

# THE JEFFERSON IMAGE

## THE WORLD OF THOMAS JEFFERSON

PART TWO OF TWO PARTS

*The World of Thomas Jefferson is continued from the previous issue of Jefferson Notes*

**1796** John Adams is elected president. Thomas Jefferson becomes President of the Senate by virtue of his election to the vice presidency. As the presiding officer, he desires to follow a “known system of rules,” so prepares for his own guidance a manual of parliamentary law, following the practice of the English Parliament.

**1797** The United States is divided over the war between France and England. In order to suppress the supporters of France, Federalists in Congress pass the Alien and Sedition Acts. Jefferson believes the Acts violate the guarantees of speech and press in the First Amendment. His resolutions against the acts are adopted by the Kentucky legislature and James Madison writes similar ones for Virginia.

**1799** The U. S. capital is moved from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C. under an agreement with Alexander Hamilton that James Madison and Jefferson will support the U.S assumption of the war debts of the states. Jefferson later feels he was deceived by Hamilton.

On December 14, 1799, George Washington dies at Mt. Vernon.

**1800** Jefferson calls his election to the presidency the Revolution of 1800. It is the first election to be decided by the House of Representatives when Jefferson is tied with Aaron Burr in the Electoral College. Jefferson's inauguration day begins a Virginia “dynasty” that will last for twenty-five years through the succeeding presidencies of James Madison and James Monroe. On the day he takes his oath of office, he looks into the face of a new Chief Justice John Marshall, who will establish the legal basis for the supremacy of the central government over the sovereignty of the states in the American federal system of government. In 1804, the 12th amendment will be added to the Constitution to provide for separate ballots for the president and vice-president.

**1801** When the Pasha of Tripoli cuts down the United States flag - a ceremonial declaration of war - he intends to frighten the young nation, but the American reaction is, “Millions for defense- not one cent for tribute.” Jefferson sends the Navy and the Marines to the shores of Tripoli.

**1802** Jefferson plans an expedition to cross the Louisiana Territory and map the route to the Pacific coast. This “voyage of discovery” will gather data of plant life, animals and the soil, examine the possibilities of the fur trade in the inland waterways and establish relations with the Indians. Led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, this bold venture will take twenty-seven months. They map the course of the Missouri and Columbia Rivers, reach the Pacific ocean and dash all hope there is a “northwest passage” to China.

**1803** A slave uprising in 1791 had driven the French from Saint-Domingue. Napoleon wants it back as a base for an invasion of New Orleans and the development of the Louisiana Territory. In a futile effort to reestablish French rule in Saint-Domingue, Napoleon loses three armies. When he is approached by Robert Livingston and James Monroe to sell the Port of New Orleans, Napoleon is weary of the cost and loss of men. He offers to sell the entire Louisiana territory, 828,000 square miles, greater than the size of the original thirteen colonies.

In *Marbury v. Madison*, the Supreme Court for the first time declares a law unconstitutional and establishes the principle of judicial review.

**1804** Napoleon declares himself emperor of France. In his coronation at the Cathedral of Notre Dame, he changes the symbolic crowning by the pope when he takes the crown and places it on his own head.

**1806** Jefferson begins construction of Poplar Forest. His ownership of a second house was not well known, so Poplar Forest becomes a refuge from the endless stream of visitors to Monticello.

**1807** The European continent is again aflame with the Napoleonic wars and England begins to seize American ships carrying French cargo. Sailors who cannot prove American citizenship are taken by the British. Napoleon declares that all ships trading with the British will be stopped. Caught in the vise, Jefferson convinces Congress to pass the Embargo Acts prohibiting foreign goods from entering American ports or American goods from leaving. The seaport towns of the east coast and the Great Lakes violently oppose the embargo because of the impact

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on their economies. Jefferson is soon faced with widespread opposition and Congress is forced to lift the embargo.

**1808** James Madison is elected president.

**1810** Napoleon invades Spain and its colonial empire collapses. Mexico, Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras all proclaim independence.

**1811** Parliament installs the Prince of Wales as Prince Regent to rule because of the mental illness of his father, George III. Born three years before Jefferson, George III ascended to the throne in 1760 amid the instability of the Seven Years War. Jefferson would become his principal antagonist against colonial rule in *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* and in the Declaration of Independence.

**1812** As England and France war, America is caught between them. Its ships are attacked by both sides and the British navy continues to take American seamen, violate U. S. territorial waters and blockade its ports. Spurred on by the “War Hawks” in Congress from the west and south, and sensing the opportunity to take Canada, the United States declares war on June 18, 1812, on the most powerful nation in the world.

**1814** Washington is a deserted city and British troops burn the Capitol, the White House and most of the government buildings before returning to their ships the next night. A timely storm helps put out the flames and prevents greater destruction. It is not so easy for the British in Baltimore. American regular troops and militia put up a stout defense. Fort McHenry withstands the naval bombardment and by “the dawn’s early light” Francis Scott Key pens the words to the Star Spangled Banner. Although peace negotiators agree to end the war, this news does not reach the British expedition which finds Andrew Jackson waiting at New Orleans. One-third of the British force falls to the withering American fire. Shocked at their losses, the British leave the field and sail away, a triumphant end for the young United States.

**1815** To counter revolution sweeping through the colonial empires, Austria, Russia and Prussia form the Holy Alliance.

**1816** The Federalist party disappears. Jeffersonian Republicans nominate James Monroe for president and he wins all but three states.

**1817** The General Assembly again rejects Jefferson’s plan for public education but does agree to charter Central College in Charlottesville. It then designates



the site as the new University of Virginia. Jefferson determines the disciplines to be taught, devises the curriculum, and designs and supervises the building of an “academical village” with its unique ranges, and at the center a magnificent Rotunda.

**1819** Several years of falling land prices and bank failures continue. Inflation, unemployment and widespread business collapse combine to create the “Panic of 1819.” Fortunes based on an agrarian economy, such as those of Jefferson and Monroe, disappear.

**1820** Admission of Missouri to the union is blocked by Northern opponents of slavery. Slavery had existed here as part of the Louisiana Territory before it was acquired by the United States. The Missouri Compromise allows admission of Missouri and the free state of Maine. It also provides that future states carved from the rest of the Louisiana territory north of 36° 31' N will be free. Jefferson believes increasing opposition to slavery is a “fire bell in the night” and to him “the knell of the union.”

**1823** The Holy Alliance is a threat to restore the Spanish colonies in the Americas. Russia contests the claim of the United States to its Pacific northwest. In the president’s annual message, James Monroe reaffirms the policy established by George Washington that the United States will not interfere in European affairs. But the “American continents,” he declares, are not “subjects for future colonization” by the European powers. Monroe warns that any attempt to extend a European political system to the western hemisphere was dangerous to the “peace and safety” of the United States. Thomas Jefferson terms the issue “momentous.”

**1824** The Marquis de Lafayette visits America to great acclaim and is the first foreigner to address both houses of Congress. His grand tour includes all 25 states and in Charlottesville he dines with Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. When he dies in 1834, dirt from Bunker Hill is spread over his grave in the Picpus cemetery in Paris.

**1825** John Quincy Adams is elected president and the new Democratic and Whig parties emerge.

**1826** Jefferson dies at Monticello on July 4, 1826. He is buried there beneath an obelisk which reads:

**Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, and Father of the University of Virginia.**