

STORIES ABOUT JEFFERSON

Thomas Jefferson was one of the great men of the American Revolution. He was not a soldier. He was not a great speaker. But he was a great thinker. And he was a great writer.

He wrote a paper that was the very beginning of the United States. It was a paper that said that we would be free from England, and be a country by ourselves. We call that paper the Declaration of Independence.

When he was a boy, Jefferson was fond of playing games, but when he was tired of play, he would pick up a book. He enjoyed learning things. From the time when he was a boy he never sat down to rest without a book.

At school he learned what other boys did. But the difference between him and most other boys was this: he did not stop with knowing just what the other boys knew. Most boys want to learn

what other boys learn. Most girls would like to know what their schoolmates know. But Jefferson wanted to know a great deal more.

As a young man, Jefferson knew Latin and Greek. He also knew French and Spanish and Italian.

He did not talk to show off what he knew. He tried to learn what other people knew. When he talked to a wagon maker, he asked him about such things as a wagon maker knows most about. He would sometimes ask how a wagon maker would go to work to make a wheel.

When Jefferson talked to a learned man, he asked him about those things that this man knew most about. When he talked with Indians, he got them to tell him about their language. That is the way he came to know so much about so many things. Whenever anybody told him anything worth while, he wrote it down as soon as he could.

One day Jefferson was traveling. He went on horseback since that was a common way of traveling at that time. He stopped at a country tavern, and at this tavern he talked with a stranger who was staying there.

After a while Jefferson rode away. Then the stranger said to the landlord, "Who is that man? He knew so much about law, that I was sure he was a lawyer. But when we talked about medicine, he knew so much about that, that I thought he must be a doctor. And after a while he seemed to know so much about religion, that I was sure he was a minister. Who is he?"

The stranger was very much surprised to hear that the man he had talked with was Thomas Jefferson.