Founding Figures

Architects of the First Free Nation

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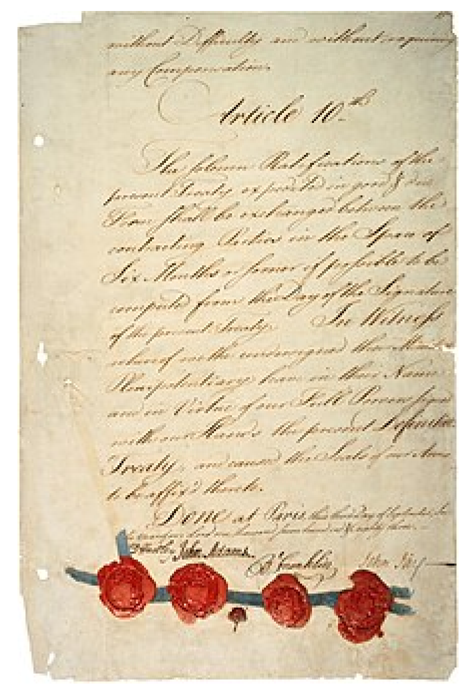
Founding Fathers of the United States

Declaration of Independence, an 1819 painting by John Trumbull, depicts the Committee of Five (John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston) presenting their draft to the Second Continental Congress on June 28, 1776[1]

The **Founding Fathers of the United States**, or simply the **Founding Fathers** or **Founders**, were a group of American revolutionary leaders who united the Thirteen Colonies, led the war for independence from Great Britain, and built a frame of government for the new United States of America upon classical liberalism and republican principles during the latter decades of the 18th century.

Historian Richard B. Morris in 1973 identified seven figures as key Founding Fathers: John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and George Washington, based on the critical and substantive roles they played in the formation of the country's new government.[2][3] Adams, Jefferson, and Franklin were members of the Committee of Five that drafted the Declaration of Independence. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay were authors of *The Federalist Papers*, advocating ratification of the Constitution. The constitutions drafted by Jay and Adams for their respective states of New York (1777) and Massachusetts (1780) were heavily relied upon when creating language for the U.S. Constitution.[4] Jay, Adams, and Franklin negotiated the Treaty of Paris (1783) that would end the American Revolutionary War.[5] Washington was Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army and was president of the Constitutional Convention. All held additional important roles in the early government of the United States, with Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison serving as president. Jay was the nation's first chief justice, Hamilton was the first Secretary of the Treasury, and Franklin was America's most senior diplomat, and later the governmental leader of Pennsylvania.


without Difficulty and without requiring any Compensation.

Article 10th

The solemn Ratifications of the present Treaty expedited in good & due Form shall be exchanged between the contracting Parties in the Space of Six Months or sooner if possible to be computed from the Day of the Signature of the present Treaty. In Witness whereof we the undersigned their Ministers Plenipotentiary have in their Name and in Virtue of our Full Powers signed with our Hands the present Definitive Treaty, and caused the Seals of our Arms to be affixed thereto.

Done at Paris

Signature page of the Treaty of Paris of 1783 that was negotiated on behalf of the United States by John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and John Jay

The term Founding Fathers is sometimes more broadly used to refer to the Signers of the embossed version of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, although four significant founders – George Washington, John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison – were not signers.[6] *Signers* is not to be confused with the term *Framers*; the Framers are defined by the National Archives as those 55 individuals who were appointed to be delegates to the 1787 Constitutional Convention and took part in drafting the proposed Constitution of the United States. Of the 55 Framers, only 39 were signers of the Constitution.[7][8] Two further groupings of Founding Fathers include: 1) those who signed the Continental Association, a trade ban and one of the colonists' first collective volleys protesting British control and the Intolerable Acts in 1774,[9] and 2) those who signed the Articles of Confederation, the first U.S. constitutional document.[10]

The phrase *Founding Fathers* is a 20th-century appellation, coined by Warren G. Harding in 1916.[11]

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Background

The First Continental Congress met briefly in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1774, consisting of 56 delegates from all thirteen American colonies except Georgia. Among them was George Washington, who would soon be drawn out of military retirement to command the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War. Also in attendance were Patrick Henry and John Adams, who, like all delegates, were elected by their

respective colonial assemblies. Other delegates included Samuel Adams from Massachusetts, John Dickinson from Pennsylvania and New York's John Jay. This congress, in addition to formulating appeals to the British crown, established the Continental Association to administer boycott actions against Britain.

The Albany Congress of 1754 was a conference attended by seven colonies, which presaged later efforts at cooperation. The Stamp Act Congress of 1765 included representatives from nine colonies.

When the Second Continental Congress convened on May 10, 1775, it essentially reconstituted the First Congress. Many of the same 56 delegates who attended the first meeting participated in the second.[12] New arrivals included Benjamin Franklin and Robert Morris of Pennsylvania, John Hancock of Massachusetts, John Witherspoon of New Jersey, and Charles Carroll of Carrollton of Maryland, who was named as a late delegate due to his being Roman Catholic. Hancock was elected Congress president two weeks into the session when Peyton Randolph was recalled to Virginia to preside over the House of Burgesses. Thomas Jefferson replaced Randolph in the Virginia congressional delegation.[13] The second Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence. Witherspoon was the only active clergyman to sign the Declaration. He also signed the Articles of Confederation and attended the New Jersey (1787) convention that ratified the Federal Constitution.

The newly founded country of the United States had to create a new government to replace their governance by the British Parliament. The U.S. adopted the Articles of Confederation, a declaration that established a national government with a one-house legislature. Its ratification by all thirteen colonies gave the second Congress a new name: the Congress of the Confederation, which met from 1781 to 1789.[14] The Constitutional Convention took place during the summer of 1787, in Philadelphia.[15] Although the convention was called to revise the Articles of Confederation, the intention from the outset for some including James Madison and Alexander Hamilton was to create a new frame of government rather than amending the existing one. The delegates elected George Washington to preside over the convention. The result of the convention was the United States Constitution and the replacement of the Continental Congress with the United States Congress.

Social background and commonalities

The Founding Fathers represented a cross-section of 18th-century U.S. leadership. According to a study of the biographies by Caroline Robbins:

> The Signers came for the most part from an educated elite, were residents of older settlements, and belonged with a few exceptions to a moderately well-to-do class representing only a fraction of the population. Native or born overseas, they were of British stock and of the Protestant faith.[16][17]

Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States, by Howard Chandler Christy (1940)

They were leaders in their communities; several were also prominent in national affairs. Virtually all participated in the American Revolution; at the Constitutional Convention at least 29 had served in the Continental Army, most of them in positions of command. Scholars have examined the collective biography of the Founders, including both the signers of the Declaration and of the Constitution.[18]

Education

Low Memorial Library at Columbia University. Five Founding Fathers were educated at Columbia (then named King's College), and two would serve as presidents of the university following the Revolutionary War.

Many of the Founding Fathers attended or graduated from the colonial colleges, most notably Columbia (known at the time as "King's College"), Princeton originally known as "The College of New Jersey", Harvard, Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, and the College of William and Mary. Some had previously been home schooled or obtained early instruction from private tutors or academies.[19] Others had studied abroad. Ironically, Benjamin Franklin who had little formal education himself would ultimately establish the College of Philadelphia (1755); "Penn" would have the first medical school (1765) in the thirteen colonies where another Founder, Benjamin Rush would eventually teach.

With a limited number of professional schools established in the U.S., Founders also sought advanced degrees from traditional institutions in England and Scotland such as the University of Edinburgh, the University of St. Andrews, and the University of Glasgow.

George Washington served as president of the 1787 Constitutional Convention.

Colleges attended

- College of William and Mary: Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Harrison V[20]
- Harvard College: John Adams, Samuel Adams, John Hancock and William Williams
- King's College (now Columbia): John Jay, Alexander Hamilton,[21] Gouverneur Morris, Robert R. Livingston and Egbert Benson.[22]
- College of New Jersey (now Princeton): James Madison, Gunning Bedford Jr., Aaron Burr, Benjamin Rush and William Paterson
- College of Philadelphia later merged into the University of Pennsylvania: eight signers of the Declaration of Independence and twelve signers of the U.S. Constitution[23]
- Yale College: Oliver Wolcott, Andrew Adams
- Queen's College (now Rutgers): James Schureman
- James Wilson attended the University of St. Andrews, the University of Glasgow,[24]

Advanced degrees and apprenticeships

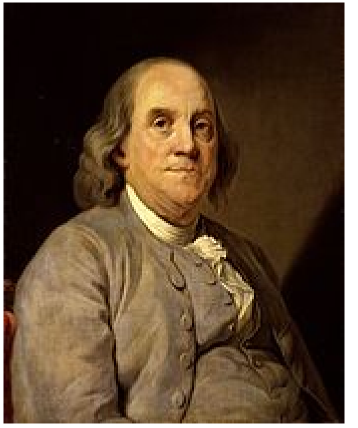
Doctors of Medicine

- University of Edinburgh: Rush [25]
- University of Utrecht, Netherlands: Williamson

Theology

- University of Edinburgh: Witherspoon (attended, no degree)
- University of St. Andrews: Witherspoon (honorary doctorate)

Legal apprenticeships



Benjamin Franklin, an early advocate of colonial unity, was a foundational figure in defining the US ethos and exemplified the emerging nation's ideals.

Several like John Jay, James Wilson, John Williams and George Wythe[26] were trained as lawyers through apprenticeships in the colonies while a few trained at the Inns of Court in London. Charles Carroll of Carrollton earned his law degree at Temple in London.

Self-taught or little formal education

Franklin, Washington, John Williams and Henry Wisner had little formal education and were largely self-taught or learned through apprenticeship.

Demographics

The great majority were born in the Thirteen Colonies, but at least nine were born in other parts of the British Empire:

- England: Robert Morris, Button Gwinnett
- Ireland: Butler, Fitzsimons, McHenry and Paterson
- West Indies: Hamilton
- Scotland: Wilson and Witherspoon

Robert R. Livingston, member of the Committee of Five that drafted the Declaration of Independence.

Many of them had moved from one colony to another. Eighteen had already lived, studied or worked in more than one colony: Baldwin, Bassett, Bedford, Davie, Dickinson, Few, Franklin, Ingersoll, Hamilton, Livingston, Alexander Martin, Luther Martin, Mercer, Gouverneur Morris, Robert Morris, Read, Sherman, and Williamson.

Several others had studied or traveled abroad.

Occupations

The Founding Fathers practiced a wide range of high and middle-status occupations, and many pursued more than one career simultaneously. They did not differ dramatically from the Loyalists, except they were generally younger and less senior in their professions.[27]

- As many as thirty-five including Adams, Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, and Jay were trained as lawyers though not all of them practiced law. Some had also been local judges.[28]
- Washington trained as a land surveyor before he became commander of a small militia.
- At the time of the convention, 13 men were merchants: Blount, Broom, Clymer, Dayton, Fitzsimons, Shields, Gilman, Gorham, Langdon, Robert Morris, Pierce, Sherman and Wilson.
- Broom and Few were small farmers.
- Franklin, McHenry and Mifflin had retired from active economic endeavors.
- Franklin and Williamson were scientists, in addition to their other activities.
- McClurg, McHenry, Rush and Williamson were physicians.
- Johnson and Witherspoon were college presidents.

Finances

Alexander Hamilton served as Washinngton's senior *aide-de-camp* during most of the Revolutionary War; wrote 51 of the 85 articles comprising the *Federalist Papers*; and created much of the administrative framework of the government.

Historian Caroline Robbins in 1977 examined the status of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence and concluded:

> There were indeed disparities of wealth, earned or inherited: some Signers were rich, others had about enough to enable them to attend Congress. ... The majority of revolutionaries were from moderately well-to-do or average income brackets. Twice as many Loyalists belonged to the wealthiest echelon. But some Signers were rich; few, indigent. ... The Signers were elected not for wealth or rank so much as because of the evidence they had already evinced of willingness for public service.[29]

A few of them were wealthy or had financial resources that ranged from good to excellent, but there are other founders who were less than wealthy. On the whole they were less wealthy than the Loyalists.[27]

- Seven were major land speculators: Blount, Dayton, Fitzsimmons, Gorham, Robert Morris, Washington, and Wilson.
- Eleven speculated in securities on a large scale: Bedford, Blair, Clymer, Dayton, Fitzsimons, Franklin, King, Langdon, Robert Morris, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, and Sherman.
- Many derived income from plantations or large farms which they owned or managed, which relied upon the labor of enslaved men and women particularly in the Southern colonies: Bassett, Blair, Blount, Davie,[30] Johnson, Butler, Carroll, Jefferson, Jenifer, Madison, Mason, Charles Pinckney, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Rutledge, Spaight, and Washington.
- Eight of the men received a substantial part of their income from public office: Baldwin, Blair, Brearly, Gilman, Livingston, Madison, and Rutledge.

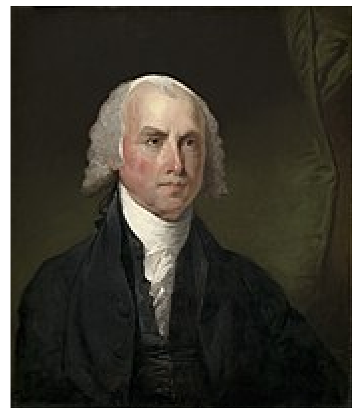
John Jay was president of the Continental Congress from 1778 to 1779 and negotiated the Treaty of Paris with Adams and Franklin.

Prior political experience

Several of the Founding Fathers had extensive national, state, local and foreign political experience prior to the adoption of the Constitution in 1787. Some had been diplomats. Several had been members of the Continental Congress or elected president of that body.

- Benjamin Franklin began his political career as a city councilman and then Justice of the Peace in Philadelphia. He was next elected to the Pennsylvania Assembly and was sent by them to London as a colonial agent which helped hone his diplomatic skills.
- Jefferson, Adams, Jay and Franklin all acquired significant political experience as ministers to countries in Europe.
- John Adams and John Jay drafted the Constitutions of their respective states, Massachusetts and New York, and successfully navigated them through to adoption.
- Jay, Thomas Mifflin and Nathaniel Gorham had served as president of the Continental Congress.

- Gouverneur Morris had been a member of the New York Provincial Congress.
- John Dickinson, Franklin, Langdon, and Rutledge had been governors or presidents of their states.
- Robert Morris had been a member of the Pennsylvania Assembly and president of Pennsylvania's Committee of Safety. He was also a member of the Committee of Secret Correspondence.
- Roger Sherman had served in the Connecticut House of Representatives.
- Elbridge Gerry was a member of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress.
- Carroll served in the Maryland Senate.
- Wythe's first exposure to politics was as a member of Virginia's House of Burgesses.
- Read's entry into the political arena was as a commissioner of the town of Charlestown, Maryland.
- Clymer was a member of the Philadelphia Committee of Safety and the Continental Congress.
- Wilson's time as a member of the Continental Congress in 1776 was his introduction to colonial politics.



James Madison, called the "Father of the Constitution" by his contemporaries

Peyton Randolph, as president of the Continental Congress, presided over creation of the Continental Association.

Nearly all of the 55 Constitutional Convention delegates had some experience in colonial and state government, and the majority had held county and local offices.[31] Those who lacked national congressional experience were Bassett, Blair, Brearly, Broom, Davie, Dayton, Alexander Martin, Luther Martin, Mason, McClurg, Paterson, Charles Pinckney, Strong, and Yates.

Religion

Franklin T. Lambert (2003) has examined the religious affiliations and beliefs of some of the Founders. Of the 55 delegates to the 1787 Constitutional Convention, 28 were Anglicans (i.e. Church of England; or Episcopalian, after the American Revolutionary War was won), 21 were other Protestant, and two were Roman Catholic (D. Carroll and Fitzsimons).[32] Among the Protestant delegates to the Constitutional Convention, eight were Presbyterians, seven were Congregationalists, two were Lutherans, two were Dutch Reformed, and two were Methodists.[32]

A few prominent Founding Fathers were anti-clerical notably Jefferson.[33][34]

Historian Gregg L. Frazer argues that the leading Founders (John Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, Wilson, Morris, Madison, Hamilton, and Washington) were neither Christians nor Deists, but rather supporters of a hybrid "theistic rationalism".[35]

Many Founders deliberately avoided public discussion of their faith. Historian David L. Holmes uses evidence gleaned from letters, government documents, and second-hand accounts to identify their religious beliefs.[36]

Ownership of slaves and position on slavery

The founding fathers were not unified on the issue of slavery. Many of them were opposed to it and repeatedly attempted to end slavery in many of the colonies, but predicted that the issue would threaten to tear the country apart and had limited power to deal with it. In her study of Thomas Jefferson, historian Annette Gordon-Reed discusses this topic, "Others of the founders held slaves, but no other founder drafted the charter for freedom".[37] In addition to Jefferson, George Washington, and many other of the Founding Fathers were slaveowners, but some were also conflicted by the institution, seeing it as immoral and politically divisive; Washington gradually became a cautious supporter of abolitionism and freed his slaves in his will. John Jay led the successful fight, along with Alexander Hamilton, to outlaw the slave trade in New York.[38] Conversely, many founders such as Samuel Adams and John Adams were against slavery their entire lives. Benjamin Rush wrote a pamphlet in 1773 which criticized the slave trade as well as the institution of slavery. In the pamphlet, Rush argued on a scientific basis that Africans were not by nature intellectually or morally inferior, and that any apparent evidence to the contrary was only the "perverted expression" of slavery, which "is so foreign to the human mind, that the moral faculties, as well as those of the understanding are debased, and rendered torpid by it." The Continental Association of 1774 contained a clause which banned any Patriot involvement in slave trading.[39][40][41][42]

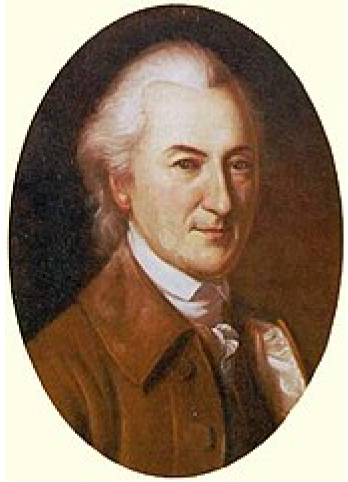
Richard Henry Lee, who introduced the Lee Resolution in the Second Continental Congress calling for the colonies' independence from Great Britain

Franklin, though he was a key founder of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society,[43] originally owned slaves whom he later manumitted. While serving in the Rhode Island Assembly, Stephen Hopkins introduced one of the earliest anti-slavery laws in the colonies, in 1769, Jefferson entered public life as a young member of the House of Burgesses, he began his career as a social reformer by an effort to secure legislation permitting the emancipation of slaves; and John Jay would try unsuccessfully to abolish slavery as early as 1777 in the State of New York.[44] He nonetheless founded the New York Manumission Society in 1785, for which Hamilton became an officer. They and other members of the Society founded the African Free School in New York City, to educate the children of free blacks and slaves. When Jay was governor of New York in 1798, he helped secure and signed into law an abolition law; fully ending forced labor as of 1827. He freed his own slaves in 1798. Alexander Hamilton opposed slavery, as his experiences in life left him very familiar with slavery and its effect on slaves and on slaveholders,[45] although he did negotiate slave transactions for his wife's family, the Schuylers.[46] John Adams, Samuel Adams, and Thomas Paine never owned slaves.[47]

John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress, renowned for his large and stylish signature on the United States Declaration of Independence

Slaves and slavery are mentioned only indirectly in the 1787 Constitution. For example, Article 1, Section 2, Clause 3 prescribes that "three-fifths of all other Persons" are to be counted for the apportionment of seats in the House of Representatives and direct taxes. Additionally, in Article 4, Section 2, Clause 3, slaves are referred to as "persons held in service or labor".[43][48] The Founding Fathers, however, did make important efforts to contain slavery. Many Northern states had adopted legislation to end or significantly reduce slavery during and after the American Revolution.[48] In 1782 Virginia passed a manumission law that allowed slave owners to free their slaves by will or deed.[49] As a result, thousands of slaves were manumitted in Virginia.[49] Thomas Jefferson, in 1784, proposed to ban slavery in all the Western Territories, which failed to pass Congress by one vote.[48] Partially following Jefferson's plan, Congress did ban slavery in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, for lands north of the Ohio River.[48]

The international slave trade was banned in all states except South Carolina, by 1800. Finally in 1807, President Jefferson called for and signed into law a Federally-enforced ban on the international slave trade throughout the U.S. and its territories. It became a federal crime to import or export a slave.[48] However, the domestic slave trade was allowed, for expansion, or for diffusion of slavery into the Louisiana Territory.[48]

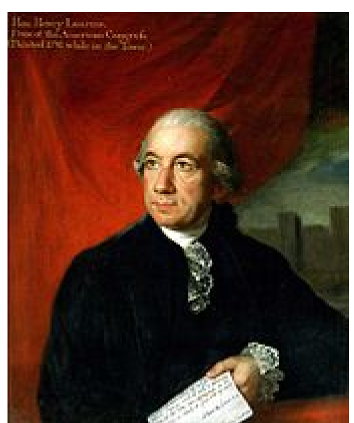


John Dickinson authored the first draft of the Articles of Confederation in 1776 while serving in the Continental Congress as a delegate from Pennsylvania, and signed them late the following year, after being elected to Congress as a delegate from Delaware.

Attendance at conventions

In the winter and spring of 1786–1787, twelve of the thirteen states chose a total of 74 delegates to attend the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. Nineteen delegates chose not to accept election or attend the debates. Among them was Patrick Henry of Virginia, who in response to questions about his refusal to attend was quick to reply, "I smelled a rat." He believed that the frame of government the convention organizers were intent on building would trample upon the rights of citizens.[50] Also, Rhode Island's lack of representation at the convention was due to leader's suspicions of the convention delegates' motivations. As the colony was founded by Roger Williams as a sanctuary for Baptists, Rhode Island's absence at the convention in part explains the absence of Baptist affiliation among those who did attend. Of the 55 who did attend at some point, no more than 38 delegates showed up at one time.[51]

Spouses and children



Henry Laurens was president of the Continental Congress when the Articles were passed on November 15, 1777.

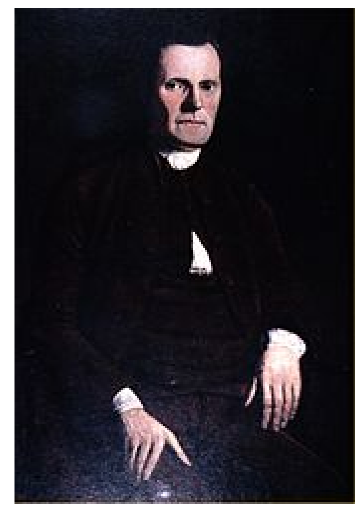
Only four (Baldwin, Gilman, Jenifer, and Alexander Martin) were lifelong bachelors. Many of the Founding Fathers' wives, like Eliza Schuyler Hamilton, Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, Sarah Livingston Jay, Dolley Madison, Mary White Morris and Catherine Alexander Duer, were strong women who made significant contributions of their own to the fight for liberty.[52]

Sherman fathered the largest family: 15 children by two wives. At least nine (Bassett, Brearly, Johnson, Mason, Paterson, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Sherman, Wilson, and Wythe) married more than once. George Washington, who became known as "The Father of His Country",[53] had no biological children, though he and his wife raised two children from her first marriage and two grandchildren.

Signatories to founding documents

Among the state documents promulgated between 1774 and 1789 by the Continental Congress, four are paramount: the Continental Association, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the United States Constitution. Altogether, 145 men signed at least one of the four documents. In each instance, roughly 50% of the names signed are unique to that document. Only a few people (6) signed three of the four, and only Roger Sherman of Connecticut signed all of them.[54] The following persons signed one or more of these United States formative documents:

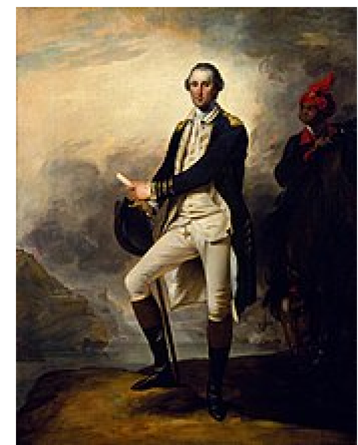
Name	Province/state	# DS	CA (1774)	DI (1776)	AC (1777)	USC (1787)
Andrew Adams	Connecticut	1			Yes	
John Adams	Massachusetts	2	Yes	Yes		
Samuel Adams	Massachusetts	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Thomas Adams	Virginia	1			Yes	
John Alsop	New York	1	Yes			
Abraham Baldwin	Georgia	1				Yes
John Banister	Virginia	1			Yes	
Josiah Bartlett	New Hampshire	2		Yes	Yes	
Richard Bassett	Delaware	1				Yes
Gunning Bedford Jr.	Delaware	1				Yes
Edward Biddle	Pennsylvania	1	Yes			
John Blair	Virginia	1				Yes
Richard Bland	Virginia	1	Yes			
William Blount	North Carolina	1				Yes
Simon Boerum	New York	1	Yes			
Carter Braxton	Virginia	1		Yes		
David Brearley	New Jersey	1				Yes
Jacob Broom	Delaware	1				Yes
Pierce Butler	South Carolina	1				Yes
Charles Carroll of Carrollton	Maryland	1		Yes		
Daniel Carroll	Maryland	2			Yes	Yes
Richard Caswell	North Carolina	1	Yes			
Samuel Chase	Maryland	2	Yes	Yes		
Abraham Clark	New Jersey	1		Yes		
William Clingan	Pennsylvania	1			Yes	
George Clymer	Pennsylvania	2		Yes		Yes
John Collins	Rhode Island	1			Yes	
Stephen Crane	New Jersey	1	Yes			
Thomas Cushing	Massachusetts	1	Yes			
Francis Dana	Massachusetts	1			Yes	
Jonathan Dayton	New Jersey	1				Yes
Silas Deane	Connecticut	1	Yes			
John De Hart	New Jersey	1	Yes			
John Dickinson	Delaware	3[a]			Yes	Yes
	Pennsylvania		Yes			
William Henry	South Carolina	1			Yes	



Roger Sherman, a member of the Committee of Five, the only person who signed all four U.S. founding documents.

Robert Morris, president of Pennsylvania's Committee of Safety and one of the founders of the financial system of the United States.

Drayton						
James Duane	New York	2	Yes		Yes	
William Duer	New York	1			Yes	
Eliphalet Dyer	Connecticut	1	Yes			
William Ellery	Rhode Island	2		Yes	Yes	
William Few	Georgia	1				Yes
Thomas Fitzsimons	Pennsylvania	1				Yes
William Floyd	New York	2	Yes	Yes		
Nathaniel Folsom	New Hampshire	1	Yes			
Benjamin Franklin	Pennsylvania	2		Yes		Yes
Christopher Gadsden	South Carolina	1	Yes			
Joseph Galloway	Pennsylvania	1	Yes			
Elbridge Gerry	Massachusetts	2		Yes	Yes	
Nicholas Gilman	New Hampshire	1				Yes
Nathaniel Gorham	Massachusetts	1				Yes
Button Gwinnett	Georgia	1		Yes		
Lyman Hall	Georgia	1		Yes		
Alexander Hamilton	New York	1				Yes
John Hancock	Massachusetts	2		Yes	Yes	
John Hanson	Maryland	1			Yes	
Cornelius Harnett	North Carolina	1			Yes	
Benjamin Harrison	Virginia	2	Yes	Yes		
John Hart	New Jersey	2		Yes		
John Harvie	Virginia	1			Yes	
Patrick Henry	Virginia	1	Yes			
Joseph Hewes	North Carolina	2	Yes	Yes		
Thomas Heyward Jr.	South Carolina	2		Yes	Yes	
Samuel Holten	Massachusetts	1			Yes	
William Hooper	North Carolina	2	Yes	Yes		
Stephen Hopkins	Rhode Island	2	Yes	Yes		
Francis Hopkinson	New Jersey	1		Yes		
Titus Hosmer	Connecticut	1			Yes	
Charles Humphreys	Pennsylvania	1	Yes			
Samuel Huntington	Connecticut	2		Yes	Yes	



George Washington and his valet slave William Lee, by John Trumbull, 1780

Richard Hutson	South Carolina	1			Yes	
Jared Ingersoll	Pennsylvania	1				Yes
William Jackson	South Carolina	1				Yes
John Jay	New York	1	Yes			
Thomas Jefferson	Virginia	1		Yes		
Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer	Maryland	1				Yes
Thomas Johnson	Maryland	1	Yes			
William Samuel Johnson	Connecticut	1				Yes
Rufus King	Massachusetts	1				Yes
James Kinsey	New Jersey	1	Yes			
John Langdon	New Hampshire	1				Yes
Edward Langworthy	Georgia	1			Yes	
Henry Laurens	South Carolina	1			Yes	
Francis Lightfoot Lee	Virginia	2		Yes	Yes	
Richard Henry Lee	Virginia	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Francis Lewis	New York	2		Yes	Yes	
Philip Livingston	New York	2	Yes	Yes		
William Livingston	New Jersey	2	Yes			Yes
James Lovell	Massachusetts	1			Yes	
Isaac Low	New York	1	Yes			
Thomas Lynch	South Carolina	1	Yes			
Thomas Lynch Jr.	South Carolina	1		Yes		
James Madison	Virginia	1				Yes
Henry Marchant	Rhode Island	1			Yes	
John Mathews	South Carolina	1			Yes	
James McHenry	Maryland	1				Yes
Thomas McKean	Delaware	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Arthur Middleton	South Carolina	1		Yes		
Henry Middleton	South Carolina	1	Yes			
Thomas Mifflin	Pennsylvania	2	Yes			Yes
Gouverneur Morris	New York	2[b]			Yes	
	Pennsylvania					Yes
Lewis Morris	New York	1		Yes		
Robert Morris	Pennsylvania	3		Yes	Yes	Yes
John Morton	Pennsylvania	2	Yes	Yes		
Thomas Nelson	Virginia	1		Yes		

Jr.						
William Paca	Maryland	2	Yes	Yes		
Robert Treat Paine	Massachusetts	2	Yes	Yes		
William Paterson	New Jersey	1				Yes
Edmund Pendleton	Virginia	1	Yes			
John Penn	North Carolina	2		Yes	Yes	
Charles Pinckney	South Carolina	1				Yes
Charles Cotesworth Pinckney	South Carolina	1				Yes
Peyton Randolph	Virginia	1	Yes			
George Read	Delaware	3	Yes	Yes		Yes
Joseph Reed	Pennsylvania	1			Yes	
Daniel Roberdeau	Pennsylvania	1			Yes	
Caesar Rodney	Delaware	2	Yes	Yes		
George Ross	Pennsylvania	2	Yes	Yes		
Benjamin Rush	Pennsylvania	1		Yes		
Edward Rutledge	South Carolina	2	Yes	Yes		
John Rutledge	South Carolina	2	Yes			Yes
Nathaniel Scudder	New Jersey	1			Yes	
Roger Sherman	Connecticut	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
James Smith	Pennsylvania	1		Yes		
Jonathan Bayard Smith	Pennsylvania	1			Yes	
Richard Smith	New Jersey	1	Yes			
Richard Dobbs Spaight	North Carolina	1				Yes
Richard Stockton	New Jersey	1		Yes		
Thomas Stone	Maryland	1		Yes		
John Sullivan	New Hampshire	1	Yes			
George Taylor	Pennsylvania	1		Yes		
Edward Telfair	Georgia	1			Yes	
Matthew Thornton	New Hampshire	1		Yes		
Matthew Tilghman	Maryland	1	Yes			
Nicholas Van Dyke	Delaware	1			Yes	
George Walton	Georgia	1		Yes		
John Walton	Georgia	1			Yes	

Samuel Ward	Rhode Island	1	Yes			
George Washington	Virginia	2	Yes			Yes
John Wentworth Jr.	New Hampshire	1			Yes	
William Whipple	New Hampshire	1		Yes		
John Williams	North Carolina	1			Yes	
William Williams	Connecticut	1		Yes		
Hugh Williamson	North Carolina	1				Yes
James Wilson	Pennsylvania	2		Yes		Yes
Henry Wisner	New York	1	Yes			
John Witherspoon	New Jersey	2		Yes	Yes	
Oliver Wolcott	Connecticut	2		Yes	Yes	
George Wythe	Virginia	1		Yes		

Notes:

a. Dickinson signed three of the documents, two as a delegate from Delaware and one as a delegate from Pennsylvania.
b. Morris signed two of the documents, one as a delegate from New York, and one as a delegate from Pennsylvania.

Post-constitution life

Subsequent events in the lives of the Founding Fathers after the adoption of the Constitution were characterized by success or failure, reflecting the abilities of these men as well as the vagaries of fate.[55] Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe served in the highest U.S. office of President. Jay would be appointed as the first chief justice of the United States and later elected to two terms as Governor of New York. Alexander Hamilton would be appointed the first Secretary of the Treasury in 1789, and later Inspector General of the Army under President John Adams in 1798.

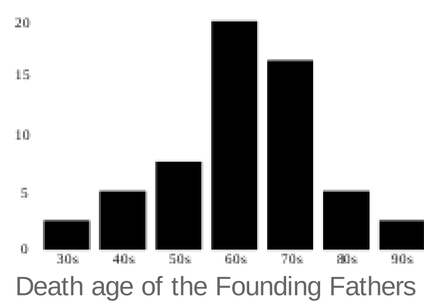
Seven (Fitzsimons, Gorham, Luther Martin, Mifflin, Robert Morris, Pierce, and Wilson) suffered serious financial reversals that left them in or near bankruptcy. Robert Morris spent three of the last years of his life imprisoned following bad land deals.[52] Two, Blount and Dayton, were involved in possibly treasonous activities. Yet, as they had done before the convention, most of the group continued to render public service, particularly to the new government they had helped to create.

Youth and longevity

Many of the Founding Fathers were under 40 years old at the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776: Aaron Burr was 20, Alexander Hamilton was 21, Gouverneur Morris was 24. The oldest were Benjamin Franklin, 70, and Samuel Whittemore, 81.[56]

A few Founding Fathers lived into their nineties, including: Paine Wingate, who died at age 98; Charles Carroll of Carrollton, who died at age 95; Charles Thomson, who died at 94; William Samuel Johnson, who died at 92; and John Adams, who died at 90. Among those who lived into their eighties were Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Whittmore, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Armstrong Jr., Hugh

Williamson, and George Wythe. Approximately 16 died while in their seventies, and 21 in their sixties. Three (Alexander Hamilton, Richard Dobbs Spaight, and Button Gwinnett) were killed in duels. Two, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, died on the same day, July 4, 1826.[57]



Death age of the Founding Fathers

The last remaining founders, also poetically called the "Last of the Romans", lived well into the nineteenth century.[58] The last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence was Charles Carroll of Carrollton, who died in 1832.[59] The last surviving member of the Continental Congress was John Armstrong Jr., who died in 1843. He gained this distinction in 1838 upon the death of the only other surviving delegate, Paine Wingate.[60]

Other notable patriots of the period

The following men and women also advanced the new nation through their actions.

Abigail Adams, close advisor to her husband John Adams

- Abigail Adams, advisor, confidant, first lady, wife of John Adams and mother of president John Quincy Adams[61]
- Ethan Allen, military and political leader in Vermont[62]
- Richard Allen, African-American bishop, founder of the Free African Society and the A.M.E. Church[63]
- John Bartram, botanist, horticulturist, and explorer[64]
- Egbert Benson, politician from New York, delegate to the Continental Congress and the Annapolis Convention (1786)[65]
- Elias Boudinot, New Jersey delegate to Continental Congress[66]
- Aaron Burr, vice president under Jefferson[67]
- George Rogers Clark, army general,[68] nicknamed "Conqueror of the Old Northwest".
- George Clinton, New York governor and vice president of the U.S.[69]
- Tench Coxe, economist in the Continental Congress[70]
- William Richardson Davie, delegate to the Constitutional Convention (leaving before he could sign it), and governor of North Carolina
- Oliver Ellsworth, member of the Continental Congress, Founding Framer on the Committee of Detail and fashioned the Connecticut Compromise at the Constitutional Convention, chief author Judiciary Act of 1789, third chief justice of the United States
- Albert Gallatin, politician and treasury secretary[71]
- Horatio Gates, army general[68]
- Nathanael Greene, Revolutionary War general; commanded the southern theater[68]
- Nathan Hale, captured U.S. soldier executed in 1776[61]
- Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton, wife of Alexander Hamilton[72][73]
- Esek Hopkins, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Navy
- James Iredell, essayist for independence and advocate for the constitution, one of the first Supreme Court justices[69]

George Mason, author of the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights and co-father of the United States Bill of Rights

- John Paul Jones, navy captain[68]
- Henry Knox, army general, Secretary of War, founder Society of the Cincinnati[69]
- Tadeusz Kościuszko, American general, former Polish army general[71]
- Bernardo de Galvez, Spanish military, governor of Spanish Louisiana.
- Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, French Marquis who became a Continental Army general[71]
- John Laurance, New York politician and judge who served as judge advocate general during the Revolution.[74]
- Henry Lee III, army officer and Virginia governor[68]
- Robert R. Livingston, member of the Committee of Five, first United States Secretary of Foreign Affairs
- William Maclay, Pennsylvania politician and U.S. senator[69]
- Dolley Madison, first lady (wife of James Madison)[61]
- John Marshall, fourth U.S. chief justice[61]
- George Mason, revolutionary writer, author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, Founding Framer and influential delegate to the Constitutional Convention, co-father of the United States Bill of Rights[75]
- Philip Mazzei, Italian physician, merchant, and author[76]
- James Monroe, fifth president of the United States[77]
- Daniel Morgan, military leader and Virginia congressman[68]
- Samuel Nicholas, commander-in-chief of the Continental Marines
- James Otis Jr., Massachusetts lawyer and politician[78]
- Thomas Paine, author of the January 1776 pamphlet *Common Sense* which urged and inspired the colonists to declare their independence from Great Britain.[79][80]
- Andrew Pickens, army general and South Carolina congressman[68]
- Timothy Pickering, U.S. secretary of state, from Massachusetts[81]
- Israel Putnam, army general[82]
- Edmund Randolph, delegate to the Constitutional Convention, where he introduced the Virginia Plan and served on the drafting committee; first United States attorney general and second U.S. secretary of state[83]
- Jean-Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau, French army general[71]
- Haym Solomon, financier and spy for the Continental Army[84]
- Arthur St. Clair, major general, president of the Confederation Congress, and later first governor of the Northwest Territory
- Thomas Sumter, South Carolina military leader, and member of both houses of Congress[68]
- Charles Thomson, secretary of the Continental Congress throughout its existence (1774–1789), and principal designer of the obverse and partly of the reverse of the Great Seal of the United States
- Richard Varick, private secretary to George Washington, mayor of New York City, second attorney general of New York state, and founder of the American Bible Society
- Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, Prussian officer[71]
- Joseph Warren, doctor, revolutionary leader[82]
- Mercy Otis Warren, political writer[69]
- Anthony Wayne, army general and politician[68]
- Noah Webster, writer, lexicographer, educator[85]

- Thomas Willing, delegate to the Continental Congress from Pennsylvania, the first president of the Bank of North America, and the first president of the First Bank of the United States[86]

Legacy

Institutions formed by Founders

Several Founding Fathers were instrumental in establishing schools and societal institutions that still exist today:

- Franklin founded the University of Pennsylvania, while Jefferson founded the University of Virginia.
- George Washington supported the founding of Washington College by consenting to have the "College at Chester" named in his honor, through generous financial support, and through service on the college's Board of Visitors and Governors.
- Rush founded Dickinson College and Franklin College, (today Franklin and Marshall) as well as the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, the oldest medical society in America.
- Hamilton founded the *New York Post*, The Bank of New York as well as what would become the United States Coast Guard.
- Knox[87] helped found the Society of the Cincinnati in 1783; the society was predicated on service as an officer in the Revolutionary War and heredity. Members included Washington, Hamilton and Burr. Other Founders like Sam Adams, John Adams, Franklin and Jay criticized the formation of what they considered to be an elitist body and threat to the Constitution. Franklin would later accept an honorary membership though Jay declined.[88]

Scholarship on the Founders

Articles and books by twenty-first-century historians combined with the digitization of primary sources like handwritten letters continue to contribute to an encyclopedic body of knowledge about the Founding Fathers.

Historians who focus on the Founding Fathers

Ron Chernow won the Pulitzer Prize for his biography of George Washington. His bestselling book about Alexander Hamilton inspired the blockbuster musical of the same name.

Joseph J. Ellis – According to Ellis, the concept of the Founding Fathers of the U.S. emerged in the 1820s as the last survivors died out. Ellis says "the founders", or "the fathers", comprised an aggregate of semi-sacred figures whose particular accomplishments and singular achievements were decidedly less important than their sheer presence as a powerful but faceless symbol of past greatness. For the generation of national leaders coming of age in the 1820s and 1830s – men like Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and John C. Calhoun – "the founders" represented a heroic but anonymous abstraction whose long shadow fell across all followers and whose legendary accomplishments defied comparison.

> We can win no laurels in a war for independence," Webster acknowledged in 1825. "Earlier and worthier hands have gathered them all. Nor are there places for us ... [as] the founders of states. Our fathers have filled them. But there remains to us a great duty of defence and preservation.[89]

Joanne B. Freeman – Freeman's area of expertise is the life and legacy of Alexander Hamilton as well as political culture of the revolutionary and early national eras.[90][91][92] Freeman has documented the often opposing visions of the Founding Fathers as they tried to build a new framework for governance, "Regional distrust, personal animosity, accusation, suspicion, implication, and denouncement—this was the tenor of national politics from the outset."[93]

Annette Gordon-Reed is an American historian and Harvard Law School professor. She is noted for changing scholarship on Thomas Jefferson regarding his relationship with Sally Hemings and her children. She has studied the challenges facing the Founding Fathers particularly as it relates to their position and actions on slavery. She points out "the central dilemma at the heart of American democracy: the desire to create a society based on liberty and equality" that yet does not extend those privileges to all."[37]

David McCullough's Pulitzer Prize-winning 2001 book, *John Adams.*, focuses on the Founding Father, and his 2005 book, *1776*, details George Washington's military history in the American Revolution and other independence events carried out by America's founders.

Peter S. Onuf – Thomas Jefferson

Jack N. Rakove – Thomas Jefferson

Noted collections of the Founding Fathers

- Adams Papers Editorial Project
- Founders Online – a searchable database of over 178,000 documents authored by or addressed to George Washington, John Jay, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams (and family), Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison.
- The Papers of Alexander Hamilton (https://founders.archives.gov/content/volumes#Hamilton)
- The Selected Papers of John Jay at Columbia University
- The Papers of Thomas Jefferson at Princeton University
- The Papers of James Madison at University of Virginia
- The Washington Papers at University of Virginia
- The Franklin Papers at Yale University

In stage and film

The Founding Fathers were portrayed in the Tony Award–winning 1969 musical *1776*, which depicted the debates over, and eventual adoption of, the Declaration of Independence. The stage production was adapted into the 1972 film of the same name.

The 1989 film *A More Perfect Union*, which was filmed on location in Independence Hall, depicts the events of the Constitutional Convention. The writing and passing of the founding documents are depicted in the 1997 documentary miniseries *Liberty!*, and the passage of the Declaration of Independence is portrayed in the second episode of the 2008 miniseries *John Adams* and the third episode of the 2015 miniseries *Sons of Liberty*. The Founders also feature in the 1986 miniseries *George Washington II: The Forging of a Nation*, the 2002-03 animated television series *Liberty's Kids*, the 2020 miniseries *Washington*, and in many other films and television portrayals.

Several Founding Fathers—Hamilton, Washington, Jefferson, Madison and Burr—were reimagined in *Hamilton*, a 2015 musical inspired by the 2004 biography *Alexander Hamilton*, with music, lyrics and book by Lin-Manuel Miranda. The musical won eleven Tony Awards and a Pulitzer Prize for Drama.[94]

Children's books

In their 2015 children's book, *The Founding Fathers* author Jonah Winter and illustrator Barry Blitt categorized 14 leading patriots into two teams based on their contributions to the formation of America – the Varsity Squad (Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, John Adams, Madison, Jay, and Hamilton) and the Junior Varsity Squad (Sam Adams, Hancock, Henry, Morris, Marshall, Rush, and Paine).[95]

See also

- Father of the Nation
- History of the United States Constitution
- History of the United States (1776–1789)
- List of national founders (worldwide)
- Military leadership in the American Revolutionary War
- Patriot (American Revolution)
- Rights of Englishmen
- Sons of Liberty
- 1776 Commission

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- Debunks – along with other fact finding sites – the Internet Myth of "What Happened to The Signers of the Declaration of Independence" (http://www.snopes.com/history/american/pricepai

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George Washington

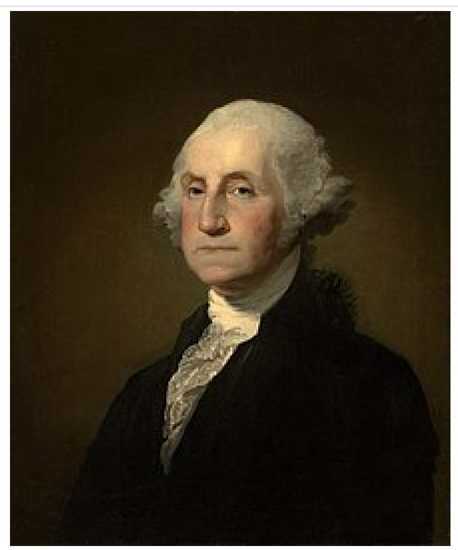
George Washington (February 22, 1732[b] – December 14, 1799) was an American political leader, military general, statesman, and Founding Father of the United States, who served as the first president of the United States from 1789 to 1797. Washington led the Patriot forces to victory in the American Revolutionary War, and presided at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, which established the Constitution of the United States and a federal government for the United States. Washington has been called the "Father of the Nation"[10] for his manifold leadership in the formative days of the country.

Washington's first public office was serving as official Surveyor of Culpeper County, Virginia from 1749 to 1750. Subsequently, he received his initial military training (as well as a command with the Virginia Regiment) during the French and Indian War. He was later elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses and was named a delegate to the Continental Congress. Here he was appointed Commanding General of the Continental Army. With this title, he commanded American forces (allied with France) in the defeat and surrender of the British at the Siege of Yorktown during the American Revolutionary War. He resigned his commission after the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783.

Washington played an indispensable role in adopting and ratifying the Constitution of the United States. He was then twice elected president by the Electoral College. He implemented a strong, well-financed national government while remaining impartial in a fierce rivalry between cabinet members Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. During the French Revolution, he proclaimed a policy of neutrality while sanctioning the Jay Treaty. He set enduring precedents for the office of president, including the title "Mr. President", and his Farewell Address is widely regarded as a pre-eminent statement on republicanism.

Washington owned and was responsible for several hundred slaves, and, to preserve national unity, he supported measures passed by Congress to protect slavery. Starting in 1778, he became troubled with the institution of slavery and freed William Lee, one of his slaves in a 1799 will. He endeavored to assimilate Native Americans into the Anglo-American culture but combated indigenous

George Washington



Portrait based on the unfinished *Athenaeum Portrait* by Gilbert Stuart, 1796

1st President of the United States	
In office April 30, 1789[a] – March 4, 1797	
Vice President	John Adams
Succeeded by	John Adams
7th Senior Officer of the United States Army	
In office July 13, 1798 – December 14, 1799	
President	John Adams
Preceded by	James Wilkinson
Succeeded by	Alexander Hamilton
Commander in Chief of the Continental Army	
In office June 19, 1775[2] – December 23, 1783	
Appointed by	Continental Congress
Preceded by	*Office established*
Succeeded by	Henry Knox (as Senior Officer)
14th Chancellor of the College of William & Mary	
In office April 30, 1788 – December 14, 1799	

resistance during instances of violent conflict. He was a member of the Anglican Church and the Freemasons, and he urged broad religious freedom in his roles as general and president. Upon his death, he was eulogized as "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen".[11] He has been memorialized by monuments, art, geographical locations, including the national capital, stamps, and currency, and many scholars and polls rank him among the greatest U.S. presidents. On March 13, 1978, Washington was militarily ranked General of the Armies, an honor that has only been awarded twice in the history of the United States.

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Retirement (1797–1799)

President	James Madison
Preceded by	Richard Terrick (1776)
Succeeded by	John Tyler (1859)
Delegate from Virginia to the Continental Congress	
In office	
September 5, 1774 – June 16, 1775	
Preceded by	*Office established*
Succeeded by	Thomas Jefferson
Member of the Virginia House of Burgesses	
In office	
July 24, 1758[3][4] – June 24, 1775[5]	
Preceded by	Hugh West[6][7]
Succeeded by	*Office abolished*
Constituency	Frederick County (1758–1765) Fairfax County (1765–1775)[5]
Personal details	
Born	February 22, 1732 Popes Creek, Virginia, British America
Died	December 14, 1799 (aged 67) Mount Vernon, Virginia, U.S.
Cause of death	Epiglottitis
Resting place	Mount Vernon, Virginia, U.S. 38°42′28.4″N 77°05′09.9″W
Political party	Independent
Spouse(s)	Martha Dandridge (m. 1759)
Children	John Parke Custis (adopted)
Parents	Augustine Washington Mary Ball Washington
Relatives	Washington family
Residence	Mount Vernon, Virginia, U.S.
Occupation	Military officer · farmer · politician
Awards	Congressional Gold Medal Thanks of Congress[8]
Signature	

Final days and death
Burial, net worth, and aftermath
Personal life
Religion and Freemasonry
Slavery
Abolition and emancipation
Historical reputation and legacy
Memorials
Universities
Places and monuments
Currency and postage
See also
References
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Primary sources
Online sources
Further reading
External links

Military service	
Allegiance	Great Britain United States
Branch/service	Virginia Militia Continental Army United States Army
Years of service	1752–1758 (Virginia Militia) 1775–1783 (Continental Army) 1798–1799 (U.S. Army)
Rank	Colonel (Virginia Militia) General and Commander in Chief (Continental Army) Lieutenant General (U.S. Army) General of the Armies (promoted posthumously in 1976 by Congress)
Commands	Virginia Regiment Continental Army United States Army
Battles/wars	French and Indian War – Battle of Jumonville Glen – Battle of Fort Necessity – Braddock Expedition – Battle of the Monongahela – Forbes Expedition American Revolutionary War – Boston campaign – New York and New Jersey campaign – Philadelphia campaign – Yorktown campaign Northwest Indian War Whiskey Rebellion

Early life (1732–1752)

Ferry Farm, the residence of the Washington Family on the Rappahannock River

The Washington family was a wealthy Virginia planter family that had made its fortune through land speculation and the cultivation of tobacco.[12] Washington's great-grandfather John Washington immigrated in 1656 from Sulgrave, Northamptonshire, England, to the English colony of Virginia where he accumulated 5,000 acres (2,000 ha) of land, including Little Hunting Creek on the Potomac River. George Washington was born on February 22, 1732, at Popes Creek in Westmoreland County, Virginia,[13] and was the first of six children of Augustine and Mary Ball Washington.[14] His father was a justice of the peace and a prominent public figure who had four additional children from his first marriage to Jane Butler.[15] The family moved to Little Hunting Creek in 1735. Three years later in 1738, they

moved to Ferry Farm near Fredericksburg, Virginia on the Rappahannock River. When Augustine died in 1743, Washington inherited Ferry Farm and ten slaves; his older half-brother Lawrence inherited Little Hunting Creek and renamed it Mount Vernon.[16]

Washington did not have the formal education his elder brothers received at Appleby Grammar School in England, but he did learn mathematics, trigonometry, and land surveying. He was a talented draftsman and map-maker. By early adulthood he was writing with "considerable force" and "precision";[17] however, his writing displayed little wit or humor. In pursuit of admiration, status, and power, he tended to attribute his shortcomings and failures to someone else's ineffectuality.[18]

Washington often visited Mount Vernon and Belvoir, the plantation that belonged to Lawrence's father-in-law William Fairfax. Fairfax became Washington's patron and surrogate father, and Washington spent a month in 1748 with a team surveying Fairfax's Shenandoah Valley property.[19] He received a surveyor's license the following year from the College of William & Mary.[c] Even though Washington had not served the customary apprenticeship, Fairfax appointed him surveyor of Culpeper County, Virginia, and he appeared in Culpeper County to take his oath of office July 20, 1749.[20] He subsequently familiarized himself with the frontier region, and though he resigned from the job in 1750, he continued to do surveys west of the Blue Ridge Mountains.[21] By 1752 he had bought almost 1,500 acres (600 ha) in the Valley and owned 2,315 acres (937 ha).[22]

In 1751, Washington made his only trip abroad when he accompanied Lawrence to Barbados, hoping the climate would cure his brother's tuberculosis.[23] Washington contracted smallpox during that trip, which immunized him but left his face slightly scarred.[24] Lawrence died in 1752, and Washington leased Mount Vernon from his widow; he inherited it outright after her death in 1761.[25]

Colonial military career (1752–1758)

Lawrence Washington's service as adjutant general of the Virginia militia inspired his half-brother George to seek a commission. Virginia's lieutenant governor, Robert Dinwiddie, appointed George Washington as a major and commander of one of the four militia districts. The British and French were competing for control of the Ohio Valley. While the British were constructing forts along the Ohio River, the French were doing the same—constructing forts between the Ohio river and Lake Erie.[26]

In October 1753, Dinwiddie appointed Washington as a special envoy. He had sent George to demand French forces to vacate land that was being claimed by the British.[d] Washington was also appointed to make peace with the Iroquois Confederacy, and to gather further intelligence about the French forces.[28] Washington met with Half-King Tanacharison, and other Iroquois chiefs, at Logstown in order to secure their promise of support against the French. His party reached the Ohio River in November and were intercepted by a French patrol. The party was escorted to Fort Le Boeuf, where Washington was received in a friendly manner. He delivered the British demand to vacate to the French commander Saint-Pierre, but the French refused to leave. Saint-Pierre gave Washington his official answer in a sealed envelope after a few days' delay, as well as food and extra winter clothing for his party's journey back to Virginia.[29] Washington completed the precarious mission in 77 days, in difficult winter conditions, achieving a measure of distinction when his report was published in Virginia and in London.[30]

French and Indian War

In February 1754, Dinwiddie promoted Washington to lieutenant colonel and second-in-command of the 300-strong Virginia Regiment, with orders to confront French forces at the Forks of the Ohio.[31] Washington set out for the Forks with half the regiment in April but soon learned a French force of 1,000 had begun

construction of Fort Duquesne there. In May, having set up a defensive position at Great Meadows, he learned that the French had made camp seven miles (11 km) away; he decided to take the offensive.[32]

Lieutenant Colonel Washington holds night council at Fort Necessity

The French detachment proved to be only about fifty men, so Washington advanced on May 28 with a small force of Virginians and Indian allies to ambush them.[33][e] What took place, known as the Battle of Jumonville Glen or the "Jumonville affair", was disputed, but French forces were killed outright with muskets and hatchets. French commander Joseph Coulon de Jumonville, who carried a diplomatic message for the British to evacuate, was killed. French forces found Jumonville and some of his men dead and scalped and assumed Washington was responsible.[35] Washington blamed his translator for not communicating the French intentions.[36] Dinwiddie congratulated Washington for his victory over the French.[37] This incident ignited the French and Indian War, which later became part of the larger Seven Years' War.[38]

The full Virginia Regiment joined Washington at Fort Necessity the following month with news that he had been promoted to command of the regiment and colonel upon the regimental commander's death. The regiment was reinforced by an independent company of a hundred South Carolinians led by Captain James Mackay, whose royal commission outranked that of Washington, and a conflict of command ensued. On July 3, a French force attacked with 900 men, and the ensuing battle ended in Washington's surrender.[39] In the aftermath, Colonel James Innes took command of intercolonial forces, the Virginia Regiment was divided, and Washington was offered a captaincy which he refused, with the resignation of his commission.[40]

Washington the Soldier: Lieutenant Colonel Washington on horseback during the Battle of the Monongahela (oil, *Reǵnier*, 1834)

In 1755, Washington served voluntarily as an aide to General Edward Braddock, who led a British expedition to expel the French from Fort Duquesne and the Ohio Country.[41] On Washington's recommendation, Braddock split the army into one main column and a lightly equipped "flying column".[42] Suffering from a severe case of dysentery, Washington was left behind, and when he rejoined Braddock at Monongahela the French and their Indian allies ambushed the divided army. Two-thirds of the British force became casualties, including the mortally wounded Braddock. Under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Gage, Washington, still very ill, rallied the survivors and formed a rear guard, allowing the remnants of the force to disengage and retreat.[43] During the engagement, he had two horses shot from under him, and his hat and coat were bullet-pierced.[44] His conduct under fire redeemed his reputation among critics of his command in the Battle of Fort Necessity,[45] but he was not included by the succeeding commander (Colonel Thomas Dunbar) in planning subsequent operations.[46]

The Virginia Regiment was reconstituted in August 1755, and Dinwiddie appointed Washington its commander, again with the rank of colonel. Washington clashed over seniority almost immediately, this time with John Dagworthy, another captain of superior royal rank, who commanded a detachment of Marylanders at the regiment's headquarters in Fort Cumberland.[47] Washington, impatient for an offensive against Fort Duquesne, was convinced Braddock would have granted him a royal commission and pressed his case in February 1756 with Braddock's successor, William Shirley, and again in January 1757 with Shirley's successor, Lord Loudoun. Shirley ruled in Washington's favor only in the matter of Dagworthy; Loudoun humiliated Washington, refused him a royal commission, and agreed only to relieve him of the responsibility of manning Fort Cumberland.[48]

In 1758, the Virginia Regiment was assigned to the British Forbes Expedition to capture Fort Duquesne.[49][f] Washington disagreed with General John Forbes' tactics and chosen route.[51] Forbes nevertheless made Washington a brevet brigadier general and gave him command of one of the three brigades that would assault the fort. The French abandoned the fort and the valley before the assault was launched; Washington saw only a friendly-fire incident which left 14 dead and 26 injured. The war lasted another four years, but Washington resigned his commission and returned to Mount Vernon.[52]

Under Washington, the Virginia Regiment had defended 300 miles (480 km) of frontier against twenty Indian attacks in ten months.[53] He increased the professionalism of the regiment as it increased from 300 to 1,000 men, and Virginia's frontier population suffered less than other colonies. Some historians have said this was Washington's "only unqualified success" during the war.[54] Though he failed to realize a royal commission, he did gain self-confidence, leadership skills, and invaluable knowledge of British military tactics. The destructive competition Washington witnessed among colonial politicians fostered his later support of a strong central government.[55]

Marriage, civilian, and political life (1755–1775)

On January 6, 1759, Washington, at age 26, married Martha Dandridge Custis, the 27-year-old widow of wealthy plantation owner Daniel Parke Custis. The marriage took place at Martha's estate; she was intelligent, gracious, and experienced in managing a planter's estate, and the couple created a happy marriage.[56] They raised John Parke Custis (Jacky) and Martha Parke (Patsy) Custis, children from her previous marriage, and later Jacky's children Eleanor Parke Custis (Nelly) and George Washington Parke Custis (Washy). Washington's 1751 bout with smallpox is thought to have rendered him sterile, though it is equally likely that "Martha may have sustained injury during the birth of Patsy, her final child, making additional births impossible."[57] The couple lamented not having any children together.[58] They moved to Mount Vernon, near Alexandria, where he took up life as a planter of tobacco and wheat and emerged as a political figure.[59]

Colonel George Washington, by Charles Willson Peale, 1772

The marriage gave Washington control over Martha's one-third dower interest in the 18,000-acre (7,300 ha) Custis estate, and he managed the remaining two-thirds for Martha's children; the estate also included 84 slaves. He became one of Virginia's wealthiest men, which increased his social standing.[60]

At Washington's urging, Governor Lord Botetourt fulfilled Dinwiddie's 1754 promise of land bounties to all-volunteer militia during the French and Indian War.[61] In late 1770, Washington inspected the lands in the Ohio and Great Kanawha regions, and he engaged surveyor William Crawford to subdivide it. Crawford allotted 23,200 acres (9,400 ha) to Washington; Washington told the veterans that their land was hilly and unsuitable for farming, and he agreed to purchase 20,147 acres (8,153 ha), leaving some feeling they had been duped.[62] He also doubled the size of Mount Vernon to 6,500 acres (2,600 ha) and increased its slave population to more than a hundred by 1775.[63]

Washington's political activities included supporting the candidacy of his friend George William Fairfax in his 1755 bid to represent the region in the Virginia House of Burgess. This support led to a dispute which resulted in a physical altercation between Washington and another Virginia planter, William Payne. Washington defused the situation, including ordering officers from the Virginia Regiment to stand down. Washington apologized to Payne the following day at a tavern. Payne had been expecting to be challenged to a duel.[64][65][66]

As a respected military hero and large landowner, Washington held local offices and was elected to the Virginia provincial legislature, representing Frederick County in the House of Burgesses for seven years beginning in 1758.[63] He plied the voters with beer, brandy, and other beverages, although he was absent while serving on the Forbes Expedition.[67] He won the election with roughly 40 percent of the vote, defeating three other candidates with the help of several local supporters. He rarely spoke in his early legislative career, but he became a prominent critic of Britain's taxation policy and mercantilist policies towards the American colonies starting in the 1760s.[68]

By occupation, Washington was a planter, and he imported luxuries and other goods from England, paying for them by exporting tobacco.[69] His profligate spending combined with low tobacco prices left him £1,800 in debt by 1764, prompting him to diversify his holdings.[70] In 1765, because of erosion and other soil problems, he changed Mount Vernon's primary cash crop from tobacco to wheat and expanded operations to include corn flour milling and fishing.[71] Washington also took time for leisure with fox hunting, fishing, dances, theater, cards, backgammon, and billiards.[72]

Martha Washington based on a 1757 portrait by John Wollaston

Washington soon was counted among the political and social elite in Virginia. From 1768 to 1775, he invited some 2,000 guests to his Mount Vernon estate, mostly those whom he considered "people of rank". He became more politically active in 1769, presenting legislation in the Virginia Assembly to establish an embargo on goods from Great Britain.[73]

Washington's step-daughter Patsy Custis suffered from epileptic attacks from age 12, and she died in his arms in 1773. The following day, he wrote to Burwell Bassett: "It is easier to conceive, than to describe, the distress of this Family".[74] He canceled all business activity and remained with Martha every night for three months.[75]

Opposition to British Parliament and Crown

Washington played a central role before and during the American Revolution. His disdain for the British military had begun when he was passed over for promotion into the Regular Army. Opposed to taxes imposed by the British Parliament on the Colonies without proper representation,[76] he and other colonists were also angered by the Royal Proclamation of 1763 which banned American settlement west of the Allegheny Mountains and protected the British fur trade.[77]

Washington believed the Stamp Act of 1765 was an "Act of Oppression", and he celebrated its repeal the following year.[g] In March 1766, Parliament passed the Declaratory Act asserting that Parliamentary law superseded colonial law.[79] In the late 1760s, the interference of the British Crown in American lucrative western land speculation, spurred on the American Revolution.[80] Washington himself was a prosperous land speculator, and in 1767, he encouraged "adventures" to acquire backcountry western lands.[80] Washington helped lead widespread protests against the Townshend Acts passed by Parliament in 1767, and he introduced a proposal in May 1769 drafted by George Mason which called Virginians to boycott British goods; the Acts were mostly repealed in 1770.[81]

Parliament sought to punish Massachusetts colonists for their role in the Boston Tea Party in 1774 by passing the Coercive Acts, which Washington referred to as "an invasion of our rights and privileges".[82] He said Americans must not submit to acts of tyranny since "custom and use shall make us as tame and abject slaves, as the blacks we rule over with such arbitrary sway".[83] That July, he and George Mason drafted a list of resolutions for the Fairfax County committee which Washington chaired, and the committee adopted the Fairfax Resolves calling for a Continental Congress.[84] On August 1, Washington attended the First Virginia

Convention, where he was selected as a delegate to the First Continental Congress, September 5 to October 26, 1774, which he also attended.[85] As tensions rose in 1774, he helped train county militias in Virginia and organized enforcement of the Continental Association boycott of British goods instituted by the Congress.[86]

The American Revolutionary War began on April 19, 1775, with the Battles of Lexington and Concord and the Siege of Boston.[87] The colonists were divided over breaking away from British rule and split into two factions: Patriots who rejected British rule, and Loyalists who desired to remain subject to the King.[88] General Thomas Gage was commander of British forces in America at the beginning of the war.[89] Upon hearing the shocking news of the onset of war, Washington was "sobered and dismayed",[90] and he hastily departed Mount Vernon on May 4, 1775, to join the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia.[91]

Commander in chief (1775–1783)

Congress created the Continental Army on June 14, 1775, and Samuel and John Adams nominated Washington to become its commander-in-chief. Washington was chosen over John Hancock because of his military experience and the belief that a Virginian would better unite the colonies. He was considered an incisive leader who kept his "ambition in check".[92] He was unanimously elected commander in chief by Congress the next day.[93]

General Washington, Commander of the Continental Army by Charles Willson Peale (1776)

Washington appeared before Congress in uniform and gave an acceptance speech on June 16, declining a salary—though he was later reimbursed expenses. He was commissioned on June 19 and was roundly praised by Congressional delegates, including John Adams, who proclaimed that he was the man best suited to lead and unite the colonies.[94][95] Congress appointed Washington "General & Commander in chief of the army of the United Colonies and of all the forces raised or to be raised by them", and instructed him to take charge of the siege of Boston on June 22, 1775.[96]

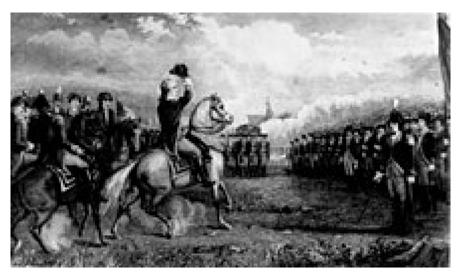
Congress chose his primary staff officers, including Major General Artemas Ward, Adjutant General Horatio Gates, Major General Charles Lee, Major General Philip Schuyler, Major General Nathanael Greene, Colonel Henry Knox, and Colonel Alexander Hamilton.[97] Washington was impressed by Colonel Benedict Arnold and gave him responsibility for launching an invasion of Canada. He also engaged French and Indian War compatriot Brigadier General Daniel Morgan. Henry Knox impressed Adams with ordnance knowledge, and Washington promoted him to colonel and chief of artillery.[98]

Washington initially opposed the enlistment of slaves into the Continental Army. Nevertheless, he later relented when the British issued proclamations such as Dunmore's Proclamation, which promised freedom to slaves of Patriot masters if they joined the British.[99] On January 16, 1776, Congress allowed free blacks to serve in the militia. By the end of the war, one-tenth of Washington's army were blacks.[100]

Siege of Boston

Early in 1775, in response to the growing rebellious movement, London sent British troops, commanded by General Thomas Gage, to occupy Boston. They set up fortifications about the city, making it impervious to attack. Various local militias surrounded the city and effectively trapped the British, resulting in a standoff.[101]

As Washington headed for Boston, word of his march preceded him, and he was greeted everywhere; gradually, he became a symbol of the Patriot cause.[102][h] Upon arrival on July 2, 1775, two weeks after the Patriot defeat at nearby Bunker Hill, he set up his Cambridge, Massachusetts headquarters and inspected the new army there, only to find an undisciplined and badly outfitted militia.[103] After consultation, he initiated


Washington taking command of the Continental Army, just before the siege

Benjamin Franklin's suggested reforms—drilling the soldiers and imposing strict discipline, floggings, and incarceration.[104] Washington ordered his officers to identify the skills of recruits to ensure military effectiveness, while removing incompetent officers.[105] He petitioned Gage, his former superior, to release captured Patriot officers from prison and treat them humanely.[106] In October 1775, King George III declared that the colonies were in open rebellion and relieved General Gage of command for incompetence, replacing him with General William Howe.[107]

In June 1775, Congress ordered an invasion of Canada. It was led by Benedict Arnold, who, despite Washington's strong objection, drew volunteers from the latter's force during the Siege of Boston. The move on Quebec failed, with the American forces being reduced to less than half and forced to retreat.[108]

The Continental Army, further diminished by expiring short-term enlistments, and by January 1776 reduced by half to 9,600 men, had to be supplemented with militia, and was joined by Knox with heavy artillery captured from Fort Ticonderoga.[109] When the Charles River froze over, Washington was eager to cross and storm Boston, but General Gates and others were opposed to untrained militia striking well-garrisoned fortifications. Washington reluctantly agreed to secure the Dorchester Heights, 100 feet above Boston, in an attempt to force the British out of the city.[110] On March 9, under cover of darkness, Washington's troops brought up Knox's big guns and bombarded British ships in Boston harbor. On March 17, 9,000 British troops and Loyalists began a chaotic ten-day evacuation of Boston aboard 120 ships. Soon after, Washington entered the city with 500 men, with explicit orders not to plunder the city. He ordered vaccinations against smallpox to great effect, as he did later in Morristown, New Jersey.[111] He refrained from exerting military authority in Boston, leaving civilian matters in the hands of local authorities.[112][i]

Battle of Long Island

Battle of Long Island
Alonzo Chappel (1858)

Washington then proceeded to New York City, arriving on April 13, 1776, and began constructing fortifications to thwart the expected British attack. He ordered his occupying forces to treat civilians and their property with respect, to avoid the abuses which Bostonian citizens suffered at the hands of British troops during their occupation.[114] A plot to assassinate or capture him was discovered but thwarted, resulting in the arrest of 98 people involved or complicit (56 of which were from Long Island (Kings (Brooklyn) and Queens counties), including the Loyalist Mayor of New York David Mathews.[115] Washington's bodyguard, Thomas Hickey, was hanged for mutiny and sedition.[116] General Howe transported his resupplied army, with the British fleet, from Halifax to New York, knowing the city was key to securing the continent. George Germain, who ran the British war effort in England, believed it could be won with one "decisive blow".[117] The British forces, including more than a hundred ships and thousands of troops, began arriving on Staten Island on July 2 to lay siege to the city.[118] After the Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, Washington informed his troops in his general orders of July 9 that Congress had declared the united colonies to be "free and independent states".[119]

Howe's troop strength totaled 32,000 regulars and Hessians auxiliaries, and Washington's consisted of 23,000, mostly raw recruits and militia.[120] In August, Howe landed 20,000 troops at Gravesend, Brooklyn, and approached Washington's fortifications, as George III proclaimed the rebellious American colonists to be

traitors.[121] Washington, opposing his generals, chose to fight, based upon inaccurate information that Howe's army had only 8,000-plus troops.[122] In the Battle of Long Island, Howe assaulted Washington's flank and inflicted 1,500 Patriot casualties, the British suffering 400.[123] Washington retreated, instructing General William Heath to acquisition river craft in the area. On August 30, General William Alexander held off the British and gave cover while the army crossed the East River under darkness to Manhattan Island without loss of life or materiel, although Alexander was captured.[124]

Howe, emboldened by his Long Island victory, dispatched Washington as "George Washington, Esq." in futility to negotiate peace. Washington declined, demanding to be addressed with diplomatic protocol, as general and fellow belligerent, not as a "rebel", lest his men be hanged as such if captured.[125] The Royal Navy bombarded the unstable earthworks on lower Manhattan Island.[126] Washington, with misgivings, heeded the advice of Generals Greene and Putnam to defend Fort Washington. They were unable to hold it, and Washington abandoned it despite General Lee's objections, as his army retired north to the White Plains.[127] Howe's pursuit forced Washington to retreat across the Hudson River to Fort Lee to avoid encirclement. Howe landed his troops on Manhattan in November and captured Fort Washington, inflicting high casualties on the Americans. Washington was responsible for delaying the retreat, though he blamed Congress and General Greene. Loyalists in New York considered Howe a liberator and spread a rumor that Washington had set fire to the city.[128] Patriot morale reached its lowest when Lee was captured.[129] Now reduced to 5,400 troops, Washington's army retreated through New Jersey, and Howe broke off pursuit, delaying his advance on Philadelphia, and set up winter quarters in New York.[130]

Crossing the Delaware, Trenton, and Princeton

Washington Crossing the Delaware, Emanuel Leutze (1851)[j]

Washington crossed the Delaware River into Pennsylvania, where Lee's replacement John Sullivan joined him with 2,000 more troops.[132] The future of the Continental Army was in doubt for lack of supplies, a harsh winter, expiring enlistments, and desertions. Washington was disappointed that many New Jersey residents were Loyalists or skeptical about the prospect of independence.[133]

Howe split up his British Army and posted a Hessian garrison at Trenton to hold western New Jersey and the east shore of the Delaware,[134] but the army appeared complacent, and Washington and his generals devised a surprise attack on the Hessians at Trenton, which he codenamed "Victory or Death".[135] The army was to cross the Delaware River to Trenton in three divisions: one led by Washington (2,400 troops), another by General James Ewing (700), and the third by Colonel John Cadwalader (1,500). The force was to then split, with Washington taking the Pennington Road and General Sullivan traveling south on the river's edge.[136]

Washington first ordered a 60-mile search for Durham boats to transport his army, and he ordered the destruction of vessels that could be used by the British.[137] He crossed the Delaware River on the night of December 25–26, 1776, and risked capture staking out the Jersey shoreline. His men followed across the ice-obstructed river in sleet and snow from McConkey's Ferry, with 40 men per vessel. The wind churned up the waters, and they were pelted with hail, but by 3:00 a.m. on December 26, they made it across with no losses.[138] Henry Knox was delayed, managing frightened horses and about 18 field guns on flat-bottomed ferries. Cadwalader and Ewing failed to cross due to the ice and heavy currents, and a waiting Washington doubted his planned attack on Trenton. Once Knox arrived, Washington proceeded to Trenton to take only his troops against the Hessians, rather than risk being spotted returning his army to Pennsylvania.[139]

The troops spotted Hessian positions a mile from Trenton, so Washington split his force into two columns, rallying his men: "Soldiers keep by your officers. For God's sake, keep by your officers." The two columns were separated at the Birmingham crossroads. General Nathanael Greene's column took the upper Ferry Road, led by Washington, and General John Sullivan's column advanced on River Road. (See map.)[140] The Americans marched in sleet and snowfall. Many were shoeless with bloodied feet, and two died of exposure. At sunrise, Washington led them in a surprise attack on the Hessians, aided by Major General Knox and artillery. The Hessians had 22 killed (including Colonel Johann Rall), 83 wounded, and 850 captured with supplies.[141]

The Passage of the Delaware, by Thomas Sully, 1819 (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Washington retreated across the Delaware to Pennsylvania but returned to New Jersey on January 3, launching an attack on British regulars at Princeton, with 40 Americans killed or wounded and 273 British killed or captured.[142] American Generals Hugh Mercer and John Cadwalader were being driven back by the British when Mercer was mortally wounded, then Washington arrived and led the men in a counterattack which advanced to within 30 yards (27 m) of the British line.[143]

The Capture of the Hessians at Trenton, December 26, 1776 by John Trumbull

Some British troops retreated after a brief stand, while others took refuge in Nassau Hall, which became the target of Colonel Alexander Hamilton's cannons. Washington's troops charged, the British surrendered in less than an hour, and 194 soldiers laid down their arms.[144] Howe retreated to New York City where his army remained inactive until early the next year.[145] Washington's depleted Continental Army took up winter headquarters in Morristown, New Jersey while disrupting British supply lines and expelling them from parts of New Jersey. Washington later said the British could have successfully counterattacked his encampment before his troops were dug in.[146]

The British still controlled New York, and many Patriot soldiers did not re-enlist or deserted after the harsh winter campaign. Congress instituted greater rewards for re-enlisting and punishments for desertion to effect greater troop numbers.[147] Strategically, Washington's victories were pivotal for the Revolution and quashed the British strategy of showing overwhelming force followed by offering generous terms.[148] In February 1777, word reached London of the American victories at Trenton and Princeton, and the British realized the Patriots were in a position to demand unconditional independence.[149]

Brandywine, Germantown, and Saratoga

In July 1777, British General John Burgoyne led the Saratoga campaign south from Quebec through Lake Champlain and recaptured Fort Ticonderoga intending to divide New England, including control of the Hudson River. However, General Howe in British-occupied New York blundered, taking his army south to Philadelphia rather than up the Hudson River to join Burgoyne near Albany.[150] Meanwhile, Washington and Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette rushed to Philadelphia to engage Howe and were shocked to learn of Burgoyne's progress in upstate New York, where the Patriots were led by General Philip Schuyler and successor Horatio Gates. Washington's army of less experienced men were defeated in the pitched battles at Philadelphia.[151]

Howe outmaneuvered Washington at the Battle of Brandywine on September 11, 1777, and marched unopposed into the nation's capital at Philadelphia. A Patriot attack failed against the British at Germantown in October. Major General Thomas Conway prompted some members of Congress (referred to as the Conway Cabal) to consider removing Washington from command because of the losses incurred at Philadelphia. Washington's supporters resisted, and the matter was finally dropped after much deliberation.[152] Once the plot was exposed, Conway wrote an apology to Washington, resigned, and returned to France.[153]

Washington was concerned with Howe's movements during the Saratoga campaign to the north, and he was also aware that Burgoyne was moving south toward Saratoga from Quebec. Washington took some risks to support Gates' army, sending reinforcements north with Generals Benedict Arnold, his most aggressive field commander, and Benjamin Lincoln. On October 7, 1777, Burgoyne tried to take Bemis Heights but was isolated from support by Howe. He was forced to retreat to Saratoga and ultimately surrendered after the Battles of Saratoga. As Washington suspected, Gates' victory emboldened his critics.[154] Biographer John Alden maintains, "It was inevitable that the defeats of Washington's forces and the concurrent victory of the forces in upper New York should be compared." The admiration for Washington was waning, including little credit from John Adams.[155] British commander Howe resigned in May 1778, left America forever, and was replaced by Sir Henry Clinton.[156]

Valley Forge and Monmouth

Washington and Lafayette at Valley Forge, by John Ward Dunsmore (1907)

Washington's army of 11,000 went into winter quarters at Valley Forge north of Philadelphia in December 1777. They suffered between 2,000 and 3,000 deaths in the extreme cold over six months, mostly from disease and lack of food, clothing, and shelter.[157] Meanwhile, the British were comfortably quartered in Philadelphia, paying for supplies in pounds sterling, while Washington struggled with a devalued American paper currency. The woodlands were soon exhausted of game, and by February, lowered morale and increased desertions ensued.[158]

Washington made repeated petitions to the Continental Congress for provisions. He received a congressional delegation to check the Army's conditions and expressed the urgency of the situation, proclaiming: "Something must be done. Important alterations must be made." He recommended that Congress expedite supplies, and Congress agreed to strengthen and fund the army's supply lines by reorganizing the commissary department. By late February, supplies began arriving.[113]

Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben's incessant drilling soon transformed Washington's recruits into a disciplined fighting force,[159] and the revitalized army emerged from Valley Forge early the following year.[160] Washington promoted Von Steuben to Major General and made him chief of staff.[161]

Washington Rallying the Troops at Monmouth, Emanuel Leutze (1851–1854)

In early 1778, the French responded to Burgoyne's defeat and entered into a Treaty of Alliance with the Americans. The Continental Congress ratified the treaty in May, which amounted to a French declaration of war against Britain.[162]

The British evacuated Philadelphia for New York that June, and Washington summoned a war council of American and French Generals. He chose a partial attack on the retreating British at the

Battle of Monmouth; the British were commanded by Howe's successor General Henry Clinton. Generals Charles Lee and Lafayette moved with 4,000 men, without Washington's knowledge, and bungled their first attack on June 28. Washington relieved Lee and achieved a draw after an expansive battle. At nightfall, the British continued their retreat to New York, and Washington moved his army outside the city.[163] Monmouth was Washington's last battle in the North; he valued the safety of his army more than towns with little value to the British.[164]

West Point espionage

Washington became "America's first spymaster" by designing an espionage system against the British.[165] In 1778, Major Benjamin Tallmadge formed the Culper Ring at Washington's direction to covertly collect information about the British in New York.[166] Washington had disregarded incidents of disloyalty by Benedict Arnold, who had distinguished himself in many battles.[167]

During mid-1780, Arnold began supplying British spymaster John André with sensitive information intended to compromise Washington and capture West Point, a key American defensive position on the Hudson River.[168] Historians have noted as possible reasons for Arnold's treachery his anger at losing promotions to junior officers, or repeated slights from Congress. He was also deeply in debt, profiteering from the war, and disappointed by Washington's lack of support during his eventual court-martial.[169]

Arnold repeatedly asked for command of West Point, and Washington finally agreed in August.[170] Arnold met André on September 21, giving him plans to take over the garrison.[171] Militia forces captured André and discovered the plans, but Arnold escaped to New York.[172] Washington recalled the commanders positioned under Arnold at key points around the fort to prevent any complicity, but he did not suspect Arnold's wife Peggy. Washington assumed personal command at West Point and reorganized its defenses.[173] André's trial for espionage ended in a death sentence, and Washington offered to return him to the British in exchange for Arnold, but Clinton refused. André was hanged on October 2, 1780, despite his last request being to face a firing squad, to deter other spies.[174]

An engraving of Washington, likely made after his tenure in the army.

Southern theater and Yorktown

In late 1778, General Clinton shipped 3,000 troops from New York to Georgia and launched a Southern invasion against Savannah, reinforced by 2,000 British and Loyalist troops. They repelled an attack by Patriots and French naval forces, which bolstered the British war effort.[175]

In mid-1779, Washington attacked Iroquois warriors of the Six Nations to force Britain's Indian allies out of New York, from which they had assaulted New England towns.[176] The Indian warriors joined with Loyalist rangers led by Walter Butler and viciously slew more than 200 frontiersmen in June, laying waste to the Wyoming Valley in Pennsylvania.[177] In response, Washington ordered General John Sullivan to lead an expedition to effect "the total destruction and devastation" of Iroquois villages and take their women and children hostage. Those who managed to escape fled to Canada.[178]

Washington's troops went into quarters at Morristown, New Jersey during the winter of 1779–1780 and suffered their worst winter of the war, with temperatures well below freezing. New York Harbor was frozen over, snow and ice covered the ground for weeks, and the troops again lacked provisions.[179]

Clinton assembled 12,500 troops and attacked Charlestown, South Carolina in January 1780, defeating General Benjamin Lincoln who had only 5,100 Continental troops.[180] The British went on to occupy the South Carolina Piedmont in June, with no Patriot resistance. Clinton returned to New York and left 8,000 troops commanded by General Charles Cornwallis.[181] Congress replaced Lincoln with Horatio Gates; he failed in South Carolina and was replaced by Washington's choice of Nathaniel Greene, but the British already had the South in their grasp. Washington was reinvigorated, however, when Lafayette returned from France with more ships, men, and supplies,[182] and 5,000 veteran French troops led by Marshal Rochambeau arrived at Newport, Rhode Island in July 1780.[183] French naval forces then landed, led by Admiral Grasse, and Washington encouraged Rochambeau to move his fleet south to launch a joint land and naval attack on Arnold's troops.[184]

French King Louis XVI allied with Washington and Patriot American colonists

Washington's army went into winter quarters at New Windsor, New York in December 1780, and Washington urged Congress and state officials to expedite provisions in hopes that the army would not "continue to struggle under the same difficulties they have hitherto endured".[185] On March 1, 1781, Congress ratified the Articles of Confederation, but the government that took effect on March 2 did not have the power to levy taxes, and it loosely held the states together.[186]

General Clinton sent Benedict Arnold, now a British Brigadier General with 1,700 troops, to Virginia to capture Portsmouth and conduct raids on Patriot forces from there; Washington responded by sending Lafayette south to counter Arnold's efforts.[187] Washington initially hoped to bring the fight to New York, drawing off British forces from Virginia and ending the war there, but Rochambeau advised Grasse that Cornwallis in Virginia was the better target. Grasse's fleet arrived off the Virginia coast, and Washington saw the advantage. He made a feint towards Clinton in New York, then headed south to Virginia.[188]

The Siege of Yorktown was a decisive allied victory by the combined forces of the Continental Army commanded by General Washington, the French Army commanded by the General Comte de Rochambeau, and the French Navy commanded by Admiral de Grasse, in the defeat of Cornwallis' British forces. On August 19, the march to Yorktown led by Washington and Rochambeau began, which is known now as the "celebrated march".[189] Washington was in command of an army of 7,800 Frenchmen, 3,100 militia, and 8,000 Continentals. Not well experienced in siege warfare, Washington often deferred to the judgment of General Rochambeau and used his advice about how to proceed; however, Rochambeau never challenged Washington's authority as the battle's commanding officer.[190]

Siege of Yorktown, Generals Washington and Rochambeau give last orders before the attack

By late September, Patriot-French forces surrounded Yorktown, trapped the British army, and prevented British reinforcements from Clinton in the North, while the French navy emerged victorious at the Battle of the Chesapeake. The final American offensive was begun with a shot fired by Washington.[191] The siege ended with a British surrender on October 19, 1781; over 7,000 British soldiers were made prisoners of war, in the last major land battle of the American Revolutionary War.[192] Washington negotiated the terms of surrender for two days, and the official signing ceremony took place on October 19; Cornwallis claimed illness and was absent, sending General Charles O'Hara as his proxy.[193] As a gesture of goodwill, Washington held a dinner for the American, French, and British generals, all of whom fraternized on friendly terms and identified with one another as members of the same professional military caste.[194]

After the surrender at Yorktown, a situation developed that threatened relations between the newly independent America and Britain.[195] Following a series of retributive executions between Patriots and Loyalists, Washington, on May 18, 1782, wrote in a letter to General Moses Hazen[196] that a British captain would be executed in retaliation for the execution of Joshua Huddy, a popular Patriot leader, who was hanged at the direction of the Loyalist Richard Lippincott. Washington wanted Lippincott himself to be executed but was rebuffed.[197] Subsequently, Charles Asgill was chosen instead, by a drawing of lots from a hat. This was a violation of the 14th article of the Yorktown Articles of Capitulation, which protected prisoners of war from acts of retaliation.[196][198] Later, Washington's feelings on matters changed and in a letter of November 13, 1782, to Asgill, he acknowledged Asgill's letter and situation, expressing his desire not to see any harm come to him.[199] After much consideration between the Continental Congress, Alexander Hamilton, Washington, and appeals from the French Crown, Asgill was finally released,[200] where Washington issued Asgill a pass that allowed his passage to New York.[201][196]

Demobilization and resignation

General George Washington Resigning His Commission, by John Trumbull, 1824

As peace negotiations started, the British gradually evacuated troops from Savannah, Charlestown, and New York by 1783, and the French army and navy likewise departed.[202] The American treasury was empty, unpaid and mutinous soldiers forced the adjournment of Congress, and Washington dispelled unrest by suppressing the Newburgh Conspiracy in March 1783; Congress promised officers a five-year bonus.[203] Washington submitted an account of $450,000 in expenses which he had advanced to the army. The account was settled, though it was allegedly vague about large sums and included expenses his wife had incurred through visits to his headquarters.[204]

Washington resigned as commander-in-chief once the Treaty of Paris was signed, and he planned to retire to Mount Vernon. The treaty was ratified in April 1783, and Hamilton's Congressional committee adapted the army for peacetime. Washington gave the Army's perspective to the committee in his *Sentiments on a Peace Establishment*.[205] The Treaty was signed on September 3, 1783, and Great Britain officially recognized the independence of the United States. Washington then disbanded his army, giving an eloquent farewell address to his soldiers on November 2.[206] On November 25, the British evacuated New York City, and Washington and Governor George Clinton took possession.[207]

Washington advised Congress in August 1783 to keep a standing army, create a "national militia" of separate state units, and establish a navy and a national military academy. He circulated his "Farewell" orders that discharged his troops, whom he called "one patriotic band of brothers". Before his return to Mount Vernon, he oversaw the evacuation of British forces in New York and was greeted by parades and celebrations, where he announced that Colonel Henry Knox had been promoted commander-in-chief.[208]

After leading the Continental Army for 8½ years, Washington bade farewell to his officers at Fraunces Tavern in December 1783 and resigned his commission days later, refuting Loyalist predictions that he would not relinquish his military command.[209] In a final appearance in uniform, he gave a statement to the Congress: "I consider it an indispensable duty to close this last solemn act of my official life, by commending the interests of our dearest country to the protection of Almighty God, and those who have the superintendence of them, to his holy keeping."[210] Washington's resignation was acclaimed at home and abroad and showed a skeptical world that the new republic would not degenerate into chaos.[211][k] The same month, Washington was appointed president-general of the Society of the Cincinnati, a hereditary fraternity, and he served for the remainder of his life.[213][l]

Early republic (1783–1789)

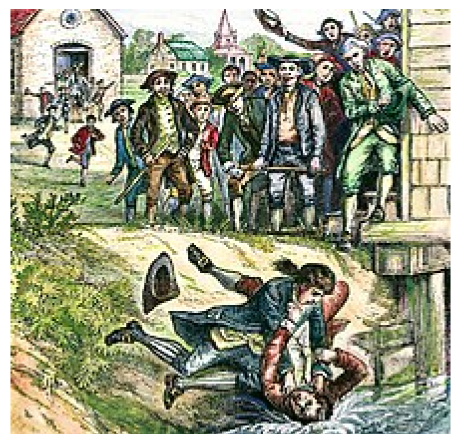
Return to Mount Vernon

Washington was longing to return home after spending just ten days at Mount Vernon out of 8½ years of war. He arrived on Christmas Eve, delighted to be "free of the bustle of a camp and the busy scenes of public life".[216] He was a celebrity and was fêted during a visit to his mother at Fredericksburg in February 1784, and he received a constant stream of visitors wishing to pay their respects to him at Mount Vernon.[217]

> I am not only retired from all public employments but I am retiring within myself, and shall be able to view the solitary walk and tread the paths of private life with heartfelt satisfaction ... I will move gently down the stream of life, until I sleep with my fathers.
>
> George Washington
> Letter to Lafayette
> February 1, 1784[215]

Washington reactivated his interests in the Great Dismal Swamp and Potomac canal projects begun before the war, though neither paid him any dividends, and he undertook a 34-day, 680-mile (1090 km) trip to check on his land holdings in the Ohio Country.[218] He oversaw the completion of the remodeling work at Mount Vernon, which transformed his residence into the mansion that survives to this day—although his financial situation was not strong. Creditors paid him in depreciated wartime currency, and he owed significant amounts in taxes and wages. Mount Vernon had made no profit during his absence, and he saw persistently poor crop yields due to pestilence and poor weather. His estate recorded its eleventh year running at a deficit in 1787, and there was little prospect of improvement.[219] Washington undertook a new landscaping plan and succeeded in cultivating a range of fast-growing trees and shrubs that were native to North America.[220] He also began breeding mules after having been gifted a Spanish jack by King Charles III of Spain in 1784. There were few mules in the United States at that time, and he believed that properly bred mules would revolutionize agriculture and transportation.[221]

Constitutional Convention of 1787



Shays' Rebellion confirmed for Washington the need to overhaul the Articles of Confederation.

Before returning to private life in June 1783, Washington called for a strong union. Though he was concerned that he might be criticized for meddling in civil matters, he sent a circular letter to all the states, maintaining that the Articles of Confederation was no more than "a rope of sand" linking the states. He believed the nation was on the verge of "anarchy and confusion", was vulnerable to foreign intervention, and that a national constitution would unify the states under a strong central government.[222] When Shays' Rebellion erupted in Massachusetts on August 29, 1786, over taxation, Washington was further convinced that a national constitution was needed.[223] Some nationalists feared that the new republic had descended into lawlessness, and they met together on September 11, 1786, at Annapolis to ask Congress to revise the Articles of Confederation. One of their biggest efforts, however, was getting Washington to attend.[224] Congress agreed to a Constitutional Convention to be held in Philadelphia in Spring 1787, and each state was to send delegates.[225]

On December 4, 1786, Washington was chosen to lead the Virginia delegation, but he declined on December 21. He had concerns about the legality of the convention and consulted James Madison, Henry Knox, and others. They persuaded him to attend it, however, as his presence might induce reluctant states to send delegates and smooth the way for the ratification process.[226] On March 28, Washington told Governor Edmund Randolph that he would attend the convention but made it clear that he was urged to attend.[227]

Washington arrived in Philadelphia on May 9, 1787, though a quorum was not attained until Friday, May 25. Benjamin Franklin nominated Washington to preside over the convention, and he was unanimously elected to serve as president general.[228] The convention's state-mandated purpose was to revise the Articles of Confederation with "all such alterations and further provisions" required to improve them, and the new government would be established when the resulting document was "duly confirmed by the several states".[229] Governor Edmund Randolph of Virginia introduced Madison's Virginia Plan on May 27, the third day of the convention. It called for an entirely new constitution and a sovereign national government, which Washington highly recommended.[230]

Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States by Howard Chandler Christy, 1940. Washington is the presiding officer standing at right.

Washington wrote Alexander Hamilton on July 10: "I almost despair of seeing a favorable issue to the proceedings of our convention and do therefore repent having had any agency in the business."[231] Nevertheless, he lent his prestige to the goodwill and work of the other delegates. He unsuccessfully lobbied many to support ratification of the Constitution, such as anti-federalist Patrick Henry; Washington told him "the adoption of it under the present circumstances of the Union is in my opinion desirable" and declared the alternative would be anarchy.[232] Washington and Madison then spent four days at Mount Vernon evaluating the new government's transition.[233]

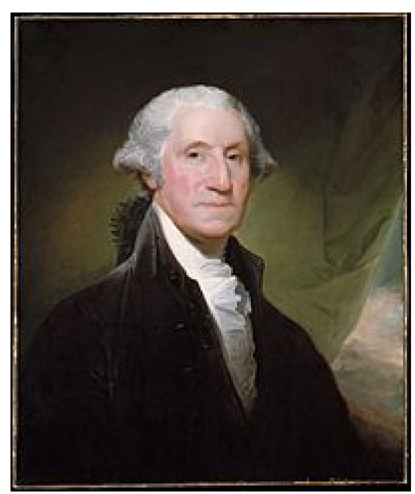
Chancellor of William & Mary

In 1788, the Board of Visitors of the College of William & Mary decided to re-establish the position of Chancellor, and elected Washington to the office on January 18.[234] The College Rector Samuel Griffin wrote to Washington inviting him to the post, and in a letter dated April 30, 1788, Washington accepted the position of the 14th Chancellor of the College of William & Mary.[234][235] He continued to serve in the post through his presidency until his death on December 14, 1799.[234]

First presidential election

The delegates to the Convention anticipated a Washington presidency and left it to him to define the office once elected.[236][m] The state electors under the Constitution voted for the president on February 4, 1789, and Washington suspected that most republicans had not voted for him.[238] The mandated March 4 date passed without a Congressional quorum to count the votes, but a quorum was reached on April 5. The votes were tallied the next day,[239] and Congressional Secretary Charles Thomson was sent to Mount Vernon to tell Washington he had been elected president. Washington won the majority of every state's electoral votes; John Adams received the next highest number of votes and therefore became vice president.[240] Washington had "anxious and painful sensations" about leaving the "domestic felicity" of Mount Vernon, but departed for New York City on April 16 to be inaugurated.[241]

Presidency (1789–1797)


President George Washington, Gilbert Stuart (1795)

Washington was inaugurated on April 30, 1789, taking the oath of office at Federal Hall in New York City.[242][n] His coach was led by militia and a marching band and followed by statesmen and foreign dignitaries in an inaugural parade, with a crowd of 10,000.[244] Chancellor Robert R. Livingston administered the oath, using a Bible provided by the Masons, after which the militia fired a 13-gun salute.[245] Washington read a speech in the Senate Chamber, asking "that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations—and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, consecrate the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States".[246] Though he wished to serve without a salary, Congress insisted adamantly that he accept it, later providing Washington $25,000 per year to defray costs of the presidency.[247]

Washington wrote to James Madison: "As the first of everything in our situation will serve to establish a precedent, it is devoutly wished on my part that these precedents be fixed on true principles."[248] To that end, he preferred the title "Mr. President" over more majestic names proposed by the Senate, including "His Excellency" and "His Highness the President".[249] His executive precedents included the inaugural address, messages to Congress, and the cabinet form of the executive branch.[250]

Washington had planned to resign after his first term, but the political strife in the nation convinced him he should remain in office.[251] He was an able administrator and a judge of talent and character, and he regularly talked with department heads to get their advice.[252] He tolerated opposing views, despite fears that a democratic system would lead to political violence, and he conducted a smooth transition of power to his successor.[253] He remained non-partisan throughout his presidency and opposed the divisiveness of political parties, but he favored a strong central government, was sympathetic to a Federalist form of government, and leery of the Republican opposition.[254]

Washington dealt with major problems. The old Confederation lacked the powers to handle its workload and had weak leadership, no executive, a small bureaucracy of clerks, a large debt, worthless paper money, and no power to establish taxes.[255] He had the task of assembling an executive department and relied on Tobias Lear for advice selecting its officers.[256] Great Britain refused to relinquish its forts in the American West,[255] and Barbary pirates preyed on American merchant ships in the Mediterranean at a time when the United States did not even have a navy.[257]

Cabinet and executive departments

Congress created executive departments in 1789, including the State Department in July, the Department of War in August, and the Treasury Department in September. Washington appointed fellow Virginian Edmund Randolph as Attorney General, Samuel Osgood as Postmaster General, Thomas Jefferson as Secretary of State, and Henry Knox as Secretary of War. Finally, he appointed Alexander Hamilton as Secretary of the Treasury. Washington's cabinet became a consulting and advisory body, not mandated by the Constitution.[258]

The Washington Cabinet

Office	Name	Term
President	**George Washington**	1789–1797
Vice President	**John Adams**	1789–1797
Secretary of State	**John Jay (acting)**	1789–1790
	Thomas Jefferson	1790–1793

Washington's cabinet members formed rival parties with sharply opposing views, most fiercely illustrated between Hamilton and Jefferson.[259] Washington restricted cabinet discussions to topics of his choosing, without participating in the debate. He occasionally requested cabinet opinions in writing and expected department heads to agreeably carry out his decisions.[255]

Edmund Randolph	1794–1795	
Timothy Pickering	1795–1797	
Secretary of the Treasury	**Alexander Hamilton**	1789–1795
Oliver Wolcott Jr.	1795–1797	
Secretary of War	**Henry Knox**	1789–1794
	Timothy Pickering	1795
James McHenry	1796–1797	
Attorney General	**Edmund Randolph**	1789–1794
	William Bradford	1794–1795
Charles Lee	1795–1797	

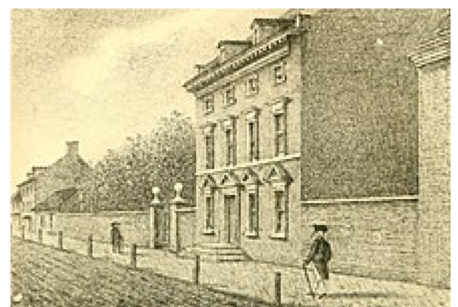
Domestic issues

Washington was apolitical and opposed the formation of parties, suspecting that conflict would undermine republicanism.[260] His closest advisors formed two factions, portending the First Party System. Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton formed the Federalist Party to promote the national credit and a financially powerful nation. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson opposed Hamilton's agenda and founded the Jeffersonian Republicans. Washington favored Hamilton's agenda, however, and it ultimately went into effect—resulting in bitter controversy.[261]

Washington proclaimed November 26 as a day of Thanksgiving to encourage national unity. "It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor." He spent that day fasting and visiting debtors in prison to provide them with food and beer.[262]

In response to two antislavery petitions, Georgia and South Carolina objected and were threatening to "blow the trumpet of civil war". Washington and Congress responded with a series of pro-slavery measures: citizenship was denied to black immigrants; slaves were barred from serving in state militias; two more slave states (Kentucky in 1792, Tennessee in 1796) were admitted; and the continuation of slavery in federal territories south of the Ohio River was guaranteed. On February 12, 1793, Washington signed into law the Fugitive Slave Act, which overrode state laws and courts, allowing agents to cross state lines to capture and return escaped slaves.[263] Many in the north decried the law believing the act allowed bounty hunting and the kidnappings of blacks.[264] The Slave Trade Act of 1794, sharply limiting American involvement in the Atlantic slave trade, was also enacted.[265]

National Bank



The President's House in Philadelphia was Washington's residence from 1790 to 1797

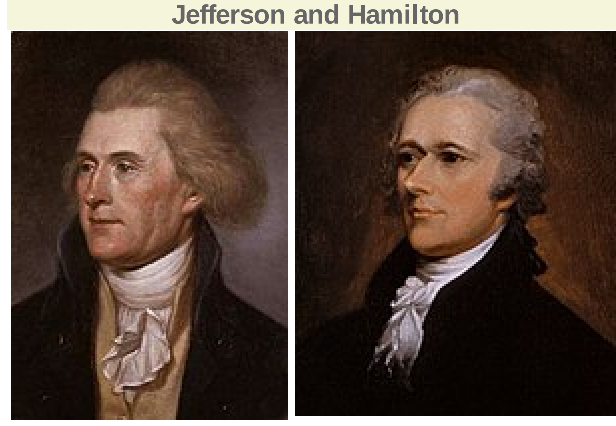
Washington's first term was largely devoted to economic concerns, in which Hamilton had devised various plans to address matters.[266] The establishment of public credit became a primary challenge for the federal government.[267] Hamilton submitted a report to a deadlocked Congress, and he, Madison, and Jefferson reached the Compromise of 1790 in which Jefferson agreed to Hamilton's debt proposals in exchange for moving the nation's capital temporarily to Philadelphia and then south near Georgetown on the Potomac River.[261] The terms were legislated in the Funding Act of 1790 and the Residence Act, both of which Washington signed into law. Congress authorized the assumption and payment of the nation's debts, with funding provided by customs duties and excise taxes.[268]

Hamilton created controversy among Cabinet members by advocating establishing the First Bank of the United States. Madison and Jefferson objected, but the bank easily passed Congress. Jefferson and Randolph insisted that the new bank was beyond the authority granted by the constitution, as Hamilton believed. Washington sided with Hamilton and signed the legislation on February 25, and the rift became openly hostile between Hamilton and Jefferson.[269]

The nation's first financial crisis occurred in March 1792. Hamilton's Federalists exploited large loans to gain control of U.S. debt securities, causing a run on the national bank;[270] the markets returned to normal by mid-April.[271] Jefferson believed Hamilton was part of the scheme, despite Hamilton's efforts to ameliorate, and Washington again found himself in the middle of a feud.[272]

Jefferson–Hamilton feud

Jefferson and Hamilton



Thomas Jefferson Alexander Hamilton

Jefferson and Hamilton adopted diametrically opposed political principles. Hamilton believed in a strong national government requiring a national bank and foreign loans to function, while Jefferson believed the states and the farm element should primarily direct the government; he also resented the idea of banks and foreign loans. To Washington's dismay, the two men persistently entered into disputes and infighting.[273] Hamilton demanded that Jefferson resign if he could not support Washington, and Jefferson told Washington that Hamilton's fiscal system would lead to the overthrow of the Republic.[274] Washington urged them to call a truce for the nation's sake, but they ignored him.[275]

Washington reversed his decision to retire after his first term to minimize party strife, but the feud continued after his re-election.[274] Jefferson's political actions, his support of Freneau's *National Gazette*,[276] and his attempt to undermine Hamilton nearly led Washington to dismiss him from the cabinet; Jefferson ultimately resigned his position in December 1793, and Washington forsook him from that time on.[277]

The feud led to the well-defined Federalist and Republican parties, and party affiliation became necessary for election to Congress by 1794.[278] Washington remained aloof from congressional attacks on Hamilton, but he did not publicly protect him, either. The Hamilton–Reynolds sex scandal opened Hamilton to disgrace, but Washington continued to hold him in "very high esteem" as the dominant force in establishing federal law and government.[279]

Whiskey Rebellion

In March 1791, at Hamilton's urging, with support from Madison, Congress imposed an excise tax on distilled spirits to help curtail the national debt, which took effect in July.[280] Grain farmers strongly protested in Pennsylvania's frontier districts; they argued that they were unrepresented and were shouldering too much of the debt, comparing their situation to excessive British taxation before the Revolutionary War. On August 2, Washington assembled his cabinet to discuss how to deal with the situation. Unlike Washington, who had reservations about using force, Hamilton had long waited for such a situation and was eager to suppress the rebellion by using federal authority and force.[281] Not wanting to involve the federal government if possible, Washington called on Pennsylvania state officials to take the initiative, but they declined to take military action. On August 7, Washington issued his first proclamation for calling up state militias. After appealing for peace, he reminded the protestors that, unlike the rule of the British crown, the Federal law was issued by state-elected representatives.[282]

Threats and violence against tax collectors, however, escalated into defiance against federal authority in 1794 and gave rise to the Whiskey Rebellion. Washington issued a final proclamation on September 25, threatening the use of military force to no avail.[282] The federal army was not up to the task, so Washington invoked the Militia Act of 1792 to summon state militias.[283] Governors sent troops, initially commanded by Washington, who gave the command to Light-Horse Harry Lee to lead them into the rebellious districts. They took 150 prisoners, and the remaining rebels dispersed without further fighting. Two of the prisoners were condemned to death, but Washington exercised his Constitutional authority for the first time and pardoned them.[284]

Washington's forceful action demonstrated that the new government could protect itself and its tax collectors. This represented the first use of federal military force against the states and citizens,[285] and remains the only time an incumbent president has commanded troops in the field. Washington justified his action against "certain self-created societies", which he regarded as "subversive organizations" that threatened the national union. He did not dispute their right to protest, but he insisted that their dissent must not violate federal law. Congress agreed and extended their congratulations to him; only Madison and Jefferson expressed indifference.[286]

Foreign affairs

John Jay, negotiator of the Jay Treaty

In April 1792, the French Revolutionary Wars began between Great Britain and France, and Washington declared America's neutrality. The revolutionary government of France sent diplomat Citizen Genêt to America, and he was welcomed with great enthusiasm. He created a network of new Democratic-Republican Societies promoting France's interests, but Washington denounced them and demanded that the French recall Genêt.[287] The National Assembly of France granted Washington honorary French citizenship on August 26, 1792, during the early stages of the French Revolution.[288] Hamilton formulated the Jay Treaty to normalize trade relations with Great Britain while removing them from western forts, and also to resolve financial debts remaining from the Revolution.[289] Chief Justice John Jay acted as Washington's negotiator and signed the treaty on November 19, 1794; critical Jeffersonians, however, supported France. Washington deliberated, then supported the treaty because it avoided war with Britain,[290] but was disappointed that its provisions favored Britain.[291] He mobilized public opinion and secured ratification in the Senate[292] but faced frequent public criticism.[293]

The British agreed to abandon their forts around the Great Lakes, and the United States modified the boundary with Canada. The government liquidated numerous pre-Revolutionary debts, and the British opened the British West Indies to American trade. The treaty secured peace with Britain and a decade of prosperous trade. Jefferson claimed that it angered France and "invited rather than avoided" war.[294] Relations with France deteriorated afterward, leaving succeeding president John Adams with prospective war.[295] James Monroe was the American Minister to France, but Washington recalled him for his opposition to the Treaty. The French refused to accept his replacement Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, and the French Directory declared the authority to seize American ships two days before Washington's term ended. [296]

Native American affairs

Ron Chernow describes Washington as always trying to be even-handed in dealing with the Natives. He states that Washington hoped they would abandon their itinerant hunting life and adapt to fixed agricultural communities in the manner of white settlers. He also maintains that Washington never advocated outright confiscation of tribal land or the forcible removal of tribes and that he berated American settlers who abused

Seneca Chief Sagoyewatha was Washington's peace emissary with the Western Confederation.

natives, admitting that he held out no hope for pacific relations with the natives as long as "frontier settlers entertain the opinion that there is not the same crime (or indeed no crime at all) in killing a native as in killing a white man."[297]

By contrast, Colin G. Calloway writes that "Washington had a lifelong obsession with getting Indian land, either for himself or for his nation, and initiated policies and campaigns that had devastating effects in Indian country."[298] "The growth of the nation," Galloway has stated, "demanded the dispossession of Indian people. Washington hoped the process could be bloodless and that Indian people would give up their lands for a "fair" price and move away. But if Indians refused and resisted, as they often did, he felt he had no choice but to "extirpate" them and that the expeditions he sent to destroy Indian towns were therefore entirely justified."[299]

During the Fall of 1789, Washington had to contend with the British refusing to evacuate their forts in the Northwest frontier and their concerted efforts to incite hostile Indian tribes to attack American settlers.[300][o] The Northwest tribes under Miami chief Little Turtle allied with the British Army to resist American expansion, and killed 1,500 settlers between 1783 and 1790.[301]

Washington decided that "The Government of the United States are determined that their Administration of Indian Affairs shall be directed entirely by the great principles of Justice and humanity",[302] and provided that treaties should negotiate their land interests.[302] The administration regarded powerful tribes as foreign nations, and Washington even smoked a peace pipe and drank wine with them at the Philadelphia presidential house.[303] He made numerous attempts to conciliate them;[304] he equated killing indigenous peoples with killing whites and sought to integrate them into European-American culture.[305] Secretary of War Henry Knox also attempted to encourage agriculture among the tribes.[304]

In the Southwest, negotiations failed between federal commissioners and raiding Indian tribes seeking retribution. Washington invited Creek Chief Alexander McGillivray and 24 leading chiefs to New York to negotiate a treaty and treated them like foreign dignitaries. Knox and McGillivray concluded the *Treaty of New York* on August 7, 1790, in Federal Hall, which provided the tribes with agricultural supplies and McGillivray with a rank of Brigadier General Army and a salary of $1,500.[306]

Battle of Fallen Timbers by R. F. Zogbaum, 1896. The Ohio Country was ceded to America in its aftermath.

In 1790, Washington sent Brigadier General Josiah Harmar to pacify the Northwest tribes, but Little Turtle routed him twice and forced him to withdraw.[307] The Western Confederacy of tribes used guerrilla tactics and were an effective force against the sparsely manned American Army. Washington sent Major General Arthur St. Clair from Fort Washington on an expedition to restore peace in the territory in 1791. On November 4, St. Clair's forces were ambushed and soundly defeated by tribal forces with few survivors, despite Washington's warning of surprise attacks. Washington was outraged over what he viewed to be excessive Native American brutality and execution of captives, including women and children.[308]

St. Clair resigned his commission, and Washington replaced him with the Revolutionary War hero General Anthony Wayne. From 1792 to 1793, Wayne instructed his troops on Native American warfare tactics and instilled discipline which was lacking under St. Clair.[309] In August 1794, Washington sent Wayne into tribal territory with authority to

drive them out by burning their villages and crops in the Maumee Valley.[310] On August 24, the American army under Wayne's leadership defeated the western confederacy at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, and the Treaty of Greenville in August 1795 opened up two-thirds of the Ohio Country for American settlement.[311]

Second term

Originally Washington had planned to retire after his first term, while many Americans could not imagine anyone else taking his place.[312] After nearly four years as president, and dealing with the infighting in his own cabinet and with partisan critics, Washington showed little enthusiasm in running for a second term, while Martha also wanted him not to run.[313] James Madison urged him not to retire, that his absence would only allow the dangerous political rift in his cabinet and the House, to worsen. Jefferson also pleaded with him not to retire and agreed to drop his attacks on Hamilton, or he would also retire if Washington did.[314] Hamilton maintained that Washington's absence would be "deplored as the greatest evil" to the country at this time.[315] Washington's close nephew George Augustine Washington, his manager at Mount Vernon, was critically ill and had to be replaced, further increasing Washington's desire to retire and return to Mount Vernon.[316]

When the election of 1792 neared, Washington did not publicly announce his presidential candidacy. Still, he silently consented to run to prevent a further political-personal rift in his cabinet. The Electoral College unanimously elected him president on February 13, 1793, and John Adams as vice president by a vote of 77 to 50.[305] Washington, with nominal fanfare, arrived alone at his inauguration in his carriage. Sworn into office by Associate Justice William Cushing on March 4, 1793, in the Senate Chamber of Congress Hall in Philadelphia, Washington gave a brief address and then immediately retired to his Philadelphia presidential house, weary of office and in poor health.[317]

USS *Constitution*: Commissioned and named by President Washington in 1794

On April 22, 1793, during the French Revolution, Washington issued his famous Neutrality Proclamation and was resolved to pursue "a conduct friendly and impartial toward the belligerent Powers" while he warned Americans not to intervene in the international conflict.[318] Although Washington recognized France's revolutionary government, he would eventually ask French minister to America Citizen Genêt be recalled over the Citizen Genêt Affair.[319] Genêt was a diplomatic troublemaker who was openly hostile toward Washington's neutrality policy. He procured four American ships as privateers to strike at Spanish forces (British allies) in Florida while organizing militias to strike at other British possessions. However, his efforts failed to draw America into the foreign campaigns during Washington's presidency.[320] On July 31, 1793 Jefferson submitted his resignation from Washington's cabinet.[321] Washington signed the Naval Act of 1794 and commissioned the first six federal frigates to combat Barbary pirates.[322]

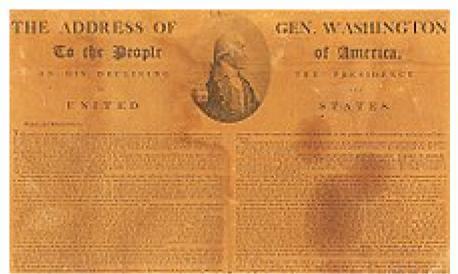
In January 1795, Hamilton, who desired more income for his family, resigned office and was replaced by Washington appointment Oliver Wolcott, Jr.. Washington and Hamilton remained friends. However, Washington's relationship with his Secretary of War Henry Knox deteriorated. Knox resigned office on the rumor he profited from construction contracts on U.S. Frigates.[323]

In the final months of his presidency, Washington was assailed by his political foes and a partisan press who accused him of being ambitious and greedy, while he argued that he had taken no salary during the war and had risked his life in battle. He regarded the press as a disuniting, "diabolical" force of falsehoods, sentiments that he expressed in his Farewell Address.[324] At the end of his second term, Washington retired for personal and political reasons, dismayed with personal attacks, and to ensure that a truly contested presidential election

could be held. He did not feel bound to a two-term limit, but his retirement set a significant precedent. Washington is often credited with setting the principle of a two-term presidency, but it was Thomas Jefferson who first refused to run for a third term on political grounds.[325]

Farewell Address

In 1796, Washington declined to run for a third term of office, believing his death in office would create an image of a lifetime appointment. The precedent of a two-term limit was created by his retirement from office.[326] In May 1792, in anticipation of his retirement, Washington instructed James Madison to prepare a "valedictory address", an initial draft of which was entitled the "Farewell Address".[327] In May 1796, Washington sent the manuscript to his Secretary of Treasury Alexander Hamilton who did an extensive rewrite, while Washington provided final edits.[328] On September 19, 1796, David Claypoole's *American Daily Advertiser* published the final version of the address.[329]


THE ADDRESS OF GEN. WASHINGTON
To the People of America,
UNITED STATES

Washington's Farewell Address (September 19, 1796)

Washington stressed that national identity was paramount, while a united America would safeguard freedom and prosperity. He warned the nation of three eminent dangers: regionalism, partisanship, and foreign entanglements, and said the "name of AMERICAN, which belongs to you, in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations."[330] Washington called for men to move beyond partisanship for the common good, stressing that the United States must concentrate on its own interests. He warned against foreign alliances and their influence in domestic affairs, and bitter partisanship and the dangers of political parties.[331] He counseled friendship and commerce with all nations, but advised against involvement in European wars.[332] He stressed the importance of religion, asserting that "religion and morality are indispensable supports" in a republic.[333] Washington's address favored Hamilton's Federalist ideology and economic policies.[334]

Washington closed the address by reflecting on his legacy:

> Though in reviewing the incidents of my Administration I am unconscious of intentional error, I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope that my country will never cease to view them with indulgence, and that, after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its service with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.[335]

After initial publication, many Republicans, including Madison, criticized the Address and believed it was an anti-French campaign document. Madison believed Washington was strongly pro-British. Madison also was suspicious of who authored the Address.[336]

In 1839, Washington biographer Jared Sparks maintained that Washington's "... Farewell Address was printed and published with the laws, by order of the legislatures, as an evidence of the value they attached to its political precepts, and of their affection for its author."[337] In 1972, Washington scholar James Flexner referred to the Farewell Address as receiving as much acclaim as Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence and Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.[338] In 2010, historian Ron Chernow reported the *Farewell Address* proved to be one of the most influential statements on Republicanism.[339]

Retirement (1797–1799)

Washington retired to Mount Vernon in March 1797 and devoted time to his plantations and other business interests, including his distillery.[340] His plantation operations were only minimally profitable,[41] and his lands in the west (Piedmont) were under Indian attacks and yielded little income, with the squatters there refusing to pay rent. He attempted to sell these but without success.[341] He became an even more committed Federalist. He vocally supported the Alien and Sedition Acts and convinced Federalist John Marshall to run for Congress to weaken the Jeffersonian hold on Virginia.[342]

Washington grew restless in retirement, prompted by tensions with France, and he wrote to Secretary of War James McHenry offering to organize President Adams' army.[343] In a continuation of the French Revolutionary Wars, French privateers began seizing American ships in 1798, and relations deteriorated with France and led to the "Quasi-War". Without consulting Washington, Adams nominated him for a lieutenant general commission on July 4, 1798, and the position of commander-in-chief of the armies.[344] Washington chose to accept, replacing James Wilkinson,[345] and he served as the commanding general from July 13, 1798 until his death 17 months later. He participated in planning for a provisional army, but he avoided involvement in details. In advising McHenry of potential officers for the army, he appeared to make a complete break with Jefferson's Democratic-Republicans: "you could as soon scrub the blackamoor white, as to change the principles of a profest Democrat; and that he will leave nothing unattempted to overturn the government of this country."[346] Washington delegated the active leadership of the army to Hamilton, a major general. No army invaded the United States during this period, and Washington did not assume a field command.[347]

Washington was thought to be rich because of the well-known "glorified façade of wealth and grandeur" at Mount Vernon,[348] but nearly all his wealth was in the form of land and slaves rather than ready cash. To supplement his income, he erected a distillery for substantial whiskey production.[349] Historians estimate that the estate was worth about $1 million in 1799 dollars,[350] equivalent to $15,249,000 in 2020. He bought land parcels to spur development around the new Federal City named in his honor, and he sold individual lots to middle-income investors rather than multiple lots to large investors, believing they would more likely commit to making improvements.[351]

Final days and death

Washington on his Deathbed
Junius Brutus Stearns 1799

On December 12, 1799, Washington inspected his farms on horseback. The weather was snowing with sleet. He returned home late for dinner. Washington kept his wet clothes on, not wanting to keep his guests waiting. He had a sore throat the next day. The weather was freezing and snowy. Washington marked trees for cutting. That evening, he complained of chest congestion but was still cheerful.[352] On Saturday, he awoke to an inflamed throat and difficulty breathing, so he ordered estate overseer George Rawlins to remove nearly a pint of his blood, bloodletting being a common practice of the time. His family summoned Doctors James Craik, Gustavus Richard Brown, and Elisha C. Dick.[353] (Dr. William Thornton arrived some hours after Washington died.)[354]

Dr. Brown thought Washington had quinsy; Dr. Dick thought the condition was a more serious "violent inflammation of the throat".[355] They continued the process of bloodletting to approximately five pints, and Washington's condition deteriorated further. Dr. Dick proposed a tracheotomy, but the others were not familiar with that procedure and therefore disapproved.[356] Washington instructed Brown and Dick to leave the room, while he assured Craik, "Doctor, I die hard, but I am not afraid to go."[357]

Washington's death came more swiftly than expected.[358] On his deathbed, he instructed his private secretary Tobias Lear to wait three days before his burial, out of fear of being entombed alive.[359] According to Lear, he died peacefully between 10 and 11 p.m. on December 14, 1799, with Martha seated at the foot of his bed. His last words were "'Tis well", from his conversation with Lear about his burial. He was 67.[360]

Congress immediately adjourned for the day upon news of Washington's death, and the Speaker's chair was shrouded in black the next morning.[361] The funeral was held four days after his death on December 18, 1799, at Mount Vernon, where his body was interred. Cavalry and foot soldiers led the procession, and six colonels served as the pallbearers. The Mount Vernon funeral service was restricted mostly to family and friends.[362] Reverend Thomas Davis read the funeral service by the vault with a brief address, followed by a ceremony performed by various members of Washington's Masonic lodge in Alexandria, Virginia.[363] Congress chose Light-Horse Harry Lee to deliver the eulogy. Word of his death traveled slowly; church bells rang in the cities, and many places of business closed.[364] People worldwide admired Washington and were saddened by his death, and memorial processions were held in major cities of the United States. Martha wore a black mourning cape for one year, and she burned their correspondence to protect their privacy. Only five letters between the couple are known to have survived: two from Martha to George and three from him to her.[365]

Miniature of George Washington by Robert Field (1800)

The diagnosis of Washington's illness and the immediate cause of his death have been subjects of debate since the day he died. The published account of Drs. Craik and Brown[p] stated that his symptoms had been consistent with *cynanche trachealis* (tracheal inflammation), a term of that period used to describe severe inflammation of the upper windpipe, including quinsy. Accusations have persisted since Washington's death concerning medical malpractice, with some believing he had been bled to death.[356] Various modern medical authors have speculated that he died from a severe case of epiglottitis complicated by the given treatments, most notably the massive blood loss which almost certainly caused hypovolemic shock.[367][q]

Burial, net worth, and aftermath

Washington was buried in the old Washington family vault at Mount Vernon, situated on a grassy slope overspread with willow, juniper, cypress, and chestnut trees. It contained the remains of his brother Lawrence and other family members, but the decrepit brick vault needed repair, prompting Washington to leave instructions in his will for the construction of a new vault.[364] Washington's estate at the time of his death was worth an estimated $780,000 in 1799, approximately equivalent to $14.3 million in 2010.[371] Washington's peak net worth was $587.0 million, including his 300 slaves.[372] Washington held title to more than 65,000 acres of land in 37 different locations.[80]

The sarcophagi of George (right) and Martha Washington at the present tomb's entrance

In 1830, a disgruntled ex-employee of the estate attempted to steal what he thought was Washington's skull, prompting the construction of a more secure vault.[373] The next year, the new vault was constructed at Mount Vernon to receive the remains of George and Martha and other relatives.[374] In 1832, a joint Congressional committee debated moving his body from Mount Vernon to a crypt in the Capitol. The crypt had been built by architect Charles Bulfinch in the 1820s during the reconstruction of the burned-out capital, after the Burning of Washington by

the British during the War of 1812. Southern opposition was intense, antagonized by an ever-growing rift between North and South; many were concerned that Washington's remains could end up on "a shore foreign to his native soil" if the country became divided, and Washington's remains stayed in Mount Vernon.[375]

On October 7, 1837, Washington's remains were placed, still in the original lead coffin, within a marble sarcophagus designed by William Strickland and constructed by John Struthers earlier that year.[376] The sarcophagus was sealed and encased with planks, and an outer vault was constructed around it.[377] The outer vault has the sarcophagi of both George and Martha Washington; the inner vault has the remains of other Washington family members and relatives.[374]

Personal life

The Washington Family by Edward Savage (c. 1789–1796) George and Martha Washington with her grandchildren. National Art Gallery[378]

Washington was somewhat reserved in personality, but he generally had a strong presence among others. He made speeches and announcements when required, but he was not a noted orator or debater.[379] He was taller than most of his contemporaries;[380] accounts of his height vary from 6 ft (1.83 m) to 6 ft 3.5 in (1.92 m) tall,[381][382] he weighed between 210–220 pounds (95–100 kg) as an adult,[383][384] and he was known for his great strength.[385] He had grey-blue eyes and reddish-brown hair which he wore powdered in the fashion of the day.[386] He had a rugged and dominating presence, which garnered respect from his peers.

He bought William Lee on May 27, 1768, and he was Washington's valet for 20 years. He was the only slave freed immediately in Washington's will.

Washington frequently suffered from severe tooth decay and ultimately lost all his teeth but one. He had several sets of false teeth made, which he wore during his presidency—none of which was made of wood, contrary to common lore.[387] These dental problems left him in constant pain, for which he took laudanum.[388] As a public figure, he relied upon the strict confidence of his dentist.[389]

George Washington's bookplate with the Coat of arms of the Washington family

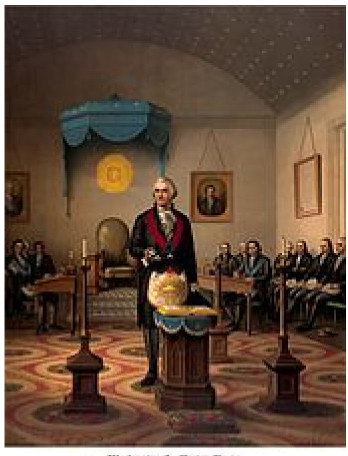
Washington was a talented equestrian early in life. He collected thoroughbreds at Mount Vernon, and his two favorite horses were Blueskin and Nelson.[390] Fellow Virginian Thomas Jefferson said Washington was "the best horseman of his age and the most graceful figure that could be seen on horseback";[391] he also hunted foxes, deer, ducks, and other game.[392] He was an excellent dancer and attended the theater frequently. He drank in moderation but was morally opposed to excessive drinking, smoking tobacco, gambling, and profanity.[393]

Religion and Freemasonry

Washington was descended from Anglican minister Lawrence Washington (his great-great-grandfather), whose troubles with the Church of England may have prompted his heirs to emigrate to America.[394] Washington was baptized as an infant in April 1732 and became a devoted member of the Church of England (the Anglican Church).[395] He served more than 20 years as a vestryman

and churchwarden for Fairfax Parish and Truro Parish, Virginia.[396] He privately prayed and read the Bible daily, and he publicly encouraged people and the nation to pray.[397] He may have taken communion on a regular basis prior to the Revolutionary War, but he did not do so following the war, for which he was admonished by Pastor James Abercrombie.[398]

Washington believed in a "wise, inscrutable, and irresistible" Creator God who was active in the Universe, contrary to deistic thought.[394] He referred to God by the Enlightenment terms *Providence*, the *Creator*, or the *Almighty*, and also as the *Divine Author* or the *Supreme Being*.[399] He believed in a divine power who watched over battlefields, was involved in the outcome of war, was protecting his life, and was involved in American politics—and specifically in the creation of the United States.[400][r] Modern historian Ron Chernow has posited that Washington avoided evangelistic Christianity or hellfire-and-brimstone speech along with communion and anything inclined to "flaunt his religiosity". Chernow has also said Washington "never used his religion as a device for partisan purposes or in official undertakings".[402] No mention of Jesus Christ appears in his private correspondence, and such references are rare in his public writings.[403] He frequently quoted from the Bible or paraphrased it, and often referred to the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*.[404] There is debate on whether he is best classed as a Christian or a theistic rationalist—or both.[405]



George Washington as Master of his Lodge, 1793

Washington emphasized religious toleration in a nation with numerous denominations and religions. He publicly attended services of different Christian denominations and prohibited anti-Catholic celebrations in the Army.[406] He engaged workers at Mount Vernon without regard for religious belief or affiliation. While president, he acknowledged major religious sects and gave speeches on religious toleration.[407] He was distinctly rooted in the ideas, values, and modes of thinking of the Enlightenment,[408] but he harbored no contempt of organized Christianity and its clergy, "being no bigot myself to any mode of worship".[408] In 1793, speaking to members of the New Church in Baltimore, Washington proclaimed, "We have abundant reason to rejoice that in this Land the light of truth and reason has triumphed over the power of bigotry and superstition."[409]

Freemasonry was a widely accepted institution in the late 18th century, known for advocating moral teachings.[410] Washington was attracted to the Masons' dedication to the Enlightenment principles of rationality, reason, and brotherhood. The American Masonic lodges did not share the anti-clerical perspective of the controversial European lodges.[411] A Masonic lodge was established in Fredericksburg in September 1752, and Washington was initiated two months later at the age of 20 as one of its first Entered Apprentices. Within a year, he progressed through its ranks to become a Master Mason.[412] Washington had high regard for the Masonic Order, but his personal lodge attendance was sporadic. In 1777, a convention of Virginia lodges asked him to be the Grand Master of the newly established Grand Lodge of Virginia, but he declined due to his commitments leading the Continental Army. After 1782, he frequently corresponded with Masonic lodges and members,[413] and he was listed as Master in the Virginia charter of Alexandria Lodge No. 22 in 1788.[414]

Slavery

In Washington's lifetime, slavery was deeply ingrained in the economic and social fabric of Virginia.[415] Slavery was protected by law in all of the 13 colonies up until the American Revolutionary War.[416]

Washington as Farmer at Mount Vernon
Junius Brutus Stearns, 1851

Washington owned and worked African slaves and during his lifetime over 577 slaves worked Mount Vernon.[417][418] He acquired them through inheritance, gained control of eighty-four dower slaves on his marriage to Martha, and purchased at least seventy-one slaves between 1752 and 1773.[419] His early views on slavery were no different from any Virginia planter of the time.[420] He demonstrated no moral qualms about the institution and referred to his slaves as "a Species of Property".[421] From the 1760s his attitudes underwent a slow evolution. The first doubts were prompted by his transition from tobacco to grain crops, which left him with a costly surplus of slaves, causing him to question the system's economic efficiency.[422] His growing disillusionment with the institution was spurred by the principles of the American Revolution and revolutionary friends such as Lafayette and Hamilton.[423] Most historians agree the Revolution was central to the evolution of Washington's attitudes on slavery;[424] "After 1783", Kenneth Morgan writes, "...[Washington] began to express inner tensions about the problem of slavery more frequently, though always in private..."[425]

The many contemporary reports of slave treatment at Mount Vernon are varied and conflicting.[426] Historian Kenneth Morgan (*2000*) maintains that Washington was frugal on spending for clothes and bedding for his slaves, and only provided them with just enough food, and that he maintained strict control over his slaves, instructing his overseers to keep them working hard from dawn to dusk year-round. [427] However, historian Dorothy Twohig (2001) said: "Food, clothing, and housing seem to have been at least adequate".[428] Washington faced growing debts involved with the costs of supporting slaves. He held an "engrained sense of racial superiority" over African Americans but harbored no ill feelings toward them.[429]

Some slave families worked at different locations on the plantation but were allowed to visit one another on their days off.[430] Washington's slaves received two hours off for meals during the workday, and given time off on Sundays and religious holidays.[431] Washington frequently cared for ill or injured slaves personally, and he provided physicians and midwives and had his slaves inoculated for smallpox.[432] In May 1796, Martha's personal and favorite slave Ona Judge escaped to Portsmouth. At Martha's behest, Washington attempted to capture Ona, using a Treasury agent, but this effort failed. In February 1797, Washington's personal slave Hercules escaped to Philadelphia and was never found.[433]

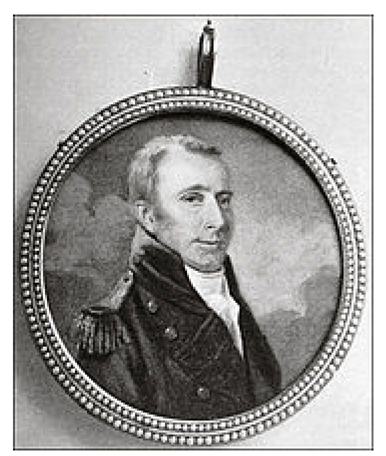
Some accounts report that Washington opposed flogging but at times sanctioned its use, generally as a last resort, on both men and women slaves.[434] Washington used both reward and punishment to encourage discipline and productivity in his slaves. He tried appealing to an individual's sense of pride, gave better blankets and clothing to the "most deserving", and motivated his slaves with cash rewards. He believed "watchfulness and admonition" to be often better deterrents against transgressions but would punish those who "will not do their duty by fair means". Punishment ranged in severity from demotion back to fieldwork, through whipping and beatings, to permanent separation from friends and family by sale. Historian Ron Chernow maintains that overseers were required to warn slaves before resorting to the lash and required Washington's written permission before whipping, though his extended absences did not always permit this.[435] Washington remained dependent on slave labor to work his farms and negotiated the purchase of more slaves in 1786 and 1787.[436]

In February 1786, Washington took a census of Mount Vernon and recorded 224 slaves.[437] By 1799, slaves at Mount Vernon totaled 317, including 143 children.[438] Washington owned 124 slaves, leased 40, and held 153 for his wife's dower interest.[439] Washington supported many slaves who were too young or too old to work, greatly increasing Mount Vernon's slave population and causing the plantation to operate at a loss.[440]

Abolition and emancipation

Based on his letters, diary, documents, accounts from colleagues, employees, friends, and visitors, Washington slowly developed a cautious sympathy toward abolitionism that eventually ended with the emancipation of his own slaves.[441] As president, he kept publicly silent on slavery, believing it was a nationally divisive issue that could destroy the union.[442]

During the American Revolutionary War, Washington began to change his views on slavery.[416] In a 1778 letter to Lund Washington, he made clear his desire "to get quit of Negroes" when discussing the exchange of slaves for land he wanted to buy.[443] The next year, he stated his intention not to separate families as a result of "a change of masters".[444] During the 1780s, Washington privately expressed his support for the gradual emancipation of slaves.[445] Between 1783 and 1786, he gave moral support to a plan proposed by Lafayette to purchase land and free slaves to work on it, but declined to participate in the experiment.[428] Washington privately expressed support for emancipation to prominent Methodists Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury in 1785 but declined to sign their petition.[446] In personal correspondence the next year, he made clear his desire to see the institution of slavery ended by a gradual legislative process, a view that correlated with the mainstream antislavery literature published in the 1780s that Washington possessed.[447] He significantly reduced his purchases of slaves after the war but continued to acquire them in small numbers.[448]


In 1794, Washington privately expressed to Tobias Lear, his secretary, that he found slavery to be repugnant.

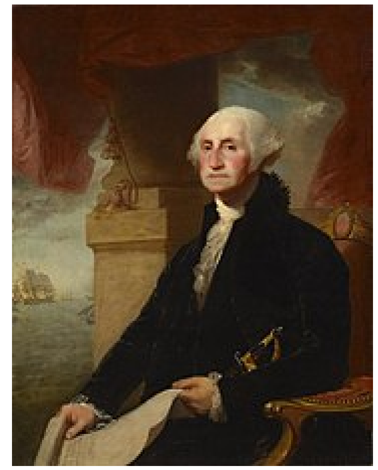
In 1788, Washington declined a suggestion from a leading French abolitionist, Jacques Brissot, to establish an abolitionist society in Virginia, stating that although he supported the idea, the time was not yet right to confront the issue.[449] The historian Henry Wiencek (2003) believes, based on a remark that appears in the notebook of his biographer David Humphreys, that Washington considered making a public statement by freeing his slaves on the eve of his presidency in 1789.[450] The historian Philip D. Morgan (2005) disagrees, believing the remark was a "private expression of remorse" at his inability to free his slaves.[451] Other historians agree with Morgan that Washington was determined not to risk national unity over an issue as divisive as slavery.[452] Washington never responded to any of the antislavery petitions he received, and the subject was not mentioned in either his last address to Congress or his Farewell Address.[453]

The first clear indication that Washington seriously intended to free his slaves appears in a letter written to his secretary, Tobias Lear, in 1794.[454] Washington instructed Lear to find buyers for his land in western Virginia, explaining in a private coda that he was doing so "to liberate a certain species of property which I possess, very repugnantly to my own feelings".[455] The plan, along with others Washington considered in 1795 and 1796, could not be realized because he failed to find buyers for his land, his reluctance to break up slave families, and the refusal of the Custis heirs to help prevent such separations by freeing their dower slaves at the same time.[456]

On July 9, 1799, Washington finished making his last will; the longest provision concerned slavery. All his slaves were to be freed after the death of his wife, Martha. Washington said he did not free them immediately because his slaves intermarried with his wife's dower slaves. He forbade their sale or transportation out of Virginia. His will provided that old and young freed people be taken care of indefinitely; younger ones were to be taught to read and write and placed in suitable occupations.[457] Washington freed more than 160 slaves, including 25 he had acquired from his wife's brother in payment of a debt freed by graduation.[458] He was among the few large slave-holding Virginians during the Revolutionary Era who emancipated their slaves.[459]

On January 1, 1801, one year after George Washington's death, Martha Washington signed an order freeing his slaves. Many of them, having never strayed far from Mount Vernon, were naturally reluctant to try their luck elsewhere; others refused to abandon spouses or children still held as dower slaves (the Custis estate)[460] and also stayed with or near Martha. Following George Washington's instructions in his will, funds were used to feed and clothe the young, aged, and sickly slaves until the early 1830s.[461]

Historical reputation and legacy



Washington, the Constable by Gilbert Stuart (1797)

Washington's legacy endures as one of the most influential in American history since he served as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, a hero of the Revolution, and the first president of the United States. Various historians maintain that he also was a dominant factor in America's founding, the Revolutionary War, and the Constitutional Convention.[462] Revolutionary War comrade Light-Horse Harry Lee eulogized him as "First in war—first in peace—and first in the hearts of his countrymen".[463] Lee's words became the hallmark by which Washington's reputation was impressed upon the American memory, with some biographers regarding him as the great exemplar of republicanism. He set many precedents for the national government and the presidency in particular, and he was called the "Father of His Country" as early as 1778.[464][s]

In 1885, Congress proclaimed Washington's birthday to be a federal holiday.[466] Twentieth-century biographer Douglas Southall Freeman concluded, "The great big thing stamped across that man is character." Modern historian David Hackett Fischer has expanded upon Freeman's assessment, defining Washington's character as "integrity, self-discipline, courage, absolute honesty, resolve, and decision, but also forbearance, decency, and respect for others".[467]

A drawing from a Japanese manuscript of Washington fighting a tiger.

Washington became an international symbol for liberation and nationalism as the leader of the first successful revolution against a colonial empire. The Federalists made him the symbol of their party, but the Jeffersonians continued to distrust his influence for many years and delayed building the Washington Monument.[468] Washington was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences on January 31, 1781, before he had even begun his presidency.[469] He was posthumously appointed to the grade of General of the Armies of the United States during the United States Bicentennial to ensure he would never be outranked; this was accomplished by the congressional joint resolution Public Law 94-479 passed on January 19, 1976, with an effective appointment date of July 4, 1976.[470][t] On March 13, 1978, Washington was militarily promoted to the rank of General of the Armies.[473]

Parson Weems wrote a hagiographic biography in 1809 to honor Washington.[474] Historian Ron Chernow maintains that Weems attempted to humanize Washington, making him look less stern, and to inspire "patriotism and morality" and to foster "enduring myths", such as Washington's refusal to lie about damaging his father's cherry tree.[475] Weems' accounts have never been proven or disproven.[476] Historian John Ferling, however, maintains that Washington remains the only founder and president ever to be referred to as "godlike", and points out that his character has been the most scrutinized by historians, past and present.[477] Historian Gordon S. Wood concludes that "the greatest act of his life, the one that gave him his greatest fame, was his resignation as commander-in-chief of the American forces."[478] Chernow suggests that Washington

was "burdened by public life" and divided by "unacknowledged ambition mingled with self-doubt".[479] A 1993 review of presidential polls and surveys consistently ranked Washington number 4, 3, or 2 among presidents.[480] A 2018 Siena College Research Institute survey ranked him number 1 among presidents.[481]

Memorials

Washington Monument, Washington, D.C.

Jared Sparks began collecting and publishing Washington's documentary record in the 1830s in *Life and Writings of George Washington* (12 vols., 1834–1837).[482] *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799* (1931–1944) is a 39-volume set edited by John Clement Fitzpatrick, whom the George Washington Bicentennial Commission commissioned. It contains more than 17,000 letters and documents and is available online from the University of Virginia.[483]

Universities

Numerous universities, including George Washington University and Washington University in St. Louis, were named in honor of Washington.[484][485]

Places and monuments

Statue of Washington at Washington University in St. Louis

Many places and monuments have been named in honor of Washington, most notably the capital of the United States, Washington, D.C. The state of Washington is the only US state to be named after a president.[486]

Currency and postage

George Washington appears on contemporary U.S. currency, including the one-dollar bill, the Presidential one-dollar coin and the quarter-dollar coin (the Washington quarter). Washington and Benjamin Franklin appeared on the nation's first postage stamps in 1847. Washington has since appeared on many postage issues, more than any other person.[487]

Washington issue of 1862

Washington–Franklin issue of 1917

Washington quarter dollar

George Washington Presidential one-dollar coin

Washington on the 1928 dollar bill

See also

- British Army during the American Revolutionary War
- List of American Revolutionary War battles
- List of Continental Forces in the American Revolutionary War
- Timeline of the American Revolution

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Notes

a. Congress counted the votes of the Electoral College and certified a president on April 6. Washington was sworn in on April 30.[1]

b. Contemporaneous records used the Old Style Julian calendar and the Annunciation Style of enumerating years, recording his birth as February 11, 1731. The British Calendar (New Style) Act 1750 implemented in 1752 altered the official British dating method to the Gregorian calendar with the start of the year on January 1 (it had been March 25). These changes resulted in dates being moved forward 11 days and an advance of one year for those between January 1 and March 25. For a further explanation, see Old Style and New Style dates.[9]

c. Washington received his license through the college, whose charter gave it the authority to appoint Virginia county surveyors. There is no evidence that he actually attended classes there.[20]

d. Thirty years later, Washington reflected "that so young and inexperienced a person should have been employed".[27]
e. The mid-16th-century word **Indian** described the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas. More modern terms for Indian include American Indian and Native American and Indigenous Peoples.[34]
f. A second Virginia regiment was raised under Colonel William Byrd III and also allocated to the expedition.[50]
g. In a letter of September 20, 1765, Washington protested to "Robert Cary & Co." the low prices he received for his tobacco and for the inflated prices he was forced to pay on second-rate goods from London.[78]
h. Historian Garry Wills noted, "before there was a nation—before there was any symbol of that nation (a flag, a Constitution, a national seal)—there was Washington."[102]
i. Congress initially directed the war effort in June 1776 with the committee known as "Board of War and Ordnance"; this was succeeded by the Board of War in July 1777, which eventually included members of the military.[113]
j. This painting has received both acclaim and criticism;[131] see Emanuel Leutze article for details.
k. Jefferson denounced the Society of Cincinnati's hereditary membership, but he praised Washington for his "moderation and virtue" in relinquishing command. Washington's wartime adversary King George III reportedly praised him for this act.[212]
l. In May 1783, Henry Knox formed the Society of the Cincinnati to carry on the memory of the War of Independence and to establish a fraternity of officers. The Society was named after Cincinnatus, a famous Roman military leader who relinquished his position after his Roman victory at Algidus (458 BC). However, he had reservations about some of the society's precepts, including heredity requirements for membership and receiving money from foreign interests.[214]
m. Starting in 1774, 14 men served as President of the Continental Congress but bore no relationship to the presidency established under Article II of the Constitution. Under the Articles of Confederation, Congress called its presiding officer "President of the United States in Congress Assembled", but this position had no national executive powers.[237]
n. There has been debate over whether Washington added "so help me God" to the end of the oath.[243]
o. A modern term for Indian is Native American.[34]
p. The first account of Washington's death was written by Doctors Craik and Brown, published in *The Times* of Alexandria five days after his death on December 19, 1799. The complete text can be found in *The Eclectic Medical Journal* (1858)[366]
q. Modern experts have concluded that Washington probably died from acute bacterial epiglottitis complicated by the administered treatments, including Morens and Wallenborn in 1999,[368] Cheatham in 2008, [369] and Vadakan in 2005.[370] These treatments included multiple doses of calomel (a cathartic or purgative) and extensive bloodletting.
r. The Constitution came under attack in Pennsylvania, and Washington wrote to Richard Peters, "It would seem from the public Gazettes that the minority in your State are preparing for another attack of the now adopted Government; how formidable it may be, I know not. But that Providence which has hitherto smiled on the honest endeavours of the well meaning part of the People of this Country will not, I trust, withdraw its support from them at this crisis."[401]

s. The earliest known *image* in which Washington is identified as the Father of His Country is in the frontispiece of a 1779 German-language almanac, with calculations by David Rittenhouse and published by Francis Bailey in Lancaster County Pennsylvania. *Der Gantz Neue Verbesserte Nord-Americanische Calendar* has a personification of Fame holding a trumpet to her lips juxtaposed with an image of Washington and the words "*Der Landes Vater*" ("the father of the country" or "the father of the land").[465]

t. In *Portraits & Biographical Sketches of the United States Army's Senior Officer*,[471] William Gardner Bell states that Washington was recalled to military service from his retirement in 1798, and "Congress passed legislation that would have made him General of the Armies of the United States, but his services were not required in the field, and the appointment was not made until the Bicentennial in 1976 when it was bestowed posthumously as a commemorative honor." In 1976, President Gerald Ford specified that Washington would "rank first among all officers of the Army, past and present".[472]

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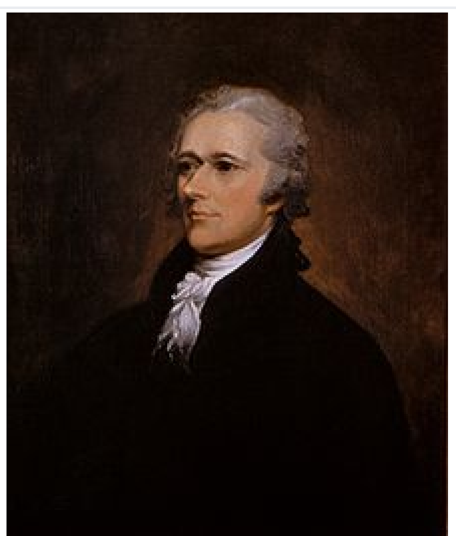
Alexander Hamilton

Alexander Hamilton (January 11, 1755 or 1757 – July 12, 1804) was an American statesman, politician, legal scholar, military commander, lawyer, banker, and economist. He was one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. He was an influential interpreter and promoter of the U.S. Constitution, as well as the founder of the nation's financial system, the Federalist Party, the United States Coast Guard, and the *New York Post* newspaper. As the first secretary of the treasury, Hamilton was the main author of the economic policies of George Washington's administration. He took the lead in the federal government's funding of the states' debts, as well as establishing the nation's first two *de facto* central banks, the Bank of North America and the First Bank of the United States, a system of tariffs, and friendly trade relations with Britain. His vision included a strong central government led by a vigorous executive branch, a strong commercial economy, support for manufacturing, and a strong military.

Hamilton was born out of wedlock in Charlestown, Nevis. He was orphaned as a child and taken in by a prosperous merchant. When he reached his teens, he was sent to New York to pursue his education. He took an early role in the militia as the American Revolutionary War began. In 1777, he became a senior aide to General Washington in running the new Continental Army. After the war, he was elected as a representative from New York to the Congress of the Confederation. He resigned to practice law and founded the Bank of New York before entering politics. Hamilton was a leader in seeking to replace the weak confederal government under the Articles of Confederation; he led the Annapolis Convention of 1786, which spurred Congress to call a Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. He helped ratify the Constitution by writing 51 of the 85 installments of *The Federalist Papers*, which are still used as one of the most important references for Constitutional interpretation.

Hamilton led the Treasury Department as a trusted member of President Washington's first Cabinet. Hamilton successfully argued that the implied powers of the Constitution provided the legal authority to fund the national debt, to assume states' debts, and to create the government-backed Bank of the United States (the First Bank of the United States). These programs were funded primarily by a tariff on imports, and later by a controversial whiskey tax. He opposed administration entanglement with

Alexander Hamilton	
 Portrait by John Trumbull, 1806	
1st United States Secretary of the Treasury	
In office September 11, 1789 – January 31, 1795	
President	George Washington
Preceded by	Office established
Succeeded by	Oliver Wolcott Jr.
Senior Officer of the United States Army	
In office December 14, 1799 – June 15, 1800	
President	John Adams
Preceded by	George Washington
Succeeded by	James Wilkinson
Delegate to the Congress of the Confederation from New York	
In office November 3, 1788 – March 2, 1789	
Preceded by	Egbert Benson
Succeeded by	Seat abolished
In office November 4, 1782 – June 21, 1783	
Preceded by	Seat established
Succeeded by	Seat abolished
Personal details	

the series of unstable French revolutionary governments. Hamilton's views became the basis for the Federalist Party, which was opposed to the Democratic-Republican Party led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. In 1795, he returned to the practice of law in New York. He called for mobilization under President John Adams in 1798–99 against French First Republic military aggression, and became Commanding General of the U.S. Army, which he reconstituted, modernized, and readied for war. The army did not see combat in the Quasi-War, and Hamilton was outraged by Adams' diplomatic approach to the crisis with France. His opposition to Adams' re-election helped cause the Federalist Party defeat in 1800. Jefferson and Aaron Burr tied for the presidency in the electoral college, and Hamilton helped to defeat Burr, whom he found unprincipled, and to elect Jefferson despite philosophical differences.

Hamilton continued his legal and business activities in New York City, and was active in ending the legality of the international slave trade. Vice President Burr ran for governor of New York State in 1804, and Hamilton campaigned against him as unworthy. Taking offense, Burr challenged him to a duel on July 11, 1804, in which Burr shot and mortally wounded Hamilton, who died the following day. Hamilton is generally regarded as an astute and intellectually brilliant administrator, politician and financier, if often impetuous. His ideas are credited with laying the foundation for American government and finance.

Born	January 11, 1755 or 1757[1] Charlestown, Nevis, British Leeward Islands (now St. Kitts and Nevis)
Died	July 12, 1804 (aged 47 or 49) Greenwich Village, New York, U.S.
Cause of death	Gunshot wound
Resting place	Trinity Church Cemetery
Political party	Federalist
Spouse(s)	Elizabeth Schuyler (m. 1780)
Children	Philip · Angelica · Alexander · James Alexander · John Church · William · Eliza · Philip
Parents	James A. Hamilton Rachel Faucette
Relatives	Hamilton family
Education	King's College (now Columbia University)
Signature	
Military service	
Allegiance	New York (1775-1777) United States (1777–1800)
Branch/service	New York Provincial Company of Artillery Continental Army United States Army
Years of service	1775–1776 (Militia) 1776–1782 1798–1800
Rank	Major general
Commands	U.S. Army Senior Officer
Battles/wars	American Revolutionary War Battle of Harlem Heights Battle of White Plains Battle of Trenton Battle of Princeton Battle of Brandywine Battle of Germantown

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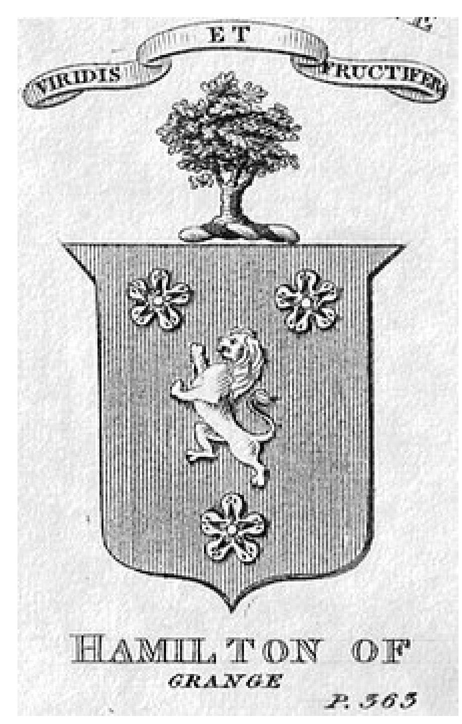
Childhood in the Caribbean

Alexander Hamilton was born and spent part of his childhood in Charlestown, the capital of the island of Nevis in the Leeward Islands (then part of the British West Indies). Hamilton and his older brother James Jr. (1753–1786)[3] were born out of wedlock to Rachel Faucette,[note 1] a married woman of half-British and half-French Huguenot descent,[10] and James A. Hamilton, a Scotsman who was the fourth son of Alexander Hamilton, the laird of Grange in Ayrshire.[11] Speculation that Hamilton's mother was of mixed race, though persistent, is not substantiated by verifiable evidence. Rachel Faucette was listed as white on tax rolls.[12][13]



Coat of arms of the Hamiltons of Grange in Ayrshire, Scotland.[2]

It is not certain whether Hamilton's birth was in 1755 or 1757.[14] Most historical evidence, after Hamilton's arrival in North America, supports the idea that he was born in 1757, including Hamilton's own writings.[15][16] Hamilton listed his birth year as 1757 when he first arrived in the Thirteen Colonies, and celebrated his birthday on January 11. In later life, he tended to give his age only in round figures. Historians accepted 1757 as his birth year until about 1930, when additional documentation of his early life in the Caribbean was published, initially in Danish. A probate paper from St. Croix in 1768, drafted after the death of Hamilton's mother, listed him as 13 years old, which has caused some historians since the 1930s to favor a birth year of 1755.[1]

The Hamilton House, Charlestown, Nevis. The current structure was rebuilt from the ruins of the house where it was thought that Alexander Hamilton was born and lived as a young child.

Historians have speculated on possible reasons for two different years of birth to have appeared in historical documents. If 1755 is correct, Hamilton might have been trying to appear younger than his college classmates, or perhaps wished to avoid standing out as older.[1] If 1757 is correct, the single probate document indicating a birth year of 1755 may have simply included an error, or Hamilton might once have given his age as 13 after his mother's death in an attempt to appear older and more employable.[17] Historians have pointed out that the probate document contained other proven inaccuracies, demonstrating it was not entirely reliable. Richard Brookhiser noted that "a man is more likely to know his own birthday than a probate court."[15]

Hamilton's mother had been married previously on St. Croix[18] in the Virgin Islands, then ruled by Denmark, to a Danish[6] or German merchant,[19][20] Johann Michael Lavien. They had one son, Peter Lavien.[18] In 1750, Faucette left her husband and first son; then traveled to Saint Kitts where she met James Hamilton.[18] Hamilton and Faucette moved together to Nevis, her birthplace, where she had inherited a seaside lot in town from her father.[1]

James Hamilton later abandoned Rachel Faucette and their two sons, James Jr. and Alexander, allegedly to "spar[e] [her] a charge of bigamy... after finding out that her first husband intend[ed] to divorce her under Danish law on grounds of adultery and desertion."[11] Thereafter, Rachel moved with her two children to St. Croix, where she supported them by keeping a small store in Christiansted. She contracted yellow fever and died on February 19, 1768, at 1:02 am, leaving Hamilton orphaned.[21] This may have had severe emotional consequences for him, even by the standards of an 18th-century childhood.[22] In probate court, Faucette's

"first husband seized her estate"[11] and obtained the few valuables that she had owned, including some household silver. Many items were auctioned off, but a friend purchased the family's books and returned them to Hamilton.[23]

Hamilton became a clerk at Beekman and Cruger, a local import-export firm that traded with New York and New England.[24] He and James Jr. were briefly taken in by their cousin Peter Lytton; however, Lytton took his own life in July 1769, leaving his property to his mistress and their son, and the Hamilton brothers were subsequently separated.[23] James apprenticed with a local carpenter, while Alexander was given a home by Nevis merchant Thomas Stevens.[25] Some clues have led to speculation that Stevens was Alexander Hamilton's biological father: his son Edward Stevens became a close friend of Hamilton, the two boys were described as looking much alike, both were fluent in French and shared similar interests.[23] However, this allegation, mostly based on the comments of Timothy Pickering on the resemblance between the two men, has always been vague and unsupported.[26] Rachel Faucette had been living on St. Kitts and Nevis for years at the time when Alexander was conceived, while Thomas Stevens lived on Antigua and St. Croix; also, James Hamilton never disclaimed paternity, and even in later years, signed his letters to Hamilton with "Your very Affectionate Father."[27][28]

Hamilton in his youth

Hamilton, despite being only in his teenage years, proved capable enough as a trader to be left in charge of the firm for five months in 1771 while the owner was at sea.[29] He remained an avid reader and later developed an interest in writing. He began to desire a life outside the island where he lived. He wrote a letter to his father that was a detailed account of a hurricane that had devastated Christiansted on August 30, 1772. The Presbyterian Reverend Hugh Knox, a tutor and mentor to Hamilton, submitted the letter for publication in the *Royal Danish-American Gazette*. The biographer Ron Chernow found the letter astounding for two reasons; first, that "for all its bombastic excesses, it does seem wondrous [that a] self-educated clerk could write with such verve and gusto," and second, that a teenage boy produced an apocalyptic "fire-and-brimstone sermon" viewing the hurricane as a "divine rebuke to human vanity and pomposity."[30] The essay impressed community leaders, who collected a fund to send Hamilton to the North American colonies for his education.[31]

Education

The Church of England denied membership to Alexander and James Hamilton Jr.—and education in the church school—because their parents were not legally married. They received "individual tutoring"[1] and classes in a private school led by a Jewish headmistress.[32] Alexander supplemented his education with the family library of 34 books.[33]

In October 1772 Hamilton arrived by ship in Boston and proceeded from there to New York City. He took lodgings with the Irish-born Hercules Mulligan who, as the brother of a trader known to Hamilton's benefactors, assisted Hamilton in selling cargo that was to pay for his education and support.[34][35] In 1773, in preparation for college work, Hamilton began to fill gaps in his education at the Elizabethtown Academy, a preparatory school run by Francis Barber in Elizabethtown, New Jersey. He there came under the influence of William Livingston, a local leading intellectual and revolutionary, with whom he lived for a time.[36][37][38]

Hamilton entered Mulligan's *alma mater* King's College (now Columbia University) in New York City in the autumn of 1773 "as a private student", and officially matriculated in May 1774.[39] His college roommate and lifelong friend Robert Troup spoke glowingly of Hamilton's clarity in concisely explaining the patriots' case

against the British in what is credited as Hamilton's first public appearance, on July 6, 1774, at the Liberty Pole at King's College.[40] Hamilton, Troup, and four other undergraduates formed an unnamed literary society that is regarded as a precursor of the Philolexian Society.[41][42]

Kings College c. 1756, adjacent to the New York Commons where City Hall Park is today

Church of England clergyman Samuel Seabury published a series of pamphlets promoting the Loyalist cause in 1774, to which Hamilton responded anonymously with his first political writings, *A Full Vindication of the Measures of Congress* and *The Farmer Refuted*. Seabury essentially tried to provoke fear in the colonies, and his main objective was to stop the potential union among the colonies.[43] Hamilton published two additional pieces attacking the Quebec Act,[44] and may have also authored the fifteen anonymous installments of "The Monitor" for Holt's *New York Journal*.[45] Hamilton was a supporter of the Revolutionary cause at this pre-war stage, although he did not approve of mob reprisals against Loyalists. On May 10, 1775, Hamilton won credit for saving his college president Myles Cooper, a Loyalist, from an angry mob by speaking to the crowd long enough for Cooper to escape.[46]

Hamilton was forced to discontinue his studies before graduating when the college closed its doors during the British occupation of the city.[47] When the war ended, after some months of self-study, by July 1782 Hamilton passed the bar exam and in October 1782 was licensed to argue cases before the Supreme Court of the State of New York.[48] Hamilton was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society in 1791.[49]

Revolutionary War

Early military career

Alexander Hamilton in the Uniform of the New York Artillery, by Alonzo Chappel (1828–1887)

In 1775, after the first engagement of American troops with the British at Lexington and Concord, Hamilton and other King's College students joined a New York volunteer militia company called the Corsicans,[50] later renamed or reformed as the Hearts of Oak.

He drilled with the company, before classes, in the graveyard of nearby St. Paul's Chapel. Hamilton studied military history and tactics on his own and was soon recommended for promotion.[51] Under fire from HMS *Asia*, he led a successful raid for British cannons in the Battery, the capture of which resulted in the Hearts of Oak becoming an artillery company thereafter.[52]:13

Through his connections with influential New York patriots such as Alexander McDougall and John Jay, Hamilton raised the New York Provincial Company of Artillery of 60 men in 1776, and was elected captain.[53] The company took part in the campaign of 1776 around New York City, notably at the Battle of White Plains. At the Battle of Trenton, it was stationed at the high point of town, the meeting of the present Warren and Broad streets, to keep the Hessians pinned in the Trenton Barracks.[54][55]

Hamilton participated in the Battle of Princeton on January 3, 1777. After an initial setback, Washington rallied the American troops and led them in a successful charge against the British forces. After making a brief stand, the British fell back, some leaving Princeton, and others taking up refuge in Nassau Hall. Hamilton brought three cannons up and had them fire upon the building. Then some Americans rushed the front door, and broke it down. The British subsequently put a white flag outside one of the windows;[55] 194 British soldiers walked out of the building and laid down their arms, thus ending the battle in an American victory.[56]

One paper suggests that Hamilton's favorite song was "How Stands the Glass Around", an anthem sung by military troops about fighting and dying in war.[57]

George Washington's staff

Hamilton was invited to become an aide to William Alexander, Lord Stirling, and another general, perhaps Nathanael Greene or Alexander McDougall.[58] He declined these invitations, believing his best chance for improving his station in life was glory on the battlefield. Hamilton eventually received an invitation he felt he could not refuse: to serve as Washington's aide, with the rank of lieutenant colonel.[59] Washington believed that "Aides de camp are persons in whom entire confidence must be placed and it requires men of abilities to execute the duties with propriety and dispatch."[60]

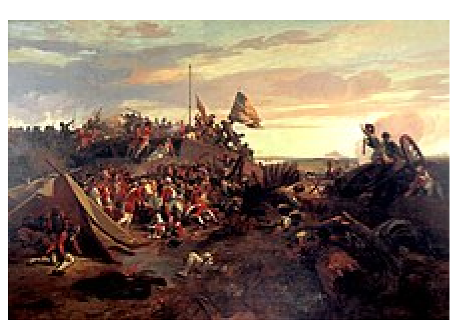
Aides-de-camp's office inside Washington's Headquarters at Valley Forge. General Washington's staff officers worked in this room, writing and copying the letters and orders of the Continental Army.

Hamilton served four years as Washington's chief staff aide. He handled letters to Congress, state governors, and the most powerful generals of the Continental Army; he drafted many of Washington's orders and letters at the latter's direction; he eventually issued orders from Washington over Hamilton's own signature.[61] Hamilton was involved in a wide variety of high-level duties, including intelligence, diplomacy, and negotiation with senior army officers as Washington's emissary.[62][63]

During the war, Hamilton became the close friend of several fellow officers. His letters to the Marquis de Lafayette[64] and to John Laurens, employing the sentimental literary conventions of the late eighteenth century and alluding to Greek history and mythology,[65] have been read by Jonathan Ned Katz as revelatory of a homosocial or even homosexual relationship.[66] Biographer Gregory D. Massey amongst others, by contrast, dismisses all such speculation as unsubstantiated, describing their friendship as purely platonic camaraderie instead and placing their correspondence in the context of the flowery diction of the time.[67]

Field command

While on Washington's staff, Hamilton long sought command and a return to active combat. As the war drew nearer to an end, he knew that opportunities for military glory were diminishing. On February 15, 1781, Hamilton was reprimanded by Washington after a minor misunderstanding. Although Washington quickly tried to mend their relationship, Hamilton insisted on leaving his staff.[68] He officially left in March and settled with Eliza close to Washington's headquarters. He repeatedly asked Washington and others for a field command. Washington demurred, citing the need to appoint men of higher rank. This continued until early July 1781, when Hamilton



The Storming of Redoubt #10, an 1840 painting by Eugene Lami

submitted a letter to Washington with his commission enclosed, "thus tacitly threatening to resign if he didn't get his desired command."[69]

Detail of *Surrender of Lord Cornwallis* by John Trumbull, showing Colonels Alexander Hamilton, John Laurens, and Walter Stewart

On July 31, Washington relented and assigned Hamilton as commander of a battalion of light infantry companies of the 1st and 2nd New York Regiments and two provisional companies from Connecticut.[70] In the planning for the assault on Yorktown, Hamilton was given command of three battalions, which were to fight in conjunction with the allied French troops in taking Redoubts No. 9 and No. 10 of the British fortifications at Yorktown. Hamilton and his battalions took Redoubt No. 10 with bayonets in a nighttime action, as planned. The French also suffered heavy casualties and took Redoubt No. 9. These actions forced the British surrender of an entire army at Yorktown, Virginia, marking the *de facto* end of the war, although small battles continued for two more years until the signing of the Treaty of Paris and the departure of the last British troops.[71][72]

Return to civilian life

Congress of the Confederation

After Yorktown, Hamilton returned to New York and resigned his commission in March 1782. He passed the bar in July after six months of self-directed education. He also accepted an offer from Robert Morris to become receiver of continental taxes for the State of New York.[73] Hamilton was appointed in July 1782 to the Congress of the Confederation as a New York representative for the term beginning in November 1782.[74] Before his appointment to Congress in 1782, Hamilton was already sharing his criticisms of Congress. He expressed these criticisms in his letter to James Duane dated September 3, 1780. In this letter he wrote,

> "The fundamental defect is a want of power in Congress...the confederation itself is defective and requires to be altered; it is neither fit for war, nor peace."[75]

While on Washington's staff, Hamilton had become frustrated with the decentralized nature of the wartime Continental Congress, particularly its dependence upon the states for voluntary financial support that was not often forthcoming. Under the Articles of Confederation, Congress had no power to collect taxes or to demand money from the states. This lack of a stable source of funding had made it difficult for the Continental Army both to obtain its necessary provisions and to pay its soldiers. During the war, and for some time after, Congress obtained what funds it could from subsidies from the King of France, from aid requested from the several states (which were often unable or unwilling to contribute), and from European loans.[76]

An amendment to the Articles had been proposed by Thomas Burke, in February 1781, to give Congress the power to collect a 5% impost, or duty on all imports, but this required ratification by all states; securing its passage as law proved impossible after it was rejected by Rhode Island in November 1782. James Madison joined Hamilton in influencing Congress to send a delegation to persuade Rhode Island to change its mind. Their report recommending the delegation argued the national government needed not just some level of financial autonomy, but also the ability to make laws that superseded those of the individual states. Hamilton transmitted a letter arguing that Congress already had the power to tax, since it had the power to fix the sums due from the several states; but Virginia's rescission of its own ratification ended the Rhode Island negotiations.[77][78]

Congress and the army

While Hamilton was in Congress, discontented soldiers began to pose a danger to the young United States. Most of the army was then posted at Newburgh, New York. Those in the army were funding much of their own supplies, and they had not been paid in eight months. Furthermore, after Valley Forge, the Continental officers had been promised in May 1778 a pension of half their pay when they were discharged.[79] By the early 1780s, due to the structure of the government under the Articles of Confederation, it had no power to tax to either raise revenue or pay its soldiers.[80] In 1782 after several months without pay, a group of officers organized to send a delegation to lobby Congress, led by Capt. Alexander McDougall. The officers had three demands: the Army's pay, their own pensions, and commutation of those pensions into a lump-sum payment if Congress were unable to afford the half-salary pensions for life. Congress rejected the proposal.[80]

Several congressmen, including Hamilton, Robert Morris and Gouverneur Morris (no relation), attempted to use this Newburgh Conspiracy as leverage to secure support from the states and in Congress for funding of the national government. They encouraged MacDougall to continue his aggressive approach, implying unknown consequences if their demands were not met, and defeated proposals designed to end the crisis without establishing general taxation: that the states assume the debt to the army, or that an impost be established dedicated to the sole purpose of paying that debt.[81]

Hamilton suggested using the Army's claims to prevail upon the states for the proposed national funding system.[82] The Morrises and Hamilton contacted General Henry Knox to suggest he and the officers defy civil authority, at least by not disbanding if the army were not satisfied. Hamilton wrote Washington to suggest that Hamilton covertly "take direction" of the officers' efforts to secure redress, to secure continental funding but keep the army within the limits of moderation.[83][84] Washington wrote Hamilton back, declining to introduce the army.[85] After the crisis had ended, Washington warned of the dangers of using the army as leverage to gain support for the national funding plan.[83][86]

On March 15, Washington defused the Newburgh situation by addressing the officers personally.[81] Congress ordered the Army officially disbanded in April 1783. In the same month, Congress passed a new measure for a 25-year impost—which Hamilton voted against[87]—that again required the consent of all the states; it also approved a commutation of the officers' pensions to five years of full pay. Rhode Island again opposed these provisions, and Hamilton's robust assertions of national prerogatives in his previous letter were widely held to be excessive.[88]

In June 1783, a different group of disgruntled soldiers from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, sent Congress a petition demanding their back pay. When they began to march toward Philadelphia, Congress charged Hamilton and two others with intercepting the mob.[83] Hamilton requested militia from Pennsylvania's Supreme Executive Council, but was turned down. Hamilton instructed Assistant Secretary of War William Jackson to intercept the men. Jackson was unsuccessful. The mob arrived in Philadelphia, and the soldiers proceeded to harangue Congress for their pay. Hamilton argued that Congress ought to adjourn to Princeton, New Jersey. Congress agreed, and relocated there.[89] Frustrated with the weakness of the central government, Hamilton while in Princeton drafted a call to revise the Articles of Confederation. This resolution contained many features of the future U.S. Constitution, including a strong federal government with the ability to collect taxes and raise an army. It also included the separation of powers into the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.[89]

Return to New York

Hamilton resigned from Congress in 1783.[90] When the British left New York in 1783, he practiced there in partnership with Richard Harison. He specialized in defending Tories and British subjects, as in *Rutgers v. Waddington*, in which he defeated a claim for damages done to a brewery by the Englishmen who held it

during the military occupation of New York. He pleaded for the Mayor's Court to interpret state law consistent with the 1783 Treaty of Paris which had ended the Revolutionary War.[91][52]:64–69

In 1784, he founded the Bank of New York, one of the oldest still-existing banks in America.[92] Hamilton was one of the men who restored King's College as Columbia College, which had been suspended since 1776 and severely damaged during the war. Long dissatisfied with the Articles of Confederation as too weak to be effective, he played a major leadership role at the Annapolis Convention in 1786. He drafted its resolution for a constitutional convention, and in doing so brought one step closer to reality his longtime desire to have a more effectual, more financially independent federal government.[93]

Constitution and the *Federalist Papers*

Constitutional Convention and ratification of the Constitution

In 1787, Hamilton served as assemblyman from New York County in the New York State Legislature and was chosen as a delegate for the Constitutional Convention by his father-in-law Philip Schuyler.[94]:191[95] Even though Hamilton had been a leader in calling for a new Constitutional Convention, his direct influence at the Convention itself was quite limited. Governor George Clinton's faction in the New York legislature had chosen New York's other two delegates, John Lansing Jr. and Robert Yates, and both of them opposed Hamilton's goal of a strong national government.[96][97] Thus, whenever the other two members of the New York delegation were present, they decided New York's vote, to ensure that there were no major alterations to the Articles of Confederation.[94]:195

Early in the Convention Hamilton made a speech proposing a President-for-Life; it had no effect upon the deliberations of the convention. He proposed to have an elected president and elected senators who would serve for life, contingent upon "good behavior" and subject to removal for corruption or abuse; this idea contributed later to the hostile view of Hamilton as a monarchist sympathizer, held by James Madison.[98] According to Madison's notes, Hamilton said in regards to the executive, "The English model was the only good one on this subject. The hereditary interest of the king was so interwoven with that of the nation, and his personal emoluments so great, that he was placed above the danger of being corrupted from abroad... Let one executive be appointed for life who dares execute his powers."[99]

Hamilton argued, "And let me observe that an executive is less dangerous to the liberties of the people when in office during life than for seven years. It may be said this constitutes as an elective monarchy... But by making the executive subject to impeachment, the term 'monarchy' cannot apply..."[99] In his notes of the convention, Madison interpreted Hamilton's proposal as claiming power for the "rich and well born". Madison's perspective all but isolated Hamilton from his fellow delegates and others who felt they did not reflect the ideas of revolution and liberty.[100]

During the convention, Hamilton constructed a draft for the Constitution based on the convention debates, but he never presented it. This draft had most of the features of the actual Constitution. In this draft, the Senate was to be elected in proportion to the population, being two-fifths the size of the House, and the President and Senators were to be elected through complex multistage elections, in which chosen electors would elect smaller bodies of electors; they would hold office for life, but were removable for misconduct. The President would have an absolute veto. The Supreme Court was to have immediate jurisdiction over all lawsuits involving the United States, and state governors were to be appointed by the federal government.[101]

At the end of the convention, Hamilton was still not content with the final Constitution, but signed it anyway as a vast improvement over the Articles of Confederation, and urged his fellow delegates to do so also.[102] Since the other two members of the New York delegation, Lansing and Yates, had already withdrawn, Hamilton was the only New York signer to the United States Constitution.[94]:206 He then took a highly active

part in the successful campaign for the document's ratification in New York in 1788, which was a crucial step in its national ratification. He first used the popularity of the Constitution by the masses to compel George Clinton to sign, but was unsuccessful. The state convention in Poughkeepsie in June 1788 pitted Hamilton, Jay, James Duane, Robert Livingston, and Richard Morris against the Clintonian faction led by Melancton Smith, Lansing, Yates, and Gilbert Livingston.[103]

Members of Hamilton's faction were against any conditional ratification, under the impression that New York would not be accepted into the Union, while Clinton's faction wanted to amend the Constitution, while maintaining the state's right to secede if their attempts failed. During the state convention, New Hampshire and Virginia becoming the ninth and tenth states to ratify the Constitution, respectively, had ensured any adjournment would not happen and a compromise would have to be reached.[103][104] Hamilton's arguments used for the ratifications were largely iterations of work from *The Federalist Papers*, and Smith eventually went for ratification, though it was more out of necessity than Hamilton's rhetoric.[104] The vote in the state convention was ratified 30 to 27, on July 26, 1788.[105]

In 1788, Hamilton served a second term in what proved to be the last session of the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation.

The Federalist Papers

Hamilton recruited John Jay and James Madison to write a series of essays, now known as *The Federalist Papers*, to defend the proposed Constitution. He made the largest contribution to that effort, writing 51 of the 85 essays published (Madison wrote 29, and Jay wrote the other five). Hamilton supervised the entire project, enlisted the participants, wrote the majority of the essays, and oversaw the publication. During the project, each person was responsible for their areas of expertise. Jay covered foreign relations. Madison covered the history of republics and confederacies, along with the anatomy of the new government. Hamilton covered the branches of government most pertinent to him: the executive and judicial branches, with some aspects of the Senate, as well as covering military matters and taxation.[106] The papers first appeared in *The Independent Journal* on October 27, 1787.[106]

Hamilton wrote the first paper signed as Publius, and all of the subsequent papers were signed under the name.[94]:210 Jay wrote the next four papers to elaborate on the confederation's weakness and the need for unity against foreign aggression and against splitting into rival confederacies, and, except for *Number 64*, was not further involved.[107][94]:211 Hamilton's highlights included discussion that although republics have been culpable for disorders in the past, advances in the "science of politics" had fostered principles that ensured that those abuses could be prevented (such as the division of powers, legislative checks and balances, an independent judiciary, and legislators that were represented by electors [Numbers 7–9]).[107] Hamilton also wrote an extensive defense of the constitution (No. 23–36), and discussed the Senate and executive and judicial branches in Numbers 65–85. Hamilton and Madison worked to describe the anarchic state of the confederation in numbers *15–22*, and have been described as not being entirely different in thought during this time period --in contrast to their stark opposition later in life.[107] Subtle differences appeared with the two when discussing the necessity of standing armies.[107]

Reconciliation between New York and Vermont

In 1764, King George III had ruled in favor of New York in a dispute between New York and New Hampshire over the region that later became the state of Vermont. New York then refused to recognize claims to property derived from grants by New Hampshire governor Benning Wentworth during the preceding 15 years when the territory had been governed as a de facto part of New Hampshire. Consequently, the people of the disputed territory, called the New Hampshire Grants, resisted the enforcement of New York's laws within the grants. Ethan Allen's militia called the Green Mountain Boys, noted for successes in the war against the

British in 1775, was originally formed for the purpose of resisting the colonial government of New York. In 1777, the statesmen of the grants declared it a separate state to be called Vermont, and by early 1778, had erected a state government.

During 1777–1785, Vermont was repeatedly denied representation in the Continental Congress, largely because New York insisted that Vermont was legally a part of New York. Vermont took the position that because its petitions for admission to the Union were denied, it was not a part of the United States, not subject to Congress, and at liberty to negotiate separately with the British. The latter Haldimand negotiations led to some exchanges of prisoners of war. The peace treaty of 1783 that ended the war included Vermont within the boundaries of the United States. On March 2, 1784, Governor George Clinton of New York asked Congress to declare war for the purpose of overthrowing the government of Vermont, but Congress made no decision.

By 1787, the government of New York had almost entirely given up plans to subjugate Vermont, but still claimed jurisdiction.[108] As a member of the legislature of New York, Hamilton argued forcefully and at length in favor of a bill to recognize the sovereignty of the State of Vermont, against numerous objections to its constitutionality and policy. Consideration of the bill was deferred to a later date. In 1787 through 1789, Hamilton exchanged letters with Nathaniel Chipman, a lawyer representing Vermont. In 1788, the new Constitution of the United States went into effect, with its plan to replace the unicameral Continental Congress with a new Congress consisting of a Senate and a House of Representatives. Hamilton wrote:

> One of the first subjects of deliberation with the new Congress will be the independence of Kentucky [at that time still a part of Virginia], for which the southern states will be anxious. The northern will be glad to find a counterpoise in Vermont.

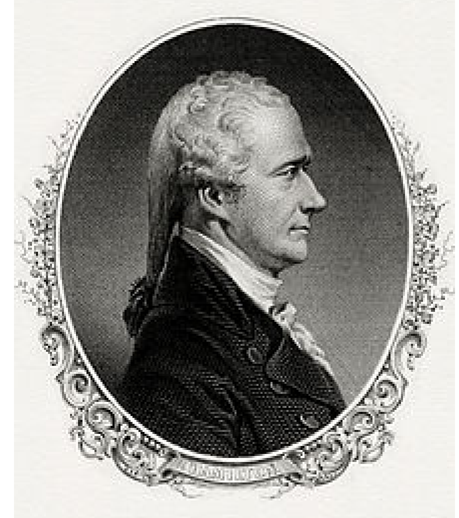
In 1790, the New York legislature decided to give up New York's claim to Vermont if Congress decided to admit Vermont to the Union and if negotiations between New York and Vermont on the boundary between the two states were successfully concluded. In 1790, negotiators discussed not only the boundary, but also financial compensation of New York land-grantees whose grants Vermont refused to recognize because they conflicted with earlier grants from New Hampshire. Compensation in the amount of 30,000 Spanish dollars was agreed to, and Vermont was admitted to the Union in 1791.

Secretary of the Treasury

President George Washington appointed Hamilton as the first United States secretary of the treasury on September 11, 1789. He left office on the last day of January 1795. Much of the structure of the government of the United States was worked out in those five years, beginning with the structure and function of the cabinet itself. Biographer Forrest McDonald argues that Hamilton saw his office, like that of the British first lord of the treasury, as the equivalent of a prime minister. Hamilton oversaw his colleagues under the elective reign of George Washington. Washington requested Hamilton's advice and assistance on matters outside the purview of the Treasury Department. In 1791, while secretary, Hamilton was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.[109] Hamilton submitted various financial reports to Congress. Among these are the First Report on the Public Credit, Operations of the Act Laying Duties on Imports, Report on a National Bank, On the Establishment of a Mint, Report on Manufactures, and the Report on a Plan for the Further Support of Public Credit.[110] So, the great enterprise in Hamilton's project of an administrative republic is the establishment of stability.[111]

Report on Public Credit

Before the adjournment of the House in September 1789, they requested Hamilton to make a report on suggestions to improve the public credit by January 1790.[112] Hamilton had written to Robert Morris as early as 1781, that fixing the public credit will win their objective of independence.[112] The sources that Hamilton used ranged from Frenchmen such as Jacques Necker and Montesquieu to British writers such as Hume, Hobbes, and Malachy Postlethwayt.[113] While writing the report he also sought out suggestions from contemporaries such as John Witherspoon and Madison. Although they agreed on additional taxes such as distilleries and duties on imported liquors and land taxes, Madison feared that the securities from the government debt would fall into foreign hands.[114][94]:244–45



A Bureau of Engraving and Printing portrait of Hamilton as Secretary of the Treasury

In the report, Hamilton felt that the securities should be paid at full value to their legitimate owners, including those who took the financial risk of buying government bonds that most experts thought would never be redeemed. He argued that liberty and property security were inseparable and that the government should honor the contracts, as they formed the basis of public and private morality. To Hamilton, the proper handling of the government debt would also allow America to borrow at affordable interest rates and would also be a stimulant to the economy.[113]

The Statue of Hamilton at the U.S. Treasury

Hamilton divided the debt into national and state, and further divided the national debt into foreign and domestic debt. While there was agreement on how to handle the foreign debt (especially with France), there was not with regards to the national debt held by domestic creditors. During the Revolutionary War, affluent citizens had invested in bonds, and war veterans had been paid with promissory notes and IOUs that plummeted in price during the Confederation. In response, the war veterans sold the securities to speculators for as little as fifteen to twenty cents on the dollar.[113][115]

Hamilton felt the money from the bonds should not go to the soldiers who had shown little faith in the country's future, but the speculators that had bought the bonds from the soldiers. The process of attempting to track down the original bondholders along with the government showing discrimination among the classes of holders if the war veterans were to be compensated also weighed in as factors for Hamilton. As for the state debts, Hamilton suggested consolidating them with the national debt and label it as federal debt, for the sake of efficiency on a national scale.[113]

The last portion of the report dealt with eliminating the debt by utilizing a sinking fund that would retire five percent of the debt annually until it was paid off. Due to the bonds being traded well below their face value, the purchases would benefit the government as the securities rose in price.[116]:300 When the report was submitted to the House of Representatives, detractors soon began to speak against it. Some of the negative views expressed in the House were that the notion of programs that resembled British practice were wicked, and that the balance of power would be shifted away from the representatives to the executive branch. William Maclay suspected that several congressmen were involved in government securities, seeing Congress in an unholy league with New York speculators.[116]:302 Congressman James Jackson also spoke against New York, with allegations of speculators attempting to swindle those who had not yet heard about Hamilton's report.[116]:303

The involvement of those in Hamilton's circle such as Schuyler, William Duer, James Duane, Gouverneur Morris, and Rufus King as speculators was not favorable to those against the report, either, though Hamilton personally did not own or deal a share in the debt.[116]:304[94]:250 Madison eventually spoke against it by February 1790. Although he was not against current holders of government debt to profit, he wanted the windfall to go to the original holders. Madison did not feel that the original holders had lost faith in the government, but sold their securities out of desperation.[116]:305 The compromise was seen as egregious to both Hamiltonians and their dissidents such as Maclay, and Madison's vote was defeated 36 votes to 13 on February 22.[116]:305[94]:255

Miniature of Hamilton attributed to Charles Shirreff, c. 1790

The fight for the national government to assume state debt was a longer issue, and lasted over four months. During the period, the resources that Hamilton was to apply to the payment of state debts was requested by Alexander White, and was rejected due to Hamilton's not being able to prepare information by March 3, and was even postponed by his own supporters in spite of configuring a report the next day (which consisted of a series of additional duties to meet the interest on the state debts).[94]:297–98 Duer resigned as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, and the vote of assumption was voted down 31 votes to 29 on April 12.[94]:258–59

During this period, Hamilton bypassed the rising issue of slavery in Congress, after Quakers petitioned for its abolition, returning to the issue the following year.[117]

Another issue in which Hamilton played a role was the temporary location of the capital from New York City. Tench Coxe was sent to speak to Maclay to bargain about the capital being temporarily located to Philadelphia, as a single vote in the Senate was needed and five in the House for the bill to pass.[94]:263 Thomas Jefferson wrote years afterward that Hamilton had a discussion with him, around this time period, about the capital of the United States being relocated to Virginia by mean of a "pill" that "would be peculiarly bitter to the Southern States, and that some concomitant measure should be adopted to sweeten it a little to them".[94]:263 The bill passed in the Senate on July 21 and in the House 34 votes to 28 on July 26, 1790.[94]:263

Report on a National Bank

Hamilton's Report on a National Bank was a projection from the first Report on the Public Credit. Although Hamilton had been forming ideas of a national bank as early as 1779,[94]:268 he had gathered ideas in various ways over the past eleven years. These included theories from Adam Smith,[118] extensive studies on the Bank of England, the blunders of the Bank of North America and his experience in establishing the Bank of New York.[119] He also used American records from James Wilson, Pelatiah Webster, Gouverneur Morris, and from his assistant treasury secretary Tench Coxe.[119] He thought that this plan for a National Bank could help in any sort of financial crisis.[120]

Hamilton suggested that Congress should charter the National Bank with a capitalization of $10 million, one-fifth of which would be handled by the government. Since the government did not have the money, it would borrow the money from the bank itself, and repay the loan in ten even annual installments.[52]:194 The rest was to be available to individual investors.[121] The bank was to be governed by a twenty-five-member board of directors that was to represent a large majority of the private shareholders, which Hamilton considered essential for his being under a private direction.[94]:268 Hamilton's bank model had many similarities to that of

the Bank of England, except Hamilton wanted to exclude the government from being involved in public debt, but provide a large, firm, and elastic money supply for the functioning of normal businesses and usual economic development, among other differences.[52]:194–95 The tax revenue to initiate the bank was the same as he had previously proposed, increases on imported spirits: rum, liquor, and whiskey.[52]:195–96

The bill passed through the Senate practically without a problem, but objections to the proposal increased by the time it reached the House of Representatives. It was generally held by critics that Hamilton was serving the interests of the Northeast by means of the bank,[122] and those of the agrarian lifestyle would not benefit from it.[94]:270 Among those critics was James Jackson of Georgia, who also attempted to refute the report by quoting from *The Federalist Papers*.[94]:270 Madison and Jefferson also opposed the bank bill. The potential of the capital not being moved to the Potomac if the bank was to have a firm establishment in Philadelphia was a more significant reason, and actions that Pennsylvania members of Congress took to keep the capital there made both men anxious.[52]:199–200The Whiskey Rebellion also showed how in other financial plans, there was a distance between the classes as the wealthy profited from the taxes.[123]

Madison warned the Pennsylvania congress members that he would attack the bill as unconstitutional in the House, and followed up on his threat.[52]:200 Madison argued his case of where the power of a bank could be established within the Constitution, but he failed to sway members of the House, and his authority on the constitution was questioned by a few members.[52]:200–01 The bill eventually passed in an overwhelming fashion 39 to 20, on February 8, 1791.[94]:271

Washington hesitated to sign the bill, as he received suggestions from Attorney General Edmund Randolph and Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson dismissed the 'necessary and proper' clause as reasoning for the creation of a national bank, stating that the enumerated powers "can all be carried into execution without a bank."[94]:271–72 Along with Randolph and Jefferson's objections, Washington's involvement in the movement of the capital from Philadelphia is also thought to be a reason for his hesitation.[52]:202–03 In response to the objection of the 'necessary and proper' clause, Hamilton stated that "Necessary often means no more than needful, requisite, incidental, useful, or conductive to", and the bank was a "convenient species of medium in which they (taxes) are to be paid."[94]:272–73 Washington would eventually sign the bill into law.[94]:272–73

Establishing the U.S. Mint

In 1791, Hamilton submitted the Report on the Establishment of a Mint to the House of Representatives. Many of Hamilton's ideas for this report were from European economists, resolutions from Continental Congress meetings from 1785 and 1786, and from people such as Robert Morris, Gouverneur Morris and Thomas Jefferson.[52]:197[124]

A Turban Head eagle, one of the first gold coins minted under the Coinage Act of 1792

Because the most circulated coins in the United States at the time were Spanish currency, Hamilton proposed that minting a United States dollar weighing almost as much as the Spanish peso would be the simplest way to introduce a national currency.[125] Hamilton differed from European monetary policymakers in his desire to overprice gold relative to silver, on the grounds that the United States would always receive an influx of silver from the West Indies.[52]:197 Despite his own preference for a monometallic gold standard,[126] he ultimately issued a bimetallic currency at a fixed 15:1 ratio of silver to gold.[52]:197[127][128]

Hamilton proposed that the U.S. dollar should have fractional coins using decimals, rather than eighths like the Spanish coinage.[129] This innovation was originally suggested by Superintendent of Finance Robert Morris, with whom Hamilton corresponded after examining one of Morris's Nova Constellatio coins in 1783.[130] He also desired the minting of small value coins, such as silver ten-cent and copper cent and half-cent pieces, for reducing the cost of living for the poor.[52]:198[119] One of his main objectives was for the general public to become accustomed to handling money on a frequent basis.[52]:198

By 1792, Hamilton's principles were adopted by Congress, resulting in the Coinage Act of 1792, and the creation of the United States Mint. There was to be a ten-dollar Gold Eagle coin, a silver dollar, and fractional money ranging from one-half to fifty cents.[126] The coining of silver and gold was issued by 1795.[126]

Revenue Cutter Service

Smuggling off American coasts was an issue before the Revolutionary War, and after the Revolution it was more problematic. Along with smuggling, lack of shipping control, pirating, and a revenue unbalance were also major problems.[131] In response, Hamilton proposed to Congress to enact a naval police force called revenue cutters in order to patrol the waters and assist the custom collectors with confiscating contraband.[132] This idea was also proposed to assist in tariff controlling, boosting the American economy, and promote the merchant marine.[131] It is thought that his experience obtained during his apprenticeship with Nicholas Kruger was influential in his decision-making.[133]

A painting of a Revenue Marine cutter, which may be of either the *Massachusetts* (1791), or its replacement, the *Massachusetts II*

Concerning some of the details of the "System of Cutters",[134][note 2] Hamilton wanted the first ten cutters in different areas in the United States, from New England to Georgia.[132][135] Each of those cutters was to be armed with ten muskets and bayonets, twenty pistols, two chisels, one broad-ax and two lanterns. The fabric of the sails was to be domestically manufactured;[132] and provisions were made for the employees' food supply and etiquette when boarding ships.[132] Congress established the Revenue Cutter Service on August 4, 1790, which is viewed as the birth of the United States Coast Guard.[131]

Whiskey as tax revenue

One of the principal sources of revenue Hamilton prevailed upon Congress to approve was an excise tax on whiskey. In his first Tariff Bill in January 1790, Hamilton proposed to raise the three million dollars needed to pay for government operating expenses and interest on domestic and foreign debts by means of an increase on duties on imported wines, distilled spirits, tea, coffee, and domestic spirits. It failed, with Congress complying with most recommendations excluding the excise tax on whiskey (Madison's tariff of the same year was a modification of Hamilton's that involved only imported duties and was passed in September).[136]

In response of diversifying revenues, as three-fourths of revenue gathered was from commerce with Great Britain, Hamilton attempted once again during his *Report on Public Credit* when presenting it in 1790 to implement an excise tax on both imported and domestic spirits.[137][138] The taxation rate was graduated in proportion to the whiskey proof, and Hamilton intended to equalize the tax burden on imported spirits with imported and domestic liquor.[138] In lieu of the excise on production citizens could pay 60 cents by the gallon of dispensing capacity, along with an exemption on small stills used exclusively for domestic consumption.[138] He realized the loathing that the tax would receive in rural areas, but thought of the taxing of spirits more reasonable than land taxes.[137]

Opposition initially came from Pennsylvania's House of Representatives protesting the tax. William Maclay had noted that not even the Pennsylvanian legislators had been able to enforce excise taxes in the western regions of the state.[137] Hamilton was aware of the potential difficulties and proposed inspectors the ability to search buildings that distillers were designated to store their spirits, and would be able to search suspected illegal storage facilities to confiscate contraband with a warrant.[139] Although the inspectors were not allowed to search houses and warehouses, they were to visit twice a day and file weekly reports in extensive detail.[137] Hamilton cautioned against expedited judicial means, and favored a jury trial with potential offenders.[139] As soon as 1791, locals began to shun or threaten inspectors, as they felt the inspection methods were intrusive.[137] Inspectors were also tarred and feathered, blindfolded, and whipped. Hamilton had attempted to appease the opposition with lowered tax rates, but it did not suffice.[140]

Portrait of Alexander Hamilton by Walter Robertson. Circa 1794

Strong opposition to the whiskey tax by cottage producers in remote, rural regions erupted into the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794; in Western Pennsylvania and western Virginia, whiskey was the basic export product and was fundamental to the local economy. In response to the rebellion, believing compliance with the laws was vital to the establishment of federal authority, Hamilton accompanied to the rebellion's site President Washington, General Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee, and more federal troops than were ever assembled in one place during the Revolution. This overwhelming display of force intimidated the leaders of the insurrection, ending the rebellion virtually without bloodshed.[141]

Manufacturing and industry

Hamilton's next report was his *Report on Manufactures*. Although he was requested by Congress on January 15, 1790, for a report for manufacturing that would expand the United States' independence, the report was not submitted until December 5, 1791.[94]:274, 277 In the report, Hamilton quoted from *Wealth of Nations* and used the French physiocrats as an example for rejecting agrarianism and the physiocratic theory; respectively.[52]:233 Hamilton also refuted Smith's ideas of government noninterference, as it would have been detrimental for trade with other countries.[52]:244 Hamilton also thought of the United States being a primarily agrarian country would be at a disadvantage in dealing with Europe.[142] In response to the agrarian detractors, Hamilton stated that the agriculturists' interest would be advanced by manufactures,[94]:276 and that agriculture was just as productive as manufacturing.[52]:233[94]:276

A statue of Hamilton by Franklin Simmons, overlooking the Great Falls of the Passaic River in Paterson, New Jersey, where Hamilton envisioned using the falls to power new factories

Hamilton argued that developing an industrial economy is impossible without protective tariffs.[143] Among the ways that the government should assist manufacturing, Hamilton argued for government assistance to "infant industries" so they can achieve economies of scale, by levying protective duties on imported foreign goods that were also manufactured in the United States,[144] for withdrawing duties levied on raw materials needed for domestic manufacturing,[94]:277[144] and pecuniary boundaries.[94]:277 He also called for encouraging immigration for people to better themselves in similar

employment opportunities.[144][145] Congress shelved the report without much debate (except for Madison's objection to Hamilton's formulation of the General Welfare clause, which Hamilton construed liberally as a legal basis for his extensive programs).[146]

In 1791, Hamilton, along with Coxe and several entrepreneurs from New York and Philadelphia formed the Society for the Establishment of Useful Manufactures, a private industrial corporation. In May 1792, the directors decided to scope out The Passaic Falls. On July 4, 1792, the society directors met Philip Schuyler at Abraham Godwin's hotel on the Passaic River, where they would lead a tour prospecting the area for the national manufactory. It was originally suggested that they dig mile-long trenches and build the factories away from the falls, but Hamilton argued that it would be too costly and laborious. [147]

The location at Great Falls of the Passaic River in New Jersey was selected due to access to raw materials, it being densely inhabited, and having access to water power from the falls of the Passaic.[52]:231 The factory town was named Paterson after New Jersey's Governor William Paterson, who signed the charter.[52]:232[148] The profits were to derive from specific corporates rather than the benefits to be conferred to the nation and the citizens, which was unlike the report.[149] Hamilton also suggested the first stock to be offered at $500,000 and to eventually increase to $1 million, and welcomed state and federal government subscriptions alike.[94]:280[149] The company was never successful: numerous shareholders reneged on stock payments, some members soon went bankrupt, and William Duer, the governor of the program, was sent to debtors' prison where he died.[150] In spite of Hamilton's efforts to mend the disaster, the company folded.[148]

Emergence of political parties

Hamilton's vision was challenged by Virginia agrarians Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who formed a rival party, the Jeffersonian Republican party. They favored strong state governments based in rural America and protected by state militias as opposed to a strong national government supported by a national army and navy. They denounced Hamilton as insufficiently devoted to republicanism, too friendly toward corrupt Britain and toward monarchy in general, and too oriented toward cities, business and banking.[151]

Aaron Burr, Hamilton and Philip Schuyler strolling on Wall Street, New York, 1790

The American two-party system began to emerge as political parties coalesced around competing interests. A congressional caucus, led by Madison, Jefferson and William Branch Giles, began as an opposition group to Hamilton's financial programs. Hamilton and his allies began to call themselves *Federalists*. The opposition group, now called the Democratic-Republican Party by political scientists, at the time called itself *Republicans*.[152][153]

Hamilton assembled a nationwide coalition to garner support for the Administration, including the expansive financial programs Hamilton had made administration policy and especially the president's policy of neutrality in the European war between Britain and revolutionary France. Hamilton publicly denounced the French minister Edmond-Charles Genêt (he called himself "Citizen Genêt") who commissioned American privateers and recruited Americans for private militias to attack British ships and colonial possessions of British allies. Eventually, even Jefferson joined Hamilton in seeking Genêt's recall.[154] If Hamilton's administrative republic was to succeed, Americans had to see themselves first as citizens of a nation, and experience an administration that proved firm and demonstrated the concepts found within the United States Constitution.[155] The Federalists did impose some internal direct taxes but they departed from the most implications of the Hamilton administrative republic as risky.[156]

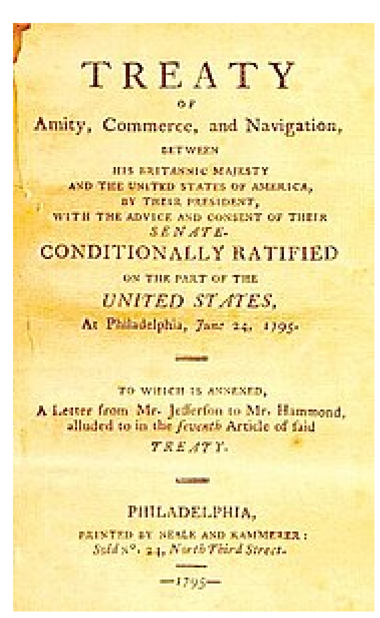
The Jeffersonian Republicans opposed banks and cities, and favored the series of unstable revolutionary governments in France. They built their own national coalition to oppose the Federalists. Both sides gained the support of local political factions, and each side developed its own partisan newspapers. Noah Webster, John Fenno, and William Cobbett were energetic editors for the Federalists; Benjamin Franklin Bache and Philip Freneau were fiery Republican editors. All of their newspapers were characterized by intense personal attacks, major exaggerations, and invented claims. In 1801, Hamilton established a daily newspaper that is still published, the *New York Evening Post* (now the *New York Post*), and brought in William Coleman as its editor.[157]

The quarrel between Hamilton and Jefferson is the best known and historically the most important in American political history. Hamilton's and Jefferson's incompatibility was heightened by the unavowed wish of each to be Washington's principal and most trusted advisor.[158]

An additional partisan irritant to Hamilton was the 1791 United States Senate election in New York, which resulted in the election of Democratic-Republican candidate Aaron Burr, previously the New York state attorney general, over Senator Philip Schuyler, the Federalist incumbent and Hamilton's father-in-law. Hamilton blamed Burr personally for this outcome, and negative characterizations of Burr appear in his correspondence thereafter. The two men did work together from time to time thereafter on various projects, including Hamilton's army of 1798 and the Manhattan Water Company.[159]

Jay Treaty and Britain

When France and Britain went to war in early 1793, all four members of the Cabinet were consulted on what to do. They and Washington unanimously agreed to remain neutral, and to have the French ambassador who was raising privateers and mercenaries on American soil, "Citizen" Genêt, recalled.[160]:336–41 However, in 1794 policy toward Britain became a major point of contention between the two parties. Hamilton and the Federalists wished for more trade with Britain, the largest trading partner of the newly formed United States. The Republicans saw monarchist Britain as the main threat to republicanism and proposed instead to start a trade war.[94]:327–28


TREATY
OF
Amity, Commerce, and Navigation,
BETWEEN
HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
BY THEIR PRESIDENT,
WITH THE ADVICE AND CONSENT OF THEIR
SENATE.
CONDITIONALLY RATIFIED
ON THE PART OF THE
UNITED STATES,
At Philadelphia, *June* 24, 1795.

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,
A Letter from Mr. Jefferson to Mr. Hammond,
alluded to in the *seventh* Article of said
TREATY.

PHILADELPHIA,
PRINTED BY NEALE AND KAMMERER:
Sold N°. 24, North Third Street.
—1795—

The Jay Treaty

To avoid war, Washington sent Chief Justice John Jay to negotiate with the British; Hamilton largely wrote Jay's instructions. The result was Jay's Treaty. It was denounced by the Republicans, but Hamilton mobilized support throughout the land.[161] The Jay Treaty passed the Senate in 1795 by exactly the required two-thirds majority. The Treaty resolved issues remaining from the Revolution, averted war, and made possible ten years of peaceful trade between the United States and Britain.[160]:Ch 9 Historian George Herring notes the "remarkable and fortuitous economic and diplomatic gains" produced by the Treaty.[162]

Several European states had formed a League of Armed Neutrality against incursions on their neutral rights; the Cabinet was also consulted on whether the United States should join the alliance, and decided not to. It kept that decision secret, but Hamilton revealed it in private to George Hammond, the British minister to the United States, without telling Jay or anyone else. His act remained unknown until Hammond's dispatches were read in the 1920s. This "amazing revelation" may have had limited effect on the negotiations; Jay did threaten to join the League at one point, but the British had other reasons not to view the League as a serious threat.[160]:411 ff[163]

Second Report on Public Credit and resignations from public office

Hamilton tendered his resignation from office on December 1, 1794, giving Washington two months' notice,[164] in the wake of his wife Eliza's miscarriage[165] while he was absent during his armed repression of the Whiskey Rebellion.[166] Before leaving his post on January 31, 1795, Hamilton submitted a *Report on a Plan for the Further Support of Public Credit* to Congress to curb the debt problem. Hamilton grew dissatisfied with what he viewed as a lack of a comprehensive plan to fix the public debt. He wished to have new taxes passed with older ones made permanent and stated that any surplus from the excise tax on liquor would be pledged to lower public debt. His proposals were included in a bill by Congress within slightly over a month after his departure as treasury secretary.[167] Some months later Hamilton resumed his law practice in New York to remain closer to his family.[168]

Post-secretary years

1796 presidential election

Hamilton's resignation as Secretary of the Treasury in 1795 did not remove him from public life. With the resumption of his law practice, he remained close to Washington as an advisor and friend. Hamilton influenced Washington in the composition of his farewell address by writing drafts for Washington to compare with the latter's draft, although when Washington contemplated retirement in 1792, he had consulted James Madison for a draft that was used in a similar manner to Hamilton's.[169][170]

In the election of 1796, under the Constitution as it stood then, each of the presidential electors had two votes, which they were to cast for different men. The one who received the most votes would become president, the second-most, vice president. This system was not designed with the operation of parties in mind, as they had been thought disreputable and factious. The Federalists planned to deal with this by having all their Electors vote for John Adams, then vice president, and all but a few for Thomas Pinckney of South Carolina.[171]

Adams resented Hamilton's influence with Washington and considered him overambitious and scandalous in his private life; Hamilton compared Adams unfavorably with Washington and thought him too emotionally unstable to be president.[172] Hamilton took the election as an opportunity: he urged all the northern electors to vote for Adams and Pinckney, lest Jefferson get in; but he cooperated with Edward Rutledge to have South Carolina's electors vote for Jefferson and Pinckney. If all this worked, Pinckney would have more votes than Adams, Pinckney would become president, and Adams would remain vice president, but it did not work. The Federalists found out about it (even the French minister to the United States knew), and northern Federalists voted for Adams but *not* for Pinckney, in sufficient numbers that Pinckney came in third and Jefferson became vice president.[173] Adams resented the intrigue since he felt his service to the nation was much more extensive than Pinckney's.[174]

Reynolds affair scandal

In the summer of 1797, Hamilton became the first major American politician publicly involved in a sex scandal.[175] Six years earlier, in the summer of 1791, 34-year-old Hamilton became involved in an affair with 23-year-old Maria Reynolds. According to Hamilton's account Maria approached him at his house in Philadelphia, claiming that her husband James Reynolds was abusive and had abandoned her, and she wished to return to her relatives in New York but lacked the means.[94]:366–69 Hamilton retrieved her address and delivered her $30 personally at her boarding house, where she led him into her bedroom and "Some conversation ensued from which it was quickly apparent that other than pecuniary consolation would be acceptable". The two began an intermittent illicit affair that lasted approximately until June 1792.[176]

Over the course of that year, while the affair took place, James Reynolds was well aware of his wife's unfaithfulness, and likely orchestrated it from the beginning. He continually supported their relationship to regularly extort blackmail money from Hamilton. The common practice of the day for men of equal social standing was for the wronged husband to seek retribution in a duel, but Reynolds, of a lower social status and realizing how much Hamilton had to lose if his activity came into public view, resorted to extortion.[177] After an initial request of $1,000[178] to which Hamilton complied, Reynolds invited Hamilton to renew his visits to his wife "as a friend"[179] only to extort forced "loans" after each visit that the most likely colluding Maria solicited with her letters. In the end, the blackmail payments totaled over $1,300 including the initial extortion.[94]:369 Hamilton at this point may have been aware of both spouses being involved in the blackmail,[180] and he welcomed and strictly complied with James Reynolds' request to end the affair.[176][181]

Hamilton by John Trumbull, 1792

In November 1792, James Reynolds and his associate Jacob Clingman were arrested for counterfeiting and speculating in Revolutionary War veterans' unpaid back wages. Clingman was released on bail and relayed information to Democratic-Republican congressman James Monroe that Reynolds had evidence incriminating Hamilton of illicit activity as Treasury Secretary. Monroe consulted with congressmen Muhlenberg and Venable on what actions to take and the congressmen confronted Hamilton on December 15, 1792.[176] Hamilton refuted the suspicions of speculation by exposing his affair with Maria and producing as evidence the letters by both of the Reynolds, proving that his payments to James Reynolds related to blackmail over his adultery, and not to treasury misconduct. The trio agreed on their honor to keep the documents privately with the utmost confidence.[94]:366–69

In the summer of 1797, however, when "notoriously scurrilous journalist" James T. Callender published *A History of the United States for the Year 1796*, it contained accusations of James Reynolds being an agent of Hamilton, using documents from the confrontation of December 15, 1792. On July 5, 1797, Hamilton wrote to Monroe, Muhlenberg and Venable asking them to confirm that there was nothing that would damage the perception of his integrity while Secretary of Treasury. All complied with Hamilton's request but Monroe. Hamilton then published a 100-page booklet, later usually referred to as the *Reynolds Pamphlet*, and discussed the affair in indelicate detail for the time. Hamilton's wife Elizabeth eventually forgave him, but never forgave Monroe.[182] Although he faced ridicule from the Democratic-Republican faction, Hamilton maintained his availability for public service.[52]:334–36

Quasi-War

During the military build-up of the Quasi-War of 1798–1800, and with the strong endorsement of Washington (who had been called out of retirement to lead the Army if a French invasion materialized), Adams reluctantly appointed Hamilton a major general of the army. At Washington's insistence, Hamilton was made the senior major general, prompting Henry Knox to decline appointment to serve as Hamilton's junior (Knox had been a major general in the Continental Army and thought it would be degrading to serve beneath him).[183][184]

Hamilton served as inspector general of the United States Army from July 18, 1798, to June 15, 1800. Because Washington was unwilling to leave Mount Vernon unless it were to command an army in the field, Hamilton was the *de facto* head of the army, to Adams's considerable displeasure. If full-scale war broke out with France, Hamilton argued that the army should conquer the North American colonies of France's ally, Spain, bordering the United States.[185] Hamilton was prepared to march the army through the Southern United States if necessary.[186]

Alexander Hamilton by William J. Weaver

To fund this army, Hamilton wrote regularly to Oliver Wolcott Jr., his successor at the treasury; William Loughton Smith, of the House Ways and Means Committee; and Senator Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts. He urged them to pass a direct tax to fund the war. Smith resigned in July 1797, as Hamilton complained to him for slowness, and urged Wolcott to tax houses instead of land.[187] The eventual program included taxes on land, houses, and slaves, calculated at different rates in different states and requiring assessment of houses, and a Stamp Act like that of the British before the Revolution though this time Americans were taxing themselves through their own representatives.[188] This provoked resistance in southeastern Pennsylvania nevertheless, led primarily by men such as John Fries who had marched with Washington against the Whiskey Rebellion.[189]

Hamilton aided in all areas of the army's development, and after Washington's death he was by default the senior officer of the United States Army from December 14, 1799, to June 15, 1800. The army was to guard against invasion from France. Adams, however, derailed all plans for war by opening negotiations with France that led to peace.[190] There was no longer a direct threat for the army Hamilton was commanding to respond to.[191] Adams discovered that key members of his cabinet, namely Secretary of State Timothy Pickering and Secretary of War James McHenry, were more loyal to Hamilton than himself; Adams fired them in May 1800.[192]

1800 presidential election

In the 1800 election, Hamilton worked to defeat not only the rival Democratic-Republican candidates, but also his party's own nominee, John Adams.[94]:392–99 In November 1799, the Alien and Sedition Acts had left one Democratic-Republican newspaper functioning in New York City; when the last, the *New Daily Advertiser*, reprinted an article saying that Hamilton had attempted to purchase the Philadelphia *Aurora* and close it down, Hamilton had the publisher prosecuted for seditious libel, and the prosecution compelled the owner to close the paper.[193]

A statue of Hamilton in the United States Capitol rotunda

Aaron Burr had won New York for Jefferson in May; now Hamilton proposed a rerun of the election under different rules—with carefully drawn districts and each choosing an elector—such that the Federalists would split the electoral vote of New York.[note 3] (John Jay, a Federalist who had given up the Supreme Court to be Governor of New York, wrote on the back of the letter the words, "Proposing a measure for party purposes which it would not become me to adopt," and declined to reply.)[194]

John Adams was running this time with Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of South Carolina (the elder brother of candidate Thomas Pinckney from the 1796 election). Hamilton now toured New England, again urging northern electors to hold firm for Pinckney in the renewed hope of making Pinckney president; and he again intrigued in South Carolina.[52]:350–51 Hamilton's ideas involved coaxing middle-state Federalists to assert their non-support for Adams if there was no support for Pinckney and writing

to more of the modest supports of Adams concerning his supposed misconduct while president.[52]:350–51 Hamilton expected to see southern states such as the Carolinas cast their votes for Pinckney and Jefferson, and would result in the former being ahead of both Adams and Jefferson.[94]:394–95

In accordance with the second of the aforementioned plans, and a recent personal rift with Adams,[52]:351 Hamilton wrote a pamphlet called *Letter from Alexander Hamilton, Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams, Esq. President of the United States* that was highly critical of him, though it closed with a tepid endorsement.[94]:396 He mailed this to two hundred leading Federalists; when a copy fell into the Democratic-Republicans' hands, they printed it. This hurt Adams's 1800 reelection campaign and split the Federalist Party, virtually assuring the victory of the Democratic-Republican Party, led by Jefferson, in the election of 1800; it diminished Hamilton's position among many Federalists.[195]

Jefferson had beaten Adams, but both he and Aaron Burr had received 73 votes in the Electoral College (Adams finished in third place, Pinckney in fourth, and Jay received one vote). With Jefferson and Burr tied, the United States House of Representatives had to choose between the two men.[52]:352[94]:399 Several Federalists who opposed Jefferson supported Burr, and for the first 35 ballots, Jefferson was denied a majority. Before the 36th ballot, Hamilton threw his weight behind Jefferson, supporting the arrangement reached by James A. Bayard of Delaware, in which five Federalist Representatives from Maryland and Vermont abstained from voting, allowing those states' delegations to go for Jefferson, ending the impasse and electing Jefferson president rather than Burr.[52]:350–51

Even though Hamilton did not like Jefferson and disagreed with him on many issues, he viewed Jefferson as the lesser of two evils. Hamilton spoke of Jefferson as being "by far not so a dangerous man", and that Burr was a "mischievous enemy" to the principal measure of the past administration.[196] It was for that reason, along with the fact that Burr was a northerner and not a Virginian, that many Federalist Representatives voted for him.[197]

Hamilton wrote many letters to friends in Congress to convince the members to see otherwise.[52]:352[94]:401 The Federalists rejected Hamilton's diatribe as reasons to not vote for Burr.[52]:353[94]:401 Nevertheless, Burr would become Vice President of the United States. When it became clear that Jefferson had developed his own concerns about Burr and would not support his return to the vice presidency,[198] Burr sought the New York governorship in 1804 with Federalist support, against the Jeffersonian Morgan Lewis, but was defeated by forces including Hamilton.[199]

Duel with Burr and death

Detail of 1802 portrait by Ezra Ames, painted after death of Hamilton's eldest son Philip

Soon after the 1804 gubernatorial election in New York—in which Morgan Lewis, greatly assisted by Hamilton, defeated Aaron Burr—the *Albany Register* published Charles D. Cooper's letters, citing Hamilton's opposition to Burr and alleging that Hamilton had expressed "a still more despicable opinion" of the Vice President at an upstate New York dinner party.[200][201] Cooper claimed that the letter was intercepted after relaying the information, but stated he was "unusually cautious" in recollecting the information from the dinner.[202]

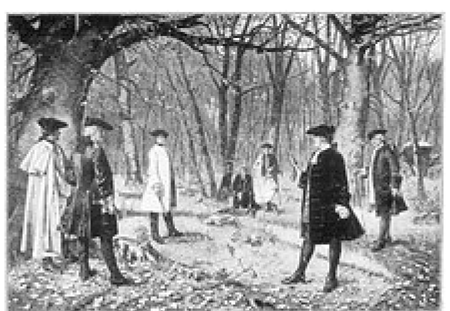
Burr, sensing an attack on his honor, and recovering from his defeat, demanded an apology in letter form. Hamilton wrote a letter in response and ultimately refused because he could not recall the

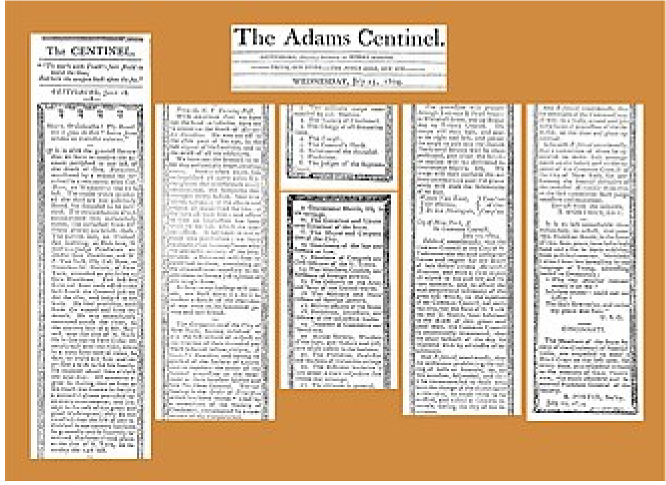
instance of insulting Burr. Hamilton would also have been accused of recanting Cooper's letter out of cowardice.[94]:423–24 After a series of attempts to reconcile were to no avail, a duel was arranged through liaisons on June 27, 1804.[94]:426

The concept of honor was fundamental to Hamilton's vision of himself and of the nation.[203] Historians have noted, as evidence of the importance that honor held in Hamilton's value system, that Hamilton had previously been a party to seven "affairs of honor" as a principal, and to three as an advisor or second.[204] Such affairs were often concluded prior to reaching their final stage, a duel.[204]

Hamilton's tomb in Trinity Church's first burial grounds at Wall Street and Broadway in Lower Manhattan

Before the duel, Hamilton wrote an explanation of his decision to duel while at the same time intending to "throw away" his shot.[205] Hamilton viewed his roles of being a father and husband, putting his creditors at risk, placing his family's welfare in jeopardy and his moral and religious stances as reasons not to duel, but he felt it impossible to avoid due to having made attacks on Burr which he was unable to recant, and because of Burr's behavior prior to the duel. He attempted to reconcile his moral and religious reasons and the codes of honor and politics. He intended to accept the duel in order to satisfy his morals, and throw away his fire to satisfy his political codes.[206][200][note 4] His desire to be available for future political matters also played a factor.[200]


Drawing (c. 1902) of the Burr–Hamilton duel, from a painting by J. Mund


The CENTINEL.

The Adams Centinel.

This July 25, 1804 article reflected extreme lamentation over Hamilton's death, and described the plan for his funeral procession and other tributes, including a 30-day wearing of a commemorative black armband ("crape") by members of the Society of the Cincinnati of Pennsylvania of which Hamilton had been President General.[207]

The duel began at dawn on July 11, 1804, along the west bank of the Hudson River on a rocky ledge in Weehawken, New Jersey.[208] Coincidentally, the duel took place relatively close to the location of the duel that had ended the life of Hamilton's eldest son, Philip, three years earlier.[209] Lots were cast for the choice of position and which second should start the duel. Both were won by Hamilton's second, who chose the upper edge of the ledge for Hamilton facing the city to the east, toward the rising sun.[210] After the seconds had measured the paces Hamilton, according to both William P. Van Ness and Burr, raised his pistol "as if to try the light" and had to wear his glasses to prevent his vision from being obscured.[211] Hamilton also refused the hairspring setting for the dueling pistols (needing less trigger pressure) offered by Nathaniel Pendleton.[212]

Vice President Burr shot Hamilton, delivering what proved to be a fatal wound. Hamilton's shot broke a tree branch directly above Burr's head.[171] Neither of the seconds, Pendleton nor Van Ness, could determine who fired first,[213] as each claimed that the other man had fired first.[212]

Soon after, they measured and triangulated the shooting, but could not determine from which angle Hamilton had fired. Burr's shot hit Hamilton in the lower abdomen above his right hip. The bullet ricocheted off Hamilton's second or third false rib, fracturing it and causing considerable damage to his internal organs, particularly his liver and diaphragm, before becoming lodged in his first or second lumbar vertebra.[94]:429[214] The biographer Ron Chernow considers the circumstances to indicate that, after taking deliberate aim, Burr fired second,[215] while the biographer James Earnest Cooke suggests that Burr took careful aim and shot first, and Hamilton fired while falling, after being struck by Burr's bullet.[216]

The paralyzed Hamilton was immediately attended by the same surgeon who tended Phillip Hamilton, and ferried to the Greenwich Village boarding house of his friend William Bayard Jr., who had been waiting on the dock. After final visits from his family and friends and considerable suffering for at least 31 hours, Hamilton died at two o'clock the following afternoon, July 12, 1804,[217][218] at Bayard's home just below the present Gansevoort Street.[219] The city fathers halted all business at noon for Hamilton's funeral, the procession of about two miles was organized by the Society of the Cincinnati and took hours to complete, and was widely attended by every class of citizen as well as widely reported nationwide by newspapers.[220] Gouverneur Morris gave the eulogy at his funeral and secretly established a fund to support his widow and children.[221] Hamilton was buried in the Trinity Churchyard Cemetery in Manhattan.[222]

Personal life

Married life

While Hamilton was stationed in Morristown, New Jersey, in the winter of December 1779 – March 1780, he met Elizabeth Schuyler, a daughter of General Philip Schuyler and Catherine Van Rensselaer. The two were married on December 14, 1780, at the Schuyler Mansion in Albany, New York.[223]

Elizabeth Schuyler, portrait by Ralph Earl

Elizabeth and Alexander Hamilton had eight children, though there is often confusion because two sons were named Philip:

- Philip (1782–1801), died in a duel, just as his father would three years later.[224]
- Angelica (1784–1857)
- Alexander Jr. (1786–1875)
- James Alexander (1788–1878)[225]
- John Church (1792–1882)
- William Stephen (1797–1850)
- Eliza (1799–1859)
- Philip, also called *Little Phil* (1802–1884), named after his older brother who had been killed in a duel the previous year

After Hamilton's death in 1804, Elizabeth endeavored to preserve his legacy. She re-organized all of Alexander's letters, papers, and writings with the help of her son, John Church Hamilton,[226] and persevered through many setbacks in getting his biography published. She was so devoted to Alexander's memory that

she wore a small package around her neck containing the pieces of a sonnet which Alexander wrote for her during the early days of their courtship.[227]

Hamilton was also close to Elizabeth's sisters. During his lifetime he was even rumored to have had an affair with his wife's older sister, Angelica, who, three years before Hamilton's marriage to Elizabeth, had eloped with John Barker Church, an Englishman who made a fortune in North America during the Revolution and later returned to Europe with his wife and children between 1783 and 1797. Even though the style of their correspondence during Angelica's fourteen-year residence in Europe was flirtatious, modern historians like Chernow and Fielding agree that despite contemporary gossip there is no conclusive evidence that Hamilton's relationship with Angelica was ever physical or went beyond a strong affinity between in-laws.[228][229] Hamilton also maintained a correspondence with Elizabeth's younger sister Margarita, nicknamed Peggy, who was the recipient of his first letters praising her sister Elizabeth at the time of his courtship in early 1780.[230]

Religion

Hamilton's religious faith

As a youth in the West Indies, Hamilton was an orthodox and conventional Presbyterian of the "New Light" evangelical type (as opposed to the "[Old Light" tradition); he was taught there by a student of John Witherspoon, a moderate of the New School.[231] He wrote two or three hymns, which were published in the local newspaper.[232] Robert Troup, his college roommate, noted that Hamilton was "in the habit of praying on his knees night and morning".[233]:10

According to Gordon Wood, Hamilton dropped his youthful religiosity during the Revolution and became "a conventional liberal with theistic inclinations who was an irregular churchgoer at best"; however, he returned to religion in his last years.[234] Chernow wrote that Hamilton was nominally an Episcopalian, but:

> [H]e was not clearly affiliated with the denomination and did not seem to attend church regularly or take communion. Like Adams, Franklin, and Jefferson, Hamilton had probably fallen under the sway of deism, which sought to substitute reason for revelation and dropped the notion of an active God who intervened in human affairs. At the same time, he never doubted God's existence, embracing Christianity as a system of morality and cosmic justice.[235]

Stories were circulated that Hamilton had made two quips about God at the time of the Constitutional Convention in 1787.[236] During the French Revolution, he displayed a utilitarian approach to using religion for political ends, such as by maligning Jefferson as "the atheist", and insisting that Christianity and Jeffersonian democracy were incompatible.[236]:316 After 1801, Hamilton further attested his belief in Christianity, proposing a Christian Constitutional Society in 1802 to take hold of "some strong feeling of the mind" to elect "*fit* men" to office, and advocating "Christian welfare societies" for the poor. After being shot, Hamilton spoke of his belief in God's mercy.[note 5]

On his deathbed, Hamilton asked the Episcopal Bishop of New York, Benjamin Moore, to give him holy communion.[237] Moore initially declined to do so, on two grounds: that to participate in a duel was a mortal sin, and that Hamilton, although undoubtedly sincere in his faith, was not a member of the Episcopalian denomination.[238] After leaving, Moore was persuaded to return that afternoon by the urgent pleas of Hamilton's friends, and upon receiving Hamilton's solemn assurance that he repented for his part in the duel, Moore gave him communion.[238] Bishop Moore returned the next morning, stayed with Hamilton for several hours until his death, and conducted the funeral service at Trinity Church.[237]

Relationship with Jews and Judaism

Hamilton's birthplace on the island of Nevis had a large Jewish community, constituting one quarter of Charlestown's white population by the 1720s.[1] He came into contact with Jews on a regular basis; as a small boy, he was tutored by a Jewish schoolmistress, and had learned to recite the Ten Commandments in the original Hebrew.[233]

Hamilton exhibited a degree of respect for Jews that was described by Chernow as "a life-long reverence."[239] He believed that Jewish achievement was a result of divine providence:

> The state and progress of the Jews, from their earliest history to the present time, has been so entirely out of the ordinary course of human affairs, is it not then a fair conclusion, that the cause also is an *extraordinary* one—in other words, that it is the effect of some great providential plan? The man who will draw this conclusion, will look for the solution in the Bible. He who will not draw it ought to give us another fair solution.[240]

Based on the phonetic similarity of "Lavien" to a common Jewish surname, it has often been suggested that the first husband of Hamilton's mother, Rachel Faucette, a German or Dane named Johann Michael Lavien,[6] was Jewish or of Jewish descent.[241] On this foundation, historian Andrew Porwancher, a self-acknowledged "lone voice" whose "findings clash with much of the received wisdom on Hamilton", has promoted a theory that Hamilton himself was Jewish.[242] Porwancher argues that Hamilton's mother (French Huguenot on her father's side[243]) must have converted to Judaism before marrying Lavien, and that even after her separation and bitter divorce from Lavien, she would still have raised her children by James Hamilton as Jews.[242][244] Reflecting the consensus of modern historians, historian Michael E. Newton wrote that "there is no evidence that Lavien is a Jewish name, no indication that John Lavien was Jewish, and no reason to believe that he was."[20] Newton traced the suggestions to a 1902 work of historical fiction by novelist Gertrude Atherton.[20]

Legacy

Hamilton's interpretations of the Constitution set forth in the *Federalist Papers* remain highly influential, as seen in scholarly studies and court decisions.[245] Although the Constitution was ambiguous as to the exact balance of power between national and state governments, Hamilton consistently took the side of greater federal power at the expense of the states.[246] As Secretary of the Treasury, he established—against the intense opposition of Secretary of State Jefferson—the country's first *de facto* central bank. Hamilton justified the creation of this bank, and other increased federal powers, under Congress's constitutional powers to issue currency, to regulate interstate commerce, and to do anything else that would be "necessary and proper" to enact the provisions of the Constitution.[247]

On the other hand, Jefferson took a stricter view of the Constitution. Parsing the text carefully, he found no specific authorization for a national bank. This controversy was eventually settled by the Supreme Court of the United States in *McCulloch v. Maryland*, which in essence adopted Hamilton's view, granting the federal government broad freedom to select the best means to execute its constitutionally enumerated powers, specifically the doctrine of implied powers.[247] Nevertheless, the American Civil War and the Progressive Era demonstrated the sorts of crises and politics Hamilton's administrative republic sought to avoid.[248]

Hamilton's policies as Secretary of the Treasury greatly affected the United States government and still continue to influence it. His constitutional interpretation, specifically of the Necessary and Proper Clause, set precedents for federal authority that are still used by the courts and are considered an authority on constitutional interpretation. The prominent French diplomat Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, who spent 1794

in the United States, wrote, "I consider Napoleon, Fox, and Hamilton the three greatest men of our epoch, and if I were forced to decide between the three, I would give without hesitation the first place to Hamilton", adding that Hamilton had intuited the problems of European conservatives.[249]

Opinions of Hamilton have run the gamut as both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson viewed him as unprincipled and dangerously aristocratic. Hamilton's reputation was mostly negative in the eras of Jeffersonian democracy and Jacksonian democracy. By the Progressive era, Herbert Croly, Henry Cabot Lodge, and Theodore Roosevelt praised his leadership of a strong government. Several nineteenth- and twentieth-century Republicans entered politics by writing laudatory biographies of Hamilton.[250]

In more recent years, according to Sean Wilentz, favorable views of Hamilton and his reputation have decidedly gained the initiative among scholars, who portray him as the visionary architect of the modern liberal capitalist economy and of a dynamic federal government headed by an energetic executive.[251] Modern scholars favoring Hamilton have portrayed Jefferson and his allies, in contrast, as naïve, dreamy idealists.[251] The older Jeffersonian view attacked Hamilton as a centralizer, sometimes to the point of accusations that he advocated monarchy.[252]

Monuments and memorials

U.S. Army unit lineage

The lineage of Hamilton's New York Provincial Company of Artillery has been perpetuated in the United States Army in a series of units nicknamed "Hamilton's Own". It was carried as of 2010 by the 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery Regiment. In the Regular Army, it is the oldest unit and the only one with credit for the Revolutionary War.[253]

Distinctive unit insignia of the United States Army 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery Regiment (Alexander Hamilton Battery). The crest at center is that of Clan Hamilton, with the addition of 13 gold acorns representing the original 13 states.

U.S. Coast Guard vessels

A number of Coast Guard vessels have been given a designation after Alexander Hamilton, including:

- *(Alexander) Hamilton* (1830) the fastest vessel in Morris-Taney Class of cutters, operated out of Boston for much of her career. It became famous for rescues and saving property and extremely popular; so much so that music was written in November 1839 titled "The Cutter Hamilton Quick step." *Hamilton* was lost in a gale in 1853.
- USS *Alexander Hamilton* (1871), was a revenue cutter in service from 1871 to 1906, and a participant in the Spanish–American War.[254]
- *Alexander Hamilton* (WIX 272), as the U. S. Navy gunboat *Vicksburg* and others of the Annapolis-class were authorized to be built in 1895 with a mission to show the flag and keep order in foreign ports, supporting the "gunboat diplomacy" policy of the period. Gunboat technology advanced rapidly at the turn of the last century, and the class of steam and sail quickly became obsolete. The *Vicksburg* was transferred to the Coast Guard in 1921, and in the following year was commissioned with the name *Alexander Hamilton*, replacing the *Itasca* as the Coast Guard Academy's training ship. She was decommissioned in 1944 and was transferred to the War Shipping Administration in 1946.
- USCGC *Alexander Hamilton* (WPG-34) was a Treasury-class United States Coast Guard Cutter launched in 1937. Sunk after an attack by a German U-boat in January 1942, the

Hamilton was the U.S. Coast Guard's first loss of World War II.[255]

- USCGC *Hamilton* (WHEC-715) was a U.S. Coast Guard cutter in service from 1967 to 2011 and transferred to the Philippine Navy as an excess defense article under the Foreign Assistance Act as BRP *Gregorio del Pilar*.
- USCGC *Hamilton* (WMSL-753) is a U.S. Coast Guard cutter commissioned in 2014.

USCGC *Hamilton* (WMSL 753) seal. The two colors on the coat of arms represent the aspects of Alexander Hamilton's life: military and civilian. The white demarcation line is a virtual diagram of the trenches converging on the British redoubt #10 at Yorktown. Surmounting the crossed bayonets symbolizing Hamilton's taking of the redoubt is a Doric column which symbolizes Hamilton's service as a statesman. The crest shows an ermine cinquefoil, which is the principal charge on the Hamilton family coat of arms and is worn by a unicorn, taken from the hand-carved powder horn Hamilton is believed to have owned. The motto, “Vigilant Sentinel,” is derived from a quote in *Federalist No. 12*: “A few armed vessels, judiciously stationed at the entrance of our ports, might at a small expense be made useful sentinels of the law.”

U.S.Navy vessels

A number of vessels in the U.S. Navy have borne the designation USS *Hamilton*, though some have been named for other men. The USS *Alexander Hamilton* (SSBN-617) was the second LAFAYETTE - class nuclear-powered fleet ballistic missile submarine.

A starboard view of the nuclear-powered strategic missile submarine USS *ALEXANDER HAMILTON* (SSBN-617) underway.

Portraits on currency and postage stamps

Alexander Hamilton on the Series 2004A U.S. $10 bill

Since the beginning of the American Civil War, Hamilton has been depicted on more denominations of U.S. currency than anyone else. He has appeared on the $2, $5, $10, $20, $50, and $1,000 notes. Hamilton also appears on the $500 Series EE Savings Bond.

Hamilton's portrait has been featured on the front of the U.S. $10 bill since 1928. The source of the engraving is John Trumbull's 1805 portrait of Hamilton, in the portrait collection of New York City Hall.[256] In June 2015, the U.S. Treasury announced a decision to replace the engraving of Hamilton with that of Harriet Tubman. It was later decided to leave Hamilton on the $10, and replace Andrew Jackson with Tubman on the $20.[257]

The first postage stamp to honor Hamilton was issued by the U.S. Post Office in 1870. The portrayals on the 1870 and 1888 issues are from the same engraved die, which was modeled after a bust of Hamilton by Italian sculptor Giuseppe Ceracchi.[258] The Hamilton 1870 issue was the first U.S. postage stamp to honor a Secretary of the Treasury. The three-cent red commemorative issue, which was released on the 200th anniversary of Hamilton's birth in 1957, includes a rendition of the Federal Hall building, located in New York

City.[259] On March 19, 1956, the United States Postal Service issued the $5 Liberty Issue postage stamp honoring Hamilton.[260]

Hamilton stamp, 1870 issue

The Grange

The Hamilton Grange National Memorial in St. Nicholas Park

The Grange is the only home Alexander Hamilton ever owned. It is a Federal style mansion designed by John McComb Jr.. It was built on Hamilton's 32-acre country estate in Hamilton Heights in upper Manhattan, and was completed in 1802. Hamilton named the house "The Grange" after the estate of his grandfather Alexander in Ayrshire, Scotland. The house remained in the family until 1833, when his widow Eliza sold it to Thomas E. Davis, a British-born real estate developer, for $25,000.[261] Part of the proceeds were used by Eliza to purchase a new townhouse from Davis in Greenwich Village (now known as the Hamilton-Holly House), where Eliza lived until 1843 with her grown children Alexander and Eliza, and their spouses.[261]

The Grange was first moved from its original location in 1889, and was moved again in 2008 to a spot in St. Nicholas Park in Hamilton Heights, on land that was once part of the Hamilton estate. The historic structure, now designated as the Hamilton Grange National Memorial, was restored to its original 1802 appearance in 2011,[262] and is maintained by the National Park Service.[263][264][265]

Colleges and universities

A statue of Hamilton outside Hamilton Hall, overlooking Hamilton Lawn at Columbia University in New York City

Columbia University, Hamilton's alma mater, has official memorials to Hamilton on its campus in New York City. The college's main classroom building for the humanities is Hamilton Hall, and a large statue of Hamilton stands in front of it.[266][267] The university press has published his complete works in a multivolume letterpress edition.[268] Columbia University's student group for ROTC cadets and Marine officer candidates is named the Alexander Hamilton Society.[269]

Hamilton served as one of the first trustees of the Hamilton-Oneida Academy in Clinton, New York, which was renamed Hamilton College in 1812, after receiving a college charter.[270]

The main administration building of the United States Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, is named Hamilton Hall to commemorate Hamilton's creation of the United States Revenue Cutter Service, one of the predecessor services of the United States Coast Guard.[271]

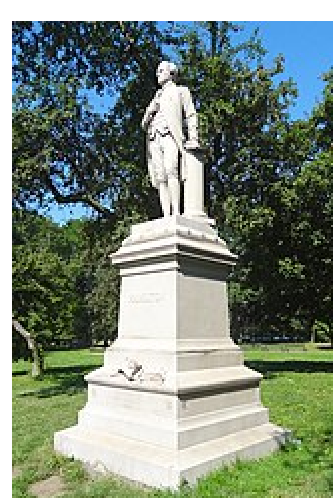
Secondary schools

- Alexander Hamilton High School (Los Angeles)
- Alexander Hamilton Jr./Sr. High School (Elmsford, New York)
- Alexander Hamilton High School (Brooklyn)
- Alexander Hamilton High School (Milwaukee)

Buildings, public works and public art

The U.S. Army's Fort Hamilton (1831) in Brooklyn at the entrance to New York Harbor is named after Hamilton. It is the fourth oldest installation in the nation, after: West Point (1778), Carlisle Barracks (1779), and Fort Leslie J McNair (1791).

In 1880, Hamilton's son John Church Hamilton commissioned Carl Conrads to sculpt a granite statue, now located in Central Park, New York City.[272][273]


The Hamilton statue in Central Park

The Hamilton Club in Brooklyn, NY commissioned William Ordway Partridge to cast a bronze statue of Hamilton that was completed in 1892 for exhibition at the World's Columbian Exposition and later installed in front of the club on the corner of Remsen and Clinton Streets in 1893. The club was absorbed by another and the building demolished, and so the statue was removed in 1936 to Hamilton Grange National Memorial, then located on Convent Avenue in Manhattan. Though the home it stood in front of on Convent Avenue was itself relocated in 2007, the statue remains at that location.

A bronze statue of Hamilton by Franklin Simmons, dated 1905–06, overlooks the Great Falls of the Passaic River at Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park in New Jersey.

In Washington, D.C., the south terrace of the Treasury Building features a statue of Hamilton by James Earle Fraser, which was dedicated on May 17, 1923.[274]

Image of the statue of Alexander Hamilton created by William Ordway Partridge, commissioned for the Hamilton Club of Brooklyn. The statue later stood in front of Hamilton Grange when the house was located at 287 Convent Ave.

PS *Alexander Hamilton*

Construction for Hudson River Day Line of the PS *Alexander Hamilton* was completed in 1924. When the *Alexander Hamilton* retired from service as a pleasure ship in 1971 it was one of the last operating sidewheel steamboats in the country. It was the last sidewheeler to traverse the Hudson River, and probably the East Coast. Its retirement signaled the end of an era.[275]

In Chicago, a thirteen-foot tall statue of Hamilton by sculptor John Angel was cast in 1939.[276] It was not installed at Lincoln Park until 1952, due to problems with a controversial 78-foot tall columned shelter designed for it and later demolished in 1993.[276][277] The statue has remained on public display, and was restored and regilded in 2016.[276]

A view of the Alexander Hamilton Bridge from the south

Connecting the New York City boroughs of Manhattan and The Bronx is the Alexander Hamilton Bridge, an eight-lane steel arch bridge that carries traffic over the Harlem River, near his former Grange estate. It connects the Trans-Manhattan Expressway in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan and the Cross-Bronx Expressway, as part of Interstate 95 and U.S. 1. The bridge opened to traffic on January 15, 1963, the same day that the Cross-Bronx Expressway was completed.

In 1990, the U.S. Custom House in New York City was renamed after Hamilton.[278]

A bronze sculpture of Hamilton titled *The American Cape*, by Kristen Visbal, was unveiled at Journal Square in downtown Hamilton, Ohio, in October 2004.[279]

At Hamilton's birthplace in Charlestown, Nevis, the Alexander Hamilton Museum was located in Hamilton House, a Georgian-style building rebuilt on the foundations of the house where Hamilton was once believed to have been born and to have lived during his childhood.[280] The Nevis Heritage Centre, located next door (to the south) of the museum building, is the current site of the museum's Alexander Hamilton exhibit. The wooden building, historically of the same age as the museum building, was known locally as the Trott House, as Trott was the surname of the family that owned the house in recent times. Evidence gradually accumulated that the wooden house was the actual historical home of Hamilton and his mother, and in 2011, the wooden house and land were acquired by the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society.

Geographic sites

Numerous American towns and cities, including Hamilton, Kansas; Hamilton, Missouri; Hamilton, Massachusetts; and Hamilton, Ohio; were named in honor of Alexander Hamilton. In eight states, counties have been named for Hamilton:[281]

- Hamilton County, Florida
- Hamilton County, Illinois
- Hamilton County, Indiana
- Hamilton County, Kansas
- Hamilton County, Nebraska
- Hamilton County, New York
- Hamilton County, Ohio
- Hamilton County, Tennessee

On slavery

Hamilton is not known to have ever owned slaves, although members of his family were slave owners. At the time of her death, Hamilton's mother owned two slaves named Christian and Ajax, and she had written a will leaving them to her sons; however, due to their illegitimacy, Hamilton and his brother were held ineligible to inherit her property, and never took ownership of the slaves.[282]:17 Later, as a youth in St. Croix, Hamilton worked for a company trading in commodities that included slaves.[282]:17 During his career, Hamilton did for family as their legal representative occasionally handle financial transactions involving slaves, and one of Hamilton's grandsons interpreted some of these journal entries as being purchases for himself.[283][284] His son John Church Hamilton maintained the converse in the 1840 biography of his father: “He never owned a slave; but on the contrary, having learned that a domestic whom he had hired was about to be sold by her master, he immediately purchased her freedom.”[285]

By the time of Hamilton's early participation in the American Revolution, his abolitionist sensibilities had become evident. Hamilton was active during the Revolution in trying to raise black troops for the army, with the promise of freedom. In the 1780s and 1790s, he generally opposed pro-slavery southern interests, which he

saw as hypocritical to the values of the American Revolution. In 1785, he joined his close associate John Jay in founding the New-York Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves, and Protecting Such of Them as Have Been, or May be Liberated, the main anti-slavery organization in New York. The society successfully promoted the abolition of the international slave trade in New York City and passed a state law to end slavery in New York through a decades-long process of emancipation, with a final end to slavery in the state on July 4, 1827.[282]

At a time when most white leaders doubted the capacity of blacks, Hamilton believed slavery was morally wrong and wrote that "their natural faculties are as good as ours."[286] Unlike contemporaries such as Jefferson, who considered the removal of freed slaves (to a western territory, the West Indies, or Africa) to be essential to any plan for emancipation, Hamilton pressed for emancipation with no such provisions.[282]:22 Hamilton and other Federalists supported Toussaint Louverture's revolution against France in Haiti, which had originated as a slave revolt.[282]:23 Hamilton's suggestions helped shape the Haitian constitution. In 1804 when Haiti became the Western Hemisphere's first independent state with a majority Black population, Hamilton urged closer economic and diplomatic ties.[282]:23

On economics

Hamilton has been portrayed as the "patron saint" of the American School of economic philosophy that, according to one historian, dominated economic policy after 1861.[287] His ideas and work influenced the 18th century German economist Friedrich List,[288] and Abraham Lincoln's chief economic advisor Henry C. Carey, among others.

Hamilton firmly supported government intervention in favor of business, after the manner of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, as early as the fall of 1781.[289][290][291] In contrast to the British policy of international mercantilism, which he believed skewed benefits to colonial and imperial powers, Hamilton was a pioneering advocate of protectionism.[292] He is credited with the idea that industrialization would only be possible with tariffs to protect the "infant industries" of an emerging nation.[143]

Political theorists credit Hamilton with the creation of the modern administrative state, citing his arguments in favor of a strong executive, linked to the support of the people, as the linchpin of an administrative republic.[293][294] The dominance of executive leadership in the formulation and carrying out of policy was, in his view, essential to resist the deterioration of republican government.[295] Some scholars point to similarities between Hamiltonian recommendations and the development of Meiji Japan after 1860 as evidence of the global influence of Hamilton's theory.[296]

In popular culture

Hamilton has appeared as a significant figure in popular works of historical fiction, including many that focused on other American political figures of his time. In comparison to other Founding Fathers, Hamilton attracted relatively little attention in American popular culture in the 20th century,[297] apart from his portrait on the $10 bill.

Lin-Manuel Miranda performs the title role in the 2015 musical *Hamilton*.

Theatre and film

- A stage play called *Hamilton*, which ran on Broadway in 1917, was co-written by George Arliss, who played the title role. Arliss reprised the role of Hamilton in a 1931 film based on the stage play.

- In 2015, Hamilton's profile in popular culture was significantly raised by the hit Broadway show *Hamilton: An American Musical*, written by Lin-Manuel Miranda, who débuted the title role. The musical, which Miranda based on a biography by Ron Chernow, was described by *The New Yorker* as "an achievement of historical and cultural reimagining. In Miranda's telling, the headlong rise of one self-made immigrant becomes the story of America."[298] The Off-Broadway production of *Hamilton* won the 2015 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Musical as well as seven other Drama Desk Awards. In 2016, *Hamilton* received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and set a record with 16 Tony Award nominations,[299] of which the show won 11, including Best Musical.[300] An Obama administration plan to replace Hamilton on the $10 bill was shelved due in part to the popularity of the musical.[301]
- On July 3, 2020, Disney+ released the movie *Hamilton*, an authorized film of the Broadway stage production performed by the original cast.

Literature

- Novelist Gertrude Atherton wrote a fictionalized biography, *The Conqueror, Being the True and Romantic Story of Alexander Hamilton*, published in 1902.[302]
- Gore Vidal's 1973 historical novel *Burr* included Hamilton as a major character.[303][304]
- L. Neil Smith cast Hamilton as a principal villain in the historical background of his 1980 libertarian alternative history novel *The Probability Broach* and its sequels in the *North American Confederacy* series.[305]

Television

- *The Adams Chronicles*, a 1976 PBS miniseries, featured Hamilton in a major recurring role.[306]
- *George Washington II: The Forging of a Nation*, a 1986 TV series, included Hamilton as a main character, portrayed by Richard Bekins.[307][308]
- In the 2000 *A&E* TV movie *The Crossing*, about Valley Forge, Hamilton is played by Canadian actor Steven McCarthy and is portrayed memorably at the start of the Battle of Trenton.[309]
- *John Adams*, a 2008 HBO miniseries in seven parts, featured Rufus Sewell as Hamilton in two episodes.[310]
- *Legends & Lies*, a documentary series produced by Bill O'Reilly, featured Alexander McPherson as Hamilton in eight episodes that aired on Fox News in 2016.
- *Turn: Washington's Spies*, an AMC period drama, included Sean Haggerty in a recurring role as Hamilton in its final two seasons (2016–2017).

Other

- An organized group of faithless electors in the 2016 United States presidential election called themselves "Hamilton electors", seeking to link their efforts to Hamilton's Federalist No. 68.[311]

See also

- Compromise of 1790
- History of central banking in the United States
- List of foreign-born United States Cabinet Secretaries
- Panic of 1792

Notes

1. Sources disagree on the spelling of Hamilton's mother's birth name, which varies widely in primary sources (*e.g.*, Faucett, Fawcett, Facet, Fatzieth).[4] Hamilton's grandfather signed his name "John Faucett" on a legal document dated May 31, 1720, which some historians consider authoritative as a primary source.[5] Hamilton himself spelled the name as Faucette in a letter dated August 26, 1800, which was corrected to Faucett in a footnote by the editor of Hamilton's papers.[6] Hamilton's son and biographer, John Church Hamilton, wrote Faucette.[7] Chernow and many early historians followed Hamilton by writing Faucette,[8] while another group of historians adopted the anglicized name Fawcett, reflecting an absence of consensus.[9]
2. The System of Revenue Cutters was also known as the *Revenue Service*, *Revenue-Marine Service*, and *System of Cutters* after being enacted by Congress. It officially became the Coast Guard in 1915.
3. The May 1800 election chose the New York legislature, which would in turn choose electors; Burr had won this by making it a referendum on the presidency, and by persuading better-qualified candidates to run, who declared their candidacy only after the Federalists had announced their ticket. Hamilton asked Jay and the lame-duck legislature to pass a law declaring a special federal election, in which each district would choose an elector. He also supplied a map, with as many Federalist districts as possible.
4. Hamilton had given his son Philip the same advice in his duel with George I. Eacker in 1801 that resulted in Philip's death. The maneuver of throwing shots on the field of honor was referred to as *delope* by the French. (Chernow, p. 653)
5. Adair and Harvey, "Christian Statesman?"; Quotes on the Christian Constitutional Society are from Hamilton's letter to James A. Bayard of April 1802, quoted by Adair and Harvey. McDonald, says p. 356, that Hamilton's faith "had not entirely departed" him before the crisis of 1801.

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16. Newton (2015), pp. 19–30 (https://books.google.com/books?id=9GvpCQAAQBAJ&pg=PA19).
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External links

- Alexander Hamilton on PBS' *American Experience* (https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/hamilton/)
- Alexander Hamilton: A Resource Guide (https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/hamilton/) from the Library of Congress
- Alexander Hamilton Papers (https://www.loc.gov/collections/alexander-hamilton-papers/about-this-collection/) from the Library of Congress (newly available August 2017)
- The Papers of Alexander Hamilton (https://founders.archives.gov/about/Hamilton), subset of Founders Online (https://founders.archives.gov/) from the National Archives
- New-York Historical Society's Alexander Hamilton Exhibit (http://www.alexanderhamiltonexhibition.org/)
- Works by Alexander Hamilton (https://www.gutenberg.org/author/Hamilton+Alexander+(1757–1804)) at Project Gutenberg
- Works by or about Alexander Hamilton (https://archive.org/search.php?query=%28%28subject%3A%22Hamilton%2C%20Alexander%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Alexander%20Hamilton%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Hamilton%2C%20Alexander%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Alexander%20Hamilton%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Hamilton%2C%20A%2E%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Alexander%20Hamilton%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Hamilton%2C%20Alexander%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Alexander%20Hamilton%22%29%20OR%20%28%221757-1804%22%20AND%20Hamilton%29%29%20AND%20%28-mediatype:software%29) at Internet Archive
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- Alexander Hamilton records (https://www.trinitywallstreet.org/about/alexander-hamilton-churchman) at Trinity Wall Street Archives

Political offices		
New office	**United States Secretary of the Treasury** 1789–1795	Succeeded by **Oliver Wolcott**
Military offices		
Preceded by **Thomas Cushing** **Acting**	**Inspector General of the United States Army** 1798–1800	Succeeded by **Thomas Cushing** **Acting**
Preceded by **George Washington**	**Senior Officer of the United States Army** 1799–1800	Succeeded by **James Wilkinson**
Non-profit organization positions		
Preceded by **George Washington**	**President General of the Society of the Cincinnati** 1800–1804	Succeeded by **Charles Pinckney**

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Benjamin Franklin

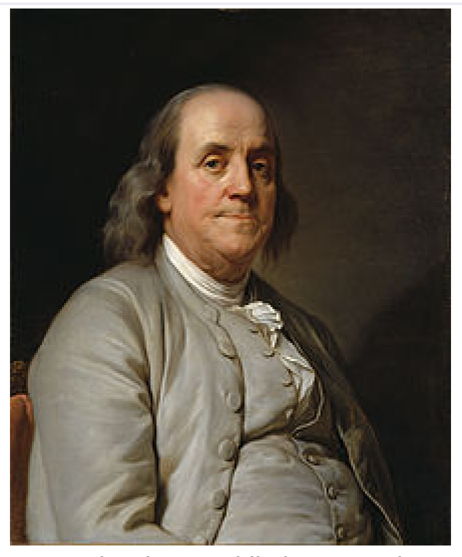
Benjamin Franklin FRS FRSA FRSE (January 17, 1706 [O.S. January 6, 1705][Note 1] – April 17, 1790) was an American polymath active as a writer, scientist, inventor, statesman, diplomat, printer, publisher and political philosopher.[1] Among the leading intellectuals of his time, Franklin was one of the Founding Fathers of the United States and the first United States Postmaster General. As a scientist, he was a major figure in the American Enlightenment and the history of physics for his discoveries and theories regarding electricity. As an inventor, he is known for the lightning rod, bifocals, and the Franklin stove, among other inventions.[2] He founded many civic organizations, including the Library Company, Philadelphia's first fire department,[3] and the University of Pennsylvania.[4]

Franklin earned the title of "The First American" for his early and indefatigable campaigning for colonial unity, initially as an author and spokesman in London for several colonies. As the first United States Ambassador to France, he exemplified the emerging American nation.[5] Franklin was foundational in defining the American ethos as a marriage of the practical values of thrift, hard work, education, community spirit, self-governing institutions, and opposition to authoritarianism both political and religious, with the scientific and tolerant values of the Enlightenment. In the words of historian Henry Steele Commager, "In Franklin could be merged the virtues of Puritanism without its defects, the illumination of the Enlightenment without its heat."[6] To Walter Isaacson, this makes Franklin "the most accomplished American of his age and the most influential in inventing the type of society America would become."[7]

Franklin became a successful newspaper editor and printer in Philadelphia, the leading city in the colonies, publishing the *Pennsylvania Gazette* at the age of 23.[8] He became wealthy publishing this and *Poor Richard's Almanack*, which he authored under the pseudonym "Richard Saunders".[9] After 1767, he was associated with the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, a newspaper that was known for its revolutionary sentiments and criticisms of the policies of the British Parliament and the Crown.[10]

He pioneered and was the first president of Academy and College of Philadelphia which opened in 1751 and later became the University of Pennsylvania. He organized and was the first secretary of the American Philosophical Society and was elected president in 1769. Franklin became a national hero in America as an agent for several colonies when he spearheaded an effort in London to have the Parliament of Great Britain repeal the unpopular Stamp

Benjamin Franklin
FRS, FRSA, FRSE



Benjamin Franklin by Joseph Duplessis, 1778

6th President of Pennsylvania	
In office	
October 18, 1785 – November 5, 1788	
Vice President	Charles Biddle Peter Muhlenberg David Redick
Preceded by	John Dickinson
Succeeded by	Thomas Mifflin
United States Minister to Sweden	
In office	
September 28, 1782 – April 3, 1783	
Appointed by	Congress of the Confederation
Preceded by	*Position established*
Succeeded by	Jonathan Russell
United States Minister to France	
In office	
March 23, 1779 – May 17, 1785	
Appointed by	Continental Congress
Preceded by	*Position established*

Act. An accomplished diplomat, he was widely admired among the French as American minister to Paris and was a major figure in the development of positive Franco–American relations. His efforts proved vital for the American Revolution in securing shipments of crucial munitions from France.

He was promoted to deputy postmaster-general for the British colonies on August 10, 1753,[11] having been Philadelphia postmaster for many years, and this enabled him to set up the first national communications network. During the revolution, he became the first United States postmaster general. He was active in community affairs and colonial and state politics, as well as national and international affairs. From 1785 to 1788, he served as governor of Pennsylvania. He initially owned and dealt in slaves but, by the late 1750s, he began arguing against slavery, became an abolitionist, and promoted education and the integration of blacks in American Society.

His life and legacy of scientific and political achievement, and his status as one of America's most influential Founding Fathers, have seen Franklin honored more than two centuries after his death on the fifty-cent piece, the $100 bill, warships, and the names of many towns, counties, educational institutions, and corporations, as well as numerous cultural references and with a portrait in the Oval Office.

Succeeded by	Thomas Jefferson
1st United States Postmaster General	
In office	
July 26, 1775 – November 7, 1776	
Preceded by	*Position established*
Succeeded by	Richard Bache
Postmaster General of British America	
In office	
August 10, 1753 – January 31, 1774	
Preceded by	*Position established*
Succeeded by	Vacant
Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly	
In office	
May 1764 – October 1764	
Preceded by	Isaac Norris
Succeeded by	Isaac Norris
Personal details	
Born	January 17, 1706 [O.S. January 6, 1705][Note 1] Boston, Massachusetts Bay, British America
Died	April 17, 1790 (aged 84) Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.
Political party	Independent
Spouse(s)	Deborah Read (m. 1730; died 1774)
Children	William · Francis · Sarah
Parents	Josiah Franklin Abiah Folger
Signature	

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Coat of arms of Benjamin Franklin

Ancestry

Benjamin Franklin's father, Josiah Franklin, was a tallow chandler, soaper, and candlemaker. Josiah Franklin was born at Ecton, Northamptonshire, England on December 23, 1657, the son of blacksmith and farmer Thomas Franklin and Jane White. Benjamin's father and all four of his grandparents were born in England.[12]

Josiah Franklin had a total of seventeen children with his two wives. He married his first wife, Anne Child, in about 1677 in Ecton and emigrated with her to Boston in 1683; they had three children before emigration, and four after. Following her death, Josiah was married to Abiah Folger on July 9, 1689, in the Old South Meeting House by Reverend Samuel Willard, and would eventually have ten children with her. Benjamin, their eighth child, was Josiah Franklin's fifteenth child overall, and his tenth and final son.[13]

Benjamin Franklin's mother, Abiah, was born in Nantucket, Massachusetts Bay Colony, on August 15, 1667, to Peter Folger, a miller and schoolteacher, and his wife, Mary Morrell Folger, a former indentured servant. Mary Folger came from a Puritan family that was among the first Pilgrims to flee to Massachusetts for religious freedom, sailing for Boston in 1635 after King Charles I of England had begun persecuting Puritans. Her father Peter was "the sort of rebel destined to transform colonial America."[14] As clerk of the court, he was jailed for disobeying the local magistrate in defense of middle-class shopkeepers and artisans in conflict with wealthy landowners. Benjamin Franklin followed in his grandfather's footsteps in his battles against the wealthy Penn family that owned the Pennsylvania Colony.

Early life in Boston

Benjamin Franklin was born on Milk Street, in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 17, 1706,[Note 1] and baptized at Old South Meeting House. As a child growing up along the Charles River, Franklin recalled that he was "generally the leader among the boys."[17]

Josiah wanted Ben to attend school with the clergy but only had enough money to send him to school for two years. He attended Boston Latin School but did not graduate; he continued his education through voracious reading. Although "his parents talked of the church as a career"[18] for Franklin, his schooling ended when he was ten. He worked for his father for a time, and at 12 he became an apprentice to his brother James, a printer, who taught Ben the printing trade. When Ben was 15, James founded *The New-England Courant*, which was the first truly independent newspaper in the colonies.

When denied the chance to write a letter to the paper for publication, Franklin adopted the pseudonym of "Silence Dogood", a middle-aged widow. Mrs. Dogood's letters were published and became a subject of conversation around town. Neither James nor the *Courant*'s readers were aware of the ruse, and James was unhappy with Ben when he discovered the popular correspondent was his younger brother. Franklin was an advocate of free speech from an early age. When his brother was jailed for three weeks in 1722 for publishing material unflattering to the governor, young Franklin took over the newspaper and had Mrs. Dogood (quoting *Cato's Letters*) proclaim: "Without freedom of thought there can be no such thing as wisdom and no such thing as public liberty without freedom of speech."[19] Franklin left his apprenticeship without his brother's permission, and in so doing became a fugitive.[20]

Philadelphia

At age 17, Franklin ran away to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, seeking a new start in a new city. When he first arrived, he worked in several printer shops around town, but he was not satisfied by the immediate prospects. After a few months, while working in a printing house, Franklin was convinced by Pennsylvania governor Sir William Keith to go to London, ostensibly to acquire the equipment necessary for establishing another newspaper in Philadelphia. Finding Keith's promises of backing a newspaper empty, Franklin worked as a typesetter in a printer's shop in what is now the Church of St Bartholomew-the-Great in the Smithfield area of London. Following this, he returned to Philadelphia in 1726 with the help of Thomas Denham, a merchant who employed Franklin as clerk, shopkeeper, and bookkeeper in his business.[20]

Junto and library

In 1727, Benjamin Franklin, then 21, formed the Junto, a group of "like minded aspiring artisans and tradesmen who hoped to improve themselves while they improved their community." The Junto was a discussion group for issues of the day; it subsequently gave rise to many organizations in Philadelphia.[21] The Junto was modeled after English coffeehouses that Franklin knew well, and which had become the center of the spread of Enlightenment ideas in Britain.[22][23]

Franklin's birthplace on Milk Street, Boston, Massachusetts

Reading was a great pastime of the Junto, but books were rare and expensive. The members created a library initially assembled from their own books after Franklin wrote:

> A proposition was made by me that since our books were often referr'd to in our disquisitions upon the inquiries, it might be convenient for us to have them altogether where we met, that upon occasion they might be consulted; and by thus clubbing our books to a common library, we should, while we lik'd to keep them together, have each of us the advantage of using the books of all the other members, which would be nearly as beneficial as if each owned the whole.[24]

Franklin's birthplace site directly across from the Old South Meeting House is commemorated by a bust atop the second-floor façade of this building.

This did not suffice, however. Franklin conceived the idea of a subscription library, which would pool the funds of the members to buy books for all to read. This was the birth of the Library Company of Philadelphia: its charter was composed by Franklin in 1731. In 1732, Franklin hired the first American librarian, Louis Timothee. The Library Company is now a great scholarly and research library.[25]

Newspaperman

Upon Denham's death, Franklin returned to his former trade. In 1728, Franklin had set up a printing house in partnership with Hugh Meredith; the following year he became the publisher of a newspaper called *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. The *Gazette* gave Franklin a forum for agitation about a variety of local reforms and initiatives through printed essays and observations. Over time, his commentary, and his adroit cultivation of a positive image as an industrious and intellectual young man, earned him a great deal of social respect. But even after Franklin had achieved fame as a scientist and statesman, he habitually signed his letters with the unpretentious 'B. Franklin, Printer.'[20]

In 1732, Ben Franklin published the first German-language newspaper in America – *Die Philadelphische Zeitung* – although it failed after only one year because four other newly founded German papers quickly dominated the newspaper market.[26] Franklin printed Moravian religious books in German. Franklin often visited Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, staying at the Moravian Sun Inn.[27] In a 1751 pamphlet on demographic growth and its implications for the colonies, he called the Pennsylvania Germans "Palatine Boors" who could never acquire the "Complexion" of the English settlers and referred to "Blacks and Tawneys" as weakening the social structure of the colonies. Although Franklin apparently reconsidered shortly thereafter, and the phrases were omitted from all later printings of the pamphlet, his views may have played a role in his political defeat in 1764.[28]

Benjamin Franklin (center) at work on a printing press. Reproduction of a Charles Mills painting by the Detroit Publishing Company.

According to Ralph Frasca, Franklin promoted the printing press as a device to instruct colonial Americans in moral virtue. Frasca argues he saw this as a service to God, because he understood moral virtue in terms of actions, thus, doing good provides a service to God. Despite his own moral lapses, Franklin saw himself as uniquely qualified to instruct Americans in morality. He tried to influence American moral life through the construction of a printing network based on a chain of partnerships from the Carolinas to New England. Franklin thereby invented the first newspaper chain. It was more than a business venture, for like many publishers since he believed that the press had a public-service duty.[29][30]

La scuola della economia e della morale (1825)

When Franklin established himself in Philadelphia, shortly before 1730, the town boasted two "wretched little" news sheets, Andrew Bradford's *The American Weekly Mercury*, and Samuel Keimer's *Universal Instructor in all Arts and Sciences, and Pennsylvania Gazette*.[31] This instruction in all arts and sciences consisted of weekly extracts from *Chambers's Universal Dictionary*. Franklin quickly did away with all this when he took over the *Instructor* and made it *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. The *Gazette* soon became Franklin's characteristic organ, which he freely used for satire, for the play of his wit, even for sheer excess of mischief or of fun. From the first, he had a way of adapting his models to his own uses. The series of essays called "The Busy-Body", which he wrote for Bradford's *American Mercury* in 1729, followed the general Addisonian form, already modified to suit homelier conditions. The thrifty Patience, in her busy little shop, complaining of the useless visitors who waste her valuable time, is related to the women who address Mr. Spectator. The Busy-Body himself is a true Censor Morum, as Isaac Bickerstaff had been in the *Tatler*. And a number of the fictitious characters, Ridentius, Eugenius, Cato, and Cretico, represent traditional 18th-century classicism. Even this Franklin could use for contemporary satire, since Cretico, the "sowre Philosopher", is evidently a portrait of Franklin's rival, Samuel Keimer.[32]

Coat of Arms of Benjamin Franklin

Franklin had mixed success in his plan to establish an inter-colonial network of newspapers that would produce a profit for him and disseminate virtue. Over the years he sponsored two dozen printers in Pennsylvania, South Carolina, New York, Connecticut and even the Caribbean. By 1753, eight of the 15 English language newspapers in the colonies were published by Franklin or his partners.[33] He began in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1731. After Franklin's second editor died, the widow Elizabeth Timothy took over and made it a success, 1738–1746. She was one of the colonial era's first woman printers.[34] For three decades Franklin maintained a close business relationship with her and her son Peter Timothy who took over the *South Carolina Gazette* in 1746.[35] The *Gazette* was impartial in political debates, while creating the opportunity for public debate, which encouraged others to challenge authority. Editor Peter Timothy avoided blandness and crude bias, and after 1765 increasingly took a patriotic stand in the growing crisis with Great Britain.[36] However, Franklin's *Connecticut Gazette* (1755–68) proved unsuccessful.[37] As the Revolution approached political strife slowly tore his network apart.[38]

Freemasonry

In 1730 or 1731, Franklin was initiated into the local Masonic lodge. He became a grand master in 1734, indicating his rapid rise to prominence in Pennsylvania.[39][40] The same year, he edited and published the first Masonic book in the Americas, a reprint of James Anderson's *Constitutions of the Free-Masons*. He was the secretary of St. John's Lodge in Philadelphia from 1735 to 1738.[40] Franklin remained a Freemason for the rest of his life.[41][42]

Common-law marriage to Deborah Read

At age 17 in 1723, Franklin proposed to 15-year-old Deborah Read while a boarder in the Read home. At that time, Read's mother was wary of allowing her young daughter to marry Franklin, who was on his way to London at Governor Sir William Keith's request, and also because of his financial instability. Her own husband had recently died, and she declined Franklin's request to marry her daughter.[20]

Deborah Read Franklin (c. 1759). Common-law wife of Benjamin Franklin

Sarah Franklin Bache (1743–1808). Daughter of Benjamin Franklin and Deborah Read

While Franklin was in London, his trip was extended, and there were problems with Sir William's promises of support. Perhaps because of the circumstances of this delay, Deborah married a man named John Rodgers. This proved to be a regrettable decision. Rodgers shortly avoided his debts and prosecution by fleeing to Barbados with her dowry, leaving her behind. Rodgers's fate was unknown, and because of bigamy laws, Deborah was not free to remarry.

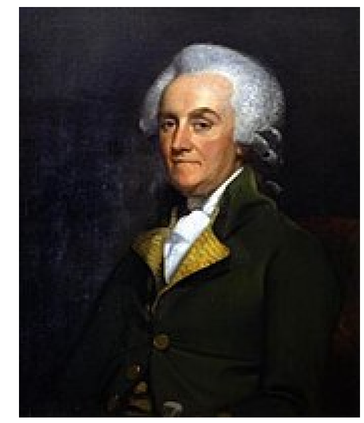
Franklin established a common-law marriage with Deborah Read on September 1, 1730. They took in Franklin's recently acknowledged young illegitimate son, William, and raised him in their household. They had two children together. Their son, Francis Folger Franklin, was born in October 1732 and died of smallpox in 1736. Their daughter, Sarah "Sally" Franklin, was born in 1743 and grew up to marry Richard Bache, have seven children, and look after her father in his old age.

Deborah's fear of the sea meant that she never accompanied Franklin on any of his extended trips to Europe, and another possible reason why they spent so much time apart is that he may have blamed her for possibly preventing their son Francis from being inoculated against the disease that subsequently killed him.[43] Deborah wrote to him in November 1769 saying she was ill due to "dissatisfied distress" from his prolonged absence, but he did not return until his business was done.[44] Deborah Read Franklin died of a stroke on December 14, 1774, while Franklin was on an extended mission to Great Britain; he returned in 1775.[45]

William Franklin

In 1730, 24-year-old Franklin publicly acknowledged the existence of his son William, who was deemed "illegitimate," as he was born out of wedlock, and raised him in his household. William was born February 22, 1730, and his mother's identity is still unknown.[46] He was educated in Philadelphia, and beginning at about age 30, studied law in London in the early 1760s. He himself fathered an illegitimate son, William Temple Franklin, born on the same date, February 22, 1760.[47] The boy's mother was never identified, and he was placed in foster care. In 1762, the elder William Franklin married Elizabeth Downes, daughter of a planter

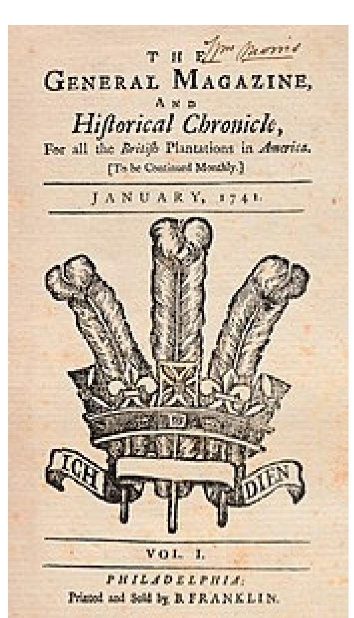
from Barbados, in London. After William passed the bar, his father helped him gain an appointment one year later in 1763 as the last royal governor of New Jersey.


William Franklin

A Loyalist to the king, William Franklin and his father Benjamin eventually broke relations over their differences about the American Revolutionary War, as Benjamin Franklin could never accept William's position. Deposed in 1776 by the revolutionary government of New Jersey, William, who was Royal Governor, was placed under house arrest at his home in Perth Amboy for six months. After the Declaration of Independence, William was formally taken into custody by order of the Provincial Congress of New Jersey, an entity which he refused to recognize, regarding it as an "illegal assembly."[48] He was incarcerated in Connecticut for two years, in Wallingford and Middletown, and after being caught surreptitiously engaging Americans into supporting the Loyalist cause, was held in solitary confinement at Litchfield for eight months. When finally released in a prisoner exchange in 1778, he moved to New York City, which was still occupied by the British at the time.[49]

While in New York City, he became leader of the Board of Associated Loyalists, a quasi-military organization chartered by King George III and headquartered in New York City. They initiated guerrilla forays into New Jersey, southern Connecticut, and New York counties north of the city.[50] When British troops evacuated from New York, William Franklin left with them and sailed to England. He settled in London, never to return to North America. In the preliminary peace talks in 1782 with Britain, "... Benjamin Franklin insisted that loyalists who had borne arms against the United States would be excluded from this plea (that they be given a general pardon). He was undoubtedly thinking of William Franklin."[51]

Success as an author


THE GENERAL MAGAZINE, AND Historical Chronicle, For all the British Plantations in America. [To be Continued Monthly.]

JANUARY, 1741.

ICH DIEN

VOL. I.

PHILADELPHIA: Printed and Sold by B. FRANKLIN.

Franklin's *The General Magazine and Historical Chronicle* (Jan. 1741)

In 1733, Franklin began to publish the noted *Poor Richard's Almanack* (with content both original and borrowed) under the pseudonym Richard Saunders, on which much of his popular reputation is based. Franklin frequently wrote under pseudonyms. Although it was no secret that Franklin was the author, his Richard Saunders character repeatedly denied it. "Poor Richard's Proverbs", adages from this almanac, such as "A penny saved is twopence dear" (often misquoted as "A penny saved is a penny earned") and "Fish and visitors stink in three days", remain common quotations in the modern world. Wisdom in folk society meant the ability to provide an apt adage for any occasion, and Franklin's readers became well prepared. He sold about ten thousand copies per year—it became an institution.[52] In 1741, Franklin began publishing *The General Magazine and Historical Chronicle for all the British Plantations in America*, the first such monthly magazine of this type published in America.

In 1758, the year he ceased writing for the Almanack, he printed *Father Abraham's Sermon*, also known as *The Way to Wealth*. Franklin's autobiography, begun in 1771 but published after his death, has become one of the classics of the genre.

Daylight saving time (DST) is often erroneously attributed to a 1784 satire that Franklin published anonymously.[53] Modern DST was first proposed by George Vernon Hudson in 1895.[54]

Inventions and scientific inquiries

Franklin was a prodigious inventor. Among his many creations were the lightning rod, glass harmonica (a glass instrument, not to be confused with the metal harmonica), Franklin stove, bifocal glasses and the flexible urinary catheter. Franklin never patented his inventions; in his autobiography he wrote, "... as we enjoy great advantages from the inventions of others, we should be glad of an opportunity to serve others by any invention of ours; and this we should do freely and generously."[55]

Electricity

Benjamin Franklin Drawing Electricity from the Sky c. 1816 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, by Benjamin West

Franklin started exploring the phenomenon of electricity in 1746 when he saw some of Archibald Spencer's lectures using static electricity for illustrations.[56] Franklin proposed that "vitreous" and "resinous" electricity were not different types of "electrical fluid" (as electricity was called then), but the same "fluid" under different pressures. (The same proposal was made independently that same year by William Watson.) Franklin was the first to label them as positive and negative respectively,[57][58] and he was the first to discover the principle of conservation of charge.[59] In 1748, he constructed a multiple plate capacitor, that he called an "electrical battery" (not to be confused with Volta's pile) by placing eleven panes of glass sandwiched between lead plates, suspended with silk cords and connected by wires.[60]

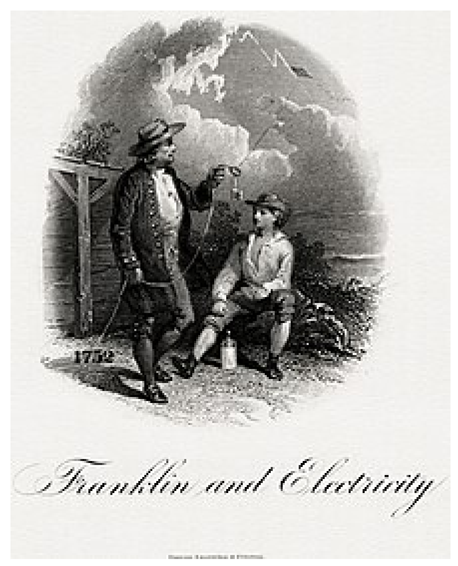
In pursuit of more pragmatic uses for electricity, remarking in spring 1749 that he felt "chagrin'd a little" that his experiments had heretofore resulted in "Nothing in this Way of Use to Mankind," Franklin planned a practical demonstration. He proposed a dinner party where a turkey was to be killed with electric shock and roasted on an electrical spit.[61] After having prepared several turkeys this way, Franklin noted that "the birds kill'd in this manner eat uncommonly tender."[62] Franklin recounted that in the process of one of these experiments, he was shocked by a pair of Leyden jars, resulting in numbness in his arms that persisted for one evening, noting "I am Ashamed to have been Guilty of so Notorious a Blunder."[63]

In recognition of his work with electricity, Franklin received the Royal Society's Copley Medal in 1753, and in 1756, he became one of the few 18th-century Americans elected as a Fellow of the Society. He received honorary degrees from Harvard and Yale universities (his first).[64] The CGS unit of electric charge has been named after him: one *franklin* (Fr) is equal to one statcoulomb.

Franklin advised Harvard University in its acquisition of new electrical laboratory apparatus after the complete loss of its original collection, in a fire that destroyed the original Harvard Hall in 1764. The collection he assembled would later become part of the Harvard Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments, now on public display in its Science Center.[65]

Franklin briefly investigated electrotherapy, including the use of the electric bath. This work led to the field becoming widely known.[66]

Kite experiment and lightning rod



Franklin and Electricity vignette engraved by the BEP (c. 1860)

Franklin published a proposal for an experiment to prove that lightning is electricity by flying a kite in a storm that appeared capable of becoming a lightning storm. On May 10, 1752, Thomas-François Dalibard of France conducted Franklin's experiment using a 40-foot-tall (12 m) iron rod instead of a kite, and he extracted electrical sparks from a cloud. On June 15, 1752, Franklin may possibly have conducted his well-known kite experiment in Philadelphia, successfully extracting sparks from a cloud. Franklin described the experiment in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on October 19, 1752,[67][68] without mentioning that he himself had performed it.[69] This account was read to the Royal Society on December 21 and printed as such in the *Philosophical Transactions*.[70] Joseph Priestley published an account with additional details in his 1767 *History and Present Status of Electricity*. Franklin was careful to stand on an insulator, keeping dry under a roof to avoid the danger of electric shock.[71] Others, such as Prof. Georg Wilhelm Richmann in Russia, were indeed electrocuted in performing lightning experiments during the months immediately following Franklin's experiment.

In his writings, Franklin indicates that he was aware of the dangers and offered alternative ways to demonstrate that lightning was electrical, as shown by his use of the concept of electrical ground. Franklin did not perform this experiment in the way that is often pictured in popular literature, flying the kite and waiting to be struck by lightning, as it would have been dangerous.[72] Instead he used the kite to collect some electric charge from a storm cloud, showing that lightning was electrical.[73] On October 19 in a letter to England with directions for repeating the experiment, Franklin wrote:

> When rain has wet the kite twine so that it can conduct the electric fire freely, you will find it streams out plentifully from the key at the approach of your knuckle, and with this key a phial, or Leyden jar, may be charged: and from electric fire thus obtained spirits may be kindled, and all other electric experiments [may be] performed which are usually done by the help of a rubber glass globe or tube; and therefore the sameness of the electrical matter with that of lightening [*sic?*] completely demonstrated.[73]

Franklin's electrical experiments led to his invention of the lightning rod. He said that conductors with a sharp[74] rather than a smooth point could discharge silently, and at a far greater distance. He surmised that this could help protect buildings from lightning by attaching "upright Rods of Iron, made sharp as a Needle and gilt to prevent Rusting, and from the Foot of those Rods a Wire down the outside of the Building into the Ground; ... Would not these pointed Rods probably draw the Electrical Fire silently out of a Cloud before it came nigh enough to strike, and thereby secure us from that most sudden and terrible Mischief!" Following a series of experiments on Franklin's own house, lightning rods were installed on the Academy of Philadelphia (later the University of Pennsylvania) and the Pennsylvania State House (later Independence Hall) in 1752.[75]

Population studies

Franklin had a major influence on the emerging science of demography, or population studies.[76]

In the 1730s and 1740s, Franklin began taking notes on population growth, finding that the American population had the fastest growth rate on Earth.[77] Emphasizing that population growth depended on food supplies, Franklin emphasized the abundance of food and available farmland in America. He calculated that America's population was doubling every twenty years and would surpass that of England in a century.[78] In

1751, he drafted *Observations concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, etc.* Four years later, it was anonymously printed in Boston, and it was quickly reproduced in Britain, where it influenced the economist Adam Smith and later the demographer Thomas Malthus, who credited Franklin for discovering a rule of population growth.[79] Franklin's predictions how British mercantilism was unsustainable alarmed British leaders who did not want to be surpassed by the colonies, so they became more willing to impose restrictions on the colonial economy.[80]

Kammen (1990) and Drake (2011) say Franklin's *Observations concerning the Increase of Mankind* (1755) stands alongside Ezra Stiles' "Discourse on Christian Union" (1760) as the leading works of eighteenth-century Anglo-American demography; Drake credits Franklin's "wide readership and prophetic insight."[81][82] Franklin was also a pioneer in the study of slave demography, as shown in his 1755 essay.[83]

Benjamin Franklin, in his capacity as a farmer, wrote at least one critique about the negative consequences of price controls, trade restrictions, and subsidy of the poor. This is succinctly preserved in his letter to the *London Chronicle* published November 29, 1766, titled 'On the Price of Corn, and Management of the poor'.[84]

Atlantic Ocean currents

As deputy postmaster, Franklin became interested in the North Atlantic Ocean circulation patterns. While in England in 1768, he heard a complaint from the Colonial Board of Customs: Why did it take British packet ships carrying mail several weeks longer to reach New York than it took an average merchant ship to reach Newport, Rhode Island? The merchantmen had a longer and more complex voyage because they left from London, while the packets left from Falmouth in Cornwall.

Franklin put the question to his cousin Timothy Folger, a Nantucket whaler captain, who told him that merchant ships routinely avoided a strong eastbound mid-ocean current. The mail packet captains sailed dead into it, thus fighting an adverse current of 3 miles per hour (5 km/h). Franklin worked with Folger and other experienced ship captains, learning enough to chart the current and name it the Gulf Stream, by which it is still known today.

Franklin published his Gulf Stream chart in 1770 in England, where it was completely ignored. Subsequent versions were printed in France in 1778 and the U.S. in 1786. The British edition of the chart, which was the original, was so thoroughly ignored that everyone assumed it was lost forever until Phil Richardson, a Woods Hole oceanographer and Gulf Stream expert, discovered it in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in 1980.[85][86] This find received front-page coverage in *The New York Times*.[87]

It took many years for British sea captains to adopt Franklin's advice on navigating the current; once they did, they were able to trim two weeks from their sailing time.[88][89] In 1853, the oceanographer and cartographer Matthew Fontaine Maury noted that while Franklin charted and codified the Gulf Stream, he did not discover it:

> Though it was Dr. Franklin and Captain Tim Folger, who first turned the Gulf Stream to nautical account, the discovery that there was a Gulf Stream cannot be said to belong to either of them, for its existence was known to Peter Martyr d'Anghiera, and to Sir Humphrey Gilbert, in the 16th century.[90]

Wave theory of light

Franklin was, along with his contemporary Leonhard Euler, the only major scientist who supported Christiaan Huygens's wave theory of light, which was basically ignored by the rest of the scientific community. In the 18th century, Newton's corpuscular theory was held to be true; only after Young's well-known slit experiment in 1803 were most scientists persuaded to believe Huygens's theory.[91]

Meteorology

On October 21, 1743, according to the popular myth, a storm moving from the southwest denied Franklin the opportunity of witnessing a lunar eclipse. Franklin was said to have noted that the prevailing winds were actually from the northeast, contrary to what he had expected. In correspondence with his brother, Franklin learned that the same storm had not reached Boston until after the eclipse, despite the fact that Boston is to the northeast of Philadelphia. He deduced that storms do not always travel in the direction of the prevailing wind, a concept that greatly influenced meteorology.[92]

After the Icelandic volcanic eruption of Laki in 1783, and the subsequent harsh European winter of 1784, Franklin made observations connecting the causal nature of these two separate events. He wrote about them in a lecture series.[93]

Traction kiting

Though Benjamin Franklin has been most noted kite-wise for his lightning experiments, he has also been noted by many for using kites to pull humans and ships across waterways.[94] George Pocock in the book *A TREATISE on The Aeropleustic Art, or Navigation in the Air, by means of Kites, or Buoyant Sails*[95] noted being inspired by Benjamin Franklin's traction of his body by kite power across a waterway. In his later years, he suggested using the technique for pulling ships.

Concept of cooling

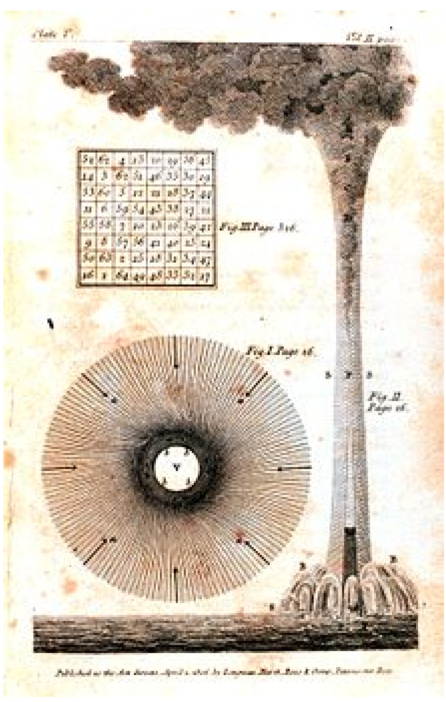
Franklin noted a principle of refrigeration by observing that on a very hot day, he stayed cooler in a wet shirt in a breeze than he did in a dry one. To understand this phenomenon more clearly Franklin conducted experiments. In 1758 on a warm day in Cambridge, England, Franklin and fellow scientist John Hadley experimented by continually wetting the ball of a mercury thermometer with ether and using bellows to evaporate the ether.[96] With each subsequent evaporation, the thermometer read a lower temperature, eventually reaching 7 °F (−14 °C). Another thermometer showed that the room temperature was constant at 65 °F (18 °C). In his letter *Cooling by Evaporation*, Franklin noted that, "One may see the possibility of freezing a man to death on a warm summer's day."[97]

Temperature's effect on electrical conductivity

According to Michael Faraday, Franklin's experiments on the non-conduction of ice are worth mentioning, although the law of the general effect of liquefaction on electrolytes is not attributed to Franklin.[98] However, as reported in 1836 by Prof. A. D. Bache of the University of Pennsylvania, the law of the effect of heat on the conduction of bodies otherwise non-conductors, for example, glass, could be attributed to Franklin. Franklin writes, "... A certain quantity of heat will make some bodies good conductors, that will not otherwise conduct ..." and again, "... And water, though naturally a good conductor, will not conduct well when frozen into ice."[99]

Oceanography findings

An aging Franklin accumulated all his oceanographic findings in *Maritime Observations*, published by the Philosophical Society's *transactions* in 1786.[100] It contained ideas for sea anchors, catamaran hulls, watertight compartments, shipboard lightning rods and a soup bowl designed to stay stable in stormy weather.


An illustration from Franklin's paper on "Water-spouts and Whirlwinds"

Decision-making

In a 1772 letter to Joseph Priestley, Franklin lays out the earliest known description of the Pro & Con list,[101] a common decision-making technique, now sometimes called a decisional balance sheet:

> ... my Way is, to divide half a Sheet of Paper by a Line into two Columns, writing over the one *Pro*, and over the other *Con*. Then during three or four Days Consideration I put down under the different Heads short Hints of the different Motives that at different Times occur to me for or against the Measure. When I have thus got them all together in one View, I endeavour to estimate their respective Weights; and where I find two, one on each side, that seem equal, I strike them both out: If I find a Reason *pro* equal to some two Reasons *con*, I strike out the three. If I judge some two Reasons *con* equal to some three Reasons *pro*, I strike out the five; and thus proceeding I find at length where the Ballance lies; and if after a Day or two of farther Consideration nothing new that is of Importance occurs on either side, I come to a Determination accordingly.[101]

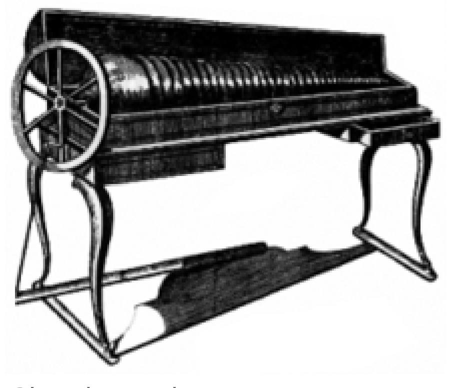
Oil on water

While traveling on a ship, Franklin had observed that the wake of a ship was diminished when the cooks scuttled their greasy water. He studied the effects on a large pond in Clapham Common, London. "I fetched out a cruet of oil and dropt a little of it on the water ... though not more than a teaspoon full, produced an instant calm over a space of several yards square." He later used the trick to "calm the waters" by carrying "a little oil in the hollow joint of my cane".[102]

Musical endeavors

Franklin is known to have played the violin, the harp, and the guitar. He also composed music, notably a string quartet in early classical style.[103] While he was in London, he developed a much-improved version of the glass harmonica, in which the glasses rotate on a shaft, with the player's fingers held steady, instead of the other way around. He worked with the London glassblower Charles James to create it, and instruments based on his mechanical version soon found their way to other parts of Europe.[104] Joseph Haydn, a fan of Franklin's enlightened ideas, had a glass harmonica in his instrument collection.[105] Mozart composed for Franklin's glass harmonica,[106] as did Beethoven.[107][108] Gaetano Donizetti used the instrument in the accompaniment to Amelia's aria "Par che mi dica ancora" in the tragic opera *Il castello di Kenilworth*

(1821),[109] as did Camille Saint-Saëns in his 1886 *The Carnival of the Animals*.[110] Richard Strauss calls for the glass harmonica in his 1917 *Die Frau ohne Schatten*,[106] and numerous other composers used Franklin's instrument as well.



Glass harmonica

Chess

Franklin was an avid chess player. He was playing chess by around 1733, making him the first chess player known by name in the American colonies.[111] His essay on "The Morals of Chess" in *Columbian Magazine* in December 1786 is the second known writing on chess in America.[111] This essay in praise of chess and prescribing a code of behavior for the game has been widely reprinted and translated.[112][113][114][115] He and a friend also used chess as a means of learning the Italian language, which both were studying; the winner of each game between them had the right to assign a task, such as parts of the Italian grammar to be learned by heart, to be performed by the loser before their next meeting.[116]

Franklin was able to play chess more frequently against stronger opposition during his many years as a civil servant and diplomat in England, where the game was far better established than in America. He was able to improve his playing standard by facing more experienced players during this period. He regularly attended Old Slaughter's Coffee House in London for chess and socializing, making many important personal contacts. While in Paris, both as a visitor and later as ambassador, he visited the famous Café de la Régence, which France's strongest players made their regular meeting place. No records of his games have survived, so it is not possible to ascertain his playing strength in modern terms.[117]

Franklin was inducted into the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame in 1999.[111] The Franklin Mercantile Chess Club in Philadelphia, the second oldest chess club in the U.S., is named in his honor.

Public life

Early steps in Pennsylvania

In 1736, Franklin created the Union Fire Company, one of the first volunteer firefighting companies in America. In the same year, he printed a new currency for New Jersey based on innovative anti-counterfeiting techniques he had devised. Throughout his career, Franklin was an advocate for paper money, publishing *A Modest Enquiry into the Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency* in 1729, and his printer printed money. He was influential in the more restrained and thus successful monetary experiments in the Middle Colonies, which stopped deflation without causing excessive inflation. In 1766 he made a case for paper money to the British House of Commons.[118]

Join, or Die: This political cartoon by Franklin urged the colonies to join together during the French and Indian War (Seven Years' War).

As he matured, Franklin began to concern himself more with public affairs. In 1743, he first devised a scheme for the Academy, Charity School, and College of Philadelphia. However, the person he had in mind to run the academy, Rev. Richard Peters, refused and Franklin put his ideas away until 1749 when he printed his own pamphlet, *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania*.[119]:30 He was appointed president of the Academy on November 13, 1749; the Academy and the charity school opened on August 13, 1751.

In 1743, Franklin founded the American Philosophical Society to help scientific men discuss their discoveries and theories. He began the electrical research that, along with other scientific inquiries, would occupy him for the rest of his life, in between bouts of politics and moneymaking.[20]

During King George's War (1744–1748), Franklin raised a militia called the Association for General Defense, because the legislators of the city decided to take no action to defend Philadelphia "either by erecting fortifications or building Ships of War". He raised money to create earthwork defenses and buy artillery. The largest of these was the "Association Battery" or "Grand Battery" of 50 guns.[120][121]

In 1747, Franklin (already a very wealthy man) retired from printing and went into other businesses.[122] He created a partnership with his foreman, David Hall, which provided Franklin with half of the shop's profits for 18 years. This lucrative business arrangement provided leisure time for study, and in a few years he had made discoveries that gave him a reputation with educated persons throughout Europe and especially in France.

Pennsylvania Hospital by William Strickland, 1755

Franklin became involved in Philadelphia politics and rapidly progressed. In October 1748, he was selected as a councilman, in June 1749 he became a Justice of the Peace for Philadelphia, and in 1751 he was elected to the Pennsylvania Assembly. On August 10, 1753, Franklin was appointed deputy postmaster-general of British North America, (see below). His most notable service in domestic politics was his reform of the postal system, with mail sent out every week.[20]

In 1751, Franklin and Thomas Bond obtained a charter from the Pennsylvania legislature to establish a hospital. Pennsylvania Hospital was the first hospital in what was to become the United States of America.

In 1752, Franklin organized the Philadelphia Contributionship, the first homeowner's insurance company in what would become the United States.[123][124]

Between 1750 and 1753, the "educational triumvirate"[125] of Benjamin Franklin, the American Samuel Johnson of Stratford, Connecticut, and the immigrant Scottish schoolteacher William Smith built on Franklin's initial scheme and created what Bishop James Madison, president of the College of William & Mary, called a "new-model"[126] plan or style of American college. Franklin solicited, printed in 1752, and promoted an American textbook of moral philosophy by Samuel Johnson, titled *Elementa Philosophica*,[127] to be taught in the new colleges to replace courses in denominational divinity.

Seal of the College of Philadelphia

In June 1753, Johnson, Franklin, and Smith met in Stratford.[128] They decided the new-model college would focus on the professions, with classes taught in English instead of Latin, have subject matter experts as professors instead of one tutor leading a class for four years, and there would be no religious test for admission.[129] Johnson went on to found King's College (now Columbia University) in New York City in 1754, while Franklin hired Smith as Provost of the College of Philadelphia, which opened in 1755. At its first commencement, on May 17, 1757, seven men graduated; six with a Bachelor of Arts and one as Master of Arts. It was later merged with the University of the State of Pennsylvania to become the University of Pennsylvania. The college was to become influential in guiding the founding documents of the United States: in the Continental Congress, for example, over one-third of the college-affiliated men who contributed the *Declaration of Independence* between September 4, 1774, and July 4, 1776, was affiliated with the college.[130]

In 1753, both Harvard[131] and Yale[132] awarded him honorary master of arts degrees.[133]

Sketch of the original Tun Tavern

In 1754, he headed the Pennsylvania delegation to the Albany Congress. This meeting of several colonies had been requested by the Board of Trade in England to improve relations with the Indians and defense against the French. Franklin proposed a broad Plan of Union for the colonies. While the plan was not adopted, elements of it found their way into the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution.

In 1756, Franklin received an honorary Master of Arts degree from the College of William & Mary.[134] Later in 1756, Franklin organized the Pennsylvania Militia (see "Associated Regiment of Philadelphia" under heading of Pennsylvania's 103rd Artillery and 111th Infantry Regiment at Continental Army). He used Tun Tavern as a gathering place to recruit a regiment of soldiers to go into battle against the Native American uprisings that beset the American colonies. Reportedly Franklin was elected "Colonel" of the Associated Regiment but declined the honor.

Decades in London

From the mid-1750s to the mid-1770s, Franklin spent much of his time in London. Officially he was there on a political mission, but he used his time to further his scientific explorations as well, meeting many notable people.

Political work in London

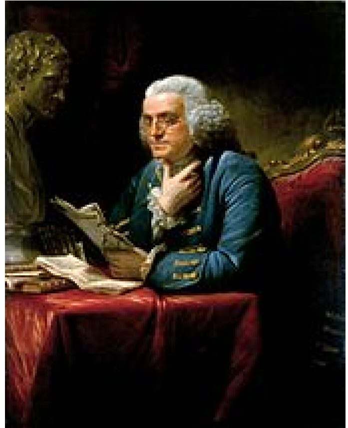
In 1757, he was sent to England by the Pennsylvania Assembly as a colonial agent to protest against the political influence of the Penn family, the proprietors of the colony. He remained there for five years, striving to end the proprietors' prerogative to overturn legislation from the elected Assembly, and their exemption from paying taxes on their land. His lack of influential allies in Whitehall led to the failure of this mission.

Pennsylvania colonial currency printed by Franklin in 1764

At this time, many members of the Pennsylvania Assembly were feuding with William Penn's heirs, who controlled the colony as proprietors. After his return to the colony, Franklin led the "anti-proprietary party" in the struggle against the Penn family, and was elected Speaker of the Pennsylvania House in May 1764. His call for a change from proprietary to royal government was a rare political miscalculation, however: Pennsylvanians worried that such a move would endanger their political and religious freedoms. Because of these fears, and because of political attacks on his character, Franklin lost his seat in the October 1764 Assembly elections. The anti-proprietary party dispatched Franklin to England again to continue the struggle against the Penn family proprietorship. During this trip, events drastically changed the nature of his mission.[135]

In London, Franklin opposed the 1765 Stamp Act. Unable to prevent its passage, he made another political miscalculation and recommended a friend to the post of stamp distributor for Pennsylvania. Pennsylvanians were outraged, believing that he had supported the measure all along, and threatened to destroy his home in Philadelphia. Franklin soon learned of the extent of colonial resistance to the Stamp Act, and he testified during the House of Commons proceedings that led to its repeal.[136]

With this, Franklin suddenly emerged as the leading spokesman for American interests in England. He wrote popular essays on behalf of the colonies. Georgia, New Jersey, and Massachusetts also appointed him as their agent to the Crown.[135]



Franklin in London, 1767, wearing a blue suit with elaborate gold braid and buttons, a far cry from the simple dress he affected at the French court in later years. Painting by David Martin, displayed in the White House.

Franklin lodged in a house in Craven Street, just off The Strand in central London. During his stays there, he developed a close friendship with his landlady, Margaret Stevenson, and her circle of friends and relations, in particular, her daughter Mary, who was more often known as Polly. Their house, which he used on various lengthy missions from 1757 to 1775, is the only one of his residences to survive. It opened to the public as the Benjamin Franklin House museum in 2006.

Franklin conversed and corresponded with many important Britons during this period. Among his inner circle were the printer William Strahan and the jurist Richard Jackson. He also corresponded with leading figures in the Scottish Enlightenment, including David Hume.

Whilst in London, Franklin became involved in radical politics. He belonged to a gentleman's club (which he called "the honest Whigs"), which held stated meetings, and included members such as Richard Price, the minister of Newington Green Unitarian Church who ignited the Revolution controversy, and Andrew Kippis.[137]

In 1763, Franklin's illegitimate son William Franklin, by then an attorney and assistant to Franklin's colonial advocacy in London, was appointed Colonial Governor of New Jersey.[20]

Scientific work in London

In 1756, Franklin had become a member of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce (now the Royal Society of Arts or RSA), which had been founded in 1754 and whose early meetings took place in Covent Garden coffee shops. After his return to the United States in 1775, Franklin became the Society's Corresponding Member, continuing a close connection. The RSA instituted a Benjamin Franklin Medal in 1956 to commemorate the 250th anniversary of his birth and the 200th anniversary of his membership of the RSA.

The study of natural philosophy (what we would call science) drew him into overlapping circles of acquaintance. Franklin was, for example, a corresponding member of the Lunar Society of Birmingham, which included such other scientific and industrial luminaries as Matthew Boulton, James Watt, Josiah Wedgwood and Erasmus Darwin; on occasion he visited them.

In 1759, the University of St Andrews awarded Franklin an honorary doctorate in recognition of his accomplishments.[138] He was also awarded an honorary doctorate by Oxford University in 1762. Because of these honors, Franklin was often addressed as "Dr. Franklin."[1]

While living in London in 1768, he developed a phonetic alphabet in *A Scheme for a new Alphabet and a Reformed Mode of Spelling*. This reformed alphabet discarded six letters Franklin regarded as redundant (c, j, q, w, x, and y), and substituted six new letters for sounds he felt lacked letters of their own. This alphabet never caught on, and he eventually lost interest.[139]

Travels around Britain and Ireland

Franklin used London as a base to travel. In 1771, he made short journeys through different parts of England, staying with Joseph Priestley at Leeds, Thomas Percival at Manchester and Erasmus Darwin at Lichfield.[140]

In Scotland, he spent five days with Lord Kames near Stirling and stayed for three weeks with David Hume in Edinburgh. In 1759, he visited Edinburgh with his son, and later reported that he considered his six weeks in Scotland "six weeks of the densest happiness I have met with in any part of my life".[141] In February 1759, the University of St Andrews awarded him an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. From then he was known as "Doctor Franklin".[142] In October of the same year he was granted Freedom of the Borough of St Andrews.[143]

He had never been to Ireland before, and met and stayed with Lord Hillsborough, who he believed was especially attentive. Franklin noted of him that "all the plausible behaviour I have described is meant only, by patting and stroking the horse, to make him more patient, while the reins are drawn tighter, and the spurs set deeper into his sides."[144] In Dublin, Franklin was invited to sit with the members of the Irish Parliament rather than in the gallery. He was the first American to receive this honor.[140] While touring Ireland, he was deeply moved by the level of poverty he witnessed. The economy of the Kingdom of Ireland was affected by the same trade regulations and laws that governed the Thirteen colonies. Franklin feared that the American colonies could eventually come to the same level of poverty if the regulations and laws continued to apply to them.[145]

Visits to Europe

Franklin spent two months in German lands in 1766, but his connections to the country stretched across a lifetime. He declared a debt of gratitude to German scientist Otto von Guericke for his early studies of electricity. Franklin also co-authored the first treaty of friendship between Prussia and America in 1785.

In September 1767, Franklin visited Paris with his usual traveling partner, Sir John Pringle, 1st Baronet. News of his electrical discoveries was widespread in France. His reputation meant that he was introduced to many influential scientists and politicians, and also to King Louis XV.[146]

Defending the American cause

One line of argument in Parliament was that Americans should pay a share of the costs of the French and Indian War, and that therefore taxes should be levied on them. Franklin became the American spokesman in highly publicized testimony in Parliament in 1766. He stated that Americans already contributed heavily to the defense of the Empire. He said local governments had raised, outfitted and paid 25,000 soldiers to fight France—as many as Britain itself sent—and spent many millions from American treasuries doing so in the French and Indian War alone.[147][148]

In 1773, Franklin published two of his most celebrated pro-American satirical essays: "Rules by Which a Great Empire May Be Reduced to a Small One", and "An Edict by the King of Prussia".[149]

Hutchinson letters leak

In 1772, Franklin obtained private letters of Thomas Hutchinson and Andrew Oliver, governor and lieutenant governor of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, proving that they had encouraged the Crown to crack down on Bostonians. Franklin sent them to America, where they escalated the tensions. The letters were finally leaked to the public in the *Boston Gazette* in mid-June 1773,[150] causing a political firestorm in Massachusetts and raising significant questions in England.[151] The British began to regard him as the fomenter of serious

trouble. Hopes for a peaceful solution ended as he was systematically ridiculed and humiliated by Solicitor-General Alexander Wedderburn, before the Privy Council on January 29, 1774. He returned to Philadelphia in March 1775, and abandoned his accommodationist stance.[152]

Agent for British and Hellfire club membership

Franklin is known to have occasionally attended the Hellfire Club's meetings during 1758 as a non-member during his time in England. However, some authors and historians would argue Benjamin Franklin was in fact a British spy. As there are no records left (having been burned in 1774[153]), many of these members are just assumed or linked by letters sent to each other.[154] One early proponent that Franklin was a member of the Hellfire Club and a double agent was the historian Donald McCormick,[155] who has a history of making controversial claims.[156]

Coming of revolution

In 1763, soon after Franklin returned to Pennsylvania from England for the first time, the western frontier was engulfed in a bitter war known as Pontiac's Rebellion. The Paxton Boys, a group of settlers convinced that the Pennsylvania government was not doing enough to protect them from American Indian raids, murdered a group of peaceful Susquehannock Indians and marched on Philadelphia. Franklin helped to organize a local militia to defend the capital against the mob. He met with the Paxton leaders and persuaded them to disperse. Franklin wrote a scathing attack against the racial prejudice of the Paxton Boys. "If an *Indian* injures me", he asked, "does it follow that I may revenge that Injury on all *Indians*?"[157]

He provided an early response to British surveillance through his own network of counter-surveillance and manipulation. "He waged a public relations campaign, secured secret aid, played a role in privateering expeditions, and churned out effective and inflammatory propaganda."[158]

Declaration of Independence

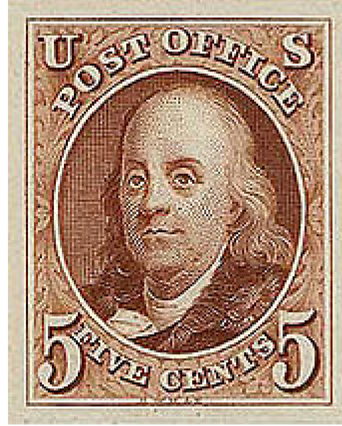
By the time Franklin arrived in Philadelphia on May 5, 1775, after his second mission to Great Britain, the American Revolution had begun—with skirmishes breaking out between colonials and British at Lexington and Concord. The New England militia had forced the main British army to remain inside Boston. The Pennsylvania Assembly unanimously chose Franklin as their delegate to the Second Continental Congress. In June 1776, Franklin was appointed a member of the Committee of Five that drafted the Declaration of Independence. Although he was temporarily disabled by gout and unable to attend most meetings of the committee, Franklin made several "small but important" changes to the draft sent to him by Thomas Jefferson.[160]

John Trumbull depicts the Committee of Five presenting their work to the Congress.[159]

At the signing, he is quoted as having replied to a comment by John Hancock that they must all hang together: "Yes, we must, indeed, all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately."[161]

Postmaster

Well known as a printer and publisher, Franklin was appointed postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737, holding the office until 1753, when he and publisher William Hunter were named deputy postmasters–general of British North America, the first to hold the office. (Joint appointments were standard at the time, for political reasons.) Franklin was responsible for the British colonies from Pennsylvania north and east, as far as the island of Newfoundland. A post office for local and outgoing mail had been established in Halifax, Nova Scotia, by local stationer Benjamin Leigh, on April 23, 1754, but service was irregular. Franklin opened the first post office to offer regular, monthly mail in what would later become Canada, at Halifax, on December 9, 1755. Meantime, Hunter became postal administrator in Williamsburg, Virginia, and oversaw areas south of Annapolis, Maryland. Franklin reorganized the service's accounting system, then improved speed of delivery between Philadelphia, New York and Boston. By 1761, efficiencies led to the first profits for the colonial post office.[162]



First issue of Benjamin Franklin on U.S. postage stamp, issue of 1847

When the lands of New France were ceded to the British under the Treaty of Paris in 1763, the new British province of Quebec was created among them, and Franklin saw mail service expanded between Montreal, Trois-Rivières, Quebec City, and New York. For the greater part of his appointment, Franklin lived in England (from 1757 to 1762, and again from 1764 to 1774)—about three-quarters of his term.[163] Eventually, his sympathies for the rebel cause in the American Revolution led to his dismissal on January 31, 1774.

On July 26, 1775, the Second Continental Congress established the United States Post Office and named Benjamin Franklin as the first United States Postmaster General. Franklin had been a postmaster for decades and was a natural choice for the position.[164] He had just returned from England and was appointed chairman of a Committee of Investigation to establish a postal system. The report of the committee, providing for the appointment of a postmaster general for the 13 American colonies, was considered by the Continental Congress on July 25 and 26. On July 26, 1775, Franklin was appointed Postmaster General, the first appointed under the Continental Congress. It established a postal system that became the United States Post Office, a system that continues to operate today.[165]

Ambassador to France: 1776–1785

Franklin, in his fur hat, charmed the French with what they perceived as rustic New World genius.[Note 2]

In December 1776, Franklin was dispatched to France as commissioner for the United States.[166] He took with him as secretary his 16-year-old grandson, William Temple Franklin. They lived in a home in the Parisian suburb of Passy, donated by Jacques-Donatien Le Ray de Chaumont, who supported the United States. Franklin remained in France until 1785. He conducted the affairs of his country toward the French nation with great success, which included securing a critical military alliance in 1778 and negotiating the Treaty of Paris (1783).

Among his associates in France was Honoré Gabriel Riqueti, comte de Mirabeau—a French Revolutionary writer, orator and statesman who in early 1791 would be elected president of the National Assembly.[167] In July 1784, Franklin met with Mirabeau and contributed anonymous materials that the Frenchman used in his first signed work: *Considerations sur l'ordre de Cincinnatus*.[168] The publication was critical of the Society of the Cincinnati, established in the United States. Franklin and Mirabeau thought of it as a "noble order", inconsistent with the egalitarian ideals of the new republic.[169]

During his stay in France, Benjamin Franklin was active as a Freemason, serving as Venerable Master of the Lodge Les Neuf Sœurs from 1779 until 1781. He was the 106th member of the Lodge. In 1784, when Franz Mesmer began to publicize his theory of "animal magnetism" which was considered offensive by many, Louis XVI appointed a commission to investigate it. These included the chemist Antoine Lavoisier, the physician Joseph-Ignace Guillotin, the astronomer Jean Sylvain Bailly, and Benjamin Franklin.[170] In doing so, the committee concluded, through blind trials that Mesmerism only seemed to work when the subjects expected it, which not only discredited Mesmerism, but was the first major demonstration of the placebo effect, which was described at that time as "imagination."[171] In 1781, he was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.[172]

Franklin's advocacy for religious tolerance in France contributed to arguments made by French philosophers and politicians that resulted in Louis XVI's signing of the Edict of Versailles in November 1787. This edict effectively nullified the Edict of Fontainebleau, which had denied non-Catholics civil status and the right to openly practice their faith.[173]

While in France Franklin designed and commissioned Augustin Dupré to engrave the medallion *"Libertas Americana"* minted in Paris in 1783.

Franklin also served as American minister to Sweden, although he never visited that country.[174] He negotiated a treaty that was signed in April 1783. On August 27, 1783, in Paris, Franklin witnessed the world's first hydrogen balloon flight.[175] *Le Globe*, created by professor Jacques Charles and Les Frères Robert, was watched by a vast crowd as it rose from the Champ de Mars (now the site of the Eiffel Tower).[176] Franklin became so enthusiastic that he subscribed financially to the next project to build a manned hydrogen balloon.[177] On December 1, 1783, Franklin was seated in the special enclosure for honored guests when *La Charlière* took off from the Jardin des Tuileries, piloted by Jacques Charles and Nicolas-Louis Robert.[175][178]

Constitutional Convention

When he returned home in 1785, Franklin occupied a position only second to that of George Washington as the champion of American independence. Franklin returned from France with an unexplained shortage of 100,000 pounds in Congressional funds. In response to a question from a member of Congress about this, Franklin, quoting the Bible, quipped: "Muzzle not the ox that treadeth out his master's grain." The missing funds were never again mentioned in Congress.[180]

Franklin's return to Philadelphia, 1785, by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris

Le Ray honored him with a commissioned portrait painted by Joseph Duplessis, which now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. After his return, Franklin became an abolitionist and freed his two slaves. He eventually became president of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society.[181]

In 1787, Franklin served as a delegate to the Philadelphia Convention. He held an honorary position and seldom engaged in debate. He is the only Founding Father who is a signatory of all four of the major documents of the founding of the United States: the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Alliance with France, the Treaty of Paris and the United States Constitution.

In 1787, a group of prominent ministers in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, proposed the foundation of a new college named in Franklin's honor. Franklin donated £200 towards the development of Franklin College (now called Franklin & Marshall College).

Between 1771 and 1788, he finished his autobiography. While it was at first addressed to his son, it was later completed for the benefit of mankind at the request of a friend.

Gouverneur Morris signs the Constitution before Washington. Franklin is behind Morris. Painting by Hintermeister, 1925.[179]

Franklin strongly supported the right to freedom of speech:

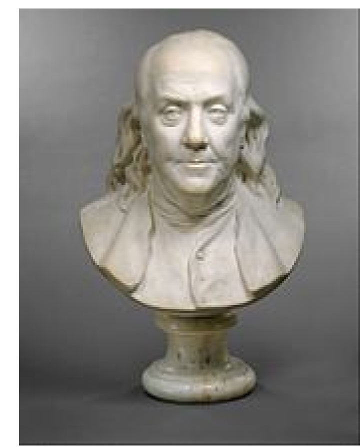
> In those wretched countries where a man cannot call his tongue his own, he can scarce call anything his own. Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation must begin by subduing the freeness of speech ... Without freedom of thought there can be no such thing as wisdom, and no such thing as public liberty without freedom of speech, which is the right of every man ...
>
> — Silence Dogood no. 8, 1722[182]

President of Pennsylvania

Franklin autograph check signed during his Presidency of Pennsylvania

Special balloting conducted October 18, 1785, unanimously elected Franklin the sixth president of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, replacing John Dickinson. The office was practically that of governor. Franklin held that office for slightly over three years, longer than any other, and served the constitutional limit of three full terms. Shortly after his initial election, he was re-elected to a full term on October 29, 1785, and again in the fall of 1786 and on October 31, 1787. In that capacity he served as host to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 in Philadelphia.[183]

Virtue, religion, and personal beliefs


A bust of Franklin by Jean-Antoine Houdon, 1778

Like the other advocates of republicanism, Franklin emphasized that the new republic could survive only if the people were virtuous. All his life he explored the role of civic and personal virtue, as expressed in *Poor Richard's* aphorisms. Franklin felt that organized religion was necessary to keep men good to their fellow men, but rarely attended religious services himself.[184] When Franklin met Voltaire in Paris and asked his fellow member of the Enlightenment vanguard to bless his grandson, Voltaire said in English, "God and Liberty", and added, "this is the only appropriate benediction for the grandson of Monsieur Franklin."[185]

Franklin's parents were both pious Puritans.[186] The family attended the Old South Church, the most liberal Puritan congregation in Boston, where Benjamin Franklin was baptized in 1706.[187] Franklin's father, a poor chandler, owned a copy of a book, *Bonifacius: Essays to Do Good*, by the Puritan preacher and family friend Cotton Mather, which Franklin often cited as a key influence on his life.[188] Franklin's first pen name, Silence Dogood, paid homage both to the book and to a widely known sermon by Mather. The book preached the importance of forming voluntary associations to benefit society. Franklin learned about forming do-good associations from Cotton Mather, but his organizational skills made him the most influential force in making voluntarism an enduring part of the American ethos.[189]

Voltaire blessing Franklin's grandson, in the name of God and Liberty, by Pedro Américo, 1889–90

Franklin formulated a presentation of his beliefs and published it in 1728.[190] It did not mention many of the Puritan ideas regarding salvation, the divinity of Jesus, or indeed much religious dogma. He clarified himself as a deist in his 1771 autobiography,[191] although still considered himself a Christian.[192] He retained a strong faith in a God as the wellspring of morality and goodness in man, and as a Providential actor in history responsible for American independence.[193]

Benjamin Franklin by Hiram Powers

It was Ben Franklin who, at a critical impasse during the Constitutional Convention in June 1787, attempted to introduce the practice of daily common prayer with these words:

> ... In the beginning of the contest with G. Britain, when we were sensible of danger we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine Protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a Superintending providence in our favor. ... And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? or do we imagine that we no longer need His assistance. I have lived, Sir, a long time and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings that "except the Lord build they labor in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel: ... I therefore beg leave to move—that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the Clergy of this City be requested to officiate in that service.[194]

The motion met with resistance and was never brought to a vote.[195]

Franklin was an enthusiastic supporter of the evangelical minister George Whitefield during the First Great Awakening. Franklin did not subscribe to Whitefield's theology, but he admired Whitefield for exhorting people to worship God through good works. Franklin published all of Whitefield's sermons and journals, thereby earning a lot of money and boosting the Great Awakening.[196]

When he stopped attending church, Franklin wrote in his autobiography:

> ... Sunday being my studying day, I never was without some religious principles. I never doubted, for instance, the existence of the Deity; that He made the world, and governed it by His providence; that the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man; that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished, and virtue rewarded, either here or hereafter.[197][198]

Franklin retained a lifelong commitment to the Puritan virtues and political values he had grown up with, and through his civic work and publishing, he succeeded in passing these values into the American culture permanently. He had a "passion for virtue".[199] These Puritan values included his devotion to egalitarianism, education, industry, thrift, honesty, temperance, charity and community spirit.[200]

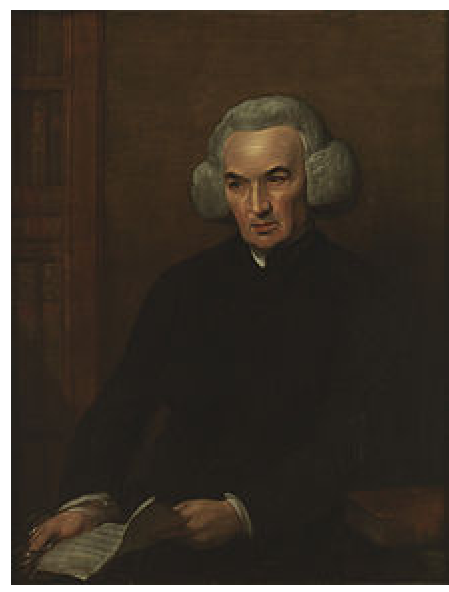
The classical authors read in the Enlightenment period taught an abstract ideal of republican government based on hierarchical social orders of king, aristocracy and commoners. It was widely believed that English liberties relied on their balance of power, but also hierarchal deference to the privileged class.[201] "Puritanism ... and the epidemic evangelism of the mid-eighteenth century, had created challenges to the traditional notions of social stratification"[202] by preaching that the Bible taught all men are equal, that the true value of a man lies in his moral behavior, not his class, and that all men can be saved.[202] Franklin, steeped in Puritanism and an enthusiastic supporter of the evangelical movement, rejected the salvation dogma, but embraced the radical notion of egalitarian democracy.

Franklin's commitment to teach these values was itself something he gained from his Puritan upbringing, with its stress on "inculcating virtue and character in themselves and their communities."[203] These Puritan values and the desire to pass them on, were one of Franklin's quintessentially American characteristics, and helped shape the character of the nation. Franklin's writings on virtue were derided by some European authors, such as Jackob Fugger in his critical work *Portrait of American Culture*. Max Weber considered Franklin's ethical writings a culmination of the Protestant ethic, which ethic created the social conditions necessary for the birth of capitalism.[204]

One of Franklin's notable characteristics was his respect, tolerance and promotion of all churches. Referring to his experience in Philadelphia, he wrote in his autobiography, "new Places of worship were continually wanted, and generally erected by voluntary Contribution, my Mite for such purpose, whatever might be the Sect, was never refused."[197] "He helped create a new type of nation that would draw strength from its religious pluralism."[205] The evangelical revivalists who were active mid-century, such as Franklin's friend and preacher, George Whitefield, were the greatest advocates of religious freedom, "claiming liberty of conscience to be an 'inalienable right of every rational creature.'"[206] Whitefield's supporters in Philadelphia, including Franklin, erected "a large, new hall, that ... could provide a pulpit to anyone of any belief."[207] Franklin's rejection of dogma and doctrine and his stress on the God of ethics and morality and civic virtue made him the "prophet of tolerance."[205] Franklin composed "A Parable Against Persecution", an apocryphal 51st chapter of Genesis in which God teaches Abraham the duty of tolerance.[208] While he was living in London in 1774, he was present at the birth of British Unitarianism, attending the inaugural session of the Essex Street Chapel, at which Theophilus Lindsey drew together the first avowedly Unitarian congregation in England; this was somewhat politically risky, and pushed religious tolerance to new boundaries, as a denial of the doctrine of the Trinity was illegal until the 1813 Act.[209]

Although Franklin's parents had intended for him to have a career in the Church,[18] Franklin as a young man adopted the Enlightenment religious belief in deism, that God's truths can be found entirely through nature and reason,[210] declaring, "I soon became a thorough Deist."[211] As a young man he rejected Christian dogma in a 1725 pamphlet *A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain*,[212] which he later saw as an embarrassment,[213] while simultaneously asserting that God is "all wise, all good, all powerful."[213] He defended his rejection of religious dogma with these words: "I think opinions should be judged by their influences and effects; and if a man holds none that tend to make him less virtuous or more vicious, it may be

concluded that he holds none that are dangerous, which I hope is the case with me." After the disillusioning experience of seeing the decay in his own moral standards, and those of two friends in London whom he had converted to Deism, Franklin turned back to a belief in the importance of organized religion, on the pragmatic grounds that without God and organized churches, man will not be good.[214] Moreover, because of his proposal that prayers be said in the Constitutional Convention of 1787, many have contended that in his later life Franklin became a pious Christian.[215][216]


Dr Richard Price, the radical minister of Newington Green Unitarian Church, holding a letter from Franklin

According to David Morgan,[217] Franklin was a proponent of religion in general. He prayed to "Powerful Goodness" and referred to God as "the infinite". John Adams noted that Franklin was a mirror in which people saw their own religion: "The Catholics thought him almost a Catholic. The Church of England claimed him as one of them. The Presbyterians thought him half a Presbyterian, and the Friends believed him a wet Quaker." Whatever else Franklin was, concludes Morgan, "he was a true champion of generic religion." In a letter to Richard Price, Franklin stated that he believed that religion should support itself without help from the government, claiming, "When a Religion is good, I conceive that it will support itself; and, when it cannot support itself, and God does not take care to support, so that its Professors are oblig'd to call for the help of the Civil Power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one."[218]

In 1790, just about a month before he died, Franklin wrote a letter to Ezra Stiles, president of Yale University, who had asked him his views on religion:

> As to Jesus of Nazareth, my Opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think the System of Morals and his Religion, as he left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is likely to see; but I apprehend it has received various corrupt changes, and I have, with most of the present Dissenters in England, some Doubts as to his divinity; tho' it is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it, and I think it needless to busy myself with it now, when I expect soon an Opportunity of knowing the Truth with less Trouble. I see no harm, however, in its being believed, if that belief has the good consequence, as it probably has, of making his doctrines more respected and better observed; especially as I do not perceive that the Supreme takes it amiss, by distinguishing the unbelievers in his government of the world with any particular marks of his displeasure.[20]

On July 4, 1776, Congress appointed a three-member committee composed of Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams to design the Great Seal of the United States. Franklin's proposal (which was not adopted) featured the motto: "Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God" and a scene from the Book of Exodus, with Moses, the Israelites, the pillar of fire, and George III depicted as pharaoh. The design that was produced was never acted upon by Congress, and the Great Seal's design was not finalized until a third committee was appointed in 1782.[219][220]

Thirteen Virtues

Franklin sought to cultivate his character by a plan of 13 virtues, which he developed at age 20 (in 1726) and continued to practice in some form for the rest of his life. His autobiography lists his 13 virtues as:[221]

1. "Temperance. Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation."
2. "Silence. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation."
3. "Order. Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time."
4. "Resolution. Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve."
5. "Frugality. Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing."
6. "Industry. Lose no time; be always employ'd in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions."
7. "Sincerity. Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly."
8. "Justice. Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty."
9. "Moderation. Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve."
10. "Cleanliness. Tolerate no uncleanliness in body, clothes, or habitation."
11. "Tranquility. Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable."
12. "Chastity. Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation."
13. "Humility. Imitate Jesus and Socrates."

Franklin bust in the Archives Department of Columbia University in New York City

Franklin did not try to work on them all at once. Instead, he would work on one and only one each week "leaving all others to their ordinary chance." While Franklin did not live completely by his virtues, and by his own admission he fell short of them many times, he believed the attempt made him a better man contributing greatly to his success and happiness, which is why in his autobiography, he devoted more pages to this plan than to any other single point; in his autobiography Franklin wrote, "I hope, therefore, that some of my descendants may follow the example and reap the benefit."[222]

Slavery

Franklin owned as many as seven slaves, including two men who worked in his household and his shop.[223][224] Franklin posted paid ads for the sale of slaves and for the capture of runaway slaves and allowed the sale of slaves in his general store. Franklin profited from both the international and domestic slave trade, even criticizing slaves who had run away from their masters to join the British Army during the various wars the Thirteen Colonies were involved in during the 1740s and 1750s. Franklin, however, later became an outspoken critic of slavery as practiced by the American upper class. In 1758, Franklin advocated the opening of a school for the education of black slaves in Philadelphia.[225] Franklin took two slaves to England with him, Peter and King. King escaped with a woman to live in the outskirts of London[226] and by 1758 he was working for a household in Suffolk.[227]

After returning from England in 1762, Franklin became notably more abolitionist in nature, attacking American slavery. In the wake of Somersett's case, Franklin voiced frustration at the British for celebrating the freeing of one slave (James Somersett) that had come to British soil while the British Parliament refused to pass laws that would abolish the slave trade.[228][229][230][231] Franklin, however, refused to publicly debate the issue of slavery at the 1787 Constitutional Convention.[232] Franklin tended to take both sides of the issue of slavery, never fully divesting himself from the institution.[233][234]

At the time of the American Founding, there were about half a million slaves in the United States, mostly in the five southernmost states, where they made up 40 percent of the population. Many of the leading American Founders – most notably Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and James Madison – owned slaves, but

many others did not. Benjamin Franklin thought that slavery was "an atrocious debasement of human nature" and "a source of serious evils." He and Benjamin Rush founded the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery in 1774.[235]

In his later years, as Congress was forced to deal with the issue of slavery, Franklin wrote several essays that stressed the importance of the abolition of slavery and of the integration of blacks into American society. These writings included:

- *An Address to the Public* (1789)
- *A Plan for Improving the Condition of the Free Blacks* (1789)
- *Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim on the Slave Trade* (1790)[236]

In 1790, Quakers from New York and Pennsylvania presented their petition for abolition to Congress. Their argument against slavery was backed by the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society and its president, Benjamin Franklin.[237]

Vegetarianism

Franklin became a vegetarian when he was a teenager apprenticing at a print shop, after coming upon a book by the early vegetarian advocate Thomas Tryon.[238] In addition, Franklin would have also been familiar with the moral arguments espoused by prominent vegetarian Quakers in colonial Pennsylvania, such as Benjamin Lay and John Woolman. His reasons for vegetarianism were based on health, ethics, and economy:

> When about 16 years of age, I happen'd to meet with a book written by one Tryon, recommending a vegetable diet. I determined to go into it ... [By not eating meat] I presently found that I could save half what [my brother] paid me. This was an additional fund for buying books: but I had another advantage in it ... I made the greater progress from that greater clearness of head and quicker apprehension which usually attend temperance in eating and drinking.[239]

Franklin also declared the consumption of meat to be "unprovoked murder".[240] Despite his convictions, he began to eat fish after being tempted by fried cod on a boat sailing from Boston, justifying the eating of animals by having observed that the fish's stomach contained other fish. Nonetheless, Franklin recognized the faulty ethics in this argument,[241] and would continue to be vegetarian on and off. He was "excited" by tofu, which he learned of from the writings of Spanish missionary to China, Domingo Fernández Navarrete. Franklin sent a sample of soybeans to prominent American botanist John Bartram, and had previously written to British diplomat and Chinese trade expert James Flint inquiring as to how tofu was made,[242] with their correspondence believed to be the first documented use of the word "tofu" in the English language.[243]

Franklin's "Second Reply to *Vindex Patriae*", a 1766 letter advocating self-sufficiency and less dependence on England, lists various examples of the bounty of American agricultural products, and does not mention meat.[242] Detailing new American customs, Franklin writes that, "[t]hey resolved last spring to eat no more lamb; and not a joint of lamb has since been seen on any of their tables … the sweet little creatures are all alive to this day, with the prettiest fleeces on their backs imaginable."[244]

Death

Franklin suffered from obesity throughout his middle-aged and later years, which resulted in multiple health problems, particularly gout, which worsened as he aged. In poor health during the signing of the US Constitution in 1787, he was rarely seen in public from then until his death.

Benjamin Franklin died from pleuritic attack[245] at his home in Philadelphia on April 17, 1790.[246] He was aged 84 at the time of his death. His last words were reportedly, "a dying man can do nothing easy", to his daughter after she suggested that he change position in bed and lie on his side so he could breathe more easily.[247][248] Franklin's death is described in the book *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*, quoting from the account of John Jones:

The grave of Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

> ... when the pain and difficulty of breathing entirely left him, and his family were flattering themselves with the hopes of his recovery, when an imposthume, which had formed itself in his lungs, suddenly burst, and discharged a quantity of matter, which he continued to throw up while he had power; but, as that failed, the organs of respiration became gradually oppressed; a calm, lethargic state succeeded; and on the 17th instant (April 1790), about eleven o'clock at night, he quietly expired, closing a long and useful life of eighty-four years and three months.[249]

Approximately 20,000 people attended his funeral. He was interred in Christ Church Burial Ground in Philadelphia.[250][251] In 1728, aged 22, Franklin wrote what he hoped would be his own epitaph:

> The Body of B. Franklin Printer; Like the Cover of an old Book, Its Contents torn out, And stript of its Lettering and Gilding, Lies here, Food for Worms. But the Work shall not be wholly lost: For it will, as he believ'd, appear once more, In a new & more perfect Edition, Corrected and Amended By the Author.[252]

Franklin's actual grave, however, as he specified in his final will, simply reads "Benjamin and Deborah Franklin".[253]

Legacy

Franklin on the Series 2009 hundred dollar bill

Designations	
Pennsylvania Historical Marker	
Official name	Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790)
Type	City
Criteria	Government & Politics, Government & Politics 18th Century, Invention, Science & Medicine, Professions & Vocations, Publishing & Journalism, Writers

A signer of the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Paris and the Constitution, the only man to sign all three documents, Franklin is considered one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. His pervasive influence in the early history of the nation has led to his being jocularly called "the only president of the United States who was never president of the United States".[255]

Franklin's likeness is ubiquitous. Since 1928, it has adorned American $100 bills, which are sometimes referred to in slang as "Benjamins" or "Franklins." From 1948 to 1963, Franklin's portrait was on the half-dollar. He has appeared on a $50 bill and on several varieties of the $100 bill from 1914 and 1918. Franklin also appears on the $1,000 Series EE savings bond.

Designated	June 30, 1990[254]
Location	Chestnut St. between 3rd & 4th Sts., at Nat'l. Liberty Mus., Philadelphia 39.94881°N 75.14683°W
Marker Text	Printer, author, inventor, diplomat, philanthropist, statesman, and scientist. The eighteenth century's most illustrious Pennsylvanian built a house in Franklin Court starting in 1763, and here he lived the last five years of his life.

On April 12, 1976, as part of a bicentennial celebration, Congress dedicated a 20-foot (6 m) marble statue in Philadelphia's Franklin Institute as the Benjamin Franklin National Memorial.[256] Many of Franklin's personal possessions are also on display at the institute, one of the few national memorials located on private property.

In London, his house at 36 Craven Street, which is the only surviving former residence of Benjamin Franklin, was first marked with a blue plaque and has since been opened to the public as the Benjamin Franklin House.[257] In 1998, workmen restoring the building dug up the remains of six children and four adults hidden below the home. *The Times* reported on February 11, 1998:

> Initial estimates are that the bones are about 200 years old and were buried at the time Franklin was living in the house, which was his home from 1757 to 1762 and from 1764 to 1775. Most of the bones show signs of having been dissected, sawn or cut. One skull has been drilled with several holes. Paul Knapman, the Westminster Coroner, said yesterday: "I cannot totally discount the possibility of a crime. There is still a possibility that I may have to hold an inquest.

Marble memorial statue, Benjamin Franklin National Memorial

The Friends of Benjamin Franklin House (the organization responsible for the restoration) note that the bones were likely placed there by William Hewson, who lived in the house for two years and who had built a small anatomy school at the back of the house. They note that while Franklin likely knew what Hewson was doing, he probably did not participate in any dissections because he was much more of a physicist than a medical man.[258]

Bequest

Franklin bequeathed £1,000 (about $4,400 at the time, or about $125,000 in 2018 dollars[259]) each to the cities of Boston and Philadelphia, in trust to gather interest for 200 years. The trust began in 1785 when the French mathematician Charles-Joseph Mathon de la Cour, who admired Franklin greatly, wrote a friendly parody of Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack* called *Fortunate Richard*. The main character leaves a smallish amount of money in his will, five lots of 100 *livres*, to collect interest over one, two, three, four or five full centuries, with the resulting astronomical sums to be spent on impossibly elaborate utopian projects.[260] Franklin, who was 79 years old at the time, wrote thanking him for a great idea and telling him that he had decided to leave a bequest of 1,000 pounds each to his native Boston and his adopted Philadelphia. By 1990, more than $2,000,000 had accumulated in Franklin's Philadelphia trust, which had loaned the money to local residents. From 1940 to 1990, the money was used mostly for mortgage loans. When the trust came due,

Philadelphia decided to spend it on scholarships for local high school students. Franklin's Boston trust fund accumulated almost $5,000,000 during that same time; at the end of its first 100 years a portion was allocated to help establish a trade school that became the Franklin Institute of Boston, and the whole fund was later dedicated to supporting this institute.[261][262]

Franklin on U.S. postage

Benjamin Franklin is a prominent figure in American history comparable to Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln, and as such he has been honored on U.S. postage stamps many times. The image of Franklin, the first postmaster general of the United States, occurs on the face of U.S. postage more than any other notable American save that of George Washington.[263]

Franklin appeared on the first U.S. postage stamp (displayed above) issued in 1847. From 1908 through 1923, the U.S. Post Office issued a series of postage stamps commonly referred to as the Washington–Franklin Issues where, along with George Washington, Franklin was depicted many times over a 14-year period, the longest run of any one series in U.S. postal history. Along with the regular issue stamps Franklin however only appears on a few commemorative stamps. Some of the finest portrayals of Franklin on record can be found on the engravings inscribed on the face of U.S. postage.[263]

Issue of 1861 Issue of 1895

Issue of 1918

Bawdy Ben

"Advice to a Friend on Choosing a Mistress" is a letter written by Benjamin Franklin, dated June 25, 1745, in which Franklin gives advice to a young man about channeling sexual urges. Due to its licentious nature, the letter was not published in collections of Franklin's papers during the nineteenth century. Federal court

decisions from the mid-to-late twentieth century cited the document as a reason for overturning obscenity laws, using it to make a case against censorship.[264]

Exhibitions

Life-size bronze statue of Benjamin Franklin (seated with cane) in the National Constitution Center, Philadelphia

"The Princess and the Patriot: Ekaterina Dashkova, Benjamin Franklin and the Age of Enlightenment" exhibition opened in Philadelphia in February 2006 and ran through December 2006. Benjamin Franklin and Dashkova met only once, in Paris in 1781. Franklin was 75, and Dashkova was 37. Franklin invited Dashkova to become the first woman to join the American Philosophical Society; she was the only woman so honored for another 80 years. Later, Dashkova reciprocated by making him the first American member of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Namesakes

As a founding father of the United States, Franklin's name has been attached to many things. Among these are:

- The State of Franklin, a short-lived independent state formed during the American Revolutionary War
- Counties in at least 16 U.S. states
- The Franklin Institute Awards (presented by the Franklin Institute) for significant contributions in the fields of science and engineering.
- The Franklin Inn Club, founded in 1902 as a literary society, was one of the four historic gentlemen's clubs in Philadelphia's Center City and was the first to open membership to women in Philadelphia.
- Several major landmarks in and around Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Franklin's longtime home, including:
  - Franklin & Marshall College in nearby Lancaster
  - Franklin Field, a football field once home to the Philadelphia Eagles of the National Football League and the home field of the University of Pennsylvania Quakers since 1895
  - Philadelphia's Benjamin Franklin Parkway (a major thoroughfare)
  - The Benjamin Franklin Bridge across the Delaware River between Philadelphia and Camden, New Jersey
- Several U.S. Navy ships have been named the USS *Franklin* or the USS *Bonhomme Richard*, the latter being a French translation of his penname "Poor Richard". Two aircraft carriers, USS *Franklin* (CV-13) and USS *Bon Homme Richard* (CV-31), were simultaneously in commission and in operation during World War II, and Franklin, therefore, had the distinction of having two simultaneously operational U.S. Navy warships named in his honor. The French ship *Franklin* (1797) was also named in Franklin's honor.
- CMA CGM *Benjamin Franklin*, a Chinese-built French-owned Explorer-class container ship[265]
- Franklin Park in Tacoma, Washington, was originally named in honor of Benjamin Franklin. It was renamed in 2021 to honor Washington state senator Rosa Franklin.[266]

See also

- Benjamin Franklin in popular culture
- U.S. Constitution, floor leader in Convention
- The Royal Commission on Animal Magnetism
- Memorial to the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence
- Fugio Cent, 1787 coin designed by Franklin
- Thomas Birch's newly discovered Franklin letters
- William Goddard (patriot/publisher), apprentice/partner of Franklin
- Franklin's electrostatic machine
- Louis Timothee, apprentice/partner of Franklin
- Elizabeth Timothy, apprentice/partner of Franklin
- James Parker (publisher), apprentice/partner of Franklin
- Benjamin Franklin on postage stamps
- *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, etc.*, by Franklin
- Order (virtue)
- Franklin's Jackass
- List of richest Americans in history
- List of wealthiest historical figures
- List of slave owners
- List of abolitionist forerunners
- List of opponents of slavery

Notes

1. Contemporary records, which used the Julian calendar and the Annunciation Style of enumerating years, recorded his birth as January 6, 1705.[15][16] The provisions of the British Calendar (New Style) Act 1750, implemented in 1752, altered the official British dating method to the Gregorian calendar with the start of the year on January 1 [it had been March 25]. These changes resulted in dates being moved forward 11 days, and for those between January 1 and March 24 (included), an advance of one year. For a further explanation, see: Old Style and New Style dates.
2. Portraits of Franklin at this time often contained an inscription, the best known being Turgot's acclamation, "*Eripuit fulmen coelo sceptrumque tyrannis.*" (He snatched the lightning from the skies and the scepter from the tyrants.) Historian Friedrich Christoph Schlosser remarked at the time, with ample hyperbole, that "Such was the number of portraits, busts and medallions of him in circulation before he left Paris, that he would have been recognized from them by any adult citizen in any part of the civilized world." – Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). "Franklin, Benjamin" (https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica/Franklin,_Benjamin). *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press.

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7. Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin* (2003), p. 492
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John Adams

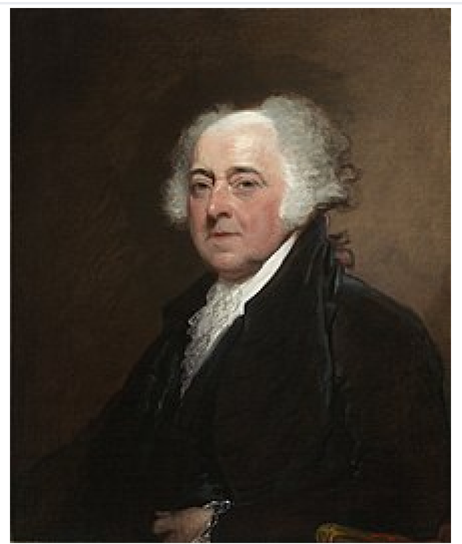
John Adams Jr. (October 30, 1735[a] – July 4, 1826) was an American statesman, attorney, diplomat, writer, and Founding Father who served as the second president of the United States from 1797 to 1801. Before his presidency, he was a leader of the American Revolution that achieved independence from Great Britain, and he served as the first vice president of the United States. Adams was a dedicated diarist and regularly corresponded with many important figures in early American history, including his wife and adviser Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson.

A lawyer and political activist prior to the revolution, Adams was devoted to the right to counsel and presumption of innocence. He defied anti-British sentiment and successfully defended British soldiers against murder charges arising from the Boston Massacre. Adams was a Massachusetts delegate to the Continental Congress and became a leader of the revolution. He assisted in drafting the Declaration of Independence in 1776. As a diplomat in Europe, he helped negotiate a peace treaty with Great Britain and secured vital governmental loans. Adams was the primary author of the Massachusetts Constitution in 1780, which influenced the United States constitution, as did his essay *Thoughts on Government*.

Adams was elected to two terms as vice president under President George Washington and was elected as the United States' second president in 1796, becoming the first incumbent vice president to be elected president. He was the only president elected under the banner of the Federalist Party. During his single term, Adams encountered fierce criticism from the Jeffersonian Republicans and from some in his own Federalist Party, led by his rival Alexander Hamilton. Adams signed the controversial Alien and Sedition Acts and built up the Army and Navy in the undeclared Quasi-War with France. During his term, he became the first president to reside in the executive mansion now known as the White House.

In his bid for reelection, opposition from Federalists and accusations of despotism from Jeffersonians led to Adams losing to his former friend Thomas Jefferson, and he retired to Massachusetts. He eventually resumed his friendship with Jefferson by initiating a correspondence that lasted fourteen years. He and his wife generated a family of politicians, diplomats, and historians now referred to as the Adams political family, which includes their son John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States. John Adams died on July 4, 1826 – the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence – hours after Jefferson's death. Adams and his son are the only presidents of the first twelve that did not own slaves in their lives. Surveys of historians and scholars have favorably ranked his administration.

John Adams



John Adams by Gilbert Stuart c. 1800–1815

2nd President of the United States	
In office	
March 4, 1797 – March 4, 1801	
Vice President	Thomas Jefferson
Preceded by	George Washington
Succeeded by	Thomas Jefferson
1st Vice President of the United States	
In office	
April 21, 1789 – March 4, 1797	
President	George Washington
Succeeded by	Thomas Jefferson
1st United States Minister to the United Kingdom	
In office	
April 1, 1785 – February 20, 1788[1]	
Appointed by	Congress of the Confederation
Succeeded by	Thomas Pinckney
1st United States Minister to the Netherlands	
In office	
April 19, 1782 – March 30, 1788[1]	

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- Member of Continental Congress
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Diplomatic service
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- Ambassador to the Dutch Republic
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- Quasi-War
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- Correspondence with Jefferson
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- *Defence of the Constitutions*

Political philosophy and views

Appointed by	Congress of the Confederation
Succeeded by	Charles W. F. Dumas (*acting*)
United States Envoy to France	
In office	
November 28, 1777[2][3] – March 8, 1779	
Preceded by	Silas Deane
Succeeded by	Benjamin Franklin
Chairman of the Marine Committee	
In office	
October 13, 1775 – October 28, 1779	
Preceded by	*Office established*
Succeeded by	Francis Lewis (Continental Board of Admiralty)
Delegate from Massachusetts to the Continental Congress	
In office	
September 5, 1774 – November 28, 1777	
Preceded by	*Office established*
Succeeded by	Samuel Holten
Personal details	
Born	October 30, 1735 Braintree, Massachusetts Bay, British America (now Quincy)
Died	July 4, 1826 (aged 90) Quincy, Massachusetts, U.S.
Resting place	United First Parish Church
Political party	Pro-Administration (before 1795) Federalist (1795 – c. 1808) Democratic-Republican (c. 1808 – 1826)[4]

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Spouse(s)	Abigail Smith (m. 1764; died 1818)
Children	6, including Abigail, John Quincy, Charles, Thomas
Parents	John Adams Sr. Susanna Boylston
Education	Harvard University (AB, AM)
Occupation	Politician · lawyer
Signature	John Adams

Early life and education

Childhood

Adams's birthplace now in Quincy, Massachusetts

John Adams was born on October 30, 1735 (October 19, 1735, Old Style, Julian calendar), to John Adams Sr. and Susanna Boylston. He had two younger brothers: Peter (1738–1823) and Elihu (1741–1775).[5] Adams was born on the family farm in Braintree, Massachusetts.[6][b] His mother was from a leading medical family of present-day Brookline, Massachusetts. His father was a deacon in the Congregational Church, a farmer, a cordwainer, and a lieutenant in the militia.[7] John Sr. served as a selectman (town councilman) and supervised the building of schools and roads. Adams often praised his father and recalled their close relationship.[8] Adams's great-great-grandfather Henry Adams immigrated to Massachusetts from Braintree, Essex, England, around 1638.[7]

Though raised in modest surroundings, Adams felt pressured to live up to his heritage. His was a family of Puritans, who profoundly affected their region's culture, laws, and traditions. By the time of John Adams's birth, Puritan tenets such as predestination had waned and many of their severe practices moderated, but Adams still "considered them bearers of freedom, a cause that still had a holy urgency".[9] Adams recalled that his parents "held every Species of Libertinage in ... Contempt and horror", and detailed "pictures of disgrace, or baseness and of Ruin" resulting from any debauchery.[5] Adams later noted that "As a child I enjoyed perhaps the greatest of blessings that can be bestowed upon men – that of a mother who was anxious and capable to form the characters of her children."[10]

Adams, as the eldest child, was compelled to obtain a formal education. This began at age six at a dame school for boys and girls, conducted at a teacher's home, and was centered upon *The New England Primer*. Shortly thereafter, Adams attended Braintree Latin School under Joseph Cleverly, where studies included Latin, rhetoric, logic, and arithmetic. Adams's early education included incidents of truancy, a dislike for his master,

and a desire to become a farmer. All discussion on the matter ended with his father's command that he remain in school: "You shall comply with my desires." Deacon Adams hired a new schoolmaster named Joseph Marsh, and his son responded positively.[11]

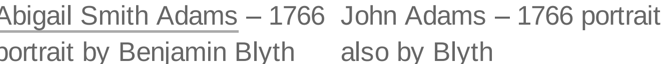
College education and adulthood

At age sixteen, Adams entered Harvard College in 1751, studying under Joseph Mayhew.[12] As an adult, Adams was a keen scholar, studying the works of ancient writers such as Thucydides, Plato, Cicero, and Tacitus in their original languages.[13] Though his father expected him to be a minister,[14] after his 1755 graduation with an A.B. degree, he taught school temporarily in Worcester, while pondering his permanent vocation. In the next four years, he began to seek prestige, craving "Honour or Reputation" and "more defference from [his] fellows", and was determined to be "a great Man". He decided to become a lawyer to further those ends, writing his father that he found among lawyers "noble and gallant achievements" but, among the clergy, the "pretended sanctity of some absolute dunces". His aspirations conflicted with his Puritanism, though, prompting reservations about his self-described "trumpery" and failure to share the "happiness of [his] fellow men".[15]

As the French and Indian War began in 1754, Adams, aged nineteen, began to struggle with his responsibility in the conflict as many of his contemporaries joined the war for money. Adams later said, "I longed more ardently to be a Soldier than I ever did to be a Lawyer", recognizing that he was the first of his family to "[degenerate] from the virtues of the house so far as not to have been an officer in the militia".[16]

Law practice and marriage

In 1756, Adams began reading law under James Putnam, a leading lawyer in Worcester.[17] In 1758, he earned an A.M. from Harvard,[18] and in 1759 was admitted to the bar.[19] He developed an early habit of writing about events and impressions of men in his diary; this included James Otis Jr.'s 1761 legal argument challenging the legality of British writs of assistance, allowing the British to search a home without notice or reason. Otis's argument inspired Adams to the cause of the American colonies.[20]



Abigail Smith Adams – 1766 portrait by Benjamin Blyth

John Adams – 1766 portrait also by Blyth

A group of Boston businessmen had been appalled at the writs of assistance that the crown had started issuing to clamp down on colonial smuggling. Writs of assistance were not only search warrants without any limits, they also required local sheriffs, and even local citizens, to assist in breaking into colonists' houses or lend whatever assistance customs officials desired.[21][22][23] The outraged businessmen engaged lawyer James Otis Jr. to challenge writs of assistance in court. Otis gave the speech of his life, making references to the Magna Carta, classical allusions, natural law, and the colonists' "rights as Englishmen".[21][24][25][23]

The court ruled against the merchants. However, the case lit the fire that became the American Revolution. Otis's arguments were published in the colonies, and stirred widespread support for colonial rights. As a young lawyer, John Adams was observing the case in the packed courtroom, and was moved by Otis’s performance and legal arguments. Adams later said that "Then and there the child Independence was born."[26][25][23][27]

In 1763, Adams explored various aspects of political theory in seven essays written for Boston newspapers. He offered them anonymously, under the nom de plume "Humphrey Ploughjogger", and in them ridiculed the selfish thirst for power he perceived among the Massachusetts colonial elite.[28] Adams was initially less well known than his older cousin Samuel Adams, but his influence emerged from his work as a constitutional lawyer, his analysis of history, and his dedication to republicanism. Adams often found his own irascible nature a constraint in his political career.[14]

In the late 1750s, Adams fell in love with Hannah Quincy; while they were alone, he was poised to propose but was interrupted by friends, and the moment was lost. In 1759, he met 15-year-old Abigail Smith, his third cousin,[29] through his friend Richard Cranch, who was courting Abigail's older sister. Adams initially was not impressed with Abigail and her two sisters, writing that they were not "fond, nor frank, nor candid".[30] In time, he grew close to Abigail and they were married on October 25, 1764, despite the opposition of Abigail's haughty mother. They shared a love of books and kindred personalities that proved honest in their praise and criticism of each other. After his father's death in 1761, Adams had inherited a 9½-acre (3.8 ha) farm and a house where they lived until 1783.[31][32] John and Abigail had six children: Abigail "Nabby" in 1765,[33] future president John Quincy Adams in 1767,[34] Susanna in 1768, Charles in 1770, Thomas in 1772,[35] and Elizabeth in 1777.[36] Susanna died when she was one year old,[35] while Elizabeth was stillborn.[36] All three of his sons became lawyers. Charles and Thomas were unsuccessful, became alcoholics, and died before old age, while John Quincy excelled and launched a career in politics. Adams's writings are devoid of his feelings about the sons' fates.[37]

Career before the Revolution

Opponent of Stamp Act

Adams rose to prominence leading widespread opposition to the Stamp Act of 1765. The Act was imposed by the British Parliament without consulting the American legislatures. It required payment of a direct tax by the colonies for stamped documents,[38][39] and was designed to pay for the costs of Britain's war with France. Power of enforcement was given to British vice admiralty courts, rather than common law courts.[40][39] These Admiralty courts acted without juries and were greatly disliked.[38] The Act was despised for both its monetary cost and implementation without colonial consent, and encountered violent resistance, preventing its enforcement.[40] Adams authored the "Braintree Instructions" in 1765, in the form of a letter sent to the representatives of Braintree in the Massachusetts legislature. In it, he explained that the Act should be opposed since it denied two fundamental rights guaranteed to all Englishmen (and which all free men deserved): rights to be taxed only by consent and to be tried by a jury of one's peers. The instructions were a succinct and forthright defense of colonial rights and liberties, and served as a model for other towns' instructions.[41]

Adams also reprised his pen name "Humphrey Ploughjogger" in opposition to the Stamp Act in August of that year. Included were four articles to the *Boston Gazette*. The articles were republished in *The London Chronicle* in 1768 as *True Sentiments of America*, also known as *A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*. He also spoke in December before the governor and council, pronouncing the Stamp Act invalid in the absence of Massachusetts representation at Parliament.[42][43] He noted that many protests were sparked by a popular sermon of Boston minister Jonathan Mayhew, invoking Romans 13 to justify insurrection.[44] While Adams took a strong stand against the Act in writing, he rebuffed attempts by Samuel Adams, a leader in the popular protest movements, to involve him in mob actions and public demonstrations.[45] In 1766, a town meeting of Braintree elected Adams as a selectman.[46]

With the repeal of the Stamp Act in early 1766, tensions with Britain temporarily eased.[47] Putting politics aside, Adams moved his family to Boston in April 1768 to focus on his law practice. The family rented a clapboard house on Brattle Street that was known locally as the "White House". He, Abigail, and the children

lived there for a year, then moved to Cold Lane; still, later, they moved again to a larger house in Brattle Square in the center of the city.[34] With the death of Jeremiah Gridley and the mental collapse of Otis, Adams became Boston's most prominent lawyer.[46]

Counsel for the British: Boston Massacre

Boston Massacre of 1770 by Alonzo Chappel

Britain's passage of the Townshend Acts in 1767 revived tensions, and an increase in mob violence led the British to dispatch more troops to the colonies.[48] On March 5, 1770, when a lone British sentry was accosted by a mob of citizens, eight of his fellow soldiers reinforced him, and the crowd around them grew to several hundred. The soldiers were struck with snowballs, ice, and stones, and in the chaos the soldiers opened fire, killing five civilians, bringing about the infamous Boston Massacre. The accused soldiers were arrested on charges of murder. When no other attorneys would come to their defense, Adams was impelled to do so despite the risk to his reputation – he believed no person should be denied the right to counsel and a fair trial. The trials were delayed so that passions could cool.[49]

The week-long trial of the commander, Captain Thomas Preston, began on October 24 and ended in his acquittal, because it was impossible to prove that he had ordered his soldiers to fire.[50] The remaining soldiers were tried in December when Adams made his legendary argument regarding jury decisions: "Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."[51] He added, "It is more important that innocence be protected than it is that guilt be punished, for guilt and crimes are so frequent in this world that they cannot all be punished. But if innocence itself is brought to the bar and condemned, perhaps to die, then the citizen will say, 'whether I do good or whether I do evil is immaterial, for innocence itself is no protection,' and if such an idea as that were to take hold in the mind of the citizen that would be the end of security whatsoever." Adams won an acquittal for six of the soldiers. Two, who had fired directly into the crowd, were convicted of manslaughter. Adams was paid a small sum by his clients.[31]

According to biographer John E. Ferling, during jury selection Adams "expertly exercised his right to challenge individual jurors and contrived what amounted to a packed jury. Not only were several jurors closely tied through business arrangements to the British army, but five ultimately became Loyalist exiles." While Adams's defence was helped by a weak prosecution, he also "performed brilliantly."[52] Ferling surmises that Adams was encouraged to take the case in exchange for political office; one of Boston's seats opened three months later in the Massachusetts legislature, and Adams was the town's first choice to fill the vacancy.[53]

The prosperity of his law practice increased from this exposure, as did the demands on his time. In 1771, Adams moved his family to Braintree but kept his office in Boston. He noted on the day of the family's move, "Now my family is away, I feel no Inclination at all, no Temptation, to be any where but at my Office. I am in it by 6 in the Morning – I am in it at 9 at night. ... In the Evening, I can be alone at my Office, and no where else." After some time in the capital, he became disenchanted with the rural and "vulgar" Braintree as a home for his family – in August 1772, he moved them back to Boston. He purchased a large brick house on Queen Street, not far from his office.[54] In 1774, Adams and Abigail returned the family to the farm due to the increasingly unstable situation in Boston, and Braintree remained their permanent Massachusetts home.[55]

Becoming a revolutionary

Adams, who had been among the more conservative of the Founders, persistently held that while British actions against the colonies had been wrong and misguided, open insurrection was unwarranted and peaceful petition with the ultimate view of remaining part of Great Britain was a better alternative.[56] His ideas began to change around 1772, as the British Crown assumed payment of the salaries of Governor Thomas Hutchinson and his judges instead of the Massachusetts legislature. Adams wrote in the *Gazette* that these measures would destroy judicial independence and place the colonial government in closer subjugation to the Crown. After discontent among members of the legislature, Hutchinson delivered a speech warning that Parliament's powers over the colonies were absolute and that any resistance was illegal. Subsequently, John Adams, Samuel, and Joseph Hawley drafted a resolution adopted by the House of Representatives threatening independence as an alternative to tyranny. The resolution argued that the colonists had never been under the sovereignty of Parliament. Their original charter, as well as their allegiance, was exclusive to the King.[57]

The Boston Tea Party, a historic demonstration against the British East India Company's tea monopoly over American merchants, took place on December 16, 1773. The British schooner *Dartmouth*, loaded with tea to be traded subject to the new Tea Act, had previously dropped anchor in Boston harbor. By 9:00 PM, the work of the protesters was done – they had demolished 342 chests of tea worth about ten thousand pounds, the 1992 equivalent of about $1 million. The *Dartmouth* owners briefly retained Adams as legal counsel regarding their liability for the destroyed shipment. Adams himself applauded the destruction of the tea, calling it the "grandest Event" in the history of the colonial protest movement,[58] and writing in his diary that the dutied tea's destruction was an "absolutely and indispensably" necessary action.[59]

Continental Congress

Member of Continental Congress

In 1774, at the instigation of John's cousin Samuel Adams, the First Continental Congress was convened in response to the Intolerable Acts, a series of deeply unpopular measures intended to punish Massachusetts, centralize authority in Britain, and prevent rebellion in other colonies. Four delegates were chosen by the Massachusetts legislature, including John Adams, who agreed to attend,[60] despite an emotional plea from his friend Attorney General Jonathan Sewall not to.[61]

John Trumbull's *Declaration of Independence* depicts the Committee of Five presenting its draft to Congress. Adams is depicted in the center with his hand on his hip.

Shortly after he arrived in Philadelphia, Adams was placed on the 23-member Grand Committee tasked with drafting a letter of grievances to King George III. The members of the committee soon split into conservative and radical factions.[62] Although the Massachusetts delegation was largely passive, Adams criticized conservatives such as Joseph Galloway, James Duane, and Peter Oliver who advocated a conciliatory policy towards the British or felt that the colonies had a duty to remain loyal to Britain, although his views at the time did align with those of conservative John Dickinson. Adams sought the repeal of objectionable policies, but at this early stage he continued to see benefits in maintaining the ties with Britain.[63] He renewed his push for the right to a jury trial.[64] He complained of what he considered the pretentiousness of the other delegates, writing to Abigail, "I believe if it was moved and seconded that We should come to a Resolution that Three and two make five We should be entertained with Logick and Rhetorick, Law, History, Politicks and Mathematicks, concerning the Subject for two whole Days, and then We should pass the Resolution

unanimously in the Affirmative."[65] Adams ultimately helped engineer a compromise between the conservatives and the radicals.[66] The Congress disbanded in October after sending the final petition to the King and showing its displeasure with the Intolerable Acts by endorsing the Suffolk Resolves.[67]

Adams's absence from home was hard on Abigail, who was left alone to care for the family. She still encouraged her husband in his task, writing: "You cannot be, I know, nor do I wish to see you an inactive Spectator, but if the Sword be drawn I bid adieu to all domestick felicity, and look forward to that Country where there is neither wars nor rumors of War in a firm belief that thro the mercy of its King we shall both rejoice there together."[68]

News of the opening hostilities with the British at the Battles of Lexington and Concord made Adams hope that independence would soon become a reality. Three days after the battle, he rode into a militia camp and, while reflecting positively on the high spirits of the men, was distressed by their poor condition and lack of discipline.[69] A month later, Adams returned to Philadelphia for the Second Continental Congress as the leader of the Massachusetts delegation.[70] He moved cautiously at first, noting that the Congress was divided between Loyalists, those favoring independence, and those hesitant to take any position.[71] He became convinced that Congress was moving in the proper direction – away from Great Britain. Publicly, Adams supported "reconciliation if practicable," but privately agreed with Benjamin Franklin's confidential observation that independence was inevitable.[72]

In June 1775, with a view of promoting union among the colonies against Great Britain, he nominated George Washington of Virginia as commander-in-chief of the army then assembled around Boston.[73] He praised Washington's "skill and experience" as well as his "excellent universal character."[74] Adams opposed various attempts, including the Olive Branch Petition, aimed at trying to find peace between the colonies and Great Britain.[75] Invoking the already-long list of British actions against the colonies, he wrote, "In my opinion Powder and Artillery are the most efficacious, Sure, and infallibly conciliatory Measures We can adopt."[76] After his failure to prevent the petition from being enacted, he wrote a private letter derisively referring to Dickinson as a "piddling genius." The letter was intercepted and published in Loyalist newspapers. The well-respected Dickinson refused to greet Adams and he was for a time largely ostracized.[77] Ferling writes, "By the fall of 1775 no one in Congress labored more ardently than Adams to hasten the day when America would be separate from Great Britain."[72] In October 1775, Adams was appointed the chief judge of the Massachusetts Superior Court, but he never served, and resigned in February 1777.[73] In response to queries from other delegates, Adams wrote the 1776 pamphlet *Thoughts on Government*, which laid out an influential framework for republican constitutions.[78]

Independence

Throughout the first half of 1776, Adams grew increasingly impatient with what he perceived to be the slow pace of declaring independence.[79] He kept busy on the floor of the Congress, helping push through a plan to outfit armed ships to launch raids on enemy vessels. Later in the year, he drafted the first set of regulations to govern the provisional navy.[80] Adams drafted the preamble to the Lee resolution of colleague Richard Henry Lee.[81] He developed a rapport with Delegate Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, who had been slower to support independence but by early 1776 agreed that it was necessary.[82] On June 7, 1776, Adams seconded the Lee resolution, which stated, "These colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states."[83]

Prior to independence being declared, Adams organized and selected a Committee of Five charged with drafting a Declaration of Independence. He chose himself, Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Robert R. Livingston and Roger Sherman.[84] Jefferson thought Adams should write the document, but Adams persuaded the Committee to choose Jefferson. Many years later, Adams recorded his exchange with Jefferson: Jefferson asked, "Why will you not? You ought to do it." To which Adams responded, "I will not – reasons enough." Jefferson replied, "What can be your reasons?" and Adams responded, "Reason first, you are a Virginian, and

The Assembly Room in Philadelphia's Independence Hall, where the Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence

a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second, I am obnoxious, suspected, and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third, you can write ten times better than I can." "Well," said Jefferson, "if you are decided, I will do as well as I can."[85] The Committee left no minutes, and the drafting process itself remains uncertain. Accounts written many years later by Jefferson and Adams, although frequently cited, are often contradictory.[86] Although the first draft was written primarily by Jefferson, Adams assumed a major role in its completion.[87] On July 1, the resolution was debated in Congress. It was expected to pass, but opponents such as Dickinson made a strong effort to oppose it anyhow. Jefferson, a poor debater, remained silent while Adams argued for its adoption.[88] Many years later, Jefferson hailed Adams as "the pillar of [the Declaration's] support on the floor of Congress, [its] ablest advocate and defender against the multifarious assaults it encountered."[89] After editing the document further, Congress approved it on July 2. Twelve colonies voted in the affirmative, while New York abstained. Dickinson was absent.[90] On July 3, Adams wrote to Abigail that "yesterday was decided the greatest question which was ever debated in America, and a greater perhaps never was nor will be decided among men." He predicted that "[t]he second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America," and would be commemorated annually with great festivities.[91]

During the congress, Adams sat on ninety committees, chairing twenty-five, an unmatched workload among the congressmen. As Benjamin Rush reported, he was acknowledged "to be the first man in the House."[92] In June, Adams became head of the Board of War and Ordnance, charged with keeping an accurate record of the officers in the army and their ranks, the disposition of troops throughout the colonies, and ammunition.[93] He was referred to as a "one man war department," working up to eighteen-hour days and mastering the details of raising, equipping and fielding an army under civilian control.[94] As chairman of the Board, Adams functioned as a *de facto* Secretary of War. He kept extensive correspondences with a wide range of Continental Army officers concerning supplies, munitions, and tactics. Adams emphasized to them the role of discipline in keeping an army orderly.[95] He also authored the "Plan of Treaties," laying out the Congress's requirements for a treaty with France.[94] He was worn out by the rigor of his duties and longed to return home. His finances were unsteady, and the money that he received as a delegate failed even to cover his own necessary expenses. However, the crisis caused by the defeat of the American soldiers kept him at his post.[96]

After defeating the Continental Army at the Battle of Long Island on August 27, British Admiral Richard Howe determined that a strategic advantage was at hand, and requested that Congress send representatives to negotiate peace. A delegation consisting of Adams, Franklin, and Edward Rutledge met with Howe at the Staten Island Peace Conference on September 11.[97][98] Howe's authority was premised on the states' submission, so the parties found no common ground. When Lord Howe stated he could view the American delegates only as British subjects, Adams replied, "Your lordship may consider me in what light you please, ... except that of a British subject."[99] Adams learned many years later that his name was on a list of people specifically excluded from Howe's pardon-granting authority.[100] Adams was unimpressed with Howe and predicted American success.[101] He was able to return home to Braintree in October before leaving in January 1777 to resume his duties in Congress.[102]

Diplomatic service

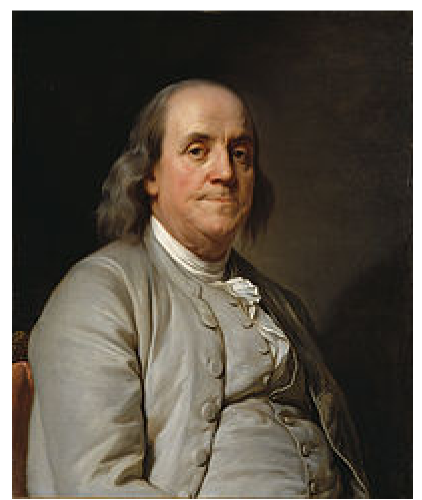
Commissioner to France

Before the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, Adams advocated in Congress that independence was necessary to establish trade, and conversely, trade was essential for the attainment of independence; he specifically urged negotiation of a commercial treaty with France. He was then appointed, along with Franklin, Dickinson, Benjamin Harrison of Virginia and Robert Morris of Pennsylvania, "to prepare a plan of treaties to be proposed to foreign powers." While Jefferson was laboring over the Declaration of Independence, Adams worked on the Model Treaty. The Model Treaty authorized a commercial agreement with France but contained no provisions for formal recognition or military assistance. There were provisions for what constituted French territory. The treaty adhered to the provision that "free ships make free goods," allowing neutral nations to trade reciprocally while exempting an agreed-upon list of contraband. By late 1777, America's finances were in tatters, and that September a British army had defeated General Washington and captured Philadelphia. More Americans came to determine that mere commercial ties between the U.S. and France would not be enough, and that military assistance would be needed to end the war. The defeat of the British at Saratoga was expected to help induce France to agree to an alliance.[103]

In November, Adams learned that he was to be named commissioner to France, replacing Silas Deane and joining Franklin and Arthur Lee in Paris to negotiate an alliance with the hesitant French. James Lovell invoked Adams's "inflexible integrity" and the need to have a youthful man who could counterbalance Franklin's advanced age. On November 27, Adams accepted, wasting no time. He wrote to Lovell that he "should have wanted no motives or arguments" for his acceptance if he "could be sure that the public would be benefited by it." Abigail was left in Massachusetts to manage their home, but it was agreed that 10-year-old John Quincy would go with Adams, for the experience was "of inestimable value" to his maturation.[104] On February 17, Adams set sail aboard the frigate *Boston*, commanded by Captain Samuel Tucker.[105] The trip was stormy and treacherous. Lightning injured 19 sailors and killed one. The ship was pursued by several British vessels, with Adams taking up arms to help capture one. A cannon malfunction killed one of the crew and injured five others.[106] On April 1, the *Boston* arrived in France, where Adams learned that France had agreed to an alliance with the United States on February 6.[107] Adams was annoyed by the other two commissioners: Lee, whom he thought paranoid and cynical, and the popular and influential Franklin, whom he found lethargic and overly deferential and accommodating to the French.[108] He assumed a less visible role but helped manage the delegation's finances and record-keeping.[109] Frustrated by the perceived lack of commitment on the part of the French, Adams wrote a letter to French foreign minister Vergennes in December, arguing for French naval support in North America. Franklin toned down the letter, but Vergennes still ignored it.[110] In September 1778, Congress increased Franklin's powers by naming him minister plenipotentiary to France while Lee was sent to Spain. Adams received no instructions. Frustrated by the apparent slight, he departed France with John Quincy on March 8, 1779.[111] On August 2, they arrived in Braintree.[112]

In late 1779, Adams was appointed as the sole minister charged with negotiations to establish a commercial treaty with Britain and end the war.[113] Following the conclusion of the Massachusetts constitutional convention, he departed for France in November[114] aboard the French frigate *Sensible* – accompanied by John Quincy and 9-year-old son Charles.[115] A leak in the ship forced it to land in Ferrol, Spain, and Adams and his party spent six weeks travelling overland until they reached Paris.[116] Constant disagreement between Lee and Franklin eventually resulted in Adams assuming the role of tie-breaker in almost all votes on commission business. He increased his usefulness by mastering the French language. Lee was eventually recalled. Adams closely supervised his sons' education while writing to Abigail about once every ten days.[117]

In contrast to Franklin, Adams viewed the Franco-American alliance pessimistically. The French, he believed, were involved for their own self-interest, and he grew frustrated by what he saw as their sluggishness in providing substantial aid to the Revolution. The French, Adams wrote, meant to keep their hands "above our chin to prevent us from drowning, but not to lift our heads out of water."[118] In March 1780, Congress, trying to curb inflation, voted to devalue the dollar. Vergennes summoned Adams for a meeting. In a letter sent in June, he insisted that any fluctuation of the dollar value without an exception for French merchants was



Adams frequently clashed with Benjamin Franklin over how to manage French relations.

unacceptable and requested that Adams write to Congress asking it to "retrace its steps." Adams bluntly defended the decision, not only claiming that the French merchants were doing better than Vergennes implied but voicing other grievances he had with the French. The alliance had been made over two years before. During that period, an army under the comte de Rochambeau had been sent to assist Washington, but it had yet to do anything of significance and America was expecting French warships. These were needed, Adams wrote, to contain the British armies in the port cities and contend with the powerful British Navy. However, the French Navy had been sent not to the United States but to the West Indies to protect French interests there. France, Adams believed, needed to commit itself more fully to the alliance. Vergennes responded that he would deal only with Franklin, who sent a letter back to Congress critical of Adams.[119] Adams then left France of his own accord.[120]

Ambassador to the Dutch Republic

In mid-1780, Adams traveled to the Dutch Republic. One of the few other existing republics at the time, Adams thought it might be sympathetic to the American cause. Securing a Dutch loan could increase American independence from France and pressure Britain into peace. At first, Adams had no official status, but in July he was formally given permission to negotiate for a loan and took up residence in Amsterdam in August. Adams was originally optimistic and greatly enjoyed the city, but soon became disappointed. The Dutch, fearing British retaliation, refused to meet Adams. Before he had arrived, the British found out about secret aid the Dutch had sent to the Americans, the British authorized reprisals against their ships, which only increased their apprehension. Word had also reached Europe of American battlefield defeats. After five months of not meeting with a single Dutch official, Adams in early 1781 pronounced Amsterdam "the capital of the reign of Mammon."[121] He was finally invited to present his credentials as ambassador to the Dutch government at The Hague on April 19, 1781, but they did not promise any assistance. In the meantime, Adams thwarted an attempt by neutral European powers to mediate the war without consulting the United States.[122] In July, Adams consented to the departure of both of his sons; John Quincy went with Adams's secretary Francis Dana to Saint Petersburg as a French interpreter, in an effort to seek recognition from Russia, and a homesick Charles returned home with Adams's friend Benjamin Waterhouse.[123] In August, shortly after being removed from his position of sole head of peace treaty negotiations, Adams fell seriously ill in "a major nervous breakdown."[124] That November, he learned that American and French troops had decisively defeated the British at Yorktown. The victory was in large part due to the assistance of the French Navy, which vindicated Adams's stand for increased naval assistance.[125]

News of the American triumph at Yorktown convulsed Europe. In January 1782, after recovering, Adams arrived at The Hague to demand that the States General of the Netherlands answer his petitions. His efforts stalled, and he took his cause to the people, successfully capitalizing on popular pro-American sentiment to push the States General towards recognizing the U.S. Several provinces began recognizing American independence. On April 19, the States General in The Hague formally recognized American independence and acknowledged Adams as ambassador.[126] On June 11, with the aid of the Dutch *Patriotten* leader Joan van der Capellen tot den Pol, Adams negotiated a loan of five million guilders. In October, he negotiated with the Dutch a treaty of amity and commerce.[127] The house that Adams bought during this stay in the Netherlands became the first American embassy on foreign soil.[128]

Treaty of Paris

After negotiating the loan with the Dutch, Adams was re-appointed as the American commissioner to negotiate the war-ending treaty, the Treaty of Paris. Vergennes and France's minister to the United States, Anne-César de La Luzerne, disapproved of Adams, so Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Jay, and Henry Laurens were appointed to collaborate with Adams, although Jefferson did not initially go to Europe and Laurens was posted to the Dutch Republic following his imprisonment in the Tower of London.[129]

Treaty of Paris by Benjamin West (Adams in front).

In the final negotiations, securing fishing rights off Newfoundland and Cape Breton Island proved both very important and very difficult. In response to very strict restrictions proposed by the British, Adams insisted that not only should American fishermen be allowed to travel as close to shore as desired, but that they should be allowed to cure their fish on the shores of Newfoundland.[130] This, and other statements, prompted Vergennes to secretly inform the British that France did not feel compelled to "sustain [these] pretentious ambitions." Overruling Franklin and distrustful of Vergennes, Jay and Adams decided not to consult with France, instead dealing directly with the British.[131] During these negotiations, Adams mentioned to the British that his proposed fishing terms were more generous than those offered by France in 1778 and that accepting would foster goodwill between Britain and the United States while putting pressure on France. Britain agreed, and the two sides worked out other provisions afterward. Vergennes was angered when he learned from Franklin of the American duplicity, but did not demand renegotiation, and was supposedly surprised at how much the Americans could extract. The independent negotiations allowed the French to plead innocence to their Spanish allies, whose demands for Gibraltar might have caused significant problems.[132] On September 3, 1783, the treaty was signed and American independence was recognized.[133]

Ambassador to Great Britain

Adams was appointed the first American ambassador to Great Britain in 1785. When a counterpart assumed that Adams had family in England, Adams replied, "Neither my father or mother, grandfather or grandmother, great grandfather or great grandmother, nor any other relation that I know of, or care a farthing for, has been in England these one hundred and fifty years; so that you see I have not one drop of blood in my veins but what is American."[134]

After arriving in London from Paris, Adams had his first audience with King George III on June 1, which he meticulously recorded in a letter to Foreign Minister Jay the next day. The pair's exchange was respectful; Adams promised to do all that he could to restore friendship and cordiality "between People who, tho Seperated [sic] by an Ocean and under different Governments have the Same Language, a Similar Religion and kindred Blood," and the King agreed to "receive with Pleasure, the Assurances of the friendly Dispositions of the United States." The King added that although "he had been the last to consent" to American independence, he wanted Adams to know that he had always done what he thought was right. Towards its end, he startled Adams by commenting that "There is an Opinion, among Some People, that you are not the most attached of all Your Countrymen, to the manners of France." Adams replied, "That Opinion sir, is not mistaken, I must avow to your Majesty, I have no Attachments but to my own Country." To this King George responded, "An honest Man will never have any other."[135]

Adams was joined by Abigail while in London. Suffering the hostility of the King's courtiers, they escaped when they could by seeking out Richard Price, minister of Newington Green Unitarian Church and instigator of the debate over the Revolution within Britain.[136] Adams corresponded with his sons John Quincy and Charles, both of whom were at Harvard, cautioning the former against the "smell of the midnight lamp" while

Adams – 1785 Mather Brown Portrait

admonishing the latter to devote sufficient time to study.[137] Jefferson visited Adams in 1786 while serving as Minister to France; the two toured the countryside and saw many British historical sites.[138] While in London, he briefly met his old friend Jonathan Sewall, but the two discovered that they had grown too far apart to renew their friendship. Adams considered Sewall one of the war's casualties, and Sewall critiqued him as an ambassador:

> His abilities are undoubtedly equal to the mechanical parts of his business as ambassador, but this is not enough. He cannot dance, drink, game, flatter, promise, dress, swear with the gentlemen, and small talk and flirt with the ladies; in short, he has none of those essential arts or ornaments which constitute a courtier. There are thousands who, with a tenth of his understanding and without a spark of his honesty, would distance him infinitely in any court in Europe.[139]

While in London Adams wrote his three-volume *A Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*. It was a response to those he had met in Europe who criticized the government systems of the American states.

Adams's tenure in Britain was complicated by both countries failing to follow their treaty obligations. The American states had been delinquent in paying debts owed to British merchants, and in response, the British refused to vacate forts in the northwest as promised. Adams's attempts to resolve this dispute failed, and he was often frustrated by a lack of news of progress from home.[140] The news he received of tumult at home, such as Shays' Rebellion, heightened his anxiety. He then asked Jay to be relieved;[141] in 1788, he took his leave of George III, who engaged Adams in polite and formal conversation, promising to uphold his end of the treaty once America did the same.[142] Adams then went to The Hague to take formal leave of his ambassadorship there and to secure refinancing from the Dutch, allowing the United States to meet obligations on earlier loans.[143]

Vice presidency (1789–1797)

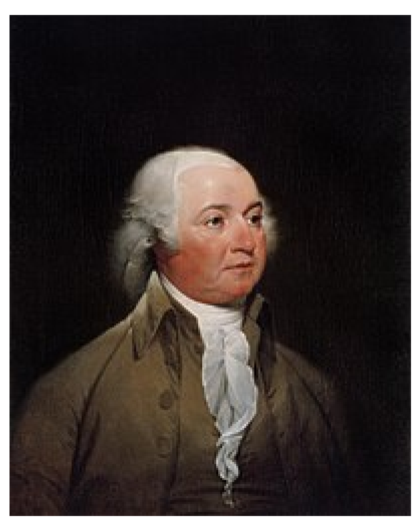
Election

On June 17, Adams arrived back in Massachusetts to a triumphant welcome. He returned to farming life in the months after. The nation's first presidential election was soon to take place. Because George Washington was widely expected to win the presidency, many felt that the vice presidency should go to a northerner. Although he made no public comments on the matter, Adams was the primary contender.[144] Each state's presidential electors gathered on February 4, 1789, to cast their two votes for the president. The person with the most votes would be president and the second would become vice president.[145] Adams received 34 electoral college votes in the election, second place behind George Washington, who garnered 69 votes. As a result, Washington became the nation's first president, and Adams became its first vice president. Adams finished well ahead of all others except Washington, but was still offended by Washington receiving more than twice as many votes.[146] In an effort to ensure that Adams did not accidentally become president and that Washington would have an overwhelming victory, Alexander Hamilton convinced at least 7 of the 69 electors not to cast

their vote for Adams. After finding out about the manipulation but not Hamilton's role in it, Adams wrote to Benjamin Rush asking whether "Is not my election to this office, in the dark and scurvy manner in which it was done, a curse rather than a blessing?"[146][147]

Although his term started on March 4, 1789, Adams did not begin serving as Vice President of the United States until April 21, because he did not arrive in New York in time.[148][149]

Tenure

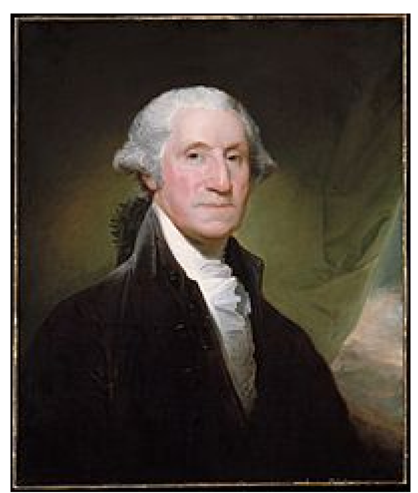


Portrait of Adams by John Trumbull, 1793

The sole constitutionally prescribed responsibility of the vice president is to preside over the Senate, where he can cast a tie-breaking vote.[150] Early in his term, Adams became deeply involved in a lengthy Senate controversy over the official titles for the president and executive officers of the new government. Although the House agreed that the president should be addressed simply as "George Washington, President of the United States", the Senate debated the issue at some length. Adams favored the adoption of the style of *Highness* (as well as the title of *Protector of Their [the United States'] Liberties*) for the president.[151] Some senators favored a variant of *Highness* or the lesser *Excellency*."[152] Anti-federalists in the Senate objected to the monarchical sound of them all; Jefferson described them as "superlatively ridiculous."[153] They argued that these "distinctions," as Adams called them, violated the Constitution's prohibition on titles of nobility. Adams said that the distinctions were necessary because the highest office of the United States must be marked with "dignity and splendor" to command respect. He was widely derided for his combative nature and stubbornness, especially as he actively debated and lectured the senators. "For forty minutes he harangued us from the chair," wrote Senator William Maclay of Pennsylvania. Maclay became Adams's fiercest opponent and repeatedly expressed personal contempt for him in both public and private. He likened Adams to "a monkey just put into breeches."[154] Ralph Izard suggested that Adams be referred to by the title "His Rotundity," a joke which soon became popular.[155] On May 14, the Senate decided that the title of "Mr. President" would be used.[156] Privately, Adams conceded that his vice presidency had begun poorly and that perhaps he had been out of the country too long to know the sentiment of the people. Washington quietly expressed his displeasure with the fuss and rarely consulted Adams.[157]

As vice president, Adams largely sided with the Washington administration and the emerging Federalist Party. He supported Washington's policies against opposition from anti-Federalists and Republicans. He cast 31 tie-breaking votes, all in support of the administration, and more than any other vice president.[158] He voted against a bill sponsored by Maclay that would have required Senate consent for the removal of executive branch officials who had been confirmed by the Senate.[159] In 1790, Jefferson, James Madison, and Hamilton struck a bargain guaranteeing Republican support for Hamilton's debt assumption plan in exchange for the capital being temporarily moved from New York to Philadelphia, and then to a permanent site on the Potomac River to placate Southerners. In the Senate, Adams cast a tie-breaking vote against a last-minute motion to keep the capital in New York.[160]

Adams played a minor role in politics as vice president. He attended few cabinet meetings, and the president sought his counsel infrequently.[150] While Adams brought energy and dedication to the office,[161] by mid-1789 he had already found it "not quite adapted to my character ... too inactive, and mechanical."[162] He wrote, "My country has in its wisdom contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived."[163] Adams's behavior made him a target for critics of the Washington administration. Toward the end of his first term, he grew accustomed to assuming a marginal role,



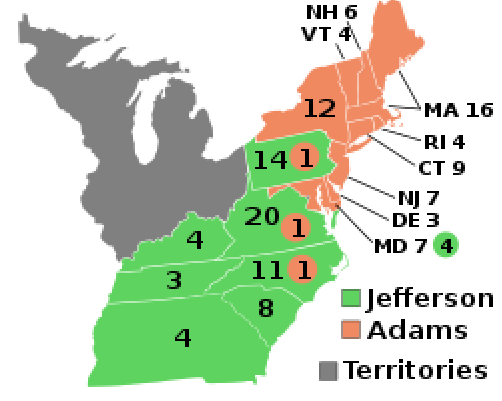
Portrait of George Washington by Gilbert Stuart, 1795. Washington rarely consulted Vice President Adams, who often felt marginalized and overshadowed by Washington's prestige.

and rarely intervened in debate.[164] Adams never questioned Washington's courage or patriotism, but Washington did join Franklin and others as the object of Adams's ire or envy. "The History of our Revolution will be one continued lie," Adams declared. "... The essence of the whole will be that Dr. Franklin's electrical Rod smote the Earth and out sprung General Washington. That Franklin electrified him with his Rod – and henceforth these two conducted all the Policy, Negotiations, Legislatures and War."[165] Adams won reelection with little difficulty in 1792 with 77 votes. His strongest challenger, George Clinton, had 50.[166]

On July 14, 1789, the French Revolution began. Republicans were jubilant. Adams at first expressed cautious optimism, but soon began denouncing the revolutionaries as barbarous and tyrannical.[167] Washington eventually consulted Adams more often, but not until near the end of his administration, by which point distinguished cabinet members Hamilton, Jefferson, and Edmund Randolph had all resigned.[168] The British had been raiding American trading vessels, and John Jay was sent to London to negotiate an end to hostilities. When he returned in 1795 with a peace treaty on terms unfavorable to the United States, Adams urged Washington to sign it to prevent war. Washington chose to do so, igniting protests and riots. He was accused of surrendering American honor to a tyrannical monarchy and of turning his back on the French Republic.[169] John Adams predicted in a letter to Abigail that ratification would deeply divide the nation.[170]

Election of 1796

The election of 1796 was the first contested American presidential election.[171] Twice, George Washington had been elected to office unanimously but, during his presidency, deep philosophical differences between the two leading figures in the administration – Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson – had caused a rift, leading to the founding of the Federalist and Republican parties.[172] When Washington announced that he would not be a candidate for a third term, an intense partisan struggle for control of Congress and the presidency began.[173]



1796 presidential election results

As in the previous two presidential elections, no candidates were put forward for voters to choose between in 1796. The Constitution provided for the selection of electors who would then choose a president.[174] In seven states voters chose the presidential electors. In the remaining nine states, they were chosen by the state's legislature.[175] The clear Republican favorite was Jefferson.[176] Adams was the Federalist frontrunner.[174] The Republicans held a congressional nominating caucus and named Jefferson and Aaron Burr as their presidential choices.[177] Jefferson at first declined the nomination, but he agreed to run a few weeks later. Federalist members of Congress held an informal nominating caucus and named Adams and Thomas Pinckney as their candidates.[176][178] The campaign was, for the most part, confined to newspaper attacks, pamphlets, and political rallies;[174] of the four contenders, only Burr actively campaigned. The practice of not campaigning for office would remain for many decades.[175] Adams stated that he wanted to stay out of what he called the "silly and wicked game" of electioneering.[179]

As the campaign progressed, fears grew among Hamilton and his supporters that Adams was too vain, opinionated, unpredictable and stubborn to follow their directions.[180] Indeed, Adams felt largely left out of Washington's administration and did not consider himself a strong member of the Federalist Party. He had remarked that Hamilton's economic program, centered around banks, would "swindle" the poor and unleash the "gangrene of avarice."[181] Desiring "a more pliant president than Adams," Hamilton maneuvered to tip the election to Pinckney. He coerced South Carolina Federalist electors, pledged to vote for "favorite son" Pinckney, to scatter their second votes among candidates other than Adams. Hamilton's scheme was undone when several New England state electors heard of it and agreed not to vote for Pinckney.[182] Adams wrote shortly after the election that Hamilton was a "proud Spirited, conceited, aspiring Mortal always pretending to Morality, with as debauched Morals as old Franklin who is more his Model than any one I know."[183] Throughout his life, Adams made highly critical statements about Hamilton. He made derogatory references to his womanizing, real or alleged, and slurred him as the "Creole bastard."[184]

In the end, Adams won the presidency by a narrow margin, receiving 71 electoral votes to 68 for Jefferson, who became the vice president; Pinckney finished in third with 59 votes, and Burr came in fourth with 30. The balance of the Electoral College votes were dispersed among nine other candidates.[185] This is the only election to date in which a president and vice president were elected from opposing tickets.[186]

Presidency (1797–1801)

Inauguration

President's House, Philadelphia. Adams occupied this Philadelphia mansion from March 1797 to May 1800.

Adams was sworn into office as the nation's second president on March 4, 1797, by Chief Justice Oliver Ellsworth. As president, he followed Washington's lead in using the presidency to exemplify republican values and civic virtue, and his service was free of scandal.[187] Adams spent much of his term at his Massachusetts home Peacefield, preferring the quietness of domestic life to business at the capital. He ignored the political patronage and office-seekers which other officeholders utilized.[188]

Historians debate his decision to retain the members of Washington's cabinet in light of the cabinet's loyalty to Hamilton. The "Hamiltonians who surround him," Jefferson soon remarked, "are only a little less hostile to him than to me."[189] Although aware of Hamilton's influence, Adams was convinced that their retention ensured a smoother succession.[190] Adams maintained the economic programs of Hamilton, who regularly consulted with key cabinet members, especially the powerful Treasury Secretary, Oliver Wolcott Jr.[191] Adams was in other respects quite independent of his cabinet, often making decisions despite opposition from it.[192] Hamilton had grown accustomed to being regularly consulted by Washington. Shortly after Adams was inaugurated, Hamilton sent him a detailed letter filled with policy suggestions for the new administration. Adams dismissively ignored it.[193]

Failed peace commission and XYZ affair

Historian Joseph Ellis writes that "[t]he Adams presidency was destined to be dominated by a single question of American policy to an extent seldom if ever encountered by any succeeding occupant of the office." That question was whether to make war with France or find peace.[194] In Europe, Britain and France were at war as a result of the French Revolution. Hamilton and the Federalists favored the British monarchy against what they perceived to be the political and anti-religious radicalism of the French Revolution, while Jefferson and

the Republicans, with their firm opposition to monarchy, strongly supported France.[195] The French had supported Jefferson for president and became even more belligerent at his loss.[196] When Adams entered office, he decided to continue Washington's policy of staying out of the war. Because of the Jay Treaty, the French saw America as Britain's junior partner and began seizing American merchant ships that were trading with the British. Most Americans were still pro-French due to France's assistance during the Revolution, the perceived humiliation of the Jay Treaty, and their desire to support a republic against the British monarchy, and would not tolerate war with France.[197]

A political cartoon depicts the XYZ Affair – America is a female being plundered by Frenchmen. (1798)

On May 16, 1797, Adams gave a speech to the House and Senate in which he called for increasing defense capabilities in case of war with France.[198] He announced that he would send a peace commission to France but simultaneously called for a military buildup to counter any potential French threat. The speech was well-received by the Federalists. Adams was depicted as an eagle holding an olive branch in one talon and the "emblems of defense" in the other. The Republicans were outraged, for Adams not only had failed to express support for the cause of the French Republic but appeared to be calling for war against it.[199]

Sentiments changed with the XYZ Affair. The peace commission that Adams appointed consisted of John Marshall, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney and Elbridge Gerry.[200] Jefferson met four times with Joseph Letombe, the French consul in Philadelphia. Letombe wrote to Paris stating that Jefferson had told him that it was in France's best interest to treat the American ministers civilly but "then drag out the negotiations at length" to arrive at most favorable solution. According to Letombe, Jefferson called Adams "vain, suspicious, and stubborn."[201] When the envoys arrived in October, they were kept waiting for several days, and then granted only a 15-minute meeting with French Foreign Minister Talleyrand. The diplomats were then met by three of Talleyrand's agents. The French emissaries (later code-named, X, Y, and Z) refused to conduct negotiations unless the United States paid enormous bribes, one to Talleyrand personally, and another to the Republic of France.[200] Supposedly this was to make up for offenses given to France by Adams in his speech.[202] The Americans refused to negotiate on such terms.[203] Marshall and Pinckney returned home, while Gerry remained.[204]

News of the disastrous peace mission arrived in the form of a memorandum from Marshall on March 4, 1798. Adams, not wanting to incite violent impulses among the populace, announced that the mission had failed without providing details.[205] He also sent a message to Congress asking for a renewal of the nation's defenses. The Republicans frustrated the President's defense measures. Suspecting that he might be hiding material favorable to France, Republicans in the House, with the support of Federalists who had heard rumors of what was contained in the messages and were happy to assist the Republicans, voted overwhelmingly to demand that Adams release the papers. Once they were released, the Republicans, according to Abigail, were "struck dumb."[206] Benjamin Franklin Bache, editor of the *Philadelphia Aurora*, blamed Adams's aggression as the cause of the disaster. Among the general public, the effects were very different. The affair substantially weakened popular American support of France. Adams reached the height of his popularity as many in the country called for full-scale war against the French.[207]

Alien and Sedition Acts

Despite the XYZ Affair, Republican opposition persisted. Federalists accused the French and their associated immigrants of provoking civil unrest. In an attempt to quell the outcry, the Federalists introduced, and the Congress passed, a series of laws collectively referred to as the Alien and Sedition Acts, which were signed by Adams in June 1798.[208] Congress specifically passed four measures – the Naturalization Act, the Alien

Friends Act, the Alien Enemies Act and the Sedition Act. All came within a period of two weeks, in what Jefferson called an "unguarded passion." The Alien Friends Act, Alien Enemies Act, and Naturalization Acts targeted immigrants, specifically French, by giving the president greater deportation authority and increasing citizenship requirements. The Sedition Act made it a crime to publish "false, scandalous, and malicious writing" against the government or its officials.[209] Adams had not promoted any of these acts, but was urged to sign them by his wife and cabinet. He eventually agreed and signed the bills into law.[210]

The administration initiated fourteen or more indictments under the Sedition Act, as well as suits against five of the six most prominent Republican newspapers. The majority of the legal actions began in 1798 and 1799, and went to trial on the eve of the 1800 presidential election. Other historians have cited evidence that the Alien and Sedition Acts were rarely enforced, namely: 1) only 10 convictions under the Sedition Act have been identified; 2) Adams never signed a deportation order; and 3) the sources of expressed furor over the acts were Republicans. The Acts allowed for the prosecution of many who opposed the Federalists.[211] Congressman Matthew Lyon of Vermont was sentenced to four months in jail for criticizing the president.[212] Adams resisted Pickering's attempts to deport aliens, although many left on their own, largely in response to the hostile environment.[213] Republicans were outraged. Jefferson, disgusted by the acts, wrote nothing publicly but partnered with Madison to secretly draft the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions. Jefferson, writing for Kentucky, wrote that states had the "natural right" to nullify any acts they deemed unconstitutional. Writing to Madison, he speculated that as a last resort the states might have to "sever ourselves from the union we so much value."[214] Federalists reacted bitterly to the resolutions, which were to have far more lasting implications for the country than the Alien and Sedition Acts. Still, the acts Adams signed into law energized and unified the Republican Party while doing little to unite the Federalists.[215]

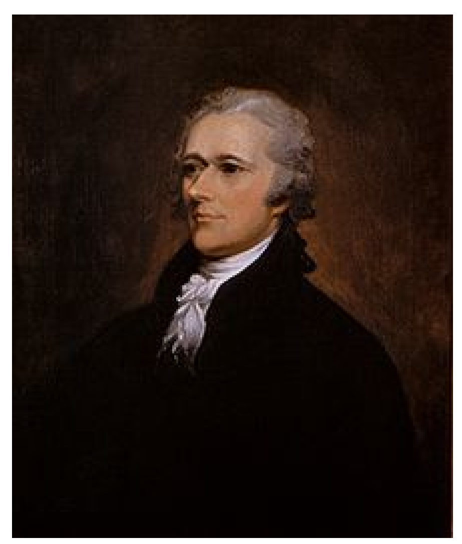
Thomas Jefferson, Adams's vice president, attempted to undermine many of his actions as president and eventually defeated him for reelection.

Quasi-War

In May 1798, a French privateer captured a merchant vessel off of the New York Harbor. An increase in attacks on sea marked the beginning of the undeclared naval war known as the Quasi-War.[216] Adams knew that America would be unable to win a major conflict, both because of its internal divisions and because France at the time was dominating the fight in most of Europe. He pursued a strategy whereby America harassed French ships in an effort sufficient to stem the French assaults on American interests.[217] In May, shortly after the attack in New York, Congress created a separate Navy Department. The prospect of a French invasion of the U.S. mainland led for calls to build up the army. Hamilton and other "High Federalists" were particularly adamant that a large army be called up, in spite of a common fear, particularly among Republicans, that large standing armies were subversive to liberty. In May, a "provisional" army of 10,000 soldiers was authorized by Congress. In July, Congress created twelve infantry regiments and provided for six cavalry companies. These numbers exceeded Adams's requests but fell short of Hamilton's.[218]

Adams was pressured by Federalists to appoint Hamilton, who had served as Washington's aide-de-camp during the Revolution, to command the army.[219] Distrustful of Hamilton and fearing a plot to subvert his administration, Adams appointed Washington to command without consulting him. Washington was surprised, and as a condition of his acceptance demanded that he be permitted to appoint his own subordinates. He wished to have Henry Knox as second-in-command, followed by Hamilton, and then Charles Pinckney.[220] On June 2, Hamilton wrote to Washington stating that he would not serve unless he was made Inspector

General and second-in-command.[221] Washington conceded that Hamilton, despite holding a rank lower than that of Knox and Pinckney, had, by serving on his staff, more opportunity to comprehend the whole military scene, and should therefore outrank them. Adams sent Secretary of War McHenry to Mount Vernon to convince Washington to accept the post. McHenry put forth his opinion that Washington would not serve unless permitted to choose his own officers.[222] Adams had intended to appoint Republicans Burr and Frederick Muhlenberg to make the army appear bipartisan. Washington's list consisted entirely of Federalists.[223] Adams relented and agreed to submit to the Senate the names of Hamilton, Pinckney, and Knox, in that order, although final decisions of rank would be reserved to Adams.[222] Knox refused to serve under these conditions. Adams firmly intended to give to Hamilton the lowest possible rank, while Washington and many other Federalists insisted that the order in which the names had been submitted to the Senate must determine seniority. On September 21, Adams received a letter from McHenry relaying a statement from Washington threatening to resign if Hamilton were not made second-in-command.[224] Adams knew of the backlash that he would receive from Federalists should he continue his course, and he was forced to capitulate despite bitter resentment against many of his fellow Federalists.[225] The severe illness of Abigail, whom Adams feared was near death, exacerbated his suffering and frustration.[224]


Alexander Hamilton's desire for high military rank and his push for war with France put him into conflict with Adams.

It quickly became apparent that due to Washington's advanced age, Hamilton was the army's *de facto* commander. He exerted effective control over the War Department, taking over supplies for the army.[226] Meanwhile, Adams built up the Navy, adding six fast, powerful frigates, most notably the USS *Constitution*.[227]

The Quasi-War continued, but there was a noticeable decline in war fever beginning in the fall once news arrived of the French defeat at the Battle of the Nile, which many Americans hoped would make them more disposed to negotiate.[228] In October, Adams heard from Gerry in Paris that the French wanted to make peace and would properly receive an American delegation. That December in his address to Congress, Adams relayed these statements while expressing the need to maintain adequate defenses. The speech angered both Federalists, including Hamilton, many of whom had wanted a request for a declaration of war, and Republicans.[229] Hamilton secretly promoted a plan, already rejected by Adams, in which American and British troops would combine to seize Spanish Florida and Louisiana, ostensibly to deter a possible French invasion. Hamilton's critics, including Abigail, saw in his military buildups the signs of an aspiring military dictator.[230]

On February 18, 1799, Adams surprised many by nominating diplomat William Vans Murray on a peace mission to France. The decision was made without consulting his cabinet or even Abigail, who nonetheless upon hearing of it described it as a "master stroke." To placate Republicans, he nominated Patrick Henry and Ellsworth to accompany Murray and the Senate immediately approved them on March 3. Henry declined the nomination and Adams chose William Richardson Davie to replace him.[231] Hamilton strongly criticized the decision, as did Adams's cabinet members, who maintained frequent communication with him. Adams again questioned the loyalty of those men but did not remove them.[192] To the annoyance of many, Adams spent a full seven months – March to September – of 1799 in Peacefield, finally returning to Trenton, where the government had set up temporary quarters due to the yellow fever epidemic, after a letter arrived from Talleyrand confirming Gerry's statement that American ministers would be received. Adams then decided to send the commissioners to France.[232] Adams arrived back in Trenton on October 10.[233] Shortly after, Hamilton, in a breach of military protocol, arrived uninvited at the city to speak with the president, urging him not to send the peace commissioners but instead to ally with Britain, which he viewed to be the stronger party,

to restore the Bourbons to France. "I heard him with perfect good humor, though never in my life did I hear a man talk more like a fool," Adams said. He regarded Hamilton's idea as chimerical and far-fetched. On November 15, the commissioners set sail for Paris.[234]

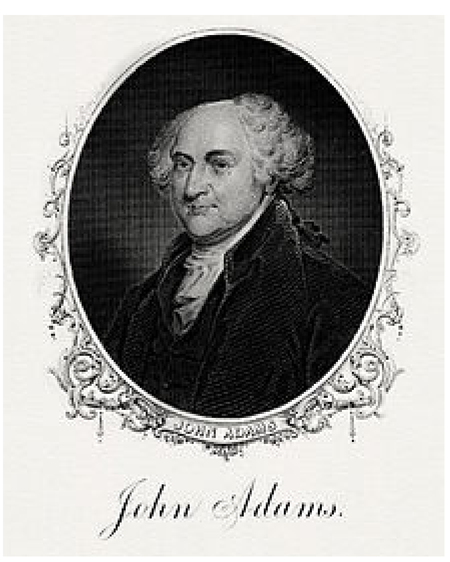
Fries's Rebellion

To pay for the military buildup of the Quasi-War, Adams and his Federalist allies enacted the Direct Tax of 1798. Direct taxation by the federal government was widely unpopular, and the government's revenue under Washington had mostly come from excise taxes and tariffs. Though Washington had maintained a balanced budget with the help of a growing economy, increased military expenditures threatened to cause major budget deficits, and the Federalists developed a taxation plan to meet the need for increased government revenue. The Direct Tax of 1798 instituted a progressive land value tax of up to 1% of the value of a property. Taxpayers in eastern Pennsylvania resisted federal tax collectors, and in March 1799 the bloodless Fries's Rebellion broke out. Led by Revolutionary War veteran John Fries, rural German-speaking farmers protested what they saw as a threat to their liberties. They intimidated tax collectors, who often found themselves unable to go about their business.[235] The disturbance was quickly ended with Hamilton leading the army to restore peace.[236]

Fries and two other leaders were arrested, found guilty of treason, and sentenced to hang. They appealed to Adams requesting a pardon. The cabinet unanimously advised Adams to refuse, but he instead granted the pardon, using as justification the argument that the men had instigated a mere riot as opposed to a rebellion.[237] In his pamphlet attacking Adams before the election, Hamilton wrote that "it was impossible to commit a greater error."[238]

Federalist divisions and peace

On May 5, 1800, Adams's frustrations with the Hamilton wing of the party exploded during a meeting with McHenry, a Hamilton loyalist who was universally regarded, even by Hamilton, as an inept Secretary of War. Adams accused him of subservience to Hamilton and declared that he would rather serve as Jefferson's vice president or minister at The Hague than be beholden to Hamilton for the presidency. McHenry offered to resign at once, and Adams accepted. On May 10, he asked Pickering to resign. Pickering refused and was summarily dismissed. Adams named John Marshall as Secretary of State and Samuel Dexter as Secretary of War.[239][240] In 1799, Napoleon took over as head of the French government in the Coup of 18 Brumaire and declared the French Revolution over.[241] News of this event increased Adams's desire to disband the provisional army, which, with Washington now dead, was commanded only by Hamilton.[242] His moves to end the army after the departures of McHenry and Pickering were met with little opposition.[243] Rather than allow Adams to receive the credit, Federalists joined with Republicans in voting to disband the army in mid-1800.[242]



BEP engraved portrait of Adams as President

Napoleon, determining that further conflict was pointless, signaled his readiness for friendly relations. By the Convention of 1800, the two sides agreed to return any captured ships and to allow for the peaceful transfer of non-military goods to an enemy of the nation. On January 23, 1801, the Senate voted 16–14 in favor of the treaty, four votes short of the necessary two thirds. Some Federalists, including Hamilton, urged that the Senate vote in favor of the treaty with reservations. A new proposal was then drawn up demanding that the Treaty of

Alliance of 1778 be superseded and that France pay for its damages to American property. On February 3, the treaty with the reservations passed 22–9 and was signed by Adams.[244][c] News of the peace treaty did not arrive in the United States until after the election, too late to sway the results.[246]

As president, Adams proudly avoided war, but deeply split his party in the process. Historian Ron Chernow writes that "the threat of Jacobinism" was the one thing that united the Federalist Party, and that Adams's elimination of it unwittingly contributed to the party's demise.[247]

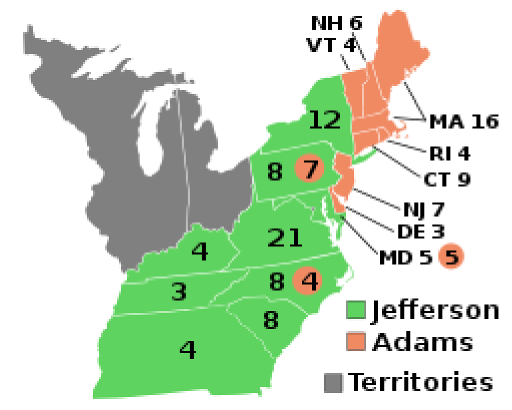
Establishing government institutions and move to Washington

Adams's leadership on naval defense has sometimes led him to be called the "father of the American Navy."[248][249] In July 1798, he signed into law An Act for the relief of sick and disabled seamen, which authorized the establishment of a government-operated marine hospital service.[250] In 1800, he signed the law establishing the Library of Congress.[251]

Adams made his first official visit to the nation's new seat of government in early June 1800. Amid the "raw and unfinished" cityscape, the President found the public buildings "in a much greater forwardness of completion than expected."[252] He moved into the nearly completed President's Mansion (later known as the White House) on November 1. Abigail arrived a few weeks later. Upon arriving, Adams wrote to her, "Before I end my letter, I pray Heaven to bestow the best of Blessings on this House and all that shall hereafter inhabit it. May none but honest and wise Men ever rule under this roof."[253] The Senate of the 7th Congress met for the first time in the new Congress House (later known as the Capitol building) on November 17, 1800. On November 22, Adams delivered his fourth State of the Union Address to a joint session of Congress in the Old Supreme Court Chamber.[254] This would be the last annual message any president would personally deliver to Congress for the next 113 years.[255]

Election of 1800

With the Federalist Party deeply split over his negotiations with France, and the opposition Republican Party enraged over the Alien and Sedition Acts and the expansion of the military, Adams faced a daunting reelection campaign in 1800.[175] The Federalist congressmen caucused in the spring of 1800 and nominated Adams and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney. The Republicans nominated Jefferson and Burr, their candidates in the previous election.[256]



1800 presidential election results

The campaign was bitter and characterized by malicious insults by partisan presses on both sides. Federalists claimed that the Republicans were the enemies of "all who love order, peace, virtue, and religion." They were said to be libertines and dangerous radicals who favored states' rights over the Union and would instigate anarchy and civil war. Jefferson's rumored affairs with slaves were used against him. Republicans in turn accused Federalists of subverting republican principles through punitive federal laws and of favoring Britain and the other coalition countries in their war with France to promote aristocratic, anti-republican values. Jefferson was portrayed as an apostle of liberty and man of the people, while Adams was labelled a monarchist. He was accused of insanity and marital infidelity.[257] James T. Callender, a Republican propagandist secretly financed by Jefferson, degraded Adams's character and accused him of attempting to make war with France. Callender was arrested and jailed under the Sedition Act, which only further inflamed Republican passions.[258]

Opposition from the Federalist Party was at times equally intense. Some, including Pickering, accused Adams of colluding with Jefferson so that he would end up either president or vice president.[259] Hamilton was hard at work, attempting to sabotage the president's reelection. Planning an indictment of Adams's character, he requested and received private documents from both the ousted cabinet secretaries and Wolcott.[260] The letter was intended for only a few Federalist electors. Upon seeing a draft, several Federalists urged Hamilton not to send it. Wolcott wrote that "the poor old man" could do himself in without Hamilton's assistance. Hamilton did not heed their advice.[261] On October 24, he sent a pamphlet strongly attacking Adams's policies and character. Hamilton denounced the "precipitate nomination" of Murray, the pardoning of Fries, and the firing of Pickering. He included a fair share of personal insults, vilifying the president's "disgusting egotism" and "ungovernable temper." Adams, he concluded, was "emotionally unstable, given to impulsive and irrational decisions, unable to coexist with his closest advisers, and generally unfit to be president."[238] Strangely, it ended by saying that the electors should support Adams and Pinckney equally.[262] Thanks to Burr, who had covertly obtained a copy, the pamphlet became public knowledge and was distributed throughout the country by Republicans, who rejoiced in what it contained.[263] The pamphlet destroyed the Federalist Party, ended Hamilton's political career, and helped ensure Adams's already-likely defeat.[262]

When the electoral votes were counted, Adams finished in third place with 65 votes, and Pinckney came in fourth with 64 votes. Jefferson and Burr tied for first place with 73 votes each. Because of the tie, the election devolved upon the House of Representatives, with each state having one vote and a supermajority required for victory. On February 17, 1801 – on the 36th ballot – Jefferson was elected by a vote of 10 to 4 (two states abstained).[175][185] It is noteworthy that Hamilton's scheme, although it made the Federalists appear divided and therefore helped Jefferson win, failed in its overall attempt to woo Federalist electors away from Adams.[264][d]

To compound the agony of his defeat, Adams's son Charles, a long-time alcoholic, died on November 30. Anxious to rejoin Abigail, who had already left for Massachusetts, Adams departed the White House in the predawn hours of March 4, 1801, and did not attend Jefferson's inauguration.[267][268] Since him, only three out-going presidents (having served a full term) have not attended their successors' inaugurations.[256] The complications arising out of the 1796 and 1800 elections prompted Congress and the states to refine the process whereby the Electoral College elects a president and a vice president through the 12th Amendment, which became a part of the Constitution in 1804.[269]

Cabinet

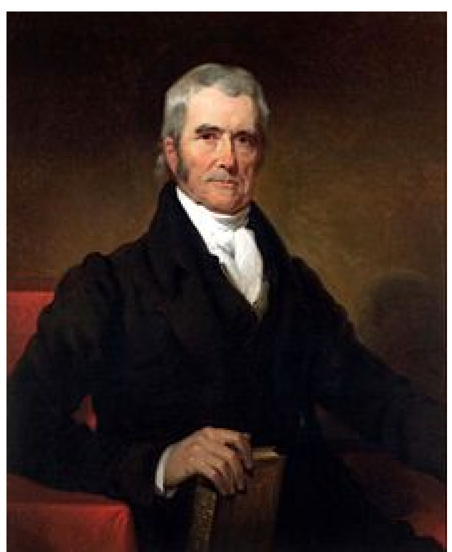
The Adams Cabinet

Office	Name	Term
President	**John Adams**	1797–1801
Vice President	**Thomas Jefferson**	1797–1801
Secretary of State	**Timothy Pickering**	1797–1800
John Marshall	1800–1801	
Secretary of the Treasury	**Oliver Wolcott Jr.**	1797–1800
Samuel Dexter	1801	
Secretary of War	**James McHenry**	1797–1800

Samuel Dexter	1800–1801	
Attorney General	**Charles Lee**	1797–1801
Secretary of the Navy	**Benjamin Stoddert**	1798–1801

Judicial appointments

Supreme Court appointments by President Adams		
Position	**Name**	**Term**
Chief Justice	**John Marshall**	1801–1835
Associate Justice	**Bushrod Washington**	1799–1829
Alfred Moore	1800–1804	



John Marshall, 4th Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and one of Adams's few dependable allies

Adams appointed two U.S. Supreme Court associate justices during his term in office: Bushrod Washington, the nephew of American founding father and President George Washington, and Alfred Moore.[256] After the retirement of Ellsworth due to ill health in 1800, it fell to Adams to appoint the Court's fourth Chief Justice. At the time, it was not yet certain whether Jefferson or Burr would win the election. Regardless, Adams believed that the choice should be someone "in the full vigor of middle age" who could counter what might be a long line of successive Republican presidents. Adams chose his Secretary of State John Marshall.[270] He, along with Stoddert, was one of Adams's few trusted cabinet members, and was among the first to greet him when he arrived at the White House.[262] Adams signed his commission on January 31 and the Senate approved it immediately.[271] Marshall's long tenure left a lasting influence on the Court. He maintained a carefully reasoned nationalistic interpretation of the Constitution and established the judicial branch as the equal of the executive and legislative branches.[272]

After the Federalists lost control of both houses of Congress along with the White House in the election of 1800, the lame-duck session of the 6th Congress in February 1801 approved a judiciary act, commonly known as the Midnight Judges Act, which created a set of federal appeals courts between the district courts and the Supreme Court. Adams filled the vacancies created in this statute by appointing a series of judges, whom his opponents called the "Midnight Judges," just days before his term expired. Most of these judges lost their posts when the 7th Congress, with a solid Republican majority, approved the Judiciary Act of 1802, abolishing the newly created courts.[273]

Retirement (1801–1826)

Initial years

Adams resumed farming at Peacefield in the town of Quincy and began work on an autobiography. The work had numerous gaps and was eventually abandoned and left unedited.[274] Most of Adams's attention was focused on farm work.[275] He regularly worked around the farm but mostly left manual labor to hired hands.[276] His frugal lifestyle and presidential salary had left him with a considerable fortune by 1801. In 1803, Bird, Savage & Bird, the bank holding his cash reserves of about $13,000 collapsed.[277] John Quincy

resolved the crisis by buying his properties in Weymouth and Quincy, including Peacefield, for $12,800.[275] During the first four years of retirement, Adams made little effort to contact others, but eventually resumed contact with old acquaintances such as Benjamin Waterhouse and Benjamin Rush.[278]

Adams generally stayed quiet on public matters. He did not publicly denounce Jefferson's actions as president,[279] believing that "instead of opposing Systematically any Administration, running down their Characters and opposing all their Measures right or wrong, We ought to Support every Administration as far as We can in Justice."[280] When a disgruntled James Callender, angry at not being appointed to an office, turned on the president by revealing the Sally Hemings affair, Adams said nothing.[281] John Quincy was elected to the Senate in 1803. Shortly thereafter, both he and his father crossed party lines to support Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase.[282] The only major political incident involving Adams during the Jefferson years was a dispute with Mercy Otis Warren in 1806. Warren, an old friend, had written a history of the American Revolution attacking Adams for his "partiality for monarchy" and "pride of talents and much ambition." A tempestuous correspondence ensued. In time, their friendship healed.[283] Adams did privately criticize the President over his Embargo Act,[280] despite the fact that John Quincy voted for it.[284] John Quincy resigned from the Senate in 1808 after the Federalist-controlled State Senate refused to nominate him for a second term. After the Federalists denounced John Quincy as no longer being of their party, Adams wrote to him that he himself had long since "abdicated and disclaimed the name and character and attributes of that sect."[4]

After Jefferson's retirement from public life in 1809, Adams became more vocal. He published a three-year marathon of letters in the *Boston Patriot* newspaper, refuting line-by-line Hamilton's 1800 pamphlet. The initial piece was written shortly after his return from Peacefield and "had gathered dust for eight years." Adams had decided to shelve it over fears that it could negatively impact John Quincy should he ever seek office. Although Hamilton had died in 1804 in a duel with Aaron Burr, Adams felt the need to vindicate his character against his charges. With his son having broken from the Federalist Party and joined the Republicans, he felt he could safely do so without threatening his political career.[285] Adams supported the War of 1812. Having worried over the rise of sectionalism, he celebrated the growth of a "national character" that accompanied it.[286] Adams supported James Madison for reelection to the presidency in 1812.[287]

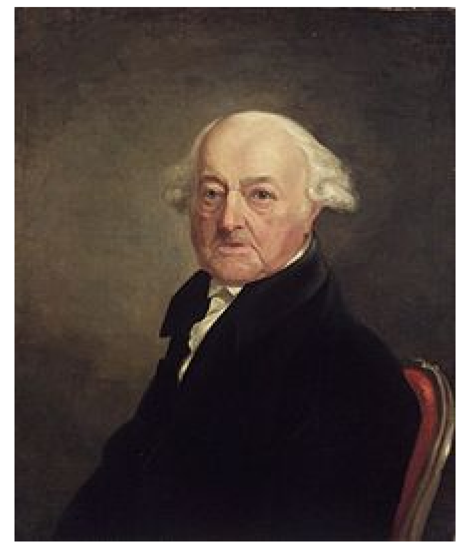
Daughter Abigail ("Nabby") was married to Representative William Stephens Smith, but she returned to her parents' home after the failure of the marriage; she died of breast cancer in 1813.[288]

Correspondence with Jefferson

In early 1801, Adams sent Thomas Jefferson a brief note after returning to Quincy wishing him a happy and prosperous presidency. Jefferson failed to respond, and they did not speak again for nearly 12 years. In 1804, Abigail, unbeknownst to her husband, wrote to Jefferson to express her condolences upon the death of his daughter Polly, who had stayed with the Adamses in London in 1787. This initiated a brief correspondence between the two which quickly descended into political rancor. Jefferson terminated it by not replying to Abigail's fourth letter. Aside from that, by 1812 there had been no communication between Peacefield and Monticello since Adams left office.[289]

In early 1812, Adams reconciled with Jefferson. The previous year had been tragic for Adams; his brother-in-law and friend Richard Cranch had died along with his widow Mary, and Nabby had been diagnosed with breast cancer. These events mellowed Adams and caused him to soften his outlook.[285] Their mutual friend Benjamin Rush, a fellow signer of the Declaration of Independence who had been corresponding with both, encouraged them to reach out to each other. On New Year's Day, Adams sent a brief, friendly note to Jefferson to accompany a two-volume collection of lectures on rhetoric by John Quincy Adams. Jefferson replied immediately with a cordial letter, and the two men revived their friendship, which they sustained by mail. The correspondence that they resumed in 1812 lasted the rest of their lives, and has been hailed as among their great legacies of American literature. Their letters represent an insight into both the period and the minds of the

two revolutionary leaders and presidents. The missives lasted fourteen years, and consisted of 158 letters – 109 from Adams and 49 from Jefferson.[290]



John Adams, c. 1816, by Samuel Morse (Brooklyn Museum)

Early on, Adams repeatedly tried to turn the correspondence to a discussion of their actions in the political arena.[291] Jefferson refused to oblige him, saying that "nothing new can be added by you or me to what has been said by others and will be said in every age."[292] Adams made one more attempt, writing that "You and I ought not to die before we have explained ourselves to each other."[293] Still, Jefferson declined to engage Adams in this sort of discussion. Adams accepted this, and the correspondence turned to other matters, particularly philosophy and their daily habits.[294][e]

As the two men became older, the letters grew fewer and farther between. There was also important information that each man kept to himself. Jefferson said nothing about his construction of a new house, domestic turmoil, slave ownership, or poor financial situation, while Adams did not mention the troublesome behavior of his son Thomas, who had failed as a lawyer and become an alcoholic, resorting afterwards to living primarily as a caretaker at Peacefield.[297]

Last years and death

Abigail died of typhoid on October 28, 1818, at their Quincy home, Peacefield.[298]

The year 1824 was filled with excitement in America, featuring a four-way presidential contest which included John Quincy. The Marquis de Lafayette toured the country and met with Adams, who greatly enjoyed Lafayette's visit to Peacefield.[299] Adams was delighted by the election of John Quincy to the presidency. The results became official in February 1825 after a deadlock was decided in the House of Representatives. He remarked, "No man who ever held the office of President would congratulate a friend on obtaining it."[300]

Tombs of John and Abigail Adams (far) and John Quincy and Louisa Adams (near), in family crypt at United First Parish Church

Less than a month before his death, Adams issued a statement about the destiny of the United States, which historian Joy Hakim characterized as a warning for his fellow citizens: "My best wishes, in the joys, and festivities, and the solemn services of that day on which will be completed the fiftieth year from its birth, of the independence of the United States: a memorable epoch in the annals of the human race, destined in future history to form the brightest or the blackest page, according to the use or the abuse of those political institutions by which they shall, in time to come, be shaped by the human mind."[301]

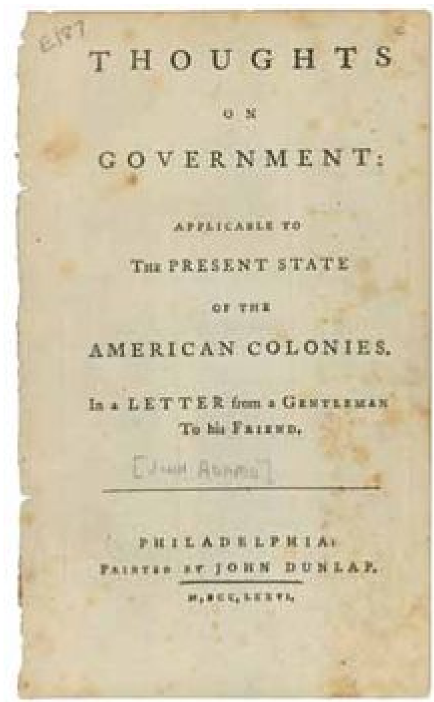
On July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, Adams died at Peacefield at approximately 6:20 pm.[302] His last words included an acknowledgement of his longtime friend and rival: "Thomas Jefferson survives." Adams was unaware that Jefferson had died several hours before.[303][304] At 90, Adams was the longest-lived US president until Ronald Reagan surpassed him in 2001.[305]

John and Abigail Adams's crypt at United First Parish Church in Quincy, Massachusetts, also contains the bodies of John Quincy and Louisa Adams.[306]

Political writings

Thoughts on Government

During the First Continental Congress, Adams was sometimes solicited for his views on government. While recognizing its importance, Adams had privately criticized Thomas Paine's 1776 pamphlet *Common Sense*, which attacked all forms of monarchy, even constitutional monarchy of the sort advocated by John Locke. It supported a unicameral legislature and a weak executive elected by the legislature. According to Adams, the author had "a better hand at pulling down than building."[307] He believed that the views expressed in the pamphlet were "so democratical, without any restraint or even an attempt at any equilibrium or counter poise, that it must produce confusion and every evil work."[308] What Paine advocated was a radical democracy with the views of the majority neither checked nor counterbalanced. This was incompatible with the system of checks and balances that conservatives like Adams would implement.[309] Some delegates urged Adams to commit his views to paper. He did so in separate letters to these colleagues. So impressed was Richard Henry Lee that, with Adams's consent, he had the most comprehensive letter printed. Published anonymously in April 1776, it was titled *Thoughts on Government* and styled as "a Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend." Many historians agree that none of Adams's other compositions rivaled the enduring influence of this pamphlet.[78]


THOUGHTS
ON
GOVERNMENT:
APPLICABLE TO
THE PRESENT STATE
OF THE
AMERICAN COLONIES.
In a LETTER from a GENTLEMAN
To his FRIEND.
[John Adams]
PHILADELPHIA:
PRINTED BY JOHN DUNLAP.
M,DCC,LXXVI.

Thoughts on Government (1776)

Adams advised that the form of government should be chosen to attain the desired ends – the happiness and virtue of the greatest number of people. He wrote that, "There is no good government but what is republican. That the only valuable part of the British constitution is so because the very definition of a republic is an empire of laws, and not of men." The treatise defended bicameralism, for "a single assembly is liable to all the vices, follies and frailties of an individual."[310] Adams suggested that there should be a separation of powers between the executive, the judicial and the legislative branches, and further recommended that if a continental government were to be formed then it "should sacredly be confined" to certain enumerated powers. *Thoughts on Government* was referenced in every state-constitution writing hall. Adams used the letter to attack opponents of independence. He claimed that John Dickinson's fear of republicanism was responsible for his refusal to support independence, and wrote that opposition from Southern planters was rooted in fear that their aristocratic slaveholding status would be endangered by it.[78]

Massachusetts Constitution

After returning from his first mission to France in 1779, Adams was elected to the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention with the purpose of establishing a new constitution for Massachusetts. He served on a committee of three, also including Samuel Adams and James Bowdoin, to draft the constitution. The task of writing it fell primarily to John Adams. The resulting Constitution of Massachusetts was approved in 1780. It was the first constitution written by a special committee, then ratified by the people; and was the first to feature a bicameral legislature. Included were a distinct executive – though restrained by an executive council – with a qualified (two-thirds) veto, and an independent judicial branch. The judges were given lifetime appointments, allowed to "hold their offices during good behavior."[311]

The Constitution affirmed the "duty" of the individual to worship the "Supreme Being," and that he had the right to do so without molestation "in the manner most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience."[312] It established a system of public education that would provide free schooling for three years to the children of all citizens.[313] Adams was a strong believer in good education as one of the pillars of the Enlightenment. He believed that people "in a State of Ignorance" were more easily enslaved while those "enlightened with knowledge" would be better able to protect their liberties.[314] Adams became one of the founders of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1780.[315]

Defence of the Constitutions

Adams's preoccupation with political and governmental affairs – which caused considerable separation from his wife and children – had a distinct familial context, which he articulated in 1780: "I must study Politicks and War that my sons may have the liberty to study Mathematicks and Philosophy. My sons ought to study Geography, natural History, Naval Architecture, navigation, Commerce and Agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study Painting, Poetry, Musick, Architecture, Statuary, Tapestry, and Porcelaine."[316]

While in London, Adams learned of a convention being planned to amend the Articles of Confederation. In January 1787, he published a work entitled *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States*.[317] The pamphlet repudiated the views of Turgot and other European writers as to the viciousness of state government frameworks. He suggested that "the rich, the well-born and the able" should be set apart from other men in a senate – that would prevent them from dominating the lower house. Adams's *Defence* is described as an articulation of the theory of mixed government. Adams contended that social classes exist in every political society, and that a good government must accept that reality. For centuries, dating back to Aristotle, a mixed regime balancing monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy – that is, the king, the nobles, and the people – was required to preserve order and liberty.[318]

Historian Gordon S. Wood has maintained that Adams's political philosophy had become irrelevant by the time the Federal Constitution was ratified. By then, American political thought, transformed by more than a decade of vigorous debate as well as formative experiential pressures, had abandoned the classical perception of politics as a mirror of social estates. Americans' new understanding of popular sovereignty was that the citizenry were the sole possessors of power in the nation. Representatives in the government enjoyed mere portions of the people's power and only for a limited time. Adams was thought to have overlooked this evolution and revealed his continued attachment to the older version of politics.[319] Yet Wood was accused of ignoring Adams's peculiar definition of the term "republic," and his support for a constitution ratified by the people.[320]

On separation of powers, Adams wrote that, "Power must be opposed to power, and interest to interest."[321] This sentiment was later echoed by James Madison's statement that, "[a]mbition must be made to counteract ambition," in Federalist No. 51, explaining the separation of powers established under the new Constitution.[321][322] Adams believed that human beings were naturally desirous of furthering their own ambitions, and a single democratically elected house, if left unchecked, would be subject to this error, and therefore needed to be checked by an upper house and an executive. He wrote that a strong executive would defend the people's liberties against "aristocrats" attempting to take it away.[323] On the government's role in education Adams stated that, "The whole people must take upon themselves the education of the whole people and be willing to bear the expenses of it. There should not be a district of one mile square, without a school in it, not founded by a charitable individual, but maintained at the public expense of the people themselves."[324]

Adams first saw the new United States Constitution in late 1787. To Jefferson, he wrote that he read it "with great satisfaction." Adams expressed regret that the president would be unable to make appointments without Senate approval and over the absence of a Bill of Rights. "Should not such a thing have preceded the model?" he asked.[325]

Political philosophy and views

Slavery

Adams never owned a slave and declined on principle to use slave labor, saying, "I have, through my whole life, held the practice of slavery in such abhorrence, that I have never owned a negro or any other slave, though I have lived for many years in times, when the practice was not disgraceful, when the best men in my vicinity thought it not inconsistent with their character, and when it has cost me thousands of dollars for the labor and subsistence of free men, which I might have saved by the purchase of negroes at times when they were very cheap."[326] Before the war, he occasionally represented slaves in suits for their freedom.[327] Adams generally tried to keep the issue out of national politics, because of the anticipated Southern response during a time when unity was needed to achieve independence. He spoke out in 1777 against a bill to emancipate slaves in Massachusetts, saying that the issue was presently too divisive, and so the legislation should "sleep for a time." He also was against use of black soldiers in the Revolution due to opposition from Southerners.[328] Slavery was abolished in Massachusetts about 1780, when it was forbidden by implication in the Declaration of Rights that John Adams wrote into the Massachusetts Constitution.[329] Abigail Adams vocally opposed slavery.[330]

Accusations of monarchism

Throughout his lifetime Adams expressed controversial and shifting views regarding the virtues of monarchical and hereditary political institutions.[331] At times he conveyed substantial support for these approaches, suggesting for example that "hereditary monarchy or aristocracy" are the "only institutions that can possibly preserve the laws and liberties of the people."[332] Yet at other times he distanced himself from such ideas, calling himself "a mortal and irreconcilable enemy to Monarchy" and "no friend to hereditary limited monarchy in America."[153] Such denials did not assuage his critics, and Adams was often accused of being a monarchist.[333] Historian Clinton Rossiter portrays Adams not as a monarchist but a revolutionary conservative who sought to balance republicanism with the stability of monarchy to create "ordered liberty."[334] His 1790 *Discourses on Davila* published in the *Gazette of the United States* warned once again of the dangers of unbridled democracy.[335]

Many attacks on Adams were scurrilous, including suggestions that he was planning to "crown himself king" and "grooming John Quincy as heir to the throne."[333] Peter Shaw has argued that: "[T]he inevitable attacks on Adams, crude as they were, stumbled on a truth that he did not admit to himself. He was leaning toward monarchy and aristocracy (as distinct from kings and aristocrats) ... Decidedly, sometime after he became vice-president, Adams concluded that the United States would have to adopt a hereditary legislature and a monarch ... and he outlined a plan by which state conventions would appoint hereditary senators while a national one appointed a president for life."[336] In contrast to such notions, Adams asserted in a letter to Thomas Jefferson:

> If you suppose that I have ever had a design or desire of attempting to introduce a government of King, Lords and Commons, or in other words an hereditary Executive, or an hereditary Senate, either into the government of the United States, or that of any individual state, in this country, you are wholly mistaken. There is not such a thought expressed or intimated in any public writing or private letter of mine, and I may safely challenge all of mankind to produce such a passage and quote the chapter and verse.[337]

According to Luke Mayville, Adams synthesized two strands of thought: practical study of past and present governments, and Scottish Enlightenment thinking concerning individual desires expressed in politics.[338] Adams's conclusion was that the great danger was that an oligarchy of the wealthy would take hold to the detriment of equality. To counter that danger, the power of the wealthy needed to be channeled by institutions, and checked by a strong executive.[338][323]

C. Bradley Thompson, in John Adams and the Spirit of Liberty (https://kansaspress.ku.edu/978-0-7006-1181-2.html), argues that Adams "grasped the characteristics of regimes ruled by king-like authorities ('the one'), wealthy minorities ('the few'), unrestrained mobs ('the many'), and of their combinations. Adams concluded that the framers of these governments failed, in one respect or another, to fully consider man’s nature, most saliently that men are born with equal rights and that these rights 'are not positive grants of the sovereign' but are 'antecedent to all earthly government'."[339]

Religious views

John Adams by Gilbert Stuart (1823). This portrait was the last made of Adams, done at the request of John Quincy.[340]

Adams was raised a Congregationalist, since his ancestors were Puritans. According to biographer David McCullough, "as his family and friends knew, Adams was both a devout Christian, and an independent thinker, and he saw no conflict in that."[341] In a letter to Rush, Adams credited religion with the success of his ancestors since their migration to the New World.[342] He believed that regular church service was beneficial to man's moral sense. Everett (1966) concludes that "Adams strove for a religion based on a common sense sort of reasonableness" and maintained that religion must change and evolve toward perfection.[343] Fielding (1940) argues that Adams's beliefs synthesized Puritan, deist, and humanist concepts. Adams at one point said that Christianity had originally been revelatory, but was being misinterpreted in the service of superstition, fraud, and unscrupulous power.[344]

Frazer (2004) notes that while he shared many perspectives with deists and often used deistic terminology, "Adams clearly was not a deist. Deism rejected any and all supernatural activity and intervention by God; consequently, deists did not believe in miracles or God's providence. ... Adams did believe in miracles, providence, and, to a certain extent, the Bible as revelation."[345] Frazer argues that Adams's "theistic rationalism, like that of the other Founders, was a sort of middle ground between Protestantism and deism."[346] In 1796, Adams denounced Thomas Paine's deistic criticisms of Christianity in *The Age of Reason*, saying, "The Christian religion is, above all the religions that ever prevailed or existed in ancient or modern times, the religion of wisdom, virtue, equity and humanity, let the Blackguard Paine say what he will."[347]

But historian Gordon S. Wood (2017) writes, "Although both Jefferson and Adams denied the miracles of the Bible and the divinity of Christ, Adams always retained a respect for the religiosity of people that Jefferson never had; in fact, Jefferson tended in private company to mock religious feelings."[348]

In his retirement years, Adams moved away from some of the Puritan sentiments of his youth and closer to more mainstream Enlightenment religious ideals. He blamed institutional Christianity for causing much suffering but continued to be an active Christian while maintaining that religion was necessary for society. He became a Unitarian, rejecting the divinity of Jesus.[349] David L. Holmes argues that Adams, while adopting central tenets of the Unitarian creed, accepted Jesus as the redeemer of humanity and the biblical accounts of his miracles as true.[350]

Legacy

Historical reputation

Franklin summed up what many thought of Adams when he said, "He means well for his country, is always an honest man, often a wise one, but sometimes, and in some things, absolutely out of his senses."[351] Adams came to be seen as someone with a long, distinguished, and honorable career in public service, and a man of great patriotism and integrity, but whose vanity, stubbornness, and cantankerousness often got him into unnecessary trouble. Adams strongly felt that he would be forgotten and underappreciated by history. These feelings often manifested themselves through envy and verbal attacks on other Founders.[165][352]

Historian George Herring argues that Adams was the most independent-minded of the Founders.[353] Though he formally aligned with the Federalists, he was somewhat a party unto himself, at times disagreeing with the Federalists as much as he did the Republicans.[354] He was often described as "prickly", but his tenacity was fed by decisions made in the face of universal opposition.[353] Adams was often combative, which diminished presidential decorum, as he admitted in his old age: "[As President] I refused to suffer in silence. I sighed, sobbed, and groaned, and sometimes screeched and screamed. And I must confess to my shame and sorrow that I sometimes swore."[355] Stubbornness was seen as one of his defining traits, a fact for which Adams made no apology. "Thanks to God that he gave me stubbornness when I know I am right," he wrote.[356] His resolve to advance peace with France while maintaining a posture of defense reduced his popularity and contributed to his defeat for reelection.[357] Most historians applaud him for avoiding an all-out war with France during his presidency. His signing of the Alien and Sedition Acts is almost always condemned.[358]

According to Ferling, Adams's political philosophy fell "out of step" with the way that the country was heading. The country tended further away from Adams's emphasis on order and the rule of law and towards the Jeffersonian vision of liberty and weak central government. In the years following his retirement from public life, as first Jeffersonianism and then Jacksonian democracy grew to dominate American politics, Adams was largely forgotten.[359] When his name was mentioned, it was typically not in a favorable way. In the 1840 presidential election, Whig candidate William Henry Harrison was attacked by Democrats on the false allegation that he had once been a supporter of John Adams.[360] Adams was eventually subject to criticism from states' rights advocates. Edward A. Pollard, a strong supporter of the Confederacy during the American Civil War, singled out Adams, writing:

> The first President from the North, John Adams, asserted and essayed to put into practice the supremacy of the "National" power over the states and the citizens thereof. He was sustained in his attempted usurpations by all the New England states and by a powerful public sentiment in each of the Middle States. The "strict constructionists" of the Constitution were not slow in raising the standard of opposition against a pernicious error.[361]

In the 21st century, Adams remains less well known than many of America's other Founding Fathers, in accordance with his predictions. McCullough argued that "[t]he problem with Adams is that most Americans know nothing about him." Todd Leopold of CNN wrote in 2001 that Adams is "remembered as that guy who served a single term as president between Washington and Jefferson, and as a short, vain, somewhat rotund man whose stature seems to have been dwarfed by his lanky colleagues."[362] He has always been seen, Ferling says, as "honest and dedicated", but despite his lengthy career in public service, Adams is still overshadowed by the dramatic military and political achievements and strong personalities of his contemporaries.[363] Gilbert Chinard, in his 1933 biography of Adams, described the man as "staunch, honest, stubborn and somewhat narrow."[364] In his two-volume 1962 biography, Page Smith lauds Adams for his fight against radicals such as Thomas Paine, whose promised reforms portended anarchy and misery. Ferling,

in his 1992 biography, writes that "Adams was his own worst enemy." He criticizes him for his "pettiness ... jealousy, and vanity", and faults him for his frequent separations from his wife and children. He praises Adams for his willingness to acknowledge his deficiencies and for striving to overcome them. In 1976, Peter Shaw published *The Character of John Adams*. Ferling believes that the man who emerges is one "perpetually at war with himself", whose desire for fame and recognition leads to charges of vanity.[365]

In 2001, David McCullough published a biography of the president entitled *John Adams*. McCullough lauds Adams for consistency and honesty, "plays down or explains away" his more controversial actions, such as the dispute over presidential titles and the predawn flight from the White House, and criticizes his friend and rival, Jefferson. The book sold very well and was very favorably received and, along with the Ferling biography, contributed to a rapid resurgence in Adams's reputation.[366] In 2008, a miniseries was released based on the McCullough biography, featuring Paul Giamatti as Adams.[367]

In memoriam

Adams is commemorated as the namesake of various counties, buildings, and other items.[251][368][369] One example is the John Adams Building of the Library of Congress, an institution whose existence Adams had signed into law.[251] Unlike many other Founders, Adams does not have a monument dedicated to him in Washington, D.C.,[370] although a family inclusive Adams Memorial was authorized in 2001 and awaits funding. According to McCullough, "Popular symbolism has not been very generous toward Adams. There is no memorial, no statue ... in his honor in our nation's capital, and to me that is absolutely inexcusable. It's long past time when we should recognize what he did, and who he was."[371]

Adams is one of honorees of the Memorial to the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence in Washington, D.C.

Explanatory notes

a. Old style: October 19, 1735
b. The site of the Adams house is now in Quincy, Massachusetts, which was separated from Braintree and organized as a new town in 1792.
c. Jefferson, after entering office, approved a negotiated end to the 1778 alliance, freeing the United States of foreign entanglements, while excusing France from paying indemnities.[245]
d. Ferling attributes Adams's defeat to five factors: the stronger organization of the Republicans; Federalist disunity; the controversy surrounding the Alien and Sedition Acts; the popularity of Jefferson in the South; and the effective politicking of Burr in New York.[265] Adams wrote, "No party that ever existed knew itself so little or so vainly overrated its own influence and popularity as ours. None ever understood so ill the causes of its own power, or so wantonly destroyed them."[266] Stephen G. Kurtz argues that Hamilton and his supporters were primarily responsible for the destruction of the Federalist Party. They viewed the party as a personal tool and played into the hands of the Jeffersonians by building up a large standing army and creating a feud with Adams.[226] Chernow writes that Hamilton believed that by eliminating Adams, he could eventually pick up the pieces of the ruined Federalist Party and lead it back to dominance: "Better to purge Adams and let Jefferson govern for a while than to water down the party's ideological purity with compromises."[264]
e. The two men discussed "natural aristocracy." Jefferson said, "The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society. And indeed it would have been inconsistent in creation to have formed man for the social state, and not to have provided virtue and wisdom enough to manage the concerns of society. May we not even say that the form of government is best which provides most effectually for a pure selection of these natural [aristocrats] into the offices of government?"[295] Adams wondered if it

ever would be so clear who these people were, "Your distinction between natural and artificial aristocracy does not appear to me well founded. Birth and wealth are conferred on some men as imperiously by nature, as genius, strength, or beauty. ... When aristocracies are established by human laws and honour, wealth, and power are made hereditary by municipal laws and political institutions, then I acknowledge artificial aristocracy to commence." It would always be true, Adams argued, that fate would bestow influence on some men for reasons other than wisdom and virtue. A good government had to account for that reality.[296]

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Further reading

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- Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive (http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/archive/) at the Massachusetts Historical Society
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Samuel Adams

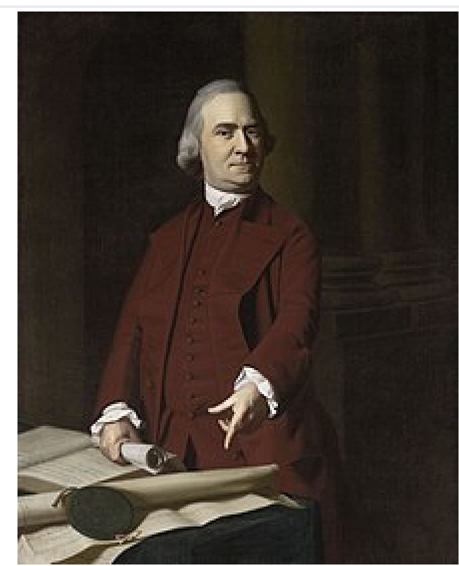
Samuel Adams (September 27 [O.S. September 16] 1722 – October 2, 1803) was an American statesman, political philosopher, and one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. He was a politician in colonial Massachusetts, a leader of the movement that became the American Revolution, and one of the architects of the principles of American republicanism that shaped the political culture of the United States. He was a second cousin to his fellow Founding Father, President John Adams.

Adams was born in Boston, brought up in a religious and politically active family. A graduate of Harvard College, he was an unsuccessful businessman and tax collector before concentrating on politics. He was an influential official of the Massachusetts House of Representatives and the Boston Town Meeting in the 1760s, and he became a part of a movement opposed to the British Parliament's efforts to tax the British American colonies without their consent. His 1768 Massachusetts Circular Letter calling for colonial non-cooperation prompted the occupation of Boston by British soldiers, eventually resulting in the Boston Massacre of 1770. Adams and his colleagues devised a committee of correspondence system in 1772 to help coordinate resistance to what he saw as the British government's attempts to violate the British Constitution at the expense of the colonies, which linked like-minded Patriots throughout the Thirteen Colonies. Continued resistance to British policy resulted in the 1773 Boston Tea Party and the coming of the American Revolution.

Parliament passed the Coercive Acts in 1774, at which time Adams attended the Continental Congress in Philadelphia which was convened to coordinate a colonial response. He helped guide Congress towards issuing the Continental Association in 1774 and the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and he helped draft the Articles of Confederation and the Massachusetts Constitution. Adams returned to Massachusetts after the American Revolution, where he served in the state senate and was eventually elected governor.

Samuel Adams later became a controversial figure in American history. Accounts written in the 19th century praised him as someone who had been steering his fellow colonists towards independence long before the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. This view gave way to negative assessments of Adams in the first half of the 20th century, in which he was portrayed as a master of propaganda who provoked mob violence to achieve

Samuel Adams



In this c. 1772 portrait by John Singleton Copley, Adams points at the Massachusetts Charter, which he viewed as a constitution that protected the peoples' rights.[1][2][3][4]

4th Governor of Massachusetts	
In office	
October 8, 1794 – June 2, 1797	
Lieutenant	Moses Gill
Preceded by	John Hancock
Succeeded by	Increase Sumner
3rd Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts	
In office	
1789–1794	
Acting Governor	
October 8, 1793 – 1794	
Governor	John Hancock
Preceded by	Benjamin Lincoln
Succeeded by	Moses Gill
President of the Massachusetts Senate	
In office	
1787–1788	
1782–1785	
Delegate from Massachusetts to the	

his goals. Both of these interpretations have been challenged by some modern scholars, who argue that these traditional depictions of Adams are myths contradicted by the historical record.

Continental Congress	
In office 1774–1777	
In office 1779–1781	
Clerk of the Massachusetts House of Representatives	
In office 1766–1774	
Personal details	
Born	September 27 [O.S. September 16] 1722 Boston, Massachusetts Bay
Died	October 2, 1803 (aged 81) Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.
Resting place	Granary Burying Ground, Boston
Political party	Democratic-Republican (1790s)
Spouse(s)	Elizabeth Checkley (m. 1749; died 1757) Elizabeth Wells (m. 1764)
Alma mater	Harvard College
Signature	

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Early life

Samuel Adams was born in Boston in the British colony of Massachusetts on September 16, 1722, an Old Style date that is sometimes converted to the New Style date of September 27.[5] Adams was one of twelve children born to Samuel Adams, Sr., and Mary (Fifield) Adams in an age of high infant mortality; only three of these children lived past their third birthday.[6][7][8] Adams's parents were devout Puritans and members of the Old South Congregational Church. The family lived on Purchase Street in Boston.[6][9] Adams was proud of his Puritan heritage, and emphasized Puritan values in his political career, especially virtue.[3][4]

Samuel Adams, Sr. (1689–1748) was a prosperous merchant and church deacon.[10][11][6] Deacon Adams became a leading figure in Boston politics through an organization that became known as the Boston Caucus, which promoted candidates who supported popular causes.[12][13] The Boston Caucus helped shape the agenda of the Boston Town Meeting. A New England town meeting is a form of local government with elected officials, and not just a gathering of citizens; according to historian William Fowler, it was "the most democratic institution in the British empire".[14][12] Deacon Adams rose through the political ranks, becoming a justice of the peace, a selectman, and a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives.[15][16][17][18] He worked closely with Elisha Cooke, Jr. (1678–1737), the leader of the

"popular party", a faction that resisted any encroachment by royal officials on the colonial rights embodied in the Massachusetts Charter of 1691.[19][18][20][17] In the coming years, members of the "popular party" became known as Whigs or Patriots.[21][22]

While at Harvard, Adams boarded at Massachusetts Hall.[23]

The younger Samuel Adams attended Boston Latin School and then entered Harvard College in 1736. His parents hoped that his schooling would prepare him for the ministry, but Adams gradually shifted his interest to politics.[6][24] After graduating in 1740, Adams continued his studies, earning a master's degree in 1743. In his thesis, he argued that it was "lawful to resist the Supreme Magistrate, if the Commonwealth cannot otherwise be preserved", which indicated that his political views, like his father's, were oriented towards colonial rights.[25][26][27][28]

Adams's life was greatly affected by his father's involvement in a banking controversy. In 1739, Massachusetts was facing a serious currency shortage, and Deacon Adams and the Boston Caucus created a "land bank" which issued paper money to borrowers who mortgaged their land as security.[29][30][31] The land bank was generally supported by the citizenry and the popular party, which dominated the House of Representatives, the lower branch of the General Court. Opposition to the land bank came from the more aristocratic "court party", who were supporters of the royal governor and controlled the Governor's Council, the upper chamber of the General Court.[30] The court party used its influence to have the British Parliament dissolve the land bank in 1741.[32][33] Directors of the land bank, including Deacon Adams, became personally liable for the currency still in circulation, payable in silver and gold. Lawsuits over the bank persisted for years, even after Deacon Adams's death, and the younger Samuel Adams often had to defend the family estate from seizure by the government.[27][32][34][35][36][37][38] For Adams, these lawsuits "served as a constant personal reminder that Britain's power over the colonies could be exercised in arbitrary and destructive ways".[38]

Early career

After leaving Harvard in 1743, Adams was unsure about his future. He considered becoming a lawyer but instead decided to go into business. He worked at Thomas Cushing's counting house, but the job only lasted a few months because Cushing felt that Adams was too preoccupied with politics to become a good merchant.[39][40] Adams's father then lent him £1,000 to go into business for himself, a substantial amount for that time.[40][29] Adams's lack of business instincts were confirmed; he lent half of this money to a friend who never repaid, and frittered away the other half. Adams always remained, in the words of historian Pauline Maier, "a man utterly uninterested in either making or possessing money".[41]

After Adams had lost his money, his father made him a partner in the family's malthouse, which was next to the family home on Purchase Street. Several generations of Adamses were maltsters, who produced the malt necessary for brewing beer.[43] Years later, a poet poked fun at Adams by calling him "Sam the maltster".[27][44] Adams has often been described as a brewer, but the extant evidence suggests that he worked as a maltster and not a brewer.[43][45][46]

In January 1748, Adams and some friends were inflamed by British impressment and launched *The Independent Advertiser*, a weekly newspaper that printed many political essays written by Adams.[27][39][47] His essays drew heavily upon English political theorist John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, and they emphasized many of the themes that characterized his subsequent career.[48][34] He argued that the people must resist any encroachment on their constitutional rights.[34] He cited the decline of the Roman Empire as an example of what could happen to New England if it were to abandon its Puritan values.[49]

When Deacon Adams died in 1748, Adams was given the responsibility of managing the family's affairs.[50][51] In October 1749, he married Elizabeth Checkley, his pastor's daughter.[35][52] Elizabeth gave birth to six children over the next seven years, but only two lived to adulthood: Samuel (born 1751) and Hannah (born 1756).[35] In July 1757, Elizabeth died soon after giving birth to a stillborn son.[35][51][53] Adams remarried in 1764 to Elizabeth Wells,[54] but had no other children.[41]

The Old South Meeting House (*1968 photo shown*) was Adams's church. During the crisis with Great Britain, mass meetings were held here that were too large for Faneuil Hall.[42]

Like his father, Adams embarked on a political career with the support of the Boston Caucus. He was elected to his first political office in 1747, serving as one of the clerks of the Boston market. In 1756, the Boston Town Meeting elected him to the post of tax collector, which provided a small income.[27][34][35][55] He often failed to collect taxes from his fellow citizens, which increased his popularity among those who did not pay, but left him liable for the shortage.[56][13] By 1765, his account was more than £8,000 in arrears. The town meeting was on the verge of bankruptcy, and Adams was compelled to file suit against delinquent taxpayers, but many taxes went uncollected.[57] In 1768, his political opponents used the situation to their advantage, obtaining a court judgment of £1,463 against him. Adams's friends paid off some of the deficit, and the town meeting wrote off the remainder. By then, he had emerged as a leader of the popular party, and the embarrassing situation did not lessen his influence.[58][59]

Struggle with Great Britain

Samuel Adams emerged as an important public figure in Boston soon after the British Empire's victory in the French and Indian War (1754–1763). The British Parliament found itself deep in debt and looking for new sources of revenue, and they sought to directly tax the colonies of British America for the first time.[60][61] This tax dispute was part of a larger divergence between British and American interpretations of the British Constitution and the extent of Parliament's authority in the colonies.[62]

Sugar Act

The first step in the new program was the Sugar Act of 1764, which Adams saw as an infringement of longstanding colonial rights. Colonists were not represented in Parliament, he argued, and therefore they could not be taxed by that body; the colonists were represented by the colonial assemblies, and only they could levy taxes upon them.[63] Adams expressed these views in May 1764, when the Boston Town Meeting elected its representatives to the Massachusetts House. As was customary, the town meeting provided the representatives with a set of written instructions, which Adams was selected to write. Adams highlighted what he perceived to be the dangers of taxation without representation:

> For if our Trade may be taxed, why not our Lands? Why not the Produce of our Lands & everything we possess or make use of? This we apprehend annihilates our Charter Right to govern & tax ourselves. It strikes at our British privileges, which as we have never forfeited them, we hold in common with our Fellow Subjects who are Natives of Britain. If Taxes are laid upon us in any shape without our having a legal Representation where they are laid, are we not reduced from the Character of free Subjects to the miserable State of tributary Slaves?[63][64][65]

"When the Boston Town Meeting approved the Adams instructions on May 24, 1764," writes historian John K. Alexander, "it became the first political body in America to go on record stating Parliament could not constitutionally tax the colonists. The directives also contained the first official recommendation that the colonies present a unified defense of their rights."[66] Adams's instructions were published in newspapers and pamphlets, and he soon became closely associated with James Otis, Jr., a member of the Massachusetts House famous for his defense of colonial rights.[66] Otis boldly challenged the constitutionality of certain acts of Parliament, but he would not go as far as Adams, who was moving towards the conclusion that Parliament did not have sovereignty over the colonies.[67][21][64][68]

Stamp Act

In 1765, Parliament passed the Stamp Act which required colonists to pay a new tax on most printed materials.[61][69] News of the passage of the Stamp Act produced an uproar in the colonies.[70][71] The colonial response echoed Adams's 1764 instructions. In June 1765, Otis called for a Stamp Act Congress to coordinate colonial resistance.[72][73] The Virginia House of Burgesses passed a widely reprinted set of resolves against the Stamp Act that resembled Adams's arguments against the Sugar Act.[73] Adams argued that the Stamp Act was unconstitutional; he also believed that it would hurt the economy of the British Empire. He supported calls for a boycott of British goods to put pressure on Parliament to repeal the tax.[73][74]

In Boston, a group called the Loyal Nine, a precursor to the Sons of Liberty, organized protests of the Stamp Act. Adams was friendly with the Loyal Nine but was not a member.[74][75] On August 14, stamp distributor Andrew Oliver was hanged in effigy from Boston's Liberty Tree; that night, his home was ransacked and his office demolished. On August 26, lieutenant governor Thomas Hutchinson's home was destroyed by an angry crowd.

Anne Whitney, *Samuel Adams*, bronze and granite statue, 1880, located in front of Faneuil Hall, which was the home of the Boston Town Meeting[76][77]

Officials such as Governor Francis Bernard believed that common people acted only under the direction of agitators and blamed the violence on Adams.[78] This interpretation was revived by scholars in the early 20th century, who viewed Adams as a master of propaganda who manipulated mobs into doing his bidding.[79][80][57] For example, historian John C. Miller wrote in 1936 in what became the standard biography of Adams[80] that Adams "controlled" Boston with his "trained mob".[75] Some modern scholars have argued that this interpretation is a myth, and that there is no evidence that Adams had anything to do with the Stamp Act riots.[78][57][81][82][83] After the fact, Adams did approve of the August 14 action because he saw no other legal options to resist what he viewed as an unconstitutional act by Parliament, but he condemned attacks on officials' homes as "mobbish".[84][85][86] According to the modern scholarly interpretation of Adams, he supported legal methods of resisting parliamentary taxation, such as petitions, boycotts, and nonviolent demonstrations, but he opposed mob violence which he saw as illegal, dangerous, and counter-productive.[86][87][84][88]

In September 1765, Adams was once again appointed by the Boston Town Meeting to write the instructions for Boston's delegation to the Massachusetts House of Representatives. As it turned out, he wrote his own instructions; on September 27, the town meeting selected him to replace the recently deceased Oxenbridge Thacher as one of Boston's four representatives in the assembly.[89] James Otis was attending the Stamp Act Congress in New York City, so

Adams was the primary author of a series of House resolutions against the Stamp Act, which were more radical than those passed by the Stamp Act Congress.[90][91] Adams was one of the first colonial leaders to argue that mankind possessed certain natural rights that governments could not violate.[91]

The Stamp Act was scheduled to go into effect on November 1, 1765, but it was not enforced because protestors throughout the colonies had compelled stamp distributors to resign.[91] Eventually, British merchants were able to convince Parliament to repeal the tax.[92][93] By May 16, 1766, news of the repeal had reached Boston. There was celebration throughout the city, and Adams made a public statement of thanks to British merchants for helping their cause.[94]

The Massachusetts popular party gained ground in the May 1766 elections. Adams was re-elected to the House and selected as its clerk, in which position he was responsible for official House papers. In the coming years, Adams used his position as clerk to great effect in promoting his political message.[95][96][97][98] Joining Adams in the House was John Hancock, a new representative from Boston. Hancock was a wealthy merchant—perhaps the richest man in Massachusetts—but a relative newcomer to politics. He was initially a protégé of Adams, and he used his wealth to promote the Whig cause.[99][100][101]

Townshend Acts

After the repeal of the Stamp Act, Parliament took a different approach to raising revenue, passing the Townshend Acts in 1767 which established new duties on various goods imported into the colonies. These duties were relatively low because the British ministry wanted to establish the precedent that Parliament had the right to impose tariffs on the colonies before raising them.[102] Revenues from these duties were to be used to pay for governors and judges who would be independent of colonial control. To enforce compliance with the new laws, the Townshend Acts created a customs agency known as the American Board of Custom Commissioners, which was headquartered in Boston.[103][102]

Resistance to the Townshend Acts grew slowly. The General Court was not in session when news of the acts reached Boston in October 1767. Adams therefore used the Boston Town Meeting to organize an economic boycott, and called for other towns to do the same.[102] By February 1768, towns in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut had joined the boycott.[102] Opposition to the Townshend Acts was also encouraged by *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, a series of popular essays by John Dickinson which started appearing in December 1767. Dickinson's argument that the new taxes were unconstitutional had been made before by Adams, but never to such a wide audience.[104]

In January 1768, the Massachusetts House sent a petition to King George asking for his help.[104][105][106] Adams and Otis requested that the House send the petition to the other colonies, along with what became known as the Massachusetts Circular Letter, which became "a significant milestone on the road to revolution".[104] The letter written by Adams called on the colonies to join with Massachusetts in resisting the Townshend Acts.[107][108] The House initially voted against sending the letter and petition to the other colonies but, after some politicking by Adams and Otis, it was approved on February 11.[107][108][109][110]

British colonial secretary Lord Hillsborough, hoping to prevent a repeat of the Stamp Act Congress, instructed the colonial governors in America to dissolve the assemblies if they responded to the Massachusetts Circular Letter. He also directed Massachusetts Governor Francis Bernard to have the Massachusetts House rescind the letter.[59][111] On June 30, the House refused to rescind the letter by a vote of 92 to 17, with Adams citing their right to petition as justification.[112][111] Far from complying with the governor's order, Adams instead presented a new petition to the king asking that Governor Bernard be removed from office. Bernard responded by dissolving the legislature.[112]

The commissioners of the Customs Board found that they were unable to enforce trade regulations in Boston, so they requested military assistance.[113][111] Help came in the form of HMS *Romney*, a fifty-gun warship which arrived in Boston Harbor in May 1768.[113] Tensions escalated after the captain of *Romney* began to impress local sailors. The situation exploded on June 10, when customs officials seized *Liberty*, a sloop owned by John Hancock—a leading critic of the Customs Board—for alleged customs violations. Sailors and marines came ashore from *Romney* to tow away *Liberty*, and a riot broke out. Things calmed down in the following days, but fearful customs officials packed up their families and fled for protection to *Romney* and eventually to Castle William, an island fort in the harbor.[113][42][114][115][116]

Governor Bernard wrote to London in response to the *Liberty* incident and the struggle over the Circular Letter, informing his superiors that troops were needed in Boston to restore order.[114][115] Lord Hillsborough ordered four regiments of the British Army to Boston.

Boston under occupation

Paul Revere's 1768 engraving of British troops arriving in Boston was reprinted throughout the colonies.

Learning that British troops were on the way, the Boston Town Meeting met on September 12, 1768, and requested that Governor Bernard convene the General Court.[117][118] Bernard refused, so the town meeting called on the other Massachusetts towns to send representatives to meet at Faneuil Hall beginning on September 22.[118][119] About 100 towns sent delegates to the convention, which was effectively an unofficial session of the Massachusetts House. The convention issued a letter which insisted that Boston was not a lawless town, using language more moderate than what Adams desired, and that the impending military occupation violated Bostonians' natural, constitutional, and charter rights.[119][120] By the time that the convention adjourned, British troop transports had arrived in Boston Harbor.[120] Two regiments disembarked in October 1768, followed by two more in November.[121]

According to some accounts, the occupation of Boston was a turning point for Adams, after which he gave up hope of reconciliation and secretly began to work towards American independence.[122][123][124][125][121] However, historian Carl Becker wrote in 1928 that "there is no clear evidence in his contemporary writings that such was the case."[126] Nevertheless, the traditional, standard view of Adams is that he desired independence before most of his contemporaries and steadily worked towards this goal for years.[127][128] Historian Pauline Maier challenged that idea in 1980, arguing instead that Adams, like most of his peers, did not embrace independence until after the American Revolutionary War had begun in 1775.[129][130][131] According to Maier, Adams at this time was a reformer rather than a revolutionary; he sought to have the British ministry change its policies, and warned Britain that independence would be the inevitable result of a failure to do so.[132][133][134][135][129]

Adams wrote numerous letters and essays in opposition to the occupation, which he considered a violation of the 1689 Bill of Rights.[136] The occupation was publicized throughout the colonies in the *Journal of Occurrences*, an unsigned series of newspaper articles that may have been written by Adams in collaboration with others.[137][138][139] The *Journal* presented what it claimed to be a factual daily account of events in Boston during the military occupation, an innovative approach in an era without professional newspaper reporters. It depicted a Boston besieged by unruly British soldiers who assaulted men and raped women with regularity and impunity, drawing upon the traditional Anglo-American distrust of standing armies garrisoned among civilians.[140][141] The *Journal* ceased publication on August 1, 1769, which was a day of celebration in Boston: Governor Bernard had left Massachusetts, never to return.[22]

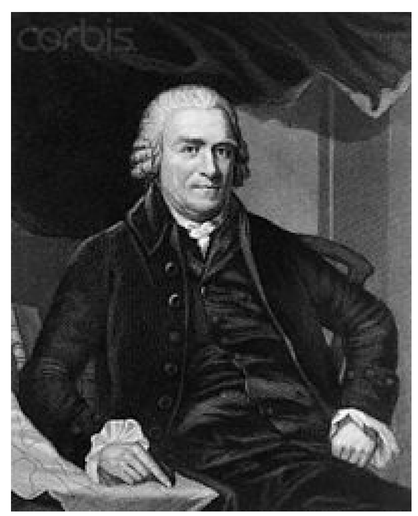
Adams continued to work on getting the troops withdrawn and keeping the boycott going until the Townshend duties were repealed. Two regiments were removed from Boston in 1769, but the other two remained.[22] Tensions between soldiers and civilians eventually resulted in the killing of five civilians in the Boston Massacre of March 1770. According to the "propagandist interpretation"[79][80][142][143][144][145] of Adams popularized by historian John Miller, Adams deliberately provoked the incident to promote his secret agenda of American independence.[146] According to Pauline Maier, however, "There is no evidence that he prompted the Boston Massacre riot".[84]

After the Boston Massacre, Adams and other town leaders met with Bernard's successor Governor Thomas Hutchinson and with Colonel William Dalrymple, the army commander, to demand the withdrawal of the troops.[147][148] The situation remained explosive, and so Dalrymple agreed to remove both regiments to Castle William.[147][149][150] Adams wanted the soldiers to have a fair trial, because this would show that Boston was not controlled by a lawless mob, but was instead the victim of an unjust occupation.[151] He convinced his cousins John Adams and Josiah Quincy to defend the soldiers, knowing that those Whigs would not slander Boston to gain an acquittal.[150][152][153][154] However, Adams wrote essays condemning the outcome of the trials; he thought that the soldiers should have been convicted of murder.[155][156]

"Quiet period"

After the Boston Massacre, politics in Massachusetts entered what is sometimes known as the "quiet period".[157] In April 1770, Parliament repealed the Townshend duties, except for the tax on tea. Adams urged colonists to keep up the boycott of British goods, arguing that paying even one small tax allowed Parliament to establish the precedent of taxing the colonies, but the boycott faltered.[158][159] As economic conditions improved, support waned for Adams's causes.[160] In 1770, New York City and Philadelphia abandoned the non-importation boycott of British goods and Boston merchants faced the risk of being economically ruined, so they also agreed to end the boycott, effectively defeating Adams's cause in Massachusetts.[158] John Adams withdrew from politics, while John Hancock and James Otis appeared to become more moderate.[161][162][163] In 1771, Samuel Adams ran for the position of Register of Deeds, but he was beaten by Ezekiel Goldthwait by more than two to one.[164][165] He was re-elected to the Massachusetts House in April 1772, but he received far fewer votes than ever before.[166]

A struggle over the power of the purse brought Adams back into the political limelight. Traditionally, the Massachusetts House of Representatives paid the salaries of the governor, lieutenant governor, and superior court judges. From the Whig perspective, this arrangement was an important check on executive power, keeping royally appointed officials accountable to democratically elected representatives.[133][168] In 1772, Massachusetts learned that those officials would henceforth be paid by the British government rather than by the province.[169] To protest this, Adams and his colleagues devised a system of committees of correspondence in November 1772; the towns of Massachusetts would consult with each other concerning political matters via messages sent through a network of committees that recorded British activities and protested imperial policies.[170] Committees of correspondence soon formed in other colonies, as well.



Samuel Adams as he looked in 1795 when he was Governor of Massachusetts. The original portrait was destroyed by fire; this is a mezzotint copy.[167]

Governor Hutchinson became concerned that the committees of correspondence were growing into an independence movement, so he convened the General Court in January 1773.[171][172] Addressing the legislature, Hutchinson argued that denying the supremacy of Parliament, as some committees had done, came dangerously close to rebellion. "I

know of no line that can be drawn", he said, "between the supreme authority of Parliament and the total independence of the colonies."[173][172] Adams and the House responded that the Massachusetts Charter did not establish Parliament's supremacy over the province, and so Parliament could not claim that authority now.[172][174] Hutchinson soon realized that he had made a major blunder by initiating a public debate about independence and the extent of Parliament's authority in the colonies.[175] The Boston Committee of Correspondence published its statement of colonial rights, along with Hutchinson's exchange with the Massachusetts House, in the widely distributed "Boston Pamphlet".[173]

The quiet period in Massachusetts was over. Adams was easily re-elected to the Massachusetts House in May 1773, and was also elected as moderator of the Boston Town Meeting.[176] In June 1773, he introduced a set of private letters to the Massachusetts House, written by Hutchinson several years earlier. In one letter, Hutchinson recommended to London that there should be "an abridgement of what are called English liberties" in Massachusetts. Hutchinson denied that this is what he meant, but his career was effectively over in Massachusetts, and the House sent a petition asking the king to recall him.[177][178][179][180]

Tea Party

Adams took a leading role in the events that led up to the famous Boston Tea Party of December 16, 1773, although the precise nature of his involvement has been disputed.

In May 1773, the British Parliament passed the Tea Act, a tax law to help the struggling East India Company, one of Great Britain's most important commercial institutions. Britons could buy smuggled Dutch tea more cheaply than the East India Company's tea because of the heavy taxes imposed on tea imported into Great Britain, and so the company amassed a huge surplus of tea that it could not sell.[181][182] The British government's solution to the problem was to sell the surplus in the colonies. The Tea Act permitted the East India Company to export tea directly to the colonies for the first time, bypassing most of the merchants who had previously acted as middlemen.[183][184] This measure was a threat to the American colonial economy because it granted the Tea Company a significant cost advantage over local tea merchants and even local tea smugglers, driving them out of business. The act also reduced the taxes on tea paid by the company in Britain, but kept the controversial Townshend duty on tea imported in the colonies. A few merchants in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Charlestown were selected to receive the company's tea for resale.[185][186] In late 1773, seven ships were sent to the colonies carrying East India Company tea, including four bound for Boston.[187][188]

News of the Tea Act set off a firestorm of protest in the colonies.[189][190] This was not a dispute about high taxes; the price of legally imported tea was actually reduced by the Tea Act. Protesters were instead concerned with a variety of other issues. The familiar "no taxation without representation" argument remained prominent, along with the question of the extent of Parliament's authority in the colonies.[191] Some colonists worried that, by buying the cheaper tea, they would be conceding that Parliament had the right to tax them.[189] The "power of the purse" conflict was still at issue. The tea tax revenues were to be used to pay the salaries of certain royal officials, making them independent of the people.[187][192] Colonial smugglers played a significant role in the protests, since the Tea Act made legally imported tea cheaper, which threatened to put smugglers of Dutch tea out of business.[193][194] Legitimate tea importers who had not been named as consignees by the East India Company were also threatened with financial ruin by the Tea Act,[195] and other merchants worried about the precedent of a government-created monopoly.[189]

Adams and the correspondence committees promoted opposition to the Tea Act.[189][197][190] In every colony except Massachusetts, protesters were able to force the tea consignees to resign or to return the tea to England.[198][199][200][201][202] In Boston, however, Governor Hutchinson was determined to hold his ground. He convinced the tea consignees, two of whom were his sons, not to back down.[203][204] The Boston Caucus and then the Town Meeting attempted to compel the consignees to resign, but they

refused.[197][205][206][207][208][209] With the tea ships about to arrive, Adams and the Boston Committee of Correspondence contacted nearby committees to rally support.[205][210]

This iconic 1846 lithograph by Nathaniel Currier was entitled "The Destruction of Tea at Boston Harbor"; the phrase "Boston Tea Party" had not yet become standard.[196]

The tea ship *Dartmouth* arrived in the Boston Harbor in late November, and Adams wrote a circular letter calling for a mass meeting to be held at Faneuil Hall on November 29. Thousands of people arrived, so many that the meeting was moved to the larger Old South Meeting House.[211][210] British law required the *Dartmouth* to unload and pay the duties within twenty days or customs officials could confiscate the cargo.[212] The mass meeting passed a resolution introduced by Adams urging the captain of the *Dartmouth* to send the ship back without paying the import duty.[210][213] Meanwhile, the meeting assigned twenty-five men to watch the ship and prevent the tea from being unloaded.[210]

Governor Hutchinson refused to grant permission for the *Dartmouth* to leave without paying the duty. Two more tea ships arrived in Boston Harbor, the *Eleanor* and the *Beaver*. The fourth ship, the *William*, was stranded near Cape Cod and never arrived to Boston. December 16 was the last day of the *Dartmouth's* deadline, and about 7,000 people gathered around the Old South Meeting House.[214] Adams received a report that Governor Hutchinson had again refused to let the ships leave, and he announced, "This meeting can do nothing further to save the country."[215][216][217] According to a popular story, Adams's statement was a prearranged signal for the "tea party" to begin. However, this claim did not appear in print until nearly a century after the event, in a biography of Adams written by his great-grandson, who apparently misinterpreted the evidence.[218] According to eyewitness accounts, people did not leave the meeting until ten or fifteen minutes after Adams's alleged "signal", and Adams in fact tried to stop people from leaving because the meeting was not yet over.[84][88][219][220][221][222][218][223]

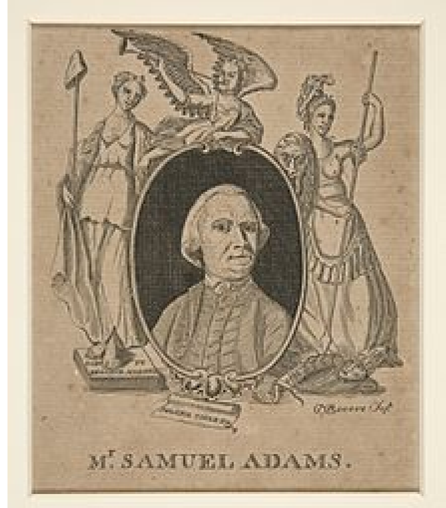
While Adams tried to reassert control of the meeting, people poured out of the Old South Meeting House and headed to Boston Harbor. That evening, a group of 30 to 130 men boarded the three vessels, some of them thinly disguised as Mohawk Indians, and dumped all 342 chests of tea into the water over the course of three hours.[214][224][225][226][227][228] Adams never revealed whether he went to the wharf to witness the destruction of the tea.[229] Whether or not he helped plan the event is unknown, but Adams immediately worked to publicize and defend it.[224][229] He argued that the Tea Party was not the act of a lawless mob, but was instead a principled protest and the only remaining option that the people had to defend their constitutional rights.[230]

Revolution

Great Britain responded to the Boston Tea Party in 1774 with the Coercive Acts. The first of these acts was the Boston Port Act, which closed Boston's commerce until the East India Company had been repaid for the destroyed tea. The Massachusetts Government Act rewrote the Massachusetts Charter, making many officials royally appointed rather than elected, and severely restricting the activities of town meetings. The Administration of Justice Act allowed colonists charged with crimes to be transported to another colony or to Great Britain for trial. A new royal governor was appointed to enforce the acts: General Thomas Gage, who was also commander of British military forces in North America.[231][232][233][234]

Adams worked to coordinate resistance to the Coercive Acts. In May 1774, the Boston Town Meeting (with Adams serving as moderator) organized an economic boycott of British goods.[232][233] In June, Adams headed a committee in the Massachusetts House—with the doors locked to prevent Gage from dissolving the legislature—which proposed that an inter-colonial congress meet in Philadelphia in September. He was one of five delegates chosen to attend the First Continental Congress.[235][2][236] Adams was never fashionably dressed and had little money, so friends bought him new clothes and paid his expenses for the journey to Philadelphia, his first trip outside of Massachusetts.[237][238][239][236][240]

First Continental Congress



Adams as portrayed by Paul Revere, 1774. Yale University Art Gallery.

In Philadelphia, Adams promoted colonial unity while using his political skills to lobby other delegates.[241] On September 16, messenger Paul Revere brought Congress the Suffolk Resolves, one of many resolutions passed in Massachusetts that promised strident resistance to the Coercive Acts.[241][242][236][240][243][244][245] Congress endorsed the Suffolk Resolves, issued a Declaration of Rights that denied Parliament's right to legislate for the colonies, and organized a colonial boycott known as the Continental Association.[242]

Adams returned to Massachusetts in November 1774, where he served in the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, an extralegal legislative body independent of British control. The Provincial Congress created the first minutemen companies, consisting of militiamen who were to be ready for action on a moment's notice.[246][247] Adams also served as moderator of the Boston Town Meeting, which convened despite the Massachusetts Government Act, and was appointed to the Committee of Inspection to enforce the Continental Association.[246] He was also selected to attend the Second Continental Congress, scheduled to meet in Philadelphia in May 1775.

John Hancock had been added to the delegation, and he and Adams attended the Provincial Congress in Concord, Massachusetts, before Adams's journey to the second Congress. The two men decided that it was not safe to return to Boston before leaving for Philadelphia, so they stayed at Hancock's childhood home in Lexington.[248] On April 14, 1775, General Gage received a letter from Lord Dartmouth advising him "to arrest the principal actors and abettors in the Provincial Congress whose proceedings appear in every light to be acts of treason and rebellion".[249] On the night of April 18, Gage sent out a detachment of soldiers on the fateful mission that sparked the American Revolutionary War. The purpose of the British expedition was to seize and destroy military supplies that the colonists had stored in Concord. According to many historical accounts, Gage also instructed his men to arrest Hancock and Adams, but the written orders issued by Gage made no mention of arresting the Patriot leaders.[250][251]

Gage had evidently decided against seizing Adams and Hancock, but Patriots initially believed otherwise, perhaps influenced by London newspapers that reached Boston with the news that the patriot leader would be hanged if he were caught.[252] From Boston, Joseph Warren dispatched Paul Revere to warn the two that British troops were on the move and might attempt to arrest them.[253] As Hancock and Adams made their escape, the first shots of the war began at Lexington and Concord. Soon after the battle, Gage issued a proclamation granting a general pardon to all who would "lay down their arms, and return to the duties of peaceable subjects"—with the exceptions of Hancock and Samuel Adams.[254] Singling out Hancock and Adams in this manner only added to their renown among Patriots and, according to Patriot historian Mercy Otis Warren, perhaps exaggerated the importance of the two men.[255][256][257]

Second Continental Congress

In John Trumbull's *Declaration of Independence*, Adams is seated to the viewer's right of Richard Henry Lee, whose legs are crossed in the front row.[258]

The Continental Congress worked under a secrecy rule, so Adams's precise role in congressional deliberations is not fully documented. He appears to have had a major influence, working behind the scenes as a sort of "parliamentary whip"[259] and Thomas Jefferson credits Samuel Adams—the lesser-remembered Adams—with steering the Congress toward independence, saying, "If there was any Palinurus to the Revolution, Samuel Adams was the man."[260] He served on numerous committees, often dealing with military matters.[261] Among his more noted acts, Adams nominated George Washington to be commander in chief over the Continental Army.[262]

Adams was a cautious advocate for a declaration of independence, urging eager correspondents back in Massachusetts to wait for more moderate colonists to come around to supporting separation from Great Britain.[87][263] He was pleased in 1775 when the colonies began to replace their old governments with independent republican governments.[264][265] He praised Thomas Paine's popular pamphlet *Common Sense*, writing as "Candidus" in early 1776, and supported the call for American independence.[265] On June 7, Adams's political ally Richard Henry Lee introduced a three-part resolution calling for Congress to declare independence, create a colonial confederation, and seek foreign aid. After a delay to rally support, Congress approved the language of the United States Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, which Adams signed.

After the Declaration of Independence, Congress continued to manage the war effort. Adams served on military committees, including an appointment to the Board of War in 1777.[266][267] He advocated paying bonuses to Continental Army soldiers to encourage them to reenlist for the duration of the war.[268][269] He called for harsh state legislation to punish Loyalists—Americans who continued to support the British crown—who Adams believed were as dangerous to American liberty as British soldiers. In Massachusetts, more than 300 Loyalists were banished and their property confiscated.[270][271] After the war, Adams opposed allowing Loyalists to return to Massachusetts, fearing that they would work to undermine republican government.[272][273]

Adams was the Massachusetts delegate appointed to the committee to draft the Articles of Confederation, the plan for the colonial confederation. With its emphasis on state sovereignty, the Articles reflected Congress's wariness of a strong central government, a concern shared by Adams. Like others at the time, Adams considered himself a citizen of the United States while continuing to refer to Massachusetts as his "country".[271][274][275] After much debate, the Articles were sent to the states for ratification in November 1777. From Philadelphia, Adams urged Massachusetts to ratify, which it did. Adams signed the Articles of Confederation with the other Massachusetts delegates in 1778, but they were not ratified by all the states until 1781.

Adams returned to Boston in 1779 to attend a state constitutional convention. The Massachusetts General Court had proposed a new constitution the previous year, but voters rejected it, and so a convention was held to try again. Adams was appointed to a three-man drafting committee with his cousin John Adams and James Bowdoin.[276] They drafted the Massachusetts Constitution, which was amended by the convention and approved by voters in 1780. The new constitution established a republican form of government, with annual elections and a separation of powers. It reflected Adams's belief that "a state is never free except when each citizen is bound by no law whatever that he has not approved of, either directly, or through his representatives".[277] By modern standards, the new constitution was not "democratic"; Adams, like most of his peers, believed that only free males who owned property should be allowed to vote, and that the senate and the governor served to balance any excesses that might result from majority rule.[278][277][279]

In 1781, Adams retired from the Continental Congress. His health was one reason; he was approaching his sixtieth birthday and suffered from tremors that made writing difficult.[280] But he also wanted to return to Massachusetts to influence politics in the Commonwealth.[281] He returned to Boston in 1781, and never left Massachusetts again.[282][283]

Return to Massachusetts

Adams remained active in politics upon his return to Massachusetts. He frequently served as moderator of the Boston Town Meeting, and was elected to the state senate, where he often served as that body's president.[284]

Adams focused his political agenda on promoting virtue, which he considered essential in a republican government. If republican leaders lacked virtue, he believed, liberty was endangered. His major opponent in this campaign was his former protégé John Hancock; the two men had a falling out in the Continental Congress. Adams disapproved of what he viewed as Hancock's vanity and extravagance, which Adams believed were inappropriate in a republican leader. When Hancock left Congress in 1777, Adams and the other Massachusetts delegates voted against thanking him for his service as president of Congress.[285] The struggle continued in Massachusetts. Adams thought that Hancock was not acting the part of a virtuous republican leader by acting like an aristocrat and courting popularity.[285] Adams favored James Bowdoin for governor, and was distressed when Hancock won annual landslide victories.[286][287][281][284]

Adams's promotion of public virtue took several forms. He played a major role in getting Boston to provide a free public education for children, even for girls, which was controversial.[288][272][273] Adams was one of the charter members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1780.[289] After the Revolutionary War, Adams joined others, including Thomas Jefferson, in denouncing the Society of the Cincinnati, an organization of former army officers. Adams worried that the Society was "a stride towards an hereditary military nobility", and thus a threat to republicanism.[290] Adams also believed that public theaters undermined civic virtue, and he joined an ultimately unsuccessful effort to keep theaters banned in Boston.[272][291] Decades after Adams's death, orator Edward Everett called him "the last of the Puritans".[292]

> *I firmly believe that the benevolent Creator designed the republican Form of Government for Man.*
>
> Samuel Adams, April 14, 1785[293][294]

Postwar economic troubles in western Massachusetts led to an uprising known as Shays's Rebellion, which began in 1786. Small farmers, angered by high taxes and debts, armed themselves and shut down debtor courts in two counties. Governor James Bowdoin sent four thousand militiamen to put down the uprising, an action supported by Adams.[295] His old political ally James Warren thought that Adams had forsaken his principles, but Adams saw no contradiction. He approved of rebellion against an unrepresentative government, as had happened during the American Revolution, but he opposed taking up arms against a republican government, where problems should be remedied through elections. He thought that the leaders of Shays's Rebellion should be hanged, reportedly saying that "the man who dares to rebel against the laws of a republic ought to suffer death".[220][221][295][296]

Shays's Rebellion contributed to the belief that the Articles of Confederation needed to be revised. In 1787, delegates to the Philadelphia Convention, instead of revising the Articles, created a new United States Constitution with a much stronger national government. The Constitution was sent to the states for ratification, when Adams expressed his displeasure. "I confess," he wrote to Richard Henry Lee in 1787, "as I enter the Building I stumble at the Threshold. I meet with a National Government, instead of a Federal Union of States."[296] Adams was one of those derisively labeled "Anti-Federalists" by proponents of the new Constitution, who called themselves "Federalists".[296][297] Adams was elected to the Massachusetts ratifying convention which met in January 1788. Despite his reservations, Adams rarely spoke at the convention, and

listened carefully to the arguments rather than raising objections.[298][299] Adams and John Hancock had reconciled, and they finally agreed to give their support for the Constitution, with the proviso that some amendments be added later.[300][301] Even with the support of Hancock and Adams, the Massachusetts convention narrowly ratified the Constitution by a vote of 187 to 168.[302]

While Adams was attending the ratifying convention, his only son Samuel Adams, Jr. died at just 37 years of age. The younger Adams had served as surgeon in the Revolutionary War, but had fallen ill and never fully recovered. The death was a stunning blow to the elder Adams.[303] The younger Adams left his father the certificates that he had earned as a soldier, giving Adams and his wife unexpected financial security in their final years. Investments in land made them relatively wealthy by the mid-1790s, but this did not alter their frugal lifestyle.[304][305]

Adams was concerned about the new Constitution and made an attempt to re-enter national politics. He allowed his name to be put forth as a candidate for the United States House of Representatives in the December 1788 election, but lost to Fisher Ames, apparently because Ames was a stronger supporter of the Constitution, a more popular position.[306] Despite his defeat, Adams continued to work for amendments to the Constitution, a movement that ultimately resulted in the addition of a Bill of Rights in 1791.[307] Adams subsequently became a firm supporter of the Constitution, with these amendments and the possibility of more.[308][309]

In 1789, Adams was elected Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts and served in that office until Governor Hancock's death in 1793, when he became acting governor. The next year, Adams was elected as governor in his own right, the first of four annual terms. He was generally regarded as the leader of his state's Jeffersonian Republicans, who were opposed to the Federalist Party.[310] Unlike some other Republicans, Adams supported the suppression of the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794 for the same reasons that he had opposed Shays's Rebellion.[308] Like his fellow Republicans, he spoke out against the Jay Treaty in 1796, a position that drew criticism in a state that was increasingly Federalist.[311][312] In that year's U. S. presidential election, Republicans in Virginia cast 15 electoral votes for Adams in an effort to make him Jefferson's vice-president,[313] but Federalist John Adams won the election, with Jefferson becoming vice-president. The Adams cousins remained friends, but Samuel was pleased when Jefferson defeated John Adams in the 1800 presidential election.[305]

Samuel Adams took a cue from President Washington, who declined to run for reelection in 1796: he retired from politics at the end of his term as governor in 1797.[314] Adams suffered from what is now believed to have been essential tremor, a movement disorder that rendered him unable to write in the final decade of his life.[315] He died at the age of 81 on October 2, 1803, and was interred at the Granary Burying Ground in Boston.[316][317] Boston's Republican newspaper the *Independent Chronicle* eulogized him as the "Father of the American Revolution".[318]

Legacy

Samuel Adams is a controversial figure in American history. Disagreement about his significance and reputation began before his death and continues to the present.[319][320][321]

Adams's contemporaries, both friends and foes, regarded him as one of the foremost leaders of the American Revolution. Thomas Jefferson, for example, characterized Adams as "truly the *Man of the Revolution*."[322] Leaders in other colonies were compared to him; Cornelius Harnett was called the "Samuel Adams of North Carolina", Charles Thomson the "Samuel Adams of Philadelphia",[323] and Christopher Gadsden the "Sam Adams of the South".[324] When John Adams traveled to France during the Revolution, he had to explain that he was not Samuel, "the famous Adams".[323]

Supporters of the Revolution praised Adams, but Loyalists viewed him as a sinister figure. Peter Oliver, the exiled chief justice of Massachusetts, characterized him as a devious Machiavellian with a "cloven Foot".[321] Thomas Hutchinson, Adams's political foe, took his revenge in his *History of Massachusetts Bay*, in which he denounced him as a dishonest character assassin, emphasizing his failures as a businessman and tax collector. This hostile "Tory interpretation" of Adams was revived in the 20th century by historian Clifford K. Shipton in the *Sibley's Harvard Graduates* reference series.[325][326] Shipton wrote positive portraits of Hutchinson and Oliver and scathing sketches of Adams and Hancock; his entry on Adams was characterized by historian Pauline Maier as "forty-five pages of contempt".[327]

Samuel Adams grave marker in the Granary Burying Ground

Whig historians challenged the "Tory interpretation" of Adams. William Gordon and Mercy Otis Warren, two historians who knew Adams, wrote of him as a man selflessly dedicated to the American Revolution.[326][328] But in the early 19th century, Adams was often viewed as an old-fashioned Puritan, and was consequently neglected by historians.[329][319] Interest in Adams was revived in the mid-19th century. Historian George Bancroft portrayed him favorably in his monumental *History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent* (1852). The first full biography of Adams appeared in 1865, a three-volume work written by William Wells, his great-grandson.[329][319][328][330] The Wells biography is still valuable for its wealth of information,[41] although Whig portrayals of Adams were uncritically pro-American and had elements of hagiography, a view that influenced some later biographies written for general audiences.[328][142][331][332]

In the late 19th century, many American historians were uncomfortable with contemporary revolutions and found it problematic to write approvingly about Adams. Relations had improved between the United States and the United Kingdom, and Adams's role in dividing Americans from Britons was increasingly viewed with regret.[333][330] In 1885, James Hosmer wrote a biography that praised Adams, but also found some of his actions troubling, such as the 1773 publication of Hutchinson's private letters.[334] Subsequent biographers became increasingly hostile towards Adams and the common people whom he represented. In 1923, Ralph V. Harlow used a "Freudian" approach to characterize Adams as a "neurotic crank" driven by an "inferiority complex".[335][327][80][336] Harlow argued that, because the masses were easily misled, Adams "manufactured public opinion" to produce the Revolution, a view that became the thesis of John C. Miller's 1936 biography *Sam Adams: Pioneer in Propaganda*.[327][80] Miller portrayed Adams more as an incendiary revolutionary than an adroit political operative, attributing to this one man all the acts of Boston's "body of the people", and consistently calling his subject "Sam", despite the fact that Adams was almost always known as "Samuel" in his lifetime.[41][337][338]

Miller's influential book became, in the words of historian Charles Akers, the "scholarly enshrinement" of "the myth of Sam Adams as the Boston dictator who almost single-handedly led his colony into rebellion".[339] According to Akers, Miller and other historians used "Sam did it" to explain crowd actions and other developments, without citing any evidence that Adams directed those events.[340] In 1974, Akers called on historians to critically re-examine the sources rather than simply repeating the myth.[341] By then, scholars were increasingly rejecting the notion that Adams and others used "propaganda" to incite "ignorant mobs", and were instead portraying a revolutionary Massachusetts too complex to have been controlled by one man.[143][144][145] Historian Pauline Maier argued that Adams, far from being a radical mob leader, took a moderate position based on the English revolutionary tradition that imposed strict constraints on resistance to authority. That belief justified force only against threats to the constitutional rights so grave that the "body of the people" recognized the danger, and only after all peaceful means of redress had failed. Within that revolutionary tradition, resistance was essentially conservative. In 2004, Ray Raphael's *Founding Myths* continued Maier's line by deconstructing several of the "Sam" Adams myths that are still repeated in many textbooks and popular histories.[342]

Samuel Adams's name has been appropriated by commercial and non-profit ventures since his death. The Boston Beer Company created Samuel Adams Boston Lager in 1985, drawing upon the tradition that Adams had been a brewer; it became a popular award-winning brand.[343] Adams's name is also used by a pair of non-profit organizations, the Sam Adams Alliance and the Sam Adams Foundation. These groups take their names from Adams in homage to his ability to organize citizens at the local level to achieve a national goal.[344]

See also

- Memorial to the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence

Notes

1. Alexander 2002, p. 103.
2. Alexander 2002, p. 136.
3. Maier 1980, p. 41.
4. Maier 1980, p. 42.
5. Hosmer 1885, p. 14.
6. Alexander 2002, p. 1.
7. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 4.
8. Puls 2006, p. 22.
9. Puls 2006, p. 21.
10. Miller 1936, p. 3.
11. Miller 1936, p. 4.
12. Alexander 2002, p. 2.
13. Maier 1980, p. 19.
14. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 8.
15. Miller 1936, p. 7.
16. Miller 1936, p. 8.
17. Puls 2006, p. 23.
18. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 11.
19. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 10.
20. Miller 1936, p. 9.
21. Alexander 2002, p. 23.
22. Alexander 2002, p. 74.
23. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 16.
24. Puls 2006, p. 25.
25. Miller 1936, p. 15.
26. Miller 1936, p. 16.
27. Alexander 2002, p. 7.
28. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 25.
29. Alexander 2002, p. 4.
30. Alexander 2002, p. 5.
31. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 21.
32. Alexander 2002, p. 6.
33. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 23.

34. Alexander 2002, p. 8.
35. Alexander 2002, p. 9.
36. Alexander 2002, p. 10.
37. Alexander 2002, p. 11.
38. Alexander 2002, p. 12.
39. Miller 1936, p. 17.
40. Alexander 2002, p. 3.
41. Maier, *American National Biography*.
42. Alexander 2002, p. 58.
43. Baron 1962, p. 74.
44. Wells 1865, p. 24.
45. Baron 1962, p. 75.
46. Stoll (*Samuel Adams*, 275n16) notes that Jim Koch, founder of the Boston Beer Company, reports having been offered for purchase a receipt for hops signed by Adams, which indicates that Adams may have done some brewing.
47. Miller 1936, p. 18.
48. Miller 1936, p. 21.
49. Miller 1936, p. 19.
50. Puls 2006, p. 30.
51. Puls 2006, p. 31.
52. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 34.
53. Puls 2006, p. 32.
54. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 55.
55. Alexander 2002, p. 14.
56. Alexander 2002, p. 14, "The failure to collect all taxes was a Boston tradition".
57. Alexander 2002, p. 27.
58. Alexander 2002, p. 53.
59. Alexander 2002, p. 54.
60. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 50.
61. Alexander 2002, p. 17.
62. Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 162.
63. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 51.
64. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 52.
65. The complete text is in Cushing, *Writings*, 1:1–7.
66. Alexander 2002, p. 21.
67. Alexander 2002, p. 22.
68. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 53.
69. Alexander 2002, p. 18.
70. Miller 1936, p. 50.
71. Miller 1936, p. 51.
72. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 61.
73. Alexander 2002, p. 24.
74. Alexander 2002, p. 25.
75. Miller 1936, p. 53.
76. Alexander 2002, p. 48.

77. "Samuel Adams" (https://web.archive.org/web/20170207192546/http://www.publicartboston.com/content/samuel-adams). *Boston Public Arts Commission*. Archived from the original (http://www.publicartboston.com/content/samuel-adams) on February 7, 2017. Retrieved February 3, 2017.
78. Alexander 2002, p. 26.
79. O'Toole 1976, p. 90.
80. O'Toole 1976, p. 91.
81. Raphael 2004, p. 51.
82. Raphael 2004, p. 52.
83. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 66, Fowler believes that Adams must have known about the attack on Hutchinson's home in advance, though he concedes that there are no records that link him to the incident.
84. Maier 1980, p. 27.
85. Alexander 2002, p. 28.
86. Alexander 2002, p. 29.
87. Maier 1980, p. 26.
88. Maier 1980, p. 28.
89. Alexander 2002, p. 30.
90. Alexander 2002, p. 32.
91. Alexander 2002, p. 33.
92. Alexander 2002, p. 37.
93. Puls 2006, p. 62.
94. Wells 1865, p. 112.
95. Alexander 2002, p. 40.
96. Alexander 2002, p. 41.
97. Alexander 2002, p. 44.
98. Alexander 2002, p. 45.
99. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 73.
00. Nobles, "Old Republicans", 269.
01. Alexander 2002, p. 39.
02. Alexander 2002, p. 50.
03. Alexander 2002, p. 49.
04. Alexander 2002, p. 51.
05. In London, the petition to the king was published, along with other documents, by Thomas Hollis under the title "The True Sentiments of America"
06. Hosmer 1885, p. 109.
07. Alexander 2002, p. 52.
08. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 78.
09. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 79.
10. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 80.
11. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 82.
12. Alexander 2002, p. 55.
13. Alexander 2002, p. 57.
14. Alexander 2002, p. 59.
15. Alexander 2002, p. 60.
16. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 81.

17. Alexander 2002, p. 61.
18. Alexander 2002, p. 62.
19. Alexander 2002, p. 63.
20. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 88.
21. Alexander 2002, p. 65.
22. Wells 1865, p. 207.
23. Hosmer 1885, p. 119.
24. Hosmer 1885, p. 120.
25. Alexander 2002, p. 64.
26. Becker, "Samuel Adams". *Dictionary of American Biography*.
27. Raphael 2004, p. 47.
28. Raphael 2004, p. 55.
29. Maier 1980, p. 25.
30. Maier 1980, p. 15.
31. Notes that Stewart Beach's *Samuel Adams, the Fateful Years* (1965) also questioned whether Adams sought independence before the mid-1770s.
32. Maier 1980, p. 21.
33. Maier 1980, p. 22.
34. Maier 1980, p. 23.
35. Maier 1980, p. 24.
36. Alexander 2002, p. 67.
37. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 90.
38. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 91.
39. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 92.
40. Alexander 2002, p. 68.
41. Alexander 2002, p. 69.
42. O'Toole 1976, p. 92.
43. O'Toole 1976, p. 93.
44. O'Toole 1976, p. 94.
45. O'Toole 1976, p. 95.
46. Miller 1936, p. 276.
47. Alexander 2002, p. 82.
48. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 105.
49. Alexander 2002, p. 83.
50. Alexander 2002, p. 84.
51. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 107.
52. Alexander 2002, p. 85.
53. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 109.
54. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 110.
55. Alexander 2002, p. 94.
56. Alexander 2002, p. 95.
57. Alexander 2002, p. 93.
58. Alexander 2002, p. 91.
59. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 111.
60. Alexander 2002, p. 105.

61. Alexander 2002, p. 97.
62. Alexander 2002, p. 98.
63. Alexander 2002, p. 99.
64. Hassam, John T. *Registers of Deeds for the County of Suffolk, Massachusetts, 1735-1900,* pp. 14–28, John Wilson & Son, University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1900.
65. Goldthwaite, Charlotte. *Descendants of Thomas Goldthwaite,* pp. 84–87, Hartford Press, The Case, Lookwood & Brainard Company, 1899.
66. Alexander 2002, p. 104.
67. Wells 1865, p. 334.
68. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 117.
69. Alexander 2002, p. 106, "Adams and others had previously suspected that Hutchinson's salary was being paid by the Crown; this had been unconfirmed until this development".
70. Wells 1865, p. 84.
71. Alexander 2002, p. 111.
72. Alexander 2002, p. 112.
73. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 120.
74. Alexander 2002, p. 113.
75. Alexander 2002, p. 114.
76. Alexander 2002, p. 116.
77. Alexander 2002, p. 118.
78. Alexander 2002, p. 119.
79. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 121.
80. Hutchinson maintained that he was predicting a curtailment of liberty, rather than recommending it; for the modern scholarly analysis of the letters affair, see Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge, 1974).
81. Thomas, *Townshend Duties*, 248–49
82. Labaree 1979, p. 334.
83. Labaree 1979, p. 67.
84. Labaree 1979, p. 70.
85. Labaree 1979, p. 75.
86. Labaree 1979, p. 76.
87. Labaree 1979, p. 78.
88. Labaree 1979, p. 79.
89. Alexander 2002, p. 120.
90. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 122.
91. Thomas, *Townshend Duties*, 246.
92. Labaree 1979, p. 106.
93. Labaree 1979, p. 102.
94. See also John W. Tyler, *Smugglers & Patriots: Boston Merchants and the Advent of the American Revolution* (Boston, 1986).
95. Thomas, *Townshend Duties*, 256.
96. Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999; ISBN 0-8070-5405-4; ISBN 978-0-8070-5405-5), 183–85.
97. Alexander 2002, p. 121.
98. Labaree 1979, p. 96.
99. Labaree 1979, p. 97.

00. Labaree 1979, p. 98.
01. Labaree 1979, p. 99.
02. Labaree 1979, p. 100.
03. Labaree 1979, p. 104.
04. Labaree 1979, p. 105.
05. Alexander 2002, p. 122.
06. Labaree 1979, p. 109.
07. Labaree 1979, p. 110.
08. Labaree 1979, p. 111.
09. Labaree 1979, p. 112.
10. Alexander 2002, p. 123.
11. This was not an official town meeting, but a gathering of "the body of the people" of greater Boston
12. Alexander 2002, p. 124.
13. Puls 2006, p. 143.
14. Alexander 2002, p. 125.
15. Wells 1865, p. 122.
16. Wells 1865, p. 123.
17. Miller 1936, p. 294.
18. Raphael 2004, p. 53.
19. Maier 1980, p. 29.
20. Maier 1980, p. 30.
21. Maier 1980, p. 31.
22. Maier 1980, p. 32.
23. For firsthand accounts that contradict the story that Adams gave the signal for the tea party, see L. F. S. Upton, ed., "Proceeding of Ye Body Respecting the Tea", *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 22 (1965), 297–98; Francis S. Drake, *Tea Leaves: Being a Collection of Letters and Documents*, (Boston, 1884), LXX; *Boston Evening Post*, December 20, 1773; *Boston Gazette*, December 20, 1773; *Massachusetts Gazette and Boston Weekly News-Letter*, December 23, 1773.
24. Alexander 2002, p. 126.
25. Labaree 1979, p. 141.
26. Labaree 1979, p. 142.
27. Labaree 1979, p. 143.
28. Labaree 1979, p. 144.
29. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 124.
30. Alexander 2002, p. 129.
31. Alexander 2002, p. 130.
32. Alexander 2002, p. 131.
33. Alexander 2002, p. 132.
34. Alexander 2002, p. 133.
35. Alexander 2002, p. 135.
36. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 130.
37. Alexander 2002, p. 137.
38. Maier 1980, p. 33.
39. Maier 1980, p. 34.

40. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 131.
41. Alexander 2002, p. 139.
42. Alexander 2002, p. 140.
43. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 132.
44. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 133.
45. Raphael 2004.
46. Alexander 2002, p. 143.
47. Fowler & Fowler 1997, p. 134.
48. Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 94, 108.
49. Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 76; Alden, "March to Concord", 451.
50. Alexander 2002, p. 146.
51. Alden, "March to Concord", 453.
52. Burgan, Patriot and Statesman, 11
53. Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 110.
54. The text of Gage's proclamation is available online (http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/amrev/shots/proclaim.html) from the Library of Congress.
55. Maier 1980, p. 17.
56. Raphael 2004, p. 62.
57. Raphael 2004, p. 63.
58. "Key to Declaration of Independence" (http://www.americanrevolution.org/deckey.html). Retrieved February 26, 2007.
59. Nobles, "Old Republicans", 264, citing Jack N. Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics: An Interpretive History of the Continental Congress* (New York 1979), 103.
60. Randall, Henry Stephens, *The Life of Thomas Jefferson*, J. B. Lippincott, 1871, p. 182
61. Alexander 2002, p. 150.
62. Chernow 2010, p. 186.
63. Alexander 2002, p. 151.
64. Alexander 2002, p. 152.
65. Alexander 2002, p. 153.
66. Alexander 2002, p. 157.
67. Wells 1865, p. 468.
68. Alexander 2002, p. 158.
69. Alexander 2002, p. 159.
70. Alexander 2002, p. 161.
71. Alexander 2002, p. 162.
72. Alexander 2002, p. 193.
73. Alexander 2002, p. 194.
74. Alexander 2002, p. 163.
75. Alexander 2002, p. 197.
76. Alexander 2002, p. 181.
77. Alexander 2002, p. 184.
78. Alexander 2002, p. 183.
79. Alexander 2002, p. 185.
80. Alexander 2002, p. 167.
81. Alexander 2002, p. 188.
82. Alexander 2002, p. 170.

83. Alexander 2002, p. 171.
84. Alexander 2002, p. 189.
85. Alexander 2002, p. 178.
86. Alexander 2002, p. 186.
87. Alexander 2002, p. 187.
88. Alexander 2002, p. 192.
89. "Charter of Incorporation" (https://web.archive.org/web/20110103142200/https://www.amacad.org/about/charter.aspx#chartermbrs#chartermbrs). American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Archived from the original (http://www.amacad.org/about/charter.aspx#chartermbrs) on January 3, 2011. Retrieved April 6, 2011.
90. Alexander 2002, p. 196.
91. Hosmer 1885, p. 404.
92. Maier 1980, p. 47, quoting Everett's 1835 "Battle of Lexington" oration.
93. Maier 1980, p. 44.
94. Cushing, *Writings*, 4:314
95. Alexander 2002, p. 202.
96. Alexander 2002, p. 203.
97. Alexander 2002, p. 204.
98. Alexander 2002, p. 205.
99. Alexander 2002, p. 206.
00. Wells 1865, p. 260.
01. Wells 1865, p. 261.
02. Alexander 2002, p. 207.
03. Wells 1865, p. 255.
04. Alexander 2002, p. 209.
05. Alexander 2002, p. 219.
06. Alexander 2002, p. 210.
07. Alexander 2002, p. 211.
08. Alexander 2002, p. 214.
09. Alexander 2002, p. 215.
10. Alexander 2002, p. 213.
11. Alexander 2002, p. 217.
12. Puls 2006, p. 227.
13. Hosmer 1885, p. 409.
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16. Hosmer 1885, p. 416.
17. Hosmer 1885, p. 417.
18. Alexander 2002, p. 221.
19. Maier 1980, p. 7.
20. Maier 1980, p. 8.
21. O'Toole 1976, p. 82.
22. Maier 1980, p. 5.
23. Maier 1980, p. 3.

24. E. Stanly Godbold, "Gadsden, Christopher"; *American National Biography Online*, February 2000.
25. O'Toole 1976, p. 83.
26. O'Toole 1976, p. 84.
27. Maier 1980, p. 11.
28. O'Toole 1976, p. 85.
29. Maier 1980, p. 6.
30. O'Toole 1976, p. 86.
31. Alexander 2002, p. 229.
32. Alexander 2002, p. 230.
33. Maier 1980, p. 14.
34. Maier 1980, p. 9.
35. Maier 1980, p. 10.
36. See Ralph V. Harlow, *Samuel Adams, Promoter of the American Revolution: A Study in Psychology and Politics* (Holt, 1923).
37. Raphael 2004, p. 58.
38. Raphael 2004, p. 59.
39. Akers, "Sam Adams – And Much More", 120–21.
40. Akers, "Sam Adams – And Much More", 121–22.
41. Akers, "Sam Adams – And Much More", 130.
42. Raphael 2004, pp. 45–63.
43. "The Boston Beer Company – About Us" (https://web.archive.org/web/20061110090603/http://www.bostonbeer.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=69432&p=irol-homeprofile). Boston Beer Company. Archived from the original (http://www.bostonbeer.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=69432&p=irol-homeProfile) on November 10, 2006. Retrieved June 1, 2007.
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Massachusetts Senate		
Preceded by **Jeremiah Powell** **Samuel Phillips, Jr.**	**President of the Massachusetts Senate** 1782–1785 1787–1788	Succeeded by **Samuel Phillips, Jr.**
Political offices		
Preceded by **Benjamin Lincoln**	**Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts** 1789–1794 Acting Governor, 1793–1794	Succeeded by **Moses Gill**
Preceded by **John Hancock**	**Governor of Massachusetts** 1794 – June 2, 1797	Succeeded by **Increase Sumner**

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Thomas Jefferson

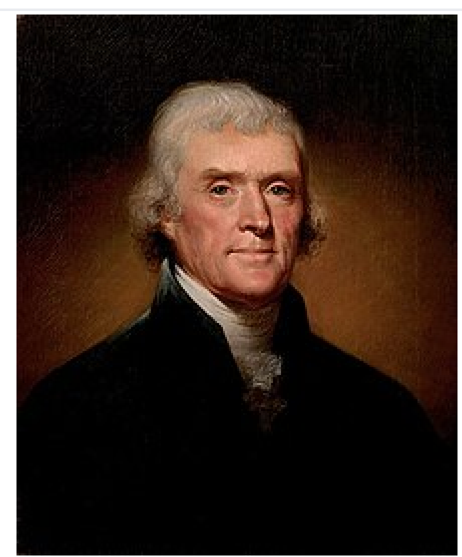
Thomas Jefferson (April 13, 1743[a] – July 4, 1826) was an American statesman, diplomat, lawyer, architect, musician,[1] philosopher, and Founding Father who served as the third president of the United States from 1801 to 1809. He had previously served as the second vice president of the United States under John Adams between 1797 and 1801, and as the first United States secretary of state under George Washington between 1790 to 1793. The principal author of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson was a proponent of democracy, republicanism, and individual rights for certain categories of people, motivating American colonists to break from the Kingdom of Great Britain and form a new nation; he produced formative documents and decisions at both the state and national levels.

During the American Revolution, Jefferson represented Virginia in the Continental Congress that adopted the Declaration of Independence. As a Virginia legislator, he drafted a state law for religious freedom. He served as the second Governor of Virginia from 1779 to 1781, during the American Revolutionary War. In 1785, Jefferson was appointed the United States Minister to France, and subsequently, the nation's first Secretary of State under President George Washington from 1790 to 1793. Jefferson and James Madison organized the Democratic-Republican Party to oppose the Federalist Party during the formation of the First Party System. With Madison, he anonymously wrote the provocative Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions in 1798 and 1799, which sought to strengthen states' rights by nullifying the federal Alien and Sedition Acts.

As president, Jefferson pursued the nation's shipping and trade interests against Barbary pirates and aggressive British trade policies. Starting in 1803, Jefferson promoted a western expansionist policy, organizing the Louisiana Purchase which doubled the nation's land area. To make room for settlement, Jefferson began a controversial process of Indian tribal removal from the newly acquired territory. As a result of peace negotiations with France, his administration reduced military forces. Jefferson was reelected in 1804. His second term was beset with difficulties at home, including the trial of former vice president Aaron Burr. In 1807, American foreign trade was diminished when Jefferson implemented the Embargo Act in response to British threats to U.S. shipping. The same year, Jefferson signed the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves.

Jefferson, while primarily a planter, lawyer and politician, mastered many disciplines, which ranged from surveying and mathematics to horticulture and mechanics. He was an architect in

Thomas Jefferson



Portrait by Rembrandt Peale, 1800

3rd President of the United States	
In office March 4, 1801 – March 4, 1809	
Vice President	Aaron Burr (1801–1805) George Clinton (1805–1809)
Preceded by	John Adams
Succeeded by	James Madison
2nd Vice President of the United States	
In office March 4, 1797 – March 4, 1801	
President	John Adams
Preceded by	John Adams
Succeeded by	Aaron Burr
1st United States Secretary of State	
In office March 22, 1790 – December 31, 1793	
President	George Washington
Preceded by	John Jay (acting)
Succeeded by	Edmund Randolph
2nd United States Minister to France	

the classical tradition. Jefferson's keen interest in religion and philosophy led to his presidency of the American Philosophical Society; he shunned organized religion but was influenced by Christianity, Epicureanism,[2] and deism. A philologist, Jefferson knew several languages. He was a prolific letter writer and corresponded with many prominent people, including Edward Carrington, John Taylor of Caroline and James Madison. Among his books is *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), considered perhaps the most important American book published before 1800.[3] Jefferson championed the ideals, values, and teachings of the Enlightenment.

During his lifetime, Jefferson owned over 600 slaves, who were kept in his household and on his plantations. Since Jefferson's time, controversy has revolved around his relationship with Sally Hemings, a mixed-race enslaved woman and his late wife's half-sister.[4] According to DNA evidence from surviving descendants and oral history, Jefferson fathered at least six children with Hemings, including four that survived to adulthood.[5] Evidence suggests that Jefferson started the relationship with Hemings when they were in Paris, where she arrived at the age of 14, when Jefferson was 44. By the time she returned to the United States at 16, she was pregnant.[6]

After retiring from public office, Jefferson founded the University of Virginia. Jefferson and his colleague John Adams both died on Independence Day, July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. Presidential scholars and historians generally praise Jefferson's public achievements, including his advocacy of religious freedom and tolerance in Virginia. Although some modern scholars have been critical of his stance on slavery, Jefferson continues to rank highly among the U.S. presidents, often in the top ten.

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- Member of Congress
- Minister to France
- Secretary of State
- Election of 1796 and vice presidency
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In office	
May 17, 1785 – September 26, 1789	
Appointed by	Confederation Congress
Preceded by	Benjamin Franklin
Succeeded by	William Short
Minister Plenipotentiary for Negotiating Treaties of Amity and Commerce	
In office	
May 12, 1784 – May 11, 1786	
Appointed by	Confederation Congress
Preceded by	Office established
Succeeded by	Office abolished
Delegate from Virginia to the Congress of the Confederation	
In office	
November 3, 1783 – May 7, 1784	
Preceded by	James Madison
Succeeded by	Richard Lee
2nd Governor of Virginia	
In office	
June 1, 1779 – June 3, 1781	
Preceded by	Patrick Henry
Succeeded by	William Fleming
Delegate from Virginia to the Continental Congress	
In office	
June 20, 1775 – September 26, 1776	
Preceded by	George Washington
Succeeded by	John Harvie
Constituency	Second Continental Congress
Personal details	
Born	April 13, 1743 Shadwell, Virginia, British America
Died	July 4, 1826 (aged 83) Charlottesville, Virginia, U.S.
Resting place	Monticello, Virginia, U.S.

Presidency (1801–1809)
- White House hostess
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References

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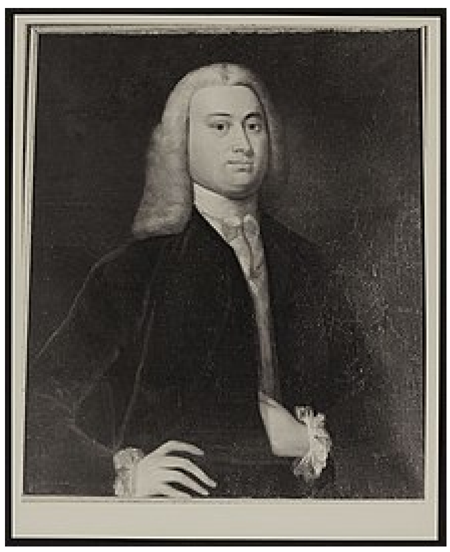
Political party	Democratic-Republican
Spouse(s)	Martha Wayles (m. 1772; died 1782)
Children	6 with Martha Wayles, including: Martha Jefferson Randolph Mary Jefferson Eppes Up to 6 with Sally Hemings, including: Madison Hemings Eston Hemings
Mother	Jane Randolph
Father	Peter Jefferson
Education	College of William & Mary (BA)
Signature	

Early life and career

Thomas Jefferson was born on April 13, 1743 (April 2, 1743, Old Style, Julian calendar), at the family home in Shadwell Plantation in the Colony of Virginia, the third of ten children.[7] He was of English, and possibly Welsh, descent and was born a British subject.[8] His father Peter Jefferson was a planter and surveyor who died when Jefferson was fourteen; his mother was Jane Randolph.[b] Peter Jefferson moved his family to Tuckahoe Plantation in 1745 upon the death of William Randolph III, the plantation's owner and Jefferson's friend, who in his will had named Peter guardian of Randolph's children. The Jeffersons returned to Shadwell in 1752, where Peter died in 1757; his estate was divided between his sons Thomas and Randolph.[10] John Harvie Sr. then became Thomas' guardian.[11] In 1753 he attended the wedding of his uncle Field Jefferson to Mary Allen Hunt, the latter who would become a close friend and early mentor.[12] Thomas inherited approximately 5,000 acres (2,000 ha; 7.8 sq mi) of land, including Monticello. He assumed full authority over his property at age 21.[13]

Education, early family life

Wren Building, College of William & Mary where Jefferson studied


William Randolph III, cousin of Jefferson's mother, and close friend of Peter Jefferson

Jefferson began his education together with the Randolph children with tutors in Tuckahoe, Virginia.[14] Thomas' father, Peter, was self-taught and, regretting not having a formal education, he entered Thomas into an English school early, at age five. In 1752, at age nine, he began attending a local school run by a Scottish Presbyterian minister and also began studying the natural world, which he grew to love. At this time he began studying Latin, Greek, and French, while also learning to ride horses. Thomas also read books from his father's modest library.[15] He was taught from 1758 to 1760 by the Reverend James Maury near Gordonsville, Virginia, where he studied history, science, and the classics while boarding with Maury's family.[16][15] During this period Jefferson came to know and befriended various American Indians, including the famous Cherokee chief *Ontasseté* who often stopped at Shadwell to visit, on their way to Williamsburg to trade.[17][18] During the two years Jefferson was with the Maury family, he traveled to Williamsburg and was a guest of Colonel Dandridge, father of Martha Washington. In Williamsburg the young Jefferson met and came to admire Patrick Henry, eight years his senior, sharing a common interest in violin playing.[19]

Jefferson entered the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, at age 16 and studied mathematics, metaphysics, and philosophy under Professor William Small. Under Small's tutelage, Jefferson encountered the ideas of the British Empiricists, including John Locke, Francis Bacon, and Isaac Newton. Small introduced Jefferson to George Wythe and Francis Fauquier. Small, Wythe, and Fauquier recognized Jefferson as a man of exceptional ability and included him in their inner circle, where he became a regular member of their Friday dinner parties where politics and philosophy were discussed. Jefferson later wrote that he "heard more common good sense, more rational & philosophical conversations than in all the rest of my life".[20] During his first year at the college he was given more to parties and dancing and was not very frugal with his expenditures; during his second year, regretting that he had squandered away much time and money, he applied himself to fifteen hours of study a day.[21] Jefferson improved his French and Greek and his

skill at the violin. He graduated two years after starting in 1762. He read the law under Wythe's tutelage to obtain his law license while working as a law clerk in his office.[22] He also read a wide variety of English classics and political works.[23] Jefferson was well-read in a broad variety of subjects, which along with law and philosophy, included history, natural law, natural religion, ethics, and several areas in science, including agriculture. Overall, he drew very deeply on the philosophers. During the years of study under the watchful eye of Wythe, Jefferson authored a survey of his extensive readings in his *Commonplace Book*.[24] Wythe was so impressed with Jefferson that he would later bequeath his entire library to Jefferson.[25]

The year 1765 was an eventful one in Jefferson's family. In July, his sister Martha married his close friend and college companion Dabney Carr, which greatly pleased Jefferson. In October, he mourned his sister Jane's unexpected death at age 25 and wrote a farewell epitaph in Latin.[26] Jefferson treasured his books and amassed three libraries in his lifetime. The first, a library of 200 volumes started in his youth which included books inherited from his father and left to him by George Wythe,[27] was destroyed when his Shadwell home burned in a 1770 fire. Nevertheless, he had replenished his collection with 1,250 titles by 1773, and it grew to almost 6,500 volumes by 1814.[28] He organized his wide variety of books into three broad categories corresponding with elements of the human mind: memory, reason, and imagination.[29] After the British burned the Library of Congress during the Burning of Washington, he sold this second library to the U.S. government to jumpstart the Library of Congress collection, for the price of $23,950. Jefferson used a portion of the money secured by the sale to pay off some of his large debt, remitting $10,500 to William Short and $4,870 to John Barnes of Georgetown. However, he soon resumed collecting for his personal library, writing to John Adams, "I cannot live without books."[30][31] He began to construct a new library of his personal favorites and by the time of his death a decade later it had grown to almost 2,000 volumes.[32]

Lawyer and House of Burgesses

Jefferson was admitted to the Virginia bar in 1767, and then lived with his mother at Shadwell.[33] In addition to practicing law, Jefferson represented Albemarle County as a delegate in the Virginia House of Burgesses from 1769 until 1775.[34] He pursued reforms to slavery. He introduced legislation in 1769 allowing masters to take control over the emancipation of slaves, taking discretion away from the royal governor and General Court. He persuaded his cousin Richard Bland to spearhead the legislation's passage, but reaction was strongly negative.[35]

House of Burgesses in Williamsburg, Virginia, where Jefferson served 1769–1775

Jefferson took seven cases for freedom-seeking slaves[36] and waived his fee for one client, who claimed that he should be freed before the statutory age of thirty-one required for emancipation in cases with inter-racial grandparents.[37] He invoked the Natural Law to argue, "everyone comes into the world with a right to his own person and using it at his own will ... This is what is called personal liberty, and is given him by the author of nature, because it is necessary for his own sustenance." The judge cut him off and ruled against his client. As a consolation, Jefferson gave his client some money, conceivably used to aid his escape shortly thereafter.[37] He later incorporated this sentiment into the Declaration of Independence.[38] He also took on 68 cases for the General Court of Virginia in 1767, in addition to three notable cases: *Howell v. Netherland* (1770), *Bolling v. Bolling* (1771), and *Blair v. Blair* (1772).[39]

The British parliament passed the Intolerable Acts in 1774, and Jefferson wrote a resolution calling for a "Day of Fasting and Prayer" in protest, as well as a boycott of all British goods. His resolution was later expanded into *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, in which he argued that people have the right to govern themselves.[40]

Monticello, marriage, and family

Jefferson's home Monticello in Virginia

In 1768, Jefferson began constructing his primary residence Monticello (Italian for "Little Mountain") on a hilltop overlooking his 5,000-acre (20 km^2; 7.8 sq mi) plantation.[c] He spent most of his adult life designing Monticello as architect and was quoted as saying, "Architecture is my delight, and putting up, and pulling down, one of my favorite amusements."[42] Construction was done mostly by local masons and carpenters, assisted by Jefferson's slaves.[43]

He moved into the South Pavilion in 1770. Turning Monticello into a neoclassical masterpiece in the Palladian style was his perennial project.[44] On January 1, 1772, Jefferson married his third cousin[45] Martha Wayles Skelton, the 23-year-old widow of Bathurst Skelton, and she moved into the South Pavilion.[46][47] She was a frequent hostess for Jefferson and managed the large household. Biographer Dumas Malone described the marriage as the happiest period of Jefferson's life.[48] Martha read widely, did fine needlework, and was a skilled pianist; Jefferson often accompanied her on the violin or cello.[49] During their ten years of marriage, Martha bore six children: Martha "Patsy" (1772–1836); Jane (1774–1775); a son who lived for only a few weeks in 1777; Mary "Polly" (1778–1804); Lucy Elizabeth (1780–1781); and another Lucy Elizabeth (1782–1784).[50][d] Only Martha and Mary survived more than a few years.[53]

Martha's father John Wayles died in 1773, and the couple inherited 135 slaves, 11,000 acres (45 km^2; 17 sq mi), and the estate's debts. The debts took Jefferson years to satisfy, contributing to his financial problems.[46]

Jefferson's daughter Martha

Martha later suffered from ill health, including diabetes, and frequent childbirth further weakened her. Her mother had died young, and Martha lived with two stepmothers as a girl. A few months after the birth of her last child, she died on September 6, 1782, with Jefferson at her bedside. Shortly before her death, Martha made Jefferson promise never to marry again, telling him that she could not bear to have another mother raise her children.[54] Jefferson was grief-stricken by her death, relentlessly pacing back and forth, nearly to the point of exhaustion. He emerged after three weeks, taking long rambling rides on secluded roads with his daughter Martha, by her description "a solitary witness to many a violent burst of grief".[53][55]

After working as Secretary of State (1790–93), he returned to Monticello and initiated a remodeling based on the architectural concepts which he had acquired in Europe. The work continued throughout most of his presidency and was completed in 1809.[56][57]

Political career (1775–1800)

Declaration of Independence

Jefferson was the primary author of the Declaration of Independence. The document's social and political ideals were proposed by Jefferson before the inauguration of Washington.[58] At age 33, he was one of the youngest delegates to the Second Continental Congress beginning in 1775 at the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, where a formal declaration of independence from Britain was overwhelmingly

favored.[59] Jefferson chose his words for the Declaration in June 1775, shortly after the war had begun, where the idea of independence from Britain had long since become popular among the colonies. He was inspired by the Enlightenment ideals of the sanctity of the individual, as well as by the writings of Locke and Montesquieu.[60]

U.S. Declaration of Independence – 1823 facsimile of the engrossed copy

He sought out John Adams, an emerging leader of the Congress.[61] They became close friends and Adams supported Jefferson's appointment to the Committee of Five formed to draft a declaration of independence in furtherance of the Lee Resolution passed by the Congress, which declared the United Colonies independent. The committee initially thought that Adams should write the document, but Adams persuaded the committee to choose Jefferson.[e]

Jefferson consulted with other committee members over the next seventeen days and drew on his proposed draft of the Virginia Constitution, George Mason's draft of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, and other sources.[63] The other committee members made some changes, and a final draft was presented to the Congress on June 28, 1776.[64]

The declaration was introduced on Friday, June 28, and Congress began debate over its contents on Monday, July 1,[64] resulting in the omission of a fourth of the text,[65] including a passage critical of King George III and "Jefferson's anti-slavery clause".[66][67] Jefferson resented the changes, but he did not speak publicly about the revisions.[f] On July 4, 1776, the Congress ratified the Declaration, and delegates signed it on August 2; in doing so, they were committing an act of treason against the Crown.[69] Jefferson's preamble is regarded as an enduring statement of human rights, and the phrase "all men are created equal" has been called "one of the best-known sentences in the English language" containing "the most potent and consequential words in American history".[66][70]

Virginia state legislator and governor

At the start of the Revolution, Jefferson was a Colonel and was named commander of the Albemarle County Militia on September 26, 1775.[71] He was then elected to the Virginia House of Delegates for Albemarle County in September 1776, when finalizing a state constitution was a priority.[72][73] For nearly three years, he assisted with the constitution and was especially proud of his Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, which forbade state support of religious institutions or enforcement of religious doctrine.[74] The bill failed to pass, as did his legislation to disestablish the Anglican Church, but both were later revived by James Madison.[75]

Governor's Palace, Governor Jefferson's residence in Williamsburg

In 1778, Jefferson was given the task of revising the state's laws. He drafted 126 bills in three years, including laws to streamline the judicial system. Jefferson's proposed statutes provided for general education, which he considered the basis of "republican government".[72] He had become alarmed that Virginia's powerful landed gentry were becoming a hereditary aristocracy. He took the lead in abolishing what he called "feudal and unnatural distinctions." He targeted laws such as entail and primogeniture by which the oldest son inherited all the land. The entail laws made it perpetual: the one who inherited the land could not sell it, but had to bequeath

it to his oldest son. As a result, increasingly large plantations, worked by white tenant farmers and by black slaves, gained in size and wealth and political power in the eastern ("Tidewater") tobacco areas.[76] During the Revolutionary era, all such laws were repealed by the states that had them.[77]

Jefferson was elected governor for one-year terms in 1779 and 1780.[78] He transferred the state capital from Williamsburg to Richmond, and introduced measures for public education, religious freedom, and revision of inheritance laws.[79]

During General Benedict Arnold's 1781 invasion of Virginia, Jefferson escaped Richmond just ahead of the British forces, and the city being razed by Arnold's men.[80][81] Jefferson sent an emergency dispatch to Colonel Sampson Mathews, whose militia was traveling nearby, to thwart Arnold's efforts.[82][83] During this time, Jefferson was living with friends in the surrounding counties of Richmond. One of these friends was William Fleming, a college friend of his. Jefferson stayed at least one night at his plantation Summerville in Chesterfield County.[84] General Charles Cornwallis that spring dispatched a cavalry force led by Banastre Tarleton to capture Jefferson and members of the Assembly at Monticello, but Jack Jouett of the Virginia militia thwarted the British plan. Jefferson escaped to Poplar Forest, his plantation to the west.[85] When the General Assembly reconvened in June 1781, it conducted an inquiry into Jefferson's actions which eventually concluded that Jefferson had acted with honor—but he was not re-elected.[86]

In April of the same year, his daughter Lucy died at age one. A second daughter of that name was born the following year, but she died at age three.[87]

Notes on the State of Virginia

Jefferson received a letter of inquiry in 1780 about the geography, history, and government of Virginia from French diplomat François Barbé-Marbois, who was gathering data on the United States. Jefferson included his written responses in a book, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785).[88] He compiled the book over five years, including reviews of scientific knowledge, Virginia's history, politics, laws, culture, and geography.[89] The book explores what constitutes a good society, using Virginia as an exemplar. Jefferson included extensive data about the state's natural resources and economy and wrote at length about slavery, miscegenation, and his belief that blacks and whites could not live together as free people in one society because of justified resentments of the enslaved.[90] He also wrote of his views on the American Indian and considered them as equals in body and mind to European settlers.[91][92]

Notes was first published in 1785 in French and appeared in English in 1787.[93] Biographer George Tucker considered the work "surprising in the extent of the information which a single individual had been thus able to acquire, as to the physical features of the state",[94] and Merrill D. Peterson described it as an accomplishment for which all Americans should be grateful.[95]

Member of Congress

The United States formed a Congress of the Confederation following victory in the Revolutionary War and a peace treaty with Great Britain in 1783, to which Jefferson was appointed as a Virginia delegate. He was a member of the committee setting foreign exchange rates and recommended an American currency based on the decimal system which was adopted.[96] He advised the formation of the Committee of the States to fill the power vacuum when Congress was in recess.[97] The Committee met when Congress adjourned, but disagreements rendered it dysfunctional.[98]

In the Congress's 1783–84 session, Jefferson acted as chairman of committees to establish a viable system of government for the new Republic and to propose a policy for the settlement of the western territories. Jefferson was the principal author of the Land Ordinance of 1784, whereby Virginia ceded to the national government the vast area that it claimed northwest of the Ohio River. He insisted that this territory should not be used as colonial territory by any of the thirteen states, but that it should be divided into sections that could become states. He plotted borders for nine new states in their initial stages and wrote an ordinance banning slavery in all the nation's territories. Congress made extensive revisions, including rejection of the ban on slavery.[99][100] The provisions banning slavery were known later as the "Jefferson Proviso;" they were modified and implemented three years later in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and became the law for the entire Northwest.[99]

Independence Hall Assembly Room where Jefferson served in Congress

Minister to France

Portrait of Thomas Jefferson while in London in 1786 by Mather Brown

In 1784, Jefferson was sent by the Congress of the Confederation[g] to join Benjamin Franklin and John Adams in Paris as Minister Plenipotentiary for Negotiating Treaties of Amity and Commerce with Great Britain, Russia, Austria, Prussia, Denmark, Saxony, Hamburg, Spain, Portugal, Naples, Sardinia, The Papal States, Venice, Genoa, Tuscany, the Sublime Porte, Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli.[101] Some believed that the recently widowed Jefferson was depressed and that the assignment would distract him from his wife's death.[102] With his young daughter Patsy and two servants, he departed in July 1784, arriving in Paris the next month.[103][104] Less than a year later he was assigned the additional duty of succeeding Franklin as Minister to France. French foreign minister Count de Vergennes commented, "You replace Monsieur Franklin, I hear." Jefferson replied, "I *succeed*. No man can replace him."[105] During his five years in Paris, Jefferson played a leading role in shaping the foreign policy of the United States.[106]

Jefferson had Patsy educated at the Pentemont Abbey. In 1786, he met and fell in love with Maria Cosway, an accomplished—and married—Italian-English musician of 27. They saw each other frequently over a period of six weeks. She returned to Great Britain, but they maintained a lifelong correspondence.[107]

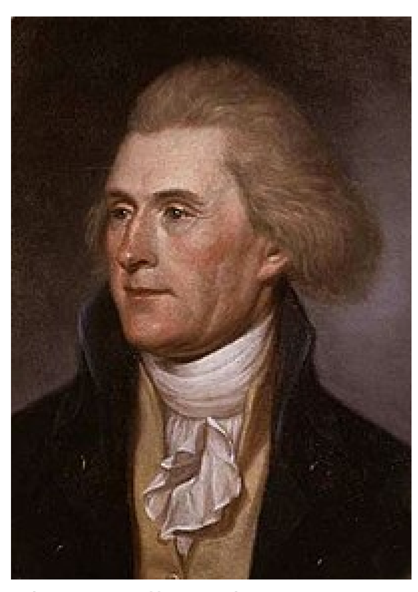
Jefferson sent for his youngest surviving child, nine-year-old Polly, in June 1787, who was accompanied on her voyage by a young slave from Monticello, Sally Hemings. Jefferson had taken her older brother James Hemings to Paris as part of his domestic staff and had him trained in French cuisine.[108] According to Sally's son, Madison Hemings, the 16-year-old Sally and Jefferson began a sexual relationship in Paris, where she became pregnant.[109] According to his account, Hemings agreed to return to the United States only after Jefferson promised to free her children when they came of age.[109]

While in France, Jefferson became a regular companion of the Marquis de Lafayette, a French hero of the American Revolutionary War, and Jefferson used his influence to procure trade agreements with France.[110][111] As the French Revolution began, Jefferson allowed his Paris residence, the Hôtel de Langeac, to be used for meetings by Lafayette and other republicans. He was in Paris during the storming of the Bastille[112] and consulted with Lafayette while the latter drafted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and

of the Citizen.[113] Jefferson often found his mail opened by postmasters, so he invented his own enciphering device, the "Wheel Cipher"; he wrote important communications in code for the rest of his career.[114][h] Jefferson left Paris for America in September 1789, intending to return soon; however, President George Washington appointed him the country's first Secretary of State, forcing him to remain in the nation's capital.[115] Jefferson remained a firm supporter of the French Revolution while opposing its more violent elements.[116]

Secretary of State

Soon after returning from France, Jefferson accepted Washington's invitation to serve as Secretary of State.[117] Pressing issues at this time were the national debt and the permanent location of the capital. Jefferson opposed a national debt, preferring that each state retire its own, in contrast to Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, who desired consolidation of various states' debts by the federal government.[118] Hamilton also had bold plans to establish the national credit and a national bank, but Jefferson strenuously opposed this and attempted to undermine his agenda, which nearly led Washington to dismiss him from his cabinet. Jefferson later left the cabinet voluntarily.[119]


Thomas Jefferson in 1791 at 49 by Charles Willson Peale

The second major issue was the capital's permanent location. Hamilton favored a capital close to the major commercial centers of the Northeast, while Washington, Jefferson, and other agrarians wanted it located to the south.[120] After lengthy deadlock, the Compromise of 1790 was struck, permanently locating the capital on the Potomac River, and the federal government assumed the war debts of all thirteen states.[120]

While serving in the government in Philadelphia, Jefferson and political protegee Congressman James Madison founded the *National Gazette* in 1791, along with poet and writer Phillip Freneau, in an effort to counter Hamilton's Federalist policies, which Hamilton was promoting through the influential Federalist newspaper the *Gazette of the United States*. The *National Gazette* made particular criticism of the policies promoted by Hamilton, often through anonymous essays signed by the pen name *Brutus* at Jefferson's urging, which were actually written by Madison.[121] In the Spring of 1791, Jefferson and Madison took a vacation to Vermont. Jefferson had been suffering from migraines and he was tired of Hamilton in-fighting.[122]

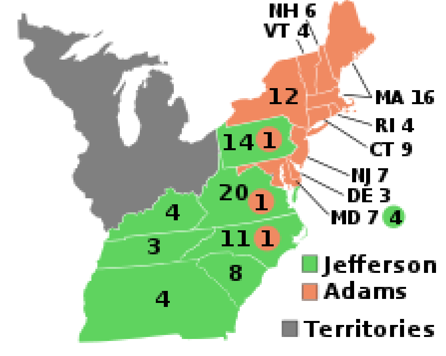
In May 1792, Jefferson was alarmed at the political rivalries taking shape; he wrote to Washington, urging him to run for re-election that year as a unifying influence.[123] He urged the president to rally the citizenry to a party that would defend democracy against the corrupting influence of banks and monied interests, as espoused by the Federalists. Historians recognize this letter as the earliest delineation of Democratic-Republican Party principles.[124] Jefferson, Madison, and other Democratic-Republican organizers favored states' rights and local control and opposed federal concentration of power, whereas Hamilton sought more power for the federal government.[125]

Jefferson supported France against Britain when the two nations fought in 1793, though his arguments in the Cabinet were undercut by French Revolutionary envoy Edmond-Charles Genêt's open scorn for President Washington.[126] In his discussions with British Minister George Hammond, Jefferson tried unsuccessfully to persuade the British to vacate their posts in the Northwest and to compensate the U.S. for slaves whom the British had freed at the end of the war. Seeking a return to private life, Jefferson resigned the cabinet position in December 1793, perhaps to bolster his political influence from outside the administration.[127]

After the Washington administration negotiated the Jay Treaty with Great Britain (1794), Jefferson saw a cause around which to rally his party and organized a national opposition from Monticello.[128] The treaty, designed by Hamilton, aimed to reduce tensions and increase trade. Jefferson warned that it would increase British influence and subvert republicanism, calling it "the boldest act [Hamilton and Jay] ever ventured on to undermine the government".[129] The Treaty passed, but it expired in 1805 during Jefferson's administration and was not renewed. Jefferson continued his pro-French stance; during the violence of the Reign of Terror, he declined to disavow the revolution: "To back away from France would be to undermine the cause of republicanism in America."[130]

Election of 1796 and vice presidency

In the presidential campaign of 1796, Jefferson lost the electoral college vote to Federalist John Adams by 71–68 and was thus elected vice president. As presiding officer of the Senate, he assumed a more passive role than his predecessor John Adams. He allowed the Senate to freely conduct debates and confined his participation to procedural issues, which he called an "honorable and easy" role.[131] Jefferson had previously studied parliamentary law and procedure for 40 years, making him unusually well qualified to serve as presiding officer. In 1800, he published his assembled notes on Senate procedure as *A Manual of Parliamentary Practice*.[132] Jefferson would cast only three tie-breaking votes in the Senate.



1796 election results

Jefferson held four confidential talks with French consul Joseph Létombe in the spring of 1797 where he attacked Adams, predicting that his rival would serve only one term. He also encouraged France to invade England, and advised Létombe to stall any American envoys sent to Paris by instructing him to "listen to them and then drag out the negotiations at length and mollify them by the urbanity of the proceedings."[133] This toughened the tone that the French government adopted toward the Adams administration. After Adams's initial peace envoys were rebuffed, Jefferson and his supporters lobbied for the release of papers related to the incident, called the XYZ Affair after the letters used to disguise the identities of the French officials involved.[134] However, the tactic backfired when it was revealed that French officials had demanded bribes, rallying public support against France. The U.S. began an undeclared naval war with France known as the Quasi-War.[135]

Jefferson in 1799, painted by Charles Peale Polk

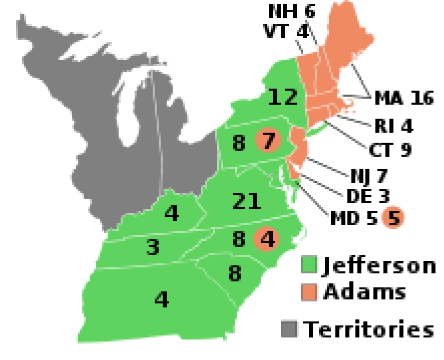
During the Adams presidency, the Federalists rebuilt the military, levied new taxes, and enacted the Alien and Sedition Acts. Jefferson believed that these laws were intended to suppress Democratic-Republicans, rather than prosecute enemy aliens, and considered them unconstitutional.[136] To rally opposition, he and James Madison anonymously wrote the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions, declaring that the federal government had no right to exercise powers not specifically delegated to it by the states.[137] The resolutions followed the "interposition" approach of Madison, in which states may shield their citizens from federal laws that they deem unconstitutional. Jefferson advocated nullification, allowing states to invalidate federal laws altogether.[138][i] Jefferson warned that, "unless arrested at the threshold", the Alien and Sedition Acts would "necessarily drive these states into revolution and blood".[140]

Historian Ron Chernow claims that "the theoretical damage of the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions was deep and lasting, and was a recipe for disunion", contributing to the American Civil War as well as later events.[141] Washington was so appalled by the resolutions that he told Patrick Henry that, if "systematically and pertinaciously pursued", the resolutions would "dissolve the union or produce coercion."[142]

Jefferson had always admired Washington's leadership skills but felt that his Federalist party was leading the country in the wrong direction. Jefferson thought it wise not to attend his funeral in 1799 because of acute differences with Washington while serving as Secretary of State, and remained at Monticello.[143]

Election of 1800

In the 1800 presidential election, Jefferson contended once more against Federalist John Adams. Adams's campaign was weakened by unpopular taxes and vicious Federalist infighting over his actions in the Quasi-War.[144] Democratic-Republicans pointed to the Alien and Sedition Acts and accused the Federalists of being secret monarchists, while Federalists charged that Jefferson was a godless libertine in thrall to the French.[145] Historian Joyce Appleby said the election was "one of the most acrimonious in the annals of American history".[146]



1800 election results

The Democratic-Republicans ultimately won more electoral college votes, though without the votes of the extra electors that resulted from the addition of three-fifths of the South's slaves to the population calculation, Jefferson would not have defeated John Adams.[147] Jefferson and his vice-presidential candidate Aaron Burr unexpectedly received an equal total. Because of the tie, the election was decided by the Federalist-dominated House of Representatives.[148][j] Hamilton lobbied Federalist representatives on Jefferson's behalf, believing him a lesser political evil than Burr. On February 17, 1801, after thirty-six ballots, the House elected Jefferson president and Burr vice president. Jefferson became the second incumbent vice president to be elected president. [149]

The win was marked by Democratic-Republican celebrations throughout the country.[150] Some of Jefferson's opponents argued that he owed his victory over Adams to the South's inflated number of electors, due to counting slaves as a partial population under the Three-Fifths Compromise.[151] Others alleged that Jefferson secured James Asheton Bayard's tie-breaking electoral vote by guaranteeing the retention of various Federalist posts in the government.[149] Jefferson disputed the allegation, and the historical record is inconclusive.[152]

The transition proceeded smoothly, marking a watershed in American history. As historian Gordon S. Wood writes, "it was one of the first popular elections in modern history that resulted in the peaceful transfer of power from one 'party' to another."[149]

Presidency (1801–1809)

The Jefferson Cabinet		
Office	**Name**	**Term**
President	**Thomas Jefferson**	1801–1809
Vice President	**Aaron Burr**	1801–1805
	George Clinton	1805–1809

Jefferson was sworn in by Chief Justice John Marshall at the new Capitol in Washington, D.C. on March 4, 1801. In contrast to his predecessors, Jefferson exhibited a dislike of formal etiquette; he arrived alone on horseback without escort, dressed plainly[153] and, after dismounting, retired his own horse to the nearby stable.[154] His inaugural address struck a note of reconciliation, declaring, "We have been called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists."[155] Ideologically, Jefferson stressed "equal and exact justice to all men", minority rights, and

freedom of speech, religion, and press.[156] He said that a free and democratic government was "the strongest government on earth."[156] He nominated moderate Republicans to his cabinet: James Madison as Secretary of State, Henry Dearborn as Secretary of War, Levi Lincoln as Attorney General, and Robert Smith as Secretary of the Navy.[157]

Office	Name	Term
Secretary of State	**James Madison**	1801–1809
Secretary of the Treasury	**Samuel Dexter**	1801
	Albert Gallatin	1801–1809
Secretary of War	**Henry Dearborn**	1801–1809
Attorney General	**Levi Lincoln Sr.**	1801–1805
	John Breckinridge	1805–1806
	Caesar Augustus Rodney	1807–1809
Secretary of the Navy	**Benjamin Stoddert**	1801
	Robert Smith	1801–1809

Upon assuming office, he first confronted an $83 million national debt.[158] He began dismantling Hamilton's Federalist fiscal system with help from Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin.[157] Jefferson's administration eliminated the whiskey excise and other taxes after closing "unnecessary offices" and cutting "useless establishments and expenses".[159][160] They attempted to disassemble the national bank and its effect of increasing national debt, but were dissuaded by Gallatin.[161] Jefferson shrank the Navy, deeming it unnecessary in peacetime.[162] Instead, he incorporated a fleet of inexpensive gunboats used only for defense with the idea that they would not provoke foreign hostilities.[159] After two terms, he had lowered the national debt from $83 million to $57 million.[158]

Jefferson pardoned several of those imprisoned under the Alien and Sedition Acts.[163] Congressional Republicans repealed the Judiciary Act of 1801, which removed nearly all of Adams's "midnight judges" from office. A subsequent appointment battle led to the Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Marbury v. Madison*, asserting judicial review over executive branch actions.[164] Jefferson appointed three Supreme Court justices: William Johnson (1804), Henry Brockholst Livingston (1807), and Thomas Todd (1807).[165]

Jefferson strongly felt the need for a national military university, producing an officer engineering corps for a national defense based on the advancement of the sciences, rather than having to rely on foreign sources for top grade engineers with questionable loyalty.[166] He signed the Military Peace Establishment Act on March 16, 1802, thus founding the United States Military Academy at West Point. The Act documented in 29 sections a new set of laws and limits for the military. Jefferson was also hoping to bring reform to the Executive branch, replacing Federalists and active opponents throughout the officer corps to promote Republican values.[167]

Jefferson took great interest in the Library of Congress, which had been established in 1800. He often recommended books to acquire. In 1802, an act of Congress authorized President Jefferson to name the first Librarian of Congress and gave itself the power to establish library rules and regulations. This act also granted the president and vice president the right to use the library.[168]

White House hostess

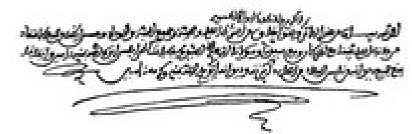
Jefferson needed a hostess when ladies were present at the White House. His wife, Martha, had died in 1782. Jefferson's two daughters, Martha Jefferson Randolph and Maria Jefferson Eppes, occasionally served in that role.[169] On May 27, 1801, Jefferson asked Dolley Madison, wife of his long-time friend James Madison, to be the permanent White House hostess. She accepted, realizing the diplomatic importance of the position. She was also in charge of the completion of the White House mansion. Dolly served as White House hostess for the rest of Jefferson's two terms and then eight more years as First Lady to President James Madison, Jefferson's successor.[169] Historians have speculated that Martha Jefferson would have been an elegant First Lady on par with Martha Washington.[170] Although she died before her husband took office, Martha Jefferson is sometimes considered a First Lady.[171]

First Barbary War

Barbary Coast of North Africa 1806. Left is Morocco at Gibraltar, center is Tunis, and right is Tripoli.

American merchant ships had been protected from Barbary Coast pirates by the Royal Navy when the states were British colonies.[172] After independence, however, pirates often captured U.S. merchant ships, pillaged cargoes, and enslaved or held crew members for ransom. Jefferson had opposed paying tribute to the Barbary States since 1785.[173] In March 1786, he and John Adams went to London to negotiate with Tripoli's envoy, ambassador Sidi Haji Abdrahaman (or Sidi Haji Abdul Rahman Adja).[174] In 1801, he authorized a U.S. Navy fleet under Commodore Richard Dale to make a show of force in the Mediterranean, the first American naval squadron to cross the Atlantic.[175] Following the fleet's first engagement, he successfully asked Congress for a declaration of war.[175] The subsequent "First Barbary War" was the first foreign war fought by the U.S.[176]

Pasha of Tripoli Yusuf Karamanli captured the USS *Philadelphia*, so Jefferson authorized William Eaton, the U.S. Consul to Tunis, to lead a force to restore the pasha's older brother to the throne.[178] The American navy forced Tunis and Algiers into breaking their alliance with Tripoli. Jefferson ordered five separate naval bombardments of Tripoli, leading the pasha to sign a treaty that restored peace in the Mediterranean.[179] This victory proved only temporary, but according to Wood, "many Americans celebrated it as a vindication of their policy of spreading free trade around the world and as a great victory for liberty over tyranny."[180]


The Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States of America and the Bey and Subjects of Ottoman Tripolitania, known popularly as the Treaty of Tripoli, handwritten in Arabic with Maghrebi script, signed November 4, 1796.[177]

Louisiana Purchase

Spain ceded ownership of the Louisiana territory in 1800 to the more predominant France. Jefferson was greatly concerned that Napoleon's broad interests in the vast territory would threaten the security of the continent and Mississippi River shipping. He wrote that the cession "works most sorely on the U.S. It completely reverses all the political relations of the U.S."[181] In 1802, he instructed James Monroe and Robert R. Livingston to negotiate with Napoleon to purchase New Orleans and adjacent coastal areas from France.[182] In early 1803, Jefferson offered Napoleon nearly $10 million for 40,000 square miles (100,000 square kilometres) of tropical territory.[183]

Napoleon realized that French military control was impractical over such a vast remote territory, and he was in dire need of funds for his wars on the home front. In early April 1803, he unexpectedly made negotiators a counter-offer to sell 827,987 square miles (2,144,480 square kilometres) of French territory for $15 million, doubling the size of the United States.[183] U.S. negotiators seized this unique opportunity and accepted the offer and signed the treaty on April 30, 1803.[158] Word of the unexpected purchase did not reach Jefferson until July 3, 1803.[158] He unknowingly acquired the most fertile tract of land of its size on Earth, making the new country self-sufficient in food and other resources. The sale also significantly curtailed the European presence in North America, removing obstacles to U.S. westward expansion.[184]

Most thought that this was an exceptional opportunity, despite Republican reservations about the Constitutional authority of the federal government to acquire land.[185] Jefferson initially thought that a Constitutional amendment was necessary to purchase and govern the new territory; but he later changed his mind, fearing that this would give cause to oppose the purchase, and he, therefore, urged a speedy debate and ratification.[186] On October 20, 1803, the Senate ratified the purchase treaty by a vote of 24–7.[187]

The 1803 Louisiana Purchase totaled 827,987 square miles (2,144,480 square kilometres), doubling the size of the United States.

After the purchase, Jefferson preserved the region's Spanish legal code and instituted a gradual approach for integrating settlers into American democracy. He believed that a period of federal rule would be necessary while Louisianians adjusted to their new nation.[188][k] Historians have differed in their assessments regarding the constitutional implications of the sale,[190] but they typically hail the Louisiana acquisition as a major accomplishment. Frederick Jackson Turner called the purchase the most formative event in American history.[184]

Attempted annexation of Florida

In the aftermath of the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson attempted to annex West Florida from Spain, a nation under the control of Emperor Napoleon and the French Empire after 1804. In his annual message to Congress, on December 3, 1805, Jefferson railed against Spain over Florida border depredations.[191] A few days later Jefferson secretly requested a two million dollar expenditure to purchase Florida. Representative and floor leader John Randolph, however, opposed annexation and was upset over Jefferson's secrecy on the matter. The Two Million Dollar bill passed only after Jefferson successfully maneuvered to replace Randolph with Barnabas Bidwell as floor leader.[192] This aroused suspicion of Jefferson and charges of undue executive influence over Congress. Jefferson signed the bill into law in February 1806. Six weeks later the law was made public. The two million dollars was to be given to France as payment, in turn, to put pressure on Spain to permit the annexation of Florida by the United States. France, however, was in no mood to allow Spain to give up Florida and refused the offer. Florida remained under the control of Spain.[193] The failed venture damaged Jefferson's reputation among his supporters.[194]

Lewis and Clark expedition

Jefferson anticipated further westward settlements due to the Louisiana Purchase and arranged for the exploration and mapping of the uncharted territory. He sought to establish a U.S. claim ahead of competing European interests and to find the rumored Northwest Passage.[195] Jefferson and others were influenced by exploration accounts of Le Page du Pratz in Louisiana (1763) and Captain James Cook in the Pacific (1784),[196] and they persuaded Congress in 1804 to fund an expedition to explore and map the newly acquired territory to the Pacific Ocean.[197]

Jefferson appointed Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to be leaders of the Corps of Discovery (1803–1806).[198] In the months leading up to the expedition, Jefferson tutored Lewis in the sciences of mapping, botany, natural history, mineralogy, and astronomy and navigation, giving him unlimited access to his library at

Monticello, which included the largest collection of books in the world on the subject of the geography and natural history of the North American continent, along with an impressive collection of maps.[199]

Corps of Discovery, October 1805

The expedition lasted from May 1804 to September 1806 (see Timeline) and obtained a wealth of scientific and geographic knowledge, including knowledge of many Indian tribes.[200]

Other expeditions

In addition to the Corps of Discovery, Jefferson organized three other western expeditions: the William Dunbar and George Hunter expedition on the Ouachita River (1804–1805), the Thomas Freeman and Peter Custis expedition (1806) on the Red River, and the Zebulon Pike Expedition (1806–1807) into the Rocky Mountains and the Southwest. All three produced valuable information about the American frontier.[201]

American Indian policies

Jefferson's experiences with the American Indians began during his boyhood in Virginia and extended through his political career and into his retirement. He refuted the contemporary notion that Indians were inferior people and maintained that they were equal in body and mind to people of European descent.[202]

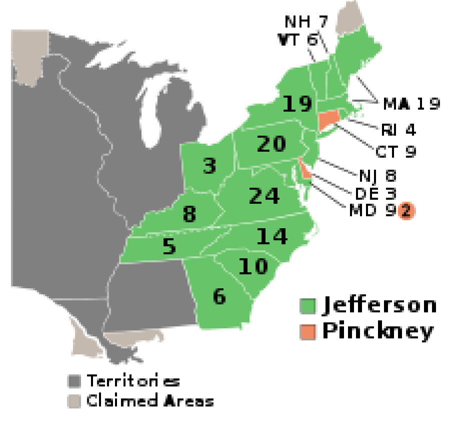
Black Hoof, leader of the Shawnee, accepted Jefferson's Indian assimilation policies.

As governor of Virginia during the Revolutionary War, Jefferson recommended moving the Cherokee and Shawnee tribes, who had allied with the British, to west of the Mississippi River. But when he took office as president, he quickly took measures to avert another major conflict, as American and Indian societies were in collision and the British were inciting Indian tribes from Canada.[203][204] In Georgia, he stipulated that the state would release its legal claims for lands to its west in exchange for military support in expelling the Cherokee from Georgia. This facilitated his policy of western expansion, to "advance compactly as we multiply".[205]

In keeping with his Enlightenment thinking, President Jefferson adopted an assimilation policy toward American Indians known as his "civilization program" which included securing peaceful U.S. – Indian treaty alliances and encouraging agriculture. Jefferson advocated that Indian tribes should make federal purchases by credit holding their lands as collateral for repayment. Various tribes accepted Jefferson's policies, including the Shawnees led by Black Hoof, the Creek, and the Cherokees. However, some Shawnees broke off from Black Hoof, led by Tecumseh, and opposed Jefferson's assimilation policies.[206]

Historian Bernard Sheehan argues that Jefferson believed that assimilation was best for American Indians; second best was removal to the west. He felt that the worst outcome of the cultural and resources conflict between American citizens and American Indians would be their attacking the whites.[204] Jefferson told Secretary of War General Henry Dearborn (Indian affairs were then under the War Department), "If we are constrained to lift the hatchet against any tribe, we will never lay it down until that tribe is exterminated or driven beyond the Mississippi."[207] Miller agrees that Jefferson believed that Indians should assimilate to American customs and agriculture. Historians such as Peter S. Onuf and Merrill D. Peterson argue that Jefferson's actual Indian policies did little to promote assimilation and were a pretext to seize lands.[208]

Re-election in 1804 and second term



1804 Electoral College vote

Jefferson's successful first term occasioned his re-nomination for president by the Republican party, with George Clinton replacing Burr as his running mate.[209] The Federalist party ran Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of South Carolina, John Adams's vice-presidential candidate in the 1800 election. The Jefferson-Clinton ticket won overwhelmingly in the electoral college vote, by 162 to 14, promoting their achievement of a strong economy, lower taxes, and the Louisiana Purchase.[209]

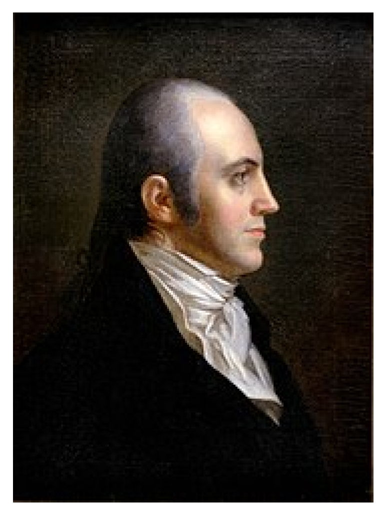
In March 1806, a split developed in the Republican party, led by fellow Virginian and former Republican ally John Randolph who viciously accused President Jefferson on the floor of the House of moving too far in the Federalist direction. In so doing, Randolph permanently set himself apart politically from Jefferson. Jefferson and Madison had backed resolutions to limit or ban British imports in retaliation for British seizures of American shipping. Also, in 1808, Jefferson was the first president to propose a broad Federal plan to build roads and canals across several states, asking for $20 million, further alarming Randolph and believers of limited government.[210]

Jefferson's popularity further suffered in his second term due to his response to wars in Europe. Positive relations with Great Britain had diminished, due partly to the antipathy between Jefferson and British diplomat Anthony Merry. After Napoleon's decisive victory at the Battle of Austerlitz in 1805, Napoleon became more aggressive in his negotiations over trading rights, which American efforts failed to counter. Jefferson then led the enactment of the Embargo Act of 1807, directed at both France and Great Britain. This triggered economic chaos in the U.S. and was strongly criticized at the time, resulting in Jefferson having to abandon the policy a year later.[211]

During the revolutionary era, the states abolished the international slave trade, but South Carolina reopened it. In his annual message of December 1806, Jefferson denounced the "violations of human rights" attending the international slave trade, calling on the newly elected Congress to criminalize it immediately. In 1807, Congress passed the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves, which Jefferson signed.[212][213] The act established severe punishment against the international slave trade, although it did not address the issue domestically.[214]

In the wake of the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson sought to annex Florida from Spain, as brokered by Napoleon.[215] Congress agreed to the president's request to secretly appropriate purchase money in the "$2,000,000 Bill".[215] The Congressional funding drew criticism from Randolph, who believed that the money would wind up in the coffers of Napoleon. The bill was signed into law; however, negotiations for the project failed. Jefferson lost clout among fellow Republicans, and his use of unofficial Congressional channels was sharply criticized.[215] In Haiti, Jefferson's neutrality had allowed arms to enable the slave independence movement during its Revolution, and blocked attempts to assist Napoleon, who was defeated there in 1803.[216] But he refused official recognition of the country during his second term, in deference to southern complaints about the racial violence against slave-holders; it was eventually extended to Haiti in 1862.[217] Domestically, Jefferson's grandson James Madison Randolph became the first child born in the White House in 1806.[218]

Burr conspiracy and trial



Aaron Burr
Vanderlyn, 1802

Following the 1801 electoral deadlock, Jefferson's relationship with his vice president, former New York Senator Aaron Burr, rapidly eroded. Jefferson suspected Burr of seeking the presidency for himself, while Burr was angered by Jefferson's refusal to appoint some of his supporters to federal office. Burr was dropped from the Republican ticket in 1804.

The same year, Burr was soundly defeated in his bid to be elected New York governor. During the campaign, Alexander Hamilton publicly made callous remarks regarding Burr's moral character.[219] Subsequently, Burr challenged Hamilton to a duel, mortally wounding him on July 11, 1804. Burr was indicted for Hamilton's murder in New York and New Jersey, causing him to flee to Georgia, although he remained President of the Senate during Supreme Court Justice Samuel Chase's impeachment trial.[220] Both indictments quietly died and Burr was not prosecuted.[221] Also during the election, certain New England separatists approached Burr, desiring a New England federation and intimating that he would be their leader.[222] However, nothing came of the plot, since Burr had lost the election and his reputation was ruined after killing Hamilton.[222] In August 1804, Burr contacted British Minister Anthony Merry offering to cede U.S. western territory in return for money and British ships.[223]

After leaving office in April 1805, Burr traveled west and conspired with Louisiana Territory governor James Wilkinson, beginning a large-scale recruitment for a military expedition.[224] Other plotters included Ohio Senator John Smith and an Irishman named Harmon Blennerhassett.[224] Burr discussed a number of plots—seizing control of Mexico or Spanish Florida, or forming a secessionist state in New Orleans or the Western U.S. Historians remain unclear as to his true goal.[225][l]

In the fall of 1806, Burr launched a military flotilla carrying about 60 men down the Ohio River. Wilkinson renounced the plot, apparently from self-interested motives; he reported Burr's expedition to Jefferson, who immediately ordered Burr's arrest.[224][227][228] On February 13, 1807, Burr was captured in Louisiana's Bayou Pierre wilderness and sent to Virginia to be tried for treason.[223]

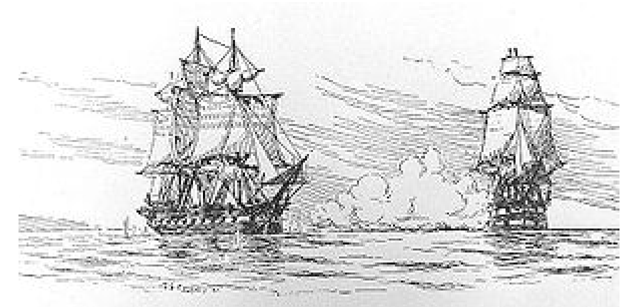
Burr's 1807 conspiracy trial became a national issue.[229] Jefferson attempted to preemptively influence the verdict by telling Congress that Burr's guilt was "beyond question", but the case came before his longtime political foe John Marshall, who dismissed the treason charge. Burr's legal team at one stage subpoenaed Jefferson, but Jefferson refused to testify, making the first argument for executive privilege. Instead, Jefferson provided relevant legal documents.[230] After a three-month trial, the jury found Burr not guilty, while Jefferson denounced his acquittal.[228][231][m][232] Jefferson subsequently removed Wilkinson as territorial governor but retained him in the U.S. military. Historian James N. Banner criticized Jefferson for continuing to trust Wilkinson, a "faithless plotter".[228]

General Wilkinson misconduct

Commanding General James Wilkinson was a holdover of the Washington and Adams administrations. Wilkinson was rumored to be a "skillful and unscrupolous plotter". In 1804, Wilkinson received 12,000 pesos from the Spanish for information on American boundary plans.[233] Wilkinson also received advances on his salary and payments on claims submitted to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn. This damaging information apparently was unknown to Jefferson. In 1805, Jefferson trusted Wilkinson and appointed him Louisiana Territory governor, admiring Wilkinson's work ethic. In January 1806 Jefferson received information from Kentucky U.S. Attorney Joseph Davies that Wilkinson was on the Spanish payroll. Jefferson took no action against Wilkinson, there being, at the time, a lack of evidence against Wilkinson.[234] An investigation by the

House in December 1807 exonerated Wilkinson.[235] In 1808, a military court looked into Wilkinson but lacked evidence to charge Wilkinson. Jefferson retained Wilkinson in the Army and he was passed on by Jefferson to Jefferson's successor James Madison.[236] Evidence found in Spanish archives in the twentieth century proved Wilkinson was, in fact, on the Spanish payroll.[233]

Chesapeake–Leopard affair and Embargo Act



HMS *Leopard* (right) firing upon USS *Chesapeake*

The British conducted seizures of American shipping to search for British deserters from 1806 to 1807; American citizens were thus impressed into the British naval service. In 1806, Jefferson issued a call for a boycott of British goods; on April 18, Congress passed the Non-Importation Acts, but they were never enforced. Later that year, Jefferson asked James Monroe and William Pinkney to negotiate with Great Britain to end the harassment of American shipping, though Britain showed no signs of improving relations. The Monroe–Pinkney Treaty was finalized but lacked any provisions to end the British policies, and Jefferson refused to submit it to the Senate for ratification.[237]

The British ship HMS *Leopard* fired upon the USS *Chesapeake* off the Virginia coast in June 1807, and Jefferson prepared for war.[238] He issued a proclamation banning armed British ships from U.S. waters. He presumed unilateral authority to call on the states to prepare 100,000 militia and ordered the purchase of arms, ammunition, and supplies, writing, "The laws of necessity, of self-preservation, of saving our country when in danger, are of higher obligation [than strict observance of written laws]". The USS *Revenge* was dispatched to demand an explanation from the British government; it also was fired upon. Jefferson called for a special session of Congress in October to enact an embargo or alternatively to consider war.[239]

In December, news arrived that Napoleon had extended the Berlin Decree, globally banning British imports. In Britain, King George III ordered redoubling efforts at impressment, including American sailors. But the war fever of the summer faded; Congress had no appetite to prepare the U.S. for war. Jefferson asked for and received the Embargo Act, an alternative that allowed the U.S. more time to build up defensive works, militias, and naval forces. Later historians have seen irony in Jefferson's assertion of such federal power. Meacham claims that the Embargo Act was a projection of power which surpassed the Alien and Sedition Acts, and R. B. Bernstein writes that Jefferson "was pursuing policies resembling those he had cited in 1776 as grounds for independence and revolution".[240]

A political cartoon showing merchants dodging the "Ograbme", which is "Embargo" spelled backwards (1807)

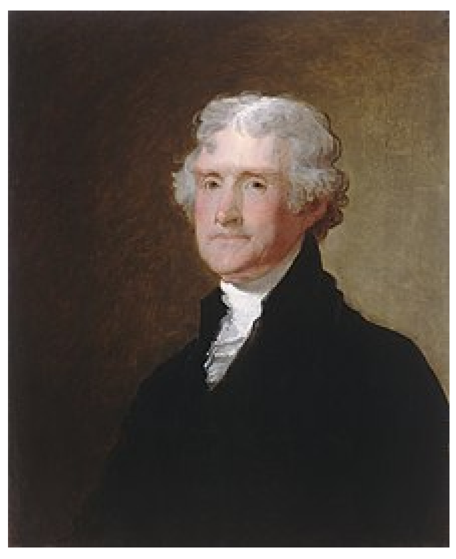
Secretary of State James Madison supported the embargo with equal vigor to Jefferson,[241] while Treasury Secretary Gallatin opposed it, due to its indefinite time frame and the risk that it posed to the policy of American neutrality.[242] The U.S. economy suffered, criticism grew, and opponents began evading the embargo. Instead of retreating, Jefferson sent federal agents to secretly track down smugglers and violators.[243] Three acts were passed in Congress during 1807 and 1808, called the *Supplementary*, the *Additional*, and the *Enforcement* acts.[238] The government could not prevent American vessels from trading with the European belligerents once they had left American ports, although the embargo triggered a devastating decline in exports.[238]

Most historians consider Jefferson's embargo to have been ineffective and harmful to American interests.[244] Appleby describes the strategy as Jefferson's "least effective policy", and Joseph Ellis calls it "an unadulterated calamity".[245] Others, however, portray it as an innovative, nonviolent measure which aided France in its war with Britain while preserving American neutrality.[246] Jefferson believed that the failure of the embargo was due to selfish traders and merchants showing a lack of "republican virtue." He maintained that, had the embargo been widely observed, it would have avoided war in 1812.[247]

In December 1807, Jefferson announced his intention not to seek a third term. He turned his attention increasingly to Monticello during the last year of his presidency, giving Madison and Gallatin almost total control of affairs.[248] Shortly before leaving office in March 1809, Jefferson signed the repeal of the Embargo. In its place, the Non-Intercourse Act was passed, but it proved no more effective.[238] The day before Madison was inaugurated as his successor, Jefferson said that he felt like "a prisoner, released from his chains".[249]

Post-presidency (1809–1826)

Following his retirement from the presidency, Jefferson continued his pursuit of educational interests; he sold his vast collection of books to the Library of Congress, and founded and built the University of Virginia.[250] Jefferson continued to correspond with many of the country's leaders, and the Monroe Doctrine bears a strong resemblance to solicited advice that Jefferson gave to Monroe in 1823.[251] As he settled into private life at Monticello, Jefferson developed a daily routine of rising early. He would spend several hours writing letters, with which he was often deluged. In the midday, he would often inspect the plantation on horseback. In the evenings, his family enjoyed leisure time in the gardens; late at night, Jefferson would retire to bed with a book.[252] However, his routine was often interrupted by uninvited visitors and tourists eager to see the icon in his final days, turning Monticello into "a virtual hotel".[253]



Portrait of Jefferson by Gilbert Stuart, 1821.

University of Virginia

Jefferson envisioned a university free of church influences where students could specialize in many new areas not offered at other colleges. He believed that education engendered a stable society, which should provide publicly funded schools accessible to students from all social strata, based solely on ability.[254] He initially proposed his University in a letter to Joseph Priestley in 1800[255] and, in 1819, the 76-year-old Jefferson founded the University of Virginia. He organized the state legislative campaign for its charter and, with the assistance of Edmund Bacon, purchased the location. He was the principal designer of the buildings, planned the university's curriculum, and served as the first rector upon its opening in 1825.[256]

The University of Virginia, Jefferson's "Academical Village"

Jefferson was a strong disciple of Greek and Roman architectural styles, which he believed to be most representative of American democracy. Each academic unit, called a pavilion, was designed with a two-story temple front, while the library "Rotunda" was modeled on the Roman Pantheon. Jefferson referred to the university's grounds as the "Academical Village," and he reflected his educational ideas in its layout. The ten pavilions included classrooms and faculty residences; they formed a quadrangle and were connected by colonnades, behind which stood the students' rows of rooms. Gardens and vegetable plots were placed behind the pavilions and were surrounded by serpentine walls, affirming the importance of the agrarian lifestyle.[257] The university had a library rather than a church at its center, emphasizing its secular nature—a controversial aspect at the time.[258]

When Jefferson died in 1826, James Madison replaced him as rector.[259] Jefferson bequeathed most of his library to the university.[260] Only one other ex-president has founded a university, namely Millard Fillmore who founded the University at Buffalo.

Reconciliation with Adams

In 1804, Abigail Adams attempted to reconcile Jefferson and Adams.

Jefferson and John Adams had been good friends in the first decades of their political careers, serving together in the Continental Congress in the 1770s and in Europe in the 1780s. The Federalist/Republican split of the 1790s divided them, however, and Adams felt betrayed by Jefferson's sponsorship of partisan attacks, such as those of James Callender. Jefferson, on the other hand, was angered at Adams for his appointment of "midnight judges".[261] The two men did not communicate directly for more than a decade after Jefferson succeeded Adams as president.[262] A brief correspondence took place between Abigail Adams and Jefferson after Jefferson's daughter "Polly" died in 1804, in an attempt at reconciliation unknown to Adams. However, an exchange of letters resumed open hostilities between Adams and Jefferson.[261]

As early as 1809, Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration of Independence, desired that Jefferson and Adams reconcile and began to prod the two through correspondence to re-establish contact.[261] In 1812, Adams wrote a short New Year's greeting to Jefferson, prompted earlier by Rush, to which Jefferson warmly responded. Thus began what historian David McCullough calls "one of the most extraordinary correspondences in American history".[263] Over the next fourteen years, the former presidents exchanged 158 letters discussing their political differences, justifying their respective roles in events, and debating the revolution's import to the world.[264] When Adams died, his last words included an acknowledgment of his longtime friend and rival: "Thomas Jefferson survives", unaware that Jefferson had died several hours before.[265][266]

Autobiography

In 1821, at the age of 77, Jefferson began writing his autobiography, in order to "state some recollections of dates and facts concerning myself".[267] He focused on the struggles and achievements he experienced until July 29, 1790, where the narrative stopped short.[268] He excluded his youth, emphasizing the revolutionary era. He related that his ancestors came from Wales to America in the early 17th century and settled in the western frontier of the Virginia colony, which influenced his zeal for individual and state rights. Jefferson

described his father as uneducated, but with a "strong mind and sound judgement". His enrollment in the College of William and Mary and election to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia in 1775 were included.[267]

He also expressed opposition to the idea of a privileged aristocracy made up of large landowning families partial to the King, and instead promoted "the aristocracy of virtue and talent, which nature has wisely provided for the direction of the interests of society, & scattered with equal hand through all its conditions, was deemed essential to a well-ordered republic".[267]

Jefferson gave his insight into people, politics, and events.[267] The work is primarily concerned with the Declaration and reforming the government of Virginia. He used notes, letters, and documents to tell many of the stories within the autobiography. He suggested that this history was so rich that his personal affairs were better overlooked, but he incorporated a self-analysis using the Declaration and other patriotism.[269]

Lafayette's visit

Lafayette in 1824, portrait by Scheffer, hanging in U.S. House of Representatives

In the summer of 1824, the Marquis de Lafayette accepted an invitation from President James Monroe to visit the country. Jefferson and Lafayette had not seen each other since 1789. After visits to New York, New England, and Washington, Lafayette arrived at Monticello on November 4.[256]

Jefferson's grandson Randolph was present and recorded the reunion: "As they approached each other, their uncertain gait quickened itself into a shuffling run, and exclaiming, 'Ah Jefferson!' 'Ah Lafayette!', they burst into tears as they fell into each other's arms." Jefferson and Lafayette then retired to the house to reminisce.[270] The next morning Jefferson, Lafayette, and James Madison attended a tour and banquet at the University of Virginia. Jefferson had someone else read a speech he had prepared for Lafayette, as his voice was weak and could not carry. This was his last public presentation. After an 11-day visit, Lafayette bid Jefferson goodbye and departed Monticello.[271]

Final days, death, and burial

Jefferson's gravesite

Jefferson's approximately $100,000 of debt weighed heavily on his mind in his final months, as it became increasingly clear that he would have little to leave to his heirs. In February 1826, he successfully applied to the General Assembly to hold a public lottery as a fundraiser.[272] His health began to deteriorate in July 1825, due to a combination of rheumatism from arm and wrist injuries, as well as intestinal and urinary disorders[256] and, by June 1826, he was confined to bed.[272] On July 3, Jefferson was overcome by fever and declined an invitation to Washington to attend an anniversary celebration of the Declaration.[273]

During the last hours of his life, he was accompanied by family members and friends. Jefferson died on July 4 at 12:50 p.m. at age 83, the same day as the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. His last recorded words were "No, doctor, nothing more," refusing laudanum from his physician, but his final significant words are often cited as "Is it the Fourth?" or "This is the Fourth."[274] When John Adams died, his last words included an acknowledgment of his longtime friend and

rival: "Thomas Jefferson survives," though Adams was unaware that Jefferson had died several hours before.[275][276][277][278] The sitting president was Adams's son, John Quincy Adams, and he called the coincidence of their deaths on the nation's anniversary "visible and palpable remarks of Divine Favor."[279]

Shortly after Jefferson had died, attendants found a gold locket on a chain around his neck, where it had rested for more than 40 years, containing a small faded blue ribbon that tied a lock of his wife Martha's brown hair.[280]

Jefferson's remains were buried at Monticello, under an epitaph that he wrote:

> HERE WAS BURIED THOMAS JEFFERSON, AUTHOR OF THE DECLARATION OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE, OF THE STATUTE OF VIRGINIA FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, AND FATHER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA.[281]

In his advanced years, Jefferson became increasingly concerned that people understand the principles in, and the people responsible for writing, the Declaration of Independence, and he continually defended himself as its author. He considered the document one of his greatest life achievements, in addition to authoring the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom and his founding of the University of Virginia. Plainly absent from his epitaph were his political roles, including President of the United States.[282]

Jefferson died deeply in debt, unable to pass on his estate freely to his heirs.[283] He gave instructions in his will for disposal of his assets,[284] including the freeing of Sally Hemings's children;[285] but his estate, possessions, and slaves were sold at public auctions starting in 1827.[286] In 1831, Monticello was sold by Martha Jefferson Randolph and the other heirs.[287]

Political, social, and religious views

Jefferson subscribed to the political ideals expounded by John Locke, Francis Bacon, and Isaac Newton, whom he considered the three greatest men who ever lived.[288][289] He was also influenced by the writings of Gibbon, Hume, Robertson, Bolingbroke, Montesquieu, and Voltaire.[290] Jefferson thought that the independent yeoman and agrarian life were ideals of republican virtues. He distrusted cities and financiers, favored decentralized government power, and believed that the tyranny that had plagued the common man in Europe was due to corrupt political establishments and monarchies. He supported efforts to disestablish the Church of England,[291] wrote the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, and he pressed for a wall of separation between church and state.[292] The Republicans under Jefferson were strongly influenced by the 18th-century British Whig Party, which believed in limited government.[293] His Democratic-Republican Party became dominant in early American politics, and his views became known as Jeffersonian democracy.[294][295]

Society and government

According to Jefferson's philosophy, citizens have "certain inalienable rights" and "rightful liberty is unobstructed action according to our will, within limits drawn around us by the equal rights of others."[296] A staunch advocate of the jury system to protect people's liberties, he proclaimed in 1801, "I consider [trial by jury] as the only anchor yet imagined by man, by which a government can be held to the principles of its constitution."[297] Jeffersonian government not only prohibited individuals in society from infringing on the liberty of others, but also restrained itself from diminishing individual liberty as a protection against tyranny from the majority.[298] Initially, Jefferson favored restricted voting to those who could actually have the free

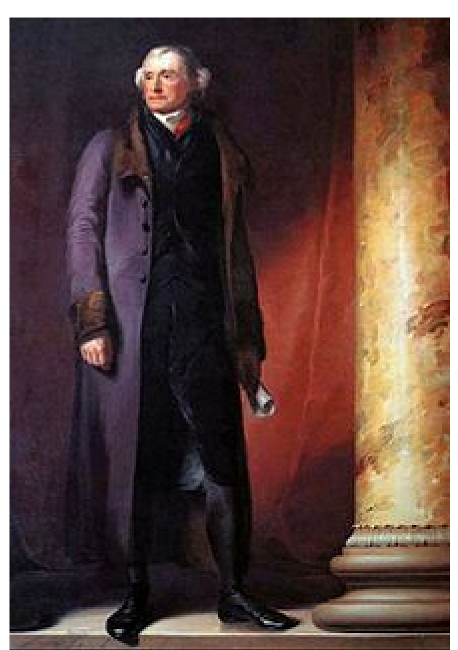
exercise of their reason by escaping any corrupting dependence on others. He advocated enfranchising a majority of Virginians, seeking to expand suffrage to include "yeoman farmers" who owned their own land while excluding tenant farmers, city day laborers, vagrants, most Amerindians, and women.[299]

He was convinced that individual liberties were the fruit of political equality, which were threatened by arbitrary government.[300] Excesses of democracy in his view were caused by institutional corruption rather than human nature. He was less suspicious of a working democracy than many contemporaries.[299] As president, Jefferson feared that the Federalist system enacted by Washington and Adams had encouraged corrupting patronage and dependence. He tried to restore a balance between the state and federal governments more nearly reflecting the Articles of Confederation, seeking to reinforce state prerogatives where his party was in a majority.[299]

Jefferson was steeped in the British Whig tradition of the oppressed majority set against a repeatedly unresponsive court party in the Parliament. He justified small outbreaks of rebellion as necessary to get monarchial regimes to amend oppressive measures compromising popular liberties. In a republican regime ruled by the majority, he acknowledged "it will often be exercised when wrong."[301] But "the remedy is to set them right as to facts, pardon and pacify them."[302] As Jefferson saw his party triumph in two terms of his presidency and launch into a third term under James Madison, his view of the U.S. as a continental republic and an "empire of liberty" grew more upbeat. On departing the presidency in 1809, he described America as "trusted with the destines of this solitary republic of the world, the only monument of human rights, and the sole depository of the sacred fire of freedom and self-government."[303]

Democracy

Jefferson considered democracy to be the expression of society and promoted national self-determination, cultural uniformity, and education of all males of the commonwealth.[304] He supported public education and a free press as essential components of a democratic nation.[305]


Thomas Jefferson at age 78. Portrait by Thomas Sully hanging at West Point, commissioned by Faculty and Cadets, 1821.

After resigning as Secretary of State in 1795, Jefferson focused on the electoral bases of the Republicans and Federalists. The "Republican" classification for which he advocated included "the entire body of landholders" everywhere and "the body of laborers" without land.[306] Republicans united behind Jefferson as vice president, with the election of 1796 expanding democracy nationwide at grassroots levels.[307] Jefferson promoted Republican candidates for local offices.[308]

Beginning with Jefferson's electioneering for the "revolution of 1800," his political efforts were based on egalitarian appeals.[309] In his later years, he referred to the 1800 election "as real a revolution in the principles of our government as that of '76 was in its form," one "not effected indeed by the sword ... but by the ... suffrage of the people."[310] Voter participation grew during Jefferson's presidency, increasing to "unimaginable levels" compared to the Federalist Era, with turnout of about 67,000 in 1800 rising to about 143,000 in 1804.[311]

At the onset of the Revolution, Jefferson accepted William Blackstone's argument that property ownership would sufficiently empower voters' independent judgement, but he sought to further expand suffrage by land distribution to the poor.[312] In the heat of the Revolutionary Era and afterward, several states expanded voter

eligibility from landed gentry to all propertied male, tax-paying citizens with Jefferson's support.[313] In retirement, he gradually became critical of his home state for violating "the principle of equal political rights"—the social right of universal male suffrage.[314] He sought a "general suffrage" of all taxpayers and militia-men, and equal representation by population in the General Assembly to correct preferential treatment of the slave-holding regions.[315]

Religion

Baptized in his youth, Jefferson became a governing member of his local Episcopal Church in Charlottesville, which he later attended with his daughters.[316] Influenced by Deist authors during his college years, Jefferson abandoned "orthodox" Christianity after his review of New Testament teachings.[317][318] In 1803 he asserted, "I am Christian, in the only sense in which [Jesus] wished any one to be."[213] Jefferson later defined being a Christian as one who followed the simple teachings of Jesus. Jefferson compiled Jesus' biblical teachings, omitting miraculous or supernatural references. He titled the work *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*, known today as the *Jefferson Bible*.[319] Peterson states Jefferson was a theist "whose God was the Creator of the universe ... all the evidences of nature testified to His perfection; and man could rely on the harmony and beneficence of His work."[320]

The *Jefferson Bible* featuring only the words of Jesus from the evangelists, in parallel Greek, Latin, French and English

Jefferson by Gilbert Stuart in 1805

Jefferson was firmly anticlerical, writing in "every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty ... they have perverted the purest religion ever preached to man into mystery and jargon."[321] The full letter to Horatio Spatford can be read at the National Archives.[322] Jefferson once supported banning clergy from public office but later relented.[323] In 1777, he drafted the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. Ratified in 1786, it made compelling attendance or contributions to any state-sanctioned religious establishment illegal and declared that men "shall be free to profess ... their opinions in matters of religion."[324] The Statute is one of only three accomplishments he chose to have inscribed in the epitaph on his gravestone.[325][326] Early in 1802, Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Connecticut Baptist Association, "that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man and his God." He interpreted the First Amendment as having built "a wall of separation between Church and State."[327] The phrase 'Separation of Church and State' has been cited several times by the Supreme Court in its interpretation of the Establishment Clause.

Jefferson donated to the American Bible Society, saying the Four Evangelists delivered a "pure and sublime system of morality" to humanity. He thought Americans would rationally create "Apiarian" religion, extracting the best traditions of every denomination.[328] And he contributed generously to several local denominations near Monticello.[329] Acknowledging organized religion would always be factored into political life for good or ill, he encouraged reason over supernatural revelation to make inquiries into religion. He believed in a creator god, an afterlife, and the sum of religion as loving God and neighbors. But he also controversially renounced the conventional Christian Trinity, denying Jesus' divinity as the Son of God.[330][331]

Jefferson's unorthodox religious beliefs became an important issue in the 1800 presidential election.[332] Federalists attacked him as an atheist. As president, Jefferson countered the accusations by praising religion in his inaugural address and attending services at the Capitol.[332]

Banks

Alexander Hamilton, national bank proponent and Jefferson's adversary

Jefferson distrusted government banks and opposed public borrowing, which he thought created long-term debt, bred monopolies, and invited dangerous speculation as opposed to productive labor.[333] In one letter to Madison, he argued each generation should curtail all debt within 19 years, and not impose a long-term debt on subsequent generations.[334]

In 1791, President Washington asked Jefferson, then Secretary of State, and Hamilton, the Secretary of the Treasury, if the Congress had the authority to create a national bank. While Hamilton believed Congress had the authority, Jefferson and Madison thought a national bank would ignore the needs of individuals and farmers, and would violate the Tenth Amendment by assuming powers not granted to the federal government by the states.[335]

Jefferson used agrarian resistance to banks and speculators as the first defining principle of an opposition party, recruiting candidates for Congress on the issue as early as 1792.[336] As president, Jefferson was persuaded by Secretary of Treasury Albert Gallatin to leave the bank intact but sought to restrain its influence.[337][n]

Slavery

Jefferson's 1795 Farm Book, page 30, lists 163 slaves at Monticello.

Jefferson lived in a planter economy largely dependent upon slavery, and as a wealthy landholder, used slave labor for his household, plantation, and workshops. He first recorded his slaveholding in 1774, when he counted 41 enslaved people.[339] Over his lifetime he owned about 600 slaves; he inherited about 175 people while most of the remainder were people born on his plantations.[340] Jefferson purchased some slaves in order to reunite their families. He sold approximately 110 people for economic reasons, primarily slaves from his outlying farms.[340][341] In 1784 when the number of slaves he owned likely was approximately 200, he began to divest himself of many slaves and by 1794 he had divested himself of 161 individuals.[342][o]

Jefferson once said, "My first wish is that the labourers may be well treated".[340] Jefferson did not work his slaves on Sundays and Christmas and he allowed them more personal time during the winter months.[343] Some scholars doubt Jefferson's benevolence,[344] however, noting cases of excessive slave whippings in his absence. His nail factory was staffed only by enslaved children. Many of the enslaved boys became tradesmen. Burwell Colbert, who started his working life as a child in Monticello's Nailery, was later promoted to the supervisory position of butler.[345]

Jefferson felt slavery was harmful to both slave and master but had reservations about releasing slaves from captivity, and advocated for gradual emancipation.[346][347][348] In 1779, he proposed gradual voluntary training and resettlement to the Virginia legislature, and three years later drafted legislation allowing slaveholders to free their own slaves.[349] In his draft of the Declaration of Independence, he included a section, stricken by other Southern delegates, criticizing King George III for supposedly forcing slavery onto the colonies.[350] In 1784, Jefferson proposed the abolition of slavery in all western U.S. territories, limiting slave importation to 15 years.[351] Congress, however, failed to pass his proposal by one vote.[351] In 1787,

Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance, a partial victory for Jefferson that terminated slavery in the Northwest Territory. Jefferson freed his slave Robert Hemings in 1794 and he freed his cook slave James Hemings in 1796.[352] Jefferson freed his runaway slave Harriet Hemings in 1822.[353] Upon his death in 1826, Jefferson freed five male Hemings slaves in his will.[354]

During his presidency, Jefferson allowed the diffusion of slavery into the Louisiana Territory hoping to prevent slave uprisings in Virginia and to prevent South Carolina secession.[355] In 1804, in a compromise on the slavery issue, Jefferson and Congress banned domestic slave trafficking for one year into the Louisiana Territory.[356] In 1806 he officially called for anti-slavery legislation terminating the import or export of slaves. Congress passed the law in 1807.[346][357][358]

In 1819, Jefferson strongly opposed a Missouri statehood application amendment that banned domestic slave importation and freed slaves at the age of 25 on grounds it would destroy the union.[359] Jefferson shared the 'common belief' of his day that Black people were mentally and physically inferior, but argued that they nonetheless had innate human rights.[346][360] In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, he created controversy by calling slavery a moral evil for which the nation would ultimately have to account to God.[361] He therefore supported colonization plans that would transport freed slaves to another country, such as Liberia or Sierra Leone, though he recognized the impracticability of such proposals.[362]

During his presidency, Jefferson was for the most part publicly silent on the issue of slavery and emancipation,[363] as the Congressional debate over slavery and its extension caused a dangerous north–south rift among the states, with talk of a northern confederacy in New England.[364][p] The violent attacks on white slave owners during the Haitian Revolution due to injustices under slavery supported Jefferson's fears of a race war, increasing his reservations about promoting emancipation at that time.[346][365] After numerous attempts and failures to bring about emancipation,[366] Jefferson wrote privately in an 1805 letter to William A. Burwell, "I have long since given up the expectation of any early provision for the extinguishment of slavery among us." That same year he also related this idea to George Logan, writing, "I have most carefully avoided every public act or manifestation on that subject."[367]

Historical assessment

Scholars remain divided on whether Jefferson truly condemned slavery and how he changed.[353][368] Francis D. Cogliano traces the development of competing emancipationist then revisionist and finally contextualist interpretations from the 1960s to the present. The emancipationist view, held by the various scholars at the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Douglas L. Wilson, and others, maintains Jefferson was an opponent of slavery all his life, noting that he did what he could within the limited range of options available to him to undermine it, his many attempts at abolition legislation, the manner in which he provided for slaves, and his advocacy of their more humane treatment.[369][370][371][q] The revisionist view, advanced by Paul Finkelman and others, criticizes him for holding slaves, and for acting contrary to his words. Jefferson never freed most of his slaves, and he remained silent on the issue while he was president.[363][372] Contextualists such as Joseph J. Ellis emphasize a change in Jefferson's thinking from his emancipationist views before 1783, noting Jefferson's shift toward public passivity and procrastination on policy issues related to slavery. Jefferson seemed to yield to public opinion by 1794 as he laid the groundwork for his first presidential campaign against Adams in 1796.[373]

Jefferson–Hemings controversy

Claims that Jefferson fathered Sally Hemings's children have been debated since 1802. That year James T. Callender, after being denied a position as postmaster, alleged Jefferson had taken Hemings as a concubine and fathered several children with her.[374] In 1998, a panel of researchers conducted a Y-DNA study of living descendants of Jefferson's uncle, Field, and of a descendant of Hemings's son, Eston Hemings. The results,

released in November 1998, showed a match with the male Jefferson line.[375][376] Subsequently, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation (TJF) formed a nine-member research team of historians to assess the matter.[376] In January 2000 (revised 2011),[376] the TJF report concluded that "the DNA study ... indicates a high probability that Thomas Jefferson fathered Eston Hemings."[376][377][r] The TJF also concluded that Jefferson likely fathered all of Heming's children listed at Monticello.[376][s]

Jefferson depicted as a rooster, and Hemings as a hen

In July 2017, the TJF announced that archeological excavations at Monticello had revealed what they believe to have been Sally Hemings's quarters, adjacent to Jefferson's bedroom.[379][380] In 2018, the TJF said that it considered the issue "a settled historical matter."[381] Since the results of the DNA tests were made public, the consensus among academic historians has been that Jefferson had a sexual relationship with Sally Hemings and that he was the father of her son Eston Hemings.[382]

Still, a minority of scholars maintain the evidence is insufficient to prove Jefferson's paternity conclusively. Based on DNA and other evidence, they note the possibility that additional Jefferson males, including his brother Randolph Jefferson and any one of Randolph's four sons, or his cousin, could have fathered Eston Hemings or Sally Hemings's other children.[383]

After Thomas Jefferson's death, although not formally manumitted, Sally Hemings was allowed by Jefferson's daughter Martha to live in Charlottesville as a free woman with her two sons until her death in 1835.[384][t] The Monticello Association refused to allow Sally Hemings' descendants the right of burial at Monticello.[386]

Interests and activities

Jefferson was a farmer, obsessed with new crops, soil conditions, garden designs, and scientific agricultural techniques. His main cash crop was tobacco, but its price was usually low and it was rarely profitable. He tried to achieve self-sufficiency with wheat, vegetables, flax, corn, hogs, sheep, poultry, and cattle to supply his family, slaves, and employees, but he lived perpetually beyond his means[387] and was always in debt.[388]

Virginia State Capitol, designed by Jefferson (wings added later)

In the field of architecture, Jefferson helped popularize the Neo-Palladian style in the United States utilizing designs for the Virginia State Capitol, the University of Virginia, Monticello, and others.[389] Jefferson mastered architecture through self-study, using various books and classical architectural designs of the day. His primary authority was Andrea Palladio's *The Four Books of Architecture*, which outlines the principles of classical design.[390]

He was interested in birds and wine, and was a noted gourmet; he was also a prolific writer and linguist, and spoke several languages.[391] As a naturalist, he was fascinated by the Natural Bridge geological formation, and in 1774 successfully acquired the Bridge by a grant from George III.[392]

American Philosophical Society

Jefferson was a member of the American Philosophical Society for 35 years, beginning in 1780. Through the society he advanced the sciences and Enlightenment ideals, emphasizing that knowledge of science reinforced and extended freedom.[393] His *Notes on the State of Virginia* was written in part as a contribution to the society.[394] He became the society's third president on March 3, 1797, a few months after he was elected Vice President of the United States.[394][395] In accepting, Jefferson stated: "I feel no qualification for this distinguished post but a sincere zeal for all the objects of our institution and an ardent desire to see knowledge so disseminated through the mass of mankind that it may at length reach even the extremes of society, beggars and kings."[393]

Jefferson served as APS president for the next eighteen years, including through both terms of his presidency.[394] He introduced Meriwether Lewis to the society, where various scientists tutored him in preparation for the Lewis and Clark Expedition.[394][396] He resigned on January 20, 1815, but remained active through correspondence.[397]

Linguistics

Jefferson had a lifelong interest in linguistics, and could speak, read, and write in a number of languages, including French, Greek, Italian, and German. In his early years, he excelled in classical language while at boarding school[398] where he received a classical education in Greek and Latin.[399] Jefferson later came to regard the Greek language as the "perfect language" as expressed in its laws and philosophy.[400] While attending the College of William & Mary, he taught himself Italian.[401] Here Jefferson first became familiar with the Anglo-Saxon language, especially as it was associated with English Common law and system of government and studied the language in a linguistic and philosophical capacity. He owned 17 volumes of Anglo-Saxon texts and grammar and later wrote an essay on the Anglo-Saxon language.[398]

Jefferson claimed to have taught himself Spanish during his nineteen-day journey to France, using only a grammar guide and a copy of *Don Quixote*.[402] Linguistics played a significant role in how Jefferson modeled and expressed political and philosophical ideas. He believed that the study of ancient languages was essential in understanding the roots of modern language.[403] He collected and understood a number of American Indian vocabularies and instructed Lewis and Clark to record and collect various Indian languages during their Expedition.[404] When Jefferson moved from Washington after his presidency, he packed 50 Native American vocabulary lists in a chest and transported them on a riverboat back to Monticello along with the rest of his possessions. Somewhere along the journey, a thief stole the heavy chest, thinking it was full of valuables, but its contents were dumped into the James River when the thief discovered it was only filled with papers. Subsequently, 30 years of collecting were lost, with only a few fragments rescued from the muddy banks of the river.[405]

Jefferson was not an outstanding orator and preferred to communicate through writing or remain silent if possible. Instead of delivering his State of the Union addresses himself, Jefferson wrote the annual messages and sent a representative to read them aloud in Congress. This started a tradition that continued until 1913 when President Woodrow Wilson (1913–1921) chose to deliver his own State of the Union address.[406]

Inventions

Jefferson invented many small practical devices and improved contemporary inventions, including a revolving book-stand and a "Great Clock" powered by the gravitational pull on cannonballs. He improved the pedometer, the polygraph (a device for duplicating writing),[407] and the moldboard plow, an idea he never patented and gave to posterity.[408] Jefferson can also be credited as the creator of the swivel chair, the first of which he created and used to write much of the Declaration of Independence.[409]

As Minister to France, Jefferson was impressed by the military standardization program known as the *Système Gribeauval*, and initiated a program as president to develop interchangeable parts for firearms. For his inventiveness and ingenuity, he received several honorary Doctor of Law degrees.[410]

Legacy

Historical reputation

Jefferson Memorial, Washington, D.C.

Jefferson is an icon of individual liberty, democracy, and republicanism, hailed as the author of the Declaration of Independence, an architect of the American Revolution, and a renaissance man who promoted science and scholarship.[411] The participatory democracy and expanded suffrage he championed defined his era and became a standard for later generations.[412] Meacham opined, that Jefferson was the most influential figure of the democratic republic in its first half-century, succeeded by presidential adherents James Madison, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, and Martin Van Buren.[413] Jefferson is recognized for having written more than 18,000 letters of political and philosophical substance during his life, which Francis D. Cogliano describes as "a documentary legacy ... unprecedented in American history in its size and breadth."[414]

Jefferson's reputation declined during the American Civil War, due to his support of states' rights. In the late 19th century, his legacy was widely criticized; conservatives felt that his democratic philosophy had led to that era's populist movement, while Progressives sought a more activist federal government than Jefferson's philosophy allowed. Both groups saw Alexander Hamilton as vindicated by history, rather than Jefferson, and President Woodrow Wilson even described Jefferson as "though a great man, not a great American".[415]

Thomas Jefferson Memorial Statue, by Rudulph Evans (1947)

In the 1930s, Jefferson was held in higher esteem; President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933–1945) and New Deal Democrats celebrated his struggles for "the common man" and reclaimed him as their party's founder. Jefferson became a symbol of American democracy in the incipient Cold War, and the 1940s and 1950s saw the zenith of his popular reputation.[416] Following the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, Jefferson's slaveholding came under new scrutiny, particularly after DNA testing in the late 1990s supported allegations that he had fathered multiple children with Sally Hemings.[417]

Noting the huge output of scholarly books on Jefferson in recent years, historian Gordon Wood summarizes the raging debates about Jefferson's stature: "Although many historians and others are embarrassed about his contradictions and have sought to knock him off the democratic pedestal ... his position, though shaky, still seems secure."[418]

The Siena Research Institute poll of presidential scholars, begun in 1982, has consistently ranked Jefferson as one of the five best U.S. presidents,[419] and a 2015 Brookings Institution poll of American Political Science Association members ranked him as the fifth greatest president.[420]

Memorials and honors

Jefferson has been memorialized with buildings, sculptures, postage, and currency. In the 1920s, Jefferson, together with George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln, was chosen by sculptor Gutzon Borglum and approved by President Calvin Coolidge to be depicted in stone at the Mount Rushmore Memorial.[421]

(left to right) George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln sculpted into Mount Rushmore

The Jefferson Memorial was dedicated in Washington, D.C. in 1943, on the 200th anniversary of Jefferson's birth. The interior of the memorial includes a 19-foot (6 m) statue of Jefferson and engravings of passages from his writings. Most prominent are the words inscribed around the monument near the roof: "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."[422]

Writings

- *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774)
- *Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms* (1775)
- Declaration of Independence (1776) (https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html)
- *Memorandums taken on a journey from Paris into the southern parts of France and Northern Italy, in the year 1787*
- *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781)
- *Plan for Establishing Uniformity in the Coinage, Weights, and Measures of the United States* A report submitted to Congress (1790)
- "An Essay Towards Facilitating Instruction in the Anglo-Saxon and Modern Dialects of the English Language (https://archive.org/stream/anessaytowardsf00jeffgoog#page/n6/mode/2up)" (1796)
- *Manual of Parliamentary Practice for the Use of the Senate of the United States* (1801)
- *Autobiography* (1821)
- *Jefferson Bible, or The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*

See also

- Memorial to the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence
- List of presidents of the United States by previous experience
- List of presidents of the United States who owned slaves
- List of abolitionist forerunners
- Jefferson Monroe Levy
- *Clotel or The President's Daughter*, an 1853 novel by William Wells Brown
- Seconds pendulum

Notes

a. Old Style: April 2, 1743

b. Jefferson personally showed little interest in his ancestry; on his father's side, he only knew of the existence of his grandfather.[8][9] Malone writes that Jefferson vaguely knew that his grandfather "had a place on the Fluvanna River which he called Snowden after a mountain in Wales near which the Jeffersons were supposed to have once lived".[8] See also Peter Jefferson#Ancestry.
c. His other properties included Shadwell, Tufton, Lego, Pantops, and his retreat Poplar Forest. He also owned the unimproved mountaintop Montalto, and the Natural Bridge.[41]
d. While the news from Francis Eppes, with whom Lucy was staying, did not reach Jefferson until 1785, in an undated letter,[51] it is clear that the year of her death was 1784 from another letter to Jefferson from James Currie dated November 20, 1784.[52]
e. Adams recorded his exchange with Jefferson on the question. Jefferson asked, "Why will you not? You ought to do it." To which Adams responded, "I will not—reasons enough." Jefferson replied, "What can be your reasons?" and Adams responded, "Reason first, you are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second, I am obnoxious, suspected, and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third, you can write ten times better than I can." "Well," said Jefferson, "if you are decided, I will do as well as I can." Adams concluded, "Very well. When you have drawn it up, we will have a meeting."[62]
f. Franklin, seated beside the author, observed him "writhing a little under the acrimonious criticisms on some of its parts."[68]
g. the immediate successor to the Second Continental Congress
h. An example can be seen at the Library of Congress website (https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm012583/).
i. Jefferson's Kentucky draft said: "where powers are assumed which have not been delegated, a nullification of the act is the rightful remedy: that every State has a natural right in cases not within the compact, (casus non fœderis) to nullify of their own authority all assumptions of power by others within their limits."[139]
j. This electoral process problem was addressed by the Twelfth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1804, which provided separate votes for presidential and vice-presidential candidates.[149]
k. Louisiana nevertheless gained statehood nine years later in 1812.[189]
l. Further complicating matters, Wilkinson was posthumously revealed to have been in the simultaneous pay of the British, French, and Spanish.[226]
m. Burr then left for Europe and eventually returned to practicing law.
n. The First Bank of the U.S. was eventually abolished in 1811 by a heavily Republican Congress.[338]
o. The 135 slaves, which included Betty Hemings and her ten children, that Jefferson acquired from Wayles's estate made him the second-largest slaveowner in Albemarle County with a total of 187 slaves. The number fluctuated around 200 slaves until 1784 when he began to give away or sell slaves. By 1794 he had gotten rid of 161 individuals.[342]
p. Aaron Burr was offered help in obtaining the governorship of New York by Timothy Pickering if he could persuade New York to go along, but the secession effort failed when Burr lost the election.
q. For examples of each historian's view, see Wilson, Douglas L., *Thomas Jefferson and the Issue of Character*, *The Atlantic*, November 1992. Finkelman, 1994 "Thomas Jefferson and Antislavery: The Myth Goes On" and Joseph J. Ellis, 1996, American Sphinx: the character of Thomas Jefferson
r. The minority report authored by White Wallenborn concluded "the historical evidence is not substantial enough to confirm nor for that matter to refute his paternity of any of the children of Sally Hemings. The DNA studies certainly enhance the possibility but ... do not prove Thomas Jefferson's paternity".[378]

s. Sally Heming's children recorded at Monticello included: "Harriet (born 1795; died in infancy); Beverly (born 1798); an unnamed daughter (born 1799; died in infancy); Harriet (born 1801); Madison (born 1805); and Eston (born 1808)".[376]
t. Annette Gordon-Reed notes that it would have been legally challenging to free Sally Hemings, due to Virginia laws mandating the support of older slaves and requiring special permission for freed slaves to remain within the state.[385]

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John Jay

John Jay (December 12, 1745 – May 17, 1829)[1] was an American statesman, patriot, diplomat, Founding Father, abolitionist, negotiator, and signatory of the Treaty of Paris of 1783. He served as the second Governor of New York and the first Chief Justice of the United States (1789–1795). He directed U.S. foreign policy for much of the 1780s and was an important leader of the Federalist Party after the ratification of the United States Constitution in 1788.

Jay was born into a wealthy family of merchants and New York City government officials of French Huguenot and Dutch descent. He became a lawyer and joined the New York Committee of Correspondence, organizing American opposition to British policies such as the Intolerable Acts in the leadup to the American Revolution. Jay was elected to the Second Continental Congress, and served as President of the Congress. From 1779 to 1782, Jay served as the ambassador to Spain; he persuaded Spain to provide financial aid to the fledgling United States. He also served as a negotiator of the Treaty of Paris, in which Britain recognized American independence. Following the end of the war, Jay served as Secretary of Foreign Affairs, directing United States foreign policy under the Articles of Confederation government. He also served as the first Secretary of State on an interim basis.

A proponent of strong, centralized government, Jay worked to ratify the United States Constitution in New York in 1788. He was a co-author of *The Federalist Papers* along with Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, and wrote five of the eighty-five essays. After the establishment of the new federal government, Jay was appointed by President George Washington the first Chief Justice of the United States, serving from 1789 to 1795. The Jay Court experienced a light workload, deciding just four cases over six years. In 1794, while serving as Chief Justice, Jay negotiated the highly controversial Jay Treaty with Britain. Jay received a handful of electoral votes in three of the first four presidential elections, but never undertook a serious bid for the presidency.

Jay served as the Governor of New York from 1795 to 1801. Although he successfully passed gradual emancipation legislation as governor of the state, he himself owned five enslaved people as late as 1800. In the waning days of President John Adams's administration, Jay was confirmed by the Senate for another term as Chief Justice, but he declined the position and retired to his farm in Westchester County, New York.

John Jay

John Jay, by Gilbert Stuart, 1794

1st Chief Justice of the United States	
In office October 19, 1789 – June 29, 1795	
Nominated by	George Washington
Preceded by	Office established
Succeeded by	John Rutledge
2nd Governor of New York	
In office July 1, 1795 – June 30, 1801	
Lieutenant	Stephen Van Rensselaer
Preceded by	George Clinton
Succeeded by	George Clinton
Acting United States Secretary of State	
In office September 15, 1789 – March 22, 1790	
President	George Washington
Preceded by	Office established
Succeeded by	Thomas Jefferson
United States Secretary of Foreign Affairs	

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President	George Washington
Preceded by	Himself
Succeeded by	Office abolished
In office May 7, 1784 – March 3, 1789	
Appointed by	Congress of the Confederation
Preceded by	Robert R. Livingston
Succeeded by	Himself
United States Minister to Spain	
In office September 27, 1779 – May 20, 1782	
Appointed by	Second Continental Congress
Preceded by	Office established
Succeeded by	William Short
6th President of the Continental Congress	
In office December 10, 1778 – September 28, 1779	
Preceded by	Henry Laurens
Succeeded by	Samuel Huntington
Delegate from New York to the Second Continental Congress	
In office December 7, 1778 – September 28, 1779	
Preceded by	Philip Livingston
Succeeded by	Robert R. Livingston
In office May 10, 1775 – May 22, 1776	
Preceded by	Seat established
Succeeded by	Seat abolished
Delegate from New York to the First Continental Congress	
In office September 5, 1774 – October 26, 1774	
Preceded by	Seat established

Early life and education

Succeeded by	Seat abolished
Personal details	
Born	December 12, 1745 New York City, British America
Died	May 17, 1829 (aged 83) Bedford, New York, U.S.
Political party	Federalist
Spouse(s)	Sarah Livingston (m. 1774; died 1802)
Children	6, including Peter, William
Relatives	Jay family
Education	Columbia University (BA, MA)
Signature	

Family history

The Jays were a prominent merchant family in New York City, descended from Huguenots who had come to New York to escape religious persecution in France. In 1685, the Edict of Nantes had been revoked, thereby abolishing the rights of Protestants, and the French Crown proceeded to confiscate their property. Among those affected was Jay's paternal grandfather, Auguste Jay. He moved from France to Charleston, South Carolina and then New York, where he built a successful merchant empire.[2] Jay's father, Peter Jay, born in New York City in 1704, became a wealthy trader in furs, wheat, timber, and other commodities.[3]

Jay's mother was Mary Van Cortlandt, of Dutch ancestry, who had married Peter Jay in 1728 in the Dutch Church.[3] They had ten children together, seven of whom survived into adulthood.[4] Mary's father, Jacobus Van Cortlandt, was born in New Amsterdam in 1658. Cortlandt served in the New York Assembly, was twice elected as mayor of New York City, and also held a variety of judicial and military offices. Both Mary and his son Frederick Cortlandt married into the Jay family.

Jay was born on December 23, 1745 (following the Gregorian calendar, December 12 following the Julian calendar), in New York City; three months later the family moved to Rye, New York. Peter Jay had retired from business following a smallpox epidemic; two of his children contracted the disease and suffered blindness.[5]

Education

Jay spent his childhood in Rye. He was educated there by his mother until he was eight years old, when he was sent to New Rochelle to study under Anglican priest Pierre Stoupe.[6] In 1756, after three years, he would return to homeschooling in Rye under the tutelage of his mother and George Murray.

In 1760, 14-year-old Jay entered King's College (later renamed Columbia College) in New York City.[7][8] There he made many influential friends, including his closest, Robert Livingston, the son of a prominent New York aristocrat and Supreme Court justice.[9] Jay took the same political stand as his father, a staunch Whig.[10] Upon graduating in 1764[11] he became a law clerk for Benjamin Kissam (1728–1782), a prominent lawyer, politician, and sought-after instructor in the law. In addition to Jay, Kissam's students included Lindley Murray.[4]

Entrance into law and politics

In 1768, after reading law and being admitted to the bar of New York, Jay, with the money from the government, established a legal practice and worked there until he created his own law office in 1771.[4] He was a member of the New York Committee of Correspondence in 1774[12] and became its secretary, which was his first public role in the revolution.

Jay represented the conservative faction that was interested in protecting property rights and in preserving the rule of law, while resisting what it regarded as British violations of American rights. This faction feared the prospect of "mob rule". He believed the British tax measures were wrong and thought Americans were

morally and legally justified in resisting them, but as a delegate to the First Continental Congress in 1774,[13] Jay sided with those who wanted conciliation with Parliament. Events such as the burning of Norfolk, Virginia, by British troops in January 1776 pushed Jay to support independence. With the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, he worked tirelessly for the revolutionary cause and acted to suppress the Loyalists. Jay evolved into first a moderate, and then an ardent Patriot, because he had decided that all the colonies' efforts at reconciliation with Britain were fruitless and that the struggle for independence, which became the Revolutionary War, was inevitable.[14] In 1780, Jay was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society.[15]

Marriage and family

Drawing of Sarah Jay by Robert Edge Pine.

On April 28, 1774, Jay married Sarah Van Brugh Livingston, eldest daughter of the New Jersey Governor William Livingston and his wife. At the time of the marriage, Sarah was seventeen years old and John was twenty-eight.[16] Together they had six children: Peter Augustus, Susan, Maria, Ann, William, and Sarah Louisa. She accompanied Jay to Spain and later was with him in Paris, where they and their children resided with Benjamin Franklin at Passy.[17] Jay's brother-in-law Henry Brock Livingston was lost at sea through the disappearance of the Continental Navy ship *Saratoga* during the Revolutionary War. While in Paris, as a diplomat to France, Jay's father died. This event forced extra responsibility onto Jay. His brother and sister Peter and Anna, both blinded by smallpox in childhood,[18] became his responsibility. His brother Augustus suffered from mental disabilities that required Jay to provide not only financial but emotional support. His brother Fredrick was in constant financial trouble, causing Jay additional stress. Meanwhile, his brother James was in direct opposition in the political arena, joining the loyalist faction of the New York State Senate at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, which made him an embarrassment to Jay's family.[19]

Jay family homes in Rye and Bedford

Jay's childhood home in Rye, New York is a New York State Historic Site and Westchester County Park

Two of Jay's homes, both located in Westchester County, have been designated National Historic Landmarks.

From the age of three months old until he attended Kings College in 1760, Jay was raised in Rye,[20] on a farm acquired by his father Peter in 1745 that overlooked Long Island Sound.[21] After negotiating the Treaty of Paris that ended the Revolutionary War, Jay returned to his childhood home to celebrate with his family and friends in July 1784.[22] Jay inherited this property upon the death of his older brother Peter in 1813 after Jay had already established himself at Katonah. He conveyed the Rye property to his eldest son, Peter Augustus Jay, in 1822.

What remains of the original 400-acre (1.6 km^2) property is a 23-acre (93,000 m^2) parcel called the Jay Estate. In the center rises the 1838 Peter Augustus Jay House, built by Peter Augustus Jay over the footprint of his father's ancestral home, "The Locusts"; pieces of the original 18th century farmhouse were incorporated into the 19th century structure. Stewardship of the site and several of its buildings for educational use was entrusted

in 1990 by the New York State Board of Regents to the Jay Heritage Center.[23][24] In 2013, the non-profit Jay Heritage Center was also awarded stewardship and management of the site's landscape which includes a meadow and gardens.[25][26]

As an adult, Jay inherited land from his grandparents and built Bedford House, located near Katonah, New York where he moved in 1801 with his wife Sarah to pursue retirement. This property passed down to their younger son William Jay and his descendants. It was acquired by New York State in 1958 and named "The John Jay Homestead." Today this 62 acre park is preserved as the John Jay Homestead State Historic Site.[27]

Jay's retirement home near Katonah, New York is a New York State Historic Site

Both homes in Rye and Katonah are open to the public for tours and programs.

Personal views

Record on slavery

> Every man of every color and description has a natural right to freedom.
>
> —John Jay, February 27, 1792

In spite of being a founder of the New York Manumission Society, Jay is recorded as owning five slaves in the 1790 and 1800 U.S. censuses, but freed all but one of them by the 1810 census. Rather than advocating immediate emancipation, he continued to purchase enslaved people and to manumit them once he considered their work to "have afforded a reasonable retribution."[28] Abolitionism following the American Revolution contained some Quaker and Methodist principles of Christian brotherly love, but was also influenced by concerns about the growth of the black population within the United States and the 'degradation' of blacks under slavery.[29][30]

In 1774 Jay drafted the 'Address to the People of Great Britain',[31] which compared American chattel slavery to British tyranny.[32] Such comparisons between American slavery and British policy had been made regularly by American Patriots starting with James Otis, but took little account of the far harsher reality of chattel slavery.[33] Jay was the founder and president of the New York Manumission Society in 1785, which organized boycotts against newspapers and merchants involved in the slave trade, and provided legal counsel to free blacks.[34]

The Society helped enact the 1799 law for gradual emancipation of slaves in New York, which Jay signed into law as governor. "An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery" provided that, from July 4 of that year, all children born to slave parents would be free (subject to lengthy apprenticeships) and that slave exports would be prohibited. These same children would be required to serve the mother's owner until age 28 for males and age 25 for females, years beyond the typical period of indenture. It did not provide government payment of compensation to slave owners, but failed to free people who were already enslaved as of 1799. The act provided legal protection and assistance for free blacks kidnapped for the purposes of being sold into slavery.[35] All slaves were emancipated by July 4, 1827.[36][37][38][39][40]

In the close 1792 election, Jay's antislavery work was thought to hurt his election chances in upstate New York Dutch areas, where slavery was still practiced.[41] In 1794, in the process of negotiating the Jay Treaty with the British, Jay angered many Southern slave-owners when he dropped their demands for compensation for slaves who had been freed and transported by the British to other areas after the Revolution.[42]

Religion

Jay was a member of the Church of England, and later of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America after the American Revolution. Since 1785, Jay had been a warden of Trinity Church, New York. As Congress's Secretary for Foreign Affairs, he supported the proposal after the Revolution that the Archbishop of Canterbury approve the ordination of bishops for the Episcopal Church in the United States.[43] He argued unsuccessfully in the provincial convention for a prohibition against Catholics holding office.[44] While considering New York's Constitution, Jay also suggested erecting "a wall of brass around the country for the exclusion of Catholics."[45]

Jay, who served as vice-president (1816–21) and president (1821–27) of the American Bible Society,[46] believed that the most effective way of ensuring world peace was through propagation of the Christian gospel. In a letter addressed to Pennsylvania House of Representatives member John Murray, dated October 12, 1816, Jay wrote, "*Real* Christians will abstain from violating the rights of others, and therefore will not provoke war. Almost all nations have peace or war at the will and pleasure of rulers whom they do not elect, and who are not always wise or virtuous. Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest, of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers."[47] He also expressed a belief that the moral precepts of Christianity were necessary for good government, saying, "No human society has ever been able to maintain both order and freedom, both cohesiveness and liberty apart from the moral precepts of the Christian Religion. Should our Republic ever forget this fundamental precept of governance, we will then, be surely doomed."[48]

During the American Revolution

> Those who own the country ought to govern it.
>
> —John Jay[49]

Having established a reputation as a reasonable moderate in New York, Jay was elected to serve as delegate to the First and Second Continental Congresses which debated whether the colonies should declare independence. Jay was originally in favor of rapprochement. He helped write the Olive Branch Petition which urged the British government to reconcile with the colonies. As the necessity and inevitability of war became evident, Jay threw his support behind the revolution and the Declaration of Independence. Jay's views became more radical as events unfolded; he became an ardent separatist and attempted to move New York towards that cause.

In 1774, upon the conclusion of the Continental Congress, Jay elected to return to New York.[50] There he served on New York City's Committee of Sixty,[51] where he attempted to enforce a non-importation agreement passed by the First Continental Congress.[50] Jay was elected to the third New York Provincial Congress, where he drafted the Constitution of New York, 1777;[52] his duties as a New York Congressman prevented him from voting on or signing the Declaration of Independence.[50] Jay served for several months on the New York Committee to Detect and Defeat Conspiracies, which monitored and combated Loyalist activity.[53] New York's Provincial Congress elected Jay the Chief Justice of the New York Supreme Court of Judicature on May 8, 1777,[50][54] which he served on for two years.[50]

The Continental Congress turned to Jay, a political adversary of the previous president Henry Laurens, only three days after Jay became a delegate and elected him President of the Continental Congress. In previous congresses, Jay had moved from a position of seeking conciliation with Britain to advocating separation sooner than Laurens. Eight states voted for Jay and four for Laurens. Jay served as President of the Continental Congress from December 10, 1778, to September 28, 1779. It was a largely ceremonial position without real power, and indicated the resolve of the majority and the commitment of the Continental Congress.[55]

As a diplomat

Minister to Spain

On September 27, 1779, Jay was appointed Minister to Spain. His mission was to get financial aid, commercial treaties and recognition of American independence. The royal court of Spain refused to officially receive Jay as the Minister of the United States,[56] as it refused to recognize American independence until 1783, fearing that such recognition could spark revolution in their own colonies. Jay, however, convinced Spain to loan $170,000 to the U.S. government.[57] He departed Spain on May 20, 1782.[56]

Peace Commissioner

On June 23, 1782, Jay reached Paris, where negotiations to end the American Revolutionary War would take place.[58] Benjamin Franklin was the most experienced diplomat of the group, and thus Jay wished to lodge near him, in order to learn from him.[59] The United States agreed to negotiate with Britain separately, then with France.[60] In July 1782, the Earl of Shelburne offered the Americans independence, but Jay rejected the offer on the grounds that it did not recognize American independence during the negotiations; Jay's dissent halted negotiations until the fall.[60] The final treaty dictated that the United States would have Newfoundland fishing rights, Britain would acknowledge the United States as independent and would withdraw its troops in exchange for the United States ending the seizure of Loyalist property and honoring private debts.[60][61] The treaty granted the United States independence, but left many border regions in dispute, and many of its provisions were not enforced.[60] John Adams credited Jay with having the central role in the negotiations noting he was "of more importance than any of the rest of us."[62]

The Treaty of Paris, by Benjamin West (1783) (Jay stands farthest to the left). The British delegation refused to pose for the painting, leaving it unfinished.

Jay's peacemaking skills were further applauded by New York Mayor James Duane on October 4, 1784. At that time, Jay was summoned from his family seat in Rye to receive "the Freedom" of New York City as a tribute to his successful negotiations.[63]

Secretary of Foreign Affairs

Jay served as the second Secretary of Foreign Affairs from 1784 to 1789, when in September, Congress passed a law giving certain additional domestic responsibilities to the new Department and changing its name to the Department of State. Jay served as acting Secretary of State until March 22, 1790. Jay sought to establish a strong and durable American foreign policy: to seek the recognition of the young independent nation by powerful and established foreign European powers; to establish a stable American currency and credit supported at first by financial loans from European banks; to pay back America's creditors and to quickly pay off the country's heavy War-debt; to secure the infant nation's territorial boundaries under the most-advantageous terms possible and against possible incursions by the Indians, Spanish, the French and the English; to solve regional difficulties among the colonies themselves; to secure Newfoundland fishing rights; to establish a robust maritime trade for American goods with new economic trading partners; to protect American trading vessels against piracy; to preserve America's reputation at home and abroad; and to hold the country together politically under the fledgling Articles of Confederation.[64]

The Federalist Papers, 1788

Jay as he appears at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.

Jay believed his responsibility was not matched by a commensurate level of authority, so he joined Alexander Hamilton and James Madison in advocating for a stronger government than the one dictated by the Articles of Confederation.[4][68] He argued in his "Address to the People of the State of New-York, on the Subject of the Federal Constitution (http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/bdsdcc.c0501)" that the Articles of Confederation were too weak and an ineffective form of government, contending:

> The Congress under the Articles of Confederation may make war, but are not empowered to raise men or money to carry it on—they may make peace, but without power to see the terms of it observed—they may form alliances, but without ability to comply with the stipulations on their part—they may enter into treaties of commerce, but without power to [e]nforce them at home or abroad ... —In short, they may consult, and deliberate, and recommend, and make requisitions, and they who please may regard them.[69]

> With equal pleasure I have as often taken notice, that Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country, to one united people; a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs, and who, by their joint counsels, arms and efforts, fighting side by side throughout a long and bloody war, have nobly established their general Liberty and Independence.
>
> —John Jay, Federalist No. 2[65][66][67]

Jay did not attend the Constitutional Convention but joined Hamilton and Madison in aggressively arguing in favor of the creation of a new and more powerful, centralized but balanced system of government. Writing under the shared pseudonym of "Publius,"[70] they articulated this vision in *The Federalist Papers*, a series of eighty-five articles written to persuade New York state convention members to ratify the proposed Constitution of the United States.[71] Jay wrote the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixty-fourth articles. The second through the fifth are on the topic "Dangers from Foreign Force and Influence." The sixty-fourth discusses the role of the Senate in making foreign treaties.[72]

Jay court

In September 1789, Jay declined George Washington's offer of the position of Secretary of State (which was technically a new position but would have continued Jay's service as Secretary of Foreign Affairs). Washington responded by offering him the new title, which Washington stated "must be regarded as the keystone of our political fabric," as Chief Justice of the United States, which Jay accepted. Washington officially nominated Jay on September 24, 1789, the same day he signed the Judiciary Act of 1789 (which created the position of Chief Justice) into law.[68] Jay was unanimously confirmed by the US Senate on September 26, 1789; Washington signed and sealed Jay's commission the same day. Jay swore his oath of office on October 19, 1789.[73] Washington also nominated John Rutledge, William Cushing, Robert Harrison, James Wilson, and John Blair Jr. as Associate Judges.[74] Harrison declined the appointment, however, and Washington appointed James Iredell to fill the final seat on the Court.[75] Jay would later serve with Thomas Johnson,[76] who took Rutledge's seat,[77] and William Paterson, who took Johnson's seat.[77] While Chief Justice, Jay was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1790.[78] Jay served as Circuit Justice for the Eastern Circuit from the Spring of 1790, until the Spring of 1792.[79] He

served as Circuit Justice for the Middle Circuit from the Spring of 1793, until the Spring of 1794.[79]

The Court's business through its first three years primarily involved the establishment of rules and procedure; reading of commissions and admission of attorneys to the bar; and the Justices' duties in "riding circuit," or presiding over cases in the circuit courts of the various federal judicial districts. No convention then precluded the involvement of Supreme Court Justices in political affairs, and Jay used his light workload as a Justice to participate freely in the business of Washington's administration.

Jay used his circuit riding to spread word throughout the states of Washington's commitment to neutrality and published reports of French minister Edmond-Charles Genet's campaign to win American support for France. However, Jay also established an early precedent for the Court's independence in 1790, when Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton wrote to Jay requesting the Court's endorsement of legislation that would assume the debts of the states. Jay replied that the Court's business was restricted to ruling on the constitutionality of cases being tried before it and refused to allow it to take a position for or against the legislation.[80]

Cases

The Court heard only four cases during Jay's Chief Justiceship.

> [T]he people are the sovereign of this country, and consequently ... fellow citizens and joint sovereigns cannot be degraded by appearing with each other in their own courts to have their controversies determined. The people have reason to prize and rejoice in such valuable privileges, and they ought not to forget that nothing but the free course of constitutional law and government can ensure the continuance and enjoyment of them. For the reasons before given, I am clearly of opinion that a State is suable by citizens of another State.
>
> —John Jay in the court opinion of *Chisholm v. Georgia*[81]

Its first case did not occur until early in the Court's third term, with *West v. Barnes* (1791). The Court had an early opportunity to establish the principle of judicial review in the United States with the case, which involved a Rhode Island state statute permitting the lodging of a debt payment in paper currency. Instead of grappling with the constitutionality of the law, however, the Court unanimously decided the case on procedural grounds, strictly interpreting statutory requirements.[74]

In *Hayburn's Case* (1792), the Jay Court made no decision other than to continue the case later, and in the meantime, Congress changed the law. The case was about whether a federal statute could require the courts to decide whether petitioning veterans of the American Revolution qualified for pensions, a non-judicial function. The Jay Court wrote a letter to President Washington to say that determining whether petitioners qualified was an "act ... not of a judicial nature"[82] and that because the statute allowed the legislative branch and the executive branch to revise the court's ruling, the statute violated the separation of powers of the US Constitution.[82][83][84]

In *Chisholm v. Georgia* (1793), the Jay Court had to decide if the state of Georgia was subject to the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and the federal government.[85] In a 4–1 ruling (Iredell dissented, and Rutledge did not participate), the Jay Court ruled in favor of Loyalists of two South Carolina whose land had been seized by Georgia. That ruling sparked debate, as it implied that old debts must be paid to Loyalists.[74] The ruling was overturned when the Eleventh Amendment was ratified, which stated that a state could not be sued by a citizen of another state or foreign country.[4][74] The case was brought again to the Supreme Court in *Georgia v. Brailsford*, and the Court reversed its decision.[86][87] However, Jay's original Chisholm decision established that states were subject to judicial review.[85][88]

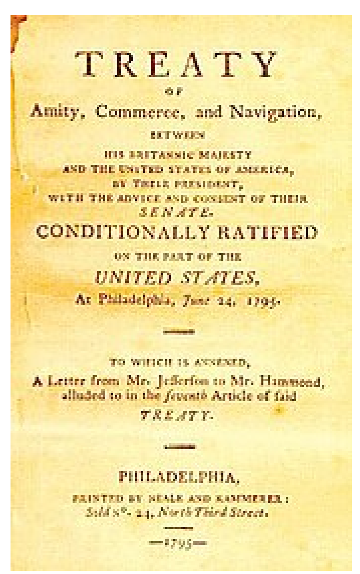
In *Georgia v. Brailsford* (1794), the Court upheld jury instructions stating "you [jurors] have ... a right to take upon yourselves to ... determine the law as well as the fact in controversy." Jay noted for the jury the "good old rule, that on questions of fact, it is the province of the jury, on questions of law, it is the province of the court to decide," but that amounted to no more than a presumption that the judges were correct about the law. Ultimately, "both objects [the law and the facts] are lawfully within your power of decision."[89][90]

1792 campaign for Governor of New York

In 1792, Jay was the Federalist candidate for governor of New York, but he was defeated by Democratic-Republican George Clinton. Jay received more votes than George Clinton; but, on technicalities, the votes of Otsego, Tioga and Clinton counties were disqualified and, therefore, not counted, giving George Clinton a slight plurality.[91] The State constitution said that the cast votes shall be delivered to the secretary of state "by the sheriff or his deputy"; but, for example, the Otsego County Sheriff's term had expired, so that legally, at the time of the election, the office of Sheriff was vacant and the votes could not be brought to the State capital. Clinton partisans in the State legislature, the State courts, and Federal offices were determined not to accept any argument that this would, in practice, violate the constitutional right to vote of the voters in these counties. Consequently, these votes were disqualified.[92]

Jay Treaty

Relations with Britain verged on war in 1794. British exports dominated the U.S. market, and American exports were blocked by British trade restrictions and tariffs. Britain still occupied northern forts that it had agreed to abandon in the Treaty of Paris. Britain's impressment of American sailors and seizure of naval and military supplies bound to French ports on neutral American ships also created conflict.[93] Madison proposed a trade war, "A direct system of commercial hostility with Great Britain," assuming that Britain was so weakened by its war with France that it would agree to American terms and not declare war.[94]


TREATY
OF
Amity, Commerce, and Navigation,
BETWEEN
HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
BY THEIR PRESIDENT,
WITH THE ADVICE AND CONSENT OF THEIR
SENATE.
CONDITIONALLY RATIFIED
ON THE PART OF THE
UNITED STATES,
At Philadelphia, June 24, 1795.

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,
A Letter from Mr. Jefferson to Mr. Hammond,
alluded to in the seventh Article of said
TREATY.

PHILADELPHIA,
PRINTED BY NEALE AND KAMMERER:
Sold No. 24, North Third Street.
—1795—

The Jay Treaty.

Washington rejected that policy and sent Jay as a special envoy to Great Britain to negotiate a new treaty; Jay remained Chief Justice. Washington had Alexander Hamilton write instructions for Jay that were to guide him in the negotiations.[95] In March 1795, the resulting treaty, known as the Jay Treaty, was brought to Philadelphia.[95] When Hamilton, in an attempt to maintain good relations, informed Britain that the United States would not join the Danish and Swedish governments to defend their neutral status, Jay lost most of his leverage. The treaty ended Britain's control of their northwestern forts[96] and granted the U.S. "most favored nation" status.[93] The U.S. agreed to restricted commercial access to the British West Indies.[93]

The treaty did not resolve American grievances about neutral shipping rights and impressment,[42] and the Democratic-Republicans denounced it, but Jay, as Chief Justice, decided not to take part in the debates.[97] The continued British impressment of American sailors would be a cause of the War of 1812.[98] The failure to receive compensation for slaves which were freed by the British and transported away during the Revolutionary War "was a major reason for the bitter Southern opposition".[99] Jefferson and Madison, fearing that a commercial alliance with aristocratic Britain might undercut republicanism, led the opposition. However, Washington put his prestige behind the treaty, and Hamilton and the Federalists mobilized public opinion.[100] The Senate ratified the treaty by a 20–10 vote, exactly by the two-thirds majority required.[93][96]

Democratic-Republicans were incensed at what they perceived as a betrayal of American interests, and Jay was denounced by protesters with such graffiti as "Damn John Jay! Damn everyone who won't damn John Jay!! Damn everyone that won't put lights in his windows and sit up all night damning John Jay!!!" One newspaper editor wrote, "John Jay, ah! the arch traitor – seize him, drown him, burn him, flay him alive."[101] Jay himself quipped that he could travel at night from Boston to Philadelphia solely by the light of his burning effigies.[102]

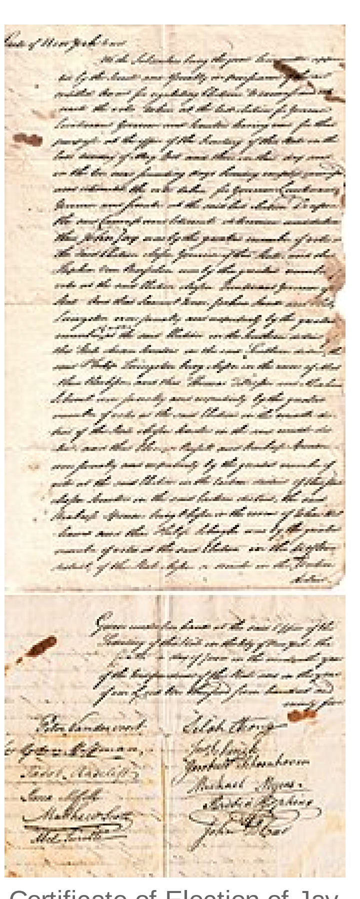
Governor of New York

Gubernatorial portrait of Jay.

While in Britain, Jay was elected in May 1795, as the second governor of New York (succeeding George Clinton) as a Federalist. He resigned from the Supreme Court service on June 29, 1795, and served six years as governor until 1801.

As governor, he received a proposal from Hamilton to gerrymander New York for the presidential election of 1796; he marked the letter "Proposing a measure for party purposes which it would not become me to adopt", and filed it without replying.[103] President John Adams then renominated him to the Supreme Court; the Senate quickly confirmed him, but he declined, citing his own poor health[68] and the court's lack of "the energy, weight and dignity which are essential to its affording due support to the national government."[104] After Jay's rejection of the position, Adams successfully nominated John Marshall as Chief Justice.

While governor, Jay ran in the 1796 presidential election, winning five electoral votes, and in the 1800 election he won one vote cast to prevent a tie between the two main Federalist candidates.



Certificate of Election of Jay as Governor of New York (June 6, 1795)

Retirement from politics

In 1801, Jay declined both the Federalist renomination for governor and a Senate-confirmed nomination to resume his former office as Chief Justice of the United States and retired to the life of a farmer in Westchester County, New York. Soon after his retirement, his wife died.[105] Jay remained in good health, continued to farm and, with one notable exception, stayed out of politics.[106] In 1819, he wrote a letter condemning Missouri's bid for admission to the union as a slave state, saying that slavery "ought not to be introduced nor permitted in any of the new states."[107]

Midway through Jay's retirement in 1814, both he and his son Peter Augustus Jay were elected members of the American Antiquarian Society.[108]

Death

On the night of May 14, 1829, Jay was stricken with palsy, probably caused by a stroke. He lived for three days, dying in Bedford, New York, on May 17.[109] Jay had chosen to be buried in Rye, where he lived as a boy. In 1807, he had transferred the remains of his wife Sarah Livingston and those of his colonial ancestors

from the family vault in the Bowery in Manhattan to Rye, establishing a private cemetery. Today, the Jay Cemetery is an integral part of the Boston Post Road Historic District, adjacent to the historic Jay Estate. The Cemetery is maintained by the Jay descendants and closed to the public. It is the oldest active cemetery associated with a figure from the American Revolution.

Legacy

In place names

Geographic locations

John Jay 15¢ Liberty Issue postage stamp, 1958.

Several geographical locations within his home state of New York were named for him, including the colonial Fort Jay on Governors Island and John Jay Park in Manhattan which was designed in part by his great, great granddaughter Mary Rutherfurd Jay. Other places named for him include the towns of Jay in Maine, New York, and Vermont; Jay County, Indiana.[110] Mount John Jay, also known as Boundary Peak 18, a summit on the border between Alaska and British Columbia, Canada, is also named for him,[111][112] as is Jay Peak in northern Vermont.[113]

Schools and universities

The John Jay College of Criminal Justice, formerly known as the College of Police Science at City University of New York, was renamed for Jay in 1964.

At Columbia University, exceptional undergraduates are designated John Jay Scholars, and one of that university's undergraduate dormitories is known as John Jay Hall.

In suburban Pittsburgh, the John Jay Center houses the School of Engineering, Mathematics and Science at Robert Morris University.

High schools named after Jay include:

- John Jay Educational Campus (Brooklyn, New York)
- John Jay High School (Cross River, New York)
- John Jay High School (Hopewell Junction, New York)
- John Jay High School (San Antonio, Texas)

The John Jay Institute, located outside Philadelphia, is the only independent faith-based organization in America exclusively dedicated to preparing principled leaders for public service. Their website is https://www.johnjayfellows.com/

Postage

In Jay's hometown of Rye, New York, the Rye Post Office issued a special cancellation stamp on September 5, 1936. To further commemorate Jay, a group led by Congresswoman Caroline Love Goodwin O'Day commissioned painter Guy Pene du Bois to create a mural for the post office's lobby, with federal funding from the Works Progress Administration. Titled *John Jay at His Home*, the mural was completed in 1938.

On December 12, 1958, the United States Postal Service released a 15¢ Liberty Issue postage stamp honoring Jay.[114]

Rye, New York Post Office Dedication Stamp and cancellation, September 5, 1936

Papers

The Selected Papers of John Jay is an ongoing endeavor by scholars at Columbia University's Rare Book and Manuscript Library to organize, transcribe and publish a wide range of politically and culturally important letters authored by and written to Jay that demonstrate the depth and breadth of his contributions as a nation builder. More than 13,000 documents from over 75 university and historical collections have been compiled and photographed to date.

In popular media

Literature

John Jay's childhood home in Rye, "The Locusts", was immortalized by novelist James Fenimore Cooper in his first successful novel *The Spy*; this book about counterespionage during the Revolutionary War was based on a tale that Jay told Cooper from his own experience as a spymaster in Westchester County.[115][116]

Film and television

Jay was portrayed by Tim Moyer in the 1984 TV miniseries *George Washington*. In its 1986 sequel miniseries, *George Washington II: The Forging of a Nation*, he was portrayed by Nicholas Kepros.

Notable descendants

Jay had six children, including Peter Augustus Jay and abolitionist William Jay. In later generations, Jay's descendants included physician John Clarkson Jay (1808–1891), lawyer and diplomat John Jay (1817–1894), Colonel William Jay (1841–1915), diplomat Peter Augustus Jay (1877–1933), writer John Jay Chapman (1862–1933), banker Pierre Jay (1870–1949), horticulturalist Mary Rutherfurd Jay (1872–1953), and academic John Jay Iselin (1933–2008). Jay was also a direct ancestor of Adam von Trott zu Solz (1909–1944), a resistance fighter against Nazism.

See also

- List of abolitionist forerunners
- List of justices of the Supreme Court of the United States
- List of United States chief justices by time in office
- List of United States Supreme Court cases prior to the Marshall Court
- List of United States Supreme Court justices by time in office

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Political offices		
Preceded by **Henry Laurens**	**President of the Continental Congress** 1778–1779	Succeeded by **Samuel Huntington**
Preceded by **Robert R. Livingston**	**United States Secretary of Foreign Affairs** 1784–1789	Succeeded by **Office abolished**
Preceded by **Office established**	**United States Secretary of State (acting)** 1789–1790	Succeeded by **Thomas Jefferson**
Preceded by **George Clinton**	**Governor of New York** 1795–1801	Succeeded by **George Clinton**
Party political offices		
First	**Federalist nominee for Governor of New York** 1792, 1795, 1798	Succeeded by **Stephen Van Rensselaer**
Legal offices		
Preceded by **Seat established by 1 Stat. 73**	**Chief Justice of the United States** 1789–1795	Succeeded by **John Rutledge**
Diplomatic posts		
Preceded by **Office established**	**United States Minister to Spain** 1779–1782	Succeeded by **William Carmichael**
Academic offices		
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Paul Revere

Paul Revere (/rɪˈvɪər/; December 21, 1734 O.S. (January 1, 1735 N.S.)[N 1] – May 10, 1818) was an American silversmith, engraver, early industrialist, and Patriot in the American Revolution. He is best known for his midnight ride to alert the colonial militia in April 1775 to the approach of British forces before the battles of Lexington and Concord, as dramatized in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, "Paul Revere's Ride" (1861).

At age 41, Revere was a prosperous, established and prominent Boston silversmith. He had helped organize an intelligence and alarm system to keep watch on the British military. Revere later served as a Massachusetts militia officer, though his service ended after the Penobscot Expedition, one of the most disastrous campaigns of the American Revolutionary War, for which he was absolved of blame.

Following the war, Revere returned to his silversmith trade. He used the profits from his expanding business to finance his work in iron casting, bronze bell and cannon casting, and the forging of copper bolts and spikes. In 1800, he became the first American to successfully roll copper into sheets for use as sheathing on naval vessels.

Paul Revere	
John Singleton Copley, *Portrait of Paul Revere.* c. 1768–1770	
Born	January 1, 1735 (O.S.: December 21, 1734) North End, Boston, Massachusetts Bay, British America
Died	May 10, 1818 (aged 83) Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.
Occupation	Silversmith, colonial militia officer
Spouse(s)	Sarah Orne (1757–1773; her death) Rachel Walker (1773–1813; her death)
Children	8 with Sarah Orne 8 with Rachel Walker
Signature	

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Early life and education

Revere was born in the North End of Boston on December 21, 1734, according to the Old Style calendar then in use, or January 1, 1735, in the modern calendar.[3] His father, a French Huguenot born Apollos Rivoire came to Boston at the age of 13 and was apprenticed to the silversmith John Coney.[4] By the time he married Deborah Hitchborn, a member of a long-standing Boston family that owned a small shipping wharf, in 1729, Rivoire had anglicized his name to Paul Revere. Their son, Paul Revere, was the third of 12 children and eventually the eldest surviving son.[2] Revere grew up in the environment of the extended Hitchborn family, and never learned his father's native language.[5] At 13 he left school and became an apprentice to his father. The silversmith trade afforded him connections with a cross-section of Boston society, which would serve him well when he became active in the American Revolution.[6] As for religion, although his father attended Puritan services, Revere was drawn to the Church of England.[7] In 1750, aged 15, Revere was part of the first group of change ringers to ring the new bells (cast in 1744) at Christ Church, in the north of Boston (the Old North Church).[8][9] Revere eventually began attending the services of the political and provocative Jonathan Mayhew at the West Church.[7] His father did not approve, and as a result father and son came to blows on one occasion. Revere relented and returned to his father's church, although he did become friends with Mayhew, and returned to the West Church in the late 1760s.[10]

Revere's father died in 1754, when Paul was legally too young to officially be the master of the family silver shop.[11] In February 1756, during the French and Indian War (the North American theater of the Seven Years' War), he enlisted in the provincial army. Possibly he made this decision because of the weak economy, since army service promised consistent pay.[12] Commissioned a second lieutenant in a provincial artillery regiment, he spent the summer at Fort William Henry at the southern end of Lake George in New York as part of an abortive plan for the capture of Fort St. Frédéric. He did not stay long in the army, but returned to Boston and assumed control of the silver shop in his own name. On August 4, 1757, he married Sarah Orne (1736–1773); their first child was born eight months later.[13] He and Sarah had eight children, but two died young, and only one, Mary, survived her father.[14]

Revere's dentistry tools

1765–1774: the gathering storm of revolution

Revere's business began to suffer when the British economy entered a recession in the years following the Seven Years' War, and declined further when the Stamp Act of 1765 resulted in a further downturn in the Massachusetts economy.[15] Business was so poor that an attempt was made to seize his property in late 1765.[16] To help make ends meet he even took up dentistry, a skill set he was taught by a practicing surgeon

who lodged at a friend's house.[17] One client was Joseph Warren, a local physician and political opposition leader with whom Revere formed a close friendship.[18][19] Revere and Warren, in addition to having common political views, were also both active in the same local Masonic lodges.[20]

Although Revere was not one of the "Loyal Nine"—organizers of the earliest protests against the Stamp Act—he was well connected with its members, who were laborers and artisans.[21] Revere did not participate in some of the more raucous protests, such as the attack on the home of Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson.[22] In 1765, a group of militants who would become known as the Sons of Liberty formed, of which Revere was a member.[23][24] From 1765 on, in support of the dissident cause, he produced engravings and other artifacts with political themes. Among these engravings are a depiction of the arrival of British troops in 1768 (which he termed "an insolent parade") and a famous depiction of the March 1770 Boston Massacre (see illustration). Although the latter was engraved by Revere and he included the inscription, "Engraved, Printed, & Sold by Paul Revere Boston", it was modeled on a drawing by Henry Pelham, and Revere's engraving of the drawing was colored by a third man and printed by a fourth.[25] Revere also produced a bowl commemorating the Massachusetts assembly's refusal to retract the Massachusetts Circular Letter. (This letter, adopted in response to the 1767 Townshend Acts, called for united colonial action against the acts. King George III had issued a demand for its retraction.)[25]

In 1770 Revere purchased a house on North Square in Boston's North End. Now a museum, the house provided space for his growing family while he continued to maintain his shop at nearby Clark's Wharf.[27] Sarah died in 1773, and on October 10 of that year, Revere married Rachel Walker (1745–1813). They had eight children, three of whom died young.[28]

The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5, 1770, a copper engraving by Paul Revere modeled on a drawing by Henry Pelham,[26] 1770.

In November 1773 the merchant ship *Dartmouth* arrived in Boston harbor carrying the first shipment of tea made under the terms of the Tea Act.[29] This act authorized the British East India Company to ship tea (of which it had huge surpluses due to colonial boycotts organized in response to the Townshend Acts) directly to the colonies, bypassing colonial merchants. Passage of the act prompted calls for renewed protests against the tea shipments, on which Townshend duties were still levied.[30] Revere and Warren, as members of the informal North End Caucus, organized a watch over the *Dartmouth* to prevent the unloading of the tea. Revere took his turns on guard duty,[31] and was one of the ringleaders in the Boston Tea Party of December 16, when colonists dumped tea from the *Dartmouth* and two other ships into the harbor.[32]

From December 1773 to November 1775, Revere served as a courier for the Boston Committee of Public Safety, traveling to New York and Philadelphia to report on the political unrest in Boston. Research has documented 18 such rides. Notice of some of them was published in Massachusetts newspapers, and British authorities received further intelligence of them from Loyalist Americans.[33] In 1774, his cousin John on the island of Guernsey wrote to Paul that John had seen reports of Paul's role as an "express" (courier) in London newspapers.[34]

In 1774, the military governor of Massachusetts, General Thomas Gage, dissolved the provincial assembly on orders from Great Britain. Governor Gage also closed the port of Boston and all over the city forced private citizens to quarter (provide lodging for) soldiers in their homes.[N 2]

During this time, Revere and a group of 30 "mechanics" began meeting in secret at his favorite haunt, the *Green Dragon*, to coordinate the gathering and dissemination of intelligence by "watching the Movements of British Soldiers".[35] Around this time Revere regularly contributed politically charged engravings to the recently founded Patriot monthly, *Royal American Magazine*.[36]

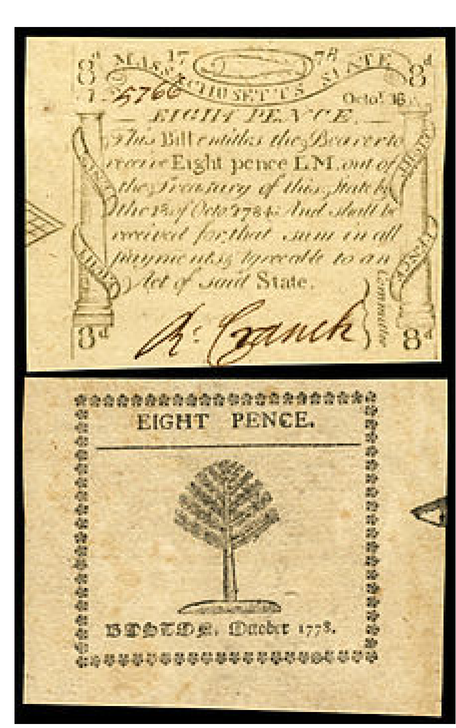
He rode to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in December 1774 upon rumors of an impending landing of British troops there, a journey known in history as the Portsmouth Alarm.[37] Although the rumors were false, his ride sparked a rebel success by provoking locals to raid Fort William and Mary, defended by just six soldiers, for its gunpowder supply.[38]

"Midnight Ride"

War years

Because Boston was besieged after the battles of Lexington and Concord, Revere could not return to the city, which was now firmly in British hands. He boarded in Watertown, where he was eventually joined by Rachel and most of his children (Paul Jr., then 15, remained in Boston to mind the family properties).[39] After he was denied a commission in the Continental Army, he tried to find other ways to be useful to the rebel cause. He was retained by the provincial congress as a courier, and he printed local currency which the congress used to pay the troops around Boston.[40]

Since there was a desperate shortage of gunpowder, the provincial congress decided in November 1775 to send him to Philadelphia to study the working of the only powder mill in the colonies, in the hopes that he might be able to build a second one in Massachusetts. Revere called on the mill's owner, Oswald Eve, armed with a letter from Continental Congressmen Robert Morris and John Dickinson asking Eve to "Chearfully & from Public Spirited Motives give Mr. Revere such information as will inable him to Conduct the business on his return home."[43][44] Eve showed Revere around the mill, but refused to give him detailed drawings unless he was first paid a substantial bribe. Despite this chilly reception, Revere was able to discern useful information from the visit. He also acquired, through the work of Samuel Adams, plans for another powder mill. This information enabled Revere to set up a powder mill at Stoughton (present-day Canton).[43][45] The mill produced tons of gunpowder for the Patriot cause.[46]



An eight-pence bill engraved and printed by Revere in 1778. The engraving of the pine tree on the verso (back of the bill) is likely the work of silversmith and engraver Nathaniel Hurd.[41][42]

Revere's friend and compatriot Joseph Warren was killed in the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775.[47] Because soldiers killed in battle were often buried in mass graves without ceremony, Warren's grave was unmarked. On March 21, 1776, several days after the British army left Boston, Revere, Warren's brothers, and a few friends went to the battlefield and found a grave containing two bodies.[48] After being buried for nine months, Warren's face was unrecognizable, but Revere was able to identify Warren's body because he had placed a false tooth in Warren's mouth, and recognized the wire he had used for fastening it. Warren was given a proper funeral and reburied in a marked grave.[49]

Militia service

Upon returning to Boston in 1776, Revere was commissioned a major of infantry in the Massachusetts militia in that April, and transferred to the artillery a month later.[50] In November he was promoted to lieutenant colonel, and was stationed at Castle William, defending Boston harbor. He was generally second or third in the chain of command, and on several occasions he was given command of the fort.[50] He applied his engineering skills to maintaining the fort's armaments, even designing and building a caliper to accurately measure cannonballs and cannon bore holes.[50] The service at Castle William was relatively isolated, and personality friction prompted some men to file complaints against Revere.[51] The boredom was alleviated in late August 1777 when Revere was sent with a troop of soldiers to escort prisoners taken in the Battle of Bennington to Boston, where they were confined on board prison ships,[52][53] and again in September when he was briefly deployed to Rhode Island.[54]

In August 1778 Revere's regiment served in a combined Franco-American expedition whose objective was to capture the British base at Newport, Rhode Island.[55] His regiment was responsible for erecting and maintaining artillery batteries on Aquidneck Island.[56] The attempt was abandoned by the French when their fleet was scattered in a storm, and Revere's regiment returned to Boston before the British sortied from Newport to force the Battle of Rhode Island.[57]

Drawing depicting the arrival of the French fleet in Narragansett Bay in 1778

Penobscot disaster

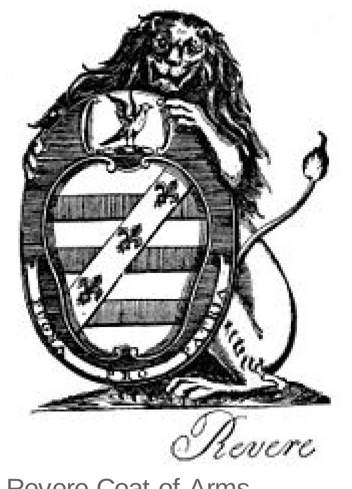
The British in June 1779 established a new base on Penobscot Bay in present-day Maine (which was then part of Massachusetts).[58] Massachusetts authorities called out the militia, pressed into service available shipping, and organized a major expedition to dislodge the British.[59] The expedition was a complete fiasco: its land and naval commanders squabbled over control of the expedition, and could not agree on strategy or tactics. The arrival of British reinforcements led to the destruction of the entire Massachusetts fleet.[60] Revere commanded the artillery units for the expedition, and was responsible for organizing the artillery train.[61] He participated in the taking of Bank's Island, from which artillery batteries could reach the British ships anchored before Fort George. He next oversaw the transport of the guns from Bank's Island to a new position on the heights of the Bagaduce Peninsula that commanded the fort.[62] Although Revere was in favor of storming the fort, Brigadier General Solomon Lovell opted for a siege instead. After further disagreements on how to proceed between Lovell and fleet commander Dudley Saltonstall, Lovell decided to return to the transports on August 12, a decision supported by Revere.[63]

Late the next day British sails were spotted. A mad scramble ensued, and on the 14th the fleet was in retreat heading up the Penobscot River. Revere and his men were put ashore with their stores, and their transports destroyed. At one point Brigadier General Peleg Wadsworth ordered Revere to send his barge in an attempt to recover a ship drifting toward the enemy position. Revere at first resisted, but eventually complied, and Wadsworth told him to expect formal charges over the affair.[64] The incident separated Revere from his men. Moving overland, he eventually managed to regroup most of his troops, and returned to Boston on August 26. A variety of charges were made against Revere, some of which were exaggerated assignments of blame[65] made by enemies he had made in his command at Castle William. The initial hearings on the matter in September 1779 were inconclusive, but he was asked to resign his post.[65] He repeatedly sought a full court-martial to clear his name, but it was not until February 1782 that a court martial heard the issue, exonerating him.[66][67]

Business and social connections

During the Revolutionary War, Revere continued his efforts to move upwards in society into the gentry. After his failed efforts to become a military officer he attempted to become a merchant, but was hindered by a number of factors: while he was a fairly well-off member of the artisan class, he did not have the resources to afford the goods he would have sold as a merchant, nor were lenders in England willing to lend him the required startup capital. Other American merchants of the time were able to continue their business with colleagues in England. However, Revere's inexperience as a merchant meant that he had not yet established such relationships and was not able to communicate as effectively on unfamiliar matters. Another factor preventing Revere's success as a merchant was the economic climate of the time period after the war known as the Confederation Period; while the colonies had seen a time of economic growth before the war, the colonies experienced a severe post-war depression, constraining the overall success of his business.[68]

Tea urn for Hannah Rowe, 1791, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Revere Coat-of-Arms engraved by Paul Revere

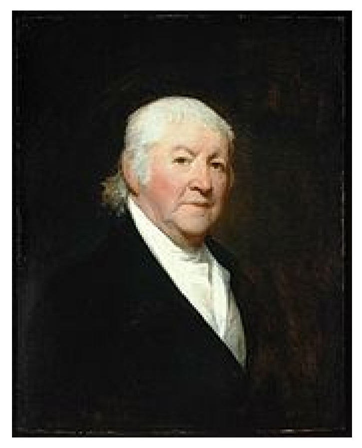
While Revere struggled as a merchant, his success as a silversmith enabled him to pursue and leverage more advanced technological developments for the purposes of mass production. For example, rolling mills greatly improved the productivity of his silver shop and enabled his business to move further away from manufacturing high-end customized products in order to focus instead on the production of a more standardized set of goods.[69] In the 18th century, the standard of living continuously improved in America, as genteel goods became increasingly available to the masses.[70] Revere responded particularly well to this trend because his business was not solely manufacturing custom, high end purchases. Smaller products like teaspoons and buckles accounted for the majority of his work, allowing him to build a broad customer base.[71]

Revere's increased efficiency left financial and human resources available for the exploration of other products, which was essential to overcoming the fluctuating post-war economic climate.[72] In addition to increasing production, the flatting mill enabled Revere to move towards a more managerial position.[73]

Later years: entrepreneurship, manufacturing, and politics

After the war, Revere became interested in metal work beyond gold and silver. By 1788 he had invested some of the profits from his growing silverworking trade to construct a large furnace, which would allow him to work with larger quantities of metals at higher temperatures. He soon opened an iron foundry in Boston's North End that produced utilitarian cast iron items such as stove backs, fireplace tools, and sash-window weights, marketed to a broad segment of Boston's population. [74] Many of Revere's business practices changed when he expanded his practice into ironworking, because he transitioned from just being an artisan to also being an entrepreneur and a manager. In order to make this transition successfully, Revere had to invest substantial quantities of capital and time in his foundry.[75]

Technological practices


1813 portrait of Revere by Gilbert Stuart

The quasi-industrialization of his practice set Revere apart from his competition. "Revere's rapid foundry success resulted from fortuitous timing, innate technical aptitude, thorough research, and the casting experience he gained from silverworking."[76] This technical proficiency allowed Revere to optimize his work and adapt to a new technological and entrepreneurial model. Revere's location also benefited his endeavors. Revere was entering the field of iron casting in a time when New England cities were becoming centers of industry. The nature of technological advancement was such that many skilled entrepreneurs in a number of fields worked together, in what is known by Nathan Rosenberg as technological convergence, by which a number of companies work together on challenges in order to spur advances.[77] By accessing the knowledge of other nearby metal workers, Revere was able to successfully explore and master new technologies throughout his career.

Labor practices

One of the biggest changes for Revere in his new business was organization of labor. In his earlier days, Revere primarily utilized the apprenticeship model standard for artisan shops at this time, but as his business expanded he hired employees (wage laborers) to work for his foundry. Many manufacturers of the era found this transition from master to employer difficult because many employees at the onset of the Industrial Revolution identified themselves as skilled workers, and thus wanted to be treated with the respect and autonomy accorded to artisans. An artisan himself, Revere managed to avoid many of these labor conflicts by adopting a system of employment that still held trappings of the craft system in the form of worker freedoms such as work hour flexibility, wages in line with skill levels, and liquor on the job.[78]

Manufacturing: church bells, cannon, and copper products

After mastering the iron casting process and realizing substantial profits from this new product line, Revere identified a burgeoning market for church bells in the religious revival known as the Second Great Awakening that followed the war. Beginning in 1792 he became one of America's best-known bell casters, working with sons Paul Jr. and Joseph Warren Revere in the firm Paul Revere & Sons. This firm cast the first bell made in Boston and ultimately produced hundreds of bells, a number of which remain in operation to this day.[79]

In 1794, Revere decided to take the next step in the evolution of his business, expanding his bronze casting work by learning to cast cannon for the federal government, state governments, and private clients. Although the government often had trouble paying him on time, its large orders inspired him to deepen his contracting and seek additional product lines of interest to the military.[80]

By 1795, a growing percentage of his foundry's business came from a new product, copper bolts, spikes, and other fittings that he sold to merchants and the Boston naval yard for ship construction. In 1801, Revere became a pioneer in the production of rolled copper, opening North America's first copper mill south of Boston in Canton. Copper from the Revere Copper Company was used to cover the original wooden dome of the Massachusetts State House in 1802. His copper and brass works eventually grew, through sale and corporate merger, into a large corporation, Revere Copper and Brass, Inc.[81]

Steps towards standardized production

During his earlier days as an artisan, especially when working with silver products, Revere produced "bespoke" or customized goods. As he shifted to ironworking, he found the need to produce more standardized products, because this made production cheaper.[82] To achieve the beginnings of standardization, Revere used identical molds for casting, especially in the fabrication of mass-produced items such as stoves, ovens, frames, and chimney backs.[83] However, Revere did not totally embrace uniform production. For example, his bells and cannons were all unique products: these large objects required extensive fine-tuning and customization, and the small number of bells and cannon minimized the potential benefits of standardizing them.[84] In addition, even the products that he made in large quantities could not be truly standardized due to technological and skill limitations. His products were rarely (if ever) identical, but his processes were well systematized. "He came to realize that the foundry oven melded the characteristics of tools and machines: it required skilled labor and could be used in a flexible manner to produce different products, but an expert could produce consistent output by following a standard set of production practices."[76]

Freemasonry

Revere was a Scottish Freemason. He was a member of Lodge St Andrews, No.81, (Boston, Massachusetts). The Lodge continues to meet in Boston with the number 4 under and the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. The date he joined the Lodge is not known but was sometime after the inauguration of the Lodge on St Andrew's Day, November 30, 1756 and May 15, 1769 when he is recorded in the Grand Lodge of Scotland membership register as the Lodge Secretary. Joseph Warren and William Palfrey are also recorded, on the same page, as members of the Lodge and being Master and Senior Warden respectively. (see image)[85][86]

Extract from membership register for Revere, Warren and Palfrey.

He subsequently became the Grand Master of the Freemasons of Massachusetts when a box containing an assemblage of commemorative items was deposited under the cornerstone of the Massachusetts State House on July 4, 1795 by Governor Samuel Adams, assisted by Grand Master Revere and Deputy Grand Master, Colonel William Scollay.[87]

Politics and final years

Revere remained politically active throughout his life. His business plans in the late 1780s were often stymied by a shortage of adequate money in circulation. Alexander Hamilton's national policies regarding banks and industrialization exactly matched his dreams, and he became an ardent Federalist committed to building a robust economy and a powerful nation. Of particular interest to Revere was the question of protective tariffs; he and his son sent a petition to Congress in 1808 asking for protection for his sheet copper business.[88] He continued to participate in local discussions of political issues even after his retirement in 1811, and in 1814 circulated a petition offering the government the services of Boston's artisans in protecting Boston during the War of 1812.[89] Revere died on May 10, 1818, at the age of 83, at his home on Charter Street in Boston.[90] He is buried in the Granary Burying Ground on Tremont Street.[91][92]

Legacy

After Revere's death, the family business was taken over by his oldest surviving son, Joseph Warren Revere.[93] The copper works founded in 1801 continues today as the Revere Copper Company, with manufacturing divisions in Rome, New York and New Bedford, Massachusetts.[94]

Revere's original silverware, engravings, and other works are highly regarded today, and can be found on display in museums including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston[95] and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[96] The Revere Bell, presented in 1843 to the Church of St. Andrew in Singapore by his daughter, Mrs. Maria Revere Balestier, wife of American consul Joseph Balestier, is now displayed in the National Museum of Singapore. This is the only bell cast by the Revere foundry that is outside the United States. For a time, it was displayed behind velvet ropes in the foyer of the United States Embassy in Singapore.[97]

Paul Revere's grave site in the Granary Burying Ground

The communities of Revere, Massachusetts[98] and Revere, Minnesota[99] bear his name, as do Revere Beach[98] in Revere, Massachusetts; Revere Avenue in The Bronx, New York City;[100] Paul Revere Road in Arlington, Massachusetts;[101] and Paul Revere Apartments[102] in Seattle.

A 25-cent 1958 U.S. postage stamp in the Liberty Series honors Paul Revere, featuring the portrait by Gilbert Stuart. He also appears on the $5,000 Series EE U.S. Savings Bond.[103] Ryan Reynolds releases a Mint Moble commercial that features Avery Revere, a direct descent of Paul Revere.[104]

In popular culture

In episode 8 of the 2nd season of the US TV show *The West Wing* (1999–2006), Paul Revere is named as the manufacturer of president Bartlet's knife-set he presents to Charlie, his personal aide.

Revere appears in the 2012 video game *Assassin's Creed III* and is portrayed by Bruce Dinsmore. It is fictitiously depicted as the game's protagonist Ratonhnaké:ton and Revere rode to alert the colonial militia.[105]

Descendants

- Maria Revere Balestier, daughter
- Paul Revere Jr. (3rd great-grandson)[106]
- Paul Revere III (4th great-grandson)[106]
  - Pauline Revere Thayer, daughter of Paul Revere III
- Avery Revere (4th great-granddaughter)[106]

See also

- Israel Bissell, who rode to Philadelphia with news of the battles of Lexington and Concord
- Sybil Ludington, who performed a similar ride in New York
- Jack Jouett, rode to warn Thomas Jefferson and the Virginia legislature of a British raid
- Revere Bells, one of Revere's highest-profile products
- Revere Copper Company, the business founded by Paul Revere and later managed by his son and grandsons
- *Johnny Tremain*, 1943 children's novel by Esther Forbes set in Boston prior to and during the outbreak of the Revolution

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Notes

1. Revere's date of birth is confused by the conversion between the Julian and Gregorian calendars, which offsets the date by 11 days, and by the fact that only his baptism, not his actual birth was recorded. While his baptism was recorded on December 22, adjusting for the conversion between Julian and Gregorian calendars changes the date to January 1.[1][2]
2. Forcing private citizens to quarter soldiers in their homes would be one of the grievances enumerated in the United States Declaration of Independence—[The King] "has combined with others to subject us to a Jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation: For quartering large Bodies of Armed Troops among us:..."—and the framers of the United States Constitution restricted the practice in the Third Amendment of the Bill of Rights.

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82. Martello 2010, p. 155.
83. Martello 2010, p. 141.
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