26 Fascinating Founding Fathers Facts - mental_floss - List Show (242)

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Hi, I'm John Green. Welcome to my salon. This is Mental Floss on YouTube.

1. And did you know that before Ben Franklin was on money he printed money? He started his career as a printer and went on to own a press that made all the money for colonial Delaware and Pennsylvania.

2. He also had a strange method for deterring counterfeiters. He spelled Pennsylvania incorrectly on all of his money. That way, when counterfeiters copied the bills, they thought they were working from a fake version and would correct the spelling, and then Franklin could catch them! Those are just two of the many amazing facts about the American founding fathers that I'm gonna share with you today in this video presented by our friends at *History*.

(Intro)

3. So everyone knows about Paul Revere's famous ride, but did you know that it included a monumental DUI? In order to get to Lexington to warn of the impending British invasion, Revere had to travel through Medford, the rum capital of America. He stopped long enough to get suitably drunk, and then the stealthy ride that Revere had intended turned into a loud and drunken rampage. In fact, he was so rowdy that patrolling Red Coats detained him for an hour before letting him go. Of course, by then he had made enough of a racket to let everyone know that trouble was brewing.

4. And speaking of brewing, one of the men Revere was on a mission to find and alert was Samuel Adams, who worked in his father's malt house as a maltster.

5. His name is now synonymous with the beer, of course, but that is not really Sam Adams' face on the label. Poor Samuel wasn't known for his good looks so a rumor spread that the Boston brewery used handsomer Paul Revere's portrait for their logo, but technically it is a picture of Sam Adams. Just a very, very flattering one, like, multiple Instagram filters.

6. The other person Revere was trying to track down during his drunken ride was John Hancock, best know for his, you know, John Hancock, his huge and ornate signature. But his signature on the Declaration of Independence was actually kept secret for months after the signing because all of the signatures were, out of fear for the signer's safety.

7. Hancock's successor as the president of the Continental Congress was South Carolina's Henry Laurens, a man who serves as an example of why the term "founding fathers" shouldn't be synonymous with great people. For one thing, Laurens got rich and powerful because he was a partner in North America's largest slave trading house.

8. After Laurens, John Jay became president of the Continental Congress, and he was a strong opponent of slavery. He actually introduced legislation to abolish slavery in New York as early as 1777.

9. Jay was in fact, so popular, that he was nominated and elected into office twice without his knowledge. The first time was in 1784 when he returned from Europe after negotiating the Treaty of Paris and, upon coming home, found that Congress had named him Secretary of Foreign Affairs, a job that he would come to hate.

10. Later, while Jay was serving as the first Chief Justice at the Supreme Court in 1794, President George Washington sent him to London to negotiate yet another peace treaty. And when Jay came back from that trip, he found that he had been elected Governor of New York. Surprise!

11. Speaking of surprises, you may be shocked to hear that Ben Franklin was an expert swimmer. Is there anything he wasn't good at? As a child, he loved swimming in Philadelphia's Schuylkill River and went on to consider opening schools for young runners and swimmers before going on to do, you know, essentially everything else.

12. And to be a proper polymath you must, of course, sleep very little. Franklin reportedly awoke at 5 in the morning every day and didn't go to bed until 1 a.m.

13. That said, Ben Franklin was a big fan of convenience and even laziness. Like for instance, he invented a mechanical arm to retrieve shelved books and a system where he could unlock his door from bed by activating a pulley.

14. Moving on to another Benjamin, Benjamin Rush was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and he was also a physician, today known as the first doctor to believe that mental illness was a disease and not something to be blamed on demons.

15. As the so-called father of American psychiatry, Dr. Rush paved the way for the humane treatment of the mentally ill, but not all of his treatments would be considered humane by today's standard. For instance, he was a strong believer in blood purging. Although, back then, who wasn't? And he also strapped some of his patients to spinning boards to force their blood to flow outwards.

16. He also invented the tranquilizing chair, a device that seems like it would be the opposite of tranquilizing. To achieve tranquillization, the patient would be strapped into a seat and immobilized before having a box placed on their head to deprive their senses. Boy, would I rather vacation on the beach or in the tranquilizing box? I can't decide.

17. Anyway, Rush was friends with both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson and knew them well during their famous and heated feuds. One night, the doctor had a dream about his friends, in which they reconciled their differences. He wrote Adams and Jefferson to tell them all about it and his dream became a self-fulfilling prophecy as the two statesmen reached out to talk to each other. Then they wound up renewing their friendship. And then they died on the same day. It's very cute.

18. Not only was it the same day, Jefferson and Adams both died on July 4th, exactly 50 years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

19. Adams and Jefferson were also linked by their shared love of pets. Jefferson had two pet grizzly bear cubs and Adams had a dog named Satan.

20. Now, Satan's a weird name for a dog, but George Washington might take the cake when it comes to our founding fathers pet naming skills. Three of our president's dogs were named Drunkard, Mopsy, and Sweetlips. [pointing to items in salon] Alright, I hereby christen you Mopsy, you're Sweetlips. Elephant, you're Drunkard. I will remind you, these are the dudes that we are still looking up to 230 years later. We're still like, "but what would the owner of Sweetlips say about this?"

21. Ben Franklin's fellow founding fathers didn't want him to draft the Declaration of Independence because they were worried he might try to sneak a joke into it.

22. They clearly were familiar with his work like the time that he wrote the Royal Academy asking them to find a way to make his farts stop smelling.

23. Franklin liked that letter enough to sign it under his own name, but he wrote many essays, books, and more under a whole slew of pseudonyms. They included Richard Saunders, Silence Dogood, Anthony Afterwit, Polly Baker, Alice Addertongue, Busy Body, Benevolous, Cecilia Shortface and Martha Careful.

24. The last two were used by Franklin to make fun of Samuel Keimer, his former employer, whom he accused of stealing his ideas.

25. Ben Franklin was many things: brilliant, ambitious, incredibly hard working, astonishingly petty, but he also coined many of the electricity-related terms we use today including battery, conductor, and electrician.

26. And finally, I return to my salon to tell you that Ben Franklin was also prolific when it came to alcohol. In 1737, Franklin published a list of over 200 synonyms for getting drunk.

Thanks for watching Mental Floss on YouTube, which is made with the help of all of these nice people and was made possible by our friends at *History*. Be sure to check out their new series *Sons of Liberty*. And as we say in my home town, don't forget to be awesome.