

GREAT  
AMERICAN PRESIDENTS

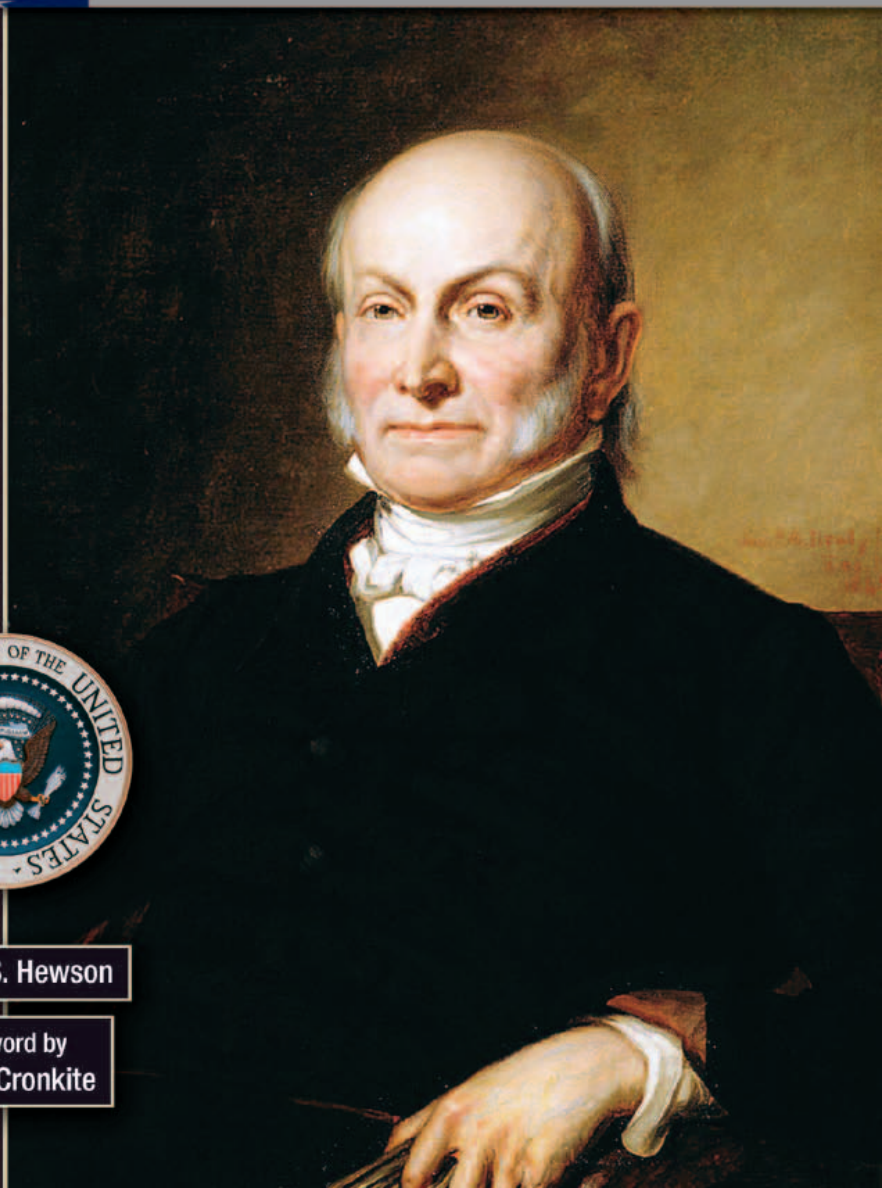


# John Quincy Adams



Martha S. Hewson

Foreword by  
Walter Cronkite



GREAT  
AMERICAN PRESIDENTS



JOHN QUINCY  
ADAMS

# GREAT AMERICAN PRESIDENTS



JOHN ADAMS

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

JIMMY CARTER

THOMAS JEFFERSON

JOHN F. KENNEDY

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

RONALD REAGAN

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

HARRY S. TRUMAN

GEORGE WASHINGTON

WOODROW WILSON

GREAT  
AMERICAN PRESIDENTS



JOHN QUINCY  
ADAMS



MARTHA S. HEWSON

FOREWORD BY  
WALTER CRONKITE

 **CHELSEA HOUSE**  
P U B L I S H E R S  
A Haight Cross Communications  Company

**Philadelphia**

#### DEDICATION

For Jackie Ziegler and Craig Ziegler, with many thanks  
for sharing your books, and for Kay Winters, who told me  
about the alligator in the White House.

#### CHELSEA HOUSE PUBLISHERS

VP, NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT Sally Cheney  
DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION Kim Shinnars  
CREATIVE MANAGER Takeshi Takahashi  
MANUFACTURING MANAGER Diann Grasse

#### STAFF FOR JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

ASSOCIATE EDITOR Kate Sullivan  
PRODUCTION EDITOR Megan Emery  
ASSISTANT PHOTO EDITOR Noelle Nardone  
SERIES DESIGNER Keith Trego  
COVER DESIGNER Keith Trego  
LAYOUT 21<sup>st</sup> Century Publishing and Communications, Inc.

©2004 by Chelsea House Publishers,  
a subsidiary of Hights Cross Communications.  
All rights reserved. Printed and bound in the United States of America.

A Hights Cross Communications  Company

[www.chelseahouse.com](http://www.chelseahouse.com)

First Printing

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data applied for.

ISBN 0-7910-7599-0



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD: WALTER CRONKITE	6
<b>1</b> A STUDENT OF THE WORLD	10
<b>2</b> LAWYER AND DIPLOMAT	22
<b>3</b> AN INDEPENDENT SENATOR AND DIPLOMAT	34
<b>4</b> SECRETARY OF STATE	46
<b>5</b> PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES	56
<b>6</b> A FIGHTER IN THE U.S. HOUSE	68
 <i>TIMELINE:</i> THE PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES	80
PRESIDENTIAL FACT FILE	82
PRESIDENT ADAMS IN PROFILE	85
CHRONOLOGY	86
BIBLIOGRAPHY	88
FURTHER READING	90
WEBSITES	91
INDEX	92

# FOREWORD

WALTER CRONKITE



A candle can defy the darkness. It need not have the power of a great searchlight to be a welcome break from the gloom of night. So it goes in the assessment of leadership. He who lights the candle may not have the skill or imagination to turn the light that flickers for a moment into a perpetual glow, but history will assign credit to the degree it is due.

Some of our great American presidents may have had a single moment that bridged the chasm between the ordinary and the exceptional. Others may have assured their lofty place in our history through the sum total of their accomplishments.

When asked who were our greatest presidents, we cannot fail to open our list with the Founding Fathers who put together this

## FOREWORD

nation and nursed it through the difficult years of its infancy. George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison took the high principles of the revolution against British tyranny and turned the concept of democracy into a nation that became the beacon of hope to oppressed peoples around the globe.

Almost invariably we add to that list our wartime presidents—Abraham Lincoln, perhaps Woodrow Wilson, and certainly Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Nonetheless there is a thread of irony that runs through the inclusion of the names of those wartime presidents: In many aspects their leadership was enhanced by the fact that, without objection from the people, they assumed extraordinary powers to pursue victory over the nation's enemies (or, in the case of Lincoln, the Southern states).

The complexities of the democratic procedures by which the United States Constitution deliberately tried to withhold unchecked power from the presidency encumbered the presidents who needed their hands freed of the entangling bureaucracy that is the federal government.

Much of our history is written far after the events themselves took place. History may be amended by a much later generation seeking a precedent to justify an action considered necessary at the latter time. The history, in a sense, becomes what later generations interpret it to be.

President Jefferson in 1803 negotiated the purchase of vast lands in the south and west of North America from the French. The deal became known as the Louisiana Purchase. A century and a half later, to justify seizing the nation's



## FOREWORD

steel mills that were being shut down by a labor strike, President Truman cited the Louisiana Purchase as a case when the president in a major matter ignored Congress and acted almost solely on his own authority.

The case went to the Supreme Court, which overturned Truman six to three. The chief justice, Fred Vinson, was one of the three justices who supported the president. Many historians, however, agreed with the court's majority, pointing out that Jefferson scarcely acted alone: Members of Congress were in the forefront of the agitation to consummate the Louisiana Purchase and Congress voted to fund it.

With more than two centuries of history and precedent now behind us, the Constitution is still found to be flexible when honest and sincere individuals support their own causes with quite different readings of it. These are the questions that end up for interpretation by the Supreme Court.

As late as the early years of the twenty-first century, perhaps the most fateful decision any president ever can make—to commit the nation to war—was again debated and precedent ignored. The Constitution says that only the Congress has the authority to declare war. Yet the Congress, with the objection of few members, ignored this Constitutional provision and voted to give President George W. Bush the right to take the United States to war whenever and under whatever conditions he decided.

Thus a president's place in history may well be determined by how much power he seizes or is granted in

## FOREWORD

re-interpreting and circumventing the remarkable document that is the Constitution. Although the Founding Fathers thought they had spelled out the president's authority in their clear division of powers between the branches of the executive, the legislative and the judiciary, their wisdom has been challenged frequently by ensuing generations. The need and the demand for change is dictated by the march of events, the vast alterations in society, the global condition beyond our influence, and the progress of technology far beyond the imaginations of any of the generations which preceded them.

The extent to which the powers of the presidency will be enhanced and utilized by the chief executives to come in large degree will depend, as they have throughout our history, on the character of the presidents themselves. The limitations on those powers, in turn, will depend on the strength and will of those other two legs of the three-legged stool of American government—the legislative and the judiciary.

And as long as this nation remains a democracy, the final say will rest with an educated electorate in perpetual exercise of its constitutional rights to free speech and a free and alert press.



# 1



## A STUDENT OF THE WORLD

---

IN FEBRUARY 1778, John Adams was going to France to seek help for the American Revolution. Winter voyages across the stormy Atlantic Ocean were always risky, but this trip would be especially dangerous. If a British warship captured his ship, Adams would be taken prisoner and hanged for treason. He had signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and was well known in Great Britain as a leader of the revolution. Adams had managed to persuade his wife, Abigail, to stay at their farm in Braintree, Massachusetts, but one member of the family begged to come along: his son, 10-year-old John Quincy Adams, known to everyone as Johnny.

## A STUDENT OF THE WORLD



John Quincy Adams was the oldest son of future president John Adams and his wife Abigail. A precocious and well-educated child, John Quincy would grow up to be a lawyer and statesman, negotiating with foreign countries to ensure the expansion and independence of the United States.

The Adamses could not sail from Boston because spies were everywhere. Instead, father and son left home and went by sleigh to a nearby beach, where their ship, the *Boston*, waited offshore. They had been at sea for only two days when three British ships caught sight of the *Boston*

and began following it. Two ships soon gave up, but the other kept after the *Boston* for three days until a fierce storm finally brought an end to the chase.

A bolt of lightning struck the *Boston's* main mast, and a sailor was killed. The sea was so rough that Johnny and his father struggled to keep from falling out of bed, and both of them were seasick. The seas eventually calmed down, but their adventure was not over yet. Later in the voyage, they met another British ship, the *Martha*. A battle broke out and a shot sailed right over John Adams's head, but the *Boston* managed to capture the British ship.

Meanwhile, Johnny impressed everyone on board. A passenger began teaching him French, and the ship's captain showed him how the compass worked and taught him the names of the sails. John Adams was very proud of his son. He wrote to Abigail that Johnny had shown great courage throughout the difficult voyage.

Father and son survived their first trip to Europe. Like his father, Johnny would grow up to be a lawyer who represented his country abroad as a diplomat. Both men eventually became minister to Great Britain and president of the United States. John Adams, the second president, occupied the White House from 1797 to 1801. John Quincy Adams served as the sixth president, from 1825 to 1829.

## **EARLY YEARS IN BRAINTREE AND BOSTON**

John Quincy Adams was born on July 11, 1767, about 10 miles south of Boston in Braintree (now Quincy), Massachusetts. The Adamses' two-story house was a New

England saltbox, with a steeply sloped roof and wooden siding. John Adams had his law office in a room on the first floor. He had been born in a similar house next door. The two houses were part of a farm with more than 100 acres of land located about a mile from the Atlantic Ocean. John was a respected lawyer whose cases often took him away from home. His wife, Abigail, came from a well-known family of clergymen. Both of them took an active role in deciding how Johnny and his siblings would be brought up.

At the time of Johnny's birth, the start of the Revolutionary War (1775–1783) was still eight years away, but trouble was already brewing between Great Britain and its American colonies. In 1763, the Seven Years' War had come to an end with Britain defeating its old enemy, France. Known in America as the French and Indian War, it had left Britain with a huge debt. As a result, Britain began taxing the 13 American colonies.

In 1767, just 12 days before Johnny was born, the British Parliament created a new tax act. The Townshend Acts taxed tea, lead, glass, paint, and paper imported from Britain. In Boston, violence broke out against customs inspectors who enforced the act, and in 1768, British troops arrived to keep order. The British weren't the only ones who arrived in town that year. John Adams's legal business was growing, so he moved his family to a large rented house in Boston.

Abigail was in that house on the night of March 5, 1770, when she heard the sounds of a church bell ringing and gunfire. The noise woke up two-year-old Johnny and his