

# THE GILDER LEHRMAN INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

## *Inside the Vault : Highlights from the Gilder Lehrman Collection*

July 10, 2020

- Your camera is automatically off.
- Your microphone is muted.
- Chat has been disabled.

## *Gilder Lehrman Staff*

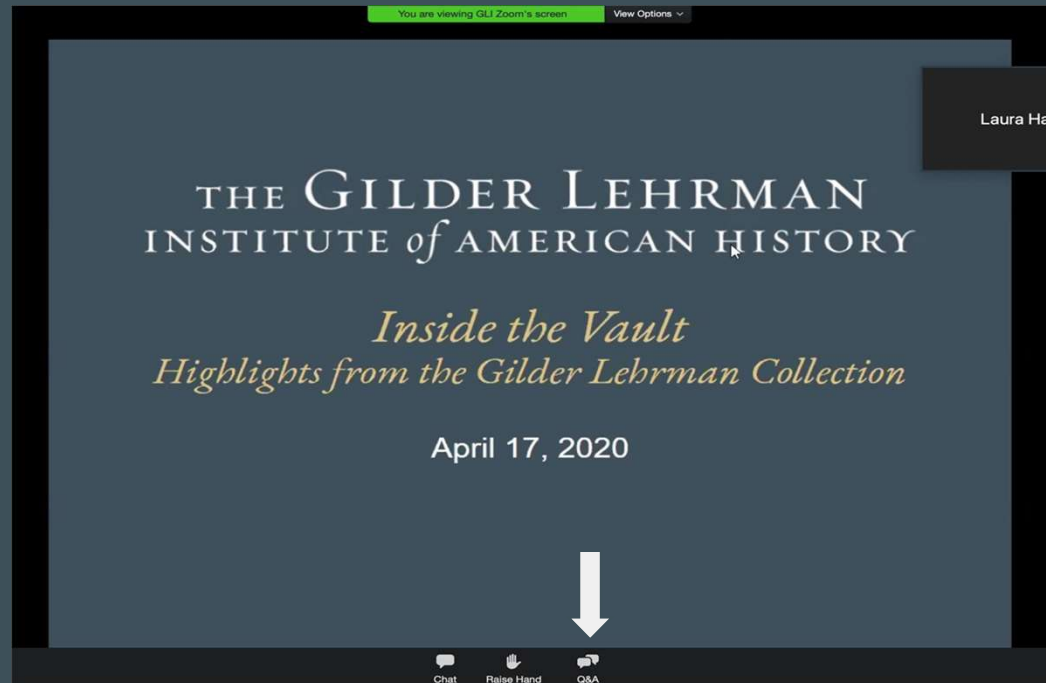
### Panelists

- Sandy Trenholm - Collection Director
- Jamael Westman - Alexander Hamilton in the Eliza Tour of *Hamilton*, and formerly in *Hamilton* West End
- Ryan Scheb - History teacher at Cristo Rey New York High School in New York City

### Support

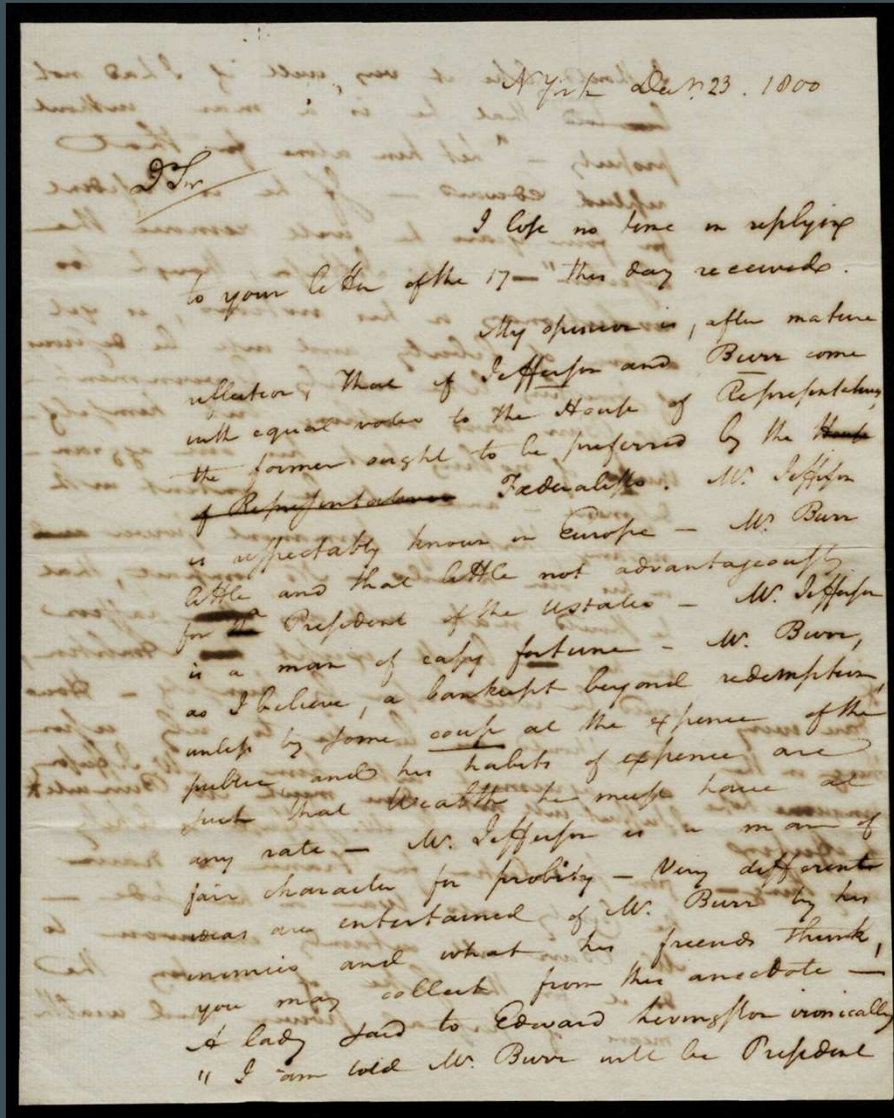
- Allison Kraft - Assistant Curator

## *During the Session*



- For security purposes, microphones and cameras are off, and chat is disabled.
- If you would like to ask a question, **you can use the Q&A feature** which can be found along the bottom of your screen.

## Today's Document



Gilder Lehrman Collection

- Alexander Hamilton's letter to Representative Harrison Otis trying to convince him to vote for Thomas Jefferson during the election of 1800.

# Bleed through from acidic ink

Dec 23. 1860  
I like no time in replying  
to your letter of the 17<sup>th</sup> - this day received.  
My opinion is, after mature  
reflection, that if Seward and Burr come  
with equal votes to the House of Representatives  
the former ought to be preferred by the House  
of Representatives. Mr. Seward  
is respectably known in Europe - Mr. Burr  
little and that little not advantageously.  
for the President of the United States - Mr. Seward  
is a man of calm fortune - Mr. Burr,  
as I believe, a bankrupt beyond redemption,  
unless by some coup at the expense of the  
public and his habits of expense are  
such that wealth for much longer at  
any rate - Mr. Seward is a man of  
fair character for probity - Very different  
views are entertained of Mr. Burr by his  
enemies and what his friends think,  
you may collect from his anecdote -  
A lady said to Edward Livingston ironically  
"I am told Mr. Burr will be President"

I should like it very well if I had not  
been told that he is a man without  
property - "Let him alone for that  
upstart Edwards - If he is President  
for four years he will remove the  
object" - Mr. Seward, though too  
revolutionary in his notions, is yet  
a lover of liberty and will be desirous  
of something like orderly Government -  
Mr. Burr loves nothing but himself -  
thinks of nothing but his own aggran-  
dizement - and will be content with  
nothing short of permanent power and  
in his own hands - No compact, that  
he should make with any other person  
in his breast except his Ambition,  
could be relied upon by himself - How  
true should we be able to rely upon  
any agreement with him? Mr. Seward  
I suspect will not dare meet Mr. Burr unless  
if Mr. Seward is likely  
from Philadelphia for France to raise  
the country into war on his side -  
Mr. Burr will certainly endeavour to  
do it for the sake of creating the  
means of personal power and wealth.

## *Election of 1800*

- People remember that the election of 1800 was the first time power went from one political party to a rival.
- It was a very contentious election between the Democratic-Republicans and the Federalists.

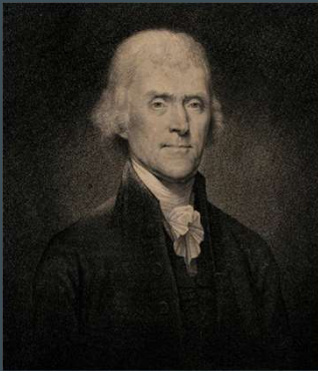
“Nasty political mud-slinging. Campaign attacks and counterattacks. Personal insults. Outrageous newspaper invective. Dire predictions of warfare and national collapse.... The presidential election of 1800 was an angry, dirty, crisis-ridden contest that seemed to threaten the nation’s very survival.” (Joanne B. Freeman)

## *Electoral College in 1800*

- Each elector would cast two votes for president, for two different people. The votes were weighted the same.
- The candidate with the most votes would be president and the person with the second most votes would be vice president.
- You could have a president and a vice president from different parties.
- You could have a tie.

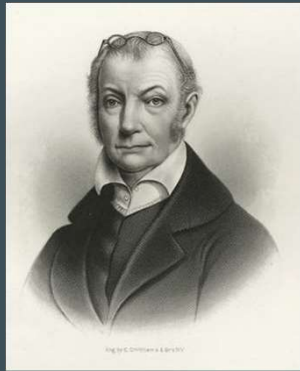
# *A tie in the Electoral College*

In 1800, there were five candidates:



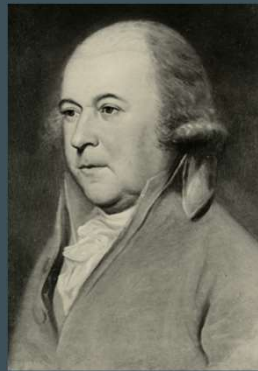
Thomas Jefferson,  
73 electoral votes

The Gilder  
Lehrman  
Collection

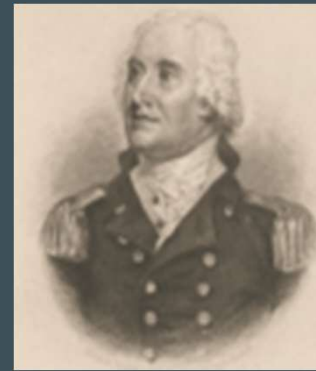


Aaron Burr,  
73 electoral  
votes

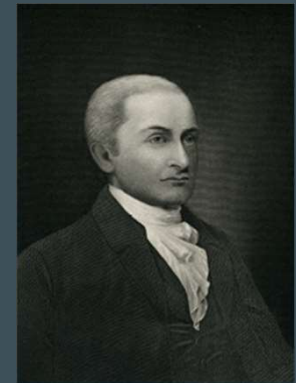
New York Public  
Library



John Adams,  
65 electoral votes  
The Gilder Lehrman  
Collection



Charles C. Pinckney,  
64 electoral votes  
New York Public  
Library



John Jay,  
1 electoral vote

The Gilder  
Lehrman  
Collection

Democratic Republicans

Federalists

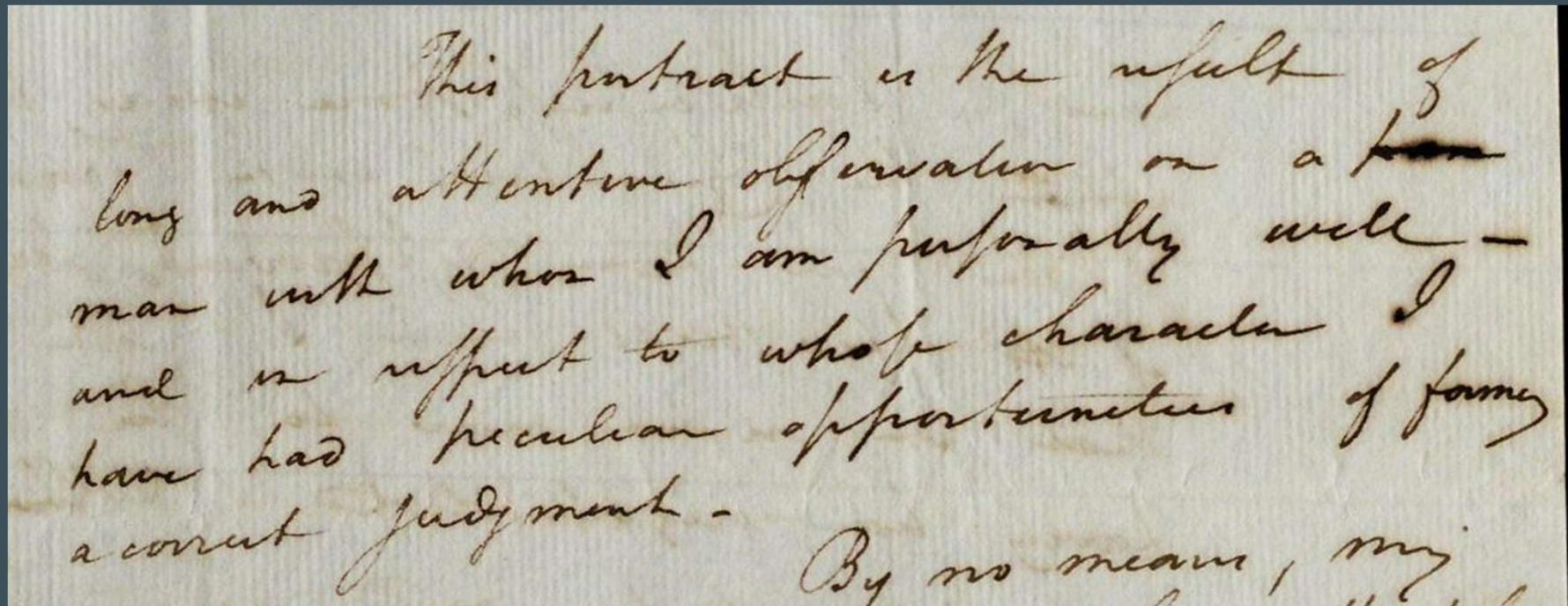
Article II, Section 1 of the US Constitution states that if two people win the majority, but have a tie, the House of Representatives decides the election.

*Convincing Federalists  
to vote for Jefferson,  
December 23, 1800*

Dec 23. 1800  
I have no time in replying  
to your letter of the 17<sup>th</sup> - this day received.  
My opinion is, after mature  
reflection, that if Jefferson and Burr come  
with equal votes to the House of Representatives,  
the former ought to be preferred by the House  
of Representatives. Mr. Jefferson  
is respectably known in Europe - Mr. Burr  
little and that little not advantageously.  
for the President of the United States - Mr. Jefferson  
is a man of easy fortune - Mr. Burr,  
as I believe, a bankrupt beyond redemption,  
unless by some coup at the expense of the  
public and his habits of expense are  
such that wealth must have at  
any rate - Mr. Jefferson is a man of  
fair character for probity - Very different  
are entertained of Mr. Burr by his  
enemies and what his friends think,  
you may collect from his anecdote -  
A lady said to Edward Livingston ironically  
"I am told Mr. Burr will be President"

## *“The result of long and attentive observation”*

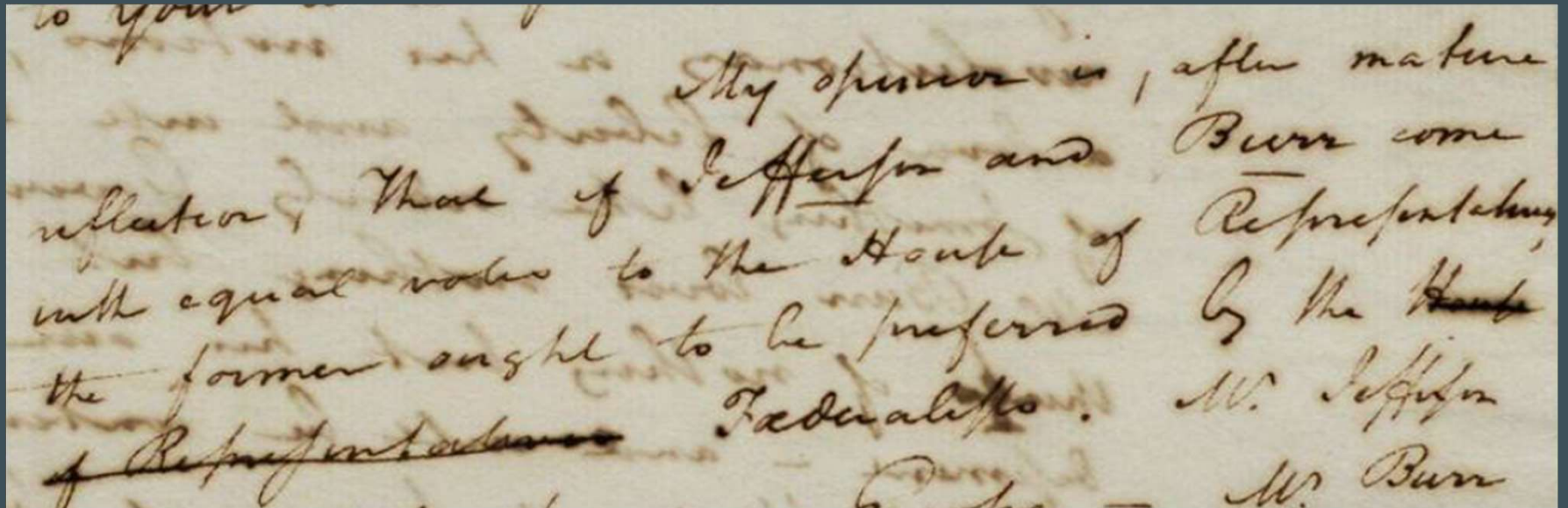
“This portrait is the result of long and attentive observation on a man with whom I am personally well – and in respect to whose character I have had peculiar opportunities of forming a correct judgment.”

A photograph of a handwritten manuscript snippet on aged, yellowed paper. The text is written in a cursive script, matching the quote above. It reads: "This portrait is the result of long and attentive observation on a ~~man~~ man with whom I am personally well – and in respect to whose character I have had peculiar opportunities of forming a correct judgment. By no means, my".

This portrait is the result of  
long and attentive observation on a ~~man~~  
man with whom I am personally well –  
and in respect to whose character I  
have had peculiar opportunities of forming  
a correct judgment. By no means, my

## *Supporting Jefferson over Burr*

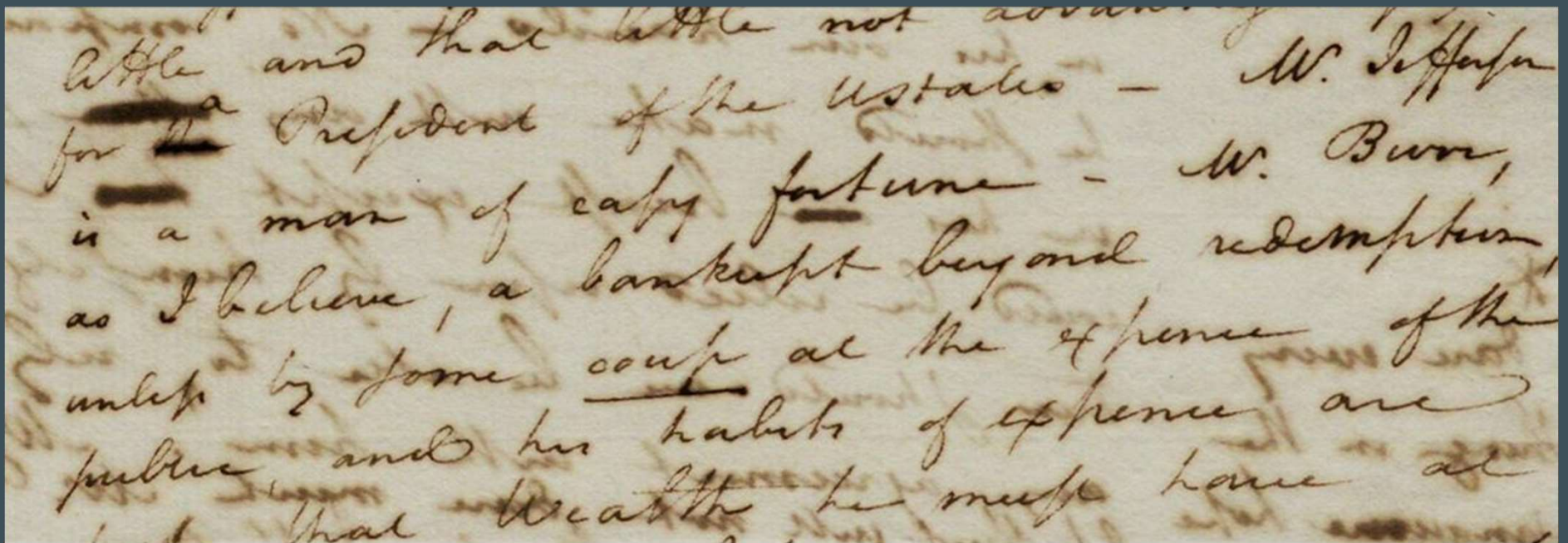
“My opinion is, after mature reflection, that if Jefferson and Burr come with equal votes to the House of Representatives, the former ought to be preferred by the Federalists.”



to your  
My opinion is, after mature  
reflection, that if Jefferson and Burr come  
with equal votes to the House of Representatives,  
the former ought to be preferred by the House  
of Representatives. Federalists. W. Jefferson  
W. Burr

## *“A bankrupt beyond redemption”*

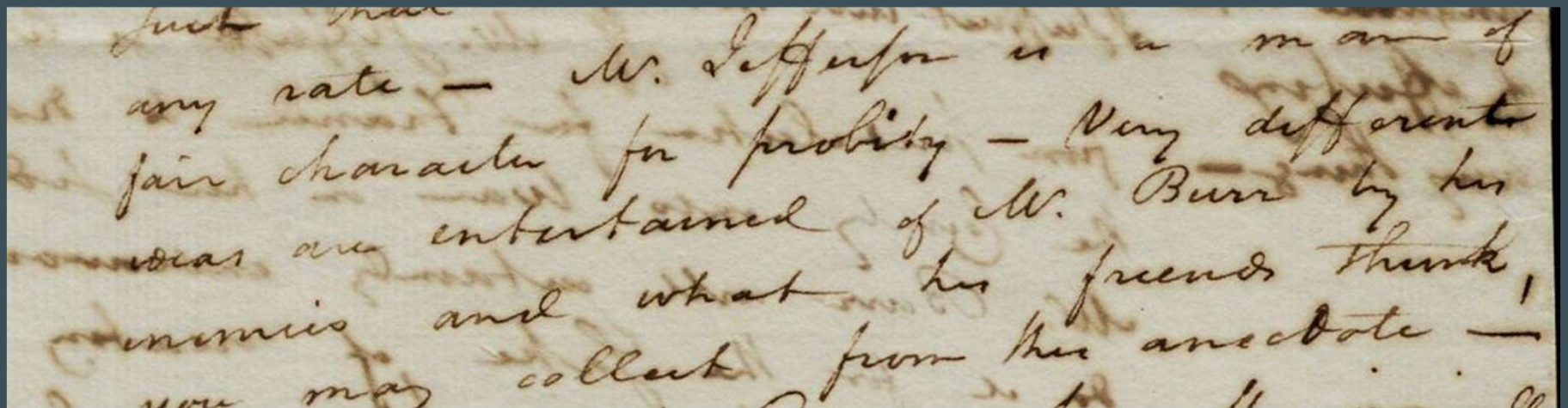
“Mr Jefferson is a man of easy fortune – Mr. Burr, as I believe, a bankrupt beyond redemption unless by some coup at the expence of the public and his habits of expence are such that Wealth he must have at any rate”

A photograph of a handwritten manuscript snippet, likely from the original source of the quote. The text is written in cursive and matches the quote above, with some words underlined. The paper is aged and slightly discolored.

little and that little not advanced - W. Jefferson  
for ~~the~~ President of the United States -  
is a man of easy fortune - W. Burr,  
as I believe, a bankrupt beyond redemption,  
unless by some coup at the expence of the  
public, and his habits of expence are  
such that Wealth he must have at

*“Jefferson is a man of fair character”*

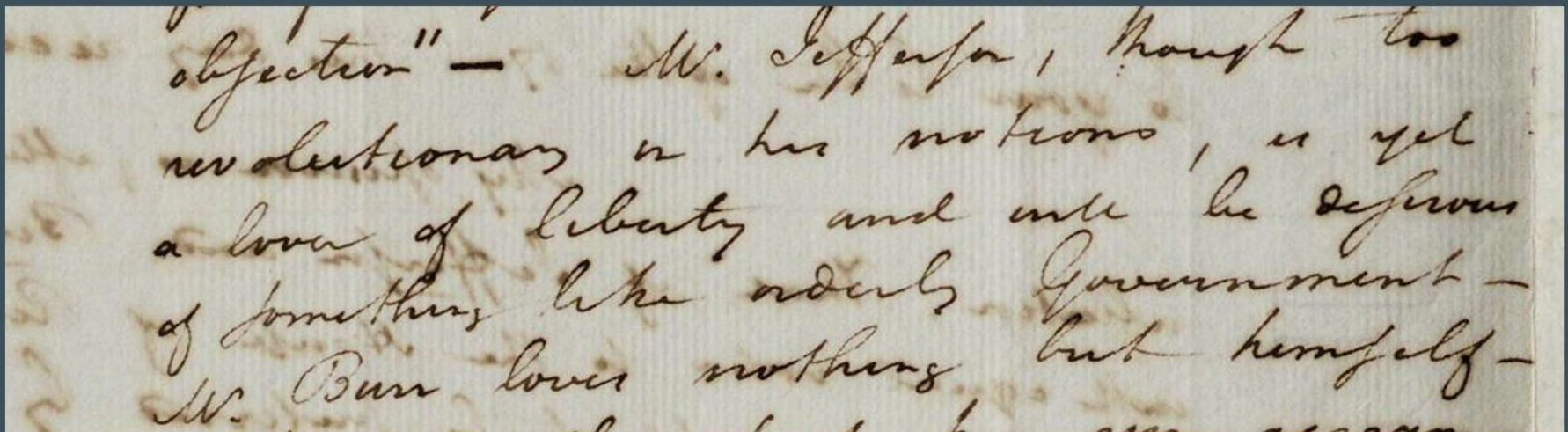
“Mr. Jefferson is a man of fair character for probity –  
Very different ideas are entertained of Mr. Burr by his  
enemies and what his friends think....”

A snippet of a handwritten manuscript in cursive script, likely from the late 18th or early 19th century. The text is written on aged, slightly discolored paper. The visible portion of the text reads: "Just that  
any rate — Mr. Jefferson is a man of  
fair character for probity — Very different  
ideas are entertained of Mr. Burr by his  
enemies and what his friends think,  
you may collect from this anecdote —". The handwriting is fluid and characteristic of the period.

Just that  
any rate — Mr. Jefferson is a man of  
fair character for probity — Very different  
ideas are entertained of Mr. Burr by his  
enemies and what his friends think,  
you may collect from this anecdote —

## *“Mr. Burr loves nothing but himself”*

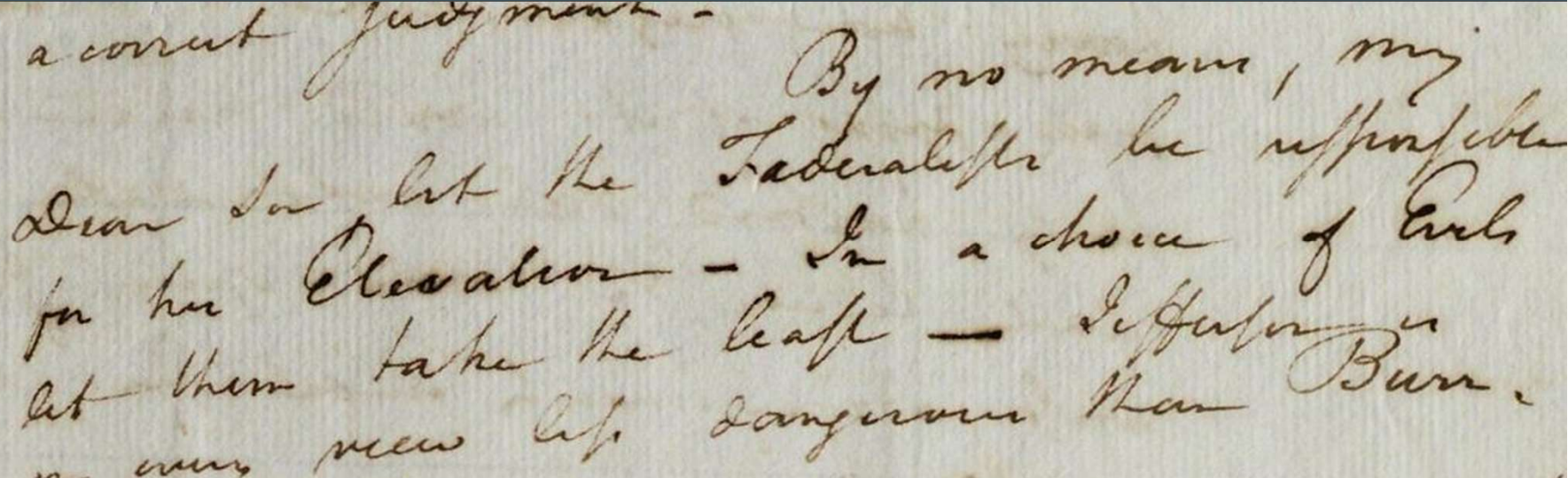
“Mr. Jefferson, though too revolutionary in his notions, is yet a lover of Liberty and will be desirous of something like orderly Government – Mr. Burr loves nothing but himself – thinks of nothing but his own aggrandizement – and will be content with nothing short of permanent power in his own hands”

A photograph of a handwritten manuscript snippet on aged, yellowed paper. The text is written in a cursive script and matches the quote in the block above. It reads: "objection" — Mr. Jefferson, though too revolutionary in his notions, is yet a lover of liberty and will be desirous of something like orderly Government — Mr. Burr loves nothing but himself —

"objection" — Mr. Jefferson, though too revolutionary in his notions, is yet a lover of liberty and will be desirous of something like orderly Government — Mr. Burr loves nothing but himself —

## *“In a choice of two Evils”*

“By no means, my Dear Sir, let the Federalists be responsible for his Elevation – In a choice of Evils let them take the least – Jefferson is in every view less dangerous than Burr.”



a correct judgment - By no means, my  
Dear Sir, let the Federalists be responsible  
for his Elevation - In a choice of Evils  
let them take the least - Jefferson is  
in every view less dangerous than Burr.

## *What can the Federalists gain from supporting Jefferson?*

“But we ought – still to seek some advantages from our situation.... The three essential points for us to secure is.”

“1 The continuance of the neutral plan *bona fide* towards the belligerent powers”

“2 The preservation of the present System of public credit”

“3 The maintenance & gradual increase of our navy. Other matters may be left to take their chance.”

## *Voting in the House of Representatives*

- In 1800, the House was controlled by the Federalists.
- They voted 36 times over the course of 5 days from February 11 to February 16 before they broke the tie.
- Jefferson became president and Burr became vice president

**How?**

**Why?**

*Q&A*

**Did you  
know?**

**Who?**

# *Study the Founding Era with EduHam at Home*

★ EDUHAM AT HOME

DASHBOARD

RESEARCH

VIDEOS

LOG OUT

Recursos en Español

WELCOME TO

EDUHAM  
AT HOME



**Getting Started / Empezar**



# *What's next?*

THE GILDER LEHRMAN  
INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY

- We will send you a packet with the documents we talked about today.
- Please complete a 2-minute feedback survey (link in chat).
- Join us for History Camp! Students grades 3-5 can participate in “History Camp: History’s Treasures” (link in chat).
- Our next *Inside the Vault* will be Friday, July 24 at 2pm ET and will feature a 1964 comic book exploring institutional segregation and the importance of voting produced by the NAACP.
- *Book Breaks* with Martha Hodes and her book *Mourning Lincoln*, this Sunday, July 12 at 2pm ET
- Visit [gilderlehrman.org](https://gilderlehrman.org) for free resources for students, teachers, families, and history enthusiasts of all ages.