

= John Adams =

John Adams ( October 30 [ O.S. October 19 ] 1735 ? July 4 , 1826 ) was an American lawyer , author , statesman , and diplomat . He served as the second President of the United States ( 1797 ? 1801 ) , the first Vice President ( 1789 ? 97 ) , and as a Founding Father was a leader of American independence from Great Britain . Adams was a political theorist in the Age of Enlightenment who promoted republicanism and a strong central government . His innovative ideas were frequently published . He was also a dedicated diarist and correspondent , particularly with his wife and key advisor Abigail .

He collaborated with his cousin , revolutionary leader Samuel Adams , but he established his own prominence prior to the American Revolution . After the Boston Massacre , despite severe local anti @-@ British sentiment , he provided a successful though unpopular legal defense of the accused British soldiers , driven by his devotion to the right to counsel and the " protect [ ion ] of innocence " . As a delegate from Massachusetts to the Continental Congress , Adams played a leading role in persuading Congress to declare independence . He assisted Thomas Jefferson in drafting the Declaration of Independence in 1776 , and was its foremost advocate in the Congress . As a diplomat in Europe , he helped negotiate the eventual peace treaty with Great Britain , and acquired vital governmental loans from Amsterdam bankers . Adams was the primary author of the Massachusetts Constitution in 1780 which influenced American political theory , as did his earlier Thoughts on Government ( 1776 ) .

Adams ' credentials as a revolutionary secured for him two terms as President George Washington 's vice president ( 1789 to 1797 ) and also his own election in 1796 as the second president . In his single term as president , he encountered fierce criticism from the Jeffersonian Republicans , as well as the dominant faction 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 face of an undeclared naval " Quasi @-@ War " with France . The major accomplishment of his presidency was a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the face of Hamilton 's opposition . Due to his strong posture on defense , Adams is " often called the father of the American Navy " . He was the first U.S. president to reside in the executive mansion , now known as the White House .

In 1800 , Adams lost re @-@ election to Thomas Jefferson , and retired to Massachusetts . He eventually resumed his friendship with Jefferson upon the latter 's own retirement by initiating a correspondence which lasted fourteen years . He and his wife established a family of politicians , diplomats , and historians now referred to as the Adams political family . Adams was the father of John Quincy Adams , the sixth President of the United States . He died on the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence . Modern historians in the aggregate have ranked his administration favorably .

= = Early life and education = =

= = = Childhood = = =

John Adams was born on October 30 , 1735 ( October 19 , 1735 Old Style , Julian calendar ) , to John Adams Sr. ( 1691 ? 1761 ) and Susanna Boylston ( 1708 ? 1797 ) . He had two younger brothers , Peter and Elihu . Adams ' birthplace was then in Braintree , Massachusetts ( now Quincy , Massachusetts ) , and is preserved at Adams National Historical Park . Adams ' mother was from a leading medical family of current Brookline , Massachusetts . His father was a Congregationalist deacon , a farmer , a cordwainer , and a lieutenant in the militia . He further served as a selectman ( town councilman ) and supervised the building of schools and roads . Adams often praised his father and recalled their close relationship . His paternal great @-@ grandfather David Adams was born and bred at " Fferm Penybanc " , Llanboidy , Carmarthenshire , North Wales . He emigrated from Wales in 1675 and sixty years later his great @-@ grandson , John Adams , was born .

Though raised in modest surroundings , Adams felt an acute responsibility to live up to his family 's

heritage of reverence . He was a direct descendent of Puritans , who came to the American wilderness in the 1630s , established a colonial presence in America , and profoundly affected the culture , laws , and traditions of their region . Journalist Richard Brookhiser wrote that Adams ' Puritan ancestors " believed they lived in the Bible . England under the Stuarts was Egypt ; they were Israel fleeing ... to establish a refuge for godliness , a city upon a hill . " By the time of John Adams ' birth in 1735 , Puritan tenets such as predestination were no longer as widely accepted , and many of their stricter practices had moderated with time , but Adams " considered them bearers of freedom , a cause that still had a holy urgency . " It was a value system he believed in and wished to live up to . Adams emphatically recalled that his parents , " held every Species of Libertinage in ... Contempt and horror , " and portrayed " pictures of disgrace , or baseness and of Ruin " from any debauchery .

Adams , as the eldest child , was under a mandate from his parents to obtain a formal education . This began at age six at a Dame school for boys and girls , which was conducted at a teacher 's home , and 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 ' reflections on early education were in the negative mostly , including incidents of truancy , a dislike for his master and a desire to become a farmer . All questions on the matter ended when his father commanded that he remain in school saying , " You shall comply with my desires . " Deacon Adams also retained a new school master , Joseph Marsh , and his son responded positively .

= = = College education and adulthood = = =

At age sixteen , Adams entered Harvard College in 1751 . He took all his courses under the tutorship of Joseph Mayhew who administered his entrance exam . He did not share his father 's expectation that he become a minister . After graduating in 1755 with an A.B. degree , he taught school for a few years in Worcester , Massachusetts while pondering his permanent vocation . In the next four years he discerned a passion for prestige , saying that he craved " Honour or Reputation " and " more defference from [ his ] fellows " ; and at age twenty @-@ one he was determined to become " 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 . " Doctrinally , he later became a Unitarian , and dropped belief in predestination , eternal damnation , the divinity of Christ and most other Calvinist beliefs of his Puritan ancestors . Nevertheless , his remnant Puritanism frequently prompted reservations about his hunger for fame , which he once referred to as mere " trumpery " , and he questioned his not properly attending to the " happiness of [ his ] fellow men . "

The French and Indian War began in 1754 and Adams began to struggle with the issue of a young man 's responsibility in the conflict ; contemporaries of his social position were largely spectators , while those who were less solvent joined the battle as a means to make some money . Adams later said , " I longed more ardently to be a Soldier than I ever did to be a Lawyer . " He was acutely aware that he was the first in his family that " degenerated from the virtues of the house so far as not to have been an officer in the militia . "

= = = Law practice and marriage = = =

Adams followed the usual course of reading the law in order obtain his license to practice . In 1756 he became an apprentice in the office of John Putnam , a leading lawyer in Worcester . In 1758 , he earned an A.M. from Harvard , and was also that year admitted to the bar , having completed his studies under Putnam . From an early age , he developed the habit of writing descriptions of events and impressions of men which are scattered through his diary , which included his report of the 1761 argument of James Otis , Jr. in the Massachusetts Superior Court as to the legality of Writs of Assistance . Otis 's argument inspired Adams to the cause of the American colonies . In 1763 he had published seven essays in Boston newspapers ? treatises that represented his forging into the convoluted realm of political theory . The essays were offered anonymously , with Adams using the

nom de plume " Humphrey Ploughjogger " ; this author reappeared in the Boston Gazette in 1765 to oppose the Stamp Act . While Adams was initially not as popular as his cousin Samuel , his influence emerged through his work as a constitutional lawyer and his in @-@ depth analysis of historical examples , together with his dedication to the principles of republicanism . Even so , Adams often found his inborn contentiousness to be a constraint in his political career .

Adams married his third cousin Abigail Smith ( 1744 ? 1818 ) on October 25 , 1764 . Her parents were Elizabeth Quincy and Rev. William Smith , a Congregational minister at Weymouth , Massachusetts . They had six children ; Abigail " Nabby " in 1765 , future president John Quincy Adams in 1767 , Susanna in 1768 , Charles in 1770 , Thomas in 1772 , and Elizabeth ( who was stillborn ) in 1777 .

= = Career before the Revolution = =

= = = Opponent of Stamp Act 1765 = = =

Adams first rose to prominence leading widespread opposition to the Stamp Act of 1765 , imposed by the British Parliament without consulting the American legislatures , and requiring payment of a direct tax by the colonies for various stamped documents . Adams in 1765 authored the " Braintree Instructions " , a letter sent to the representatives of Braintree in the Massachusetts legislature , which served as a model for other towns ' instructions . In the piece he explained that the Stamp 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 only by a jury of one 's peers . The instructions were a succinct and forthright defense of colonial rights and liberties .

In August 1765 , reprising his pen name " Humphrey Ploughjogger " , he contributed four articles to the Boston Gazette ( republished in The London Chronicle in 1768 as True Sentiments of America , also known as A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law ) . He delivered a speech in December before the governor and council in which he pronounced the Stamp Act invalid on the ground that Massachusetts , being without representation in Parliament , had not given its assent to it . He later observed that many protests were sparked by an oft @-@ reprinted sermon of the Boston minister , Jonathan Mayhew , invoking Romans 13 to justify insurrection . In 1766 , a town meeting of Braintree elected John Adams as a selectman .

He moved the family to Boston in April of 1768 , renting a clapboard house on Brattle Street , a place known locally as the " White House . " He and 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 .

= = = Counsel for the British ? Boston Massacre = = =

On March 5 , 1770 , a street confrontation , known as the Boston Massacre , resulted in British soldiers killing five civilians . The accused soldiers were arrested on criminal charges and expectedly had trouble finding legal representation . Adams ultimately agreed to defend them , though he feared it would hurt his reputation . In arguing their case , Adams made his legendary statement 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 . " He also expounded upon Blackstone 's Ratio : " 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 of them who had fired directly into the crowd were charged with murder but were convicted only of manslaughter . Adams was paid a small sum by his clients .

Biographer John Ferling opines that Adams made the most of juror selection during the Voir dire stage of the trial , saying that 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 . " Indeed , Hiller B. Zobel , a scholar who has most closely studied the trial , concluded , " we can be fairly sure that before a single witness had been sworn , the outcome of the trial was certain . " Ferling also surmises that Adams was likely encouraged to take the case in exchange for political office ? when one of Boston 's seats in the Massachusetts legislature opened three months later , Adams was the town 's first choice to fill the vacancy .

His law practice increased greatly from this exposure , as did the demands on his time . In 1771 he moved Abigail and the children to Braintree , but he kept his office in Boston , saying , " I shall spend more Time in my Office than ever I did . " He also 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 . I never could in my family . " Nevertheless , after some time in the capital , he became disenchanted with the rural and " vulgar " Braintree as a home for his family . In August 1772 , therefore , Adams moved his family back to Boston . He purchased a large brick house on Queen Street , not far from his office . In 1774 , due to the increasingly unstable situation in Boston , Adams and Abigail returned the family to the farm , and Braintree remained their permanent Massachusetts home .

= = = Objections to British Parliament 's authority = = =

Governor Thomas Hutchinson and his judges until 1772 received their salaries from the Massachusetts legislature . The Coercive Acts and the Tea Act were then passed by Parliament , and the British Crown assumed payment of those wages , drawn from customs revenues imposed upon that colony . According to biographer Ferling , the British government thus singled out Massachusetts for reprisals of previous rebellion and hoped in the process to force the other colonies into line . Boston radicals protested and asked John Adams to proclaim their objections . In " Two Replies of the Massachusetts House of Representatives to Governor Hutchinson " Adams argued that the colonists had never been under the sovereignty of Parliament . Their original charter , as well as their allegiance , was exclusively with the king . If a workable line could not be drawn between parliamentary sovereignty and the total independence of the colonies , he continued , the colonies would have no other choice but independence from England .

Adams authored *Novanglus* ; or , A History of the Dispute with America , From Its Origin , in 1754 , to the Present Time ; he repudiated the essays by Daniel Leonard which in turn defended Hutchinson 's arguments for the absolute authority of Parliament over the colonies . In *Novanglus* ( " New Englander " ) Adams gave a point @-@ by @-@ point refutation of Leonard 's essays , and then provided one of the most extensive and learned arguments made by the colonists against British imperial policy . It was a systematic attempt by Adams to describe the origins , nature , and jurisdiction of ( unwritten ) British concepts of constitutionality . Adams used his wide knowledge of English and colonial legal history to argue that the provincial legislatures were fully sovereign over their own internal affairs , and that the colonies were connected to Great Britain only through the king .

The Boston Tea Party ? a historic demonstration against the British enactments ? took place in December 1773 . The British schooner *Dartmouth* , loaded with tea to be traded subject to the new tea tax , had previously dropped anchor . By 9 : 00 PM on the night of the 16th , the work of the protesters was done ? they had demolished 342 chests of tea worth about ten thousand pounds ? today 's equivalent of about \$ 1 million . Adams was briefly retained by the *Dartmouth* owners regarding the question of their liability for the destroyed shipment . Adams applauded the destruction of the tea . There had been no choice , he thought , and he called the defiant boarding of the vessels and the quick obliteration of the dutied beverage the " grandest Event " in the history of the colonial protest movement . He wrote the following day that the destruction of the dutied tea by

the protesters had been an " absolutely and indispensably " necessary action .

John Adams vehemently supported the right of all Americans to jury trials . Adams protested the 1765 passage of the Stamp Act , which gave jurisdiction to British Vice Admiralty Courts , rather than common law courts . Many colonists , including Adams , believed these courts , which operated without a jury , were corrupt and unfair .

= = Member of Continental Congress = =

Massachusetts sent Adams to the first and second Continental Congresses in 1774 and from 1775 to 1777 respectively . The Massachusetts delegation resolved to assume a largely passive role in the first Congress . But Adams felt strongly that the conservatives of 1774 , men like Joseph Galloway and James Duane , were no different than Hutchinson and Peter Oliver , and he denigrated such men , telling Abigail that " Spiders , Toads , Snakes , are their only proper Emblems . " Yet at that point his views were similar to those of conservative John Dickinson . He sought repeal of objectionable policies , but at the early stage he continued to see positive benefits for America remaining part of the British empire .

In 1774 , as a delegate to the First Constitutional Congress , John Adams renewed his push for the right to a jury trial , stating " Representative government and trial by jury are the heart and lungs of liberty . Without them , we have no other fortification against being ridden like horses , fleeced like sheep , worked like cattle , and fed and clothed like swines and hounds . ?

By early 1775 , Adams became convinced that Congress was moving in the proper direction ? away from its relationship with Great Britain . " Reconciliation if practicable , " he said publicly , yet he agreed with Benjamin Franklin 's confidential observation that independence was inevitable . In the fall of 1775 no one in Congress labored more ardently than Adams to hasten America 's separation from Great Britain .

In June 1775 , with a view of promoting union among the colonies , he nominated George Washington of Virginia as commander @-@ in @-@ chief of the army then assembled around Boston . His influence in Congress was great , and he then argued in favor of permanent severance from Britain . In October 1775 , he was also appointed the chief judge of the Massachusetts Superior Court , but he never served , and resigned in February 1777 .

Over the next decade , Americans from every state gathered and deliberated on new governing documents , employing many of Adams ' innovative positions . Prior tradition suggested that a society 's form of government need not be codified in a single document . As radical as it was to write constitutions , what was equally profound was the revolutionary nature of American political thought as the summer of 1776 dawned .

= = Thoughts on Government = = =

A number of delegates sought Adams ' advice about forming new governments , and found his views so convincing they urged him to commit them to paper . He did so in separate letters to these colleagues , each missive a bit longer and more thoughtful . So impressed was Richard Henry Lee that , with Adams 's consent , he had the most comprehensive letter printed . Published anonymously just after mid @-@ April 1776 , it was titled simply Thoughts on Government and styled as " a Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend . " Many historians agree that none of Adams ' other compositions rivaled the enduring influence of this pamphlet .

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 also defended bicameralism , for " a single assembly is liable to all the vices , follies and frailties of an individual " . He also 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 as an authority in every state @-@ constitution writing hall .

= = = Declaration of Independence = = =

Adams in the 1776 session of Congress drafted the preamble to the Lee resolution of colleague Richard Henry Lee ( Virginia ) , which called on the colonies to adopt new independent governments . On June 7 , 1776 he seconded the resolution , which stated , " These colonies are , and of right ought to be , free and independent states . " Adams also championed the measure until it was adopted by Congress on July 2 . Once the resolution passed , independence became inevitable , though it still had to be declared formally . The commitment was , as Adams put it , " independence itself " .

A Committee of Five was charged with drafting the Declaration , and included Adams , along with Thomas Jefferson , Benjamin Franklin , Robert R. Livingston and Roger Sherman . The Committee , after discussing the general outline that the document should follow , decided that Jefferson would write the first draft . Jefferson particularly thought Adams should write the document ; but Adams persuaded the Committee to choose Jefferson while agreeing to consult with Jefferson personally . 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 . " The Committee left no minutes , and the drafting process itself is uncertain ? accounts written many years later by Jefferson and Adams , although frequently cited , are otherwise contradictory . Although the first draft was written primarily by Jefferson , Adams assumed a primary role in its completion . After editing the document further , Congress approved it on July 4 . 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 . "

= = = Government during revolution = = =

After defeating the Continental Army at the Battle of Long Island on August 27 , 1776 , British Admiral Richard Howe mistakenly assumed a strategic advantage to be at hand , and requested the Second Continental Congress send representatives in an attempt to negotiate peace . A delegation , including Adams and Benjamin Franklin , met with Howe at the Staten Island Peace Conference on September 11 . Howe 's authority was premised on the Colonists ' submission , so no common ground was to be found . When Lord Howe unhappily 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 . " Adams learned many years later that his name was on a list of people specifically excluded from Howe 's pardon @-@ granting authority . Being quite unimpressed with General Howe , and also after payments to colonial volunteers were increased , Adams in September of 1776 said about the war , " We shall do well enough . " Indeed , if Washington got his men , the British would be " ruined " .

In 1777 , Adams began serving as the head of the Board of War and Ordnance ; in fact , he sat on no less than ninety committees , chairing twenty @-@ five . No other congressman approached the assumption of such a work load . As Benjamin Rush reported , he was acknowledged " to be the first man in the House . " He was also referred to as a " one man war department " , working eighteen @-@ hour days and mastering the details of raising , equipping and fielding an army under civilian control . He also authored the " Plan of Treaties , " laying out the Congress 's requirements for the crucial treaty with France .

= = Diplomat in Europe = =

= = = Commissioner to France and Minister Plenipotentiary = = =

In the spring of 1776 Adams advocated in Congress that independence was necessary in order 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 V of Virginia and Robert Morris of Pennsylvania , " to prepare a plan of treaties to be proposed to foreign powers " . Indeed , while Jefferson was laboring over the Declaration of Independence , Adams worked on the Model Treaty .

Adams joined Franklin and Arthur Lee in 1778 as a commissioner to France , replacing Silas Deane . He sailed for France with his 10 @-@ year @-@ old son John Quincy aboard the frigate Boston early that year . The stormy trip was treacherous , with lightning injuring 19 sailors and killing one . Adams ' ship was later pursued by several British frigates in the mid @-@ Atlantic , but evaded them . Near the coast of Spain , Adams himself took up arms to help capture a heavily armed British merchantman ship , the Martha . Later , a cannon malfunction killed one and injured five more of the crew before the ship arrived in France .

Adams did not speak French , the international language of diplomacy at the time . He therefore assumed a less visible role , but emerged as the commission 's chief administrator , imposing order and methods lacking in his delegation 's finances and record @-@ keeping affairs . His first stay in Europe , between April 1 , 1778 , and June 17 , 1779 , was otherwise unremarkable , and he returned to his home in Braintree in early August 1779 . Back home , Adams became one of the founders and charter members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1780 .

In the fall of 1779 Adams was unanimously appointed a Minister Plenipotentiary , charged with negotiating a " treaty of peace , amity and commerce " with peace commissioners from Britain . Following the conclusion of the Massachusetts constitutional convention , he departed for Europe in November aboard the French frigate Sensible ? accompanied by John Quincy and 9 @-@ year @-@ old son Charles . In France , constant disagreement between Lee and Franklin eventually resulted in Adams assuming the role of tie @-@ breaker in almost all votes on commission business ; Adams also increased his usefulness by mastering the French language . In time Lee was recalled and Adams later developed his own enmity towards the older Franklin , whom the younger , more aggressive Adams felt was overly deferential to the French .

The French foreign minister , Charles Gravier disapproved of Adams , so Franklin , Thomas Jefferson , John Jay , and Henry Laurens were appointed to collaborate with Adams ; nevertheless , Jefferson did not go to Europe and Laurens was posted to the Dutch Republic . Jay , Adams , and Franklin played the major part in the final negotiations . Overruling Franklin and distrustful of Vergennes , Jay and Adams decided not to consult with France ; instead , they dealt directly with the British commissioners .

Throughout the negotiations , Adams successfully demanded that the right of the United States to the fisheries along the Atlantic coast be recognized . The American negotiators were able to secure a favorable treaty securing most lands east of the Mississippi , and the document was signed on September 3 , 1783 .

= = = Ambassador to Holland = = =

In July 1780 Adams replaced Laurens as the ambassador to the Dutch Republic , then one of the few other Republics in the world . With the aid of the Dutch Patriot leader Joan van der Capellen tot den Pol , Adams secured the recognition of the United States as an independent government at The Hague on April 19 , 1782 . In February 1782 the Frisian states was the first Dutch province to recognize the United States , while France had been the first European country to grant diplomatic recognition in 1778 . He also negotiated a loan of five million guilders financed by Nicolaas van Staphorst and Wilhelm Willink . By 1794 a total of eleven loans were granted in Amsterdam to the United States with a value of 29 million guilders . In October 1782 , he negotiated with the Dutch a

treaty of amity and commerce , the first such treaty between the United States and a foreign power following the 1778 treaty with France . The house that Adams bought during this stay in The Netherlands became the first American @-@ owned embassy on foreign soil .

In 1784 and 1785 , he was one of the architects of extensive trade relations between the United States and Prussia . The Prussian ambassador in The Hague , Friedrich Wilhelm von Thulemeyer , was involved , as were Jefferson and Franklin , who were in Paris .

= = = Ambassador to Great Britain = = =

Adams was appointed in 1785 the first American minister to the Court of St. James 's ( ambassador to Great Britain ) . When asked by a counterpart if he had any British relatives , 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 " .

During her visit to Washington to mark the bicentennial of American independence in 1976 , Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom gave historical perspective to Adam 's service : " John Adams , America 's first ambassador , said to my ancestor , King George III , that it was his desire to help with the restoration of ' the old good nature and the old good humor between our peoples . ' That restoration has long been made , and the links of language , tradition , and personal contact have maintained it " .

Adams was joined by his wife while in London ; they suffered the stares and hostility of the Court , and chose to escape it when they could by seeking out Richard Price , minister of Newington Green Unitarian Church and instigator of the Revolution Controversy .

= = Conceptions of constitutional government = =

Adams ' preoccupation with political and governmental affairs ? which caused considerable separation from his wife and children ? ironically 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 , Architecutre , Statuary , Tapestry , and Porcelaine . "

The Massachusetts Constitution of that year , to which Adams was a primary contributor , structured its government closely on his views of politics and society ; in 1779 , he drafted the document together with Samuel Adams and James Bowdoin . It was the first constitution written by a special committee , then ratified by the people ; and was also the first to feature a bicameral legislature . Included were a distinct executive ? though restrained by an executive council ? with a partial ( two @-@ thirds ) veto , and a separate judicial branch .

While in London , Adams published a work entitled A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States ( 1787 ) . In it he repudiated the views of Turgot and other European writers as to the viciousness of state government frameworks . In the book , Adams 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 ' Defence is described as an articulation of the classical republican 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 .

Wood ( 2006 ) has maintained that Adams ' 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 . Yet Wood ignored Adams ' peculiar definition of the term " republic , " and his support for a constitution ratified by the people . He also underestimated Adams ' belief in checks and balances , such as Adams ' statement that , " Power must be opposed to power , and interest to interest . " This sentiment was later echoed by James Madison 's famous statement that , " [ a ] mbition must be made to counteract ambition " , in The Federalist No. 51 , explaining the separation of powers established under the new Constitution . Adams was unsurpassed in his dedication to establishing checks and balances as a governing strategem .

On the government 's role in education Adams offered unambiguously 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 .

= = Vice Presidency = =

When Washington won the presidential election of 1789 with 69 votes in the electoral college , Adams came in second with 34 votes and became Vice President ; in that capacity , he became under the Constitution the President of the United States Senate . Due to a delay in the decision of the electoral college , Adams first presided over the Senate on April 21 . Washington was officially sworn in and gave his inaugural address on April 30 . Beyond Adams ' nominal position in the Senate ( he was allotted a vote as tie breaker when required ) , he otherwise played a minor role in the politics of the early 1790s . He was reelected Vice President in 1792 . Washington seldom asked Adams for advice on policy and legal issues during his tenure as vice president .

At the start of Washington 's administration , Adams became deeply involved in a month @-@ long Senate controversy over the official title of the President . Adams favored grandiose titles derived from British Crown tradition , such as " His Majesty the President " or " His High Mightiness , the President of the United States and Protector of Their Liberties . " Jefferson described Adams ' proposed titles as " superlatively ridiculous . " The plain " President of the United States " eventually won the debate . The perceived pomposity of his stance , along with his being overweight , led to Adams earning the nickname " His Rotundity . "

As president of the Senate , Adams cast a historic 31 tie @-@ breaking votes . He thus protected the president 's sole authority over the removal of appointees and influenced the location of the nation 's capital . But his views did not always align with Washington , who joined Franklin as the object of Adams ' ire , as shown in this quote : " The History of our Revolution will be one continued lie . . . . The essence of the whole will be that Dr. Franklin 's electrical Rod smote the Earth and out sprung General Washington . That Franklin electrized him with his Rod ? and henceforth these two conducted all the Policy , Negotiations , Legislatures and War . " On at least one occasion , he persuaded senators to vote against legislation that he opposed , and he frequently lectured the Senate on procedural and policy matters . Adams ' political views and his attempt to assume a more active role in the Senate made him a natural target for critics of the Washington administration . Toward the end of his first term , as a result of a threatened resolution that would have silenced him except for procedural and policy matters , he began to exercise more restraint . When the nation 's first two opposing political parties formed , he joined the Federalist Party , though he was consistently in opposition to its dominant leader Alexander Hamilton .

Adams ' two terms as Vice President were frustrating experiences for him . He complained to his wife Abigail , " My country has in its wisdom contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived . "

= = Presidential Election of 1796 = =

The 1796 election was the premier contest under the First Party System . Adams was the presumptive presidential nominee of the Federalist Party ; the other Federalist candidate was Thomas Pinckney , the Governor of South Carolina , considered electable as the vice @-@

president . At that time there was no formal practice of naming a vice @-@ presidential nominee ? the result was left to the electoral college in determining the vice @-@ president as the second @-@ place winner of electoral votes .

Adams ' and Pinckney 's opponents , of the Democratic @-@ Republican Party , were former Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson of Virginia , who was joined by Senator Aaron Burr of New York as the party 's second nominee . Many Federalists would have preferred Hamilton to be a candidate . Although Hamilton supported Adams , his more austere background made him somewhat resentful ; some suspected Hamilton of supporting Pinckney over Adams , though this was later demonstrated to be false ? Hamilton was more determined to defeat Jefferson . Hamilton and his supporters did however believe that Adams lacked the seriousness and popularity that had caused Washington to be successful , and feared that Adams was too vain , opinionated , unpredictable and stubborn to follow their directions . Adams vowed he would resign if elected to the second place spot of vice @-@ president under Jefferson .

Burr was the only active campaigner in the group . In keeping with the current practice , Adams stayed in his home town ( as did the others ) rather than actively campaign for the Presidency . He specifically wanted to stay out of what he called the " silly and wicked game " . His party , however , campaigned for him , while the Democratic @-@ Republicans campaigned for Jefferson . It was expected that Adams would dominate the votes in New England , while Jefferson was expected to win the Southern states . In the end , Adams won the election by a narrow margin of 71 electoral votes to 68 for Jefferson ( who became the vice president ) , including one crucial vote from Jefferson 's own Virginia and also one from North Carolina .

= = Presidency : 1797 ? 1801 = =

Adams followed Washington 's lead in using the presidency to exemplify republican values and civic virtue ; and his service was free of scandal . He continued to strengthen the central government by expanding the navy and army . In July 1798 Adams signed into law the Act for the Relief of Sick and Disabled Seamen , which authorized the establishment of a government @-@ operated marine hospital service .

Historians debate his decision to retain en masse the members of Washington 's cabinet . Many felt he was oblivious to the political danger of such a decision , 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 . " Although aware of the Hamilton factor , Adams was convinced their retention ensured a smoother succession . Adams ' economic programs maintained those of Hamilton , who indeed had regularly consulted with key cabinet members , especially the powerful Secretary of the Treasury , Oliver Wolcott , Jr . Adams was in other respects quite independent of his cabinet , often making decisions despite strong opposition from it . Such self @-@ reliance enabled him to avoid war with France , despite a strong desire among his cabinet secretaries for the conflict . The Quasi @-@ War with France resulted in the detachment from European affairs that Washington had sought . It also had psychological benefits , allowing America to view itself as holding its own against a European power .

Historian George Herring argues that Adams was the most independent @-@ minded of the founders . Though he aligned with the Federalists , he was somewhat a party unto himself , disagreeing with the Federalists as much as he did the Democratic @-@ Republicans . He was often described as " prickly " , but his tenacity was fed by good decisions made in the face of universal opposition . Adams was often combative , which diminished presidential decorum , as Adams himself 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 . " Adams ' resolve to advance peace with France , rather than to continue hostilities , especially reduced his popularity . This played an important role in his reelection defeat , however he was so pleased with the outcome that he had it engraved on his tombstone . Adams spent much of his term at home in Massachusetts , ignoring the details of political patronage nursed by other office holders .

= = = Quasi @-@ War and peace with France = = =

The president 's term was marked by disputes concerning the country 's role , if any , in the expanding conflict in Europe , where Britain and France were at war . Hamilton and the Federalists supported Britain , while Jefferson and the Democratic @-@ Republicans favored France . The French had supported Jefferson for president and became even more belligerent at his loss . When Adams entered office , he decided to continue Washington 's policy of staying out of the European war . The intense battle over the Jay Treaty in 1795 had previously polarized politics throughout the nation . The French saw America as Britain 's junior partner and began seizing American merchant ships that were trading with the British . Nevertheless , most Americans were initially pro @-@ French due to France 's assistance during the Revolutionary War , and would not have sufficiently rallied behind anyone to stop France .

Sentiments changed with the XYZ Affair , in which the French demanded huge bribes before any discussions could begin regarding American complaints ; this substantially weakened popular American support of France . The pro @-@ French Jeffersonians lost support and quickly became the minority as many began to demand full @-@ scale war . The affair heightened fears of sedition by the administration 's opponents and legislation was introduced in response . The president knew that America would be unable to win a conflict , as France at the time was dominating the fight in most of Europe . Adams therefore pursued a strategy whereby American ships harassed French ships in an effort sufficient to stem the French assaults on American interests . This was the undeclared naval war between the U.S. and France ? the Quasi @-@ War which broke out in 1798 .

There was danger of invasion from the more powerful French forces , so Adams and the Federalist congress built up the army , bringing back Washington as its commander . Washington wanted Hamilton to be his second @-@ in @-@ command and Adams reluctantly accommodated . It became apparent that Hamilton was truly in charge due to Washington 's advanced years . The angered president remarked at the time , " Hamilton I know to be a proud Spirited , conceited , aspiring Mortal always pretending to Morality , " he wrote , but " with as debauched Morals as old Franklin who is more his Model than anyone I know . "

Adams also rebuilt the Navy , adding six fast , powerful frigates , most notably the USS Constitution . To pay for the military buildup , Congress imposed new taxes on property : the Direct Tax of 1798 . It was the first ( and last ) such federal tax . Taxpayers were angered , especially in southeast Pennsylvania , where the bloodless Fries 's Rebellion broke out among rural German @-@ speaking farmers who protested what they saw as a threat to their republican liberties and to their churches .

Hamilton assumed control in the War department , and the rift between Adams ' and Hamilton 's supporters widened . Many sought to vest Hamilton with command authority over the army , and they also resisted giving prominent Democratic @-@ Republicans positions in the army , which Adams wanted to do in order to gain bipartisan support . By building a large standing army , Hamilton 's supporters raised popular alarms and played into the hands of the Democratic @-@ Republicans . They also alienated Adams and his large personal following . They shortsightedly viewed the Federalist party as their own tool and ignored the need to pull together the entire nation in the face of war with France . Overall , however , patriotic sentiments and a series of naval victories , popularized the war as well as the president .

In February 1799 , Adams surprised many by sending diplomat William Vans Murray on a peace mission to France . Napoleon , realizing that the conflict was pointless , signaled his readiness for friendly relations . At the Convention of 1800 the Treaty of Alliance of 1778 was superseded and the United States was then free of foreign entanglements , as Washington had advised in his farewell address . Adams brought in John Marshall as Secretary of State and demobilized the emergency army . Adams proudly avoided war , but deeply split his party in the process .

= = = Alien and Sedition Acts = = =

Despite the discredit of the XYZ Affair , the Democratic @-@ Republicans ' opposition persisted . In the midst of war , which included the reign of terror during the French Revolution , political tensions were incendiary . Some pro @-@ French Democratic @-@ Republicans even fostered a movement in America , similar to the French Revolution , to overthrow the Federalists . When Democratic @-@ Republicans in some states refused to enforce federal laws , some Federalists voiced the intention to send in an army and force them to capitulate . As the hostility sweeping Europe bled over into America , calls for secession began to reach new heights . Some Federalists accused the French and their associated immigrants of provoking civil unrest . In an attempt to quell the uprising , 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 1798 .

Congress specifically passed four measures ? the Naturalization Act , the Alien Friends Act , the Alien Enemies Act and the Sedition Act . These statutes were designed to mitigate the threat of secessionists by disallowing their most extreme firebrands . The Naturalization Act increased to 14 years the period of residence required for an immigrant to attain American citizenship ( naturalized citizens tended to vote for the Democratic @-@ Republicans . ) The Alien Friends Act and the Alien Enemies Act allowed the president to deport any foreigner ( from friendly and hostile nations , respectively ) which he considered dangerous to the country . The Sedition Act made it a crime to publish " false , scandalous , and malicious writing " against the government or its officials . Punishments included 2 ? 5 years in prison and fines of up to \$ 5 @, @ 000 . Although Adams had not promoted any of these acts , he signed them into law .

The acts became controversial from prosecution thereunder of a Congressman and a number of newspaper editors . Indeed , the Federalist administration initiated fourteen or more indictments under the Sedition Act , as well as suits against five of the six most prominent Democratic @-@ 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 ? timing that hardly appeared coincidental , according to biographer Ferling . 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 Democratic @-@ Republicans . However , other historians have emphasized that the Acts were employed for political targeting from the outset , causing many aliens to leave the country . The Acts as well allowed for prosecution of many who opposed the Federalists , even on the floor of Congress . In any case , the election of 1800 in fact became a bitter and volatile contest , with each side expressing extraordinary fear of the other and its policies ; after Democratic @-@ Republicans prevailed in the elections of 1800 , they used the acts against Federalists before the laws finally expired .

= = = Election of 1800 = = =

The death of Washington in 1799 weakened the Federalists , as they lost the one man who united the party . In the presidential election of 1800 , Adams and his fellow Federalist candidate , Charles Cotesworth Pinckney , opposed the Republican ticket of Jefferson and Burr . Hamilton tried his hardest to sabotage Adams ' campaign in the hope of boosting Pinckney 's chances of winning the presidency . In the end , Adams lost narrowly to Jefferson by 65 to 73 electoral votes , with New York providing the decisive margin .

Adams ' defeat resulted from 1 ) the stronger organization of the Democratic @-@ Republicans , 2 ) Federalist disunity , 3 ) the controversy of the Alien and Sedition Acts , 4 ) the popularity of Jefferson in the south and 5 ) the effective politicking of Aaron Burr in New York State , where the legislature shifted from Federalist to Democratic @-@ Republican on the basis of a few wards in New York City controlled by Burr 's machine .

In the closing months of his term Adams became the first president to occupy the new , but unfinished President 's Mansion ( later known as the White House ) beginning November 1 , 1800 . " I pray Heaven to bestow the best of Blessings on this House and all that shall hereafter inhabit it , "

Adams wrote on his second night in the mansion . " May none but honest and wise Men ever rule under this roof . "

After his defeat in the hotly contested election , Adams was depressed when he left office . His son Charles had also recently died from alcoholism , and he was anxious to rejoin his wife Abigail , who had left for Massachusetts months before the inauguration . As a result , he did not attend Jefferson 's inauguration , departing the White House at 4 : 00 a.m. that day , and making him one of only four presidents surviving in office not to attend his successor 's inauguration . Adams ' correspondence with Jefferson at the time is not indicative of the animosity and resentment that scholars have attributed to him .

= = = Administration and cabinet = = =

= = = Judicial appointments = = =

= = = = Supreme court = = = =

Adams named John Marshall as the fourth Chief Justice of the United States to succeed Oliver Ellsworth , who had retired due to ill health . Marshall 's long tenure represents the most lasting influence of the Federalists , as he infused the Constitution with a judicious and carefully reasoned nationalistic interpretation and established the Judicial Branch as the equal of the Executive and Legislative branches .

= = = = Other judicial appointments = = = =

The lame @-@ duck session of Congress in late 1800 enacted the Judiciary Act of 1801 , which created a set of federal appeals courts between the district courts and the Supreme Court . The purpose of the statute was twofold ? first , to remedy the defects in the federal judicial system inherent in the Judiciary Act of 1789 , and second , to enable the defeated Federalists to staff the new judicial offices with loyal Federalists in the face of the party 's defeat in 1800 ? the party had lost control of both houses of congress in addition to the White House . Adams filled the vacancies created in this statute by appointing a series of judges , whom his opponents called the " Midnight Judges " because most of them were appointed just days before his presidential term expired . Most of these judges lost their posts when the Jeffersonian Republicans enacted the Judiciary Act of 1802 , abolishing the courts created by the Judiciary Act of 1801 and returning the federal courts to their original structure as specified in the 1789 statute .

= = Retirement = =

Adams resumed farming at his home Peacefield in the town of Quincy ; he also began work on an autobiography ( which he never finished ) and resumed correspondence with such old friends as Benjamin Waterhouse and Benjamin Rush .

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 an 1800 pamphlet by Hamilton which attacked his conduct and character . Though Hamilton had died in 1804 in a duel with Aaron Burr , Adams felt the need to vindicate his character against the New Yorker 's vehement charges .

The years of retirement in the Adams ' household were not without some temporary financial adversity ; in 1803 the bank holding his cash reserves of about \$ 13 @,@ 000 collapsed . Son John Quincy came to the rescue by purchasing from him his properties in Weymouth and Quincy , including Peacefield , for the sum of \$ 12 @,@ 800 .

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 . His wife Abigail died of typhoid on October 28 , 1818 . His son Thomas and wife Ann , along with seven children , lived with Adams to the end of Adams ' life , as well as Louisa Smith ( Abigail 's niece by her brother William ) . Sixteen months before John Adams ' death , his son , John Quincy Adams , became the sixth president of the United States in 1825 , the only son to succeed his father as President until George W. Bush in 2001 .

= = Correspondence with Jefferson = =

In early 1812 , Adams reconciled with Jefferson . 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 the other . On New Year 's Day Adams sent a brief , friendly note to Jefferson to accompany the delivery of " two pieces of homespun , " 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 . 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 ? " 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 true wisdom and virtue . That being the way of nature , he thought such " talents " were natural . A good government , therefore , had to account for that reality .

= = Death = =

Less than a month before his death , Adams issued a statement about the destiny of the United States , which historians such as Joy Hakim have 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 . "

On July 4 , 1826 , the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence , Adams died at his home in Quincy , at approximately 6 : 20 PM . Jefferson died earlier the same day . Adams ' crypt lies at United First Parish Church in Quincy , Massachusetts , with his wife Abigail and son John Quincy Adams . When Adams died , his last words included an acknowledgement of his longtime friend and rival : " Thomas Jefferson survives " , though Adams was unaware that Jefferson had died several hours before .

= = Political philosophy and views = =

### == Slavery ==

Adams never bought a slave and declined on principle to utilize 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 . " 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 . 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 . Abigail Adams , on the other hand , vocally opposed slavery .

### == Accusations of monarchism ==

Throughout his lifetime Adams expressed controversial and shifting views regarding the virtues of monarchical and hereditary political institutions . 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 . " 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 . " Such denials did not assuage his critics , and Adams was often accused of being a Monarchist .

Many of these attacks are considered to have been scurrilous , including suggestions that he was planning to " crown himself king " and " grooming John Quincy as heir to the throne " . However , 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 ) at the time he wrote ' Davila ' , though he did not directly reveal this in its essays . 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 . " In contradiction 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 . "

### == Religious views ==

Adams was raised a Congregationalist , since his ancestors were Puritans . According to biographer McCullough , " as his family and friends knew , Adams was both a devout Christian , and an independent thinker " . In a letter to Benjamin Rush , Adams credited religion with the success of his ancestors since their migration to the New World in the 1630s . Adams was educated at Harvard when the influence of deism was growing there , and sometimes used deistic terms in his speeches and writing . He also 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 . Fielding ( 1940 ) argues that Adams ' beliefs synthesized Puritan , deist , and humanist concepts . Adams at one point said that Christianity had originally been revelatory , but was being misinterpreted and

misused in the service of superstition , fraud , and unscrupulous power . Goff ( 1993 ) acknowledges Fielding 's " persuasive argument that Adams never was a deist because he allowed the suspension of the laws of nature and believed that evil was internal , not the result of external institutions . "

Frazer ( 2004 ) notes that while Adams shared many perspectives with deists , " 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 , however , did believe in miracles , providence , and , to a certain extent , the Bible as revelation . " Frazer further argues that Adams ' " theistic rationalism , like that of the other Founders , was a sort of middle ground between Protestantism and deism . " By contrast , David L. Holmes has argued that Adams , beginning as a Congregationalist , ended his days as a Christian Unitarian , accepting central tenets of the Unitarian creed , but also accepting Jesus as the redeemer of humanity and the biblical account of his miracles as true . Like many of his Protestant contemporaries , Adams criticized the claims to universal authority made by the Roman Catholic Church . In 1796 , Adams denounced political opponent 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 . "

= = Biographies = =

Adams ' grandson Charles Francis Adams , Sr. edited the first two volumes of *The Works of John Adams , Esq .* , Second President of the United States . This was published between 1850 and 1856 by Charles C. Little and James Brown in Boston . The first seven chapters were produced by Adams ' son John Quincy Adams .

The premier modern biography was *Honest John Adams* , a 1933 biography by the noted French specialist in American history Gilbert Chinard , who came to Adams after writing his acclaimed 1929 biography of Thomas Jefferson . For a generation , Chinard 's work was regarded as the best life of Adams , and it is still an important text in illustrating the themes of Adams ' biographical and historical scholarship . Following the opening of the Adams family papers in the 1950s , Page Smith published the first major biography to use these previously inaccessible primary sources ; his biography won a 1962 Bancroft Prize but was criticized for its scanting of Adams ' intellectual life and its diffuseness . In 1975 , Peter Shaw published *The Character of John Adams* , a thematic biography noted for its psychological insight into Adams ' life . The 1992 character study by Joseph J. Ellis , *Passionate Sage : The Character and Legacy of John Adams* , was Ellis 's first major publishing success and remains one of the most useful and insightful studies of Adams ' personality . In 1992 , the Revolutionary War historian and biographer John E. Ferling published his acclaimed *John Adams : A Life* , also noted for its psychological sensitivity .

In 2001 , historian David McCullough published a biography entitled *John Adams* , that won various awards . McCullough 's biography was the basis for a 2008 TV miniseries .