The Rise and Fall of
Jeffersonian Republicanism (1790-1820)

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by
Jennifer L. Freeman

Thesis Director

Dr. Joseph Losco

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When Thomas Jefferson joined President George Washington's administration as Secretary of State in March, 1790, he brought with him to that office no party label or affiliation. He was recommended to the position as a result of his participation in the Revolution and by his diplomatic skill as evidenced by his term as minister to France, but he had no political constituency outside his native Virginia; he had not even been in the country when Washington had been elected. As a presidential advisor, Jefferson worked closely with Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, who had conspired with Jefferson's compatriot, James Madison, in promoting the ratification of the Constitution. Other than the recent alignments as Federalists and Anti-Federalists, proponents for and against the Constitution's acceptance respectively, members of Congress as well as the President and his principal advisors had no identification with political parties. As Madison pointed out, the division between Federalists and Anti-Federalists had been "terminated by the regular and effectual establishment of the federal government in 1788." There was no mechanism in either the executive or legislative branches of government, nor was there any reference to parties in the Constitution itself.
Little more than a decade later, when Thomas Jefferson took the oath of office as the third president of the United States on March 4, 1801, he did so as the head of the political party. He commanded a national constituency, and his election had been made possible by the work of an institutionalized party, which in four years of organizing, campaigning, and mobilizing popular support had ousted John Adams and the Federalists from power and instituted the first party-partisan turnover in the young republic's history. The new president, insisting that "we are all federalists," initially spoke in terms of reconciling parties, but his immediate action was to construct a party government.

Thomas Jefferson's appointees in his new administration, headed by James Madison as Secretary of State, had all been integral characters in the building of the Republican coalition. The Congress that was ushered in with Jefferson was a different kind of body than that which had met at the commencement of Washington's tenure. Politicians were claiming party affiliations where they previously had not; a governmental metamorphosis had occurred in the decade preceding Thomas Jefferson's advancement into the presidential position. Author Arthur M. Schlesinger in History of American Political Parties, agreed, "In a single decade, then, the nonparty conditions which had
existed when Washington took office had been replaced by a two-party system, sufficiently mature by 1801 to produce an orderly transfer of political power in the national government from one party to another. \(^3\) These conditions which created a nation willing to embrace Jefferson and his Republicans are of tantamount significance in the examination of this party's rise to power at the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the next.

During the period from its rise in the 1790's to its breakup in the 1820's, the Jeffersonian Republican party made contributions of major significance to the development of the American political system. It demonstrated that a political party could be successfully organized in opposition to an administration in power in the national government, win control over that government, and inspire orderly changes through party mechanisms. In challenging the Federalist opposition, Jeffersonians were innovative in building party machinery, organizing political campaigns, employing party press, and devising campaign techniques to stimulate voter interest in elections and support of Republican candidates at the polls.

It was never the intention of Jefferson to be instrumental in the construction of an American party system; in fact he attempted to reconcile the Federalist opposition to his administration. Although
that goal was never achieved during his tenure, in demonstrating both the techniques of successful party mobilization to obtain power and the responsible management of party government, the Jeffersonian Republicans laid the foundations for workable party government in the United States.

In order to grasp the magnitude of Jefferson and his followers' effects on the future of party politics in America, it is necessary to examine the conditions which created an environment conducive to such change, the administration of Jefferson, and its subsequent decline.

One of the paradoxes of American political development is that the genesis of political parties took place in an atmosphere of distrust of these very institutions. Contemporaries equated parties with divisiveness, disruption, and conspiracy against government. The Constitution had not anticipated parties and thus had made no provisions for their existence. In the Federalist Papers Madison stressed the argument that the Constitution would, in fact, control "the violence of faction." But others with the Anglo-American tradition from which the Founding Fathers had drawn upon found little favorable to say about political parties. These anti-party feelings on the part of most political thinkers reflected a concern that parties would become the instruments of
special interests, thus preventing the national consensus they considered necessary for good government.

James Madison wrote as a Federalist about the presence of "factions" in society and their potential dangers to the smooth and efficient progress of both society and government. He and the other Federalists held this negative view of factions or parties, making their opinions quite clear in *Federalist #10:* "By a faction, I understand a number of citizens whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and activated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." Yet he admitted that parties were the inevitable result of the natural human tendency to differ, and that any attempt to change this would sacrifice liberty, an unacceptable course of events. Thus in Madison's own words, the tasks of "curing the mischiefs of faction" must be "sought in the means of controlling its effects." This solution was present in the American Constitution, according to Madison. The principle of representation embodied in the republican form of government, the various levels of it established in a federal system, and the large society made possible in this system all "make it less probable
that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens" or at least "to discover their own strength and to act in unison with each other." 9

Over the decade that followed the writings of The Federalist Papers, Madison's views were modified somewhat as he observed the actual workings of parties. Writing in 1792, he still clinging to the view of parties as a necessary evil, but he suggested some hope that parties in competition could work in the public interest. Madison was not the only one who was skeptical about ideologic divisions in government and society. In Washington's farewell address in 1796, he warned of the "danger of parties." He said, "There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the Administration of Government and serve to keep alive the spirit of Liberty. This within certain limits is probably true, and in Governments of a Monarchical case, Patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favour, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in Governments purely elective, it is a spirit not be encouraged, fire to be quenched; it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into flame; lest instead of warning it should consume." 10

Although Jefferson wrote in 1798 that "in every free and deliberating society there must, from the
nature of man, be opposite parties," he never thought or acted in terms of a system of two responsible parties in the United States. He justified his own participation in party activity on the ground that when "the principle of difference is as substantial and as strongly pronounced as between the republicans and monocrats of our country, I hold it as honorable to take a firm and decided part, and as immoral to pursue a middle line, as between the parties of honest men, and rogues, into which every country is divided." Thus, as party divisions manifested themselves in the political and social order of nineteenth century America, each party tended to regard itself as the manifestation of the public good and the other party as dangerous to the liberty and security of the nation.

No precise date can be given for the establishment of the Republican party, for it did not spring suddenly into being, and even those leaders most intimately involved in its formation were not fully aware of what they were creating. The beginnings of what over the course of time became the Republican party can be found in the Second Congress in the congressional faction that contemporaries referred to as the "republican interest." An adversary of Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton wrote in May, 1792, "It was not til last session that I
became unequivocally convinced of the following truth: that Mr. Madison, cooperating with Mr. Jefferson, is at the head of a faction decidedly hostile to me and my administration; and actuated by his views, in my judgement, subversive of the principles of good government and dangerous to the Union, peace, and happiness of the country."14 The political skirmish between Jefferson and Madison against Hamilton was evidenced in the political styles of the adversaries. Author Robert Kelley wrote of this in his book The Cultural Pattern in American Politics, "Jefferson was cynical about 'great men,' whom he viewed as inveterate rogues. He distrusted the close union between capitalists and the government that Hamilton had in mind, regarding it as inviting corruption."15 Jefferson frowned on the encouragement of city and industry growth, believing that the people, divorced from the complications of business, were the true source of leadership for the country.

Jefferson's world view was rooted in the soil and a profound localism. From his experience in Europe as America's minister to France, Jefferson had formed a distaste for cities and thought the British to be irretrievably corrupted by power, aristocratic arrogance, and ignorance among the masses. All of humanity, he believed, was by natural law divided into Whigs and Tories, this division springing from
fundamental differences in personality. Whigs, he claimed, were rugged self-sufficient people who were capable of governing themselves and willing to let others do the same, thus in little need of institutions. Tories, on the other hand, were either arrogant followers or people so weak in spirit that they needed and desired the protection of powerful men and governments.

Jefferson regarded bankers warily and thought paper money an evil. His economics came from the Scotsman Adam Smith, who in his Wealth of Nations (1776) warned that businessmen must always be watched carefully, for they monopolized and wheedled special privileges from the government at every opportunity. Far better, Smith thought, would be a system of "natural liberty" by which no favors would be given to anyone. So persuaded, Jefferson warned Americans that society was not naturally harmonious, as Federalists insisted, with its upper class providing good leadership to the obedient and humble masses. Rather, society was divided against itself by an unending conflict between the classes, induced by the greed of the wealthy. Hamilton's banking schemes, he believed, would only serve to corrupt the people and sap the moral foundations of honest republicanism. Too many members of Congress, he claimed, manipulated their positions in order to "get rid of the limitations
imposed by the constitution on the general government."
Jefferson thus emerged as the champion of strict
construction of the Constitution; and it was, as he saw
it, "the republican party, who wished to preserve the
government in its present form."18

The growing antagonism between Jefferson and
Hamilton was fueled by each politician's differences in
governmental strategy and perpetuated by the climate of
the times. The newspapers enjoyed publishing their
differences, often adding to the battle. By the summer
of 1792 the quarrels between Hamilton and Jefferson
were the center of such newspaper controversy that
President Washington appealed confidentially to each of
them to reconcile their differences, urging, "that
instead of wounding suspicions, and irritable charges,
there may be liberal allowances, mutual forbearances,
and temporising yieldings on all sides."19 In reply,
Jefferson admitted that he disapproved privately of the
Secretary of Treasury, but he avowed he never publicly
attempted to persuade members of the legislature to
defeat Hamilton's plans. Hamilton contended that he
was the injured party, and knew he had been the target
of Jefferson's sabotage.

Washington's plea for harmony did little to lessen
the conflict between Jefferson and Hamilton, which went
far deeper than their personal relationship. On the
basic issues of their day - the nature of the federal
union, the interpretation of the Constitution, the economic policies of the government, and the direction of foreign policy - their differences were fundamental. Because the contrasts were so sharp and the prominence of each man so great, it is tempting to see the formation of two national political parties as the projection of this antagonism and to view the partisan conflict of the 1790's in terms of a conflict between Jefferson and Hamilton principles. To do so, however, is to distort the record of party formation and obscure the institutional development of political parties capable of formulating programs, nominating candidates, organizing election campaigns, and through the party process produce orderly change in the nation's political system.

While the cleavage within Washington's cabinet cannot be divorced from political developments in Congress and elsewhere in the nation, the formation of Republican and Federalist party groupings in Congress, rather than the split in the cabinet, provided for the basis for the institutional growth of parties. As two opposing congressional parties increasingly came to dominate the proceedings of the legislature, members more and more were forced to take sides, and by the very act of voting, they became identified with one party or another. As members of Congress defended their legislative records and sought reelection, they
took to the electorate the issues and the disputes that had divided Congress; they tended in their campaigns for reelection to impart to the voters something of the partisanship that was developing in Congress. Thus, the party divisions in Congress filtered down to the voters through the election process; voters chose their sides along those which had divided Congress. Author Edgar E. Robinson of *The Evolution of American Political Parties*, remarked, "In this process the congressional factions acquired the mass followings in the country necessary to transform them from capital factions into national political parties."21

This process occurred over a period of tempestuous historical events; all of which influenced the erection of partisan politics. Foreign crises greatly determined the path that the alignments would take.

The presidential election of 1792 stimulated an interstate cooperation among leaders of the emerging Republican interest that was a major step in the formation of the Republican party. Washington chose to run for a second term, removing that office from partisan contention; however, the vice presidency was a target for either party. Although Adams won the reelection as vice president, his Republican opponents garnered unanimous electoral votes in New York, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia. This was substantial evidence that the Republican cause was
organizing in 1792. Though the party had no deep roots within the political community, the beginnings of a national Republican party structure could be seen.

As long as he remained Secretary of State, Jefferson provided guidance and advice to the Republican interest in Congress. However, at the end of 1793, Jefferson, longing for some respite from the "hated occupations of politics," resigned as Secretary of State and retired to Monticello. The Republican leadership which Jefferson had shared with James Madison now was left for Madison alone to manage. During the next three years while Jefferson was in retirement, Madison remained as the Republican leader in Congress and built up there the nucleus of the party that Jefferson was to command when he returned to Philadelphia in 1797 as vice president. Contemporaries referred to "Madison's party," and, when Jefferson was nominated for the presidency in 1796, he was recognized as the candidate of Madison's party.22

Under Madison's leadership, the Republican party in Congress moved from a role characterized largely by opposition to administration measures, mostly Hamiltonian inspired, to one of offering policy alternatives and proposing Republican programs. This change was signaled in January, 1794 when Madison introduced a series of resolutions designed to produce a policy of commercial discrimination against Great
Although these resolutions were abandoned, their introduction suggested a Republican effort to summon popular support and aroused Federalist fears that had a significant part in bringing about the negotiation of the Jay Treaty with Great Britain. The controversy over the Jay Treaty, in turn, played a major role in generating popular support for the Republican party and in solidifying the connections between national leaders and Republicans on the state and local levels. National leaders, such as John Beckley, were active in helping to rally public protests against the treaty. The struggle intensified party spirit throughout the country; in Congress it promoted an increase in voting along party lines, caused Republican leaders to give unusual attention to party strategy and tactics, and led to significant innovations in party procedures. The most important of these was the introduction of the party caucus by Republicans in the House of Representatives to determine party policy in regard to the treaty. The Republican caucus that met in April, 1796 over the Jay Treat was the first formal party caucus that can be documented. It met during the attempt by House Republicans led by Madison to block the Jay Treaty, already ratified by the Senate, by refusing to appropriate funds to carry it into effect. Arthur Schlesinger postulated, "Although party discipline was
not so well advanced as to insure unanimous support of the caucus decision, the holding of a formal party caucus to formulate the party's legislative policy was a significant sign of the growing maturity of the Republican party in Congress. When Republicans failed to block the treaty in the House, Madison felt that, "the causes lay in the unsteadiness, the follies, the perverseness, and the defections among our friends, more than in the strength, or dexterity, or malice of our opponents." Party discipline was still lacking, but the Republican party in Congress under Madison's leadership became a far more cohesive group than ever before; and it supplied much of the direction for the Republican effort nationally.

When in 1796 Jefferson ran against John Adams, Washington's vice president and heir apparent, he became Adams' vice president, losing to Adams by three electoral votes, according to the provisions of the Constitution. Behind the outcome of this election lay an epochal mobilization of the common people. The general populace, awakened by the excitement of the campaign, headed in record numbers to the polls. This outpouring of voters mounted steadily in the 1790's. Until about 1795, an average of twenty-five percent of the eligible male voters had turned out for national elections, with no indication of an upward trend. The two-party rivalry now emerging, however, sent voting statistics soaring.
John Adams' single term as president (1797-1801) saw an almost unceasing political battle. The undeclared war with France, and undeclared naval conflict on the open seas that began in 1797, possessed the national mind. Hamilton's Federalists were eager to smite the French, and demanded that Adams secure a full declaration of war from Congress. When he refused, they made his life miserable with their intrigues, practically expelling him from the party. As Jefferson observed in 1793, the war in Europe between France and England "kindled and brought forward the two parties with an ardour which our own interests merely, could never excite."

The Jeffersonians were traditionally warm to the French, not only because of their egalitarian and republican revolution, but because of their animosity toward the English. When Jefferson and his constituency protested that Adams was in fact leading the nation to war with France, Adams replied by labeling them the "French party" and calling them seditious and treacherous. In April 1798 the French demanded a huge bribe of American negotiators in the XYZ affair. "The magic spell France had cast over the Republicans was suddenly broken by President Adam's coup in submitting to Congress in April 1798 the report of our commissioners to France on the sensational XYZ affair," concurred Wilfred E. Binkley, author of
American Political Parties. 29 These envoys had sought to compose the difference between the United States and France and to restore the diplomatic relations broken by France when the nation learned of Jay's Treaty.

Stimulating a hesitancy to reveal the contents of the commissioner's report, the wily Federalists had lured the Republican Congressmen into a trap - the introduction of a resolution demanding publication of the report. As the news spread throughout the land that the French Directory had required a bribe as a preliminary to opening negotiations, a roar of indignation arose and American almost unanimously became anti-French. 30 The end of that year found the Federalists making marked gains in the congressional and state elections.

Internally, America had been churning with issues that continued to further divide the nation into distinct political camps. Following the XYZ affair, the Federalists seized the opportunity to capitalize on the anti-Republican sentiment. They proceeded to enact statues that betrayed not only their ruling-class consciousness but even their conviction of the illegitimacy of political parties. The Alien and Sedition Acts were designed to suppress Republican editors and pamphleteers of French, British, and Irish nativity - "foreign liars," the Federalists called them. 31 The Federalists were a nativist party, and
immigrants naturally gravitated to the party of the underdog and opposition to the government. Republican politicians were already learning to court their favor, a practice of which the Federalists were inherently incapable. They decided instead, "to strike the evil at its roots and destroy the foreign vote."32

Under the Alien provision, the period of residence required for naturalization was increased from five to fourteen years, during which period the President was empowered to deport any alien he judged to be "dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States." Having provided for subduing the foreign electorate, the fatuous Federalists turned to the native Republicans and, in the Sedition Act, provided for fines and imprisonment as penalties for seditious utterances and writings against the president or congress. Such latitude did this afford the courts that partisan Federalist judges applied it with savage severity against Republicans for relatively innocent remarks.

How were the Republicans to defend themselves against such an arbitrary exercise of legislative and judicial power? Since Congress had not even been delegated power to enact the Sedition Act, and the first amendment even forbade "abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press," Republicans promptly denounced it as unconstitutional. But, with the
landmark decision *Marbury v. Madison* (1803) which had established the Court's prerogative of declaring a law unconstitutional through judicial review not yet having reach the political arena, and with the courts packed with Federalist judges, the Republicans found themselves groping for retaliation. They decided on the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions.

Author John Hoadley wrote in his book *Origins of American Political Parties 1789-1803*, "The Republicans needed a device for appealing to public opinion, later to be supplied by party platforms. They resorted to the not altogether new practice of resolutions by state legislatures, and Virginia passed a set protesting against the obnoxious (Alien and Sedition) statutes."33 It was planned to have the legislature of South Carolina pass similar resolutions, but the elections following the XYZ outrage had given the Federalists too much strength there. The Kentucky legislature instead was used. Both sets of resolutions declared the Alien and Sedition Acts unconstitutional and proposed a method of challenging the execution of Federal statues deemed invalid. The theory behind these resolutions concerned the sovereignty of the states as designed by the Constitution over the mandates of the federal government when they superseded the authority delegated it. Although the Republicans failed to strike the Alien and Sedition Acts
unconstitutional, the premise of the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions held their importance for many years. As author William Myers wrote in his book *The Republican Party: A History*, "The Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions became the political bible of the Jeffersonians by 1800, and for a generation the undisputed articles of faith of the overwhelming majority of Americans."

Washington's announcement in 1796 that he would not seek re-election created the first opportunity for a competition for that office. This election became a clear-cut party contest between the Federalist supporters of John Adams and the Republican champions of Thomas Jefferson. Each candidate was a party candidate, although the Federalists were not fully united behind Adams, and Hamilton schemed to make Jefferson's vice presidential partner, Thomas Pickney, the presidential victor. The election of 1796 demonstrated increased partisanship in campaign activities. It also brought improvement in Republican party organization and campaign operations, although formal party organization was found only in a few states.

Jefferson took no part in the campaign of 1796. Not long before, he had affirmed that his "retirement from office had meant from all office, high or low, without exception," and that question was "forever
closed." It is apparent from Jefferson's actions and from his private correspondence that he did not seek to be the Republican candidate in 1796. After his name was proffered for the office, he was reluctant to be called back into the political arena. If his retirement was to be disturbed, he preferred the vice presidential post. Such was certainly not the aim of his supporters, who were so intent on elevating Jefferson to the presidency, that they gave little attention to the second office.

The election of 1796 clearly displayed the tightening of party lines; it was a measure of the growing strength and activity of their party that the Republicans nearly succeeded in defeating the incumbent vice president, John Adams, and making the reluctant Virginian president. When the electoral vote was counted, Adams had seventy-one electoral votes to Jefferson's sixty-eight; under the constitutional provisions, Jefferson, the candidate with the second highest number of votes, became vice president.

His election to the second office soon opened not only a new chapter in Jefferson's political career, but also ushered in a new phase in the formation of the Republican party. Despite the suspicions of his critics, Jefferson had withdrawn from active politics during his three years of retirement at Monticello from 1794-1797. It had been Madison who was the active
motivator of Republican interest. However, when Jefferson returned to Philadelphia in 1797 to take the oath of his new office, he returned not only to public service but to politics.

With a Federalist majority in Congress and a Federalist in the presidential office, the administration of John Adams marked the first clearly partisan administration of the national government. Although badly divided, the Federalist party was in control of the national government, systematically excluding the Republicans from its offices. Thus, during Adams' presidency the Republican party was the opposition party in a sense that had never been possible as long as the non-partisan Washington had held the helm of government.

As the party out of power, the Republicans had opportunity to focus efforts on issues involving the intricacies of formalized party politics. Devoting their energies on building party machinery, the Republicans took the lead in developing official techniques for partisan politics and election processes, fine-tuning these structures in key political states like Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Virginia. Since there was no uniform method of choosing presidential electors, each state legislature determined the manner of election as it chose. In some states electors were named by the
legislature; in others they were elected by district, in others, on a general ticket. Thus, the party with the majority in the state legislature was in a position to establish the method of election that promised the greatest partisan advantage. Since in 1796 John Adams had won the presidency by a margin of three electoral votes, Republicans were anxious to deny him votes in the election of 1800 in states where under a district system he might carry one or two districts in an otherwise Republican state. Early in January, 1800 the Republican majority in the Virginia General Assembly pushed through legislation changing the method of choosing presidential electors from election by district to election on a general ticket throughout the state. Thus the voter, who in the past had selected one elector from his district, was now required to choose twenty-one electors from the state at large. To succeed in such an election Republicans were compelled to develop more systematic measures of party management than had been required previously in a state where there had been no statewide elections. As a consequence, Virginia Republicans created one of the most extensively organized party structures in the country. That Republican party machinery established in Virginia in 1800, and utilized by Jefferson in his own campaign, proved to be a stable and persistent entity throughout the republican reign.
On the national level, Republican members of Congress through their informal associations in the national capital formed the basic national party structure. By informal communications such as dining together, they had many an opportunity to plot party tactics. In 1800, Republican members introduced what was the most powerful device for the maintenance of congressional influence in the leadership of the party: the congressional nominating caucus. Such a caucus met in May, 1800 and nominated Aaron Burr to be the Republican vice presidential candidate on the ticket with Jefferson, whom consensus had already made the Republican candidate for president.

Jefferson's election as vice president four years before had put him in a position to provide direction for his party; he had assumed leadership of the party immediately after assuming office in 1797. He had been in office only a few months when he wrote to Aaron Burr in New York seeking Burr's help on "the penetration of truth into the eastern states." Burr responded quickly by meeting with Jefferson in Philadelphia to discuss party tactics. In 1798, reacting to the flurry of internal security measures sponsored by the Federalists in the aftermath of the XYZ crisis with France, Jefferson subtly took the reigns in the challenge of the Alien and Sedition laws by drafting the Kentucky Resolutions. With opportunities for daily contacts
with the Republican members of Congress, Vice President Jefferson kept abreast of Republican party leaders and their activities.

The election of 1800 was the critical election in the history of the Jeffersonian Republican party - the triumphant climax to four years of hard work to capture control of the administration of the national government. Although Jefferson would later reminisce of the "revolution of 1800"; that event was not a revolutionary upheaval, but a contest between parties. This election offered voters a change; Republicans outlined a clear program of policy alternatives to the prevailing Federalist agenda. Although the term platform was not used, and no official program was adopted by any party agency, the Republicans did provide a platform of sorts. This program was publicly reiterated in numerous addresses and resolutions adopted at party meetings, and it appeared in various forms in Republican newspapers, pamphlets, and campaign handbills.41

Jefferson summarized in 1799 the policies which he endorsed to be "unquestionably the principles of a great body of our fellow citizens." He stressed that he was "for preserving to the states the powers not yielded by them to the Union" and "not for transferring all the powers of the states to the general government." He affirmed that he was "for a government
rigorously frugal and simple, applying all the possible savings of the public revenue to the discharge of the national debt." He opposed a standing army in time of peace and would rely solely on the militia for internal defense until an actual invasion. He favored only such naval force necessary to guard the coast and harbors.

The Republican platform of 1800 was directed against the record of the Adams administration, especially against the Alien and Sedition Acts, the expansion of the army, the establishment of the navy, and the increased taxation that had accompanied the military expenditures. While Federalists called Jefferson an atheist and portrayed him as a French anarchist, Republicans labeled Adams a monarchist and an enemy to Republican government.

Republican members of Congress held a caucus May 11 and unanimously agreed to support Aaron Burr for the vice presidential candidate. This was the first successful meeting of the Republican nominating caucus, which came to be the central feature of the national machinery of the party. Its beginning indicated the significant role which the Republican members of Congress played in supporting national party organization.

The election itself was close, with an unprecedented display of party regularity as every Republican elector cast his vote for the party's
nominees, Jefferson and Burr. The Republican party was thus put to another test as the election made its way to the House of Representatives. On the final ballot, Jefferson had the votes of ten states and Burr, four, with two Federalist-controlled states casting blank ballots.

On March 4, 1801, Jefferson took to oath of office as President, and a peaceful transfer of power took place - the first transfer of political power in the national government from one political party to another. The change of authority in the executive branch was accompanied by a similar changeover in the legislative branch, where Republican majorities in both houses of Congress displaced Federalist majorities. The party triumph in 1800 was thus complete; the outcome of the party contest had demonstrated the maturity of the party system in American politics.

The coming to power of the Jeffersonians in 1801 marked the beginning of the Republican era that saw the presidency pass from Jefferson to Madison to Monroe. When the Virginia dynasty came to an end in 1825, the presidential office went to a former Federalist who had become a Republican while Jefferson occupied the office. But, although John Quincy Adams was a Republican, the presidential election of 1824 shattered the Republican party and the congressional nominating caucus which had given direction to the party's
national structure since 1800. The twenty-four years of uninterrupted control of the national government which the Jeffersonians enjoyed could not have been anticipated when they took office in 1801. The Federalist party had lost an election, but the party had not collapsed. A sizeable minority of Federalists still existed in Congress, a threat which prevented the Republicans from resting on their recent win. Thus, after taking office in 1801, Republicans fought to prevent a Federalist return to power. They sought their goal by strengthening party mechanisms and building party machinery in areas of Federalist challenge, by supporting the expansion of the Republican press, by directing federal patronage to party supporters, and by making policy changes in accordance with campaign promises.\(^{43}\)

Once in office the Republicans moved to implement the policies of simplicity and frugality which Jefferson had promised. They cut taxes and government expenditures, began an orderly retirement of the national debt, and reduced the size of the army, navy, and the diplomatic establishment. They reduced the fourteen-year residency requirement for naturalization to five years to keep the promise that there would be no more Alien and Sedition Acts. In taking these steps, the Jeffersonians demonstrated that the direction of national policy could be effectively altered through the working of the party system.
As the party in power, the Republican had the patronage of the federal government at their disposal. Jefferson moved cautiously in working out his patronage policy; he did not make the clean sweep of all the Federalist officeholders that some of his compatriots wanted. He did initiate a policy designed to promote the continuity of the party in power. In terms of appointments, his policy was clear cut. Only Republicans would be appointed to office until Republicans held their proportionate share of public offices. While protecting the public interest, he rewarded the party faithful and succeeded in maintaining the confidence of his party.

During Jefferson's presidency, Republicans institutionalized the most important mechanism of national party machinery — the congressional nominating caucus. Although never without critics, the caucus, which had assembled secretly in 1800, was brought into the open and became the accepted, successful mode of nominating presidential and vice presidential candidates. Until 1824 the nominees of the Republican congressional nominating caucus were victorious candidates at the polls.

The legislative caucus as a means of making nominations was found on the state level as well as on the national level. On the national level, the Republican nominating caucus was never expanded to
involve in its decision party leaders who were not members of Congress; and it is not surprising that as state nominating conventions sprang up, a movement to abolish the national caucus gained momentum. But, above all, the congressional nominating caucus would fall victim to intra-party divisions. By 1824, Republican factionalism would so prevail that the caucus would be unworkable.

By Jefferson's second term in office, Republican disunity had become a major party problem. Once the Republicans were firmly in power, the solidarity that Federalist strength had promoted was weakened. When Jefferson announced his intention to retire from office at the end of his second term, the Republican party faced the greatest test of its national strength since its ascension to power.

While Madison defeated Federalist Charles Cotesworth Pinckney in the election of 1808, there was a substantial Federalist revival. From the outset of his presidency, Madison was faced with both a Federalist resurgence and disunity within his own party. Plagued by Republican factionalism in Congress throughout his two terms, he was never able to exert the executive leadership over the national legislature that Jefferson had exercised. As the divided nation drifted to war with Great Britain, a divided Republican party lost support. In the presidential election of
1812, Madison himself was challenged in his bid for reelection, not by a Federalist but by a member of his own party.46

Despite their losses, Republican remained the dominant party, persevered in the frustrating war, and survived to take credit for the peace with Great Britain. The Federalists, on the other hand, tainted by the opposition to the war, found little support in the post-war nation. While Federalists survived within a few states, the Federalist party as a national instrument did not exist after 1816.47

The end of the War of 1812 thus brought a major change in the political situation in the United States. Until then, the Federalist party had remained a force to be reckoned with by the Republicans. After 1816 this condition no longer existed on the national level, and a period of one-party government began. President Monroe, who presided over this era, envisaged the elimination of all political parties; and many of his contemporaries, still unable to see the benefits of party competition, shared this vision.

The changed state of party competition after the end of the War of 1812 also altered in practice, if not in theory, the character of the congressional nominating caucus. Attitudes toward it shifted as the realities of practical politics shifted. The caucus was designed to concentrate party support behind a
single candidate, which in a competitive two-party system was a practical necessity. The caucus provided an effective means of performing this task; with the disappearance of the Federalists as a national party after 1816 and the absence of a contest in the electoral college, the caucus, which initially had been only the nominating agent, came to be in effect the electing power.

The congressional nominating caucus was under more than verbal assault, which led to new methods of putting candidates before the voters. Some faithful Republicans attempted to cling to the caucus nominating procedure to resurrect the party, but their support was crumbling under the changing political conditions of the 1820's. The necessity of politics had brought the caucus into existence, and would be abandoned by the same necessity. While the political currents that buffeted the caucus drew attention to this key party mechanism of the first party system, its collapse was evidence, not cause, that the Republican organization that had carried Jefferson into the presidency in 1801 no longer survived.

In the election of 1824, when the House chose Adams over Jackson, a new era of partisan politics was ignited. Although Adams, who had left the Federalist party to join the Republicans while Jefferson was president and had served for eight years as Monroe's
Secretary of State, was in name a Republican, the Jeffersonian era had in fact come to an end; the Republican party as a viable organization no longer existed.

While out of power, the Republicans never accepted the Federalists as a legitimate ruling party; one in office, the Republicans never accepted the Federalists as a legitimate opposition party. Even Jefferson, who at times made statements that suggested that he saw value in a party system, never acted upon the premise as president. Instead, he sought initially to reconcile the present factions of government. When the Republicans entered the one-party period after 1816, President Monroe sought the elimination of all political parties, but he never reached the point of ignoring previous Federalist partisanship. Although the idea of a two-party system was not yet accepted when the Republican era ended, the experience of the nation under the first party system of the Federalists and the Republicans led in that direction. In demonstrating both the techniques of successful party mobilization to obtain power and the responsible management of party government, the Jeffersonian Republicans laid the foundations for workable party government in the United States.
ENDNOTES


6 Wilfred Binkley, p. 69.


8 Arthur Schlesinger, p. 343.

9 Leon D. Epstein, p. 200.

10 Leon D. Epstein, p. 220.


13 Francis Curtis, p. 225.


16 John F. Hoadley, p. 201.


20 William S. Myers, p. 98.
23 Wilfred Binkley, p. 83.
24 Francis Curtis, p. 191.
25 Andrew W. Crandall, p. 106.
26 Arthur Schlesinger, p. 205.
27 Robert L. Kelley, p. 87.
28 Robert L. Kelley, p. 75.
29 Wilfred Binkley, p. 85.
30 William S. Myers, p. 154.
31 Arthur Schlesinger, p. 308.
33 John F. Hoadley, p. 94.
34 William S. Myers, p. 164.
35 Edgar E. Robinson, p. 43.
37 Arthur Schlesinger, p. 360.
38 Arthur Schlesinger, p. 372.
39 Leon D. Epstein, p. 133.
40 Wilfred Binkley, p. 87.
41 John F. Hoadley, p. 103.
43Arthur Schlesinger, p. 244.


45Andrew Crandall, p. 123.

46Robert L. Kelley, p. 62.


48Arthur Schlesinger, p. 309.
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