

JOHN ADAMS

George Washington served two terms as President, having been elected in 1788 and 1792. He set a precedent, or tradition, that one person would serve no more than two terms that was not broken until Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected 4 times in the 1930's and 1940's. Washington was ready to retire to Mount Vernon and be a gentleman farmer.

John Adams, who had been Washington's Vice-President, was elected President in 1796. He was a member of the Federalist Party and his Vice-President was Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson, a Democratic-Republican party member, had actually run against Adams in the election of 1796. Because the Constitution said that whatever candidate got the most electoral votes would be President and whoever got the second most would be Vice-President, the country had a President from one party and a Vice-President from another. As a result there was difficulty reaching agreements in the Executive branch of the government.

John Adams was 61 years old when he became President. He had had an outstanding political career. He had served as a delegate from Massachusetts to the 2nd Continental Congress and had worked on the committee to write the Declaration of Independence. He helped negotiate the Treaty of Paris that ended the Revolutionary War. He had also been an ambassador to Great Britain.

During the time of President Adams the **two party system** became a firm part of American political life. The Federalist Party and the Democratic-Republican Party were the first two parties. You studied the main differences in these two groups in the lessons on George Washington.

While John Adams was President workers continued to build the capital city of Washington D. C. Adams and his wife Abigail moved into the White House and became the first presidential family to live there.

President Adams guided the United States through a series of problems at home and abroad. He built up the size of the army and navy to successfully avoid a war with France. He worked hard to help the United States grow stronger, but his efforts to keep peace with France resulted in the permanent decline of his Federalist Party. He ran for re-election in 1800, but lost in a close election to Thomas Jefferson. It is interesting to note that despite their political differences, Adams and Jefferson became life long friends and wrote letters to each other regularly. Ironically they died on exactly the same day-July 4, 1826.

After reading the passage about John Adams, answer the following questions. You are to write your answers on loose-leaf paper in complete sentences.

1. When was John Adams elected President?
2. What were two other jobs that Adams had held that made him an experienced government leader before he was elected President?
3. Who ran against Adams in both the election of 1796 and 1800?
4. What became a big part of American political life during the administration of John Adams? Why do you think this has remained important in American political life ever since?
5. What caused the Federalist Party to decline and caused Adams to lose the election of 1800?