

V. “Jefferson and Liberty”

Narrator:

Though Jefferson greatly enjoyed and appreciated his time in France serving as a strong representative for the United States, he was not present for the drafting of the US Constitution and much of the activity surrounding its debates. Nevertheless, he kept up with the activity through letters from his friend James Madison and, in turn, let his thoughts be known through return letters. His most fervent stance was for the clarifying of the interpretation of the Constitution and for the safeguarding against too liberal or too loose of an interpretation through the addition of a Bill of Rights, which he did much to shape in conjunction with Madison, and which stands beside the Constitution as a bedrock of America’s present-day political system.

But finding himself feeling uncomfortably disconnected with the activity in the US, and frustrated that he was not present to debate and lobby for his strong beliefs, he was eager to return home to re-enter US politics when his assignment in France ended. As fortune had it, he was requested by General Washington, upon returning to America, to immediately re-enter US politics at the front of the stage. He seized the opportunity, moving to Washington in 1789 to serve as America’s first Secretary of State under its first President, George Washington.

Jefferson moved up the political ladder quickly, next serving as vice president under John Adams and then, on March 4th, 1801, after one of the nation's closest presidential contests, Jefferson defeated Aaron Burr to be elected as the third President of the United States of America. Thomas Jefferson had remarried his head and his heart to the world of words, ideas, and affairs of the world, and through his first inaugural address, crafted his vision for the young nation.

(Begin music of V “Jefferson and Liberty” immediately)