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“To Organize the Sovereign People”: Political Mobilization in Pennsylvania, 1783-1808

By

David W. Hought

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2015

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for thy  
Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the  
Dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Andrew W. Robertson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of Examining Committee

Helena Rosenblatt

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Officer

David Waldstreicher

Jonathan Sassi

Martin Burke

Andrew Shankman

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## Abstract

“To organize the sovereign people”: Political Mobilization in Pennsylvania, 1783-1808

By

David W. Houpt

Adviser: Andrew W. Robertson

Political mobilization is the connective tissue between the people and their government. Whether through petitions, voting, parades or even riots, it is the tool political actors use to engage in the deliberative process. Scholars have explored a variety of facets of the political culture of the early American republic and have noted the importance of certain forms of political mobilization such as parades and fêtes. These studies have not, however, fully explained how elections emerged as the primary means for citizens to express their will and the boundaries of political expression changed accordingly. This dissertation explains the evolution of Americans’ engagement with their government by charting the trajectory of different forms of political mobilization in early national Pennsylvania. By focusing on the ways in which Americans organized and participated in the political process, this project presents a new way of thinking about democracy in the early republic and shows that, while citizens lost the ability to engage directly in the deliberative process, the rise of political parties and their emphasis on elections offered the public an effective means of securing change.

## Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help of numerous people who have supported, guided and directed me through the twists and turns of life as a graduate student. I have been fortunate to work with talented scholars who have offered keen insights at critical phases. In particular, I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee, Andrew W. Robertson, David Waldstreicher, Martin Burke, Jonathan Sassi and Andrew Shankman, for taking the time to read the manuscript and giving me constructive and incredibly helpful suggestions for the next phase of this process. I also want to thank the members of the CUNY Early American Republic Seminar (EARS) for helping to foster a creative and collegial environment and for making this process much more enjoyable. Most of all, I want to thank my family for sticking by me, supporting me (in every sense of the word) and believing in me.

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# Introduction

In the decades following the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, Americans struggled to define the meaning of the Revolution and to balance establishing a new nation with a desire to remain faithful to the ideals of liberty and equality that had inspired their rebellion. Historians have analyzed different facets of this battle over the extent and legacy of the Revolution and have provided important insights into how Americans reached a Revolutionary settlement. The existing scholarship has not, however, sufficiently explained how elections emerged as the primary means for citizens to express their will and how the boundaries of political expression changed accordingly. This presents a new way of understanding the evolution of Americans' engagement with their government in the early republic through analysis of different forms of political mobilization in early national Pennsylvania.

Political mobilization is the connective tissue between the people and their government. Whether in the form of a vote, a petition, a rally, or even a riot, it is the tool actors use to engage in the deliberative process.<sup>1</sup> By focusing on the ways in which Americans organized and participated in the political process in first twenty-five years following the end of the Revolutionary War, this analysis presents a new way of thinking about democracy in the early republic and shows that the early republic is not a simple story of declension. While citizens in the decades following the Revolution did, indeed, lose the ability to engage directly in the deliberative process, the rise of political parties and their emphasis on elections offered the

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<sup>1</sup> I define the deliberative process as the back-and-forth process of creating and implementing laws and policy that occurs between citizens and/or members of the government. For a good overview of the literature on the deliberative process, see chapter 1 of Sandra M. Gustafson, *Imagining Deliberative Democracy in the Early American Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). See, also, James Bohman and William Rehg, eds. *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997).

public an effective means of securing change when other approaches failed. Thus, it demonstrates that the emergence of parties did translate into the “rise of American democracy,” albeit a different kind of democracy than had flourished in the 1770s and 1780s.

At its core, the American Revolution was a movement to provide people with a greater voice in their government. Frustrated by the lack of representation in Parliament and upset with increases in taxation, American colonists rebelled against the British monarchy and established a new government based on the principles of liberty and equality. Initially, Americans were flush with idealism and harbored a lingering fear of centralized power, a combination that led them to embrace a democratic form of government that empowered citizens to engage directly in the deliberative process through town meetings, instructions to representatives, and frequent elections. But within a matter of years, some Americans, particularly the wealthy, concluded that the Revolution had gravitated too far toward democracy, and these individuals pushed for reforms that would strengthen the national government and insulate it from the whims of public opinion. Nationalists and supporters of the new central government, who called themselves Federalists, concluded that the people held too much power. The nation, they believed, needed a select group of wealthy and educated men at the helm. While Federalists did not endorse a return to a monarchy or an aristocracy, they did seek to limit the participation of average citizens in the deliberative process and favored a deferential culture. These same men, however, understood the importance of public opinion and utilized different forms of popular politics to build support for their cause. Their effort eventually led to the adoption of a new federal constitution in 1788 and a state constitution in 1790 that placed new boundaries on the deliberative process.

In the first few years following the ratification of the Constitution, Federalists succeeded in winning the support of most voters and controlled all three branches of government, but

controversial policies such as Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton's Fiscal Plan and the establishment of a "Republican Court" helped foster a growing opposition movement. By the mid-1790s, an opposition party, the Republicans, started to coalesce. Members of this fledgling party supported an active citizenry and argued that the people must remain involved in the deliberative process to prevent corruption. Republicans focused initially on politics out of doors and relied on symbolism from the French and American Revolutions to demonstrate popular support and rally supporters. Additionally, they used town meetings to engage citizens in the deliberative process. A series of popular uprisings that culminated in the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794, along with the lack of influence over important policy decisions, however, forced Republicans to recognize that Federalists had succeeded in building a government insulated from these forms of political mobilization. In order to remain relative, they needed to reconsider their strategy.

Following the ratification of the Jay Treaty in 1796, which they had done everything in their power to prevent, Republicans began to alter their approach toward political mobilization and to focus more on elections and building a statewide network of committees that could oversee and coordinate party activities. Federalists, meanwhile, seized on the threat of war with France to discredit their political rivals. They passed a series of controversial laws that empowered the president to deport any immigrant deemed a threat, criminalized criticism of the federal government, and dramatically increased the nation's armed forces. Republicans viewed these laws as unconstitutional and, in addition to their electioneering efforts, experimented with the concept of popular nullification. The outbreak of Fries's Rebellion in 1798 and 1799 and fear of being tarred with fomenting a rebellion, however, forced Republicans to commit to working through the constitutional system to secure change. The new strategy reflected a retreat from

Republicans' earlier commitment to engaging the public in the deliberative process, but the electoral victories of Thomas McKean in 1799 and Thomas Jefferson 1800 appeared to justify the concessions.

Republicans' success at the polls, however, exposed underlying disagreements that had been masked behind a shared opposition to the Federalists. Pennsylvania Republicans had agreed on the best forms of political mobilization to challenge the Federalists and induce change, but once in power, members of the party disagreed over what reforms to pursue. Moderates claimed that the election of new men had been the party's main goal and that the public could relax and defer to their elected officials now that Republicans were in office. With the threat of monarchy and aristocracy vanquished, these men believed, the time had come to move beyond the bitter partisanship of the 1790s. In contrast to this position, other members of the original Republican coalition argued that the elections had only been one step toward the goal of creating a more democratic society. They called for significant reforms that would make the government more responsible to the will of the people and sought a greater voice in the deliberative process for the public. By 1803 the groups split into warring factions. Those who believed the ingredients necessary for a healthy and successful republic were in place became known as Quids, while those who pushed for further reforms adopted the name Democrats. Between 1803 and 1808, the two sides battled for control and legitimacy, but ultimately neither side could claim victory, and they reconciled in 1808. The reunification established that political parties would serve as an intermediary body between the public and their government and that elections would serve as the primary vehicle for the expression of the public will.

As Douglas Bradburn has shown, states established the definition and boundaries of citizenship in the early republic.<sup>2</sup> To understand the evolution of political mobilization and the relationship between the public and the deliberative process it is necessary to begin at the state level. Pennsylvania was at the forefront of early national political culture, and changes in how citizens of the Keystone State approached political mobilization foreshadowed developments in other parts of the nation. Historians have described the state in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as an economic and social microcosm of the infant United States.<sup>3</sup> In that period, Pennsylvania had developed rural and urban regions and was home to diverse ethnic groups and religious sects. Additionally, Philadelphia served as the seat of the federal government between 1790 and 1800, and local and national politics were deeply intertwined. In conjunction with the state's unique history of partisanship, the presence of the federal government in Pennsylvania contributed to the development of robust political parties earlier than in other parts of the nation. Finally, the state witnessed two major rural uprisings during the 1790s that forced Pennsylvanians to define the limits of acceptable political action and to clearly articulate the differences between legitimate popular politics and illegitimate popular violence.

Scholars who have explored the political debates during this time period tend to reach one of two conclusions: either that the defeat of the Federalists and rise of Jefferson signified a triumph of democracy over the forces of monarchy and aristocracy or that the federal Constitution and emergence of political parties was a retreat from a genuinely democratic

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<sup>2</sup> Douglass Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution: Politics and the Creation of the American Union, 1774-1804* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Harry M. Tinkcom, *The Republicans and Federalists of Pennsylvania, 1790-1801: A Study in National Stimulus and Local Response* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1950).

moment. A comparison between how historians Sean Wilentz and Seth Cotlar approach the story of democracy in the early republic illustrates this divide.

In *The Rise of American Democracy*, Wilentz portrays the early republic as a slow, but linear, march towards greater democracy and freedom. He contends that the Democratic Party (his term for those who opposed the Federalists), along with farmers and urban workers, paved the way for the spread of democracy in America. Despite the public's deeply engrained monarchical and hierarchical tendencies, the Democrats used grassroots organization and advancements in electioneering to establish "the political equality of the mass of American citizens" and dislodge the Federalists from power.<sup>4</sup> Overall, Wilentz sees the rise of political parties as a positive development that helped engage more Americans in the political process.

By contrast, in *Tom Paine's America* Cotlar portrays the emergence of the Jeffersonian coalition as a clear defeat for the forces of democracy. Cotlar's study focuses on the dynamic between Jeffersonian democrats and a network of radical democrats who were part of a transatlantic network of activists who fought for greater equality. These democrats wanted to make government more accountable to the people; they styled themselves citizens of the world and sought to eliminate national borders. They called for an end to slavery and a more equal distribution of wealth. According to Cotlar, the Jeffersonian Republicans defined themselves as much through their rejection of these democrats as they did through their repudiation of the Federalists. By dismissing the radical democrats as too extreme, the Republicans managed to appear more moderate. They compromised on issues including anti-slavery and economic inequality in order to build a broader coalition. These moves, Cotlar argues, facilitated the

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<sup>4</sup> Sean Wilentz, *The Rise in American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 138.

emergence of the Republican Party and destroyed the opportunity to create a truly democratic society.<sup>5</sup> Thus while Wilentz sees the early republic as a story of democratization, Cotlar sees it as an era marked by declension.

Both the democratization and the declension models contain important insight into the nature of politics in the early republic. Using political mobilization as an analytical framework, however, provides a way to move beyond this dichotomy and achieve a more nuanced understanding of this era. This dissertation demonstrates that both of the earlier models are, in some ways, correct. It agrees with historians, including Barbara Clark Smith who contend that the opportunities for ordinary Americans to engage directly in the deliberative process diminished following the end of the Revolutionary War.<sup>6</sup> Contrary to Cotlar's conclusions, however, this analysis shows that political parties enabled citizens to effect change where other methods had failed and gave them the opportunity to exercise greater control over the deliberative process.

Scholars have explored different forms of political mobilization, but have tended to focus on only one method. As a result, they have missed important connections and broader developments. David Waldstreicher and Simon Newman for example, have explored celebratory politics. In his book *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, Waldstreicher analyzes the relationship between rituals of celebration and an emerging sense of nationalism in the early republic. He argues that parades, festivals, and speeches, along with the printed accounts of these events, “made it possible for large numbers of people—men and women—to practice nationalism and

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<sup>5</sup> Seth Cotlar, *Tom Paine's America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Barbara Clark Smith, *The Freedoms We Lost: Consent and Resistance in Revolutionary America* (New York: New Press, 2010).

local politics simultaneously.” Waldstreicher also demonstrates that Federalists and Republicans adopted dueling styles of celebrations. In what Waldstreicher describes as “antiparty partisanship” both sides claimed to speak for the nation and rejected their opponents as illegitimate. Notably he finds that following the election of 1800, “Republicans pioneered election-oriented festivals that helped legitimate key innovations in local political organizing.” This process helped Republicans win elections but came at the expense of “narrowing the political.”<sup>7</sup>

Simon Newman’s *Parades and the Politics of the Street* similarly focuses on politics out of doors and argues that festivals, parades, and celebrations “constituted a vital part of the political lives of ordinary Americans in the era of the first political party system.” These activities provided ordinary Americans with the opportunity to engage in the political process. Newman, like Waldstreicher, emphasizes that culture and print culture “went hand-in-hand” and that printed accounts of these gatherings dramatically enlarged their audiences. More so than Waldstreicher, however, Newman emphasizes that the first political parties and celebratory politics were intertwined. While the Democratic-Republicans proved more comfortable with popular politics, he finds, “they were constantly seeking to limit or prohibit the participation . . . of women and Black Americans.” Celebratory politics became at once inclusive and exclusionary. By appropriating the radical symbolism and rhetoric of the Revolution, Democratic-Republicans managed to legitimize this process and ultimately seize control of the public sphere.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 13

<sup>8</sup> Simon P. Newman, *Parades and Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 4, 3, 190.



These works have uncovered a rich part of the political culture of the early republic. By factoring the study of celebratory politics into the study of the rise of democracy in this country, Newman and Waldstreicher have enhanced our understanding of the first political parties and opened the door to study of other styles of political mobilization. As a result of their work, it is now possible to expand the focus to include larger developments and relationships between different forms of mobilization beyond parades, songs and festivals. Analysis of the full fabric of political mobilization in the early republic shows that, while the rise of the Republican Party coincided with a shrinking role in the deliberative process, partisan organization offered a significant gain.

Other historians have contributed to the understanding of political mobilization in this time period but, again, their studies focus on specific forms of mobilization rather than on the interplay between differing approaches. In *Taming Democracy* Terry Bouton looks at the various forms of popular uprisings and crowd action Pennsylvanians used in the decades following the American Revolution. More so than either Waldstreicher or Newman, Bouton finds that “most ordinary white men were disappointed by the version of democracy that emerged from the Revolution.” Bouton claims that the Revolution “expanded the definition of democracy” and empowered ordinary Americans to take part in the deliberative process. Pennsylvanians became convinced that for the republic to survive, a greater distribution of wealth was needed. During the 1780s and 1790s, however, the elites in Pennsylvania waged a “counterrevolution.” Common Pennsylvanians fought back. When formal political channels failed, these men turned to “civil disobedience, extralegal protest, and ultimately collective violence.” The gentry eventually crushed the opposition and instituted a new version of democracy that ignored glaring inequalities of wealth and power. Bouton’s analysis elucidates the tactics and strategies ordinary

Pennsylvanians used to protect their vision of democracy. He demonstrates that, in the years immediately following the Declaration of Independence, many Pennsylvanians favored an expansive version of democracy that was not realized. There is no doubt that the Revolution did not go as far as some men had hoped, but political parties enabled small farmers and rural residents to effect change where popular uprisings had failed.<sup>9</sup>

Todd Estes's *The Jay Treaty Debate, Public Opinion, and the Evolution of Early American Political Culture* explores the different ways Federalists and Republicans mobilized their supporters during the battle over the Jay Treaty. Estes shows that "while Federalists were often ideologically elitist, they were also operationally democratic." In fact, Estes finds that Federalists were skilled at using town meetings and petitions as a way to influence public opinion. Like other scholars of the political culture of the early republic, Estes identifies the Jay Treaty debates as a key turning point the nation's political culture. Both Republicans and Federalists claimed to have public opinion on their side and engaged in different forms of popular politics including town meetings, print propaganda, and petitioning to rally support and demonstrate that they spoke for the majority. Estes concludes that while the Federalists won the battle, the Jay Treaty debates helped undermine the hierarchical and deferential society Federalists favored and, therefore, eventually contributed to their demise. This dissertation agrees with many of Estes's findings, particularly that the Federalists were skilled political organizers who engaged in popular politics despite their elitist outlook. Estes, however, argues that political parties formed from the top-down, and he does not take into account the existence of state parties that formed at the same time as the national organizations. Additionally, while

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<sup>9</sup> Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: "The People," the Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4, 6.

Estes notes that the debates surrounding the Jay Treaty contributed to the democratization of the nation's politics, the most immediate consequence of the debates is that Republicans began to focus more on elections and party-building. Their inability to stop ratification clearly demonstrated that, in order to exert influence over the government, Republicans would need to start winning elections.<sup>10</sup>

In *“Let a Common Interest Bind us Together”*: *Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775-1840* Albrecht Koschnik investigates the role of voluntary societies in early national Philadelphia. During the 1770s and 1780s, most voluntary societies strove to remain apolitical and remain above any particular political disputes. The Democratic and Republican Societies broke this model and engaged directly in political debates. Moreover, unlike previous organizations, the Democratic and Republican Societies claimed to speak for the people writ large, and not just their members. Federalists viewed the societies as a threat and tarred them as “self-created” and subversive. Following the decline of the Democratic Societies, Republicans turned to older forms of association that made no attempt to speak for the people writ large. Federalists, meanwhile, relied on the volunteer militia. Republicans initially rejected the partisan militia as dangerous but eventually organized their own companies. In the final chapters of his book, Koschnik looks at Federalists’ retreat into civic and cultural organizations following their defeats at the polls. “To organize the sovereign people” builds on Koschnik’s findings and places the shifting views and uses of associations within the broader context of evolving forms of political mobilization and changing attitudes toward the role of citizens in the deliberative process. Republicans’ decision to organize a volunteer militia was, for example, part

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<sup>10</sup>Todd Estes, *The Jay Treaty Debate, Public Opinion and the Evolution of Early American Political Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 9.

of their shift toward party-building and electioneering. It also helped them reaffirm their patriotism and legitimize their oppositional politics in general.<sup>11</sup>

Print culture played an important part in the shifting styles of political mobilization in the early republic and is important to understanding how the public engaged in the deliberative process. In *“The Tyranny of Printers”* historian Jeffrey Pasley demonstrates that newspapers and newspaper editors played a critical role in the formation of parties. “[T]he newspaper press,” he argues, “was the political system’s central institution, not simply a forum or atmosphere in which politics took place. Instead, newspapers and their editors were purposeful actors in the political process, linking parties, voters and the government together, and pursuing specific political goals.” Newspaper editors often doubled as political organizers and used their papers to rally support and establish networks of like-minded men. Pasley contends that partisan editors became the nation’s first group of professional politicians. According to Pasley, Pennsylvania stood at the forefront of the partisan print network. The Philadelphia editors John Fenno, Benjamin Franklin Bache, William Duane and William Cobbett wielded enormous influence. Indeed, fear of the power of the Republican press led Federalists to adopt the Sedition Act in an attempt to stifle the chorus of criticism. As Pasley shows, however, the Sedition Act backfired and led to a dramatic increase in the number of Republican newspapers nationwide. This dissertation agrees with Pasley’s findings and provides further detail on the role of partisan editors and on the relationship between political mobilization and print culture.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Albrecht Koschnik, *“Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together”*: Association in Philadelphia, 1775-1840 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007)

<sup>12</sup> Jeff Pasley, *“The Tyranny of Printers: Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic”* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 3.

The rhetoric politicians and journalists use is a form of political mobilization itself. As Andrew Robertson argues in *The Language of Democracy*, “Rhetoric, acting as a mobilizing instrument, played an indispensable role in the development of participatory political culture.” Robertson finds that political rhetoric changed dramatically in the 1790s. With the electorate growing and changing, political journalists and politicians needed to reach and influence a wider audience. In the last decades of the eighteenth century, rhetorical styles shifted from a traditional style that relied on reason and logic to a more emotional form of rhetoric. Robertson characterizes the classic style as “demonstrative” or “laudatory” and the new style as “hortatory.” Hortatory rhetoric was more accessible to the public, and Robertson argues that it helped pave the way to further democratization of politics.<sup>13</sup>

In *Scandal and Civility*, Marcus Daniel reaches similar conclusions. Daniel argues that the editors of the 1790s “broke sharply with the ideals of republican print culture” that called for editors to keep their personality and personal beliefs out of the papers. Traditional republican wisdom held that “editors were to be neither heard nor seen” and that their papers should be impartial vehicles for information. The Revolution challenged and weakened this ideal, but the idea of unbiased editor did not fully collapse until the 1790s. Daniel places Philadelphia editors at the center of this transition. For example, editor William Cobbett, the acerbic English émigré and rabid Federalist, disregarded the theory of impartiality and filled his pages with his own views. As part of the breakdown of the republican ideal, the boundaries between private and public blurred and Cobbett, like most of his Republican counterparts, reveled in character assassination. The political debates between Federalists and Republicans, however, cannot be

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<sup>13</sup> Andrew W. Robertson, *The Language of Democracy: Political Rhetoric in the United States and Great Britain, 1790-1900* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 7.

reduced to personal rivalries or issues of character alone, and Daniel argues that real policy differences lay at the heart of the partisanship.<sup>14</sup>

This dissertation develops the findings of Robertson and Daniel and shows how the transition to a new style of rhetoric occurred at the same time that partisans shifted away from attempts to engage the public directly in the deliberative process. The goal of hortatory rhetoric and personal attacks is not to inform the reader of facts and enable him to reach their own conclusions; it is to convince the reader of a position and inspire him to support party activities. Pennsylvania Federalists, who believed the public's engagement with the deliberative process should be limited to election day, adopted hortatory rhetoric first, and Republicans only followed after their decision to focus more on elections and electioneering.

Although it does not explicitly cover political mobilization, Andrew Shankman's *Crucible of American Democracy* is a valuable study of the debates over the meaning of democracy in early national Pennsylvania and has informed this dissertation. Shankman argues that in Pennsylvania, Jeffersonian Republicans agreed "that the state and the nation both needed to be democracies." Members of the coalition disagreed, however, "about how it was best structured, what it was supposed to do, and in which ways the fundamental principles of a democratic people intersected with the daily fluctuating needs and desires of temporary majorities of that people." Following Jefferson's victory, these disagreements over the scope and meaning of democracy fractured the Republican coalition. According to Shankman, the "crucible of conflict" between Quids, who believed the ingredients for a healthy democracy existed, and Democrats who, favored reforms to create a more equal society, forced the two sides to better

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<sup>14</sup> Marcus Daniel, *Scandal & Civility: Journalism and the Birth of American Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

articulate and defend their versions of democracy. These debates eventually forged a new concept of democracy that was compatible with capitalism. “To organize the sovereign people” complements Shankman’s findings and shows how the clashing theories of democracy led Quids and Democrats to adopt different styles and methods of political mobilization. This dissertation also shows that, in addition to creating a new version of democracy, the battles between Quids and Democrats and subsequent reunification in 1808 with the election of Simon Snyder as governor sealed the existence of political parties as an intermediary between the public and the deliberative process.<sup>15</sup>

Recent scholarship on the early American republic has expanded in scope and considers how global currents shaped the young nation. Two important themes emerge in these studies: the effect of the French Revolution and the role of immigrants. Historians have long recognized the importance of the French Revolution in America. Political historians writing during the 1960s and 1970s emphasized the disputes over policies including Washington’s Neutrality Proclamation and the Jay Treaty to demonstrate that the French Revolution drove political debates in America. More recent studies have explored how the French Revolution influenced political culture in America.<sup>16</sup> Newman and Waldstreicher, for instance, both show that the Republican coalition drew on symbolism and rhetoric from Revolutionary France. In *The Reign of Terror in America*, Rachel Hope Cleves demonstrates the potency of anti-Jacobinism during the early republic and argues that the violence of the French Revolution infused American

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<sup>15</sup> Andrew Shankman, *Crucible of American Democracy: The Struggle to Fuse Egalitarianism and Capitalism in Jeffersonian Pennsylvania* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>16</sup> The classic study of policy is Jerald A. Combs, *The Jay Treaty: Political Battleground of the Founding Fathers*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970). For the cultural perspective see, for example, Susan Branson *These Fiery Frenchified Dames: Women and Political Culture in Early National Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) and Matthew Rainbow Hale, *The French Revolution and the Forging of American Democracy* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, forthcoming).

rhetoric of the time.<sup>17</sup> While these are important findings in and of themselves, the focus on political mobilization provides another perspective on the effects of the French Revolution in America. For example, this dissertation finds that while Waldstreicher and Newman are correct that Republicans initially linked themselves with the French Revolution, attitudes changed as Republicans shifted their attention to party building and elections. The carnage of the French Revolution served as a powerful reminder for Republicans of the dangers of mobs and unchecked democracy and contributed to the move away from certain forms of popular politics. This shift is reflected in Republican symbolism as well as slogans including “principles not men” faded and party leaders urged their followers to stop donning the tri-colored cockade.

In addition to the French Revolution, the massive influx of immigrants following the end of the Revolutionary War had a profound effect on America. As Michael Durey shows in *Transatlantic Radicals*, the American Revolution led to a “radical diaspora” where hundreds of democrats flooded into America in search of greater liberty. The reality of immigrant life in America, however, rarely lived up to expectations. Many new arrivals felt they needed to fight for their dreams and leaped into the seething caldron of American politics. A large number of these immigrants arrived in Philadelphia and, while some drifted to other parts of the country, many chose to remain in Pennsylvania. A high proportion of them were Irishmen seeking refuge following a failed uprising. Maurice Bric’s *Ireland, Philadelphia, and the Re-Invention of America, 1760-1800* and David Wilson’s *United Irishmen, United States* show that these Irish immigrants wielded enormous political power and influence in the early republic. These works are, however, primarily focused on how immigrants shaped political thought in America and not

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<sup>17</sup> Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).



on strategies of political mobilization. Immigrants including Joseph Priestley, Mathew Carey, and James Thomas Callender were veteran political organizers by the time they arrived in America. They had experience mobilizing crowds and crafting propaganda and they applied this knowledge in their new home. Factoring the activities of these immigrants into the context of larger trends in political mobilization provides a new perspective on how immigrants shaped early national political culture.<sup>18</sup>

Identification of the Federalists and Republicans as political parties is not intended to indicate a belief that formalized parties existed in the 1790s, and this dissertation makes no attempt to prove or disprove the existence of a “first party system.” Instead, “To organize the sovereign people” demonstrates how elections emerged as the primary vehicle for the expression of the public will. My treatment of political parties draws on Jeffrey Pasley’s recent work *The First Presidential Contest*. Like Pasley, I find that “‘Federalist’ and ‘Republican’ were deeply meaningful and highly coherent categories for the politicians and citizens of the 1790s.” These terms, however, did not refer to formalized institutional organizations. Parties in the early republic were, as Pasley writes, “intense communities of political ideology, emotion, and action that took form among politicians, political writers, and their audiences.” These communities formed from the top-down, bottom-up and middle-out, and focusing on political mobilization enables this dissertation to consider both national leaders and grassroots activists as well as to explore the dynamic between the two. It also helps shed light on the activities of the mid-level

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals in the Early American Republic* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997); Maurice Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia, and the Re-Invention of America* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008); David Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

organizers who served as the connection between leaders in Philadelphia and citizens across the state.<sup>19</sup>

In approaching political parties in the early republic, this study bridges the gap between the “new political historians” and the “new new political historians.” The “new political historians,” who emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a reaction to traditional political history approaches that focused on elites, relied heavily on quantitative data and focused on political parties and voting. New political historians who studied Pennsylvania include Ronald Baumann, Richard Miller, and Harry Tinkcom.<sup>20</sup> These scholars have provided a comprehensive overview of the socioeconomic conditions that led to the growth of parties and used election returns to map general information about voting patterns. The “new new political historians,” who gained prominence during the 1990s and 2000s, concentrated on culture and drew from anthropology. Many of the historians who have studied forms of political mobilization including Waldstreicher, Newman, and Koschnik fall into this category.<sup>21</sup> The “new new political historians” have expanded our knowledge of the early republic and provided insight into the era’s political culture. Little hybridization, however, between the methodologies of the new political historians and the new new political historians has occurred. By considering both the cultural and the institutional perspectives and by relying on qualitative and quantitative evidence, this study

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<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The First Presidential Contest: 1796 and the Founding of American Democracy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2013), 7, 6.

<sup>20</sup>Ronald M. Baumann *The Democratic-Republicans of Pennsylvania: The Origins, 1776-1797*, PhD dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1970.; Richard G. Miller, *Philadelphia—The Federalist City: A Study of Urban Politics, 1789-1801* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1976); Tinkcom, *The Republicans and Federalists of Pennsylvania*. See, also, Robert Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1942) and Sanford W. Higginbotham *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch: Pennsylvania Politics 1800-1816* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1952).

<sup>21</sup> For a helpful discussion of the different approaches, see, Jeffrey L. Pasley, Andrew W. Robertson, and David Waldstreicher, eds., *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

connects politics indoors with politics out-of-doors and provides a methodological foundation for future studies of the early republic.

Chapters one through four of this dissertation explore specific forms of political mobilization between 1783 and 1800; the final chapter looks at political mobilization more generally from 1801 to 1808 during the schism in the Republican Party. The first chapter examines town meetings and petitioning. During the Revolution and early 1780s, town meetings in Pennsylvania functioned as quasi-legal bodies that dealt with issues including price control and what to do with Loyalists. These gatherings, which also issued instructions to elected officials, gave the general public the opportunity to engage directly in the deliberative process. The adoption of the Federal Constitution marked a shift away from this style of town meetings as Federalists sought to place new boundaries on the deliberative process. In place of the deliberative meetings, Federalists began staging public meetings as way for citizens to offer their support for the new federal government. The emerging Republican opposition, however, continued to try to use meetings as a way to engage the citizenry. The culmination of these Republican efforts came during the Jay Treaty debates when these men organized a massive town meeting in an effort to convince Washington to reject the terms of the proposed treaty. Their efforts failed, and Washington signed the treaty. When Republicans tried to stop the treaty in the House of Representatives, Federalists organized a wide-scale petition drive that forced even some leading Republicans to relinquish their efforts. Following these political setbacks, Republicans abandoned public meetings as a forum for engaging the public in the deliberative process and adopted the more deferential petition as the preferred instrument. The shift in strategy became clear during the opposition to the Alien and Sedition Acts, when Republicans avoided large public meetings and focused their energy on signature collections.

Chapter two focuses on celebratory politics and voluntary societies. In the years immediately following the end of the Revolutionary War, Pennsylvanians lacked a coherent or uniform approach to celebrating holidays. Residents made a few lackluster attempts to honor events including the formal end of the war with Great Britain and the Fourth of July, but by the mid-1780s even these efforts started to fade. Federalists and supporters of the new Federal Constitution were the first group to seize on the power of ritual and symbolism. Federalists, often operating through the Society of the Cincinnati and voluntary militia companies, utilized public celebrations as a way for citizens to symbolically consent to the new government. The adoption of monarchical customs and establishment of a Republican Court helped reinforce Federalists' concept of a hierarchical/deferential culture. The Republican opposition viewed these developments as a dangerous step toward aristocracy and began creating their own counter-celebratory politics. Instead of honoring the nation and the Constitution, Republicans embraced symbolism from the French and American Revolutions. With the help of newly organized voluntary societies including the Democratic and Republican Societies, the Federalists' opponents staged competing holiday celebrations. Both sides claimed to be the true heirs to the Revolution and denounced their adversaries as traitors and a threat to the republic.

Approaches to celebratory politics did not remain static. Republicans, in particular, began changing their strategy in the latter part of the 1790s. Among other factors, the Whiskey Rebellion, decline of the Democratic and Republican Societies, and declining relationship with France led Republicans to adopt different styles of celebration and new symbolism. They abandoned symbolism associated with Revolutionary France and toasted party leaders Jefferson and Thomas McKean instead of the abstract principles of liberty and equality. Additionally, as part of an effort to prove their commitment to law and order, Republicans organized voluntary

militia units, which Federalists had been using as a form of political mobilization for years. By the end of the decade, Republicans had established a new form of celebratory politics that emphasized participation in the party and elections as the primary vehicle for change

Chapter three covers popular uprisings, riots and rebellions. Colonial Pennsylvanians had accepted small-scale riots as a part of life. Communities accepted the right to use violence, often ritualized, as a way to police the boundaries of acceptable behavior. The bloodshed of the Revolution further solidified this right in the minds of some individuals. As part of their commitment to engaging directly in the deliberative process, Pennsylvanians in the early 1780s shut down court houses and harassed tax and debt collectors on a regular basis. These protesters saw the taxes as unjust, and after failing to secure redress from the legislature, they believed it was well within their rights to enforce the will of the community. In the mid-1780s, supporters of the Constitution identified the inability to collect tax revenue as a significant problem and as evidence that the country and state needed stronger governments. The adoption of new Constitutions did not, however, immediately lead to a decline in popular violence. Western Pennsylvanian communities in particular continued to use ritualized violence and threats to impede tax collection and to punish those who transgressed community norms. Federalists denounced these acts of violence and urged the federal government to respond. Republicans, meanwhile, walked a fine-line between expressing sympathy for the westerners' grievances and not openly condoning the extra-legal actions.

The outbreak of the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794, however, forced Republicans to take a firm stance on popular uprisings and violence as a form of political mobilization. Federalists seized on the violence as proof that their political adversaries posed a threat to the republic and argued that Republican criticism of the government had inspired the westerners to take up arms.

In response, Republicans denounced the violence in the west and affirmed their allegiance to seeking change through the constitutional system. Many Republicans even joined the army that marched west to suppress the uprising. In short, the Whiskey Rebellion provided Republicans with an opportunity to draw a clear distinction between their legitimate opposition to the Federalists and the rebels' treasonous attacks on the entire federal government.

Political violence of a different sort raged in the latter half of the 1790s. Young Federalists often attacked their Republican opponents in an effort to punish and silence Republican criticism. The aggressors justified the violence by claiming that Republicans were enemies of the country and outside the body politic. Republicans, meanwhile, had not entirely embraced the Federalist theory that citizens could only exercise their sovereignty at the ballot box. Thus, when Federalists gained majorities in the House and Senate and passed legislation calling for the creation of an army funded by new taxes as well as the adoption of the Alien and Sedition Acts, Republicans turned to the concept of popular nullification, the idea that citizens could declare a law unconstitutional. Fries' Rebellion, however, forced Republicans to retreat from this strategy. Now committed to working through elections, Republicans focused on creating a party structure that could harness and channel the popular outrage with the Federalists into constructive action.

Chapter four covers elections and electioneering. Despite the fact that most Pennsylvanians agreed with republican theorists that political parties posed a threat to a republic, party competition raged throughout the early republic. Following the Revolution, the state divided into two loosely organized factions. Constitutionalists supported the state's 1776 constitution, a radical government that gave the public significant power over the deliberative process. Republicans opposed the constitution. Both groups engaged in some electioneering, but

neither group built any effective organization or attempted to coordinate efforts with other parts of the state in any meaningful fashion. Supporters of the Federal Constitution demonstrated the potential power of a structured and disciplined campaign. By manipulating the election laws, flooding the state with propaganda, and identifying and targeting key religious groups, Federalists managed to overwhelm the state's Antifederalists and secure a quick ratification. Then they dominated the first elections. Although supporters of a strong national government managed to maintain majorities in the state legislature and the congressional delegation throughout the early 1790s, the defeat of their gubernatorial candidate in 1790 signaled that their control could not be taken for granted. Initial efforts to establish an organized opposition party, however, proved only marginally successful. Republicans did not begin to organize in earnest until after the ratification of the Jay Treaty. The failure of town meetings and public rallies to sway elected officials underscored the need to challenge Federalists at the polls and not just in the streets.

Republicans entered the election of 1796 enthusiastic and committed to establishing a foothold at both the state and national levels. The first contested presidential election, this event gave Republicans and Federalists throughout Pennsylvania a cause to rally around. Although some men, particularly the wealthy and elite, remained uncomfortable with the establishment of a political party and few would openly call themselves a party, Republicans began constructing a multi-level party organization designed to identify and mobilize potential voters. The party grew from both the top-down and bottom-up, with leaders in Philadelphia directing lieutenants in other parts of the state and grassroots activists taking the initiative to establish party committees. Participation in the party structure gave citizens an opportunity to voice their opinion and work to effect change in a non-threatening and non-violent way. Pennsylvania Federalists were slow to

respond to the new Republican organization, and when they did focus on party building, they did so in a top-down manner with a Federalist in Philadelphia appointing local delegates. The full impact of the Republican organization became apparent during the election of 1799 as Pennsylvanians turned out in record numbers to vote for Thomas McKean as governor. The new strategy, it appeared, had succeeded in toppling the Federalists.

The debates over the role of citizens and legitimate forms of political mobilization did not, however, end with Republicans' electoral victories, and chapter five explores the schism in the Pennsylvania Republican Party following the elections of Jefferson and Thomas McKean. Shortly after Jefferson took office, the Party split into two factions. Quids, hoped to move past partisanship and accepted that citizens could only participate in the deliberative process through voting, and agreed that individuals should defer to their election officials. Democrats saw Federalists as enemies and wanted to increase the public's influence over the deliberative process. These contrasting visions for the future led Quids and Democrats to adopt different strategies of political mobilization, and the two sides fought for control of the state. Both sides suffered during these clashes. Quids lost legitimacy when they publically aligned with Federalists, and Democrats suffered from internal divisions. In the end, neither side could claim victory and the factions reunited to elect Simon Snyder as governor.

The reunification of the Republican Party did not signify an end to all political differences among party members. It did, however, mark the end of the debate over the role of citizens in the deliberative process. Quids accepted political parties as a necessary, if not always positive, part of American political culture and Democrats retreated from their campaign to make government more responsive to the will of the people. In Pennsylvania, democracy would be defined as participation in a political party and the casting of a ballot.



And now the town was summon'd greeting,

To grand parading of town-meeting;

A show, that strangers might appall.

As Rome's grave senate did the Gaul. P. 7

John Trumbull-- "McFingal: A Modern Epic Poem or, The Town-Meeting"  
(Philadelphia, 1776)

## **Chapter 1: Petitions and Town Meetings**

Public meetings are one of the most basic forms of political mobilization. A staple of colonial and early national political culture, Pennsylvanians organized town meetings for a variety of purposes including appointing a committee, dealing with unemployment, and instructing representatives how to vote. Meetings often culminated with the adoption of a petition which could then be distributed to allow people who were physically unable to attend the event to express their support. Any citizen, including men and women of any race or age, could attend a town meeting or sign a petition. Thus Pennsylvanians who would normally have no say in public policy had an opportunity to be heard. During and immediately following the Revolution, the town meeting was one of the more democratic forms of political mobilization. The role of the town meeting would, however, change dramatically in the decades following the end of the Revolution.

Unlike their counterparts in New England, town meetings in Pennsylvania were not legal entities or a part of the state government. Town assemblies occurred irregularly, and any citizen could call a meeting. This lack of constitutional backing, however, did not mean public assemblies lacked power. In some instances, town meetings in Pennsylvania exerted more direct

influence over residents than the actual government. Whereas town meetings in Massachusetts derived authority from the constitution, similar gatherings in Pennsylvania derived it directly from the people. The ability of a town meeting to effect change hinged on the number of people who participated and whether the public viewed individuals in attendance representative of the town as a whole. It also depended on whether residents viewed the meeting as a legitimate method of gauging the general will.<sup>22</sup>

The role town meetings played in Pennsylvania evolved in the decades following the American Revolution. An analysis of these changes helps illuminate the ways in which the adoption of the Federal Constitution and the development of political parties changed the relationship between people and their government. In the 1780s, Pennsylvania remained flush with democratic ideals. Ultimate sovereignty, residents believed, rested with the people, and elected officials were no more than vessels of the public will. During this time period, town meetings served as a quasi-legal body with the ability to set—and in some instances implement—policy. Meetings also generated instructions dictating how representatives should vote and what laws should be proposed. Other than complaints from a few lone critics, the authority of town meetings went unchallenged.<sup>23</sup>

The ratification of the Federal Constitution in 1787 and adoption of a new state constitution in 1790 signaled a retreat from the democratic ideals of the 1780s. The Bill of Rights

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<sup>22</sup> For a helpful overview of town meetings in New England, see, Donald L. Robinson, *Town Meetings: Practicing Democracy in Rural New England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011)

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of political ideology in Pennsylvania during the Revolution see J. R. Pole, *Political Representation in England and the Origins of the American Republic* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 250-280; Robert L. Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1971); Richard Ryerson, *The Revolution is Now Begun: The Radical Committees of Philadelphia, 1765-1776* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); Douglas M Arnold, *A Republican Revolution: Ideology and Politics in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989).

protected the right to free speech and to peacefully assemble, but the role of town meetings remained uncertain. Members of the emerging Federalist Party began to assert that, under the Constitution, the people's ability to impact policy was limited to voting. But this assertion did not mean that they opposed town meeting altogether or that they ignored public opinion. Federalist leaders were sensitive to the importance of public opinion and used town meetings and petition drives to rally the people behind their government. Rather than being an opportunity for the people to assert their sovereignty, these gatherings were a chance for the public to express their support for the government.

Members of the nascent Republican Party in Pennsylvania maintained a different understanding of the role of citizens. They believed that the people had a right and a responsibility to take an active role in public affairs, and that they needed to be constantly on guard against corruption. What this vigilance meant in practice, however, remained unclear. Initially, Republicans considered general meetings an important opportunity for the people to engage in the deliberative process. Their inability to influence policy, however, led Republicans to reconsider their views on the role of public assemblies. The Jay Treaty debates marked a turning point in how Republicans approached town meetings. Members of the young party organized massive meetings throughout the state in an attempt to demonstrate that the populace disapproved of the treaty. Federalists condemned the gatherings and denied that they represented the will of the people. Despite the public outcry, George Washington decided to sign the treaty. Frustrated, but committed to their cause, Republicans switched their attention to the House of Representatives, where Republicans held a majority and could potentially stop the implementation of the treaty by refusing to appropriate the necessary funds. Federalists responded by orchestrating a massive petition drive as a way to rally public opinion and pressure

representatives to vote to fund the treaty. Republicans answered with their own petitions but Federalists, who had more experience with petitioning, collected more than twice the number of signatures. Even some of the Republican representatives who had been vocal opponents of the Jay Treaty were forced to bow to this public pressure and voted to fund the treaty.

The Jay Treaty debates provided Republicans with two valuable lessons on political mobilization. First, it clearly demonstrated the importance of winning elections. Public meetings alone could not change policy. Second, the experience highlighted the value of petitions as a way to mobilize and engage supporters. Republicans took these lessons to heart and, in conjunction with other changes in the political climate, abandoned town meeting as a way for the people to express their will and committed to challenging the Federalists through ballot box. The extent of this change became clear during the Adams administration. In the wake of the XYZ Affair in 1798, Federalists organized a series of meetings designed to rally the public behind John Adams. Ironically, Republicans—the former champions of town meetings—used some of the same arguments Federalists had used in 1795 to try to discredit the pro-Adams assemblies. Republicans also built on Federalists' success with petitions by using petition drives as a way to rally supporters peacefully in opposition to the Alien and Sedition Acts. By 1800 partisan rallies had effectively replaced the town meeting. What used to be a venue for the democratic expression of the people's will had now become a partisan tool for mobilizing supporters and influencing public opinion.

## Format of Town Meetings

The majority of town meetings between 1783 and 1800 followed a similar pattern.<sup>24</sup> Typically a notice appeared in the paper a day or two prior to the scheduled meeting informing residents of the time and place. Larger gatherings tended to convene in a central location, such as the State House Yard in Philadelphia. Taverns, hotels, and private homes often hosted smaller assemblies. For larger meetings a temporary stage and podium might be installed but most meetings made due with a few chairs and a desk. Although there is little evidence about who actually called the meetings, the men elected to serve as president and secretary, along with those appointed to various committees, tended to be prominent local leaders. The timing of the meeting varied depending on the anticipated audience. If the organizers hoped to attract mechanics and laborers, the meeting could not convene until the evening, when most workers would be available. Conversely, merchants and gentlemen had much more flexible schedules and could attend gatherings in the morning. Meetings typically opened with the election of a president and a secretary; the president controlled the agenda and, if necessary, counted votes while the secretary kept detailed notes of the proceedings for publication in a local newspaper. Meetings usually concluded with the adoption of a series of resolutions, a set of instructions for representatives, and/or a petition. In some cases a committee appointed by the meeting would try to gather more signatures for a petition.

Published descriptions of the meetings helped to amplify the importance of public meetings. The number of newspapers printed in Pennsylvania grew steadily following the

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<sup>24</sup> This chapter will focus on only town meetings and petitions that dealt with controversial political issues, with the exception of electioneering meetings, which will be discussed in chapter four.

Revolution. Newspapers in the early republic were a critical resource in the spread of information. As one correspondent argued, a newspaper “tells us facts at the minute we are curious to know them—it tells us also the opinion of the world upon them.” This outlet also allows readers to “be made acquainted with strangers” and to develop “sympathy with mankind” without leaving the house.<sup>25</sup> The bonds these newspapers established helped knit the country together and create what scholars have called “imagined communities.”<sup>26</sup> As historian Jeffrey Pasley has shown, newspapers made the first political parties possible by linking likeminded individuals across the state and nation. A rural Pennsylvanian, for example, could read an account of a town meeting in Philadelphia and feel part of a larger movement. Published descriptions of the proceedings thus became almost as important, if not more so, than the actual meeting and adopted resolves or instructions were often designed to influence the general public in addition to specific government officials.<sup>27</sup>

### **Disloyalty, Debt, and Duty: Town Meetings in the Age of Democracy**

Historians have identified Pennsylvania’s Constitution of 1776 as the most democratic of the new state governments. Written by a coalition of revolutionaries, the constitution made clear that all power derived from the people and that state officials were servants to the electorate. The document created a plural executive, established a unicameral legislature and opened the franchise to all tax-paying white men at least 21 years old. It also included a provision that required an election to occur between the proposal of a bill and the final vote on its adoption as a

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<sup>25</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 3 December 1791.

<sup>26</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* Revised Edition. (London: Verso, 1991); David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 10-11.

<sup>27</sup> Jeffrey L. Pasley, *“The Tyranny of Printers”: Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 1-23.

law. In reference to town meetings, the constitution explicitly protected the “right to assemble together, to consult for their common good, to instruct their representatives, and to apply to the legislature for redress of grievances, by address, petition, or remonstrance.”<sup>28</sup>

The constitution also contained some undemocratic elements. One of the most controversial provisions was a requirement that all citizens swear an oath to the state government. Officers of the government were additionally required to swear that they believed in a single God and that the Scriptures were divinely inspired. Those citizens who refused were barred from voting or holding public office and were taxed at a higher rate. These oaths were originally justified as necessary to prevent Loyalists from undermining the new government. While they did prevent Loyalists from participating in government, the oaths also effectively barred members of certain religious groups, including the Quakers, from voting or holding office because their religion forbade them to take oaths. Additionally, opponents of the Constitution of 1776 were limited to proposing small changes. The Test Laws were controversial from the onset and Republicans, as opponents of the Constitution of 1776 were called, made numerous attempts to have them overturned. By 1779, the Test Laws eliminated nearly one-half of the inhabitants of Philadelphia.<sup>29</sup> Constitutionalists, or supporters of the Constitution, had managed to block Republican efforts during the war, but opponents gained momentum with the adoption of the peace treaty.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> J. Paul Selsam, *The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776: A Study in Revolutionary Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936); Pole, *Political Representation*, 270-280; Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution*, 13-19 and *passim*; Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 83-90.

<sup>29</sup> Owen S. Ireland, “The Ethnic-Religious Dimension of Politics,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 30 (July 1973):423-428; J. Thomas Scharff and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884, 3 Volumes* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1884) 1: 435.

<sup>30</sup> Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution*, 88-135.

Questions of citizenship were not the only problems Loyalists raised. During the war the Pennsylvania government had seized a significant amount of land belonging to Loyalists who had fled. The Penn family, in particular, owned huge amounts of land throughout the state. Constitutionalists had long feared that Republicans wanted to restore proprietary land to the Penn family and return confiscated estates to Loyalists. Although Republicans denied accusations that they wanted to see the restoration of the Penn family, their intentions with relation to confiscated land remained less clear. With the end of the war, a number of Loyalists were likely posed to return and try and make claims on their confiscated property.<sup>31</sup> The matter came to a head in 1783 when Pennsylvanians bypassed the Assembly and took matters into their own hands.

In May of 1783, the officers of the militia of the city and liberties of Philadelphia met at the State House to consider what to do about the return of Loyalists.<sup>32</sup> After some discussion, the meeting attendees unanimously agreed that “such persons as have joined the enemy, or have been expelled [from] this or any other of the United States, ought not to be suffered to return or remain amongst us” and that anyone who was caught “harboring or entertaining” such individuals “ought to feel the highest displeasure of the citizens” of Philadelphia. In addition to promising to use everything in their power to enforce these resolutions, the officers believed it necessary to call a town meeting “to take into consideration the mode of instructing our representatives.”<sup>33</sup> The meeting was set for 3:00 pm on Saturday, June 14, and a notice appeared

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 140-142. On Loyalists, or the “disaffected” in Pennsylvania, see Anne M. Ousterhout, *A State Divided: Opposition in Pennsylvania to the American Revolution* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).

<sup>32</sup> The officers had previously petitioned the Assembly requesting changes in the Militia Law to prevent Loyalists and those who did not serve during the Revolutionary War from participating in the election of officers. Although they made some changes in the Militia Law, the Assembly did not act on the petition. On the militia’s role in the Revolution, see Steven Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class: The Philadelphia Militia and the “Lower Sort” During the American Revolution, 1775-1783* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

<sup>33</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 4 June 1783.



in the papers requesting that all freemen assemble to consider instructions to their representatives “and other important matters of general concern to the community.”<sup>34</sup>

Two days before the scheduled town meeting in Philadelphia, residents of Newtown, in the County of Bucks, convened at the local Court House in a separate meeting. The group resolved that “a repeal of the test laws . . . is utterly incompatible with the peace, liberty, and happiness of the good citizens of this commonwealth” and called on all Pennsylvanians to instruct their representatives to defend the Test Laws and prevent the return of Loyalists. Even though the laws disenfranchised approximately two-fifths of Bucks voters, many believed it necessary measure.<sup>35</sup> The meeting attendees adopted a circular letter to be distributed throughout the county requesting that each township elect one or more representatives to attend a meeting on July 29 to prepare instructions to their representatives and take any other steps deemed necessary.<sup>36</sup>

Back in Philadelphia, the town meeting convened at the State House on June 14. Colonel Samuel Miles, a well-known veteran of the Revolutionary War who served as quartermaster for the State of Pennsylvania, served as president of the gathering. Attendees then proceeded to adopt a series of resolutions that stated it was “inconsistent with the interest and dignity of the good people of this state” to allow Loyalists to return and that the restoration of the property was “incompatible with the peace, the safety and the dignity.” After noting the “unquestionable right” of citizens “to instruct their representatives” they told their representatives to do everything in their power at the next session of the assembly to pass laws to ensure that “no person who has voluntarily withdrawn himself from the United States since the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 1775” be permitted

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<sup>34</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 11 June 1783.

<sup>35</sup> Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution*, 165.

<sup>36</sup> *Pennsylvania Packet*, 17 June 1783.

to reside in Pennsylvania “or enjoy the rights of a citizen of this commonwealth.” Any sign of mercy shown to Loyalists, even to those who may be connected through “friendship, blood, or alliance...will be reprobated with a hearty indignation.” The instructions ended with a suggestion that the representatives take steps towards protecting the nation’s credit. Before adjourning, the meeting attendees appointed a committee comprising the field officers and captains of the militia and representatives of each ward to “carry these resolves into execution.”<sup>37</sup> A similar meeting occurred in Germantown a few days later, followed later by ones in Chester and Cumberland counties.<sup>38</sup>

Various citizen committees had been an integral part of the Revolution in Pennsylvania. According to historian Richard Ryerson, it was “through the committee movement [that] the Revolution had at last triumphed in Pennsylvania.” Private citizens, usually elected at a general meeting, came together to form committees to regulate prices and guard against inflation and monitor suspected Loyalists. In addition to making decisions and setting policy, these committees, with the support of the militia, dispensed with justice. Citizens caught neglecting price regulations or suspected of aiding the British would be hauled in front of the committee and faced potential banishment. These committees held no legal authority, but derived their power from the people. Though controversial, the committees were accepted by many as a necessary measure to maintain peace and order during the war. In 1783, with a peace agreement signed, the same justification did not exist.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 17 June 1783.

<sup>38</sup> Scharff and Westcott, *History of Pennsylvania*, 428; Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution*, 141.

<sup>39</sup> R.A. Ryerson, “Political Mobilization and the American Revolution: The Resistance Movement in Philadelphia, 1765 to 1776,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 31:4 (Oct. 1794): 565-588 quote on 573; Ryerson, *The Revolution is Now Begun*, Brunhouse *The Counter-Revolution*, 68-76.

Justified or not, the committee appointed at the State House on June 14 wasted little time taking action. They met on the 30th and gave notice that all Loyalists had ten days to leave the state. Anyone caught remaining after the allotted period “will be dealt with in a proper manner.” They promised to “use all the means in our power” to execute the decision of the town meeting.<sup>40</sup> Over the next month, the committee met regularly and heard evidence against suspected Loyalists. At least eight men were denounced by the committee and warned to leave town.<sup>41</sup> Committees in other parts of the state followed suit.<sup>42</sup>

The committee appointed at the State House did not receive universal approval. “A Private in the Militia of Philadelphia” penned a sarcastic letter that appeared in the *Freeman’s Journal* that pointed out that if the resolves of a town meeting could be considered binding, then there was no need to worry about electing representatives to the Assembly. According to the argument, if important questions such as what to do with Loyalists “are so easily discussed and carried into immediate execution at a town meeting” then the “legislature is an unnecessary expense to the public.” Moreover, as the resolves of the town meeting and subsequent actions by the committee dealt with some of the same matters that American diplomats such as Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay were discussing in Paris, the town meeting might as well decide the terms of the peace treaty.<sup>43</sup>

A response from “A Private in the Militia of Philadelphia” appeared a few days later, asserting that the committee “exercised no power, but that which they are invested by the

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<sup>40</sup> *Pennsylvania Packet*, 8 July 1783.

<sup>41</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, 28 June 1783; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 31 July 1783; Scharff and Westcott, *History of Pennsylvania*, 428. Captain Thomas Rawlins, Captain Joseph Crathorn, and Thomas Plunkett were notified even before the committee met that he would need to leave town.

<sup>42</sup> *Pennsylvania Packet*, 7 August 1783.

<sup>43</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 30 July 1783.

people.” “The people” the correspondent argued, “have an undoubted right not to suffer traitors...to reside amongst them” and they have every right to appoint citizens to ensure this is the case. The implication is that simply because the people have elected representatives does not deprive them of their sovereignty or of their right to appoint other bodies to carry out their will.<sup>44</sup>

This debate over the power of the town meeting and committee served as the backdrop to the scheduled meeting of delegates from various townships called by the Newton town meeting to discuss the Test Laws. Thirty-six delegates from twenty-four townships assembled on July 29. After reading and approving the original circular letter, the delegates resolved “that it is the unquestionable right” and “indispensable [sp] duty” for freemen to instruct their representatives. The meeting members then appointed a committee to draw up a list of instructions. These resolves once again reflect the belief that elected officials are simply agents of the people’s will and that the people retain sovereignty.<sup>45</sup>

The final instructions, addressed to the five members representing Bucks in the Pennsylvania Assembly, covered much more than just the Test Laws. In addition to charging the representatives “to oppose with your strongest efforts any attempt (should such be made) to repeal the test laws,” the meeting called them “to promote a Convention of the States to take into consideration the present defects of the federal government,” take measures to promote public credit, and ensure a payment of the national debt. Lastly, the gathering “most solemnly command[ed]” their representatives to prevent any alteration to the state Constitution. The meeting also noted that it was “highly destructive of that confidence and harmony which must constitute the basis of public happiness, for one county to interfere in the local polity and

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<sup>44</sup>*Independent Gazette*, 2 August 1783.

<sup>45</sup>*Pennsylvania Packet*, 7 August 1783.

interests of another.”<sup>46</sup> Government should be primarily a local affair, thereby ensuring that the people’s will is carried out.

With the public’s support, the defenders of the Test Laws managed to fight back attempts to repeal them until 1786 when critics passed legislation that rendered them effectively impotent. The Assembly repealed the laws entirely in 1787, the same year that representatives from the states gathered in Philadelphia to draft a new form of government.<sup>47</sup> Taken together, the Philadelphia town meeting and committee, along with the instructions adopted by Bucks County, reflect the central role of public assemblies in Pennsylvania’s political culture during the 1780s. Because the people as a whole—not their government—were sovereign, town meetings had the power express and exercise the public will. Elected officials were considered spokesmen for the people and therefore bound to carry out their will. As a participant at another town meeting held in Bucks County in 1784 put it, “the spirit of 1776 has not lost all its influence among the yeomanry of this state.”<sup>48</sup>

### **The Burden of Debt: Town Meetings and the Economy**

In the years following the end of the war with Great Britain, Pennsylvanians, like many other Americans, were deeply concerned about the state of the economy. Both the states and the federal government went into significant debt to help finance the war. With the economy sluggish, many citizens could not afford to pay even the most minimal taxes. As a result, many states struggled to pay off their debt or to give money to the confederal government. The impotent national government was left helpless as soldiers went unpaid and the nation’s credit

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<sup>46</sup> *Pennsylvania Packet*, 7 August 1783.

<sup>47</sup> Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution*, 179-181, 197-198.

<sup>48</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 November 1783.

abroad shriveled. To make matters worse, at the end of the war British merchants flooded American markets, driving prices down. At the same time, Britain prohibited American ships from trading in the West Indies and other British colonies, depriving American merchants of a key source of income.<sup>49</sup>

The issue reached a boiling point in 1785. “The suplneness of Congress with respect to trade and manufactures,” fumed one correspondent, “had rendered public meeting absolutely necessary and indispensable; and the people find themselves obliged to form and strike out modes for that redress which long since ought to have engrossed the sole attention of that honorable body.”<sup>50</sup> As had happened in 1783 with the Loyalists, Pennsylvanians had become frustrated with governmental inaction and took matters into their own hands.

On June 2, 1785, a “large number of respectable citizens” gathered at the University of the State of Pennsylvania to consider the “declining state” of the economy. The assembled group agreed that measures should be taken immediately to provide relief for the suffering and appointed a committee of thirteen men “vested with the authority to call a town meeting” as soon as possible.<sup>51</sup> The committee selected Monday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, at 9:00 am for the general meeting. Citizens were notified through the local newspapers that the meeting would discuss “Business of such general Importance to the Trade and Manufacturers of this Country.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution*, 172-173. On the economy in the 1780s, see, E. James Ferguson, “The Nationalists of 1781-1783 and the Economic Interpretation of the Constitution” *Journal of American History* 56 (1969): 241-261. On merchants and their role, see, Thomas Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

<sup>50</sup> *Independent Gazette*, 4 June 1785.

<sup>51</sup> *Pennsylvania Evening Herald*, 4 June 1785.

<sup>52</sup> *Pennsylvania Packet*, 15 June 1785.

The meeting opened with a speech by Jared Ingersoll, a Philadelphia attorney and firm patriot. Addressing the crowd from a temporary stage, Ingersoll spoke in “a most animated and argumentative” manner. He called on citizens to remember the “tumult and horror” of the war and the great expectations they had for the county with the arrival of peace. Becoming more impassioned as he spoke, Ingersoll described in detail the suffering caused by the national government’s inability to regulate trade and levy duties. “The consequences of this loose system,” he cried, “have been felt in a greater or lesser degree by all ranks of people:--The farmer, in despair, is obliged to abandon his plough—the merchant cannot freight his vessels—the manufacturer is undersold—and the artists and mechanics are but partially, if at all employed.” Because the national government lacked the power to retaliate, he claimed, states were left to fend for themselves. Action at the state level, however, created a new set of problems. If one state tried to retaliate and impose a duty on British goods, merchants would simply trade with another state. The only remedy, Ingersoll thundered, was to invest Congress with the powers to regulate trade. Those who feared that this approach invested the central government with too much power needed only to remember that Congress was merely a servant to the states and that representatives “serve for a limited time, after which . . . they must return and mix with the mass of the people.” It was, therefore, unlikely that members of the government would take unpopular or harmful measures because they would not only have to face the people but would suffer themselves.<sup>53</sup>

At the conclusion of his speech, Ingersoll read a report drafted by the committee of thirteen. The report opened with a declaration that the “present is a suitable occasion . . . for the people to exercise collectively that privilege of offering their sentiments and advice to their

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<sup>53</sup> *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 22 June 1785.

representatives.” It went on to state “that nothing but a full power in Congress, over the commerce of the United States, can relieve it from its present oppressions.” The meeting then reviewed the report by paragraph and voted to approve it in full, and the committee was tasked with drafting a petition to the Assembly. Before closing, the meeting added seven mechanics, along with Ingersoll, to the committee to ensure that the committee adequately represented the meeting.<sup>54</sup>

The town meeting resolves and subsequent petition and memorial to the legislature reflect Pennsylvanians’ firm commitment to popular sovereignty and the belief that the people had a right to influence the deliberative process directly, even as they called for a stronger central government. As one commentator stated, “It is the very nature of representation, that the represented should instruct the representor [sp].”<sup>55</sup> Even on such weighty topics such as citizenship or the economy, citizens felt it their right, and duty, to express their opinions. Town meetings provided one of the best forums for learning the public will.

The push for a stronger central government that could regulate the economy, however, forced Pennsylvanians to reconsider the role of citizens in the deliberative process. Few, if any, residents were prepared to deny that sovereignty rested with the people—the question was how and when it should be expressed. With the country teetering on the brink of ruin, an increasing number of men, particularly members of the gentry, began to conclude that the country suffered from an excess of democracy.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 22 June 1785. See, also *Pennsylvania Packet*, 6 September 1785; *Pennsylvania Evening Herald*, 14 September 1785.

<sup>55</sup> *Independent Gazette*, 5 February 1785.

<sup>56</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of this debate over the meaning of sovereignty in the new country, see Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*. On the push for the new Constitution, see chapter 4.



## Town Meetings in the Early 1790s

The adoption of the Federal Constitution in 1787 and new state constitution in 1790 altered the relationship between the people and their representatives. Both documents took a step back from democracy and established checks and balances on the people's will. The Constitution created a strong federal government that remained insulated from the people. Even in the House of Representatives, theoretically the democratic part of the new government, representatives came from large election districts, and the sheer number of constituents and geographic distances within those districts were significant impediments to any representative maintaining connection with the will of his constituents. The new state constitution was modeled on the Federal Constitution and created a bicameral legislature and a governor with the power to veto legislation. One historian has gone so far as to call the new constitution a "counter-revolution."<sup>57</sup>

The status of town meetings and petitioning under these governments remained ambiguous. The federal Bill of Rights protected freedom of speech and "the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Pennsylvania's Declaration of Rights included similar guarantees of the people's right to express themselves freely and "assemble together for their common good, and to apply to those invested with the powers of government for redress of grievances or other proper purposes by petition, address or remonstrance." While the right to assemble and petition was protected, the new constitutions did not specify how much weight of influence petitions should carry or exactly

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<sup>57</sup> Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution*, 191-227; Arnold, *Imagined Communities*, 284-327. On the federal Constitution as a retreat from democracy see Charles A. Beard, *An Economy Interpretation of the Constitution* (New York: The Free Press, 19413); Alfred F. Young, "The Framers of the Constitution and the 'Genius' of the People," *Radical History Review* 42 (Fall 1988); Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: The People, The Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

what role the people would play in the deliberative process. In Congress some representatives had pushed for an explicit provision allowing for the people to instruct their representatives but were unable to gain enough support.<sup>58</sup>

Although the authority of town meetings remained uncertain, in the early 1790s some Pennsylvanians continued to see them as an opportunity for the public to directly engage in the deliberative process. In the summer of 1790, the new Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton proposed a tax on distilled liquors, among other things, to help fund the federal government and pay down some of the debt. With memories of the Stamp Act still relevant, the proposed excise met with considerable hostility. Philadelphians responded by calling a town meeting to be held on June 23 at 7:00 pm in the State House Yard. The late starting time ensured that mechanics and artisans could attend. Before the meeting convened, however, news arrived from New York that the bill was not likely to pass and that a new committee had been appointed. As a result, citizens were unclear on what the law would actually look like and chose to postpone the meeting until they learned more. An announcement carried in the next day's newspapers, however, made it clear that the proposed excise law "was a high infringement of the Liberties of the People, and ought not silently be submitted to, and that if any similar system should be brought forward, a meeting of the citizens should be immediately called." Despite such

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<sup>58</sup> For a discussion of the ambiguity of petitioning under the Constitution see, Ruth Bogin, "Petitioning and the New Moral Economy of Post-Revolutionary America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 45:3 (July, 1988), 391-425; Ronald J. Krotoszynski, Jr., *Reclaiming the Petition Clause: Seditious Libel, "Offensive" Protest, and the Right to Petition the Government for a Redress of Grievances* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 109-111. See also, Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 224-230, 283-284; Stephen A. Higginson, "A Short History of the Right to Petition Government for the Redress of Grievances," *The Yale Law Journal*, 96:1 (November 1986): 142-166; Don L. Smith, "The Right to Petition for Redress of Grievances: Constitutional Development and Interpretations," Ph.D. diss, Texas Tech University, 1971.

assertions, a meeting never materialized suggesting that either citizens lost interest, or chose other methods of voicing their displeasure.<sup>59</sup>

An excise law eventually passed in 1791 that placed a tax on distilled liquors. This was the first internal tax in the United States, and, unsurprisingly, the measure provoked a controversy. The Revolution, after all, had been fought in part because of taxation. In Philadelphia, the new tax resulted in public outcry and specific interest groups, such as the Society for Promoting Domestic Manufacturers, assembled to denounce the tax, but a general town meeting was never called.<sup>60</sup> Philadelphians did, however, continue to assert their right to a town meeting. As one opponent of the tax put it, “Every free citizen has a right to inquire into the principles of governmental measures and to expose their errors or their defects.” While citizens must adhere to the law, he argued, they were well within their rights to try to have the law repealed. Under these circumstances, “[a]ssemblies of the people convened for the purpose of deliberating on proper plans to be pursued for obtaining redress from public grievances—from measures which are oppressive or subversive of the constitution of the state, are justifiable and requisite.”<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, the fact remains that opponents of the excise in Philadelphia chose to pursue other avenues of protest. That Philadelphians felt the need to defend these rights is itself evidence that a change was underway—during the 1780s, the right of a citizen to assemble in protest was assumed. By the early 1790s, these rights were being called into question.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *Pennsylvania Packet*, 25 June 1790; *Independent Gazette*, 26 June 1790. See *Pennsylvania Packet*, 23 June 1790 for the announcement of the meeting.

<sup>60</sup> *Independent Gazette*, 9 July 1791.

<sup>61</sup> *Independent Gazette*, 23 June 1792.

<sup>62</sup> For a general discussion of the turn away from democracy in the late 1780s and 1790s see Barbara Clark Smith, *The Freedoms We Lost: Consent and Resistance in Revolutionary America* (New York: The New Press, 2010) and Seth Cotlar, *Tom Paine's America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011).

The response to the excise outside Philadelphia was less restrained. The tax proved to be particularly burdensome to Pennsylvania's western farmers who relied on the sale of whiskey. Shipping grain and corn from the west was prohibitively expensive, and the only way to make a profit was to distill the grain into liquor, which was more easily transported. Immediately following the passage of the tax on distilled liquors, westerners assembled to petition and protest the law. A meeting of representatives of the four western counties convened in Pittsburgh on September 7, 1791. The gathering resolved that the excise violated the Constitution and infringed upon basic liberties.<sup>63</sup> A meeting the following year went further and declared that the members of the meeting would refuse to do business with any man who accepted the office of excise collector and promised to "treat [excise officers] with that contempt they deserve." The meeting also established a committee to communicate and coordinate protests.<sup>64</sup> As historian Thomas Slaughter observed, the men who gathered in western Pennsylvania in opposition to the excise were "deeply concerned with process" and ensuring that the meetings adequately represented public opinion. Those gathered did not seek to directly undermine the federal government, but they did believe that citizens still had the right to participate in the deliberative process and refuse to follow laws deemed unjust. Constitution or not, the westerners still believed they had the right to exercise their sovereignty through a town meeting. As will be seen, federal officials viewed the situation differently.<sup>65</sup>

## **The Neutrality Proclamation and Rise of the Partisan Town Meeting**

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<sup>63</sup> Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution*, 92.

<sup>64</sup> *General Advertiser*, 1 September 1792.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 109-124, quote on 111.

The 1790s witnessed the rise of two relatively organized political parties. A diverse population composed of different ethnic and religious groups made the state ripe for political conflict and factions had existed in some form or another in Pennsylvania for some time. Before the Revolution the colony divided between the Quaker party and the Proprietary party. Following the Revolution, opponents of the new state Constitution organized and called themselves Republicans, while the supporters of the Constitution took the name Constitutionists. Between 1777 and 1790, the control of the state Assembly seesawed between these two groups, with the Republicans eventually succeeding in the overthrow of the Constitution of 1776. The new federal and state constitutions initiated another period of realignment.<sup>66</sup>

Pennsylvania ratified the Federal Constitution on December 12, 1787 by a vote of 46 to 23. The lopsided vote masks the intensity of the battle between Federalists and Anti-federalists. Opposition to the Constitution was widespread in the west, but Federalists proved better

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<sup>66</sup> On the Federalists in general see, David Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution in American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); James Banner Jr *To the Hartford Convention: The Federalists and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts, 1789-1815* (New York: Knopf, 1970); Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University, 1993); Doron S. Ben-Atar and Barbara Oberg, eds. *Federalists Reconsidered* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999); Kathleen O. Potter, *The Federalist's Vision of Popular Sovereignty in the New American Republic* (New York: LFP Scholarly Publishing LLC, 2002); Todd Estes, *The Jay Treaty Debate, Public Opinion, and the Evolution of Early American Political Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006). For Pennsylvania see Richard G. Miller, *Philadelphia: The Federalist City: A Study in Urban Politics, 1789-1801* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1976). For the Republican Party in the 1790s see, Noble E. Cunningham, *Jeffersonian Republicans: The Formation of Party Organization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957); Lance Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980); Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 40-90; Cotlar, *Tom Paine's America*. For Pennsylvania see, Raymond Walters, Jr. "The Origins of the Jeffersonian Party in Pennsylvania," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 66:4 (October, 1942), 440-458; Richard G. Miller, *Philadelphia, the Federalist City: A Study in Urban Politics, 1789-1801* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1976; Harry M. Tinkcom, *The Republicans and Federalists in Pennsylvania, 1790-1801* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1950); Ronald Baumann, "The Democratic-Republicans of Philadelphia: The Origins 1776-1797," Ph.D. diss, University of Pennsylvania, 1970; Ibid. "John Swanwick: Spokesman for 'Merchant Republicanism' in Philadelphia, 1790-1798," *PMHB* 97:2 (Spring 1973): 131-182; Ibid, "Philadelphia's Manufacturers and the Excise Taxes of 1794: The Forging of the Jeffersonian Coalition," *PMHB* 106:1 (January 1982): 3-39; Andrew Shankman, *Crucible of American Democracy: The Struggle to Fuse Egalitarianism & Capitalism in Jeffersonian Pennsylvania* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004).

organized and acted before the Anti-federalist movement really took shape. Divisions remained and helped lay the groundwork for the Federalist and Republican parties. Pennsylvania politics had always been influenced by national politics, but when the seat of the federal government moved to Philadelphia in 1790, state and national politics became even more intertwined.<sup>67</sup>

The emerging Federalist Party was the first to take advantage of town meetings for partisan purposes. On April 22, 1793, George Washington formally announced that the United States would remain neutral in the war between Great Britain and France. France, which was in the midst of its own Revolution, had declared war on Great Britain in February of 1793. Members of the nascent Republican Party responded with outrage to what they saw as a direct violation of the Treaty of Alliance America signed with France in 1778 and an abandonment of a sister Republic in her time of need.

In the early phase of the French Revolution, Americans were generally united in support of the uprising. By 1793, however, many members of the Federalist Party concluded that the French Revolution had gone too far and worried that the seeds of revolution might spread to America. Many of the same men who turned on the French Revolution relied heavily on trade with Great Britain, and a war would have devastated their businesses. Republicans, in contrast, tended to be more forgiving of the revolution's excesses and continued to support its goals. Those who aligned themselves with the Republican Party were also more likely to have disdain for the British and to believe that the greatest threat to America came from closet monarchists.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> On ratification in Pennsylvania, see Owen S. Ireland, "The Ratification of the Federal Constitution in Pennsylvania." Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1966; Owen S. Ireland, "The Invention of American Democracy: The Pennsylvania Federalists and the New Republic," *Pennsylvania History* 67 (Winter, 2000), 161-171.

<sup>68</sup> On the French Revolution's impact on Pennsylvania, see, Charles F. Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1897); Alexander DeConde *Entangling Alliance:*

In May 1793, the merchants and traders of Philadelphia held a meeting to draft an address to George Washington praising his Neutrality Proclamation.<sup>69</sup> They presented the address, which was signed by nearly three hundred men, to the president on May 16. The signers not only promised to adhere to the proclamation themselves, “but to discountenance, in the most pointed manner, any contrary disposition in others.” Washington responded that he was pleased his actions gave “general satisfaction to the citizens of Pennsylvania” and that he trusted that the “good citizens of the United States” would demonstrate to the world a firm commitment to peace. The address was printed in the newspapers throughout Pennsylvania and the nation, amplifying its effect. Additionally, the organizers sent a circular letter to neighboring towns inviting them to join in their praise.<sup>70</sup>

Other addresses and similar petitions were adopted throughout the country, many of which were sent directly to the President. In Pennsylvania, the Grand Inquest (Grand Jury) of Chester County along with meetings in Lancaster and York Counties agreed to resolutions thanking Washington for his stance. These addresses followed a similar pattern to the one adopted in Philadelphia, taking a deferential tone and expressing gratitude and a commitment to do everything possible to uphold the Proclamation. Whether or not the organizers of these meetings envisioned the address as a general endorsement of the federal government and the

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*Politics & Diplomacy Under George Washington* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1958); Gary Nash, “The American Clergy and the French Revolution” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 22:3 (July 1965): 392-412; Simon P. Newman, *Parades and Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Waldstreicher, 112-140; Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 303-365; Matthew Rainbow Hale, “Neither Britons Nor Frenchman: The French Revolution and American National Identity.” Ph.D. diss., Brandies University, 2002.

<sup>69</sup> For a discussion of the background to the Neutrality Proclamation, see DeConde, *Entangling Alliance*, 195; Harry Ammon, *The Genet Mission* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973); Albert Hall Bowman, *The Struggle for Neutrality: Franco-American Diplomacy in the Federalist Era* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1974); Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 338-339; Estes, *The Jay Treaty Debate*, 36-53.

<sup>70</sup> *Federal Gazette*, 17 May 1793; “From Philadelphia Merchants & Traders,” May 16, 1793, *The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series*, ed. Dorothy Twohig, et. al. (15 vols., Charlottesville, VA, 1987-), 12:599. For reference to the circular letter, see *Aurora*, 24 July 1795. Estes, *The Jay Treaty* 49.

Federalist Party, supporters of the administration, led by Alexander Hamilton, seized on the resolutions as evidence that the people stood with the President against the Republican opposition. Historian Christopher Young has persuasively argued that through the addresses, Federalists learned that “public opinion could be used to render an undesirable political force impotent” while strengthening the relationship between the president and the people.<sup>71</sup>

Federalist’s use of public assemblies and petitions to rally support for the government represents a shift in the relationship between the people and their representatives and in the role of town meetings in Pennsylvania’s political culture. During the 1780s, citizens remained sovereign, and a representative was simply a conduit for the people’s will. Given this understanding, a town or general meeting was one of the best venues for the people to come together and express their will. Following the adoption of the new constitutions, members of the Federalist Party began to argue that the citizen gave up sovereignty at the ballot box. A meeting of citizens, therefore, had no real authority to speak or act on behalf of the people. According to the Federalists, true liberty under the Constitution did not consist of “the right of the populace to assemble and oversee the proceedings of the freely elected legislators of the nation” as some “demagogues” claimed. Instead, “Liberty invests people with the right to elect their own rulers, whose task it is to enact laws for the general good.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Christopher J. Young, “Connecting the President and the People: Washington’s Neutrality, Genet’s Challenge, and Hamilton’s Fight for Public Support,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 31:3 (Fall 2011):435-466; quote on p 465; Estes, 52-53. For copies of the Chester County address see Chester County, Pennsylvania Grand Inquest to George Washington, August 1793, *The Papers of George Washington Digital Edition*, ed. Theodore J. Crackel. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008. <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/GEWN-05-13-02-0366> [accessed 15 October 2012]; for the Lancaster Address see, *The Gazette of the United States*, 7 September 1793.

<sup>72</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 13 July 1793. See also “True Republicanism,” *Gazette of the United States*, 17 August 1793; Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*, 372-376.



Federalists still believed that private citizens were entitled to their own opinions but thought that they should defer policy decisions to elected officials. Every citizen had a right to express his opinions, explained one Federalist, “but it becomes us . . . to do it with some little degree of modesty, and especially when the proper office of the government, entrusted by the constitution to speak the sense of the Union” had already spoken. The Constitution invested the president and Congress to speak for the people. A private citizen could only speak for himself.<sup>73</sup>

According to the Federalists, town meetings still had a place in that they could be used to express support for the government and strengthen the bond between the people and their government. Although this position represented a change from the 1780s, it was not entirely new. In England, members in Parliament used public gatherings and petitions to influence public opinion and rally support since the mid seventeenth century. Similar to what the Federalists began to do, a select few elite men in England would organize local meetings or draft a set of instructions which would appear to be the work of a grassroots movement. Not only did this give the organizer the ability to speak for the people but printed resolves of the meetings could be distributed in order to influence others. By creating the semblance of public support it was, therefore, possible to build a real popular base. In contemporary parlance, this practice is known as “Astroturfing.”<sup>74</sup>

Members of the nascent Republican Party in Pennsylvania saw town meetings in a different light. As had been the case in the 1780s, Republicans believed public assemblies were an opportunity for the people to come together, deliberate, and express their will. But they also served another purpose as well. Large public gatherings were also a way for Republicans to

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<sup>73</sup> *National Gazette*, 15 June 1793.

<sup>74</sup> Morgan, *Inventing the People*, 219-224; Cotlar, *Tom Paine's America*, 192-194.

demonstrate that they had the support of the people, thereby reaffirming their legitimacy. Whereas the Federalists had the authority of the Constitution and, perhaps more importantly, the people's seemingly endless love for Washington, Republicans needed popular support to legitimize their existence. Without the backing of the people, they had no real justification for their opposition. The outpouring of support for Washington following the Neutrality Proclamation therefore posed a significant challenge to the emerging Republican Party.

The different ways Federalists and Republicans used town meetings in the early 1790s reflects their contrasting understandings of civil society. Scholars such as Albrecht Koschnik, Johann Neem, and John Brooke have persuasively argued that during the 1790s Federalists clung to a unitary conception of civil society. As Koschnik puts it, "Federalists could not conceive of a separate state and public sphere and expected to see a unified, indivisible and consensual public that extended the reach of the federal government and affirmed traditional elite rule." Meetings or groups that joined in support of the common good were welcomed, provided they made no claims at representing the people as a whole. Only the established legal authorities could speak for the people and Federalists saw meetings that challenged the constituted authorities as inherently threatening. Republicans, in contrast, had begun to develop a pluralistic understanding of civil society and recognize that American society was composed of a variety of different interests. In a healthy country, they argued, a variety of interests could coexist. As a result, they could challenge a particular law or policy without threatening the entire system. Moreover, Republicans believed that the public had to constantly keep watch over their government. In the early 1790s, they thought that town meetings presented an opportunity for citizens to remain active in the deliberative process and ensure that the government adequately represented their

will. Their attitudes towards town meetings and their understanding of the role of citizens would, however, shift in response to the changing political landscape.<sup>75</sup>

## **Town Meetings and the Jay Treaty**

The competing conceptions of the role of town meetings came into sharp focus during the crisis over the Jay Treaty in 1795-1796. Tensions in Pennsylvania had continued to rise in the years following the Neutrality Proclamation. The arrival of the controversial French foreign minister Edmund Genêt, a new round of excise taxes, and the outbreak of rebellion in the west fueled the flames of partisanship. During these years, both Federalists and Republicans invested considerable time and energy in courting public opinion and building bases of support. The infant parties' first major clash occurred following the arrival of a new treaty with Great Britain, known as the Jay Treaty, signed by former Chief-Justice John Jay in the summer of 1795. The struggle over the Jay Treaty spilled into the streets and took partisanship to a new level. Beyond simply a debate over the terms of the treaty, the fights represented a battle between two different conceptions of the public sphere and understandings of the relationship between the people and their government.

A number of issues between Great Britain and the United States remained unresolved in 1794. For example, in a clear violation of the Peace Treaty signed in 1783, the British remained in control of posts in the Northwest. Additionally, England had restricted American trade with the French West Indies, and British ships had been harassing American merchant vessels bound

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<sup>75</sup> John L. Brooke, "Ancient Lodges and Self-Creates Societies: Voluntary Association and the Public Sphere in the Early Republic," Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, ed. *Launching the "Extended Republic": The Federalist Era* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996) 273-377; Albrecht Koschnik, "The Democratic Societies of Philadelphia and the Limits of the American Public Sphere, circa 1793-1795," *WMQ* 58:3 (July 2001): 615-636, quote from 617; Johann N. Neem, "Freedom of Association in the Early Republic: The Republican Party, the Whiskey Rebellion, and the New York Cordwainers Cases," *PMHB* 127:3 (July 2003): 259-290.

for France. Outstanding debts dating to the Revolution remained a major point of contention as well. To deal with these, and other, issues, George Washington appointed Chief Justice John Jay as special envoy to Great Britain. Already upset at Washington's refusal to support Revolutionary France, Republicans reacted with outrage to the appointment of Jay, a well-known Federalist and anglophile. Before he had even reached Great Britain, Philadelphians burned Jay in effigy.<sup>76</sup>

Jay signed a treaty on November 19, 1794. Rumors circulated in the United States as early as January 1795 that a treaty had been signed, but an official copy did not reach the Secretary of State until early March. Once it had, George Washington called the Senate into a special session to consider the treaty. As was customary when dealing with potentially sensitive information, the Senate discussed the treaty in a closed-door session, and the provisions of the treaty remained secret. Republicans seized on this secrecy as evidence that the Federalists were corrupting the meaning of a representative government. "Franklin," a leading critic of the Jay Treaty, acknowledged "that the President and Senate are alone the constitutional organs to make and determine Treaties" but pointed out that their powers "are derived from *the People*" and that they must therefore consult the people before making a decision of such consequence.<sup>77</sup> "It is said that the Government of the United States is a *representative* Government" lectured another

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<sup>76</sup> Samuel Flagg Bemis, *Jay's Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy* Second edition (New Haven: Greenwood Press, 1962); Jerald A. Combs, *The Jay Treaty: Political Battleground of the Founding Fathers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970); Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 388-415. Todd Estes covers the debates around the Jay Treaty and the competing conceptions of the role of citizens extensively in *The Jay Treaty Debate*. While Estes does an excellent job explicating the differences between the ways Federalists and Republicans understood the public sphere, I disagree with his interpretation of the significance and ultimate outcome of the debates. Estes asserts that Republicans' use of town meetings and petitions shows that the party adhered to "a newer conception of the roles and duties of citizens" and that while Federalists ultimately won the battle over the Jay Treaty, Republicans' view of the role of citizens triumphed in the long run. Instead, I argue that in 1795 Republicans' viewed town meetings and petitions in the same way that most Americans during the Revolution and early 1780s had and that the ratification of the Jay Treaty forced them to reconsider their views on the role of citizens. Estes, *The Jay Treaty*, 127-149, quote on 129.

<sup>77</sup> *Independent Gazette*, 11 March 1795

author, “if so, the Representatives must only personate those who delegated them. To represent is to be placed in the room of another or others, and to do as they would do in like circumstances; if this distinction do not apply, Representation is a paradox—it is only a name.”<sup>78</sup> These arguments reflect Republicans’ belief that the people retained sovereignty between elections and are in stark contrast to Federalists’ understanding of representation and the role of the people. Despite the protestations of the Republicans, the Senate narrowly ratified the treaty on June 17 with a vote of 20-10, barely reaching the two-thirds threshold required for treaties.<sup>79</sup> The treaty’s fate now rested in President Washington’s hands.

The provisions of the treaty remained secret until Senator Steven T. Mason, a Republican from Virginia, leaked his copy to Benjamin Bache, who printed it in his *Aurora* newspaper on July 1, 1795.<sup>80</sup> The treaty immediately precipitated a major public outcry. A disagreement exists among historians whether Jay secured the best possible deal for his country. He had managed to ensure that the British would evacuate the forts in the northwest and had gained access to India and the British West Indies. In exchange, however, he accepted severe restrictions on tonnage and agreed to settle prewar debts owed to British merchants. The treaty did nothing to address Britain’s repeated violations of America’s maritime rights. Regardless of whether it was the best possible deal, Pennsylvania Republicans reacted with fury to what they saw as a treaty that ensured America would remain subservient to England.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *Aurora*, 22 June 1795.

<sup>79</sup> The treaty was ratified on the condition that Article 12, which dealt with trade between America and the Caribbean, be amended.

<sup>80</sup> Ironically, the Federalists had already decided to release the treaty and had planned to do so the very same day.

<sup>81</sup> Southern Republicans were also upset that Jay did not secure compensation for slaves carried off at the end of the Revolutionary War. Todd Estes does an excellent job analyzing the provisions of the treaty and outlines the various positions taken by historians. Estes, *The Jay Treaty*, 29-31.

In Philadelphia, Republicans decided to call a town meeting on Thursday, July 23 at 5:00 p.m. to consider how to respond to the treaty. The late start time suggests that organizers sought to maximize turnout by ensuring that mechanics and artisans could attend. A handbill announcing the meeting implored citizens to turnout “to discuss the Momentous Question, viz: Are the People the Legitimate Fountain of Government?”<sup>82</sup> Clearly the meeting was about more than just the treaty. Republicans saw this gathering as an opportunity for the people to assert their sovereignty and push back against Federalist’s deferential conception of American political culture.

Federalists began criticizing the meeting before it even convened. There was nothing inherently wrong with town meetings, they argued; the problem was how the Republicans went about them. “[W]here meetings or elections are held according to special legal appointment,” argued a correspondent in the *Gazette of the United States*, “it becomes every man’s duty to attend in person.” In contrast, the meeting to condemn the Jay Treaty was “called by a few individuals” who had no legal right to speak for the people.<sup>83</sup> Labeling their opponents Jacobins, other writers sought to link Republicans’ use of town meetings with the chaos in France. “Jacobinism relies on the populace” exclaimed another Federalist essayist, “the populace, when agitated, rage with fury—they bear down on all before them for a moment—then disperse—go home—reflect—and repent on their folly.”<sup>84</sup>

Republicans countered by defending the rights of a town meeting. As one Republican pointed out, even the people of England respected the “right of the citizens to meet and

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<sup>82</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 24 July 1795.

<sup>83</sup> *Gazette of the United States* 15 July 1795.

<sup>84</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 23 July 1795.

deliberate on measures which so intimately concern their welfare and property . . . There can be no impropriety,” he continued, “in the citizens of this large commercial town assembly on this occasion. It is a business that concerns every class of citizens.” As for Federalist attempts to link American Republican with French Jacobinism, it “is too stale a trick to impose any longer on the citizens.” In spite of the criticism, Republicans remained determined to stage one of the largest town meetings the city had seen.<sup>85</sup>

Residents crammed into the State House Yard on the afternoon of July 23. Estimates vary, but most observers agreed that at least fourteen hundred people turned out for the meeting.<sup>86</sup> After coming to order, the meeting attendees selected Dr. William Shippen, Jr., a well-known physician and prominent Republican, as chair and proceeded to “UNANIMOUSLY” adopt a series of resolutions that affirmed “the constitutional right and patriotic duty of the Citizens of the United States, to express on every important occasion, the public sense of public measures” and stated that “the citizens of Philadelphia *in judgment and in feeling*, disapprove of the Treaty.” The meeting then appointed a committee to draft a memorial to President Washington “respectfully but forcibly conveying the sentiments of the City of Philadelphia.”<sup>87</sup>

The meeting participants selected Saturday, July 25 for the committee to issue its report. Perhaps fearing that the size of the crowd and frustrations with the treaty might lead to trouble, Bache emphasized the importance of “order and decency” on the day of the meeting.<sup>88</sup> His pleas were important to achieving the desired outcome. Riots and violence would detract from the

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<sup>85</sup> *Aurora*, 17 July 1795.

<sup>86</sup> Timothy Pickering to Stephen Higginson, 27 July 1795, *The Life of Timothy Pickering*, Octavius Pickering, ed. (Bedford: Applewood Books, 2009), 3:184.

<sup>87</sup> *Aurora*, 24 July 1795. The committee consisted of the prominent Republicans Thomas McKean, Charles Pettit, Thomas Lee Shippen, Stephen Girard, Jared Ingersoll, Blair McClenachan, William Shippen, Abraham Coats, Alexander James Dallas, John Hana, John Swanwick, Moses Levy, John Barker, and William Coats.

<sup>88</sup> *Aurora*, 25 July 1795.

message and would provide ammunition for Federalist critics. As will be discussed in detail in a later chapter, by 1795 Republicans had begun to focus more on balancing popular politics with the need for order.

Saturday's meeting drew an even larger crowd than Thursday's had. Bache estimated the crowd at between 5,000 and 6,000 people, but Federalists put the number closer to 2,000. At the appointed hour, the members of the committee mounted a temporary stage and William Shippen, once again serving as chair, read the memorial. According to Bache, "silence was strictly observed, while the report was read by the chairman." The meeting then went through the memorial, adopting each paragraph individually. At the conclusion, Shippen asked if the meeting was prepared to adopt the memorial, and the crowd cheered, stomped their feet, and waved their hats to demonstrate their approval. In his published account of the meeting, Bache went to great lengths to point out that, "*one* and *two* hands were up in the negative" on a few clauses but "*one* and but *one*" voted against the final report.<sup>89</sup>

Although the meeting had finished with its business, the crowd remained energized and enthusiastic and showed no sign of disbanding. Blair McClenachan, a leading Philadelphia Republican, took the stage and, while waving a copy of the treaty above his head, bellowed that he "had one more motion to make to my fellow countrymen, and that is, that you kick this damn treaty to hell!" With that, McClenachan threw the treaty into the sea of onlookers. The crowd seized the treaty, stuck it to the top of a pike, and then paraded to the French Minister's house where they held another ceremony to denounce the treaty. Later that evening, crowds of between

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<sup>89</sup> *Aurora*, 27 July 1795. For a copy of the memorial, see *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser*, 28 July 1795. The committee delivered the memorial to Washington on 14 August. See, *Gazette of the United States*, 15 August 1795.



two and three hundred men assembled in front of the houses of prominent Federalist Philadelphians and burned copies of the treaty.<sup>90</sup>

Federalists treated the meeting with predictable scorn. In private correspondence and published accounts, they sought to downplay the significance of the gathering. Federalists furiously debated the Republican assessment of the number of people who attended the meeting. Correspondents even measured the space in the State House Yard and then divided it by the average space a single person needs to stand in order to mathematically prove their estimates. The lengths Federalists went to discredit Republican estimates on turnout suggest that, while Federalists may have claimed that the town meetings lacked legitimacy, they recognized the gathering as a threat.<sup>91</sup>

Federalists also attempted to characterize the meeting's participants as unrepresentative of the general public. "The actors generally were an ignorant mob, of that class which is most disaffected and violent" sniffed Oliver Wolcott.<sup>92</sup> In his report to George Washington, Timothy Pickering assured the President that the majority of people in attendance were simply spectators who showed up out of curiosity. Of those who were actually there to participate, Pickering believed, only a fraction had even read the treaty.<sup>93</sup> Fenno echoed these descriptions in the *Gazette of the United States*. "There were at this meeting" he explained in one article, "as many

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<sup>90</sup> *Aurora*, 27 July 1795; *Gazette of the United States*, 27 July 1795; Oliver Wolcott to George Washington, 26 July 1795 and Oliver Wolcott to Laura Collins Wolcott, 26 July 1795 in George Gibbs, ed. *Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and John Adams, Edited from the Papers of Oliver Wolcott* (New York: n.p., 1846) 217-218.; Timothy Pickering to George Washington, 27 July 1795 and Pickering to Higginson, 27 July 1795, *The Life of Thomas Pickering*, 182-184.

<sup>91</sup> For the debate over the number of people who attended see, *Gazette of the United States*, 27, 30, 31 July 1795; *Aurora*, 29, 31 July and 3 August 1795.

<sup>92</sup> Oliver Wolcott to George Washington, 26 July 1795 and Oliver Wolcott to Laura Collins Wolcott, 26 July 1795, *Memoirs of the Administration . . .*, 1:217-218.

<sup>93</sup> Timothy Pickering to George Washington, 27 July 1795 and Pickering to Higginson, 27 July 1795, *Life of Thomas Pickering*, 182-184

persons immediately around the scaffold as arrived from the last ships from Ireland, interspersed with about 50 French Emigrants.”<sup>94</sup>

Other Federalists took their pens up to condemn the entire idea of a town meeting. “The constituted authorities of the country are the only organs of the national will” they asserted.<sup>95</sup> “Contrary to their duties as members of a civil society” argued one polemicist, Republicans have used “Town Meetings—tumultuous gatherings, where the sober and industrious citizen does not choose to appeal; which friends of order reprobate as unnecessary, as well as illegal” to try to subvert the “*legal resolves*” of the government. These meetings, which are the work of “artful demagogues,” bring together the “idle” and “turbulent” masses and then claim to speak for the entire public. The very nature of such meetings prevents “sober discussion.” Anyone who raised an objection “runs a great risk of being answered by the logic of clubs and brick bats.”<sup>96</sup> Town meetings do nothing more than “subvert all government, and introduce anarchy and confusion.” It was, therefore, “the duty of every well disposed citizen, to discourage town-meetings.”<sup>97</sup>

Republicans considered these attacks on town meetings as “a libel on the Federal, and every free Constitution.”<sup>98</sup> Bache asserted that “the constitution *expressly* warrants such assemblages of the People” and have been customary for decades. The critics, he argued, were part of an “aristocratic faction” that sought to silence the public will. “But the voice of the people” he exclaimed, “will drown their clamors.”<sup>99</sup> Other Republicans were quick to point out

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<sup>94</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 27 July 1795.

<sup>95</sup> *Aurora*, 1 August 1795.

<sup>96</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 29 July 1795.

<sup>97</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 31 July 1795.

<sup>98</sup> *Aurora*, 1 August 1795.

<sup>99</sup> *Aurora*, 4 August 1795.

that Federalists had no problem with the town meetings that met to express support for the Neutrality Proclamation.<sup>100</sup>

Federalists did not, however, see anything hypocritical about their approach toward town meetings. They saw nothing wrong with private citizens meeting in an orderly manner to support their government. Indeed, an assembly of merchants and traders met in Philadelphia to draft a memorial in support of the treaty in mid-August. Because they had a “more special interest in the Treaty than other classes,” the merchants and traders felt it was particularly important to let Washington know how they felt.<sup>101</sup> For Federalists, these types of meetings were not only acceptable but were becoming an important strategy to mobilize supporters.

Despite the public outcry, Washington signed the Jay Treaty on August 14, 1795. His signature, however, did not put an end to the debate over the Jay Treaty or the proper role of town meetings. Republicans howled in protest and accused Washington of blatantly disregarding the will of the people in favor of the a few “foreigners and old tories” who supported the treaty.<sup>102</sup> Washington’s decision, accused “An American,” threatened to undermine people’s trust in their government and thereby corrode the fabric of representative government. “[T]he people must resume sovereignty and exercise it themselves,” he warned, “or they must submit to a government in which force shall be substituted for opinion and confidence.”<sup>103</sup> Federalists, for their part, continued to argue that elections were the only proper way for the people to influence government.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> See, for example, “Atticus,” *Independent Gazette*, 5 August 1795.

<sup>101</sup> *Philadelphia Gazette*, 22 August 1795. The Republican memorial contained 413 signatures. Federalists in the Borough of York held a similar meeting. See *Gazette of the United States* 11 September 1795.

<sup>102</sup> *Aurora*, 8 September 1795.

<sup>103</sup> “An American,” *Gazette of the United States*, 10 September 1795.

<sup>104</sup> *Aurora*, 10 September 1795; *Gazette of the United States*, 12, 18 September 1795.

## The Jay Treaty and Petition Drives

Even though the treaty had been officially ratified by the Senate and signed by the President, it could not go into effect until the House of Representatives, where Republicans held a 54-49 majority, agreed to appropriate necessary funds. Washington, who was more astute when it came to popular politics than he is generally given credit for, decided to delay officially declaring the treaty in effect until some of the passions generated during the summer diminished. As a result, during the winter of 1795-1796, the Jay Treaty faded from the public consciousness. Republicans, meanwhile, divided over the proper response. The public had seemed to stand with them during the summer, but Washington remained wildly popular. A challenge to the treaty now that he had signed it risked alienating a large swath of voters.

On February 29, 1796 Washington finally issued a declaration that the treaty was in effect and sent it to the House of Representatives. Before the Republicans had an opportunity to coordinate their response, Edward Livingston, a Republican from New York, offered a resolution requesting that Washington provide the House with all correspondence and documents relating to the Jay Treaty. The resolution was a direct challenge to the President's authority and implied that the House of Representatives had the right to decide on the merits of a treaty. Although not all Republicans found this approach to be the best course of action, they backed the resolution and it passed with a vote of 62-37. The Pennsylvania delegation voted 8-4 in favor, with all Republicans joining in calling for the papers. After briefly considering his options, Washington replied that, while he had no intention of hiding anything from the people, diplomacy required secrecy and the House had no right to request such information. The Constitution specifically

grants the President, with the consent of the Senate, full power over foreign treaties. Complying with the House's request, Washington concluded, would set a "dangerous precedent."<sup>105</sup>

While congressional Republicans considered their next step, the debate raged out-of-doors. Bache published the names of the representatives who had supported the Livingston Resolution and called on his readers to "shew, at all future elections, that we deserve to be free, by the attention and respect we pay to those who so particularly exert themselves to secure our freedom." The conduct of those who voted against the resolution, he warned, will be remembered "when the day of election arrives."<sup>106</sup>

Not all Republicans, however, viewed continued opposition to the treaty as the best course of action. Alexander James Dallas, Secretary of the Commonwealth and a leading Philadelphia Republican, believed that Washington's decision effectively put an end to the debate. Dallas had played a central role in the July town meetings and was a staunch opponent of the treaty, but he was more moderate than many of his Philadelphia colleagues when it came to popular politics. According to Dallas, the party needed to maintain a level of respect and deference to elected officials. Success depended on balancing popular politics with order and the rule of law. Continued opposition to the treaty, Dallas feared, threatened to undermine the party's legitimacy. As a result, Dallas refused to participate in the protests, a decision that earned him the ire of some of his Republican colleagues.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Those in favor of the Livingston Resolution: John Swanwick, Frederick Muhlenberg, John Richards, Samuel Maclay, Andrew Gregg, David Bard, William Findley, and Albert Gallatin. Against: Richard Thomas, Samuel Sitgreaves, John Kittera, and Thomas Hartley. *Annals of Congress*, 4 Congress, 1 Session, 759. See also, Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 441-449; Estes, *The Jay Treaty*, 150-155.

<sup>106</sup> *Aurora*, 6 April 1796.

<sup>107</sup> Raymond Walters, Jr. *Alexander James Dallas: Lawyer—Politician—Financier, 1759-1817* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1943), 65-75.

Although they were frustrated by the Republican efforts to block the treaty, Federalists sensed an opportunity. In the weeks following the Livingston Resolution, Federalists and supporters of the treaty flooded Congress with petitions and memorials praying that the funds be appropriated for the treaty. Petitions, as Federalists had learned during the debate over the Neutrality Proclamation, were a great way to mobilize public opinion in a way that did not interfere with their view on the role of the citizen. Petitioning was an inherently deferential form of political mobilization because it was a request, not a direction, and an implicit acknowledgment that the people cannot participate directly in the deliberative process.<sup>108</sup> Federalists throughout the state organized meetings and created committees to go door-to-door collecting signatures. A central committee in Philadelphia communicated with the other parts of the state and coordinated efforts. Federalists' efforts clearly paid off and between the middle of March and the end of May, at least 44 pro-treaty petitions signed by more than 6,400 Pennsylvanians arrived in Congress.<sup>109</sup>

Caught a little off guard, Republicans did their best to counter the wave of pro-treaty petitions. Because they held a majority in the House, many Republicans had not worried as much about mobilizing supporters.<sup>110</sup> But, as the extent of the Federalist petition drive became clear, Republicans rushed to collect signatures on petitions opposing the treaty. John Beckley, clerk of the House of Representatives and one of the key Republican organizers in Pennsylvania, worked tirelessly to coordinate the response. As he explained to Madison, “a regular correspondence and

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<sup>108</sup> Some communities organized public meetings to adopt the petitions. Because these gatherings formed to express support for an established government position they were, by their very nature, different than those held by Republicans or those in the 1780s.

<sup>109</sup> *Aurora*, 29 April 1796; Stephen G. Kurtz, *The Presidency of John Adams: The Collapse of Federalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), 66-69; Douglass Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution: Politics and the Creation of the American Union, 1774-1804* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009).

<sup>110</sup> *Aurora*, 29 April 1796.

union of effort is maintained and we have already dispersed in Circular letters, all over the States a petition to the H. of Represents. without, as yet, the smallest suspicion from our opponents . . .”<sup>111</sup> In the end, however, Republicans managed to generate about ten petitions with approximately 2,600 names.<sup>112</sup> The one bright spot for Republicans was that they managed to collect more signatures in Philadelphia than the Federalists did. Republican John Swanwick, who represented Philadelphia, presented the largest single petition with 1,500 names.<sup>113</sup>

Republicans struggled to understand how there could have been such a dramatic change in public opinion. Fraud seemed the only logical explanation for some. Republicans accused Federalists of relying on threats and tricks to get people to sign their petition. There were reports that bank directors had threatened to cut credit if people did not sign the petitions.<sup>114</sup> One correspondent claimed that he was told to “EITHER SIGN THIS PETITION OR YOU WILL HAVE A WAR” and never informed that the petition had to do with the treaty.<sup>115</sup> Supporters of the treaty apparently told residents that “the House of Representatives is about to declare war against Great Britain, and will certainly do so unless their constituents petition to the contrary.”<sup>116</sup> Federalists in western Pennsylvania also helped spread a rumor that Pinckney’s Treaty, an agreement that would have secured Americans navigation rights on the Mississippi, was somehow tied to the Jay Treaty and that refusing to fund the Jay Treaty would also prevent Pinckney’s Treaty from going into effect. Access to the Mississippi was a major issue for

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<sup>111</sup> John Beckley to James Madison, 10 September 1795, Gerard W. Gawalt, ed. *Justifying Jefferson: The Political Writings of John James Beckley* (Washington, DC: The Library of Congress, 1995), 96-97.

<sup>112</sup> Data on petitions found in the *Journal of the House of Representatives* supplemented with reports found in the *Gazette of the United States*. Numbers given are approximations because the official records do not indicate the number of signatures on a petition or whether the House received more than one petition relating to the treaty on the same day from the same locality. The *Gazette of the United States* is likewise incomplete.

<sup>113</sup> John Beckley to Dewitt Clinton, 21 April 1796, *Justifying Jefferson*, 117.

<sup>114</sup> *Aurora*, 19 April 1796.

<sup>115</sup> *Aurora*, 20 April 1796.

<sup>116</sup> *Aurora*, 26 April 1796.

westerners and the rumor appears to have led to at least some people signing a petition calling on Congress to fund the treaty.<sup>117</sup> In the end, whatever methods they used, Federalist supporters of the Jay Treaty scored a major victory in the battle for public opinion.

Under pressure from their constituents, even some of Pennsylvania's Republican congressmen retreated from their opposition to the treaty. Of the eight who opposed originally opposed the Jay Treaty, only five voted against the final authorization of funds. The three who switched sides represented commercial districts that would benefit from the treaty and had received petitions urging them to change their vote. In addition to these three, Daniel Hiester, a Republican representing Luzerne County who had been absent during the vote on the Livingston Resolution, voted to support the treaty. Perhaps most frustrating to Pennsylvania's Republicans was the fact that William Findley, a representative of Westmoreland and Fayette Counties and formerly an outspoken critic of the treaty, happened to step out of the room as the votes were being taken. He later claimed that he had gone to send a chest to his family in the west and had not realized the vote would be called in his absence. The final vote was 51-48, meaning that had Pennsylvania's Republicans held firm they could have killed the treaty.<sup>118</sup>

The public reaction to the Jay Treaty and Republicans' failure to prevent its implementation marked a shift in the role of town meetings. Republicans staged the largest public assembly since the Revolution, but their efforts proved futile and Washington signed the treaty anyway. Conversely, Federalists managed to mobilize supporters of the treaty in an unprecedented petition drive that helped defeat the attempt to block appropriations. Although they continued to assert the importance of public rallies and stress the need for the people to take

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<sup>117</sup> 26 March 1796, *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser*

<sup>118</sup> Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 446-447; Estes, *The Jay Treaty*, 181-187; Kurtz, *The Presidency of John Adams*, 71-73.



an active role in their government, Pennsylvania Republicans slowly came to terms with the reality of the new political culture. As Federalists had shown, the ability to control policy rested on who controlled the levers of power. Popular support and public opinion mattered, but the ability to affect policy hinged on winning elections. The Jay Treaty debates drove this point home. In the wake of their defeat, Republicans turned away from town meetings and focused on working to secure change through the constitutional system by winning elections and influencing public opinion through petitions.

### **XYZ Affair and Republican Response to Town Meetings**

The partisan responses to the increased tensions between France and the United States in 1798 and 1799 demonstrate the degree to which attitudes toward town meetings had changed in Pennsylvania. Whereas Republicans had traditionally defended the rights of town meetings and asserted the importance of public opinion in controlling the direction of government, in 1798 Republicans condemned public assemblies and accused Federalists of fomenting partisanship. Indeed, Republicans employed many of the same arguments Federalists had previously used to try and discredit Republican town meetings. The change in approach is further highlighted by the fact that Republicans did not turn to large public assemblies to protest the newly passed Alien and Sedition Acts and chose instead to focus their energy on collecting signatures on petitions. Taken together, these events demonstrate that Republicans had changed strategies.

On April 3, 1798, President John Adams delivered reports detailing the recent negotiations between the French Republic and American diplomats. Relations between the two countries had steadily deteriorated following the Jay Treaty. France had initially held out hope that the retirement of George Washington in 1796 would open the door to a new administration

that promoted friendlier relations, but John Adams's election ensured that would not be the case. Shortly after the election, French privateers began attacking American merchant vessels. Eager to avoid a major war, Adams sent an envoy to negotiate with the French Directory. Instead of welcoming the overture, French officials issued a series of demands, including a bribe to the French Foreign Minister Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, which had to be met before discussions could even begin. Horrified at this insult to American's honor, the envoys sent detailed reports to Adams inquiring how to proceed.

President Adams received the first reports from the envoy on March 4, 1798. Knowing that the French demands would cause uproar, he hesitated to make the reports public. In Pennsylvania, Republicans continued to back the French and became convinced that Adams refused to release his correspondence with the diplomats because it contained information that might damage the Federalist's reputation. Federalists remained hostile to the French and committed to maintaining a strong relationship with Great Britain. Finally, on April 3, at the behest of the House of Representatives, Adams delivered the reports. To protect anonymity, the names of the diplomats involved were substituted with the letters "X," "Y," and "Z." The incident has subsequently been labeled "the XYZ Affair."<sup>119</sup>

As predicted, the public reacted with outrage. Republicans were dumbfounded and struggled to find a way to respond. The best defense they could formulate was that the behavior of a few foreign ministers should not be used to condemn an entire nation.<sup>120</sup> Gleeful Federalists seized on the publication of the dispatches as an opportunity to further rally the public behind the

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<sup>119</sup> On the XYZ Affair and deterioration of relations between France and the United States, see Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 537-590 and Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France, 1797-1801* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 3-108.

<sup>120</sup>For this claim, see *Aurora*, 18 April 1798.

federal government. As they had in response to the Neutrality Proclamation, Federalists staged large public assemblies to demonstrate their support for Adams. With public opinion clearly running against them, Republicans found themselves in the awkward position of condemning these rallies and questioning their purpose.

The first Federalist meeting in support of the government occurred in Philadelphia at Dunwoody's tavern on Thursday, April 12. Colonel Francis Gurney, a wealthy and well-known merchant, served as the chair. The participants unanimously adopted resolutions praising Adams's actions surrounding the negotiations with France as "wise, just, liberal, and sincere and entitle him to the grateful acknowledgments of his country." They subsequently appointed a committee to draft a petition expressing these sentiments and to collect signatures.<sup>121</sup> The petition, which was printed in the newspapers and circulated throughout the city, asserted faith in the federal government and outrage at the insult to national honor perpetrated by the French.<sup>122</sup>

Meetings throughout Pennsylvania adopted similar resolutions. The Grand Inquest (Grand Jury) for the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, for example, assured the president that the people were certain that he could avoid this rupture with France and exclaimed that anyone who thought otherwise, or who opposed the administration, was surely being paid by a foreign country.<sup>123</sup> The merchants and traders of Philadelphia also met and produced a memorial praising Adams and stating that "although we may differ in local politics or in our sentiments, as to particular measures . . . we shall always unite in opposing the attempts of any foreign nation to

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<sup>121</sup> *Porcupine's Gazette*, 13 April 1798.

<sup>122</sup> *Porcupine's Gazette*, 14 April 1798.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

diminish our rights as an independent people.”<sup>124</sup> In Reading, “the largest meeting every known to inhabitants” approved resolutions thanking Adams.<sup>125</sup> The citizens of Canonsburg in Washington County; the towns of Harrisburg, Huntington, and Shippensburg; and Allegheny County were among the other supporters to praise Adams. In his study of the public response to the XYZ Affair, historian Thomas Ray found a total of 46 addresses from Pennsylvania, more than any state in the nation.<sup>126</sup> Although the meetings were technically non-partisan, Federalists clearly saw them as a tool to build support for the party. William Cobbett, the arch-Federalist journalist, for instance, warned that anyone who did not sign one of the addresses would be considered “a devoted tool of France.”<sup>127</sup>

One of the largest meetings occurred on Monday, April 30, at a private residence on Shippen Street in Philadelphia. Two days earlier, a “general meeting of the young citizens” had appointed a committee to draft an address lauding Adams’s “wisdom, integrity, and patriotism” and pledging to “obey with alacrity the first summons of our country, in resisting the invasion of a foreign enemy.” Nearly 800 young men showed up on the 30<sup>th</sup> to adopt the address. The members of the meeting then appointed a committee of three men for each ward and six for the Northern Liberties and Southward to collect signatures of citizens between the ages of 18 and 23. Copies of the memorial were deposited at the Library and City Coffee House.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 18 April 1798; *Aurora*, 14 April 1798.

<sup>125</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 25 August 1798.

<sup>126</sup> Thomas R. Ray, “‘Not One Cent for Tribute’: The Public Address and American Popular Reaction to the XYZ Affair, 1798-1799,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 3:4 (Winter, 1983):401. See, also, Bradburn *Citizenship Revolution*, 153-158.

<sup>127</sup> *Porcupine’s Gazette*, 14 April 1798. Ray argues that the meetings were “indigenous and impulsive in nature” and “not contrived demonstrations carefully orchestrated by good Federalists.” This may be correct for many of the meetings, but the meetings in Philadelphia had clearly been organized. Even if there was an element of spontaneity, Federalists certainly used the meetings to help establish a popular backing for their agenda in Congress. See, Ray, 402.

<sup>128</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 1 May 1798.

The public responded to these meetings with overwhelming support. More than 5,000 residents signed the petition produced at Dunwoody's, and another 1,800 signed one from Lancaster County. The *Gazette of the United States* reported that "in one of the wards of the city, every individual excepting five, cheerfully and readily signed the address to the President." On May 7, a crowd—estimated at nearly 10,000—assembled to watch as 11,000 young men delivered their petition to President Adams. John Fenno of the *Gazette of the United States* called it the most "affecting, pleasing, and animating scene" he ever witnessed.<sup>129</sup>

Somewhat ironically, Republicans reacted to the meetings in a manner similar to how Federalists responded to the gatherings surrounding the Jay Treaty. Bache argued that the Federalist papers exaggerated the number of people who attended the various meetings. For example, he reported that Dunwoody's tavern could only hold about 200 people, about half of the number Federalists claimed. When the *Gazette of the United States* challenged Bache's reporting, a Republican correspondent replied by using geometry to prove that actually only 165 people could fit in the tavern. Just as Federalists had done to Republicans in 1795, the Republicans now sought to undermine the opposition's claims that the meetings were "numerous and general."<sup>130</sup>

Additionally, Republicans went to great lengths to discredit the meetings and petitions by attacking the people who participated in them and their ability to hold a functional meeting. A correspondent in the *Aurora* described the young men's meeting as "a perfect chaos of clamor and disorder . . . from beginning to end." Moreover, these "*half-fledged friends of order*" were under 21 and therefore "have nothing to do with the affairs of the nation."<sup>131</sup> As for the address

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<sup>129</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 7 May 1798; Ray, "Not One Cent For Tribute," 404-409.

<sup>130</sup> *Aurora*, 16, 18 April 1798.

<sup>131</sup> *Aurora*, 1 May 1798.

from the Grand Inquest, another Republican pointed out that the members of Grand Inquest “are the creatures of the Marshall of the district, and that the Marshal is the creature of the President. The address must then be viewed as an address of the President himself.”<sup>132</sup> Bache also accused Federalists of misrepresenting petitions and tricking people into signing them by saying that the documents were designed simply to prevent war and neglecting to mention the condemnation of France and praise of Adams.<sup>133</sup>

For the most part, Federalists ignored these attacks. A few correspondents challenged the Republican portrayal of the meetings, but most Federalists seemed content to let the results speak for themselves. In Congress, however, Federalists used their popular support to push through a series of controversial pieces of legislation. Among the new laws passed, the Naturalization, Alien, Alien Enemies, and the Sedition Acts generated the most controversy.

The Naturalization and Alien Acts increased the number of years an immigrant had live in the United States before becoming naturalized and invested the President with broad powers to deport any immigrant deemed a threat. Pennsylvania had always been a popular destination for immigrants and, during the 1790s, thousands of foreigners entered America through Philadelphia. Many of these men and women were looking to escape the turmoil in Europe. The French Revolution and failed Irish uprising, in particular, produced a flood of political refugees in need of asylum. Upon arriving, some of these immigrants dove headfirst into American politics. Most immigrants sided with the emerging Republican Party and became fierce critics of the Federalists. Irish immigrants William Findley, William Duane, and Blair McClenachan, for example, became prominent leaders in the Republican Party. Federalists, who considered any

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<sup>132</sup> *Aurora*. 19 April 1798.

<sup>133</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 17 April 1798; *Aurora*, 18 April 1798.

opposition to the federal government illegitimate and dangerous, saw this foreign involvement as evidence that Republicans were un-American and the Alien Acts were designed to scare immigrants away from the Republican Party.<sup>134</sup>

While the Alien Acts focused on foreigners, the Sedition Act targeted the growing network of Republican newspapers. Most papers in the country tended to support the administration, but some editors, including Bache in Philadelphia and John Israel, editor of the *Herald of Liberty* printed in Washington, Pennsylvania, wielded enormous influence over public opinion and filled their pages with attacks on Federalists. The Sedition Act sought to muzzle these men by making it a crime to “write, print, utter, publish . . . any false, scandalous and malicious writing or writings against the government of the United States.” Violators were punishable by up to two thousand dollars and two years in prison. Although the law clearly infringed on the First Amendment’s guarantee of freedom of speech, Federalists claimed the Sedition Act was justified because printed attacks against the President or Congress could weaken the federal government and undermine its credibility.<sup>135</sup> In addition to these acts, Federalists passed legislation that established a new standing army. A series of new taxes were levied to help pay for the army as well.<sup>136</sup>

The Federalist war measures presented both a challenge and an opportunity to the Republican Party in Pennsylvania. The Alien Acts threatened to weaken the party’s base of

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<sup>134</sup> On the Alien and Sedition Acts, see, James Morton Smith, *Freedom’s Fetters: The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956). On the immigration of Irish and French radicals, see, Michael Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals in the Early American Republic* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997); Maurice Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia, and the Re-Invention of America, 1760-1800* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008); Cotlar, *Tom Paine’s America*.

<sup>135</sup> Paul Douglas Newman, *Fries’s Rebellion: The Enduring Struggle for the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 71-78.

<sup>136</sup> Elkins and McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 590-599; Miller, *Philadelphia: The Federalist City*, 102-109; Pasley, “*Tyranny of Printers*”, 105-131

support, and the Sedition Act potentially deprived the party of one of its most important weapons. The new laws were, however, extremely controversial and provided Republicans with an opportunity to shift the country's focus away from their support of the French. These laws could also serve as issues to rally voters. Therefore, in the summer of 1798 Republicans set about orchestrating a campaign to force the repeal of the new laws.<sup>137</sup>

Pennsylvania Republicans had learned from the experience of the Jay Treaty protests and avoided large-scale town meetings. Instead, they mounted a major petition campaign while simultaneously using the controversial legislation to muster support for Republican candidates in the upcoming elections. Additionally, as will be discussed in chapter three, opponents of the legislation experimented with the concept of popular nullification and used force to prevent the collection of the new taxes. While Republicans still believed that the people must remain active and guard against corruption, they had come to accept that change must be accomplished by working through the constitutional system. The people, explained one Republican, “shew their patriotism to be genuine when they declare themselves ready, on all occasions, to support [the Constitution]; but at the same time, make use of the constitutional mode for repeal of obnoxious laws.”<sup>138</sup>

The petition campaign began in late 1798 in northeastern Pennsylvania and quickly spread throughout the state. Leading Republicans in each county established committees to write and circulate the petitions. Additionally, Republican newspapers carried many of the petitions. These efforts paid significant dividends and by January 1799 Pennsylvania Representatives were being deluged by petitions denouncing the Alien and Sedition Acts. In total, at least 15,200

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<sup>137</sup> On the utility of the protests, see, Bradburn, *Citizenship Revolution*, 171.

<sup>138</sup> For a discussion of the Republican response to the Alien and Sedition Acts, see Miller, *Philadelphia: The Federalist City*, 102-109.



Pennsylvanians signed a petition that called on Congress to reconsider the controversial legislation. Nearly every county sent a petition with the largest number of signatures coming from Montgomery, York, and Franklin counties.<sup>139</sup>

The language and tone of the petitions clearly reflects the change in how Republicans' understood the role of the people. Most petitions were deferential and while they defended the right of the people to peacefully assemble and petition their government they also acknowledged that citizens could only offer their suggestions and had no right to directly influence in the deliberative process. A memorial from Washington went so far as to say that "on ordinary occasions we deem it inexpedient to interrupt with petitions and remonstrances, the public deliberations of the Nation."<sup>140</sup> Many of the petitions also explicitly reaffirmed the signers' faith and support for the Constitution. A petition from Cumberland County, for example, asserted that "the welfare of the county almost wholly depends on a rigid adherence of the citizens to the principles of their government and constitution."<sup>141</sup>

Federalists responded to the petition campaign by claiming that critics of the Alien and Sedition Acts were primarily foreigners and that any American who signed was a traitor and/or a threat to order. Because they were either not citizens or enemies of the country, their opinions did not matter. A Federalist counter-petition called the whole effort to repeal the Alien and Sedition Acts a "*trick of the enemies of order and good government, to revive their almost*

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<sup>139</sup> See *Annals of Congress*, House of Representatives, 5<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> Session, 2785-3001. The number of signatures for each county are: Montgomery—1,940; York—1,800; Washington—1,544; Franklin—1,487; Berks—1,400; Philadelphia County—1,210; Northampton—1,100; Lancaster—950; Chester—755 and 692; Philadelphia City—587; Dauphin—504; Cumberland—320 and 270; Mifflin—314 and 270. Petitions were also received from Bedford and Northumberland but the exact number of signatures was not specified.

<sup>140</sup> *Herald of Liberty*, 26 November 1798.

<sup>141</sup> *Farmer's Register*, 26 December 1798.

*extinguished party.*”<sup>142</sup> John Fenno, Jr., of the *Gazette of the United States* claimed that anyone who supported men like William Duane in his effort to collect signatures on a petition urging repeal of the Alien Acts was not only un-American but “a fit tenant only for Hell or for France.”<sup>143</sup> Federalists also seized on a scuffle that broke out in the yard of St. Mary’s Church between a group of Irish-American Republicans trying to collect signatures on a petition and Federalist congregants as evidence that Republicans were seeking to undermine law and order. Although the incident, which involved prominent Republican leaders William Duane and Dr. James Reynolds, resulted in no significant injuries or damage, William Cobbett labeled the event the “United Irish Riot .” and criticized Thomas McKean, a Republican and Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, for interfering with the arrest of Duane and Reynolds.<sup>144</sup>

Republican leaders did their best to ignore these criticisms and remained focused on rallying public opinion and mobilizing the people. Federalist accusations, they maintained, were just an attempt to prevent the people from speaking out against an unjust law. “The impertinent charge of French influence has nothing to do with this business” explained one Republican editor. “The question is, whether the citizens shall not employ the means provided by the constitution” for opposing a law. “Will [the people] calmly bow their necks to this yoke” he asked, “without one manly effort towards the constitutional mode of redress?” As the quote suggests, Republicans remained committed to challenging the Alien and Sedition Acts—but only through legal means.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> *Farmer’s Register*, 16 January 1799.

<sup>143</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 12 February 1799.

<sup>144</sup> *Porcupine’s Gazette*, 12 February 1799; William Duane, “A Report of the Extraordinary Transactions,” (Philadelphia, 1799); Bradburn, *Citizenship Revolution*, 206-209, 228-230.

<sup>145</sup> *Farmer’s Register*, 9 January 1799.

The steady stream of petitions did eventually force the House of Representatives, which Federalists now controlled, to revisit the laws in late February. Federalists in Congress had initially tried to refuse the petitions on the grounds that the people had no right to criticize the government. Republicans, led by Pennsylvanian Republican Albert Gallatin, defended the right of citizens to petition their government on any subject and accused Federalists of trying to deprive the people of their basic rights. Republicans managed to have the House officially receive the petitions, but when the question of whether or not to repeal the Alien and Sedition Acts was put to a vote Republicans were unable to garner a majority. In February 1799, by a vote of 52 to 48 the House passed a resolution stating that it was “inexpedient to repeal” the Alien and Sedition Acts. A similar resolution in defending the increases in military spending passed as well. The Pennsylvanian delegation split along party lines—four Federalists voted in favor of the resolutions and seven Republicans voted against them.<sup>146</sup> The petition drive had galvanized supporters and helped Republicans identify supporters but it was not enough.

The failure to repeal the Alien and Sedition Acts provided a stern reminder that if Republicans wanted to influence policy, they would have to win elections. Petition drives might convince Congress to take a vote, but they could not change who held a majority of seats. The best way to secure change was to elect like-minded men. Although Republicans still believed that citizens had to remain vigilant and guard against corruption, they had come to believe that the best way to accomplish this was through participation in a party. Petitions and town meetings

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<sup>146</sup> *Annals of Congress*, 5<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> Session, 2957-2599; 2985-3017. Federalists voting in favor of the Resolutions: Robert Waln, Richard Thomas, John Chapman, John Kittera, Thomas Hartley. Republicans voting against the Resolutions: Joseph Hiester, John Hanna, Andrew Gregg, William Findley, Albert Gallatin, Robert Brown. Federalist John Kittera did not vote.

were ways to mobilize supporters and influence public opinion; they were not ways for the people to participate directly in the deliberative process.

## Chapter 2: Celebratory Politics

Parades, festivals, feasts, and other celebrations dotted the calendar of the early American republic. Citizens and non-citizens, men as well as women, adults and children, and people from any background could attend these festivities. These days gave the public an opportunity to take a break from their daily toils and enjoy some revelry. As historians Simon Newman and David Waldstreicher have demonstrated, these gatherings could also be used as a form of persuasion to mobilize supporters and influence public opinion. While these forms of politics out of doors clearly played an important role in the early national political culture, their significance and relationship to more traditional forms of politics such as elections and coalition building remains ambiguous. By exploring the rise of celebratory politics in Pennsylvania through the lens of political mobilization, this chapter will demonstrate how partisans used public spectacle and symbolism to secure legitimacy for their viewpoints and to build a popular base of support.<sup>147</sup>

The celebratory culture that emerged in Pennsylvania during the early republic drew on a long tradition of popular politics in England. Scholars of English political culture have shown that the British monarchy used ritual and symbolism to reinforce its power and legitimate the social order. The English calendar was filled with feast days and carnivals such as Guy Fawkes Day and celebrations of the monarch's birthday. Many of these royal festivals filtered across the

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<sup>147</sup> Simon Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). See, also, Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997) and Susan Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theater in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

Atlantic during the colonial years, although colonists often appropriated them for their own purposes.<sup>148</sup>

The form of celebratory politics that took shape in America also drew from the English tradition of crowd action. The work of E.P. Thompson, among other historians, demonstrated that a “moral economy of the crowd” existed in England and that the English crowd used popular uprisings and riots as a way to police the traditional bounds of society. Activists also employed ritualized violence to scare and humiliate people who violated custom or tradition. In the colonies, the English crowd action and festive tradition melded during the eighteenth century to create a dynamic form of popular culture that would echo throughout early American culture.<sup>149</sup>

In the years immediately following the Declaration of Independence, Americans remained suspicious of centralized authority and resisted efforts by the Continental Congress to use ritual and symbolism as a way to establish legitimacy and build support for the new nation. Although these efforts had some success and were able to hold that nation together during the war, the public did not always respond well to Congress’ efforts. “Time and time again,” Irvin concludes, “the people out of doors responded to Congress in unpredictable and uncontrollable

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<sup>148</sup> Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics From the Restoration Until the Exclusion Crisis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Nicholas Rogers, *Whigs and Cities: Popular Politics in the Age of Walpole and Pitt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). On the influence of British festive culture in America, see Alfred Young, “Ebenezer Mackintosh: Boston’s Captain General of the Liberty Tree” in Young, Gary Nash, and Ray Raphael, eds. *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 15-33; Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street*, 11-43; Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 18-52.

<sup>149</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966); Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York: The New Press, 1993). See also, George Rude *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1840* (New York: Serif, 2005). This topic will also be expanded upon in chapter 3.

ways.” As a result, the Continental Congress simply gave up trying when the war finally ended in 1783.<sup>150</sup>

Celebratory politics appeared to be fading away in the early 1780s. In Pennsylvania, the public remained committed to localism and efforts to honor national holidays suffered from poor planning and weak attendance. The true pioneers of celebratory politics in America were the supporters of a stronger national government. Beginning in the late 1780s, Federalists pushed for a strong central government in which the majority of citizens only participated in the deliberative process through the franchise. Drawing on the British and colonial traditions, Federalists used public spectacles such as the celebration of the Fourth of July as a way build support for their cause. These public events allowed the people to participate symbolically in the formation of a new nation and demonstrate their consent to the new government.<sup>151</sup>

Following the ratification of the Constitution, Federalists continued to use holidays including George Washington’s Birthday to rally support and influence public opinion. These events, which the Society of the Cincinnati typically organized in conjunction with volunteer militia companies, emphasized law and order and helped build confidence in the national government. Additionally, Federalists relied on ceremonies and displays of wealth including the creation of a new “Republican Court” to reinforce the social hierarchy. To some onlookers, the culture Federalists promoted seemed dangerously similar to the British court. Critics accused the

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<sup>150</sup> Benjamin H. Irvin, *Clothed in the Robes of Sovereignty: The Continental Congress and the People Out of Doors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 283.

<sup>151</sup> A large literature exists on the use of symbolism and ritual during the nineteenth century. See, for example, Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theater State in Nineteenth Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); and Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Jeffery L. Pasley, Andrew W. Robertson, and David Waldstreicher, ed. *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Federalists of plotting to slowly poison the republic with aristocratic practices. Many of these critics would join the emerging Republican party in response to these negative reactions to the Federalists' celebrations.

In the early 1790s Republicans in Pennsylvania established a counter-celebratory politics that differed from the one practiced by Federalists. Whereas Federalists used festivals to promote a sense of nationalism and give the public an opportunity to symbolically consent to the federal government, Republicans turned to popular political culture as a way to establish legitimacy and to guard against the forces of monarchy and aristocracy. The concept of a legitimate opposition had not fully taken shape, and Americans remained deeply suspicious of factions.<sup>152</sup> Public displays of popular support enabled Republicans to assert that they were the true heirs of the Revolution and not just ambitious demagogues. Voluntary associations like the Democratic and Republican Societies served as the engine of this effort. Republican leaders also understood the importance of demonstrating their faith in law and order and tried to project an image of controlled popular support by distancing themselves from acts of violence.

The two approaches toward popular politics clashed frequently throughout the 1790s, and the parties staged competing festivals and wrestled for control of the major holidays. The largest Federalist celebrations occurred on George Washington's Birthday and the Fourth of July. Republicans, on the other hand, staged their biggest fêtes on May first, August tenth (in honor of the creation of the French Republic) and the Fourth of July. The two parties also adopted different symbols and rituals. Federalist festivals, for example, used symbolism from the Roman

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<sup>152</sup> The classic work on this subject is Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of the Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1740-1840* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969). Hofstadter, however, does not believe that the concept of a legitimate opposition emerged in the America until the Age of Jackson.



republic and stressed nationalism and the Constitution, while Republicans utilized imagery from the American and French Revolutions and emphasized the principles of liberty and equality.

Modes of celebration did not, however, remain static. The downward spiral of the French Revolution and undeclared war between America and France in 1797 created an environment hostile to the Republicans. Federalists seized on the possibility of war with France to rally the public and mobilize a new generation of supporters. Republicans responded by cutting symbolic ties with Revolutionary France, abandoning the rallying cry of “principles and not men” and toasting individuals like Thomas Jefferson and Thomas McKean, and focused more on capturing the mantle of “friends of order” from Federalists. In essence, Republicans turned away from establishing a counter-celebratory culture and sought to take control of the existing forms of celebratory politics pioneered by Federalists. This shift in tactics represents a fundamental change in how Republicans used popular politics. Instead of relying on politics out of doors to create a popular political culture, they focused on achieving their goals through politics in-doors. Popular politics became the means to an end not the end itself.<sup>153</sup>

### **Celebratory Politics in the 1780s**

By 1783 the Confederate Congress had essentially given up trying to assert its legitimacy through the use of symbolism and ritual. They had succeeded in keeping the country together during the war, but members of the Congress failed to establish a new popular national culture. The Congress had attempted to craft a new national identity through new symbols and rituals but the task proved more difficult than expected. Rendered impotent by the country’s fear of a

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<sup>153</sup> Following Simon Newman, I use the phrase “popular political culture” to describe a broad range of activities and symbols associated with the rise of celebratory politics. See Newman, *Parades and Politics of the Street*, 5-6.

central government, members of the Congress eventually stopped trying.<sup>154</sup> Initial attempts by state and local officials to organize celebrations to honor national events and holidays did not fare much better. The public's uncertain relationship with national holidays and celebratory politics is illustrated by how Pennsylvanians approached the Fourth of July in the years following the end of the Revolutionary War.<sup>155</sup>

In 1783, perhaps reflecting a boost in nationalism that accompanied the end of the war, citizens used the Fourth of July to honor the young nation. In Philadelphia, the day was “ushered in with the ringing of bells” and the ships in the harbor (excepting Great Britain's boats) displayed their flags. After a display of military maneuvers, members of the army joined state leaders in “an elegant entertainment.” That evening, spectators gathered to witness a torchlight parade arranged by a local artisan that included a “triumphal car” carrying a sofa bearing portraits of Washington, Gates, and Rochambeau embroidered on the back. The sofa was made by a local company and served as a testament to the young country's manufacturing capabilities.<sup>156</sup> A few blocks away, a group of Philadelphians hosted a dinner at the State House in honor of the federal army. Toasts to “The United States in Congress,” “New strength to the union, and new honors to its friends” were echoed with cannon fire and music from a military band. The guests, although hailing from “nearly every state in the union” behaved “like the members of one great and happy family.”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Irvin, *Clothed in the Robes of Sovereignty*, 239-283.

<sup>155</sup> Travers describes the celebrations in Philadelphia as “lackluster,” particularly compared to those in Boston. Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth*, 35.

<sup>156</sup> *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 5 July 1783; Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth*, 26; John Thomas Scarf and Thomas Westcott, *History of Philadelphia: 1609-1884*, (Philadelphia: L & H Evertts and Co., 1884), 1:432.

<sup>157</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 30 July 1783.

In contrast to the national themes that dominated the day in 1783, celebrants honored the state of Pennsylvania on July 4, 1784 and showed little interest in the nation as a whole. Because the Fourth fell on a Sunday, all celebration except for the ringing of the bells of Christ Church occurred the following day. On that Monday, John Dickinson, President of the State, hosted an “elegant entertainment” for members of the Supreme Executive Council and other dignitaries. In the evening, “the most elegant fire works” lit up the sky. Meanwhile, the Confederate Congress did nothing to recognize the day, leading one disgusted correspondent to a local paper to ask “O! INDEPENDENCE wither hast thou fled!” “[H]ave the guardians and directors of our country forsaken thee?”<sup>158</sup>

Despite the efforts of a few residents, celebrations in 1785 were not much better. The University of the State of Pennsylvania held its commencement ceremonies on the Fourth of July in 1785 and invited students to prepare speeches that reflected both their academic knowledge and a “love of civil liberty.” A massive audience turned out to hear the orations and some of the students showed promise, but the day dragged on too long and the audience became restless. A German choir came to the rescue and breathed some life back into the day.<sup>159</sup> Overall, these early Fourth of July celebrations suggest that the public had no real appetite for national celebrations.

## **The Society of the Cincinnati and the Origins of Federalist Popular Culture**

Beginning in the mid-1780s the Society of the Cincinnati breathed new life into the celebration of national holidays in Pennsylvania. A hereditary organization consisting of former

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<sup>158</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 7 July 1784; *Independent Gazette*, 10 July 1784. On July 4, 1784 residents also gathered to watch a hot air balloon demonstration. After the balloon rose about fifteen feet, however, the basket holding to captain hit a wall knocking the passenger out. This turned out to be quite fortunate because the balloon caught fire shortly thereafter. Scarf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:436-437.

<sup>159</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 6 July 1785; Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth*, 36.

Revolutionary War officers, the Society of the Cincinnati was dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Revolution. Although the group was technically apolitical, it was composed of men committed to a strong nation, many of whom would later support the Federal Constitution and join the ranks of the Federalist Party.<sup>160</sup>

As former officers of the army, members of the Society of the Cincinnati understood the art of persuasion. Symbolism and ritual are an integral part of how armies instill discipline and ensure that soldiers respect their superiors. One of the Society's first actions was to adopt an insignia consisting of a gold eagle with the motto *Omnia Relinquit servare republicam*: "He gave all to serve the republic." Even the Society's name, a reference to the Roman general Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus, who traded his sword for the plow, is rich with meaning. Members of the Society used their knowledge of symbolism and ritual to spearhead the effort to revive the celebration of the Fourth.<sup>161</sup>

Although the Society of the Cincinnati had been celebrating the Fourth of July in other cities for years, it was not until 1785 that the Pennsylvania organization gathered on the Fourth. The group met at City Tavern, one of the most elegant buildings in Philadelphia, and proceeded to call to John Dickinson, the President of the State, and Thomas McKean, the state's chief justice. Practice clearly drew on the tradition of visits by prominent members of the British military to the King of England on holidays. Afterward, the celebrants returned to the City

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<sup>160</sup> On the Society of the Cincinnati, see Minor Myers, *Liberty Without Anarchy: A History of the Society of the Cincinnati* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1983).

<sup>161</sup> For a discussion of the Society of the Cincinnati and symbolism see, Albrecht Koschnik, "*Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together*": *Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775-1840* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 101-105.

Tavern where they enjoyed an elegant dinner and drank toasts to “Prosperity to the United States” and “The United States Congress.”<sup>162</sup>

The following year’s celebrations were even more elaborate and the local newspapers carried accounts of Fourth of July being recognized in parts of the state other than Philadelphia. Although 1786 may not have been the first time that citizens in towns like Carlisle or Germantown actually observed the Fourth of July, the Philadelphia papers dedicated more space to these descriptions than they had in prior years. In Germantown, for example, celebrants met at the falls of the Schuylkill River and drank to “The Day” and “The United States” while “the most respectable inhabitants of Dauphin County” gathered in Harrisburg and toasted “The United states of America in Congress assembled” along with “Our late glorious commander general Washington.” This coverage suggests the growing importance of the Fourth as an American holiday.<sup>163</sup>

In addition to the number of gatherings multiplying, the festivities themselves became more overtly political. Members of the Society of the Cincinnati started using the celebrations as an opportunity to promote a stronger national government. In Philadelphia, the Cincinnati attended a patriotic sermon that stressed the “indispensible necessity of strengthening the confidence in our continental councils, and encreasing [sp] the energy of our federal government.” The speech, which was dedicated to the leading financier and prominent nationalist Robert Morris, concluded that “to attempt the repair of its feeble constitution, or to change the confederated system altogether, must soon become an unavoidable alternative.” The toasts that night included “May the Union, Friendship, and Happiness of these States be forever

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<sup>162</sup> *Pennsylvania Evening Herald*, 9 July 1785; *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 9 July 1785.

<sup>163</sup> *Pennsylvania Packet*, 8, 13 July 1786. The same trend of giving more space to Fourth of July descriptions occurred in the *Carlisle Gazette*. See, *Carlisle Gazette*, 5, 19 July 1786.

uninterrupted by local prejudices, or local interests” and “Confidence in our Continental Councils, & an Increase of Energy in Our Federal Government.”<sup>164</sup>

In what would become customary, published accounts of these gathering started to deny specifically the existence of any political disagreements. Celebrations in the early 1780s made no reference to people agrees or disagreeing. In the 1780s, however, accounts stressed that those in attendance had left aside “every foreign consideration” and “united in happy harmony to swell the triumphant song of that day which fixed the liberties of Americans for ever.”<sup>165</sup>

The Society of the Cincinnati’s efforts to honor the Fourth of July and use celebration as a way to promote a stronger national government became an integral part of Federalists’ strategy for securing ratification of a new federal constitution. Proponents of the new Constitution, including the majority of members of the Society of the Cincinnati believed that the nation suffered from an excess of democracy and concluded that too many people participated in the deliberative process. Moreover, the prevailing approach toward deliberation allowed men who lacked virtue and who were poorly educated to participate in governance. If the young republic hoped to survive, Federalists believed, the reins of power needed to be handed to a select group of educated, wealthy, virtuous men. Despite what their opponents would say, Federalists were still republicans and felt that most people were unfit to participate in the actual process of governance. The opportunity for the people to express their sovereignty came on election day.

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<sup>164</sup> William Jackson, “An Oration to Commemorate the Independence of the United States,” (Philadelphia: Oswald, 1786); *Pennsylvania Packet*, 6 July 1786.

<sup>165</sup> *Carlisle Gazette*, 19 January 1786. Historians have explored this idea of anti-party partisanship in detail. See, for example, Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 205-207 and *passim*, Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 122-16.

Limiting the ability of most citizens to participate in government to voting meant that Federalists needed to find other ways to ensure support for the new government. Participation in deliberation is a form of consent. For example, by attending a town meeting, a citizen accepted that the meeting was a legitimate body. The Constitution granted far less opportunity for the citizen to express consent than Pennsylvanians had during and immediately following the Revolutionary War. Celebratory politics was the Federalists' answer to this dilemma.<sup>166</sup> Public celebrations of the nation as a whole gave citizens a chance to demonstrate their support. Published accounts, which Waldstreicher and Newman show were an integral part of celebratory politics, expanded the reach of the physical celebrations and gave readers the opportunity to symbolically take part in the events.<sup>167</sup>

The Grand Federal Procession in 1788—a celebration of both adoption of the Declaration of Independence and the ratification of the Federal Constitution—was the culmination of the efforts to revitalize the Fourth of July as a national holiday. Federalists, had launched an unprecedented public opinion campaign in the weeks following the Constitutional Convention. With the fate of the new national government hanging in the balance, supporters of the new Constitution used every tool at their disposal to win over undecided voters. In Pennsylvania, Federalists left nothing to chance and forced through a call for a convention before an opposition could mobilize. When some of the critics of the new Constitution tried to prevent a vote on ratification during the Constitutional convention by hiding to ensure the absence of a quorum, Federalists had the sheriff forcibly haul them to the State House. Their efforts paid off when the

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<sup>166</sup> Jason Frank, *Constituent Moments: Enacting the People* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>167</sup>On Federalist use of popular politics see, Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 53-107 and *passim*; Simon P. Newman, "Principles or Men? George Washington and the Political Culture of National Leadership, 1776-1801," *Journal of American History* 12:4 (Winter, 1992), 477-507; Albrecht Koschnik, "Political Conflict and Public Contest: Rituals of National Celebration in Philadelphia, 1788-1815," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 118:3 (July, 1994), 209-248.

convention voted 46 to 23 to ratify on December 17, 1787, making Pennsylvania the second state to adopt the new Constitution.

By July of 1788, ten states had voted to ratify the Constitution, thereby ensuring that the new nation would have a strong national government. To celebrate their success, Federalists in Pennsylvania decided to stage the largest parade the country had ever seen. Choreographed by Francis Hopkinson, a poet and signer of the Declaration of Independence, the Grand Federal Procession was designed to “express publically an approbation of the new constitution, by all classes of the community, from the day laborer to the highest functionary of the commonwealth.” The parade stretched for miles. Elaborately constructed floats that represented the young nation and paid homage to the city’s different craft guilds awed spectators.<sup>168</sup>

As historian Len Travers argues, “[a]s a Federalist propaganda, the Grand Federal Procession was a smashing success.” Hopkinson’s meticulous planning and attention to detail paid off. Upward of 5,000 people participated in the parade, and another 17,000 gathered to watch. Somewhat remarkably given the size of the spectacle, no major accidents, disturbances, or serious problems with the crowd were reported. Even the weather cooperated. The fact that ratification had been contested and that a large segment of the population remained deeply suspicious of the new federal government was entirely hidden from view. Instead, the Grand Federal Procession projected a message that the people as a whole supported the Constitution. Federalists could not have asked for more from a public spectacle.

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<sup>168</sup> Quoted in Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth*, 78.



## The Celebration of Washington and the Republican Court

Federalist use of public spectacle as persuasion did not end with the ratification of the Constitution. The Grand Federal Procession may have presented an illusion the new government received universal approval, but the reality was quite different. Pennsylvania was home to some of the most outspoken opponents of the new Constitution. Although these Anti-federalists may have accepted that they had lost the ratification debate, Federalists feared that they would likely remain hostile to the new government. Popular displays of power would serve as a counterweight to this opposition voice and reinforce the new government's authority and legitimacy. Particularly since the Federalists were attempting to limit the ability of the average citizen to influence or participate in deliberation, public celebrations played an important role in giving the people a chance to offer their symbolic consent. Prominent Federalists also saw public spectacle and ritual as an opportunity to instill proper republican values. Establishing a vibrant celebratory culture was, therefore, an important part of Federalists' vision for the future of the country.<sup>169</sup>

Federalists were fortunate enough to have the most powerful symbol at their disposal: the acknowledged father of the country, George Washington. The celebration of Washington became a key component of the Federalist strategy to rally support for the new government.

Unanimously elected to serve as the first president, George Washington seemed to be the one individual whom all Americans revered, and his role as the first leader of the new country made him a convenient and universally accepted symbol of the strength, hope, and promise of the new nation. Washington embodied the young Republic in the minds of many Americans. Only Benjamin Franklin came close to matching Washington's popularity, but his age and democratic

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<sup>169</sup>Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 97-107; Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 101-127.

beliefs made him less appealing as a symbol for a strong central government. The General's success against the British had earned him the love and, more importantly, the trust of the American people. His retirement at the conclusion of the war had only strengthened the people's faith in his virtue. Federalists were well aware of Washington's influence and did their best to harness his popularity for their cause. The importance of Washington's presence at the Constitutional Convention, for example, cannot be overstated. Without his blessing, the nationalist movement would very possibly have failed to overcome the public's suspicions of a strong central government. Moreover, as Waldstreicher has shown, the symbol of Washington connected the Federalist project directly with the Revolutionary War and helped establish the new government as the culmination of the Revolution.<sup>170</sup>

Washington certainly did nothing to dissuade Federalists from using him as their national symbol. He was an ambitious man and a keen politician and, perhaps more than many of his contemporaries, he understood the importance of ritual and symbolism. For example, he just happened to be the only man at the Continental Congress dressed in uniform when the time came to decide on a commander for the army. When called upon to once again lead his nation, this time as the first president, Washington embraced his role as national patriarch and carefully crafted a public image he believed fit a republican president. After canvassing some of his closest advisors on proper etiquette, Washington adopted a stiffly formal demeanor that, at least according to some critics, was modeled after the British monarch. He traveled in an elegant

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<sup>170</sup> On Washington as a Federalist symbol see, Newman, "Principles or Men?"; idem, *Parades and Politics of the Street*, 44-82; Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 117-126; Estes, 209-211; Barry Schwartz, *George Washington: The Making of an American Symbol* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1987); Paul K. Longmore, *The Invention of George Washington* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Francois Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation* (New York: Penguin, 2007).

chariot pulled by four white horses that led at least one Pennsylvanian to mistake the president for a monarch.<sup>171</sup>

Federalists began using Washington as a symbol to rally support for the nation and the Constitution before he had even taken the oath of office. The president-elect's ceremonial tour from his Mount Vernon home to the temporary seat of the federal government in New York set the tone for how Federalists would establish Washington as the symbol of the new government and Federalist vision for the republic. Hordes of supporters and well-wishers gathered to witness the president-elect make his way up the eastern seaboard. Philadelphia once again turned to the artist Charles Willson Peale to design and organize a proper welcome for Washington as he passed his way through the city. Never one for subtlety, Peale built a triumphal arch that slowly lowered a laurel wreath onto Washington's head as he passed underneath, literally crowning the new president as the father of the nation. According to one witness, "thousands of freeman, whose hearts burned with patriotic fire" joined the procession once it entered Philadelphia.<sup>172</sup>

The celebration of Washington's Birthday served as an annual opportunity for Federalists to rally support for the federal government. Philadelphians gathered on February 22 for the first time in 1786 to honor the birth of George Washington. Other communities, particularly in Virginia, had been doing so for years, and the Philadelphia papers occasionally carried accounts, but no evidence exists that Pennsylvanians had publically observed the day.<sup>173</sup> The first celebration was a small affair hosted by the "Adopted Sons of Pennsylvania," an immigrant group composed primarily of men from Ireland who likely saw the event as an opportunity to

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<sup>171</sup> *General Advertiser*, 26 January 1793; Sandra Moats, *Celebrating the Republic: Presidential Ceremony and Popular Sovereignty from Washington to Monroe* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 35-67.

<sup>172</sup> *Federal Gazette*, 22 April 1789; Moats, *Celebrating the Republic*, 17-18; Scarf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 454.

<sup>173</sup> See, for example, *Pennsylvania Packet*, 266, February 1784 and 23 February 1785.

demonstrate their allegiance to their new home.<sup>174</sup> Within a few years Washington's Birthday grew to become one of the most recognized holidays in Pennsylvania. Local militia companies, in conjunction with the Society of the Cincinnati, typically took charge of organizing the festivities. The day usually consisted of a display of military maneuvers accompanied by the firing of heavy artillery. After the seat of the federal government moved to Philadelphia, members of the Society of the Cincinnati waited on Governor Thomas Mifflin and President Washington. In the evening, socialites hosted elegant dinners and soirees. While these events were technically non-partisan, toasts accompanying the dinner often emphasized support for the federal government. In 1789, for example, guests drank to "The friends of the federal government around the union."<sup>175</sup> The following year, celebrants and national representatives toasted "The Convention and Assembly now convened—may Virtue and Wisdom preside over their deliberations," a reference to the state Constitutional Convention that was in the process of adopting a more conservative state Constitution and one that was based on the federal one.<sup>176</sup>

Initially, the celebration of Washington appears to have been universally supported.<sup>177</sup> Even though Federalists utilized Washington image as propaganda, few people questioned the rituals. Even Benjamin Franklin Bache, the editor of the *General Advertiser* and a man who would become one of Washington's fiercest critics, wrote in 1792 that "the anniversary of our President's birth day, is the most suitable occasion for demonstrations of . . . manly joy and

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<sup>174</sup> Scarf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 442.

<sup>175</sup> *Pennsylvania Packet*, 12 February 1789.

<sup>176</sup> *Pennsylvania Packet*, 15 February 1790; Koschnik, "Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together," 82-87; Newman, *Parades and Politics of the Street*, 60.

<sup>177</sup> A Light-Infantry-Man penned an angry letter condemning the Philadelphia city council for ordering his company to escort Washington through the city on his way to the temporary seat of the federal government in New York. The order was insulting because it implied that the company was not already planning on attending to the new president. *Federal Gazette*, 19 March 1789.

decent liberty. As long as Americans feel the blessing of Liberty, and of pure republican government this day will be remembered as one of the most auspicious in their calendar.”<sup>178</sup>

The celebration of Washington’s Birthday was just one component of a developing Federalist culture. Washington and his Federalist allies believed that elegant displays of wealth, elite social gatherings, and courtly manners would inspire confidence in the new government. They also believed that a successful society required social distinctions. With this in mind, Philadelphia Federalists constructed a “Republic Court” that combined traits of the British aristocracy with republican values. Members of high society competed with one another for the attention—and patronage—of government officials. Clustered around an area of the city known as “New Society Hill,” the gentry constructed elaborate mansions, hosted extravagant balls, and flaunted the finest of clothes. Social calendars burgeoned with invitations to dinners, card games, theater outings, concerts, and dancing assemblies. The most prestigious gatherings were George and Martha Washington’s weekly levées, a rigidly formal practice reminiscent of monarchical rituals.<sup>179</sup>

Given the new nation’s professed attachment to republican values such as simplicity and equality, the ostentatious lifestyle of the Republican Court soon drew criticism. As the political opposition to the Federalists in power grew, some critics questioned whether the demonstrations of wealth and prestige were appropriate in a republic. “What a pity,” lamented one observer,

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<sup>178</sup> *General Advertiser*, 22 February 1792.

<sup>179</sup> For a discussion of the Republican Court, see Amy Hudson Henderson, “Furnishing the Republican Court: Building and Decorating Philadelphia Homes, 1790-1800” (Ph.D. diss, University of Delaware, 2008); Ethel Rasumussen, “Capital on the Delaware: The Philadelphia Upper Class in Transition, 1789-1801 (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1962); Robert J. Gouge, “The Philadelphia Economic Elite at the End of the Eighteenth Century,” in *Shaping a National Culture: The Philadelphia Experience, 1750-1800* ed. Catherine E. Hutchins (Winterthur, PA, 1994), 15-43; Kenneth R. Bowling, “The Federal Government and the Republican Court Move to Philadelphia, November 1790-March 1791” in *Neither Separate Nor Equal: Congress in the 1790s*, ed. Kenneth R. Bowling and Donald R. Kennon (Athens, OH: Ohio Univeristy Press, 2000),3-33.

“that in America such distinctions should be ever thought of” despite protestations that “claims of hereditary birth and honors” mean nothing. Instead of just copying French fashion and styles of dancing, the author suggested, Americans should take note of the France’s recent “abolition of titles and distinctions.”<sup>180</sup>

According to members of the emerging Republican Party, Federalist obsession with social distinction reflected a secret desire to see America ruled by a monarchy. Republicans remained committed to a more egalitarian society and began to see the pomp and pageantry of Federalist ceremonial culture as part of a larger plot to deprive the people of their liberties. Beginning in 1793, the celebration of Washington’s Birthday, in particular, became a target for Republican polemicists. Benjamin Franklin Bache, who had heaped praise on Washington only a few months earlier, led the charge. In January 1793, his paper carried a satirical piece addressed to “the Noblesse and Courtiers of the United States” advertising an opening for a “Poet laureate” to prepare some verse for the president’s birthday. The successful candidate must be able to compose poetry praising “certain *monarchical prettiness*... such as LEVIES, DRAWING ROOMS, STATELY NODS INSTEAD OF SHAKING HANDS, TITLES OF OFFICE, SECULSION FROM THE PEOPLE, &c. &c.” He should also be ready to ridicule the idea of equality and poke fun at the absurd idea that the “*vulgar*, namely the people, should presume to think and judge for themselves.”<sup>181</sup>

It was not only Philadelphia journalists who feared that the Republican Court surrounding Washington was inappropriate and a threat to the health of the republic. William Maclay, the

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<sup>180</sup> *Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser*, 25 February 1792.

<sup>181</sup> *General Advertiser*, 2 January 1793; Neman, *Parades and Politics of the Street*, 50-68; Jeffrey L. Pasley, “*The Tyranny of Printers*”: *Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 79-94. Marcus Daniel, *Scandal and Civility: Journalism and the Birth of American Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 109-147.

acerbic Pennsylvania Senator from Chester County, filled his diary with concerns over what he saw as un-republican behavior. The efforts by Vice President Adams and a few other Federalist Senators to establish a formal title for the president struck Maclay as silly, unnecessary, and potentially detrimental. Maclay feared that “if you gave [Washington] the Title of any foreign Prince or Potentate” then soon “the Manners of that Prince and his modes of Government would be adopted.” He was equally concerned with Washington’s levêes. Although he understood the social pressures placed on Washington, Maclay could not condone the “frivolities fopperies” that surrounded the president. “Levêes may be extremely Useful, in old Countries” he wrote, “But here I think they are hurtful.”<sup>182</sup>

Members of the emerging Republican opposition believed that the idolization of Washington and a Republican Court represented a serious threat to the future of the republic. Washington’s levêes, explained “Sydney,” may not seem like a big deal but they strike “a distinction between the public servant and his visitors, a distinction incompatible with a republican constitution.” Echoing Senator Maclay’s concerns, Sydney warned that Washington would slowly become accustomed to being treated like royalty and would soon believe he deserved the honors. Washington would, therefore, forget that he was but a servant of the people. “In political concerns” Sydney concluded, “liberty is my idol, and to her shrine alone will my iron knee bend.” Leaders should be respected as representatives of the people and nothing more. The idolatry of any man ran counter the basic principles of republicanism.<sup>183</sup> As “Cornelia”

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<sup>182</sup> *The Diary of William Maclay and Other Notes on Senate Debates, March 4, 1789-March 3, 1791*, ed. Kenneth R. Bowling and Helen E. Veit (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 29, 70, 74, 182.

<sup>183</sup> *General Advertiser*, 26 January 1793; 23 January 1793. For an analysis of Maclay’s Diary see, Joanne Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 11-61.

explained, “To *homage* anyone is to destroy the equality which constitutes the essence of our sovereignty, and is a *degradation of freeman*.”<sup>184</sup>

Washington’s Proclamation of Neutrality, issued on April 22, 1793, only exacerbated tensions. Republicans believed that by remaining neutral in the war between Revolutionary France and Great Britain, America was turning its back on her closest ally. Not only did the two countries share a common form of government, but France had joined America against England during the Revolutionary War. Without French military and economic support, the colonists would have been hard pressed to triumph over the British. Members of the opposition also worried that Washington’s decision to declare neutrality without first consulting Congress set a dangerous precedent. In one particularly inflammatory article, “An Old Solider” spoke directly to Washington and reminded him that “*sovereignty* still resides WITH THE PEOPLE, and that neither proclamations nor *royal demeanor and state* can prevent them from exercising it.” The people, he warned, will not suffer “to be the slavish received of proclamatory principles,” nor will they be blinded by displays of wealth and power. “When the human mind was immersed in ignorance. . . ostentation, splendor, and parade were thought necessary to impress the ‘swinish multitude’ with ideas of superiority and sovereignty.” But “these shakels have been broken by truth.” “Simplicity,” he concluded, “is the gem of republicanism.”<sup>185</sup>

### **Republicans and the Construction of a Counter-Culture**

The attempt to pull Washington from the pedestal and attacks on the Republican Court were part of a larger effort by the emerging Republican coalition to establish a counter-political culture. In an effort to counter what they saw was an effort to undermine the republic, members

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<sup>184</sup> *National Gazette*, 26 December 1792.

<sup>185</sup> *National Gazette*, 22 May 1793; Estes, *The Jay Treaty Debates*, 36-53.



of the opposition attempted to introduce new, republican, rituals and symbols. In order to claim the legacy of the Revolution and establish themselves as legitimate spokesmen for the people, Republicans celebrated “Principles not men” and used symbolism from the American and French Revolutions. The battle between Federalist and Republican versions of popular political culture was more than a fight over symbols and rituals. Both sides believed that popular politics helped instill certain values and ideals. For Federalists, the Republican Court would serve as a way to teach the public to remain deferential. In contrast, Republicans use of symbolism from the Revolution would inspire the public to remain vigilant in defense of their liberties and rights. The fight was, therefore, really about the role of citizens in the new country.<sup>186</sup>

Republican efforts to construct an alternative popular political culture began in earnest in 1792. In the fall of that year, James Madison anonymously published an article that formally introduced the opposition party. The article, entitled “A Candid State of Parties,” appeared in the *National Gazette*, one of the leading anti-administration papers. In the essay, Madison claimed that, since the ratification of the Constitution, the country had divided into two parties. On one side were “those who, from particular interest, from natural temper, or from habits of life, were more partial to the opulent than to the other classes” and who believed “that mankind are incapable of governing themselves” and therefore assume “that government can be carried on only by pageantry of rank, the influence of money and emoluments, and the terror of military force.” “Republicans,” however, are those who believe “in the doctrine that mankind are capable of governing themselves and hat[e] hereditary power as an insult to the reason and an outrage to the rights of man.” Although the “antirepublican party” was “weaker in point of numbers,” Madison warned that they would use whatever means necessary. The evidence, furthermore,

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<sup>186</sup> Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 144.

suggested that the forces of monarchy were on the march. One correspondent fretted that a “language in praise of monarchical and aristocratical institutions, and in derogation of our republican systems, which would not have been whispered a few years past” was now commonplace. To save the republic, “all true friends to liberty ought to be on their constant guard . . . and to unite firmly in checking the career of monarchy.”<sup>187</sup>

Republican voluntary societies led the efforts to fend off what they believed to be a growing threat from the forces of monarchy and aristocracy. The Democratic and Republican Societies, in particular, spearheaded the campaign to create a republican popular culture. The first two societies formed in Philadelphia in 1793, and over the next two years another seven groups took shape throughout the state. Although these organizations were not officially affiliated with the Republican Party, many prominent Republicans such as James Hutchinson, Michael Leib, George Logan, and John Swanwick joined. Building on the attacks on the Republican Court, these men relied heavily on anti-aristocratic rhetoric and called for greater popular participation. Members of the associations pledged to defend against the natural tendency of republics to degenerate by keeping a close watch on public officials and giving support to those “men and measures, which have an influence in promoting the prosperity of the Commonwealth.”<sup>188</sup>

The formation of Democratic and Republican Societies represented a challenge to Federalist conceptions of civil society. Voluntary societies were not new, but the Democratic and

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<sup>187</sup> “A Candid State of Parties,” *National Gazette*, 26 September and 1 December 1792. See also 22 December 1792.

<sup>188</sup> Philp S. Foner, ed. *The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800: A Documentary Sourcebook of Constitutions, Declarations, Addresses, Resolutions, and Toasts* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976), 3-40, quote on 65. For further discussion of the ideology of the Democratic Society, see Eugene Perry Link, *Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942) 100-125; Koschnik, “*Let a Common Interest Bind Use Together*,” 22-40; Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 53-71.

Republican societies broke with their predecessors by claiming to speak for the people and seeking to influence public opinion through the press. Committed to a hierarchical society based on deference, Federalists condemned these organizations as “self-created,” and questioned their legitimacy. Federalists believed that public institutions and organizations were acceptable as long as they supported the public good. Because the Democratic and Republican Societies acted as an intermediary between the people and the government and challenged elected leaders, Federalists considered them a threat to the republic’s survival. Aeneas, a correspondent in the *Gazette of the United States*, summarized this view: “The very circumstance of allowing ourselves to speak against government, has a tendency to bend our minds that way.”<sup>189</sup> Republicans, on the other hand, argued that such societies were not only proper but necessary to defend against government abuse. The Democratic and Republican Societies could serve as venues for both educating average citizens in political affairs and giving them an opportunity to participate in the deliberative process. Despite the fact that the Federalists never accepted this argument, the Democratic and Republican Societies helped introduce the concept of a legitimate opposition to the American public. As historian Jason Frank explained, “in establishing spaces of insurgent citizenship—spaces of political declamation as well as political deliberation—the societies helped to create an assertive oppositional political culture.”<sup>190</sup>

The Philadelphia Democratic Society made its challenge to the Federalist vision of society and the Republican Court explicit in a circular letter published on July 4, 1793. The day before, members of the Society agreed to stop using the words “Sir” and “humble servants” in

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<sup>189</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 8 September 1796.

<sup>190</sup> Johann N. Neem, “Freedom of Association in the Early Republic: The Republican Party, the Whiskey Rebellion, and the New York Cordwainers Cases,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 127:3 (July 2003): 259-290; Albrecht Koschnik, “The Democratic Societies of Philadelphia and the Limits of the American Public Sphere, circa 1793-1795,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 58:3 (July 2001): 615-636; Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 131.

their communications. Instead, members would use the title “citizen.” Such measures were necessary, the circular explained, because “[t]he seeds of luxury appear to have taken root in our domestic soil.” The letter stated that members of the Society fundamentally disagreed with “those who imagine that the rulers of a republic may conciliate the favors of monarchs and despotic courts, by assuming the courtly forms, etiquettes, and manners.” These relics of monarchy needed to be destroyed and replaced with new republican rituals.<sup>191</sup>

Revolutionary France was one area the Democratic Society could draw on in their quest to construct and legitimize new republican customs. The French Revolution provided ample fodder for partisan disputes in Philadelphia. Originally united in support of a sister Republic, an increasing number of Americans were becoming uncomfortable with the growing radicalism in France. The execution of Louis XVI and the outbreak of war between France and Great Britain convinced many Federalists that the Revolution had gone too far. They feared that the anarchy in France could poison the American experiment. Republicans proved more willing to overlook this excess. Seeing the events in France as part of a global struggle against monarchy and tyranny, Republicans vehemently defended the French cause.<sup>192</sup>

Philadelphia Republicans eagerly adopted symbolism and rhetoric from Revolutionary France. For example, members of the Democratic Society agreed to address one another by the title “citizen.” Other Francophiles wore tri-colored cockades and took to the streets to dance the *carmagnole* and sing the *Ça Ira*. Beginning in 1793, citizens demonstrated their solidarity

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<sup>191</sup>*National Gazette*, 17 July 1793; Foner, *The Democratic-Republicans*, 66-67.

<sup>192</sup> For a discussion of the French Revolution’s impact on American politics, see James Roger Sharp, *American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 69-92; For the impact on American political culture, see Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street*, 120-151; Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 112-116, 131-140; Matthew Rainbow Hale, “Neither Britons Nor Frenchmen: The French Revolution and American National Identity,” Ph.D. diss, Brandeis University, 2002.

through public celebrations of French holidays and major military victories. Pennsylvania Republicans hoped to establish themselves as the true defenders of the American Revolution through this adoption of the symbolism of Revolutionary France.<sup>193</sup>

Republicans launched their new republican festive culture in a series of celebrations designed to greet the arrival of French minister Edmond-Charles Genêt in May 1793. Genêt landed in Charleston in early April and slowly made his way to Philadelphia through seemingly endless festivals. On the eve of Genêt's arrival, "A Freeman" called on all Philadelphians to demonstrate their loyalty to the republican cause by giving the minister a "proper and joyful reception." On May 16, Genêt was met by scores of cheering residents. A welcoming committee, headed by prominent Republicans such as James Hutchinson and John Swanwick, delivered a speech that praised the French and proclaimed "cultivation of republican principles, as the best security for the permanency" of the American Republic. The crowd erupted as Genêt expressed his gratitude and embraced members of the committee. "It is impossible to describe with adequate energy the scene" reported one observer. "Every man who joined in the address...had at once testified his gratitude to a faithful ally, in the hour of distress, and demonstrated his attachment to those republican principles which are the basis of the American government."<sup>194</sup> Following the address, leading Republicans hosted a massive banquet at Oeller's tavern. Guests were treated to a "heavily-laden table, gaily decorated with French and American flags and liberty caps."<sup>195</sup> Though Genêt's subsequent impolitic behavior certainly caused some

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<sup>193</sup> Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 126-140 ; On the symbolism and ritual of the French Revolution see, Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 19-119

<sup>194</sup> *General Advertiser*, 17, 18, 20, 21 May 1793; *Federal Gazette*, 21 May 1793. For an excellent portrayal of Genêt's arrival in Philadelphia, see Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 126-136.

<sup>195</sup> Tinkcom, *The Republicans and Federalists in Pennsylvania*, 76; Scarf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 474.

embarrassment, for the time being the majority of Republicans continued to support the French cause.<sup>196</sup>

The welcome parties for Genêt were simply an overture. Between 1793 and 1796, the Democratic and Republican Societies, along with other Republican-leaning voluntary societies, hosted a number of festivals and parades to rally supporters and demonstrate allegiance to republican principles.<sup>197</sup> The most elaborate of these events, labeled the “Feast of Reason,” took place on August 10, 1794, in honor of the founding of the French Republic. A few days before the celebration, “A Citizen” wrote in the *General Advertiser* that “Next to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, none has a greater claim to the attention of the American public than THE 10<sup>th</sup> OF AUGUST.” The author encouraged all citizens to participate in the day’s festivities. Simply by “participating in the celebration,” Philadelphians were “sensibly lending [their] aid to the cause of Liberty and equality throughout the Universe.”<sup>198</sup>

Republicans carefully scripted their public spectacles to ensure order. Organizers of the Feast of Reason held a public planning meeting, and the details of the day’s schedule were printed in advance to help ensure everything went according to plan.<sup>199</sup> The published arrangements provide a rare glimpse into the structure of public festivals and demonstrate the importance of order. Along with a detailed list of instructions for participants, the schedule includes the statement that “the dignity of the people on public festivals or ceremonies should be evinced by the decency and majesty which they give to them by their silence and respect.”

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<sup>196</sup> On Genêt’s mission see, Harry Ammon, *The Genet Mission* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973). On celebrations honoring his arrival, see, Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 133-136.

<sup>197</sup> Koschnik, “Political Conflict and Public Contest: Rituals of National Celebrations in Philadelphia, 1788-1815.”

<sup>198</sup> “A Citizen,” *General Advertiser*, 2 August 1794.

<sup>199</sup> *General Advertiser*, 1 August 1794.

Citizens were reminded that the “festival is to be celebrated under the auspices of fraternity” and that they were therefore “invited to attend without arms, but with their uniforms, if possible.”<sup>200</sup>

“Several thousands” of people turned out for the spectacle. The festivities commenced with the firing of artillery and a large procession of French and American residents. The parade was headed by local dignitaries, providing a visual reminder of the need for some social discipline. Following them, four men carried “an obelisk on which were painted the attributes of liberty and equality, and surmounted by a Liberty cap.” Women dressed in white and— “adorned with three coloured ribbons”—spread flowers around the obelisk. Participants marched to the beat of drums, giving the procession a militaristic undertone. After winding through the city, the parade entered the gardens of Jean Fauchet, Genêt’s successor as French minister. In the garden they “erected an altar to liberty, with an elegant statue of the goddess of liberty on it.” After singing the *Marseillaise* and a listening to a series of speeches, the crowd heard an account of the day’s festivities that would be carried in the local newspapers. At the conclusion of the formal celebration, the crowd took to the streets “dancing the Carmagnole to the sound of drum and cannon.” That evening, nearly 500 residents dined at Richardet’s Hotel where they were treated to an elaborate fireworks display and drank to “Mankind: may they be no more the property of a few individuals” and “May death, like lightening, strike every hypocrite and false republican.” Overall the day was a massive success. The crowd did, at one point, burn a British flag, but otherwise the events unfolded exactly as planned.<sup>201</sup>

The Feast of Reason was a Republican counterpart to the Federalist Grand Federal Procession. Whereas the Federal Procession celebrated the new government and Constitution,

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<sup>200</sup>*General Advertiser*, 9 August 1794.

<sup>201</sup> *General Advertiser*, 19, 28 August 1794; Newman, *Parades and Politics of the Street*, p. 145-147; Scarf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:418.

the Feast of Reason honored “liberty, equality, and fraternity.” Federalist symbols such as the rising-sun or eagle were replaced by tri-colored cockades and liberty caps. With these symbols, Republicans consciously sought to link their cause with the ideals of the Revolution. Both festivals strove to mobilize the people of Philadelphia in an organized manner and, just as the success of the Grand Federal Procession helped rally support for the new Federal Constitution, the Feast of Reason helped Republicans establish legitimacy.

### **Republican Mobilization: Liberty and Order**

While Republican efforts to build a new popular political culture achieved some success, Republicans struggled to find a balance between liberty and order. News of the Reign of Terror in France dramatically underscored the danger of unrestrained crowd action.<sup>202</sup> Republican leaders knew that their ability to challenge the Federalist leadership hinged on a peaceful, nonthreatening, mobilization of common Pennsylvanians. Federalists would seize on any signs of disorder as proof that the Republicans promoted anarchy and confusion and posed a threat to the nation. As they became more vocal in their opposition, Republican leaders found controlling the crowd increasingly difficult. On May 5, 1794, only a few days after a Civic Festival in celebration of the French victory at Toulon, trouble erupted on the Philadelphia docks. Rumor spread that a small merchant vessel was preparing “to take provisions or something else to the English fleet.” Whether inspired by hatred for the British or support for the French, a mob gathered, tore down the ship’s mast and dragged it ashore. The destruction would likely have escalated had not Alexander James Dallas, a Republican leader, arrived and managed to

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<sup>202</sup> On American reactions to the Reign of Terror see, Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Hale, “Neither Britons Nor Frenchmen,” 99-101.



convince the crowd to disperse.<sup>203</sup> In June, protesters filled an effigy of John Jay with gunpowder and hung it near the center of town. After a mock trial, the crowd executed Jay with a model guillotine and blew him up.<sup>204</sup>

Even the Republican campaign against Federalist symbolism threatened to get out of hand. In late July, a letter signed “Order” appeared in the *General Advertiser* expressing shock at the discovery of a figure of King George II on the east end of Christ Church. “I think it sufficient only to hint” the letter warned “that prudence will dictate to have it removed in a peaceful manner.” If the officials refused to abide by this request, “it will be done for them.” Another writer described the statue as a remaining weed from the poisonous “root of royalty.” The destruction of the image could serve “as a sacrifice at the shrine of pure democracy.”<sup>205</sup> After reading the letter, Philadelphia Republican John Swanwick, who professed to “a considerable share of democratic fanaticism” himself, “immediately conceived that this cardwriter had a superior quantum of asses’ brains” and “censure[d] citizen Bache” for printing the piece.<sup>206</sup> Swanwick and other more moderate Republicans scorned such threats of violence and destruction of property because they undermined their attempts to establish legitimacy.

The Whiskey Rebellion, which erupted in late July 1794, posed the greatest threat to Republican attempts to establish themselves as the true spokesmen for the people. Federalists seized on the insurrection as evidence that the Democratic and Republican Societies, along with

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<sup>203</sup> 5 May 1794, Elaine Forman Crane, ed. *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker: The Life Cycle of an Eighteenth-Century Woman* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 224.

<sup>204</sup> Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia: 1609-1884*, 1:478. According to Matthew Hale, British and French sailors in Philadelphia brawled frequently. See Hale, “Neither Britons Nor Frenchmen,” 60, 68-69.

<sup>205</sup> *General Advertiser*, 17 July; 21 August 1794.

<sup>206</sup> John Swanwick, *A Rub From Snub or a Cursory Analytical Epistle Addressed to Peter Porcupine, Author of the Bone to Gnaw, Kick for a Bite, &c, &c.* (Philadelphia: 1975), 21.

their Republican allies, were promoting anarchy.<sup>207</sup> “The Democratic Societies,” claimed one correspondent, “are a species of the Jacobin Clubs... The one destroyed a government founded in tyranny, oppression, and violence—and substituted another, that contemplates the peace, liberty, and happiness of its citizens—The other appears to be emulous in assailing and battering to pieces the best and most free of all governments—and to erect one replete with anarchy and confusion.”<sup>208</sup> Influential Federalists like Alexander Hamilton and George Washington added their considerable weight to the debate and joined the chorus of denunciations.

As will be discussed in detail in chapter three, Republican leaders used the Rebellion as an opportunity to demonstrate their faith in law and order. For the most part, Republicans in Pennsylvania expressed sympathy for the plight of their western brethren but condemned any unlawful action. The strategy proved effective, and most of the leaders escaped unscathed. Conversely the Democratic and Republican Societies began to slowly wilt following Washington’s public criticism.

### **Popular Politics in Conflict: The Fourth of July**

Federalists viewed the rise of this opposition culture with a mixture of contempt and alarm. Just as Republicans believed Federalists were plotting to undermine the republic, Federalists saw Republicans as a threat to the country. As members of the federal government, Federalists considered themselves as the only legitimate spokesmen for the people. Republicans,

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<sup>207</sup>The best study of the Whiskey Rebellion remains Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). For Federalist reactions to the Rebellion see ch. 12.

<sup>208</sup>*Gazette of the United States*, 4 September 1794.

they feared, were part of a larger democratic conspiracy that, if unstopped, would plunge the country into anarchy. The Republican leaders were nothing more than “ambitious knaves” and demagogues who preyed on the ignorance of the masses. These self-styled “friends of the people” explained one Federalist “use every means to make the people abhor the laws, the constitution, and the executive officers.”<sup>209</sup>

Thus, despite the fact that by the mid-1790s two clearly defined parties existed, neither side admitted to party building nor acknowledged their opponent’s legitimacy. Instead, both saw their efforts as necessary to defend the country against the machinations of groups of men bent on destroying the republic. Both groups saw popular politics as an opportunity to demonstrate popular support and claim the mantle of defender of the Revolution. As a result holidays and celebrations, particularly the Fourth of July, became key battlegrounds in the struggle for legitimacy.<sup>210</sup>

As mentioned previously, the Society of the Cincinnati established the Fourth of July as a day to celebrate the nation and, beginning in the late 1780s, Federalists used the holiday as a way to promote the Constitution and build support for the national government. In contrast, Republican Fourth of July celebrations emphasized the principles of the American Revolution. Perhaps just as important, Republicans used the day as a chance to demonstrate loyalty to the nation. By cloaking themselves in the rhetoric of nationalism, Republicans could ward off accusations of being a faction or promoting French-style anarchy.

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<sup>209</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 31 October 1792; 11 February 1794.

<sup>210</sup> The celebration of the Fourth of July has been analyzed by a number of different scholars, most notably Len Travers. The goal here is not to “reinvent the wheel,” rather it is to illustrate the differences between how Federalists and Republicans in Pennsylvania utilized the holiday and explore how their celebrations fit into their respective approaches to popular politics and political mobilization. In addition to the previously cited words see, Diana Karter, *The Glorious Fourth: An American Holiday, an American History* (New York: Facts on File, 1989).

Newspaper evidence indicates that opponents of the Federalists held their own celebrations on the Fourth of July as early as 1789 in Carlisle, but Republicans did not regularly gather separately in Philadelphia until 1792.<sup>211</sup> That year the *National Gazette* carried an article on the Fourth of July entitled “Rule for changing a limited Republican Government into an unlimited hereditary one.” “It being necessary,” the article began, “in order to effect the change, to get rid of constitutional shackles, and popular prejudices, all possible means and occasions are to be used for both these purposes.” The “rules” suggested beginning by instilling the public with veneration of public officials and teach them to refrain from questioning authority.<sup>212</sup> Federalists’ popular political culture was, therefore, clearly the first step in undermining the republic. Republicans hoped to prevent this subversion by staging their own celebration. As one Republican explained, “At a time when some of our Citizens appear disposed to view Monarchical Power. . . different. . . [than] . . . they viewed it in 1776, we hope it will not be amiss to remind them of the principles and feelings of the Citizens of the United States in that memorable Year.” Instead of celebrating the Constitution and venerating public officials, Republicans wanted use the Fourth of July as an opportunity to remind the public of both the dangers of excessive centralization and the strength of collective action. Honoring the Revolution also helped Republicans reaffirm their patriotism.<sup>213</sup>

A heavy thunderstorm on the afternoon of July 4, 1792 forced celebrants to postpone a fireworks display. Seeing an opportunity, Republicans decided to reschedule the show for the Fourteenth of July to coincide with a planned celebration of the anniversary of the fall of the

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<sup>211</sup>*Pennsylvania Packet*, 18 July 1789; *Carlisle Gazette*, 7 July 1790.

<sup>212</sup>*National Gazette*, 4 July 1792

<sup>213</sup>*Dunlap’s American Daily Advertiser*, 4 July 1792; Koschnik, “Political Conflict and Public Contest,” Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth*, 88-106 and *passim*, Newman, *Parades and Politics of the Street*, 83-119.

Bastille. By combining the two holidays, Republicans highlighted the shared principles of the French and American Revolutions. On the Fourteenth, Philadelphians awoke to the sound of cannon fire from various ships draped in the colors of the French and American flags. Following a “brilliant display of Rockets and other fire-works” a select few retired to Oeller’s Hotel to enjoy a “splendid repast.” Following the feast, guests toasted “The French Nation; the Constitution, and King,” “Liberty or Death,” “The Rights of Men,” along with “The President of the United States.” Following the celebration, one Republican mused that, in the future, Americans might celebrate the Fourteenth of July “as our second day of eminence in the calendar of Liberty.”<sup>214</sup>

Republican efforts to claim the Fourth of July did not go unnoticed. John Fenno, the editor of the Federalist *Gazette of the United States*, responded to the idea of celebrating the Fourteenth of July as a second national holiday with an article that defended the Fourth of July as the day that rightly “receives more pointed attention from the citizens of the United States” than any other day. “It is the birth-day of a nation—it is the triumph of reason and liberty.” But, as Fenno was quick to point out, Americans only “realized what the word *Independence* imports—Laws and Rights—Peace and Prosperity—Credit and Confidence are the rich possession we now enjoy” after the ratification of the Federal Constitution. Lest anyone miss the point that the new federal government deserved the credit, Fenno concluded by noting that “every anniversary return since March, 1789 [when the federal government first convened] is noticed with additional demonstrations of joy festivity, and splendor.”<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> *Dunlap’s American Daily Advertiser*, 6 July 1792; *Federal Gazette*, 16 July 1792; *General Advertiser*, 23 July 1792. For accounts of Republican celebrations in other parts of the state see *Federal Gazette*, 20 July 1792.

<sup>215</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 25 July 1792.

Over the next few years, the two parties continued to stage separate celebrations on the Fourth of July. Because both sides denied that their activities constituted party building, accounts of the celebrations often downplayed differences. Nevertheless, the increasingly partisan nature of these meetings is clear in the published list of toasts. These salutations were not simply a way to drink more, they were an opportunity for a group to assert their principles. Typically, a select group drew up a list of toasts before the event, and guests offered their consent to the toast by raising their glasses. The number of set toasts often carried significance. For example, Federalists would drink thirteen toasts in honor of each of the original states. In some instances, after drinking to the pre-approved tributes, guests had the chance to offer “volunteer” toasts. Guests sometimes ended up raising their glasses to upwards of twenty toasts. Passing along the list of toasts to the local newspaper editor allowed the group to broadcast their message to a wider audience.<sup>216</sup>

By the mid-1790s, lists of toasts consumed throughout the state and nation filled the newspapers in the weeks following the Fourth of July. Each year the salutations became more blatantly partisan. In 1794, for example, Republican groups such as the Democratic Society drank to “The genuine republicans of all nations,” “Democratic associations,” “the Jacobin Clubs of America,” “our allies, and brethren, the Sans Culottes of France,” and reminded the “representatives of the people...[to] never forget the source of their power and the end of the appointment.” Groups more aligned with the Federalists, however, such as the Society of the

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<sup>216</sup> Koschnik, “Political Conflict and Public Contest,” 222-223; Newman, *Parades and Politics of the Street*, 29-31. See, also, Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch & Revolution: Taverngoing & Public Life in Eighteenth Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

Cincinnati, toasted “the United States of America,” “The Fair Daughters of Columbia,” “Universal liberty” and “the President of the United States.”<sup>217</sup>

As the competing lists of toasts suggests, the battle over the Fourth was waged in print as well as in the streets. Printed accounts amplified the event’s message and allowed a much wider audience to participate. Particularly because the celebrations occurred in Philadelphia, home to the federal government and where the Declaration of Independence had been signed, the printed account would often be reprinted throughout the nation. In some ways the published account was more important than the actual event. Not only would it be how the majority of people learned of what happened, but it would shape how the event was remembered. Both Federalists and Republicans understood the importance of published accounts, and the organizers often appointed a specific person to take notes on the day’s events. As had been happened at the Feast of Reason, some events even concluded with a reading of the description that would appear in the newspaper.<sup>218</sup>

The importance of the public accounts of the proceedings often led to conflicting accounts of how many people attended, what toasts made and whether or not the festivities remained peaceful. For example, Federalist and Republican newspapers gave remarkably different versions of what transpired on July 4, 1795. As mentioned in ch 1, in the summer of 1795 *Republicans* were incensed with the news of the Jay Treaty. Tensions, which had been building for months, spilled over when Bache published the previously secret provisions of the treaty on July 1. The Senate had already ratified the treaty, but Republicans nevertheless held out

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<sup>217</sup> *General Advertiser* 5,8,9 July 1794. See also, *Dunlap’s American Daily Advertiser*, 7 July 1794.

<sup>218</sup> See, for example, *General Advertiser*, 9 August 1794; Waldstreicher, *the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, *passim*; Newman, *Parades and Politics*, *passim*. On the role of print in general see, Pasley, “*Tyranny of Printers*” and Andrew W. Robertson, *The Language of Democracy: Political Rhetoric in the United States and Britain, 1790-1900* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005) and Daniel, *Scandal and Civility*.0

hope that Washington would refuse to sign. Fourth of July celebrations thus took on added significance as Republicans hoped to use the day as an opportunity to broadcast their disapproval.<sup>219</sup>

Federalists and Republican newspapers struggled to define the tone of celebrations before the Fourth had even arrived. The pages of the Republican *Aurora* teemed with articles attacking the Jay Treaty, and on July 3 “A Militia-Man” encouraged his fellow militiamen to demonstrate their opposition to the Treaty by refusing to participate in the regular parade. Instead, soldiers “ought to be clad in *mourning* to manifest your sorrow at the *last* anniversary of American *Independence*” because the Jay Treaty “had again made you the *colonies* of Great Britain.”<sup>220</sup> A Federalist correspondent responded in the *Gazette of the United States*, claiming that “[t]o judge from what the eye sees, the ear hears, the mind understands, and the federal grateful heart feels—no people were ever so favored in a government, and so happy, as the people of the United States.” Based on the representations of the Republicans, however, “the people of no country ever had greater cause of mourning, discontent, mobs, seditions, and treason, than the citizens of the United States.” Despite these efforts, the author concluded that all signs point to the fact “that the Anniversary of Independence will be honored tomorrow with demonstrations of felicity and congratulation superior to those which have distinguished any proceeding celebrations.”<sup>221</sup>

Both sides claimed to have correctly predicted the tone of the celebrations. The Republican leaning *Independent Gazetteer* declared that “the birth day of American liberty was celebrated in this city with a funeral solemnity.” Citizens looked “dejected” and the entire day

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<sup>219</sup> See, Estes, *The Jay Treaty Debate*, 71-188 for analysis of Republican reactions to the treaty.

<sup>220</sup> *Aurora*, 3 July 1795.

<sup>221</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 3 July 1795.



felt “more like the interment of liberty than the anniversary of its birth.” A somber procession of a large effigy of John Jay replaced the usual festive parade. The effigy of Jay held a pair of scales in his right hand in which “*British Gold*” weighed more than “*American liberty and Independence*.” In his left, he carried a copy of his treaty “which he extended to a group of Senators, who were grinning with pleasure and grasping at the Treaty.” A label coming from Jay’s mouth said “*Come up to my price and I will sell you my Country*.” According to the *Independent Gazetteer* “a great concourse of People” took part in the procession that marched from Kensington in the outskirts\ through the center of the city. Spectators remained absolutely silent “and scarcely a whisper was heard” until the procession made its way back to Kensington, a heavily Republican neighborhood. The crowd then burned the effigy “amid the acclamation of hundreds of citizens.” The Republican account finished by affirming that “[n]ever was a procession more peaceably conducted, no noise, no riot. The citizens seemed to vie with each other in decorous behavior.”<sup>222</sup>

The Federalist *Gazette of the United States* gave a remarkably different version of what transpired. Unless “we are strangers to those demonstrations of satisfaction and joy” explained one Federalist, “we never witnessed more heartfelt happiness than beamed from the countenances of our fellow citizens on that auspicious day.” As usual, he claimed, the city echoed with cannon fire and the ringing of bells as residents partook in various “civic and military processions.” Militia groups dined together and drank toasts such as “The Citizens of the United States: May their love of freedom be equaled by nothing but their respect for laws” and “Governor Jay.” According to this account, the processions described in the *Independent Gazetteer* did not occur until “a very late, and silent hour of the night, when the *sober* citizen had

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<sup>222</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, 6 July 1795. The *Aurora* copied the article verbatim. See, *Aurora*, 9 July 1795.

retired to rest” and consisted of no more than “a few idle and ill-intentioned persons” who were clearly “ashamed of their conduct.” After sneaking through a few side streets, the small group retreated to “a remote corner” of the city to burn what they claimed to be an effigy. The actions of these few men, concluded the author, hardly constituted a large procession. Nor did they reflect the views of the majority of Philadelphians.<sup>223</sup>

The Republican version of what happened, Secretary of the Treasury Oliver Wolcott explained, was nothing more than “a good story” and a “lie, told for the purpose of deceiving the people at a distance.” The silence and solemnity of the Republican celebrants described in the *Independent Gazetteer* stemmed from cowardliness and shame. A Federalist from Pittsburgh suggested that not only did the Republicans not act in an orderly and dignified manner, but their actions were reminiscent of the events leading up to the Whiskey Rebellion. He therefore predicted that “we may expect shortly to hear of an insurrection in Philadelphia.”<sup>224</sup>

Ascertaining which version is correct is impossible and the truth likely lies somewhere in between, but the incident highlights the importance of the press and control of the narrative. Both Federalists and Republicans in Philadelphia understood that people from across the country would read about their actions. In the end, however, what really mattered was whether Washington decided to sign the treaty. Despite their attempts to rally public opinion and demonstrate popular outrage, Republicans failed to change the president’s mind. They

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<sup>223</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 9 July 1795.

<sup>224</sup>“Oliver Wolcott to Ms. Wolcott,” 8 July 1795, George Gibbs, *Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and John Adams: Edited from the Papers of Oliver Wolcott, Secretary of the Treasury* (New York: William Van Norden, 1846), I:209; *Gazette of the United States*, 13 July 1795.

successfully organized some of the largest rallies in cities and towns across the country, but Washington ultimately determined that the treaty was the best Americans could hope for.

### **Volunteer Militia Companies and the Federalist Cultural Offensive**

Beginning in approximately 1796, Republicans in Pennsylvania changed how they approached popular politics. Their inability to stop the implementation of the Jay Treaty, in conjunction with the decline in the Democratic and Republican Societies and increasing tensions between the United States and France, forced them to reevaluate their previous strategy. Additionally, the Whiskey Rebellion and the Reign of Terror in France dramatically illustrated the potential dangers of an excess of democracy. As a result, Pennsylvania Republicans moved away from relying on volunteer societies dedicated to protecting the principles of the American Revolution and organized militia companies, tempered their support for France, scaled back the use of Revolutionary imagery, moved away from the celebration of “principles and not men” and began promoting individuals. Once he retired from office, Republicans even reversed themselves on the cult of Washington and competed with Federalists to claim the General’s legacy. Finally, the young party invested more time and effort in electioneering, and many of the leaders of the Democratic and Republican societies ran for public office. These changes did not represent a fundamental shift in the party’s principles. Members remained committed to protecting liberty and supported popular participation in government. The major difference was that, instead of competing to create a separate form of celebratory politics, Republicans in the latter part of the 1790s focused on gaining control of the existing political culture.

The absence of the Democratic and Republican Societies and rise of Republican militia groups was one of the most conspicuous changes in how Pennsylvania Republicans approached

popular political culture in the latter part of the 1790s. The Democratic and Republican Societies had been the primary organizers of many of the Republican festivals and parades. The groups had provided a structure and helped the nascent opposition develop its own rituals and symbols. By 1796, however, the Democratic and Republican Societies had ceased to meet. Members had done their best to distance themselves from the Whiskey Rebellion but Washington's public denunciation of the Democratic and Republican Societies as "self created" and a threat to the republic effectively killed the groups. Although other Republican-leaning voluntary societies such as the Society of St. Tammany, continued to meet and Republicans formed new groups including the "True Republican Society," the collapse of the Democratic and Republican Societies left a void. Over the next few years Republicans formed a series of volunteer militia companies and new, more overtly-partisan voluntary societies, as one way to fill this void.<sup>225</sup>

State and federal militia law required all able-bodied white males between the ages of eighteen and forty-five to enroll in the militia. Under the 1793 Pennsylvania Militia Act, citizens could fulfill this requirement by serving in the state militia or in a separately created volunteer company. Men who signed up with the state militia could appear on muster days in plain clothes and without a weapon, but members of the volunteer companies had to purchase a special uniform and supply their own equipment. Volunteers also met more frequently which meant that they had to have a significant amount of leisure time. As a result, volunteer companies tended to attract the wealthy and upper classes.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Link, *The Democratic-Republican Societies*, 175-209; Koschnik, "The Democratic Societies of Philadelphia and the Limits of the American Public Sphere"; Neem, "Freedom of Association in the Early Republic." On the Tammany Society see, Koschnik, "*Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together*," 48-66.

<sup>226</sup> Koschnik, "*Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together*," 97.

During the early 1790s, most volunteer militia companies aligned themselves with the Federalists. Prominent Federalist leaders such as William Bingham and Robert Wharton served as officers. A significant overlap also existed between men who joined volunteer companies and members of the Society of the Cincinnati. As mentioned previously, the militia played a central role in Federalist holidays. Volunteer militia groups tended to do much of the organization for Federalist celebrations and the display of various maneuvers often served as the main attraction. Volunteer companies also joined with the Society of the Cincinnati to visit George Washington and Governor Mifflin on holidays.<sup>227</sup>

One of the most prominent Federalist militia companies was “MacPherson’s Blues,” organized by William MacPherson during the Whiskey Rebellion. A veteran of the Revolutionary War and officer of the Society of the Cincinnati, MacPherson had served as a state legislator and in the Pennsylvania ratifying convention. He supported the Constitution and became a confidant of Alexander Hamilton. Nearly 600 men joined the Blues during the Whiskey Rebellion. Although the group was officially non-partisan, published toasts and voting records demonstrate that the majority of members supported the Federalists.<sup>228</sup>

The emerging Republican Party took notice of the Federalist sympathies of the volunteer companies and began to criticize them as elitist and part of the Republican Court.<sup>229</sup> Republicans took particular joy in being able to criticize companies such as MacPherson’s Blue as “self-created.” Since President Washington had weakened the Democratic and Republican Societies by publically denouncing them as self-created, Republicans took every opportunity to challenge

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<sup>227</sup> For example see, *Gazette of the United States*, 5 July 1795. Koschnik, “*Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together*,” 82-87.

<sup>228</sup> Koschnik, “*Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together*,” 111-114, 118-126.

<sup>229</sup> See, for example, *Aurora*, 18, 21 February 1795.

various Federalist groups on the same grounds. In August 1795 “Senex,” a correspondent in the Republican *Aurora*, pointed out that the Blues had been “raised for a *specific purpose*”—to help quell the Whiskey Rebels. Why, he asked, was the company still needed? “The law no longer acknowledges it, and if it is continued the law notwithstanding, it will be a *self-created body* of the most dangerous kind.” Tapping into deep-seated fears of a standing army, Senex warned that the group threatened the republic. The Blues were particularly dangerous because the company was “made up of men possessing the same political sentiments. Senex concluded that if the Blues did not soon disband, other, presumably Republican, companies would form in opposition.”<sup>230</sup>

The criticisms fell on deaf ears, and the increasing tensions with France and the fear of war led to the organization of more voluntary companies. Hordes of Federalists joined volunteer companies and pledged to defend their country. As one observer recalled, throughout the spring and summer of 1798 “[w]arlike excitement was so extreme that not to signalize alacrity to fight the French was a defect of patriotism, or even courage.”<sup>231</sup> Young men in particular flocked to the volunteer militia companies. With no actual combat occurring, the militia units and partisan warfare offered these men the next best opportunity to assert their manhood and patriotism. An address circulated among the working class neighborhood of the Northern Liberties called on the “youthful arm of America” to “rise up, gird on the armor of defense, stand before your aged parent and your wives” and defend the nation.<sup>232</sup> Although the address called on all young men, as historian Albrecht Koschnik explains, “the young Federalists practiced an exclusionary patriotism: they invited volunteering and demanded patriotic action, but accepted volunteers only

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<sup>230</sup> *Aurora*, 11 August 1795.

<sup>231</sup> Quoted in, Koschnik, *Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together*, 113.

<sup>232</sup> *Porcupine's Gazette*, 31 March 1798.

on their own partisan terms.” The officers of McPherson’s Blues, for example, screened applicants and rejected those whose commitment to Federalism was suspect.<sup>233</sup>

The volunteer companies used symbolism as a way to demonstrate their partisanship. At the behest of the arch-Federalist journalist William Cobbett, the Federalist companies began wearing a black cockade in their hats. Soldiers during the Revolutionary War had occasionally donned the black cockade, and the Society of the Cincinnati adopted the emblem after the war. Cobbett believed that the black, or “American,” cockade was a great way for Federalists to demonstrate their patriotism and single out those Republicans who still supported France. Signatures on a petition are important, he explained, but only a few people actually see them. A cockade, on the other hand, “will be seen by the whole city, by the friends and the *foes* of the wearer.”<sup>234</sup>

In addition to the display of black cockades and organization of new volunteer companies, Federalists composed songs and odes that expressed reverence for the federal government and condemned the French. Songs such as “Adams and Liberty” and “God Save George Washington” echoed throughout the state. Joseph Hopkinson, a Philadelphia attorney, wrote “Hail Columbia” in early 1798. The song, which was set to the tune of the “President’s March,” was met with “unbounded and repeated plaudits” when it debuted in Philadelphia. According to one witness, there had never been such excitement “witnessed in a public place; not even at France at the commencement of the revolution.”<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Koschnik, “Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together,” 118-120. See, also Seth Cotlar, “The Federalists’ Transatlantic Cultural Offensive of 1798 and the Moderation of American Democratic Discourse,” in Pasley, Robertson, Waldstreicher, eds. *Beyond the Founders*, 274-299.

<sup>234</sup> *Porcupine’s Gazette*, 4 May 1798; see also, *ibid.*, 2, 5, 7, 8, 17 May 1798; Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street*, 154-163; Koschnik, “Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together,” 115-116.

<sup>235</sup> *Porcupine’s Gazette*, 31 July 1798; Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street*, 181-182.

Federalists also sought to remove Republican and French songs from the repertoire. In the early 1790s, Republicans and proponents of the French Revolution had frequently used song and dance as a way to express their support for the French cause. The *Ça Ira*, the *Marseillaise*, and the *Carmagnole* were the most popular. As historian Simon Newman pointed out, while the songs were meant simply to entertain on one level, “it was all but impossible for contemporaries to ignore their political nature.”<sup>236</sup> The political climate changed so dramatically that, by 1798, theatergoers hissed and booed when the Philadelphia orchestra played *Ça Ira*. One Federalist correspondent demanded the theater cease playing any song “that bears the least tincture of French principles.” Refusing to heed the request, another Federalist warned, could be dangerous.<sup>237</sup>

While Federalists flaunted their popular support, Republicans struggled to hold their ground. With the Democratic and Republican Societies defunct, the opposition lacked organization and their efforts at creating a separate popular political culture floundered. In the early 1790s, for example, Republicans had proudly worn red, white, and blue cockades to demonstrate their support for France. In 1794 Bache even suggested a design and asserted that the cockade would “properly distinguish Republicans, when they meet on days of civic rejoicing.”<sup>238</sup> The French minister Pierre-Auguste Adet echoed the call in 1796 and suggested that all Frenchmen residing in America wear a tricolored cockade.<sup>239</sup> By 1798 Bache had concluded that the cockade was no longer serving its purpose. “Citizens have no business with cockades,” he wrote, “it is a military emblem which ought only to be worn by a soldier.” Bache,

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<sup>236</sup> Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street*, 177.

<sup>237</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 18, 17 February 1798. See also *Ibid*, 2 May 1798.

<sup>238</sup> “American National Cockade,” *General Advertiser*, 1 May 1794.

<sup>239</sup> Scarf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:485.



therefore, “earnestly recommended to the Republicans, the real friends of order, not to think of assuming any badge liable to misconstruction.” In short, it was time for Republicans to abandon any symbol that might link Republicans to the French.<sup>240</sup>

Bache was not alone in thinking that Republicans needed to distance themselves from France. When members of the “True Republican Society,” a new Republican voluntary society, considered displaying a French flag, a Revolutionary War veteran stood up and declared, “I was one of those who pulled down the Flag of Britain in ’75, and I now inform you that if that of France is hoisted, I shall pull it down.” The group took “this broad hint” and rejected the idea. But it would take more than removing the French flag for Republicans to disassociate themselves from France.<sup>241</sup>

Despite these attempts to change their image, Republicans suffered for their previous support for France. Although the country had originally stood united with the French, by 1797 public opinion had changed dramatically, and being associated with France had become a liability. The XYZ Affair, in particular, severely damaged Republican efforts to establish themselves as a loyal (and legitimate) opposition. When the public learned that President Adams was withholding dispatches from a diplomatic envoy sent to France to resolve the growing crisis, Republicans became convinced that the letters contained information that would damage Federalist efforts to use the threat of war to mobilize supporters. In reality, Adams knew that the contents of the letters were so damning that the public might demand war. The dispatches told the story of how the French Foreign Minister Charles Maurice de Talleyrand had demanded bribes and promises of loans before he would even officially receive the diplomats. Shocked by

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<sup>240</sup> *Aurora*, 14 May 1798.

<sup>241</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 7 May 1798.

the minister's impertinence, the diplomats had written Adams to find out how they should respond to the insult. With no knowledge of Talleyrand's actions, Republicans assumed that the dispatches portrayed France in a positive light. At least one Pennsylvania Republican, however, Representative Albert Gallatin, sensed that the dispatches might contain some damaging information. He was overheard telling a colleague that, "You are doing wrong to call for those dispatches. They will injure us."<sup>242</sup>

Adams released the dispatches on March 20, 1798. The information stunned Republicans and infuriated Pennsylvanians. From Philadelphia, Abigail Adams noted that "The public opinion is changing here very fast, and the people begin to see who have been their firm unshaken friends, steady to their interests and defenders of their Rights and Liberties." Anyone who dared appear in public with a tricolored cockade risked being assaulted. The wife of a prominent Philadelphia Republican described the atmosphere as "a state of society destructive of the ties which ordinary times bind one class of citizens to another" where "friendships were dissolved, tradesmen dismissed, and custom withdrawn from the Republican party." Women ripped partisan badges off one another's dresses, and a Federalist mob attacked Benjamin Bache's home.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Raymond Walters, Jr. *Albert Gallatin: Jeffersonian Financier and Diplomat* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1957), 107. On the XYZ Affair see, Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France, 1797-1801*, 36-73; Thomas M. Ray, "'Not One Cent for Tribute': The Public Addresses and American Popular Reaction to the XYZ Affair, 1798-1799" *Journal of the Early American Republic* 3:4 (Winter, 1983), 389-412.

<sup>243</sup> Abigail Adams to March Cranch, 13 April 1798 in Stewart Mitchell, *New Letters of Abigail Adams, 1788-1801* (Charleston: Nabu Press, 2011), 155-157; Rosemarie Zagarrri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 86-87; Susan Branson, *These Fiery Frenchified Dames: Women and Political Culture in Early national Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Frederick B. Tolles, *George Logan of Philadelphia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 149; DeConde, *The Quasi-War*, 74-84. These themes will be explored more in ch. 3.

The hostile political environment caused Republicans to reevaluate their previous positions on volunteer militia companies. Beginning in 1798 Pennsylvania Republicans organized their own volunteer militia companies. Federalists had already demonstrated how effective they could be at building a popular base of support. Perhaps more importantly, unlike the Democratic and Republican Societies, Federalists would not be able to denounce these groups as illegitimate. By taking up arms and pledging to defend the nation, Republicans could demonstrate their commitment to law and order and prove their patriotism. Finally, particularly for outspoken Republicans like Bache and his successor as editor at the *Aurora* William Duane, the militia companies could serve as protection from the angry Federalist mobs. As will be discussed later, they had good reason to want protection.<sup>244</sup>

Although a few volunteer companies supported Republican positions in the mid-1790s, Republicans mobilized on a scale approaching that of the Federalists beginning in 1798.<sup>245</sup> That year, leading Philadelphia Republicans such as Blair McClenachan, one of the officers of the Pennsylvania Democratic Society, and William Bache, the brother of the editor of the *Aurora*, formed the Republican Blues to serve as a counterweight to McPherson's Blues. Like the Federalist companies, Republicans made their politics apparent. An advertisement recruiting new members for the Southwark Light Infantry stated that "REPUBLICANS ONLY are admitted." Applicants were also required to declare their support for the principles of the Republican Party.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Koschnik, "Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together," 130-140.

<sup>245</sup> For evidence of a Republican volunteer company prior to 1798 see *General Advertiser*, 8 July 1794.

<sup>246</sup> Quoted in Koschnik, "Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together," 122; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:494.

These new volunteer militia companies helped fill the void in Republican popular political culture left with the collapse of the Democratic and Republican Societies, and they played a central role in Republican celebrations. The Republican companies selected Easter Monday, May First, and the Fourth of July as official parade days. On these days, the various militia units met at a central location such as the State House and then marched through the city. The parades usually concluded with a display of military maneuvers. Following the parades, the troops would retire to a local hotel or pub for dinner and toasts. Again, like their Federalist counterparts, the Republican companies used these salutations as a way to broadcast their political beliefs. For example, the First Light Infantry Company, also known as the Sans Culottes Company, drank to the health of “Those who established our Liberty, the patriots of ‘76” and “Sans Culottes—May they be the advance guard to the defense of their country’s liberty.”<sup>247</sup>

The inclusion of Republican volunteer militia units was not the only change in Republican celebrations. A clear difference exists between the toasts Republicans drank in the early 1790s and those in the latter part of the decade. “Principles and not men” and the closely related “Measures and not men” were two of the most common Republican toasts in early in the decade.<sup>248</sup> The phrases capture both Republican’s rejection of the Cult of Washington and their commitment to what they believed to be the true principles of the American Revolution. Beginning in about 1797, Republicans stopped using the phrases. And, as Pennsylvanian Republicans ceased raising their glasses to salute “Principles and not men,” they and other Republican groups began toasting individual men more frequently. Republicans had occasionally

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<sup>247</sup> Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:494; *Aurora*, 3 May 1798.

<sup>248</sup> *General Advertiser*, 6 July 1793; *Dunlap’s American Daily Advertiser*, 8 July 1793

toasted specific people in the early 1790s, but in the late 1790s they regularly drank toasts to men like Vice President Thomas Jefferson and Thomas McKean.<sup>249</sup>

Republicans also changed how they viewed George Washington. In 1797 the *Aurora* had attacked Washington as a “man who is the source of all the misfortunes of our country” and concluded that “if want of respect for Mr. WASHINGTON is to constitute *treason*, the United States will be found to contain very many *traitors*.”<sup>250</sup> When news of Washington’s death arrived in December 1799, however, the *Aurora* struck an entirely different tone. The paper eulogized Washington as a “distinguished character” whose “name will live to the latest posterity among the greatest men who have ornamented history, by the support of liberty and their country against tyranny.” The Republican militia companies turned out to march in a funeral procession held in Philadelphia on December 26. In its coverage of the event, the *Aurora* listed the names and party identification of each of the militia companies. Republican companies, according to this account, marched first and outnumbered Federalists fifteen to eight. The number of men in each company is not listed, and it is likely that more Federalists participated. Coverage in the *Aurora*, however, leaves the impression that Republicans were in the majority. The account of the services printed in the *Gazette of the United States*, on the other hand, does not list the individual companies and focuses on the public officials who participated and on Washington’s horse, which was rider-less and draped in black with a reversed pair of boots in the stirrups, a custom in military funerals. The *Aurora* coverage ignored the presence and symbolism of the horse completely.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> See, for example *Aurora*, 7 July, 13 November 1797, 6, 7 July 1798.

<sup>250</sup> *Aurora*, 12 May 1797; Scarf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:489, Newman, “Principles or Men?,” 497.

<sup>251</sup> *Aurora*, 19, 24, 27, 28 December 1799; *Gazette of the United States*, 23, 27 December 1799; Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street*, 501-502; Scarf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:502; Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father*, 7-30 and 47-50.

Republicans did not, however, blindly embrace all aspects of the Federalist celebration of individual men. Republican militias, for example, refused to participate in a ceremony honoring President John Adams's return to Philadelphia after an extended absence. Republicans writing under pseudonyms like "No Idolater" in the *Aurora* angrily rejected a call by the adjunct general of the volunteer militia to participate in the parade to show "respect" for the president. "An Old Solider" pointed out that Federalists justified treating Washington in a similar manner because he "had saved his country, and therefore extraordinary honours were due to him." If that were the case, he continued, "What is now to be the excuse?" In response to claims that the militia should march out of respect for the office, one Republican pointed out that no parade or festivities marked Vice President Thomas Jefferson's return.<sup>252</sup>

In addition to organizing militia groups and moving away from "principles not men," Pennsylvania Republicans in the late 1790s celebrated for different reasons from their Federalist counterparts. As will be expanded upon in later chapters, Republicans began to focus more on electoral politics in the aftermath of the Jay Treaty. The public demonstrations and symbolic display of opposition to the treaty proved insufficient. Change had to come from within the halls of government. As a result, Republicans put more effort into winning elections. This change of focus is reflected in *what* Republicans celebrated as well as in how and when they celebrated. Whereas Republican fêtes in the early 1790s tended to honor principles and/or the French Revolution, the Grand Jubilee in 1799 celebrated the recent election of Republican Thomas McKean as governor.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>252</sup>"No Idolater," *Aurora*, 11 November 1797; "An Old Solider," *Aurora*, 4 November 1797; Scarf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:491.

<sup>253</sup> See ch. 4 for further details on the election of 1799.

The Grand Jubilee occurred on October 24, 1799 at Zeigler's Plains in the northern part of the city. Like many other celebrations, the jubilee was steeped in classical symbolism designed to recall the glory of ancient Rome. The event included the ritual sacrifice of a "fine fat steer...on the altar of liberty beneath the flag of America and surmounted by the classical emblems of liberty and peace" A temporary amphitheater was constructed to enable the crowd to witness the spectacle. Following the sacrifice, "libations of red and white wine were poured out on the altar, and the classical mind was regaled with inhaling the mixed odors of the libation and sweet savors of the victim." In the afternoon, celebrants fired two British cannons that had been seized during the Revolutionary War and fired guns in honor of the counties that voted for McKean. That night, the party marched to the houses of leading Republicans and serenaded them with the "song of 1776."<sup>254</sup>

The *Aurora* described the jubilee as a celebration of "the triumph of the principles of republicanism over *foreign factions*—the success of American principles and integrity." The event symbolically linked McKean's victory with the ancient struggle between liberty and tyranny in general and the colonists' triumph over the British in particular. The battle they were celebrating, however, had not taken place on the streets or in the press. It occurred at the ballot box. Republicans, by the end of the 1790s, had concluded that the best way to defeat the forces of monarchy and aristocracy was by winning election.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> *Aurora*, 25 October 1799; Scarf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 498.

<sup>255</sup> *Aurora*, 25 October 1799.

*The Mob tumultuous instant seize  
With venom'd rage on whom they please;  
The People cannot err!  
Can it be wrong, in Freedom's cause,  
To tread down justice, order, laws,  
When all the mob concur?*

--Joseph Stansbury, 1779

### **Chapter 3: Popular Uprisings**

Riots and popular uprisings are some of the most powerful forms of political expression. They allow the voiceless to be heard and, when wielded carefully, can often achieve results where other methods failed. Crowd action, however, is also one of the most unwieldy weapons. As examples throughout history demonstrate, even small acts of political violence can escalate into wide-spread rebellion. Despite their uncertain nature, however, popular uprisings provide groups and individuals with an important avenue for asserting their will.<sup>256</sup>

A number of historians have explored crowd action and rioting in early America. Building on E.P. Thompson's work on the "moral economy of the crowd" in England, scholars including Alfred Young and Pauline Maier have demonstrated that mobs in colonial America helped enforce the will of the community. These uprisings tended to be limited to specific targets and rarely resulted in the loss of life. Thomas Slaughter found, however, that riots in rural areas were more likely to be violent and result in casualties. According to Paul Gilje, the tradition of crowd action broke down in the decades following the American Revolution as America's

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<sup>256</sup> For a broad look at the role of popular uprisings throughout American history see, Thom Paul Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).



corporate/communal values gave way to individualism. Gilje also noted that riots in the nineteenth century, unlike crowd action in the eighteenth century, were fueled by racial and ethnic tensions. Terry Bouton, who focused on popular uprisings in Pennsylvania, likewise found that attitudes towards popular uprisings changed in the late 1700s. Bouton argued that rural farmers turned to popular uprisings in the 1780s and 1790s to “defend their ideas of political and economic equality.” These protests, Bouton claims, helped fuel a conservative backlash and led to creation of “more permanent ‘barriers against democracy.’”<sup>257</sup> These writers have made significant contributions to clarifying the role of mobs and riots in the late eighteenth century, but important questions remain. The relationships between popular uprisings, the debate over the role of citizens in a representative government, and the rise of political parties, for example, remains underexplored. Gilje notes that Republicans and Federalists differed in their view of popular uprisings but does not investigate how these attitudes changed over time. Moreover, he does not distinguish between town meetings, public demonstrations, and riots—they all fall under the category of “politics out-of-doors.” As a result, Gilje’s work does not address the different ways partisans used each form of political mobilization. Bouton puts crowd action along a continuum of different forms of political mobilization and notes that Pennsylvanians used it only when other methods failed, but his focus is on popular uprisings and does not explore how changing attitudes towards popular uprisings related to broader trends in political mobilization and evolving views on the role of citizens. Popular uprisings helped shape the development of political parties in Pennsylvania and forced members of the emerging

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<sup>257</sup>Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: “The People,” the Founders and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7-8.

Republican Party to accept petitioning and voting as the only legitimate ways citizens could participate in the deliberative process.<sup>258</sup>

Pennsylvanians inherited the concept of “moral economy of the crowd” from England and many residents accepted limited riots and popular uprisings as legitimate forms of political mobilization. At a time when the people were shut out of the deliberative process and the institutions of the state were weak and often ineffective, mobs acted as the police for the will of the community. Mobs also formed in response to laws considered unjust or when locals felt that their basic rights and liberties had been violated. Participants often used ritualized violence as a way to differentiate their actions from random acts of violence and emphasize that they targeted an idea or principle, not just an individual. Although these crowds acted outside the law, participants rarely faced consequences. Local militias often joined the protests, which added to their legitimacy and made the regulation of them difficult. The few instances where rioters were jailed often led to another mob forming to free the prisoners.<sup>259</sup>

This tradition of crowd action and political violence played a central role in the years leading up to and immediately following the Declaration of Independence. During the 1760s and

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<sup>258</sup> There exists a vast literature on violence and popular uprisings in England and America. For English crowds see, E.P. Thompson, “The moral Economy of the English Crowd,” *Past and Present*, 51 (1971): 76-136; Thompson, “Patrician Society, Plebian Culture,” *Journal of Social History*, 7 (1974): 382-405; Gordon S. Wood, “A Note on the Mobs in the American Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 3:23 (1966): 635-642; John R. Howe, Jr. “Republican Thought and the Political Violence of the 1790s” *American Quarterly*, 19:2 (Summer 1967): 147-165; Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to the Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972); Alfred Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976); Paul Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763-1834* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Thomas P. Slaughter, “Crowds in Eighteenth-Century America: Reflections and New Directions,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 115:1 (January, 1991): 3-34; William Pencak, et al. eds, *Riot and Revelry in Early America* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); Alfred Young, *Liberty Tree: Ordinary People and the American Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Jason Frank, *Constituent Moments: Enacting the People* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>259</sup> On the use of ritual and participation of the militia, see, Robert W. T. Martin, *Government by Dissent: Protest, Resistance, and Radical Democratic Thought in the Early American Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 23-25

1770s, mobs took to the streets to fight against new taxes and against a perceived conspiracy to deprive Americans of their basic liberties.<sup>260</sup> Following the Revolution, some Pennsylvanians began to question the moral economy of the crowd. The institution of a representative government meant that citizens had legal means of redressing any grievances. In addition, the Revolution demonstrated the potential power of crowd action and incidents like the Fort Wilson Riot and the Philadelphia Mutiny convinced many elite Pennsylvanians that crowd action posed a threat to order. Nevertheless, some residents continued to turn to mobbing to protest laws deemed unjust.<sup>261</sup> Particularly in western parts of the state, Pennsylvanians attacked tax collectors, shut-down court houses, and blocked main roads to protest taxes. These incidents, in turn, fueled the movement to strengthen the institutions of state. The result was the adoption of new state and federal constitutions. Pennsylvania ratified the Federal Constitution quickly, but a number of citizens saw the new government as a retreat from the ideals of the Revolution, and violence and insurrections continued.

Resentments over the Constitution and Federalist policies culminated in the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794. While the insurgents believed they were fighting to defend their rights and liberties, George Washington and other Federalists considered the rebellion treason and called up a force of 13,000 militiamen to demonstrate that the new government would not tolerate popular violence. Members of the nascent Republican Party joined the condemnation of the rebels and tried to use the opportunity to differentiate their legitimate opposition to the Federalists with the illegitimate actions of the activists in the west. While President Washington managed to quash

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<sup>260</sup> On violence and popular uprisings during the Revolution see, Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); Benjamin Carp, *Rebels Rising: Cities and the America Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Barbara Clark Smith, *The Freedoms We Lost: Consent and Resistance in Revolutionary America* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

<sup>261</sup> Terry Bouton, "A Road Closed: Rural insurgency in Post-independence Pennsylvania," *The Journal of American History*, 87:3 (Dec. 2000), 855-87.

the Whiskey Rebellion and restore law and order to the western parts of the state, his administration created deep political divisions that only intensified after his retirement. Political parties were still in their infancy and had not developed sufficiently to contain the partisan animosity. Fueled by changes in the political rhetoric, partisan battles often spilled into the streets. In an attempt to undermine the growth of the Republican Party, Federalist passed the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798. Republicans viewed these laws as unconstitutional and experimented with popular constitutionalism and nullification. The outbreak of Fries's Rebellion in 1798 and 1799, however, caused Republicans to reevaluate their approach and led them to commit to legal forms of protest. This tumultuous end to the decade helped solidify the existence of political parties as a way for Pennsylvanians to legally and peacefully participate in the deliberative process.

### **Mobbing During the Revolutionary War: Fort Wilson's Riot**

Popular uprisings in response to unpopular legislation such as the Stamp Act marked the opening salvos of the American Revolution, and crowds played an important role throughout the showdown between the colonists and Great Britain. During the war years, Philadelphians relied on mobs to enforce price controls and to punish suspected Tories. While the system of town meetings and crowd action worked well for laborers and artisans, wealthy Philadelphians began to see the potential danger of popular violence. Ft. Wilson's Riot, a violent clash between a Philadelphia mob and a few well-known state officials, only confirmed this fear.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Steven Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class: The Philadelphia Militia and Lower Sort During the American Revolution* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Richard Alan Ryerson, *The Revolution is Now Begun: The Radical Committees of Philadelphia, 1765-1776* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

In October 1779, a period one historian refers to as “the highwater mark of Radical democracy in Pennsylvania during the revolutionary period,” radicals in Philadelphia began to conclude that their more conservative political opponents might be a threat to the Revolution, and some radicals began to discuss driving their opponents from town.<sup>263</sup> After receiving word that they could be in danger, a few well-known conservative politicians met at the house of the James Wilson, a prominent attorney and politician. Wilson had signed the Declaration of Independence and supported the Revolution, but he also defended the rights of Loyalists and was accused of aiding the British during their occupation. Over the protestations of leading radical politicians such as Charles Peale and Dr. James Hutchinson, the militia and a growing crowd of angry citizens gathered in front of Wilson’s residence. Accounts of what happened next are inconsistent, but witnesses in the street reported that someone from the house opened fire on the crowd. Troops returned a volley, and a few men from the crowd rushed the house. In the ensuing mêlée, at least one militiaman was killed, and a number of men from both sides suffered injuries. Only the arrival of federal soldiers prevented any worse consequences. The threat of violence hung over the city for days, and many of the men who had taken refuge in Wilson’s house were forced to leave town for their safety. Although some members of the mob were arrested, a crowd that gathered in front of the jail forced their release.<sup>264</sup>

Fort Wilson’s Riot illustrates one of the dangers of accepting the legitimacy of mob action. Political leaders who had happily stood by as crowds vented their anger on the British

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<sup>263</sup> Robert Brunhouse, *The Counter Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), 75-76.

<sup>264</sup> J. Thomas Scarf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1884) 1: 401-402; C. Page Smith, “The Attack on Fort Wilson,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 78:2 (April 1954): 177-188; John K. Alexander, “The Fort Wilson Incident 1779: A Case Study of the Revolutionary Crowd,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3:31 (1974):589-612; Rosswrum, *Arms, Country, and Class*, 430-465.

found that, once unleashed, popular violence proved extraordinarily difficult to control. This struggle to strike a balance between acceptable crowd behavior and the need for order is a theme that would continue in the years following the Revolution.<sup>265</sup>

## **Crowd Action after the Revolution**

The end of the Revolutionary War and the institution of a representative government led Pennsylvanians to reconsider the legitimacy of riots and popular uprisings. Communities had accepted popular uprisings as legitimate because the people did not have a voice in the deliberative process. Under the new government, citizens were represented by elected officials who theoretically embodied the public will. This system should, therefore, remove the need for crowd action. Should a perceived injustice occur, citizens and communities could petition their representatives. If the problem continued, voters could theoretically express their will by voting for a different representative at the next election.<sup>266</sup>

The Revolution altered people's perception of popular uprisings in other ways as well. Riots in the colonial era were usually contained, and most people accepted them as a normal part of life without giving much thought to the potential for serious harm. The mobs and riots of the Revolution forced Americans to reconsider the power of the masses. A general belief that republics were weak by nature exacerbated this growing fear of crowds. Political theorists argued that republics were inherently unstable and prone to decay and Americans were keenly aware

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<sup>265</sup>Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of American Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 319-320

<sup>266</sup> John Parker and Carol Urness, eds., *The American Revolution: A Heritage of Change* (Minneapolis: The Associates of the James Ford Bell Library, 1975); Smith, *The Freedoms We Lost*, 183-209; Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 85. John L. Brooke's analysis of the "Revolutionary Settlement" in the Hudson Valley is also particularly helpful in understanding the changing views of popular uprisings. John L. Brooke, *Columbia Rising: Civil Life on the Upper Hudson from the Revolution to the Age of Jackson* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

that their experiment could fail. Broadly speaking, two threats to the health and stability of a republic existed: tyranny and mobocracy. Republics failed because power became overly concentrated in either the hands of the few or in the hands of the many. After waging a war against the perceived tyranny of the British crown, some Americans—particularly members of the gentry—began to worry that the new threat to a successful nation might come from below in the form of the lower classes. As Benjamin Rush explained, “In our opposition to monarchy, we forgot that the temple of tyranny has two doors. We bolted one of them by proper restraints; but we left the other open, by neglecting to guard against the effects of our own ignorance and licentiousness.”<sup>267</sup>

The unease of the nation’s elite and the fact that a representative government theoretically negated the need for crowd action did not, however, stop some Pennsylvanians from concluding that they needed to take action into their own hands. Popular uprisings continued to occur both in Philadelphia and in the western parts of the state, and many Pennsylvanians still accepted at least the threat of violence as a legitimate form of political expression.

The smoke had barely cleared from the battlefield when the new representative government faced its first major popular uprising. In the summer of 1783, with the war over, the new nation faced the difficult task of disbanding the Continental Army and dealing with the soldiers’ pay. Robert Morris, Superintendent of Finance, concluded early on that the process of untangling the various accounts might take years. The Confederation Congress had hoped that

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<sup>267</sup> John Howe, “Attitudes Toward Violence in the Pre-War Period,” in *The American Revolution: A Heritage of Change*, 84-95; Rush quoted in Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 114. The classic works on republicanism in the Revolutionary Era are Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) and Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969).

soldiers would accept furloughs as a compromise, but some soldiers refused to lay down their arms until they knew for certain that they would be paid. On June 13, soldiers stationed at the Philadelphia barracks sent a strongly worded petition demanding that Congress settle their accounts. Some of these troops belonged to the Pennsylvania Line and had participated in another mutiny in 1781.<sup>268</sup> Meanwhile, a contingent of about eighty soldiers stationed in Lancaster, fearful that they would be sent home with nothing, ignored orders from their commanders and began to march toward Philadelphia. With a crowd of citizens cheering them on, the Lancaster soldiers arrived in Philadelphia on Friday, June 20 and joined the other troops.<sup>269</sup>

When the first reports of the march reached Philadelphia, Congress, which met one floor below the Pennsylvania Executive Council in the Pennsylvania State House, appointed a committee to confer with John Dickinson, the president of the state, and the Supreme Executive Council. The committee requested that the state take immediate steps to ensure Congress' safety. Much to the committee's dismay, Dickinson and the Council refused to summon the Philadelphia militia. Pennsylvania officials knew that calling out the militia might exacerbate the situation. Considering the part the militia had played in the Fort Wilson's Riot, the state could not be sure

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<sup>268</sup> The 1781 mutiny occurred while the army was stationed in New Jersey and was over frustration stemming from inadequate food, clothing, and pay. See, Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution*, 91-92.

<sup>269</sup> There are several eye-witness accounts to what occurred during the Mutiny. Although small discrepancies exist, there is a general consensus on the timeline of events. For documents related to the Mutiny see, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, ed. Worthington C. Ford, et al. (Washington, D.C., 1904-1937), 24:410-420 [hereafter *JCC*]; Paul H. Smith, et al., eds., *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789* (Washington, D.C: Library of Congress)20:345-376, 417-450 [hereafter *LDC*]; *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: Theo., Fenn, 1853), 13:606-609, 656-662 [hereafter *Colonial Records*]. The most thorough account of the Munity remains Varnum L. Collins, *The Continental Congress at Princeton* (Princeton: University Library, 1908), 9-41. See also, Kenneth R. Bowling, "New Light on the Philadelphia Mutiny of 1783: Federal-State Confrontation at the Close of the War for Independence," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 101:4 (October, 1977): 419-450.



the militia would actually respond to orders to appear. Of even more concern to Dickinson and the Council was the thought that the militia might join the mutiny.<sup>270</sup>

The mutiny reached its climax on Saturday, June 21. Around noon, between 250 and 300 soldiers marched (without their commanding officers) from the barracks to the State House and surrounded the building. Congress did not regularly meet on Saturday, suggesting that the soldiers intended to confront the Pennsylvania Executive Council, which had just gathered. As historian Kenneth R. Bowling has argued, the soldiers likely concluded that they would have more luck receiving their pay from the state of Pennsylvania than from the financially strapped Congress. The troops sent the Council a hastily written address demanding the right to appoint new officers and warned that if they did not receive a response in 20 minutes “we shall instantly let in those injured soldiers upon you and abide by the consequences.” Because they saw the soldiers’ actions as illegitimate, Dickinson and the Council simply ignored the letter. Meanwhile, members of Congress, who had been called into a special session, filtered past the growing crowd and into the State House. Surveying the scene, James Madison determined that “No danger from premeditated violence was apprehended” but he noted “that spirituous drink from the tipling houses adjoining began to be liberally served out to the Soldiers & might lead to hast excesses.” The soldiers, however, refrained from doing more than hurling insults and occasionally pointing their weapons at the building. The crowd eventually allowed the officials to leave the State House, but the militia remained unsatisfied.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Report of Committee, 1 July 1783, *JCC*, 24:412-16; Committee of Congress to William Jackson, 19 June 1783, *LDC*, 24:345; James Madison’s Notes of Debates, 19 June 1783, *LDC*, 24:345-347.

<sup>271</sup> Report of Committee, 1 July 1783, *JCC*, 24:416-420; James Madison’s Notes of Debates, 21 June 1783, *LDC*, 20:351-353; “A message from the President and the Supreme Executive Council to the General Assembly,” *Colonial Records*, 13:645-659. Although Madison did not feel in danger, Elias Boudinot described the event as “a most dangerous insurrection and mutiny” and that the soldiers “kept us Prisoners in a manner near 3 hours.” Elias Boudinot to Elisha Boudinot, 23 June 1783, *LDC*, 20:356.

Following the tense stand-off at the State House, Elias Boudinot, President of Congress, dashed off a letter to General Washington, who was then stationed in Newburgh, New York, informing him of the situation and requesting that he send troops. That evening, members of Congress once again gathered and demanded that Dickinson and the Executive Council take steps to protect them. If the state refused, Congress would leave Philadelphia and seek refuge in Princeton.<sup>272</sup>

Despite this threat of Congress moving to Princeton and rumors of further violence, Pennsylvania officials concluded that no real danger existed. Members of the Executive Council spoke with citizens and found that most “were impressed with an opinion of the pacific disposition of the soldiery in the Barracks” and saw no need to call out the militia. In fact, the Executive Council reported that “the citizens considered [the soldiers] as objects of compassion rather than terror or resentment.” State officials likewise spoke with members of the militia and found that they were “disinclined to act upon the present occasion.” Thus, while the Executive Council “regretted the insult which had happened” they saw no reason respond with force.<sup>273</sup>

Boudinot and other nationalists such as Alexander Hamilton, already irked by Pennsylvania’s initial refusal to call out the militia, were furious with this response. To them, the honor and dignity of Congress and been grossly insulted. Unlike the Philadelphia residents who cheered the mutiny, Hamilton and Boudinot believed that the soldiers constituted an unruly and illegitimate mob that threatened to undermine the government’s authority. Moreover, by not taking immediate action, Pennsylvania officials implied that the mutiny was a legitimate tactic.

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<sup>272</sup> Elias Boudinot to George Washington, 21 June 1783, *LDC*, 20:349-351; Committee of Congress to John Dickinson, 23 June 1783, *LDC*, 20:359; Supreme Executive Council Minutes, 21 June 1783, *Colonial Records*, 13:606-607.

<sup>273</sup> “A message from the President and the Supreme Executive Council to the General Assembly,” *Colonial Records*, 13:659-661.

<sup>274</sup> Boudinot, therefore, took action himself and, on the morning of June 24, issued a proclamation calling on Congress to withdraw from the city immediately and to assemble in Princeton two days later. The mutiny quickly fizzled following the departure of Congress and many assumed that, having made his point, Boudinot would recall members to Philadelphia shortly. He did not, and the Confederation Congress never returned.<sup>275</sup>

The public's response to the mutiny and decampment of Congress illustrates Pennsylvanians' complex relationship with popular uprisings at the end of the Revolutionary War. As historian Gary Nash argued, "Insubordination and direct defiance of officers' authority is the most radical action any man under arms can take."<sup>276</sup> But, throughout the demonstration, Philadelphians seemed more inclined to support the mutinous soldiers than their elected representatives in Congress. Philadelphians did not appear to regret the way they had behaved either. Instead, residents blamed Congress for overreacting and were only "sorry that better reasons were not assigned for their removal." A few prominent men felt differently and organized a petition drive to prove that the people stood ready to do whatever Congress needed to prevent another incident. The petition, however, garnered only 873 signatures, well below the 2,000 names the organizers had anticipated. According to one witness, the entire address was little more than a farce and while "it is pretended to be from the citizens of Philadelphia" those who did sign only did so because influential men like Charles Willson Peale went "about from house to house." Boudinot found the effort almost insulting and heard that "5 to one could be obtained to keep Congress out of the City." Thus, the Mutiny and the public's response suggest

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<sup>274</sup> Report of Committee, 1 July 1783, *JCC*, 416-421 Elias Boudinot to Elisha Boudinot, 23 June 1783, *LDC*, 20:356. On issues raised about state v. federal power see, Bowling, "New Light on the Philadelphia Munity."

<sup>275</sup> Elias Boudinot's Proclamation, 24 June 1783, *LDC*, 20:360-361; Bowling, 442-450. The new federal government would meet in Philadelphia from 1790 to 1800.

<sup>276</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 358.

that, even with a representative government, many citizens still supported the people's right to use crowd action to influence the deliberative process.<sup>277</sup>

## **Crowd Action in the West**

The tradition of popular uprisings continued in the western parts of Pennsylvania following the end of the Revolution as well. As historian Thomas P. Slaughter has observed, individuals who lived on the fringes of civilization occupied a “liminal” state and engaged in collective violence more frequently than those who lived in more developed and populated parts of the state. Far removed from the center of power and civilization, Pennsylvanians living on the frontier embraced a form of democratic localism that emphasized the community over the individual. Settlers in the west were under constant threat of attack from Native Americans and were prey to the whims of Mother Nature. They needed to work together to survive. In the absence of any real state power because of their locale, residents turned to extra-legal forms of political mobilization to enforce the will of the community and protect their rights.<sup>278</sup>

Although they had wholeheartedly supported the patriot cause, the Revolutionary War left many rural Pennsylvanians broke and bitter. In addition to long-standing grievances stemming from lack of protection from Native Americans, westerners were frustrated with what the American Revolution had not accomplished. They had hoped the Revolution would lead to more egalitarian society and that life would get better. Instead life became harder following the

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<sup>277</sup> The full text of the petition can be found in Collins, *The Continental Congress at Princeton*, 88-89; Captain P.S. DuPonceau to Robert Livingston, 15 August 1783, quoted in Collins, *The Continental Congress at Princeton*, 86; Richard Peters to Thomas Fitzsimmons, 26 July 1783, *LDC*, 20:451-452; Elias Boudinot to Benjamin Rush, 25 July 1783, *LDC*, 20L 448-451; *Independent Gazette*, 28 June 1783; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 28 June 1783. After tempers cooled and Philadelphians realized that Congress was not coming back some writers began to defend the actions of Congress. See, for example, *The Freeman's Journal*, 16, 23 July 1783.

<sup>278</sup> Slaughter, “Crowds in Eighteenth-Century America,” 15-34.

Revolution. The economy sunk into a depression, and formerly prosperous farmers found themselves teetering on the edge of destitution. Falling prices for crops—coupled with a scarcity of cash—led to chronic debt which, in turn, led to foreclosure. Meanwhile, a small group of wealthy speculators took advantage of the crisis and purchased a vast amount of land for a fraction of what it was worth. As a result, wealth and property became even more concentrated.<sup>279</sup>

Distressed westerners initially sought a political remedy to their situation. They elected strong democrats like William Findley and John Smilie who fought for reforms that would make cheap land and credit readily available.<sup>280</sup> Communities held meetings and sent a steady stream of petitions pleading for help to Philadelphia. These efforts to work within the political system were, however, hampered by the social conditions that existed within the backcountry. Western Pennsylvania was an ethnically and religiously diverse region and, despite often sharing similar goals, the differing groups did not always work well together. Even had they been willing to mount coordinated efforts, poor roads and sparse settlement made travel and communication difficult. As a result, westerners struggled to create a broad political movement, and they were unable to bring about real change.<sup>281</sup>

Unable to influence policy through political channels, frustrated westerners turned to other forms of protest. As the historian Terry Bouton has demonstrated, during the 1780s

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<sup>279</sup> Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 88-104; Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 46-89.

<sup>280</sup> John Caldwell, *William Findley from West of the Mountains: A Politician in Pennsylvania, 1783-1791* (Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000); Edward Everett, "John Smilie, Forgotten Champion of Early Western Pennsylvania," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, 33:3 and 4 (September-December 1950): 77-89.

<sup>281</sup> The best discussion of the economic situation in Pennsylvania following the Revolution is R. Eugene Harper, *The Transformation of Western Pennsylvania, 1770-1800* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991). See also, Dorothy Elaine Fennell, "From Rebelliousness to Insurrection: A Social History of the Whiskey Rebellion, 1765-1802" (Ph.D. diss, University of Pittsburgh, 1981). On efforts to work within the political structure see, Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 105-144. On the movements to create a new state see, Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 26-45.

“ordinary” men and women in western Pennsylvania employed diverse forms of crowd action to protect suffering families from tax and debt collectors. Communities would form associations and pledge to take whatever steps necessary to prevent the collection of taxes. Tactics included excise officials refusing to collect taxes from poor families, justices of the peace declining to hear cases relating to taxes, juries declining to convict delinquent taxpayers, and officials who refused to collect money from their struggling neighbors. Although resistance often took the form of nonviolent civil disobedience, violence remained an option.<sup>282</sup>

Tax collectors who attempted to do their job, in particular, regularly faced the wrath of rural mobs. Between 1784 and 1790, westerners forced at least three excise collectors to resign their position. These incidents were ritualized and followed traditional patterns that can be traced back to England. Attackers usually donned disguises and struck at night. Tactics to obscure identity were less about preventing perpetrators from being caught than they were a way for assailants symbolically act on behalf of the community. The ritualization also helped establish that the attack represented something larger than a random act of violence or a personal vendetta.<sup>283</sup> Targets typically received at least one warning and were given time to repent; oftentimes, this opportunity was accepted. For example, in Fayette County in 1784, a group of disguised men broke into the house of a newly appointed excise collector and warned of severe consequences if the tax collector did not immediately turn over the account books and resign his position. The collector agreed, and the crowd left without further incident. Excise officers brave (or stupid) enough to ignore the warnings were punished. In 1786, an angry crowd surrounded a Washington County collector who stubbornly continued to collect taxes and forced him to

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<sup>282</sup> Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 145-167; Fennell “From Rebelliousness to Insurrection,” 5-43.

<sup>283</sup> Martin, *Government by Dissent*, 23-24.

“Imprecate curses on himself, the Commission and the Authority that gave it to him.” The mob then “cut off half his hair,” put the other half in a pigtail, and forced the collector to march through nearby towns. Finally, the mob marched to the border of Westmoreland County and released the officer “with Threats of utter Desolution should he dare to return.”<sup>284</sup>

Popular uprisings such as these proved extraordinarily effective. Officials from throughout the state reported that they were unable to collect taxes and warned that if they continued to try, their efforts would likely lead to violence. In 1784, the state treasurer reported that “there seems to be almost a total stop in the Collecting of Taxes.” Under normal circumstances, state leaders could have turned to the militia but, considering the mood of the general public, leaders were concerned that the troops would refuse to march against their neighbors. Thus, despite their lack of influence in the representative government, the people of western Pennsylvania managed to repeal the burdensome taxes and assert their will through crowd action.<sup>285</sup>

The situation in western Pennsylvania was not unique. Incidents of crowd action and violence against tax collectors occurred throughout the nation. Most notably, farmers in western Massachusetts rebelled against new taxes and forcibly shut down courts. The men who participated in Shays’s Rebellion, like the members of the Pennsylvania Munity and the farmers in western Pennsylvania, considered their actions justified. The insurgents argued that they were exercising their basic rights of self-government and that their lack of influence over the deliberative process left them with no other choice. Other citizens, however, believed that the

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<sup>284</sup> “Deposition of James Bell” and “Deposition of Philip Jenkins,” Samuel Hazard, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives* (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns & Co., 1854), ser. 1, vol. 10, 594-595; Dorsey Penticost to Supreme Executive Council, 16 April 1786, *ibid.*, 757; Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 159-163; Fennell, “From Rebelliousness to Insurrection,” 5-43.

<sup>285</sup> Quoted in Bouton, *Taming the Revolution*, 166.

existence of a representative government provided a peaceful and legal way of addressing any concerns and that there was no longer a place for mobs. As historian Jason Frank has shown, for some Americans “mobbing was the most direct manifestation of the democracy that the representative principle was meant to blunt.”<sup>286</sup>

## **The Constitution and Carlisle Riot**

The number of popular uprisings along with irresponsible, but popular, policies such as debt-forgiveness and printing of paper money that some states pursued convinced many elite Americans that the Revolution had gone too far. To them, democracy seemed to be poisoning the republican experiment. With the economy on the verge of collapse, nationalists and supporters of a strong central government called a convention ostensibly aimed at amending the Articles of Confederation. Instead of building on the existing government, however, the delegates began creating a new one that invested the national government with more power and the strength to crush popular uprisings.<sup>287</sup>

The resulting Federal Constitution represented a clear attempt by the elite and wealthy to put an end to the type of tumults seen in western Pennsylvania. In order for the country to succeed, they argued, liberty must be balanced with order. The framers embraced the concept of popular sovereignty, but argued that the government needed to be insulated from the twists and

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<sup>286</sup> Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 97.

<sup>287</sup> On the Constitution see, Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); Bouton, *Taming the Revolution*, 171-184. For a helpful analysis on how tax policy in the 1780s led to the adoption of the new Constitution see, Roger H. Brown, *Redeeming the Republic: Federalists, Taxation, and the Origins of the Constitution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).



turns of public opinion. Economic policy, in particular, must be dictated by what was best for the nation long-term and not simply by what was popular at the moment or in a particular area.<sup>288</sup>

Federalists in Pennsylvania launched a massive publicity campaign and managed to force a vote on the new Constitution before the opposition had time to mobilize. Critics of the Constitution did their best to stall—even hiding to prevent a quorum—but were unorganized and unable to prevent the inevitable: on December 12, 1787, Pennsylvania became the second state to ratify the Constitution by a vote of 46 to 23.<sup>289</sup>

Even with the new Constitution ratified, the public remained deeply divided. Residents, particularly those in the west, saw the Constitution as an assault on their rights and an attempt to further deprive them of a voice in government. Frustrations erupted into a riot in Carlisle, a center of Anti-federalism. The Carlisle Riot, began when a group of local Federalists gathered on December 26, 1787, “to testify their approbation of the proceedings of the late Convention.”<sup>290</sup> Festivities had just commenced, and the celebrants were preparing to fire a cannon when “a number of men armed with bludgeons” began to circle the Federalists. The crowd, which included many well-known critics of the Constitution, demanded that the Federalists immediately disperse because “their conduct was contrary to the minds of three-fourths the inhabitants.” Major James Wilson, a well-known Federalist and the event’s organizer, attempted to respond that they had every right to assemble peacefully, but before he could finish a few men

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<sup>288</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969).

<sup>289</sup> On ratification in Pennsylvania see, Pauline Maier, *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 97-124.

<sup>290</sup> For a discussion of the Carlisle Riot in the context of the broader Anti-federalist movement, see, Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism & the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 109-120 and Saul Cornell, “Aristocracy Assailed: The Ideology of Backcountry Anti-Federalism,” *The Journal. Of American History*, 76:4 (March 1990): 1148-1172.

attacked him, continuing to beat him even after he fell. Outnumbered and unarmed, the Federalists helped Wilson to his feet and retreated. Meanwhile, the mob proceeded to build a large bonfire and burn the cannon along with a copy of the new Constitution.<sup>291</sup>

Federalists returned the following day carrying arms and determined to have their celebration. Crowds of armed men appeared during the festivities but made no attempt to interfere with the celebrations. After about two hours, the Federalists concluded their festivities and went home. As soon as they had departed, a drum began to beat and an armed mob assembled. In addition to their weapons, the crowd carried effigies of Chief Justice Thomas McKean and James Wilson, both prominent Federalists. After marching the effigies through town, the demonstrators burned the effigies in the town square.<sup>292</sup>

In response to the uprising, Chief Justice Thomas McKean issued a warrant for the arrest of 21 of the men who had participated in the attack on the Federalist celebration and in the burning of effigies. These men were accused of engaging in riotous behavior, assault and battery, and causing “great terror and disturbance” to the residents of Carlisle. After some confusion over jurisdiction, a local judge offered the accused men the opportunity to make bail to avoid spending time in jail. While the majority of them accepted the offer, seven of the rioters refused, claiming that they had done nothing wrong. They demanded an opportunity to defend themselves in court. The judge was left with little recourse and sent them to jail.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> *Carlisle Gazette*, 2, 9 January 1788 in Merrill Jensen, et al, ed. *Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution* (Madison: The Historical Society of Wisconsin) [hereafter *DHRC*] 2:604-610,670-678; Maier, *Ratification*, 159.

<sup>292</sup> *Carlisle Gazette*, 2,9 January 1788, *DHRC*, 2:604-610.

<sup>293</sup> Pennsylvania Supreme Court to Sheriff Charles Leeper, 23 January 1788, *DHRC*, 2:684-685.

News of the arrest and jailing of the rioters spread quickly. According to one prominent Anti-federalist, the opponents of the Constitution had been forming societies since the riot for the “purpose of opposing this detestable Fedrall conspiracy” and had been establishing committees of correspondence.<sup>294</sup> These societies spread word of the arrests throughout the backcountry. Tensions in Carlisle, meanwhile, remained high. One Federalist recalled that each night after the jailing, “[a] party consisting chiefly of such boys and fellows of dissolute character” paraded through town banging drums.<sup>295</sup>

The militia mobilized and took charge of organizing a response to the jailing. After a meeting of representatives from the various companies in the area, the militia selected a few men to meet with local officials. Federalists from the region gathered as well and discussed the growing crisis. “Meetings of the friends of good order were had” reported one Federalist, “where it was proposed by some ardent men to oppose the rescuers by force.” The Federalists realized, however, that if they responded with force they risked the loss of “many lives” and might plunge the region into a civil war. Unwilling to take this risk, local Federalists and town officials made no attempt to stop the militia from entering the city to free the prisoners. On March 1, 1788, companies from throughout the state marched into Carlisle to the sound of ringing bells and cheering crowds. Reports of the number of people who joined in the procession range from 250 to 1,500. The men paraded throughout town and assembled at the courthouse, where the sheriff

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<sup>294</sup> *Carlisle Gazette*, 27 February 1788; *DHRC*, 2:646-647. William Petrikin to John Nicholson, 24 February 1788, *DHRC*, 2:695-696. For an example of one of these associations, see “An Address to the Minority of the Convention,” *Carlisle Gazette*, 2 January 1788, *DHRC*, 2:651-653.

<sup>295</sup> John Montgomery to James Wilson, 2 March 1788, *DHRC*, 2:701-706.

delivered the prisoners. Having succeeded in their mission, the troops peacefully marched out of town.<sup>296</sup>

The Carlisle Riot illustrates that the tradition of popular justice and crowd action continued in western Pennsylvania into the late 1780s. As had been the case during the mutiny in 1783, the public cheered the rioters. The episode also points to the potential for political differences to lead to fighting and rioting and foreshadows some of the partisan violence of the late 1790s. Anti-federalists in Carlisle believed that rioters were justified in their use of force because Federalists had behaved contrary to the will of the community. Effigy burning, parades and jail-break were all rituals of crowd action that Pennsylvanians had used for decades. Local Federalists' response and McKean's decision to have the rioters arrested, however, demonstrate that the "moral economy of the crowd" could no longer be taken for granted. For Federalists, the new political institutions obviated the legitimacy of popular uprisings. The people had constitutional instruments to implement change and voice their dissent.<sup>297</sup>

### **Rural Violence in the 1790s: The Whiskey Rebellion**

The ratification of the Federal Constitution and Pennsylvania's decision in 1790 to abandon the Constitution adopted in 1776 in favor of a more conservative one marked a retreat from the democratic principles that had flourished in the late 1770s and early 1780s. The men behind the new constitutions believed that the stronger, more centralized, form of government would lead to more stability. Moreover, a stronger state could better satisfy the needs of the people. The more people gained confidence in the state and felt that they had a voice in

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<sup>296</sup>Ibid; *Carlisle Gazette*, 5 March 1788, *DHRC*, 2:699-701; John Shippen to Joseph Shippen, 3 March 1788, *DHRC*, 2:706-707.

<sup>297</sup> Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 93-97.

government, the more they would be willing to work within the confines of the republican institutions and, therefore, the need for popular uprisings would diminish. But, should riots or insurrection occur, the new government would have the power to respond quickly and forcefully.<sup>298</sup>

Ambiguity remained, however, about the people's role in the deliberative process and whether the people retained the right to use force as a last resort. Although proponents of the new government viewed riots and crowd action as dangerous and threatening to the country, they could not ignore that popular uprisings had led to American independence in the first place. Federalists had to walk a fine line between condemning unlawful crowd action and recognizing the right to revolution. In Federalist #28, for example, Alexander Hamilton asserted "that seditions and insurrections are unhappily maladies as inseparable from the body politic, as tumors and eruptions from the natural body" and argued that the only remedy was force. In the same essay, however, Hamilton admitted that "If the representatives of the people betray their constituents, there is then no recourse left but in the exertion of that original right of self-defense which is paramount to all positive forms of government." Of course what constituted betrayal by a representative was open to interpretation and, as would become clear in the 1790s, Hamilton's understanding of justified popular violence was considerably different than that of the men living on the frontier of Pennsylvania.<sup>299</sup>

Frustrated by their lack of influence in the federal government and facing economic ruin, westerners turned to violence. In the fall of 1791, mobs attacked at least three men alleged to be

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<sup>298</sup> Howe, "Attitudes Toward Violence in the Pre War Period."

<sup>299</sup> "The Federalist No. 28: Hamilton," *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Bantam Books, 2003) 159-164; Robert H. Churchill, *To Shake Their Guns in the Tyrants Face: Libertarian Political Violence and the Origins of the Militia Movement* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2011), 46-47.

related to the collection of the tax. The assailants relied on the same painful and humiliating rituals used for decades to punish those who violated the will of the community. For example, Robert Johnson, the collector for Alleghany and Washington counties, was abducted by a crowd of men who cut off his hair and tarred and feathered him. The mob then left Johnson, without his horse, miles from the nearest town. Johnson pressed charges against his attackers, but the messenger tasked with delivering the warrant was captured by another mob. After tarring and feathering the messenger, the mob left him blindfolded and tied to a tree.<sup>300</sup>

Well aware of the unpopularity of the excise, Congress made some minor amendments to the law in the spring of 1792 with the hopes of making it more palatable. The changes, however, did little to stem the growing opposition in western Pennsylvania. General John Neville, the inspector of the revenue, struggled to find anyone who would rent him space to open an office. Those who did risked retaliation from the community. William Faulkner of Washington County initially agreed to rent part of his residence to Neville, but was attacked by a group of men who put a knife to his throat and threatened to scalp him and burn his house if he did.<sup>301</sup>

Not all western Pennsylvanians approved of these tactics, and some opponents of the law attempted to work through the constitutional system to secure a repeal of the law. In the fall of 1792, delegates from the various western counties gathered in Pittsburgh and agreed to resolutions denouncing the excise tax and promising to take every “legal measure that may

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<sup>300</sup> *United States v. Insurgents of Pennsylvania*, 2 Dall. 335 (CC Pa. 1795); Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, 5 August 1794 in Steven R. Boyd, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Past and Present Perspectives* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 31-47 [Hereafter Hamilton’s Account]; William Findley, *History of the Insurrection in the Four Western Counties of Pennsylvania . . .* (Philadelphia: Samuel Harrison Smith, 1796), 58-67. For an interesting analysis of the different accounts of the Whiskey Rebellion, see, Jeffrey A. Davis, “Guarding the Republican Interest: The Western Pennsylvania Democratic Societies and the Excise Tax,” *Pennsylvania History*, 67:1 (Winter 2000): 43-62.

<sup>301</sup> *United States v. Insurgents*, 6-7; Findley’s Account, 58-59.

obstruct the operation of the Law until we are able to obtain its total repeal.” Although Hamilton would later call this meeting treasonous and mock the idea that the law could be legally obstructed, meeting organizers viewed their gathering as a way to contain the spread of violence and hopefully channel resistance through the constitutional structure.<sup>302</sup>

From the temporary seat of government in Philadelphia, Federalists followed the events in western Pennsylvania closely. With the new federal government still in its infancy, many believed that he must stand firmly behind the rule of law and demonstrate that popular uprisings would not be tolerated—particularly those that occurred in such close proximity to the federal government. Hamilton warned President Washington that if he did not take steps to “exert the full force of the Law against the Offenders” then the “the spirit of disobedience . . . [would] naturally extend and the authority of the Government will be prostrate.”<sup>303</sup> Heeding Hamilton’s advice, on September 15, 1792, Washington issued a Presidential Proclamation that called the recent attempts to obstruct tax collection “subversive of good order . . . and of nature dangerous to the very being of government.” The new government simply would not tolerate popular uprisings, he said, and called on all citizens to respect the laws. He further ordered government officials to ensure that anyone breaking the law be brought to justice.<sup>304</sup>

In response to Washington’s proclamation, Pennsylvania officials renewed their efforts to enforce the laws and punish the insurgents, but the public did not always cooperate. Governor Thomas Mifflin reminded citizens that the constitution and laws were expressions of the popular will and that “every irregular and illegal opposition to the existing laws will not only embarrass the operations of Government, but eventually undermine the only real security for the liberty and

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<sup>302</sup> “Minutes of the Meeting at Pittsburgh,” *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2 ser. vol.4, 29-31; Hamilton’s Account, 38.

<sup>303</sup> Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, 1 September 1792, *Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 7:336-340.

<sup>304</sup> Proclamation of the President, 15 September 1792, *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2 ser. vol. 4, 32-33.

property of the individuals.”<sup>305</sup> Judge Alexander Addison tried to convince westerners to “inculcate that constitutional resistance, which alone is justifiable in a free people.”<sup>306</sup>

Nevertheless, many Pennsylvanians still saw the attacks as a legitimate form of protest. A Grand Jury charged with reviewing the situation in the west found no evidence of widespread opposition to the laws. Even when officials managed to bring charges against rioters, the accused men often managed to escape punishment because sheriffs refused to make arrests or because they had fled the area.<sup>307</sup> Meanwhile, some critics of the Washington administration claimed that the opposition to the excise had been blown out of proportion. Republican Congressman William Findley of Westmoreland surveyed public opinion and found “that a disposition to maltreat the public officers or to make riotous opposition to the execution of the Excise Law is neither manifested nor patronized by the leading Citizens who inhabit the Western Counties of this State.” Only a small minority of residents, he asserted, supported crowd action.<sup>308</sup>

Whether or not they had the support of the “leading Citizens,” mobs continued to threaten and attack excise officers and local residents who complied with the law. In April, 1793, a pack of men with blackened faces broke into the house of Robert Wells, a revenue collector in Fayette County, and, finding that Wells was not at home, terrorized his family. The sheriff, fearful of retribution, refused to deliver warrants against some of the men accused of participating in the attack. The mob returned in November and forced Wells at gunpoint to surrender his account books and renounce his position. John Lynn, collector for Washington County, had his hair cut off, was tarred and feathered and, after being forced to swear that he would never take another

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<sup>305</sup> Thomas Mifflin to Judges of the Supreme Court, 21 March 1794, *Pennsylvania Archives*, ser. 2, vol. 4, 58.

<sup>306</sup> Alexander Addison to Thomas Mifflin, 31 March 1794, *Pennsylvania Archives*, ser. 2, vol. 4, 60.

<sup>307</sup> Charge of Chief Justice McKean, and Reply of Grand Jury, 8 November 1792, *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2 ser. vol. 4, 41-43; James Brison to Thomas Mifflin, 9 November 1792, *ibid*, 45.

<sup>308</sup> William Findley to Thomas Mifflin, 21 November 1792, *Pennsylvania Archives*, ser.2, vol.4, 48-50.



position associated with the excise, was left naked and tied to a tree. Crowds also burned down the barns and/or destroyed farm equipment of distillers who cooperated with the law. Victims were often told to publish accounts of what happened in the newspaper as a warning to others who considered paying the tax. Crowd action, once again, proved extraordinarily effective, and by the spring of 1794 the collection of the excise had virtually ceased in western Pennsylvania.<sup>309</sup>

In an effort to diffuse the situation, Congress passed legislation designed to make the tax less burdensome. In June 1794 Congress passed amendments to the excise that, among other things, gave the state courts jurisdiction over the enforcement of the tax. A major complaint against the original law had been that distillers charged with not paying the tax were forced to travel to Philadelphia—an expensive and time-consuming trip—in order to appear in federal court. Giving the state courts jurisdiction meant less travel for delinquent distillers and therefore, Congress hoped, less opposition to the law. With the changes in place, federal officials renewed their efforts to collect the tax and prosecute distillers who refused to pay.<sup>310</sup>

The changes to the law did little to stem the opposition and, by attempting to arrest some of non-complying distillers, the government effectively threw gas on what was, up until that point, a relatively minor fire. Prior to 1794, mob action had been limited and focused only on men associated with the excise; insurgents used the same tactics that Pennsylvanians had relied on for decades. This small-scale and traditional approach to violence changed when federal officials began issuing warrants in the summer of 1794.

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<sup>309</sup> *United States v. Insurgents of Pennsylvania*, 8-9; Findley's Account, 58-59; Hamilton's Account, 40-43.

<sup>310</sup> Hamilton's Account, 43; *United States v. Insurgents*, 10-11; "An Act making further provision for securing and collecting the duties on foreign and domestic distilled spirits, stills, wines, and teas," 5 June 1794, *Annals of Congress*, Vol. 4, 1457-1461.

Well aware of the potential for violence, David Lenox, a federal marshal, and General Neville, inspector of the revenue, agreed to deliver some the first warrants personally. Neville was a polarizing figure in the west. After securing the votes of his neighbors based on the promise that he would do everything in his power to end the excise, Neville accepted the position of inspector of the revenue and grew wealthy on the collection of the hated tax.<sup>311</sup> Lenox and Neville issued the first few warrants without incident but, on July 15, a scuffle broke out when they tried to deliver summons to William Miller, a poor farmer who had refused to register his stills for the excise. Miller, once a supporter of Neville, was particularly incensed that he had accompanied Lenox and began screaming and cursing at the two officials. Nearby farmers spread news of the confrontation and erroneously claimed that “the Federal Sheriff was taking away people to Philadelphia.” Within minutes, a company of thirty to forty militiamen appeared and opened fire on Lenox and Neville, who barely managed to escape unscathed. They were, however, not free from danger.<sup>312</sup>

The following morning, July 16, approximately 100 men, many of them carrying weapons, descended on Neville’s mansion, which was known as “Bower Hill.” Neville had received numerous threats over the years and had taken steps to protect himself by boarding windows shut and storing guns and ammunition. When the mob reached the house, they demanded that Neville and Lenox come out. Neville responded by opening fire. Some of the rioters returned shots but the group was attacked from behind by slaves who had been hiding nearby. The mob was forced to retreat. Enraged by the surprise attack, 500 men returned the next day. When they arrived at Bower Hill, the men learned that federal troops had arrived at the

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<sup>311</sup> On Neville, see Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 231-232.

<sup>312</sup> *United States v. Insurgents*, 10; Hamilton’s Account, 43; Findley, *History of the insurrection*, 74; William Irvine to Alexander James Dallas, 20 August 1794, *Pennsylvania Archives*, ser. 2 vol.4, 180-181.

house the previous night and that Neville had fled. As word of Neville's disappearance filtered back to the waiting crowd, one of the rebels opened fire on the mansion, and a heated gunfight ensued between the two sides. After about 15 minutes, the troops in Bower Hill ceased firing. Assuming surrender was imminent, Captain James McFarland, one of the rebel leaders, stepped out from behind a tree and was promptly shot. Furious, the rebels resumed firing. The soldiers did their best to defend the house but, outnumbered and surrounded, they eventually surrendered and were allowed to leave without further injury. After ransacking the wine cellar, the mob torched the mansion.<sup>313</sup>

The violence at Bower Hill and death of a leading rebel radicalized the insurgents. While some political leaders, including Hugh Henry Brackenridge, warned that the attack on Bower Hill and gunfight with federal troops exceeded the acceptable forms of popular protest and that Washington had the right to call out the militia, other rebels called for a Revolution. Radicals such as David Bradford claimed that the entire federal government only benefited the wealthy and argued that the Constitution was a betrayal of the principles of the American Revolution. This faction called for the creation of a new country. After seizing the mail and learning that some residents of Pittsburgh were communicating with the federal government, leading rebels decided it was time to act. At the end of July, Bradford and other radicals issued a circular letter stating "that every citizen must express his sentiments not by his words, but by his actions" and calling for a mass muster at Braddock's Field on August 1. What began as a series of popular uprisings protesting a specific law had escalated into an open rebellion against the federal

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<sup>313</sup> Testimony of John Baldwin, Quoted in Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 233; Hamilton's Account; *United States v. Insurgents of Pennsylvania*, 11-12; John Gibson to Thomas Mifflin, 18 July 1794. *Pennsylvania Archives*, ser. 2, vol.4, 69-70; Thomas Butler to Henry Knox, 18 July 1794, *ibid* , 74-75.

government. The rebels had moved beyond traditional forms of popular violence and stood at the precipice of civil war.<sup>314</sup>

Nearly 7,000 men turned out for the muster at Braddock's Field. Although Bradford had not specified the exact purpose of the muster, many rebels clearly saw it as the first step in a second revolution. Some of the insurgents had even created their own flag which bore six stripes representing the counties of western Pennsylvania and Ohio County, Virginia, which supported the rebellion. The gathering, however, proved anti-climactic. Although many rebels appeared eager to seize a federal arsenal near Pittsburgh and establish a new country, moderates pointed out that the arsenal was well fortified and that many rebels lacked weapons. Ultimately, the meeting agreed to march peacefully through the city rather than mount an attack.<sup>315</sup>

The threat of violence dissipated in the weeks following the meeting at Braddock's Field. At an assembly of 200 delegates from the six western counties on August 14, Republican leaders Albert Gallatin, William Findley, and Brackenridge successfully steered the opposition to the excise back into legal channels. While some of the delegates still called for armed uprisings, the majority agreed to a resolution that condemned the practice of trying citizens outside of their "respective vicinage" and appointed a committee to draft a petition to Congress outlining their opposition to the excise. They were, however, clear that they did not oppose all taxation and "a more equal and less odious tax" would "be cheerfully paid by the people of these counties." Perhaps most importantly, the gathering resolved "that we will exert ourselves, and that it be

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<sup>314</sup> Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *Incidents of the Insurrection in the Western Parts of Pennsylvania in the Year 1794* (Philadelphia: 1795) EAI#28332, 1:47-50; "Circular of the Western Insurgents to the Militia Officers," 28 July 1794, *Pennsylvania Archives* ser. 2, vol. 4, 79. For an overview of the meeting and a discussion of those involved see, Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 183-186.

<sup>315</sup> Brackenridge, *Incidents of the Insurrection*, 1:85-86; Findley, *History of the Insurrection*, 98. For an overview of the meeting, see, Slaughter, *Whiskey Rebellion*, 186-189.

earnestly recommended to our fellow citizens to exert themselves in support of the municipal laws of the respective States, and especially from preventing any violence or outrage against the property and persons of any individual.” In other words, they would only support constitutional forms of protest and would refrain from resorting to violence as a way of influencing the deliberative process.<sup>316</sup>

Although the rebellion collapsed and the majority of westerners pledged to support the federal government, Washington assembled a force of nearly 13,000 troops to march on western Pennsylvania. The march accomplished little more than upsetting locals. Civilians taunted the troops, and some raised liberty poles as a sign of their commitment to the principles of the Revolution, but the army met no organized opposition. Left with nothing else to do, soldiers contented themselves with harassing locals and making mass arrests of suspected rebels. Many of the leading rebels, including David Bradford, managed to escape; others surrendered without incident.<sup>317</sup> Washington’s decision to use force may not have won him the support of the westerners, but it sent a clear message about civil disorder and crowd action—the new federal government would not tolerate popular uprisings.

### **Triangulation and the Republican Response**

The Whiskey Rebellion put members of the emerging Republican Party in Philadelphia in a difficult position. In the early 1790s, Republicans had been trying to establish themselves as the legitimate heirs to the Revolution and true defenders of the people’s interests and not, as

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<sup>316</sup> Brackenridge, *Incidents of the Insurrection*, 1:87-100; “Meeting at Parkinson’s Ferry,” 14 August 1794, *Pennsylvania Archives*, ser. 2, vol. 4:159-161; The United States Commissioners to the Edmund Randolph, 17 August 1794, *ibid*, 164-165; *United States v. Insurgents*, 18-19.

<sup>317</sup> For a discussion of the army’s march see, Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 205-221. For an example of the interactions between civilians and troops, see, Jonathan Forman, “journal of the march to Pittsburgh,” Jonathan Forman Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Darlington Collection, University of Pittsburgh.

Federalists claimed, ambitious demagogues who promoted lawlessness and disorder. Republicans had never openly condoned the use of ritual violence, but they had not publically denounced it either. The attack on Bower Hill and muster at Braddock's Field forced them to take a firm stand against popular uprisings or risk being associated with rebellion against the federal government. Distancing themselves from the rebels would, however, be difficult. Particularly following the adoption of the Revenue Act of 1794, which placed a duty on manufactured goods, Republicans in Philadelphia had been some of the most outspoken critics of the excise. Manufacturers held a series of rallies in the spring of 1794 that criticized the tax and called on the administration to promote domestic manufacturing. In April, the Democratic Society of Philadelphia adopted a resolution stating "that the general welfare of our country is involved in promoting necessary manufacturers" and encouraging members to purchase only American-made goods.<sup>318</sup> The society put the Republican position more succulently in a toast on the Fourth of July: "EXCISE, may this baneful exotic wither in the soil of freedom." Prominent Republicans such as William Findley and Albert Gallatin had also participated in town meetings in western Pennsylvania that condemned the tax. Pennsylvania Republicans were, therefore, intimately tied to opposition of the excise.<sup>319</sup>

Federalists wasted no time blaming the Democratic Societies and nascent Republican Party for the insurrection. Federalists adhered to a unitary, hierarchical concept of society and viewed challenges to the government or attempts by other groups to speak for the people as dangerous and subversive. Therefore, even if Republicans had not directly participated in the

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<sup>318</sup> Philp S. Foner, ed. *The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800: A Documentary Sourcebook of Constitutions, Declarations, Addresses, Resolutions, and Toasts* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976), 75-78.

<sup>319</sup> *American Daily Advertiser*, 5 July 1794. For an excellent overview of the Republican opposition to the tax, see, Ronald M. Baumann, "Philadelphia's Manufacturers and the Excise Tax of 1794: The Forging of the Jeffersonian Coalition," Steven R. Boyd, ed. *The Whiskey Rebellion: Past and Present Perspectives* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 140-163.

violence, Federalists believed they helped foster the rebellion.<sup>320</sup> President Washington accused the Democratic Societies of “laboring incessantly to sow the seeds of distrust, jealousy, and, of course discontent” and was sure “that they [the Democratic societies] have been the fomenters of the western disturbances.”<sup>321</sup> A correspondent in the *Gazette of the United States* echoed this sentiment writing that “[t]he mad conduct of the insurgents at Pittsburgh is the natural fruit of their democratic clubs.”<sup>322</sup> The Democratic Societies were not the only threat to order. In one particularly inflammatory piece, an author under the pseudonym “One of the Men of 1794” implied that Republicans were plotting to attack Philadelphia while the army was busy in the west.<sup>323</sup>

Blamed by the Federalists for provoking internal dissent and implicated in the Rebellion by their opposition to the excise, Republicans and critics of the Federalists in Philadelphia responded by condemning the rebellion while simultaneously acknowledging the legitimacy of the insurgents’ grievances. The Democratic Society, for example, criticized the rebels for not adhering to the basic principles of majority rule but also adopted a resolution declaring that “we conceive excise systems to be oppressive, hostile to the liberties of this country, and a nursery of vice, and sycophancy.” Members of the society pledged to “use our utmost efforts to effect a repeal of the Excise by Constitutional means” but asserted that they would neither endorse nor support any attempt to use other forms of resistance.<sup>324</sup> Republican authors echoed these sentiments in the press. One correspondent warned that, while westerners had legitimate

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<sup>320</sup> For an example of the Federalist view of society, see, *Gazette of the United States*, 26 July 1794; Charge delivered by Judge Riddle, *Carlisle Gazette*, 17 December 1794.

<sup>321</sup> George Washington to John Jay, 1 November 1794; George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799; Series 4. General Correspondence.

<sup>322</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 3 September 1794.

<sup>323</sup> *Philadelphia Gazette*, 19 September 1794.

<sup>324</sup> Foner, *The Democratic Republican Societies*, 88, 90-93. See also, Eugene Perry Link, *Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 147-149

grievances, “if every portion of the republic rises in arms to prevent the execution of laws obnoxious to them [the country] would revert to a state of anarchy and barbarism.”<sup>325</sup>

Philadelphia Republicans also used the Whiskey Rebellion as an opportunity to affirm that, contrary to what Federalists might claim, they were “friends of order” and had faith in the constitutional system. Unlike Federalists, Republicans accepted that citizens might disagree with their government, but by using force to oppose the law the rebels had exceeded their constitutional right to resistance. “If a law is obnoxious to any part of the country,” explained one correspondent, “let the citizens there petition for its repeal, expose its defects or injustice through the medium of the press; let them change their representation, put into their legislature men who they know to be active to procure its repeal.”<sup>326</sup> John Swanwick, a leading Republican and a member of the state legislature, argued that Republicans in Philadelphia had been utilizing these very tools and had been close to forcing a repeal of the excise. Unfortunately, the outbreak of violence “greatly injured” their cause and “have armed the friends of the system with reasons for enforcing it.”<sup>327</sup> Other Republicans demonstrated their commitment to the laws by volunteering to join the army to march against the insurgents. Overall, Republicans made clear that, while westerners may have had reason to protest the federal government, they did not accept popular uprisings as a legitimate form of resistance.<sup>328</sup>

By charting this middle course through the Federalists on the one side and the western insurgents on the other, Republicans ultimately managed to turn the Whiskey Rebellion to their advantage. The violence in the west enabled members of the young party to clearly articulate the

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<sup>325</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser*, 26 July 1794; *Aurora General Advertiser*, 12 August 1794.

<sup>326</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser*, 26 July 1794.

<sup>327</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser*, 16 September 1794. See, also, *Independent Gazette*, 13 September 1794; *Dunlap’s American Daily Advertiser*, 15 September 1794.

<sup>328</sup> *Dunlap’s American Daily Advertiser*, 19 September 1794.



differences between their legitimate forms of opposition and the illegitimate actions of the insurgents. Republicans did suffer from the loss of the Democratic and Republican Societies, which collapsed under the weight of Federalist accusations that they had caused the Rebellion.<sup>329</sup> As discussed in chapter two, however, other groups, more directly linked to the Republican Party, emerged to fill the void left by the decline of the Democratic and Republican Societies. Republicans' denunciation of the rebels' tactics also meant that western farmers lost one of the most effective ways of influencing the deliberative process. Nevertheless, the Republican response to the Whiskey Rebellion went a long way in establishing the Republicans as a legitimate opposition.<sup>330</sup>

## Partisan Violence

Political differences and partisanship flourished in the Pennsylvania during the late 1790s. Republicans denounced popular uprisings and established that they were willing to work within the constitutional structure, but they did not stop their attacks on the Federalists who

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<sup>329</sup> The Democratic and Republican societies in the western parts of the state, particularly those linked to the uprisings, ceased meeting immediately following the Rebellion. Those in Philadelphia, however, continued to meet regularly and historian Sean Wilentz argues that Federalists' attacks actually emboldened the societies. Wilentz contends that the Philadelphia societies did not disband until after the Jay Treaty debates. While there is no question that many former members of the Philadelphia Democratic and Republican societies participated in the protests surrounding the Jay Treaty, there is no evidence that either the Democratic or Republican Societies had any part. Albrecht Koschnik, the most recent historian to study the Philadelphia societies, concluded that the groups ceased meeting in December 1794. "If the Democratic Society existed beyond 1794," he finds, "it did so in a radically different manner: as a private association, without publications, not as an openly political organization." The New York Democratic Society did, however, continue to function. See, Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 62-71; Albrecht Koschnik, *Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together: Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775-1840* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 23-38; fn. 96 262.

<sup>330</sup> Johann N. Neem, "Freedom of Association in the Early Republic: The Republican Party, the Whiskey Rebellion, and the Philadelphia and New York Cordwainers' Cases," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 127:3 (July 2003): 259-290. For more on the Democratic Societies and the Whiskey Rebellion, see, Marco M. Sioli, "The Democratic Republican Societies at the End of the Eighteenth Century: The Western Pennsylvania Experience," *Pennsylvania History*, 60:3 (July 1993): 288-304; Albrecht Koschnik, "The Democratic Societies of Philadelphia and the Limits of the American Public Sphere, circa 1793-1795," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 58:3 (July 2001): 615-636.

controlled the federal government. The emerging party worked to harness frustrations with the policies of the Federalists and channel them into constructive forms of protest. As discussed, Republicans initially styled themselves as the “friends of liberty” and focused on demonstrating popular support by staging fêtes and parades that symbolically linked their cause with the American and French Revolution. Following the ratification of the Jay Treaty, the party began to focus more on building a network of supporters that could be mobilized on election day. Federalists, meanwhile, continued to portray Republicans as a threat to order and utilized the power of the federal government to silence the opposition. Although both parties rejected popular uprisings as a legitimate form of political expression, during emotionally charged periods, such as the debates over the Jay Treaty and Quasi-War with France, partisanship flared and debates often spilled into the streets. Party leaders urged their supporters to remain peaceful but were unable to contain the political fervor that they had helped foster. Whipped into frenzy by charged rhetoric and often fueled by alcohol, Republicans and Federalists vented their anger through vandalism and fighting.<sup>331</sup>

The apogee of partisan violence in Pennsylvania occurred during the presidency of John Adams. Federalists used the threat of war with France and the XYZ affair as opportunities to rally supporters and paint Republicans as traitors for having supported the French Revolution. Republicans responded by blaming the Federalists for provoking the French with the Jay Treaty. Emotions reached a boiling point during the months surrounding the XYZ Affair in the spring of 1798. Energized young Federalists roamed the streets looking for an excuse to fight and even a

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<sup>331</sup> Howe, Jr. “Republican Thought and the Political Violence of the 1790s”; Marshall Smelser, “The Jacobin Phrenzy: Federalism and the Menace of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity,” *The Review of Politics*, 13:4 (October 1951): 457-482; Smelser, “The Jacobin Phrenzy: The Menace of Monarchy, Plutocracy, and Anglophilia, 1789-1798,” *The Review of Politics*, 21:1 (January 1959), 239-258.

meeting of the local society for free debate degenerated into a brawl. All of Philadelphia seemed to be engulfed in the frenzy. One Congressman claimed that he saw women “meet at the church door and violently pluck the badges [displaying partisan allegiance] from one another’s bosoms.” The city of brotherly love appeared on the verge of a civil war.<sup>332</sup>

In the midst of the crisis President Adams called for a national day of fasting and prayer to occur on May 9, 1798. Although the day may have appeared non-partisan, Federalists saw it as an opportunity to further sway public opinion. As Hamilton explained, a day of prayer and fasting is “an important means of influencing Opinion” and “a valuable resource in a contest with France.”<sup>333</sup> Republicans in Philadelphia viewed the day as a political stunt and organized their own demonstration, thereby setting the stage for a standoff between the two parties. The day’s events, which included speeches and church services, were peaceful but, as Adams later recalled, that night “ten thousand People, and perhaps many more, were parading the Streets” cursing and threatening the President. Worried about his safety, Adams went so far as to have a chest of guns and ammunition snuck into his house.<sup>334</sup> Protesters refrained from attacking Adams’s house but, later in the evening, a group of Federalists beat Republicans who had been wearing tri-colored cockades. When officials arrived on the scene, they arrested the Republicans, and the cavalry marched through the city for the rest of the night to ensure order.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France, 1797-1801* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1966), 74-108, quote on 82-83. One the politicization of women, see, Susan Branson, *Those Fiery Frenchified Dames: Women and Political Culture in Early National Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) and Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

<sup>333</sup> Hamilton to William Loughton Smith, 10 April 1797, *Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 21:41.

<sup>334</sup> Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 30 June 1813, Lester J. Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), vol 2, 346-348.

<sup>335</sup> *Aurora*, 9,10,11 May 1798; *Gazette of the United States*, 10 May 1798

Changes in the political rhetoric played a major role in the increased partisanship and partisan violence. One Philadelphia resident reported that during the late 1790s, people were “speaking with a degree of violence” never before seen.<sup>336</sup> This new violent rhetoric reflects a move away from what historian Andrew Robertson describes as “laudatory,” or demonstrative, rhetoric that drew on classical texts toward a more dramatic, emotional style that he identifies as “hortatory.” Characterized by negative associations and personal attacks, hortatory rhetoric helped fuel partisan animosity. Anti-Jacobin writing, which relied on violent and graphic imagery to depict the horrors of Revolutionary France and warn of the dangers of democracy, proliferated during the late 1790s and epitomized hortatory rhetoric. But, as one correspondent upset with the increasing partisanship lamented, both parties practice the “sophistry” of reporting “any scandalous story that has ever been whispered” as “a known undoubted truth.”<sup>337</sup> While this form of rhetoric proved to be an effective tool to mobilize supporters and influence public opinion, the infant parties could not always channel the passions they helped generate into peaceful and constitutionally sanctioned forms of action. Benjamin Bache, editor of the *Aurora*, for example, blamed the Fast Day Riot on orators who had “artfully inflamed” the passions of residents with “war speeches and addresses as well as threats and denunciations against the Republicans.”<sup>338</sup>

Hortatory rhetoric mixed with partisanship led to a number of violent attacks against newspaper editors in the late 1790s. Angry readers assaulted Bache twice in 1798. John Fenno,

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<sup>336</sup> Henrietta Liston to James Jackson, 3 May 1798 in Bradford Perkins, “A Diplomat’s Wife in Philadelphia: Letters of Henrietta Liston, 1796-1800,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 11:4 (October 1954): 616

<sup>337</sup> *Farmer’s Register*, 13 February 1799.

<sup>338</sup> Andrew W. Robertson, *The Language of Democracy: Political Rhetoric in the United States and Britain, 1790-1900* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 1-35; Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Anti-Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); *Aurora*, 10, 11, 12 May 1798.

Jr., the son of John Fenno the editor of the arch-Federalist newspaper the *Gazette of the United States*, struck Bache in retaliation for an article printed in the *Aurora* that accused Fenno Sr. of being a British agent. Federalist leaders ignored this attack. Bache had one of his assailants, Able Humphreys, prosecuted and fined, but President Adams rewarded Humphreys with a diplomatic position. While neither of these incidents resulted in any major injuries, a more serious attack on an editor occurred in the spring of 1799.<sup>339</sup>

In April, in the midst of the federal government's response to a series of uprisings in northeastern Pennsylvania known as Fries's Rebellion, members of the Federalist militia troop MacPherson's Blues became incensed when they heard about an article in the Republican *Readinger Adler* that criticized the conduct of certain members of the militia. Jacob Schneider, the editor, printed a piece accusing troops of behaving in way that "would be more apt to excite the people to insurrection and raise them against the government, than to enforce obedience." The paper also accused members of the militia of ducking payment for their room and board. Although other newspapers had made similar claims, the militia happened to be near Reading, where the paper was published, and decided to pay Schneider a visit. After forcing Schneider to admit that he authored the piece, the troops, led by Robert Goodloe Harper, a Federalist member of the U.S. House of Representatives, seized Schneider and dragged him to the town square. The captain of the militia then ordered that the already bloodied Schneider receive twenty-five lashes with a knotted rope across his bare back. Fortunately for Schneider, a company of the

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<sup>339</sup> James Morton Smith, *Freedom's Fetters: The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), 192-193; Bache, *The Truth Will Out* (Philadelphia, 1798); *Aurora*, 9 August 1798; *Porcupine's Gazette*, 1 February 1799. On newspaper editors and the growth of parties, see, Jeffrey L. Pasley, "*The Tyranny of Printers*": *Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001). For another instance of violence against an editor, see, *Farmer's Register*, 20 February 1799.

Philadelphia cavalry arrived and stopped the lashing at six. The violence did not, however, stop there.<sup>340</sup>

In Philadelphia, William Duane, who had assumed the position of editor of the *Aurora* following Benjamin Bache's death from yellow fever in late 1798, printed an account of Schneider's beating. Duane and other Republicans were incensed when they learned that the troops involved in the incident had escaped without punishment. Duane warned that if the soldiers got away with the violence, "it would not be in the least surprizing, if every citizen in Philadelphia, who was obnoxious to Macpherson's Blues, should in turn be dragged out of his house, and treated as Mr. [Schneider] was." Congressman Harper wrote an open letter admitting that he took part in the beating but downplayed the severity and implied that Schneider had gotten what he deserved. Duane, however, continued to harp on the attack as proof of the hypocrisy of the so-called "friends of order."<sup>341</sup>

Infuriated by Duane's criticisms, members of various Federalist militia units entered the office of the *Aurora* on the morning of May 15<sup>th</sup>, pushed members of the staff against the wall, and surrounded Duane at his desk. After a few moments, Duane looked up from his work and announced that he would be happy to fight any of the soldiers individually. When nobody responded, he returned to his paperwork. Livid at Duane's insolence, one of the officers punched the editor in the face. Although Duane did his best to respond, the crowd overpowered him and dragged him outside. In front of the office, the troops encircled Duane and took turns beating

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<sup>340</sup>Readinger Adler, 23 April 1799; *Oracle of Dauphin*, 8 May 1799; Paul Douglas Newman, *Fries's Rebellion: The Enduring Struggle of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 162-163.

<sup>341</sup> *Aurora*, 10, 13, 24 May 1798; *Porcupine's Gazette*, 15 May 1798.

him. When he could no longer stand, the group turned to whipping. By the time they were done, Duane lay barely conscious and covered in blood and dirt.<sup>342</sup>

Intent on showing the Federalists that he could not be silenced, Duane was back at work the following day. He printed an account of the assault under the headline “MORE OF GOOD ORDER AND REGULAR GOVERNMENT” and used the event to rally Republicans. Articles condemning the militia and Federalists filled the pages of the *Aurora* in the days following the attack. An article by “Mentor,” which was printed next to a detailed description of the event, called on Republicans to “Arm and organize immediately” in order to prevent further violence. “Nestor” warned that America stood at the precipice of its own Reign of Terror. “[W]e hear of the want of *laws* and *protection* in France, we are told of the *reign of terror and despotism* there; but let us hereafter look at *home*.” The “inveteracy and fury of party spirit” was dissolving the bonds of civil society. Ultimately, Duane’s beating allowed Republicans to claim the mantle of the “true friends of order” and to further distance the party from popular violence.<sup>343</sup>

The majority of instances of political violence in the late 1790s involved Federalists attacking Republicans. Both sides contributed to the combustible atmosphere through the use of violent rhetoric and bore responsibility for fomenting dissension among the public, but Federalists tended to be the aggressors. Federalist leaders condemned mobbing and rejected violence as a legitimate political tool. Individual and small groups of Federalists, however, continued to assault political enemies. Federalist violence in the late 1790s differed from the popular uprisings of the 1780s and 1790s. Unlike the mobs that harassed excise officers throughout western Pennsylvania, Federalists attacks were not ritualized—nobody wore

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<sup>342</sup> *Aurora*, 16, 17, 21, May 1799; *Gazette of the United States*, 15, 16 May 1799

<sup>343</sup> *Aurora*, 16, 17, 21 May 1799; Pasley, “*Tyranny of Printers*,” 190.

disguises or blackened their faces, and victims were not tarred and feathered. This difference reflects an important distinction between the two forms of popular violence. Whereas mobs in the 1780s and 1790s claimed to act on behalf of the community, the Federalists who attacked Republicans during the late 1790s made no such claims. Instead of justifying the attack as the will of the people, Federalists' claimed that Republicans like Duane posed a threat to the country which meant that the normal rules of engagement did not apply. Federalist violence often involved young men who, as historians Albrecht Koschnick and David Waldstreicher have shown, were eager to assert their masculinity and patriotism through combat, as their fathers had during the Revolutionary War.<sup>344</sup> Unlike their Republican counterparts, these young Federalists did not have an outlet for the partisan zeal generated through rallies and rhetoric. Federalist lagged behind Republicans in the construction of a party organization that could channel energy away from the streets and toward the ballot box. Republicans in Pennsylvania had been working to create a party that encouraged popular participation in the deliberative process. Supporters could have their voices heard by taking part in electioneering meetings and petition drives. Federalists, on the other hand, continued to hold a hierarchical concept of society and believed the people's role in the deliberative process should be limited to voting and rituals of deference, such as the petitions that praised the Adams' administration handling of the XYZ Affair. Shut out of the deliberative process, some Federalists turned to violence as a way of venting partisan animosities.

### **Federalist Repression and Popular Reaction**

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<sup>344</sup> Koschnick, "Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together," 113-116; Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 159.



With war fever running high in the summer of 1798, Federalists, who controlled all three branches of government, pushed through a series of measures designed to cripple domestic opposition and prepare the country for war. Rumors of French spies and secret plots filled the streets of Philadelphia and pamphlets warned that Jacobins, members of the Illuminati and Irish radicals were working to destroy America from within. To protect the country against these internal enemies, Federalists passed the Alien and Sedition Acts and took steps to strengthen America's armed forces. Congress increased the size of the Navy, agreed to let American merchant ships arm themselves, and passed legislation that enabled American privateers to seize French ships. In addition, Congress called for the creation of a volunteer army that could be summoned in case of war. The cost of these measures amounted to a staggering \$10,519,368—nearly \$4 million dollars more than Congress usually allotted for the entire government. To pay for these increases, Congress passed a new round of taxes. The new taxes consisted of a Stamp Act similar to the notorious law of the same name adopted by the British Parliament in 1765, followed by the nation's first direct tax on houses and slaves. Federalists understood that any form of direct tax would be controversial but hoped that a tax on houses and slaves would be more palatable. The house tax was progressive and required families that could afford larger houses to pay more. Additionally, unlike the whiskey tax which fell most heavy on rural residents, the law affected city dwellers as well as those on the frontier. It required that officials assess every house, piece of land, and slave in the country and created a number of new offices that the Federalist Secretary of Treasury Oliver Wolcott used to reward local Federalists.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>345</sup>Deconde, *The Quasi-War*, 101-103; Newman, *Fries's Rebellion*, 69-78. On the role of editors in the development of parties, see, Pasley, "Tyranny of the Printers."

Republicans and critics of the Adams administration responded to the Federalist war measures with outrage and resistance proceeded along two lines in Pennsylvania. As discussed in chapter one, many Republicans focused on organizing petition drives and worked to channel energy into upcoming elections. Petitions were a way to mobilize supporters and encourage the people to demonstrate their opposition to the laws in a constitutional way. Political tensions ran so high, however, that even this orderly form of resistance led to the Riot in St. Mary's churchyard<sup>346</sup>

Critics of the new laws in Pennsylvania also experimented with the concept of nullification. Although nobody had tried to put the principle into practice, many Republicans in Pennsylvania and elsewhere believed that the people, in some fashion, had the right to interpret the Constitution themselves. Unlike Federalists, who argued that citizens' role in government should be limited to voting, Republicans supported a more active citizenry and believed that the people had a right to participate in the deliberative process. What this participation meant in practice, however, remained uncertain. The experience of the Whiskey Rebellion and subsequent battles over the Jay Treaty had helped convince many Pennsylvania Republicans on the need to focus on winning elections. Their focus, therefore, became engaging the public in a party organization that could serve as an intermediary between the people and the government and mobilize voters on election day. Despite this move toward party building and commitment to work within the constitutional structure, no consensus existed on the role of citizens in their

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<sup>346</sup> See ch. 1. For a discussion of the broader petition movement against the Alien and Sedition Acts, see, Douglas Bradburn, "A Clamor in the Public Mind: Opposition to the Alien and Sedition Acts," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 65:3 (July, 2008): 565-600.

government. One of these uncertainties was whether the people had the right to declare a law unconstitutional.<sup>347</sup>

In *Federalist #78* Alexander Hamilton wrote that “no legislature act . . . contrary to the Constitution, can be valid.” While Hamilton envisioned the judiciary as the arbitrator of questions involving a law’s constitutionality, some Republicans began arguing in response to the Alien and Sedition Acts that, because sovereignty ultimately rested with the people, the people could also deem a law unconstitutional. Most Republicans who toyed with this idea believed it was the states, acting on behalf of the people, which would make this judgment. This line of thinking led Jefferson and Madison to draft what became the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions in 1798 and 1799. While the final documents did not use the term “nullification,” they asserted that the Constitution had been a compact between states, that each state retained sovereignty, and that the federal government could only exercise the specifically enumerated powers. Laws passed that went beyond the scope of delegated powers were illegitimate and unenforceable. Although they would have important consequences for the country’s future, these Resolutions had no immediate effect. Neither Virginia nor Kentucky took any action beyond adopting resolutions, and the other states remained silent on the issue.<sup>348</sup>

While Jefferson and Madison had argued that the people could declare a law unconstitutional through their state representatives, other Republicans asserted that individual citizens and communities had the right to interpret the Constitution. In late 1798 and 1799, residents of northeastern Pennsylvania used this theory to justify their resistance to attempts by

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<sup>347</sup> For a discussion of the tradition of a popular constitutionalism, see, Larry Kramer, *The People Themselves: Popular Constitutionalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>348</sup> “Federalist No. 78, Hamilton,” *The Federalist Papers*, 471-479. On the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions, see, William J. Watkins, Jr., *Reclaiming the American Revolution: The Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

federal officials to assess property in order to levy the new taxes. Northeastern Pennsylvania was populated primarily by German *Kirchenleute*, or church people. The *Kirchenleute* had been committed patriots during the Revolution and believed in localism and self-government. These values led them to endorse “popular constitutionalism”—the theory that the people retained sovereignty and could intervene directly in the deliberative process to judge whether a legislative act violated the Constitution. The *Kirchenleute* believed that the new taxes and the Alien and Sedition Acts violated the people’s basic rights and liberties. The people, therefore, had the right, and even a responsibility, to resist the implantation of the laws.<sup>349</sup>

Despite similarities between Fries Rebellion and the Whiskey Rebellion, the events of 1798 and 1799 were not, as the historian Terry Bouton argued, “a replay of what had happened in 1794.”<sup>350</sup> The men and women involved in Fries Rebellion saw themselves as fighting on behalf of the Constitution and Bill of Rights, an entirely different sentiment from that of the rebels in 1794 who spoke of forming a new country and resented the entire federal government. The two uprisings differed tactically as well. Insurgents in 1799 did not use ritualized violence or seek to humiliate federal officials, nor did they burn effigies or target private property. No shots were fired, and the only violence involved women throwing hot water on assessors. Nevertheless, Fries’s Rebellion would have an important impact on politics and party development in Pennsylvania.

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<sup>349</sup> Newman, *Fries’s Rebellion*, 13-47. Robert Churchill, “Popular Nullification, Fries’ Rebellion, and the Waning of Radical Republicanism, 1798-1801,” *Pennsylvania History*, 67:1 (Winter 2000): 105-140. On the origins of the uprising, see, Terry Bouton, “‘No Wonder the times were troublesome:’ The Origins of the Fries Rebellion, 1783-1799,” *Pennsylvania History*, 67:1 (Winter 2000): 21-42; Whitman H. Ridgway, “Fries in the Federalist Imagination: A Crisis of Republican Society,” *Pennsylvania History*, 67:1 (Winter 2000):141-160; Paul Douglas Newman, “The Federalists’ Cold War: The Fries Rebellion, National Security, and the State, 1787-1800,” *Pennsylvania History*, 67:1 (Winter 2000):63-104; Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 245-249; Newman, *Fries’s Rebellion*, 1-111.

<sup>350</sup> Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 245.

The first stage of “Fries’s Rebellion” consisted of the assembly of town meetings, the raising of liberty poles, and the organization of associations committed to resisting the new taxes. In the fall of 1798, liberty poles began appearing throughout the northeast. They carried flags with slogans such as “The Constitution Sacred, No Gag Laws, Liberty or Death” and “THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, FREE SOVEREIGN, AND INDEPENDENT.” Although residents did not usually break any specific laws when they raised the pole, these poles wielded enormous symbolic significance, and Federalists labeled them “sedition poles.” Communities and militia companies also signed pledges swearing to prevent assessors from doing their jobs. The resistance remained non-violent and most assessors simply resigned or refused to do their job.<sup>351</sup>

Local Republicans initially supported the resistance and looked for ways to capitalize on the growing resentments. Jacob Schneider, the editor of the Republican *Readinger Adler*, continuously warned of Federalist plots to establish a monarchy. Republicans running for election in the fall 1798 joined the chorus as well.<sup>352</sup> Republican assemblyman Jonas Hartzell “was very industrious . . . in telling the people that they should endeavor to put other people into the Legislature [and] that the laws of congress lately made were very dangerous to the liberties of the people.”<sup>353</sup> Blair McClenachan, a Republican member of the U.S. House of Representatives, traveled throughout the northeast claiming that Federalists “wished to oppress the people” by taking the people’s land and reducing them to serfdom. “[T]he President,” he cautioned, “would make himself to be king of the County!”<sup>354</sup> Other Republicans encouraged the insurgents to stay

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<sup>351</sup> Deposition of James Jackson, 23 October 1799, Rawle Papers, 2:31; *Oracle of Dauphin*, 9, 16, 23 January, 6 February, 6, 20 March 1799; Newman, *Fries’s Rebellion*, 87-94, 99-100;

<sup>352</sup> For examples of anti-Federalist rhetoric in the *Reading Adler*, see, *Reading Adler*, 2,9 October 1798.

<sup>353</sup> Deposition of John Jarret, 10 April 1799, Rawle Papers, 2:62; Newman, *Fries’s Rebellion*, 84-87.

<sup>354</sup> Deposition of Henry Ohl, 27 April 1799, Rawle Papers, 2:91.

strong. Republican Congressman Robert Brown urged the people “to keep the assessors back so that the rates should not be taken before the new congress met.”<sup>355</sup> Republican support for the resistance, however, quickly dissipated when the rebellion became more serious in the spring of 1799.<sup>356</sup>

The insurgency had centered in Northumberland County in late 1798, but in early 1799 the unrest spread to neighboring Bucks County. Assessors began taking measurements in February and quickly found that the inhabitants of Bucks had no more interest in submitting to the new laws than had their brethren in Northumberland. The decision to appoint a few Quakers as assessors only exacerbated the problem. As pacifists, the Quakers had earned the ire of their neighbors by refusing to take up arms during the Revolutionary War. Residents were further incensed when they learned that one of the assessors would be a man named Everhand Foulke, one of the wealthiest men in the area. In response to the appearance of the assessors, citizens gathered to form associations and sign pledges to stop the officials from doing their jobs. They also issued stern warnings to the men appointed to act as assessor that they faced real danger if they insisted on taking measurements.<sup>357</sup>

With the resistance spreading, the Adams administration sent Marshal William Nichols to issue warrants for the arrest of some of the ringleaders. On March 1, Nichols set up an office in Bethlehem, a town that bordered Northumberland and Bucks, and began making arrests. Although he was unable to apprehend all of the suspects, Nichols managed to take a few men into custody and brought them to the jail in Bethlehem, where they would wait for transportation

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<sup>355</sup> Deposition of John Fogel, 13 April 1799, Rawle Papers: 2:69.

<sup>356</sup> Churchill, *To Shake their Guns*, 77-79.

<sup>357</sup> Newman, *Fries's Rebellion*, 112-121; [Deposition of John Jameson, n.d., Rawle Papers, 2:92; Deposition of George Mitchell, n.d., Rawle Papers: 2:95].

to Philadelphia for trial. As had been the case during the Whiskey Rebellion, the fact that the arrested men would have to stand trial in Philadelphia as opposed to locally infuriated the locals and contributed to unrest.<sup>358</sup>

Word of the arrests spread fast throughout the area, and the people quickly mobilized to liberate the prisoners. On March 7, 1799, a force of about 100 men, some of whom wore tri-colored cockades to symbolize their commitment to protect the people's liberty, met Nichols at a bridge just outside Bethlehem. Nichols had brought with him four men—two Republicans and two Federalists—to try to negotiate a peaceful resolution. After some initial verbal parrying in which Nichols refused an offer from the troops to pay the prisoners bail, the militia agreed to select three men to negotiate. The negotiations, however, ended in a stalemate and Nichols remained adamant that he would not release the prisoners.<sup>359</sup>

By the time the three militiamen headed back to meet their comrades, the number of armed men ready to march on Bethlehem had swollen to near 400 and Revolutionary War veteran John Fries had assumed command. While some of the troops wore tricolored cockades, Fries donned his cap with a black feather—a symbol usually worn by Federalists. Fries had been a Federalist and had marched against the Whiskey Rebels, but the Federalist war measures and higher taxes had driven him into to the opposition. After learning that the prisoners remained in captivity, Fries led the militia to the tavern where Nichols was holding the prisoners. While the crowd waited, Fries entered the tavern unarmed and offered Nichols one more opportunity to accept bail. Nichols refused. Fries, who had been trying to avoid violence, was left with no choice but to use force. Once outside the tavern, he gave the order to free the prisoners but

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<sup>358</sup> Newman, *Fries's Rebellion*, 123-126.

<sup>359</sup> Newman, *Fries's Rebellion*, 131-139; Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 250-251

pleaded with the troops to “Please, for God’s sake, don’t fire *except* [if] we are fired on first.” Nichols did not put up much of a fight and the prisoners were freed without violence. Having achieved their goal, the militia left town without further incident.<sup>360</sup>

Although the insurgents had freed the prisoners without violence, both Federalists and Republicans responded by condemning the participants and calling the event a rebellion. For Federalists, the uprising seemed to confirm their fear of internal enemies and justify the suppression of their political opponents. The Federalists were unimpressed that the *Kirchenleute* had gone to great lengths to avoid violence and had used the Constitution and Bill of Rights to justify their actions. They rejected outright the entire concept of constitutional resistance. In their view, the uprising represented a fundamental threat to the stability of the republic. William Cobbett warned that, if the federal government did not respond immediately, “a *civil war or surrender of Independence*” would be the inevitable result. Federalists were particularly troubled by the fact that some of the rebels had worn the tri-colored cockade, which they believed demonstrated that the rebellion was inspired by the French Revolution.<sup>361</sup> In the *Gazette of the United States*, John Fenno, Jr. stated bluntly that the uprising was “directly related to the political posture between this county and France.”<sup>362</sup> Other Federalists blamed the French outright and asserted that Fries and the other insurgents were trying to “imitate their revolutionary brethren in other parts of the world.”<sup>363</sup> Fenno also asserted “That infernal Aurora, and the infamous United Irishman who conducts it” bore some responsibility for inciting the uprising.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Newman, *Fries’s Rebellion*, 114-119, 138-141; Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 252-253.

<sup>361</sup> *Porcupine’s Gazette*, 12 March 1799

<sup>362</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 11 March 1799

<sup>363</sup> *Philadelphia Gazette*, 16 March 1799.

<sup>364</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 16 March 1799; Newman, *Fries’s Rebellion*, 142-154; Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 254-256.



President Adams agreed with his fellow Federalists that the incident constituted a rebellion against the government, and on March 11 he issued a proclamation ordering the “insurgents of Northampton, Montgomery and Bucks counties” to end their “treasonable proceedings . . . [and] to disperse and retire peaceably to their respective abodes” by March 18. The same day, Adams also called up the newly created army and appointed Federalist William MacPherson, who led the Federalist militia corps MacPherson’s Blues, as commander. Residents of the three counties, including Fries and the other leaders of the opposition movement, gathered on March 18 and universally agreed “to desist from opposition any public officer in the execution of his office” and promised to “use their influence to prevent any opposition, and to give due submission to the laws of the United States.” Even though the group met Adams’s deadline, the meeting failed to stop the federal government from sending troops.<sup>365</sup>

Similar to their response in the wake of the Whiskey Rebellion, Federalists argued that the federal government needed to respond with force and demonstrate that rebellion would not be tolerated. Cobbett summed up the Federalist position: “merely to quell such an insurrection as this will answer but little purpose. It is a weed that has poisoned the soil, to crop off the stalk will only enable it to spring up again and send out a hundred shoots instead of one. It must be torn up by the root.”<sup>366</sup> To accomplish this “weeding” a force of nearly 1,000 men marched on northern Pennsylvania in early April. Despite being a considerably smaller army than the one that Washington sent to suppress the Whiskey Rebellion, this regiment represented a substantial show of force. The troops quickly found, however, that the people had no intention of resisting. Soldiers arrested Fries and a few of the other leaders of the opposition without incident.

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<sup>365</sup> Newman, *Fries’s Rebellion*, 143-144.

<sup>366</sup> *Porcupine’s Gazette*, 30 March 1799,

Ultimately, the army accomplished little in the way of influencing public opinion and may have further contributed to the region's move away from the Federalist Party.<sup>367</sup>

While Federalists condemned the uprising and blamed France, Republicans looked for ways to distance themselves from their previous position on the insurgency. Republicans in the region had lent their support to the initial opposition; nation-wide, they had been calling the Federalist war measures unconstitutional. Although the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions had claimed that the states, not individuals or communities, had the right to interpret the Constitution, and they said nothing about the use of force, they did introduce the idea of nullification. Much of the Republican response to the uprising was, therefore, focused on proving that the party had not been behind the uprising. William Duane pointed out that Fries was a Federalist and claimed that the incident had nothing to do with nullification. Rather, it was part of a Federalist plot to punish the *Kirchenleute* for voting Republican in the last election. Certainly no “Republican can justify the conduct of those people who resisted the marshal in the execution of his duty” Duane declared.<sup>368</sup> Echoing this sentiment, Jacob Schnedier, editor of the Republican *Readinger Adler*, claimed that “none of the perpetrators of violence were subscribers to the *Readinger Adler*.” Republicans even tried to use the rebellion as weapon against James Ross, the Federalist candidate for governor in 1799.<sup>369</sup>

Republicans also reaffirmed their commitment to work within the laws. The insurrection had illustrated the dangers of promoting popular constitutionalism and constellated a belief in the need to focus their energy on legal forms of protest and on winning elections. The Republican

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<sup>367</sup> Newman, *Fries's Rebellion*, 154-164.

<sup>368</sup> *Aurora*, 16, 22, 25 March, 5, 30 April, 15 July 1799

<sup>369</sup> *Readinger Adler*, 20 March 1799; Newman, *Fries's Rebellion*, 149-151; Churchill, “Popular Nullification,” 126-133; Martin, *Government by Dissent*, 44-52.

*Farmers' Register* made this explicit: "Mobs, riots, and hostile oppositions are not the way and means [of participating in the deliberative process] contemplated in the constitution; a more effectual and orderly method can be pursued by *ELECTIONS*."<sup>370</sup> Along similar lines, Duane stated that "While the law exists, it must be obeyed by every good citizen. There is no honest method to get rid of a bad tax or a bad law, but by prevailing on the legislature to repeal it."<sup>371</sup> From Philadelphia, Jefferson, who had once claimed that "a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical" and who had endorsed nullification, reached a similar conclusion after Fries's Rebellion. "In this state we fear the ill-designing may produce insurrection," he wrote in a letter to Edmund Pendleton after receiving news of the uprising. "Nothing could be so fatal. Anything like force would check the progress of public opinion and rally them around the government. This is not the kind of opposition the American people will permit. But keep away from all show of force, and they will bear down the evil propensities of the government, by the constitutional means of election and petition."<sup>372</sup>

In April 1799 a federal grand jury indicted Fries for treason. Another ninety-one people would receive incitements on charges ranging from sedition to conspiracy and obstruction of justice. Federalists were eager to see Fries hang for his role in the uprising. The leaders of the Whiskey Rebellion had either escaped or been pardoned by Washington, and some Federalists believed that this lack of punishment had sent a message that rebellions were condoned. In this climate, Fries never stood a chance of exoneration, even with the counsel of the prominent

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<sup>370</sup> *The Farmers' Register*, 3 April 1799.

<sup>371</sup> *Aurora*, 16 March 1799.

<sup>372</sup> Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 30 January 1787 in Paul Leicester Ford, ed. *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896), Vol. 11:92-93; Jefferson to Pendleton, 14 February 1799, in *ibid*, 7:356; Churchill, "Popular Nullification," 128-129; Newman, *Fries's Rebellion*, 150-151.

Republican attorney Alexander James Dallas. The judge hearing the case ruled that any organized act of violence against the government, no matter the size, constituted treason, which left the jury with no choice but to deliver a guilty verdict. On April 25 the jury found Fries guilty and the judge sentenced him to hang.<sup>373</sup>

Fries's Rebellion marked a turning point in Pennsylvania politics. Although Republicans had denied the legitimacy of crowd action since the Whiskey Rebellion, they had still supported an active citizenry and believed the people had a right to insert themselves into the deliberative process. These positions, however, had left them vulnerable to charges of supporting Fries's Rebellion. Following the uprising, Republicans backed away from popular constitutionalism and nullification and joined with Federalists in asserting that a citizen could participate in government only through the ballot box. Federalist political violence even enabled Republicans to campaign as "friends of order," a slogan Federalists had once used.

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<sup>373</sup> Newman, *Fries's Rebellion*, 165-188; Jane Shaffer Elsmere, "The Trial of John Fries," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 103 (October 1979): 432-435. See also, Thomas Carpenter, *The Two Trials of John Fries* (Philadelphia: William Woodward, 1800).

## Chapter 4: Elections and Electioneering

Elections are the foundation of a representative government, and voting is one of the most basic, if not direct, ways citizens can engage in the deliberative process. While other forms of political mobilization such as town meetings, public demonstrations, and popular uprisings allow the people to engage with policy in an unmediated fashion, voting filters public opinion. Nevertheless, voting can be a powerful weapon and, as other forms of political mobilization fell out of a favor, Pennsylvanians began to rely more on elections as a way of expressing their will.

Colonists in Pennsylvania had exercised the franchise in some fashion since the first settlers arrived, and over time residents came to see voting for representatives as a basic right. This belief drove the colonists to reject the British concept of virtual representation and to demand the ability elect their own leaders. The experience of the Revolution, however, left many Pennsylvanians with a deep suspicion of authority, and in the years following the Declaration of Independence residents often demanded the right to engage directly in the deliberative process. Citizens exercised their right to vote, but often turned to other forms of political mobilization to assert their will. Additionally, a clear connection between elections and policy did not exist and during these years voters often made their decision based on regional and/or regional and ethnic loyalties.

By the mid-1780s some Pennsylvanians, particularly the elite, concluded that the masses exercised too much control over policy decisions and that the government had to be insulated from the whims of public opinion. Their efforts resulted in new federal and state constitutions

that limited the ways in which the public could engage in the deliberative process. Supporters of the new government believed that voting should be the only way citizens exercised their sovereignty and developed effective strategies for mobilizing voters. Using election laws, flooding the state with pro-Constitution propaganda and suppressing dissent, these Federalists were the first group to orchestrate a statewide election campaign and managed to secure ratification of the Constitution and dominate the first federal elections.

The coalition that voted to ratify the Constitution and elected a solid Federalist delegation to the First Congress, however, broke down in the early 1790s, and two parties emerged that were divided over the role of citizens in the new government. United by a shared belief in a deferential, unitary civil society, Federalists saw elections as the only legitimate way citizens could exercise their sovereignty and focused their efforts on securing consent for their policies by winning elections. In contrast, critics of the Washington administration and members of the emerging Republican Party believed that citizens had to remain vigilant in defense of their rights and that they had the right to express their will beyond casting a ballot. Members of the opposition attempted to challenge Federalists at the ballot box, but in the early 1790s they continued to utilize other forms of political mobilization and focused their efforts on demonstrations of popular support. By the mid-1790s, however, a growing recognition of the volatility of crowds along with a string of political defeats drove Republicans to refocus their efforts on channeling popular support into electoral victories. Aided by the spread of newspapers and an increasing awareness of the connection between elections and policy, Republicans in the second half of the 1790s started to create a statewide network of party operatives who could tailor electioneering efforts to the local public. Unlike the Federalists who tried to rally supporters through attacks on recent immigrants and fears of French influence, Republicans

worked to unite a variety of different ethnic and religious groups behind a shared opposition to Federalists. The emerging party structure also incorporated other forms of political mobilization, such as fêtes, parades, and town meetings as a way to promote a partisan identity and boost voter turnout. Instead of giving the public an opportunity to express their will, these forms of political mobilization became part of party's effort to win elections. By the end of the decade, the party organization had emerged as an intermediary between the people and the government. Instead of engaging directly in the deliberative process, Pennsylvanians participated in a political party whose primary mission was to win elections.<sup>374</sup>

This chapter will explore the changing ways in which partisans in Pennsylvania approached elections and electioneering between 1783 and 1800. Although both Federalists and Republicans attempted to influence election outcomes in a variety of ways during this time period, this chapter will focus on four of the most prominent forms of electioneering: manipulation of election laws, nominating procedures, printed propaganda, and efforts on, or near, election day to mobilize (or suppress) voters. Each of these forms of electioneering factored in elections in Pennsylvania and played a key role in the emergence of organized political parties.

Other historians have explored elections in the early republic. Most notably, the study of elections and electioneering figured prominently in the scholarship of the “new political historians” of the 1960s and 1970s. Historians including Ronald Formisano, Noble E. Cunningham, Jr. and Richard Miller used election data as a way of studying constituent

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<sup>374</sup> On the emergence of parties as an intermediary body, see, Larry Kramer, *The People Themselves: Popular Constitutionalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 166-168. On party's incorporation of other forms of political mobilization, see, David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), especially chapters 2 and 3.

behavior. Much of the work of the new political historians centered on uncovering when “real” political parties emerged. The goal of this chapter is not to wade into this fraught debate over whether or not a “first party system” existed. Instead, it looks to bridge the gap between the quantitative work of the new political historians and the qualitative studies of political culture and show how changing electoral practices related to larger trends in approaches to political mobilization and questions of the role of citizens in the deliberative process.<sup>375</sup>

### **Voting and Electioneering in Colonial Pennsylvania**

Pennsylvanians had engaged in some form of organized electioneering since the early eighteenth century. For much the colonial period, the state was divided between the Quaker Party and the Proprietary Party. The Quaker Party, as the name implies, drew its strength primarily, but not exclusively, from the Society of Friends, while the Proprietary Party’s main support came from Germans, Anglicans and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. Although many elections passed with relatively little fanfare, during important elections the two sides fought fiercely for every vote.<sup>376</sup>

Before the Revolution only adult males who owned fifty acres of land or more could vote in Pennsylvania. Scholars estimate that about 50 to 60 percent of adult males held the franchise;

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<sup>375</sup> Ronald P. Formisano, *The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s-1840s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Noble E. Cunningham, *Jeffersonian Republicans: The Formation of Party Organization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957); Richard G. Miller, *Philadelphia, the Federalist City: A Study of Urban Politics, 1789-1801* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1976). For more studies of elections, see, Jeffrey L. Pasley, “The Chees and the Words: Popular Political Culture and Participatory Democracy in the Early Republic” and Andrew W. Robertson, “Voting Rites and Voting Acts: Electioneering Ritual, 1790-1820” both in in Pasley, Robertson, and David Waldstreicher, *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 46-47; 57-75; Daniel Peart, *Era of Experimentation: American Political Practices in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014).

<sup>376</sup> For a general discussion of the political divisions in colonial Pennsylvania, see, Theodore Thayer, *Pennsylvania Politics and The Growth of Democracy, 1740-1776* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1953); Alan Tully, *Forming American Politics: Ideals, Interests, and Institutions in Colonial New York and Pennsylvania* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).



turnout varied by region and by year but hovered between 20 and 40 percent. Nominations were generally made in private, although Quakers occasionally used their annual meeting to discuss candidates for upcoming elections. Additionally, the Proprietary Party attempted to organize a public nominating meeting in 1754, but there is no evidence that such a meeting ever occurred or that the experiment was tried again.<sup>377</sup> Because religious and ethnic groups voted in blocs and voter turnout was consistently higher in religiously/ethnically divided regions, political organizers in colonial Pennsylvania often appealed to specific religious or ethnic groups and/or fanned the flames of rivalries between groups to boost turnout. During the election of 1764, for example, Benjamin Franklin's son spent "several days . . . canvassing among the Germans and endeavoring to get votes by propagating the most infamous lies he could invent" about rival candidates.<sup>378</sup>

The factions also resorted to more physical tactics. In Philadelphia, partisans battled over control of the only staircase that led to the second floor of the state house, where voting occurred. As early as 1725, the parties stationed guards atop the flight of stairs and prevented anyone known to support the "wrong" candidate from using them. Control over this hallway became such an issue that in 1742 members of the Proprietary Party incited a riot by hiring a group of sailors and shipbuilders to take control of the stairs by force. Heated rhetoric and violence were, however, the exception. Most elections during the colonial period were quiet affairs where incumbents were easily reelected.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Robert J. Dinkin, *Voting in Provincial America: A Study of Elections in the Thirteen Colonies, 1689-1776* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977), 33-34, 38-39, 44, 81-83, 155-161.

<sup>378</sup> John Franklin to Thomas Penn, 19 October 1764, quoted in Sister Joan de Lourdes Leonard, "Elections in Colonial Pennsylvania," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 11:3 (July, 1954), 391.

<sup>379</sup> Leonard, "Elections in Colonial Pennsylvania," 394-395; Dinkin, *Voting in Provincial America*, 155-161, 183-185; Mark Brewin, "The History of Election Day in Philadelphia: A Study in American Political Ritual," PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2002, 35-71.

## Electioneering in Revolutionary Pennsylvania 1783-1786

The American Revolution transformed the political landscape in Pennsylvania and altered the public's relationship with elections. Pennsylvanians had come to see self-government as a fundamental right and defended their right to engage directly in the deliberative process. Particularly during the war years, Pennsylvanians relied on town meetings and popular violence to assert their will. Even as the war wound down, however, citizens continued to employ these forms of political mobilization as a way of voicing their will. Committed to their freedom and weary of authority, many Pennsylvanians preferred these more direct methods over voting, which filtered public opinion and only occurred once a year.<sup>380</sup> Moreover, voters did not necessarily see a connection between changes in policy and changes in representation and often cast ballots based on regional or ethnic loyalties, not support for a candidate's positions.<sup>381</sup> Elections, nevertheless, remained important, and two proto-parties, the Constitutionals and the Republicans/Anti-Constitutionals' vied with each other for control of the state government and worked to mobilize their supporters on election day.

Differences over the democratic constitution of 1776 served as the catalyst for the formation of factions in Pennsylvania during the 1780s. Republicans, who drew their strength from Anglicans, Quakers who could vote, and German Sectarians, argued that the constitution lacked checks and balances and verged on democratic tyranny. Meanwhile, Constitutionals, who tended to be Scotch-Irish, Presbyterian or Germans from Reformed churches, defended the frame of government as the protector of liberty and will of the people. The two groups divided along

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<sup>380</sup> Barbara Clark Smith, *The Freedoms We Lost: Consent and Resistance in Revolutionary America* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

<sup>381</sup> Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The First Presidential Contest: 1796 and the Founding of American Democracy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013), 112.

the same lines as the colonial factions had, with the key difference being that many of the men who had belonged to the Quaker Party had either become Loyalists and fled or were disfranchised by the Test Laws. A dearth of newspapers in the west and poor communication made a statewide organization difficult, and the two groups tended to focus on mobilizing their base rather than on appealing to new voters. Constitutionlists dominated elections immediately following the Declaration of Independence, but as the war came to a close and life began returning to normal, a growing number of voters joined the ranks of the Republicans, and elections became more competitive. Between 1783 and 1786, both factions put forward tickets, published electioneering articles, and worked to mobilize supporters on election day.<sup>382</sup>

Election laws and regulations on who had the right to vote played a prominent role in Pennsylvania's elections during the 1780s. The state's 1776 constitution removed all property requirements and gave the right to vote to all males age 21 and older who had lived in the state for a year and who paid taxes. The constitution also granted suffrage to adult sons of freeholders who had not paid taxes. While this was the most liberal franchise law in the nation, other Pennsylvania laws limited the actual number of men who could vote. As discussed in chapter one, the new state required that all voters and office holders take an oath to uphold the constitution and renounce allegiance to the king of England. Men elected to serve in government also had to declare their belief in a single God and in the divinity of the Scriptures. These laws disenfranchised many Quakers, who refused to take oaths, as well as anyone who openly

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<sup>382</sup> Robert Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971); Douglas M Arnold, *A Republican Revolution: Ideology and Politics in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790* (Garland Publishing, 1989); Owen S. Ireland, "The Ethnic-Religious Dimension of Politics," *William and Mary Quarterly* 30 (July 1973):423-428; Owen S. Ireland, "The Crux of Politics: Religion and Party in Pennsylvania, 1778-1789," *William and Mary Quarterly* 42 (October 1985): 463-475.

opposed the new constitution or who had qualms about the new nation. The Test Laws had a dramatic effect on the electorate, leaving as much as half the population in some areas without the right to vote. Defenders of the Test Laws argued that they were necessary mechanism to prevent Tories from sabotaging the republican experiment. Critics of the laws, however, argued that they deprived men of one of their basic rights and discriminated against certain religious groups. Just or not, the Test Laws shaped elections in Pennsylvania during this time period and, because many of the disenfranchised would likely have sided with the Republicans, gave the Constitutionalists an advantage.<sup>383</sup>

A uniform approach to nominating candidates did not exist in the 1780s. In some areas the public played an active role in the process and used town meetings to select candidates. Detailed records of these meetings do not exist, but available evidence suggests a fairly open and democratic process. Small towns held meetings to discuss upcoming elections and to select a representative to attend a larger district or county meeting. Representatives from the towns would then gather and agree on a ticket.<sup>384</sup> In Philadelphia, in addition to these public meetings, Constitutionalists and Republicans met privately to select candidates.<sup>385</sup>

During this time period, electioneering articles appeared in late September and increased in frequency until election day, which occurred on the second Tuesday of October. Many of the articles that covered upcoming elections involved personal attacks on individual candidates. As “A Plebian” lamented at the beginning of September 1784, “every newspaper is to teem with

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<sup>383</sup> Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania*, 16; Ireland, “The Ethnic-Religious Dimension of Politics.”

<sup>384</sup> For an example of these meetings see, *Independent Gazetteer*, 11 October 1783. There appears to have been a controversy surrounding this meeting. See, *Independent Gazetteer* 1, 15, 22 November 1783;

<sup>385</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 5 October 1785; *Independent Gazetteer*, 8 October 1784; *Pennsylvania Evening Herald*, 8 October 1783. Republican claimed that the combined ticket was a more ploy and that it did not actually represent the views of the mechanics. See, *Independent Gazetteer*, 5, 15 January 1785.

abuse until the general election is over” because partisans “believe that nothing can procure so many votes at an election as scurrility and lies.”<sup>386</sup> George Bryan, a Constitutionalist and judge on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, bore the brunt of the Republican assault. Polemists ridiculed Bryan’s age, claimed he lacked a moral compass, accused him of behaving like a dictator during his tenure as President of the state, and condemned him for refusing to pardon supposedly innocent men.<sup>387</sup> The Constitutionlists hurled their own insults. Just prior to the election in 1783, the *Freeman’s Journal*, a paper friendly to the Constitutionlists, published a postscript that included blurbs on the leading Republicans in Philadelphia City and County. Sharp Delany, a Republican member of the Assembly, for example, was mocked for his “defective education and vulgar manners” and labeled a “tool” for whom “no servility is too great” in the search for personal reward.<sup>388</sup>

The factions did, however, use more than just smear campaigns to rally voters. The Constitutionlists relied on fears and rhetoric from the Revolution. They warned that if Republicans held power they would restore seized property to Loyalists and to the Penn family and allow the return of Loyalists. The Constitutionlists also portrayed the Republicans as aristocrats and elitists unconcerned with the plight of ordinary Pennsylvanians.<sup>389</sup> Meanwhile, Republicans seized on the Test Laws as a way to rally voters. As early as November 1784, after suffering another defeat at the polls, Republicans discussed supporting the repeal of the Test Laws as a way of winning the loyalty of non-jurors and their friends. As Benjamin Rush, a prominent Philadelphia Republican, explained to a friend, the effort would likely yield no

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<sup>386</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 1 September 1784.

<sup>387</sup> For some of the charges made against Bryan, see, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 8 October 1783; 24 August 1784; 1, 8, 22, 29 September 1784; *Independent Gazetteer*, 8, 11 October 1783; 4 September 1784; *Freeman’s Journal*, 22 September 1784.

<sup>388</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 October 1783; *Pennsylvania Gazette*,

<sup>389</sup> *Freemans’s Journal*, 8, 24 September 1784; Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution*, 141-142.

immediate results, but forcing the Constitutionals to defend the acts might “rouse and irritate the sons and friends of the nonjurors” and win the future vote of the disenfranchised.<sup>390</sup> The following year Republicans published their ticket under the name “the Friends to Equal Liberty” and filled the papers with attacks against Test Laws. One article printed shortly before election day in 1785 in the Republican-leaning *Independent Gazetteer* pointed out that the laws put non-jurors in the same position that the colonists had been in when they raised arms against Great Britain—forced to pay taxes without the right to vote for a representative—and called on voters to select candidates who would free these “*Slaves of a free state.*”<sup>391</sup>

Both Constitutionals and Republicans, particularly in Philadelphia, worked hard on election day to ensure that their supporters made it to the polls. As the *Independent Gazetteer* reported in 1785, “Great exertions were made by the two contending parties in the city to carry their favorite ticket.”<sup>392</sup> Pennsylvania election law required that each ticket be handwritten, and party organizers painstakingly wrote hundreds of tickets to distribute to supporters. Reports from the time indicate that some men went “house-to-house, soliciting votes.”<sup>393</sup> Both factions often stationed supporters outside polling places to harass voters as they approached. Shortly after election day in 1785, The *Pennsylvania Evening Herald* printed a fictionalized account of this type of lobbying near polling locations:

“Well; Tom, going to vote?—Say?’—Yes—surely—‘My dear fellow, here’s the staunch supporters of the constitution—your approved friends . . . We’ll have no nabobs—no great men—no *aristocrats*—huzza, boys!—Success to the constitution for ever!’—My dear friends!—Happy to see you!—How are you, Jack?—How’s all your family, Bill?—What’s

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<sup>390</sup> Benjamin Rush to unknown, 10 November 1784, L.H. Butterfield, ed., *Letters of Benjamin Rush* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 1:339-340.

<sup>391</sup> *Pennsylvania Evening Herald*, 8 October 1785; 4 October 1786. A Republican correspondent wrote that the definition of the Friends of Equal Liberty was “A sett of characters desirous of introducing moderation in the political system.” *Independent Gazetteer*, 8 October 1785; *Independent Gazetteer*, 8 October 1785.

<sup>392</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, 15 October 1785.

<sup>393</sup> *The Pennsylvania Evening Herald*, 4 October 1786.

the matter with you, Ned?—How do, Harry?—Welcome to Philadelphia once more Dick.—Are you going to vote? Here’s the ticket—friends of equal liberty—men who understand trade and commerce—not those damn’d *prospeteran* crew, who ride rough-shod over the people, like Oliver Cromwell—huzza!—Three cheers!—Commerce and equal liberty for ever!—Come on, my lads, come on!”<sup>394</sup>

Although it is meant to be satirical, the article illustrates the central divisions in Pennsylvania politics. The imagined activist campaigning for the Constitutionals relies on class antagonism and the Constitution—issues that would likely appeal to laborers. The Republican, in contrast, targets merchants and Quakers with slogans including “trade and commerce” and “Commerce and equal liberty forever.” The Republican also appeals to the Republican fears of a democratic despotism and compares the Constitutionals to Oliver Cromwell.

In the midst of the partisan battles, voting places often degenerated into chaos and confusion. Following the election of 1784, “A Citizen of Pennsylvania” decried that the scene looked more like “a mob assembled for some illegal purposes” than an election. The situation was ripe for fraud, and accusations of irregularities at polling places were commonplace.<sup>395</sup>

Turnout rates during this time period ranged from the low teens to upward of 60 percent in some regions. In general, however, more people voted as the decade wore on. The increase in turnout was, as historian Owen Ireland has shown, due to votes from Lutherans, Sectarians, and Quakers who had previously abstained from voting for religious reasons. Likely influenced by the Republican campaign to repeal the Test Laws, the majority of the new voters sided with

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<sup>394</sup> *Pennsylvania Evening Herald*, 12 October 1785.

<sup>395</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 October 1784. On charges of fraud, see, *Independent Gazetteer*, 25 October 1783; *Freeman’s Journal*, 21 January, 20, 27 October 1784.

Republican candidates. By 1786 Republicans held a commanding majority in the Assembly and managed to gut the Test Acts, thus sealing the fate of the Constitutionalists.<sup>396</sup>

## Federalists and the Constitution 1787-1789

The debate over the Federal Constitution and first federal elections marked a shift in how Pennsylvanians viewed the relationship between the people and their government. The Constitution was designed to serve as a check against the excesses of the Confederation period. Instead of exercising direct authority over deliberations, public opinion would be filtered through the selection of representatives. The presidential veto and bicameral legislature further insulated the government from popular pressures. Federalists tended to see the vote as the only legitimate way for the people to express their will. As scholars including Gordon Wood have shown, these political leaders and their followers asserted that sovereignty rested with the people and elections were the only way the people as a whole could speak. Benjamin Rush, a leading proponent of the Constitution, summarized this view: “[T]he *sovereignty of the people* is delegated to those whom they have *freely appointed* to administer [the] constitution, save at the stated period of election, when the sovereignty is again at the disposal of the *whole people*.”<sup>397</sup> Federalists viewed other approaches to political influence such as town meetings, instructions to representatives, and popular uprisings as illegitimate and saw them as a threat to the health and longevity of the republic. Given the importance they placed on elections and the significance of what was at stake, they invested significant amount of time and resources in ensuring the election of

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<sup>396</sup> Ireland, *Religion, Ethnicity, and Politics*, 215-253.

<sup>397</sup> See Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (1969; reprint, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998), 344-389 and *passim*. For a different take on popular sovereignty, see, Edmund Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989); Kramer, *The People Themselves*, 129-130. Rush quote, 129.



Federalists to the Constitutional Convention and the first federal Congress. In 1787 and 1788 Pennsylvania Federalists pioneered a new style of electioneering that utilized election law, grassroots organizing, and newspaper rhetoric to build a diverse coalition of voters.

As the Constitutionals had done with the Test Acts, Federalists used election laws to frame the rules of the game in a way that favored their candidates. In 1787, Federalists relied on a shortened campaign schedule to prevent their opponents from mobilizing. Only ten days after the introduction of the new Constitution, Federalist member of the Assembly George Clymer called for the immediate election of a convention to ratify the Constitution. The motion stunned some fellow Federalists and came as a complete shock to Constitutionals who had not even had time to discuss the new frame of government with their constituents. Although most Pennsylvanians agreed that the Articles of Confederation needed revision and few people objected to the new government following the first publication of the Constitution, Federalists correctly predicted that Constitutionals would see the new government as a threat to the state constitution and try to block ratification. The proposed Federal Constitution, with its strong executive and bicameral legislature, represented an implicit rejection of Pennsylvania's 1776 constitution. As Clymer recognized, the call for immediate elections would undercut the Constitutionals' ability to organize their western supporters.<sup>398</sup> Anti-federalists in the Assembly recognized that the shortened campaign schedule put them at a disadvantage and did everything in their power to delay the call for a convention, including refusing to attend the Assembly to prevent a quorum. A similar tactic had been employed in 1784 to thwart an

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<sup>398</sup> With few exceptions, the Constitutionals became Antifederalists and the Republicans Federalists. I will, therefore, use the terms Federalists and Antifederalists to describe the two groups. Ireland, *Religion, Ethnicity, and Politics*, 16-33; Owen S. Ireland, "The People's Triumph: The Federalist Majority in Pennsylvania, 1787-1788," *Pennsylvania History* 56:2 (April 1989): 93-113; Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania*, 199-203.

attempted revision to the Test Laws.<sup>399</sup> While the strategy had worked in 1784, Federalists in 1787 were in no mood for games and sent word that the absent members must return. When the missing representatives refused to appear, the Sergeant at Arms and a group of Philadelphians dragged two of the assemblymen back to the meeting room. Once they reached quorum, the Assembly voted to call for elections for a convention to occur in less than six weeks on Tuesday, November 6.<sup>400</sup>

Federalists also manipulated the election laws in 1788 in preparation for the first federal elections. The Federal Constitution gave the states leeway to decide how to conduct elections, which meant that the decision rested with the Pennsylvania Assembly, where Federalists held a majority.<sup>401</sup> In September 1788, over the objection of William Findley and other leading western Anti-federalists, Federalists passed an election bill that called for at-large elections to occur on November 26. In an at-large election, each voter wrote the names of eight different men on a piece of paper, and the eight men receiving the greatest number of votes were elected. At-large, as opposed to district, elections favored Federalists because most of their supporters lived in the eastern part of the state, in and around Philadelphia. Antifederalists favored district elections because they held majorities in western parts of the state and had a chance of electing at least a few representatives if the state was divided into districts. In an at-large election, however, the

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<sup>399</sup> Brunhouse, *Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania*, 154-155; "To the Citizens of Pennsylvania . . .", 29 September 1784, Broadside, EAI #18714.

<sup>400</sup> Ireland, *Religion, Ethnicity, and Politics*, 10-33.

<sup>401</sup> Thomas Fitzsimons to Samuel Meredith, 20 August 1788, *The Documentary History of the First Federal Elections, 1788-1790*, ed. Merrill Jensen and Robert A. Becker (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), I:253-254. (Hereafter *DHFFE*).

Federalist majorities in the more populous east would likely erase whatever advantage Anti-federalists may have had.<sup>402</sup>

Supporters of the Constitution used a hybrid public/private system to nominate candidates. In 1787, Federalists organized town meetings to select candidates. Instead of voting directly for representatives, however, the participants appointed a committee to create a ticket for ratification at a later meeting. This process ensured that the desired candidates received the nomination while also allowing the public to feel as though they had participated in the decision. Even with a select committee picking the candidates, Federalists left nothing to chance and required each of the proposed candidates to publically state their support for the new Constitution.<sup>403</sup>

In late 1788 Federalists organized the first-ever statewide nominating convention. This convention, held in Lancaster, began as a response to a similar gathering of Anti-federalists in Harrisburg in the fall of the same year. The primary purpose of the Anti-federalist meeting, however, had been to discuss possible amendments to the Constitution. The Harrisburg convention did create a ticket for the upcoming elections, but this action was almost an afterthought.<sup>404</sup> Although Federalists condemned the meeting and claimed that the goal of “*the Antifederal conclave*” in creating a ticket had been to “save all the trouble of *free elections* in the

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<sup>402</sup> Assembly Proceedings, 29 September 1788, *DHFFE*, 291-292; The Pennsylvania Election Law, October 4, 1788, *DHFFE*, 299-302; John Caldwell, *William Findley: A Politician in Pennsylvania, 1783-1791* (Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000); David W. Houpt, “Contested Election Laws: Representation, Elections, and Party Building in Pennsylvania, 1788-1794,” *Pennsylvania History*, 79:3 (Summer 2012): 257-283.

<sup>403</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, 17, 26 October, 6 November 1787; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 15 October 1787; *Pennsylvania Herald*, 7 November 1787; *Carlisle Gazette*, 24, 31 October 1787; Merrill Jensen, ed. *Documentary History of the Ratification of the Federal Constitution* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976) II: 228-229 (Hereafter, *DHRFC*)

<sup>404</sup> “Proceedings of the Harrisburg Convention, September 3-6, 1788,” *DHFFE*, 258-259. The proceedings published in the newspapers said nothing about candidates for the upcoming elections. Private letters, however, suggest that there was discussion of a ticket. When the slate was finally published on November 7 in the *Federal Gazette* it was referred to as the “Harrisburg Ticket.”

future,” Federalist leaders were concerned that the gathering might give Antifederalists an advantage.<sup>405</sup> Leading Philadelphia Federalists, therefore, called on supporters of the Federal Constitution throughout the state to hold local meetings and select delegates to attend a convention. Similar to the process in 1787, citizens who attended these gatherings voted for delegates to the Lancaster Convention and did not directly select nominees.<sup>406</sup> On November 3, 1788, delegates representing eighteen counties and the city of Philadelphia convened in Lancaster. Unlike the Anti-federalist meeting, the Lancaster Convention dealt solely with nominations.<sup>407</sup>

The ticket Federalists settled on, however, was not universally satisfactory. Federalists trumpeted the Lancaster Ticket as a reflection of the state’s diverse population, but some Pennsylvanians rejected both the Harrisburg and the Lancaster tickets as unrepresentative of their interests and demanded the right to select their own candidates.<sup>408</sup> An article addressed to “the German Inhabitants of the State of Pennsylvania” published shortly before election day called on Germans to “Muster all your strength in the ensuing election, and neither receive nor give a ticket which has not at least three Germans on it.”<sup>409</sup> The article highlights the continued importance of ethnic loyalty in Pennsylvania and shows that neither Federalists nor Anti-federalists had developed a sufficient strategy to appeal to German voters, who made up a

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<sup>405</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 3 September 1788, *DHFFE*, 265. For other examples of Federalist condemnations of the Harrisburg convention, see “A Federal Centinel,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 10 September 1788, *DHFFE*, 267-269.

<sup>406</sup> “Federalists Call Conference at Lancaster,” 1 October 1788, *DHFFE*, 296-298.

<sup>407</sup> See documents listed under “Proceedings of the Lancaster Conference,” *DHFFE*, 323-329.

<sup>408</sup> *Pennsylvania Packet*, 10 November 1788, *DHFFE*, 336..

<sup>409</sup> *Pennsylvania Packet*, 19 November 1788, *DHFFE*, 339-340; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 25 November 1788. For commentary on the proposed changes, see, *Independent Gazetteer*, 178 November 1788, *DFFE*, 346; *Federal Gazette*, 18 November 1788, *DHFFE*, 347.

significant portion of the electorate. The modified tickets also demonstrate that the parties had not matured to a point where voters felt obliged to adhere to the party-approved ticket.<sup>410</sup>

In 1787 and 1788 Federalists also utilized newspaper propaganda to build momentum and rally supporters. Leading Pennsylvania Federalists including Thomas Fitzsimmons and Benjamin Rush recruited some of the most talented writers in the nation to defend the Constitution, and Federalists flooded the newspapers with opinion pieces.<sup>411</sup> In general, Federalists presented the Constitution as a panacea—it would solve all problems and create none.<sup>412</sup> Beyond responding to specific Anti-federalist criticisms, however, Federalist authors rarely discussed specific provisions in the Constitution. Instead, Federalist-leaning journalists harped on the general benefits of a stronger national government, warned of the dangers of the status quo and attacked the Anti-federalists as disorganizers. Federalist polemicists also made liberal use of lingering resentments over the Test Laws as a way to ensure that Quakers and other previously disenfranchised voters turned out to support Federalist candidates.<sup>413</sup> Other pieces dwelled on mistakes made by the Constitutionals and hammered leading Anti-federalists as either being closet Tories or power-hungry office-seekers who were worried that the new government would cost them their lucrative government jobs.<sup>414</sup> Finally, Federalists held up George Washington and Benjamin Franklin’s participation in the Constitutional Convention as evidence that the Constitution was the best form of government possible. As one correspondent wrote in 1787, “if

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<sup>410</sup> Kenneth Keller, “Diversity and Democracy: Ethnic Politics in Southeastern Pennsylvania, 1788-1799,” Ph.D. diss, Yale University, 1971, 71-80.

<sup>411</sup> Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution*, 204.

<sup>412</sup>For example, see James Wilson’s speech at the State House Yard, *Pennsylvania Herald*, 9 October 1787, *DHRFC* 174-175; *Federal Gazette*, 19 November 1788, *DHFFE*, 349.

<sup>413</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, 15 January 1788; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 5 November 1788, *DHFFE*, 330-331; Ireland, *Religion, Ethnicity, and Politics*, 54-55;

<sup>414</sup> *Carlisle Gazette*, 3 October 1787; *Independent Gazetteer*, 29 September, 9,13,20,23 October 1787; *Pennsylvania Herald* 4 October 1787.

the plan is not a good one, it is impossible that either General Washington or Dr. Franklin would have recommended it.”<sup>415</sup> Overall, the goal of Federalist newspaper campaign was not to educate the public on the new government or to engage in a debate over the merits of the Constitution. It was to convince voters to side with Federalist candidates.<sup>416</sup>

Federalists also looked for ways to undermine their opponents’ campaigns. The majority of newspaper editors in Pennsylvania supported the Federalists, and Anti-federalists faced difficulties in even getting their work published.<sup>417</sup> Federalist readers, meanwhile, canceled subscriptions and boycotted newspapers that carried Anti-federalist pieces.<sup>418</sup> Anti-federalists also claimed that Federalists at the Post Office prevented or delayed the delivery of news to the Anti-federalist western parts of the state.<sup>419</sup> Additionally, proponents of the new government waged a campaign to force journalists to use their real names when publishing articles. Federalists believed the stature of their supporters might lend the arguments greater weight. Perhaps more importantly, they hoped the move might scare Anti-federalist authors in predominantly Federalist parts of the state, such as Philadelphia, from publishing comments critical of the Constitution because they might lose business or friends if their identity was revealed. According to one Anti-federalist, the call for authors to use their real name amounted to “Give me a stick, and I will break your head.”<sup>420</sup> Anti-federalists had legitimate reasons to be concerned about being “outed.” Benjamin Workman, for example, lost his job at the University

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<sup>415</sup> *Pennsylvania Herald*, 27 October 1787; *Independent Gazetteer*, 15 October 1787. On the

<sup>416</sup> On Federalists’ use of language and rhetoric, see, John Howe, *Language and Political Meaning in Revolutionary America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004).

<sup>417</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, 23 January 1788; Cornell, *The Other Founders*, 121-128.

<sup>418</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, 23 January 1788; Pauline Maier, *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 75, 101, 145

<sup>419</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, 26 January, 12 March 1788; Robert W. T. Martin, *Government by Dissent: Protest, Resistance, and Radical Democratic Thought in the Early American Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 66-67.

<sup>420</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 31 October 1787.

of Pennsylvania after Federalists unmasked him as the author of series of Anti-federalist articles signed by “Philadelphiensis.”<sup>421</sup> While these antics may appear questionable or unethical, they point to Federalists’ focus on elections and determination to secure victory.

Evidence of election day campaigning in 1787 and 1788 is sparse, but the effect of Federalist electioneering overall is clear: Federalists sailed to victory in both elections.<sup>422</sup> In 1787, Federalists won nearly twice as many seats as their Anti-federalist opponents, thereby guaranteeing that the state would ratify the Constitution.<sup>423</sup> In 1788, the proposed modified German/Lancaster and German/Harrisburg tickets complicated voting, but six men from the original Lancaster Ticket, along with two Germans, one Federalist and one moderate, were elected to the first Congress.<sup>424</sup> Federalist regions reported higher turnouts than did those that sided with the Anti-federalists, which suggests that the Federalists did a better job at getting their supporters to the polls. Totals for the different Federalist candidates, however, differ significantly, which means that many voters strayed from the Lancaster Ticket.<sup>425</sup> The fact that voters did not feel compelled to vote for either ticket indicates that these proto-parties had not yet been fully accepted as the intermediary between the people and their government. Nevertheless, Federalists’ success at the polls demonstrates the efficacy of their electioneering strategy. Using

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<sup>421</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, 11, 12 March 1788; *Carlisle Gazette*, 1 November 1787. For a discussion of the importance of anonymity in print during the debates over the Constitution, see, Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism & the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 37-38, 105-106. The debate over anonymity led to a libel case when When Eleazer Oswald refused to reveal the authors of articles that attacked Andrew Brown, editor of the *Federal Gazette*. A Federalist judge who overheard the trial found Oswald guilty. Anti-federalist believed the whole trial had been an attempt to further scare Anti-federalists. See, Cornell, 128-136.

<sup>422</sup> The *Federal Gazette* printed accusations that Antifederalists in Cumberland County had resorted to “disgraceful” means to win but did not offer specifics, *Federal Gazette*, 12 December 1788, *DHFFE*, 370-371.

<sup>423</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, 18 November 1788.

<sup>424</sup> Federalists elected from Lancaster Ticket: Frederick A. Muhlenberg, Henry Wynkoop, Thomas Hartley, George Clymer. Thomas Fitzsimmons, and Thomas Scott. The other men elected were John P. Muhlenberg and Daniel Hiester.

<sup>425</sup> Keller, “Diversity and Democracy,” 83-91, esp. ff. 38. For the final tallies, see, *DHFFE*, 378-379.

election law, hybrid nominations, and newspapers, Federalists managed to create a broad base of support and mobilize voters on election day.

## **Elections in the Early 1790s**

The ratification of the Federal Constitution and adoption of a new state constitution in 1790 changed Pennsylvanians' relationship with their government and invested elections with greater significance. The new governments limited the ability of average citizens to engage in the deliberative process and, at least according to some residents, empowered elected officials as the only legitimate spokesmen of the public will. These developments, in turn, led Pennsylvanians to begin to focus more on elections.

The Federalist coalition that had united behind ratification and demonstrated the efficacy of a coordinated electioneering strategy broke down following the first federal elections and, in its wake, the outlines of two new political parties began to take shape. The two parties divided over the role of citizens and approached elections and electioneering in different ways. Federalists supported a hierarchical society and remained convinced that voting was the only legitimate expression of the public will. Their electioneering efforts were based on the belief that the general public needed the guidance and direction of a few wealthy and well-educated men when selecting representatives. In contrast to the 1787 and 1788 campaigns, Federalists in the early 1790s relied on deference to win elections and, at least initially, avoided grassroots organizing. Opponents of the Federalists, meanwhile, argued that citizens had to remain active in defense of their rights, and most of their electioneering centered on demonstrating that their candidates represented the will of the people. Unlike the Federalists, opponents of the Washington Administration continued to use other forms of political mobilization to try to more



directly influence the deliberative process. As the decade wore on, however, members of the emerging Republican Party began to recognize that, without challenging Federalists at the polls, their efforts could accomplish little. As a result, the Party shifted its focus and began working to construct a party structure designed to mobilize voters.

Throughout the early 1790s, both Republicans and Federalists tried to use election laws to gain an upper hand. The struggle over election law played a particularly important role in the state's congressional races. Following the first federal elections, critics of the Federalists complained that at-large election had discriminated against inhabitants of the western part of the state and had resulted in a delegation that did not truly reflect the state's diversity.<sup>426</sup> To prevent the same outcome in the second congressional elections, a coalition of westerners and former Antifederalists managed to pass legislation that divided the state into districts for the second congressional election.<sup>427</sup> Even with district elections, however, Federalists won a majority of the seats in the second congressional elections. Despite their victory, Federalists in the state's House of Representatives were determined to rewrite the laws for the third elections, which were scheduled for October 1792.<sup>428</sup> Their opponents, meanwhile, prepared to defend the district system. Before proponents of districts could draft an election law, however, they had to wait and find out how many seats they would have in the House of Representatives. The third congressional elections would be the first to reflect the data from the census taken in 1790 and Pennsylvanians expected to pick-up at least two seats. Just as it appeared that a decision was near, George Washington vetoed the proposed reapportionment bill. The ensuing confusion over

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<sup>426</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, 13 March, 10, 17 April 1790.

<sup>427</sup> In March of 1790, Fitzsimmons bemoaned that the next elections "will be in districts and in that case I think it highly probably that the Commerce of Pennsly. May be without a Single Representative." Thomas Fitzsimmons to Benjamin Rush, 7 March 1790, Charlene Bickford, et al. ed. *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming), XXII.

<sup>428</sup> Five Federalists and 3 Republicans were elected.

how many seats Pennsylvania would have in the next session of Congress made dividing the state into districts impossible, and Republicans were forced to acquiesce to at-large elections.<sup>429</sup>

The Republicans, however, still managed to pick up a few seats. Actually, an at-large election in 1792 may have helped them because it forced them to develop a statewide organization. Cognizant of this fact and worried that Republicans might continue to multiply in the west and outnumber Federalists in the east, Federalists submitted to district elections beginning in 1794. Throughout this back and forth, partisans claimed they were motivated by a desire to secure the best representation for the people of Pennsylvania and not by partisanship. But, while the sides may have genuinely believed their system was the best for the state, the strategic importance of the laws to their own cause should not be overlooked.<sup>430</sup>

The two young parties differed in their approach towards nominating candidates. Reflecting their belief in a hierarchical society, Federalists did not seek direct public input. For example, in preparation for the state's first gubernatorial election in 1790, approximately two dozen Federalist delegates from the state constitutional convention and a few assemblymen gathered at the first-ever nominating caucus and settled on General Arthur St. Clair as their candidate. St. Clair was a war hero, had served in state government, and had been the President of Congress under the Articles of Confederation. Although St. Clair was a popular figure, no evidence exists that the Federalist caucus sought any direct input from the public before selecting him. Whereas nominations were usually presented as the choice of a "numerous and respectable

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<sup>429</sup> The census reported that Pennsylvania had a population of 434,373 in 1790. The bill Washington vetoed would have given Pennsylvania fourteen seats. The new bill adopted after Washington's veto gave the state thirteen. See, Edmund J. James, "The First Apportionment of Federal Representatives in the United States," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 9 (1897): 1-41.

<sup>430</sup> Houpt, "Contested Election Laws," 264-278. Further evidence that the debate was about more than ideology came in 1794 when a number of the same Federalists who had been vocal opponents of the district system in 1792 quietly voted in favor of dividing the state.

meeting,” the circular announcing St. Clair’s candidacy was signed by only seven prominent Federalists.<sup>431</sup> The message was clear: voters should defer to the judgment of these men.

Opponents of the Federalists emphasized that the public had selected their own candidates. Rather than a select group of well-known politicians, “a very numerous and respectable meeting of the Citizens of Philadelphia” unanimously agreed to support Thomas Mifflin in September 1790 for governor. Although a “Republican Party” per se did not exist in the fall of 1790, many of the men who labored for Mifflin’s candidacy later became Republicans.<sup>432</sup> Mifflin was one of the most well-known political figures in Pennsylvania and had served in the colonial and state governments and had attended the United States Constitutional Convention. Following the meeting in Philadelphia, gatherings across the state adopted similar resolutions. In a break from tradition, newspapers printed the results of votes taken at many of the town meetings as way to further highlight that Mifflin had the support of the people.<sup>433</sup> Instead of trumpeting their candidate’s connections to prominent men, Mifflin’s supporters emphasized that, although he was a well-respected and influential figure, “no elevation of rank has been sufficient to warp his mind from its original democratical biases.”<sup>434</sup> Other Mifflin supporters mocked the pretensions of the Federalist caucus and their attempt to overawe the people with their public endorsements. Mifflin was, they argued, the people’s

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<sup>431</sup> “Gentlemen, Permit us . . .,” Philadelphia, 6 September 1790, (Philadelphia: np, 1790), Broadside # 45969; *Federal Gazette*, 13 September 1790. The seven who signed included luminaries Frederick Muhlenberg, Thomas Fitzsimmons, Robert Morris, James Wilson, and George Clymer.

<sup>432</sup> St. Clair noted that the “individuals who composed the Constitutional party” would likely reemerge under a new name in support of Mifflin. Arthur St. Clair to Thomas Fitzsimmons, 12 October 1790, quoted in Tinckom, *Republicans and Federalists*, 39.

<sup>433</sup> *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 11 September 1790; *Independent Gazetteer*, 18 September 1790; *Federal Gazette* and *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 22 September 1790; *General Advertiser*, 6, 7 and 9 October 1790

<sup>434</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, 18 September 1790; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 22 September 1790.

choice.<sup>435</sup> Their assessment proved to be correct, and Mifflin easily defeated St. Clair in the election.<sup>436</sup>

The different styles of nominating candidates played a central role in the third congressional elections, held in the fall of 1792. As was mentioned, Federalists in the state legislature had passed an at-large election bill in the hope that the populous eastern parts of the state that tended to vote Federalist would offset the less-populated western regions that usually supported opposition candidates. The caucus debacle and rout of St. Clair had convinced Federalists that they needed to rethink their approach to selecting candidates. With this in mind, Federalists decided to pursue the same strategy that had led to victory in 1788 and have each county send delegates to a statewide meeting. The public could participate in the choice of the delegates but would not be directly engaging in the nomination process. A planning meeting in Philadelphia called to discuss the new strategy, however, broke down because some attendees rejected the statewide conference in favor of a committee of correspondence that would communicate directly with citizens throughout the state. The meeting ended in a deadlock, and in the ensuing weeks the emerging Republican coalition embraced the correspondence method while Federalists backed the statewide conference.<sup>437</sup> The opposing views on the nomination process is a reflection of the different way the groups viewed the public's relationship with the deliberative process: Federalists believed citizens should defer to the elite and well-educated

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<sup>435</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 22 September, 1790

<sup>436</sup> The total was 27,725 to 2,802.

<sup>437</sup> Conferee Circular Letter, "To [blank] and other citizens. . ." Philadelphia, 1792, #50681; Correspondence Circular Letter, "Extract from the minutes of the. . ." 3 August 1792, Philadelphia. Broadside #46543; The best account of the events surrounding the congressional election of 1792 remains Tinkcom, *Republicans and Federalists*, 51-68.

while members of the young Republican Party believed the public should play a more active role.

The debate between Republicans, or “correspondents,” and Federalists, known as “conferees,” played out in a series of public town meetings. On July 30, Republicans held a rally in the State House Yard that drew over two thousand residents. Those in attendance appointed a committee of well-known Republicans to draft a circular letter designed solely to communicate with residents throughout the state and to collect the names of possible candidates. Their job was not “to deliberate on the subject of the election [or] to admit, or reject the names of the candidates” but simply learn the “sense of the people.” On August 3, 1792, members of the Philadelphia committee sent 520 copies of the letter to various communities throughout state. The goal of the letter was to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to have their voices heard and reflects the Republican commitment to demonstrating legitimacy through popular support.<sup>438</sup>

Federalists recognized the threat posed by the Republican assembly and organized their own meeting in the State House Yard on July 31, the day after the Republican rally. Unlike the Republican gathering, which had started at 7:00 pm in order to accommodate the city’s working men, the Federalist meeting opened at 3:00 pm. In response, Republicans called on their supporters to leave work early to attend and protest the gathering. When the meeting convened, the two sides could not agree on who would serve as chair, and a riot nearly broke out when Federalists tried to install the Senator Robert Morris, a well-known Federalist. In the mayhem, the officer’s chair and table were smashed and, as one witness recounted “it was with difficulty *violence of a more serious nature* were prevented.”<sup>439</sup> This brief foray into engaging the public

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<sup>438</sup> Correspondence Circular Letter.

<sup>439</sup> James Hutchinson to Albert Gallatin, 19 August 1792, Gallatin Papers.

directly in the nominating process convinced Federalists to return to private gatherings and, after a series of small meetings held at a local tavern, Federalists announced that a nominating convention would convene in Lancaster on September 20.<sup>440</sup>

With the lines drawn on how the two parties would approach nominations, the two sides began the process of creating their tickets. Only nine of the state's twenty counties sent delegates to the Lancaster convention. Of the western counties, only York sent a representative, highlighting the fact that the Federalists were almost exclusively a party of the east. The poor turnout did not, however, stop the Federalists from creating the "Conferee Ticket."<sup>441</sup> Republicans, meanwhile, presented a list of forty-four names collected from the correspondence with citizens throughout the state. Next, Republicans throughout the state held meetings to decide which candidates to nominate. Unlike the tumultuous gathering in Philadelphia, these meetings do not appear to have degenerated into violence. When the committees had met, a Philadelphia committee collated the work of the various counties and presented the Republican ticket under the name "The Rights of Man Ticket."<sup>442</sup> Notably, despite the different approaches to creating a ticket, seven of the thirteen candidates that appeared on the Republican Rights of Man ticket were also nominated by Federalists at Lancaster. The fact that the two parties agreed on more than half of the candidates highlights the fluidity of party lines and immature state of the parties. At the same time, however, the attention given to the different forms of nominating

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<sup>440</sup> *General Advertiser*, 30, 31 July, 1, 4 August 1792.

<sup>441</sup> Tinkcom, *Republicans and Federalists*, 63.

<sup>442</sup> Circular Letter issued by the Correspondents 3 August 1792; *General Advertiser* 4 August 1792. There is some evidence to suggest that entire circular letter was a scam and that leading Republicans in Philadelphia had already settled on a ticket before hearing back from the public. But, even if the whole process was a farce the point that Republicans felt that they needed to go through the process of engaging with the public remains. For Federalist accusations see, for example, "Cerberus," *General Advertiser*, 5, 7, and 14 September 1792.

candidates reflects the public's increasing awareness of the importance of participating in the electoral process.

The fact that the two parties may have agreed on certain candidates did not, however, prevent journalists from trying to rally supporters by portraying elections as a contest between two well-defined ideologies. Generally speaking, during this period Federalists presented themselves as the defenders of the Constitution and attacked Republicans as Antifederalists and disorganizers. An electioneering broadside in 1792, for example, warned that “enemies to the peace and happiness in Pennsylvania, do now exist in various districts of the state, whose object is to impede the operations of the federal government.” Having failed to prevent ratification, these men “are now attempting a deadly blow at its administration” by gaining a foothold in Congress.<sup>443</sup> Lest any readers doubt the seriousness of the threat, Federalists reminded readers of the benefits of the Federal Constitution to the country in general and Pennsylvania in particular. “No state in the Union,” lectured a correspondent in the *Gazette of the United States*, “has more to hope or to fear than Pennsylvania” from the measures of the federal government. It was, therefore, imperative to elect men “who are firm friends to the present Constitution of the United States.”<sup>444</sup>

While Federalists used the Constitution and Washington to substantiate legitimacy, Republicans claimed to be guardians of the principles of the Revolution and portrayed Federalists as aristocrats and closet-monarchists. They circulated their own electioneering broadside in 1792, proclaiming that an “Aristocratic junto” had launched a “daring attack upon the equality of rights, and freedom of suffrage” by depriving the people of the opportunity to

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<sup>443</sup> “To the independent Electors of Pennsylvania,” Broadside, Philadelphia, 1792, 46586.

<sup>444</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 12 September 1792.

participate in the nomination of candidates. The broadside concluded by calling on voters to “Be vigilant and independent” and praying that the “Power, which inspired the valorous spirit of the Revolution” will serve as a guide.<sup>445</sup> James Madison summed up the Republican view of the partisan divisions in his famous “A Candid State of the Parties,” which appeared in the Philadelphia *National Gazette*, shortly before election day. Contrary to what the Federalists claimed, Madison asserted that divisions between Federalists and Antifederalist no longer existed. Instead, society had now divided into two groups: the “republicans” and the “anti-republicans.” Republicans, according to Madison, were those men who were “offended at every public measure that does not appeal to the understanding and to the general interest of the community, or that is not strictly conformable to the principles.” Anti-republicans were those individuals who are “more partial to the opulent than to the other classes of society” and who believe “that mankind are incapable of governing themselves” and must be guided by the elite.<sup>446</sup>

In addition to these printed appeals, both parties labored to ensure that their supporters made it to the polls on election day armed with knowledge of the correct candidate. Republicans, in particular, had to invest time and energy dispersing copies of the approved tickets to supporters in the western rural areas. In 1792 Albert Gallatin and William Findley rode throughout the western counties scattering tickets and trying to galvanize supporters. The scarcity of newspapers and sparse settlement meant that the success of the Republicans depended on these efforts.<sup>447</sup> Federalists were active in the west as well, and historian Ronald Baumann claims that Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton spread rumors that Federalists would

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<sup>445</sup> “To the Freemen of the City of Philadelphia,” 1792, Broadside, Philadelphia, 46585.

<sup>446</sup> *National Gazette*, 26 September 1792.

<sup>447</sup> William Findley to Albert Gallatin, 20 August, 27 September 1792; Alexander James Dallas to Albert Gallatin, 25 September 1792, Gallatin Papers, New York Historical Society.



repeal all excise taxes and were close to securing a deal with Spain that would give American settlers access to the Mississippi in an effort to build support for Federalist candidates.<sup>448</sup>

By 1792 the outlines of the Republican Party in Pennsylvania had begun to take shape, and operatives including James Hutchinson and Alexander James Dallas in Philadelphia and Gallatin and Findley in the west labored to defeat the Federalists at the polls. Elections and electioneering, however, were only a few of the tools critics of the Washington administration used to affect policy in the early 1790s. As mentioned in chapter one, in the fall of 1792 critics of the Federalists organized a large meeting in Pittsburgh to protest the federal excise tax. Prominent Republicans, including Gallatin and John Smilie, a candidate on the Rights of Man ticket, attended the gathering and endorsed resolutions that called for the use of all “legal measure that may obstruct the operation of the Law until we are able to obtain its total repeal.”<sup>449</sup> The gathering came on the heels of a series of violent attacks against excise collectors, and Federalists pounced on the gathering as proof that the Republicans sought to undermine the strength of the federal government. They also condemned the resolutions as “disgraceful to humanity, subversive of social happiness, and destructive of civil authority.”<sup>450</sup> Republicans in Philadelphia recognized that the meeting seemed to reaffirm the Federalist stereotype of any critic of the federal government as a promoter of disorder. “Tis impossible to conceive,” a dejected James Hutchinson wrote to Gallatin, “what mischief your Pittsburgh meeting about the excise has done us.” Hutchinson believed the meeting reversed the momentum and breathed life into the Federalists.<sup>451</sup> Republican newspaper editor Benjamin Bache denounced the meeting and

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<sup>448</sup>Ronald Baumann, “The Democratic-Republicans of Philadelphia: The Origins, 1776-1797,” PhD diss., The Pennsylvania State University, 1970, 374-375.

<sup>449</sup> “Minutes of the Meeting at Pittsburgh,” *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2 ser. vol.4, 29-31.

<sup>450</sup> “To the independent Electors of Pennsylvania,” Philadelphia, 1792. EAI #46586

<sup>451</sup> James Hutchinson to Albert Gallatin, 14, 25, September 1792, Gallatin Papers.

concluded that the resolutions could not have been “the result of dispassionate and full deliberation.”<sup>452</sup> The damage, however, had been done. Hutchinson concluded that the anti-excise meeting in Pittsburgh cost Republicans “the Majority in the Counties of Berks and Dauphin.”<sup>453</sup>

Voter turnout during the early 1790s reflects the relative weakness of the federal government and undeveloped state of the political parties. Communities remained relatively parochial and voters showed more interest in offices that had a direct impact on their daily lives than in positions in the new federal government. Local elections, such as the selection of a sheriff, consistently drew the highest percent of eligible voters to the polls. There were, however, early signs of how the rise of parties affected who voted. Turnout in Philadelphia, where the young parties had been most active, increased by six percent between 1790 and 1792 and Republicans had succeeded in mobilizing a number of voters who had previously stayed at home on election day. But, the nascent opposition party had not developed a sufficient strategy for mobilizing voters outside of Philadelphia and Federalists easily secured a majority of statewide elections throughout this period.<sup>454</sup>

### **The Elections of 1794 and 1795**

The elections of 1794 and 1795 marked the beginnings of a transition from traditional styles of electioneering to organized parties. The tumultuous public nominating meeting in 1792, in conjunction with popular uprisings in the west, led members of the emerging Republican Party to rethink their approach toward political mobilization. Additionally, following the Jay Treaty

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<sup>452</sup> *General Advertiser*, 1 September 1792.

<sup>453</sup> Tinckom, *Republicans and Federalists*, 62-63; Hutchinson to Gallatin, 14 September 1792.

<sup>454</sup> Unless otherwise mentioned, all election returns for the 1790s are from “A New Nation Votes: American Election Returns 1787-1825,” <http://elections.lib.tufts.edu/>

debates, Republicans recognized that while petitioning, town meetings, and fêtes might build support, they had to start winning elections to challenge Federalists' grip on power. The contests during these years pitted two well-defined groups against each other. Both Republicans and Federalists utilized nominations and rhetoric and experimented with different ways of mobilizing voters. Voter turnout continued to rise during these years but some Pennsylvanians resisted the focus on elections and remained committed to engaging directly in the deliberative process.

Neither Republicans nor Federalists attempted to develop much of a statewide organization in 1794 and 1795, in large part because easterners had no immediate need to coordinate their efforts with westerners. These were off-years for the gubernatorial race, and the election laws remained unchanged, which meant that both the congressional and state elections occurred in districts. Unlike the situation in 1792, when Philadelphia Republican James Hutchinson had to rely on westerner Albert Gallatin to secure victory, partisans in 1794 and 1795 had no reason to organize outside of their own region. The establishment of a network of Democratic and Republican Societies throughout the state and nation during this period seemed to suggest that the critics of the Federalists were creating a more organized opposition, but these societies generally did not engage in electioneering. Furthermore, Washington's denunciation of the societies destroyed whatever momentum existed and partisans focused their electioneering efforts locally in 1794 and 1795.<sup>455</sup>

In general, as the two parties matured the public's ability to participate directly in the nominating process diminished. In Philadelphia, where the parties were coalescing faster than other parts of the state, both Federalists and Republicans during this time period used a mixed

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<sup>455</sup> Albrecht Koschnik, "*Let A Common Interest Bund Us Together*": *Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775-1840* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 23-40.

private/public method of selecting candidates. A small group of party leaders agreed on a ticket which was then submitted to a public meeting for ratification. Using this approach, party officials could ensure that the “right” candidate was nominated while providing average voters with an opportunity to participate in the process. The system had the additional appeal of avoiding throngs of people, a significant plus for Pennsylvanians who remained wary of large crowds after the chaos of the 1792 meeting and the uprisings in the west. But, as Federalists learned in 1794, even inviting the public to participate in such a proscribed manner could prove problematic.<sup>456</sup>

In preparation for the fourth congressional elections in 1794, Federalists in Philadelphia organized a public nominating meeting for Saturday, October 11—three days before the election. The gathering was held in partial response to a series of Republican meetings that had endorsed John Swanwick to fill the seat occupied by Federalist Thomas Fitzsimmons. Cognizant that the Saturday meeting would likely be the last public assembly before the election on Tuesday, Republican editor Benjamin Bache urged his readers to make every effort to attend. Apparently a significant number of Republicans heeded his advice because Swanwick’s supporters narrowly missed nominating their candidate over Fitzsimmons. In fact, the meeting chairman had to call for a second show of hands before he could declare Fitzsimmons the winner. This close vote served as yet another reminder of the challenges of engaging the public.<sup>457</sup> To avoid a similar embarrassment, Philadelphia Federalists held their 1795 nominating meeting indoors where they could better control both attendance and outcome.<sup>458</sup>

The public, however, was not ready to concede their right to participate in the nomination process. A correspondent in the *Carlisle Gazette* raged against a “private junto” which had met

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<sup>456</sup> Keller, “Diversity and Democracy,” 150-154.

<sup>457</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 11 October 1794; *General Advertiser* 11,14 October 1794.

<sup>458</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 12 October 1795.

to form a ticket. These men, he fumed, were trying to “dictate . . . whom you ought to choose to make laws.” “This is,” he exclaimed, “the few attempting to dictate to the many.”<sup>459</sup> Even newspaper editor Bache, a key figure in the Republican Party, wrote in 1794 that the practice of framing tickets before an election was something to be “regretted.”<sup>460</sup> Another sign that the parties had not matured was that different meetings from the same district occasionally endorsed slightly different tickets. Neither party had a centralized power structure that could ensure uniformity.<sup>461</sup> Even the party names remained in flux. The labels “Federalist” and “Republican” hardly appeared during the 1795 election season. Instead, the parties published tickets under the labels “Treaty” and “No Treaty” or “Anti-Treaty,” references to how the two groups felt about the Jay Treaty.<sup>462</sup>

The use of the “Treaty” and “No Treaty” labels in 1795 does, however, point to an increasing awareness of the connection between policy and elections. In past elections, partisans had occasionally referred to specific issues in electioneering pieces, but nobody had ever made the relationship between elections and policy as explicit as the two emerging parties did in 1795. Republicans claimed that a vote for the Federalists in the 1795 elections was a vote for the Jay Treaty even though the elections were for the Pennsylvania state legislature, which had no direct voice in the treaty debates. “Justitia,” a correspondent in the Republican *Aurora*, explained that “the whole representation from [Philadelphia]” voted to appoint Federalist William Bingham as U.S. Senator in 1795 and that it was “William Bingham’s vote in the Senate” that gave Federalists the necessary two-thirds of the Senate needed to ratify the treaty.<sup>463</sup> The Philadelphia

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<sup>459</sup> *Carlisle Gazette*, 30 September 1795.

<sup>460</sup> *General Advertiser*, 11 October 1794.

<sup>461</sup> Keller, “Diversity and Democracy,” 152-155.

<sup>462</sup> *Aurora*, 8 October 1795; *Independent Gazette*, 10 October 1795.

<sup>463</sup> *Aurora*, 5 October 1795.

representation, therefore, voted for the Jay Treaty. While Republicans were not completely ready to abandon their efforts to use other forms of political mobilization to affect change, the effort to frame the 1795 election as a referendum on the Jay Treaty reflects their move toward a focus on elections as the only legitimate way to affect change.

The focus on the Jay Treaty also points to Republicans' decision to use national/international issues, as opposed to local ones, to rally supporters. In the absence of any real statewide organization, the emphasis on a national debate such as the Jay Treaty helped unify the opposition and gave voters throughout Pennsylvania (and the country) a reason to turn out on election day. Using national issues did, however, come at cost. Whereas the public could engage directly in debates over local issues, it was not practical to give each citizen a voice in national and international affairs. Many Republicans had been firm advocates for democratic localism. The emphasis on national topics reflects their growing acceptance of the power of the federal government and the limited role of citizens in the deliberative process.<sup>464</sup>

Evolving views on the role of citizens also effected electioneering rhetoric. The Whiskey Rebellion and Jay Treaty debates further polarized politics, and electioneering rhetoric continued to intensify. As discussed in chapter three, during this time journalists began to make a transition away from laudatory/demonstrative rhetoric that used reason and logic to persuade audiences and toward the more emotional style of rhetoric known as horatory. Partisans used horatory rhetoric to inflame passions rather than to involve the public in debates over important policy questions.

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<sup>464</sup> On the struggle between localism and nationalism, see, Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*.

Because it is more accessible to the broader public, the shift to horatory rhetoric in American politics signaled a democratization of politics.<sup>465</sup>

Federalists were the first to embrace the use of horatory rhetoric for electioneering. Fear mongering is one of the most common forms of horatory language, and in 1794 and 1795 Federalists focused their electioneering efforts on demonstrating that the Republicans were a threat to order. The Whiskey Rebellion, they claimed, proved that Republicans were a dangerous cabal of Antifederalists eager to destroy the federal government.<sup>466</sup> Federalists ignored the fact that the Philadelphia Democratic Society had condemned the use of violence and that a number of Republicans had joined the march to quell the disturbance. “Had it not been for the encouragement & support derived from the inflammatory speeches” of Republicans, explained one Federalist in the *Gazette of the United States*, the Whiskey Rebellion would not have happened.<sup>467</sup> Federalists were particularly critical of former members of the Democratic Society who ran for office. Shortly before the election 1794, for example, a Federalists writing under the pseudonym “A.B.” labeled John Swanwick, who had joined Philadelphia’s Democratic Society a few months earlier, “ABASSADO EXTRAORINDARY to the Insurgents.”<sup>468</sup> Personal attacks, another characteristic of horatory rhetoric, played an integral role in the Federalist campaigns during this period. Swanwick was ridiculed for being short, mocked for writing poetry, and that he remained unmarried. In 1795, Federalist journalists targeted the Vice President of the Philadelphia Democratic Society and Republican candidate for the state House of

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<sup>465</sup> Andrew W. Robertson, *The Language of Democracy: Political Rhetoric in Britain and the United States, 1790-1900* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995).

<sup>466</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 7 October 1795.

<sup>467</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 7, 11 October 1794.

<sup>468</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 27 September, 6, 13 October 1794

Representatives Israel Israel and mocked him for being Jewish, even though Israel was not Jewish.<sup>469</sup>

The Federalist cause benefited from the arrival of William Cobbett, aka “Peter Porcupine,” a journalist and editor with a knack for witty but scathing sarcasm. Cobbett pushed the rhetorical battles between the two sides to a new level. A prolific writer, Cobbett published pamphlets entitled “A Little Plain English” and “A Bone to Gnaw, for the Democrats” that portrayed Republicans as an unthinking and bloodthirsty mob that took orders from Revolutionary France. Cobbett also repeatedly questioned various Republicans’ masculinity, a trope that would become more common as the parties continued to grow. For example, he mocked John Swanwick as a “diminutive superannuated bachelor” who, though a “great and mighty democrat,” is confined to being a “perfect platonist in politics and love.”<sup>470</sup> Cobbett’s uncouthness certainly offended some but it proved popular and effective. As one Federalist noted, Cobbett’s writing circulated widely among “the middle and town classes” and his style “suits them and has a great effect.”<sup>471</sup>

Republicans did not stand by as Cobbett and other Federalists hurled insults. In response to Cobbett’s attacks, Swanwick published his own pamphlet that, in addition to picking apart Cobbett’s grammar, called the British emigrant a Tory and a claimed he was run out of England.<sup>472</sup> But, Republicans journalists did more than respond to Federalist allegations; they

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<sup>469</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 17 September 1795. William Pencack, *Jews and Gentiles in Early America: 1654-1800* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 238-242.

<sup>470</sup> William Cobbett, *A Bone to Gnaw . . .* (Philadelphia: Thomas Bradford, 1795), 56.

<sup>471</sup> Quoted in Richard G. Miller, *Philadelphia—The Federalist City: A Study of Urban Politics, 1789-1801* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1973) 93; For more on Cobbett’s journalistic style, see Marcus Daniel, *Scandal and Civility: Journalism and the Birth of American Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 187-230; David Waldstreicher, “Federalism, the Style of Politics, and the Politics of Style,” in Doron Ben-Atar and Barbara B. Oberg, eds. *Federalists Reconsidered* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 115 -117.

<sup>472</sup> John Swanwick, “A Run from Snub” (Philadelphia: n.p., 1795).



hammered Federalists as aristocrats bent on depriving the people of the right of self-government. “A Federal Democrat” stated that “the name of a Federalist and an Aristocrat are now in connection” and explained that “Treaty Ticket” is “supported by British agents, Old Tories and Bank Directors.”<sup>473</sup> Republicans had to wake up to the imminent danger and act to save the republic. Alternatively, as the writer “Sleep” ironically suggested, voters could just “sleep on for a few elections more and . . . never again shall have the trouble of [voting].”<sup>474</sup> In short, while Republicans may not have had someone quite as gifted in electioneering mudslinging as Cobbett, they did have plenty of able authors willing to engage in verbal fisticuffs.

The elections of 1794 and 1795 also saw the introduction of new styles of electioneering. Republican John Swanwick is credited with being one of the first candidates to openly seek election in 1794. A disgusted “T. T.” wrote in the *Gazette of the United States* that “within these last two years a total innovation has been effected in our mode of election.” Campaigning and electioneering were traditionally left to the friends and supporters of a candidate, but now, T.T. continued, “all the arts of undue influence and corruption supplant the purity” that used to exist.<sup>475</sup> T.T.’s objections stemmed from the facts that Swanwick did not hide that he sought public office and that he used his personal wealth to woo voters, including treating members of the State House to an extravagant lunch at the luxurious Oeller’s Hotel and purportedly agreeing to make a generous donation to St. Mary’s Catholic Church in an attempt to win Catholic voters. Even more egregious, Swanwick’s supporters stood near the polling location on election day and thrust tickets into the hands of approaching voters and invited them to have some “Pottage, a slice of ham, or a drink of Grog.” Treating was a common practice in some parts of the country

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<sup>473</sup> *Aurora*, 9 October 1795.

<sup>474</sup> *Aurora*, 13 October 1795. See also, *Aurora* 8 October 1795

<sup>475</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 11 October 1794.

but struck some Philadelphians as uncouth.<sup>476</sup> Although these efforts are partially explained by Swanwick's personal ambition, they are also a sign of Republicans' increasing focus on winning elections.

Federalists claimed to look down on the overt forms of electioneering Swanwick used. Citizens should vote for the "best" candidate, which for Federalists usually meant the more educated and refined one, and not the one who offered free food or alcohol. But, while Federalist candidates avoided public solicitation of votes, their supporters utilized whatever tools were at their disposal to mobilize voters. At least according to Republicans, wealthy Federalists in 1795 relied on "British influence, British agents, old tories, the power of the Bank, and a long list of unprincipled speculators" to rally voters.<sup>477</sup> Republicans claimed that on election day, Federalists ransacked the entire city "for every person they could influence either by persuasion or intimidation."<sup>478</sup> Republicans also accused their opponents of spreading false rumors that the Republican anti-treaty ticket had been roundly defeated in a recent election in nearby Delaware when, in fact, the results were mixed.<sup>479</sup>

In the mid-1790s Federalists also started using nativist rhetoric and anti-immigrant sentiment as a way to rally supporters. The turmoil in Europe had resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of immigrants seeking refuge in America. Philadelphia was the largest and most diverse city in the new county and seemed a logical choice for many new arrivals. Wave after wave of Irish, German, and French poured into the city of brotherly love and filtered throughout

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<sup>476</sup> Jacob Cox Parsons, ed. *Extracts from the Diary of Jacob Hiltzheimer of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia 1893), 208.; Mathew Carey, "He Wou'd be a Poet" (Philadelphia, 1796), 25-28; Baumann, "John Swanwick: Spokesman for 'Merchant Republicanism' in Philadelphia, 1790-1798," 166.; *Gazette of the United States*, 16 October 1794.

<sup>477</sup> *Aurora*, 21, 24 October 1795.

<sup>478</sup> *Aurora*, 21 October 1795.

<sup>479</sup> *Aurora*, 12 October 1795.

the backcountry. Of course not everyone welcomed the influx of these new ethnic groups. Federalists, in particular, feared that the Irish and French might infect American politics with the same type of radical politics that had led to the Reign of Terror in France. That many of the recent immigrants sided with the emerging Republican Party only seemed to confirm their suspicions. Some Federalists even claimed that the immigrants were the cause of the increased partisanship. “A Citizen of 1776” claimed that “since the arrival . . . of a certain junto of foreigners. . . animosities have been excited, friend set against friend, neighbor against neighbor and instead of that friendly intercourse which subsisted between men of different parties, suspicion, jealousy, bitterness, and strife have been stirred up.”<sup>480</sup> All friends of order, the author urged, must unite to prevent the newcomers from infiltrating the government. The Federalist campaign against immigrants, which would only intensify as time went on, reflects the party’s struggle to adjust to the realities of the changing political climate and refusal to accept an increasingly pluralistic society.<sup>481</sup>

The divisive political atmosphere coupled with Republicans’ evolving approach towards political mobilization led to increases in voter turnout. Nearly 34 percent of the eligible voters participated in the contest between John Swanwick and incumbent Federalist Thomas Fitzsimmons, an increase of about 4 percent from 1792. Thanks in large part to high turnout in the ethnically diverse working class neighborhoods of North and South Mulberry, along with a strong showing among the militia units deployed to quell the Whiskey Rebellion, Swanwick eked out a victory. The contest in greater Philadelphia between the “Treaty” and “No Treaty” tickets in 1795 drew even more voters to the polls. Over 2,600 citizens in Philadelphia City and

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<sup>480</sup> *Carlisle Gazette*, 16 September 1795.

<sup>481</sup> On Federalists’ view of immigrants, see, Douglas Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution: Politics & the Creation of the American Union, 1774-1804* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 130-136.

approximately 1,500 in Philadelphia County cast ballots on election day—more than in any previous Assembly race. When the votes were counted, the Federalist “Treaty” ticket triumphed in the city of Philadelphia but the Republican “No Treaty” ticket won convincing majorities in Philadelphia County.<sup>482</sup>

One of the Republicans elected to the Assembly from Philadelphia County in 1795 was Blair McClenachan, who had served as president of the Democratic Society and had famously urged his fellow citizen to “kick the [Jay] treaty to hell.”<sup>483</sup> McClenachan’s election is a clear sign of Republicans’ increasing awareness of the importance of elections. McClenachan had been a vocal opponent of the Washington administration for years but had never run for public office. Instead, McClenachan had relied on town meetings and voluntary societies to challenge the Federalists. The Whiskey Rebellion and subsequent demise of the Democratic and Republican Societies along with Washington’s decision to sign the Jay Treaty, however, forced him to reconsider this strategy. Like many other Pennsylvania Republicans, by 1795 McClenachan had come to see the ballot box as the most effective means of affecting change. This, in turn, meant that Republicans would need to start developing a more coherent and organized electioneering strategy.

### **The Election of 1796: Electioneering Old and New**

Historians have dubbed the election of 1796 in Pennsylvania “the first Presidential election” because it was the first time two clearly defined political parties competed for the nation’s highest office. Although it was a national contest, the election would play out on the

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<sup>482</sup> Miller, *Philadelphia—The Federalist City*, 64-67, 76-77.

<sup>483</sup> John Beckley to William Irvine, 17 October 1796 in Gawalt, ed., *Justifying Jefferson*, 128-129.

state-level. With no national organization to assist or direct, the campaign would be orchestrated by local and state leaders. In Pennsylvania, the election gave Republicans their first real opportunity to test their new commitment to focusing on elections. But, while Republicans recognized that town meetings, parades, and fêtes were insufficient, they did not abandon all other forms of political mobilization entirely. As opposed to relying them as way to affect change directly, Republicans used parades and public rallies as a way to build a partisan identity and increase voter turnout. Federalists, however, had also learned from the Jay Treaty experience and would not to cede the election grounds without a fight.<sup>484</sup>

The presidential election of 1796 in Pennsylvania opened with a struggle over the rules of the game. As another safeguard against the whims of popular opinion, the Federal Constitution called a special legislature known as the Electoral College to meet every four years for the express purpose of selecting a president. The public, therefore, did not vote directly for the president but for “electors.” The allotment of electoral votes followed the earlier compromises over representation and gave each state the same weight it had in Congress. Each state determined on its own how the electors would be selected. Because Washington had been the obvious choice in 1788 and 1792, the method for selecting electors had not elicited much controversy. Although Washington waited until the last minute to announce his decision, most political observers expected him to retire and the end of his second term. Therefore, when the Pennsylvania legislature turned its attention to framing a law for the selection of the state’s

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<sup>484</sup> The presidential election of 1796 has been discussed by a variety of different authors. The most comprehensive account is Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The First Presidential Contest: 1796 and the Founding of American Democracy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013). For Pennsylvania during the election, see, Tinkcom, *Republicans and Federalists*, 164-173; Miller, *Philadelphia—The Federalist City*, 81-86.

fifteen electoral delegates in the spring of 1796, both sides recognized the debate as the opening salvos of the first contested presidential election.

Although they had been gaining support throughout the state, Republicans did not feel comfortable enough to challenge the Federalists in a statewide election. Instead, they called for district elections. Not surprisingly, Federalists favored a statewide approach in the hope that their majorities in the eastern part of the state would offset the Republican-leaning and less-populous western region. After much debate, Federalists managed to overcome the Republican-led district bill and pass a law calling for statewide elections. The Federalists also scheduled the date for the selection of electors for a month after the state's regular October elections, a move historian Jeffrey Pasley suggests was designed to discourage participation by rural Pennsylvanians, who would have to trek to the polling location twice. In the end, however, the selection of electors on a statewide basis may have helped Republicans as it forced them to coordinate their activities on a larger scale and helped create the foundation for a more formal organized party.<sup>485</sup>

With the method of selecting electors settled, Federalists looked for other ways to manipulate election law to their advantage as well. In particular, they looked for ways to stem the tide of immigrants who would likely vote Republicans. On the eve of the election a group of Federalists including William Rawle, the United States Attorney for the District of Pennsylvania; Jared Ingersoll, the state's Attorney-General; and former federal attorney William Lewis announced that, according to their readings of naturalization laws, all immigrants who had arrived since the Revolution had to present certified proof that they had been naturalized. The state had never before required voters to show any form of identification or proof of citizenship

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<sup>485</sup> Tinkcom, *Republicans and Federalists*, 163; Pasley, *The First Presidential Contest*, 351.

in order to cast a ballot, and the move outraged Republicans who saw it as a blatant attempt to suppress the immigrant vote. Exactly how many election judges actually followed the new dictates is unknown, but one Republican claimed that at least three hundred immigrants were prevented from voting in Philadelphia.<sup>486</sup> The last-minute requirement did produce enough confusion that, following the election, Governor Mifflin asked the legislature to clarify the laws.<sup>487</sup> Federalists seized the opportunity to pass legislation establishing that election judges could require immigrants to provide documentation of their citizenship before voting. Governor Mifflin deemed the bill a violation of the rights of immigrants and vetoed the law.<sup>488</sup> The Federalist assault on immigrants' voting rights would, however, continue in future elections.

No real mystery surrounded who would be the respective parties' nominees. Although Vice President John Adams had a somewhat strained relationship with the Federalist Party, he was the logical successor to Washington. Adams had a long history of public service and had diligently fulfilled his duties under President Washington. On the Republican side, Thomas Jefferson stood as the obvious candidate. Jefferson had claimed to have left politics for good when he retired from the office of the Secretary of State in 1793, and he professed to have no desire to serve as the chief executive. Nobody, however, seemed to take him seriously. Both Federalists and Republicans struggled to settle on a candidate for Vice President but eventually New Yorker Aaron Burr emerged as the frontrunner for the Republicans while Thomas Pinckney of South Carolina became the consensus candidate for the Federalists.<sup>489</sup> As the candidates

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<sup>486</sup> *Aurora*, 20 April 1797.

<sup>487</sup> *Aurora* 5 November 1796.

<sup>488</sup> Keller, "Diversity and Democracy," 184-185.

<sup>489</sup> Alexander Hamilton and other Federalists who did not trust John Adams worked quietly behind the scenes in an attempt to get Pinckney elected president and Adams vice president. The plan was never very feasible but it did attract the support of a number of influential Pennsylvania Federalists and contributed to the eventual schism in the Federalist Party.

running in the first contested presidential election, these men were quickly seen as the leaders of their respective political parties. They did not, however, personally engage in any real electioneering.

In Pennsylvania, presidential electioneering began with the nomination of electors who would actually appear on the ballot. As had become common, the two parties sought only limited public advice when creating their tickets. On the last day of the legislative session on April 4, 1796, Republican and Federalist gathered separately to discuss the upcoming elections and to nominate candidates. Historians consider these gathering as the first real party caucuses and would become the norm as the two party system matured. The Republican caucus consisted of “several members of this state in Congress, and of both houses of the State Legislature” while the Federalists who assembled were primarily members of the state legislature. The caucuses met privately and no evidence exists that either party engaged the public in the discussion. The embryonic parties had effectively removed the public’s right to nominate whomever they pleased.<sup>490</sup>

But while the parties had circumscribed the public’s participation in the nomination process, they could not discount public engagement entirely. Pennsylvania election law banned printed tickets, so the electors had to be recognizable to voters throughout the state. With this in mind, Republicans filled their ticket with popular and influential men including Chief Justice Thomas McKean, Congressman William Irvine, and the prominent German politicians Peter Muhlenberg and Daniel Hesiter. Unaware that their adversaries had assembled such high profile men to run, Federalists selected second-tier state leaders such as Philadelphians Samuel Miles

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<sup>490</sup> *Aurora*, 24 October 1796; Douglas E. Bowers, “From Caucus to Convention in Pennsylvania Politics, 1790-1830,” *Pennsylvania History*, 56:4 (October 1989), 282; Joseph S. Walton, “Nominating Conventions in Pennsylvania,” *The American Historical Review*, 2:2 (January 1897), 270.



and Israel Whelen. The obvious disparity between the popularity of the men nominated on the two tickets, which even Federalist John Fenno admitted, is evidence of the increased sophistication of Republican electioneering and of Federalists' relative lack of organization.<sup>491</sup>

The parties framed their tickets in the spring of 1796, but the real campaigning did not begin until Washington officially declared his retirement in mid-September. Although in his Farewell Address Washington urged his fellow Americans to avoid parties, according to Federalist Fisher Ames, the announcement that he would not seek a third term served as “a signal, like dropping a hat, for the party races to start.”<sup>492</sup> Following the declaration, both parties staged meetings throughout the state to allow public ratification of the pre-selected tickets. The Republicans, in particular, organized dozens of meetings, including multiple gatherings in Philadelphia. Holding several meetings in one area ensured that none of these assemblies reached the size of the nominating meetings held in 1792. The goal of these meetings was not to seek input from the public, however. Instead, they served as an opportunity to rally voters behind the party-approved ticket and give the public the feeling of having participated in the process.<sup>493</sup>

With the campaign in full swing, the two parties turned their attention to ensuring that voters had access to their tickets—a difficult task considering that all the tickets had to be hand written. After agreeing on a nominee, the Republican caucus established a committee of correspondence tasked with keeping in regular contact with Republicans throughout the state and with ensuring that voters had access to campaign literature and ballots. Much of the work fell to

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<sup>491</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 4 November 1796.

<sup>492</sup> Fisher Ames to Oliver Wolcott, 26 September 1796 in George Gibbs, ed, *Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and John Adams*, (New York: np, 1846) 1:384. Ames went on to write that he expected “a great deal of noise, whipping, and spurring [*sic*]; money, it is very probably will be spent, some virtue and more tranquility lost; but I hope public order will be saved.”

<sup>493</sup> Palsey, *The First Presidential Election*, 158-159; Tinkcom, *Republicans and Federalists*, 168. Voters could still write-in candidates but the chances of someone not on one of the two parties being elected were slim.

John Beckley, who has been called Jefferson's "campaign manager" for his work during the election of 1796. Along with the help of other Republican activists in Philadelphia, Beckley transcribed nearly 50,000 ballots that were then passed to express riders to deliver throughout the state. One rider, Major John Smith, recalled covering more than 600 miles and riding from before the sun rose until after dark for nearly three weeks straight to distribute tickets and campaign literature. Beckley asked that his riders begin delivering tickets in the western parts of the state and slowly work their way back to Philadelphia, thereby preventing leading Federalists from learning of their all-star cast of nominees until insufficient time remained to respond. Federalists circulated tickets as well, although on a much smaller scale. Additionally, the literature and ballots Federalists riders dropped off did not always make its way into the hands of supporters: Major Smith, the Republican rider, reported following a group of Federalists for sixty miles, picking up whatever material they had distributed.<sup>494</sup>

While the actual ballots may have been handwritten, printed material proliferated during the time leading up to the election. The number of newspapers printed in the state had steadily increased throughout the 1790s, and both sides relied heavily on them in 1796. Newspapers helped forge a shared partisan identity and linked voters in remote parts of the state with leaders in Philadelphia.<sup>495</sup> In addition to newspapers, the parties circulated hundreds of handbills, broadsides, and pamphlets. Polemists from both parties continued to rely on horatory rhetoric, and few authors made an effort to engage voters in a reasoned discussion on the issues and positions at stake in the election. Character assassination and dire warnings of what would happen if the opposing party won were the preferred tools.

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<sup>494</sup> Pasley, *The First Presidential Election*, 358-359.

<sup>495</sup> Pasley, "*The Tyranny of Printers*": *Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001).

Republicans framed the election as a struggle between the forces of democracy and republicanism against monarchy and aristocracy. Authors seized on passages from John Adams's *Defence of the Constitutions of the United States* as well as his *Discourses on Davila* as proof the signer of the Declaration of Independence harbored monarchical ambitions. As one handbill stated succinctly: "Thomas Jefferson is a firm REPUBLICAN—John Adams is an avowed MONARCHIST."<sup>496</sup> Others sought to capitalize on rumors that Washington and Adams did not always see eye-to-eye. "President Washington Loves a Republican and hates a monarchist," explained one correspondent. "He therefore wishes that Jefferson may be his successor."<sup>497</sup> According to Pasley, some of the Republican campaign literature printed in Philadelphia targeted party leaders in other parts of the state and not voters—a sign of the growing network of party operatives.<sup>498</sup> The party also printed "voter guides" which provided voters with the details of the upcoming election along with a list of the approved ticket. Republicans even printed a smaller pocket-sized version to make it easier for voters to carry a crib card with them to the polls on election day. These approaches add up to the most sophisticated use of print as a campaign tool in the nation's young history.<sup>499</sup>

Although less active than their opponents, Federalists also used print to rally support for Adams. The majority of the Federalist electioneering articles came in the form of attacks against Jefferson and dire warnings of what would happen if the Republicans ran the country. Jefferson,

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<sup>496</sup>Quoted in John Ferling, *Adams v. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 90.

<sup>497</sup>*Gazette of the United States*, 31 October 1796.

<sup>498</sup> Pasley, *The First Presidential Election*, 354

<sup>499</sup> Pasley, *The First Presidential Election*, 353-357. Perhaps the most influential articles written in support of Jefferson actually came from the French foreign minister Pierre Adet who, without consulting local Republicans, published a series of articles announcing that America's recent drift toward Great Britain had endangered the relationship between the two countries and implied that, if things did not change, a war might be inevitable. Of course if Jefferson were elected all would be forgotten. Federalists subsequently claimed that many Pennsylvania Quakers who would have sided with Adams cast their ballot for Jefferson out of fear of war.

Federalists warned, was a dangerous man without a moral compass. Authors such as “Phocion” thoroughly analyzed Jefferson’s career in public life and found him lacking “firmness” and sound judgment. Jefferson was, moreover, a non-believer as evidenced by statements in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Were Jefferson elected President, Phocion warned, the atheistic Virginian would outlaw religion and the moral fabric of society would unravel. Federalists also targeted Jefferson for his well-known attachment to France and suggested that the French might even be funding part of the Republican print campaign.<sup>500</sup> In short, if Republicans framed the election as monarchy v. republicanism/democracy Federalists saw it as a struggle between French style anarchy and atheism versus order and good government.

In addition to the plethora of print that blanketed the state, partisans turned to new styles of electioneering in 1796. More so than in any previous election, Republicans employed celebratory politics during the 1796 campaign as a way to rally voters. As discussed in chapter two, in the second half of the 1790s Republicans began using popular politics as a way to build a partisan identity that emphasized voting. This fusion of celebratory politics, voting, and parties was apparent during the presidential election in 1796. In the weeks before the election Republicans used symbolism, parades, and fêtes to create a party identity and mobilize voters. For example, in addition to warning Americans of the possible consequences of electing another anglophile, Pierre Adet, the French foreign minister, issued the “cockade proclamation” shortly before the election. This edict called on all friends of France to wear a tri-colored cockade. The exact number of Republicans who heeded Adet’s suggestion is uncertain, but one Federalist noted with disgust that “supporters of the Jefferson ticket . . . went to the polls with French

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<sup>500</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 26 October 1796.

cockades in their hats in Philadelphia.”<sup>501</sup> In addition to donning cockades, Republicans organized a parade on the day before the election. The parade consisted of a crowd of upward of 150 sailors carrying a flag that proclaimed Jefferson “the man of the People” and chanting “Jefferson and no king.” The size of the gathering, however, made some locals uneasy, and rumors circulated that the sailors planned to prevent voters from casting ballots. When the Alderman tried to stop the parade, a fight ensued that resulted in the jailing of sixty participants. Undeterred, many of the sailors returned on election day and continued to promote Jefferson. The violence and arrest of some members of the parade did, however, served as a stern reminder of the dangers associated with popular politics.<sup>502</sup>

Federalists were active in the final days of the campaign as well. Building on their successful use of committees during the petition drive against the Republican-led effort to block the Jay Treaty in the House of Representatives, Federalists created special committees to visit Philadelphia neighborhoods and ensure supporters make it to the polls on election day.<sup>503</sup> In addition, Federalist shipbuilders warned their employees that a vote for the Republican ticket might cost them their jobs, a move reminiscent of Federalist bankers’ threat to withhold credit to garner signatures on the pro-Jay Treaty petitions. Finally, Federalist clergymen warned their congregations of the threat Jefferson and Republicans posed to organized religion.<sup>504</sup>

Election returns for the presidential election of 1796 reflect the superior Republican electioneering effort as well as the hardening of partisan lines. Despite a relatively low turnout statewide (likely a product of Federalists’ decision to hold the election a month after the

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<sup>501</sup> Chauncey Goodrich to Oliver Wolcott, 15 November 1796 in Gibbs, *Memoirs of the Administrations of George Washington and John Adams*, 1:39.

<sup>502</sup> Baumann, “The Democratic Republicans of Philadelphia,” 566; *The North Carolina Gazette*, 14 November 1796.

<sup>503</sup> *Aurora*, 11 October 1796.

<sup>504</sup> *Aurora*, 7, 11, 28 October 1798; Keller, “Diversity and Democracy,” 174-175.

statewide races), the budding Republican organization managed to mobilize enough voters to swing the state in Jefferson's favor.<sup>505</sup> A review of the election returns indicates high levels of ticket-voting. In what can be considered a testament to John Beckley's tireless work, statewide, only 133 votes separate Thomas McKean, the Republican elector who received the most votes, from James Edgar, the Republican who received the least votes. Federalists, however, also voted as a bloc as well and the difference between the top and bottom Federalist electors is only 146 votes. As these numbers suggest, the public had accepted the parties as intermediaries.

### **Electioneering and Party Development 1797-1798**

The election of 1796 ushered in a new era in party conflict in Pennsylvania. The two parties became even more polarized, and elections were viciously contested as both sides continued to hone their electioneering strategies. In and around Philadelphia, both parties created committees to coordinate and oversee campaigning. In addition to the increased organization in the eastern part of the state, Republicans constructed a statewide network of party operatives who could tailor electioneering efforts to the local audience. Fries's Rebellion in late 1798 and 1799 dramatized the importance of finding a way to channel frustrations with the Adams's administration into orderly forms of political mobilization. Federalists failed to match the Republican party-building efforts outside of Philadelphia during these years. While Republicans adopted different strategies for different groups of voters, Federalists throughout the state relied on nativism and fear to mobilize voters. Federalists' strategy yielded dividends in some areas but eventually proved less effective than the Republican focus on local organizing.

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<sup>505</sup> Officially, Jefferson won 13 electoral and Adams 2. One of the Adams electors, however, cast his ballot for Jefferson when the Electoral College met. The returns from Greene County, however, were excluded from the official count because they were late. If they were counted, Jefferson would have received all 15 of the state's votes.

By the second half of the 1790s, both Federalists and Republicans had accepted the division of the state into districts for congressional elections. Nevertheless, election law remained an important electioneering tool. Federalists continued their campaign to limit the number of immigrants who could vote. Party officials had become convinced that immigrants, particularly French and Irish immigrants, were importing radical democratic ideas and trying to undermine the American republic from within. Republicans, they believed, were part of this conspiracy and owed their success to the influx of immigrants. The XYZ Affair and subsequent war hysteria increased tensions further and fueled a national wave of nativism, the culmination of which was the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts. These laws included an extension of the residency requirement for citizenship from five to fourteen years, creating difficulties for Republicans who had come to rely on immigrants to win elections.<sup>506</sup> At the state level, Federalists persisted in their efforts to pass a law requiring voters to prove their citizenship before casting their ballot. Federalist scored a major victory in this campaign when a state committee discovered that Republican election-judges in Philadelphia had been systematically letting non-naturalized immigrants vote. As a result, the committee invalidated the election of Republican Israel Israel in 1797. But, while the exposure of election fraud embarrassed Republican leaders, Governor Mifflin remained opposed to any form of voter identification, and the Federalist effort stalled. One Federalist became so disgusted with the inaction that he openly pined for the establishment of property requirements which could prevent all men without property from voting as a way to ensure poor immigrants could not cast ballots.<sup>507</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> Keller, "Diversity and Democracy," 218; Michael Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals and the Early American Republic* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1997); Edward C. Carter, II, "A 'Wild Irishman' under Every Federalist's Bed: Naturalization in Philadelphia, 1789-1806," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 94:3 (July 1790), 331-346; Maurice Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia, and the Re-Invention of America, 1760-1800* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008); Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution*, 168-187.

<sup>507</sup> *Carlisle Gazette*, 4 October 1797.

The parties effectively controlled the nomination of candidates during this time. Both Federalists and Republicans continued to use the mixed private/public method to nominate candidates, and neither party invited the public to participate directly in the selection of candidates. Republicans established standing committees in each of Philadelphia's wards in the congressional elections of 1796. The combined committees nominated candidates and organized meetings designed to give the broader public an opportunity to ratify their decisions. Following the election of 1796, Republicans in other parts of the state organized similar committees at the county level. In some areas, these county committees established committees at the township level. These committees, in turn, organized meetings for the broader public. As historian Kenneth Keller argues, for Republicans this phase of party development occurred both from the top-down and bottom-up. At first, party leaders appointed committee members but, as the base of the party grew, these posts became elected positions. By the end of the decade, Republicans had built a statewide party structure that acted as an intermediary between the public and the deliberative process. Instead of engaging directly in the selection of candidates, the public picked committee-members who would oversee nominations and/or attended meetings to endorse the party's decision.<sup>508</sup>

Some Republicans, like an author who used the pseudonym "Republican" that appeared in the *Aurora* in 1797, heralded the new party organization and argued that, whether or not the people like it, "at present, it is chiefly by the collision of parties that public business is pushed forward." Republicans, he asserted, must unite behind the party's nominees and not waste their ballots on other candidates.<sup>509</sup> Not everyone under the Republican umbrella, however, approved

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<sup>508</sup> Kenneth W. Keller, "Rural Politics and the Collapse of Pennsylvania Federalism," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 72:6 (1982), 6-8.

<sup>509</sup> *Aurora*, 20 September 1797.



of the institutionalization of parties. Alexander James Dallas, for example, refused to accept the reality of the emerging two party system. As Secretary of the Commonwealth under Governor Mifflin, Dallas had been a leading Republican organizer in the early 1790s but had broken with the party in 1796 over the Republican campaign to block appropriation for the Jay Treaty. As a result, Dallas did not participate in the presidential election of 1796 and had earned the title “trimmer” from fellow Republicans.<sup>510</sup> Although Dallas remained wary of the increased partisanship, he decided to reenter the political fray in 1797. In a 1798 speech given before a committee investigating charges of election fraud, Dallas lamented the degree to which the party spirit had infiltrated society. “It has obtruded,” he bemoaned, “into every class of society and goes nearly to annihilate the useful as well as the agreeable avocations of life. Unless an end is speedily put to this dreadful evil, no man will accept a situation in the public councils, it will be no longer safe, no longer honorable.” While many Republicans chose to embrace the existence of parties as a way to mobilize the public in an organized and efficient manner, Dallas’s warnings against party spirit foreshadowed future party schisms.<sup>511</sup>

Like Dallas, Federalists in Pennsylvania struggled with the growth of parties and use of committees. These men still adhered to a unitary view of society and asserted that the federal government was the only true expression of the public will. As “Unity” explained in an essay entitled “The Philosophy of Politics” printed in the *Gazette of the United States*, “In a republic the public good, determined by the public will, as expressed by the representative government, must be considered the political center of gravity.”<sup>512</sup> In short, the public spoke through voting

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<sup>510</sup> Quoted in Tinkcom, *Republicans and Federalists*, 168. See also, Ray Walters, *Alexander James Dallas: Lawyer, Politician, Financier, 1759-1817* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1969), 73.

<sup>511</sup> *Aurora*, 31 January 1798; Tinkcom, *Republicans and Federalists*, 193-194

<sup>512</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 20 February 1798.

and voting alone. Federalists understood the value of engaging the public outside of election day and were adept at using deferential rituals and symbolism, but they were resistant to the type of grassroots organizing used by Republicans.

The success of the Republican committees, however, forced Federalists to develop some type of organization. Federalists, therefore, haltingly began using committees to nominate candidates and oversee electioneering. But, unlike the Republicans, Federalists organized purely from the top-down. During the elections of 1797 and 1798, leading Federalists in Philadelphia appointed ward committees and tasked them with organizing local meetings to ratify pre-selected tickets.<sup>513</sup> These meetings made no attempt to speak on behalf of the community as a whole or to solicit public opinion—a direct contrast to the nominating meetings held in the 1780s and early 1790s. These were not “town meetings” but private assemblies of the “friends” of a particular candidate. A near-riot ensued in 1798 when Republicans tried to crash a Federalist meeting. The fact that Republicans even bothered to attempt to overtake the Federalist nominating meeting does, however, reflect that even the sentiments of these private meetings held weight.<sup>514</sup>

While Federalists in the years 1796 and 1797 accepted the need to create committees in Philadelphia, the party did not immediately begin building committees in the rest of the state as Republicans had. Their lack of activity reflected both a distaste for parties and a belief that no further organization was needed. They were, after all, in control and in many areas had the support of local elites and therefore could rely on the levers of power to achieve their goals. Outside of Philadelphia, Federalists often relied on local militias and/or grand juries to ratify the

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<sup>513</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 21 February 1798.

<sup>514</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 8 October 1798.

party ticket instead of engaging the public through the committee system.<sup>515</sup>The absence of any real grassroots organization presented problems for candidates interested in running for election in the Republican-dominated western parts of the state. In 1798 Arthur St. Clair, the Federalist candidate for governor in 1790 who was serving as Governor of the Northwest Territory, asked a few western Federalists about his chances for winning a seat in Congress for a district that included Westmoreland and Fayette Counties. Writing from Pittsburgh, Federalist Senator James Ross gave St. Clair a brief rundown of the state of the Federalist Party the west:

“You know as well as I do that there is no such thing as a Federal party in Westmoreland county, and the friends of these three men are only subdivisions of the great universal mass of insurrectionary anti-federalism, Jacobinism, or whatever you please to call it. The Federalist might have secured a number of friends, had there been any permanent, sensible leader, who could have organized and kept them in countenance against [William] Findley. Unfortunately, we have never had anybody there who would undertake and attempt to execute this task, and at present, it seems to me, that, however these candidates may contend among themselves and scramble for power, they would all united against the *government man*.”<sup>516</sup>

In short, even with divisions appearing in the Republican ranks, Ross did not think St. Clair had a chance at winning. Leaderless and lacking any real structure, the Federalist Party in the west was simply outmatched.

During the late 1790s the network of partisan newspapers continued to expand, and both sides looked for ways to use print to bring voters to the polls. Federalists had hoped that the Sedition Act would silence the chorus of Republican editors but, as historian Jeffrey Pasley has shown, the number of Republican newspapers actually increased after the passage of the laws.

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<sup>515</sup> Keller, “Diversity and Democracy,” 192 ; Keller, “Rural Politics and the Collapse of Pennsylvania Federalism,” 7-8.

<sup>516</sup> Ross to St. Clair, 6 July 1798 in William Henry Smith, ed. *The Life and Public Services of Arthur St. Clair* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co, 1882) 2:422-425.

Between 1797 and 1799, eight new Republican newspapers circulated in Pennsylvania.<sup>517</sup> Republicans, much more so than their opponents, relied on local editors to serve as a liaison between party officials in Philadelphia and the voting public across the state. Local editors, printing in both English and German, crafted election appeals tailored to the readership. In his study of Pennsylvania politics during the late eighteenth century Kenneth Keller demonstrated that Republican editors employed different strategies in different areas. In ethnically and culturally diverse areas such as Philadelphia, Lancaster County, and York County, Republican editors avoided references to specific religious or ethnic distinctions.<sup>518</sup> Instead, polemicists presented the election as a struggle between the many and the few. This strategy had first been used by Republicans to unite the heterogeneous opponents of the Federalists in Philadelphia in 1795, and 1796 and proved successful enough that they employed it in other parts of the state. While Republican editors in racially and culturally mixed regions tried to unite voters against the forces of aristocracy, their counterparts in more homogenous parts of the state frequently used racial and ethnic appeals. In predominantly German Berks County, for example, Republican editor Jacob Schenider appealed to Germans to mobilize against the Irish and overthrow the Federalists who “boast that they always can do with the Germany whatever they want to, that they are patient asses.”<sup>519</sup> The targeted messaging is another sign of the sophistication of the Republican organization in Pennsylvania.

In the late 1790s Pennsylvania Federalists also established a network of newspapers throughout the state. Like the Republicans, they printed papers in both English and German as a

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<sup>517</sup> Pasley, *Tyranny of Printers*, 105-131. See Appendix 2 for a list of the Republican papers established during these years.

<sup>518</sup> On Republicans’ mobilization of immigrants, see, Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution*, 175-178, 203-204, *passim*.

<sup>519</sup> Keller, “Diversity and Democracy,” 214-215, quote on 214.

way to reach a diverse audience. Unlike their adversaries, however, Federalist editors did not tailor their electioneering rhetoric to local audiences. Rural newspapers usually just carried reprints of the same articles that appeared in Philadelphia. Anti-immigrant tirades and dire warnings of the threat posed by Republicans were therefore the staple of Federalist newspapers throughout the state. Federalist journalists especially targeted the French. An appeal printed in the *Gazette of the United States* shortly before election day in 1797, for example, urged Federalists to mobilize against the “Jacobins, Democrats, Frenchmen and pretend Republicans” and “[shut] the door against French principles and every thing French.”<sup>520</sup> The French, however, were not the only immigrants Americans needed to fear. Federalists blamed the Republican success in 1796 on the “new imported Cocknies and raw Irishmen” and “disgraced men, bankrupts, swindlers, over-drawers at the bank, renegades from Britain and Ireland” who had turned out for Jefferson.<sup>521</sup> Even though Federalists had succeeded in extending the time immigrants had to reside in the United States before applying for citizenship, the effort to require proof of citizenship before casting ballot failed and Federalist editors stressed that it was critical for true Americans to turn out at the polls to protect against these foreigners.

With partisan fever running higher than ever, both parties stressed the importance of turnout and looked for new ways to ensure voters made it to polls on election day. Get out the vote efforts were particularly intense in Philadelphia, where not even the return of the Yellow Fever in 1797 justified missing an election. Federalists were, however, concerned enough about the health and welfare of their supporters to warn voters to employ “proper precaution” when

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<sup>520</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 2 October 1797.

<sup>521</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 22, 31 December 1796; 25 February 1797, quoted in Keller, “Diversity and Democracy,” 202.

entering Philadelphia and to use only Chestnut Street to access the State House.<sup>522</sup> During these years, the Republican committees in Philadelphia focused on mobilizing recent immigrants and the lower and middling classes. During the special election following Federalists' successful attempt to invalidate the election of Israel Israel in 1798, for example, Republicans treated voters to food and drink, offered to pay the taxes of poor voters, and sent trumpeters and drummers throughout to parade the streets the night before the election. They also reminded immigrants that, despite what the Federalists may claim, a new election law had not been passed, so they would not need to provide proof of citizenship.<sup>523</sup> Federalist qualms with electioneering seemed to dissipate during this time. According to historian Richard Miller, the Federalist committees in Philadelphia worked even harder than their adversaries to mobilize voters in 1797 and 1798. Federalists blanketed the city with handbills and broadsides in the days before the election as well as establishing ward captains to distribute hundreds of handwritten tickets and to ensure voters knew what to do.<sup>524</sup> Passions ran so high in 1798 that rumors circulated that voters were planning to come to election day armed with clubs. "A Democrat" claimed that Federalists were planning to incite violence in an effort to prove that Republicans were a threat to society and, if need be, provide grounds for challenging the election results.<sup>525</sup>

While the Federalists may have been more active than their adversaries in Philadelphia, the network of committees gave Republicans the upper hand in other parts of the state. In the weeks before the election of 1798, Republican Congressman Blair McClenachan crisscrossed Northampton County spreading rumors that the Federalists planned to further increase taxation

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<sup>522</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 9 October 1797; *Porcupine's Gazette*, 7 October 1797.

<sup>523</sup> Thomas McKean, "Fellow citizens . . ." Philadelphia: 1798. EAI 33727.

<sup>524</sup> Miller, *Philadelphia—The Federalist City*, 94,108.

<sup>525</sup> *Aurora*, 19 February 1798

and to establish a monarchy. A horrified Federalist merchant traveling through the region reported that the locals believed that John Quincy Adams was going to marry a British princess and that “General Washington was to hold the United States in trust for their King.”<sup>526</sup>

Federalists outside of Philadelphia, meanwhile, continue to rely on local elites and militia organizations to promote turnout and, at least according to Republicans, intimidate voters.<sup>527</sup>

The return of Yellow Fever suppressed voter turnout in Philadelphia during this time, a factor historian Richard Miller argues helped give Federalists an advantage. In 1798, for example, only 18 percent of eligible voters cast ballots and the Federalist candidate won handily. Outside of Philadelphia, however, voter turnout continued to rise. Thanks to the work of the partisan committees, voters flocked to the polls and turnout soared to above 50 percent in many parts of the state. Even elections that did not include local offices such as sheriffs drew a large number of voters. In another sign of the increasing interest in elections and turnout, newspapers across the state began printing detailed election returns. Partisan editors in Philadelphia had begun supplying readers with the breakdown of election results as opposed to just announcing the winner since the mid-1790s but it was not until the latter part of the decade that the practice caught on in other parts of the state. Partisans from both sides poured over the election returns looking for information that might help them in the next election. With the state fairly evenly split, both parties understood that every vote would count.

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<sup>526</sup> Timothy Pickering to George Washington, 27 October 1798 [Pickering Papers?]

<sup>527</sup> Keller, “Diversity and Democracy,” 229.

## The Election of 1799

The parties that had been slowly gestating during the 1790s blossomed during the gubernatorial election of 1799. By this point, Federalists and Republicans both considered elections the only legitimate way citizens could express their will and, with Governor Thomas Mifflin unable to run for reelection due to term limits, saw this as a pivotal and must-win election. For Republicans, the election presented an opportunity to harness popular outrage at the policies of the Adams administration and, in the wake of Fries's Rebellion, reaffirm their faith in law and order. Federalists saw the election as a chance to crush the Republican organization before it spread. In an attempt to gain the upper hand, the parties employed electioneering strategies they had been developing for years. Ultimately, a record number of citizens turned out to vote and the election marked the triumph of political parties as an effective and organized way for the people to exercise their sovereignty.

Election law once again played an important role during the election of 1799. In preparation for the contest, Federalists renewed their efforts to require immigrants to provide proof of naturalization in order to vote. Mifflin had previously vetoed the bill but, perhaps bending to the increased fear of war, he agreed to sign a law in 1799 that enabled election judges to request proof of citizenship. Federalists, who controlled both branches of the state legislature, also tried to prevent Republicans from treating potential voters to food and beverage. The legislation regulating the gubernatorial election stated "That all elections shall be free and voluntary, and that any elector who shall receive any gift or reward of his vote, in meat, drink, or moneys, or otherwise" shall not only forfeit his right to vote but receive a fine and a jail sentence. While treating may have been common practice in other parts of the county, Federalists in Pennsylvania saw it as a form of bribery.<sup>528</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> James T. Michell, et. al. *The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania From 1682-1801* (Harrisburg: C.E. Aughinbaugh, 1911), 16:164, 178.



Both parties used caucuses and a network of committees to select the nominees and coordinate electioneering efforts. Republicans opened their discussion of the upcoming election with gathering of federal and state officials along with a few select private citizens in April 1799. After debating the qualifications and personal character of prominent Republicans, a final meeting attended by “about sixty persons from all parts of the state” took a vote and found that a considerable majority supported the nomination of Thomas McKean, the state’s Chief Justice. McKean had a long history of public service, including as a delegate to the First and Second Continental Congresses, and had signed the Declaration of Independence. After nominating McKean, the caucus appointed a central committee which included party stalwarts Michael Leib, Alexander James Dallas, and former Federalist Tench Coxe to oversee the campaign. The Philadelphia committee then issued a circular letter to the Republican committees throughout the state calling on them to hold public meetings to endorse McKean. Republicans residing in areas that did not already have a committee were encouraged to create one and do the same. Although the central committee communicated with Republicans throughout the state, local committees were left a significant amount of latitude to select members and craft electioneering strategies.<sup>529</sup>

Federalists also held a caucus to discuss the upcoming gubernatorial election in the spring of 1799. On March 6, after a “Committee of Gentlemen from twenty-one counties” ensured that their chosen candidate would accept the nomination, the caucus announced that the party would support James Ross. A westerner, Ross had acted as a lead negotiator during the Whiskey Rebellion and had been selected to serve as one of the state’s two federal senators in 1794. The Federalist caucus also created a network of committees to oversee the campaign in different parts of the state. In contrast to what Republicans had done, however, Federalists in Philadelphia appointed the members of the various local committees and did not engage local partisans in the process.<sup>530</sup> The difference between how the two parties approached

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<sup>529</sup> For a summary of this process, see, *Herald of Liberty*, 13 May 1799. See also, *Aurora*, 16 April 1799. For an example of a Republican meeting to endorse McKean, see, *Herald of Liberty*, 26 August 1799.

<sup>530</sup> “Sir, we enclose a copy of a circular letter . . .,” 4 April 1799, Philadelphia, Broadside, #50970; *The Philadelphia Gazette*, 11 April 1799; *Porcupine’s Gazette*, 12 April 1799.

the organization of party committees is both a reflection of Federalists' lack of a preexisting party structure outside of Philadelphia and their top-down view of society. While Republicans used the committees as a form of grassroots mobilization to harness the opposition to the Federalists in a peaceful and organized manner, Federalists viewed the committees as just a tool to boost turnout.

While neither party invited the public to participate directly in the nomination of a candidate, between March, when the parties nominated their candidates, and election day on October 8, the party committees used a variety of strategies to create the illusion that their candidate reflected the will of the people. Both parties organized dozens of meetings throughout the state where attendees voted to ratify the party's nominee and agree to resolutions that would be printed in the local newspaper. After endorsing Ross, for example, a Federalist meeting in Cumberland County agreed to an address praising Ross as "the poor man's friend" and claiming that, no matter what slander McKean's supporter may hurl, his "character is irreproachable."<sup>531</sup> Despite the fact that these were private gatherings called by the parties, organizers still tried to present their meeting as representative of public sentiment. Republicans, for example, went to great lengths to show that they welcomed men with different opinions at their meetings and that they would not expel someone for dissenting with the majority.<sup>532</sup> The parties also held meetings on the Fourth of July as a way to maximize attendance and symbolically link their efforts with the legacy of the American Revolution.<sup>533</sup>

Electioneering articles and broadsides flooded the state in the months leading up to the election as both sides tried to rally support and build momentum. At no small cost, the committees usually oversaw the printing and distribution of electioneering propaganda. Individual Philadelphia Republicans spent so much of their own money that a special committee had to be appointed following the election to

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<sup>531</sup> *Carlisle Gazette*, 25 September 1799. For other Federalist meetings see *The Philadelphia Gazette*, 31 July 1799; *Gazette of the United States*, 22 June 1799, 14 August 1799; *Porcupine's Gazette*, 24 August 1799. For examples of Republican meetings, see, *Herald of Liberty*, 26 August 1799; *Carlisle Gazette*, 28 August 1799, 25 September 1799; *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser*, 28 September 1799.

<sup>532</sup> *Carlisle Gazette*, 2 October 1799.

<sup>533</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 18 July 1799; *Philadelphia Gazette*, 26 July 1799.

raise money to reimburse donors.<sup>534</sup> The vast majority of electioneering articles dealt with the candidates' character and neither side showed interest in engaging the public in a reasoned debate on policy differences or issues which the governor actually had the power to address (as opposed to the federal Alien and Sedition Acts). As one correspondent bemoaned, the newspaper had "ceased to be a source of public intelligence and instruction; and became an instrument to vitiate the taste, to mislead the understanding, to taint the virtue, and undermine the independence of the People."<sup>535</sup> Although penned by a Republican with the writing of Cobbett in mind, the statement accurately reflects the way in which both parties used the press during the election of 1799. The goal of the partisan newspapers, at least in the months before an election, was to boost voter turnout and not to educate the public.

Throughout the state Federalist propaganda tried to establish Ross as the candidate of law and order. Ross was, explained one Federalist broadside, the only candidate who would "suppress the spirit of anarchy and insurrection" and uphold the laws of the nation.<sup>536</sup> Using both the Whiskey and Fries's Rebellion as evidence, Federalists tried to paint Republicans and McKean as anarchists. McKean's stated "political wishes and opinions," Federalists charged, "would subvert the liberty, the religion, and the social order of our country."<sup>537</sup> Federalists also accused their opponents of plotting with radical immigrant groups such as the United Irishmen to overthrow the federal and state constitutions.<sup>538</sup>

Similar to their tactics in previous elections, Republicans used targeted messaging to appeal to specific groups. For example, the *Carlisle Gazette*, printed in an area with a large German population, carried a special plea to Germans from General Peter Muhlenberg, one of the most popular Germans in the state, shortly before the election.<sup>539</sup> In heavily religious areas, Republicans took a page out of the Federalist 1796 playbook and called Ross a deist and published affidavits from a minister who claimed to

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<sup>534</sup> *Herald of Liberty*, 18 November 1799.

<sup>535</sup> John Peter Muhlenberg, "To the Republicans of Pennsylvania," Philadelphia, 1799. #36435

<sup>536</sup> "Sir, deeply interested in. . .," Broadside, Philadelphia, 1799, #48956.

<sup>537</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 14 August 1799.

<sup>538</sup> "To the Citizens of the County of Philadelphia," Broadside, Philadelphia, 1799. #36422.

<sup>539</sup> *Carlisle Gazette*, 2 October 1799.

have overheard Ross deny a belief in original sin.<sup>540</sup> In other areas, Republicans focused more on tying the Ross campaign to the controversial policies of the Adams's administration. "[T]he supporters of James Ross," exclaimed one Republican address printed Washington County, "are the friends of the sedition law, the alien law . . . [and] who are in favor of a standing army."<sup>541</sup> Throughout the state, Republicans presented McKean as the "firm" and "manly" candidate with a history of public service who was also "a true friend to the Federal Constitution and Government."<sup>542</sup>

Electioneering articles and accounts of local meetings and addresses flooded the papers in the final days of the campaign, leading one editor to feel compelled to issue an apology promising that he would return to printing other types of news after election day.<sup>543</sup> The party committees engaged in a frantic effort to ensure their supporters turned out to the polls. A Federalist meeting in Montgomery County aimed to visit "[e]very man in the several townships . . . excepting only, such as are notoriously governed by French principles, and are under French influence."<sup>544</sup> Republicans prepared tickets and appointed men to visit supporters to remind them to turnout on election day. Federalists also released a barrage of new attacks on McKean in the waning days. Similar to what Republicans had done with their nominees in 1796, Federalists circulated these charges in the western parts of the state, timing the distribution so that Republicans would not have time to respond.<sup>545</sup> The last minute attacks, however, failed to stem the Republican tide.

The contest between McKean and Ross brought record numbers of voters to the polls. Statewide, over 60 percent of the adult males voted, nearly 30 percent more than had turned out in any of the

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<sup>540</sup> "Declaration of the Reverend Mr. David Jones . . .," *Broadside*, 26 September 1799, Washington, Pa. The accusations concerned Federalists enough to publish a statement from members of a Presbyterian congregation in Washington County that Ross regularly attended church. "To the electors of Pennsylvania," *Broadside*, Philadelphia, 1799, EAI: 50968.

<sup>541</sup> *Herald of Liberty*, 26 August 1799.

<sup>542</sup> *Carlisle Gazette*, 25 September 1799.

<sup>543</sup> *Carlisle Gazette*, 2 October 1799.

<sup>544</sup> *Philadelphia Gazette*, 31 July 1799. See also, *Gazette of the United States* 22 June 1799; *Carlisle Gazette*, 28 August 1799.

<sup>545</sup> "To the Citizens of the County of Philadelphia," *Broadside*, Philadelphia, 1799. EAI: 36422.

previous gubernatorial contests. In some counties, over 80 percent of the eligible voters cast a ballot.<sup>546</sup> Although particularly contentious local elections had resulted in similar levels of turnout in previous years, this was the first time that a statewide contest elicited such a response. Additionally, as Kenneth Keller demonstrated in his detailed analysis of the election returns, the counties that voted for McKean had a higher turnout than those that sided with Ross, a reflection of Republicans' superior organization. Notably, some of the highest turnout occurred in heavily German speaking regions where Fries's Rebellion occurred, a reflection of Republican's success at channeling frustrations with the Federalists into voting. The Federalist committees did, however, outperform their adversaries in some regions. Ross, for example, won in Philadelphia, where the Republican committees had first taken root. Overall, the record turnout is evidence that Pennsylvanians from both parties had accepted elections as the primary vehicle for the expression of the public will.<sup>547</sup>

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<sup>546</sup> Pasley, "The Cheese and the Words," *Beyond the Founders*, 46-47.

<sup>547</sup> Keller, "Rural Politics and the Collapse of Pennsylvania Federalism," 40-41.

## Chapter 5: Party Schism and Political Mobilization, 1801-1808

The boundaries of citizenship and the relationship between the public and the deliberative process appeared settled in Pennsylvania at the advent of the nineteenth century. After failing to effect change through disparate forms of direct political mobilization including town meetings, parades, and popular uprisings, opponents of the Federalists had embraced elections and electioneering as the primary vehicles for the expression of the public will and begun construction of a multi-layer party organization that acted as an intermediary between the public and the government. Town meetings, parades and fêtes did not disappear; they became part of the larger party structure. Rather than using these forms of political mobilization as a way to engage the people directly in the deliberative process, Republicans employed them as a way to generate support and mobilize voters. While in some ways this approach represented a retreat from the democratic ideals advanced by critics of the Federalists, the new party's success and election of Thomas McKean in 1799 and Thomas Jefferson in 1800 appeared to justify the move away from direct participation in the deliberative process.<sup>548</sup>

Success at the polls, however, exposed fundamental disagreements between Republican leaders that had been masked by a shared goal of defeating the Federalists. Republicans had rallied around elections and party building to achieve change, but once they secured power, party members disagreed over what change meant in practice. For some Republicans, electing new men to office represented the ultimate goal. With Republicans McKean and Jefferson at the

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<sup>548</sup> For a good discussion of the machinery of the Republican Party in Pennsylvania at this time, see, Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., *The Jeffersonian Republicans in Power: Party Operations, 1801-1809* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 156-166.

helm, these men believed the public could relax and trust that the country was in good hands. Other Republicans, however, viewed the election of like-minded individuals as only the first step toward a more democratic society. Government, they argued, had become too insulated from the will of the people and required major reforms. After a brief honeymoon following the election of McKean and Jefferson, the differences between the two wings became overwhelming and, beginning in 1802, the party split into warring factions.

The schism in the Republican Party was, in many ways, a continuation of the debate over the role of citizens in the new government that had been occurring since the end of the Revolutionary War. Both the Quids and the Democrats emerged from the Republican coalition of the 1790s and both sides claimed to be the successors of the Republican Party and asserted that they were fighting on behalf of the people. The two factions, however, had different visions for the future of the party. The Quids, which included moderates Alexander James Dallas and Tench Coxe, continued to believe that the public should stay out of the deliberative process with the exception of casting a ballot on election day and otherwise defer to their elected officials. Democrats including William Duane and Michael Leib believed the people should play a more active role in the deliberative process. Democrats also supported reforms to the legal system and called for structural revisions to the state constitution that would make the government more responsive to the will of the people. Quids denied that government required any fundamental changes and fought against the proposed reforms.

To establish their legitimacy and gain control, Quids and Democrats returned to the forms of political mobilization and strategies for marshalling public opinion Republicans had developed in the 1790s. Each side staged rallies, developed electioneering committees, employed printed propaganda, organized voluntary societies, and held celebrations. Although the two sides

used many of the same tools, important differences existed in the way that Quids and Democrats employed them. Quids preferred more controlled and less direct means of engaging the public, while Democrats favored more direct and popular forms. Ultimately, however, neither side could claim victory. Democrats seized control of the party in Philadelphia, but their radicalism alienated many potential allies. Quids blocked the Democratic-led reform movement and reelected Governor Thomas McKean in 1805 but eventually lost legitimacy due to their connections with the Federalists. The real winner was Simon Snyder and his followers, who won the 1808 gubernatorial election and managed to chart a middle course between the two wings. As historian Andrew Shankman has demonstrated, a new vision of democracy that was compatible with capitalism emerged from the “crucible of conflict” between the Quids and Democrats.<sup>549</sup> Perhaps just as importantly, the battles between Quids and Democrats ultimately reinforced the existence of parties and of elections as the primary vehicles for the expression of the public will.

### **The Republican Honeymoon and Stirrings of Discontent**

Although historians disagree about whether Jefferson’s election in 1800 represented a second revolution, few scholars question whether Republicans in Pennsylvania saw the election as a watershed moment.<sup>550</sup> Even though a deadlock between the Federalist-controlled state Senate and the Republican-led House of Representatives had prevented Republicans from delivering all fifteen of the state’s electoral votes to Jefferson and Burr, Republicans in Pennsylvania believed they stood at the forefront of a democratic movement that had saved the

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<sup>549</sup> Andrew Shankman, *Crucible of American Democracy: The Struggle to Fuse Egalitarianism & Capitalism in Jeffersonian Pennsylvania* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004).

<sup>550</sup> James Horn, Jan Eelen Lewis, and Peter Onuf, eds. *The Revolution of 1800: Democracy, Race, and the New Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002) provides a good overview of the debate over whether the election of 1800 was a real “revolution.”



country from the combined forces of monarchy and aristocracy. Having succeeded in taking control of both the state and federal governments, Republicans entered the nineteenth century confident of a bright future. Below the surface, however, tensions within the party began to brew.

Boisterous celebrations throughout the commonwealth welcomed the official news that Jefferson had been elected president. Weeks of pent-up anxiety and worry as Congress worked through the electoral tie between Jefferson and Aaron Burr gave way to public jubilation among Republicans. When the first reports reached Philadelphia in February 1801, the bells of Christ Church “were kept constantly tolling for the death of the British faction” and a spontaneous gathering of Republicans paraded through the streets of Philadelphia with drums and fifes and carrying a flag with the mottos “JEFFERSON, *the Friend of the PEOPLE*,” and “JEFFERSON and BURR.”<sup>551</sup> One Philadelphia resident reported that “The Republicans, through the medium of hurrahs, cannons, and drums have made such a noise for three days past that one could hardly read a newspaper.”<sup>552</sup>

These initial parties were, however, the prologue to the official celebration that occurred on March 4, 1801, the day Jefferson took the oath of office. On that day, Republican militia groups, along with the members of the Tammany Society and the True Republican Society, took part in a massive procession that included a schooner drawn by sixteen white horses. In the afternoon, John Beckley delivered an oration tracing the triumph of reason over ignorance and proclaimed Jefferson’s inauguration as the end of the “reign of terror and political delusion” in America. Following the oration, Republicans retired to private dinners where they raised their

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<sup>551</sup> *The Herald of Liberty*, 9 March 1801.

<sup>552</sup> Richard Rush to Richard Peters, Jr., 21 February 1801, quoted in Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, *John Beckley: Zealous Partisan in a Nation Divided* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1973), 218.

glasses to toasts such as “Our days of triumph—The Fourth of July 1776, Independence declared; the Fourth of March, 1801, Independence preserved!”<sup>553</sup>

By the Fourth of July, 1801, the Republican takeover appeared complete and the success of their vision of a political society where citizens engaged the deliberative process through parties and elections seemed assured. Dejected Federalists did not even bother to attend celebrations. In reporting the day’s festivities, William Duane gleefully pointed out that, while Republicans honored the founding of their nation, “those who call themselves *federalists* were invisible.”<sup>554</sup> Republicans even managed to vote out all remaining Federalist officers from the Society of the Cincinnati, once the bastion of Federalism, and elect Republicans in their place.<sup>555</sup> Symbolically, Republican control over the Fourth of July and of the Society of the Cincinnati represented a triumph of their vision of a participatory democracy over Federalists’ view of a deferential society. Republicans in York County went so far as to act out the death of Federalist political culture by staging a “black cockade funeral” and burying Federalist symbols.<sup>556</sup>

Even in the midst of these celebrations, signs of future trouble simmered. A review of toasts raised at Republican gatherings during the spring and summer of 1801 indicate that, while all Republicans agreed the election of Jefferson and McKean represented a major step forward, they disagreed over what should happen next. Many Pennsylvania Republicans hoped that Jefferson’s election would mark the end of partisanship and welcomed Jefferson’s olive branch

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<sup>553</sup> *Aurora*, 6 March 1801.

<sup>554</sup> *Aurora*, 7 July 1801. See also, *Aurora*, 10,11,14 July 1801.

<sup>555</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 8 July 1801;

<sup>556</sup> David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 189-190. For more on the triumph of Republican political culture and control of Independence Day, see, Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fêtes*, 178-201; Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 169-180.

to the Federalists. At a Fourth of July celebration, the Republican Blues, for example, drank to “Moderation among Republicans—May it differ from the moderation of Tories, and convince them that it is intended to conciliate.”<sup>557</sup> But while some Republicans favored a moderate course and wanted to cooperate with Federalists, others believed the electoral victories were a mandate from the people to institute democratic reforms. At a dinner in Northumberland to mark Jefferson’s inauguration, participants drank to “A speedy revision to our constitution, and a reform to the senatorial branch of our legislature” and condemned Federalists.<sup>558</sup> Federalists certainly noticed a difference between the two groups. A correspondent in the *Gazette of the United States* noted that toasts drunk by the “decent democrats . . . were in general moderate and such as might be drunk by *Americans*” while those at other gatherings “were truly Jacobinical.”<sup>559</sup> Republicans easily overlooked in the midst of the festivities but, as the elation wore off and Republicans turned their attention to the actual process of governance, the conflicting visions for the future could no longer be ignored.

## The Schism

As the glow of success dissipated, the disagreements that had been percolating within the Republican Party in Pennsylvania came to a boil. An attempt to reform the judicial system and clash over patronage served as the immediate catalysts for this schism. Most Republicans agreed that the state’s judicial system needed changes, but they disagreed over what needed fixing. For Governor McKean and other moderates, the real problem was that the courts were overworked. A little streamlining and some additional courts, the Governor believed, would solve everything.

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<sup>557</sup> *The Herald of Liberty*, 13 July 1801.

<sup>558</sup> *Aurora*, 6 March 1801.

<sup>559</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, 9 March 1801

William Duane and other more radically minded individuals, however, saw the judicial branch as undemocratic and called for major changes. Specifically, these men wanted elected justices of the peace to have more power and they opposed the use of common law. Duane also believed the people should have the right to impeach judges if they disagreed with their decisions. Moderates who considered an independent judiciary an important safeguard against tyranny feared these proposed reforms would lead to a breakdown in law and order.<sup>560</sup>

Patronage emerged as a contentious issue during this time as well. Governor McKean and President Jefferson stood atop large bureaucracies, and one of their first tasks was deciding how to use their patronage powers. Many Republican partisans expected to be rewarded for their dedication, and letters from office seekers flooded the two executives during their first months. Both the Governor and the President believed that some Federalists officeholders, particularly those who were incompetent and/or had actively campaigned against them, should be removed. They also recognized, however, that the wholesale removal of Federalists from office would inflame partisan tensions. Worried about the possible consequences of a Federalist purge, prominent Republicans including Beckley and Dallas urged moderation. If the Republican executives were to fire all men who opposed their elections, Dallas warned, “the parties will continue almost equally to divide the nation; every Federalist will become a conspirator; every Republican will be a tyrant; and each general election will invite the hazard of civil war.”<sup>561</sup> Dallas, Beckley, and others who shared their views wanted to move past the bitter partisanship of

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<sup>560</sup> Sanford W. Higgenbotham, *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch: Pennsylvania Politics, 1800-1816* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1952), 49-58. For a good example of how the Quids viewed of the judiciary, see *The Philadelphia Evening Post*, 18 April 1804. For Democrats, see, *Aurora* 11, 12, 13 May 1803.

<sup>561</sup> Alexander James Dallas to Albert Gallatin, 14 June 1801. Albert Gallatin Papers, New York Historical Society. See, also, Harry Tinkcom, *The Republicans and Federalists in Pennsylvania, 1790-1801: A Study in National Stimulus and Local Response* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1950), 267-268.

the late 1790s and were open to working with Federalists. With Jefferson and McKean ensconced in office, they felt no need to worry about the Federalists.

Other Republicans, however, saw all Federalists as enemies to the country and pressed for their removal. Duane wrote in the *Aurora* that Republicans would “think themselves persecuted if every . . . [Federalist] is not discharged.”<sup>562</sup> Ultimately Jefferson and McKean chose a moderate course and removed some of the most outspoken Federalists but left others at their post. The decision infuriated Duane and his supporters, further separating the two groups. “What is this thing that they call *moderation*?” Duane fumed, “Is it a patronage of *tories*? Is it to bestow a benefit upon an *enemy* at the expense of a *friend*? Is it to arm your adversaries with weapons of government for your own destruction?”<sup>563</sup>

The lines were drawn. Those men who supported only minor changes to the judiciary and endorsed a moderate patronage policy became known as Quids, from the Latin phrase *tetrium quid*, meaning “third way.” Those who wanted to make the judiciary more reliant on the will of the people and favored the replacement of all Federalists were known as Democrats.<sup>564</sup> Importantly, despite their differences, both Democrats and Quids considered themselves Republicans.

Beneath the debates over judicial reform and patronage, historian Andrew Shankman has shown that the root of the divide between Quids and Democrats was a debate over the meaning

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<sup>562</sup> *Aurora*, 8 August, 1801.

<sup>563</sup> *Aurora*, 22 June 1803. For an example of a meeting protesting Jefferson’s patronage policy, see, *Aurora* 23 March 1803. Higginbotham, *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 43.

<sup>564</sup> Higginbotham, *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 58-59. The term *tetrium quid* was first used by Democrats as a way of mocking the moderate wing of the party. Quids, however, embraced the name and it stuck. See, *The Freeman’s Journal*, 13 March 1805.

of democracy and the proper way for citizens to engage in the deliberative process.<sup>565</sup> The Quids, who included party stalwarts Dallas, Coxe, Blair McClenachan, and, for all intents and purposes, Governor McKean, believed in popular sovereignty and embraced popular politics but thought that prosperity required stability. In their estimation, the public could and should participate in the deliberative process through voting, but citizens should defer to their elected officials in all other matters. Democrats, led by Congressman Leib and Duane, wanted government to become more directly responsive to the will of the people and favored democratic reforms such as annual elections for senators and empowering the public to elect judges. These men believed in the principle of majority rule and argued that barriers between the people and the deliberative process should be kept as minimal as possible. Between 1802 and 1804, the Quids and Democrats battled for legitimacy and control of the Republican Party using the tools developed in the 1790s. Exploring the differences in how the two factions utilized some of these tools and strategies underscores their divergent views on the role of citizens and political parties in the post-1800 republic.

One of the first skirmishes between Quids and Democrats occurred in 1802-1803 during a debate in Philadelphia County over the best way to select candidates. The central issue was whether to hold one large county meeting to draw up a ticket or to break the area into districts. The district approach, which most other counties used, involved a series of smaller meetings at which committee members were nominated to attend another gathering which would select the candidates. Quids tended to favor districts while the Democrats backed county-wide meetings. Historians who have discussed this division have primarily focused on the strategic reasons the two groups favored one method over another: Democrats supported county meetings because

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<sup>565</sup>Shankman, *Crucible of American Democracy*.

their superior organizational skills and ability to mobilize supporters, coupled with the fact that the meetings typically occurred in the heavily Democratic neighborhood of Northern Liberties, meant that Democrats could assume a majority and control of the proceedings. For the same reason, Quids preferred a series of smaller meetings in areas sympathetic to their beliefs where they would have a better chance at influencing the outcomes.<sup>566</sup>

While attempts to capitalize on strategic advantages are important to understanding differences between Quids and Democrats, these positions also reflect the respective group's view of political society. Both groups agreed that the public had a right to participate in the nomination process and defended their approach to candidate selection as most likely to facilitate the expression of the public will. Democrats favored large meetings because attendees could participate more directly in the nomination process. Quids, in contrast, believed the people needed some guidance and that large gatherings undermined order and reason. They argued that a district/committee system would act as a filter for public opinion and guard against hasty and unwise decisions. The smaller gatherings, they contended, facilitated calm deliberation and avoided the dangers of disorganization and unchecked tempers. Finally, Quids pointed out that using the district approach allowed more people from a wider geographic range to participate in the process.<sup>567</sup>

The two Republican groups also disagreed over who should be allowed to participate in the party meetings. After an attempt at a joint meeting between Quids and Democrats degenerated into violence in 1803, Democrats passed a resolution stating that henceforward only "known democrats" would be allowed to participate in party meetings.<sup>568</sup> Though political

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<sup>566</sup> Higginbotham, *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 42, 61-63, 70-72.

<sup>567</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 21 June 1804.

<sup>568</sup> *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, 9, 13, 16, 19 July 1803; *Aurora*, 7, 9, 13, 14, 15.

parties had been holding private meetings for years, it was rare for a meeting to put such explicit boundaries on attendance. Quids reacted with outrage, focusing on use of the term “democrat” instead of “democratic-republican,” a standard term to describe the coalition that backed Jefferson. Furthermore, Quids wanted to know who got to decide who was a democrat. Was “a political inquisition about to be established in the county of Philadelphia,” asked one Quid.<sup>569</sup> Duane and his Democratic supporters retorted that Quids were only upset because they had hoped to rely on Federalists to help take control of meetings.<sup>570</sup>

The issue of closed meetings points to larger ideological differences between how the two groups viewed political parties. Democrats considered political parties as a positive force. The party, they believed, was an expression of the public will. Federalists were enemies of the party, and by extension the people, and therefore could not be trusted. Quids had a different view. As a correspondent in the *Philadelphia Evening Post* explained, Quids accepted parties as necessary to guard against “that state of apathy which precedes despotism” but saw “party carried to the excess” as tyrannical and poisonous to a healthy republic.<sup>571</sup> Many Quids hoped that the need for political parties would dissipate as the country matured. Quids’ willingness to allow Federalists to attend party meetings involved more than simply padding numbers at public meetings and was evidence of their hope to avoid extremes.

As the fissure deepened, Quids and Democrats differed in their use of other forms of political mobilization as well. Newspapers continued to flourish in Pennsylvania during the early nineteenth century, and both Quids and Democrats took advantage of the medium to advance their agenda. But while both sides relied on print to galvanize supporters, the rhetoric and

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<sup>569</sup> *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser*, 22 July 1803.

<sup>570</sup> On charges that Quids relied on Federalists, see *Aurora*, 13, 14, 16, 28, 29, 30 July 1803.

<sup>571</sup> *Philadelphia Evening Post*, 17 May 1804.



journalistic style differed between the two groups. Democrats argued that the people were best equipped to defend their rights and utilized hortatory rhetoric, which appealed to the masses, while Quids who believed that order and stability required that citizens defer to their elected officials aimed to have an intellectual discussion with educated and level-headed men.

Duane's *Aurora* stood as the most influential newspaper in the state and set the tone for most Democratic writings. An evangelical in the democratic cause, Duane cut his literary teeth on the battles between Federalists and Republicans and had embraced hortatory rhetoric as his weapon of choice when dealing with adversaries. The *Aurora* did engage in reasoned and thoughtful debate, but when it came to his political opponents, Duane reveled in personal attacks, scathing satire, and witty putdowns. His aggressive and personal style had landed him in jail for libel and led to a number of physical altercations. To him, the world was black and white—supporters of democracy and the rights of the people or their opponents. Quids, regardless of their previous service to the Republican Party, fell into the latter category. In fact, Quids were worse than Federalists in Duane's mind. "Let men who endeavor to disunite us," he declared, "be severed from us" because "an open enemy is far less to be dreaded than a treacherous *friend*."<sup>572</sup>

While Duane fired verbal rounds from the *Aurora*, Quids professed to approach print and rhetoric in a more moderated manner. In 1804 William McCorkle set up the *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, later renamed the *Freeman's Journal*, to serve as a Quid counter to the Democratic *Aurora*. McCorkle and his Quid correspondents claimed to be disgusted with Democratic tactics of character assassination and urged readers to not be swayed by threats.

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<sup>572</sup> *Aurora*, 21 June 1803. For other examples of Duane's view of Quids, see, *Aurora* 14 August 1804, 7, 8, 9 September 1804. On Duane's literary style, see, Jeffrey L. Pasley, "*The Tyranny of Printers: Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 176-195 and Marcus Daniel, *Scandal and Civility: Journalism and the Birth of American Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 231-274.

Writers in the *Freeman's Journal* contended that a healthy republic required calm deliberation and the free-flow of ideas. The *Aurora*, they charged, stifled both. According to the Quids, “honest Republicans” would not stand by while the country descended into democratic anarchy. “The day is coming,” McCorkle predicted, “when we shall speak out, not in menaces and threats like the *Aurora*, for we detest them, but in the dispassionate language of freemen. Then will the long black catalogue of intrigue and denunciation, of antirepublicanism and intolerance, be exposed to view.”<sup>573</sup> Quids did not always live up to this promise to take the high road, and the *Freeman's Journal* printed its share of personal attacks and innuendos, but their goal of avoiding *Aurora*- style “Robespierism, denunciations, and proscription” highlights the differences between how Democrats and Quids approached rhetoric and reflects their conflicting views on the role of citizens.<sup>574</sup>

Quids and Democrats also differed over the use of public ritual and political fêtes. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the calendar was filled with holidays and celebrations that gave partisans an opportunity to enjoy some revelry and reaffirm their allegiance to the party. When the schism occurred, Democrats controlled most of the voluntary societies including the Tammany Society and militia units that typically organized these festivals. Democrats, therefore, took advantage of the public rituals to promote their version of democracy and to chastise Quids. During a celebration in honor of the Louisiana Purchase in May 1804, for example, Democratic voluntary societies drank toasts to “The people, the source of government—May they never suffer their servants to become their masters” and “Execration to political hypocrisy—the worse enemies of the people are those who pretend to save them from themselves.” The Tammany

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<sup>573</sup> *The Philadelphia Evening Post*, 16 May 1804; Shankman, *Crucible of American Democracy*, 102.

<sup>574</sup> *Philadelphia Evening Post*, 16 May 1804.

Society went so far as to refuse to offer the customary toast to Governor McKean, a move Quids promised would not be forgotten.<sup>575</sup> For Democrats, celebratory politics was a way to engage with the public and promote party loyalty.

Although they recognized the importance of honoring national holidays, Quids were wary of large, alcohol-infused rallies and questioned their value. A correspondent to the *Philadelphia Evening Post* writing under the pseudonym “A Philadelphian” in 1804 expressed the Quid vision of celebratory politics. He agreed that Americans should express their gratitude for events such as the acquisition of Louisiana, but he wondered what was gained from the current style of celebrating. “[T]he labor of a whole day is in the first place lost,” he pointed out. “[W]ere this all, it would be soon gotten over; but citizens form themselves into large companies, dine at some tavern, spend from two to six dollars, and many of their families are the worse for weeks by celebrating one grand holiday.” Instead of wasting money on “costly dinners and swallowing down bottles of wine” while drinking toasts that “only can flatter weak men, but never profit society,” A Philadelphian suggested that citizens partake in a quiet and orderly procession capped by an oration on the blessing of being an American. At the conclusion, “let every one go quietly to his own home, and enjoy the sweets of liberty in the circle of family.” Finally, as a way of further demonstrating their gratitude and patriotism, “let each democratic citizen give a dollar, to be applied for the most patriotic purposes.”<sup>576</sup> As this passage suggests, while Democrats embraced the ribaldry of public fêtes, Quids preferred low-key, sober demonstrations that stressed virtue and patriotism over debauchery and disorder.

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<sup>575</sup> *Aurora*, 14, 15, 16, 18 May 1804.

<sup>576</sup> *Philadelphia Evening Post*, 19 March 1804.

During the first years of the schism, Quids struggled to translate their reasoned and orderly style of popular politics into winning elections. In 1804 their top target for removal from office, Congressman Michael Leib, narrowly won reelection. Quids took some solace in the fact that Leib polled less than any of the other winning candidates and that the Quid candidate outpolled Leib in Delaware County. But these facts did not change the final result. Quid candidates in other parts of the state likewise failed to mobilize sufficient support. As a result, Quids were forced to sit on the sidelines while the Democrats celebrated another victory.<sup>577</sup>

### **Constitutional Reform**

The year 1805 was pivotal for Pennsylvania politics, and the struggles underscore the continued debate over the role of citizens in the post-Revolution of 1800 Pennsylvania. Although Leib and the Democrats had survived the Quid onslaught the previous year, their attempts to institute reforms were stymied by Governor McKean's veto powers. Frustrated and convinced that they spoke for the majority of Pennsylvanians, Democrats responded in early 1805 by launching a campaign to call a new constitutional convention. These men claimed that the constitution of 1790 had been a counter-revolution that had deprived the people of their right to participate in the deliberative process. The call for a new constitutional convention, therefore, represented the next step in Democrat's mission to make government more responsive to the will of the people. Quids, along with their Federalist allies, denied the need for a new convention and charged Democrats with recklessness. The constitution, they argued, balanced liberty and order and had led to over a decade of prosperity. During the debate over the constitution, Quids and

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<sup>577</sup> Higginbotham, *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 72-43.

Democrats once again turned to forms of political mobilization developed during the 1790s to build support for their position and fight for their vision of political society.

On February 28, 1805, the *Aurora* published a long memorial addressed to members of the legislature that urged them to take immediate steps toward calling a new constitutional convention. The memorial, which Duane pressed his readers to sign and help distribute throughout the state, outlined a series of “material imperfections” in the constitution that had become apparent since its adoption in 1790. The first problem was that senators were elected every four years, meaning that they could freely operate against the will of their constituents for years before being recalled. “[W]e hold it as a fundamental principle of republican government,” the memorial read, “that the agents of the people should feel at all times their responsibility to those who have constituted them.” Annual elections, therefore, were necessary to ensure that senators respected the will of the people. In addition, the memorial demanded drastic cuts to the governor’s patronage powers and veto powers. Finally, it asserted that the judicial branch was too independent and suggested that judges be regularly “bro’t to the tribunal of an election” to ensure that they adhered to the public will.<sup>578</sup>

While Democrats saw the convention as a chance to move toward greater democracy and freedom, Quids feared a new convention could plunge the state into anarchy. “We are fast approaching the brink of an awful precipice—an unfathomable abyss” warned the *Freeman’s Journal*.<sup>579</sup> Quids admitted that the current constitution had problems and did not deny the right of the people to amend or abolish the document, but argued that a new convention was unnecessary and potentially dangerous. “Innovation, in great affairs, should be adopted with

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<sup>578</sup> *Aurora*, 28 February 1805.

<sup>579</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 February 1805.

caution,” explained a Quid correspondent, “and their direct and relative consequences be duly considered and weighed in the balance.”<sup>580</sup> Furthermore, Quids claimed that the memorial calling for a convention had not originated from the people but was the work of Duane and his minions.<sup>581</sup> Finally, Quids questioned the legitimacy of relying on petitions as a way to demonstrate that the public supported a new convention. The only way to really gauge public opinion, they believed, was through taking “*a vote of citizens at large by printed ballots, on points properly defined.*”<sup>582</sup> To their way of thinking, elections remained the only acceptable way for the people to express their will.

Despite questioning the legitimacy of petitions as a vehicle for expressing public will, Quids recognized the efficacy of this tool in political mobilization and began circulating a counter-memorial. The Quid petition opened with the statement that the constitution was the work of Pennsylvanian’s “wisest and best Citizens” and that the public should trust that they developed the best possible constitution. Despite what some may say, the petition continued, the constitution “exhibits nothing essentially defective in its theory” and has protected “civil liberty and public order” since its inception. The proposed changes were “calculated to destroy the political symmetry” by empowering the House of Representatives at the expense of the Senate, Governor, and Judiciary. Moreover, calling a convention would “generate licentiousness and anarchy” and inevitably “agitate, inflame, and may fatally divide the people.”<sup>583</sup>

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<sup>580</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 23 March 1805.

<sup>581</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 February 1805. Quids were incorrect in claiming that the memorial originated with Duane but were right that it was not a spontaneous popular movement. The real mastermind was Nathan Boileau, one of the most outspoken Democrats in the state legislature. As Quids suspected, Boileau had tried to hide his authorship and make it seem as though it had originated from the people. See, Higginbotham, *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 81-82. For Duane’s response to the charges that he fathered the memorial, see, *Aurora* 15 March 1805.

<sup>582</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 5 March 1805.

<sup>583</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 18 March 1805.

Quids took other steps to counter the Democratic effort to call a new convention as well. Similar to what Republicans in the late 1790s had done, Quids organized a new voluntary society, “The Society of Constitutional Republicans,” to help direct the mobilization effort against the Democratic effort to call a new convention. In contrast to existing voluntary societies such as the Tammany Society, however, the Quid organization formed explicitly for political purposes. The Society of Constitutional Republicans’ constitution stated that the society’s mission was “To preserve and perpetuate the principles of A DEMOCRACY which recognizes the PEOPLE, as the legitimate sources of all the powers of Government” and “to maintain and defend THE CONSTITUTION of the Union, and of the STATE.” The society’s aim was, therefore, to protect the constitution and perpetuate Quid’s vision of democracy as a representative government based on popular sovereignty where the people expressed their will through the ballot and deferred to their elected officials. To achieve these goals, the society established a correspondence committee and set regular times for members to gather and discuss strategy.<sup>584</sup>

Democrats initially condemned the Society of Constitutional Republicans and warned that the new “*self-created club*” planned to deprive the people of their right to call a convention.<sup>585</sup> Their outrage did not, however, prevent them from establishing their own purely political voluntary society. At one of the largest public meetings in years, Democrats adopted resolutions creating the “Society of Friends of the People.” The constitution stated that the society was organized in response to an effort to prevent the people from exercising their

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<sup>584</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 15 March 1805; Albrecht Koschnik, “Let A Common Interest Bind Us Together:” *Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775-1840* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 66-69.

<sup>585</sup> *Aurora*, 29 March 1805.

sovereignty. Like the Quid organization, the Society of Friends of the People created committees to communicate with likeminded men across the state and called on other communities to form their own societies.<sup>586</sup>

While the two voluntary societies gathered signatures, a tide of opinion articles flooded the newspapers, as both Quids and Democrats honed their ability to articulate their understanding of democracy and their views on the proper role of citizens. Democratic writers became more vehement in their commitment to the principle of majority rule and passionately defended the people's right to engage in the deliberative process. The people, according to Democrats, might make occasional mistakes but they would always be the best guardians of liberty. As "Cato," a correspondent in the *Aurora*, wrote, "it is a correct maxim, that the will of the people ought to rule, and that the will of a majority is the will of the people. Therefore, every part of a constitution, which prevents the will of the people, from becoming supreme law . . . is unjust, and dangerous and ought to be abolished."<sup>587</sup> In the process of arguing in favor of a new convention, Democrat writers also defended the existence of political parties and argued that it was "the duty of every Republican to aid in correcting the aristocratic tendencies of the constitution."<sup>588</sup>

In response to Quid charges that these changes would spell an end to law and order, Democrats pointed out that the British said the same thing about reforms urged by the colonists in 1775 and Federalists said the same thing about the election of Jefferson in 1800. What horrible consequences followed these events? Democrats thus portrayed the call for a convention as part of a larger historical march toward greater freedom and equality. They saw themselves as the

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<sup>586</sup> *Aurora*, 30 March 1805; Koschnik, "Let A Common Interest Bind Us Together," 66-69.

<sup>587</sup> *Aurora*, 30 March 1805.

<sup>588</sup> *Aurora*, 15 March 1805.



standard-bearers of progress and denounced anyone who stood in their way as a tory or aristocrat. The rich, wealthy, and ambitious, they argued, would always complain and try to induce fear by denouncing reformers as “jacobins” and “disorganizers” but history had proven them wrong.<sup>589</sup>

Quids countered with a different version of history that stressed the need for stability and moderation. According to Quid writers, a healthy republic was a stable republic and a strong, independent, judiciary was one of the best safeguards against tyranny of the few and the many. While they agreed with Democrats that all power flowed from the people, Quids believed the people were fallible. As one Quid explained, “Despots deprive the people of liberty, under the doctrine that man is a restless violent animal, always inclined to subvert order. Jacobins destroy regular government by avowing, that the people are always actuated by the true knowledge of their own interest—and that their own delegated authorities are secret enemies. Republicans know that human nature is intrinsically good, but liable to error and passion.”<sup>590</sup> Quids, therefore, viewed Democrats as the logical successors of the Jacobins in France and not the Patriots in 1775 or Republicans in 1800. To save the county from these reincarnated Jacobins, Quids called for a “union of honest men.” This phrase, “a union of honest men”—a reference to a toast given by Aaron Burr at a Federalist dinner— appeared often in Quid writings during this time period and underscored Quids’ desire to move beyond the existing political parties.<sup>591</sup>

Between late February and mid-April, the legislature received a total of 169 petitions with 10,893 signatures addressing the matter of calling a convention. Of those, Democrats and proponents of the convention delivered 79 petitions with 4,944 names and opponents of the

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<sup>589</sup> *Aurora*, 14 March 1805; 1 April 1805.

<sup>590</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 14 June 1805.

<sup>591</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 25 March, 28 June, 5 July 1805

convention sent in 90 remonstrances with 5,949 signatures. Most of the signatures against the convention came from the city and county of Philadelphia and from areas that tended to vote Federalist, while the support for the convention came from across the state and from regions that typically elected Republicans.<sup>592</sup> The “union of honest men,” appeared to have outflanked the Democrats. Despite the fact that a majority of the petitions opposed a convention, the Democratic-controlled legislature still passed a resolution stating that “no man, or generation of men, is authorised [sp] to say to their successors, that we have arrived at the *acme* of perfection in any human institution, beyond which it is impossible for you to pass” and argued that the constitution required amendment. The legislature, however, stopped short of calling a convention and concluded that not enough time had passed “for the majority of the people fully to express their opinion on this very interesting subject.” They suggested that the next legislature return to the issue once the people had had more time to deliberate the question.<sup>593</sup> In short, Democrats were not ready to concede defeat.

## Election of 1805

In the midst of the debate over whether to call a convention, Pennsylvanians began to turn their attention toward the upcoming gubernatorial election. McKean had won reelection in 1803 by a landslide, but his decision to veto Democratic legislation and his aristocratic tendencies had earned him the ire of Democrats. His reputation was further damaged in early 1805 when the *Aurora* printed an account of a meeting between McKean and two Democratic members of the state legislature. Although McKean’s version of the incident, which was later

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<sup>592</sup>*United States Gazette*, 19 April 1805.

<sup>593</sup> *Journal of the fifteenth House of Representative of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, (Lancaster: Benjamin Grimler, 1805), 634-639.

printed, differed from the original *Aurora* piece, McKean admitted that he had lost his temper and referred to those who supported the convention as a “set of clodpoles [clodhoppers], and ignoramuses.”<sup>594</sup> The outburst fit the Democratic narrative that McKean was aloof and condescending toward common people and Democrats embraced the term “clodhopper” as a sign of their humble roots.<sup>595</sup> But while the “clodhopper affair” helped guarantee that Democrats would challenge McKean’s re-election, both Quids and Democrats understood that the election would turn on the question of the convention.

At a legislative caucus on April 1, 1805, Democrats nominated speaker of the state House of Representatives Simon Snyder as their candidate for governor. Snyder’s background stood in stark contrast to McKean’s privileged upbringing. The Democratic candidate came from humble beginnings and had worked his way up to become one of the most influential political figures in the state. He was also of German descent and therefore popular with the large numbers of German voters in the state.<sup>596</sup> Duane and Leib, however, greeted the nomination coolly and, while they agreed to abide by the party’s decision, they were not fully satisfied and rumors circulated that Leib tried to undermine Snyder’s nomination. Nothing came of these whispers in 1805, but they did foreshadow future problems.<sup>597</sup>

Shortly after the Democratic caucus nominated Snyder, a group of Quid legislators and a few Federalists formally nominated McKean.<sup>598</sup> From the outset, Quids sought to make the

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<sup>594</sup> For McKean’s account, see, *Aurora*, 3 June 1805 and Constitutional Republican Party, “The Address of . . . 10<sup>th</sup> of June, 1805,” (Philadelphia: McCorkle, 1805), 24-28. For another version, see, *Aurora*, 29 March 1805.

Higginbotham, *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 84-86.

<sup>595</sup> See, for example, *The Aurora*, 6 July 1805.

<sup>596</sup> *Aurora*, 20 May 1805; *Pennsylvania Correspondent*, 16 April 1805; *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser*, 6 April 1805.

<sup>597</sup> Veritas, “Six Letters on the Intrigues . . . of Doctor Michael Leib,” (Philadelphia, 1807) #14113; Higginbotham, *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 88-89.

<sup>598</sup> *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser*, 6 April 1805.

election about the constitution. Not only did they believe that the majority of Pennsylvanians opposed the convention, but focusing on the constitution also gave cover to Federalists who would otherwise not vote for McKean. On April 15, therefore, the Society of Constitutional Republicans resolved to promote the election of representatives “selected from such of the democratic-republican citizens of the state, as are opposed to the call of a convention” and endorsed McKean. The society praised McKean’s previous service to the country and applauded his “wisdom, energy, and fidelity” and concluded that the governor had earned another term in office.<sup>599</sup> Over the next few months, meetings across the state echoed these sentiments. Blockely and Kingsessing townships in Philadelphia County, for example, adopted a resolution stating that, “We deem it necessary for all those who wish to preserve the present constitution, to unite in supporting *Thomas M’Kean*; for should the opposition candidate succeed, it will most inevitably be destroyed.”<sup>600</sup> As had become customary, these gatherings would also nominate men to serve on committees of correspondence to communicate and coordinate with other groups. In some areas Quids could use existing Republican standing committees while in regions McKean’s supporters created new ones. In both cases the meetings welcomed Federalist participants.<sup>601</sup>

Democrats organized meetings throughout the state as well. Firmly committed to constitutional reform and confident that they spoke for the people, these men initially welcomed the Quids’ attempt to make the election about the constitution and call for a convention. Like their rivals, Democrats used gatherings to adopt resolutions that explicitly linked Snyder’s election to the convention question. Participants at a meeting in Northumberland agreed to

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<sup>599</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 15 April 1805.

<sup>600</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 August 1805.

<sup>601</sup> See, for example, *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 September 1805.

“mutually pledge ourselves . . . to use our best exertions to promote the election of *Simon Snyder* for governor of this commonwealth at the next election, and also the call of a convention.”<sup>602</sup>

Again like the Quids, Democrats relied on Republican committees where they could and, in at least one instance, overthrew an existing committee that favored McKean.<sup>603</sup> Additionally, Democrats established committees of “vigilance” tasked with drumming up support for Snyder and the convention movement.<sup>604</sup>

During the summer of 1805, the growing animosity between Quids and Democrats spilled into the established Republican voluntary societies. Leib, Duane, and their Democratic allies began to purge Quids and anyone who had opposed the call for a convention from the Tammany Society. Quids retailed by denouncing the organization. The *Freeman’s Journal* claimed that the original goals of the society had been achieved through the election of McKean and Jefferson and asserted that the organization had become a “scourge of the people” that existed only for the purpose of “individual aggrandizement.”<sup>605</sup> A similar rupture occurred in the militia when Democratic companies refused to salute Governor McKean as part of the annual Independence Day celebrations. Quids viewed the refusal as a sign of Democratic intransigence and evidence of the threat they posed to law and order. Democrats retorted that, as an independent and self-governing institution, the volunteer units were not required to salute McKean. Despite the Quids’ outcry, most of the militia ended up siding with the Democrats and, rather than acknowledge the Governor, the soldiers used the Fourth of July as an opportunity to promote Snyder’s candidacy. They also mocked McKean with toasts such as, “Clodhoppers,

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<sup>602</sup> *Aurora*, 26 June 1805.

<sup>603</sup> *Aurora*, 10 May 1805.

<sup>604</sup> *Aurora*, 16 July 1805.

<sup>605</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 April 1805; Koschnik, “*Let A Common Interest Bind Us Together*,” 63.

stumbling blocks in the way of his *excellency*—May they teach him good manners and decorum at the next election.”<sup>606</sup>

Blocked from the largest and most influential voluntary societies, Quid supporters of McKean relied on print to build support and counter Democratic accusations. According to one historian, thirty out of forty of the state’s newspapers endorsed McKean.<sup>607</sup> The *Freeman’s Journal* remained the primary Quid newspaper and carried a steady stream of articles condemning Duane and Leib as revolutionists. One of the most widely distributed Quid piece of campaign literature was a pamphlet containing a speech given by Dallas on June 10, 1805. The Society of Constitutional Republicans printed more than 25,000 copies of the pamphlet in both German and English and had them dispersed throughout the state.<sup>608</sup> The speech encapsulated the Quid view of the election and of what was at stake. In it, Dallas traced the rise of the Republican Party and argued that it was “a principle of concert and conciliation” that enabled Republicans to triumph over Federalists. Although the party had succeeded in saving the republic from the Federalists and could rest assured that their liberty was safe in the hands of Republicans, he warned that “a small but active COMBINATION OF MALCONTENTS” threatened to undermine the party’s achievements. The vast majority of Republicans understood “that their position did not afford a view of the whole of the political ground” and they were therefore happy to defer policy decisions to elected officials. The malcontents, however, refused to abide by the will of the majority and sought to force their wishes on the party.

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<sup>606</sup> *Aurora*, 7 July 1805; Koschnik, “*Let A Common Interest Bind Us Together*,” 140-146. Quids did hold Fourth of July celebrations in some parts of the state. See, *Freeman’s Journal*, 5, 6, 10 July 1805.

<sup>607</sup> Higginbotham, *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 100.

<sup>608</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 June 1805.

Dallas urged his fellow citizens to ignore these “men deranged by Utopian theories” and to trust the wisdom of those who came before. Despite what the malcontents claimed, he asserted that Pennsylvania had thrived under McKean and “no material change can be projected, without involving the hazard of material injury.” Dallas concluded that it was “time, to evince to the world, that a Democratic Republic, can enjoy energy without tyranny, and Liberty without anarchy.”<sup>609</sup> The election represented a “struggle, in which the very character and principles of a republican government are implicated” and would determine whether reason or passion would govern.<sup>610</sup>

The Democratic press responded with a focus on the larger issues of the constitution and the principle of majority rule. Some Democratic writers even began to question the legitimacy of constitutions in general.<sup>611</sup> A noticeable shift, however, occurred in Democratic rhetoric as election day drew closer. Writers retreated from the question of a convention and focused their criticism on McKean. A broadside published late in the campaign suggested that the real problem with the government may not have been the constitution or the judiciary but how McKean used these instruments of power. “Indeed, had the present governor been regardful of the public will; had he not scorned the public sentiment and scoffed at the people; had he not considered himself monarch of the state . . . the constitution might have remained without analysis, and the people undisturbed under its administration.”<sup>612</sup> Electing someone other than McKean, they implied, might render the convention question moot.

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<sup>609</sup> Constitutional Republican Party, “The Address of . . . 10<sup>th</sup> of June, 1805,” (Philadelphia: McCorkle, 1805).

<sup>610</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 5 September 1805.

<sup>611</sup> See, for example, *Aurora*, 15 July, 21 August 1805.

<sup>612</sup> “Address of the conferees of the city and county of Philadelphia . . .,” (Philadelphia: n.p., 1805) Broadside # 52110.

This rhetorical shift indicates a growing recognition among Democrats that the majority of the public supported the constitution. The Democrats' decision to abandon the convention as a campaign issue became even more apparent during the final weeks before the election. At a special meeting of the Society of the Friends of the People held two weeks before election day, members adopted resolutions stating that it was "the opinion of this society, That the two questions now before the public, the choice of a governor for the next three years, and the call of a convention to amend the constitution, are independent of each other, and stand upon distinct ground."<sup>613</sup> This shift does not mean that Democrats such as Leib and Duane stopped supporting fundamental changes to the constitution. Instead, the attempt to distance Snyder's election from the convention indicates that Democrats realized they were fighting a losing battle. Duane and Leib had underestimated the public's support for the established institutions and misread popular outrage with McKean as evidence that a majority of Pennsylvanians wanted more direct control over the deliberative process.

Quids, however, did not retreat from the question of the convention, and in the final days of the campaign sent out a stream of campaign literature that urged voters to mobilize to save the constitution. An address from Bucks County Society of Constitutional Republicans issued the day before the election pleaded with readers not to be fooled by Democrats who said the election had nothing to do with the constitution. The "malcontents" would stop at nothing, they claimed, and were simply biding their time. Pennsylvanians may have already demonstrated their opposition to the convention through petitions, but the results of the election would carry more weight. "A fair election, though not perfect, is the most perfect expression of public will," Quids

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<sup>613</sup> *Aurora*, 28 September 1805.



asserted.<sup>614</sup> By voting for McKean citizens could clearly demonstrate their support for the constitution.

In the waning days of the campaign, Quids also formalized their partnership with Federalists. Quid leaders including Dallas and Coxe announced in mid-September that they “had disregarded what may *now* be called but shades of difference in political opinion” and introduced a ticket with a mix of Republicans and well-known Federalists such as William Lewis and Levi Hollingsworth.<sup>615</sup> Quids and Federalists had been working together against the Democrats for months, but the joint-ticket represented the first formal union. Although some Federalists had trepidation about joining forces with former enemies and agreeing to vote for a man who had once denounced them as tories, most were concerned enough about the prospects of a Democratic governor that they accepted the union.<sup>616</sup> Quids and Federalists across the state followed the same course and adopted combined tickets. The barrage of Quid/Federalist tickets led one editor to conclude that “there is no longer any third party” because the two had become “so completely amalgamated.”<sup>617</sup>

Democrats pounced on the public union of Federalists and Quids as further proof of how far the Quids had strayed from the principles of the Republican Party. No real Republican could possibly vote for a Federalist, they claimed. On election day, the *Aurora* printed a special half-page advertisement comparing Snyder, the “uniform republican,” with McKean, “an apostate from principle.” Duane asked readers to recall the Federalists of 1799, 1800, and 1801 and to reflect on the terrors associated with the Adams’s administration. A McKean victory, he

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<sup>614</sup> *Pennsylvania Correspondent*, 7 October 1805

<sup>615</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 17 September 1805.

<sup>616</sup> On the internal debate within the Federalist Party over whether to vote for McKean, see, *United States Gazette*, 24,25 September 1805.

<sup>617</sup> *Spirit of the Press*, 12 October 1805; *Carlisle Gazette*, 1 October 1805.

threatened, would result in similar outcomes. “TODAY,” he cried, “you are to meet your old and uniform political opponents, the *federalists* who are supported by a mongrel faction destitute of all principle.” The final pitch to Democrats was that voters needed to mobilize to defense of the Republican Party.<sup>618</sup>

A total of 82,866 Pennsylvanians, or nearly 55 percent of the state’s eligible voters, cast a ballot on election day. The heated contest between Quids/Federalists and Democrats had driven a record number of people to the polls, and the results reveal a closely contested race. McKean received 43,674 votes (53 percent) while Snyder garnered 38,924 (47 percent).<sup>619</sup> McKean won in every county that tended to vote for Federalists and in most of the counties where the two parties split evenly, while Snyder took the areas that usually sided with Republican candidates. With a few exceptions, however, both candidates did well across the state, an indication of how divided Pennsylvanians were over the election.

The Quid view of society and version of democracy had triumphed, and the constitution appeared safe. The checks on popular passions would remain in place, and the people would continue to engage in the deliberative process through elections. The victory, however, was incomplete. The “union of honest men” may have triumphed but, as the election results reveal, Quids held a tenuous majority and McKean owed his election primarily to Federalists. Even Alberta Gallatin, a prominent Quid, admitted that the Democrats had won more than two-thirds of the Republican vote and that McKean owed his election to the Federalists.<sup>620</sup> The decision to

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<sup>618</sup> *Aurora*, 8 October 1805.

<sup>619</sup> The official count for Snyder was lower due to a clerical error.

<sup>620</sup> Higginbotham, *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 100.

join publically with Federalists had yielded short-term results but, as soon became apparent, the embrace proved to be a kiss of death.

### **Decline of Quids and Democratic Divisions, 1806-1807**

The political landscape in Pennsylvania shifted once again in the years following McKean's narrow victory in 1805. Having secured the governor's reelection and defended the constitution, Quid leaders initially hoped to reunite with their Democratic opponents under the Republican banner. Democrats, however, were not ready to welcome the Quids back. Instead, they continued to attack McKean and his Quid allies. Making matters worse for Quids, the Federalist Party began to reemerge at the national level, and Quids were put in the uncomfortable position of being allied with men who attacked President Jefferson. Democrats faced their own problems, however. The Democratic coalition began to fracture as members debated what to focus on following McKean's reelection: some Democrats wanted to continue to push for reforms while others believed that the party needed to shift its focus to elections. In the midst of the turmoil, both Quids and Democrats were forced once again to revisit their approaches toward political mobilization and to reconsider their views on the role of citizens.

In November 1805, following McKean's reelection, the Society of the Constitutional Republicans gathered and adopted an address stating that the society had succeeded in its mission of protecting the constitution and, as a result, would soon dissolve. The address also urged members to rejoin their Republican allies who had been deluded and led astray by a "faction" during the last election and warned against heeding the siren song of some Federalists. Dallas and his allies understood that reconciliation with the Democrats might be difficult as long as Leib and Duane controlled the party, but the dissolution of the Constitutional Republican

society represented an olive branch to Democrats. Dallas, George Logan, and many of the other Quids had been fighting Federalists for decades and, while circumstances may have necessitated an occasional need to form a joint ticket with Federalists, they were not prepared to join permanently with their adversaries.<sup>621</sup>

Democrats did not welcome the Quids back. Duane laughed at the idea of reunion and called it an “extraordinary and ludicrous” idea. Why, he wondered, would Democrats want to cooperate with men who referred to Democrats as “*jacobins*” and spread rumors that they planned to plunder farms and eliminate private property?<sup>622</sup> A few correspondents in the *Aurora* suggested that there might be room in the party for honest Quids who had been fooled by Dallas, but most agreed that the Quid “leaders must fall into the pit they dug for the republican party.”<sup>623</sup> The formal cooperation with Federalists had, according to Duane, exposed Dallas and the Quid leaders as “naked *federalists*.”<sup>624</sup> Quids had, after all, admitted themselves that only a “shade of difference” existed between Federalists and Quids.<sup>625</sup>

Unable to rejoin the Democrats, Quids were forced to continue their cooperation with Federalists. The Quid alliance with Federalists, however, became more complicated and problematic following the resurgence of Federalists at the national level. National issues had, for the most part, remained of secondary importance for Pennsylvanians since Jefferson’s election. The collapse of the Federalist Party had left Republicans in firm control of the federal government, which meant that Pennsylvanians could focus on state issues. But, with the prospect of war looming and the passage of the controversial Embargo Act in 1807, national issues

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<sup>621</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 26 November 1805.

<sup>622</sup> *Aurora*, 28 November 1805.

<sup>623</sup> *Aurora*, 28 November 1805.

<sup>624</sup> *Aurora*, 1 October 1805.

<sup>625</sup> *Aurora*, 26 November 1805.

assumed paramount importance. Federalists in Pennsylvania and at the national level denounced Jefferson's foreign policy and the Embargo Act and Federalists throughout the state who had remained on the sidelines for years resurfaced and joined the chorus of criticism. This Federalist revival put Quids in an awkward position. Quids had always maintained that they were Republicans and the real heirs to the party that had elected Jefferson. They had been willing to work with Federalists against a common enemy when Federalists had remained quiet, but now that Federalists were loudly attacking Jefferson and his foreign policy, Quids faced a dilemma. They could continue to cooperate with Federalists and in the process implicitly work against Jefferson and the national Republican Party, or they could abandon the Federalists and try again to rejoin the Democrats. Neither option looked appealing. Both choices would require the sacrifice of principle—either the rebuke of the Republican Party, which many Quids had helped build, or the acceptance of Democratic views on the role of citizens.

While Quids deliberated on which course to take, a debate began within the Democratic Party. Despite failing to unseat McKean, Democrats had initially remained unified and committed to democratic reforms. They continued to press for reforms to make the judiciary more responsive to the people's will and moved to impeach Governor McKean. As the party began preparations for the next gubernatorial election, however, tensions emerged between the more radical wing led by Duane and Leib who wanted a new candidate and a more moderate group united in selecting Simon Snyder as the party's nominee again. Although some historians portray the intraparty debate as primarily a clash of personalities and just a question of who would lead the party, the struggle stemmed from a fundamental disagreement over approaches to political mobilization and whether Democrats should continue to press for reforms or to accept

the election of 1805 as a referendum on dramatic change and make winning elections the priority.<sup>626</sup>

The genesis of the split occurred in 1807 with the founding of the *Democratic Press*, a new Democratic paper in Philadelphia. Edited by John Binns, a staunch Democrat who had previously published the *Northumberland Argus*, the paper initially worked in tandem with Duane's *Aurora*. Duane even assisted Binns in finding subscribers and, in conjunction with the "grand sachem" Leib, invited Binns to give the ceremonial "long talk" at the annual Tammany Society celebration in May.<sup>627</sup> Unity, however, proved elusive.

In June 1807 a pamphlet entitled "A Narrative of Facts Relative to the Conduct of Some of the Members of the Legislature" began to circulate. Purportedly written by a committee of Democratic members of the legislature, the pamphlet accused Leib of behaving like a dictator and promoting his own agenda at the expense of the party as a whole. The effort to impeach McKean, it claimed, was an attempt "to re-establish his popularity." The pamphlet detailed Leib's maneuverings during the legislature's election of a new federal senator in January 1807 and blamed Leib for costing Democrats the election. It described the Democratic Party as the great bulwark against tyranny and warned that Leib's machinations threatened to undermine the organization. "The affairs of our party are at a crisis," it concluded, "we must either get rid of this man or the party will fall."<sup>628</sup> Leib did not publically respond to the accusations and Duane

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<sup>626</sup> For an account that stressed personalities over principles, see, Higginbotham, *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 136-145. Andrew Shankman, in contrast, portrays the split as rooted in conflicting visions of democracy but his account does not take into consideration the different styles of political mobilization. See, Shankman, *Crucible of American Democracy*, 109-11 and *passim*.

<sup>627</sup> *Aurora*, 14 May 1807; John Binns, *Recollections of the Life of John Binns: Twenty-Nine Years in Europe and Fifty-Three in the United States* (Philadelphia: T.K. and P. G. Collins, 1854),197; Higginbotham, *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 138.

<sup>628</sup> "Narrative of facts relative to the conduct of some of the members of the legislature of Pennsylvania, professing to be Democrats, at the election of a senator to represent this state in the Senate of the United States," (Philadelphia: n.p.,1807). EAI 52167.

quickly denounced the pamphlet and urged readers to not be swayed by the salacious accusations. The pamphlet, however, proved to be the opening salvos of a war between wings of the Democratic Party.<sup>629</sup>

In the latter half of 1807, the *Democratic Press* emerged as an advocate for a restrained and moderate version of the Democratic Party characterized by an emphasis on party organization and a focus on winning elections. Binns' decision to take the *Democratic Press* in a new direction and break with Duane and his allies first became apparent when the paper came out in favor of dividing Philadelphia County into districts as opposed to using a single county-wide meeting to nominate candidates for the fall elections. Echoing the arguments Quids had used against the county-wide meeting in 1804, a series of articles in the *Democratic Press* and signed by "A Citizen of the Northern Liberties" defended districts as the most effective, organized, and practical method of conducting county business. Not only did the size of the county make it impractical for all interested citizens to attend a single meeting, the author claimed, but the current practice of gathering in Northern Liberties, the epicenter of Leib and Duane's popularity, invited chicanery and enabled a small number of men to dictate the proceedings. Open and fair nominations, he argued, were crucial to the party's future. "THE POWER OF NOMINATION IS THE POLITICAL LEVER UPON WHICH DEPENDS THE RISE OR FALL OF PARTIES," he exclaimed. Nominations were particularly important because they served as a test of political loyalty. Determining whether a partisan would acquiesce to the will of the majority and back the nominated candidate, regardless of who they had originally supported, enabled the party to eliminate men who were using the organization for selfish ends. It was, therefore, imperative that the legitimacy of the nomination process be unimpeachable.

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<sup>629</sup> *Aurora*, 3 June 1807.

Notably, in contrast to the Quid writers who defended districts, this author viewed political parties as a positive and necessary force. Thus, while this wing of the Democratic Party may have adopted Quid positions, crucial differences between the moderate Democrats and the Quids remained.<sup>630</sup>

In addition to the call for districts, the *Democratic Press* began printing a series of letters addressed to Leib. Signed by “Veritas,” the letters built on accusations made in the pamphlet and accused Leib of demagoguery. Veritas prefaced his letters by acknowledging that his attack was like “David against Goliath” and that he understood that, when the dust settled, one of them would slip “into political insignificance.” Nevertheless, in subtle jab at Duane, Veritas promised to eschew personal insults and hortatory rhetoric used by many writers and to look only at Leib’s political conduct. The public, he suggested, should soberly deliberate on the facts presented in the letters. “A calm investigation, and temperate discussion will make manifest truth.” Veritas detailed Leib’s actions as a member of Congress, highlighting the instances where Leib acted contrary to the will of most Democrats. In addition to rehashing some of the charges made in the previously published pamphlet, Veritas accused Leib of secretly working to prevent the nomination of Snyder in 1805 and then of trying to block the selection of Snyder as Speaker of the House in 1806. In light of this evidence Veritas concluded that “the name of *Leib*, like of *Arnold*, will be synonymous [sp] with *Treachery* and *Treason*.”<sup>631</sup>

Through these acts, Binns and his correspondents in the *Democratic Press* declared their independence from Leib and Duane. This schism emerged from contrasting approaches to political mobilization. While both groups shared the same goal of creating a more democratic

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<sup>630</sup> *The Democratic Press*, 7, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, 21, 26 August 1807

<sup>631</sup> Veritas, “Six Letters on the Intrigues, Apostasy and Ambition of Doctor Michael Leib,” (Philadelphia: John Binns, 1807). EAI 14113.



society, they disagreed over how to achieve these reforms. Writers in the *Democratic Press* asserted that the best way to institute reforms was the election of new men, not a constitutional convention. Furthermore, they believed that Duane's and Leib's radicalism and uncompromising attitudes had cost Snyder the election. To prevent a similar outcome in 1808, these Democrats concluded, the party had to bring Quids back into the fold. This approach might come at the expense of engaging the public directly in the process, but such concessions were necessary to build a broad coalition. In essence, the opponents of Duane and Leib sought to return to the strategy that Republicans had employed in 1799 and 1800.

Not surprisingly given their record of dealing with dissenters, Duane and Leib denounced Binns and the men who sought to steer the party in a different direction. The two men still controlled much of the party organization and quickly mobilized their supporters. The Tammany Society as well as from the Society of the Friends of the People banned Binns. Democratic meetings adopted resolutions condemning him and the organizers of the district meetings. The move to call districts, according to one assembly of Democrats, stemmed from a desire to “distract and disorganize the democratic interest, or to gratify personal hatred and malice, or to favor the ambitious views of a certain set of individuals.”<sup>632</sup> Real Democrats, another group declared, believed that “whenever the people can deliberate for themselves, they ought never to delegate their authority.”<sup>633</sup> In addition to criticizing the promoters of district meetings, Democratic gatherings adopted statements praising Leib and thanking him for his tireless work on behalf of the people.<sup>634</sup>

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<sup>632</sup> *Aurora*, 1 September 1807.

<sup>633</sup> *Aurora*, 19 August 1807.

<sup>634</sup> *Aurora*, 1 September 1807.

Duane meanwhile used the *Aurora* as a platform to portray Binns and his allies as traitors and enemies of the people. Calling them “Quadroons,”<sup>635</sup> Duane wrote that “they are only the successors in *fact* and *form* of the *third party* or quids” and secretly worked with Federalists. Moreover, Duane accused the Quadroons of plotting to elect Dallas as governor. According to Duane, a lust for power and prestige drove these pretend friends of the people to break with the party.<sup>636</sup>

But, while Duane and Leib called Binns and the *Democratic Press* a minority faction and traitors to the cause, the 1807 election results presented a different story. The voters of Philadelphia City rebuked Duane’s attempt to win a seat in the state legislature. Leib, running in Philadelphia County, narrowly won his election but received the least number of votes of the winning candidates, a sign of his diminishing popularity. Despite what Leib and Duane may have claimed, the moderate Democratic wing appeared to be in the ascendency.

## **Election of 1808**

The status of the parties in Pennsylvania remained uncertain as the state geared up for the gubernatorial election of 1808. With McKean barred from seeking reelection, the field appeared wide open. Each of state’s political groups vying for power, however, faced serious obstacles. The Quid/Federalist coalition that had elected McKean in 1805 was becoming difficult to maintain as a rejuvenated national Federalist Party began denouncing Jeffersonian foreign policy. Federalists, moreover, did not appear interested in playing a supportive role this time and believed that, in return for backing McKean in 1805, Quids should unite behind a Federalist in

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<sup>635</sup> The term “quadroon” is used to describe a person with one white parent and one half-black half-white parent. Interestingly, this would mean Duane sees Democrats as black and Federalists as white.

<sup>636</sup> *Aurora*, 2 September 1807.

1808. Quids, however, were reluctant to abandon the Republican Party. Democrats, meanwhile, remained embroiled in an internal debate over strategies for achieving reform. Snyder stood as the obvious choice of candidate for the party, but concerns remained that the Leib and Duane faction might attempt to torpedo his candidacy. The campaign proved to be a political furnace that helped fuse the factions of the Democratic Party and distill the party's views on the role of citizens, political mobilization, and meaning of democracy.

The nomination process started ominously for Democrats. In the fall of 1807, a gathering of Philadelphia Democrats adopted resolutions criticizing the use of a legislative caucus to select the party's nominees. Instead, the gathering suggested that Democrats in each county select delegates to a statewide convention. This new method, the meeting claimed, would ensure that communities without a Democratic representative could still participate.<sup>637</sup> Duane defended the proposals and argued that they would lead to a more democratic process but the call was also an obvious attempt by the Duane and Leib faction to assert control over the nomination process and to challenge the selection of Snyder, who had the support of the majority of the state legislators. Snyder's supporters recognized the threat and organized meetings throughout the state that condemned the idea of a convention and voiced faith in the legislative caucus. Duane continued to push for a convention, but it quickly became clear he was in the minority.<sup>638</sup>

At a caucus in early January 1808, Democrats reached a compromise: a mixed-legislative caucus. Regions that did not have a Democratic representative were allowed to send a delegate to engage in the process. Democrats from across the state would, therefore, be able to participate. In another concession to the Duane-Leib faction, the caucus suggested that local meetings provide

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<sup>637</sup> *Aurora*, 23 September 1807.

<sup>638</sup> *Aurora*, 24 November 1807; *Democratic Press*, 24 November, 9,16,24 December 1807; Higginbotham, *Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 151.

instructions to their representatives. Citizens could, therefore, play a more active role in the process, although at least one Democratic gathering concluded, after a vigorous debate, that everyone knew Snyder would be nominated and that “entering into a specific resolution to instruct members would shew [sp] a suspicion of their republican firmness and integrity.”<sup>639</sup> On the surface, at least, the party appeared to be coalescing, and at the mixed caucus in early March the Democratic Party unanimously endorsed Snyder for governor. Leib served as secretary of the gathering while his close friend Thomas Leiper acted as chair. Duane, meanwhile, was selected to be on the state committee to oversee the campaign.<sup>640</sup>

As the Democrats rallied around Snyder, Federalists and Quids tried to work through their differences. Coming into the election, Quids backed John Spayd, a prominent judge, while Federalists tended to support James Ross, a lawyer and former Senator who had run against McKean in 1799 and 1802. Quids and Federalists met twice in an attempt to resolve their differences, but neither group would abandon their preferred candidate. Quids refused to vote for a man so intimately tied to the Federalist Party, and Federalists were “resolved not to be under the direction of the Quids” any longer. As a result, the two groups nominated their respective candidates.<sup>641</sup>

With the candidates finalized, the parties began organizing for the campaign. Theoretically, Snyder’s candidacy would be overseen by a committee appointed during the Democratic caucus. But, in a sign of the lingering tensions within the party, Snyder’s supporters

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<sup>639</sup> *Aurora*, 11 January 1808; Higginbotham, *Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 153-154. For the account of the meeting that decided against sending instructions, see, *Democratic Press*, 11 February 1808. Other Democratic gatherings had no qualms with issuing instructions. See, for example, *Democratic Press*, 24 February 1808.

<sup>640</sup> *Aurora*, 10 March 1808.

<sup>641</sup> Higginbotham, *Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 155; Joseph Hopkins to unknown, 22 May 1808, quoted in Shankman, *Crucible of American Democracy*, 183.

also set up their own organization. Before the caucus had officially selected Snyder, Binns and his allies formed the “Society of Independent Democrats” to provide a home for Democrats disenchanted with Duane and Leib. Then, in May, they established the “Association of Friends of Democracy and Simon Snyder” for the express purpose of electing Snyder.<sup>642</sup> Both societies formed committees of correspondence and urged Democrats in other parts of the state to found their own groups. The new societies would enable Snyder’s supporters to control the tenor of the campaign and, regardless of what Leib and Duane wanted, keep the focus on the election and party unity and not any democratic reforms. Duane denounced the new societies and refused to carry accounts of their meetings. Instead he printed information from the regular state committee, which Binns had been ignoring, along with the proceedings of the standard voluntary societies such as the Tammany Society.<sup>643</sup>

While Democrats suffered from an abundance of electioneering, Quids and Federalists struggled to build any sort of campaign structure. Instead of forming a specific group to promote Spayd’s election, Quids relied on the Society of Constitutional Republicans to publish addresses and coordinate activities. The organization, however, lacked the same vigor as their Democratic counterparts, and Spayd’s campaign never really got off the ground. Federalists did not create a new voluntary society either, but they did appoint committees of correspondence and organize meetings throughout the state. Somewhat controversially, Ross also undertook some electioneering himself during the early stages of the campaign. For the most part, however, Federalists remained uncomfortable with the type of popular politics and electioneering practiced by Democrats.<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>642</sup> *Democratic Press*, 12, 17 May 1808.

<sup>643</sup> *Aurora*, 14 May, 7 June 1808.

<sup>644</sup> *Democratic Press*, 13 May, 28 July 1808; Higginbotham, *Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 155.

Election coverage dominated the newspapers months before anyone went to the polls. On the Democratic side, the *Democratic Press* and the *Aurora* remained the most prominent papers. As early as June, both Binns and Duane dedicated multiple columns to discussing the upcoming contest. But, while both papers defended Snyder, the way they approached electioneering differed in substance and style. The *Democratic Press* only published the accounts of the new voluntary societies. These organizations stressed Snyder's popularity and urged that all Republicans unite. An Address from the Friends of Democracy and Simon Snyder, for example, described Snyder as "a lover of our political institutions . . . [and] an open and firm friend to the constitution of this state."<sup>645</sup> Binns also carried a number of articles that targeted the Quid vote by stressing Snyder's moderation. "A Constitutional Republican" wrote a series of open letters to the Quids urging them to support Snyder. Professing to be "a zealous friend of Mr. *Madison and the administration of Mr. Jefferson*," the author claimed to be a firm defender of the state constitution and to have voted for McKean in the previous election. He had, however, concluded that while Spayd was a good man, Snyder offered the only real hope for defeating Ross and the Federalists. Moreover, he asserted that the question of a change to the constitution "has been totally abandoned" by Snyder and his friends because the election of 1805 had demonstrated that the public did not support a convention.<sup>646</sup> Other pieces suggested that "many honest" men became Quids and were forced into the hands of the Federalists by rogue Democrats. Real Democrats "never approved of this system of driving men from their party" and would welcome any Quid back.<sup>647</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> *Democratic Press*, 3 August 1808. See, also, *Democratic Press*, 17 May, 3 June, 7 July 1808.

<sup>646</sup> *Democratic Press*, 28 July, 3 August 1808.

<sup>647</sup> *Democratic Press*, 11 May 1808.

Duane struck a different chord in the *Aurora*. In keeping with his previous journalistic style, he relied heavily on personal attacks against Ross and reveled in one particular incident in which Ross purportedly used nefarious means to steal his house in Pittsburgh from a poor unsuspecting widow.<sup>648</sup> Duane also gave space to the Democratic committee tasked with overseeing Snyder's election. In stark contrast to the addresses carried in the *Democratic Press*, the Democratic committee initially suggested that the election revolved around the question of changing the constitution. In June, the committee claimed that the constitution violated the first principle of a republican government that "*the will of the majority ought to govern.*" The most egregious example, they asserted, was the office of the governor. "Though not actually a monarch, he has qualified monarchical powers, such as are dangerous to our rights . . . . If we are competent to govern ourselves, then ought no constitutional power to exist in any one man, which implies an incapacity in the people for self government."<sup>649</sup> Considering that Leib and Duane served on the committee that drafted the address, the focus on the constitution was unsurprising. The *Aurora* had never stopped attacking the constitution and regularly likened McKean to a monarch. Nevertheless, the address met with a cool reception, and over the next few months the question of a convention faded from the pages of the *Aurora*. Snyder and his allies wanted the focus on party unity and on winning the election, not on the constitution or fundamental democratic reforms.<sup>650</sup>

Democrats' moderation did not prevent the Federalist press from portraying Snyder as a radical. Much of the Federalist strategy hinged on winning the Quid vote. By painting Snyder as a tool of the radical wing of the Democrats, Federalists hoped that Quids would overcome their

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<sup>648</sup> Higginbotham, *The Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 165-166.

<sup>649</sup> *Aurora*, 7 June 1808.

<sup>650</sup> *Aurora*, 30 August, 22 September 1808.

trepidation about voting for Ross. Federalists denounced Snyder as a “*violent and intemperate party man*” who “tolerates neither the principles, nor character of his opponents.” If elected, they claimed, he would punish and persecute “the whole body of the Quids and Federalists.”<sup>651</sup> “He who votes for *Simon Snyder*,” warned one Federalist, “votes in fact, and in truth, for *Leib, Duane, and Binns*.”<sup>652</sup> Other writers urged readers not to trust Democratic lies and claimed that Snyder planned to gut the constitution. In contrast, Federalists presented Ross as a moderate who would faithfully uphold the constitution.<sup>653</sup>

With both sides courting their vote, Quids faced a tough decision. By the summer, Spayd’s candidacy was clearly a failure. Although a few meetings continued to express their support for Spayd right up to the election, most Quids recognized that their choice of candidate would be either Ross, a Federalist who many of them had campaigned against in 1799, or Snyder, whom they had vehemently opposed in 1805. The journey of the *Freeman’s Journal* illustrates the difficulties Quids faced. Founded as the primary mouthpiece for the growing Quid opposition, the paper welcomed news of Spayd’s nomination as a way to prevent the election of Snyder. Confidence in Spayd was, however, short-lived, and in May the paper announced that Quids would be supporting someone else. Just who that someone else was remained ambiguous but, as the summer progressed, editor McCorkle indicated that Ross was the candidate of choice. Completing its transformation into a Federalist paper, the *Freeman’s Journal* also began criticizing Jefferson’s foreign policy and the embargo.<sup>654</sup> The decision to embrace Federalism did not sit well with many of the Philadelphia Quids. In August, a meeting of Quids resolved that

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<sup>651</sup> *American Daily Advertiser*, 18 July 1808.

<sup>652</sup> *Pennsylvania Herald*, 17 August 1808.

<sup>653</sup> *American Daily Advertiser*, 22 August 1808.

<sup>654</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 6 April, 26 May, 22,25,26 July 1808; Higginbotham, *Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 170-171.



they would “not support JAMES ROSS for governor, because we believe him hostile to the Constitution of the United States, and to the equal rights of the people.” Those gathered also declared that they “view with concern and decided disapprobation” the *Freeman’s Journal’s* endorsement of Ross.<sup>655</sup> McCorkle responded with a tirade of abuse and accused the meeting of trying to deprive him of his freedom of speech.<sup>656</sup>

The Quid coalition dissolved following the rupture with the *Freeman’s Journal*. With McCorkle firmly in the Federalist camp, Binns offered to start publishing the accounts of Quid meetings in the *Democratic Press*. Stating that Quids and Democrats agreed on “nineteen out of twenty” issues, Binns called on all Republicans to unite. It was time, he insisted, to put the interest of the party ahead of personalities. “As individuals we may observe our personal likings and disliking but as members of a political party they must be sacrificed to the general will.”<sup>657</sup> Quids in Philadelphia agreed, and at a meeting in late August adopted resolutions endorsing Snyder and acknowledging that a vote for Spayd would, in effect, be a vote for Ross.<sup>658</sup> Although some Quids in other parts of the state stayed loyal to Spayd and, at least according to the Federalist press, a few Quid meetings endorsed Ross, the majority of Quids decided to return to the Republican/Democratic fold. The willingness of prominent Quids such as Coxe to vote for Snyder is perhaps the best evidence of the changes in the Democratic Party. By replacing Duane and Leib’s uncompromising commitment to democratic reforms and unforgiving attitude with an approach that focused on partisan building and elections, Snyder and his allies had managed to rebuild the original Republican coalition.<sup>659</sup>

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<sup>655</sup> *Carlisle Gazette*, 26 August 1808.

<sup>656</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 15,16 August 1808.

<sup>657</sup> *Democratic Press*, 28 September 1808.

<sup>658</sup> *Democratic Press*, 25,29 August 1808.

<sup>659</sup> On Coxe, see, Shankman, *Crucible of American Democracy*, 186-187.

A record number of Pennsylvanians voted in 1808. A total of 111,482 citizens, or approximately 70 percent of those eligible to vote, cast a ballot. Of those who voted, about 61 percent, or 67,829, sided with Snyder; 35 percent, or 39,647, with Ross; and four percent, or 4,006, with Spayd. Snyder and the Democrats had trounced their opponents. Ross only managed to win a majority in six counties. Spayd, who in the final days of the campaign had to fight off rumors that he had dropped out of the race, got nearly 25 percent of the vote in Northumberland and Berks Counties but did poorly in most areas.<sup>660</sup>

The election results highlight two important points. First, the state had reverted to the traditional Federalist/Republican dichotomy. Snyder won in Philadelphia County and western and central counties that had traditionally leaned Republican, while Ross won in Federalist strongholds such as Luzerne and Delaware Counties. Quids had been effectively re-absorbed into the two parties. Second, the election illustrates the importance of parties and political organization. The network of partisan committees and voluntary societies, along with nearly non-stop election coverage in the media, proved remarkably successful at mobilizing voters. Similar turnout levels would not be seen in Pennsylvania again until the Jacksonian era, a testament to both the sophistication of the parties in 1808 and to how committed the citizenry was to exercising their right to engage in the deliberative process.

More broadly, the election of 1808 reaffirmed the political consensus that had been forged during the 1790s. Leib and Duane's hope for a more democratic society where citizens regularly engaged in the deliberative process through political parties had proven too radical for most Pennsylvanians. Quids had not been victorious either and their vision of a post-political

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<sup>660</sup> On the rumor that Spayd dropped out, see, *Democratic Press*, 7 September 1808; Higginbotham, *Keystone in the Democratic Arch*, 173-174.

party republic was never realized. Snyder and his followers succeeded where the others did not by returning the focus to party building and electioneering. The Republican coalition would suffer more schisms in the future as they dealt with contentious question of federal vs. state power, race, and gender but Snyder's election marked the conclusion of the debate over how citizens would engage in the deliberative process.

## Conclusion

Historians have argued that a moment existed, however fleeting, in the years immediately before and after the Declaration of Independence when the principles of liberty and equality flourished and the people held the reins of power. Even after this golden moment began to dissipate, some historians contend, true democracy might have prevailed had it not been for the emergence of organized political parties. Other scholars, however, assert that Americans slowly gained more rights and freedoms during this time period. Far from snuffing out true democracy, political parties opened the door for more citizens to engage in the deliberative process. Both of these narratives oversimplify a complex and uncertain time when Americans struggled to come to terms with the meaning of the Revolution and build a new nation. Using political mobilization as an analytical framework, this dissertation has shown that Americans in Pennsylvania did lose the ability to directly engage in the deliberative process in the years following the end of the Revolutionary War. The rise of party politics, however, provided post-Revolution Americans with a more effective way to secure change, in essence providing them with a more powerful role in their government than had been previously possible.

In the early 1780s, when memories of life under a monarchy were still fresh, citizens remained committed to direct participation in the deliberative process. As the dust of war settled, however, an increasing number of men – particularly wealthy men who became known as Federalists – worried that the country had become too democratic, so they instituted reforms that limited the average citizen's ability to engage in the deliberative process to the casting of a ballot. Despite extensive efforts to rally public opinion behind this change, not everyone agreed on the new definition of a citizens' role. An opposition movement that began to coalesce in the

early 1790s rejected Federalists' vision, and its members organized forums that gave average citizens a platform on which to express their will. Efforts to sway the state to their point of view were unsuccessful, however, and Republicans realized they needed to win elections in order to implement the changes they desired. In 1796, they set about establishing a statewide, multilayer organization designed to mobilize voters in a process that required both conservative and radical Republicans to accept compromise for the sake of electability. Harmony between party factors, however, dissipated once the election was over, and Republicans, who held the reins of power, faced the same dilemma that had confronted the nation in the 1780s: how to balance the need to govern with the desire to remain true to their principles. Only when these factions – the Quids and the Democrats – recognized that a functioning democracy required combining myriad voices into a single vision did America's fledgling democracy truly take shape.

Pennsylvanians unquestionably experienced new limitations on the ways they could engage in the deliberative process between the early 1780s and 1800s. In the early 1780s the public expressed its will and engaged directly in the deliberative process in a number of ways. By 1808 many of these avenues had been closed or limited, and the average citizen could no longer participate in the actual process of governance beyond the casting of a ballot. Pennsylvanians continued to utilize some of traditional forms of political mobilization, including town meetings, but their function changed and could not be used to participate directly in the deliberative process. Instead, partisans often used them as a tool to mobilize supporters and influence public opinion. The deliberative process became exclusively the domain of members of the government. But the public did gain new powers. The rise of organized parties provided Pennsylvanians with a powerful new tool for asserting their will. Critics of Federalists' conception of a strong central government and a deferential/hierarchical society had been unable

to force change through town meetings, parades, fêtes and popular uprisings. Once they accepted the limits on the role of citizens and focused their efforts on party-building and elections, however, Republicans successfully overthrew the Federalists. The political party succeeded where other methods had failed and, while issues such as who holds the franchise, the balance of power between the state and federal governments, and the issues surrounding slavery, remained unsettled, party politics created a type of democracy that balanced the desire to create an orderly society with the principles of the Revolution.

By exploring the trajectory of multiple forms of political mobilization, this dissertation provides a new window into the evolving relationship between the public and their government in the early republic. Previous scholars who have looked at political mobilization have focused on a single type and have not considered how changing approaches in one kind related to shifts in other kinds. Analyzing multiple forms of political mobilization reveals connections and broader developments that are obscured when looking at only one approach. As a result, this approach provides a more complete and nuanced understanding of the era's political culture. While this dissertation has focused on Pennsylvania, the same framework can be applied to other states in an effort to understand more about the development of American democracy in other areas. In Pennsylvania, an exploration of the connective tissue that joins people to their government – political mobilization – shows that the early republic was both a period of declension and of democratization. The people may have lost a direct line to the deliberative process, but they developed a tool that gave them a more powerful voice.

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