

Thomas Jefferson Memorial

Washington, D.C.
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

*"We hold these truths to be self-evident:
that all men are created equal,
that they are endowed by their Creator
with certain inalienable rights,
among these are life, liberty, and
the pursuit of happiness."*

— Declaration of Independence



Thomas Jefferson—political philosopher, architect, musician, book collector, scientist, horticulturist, diplomat, inventor, and third President of the United States—looms large in any discussion of what Americans are as a people. Jefferson left to the future not only ideas but also a great body of practical achievements. President John F. Kennedy recognized Jefferson's accomplishments when he told a gathering of American Nobel Prize winners that they were the greatest assemblage of talent in the White House since Jefferson had dined there alone. With his strong beliefs in the rights of

man and a government derived from the people, in freedom of religion and the separation between church and state, and in education available to all, Thomas Jefferson struck a chord for human liberty 200 years ago that resounds through the decades. But in the end, Jefferson's own appraisal of his life, and the one that he wrote for use on his own tombstone, suffices: "Author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom, and Father of the University of Virginia."

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*"I have sworn upon the altar
of God eternal hostility against
every form of tyranny over
the mind of man."*



I AM NOT AN ADVOCATE FOR FREQUENT
CHANGES IN LAWS AND CONSTITUTIONS
BUT LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS MUST GO
HAND IN HAND WITH THE PROGRESS
OF THE HUMAN MIND AS THAT BECOMES
MORE DEVELOPED, MORE ENLIGHTENED.
AS NEW DISCOVERIES ARE MADE, NEW
TRUTHS DISCOVERED AND MANNERS AND
OPINIONS CHANGE, WITH THE CHANCE
OF BETTERMENT.

Thomas Jefferson: A Chronology

1743 Born at Shadwell, Albemarle County, Va., April 13
■ 1769-75 Member of Virginia House of Burgesses; very early a part of an increasingly anti-British faction; helped set up Virginia Committee of Correspondence
■ 1775-76 Attended Continental Congress; chosen to be on committee to write the Declaration of Independence and became its principal author ■ 1776-79 Member of Virginia House of Delegates; involved in rewriting state legal code to reflect republican principles concerning landholding, inheritance, and criminal law; drafted Virginia statute for religious freedom with the help of James Madison ■ 1779-81 Governor of Virginia ■ 1784-89 Ambassador to France; studies of architecture and Roman ruins led him to introduce the classical style in the United States, of which the Virginia State Capitol, the University of Virginia, and Monticello, his home, are notable examples ■ 1789-93 Secretary of State

under President George Washington; bargained with Alexander Hamilton to locate the Federal City on the Potomac River ■ 1797-1801 Vice President under President John Adams; supported states rights; opposed Alien and Sedition Acts as unwarranted infringement of individual liberties and of freedom of speech ■ 1801-09 President; negotiated the Louisiana Purchase that doubled the size of the United States; sponsored Lewis and Clark Expedition to the mouth of the Columbia River; strove to maintain peace and not be drawn into the war between Great Britain and France ■ 1809-26 Lived at Monticello; drew up plans, supervised construction, and outlined curriculum of the University of Virginia; corresponded extensively with John Adams ■ 1826 Died on 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, July 4, a few hours before John Adams