

hear it — much to Jefferson's irritation. Marshall faced a tough dilemma: if he ruled against Madison, his decision might be defied; if he ruled against Marbury, he weakened the orderly operations of the national government. Marshall found an excellent way out that did not defy Jefferson, without diminishing the Court.

To the question, Did Marbury deserve to receive his commission? the answer was “yes.” To the further question, Can the laws of the Congress come to his rescue? the answer was also “yes.” But to the question, Can the Court offer him remedy? the answer was “no.” The reason for the negative was that the Judiciary Act of 1789 had extended the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court beyond that stated in the Constitution. Therefore, (1) the law in question was in part unconstitutional, (2) the case could not properly be heard by the Court, and (3) the Court could render no final verdict on the matter. Marshall denied one power to the Court but asserted a far greater one: the right of *judicial review*. Henceforth, the Constitution would stand as the supreme law of the land, and the Supreme Court would be the final authority on what that document said and, even more importantly, what it meant.

✧ *Economics and Politics at Home*

In his First Inaugural, Jefferson spoke of a “wise and frugal” government. Frugality he emphasized by cutting costs and eliminating offices; wisdom he sought through careful appointments and prudent policies. His two most important cabinet choices were his fast friend, James Madison, as secretary of state, and Swiss immigrant Albert Gallatin as secretary of treasury. Both men gave Jefferson solid and significant service throughout his two terms. Levi Lincoln held the office of attorney general only during Jefferson's first term, but proved both able as a lawyer and supportive as a politician.

Jefferson began his governmental frugality with his own personal lifestyle. Instead of moving about Washington in a coach with six or eight horses, he rode horseback, generally alone. He disdained fancy clothes, dinners, and lofty titles. His predecessors wore wigs and worried about protocol; he did not. By 1801, even such modest titles as “master” and “servant” no longer seemed suitable to a republic in which all citizens could advance themselves through hard work and honest effort. Contemporaries noted that Americans now spoke of the “help.” Clothing no longer would designate rank, and if ordinary people wanted and could afford to wear silk, gold, and lace (forbidden by colonial sumptuary

laws), then let them do so. Officers of government now abandoned knickers in the style of the English aristocracy, instead wearing long pants in the style of French workingmen. (Federalist John Marshall was a conspicuous exception.) Women, except for a few dedicated Federalists, forsook corsets and cut their hair. The British minister was offended to be received by President Jefferson attired “in slippers down at the heels, and both pantaloons, coat and underclothes indicative of an indifference to appearance.”

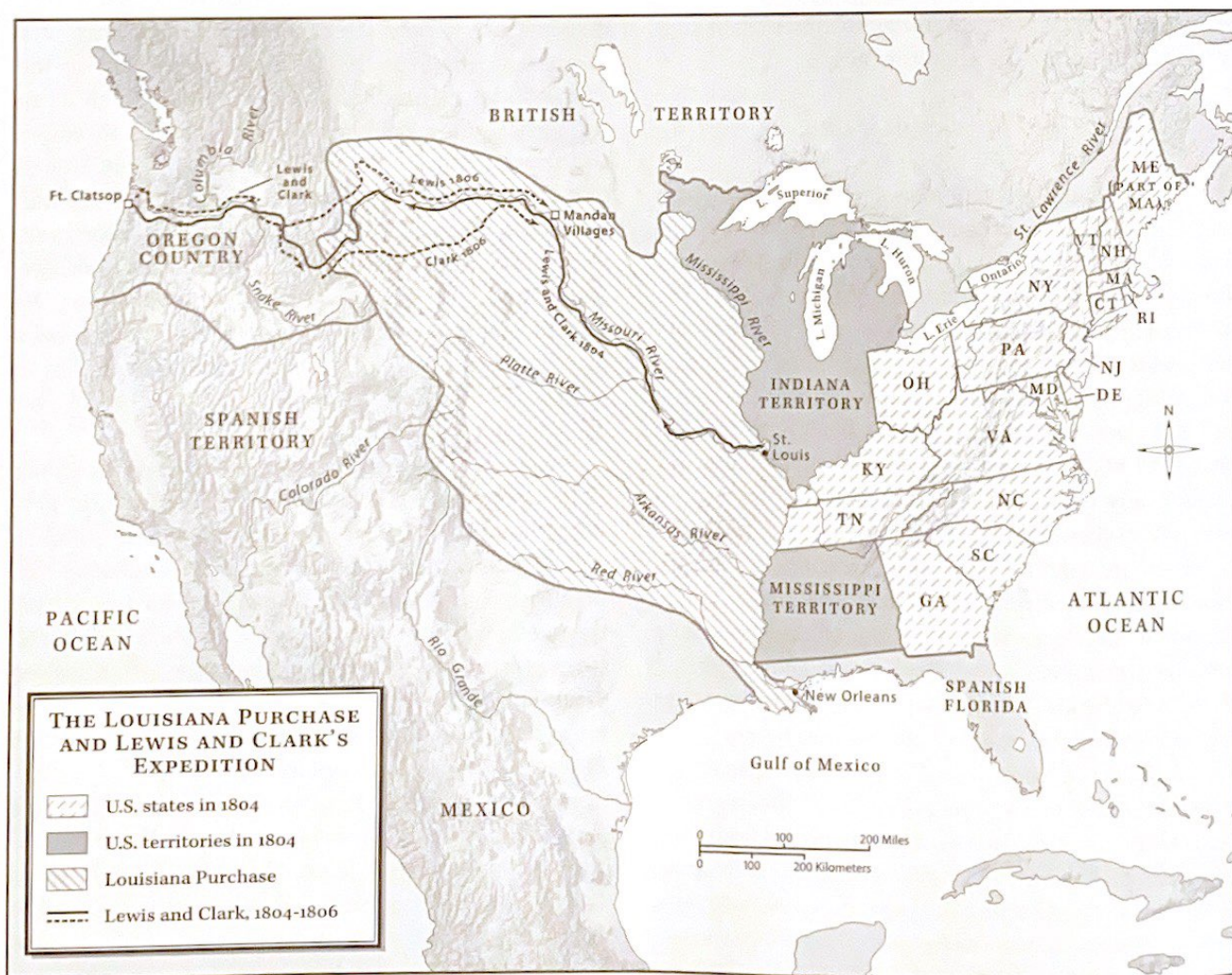
Economy was, of course, more than manners. Cost-cutting, the president believed, was essential not just to balance the budget but to rid the nation of the debt that corrupted its politics and reduced the power of its government. Jefferson restricted the number of positions in the executive department and urged Congress to abolish public offices under their jurisdiction. He trimmed foreign missions back to a mere three: Britain, France, and Spain. In eliminating the hated excise taxes, such as had provoked the Whiskey Rebellion, he also eliminated the even more despised tax collectors. He could not immediately cut the standing army, but he notified Congress that he intended to rely on the state militias as the first line of defense, which in an emergency could hold until “regulars” were recruited and armed. Moreover, the Republican president argued that a standing army in peacetime was neither “needful [n]or safe.” Jefferson reduced the number of sailors, sold some of the ships, and stopped construction of others. The United States needed only enough of a navy, he said, to defend the American shores or perhaps make a preemptive strike against insolent pirates. America, in Jefferson's view, must not aspire to be a great sea power like England or France.

Jefferson had serious reservations about keeping Hamilton's national bank, but Secretary Gallatin persuaded him that it would be convenient and useful to do so. Gallatin played an even more determinative role in retiring the national debt. When Jefferson took office, the public debt stood at around \$83 million, and Gallatin conceived of a plan to retire that debt within sixteen years, chiefly through the sale of western lands and the collection of import duties. By the end of Jefferson's first term, the federal treasury had a surplus of \$1 million. A cherished Jeffersonian principle held that one generation had no right to bind posterity. If one generation carelessly accumulated a large public debt, those that followed were subjected to fiscal servitude. “By the law of nature,” Jefferson asserted, “one generation is to another as one independent nation is to another.”

The issue of political patronage rendered Jefferson perplexed and indecisive. Presumably a change of parties would mean a change of personnel — everywhere. Legally, however, not all offices were open to presidential plucking. Politically, Jefferson still wanted to “rise above party” where possible, though his moderation angered many of the Republican faithful. Moreover, Jefferson still bristled at all the appointments that Adams made after he knew of his defeat. He would, so he explained to James Monroe, remove all Federalist leaders from office, but those serving quietly in the ranks could stay until they vacated their office, either by death or by resignation — though he was disappointed that resignations were few and deaths none. Loyal Republicans Charles Pinckney of South Carolina and Robert Livingston of New York won appointments as minister to Spain and France, respectively; but beyond that Jefferson came under intense pressure to increase his pace of removal of Federalists. Demands from New Jersey and Delaware were, he said, “moder-

ately importunate,” and in Pennsylvania he was told of serious discontent. He looked forward to the day when he could ask regarding potential candidates for office only three questions: “Is he honest? Is he capable? Is he faithful to the Constitution?”

The despised Alien and Sedition Acts of the previous administration had been written to expire in 1801 — cleverly, so that a hostile new administration would not have the opportunity to use them against its Federalist political opponents. When the expiration date arrived, the Jeffersonians allowed them simply to lapse. Jefferson even saw to it that the Republican editors who had been convicted under the Sedition Act were discharged from prison, and he supported the refunding of their fines. Jefferson worked with Congress carefully on this and many other matters, proving himself to be a master of persuasion. He held regular informal dinners for the Republican legislators, many of whom were or became good friends. Under such winsome leadership, Congress gave his domestic agenda its benign blessing.



That leadership outwitted the Federalists at every turn. They grew steadily weaker, ever more regional, ever more remote from the people. To the extent that they had any power, it was in New England where, in their utter frustration, they periodically threatened to secede. New Englanders even involved Jefferson's vice president (and presidential rival), Aaron Burr, in a plot to include New York in the secession. Hamilton learned of Burr's collusion, exposed the scheme, and dashed Burr's hopes of becoming governor of New York. An enraged Burr challenged Hamilton to a duel that took place on July 11, 1804, in which Hamilton received a fatal wound.

The Republicans, finding themselves scarcely opposed, began to quarrel, dividing into factions associated with a dominant individual or a forgotten principle. Some, deciding that "party" was not such a great idea after all, vowed to listen to the still small voice of conscience (or idiosyncrasy) and to no one else. Still others waited for an opportunity to make league with disgruntled Federalists on some issue or other. Still, Jefferson's leadership went unchallenged and his popularity undiminished. He had stopped listening to Burr as early as 1802, so he was in no danger of being betrayed by a man whom he no longer trusted. "I never thought him an honest, frank-dealing man," Jefferson later wrote, but considered him as "a crooked gun ... whose aim or shot you could never be sure of."

Domestically, Jefferson's administration reached the pinnacle of success in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. No accomplishment enhanced his presidency more, and nothing else so radically changed the history of his country.

✧ The Louisiana Purchase and the West

The admission of Ohio to the Union in 1803 gave ample testimony that America's interest in the West was both steady and strong. The Old Northwest, east of the Mississippi and north of the Ohio River, was now beginning to acquire a white population as relations with the Indians and the British permitted. But the Mississippi River, as a political boundary, was a great barrier to westward migration, just as the waterway served as a great "highway" for the region west of the Allegheny Mountains. Americans living there viewed with special concern the matter of who controlled the port of New Orleans.

The vast Louisiana Territory, including New Orleans, had been France's pride in the interior of North America. But in 1762 France ceded it to Spain as com-



A Sketch from the West Meriwether Lewis covered pages and pages of his expedition journal with sketches and descriptions of the wildlife he observed in the West. This bird is just one fine example.

pensation for that ally's losses in the Seven Years' War. Napoleon Bonaparte's rise to power correspondingly revived visions of a great French overseas empire. Louisiana, named in honor of France's Louis XIV, seemed a logical place to begin imperial rebuilding. So Bonaparte persuaded Spain to cede the vast and hard-to-defend American wilderness territory to France. Preliminary terms were agreed to in 1800, although the transfer did not become official until the fall of 1802.

Jefferson feared the change, for it put a power much more ominous than Spain in control of New Orleans. Although France, said Jefferson, had hitherto been our "natural friend," its occupation of New Orleans and threat to Mississippi shipping made that friend now a natural enemy. "The produce of three-eighths of our territory must pass to market" through New Orleans,

Jefferson observed, and nothing must be allowed to obstruct it. If Jefferson could not prevent the transfer, perhaps he could neutralize some of its impact by buying West Florida and New Orleans from the French. After Congress appropriated \$2 million for this purpose, Jefferson dispatched James Monroe of Virginia to join the American minister to Paris, Robert R. Livingston, to discuss such a deal with the French. Jefferson authorized his negotiators to go as high as \$10 million, if necessary. But, he added, if the talks broke down, the United States would have no choice but to turn to Britain to help keep the French in check.

The talks did not break down, but they took a wildly unpredictable turn when Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord, the French diplomat, asked the Americans if the United States would be interested in buying *all* of Louisiana. Livingston and Monroe could hardly believe what they were hearing. When they recovered sufficiently from the shock, they began discussing terms, ultimately arriving at a figure of about \$15 million for land that would double the size of the United States. The purchase price worked out to about three cents an acre, at a time when the federal government was charging settlers in the Old Northwest two dollars an acre.

Why did France sell? Bonaparte's troops had failed to put down a slave uprising in Haiti; the attempt was costing him dearly, and Louisiana might cost him more. Besides, he now needed more money to rebuild his army and prepare for the new war with Britain he was planning. Bonaparte wished neither to drive America into the arms of the British nor to go to war with the United States (or even the aroused and belligerent westerners) to defend his distant wilderness. Thus a combination of motives — for the United States, a happy combination — led Bonaparte to move quickly. On April 30, 1803, Livingston and Monroe, exceeding their instructions, signed on behalf of the United States an agreement to buy some 800,000 square miles of land. Livingston commented that this, "the noblest work of our whole lives," would enable the United States to move into the first rank of world powers.

News of the purchase set the western settlers to rejoicing in the summer of 1803. Kentuckians, worried that the United States might be too weak to defend "their" river and "their" port, had even considered raising a vigilante army to "free" New Orleans, although the realists among them admitted that, without a genuine army or navy, their cause was doomed. Not now, however. Suddenly the president had become in their eyes

"The Immortal Jefferson."

Jefferson, the strict constructionist of earlier days, now found himself obliged to do something not specifically authorized by the Constitution. It would be possible, of course, to amend the Constitution to make explicit the president's authority to purchase new territory, but such a process would take months if not years. He could find refuge in the "general welfare" clause or in the power to make treaties, or he could think of pushing through an amendment after the fact. But now was the time to act, before the French ruler changed his mind. Now was not the time, said Jefferson, to get hung up on "metaphysical subtleties."

But Federalists, formerly advocates of a loose construction of the Constitution, now became the strict constructionists. One New England Federalist grumbled that "we are to give money of which we have too little for land of which we already have too much." Another complained about paying any amount for a "great waste, a wilderness unpeopled with any beings except wolves and wandering Indians." What troubled the New Englanders most was that this sudden expansion of "the West" would necessarily come at the political expense of "the East." New England would witness the gradual erosion of its influence in national affairs.

But a bargain was a bargain, and this one was simply too good to pass up. The treaty officially reached American shores in July 1803, and the following October the Senate ratified it by a lopsided vote of 26 to 6. What, exactly, had the United States bought?

EXPLORING THE WEST

Even while Louisiana was still in foreign hands, Jefferson, a man of enormous intellectual curiosity and scientific interest, had persuaded Congress to appropriate funds to explore all the way to the Pacific Ocean. This expedition, Jefferson assured Spain, France, and Britain, was not motivated by territorial ambitions: its purposes were strictly geographical and scientific. In 1803 Jefferson appointed his private secretary, Meriwether Lewis, to head the trek, to be assisted by another Virginia neighbor, William Clark. The secretary of war supplied Lewis and Clark with equipment and provisions, as well as volunteers from the army to help explore and, if need be, defend the expeditionary corps, which eventually grew to about fifty. The leaders carried French and English passports that "will entitle you to the friendly aid of any traders of that allegiance with whom you may happen to meet."

Jefferson's detailed instructions to Lewis and Clark

revealed the president's questing mind. The men were to observe all flora and fauna and to take notes (with illustrations, if possible) of what they saw. Jefferson added that "Your observations are to be taken with great pains & accuracy, to be entered distinctly & intelligibly for others as well as yourself." Many copies should be made, so that if one set were lost or captured, another might survive. All encounters with Native Americans should be as friendly as possible: "allay all jealousies as to the object of your journey, satisfy them of its innocence." In urging Lewis and Clark to take extensive notes on the various tribes they met, Jefferson made the expedition one of ethnology, as well as of geography, botany, zoology, soil science, and even astronomy.

Of course, the expedition had serious political and military purposes as well. First, territorial claims needed to be established for as much of the West as possible. Second, that old lure of a northwest passage to the Pacific, with all its commercial possibilities, continued to attract. Third, a U.S. presence in the Pacific Northwest would keep Britain and the Hudson Bay Company in check — or at least under closer observation. Above all, mapping the West would make that vast region accessible for future settlement and territorial expansion.

From Pittsburgh, the explorers first made their way to St. Louis late in 1803, then ascended the Missouri River north to the Dakotas. Turning westward, Lewis and Clark crossed the Rockies, ultimately joining the Columbia River and descending its course until they at last sighted the Pacific. "Oceania in view! O! the joy," rhapsodized Clark in uncertain spelling. In their twenty-six-month march, they had been immeasurably aided by a French trader's Indian wife, Sacagawea, who served as interpreter and, when necessary, negotiator. Returning along a similar route, the expedition reached St. Louis in September 1806, three years after setting out.

Politically and scientifically, the Lewis and Clark expedition had been an unqualified success. Although it would take years for all of the *Journals* to be published and for their information to be absorbed, the American public could begin to think of that unknown wilderness as now their own. And Thomas Jefferson could plant seeds at his beloved home, Monticello, that Meriwether Lewis had carefully gathered along the way.

Jefferson sent another explorer, Zebulon Pike, into the West in 1805 and 1806 — first up the Mississippi in search of its source, then up the Arkansas River to present-day Colorado. (The name Pike's Peak there testifies to the unsuccessful effort to reach the top.) Pike

also pushed into New Mexico where uneasy Spanish authorities brought Pike and his followers into Santa Fe under arrest. Pike persuaded his interrogators that his interests, like those of Lewis and Clark, were geographical, not political.

BURR'S TRIAL FOR TREASON

Aaron Burr's interests in the West, however, were decidedly political. Exactly what direction (or directions) they took was less clear. The vice president, having fled New York to escape justice following his killing of Hamilton, went south and then west. The newly acquired West, not yet fully bound into the Union, seemed ripe for plucking — by somebody. Maybe in collusion with Spain, Burr could promote a separate government with himself at its head. Or with France. Or with England. Or with the unscrupulous commander of the U.S. Army, James Wilkinson. Himself a master of deceit and intrigue, Wilkinson for years had plotted with Spain for his own advancement and enrichment in the West. He and Burr were natural allies. But when Burr was about to be exposed, Wilkinson decided to turn against him and support a charge of treason. When Jefferson learned of all this, he commented that "Burr's enterprise is the most extraordinary since the days of Don Quixote. It is so extravagant that those who know his understanding would not believe it if the proofs admitted doubt."

Having been tried and acquitted in territorial courts, Burr was brought to Richmond in 1807 to be tried for treason before Chief Justice John Marshall, sitting as a circuit judge. Since Jefferson so desperately wanted Burr to be found guilty, his nemesis Marshall hewed to the narrowest possible definition of treason, and found the evidence insufficient for conviction. He so instructed the jury, which not surprisingly concluded that Aaron Burr "is not proved to be guilty." For some years, Burr lived abroad, returning to New York in 1812 to spend the rest of his days, more or less quietly, in legal practice. Burr, having failed in domestic politics, failed in foreign intrigue as well. He even failed in his marriage; when in his eighties, his wife divorced him on the charge of adultery.

THE TRIUMPH OF JEFFERSONIAN POLITICS

Jefferson's victory for his second term was more impressive than in 1800. In fact, it demonstrated the perilous state of the Federalist Party as Jefferson tallied 162 electoral votes to Charles Pinckney's 14. Jefferson's choice as vice president, George Clinton of New York,



A View of the Rockies Lewis and Clark's expedition fueled American interest in the West, which only grew as more expeditions generated romantic images of rugged vistas like this one.

represented the anti-Burr faction in that state. This time, no question arose as to who should be president and who should have the second office. For the Twelfth Amendment (adopted in September 1804) clarified a previously murky situation by requiring electors to vote for a president and a vice president. From that year on, presidents had this much power at least: they could name their own vice president.

For the next twenty years, the Jeffersonian party would control the presidency. This long-term party control reinforced the Jeffersonian impact on America. The Federalist Party, on the other hand, virtually retreated from the national scene, surviving only in New England. Their opposition to the Jefferson embargo of 1807 (see below) gave the Federalists some new life, but their resuscitation was temporary. Not until Andrew Jackson in the 1830s, did a vigorous two-party system reappear in American politics.

☞ *To the Shores of Tripoli — and Beyond*

Beyond fretting about Aaron Burr, Jefferson also was burdened by troubles with foreign powers. The Barbary pirates, who controlled the mainland of northwest Af-

rica and menaced shipping in the Mediterranean, made an excellent living raiding the commerce of any country — including the United States — that did not pay them tribute. Jefferson found this bribery offensive, degrading, and costly, and he was even more outraged when the Pasha of Tripoli cut down the American flag in front of the nation's consulate. Insisting that national honor be satisfied, Jefferson dispatched a naval fleet to Tripoli in 1801 and, after years of negotiation, in 1805 wrung from the reluctant ruler the concession that tribute would no longer be demanded from American commercial vessels sailing in what he claimed as his territorial waters. It was a minor international incident, but it — along with much later settlements with the other Barbary States of Algiers, Tunis, and Morocco — increased visibility and respect for the United States abroad. It also honored Jefferson's careful monetary calculation: sending the navy cost money, but in the long run that cost less than paying off the Pasha, year after year.

France's declaration of war against Britain in 1805 presented more serious problems. Once again the task was not to decide between the two warring parties but to stay aloof from both. American traffic on the high seas increased sharply as England and France locked in combat. Much of the increase in American shipping came at the expense of the British, who determined to stop it by forbidding goods from being shipped from

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Meriwether Lewis to Thomas Jefferson

Dear Sir,

Fort Mandan [North Dakota],

April 7th 1805

Herewith inclosed you will receive an invoice of certain articles which I have forwarded to you from this place. Among other articles, you will observe by reference to the invoice, 67 specimens of earth, salts and minerals; and 60 specimens of plants;

these are accompanied by their respective labels expressing the days on which obtained, places where found, and also their virtues and properties when known. . . . These have been forwarded with a view of their being presented to the Philosophical Society of Philadelphia, in order that they may under their direction be examined or analyzed. After examining these specimens yourself, I would thank you to have a copy of their labels made out, and retained until my return. The other

articles are intended particularly for yourself, to be retained, or disposed off as you may think proper.

You will also receive herewith inclosed a part of Capt. Clark's private journal, the other part you will find inclosed in a separate tin box. This journal is in it's original state. . . . Captain Clark dose not wish this journal exposed in it's present state, but has no objection that one or more copies of it be made . . . correcting it's grammatical errors &c.

the West Indies directly to France. The British rule did permit ships that unloaded West Indian goods at an American port and at least theoretically paid duty to sail on to France. However, in the notable case of the *Essex* in 1805, the British Court of Appeals ruled that so-called "broken voyages" like this were actually continuous voyages violating an old international rule that trade that was not open in time of peace could not be permitted in time of war.

To this financial blow, the British added a psychological blow by boarding American ships on the high seas and forcibly taking any Englishman, or anyone who they thought might be English, to serve on their own undermanned ships. This practice of "impressment" was seen as insolence to the highest degree, an insolence hardly softened by the fact that many British sailors preferred service on American commercial vessels to the harsher service in the Royal Navy. If thousands of Americans were impressed into British service, it was — Britain responded — only because tens of thousands of English sailors had deserted, often with the encouragement of American captains.

Jefferson tried diplomacy, sending a special commission of James Monroe and William Pinkney to make concessions that would induce Britain to give up the hated business of impressment. Britain would not budge. Jefferson's emissaries came home with a treaty the president found so unsatisfactory that he would not even submit it to the Senate.

Then on June 22, 1807, the British illegally, and without permission, boarded the American frigate, the *Chesapeake*, to retrieve four sailors who had deserted in Norfolk, Virginia. In the ensuing struggle, three Americans were killed and eighteen wounded. Ameri-

can pride was more than wounded. "Never since the battle of Lexington," Jefferson declared, "have I seen this country in such a state of exasperation." The British, he added, "have often enough, God knows, given us cause of war before; but it has been on points which would not have united the nation. But now they have touched a chord which vibrates in every heart."

What would the choice be: national humiliation or war? The first was unthinkable, the second almost inevitable. But the nation needed more time, Jefferson strongly believed — time to grow stronger in population, in produce, in financial resources. Jefferson took what seemed like the only way off the horns of a harsh dilemma. In December of 1807 he persuaded Congress to pass the Embargo Act, which prohibited the export of almost all goods from the United States; this, Jefferson argued, would injure both belligerents, but especially Britain, which was more dependent on goods from abroad.

The embargo backfired terribly. It hurt American shipping cruelly, especially in New England, where it was called the "dambargo." So devastating were its results that it threatened to bring the moribund Federalist party back to life. "The Immortal Jefferson" in four short years became "You Infernal Villain." Federalists complained that the Embargo Act was like "cutting one's throat to cure the nosebleed." On the Fourth of July New Englanders sang a song that included this stanza:

*Our ships, all in motion,
Once whitened the ocean,
They sail'd and returned with a cargo;
Now doomed to decay
They have fallen a prey
To Jefferson, worms, and Embargo.*

Unemployed American sailors now joined the British crews, mitigating the impressment problem but not in the way Jefferson envisioned. Smugglers evaded the force of the act, especially by sending goods through Canada. France showed no gratitude for the hardships imposed on England, but instead seized American ships in French ports on the hollow pretext that they must be British ships in disguise. Nothing worked. Fifteen months after the embargo was passed, Jefferson signed its repeal. "Peaceable coercion" had avoided war, although that would have been a more popular course of action. Unhappily, it only postponed war with England from Jefferson's administration to that of his successor, James Madison.

THE JEFFERSONIAN LEGACY

Though never quite becoming the American icon that George Washington did, likenesses of Thomas Jefferson appeared on medals, in waxworks, innumerable etchings, and paintings; in statuary, and even on Liverpool potter ware. Europeans joined Americans in giving artistic honor to America's third president. His home in Monticello eventually became a national shrine, and the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C. (dedicated by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1943), today draws visitors by the tens of thousands. Yet what he left to the nation has much more to do with his ideas, compromises, and political philosophy than with monuments and images.

Art and Architecture

Jefferson was both a patron of the arts and a contributor to artistic development. His years in France honed an already keen aesthetic sense as he collected, observed, sketched, and stimulated his fellow citizens to move toward cultural sophistication. His first library contained many books on painting, sculpture, architecture, and theories of aesthetics, and when he went to Paris in 1785 his mind was well stocked and his eye well trained.

Meeting France's noted sculptor, Jean-Antoine Houdon, Jefferson quickly concluded that this must be the artist to create the statue of George Washington authorized by the state of Virginia. He brought home from Paris in 1789 seven of Houdon's plaster portrait busts, including one of himself. Most of these ended up at Monticello, which began to resemble an art museum with original paintings (both European and American),

silver, marble, and porcelain objects gathered in Paris, and highest quality examples of French craftsmanship. With some enthusiasm, Jefferson wrote during his first year in Paris: "Were I to proceed to tell you how much I enjoy their architecture, sculpture, painting, music, I should want words. It is in these arts they shine."

Jefferson's contributions in architecture laid the foundation for a greater appreciation for quality and style among his fellow citizens. When still in his twenties, Jefferson began constructing Monticello. Greatly influenced by the sixteenth-century Italian architect Andrea Palladio, Jefferson worked on his classical design for years, modifying or enlarging the building over most of his lifetime. He was so captivated by a small Roman temple in southern France (the *Maison Carrée*) that he quickly determined this should be the model for Virginia's state capitol in Richmond.

When it was agreed to build the new "Federal City" of Washington, D.C., Jefferson immediately suggested a French engineer and surveyor, Pierre Charles L'Enfant, to plan it — after models of great European capital cities. When L'Enfant withdrew from the project, Jefferson took over, designing the Mall and deciding on the locations of the Capitol and the executive mansion. When the time came to build the presidential residence, Jefferson anonymously entered the competition for its design. Though his plan was not selected, when he later moved into the structure he added the two porticoes and other elements to the structure. While president he also pushed architect Benjamin Latrobe to complete the imposing Capitol, which in its unfinished condition suggested some tentativeness to the life of the young republic itself.⁵

Jefferson's most stunning architectural achievement came in the last years of his life: the design of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. He laid out the grounds of his "academical village," with close attention to classical motifs and obvious deference once more to the ideas of Palladio. The rotunda, initially the library and modeled after the Roman Pantheon, has been called "the greatest example of French visionary architecture in North America." State capitols across the country as well as other public buildings imitated Jefferson's striking rotunda design. Jefferson would have been remembered as one of America's great architects even if he had done nothing in any other field.

5. The Capitol was not finished, however, until Lincoln's administration. The completion of the dome despite the raging Civil War had symbolic implications that Lincoln understood as fully as Jefferson.

Jefferson's Wheel Cipher Cryptography was one of Thomas Jefferson's many interests, and he designed this wheel cipher while serving as George Washington's secretary of state. Made up of twenty-six cylindrical wooden pieces on an iron spindle, it worked essentially like a combination lock, allowing words to be scrambled and unscrambled. Jefferson abandoned use of this cipher after 1802, but in the 1920s the United States Army developed one that was remarkably similar and used it until the beginning of World War II.



Education and Science

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free," Jefferson wrote in 1816, "it expects what never was and never will be." His commitment to education was virtually an obsession. Like other figures of the American Enlightenment, Jefferson fought strenuously to remove all shackles from the human mind. But if the mind were simply left free, and all paths to inquiry left open, with no disciplined pursuit of knowledge as a consequence, then the battle — though seemingly won — had been lost. The goal of education, said Jefferson's close friend, Benjamin Rush, was "to convert men into republican machines."

At every level of education, the South lagged behind New England in the eighteenth century. Conscious of Virginia's deficiencies, Jefferson introduced into the state legislature in 1779 a Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge. He labored and lobbied hard for its passage, but his fellow Virginians found it too costly, or too egalitarian, or too ambitious. Jefferson envisioned a system of public education open to all free citizens, rich or poor, and set into a competitive frame that would allow the best students to be sent to a "grammar school" that, despite the name, was akin to a preparatory academy for higher education. The state must not neglect its finest resource, Jefferson argued, but avail itself of "those talents which Nature has sown as liberally among the poor as the rich, but which perish without use if not sought for and cultivated."

Jefferson's educational reform plan from the first half of his life failed, but the grand design of the second half of his life, the University of Virginia, succeeded magnificently. Back home in Monticello after retiring from the presidency, Jefferson decided to establish a public university that would be faithful to Enlightenment ideals and serve the needs of the new republic. At first he sought to make his own alma mater, the College of William and Mary, the state university, but only if his old college abandoned all ties to the Episcopal Church. When it refused, Jefferson started afresh with an entirely new institution that was very much a Jeffersonian creation.

Not theology and metaphysics, but science and the

practical arts, were the foundation of the University of Virginia's curriculum.

He determined the site, laid out the grounds,⁶ designed the buildings, devised the courses, chose the faculty, raised the money, selected the books for the library, and even kept track of the construction by telescope from his hilltop home a few miles away. "Mr. Jefferson's University," it is still called.

Jefferson set the example for his university by being, if not a scientist in the strict sense, a man consumed with scientific curiosity and an abiding interest in the world around him. To a friend in 1791 he had described politics as his "duty," but science as his "passion." And to Pierre-Samuel du Pont de Nemours (the French entrepreneur who founded what is today the DuPont Corporation), he wrote in 1809: "Nature intended me for the tranquil pursuits of science by rendering them my supreme delight." "But," he added, "the enormities of the times in which I have lived, have forced me to . . . commit myself on the boisterous ocean of political passions." At Monticello he installed busts of the "three greatest thinkers" in the world: Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, and John Locke.

Jefferson's one book, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), gave more attention to scientific observations and the collection of data than to any other subject. Besides the state's flora and fauna, Jefferson described its geography, its rivers and streams, its climate (he kept temperature records at Monticello for over fifty years), its mountain ranges, and its natural resources. In his own scientific reflections, he borrowed from Europe where possible and applied his own creative genius where not. His inventions included a dumbwaiter (a small elevator for bringing wine from the cellar to the dining room), a great clock that indicated not only the time but also the days of the week, a revolving chair, a portable writing desk, and a machine that made du-

6. What is called the campus at every other American university is still known as "the grounds" at the University of Virginia.



Monticello Jefferson spent much of his lifetime and fortune designing, building, tearing down and rebuilding, and embellishing his home, Monticello, which crowns a low mountain overlooking Charlottesville, Virginia. It is the complete embodiment of Jefferson's exquisite artistic taste and innovative personality. Lacking any water source except rain collected from the roof and buckets and barrels that slaves lugged up from a spring at the foot of the mountain, it was also a wildly impractical place to build a home.

plicate copies as he wrote. To encourage gathering information about scientific developments abroad, Jefferson opposed placing tariffs on books and periodicals brought into the United States. And to encourage the dissemination of scientific information at home, he joined Franklin's American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia and served as its president from 1797 to 1815.

He collected scientific objects as he collected art: avidly. At Monticello he displayed fossil bones, wild animal heads, remarkable geological specimens, and a variety of cultural artifacts of Native American tribes. He promoted a uniform standard of weights and measures. Like his father before him, he acted as his own surveyor in projects that interested him; he made regular astronomical observations, and at one time even planned to build an observatory atop his "little mountain." With an ever-restless, ever-grasping mind, Thomas Jefferson, as a man of science, would no doubt have preferred to go on the Lewis and Clark expedition himself; as president, however, he had to settle for making of that expedition a boon and stimulus to the development of science throughout America. When critics pointed out that American contributions to science were rather minimal, Jefferson responded that when

the United States had been in existence as long as the Greeks before they produced a Homer, or as long as the English before they produced a Shakespeare, then it could legitimately be asked what this new nation had managed to accomplish.

✧ *Gender and Race*

Brilliant as Jefferson's legacy to America might be in the realms of science and culture, in the troubled spheres of gender and race relations his imprint was mixed at best, tragically flawed at worst. In so many avenues of thought, Jefferson moved well ahead of his times. In others, however, he never wholly escaped the age and place of his upbringing.

In his thinking about women, Jefferson took some steps forward, but some backward as well. He did believe that they deserved an education, certainly in the domestic arts, but also in art, music, and dance. They should learn French, the language not only of diplomacy but the "depository of all science." Mothers should be educated in sufficient depth to enable them to educate their own daughters, and sons too, if need be, in the absence of formal schooling. Jefferson, moreover, favored abolishing the traditional law of primogeniture (by which all property passed to the eldest son) in favor of younger sons and all the daughters as well. This would provide some measure of economic independence, from which other kinds of independence could more readily flow.

On the other hand, Jefferson thought of women largely in terms of their ability to assist and comfort men. They should not engage directly in politics other than "to soothe and calm the minds of their husbands, returning ruffled from political debate." Women should not mix in public assemblies or dance after marriage, for to do so would lead to moral decline and "ambiguity of issue." To his secretary of the treasury, Albert Gallatin, Jefferson wrote in 1807 that appointing a woman to public office was "an innovation for which the public is not prepared" — and added, "nor am I." It is impossible to make a feminist out of Jefferson.

Notwithstanding Jefferson, women did make major strides in the new nation, both in contributions rendered and recognition won. In the early years of the republic, many women emphasized the sacrifices that they, no less than the soldiers in battle, had been called upon to render and had willingly made. Gender roles, while admittedly different, did not elevate one above the other in value. Moreover, women played

the major role in preserving moral values, in seeing within the family that the rhetoric regarding virtue had some visible reality. Husbands, fathers, sons, daughters — all would be held to a strict moral account that would preserve virtue in the republic for generations to come. Evangelical women, after the Revolution, pointed out that the real war confronting the nation was against sin and the devil. In an anonymous pamphlet published in Boston in 1787, a “Daughter of America” explained that Satan “has done more harm already, than all the armies of Britain will ever be able to do.” She concluded that “we shall all be destroyed or brought into captivity, if the women as well as the men, do not oppose, resist, and fight against this destructive enemy.” In the battle against vice and for virtue, women served in the trenches and on the front lines.

In writing about the Indians, Jefferson took a more egalitarian line, though his politics and his science frequently pulled him in opposing directions. Artists and authors of his day often portrayed the Indian as the quintessential American. To demote or degrade the Indian was somehow to degrade America. Jefferson spent much time refuting French armchair anthropologists who argued that all species in North America were inferior to those of Europe. Nonsense, Jefferson replied, disproving the charge by weighing, measuring, counting, and recording in great detail. Not in South America, where Indians had been held in slavery for centuries, but in North America Europeans should look “to seek their original character.” On the basis of his own close scientific observation, Jefferson judged the Indian “to be in body and mind equal to the white-man.” Even more surprising for the time, he saw white-Indian intermarriage as altogether appropriate. In an address to several tribes in 1808, he stated that “we shall all be Americans; you will mix with us by mar-

riage, your blood will run in our veins, and will spread with us over this great land.” Yet this vision remained only that: a vision.

For political realities kept intruding — upon the nation in general, but on Jefferson in particular. When he served as Washington’s secretary of state, he joined in the move to drive the Indians farther westward. “I hope we shall drub the Indians well this summer,” he wrote to Madison in 1791; then, we can “change our plan from war to bribery.” Europeans had not treated Indians fairly, Jefferson readily acknowledged, but Americans would do no better. Jefferson the politician agreed that the Indians must first be conquered, then pacified, then civilized. They would enjoy liberty as soon as they allowed knowledge to displace ignorance and “reformed” behavior to supplant native tradition. Jefferson the anthropologist saw no reason why Indians and whites could not live together as equals. Unhappily, the science and the politics never merged into a single, consistent approach.

Jefferson’s attitudes toward blacks and slavery had the grimmest consequences. Here theory and experience seemed totally at odds. As author of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson exalted the idea of equality: all men (meaning human beings) are of an equal creation. More than that, he condemned the slave trade (that “cruel war against human nature itself”) in language so strong that it had to be stricken from the Declaration before the Continental Congress would accept it. In 1783 Jefferson urged his fellow Virginians to provide freedom for all children born of slaves after 1800. And the next year he fashioned the language of the Northwest Ordinance that “neither slavery nor involuntary servitude” would be allowed anywhere in that large western expanse. But the year 1784 would mark the high point of Jefferson’s efforts toward abolition.

✿ IN THEIR OWN WORDS

An American Language

In a copious list of names of places, rivers, lakes, mountains, &c. which are introduced into this work, no labor has been spared to exhibit their just orthography and pronunciation, according to the analogies of our language, and the common usages of the

country. The occurrence of Indian names has not, in every instance, been well adjusted by American authors. Many of these names still retain the French orthography, found in the writings of the first discoverers or early travellers; but the practice of writing such words in the French orthography ought to be discountenanced. How does an unlet-

tered American know the pronunciation of the names Ouisconsin or Ouabasche in this French dress? Would he suspect the pronunciation to be Wisconsin and Waubash? Our citizens ought not to be perplexed with an orthography to which they are strangers.

Noah Webster, *The American Spelling Book*, 1803

In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, published in 1787 but composed as early as 1785, Jefferson revealed his gloomy doubts about the prospect of blacks in America. He saw them, unlike the Indians, as improbable prospects for intermarriage or complete integration. His political enemies seized the opportunity to expose what they saw as utter hypocrisy. For they charged him with keeping a mulatto mistress, Sally Hemings, by whom he had several children. Many generations later, scholarly investigators — not political enemies — have examined these charges with great care, and with mixed results.

But the most damning evidence of Jefferson's racism comes from his own pen. Admitting that his observations of African Americans had been severely limited, he nonetheless suggested, "as a suspicion only," "that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments of both body and mind."

Here Jefferson sank ever deeper into his native southern social milieu. Slaveholders throughout the South had a mean opinion of the mental capacities of their labor force. Blackness itself was widely interpreted, both in Europe and America, as a sign of inferiority. The eminent Scottish philosopher David Hume declared as simple fact that "there never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white." Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish historian of the nineteenth century, carefully explained that in the divine plan blacks had been created to serve whites, and this fact was firmly fixed in the laws of nature. So much was blackness identified in popular thought with inferiority that James Madison once told a friend that "if he could work a miracle, he knew what it would be. He would make all blacks white; and then he could do away with slavery in twenty-four hours."

In the *Notes*, Jefferson did forthrightly condemn slavery. Whatever the talents of the blacks, he wrote, it was "no measure of their rights." Slavery diminished both master and slave, he noted, creating "the most unrelenting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other." If Jefferson could not embrace equality, he could at least extol liberty — but it was a liberty *postponed*. For the eradication of slavery, "we must await with patience the workings of an overruling Providence," Jefferson wrote, "and hope that that is preparing the deliverance of these, our suffering brethren." Never has Jeffersonian rhetoric sounded so hollow, or rung so false a note. Slavery was an abomination, yes, but leave it to heaven. Blacks are

of an equal creation, yes, but somehow still inferior. My scientific observations are quite limited, yes, but nonetheless my mind is made up. Concerning both slavery and the blacks, Jefferson, the great libertarian and egalitarian, failed to measure up to his own high ideals and moral claims.

Reason and Religion

So strongly is Jefferson identified with the cause of political liberty that it is difficult to believe that his devotion to religious liberty ran even deeper. For Jefferson, the Enlightenment represented above all else freedom for the human mind. And, in his view, religion had historically been the leading enemy of freedom of thought. The bigoted clergy, Jefferson wrote, had had the advantage for centuries of "stated and privileged days to collect and catechize us, opportunities of delivering their oracles to the people in mass, and of molding their minds as wax in the hollow of their hands." In the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C., Jefferson's famous words are carved in stone: "For I have sworn upon the altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." That sentence comes from a letter to Benjamin Rush, written in 1800, in which the context makes clear that the tyranny he most feared was a religious one. "Almighty God hath made the mind free," Jefferson declared in his Statute for Establishing Religious Freedom (1786), and he would do all in his power to keep minds free. With Madison's help, he persuaded the Virginia legislature to pass the statute, with its promise that no one would be "compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever." Nor would any person be restrained or molested or burdened simply because of his or her religious opinions. The union between church and state, as had prevailed in Virginia for nearly two hundred years, must be broken and never put back together again.

When Jefferson published his *Notes* the next year, he included the statute in an appendix — one measure of his pride in having struck a blow for religious liberty. Another measure may be found in his letter to Madison in 1787 where he revealed his delight in "seeing the standard of reason at length erected, after so many ages during which the human mind has been held in vassalage by kings, priests & nobles."

Virginia had taken the first giant step in 1786; Jefferson encouraged Madison to see that the nation took a similar step in the First Amendment to the Consti-

tution, proposed in 1789 and ratified two years later. The amendment began: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Government should neither favor religion nor oppress it, but leave it alone. On his tombstone, Jefferson asked to be remembered for only three accomplishments: the Declaration of Independence, the Statute for Establishing Religious Freedom, and the University of Virginia.

His contribution to religious liberty was enormous, but he did not stop there. He wanted to bring about a theological reformation as well, to create a climate in which religion would be as rational as it was free. To forward this enterprise, he spent many evenings in Monticello, after retiring from the presidency, creating what has been called "the Jefferson Bible." Working with the four Gospels in the New Testament, and comparing the Greek, Latin, French, and English versions, Jefferson restricted his "bible" to the sayings of Jesus, especially those that offered moral counsel. There should be no conflict between faith and reason, for reason must be in charge. But religion, he thought, is the foundation and enforcer of morality, and there should be no conflict between them.

Over the centuries, Christianity, Jefferson argued, had departed widely from the simple teachings of Jesus. It had been weighted down by philosophical abstraction and metaphysical speculation. "Our savior did not come into the world to save metaphysicians only," Jefferson noted. What was once so simple and clear had been made so complex and mysterious. The essence of Christianity was "Fear God and love thy neighbor," but that essence had been encrusted by layers of priestly absurdities and "scholastic subtleties." Jefferson was neither infidel nor atheist, but a radical reformer who would have all persons return "to the plain and unsophisticated precepts of Christ." So confident was Jefferson about the Age of Enlightenment and the promise of rational religion that in 1822 he asserted "that the present generation will see Unitarianism become the general religion of the United States." He went even further: "I trust that there is not a young man now living in the U.S. who will not die an Unitarian." One reason why that never happened was the popular wave of evangelicalism that was sweeping over the nation even as Jefferson was making his confident — and utterly mistaken — prediction.

CONCLUSION: BUILDING AND NURTURING THE NEW NATION

When Washington was unanimously chosen as president of the United States, it was unclear how much unity among the thirteen sovereign states was possible. For many, it was equally unclear how much unity was desirable. But Washington did manage to put a *national* face on many of the actions that he and the Congress undertook. The new nation addressed the problems of war debts and war obligations, created a national bank, stimulated manufacturing, and determined the permanent location of the capital. The first president, pulled in opposite directions, also kept the nation out of war, and firmly put down internal rebellion. He did much in his two terms to mark the path toward nationhood.

The single term of his successor, John Adams, also managed to keep a young and vulnerable people from being caught in the furies of European wars. On the domestic front, his troubles were many, as his own vice president, Thomas Jefferson, led the opposing political faction, and his own cabinet, dominated by Alexander Hamilton, gave very little loyalty to the president. The Constitution did not anticipate the rise of political parties, and Washington personally deplored the "party spirit." Nonetheless, within a remarkably brief period of time, political parties became a permanent feature of the nation's life.

Nothing demonstrated this more clearly than the hard-fought campaign of 1800, pitting President Adams against Vice President Jefferson. The victory of Jefferson heralded the growing influence of his Republican Party, with the gradual decline of Adams's Federalist Party. The most dramatic single event of Jefferson's presidency, the Louisiana Purchase, doubled the size of the United States and thrust it closer to its role as a major player on the world stage. During his two terms, the U.S. Supreme Court also shed its minor role to become a major player on the American stage.

The twenty years covered by the nation's first three presidents did much to determine the future political destiny of the American people. As President Washington observed, he walked upon "an unexplored field, enveloped on every side with clouds and darkness." After his labors, as well as those of his two successors, the clouds had parted enough to allow a good deal more light to shine through.

SUGGESTED READING

Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (1996). A highly readable, delightfully detailed account of the nation's most significant overland exploration; excellent maps.

Ruth Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800* (1985). A sophisticated analysis of both the sweep and the power of millennial ideas in the new republic.

Richard Brookhiser, *Founding Father: Rediscovering George Washington* (1996). A "moral biography," this book seeks not to denigrate or dismiss Washington, but to retrieve him for our own time.

Lester J. Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 2 vols. (1959). An endlessly engaging correspondence between the two political allies, then political enemies, then friends again; the range of subjects covered by these two omnivorous readers staggers the imagination.

Joseph J. Ellis, *Passionate Sage: The Character and Legacy of Adams* (1993). An appreciative, insightful examination into the inner Adams that would rescue him from partial obscurity.

Joseph J. Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (1997). Rejecting myth-making and sentimentality, the author offers instead a solid, sensitive portrayal of the complexities of our third president.

James T. Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (1969). A one-volume condensation of Flexner's four-volume and authoritative biography of the first president; readable and wise.

Edwin S. Gaustad, *Faith of the Founders: Religion and the New Nation, 1776-1826* (1993, 2004). Gives special attention to the role of Adams, Franklin, Jefferson, Madison, and Washington in setting the republic on its daring and experimental religious path.

Donald Jackson, *Thomas Jefferson & the Stony Mountains: Exploring the West from Monticello* (1981). Provides excellent context, with over a dozen maps, of the expedition of Lewis and Clark, along with others moving westward at Jefferson's behest.

Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (2nd ed., 1986). A persuasive case for the real, if limited, emancipation of women in the latter decades of the eighteenth century; also, a fresh assessment of their major contributions.

Ralph Ketcham, *Presidents Above Party: The First American Presidency, 1789-1829* (1984). Probes the earnest efforts, ultimately unavailing, of the first presidents to put "party spirit" far behind them.

John Chester Miller, *The Wolf by the Ears: Thomas Jefferson and Slavery* (1977). A thorough and balanced analysis of the most haunting and troubled issue of Jefferson's career.

Merrill D. Peterson, ed., *Thomas Jefferson: A Reference Biography* (1986). Pursuing a topical approach to the many-sided Jefferson, this volume gives attention to such interests as art, architecture, education, religion, science, slavery, the West, agriculture, political thought, and the American Indians.

James Morton Smith, *The Republic of Letters: The Correspondence between Jefferson and Madison*, 3 vols. (1995). Absolutely essential reading for the vital public roles of these two Virginians, as well as the light it sheds on their long-lasting friendship.

Francis N. Stites, *John Marshall: Defender of the Constitution* (1981). In brief compass, this volume provides a readable introduction to the life and thought of not the first chief justice but the first one that anyone remembers.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Joyce O. Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (1984).

Joyce O. Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (1992).

Joyce O. Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (2000).

Lance Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology* (1978).

Kenneth R. Bowling and Helen E. Veit, eds., *The Diary of William Maclay* (1988).

R. B. Burnstein, *Thomas Jefferson* (2003).

Andrew Burstein, *The Inner Jefferson: Portrait of a Grieving Optimist* (1995).

Edward H. Davidson and William J. Scheick, *Paine, Scripture, and Authority: The Age of Reason as Political and Religious Idea* (1994).

Joseph J. Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington* (2004).

John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800* (2004).

John R. Fitzmier, *New England's Moral Legislator: Timothy Dwight, 1752-1817* (1998).

Jack Fruchtman, Jr., *Thomas Paine and the Religion of Nature* (1993).

Edwin S. Gaustad, *Sworn on the Altar of God: A Religious Biography of Thomas Jefferson* (1996).

Felix Gilbert, *The Beginnings of American Foreign Policy* (1961).

Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* (1997).

Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (1997).

Charles F. Hobson, *The Great Chief Justice: John Marshall and the Rule of Law* (1996).

James Horn et al., eds., *The Revolution of 1800: Democracy, Race, and the New Republic* (2002).

John R. Howe, Jr., *The Changing Political Thought of John Adams* (1966).

Leonard W. Levy, ed., *Freedom of the Press: From Zenger to Jefferson* (1966).

Paul K. Longmore, *The Invention of George Washington* (1988).

Charles A. Miller, *Jefferson and Nature: An Interpretation* (1988).

Peter F. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (2000).

John Rhodehamel, *The Great Experiment: George Washington and the American Republic* (1998).

James P. Ronda, *Finding the West: Explorations with Lewis and Clark* (2001).

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (1990).

Kerry S. Walters, *The American Deists: Voices of Reason and Dissent in the Early Republic* (1992).