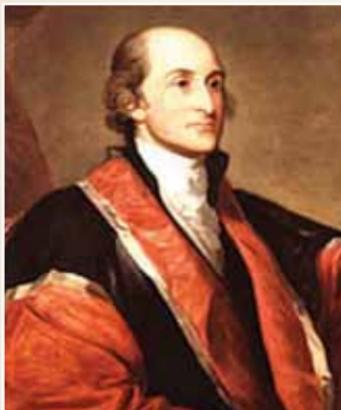


Constitution

The backstory

John Jay (1745-1829)



John Jay was born on December 12, 1745 in New York City into a wealthy and politically minded family. Jay was primarily educated by tutors in the family home and attended Kings College (which later became Columbia University). After college, Jay began studying law under well-known lawyer and politician Benjamin Kissam.

Once Jay began practicing law in New York City, he became secretary of the New York Committee of Correspondence where he represented the conservatives.

Jay believed that the British were unjustified in their taxing of the American people. As a representative in the First Continental Congress in 1774, Jay sided with those who wanted to reconcile with British Parliament, but he began to support those who wanted independence when the British troops burned down Norfolk, Virginia.

In 1774, John Jay and Sarah Van Brugh Livingston, daughter of then New Jersey governor William Livingston, were married. Sarah, and their six children, joined John in both Spain and France as he was representing America.

Jay held many political posts including; Delegate to the First and Second Continental Congress, President of the Continental Congress, U.S. Minister to Spain, U.S. Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Chief Justice of the United States, and Governor of New York. During his time as governor, Jay signed a law in 1799 for gradual emancipation of slaves.

Jay was a devout Christian, and after his time in politics, became President of the American Bible Society. He believed the best way to ensure world peace was through spreading Christianity throughout the world.

"No human society has ever been able to maintain both order and freedom, both cohesiveness and liberty apart from the moral precepts of the Christian Religion. Should our Republic ever forget this fundamental precept of governance, we will then, be surely doomed." – John Jay

What are your thoughts on this John Jay quote? Do you believe that our society can maintain order and freedom without high moral standards? Why or why not?

Next Lesson April 8