

Thomas Jefferson.  
At the Jefferson Day Banquet, Seminole  
April 12th, 1933.

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It is no more than fitting that we should set aside this day to remember the founder of our party. Simultaneously with the adoption of the constitution of these United States there sprang into existence a political organization known as the Democratic Party. It is to-day one of the leading factors in our government. It also has the distinction of being the oldest organization of its kind in the world. And we are here tonight to dedicate ourselves to its preservation and continuance so that the principles laid down and so sincerely and religiously followed by The Ideal Democrat, Thomas Jefferson, shall be strengthened and upheld.

It is not my purpose to go into a detailed history of Mr. Jefferson although it would be enlightening and historical. But I shall simply refer to those contributions he made to society and government that have effected us most.

He believed in men. It was his belief that backbone and honesty of our country rested chiefly in the farming people. That because of their peculiar state of independence they were less corruptible. Born in 1743, April 13th, of the aristocracy of Virginia, belonging to the stock of England and Scotland. He was an orphan at 14 with an income from his father's estate of \$4,000.00 a year, an immense sum in those days. He went to Williamsburg college, after getting his early training from the Rev. Mr. Maury, who was the victim of Patrick Henry's first philippic against the Established Church. He was industrious, studious and quick to comprehend and tenacious of memory. He studied law under George Wythe, one of the great lawyers and law teachers of that period.

But it is of his affairs in government that we wish to learn.

He was elected to the assembly of Virginia in 1769 as a member of the House of Burgesses where he sat until the Revolution. During his service there he made several attempts toward the freedom of the slaves. He stated: "during the Regal government nothing liberal could be accomplished."

He held in abhorance the tendency of the colonies and subsequent states toward great cities. It was his belief that the congesting of humanity into such communities would breed bad morals, ill health and circumscribe the liberties of men. In connection with this he pointed out that the history of the world did not reveal an instance where "corruption of the morals of the great mass of the cultivators" revealed an example. As early as 1755 he and some of his associates "cooked" up a resolution to the Crown against the evils they claimed were leading to revolution. This perhaps was the first step and the first document leading to the Declaration of Independence. The Revolutionary Convention of Virginia in 1774 was an occasion for Jefferson to pen what he called "Summary View of the Rights of British America." It was sent to England and there became the handbook for the Opposition. It also occasioned the placing of Jefferson's name on the rolls of Proscription. It is amazing how those old fellows played with death.

In 1775 Jefferson was sent to Congress. He carried with him a draft that was later called "Summary View.", and gave him the distinction of being hailed as a forceful writer. He was not a debater but a writer. This occasion later led to his choice as the author of the Declaration of Independence. In that congress he became one of the leaders of the radicals which Dickinson of Pennsylvania headed the conservatives. John Adams did the debating for the radicals.

Which Patrick Henry voicing the ideas of the people of Virginia Jefferson was sent to Philadelphia to the convention of 1776 and was there chosen as one of three, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin and perhaps, also, Sherman and Livingston, to draft a declaration of Independence. These last two never touched the document and Adams and Franklin only slightly. The convention itself, however, eliminated much of the later part of the declaration, that as to introduction of slaves and lessened the harshness of reference to the King of England and the people of England. All of these were done to draw over Dickinson, which was never accomplished. However Dickenson was persuaded by Doctor Franklin to remain away on the day set for voting on its adoption and a rider was send into Rode Island to bring an absent delegate so that the ratification might be unanimous. It was and each man who signed that declaration knew that he was enviting death for treason.

Strange to say there is little in the utterances of Adams or Doctor Franklin, who was a prolific writer, about the composition of the Declaration. That is not strange, for the things therein contained were of every day knowledge to those men. They had lived and were living in the midst of the very things recited.

Jefferson resigned his seat in congress and returned to take up work in foring the laws of Virginia. The work he did there left its impress on every state in this Union. In his judgment and in the judgment of the student of government his greatest accomplishment to our people was rendered there.

He drew up the Bill of Courts.

He next did away with the law of entail.

He suspended the importation of slaves.

He broke down the Established Church.

He removed the State Capitol to a safer place.

He compeled a declaration of the rights of citizens.

Jefferson considered four of these bills of the greatest importance: The repeal of the laws of entail and primogeniture did away with the steadily growing trend to a landed aristocracy. It would prevent the accumulation and perpetuation of wealth in select families and keep the soil from mortmain or inalienability in certain families. The repeal of the primogeniture law would prevent the eldest child from receiving all the estate while the others were poor and needy. It would require an equal division of estates and obstruct the tendency toward feudal distinctions.

Jefferson was a strong and bitter foe of corporations, for as he said: the pooling of wealth was destructive of individual efforts, and the idea of corporations holding the title to land was monstrous and unreal.

The suspension of the importation of slaves was only a half loaf as what he was driving at was to free the slaves and prevent what he so clearly saw was sooner or later to come, civil war.

He broke down the Established Church and forced it to finance itself elsewhere than from the public funds. The poor were as much entitled to their religious belief and the rich and under the Established Church only the rich might belong and find the way of Heaven. He was paving the way for religious freedom, and if you remember it was Jefferson that forced the first ten amendments to the constitution, one of which guaranteed religious liberty. And when he had completed this great program he is said to have remarked: " And all this has been effected without the violation of a single natural right of any one individual." Personal liberty was his watchword.

In 1779 on account of the extreme age of Patrick Henry Jefferson was forced to accept the governorship of Virginia. His home was ransacked by the raiding Tarleton and Jefferson only escaped with his life.

At about this time he lost his wife and his sorrow was so deep that he withdrew from public life and was only drawn back in at the request of General Washington. He went to France as a Commissioner of the United States and remained there until after Washington was elected present when he was ordered home by Washington accept the Secretaryship of State. Hamilton was Secretary of the Treasury. A bitter rivalry sprang up. Jefferson was a man of the people- Hamilton had monarchial ideas. Hamilton was a shrewd judge of human nature. He realized that men of affairs were only swayed by force or interest. Not having the force he built up the treasury so as to make it interesting. Jefferson was shocked. Washington somewhat so, himself. During all this time each side were writing articles in the various papers and periodicals. They became scathing and handereus. Washington, himself, did not escape. But Jefferson stood steadfast for the liberty of press and speech. This brought he and Washington to the nearest approach fo estrangment.

Through his insistance the first ten amendments to the constitution were enacted insuring religious freedom, freedom of the press, freedom of the person from unlawful siezure under protection of Habaes Corpus. Trial by jury in both criminal and civil matters. He believed in the people, and if not all the people, then a part of them. He believed that from the people all justice eminated. He carried this idea to his grave.

He was elected president over Aaron Burr and during his first administration came the Louisiana purchase. He found no warranty in the constitution for such an act but he felt that the people would back him up. They did. His purpose in the purchahse was not to procure a larger country but to secure the upper reaches and the mouth of the Mississippi so that the English, whom he feared and dispised, would not have uninterrupted entrance for attack on the States?

He ran for reelection because the ministry, the bar, the financiers and the ancient families and the Federalist editors had bemeaned him from one end of the country to the other. The man of the people is never popular with those who seek an advantage and the press in those days, as it is in ours, was of necessity, taking the part of the wealthy who could pour money into its coffers.

The bitter fight between Jefferson and John Marshall was one of the outstanding instances of his two administrations. Marshall was the man of organized wealth. He organized and established the first corporation in these United States and during his service upon the Supreme Court bench, his attitude always leaned toward organized business. His position, it is well to admit, made it possible for our country to progress as rapidly as it did, but on the other hand that very position of Marshall's has set a government up over the government of the people and has contributed greatly to the mess we are in today. It has contributed to the centralization of our government and has given power and authority to the federal government that was never intended by the framers of our constitution. We find business running to the central government to acquire privilege that could not be obtained through the states. Business has been successful and the structure which it build up has fallen by its own weight.

Jefferson was reelected by the vote of 162 to 14. The people stayed with him. His confidence was justified, and the people were justified in their confidence in him. He laid down an embargo during the European wars as he thought it cheaper to do that than be drawn into the war. He was bitterly abused, but we who have passed through and looked back upon the World War can recognize his wisdom.

He died as he had lived in the midst of his people. Actually eaten out of house and home and at one time calling upon his old friend James Madison to bury him when he died. Thousands and thousands of people visited him at Monticello and as many as fifty beds were placed for their accomidation. They would atand around in the halls and curiously watch the great man as he passed from one room to the other, or follow him into the gardens where he was wont to walk and curòously stare at him. But he never lost patience. He was never rude. He carried out the Virginia hospitality even to financial ruin.

He designed many architectural masterpieces, particularly that of the University of Virginia.

He died on the 4th day of July, 1826, just a few hours before John Adams. Over his grave a monument proclaims:

" Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, author of the ~~American~~ Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom, and father of the Univeristy of Virginia."

He was the father of our party. May we never stray away from the ideals he held. May we retain his confidence in the people and may that confidence be justified. We have one in the White house today that is restoring Jeffersonian order to our government. Let it be our several and individual aims to uphold that strong, firm man in his exemplification of our founders ideals.