In honor of a 2008 campaign year full of political firsts, this presentation looks back at some of the other FIRSTS in our country’s presidential campaign history.
First Federalist to become president: John Adams, 1792

Also first father and son to be presidents: John Quincy Adams, 1824

John Adams was George Washington’s vice president. Washington was elected twice by the framers of the Constitution and had no party affiliations. By 1796, when John Adams became president, the Federalist party had been formed. He ran against Thomas Jefferson, a member of the newly formed Democratic-Republican party.
John Adams, engraving and original frame, 1799.

The earliest types of photographs were at least 40 years in the future. Consequently most people did not know what their president looked like.
First Democrat to become president: Andrew Jackson, 1828

Slowly, the parties of today were forming. In 1828, The Democratic-Republican party shortened its name to Democratic Party. When Jackson, “Old Hickory”, was elected male suffrage had increased from 359,000 to 1,155,400 because voting rights were no longer restricted to property-holders. Aware of a new force in the electorate, Jackson declared “the president is the direct representative of the American people.”
Jackson plate, 1829

Before mass communication, household objects were effective ways of reminding people of their elected president.
Andrew Jackson – bodkin

This needle with a large eye and blunt point was used to draw tape or ribbon through a hoop or hem. “Elected President 1829” is on the other side of the shaft.
First Whig to become president:

William H. Harrison, 1840

Also first president to die in office

After John Adams, no Federalist had been president. The party name was changed, and from 1836 to 1852 members were known as the Whigs. Harrison was their first successful presidential candidate. Standing in a driving rain, he gave the longest inaugural address. He caught cold and died a month later.
William Henry Harrison, 1840
Dinner ware.
After Andrew Jackson’s presidency, candidates had to appeal to the people. Harrison, born on a Virginian plantation, used a fictitious log cabin and cider barrel as symbols in his campaign to create a myth about his humble origins.
Wm. Harrison

Sulphide broach with brass frame. Men wore political broaches on their lapels.
First presidential candidate from the Republican party:

John C. Fremont, 1856

The ancestry of the Republican party traced its lineage through the Federalists to the Whigs. In 1856, it officially became the Republican party and John C. Fremont, a popular explorer and soldier became its first presidential candidate. The election revolved around the powder keg of slavery. The Democratic party denied Congress the power to interfere with slavery in new territories. The newly-formed Republican party urged Congress to prohibit slavery in new territories. This position prohibited slavery from spreading, but allowed it in states where it was already established.
First president of the Republican party:  
Abraham Lincoln, 1860,  
also first president to be assassinated.

Lincoln was a president of many legislative firsts. To preserve the Union during the Civil War, he took steps which were constitutionally questionable but effective. He issued the Emancipation Proclamation without Congressional ratification. James McPherson said it best:

“The United States went to war in 1861 to preserve the *Union*; it emerged from war in 1865 having created a *nation*.”
Rare flag naming Lincoln’s first VP: Hannibal Hamlin, 1860. Adding lettering to a flag is illegal today.
Lincoln shaving mug
Lincoln, 1865
The black ribbons signify that this is a mourning pin.
Photography had recently advanced from images printed on metal sheets to images like this one which was printed on paper.
First campaign with dual party candidates:

Presidental candidate, Abraham Lincoln, Republican
Vice President candidate, Andrew Johnson, Democratic

1864

The Civil War was dragging on. Consolidating a Republican and a Democratic candidate under the name of “Union Party” was the only hope Lincoln’s administration felt that they had for re-election.

It worked.
First pairing of a Republican, Lincoln, with a Democrat, Johnson, as running mates.
First president to be impeached:
Andrew Johnson, Democrat, 1868

Questions over Reconstruction pitted the president against factional divisions within Congress. Johnson did not have Lincoln’s instincts for diplomacy and compromise. He was impeached for his attempts to legislate his own plan for Reconstruction. He was not convicted, but did not run for reelection.
First president to serve 2 nonconsecutive terms:

Grover Cleveland, Democrat, 1884 & 1892

also first president to be married in the White House.

During the 1884 campaign, Cleveland admitted he had an illegitimate child but won the White House anyway after Blaine, his Republican opponent, let a supporter [a Protestant minister] characterize the Democratic party as belonging to “Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion”. That lost the Irish vote for the Republicans. In 1888, the Republicans rebounded to victory partly because Cleveland did not seem a sufficient opponent of tariffs. When Benjamin Harrison did not oppose them strongly enough either, Cleveland defeated him and won the presidency back in 1892.
Three campaigns; three running mates.

1884 – First running mate, Thomas Hendricks silk lapel ribbons with candidate’s names.
Three campaigns; three running mates
1888- second running mate, Allen B. Thurman.
Cotton bandanas were popular campaign items from 1825-1900.
Three campaigns; three running mates.
1892 – third running mate, Adlai Stevenson.
Bandana with axes to chop high tariffs.
Cleveland, 1884. Broach.

Politics has always had negative advertising. Looking through the pig’s rectum shows a photograph of James Blaine, Cleveland’s opponent.
Grover Cleveland, 1884
A lapel broach with a brass bust of Cleveland.

The rooster was the original symbol of the Democratic Party.
President and Mrs. Grover Cleveland. Cigar box labels celebrating the Cleveland’s marriage. Love birds cradle their pictures, while the hand of Liberty waves a flag.
*First three time unsuccessful presidential candidate:*

William Jennings Bryan, Democrat, 1896, 1900, 1908

Bryan introduced campaign “stumping” in 1896 by traveling 1800 miles on the train defending the silver standard. His opponent, William McKinley, never left his house, giving speeches from his front porch. Despite Bryan’s gifted oratory, he lost all three elections through his stand against big business (1896, 1908) and imperialism in the Philippines (1900). Committed to an agrarian populism, Bryan resisted the financial complexities developing in the world.
Bryan and McKinley boot jacks in the shape of gold and silver bugs.

Bryan supported money based on a silver standard. His slogan was 16:1. McKinley [and eastern banks] support a gold standard.
Bryan’s opponent in 1896 and 1900 was Wm McKinley, whose campaign slogan was “A full lunch pail”. A cup sits on the handle on top of this McKinley campaign item.
1908 Denver Democratic Convention

Oklahoma delegate’s badge with silk ribbons. The pro-Bryan button lampoons Mckinley’s successful prosperity campaigns [1896, 1900] by claiming “the bottom out of the full dinner pail”.

First Democratic convention held in Denver, CO. 1908

Although the candidate, Wm. Jennings Bryan, was well-known to the party as he made his third bid for election, Denver was a western novelty to party leaders in Washington. The convention was held in the newly opened Denver Auditorium, today the Ellie Caulkins Opera House. Politicians came by rail from all over the country. The candidate, however, stayed in Lincoln, Nebraska: Bryan listened to the proceedings by telephone.
1908 Denver Democratic Convention
Delegates admission ticket and envelope
Back of the delegate’s ticket to the Democratic Convention with scenes of Denver in 1908. Today, the Convention Hall is part of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts and is the remodeled Ellie Caulkins Opera House.
First presidential election that included female suffrage:

Warren Harding, Republican, 1920

Harding’s inaugural address was also the first to be broadcast over the radio. His administration was plagued with corruption, such as the Teapot Dome scandal. He was not implicated personally and died before his last year in office.
Warren Harding, 1920:
First gender-specific campaigning:
For her vote, a women’s change purse.
For his vote, a cigar and cigar box
First Four-term president:

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Democrat, 1931, 1936, 1940, 1944

FDR led the nation through an economic depression and a second world war. To avoid disruption in the midst of these disasters, he advised the country not to "change horses in mid-stream". He died shortly after being elected to his fourth term.
Franklin D. Roosevelt: Electric clock
FDR taller and larger than Lincoln (left) and Washington (right)
Franklin D. Roosevelt: three VPs:
John Garner, 1932 & 1936;
Henry Wallace, 1940; Harry Truman, 1944

FDR: multiple terms viewed favorably
Franklin D. Roosevelt: multiple terms disparaged
First Roman Catholic president:

John F. Kennedy, Democrat, 1960

Campaign slurs insinuated that the Pope would have political influence in a Kennedy presidency. This did not happen. What was a political influence, however, was television. Kennedy used it as his podium to articulate national goals. He brought young people into activism by establishing the Peace Corps. He enforced earlier Civil Rights legislation which he made into a moral revolution in the country. He did not live to see a man landing on the moon but it was his support of the U.S. space program that inspired it.
John F. Kennedy, 1960

This salt and pepper shaker [Kennedy figure holds the salt, the rocking chair holds the pepper], follows a long tradition of campaign items in the form of housewares.
First televised presidential debate:

John F Kennedy, Democrat
versus Richard M. Nixon, Republican, 1960

During the first of a series of four TV debates, Nixon appeared pale and gaunt after recovering from knee surgery. He also refused make-up for the camera. Kennedy, tanned from California campaigning, appeared healthy and handsome. Although a majority of radio listeners thought Nixon won the first debate, the majority of television viewers decided Kennedy had won. Whether it influenced the election has been questioned, but it certainly influenced future campaigning. By 1976, televised debates became a necessity for all presidential candidates.
Nixon buttons:
FDR’s innuendos were conscious. Nixon’s were inadvertent
First president to resign in office:

Richard M. Nixon, Republican 1974

Certainly not the first president to have a scandal within his administration, but the first president to be implicated himself in the crimes. “Watergate” was a term used for a culture of lawbreaking that ranged from illegal wiretapping, to re-election sabotage, to a cover-up of perjury and lies. When impeachment and conviction became imminent, Nixon resigned. His legacy was a traumatized country as well as a creative foreign policy that acknowledged the new order of world power.
“The Republican Image” is on the outside of this pamphlet. Inside is the face of Richard Nixon. Association is one of the oldest forms of argument.
Nixon tape measure:
an innocent foreshadow of doom
Nixon, 1968
Elephant-shaped whiskey decanter. Nixon’s profile on one side, Spiro Agnew on the other.
The whiskey decanter started as a campaign item with Andrew Jackson in 1828.
Andrew Jackson, 1828
Glass whiskey flask.

Campaigning began in earnest in 1828, when the popular vote began to matter. The profile on one side of this flask reads “Washington” and on the other “Jackson.”
First unelected president:

Gerald Ford, Republican, 1974

Ford was appointed Vice President when Spiro Agnew, Nixon’s vice-president had to resign to avoid criminal charges. Ford was nominated by Nixon, and confirmed by both Houses of Congress. When Nixon in turn resigned, Ford became president. He pardoned Nixon. Many people consider this cost him his chance for election.
Gerald Ford, 1976
No decanter for Ford. His likeness is on a coffee mug.
First female vice presidential candidate:

Geraldine Ferraro, Democrat, 1984

Walter Mondale was applauded by many for his choice of a woman for vice president. It almost seemed a fluke, since it took twenty-four years for another woman to be connected with either major party in the presidential race.
Ferraro: gender of candidate a target on some buttons