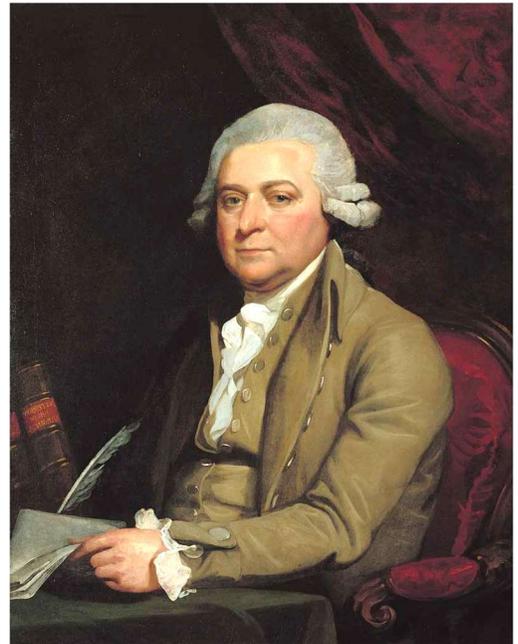


John Adams

**2nd President of the United States,
1797 – 1801**
“Father of the United States Navy”

John Adams was born on a small farm near what is now Quincy Massachusetts on October 30, 1735. He had two younger brothers, Peter and Elihu. His father was a farmer and a deacon in the Congregational Church. His mother was from a well-respected medical family. John Adams was the great-great-grandson of John and Priscilla Alden, Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620, and he always felt that it was important to lead a good, moral life and work hard, just as his ancestors did.



Adams went to local schools when he was young. When he turned 16, he went to Harvard College and graduated in 1755 with a law degree. In 1758, Adams earned his master’s degree law from Harvard, and he began practicing law in his hometown. Six years later, he married Abigail Smith, and they had six children – three sons, two daughters, and a daughter who died at birth. One of John and Abigail’s sons, John Quincy, became the sixth president of the United States. Abigail Adams and Barbara Bush are the only two women who have been married to a President and had a son serve as President.

Adams first became famous when he organized protests against the Stamp Act. The British Parliament’s act required colonists to pay a tax on any legal document, newspaper, or flyer that was printed on paper. In 1768, he achieved recognition throughout the Colonies for successfully defending John Hancock, whom the British custom officials had charged with smuggling.

Adams soon became one of the leaders of the American independence movement. He was a member of the Continental Congress from 1774 to 1778. He was in charge of 25 of the more than 90 congressional committees on which he sat. Adams played an instrumental role in obtaining Washington’s appointment as the Commander in Chief of the Continental Army, and was a member of the five-man committee charged with writing the Declaration of Independence. Adams then led the debate in Congress to have the declaration passed. On July 4, 1776, the declaration was approved by Congress and sent to the thirteen colonies for ratification.



Declaration of Independence, painted by John Trumbull. John Adams is standing in the center with his hand on his hip.

In 1778, Adams wrote a state constitution for his home state of Massachusetts. It would later serve as one of the models for the United States Constitution. In 1783, he joined Benjamin Franklin and John Jay in negotiating the Treaty of Paris (1783), in which Britain recognized the independence of the United States, officially ending the war of the American Revolution.

In 1789, Adams was elected as America's first Vice President. When George Washington refused to run for a third term, Adams was elected President and his arch enemy, Thomas Jefferson, was elected Vice President. In the original Constitution, the person with the most votes became President and the person who came in second became Vice President. This was changed by the 12th Amendment to the Constitution.

During Adam's term as President, Napoleon Bonaparte was the leader of France. Bonaparte was trying to take over most of Europe, so England went to war against France. When American merchant ships sailed across the Atlantic to sell goods to Europeans, the British Navy would capture America sailors and make them serve in the British Navy. President Adams knew that we needed a stronger navy to defend our ships, so he asked Congress to approve new warships and establish the Department of the Navy. Federalists wanted a war with France, but Adams insisted on remaining neutral. Finally, he was able to reach peace with the other countries, and he saved the United States from going a war. The Federalists were angered by Adams, and in the election of 1801, they turned against him and he lost.

Near the end of John Adams' term as President, the Government was moved from Philadelphia to the new capital city of Washington, D. C. Adams retired to Peacefield, Massachusetts. He lived to see his son become President, and he died at the age of 90. Ironically, John Adams died on July 4, 1826, fifty years after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. His arch rival, Thomas Jefferson, died on the same day. Adams and Jefferson were the only two Presidents to have signed the Declaration of Independence.

<http://www.ipl.org/div/potus/gwashington.html>