

# Twentieth Congress

Dec. 3, 1827-Mar. 3, 1829

## Administration of John Quincy Adams

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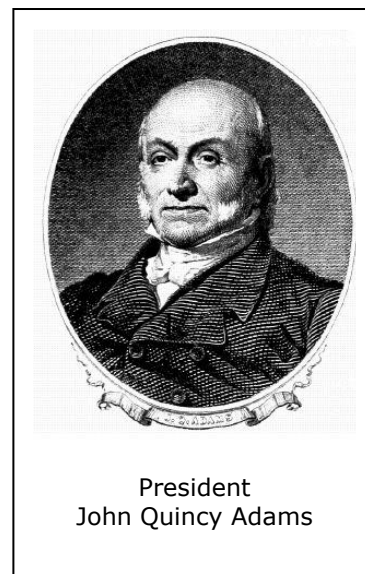
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### Historical Background

Although the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress occurred during John Quincy Adams’ presidency, a political strategy implemented midway through the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress by the Jacksonian party—which at the time controlled both the House and Senate—is credited with helping defeat the incumbent President and elect Andrew Jackson. To get enough support for Jackson to ensure a victory, the Jacksonians targeted manufacturers and farmers for support by introducing a bill that imposed high tariffs on most imported raw materials as well as on imported goods that competed with domestically produced goods. The Jacksonians did not expect the bill—called “Tariff of Abominations”—to pass, but expected it would be enough to satisfy protectionists and gain support for Jackson. However, the bill did pass, and as international trade and foreign relations were very much on the President’s agenda, in May 1828 Adams signed it into law. A few months later, Jackson received 178 electoral votes to Adams’s 83.

However, there were many other issues that held Adams’s attention during the last two years of his administration, including efforts to get France and Denmark to make restitution to U.S. citizens whose property was seized or destroyed because of actions by representatives of those governments. Adams claimed a U.S. government official in Paris reported there were indications by the French government that it would make a “favorable consideration” of those claims. However, efforts to obtain restitution from France would continue for several more years. Conversely, Denmark had agreed to restitution and the Danes had begun making payments. In 1827 Adams reported to Congress that “a small portion of the claims [had] already



House	Senate
Majority Party: Jacksonian (113 seats)	Majority Party: Jacksonian (27 seats)
Minority Party: Adams (100 seats)	Minority Party: Adams (21 seats)
Other Parties: None	Other Parties: None
Speaker of the House: Andrew Stevenson	President Pro Tempore: Samuel Smith

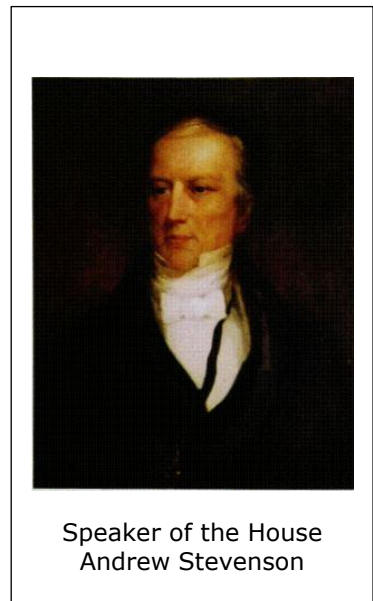
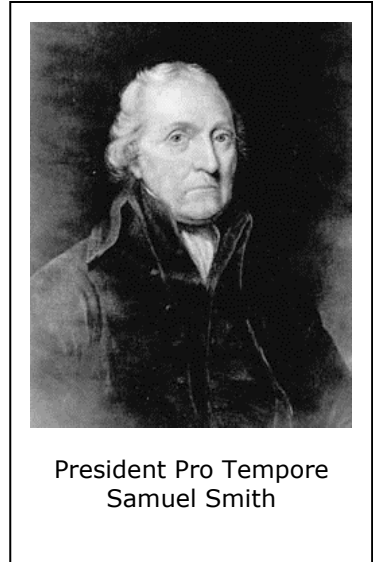
been settled.” In a non-trade related issue, Adams also reported that the United States and Great Britain had selected the King of the Netherlands to be “the umpire” in negotiations over the “North Eastern boundary” dividing the U.S. and British North America (Canada).

In addition to foreign relations, Adams reviewed several domestic programs and services during the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress. He reported that by 1828 the number of Post Offices had increased to nearly 8,000, and he was optimistic that the Post Office would soon be delivering correspondence directly to the homes of “every villager in the Union.” In addition, surveys on a dozen proposed public works projects had been completed and presented to Congress; half of the surveys were for new national roads, while the rest were a mix of information for proposed new canals, improvements to ports, and proposals for the construction of light houses.

Sources:

Adams, John Quincy. [\*Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the First Session of the Twentieth Congress\*](#). Senate, Dec. 4, 1827. 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, S. Doc. 20-1/1. (Pr6.1/1:827) ProQuest Congressional, 163 S.doc.1/1

Adams, John Quincy. [\*Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the Second Session of the Twentieth Congress\*](#). Senate, Dec. 2, 1828. 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, S. Doc. 20-1/1. (Pr6.1/1:828) ProQuest Congressional, 181 S.doc.1/1



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## War or Peace?

### Military Buildup and Indian Conflicts

During the two years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, the United States was mostly at peace with other nations, but there were instances when military force was utilized. In one instance the U.S. Navy’s successfully suppressed piracy in the West Indies and Grecian Seas. The Army was also dispatched to Wisconsin after four white miners were attacked and killed by members of the Winnebago tribe, also known as the Ho-Chunks, following the trespassing of tribal lands in order to conduct mining operations. While most Native Americans in the region did not participate in the attacks, the conflict only ended after U.S. troops arrived. As a result, Ho-Chunk chiefs were made to turn over eight of the tribesmen who had participated in the attacks. In Washington, the incident lead to Adams arguing there needed to be a “remedy” to the question of where Native Americans should live and submitted a report by the War Department on that question to Congress urging that its recommendations be adopted.

The signing of a peace treaty by Argentina and Brazil in 1827 ended a maritime war that—while the U.S. remained neutral—resulted in the seizure of U.S. ships by Brazil. Some of the ships had been released, but claims for damages to U.S. citizens had not been resolved. Because the Brazilian government had been stalling on making restitution, the U.S. Chargé d’Affairs

stationed in Rio de Janeiro terminated his official functions and returned to the United States. However, Brazil protested the action, and requested another Chargé d’Affairs be appointed.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, Russia had declared war on the Ottoman Sublime Porte, which threatened the Ottoman Empire’s trade with the United States. However, Adams expressed the hope that when the war concluded, one of the outcomes would be that “the suffering Greeks” would secure freedom.

The Army and Navy continued with programs that focused on the construction of facilities and infrastructure needed for the defense of the United States. The Army Corps of Engineers collected topographical data, data used to design fortifications for the coasts and harbors, as well as data for maintaining the Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. In addition, the Navy was engaged in collecting timber, so it would be prepared for such a time when the number of warships needed to be increased, as well as for the construction of dry docks and a marine railway in Florida which would be used to repair ships. The Navy was also working on establishing a Naval Academy.

Sources:

Adams, John Quincy. [\*Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the First Session of the Twentieth Congress.\*](#) Senate, Dec. 4, 1827. 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, S. Doc. 20-1/1. (Pr6.1/1:827) ProQuest Congressional, 163 S.doc.1/1

Adams, John Quincy. [\*Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the Second Session of the Twentieth Congress.\*](#) Senate, Dec. 2, 1828. 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, S. Doc. 20-1/1. (Pr6.1/1:828) ProQuest Congressional, 181 S.doc.1/1

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## **Economic Trends and Conditions**

Adams favored a policy of infrastructure creation—generally referred to as “internal improvements”—within the United States as a means to increase markets and commerce. The President signed several dozen bills that funded canal construction, river and harbor developments, road improvements, and lighthouse preservation. In order to determine what new infrastructure was needed, Adams directed the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct surveys around the country to determine where improvements would best serve the nation. To gain support for the funding of such internal improvements, Adams—who believed trade between nations promoted peace—said the infrastructure created would facilitate commerce with other nations, which provided “real addition to the wealth” of the citizens. To support that claim, Adams included an estimate of the country’s increased income, arguing that 3 million to 4 million dollars could be attributed to the creation of new infrastructure.

Adams made trade a leading topic of his State of the Union addresses of 1827 and 1828, saying—in the 1828 address—that “balance” in the value of traded goods should be the goal. He went on to say, “it is, indeed, a general

law of prosperous commerce that the real value of exports should, by a small, and only a small balance, exceed that of imports; that balance being a permanent addition to the wealth of the nation.” To that end, Adams delineated the U.S.’s major trading relationships in his addresses to the Congress. This included trade with Great Britain and its colonies in the West Indies, of which Adams said, “the commercial intercourse” between Britain and the U.S. was “greater in magnitude and amount than between any other two nations on the globe,” but that Britain had recently instituted policies that stymied trade. Adams said “commercial relations with Great Britain” had been “materially changed” because Congress imposed tariffs, which prompted the British Parliament to action. That action included the “interdiction of direct trade” with the U.S. and the “exclusion” of U.S. ships from British colonial ports. However, Adams stressed that U.S. exports, revenue and navigation did not suffer because of being excluded from trading with the British colonies. But, he added, if the tariff created by Congress is what led to Great Britain excluding the U.S. from trading with its colonies, and if the trade embargo hurts U.S. commerce, the tariff will be “so mollified as to alleviate its burden.”

Adams also reported that revenues and expenditures of the United States based on Treasury Department figures, which said that on Jan. 1, 1827 the U.S. started the year with a surplus of more than \$6.3 million. Revenues from January through December 1827 totaled \$21.4 million, but expenditures for 1827 totaled \$22.3 million; those expenditures included money spent to pay the public debt, according to the Adams. Revenues for 1828 surpassed \$24 million, while expenditures for 1828 reached \$25.6 million.

Sources:

Adams, John Quincy. [\*Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the First Session of the Twentieth Congress\*](#). Senate, Dec. 4, 1827. 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, S. Doc. 20-1/1. (Pr6.1/1:827) ProQuest Congressional, 163 S.doc.1/1

Adams, John Quincy. [\*Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the Second Session of the Twentieth Congress\*](#). Senate, Dec. 2, 1828. 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, S. Doc. 20-1/1. (Pr6.1/1:828) ProQuest Congressional, 181 S.doc.1/1

Rush, Richard. [\*Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting the annual report on the state of the finances\*](#). Department of Treasury, Dec. 8, 1827. 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, S. Doc. 4 (T1.1:827). ProQuest Congressional, 163 S.doc.4

Rush, Richard. [\*Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, on the state of the finances, made 9<sup>th</sup> December 1828\*](#). Department of Treasury, Dec. 6, 1828. S. Doc. 7, (T1.1:828). ProQuest Congressional, 181 S.doc.7

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## Major Treaties

**Treaty of Limits between the United Mexican States and the United States of America.** The treaty recognized the Mexico–U.S. boundary that had been established by the 1819 Adams-Onís Treaty between Spain and the U.S. Concluded Jan. 12, 1828. Entered into force April 5, 1832 ([8 Stat. 372](#))

Sources:

Dell, Christopher and Stephen W. Stathis. [Major Acts of Congress and Treaties Approved by the Senate, 1789-1980](#). Government Division (CRS), Sept. 1, 1982. 97<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 82-156 GOV. ProQuest Congressional, CRS-1982-GOV-0005

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## Landmark U.S. Supreme Court Decisions

*Brown v. Maryland*, reversed a decision by the Court of Appeals of the State of Maryland that affirmed a lower court decision affirming a penalty that was imposed on an importer of foreign made goods because the importer lacked a license to engage in that enterprise. The court held that a license tax on the importer is indistinguishable from a tax on the import itself. 25 U.S. 419 (1827)

*Postmaster General v. Early*, held that United States circuit courts have jurisdiction to hear lawsuits initiated by the Postmaster General of the United States to recover debts owed the Post Office. 25 U.S. 136 (1827)

*Ogden v. Saunders*, held that a New York bankruptcy law did not violate the Obligation of Contracts Clause in the Constitution, thereby determining the scope of bankruptcy law. 25 U.S. 213 (1827)

*American Insurance Company v. Canter*, held that courts in United States' territories—in this case Florida—had jurisdiction to hear cases on the basis of Congress' broad power to enact local laws for territories. 26 U.S. 511 (1828)

Sources:

Costello, George A. and Johnny H. Killian. [Constitution of the United States of America, Analysis and Interpretation](#). CRS, Library of Congress, Jan. 1, 1996. 103rd Congress, 1st Session, S. Doc. 103-6 (Y1.1/3:103-6). ProQuest Congressional, 14152 S.doc.6

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## 1827 Events

- **Jan. 17:** The Duke of Wellington Field Marshal Arthur Wellesley is appointed British supreme commander
- **Feb. 27:** The first Mardi Gras celebration is held in New Orleans
- **Feb. 28:** [The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad \(B&O\), the first commercial railroad in the United States, is chartered](#)
- **Mar. 29:** Ludwig von Beethoven's burial in Vienna attracts 20,000 mourners
- **Apr. 7:** English chemist John Walker invents wooden matches
- **June 5:** *Greek War of Independence* - Ottoman Turks capture the Acropolis and take Athens

- **July 4:** 1817 New York state law comes into effect, freeing all slaves born before July 4, 1799
- **Sep. 10:** [Simón Bolívar returns to Bogota, Colombia to assume absolute power](#)
- **Oct. 20:** *Greek War of Independence* - A fleet of English, Russian and French ships defeat a fleet of Turkish and Egyptian ships at Navarino Bay off the coast of Greece

## 1828 Events

- **Feb. 22:** Russia and Persia sign Peace of Turkmanstjai
- **Mar. 24:** The first state owned railway, the Philadelphia and Columbia Railway, is authorized
- **Apr. 14:** Noah Webster registers a copyright for the First American Dictionary
- **Apr. 26:** *Greek War of Independence* - Russia declares war on Turkey to support Greece's independence
- **May 19:** [President John Quincy Adams signs the Tariff of 1828 \(Tariff of Abominations\) into law to protect industry in the northern part of the United States](#)
- **Aug. 24:** The Dutch claim part of New Guinea and establish the settlements of Merkusoord/Fort Du Bus
- **Aug. 27:** Uruguay gains independence during peace talks by Brazil and Argentina
- **Aug. 27:** *Greek War of Independence* - At the Battle of Akhalzic (located in present-day Georgia), 9,000 Russian troops defeat 30,000 Turks
- **Oct. 7:** *Greek War of Independence* - The Greek city of Patras is liberated by the French expeditionary force in the Peloponnesus
- **Dec. 3:** Andrew Jackson is elected the seventh President of the United States
- **Dec. 19:** *Nullification Crisis* - [South Carolina declares the right of States to nullify Federal laws, in a protest against the Tariff of 1828, in what would be the start of the Nullification Crisis; John C. Calhoun writes an essay calling the law unconstitutional and arguing the South must rally together to nullify the tariff](#)

Sources:

["An Act in alteration of the several acts imposing duties on imports."](#) (4 Stat. 270, Chap. 55; May 19, 1828). ProQuest Congressional

["Bicentennial Year of the Birth of Simon Bolivar."](#) Presidential Proclamation No. 5073. (97 Stat. 1597; July 19, 1983) ProQuest Congressional

[Memorial of the members of the Legislature of South Carolina opposed to nullification.](#) Committee on Ways and Means. House, Jan. 23, 1832. 22nd Congress, 1st Session, H.doc.70. ProQuest Congressional, 217 H.doc.70

Thomas, P.E. Mr. [Buchanan submitted the following letter, &c., upon the subject of obtaining a supply of iron for the Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road.](#) House, Apr. 16, 1828. 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, H. Doc. 20-271. ProQuest Congressional, 175 H.doc.271

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## Major Acts

**Tariff of Abominations.** Amended the tariff law by raising duties on imported goods in general to a rate of 41 percent, with special attention to cotton, woolens, iron, hemp, flax, wool, molasses, and sailcloth. Approved May 19, 1828. ([4 Stat. 270, Chap. 55](#))

### Sources:

Dell, Christopher and Stephen W. Stathis. [Major Acts of Congress and Treaties Approved by the Senate, 1789-1980](#). Government Division (CRS), Sept. 1, 1982. 97<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 82-156 GOV. ProQuest Congressional, CRS-1982-GOV-0005

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