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Galois and the Galois Theory of Differential Equations

It took decades before the French mathematician Évariste Galois became the national and international mathematical icon that is now familiar. However, we shall show that this was well-established by the 1880s, and that competition to become the true heir to Galois' thought was fierce in the context of establishing a "Galois theory" of differential equations. At the time, Picard, Vessiot, Drach and others display competing views of the essential character of Galois' achievement. In this paper we assess these contrasting views, comparing them to the image of the mid-19th century and to that today.