
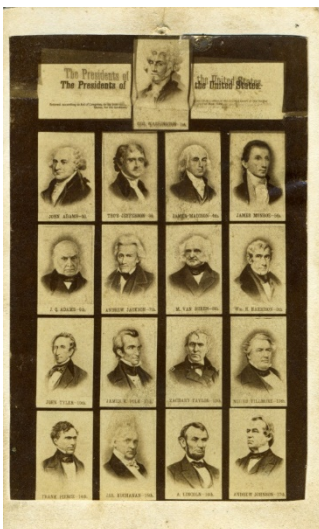


Chapter 79. Jefferson And Madison Die On America's 50th Anniversary Of Independence

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|  | <p>Dates: 1826</p> | <p>Sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> America's Founders Continue To Pass Away |
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Time: July 4, 1826

America's Founders Continue To Pass Away



American Presidents

One other event that marks Adams's term is the 50th anniversary celebration of independence from Britain.

As flag waving, parades and memorial speeches play out in local town squares across the nation, an eerie coincidence forever defines the moment, for all Americans, but especially for JQ Adams.

In Quincy, Massachusetts, his 90 year old father, lies dying. In the early morn, he is awakened momentarily by a memorial cannonade. When told that it is the Fourth, he replies: "It is a great day. It is a good day." Then he lapses. In the late afternoon his mind wanders back to the past and a reassuring thought: "Thomas Jefferson survives." A pause, and he is dead around 6:20PM.

But, ironically, so is Thomas Jefferson, at 83 years of age. As if by sheer will, he too struggles toward the memorial day. In the evening of July 3 he asserts a last wish, "this is the Fourth of July." When told that the day is indeed

approaching, he fades back into sleep. He wakes briefly around 4AM on the Fourth, then succumbs in the early afternoon, around 1:00PM.

The second and third presidents, dead on the same day, the day of the bold Declaration, of the grave risk giving way to the prospect of a glorious reward, now a half century in the past.

The two have shared a love-hate relationship over the entire time.

Adams plays the role of the squat New England Yankee, working his own farm in Quincy, horrified by slavery, constantly pinching pennies to end up with a \$100,000 estate at his demise, forever speaking his mind in plain language that lacks in diplomacy. It is he who coerces Jefferson into drafting the Declaration on the grounds that he is “ten times the better writer.”

Jefferson is the tall, rail-thin Southerner, master of his Monticello plantation run by slaves, a congenial spendthrift whose inheritance will be \$100,000 in debts, forever the quiet, often sneaky politician, but also the one truest author of America’s hopes and ideals. From the beginning he sees in Adams the “colossus of America’s independence” with the bulldog tenacity needed to make his elegant phrases come to life in practice.

Throughout their lives, both are certain they are right in their lifestyles and convictions.

Adams knows the nation needs a strong central government run by the best people to keep it safe and promote prosperity. Jefferson is sure that local governments are better equipped to solve problems and that concentrated federal power will ultimately cost the people their freedom.

Eventually their political differences lead to a painful falling out.

But this ends in 1812 when their mutual friend, Dr. Benjamin Rush, prompts a rapprochement in the form of a short New Year’s day letter sent by Adams to Jefferson. It will be one of the 380 notes the two will exchange from then on, reflecting on the country’s past and future.

They are both amazed and pleased by what they have proven together – the many promises of government by the people and for the people.

Both, however, also sense that something is being lost in America, that the once strong bonds of Union may be fraying in the face of sectional differences. In a moment of nostalgia, Adams recalls the spirit of 1776:

I look back with rapture on those golden days when Virginia and Massachusetts lived and acted together like a band of brothers.

Jefferson is laid to rest at 5PM, the day after his death, in a simple ceremony at Monticello. No invitations are sent out, but friends are allowed to visit his grave. According to his wishes, a headstone in the shape of an obelisk spells out the three things he wishes to be remembered for.

*Here was buried
Thomas Jefferson
Author of the Declaration of American Independence
of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom
& Father of the University of Virginia*

Adams's funeral is held in Quincy on July 7, with some 4,000 spectators on hand. It is marked by canon salutes and a procession, including dignitaries from Congressman Daniel Webster to John Kirkland, head of Harvard College, to Governor Levi Lincoln, from Adams's home to the First Congregational Church. Three weeks later Webster eulogizes both Adams and Jefferson at Faneuil Hall in Boston.

Their fame, indeed, is safe. Although no sculptured marble, should rise to their memory, nor engraved stone bear record of their deeds, yet will their remembrance... remain; for which American Liberty it rose, and with American Liberty Only can it perish.

Their deaths in 1826 narrow the list of survivors from the revolutionary period. The two Pinckneys are gone. Luther Martin, Rufus King and John Jay will follow soon. When Charles Carroll dies in 1832 all signers of the Declaration will have passed – and less than five years later, the voices of the remaining founders are silenced.

Founders Who Live On Past 1820

| 1820+ | Deaths | At Age |
|---------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Charles Pinckney | Oct 29, 1824 | 67 |
| CC Pinckney | Aug 16, 1825 | 79 |
| William Eustis | Feb 6, 1825 | 71 |
| John Adams | July 4, 1826 | 90 |
| Thomas Jefferson | July 4, 1826 | 83 |
| Luther Martin | July 8, 1826 | 78 |
| Rufus King | April 29, 1827 | 72 |
| John Jay | May 17, 1829 | 83 |
| James Monroe | July 4, 1831 | 73 |
| Charles Carroll III | Nov 14, 1832 | 95 |
| John Randolph | May 24, 1833 | 59 |
| William Johnson | Aug 4, 1834 | 62 |
| Nathaniel Dane | Feb 15, 1835 | 82 |
| John Marshall | July 6, 1835 | 79 |
| James Madison | June 28, 1836 | 85 |
| Aaron Burr | Sept 14, 1836 | 80 |

It will now be left to the next generation to continue to advance America along the paths laid out by the founders.