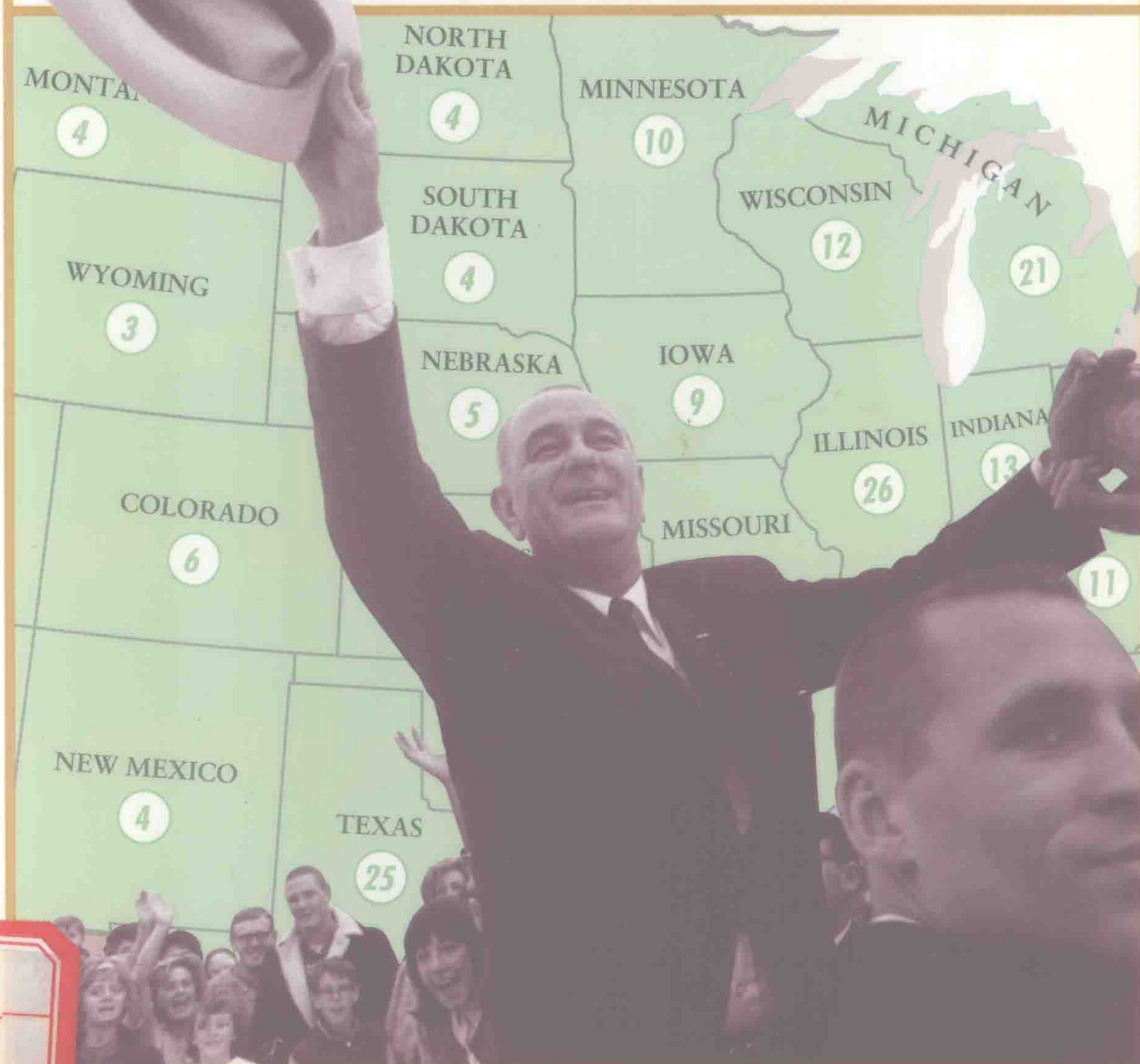


ROUTLEDGE ATLASES OF AMERICAN HISTORY

THE ROUTLEDGE HISTORICAL ATLAS OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS



YANEK MIECZKOWSKI

SERIES EDITOR: MARK C. CARNES

THE ROUTLEDGE
HISTORICAL ATLAS
OF
PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTIONS

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Foreword

The presidential election of the year 2000 turned on Florida. Just before the polls closed there, the major television networks announced that, based on a sampling of those who had just voted, Democratic candidate Al Gore had won the state. Several hours later, the networks retracted their prediction. Now Florida was “too close to call.” By three o’clock A.M., after 99 percent of the Florida vote had been counted, the networks announced that Republican George W. Bush had won the state. But as the sun rose over the Everglades and returns trickled in from the remaining precincts, the networks again reversed themselves: Bush’s lead in Florida had dwindled to several hundred votes out of six million cast. Florida, the networks sheepishly reported, was again “too close to call.” And so it remained for weeks while local, state, and federal courts wrangled over who had won the state—and with it, the presidency.

Nationwide, Gore had received 300,000 more votes than Bush had. But the Constitution provided that the president was not to be chosen directly by the nation’s voters, but by an “electoral college.” The idea of an electoral college grew out of a heated debate during the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Some delegates had then questioned whether the people of the vast young nation possessed the “requisite capacity” to choose the chief executive; such unlettered and far-flung peoples would likely be swayed by “a few active and designing men.” It would be preferable for Congress—either the House of Representatives, the Senate, or both—to select the nation’s president. But James Madison and Gouverneur Morris countered that if the president were chosen by the legislative branch, he would become subservient to its wishes. The president should serve the people and be held directly accountable to them. Unable to come to agreement, the delegates eventually turned this contentious matter over to a Special Committee on Postponed Matters, which, after much debate, finally proposed a fateful compromise: neither the American people nor any branch of Congress would choose the president. Instead, each state would select, in a manner of its own devising, presidential “electors” equal in number to the state’s total congressional delegation (members of the House of Representatives plus two senators); and the electors of all the states would meet together as an “electoral college” to choose the president.

Whatever the merits of the compromise—James Madison later conceded that the decision had been partly a product of “a degree of the hurrying influence produced by fatigue and impatience”—the electoral college has decisively shaped presidential political campaigns. The election of 2000 was an especially vivid demonstration of this fundamental—some might say peculiar—aspect of American politics. Because politicians were obliged to win states (and thus their electors), presidential candidates have long tailored their speeches and programs to appeal to states whose electoral votes were thought to be decisive. Presidential candidates have fought their battles, inescapably,

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upon the geographical landscape marked by the boundaries of the states.

In this atlas Yanek Mieczkowski repeatedly illustrates the truth of this assertion. Even a glance at its pages reveals much about our political culture: the continuities of its distinctive regions—New England, the South, the north central Plains, the Far West—and also the historic shifts that have forced new alignments—the breakup of the Federalists, and then of the Whigs; the rise of the Republican Party in the North and Midwest; the way in which the FDR, LBJ, and Reagan landslides obliterated the old political boundaries; the southern strategy of Republicans Richard Nixon and, later, Ronald Reagan; and so on.

This atlas's clarity of purpose is reinforced by Mieczkowski's clean, concise narrative; together, the maps and the text encapsulate millions of words of contentious speeches, party platforms, and political conniving. Casual readers and candidates for a doctoral degree in history alike will find this an indispensable household reference; it may well constitute the best brief guide to American history yet published. It is a worthy and indispensable addition to the Routledge Atlases of American History series.

Mark C. Carnes
Barnard College, Columbia University
Series Editor

Introduction

The presidency is the highest elective office in the United States and, along with the vice presidency, the only one where the winner is not determined through direct popular vote. The Founding Fathers designed the awkward electoral college system to avoid direct popular elections, because they lacked faith in the common people's ability to choose the best candidate. Few aspects of the Constitution have been so roundly condemned as the electoral college, because it can deny the will of the people—and has, in four elections.

In the early years of the republic, each state selected its electors by a method of its own choosing (such as popular vote or appointment by state legislature), and the number of electors equaled the sum of a state's U.S. representatives and senators, ensuring at least three electors for each state. Each elector was to cast two votes for president; the candidate with the most electoral votes would win, while the runner-up would be vice president. There was no campaign ticket with a pair of running-mates; since the Founding Fathers envisioned a political system without parties, the presidential and vice presidential candidates would have no partisan affiliations and would not need to campaign as a team against another party's candidates. Yet political parties immediately emerged, and the system they had created suffered growing pains and awkward adjustments.

For almost a century and a half, the franchise in the United States was restricted to adult white males. Women, African Americans, and American Indians could not vote. Until the 1820s, no reliable records were kept of the direct popular vote for president. The average voter had no measurable effect on the outcome unless he lived in a state where the electors were chosen by popular vote. When men voted, they did so by voice or at open tables; the secret ballot was unknown. So was a single national election day; states held elections to choose electors on various days in October and November, and in most states a voter had several days during which he could vote. (Only in 1845 did Congress designate the Tuesday following the first Monday in November as Election Day.)

In the nation's early years, presidential candidates behaved differently from the way they do today. Among the many precedents that George Washington set was that a candidate should not appear too eager to win the office or actively seek it. Rather, as the adage of the day went, "The office should seek the man." Active campaigning and making promises to the people seemed undignified, even vulgar. The more seemly behavior for a presidential candidate was to remain at home, mute. This pattern continued for more than a hundred years, and was broken only at the beginning of the twentieth century. The traditional stricture against open campaigning undoubtedly helped many early candidates who would have found speech-making torturous. George Washington wore dentures and had difficulty pronouncing certain words; John Adams, who lacked teeth but refused dentures, also had trouble speaking; Thomas Jefferson shied away from large audiences; James Madison had a weak voice.

Since early presidential candidates said nothing on their own behalf, they relied on party surrogates to speak for them. State and local party committees sponsored orators to give speeches promoting the party's nominee. For example, in 1844

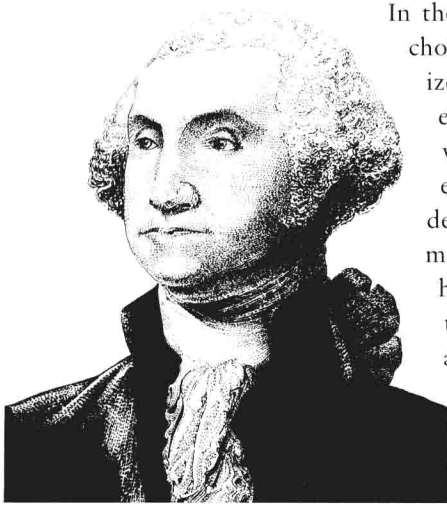
Abraham Lincoln gave speeches in Illinois to endorse Henry Clay, the silent Whig candidate for president; but in 1860, as the Republican nominee, Lincoln remained in Springfield and said nothing. Newspapers, which were blatantly partisan, were also a widely used forum for promoting a candidate. Historian Keith Malden has written that in this era, “A man’s politics could be readily identified by the paper he read.” By the 1820s, new techniques for rallying partisan supporters and advertising presidential candidates emerged, such as national nominating conventions, nicknames and symbols for candidates, and mass electioneering events such as rallies, parades, and barbecues.

As electioneering practices changed, so did the nation. The country acquired vast expanses of land, and settlers forged westward, creating new states. Whereas America was once a provincial country where citizens felt that their first loyalty was to their home state, during the early 1800s the growth of a national party system fostered a national character. As the country grew and political parties evolved, distinct voting patterns emerged. In the early 1800s, the Federalists dominated the Northeast and New England, while the Democratic Republicans were popular in the South and West. As the eventual successors to the Federalists, the Whigs were more national in scope, with supporters in all regions of the country. In the 1850s, the Republicans began as a northern party, and were locked out of the South for nearly a century after the Civil War.

More transformations came during the twentieth century. While electioneering gimmickry such as parades began to fade, candidates began actively seeking votes. They crisscrossed the country in trains, cars, and, by midcentury, airplanes. Improved communications enabled candidates to reach voters more directly, through radio, television, and, by the end of the century, the Internet. Campaigns became more grueling, not only because of the energy it took to travel and communicate, but also because the election process itself grew more protracted and demanding, with an increasing number of state primaries and a greater need to use every weapon in a candidate’s political arsenal, from “spin doctors” and saturation advertising to nationally televised debates.

Amid all the dynamism of American presidential elections, imperfections remain. Party loyalty continues to decline, as does voter participation, with turnout sometimes sinking below 50 percent of registered voters. The electoral college is still anathema to those who believe that direct vote should determine the presidential winner. Despite the problems, elections continue to be an important reflection of America’s distinct geographic regions and socioeconomic groups. And while a candidate’s personality has always been crucial, his personal life and image—family, fidelity, integrity—have received increasing attention, sometimes from voters and almost always from an expanding news media. Perhaps above all, elections express the popularity of candidates and their ideas. During the last half of the twentieth century in particular, elections have allowed popular presidents to serve two full terms in office, while they have repudiated other incumbents, especially for poor economic stewardship. Presidential elections will continue to shape this country’s history and destiny, and their character will certainly undergo more changes.

The Elections of 1789 and 1792



George Washington

1732–1799

Washington struggled to remain above partisan bickering, but in the end he adhered to the Federalist philosophy. The resulting Democratic Republicans' criticism prompted him to retire after two terms.

In the election of 1789, George Washington was the obvious choice for president. A Revolutionary War hero, he was idolized by the American people and had been unanimously elected president of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, where he had been a quiet but enormously prestigious presence. Indeed, at that convention the Founding Fathers designed the office of the presidency with Washington in mind. Although fearful of strong executive authority, they had created a powerful presidency by reposing their fears in the knowledge that Washington would occupy the post. But as 1789 began, Washington was 56 years old and had retired to Mount Vernon for what he anticipated would be his tranquil twilight years. He wanted nothing more than to live out these years tending his estate.

Washington viewed the presidency with a reluctance that would startle today's eager, ambitious candidates.

Yet, while he dreaded the prospect of being elected and felt unequal to the new responsibilities, he felt obligated to preside personally over the executive branch to ensure the early success of the new government. With heavy resignation, he awaited word of the first presidential election.

In this election and in those of the early nineteenth century, there was no popular vote for president—only an electoral vote. On February 4, 1789, when the 69 presidential electors met in New York City, Washington received one vote from every one of them; he still holds the distinction as the only president ever to be unanimously elected. Since Washington did not indicate any special preference for a vice president, considerable speculation developed around who should fill this position. In order to balance Washington's Virginia roots, the electors felt that a northerner was desir-

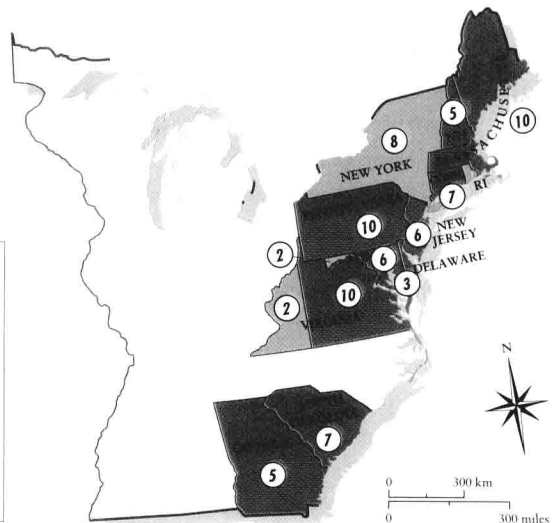
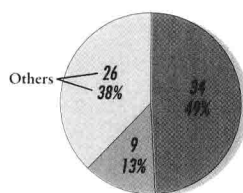
Presidential elections, 1789

- George Washington
- John Adams
- John Jay
- number of voting electors (2 votes per elector)
- territory not voting

Electoral vote 1
(total: 69)



Electoral vote 2
(total: 69)



able. They focused on the state of Massachusetts, which had a wealth of political talent that included John Hancock and Samuel Adams. The Federalists selected the most prominent statesman there, John Adams, an ardent supporter of the Constitution who had served as a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, a negotiator for the Treaty of Paris in 1783, and a minister to Great Britain.

At this time, since there was no distinction between a presidential elector's vote for president or vice president, Adams could have received 69 votes as well, tying Washington. The situation would have been politically embarrassing and inauspicious for the new nation. Thus, already in the nation's first election, some behind-the-scenes political maneuvering took place. Alexander Hamilton, who had served as an aide-de-camp to Washington during the Revolution and who, along with James Madison and John Jay, had coauthored *The Federalist Papers* to support and defend the Constitution, set to work to avoid a tie vote. Some of Hamilton's contemporaries, including Adams, suspected that he was motivated more by political ill will toward Adams than anything else. Shrewd and manipulative, Hamilton arranged for just enough electors to vote for other candidates, thus ensuring that Adams would gain the second-highest total but not nearly enough to tie with Washington. Adams won 34 votes, while the remaining electoral votes were scattered among nine different persons (the next highest total after Adams's 34 was John Jay, with 9; John Hancock won 4; 22 electoral votes were spread among other persons). Three states did not participate in the election of 1789: North Carolina and Rhode Island had not yet ratified the Constitution, and New York had failed to appoint its electors by the January 1 deadline. On April 6, the electoral votes were officially opened in Congress, and Washington became, reluctantly, the first president of the United States.

The Constitution contains no references to political parties. This was the Founding Fathers' deliberate design. Concerned with fostering national unity, they had envisioned an America without parties. They viewed parties as a corrupting, divisive force that could prevent national harmony, subordinate the public good to party politics, and destabilize the government. As a framework of government, the Constitution was designed to discourage the development of political parties, and James Madison argued in *The Federalist Papers* that one of the virtues of a new government under the Constitution would be the absence of "faction."

But already during Washington's first term, political parties began to emerge. The presence of a strong central government and forceful personalities within that government, the sharply differing economic and social interests of Americans, and the controversies surrounding Washington's domestic and foreign policies all contributed to the growth of parties.

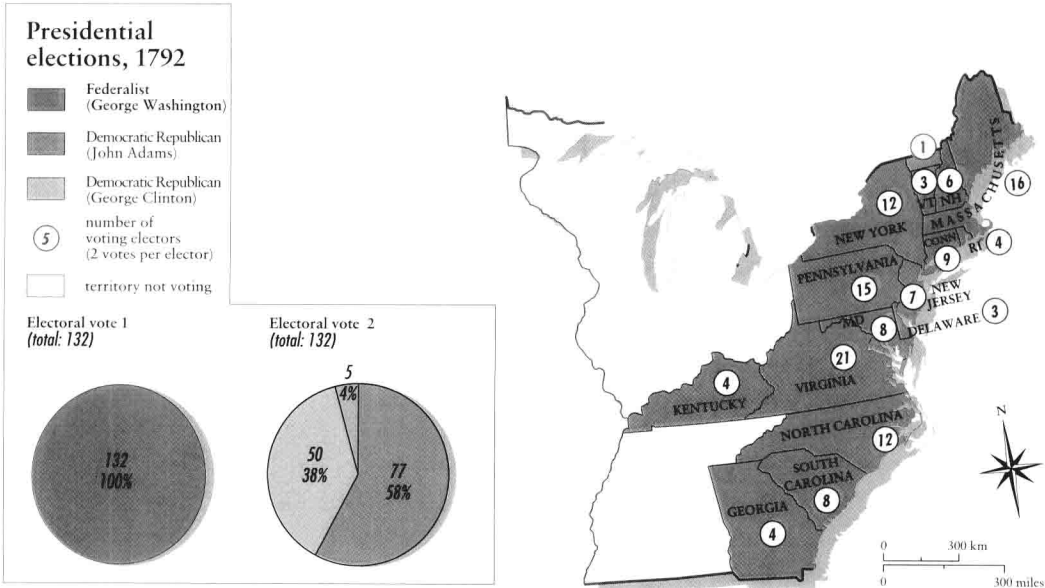
Early partisan warfare assumed a vituperative, highly personal nature, and the two competing parties coalesced around the two strongest personalities of the day and the most important members of Washington's cabinet.

In the early sessions of Congress, political disagreement occasionally exploded into violent scenes. Here a contemporary artist shows an event on the February 15, 1798, when Federalist Roger Griswold fought Republican Matthew Lyon, much to the amusement or horror of the onlookers.

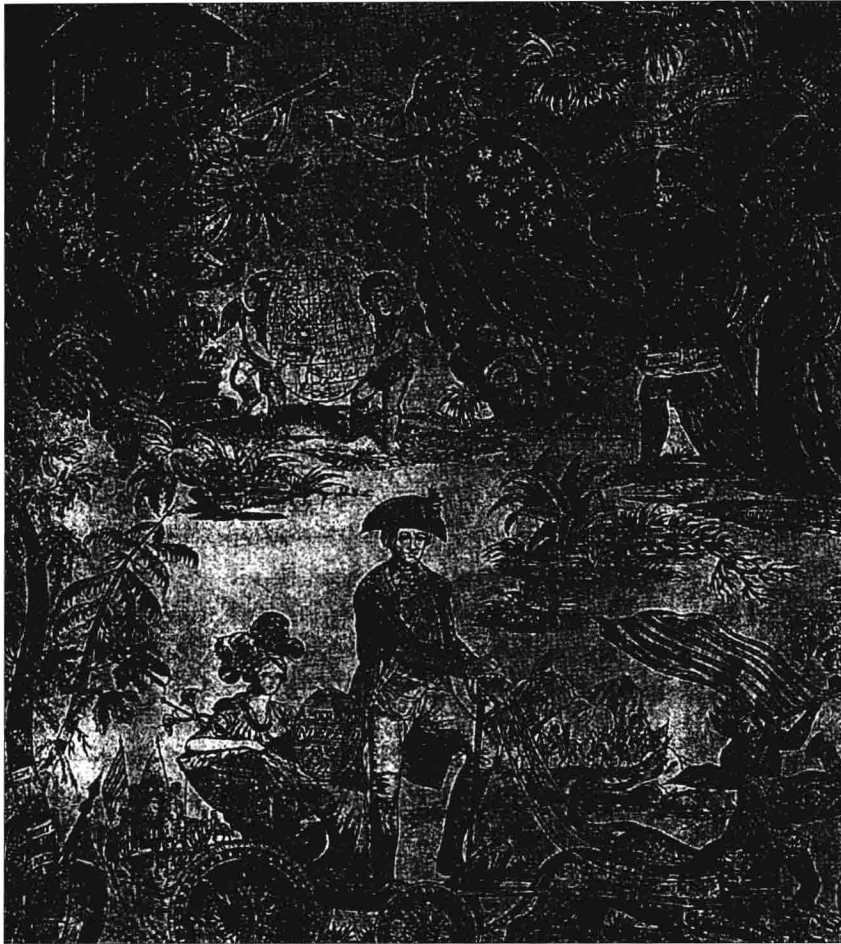


Secretary of Treasury Hamilton’s followers became known as the Federalists, and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson led the opposition, the Democratic Republicans (or simply “Republicans,” generally regarded as the precursor of today’s Democratic Party).

Hamilton and the Federalists envisioned a strong central government ruled by wealthy, elite Americans, with an economy based on commerce and industry. More sensitive to the needs of merchants and businessmen, the



Federalists lacked faith in the common man (Hamilton once referred to the common people as “a great beast”) and feared excessive popular control of the government. Above all, they had an acute fear of mob rule. Jefferson and his followers, by contrast, subscribed to a pastoral ideal. Their blueprint for the nation’s future involved a weak, decentralized, federal government with more power vested in the states, and an economy in which the small, inde-



While artists and designers created images like this tapestry, which eulogized the first president and his office, contemporary Republican newspapers criticized almost everything about the Federalist administration, including the president Wounded by such remarks, Washington stated, “I would rather be in my grave than in the presidency.”

pendent farmer held center stage. Jefferson was particularly suspicious of urbanization and industrialization, and feared that allying America’s government with the wealthy classes would lead to venality and corruption.

Foreign policy was a wedge that separated the parties even further. The guillotine and the violence of the French Revolution, which included the execution of King Louis XVI, alarmed the Federalists, who increasingly gravitated toward Great Britain, a trading partner and a source of stability and sanity in Europe. The Republicans, meanwhile, continued to champion the

democratic, antiaristocratic forces that drove France to revolution. Members of each party felt that their opponents had an allegiance to France or Britain that was irresponsible, even treasonous.

America's first party system was emerging. The Federalists comprised the wealthier groups of society, such as the merchants, manufacturers, large-scale farmers, doctors, and lawyers. The Republicans attracted the old Anti-Federalists (opponents of the Constitution), small farmers, large planters, workers and artisans in urban areas, as well as immigrants such as Irish and French and religious minorities such as Baptists and Catholics. Geographically, the Federalists dominated New England, where a thriving merchant class and commercial ties to England, support for native son John Adams, and fear of revolutionary France made their party more appealing. In the mid-Atlantic states the two parties were neck and neck (although in New

*A display of the
United States of
America prominently
featuring George
Washington, 1794*



York the Republicans enjoyed considerable strength), while in the South the Republicans were in almost total control (the sole exception was South Carolina, where fear of the state's black majority united whites solidly under the Federalist banner).

While George Washington sought to remain statesmanlike above party