

American Revolution Biography



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Enjoy these biographies of well-known and not so well known people from the founding of our country.

Compiled by: Jim G



Adopted Son: Washington, Lafayette, and the Friendship that Saved the Revolution

David A. Clary Adult Nonfiction - 973.33 Cla

They were unlikely comrades-in-arms. One was a self-taught, middle-aged Virginia planter in charge of a ragtag army of revolutionaries, the other a rich, glory-seeking teenage French aristocrat. But the childless Washington and the orphaned Lafayette forged a bond between them as strong as any between father and son. It was an unbreakable trust that saw them through betrayals, shifting political alliances, and the trials of war.

Lafayette came to America a rebellious youth whose defiance of his king made him a celebrity in France. His money and connections attracted the favor of the Continental Congress, which advised Washington to keep the exuberant Marquis from getting himself killed. But when the boy-general was wounded in his first battle, he became a hero of two countries. As the war ground on, Washington found in his young charge the makings of a courageous and talented commander whose loyalty, generosity, and eagerness to please his Commander in Chief made him one of the war's most effective and inspired generals. Lafayette's hounding of Cornwallis's army was the perfect demonstration of Washington's unconventional "bush-fighting" tactics, and led to the British surrender at Yorktown.

Their friendship continued throughout their lives. Lafayette inspired widespread French support for a struggling young America and personally influenced Washington's antislavery views. Washington's enduring example as general and statesman guided Lafayette during France's own revolution years later.

Using personal letters and other key historical documents, *Adopted Son* offers a rare glimpse of the American Revolution through the friendship between Washington and Lafayette. It offers dramatic accounts of battles and intimate portraits of such major figures as Alexander Hamilton, Benedict Arnold, and Benjamin Franklin. The result is a remarkable, little-known epic of friendship, revolution, and the birth of a nation.



Benjamin Franklin: an American Life

Walter Isaacson Adult Nonfiction - 921 Franklin Isa

In a sweeping narrative that follows Franklin's life from Boston to Philadelphia to London and Paris and back, Isaacson chronicles the adventures of the spunky runaway apprentice who became, during his 84-year life, America's best writer, inventor, media baron, scientist, diplomat, and business strategist, as well as one of its most practical and ingenious political leaders. He explores the wit behind Poor Richard's Almanac and the wisdom behind the Declaration of Independence, the new nation's alliance with France, the treaty that ended the Revolution, and the compromises that created a near-perfect Constitution.

Above all, Isaacson shows how Franklin's unwavering faith in the wisdom of the common citizen and his instinctive appreciation for the possibilities of democracy helped to forge an American national identity based on the virtues and values of its middle class.



Desperate Sons: Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, John Hancock, and the Secret Band of Radicals Who Led the Colonies to War

Les Standiford Adult Nonfiction - 973.3 Sta

A groundbreaking narrative, a historical political thriller, that explores the role of the Sons of Liberty in the American Revolution.

More than two hundred years ago, a group of British colonists in America decided that the conditions under which they were governed had become intolerable. Angry and frustrated that King George III and the British Parliament had ignored their lawful complaints and petitions, they decided to take action.

In this gripping narrative, Les Standiford reveals how this group of intelligent, committed men, motivated by economics and political belief, began a careful campaign of interlocking events that would channel feelings of vague injustice into an armed rebellion of common cause, which would defeat an empire and give birth to a radical political experiment--a new nation known as the United States.



George Washington and Benedict Arnold: a Tale of Two Patriots

Dave R. Palmer Adult Nonfiction - 973.3 Pal

From 1775 through 1777, George Washington and Benedict Arnold were America's two most celebrated warriors. Their earlier lives had surprisingly parallel paths. They were strong leaders in combat, they admired and respected each other, and they even shared common enemies. Yet one became our greatest hero and the other our most notorious traitor. Why?

In *George Washington and Benedict Arnold: A Tale of Two Patriots*, author and military historian Dave Palmer reveals the answer: character. In this fascinating and unique dual biography, Palmer also shows:

How Arnold's treason actually helped the Patriot cause.

Why Arnold and Washington's amazingly similar backgrounds, family influences, youthful experiences, and selfmade status led to strikingly different results in their lives.

How in four well-defined steps Arnold went from hero to traitor.

Presenting the panorama of the Revolutionary War through the lives of two of its most colorful and important figures, George Washington and Benedict Arnold reveals important lessons for today through a story that few Americans know, but that every American should.



His Excellency: George Washington

Joseph J. Ellis Adult Nonfiction - 921 Washington Ell

To this landmark biography of our first president, Joseph J. Ellis brings the exacting scholarship, shrewd analysis, and lyric prose that have made him one of the premier historians of the Revolutionary era. Training his lens on a figure who sometimes seems as remote as his effigy on Mount Rushmore, Ellis assesses George Washington as a military and political leader and a man whose "statue-like solidity" concealed volcanic energies and emotions.

Here is the impetuous young officer whose miraculous survival in combat half-convinced him that he could not be killed. Here is the free-spending landowner whose debts to English merchants instilled him with a prickly resentment of imperial power. We see the general who lost more battles than he won and the reluctant president who tried to float above the partisan feuding of his cabinet. His Excellency is a magnificent work, indispensable to an understanding not only of its subject but also of the nation he brought into being.



James & Dolley Madison : America's First Power Couple

Bruce Chadwick Adult Nonfiction - 921 Madison Cha

This revealing new portrait of James and Dolley Madison introduces the reader to America's first power couple. Using recently uncovered troves of letters at the University of Virginia, among other sources, historian Bruce Chadwick has been able to reconstruct the details of the Madisons' personal and political lives.

Chadwick argues that Madison was not a boring, average president, as other historians have characterized him, but a vibrant, tough leader and a very successful commander in chief in the War of 1812. He contends that Madison, the architect of the Constitution, owed much of his success to the political savvy of his charismatic, much younger wife, whose parties and backdoor politicking make for remarkable stories. And Dolley, through her many social skills, created the dynamic role of First Lady that we know today.

Despite their glamorous lifestyle, behind the scenes, the Madisons struggled with family drama: James and Dolley's constant funding of their charming but sociopathic son's misadventures ultimately led to their own financial ruin. Blending the personal and the political, this is a fascinating profile of a couple whose life together contributed so much to the future course of our nation.



James Madison and the Making of America

Kevin R. C. Gutzman Adult Nonfiction - 921 Madison Gut

In *James Madison and the Making of America*, historian Kevin Gutzman looks beyond the way James Madison is traditionally seen -- as "The Father of the Constitution" -- to find a more complex and sometimes contradictory portrait of this influential Founding Father and the ways in which he influenced the spirit of today's United States. Instead of an idealized portrait of Madison, Gutzman treats readers to the flesh-and-blood story of a man who often performed his founding deeds in spite of himself: Madison's fame rests on his participation in the writing of The Federalist Papers and his role in drafting the Bill of Rights and Constitution. Today, his contribution to those documents is largely misunderstood. He thought that the Bill of Rights was unnecessary and insisted that it not be included in the Constitution, a document he found entirely inadequate and predicted would soon fail. Madison helped to create the first American political party, the first party to call itself "Republican", but only after he had argued that political parties, in general, were harmful. Madison served as Secretary of State and then as President during the early years of the United States and the War of 1812; however, the American foreign policy he implemented in 1801-1817 ultimately resulted in the British burning down the Capitol and the White House. In so many ways, the contradictions both in Madison's thinking and in the way he governed foreshadowed the conflicted state of our Union now. His greatest legacy "the disestablishment of Virginia's state church and adoption of the libertarian Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom" is often omitted from discussion of his career. Yet, understanding the way in which Madison saw the relationship between the church and state is key to understanding the

real man.



John Adams

David G. McCullough Adult Nonfiction - 921 Adams Mcc

In this powerful, epic biography, David McCullough unfolds the adventurous life journey of John Adams, the brilliant, fiercely independent, often irascible, always honest Yankee patriot who spared nothing in his zeal for the American Revolution; who rose to become the second president of the United States and saved the country from blundering into an unnecessary war; who was learned beyond all but a few and regarded by some as "out of his senses"; and whose marriage to the wise and valiant Abigail Adams is one of the most moving love stories in American history.

This is history on a grand scale -- a book about politics and war and social issues, but also about human nature, love, religious faith, virtue, ambition, friendship, and betrayal, and the far-reaching consequences of noble ideas. Above all, John Adams is an enthralling, often surprising story of one of the most important and fascinating Americans who ever lived.



John Jay: Founding Father

Walter Stahr Adult Nonfiction - 921 Jay Sta

John Jay was a central figure in the early history of the American Republic. A New York lawyer, born in 1745, Jay served his country with the greatest distinction and was one of the most influential of its Founding Fathers. In the first full-length biography in almost seventy years, Walter Stahr brings Jay vividly to life, setting his astonishing career against the background of the American Revolution.

Drawing on substantial new material, Walter Stahr has written a full and highly readable portrait of both the public and private man. It is the story not only of John Jay himself, the most prominent native-born New Yorker of the eighteenth century, but also of his engaging and intelligent wife, Sarah, who accompanied her husband on his wartime diplomatic missions. This lively and compelling biography presents Jay in the light he deserves: as a major Founding Father, a true national hero, and a leading architect of America's future.



Nathanael Greene: a Biography of the American Revolution

Gerald M. Carbone Adult Nonfiction - 921 Greene Car

When the Revolutionary War began, Nathanael Greene was a private in the militia, the lowest rank possible, yet he emerged from the war with a reputation as George Washington's most gifted and dependable officer--celebrated as one of the war's three most important generals. Upon taking command of America's Southern Army in 1780, Nathanael Greene was handed troops that consisted of 1,500 starving, nearly naked men. Gerald Carbone explains how, within a year, the small worn-out army ran the British troops out of Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina and into the final trap at Yorktown. Despite his huge military successes and tactical genius Greene's story has a dark side. Gerald Carbone drew on 25 years of reporting and researching experience to create his chronicle of Greene's unlikely rise to success and his fall into debt and anonymity.



Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence

Carol Berkin Adult Nonfiction - 973.3 Be

The American Revolution was a home-front war that brought scarcity, bloodshed, and danger into the life of every American. In this groundbreaking history, Carol Berkin shows us how women played a vital role throughout the conflict.

The women of the Revolution were most active at home, organizing boycotts of British goods, raising funds for the fledgling nation, and managing the family business while struggling to

maintain a modicum of normalcy as husbands, brothers and fathers died. Yet Berkin also reveals that it was not just the men who fought on the front lines, as in the story of Margaret Corbin, who was crippled for life when she took her husband's place beside a cannon at Fort Monmouth. This incisive and comprehensive history illuminates a fascinating and unknown side of the struggle for American independence.



Robert Morris: Financier of the American Revolution

Charles Rappleye Adult Nonfiction - 921 Morris Rap

Morris started life in the colonies as an apprentice in a counting house. By the time of the Revolution he was a rich man, a commercial and social leader in Philadelphia. He organized a clandestine trading network to arm the American rebels, joined the Second Continental Congress, and financed George Washington's two crucial victories: Valley Forge and the culminating battle at Yorktown that defeated Cornwallis and ended the war.

The leader of a faction that included Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and Washington, Morris ran the executive branches of the revolutionary government for years. He was a man of prodigious energy and adroit management skills and was the most successful businessman on the continent. He laid the foundation for public credit and free capital markets that helped make America a global economic leader. But he incurred powerful enemies who considered his wealth and influence a danger to public "virtue" in a democratic society.

After public service, he gambled on land speculations that went bad, and landed in debtors' prison, where George Washington, his loyal friend, visited him.

This once wealthy and powerful man ended his life in modest circumstances, but Rappleye restores his place as a patriot and an immensely important founding father.



Samuel Adams: Father of the American Revolution

Mark Puls Adult Nonfiction - 921 Adams Pul

Samuel Adams is perhaps the most unheralded and overshadowed of the founding fathers, yet without him there would have been no American Revolution. A genius at devising civil protests and political maneuvers that became a trademark of American politics, Adams astutely forced Britain into coercive military measures that ultimately led to the irreversible split in the empire. His remarkable political career addresses all the major issues concerning America's decision to become a nation -- from the notion of taxation without representation to the Declaration of Independence. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams all acknowledged that they built our nation on Samuel Adams' foundations. Now, in this riveting biography, his story is finally told and his crucial place in American history is fully recognized.



The Forgotten Founding Father: Noah Webster's Obsession and the Creation of an American Culture

Joshua Kendall Adult Nonfiction - 423.092 Ken

Noah Webster's name is now synonymous with the dictionary he created, but his story is not nearly so ubiquitous. Now acclaimed author of *The Man Who Made Lists*, Joshua Kendall sheds new light on Webster's life, and his far-reaching influence in establishing the American nation. Webster hobnobbed with various Founding Fathers and was a young confidant of George Washington and Ben Franklin. He started New York's first daily newspaper, predating Alexander Hamilton's *New York Post*. His "blue-backed speller" for schoolchildren sold millions of copies and influenced early copyright law. But perhaps most important, Webster was an ardent supporter of a unified, definitively American culture, distinct from the British, at a time when the United States of America were anything but unified-and his dictionary of American English is a

testament to that.



Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power

Jon Meacham Adult Nonfiction - 921 Jefferson Mea

In this magnificent biography, the Pulitzer Prize winning author of *American Lion* and *Franklin and Winston* brings vividly to life an extraordinary man and his remarkable times. Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power gives us Jefferson the politician and president, a great and complex human being forever engaged in the wars of his era. Philosophers think; politicians maneuver. Jefferson's genius was that he was both and could do both, often simultaneously. Such is the art of power.

The father of the ideal of individual liberty, of the Louisiana Purchase, of the Lewis and Clark expedition, and of the settling of the West, Jefferson recognized that the genius of humanity and the genius of the new nation lay in the possibility of progress, of discovering the undiscovered and seeking the unknown. From the writing of the Declaration of Independence to elegant dinners in Paris and in the President's House; from political maneuverings in the boardinghouses and legislative halls of Philadelphia and New York to the infant capital on the Potomac; from his complicated life at Monticello, his breathtaking house and plantation in Virginia, to the creation of the University of Virginia, Jefferson was central to the age. Here too is the personal Jefferson, a man of appetite, sensuality, and passion.
