



The Paris Years of Thomas Jefferson

William Howard Adams

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In 1784 Thomas Jefferson moved to the city of Paris, where he spent the next five years as minister for the new United States of America. These were formative years for France, for the United States, and for Jefferson's cultural and intellectual development. This book recreates the atmosphere and personalities of pre-revolutionary Paris, and reveals the impact they had on one of America's first transatlantic citizens. The text discusses how the provincial Virginian became a cosmopolitan connoisseur in the intellectual, political, scientific and artistic circles of the city. It describes Jefferson's relationships with such people as Lafayette, Condorcet, Lavoisier, Baron Grimm, La Rochefoucauld, John and Abigail Adams, Gouverneur Morris, and J.L. David, as well as his involvement with the English painter, Maria Cosway. His alleged affair with his slave Sally Hemings is also examined in the context of all available evidence. The principal focus of the book is on Jefferson's role as the pre-eminent envoy in Europe after the departure of Franklin, his participation in the cultural and political life of the city, and his private intrigues to help his friends bring the Bourbon monarchy to heel. Finally, the author of the Declaration of Independence is placed in the middle of his second revolution and the book chronicles the events leading up to the upheaval of 1788-1789.

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