



FRANKLIN COURT

Architects: Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Inc.
Location: Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia, PA
Client: United States National Park Service
Area: 30,000 sf
Construction Cost: \$4,750,000
Completion: 1976



This museum and memorial to Benjamin Franklin rests on the site of the home Franklin built for himself, set back from Market Street in Philadelphia’s historic Old City. The challenge was to design a contextually appropriate but distinctive structure: imaginatively serving educational and memorial purposes, conveying the site and builder’s rich history, and reflecting Franklin’s spirit and accomplishments. Our response departed from the usual museum and memorial architecture by placing the main exhibit area underground and designing a steel “ghost” structure representing the original house. This preserved the site of Franklin’s garden as open space. Viewing ports *in situ* allow visitors to see the few archaeological remains of the house unearthed during earlier research. Quotes from Franklin’s letters to his wife during the house’s construction are engraved in the paving.

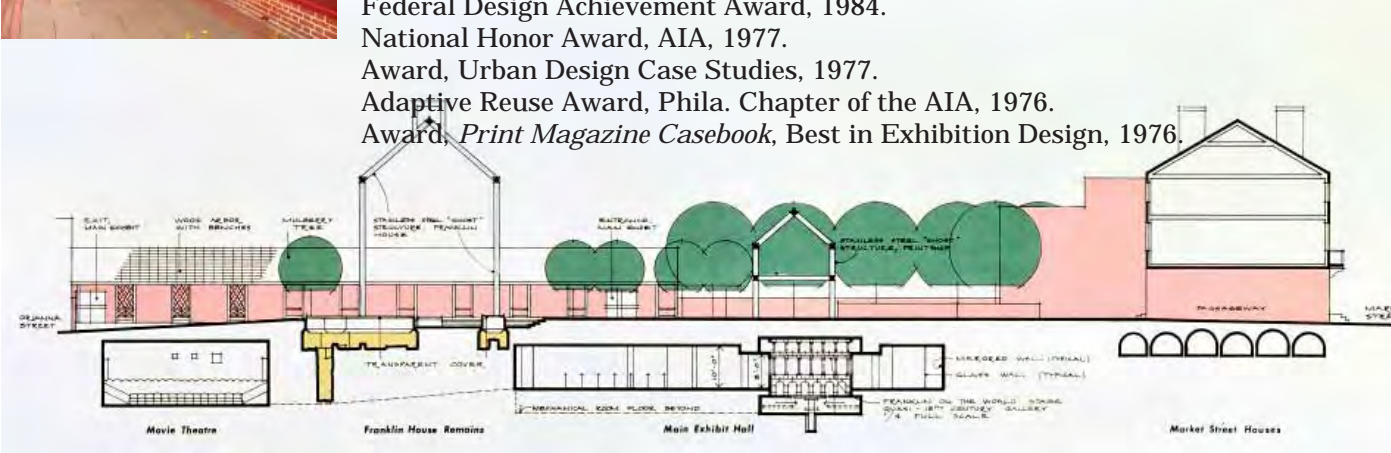


Five historic houses that once faced Market Street were reconstructed. Two are archaeological exhibits and the others house administrative offices and a shop. As in Franklin’s time, they enclose the garden beyond. The entry to the memorial through a passageway under these houses offers a sense of discovery and drama, of both physical and temporal movement. The inner court’s landscaping recalls an 18th century garden while providing comfortable yet sturdy visitor accommodations.



Franklin Court is now one of the most visited attractions in Independence Park. It’s also used by nearby residents and workers from surrounding office buildings during lunchtimes. As in Franklin’s day, it serves as a quiet oasis off a bustling commercial street.

- Awards:*
- Presidential Design Award, 1984.
- Federal Design Achievement Award, 1984.
- National Honor Award, AIA, 1977.
- Award, Urban Design Case Studies, 1977.
- Adaptive Reuse Award, Phila. Chapter of the AIA, 1976.
- Award, *Print Magazine Casebook*, Best in Exhibition Design, 1976.





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