

# Jefferson and Adams

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**By Lenny Cacchio**

LEE'S SUMMIT, Mo.—It's July 4, 1826. On this very day, a lifetime after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, two titans of American history, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, finish the final chapter of their lives.

These two men, one breathing his last in Massachusetts, the other in Virginia, had not been in each other's presence for decades. In fact, for several years these two men who were once close friends and had pledged to each other their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor were bitter political enemies.

In a sense Adams and Jefferson personified two strains of thought that have been a part of the American political landscape from its founding. John Adams supported a strong federal government. Jefferson was the champion of states' rights. Adams supported a strong mercantile class, Jefferson the idyllic world of yeoman farmers and craftsman. Adams represented the world of the Reformation and religion, Jefferson the philosophy of the Enlightenment and the supremacy of reason.

The break between these two patriots began in the early days of the Republic but came to an explosive climax during the Adams administration. Due to a fluke in that day's electoral system, Jefferson, despite his antipathy to Adams' view of the role of the chief executive, was elected as Adams' vice president. Thus two men with radically different views become political enemies even while they were supposed to serve side by side in the government.

It was only when Jefferson had finished his second term as president that a common friend and fellow signer, Dr. Benjamin Rush, played the role of peacemaker and nudged the two titans to begin a correspondence that would last the rest of their lives, rekindling a friendship and enriching the heritage of our country.

These two warriors of liberty, whose friendship turned to rivalry, then enmity, blossomed in their mutual respect and friendship once again with the coming of old age and the march of time.

Jefferson and Adams provide a model for political rivals. They had two differing views on the role of government, and those differences transformed a friendship into bitterness. Yet through the influence of a peacemaking inter-

mediary they finished their lives with renewed friendship and respect, and our nation is the richer for it.

It was fitting that both of these old patriots who signed the founding document five decades before left this life on the anniversary of the day that changed their lives and our world forever.

July 4, 1826: Two titans passed from the scene. But their republic endures.