

Jeffersonian Democracy

One American's Story

During the election of 1800, supporters of President John Adams and challenger **Thomas Jefferson** fought for their candidates with nasty personal attacks. For instance, journalist James Callender published pamphlets that warned voters not to re-elect Adams.

PRIMARY SOURCE

“In the fall of 1796 . . . the country fell into a more dangerous juncture than almost any the old confederation ever endured. The tardiness and timidity of Mr. Washington were succeeded by the rancour [bitterness] and insolence [arrogance] of Mr. Adams. . . . Think what you have been, what you are, and what, under [Adams], you are likely to become.”

—James Callender, quoted in *American Aurora*

Adams's defenders were just as vicious. Yet, in spite of the campaign's nastiness, the election ended with a peaceful transfer of power from one party to another.

A New Party Comes to Power

▼ **KEY QUESTION** How was the presidential election of 1800 resolved?

The 1800 election was a contest between two parties with different ideas about the role of government.

Election of 1800 The two parties contesting the election of 1800 were the **Federalists**, led by President John Adams, and the **Democratic-Republicans**, represented by Thomas Jefferson. Each party believed that the other was a threat to the Constitution and the American republic.

The Democratic-Republicans thought they were saving the nation from monarchy and oppression. They argued that the Alien and Sedition Acts passed by the Federalist congress in 1798 violated the Bill of Rights.



This campaign banner declared: “T. Jefferson President of the United States of America—John Adams no more.”