

Thomas Jefferson
3rd President




Terms: 1801-1809

Political Party: Democratic-Republican

First Lady: Martha "Patsy" Jefferson Randolph (daughter)

Vice President: Aaron Burr, George Clinton

Overview

Born: April 13, 1743, in Shadwell, Virginia... Jefferson wrote his own epitaph: -- "Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom, and the Father of the University of Virginia" -- without mentioning that he served as president. As president, he authorized the Louisiana Purchase <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/duel/peoplevents/pande19.html>> and kept America free of the international entanglements of the Napoleonic Wars... Died: July 4, 1826.

The Era

- The Supreme Court decides *Marbury vs. Madison*, establishing the right of the courts to declare laws passed by Congress unconstitutional (1803)
- Meriwether Lewis and William Clark begin their exploration of Louisiana Territory (1804)
- The United States officially bans the importation of slaves from Africa (1808)

Domestic Policy

Jefferson advocated states' rights over national institutions. As president, he drastically cut

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the federal government, reducing spending in his administration as well as in the armed forces. His frugality allowed him to reduce the national debt more than 25 percent during his time in office despite paying 15 million for the Louisiana Purchase, doubling the nation's territory in 1803. Jefferson worried that the acquisition of foreign territory was not covered by the Constitution, and suspected that he was funding Napoleon's imperial ambitions, but ultimately decided that the opportunity was too good to pass up.

Foreign Affairs

Barbary pirates on the north coast of Africa harassed all shipping at the turn of the 19th century. Jefferson resisted the extortion and implemented a successful blockade of Tripoli and other Barbary ports in 1801. These actions forced him to reconsider his advocacy of budget cuts for the American navy. As Napoleon advanced in Europe, Jefferson resolved to remain neutral and banned all European trade from American ports.

“I believe this [to be] the strongest Government on earth. I believe it the only one where every man, at the call of the law, would fly to the standard of the law, and would meet invasions of the public order as his own personal concern.”

– Thomas Jefferson, 1801

Presidential Politics

Narrowly losing to John Adams

<<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/presidents-adams/>> in the election of 1796,

Jefferson tied Aaron Burr -- his running mate -- in the election 1800. After the election was thrown to the House of Representatives, where Federalists

<<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/duel/peoplevents/pande05.html>> delayed a resolution for a few weeks, Jefferson was elected president. As a Democratic-Republican succeeding the Federalist Adams, Jefferson participated in the first transfer of power between parties and established the system of peaceful transitions that ensured the United States would not be consumed by counter-revolution. Jefferson was easily reelected in 1804, and voluntarily stepped down after two terms by declaring that no president should serve longer than that.

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