



Please Welcome
Mr. & Mrs. America:
A look at the lives of
U.S. Presidents and
Their Wives

From Washington to Eisenhower

An Excerpt from:

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3 – A Man For All Seasons – Thomas Jefferson



Thomas Jefferson: President 1801-1809. B: April 13, 1743, Goochland (now Albemarle) County, Virginia. D: July 4, 1826, Charlottesville, Virginia.



Martha Wayles Skelton: B: October, 1748, Charles City County, Virginia. D: September 6, 1782, Monticello, Virginia.

When President Kennedy entertained a group of Nobel Prize winners at the White House in December, 1962 he said that it was the most distinguished gathering of talent ever assembled at the White House – except when Jefferson was there alone! Thomas Jefferson was an architect, violinist, inventor, scientist, serious religion student, and an expert in agricultural methods who believed that the drafting of the Declaration of Independence was the biggest event in his life – even more important than being the President!

When Jefferson began courting Martha Wayles Skelton she was a 22 year old widow, heiress and mother. Thomas and Martha loved music and when they were building Monticello, he ordered a “forte-piano” for his bride. The wedding took place on January 1, 1772 and they arrived at Monticello during a late January snowstorm. There was no fire, no food and the servants were asleep so they toasted their new home with a leftover half-bottle of wine. But Monticello actually became a home for BEER. It seems Martha was an excellent brew master. During their first

year at Monticello, she brewed 1700 12-ounce servings of beer! Thomas designed a beer distillery under the south pavilion for her.

Martha's death was devastating for Thomas who shut himself up in his room for three weeks! Some say he vowed never to marry again – in any case, he never did and so Dolley Madison served as Hostess while Jefferson was President. Jefferson's daughter Patsy also assisted with the duties of the First Lady (*Patsy's real name was Martha; she married Thomas Mann Randolph, Jr.*)

At the White House, Jefferson received one of the most unusual congratulatory gifts on record. In celebration of the Republican candidate's victory, Elder John Leland and the ladies of his Baptist Congregation in Cheshire, Massachusetts decided to manufacture a 1,235 pound wheel of cheese using the milk of 900 Republican cows (they would not contaminate the cheese by using Federalist cows!). Formed in a specially modified cider press that was six feet in diameter, the cheese-makers engraved the cheese with the motto, "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God." They then spent several weeks getting the giant gift to Washington D.C. where it was presented to the President on New Year's Day 1802. The cheese measured 4 feet 4 ½ inches in diameter and was 15 inches thick and the President called it "extraordinary proof of the skill with which those domestic arts which contribute so much to our daily comfort are practiced by them." However, to make sure all was legal and above board, Jefferson paid Leland \$200 for the cheese. The Colossal Cheshire Cheese was served at the White House for a long time thereafter (some claim as much as three years later!) And so, it was known that the President was truly the Big Cheese!

Home:

Monticello, Charlottesville, VA – open to the public.

<http://www.monticello.org/>



This is from our book PLEASE WELCOME MR. & MRS. AMERICA based on one of EVE's history programs which cover topics such as REMARKABLE OHIOANS and ORDINARY PEOPLE IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES: STORIES FROM WWII.

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