

James E. Lewis Jr.
Dept. of History
Kalamazoo College

Summary of "'My Character as a Republican Is So Well Known': Robert R. Livingston's Paris Mission"

The three years that Robert R. Livingston spent as the American Minister to France (1801–1804) were among the most eventful and the most important in his life, highlighted, of course, by the crucial part that he played in the Louisiana Purchase. During these years, Livingston's self-identification as a "republican gentleman" produced tensions both with the surprisingly "unrepublican" government of Napoleonic France and with the no less surprisingly "ungentlemanly"—at least from his perspective—officials of his own country in Paris and in Washington. Livingston's foreign service involved a series of conflicts with his French counterparts and his American subordinates, colleagues, and superiors. Ultimately, he proved far more successful at negotiating the complexities of imperial court politics than at resolving the collisions with other republican gentlemen.