

Presidential Anecdotes

George Washington (1789-1797): When the Constitutional Convention got around to discussing the power of Congress to raise an army, one of the delegates moved “that the standing army be restricted to five thousand men at any time.” Washington was amused by the motion, but as chairman could not offer a motion himself. Instead, he whispered to one of the delegates sitting near him that they had better amend the motion so as to provide that “no foreign army should invade the United States at any time with more than three thousand troops.”

Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865): On the fatal night, April 14, 1865, Lincoln did not want to go to the theater. He had seen the play, *Our American Cousin*, once before and was not anxious to see it again. He tried to get out of going, but Mrs. Lincoln had her heart set on it. “It has been advertised that we will be there,” Lincoln told White House guard Colonel William H. Crook, “and I cannot disappoint the people. Otherwise I would not go. I do not want to go.” As he left, he said, “Good-bye, Crook.” This puzzled the guard. Ordinarily the President said, “Good night.”

Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809): When Jefferson arrived in Paris as U.S. minister to France and presented himself to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, the latter said, “You replace Monsieur Franklin?” “I succeed him”, replied Jefferson. “No one can replace him.”

John F. Kennedy (1961-1963): One night, when JFK was running for Congress, he appeared at a rally with dozens of other candidates who were running for the Massachusetts legislature. The chairman kept Kennedy waiting impatiently until a late hour while he introduced speaker after speaker as “a young fellow who came up the hard way.” When JFK’s turn finally came, he began his address by saying, “I seem to be the only person here tonight who didn’t come up the hard way!”