

SECTION 3

Jefferson in Office

Guide to Reading

Main Idea

As president, Jefferson worked to limit the scope of the federal government, obtain the Louisiana Territory, and keep the United States out of European wars.

Key Terms and Names

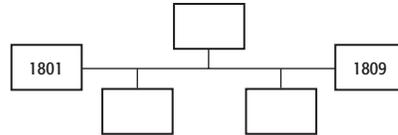
John Marshall, judicial review, Louisiana Purchase, Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, Sacagawea, Zebulon Pike, impressment, embargo

Preview of Events



Reading Strategy

Sequencing As you read about Thomas Jefferson's administration, complete a time line similar to the one below to record the major events of Jefferson's presidency.



Reading Objectives

- **Evaluate** the changing role of the Supreme Court.
- **Discuss** the events leading to the Louisiana Purchase.

Section Theme

Government and Democracy An important Supreme Court decision asserted that the Court had the power to decide whether laws passed by Congress were constitutional.

★ An American Story ★

March 4, 1801, was Inauguration Day in Washington, D.C. The still unfinished capital of the United States was only a tiny village. Stumps and mud holes filled Pennsylvania Avenue, and a swampy wilderness separated Capitol Hill from the president's mansion. A Washington resident described the modest inauguration ceremony:

“The sun shone bright on that morning. . . Mr. Jefferson had not yet arrived. He was seen walking from his lodgings, which were not far distant, attended by five or six gentlemen who were his fellow lodgers. Soon afterwards he entered . . . and bowing to the Senate, who arose to receive him, he approached a table on which the Bible lay and took the oath which was administered to him by the Chief Justice. . . The new President walked home with two or three of the gentlemen who lodged in the same house. At dinner . . . a gentleman from Baltimore, . . . asked permission to wish him joy. ‘I would advise you,’ answered Mr. Jefferson smiling, ‘to follow my example on nuptial occasions when I always tell the bridegroom I will wait till the end of the year before offering my congratulations.’ And this was the only and solitary instance of any notice taken of the event of the morning.”

—quoted in *The Life of Thomas Jefferson*

Thomas Jefferson Takes Office

Thomas Jefferson privately referred to his election as the “Revolution of 1800.” He believed that Washington and Adams had acted too much like royalty, and he tried to create a less formal style for the presidency. He rode horseback rather than traveling in carriages. In place of formal receptions, he entertained at more intimate dinners around



a circular table so that, as he said, “When brought together in society, all are perfectly equal.” Although Jefferson set a new style for the presidency, he did not overturn all of the Federalists’ policies. Instead he sought to integrate Republican ideas into the policies that the Federalists had already put in place.

A strong believer in small government, Jefferson hoped to limit the scope of federal power. He began paying off the federal debt, cut government spending, and did away with the hated whiskey tax. Instead of a standing army, he planned to rely on local militia.

Jefferson’s economic ideas had worried many Federalists, who expected the new president to dismantle the national bank. Jefferson’s choice of Albert Gallatin as secretary of the treasury reassured them. Gallatin was a skilled financier who supported Hamilton’s system.

✓ Reading Check **Summarizing** What was new about Jefferson’s approach to the presidency?

The Rise of the Supreme Court

Before their term expired, the Federalist majority in Congress passed the Judiciary Act of 1801. This act created 16 new federal judges. Before leaving office,

President Adams appointed Federalists to these positions. These judges were nicknamed “midnight judges” because Adams supposedly signed appointments until midnight on his last day in office.

Impeaching Judges Neither Jefferson nor the Republicans in Congress were pleased that the Federalists controlled the courts. One of the first acts of Congress after Jefferson took office was to repeal the Judiciary Act of 1801, thereby doing away with the “midnight judges” by abolishing their offices.

The Republicans then tried to remove other Federalists from the judiciary by impeachment. Republican leaders believed that the impeachment power was one of the checks and balances in the Constitution. Congress could impeach and remove judges for arbitrary or unfair decisions, not just for criminal behavior.

In 1804, the House impeached Supreme Court Justice Samuel Chase. During one trial, Chase had ordered “any of those persons or creatures called democrats” removed from the jury. He had also denounced Jefferson while addressing another jury. Although these actions may have been unfair, the Senate did not convict Chase. Many senators did not think he was guilty of “treason, bribery, or other high

Birth of a Capital

To plan the new national capital, President Washington chose Pierre Charles L’Enfant. One of L’Enfant’s first decisions was to place the future “Congress House” (what would become the Capitol) on high ground with a commanding view of the Potomac River. Congress House was to be the central point in a square grid of streets slashed by avenues that radiated from Capitol Hill like spokes on a wheel. L’Enfant’s plan called for circular intersections to join three or more avenues at strategic spots.

After a series of disputes with the local landowners, L’Enfant was removed from the project, and he took his plans with him. Fortunately one of the surveyors, an African American named Benjamin Banneker, was able to draw the plans from memory, thus enabling the project to continue. Modern Washington, D.C., still retains many of the elements of this plan.



The clothes President Jefferson wore at his inauguration in the new capital

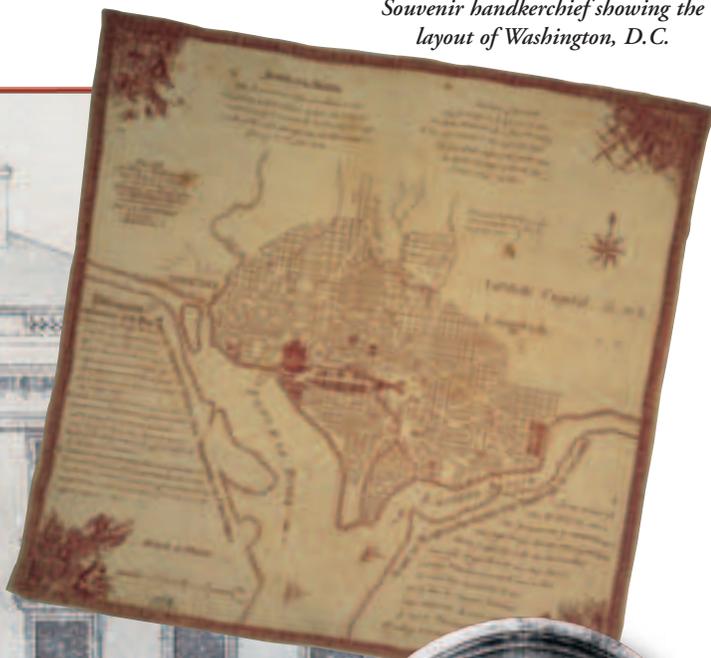


crimes and misdemeanors” that the Constitution required for his removal. The impeachment of Justice Chase established that judges could only be removed for criminal behavior, not simply because Congress disagreed with their decisions.

Marbury v. Madison The most important judicial appointment President Adams made before leaving office was to choose **John Marshall** as Chief Justice of the United States. Marshall served as Chief Justice for 34 years. He was more responsible than any other justice for making the Supreme Court into a powerful, independent branch of the federal government.

Initially, the Supreme Court was a very minor body, but its role began to change in 1803 with the case of *Marbury v. Madison*. William Marbury was a Federalist who had been appointed justice of the peace in Washington, D.C., shortly before Adams left office. Although Adams had signed Marbury’s appointment, the documents were not delivered before Adams left office. The new Secretary of State, James Madison, was supposed to deliver the documents, but Jefferson told him to hold them, hoping Marbury would quit and allow Jefferson to appoint a Republican to the job.

Souvenir handkerchief showing the layout of Washington, D.C.



Medallion honoring Pierre L'Enfant

Instead, Marbury asked the Supreme Court to issue a court order telling Madison to deliver the documents. Marbury based this request on the Judiciary Act of 1789, which stipulated that requests for federal court orders go directly to the Supreme Court. In *Marbury v. Madison*, the Supreme Court unanimously agreed with Chief Justice Marshall that the Court could not issue the order.

Marshall explained that the Court could not issue the order because it had no jurisdiction. The Constitution, Marshall pointed out, was very specific about the kind of cases that could be taken directly to the Supreme Court. A request for a court order was not one of those cases, making that section of the Judiciary Act of 1789 unconstitutional and invalid. The decision strengthened the Supreme Court because it asserted the Court’s right of **judicial review**, the power to decide whether laws passed by Congress were constitutional and to strike down those laws that were not.  (See page 1081 for more information on *Marbury v. Madison*.)

 **Reading Check Explaining** Why did Congress repeal the Judiciary Act of 1801?

The United States Expands West

One of Jefferson’s strongest beliefs was that a republic could only survive if most of the people owned land. This belief led him to support the idea of expanding the country farther west.

The Louisiana Purchase In 1800 French leader Napoleon Bonaparte convinced Spain to give Louisiana back to France in exchange for helping Spain take control of part of Italy. Napoleon’s deal worried Jefferson, because it gave France control of the lower Mississippi. Jefferson believed that having France back in North America would force the United States into an alliance with the British, whom Jefferson despised.

Jefferson ordered his ambassador to France, **Robert Livingston**, to try to block the deal or gain concessions for the United States. Livingston arrived in Paris in the spring of 1801, but his negotiations accomplished little until 1803.

By 1803 Napoleon had begun making plans to conquer Europe. If France resumed its war against Britain, the last thing the French wanted was an alliance between the United States and Great Britain. Furthermore, France’s government was short on funds. In 1803, therefore, Napoleon offered to sell all of the Louisiana Territory, as well as New Orleans, to the United States. Livingston immediately accepted.



Picturing History

Mountain Explorer Besides giving his name to Colorado's Pikes Peak, army officer Zebulon Pike led an expedition to find the Mississippi's headwaters. **What skills might army officers have that would aid them in such an assignment?**

On April 30, 1803, the United States bought Louisiana from France for \$11.25 million. It also agreed to take on French debts owed to American citizens. These debts were worth about \$3.75 million, making the total cost about \$15 million. The Senate overwhelmingly ratified the **Louisiana Purchase**. As a result of the deal, the United States more than doubled its size and gained control of the entire Mississippi River.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition Even before Louisiana became a part of the United States, Jefferson asked Congress to fund a secret expedition into the Louisiana Territory to trace the Missouri River and find a route to the Pacific Ocean. After Congress approved the expedition, Jefferson chose **Meriwether Lewis**, his private secretary, and **William Clark**, the younger brother of Revolutionary War hero George Rogers Clark, to lead the expedition.

In May 1804 the "Corps of Discovery," as the expedition was called, headed west up the Missouri

River. Along the way they met **Sacagawea**, a Shoshone woman who joined the expedition as a guide and interpreter. The expedition found a path through the Rocky Mountains and eventually traced the Columbia River to the Pacific Ocean. The expedition greatly increased American knowledge of the Louisiana Territory and also gave the United States a claim to the Oregon territory along the coast.

The Pike Expedition Lewis and Clark's expedition was not the only one exploring the Louisiana Purchase. In 1805 **Zebulon Pike** mapped much of the upper Mississippi, and in 1806 he headed west to find the headwaters of the Arkansas River. Pike traveled to Colorado, where he charted the mountain now known as Pikes Peak. He later mapped part of the Rio Grande and traveled across northern Mexico and what is now southern Texas. Pike's account of this trip gave Americans their first detailed description of the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains.

The Essex Junto The Louisiana Purchase alarmed New England Federalists. It meant that eventually their region would lose its influence in national affairs while the South and West gained political strength through new states. In Massachusetts, a small group of Federalists known as the **Essex Junto** drafted a plan to take New England out of the Union.

Hoping to expand their movement, they persuaded Vice President Aaron Burr to run for governor of New York in 1804. During the campaign, Alexander Hamilton called Burr "a dangerous man, and one who ought not be trusted with the reins of government." An offended Burr challenged Hamilton to a duel. When the two met on July 11, 1804, though, Hamilton refused to fire. Burr shot and killed his foe. In 1807 Burr was accused of plotting to create a new country in the western United States. He was charged with treason but found not guilty.

Reading Check **Describing** Why did Thomas Jefferson want to purchase the Louisiana Territory?

Rising International Tensions

Burr's schemes were only a minor annoyance to President Jefferson. During his second term in office, the president was much more concerned with keeping the United States out of the war between Britain and France. A fragile peace between France and England had fallen apart in mid-1803, when Napoleon's armies surged out of France and headed east.





Economic Warfare At first, the war actually benefited American merchants. As the British seized French ships, American merchants began trading with French colonies in the Caribbean. The British left the American ships alone because the United States had proclaimed neutrality.

In 1806 Britain issued regulations known as the Orders in Council. These declared that all ships going to Europe needed British licenses and would be searched for contraband. In response, Napoleon declared that merchants who obeyed the British system would have their goods confiscated when they reached Europe. Americans were caught in the middle. No matter whom they obeyed, they were going to lose their goods.

Impressment Although British and French trade restrictions upset Americans, the British practice of stopping American ships to seize sailors angered them even more. The British navy was short of recruits because of its low pay and terrible shipboard conditions. British sailors often deserted for American vessels. Britain solved this problem by **impressment**, a legalized form of kidnapping that forced people into military service. Britain claimed the right to stop American ships and search for deserters. On many occasions they impressed American citizens into service as well.

In June 1807, these tensions reached the boiling point when the British warship *Leopard* stopped the American warship *Chesapeake* to search for British deserters. When the captain of the *Chesapeake* refused to comply, the *Leopard* opened fire, killing three Americans. After the Americans surrendered, the British went aboard and seized four sailors.

Economic Diplomacy Fails The attack on the *Chesapeake* enraged the public, and American newspapers clamored for war. Like Washington and Adams before him, however, President Jefferson did not want to entangle the United States in the affairs of Europe. Instead of going to war, he asked Congress to pass the Embargo Act of 1807, halting all trade between the United States and Europe.

The **embargo**, a government ban on trade with other countries, wound up hurting the United States more than France or Britain. In the Northeast, once-lucrative shipping businesses came to a standstill, while farmers in the South and West saw the demand for their crops plummet. In Congress, Maryland's Philip Barton Key railed against the embargo:

“It has paralyzed industry. . . . Our most fertile lands are reduced to sterility. It will drive our seamen into foreign employ, and our fishermen to foreign sandbanks. . . . It has dried up our revenue.”

—quoted in *The American Spirit*

Realizing that the embargo was not working and that it was costing the Republican Party political support, Congress repealed it in March 1809, shortly before Jefferson left office.

After his second term, President Jefferson gladly retired to his estate, Monticello, in Virginia. While the embargo made Jefferson unpopular, his administration had reversed the Federalist course by limiting the power of the federal government. It had also acquired a vast new territory in the West.

Reading Check **Examining** Why did Jefferson have Congress pass the Embargo Act of 1807?

SECTION 3 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

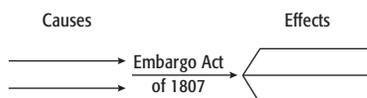
- Define:** **judicial review**, **impressment**, **embargo**.
- Identify:** John Marshall, Louisiana Purchase, Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, Sacagawea, Zebulon Pike.

Reviewing Themes

- Government and Democracy** How did the Supreme Court decision in *Marbury v. Madison* strengthen the federal judiciary?

Critical Thinking

- Comparing and Contrasting** How was Jefferson's presidency similar to and different from those of Washington and Adams in political style, goals, and foreign policy?
- Organizing** Use a graphic organizer similar to the one below to list the causes and effects of the Embargo Act of 1807.



Analyzing Visuals

- Examining Maps** Study the sketch of Washington, D.C., on page 223. Why do you think Pierre L'Enfant designed the city with wide avenues and circular intersections?

Writing About History

- Descriptive Writing** Imagine you are a member of the Zebulon Pike expedition in the Colorado territory. Write a journal entry describing what you have seen on the trip.