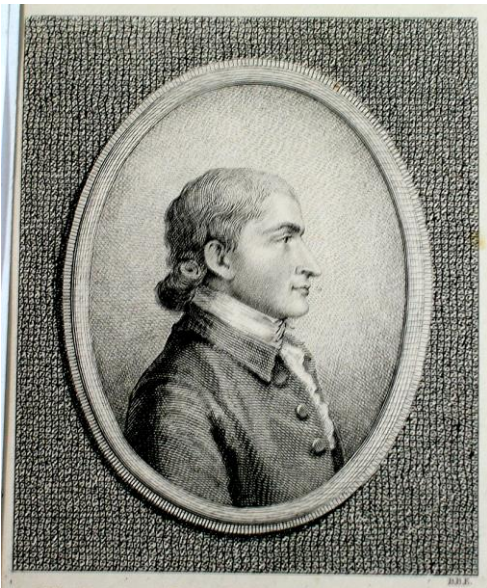


John Jay
&
Thomas Jefferson



The Early Years

John Jay and Thomas Jefferson are two statesmen known for their involvement in the formation of the United States and their dedication to establishing its early government. Although the two men ultimately ended up on opposing sides of the political aisle, their stories have a number of striking similarities.

John Jay was born in New York City in 1745. One of ten children, he was born into a successful merchant family. Thomas Jefferson was born in Virginia two years earlier, in 1743. Also one of ten children, Jefferson spent his youth in an agricultural setting on the family plantation. Both boys benefited from the education afforded to children of wealthy families through boarding schools and private tutors.

American Revolution

The two men first crossed paths while serving on the Second Continental Congress. Among the youngest members of the congress, they each made their mark. Jay was on the committee that drafted the *Olive Branch Petition*, a document that was a final attempt at reconciling with Britain. When the petition failed, the Congress agreed that war was unavoidable and began to draft a statement of independence. Jefferson was the primary author of that statement, *The Declaration of Independence*.

While serving on the congress, Jay and Jefferson continued to be heavily involved in the politics of their individual states. Both men believed that state's rights were essential, however their friendship would later become forever fractured over the issue of how much power the federal government should have over the states.





Treaty of Paris

Jay and Jefferson both had successful political careers as diplomats. Jay was sent to Spain as Minister Plenipotentiary in 1779. The Continental Congress hoped that Spain would financially support America during the war, since they were also engaged in conflict with England. Jay's mission was unsuccessful. Ultimately, Spain was fearful that if they supported the United States it could lead to uprisings in their own colonies.

Jay and Jefferson were two of the five men appointed by the congress as commissioners to negotiate peace with Britain. In 1782, Jay arrived in France where Benjamin Franklin had begun the negotiations. John Adams would later join them, with Henry Laurens arriving near the end of the negotiations. The fifth commissioner, Thomas Jefferson declined the appointment and was never involved in the peace talks.



Diplomats

Once the United States was established as an independent nation in 1784, John Jay was appointed Secretary for Foreign Affairs, the country's chief diplomat. At about the same time, Jefferson was sent to France as Minister Plenipotentiary for Negotiating Treaties. The following year he replaced Benjamin Franklin as Minister to France. During his five years in Paris, Jefferson played a leading role in shaping the foreign policy of the United States.

As Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Jay was Jefferson's supervisor. It was incredibly challenging for them to accomplish anything. The members of Congress were constantly changing, and rarely was there a quorum to vote on any matters. That, combined with the time delay in communications across the Atlantic, made it impossible for either man to advance the United States' position on the world stage.

For my own part, I have long found myself in an awkward situation—so very much to be done and enabled to do very little. All we can do is to persevere, and if good results follow, our labour will not be in vain; if not, we shall have done our duty, and that reflection is valuable.

John Jay to Thomas Jefferson, April 24,
1787



Family Life: John Jay

John Jay married Sarah Livingston in 1774. Together they had six children, five who lived to adulthood. Sarah traveled with John to Europe and was a constant ally during his career. Her gregarious personality made her a well-known, and well liked figure, during the early days of the Republic.

Sarah Jay died in 1802 at the age of 46 shortly after the family moved to Bedford. Her and John's two youngest children were twelve and ten at the time. John lived, unmarried, another 28 years after the death of his wife.

Family Life: Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson married Martha Wayles Skelton in 1772. Like Sarah, Martha gave birth to six children, but only two lived to adulthood. Before her death in 1782, she made Thomas promise that he would never marry again.

Although he kept that promise, Jefferson fell in love with Italian-English artist, Maria Cosway while in France in 1786. Cosway was married, and at her husband's insistence returned abruptly to London just six weeks after meeting Thomas.

After her departure, Jefferson wrote a 4,000-word love letter to her entitled, *The Dialogue of the Head vs. the Heart*. The two would maintain a lifelong correspondence.

Jefferson also had children with Sally Hemings, who was a slave at Monticello.

He died in 1826, 44 years after the death of Martha.





Daughter as Lady of the House- Patsy Jefferson

After the death of their wives, both Jay and Jefferson had daughters who took over the role of running their households.

Martha "Patsy" Jefferson was the oldest child of Thomas and Martha Jefferson. After her mother's death, 10 year old Patsy served as her father's main support. From the ages of 12-17, Patsy lived in Paris along with her father and sister.

In 1790, Patsy married at the age of 18 and had a total of 13 children, with 11 of them living to adulthood. When her father was elected president in 1800, Patsy became the President's hostess and the informal "First Lady."

After her father's retirement, Patsy dedicated much of her life to his care. Jefferson describes her as the "*cherished companion of his youth and the nurse of his old age.*"

When Jefferson died in 1826, Patsy inherited Monticello. The estate, along with 130 slaves, was sold to settle her father's debts. She died in 1836 at the age of 64, the only Jefferson child to live past the age of 25.



Daughter as Lady of the House- Nancy Jay

Nancy Jay was born in France in 1783. Educated first by private tutors, she attended the Moravian Young Ladies Seminary located in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Nancy was nineteen when her mother died, and as the oldest, unmarried daughter she took over the role of female head of the house. In this role, she was responsible for supervising the care of her younger sibling, ordering supplies, overseeing staff, and the interior upkeep of the home.

Nancy continued to oversee the management of Bedford House until her father's death in 1829. At that point, her brother William inherited the house and farm.

Nancy moved to New York City with her sister Maria. The sisters traveled both for health and for leisure, and were very involved in several charitable organizations. Nancy Jay died in 1856 at the age of 73.

Views on Slavery: Thomas Jefferson

John Jay and Thomas Jefferson were both slave owners, and owned slaves for much of their lives.

Thomas Jefferson lived in a plantation 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. Over his lifetime he owned about 600 slaves; he inherited about 175, while most of the remainder were born on his plantations.

Jefferson felt slavery was harmful to both slave and master, but had reservations about releasing unprepared slaves into freedom and advocated gradual emancipation. In 1779, he proposed gradual voluntary training and resettlement of slaves to the Virginia legislature, and three years later drafted legislation allowing owners to free their slaves. In 1784, Jefferson proposed the abolition of slavery in all western U.S. territories, and limiting slave importation to 15 years.

During his presidency, Jefferson was for the most part publicly silent on the issue of slavery and emancipation; however, in 1804 he allowed slavery to spread into the Louisiana Territory. This was in response to a threat of secession from South Carolina. Jefferson knew that to be reelected he had to have the southern vote and speaking out against slavery would prevent that.

*I have most carefully avoided every public act or
manifestation on that subject.*

Thomas Jefferson, May 11, 1805

Views on Slavery: Thomas Jefferson

Jefferson also had children with an enslaved woman who lived at Monticello named Sally Hemings. Sally was the half-sister of Jefferson's wife Martha. Claims that Jefferson had fathered children with Hemings date back as far as 1802. While this fact was denied for many years, DNA testing has proven that Thomas Jefferson was the father of all six of Sally Hemings' children.

Sally gave birth to her first child at the age of 22; Jefferson was 52. Three of Sally's surviving children were able to integrate into white society in Washington, another son moved to Wisconsin. After Jefferson's death Sally was not sold and was "given her time" living on her own in Virginia until her death in 1835.

Views on Slavery: John Jay

Jay grew up in a slave holding household; his father Peter owned at least a dozen slaves at a time and was an investor in slave ships.

The largest number of slaves we know that John owned at one time was 6. Based on New York standards, this would have made him a large slave owner.

At multiple times throughout his life, Jay advocated for the abolishment of slavery. He attempted to include a provision to outlaw it in the New York State Constitution of 1777, but it was never brought to a vote. Jay was a founding member of the New York Manumission Society which advocated for the manumission of slaves. Manumission is the freedom of slaves using terms that have been decided upon by the owner. The organization fought to get laws passed that prohibited the export of slaves purchased in New York. When Jay was governor of New York in 1799 he signed into law the Gradual Emancipation Act.

...any child born of a slave within this state after the fourth day of July next shall be deemed and adjudged to be born free; Provided nevertheless. That such child shall be the servant of the legal proprietor of his or her mother until such servant, if a male shall arrive at the age of twenty-eight years, and if female, at the age of twenty-five years.

1799 Gradual Emancipation Act

Views on Slavery: John Jay

The law was eventually commuted to an abolition law, with slavery becoming illegal in New York in 1827. Jay advocated for all this legislation while he continued to own slaves. His last slave was freed in 1817.



John Jay's Barrister's Bookcase

Midnight Appointments

John Jay and Thomas Jefferson both were successful lawyers prior to the American Revolution. While neither returned to practicing law, Jay had been Chief Justice of the New York State Supreme Court from 1777-1778, and the United States Supreme Court from 1789-1795. In 1800 he was governor of New York.

After losing the election in 1800, outgoing president John Adams did all he could to derail president elect Thomas Jefferson. Adams began packing the court with Federalists, including appointing Jay Chief Justice. The appointment quickly made its way through the Senate and Jay was confirmed before he was even notified of the appointment. Very few people, Adams included, thought Jay would accept the post.

In the future administration of our country, the firmest security we can have against the effects of visionary schemes or fluctuating theories, will be in a solid judiciary; . . . You have now a great opportunity to render a most signal service to your country. I therefore pray you most earnestly to consider it seriously, and accept it.

John Adams to John Jay, December 19, 1800

Jay turned down the position as expected, which led to the appointment of John Marshall as Chief Justice.



Election of 1800

The election of 1800 was closely watched and could potentially change the political party in power. John Adams, a Federalist, was running for reelection and was being challenged by Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr for the Democratic-Republicans.

When the New York State elections in April had concluded, the Republicans had won a majority in the state assembly. It was thought that they would then select Republican presidential electorates, thus insuring that the Presidential election would go to Jefferson. Looking for a way to prevent this, Alexander Hamilton proposed that New York governor John Jay call a special session of the existing legislature, which still had a Federalist majority, to pass a law changing the way the state selected presidential electors. Jay refused his request.

All the votes are now come in except Vermont & Kentucky, and there is no doubt that the result is a perfect parity between the two republican characters. the Feds appear determined to prevent an election, & to pass a bill giving the government to mr Jay, appointed Chief justice, or to Marshall as Secy. of state.

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison,
December 26, 1800

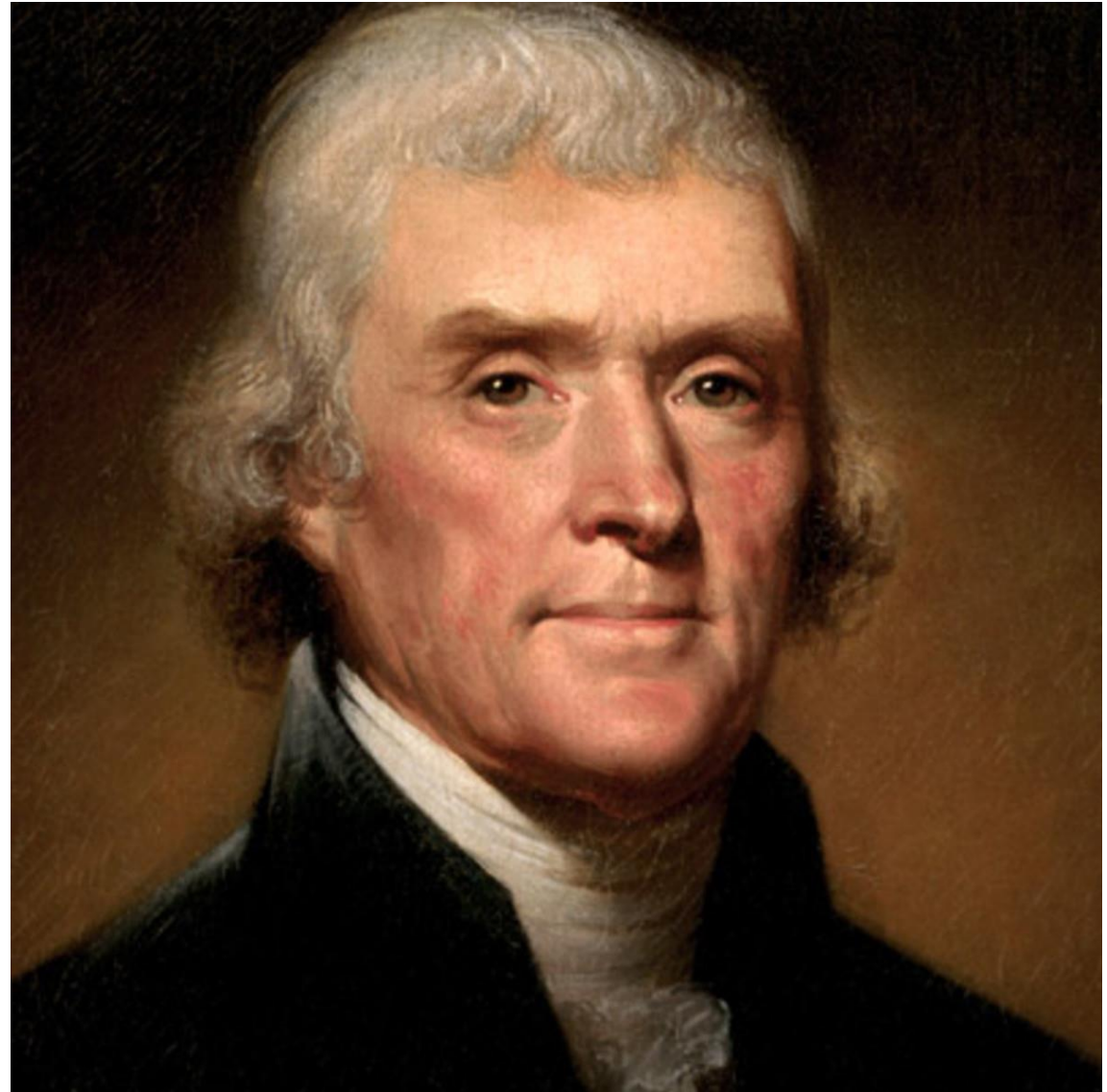
Election of 1800

After the election of 1800 concluded, both Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr had received 73 electoral votes. Each man had run as a Democratic-Republican. In the event of a tie, The House of Representatives decided the new president. It was the outgoing House of Representatives, controlled by the Federalist Party, that was charged with making this decision.

In February 1801, the members of the House of Representatives balloted as states to determine whether Jefferson or Burr would become president. There were sixteen states, each with one vote; an absolute majority of nine was required for victory.

Over the course of seven days, from February 11-17 the House cast a total of 35 ballots, with Jefferson receiving the votes of eight state delegations each time, falling just one short of the necessary majority of nine each time.

It was not until Alexander Hamilton embarked on a furious letter writing campaign supporting Jefferson over Burr that several representatives changed their votes. On the 36th vote, Jefferson was elected president.





Retirement

When Jay and Jefferson retired from public life, they both became gentleman farmers. Exemplifying the ideals of Cincinnatus, they served their country and then returned to their farms.

John Jay had looked forward to retiring for years; he lived a life of rural retreat, and spent his last years with his family.

Jefferson established the University of Virginia, expanded Monticello, and kept up a rigorous correspondence after his presidency. Jefferson died in 1826, Jay in 1829.