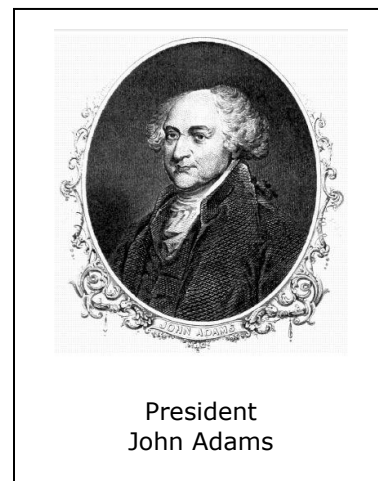


Fifth – Sixth Congresses

May 15, 1797 – Mar. 3, 1799; Dec. 2, 1799 – Mar. 3, 1801

Administration of John Adams

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Historical Background

As John Adams assumed the Presidency during the 5th and 6th Congresses, the world continued to reel from the disruptions unfolding as a result of the French Revolution. For the United States, the conflict between revolutionary France and Great Britain—the young republic’s chief ally and foe, respectively, in its struggle for independence—was of particular concern.

The French government, angered by Jay’s Treaty with Great Britain, interfered with U.S. shipping and refused to receive the U.S. Minister to France. When a U.S. commission was dispatched to France with orders to secure a treaty of commerce and amity, it was presented with an unofficial request for a U.S. loan to France and a bribe of \$240,000 (similar to the arrangement already in effect with the Barbary States of Algiers and Tripoli, arranged under the Washington Administration, and Morocco, arranged under the Articles of Confederation). The U.S. commissioners rejected the French proposal, which action ushered in an undeclared naval war with France, lasting from 1798 to 1800, known as the Quasi-War.

President Adams’s handling of the French crisis created a schism in the Federalist Party. The President favored and Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, aimed at suppressing political opposition to American foreign policy.

In 1800, the Federalists lost both the Presidential and Congressional elections. The Republicans did not take office until March 4, 1801, however, and the Federalists, who had a solid majority in both houses of Congress, sought to entrench themselves through the Federal Judiciary Act of February 7, 1801. During the remaining weeks of his Presidency, Adams filled all the posts created by the Act and commissioned a great many minor

Fifth Congress	
House	Senate
Majority Party: Federalists (57 seats)	Majority Party: Federalists (22 seats)
Minority Party: Jeffersonian Republicans (49 seats)	Minority Party: Jeffersonian Republicans (10 seats)
Other Parties: none	Other Parties: none
Speaker of the House: Jonathan Dayton	Senate President Pro Tempore: William Bradford; Jacob Read; Theodore Sedgwick; John Laurance; James Ross

appointments. In April 1802, soon after the Republicans assumed power, they repealed the act.

Thomas Jefferson's election by the House of Representatives on February 17, 1801, resolved one of the great constitutional-political crises in the nation's history. Although Aaron Burr had sought only the Vice Presidency in the election of 1800, by virtue of his receiving the same number of electoral votes as Jefferson, the House of Representatives was constitutionally required to elect the President. Ultimately, this led to the adoption of the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution four years later.

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. 97th Congress, 2nd Session, 82-156 GOV. ProQuest Congressional, CRS-1982-GOV-0005

War or Peace?

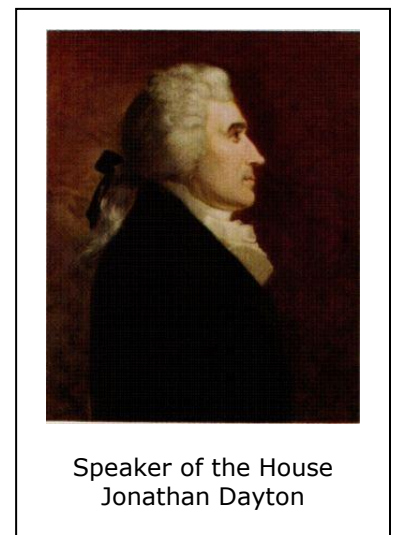
French Revolution and the Quasi-War

The continuing global perturbations ancillary to the French Revolution dominated the foreign and even the domestic policy of John Adams's Administration. The French government, angered by what it perceived as a favorable treaty with its foes, the British, and U.S. reluctance to repay the debts incurred during the Revolutionary War, refused to recognize the U.S. minister to France Charles Cotesworth Pinckney unless the United States agreed to pay a combination of loans and a bribe.

In February 1797, Secretary of State Timothy Pickering submitted a report to Congress detailing claims made by U.S. citizens against the French government for cargos seized by French agents and ships embargoed in French ports. In response to these developments, the Congress passed, in July 1798, *An Act to further protect the Commerce of the United States* (1 Stat. 578), which authorized the U.S. Navy to seize any armed French vessel found in U.S. territorial waters.

At home, the ongoing hostilities between the British and French split public opinion along broadly factional lines. The governing Federalists broadly favored increased alignment with the British in the face of what it saw as the excesses of the French Revolution, while the southern-dominant Jeffersonian Republicans were more sympathetic to the Revolution's republican ideals. This situation, coupled with the undeclared naval war with France of 1798-1800, known as the Quasi-War, led to the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts, four laws that made it more difficult for immigrants to gain U.S. citizenship and made it easier for the Federal government to prosecute and deport foreigners it deemed hostile to the security of the United States.

Sixth Congress	
House	Senate
Majority Party: Federalists (60 seats)	Majority Party: Federalists (22 seats)
Minority Party: Jeffersonian Republicans (46 seats)	Minority Party: Jeffersonian Republicans (10 seats)
Other Parties: none	Other Parties: none
Speaker of the House: Theodore Sedgwick	Senate President Pro Tempore: Samuel Livermore; Uriah Tracy; John E. Howard; James Hillhouse



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["An Act further to protect the Commerce of the United States."](#) (1 Stat. 578, Chap. 68; July 9, 1798). ProQuest Congressional

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Economic Trends and Conditions

The buildup of the Navy required by the undeclared conflict with revolutionary France led to the problem of how to finance the endeavor. Congress hoped to achieve this by levying a direct tax on homes and property, *An Act to lay and collect a direct tax within the United States*. The Act dictated, in part that "the said tax shall be collected by the supervisors, inspectors and collectors of the internal revenues of the United States [...] and shall be assessed upon dwelling-houses, lands and slaves."

Opposition to the direct tax on land and dwelling houses among German communities in southeastern Pennsylvania coalesced around a local auctioneer named John Fries. Because the levying of the tax depended on the work of tax inspectors and assessors assigned to value the houses and property of residents, Fries and his allies organized a campaign of intimidation designed to prevent assessments on local properties. Resistance to the tax incited a strong reaction by the governing Federalists who sent Federal Marshals to Pennsylvania with warrants to arrest those interfering with the work of the tax assessors with treason.

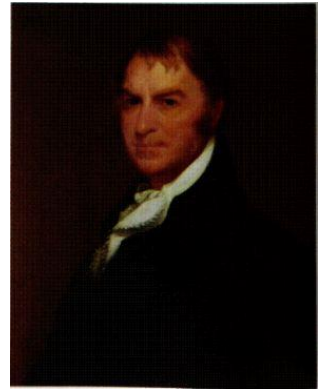
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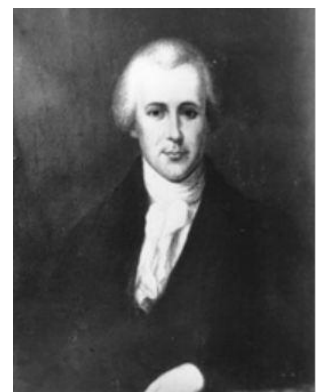
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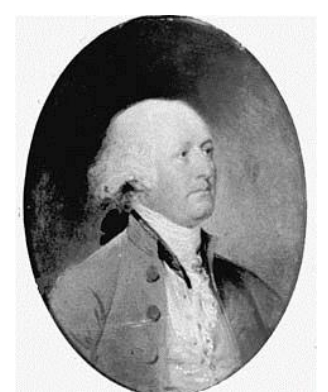
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Speaker of the House
Theodore Sedgwick



President Pro Tempore
William Bradford



President Pro Tempore
Jacob Read

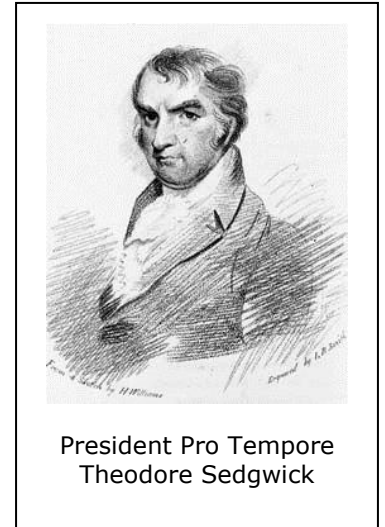
["An Act to lay and collect a direct tax within the United States."](#) (1 Stat. 597 Chap. 75; July 14, 1798). ProQuest Congressional

Landmark U.S. Supreme Court Cases

Hollingsworth v. Virginia, ruling that the President of the United States has no formal role in the process of amending the Constitution. The justices further ruled that amendments to the Constitution were binding on cases pending prior to their ratification. 3 U.S. 378 (1798)

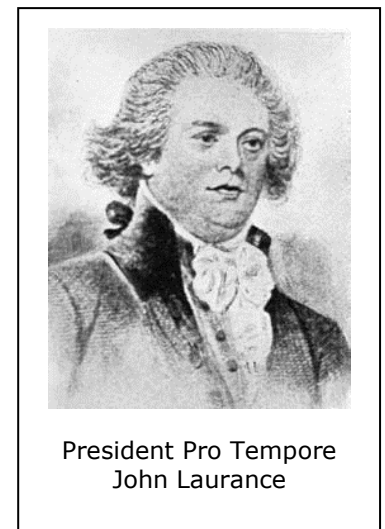
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Costello. George A. and Johnny H. Killian. [Constitution of the United States of America, Analysis and Interpretation](#). CRS, Library of Congress, Jan. 1, 1996. 103rd Congress, 1st Session, S. Doc. 103-6 (Y1.1/3:103-6). ProQuest Congressional, 14152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



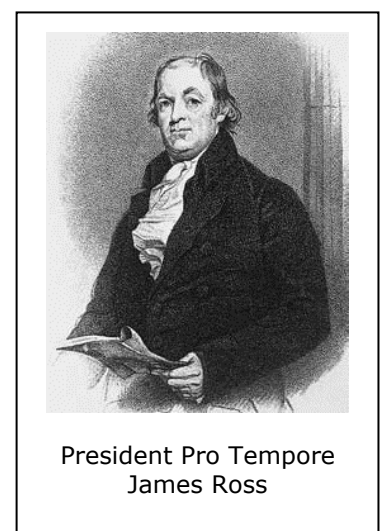
1797 Events

- **Jan. 14:** *French Revolution* - French forces under General Napoléon Bonaparte defeat an Austrian army of 28,000 men near Rivoli, ending Austria's fourth and final attempt to relieve the fortress city of Mantua
- **Feb. 19:** *French Revolution* - Pope Pius VI signs a peace treaty with Revolutionary France. He agrees to deliver works of art, territory, the Comtat Venaissin and 30 million Francs
- **Feb. 26:** The Bank of England issues the first one-pound and two-pound notes
- **Mar. 16:** *French Revolution* - An Austrian army led by Archduke Charles fights a rear guard action at the crossing of the Tagliamento River but is defeated by Napoléon Bonaparte at Valvasone
- **May 10:** [The first ship of the United States Navy, the frigate USS United States, is commissioned](#)
- **July 1:** *Quasi-War* - [The XYZ Affair: A diplomatic mission sent by the Adams administration to negotiate a settlement to the issue of U.S. ships being detained by the French navy failed, leading to the so-called "Quasi-War" between the U.S. and France](#)
- **July 9:** Irish philosopher, political theorist and Member of the British Parliament Edmund Burke dies
- **Aug. 30:** English novelist Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley is born
- **Sept. 10:** English writer and feminist philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft dies from complications during childbirth
- **Oct. 21:** In Boston Harbor, the 44-gun U.S. Navy frigate USS Constitution is launched to fight the Barbary Pirates off the coast of Tripoli



1798 Events

- **Jan. 22:** A coup d'état is staged in the Netherlands (Batavian Republic). Unitarian Democrat Pieter Vreede makes an end to the power of the Parliament



- **Mar. 7:** *French Revolution* - French forces invade the Papal States and establish the Roman Republic
- **Apr. 26:** *French Revolution* - France annexes Geneva
- **July 1:** *French Revolution* - Napoléon Bonaparte's troops land in Egypt
- **July 7:** *Quasi War* - [U.S. declares that treaties previously concluded with France are no longer obligatory to the U.S.](#)
- **Sept. 18:** [English poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth publish the *Lyrical Ballads* anonymously, inaugurating the English Romantic movement in literature](#)

1799 Events

- **Mar. 29:** New York enacts a law aimed at gradually abolishing slavery in the State
- **July 15:** In the Egyptian port city of Rosetta, French Captain Pierre Bouchard finds the Rosetta Stone, providing the key to the modern understanding of Egyptian hieroglyphs
- **Nov. 9:** *French Revolution* - Napoléon Bonaparte overthrows the French Directory in the Coup of 18 Brumaire, effectively concluding the French Revolution
- **Dec. 14:** [George Washington dies at Mount Vernon](#)

1800 Events

- **Mar. 20:** Alessandro Volta describes his new invention, the voltaic pile, the first chemical battery, in a letter to the Royal Society of London
- **Apr. 2:** Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 1 premieres at the Burtheater in Vienna
- **Apr. 24:** [The U.S. Library of Congress is founded in Washington D.C.](#)
- **June 2:** The first smallpox vaccination is made in North America at Trinity, Newfoundland
- **Sept. 30:** *Quasi-War* – Convention of 1800 held to settle the hostilities between France and the U.S. effectively resulting in U.S. neutrality during the British and French conflicts
- **Nov. 17:** [Congress takes up residence in Washington D.C.](#)

Sources:

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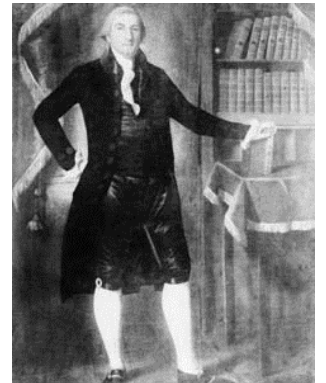
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["An Act to declare the treaties heretofore concluded with France, no longer obligatory on the United States."](#) (1 Stat. 578, Chap. 67; July 7, 1798). ProQuest Congressional

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President Pro Tempore
Samuel Livermore



President Pro Tempore
Uriah Tracy

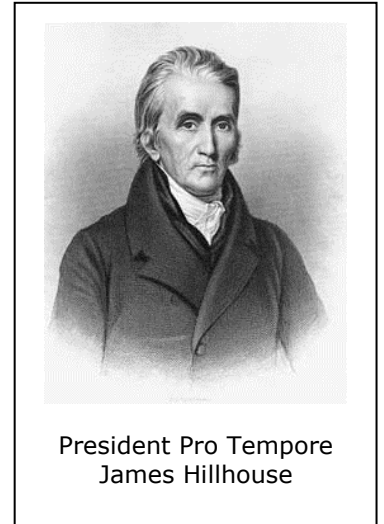


President Pro Tempore
John E. Howard

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Major Acts

Fifth Congress

Naval Armament for the Protection of American Commerce. Authorized the President to cause to be built, purchased, or hired as many as twelve naval vessels, to be fitted out with no more than twenty-two guns apiece, and to appoint the officers and men for the service of said vessels, to be used for the Nation's defense. Approved Apr. 27, 1798. ([1 Stat. 552, Chap. 31](#))

Department of Navy Act. Established the Department of the Navy, to be directed by a new cabinet officer, the Secretary of the Navy, whose duties were to include the procurement of naval stores and materials and the construction, armament, equipment, and employment of vessels of war. The new act required repeal of part of the law establishing the War Department, enacted in 1789. Approved Apr. 30, 1798. ([1 Stat. 553, Chap. 35](#))

Naturalization Act (First Alien and Sedition Act). Amended the Naturalization Law of January 29, 1795 (1 Stat. 414), to provide that no alien may become a citizen unless he shall have declared his intention of such five years in advance, at which point he must prove fourteen years' residence within the United States and five years' residence within the State where he applies, besides otherwise superseding the former act. Approved June 18, 1798. ([1 Stat. 566, Chap. 54](#))

Alien Act (Second Alien and Sedition Act). Granted authority to the President, over a two-year period, to order the deportation of aliens adjudged to be undesirable, and to require the licensing of certain other aliens. Approved June 25, 1798. ([1 Stat. 570, Chap. 58](#))

Alien Enemies Act (Third Alien and Sedition Act). Provided that in the case of war, or actual threatened invasion, the President is empowered to make a proclamation declaring certain alien residents of the United States inimical to the national purpose. If not chargeable with crimes against the public safety, time should be allowed for the departure of such aliens. All courts of criminal jurisdiction may hear and receive complaints against suspected alien enemies. Approved July 6, 1798. ([1 Stat. 577, Chap. 66](#))

Marine Corps Act. Organized the Marine Corps into a distinct Service of the United States Government and provided the basis for assigning duties to the new Corps, and for 149 years, with minor changes, remained the legal

authority for Marine Corps missions. Approved July 11, 1798. ([1 Stat. 594, Chap. 72](#))

Sedition Act (Fourth Alien and Sedition Act). Provided for the arrest and imprisonment of any person, citizen or alien, who attempted to impede lawful processes of government, foment insurrection, or write, publish, or utter any false or malicious statement about the President, Vice President, Congress, or the Government of the United States. The authority of the act expired March 3, 1801. The legislatures of Kentucky and Virginia each passed resolutions, framed by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, respectively, invoking the compact theory of the Constitution and maintaining that the Alien and Sedition Acts were unconstitutional. Approved July 14, 1798. ([1 Stat. 596, Chap. 74](#))

Sixth Congress

Bankruptcy Act of 1800. Established a uniform system of bankruptcy throughout the United States for merchants and traders. Approved Apr. 4, 1800. ([2 Stat. 19, Chap. 19](#))

Removal of Government to Washington D.C.. Provided for the removal of the Government to the city of Washington, furnishings for the President's house, accommodations in the new Capital for Secretaries of the four executive departments, and money for a congressional library. Approved Apr. 24, 1800. ([2 Stat. 55, Chap. 37](#))

Indiana and Ohio Territories Act. Divided the Northwest Territory into the Indiana and Ohio Territories, which were separated by a line running due north from the confluence of the Kentucky and Ohio Rivers. Approved May 7, 1800. ([2 Stat. 58, Chap. 41](#))

Judiciary Act of 1801. Increased the number of District Courts to twenty-one, established six circuit courts to be staffed by sixteen new and separate circuit judges, and provided for a host of additional marshals, clerks, and bailiffs. It also reduced the number of Supreme Court Justices from six to five. Approved Feb. 13, 1801. ([2 Stat. 89, Chap. 4](#))

District of Columbia Organic Act of 1801. Established that the laws of the State of Virginia shall apply in that part of the District of Columbia ceded by that state and the laws of the State of Maryland shall apply in the portion of the District ceded by Maryland. Established a Circuit Court for the District of Columbia and organized the judicial conventions of the circuit. Approved Feb. 27, 1801. ([2 Stat. 103, Chap. 15](#))

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. 97th Congress, 2nd Session, 82-156 GOV. ProQuest Congressional, CRS-1982-GOV-0005

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