Political Conflict and Public Contest: Rituals of National Celebration in Philadelphia, 1788-1815

IN AN ORATION DELIVERED ON THE Fourth of July 1788 in Philadelphia, James Wilson succinctly expressed the purpose of national celebrations. “Public processions,” Wilson proclaimed, “may preserve the memory, and engrave the importance of great political events. They may represent, with peculiar felicity and force, the operation and effects of great political truths.”1 As a Pennsylvania legislator and a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1787, Wilson clearly understood the need for political ritual. Ritual helped to reinforce ideological concepts associated with the nation in the minds and behavior of the participants and spectators. Celebrations such as Washington’s birthday and Independence Day were an important forum for the first tentative constructions of national identity in an era when the “direction of government, economy, and society still seemed open and uncertain.”2 They gave people the chance to participate in a national event; they were a “powerful symbolic occasion, incorporating emblems of the Revolution and of American nationality.”3 In the politically charged atmosphere of the 1790s, they were also becoming a partisan political experience, encouraging people to express their preferences for the national agendas of the early republic’s emerging political factions, and a venue to fight over the content and meaning of adopted rituals and symbols. Indeed, such celebrations served

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2 Susan G. Davis, Parades and Power: Street Theater in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia (1986; reprint, Berkeley, 1988), 9. For the purposes of this paper, I use the terms “national celebration” or “ceremony” and “political ritual” interchangeably.

3 Keith E. Melder, The Village and the Nation (Sturbridge, Mass., 1976), 38.

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as a vehicle in the ongoing confrontation between Philadelphia's Federalists and Republicans, as supposedly different definitions of national identity contributed to the process of party formation. Thus political ritual in the early republic played a paradoxical role. Celebrations expressed factional conflict, but simultaneously denied that conflict by pointing to the consensus among participants, by describing the participants as representative of the community (a description that excluded their respective political opponents), and by attempting to subsume conflict under an all-encompassing ideal of national unity. In the end, political conflict and group consensus fed off each other. This is not to say that national rituals actually overcame factional conflict, but that the organizers of, and participants in, partisan events intended their celebrations to deny and overcome their factional character and to express national unity across political and social boundaries.

Historians of the Revolution and the early republic have tended to view national celebrations as relatively straightforward expressions of ideological conflict between Republicans and Federalists. More generally, historical investigations of national celebrations regarded them as reflections of the contemporary political situation. Following Sally Falk Moore and Barbara Myerhoff, I will argue that celebrations do more than "mirror existing social arrangements and existing modes of thought. [Celebrations] can act to reorganize them or even help to create them." The rituals were as important as their political content; they were meta-


phors of power and, to a large extent, constituted political power. Federalists and Republicans alike used national celebrations to promote their respective claims for the status of true inheritors of the revolutionary legacy and to develop competing definitions of American national identity. They connected their own social and occupational characteristics with these respective definitions and turned themselves into prescriptive exemplars as bearers of national identity and observers of national celebrations. My paper is less concerned with the content of their differing definitions of national identity, although I refer to them where it is appropriate. Instead, I will focus on the attempts to reinforce those definitions through political ritual in the realm of celebrations and celebrational contest. To gain an additional perspective on the purposes of national celebrations, I will draw on recent anthropological and sociological studies that interpret political rituals as symbolic events and stress the function celebrations play as integrative forces building and reinforcing community identity. However, much of this literature overemphasizes consensus. In this paper, I am more concerned with conflict rather than consensus as the central element of the celebrations. I will examine the relations of the participants to each other and to the spectators, the language of public displays used to express those relations, and the representations, commentaries, and reprovals of the celebrations that appeared in print.


7 “National identity” is taken to mean the reference to a set of values and symbols that created, expressed, and emphasized a sense of community and “Americanness” among Philadelphians. The keywords and concepts around which national identity evolved were the understanding that Americans were an exceptional people and that American politics operated on new principles among others, independence, republicanism, popular sovereignty, the people (or the union, the public). When I speak of different definitions of national identity, I mean slight differences in degree, not in kind.

8 Extended discussions of anthropological approaches to rituals and ceremonies are given by Bell, Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice, Kertzer, Ritual, Politics, and Power, Ronald L. Grimes, Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory (Columbia, S. C., 1990), Grimes, Beginnings in Ritual Studies (Washington, D.C., 1982). For the links between ritual studies and social history, see Davis, Parades and Power, Paul Connerton, How Society Remembers (New York, 1989), 41-71, and Steven Lukes, “Political Ritual and Social Integration,” Sociology 9 (1975), 289-308, provide introductions to sociological interpretations that stress, respectively, the integrative and conflictive forces of celebrations. A growing literature—to too numerous to cite
Citizens of the early republic observed national celebrations in a variety of ways with events that quickly developed into highly formalized affairs. The day began with religious ritual: processions to churches, services, prayers, and sacred music. Secular ritual followed and could include militia parades and musters, processions of nonmilitary organizations, and meetings (in taverns, on the commons, or at other outdoor locations like public gardens). At the meetings, people often heard an oration (and, if it was a Republican gathering, a reading of the Declaration of Independence), followed by a set of toasts during and after dinner. There were salutes, bell ringing, and firing of cannons throughout the day. Evening fireworks concluded the festivities.9

Notions of orderly and disorderly conduct, and of respectable and disreputable appearance controlled participation in the celebrations. These two broad categories were the legacy of colonial political ritual. In principle, only "respectable" groups or persons could take an active part. Institutionalized colonial rituals—such as election days—demonstrated the social status and political power of elites, while negotiating consent (and to a lesser extent deference) from the voters and spectators. Even the militant crowd actions that took place throughout the colonial era and the Revolution, which drew their participants from a much broader range of the social spectrum, embodied a distinction between "respectable" sorts and the "rabble" (the latter were excluded). Crowd action—with its associated tactics and rituals, such as effigy processions and bonfires—was a legitimate institution. Understood as an extralegal, but not necessarily illegal, enforcer of communal welfare, crowd action was an "established social force."10 After the Revolutionary War, the notion of "respectability" became connected more closely to processions of officeholders and militia...

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9 This typology does not extend to every feature of the different celebrations, not all celebrations followed exactly this format.

parades. The "respectable" status of crowd action and its tactics, always open to contest, was increasingly questioned, especially by political leaders of all persuasions who sought to discredit their opponents.

Despite their political differences, Federalists and Republicans shared the same modes of celebrating (such as dinners and processions), as well as common assumptions about proper ways to celebrate the anniversaries. For example, the Republican Aurora claimed of Republican Fourth of July celebrations in 1799 that "the evening [was not] disgraced by a single act of irregularity or turbulence—the day was spent as it ought to, in well regulated and rational festivity." In the same year, the Philadelphia Gazette described a Federalist procession in similar terms. All the different dinner parties and parades celebrated with "order" and "decorum," displaying "rational pleasure and social intercourse. . . . Nothing could surpass the uniformity, elegance and discipline of these respectable associations." Consequently, confrontations over the character of a celebration often centered around the image of respectability. Ultimately, the right of taking part in a ceremony followed not exclusively from one's social position, but was open to political competition and connected with the claim of respectable conduct.

Philadelphia is an excellent place for the study of national celebrations. It was among the first cities to commemorate the Fourth of July (1777) and Washington's birthday (1788). From 1790 to 1800 the city was the capital of the nation and also the largest city in the United States. Philadelphia was the foremost publishing center of the period and a hub of political activity. At the same time, although densely populated, Philadelphia was still a preindustrial and, in many respects, provincial town. Urban geographic spread was small; the city reached from the Delaware River westward for only about a mile and a half, about eight or nine blocks. People from different social backgrounds lived close to one another. The wealthy and the poor did not generally live in distinct and homogeneous quarters, although unskilled workers and artisans of the lesser crafts clustered in peripheral districts. As for the center of the city, as Stuart

11 Aurora, July 6, 1799; Philadelphia Gazette, July 5, 1799.

Blumin remarks, the homes of all occupational and social groups "stood in close proximity to one another—distinguished . . . by size, architecture, and type of frontage." Organizers took advantage of the city's layout. A celebration parading through the central wards would march through a socially heterogeneous area and address a fairly representative cross section of the population. With its densely interconnected streets and tight arrangement of diverse neighborhoods, the city provided the backdrop for parades as performance and as a form of communication. Announced in advance to gather audiences, the processions followed the published routes. This practice points to the crucial importance of the spectators for the setup of any parade or procession: the marchers needed witnesses as much as their uniforms and banners to legitimate their actions.

The Fourth of July was the principal national ceremony in Philadelphia, and it developed into a highly formalized event during the first decades of its observance. The "Grand Federal Procession" of 1788 combined the celebration of the adoption of the Federal Constitution with the Fourth of July ceremony. The widespread acceptance of the Constitution in Philadelphia produced the largest celebration in the country, immortalized by its Federalist organizer Francis Hopkinson in a detailed description. It remained the most elaborate celebration in Philadelphia until the centennial procession in 1876, and set an unmatched precedent for the city's later ceremonies. Five thousand people marched in the procession and some 17,000 sat down to an afternoon dinner. Soliciting the participation of Philadelphia's artisans, the city's Federalist leadership planned and took leading parts in the procession, which was intended as a symbolic representation of the whole population, unanimously united behind the Federal cause. For example, the float "Constitution," carrying the Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, Thomas McKean, bore a banner with the words "The People." Foreshadowing later rhetoric, the Federalists denied any partisan intention, identified their efforts on behalf of the adoption of the Constitution with the fight for American independence, and thus attempted to link opposition to the Constitution and Federalism with a lack of patriotism.14

13 Stuart M. Blumin, The Emergence of the Middle Class Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900 (New York, 1989), 24-25, Miller, Philadelphia, 5-6, 10-14

14 Francis Hopkinson's account was first published in the Pennsylvania Gazette, July 9, 1788, and reprinted in Hopkinson, The Miscellaneous Essays and Occasional Writings of Francis Hopkinson (3 vols, Philadelphia, 1792), 2 349-422. For a comparative survey see Whitfield Bell, Jr, "The
Comparatively distinct local factions of the Federalists and Republicans emerged in Philadelphia during the era of the so-called "First Party System" before 1815. Although a sophisticated party system did not evolve in Pennsylvania (or elsewhere) during the 1790s, many Philadelphians began to draw party lines, leading to considerable political activity centered on symbols and celebrations as the customary emblems of partisan conviction and means of political conflict. In this sense, the terms "Federalists" and "Republicans" apply to all citizens who considered themselves supporters of a "party," and not only to loose "factions," "opinion groups," or "interests" that rallied around an election ticket.15

To a considerable extent the battles waged by Republicans and Federalists in the celebrations concerned the future of republicanism and the


Open to several interpretations, the "Grand Federal Procession" is usually explained as a paradigm of working class unity and artisan confidence in and support of the Constitution and Federalist politics. See, for example, Alfred F. Young, "Conservatives, the Constitution, and the 'Spirit of Accommodation,' " in Robert A. Goldwin and William A. Schamba, eds., *How Democratic is the Constitution?* (Washington, D.C., 1980), 145-47; Davis, *Parades and Power*, 117-25. The present interpretation is intended to stress the Federalist elite's role rather than to downplay artisan involvement or its historiographical position. See also Paul Gilje's suggestive essay, "The Common People and the Constitution: Popular Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century New York City," in Gilje and William Pencak, eds., *New York in the Age of the Constitution* (Rutherford, N.J., 1992), 48-73, esp. 53-63.

It was well known to all contemporaries that the Federalists' pretense of unity was a sham. News of the "Carlisle Riot" of December 26, 1787, where Pennsylvania Anti-Federalists drove a Federalist celebration off the town square and later burned Thomas McKean and James Wilson in effigy, received widespread distribution in major newspapers. Of course, both groups circulated their own version of the events. Saul Cornell, "Aristocracy Assailed: The Ideology of Backcountry Anti-Federalism," *Journal of American History* 76 (1990), 1,150-55; Stephen R. Boyd, *The Politics of Opposition: Anti-Federalists and the Acceptance of the Constitution* (Millwood, N.Y., 1979), 96.


character of the revolutionary legacy. The Fourth of July and particularly the Declaration of Independence, with its espousal of natural rights, liberty, and equality, gained premium significance for the Republicans. The Federalists, however, regarded the Fourth simply as the anniversary of independence, and dismissed from their observations all talk of the revolutionary ideology embodied in the Declaration. For them, unquestioned allegiance to the elected government was a crucial aspect of their understanding of politics, and the celebration of Washington’s birthday epitomized that conviction. The call of some Republicans for a perpetual political revolution constantly reminded the Federalists, who considered the Revolution as a finished act, that their vision of a hierarchically structured society, governed by the propertied and educated, was about to be turned into an unlimited “democracy.” In the Federalist perspective, their opponents assaulted stability, instead of showing obedience or deference, and accused the lawful government of counterrevolutionary activities. In short, given their conflicting definitions of republicanism, both parties regarded each other as a threat to the American republic and freely dealt out invectives in the light of the ongoing debate over America’s relation to its former sovereign and the French Republic: the Federalists became the “British party,” supporters of “monarchy” and “aristocracy,” whereas the Republicans received the title of “French faction” or “Jacobins.” Within the context of the perceived dangers of factionalism and the lack of a concept of loyal opposition, the Federalists ultimately viewed criticism of themselves as tantamount to an attack on the republic itself, as well as on their definition of American nationhood and the Constitution.  

At the same time, a power struggle within the Philadelphia elites shaped and sustained this ideological conflict. Despite the increased political participation of Philadelphia artisans during the Revolution and its immediate aftermath, the city’s elites thoroughly dominated politics by the early 1790s. They were not, however, a united group. Older, mostly Federalist elites, distinguished by a history of appointments to major political offices, preeminent social standing, or high military rank (frequently all three) confronted a newer, mostly Republican elite who came to economic and political power only during or after the Revolution and who did not have access to the inner circles of power and high status. The Republicans also attracted and represented a broader social spectrum, especially voters of the “middling sort” (composed of craftsmen, lesser merchants, shop- and innkeepers, and professional men) who formed the bulk of the urban population in the 1790s. The latter had supported Federalism in the 1780s and early 1790s because they believed a stronger national government served their interests. As the decade advanced, however, they began to suspect that the Federalists did not intend to widen economic or social opportunities but to restrict them. The Republicans built a powerful electorate in Philadelphia because they promised exactly those opportunities. Additionally, the Republicans attracted supporters who had not yet exercised their right to vote. Beginning in 1794, they successfully contested municipal, state, and federal elections. Although the state of Pennsylvania remained Federalist until 1799, by 1797 the Republicans occupied elected offices in Philadelphia, arranged the reelection of Governor Thomas Mifflin to his third term, won congressional seats, and carried the city and county of Philadelphia in the national elections. The Federalist-Republican controversy grew with the

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involvement of Republican organizations in the observance of the Fourth of July; it transformed the event into a venue for the competition of political elites for ceremonial presence.

The competition quickly escalated. Both parties observed national celebrations with processions and festivities designed to claim that only they represented the American nation and could define national identity. Besides Independence Day and Washington’s birthday—both of which soon developed partisan overtones—the two parties tried to create new events to support their political agendas. The Federalists announced a “Day of National Fasting” in 1798, and the Republicans promoted the celebration of Thomas Jefferson’s inauguration in and after 1801. In the first years of the decade, after Jefferson’s election in 1800, only the Republicans organized national celebrations. Toward the end of the decade resurgent Federalist organizations and militia companies fueled renewed competition.

The paradoxical purposes of national celebrations are clearly evident in newspaper accounts of the events. The accounts were usually distinctly partisan, reflecting and promoting the developing pluralism in the distribution of information in the 1790s. Republican as well as Federalist newspapers carried attacks against their respective political opponents, accusing them of “bribery, thievery, and treachery of every sort.”

Newspapers documented, amplified, and challenged political positions formulated in the celebrations, and thus testified to the significance given them by editors and readers. Yet most of these accounts also obscured and denied conflicting attitudes toward the events, representing the participants and spectators as being of one mind. For example, the Federalist Philadelphia Gazette described the Fourth of July in 1798 as “celebrated in this city with all the spirit, show, and harmony, which are characteristic of a free and enlightened people, sensible of the blessings of good government, and determined at every hazard, to perpetuate its existence.” At


the same time, the paper printed a description of a Federalist military procession, including the participants' toasts to, among others, George Washington and John Adams. The article reproduced exactly the same factional conflict expressed in the observances, but the Gazette denied that conflict with its claim of national unity. Clearly, newspapers are a valuable resource for an investigation of national celebrations in the early republic. In this paper, I rely primarily on accounts from those Philadelphia newspapers that expressed their political convictions most explicitly.

The celebrational practices of the Pennsylvania Society of the Cincinnati and the independent militia reveal the modes of controversy between Federalists and Republicans. The society's involvement in national celebrations began before the Federalist-Republican conflict, but a brief analysis of its political ritual provides important insight into the later expression of that conflict. Its presence in national rituals linked the Cincinnati's existence to the national cause. In Philadelphia, the Society of the Cincinnati organized the celebration of the Fourth of July in and after 1789. Founded by officers of the Continental Army, the society's name recalled the Roman general who returned to his farm after he saved Rome from destruction. The name gives ample indication of the founders' self-perception. The society sought to raise funds for the support of impoverished officers and provide them with a political voice. Membership in the Cincinnati was restricted to officers and their firstborn sons, opening the society to criticism that its members were trying to form a new American aristocracy. The society's recruitment of a high number

20 Philadelphia Gazette, July 5, 1798.
of its leading members from the political and social elites of the states gave credibility to this reproach and confirmed fears of an uncontrolled merging of military and political power. \(^{22}\) Although the Cincinnati's support for a stronger central government made the society an ally of the Federalists (38 percent of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 were Cincinnati members), it was not a Federalist organization per se. Members could be found who supported Thomas Jefferson as well as Alexander Hamilton. On occasion, the Cincinnati walked with Republicans in the same procession: for example, during the celebration of the Louisiana purchase in 1804. In the 1790s the society continued to support Federalism, but, as Minor Myers argues, by Jefferson's second term the partisan character of the society had disappeared. \(^{23}\)

Myers's argument that the society was finally insignificant as a political lobby is contradicted by evidence of the Cincinnati's strong presence in national celebrations. This presence made the society's "voice" clearly audible. Society members used the Fourth of July as the occasion for their annual meeting when they elected officers for the coming year. As members organized their celebration and dinner, their invocation of service in the Revolutionary War connected the society with the national cause, turned the members into super-patriots and chief interpreters of national identity, and gave prominence and additional symbolic power to their appearance in political ritual. Participation in the celebration distinguished the Cincinnati from other occupational and fraternal organizations that did not formally take part. Such an interpretation gains weight by a look at the composition of the Pennsylvania Cincinnati. The typical member came not from prominent Anglican or Quaker, but from Scottish and Irish families that formed the new elite of the state. \(^{24}\) In this perspective, participation in the Fourth of July celebration (and ultimately the existence of the Cincinnati itself) became an instrument

\(^{22}\) For example, in 1794 Governor Thomas Mifflin and Chief Justice Thomas McKean were president and vice-president of the Pennsylvania State Society

\(^{23}\) Minor Myers, Jr., *Liberty Without Anarchy* A History of the Society of the Cincinnati (Charlottesville, 1983), ix-x, 74-75, 92-93, 123, 141-42, 180-81, 186-87, 190-94, Appelbaum, *Glorious Fourth*, 26, Warren, "Fourth of July Myth," 259-60 Although the Pennsylvania State Society remained one of the most visible chapters of the organization, the general society was in decline by the early 1800s, due to the diminishing interest of the postrevolutionary generation

\(^{24}\) Myers, *Liberty Without Anarchy*, 128
of a new (or aspiring) elite in its competition for influence in Pennsylvania, an elite that used the national cause as one of its means.

Cincinnati celebrations started with a procession from Independence Hall (the customary meeting point for all kinds of urban activities) and included a church service and oration and an afternoon dinner. The society organized a separate publication of the oration and sent its own article to several newspapers. The papers duly published the account and commented upon the sermon and oration commissioned by the society. The dinner took place at the City Tavern or at Oeller's Hotel, which were the largest and "most genteel" places of public resort in Philadelphia. While other dinner parties celebrated in unnamed taverns or met in public gardens, the Cincinnati asserted high social standing and demonstrated affluence by their choice of venue. The connection of the image of elevated social standing with the celebration of American nationality linked its proper observance to the social position of the participants, amply demonstrated by the members' choice of a "genteel" dining place.

The articles submitted by the Cincinnati emphasized the limited number of participants in the procession (the Cincinnati and the independent militia), and, as argued above, elevated the public image of the society and linked its endeavors to the national cause. In 1789, the Cincinnati article expressed "the hope that their services [in the Revolutionary War] will continue to live in the remembrance of all our fellow citizens." The Cincinnati reports (and other descriptions of the event) heightened this effect: they mentioned the spectators and other celebrants only incidentally. The following report, describing the society-organized procession and afternoon dinner, contained one of the few mentions of spectators.


26 Pennsylvania Packet, July 8, 1789. See also the July editions of Pennsylvania Packet, 1790; Pennsylvania Gazette, 1789-93; Pennsylvania Journal, 1789-93; Gazette of the United States (hereafter, Gazette of the U.S.), 1791-93.
The uniform companies of horse and foot paraded under their respective officers, and made a brilliant appearance. The customary manoeuvres were performed in the view of a multitude of citizens [my emphasis], and numerous salutes were fired by the artillery. Select parties [my emphasis] dined at several public places, where patriotism and civic enjoyment presided, and every heart glowed with the joy of the day. According to annual custom, the officers of the militia and the Society of the Cincinnati waited on the Governor with their congratulations.27

Distinguishing between the dinners of “select parties” and the undifferentiated “multitude,” the articles also usually ignored places of “public amusement,” like Gray’s Garden, whose offerings lay outside the “rational and intellectual amusement” that characterized the proper observance of the day as exemplified by the Cincinnati. The society interpreted the events of the day in an inclusive and harmonizing manner, thus disregarding (and counteracting) the implications of its rhetoric. All the different entertainments showed the “usual demonstrations of joy,” and “whether public or private, exhibited one continued concept of national harmony and exaltation.”28

The crucial function of newspapers in representing the celebrations is apparent from accounts of the Cincinnati. Participating in a procession and organizing a dinner were integral parts of the celebration. The procession was a visible statement intended for the larger community, but the dinner was initially invisible, indoors, and enclosed. The private character of a dinner assigned a degree of exclusiveness to the society, distinguishing it from other groups of celebrants. Yet the publication of the dinner’s “proceedings” in the form of a newspaper report, although it reemphasized the dinner’s social exclusivity, assigned a public character and importance to this putatively private occasion and, ultimately, transformed it into a public event. After tracing the involvement of the society in the celebration of the day, the newspapers recorded the toasts proposed during the dinner. Chosen members of the dinner party arranged and controlled the texts and order of the toasts in advance to make their

27 The report appeared in identical form in the Gazette of the U.S., July 5, 1794; Dunlap’s, July 7, 1794; Pennsylvania Gazette, July 9, 1794.
28 Gazette of the U.S., July 6, 1791. A violent dispute between customers of Gray’s Garden was simply ignored. See General Advertiser, July 6, 1791. For other examples see Pennsylvania Journal, July 7, 1790; Gazette of the U.S., July 5, 1794.
"sentiments" acceptable to all guests. No participant would have drunk a toast if he disagreed with the opinion it expressed. Only after all the formal toasts had been proposed and drunk could other individuals rise to offer spontaneous toasts ("volunteers"). Thus toasts offer abundant testimony to political persuasions and affiliations. Among others, the Cincinnati proposed the following toasts on the Fourth of July in 1793:

1. The day—May it be forever a testimonial of triumphant patriotism.
2. The United States—May their union, which originated in a common danger, be perpetuated in a common interest.
4. The President of the United States.
9. The Society of the Cincinnati—May friendship, benevolence and patriotism, the basis of the institution, forever inspire the conduct of its members.
12. The Federal Constitution—May the principles on which it is founded be faithfully administered, and republican laws, men and measures prevail.

Agreement on the character of the celebration and on the political principles underlying it (in this instance, support for the Union and the Constitution) constituted the ideological basis for attendance at a dinner. Publication of the toasts, conventionally an instrument of "elevated" social intercourse, transformed them into political statements and linked the Cincinnati's public appearance to its political convictions.

The Cincinnati invited the independent militia to accompany them in the procession, and the society's articles asserted the importance of their presence for the proper observance of the day. Indeed, militia parades formed a main part of all national celebrations, and the independent militia contributed considerably to their conventions. The Fourth of July became the usual day for the main muster of the militia, with reviews on the commons in the morning and martial exercises throughout the day. A look at the militia system provides insight into the significance of this custom. All men eligible for military service made up the standing militia; they had to buy their own equipment and were required to train periodically. People who did not want to serve in the standing militia could fulfill their military obligation with membership in the volunteer

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30 *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 10, 1793.
militia (and were designated “independents” if they had existed before the passing of the 1793 militia law). Organized into units of cavalry and artillery, the volunteers enjoyed special privileges because the men paid for more expensive equipment. The volunteers’ uniforms, elaborate costumes, and tokens of identity—badges and banners—advertised affluence. Such adornments and displays of affluence enhanced the volunteers’ respectability in the eyes of the audience. Men from Philadelphia’s elite families made up independent companies, such as the First and Second Troop of City Cavalry. From their perspective, social origin and respectable status made them the designated protectors of the republic, preservers of the memory of the American Revolution, and guardians of peace and order in the city. For example, the campaigns against the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794 and Fries’s Rebellion in 1799 drew on independent and volunteer units from Philadelphia. They were a “decidedly partisan force.”


32 For example, the troops included men from such elite social clubs as the Gloucester Fox Hunting Club and the Schuylkill Fishing Company. “In 1774, twenty-two members of the Gloucester Hunt were among the founders of the First Troop of Philadelphia City Cavalry. . . . [Samuel] Morris, the essence of the eighteenth-century Philadelphia gentleman, was captain of the First City Troop in the Revolution, and at the same time governor of the colony in Schuylkill and president of the Gloucester Hunt from its founding till his death in 1812. . . .” E. Digby Baltzell, “Upper-Class Clubs and Associations in Philadelphia,” The Puritan Establishment Revisited (New Brunswick, N. J., 1991), 100-101. A History of the Schuylkill Fishing Company of the State of Schuylkill (Philadelphia, 1889), 404. The material given in note 35 points to similar conclusions.

The distinction between standing and independent or volunteer militia prepared the ground for continued political differences. "Unlike the volunteers, public [standing] companies had neither money nor leisure to practice being soldiers or to stage elaborate parades." Consequently, a comparison of the musters of standing and volunteer companies reminded spectators and militiamen alike of the social inequalities underlying this distinction. Volunteer companies also served as fraternal and political organizations for professionals, merchants, businessmen, and master artisans, as the overlap of volunteer company officership, political activity, and municipal officeholding implies. The regularity with which the volunteers appeared in national celebrations suggests they used military performances to distance themselves from the standing militia (and the audience) and to legitimate their linking of voluntarism, martial display, and patriotism. Similar to the practices of the Society of the Cincinnati, the volunteers' presence in the sphere of national ritual undermined the status of the standing companies and gave the volunteers sole access to a realm within which the definition of national identity was taking place. (Standing companies apparently did not take part in the early parades.) By appearing in parades the volunteers were attempting to associate themselves with the nation and to link the proper observance of the national commemoration to their social position and "respectability." They sought to turn themselves into the chief interpreters of patriotism and national identity.

The attempts by the volunteers and the Society of the Cincinnati to create distinctions were well understood by the public. In a mock invitation from a militia officer published in the Republican newspaper Aurora, other militiamen were called on to celebrate Washington's birthday with the Cincinnati. The "citizen soldiers" should doubtless assist the "noble

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34 Davis, Parades and Power, 51. The 1793 militia law was amended by the state legislature in 1799 and 1801 it demanded five militia musters per year instead of one, plus regular training sessions, Poulson's American Daily Advertiser (hereafter, Poulson's), Oct 11, 1802. This regulation further increased the pressure on the public militia and widened the gap between public and private militia.

35 W A Newman Dorland provides biographical sketches of the captains of the Second City Troop that allow this conclusion, Dorland, "The Second Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry," PMHB 45 (1921), 375-84, 46 (1922), 57-62, 47 (1923), 67-79, 49 (1925), 79-87, 50 (1926), 79-87, 53 (1929), 283-87. The lack of a social history of the urban militia covering the period after 1783 makes statements about the independents and volunteers' political role speculative.
order" in "establishing monarchical fashions." But, the invitation noted sarcastically, they would need to drill properly and get new uniforms to match the superior standards of the Cincinnati and the volunteer militia. "[T]hus equipped, [we] shall not offend the eyes or the noses of the 'self-created' order, with whom [we] shall have the superlative honor to mingle. . . . Every sword glitters anew, and every epaulet shines with fresh lustre on the auspicious day which reminds the world that the king of Great Britain was born." The article attacked and ridiculed the creation of distinctions in "station" and "rank" through greater military training and expensive uniforms. The author understood such displays as attempts to remind the spectators and public militiamen of their supposedly inferior social position.36

The French Revolution, particularly as it was represented in America, had a profound impact on national celebrations in Philadelphia. Most fundamentally, it widened the rift between Federalists and Republicans. Initially, partisans of both persuasions had united in celebrating the success of a kindred revolutionary movement. In 1792, the anniversary celebration of the fall of the Bastille had met with general acclaim, as did the commemoration of the alliance with France in February 1793.37 The French Revolution radicalized notions of "liberty," "equality," and "the rights of man" and endowed these terms with renewed significance for Americans who linked them to current domestic issues. As these ideas politicized ever larger portions of the population, the Federalists retreated in disgust from the prospect, as they saw it, of the destruction of civil liberties and the possibility of America becoming a second France. Toasts and orations that linked the American and French republics, and especially any reference to the similarities between French and American revolutionary doctrines, polarized the participants in the celebrations. Moreover, any commentary on the events in France also became a statement on American domestic affairs, as Republicans and Federalists identified each other as supporters and opponents, respectively, of the French Republic.38 Through the extensive coverage of events in France,

36 Aurora, Feb. 21, 1795. For a similar note see General Advertiser, Feb. 21, 1794.
37 For July 14, 1792, see Pennsylvania Gazette, July 18, 1792; General Advertiser, July 18, 1792; Scharf and Westcott, History of Philadelphia, 1:469. For Feb. 6, 1793, see Dunlap's, Feb. 7, 1793; General Advertiser, Feb. 7, 8, 1793; Scharf and Westcott, History of Philadelphia, 1:472.
which included detailed descriptions of French revolutionary ritual, many items symbolizing the French Revolution found their way into American political ritual. Aside from exclusively Republican festivals to commemorate Republican liberty and the French Republic, references to the French Revolution (or lack thereof) led to distinctive Federalist and Republican observances of the Fourth of July and transformed the character of the celebrations. For the Fourth of July celebration in 1792, the Republican National Gazette predicted "a general rejoicing in every part of the United States, by all who are friends to the French Revolution, and consequently real friends to the revolution in America." Republican dinner parties featured rooms decorated with French and American flags, and diners wore liberty caps and red, white, and blue cockades. Philadelphians drank toasts to "Liberty, equality, and no king," and to "the Sans Souliers of Valley Forge, and Sans Culottes of Jemappe." With the arrival of the French ambassador, Edmond Genêt, in May 1793, the partisan clash over France found a new object of controversy. Republicans celebrated Genêt and the successes of the French Republic. They were outraged by Washington's policy of neutrality which they perceived as an abandonment of France and a dangerous meddling with Great Britain, while Federalists were aghast in the face of Genêt's defiance of the elected American government when he issued commissions for privateers. Federalists rallied around Washington and supported him and his policy in several public meetings.

The spring of 1793 had already seen the establishment of the Democratic Society of Pennsylvania and the German Republican Society in Philadelphia and about forty similar societies in other towns. Their outspoken intention to monitor the government, their support for France, their use of revolutionary rhetoric, and their publication of petitions and addresses to the public immediately drew the wrath of Federalists, who saw these actions as a usurpation of governmental powers. Wrongly accused of being Genêt's creations, in Philadelphia the societies nonethe-

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less organized a welcome ceremony and a public dinner in his honor.\textsuperscript{41} Starting in 1794, the societies staged their own Fourth of July celebrations and dinners, during which they lauded the French Republic and proposed it as a model for the United States. According to Simon Peter Newman, for the Republicans the French Revolution became a "symbol of their continued allegiance to radical republicanism, and their opposition to Federalist policies at odds with these values." The Democratic Society toasted "Our allies and brethren, the Sans Culottes of France—May the temple of liberty which they are erecting have the whole earth for its area."\textsuperscript{42} Additionally, they organized a "Civic Festival," in May 1794, to celebrate the French victory at Toulon. This was one of the high points of Republican attempts to use events in France as an occasion to develop its own celebrational calendar and to popularize its cause. Using all the paraphernalia of national celebrations, the Republicans made a powerful inroad into ceremonial territory held by the Federalists and established an oppositional voice in the realm of political ritual.\textsuperscript{43}

New patterns of newspaper publication accompanied the coexistence of Federalist and Republican celebrations. The deliberate submission of reports detailing individual celebrations of societies and companies replaced the occasional, almost accidental publication of such reports around 1790 (excepting the Cincinnati). The volunteer and independent militias had submitted their toasts for publication only sporadically before 1794; thereafter their reports appeared regularly. The broader participation of standing, mostly Republican, militia companies in Fourth of July celebrations led to an increasing number of such reports. Newspapers with different politics had formerly printed submitted reports irrespective of their content; after 1794, they published only material of particular organizations, according to their political bias. Participants used the newspapers to attack their opponents' celebration and to document and amplify their own celebration and the political message pronounced by

\textsuperscript{41} General Advertiser, May 18, 20, 21, 1793. See also General Advertiser, July 17, 1793, for a republican celebration of Bastille Day that was attended by Genêt. On the societies, see Philip S. Foner, ed., The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800: A Documentary Sourcebook of Constitutions, Declarations, Addresses, Resolutions, and Toasts (Westport, Conn., 1976), 5-40; Baumann, "Democratic-Republicans of Philadelphia," 440-51; Eugene Perry Link, Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800 (New York, 1942).


\textsuperscript{43} General Advertiser, April 28, 29, May 3, 1794.
it. Republicans made the *General Advertiser* (later, the *Aurora*) and the *Independent Gazetteer* their forums for attacks on the government and for expressing their support for the Democratic-Republican societies. Federalists and the volunteer companies turned to the *Gazette of the United States* and the *Philadelphia Gazette*. The more frequent publication of dinner reports demonstrates the standing militia’s increasing awareness of the possibilities of representation. Together with the appearance of the Democratic-Republican societies, the participation of the standing militia, and especially the publication of their reports, are the first large-scale examples of the inroads into Federalist territory made by Republicans. After 1795 toasts were either Federalist or Republican in tone. The former praised the “order and decorum” of the American Revolution and the Constitution, while the latter lauded the French Revolution as the true heir of the American Revolution and interpreted the Declaration of Independence, not the Constitution, as the true embodiment of the Revolution’s principles.45

As noted earlier, Americans continued to employ crowd action to express political discontent, but acceptance of the “respectable” crowd and of rioting had always been conditional. In the 1790s Federalists and Republicans alike questioned the legitimacy of crowds supporting the other party, and both used a political rhetoric that capitalized on fears of excessive crowd action. Still, the harassment of opponents and coercive crowd tactics remained a tool in partisan confrontations, employed by both Federalists and Republicans.46 The celebration of the Fourth of July in Philadelphia in 1795 illustrates the polarization between respectable and disreputable celebrations and how different observances became associated (and dissociated) with the national cause.

44 See the July 1794 issues of *Dunlap’s, Gazette of the U.S.*, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, *Philadelphia Gazette, General Advertiser*. The increasing coverage of Independence Day celebrations is already noted by Link, *Democratic-Republican Societies*, 150-51.
In that year the Fourth of July provided an opportunity for the Republicans to voice opposition to the Jay Treaty, an agreement with England concerning commercial relations and naval rights negotiated by Federalist John Jay. The rapprochement between the United States and Great Britain, the treaty’s secret ratification by the Senate, the concealment of its terms, and the putatively adverse effects on American commercial interests were in themselves sufficient to cause Republican anger. The resulting destruction of the American-French alliance, a symbolically significant union near and dear to the Republicans, provoked even more opposition. In a number of port cities—New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore—demonstrators burned Jay in effigy and threw copies of the treaty into the flames, actions directly reminiscent of political ritual during the colonial and revolutionary era. In Philadelphia the Federalist militia parade and dinners took place in their usual manner. In response the Republican observer reverted to the language of civic ritual to articulate his protest. According to the *Independent Gazetteer*, the day “was celebrated in this city with a funer [e]al solemnity. It appeared more like the interment of freedom than the anniversary of its birth... It seemed more like a day of mourning than that of rejoicing.” The Republican toasts showed support for the French Republic, for the existing treaty between France and the United States, for the ten Senators who voted against ratification of the Jay Treaty, and an explicit rejection of the treaty designed for “the destruction of freedom.” Yet these Republicans framed their disagreement over the treaty in a manner designed to show their respectable status; that is, they used the media of the dinner and toasts to express their opinions. Their means of expression remained within the celebrational language of national events (as established by the Philadelphia elites) and thus mediated and moderated Republican dissent from Federalist national policy.

On the same day, a second procession, also organized by Republicans in Philadelphia, drew on a different means—crowd action—to express political discontent. In the evening a crowd of “shipwrights” and “mechanics” brought an effigy of John Jay from Kensington, one of Philadelphia’s northern suburbs, to the city. On their return to Kensington the participants burned the effigy. The figure of John Jay held in its right

47 *Aurora*, June 25, 27, 1795.
48 *Independent Gazetteer*, July 8, 1795; *Aurora*, July 7, 11, 1795; *Philadelphia Gazette*, July 6, 1795.
hand a pair of scales in which “British Gold” outweighed “American liberty and independence.” In its left hand the figure held a scroll of paper, the treaty, which it extended toward a group of senators who reached out to grasp it. A label coming from the mouth of the figure said: “Come up to my price, and I will sell you my country.” When a company of volunteer militia (commanded by Captain Morrell) appeared to break up the procession, the marchers attacked the company with stones and forced it to flee. Later, participants erected a banner to mark the spot: “Morrell’s Defeat—Jay Burned—July 4, 1795.”

The printed representation of this event is one of the most explicit and noteworthy examples of how newspaper editors subjected a particular occasion to a partisan reading and how their interpretation placed the event into a context designed to transform the event. Two Republican papers printed a narrative of the effigy procession; first published in the Independent Gazetteer of July 6, the Aurora of July 9 copied it without changes. On the same day, the Federalist Gazette of the United States printed this account, added an extensive commentary, and supplied a different version of the events. As described above, the original Republican article used the convention of reports on national celebrations, while inverting its rhetoric. Instead of “joy and festivity,” “sadness” and “solemnity” marked the conduct of the crowd. Furthermore, the author pointed to the procession’s seriousness of purpose and its orderly conduct:

A great concourse of People attended the procession and scarcely a whisper was heard until its return, when shouts of repeated huzzas interrupted the solemnity of the scene. The figure was burnt in Kensington amid the acclamation of hundreds of citizens. Never was a procession more peacably conducted, no noise, no riot. The citizens seemed to vie with each other in decorous behaviour.

This strategy attempted to preempt the customary attack on the “riotous

49 Independent Gazetteer, July 6, 8, 1795; Aurora, July 9, 1795; Stewart, Opposition Press, 200-201; Scharf and Westcott, History of Philadelphia, 1:480-81. The Republican faction in Philadelphia organized two town meetings on July 23 and 25 to discuss the treaty; the second meeting ended with extended crowd action involving the burning of the treaty and the destruction of windows in the houses of the English consul and Federalist senator William Bingham. On the whole, the procession and protest meetings failed to generate the kind of massive popular support anticipated by the organizers. Miller, Philadelphia, 70-74; Baumann, “Democratic-Republicans of Philadelphia,” 518-21.

50 Aurora, July 9, 1795; Independent Gazetteer, July 6, 8, 1795.
mob,” unable (or unwilling) to present its cause according to the rules of respectable society. The text and its rhetoric placed the crowd within this society, making it an event of equal importance to a regular national celebration. Here, the crowd ceased to be a crowd. Additionally, the defense of the communal welfare that underlay colonial crowd action was reiterated, transforming the event into a nonpartisan display by concerned citizens, an event designed to transcend party lines and political bickering. The *Independent Gazetteer’s* reading of the event interpreted the effigy burning as a meaningful and appropriate patriotic display in answer to the “threat” posed by Jay’s Treaty.

The *Gazette of the United States* tried to undermine this argument. After connecting its own text with “truth” and “facts,” it not only dismissed the *Independent Gazetteer’s* text as false but went to great length to explain why the event could not have happened as described. The paper invoked its own interpretation of the Fourth of July to condemn the effigy burning as a violation of the regular, appropriate form of celebration as sanctioned and practiced by the majority of Philadelphians. As the *Gazette of the United States* proclaimed, “either we are strangers to those demonstrations of satisfaction and joy which describe the feelings within, or we never witnessed more heartful happiness than beamed from the countenances of our fellow citizens on that auspicious day.”† The *Gazette* went on to speak of “American citizens” experiencing “heartful happiness” and “satisfaction and joy,” to counterbalance and reject the marchers’ claims to represent the community. The *Gazette’s* “citizens” were deeply “interested in the prosperity of our country,” while participants in the effigy burning became a lunatic fringe, void of any serious purpose. Their action was reduced to disgraceful conduct.

As to the unwarrantable procedure, related in the subsequent part of the paragraph, a short observation on the clandestine manner, in which it was carried into effect, will sufficiently expose the contemptability of its actors. At a very late and silent hour of the night, when the sober citizens had retired to rest, a few idle and ill-intentioned persons, being at once ashamed of their conduct, and afraid of its consequences, crept in fearful silence, along some streets, carrying with them what they called an effigy, which, after this heroic parade—they ventured to burn, in a remote corner, beyond

† *Gazette of the U.S*, July 9, 1795.
the limits of the city.—Whether such conduct comports with the general character of the citizens of Philadelphia, it is quite unnecessary to say.—And we can only observe that, among the best flocks, some scabby sheep will occasionally be found.\textsuperscript{52}

Thus, the rhetorical strategies of the \textit{Gazette of the United States} and the \textit{Independent Gazetteer} become clear. Both reports claimed that “their” procession represented the national welfare. They declared theirs alone as truly American and denied the opposing celebration the status of bearer of national identity.

For comparative purposes, it is useful to discuss the purely partisan celebration of Washington's birthday on February 22. Although Americans in the early republic needed a means of expressing the “necessarily abstract” concept of nationhood, and Washington seemed to have been predisposed to become a national hero instantly, the initial nonpartisan idolization turned into fierce partisan fighting as Republicans came to perceive him not as impartial but as a thoroughly Federalist President.\textsuperscript{53}

Thus, Republicans did not organize or take part in the commemoration of his birthday; they turned instead to the Declaration of Independence as the embodiment of their sentiments. Led by the Society of the Cincinnati, the Federalist elite celebrated Washington's birthday as a national occasion, denying its character as a partisan event. The course of the celebration did not change significantly from 1789 to 1797; it is possible that the lack of ceremonial competition accounted for the lack of change. The procession included civil and military officers, the “principal gentle-

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.

men" of the city, and "strangers of distinction." During Washington's terms as president (1790-97), his presence in Philadelphia determined the ceremonial agenda: well-wishers gathered for a reception at his house, and the volunteer militia went past the house to pay its tribute. After Washington's death, a bipartisan "sham funeral," held on December 26, 1799, and a "Day of National Mourning," observed on February 22, 1800, were the last events for several years held on those days.

"Elegant" entertainment closed Washington's birthday commemoration in the 1790s. Use of the adjective itself sheds light on how institutions and practices, other than the militia system and openly partisan organizations, contributed to (and to some extent maintained) divisions within urban society. For example, the Philadelphia Dancing Assembly, which held its annual ball on Washington's birthday, was one of the city's oldest and most restrictive social clubs. The French visitor Duc de la Rochefoucauld described his impression of a ball he attended in 1797: "The profusion and luxury of Philadelphia on great days . . . are . . . extreme. I have seen balls on the President's birthday where the splendor of the rooms, and the variety and richness of the dresses, did not suffer in comparison with Europe.”

The Assembly limited invitations to their ball; membership became an index of economic and political power and a desired proof of admission to elite society. As Lynn Matluck Brooks argues, “[e] specially among the emerging American elite who became leaders of commerce and culture, opportunities for social display and intercourse became crucial to the establishment of power. . . . With membership by subscription only . . . this social event raised participants to a plane of achievement and visibility that acceptance into the Assembly’s company guaranteed.” In the context of a national celebration such

54 Pennsylvania Gazette, Feb. 24, 1796; Philadelphia Gazette, Feb. 23, 1797. For more examples, see Dunlap's, Feb. 22, 1792; Dunlap and Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser, Feb. 22, 1794.


56 Dunlap's, Feb. 25, 1792; Gazette of the U.S., Feb. 27, 1793; Feb. 24, 1794; Feb. 25, 1795; Philadelphia Gazette, Feb. 23, 1797.

57 Duc de la Rochefoucauld, Travels through the United States of North America . . . in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797 (2 vols., London, 1799), 2:385, quoted in Blumin, Emergence of the Middle Class, 39.

practices of inclusion and exclusion acquired additional meaning. They connected a privileged group with the celebration and with its ritual expression of national identity.

Consequently, whether Washington’s birthday should be celebrated at all as a national event was a disputed question. Criticism of the commemoration focused on the illegitimacy of the putatively “royal” honors given to him in a republic and expressed fears that this phenomenon anticipated a change in the form of government. The following editorial from the Republican *National Gazette* is representative. “The Fourth of July being the birthday of the Americans into a world of freedom and independence, is the only day that should be consecrated to festivity and gratitude in the United States.” Establishing a celebration related to a public servant “is to make the creature greater than the creator—it is to repeat the crime and folly of idolatry. It is an inversion of all order, for in a republic, officers of government are the political servants of the people.” 59 Most critics simply wanted to do away with the event. “May the birthday of our liberty be the only jubilee in the American calendar,” demanded the Democratic-Republican Society in a Fourth of July toast in 1794. 60 Newspaper accounts, or their absence, reflected the divided attitude toward the observance of the day. The *Gazette of the United States* regarded by its opponents as an official government publication, regularly covered the celebrations, as did the Federalist *American Daily Advertiser* and the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. In contrast, the Republican *National Gazette*, the *General Advertiser/Aurora* and the *Independent Gazetteer* ignored the occasion.

The Jay Treaty had improved relations with Britain, but it also provoked French retaliation. Seizure of American ships caused a sharp rise in the stumbling support for John Adams’s administration and its stance against France. Moreover, after April 1798, the government rode a wave of anti-French sentiment in the wake of the XYZ affair, where American emissaries to Paris had faced the demand for a bribe before negotiations

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60 *General Advertiser*, July 5, 1794. For Republican objections to the celebration of Washington’s birthday, see also Newman, “American Popular Political Culture,” 78-80.
could begin. Congress repealed the Treaty of Alliance between France and the United States and authorized American ships to seize French vessels. In this climate the Federalists saw an opportunity to clamp down on the Republican opposition. The resulting Alien and Sedition Acts, which became law in June and July 1798, were designed to deal with French and English immigrants who were perceived as future Republican supporters, to punish the most vocal Republican newspapers and editors for seditious libel, and, more generally, to destroy the Republican opposition to the Federalist government.

In the impassioned atmosphere of a spiralling foreign and domestic crisis, Adams declared May 9, 1798, a “Day of National Fasting.” The proclamation of days of thanksgiving for good harvests and victories in wars or of days of fasting and prayer in the face of difficulties had been a common practice in colonial New England. They were intended to renew the sense of community and to cleanse the body social. Since “the United States of America are at present placed in a hazardous and afflictive situation by the unfriendly disposition, conduct, and demands of a foreign power [France],” Adams adopted the fasting tradition for Federalist purposes and proposed “a day of solemn humiliation, fasting, and prayer,” designed for all citizens to “acknowledge before God the manifold sins and transgressions with which we are justly chargeable as individuals and as a nation,” and to ask for redemption.

Two days prior to the fast, on May 7, 1798, 1,200 self-designated “Young Men of Philadelphia” marched to martial music through the streets of the city. They stopped before Adams’s house to present an address and to offer their services in the apparently imminent war. Adams, wearing a complete military uniform, replied before an audience of suppos-

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61 For widespread support of the government’s stance against France at this time, see Thomas M. Ray, “‘Not One Cent For Tribute’: The Public Addresses and American Popular Reaction to the XYZ Affair, 1798-1799,” Journal of the Early Republic 3 (1983), 389-412.


edly 10,000 spectators. Following the suggestion of William Cobbett, publisher of the Federalist *Porcupine's Gazette*, the "Young Men" decided to wear a black cockade on their hats. Cobbett called it the "American cockade," adding: "by this the President will see whom he can depend upon, and whom he cannot." The black cockade did have a history of its own: many soldiers of the Continental Army had worn it during the Revolutionary War, and later the Society of the Cincinnati adopted a slightly different version. By adopting the cockade, Federalists defined themselves as Americans and, simultaneously, attacked the anti-government stance and the pro-French sympathies associated with the tricolored cockade. During the evenings of May 8 and 9 Republican processions marched in the city wearing tricolored cockades, the customary proof of republicanism. On May 9, the date set for the fast, the day was observed with church services, but Republican and Federalist processions attacked each other in the streets, and several Republicans were jailed after appearing in the yard of Independence Hall with the "French cockade" in their hats. On the same day, a group wearing black cockades smashed windows in Benjamin Franklin Bache's house—as they had two days before. As publisher of the Republican *Aurora*, Bache was an obvious target for Federalist crowd action. His paper was outspoken in its support for a reconciliation with France and in its unrelenting attacks on the Federalist government.

Accounts of the day reveal how contemporaries understood the symbolic power of the two cockades and how the papers reflected and constructed the link between tokens of political allegiance and national identity. The Federalist papers, *Gazette of the United States*, the *Philadelphia Gazette*, and *Porcupine's Gazette*, did not mention the attacks on Bache's house. In their versions the day was spent according to Adams's recom-

64 *Porcupine's Gazette*, May 2, 5, 7, 1798 Cobbett noted the usefulness of celebrations to publicize a political position "The handwriting at the bottom of an address is seen but by few persons, whereas a cockade will be seen by the whole city, by the friends and the foes of the wearer, it will be the visible sign of the sentiments of his hearts, and which prove, that he is not ashamed to avow those sentiments" Ibid, May 4, 1798

65 For a more detailed account of the significance of tricolored and black cockades, see Newman, "American Popular Political Culture," 253-56, 310-16

mendation with "decency" and "solemnity." A sermon supporting the Adams administration linked "anarchy" and disunity to the "atheism" of the non-worshippers, thus placing them outside of the respectable society represented by observers of the fast. The Republican Aurora, in contrast, played up the attack on Bache's house with particular emphasis on the climate that gave rise to the events. "Our city yesterday bore a very disquieting appearance. The passions of our citizens, which have been artfully inflamed by war speeches and addresses, as well as threats and denunciations against the Republicans burst out in such a manner as to endanger the peace of the city."  

The Aurora focused on the different cockades. Despite its American usage in the war against the British empire, the paper understood the black cockade as an aristocratic and British emblem. It deplored the decree by the Federalist government to adopt this cockade as a badge of the army, i.e., for a national body. The decision was a betrayal of the revolutionary legacy and an indication of the monarchical convictions of the Federalists. The Aurora treated Cobbett's recommendation, one made, after all, by "a British subject and a royalist," as the cause of the "tumultuous meetings and riots." With respect to the colors of the French Republic, the paper acknowledged the tricolored cockade's ambiguity as an "American" sign. It suggested avoiding any tokens of faction. "It is earnestly recommended to the Republicans, the real friends of order, not to think of assuming any badge liable to misconstruction." Again, the Republicans appeared to be the "true" supporters and embodiment of the country's interest and welfare.  

In contrast, Porcupine's Gazette defended its endorsement of the black cockade and denied responsibility for the violence:

It has been stupidly asserted, that their [the "Young Men's"] hoisting of the COCKADE was the occasion for this fracas! Monstrous! What! are

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68 Aurora, May 10, 1798. A "Day of National Fasting" proclaimed for March 6, 1799, seemed not to have attracted similar attention; Claypoole's, March 9, 1799; Philadelphia Gazette, April 26, 1799; Aurora, April 27, 1799. Its observation was discontinued.

69 Aurora, May 11, 12, 14, 1798. See also Tagg, Benjamin Franklin Bache, 345.
men to carry about them no sign of their devotion to the cause of their own country, and that too in that country, for fear of giving offense and exciting tumults! In the name of God, who should they offend; who should they excite to tumult? . . . Either there is still a French faction here or there is not: if there is not, who is to be offended and excited to tumult; and if there is, the sooner they are known the better.70

Cobbett divided Federalists and Republicans into "Americans" and the "French faction," respectively. The black cockade performed the same task: supporters of both parties showed their allegiance publicly. By their choice of cockade Federalists and Republicans identified themselves. They could be recognized on the fast day and praised or condemned accordingly.

Supporters of both parties created volunteer organizations with up to 800 men each to represent the parties in public: the "Republican Legion" and "McPherson's Blues." The Blues formed during the preparation for the campaign against the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794. The First and Second City Troop of Cavalry served in the battalion. The Blues regularly accompanied the Society of the Cincinnati and Federalist organizations in national processions. Just as they had objected to the order of Cincinnati, critics of the volunteer system and of the Federalist party repeatedly objected to the overly close association of political with military power. The Blues' existence drew Republican attention to their own lack of a military unit to represent them. Organized in May 1799, the Republican Legion was designed to counteract the Blues' dominance of celebrations and to give the Republicans a military organization. Each side charged that the other battalion was exclusively partisan and, as a result, unable to fulfill its military obligation. Such charges, of course, only increased the rivalry between the companies.71

Celebrational confrontation between the partisan companies increased in 1798 and was transformed between 1799 and 1801. Changes focused on differing views of the Fourth of July and the Republican party's

70 Porcupine's Gazette, May 10, 1798.
commemoration of Jefferson's inauguration on March 4, 1801. The "Quasi-War" of 1798 occasioned a particularly large muster and parade of all militia units. In its troop order the Second City Troop of Cavalry pointed to the special purpose of that year's Fourth of July celebration: in the face of war the celebration "must impress on the mind of every real American the propriety of unanimity in supporting the government of their choice." In a toast they expressed this intention anew: "May the differences among Americans, arising from a diversity of political opinions, be superseded by an universal love and regard for their common country."\textsuperscript{72} McPherson's Blues published an account that pointed to the more impressive appearance of the Federalist volunteers compared to the Republican Legion and gave weight to the Federalist assertion that they represented American interests:

A superior magnificence was added to the scene, by the number, uniform, and discipline of the FEDERAL SOLDIERS—the PHILADELPHIA VOLUNTEER GRENADEIRS, McPHERSON'S BLUES, and the ARTILLERY BLUES. . . . These companies formed a large majority of the whole line; and acquitted themselves with a facility, promptness, and decorum, as necessary to the character of soldiers.\textsuperscript{73}

The Republican volunteer and standing militia companies published their toasts in the \textit{Aurora}. The Southwark Light Infantry proposed a toast to "our Republican Senators and Representatives in Congress—May they guard their constituents against the—intolerable burden of Domestic Tyranny."\textsuperscript{74} The general increase of dinner reports around 1794 was matched by a second wave in 1799 occasioned by the founding of the Republican Legion. Many companies in the battalion submitted minutes of their dinners and toasts. The ever more frequent publication of toasts and troop orders points to the changing attitude of militiamen toward the possibilities of using their military obligation to make a political statement. By now, Republican supporters used newspapers in the same way and as intensively as their Federalist counterparts, which only fueled their rivalry.

In 1799 the Republican Legion and McPherson's Blues, introduced

\textsuperscript{72} Claypoole's, June 26, 1798; July 9, 1798.
\textsuperscript{73} Gazette of the U.S., July 5, 1798.
\textsuperscript{74} Aurora, July 6, 7 (quote), 9, 1798.
by the *Aurora* as the "Republican volunteer militia legion" and the
"Federal volunteers," staged two separate parades using main areas of
the city center. After the musters, the Legion moved from their arsenal
in Spruce Street to Tenth Street, up to Market Street, one of Philadelphia's
main streets, and entered Center Square for further exercises. They went
back down Market Street, finally turning on Second Street, where they
were discharged in front of the Town Hall. The Blues paraded in Market
Street, through Center Square, and back down Market Street. As they
marched, units sheered off in front of their officers' houses. Some of the
Blues' officers owned houses on Market Street, a circumstance testifying
to their high social standing (a fact their report did not fail to mention).75
Center Square formed the main parade ground of Philadelphia. When
the Legion and the Blues paraded in the Square, they tacitly recognized
the obligation to appear in the principal site for military training and
municipal festivities. Both battalions marched up and down Market
Street, with its sidewalks wide enough for a large number of spectators
(like Center Square). The battalions' choice of route once more shows
the significance they attached to the spectators in planning the parade
or procession.

In 1800, in the aftermath of the Republican victory in the New York
State election in early May (the states voted individually all through the
summer and fall to establish the composition of their electoral colleges),
the national Federalist party broke apart over the question of whether
and how to support Adams in his bid for reelection. When it seemed
likely that a Republican would become President, Federalists openly
wondered whether the celebration of the Fourth of July should be contin-
ued at all. From their perspective, voting the Republicans into power
was an attack on the core values of American society and on the Federalist
claims as defender of the national welfare. The Federalists no longer
regarded the observance of Independence Day as a suitable or even
legitimate embodiment of these values, since the Republicans also cele-
brated the day. In any case, the Federalist party in Philadelphia began
to disintegrate after Adams's defeat in the earlier state elections, and it

75 *Aurora*, July 7, 1799. The Republican Legion increased in size, ranging from eighteen to
twenty-two companies organized into two battalions of approximately 1,000 men each. Ibid., July
editions, 1800-1809.
did not celebrate the Fourth of July in 1800. The *Aurora* gleefully expressed its satisfaction over the absence of Federalists and stylized the Republican celebration of the Fourth as a triumph:

On Friday last there was no *federal* procession or parade, save only of a *troop* of twelve *horsemen*.

On Friday last there was no emulation, no rivalry, no congratulation, no joy, seen among those who *call themselves* Federalists; sorrow and disappointment was marked on their countenances, and to them it seemed as if their hearts were clothed in such cloth and ashes as on some day of general mourning.

But

THE DAY WAS CELEBRATED BY REPUBLICANS—AND BY THEM ONLY, with their wonted conviviality and gladness. The Republican Militia Legion never appeared to so great advantage, nor in greater numbers.

In ceding the Fourth of July to the Republicans, Federalists tacitly ceded a great deal more—the heritage of Independence Day and their control over the symbolic representation of the Revolution.

The inauguration of a Republican President gave Republicans in Philadelphia the opportunity to commemorate the “Second Revolution,” a recovery and “victory” of their principles and an expulsion of the counterrevolutionary Federalists from office. On the fourth of March, Inauguration Day, a Republican procession formed at Independence Hall and marched to the German Reformed Church to hear the Declaration

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77 *Aurora*, July 7, 1800. Apart from the Cincinnati celebration, the newspapers carried no reports from Federalist militia parades or dinners. The Republican Legion consisted of fifteen companies, six of which published their toasts. Ibid., July 7, 8, 10, 12, 1800.

78 John Barker, a public militia captain, reflected this view in his troop order for the day. “No event has taken place since the glorious fourth of July, 1776—of such importance, or so congenial to the spirit of that day, as the present. . . . This is a triumph of reason and justice over folly and intrigue, and a phalanx of domestic Tyrants and Sycophants, acting under the cloak of republicanism.” Ibid., March 3, 1801. Republicans celebrated the day in most cities on the east coast. *Aurora*, March 9-23, 1801.
of Independence and an oration. The Republican Legion, twenty com-
nies in all, headed the line followed by the leading military and civil
officers of Pennsylvania, a ship named “Thomas Jefferson” on a float
(recalling the ship “Alexander Hamilton” in New York City’s procession
of 1788), and Republican supporters bearing “Caps of Liberty.” The
ensuing public dinner attracted 2,000 people. A “Liberty Pole” bore the
national flag and individual parties planted “Liberty Trees.”

The committee appointed to organize the celebration took pains to
ensure that the celebration remained within the limits of proper and
acceptable behavior. It appealed to the “Republicans of the City and
County of Philadelphia . . . to exhibit an example of decorum, and
dignified moderation throughout the day.” Anticipating “riot or disorder,”
“illuminations or bonfires,” “colored portraits,” and gatherings of
“crowds” after the ceremony’s end, the committee urged Republicans to
abstain from all such actions. The Federalist newspapers continued to
attack the Republican assertion of respectability, but they were refuted
by an editorial in the Aurora that pointed to the peaceful observance of
the day as an indication of Republican decency and trustworthiness. “It
is worthy to remark, that not only the cavalcade excited the admiration
of our political opponents, but that they admit that good order was
preserved by the democrats on this occasion.”

The Aurora published the order of procession, the texts of all the songs
and prayers composed for the day, and reprinted the oration. Its coverage
of the event exceeded that on comparable occasions, stressing the day’s
importance. The paper employed the customary language for describing
national celebrations. It emphasized the exceptional scale of the celebra-
tion, comparing it with the Grand Federal Procession of 1788. The
account interpreted the large turnout of Philadelphians who wanted to

79 Aurora, March 6, 7, 1801, Scharf and Westcott, History of Philadelphia, 1 508 In 1802 and
1803, the Republican Legion organized small parades Companies from the Republican Legion
and the public militia celebrated the anniversary until 1810, Aurora, March 1802-10

80 Aurora, March 2, 6, 1801 The paper amplified this assertion by the number of published
toasts of Republican dinner parties. It took the paper two weeks to publish the reports submitted
by the public and Republican militia, the publisher did not fail to mention the “astonishing
number” of submitted articles. For comments on the large number of articles see ibid, July 7,
1802, July 6, 1803. For Federalist assertions of disreputable behavior by Republicans during
the inauguration celebration, see Philadelphia Gazette, March 5, 6, 7, 1801, Poulson’s, March 9,
1801, Gazette of the U S, March 9, 1801
take part in the procession as evidence of the universal support for the cause expressed by the celebration. It also put the celebration into a wider context, regarding the fourth of March not only as a change in government but as a return to the true principles of the Revolution, and ultimately, a return to the unifying cause of the independence movement. Finally, the *Aurora* declared: “Our days of triumph:—the Fourth of July, 1776, Independence declared; the Fourth of March, 1801, Independence preserved.”81

Jefferson’s victory turned the Fourth of July 1801 into a Republican festival, intended as proof of the Republican embodiment of national identity and unity. The Republican procession surpassed the scale of the inauguration celebration: “The [Republican] Legion, Horse, Foot, and Artillery assembled more numerously than on any former occasion; and several new companies joined for the first time.” The *Aurora* declared that “the festival was celebrated on Saturday with the accustomed gladness, by the Republicans of Philadelphia and the neighborhood—that who call themselves Federalists were invisible.” Meanwhile, the Federalist *Gazette of the United States* noted only that “on Saturday last the Anniversary of AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE was celebrated in this city.” The paper’s sparse coverage revealed that none of the Federalist organizations had paraded that day. The *Gazette* explained: “It is not surprising that the friends of . . . [Adams’s] administration did not dare to show themselves on the festive occasion, or, in the words of the *Aurora*, ‘were invisible.’ . . . It will not be strange if in a short time Federalists should not only neglect, but detest the festival.” From the Federalist perspective, the Fourth of July celebration no longer constituted an appropriate expression of “Americanism.” In 1801 a celebration would be disrespectful of the revolutionary heritage and of the principles the day had commemorated in the 1790s.82

It is commonplace to classify as one period political developments in the early republic from 1789 to 1801. It is revealing, however, to look at the years from 1801 to 1815 and compare briefly the activities of newly-formed Federalist organizations with earlier festivities. Notwith-

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81 *Aurora*, March 6, 12 (quote), 1801.
82 *Aurora*, July 7, 1801. *Gazette of the U.S.*, July 9, 10, 1801.
standing the schism within the Republican party in and after 1804, the Fourth of July remained a Republican festival up to 1810. In the years after 1801, the *Aurora* described the ever-greater size of the celebrations, the impressive appearance of the Republican Legion, and the refusal of the Federalists to attend. Between 1810 and 1815, however, several newly-founded Federalist organizations started to observe Washington's birthday and the Fourth of July. The Sons of Washington (1808-12), the American Republican Society (1809-11), the Washington Association (1811-14), and the Washington Benevolent Society (1812-late 1820s) claimed to devote their existence to the observance of the "principles" of Washington's government, and they urged "every true friend of Washington" to unite with them in the celebrations. The organizations celebrated Washington's birthday without competition from Republican observances, but on the Fourth of July they faced the usual Republican processions. Thus the situation to some extent resembled that of the late 1790s.

Support for the faltering Federalist party was a major objective of these societies. Founded in response to the Democratic-Republican societies, the new organizations were part of the Federalist regrouping after the defeat in the election of 1800. Most members of the Benevolent Society, for example, can be identified as "Young Federalists," a group within the Federalist party that unsuccessfully tried to reorganize the party and to give it more popular appeal. The societies met on Washington's birthday and the Fourth of July, combining their organizational affairs

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82 "On no occasion has there been so little of a disposition manifested by the anti-republican party, to insult the joys or to annoy the conviviality as on this occasion" *Aurora*, July 7, 1802.
83 For a similar comment see ibid., July 7, 1806.
86 In print, however, the Fourth remained a Republican holiday. The *Aurora* continued to publish the toasts of public and Republican militia companies, outnumbering accounts in Federalist papers *Aurora*, July editions, 1810-15.
87 See Fischer, *Revolution of American Conservatism*, 332-53, for a description of the Philadelphia members that distinguishes "old" and "young Federalists."
with the celebrations in an attempt once again to dissolve the distinction between partisan politics and national festivals. Although the societies stressed their defensive character, they carried through an undisguised attack on the Republican government. At the same time, the president of the Sons of Washington claimed that his organization was nonpolitical. "Divested of every feeling but that of patriotism, burning with zeal for our country's happiness and glory, we claim here no political distinction but what our name imports. We avow no political creed but devotion to the maxims of our beloved and lamented Father."  

Multiple membership connected the organizations with one another, to the Society of the Cincinnati, and to several volunteer and independent militia companies. The Cincinnati and the societies pointed to these links in their newspaper articles. They exchanged delegations, which symbolically tied the organizations together and connected the embodiment of the fight for independence with the self-designated heirs and "true representatives" of Washington's heritage. The continuous reference to Washington also expanded the means and meanings of national celebrations in significant respects. The Sons of Washington placed a "transparency of Washington" outside the restaurant or hall that lodged their afternoon dinner. In this instance, Washington was more than an abstract being worshipped in a toast, the icon was a powerful visual means of identifying the societies with Washington's legacy. The images were instrumental in carving out a niche in the celebrational realm in opposition to the Republican government. The Washington Benevolent Society, the most numerous and influential organization in Philadelphia (about 3,000 members) purchased a hotel and tavern and named it "Washington Hall." This made the society one of the most visible political organizations in the city. Moreover, the societies began to publish articles detailing their celebrations, with special references to the expensive style of their observances.

88 Poulson's, Feb. 25, 1813; Relf's Philadelphia Gazette, Feb. 25, 1813; James Milnor, "Oration before the Sons of Washington," Poulson's, Feb. 27, 1811.

89 Poulson's, Feb. 25, 1813; Feb. 26, 27, July 7, 1810; Feb. 25, 26, July 6, 8, 10, 1813. For the transparencies, see Poulson's, Feb. 26, July 7, 1810; Feb. 27, 1811; Feb. 25, 1812. This is not to say that the societies were the first to introduce pictorial representations of Washington in the early republic.

90 Fischer, Revolution of American Conservatism, 118-19. For articles, see Poulson's, July 7, 1810; July, 9, 10, 1813; July 11, 1814.
The new Federalist societies included the independent and volunteer militias in their celebrations. During the celebration of Washington's birthday in 1814, the First and Second Troop of City Cavalry and other volunteer companies gathered for their musters and parades on Center Square, then marched to Washington Hall to accompany the societies in their procession. The society members wore badges and medals, pictures of Washington and of the American eagle, and carried the United States flag and the banners of the societies in the procession. Thus, an elaborate procession filed into the city center, consisting of approximately 2,000 participants. The procession from the hall to the Olympic Theater did not take the shortest way, but passed through most of the main streets in the core area between Arch and Spruce, and Front and Eighth streets before they arrived at the theater.\(^91\) The societies calculated the route to achieve the utmost public impact. Washington's birthday was not a regular muster day for the public militia (as was the Fourth of July), so the spectators saw only the musters and parades of the volunteer companies. This takeover of the city during their procession recalls the practices of the volunteer militia in the late 1790s. Additionally, the spectators may have read the announcements of the societies, most of which included not only information on the course of the procession but stated its intentions. "It is hoped that every friend to the memory of WASHINGTON, will unite with the Washington Benevolent Society, in the Celebration of this solemn festival. It is only by a return to his policy and to his maxims of government, that our Country can be restored to that elevated standing, on which Mr. Jefferson found it."\(^92\) With the Republicans in control of the government, and by their refusal to attend celebrations of Washington's birthday, its observance again became a force in the conflict between the partisans.

In summary, early republican Philadelphia witnessed a period of conflicting definitions of what the republican society and politics should look

\(^{91}\) Poulson's, Feb 22, 25, 26, 1814, Pennsylvania Gazette, March 2, 1814 For similar processions see Poulson's, July 5, 1813, July 2, 8, 1814, July 4, 1815, Relf's Philadelphia Gazette, July 8, 1815 The numbers participating for other years (according to the societies) were 500 (1810), 1,000 (1813), 2,000 (1815) Poulson's, Feb 24, 1810, Feb 25, 1813, Pennsylvania Gazette, March 1, 1815

\(^{92}\) Poulson's, Feb 20, 1814
like, and political ritual and celebrations played a key role in that process. Indeed, the public realm of national festivals figured as one of the areas where the symbolic construction and expression of national identity took place. I have argued that between 1790 and 1815 a single American national identity did not evolve among Philadelphians. Rather, it remained fragmented. The ritualistic observances of national celebrations were attempts to legitimate the participants' aspirations to represent the nation by using a means that created an image of their own unity, and, ultimately, of national unity. Although the celebrants used the events to express concern about national political issues and to attack political opponents, the reports consistently pointed to the "unity," "order," and "mutuality" of the assemblies. Each party explicitly denied its opponent the status of bearers of national identity.

Even when they attacked political adversaries, newspaper reports created the fiction of general and unanimous participation of the "respectable" citizens in the depicted celebrations, usually in support of that paper's political stance. To some extent, these reports popularized notions of citizenship originated by a small but influential section of the population that sought to link the proper celebration of national holidays with their own social standing. Philadelphia elites observed national ceremonies with processions and socially exclusive festivities designed to show their fellow citizens who was fit to represent the American public and to define notions of American citizenship. The increasing participation of Republican supporters, however, organized in their own militia units, opened up a process of redefinition that questioned this restrictive construction and supplied its own version of republicanism and American citizenship.

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