

Who was John Jay and why is he important?

John Jay was one of America's founding fathers, just like George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. During his life, Jay was a lawyer, diplomat, the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court and a governor of New York.

He was born in New York City in 1745 into a well-to-do family. Jay grew up on the family farm in the town of Rye in Westchester and was sent to King's College when he was 14. After graduation he worked as an apprentice in a law office.

In 1774, John married Sarah Livingston, the same year he was elected to the Continental Congress, which had organized to protest Britain's taxes on products used in the American colonies.

Angry that Britain would not listen to the colonists complaints, John Jay became a Patriot.

When the American Revolution began John and his wife Sarah traveled to Spain to try and raise money to help the colonists.

In America the British surrendered at the battle of Yorktown and John Jay traveled from Spain to Paris in order to help negotiate the treaty which ended the Revolutionary War.

When the Jays returned to the United States, John supported a new Constitution that created the government we have today. He wrote essays called the Federalist papers to convince New Yorkers to ratify the Constitution.

The Constitution was ratified in 1789 and George Washington appointed John Jay to be the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court.

In 1794 John Jay was sent by President George Washington to Britain to negotiate a treaty that would solve the problems that had not been fixed when the American Revolution had ended.

Americans disliked the Jay Treaty because they felt that it was more favorable to Britain. Today historians think that the Jay Treaty prevented a war that the new American nation would not have been ready to fight.

After returning to America John Jay became the Governor of New York. In 1801, Jay retired to his farm in Bedford with his wife and three of their five children. John died in 1829 and was buried in the family cemetery in Rye, New York.