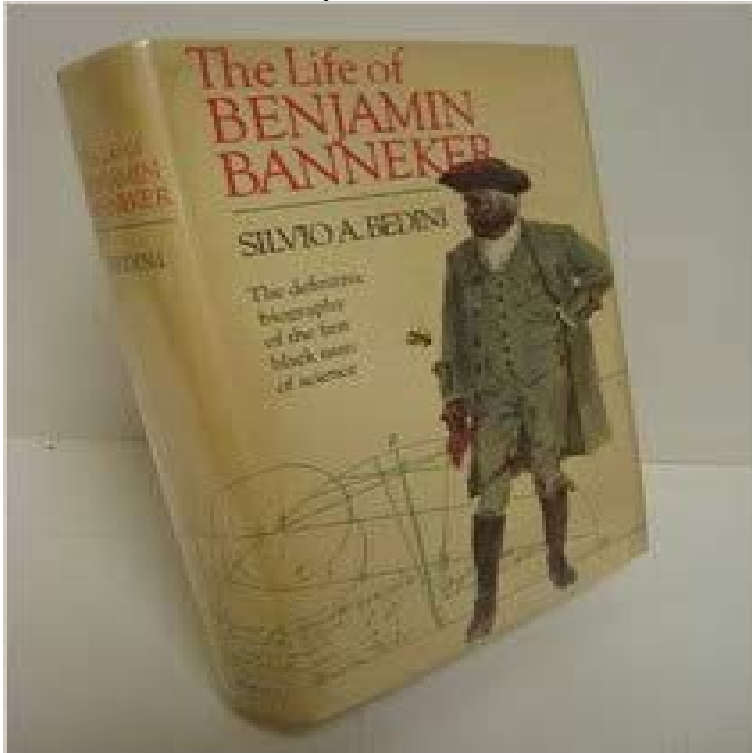


# The Life of Benjamin Banneker



Originally published by Scribner in 1972 to wide praise and critical acclaim, Silvio Bedini's work remains the definitive biography of Benjamin Banneker, the self-educated mathematician and astronomer who became America's first black scientist. Born a free man in Maryland in 1731, he had little formal education but developed a remarkable aptitude for mathematics. He assisted in surveying the area that was to become the District of Columbia, but his real achievement came with the creation of almanacs. Through much of the 1790s, his work influenced daily life in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. In 1791 he took up his pen and wrote to Thomas Jefferson, arguing that the treatment of blacks in the young United States was unwarranted and unfair. In his own time, antislavery activists hailed his accomplishments, and today his life is honored as a model of achievement. But as is the case with many famous lives, myth and legend have begun to cloud history. In recent years, Banneker has been memorialized for things he did not do, such as designing the city of Washington.

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