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## **The Early National Period Timeline**, *Digital History ID 2931*

1785 Virginia abolishes primogeniture, the practice of conveying an estate to the eldest son.

1787 January 25. Shays Rebellion. Massachusetts farmers, faced with high taxes, eviction, and imprisonment for debt, attack the Springfield arsenal. George Washington writes to James Madison: "If there exists not a power to check them, what security has a man for life, liberty or property?" THomas Jefferson, in Paris, responded differently: "A little revolution now and then is a good thing; the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants."

May 14: The Constitutional Convention, with George Washington presiding, convenes in Philadelphia.

July 13: The Northwest Ordinance establishes a system of government for the region and prohibits slavery from the territory.

1788 June 21: By a vote of 57 to 47, New Hampshire becomes the 9th state to ratify the Constitution. North Carolina and Rhode Island rejected the document. In Virginia the vote was 89-79 for approval; in New York, 30-27; and in Massachusetts, 187-168.

1789 The first American novel, William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy*, seeks "to expose the dangerous Consequences of Seduction and to set forth the advantages of female Education."

February 4: The Electoral College selects George Washington as president. Washington wrote: "My movement to the chair of Government will be accompanied by feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution."

July 14: A Paris crowd of 20,000 storms the Bastille, a hated royal fortress. The crowd frees seven prisoners.

August 27: The French National Assembly, inspired in part by the Declaration of Independence, issues the Declaration of the Rights of Man, which proclaims the legal equality of all citizens and freedom of speech, press, assembly, and religion.

1790 U.S. population: 3,929,625.

Philadelphia's Walnut Street Prison introduces the Pennsylvania system of prison management; prisoners are placed in solitary confinement to isolate them from other offenders and encourage them to reflect on their crimes.

January 14: Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton recommends that the Federal Government assume the national debt and state debts incurred during the Revolution. In exchange for Southern support, northern members of Congress agree to move the U.S. capital to a site located between Maryland and Virginia.

December 21: Samuel Slater opens the first cotton mill in Pawtucket, R.I.

1791 March 3: To raise revenue, Congress imposes a tax of 20-30 cents a gallon on distilled

spirits.

August 22: 100,000 slaves revolt in the French colony of St. Domingue, marking the beginning of the Haitian Revolution. Napoleon reestablished slave labor in Haiti in 1802, but lost 24,000 troops to disease and black resistance in 1803, which led to his decision to abandon his New World empire and sell Louisiana Territory to the United States.

December 15: The Bill of Rights is ratified, protecting individual liberties from the power of the central government. The first ten amendments to the Constitution guarantee such basic rights as freedom of speech, religion, and assembly, and the right to a jury trial.

December 21: Samuel Slater opens the United States' first cotton mill in Pawtucket, R.I.

1793 April 22: President Washington issues a proclamation of neutrality, calling on Americans to avoid taking sides in the war between Britain and revolutionary France.

October 28: Eli Whitney patents the cotton gin. He had learned how to separate seeds from raw cotton from a slave known only as Sam.

1794 Charles Willson Peale opens America's first museum of national history in Philadelphia.

August 20: General Anthony Wayne defeats Indians at the battle of Fallen Timbers, opening the Ohio country to white settlement.

July-November: Whiskey Rebellion. President Washington demonstrates the ability of the federal government to enforce its laws by calling out state militia to suppress a tax revolt by farmers in western Pennsylvania, who object to a tax on whiskey.

November 19: Jay's Treaty.

1796 The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is formed in New York.

September 19: A Philadelphia newspaper publishes President Washington's Farewell Address. A plea for national unity against partisan and sectional divisions, the address also calls on the United States to avoid entangling foreign alliances.

1797 May 31: The XYZ Affair. French agents, referred to as X, Y, and Z, demand a \$10 million loan and bribes before France will negotiate a treaty with the United States. The incident gave rise to the slogan, "Millions for defense, but not one sent for tribute."

1798 The Alien and Sedition Acts give the president the power to imprison or deport foreigners believed to be dangerous to the United States and make it a crime to attack the government with "false, scandalous, or malicious" statements or writings.

The Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions declare the Alien and Sedition Acts to be unconstitutional and provide the basis for the doctrine of states' rights.

December 14: George Washington dies at his home at Mount Vernon. "Light-Horse Harry" Lee delivers the most famous eulogy: "To the memory of the man, first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

1801 Thomas Jefferson becomes the third president. Because Jefferson and his running mate Aaron Burr received the same number of electoral votes, the election was thrown into the House of Representatives, where Jefferson was elected after six days of balloting and 36 ballots.

January 20: John Marshall is appointed chief justice of the Supreme Court. Under his leadership, the court established the judiciary's right to declare federal and state laws unconstitutional.

March 4: In his inaugural address, Jefferson attempts to allay Federalist fears of a Republican reign of terror by declaring "We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists." He pledges a frugal government and subsequently repealed all internal taxes.

April 30: Jefferson purchases Louisiana Territory from Napoleon, acquiring 800,000 square miles for \$15 million.

1802 The first hotel in the U.S. opens in Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

1803 February 24: The Supreme Court establishes the principle of judicial review in the case of Marbury v. Madison. For the first time, the court rules a federal law unconstitutional.

1804 January 1: Jean Jacques Dessalines proclaims Haiti's independence.

May 14: The Lewis and Clark Expedition sets out from St. Louis. The party will explore 8000 miles along the Missouri and Columbia Rivers as far as the Pacific, returning in 1806.

July 11: Federalist party Alexander Hamilton is killed in a duel with Vice President Aaron Burr. Indicted by New Jersey for murder, Burr flees to South Carolina and Georgia until the indictment is quashed.

1805 April 27: "To the Shores of Tripoli." William Eaton and a small force of Marines and Arab mercenaries march 500 miles from Egypt to capture Tripoli's port of Derna. Tripoli, which had enslaved American seamen, ended its demands for tribute.

1806 Aaron Burr is charged with treason for plotting to set up a separate nation on lands claimed by the United States and Spain. At a trial presided over by John Marshall, Burr is acquitted.

July 15: While exploring the southern portion of the Louisiana Purchase, Zebulon Pike sees the famous peak that now bears his name.

1807 June 22: The British frigate Leopard fires on the American warship Chesapeake, killing three Americans and forcibly removing four alleged British navy deserters.

September 4: Robert Fulton sails his steamship the Clermont on the Hudson River, inaugurating a new era of steam-powered transportation.

December 22: The Embargo of 1807 prohibits U.S. exports to Britain and France to protest interference with American shipping. In effect for 18 months, it produced smuggling and unemployment.

1808 January 1: Congress prohibits the African slave trade.

March 1: The Non-Intercourse Act prohibits imports from Britain and France and bans their ships from U.S. ports.

1810 U.S. population: 7,239,881.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, originally founded by the Congregationalist Church, begins to send Protestant missionaries to foreign countries and Indian tribes.

May 1: Macon's Bill No. 2, which replaces the Non-Intercourse Act, reopens trade with Britain and France, but provides that if either country agrees to respect American shipping, the U.S. will cut off trade with the other.

October 27: Following a revolt by American settlers in West Florida in September, the U.S. annexes the region.

1811 January: A slave insurrection in Louisiana results in the deaths of some 75 slaves.

November 7: William Henry Harrison and 800 soldiers defeat Tenskwatawa, the Shawnee prophet, and destroy Prophetstown.

1812 The word "gerrymander" enters the politics after the Massachusetts Republicans reapportion the state's Senate districts. One district resembles a salamander, or, as a Federalist put it, a gerrymander (after Gov. Elbridge Gerry).

June 18: By a vote of 79-49 in the House and 19-13 in the Senate, the United States declares war against Britain over interference with American shipping and impressments of American seamen. Two days earlier, the British had repealed trade restrictions, but news of the British action did not reach the United States until August 12.

1814 September 10: Lieut. Oliver Hazzard Perry announces his naval victory at the battle of Lake Erie with the famous words: "We have met the enemy and they are ours."

October 5: The Indian leader Tecumseh is killed at the battle of the Thames in Canada, ending his hopes for an Indian confederation resisting American expansion.

1814 Francis Cabot Lowell opens the first U.S. factory able to convert raw cotton into cloth using power machinery.

May 27: The Creek Chief Red Eagle surrenders to General Andrew Jackson after the battle of Horse Shoe Bend, opening southern and western Alabama to white settlement.

August 24: The British avenge an American raid on York, Ontario (now Toronto), the capital of Upper Canada, by setting fire to the White House and the Capitol.

September 14: Lawyer Francis Scott Key, detained on a British warship, writes "The Star-Spangled Banner," which was destined to become the country's national anthem.

December 15-January 1815: Hartford Convention. Federalists call for the repeal of the Three-Fifths compromise; requiring a two-thirds vote for admission of new states and declarations of war; limiting presidents to one terms; and forbidding successive presidents to come from the same state.

December 24: A peace treaty ending the War of 1812 is signed at Ghent, Belgium.

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