

A Question of Boundaries

An Annotated History of the United States

I. The Succession

When the Revolution ended with the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781, Washington's army offered to make him king. Washington refused, but the people needed a symbol and were accustomed to a monarchy (just not the one they had recently flung off). The fledgling Congress approached John Adams, who also refused. On hearing that a committee had been sent to Italy to extend the crown to Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie), then in exile in Florence*, Jefferson quietly let it be known that if the crown were offered to him instead, he would accept. His reasoning was that the new country would be better off with no ties to Europe. King Thomas I was crowned in January 1782.

Thomas Jefferson I was born in 1743 in Virginia and married Martha Wayles in 1772. They had six children, four of whom survived to adulthood. He died in 1826 at age 83.

Major accomplishments: Louisiana Purchase, 1803; successfully defeating the British in the War of 1812; moving swiftly to close the borders when plague broke out in Europe in 1815; ensuring that the country became self-sustaining; and cultivating the tea seedlings he had obtained prior to the Revolution and starting tea plantations in South Carolina. Most Americans consider this last to be his greatest achievement.

Thomas Jefferson II was born in 1777 and was crowned in 1826 at age 49. King Thomas II died in 1848 at age 71.

Major accomplishment: ending slavery. He argued to Parliament that his father's words "all men are created equal" meant all men, including slaves. Historians rightly believe that it was actually his shame in discovering that he had several Negro brothers and sisters that prompted him rather than idealism. He averted rebellion in the Southern states by offering compensation. That, and the realization that it was cheaper to pay a man wages than to feed, clothe and house his entire family for life, made the transition less controversial than it might have been. Thomas II was content after that point to be a figurehead and let the Parliament handle the reins of the country.

Thomas Jefferson III was born in 1807 and was crowned in 1848 at age 41. His first wife died childless in 1859. Thomas married again and his second wife bore a son in the following year, to the rejoicing of the people who had feared the crown would go to an unpopular nephew. King Thomas III died in 1880 at age 73.

Major accomplishments: None overt, unless one counts the survival of the monarchy. Unknown to the populace or to Parliament, Thomas III masterminded an undercover spy ring and quietly corresponded with the governments of Canada, Texas, and some European countries with the purpose of establishing or renewing ties once Americans opened the borders. He died before this could happen.

Thomas Jefferson IV was born in 1860 and was crowned in 1880 at age 20.

Major accomplishments: remain to be seen

II. Federal Government

After the decision to crown a king, the Continental Congress reverted to British custom and renamed itself Parliament, but instituting the convention of “Upper” and “Lower” Houses. The Upper House is composed of two men from each state who are appointed by the governor of that state. It was assumed that on the death or resignation of a member of the Upper House, a new member would be appointed by the acting governor of his state. However, in 1813, when an MP from Rhode Island died, his son approached the governor and requested that he be appointed to succeed his father. In 1820, the same thing happened in North Carolina. From that point onward, the seat became hereditary with no term limits. Realizing that precedent had become *ipso facto* law, Parliament voted in 1863 that if a member had no direct heir, the seat would revert to governmental appointment.

The Lower House is composed of two men elected from each state for a term of six years. No Lower House MP can serve more than two consecutive terms. In 1835, the New England states, New York and Pennsylvania, petitioned Parliament to have representation based on population, but the western states defeated this motion on the grounds that more densely populated states would have an unfair advantage over those with fewer people. Members of both Houses must prove ownership of property before campaigning for, or being appointed to office. Voters also must provide proof of property ownership.

There is a movement now to extend the franchise to all men, regardless of the property qualification. Some women hope that if this happens, the privilege will extend to them as well.

The King, as has been seen, is largely a figurehead, but he does have some powers: the right of veto, to vote in case of a tie and to appoint committees. He also appoints judges to the Supreme Court based on recommendations from lower court judges. Supreme Court judges are required to retire at age 70.

The Federal government oversees the treasury, the national bank, the army and navy, border security, the postal service, and taxes.

III. State Government

Individual states are composed of counties (or parishes or boroughs) and have autonomy over roads, education, commerce and security (police, fire, etc.) Unlike Parliament, the state legislatures vary from state to state. Most are loosely patterned after Virginia’s Legislature: a representative from each county who serves four years with a limit of three consecutive terms, and an elected senator from districts composed of from three to 12 counties. Some states have only districts and term limits vary from two to unlimited.

Due to King Thomas I’s efforts, no state may impede the free flow of goods across its borders or tax any goods save those grown or manufactured within its borders.

IV: Education

Education was a haphazard affair until 1856, when each state sent educators, ranging from teachers at one-room schools to university professors, to a convention in Chicago with the rather unwieldy title “Minimum Standards for the Success of a Free and Universal Education.” Eventually the manifesto created there was accepted by all 36 states and students in every state studied the same basic curriculum in reading (including spelling and composition), mathematics through the teaching of algebra, and American history (no one saw the need to teach European history, let alone world history, or a foreign language). Individual school boards could add to this to meet the needs of their local populations, thus higher mathematics, music, art, philosophy, Greek or Latin might be offered at a school determined to send its graduates to university, while a rural school might offer domestic arts, woodworking, animal husbandry and agriculture. It was not unusual for a family to send a son (and occasionally a daughter) to board in a town whose school met their needs more fully than what was offered locally.

Interestingly, most schools were integrated by the time of the Chicago convention, taxpayers having come to the conclusion that operating side-by-side facilities was not cost-effective. Only Georgia and the Carolinas maintained separate but equal schools.

V: Taxes

Faced the necessity to pay reparations to former slaveholders, a mounting debit for maintaining border security and the loss of income from tariffs and excise taxes, Parliament enacted a flat 10 percent income tax in 1825 for all wages over \$2,000 annually. States could enforce a property tax, but not an income tax. Taxing goods and services was at the discretion of individual states (see above), but Parliament reserved the right to tax certain commodities, including basic crops such as corn, wheat, sugar beets, tea, beef, pork and mutton, cotton and wool; and natural resources such as oil, coal (electricity was not considered taxable—yet), gold and gems. The federal tax was paid by the seller and the state tax by the consumer.

The Llewellen family sent Nathan to Parliament to argue that the tax on luxuries, such as gold and jewels, should be paid by the consumer, but he was never able to accomplish this and the family continues to pay part of its profits to the government.

IV: Transportation

Roads were maintained by the states with varying degrees of efficiency. Some western states had no roads to speak of. Railroads and river traffic were considered private enterprise and no business of the government. Increasing collisions of large airships with smaller ones were becoming a concern and the king appointed a committee to investigate a way to control the paths and schedules of larger airships as his first act after attaining the crown. Anticipating the outcome, the *Patsy J.* was the first airship to establish a regular schedule.

VI: Bordering Nations

- a. **Canada:** a federal dominion of provinces loyal to Great Britain.
- b. **Texas:** a republic formed in 1836 by U.S. citizens who were cut off by the border closings in 1815, the United States recognizing the territory as being legally under Spanish rule. They were joined by adventurers and entrepreneurs who chafed under the tight restrictions imposed by the U.S. government and eventually became strong enough to defeat the Mexican army and declare independence. It is here noted that while border guards acted swiftly to prevent anyone crossing the border into the United States, a more or less blind eye was turned toward anyone leaving. Texas profited from farming, ranching and manufacturing, mainly farming machinery. In their case, necessity did become the “mother of invention” and Texas-made steamtractors found a brisk market in Mexico and the Confederacy of Tribes.
- c. **Confederacy of Tribes:** pushed to the limit by encroaching settlers, the Indian Nations put aside their differences and banded together in a mass exodus to the Pacific, where they claimed the land from the Rockies to the Pacific. They assimilated with Spanish settlers there and adopted many of their customs while maintaining individual tribal customs. They thrived as ranchers of buffalo, sheep and alpaca, which were imported from South America and prized for their long hair; and as farmers. Large areas were devoted to planting groves of oranges and lemons and the confederacy had thriving markets in Texas, Mexico and Canada. They formed a central government and established schools. Their main impediment to unity was the wide variety of dialects and ironically decided to adopt English as their primary language, probably because the majority had some fluency in that tongue.
- d. **Floriana:** The State of Louisiana seceded from the United States and was joined by the Florida, Mississippi and Alabama territories when war was declared against Britain in 1812, rightly fearing that their cotton and rice would be embargoed. Unwilling to fight on two fronts, King Thomas I faced the loss, declaring the renegade territories would beg to return to the union when the conflict was over. In 1813, Spain invaded the Gulf territories. The new Spanish colony was named Ferdinandia in honor of its ruler, King Ferdinand VII. The colony fought for and won its independence in 1847 and renamed itself Floriana.

*Gentle reader, although “A Question of Boundaries” is a fantasy, this event did happen and is documented in the U.S. Senate archives.