

**ABSURDITIES,  
SCANDALS & STUPIDITIES  
IN POLITICS**

by

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# 1

## FOUNDING FATHERS

Patriots to the end, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1826, fifty years to the day after they signed the Declaration of Independence. Adam's last words were "Thomas Jefferson survives." He was wrong; Jefferson had died a little earlier in the day.

Fart Proudly.

— Title of an article written by Renaissance man Benjamin Franklin.

Are you sure George Washington was the first president? Though the Articles of Confederation were ratified in 1781, George Washington was not elected President of the United States until 1789. During this time, John Hanson, a delegate from Maryland, served as the President of the Continental Congress. Some historians therefore argue that Hanson is the true first president of the country.

Unapologetic and controversial founding father Aaron Burr served as Thomas Jefferson's vice president and famously fatally wounded his rival Alexander Hamilton in a duel. Burr declared Hamilton "contemptible" when he heard that Hamilton had not intended to fire upon him during their duel. Though Burr was charged with murder, he was mysteriously never tried.

Most people would use warmer words to describe someone that chose not to fire a shot at them.

On December 12, 1829, Founding Father John Lansing Jr. left his hotel room to mail a letter and disappeared into history. He is presumed dead.

When wealthy slave owner George Wythe became an abolitionist, freed his slaves and modified his will to provide for them on his death, his heir and great-nephew, George Wythe Sweeney devised a scheme to keep the money for himself. He poisoned all of his uncle's slaves with arsenic but somehow managed to poison the aging Wythe also.

For all his troubles, the enterprising Sweeney got nothing. Wythe changed his will on his deathbed to disinherit his killer.

He had lived long, did some good and much harm.

– Obituary notice of Founding Father Thomas Paine, a noted intellectual and controversial figure for his vocal support for Deism.

After the White House, what is there to do but drink?

– Retired President and noted drunkard Franklin Pierce, who in modern times, would have been cited for a DUI when he ran over an elderly woman while driving his carriage drunk!

Known as a philanderer, charged with the murder of a former Treasury Secretary, indebted to many lenders and indicted for treason against the country. These were not the acts of a common street thug but indeed those of Founding Father and former vice-president Aaron Burr.

Burr set the bar so high (or low, depending on how you see it) that no federal politician has since been able to match his penchant for getting into trouble.

John Adams, the second president of the United States, married his third cousin, Abigail Adams. Defying genetics, the closely related couple parented a son, John Quincy Adams, who became the sixth president of the country.

George Washington lost all his teeth by the time he reached forty years of age requiring him to use dentures. His dentures were made from various materials, including ivory, lead, pig teeth, cow teeth, elk teeth and human teeth. The dentures were ill fitting and distorted his lips, and are believed to be the reason for the awkward facial expressions in the portraits of the first president.

John Adams fired off one of the first salvos of negative campaigning during his presidential contest with Thomas Jefferson. Adams' allies scared voters by stating that if Jefferson won, "Murder, rape, adultery, and incest will all be openly taught and practiced. The air will be filled with the cries of the distressed, the soil will be soaked in blood, and the nation black with crime."

Jefferson won, but the predicted descent into chaos did not materialize.

John Hancock, the Founding Father from Massachusetts with a distinctively masculine name, was the first person to sign the Declaration of Independence. He reportedly signed his name so large and clear that "King George III could read it without his spectacles."

This act made the term 'John Hancock' eponymous with signature.

*Did you know? – John Hancock's burial marker in the Granary Burying Ground in Boston is arguably phallic.*

Despite suspicion he was suffering from recurring dementia, Founding Father Samuel Chase was nominated to the Supreme Court in 1776. Notwithstanding numerous complaints, Chase became Chief Justice, but his eccentricity finally caught up with him and he was impeached in 1805. Acquitted at trial, Chase holds the distinction as the only Supreme Court justice to ever be impeached.

William Blount was the first individual to be expelled from the US Senate after it was discovered that this Founding Father had hatched a plan to aid the British in conquering the then Spanish territory of Florida. Only twenty years earlier, Blount was a part of the Revolutionary Army fighting to wrestle America from British hands.

Founding Father, author, inventor, statesman, scientist, playboy, raconteur and signatory to the Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Franklin knew his way around the beer barrel well enough that in 1737 he chronicled 228 slang terms and phrases to describe drunkenness. His compilations include such gems as:

- Cherry-merry
- Soaked
- Nimtopsical
- Crump-footed
- Pigeon eyed
- Had a thump over the head with a Sampson jawbone
- Got the glanders
- Globular
- Womble-cropped
- Trammeled

Many fraternities continue to closely study Franklin's work.

Thomas Paine played an important role in both the American and French Revolutions serving as a pamphleteer in the former and as a province representative in the latter. In fact, Paine was at greater peril during the French Revolution where he narrowly escaped being murdered in prison.

His family must have been grateful there were no other major revolutions during his lifetime.

Aaron Burr was the third vice president and, until Dick Cheney shot his hunting partner in 2006, the only sitting vice president to have shot a man while in office. In a cruel twist of fate worthy of any soap opera, Burr was served with divorce papers while on his deathbed by the oldest son of Alexander Hamilton.

The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.

– Thomas Jefferson, in response to the Shays Rebellion of 1786. The Rebellion occurred when a group of indebted farmers mobbed the courts in Massachusetts to prevent foreclosure proceedings from being instituted against their farms and homes.

After leading the colonists to victory against England in the Revolutionary War, there was a campaign by some military officers and ordinary citizens to crown George Washington as King of the United States. Washington wisely declined and the nation was spared the everlasting irony of having replaced King George III with King George I.

The 'John Hancock' of Button Gwinnett, a signatory to the Declaration of Independence is one of the most valuable autographs. Original documents bearing his mark are known to have sold for over \$150,000. This value is believed to stem from the limited set of documents known to bear his signature and the desire by history buffs to collect signatures of all 56 signers of the Declaration.

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## **THE JEFFERSON/HEMINGS CONNECTION**

The relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings is one of the most enduring mysteries in American history. Rumors started during Jefferson's lifetime hinted at the fact that this Founding Father was the father of one or more of Hemings' children. Jefferson never publicly addressed this and historians are still unable to conclusively prove or disprove the conjecture. The Jefferson/Hemings saga has another strange twist. Sally is widely believed to be the half-sister of Martha Wayles, the wife of Thomas Jefferson. John Wayles, Martha's father reportedly fathered Sally with one of his slaves and left Sally to Martha in his will.

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## MR. PRESIDENT

I don't know whether it's the finest public housing in America or the crown jewel of the American penal system.

— Bill Clinton, on the White House.

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### **PRESIDENTS ON PROSTITUTION**

My choice early in life was either to be a piano-player in a whorehouse or a politician. And to tell the truth, there's hardly any difference.

— Harry Truman.

Politics is supposed to be the second oldest profession. I have come to realize that it bears a very close resemblance to the first.

— Ronald Reagan.

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President William Howard Taft was so overweight during his tenure as America's leader that he became stuck in the White House bathtub on several occasions. To stop the occurrence of this embarrassing situation, Taft had a 7 ft x 4ft tub installed that could accommodate several men.

Always be sincere, even if you don't mean it.

— President Harry Truman.

I have no trouble with my enemies. I can take care of my enemies in a fight. But my friends, my goddamned friends, they're the ones who keep me walking the floor at nights!

— President Warren Harding. Harding, however did not distinguish between friends and foes in issues of romance. Starting out, he married Florence Kling, the daughter of his arch-nemesis, which earned his new bride banishment from her father. Later he had an affair with Carrie Philips, the wife of a family friend and a German WWI sympathizer. The liaison almost cost him his candidacy for the presidency and Carrie successfully used it to blackmail the Republican Party for a lifetime of financial support. As a final masterstroke, he conducted an affair with Nan Britton, the daughter of his close friend. The relationship supposedly produced a child.

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## **THE LINCOLN/KENNEDY CONNECTION**

Much has been said about the bizarre coincidences between our 16<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> presidents. That is of course beyond the fact that they were both felled by gunshots to the head. We present here a list of these coincidences and invite you to draw any conclusion you see fit:

- Lincoln was elected to congress in 1846. Kennedy was elected to congress in 1946.
- Lincoln was elected president in 1860. Kennedy was elected president in 1960.
- Southerners assassinated both Lincoln and Kennedy on a Friday.
- Lincoln's secretary was named Kennedy. Kennedy's secretary was named Lincoln.
- Kennedy was shot while riding in a car model named 'Lincoln.'
- Men named Johnson succeeded both.
- Andrew Johnson, who succeeded Lincoln, was born in 1808. Lyndon Johnson, who succeeded Kennedy, was born in 1908.

- John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated Lincoln, was born in 1839. Lee Harvey Oswald, who assassinated Kennedy, was born in 1939.
  - Booth ran from a theater and was caught in a warehouse. Oswald ran from a warehouse and was caught in a theater.
  - Booth and Oswald were both assassinated before they stood trial.
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President Ulysses S. Grant, a man of some means, placed his entire combined fortune in a venture with his friend, Ferdinand Ward. Ward swindled Grant out of his fortune and the ex-president was left bankrupt and destitute.

There are no favorites in my office. I treat them all with the same general inconsideration.

— Lyndon B. Johnson.

*Did you know? The only three presidents known more commonly by their initials are Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), John Fitzgerald Kennedy (JFK) and Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ).*

It depends on what the definition of 'is' is.

— Bill Clinton displayed this bit of verbal jujitsu that had earned him the nickname "Slick Willie" in response to a question during hearings on the Monica Lewinsky scandal.

President Ike Eisenhower was forced to admit that his administration had misled the nation about the Soviet Union shooting down a U2 spy plane. The government had initially claimed the plane crashed but the Soviets produced Francis Gary Powers, the pilot of the plane. Powers had failed to destroy the plane as required by the CIA and also commit suicide to avoid divulging secrets during interrogation. A distraught Eisenhower commented to his secretary, "I would like to resign."