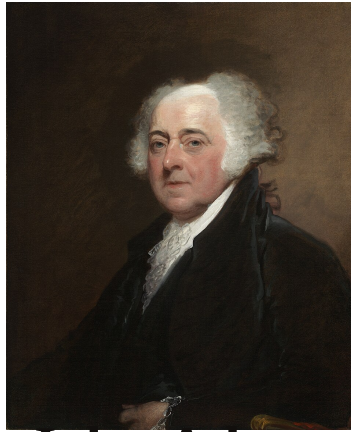




John Adams

October 30, 1735 - July 4, 1826

Quincy, Massachusetts

John Adams died in Quincy, Massachusetts, on the afternoon of July 4, 1826, fifty years to the day after the Declaration he had argued into being. He was ninety. The last words reported to the room were that Thomas Jefferson still lived. Jefferson had died a few hours earlier at Monticello; the two old rivals, reconciled by a late correspondence, left the country on the same anniversary.

He was born in Braintree - now Quincy - on October 30, 1735, a farmer's son who made himself a lawyer and then the most useful irritant in the Continental Congress. He nominated Washington to command, insisted on independence when caution was fashionable, and sailed to Europe to borrow money and write treaties. He was the first vice president, a job he called insignificant, and the second president, a term crowded by the Quasi-War with France, the Alien and Sedition Acts he later had cause to regret, and a refusal to declare a full war that would have been popular and ruinous.

The election of 1800 sent him home in bitterness. Peacefield, the house in Quincy, became the long workshop of retirement: diaries, letters to Abigail until her death, then the extraordinary exchange with Jefferson that repaired a friendship the campaign had broken. He lived to see his son, John Quincy Adams, take the same office - a dynastic accident he treated as a father's pride and a republican embarrassment.

He was vain, learned, and incapable of flattery. The Massachusetts constitution he drafted is still in force. He asked to be remembered as a man who had done his duty and been misunderstood, which is a kind of accuracy. Quincy was the beginning and the end. The granite church on the square holds the family vault.

Services

Died in Quincy, Massachusetts, on July 4, 1826. Entombed in the United First Parish Church, Quincy.

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