

Was John Jay a City Slicker or a Country Boy?



Throughout his life John Jay moved back and forth between living in the countryside and living in a city.

During his childhood John's father made the decision to move the Jay family to Rye, New York (at that time considered the country) due to a disease epidemic that was sweeping through New York City.

This was a wise decision. In cities people live very close together which helps disease spread more quickly. There are also higher levels of waste in cities with less free space to put it. This pollutes the air people breath and the water they drink.

As the governor of New York, John Jay lived in New York City and then Albany.

In colonial times cities were a good location for government offices because information could spread quickly between the members of the government.

This was before the invention of the telephone and if members of the government were living spread out in the countryside it could take days for messages to go back and forth. Living close to each other in a city allowed government officials to send messages more quickly and meet together more often.



When John Jay retired, he moved to a part of the countryside called Bedford.



John's life on his farm in Bedford was much different than when he lived in the city. There were no longer bakers, blacksmiths, tailors and fishermen right down the road. Instead of buying soap from a local store, Jay's servants would have to make soap.

If something was needed that could not be made at the farm, it would be shipped up the Hudson River from New York City to Ossining. The shipment would then travel by carriage from Ossining to Jay's farm in Bedford.



Activity: Imagine you live on John Jay's farm in the 1800s.

You want to bake an apple pie. What ingredients do you have on your farm? What would need to be shipped?

What do you have at your farm that people in the city would have to buy at the store?

Where would you rather live in the 1800s, the country or the city? Why?