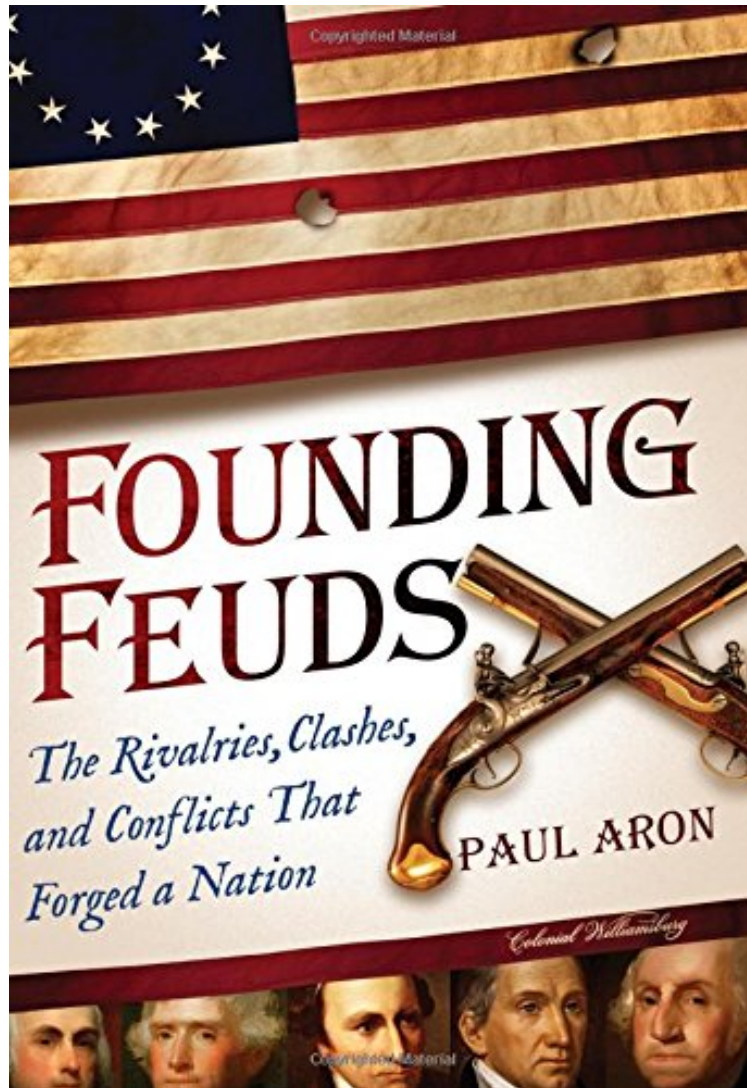


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Founding Feuds: The Rivalries, Clashes, and Conflicts That Forged a Nation

Paul Aron

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Paul Aron : Founding Feuds: The Rivalries, Clashes, and Conflicts That Forged a Nation before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Founding Feuds: The Rivalries, Clashes, and Conflicts That Forged a Nation:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Founding fightcatsBy JudithWho knew what a bunch of fightcats the founding fathers were?! Well, we knew about Jefferson and Adams, and Burr and Hamilton. But, I didn't know that so many others had issues with one another. It seems like Alexander Hamilton had issues with just about everybody.

When you think about it, making decisions about how the new government would work was bound to be a cause of conflict, as each man had his own ideas and principles. Perhaps if they wouldn't have kept writing public letters, or leaking what were supposed to be private letters to newspapers they could have gotten along. It reminded me of a certain President who can't stay off twitter. We think things are bad now, but at least we don't have representatives beating each other in the capitol and people shooting each other in duels. As interesting as all this is, I do have to say the book has some faults. It's just a little dry; you will have to be willing to work a little bit to get through this. If you are looking for breezy, chatty history, this is not your book. Each chapter features the feud between two specific people. So, you have a Jefferson vs. Adams chapter, and a Jefferson vs. Burr chapter, and so on. This format means the author has to repeat a lot of history. For instance the election of 1800 caused conflict between several men, so the author has to go over the same ground about that election multiple times as he explains the feuds between the various pairs of enemies. I find that I like this book as long as I read it in small doses. Some chapters are more interesting than others, because some people are more interesting than others, and because some fights are more outrageous than others. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Well written By Ron Cohen A well written book. I truly enjoyed reading every page. I learned much. The facts are there and right to the point. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Those interested in the founding fathers will love this book. By Jack S. A wonderful look behind the scenes at some of the events that don't always make it into the mainstream history books. A thoroughly informative and delightful read!

The Founding Fathers have been hailed for centuries as shining examples of men who put aside their own agendas to found a nation. But behind the scenes, there were more petty fights and fraught relationships than signatures on the Declaration of Independence. From the violent brawl between Roger Griswold and Matthew Lyon in the halls of Congress, to George Washington's battle against his slave Harry Washington, these less-discussed clashes bring to light the unpredictable and volatile nature of a constantly changing nation. Additionally, this gripping narrative delves deeper into the famous feuds, such as the fatal duel of Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr, and the many rivalries of Thomas Jefferson (which were as often personal as political.) America's great forbearers fought with each other as bitterly as our politicians do today. Founding Feuds reveals the true natures of the Founding Fathers and how their infighting shaped our nation as much as their cooperation, in fact sometimes even for the better.

"In lively prose and with keen understanding Paul Aron sets forth the personal animosities and grudges that drove politics in the new nation." - Robert Gross, Bancroft Prize winning historian and author of *The Minutemen and Their World* "With the verve of a storyteller and the precision of a historian, Paul Aron shows us how American politicians have been battling and backstabbing since the days when talking heads wore powdered wigs. Huzzah!" - Gerard Helferich, author of *New York Times* bestselling *Theodore Roosevelt and the Assassin* "By focusing on the internal conflicts that nearly tore the fledgling United States to shreds, Paul Aron provides an excellent entre into the world of the Founding Fathers. He strips these stories to their essentials without dumbing them down. And by summing up each struggle as a contest between two outsized 18th century characters, he draws us readers right into the fray. As the sparks fly, they light up the scene." - Woody Holton, author of *Abigail Adams* "If you are a reader of history that enjoys being in the thick of the exact feelings and experiences people may have had in past days, this is the book for you." - C.J. Leger "Even George Washington had a feud, so there's something for everyone. The book is perfect for lounging at the beach or pool, or even in a classroom. One of the best parts is Paul included endnotes complete with all of his sources, so if you want to learn more about a particular subject, he lets you know where to look." - *Making History* "The lively Founding Feuds should reassure readers that the political stridency of the present is an essential part of our tradition." - Richard Buel, author of *America on the Brink* "Those who think nastiness is a recent addition to our politics should read this book. Founding Feuds reminds us that mud-slinging goes back to the beginnings of the American republic." - John Mack Faragher, author of *Eternity Street* "Aron has compiled an ingenious list, in the literary sense, of historical combatives within a broad context of Founding Fathers...the book is well-written and researched, and the dueling combatants have been laced together in an engaging catalog." - *Daily Press* About the Author Paul Aron is the Director of Publications for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. The author of the popular *UNSOLVED MYSTERIES* series, he was previously a reporter for the *Virginia Gazette*, executive editor at Simon and Schuster and editor at Doubleday. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. **SILAS DEANE and ARTHUR LEE** His countenance is disgusting, his air is not pleasing, his manners are not engaging, his temper is harsh, sour, and fiery. John Adams on Arthur Lee What Mr. Deane's political principles were if he had any I never could learn. His views always appeared to me commercial and interested. Samuel Adams on Silas Deane Faced with the overwhelming superiority of the British military, the Continental Congress sent a secret agent to France in early 1776 to negotiate for diplomatic support, weapons, and other materials. This was Silas Deane, a merchant and former delegate to Congress who, along with Benedict Arnold, had been instrumental in the capture of Fort Ticonderoga from the British. Deane's cover story was that he was representing the trading firm of Morris and Willing. Deane was an unlikely agent: he had lived most of his life in Connecticut and spoke not a word of French. Benjamin Franklin

thought Deane's best qualification for the job was that he was so clearly unqualified to be a secret agent that no one would suspect him of anything other than working for Morris and Willing. In Paris, Deane found a partner with the court savvy he lacked. Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais was at various times a watchmaker, a spy, a diplomat, and a playwright; he created the character of Figaro, who inspired operas by both Mozart and Rossini. Beaumarchais was also an arms dealer. Deane and Beaumarchais worked out a deal to send cannons, muskets, ammunition, and clothing to the Continental Army. Since American money was virtually worthless, Congress would pay for all this with tobacco. Amidst the complex negotiations, Congress appointed Benjamin Franklin and Arthur Lee to join Deane as America's commissioners to France. The mission was no longer secret; Franklin was too big a celebrity to go unnoticed. As for Lee, he was the youngest son in a wealthy and distinguished Virginia family. His brother, Richard Henry Lee, had introduced the motion for independence in Congress. Arthur Lee's intelligence was undeniable—he was both a doctor and a lawyer—but it was, unfortunately, matched by his arrogance and tactlessness. John Adams, who generally allied himself with the Lees in Congress, said of Arthur Lee that "his judgment of men and things is often wrong." Franklin set about charming the French court and nation. Lee quickly offended both French diplomats and his fellow American commissioners, especially Deane. When the feud between Deane and Lee spilled over into the halls of Congress, it split its members publicly as no issue had since independence. Even before Lee arrived in Paris, he was distressed by Deane's dealings with Beaumarchais. Lee had met Beaumarchais in London in 1775 and, without authorization from Congress, had taken it upon himself to negotiate an arms-for-tobacco deal. Nothing had come of those negotiations, but Lee worried that Deane might get the credit for his earlier efforts. Deane and Franklin further antagonized Lee by largely excluding him from their negotiations with the French. Deane's and Franklin's negotiations paid off in 1777, when Beaumarchais's ships sailed to America loaded with arms and other material for the army. The material made its way to Saratoga, as did American volunteers, encouraged by word that they had what they needed to fight the British. The American victory at Saratoga that fall was a turning point in the war. After Saratoga, British military operations were largely limited to the South. The victory didn't stop Lee from complaining to his brothers and others in Congress. He accused both Deane and Franklin of profiting personally from the French deals. He claimed there was no reason to pay Beaumarchais, since the arms were a gift from the French government. And he accused Edward Bancroft, the secretary to the American commissioners, of being a British spy. This last accusation turned out to be true, as British archives revealed when they were made public a century later. Deane was increasingly exasperated. Lee "must be shaved and bled, or he will actually be made for life," Deane wrote in January 1778. Franklin stopped answering Lee's letters, explaining that he did so because of "my pity of your sick mind, which is forever tormenting itself, with jealousies, suspicions and fancies that others mean you ill, wrong you, or fail in respect for you." Lee's complaints ultimately forced Congress to act. In early 1778, Congress recalled Deane from France, replacing him with John Adams, and opened an investigation into Deane's conduct. Lee's supporters in Congress charged that Deane had granted nearly sixty commissions to French gentlemen, making them officers in the Continental Army even though many were unqualified and the army could not afford to pay them. This was true, though Deane thought his actions necessary to gain the favor of the French court. Besides, not all his commissions turned out to be problems; among the Frenchmen who joined the Continental Army was the Marquis de Lafayette, who became one of Washington's most trusted officers. The more serious accusation was that Deane had used his mission for personal profit. Richard Henry Lee called as a witness William Carmichael, a merchant who had worked as secretary to Deane and Franklin. Lee announced to Congress that Carmichael would show that "Deane had misapplied the public money." Carmichael's actual testimony was inconclusive, since he admitted he did not recall many details of Deane's transactions. Arthur Lee's supporters also introduced Arthur's own letters as evidence, though these were too obviously biased to be of much use as evidence. Beaumarchais rose to Deane's defense. In a letter to Congress, he wrote that he had arranged for the arms shipments after Deane had promised him Congress would pay for them. Beaumarchais added, "I certify that if my zeal, my money advances, and shipments of munitions and merchandise have been agreeable to the noble Congress, their gratitude is due to the indefatigable exertions of Mr. Deane." Franklin, too, wrote on Deane's behalf, calling him "a faithful, active, and able minister, who to my knowledge has done in various ways great and important services to his country." Also testifying on Deane's behalf was Conrad Gerard, the new French ambassador. He reiterated that the French government wanted nothing more to do with Arthur Lee. Appearing before Congress, Deane stressed that he was eager to show that he had not "applied one shilling of the public moneys to my own use." He added, "It is well known that my private fortune in America, which at the time I left my country was moderate, has not been augmented, but the contrary, by my absence." He had brought virtually nothing back from France "excepting my clothes." Deane's defense was hampered by having left his account books in France. Even if he had brought them, they would have been confusing. In order to conceal the secret arms deals and preserve his initial cover story that he was merely an agent for Morris and Willing, Deane had mixed his public and private transactions. It also didn't help his case that, while waiting to testify before Congress, Deane lodged with Benedict Arnold. Arnold had not yet turned traitor, but his opulent lifestyle and his flirtation with a loyalist's daughter made him an object of suspicion. Both sides took their case to the public. In an essay in the *Pennsylvania Packet*, Deane blamed Lee for almost derailing the mission by offending the French and charged him with passing on

intelligence to the British. He accused Congress of refusing to hear his side of the story, since "their ears have been shut against me." The Lees and their supporters recruited Thomas Paine to write a response in the same newspaper. Paine was appalled by Deane's "barbarous, unmanly, and unsupported attack" on Lee. Paine repeated Lee's claims that the French military supplies had been a gift, that there was no need to repay Beaumarchais, and that Deane had embezzled public funds. Lest there be any doubt of his credentials, Paine signed off as "Common Sense," the title of the pamphlet he'd written that many credited with inspiring Americans to support the Revolution. The feud between Deane and Lee polarized Congress as never before. John Adams feared the affair would end with either "the ruin of Mr. Deane, or the ruin of his country." George Washington moaned that "party disputes and personal quarrels are the great business of the day whilst the momentous concerns of an empire-a great and accumulated debt-ruined finances-depreciated money-and want of credit...are but secondary considerations and postponed...as if our affairs wore the most promising aspect." This was clearly more than a matter of difficult personalities, however disagreeable Lee was. The Lees and their supporters were appalled by the way Deane mixed personal and government business. "What Mr. Deane's political principles were if he had any I never could learn," wrote Samuel Adams. "His views always appeared to me commercial and interested." Asked Paine: "To what a degree of corruption must we sink if our delegates and ambassadors are to be admitted to carry on a private partnership in trade?" For Robert Morris, who was a signer of the Declaration of Independence as well as a partner in the firm that had provided Deane's cover story in France, there was no conflict between the pursuit of private wealth and the nation's interest. "I do not conceive that the state I live in has any right or inclination to enquire into what mercantile connection I have had or now have with Mr. Deane or with any other person," he wrote. "As I did not, by becoming a delegate for the state of Pennsylvania, relinquish my right of forming mercantile connections, I was unquestionably at liberty to form such with Mr. Deane." The divide was also regional. Like most of those who supported John Adams and Richard Henry Lee in their fight for a declaration of independence, Arthur Lee's supporters came mostly from the states of New England and the South, whose wealth came primarily from agriculture. Deane's supporters were mostly from New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, where commercial and financial interests were more dominant. The economic problems brought on by the Revolution exacerbated these tensions. The Lees had resented Franklin since the early 1770s, when he had represented a company that was competing with the Lees for a grant of land in the Ohio Valley. In September 1778, Richard Henry Lee wrote Arthur Lee that Franklin was "immoral" and that "the doctor is old and must soon be called to account for his misdeeds." But in publicly attacking Franklin-already an American icon-the Lees went too far. They alienated potential congressional allies and ended up strengthening support for Deane. And, overall, Deane's defense in Congress was convincing. In January 1779, Congress unanimously agreed that Lee's claim that the French supplies were a present was untrue. Indeed, the debate in Congress turned from Deane's conduct to Lee's, and a vote to recall Lee from France failed by a single vote. Lee's reputation never recovered. He was elected to Congress in 1781 but then further alienated many of his family's previous allies, including Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. He made clear to George Washington that he wanted to be a justice of the Supreme Court or the secretary of the treasury, but the president never named him to any post. Deane's reputation also spiraled downward. The attacks in Congress left him disillusioned about American democracy, and he returned to France in 1780. "We ought to inquire if any country ever was, for any time, even for one century at peace, free, and happy under a democracy," Deane wrote. British spies got their hands on this and other letters expressing similar sentiments and, recognizing their propaganda value, leaked them to American loyalists. The letters soon appeared in a New York newspaper, *The Royal Gazette*. Deane pointed out these were his private letters, not meant for publication, and he also claimed the British had doctored them. But he didn't deny he had lost faith in the Revolution. "You believe that the peace, liberty, and happiness of our country will be best secured...under an independent democracy," he wrote Franklin. "I have the misfortune to think differently."