

John Quincy Adams

6th President

John Quincy Adams



Terms: 1825-1829

Political Party: Democratic-Republican

First Lady: Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams

Vice President: John C. Calhoun

Overview

Born: July 11, 1767, in Braintree (now in Quincy), Massachusetts... John Quincy Adams, the first son of a president (John Adams <www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/presidents-jqadams/>) to be elected, was raised by his parents to attain the highest office in the land. As it turned out, the circumstances of his election created enemies that neutralized his presidency. Adams is now considered to have been one of America's greatest diplomats (before his presidency) and one of America's greatest congressmen (after his presidency) but not a particularly effective president.... Died: February 23, 1848, in Washington, D.C.

The Era

- Erie Canal completed, opening cheap transport access to the Midwest (1825)
- Bolivia and Uruguay become independent nations (1825)
- James Fenimore Cooper publishes *The Last of the Mohicans* and Noah Webster publishes a *Dictionary of American English* (1826, 1828)
- Frenchman Joseph Nicéphore Niepce develops a stable photographic process (1827)
- Russia goes to war against the Ottoman Empire (1828-9)
- Chang and Eng, the "Siamese Twins," visit Boston (1829)

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Domestic Policy

Adams believed that the United States should prosper as a national entity, with different regions specializing in different industries. In his first annual speech to Congress he called for federal projects like road and canal building, a national university and a national bank. The legislators balked at the perceived gall of such a narrowly elected president and pointed out the imbalance of regional aid and the opportunities for graft in Adams' proposal. At the end of his term, Adams signed a tariff bill into law -- called the "Tariff of Abominations" by its critics -- which protected American manufacturers but raised the prices on many goods, especially in the South. The tariff assured Adams would not be reelected and had repercussions for his successors.

Foreign Affairs

Adams had been groomed as a statesman since birth and worked as an American diplomat since [George Washington's](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/presidents-washington/) administration, rising to secretary of state under [James Monroe](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/presidents-monroe/). He was the primary author of the [Monroe Doctrine](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/tr-monroe/), negotiated the end of the War of 1812, and set policies regarding newly independent colonies in the Americas. Ironically, he accomplished little in the way of foreign policy during his presidency, in part because his previous activities settled so many issues and in part because of opposition from [Andrew Jackson's](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/presidents-jackson/) congressional supporters who denied Adams the resources necessary to hire more diplomats.

“Our political creed is, without a dissenting voice that can be heard, that the will of the people is the source and the happiness of the people the end of all legitimate government upon earth; that the best security for the beneficence and the best guaranty against the abuse of power consists in the freedom, the purity, and the frequency of popular elections.”

— John Quincy Adams, 1825

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Presidential Politics

In 1824 Andrew Jackson received more popular votes and more electoral college votes than any of the other three major candidates. Adams finished second. Yet Jackson lacked a full majority of electoral college votes. The decision to elect a president went to the House of Representatives, where Henry Clay threw his support behind Adams. Jackson supporters cried foul, especially after Adams appointed Clay his secretary of state, a post from which many previous presidents had ascended. The Jacksonians kept the pressure on Adams throughout his administration and in a rematch in 1828, Jackson won by a landslide.

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