

## Preface

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The 2000 and 2001 United States Capitol Historical Society conferences on Congress in the 1790s focused on the end of the decade, when, in rapid succession, George Washington died, the federal government moved to Washington, D.C., and the election of 1800 put Thomas Jefferson and the Democratic-Republican party in charge of the federal government.

At the 2000 conference, “Created Capitals: Congress Moves to Washington,” Elaine C. Everly and Howard H. Wehmann dispelled the myths and misinformation that surround the federal government’s move to Washington in “‘Then Let Us to the Woods Repair’: Moving the Federal Government and Its Records to Washington in 1800.” They compiled their evidence from documents in the National Archives, particularly Miscellaneous Treasury Accounts (RG 217), rather than from the inaccurate and politically motivated contemporary congressional report on the costs of the removal, on which historians have long relied. Indeed, as the authors note, the move occurred at a time of cabinet turnover and during the highly partisan election of 1800. Most of the almost five hundred clerks, officeholders, and family members who moved to Washington over the course of a year (March 1800–February 1801) came by land rather than by sea, as did the papers of the Continental and Confederation Congresses as well as those of the federal government under the Constitution. The several departmental libraries and the books of Congress, as well as furniture and office equipment, generally came by sea. Everly and Wehmann also provide new detail about the housing problems faced by Washington’s new residents.

When Congress arrived at Washington it moved into a Capitol, not a Federal Hall (New York, 1789–90) or a Congress Hall (Philadelphia, 1790–1800). Why the name changed is the subject of C. M. Harris’s “Jefferson, the Concept of the Modern Capitol, and Republican Nation-Building.” In altering the name on Peter L’Enfant’s plan of Washington from “Congress House” to “Capitol,” Jefferson had far more in mind than merely a return to Roman terminology or a particular style of architecture. Harris has argued elsewhere that, as president, Jefferson sought successfully to establish Washington, D.C.,

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as a federal town rather than a federal city. Here he extends our understanding of Jefferson's influence on the seat of government with a discussion of how the president sought to remove the looming presence of the executive from the Capitol and turn the building into a temple for the legislature and an instrument for nation-building. This, he argues, is why Jefferson successfully opposed using any part of the building as a national shrine or pantheon to George Washington.

Rubil Morales-Vázquez takes up the latter issue in "Redeeming a Sacred Pledge: The Plans to Bury George Washington in the Nation's Capital." The author details the decades-long debate over whether to bury the national hero in Washington or whether only to erect a monument there as a memorial. It is a compelling story that stirred up a "constellation of obligations" of concern to nineteenth-century Americans: obligations between the citizen and the state, the state and federal governments, present and future generations, husband and wife, and the New World and the Old World.

The practice of politics at the new seat of government is the subject of Catherine Allgor's "Federal Patronage in the Early Republic: The Role of Women in Washington, D.C." In order to understand the practice, Allgor looks beyond the men who voted to the women who lobbied, ran elections, and entertained. While the ultimate decisions were made in male official space, the politics behind the decisions primarily occurred in spaces—physical, contextual, and psychological—that were traditionally female. She does not claim that this behavior was in any way radical; indeed, it was important to the women involved that it occurred within the context of the roles that they performed all along as hostesses and family members. Perhaps most important, she argues that it was natural for women to play a leading role when patronage was concerned because this activity was considered antithetical to republicanism and therefore somewhat uncomfortable for male officeholders.

At the 2001 conference, "The Election of 1800," two papers put a capstone on the series and two laid the foundation for a series of conferences between 2004 and 2009 entitled "The Federal Capital in a Nation Divided: Congress and the District of Columbia Confront Sectionalism and Slavery, 1800–1865."

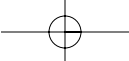
In "Fighting for Control of the American Dream: Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and the Election of 1800," Cal Jillson looks back from the perspective of the American Creed and the twenty-first century. Arguing

that although Hamilton was not a candidate the election was about his views of human nature and government and not those of John Adams, Jillson accepts the traditional view that the election was a grand debate between Jefferson—who stood for democracy, agrarianism, and limited government—and Hamilton—who stood for manufacturing and a federal government strong enough to assert its authority over the people. In conclusion, he postulates other differences: Jefferson was a principal, Hamilton an agent; Jefferson reasoned from ideas, Hamilton from evidence; Jefferson worried about character formation, Hamilton about capital formation; Jefferson saw the emergence of democracy, Hamilton saw capitalism.

John H. Aldrich's "The Election of 1800: The Consequences of the First Change in Party Control" puts forward the argument that the election should be seen not so much as a revolution but as the first national campaign between two self-interested and well-organized political parties that sought to capture and use the influence of political office to advance partisan agendas. This, the vigorous—even vicious—manner in which it was contested, the closeness of the electoral vote, and the tortuous struggle in the House of Representatives is what makes so significant the peaceful turnover of power from one political party to another in 1800. The election changed American party politics forever, made it possible for Jefferson (and by implication his successors) to pursue a moderate policy as president, established the success of the American experiment in government, and completed the founding of the Republic.

In "Messing Around: Entertaining and Accommodating Congress, 1800–1830," Cynthia D. Earman portrays a lively Washington City that was very much in touch with, rather than isolated from, the American people, a seat of government where congressmen participated in a complex local society. She does this by describing social and political life in the private homes, hotels, boardinghouses, and eating messes that housed and fed the residents, congressmen, federal officeholders, petitioners, and lobbyists that composed the early Washington community.

William C. diGiacomantonio's "'To Make Hay while the Sun Shines': D.C. Governance as an Episode in the Revolution of 1800" reveals how the Federalists' lame-duck legislative agenda in the winter of 1800–1801 led to the incidental disenfranchisement of the residents of the District of Columbia. Following their rival's victory at the polls, the outgoing Federalist majority in Congress sought to shore up the power of the federal government in every

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way possible before handing it over to Jeffersonian decentralizing impulses, most famously in the Judiciary Act of 1801. Virginia Representative Henry Lee's bill providing for the governance of the federal district unleashed a long and virulent debate over the constitutional interpretation of Congress's power to exercise "exclusive legislation" there. The essay traces the ideological and political genesis of Congress's exclusive jurisdiction over the District of Columbia and suggests that ultimately it was more a legacy of the "paranoid style" of federal politics in the 1790s than a constitutional mandate.

