



Life and Public Services of John Quincy Adams, Sixth President of the United States

William H. Seward

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John Quincy Adams, (July 11, 1767 – February 23, 1848) was the sixth President of the United States (1825–1829). He served as American diplomat, Senator, and Congressional representative. He was a member of the Federalist, Democratic-Republican, National Republican, and later Anti-Masonic and Whig parties. Adams was the son of former President John Adams and Abigail Adams. As a diplomat, Adams played an important role in negotiating many international treaties, most notably the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812. As Secretary of State, he negotiated with the United Kingdom over America's northern border with Canada, negotiated with Spain the annexation of Florida, and authored the Monroe Doctrine. Historians agree he was one of the greatest diplomats and secretaries of state in American history. As president, he sought to modernize the American economy and promoted education. Adams enacted a part of his agenda and paid off much of the national debt. He was stymied by a Congress controlled by his enemies, and his lack of patronage networks helped politicians eager to undercut him. He lost his 1828 bid for re-election to Andrew Jackson. In doing so, he became the first president since his father to serve a single term. Adams is best known as a diplomat who shaped America's foreign policy in line with his ardently nationalist commitment to America's republican values. More recently Howe (2007) portrayed Adams as the exemplar and moral leader in an era of modernization. During Adams' lifetime, technological innovations and new means of communication spread messages of religious revival, social reform, and party politics. Goods, money, and people traveled more rapidly and efficiently than ever before. Adams was elected a U.S. Representative from Massachusetts after leaving office, serving for the last 17 years of his life with far greater acclamation than he had achieved as president. He is, so far, the only president later elected to the United States House of Representatives (though John Tyler was elected to the House of Representatives of the Confederate States just before his death in 1862). Animated by his growing revulsion against slavery, Adams became a leading opponent of the Slave Power. He predicted that if a civil war were to break out, the president could abolish slavery by using his war powers. Adams also predicted the Union's dissolution over the slavery issue, but said that if the South became independent there would be a series of bloody slave revolts.

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