



Fathers of their Country: The Federalists

History 1100.3,
October 31-Nov. 1-7-9, 2006

I. The Crisis of the Confederation and the Movement for a New Government

◆ A. Catalysts for the Nationalist (Federalist) Movement

- 1. Dissatisfaction of younger Revolutionary leaders (such as Alexander Hamilton of NY and James Madison of VA) with weakness of national government, unfitness of state governments, conflicting trade & economic policies.
- 2. Economic depression and widespread hardship for common people during 1780s. Conflict between debtors and creditors.
- 3. Elite fears of a further revolution that might get rid of them: Shays' Rebellion, 1786-87.

◆ B. Madison and Hamilton and the Origins of Federalism: "A Revolution in Favor of Government"

– Explanation of term "Federalist"

- 1. Madison saw root of problem in the excessive democracy and Revolutionary zeal they saw in states.
- 2. Hamilton's goal was more simply the re-creation of a single sovereign authority in the form of a more powerful national government.

◆ C. The "Conspiracy" for a Constitutional Convention

- 1. Conference at Mt. Vernon led to Virginia's call (Jan. 1786) for a convention to discuss interstate commerce.
- 2. The resulting Annapolis Convention (Sept. 1786) issued surprise call for another convention to revise Articles of Confederation.
 - Adding a taxing power to Confederation was only well-known goal

II. Muddying the Waters: The Philadelphia Convention, May-Sept. 1787



- ◆ **A. Make-up and procedures of convention**
 - 1. Convention made up of nation's elite (in contrast to state legislatures).
 - 2. Met in private, with no spectators or reporters.
 - 3. Voted by states.
- ◆ **B. Nationalist Proposals: Led by James Madison's Virginia Plan.**
 - 1. Main elements of Virginia Plan: national representative government with bicameral legislature (both houses apportioned by population), national veto on state laws.
 - 2. Conflicts in the convention: small states vs. large states; people, states or property as the basis of representation; sovereign national government or not.
 - 3. Father of His Country and King of Democracy: Strong executive (the presidency) emerged as element of most plans.
 - The patriarchal role of an elective monarch was thinkable because all knew that the trusted George Washington would be the one to fill the office.

II. Muddying the Waters: The Philadelphia Convention, May-Sept. 1787 (cont.)

◆ **D. Great (or Connecticut) Compromise:** broke large state-small state deadlock, split basis of representation (population or states) between two houses.

- 1. Fudged issue of sovereignty (where located, whether national government had it).
- 2. Oh no! Imperium in imperio! Created unique U.S. "federal" system in which functions of government and ultimate responsibilities were divided.
- 3. Also included a North-South compromise, the "3/5 clause," partially counting slaves for purposes of representation and taxation.

◆ **E. Committee of Detail** then worked up final draft that enumerated national powers and made other important changes.

- 1. Important nationalist loophole added: power to make any laws "necessary and proper" to execute the enumerated powers.
- 2. States prohibited from engaging in diplomatic relations, issuing money, or laying import duties. National laws "supreme" over state laws.
- 3. Much emphasis was placed on protecting property rights and restraining democracy: contract clause, anti-insurrection powers, Electoral College, Presidential veto.
- 4. No Bill of Rights included, in contrast to state constitutions. Not needed, was the argument.
- 5. Opponents of the Constitution (Antifederalists) forced promise that a Bill of Rights would be added immediately if the Constitution was approved.
 - Fulfilling a promise made (especially to Baptists) during the first congressional elections, Madison created & got passed what now call the Bill of Rights.

◆ **F. Committee of Style** muddied waters further on issues of slavery & sovereignty.

- 1. Slaves or slavery never mentioned by name in the document despite many special protections.
- 2. Preamble of Constitution invoked "We the People" and suggested that a consolidated, sovereign, national republic had been created.

III. Echoes of Monarchy & Seeds of Division in the First Administration

◆ Conflicting needs to both reassure people & get them to respect new government.
◆ Sometimes intentionally, Washington & his supporters modeled the new presidency and practices surrounding it after the British monarchy

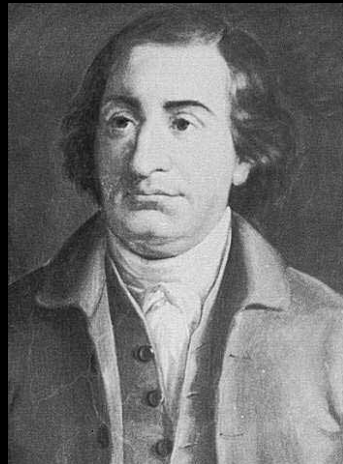
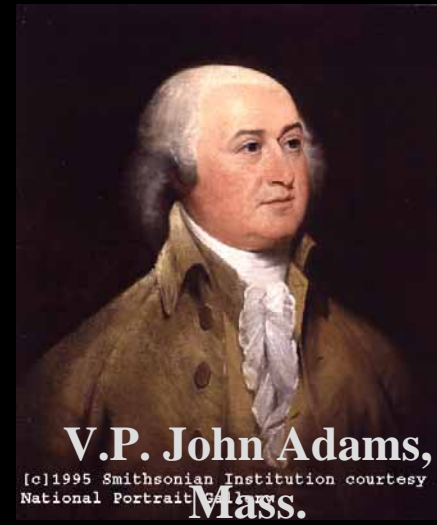
- Washington's "Triumphal Progress" to New York
- "His most gracious speech" to Congress
- Vice President John Adams & "the "title debate"
- Social life: coach, "levees," no presidential handshakes
- Appearance of a "court" newspaper, *The Gazette of the United States*
- Birthday celebrations & coinage

◆ The First Cabinet

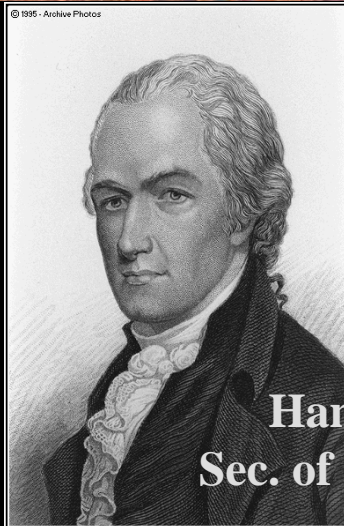
- Intended to unify new nation – no one believed in political parties – but instead laid seeds of party conflict that continues to this day.
- Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, Washington's assistant during the War, acted as prime minister.
- Contest between Jefferson and Hamilton as beginnings of party conflict, splitting the Federalist ranks.



The First Administration



Edmund Randolph,
Att. Gen., VA



Hamilton,
Sec. of Treasury,
NY



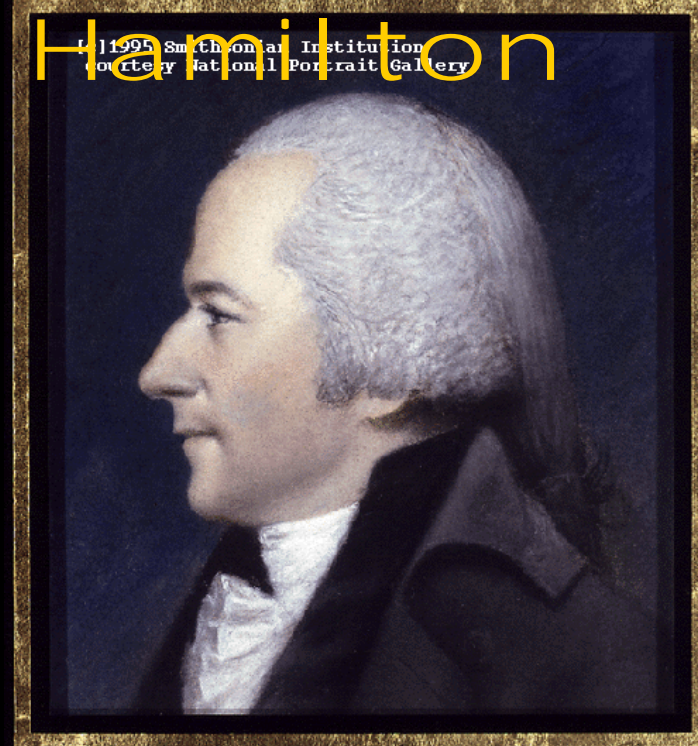
Henry Knox,
Sec. of War, Mass.

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Jefferson vs. Hamilton

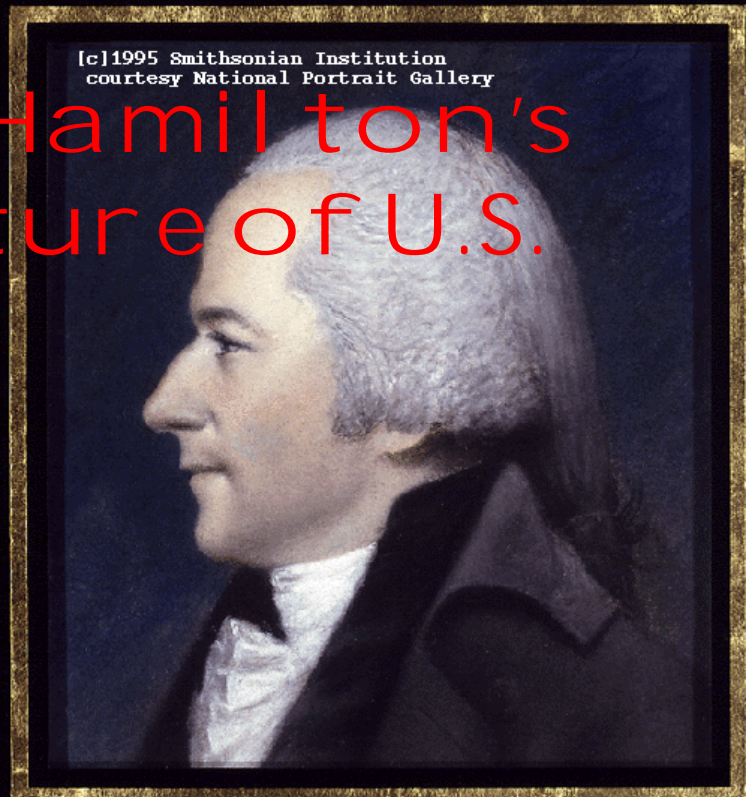


- Member of Virginia planter elite, failed lawyer, scientist, Congressman, Gov of VA & minister to France during Revolution.
- Despite high status, sympathetic to democracy and equality & enthusiastically supported the Enlightenment. Also, large-scale slaveholder.
- Leading figure of “Republican” (future Democratic) party, opponents of admin.



- Illegitimate child from Caribbean colonies, moved to NY & married rich, army officer in Revolution (GW's aide), eminent lawyer & congressman after.
- Social climber who had reached aristocratic circles. Distrusted democracy, not especially interested in Enlightenment, but opposed slavery.
- Leading figure of “Federalist” party, supporters of Washington admin.

Jefferson and Hamilton's Visions for Future of U.S.



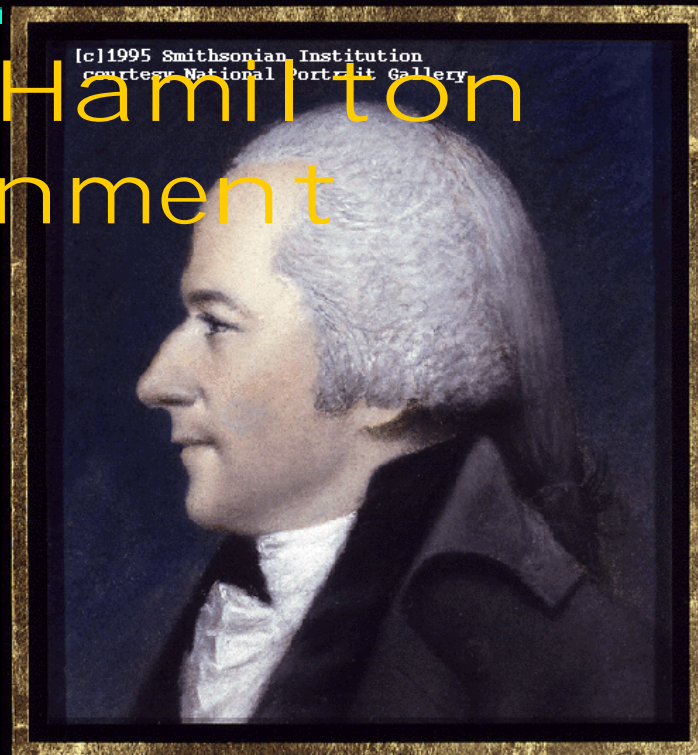
- Rural, agricultural republic as unlike Great Britain as possible.
- Government should seek additional land & markets for farmers' crops so that country could stay agricultural far into future.
- Optimist: Constitutional republic would last, especially if US followed his course.

- Urban, manufacturing, commercial empire much like, but better than, Britain. U.S. as "Hercules in his cradle."
- Government should act aggressively to develop economy (esp. manufacturing) & bring about future *now*.
- Pessimist: Constitutional republic would probably NOT survive unless US followed his course.

Jefferson Vs. Hamilton on Government



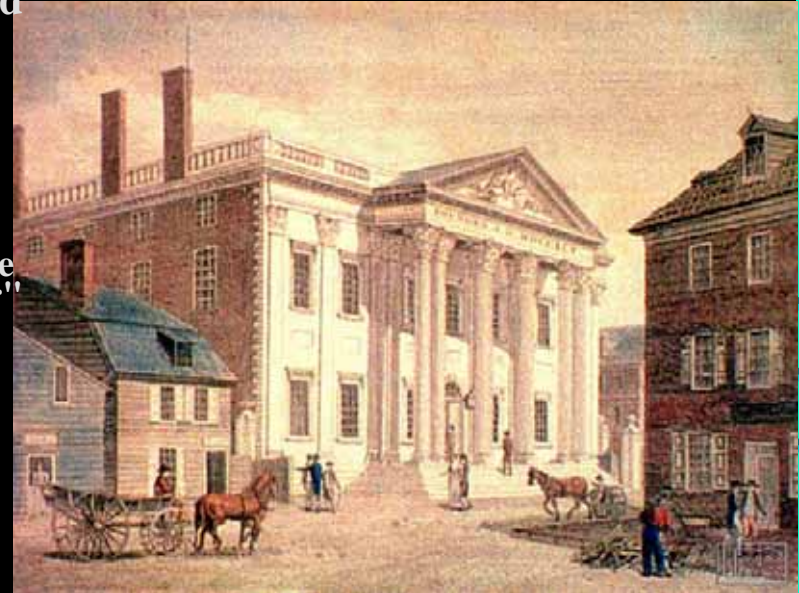
- Relatively inactive government, limited by strictly interpreted constitutional rules.
- Methods: reason, persuasion, information, public opinion. Use “peaceable coercion” instead of force, if possible, even in foreign affairs.
- Large army and navy wasteful, dangerous to liberty.
- Deist believed religion was a strictly private matter.



- “Energetic,” sovereign government, exercising inherent powers with few limits.
- Methods: fear & habit (regarding common people), interest (regarding social & economic elite). Government *must* show ability to use force, against its own people as well as outside threats.
- Strong military (& ability to pay for it) an absolute necessity.
- Late-life convert who proposed a network of Christian Constitutional Societies to build support for strong government & the Federalist party.

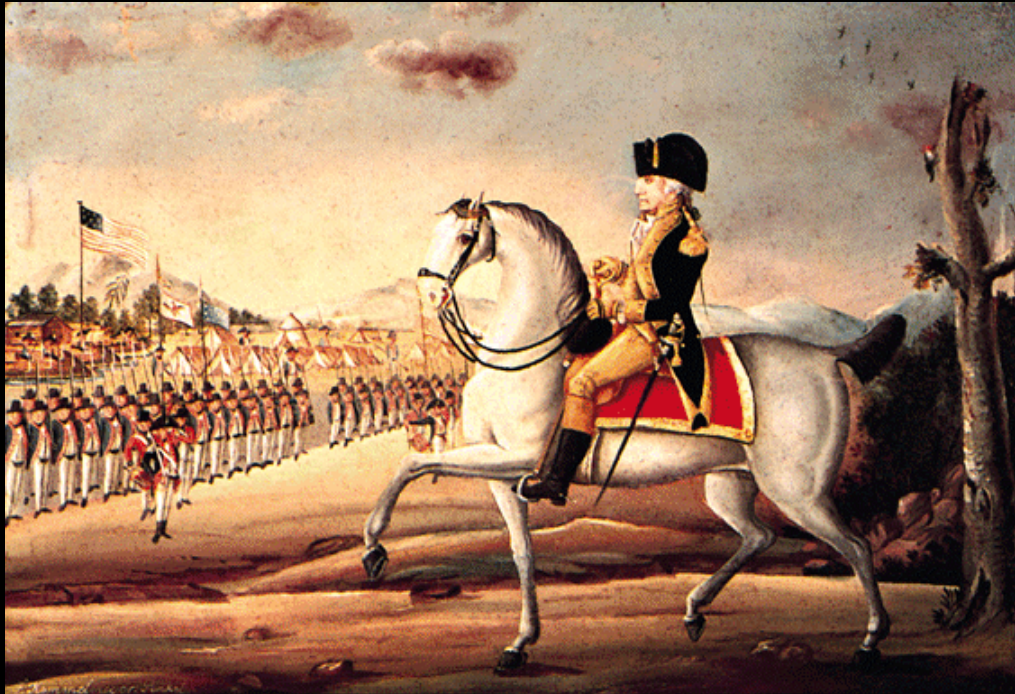
IV. Desperately Seeking Sovereignty: The Federalists in the 1790s

- ◆ **A. Hamilton's Financial System (1790-91)**
 - 1. "Funding" of the national debt: regular interest, at face value, to investors who held debt certificates.
 - 2. "Assumption" of the states' Revolutionary War debts.
 - 3. Bank of the United States (2/91)
 - Profit-making corporation under private control, holding government's \$.
 - TJ-AH debate on the constitutionality of the bank: hinged on the "necessary and proper" clause, involved basic philosophies of government.
 - 4. Immediate use of the new taxation power: import duties & the the Excise or Whiskey Tax (3/91).
- ◆ **B. Responses to the French Revolution**
 - 1. Democratic-Republican Societies (clubs supporting FR & democracy) popped up when 1st ambassador from French Republic (Genet) arrived in 1793.
 - 2. Washington denounced clubs as "self-created" & illegitimate, nearly equating opposition to his policies with treason.
 - 3. U.S. abandoned French alliance with Proclamation of Neutrality (1793) & moved closer to Britain w/ Jay Treaty (1795).



**The Bank of the
United States,
Philadelphia**

IV. Desperately Seeking Sovereignty: The Federalists in the 1790s (cont.)



GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON. ♦
Reviewing the Western army at Fort Cumberland, the 18th of October 1794

♦ C. Rise of the Democratic – Republican Opposition

- Galvanized by Jay Treaty, opposition morphed into 1st opposition political party.
- Adopted Jefferson as figurehead, led by B.F. Bache's *Aurora*.
 - Jefferson put up against John Adams in 1796 presidential election, nearly won with charge that Adams was monarchist.
 - Federalists charged that Jefferson was a French conspirator.
- Upholding idea that politics should be about “principles, not men,” Bache even criticized Washington.

D. Federalist assertions of national sovereignty

- 1. Whiskey Rebellion, 1794:
13,000 troops sent to suppress protests against excise tax in western Pennsylvania.

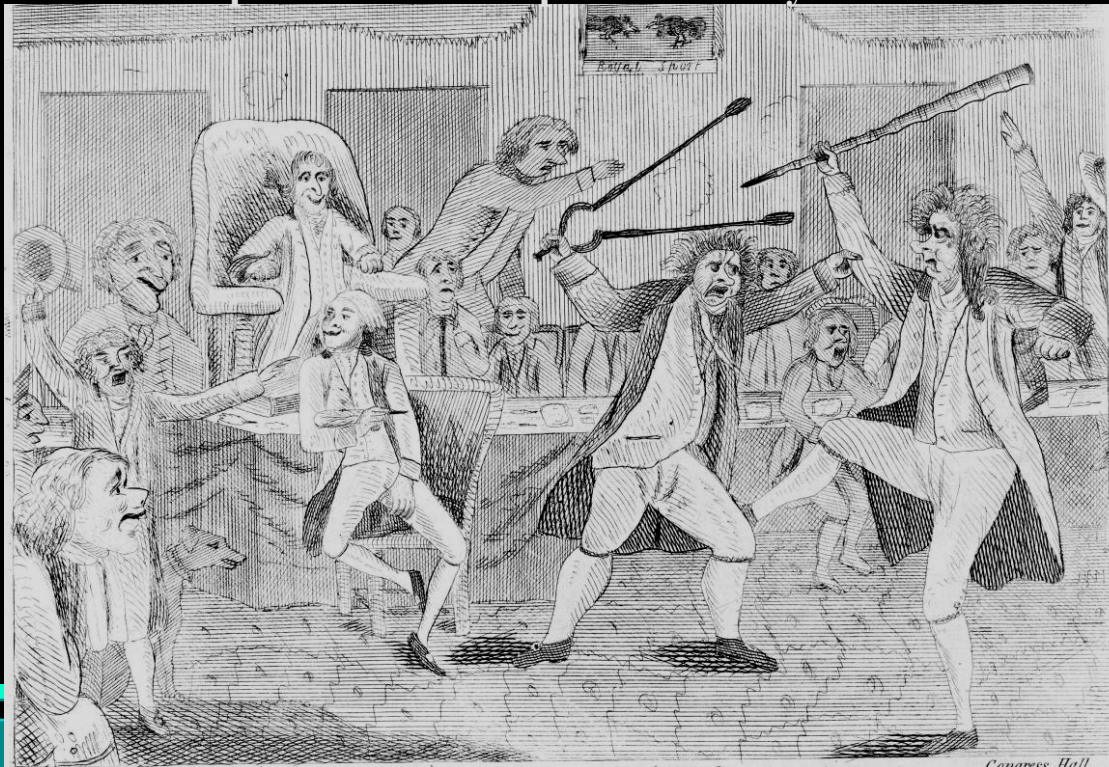
IV. Desperately Seeking Sovereignty: The Federalists in the 1790s (cont.)

- ◆ **D. Federalist assertions of national sovereignty (cont.)**
 - 2. “Quasi-War” with France, 1798-1800: undeclared naval war (with possibility of wider conflict) leading to military build-up and crackdown on domestic opposition.
 - 3. Alien and Sedition Acts, 1798: allowed government to easily deport immigrant radicals, made criticism of government a crime, led to arrests of opposition newspaper editors.
 - Bill of Rights held to be no barrier.



IV. Desperately Seeking Sovereignty: The Federalists in the 1790s (cont.)

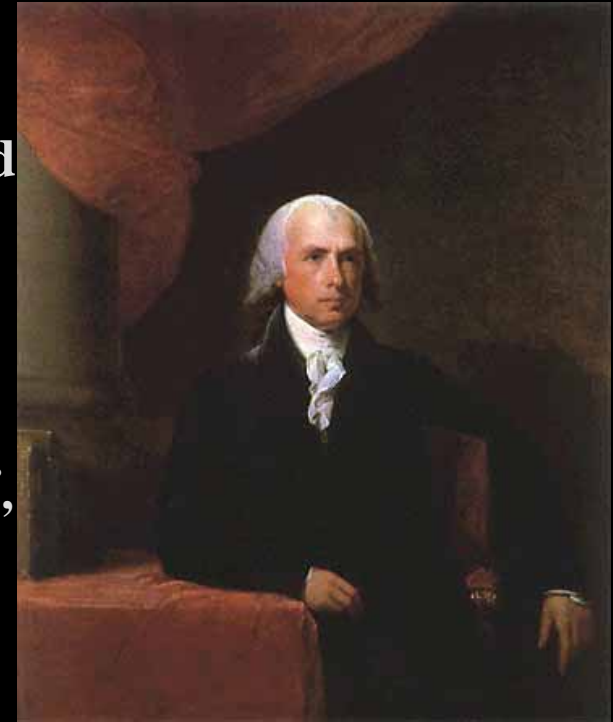
- ◆ **D. Federalist assertions of national sovereignty (cont.)**
 - **4. Direct or “Window” Tax:** first federal income tax, designed to pay for security program.
 - **5. Fries’ Rebellion, 1800:** military force used against German farmers who resisted collection of the Direct Tax.
 - **6. Intimidation and violence (sometimes by paramilitary groups) against Republicans. Example: attack on Rep. Matthew Lyon on floor of Congress.**



V. The Fall of the Federalists & the Triumph of Democratic Politics

◆ A. Republican Response: Southern Style

- 1. Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, 1798-99: Jefferson & Madison arranged for state legislatures to protest the Sedition Act.
 - a) States and voters, not courts, as enforcers of constitutionality. Could "interpose" themselves to stop violations, nullify unconstitutional laws.
 - b) Publicly expressed "compact theory," formulated by James Madison, one of constitution's chief authors.
 - Theory held that states had created the union, implying right to dissolve it.
- 2. Tactic was rejected even by other southern state legislatures, probably lost Jefferson votes.



James Madison

VI. The Fall of the Federalists & the Triumph of Democratic Politics (cont.)



Aaron Burr

◆ B. Republican Responses: Middle States Style

- 1. Campaigns to elect Jefferson president, using newspapers, party organization, democratic tactics like speeches, parades, festivals.
- 2. Middle States (NY & PA), where sides were evenly matched and party politics was long familiar, led the way.
 - The key to Jefferson's national victory was Republican win in NY state legislative elections, engineered by vice-presidential candidate Aaron Burr.

VI. The Fall of the Federalists & the Triumph of Democratic Politics (cont.)

- ◆ C. Federalist New England (the “Bible belt” of the 1790s) vs. Republican South & west.
 - Feds saved New England by attacking Jefferson’s religious beliefs, claiming he was a threat to Christianity, morality, & the family.
 - NY and PA as "swing states" that gave Jefferson and Burr the win.
- ★ D. Jefferson & Republicans won 1800 election, but still distrusted Federalists as monarchists & would-be tyrants conspiring to keep power.
 - Electoral College did not allow for political parties or presidential running mates, creating a tie between Jefferson & Burr that Congress had to settle.
 - Tie allowed Federalists in Congress to delay Jefferson's election, toy with choosing Burr instead, causing first real brush with civil war.
- ◆ E. Jefferson later called his election “The Revolution of 1800”
 - ★ 1st peaceful transfer of power & the beginnings of democracy, parties, & competitive elections as basis of U.S. political system.
 - ★ Song “Jefferson and Liberty” as example of Jeffersonian radicalism and the new democracy-driven, informally rewritten constitution.

