

# Letters link Jefferson to a New York wife

By BILL BASERVILL  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — She was beautiful and independent with a razor-sharp intellect. Her patrician upbringing was tempered by sensitivity and tenderness.

Add exquisite good taste and a fashionably understated style of dress, and she became a thief of hearts, a woman simply irresistible to a lonely widower in a foreign land, a man destined to become the third president of the United States.

"The morning you left us, all was wrong, even the sunshine was sparkling, with which I never quarried before," he wrote her. "I look into my head he shone only to throw light on our loss: to present a showfulness not at all in unison with my mind. I mounted my horse earlier than common. I look by instinct the road you had taken."

It was Paris, the winter of 1788, and Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence and now America's ambassador to France, was smitten with the formidable Angelica Schuyler Church, he already married daughter of a Revolutionary War hero.

"I think I have discovered a method of preventing this dejection of mind on any future parting," he wrote her on Feb. 17, the same day she left Paris to return to London. "It is this," he explained. "When you come again I will employ myself nicely in finding or fancying that you have some faults. & I will draw well over all your good qualities, if you can find one large enough."

Angelica Church's story came close to meeting Jefferson's feminine ideal after his beloved wife, Martha Wayles Jefferson, died in 1782, when he was only 39, said Jefferson scholar William Howard Adams.

Adams devotes a chapter to Jefferson's female friends in "The Par-Years of Thomas Jefferson" to be published in the spring of 1997 by Yale University Press. He gave The Associated Press an advance look.

New insights into Jefferson's relationship with Angelica come from Jefferson letters recently purchased by the University of Virginia, the school he founded.

Angelica, sister-in-law of Jefferson's personal enemy, Alexander Hamilton, corresponded with many of the young country's most prominent figures, among them Hamilton, George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette. Her family got the letters she got, but in Feb-



Thomas Jefferson, painted by Rembrandt Peale, has been romantically linked with Angelica Schuyler Church, painted (at right) with her son and a servant by John Trumbull.



rury contacted a book dealer in Hadley, Mass., about selling them. The dealer offered them first to the University of Virginia, which paid \$275,000 for a total of 13 letters from Jefferson and 64 more from Hamilton, Washington, Lafayette and some lesser lights. Angelica, 13 years younger than Jefferson, filed a real emotional need for Jefferson, says Adams, a fellow at the International Center for Jefferson Studies in Charlottesville.

A New Yorker, she replaced the beautiful and temperamental English artist Marie Cosway as the object of Jefferson's affections while he was American ambassador in France, Adams says. Ironically, Angelica and Marie were friends and talked about Jefferson, he says.

At one point, Angelica gave Jefferson a handsome silver tea urn. Angelica said she hoped the urn "will sometime at Monticello remind you of your friend."

A small portrait of Jefferson by painter John Trumbull enthralled both women, and each obtained copies from the artist.

Angelica's note accompanying the tea urn said that while Marie's copy was better, she held a better likeness of Jefferson in her heart.

Was Jefferson in love with either of these married women?

"There is something going on, some sort of attraction" between Jefferson and Angelica, says Jan Lewis, professor of history at Rutgers University and author of "The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia." Lewis, however, believes Jefferson was "head over heels in love" with Marie, not Angelica.

"He was deeply depressed" for years after his wife's death. "Once he got to France he pulled out of it," she says, primarily because of Marie. Still, Jefferson's ardor for Angelica remained undiminished for many years after their first meeting in Paris in the winter of 1787. At the time, his infatuation with the flashy but more demanding and complex Marie was waning, and they eventually got together.

Six months after they met, Jefferson begs Angelica to return to Paris and in August 1788 he proposes that she accompany him on a vacation to America. "Think of it, my friend, and let us begin a negotiation on the subject. You shall find in me all the spirit of accommodation with which York began his with the fair Piedmontese."

The characters Jefferson mentioned are in a sexually charged scene in "Sentimental Journey," a best-selling novel of the day by En-

glish writer Laurence Sterne. York is forced to share a room at a crowded Italian country inn with the lovely stranger Piedmontese and the two eventually have sex.

In an earlier letter, Jefferson also urged Angelica to return with him to America: "Let's go back together then, you intend it a visit; so do I. While you are indulging with your friends on the Hudson, I will go to see if Monticello remains in the same place, or I will attend you in the falls of Niagara, if you will go with me to the passage of the Potomac, the Natural Bridge, etc.," he wrote.

Said Lewis: "If you were a guy trying to make an impression on a woman in the late 18th century, you would take her to Niagara Falls or Natural Bridge."

A decade later, Jefferson was still trying. Writing from Philadelphia after Angelica arrived in New York, the vice president of the United States pleases: "The you have taken so great a step, there is still a wide space between us. I shall entertain the hope that we may meet at this place, as on a middle ground."

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Angelica Church likely came closest to meeting Jefferson's feminine ideal after his beloved wife, Martha Wayles Jefferson, died in 1782, when he was only 28, said Jefferson scholar William Howard Adams.

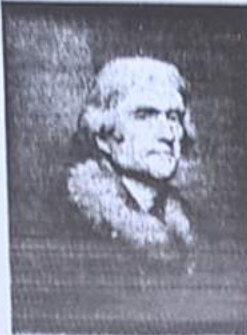
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THE BROADWAY SHOW 'HAMILTON' FEATURES

OUR TOWN ANGELICA

NAMESAKE

IS ON THE TOUR ITINERARY FOR  
"HAMILTON TOURISTS"... HERE'S WHY

ALEXANDER HAMILTON WAS MARRIED  
TO THE SISTER OF ANGELICA CHURCH  
FOR WHOM THIS TOWN WAS NAMED

PHILIP CHURCH (ANGELICA'S SON)  
WAS ALEXANDER HAMILTON'S  
AIDE-DE-CAMP. HE SETTLED THIS  
TOWN AND ALLEGANY COUNTY AFTER  
ALEXANDER HAMILTON BACKED THE  
MORTGAGE TO BUY THIS LAND.

ANGELICA CHURCH WAS CALLED THE  
'THIEF OF HEARTS' SEVERAL FOUNDING  
FATHERS WERE IN LOVE WITH HER.  
SHE HELPED BRING FRENCH ARISTOCRATS  
HERE TO HIDE DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

*Angelica Church's letters of introduction to Alexander  
Hamilton for exiles  
from the French Revolution*

*February 1793*

*From Angelica Church to Alexander Hamilton*

*"My dear Brother: You will receive this from a friend of  
mine and an admirer of your virtues and your talents.*

*The Count Louis-Marie de Noailles...*

*your faithful friend and affectionate sister, Angelica Church"*

Louis Marie was a cousin and close friend of the Marquis de Lafayette. He had fought for American independence with French and German forces at Yorktown. After returning to France, he proposed a dissolution of aristocratic titles and privileges. Even so, it was not enough for the Rebels during the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution. He left again for America, probably hoping to protect his family in this way, but his wife, parents, and several other family members, men, women, and children were guillotined in 1794.

There is no doubt John and Angelica Church were also influential in bringing members of three French aristocratic families to Angelica, NY during and after France's bloody Revolution in which about 25,000 Frenchmen were executed, mostly by the Guillotine, called "the National Blade". The Hyde de Neuilles, the DuPonts, and the D'Autremonts all bought properties in Angelica from Philip Church in the early 1800's.



Liancourt was a social reformer but also close to King Louis XVI due to his father's position as Grand Master of the Royal Wardrobe. Two days before the storming of the Bastille, the King told Liancourt he thought there would be a revolt. Liancourt responded, no, it will be a Revolution. Two days later on July 14, 1789 the French Revolution began.

He tried to help the King escape but failed. By 1792, Liancourt he knew he was in danger of execution and left for England. In 1794, he emigrated to the United States with Angelica Church's assistance. He traveled through western New York and parts of Canada, and later returned to France.

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*Angelica Church's letters of introduction to Alexander  
Hamilton for exiles  
from the French Revolution*

*September 1794*

*From Angelica Church to Alexander Hamilton*

*"I have very particular and very good motives to ask your  
kindness for the Duke de Liancourt, He goes to America,  
and goes there without a friend. Besides many good qualities,  
this gentleman is the friend of the Marquis de La Fayette."*

*Adieu my dear friend, remember me to Beaumetz and  
Monsieur de Talleyrand.*

*Angelica Church"*

*December 1794*

*Alexander Hamilton to Angelica Church*

*"...Liancourt has arrived and has delivered your letter...I pay  
him the attentions due to his misfortunes and his merits. But  
now, sympathy, kind words, and occasionally a dinner, are all  
I can contribute. A Hamilton"*