

# The Early Republic 1789–1829

The Early Republic began in 1789 with the election of George Washington as the nation's first president and with the enactment of the American Constitution. This was the beginning of the American republic.

A **republic** is a government in which the supreme power resides in a body of citizens entitled to vote and is exercised by elected officers and representatives responsible to them and governing according to law. The beginning of the era (the presidencies of Washington and Adams) was called the Federalist Years because many important men argued for a strong federal government.

The Early Republic period was characterized by the United States' struggle to establish itself as a nation politically, economically, and socially. The new country also wanted to be viewed as culturally separate from England.

Even within the United States there were deep cultural and economic differences. The nation's people lived in separate states and regions that were united under one government.

This period saw the rise of three regions: North, South, and West. Their economies and outlooks were distinct and different. The North depended on manufacturing, and it favored taxes on imports. The South depended on agriculture, and it was opposed to taxes on imports. The West was growing in population and character. Soon the West would depend on ranching and mining. The West supported taxation for internal improvements and was interested in the sale of public lands.

While the period known as the Early Republic ended in 1829, this was a period in U.S. history that experienced great change in response to a great need for change.

## Important Events during the Early Republic

1798 Eli Whitney invented mass production and interchangeable parts. Five years earlier, he had invented the cotton gin. This increased cotton production so that the United States became the world's leading producer of cotton.

1807 Robert Fulton built the first successful steamboat, which both improved transportation time and cut the costs of transportation. This made it easier and more efficient to haul goods and people over water than over land.

1825 The Erie Canal, the longest canal in America, was built. The Erie Canal made transportation possible from the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes. This enabled routes for people and goods that did not involve crossing the mountains.

1828 Noah Webster published his first *American Dictionary of the English Language*, which showed that the English language spoken in the U.S. was different from the English language spoken in Great Britain. With the publication of this book, the United States took its position of being culturally separate from Great Britain.

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