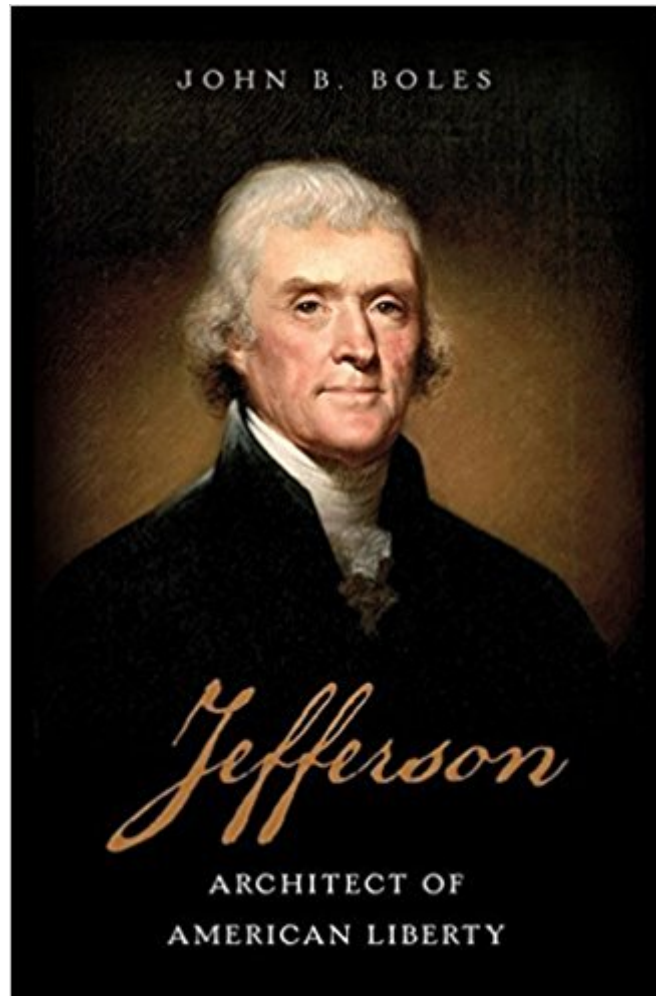




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Jefferson: Architect Of American Liberty



Synopsis

"Magisterial . . . perhaps the finest one-volume biography of an American president." --Jonathan Yardley, *Washington Post* "[A] splendid biography." --*Wall Street Journal* "The fullest and most complete single-volume life of Jefferson since Merrill Peterson's thousand-page biography of 1970." --Gordon Wood, *Weekly Standard*

From an eminent scholar of the American South, the first full-scale biography of Thomas Jefferson since 1970. Not since Merrill Peterson's *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation* has a scholar attempted to write a comprehensive biography of the most complex Founding Father. In *Jefferson*, John B. Boles plumbs every facet of Thomas Jefferson's life, all while situating him amid the sweeping upheaval of his times. We meet Jefferson the politician and political thinker--as well as Jefferson the architect, scientist, bibliophile, paleontologist, musician, and gourmet. We witness him drafting of the Declaration of Independence, negotiating the Louisiana Purchase, and inventing a politics that emphasized the states over the federal government--a political philosophy that shapes our national life to this day. Boles offers new insight into Jefferson's actions and thinking on race. His Jefferson is not a hypocrite, but a tragic figure--a man who could not hold simultaneously to his views on abolition, democracy, and patriarchal responsibility. Yet despite his flaws, Jefferson's ideas would outlive him and make him into nothing less than the architect of American liberty.

Book Information

Hardcover: 640 pages

Publisher: Basic Books; 1 edition (April 25, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0465094686

ISBN-13: 978-0465094684

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 2 x 9.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 37 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #36,234 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #118 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > US Presidents](#) #157 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Presidents & Heads of State](#) #382 in [Books > History > Americas > United States > State & Local](#)

Customer Reviews

"A sympathetic (though not hagiographic) view of Jefferson that emphasizes the differences

between his world and ours....[Jefferson] was, in Mr. Boles's words, the 'architect of American liberty,' a phrase the author uses without the sneers or hedges that have become de rigueur among recent chroniclers of the founding era....[a] splendid biography." --Wall Street Journal "Magisterial... Jefferson: Architect of American Liberty is perhaps the finest one-volume biography of an American president." --Jonathan Yardley, Washington Post"[A] good, solid, generally fair-minded biography... [Boles's] biography concentrates on the exterior events of Jefferson's private and public lives and weaves them together in a straightforward, clearly written narrative. It is the fullest and most complete single-volume life of Jefferson since Merrill Peterson's thousand-page biography of 1970." --Gordon Wood, Weekly Standard "Intensely satisfying... Boles does a particularly skillful job at weaving Jefferson's correspondence and other writings into the busy tempo of his year-to-year life, creating a fascinating dialogue on the page between the reserved and often diffident public man and direct and provocative private writer." --Christian Science Monitor "For all readers interested in understanding the enigmatic and controversial Jefferson as well as his shortcomings and triumphs within the context of his time." --Library Journal "[An] elegant, highly incisive new biography... The detail is impressive, equally so the fluidity of the presentation. The reader is enveloped in Jefferson's world." --Booklist "In a narrative as majestic as its subject, Boles takes a fresh, nuanced look at one of the America's most enigmatic founding fathers... Boles, an accomplished scholar well versed in the source material, deftly paints a picture of the world as Jefferson knew it, taking care not to mix up understanding with excusing, especially with the Virginian's relationship with Sally Hemings. This is a gem of a biography." --Publishers Weekly "A fully fleshed biography of Thomas Jefferson that emphasizes his creative paradoxes and accomplishments... A stately, knowledgeable study." --Kirkus Reviews"John Boles's deeply researched and judiciously balanced Jefferson is an exemplary biography. Animated by a warm and wise admiration for a great American, Boles never loses sight of Jefferson's limitations and failures-or of his extraordinary achievements." --Peter Onuf, University of Virginia, and coauthor, with Annette Gordon-Reed, of 'Most Blessed of the Patriarchs': Thomas Jefferson and the Empire of the Imagination"John Boles's Jefferson is learned, fluent, sensitive, and magnificently detailed. It gives due attention to the intellectual currents and social circumstances that made Jefferson who he was, and its careful engagement with the complexities of slavery is convincingly integrated into the whole. Professor Boles has earned an eminent place for himself in the ever-active field of Jefferson studies."--Andrew Burstein, author of Jefferson's Secrets and coauthor of Madison and Jefferson"John B. Boles reassesses Jefferson's achievements and shortcomings, situating his remarkable life story in the larger history of his extraordinary times. Admiring but critical, Boles's

Jefferson is a next-generation biography of one of the more complicated-and controversial-of America's founding fathers."--Cynthia A. Kierner, author of *Martha Jefferson Randolph, Daughter of Monticello*"An authoritative new biography of Jefferson, Boles interprets his subject in terms of his own time and place, with Jefferson emerging as a greater champion of the people's government than the more elitist Alexander Hamilton and John Adams. Based on original sources and the latest scholarly work, it is a welcome addition to the literature by an author who has spent many years working and thinking about Jefferson."--Andrew O'Shaughnessy, Vice President of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation (Monticello) and author of *The Men Who Lost America*

John B. Boles is the William P. Hobby Professor of History at Rice University and the former editor of the *Journal of Southern History*. He lives in Houston, Texas.

A breath of fresh air in Jeffersonian scholarship, *"Jefferson: Architect of American Liberty"* is balanced and broad. Late 20th century and early 21st century scholarship has given us highly biased, highly critical, and often narrowly scoped portraits of Jefferson. John Boles's book offering alleviates those concerns. This book is a cradle to grave biography that is "sympathetic but critical when appropriate." The author writes with boldness as he navigates error in recent Jeffersonian research. For example, in contrast to some Jeffersonian historians, Boles claims Jefferson actually had a close relationship with his mother and backs it up with adequate evidence. He takes on author Ron Chernow's accusation of cowardice by Jefferson while he was governor of Virginia and even charges Chernow with intellectual dishonesty. He takes on Jefferson critic Joseph Ellis's wild notion that Jefferson would have sided with the South in the Civil War. Boles teaches us that the Architect of American Liberty would have been horrified by that notion and by that war. Boles exposes author Henry Wiencek's conclusion that Jefferson softened on slavery in his later years as pure fantasy. There is one small detail that I especially appreciated in this book. Boles correctly slams the idea (indeed, propagated by the *Hamilton* Broadway Musical) that Jefferson's use of the word "men" in the Declaration of Independence meant only males. This is the height of intellectual dishonesty and is in fact revisionist history. For one to interpret the Declaration in that way is to show one's severe lack of literary exposure. Boles rightly points out that Jefferson's use of the word "men" is to refer to mankind which includes both men and women. By pointing this out, Boles exposes the blatant modern bias against Jefferson. It also exposes Boles for being an honest, bold, and informed writer and researcher. Boles deals with the slavery paradox with precision and

honesty. He shows us how and why we are disappointed with Jefferson in this area and teaches us how Jefferson could live with such a paradox. Boles helps us to think about how to judge the man by the man's times, standards, and surroundings. The treatment of this subject in this book is extremely thoughtful, unbiased, and balanced; critical where criticism is due. Boles draws on extensive scholarship and offers satisfying conclusions about how to think about Jefferson in the context of slavery. Of course, what would a book about Jefferson be without a detailed account of the brilliance of his mind, stock of his broad interests, and details about his beloved Monticello. All of that is here in detail. The stories of Jefferson's time in Paris are highly interesting in this book. Boles also offers juicy family tales of knife fights, fireplace poker fights, and other wild stories. We follow Jefferson from his birth place at Shadwell then to Tuckahoe and on to the College of William and Mary. We follow him to Philadelphia where he becomes friends with the American greats such as Washington, Adams, Franklin, et al. We follow him to Paris and then to New York in the 1790's when the fierce political battles charge up. We see Jefferson rise to great fame as the author of the Declaration of Independence and as the President. We follow him back to Monticello where he lives for 17 more years enjoying a fruitful and eventful retirement. There are a number of books about Jefferson, but this is the first one possibly since Merrill Peterson's "A New Nation" that has attempted a comprehensive accounting of the life of Jefferson. This book details the many reasons why millions of people flock to Monticello, why a mountain has his face carved into the side of it, why he's on our money, why he began a university, and why a prominent memorial of him exists in our nation's capital. The author claims to "humanize and contextualize Jefferson without either deifying or demonizing him." He has succeeded. This book is the modern day standard for a full life biography of America's third president, Thomas Jefferson.

Jefferson: Architect of American Liberty by Boles is well written and well documented. Jefferson's life and career is put back in perspective.

A well-researched, well-written, accessible, highly informative and balanced account

Excellent and a thorough review of Jefferson as a man of his times and patriot

Absolutely wonderful and thoughtful portrayal of a founding father by a leading scholar. I own it now in hardback and the more expensive digital version. When I was at Tulane in the late 70's I was

bumped as an Honors history student from President Sheldon Hackney's course on Southern History and took classes from Dr. Boles. It might have been the best thing that ever happened to me. He was a gifted teacher. This comprehensive biography covers all the avenues of his life and covers both negative and positive attributes with insight. Very likely one of the best history publications of 2017.

Jonathan Yardley, book critic for The Washington Post, has described this book as "perhaps the finest one-volume biography of an American president," and I would be hard-pressed to take issue with that description. Dr. Boles provides a tapestry of endlessly fascinating information that comes together in the end as a discerning and wise portrait of Thomas Jefferson. In providing an accessible narrative of Jefferson's life, the book also delivers a superb lesson in how to humanize someone as celebrated and controversial as Jefferson and how to understand any historical figure by keeping them in the context of the world in which they lived. I have no reservations in giving this book the highest recommendation.

Your humble reviewer heard of a new biography of Thomas Jefferson. Ho-hum said I. But perhaps I will give it a try! Written by a PH.D scholar of history at Rice University I thought the one volume biography would be as dull as waiting in a doctor's office! Was I wrong! In 600 pages Dr. Boles brings Jefferson to life in all his complexity and genius. Consider just the following contradictions in the Man from Monticello:1. TJ was born an aristocrat in old Virginia but as founder of the Republican (now Democratic) Party he fought expanding growth in the West and opening up the Louisiana Purchase for settlement. He was a friend of the common American citizen who opposed a monarchical northeastern monopoly of the levers of power in the federal government.2. A bibliophile who in donating his library of over 6,000 volumes to the government in establishing the Library of Congress he only wrote one book "Notes on the State of Virginia."3. He was a Christian in the sense he believed Jesus to be the most moral man who ever lived even though he did not believe him to be divine. His "wall of separation" between government and the free exercise of religion is vital to understanding toleration in a modern democratic society.4. He was personally opposed to slavery though he did consider African-Americans inferior in intellect to whites. He had several children with his mulatto mistress Sally Hemings (she was the half-sister of Jefferson's wife Martha)5. Jefferson was a Francophile and despised Great Britain as he led Virginia as governor during the Revolutionary War. During his second term as president he imposed the Embargo Act in

retaliation to Britain's naval impressment and searching American ships.⁶ Jefferson was a great writer but a poor orator.⁷ Jefferson the Republican and John Adams the federalist had many political disagreements but became close friends in old age. Both died on the same date July 4, 1776 the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.⁸ Jefferson loved gardening and agriculture but except for his years in Monticello spent most of his life in big cities.⁹ Jefferson may or may not have had an affair with British artist Maria Cosway while he was living in Paris.¹⁰ Jefferson was non-military in outlook but during his presidency West Point was founded.¹¹ Jefferson was a cosmopolitan man but at heart he was a homebody enjoying his friends, family, food, books, pets and life on the plantation of Monticello. Boles divides the Jefferson life story into six parts: Colonial Virginia: 1743-1770; Revolutionary America 1771-1784; Paris (where he served as United States ambassador to the court of Louis XVI) 1784-1790; Philadelphia and New York City (1790-1801. This section deals with Jefferson's service as the Secretary of State in Washington's cabinet and his battles with Alexander Hamilton the Secretary of the Treasury over such issues as the National Bank. He served as Vice-President under John Adams from 1796-1800. Part V deals with the years from 1801-1809 outlining his two terms as POTUS. He is notable for seeing through the purchase of Louisiana from France in 1803; the Lewis and Clark expedition and suppressing the Barbary pirates. Jefferson kept the peace Part VI deals with Jefferson's retirement years at Monticello from 1809 until his death in 1826. Boles condemns human slavery and shows us how Jefferson opposed the institution but was a slaveholder throughout his long and eventful life. John Boles is a scholar who writes well and this one volume biography of Jefferson deserves a wide readership!

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