

[In Service to the New Nation: The Life and Legacy of John Jay](#)

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Call for Papers

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December 15, 2019

Location:

New York, United States

Subject Fields:

Political History / Studies, Law and Legal History, Diplomacy and International Relations, Atlantic History / Studies, American History / Studies

The John Jay Papers Project seeks paper proposals for a conference entitled "In Service to the New Nation: The Life and Legacy of John Jay," to be held on September 24-25, 2020, at Columbia University. Dr. Joanne Freeman, Professor of American History at Yale University, will serve as the event's keynote speaker. The conference coincides with a major exhibition of Jay documents and artifacts at Columbia University's Rare Book & Manuscript Library (RBML) and with the completion of *The Selected Papers of John Jay*, a documentary edition of Jay's writings that appears as a seven-volume series published in print and digital formats. The current edition of the John Jay Papers Project commenced in the 1990s and built on the extensive collection of John Jay materials that RBML began amassing several decades earlier.

Few leaders of the new American republic were more influential than John Jay (1745-1829). A New Yorker and 1765 graduate of King's College (now Columbia University), Jay went on to lead a life marked by a notable record of continuous service, a fact noted by Thomas Jefferson, who described Jay as "a man who has passed his life in serving the public." Jay stood out as one of the first foreign diplomats to serve the United States, the first chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, and governor of New York, among other posts. In all of these, he displayed a steadfast devotion to carrying out principled actions on behalf of his state and nation, family, and religion.

"In Service to the New Nation" seeks to evaluate Jay's life and legacy, as well as the current state of Jay scholarship. Given his significance as a key member of the founding generation, Jay remains a focus for those researching national and Atlantic histories of diplomacy, constitutionalism, family economies and politics, and religious and anti-slavery movements. This conference thus aims to serve as an occasion where new directions in the study of Jay can be assessed. At the same time, the connection of Jay to such broader topics as diplomatic practices and theories of foreign policy, state and national jurisprudence, and federal systems of governance has pointed the way to related but distinct areas of inquiry. The conference is particularly interested in investigating the enduring impact of Jay's contributions and activities by exploring how they influenced later generations, including his descendants, and important institutions, including the U.S. Supreme Court, State Department, New York's governorship, and abolitionist societies. Moreover, the conference seeks to examine the collection, organization, and presentation of John Jay's papers and the emergence of Jay-related historical sites, monuments, and memorials in order to show how these processes and venues of public memory, commemoration, and archival formation shape current understandings of the past.

We welcome scholars from all disciplines interested in how Jay's decades of service molded civic and political culture during his era and have implications for our own.

Topics that papers might consider include but are not limited to the following:

- New York's Constitution of 1777 and the new nation
- The *Federalist Essays* and national formation
- The development of the U.S Supreme Court and District Circuit Courts
- The New-York Manumission Society and the Gradual Emancipation Act of 1799
- Intersections of familial and state politics, social practices, and diplomacy
- Experiences of slavery in New York City and the Hudson Valley
- Indian affairs and land dispossession
- Advent of Protestant philanthropy and reform movements
- Active retirement in the early republic
- Elite families, genealogy, and the crafting of historical legacy
- Documentary editing and a sustainable public memory of the founding era

In order to be considered for the program, please send a paper proposal of 250 words and a two-page CV to rkh2125@columbia.edu. The deadline for submitting proposals is December 15, 2019.

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