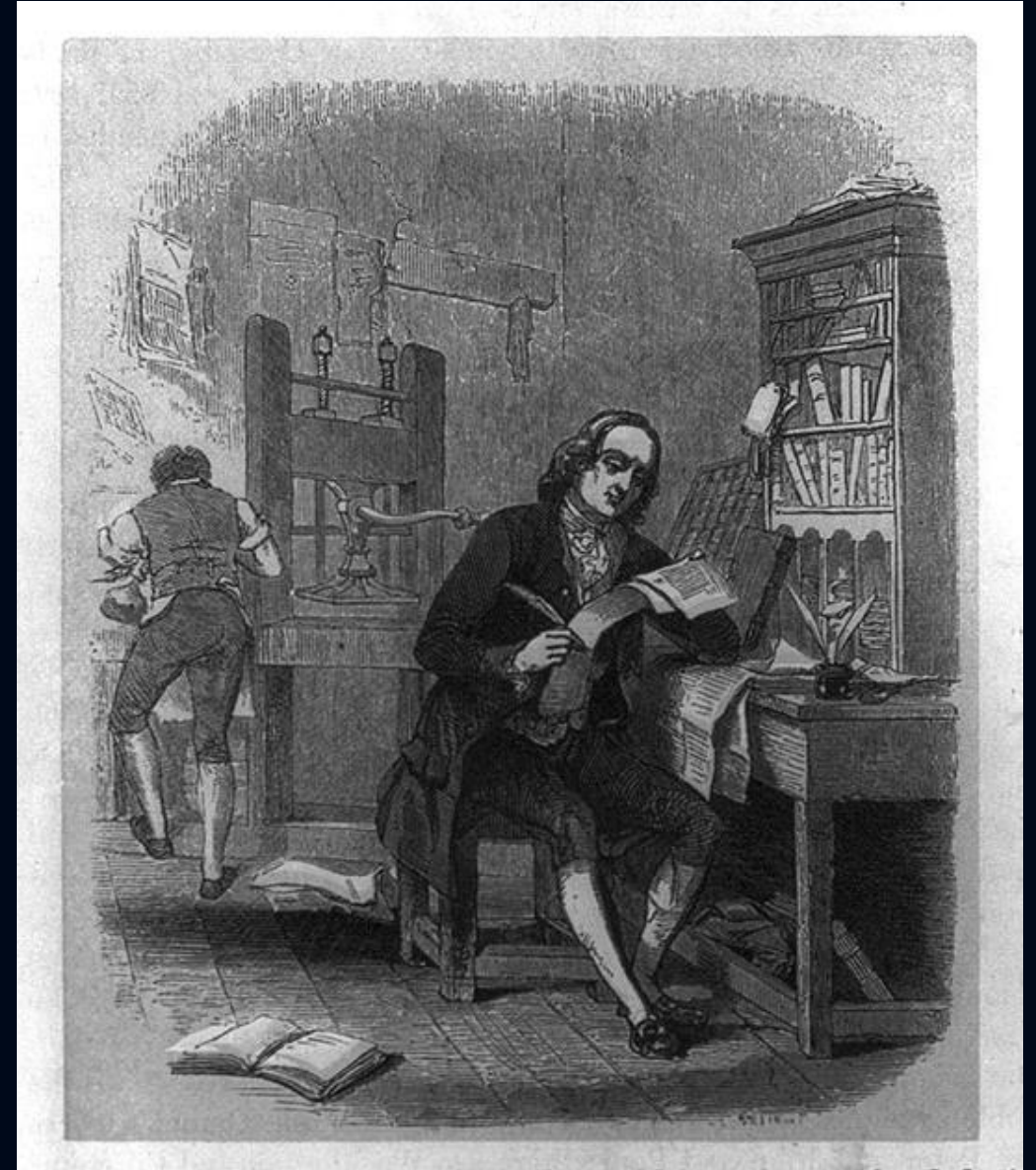


John Jay and Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin was born in 1706 in Boston to a lower-class family and was the 15th out of 17 children. Franklin never received a formal education past the age of 10. He became a printer's apprentice and eventually moved to Philadelphia at the age of 17 to continue his trade.





John Jay was born in 1745 in New York to a moderately wealthy family and was the 8th of 10 children. He received a good education and was taught by tutors before attending King's College at the age of 14. After graduating, he became a successful lawyer.



Huguenot Cross

John Jay and Benjamin Franklin both descended from ancestors who came to America seeking religious freedom. Jay's ancestors were French Huguenots while Franklin's family were Puritans. The stories of their ancestor's religious persecution had a huge impact on both men and is reflected in many of their beliefs.



John Jay's grandfather, Augustus Jay, was a French Huguenot who came to America in the 1680s. Augustus and his family had to leave France in order to flee the religious persecution of Huguenots after the King of France revoked the Edict of Nantes.

The Edict had protected French Protestants from religious persecution in the heavily Catholic country and without it, Huguenots were no longer safe in France.

The oppression and pursuit of religious freedom that his ancestors endured had a lasting effect on Jay and his beliefs. He strongly believed that there should not be a national religion and that it was important to enforce a strong separation between religion and government.

Benjamin Franklin was born into a Puritan family. His father, Josiah Franklin was a staunch puritan who emigrated to America in 1683, fleeing religious persecution in England. His mother, Abiah Folger was a descendant of Flemish Protestants who originally fled to England in the 1500s and later moved to Boston in 1653.

As a child, Franklin was baptized in and attended a Puritan Church in Boston. Even though Franklin identified as a Deist when he was older, he retained a lifelong commitment to the Puritan virtues and political values he had grown up with.

“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.” –Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin entered into a common law marriage with Deborah Read in 1730.

Deborah's husband had abandoned her shortly after their marriage. Because his whereabouts were unknown, Deborah could not remarry.

Benjamin and Deborah had two children together and raised Franklin's son from a previous relationship.

Deborah feared the sea and never traveled with Ben. As a result, they spent over twenty years of their forty-four year marriage apart while Ben was in Europe.





John Jay married Sarah Livingston in 1774.

Sarah traveled with John to Europe from 1779-1784 and was a constant presence during his political career. The couple had six children; with five of them living to adulthood.



The ROYAL PALACE at MADRID the Capital of SPAIN

Franklin and Jay both served as diplomats during the American Revolution. Franklin spent many years representing America's interests abroad; first in England, prior to the Declaration of Independence, and then in France from 1779 to 1785.

Jay was sent to Spain in 1780 as Minister Plenipotentiary, in hopes of getting financial support from the Spanish government.

However, his trip did not go well. The Spanish government never refused to recognize him as a representative from a legitimate foreign nation.

The cost of living in Spain was high and having little success, Jay began to struggle financially. He wrote to Franklin on a few occasions asking for help paying the bills that the mission was incurring. It was during their time abroad and through these letters that Jay and Franklin began to form a relationship.

While the Jays were in Spain in 1780, Sarah Jay requested a print of Franklin that had recently been produced. John commented,

“I believe there is no man of your age in Europe so much a favourite with the ladies.”

-John Jay to Benjamin Franklin, April 27, 1780



Franklin's response was to send five or six copies of the print for Sarah to choose from.

Sarah Jay's chosen copy of the Franklin print still hangs in Bedford House today.

In April 1781, at the age of 75, Franklin wrote Congress requesting that he be able to retire from his diplomatic duties. He suggested that Jay replace him in France. Jay disagreed and felt that Franklin's letters "*bear no mark of age*".

Congress left Franklin in place, but named Jay, John Adams, Henry Laurens and Thomas Jefferson peace commissioners to assist with the negotiations.





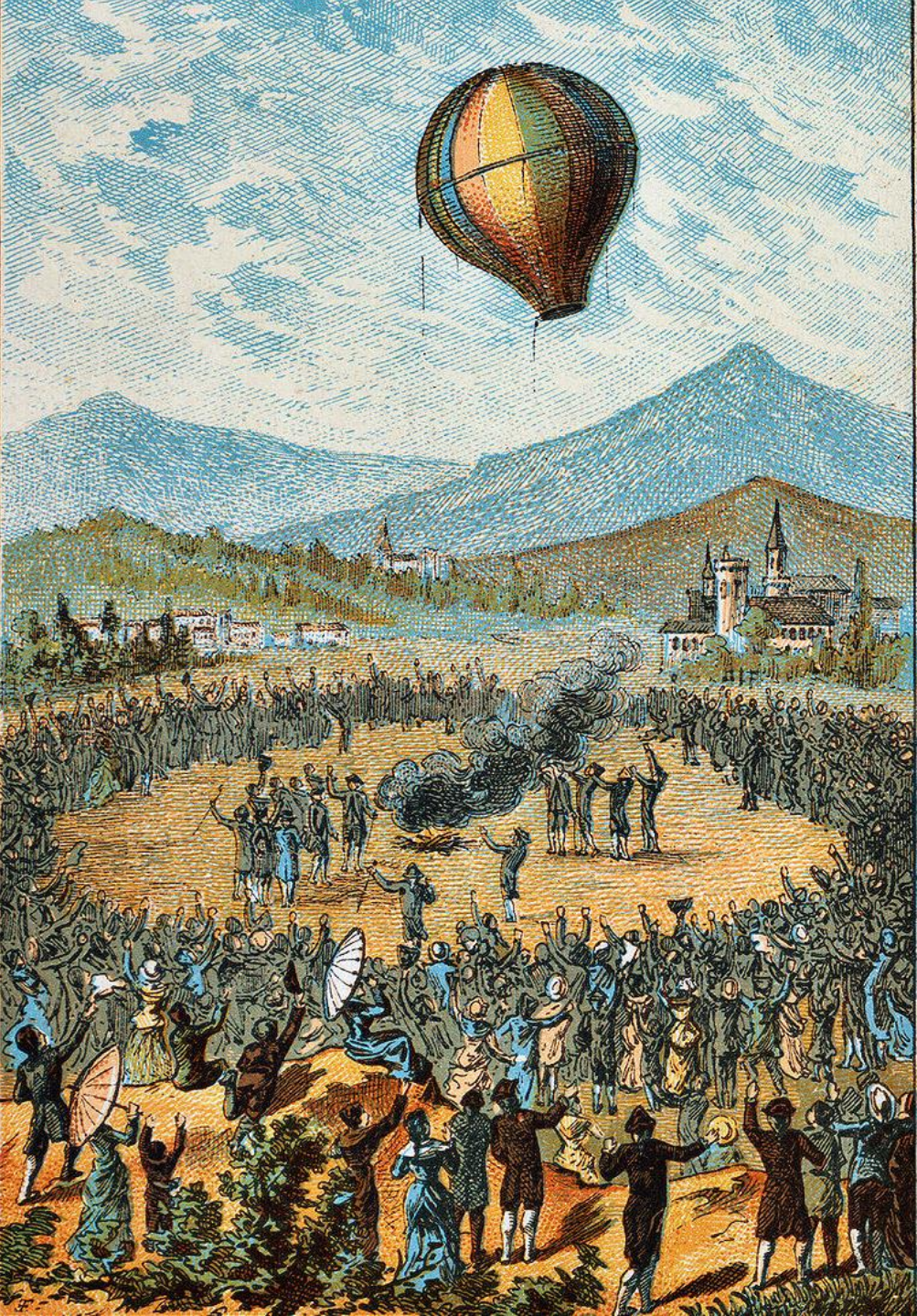
The following year, Franklin requested Jay come to France in order to begin peace negotiations with Britain. Congress had ordered the commissioners to include France in negotiations due to their support during the war. However, Jay felt strongly that they should deal directly with Britain, excluding France from any negotiations. Franklin and Adams agreed. The three men were also adamant that England needed to recognize the United States as its own country for any negotiations to occur.

The Preliminary Articles of Peace were signed on November 30, 1782, with the Treaty of Paris being signed 10 months later.

Jay and Franklin's relationship grew closer while the two were working together in France.

In the spring of 1783, the Jays moved from Paris to Franklin's home in Passy for the summer, where they enjoyed the fresh air and relaxed atmosphere of the French countryside.

During their stay at Franklin's home, John's wife Sarah gave birth to their daughter, Nancy. Sarah and their three-year-old daughter, Maria, both had great affection for Franklin.



When they returned to Paris that fall, the Jays would often dine and attend social events with Franklin and his grandson. In November of 1783, Sarah Jay and the Franklins witnessed the first manned hot air balloon flight over Paris.

Both Sarah and Benjamin wrote about attending such an extraordinary event.

When the Jays returned to New York and Franklin returned to Philadelphia, they made it a point to keep in touch. Franklin wrote to Jay,

“I am now so well as to think it possible that I may once more have the pleasure of seeing you both, perhaps at New York, with my dear young friend, who I hope may not have quite forgotten me.”

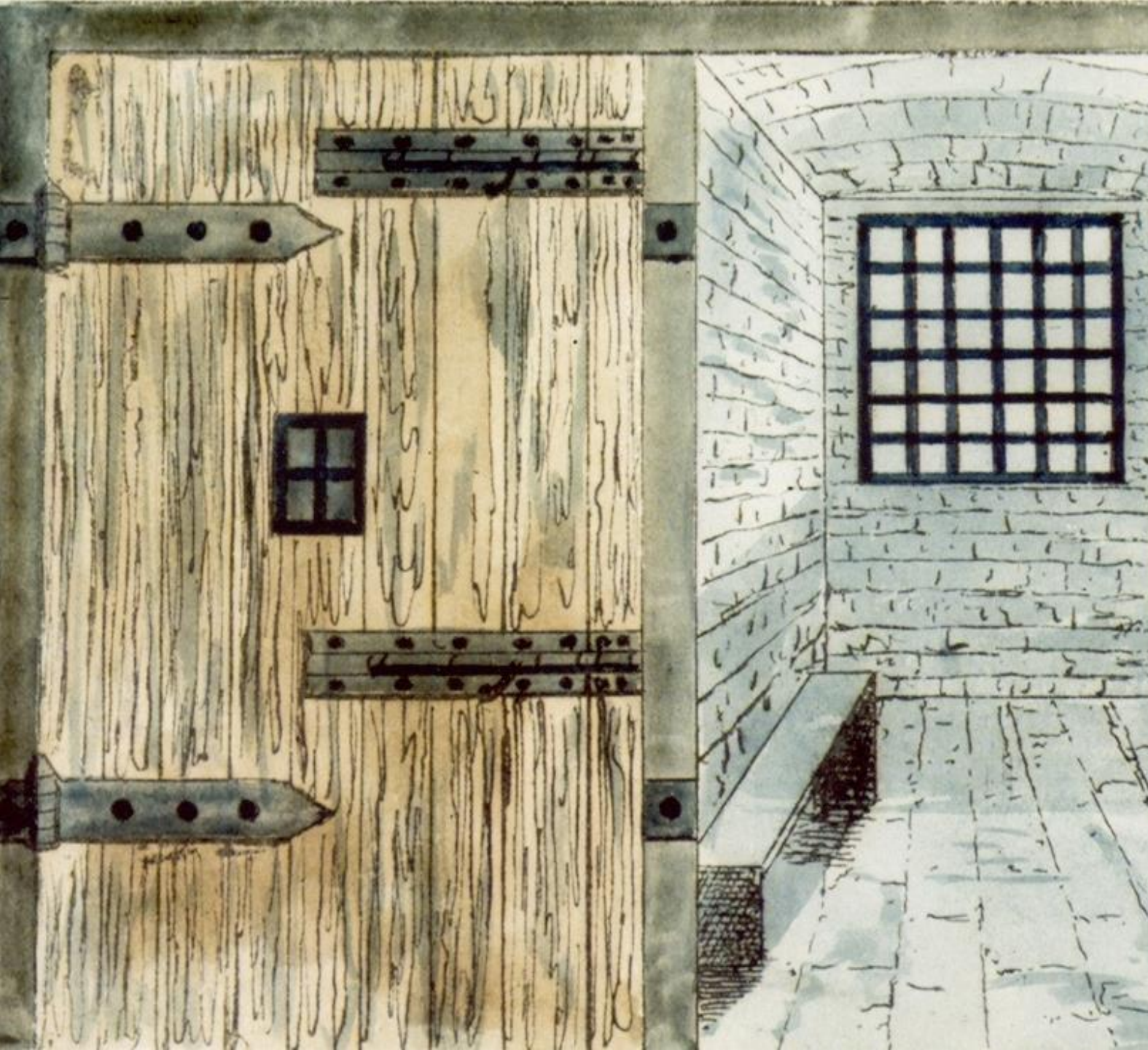
-Benjamin Franklin to John Jay, September 21, 1785

Note: Franklin is referring to Maria Jay as his “dear young friend”.

Both Jay and Franklin were slave owners for the majority of their lives. While they advocated for legislation to end slavery, they also took no issue with enslaving people themselves.

While Sarah Jay was staying at Franklin's home, a woman named Abbe, who was enslaved by the Jays, ran away. Abbe had been promised paid work in Paris and since slavery was illegal in France, there was no legal recourse for her running away.

However, Benjamin Franklin used his influence to have her arrested. Sarah Jay pleaded with Abbe to return home, but she refused.



John was in England during this time but was kept informed of the issues. In November Sarah writes:

“Dr. Franklin thinks I ought not to take notice of her for 15 or 20 days; but I am so afraid of her suffering from the cold.”

Sarah was able to convince Abbe to return after a few months in jail where she had become very ill. Unfortunately, Abbe died in mid-December.

While both Jay and Franklin were saddened by Abbe's death, they struggled to understand why she had run away.

Franklin returned to Philadelphia in 1785, at the age of 79. Upon his arrival he soon wrote to John and Sarah stating that he was well and hoped to visit them in New York. John replied:

“We are happy to find that you think of visiting New York.... Mrs. Jay is exceedingly pleased with this idea, and sincerely joins me in wishing to see it realized. Her attachments are strong, and that to you, being founded in esteem and the recollection of kind offices, is particularly so.”

-John Jay to Benjamin Franklin, October 4, 1785



That same year, Franklin was elected President of Pennsylvania (similar to a modern-day Governor), and served three, one-year terms. Both Jay and Franklin supported a constitution and a strong federal government. Franklin served as the host of the 1787 Constitutional Convention, acting in an honorary capacity but did not participate in the debates. At 81, he was the oldest member of the convention.

THE
FEDERALIST:

A COLLECTION OF
ESSAYS,

WRITTEN IN FAVOUR OF THE

NEW CONSTITUTION,

AS AGREED UPON BY THE
FEDERAL CONVENTION,

SEPTEMBER 17, 1787.

—♦—♦—♦—♦—♦—
IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.
—♦—♦—♦—♦—♦—

While Jay was not a delegate at the convention, he wrote *The Federalist Papers* along with Alexander Hamilton and James Madison in hopes of encouraging the citizens of New York to ratify the Constitution. Jay also wrote an *Address to the People of the State of New York*, which was an essay asking a number of questions about how New York State would function if they did not ratify the Constitution.

The essay was unsigned, and many wondered who had written it. Franklin read the essay in a Philadelphia paper and immediately recognized the style of writing as belonging to his old friend John Jay.

Franklin encouraged Jay to put his name on, confident that it would carry more weight if the public knew he was the author. Jay respectfully declined.

When Franklin died in 1790, Jay was one of four executors of his estate. This arrangement had been in place since at least 1786 based on a letter Franklin wrote to Jay:

“On a review of my affairs since my return I think it proper to make some changes in the disposition of my will. Having no other copy on this side the water but that in your possession, I wish you to send it to me.”

-Benjamin Franklin to John Jay, August 24, 1786