

Three United States Presidents Died On Independence Day, Two In Same Hour

Washington, D. C.—One historic fact relating to July 4 is seldom remembered in our annual observance of Independence Day, according to the Division of Information and Publication of the United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission. This is especially strange because this historic fact has touching and dramatic meaning. July 4 is the day on which three presidents of the United States died.

Each of these three early presidents played a prominent part in the very formation of our gov-

ernment and each, received, as a reward from the people, elevation to their highest office. Having performed great labors in planning the theory of our government, it fell to their lot to set noble examples in putting the theory into practical effect.

These three presidents were John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Monroe. Indeed John Adams and Thomas Jefferson died almost at the same hour on July 4th, 1826. After many sharp differences of opinion, which had divided them during a part of

their lives Adams and Jefferson became not only reconciled but closely attached friends. The correspondence of their final years is one of the glories of American letters.

Close To Washington Adams lived to be 90, Jefferson 82. Neither knew how close to death was the other, and Adams' last words, when conscious that death was near, are said to have been, "Thomas Jefferson still lives." But Thomas Jefferson was already dead.

Before their presidency, both these great men served as vice-president, and one of them as president, while the other was vice-president. The older man, John Adams, was vice-president under George Washington himself. All three were closely associated with Washington during our formative days and to one of them, John Adams, goes the credit for playing a major part in throwing George Washington into the arms of destiny.

It was largely the action of John Adams that led the Continental Congress to appoint George Washington as commander-in-chief of the Revolutionary forces. Before that time Washington had been an outstanding sectional figure, a man of the south. In command of the Continental forces he became a man of the country, and history knows full well how he played the part.

James Monroe, a younger man, appeared on the scene of action after the great political groundwork of founding the nation had been accomplished. But as a young man he played a gallant part on the field of battle, as a follower of Washington.

Opposed Constitution Strange to say, he at first opposed the constitution of the United States, and, as a member of the Virginia Convention, elected to act on adoption of the con-

stitution, he voted against it. Yet he lived to become the president who enunciated a Doctrine that statesmen regard as no less a settled rule of American policy than the constitution itself. James Monroe died on July 4, 1831; but the "Monroe Doctrine" is immortal.

The older men, Adams and Jefferson, are forever linked with George Washington as leaders in the movement that made America independent. Washington was distinctly the man of action the soldier, the director of affairs and without him the revolution might never have moved to victory. But just as necessary were the philosophy of Jefferson in shaping our principles of government, and the abilities of Adams in waking and training popular opinion a labor in which he had few peers.

Both Adams and Jefferson served on the committee to draft the Declaration of Independence. Both signed the Declaration, and to one of them, Thomas Jefferson, belongs the immortal honor of having written that timeless instrument.

In spite of their passing differences, these two giants of intellect and manhood were partners throughout their lives, in one of the greatest achievements for the progress of humanity. On the very birthday of the new charter they had brought to mankind when the entire nation was celebrating its 50th anniversary, they died, within a few hours of each other. Had they been allowed to select the day of their passing, neither could have picked one more to his liking, or more fitting to the record they have left in American history.

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