

## *Author's Note*

The Founding Fathers wrote eloquently and extensively. Well aware of the historical significance of their lives and times, they made copies of their letters; Thomas Jefferson famously used a variety of copying presses and polygraph devices for that purpose. The result is a remarkably complete record of the thoughts of this group of American eighteenth-century intellectuals, lawyers, clerics, and farmers. In the following narrative, wherever possible, I have tried to allow the characters to speak for themselves through their letters and publications. I have also retained their original spelling, punctuation, and emphases, much of which is strange to modern eyes. Jefferson, for example, consistently wrote the possessive “its” as “it’s,” and John Adams’s spelling, especially when he was young, was delightfully erratic. Seeing the texts in this way, while not quite as authentic as reading the handwritten originals, helps capture for us the living person as he sat, perhaps by candlelight, composing works, short or long, to meet the requirements of a particular moment and also knowing that they would probably be read by future generations. It is a privilege to take our turn at finding a new understanding—in this case, to discover Thomas Jefferson’s love and use of science.