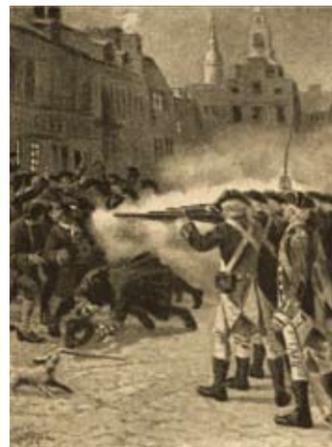


George the Third, King of Great-Britain. . . is endeavoring to destroy the good people of the United Colonies, by sending fleets and armies to America. . . in order to compel us to submit to the most debasing and detestable tyranny. . . it becomes our highest duty, to use every means with which God and nature has furnished us, in support of our invaluable rights and privileges to oppose that power. . . *The Pennsylvania Evening Post, Philadelphia, Saturday, May 18, 1776*

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Thomas Jefferson

The Correspondence of William Fleming and Thomas Jefferson

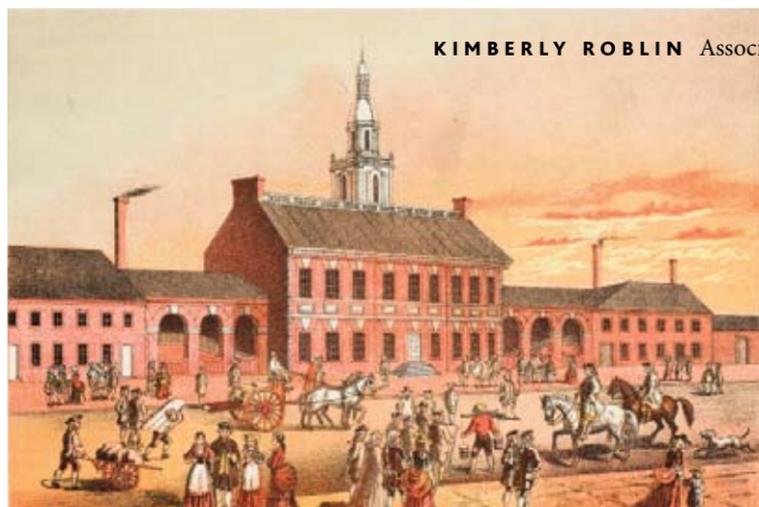


ABOVE: The Boston Massacre from *A History of the American People* by Woodrow Wilson, 1902. Volume 2. GM 2527.4879. ~

On March 7, 1770, British soldiers outside the Customs House in Boston fired into a large crowd, killing five colonists. It was the culmination of increasing hostilities between Britain and her colonies. The redcoats stood trial and were defended by John Adams. Most were acquitted, but patriot propaganda succeeded in portraying the event as The Boston Massacre. ~

RIGHT: Independence Hall, Phila. Pa. 1776. Artist unknown. Chromolithograph, 1876. GM 1526.1017. ~ The Pennsylvania State House, also known as Independence Hall, was located on Chestnut Street between Fifth and Sixth Streets in Philadelphia.

PHILADELPHIA, SUMMER, 1776—The American Revolution is in its infancy, gaining momentum as opposition to the Crown increasingly replaces the loyalty once pledged to it. King George III has long since abandoned attempts to quiet the minds of his subjects in America, and has turned instead to an oppressive militant policy. The language of local newspapers reveals the charged and unstable atmosphere: destroy, confiscate, fire, sword, desolation, debasing, detestable. Tyranny. Although unthinkable less than a decade before, many colonists have begun to embrace independence from Great Britain, and at the Pennsylvania State Hall, this historic decision falls to the Second Continental Congress—among its members a young Virginian, Thomas Jefferson.



KIMBERLY ROBLIN Associate Curator



LEFT TO RIGHT: Portrait of Judge William Fleming by an unknown artist. Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia. ~ Thomas Jefferson. De Quevanillier. Etching. GM 15.1122. ~ William and Mary College from *A History of the American People* by Woodrow Wilson, 1902. Volume 2. GM 2527.4879. Jefferson attended the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg from 1760 to 1762. He shared a dorm-room in Wren Hall with William Fleming. He once called Williamsburg “the finest school of manners and morals that ever existed in America.” In the background is Thomas Jefferson’s writing desk. 1776. Smithsonian Institution; Washington, D.C. This mahogany lap desk was designed by Jefferson and built by Benjamin Randolph, a Philadelphia cabinetmaker. Jefferson used this desk when he wrote the Declaration of Independence and quite probably the Gilcrease letter to William Fleming.

Only thirty-three, he is the youngest Virginia delegate at the Congress but already possesses a reputation for both his quick mind and his able pen. He has recently been appointed to draft a declaration for independence, and he completes it in only a few days at his apartment on Market Street. On Friday, June 28 he submits it to Congress, and on the following Monday morning he receives a letter postmarked from Williamsburg, where his old friend William Fleming is serving on the Fifth Virginia Convention.

The two first met as roommates in 1760 at the College of William and Mary while teenagers. Both were born to prominent Virginia families, Jefferson tracing his lineage to the Randolph family, one of the most powerful and influential of the colony, and Fleming tracing his to John Rolfe and Matoaka, commonly known as Pocahontas. Jefferson had quickly made friends with Fleming and also another young Virginian, John Page.

Jefferson reminisces on his adolescent correspondence with the two friends—how they inquired after young ladies in whose presence they felt self-conscious and foolish. How they felt *overwhelmed with more and greater misfortunes than have befallen a descendant of Adam for these thousand years...excepting Job*.

Gone now is his penchant for melodrama, yet other aspects of his character have remained the same—the constant worry over others’ opinions of him, a fervent idealism, and hope for the future. These he carries still, along with a desire, common in the 18th century, to work diligently at the cultivation and preservation of his reputation.

It has been fourteen years since Jefferson and Fleming completed their studies. Both pursued a law career. Both married. Jefferson has begun a family. Much has changed since their university days, but their correspondence has continued. Particularly at the present, it acts as a constant and a comfort in a time of great uncertainty.

As Jefferson opens the letter from his friend, he is reassured by the cramped penmanship, as familiar to him as Fleming’s own voice or face...

Pocahontas from *The General Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* by John Smith, 1624. GM 2576.2014. ~ Daughter of Powhatan, Matoaka was a girl of around ten when she first met John Smith and his fellow Englishmen. She was a frequent visitor to their camp, bringing food and other items to trade. In 1615 she met and married John Rolfe, a Jamestown colonist. They had a son together, Thomas. She died in 1617.



George Mason from *A History of the American People* by Woodrow Wilson, 1902. Volume 2. GM 2527.4879. ~ Mason strongly protested the Stamp Act, writing a letter in 1766 to the *London Public Ledger* and signing it “A Virginia Planter.”



Wmsburg, 22^d. June, 1776. 3 o'clock, P.M.

Dear Sir [Fleming writes to Jefferson],

I, being inform'd that the post is to set out in an hour, have just left the committee

appointed to prepare a form of government to give you a summary of their proceeding. The

inclosed printed plan was drawn by Colo. G. Mason and by him laid before the committee.

Colonel George Mason and his latest plan for government.

They proceeded to examine it clause by clause, and have made such alterations as you will

Colonel Mason had written the Virginia Declarations of Rights

observe by examining the printed copy and the manuscript together; tho' I am fearful you

the month prior and many believe Jefferson modeled much of

will not readily understand them, having made my notes in a hurry at the table, as the

his declaration after Mason's. The form of government Fleming

alterations were made. I left the committee debating on some amendments proposed to the

mentions was the Virginia Constitution, unanimously adopted June

last clause, which they have probably finished, as the bell, for the meeting of the house, is now

29, 1776. Jefferson had also drafted a version and had hoped to

ringing. This business has already taken up about a fortnights time, I mean in committee.

help with the process, but his obligation towards finishing another

As some of your friends have, no doubt, given you a history of our late election

historic document has kept him in Philadelphia.}

of delegates to serve in congress, and of the spirit (evil spirit I had almost said) and general

proceedings of our convention, I shall, for the present, forbear any animadversions thereon:

indeed, were I ever so much inclined to it the time would not allow me.

There was found on board the transport brought up by the two Barons,

200 matrasses, 100 tents, 3 hhds. Rum, and 2 barrels of Gun Powder.

Oxford, and left a small crew of his men in charge. Unfortunately for Biddle, as he and his prize ships sailed to Boston, they encountered a British blockade and were forced to disperse. The Highlanders recognized the opportunity and quickly overtook the small colonial crew. They started a course for Virginia waters hoping to find Lord Dunmore, but on June 20 they found instead Commodore Barron and his

armed vessel of the Virginia Navy. Barron took the Oxford after a short skirmish and marched the prisoners to Williamsburg on June 22. Despite all efforts to persuade the Highlanders to join the patriot cause, they desisted and were held as prisoners of war until 1778.}

Lord Dunmore from *The New Complete History of the United States of America* by John Clark Ridpath, 1914. Volume 5. GM 2527.4863. ~ The 4th Earl of Dunmore was a colonial governor of Virginia. He remained a Loyalist during the Revolution and fled to England, eventually becoming governor of the Bahamas from 1787 to 1796.



{By late spring of 1776 Great Britain's concern over the colonial rebellion was sharply rising. In response they sent 217 of the fiercest soldiers—the Scottish Highlanders. With wives and children they sailed from Glasgow and had nearly reached Boston when the Andrea Doria, a small brig under command of Captain Biddle, captured both ships. The captain loaded the prisoners onto a transport, the

Purdie has promised to pack up your books, and Colo. Tom to carry them to Tuckahoe.

He this day told me you desired him to enquire, of me, something about Vatel's law of nations.

You did not mention it in your letter to me. I can lend you a copy for a few months which you

return to Virginia.

I am Dr. Sr. yr. friend & serv.,

William Fleming

N.B. Mr. Wythe was at Port royal Thursday night, and will be in town tomorrow.

Philadelphia. July 1. 1776.

Dear Fleming

Your's of 22^d June came to hand this morning and gratified me much as this with your

former contains interesting intelligence. Our affairs in Canada go still retrograde, but I hope

they are now nearly at their worst. The fatal sources of these misfortunes have been want of

hard money with which to procure provisions, the ravages of the small pox with which one

half of our army is still down, and an unlucky choice of some officers. By our last letters, Genl.

Sullivan was retired as far as Isle au noix with his dispirited army and Burgoyne pursuing

him with one of double or treble his numbers. It gives much concern that he had determined

to make a stand there as it exposes to great danger of losing him and his army; and it was the

{Only three days before the Second Continental Congress

universal sense of his officers that he ought to retire. Genl. Schuyler has sent him positive orders

approves his revised *Declaration & etc*, Jefferson responds to

to retire to Crown point but whether they will reach him [in]time enough to withdraw him

Fleming's letter. He makes little mention of the document and

from danger is questionable. Here it seems to be the opinion of all the General officers than an

discusses the two greatest threats to the Revolution's cause—

effectual stand may be made and the enemy not only prevented access into New York, but by

smallpox and the campaigns in Canada and New York.}

Market Street Apartment in Philadelphia from *Life and Times of Thomas Jefferson* by Thomas E. Watson, 1903. GM 2317.891a. ~ While staying in Philadelphia during the Second Continental Congress, Jefferson rented the second floor of this building. It was here that he wrote the Declaration and also the letter to William Fleming.



preserving a superiority on the lakes we may renew our attacks on them to advantage as soon as
 {Though worried, Jefferson maintains his characteristic
 our army is recovered from the small pox and recruited. But recruits, tho long ordered, are very
 optimism, hoping affairs are at their worst. In truth they were
 difficult to be procured on account of that dreadful disorder.
 far from it. Sullivan had indeed retreated to Crown Point but
 The Conspiracy at New York is not yet thoroughly developed, nor has any thing transpired,
 could not save his men from smallpox; within two months
 the whole being kept secret till the whole is got through. One fact is known of necessity, that one of
 of this letter, over half of his 10,000 soldiers are dead. The
 the General's lifeguard being thoroughly convicted was to be shot last Saturday.
 approaching months only bring defeat and loss of morale.}

{This Conspiracy at New York is also known as the Hickey Plot. Although relatively unknown to the modern American public, in July of 1776 it is symptomatic of the uncertain and perilous environment of the Revolution. Under the leadership of John Jay, the Committee for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies holds hearings from June 19 to June 21 to investigate charges brought against a number of men, including the current

governor of New York, Roger Matthews. John Forbes funded the treacherous plan to turn cannon fire against the unsuspecting Continental Army. If successful, it would have devastated the colonial cause and perhaps caused Washington's death. One of the General's guards is implemented in the scheme, but Thomas Hickey is the only man found guilty of treason. Matthews is imprisoned but escapes weeks later. Despite Jefferson's claim that Hickey was shot, he

instead faced the gallows on June 28. The Howe Jefferson speaks of is General William Howe, commander of the British land forces. What Jefferson does not know, however, is that British reinforcements under the command of General Howe's brother, Admiral Lord Richard Howe, have also arrived. Together, their forces are formidable—30 battleships, 1,200 cannon, 300 supply ships, 30,000 soldiers, and 10,000 sailors.}

General Howe with some ships (we know not how many) is arrived at the Hook, and, as is said, has landed some horse on the Jersey shore. . .

LEFT: John Sullivan from *A History of the American People* by Woodrow Wilson, 1902. Volume 2. GM 2527.4879. ~ A son of Irish immigrants, John Sullivan was born in New Hampshire in 1740. As a young man he became a major in the New Hampshire militia and served as a delegate to the First Continental Congress. In 1775 he was promoted to brigadier-general and sent to Canada in May of 1776 to take control of the weakened colonial forces already present along the northern frontier. ~ CENTER: Sir William Howe from *The New Complete History of the United States of America* by John Clark Ridpath, 1914. Volume 5. GM 2527.4863. ~ The younger brother of Richard Howe, William Howe was born in 1729. The Howe brothers quickly rose through the military ranks, possibly aided by their lineage—their grandmother was Sophia von Kielmansegg, half-sister to King George I. ~ RIGHT: Admiral Lord Howe from *The New Complete History of the United States of America* by John Clark Ridpath, 1913. Volume 6. GM 2527.4864. ~ Born Richard Howe in 1726, Admiral Lord Howe, as he would later be known, was praised for tactical mastery and bravery by Admiral Lord Nelson.



Letter from Thomas Jefferson to William Fleming, dated July 1st, 1776. GM 3826.71.

Dear Fleming

Philadelphia July 1. 1776.

yours of 22^o. June came to hand this morning and gratified me much as this with your former contains interesting intelligence.

Our affairs in Canada go still retrograde, but I hope they are now nearly at their worst. the fatal sources of these misfortunes have been want of hard money with which to procure provisions, the ravages of the small pox with which one half of our army is still down, and an unlucky choice of some officers. by our last letters, Gen^l. Sullivan was retired as far as Ila au noi: with this dispirited army and Burgoyne pursuing him with one of double or treble his numbers. it gives much concern that he he^d determined to make a stand then as it exposes to great danger of losing him & his army; & it was the universal sense of his officers that he ought to retire. Gen^l. Schuyler has sent him positive orders to retire to Crown point but whether they will reach him time enough to withdraw him from danger is questionable. here it seems to be the opinion of all the General officers that an effectual stand may be made & the enemy not only prevented access into New York, but by preserving a superiority on the lakes we may renew our attacks on them to advantage as soon as our army is recovered from the small pox & recruited. but recruits, tho long ordered, are very difficult to be procured on account of that dreadful disorder.

The Conspiracy at New York is not yet thoroughly developed, nor has any thing transpired, the whole being kept secret till the whole is got through. one fact is known of necessity, that one of the General's lifeguard being thoroughly convicted was to be shot last Saturday. General Howe with some ships (we know not how many) is arrived at the Hook, & as is said, has landed some horse on the Jersey shore. the famous major Rogers is in custody on evident suspicion of being concerned in the conspiracy.

I am glad to hear of the Highlanders carried into Virginia. it does not appear certainly how many of these people we have but I imagine at least six or eight hundred. great efforts should be made to keep up the spirits of the people the succeeding three months: which in the universal opinion will be the only ones in which our trial can be severe.

{And indeed, once landed, the vast army wastes little time engaging the Continental Army. It celebrates its first victory in late August with General Howe's defeat over General Washington at the Battle of Long Island. Unfortunately for the Continental cause it signals the beginning of a series of defeats. In October, the British forces won at Valcour Bay, Canada and by November have captured Fort

Washington and Fort Lee, forcing General Washington to abandon New York. As a final blow to morale, on December 12 the threat of attack forces Congress to abandon Philadelphia. Jefferson writes that *The famous Major Rogers is in custody on the violent suspicion of being concerned in the conspiracy.*

This famous Major Rogers is Robert Rogers, a frontier hero of the

French and Indian War known for his brutal tactics and determination. He offered his services to General Washington at the start of the Revolution, but Washington suspected Rogers' Loyalist ties and refused the offer. His instincts are validated when Rogers joins the British army and fights against the colonies he has helped protect for the past thirty years.

Jefferson continues:}

{In the most fascinating aspect of Jefferson's letter of July 1 and 2, 1776, he assures Fleming that Virginians will soon know his political creed in the form of a "Declaration &c." that he was lately directed to draw. A Declaration &c. The Declaration of Independence. The historic and intrinsic importance of this mention cannot be

overestimated. As Americans, we know he is referring to the Declaration of Independence, the founding document of our country. However, as Jefferson sits in his Philadelphia apartment writing this letter, he is three days from seeing it approved by the Continental Congress—three days from July 4, 1776. The Declaration as we know it today did

not yet exist. It is remarkable and telling that the most significant aspect of this letter is mentioned only in passing. Even Jefferson could not surmise the legacy of this document. For Jefferson, the Declaration represents only a fraction of the Revolution and its events. For modern Americans, the Declaration essentially is the Revolution.}

Signature of Thomas Jefferson from a letter to William Fleming. GM 3826.71.

I am glad to hear of the Highlanders carried into Virginia. It does not appear certainly

how many of these people we have but I imagine at least six or eight hundred. Great efforts should be made to keep up the spirits of the people the succeeding three months: which in the

universal opinion will be the only ones in which our trial can be severe.

I wish you had depended on yourself rather than others for giving me an account of the

late nomination of delegates. I have no other state of it but the number of votes for each person.

The omission of Harrison and Braxton and my being next to the lag give me some alarm. It is

a painful situation to be 300 miles from one's country, and thereby open to secret assassination

{This portion of the letter discloses some of the clearest insights into Jefferson's mind at this time. Clearly

I am willing to hope nothing of this kind has been done in my case, and yet I cannot be

troubled by election results in Virginia, he inquires after

easy. If any doubt has arisen as to me, my country will have my political creed in the form of a

the reasons for it. The reasons are discussed in Fleming's

'Declaration &c.' which I was lately directed to draw. This will give decisive proof that my own

next letter. Also note Jefferson's use of the word *country*

sentiment concurred with the vote they instructed us to give. Had the post been to go a day later

to describe his home colony. Though united against a

we might have been at liberty to communicate this whole matter.

common enemy, loyalty lay with one's colony in this era

July, 2. I have kept open my letter till this morning but nothing more new. Adieu.

Jefferson's worry underscores a tense and distrustful

atmosphere.}

In Congress July 4, 1776
A Declaration by the Representatives of the
United States of America in general Congress
assembled.

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature & Nature's God entitle them: A decent respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation.

We hold these truths self evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty & a pursuit of Happiness— That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the Governed, that whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety & Happiness, Prudence, indeed

Certified Copy of the Declaration of Independence. GM 4026.901. ~ This is the only known certified copy of the Declaration of Independence. It was given to Frederick the Great of Prussia in 1777 by American diplomats overseas, including Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane.

Charleston in 1780 from *The New Complete History of the United States of America* by John Clark Ridpath, 1913. Volume 6. GM 2527.4864. ~ The attack on Charleston commenced June 28 at 11 a.m. With several gun-ships, the British focused their assault on Fort Moultrie. Twelve hours later, however, the British ships, battered and defeated were forced to retreat. They lost roughly five times as many men as the Americans.



{Ever the optimist, Fleming reminds Jefferson that public

morale is strong after victories at Gwinn's Island and Charles

Town. On June 28, a large British naval contingent attacked the

city. Although heavily outnumbered, the colonists won when

three British ships ran aground on a hidden shoal. A week

and a half later the British suffered another humiliating defeat

at Gwinn's Island, the stronghold retreat of Lord Dunmore,

former royal Governor of Virginia. The battle lasted only a few

hours but gave tremendous hope to colonists. These would be

their last victories for some time.}

Dear Sir [Fleming writes to Jefferson]

Our convention having, the 12th. instant, adjourned to the first monday in October, I did not receive yours of the 1st. July 'til I had been a fortnight at home.

I am much concerned at the situation of our affairs in Canada, but am not without hope they may yet be retrieved. A thorough knowledge of the sources of human evils, is, generally speaking a good step towards pointing out effectual remedies; but I am fearful the procuring hard money, in our present circumstances, will be attended with great difficulty, and it must be very discouraging to young soldiers to meet a formidable enemy in the jaws of a malignant distemper.

The horrid conspiracy at New York affects me exceedingly, and when I reflect that every engine of ministerial tyranny is in motion to effect their diabolical purposes, I cannot suppress my anxiety, lest the seeds of that infernal plot be not totally eradicated. God grant that the authors with all their coadjutors may meet with the justice due to their horrid crime.

I perfectly agree with you in opinion that the severity of our trial is near at hand and

perhaps a few weeks will determine the fate of New York, as the enemy in that quarter, if we

may believe the public papers, are very formidable; tho' I doubt not they will meet with a very

warm reception.

The spirits of our people are, and for some time have been, higher than at any period

since the commencement of hostilities; and they are not a little elevated by our late successes at

Charles Town, and Gwinn's Island. How a severe reverse of fortune might affect them, I cannot

pretend to determine; but those who are much elated with a little success, are generally most

dejected in misfortune: however, since the Rubicon is passed, I believe there are few among us,

even of the lower class, who have an idea of giving up the cause, happen what will.

Mt. Pleasant 27th. July, 1776.

{Fleming's reference to the Rubicon points interestingly to the education men like Fleming and Jefferson received in as youths—lessons that placed great emphasis on Greek and Roman history. The founding fathers commonly alluded to classical names and events. The reference is to an event that occurred in 49 B.C., when the infamous Roman general Julius Caesar crossed the

Rubicon River dividing Gaul from Italy. Upon crossing he is quoted as having said *Let the die be cast*, and so it was. By leading his army into Italy and marching against the Senate he openly declared civil war. The Rubicon thus became a metaphor for a point of no return. Fleming means there can be no retreat from the cause—they must press forward or all will be lost.}

With respect to the late nomination of delegates, the reduction of the number to five was on motion of the governor, "first to save expense, and secondly that we might have the assistance of the two supernumeraries in our own government, where gentlemen of abilities are much wanting." It met with little or no opposition. The appointment of Dr. Rickman physician and director general to the continental hospital, when McClurg, a native and regular bred physician had been recommended by the committee of safety, and by Genl. Lee, gave very great offence, and was undoubtedly the cause of Colo. Harrison's being left out, as it was generally supposed Rickmans appointment was through his influence. Mr. Braxton's address on government made him no friends in convention; and many reports were propagated in Wmsburg. (upon what grounds I know not) respecting the extreme imprudent, and inimical conduct of his lady, which, with many people, affected his political character exceedingly, of which Fitzhugh and some other of his friends informed him by letter, before we left town. As to your own case, you may take yourself perfectly easie, for you are as high in the estimation of your countrymen as ever, and the reason you were so late in the nomination was the mention of a letter you had written to Dr. Gilmer, signifying your inclination to resign. He was out of town at the time of the nomination, but desired another gentleman, if the matter came on in his absence, to inform the house he had received such a letter, which he accordingly did, and



TOP: King George III from *A History of the American People* by Woodrow Wilson, 1902. Volume 2.

GM 2527.4879. ~ George III came to the throne in 1760 following the death of his grandfather. He was the third monarch of the Hanoverian dynasty and the first born in England. ~ CENTER: *The State House in Phila. 1778 (Independence Hall)*. Charles Willson Peale. GM 1526.1024. ~ BOTTOM: High Street from from the Country Market Place, Philadelphia, with the Commemoration of the Death of General Washington from *The Stranger in America: Containing Observations Made During a Long Residence in that Country* by Charles William Janson, 1807. GM 2576.2412.



Thomas Jefferson by Charles Willson Peale, from life, 1791-1792. Courtesy, Independence National Historical Park.

thereupon arose a debate whether or not your excuse should be admitted. Some were of opinion you were jesting, and some that you were in earnest, and after near half an hours debate, they proceeded to ballot without a question being put, and many of your warmest friends (myself among the rest) erased your name out of their ballots, taking it for granted that your services in congress were to be dispensed with, as the opposition grew faint towards the latter end of the debate. Had it not been for these circumstances, I much doubt whether there would have been three votes against you. Your letter to the president on the same subject appeared the next day, which would have been effectual, had it arrived in time; but as the nomination was over, the house did not seem inclined to a new election; tho' I imagine if your affairs are such as to make your longer stay in congress still inconvenient, you will be indulged in October with a recess for the remainder of the year.

{In his letter of July 1 and 2, Jefferson made clear he

hoped his friends and countrymen did not think poorly

of him, and wonders over their reasons for nearly not

reelecting him. In this letter, Fleming states that Jefferson

had sent an earlier letter to Dr. Gilmer requesting not to

be reelected as he was weary and wished to be at home

with his ailing wife.

This is a classic example of Jefferson's contradictory

nature and his preoccupation with reputation. He had

indeed sent such a letter, which was discussed at the

Convention. Yet he still was perplexed as to why the

electors had considered allowing them to resign. This is

one of many instances in the life of Jefferson when his

words and his actions seem to be in conflict. }

Our elections of senators, of whom you have already been informed we are to have twenty four, come on early next month. The districts in our neighbourhood are 1st. Chesterfield, Amelia and Cumberland, 2d. Henrico Goochland and Louisa. 3d. Amherst, Albemarle, and Buckingham. The Candidates are Messrs. Cary and Mayo for the first, (Tabb having lately declined, it is said, in favor of Mayo!), Messrs. T. Mann Randolph and Adams for the second, and Dr. Walker and W. Cabell for the third.

We have a prospect of a fine crop, tho' we begin to suffer with a drought. I was at Old Con's last monday, and observed the corn in the Island to be very fine. Our latter wheat is much injured by the rust, and the weavel alredy begin to appear.

I am with great esteem, dear sir, Yr. friend & obed. Servt.,

Wm. Fleming

The correspondence between William Fleming and Thomas Jefferson continued for over fifty years, until Fleming's death in 1824. Since their first meeting at William and Mary, the two had grown up and grown old together, seen the birth of a nation and the death of imperialism. They had witnessed history and become part of it. But unlike today's friendships, theirs was based not on telephone calls or text messages, but on letters. For half a century they had sat at desks and tables, paper and ink at hand, and written one another.

Jefferson had always preferred the written word to the spoken, being notoriously disinclined to public speaking. As a man so preoccupied with his reputation, perhaps he felt the written word better suited to his purpose. For through his correspondence it appears not a word was written without the consideration of its full meaning and measure. Public speaking could not afford this luxury, so it is not surprising that we know Jefferson not by the words he spoke, but those he committed to paper. Because of those words, he has been mythologized in American history. Immortality is not without consequence, however, and over time he has become little more than a one-dimensional figure of the flesh and blood man he once was.

Today, the man who loved books and words has inspired what he so valued as historians humanize him with works of observation and explanation, hoping to reveal the mild-mannered member of the Virginia planting class. Letters, by Jefferson's own admittance, perhaps provide the greatest clues as they form the only full and genuine journal of a life. They make it possible to know what he thought on a single day rather than speculate on what he thought over a lifetime, to gain insight not into the icon, but the everyday Jefferson—the man and not the myth.

Boyd, Julian P., ed. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*. Vol. 1, 1760–1776. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1950.

Ellis, Joseph J. *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson*. New York: Knopf, 1996.

Ellis, Joseph J. *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*. New York: Vintage, 2000.

Randall, Willard Sterne. *Thomas Jefferson: A Life*. New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1993.

Wood, Gordon S. *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*. New York: Penguin, 2006.



Monticello from *Life and Times of Thomas Jefferson* by Thomas E. Watson, 1903. GM 2317.891a.

In 1769 construction began on the house Jefferson designed in a Roman Neoclassical style. Work on the estate continued off and on for the next thirty years as Jefferson made changes and improvements to his original design.