

# Thomas jefferson's vision of a free holding yeoman society



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Thomas Jefferson is considered as one of the most influential personalities in the history of the US. Jefferson who was the third President of the United States is regarded as one of the most prominent figures in the US, is characteristically known for his ideological promotions of republicanism in his stint as the president.

Some of the famous events that are associated with his presidency include the 1803 Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition during the period between 1804 and 1806. Thomas Jefferson is also accredited for authoring the Declaration of Independence and since he was a philosophical thinker and politician, he idealized the concept of a free holding yeoman society which was a series of complex ideologies which emphasized various virtues. It was during the 18th century that a number of influential “ poets, politicians and economists created in America a complex of ideas which has been called the Jeffersonian myth” (Hess, 1992). This concept generally emphasized various virtues with simplicity and purity leading and the principal dictated a variety of social choices. The Yeoman term generally refers to farmers who usually cultivate their own land.

The yeoman thus can be considered as a small farmer who holds a piece of land. Since Jefferson hailed from this type of yeoman society, he had first class experience of the issues and challenges they faced and therefore in his presidency he decided to make amends so as to ensure that this class in the society was prosperous. This philosophy was coined in a time that could be considered appropriate for a country that was settled by “ land hungry men” (Hess, 1992). Most English men were used to a social system in which the

ownership of land was a symbol of a man's stand in the society and the political power that he yielded. Thomas Jefferson and J. Hector St.

John de Crevecoeur came up with a philosophy that dictated the natural rights of any man to own land and that the ownership of land by any man obviously gives him a social status and dignity. The philosophy goes further to describe how man's interaction with nature " makes him virtuous and happy". This philosophical thinking as Jefferson and his colleague tend to challenge the government is that it " should be dedicated to the interests of the freehold farmer" (Hess, 1992). These policies and principles held a lot of significance for Jefferson who is considered as the brains behind the western land policy.

In Jefferson's own words he described the small and self-sufficient as " the chosen people of God" and thus asserted their importance if the new republic would have any chance to survive. Jefferson described the " virtuous yeoman" as the moral backbone that would lead the nation to greater heights and thus prosperity would be easily achievable (Hess, 1992). The issue of land was embedded deep in Jefferson's heart and he believed that it was the core of an envisioned republic. Thomas Jefferson had a landscape vision that mainly depended on the unlimited expansion of most of the wilderness in the country and thus make it the people's will to settle and subdue it for settlement and cultivation purposes. This vision was just a vision and its applicability mainly depended on the prudence of the government of that period in applying the " public land policies fairly and justly".

Jefferson held the belief in his heart that "land was the clay from which a free society would be molded and preserved" (Hess, 1992). However, one of the issues that he had to deal with was those of religion. Although religion was a predominant force during his government, it had failed to provide what Jefferson's landscape vision promised to produce. Land in this era was considered to offer the much needed cohesion and was therefore viewed as an "icon of secular religion" (Hess, 1992). The success of Jefferson's policies and philosophical thinking are still evident today and the western range is the product of his landscape vision. The landscape vision which was envisioned in the "Jeffersonian agrarianism" was built on a firm foundation (Hess, 1992).

This had the obvious effects of spilling its advantages in the years that were to follow and most of its effects are still visible today. The western range which was a harsh testament of nature in the state of a wilderness became a land that would become exceedingly abundant. However, the alteration of nature and its overuse can be considered as one of the negative aspects of his landscape vision. Various factors one of them being drought led to the overstocking of the ranges in a way that nature was almost strained beyond its holding capacity and thus became unforgiving with adverse effects. Collisions among farmers with diverse wants is also a major shortcomings but the experience that was gained from the harsh reactions of nature served to teach the inhabitants valuable lessons and thus take some measures into considerations during when setting future plans.