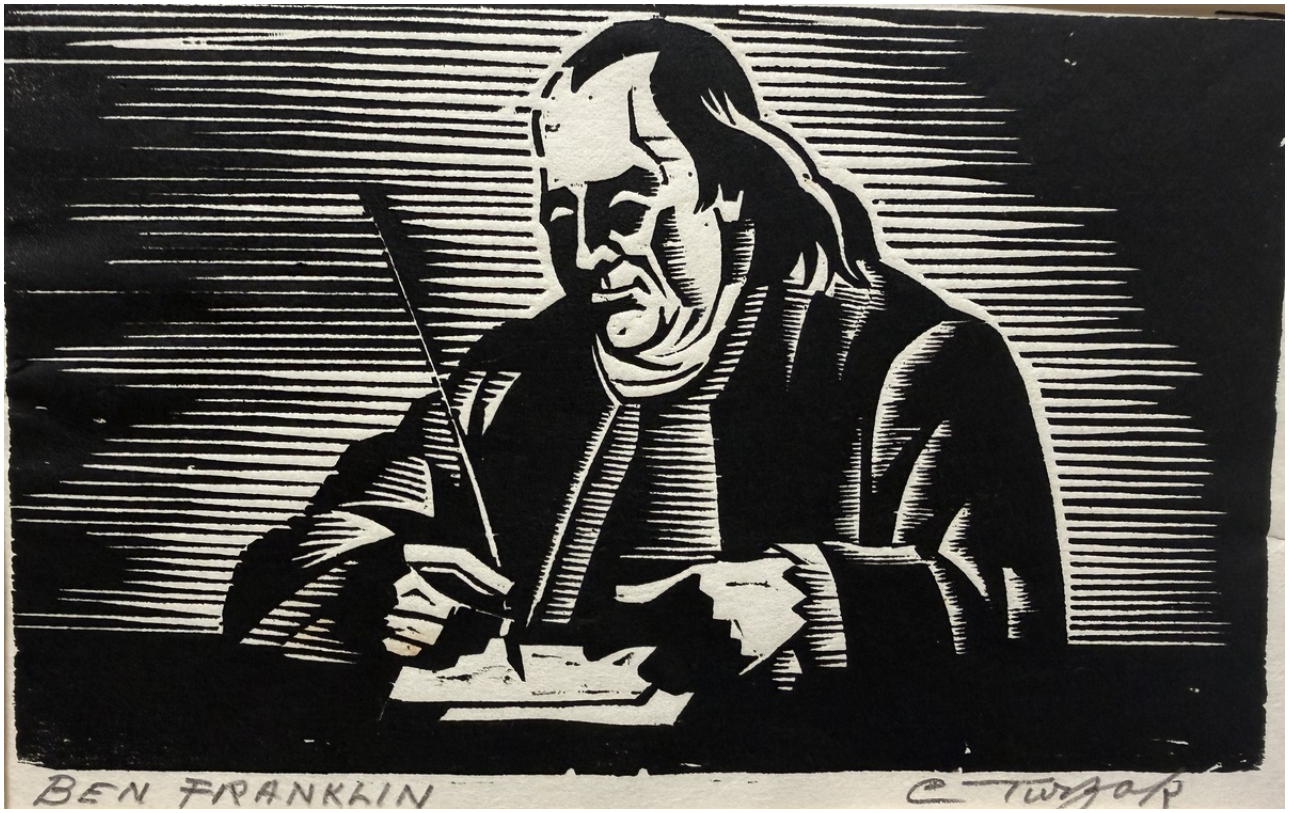

Charles Turzak (American, 1899 - 1986)
Benjamin Franklin, ca. 1935
Woodcut on paper
4 1/4 x 7 inches
Signed and titled in pencil
#23365

Charles Turzak

Charles Turzak was one of Chicago's greatest printmakers of the Art Deco-era. Son of a coal miner, Charles Turzak was born in Streeter, IL in 1899. In 1920, Turzak won the first prize a cartoon contest sponsored by the Purina company and he used his prize money to enroll in the Art Institute of Chicago. Best known as a print maker, in the 1920s & 30s, he created woodcuts of many of Chicago's most notable buildings, including the Merchandise Mart, Palmolive Building and the Old Water Tower, among others. In 1933, he was commissioned to create woodcuts of many of Chicago's most iconic buildings to illustrate a guidebook called "All About Chicago" by John and Ruth Ashenhurst" that featured the upcoming Century of Progress Exhibition in Chicago. During the 1933 World's Fair, Turzak sold a book and collection of prints he created about Abraham Lincoln. Later, he created other series of prints dedicated to other patriots, such as Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton. Some of these prints also illustrated Federal Hardware and Implement Mutuals Company of Dallas calendars.

Charles Turzak exhibited at the Art Institute if Chicago in 1940, and also created a WPA post office mural in Lemont, IL. His works can be found in the collections of such museums of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Terra Foundation of American Art, the Smithsonian, Washington, D.C, among others. Later in life, Turzak retired to the Orlando Florida area, where he continued to create prints and paint until his death in 1986.