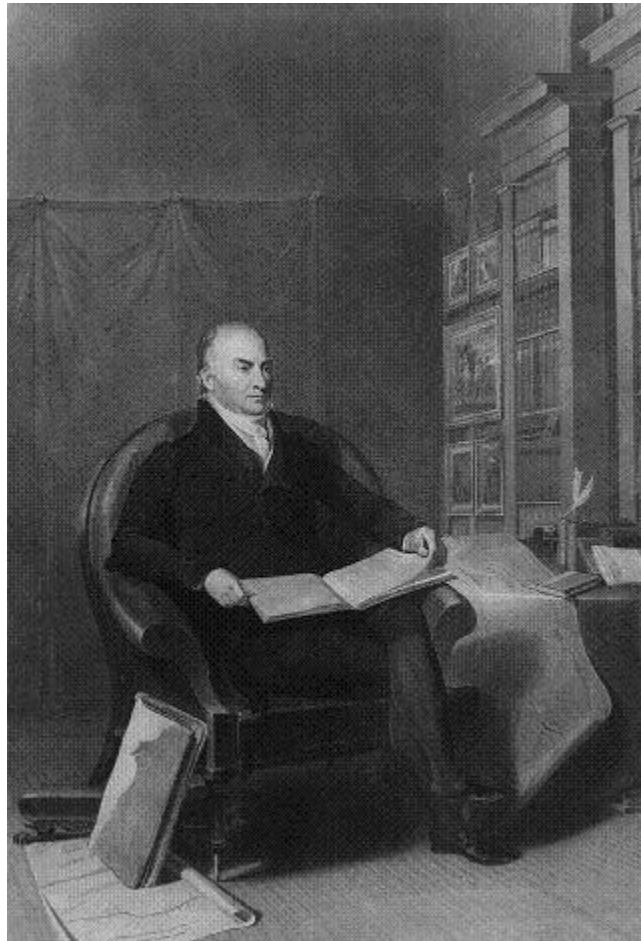


# John Quincy Adams

Apple of His Father's Eye  
Sixth, 1825-1829



**Nicknames:** “Old Man Eloquent”, “Publicola”

**Birth:** July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1767, Braintree (now Quincy), Massachusetts

**Death:** February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1848, Washington, D.C.

**Significant Events During Adam's Term:** Erie Canal Completed ... His father, John Adams (#2), and Thomas Jefferson (#3) die on the same day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1826 ... Number of States remained twenty-four

**Quotes:** *"If you do not rise to the head not only of your profession but of your country, it will be owing to your own laziness, slovenliness, and obstinacy."*

-- John Adams, to his son John Quincy Adams

*"I am a man of reserved, cold, austere, and forbidding manners: my political adversaries say, a gloomy misanthropist, and my personal enemies, an unsocial savage. With a knowledge of the actual defect in my character, I have not the pliability to reform it."* -- John Quincy Adams

*"Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her [America's] heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own...She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself, beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom...She might become the dictatress of the world; she would no longer be the ruler of her own spirit."* -- John Quincy Adams

**How his term ended:** Adams lost his bid for re-election to Andrew Jackson

**Other Professions:** Lawyer, Professor of Oratory and Rhetoric

**Worst Mistake:** Nothing particularly stands out. His apparent "deal" with Henry Clay to win the presidency over Jackson was apparently not cheating (no voter fraud took place), but just politics as usual.

**Saving Graces:** John Quincy Adams fought against slavery his entire life.

Adams did not vote along party lines, but according to his conscience/on the merits of the matter under discussion.

**Notes:** John Quincy Adams was raised by his parents, John and Abigail Adams, to be a political leader.

As a boy of eight, John Quincy watched the Battle of Bunker Hill from a nearby ridge with his mother. From a young age, he was "the man of the house" while his father was away tending to patriotic/revolutionary duties. John Quincy lived under the constant dread of being captured by British soldiers.

While John Quincy Adams was serving as President, his father, who had been the 2<sup>nd</sup> President, died.

Adams negotiated the end to the War of 1812 (during fourth President Madison's administration).

At the time he became President, such were chosen by Senators and Congressman; also, State Legislators chose the Electors. In 1824, Adams was chosen by the House of Representatives,

as no candidate had a majority of the Electoral College votes. *Andrew Jackson* had a plurality of votes (more than any other candidate), but not the majority. With that, John Quincy Adams became the only man to ever be elected President with fewer electoral and popular votes than another candidate.

In that (1824) election, Andrew Jackson garnered 99 electoral votes compared to Adams' 84; Jackson had 153,544 popular votes to Adams' 108,740. However, a stipulation in Article II of the Constitution called for the House of Representatives to choose the new President when none of the candidates had received a majority of votes. W.H. Crawford and Henry Clay also ran, Crawford getting 41 electoral votes and Clay 37. The winner would need a minimum of 131 electoral votes to win. After a "confidential interview" between Clay and Adams, Clay's supporters swung their votes Adams' way, leading to Adams being elected. Soon thereafter, Clay was appointed Secretary of State by Adams. Jackson said of this suspicious turn of events, "The Judas of the West has closed the contract and will receive the thirty pieces of silver."

John Quincy Adams read the Bible in its entirety at least once a year. Each morning, he would read several chapters, first in English, then in French and German. He also walked several miles per day.

As his father had done, John Quincy Adams served as lawyer in a controversial law case. His father had done so when he defended the British soldiers involved in the "Boston Massacre." John Quincy Adams legally represented the slave mutineers of the *Amistad*, a case which went to the Supreme Court and was won by the stolen Africans with Adams' able assistance.

John Quincy Adams suffered from depression, and was even at times passively suicidal, describing his symptoms as: "uncontrollable dejection of spirits", "a sluggish carelessness of life" and "an imaginary wish that it [life] were terminated." He also made the following statements:

- "I have no plausible motive for wishing to live, when everything that I foresee and believe of futurity makes death desirable."
- "[My] whole life has been a succession of disappointments. I can scarcely recollect a single instance of success in anything that I ever undertook."
- "The four most miserable years of my life were my four years in the presidency."

Regarding the last statement, Adams didn't always feel that way, apparently, because he *did* run for reelection (and lost).

John Quincy Adams' wife Louisa was the only first lady to not have been born in the United States. Although her father was an American, she was born in her mother's homeland, England.

The sons born to John Quincy and Louisa (Johnson) Adams were an interesting bunch. The oldest, George Washington Adams, was mentally unstable and died when he was twenty-eight (he either fell or jumped off a steamer after accusing other passengers of plotting against him). Their second son, John Adams II, was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July in 1803. He was expelled from Harvard for participating in a student riot there. He later became his father's private secretary in the White House while he was President. This son also died at a young age (thirty-one). The Adams' third son, Charles Francis, who lived to a "ripe" old age (seventy-nine), played a role in the Union winning the Civil War, ran for Vice President once, and almost got the nomination for President on another occasion. Several grandsons of John Quincy Adams were noted historians, most notably Henry Brooks Adams, author of *The Education of Henry Adams*, which won the Pulitzer prize in 1919.