



John Adams's Republic: The One, the Few, and the Many

By Richard Alan Ryerson

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Scholars have examined John Adams's writings and beliefs for generations, but no one has brought such impressive credentials to the task as Richard Alan Ryerson in *John Adams's Republic*. The editor-in-chief of the Massachusetts Historical Society's Adams Papers project for nearly two decades, Ryerson offers readers of this magisterial book a fresh, firmly grounded account of Adams's political thought and its development.

Of all the founding fathers, Ryerson argues, John Adams may have worried the most about the problem of social jealousy and political conflict in the new republic. Ryerson explains how these concerns, coupled with Adams's concept of executive authority and his fear of aristocracy, deeply influenced his political mindset. He weaves together a close analysis of Adams's public writings, a comprehensive chronological narrative beginning in the 1760s, and an exploration of the second president's private diary, manuscript autobiography, and personal and family letters, revealing Adams's most intimate political thoughts across six decades.

How, Adams asked, could a self-governing country counter the natural power and influence of wealthy elites and their friends in government? Ryerson argues that he came to believe a strong executive could hold at bay the aristocratic forces that posed the most serious dangers to a republican society. The first study ever published to closely examine all of Adams's political writings, from his youth to his long retirement, *John Adams's Republic* should appeal to everyone who seeks to know more about America's first major political theorist.

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Editorial Review

Review

"No scholar is more qualified to capture the 'whole' Adams. Richard Ryerson has mastered the biographical details of Adams's public and private life, as well as the trajectory of his thought. More than a study of one man, this book is an insightful narrative of the founding of the nation."

(Barbara B. Oberg, Princeton University, coeditor of *Federalists Reconsidered*)

"This is a serious, detailed, and convincing account with few unexplored avenues... Recommended. All academic levels/libraries."

(*Choice*)

"... very excellent and elegantly written..."

(*Chronicles*)

About the Author

Richard Alan Ryerson, the former academic director and historian of the David Library of the American Revolution, was the editor-in-chief of the Adams Papers from 1983 to 2001.

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