

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Thomas Jefferson and
the Origins of
American Political Parties



Jefferson Library
Thomas Jefferson Foundation

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T H O M A S J E F F E R S O N A N D T H E O R I G I N S O F A M E R I C A N P O L I T I C A L P A R T I E S

America's founders initially opposed the formation of political parties that we now regard as vital for the functioning of a free government. They regarded parties as a potential menace to democratic self-government. These "factions," the founders feared, might become the tools of special interests. Even so, party politics emerged in President Washington's administration when he appointed Cabinet members with profoundly different visions of the future United States and its government. Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton advocated a strong central government while Secretary of State Jefferson envisioned a decentralized government better suited to serve a society of yeomen farmers.

Jefferson feared that Hamilton's federalism would allow the return of a monarchy and an economy dominated by British merchants. Hamilton's opponents took the name "Democratic-Republicans" or "Republicans" because they saw themselves as defenders of the American Republic; Hamilton's allies were called "Federalists" for their support of a strong federal government. Newspapers and pamphlets, often partisan, carried the debate to the people. Before long, party politics took shape. Foreign policy created an irreparable breach after the outbreak of war between Britain and France in 1793. The Federalists, particularly Hamilton, were pro-British while Jefferson was pro-French. Jefferson, narrowly defeated by Federalist John Adams in the presidential election of 1796, emerged as the leader of the opposition. A critical turning point occurred with the hard-fought, close election of 1800, which shifted power from Federalist Adams to Republican Jefferson, who later wrote, "the Revolution of 1800 was as real a revolution in the principles of our government as that of 1776 was in its form." Conflict between the parties continued as the Federalists opposed Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase.

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1. Porcupine's Political Censor for Jan. 1797. William Cobbett. Philadelphia: W. Cobbett, 1797. 51 pages.

William Cobbett as "Peter Porcupine" was the most widely read political pamphleteer in the early American republic. An avid and often vituperative supporter of the Federalists, in this issue he celebrates John Adams' victory in the 1796 Presidential election. Jefferson, the runner-up, became Vice President. After a seventeen-year interval in his native England, Cobbett switched political sides and wrote an adulatory biography of President Andrew Jackson.

2. Thomas Jefferson. Engraved by Benjamin Tanner (1775-1848), after the life portrait by Rembrandt Peale (1800). Thomas Jefferson Foundation.

This image by Benjamin Tanner is derived from the life portrait taken by Rembrandt Peale in 1800 while Jefferson was Vice President. It was likely made from an engraving of the portrait produced by David Edwin in June 1800. Tanner's version was made for the Philadelphia publisher Matthew Carey who printed it extensively in pamphlets and broadsides of Jefferson's inaugural address in 1801 as well as an edition of Notes on the State of Virginia (1803).

3. Notes on the State of Virginia. Thomas Jefferson. Philadelphia: R.T. Rawle, June 1801. 494 pages.

First published in 1785 in Paris and in 1788 in Philadelphia, Jefferson's only published book was printed in many editions. This one, issued months after Jefferson's March inauguration as president, included his inaugural address as an appendix. This speech clearly presents Jefferson's democratic values, emphasizing his commitment to the rule of the majority and the rights of the minority. After the hard-won election decided by the House of Representatives, Jefferson reached out to his

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supporters and opponents alike with his famously conciliatory declaration, “We are all republicans; we are all federalists.”

4. *The Prospect Before Us*. James Callender. Richmond: Printed by author, and sold by M. Jones, 1800. 184 pages.

James Thomson Callender, a political journalist, strongly supported Jefferson and opposed Federalist John Adams in 1800. The book’s preface presents Callender’s intention “to exhibit the multiplied corruptions of the Federal Government, and more especially the misconduct of the President, Mr. Adams.” Later, Callender turned against Jefferson, writing in a Richmond newspaper that Jefferson had for many years, “kept, as his concubine, one of his own slaves.” “Her name is Sally.” Callender’s article spread the story widely. It was taken up by Jefferson’s Federalist opponents and was published in many newspapers during the remainder of Jefferson’s presidency.

5. *The Statutes at Large, Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the year 1619*. William Waller Hening. Richmond: Printed for the Editor, by George Cochran, 1822. 663 pages.

During his service as governor of Virginia (1779-1781), Jefferson secured the repeal of “all acts providing salaries for ministers.” This act was followed in 1786 by passage of his broader Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, which protected freedom of conscience from government interference and paved the way for the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. Jefferson’s commitment to religious freedom also inspired the enmity of many clergy, especially in New England.

6. *Debates in the House of Representatives, on the Bills for Carrying into Effect the Louisiana Treaty*. United States Congress. Philadelphia: Printed by

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Thomas and George Palmer, for J. Conrad & Co.,
1804. 171 pages.

History has shown that one of the greatest achievements of Jefferson's presidency was the Louisiana Purchase but it was passionately debated at the time. On October 17, 1803, President Jefferson asked Congress to approve a thirteen million dollar increase in the public debt, in addition to two million dollars previously authorized to secure the port of New Orleans. This pamphlet contains the text of the debate, in which members of Congress recognized the importance of the port as "an independent outlet for the produce of the western states," understanding that "the fertility of the country, its climate, and extent, promise in due season, important aids to our treasury, an ample provision for our posterity, and a wide spread for the blessings of freedom and equal laws."

7. The National Intelligencer and Washington Advertiser. November 21, 1801.

Samuel Harrison Smith, editor of the National Intelligencer, supplied a detailed account of the sometimes heated "Debate on the Louisiana Treaty." One congressman asked his fellows to pursue the discussion with "coolness and temper," so that this "important subject should be decided on argument, and argument alone." Part of the debate centered on the constitutionality of the purchase and the rights of the citizens of the territory.

8. Thos Jefferson The Pride of America, March 4, 1801. Copy of engraving by Thomas Gimbrede (1781-1832). New York. Thomas Jefferson Foundation. Gimbrede, who also made engravings of John Quincy Adams, depicted Jefferson in a cloud with Liberty wearing a helmet and carrying a scepter. They ride above a winged angel blowing a trumpet.

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9. An Inquiry in the Present State of the Foreign Relations of the Union, as affected by the Late Measure of Administration. Philadelphia; New York; Boston; Published by Samuel F. Bradford, et al., 1806. 183 pages.

Federalists, who believed that American law did not provide for the purchase of foreign territory, objected to the Louisiana Purchase in principle as well as for the price paid. Jefferson and his fellow Republicans were ridiculed for celebrating the Purchase “as a democratic jubilee” for the acquisition of “this Eden...where nature seemed to have gone out of her ordinary course.” The author of this passage also criticizes Jefferson for denouncing the opposition “as traitors to the country.”

10. Jefferson’s March. 1801.

Patriotic songs, often for violin and flute, were written to celebrate Jefferson’s election as President. Jefferson’s March was performed repeatedly in Philadelphia on March 4, 1801, the day of Jefferson’s inauguration in the nation’s new capitol in Washington. The song gained popularity, and numerous editions were published.

Another popular tune was Jefferson and Liberty: A Patriotic Song, for the Glorious Fourth of March, 1801. All fourteen stanzas of Jefferson and Liberty were first published in William Duane’s Republican newspaper, the Aurora. Election the People’s Right and The Acquisition of Louisiana were also published and sung in Philadelphia.

11. The People’s Friend. Rembrandt Peale and John Isaac Hawkins. 1801. Loan courtesy of the Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

A seemingly unlikely pair of artist and inventor collaborated

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to write *The People's Friend*—Rembrandt Peale, an artist, and John Isaac Hawkins, an inventor. Peale was the son of Charles Willson Peale, the artist, naturalist, and friend of Jefferson; Hawkins was the maker of a copying machine (1805) that Jefferson later considered the “finest invention of the present age.” A chorus in Philadelphia’s German Reformed Church first performed the song.

12. Violin string. Donated by a descendant of Thomas Jefferson to the Thomas Jefferson Foundation.

13. Circular of the “Democratic Society of Philadelphia.” July 4, 1793.

The Democratic Society of Philadelphia was the first organization in America to call itself “Democratic,” i.e., supporters of republican ideals. The Society sent this circular proposing the formation of pro-democratic organizations to county and state leaders throughout the country. By the time of Jefferson’s election in 1800/1801, forty-one such groups opposing the Federalists had existed in thirteen of fifteen states and of them sixteen used “Democratic” in their names. Although most of these groups were short-lived, they helped to overturn the stereotypical connotation linking “democracy” to mob rule.

14. *The Connecticut Courant*. Hartford. September 8, 1800.

Some members of the New England clergy assailed candidate Jefferson as a dangerous “infidel.” “It is with pain I oppose him...I admire his talents, and feel grateful for the services which he has been instrumental in sending to his country,...my objection to his being promoted to the Presidency is founded only upon his disbelief of the Holy Scriptures; or in other words, his rejection of the Christian Religion and open profession of Deism.”

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15. The Connecticut Courant. Hartford. August 17, 1803.

Shortly after the Louisiana Purchase, President Jefferson was condemned for the “wasteful” expenditure. The writer of this article notes “...the United States are in no want of land, but possess already an overplus...the purchase of Louisiana will be of infinite prejudice to the agriculture, manufacturers and commerce of the eastern and middle states.”

16. Oration in Honor of the Election of President Jefferson and the Peaceable Acquisition of Louisiana. May 11, 1804. Hartford: Sidney’s Press, 1804.

Louisiana Purchase Exposition Program. Front and back covers. 1904.

Abraham Bishop, a prominent New England supporter of Jefferson, attempted to win popular support for the Louisiana Purchase. He wrote, “to federalists this territory...now seems a barren waste, where no verdure quickens; but to us it appears fruitful, abounding in broad rivers and streams, producing whatever is necessary to our commerce with foreign nations...” One hundred years after the Purchase, the debate was forgotten and the event was commemorated with a great exposition. The official program featured portraits of Jefferson and Napoleon.

17. The Presidents of the United States. New York: T. & E. H. Ensign, 1845.

The presidents from Washington through Polk are illustrated on this large broadside that also shows the seals of twenty-six states; Justice and Liberty are shown in the bottom corners. The broadside was published at the time of Polk’s inauguration in 1845. Five of the eight Presidents who followed Jefferson were Jeffersonian “Democratic-Republicans” or “Democrats”: Madison, Monroe, Jackson, Van Buren, and Polk.

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Dr. Douglas C. Kelley, a political scientist and adult educator retired from the University of Michigan, conceived the idea for this exhibition. Unless otherwise noted, Dr. Kelley generously loaned these objects from his "Democratic Archive" in Ann Arbor, and is now donating twelve of them to the Thomas Jefferson Foundation.