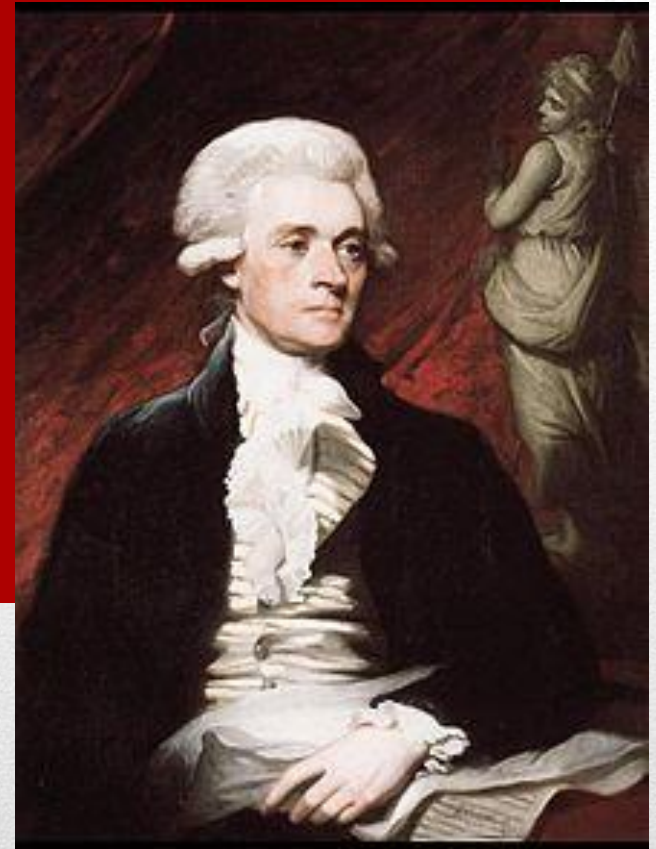
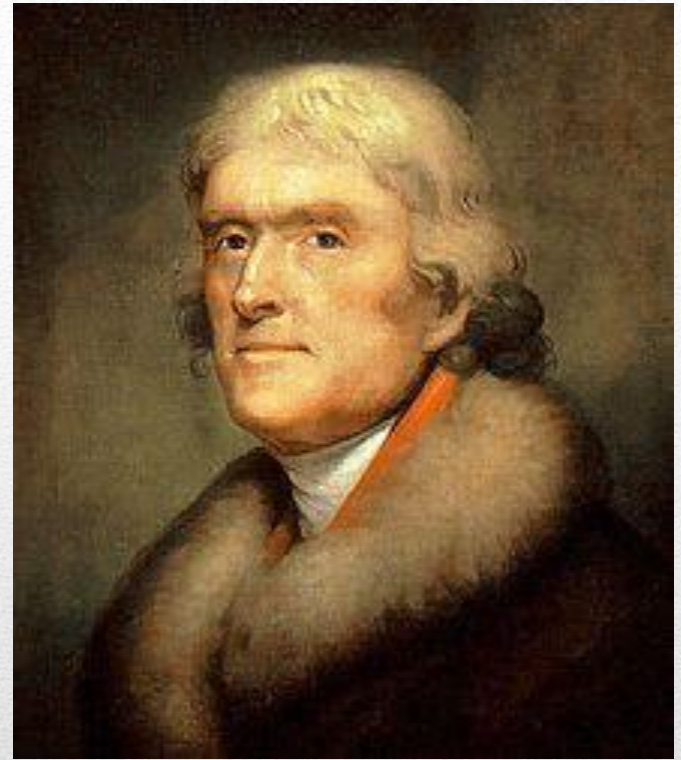


Thomas Jefferson



The third of ten children, Thomas Jefferson was born on April 13, 1743 at the family home not far from the Virginia wilderness. According to his autobiography, Jefferson's earliest memory was being handed to a slave on horseback and carried 50 miles away to their new home.



His father was Peter Jefferson, a planter and surveyor who died when Jefferson was fourteen.

His mother was Jane Randolph, daughter of Isham Randolph, a ship's captain and sometime planter.

Wren Building , College of William & Mary
where Jefferson studied

At the age of nine, Jefferson began studying Latin, Greek, and French; he learned to ride horses, and began to appreciate the study of nature.

At age 16, Jefferson entered the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg and first met the law professor George Wythe who became his influential mentor.

He studied mathematics, metaphysics, and philosophy under Professor William Small.

He also improved his French, Greek, and violin.

A diligent student, Jefferson displayed an avid curiosity in all fields and graduated in 1762, completing his studies in only two years. Jefferson read law while working as a law clerk for Wythe. During this time, he also read a wide variety of English classics and political works.



Throughout his life, Jefferson depended on books for his education. By 1815, his collection had grown to almost 6,500 volumes.

Jefferson married the 23-year-old widow Martha Wayles Skelton on January 1, 1772. They were third cousins. They had a happy marriage which is considered the happiest period of Jefferson's life.

During the ten years of their marriage, Martha bore six children. Only Martha and Mary survived to adulthood.

As a lawyer, Jefferson was closely involved with and took on a number of freedom suits for slaves seeking their freedom.

