

0. POWERS OF THE MIND - Story Preface

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In 1980, the U.S. Postal Service honored Benjamin Banneker, and his work as a surveyor, with a postage stamp. Born in the British colony of Maryland, in 1731, Benjamin was never a slave.

Benjamin Banneker, a free black, prepared an Almanac for 1792 which his publishers called "an extraordinary effort of genius."

Enclosing a manuscript copy of his first almanac to Thomas Jefferson, Banneker sent a letter to the drafter of the Declaration of Independence on August 19, 1791. The son of a slave reminded the future President of the opening words in the Declaration of Independence: "All men are created equal."

Jefferson's response, which reflects his ambivalent attitude toward slavery, states:

...no body wishes more ardently to see a good system commenced for raising the condition [of blacks] to what it ought to be...

Recommending Banneker's work, James M'Henry (a white friend) noted:

I consider this Negro as a fresh proof that the powers of the mind are disconnected with the colour of the skin...

M'Henry further observed:

...But the system that would assign to these degraded blacks an origin different from the whites, if it is not ready to be deserted by philosophers, must be relinquished...

Banneker's detailed work is extraordinary. (Follow the link to review it.)

The United States outlawed transatlantic slave trading in 1808, but uprooting Africans from their homes continued even after the slave trade was outlawed.

Demand for cheap labor in "the new world" was strong.

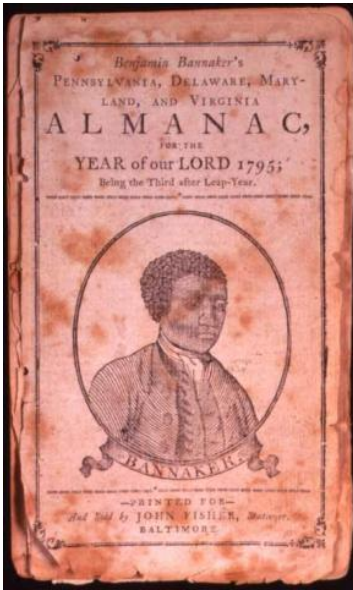
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/POWERS-OF-THE-MIND-Slave-Voices>

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/POWERS-OF-THE-MIND-Slave-Voices>

Media Stream



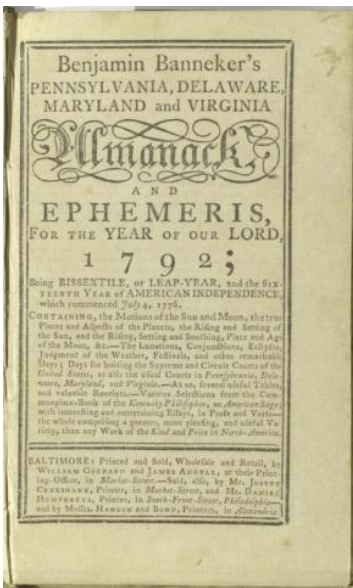
Almanac - by Benjamin Banneker

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

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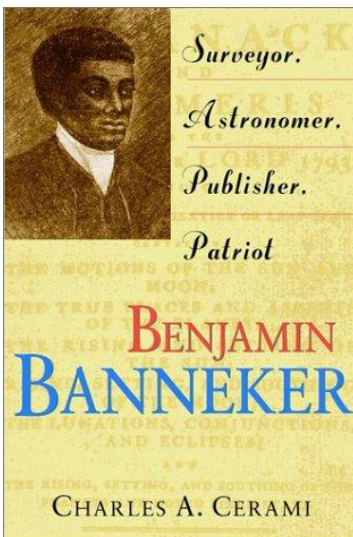
Almanac for 1792 - by Benjamin Banneker

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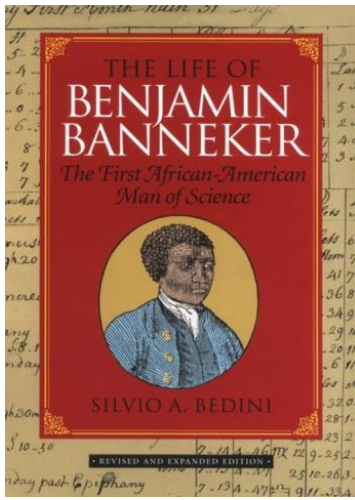


Benjamin Banneker - by Charles A. Cerami

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The Life of Benjamin Banneker - by Silvio A. Bedini

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