

Narrator:

In 1808, the presidential election was a contest between Democratic-Republican James Madison and Federalist Charles Cotesworth Pinckney. By then, the Federalist Party was in decline, and the election results reinforced that reality. Madison easily defeated Pinckney by an electoral vote count of 122 to 47.

While Madison was new to the presidency, the problems he faced were not new to the United States or to Madison. Several issues that had developed during Jefferson's presidency would have to be dealt with by Madison as President.

One of the problems that Madison inherited from Jefferson involved West Florida. When Jefferson bought the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803, he thought that it included West Florida. The Spanish thought differently. They had owned the Florida's since 1783 and did not consider West Florida to be part of the Louisiana Territory when they gave it to France.

Another problem involved relations between the Native Americans of the Indiana Territory and the settlers in Ohio. Their interactions had grown increasingly hostile as more and more settlers pushed into Native American lands. These tensions would eventually devolve into armed conflict.

Perhaps the biggest problem inherited by Madison, though, was the continued disruption of American trade by the warring British and French. The navies of both nations stopped American trade ships and seized any cargo headed for their European rivals. By the time President Madison took office, neither the Embargo Act nor the Non-Intercourse Act had proven effective in convincing either country to recognize American neutrality and respect their shipping rights.

While acts of Congress had little effect on the British or French economies, they had a devastating effect on the American economy. Both the Embargo Act and the Non-Intercourse Act cut off trade to America's largest trading partners - Britain and France. Without this trade, American businesses suffered. As president, Madison would have to figure out how to strengthen the American economy in the face of hostility abroad.
