

Jared Sparks Biography

Jared Sparks

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Biography

Jared Sparks (10 May 1789-14 March 1866), biographer and historian, overcame his illegitimate birth in Willington, Connecticut, and, by educating himself, entered Harvard College, graduating in 1815. Sparks became a divinity student and was ordained in Baltimore in 1819. He served as chaplain of the House of Representatives and returned to New England in 1823. After buying the *North American Review*, Sparks edited it with such success that in 1829 he sold the magazine for a 100% profit. His first marriage, in 1832, ended when his wife died three years later. His second marriage, in 1839, to a wealthy Bostonian, enabled him to devote the rest of his life to his historical writings and to Harvard, which had named him McLean Professor of Ancient and Modern History in 1838, and which he served as president of from 1849 to 1853. He died in Cambridge. Sparks's fame rests upon his editions of the papers of George Washington (1834-1837) and Benjamin Franklin (1836-1840), his own biographies of famous Americans, and his series, "Library of American Biography" (25 vols., 1834-1838, 1844-1848). Although Sparks did save valuable manuscripts from loss, his editions of them are untrustworthy and his own biographies are too formal and proper to be of use today.