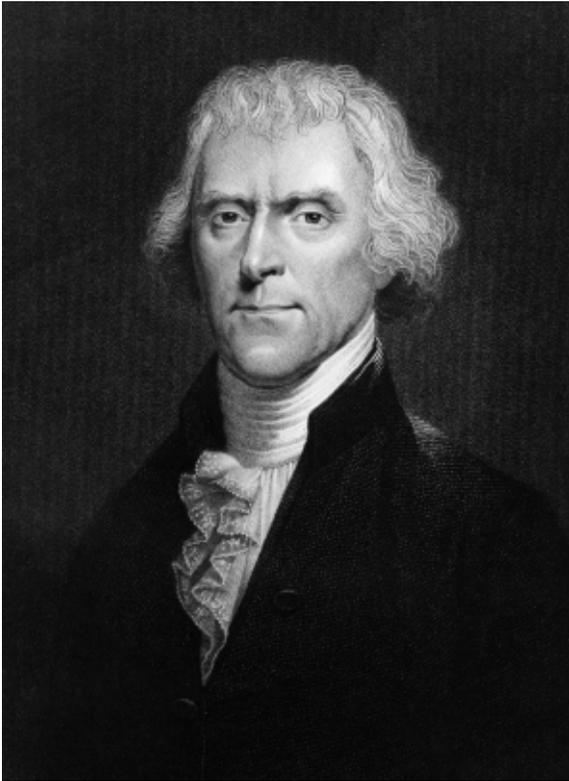


# Chapter 1

## Founding Fathers quotes on Farming, Property, & Contracts



The founding fathers believed delegated powers under the Constitution protected property rights, which included opinions, ideas, speech, and commerce. Contracts are the mechanism, which enforce property rights. The founders studied prior civilizations, which allowed them to obtain a unique perspective about property. Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton studied ancient governments, which included Holland, United Netherlands, Switzerland, ancient Greece, and ancient Rome. They found defects in the foundations of these governments, which limited individual property rights. These defects identified from prior governments helped form the U.S. Constitution. States formed their own constitutions, which included the Virginia Declaration of Rights, and influenced the founder's writings on property and contracts.

Thomas Jefferson:

- “The true foundation of republican government is the equal right of every citizen in his person and property and in their management.”<sup>i</sup>
- “A right to property is founded in our natural wants, in the means with which we are endowed to satisfy these wants, and the right to what we acquire by those means without violating the similar rights of other sensible beings.”<sup>ii</sup>
- “He who is permitted by law to have no property of his own can with difficulty conceive that property is founded in anything but force.”<sup>iii</sup>
- “That, on the principle of a communion of property, small societies may exist in habits of virtue, order, industry, and peace, and consequently in a state of as much happiness as Heaven has been pleased to deal out to imperfect humanity, I can readily conceive, and indeed, have seen its proofs in various small societies which have been constituted on that principle. But I do not feel authorized to conclude from these that an extended society, like that of the United States or of an individual State, could be governed happily on the same principle.”<sup>iv</sup>
- “The political institutions of America, its various soils and climates, opened a certain resource to the unfortunate and to the enterprising of every country and insured to them the acquisition and free possession of property.”<sup>v</sup>
- “The earth is given as a common stock for man to labor and live on. If for the encouragement of industry we allow it to be appropriated, we must take care that other employment be provided to those excluded from the appropriation. If we do not, the fundamental right to labor the earth returns to the unemployed. It is not too soon to provide by every possible means that as few as possible shall be without a little portion of land. The small landholders are the most precious part of a state.”<sup>vi</sup>
- “No right [should] be stipulated for aliens to hold real property

within these States, this being utterly inadmissible by their several laws and policy.”<sup>vii</sup>

- “Whenever there is in any country uncultivated lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right.”<sup>viii</sup>
- “[The] unequal division of property occasions the numberless instances of wretchedness which is to be observed all over Europe.”<sup>ix</sup>
- “I am conscious that an equal division of property is impracticable. But the consequences of this enormous inequality producing so much misery to the bulk of mankind, legislators cannot invent too many devices for subdividing property, only taking care to let their subdivisions go hand in hand with the natural affections of the human mind.”<sup>x</sup>
- “Our wish is that equality of rights [be] maintained, and that state of property, equal or unequal, which results to every man from his own industry or that of his fathers.”<sup>xi</sup>
- “Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth.”<sup>xii</sup>
- “Cultivators of the earth are the most virtuous and independent citizens.”<sup>xiii</sup>
- “Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands.”<sup>xiv</sup>
- “It is not too soon to provide by every possible means that as few as possible shall be without a little portion of land. The small landholders are the most precious part of a state.”<sup>xv</sup>
- “Good husbandry with us consists in abandoning Indian corn

and tobacco, tending small grain, some red clover following, and endeavoring to have, while the lands are at rest, a spontaneous cover of white clover. I do not present this as a culture judicious in itself, but as good in comparison with what most people there pursue.”<sup>xvi</sup>

- “It [agriculture] is at the same time the most tranquil, healthy, and independent [occupation].”<sup>xvii</sup>
- “I am become the most industrious and ardent farmer of the canton.”<sup>xviii</sup>
- “The class principally defective is that of agriculture. It is the first in utility, and ought to be the first in respect. The same artificial means which have been used to produce a competition in learning, may be equally successful in restoring agriculture to its primary dignity in the eyes of men. It is a science of the very first order. It counts among it handmaids of the most respectable sciences, such as Chemistry, Natural Philosophy, Mechanics, Mathematics generally, Natural History, Botany. In every College and University, a professorship of agriculture, and the class of its students, might be honored as the first. Young men closing their academical education with this, as the crown of all other sciences, fascinated with its solid charms, and at a time when they are to choose an occupation, instead of crowding the other classes, would return to the farms of their fathers, their own, or those of others, and replenish and invigorate a calling, now languishing under contempt and oppression. The charitable schools, instead of storing their pupils with a lore which the present state of society does not call for, converted into schools of agriculture, might restore them to that branch qualified to enrich and honor themselves, and to increase the productions of the nation instead of consuming them.”<sup>xix</sup>
- “I think it the duty of farmers who are wealthier than others to give those less so the benefit of any improvements they can introduce, gratis.”<sup>xx</sup>
- “The pamphlet you were so kind as to send me manifests

a zeal, which cannot be too much praised, for the interests of agriculture, the employment of our first parents in Eden, the happiest we can follow, and the most important to our country.”<sup>xxi</sup>

- “With respect to the boys I never till lately doubted but that I should be able to give them a competence as comfortable farmers, and no station is more honorable or happy than that.”<sup>xxii</sup>

### John Adams:

- “As long as Property exists, it will accumulate in Individuals and Families. As long as Marriage exists, Knowledge, Property and Influence will accumulate in Families.”<sup>xxiii</sup>
- “Each individual of the society has a right to be protected by it in the enjoyment of his life, liberty, and property, according to standing laws. He is obliged, consequently, to contribute his share to the expense of this protection; and to give his personal service, or an equivalent, when necessary. But no part of the property of any individual can, with justice, be taken from him, or applied to public uses, without his own consent, or that of the representative body of the people. In fine, the people of this commonwealth are not controllable by any other laws than those to which their constitutional representative body have given their consent.”<sup>xxiv</sup>
- “Resistance to sudden violence, for the preservation not only of my person, my limbs, and life, but of my property, is an indisputable right of nature which I have never surrendered to the public by the compact of society, and which perhaps, I could not surrender if I would.”<sup>xxv</sup>
- “Democracy will soon degenerate into an anarchy, such an anarchy that every man will do what is right in his own eyes and no man’s life or property or reputation or liberty will be secure, and every one of these will soon mould itself into a system of subordination of all the moral virtues and intellectual

abilities, all the powers of wealth, beauty, wit and science, to the wanton pleasures, the capricious will, and the execrable cruelty of one or a very few.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

- “Property is surely a right of mankind as real as liberty.”<sup>xxvii</sup>
- “The moment the idea is admitted into society that property is not as sacred as the law of God, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence.”<sup>xxviii</sup>
- “Property must be secured or liberty cannot exist.”<sup>xxix</sup>
- “It is agreed that the end of all government is the good and ease of the people in a secure enjoyment of their rights without oppression.”<sup>xxx</sup>

#### George Washington:

- “The time is now near at hand which must probably determine whether Americans are to be freemen or slaves; whether they are to have any property they can call their own; whether their houses and farms are to be pillaged and destroyed, and themselves consigned to a state of wretchedness from which no human efforts will deliver them. The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army. Our cruel and unrelenting enemy leaves us only the choice of brave resistance, or the most abject submission. We have, therefore, to resolve to conquer or die.”<sup>xxxi</sup>
- “Republicanism is not the phantom of a deluded imagination. On the contrary, under no form of government will laws be better supported, liberty and property better secured, or happiness be more effectually dispensed to mankind.”<sup>xxxii</sup>

#### Adam Smith:

- “As soon as the land of any country has all become private

property, the landlords [e.g., the governments], like all other men, love to reap where they never sowed, and demand a rent even for its natural produce.”<sup>xxxiii</sup>

- “It is only under the shelter of the civil magistrate, that the owner of that valuable property, which is acquired by labour of many years, or perhaps of many successive generations, can sleep a single night in security.”<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Noah Webster:

- “The exclusive right of possessing, enjoying and disposing of a thing; ownership. In the beginning of the world, the Creator gave to man dominion over the earth, over the fish of the sea and the fowls of the air, and over every living thing. This is the foundation of man’s property in the earth and in all its productions. Prior occupancy of land and of wild animals gives to the possessor the property of them. The labor of inventing, making or producing anything constitutes one of the highest and most indefeasible titles to property.”<sup>xxxv</sup>

John Dickinson:

- “Let these truths be indelibly impressed on our minds: (1) that we cannot be happy without being free; (2) that we cannot be free without being secure in our property; (3) that we cannot be secure in our property if without our consent others may as by right take it away.”<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Alexander Hamilton:

- “Precautions against the repetition of those practices on the part of the State governments which have undermined the foundations of property and credit.”<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Fisher Ames:

- “Our sages in the great [constitutional] convention...intended our government should be a republic which differs more widely from a democracy than a democracy from a despotism. The rigours of a despotism often oppress only a few, but it is the very essence and nature of a democracy, for a faction claiming to oppress a minority, and that minority the chief owners of the property and truest lovers of their country.”<sup>xxxviii</sup>
- “And if government has this right, what right of private property is safe? In the East, government is said to be the sole owner of property, and may resume it at pleasure. This absurd doctrine will not find advocates; for it would not do for practice, even where it may not be denied true. Human nature revolts against it; it would shock the morality of Botany Bay; it would exasperate beyond sufferance the patient slavery of Hindostan. And who can give a good reason why one sort of property should be more sacred than another?”<sup>xxxix</sup>

Samuel Adams:

- “The Utopian schemes of re-distribution of the wealth...are as visionary and impractical as those which vest all property in the Crown.”<sup>xi</sup>
- “Now what liberty can there be where property is taken without consent?”<sup>xli</sup>
- “In short, it is the greatest absurdity to suppose it in the power of one, or any number of men, at the entering into society, to renounce their essential natural rights, or the means of preserving those rights; when the grand end of civil government, from the very nature of its institution, is for the support, protection, and defence of those very rights; the principal of which, as is before observed, are Life, Liberty, and Property.”<sup>xlii</sup>

- “The supreme power cannot justly take from any man any part of his property, without his consent in person or by his representative.”<sup>xliii</sup>
- “Among the natural rights of the Colonists are these: First, a right to life; Secondly, to liberty; Thirdly, to property; together with the right to support and defend them in the best manner they can. These are evident branches of, rather than deductions from, the duty of self-preservation, commonly called the first law of nature.”<sup>xliv</sup>
- “The security of right and property, is the great end of government.”<sup>xlv</sup>
- “And that the said Constitution be never construed to authorize Congress to infringe the just liberty of the press, or the rights of conscience; or to prevent the people of the United States, who are peaceable citizens, from keeping their own arms; or to raise standing armies, unless necessary for the defense of the United States, or of some one or more of them; or to prevent the people from petitioning, in a peaceable and orderly manner, the federal legislature, for a redress of grievances; or to subject the people to unreasonable searches and seizures of their persons, papers or possessions.”<sup>xlvi</sup>
- “If our Trade be taxed, why not our Lands, or Produce in short, everything we possess? They tax us without having legal representation.”<sup>xlvii</sup>

Benjamin Franklin:

- “All the property that is necessary to a Man, for the Conservation of the Individual and the Propagation of the Species, is his natural Right, which none can justly deprive him of: But all Property superfluous to such purposes is the Property of the Publick, who, by their Laws, have created it, and who may therefore by other laws dispose of it, whenever the Welfare of the Publick shall demand such Disposition. He that does not like civil Society on these Terms, let him retire and live among

Savages. He can have no right to the benefits of Society, who will not pay his Club towards the Support of it.”<sup>xlvi</sup>

- “Private Property therefore is a Creature of Society, and is subject to the Calls of that Society, whenever its Necessities shall require it, even to its last Farthing.”<sup>xlvi</sup>

### Joseph Story:

- “Another not unimportant consideration is, that the powers of the general government will be, and indeed must be, principally employed upon external objects, such as war, peace, negotiations with foreign powers, and foreign commerce. In its internal operations it can touch but few objects, except to introduce regulations beneficial to the commerce, intercourse, and other relations, between the states, and to lay taxes for the common good. The powers of the states, on the other hand, extend to all objects, which, in the ordinary course of affairs, concern the lives, and liberties, and property of the people, and the internal order, improvement, and prosperity of the state.”<sup>1</sup>
- “The sacred rights of property are to be guarded at every point. I call them sacred, because, if they are unprotected, all other rights become worthless or visionary. What is personal liberty, if it does not draw after it the right to enjoy the fruits of our own industry? What is political liberty, if it imparts only perpetual poverty to us and all our posterity? What is the privilege of a vote, if the majority of the hour may sweep away the earnings of our whole lives, to gratify the rapacity of the indolent, the cunning, or the profligate, who are borne into power upon the tide of a temporary popularity?”<sup>li</sup>

