



Places in Time

SUMMER 2021

Negative Campaigning in Early Presidential Politics

By Brian Armstrong

After the last two elections, many Americans feel that the country has descended into its worst time period concerning negative campaigning. Many people feel that the personal attacks were awful and there was little discussion of the issues. We often look to our founding fathers at times of division and say these wonderful men who created the Constitution would be much better candidates and leaders than the people running from either party today. The truth about these early elections and these candidates is a little different than the myth.

The first two American presidential campaigns involving Washington were tame civil affairs. Washington observed the growth of factions in the political landscape and spoke out against these new parties in his farewell address. He felt that when people voted according to party loyalty, rather than the common interest of the nation, a “spirit of revenge,” would enable the rise of “cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men” who would “usurp for themselves the reins of government; destroying afterwards the very engines, which have lifted them to unjust dominion.”¹

Washington was correct in his warning since things got ugly with the Adams/Jefferson election of 1796 which was the first contested election. The two men had been allies and friends during the years of the American Revolution and the drafting of the Constitution. Later their opposing ideas about the power of central government versus state rights caused a political division which came to a boil.

Presidential candidates did not need to throw mud in the early days; since party newspapers did that work for their candidates. These rags make CNN, MSNBC and FOX News seem tame and unbiased. The Jefferson faction accused President Adams through James Callender, a partisan newspaper editor, of having a “hideous hermaphroditical character, which has neither the force and firmness of a man, nor the gentleness and sensibility of a woman.”² They called him “a fool, a hypocrite, a criminal, and a tyrant.”³ They also said Adams was a monarchist who wanted to attack France to help England.

Adams’ men called Jefferson “a mean-spirited, low-lived fellow, the son of a half-breed Indian squaw, sired by a Virginia mulatto father.”⁴

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1 <https://www.history.com/news/george-washington-farewell-address-warnings>

2 <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/hideous-hermaphroditical-character-spurious-quotation>

3 <https://www.cnn.com/2008/LIVING/wayoflife/08/22/mf.campaign.slurs.slogans/>

4 <https://respectandrebillion.com/stories/adams-jefferson/>

President's Message

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your renewals of membership in the Lawrence Historical Society. Your dues make the publication of the newsletter possible as well as events and the care of the Brearley House. At this time we have opened the Brearley House for tours on the third Sunday from 2:00-4:00 pm with guided tours by our knowledgeable docents.

As we look toward the fall, we again will offer the Mary Tanner Lecture. Look on our website for more information about the topic and the speaker. We are looking forward to seeing you in person and hearing your insights about the history of Lawrence.

Best wishes,

Kathie Meeker-Cohen
President

About Places In Time

The mission of *Places in Time* is to serve members of the Lawrence Historical Society (LHS) by:

- educating them about the history of Lawrence Township; and
- informing them of the activities of the Society.

Comments, questions, or submissions should be directed to sent to webmaster@thelhs.org.

Deadlines for submissions are as follows:

December 15th (Winter issue)

March 15th (Spring issue)

June 15th (Summer issue)

August 15th (Fall issue)

Preferred length of submissions is 800-1000 words for feature articles and 400-500 words for reviews. LHS does not provide a commission for submitted works.

Places in Time accepts advertisements from businesses which provide services that would be of interest to LHS membership. Rates and other related information can be obtained by contacting the Society at webmaster@thelhs.org

Places in Time is published quarterly by the Lawrence Historical Society. Back issues are available at the LHS website -www.TheLHS.org. We can be contacted at the following address: webmaster@thelhs.org This program is made possible, in part, by a grant from the Mercer County Division of Culture and Heritage, in partnership with the New Jersey Historical Commission, Division of Cultural Affairs/ Department of State. An advertisement (or sponsor recognition) appearing in *Places in Time* does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation of the advertiser's product or service by LHS or *Places in Time*. *Places in Time* and LHS assume no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

Lawrence High Senior Kira Eng Wins 2021 Nash Scholarship

Each year, the Lawrence Historical Society presents The Winona Nash History Award to an outstanding high school senior who has demonstrated excellence in history and is actively involved in extracurricular activities, as determined by the faculty.

Kira Eng is this year's winner.

Due to a State of Emergency in force on the presentation date, the 2021 Nash award was presented virtually by Lawrence Township Historian and Lawrence Historical Society Board of Trustees member Brooke Hunter. Brooke is also Associate Professor of History and Director of American Studies at Rider University.

Kira is an extraordinarily talented young woman with cross curricular strengths and academic interests in History, English, Biology, Chemistry and Music. She is a student with excellent verbal and written skills.

A natural leader, Kira was chosen to be part of a select group of LHS students, teachers and administrators that promote conversation, awareness and action around issues of race, gender and class, and the underlying power of privilege and access. Kira has shined in this capacity, setting herself apart as a leader amongst leaders in an initiative that is intellectually challenging, emotionally charged, and sensitive in nature.

Kira is a standout in extracurricular activities as well. She is a member of STEM Academy, International Alliance, Theater Company, Tri-M National Music Honors Society, Student Leadership, the Arts & Humanities Academy, and Unity Project. The Unity Project is a club that spreads diversity and inclusivity at Lawrence High School. She was nominated by teachers to be a part of this organization. She also served on the planning committee for the annual Black History Month celebration and served as Manager for the Showcase Display and Band Setup/ Breakdown functions.



Kira is a Teen Staff Writer at an award-winning magazine and website written by teens for teens to provide young people with unfettered access to honest and accurate reproductive health information. Kira's articles have been published on the magazine's online forum as well as their national magazine. Her writing is celebrated as clear, crisp, and full of voice.

Kira's touch can be felt in nearly every aspect of Lawrence High School's community. From the Peer Leadership Program, to the performing arts community to the STEM Academy, Kira is a leader among her peers. Kira is an academic standout, ranking well in the top 10% of her highly competitive senior class. Her academic and extracurricular success is a natural product of her intellectual curiosity and determination.

The Society is proud to recognize this outstanding student. Kira's award includes a mounted certificate, a book on history and a check for \$300.00. This Fall, Kira will begin her college studies at Temple University.

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Jefferson was also branded a “weakling, an atheist, a libertine, and a coward.”¹ Martha Washington told a clergyman that Jefferson was “one of the most detestable of mankind.”² Jefferson was also linked to the violence of the French Revolution.

Each of these elections created Constitutional tests. The first problem came in 1796 when the two biggest electoral vote tallies for president went to Adams (71) and Jefferson (68). Adams became president and Jefferson vice president (VP). Due to their political differences this would be the same today as Biden being elected president and Trump serving as VP. During the term, it was constant conflict between two visions for the new nation with the VP having tremendous popularity and influence.

After four years of this tension, the election of 1800 was conducted with running mates that would gather the same number of electoral votes to ensure a unified government. The problem in 1800 was that both Jefferson and his running mate Aaron Burr received the same number of electoral votes (73) and the Constitution did not provide a solution to this issue since the positions were not voted separately. Burr supporters insisted that he had as much claim to the office of president as Jefferson according to the Constitution. Burr was also accused of campaigning for the presidency himself despite being a Jefferson’s running mate.

The House of Representatives had to choose the winner. After casting 35 ballots, the Federalist Congressmen continued to back Burr and the Democratic-Republican Congressmen backed Jefferson. Finally, Alexander Hamilton convinced several Federalists to switch their support to Jefferson, giving Jefferson a victory on the 36th ballot. The tension of these elections led to a feud between former friends Adams and Jefferson that took decades to fix. Also, the feud between Hamilton and Burr which would lead to a fatal duel was intensified by this election. The 12th amendment was passed in 1804 separating the President and Vice President voting by the electoral college which ensured a more orderly voting process.

Two calm decades would pass before the bitter presidential campaigns of the 1820s. The first two Jackson elections were as ugly as 1796 and 1800. This time Adam’s son, John Quincy Adams, would give and receive negative campaign barbs. Adams was accused of acting as pimp to provide American woman to the Czar when Ambassador to Russia and using the White House pool table for gambling. Jackson, who had a fierce temper, would be called a murderer due to the stories of deaths from dueling and military punishment by hanging under his command. His wife was called a bigamist and his mother was called “a prostitute brought to US by British soldiers and later married to a mulatto man.”³ Adams won the first contest in 1824 with the help of Henry Clay’s “Corrupt Bargain” to add enough electoral votes to win in the House of Representative but Jackson soundly defeated Adams in 1828 making it the second one term Adams presidency.

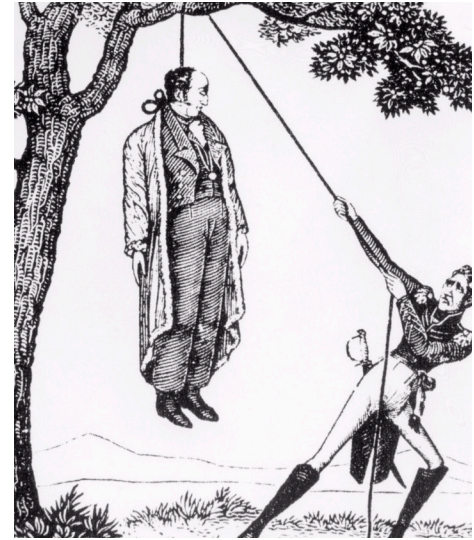
More negative campaigns would follow during the next two centuries of presidential elections, however, these early campaigns were in a league of their own for mudslinging and personal attacks.

1 <https://www.cnn.com/2008/LIVING/wayoflife/08/22/mf.campaign.slurs.slogans/>

2 <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/82535/why-martha-washington-called-visit-thomas-jefferson-one-worst-experiences-her-life>

3 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/books/chap1/andrewjackson.htm>

Political cartoon of Andrew Jackson hanging John Quincy Adams. The cartoon is presumed to have appeared after the 1828 election and carried the text “Jackson is to be President, and you will be HANGED.”





Sources

- Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The First Presidential Contest: 1796 and the Founding of American Democracy* (2013)
- “A Revolution of 1800 After All: The Political Culture of the Earlier Early Republic and the Origins of American Democracy”. Jeffrey L. Pasley University of Missouri-Columbia.
- Dubin, Michael (2002). *United States Presidential Elections, 1788-1860*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc. pp. 42–51. ISBN 9780786464227.

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The Winona Nash award is given annually in honor of long-time Lawrence Township resident, Historian and LHS member Winnie Nash. A resident of Lawrence Township from 1941 until her death, Nash served as the Lawrence Township Historian, was instrumental in establishing the Lawrence Historical Society, and worked tirelessly in collecting and archiving thousands of documents, photographs, and artifacts as part of the township’s historical collection. She also served as a commissioner for the Delaware Raritan Canal Commission.



**The Lawrence Historical Society
Winona D. Nash History Award is
presented to a senior who has
demonstrated excellence in the study of
history and is actively involved in
extracurricular activities.**

History in the Pages

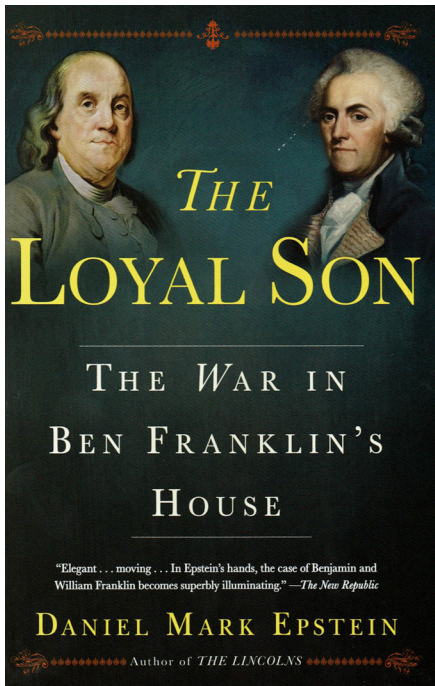
The Loyal Son: The War in Ben Franklin's House

Daniel Mark Epstein, Random House Publishing Group, 2017, 464 pp.

Review by Judy Salcewicz

If opposites attract, are two talented, eloquent, charming, and ambitious individuals destined to repel? This seems to be true in the relationship of Benjamin Franklin and his illegitimate son, William. The war for American Independence sets the scene for the war between Ben and William. Their narrative reads like a mini-series yet to be made and reflects some of today's political divisions.

Mr. Epstein details scenes from the life of Benjamin Franklin that flesh out the two-dimensional figure in most history books. The motivations and rationalizations behind the actions of Ben and William contribute to the author's fair treatment of the pair. Detailed descriptions of family life, homes, and the brutality of the war help to immerse the reader in the period.



William was an accomplished officer in the French-Indian War who worked with Ben to bring peace with Indian tribes in the Northwest. He accompanied his father to England where he completed his education and became a lawyer while nursing his father through a lengthy illness and serving as Ben's political liaison. Ben's leverage helped William become an influential colonist who was made the royal Governor of New Jersey.

Unlike many of the colonial governors, William was devoted to his role. He strove to unite the divided East and West Jersey and continued to voice his moderate argument for loyalty to the Crown long after other governors deserted their posts and fled the country. William's unwavering loyalty may have been influenced by greed and hopes for a generous land grant that would make him rich and free from the censure of a father who kept meticulous records of every penny he'd spent on his son and reminded William of how much he owed.

Benjamin became a strong supporter of the patriot cause in response to war atrocities. His efforts to win William's allegiance failed. Even though many suspected the two of collusion, their contact was severed as each toiled for opposing sides of the war.

Benjamin traveled to France where he tipped the balance by persuading France to join the war. William believed that he could devise a plan that would subdue the radicals and bring peace. He harbored little ill will for his father and said that, if his father succeeded in lighting a fire in the colonies he hoped he'd run away from the flames. William was placed on house arrest when the Patriots took over New Jersey. Not one to be idle, he worked behind the scenes and was brought to trial in front of the Reverend John Witherspoon, President of Princeton who responded to William's arguments, "He has made a speech worthy of his illegitimate birth and refined grammar-school education." William was confined to a cottage in relative comfort until his continued collusion would land him in a horrible prison room with only a chamber pot and straw on the floor. He was

denied permission to visit his dying wife. After almost a year in this extreme prison, his health declined and he became a shadow of his former self. He was released. It was assumed he would go to England. He didn't. He violated his parole and became the leader of a group of Tory marauders, something his father couldn't understand or forgive.

The end of the Revolutionary War did not end the war between the Franklins. William fled to England where he petitioned for and eventually received a pension. Benjamin insisted that William repay his debt by signing over all of his properties in America to his illegitimate son, Temple. Ben, Temple's grandfather, had indulged the young man to such a degree that he lived on his inheritance without ever finding a profession or job. William's properties were worth much more than he owed his father. Perhaps he was hoping for a reconciliation. It never came.

I've only skimmed the surface of this well-researched book filled with many insights and information about colonial New Jersey and two of our prominent fore-fathers. If you'd like to learn more about Ben Franklin, the flawed but talented man, and his equally flawed and talented son, I can recommend this book without reservation.

Judy Salcewicz, a Lawrence Historical Society board member, lives, writes and gardens in Lawrence. Her work has been published by Chicken Soup for the Soul, The Kelsey Review, and other publications.

Port Mercer Canal House Improvements

Anyone driving along Quakerbridge Road lately may have noticed the new shine to the Society's other property – the Port Mercer Canal House.

The building has been closed to the public for several years due to issues with its septic system. Progress has been made, albeit slowly, and the Society is hopeful that the remaining work will be made before the end of this year. While awaiting installation of the new system, the Society has been busy with other work. Most recently it had the house power-washed, removing years of mildew and grime.

“The Canal House is an important symbol of Lawrence Township's connection to the Delaware & Raritan Canal,” stated the Society's president, Kathie Meeker-Cohen. “I'm thrilled with the improvements we and the NJ Park Service have been making to the property and look forward to the day when we can once again host public events in the Canal House.”

The Society has maintained the house for the New Jersey State Park Service since the 1970s. You can read more about the history of the Canal House on the Society's website at <https://www.thelhs.org/port-mercercanal-house>

The Lawrence Historical Society
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Return Service Requested



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Make check payable to: The Lawrence Historical Society, PO Box 6025, Lawrence Township, NJ 08648
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