

Robert R. Livingston (chancellor)

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Robert R(ober) ^[1] Livingston (November 27, 1746 (Old Style November 16) – February 26, 1813) was an American lawyer, politician, diplomat from New York, and a Founding Father of the United States. He was known as "**The Chancellor**", after the high New York state legal office he held for 25 years. He was a member of the Committee of Five that drafted the Declaration of Independence, along with Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Roger Sherman.

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Early life

Livingston was the eldest son of Judge Robert Livingston (1718-1775) and Margaret Beekman Livingston, uniting two wealthy Hudson River valley families. He had nine brothers and sisters, all of whom wed and made their homes on the Hudson River near the family seat at Clermont Manor. Livingston graduated from King's College, the predecessor to today's Columbia University, in 1764.

Livingston married Mary Stevens, daughter of Continental Congressman John Stevens, on September 9, 1770,^[2] and built a home for himself and his wife south of Clermont, called Belvedere, which was burned to the ground along with Clermont in 1777 by the British Army under General John Burgoyne. In 1794 he built a new home called New Clermont, which was subsequently renamed Arryl House – a phonetic spelling of his initials, "RRL" – which was deemed "the most commodious home in America" and contained a

Robert Livingston



United States Minister to France

In office

1801–1804

Appointed by Thomas Jefferson

Preceded by Charles Pinckney

Succeeded by John Armstrong

1st United States Secretary of Foreign Affairs

In office

October 20, 1781 – June 4, 1783

Preceded by Position established

Succeeded by John Jay

1st Chancellor of New York

In office

July 30, 1777 – June 30, 1801

Governor George Clinton
John Jay

Preceded by Position established

Succeeded by John Lansing

Personal details

Born November 27, 1746
New York City, New York, British America

library of four thousand volumes. Livingston was known for continually quarreling with his relatives.^[3]

Political career

Livingston was appointed Recorder of New York City in October 1773, but soon identified himself with the anti-colonial Whig Party and was replaced a few months later with John Watts, Jr. He was a member of the Committee of Five that drafted the Declaration of Independence, although he was recalled by his state before he could sign the final version of the document.

Died	February 26, 1813 (aged 66) Clermont, New York, U.S.
Political party	Democratic-Republican
Spouse(s)	Mary Stevens Livingston
Alma mater	Columbia University



Of the five figures standing in the center of John Trumbull's 1817 painting *Declaration of Independence*, Thomas Jefferson is depicted in front of the Committee of Five, presenting the draft Declaration to the Second Continental Congress standing next to Benjamin Franklin. The three prominent figures standing just behind them are, from left to right, John Adams, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston.

In 1777-1801 Livingston was the first Chancellor of New York, then the highest judicial officer in the state. He became universally known as "The Chancellor", retaining the title as a nickname even after he left the office. Livingston was also U.S. Secretary of Foreign Affairs from 1781 to 1783 under the Articles of Confederation.

In 1789 as Chancellor of New York, Livingston administered the presidential oath of office to George Washington at Federal Hall in New York City, then the Capital of the United States.

In 1789 Livingston joined the Jeffersonian Republicans (later known as the Democratic-Republicans), in opposition to his former colleagues John Jay and Alexander Hamilton who founded the Federalists. He formed an uneasy alliance with his previous rival George Clinton, along with Aaron Burr, then a political newcomer. He opposed the Jay Treaty and other Federalist initiatives.^[4]

In 1798 Livingston ran for Governor of New York on the Democratic-Republican ticket, but was defeated by incumbent Governor John Jay.

As U.S. Minister to France from 1801 to 1804, Livingston negotiated the Louisiana Purchase. After the signing of the Louisiana Purchase agreement in 1803, Livingston made this memorable statement:

We have lived long but this is the noblest work of our whole lives ... The United States take rank this day among the first powers of the world.^[5]

During his time as U.S. minister to France, Livingston met Robert Fulton, with whom he developed the first viable steamboat, the North River Steamboat, whose home port was at the Livingston family home of Clermont Manor in the town of Clermont, New York. On her maiden voyage she left New York City with him as a passenger, stopped briefly at Clermont Manor, and continued on to Albany up the Hudson River, completing in just under 60 hours a journey which had previously taken nearly a week by sloop. In 1811 Fulton and Livingston became members of the Erie Canal Commission.

Livingston was a Freemason, and in 1784 he was appointed the first Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New

York, retaining this title until 1801. The Grand Lodge's library in Manhattan bears his name. The Bible Livingston used to administer the oath of office to President Washington is owned by St. John's Lodge No. 1, and is still used today when the Grand Master is sworn in, and, by request, when a President of the United States is sworn in.

After his death, Livingston was buried at St. James Episcopal Churchyard in Hyde Park, New York.

Livingston commemorated

In 1904 the U.S. Post office issued a series of postage stamps commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase along with the central figures involved in this historical transformation of the United States. The engraved image of Livingston is taken from a Gilbert Stuart (1783–1872) oil painting of 1794.^[6]

External links

- [1] (<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/george-dangerfield-2/chancellor-robert-r-livingston-of-new-york/>) Review of a 1960 biography by George Dangerfield



Robert Livingston
Issue of 1904



Map of Louisiana Purchase
Issue of 1904

Livingston County, Kentucky,^[7] and Livingston County, New York, are named for him.

A statue of Livingston was commissioned by the state of New York and placed in the U.S. Capitol building, pursuant to the tradition of each state selecting two individuals from the state to be so honored.

In popular culture

- In the 2008 HBO miniseries, *John Adams*, Livingston is portrayed by actor Alex Draper.

See also

- Livingston family
- Edward Livingston (1764-1836), Robert's younger brother, who also served as U.S. Minister to France

References

- At the time, the Livingstons used their father's first name as a middle name to distinguish the numerous members of the family, as a kind of patronymic. Since he and his father had the same name, he never spelled out the middle name but always used only the initial.
- The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* (https://books.google.com/books?id=EtMUAAAAYAAJ), Vol. XI (1880), p. 6.
- www.kirkusreview.com (https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/george-dangerfield-2/chancellor-robert-r-livingston-of-new-york/)
- Robert R. Livingston (http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3404703928.html), *Encyclopedia of World Biography*.
- The Louisiana State Capitol Building (http://www.crt.state.la.us/tourism/capitol/capitol.htm)
- Clermont State Historical Site: http://clermontstatehistoricsite.blogspot.com/search?q=robert+livingston
- Collins, Lewis (1877). *History of Kentucky*. p. 478.

Further reading

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- Brecher, Frank W. *Negotiating the Louisiana Purchase: Robert Livingston's Mission to France, 1801-1804* (McFarland, 2006)
- Dangerfield, George. *Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York, 1746-1813* (1960)

External links

- United States Congress. "Robert R. Livingston (id: L000372)". *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*.
- The Chancellor Robert R Livingston Masonic Library of New York (http://www.nymasoniclibrary.org/)
- Louisiana purchase Risks and Rewards page (http://www.risksandrewards.org.uk/invest/proposal_10.html)



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Preceded by Thomas Jones	Recorder of New York City 1773–1774	Succeeded by John Watts
New office	Chancellor of New York 1777–1801	Succeeded by John Lansing
Political offices		
New office	United States Secretary of Foreign Affairs 1781–1783	Succeeded by John Jay
Diplomatic posts		
Preceded by Charles Pinckney	United States Minister to France 1801–1804	Succeeded by John Armstrong

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