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The Election of 1800 - I

Lead: In 1800 Thomas Jefferson was elected President of the United States in a close contest that some have come to see as the third American Revolution.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: If 1776 marked the beginning of the America's military revolution, if crafting the nation's charter in 1787 marked America's constitutional revolution, a case can be made that the election of 1800 marked America's political

revolution. The first secured national independence, the second dealt with burgeoning governmental chaos, the third established a means of managing the nation's competing impulses with the introduction of political parties. Each was necessary in setting the Republic's foundation and building the structure of its future prosperity.

If revolutionary credentials mattered at all, and they did, four men could lay claim to the Presidency in the early years of the Republic: George Washington, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson. In the crucial, dangerous and, indeed, desperate years of the mid-1770s they had laid reputation

and life on the line in the cause of independence. They had paid their dues when it counted and had powerful claim on the hearts of their countrymen. Washington was the only choice permissible as first Chief Executive and served two terms. Franklin, an old man in 1776, was physically incapable of such high office and was dead by 1790. Thus, the quest fell to Adams and Jefferson and their competition, Adams prevailed in 1796, Jefferson in 1800, marked the progress of the third American Revolution. From that point politics as defined and shaped by competing parties would mark, whether for good or ill, the path of the nation's progress. Next time: Parties, politics, partisans, and

propaganda. The producer of *A Moment in Time* is Steve Clark.

**At the University of Richmond,
this is Dan Roberts.**

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