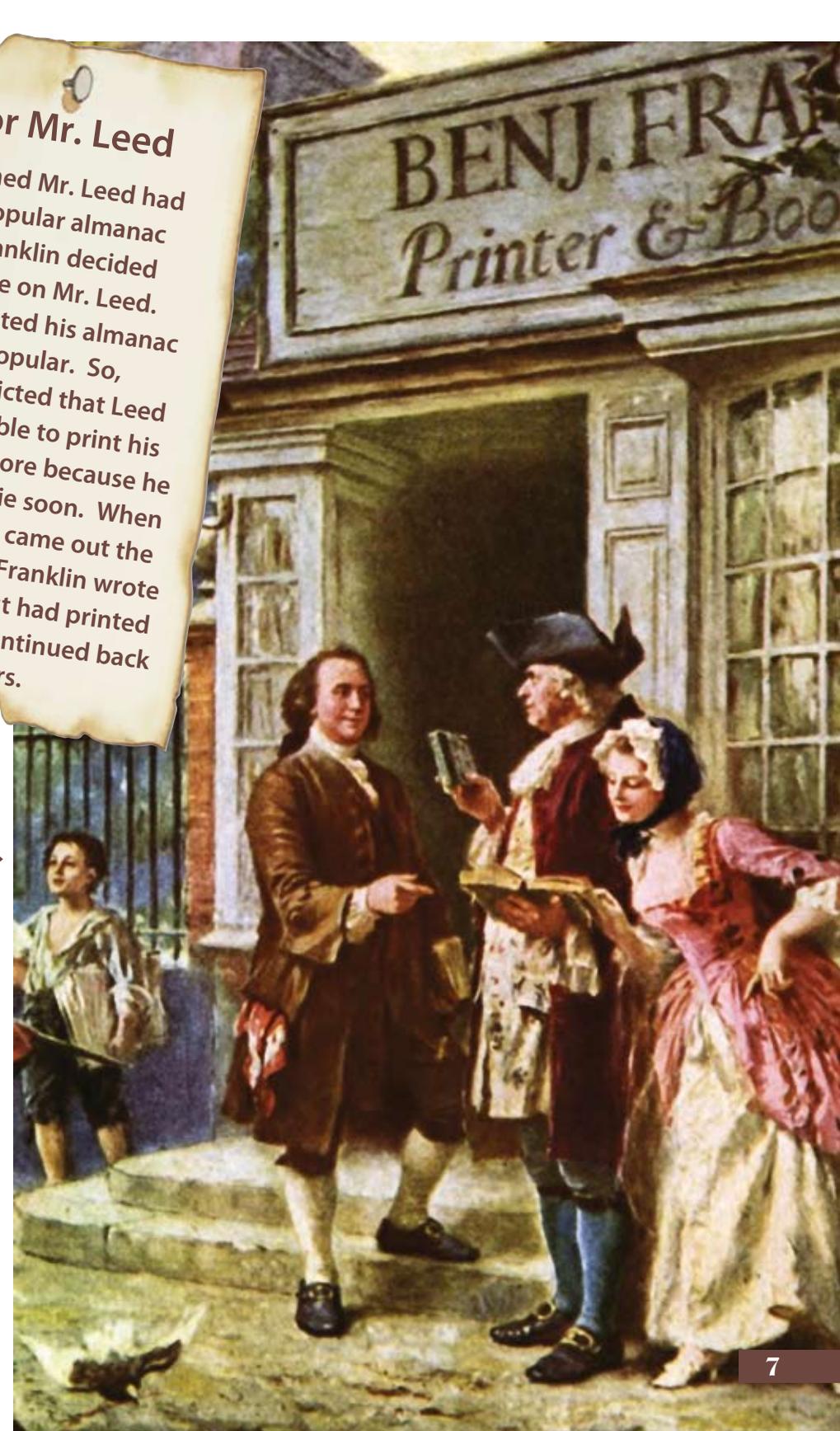
Ten years later, Franklin started his own printing business. He was probably best known for his book *Poor Richard's Almanack*. **Almanacs** (OL-muh-naks) were printed yearly. Each year, the almanac predicted the weather. It also told about the special city events planned for the year.

Franklin's printing press ▶

▼ Title page of the 1748 *Poor Richard's Almanack*



▶ Franklin, as a young man, in front of his print shop



Poor Mr. Leed
A man named Mr. Leed had the most popular almanac in town. Franklin decided to play a joke on Mr. Leed. Franklin wanted his almanac to be more popular. So, Franklin predicted that Leed wouldn't be able to print his almanac anymore because he was going to die soon. When Leed's almanac came out the following year, Franklin wrote that Leed's ghost had printed it. This joking continued back and forth for years.