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Becoming Benjamin Franklin: The Autobiography and the Life

Ormond A. Seavey

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Becoming Benjamin Franklin: The Autobiography and the Life Ormond A. Seavey
This is the first book to examine Franklin's Autobiography systematically in relation to the life history from which it was drawn. It also considers the Autobiography in terms of eighteenth-century conventions of autobiography and Enlightenment conceptions of the self. Seavey emphasizes the cultural and historical importance of Franklin as a writer. Unlike most historians' treatments of Franklin, this study sees Franklin's activity as author of his own life history as central to his importance, thus locating Franklin's life in the history of self-consciousness in the eighteenth century. Unlike conventional approaches to biography, Seavey's study sets apart the Autobiography and its provenance for special focus. However, like a biography, this is also a study of Franklin's personality as it developed from his birth is Boston to his death. His own self-understanding has posed a particular challenge to the students of his life. The great impediment to biographies of Franklin is that he took charge of the territory first. He was intensely aware of his own identity all his life, and this book takes a more comprehensive view of his writings as manifestation of a developing self.

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