

# John Quincy Adams

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**John Quincy Adams** (iˈkwɪnzi<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>[a]</sup> July 11, 1767 – February 23, 1848) was an American statesman who served as the sixth President of the United States from 1825 to 1829. He also served as a diplomat, a Senator and member of the House of Representatives. He was a member of the Federalist, Democratic-Republican, National Republican, and later Anti-Masonic and Whig parties.

In his biography, Samuel Flagg Bemis argues that Adams was able to:

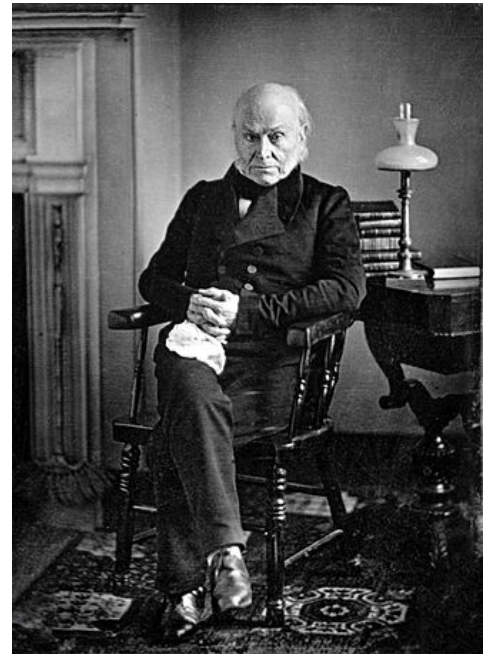
"gather together, formulate, and practice the fundamentals of American foreign-policy – self-determination, independence, noncolonization, nonintervention, nonentanglement in European politics, Freedom of the Seas, [and] freedom of commerce."<sup>[4]</sup>

Adams was the son of former President John Adams and Abigail Adams. As a diplomat, Adams played an important role in negotiating key treaties, most notably the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812. As Secretary of State, he negotiated with Britain over the United States' northern border with Canada, negotiated with Spain the annexation of Florida, and drafted the Monroe Doctrine. Historians agree he was one of the greatest diplomats and secretaries of state in American history.<sup>[5][6]</sup>

As president, he sought to modernize the American economy and promote education. Adams enacted a part of his agenda and paid off much of the national debt.<sup>[7]</sup> He was stymied by a Congress controlled by his enemies, and his lack of patronage networks helped politicians eager to undercut him. He lost his 1828 bid for re-election to Andrew Jackson.

Adams is best known as a diplomat who shaped America's foreign policy in line with his ardently nationalist commitment to America's republican values. More recently, he has been portrayed as the exemplar and

## John Quincy Adams



**6th President of the United States**

**In office**

March 4, 1825 – March 4, 1829

**Vice President** John C. Calhoun

**Preceded by** James Monroe

**Succeeded by** Andrew Jackson

**8th United States Secretary of State**

**In office**

September 22, 1817 – March 4, 1825

**President** James Monroe

**Preceded by** James Monroe

**Succeeded by** Henry Clay

**United States Minister to the Court of St. James's**

**In office**

April 28, 1814 – September 22, 1817

**Nominated by** James Madison

**Preceded by** Jonathan Russell (Acting)

**Succeeded by** Richard Rush

moral leader in an era of modernization. During Adams' lifetime, technological innovations and new means of communication spread messages of religious revival, social reform, and party politics. Goods, money, and people traveled more rapidly and efficiently than ever before.<sup>[8]</sup>

Adams was elected a U.S. Representative from Massachusetts after leaving office, serving for the last 17 years of his life with far greater acclaim than he had achieved as president. Animated by his growing revulsion against slavery,<sup>[9]</sup> Adams became a leading opponent of the Slave Power. He predicted that if a civil war were to break out, the president could abolish slavery by using his war powers. Adams also predicted the Union's dissolution over the slavery issue, but said that if the South became independent there would be a series of bloody slave revolts.<sup>[10]</sup>

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### United States Minister to Russia

#### In office

November 5, 1809 – April 28, 1814

**Nominated by** James Madison

**Preceded by** William Short

**Succeeded by** James Bayard

### United States Minister to Prussia

#### In office

December 5, 1797 – May 5, 1801

**Nominated by** John Adams

**Preceded by** Position established

**Succeeded by** Henry Wheaton

### United States Minister to the Netherlands

#### In office

November 6, 1794 – June 20, 1797

**Nominated by** George Washington

**Preceded by** William Short

**Succeeded by** William Vans Murray

### United States Senator from Massachusetts

#### In office

March 4, 1803 – June 8, 1808

**Preceded by** Jonathan Mason

**Succeeded by** James Lloyd

### Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Massachusetts's 8th district

#### In office

March 4, 1843 – February 23, 1848

**Preceded by** William Calhoun

**Succeeded by** Horace Mann

### Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Massachusetts's 12th district

#### In office

March 4, 1833 – March 4, 1843

**Preceded by** James Hodges

**Succeeded by** George Robinson

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## Early life, education, and early career

John Quincy Adams was born on July 11, 1767, to John Adams and his wife Abigail Adams (née Smith) in a part of Braintree, Massachusetts that is now Quincy.<sup>[11]</sup> John Quincy Adams did not attend school, but was tutored by his cousin James Thax and his father's law clerk, Nathan Rice.<sup>[12]</sup> He was named for his mother's maternal grandfather, Colonel John Quincy, after whom Quincy, Massachusetts, is named.<sup>[13]</sup> His namesake great-grandfather died only two days after he was born.

Adams first learned of the Declaration of Independence from the letters his father wrote his mother from the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia. In 1779, Adams began a diary that he kept until just before he died in 1848.<sup>[14]</sup> The massive fifty volumes are one of the most extensive collections of first-hand information from the period of the early republic and are widely cited by modern historians.<sup>[7]</sup>

### Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Massachusetts's 11th district

#### In office

March 4, 1831 – March 4, 1833

**Preceded by** Joseph Richardson

**Succeeded by** John Reed

#### Personal details

<b>Born</b>	July 11, 1767 Braintree, Massachusetts Bay (now Quincy, Massachusetts, U.S.)
<b>Died</b>	February 23, 1848 (aged 80) Washington, D.C., U.S.
<b>Resting place</b>	United First Parish Church Quincy, Massachusetts
<b>Political party</b>	Whig (1838–1848)
<b>Other political affiliations</b>	Federalist (Before 1808) Democratic-Republican (1808–1830) National Republican (1830–1834) Anti-Masonic (1834–1838)
<b>Spouse(s)</b>	Louisa Johnson (1797-1848; his death)
<b>Children</b>	George John Charles Louisa
<b>Parents</b>	John Adams Abigail Adams
<b>Alma mater</b>	Harvard College
<b>Profession</b>	Lawyer, diplomat, professor, politician
<b>Religion</b>	Unitarianism <sup>[1][2]</sup>
<b>Signature</b>	<i>John Quincy Adams</i>

Much of Adams' youth was spent accompanying his father overseas. John Adams served as an American envoy to France from 1778 until 1779 and to the Netherlands from 1780 until 1782, and the younger Adams accompanied his father on these diplomatic missions.<sup>[7]</sup> Adams acquired an education at institutions such as Leiden University. He matriculated in Leiden January 10, 1781.<sup>[15][16]</sup> For nearly three years, beginning at the age of 14, he accompanied Francis Dana as a secretary on a mission to Saint Petersburg, Russia, to obtain recognition of the new United States. He spent time in Finland, Sweden, and Denmark and, in 1804, published a travel report of Silesia.<sup>[17]</sup> During these years overseas, Adams became fluent in French and Dutch and became familiar with German and other European languages. Adams, mainly through the influence of his father, had also excelled in classical studies and reached high fluency of Latin and Greek. Upon entering Harvard he had already translated Virgil, Horace, Plutarch, and Aristotle.<sup>[18]</sup> He entered Harvard College and was graduated in 1787 with a Bachelor of Arts degree, Phi Beta Kappa.<sup>[19]</sup> Adams House at Harvard College is named in honor of Adams and his father. He later earned an M.A. from Harvard in 1790.<sup>[20]</sup> He apprenticed as an attorney with Theophilus Parsons in Newburyport, Massachusetts, from 1787 to 1789. He gained admittance to the bar in 1791 and began practicing law in Boston.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Early political career (1796–1817)

### Washington administration

Adams first won national recognition when he published a series of widely read articles supporting Washington's decision to keep America out of the growing hostilities surrounding the French Revolution. Soon after, George Washington appointed Adams minister to the Netherlands (at the age of 26) in 1793. He did not want the position, preferring to maintain his quiet life of reading in Massachusetts, and probably would have rejected it if his father had not persuaded him to take it. On his way to the Netherlands, he was to deliver a set of documents to John Jay, who was negotiating the Jay Treaty. After spending some time with Jay, Adams wrote home to his father, in support of the emerging treaty because he thought America should stay out of European affairs. Historian Paul Nagel has noted that this letter reached Washington, and that parts of it were used by Washington when drafting his farewell address.<sup>[7]</sup>

While going back and forth between The Hague and London, he met and proposed to his future wife, Louisa Catherine Johnson. Though he wanted to return to private life at the end of his appointment, Washington appointed him minister to Portugal in 1796, where he was soon promoted to the Berlin Legation. Though his talents were far greater than his desire to serve, he was finally convinced to remain in public service when he learned how highly Washington thought of his abilities.<sup>[7]</sup> Washington called Adams "the most valuable of America's officials abroad," and Nagel believes that it was at this time that Adams first came to terms with a lifetime of public service.<sup>[7]</sup>

He became a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1797.<sup>[21]</sup> When the elder Adams became president, he appointed his son in 1797 as Minister to Prussia at Washington's urging. There Adams signed the



Gilbert Stuart, *Portrait of Louisa Catherine Johnson*

renewal of the very liberal Prussian-American Treaty of Amity and Commerce after negotiations with Prussian Foreign Minister Count Karl-Wilhelm Finck von Finckenstein. He served at that post until 1801.

While serving abroad, in 1797 Adams also married Louisa Catherine Johnson, the daughter of an American merchant, in a ceremony at the church of All Hallows-by-the-Tower, London. Adams remains the only president to have a First Lady born outside of the United States.

## Massachusetts politics

On his return to the United States, Adams was appointed a Commissioner of Monetary Affairs in Boston by a Federal District Judge; however, Thomas Jefferson rescinded this appointment. He again tried his hand as an attorney, but shortly afterward entered politics. John Quincy Adams was elected a member of the Massachusetts State Senate in April 1802. In November 1802 he ran as a Federalist for the United States House of Representatives and lost.<sup>[22]</sup>

The Massachusetts General Court elected Adams as a Federalist to the U.S. Senate soon after, and he served from March 4, 1803, until 1808, when he broke with the Federalist Party. Adams, as a senator, had supported the Louisiana Purchase and Jefferson's Embargo Act, actions which made him very unpopular with Massachusetts Federalists. The Federalist-controlled Massachusetts Legislature chose a replacement for Adams on June 3, 1808, several months early. On June 8, Adams broke with the Federalists, resigned his Senate seat, and became a Republican.<sup>[23]</sup>

## Harvard professor

While a member of the Senate, Adams also served as a professor of logic at Brown University.<sup>[24]</sup> Disowned by the Federalists and not fully accepted by the Republicans, Adams used his Boylston Professorship of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard as a new base.<sup>[25]</sup> Adams' devotion to classical rhetoric shaped his response to public issues. He remained inspired by classical rhetorical ideals long after the neo-classicalism and deferential politics of the founding generation had been eclipsed by the commercial ethos and mass democracy of the Jacksonian Era. Many of Adams' idiosyncratic positions were rooted in his abiding devotion to the Ciceronian ideal of the citizen-orator "speaking well" to promote the welfare of the polis.<sup>[26]</sup> Adams was influenced by the classical republican ideal of civic eloquence espoused by British philosopher David Hume.<sup>[27]</sup> Adams adapted these classical republican ideals of public oratory to America, viewing the multilevel political structure as ripe for "the renaissance of Demosthenic eloquence." Adams' *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (1810) looks at the fate of ancient oratory, the necessity of liberty for it to flourish, and its importance as a unifying element for a new nation of diverse cultures and beliefs. Just as civic eloquence failed to gain popularity in Britain, in the United States interest faded in the second decade of the 19th century as the "public spheres of heated oratory" disappeared in favor of the private sphere.<sup>[28]</sup>

## First U.S. minister to Russia

President James Madison appointed Adams as the first ever United States Minister to Russia in 1809 (though Francis Dana and William Short had previously been nominated to the post, neither presented his credentials at Saint Petersburg). After resigning his post at Harvard, Adams and his wife Louisa boarded a merchant ship in Boston on Aug. 5, 1809. Their youngest son was with them during the long and tedious voyage to St. Petersburg. Their voyage was temporarily interrupted outside the southern coast of

Norway<sup>[29]</sup> due to the Gunboat War. They were at first boarded by a British officer who examined their papers and then, later that day, by a Norwegian officer who ordered the ship to Christiansand. In Christiansand, Adams discovered thirty-eight U.S. vessels which had been detained by the Norwegians and decided to take whatever action necessary to gain the release of both ships and crew as soon as possible. Norway was under Danish rule at the time, so the officer and pirates were actually Norwegian. The voyage to St. Petersburg resumed but was once again stopped by a British squadron. Adams showed his commission to Admiral Albermarle Bertie, the commander of the Squadron who recognized the usage of nations and Adams as an ambassador. The usage of nations is common laws of nations founded on custom. Because of the many delays, the Adams' did not arrive in St. Petersburg until October 23, 1809.

## Diplomatic relations

Count Nikolay Rumyantsev, Chancellor of the empire, formally received Adams, and requested a copy of his credential letter. Romanzoff assured Adams that his appointment pleased him personally. Adams presentation to the emperor was postponed however because of the temporary indisposition of Alexander I. Rumyantsev immediately invited Adams to a diplomatic dinner which included the French ambassador, Armand Augustin Louis de Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza, numerous foreign ministers then at the Russian Court, and many of the nobility. This was the same mansion Adams had dined in 1781, as secretary of Francis Dana.

Tsar Alexander I received Adams alone in his cabinet where he expressed his pleasure at Adams' appointment. Adams told Alexander that "the President of the United States had desired him to express the hope that his mission would be considered as a proof of respect for the person and character of his majesty, as an acknowledgment of the many testimonies of good-will he had already given to the United States, and of a desire to strengthen commercial relations between them and his provinces." Alexander replied, that, "in everything depending on him, he should be happy to contribute to the increase of their friendly relations; that it was his wish to establish a just system of maritime rights, and that he should adhere invariably to those he had declared."<sup>[30]</sup> After these official diplomatic greetings, Alexander and Adams discussed several other issues such as the policies of the different European powers, trade and commerce, and other mutually beneficial prospects, and that the Russian and U.S. could be very useful to each other.

Adams was also given private audiences with the empress and the dowager empress, who also received Louisa Adams. While not officially a diplomat, Louisa Adams did serve an invaluable role as wife-of-diplomat, becoming a favorite of the czar and making up for her husband's utter lack of charm. She was an indispensable part of the American mission.<sup>[31]</sup>

Adams requested Rumyantsev to ask Alexander to act on behalf of the United States in securing the release of the American sailors and ships being held by the Danish. The Tsar ordered the Chancellor to request the release of the American property as soon as possible, which the Danish government complied with. Adams spent a great deal of time securing the release of American vessels and seamen from various "seizures and sequestrations."

In 1811, Adams received a commission from the Secretary of State as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. Adams immediately declined and remained in St. Petersburg. In 1812, Adams reported the news of Napoleon's invasion of Russia and Napoleon's disastrous retreat. Also in 1812, Rumyantsev asked if he should request Alexander to mediate a pacification of hostilities between the United States and Great Britain. The U.S. accepted the offer and in July 1813, two associates of Adams, Albert Gallatin and James A. Bayard arrived in St. Petersburg to begin negotiations under mediation by

Alexander. Gallatin was at that time Secretary of Treasury and the Senate rejected his appointment to the diplomatic mission as incompatible under the Constitution. However, this rejection did not occur until after Gallatin and Bayard had already left for St. Petersburg. In September, Lord William Cathcart delivered a British memoir to Alexander explaining their reasons for declining the mediation. Thus ended President Madison's hope that Alexander could end a war that he himself had declared.<sup>[32]</sup>

### **Adams in Russian society**

Adams was well liked by the Russian Court and often would be met on walks by Alexander. The tsar asked Adams if he would be taking a house in the country over the summer. When Adams hesitated, the emperor stated with good humor that perhaps it was a financial consideration and Adams was able to respond in kind that it was in large part. Adams was a man who endeavored to live within the means provided by the American government.<sup>[33]</sup>

The Adams' were also provided with several invitations to various entertainments. "The formalities of these court presentations," Mr. Adams remarked, "are so trifling and insignificant in themselves, and so important in the eyes of princes and courtiers, that they are much more embarrassing to an American than business of greater importance. It is not safe or prudent to despise them, nor practicable for a person of rational understanding to value them."<sup>[34]</sup> Adams was concerned that the various balls and parties given by the Tsar and the foreign ministers, took too much time away from his official duties. Often these events would last until 4 a.m., so Adams stopped attending those he was able to avoid. The numerous diplomatic visits also annoyed Adams who wrote "I have been engaged the whole forenoon; and though I rise at six o'clock, I am sometimes unable to find time to write only part of a private letter in the course of the day. These visits take up so much of my time, that I sometimes think of taking a resolution not to receive them; but, on the other hand, so much information important to be possessed, and particularly relative to current political events, is to be collected from them, that they are rather to be encouraged than discountenanced."

In 1814, Adams was recalled from Russia to serve as chief negotiator of the U.S. commission for the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812 between the United States and United Kingdom.

### **Minister to the court of St. James's**

Finally, he was sent to be minister to the Court of St. James's (Britain) from 1815 until 1817, a post that was first held by his father.<sup>[23]</sup> The name is derived from its location at St. James's Palace. In London, Adams was part of a U.S. Legation consisting of himself, two young secretaries and a small office in Craven Street, London WC2.<sup>[35]</sup> Since they were not particularly well paid, Adams and his wife Louisa lived in Ealing, at that time a village in the countryside, in order to maintain the expensive carriages and liveries which social appearance demanded.<sup>[35]</sup>

## **U.S. Secretary of State (1817–1825)**

Adams served as Secretary of State in the Cabinet of President James Monroe from 1817 until 1825. Typically, his views concurred with those espoused by Monroe. As Secretary of State, he negotiated the Adams–Onís Treaty (which acquired Florida for the United States), the Treaty of 1818, and wrote the Monroe Doctrine. Many historians regard him as one of the greatest Secretaries of State in American history.<sup>[5][6]</sup>

The Floridas, still a Spanish territory but with no Spanish presence to speak of, became a refuge for runaway slaves and native Americans. Monroe sent in General Andrew Jackson who pushed the Seminole Indians south, executed two British merchants who were supplying weapons, deposed one governor and named another, and left an American garrison in occupation.<sup>[36]</sup> President Monroe and all his cabinet, except Adams, believed Jackson had exceeded his instructions. Adams argued that since Spain had proved incapable of policing her territories, the United States was obliged to act in self-defense. Adams so ably justified Jackson's conduct that he silenced protests from either Spain or Britain; Congress refused to punish Jackson. Adams used the events that had unfolded in Florida to negotiate the Florida Treaty with Spain in 1819 that turned Florida over to the U.S. and resolved border issues regarding the Louisiana Purchase.<sup>[36]</sup>

With the ongoing Oregon boundary dispute, Adams sought to negotiate a settlement with England to decide the border between the western United States and Canada. This would become the Treaty of 1818. Along with the Rush–Bagot Treaty of 1817, this marked the beginning of improved relations between the British Empire and its former colonies, and paved the way for better relations between the U.S. and Canada. The treaty had several provisions, but in particular it set the boundary between British North America and the United States along the 49th parallel through the Rocky Mountains. This settled a boundary dispute caused by ignorance of actual geography in the boundary agreed to in the 1783 Treaty of Paris that ended the American Revolutionary War. That earlier treaty had used the Mississippi River to determine the border, but assumed that the river extended further north than it did, and so that earlier settlement was unworkable.

By the time Monroe became president, several European powers, in particular Spain, were attempting to re-establish control over South America.<sup>[37]</sup> On Independence Day 1821, in response to those who advocated American support for independence movements in many South American countries,<sup>[38]</sup> Adams gave a speech in which he said that American policy was moral support for independence movements but not armed intervention. Adams foresaw what would befall the United States if it sacrificed its republican spirit on the altar of empire. He stated that America "goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy" lest she "involve herself beyond power of extrication, in all wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom. The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force." The United States, Adams warned, might "become the dictatress of the world [but] she would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit."<sup>[39]</sup> From this, Adams authored what came to be known as the Monroe Doctrine, which was introduced on December 2, 1823. It stated that further efforts by European countries to colonize land or interfere with states in the Americas would be viewed as acts of aggression requiring U.S. intervention.<sup>[40]</sup> The United States, reflecting concerns raised by Great Britain, ultimately hoped to avoid having any European power take over Spain's colonies.<sup>[37]</sup> It became a defining



1815 US passport issued by John Quincy Adams at London



John Quincy Adams by Gilbert Stuart, 1818



moment in the foreign policy of the United States and one of its longest-standing tenets, and would be invoked by many U.S. statesmen and several U.S. presidents, including Theodore Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan and others.

## 1824 presidential election

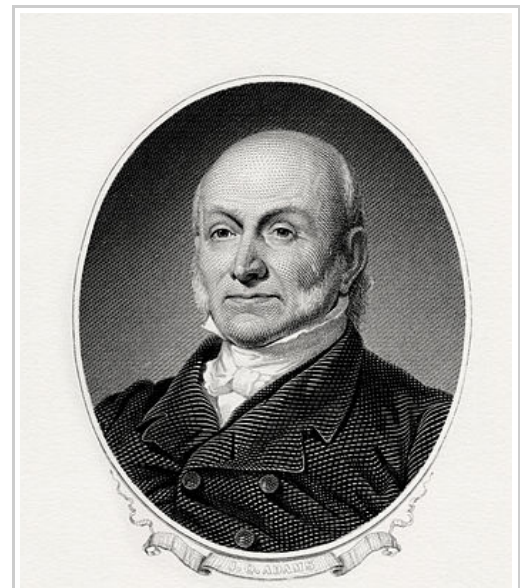


1938 stamp of John Quincy Adams

As the 1824 election drew near people began looking for candidates. New England voters admired Adams' patriotism and political skills and it was mainly due to their support that he entered the race. The old caucus system of the Democratic-Republican Party had collapsed; indeed the entire First Party System had collapsed and the election was a fight based on regional support. Adams had a strong base in New England. His opponents included John C. Calhoun, William H. Crawford, Henry Clay, and the hero of New Orleans, Andrew Jackson. During the campaign Calhoun dropped out, and Crawford fell ill giving further support to the other candidates. When Election Day arrived, Andrew Jackson won, although narrowly, pluralities of the popular and electoral votes, but not the necessary majority of electoral votes.<sup>[41]</sup> With just over one-fourth voter turnout for the election, combined with Adams receiving less than one-third of the popular vote, Adams scored only 113,142 votes.

Under the terms of the Twelfth Amendment, the presidential election fell to the House of Representatives, which was to choose from the top three candidates: Jackson, Adams, and Crawford. Clay had come in fourth place and thus was not on the ballot, but he retained considerable power and influence as Speaker of the House.

Clay's personal dislike for Jackson and the similarity of his American System to Adams' position on tariffs and internal improvements caused him to throw his support to Adams, who was elected by the House on February 9, 1825, on the first ballot. Adams' victory shocked Jackson, who had won the most electoral and popular votes and fully expected to be elected president. When Adams appointed Clay as Secretary of State—the position that Adams and his three predecessors had held before becoming president—Jacksonian Democrats were outraged, and claimed that Adams and Clay had struck a "corrupt bargain". This contention overshadowed Adams' term and greatly contributed to Adams' loss to Jackson four years later, in the 1828 election.<sup>[41]</sup>



BEP engraved portrait of Adams as president

## Presidency (1825–1829)

Adams served as the sixth President of the United States from March 4, 1825, to March 4, 1829. He took the oath of office on a book of constitutional law, instead of the more traditional Bible. Adams proposed an elaborate program of internal improvements (roads, ports and canals), a national university, and federal support for the arts and sciences. He favored a high tariff to encourage the building of factories, and

restricted land sales to slow the movement west. Opposition from the states' rights faction of a hostile congress killed many of his proposals.<sup>[43]</sup> He also reduced the national debt from \$16 million to \$5 million, the remainder of which was paid off by his immediate successor, Andrew Jackson.<sup>[7]</sup>

Paul Nagel argues that his political acumen was not any less developed than others were in his day, and notes that Henry Clay, one of the era's most astute politicians, was a principal advisor to Adams and supporter throughout his presidency. Nagel argues that Adams' political problems were the result of an unusually hostile Jacksonian faction, and Adams' own dislike of the office.<sup>[7]</sup> Although a product of the political culture of his day, he refused to play politics according to the usual rules and was not as aggressive in courting political support as he could have been. He was attacked by the followers of Jackson, who accused him of being a partner to a "corrupt bargain" to obtain Clay's support in the election and then appoint him Secretary of State.<sup>[44]</sup> Jackson defeated Adams in 1828, and created the modern Democratic party thus inaugurating the Second Party System.<sup>[45]</sup>



John Quincy Adams in a posthumous portrait created in 1858 by G.P.A. Healy.<sup>[42]</sup>

## Domestic policies



Presidential Dollar of John Quincy Adams

During his term, Adams worked on transforming America into a world power through "internal improvements," as a part of the "American System". It consisted of a high tariff to support internal improvements such as road-building, and a national bank to encourage productive enterprise and form a national currency. In his first annual message to Congress, Adams presented an ambitious program for modernization that included roads, canals, a national university,<sup>[46]</sup> an astronomical observatory,<sup>[47]</sup> and other initiatives. The support for his proposals was mixed, mainly due to opposition from Jackson's followers.<sup>[48]</sup>

Some of his proposals were adopted, specifically the extension of the Cumberland Road into Ohio with surveys for its continuation west to St. Louis; the beginning of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, the construction of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal and the Louisville and Portland Canal around the falls of the Ohio; the connection of the Great Lakes to the Ohio River system in Ohio and Indiana; and the enlargement and rebuilding of the Dismal Swamp Canal in North Carolina.<sup>[49]</sup> One of the issues which divided the administration was protective tariffs, of which Henry Clay was a leading advocate. After Adams lost control of Congress in 1827, the situation became more complicated. By signing into law the Tariff of 1828, quite unpopular in parts of the south, he further antagonized the Jacksonians.<sup>[50]</sup>

Adams' generous policy toward Native Americans caused him trouble. Settlers on the frontier, who were constantly seeking to move westward, cried for a more expansionist policy. When the federal government tried to assert authority on behalf of the Cherokees, the governor of Georgia took up arms. Adams defended his domestic agenda as continuing Monroe's policies. In contrast, Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren instigated the policy of Indian removal to the west (i.e. the Trail of Tears).<sup>[51]</sup>

## Foreign policies

Adams is regarded as one of the greatest diplomats in American history, and during his tenure as Secretary of State, he was the chief designer of the Monroe Doctrine.<sup>[52]</sup> He had witnessed the First Barbary War and the Second Barbary War against the Arab pirates of North Africa, and the Greek War of Independence from the Ottoman Turks. Public opinion in the U.S. strongly favored the Greek cause and such leaders as Henry Clay called for intervention. Adams strongly opposed any entanglement in European affairs.<sup>[53]</sup> According to Charles Edel, Adams believed that, "Intervention would accomplish little, retard the cause of republicanism, and distract the country from its primary goal of continental expansion. Moreover, fearful that U.S. intentions would outstrip its capabilities, Adams thought that projecting U.S. power abroad would weaken its gravitational force on the North American continent."<sup>[54]</sup>

On July 4, 1821, he gave an address to Congress:

... But she [the United States of America] goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.<sup>[39]</sup>

During his term as president, however, Adams achieved little of long-term consequence in foreign affairs. A reason for this was the opposition he faced in Congress, where his rivals prevented him from succeeding.<sup>[52]</sup> Among his diplomatic achievements were treaties of reciprocity with a number of nations, including Denmark, Mexico, the Hanseatic League, the Scandinavian countries, Prussia and Austria. However, thanks to the successes of Adams' diplomacy during his previous eight years as secretary of state, most of the foreign policy issues he would have faced had been resolved by the time he became president.<sup>[55]</sup>

## Administration and cabinet

The Adams Cabinet		
OFFICE	NAME	TERM
President	<b>John Quincy Adams</b>	1825–1829
Vice President	<b>John C. Calhoun</b>	1825–1829
Secretary of State	<b>Henry Clay</b>	1825–1829
Secretary of Treasury	<b>Richard Rush</b>	1825–1829
Secretary of War	<b>James Barbour</b>	1825–1828
	<b>Peter B. Porter</b>	1828–1829
Attorney General	<b>William Wirt</b>	1825–1829
Secretary of the Navy	<b>Samuel L. Southard</b>	1825–1829

## Appointments

## Supreme Court

- Robert Trimble – June 16, 1826 – August 25, 1828

## States admitted to the Union

- None.

## Departure

John Quincy Adams left office on March 4, 1829, after losing the election of 1828 to Andrew Jackson. Adams did not attend the inauguration of his successor, Andrew Jackson, who had openly snubbed him by refusing to pay the traditional "courtesy call" to the outgoing president during the weeks before his own inauguration.<sup>[7]</sup> He was one of only four presidents who chose not to attend their respective successor's inauguration; the others were his father, Andrew Johnson, and Richard Nixon.

## 1828 presidential election

After the inauguration of Adams in 1825, Jackson resigned from his senate seat. For four years he worked hard, with help from his supporters in Congress, to defeat Adams in the presidential election of 1828. The campaign was very much a personal one. As was the tradition of the day and age in American presidential politics, neither candidate personally campaigned, but their political followers organized many campaign events. Both candidates were rhetorically attacked in the press. This reached a low point when the press accused Jackson's wife Rachel of bigamy. She died a few weeks after the elections. Jackson said he would forgive those who insulted him, but he would never forgive the ones who had attacked his wife.

Adams lost the election by a decisive margin. He won all the same states that his father had won in the election of 1800: the New England states, New Jersey, and Delaware, as well as parts of New York and a majority of Maryland. Jackson won the rest of the states, picking up 178 electoral votes to Adams' 83 votes, and succeeded him. Adams and his father were the only U.S. presidents to serve a single term during the first 48 years of the Presidency (1789–1837). Historian Thomas Bailey observed, "Seldom has the public mind been so successfully poisoned against an honest and high-minded man."<sup>[56]</sup>

## Later congressional career (1830–1848)

Adams did not retire after leaving office. Instead he ran for and won a seat in the United States House of Representatives in the 1830 elections. This went against the generally held opinion that former Presidents should not run for public office. He was the first President to serve in Congress after his term of office, and one of only two former presidents to do so (Andrew Johnson later served in the Senate). He was elected to nine terms, serving as a Representative for 17 years, from 1831 until his death.

Adams ran for Governor of Massachusetts in 1833 on the Anti-Masonic ticket.<sup>[57]</sup> Incumbent National Republican Governor Levi Lincoln, Jr. was retiring and Adams faced National Republican John Davis, Democrat Marcus Morton and Samuel L. Allen of the Working Men's Party. Davis won a plurality, 40%,

and Adams took 29% with Morton taking 25% and Allen 6%. Because no candidate had won a majority, the election was sent to the state legislature to decide. Adams withdrew and endorsed Davis, preferring him over Morton, and Davis was chosen by the legislature in January 1834.

In authoring a change to the Tariff of 1828, he was instrumental to the compromise that ended the Nullification Crisis. When James Smithson died and left his estate to the U.S. government to build an institution of learning, many in Congress wanted to use the money for other purposes. Adams was key to ensuring that the money was instead used to build the Smithsonian Institution.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Committee assignments

In Congress, he was chair of the Committee on Commerce and Manufactures, the Committee on Indian Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Affairs.<sup>[58]</sup>

## Slavery

A longtime opponent of slavery, Adams used his new role in Congress to fight it. In 1836, Southern Representatives voted in a “gag rule” that immediately tabled any petitions about slavery, thus preventing any discussion or debate of the slavery issue. He became a forceful opponent of this rule and conceived a way around it, attacking slavery in the House for two weeks.<sup>[7]</sup>

The gag rule prevented him from bringing slavery petitions to the floor, but he brought one anyway. It was a petition from a Georgia citizen urging disunion due to the continuation of slavery in the South. Though he certainly did not support it and made that clear at the time, his intent was to antagonize the pro-slavery faction of Congress into an open fight on the matter.<sup>[7]</sup> The plan worked.

The petition infuriated his Congressional enemies, many of whom were agitating for disunion themselves. They moved for his censure over the matter, enabling Adams to discuss slavery openly during his subsequent defense. Taking advantage of his right to defend himself, Adams delivered prepared and impromptu remarks against slavery and in favor of abolition.<sup>[7]</sup> Knowing that he would probably be acquitted, he changed the focus from his own actions to those of the slaveholders, speaking against the slave trade and the ownership of slaves.<sup>[59]</sup> He decided that if he were censured, he would merely resign, run for the office again, and probably win easily.<sup>[7]</sup> When his opponents realized that they played into his political strategy, they tried to bury the censure. Adams made sure this did not happen, and the debate continued. He attacked slavery and slaveholders as immoral and condemned the institution while calling for it to end.<sup>[7]</sup> After two weeks, a vote was held, and he was not censured. He delighted in the misery he was inflicting on the slaveholders he so hated, and prided himself on being "obnoxious to the slave faction."<sup>[7]</sup>

Although the censure of Adams over the slavery petition was ultimately abandoned, the House did address the issue of petitions from enslaved persons at a later time. Adams again argued that the right to petition was a universal right, granted by God, so that those in the weakest positions might always have recourse to those in the most powerful. Adams also called into question the actions of a House that would limit its own ability to debate and resolve questions internally. After this debate, the gag rule was ultimately retained.<sup>[60]</sup>

The discussion ignited by his actions and the attempts of others to quiet him raised questions of the right to petition, the right to legislative debate, and the morality of slavery.<sup>[7]</sup> During the censure debate, Adams said that he took delight in the fact that southerners would forever remember him as "the acutest, the astutest, the archest enemy of southern slavery that ever existed".<sup>[7]</sup>

In 1844, he chaired a committee for reform of the rules of Congress, and he used this opportunity to try once again to repeal the gag rule. He spent two months building support for this move, but due to northern opposition, the rule narrowly survived.<sup>[7]</sup> He fiercely criticized northern Representatives and Senators, in particular Stephen A. Douglas, who seemed to cater to the slave faction in exchange for southern support.<sup>[7]</sup> His opposition to slavery made him, along with Henry Clay, one of the leading opponents of Texas annexation and the Mexican–American War. He correctly predicted that both would contribute to civil war.<sup>[7]</sup> After one of his reelection victories, he said that he must "bring about a day prophesied when slavery and war shall be banished from the face of the earth."<sup>[7]</sup> He wrote in his private journal in 1820:<sup>[61]</sup>

The discussion of this Missouri question has betrayed the secret of their souls. In the abstract they admit that slavery is an evil, they disclaim it, and cast it all upon the shoulder of...Great Britain. But when probed to the quick upon it, they show at the bottom of their souls pride and vainglory in their condition of masterdom. They look down upon the simplicity of a Yankee's manners, because he has no habits of overbearing like theirs and cannot treat negroes like dogs. It is among the evils of slavery that it taints the very sources of moral principle. It establishes false estimates of virtue and vice: for what can be more false and heartless than this doctrine which makes the first and holiest rights of humanity to depend upon the color of the skin?

In 1841, at the request of Lewis Tappan and Ellis Gray, Adams joined the case of *United States v. The Amistad*. Adams went before the Supreme Court on behalf of African slaves who had revolted and seized the Spanish ship *Amistad*. Adams appeared on 24 February 1841, and spoke for four hours. His argument succeeded; the Court ruled in favor of the Africans, who were declared free and returned to their homes.<sup>[62]</sup>

## Photography

In 1843, Adams sat for the earliest confirmed photograph still in existence of a U.S. president, although other sources contend that William Henry Harrison had posed even earlier for his portrait, in 1841.<sup>[63]</sup> The original daguerreotype is in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution.<sup>[64]</sup> Although there is no indication that the two were close, Adams met Abraham Lincoln during the latter's sole term as a member of the House of Representatives, from 1847 until Adams' death. Thus, it has been suggested that Adams is the only major figure in American history who knew both the Founding Fathers and Abraham Lincoln, though Martin Van Buren met Founding Fathers Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, knew Founder Aaron Burr (Van Buren's mentor), and met the young Lincoln while on a campaign trip through Illinois.

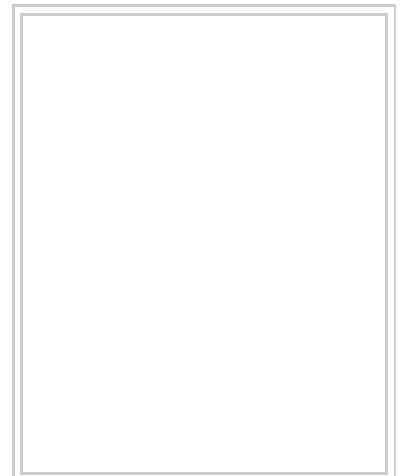
## Nullification crisis

Besides his opposition to slavery and the gag rule (discussed above), his congressional career is remembered for several other key accomplishments. Shortly after Adams entered Congress, the Nullification Crisis threatened civil war over the Tariff of 1828. Adams authored an alteration to the tariff, which weakened it and diffused the crisis. Congress also passed the Force Bill which authorized President Andrew Jackson to use military force if Adams' compromise bill did not force the belligerent states to capitulate. There was no need, however, because Adams' compromise defused the issue. The compromise actually did not alter the tariff as much as the southern states had hoped, though they agreed not to continue pursuing the issue for fear of civil war.<sup>[7]</sup>

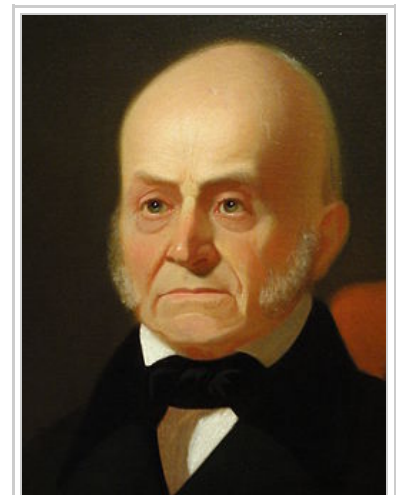
Adams also became a leading force for the advancement of science. As president, he had proposed a national observatory, which did not win much support. In 1829 British scientist James Smithson died, and left his fortune for the "increase and diffusion of knowledge." In Smithson's will, he stated that should his nephew, Henry James Hungerford, die without heirs, the Smithson estate would go to the government of the United States to create an "Establishment for the increase & diffusion of Knowledge among men." After the nephew died without heirs in 1835, President Andrew Jackson informed Congress of the bequest, which amounted to about US\$500,000 (\$75,000,000 in 2008 U.S. dollars after inflation). Adams realized that this might allow the United States to realize his dream of building a national institution of science and learning. Adams thus became Congress' primary supporter of what would become the Smithsonian Institution. He also relentlessly pursued support for astronomical efforts and observatories, seeking a national observatory for the United States.<sup>[65][66]</sup> His efforts eventually led to what is now the United States' oldest, still-operational scientific institution, the United States Naval Observatory. In 1825 Adams signed a bill for the creation of a national observatory just before leaving presidential office – which became the Naval Observatory. Adams in fact spent many nights at the Observatory, with celebrated national astronomer and oceanographer Matthew Fontaine Maury, watching and charting the stars, which had always been one of Adams' avocations.

As for efforts to found the Smithsonian Institution, the money was invested in shaky state bonds, which quickly defaulted. After heated debate in Congress, Adams successfully argued to restore the lost funds with interest.<sup>[67]</sup> Though Congress wanted to use the money for other purposes, Adams successfully persuaded Congress to preserve the money for an institution of science and learning.<sup>[7]</sup> Congress also debated whether the federal government had the authority to accept the gift, though with Adams leading the initiative, Congress decided to accept the legacy bequeathed to the nation and pledged the faith of the United States to the charitable trust on July 1, 1836.<sup>[68]</sup>

## Death

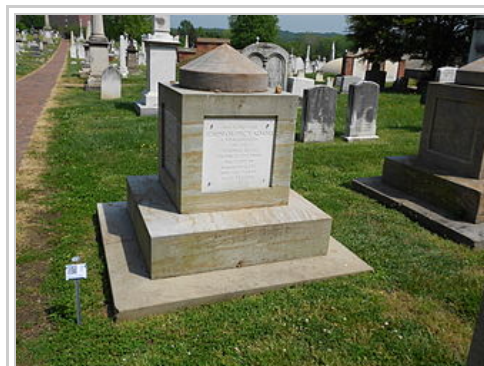


Glass collodion negative copy c. 1860 of a daguerreotype of John Quincy Adams in 1847 or 1848, attributed to Mathew Brady (retouched)



Detail view of the portrait of *Adams* in the U.S. National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C., painted by George Caleb Bingham; this copy c. 1850 from an original of 1844

In 1846, the 78-year old former president suffered a stroke that left him partially paralyzed. After a few months of rest, he made a full recovery and resumed his duties in Congress. When Adams entered the House chamber, everyone "stood up and applauded."<sup>[69]</sup> On February 21, 1848, the House of Representatives was discussing the matter of honoring U.S. Army officers who served in the Mexican–American War. Adams had been a vehement critic of the war, and as Congressmen rose up to say "Aiy!" in favor of the measure, he instead yelled "No!"<sup>[70]</sup> He rose to answer a question put forth by the Speaker of the House.<sup>[71]</sup> Immediately thereafter, Adams collapsed, having suffered a massive cerebral hemorrhage.<sup>[72]</sup> Two days later, on February 23, he died with his wife and youngest son at his side in the Speaker's Room inside the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. His last words were "This is the last of earth. I am content." He died at 7:20 p.m.<sup>[71]</sup>



Adams's cenotaph at the Congressional Cemetery

His original interment was temporary, in the public vault at the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C. Later, he was interred in the family burial ground in Quincy, Massachusetts, across from the First Parish Church, called Hancock Cemetery. After Louisa's death in 1852, his son Charles Francis Adams had his parents reinterred in the expanded family crypt in the United First Parish Church across the street, next to John and Abigail. Both tombs are viewable by the public. Adams' original tomb at Hancock Cemetery is still there and marked simply "J.Q. Adams".<sup>[73]</sup>

## Personal life

John Quincy Adams and Louisa Catherine Adams had three sons and a daughter. Their daughter, Louisa, was born in 1811 but died in 1812 while the family was in Russia. They named their first son George Washington Adams (1801–1829) after the first president. Both George and their second son, John (1803–1834), led troubled lives and died in early adulthood.<sup>[74][75]</sup> (George committed suicide and John was expelled from Harvard before his 1823 graduation.)



John Quincy Adams' original tomb at Hancock Cemetery, across the street from United First Parish Church

Adams' youngest son, Charles Francis Adams (who named his own son John Quincy), also pursued a career in diplomacy and politics. In 1870 Charles Francis built the first memorial presidential library in the United States, to honor his father. The Stone Library includes over 14,000 books written in twelve languages. The library is located in the "Old House" at Adams National Historical Park in Quincy, Massachusetts.

John Adams and John Quincy Adams were the only father and son to serve as presidents until George H. W. Bush (1989 - 1993) and George W. Bush (2001 - 2009).

## Legacy



John Quincy Adams Birthplace is now part of Adams National Historical Park and open to the public. The name Quincy has been used for at least nineteen other places in the United States. Those places were either directly or indirectly named for John Quincy Adams (for example, Quincy, Illinois, was named in honor of Adams while Quincy, California, was named for Quincy, Illinois).

Adams was the first president to have his photograph taken.<sup>[76]</sup> He also became the first president to adopt a short haircut instead of long hair tied in a queue and to regularly wear long trousers instead of knee breeches. He is probably best known as a diplomat who shaped America's foreign policy in accordance with his ardently nationalist views, and is widely considered by historians to have been one of the greatest diplomats in American history.<sup>[5]</sup> He was key to the negotiation of several important treaties, such as the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812, and the Florida Treaty, which resulted in the annexation of Florida. He also formulated the Monroe Doctrine, which is still evoked to the present day. He is viewed by many as the exemplar and moral leader in an era of modernization. During this era, new technologies and networks of infrastructure and communication brought to the people messages of religious revival, social reform, and party politics, as well as moving goods, money, and people ever more rapidly and efficiently.<sup>[8]</sup>

Though he was always quite hostile to slavery, nearly to the point of being an abolitionist (although he doubted the abolitionists could successfully end slavery), he grew even more hostile to it later in life.<sup>[9]</sup> Adams became a leading opponent of slave power and articulated a theory whereby the president could abolish slavery by using his war powers, a correct prediction of Abraham Lincoln's use of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Adams predicted the likelihood of the Union's dissolution over the slavery issue, and was a key opponent of the Mexican–American War for this reason.<sup>[10]</sup> Though he later described his presidency as the unhappiest time of his life,<sup>[7]</sup> scholars rate John Quincy Adams in the second quartile in the majority of historical presidential rankings.

Historians have often included Adams among the leading conservatives of his day.<sup>[7][77][78][79][80]</sup> Russell Kirk, however, sees Adams as a flawed conservative who was imprudent in opposing slavery.<sup>[77]</sup>

## Diaries

One of Adams' most important legacies is his massive diary,<sup>[7]</sup> which he began at age 11 with the simple entry "A journal, by me, J.Q.A." The Diary, housed at the Massachusetts Historical Society, covers, in extraordinary detail, Adams' life and experiences up to his death in 1848.<sup>[14]</sup> The massive fifty volumes are one of the most extensive collections of first-hand information from that period of the early American republic, and are cited by historians in a wide range of matters pertaining to that period.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Personality



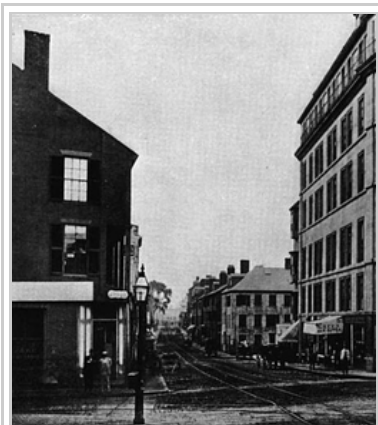
Tombs of Presidents John Adams (left) and John Quincy Adams (right) and their wives, in a family crypt beneath the United First Parish Church

Adams' personality was much like that of his father, as were his political beliefs.<sup>[7]</sup> Throughout his life, he always preferred reading in seclusion to attending social engagements, and several times had to be pressured by others to remain in public service. Historian Paul Nagel argues that, like Abraham Lincoln after him, Adams suffered from depression for much of his life. Early in his life he sought some form of treatment. Adams thought his depression was due to the high expectations demanded of him by his father and mother. Throughout his life he felt inadequate and socially awkward because of his depression, and was constantly bothered by his physical appearance.<sup>[7]</sup> He was closer to his father, whom he spent much of his early life with abroad, than he was to his mother. When he was younger and the American Revolution was going on, his mother told her children what their father was doing, and what he was risking, and because of this Adams grew to greatly respect his father.<sup>[7]</sup> His relationship with his mother was rocky; she had high expectations of him and was afraid her children might end up a dead alcoholic like her brother.<sup>[7]</sup> As Abigail Adams had feared, John Quincy's brother, Charles, would eventually follow this fate.

John Quincy fell in love shortly after he finished school, but his mother did not approve of his considering marriage when he was still dependent on his parents for support, and the relationship ended. When he fell in love with his future wife, Louisa Johnson, his mother disapproved of this relationship as well. His biographer, Nagel, concludes that this disapproval motivated him to marry Johnson in 1797, despite Adams' reservations that Johnson, like his mother, had a strong personality.<sup>[7]</sup>

Marquis de Lafayette once gave Adams an alligator as a gift, which he lodged for months in the unfinished East Room of the White House, before building it its own lodge. Reports indicate he enjoyed showing it to visitors.<sup>[81][82]</sup>

## Antislavery advocacy



Adams lived at the corner of Tremont and Boylston Streets, Boston, 1806–1809 <sup>[83]</sup>

Before 1820, Adams was best known as an exponent of American nationalism. Later in life, especially after his election to the House, he was famous as the most prominent national leader opposing slavery. He was not an abolitionist, say biographers Nagel and Parsons.<sup>[7][84]</sup> Remini notes that Adams thought the end of slavery would come by either civil war or the consent of the slave South, but definitely not through the work of abolitionists.<sup>[85]</sup>

The turning point came with the debate on the Missouri Compromise in 1820 when he broke with his friend John C. Calhoun, who became the most outspoken national leader in favor of slavery. They became bitter enemies. Adams vilified slavery as a terrible evil and preached total abolition, while Calhoun countered that the right to own slaves had to be protected from interference from the federal government to keep the nation alive. Adams said slavery contradicted the principles of republicanism, while Calhoun said that slavery was essential to American democracy, for it made all white men equal. Both men pulled away from nationalism, and started to consider

dissolution of the Union as a way of resolving the slavery predicament. Adams predicted that if the South formed a new nation, it would be torn apart by an extremely violent slave insurrection. If the two nations went to war, Adams predicted the president of the United States would use his war powers to abolish

slavery. The two men became ideological leaders of the North and the South.<sup>[86]</sup> In the House Adams became a champion of free speech, demanding that petitions against slavery be heard despite a "gag rule" that said they could not be heard.<sup>[87]</sup>

In 1841, Adams had the case of a lifetime, representing the defendants in *United States v. The Amistad Africans* in the Supreme Court of the United States. He successfully argued that the Africans, who had seized control of a Spanish ship on which they were being transported illegally as slaves, should not be extradited or deported to Cuba (a Spanish colony where slavery was legal) but should be considered free. Under President Martin Van Buren, the government argued the Africans should be deported for having mutinied and killed officers on the ship. Adams won their freedom, with the chance to stay in the United States or return to Africa. Adams made the argument because the U.S. had prohibited the international slave trade, although it allowed internal slavery. He never billed for his services in the *Amistad* case.<sup>[88]</sup> The speech was directed not only at the justices of this Supreme Court hearing the case, but also to the broad national audience he instructed in the evils of slavery.<sup>[89]</sup>



The original sketch of John Quincy Adams during his final hours of life after his collapse in the Capitol. (Drawing in pencil by Arthur Joseph Stansbury)

Adams repeatedly spoke out against the "Slave Power", that is the organized political power of the slave owners who dominated all the southern states and their representation in Congress.<sup>[90]</sup> He vehemently attacked the annexation of Texas (1845) and the Mexican War (1846–48) as part of a "conspiracy" to extend slavery.<sup>[91]</sup>

## Film and television

Adams occasionally is featured in the mass media. In the PBS miniseries *The Adams Chronicles* (1976), he was portrayed by David Birney, William Daniels, Marcel Trenchard, Steven Grover and Mark Winkworth. He was also portrayed by Anthony Hopkins in the 1997 film *Amistad*, and again by Ebon Moss-Bachrach and Steven Hinkle in the 2008 HBO television miniseries *John Adams*; the HBO series received criticism for needless historical and temporal distortions in its portrayal.<sup>[92]</sup>

## See also

- Adams political family
- Inauguration of John Quincy Adams
- List of opponents of slavery
- List of United States political appointments across party lines
- List of Presidents of the United States, sortable by previous experience
- Mendi Bible
- Presidential Issue
- *Profiles in Courage*, a book by John F. Kennedy

- United States presidential election, 1820
- US Presidents on US postage stamps

## Pronunciation note

- a. ^ The Quincy family name was pronounced /ˈkwɪnzi/, as is the name of the city in Massachusetts where Adams was born. All of the other Quincy place names are locally /ˈkwɪnsi/. Though not accurate, this pronunciation is also commonly used for Adams' middle name.<sup>[3]</sup>

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- ^ ***a b c*** Bemis (1949)
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