

The Federalist Era: John Adams's Presidency



"People and Nations are forged in the fires of adversity."



Election of 1796

- Federalist candidates - John Adams and Thomas Pinckney
 - Some New England Federalists didn't like the southerner Pinckney and didn't vote for him
- Democratic-Republican candidates - Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr
- Result was Adams won the Presidency with 71 votes and Jefferson won Vice Presidency with 68
 - When designing the electoral college, the framers had not foreseen the rise of political parties

Presidential Cabinet

- ❑ Election resulted in a politically divided Executive
- ❑ Kept Washington's cabinet including Federalist leader and rival Hamilton
 - Had powerful enemies in both parties
- ❑ Jefferson and Adams would go from close friends to bitter enemies





XYZ Affair

- France became angry with US “neutrality” and Jay’s Treaty with Britain
 - France began seizing US merchant vessels in the Caribbean
- Adams sent ambassadors to France to negotiate in 1798
- Agents for the French foreign minister, Talleyrand, demanded a \$250,000 bribe before talks could begin



XYZ Affair

- Ambassadors sent Adams word of incident
- Adams gave their report to Congress with the letters X, Y, Z to represent the 3 French agents
- This act of disrespect prompted many Federalist congressmen to call for war
 - Congress authorized creation of standing army of 10,000
- Published XYZ papers caused Anti-French sentiment nationwide
 - “Millions for defense, not a cent for tribute!”
- Democratic Republicans continued to support France
 - Jefferson, Madison

XYZ Affair



“Father of U.S. Navy”

- Six new naval vessels
 - First 3 in 1797
- Adams pushed for, and Congress created, a Department of the Navy
 - Secretary - Benjamin Stoddert
 - New loyal cabinet member
- Adams had long been a proponent for the “wooden walls of defense”
- One of his proudest accomplishments



The USS Constellation – the first US Naval vessel to be put to sea in 1797

Quasi-War

- ❑ Undeclared war with France
- ❑ Spurred by French seizure of American merchant ships and XYZ Affair
- ❑ Much of the fighting took place in the Caribbean
- ❑ US naval power proved superior
 - by 1799, US had captured 8 French naval vessels



BRITISH

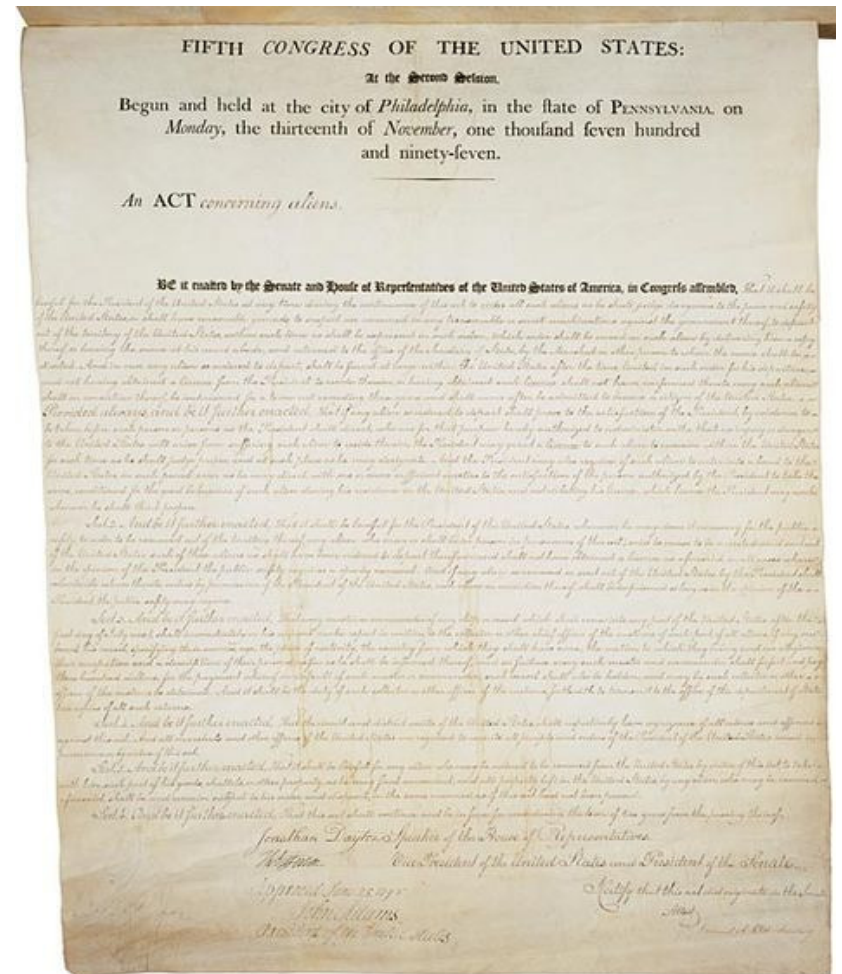


Political Climate

- Republican opposition to Quasi -War and Adams administration
- Criticism in the press seen as malicious to the Federalists
- Strong public support for Federalists and war with France
- Rumors of French spies and sympathizers in America

Alien & Sedition Acts

- Congress passed and Adams signed four laws aimed at suppressing French/Republican sympathy in US
- Alien Acts
 - Deportation of any alien seen as dangerous to national security
 - Provided for detention or deportation of enemy aliens in time of war
 - Still ‘on the books’ in 2007
- Sedition Acts
 - Made it a crime to write, print, or utter “false, scandalous and malicious” statements against the government





Alien & Sedition Acts

- No one deported during Adams presidency under Alien Acts
- 10 convictions of Sedition Act
 - Matthew Lyon – Congressman (Vt. – R)
 - 4 months, \$1000 fine
 - Declaring in print that the President had displayed “a continual grasp for power,” and “an unbounded thirst for ridiculous pomp, foolish adulation, and selfish avarice.”
 - Jefferson and Republicans jumped all over Adams for this
 - Unconstitutional
 - Jefferson and Madison encouraged the passage of the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions
 - Declared Alien and Sedition Acts unconstitutional and relieved their states from obedience to them
 - Would help turn the tide for the Republicans in election of 1800

Peace with France

- On October 3, 1800 a peace treaty was signed with France officially ending the Quasi-War
 - Ended permanent alliance with France and assured immediate peace
 - News would arrive too late to effect upcoming presidential election

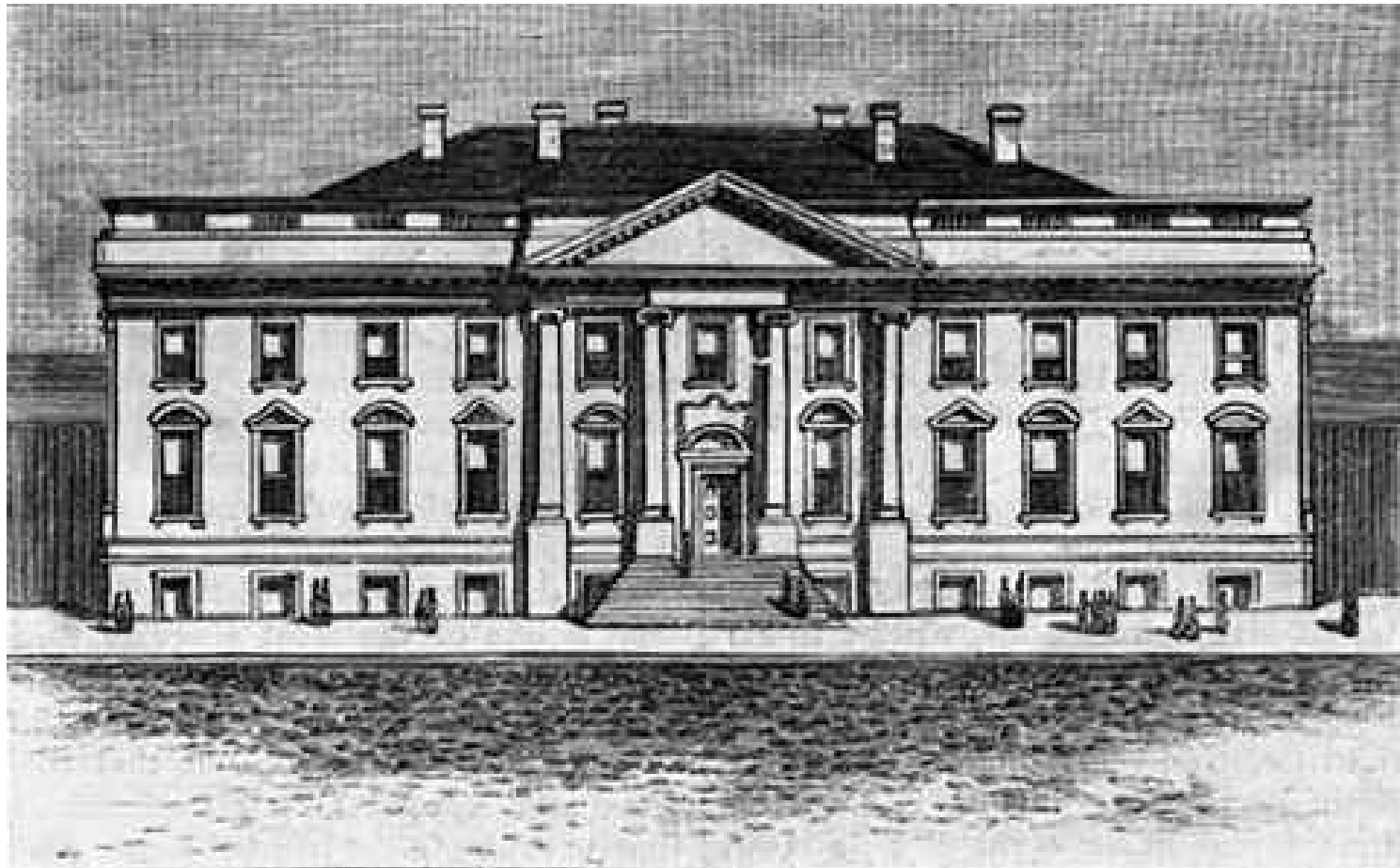


The White House



- On Nov. 1, 1800 John Adams became the first president to occupy the (almost) completed Presidential Mansion in Washington D.C.
- Adams offered this prayer: “I pray Heaven to bestow the best of blessings on this House, and all that shall hereafter inhabit it. May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof.”
 - FDR carved it into the Mantle in the State Dining Room

The White House



Election of 1800



Marshall Memorial in Washington DC

- Adams loses the election of 1800 to Thomas Jefferson
 - Due in large part to the scheming of Alexander Hamilton
- Midnight Appointments
 - Filled judicial openings in the final days of his presidency
 - Would prove to be controversial
 - Nominated John Marshall as Chief Justice
 - One of the most important Chief Justices in US history

John Adams 1797-1801



John Adams One Dollar Coin

- Returned home to Peacefield the night before Jefferson's inauguration
 - No congratulations or greeting for his successor

- Last President of the Federalist Era