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978-1-107-02070-2 - Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood

Brian Steele

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## Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood

This book emphasizes the centrality of nationhood to Thomas Jefferson's thought and politics, envisioning Jefferson as a cultural nationalist whose political project sought the alignment of the American state system with the will and character of the nation. Jefferson believed that America was the one nation on earth able to realize in practice universal ideals to which other peoples could only aspire. He appears in the book as the narrator of what he once called "American Story": as the historian, the sociologist, and the ethnographer; the political theorist of the nation; the most successful practitioner of its politics; and its most enthusiastic champion. The book argues that reorienting Jefferson around the concept of American nationhood recovers an otherwise easily missed coherence to his political career and helps make sense of a number of conundrums in his thought and practice.

Brian Steele is assistant professor of history at the University of Alabama, Birmingham. His work has appeared in the *Journal of American History* and the *Journal of Southern History*.

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BRIAN STEELE

*University of Alabama, Birmingham*



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## Acknowledgments

“All this was given to you...”

This book has its earliest roots in a paper written for an inspired senior seminar with Lawrence Cress at the University of Tulsa and a dissertation written at the University of North Carolina under the direction of Don Higginbotham. Neither man lived to see the book; both shaped it in fundamental ways, and, I might add, altered the course of my life.

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With more space and ability, I would be justified in writing a volume on each of the following friends. As a substitute, I will simply affirm my love and admiration for Jonathan Weiler, Steve Keadey, Spencer Downing, Adam Tuchinsky, Karl and Elizabeth Davis, Bill Estes, and Mike Wilhoit: “I cannot tell how my ankles bend ... nor whence the cause of my faintest wish,/ Nor the cause of the friendship I emit ... nor the cause of the friendship I take again.”

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“May I prove to be deserving of that high company.”

Key to Brief Citations

AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
AJL	Lester J. Cappon, ed., <i>The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams</i> , 2nd ed., (Chapel Hill, 1987)
FE	Paul Leicester Ford, ed., <i>The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Federal Edition</i> , 12 vols. (New York, 1904–1905)
JAH	<i>Journal of American History</i>
JER	<i>Journal of the Early Republic</i>
JSH	<i>Journal of Southern History</i>
LC	<i>Thomas Jefferson Papers</i> , Library of Congress
L&B	Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert Ellery Bergh, eds., <i>The Writings of Thomas Jefferson</i> , 20 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1903–1904)
Notes	Thomas Jefferson, <i>Notes on the State of Virginia</i> (1784), ed. William Peden (Chapel Hill, 1954)
PAH	Harold C. Syrett, ed., <i>The Papers of Alexander Hamilton</i> , 25 vols. (New York, 1961–1977)
PJM	William T. Hutchinson et al., eds., <i>The Papers of James Madison</i> (Chicago and Charlottesville, 1962–)
PTJ	Julian P. Boyd, ed., <i>The Papers of Thomas Jefferson</i> , 34 vols. to date (Princeton, 1950–).
PTJ, Retirement Series	J. Jefferson Looney, ed., <i>The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series</i> , 8 vols. to date (Princeton, 2004–)
ROL	James Morton Smith, ed., <i>The Republic of Letters: The Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and James Madison</i> , 1776–1826, 3 vols. (New York, 1995)
TJW	Merrill D. Peterson, ed., <i>Thomas Jefferson: Writings</i> (New York, 1984).
WJA	Charles Francis Adams, ed., <i>Works of John Adams</i> , 10 vols. (Boston, 1850–1856).
WMQ	<i>William and Mary Quarterly</i> , Third Series