

## CHAPTER 9

# JACKSONIAN AMERICA



***THE VERDICT OF THE PEOPLE*** (1855), BY GEORGE CALEB BINGHAM This scene of an election-day gathering is peopled almost entirely by white men. Women and blacks were barred from voting, but political rights expanded substantially in the 1830s and 1840s among white males. (Courtesy of the Saint Louis Art Museum)



WHEN THE FRENCH ARISTOCRAT Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States in 1831, one feature of American society struck him as “fundamental”: the “general equality of condition among the people.” Unlike older societies, in which privilege and wealth passed from generation to generation within an entrenched upper class, America had no rigid distinctions of rank. “The government of democracy,” he wrote in his classic study *Democracy in America* (1835–1840), “brings the notion of political rights to the level of the humblest citizens, just as the dissemination of wealth brings the notion of property within the reach of all the members of the community.”

DeTocqueville

Yet Tocqueville also wondered how long the fluidity of American society could survive in the face of the growth of manufacturing and the rise of the factory system. Industrialism, he feared, would create a large class of dependent workers and a small group of new aristocrats. For, as he explained it, “at the very moment at which the science of manufactures lowers the class of workmen, it raises the class of masters.”

Americans, too, pondered the future of their democracy in these years of economic and territorial expansion. Some feared that the nation’s rapid growth would produce social chaos and insisted that the country’s first priority must be to establish order and a clear system of authority. Others argued that the greatest danger facing the nation was privilege and that society’s goal should be to eliminate the favored status of powerful elites and make opportunity more widely available. Advocates of this latter vision seized control of the federal government in 1829 with the inauguration of Andrew Jackson.

Jackson and his followers were not egalitarians. They did nothing to challenge the existence of slavery; they supervised one of the harshest assaults on American Indians in the nation’s history; and they accepted the necessity of economic inequality and social gradation. Jackson himself was a frontier aristocrat, and most of those who served him were people of wealth and standing. They were not, however, usually aristocrats by birth. They had, they believed, risen to prominence on the basis of their own talents and energies, and their goal in public life was to ensure that others like themselves would have the opportunity to do the same.

The “democratization” of government over which Andrew Jackson presided was accompanied by a lofty rhetoric of equality and aroused the excitement of working people. To the national leaders who promoted that democratization, however, its purpose was not to aid farmers and laborers. Still less was it to assist the truly disenfranchised: African Americans (both slave and free), women, Native Americans. It was to challenge the power of eastern elites for the sake of the rising entrepreneurs of the South and the West.

Equality of Opportunity

## SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- 1820–1840 ▶ State constitutions revised
- 1823 ▶ Nicholas Biddle becomes president of Bank of the United States
- 1826 ▶ William Morgan’s disappearance inflames Anti-Masonry
- 1828 ▶ Calhoun’s South Carolina Exposition and Protest outlines nullification doctrine
- 1829 ▶ Andrew Jackson inaugurated
- 1830 ▶ Webster and Hayne debate
- ▶ Jackson vetoes Maysville Road Bill
- ▶ Indian Removal Act passed
- 1830–1838 ▶ Indians expelled from Southeast
- 1831 ▶ Anti-Mason party established
- ▶ Supreme Court rules in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*
- 1832 ▶ Democrats hold first national party convention
- ▶ Jackson vetoes bill to recharter Bank of the United States
- ▶ Jackson reelected president
- 1832–1833 ▶ Nullification crisis erupts
- 1833 ▶ Jackson and Taney remove federal deposits from Bank of the United States
- ▶ Commercial panic disrupts economy
- 1834 ▶ Indian Trade and Intercourse Act renewed
- 1835 ▶ Roger Taney succeeds Marshall as chief justice of the Supreme Court
- ▶ Federal debt retired
- 1835–1840 ▶ Tocqueville publishes *Democracy in America*
- 1835–1842 ▶ Seminole War
- 1836 ▶ Jackson issues “specie circular”
- ▶ Martin Van Buren elected president
- 1837 ▶ Supreme Court rules in *Charles River Bridge* case
- 1837–1842 ▶ Commercial panic and depression
- 1838 ▶ “Aroostook War” fought in Maine and Canada
- 1839 ▶ Whigs hold their first national convention
- 1840 ▶ William Henry Harrison elected president
- ▶ Independent Treasury Act passed
- 1841 ▶ Harrison dies
- ▶ John Tyler becomes president
- 1842 ▶ Dorr Rebellion hastens reform in Rhode Island
- ▶ Webster–Ashburton Treaty signed

## THE RISE OF MASS POLITICS

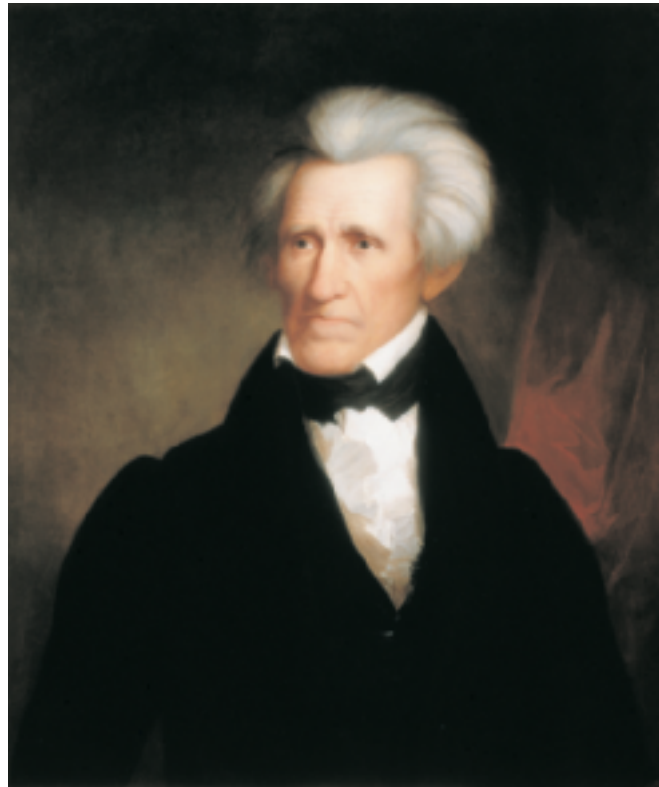
On March 4, 1829, an unprecedented throng—thousands of Americans from all regions of the country, including farmers, laborers, and others of modest social rank—crowded before the Capitol in Washington, D.C., to witness the inauguration of Andrew Jackson. After the ceremonies, the boisterous crowd poured down Pennsylvania Avenue, following their hero to the White House. There, at a public reception open to all, they filled the state rooms to overflowing, trampling one another, soiling the carpets, ruining elegantly upholstered sofas and chairs in their eagerness to shake the new president's hand. "It was a proud day for the people," wrote Amos Kendall, one of Jackson's closest political associates. "General Jackson is their own President." To other observers, however, the scene was less appealing. Justice of the Supreme Court Joseph Story, a friend and colleague of John Marshall, looked on the inaugural levee, as it was called, and remarked with disgust: "The reign of King 'Mob' seems triumphant."

### The Expanding Electorate

What some have called the "age of Jackson" did not much advance the cause of economic equality. The distribution of wealth and property in America was little different at the end of the Jacksonian era than it was at the start. But it did mark a transformation of American politics that extended the right to vote widely to new groups.

Until the 1820s, relatively few Americans had been permitted to vote. Most states restricted the franchise to white males who were property owners or taxpayers or both, effectively barring an enormous number of the less affluent from the voting rolls. But beginning even before Jackson's election, the rules governing voting began to expand. Changes came first in Ohio and other new states of the West, which, on joining the Union, adopted constitutions that guaranteed all adult white males the right to vote and gave all voters the right to hold public office. Older states, concerned about the loss of their population to the West and thinking that extending the franchise might encourage some residents to stay, began to grant similar political rights to their citizens, dropping or reducing their property ownership or taxpaying requirements. Eventually, every state democratized its electorate to some degree, although some much later and less fully than others.

Change provoked resistance, and at times the democratic trend fell short of the aims of the more radical reformers, as when Massachusetts held its constitutional convention in 1820. Reform-minded delegates complained that in the Massachusetts government the rich were better represented than the poor, both because of restrictions on voting and officeholding and because of a

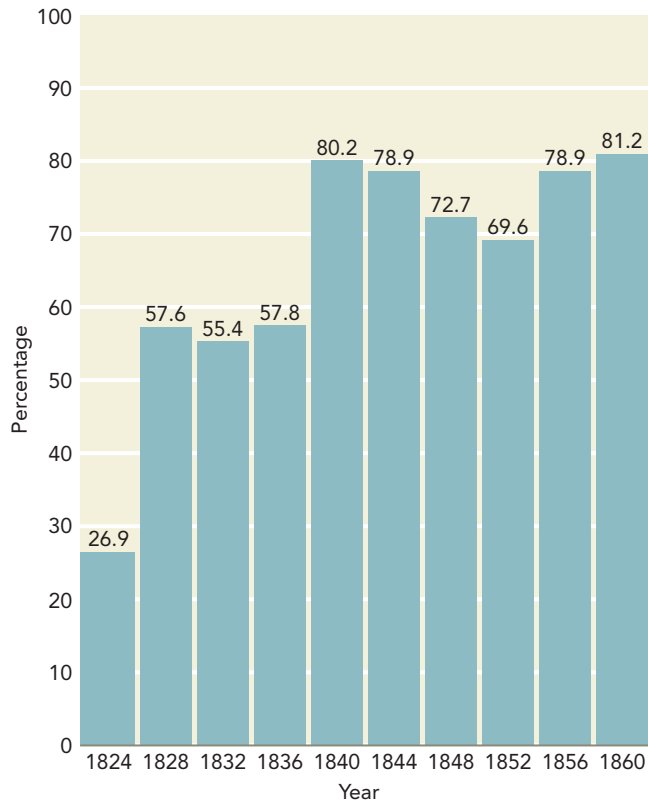


**ANDREW JACKSON** This stern portrait suggests something of the fierce determination that characterized Andrew Jackson's military and political careers. Shattered by the death of his wife a few weeks after his election as president—a death he blamed (not without reason) on the attacks his political opponents had leveled at her—he entered office with a steely determination to live by his own principles and give no quarter to his adversaries. (*New-York Historical Society*)

peculiar system by which members of the state senate represented property rather than simply people. But Daniel Webster, one of the conservative delegates, opposed democratic changes on the grounds that "power naturally and necessarily follows property" and that "property as such should have its weight and influence in political arrangement." Webster and the rest of the conservatives could not prevent the reform of the rules for representation in the state senate; nor could they prevent elimination of the property requirement for voting. But, to the dismay of the radicals, the new constitution required that every voter be a taxpayer and that the governor be the owner of considerable real estate.

More often, however, the forces of democratization prevailed in the states. In the New York convention of 1821, for example, conservatives led by James Kent insisted that a taxpaying requirement for suffrage was not enough and that, at least in the election of state senators, the property qualification should survive. But reformers, citing the Declaration of Independence, maintained that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, not property, were the main concerns of society and government. The property qualification was abolished.





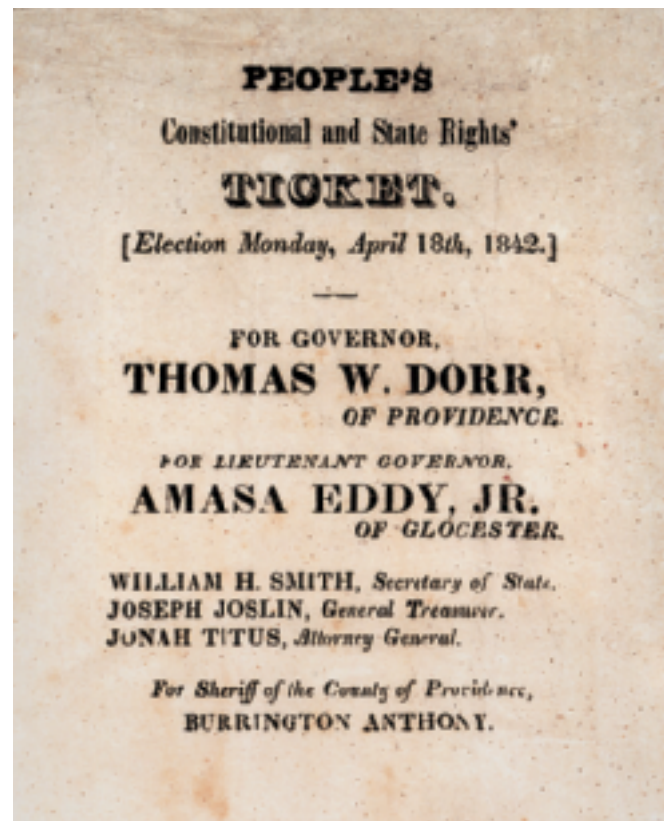
**PARTICIPATION IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, 1824–1860** This chart reveals the remarkable increase in popular participation in presidential elections in the years after 1824. Participation almost doubled between 1824 and 1828, and it increased substantially again beginning in 1840 and continuing through and beyond the Civil War. ♦ *What accounts for this dramatic expansion of the electorate? Who remained outside the voting population in these years?*

The wave of state reforms was generally peaceful, but in Rhode Island democratization efforts created considerable instability. The Rhode Island constitution (which was still basically the old colonial charter) barred more than half the adult males of the state from voting. The conservative legislature, chosen by this restricted electorate, consistently blocked all efforts at reform. In 1840, the lawyer and activist Thomas W. Dorr and a group of his followers formed a “People’s party,” held a convention, drafted a new constitution, and submitted it to a popular vote. It was overwhelmingly approved. The existing legislature, however, refused to accept the Dorr document and submitted a new constitution of its own to the voters. It was narrowly defeated. The Dorrists, in the meantime, had begun to set up a new government, under their own constitution, with Dorr as governor; and so, in 1842, two governments were claiming legitimacy in Rhode Island. The old state government proclaimed that Dorr and his followers were rebels and began to imprison them. Meanwhile, the Dorrists made a brief and ineffectual effort to capture the state arsenal. The Dorr Rebellion, as it was known, quickly failed. Dorr himself surrendered and was briefly imprisoned. But the episode

#### The Dorr Rebellion

helped pressure the old guard to draft a new constitution, which greatly expanded the suffrage.

The democratization process was far from complete. In much of the South, election laws continued to favor the planters and politicians of the older counties and to limit the influence of more newly settled western areas. Slaves, of course, were disenfranchised by definition; they were not considered citizens and were believed to have no legal or political rights. Free blacks could vote nowhere in the South and hardly anywhere in the North. Pennsylvania, in fact, amended its state constitution in 1838 to strip African Americans of the right to vote they had previously enjoyed. In no state could women vote. Nowhere was the ballot

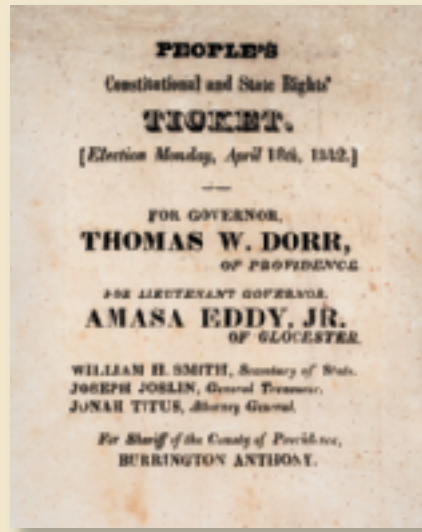


**THE DORR REBELLION** The democratic sentiments that swept much of the nation in the 1830s and 1840s produced, among many other things, the Dorr Rebellion (as its opponents termed it) in Rhode Island. Thomas Dorr was one of many Rhode Islanders who denounced the state’s constitution, which limited voting rights to a small group of property owners known as “freeholders.” The dissidents crafted a new constitution and submitted it to a vote; a majority of the state’s citizens approved it. But the legislature refused to acknowledge its legitimacy, and the result was two separate elections in 1842 for the same state offices. Dorr ran for governor under the new constitution and was elected by a majority of the people. This “ticket” was what his supporters placed in ballot boxes as they cast their votes. Another candidate, Samuel King, ran under the old constitution and was elected by the freeholders. Both men were inaugurated, and not until President Tyler threatened federal intervention on behalf of King did the Dorr movement crumble. A year later, however, the state ratified a new constitution extending the franchise. (Courtesy of The Rhode Island Historical Society, RHi X5 304)

## THE “AGE OF JACKSON”

To many Americans in the 1820s and 1830s, Andrew Jackson was a champion of democracy, a symbol of a spirit of anti-elitism and egalitarianism that was sweeping American life. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, however, historians have disagreed sharply not only in their assessments of Jackson himself, but in their portrayal of American society in his era.

The “progressive” historians of the early twentieth century tended to see the politics of Jackson and his supporters as a forerunner of their own generation’s battles against economic privilege and political corruption. Frederick Jackson Turner encouraged scholars to see Jacksonianism as the product of the democratic West: a protest by the people of the frontier against the conservative aristocracy of the East, which they believed restricted their own freedom and opportunity. Jackson represented those who wanted to make government responsive to the will of the people rather than to the power of special interests. The culmination of this progressive interpretation of Jacksonianism was the publication in 1945 of Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.’s *The Age of Jackson*. Schlesinger was less interested in the



(Courtesy of The Rhode Island Historical Society, RHI X5 304)

regional basis of Jacksonianism than Turner’s disciples had been. He saw support for Jackson not just among western farmers, but also among urban laborers in the East. Jacksonian democracy, he argued, was the effort “to control the power of the capitalist groups, mainly Eastern, for the benefit of non-capitalist groups, farmers and laboring men, East, West, and South.” He portrayed Jacksonianism as an early

version of modern reform efforts (in the progressive era and the New Deal) to “restrain the power of the business community.”

Richard Hofstadter, in an influential 1948 essay in *The American Political Tradition*, sharply disagreed. He argued that Jackson was the spokesman of rising entrepreneurs—aspiring businessmen who saw the road to opportunity blocked by the monopolistic power of eastern aristocrats. The Jacksonians opposed special privileges only to the extent those privileges blocked their own road to success. They were less sympathetic to the aspirations of those below them. Similarly, Bray Hammond, writing in 1957, argued that the Jacksonian cause was “one of enterpriser against capitalist,” of rising elites against entrenched ones. Other historians, exploring the ideological origins of the movement, saw Jacksonianism less as a democratic reform movement than as a nostalgic effort to restore a lost (and largely imagined) past. Marvin Meyer’s *The Jacksonian Persuasion* (1957) argued that Jackson and his followers looked with misgivings on the new industrial society emerging around them and yearned instead for a restoration

secret, and often voters had to cast a spoken vote rather than a written one, which meant that political bosses could, and often did, bribe and intimidate them.

Despite the persisting limitations, however, the number of voters increased far more rapidly than did the population as a whole. Indeed, one of the most striking political trends of the early nineteenth century was the change in the method of choosing presidential electors and the dramatic increase in popular participation in the process. In 1800, the legislature had chosen the presidential electors in ten of the states, and the people in only six. By 1828, electors were chosen by popular vote in every state but South Carolina. In the presidential election of 1824, less than 27 percent of adult white males had voted. In the election of 1828, the figure rose to 58 percent, and in 1840 to 80 percent.

### The Legitimization of Party

The high level of voter participation was only partly the result of an expanded electorate. It was also the result of

a growing interest in politics and a strengthening of party organization and, perhaps equally important, party loyalty. Although party competition was part of American politics almost from the beginning of the republic, acceptance of the idea of party was not. For more than thirty years, most Americans who had opinions about the nature of government considered parties evils to be avoided and thought the nation should seek a broad consensus in which permanent factional lines would not exist. But in the 1820s and 1830s, those assumptions gave way to a new view: that permanent, institutionalized parties were a desirable part of the political process, that indeed they were essential to democracy.

The elevation of the idea of party occurred first at the state level, most prominently in New York. There Martin Van Buren led a dissident political faction (known as the “Bucktails” or the “Albany Regency”). In the years after the War of 1812, this group began to challenge the established political leadership—led by the aristocratic governor, De Witt Clinton—that had dominated the state for

of the agrarian, republican virtues of an earlier time.

Historians of the 1960s began examining Jacksonianism in entirely new ways: looking less at Jackson himself, less at the rhetoric and ideas of his supporters, and more at the nature of American society in the early nineteenth century. Lee Benson's *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy* (1961)—a pathbreaking work of quantitative history—emphasized the role of religion and ethnicity in determining political divisions in the 1830s. If there was an egalitarian spirit alive in America in those years, it extended well beyond the Democratic Party and the followers of Jackson. Edward Pessen's *Jacksonian America* (1969) revealed that the democratic rhetoric of the age disguised the reality of an increasingly stratified society, in which inequality was growing more, not less, severe. Richard McCormick (1963) and Glyndon Van Deusen (1963) similarly emphasized the pragmatism of Jackson and the Democrats and deemphasized clear ideological and partisan divisions.

Scholars in more recent years have also paid relatively little attention to Jackson and the Democratic Party and instead have focused on a series of broad social changes occurring in the early and mid-nineteenth century which some have called a “mar-

ket revolution.” Those changes had profound effects on class relations, and the political battles of the era reflected only a part of their impact. Sean Wilentz, in *Chants Democratic* (1984), identified the rise in the 1820s of a powerful class identity among workers in New York, who were attracted less to Jackson himself than to the idea that power in a republic should be widely dispersed. Wilentz's *The Rise of American Democracy* (2005) also portrays Jacksonian politics as a broadly democratizing force. John Ashworth, in *“Agrarians” and “Aristocrats”* (1983), and Harry Watson, in *Liberty and Power* (1990), also saw party politics as a reflection of much larger social changes. The party system was an imperfect reflection of a struggle between people committed to unrestricted opportunities for all white men and those committed to advancing the goals of capitalists, in part through government action.

Other scholarship turned the focus of discussion away from Jackson and the Democratic Party and toward the larger society. But its success in revealing inequality and oppression in antebellum America has produced some withering reassessments of Jackson himself. In *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (1975),

Michael Rogin portrays Jackson as a man obsessed with escaping from the imposing shadow of the Revolutionary generation. He would lead a new American revolution, not against British tyranny but against those who challenged the ability of white men to control the continent. He displayed special savagery toward American Indians, whom he pursued, Rogin argued, with an almost pathological violence and intensity. Alexander Saxton, in *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic* (1990), likewise points to the contradiction between the image of the age of Jackson as a time of expanding democracy and the reality of constricted rights for women, blacks, and Indians. The Democratic Party, he argues, was committed above all to defending slavery and white supremacy. And Daniel Walker Howe, in *What Hath God Wrought* (2007), also portrays the Jacksonians as champions of white male supremacy and sees the Whigs as in many ways more truly democratic.

But the portrayal of Jackson as a champion of the common man has not vanished from scholarly life. The leading Jackson biographer of the postwar era, Robert V. Remini, has noted the flaws in Jackson's concept of democracy; but within the context of his time, Remini claims, Jackson was a genuine “man of the people.”

years. Factional rivalries were not new, of course. But the nature of Van Buren's challenge was. Refuting the traditional view of a political party as undemocratic, they argued that only an institutionalized party, based in the populace at large, could ensure genuine democracy. The alternative was the sort of closed elite that Clinton had created. In the new kind of party the Bucktails proposed, ideological commitments would be less important than loyalty to the party itself. Preservation of the party as an institution—through the use of favors, rewards, and patronage—would be the principal goal of the leadership. Above all, for a party to survive, it must have a permanent opposition. Competing parties would give each political faction a sense of purpose; they would force politicians to remain continually attuned to the will of the people; and they would check and balance each other in much the same way that the different branches of government checked and balanced one another.

By the late 1820s, this new idea of party was spreading beyond New York. The election of Jackson in 1828,

the result of a popular movement that seemed to stand apart from the usual political elites, seemed further to legitimize the idea of party as a popular, democratic institution. “Parties of some sort must exist,” said a New York newspaper. “’Tis in the nature and genius of our government.” Finally, in the 1830s, a fully formed two-party system began to operate at the national level, with each party committed to its own existence as an institution and willing to accept the legitimacy of its opposition. The anti-Jackson forces began to call themselves Whigs. Jackson's followers called themselves Democrats (no longer Democratic Republicans), thus giving a permanent name to what is now the nation's oldest political party.

The Second Party System

### “President of the Common Man”

Unlike Thomas Jefferson, Jackson was no democratic philosopher. The Democratic Party, much less than Jefferson's



**ELECTION SCENE** Frequent and often boisterous campaign rallies were characteristic of electoral politics in the 1840s, when party loyalties were high and political passions intense—as this 1845 drawing by Alfred Jacob Miller of a rally in Catonsville, Maryland, suggests. (*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Maxim Karolik for the proposed M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Watercolors, Drawings, and Prints, 1800–1875, 51.2537. Photograph © 2007 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.*)



Republicans embraced no clear or uniform ideological position. But Jackson himself did embrace a distinct, if simple, theory of democracy. It should offer “equal protection and equal benefits” to all its white male citizens and favor no region or class over another. In practice, that meant an assault on what Jackson and his associates considered the citadels of the eastern aristocracy and an effort to extend opportunities to the rising classes of the West and the South. It also meant a firm commitment to the continuing subjugation of African Americans and Indians (and, although for different reasons, women), for the Jacksonians believed that only by keeping these “dangerous” elements from the body politic could the white-male democracy they valued be preserved.

Jackson’s first targets were the entrenched officeholders in the federal government, many of whom had been in place for a generation or more. Official duties, he believed, could be made “so plain and simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance.” Offices belonged to the people, he argued, not to the entrenched officeholders. Or, as one of his henchmen, William L. Marcy of New York, cynically put it, “To the victors belong the spoils.”

In the end, Jackson removed a total of no more than one-fifth of the federal officeholders during his eight years in office, many of them less for partisan reasons than because they had misused government funds or engaged in other corruption. Proportionally, Jackson dismissed no more jobholders than Jefferson had dismissed during his presidency. But by embracing the philosophy of the “spoils system,” a system already well entrenched in a number of

state governments, the Jackson administration helped make the right of elected officials to appoint their own followers to public office an established feature of American politics.

Jackson’s supporters also worked to transform the process by which presidential candidates won their party’s nomination. They had long resented the congressional caucus, a process they believed worked to restrict access to the office to those favored by entrenched elites and a process Jackson himself had avoided in 1828. In 1832, the president’s followers staged a national party convention to renominate him for the presidency—one year after the Anti-Masons (see p. 253) became the first party to hold such a meeting. In later generations, some Americans would see the party convention as a source of corruption and political exclusivity. But those who created it in the 1830s considered it a great triumph for democracy. Through the convention, they believed, power would arise directly from the people, not from aristocratic political institutions such as the caucus.

The spoils system and the political convention did serve to limit the power of two entrenched elites—permanent officeholders and the exclusive party caucus. Yet neither really transferred power to the people. Appointments to office almost always went to prominent political allies of the president and his associates. Delegates to national conventions were less often common men than members of local party organizations. Political opportunity within the party was expanding, but much less so than Jacksonian rhetoric suggested.

The Spoils System

in office, many of them less for partisan reasons than because

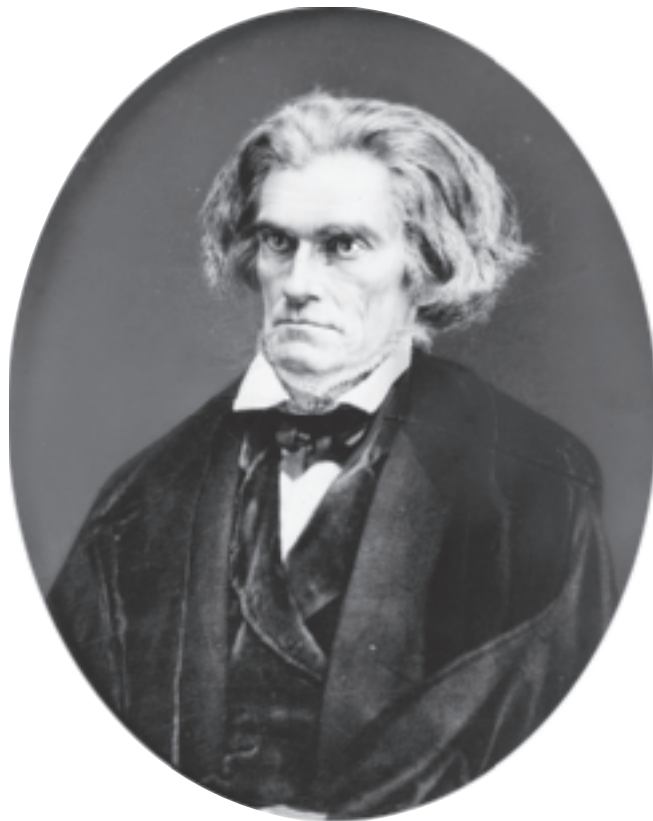
Limited Nature of Democratic Reform

## “OUR FEDERAL UNION”

Jackson’s commitment to extending power beyond entrenched elites led him to want to reduce the functions of the federal government. A concentration of power in Washington would, he believed, restrict opportunity to people with political connections. But Jackson also believed in forceful presidential leadership and was strongly committed to the preservation of the Union. Thus, at the same time that Jackson was promoting an economic program to reduce the power of the national government, he was asserting the supremacy of the Union in the face of a potent challenge. For no sooner had he entered office than his own vice president—John C. Calhoun—began to champion a controversial (and, in Jackson’s view, dangerous) constitutional theory: nullification.

### Calhoun and Nullification

Calhoun was forty-six years old in 1828, with a distinguished past and an apparently promising future. But the smoldering issue of the tariff created a dilemma for him. Once he had been an outspoken protectionist and had



**JOHN C. CALHOUN** This photograph, by Mathew Brady, captured Calhoun toward the end of his life, when he was torn between his real commitment to the ideals of the Union and his equally fervent commitment to the interests of the South. The younger generation of southern leaders, who would dominate the politics of the region in the 1850s, were less idealistic and more purely sectional in their views. (*Library of Congress*)

strongly supported the tariff of 1816. But by the late 1820s, many South Carolinians had come to believe that the “tariff of abominations” was responsible for the stagnation of their state’s economy—even though the stagnation was largely a result of the exhaustion of South Carolina’s farmland, which could no longer compete effectively with the newly opened and fertile lands of the Southwest. Some exasperated Carolinians were ready to consider a drastic remedy—secession.

Calhoun’s future political hopes rested on how he met this challenge in his home state.

He did so by developing a theory that he believed offered a moder-

Calhoun’s Theory of Nullification

ate alternative to secession: the theory of nullification. Drawing from the ideas of Madison and Jefferson and their Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1798–1799 and citing the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution, Calhoun argued that since the federal government was a creation of the states, the states—not the courts or Congress—were the final arbiters of the constitutionality of federal laws. If a state concluded that Congress had passed an unconstitutional law, then it could hold a special convention and declare the federal law null and void within the state. The nullification doctrine—and the idea of using it to nullify the 1828 tariff—quickly attracted broad support in South Carolina. But it did nothing to help Calhoun’s standing within the new administration, in part because he had a powerful rival in Martin Van Buren.

### The Rise of Van Buren

Van Buren was about the same age as Calhoun and equally ambitious. He had won election

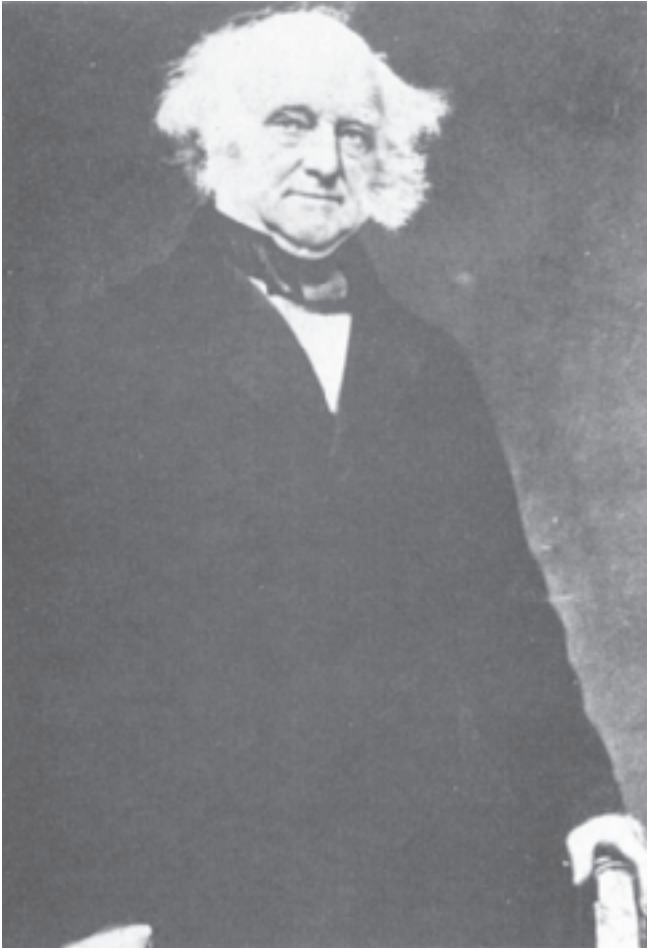
to the governorship of New York

Martin Van Buren

in 1828 and then resigned in 1829 when Jackson appointed him secretary of state. Alone among the figures in the Jackson administration, Van Buren soon established himself as a member both of the official cabinet and of the president’s unofficial circle of political allies, known as the “Kitchen Cabinet” (which included such Democratic newspaper editors as Isaac Hill of New Hampshire and Amos Kendall and Francis P. Blair of Kentucky). Van Buren’s influence with the president was unmatched and grew stronger still as a result of a quarrel over etiquette that drove a wedge between the president and Calhoun.

Peggy O’Neale was the attractive daughter of a Washington tavern keeper with whom both Andrew Jackson and his friend John H. Eaton had taken lodgings while serving as senators from Tennessee. O’Neale was married, but rumors circulated in Washington in the mid-1820s that she and the unmarried Senator Eaton were having an affair. O’Neale’s husband died in 1828, and she and Eaton were soon married. A few weeks later, Jackson named Eaton secretary of war and thus made the new Mrs. Eaton a cabinet wife. The rest of the administration wives, led by Mrs. Calhoun, refused to receive her socially. Jackson



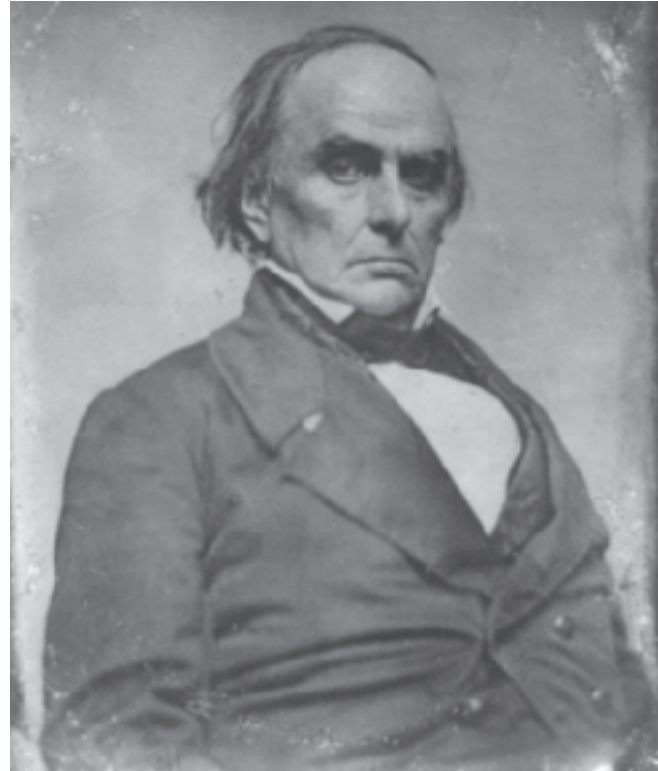


**MARTIN VAN BUREN** As leader of the so-called Albany Regency in New York in the 1820s, Van Buren helped create one of the first modern party organizations in the United States. Later, as Andrew Jackson's secretary of state and (after 1832) vice president, he helped bring party politics to the national level. In 1840, when he ran for reelection to the presidency, he lost to William Henry Harrison, whose Whig Party made effective use of many of the techniques of mass politics that Van Buren himself had pioneered. (*Library of Congress*)

(remembering the effects of public slander directed against his own late wife) was furious and demanded that the members of the cabinet accept her into their social world. Calhoun, under pressure from his wife, refused. Van Buren, a widower, befriended the Eatons and thus ingratiated himself with Jackson. By 1831, partly as a result of the Peggy Eaton affair, Jackson had chosen Van Buren to succeed him in the White House, apparently ending Calhoun's dreams of the presidency.

### The Webster-Hayne Debate

In January 1830, as the controversy over nullification grew more intense, a great debate occurred in the United States Senate over another sectional controversy. In the midst of a routine debate over federal policy toward western lands, a senator from Connecticut suggested that



**DANIEL WEBSTER** The great Civil War photographer Mathew Brady took this portrait of Daniel Webster shortly before Webster's death in 1852. It conveys something of Webster's intensity of purpose—an intensity that was perhaps most famously visible in his dramatic 1830 debate with South Carolina senator Robert Y. Hayne. In his response to Hayne, he spoke words that became a rallying cry in the North: “Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable.” During his long political career, Webster was one of the giants of American politics, a man of much greater stature than many of the presidents who were his contemporaries. (*Library of Congress*)

all land sales and surveys be temporarily discontinued. Robert Y. Hayne, a young senator from South Carolina, responded, charging that slowing down the growth of the West was a way for the East to retain its political and economic power. Although he had no real interest in western lands, he hoped his stance would attract support from westerners in Congress for South Carolina's drive to lower the tariff. Both the South and the West, he argued, were victims of the tyranny of the Northeast. He hinted that the two regions might combine to defend themselves against that tyranny.

Daniel Webster, now a senator from Massachusetts and a nationalistic Whig, answered Hayne the next day. He attacked Hayne, and through him Calhoun, for what he considered their challenge to the integrity of the Union—in effect, challenging Hayne to a debate not on public lands and the tariff but on the issue of states' rights versus national power. Hayne, coached by Calhoun, responded with a defense of the theory of nullification. Webster then spent two full afternoons delivering what

States' Rights Versus  
National Power



**CHARLESTON, 1831** The little-known South Carolina artist S. Bernard painted this view of Charleston's East Battery in 1831. Then, as now, residents and visitors liked to stroll along the battery and watch the activity in the city's busy harbor. But Charleston in the 1830s was a less important commercial center than it had been a few decades earlier. By then, overseas traders were increasingly avoiding southern ports and doing more and more business in New York. (*Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, Yale University Art Gallery/Art Resource, NY*)

became known as his "Second Reply to Hayne," a speech that northerners quoted and revered for years to come. He concluded with the ringing appeal: "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!"

Both sides now waited to hear what President Jackson thought of the argument. The answer became clear at the annual Democratic Party banquet in honor of Thomas Jefferson. After dinner, guests delivered a series of toasts. The president arrived with a written text in which he had underscored certain words: "Our Federal Union—It must be preserved." While he spoke, he looked directly at Calhoun. The diminutive Van Buren, who stood on his chair to see better, thought he saw Calhoun's hand shake and a trickle of wine run down his glass as he responded to the president's toast with his own: "The Union, next to our liberty most dear." The two most important figures in government had drawn sharp lines between themselves.

### The Nullification Crisis

In 1832, finally, the controversy over nullification produced a crisis when South Carolinians responded angrily to a congressional tariff bill that offered them no relief from the 1828 "tariff of abominations." Almost immediately, the legislature summoned a state convention, which voted to nullify the tariffs of 1828 and 1832 and to forbid the collection of duties within the state. At the same time,

South Carolina elected Hayne to serve as governor and Calhoun (who resigned as vice president) to replace Hayne as senator.

Jackson insisted that nullification was treason and that those implementing it were traitors. He strengthened the federal forts in South Carolina and ordered a warship and several revenue ships to Charleston. When Congress convened early in 1833, Jackson proposed a force bill authorizing the president to use the military to see that acts of Congress were obeyed. Violence seemed a real possibility.

Calhoun faced a predicament as he took his place in the Senate. Not a single state had come to South Carolina's support. Even South Carolina itself was divided and could not hope to prevail in a showdown with the federal government. But the timely intervention of Henry Clay, newly elected to the Senate, averted a crisis. Clay devised a compromise by which the tariff would be lowered gradually so that, by 1842, it would reach approximately the same level as in 1816. The compromise and the force bill were passed on the same day, March 1, 1833. Jackson signed them both. In South Carolina, the convention reassembled and repealed its nullification of the tariffs. But unwilling to allow Congress to have the last word, the convention nullified the force act—a purely symbolic act, since the tariff toward which the force act was directed had already been repealed. Calhoun and his followers

Compromise

claimed a victory for nullification, which had, they insisted, forced the revision of the tariff. But the episode taught Calhoun and his allies that no state could defy the federal government alone.

## THE REMOVAL OF THE INDIANS

There had never been any doubt about Andrew Jackson's attitude toward the Indian tribes that continued to live in the eastern states and territories of the United States. He wanted them to move west, beyond the Mississippi, out of the way of expanding white settlement. Jackson's antipathy toward the Native Americans had a special intensity because of his own earlier experiences leading military campaigns against tribes along the southern border. But in most respects, his views were little different from those of most other white Americans.

### White Attitudes Toward the Tribes

In the eighteenth century, many white Americans had considered the Indians "noble savages," peoples without real civilization but with an inherent dignity that made civilization possible among them. By the first decades of the nineteenth century, this vaguely paternalistic attitude (the attitude of Thomas Jefferson, among others) was giving way to a more hostile one, particularly among the whites in the western states and territories whom Jackson came to represent. Such whites were coming to view Native Americans simply as "savages," not only uncivilized but uncivilizable. Whites, they believed, should not be expected to live in close proximity to the tribes.

White westerners favored removal as well because they feared that continued contact between the expanding white settlements and the Indians would produce endless conflict and violence. Most of all, however, they favored Indian removal because of their own insatiable desire for territory. The tribes possessed valuable land in the path of expanding white settlement. Whites wanted it.

Legally, only the federal government had authority to negotiate with the Indians over land, a result of Supreme Court decisions that established the tribes as, in effect, "nations within the nation." The tribal nations that the Court identified were not, however, securely rooted in Native American history. The large tribal aggregations with which white Americans dealt were, in fact, relatively new entities. Most Indians were accustomed to thinking in much more local terms. They created these larger tribes when they realized they would need some collective strength to deal with whites; but as new and untested political entities, the tribes were often weak and divided. The Marshall Court had seemed to acknowledge this in

declaring the tribes not only sovereign nations, but also dependent ones, for whom the federal government had to take considerable responsibility. Through most of the nineteenth century, the government interpreted that responsibility as finding ways to move the Native Americans out of the way of expanding white settlement.

### The Black Hawk War

In the Old Northwest, the long process of expelling the woodland Indians culminated in a last battle in 1831–1832, between white settlers in Illinois and an alliance of Sauk (or Sac) and Fox Indians under the fabled and now aged warrior Black Hawk. An earlier treaty had ceded tribal lands in Illinois to the United States; but Black Hawk and his followers refused to recognize the legality of the agreement, which a rival tribal faction had signed. Hungry and resentful, a thousand of them crossed the river and reoccupied vacant lands in Illinois. White settlers in the region feared that the resettlement was the beginning of a substantial invasion, and they assembled the Illinois state militia and federal troops to repel the "invaders."

The Black Hawk War, as it became known, was notable chiefly for the viciousness of the white military efforts. White leaders in western Illinois vowed to exterminate the "bandit collection of Indians" and attacked them even when Black Hawk attempted to surrender. The Sauks and Foxes, defeated and starving,

Changing Attitudes  
Toward the Indians

considered the Indians "noble savages," peoples without real civilization but with an inherent

Sauk and Fox Indians  
Defeated



**BLACK HAWK AND WHIRLING THUNDER** After his defeat by white settlers in Illinois in 1832, the famed Sauk warrior Black Hawk and his son, Whirling Thunder, were captured and sent on a tour by Andrew Jackson, displayed to the public as trophies of war. They showed such dignity through the ordeal that much of the white public quickly began to sympathize with them. This portrait, by John Wesley Jarvis, was painted on the tour's final stop, in New York City. Black Hawk wears the European-style suit, while Whirling Thunder wears native costume to emphasize his commitment to his tribal roots. Soon thereafter, Black Hawk returned to his tribe, wrote a celebrated autobiography, and died in 1838. (Bettmann/Corbis)



retreated across the Mississippi into Iowa. White troops (and some bands of Sioux whom they encouraged to join the chase) pursued them as they fled and slaughtered most of them. United States troops captured Black Hawk himself and sent him on a tour of the East, where Andrew Jackson was one of many curious whites who arranged to meet him. (Abraham Lincoln served as a captain of the militia, but saw no action, in the Black Hawk War; Jefferson Davis was a lieutenant in the regular army.)

## The “Five Civilized Tribes”

More troubling to the government in the 1830s were the tribes remaining in the South. In western Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida lived what were known as the “Five Civilized Tribes”—the Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, Chickasaw, and Choctaw—most of whom had established settled agricultural societies with successful economies. The Cherokees in Georgia had formed a particularly stable and sophisticated culture, with their own written language and a formal constitution (adopted in 1827) that created an independent Cherokee Nation. They were more closely tied to their lands than many of the nomadic tribes to the north.

Even some whites argued that the Cherokees, unlike other tribes, should be allowed to retain their eastern lands, since they had become such a “civilized” society and had, under pressure from missionaries and government agents, given up many of their traditional ways. Cherokee men had once been chiefly hunters and had left farming mainly to women. By now the men had given up most of their hunting and (like most white men) took over the farming themselves; Cherokee women, also like their white counterparts, restricted themselves largely to domestic tasks.

The federal government worked steadily to negotiate treaties with the southern Indians that would remove them to the West and open their lands for white settlement. But the negotiating process often did not proceed fast enough to satisfy the region’s whites. The State of Georgia’s independent effort to dislodge the Creeks, over the objection of President Adams, was one example of this impatience. That same impatience became evident early in Jackson’s administration, when the legislatures in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi began passing laws to regulate the tribes remaining in their states. They received assistance in these efforts from Congress, which in 1830 passed the Removal Act (with Jackson’s approval), which appropriated money to finance federal negotiations with the southern tribes aimed at relocating them to the West. The president quickly dispatched federal officials to negotiate nearly a hundred new treaties with the remain-

Agrarian Tribes  
of the South

Removal Act

ing tribes. Thus the southern tribes faced a combination of pressures from both the state and federal governments. Most tribes were too weak to resist, and they ceded their lands in return for only token payments. Some, however, balked.

In Georgia, the Cherokees tried to stop the white encroachments (which were actively encouraged by Jackson) by appealing to the Supreme Court. The Court’s decisions in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* and *Worcester v. Georgia* in 1831 and 1832 (see p. 230) seemed at least partially to vindicate the tribe. But Jackson’s longtime hostility toward Native Americans left him with little sympathy for the Cherokees and little patience with the Court. He was eager to retain the support of white southerners and westerners in the increasingly bitter partisan battles in which his administration was becoming engaged. When the chief justice announced the decision in *Worcester v. Georgia*, Jackson reportedly responded with contempt. “John Marshall has made his decision,” he was reported to have said. “Now let him enforce it.” The decision was not enforced.

In 1835, the federal government extracted a treaty from a minority faction of the Cherokees, none of them a chosen representative of the Cherokee Nation. The treaty ceded the tribe’s land to Georgia in return for \$5 million and a reservation west of the Mississippi. The great majority of the 17,000 Cherokees did not recognize the treaty as legitimate and refused to leave their homes. But Jackson would not be thwarted. He sent an army of 7,000 under General Winfield Scott to round them up and drive them westward at bayonet point.

Cherokee Resistance

## Trails of Tears

About 1,000 Cherokees fled across the state line to North Carolina, where the federal government eventually provided a small reservation for them in the Smoky Mountains, which survives today. But most of the rest made the long, forced trek to “Indian Territory” (which later became Oklahoma) beginning in the winter of 1838. Along the way, a Kentuckian observed: “Even aged females, apparently nearly ready to drop in the grave, were travelling with heavy burdens attached to their backs, sometimes on frozen ground and sometimes on muddy streets, with no covering for their feet.”

Cherokee Removal

Thousands, perhaps an eighth or more of the emigrés, perished before or soon after reaching their unwanted destination. In the harsh new reservations in which they were now forced to live, the survivors never forgot the hard journey. They called their route “The Trail Where They Cried,” the Trail of Tears. Jackson claimed that the “remnant of that ill-fated race” was now “beyond the reach of injury or oppression,” apparently trying to convince himself or

Indian Removal

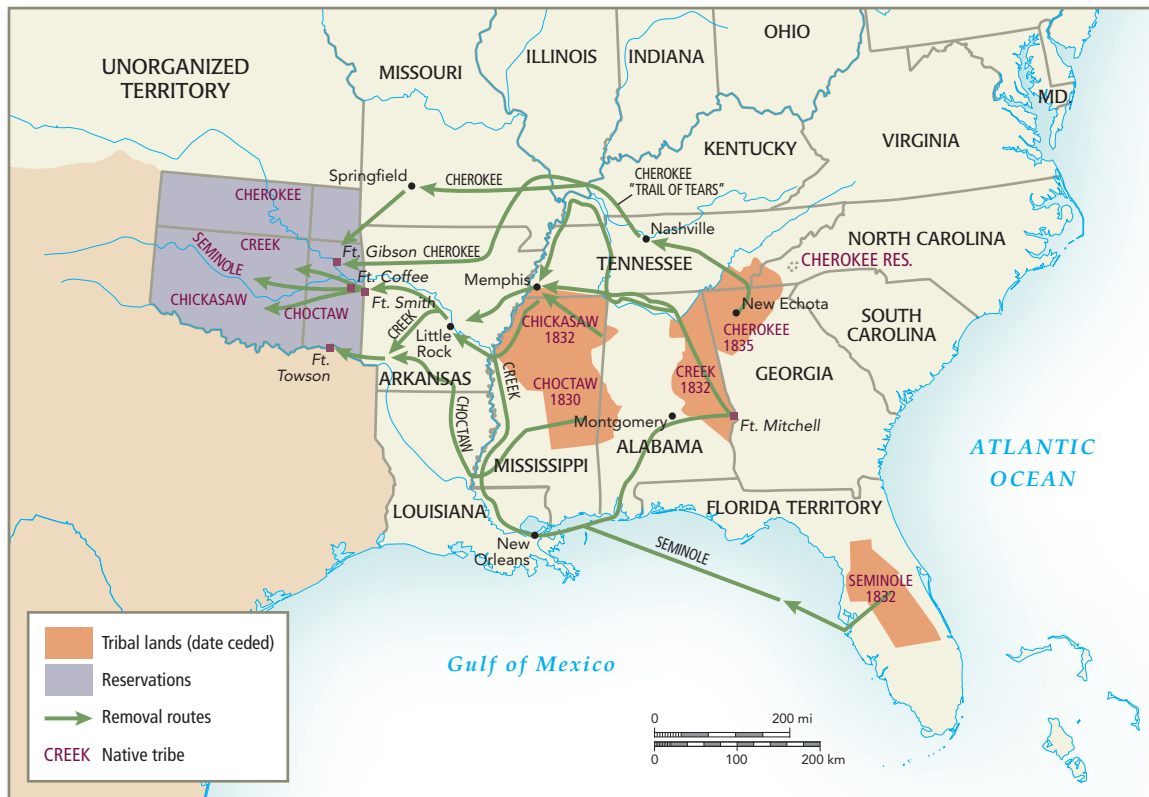
others that he had supported removal as a way to protect the tribes.

The Cherokees were not alone in experiencing the hardships of the Trail of Tears. Between 1830 and 1838, virtually all the “Five Civilized Tribes” were expelled from the southern states and forced to relocate in the new Indian Territory, which Congress had officially created by the Indian Intercourse Act of 1834. The Choctaws of Mississippi and western Alabama were the first to make the trek, beginning in 1830. The army moved out the Creeks of eastern Alabama and western Georgia in 1836. The Chickasaw in northern Mississippi began the long march westward a year later, and the Cherokees, finally, a year after that. The government thought the Indian Territory was safely distant from existing white settlements and consisted of land that most whites considered undesirable. It had the additional advantage, the government believed, of being on the eastern edge of what earlier white explorers had christened the “Great American Desert,” land unfit for habitation. It seemed unlikely that whites would ever seek to

settle along the western borders of the Indian Territory; and thus the prospect of whites surrounding the reservation and producing further conflict seemed remote.

Only the Seminoles in Florida managed to resist the pressures to relocate, and even their success was limited. Like other tribes, the Seminoles had agreed under pressure to a settlement (the 1832–1833 treaties of Payne’s Landing), by which they ceded their lands to the government and agreed to move to Indian Territory within three years. Most did move west, but a substantial minority, under the leadership of the chieftain Osceola, refused to leave and staged an uprising beginning in 1835 to defend their lands. (Joining the Indians in their struggle was a group of runaway black slaves who had been living with the tribe.) The Seminole War dragged on for years. Jackson sent troops to Florida, but the Seminoles with their African-American associates were masters of guerrilla warfare in the jungly Everglades. Even after Osceola had been treacherously captured by white troops while under a flag of truce and had died in prison; even after

The Seminole War



**THE EXPULSION OF THE TRIBES, 1830–1835** Andrew Jackson was famous well before he became president for his military exploits against the tribes. Once in the White House, he ensured that few Indians would remain in the southern states of the nation, now that white settlement was increasing there. The result was a series of dramatic “removals” of Indian tribes out of their traditional lands and into new territories west of the Mississippi—mostly in Oklahoma. Note the very long distance many of these tribes had to travel. ♦ *Why was the route of the Cherokees, shown in the upper portion of the map, known as the “Trail of Tears”?*

For an interactive version of this map, go to [www.mhhe.com/brinkley13ech9maps](http://www.mhhe.com/brinkley13ech9maps)



**THE TRAIL OF TEARS** The devastating Indian policies of the Jackson administration forced thousands of Native Americans to relocate from their traditional tribal lands to new “reservations” west of the Mississippi. The Cherokee Nation was among the first tribes forced to move. They called their long and tragic trek west the “Trail of Tears,” both because of the loss of their homes and because of the terrible hardships (which left thousands dead) of the journey. Other tribes soon followed. (© Woolaroc Museum, Oklahoma, USA/Peter Newark Western Americana/The Bridgeman Art Library)

white troops had engaged in a systematic campaign of extermination against the resisting Indians and their black allies; even after 1,500 white soldiers had died and the federal government had spent \$20 million on the struggle—even then, followers of Osceola remained in Florida. Finally, in 1842, the government abandoned the war. By then, many of the Seminoles had been either killed or forced westward. But the relocation of the Seminoles, unlike the relocation of most of the other tribes, was never complete.

### The Meaning of Removal

By the end of the 1830s, almost all the important Indian societies east of the Mississippi had been removed to the West. The tribes had ceded over 100 million acres of eastern land to the federal government; they had received in return about \$68 million and 32 million acres in the far less hospitable lands west of the Mississippi between the Missouri and Red Rivers. There they lived, divided by tribe into a series of carefully defined reservations, in a territory surrounded by a string of United States forts to keep

them in (and to keep most whites out), in a region whose climate and topography bore little relation to anything they had known before. Eventually, even this forlorn enclave would face incursions from white civilization.

What were the alternatives to the removal of the eastern Indians? There was probably never any realistic possibility that the government could stop white expansion westward. White people had already been penetrating the West for nearly two centuries, and such penetrations were certain to continue. But did that expansion really require removal?

There were, in theory at least, several alternatives to the brutal removal policy. There were many examples in the West of white settlers and native tribes living side by side and creating a shared (if not necessarily equal) world. In the pueblos of New Mexico, in the fur trading posts of the Pacific Northwest, in parts of Texas and California, settlers from Mexico, Canada, and the United States had created societies in which Indians and whites were in intimate contact with each other. Even during the famous Lewis and Clark expedition, white

Alternatives to Removal



explorers had lived with western Indians on terms of such intimacy that many of them contracted venereal disease from Indian sexual partners. Sometimes these close contacts between whites and Indians were beneficial to both sides, even reasonably equal. Sometimes they were cruel and exploitive. But the early multiracial societies of the West did not separate whites and Indians. They demonstrated ways in which the two cultures could interact, each shaping the other.

By the mid-nineteenth century, however, white Americans had adopted a different model as they contemplated westward expansion. Much as the early British settlers along the Atlantic coast had established “plantations,” from which natives were, in theory, to be excluded, so the westward-moving whites of later years came to imagine the territories they were entering as virgin land, with no preexisting civilization. Native Americans, they believed, could not be partners—either equal or subordinate—in the creation of new societies in the West. They were obstacles, to be removed and, as far as possible, isolated. Indians, Andrew Jackson once said, had “neither the intelligence, the industry, the moral habits, nor the desire of improvement” to be fit partners in the project of extending white civilization westward. By dismissing Native American cultures in that way, white Americans justified to themselves a series of harsh policies that they believed (incorrectly) would make the West theirs alone.

## JACKSON AND THE BANK WAR

Jackson was quite willing to use federal power against rebellious states and Indian tribes. On economic issues, however, he was consistently opposed to concentrating power either in the federal government or in powerful and, in his view, aristocratic institutions associated with it. An early example of his skeptical view of federal power was his 1830 veto of a congressional measure providing a subsidy to the proposed Maysville Road in Kentucky. The bill was unconstitutional, Jackson argued, because the road in question lay entirely within Kentucky and was not, therefore, a part of “interstate commerce.” But the bill was also unwise, he believed, because it committed the government to what Jackson considered extravagant expenditures.

Jackson’s opposition to federal power and aristocratic privilege lay behind the most celebrated episode of his presidency: the war against the Bank of the United States.

### Biddle’s Institution

The Bank of the United States in the 1830s was a mighty institution indeed, and it is not surprising that it would attract Jackson’s wrath. Its stately headquarters in Phila-

delphia seemed to symbolize its haughty image of itself. It had branches in twenty-nine other cities, making it the most powerful and far-flung financial institution in the nation. By law, the Bank was the only place that the federal government could deposit its own funds; the government, in turn, owned one-fifth of the Bank’s stock. The Bank did a tremendous business in general banking. It provided credit to growing enterprises; it issued bank notes, which served as a dependable medium of exchange throughout the country; and it exercised a restraining effect on the less well-managed state banks. Nicholas Biddle, who served as president of the Bank from 1823 on, had done much to put the institution on a sound and prosperous basis. Nevertheless, Andrew Jackson was determined to destroy it.

Opposition to the Bank came from two very different groups: the “soft-money” faction and the “hard-money” faction. Advocates of soft money—people who wanted more currency in circulation and believed that issuing bank notes unsupported by gold and silver was the best way to circulate more currency—consisted largely of state bankers and their allies. They objected to the Bank of the United States because it restrained the state banks from issuing notes freely. The hard-money people believed that gold and silver were the only basis for money. They condemned all banks that issued bank notes, including the Bank of the United States. The soft-money advocates were believers in rapid economic growth and speculation; the hard-money forces embraced older ideas of “public virtue” and looked with suspicion on expansion and speculation.

Jackson himself supported the hard-money position. Many years before, he had been involved in some grandiose land and commercial speculations based on paper credit. His business had failed in the Panic of 1797, and he had fallen deeply into debt. After that, he was suspicious of all banks and all paper currency. But as president he was also sensitive to the complaints of his many soft-money supporters in the West and the South. He made it clear that he would not favor renewing the charter of the Bank of the United States, which was due to expire in 1836.

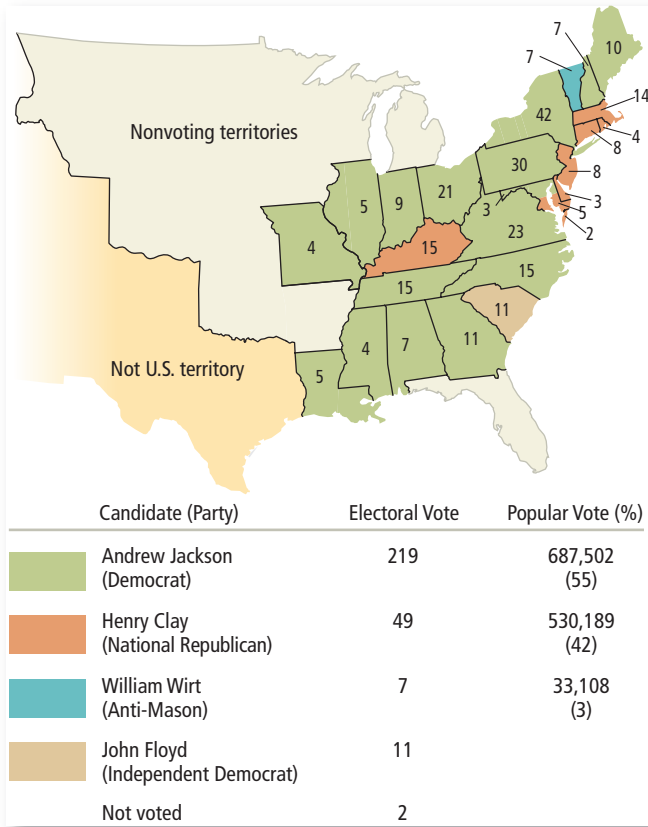
A Philadelphia aristocrat unaccustomed to politics, Biddle nevertheless began granting financial favors to influential men who he thought might help him preserve the Bank. In particular, he turned to Daniel Webster and cultivated a close personal friendship with him. He named Webster the Bank’s legal counsel and director of its Boston branch; Webster was also a frequent, heavy borrower from the Bank. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he helped Biddle win the support of other important figures, among them Henry Clay.

Clay, Webster, and other advisers persuaded Biddle to apply to Congress in 1832 for a bill to renew the Bank’s

Nicholas Biddle

Hard and Soft Money

Jackson’s Opposition to Concentrated Power



**THE ELECTION OF 1832** Jackson's reelection victory in 1832 was almost as decisive as his earlier victory in 1828. ♦ *What changes are visible in party loyalties since the previous election?*

For an interactive version of this map, go to [www.mhhe.com/brinkley13ech9maps](http://www.mhhe.com/brinkley13ech9maps)

charter. That was four years ahead of the date the original charter was scheduled to expire. But forcing a vote now would allow the Bank to become a major issue in the 1832 national elections. Congress passed the recharter bill; Jackson, predictably, vetoed it; and the Bank's supporters in Congress failed to override the veto. Just as Clay had hoped, the 1832 campaign now centered on the future of the Bank.

Clay himself ran for president that year as the unanimous choice of the National Republicans, who held a nominating convention in Baltimore late in 1831. But the Bank War failed to provide him with the winning issue for which he had hoped. Jackson, with Van Buren as his running mate, overwhelmingly defeated Clay (and several minor party candidates) with 55 percent of the popular vote and 219 electoral votes (more than four times as many as Clay received). These results were a defeat not only for Clay, but also for Biddle.

### The "Monster" Destroyed

Jackson was now more determined than ever to destroy the "monster" Bank as quickly as possible. He could not

legally abolish the institution before the expiration of its charter. Instead, he tried to weaken it. He decided to remove the government's deposits from the Bank. His secretary of the treasury believed that such an action would destabilize the financial system and refused to give the order. Jackson fired him and appointed a new one. When the new secretary similarly balked, Jackson fired him too and named a third, more compliant secretary: Attorney General Roger B. Taney, his close friend and loyal ally. Taney began placing the government's deposits not in the Bank of the United States, as it had in the past, but in a number of state banks (which Jackson's enemies called "pet banks").

Removal of Government Deposits

Nicholas Biddle, whom Jacksonians derisively called "Czar Nicholas," did not give in without a fight. "This worthy President," he wrote sarcastically, "thinks that because he has scalped Indians and imprisoned Judges, he is to have his way with the Bank. He is mistaken." When the administration began to transfer funds directly from the Bank of the United States to the pet banks (as opposed to the initial practice of simply depositing new funds in those banks), Biddle called in loans and raised interest rates, explaining that without the government deposits the Bank's resources were stretched too thin. He realized his actions were likely to cause financial distress. He hoped a short recession would persuade Congress to recharter the Bank. "Nothing but the evidence of suffering," he told a colleague, would "produce any effect in Congress." By now, the struggle had become not just a conflict over policy and principle, but a bitter and even petulant personal battle between two proud men—both of them acting recklessly in an effort to humiliate and defeat the other.

As financial conditions worsened in the winter of 1833–1834, supporters of the Bank blamed Jackson's policies for the recession. They organized meetings around the country and sent petitions to Washington urging a rechartering of the Bank. But the Jacksonians blamed the recession on Biddle and refused to budge. When distressed citizens appealed to the president for help, he dismissively answered, "Go to Biddle."

Finally, Biddle contracted credit too far even for his own allies in the business community, who began to fear that in his effort to save his own bank he was threatening their interests. Some of them did "go to Biddle." A group of New York and Boston merchants protested. To appease the business community, Biddle at last reversed himself and began to grant credit in abundance and on reasonable terms. His vacillating and unpopular tactics ended his chances of winning a recharter of the Bank.

Jackson had won a considerable political victory. But when the Bank of the United States died in 1836, the country

Jackson Victorious





Harvard College; the challenging company, by contrast, consisted largely of newer, aspiring entrepreneurs—the sort of people with whom Jackson and his allies instinctively identified.) The decision reflected one of the cornerstones of the Jacksonian ideal: that the key to democracy was an expansion of economic opportunity, which would not occur if older corporations could maintain monopolies and choke off competition from newer companies.

## THE CHANGING FACE OF AMERICAN POLITICS

Jackson's forceful—some claimed tyrannical—tactics in crushing first the nullification movement and then the Bank of the United States helped galvanize a growing opposition coalition that by the mid-1830s was ready to assert itself in national politics. Denouncing the president as “King Andrew I,” they began to refer to themselves as Whigs, after the party in England that had traditionally worked to limit the power of the king. With the emergence of the Whigs, the nation once again had two competing political parties. What scholars now call the “second party system” had begun what turned out to be its relatively brief life.

### Democrats and Whigs

The two parties were different from one another in their philosophies, in their constituencies, and in the character of their leaders. But they became increasingly alike in the way they approached the process of electing their followers to office.

Democrats in the 1830s envisioned a future of steadily expanding economic and political opportunities for white males. The role of government should be limited, they believed, but it should include efforts to remove obstacles to opportunity and to avoid creating new ones. That meant defending the Union, which Jacksonians believed was essential to the dynamic economic growth they favored. It also meant attacking centers of corrupt privilege. As Jackson himself said in his farewell address, the society of America should be one in which “the planter, the farmer, the mechanic, and the laborer, all know that their success depends on their own industry and economy,” in which artificial privilege would stifle no one's opportunity. Among the most radical members of the party—the so-called Locofocos, mainly workingmen and small businessmen and professionals in the Northeast—sentiment was strong for a vigorous, perhaps even violent assault on monopoly and privilege far in advance of anything Jackson himself ever contemplated.

The political philosophy that became known as Whiggery was very different. It favored expanding the power of the federal government, encouraging industrial and commercial development, and knitting the country together into a consolidated economic system. Whigs embraced material progress enthusiastically; but unlike the Democrats, they were cautious about westward expansion, fearful that rapid territorial growth would produce instability. Their vision of America was of a nation embracing the industrial future and rising to world greatness as a commercial and manufacturing power. Thus, while Democrats were inclined to oppose legislation establishing banks, corporations, and other modernizing institutions, Whigs generally favored such measures.

The Whigs were strongest among the more substantial merchants and manufacturers of the Northeast; the wealthier planters of the South (those who favored commercial development and the strengthening of ties with the North); and the ambitious farmers and rising commercial class of the West—usually migrants from the Northeast—who advocated internal improvements, expanding trade, and rapid economic progress. The Democrats drew more support from smaller merchants and the workingmen of the Northeast; from southern planters suspicious of industrial growth; and from westerners—usually with southern roots—who favored a predominantly agrarian economy and opposed the development of powerful economic institutions in their region. Whigs tended to be wealthier than Democrats, to have more aristocratic backgrounds, and to be more commercially ambitious.

But Whig and Democratic politicians alike were more interested in winning elections than in maintaining philosophical purity. And both parties made frequent adjustments in their public postures to attract the largest possible number of voters. In New York, for example, the Whigs worked to develop a popular following by making a connection to a movement known as Anti-Masonry. The Anti-Mason movement had emerged in the 1820s in response to widespread resentment against the secret, exclusive, and hence supposedly undemocratic, Society of Freemasons. Such resentments greatly increased in 1826 when a former Mason, William Morgan, mysteriously disappeared (and was assumed to have been murdered) from his home in Batavia, New York, shortly before he was scheduled to publish a book purporting to expose the secrets of Freemasonry. Whigs seized on the Anti-Mason frenzy to launch harsh attacks on Jackson and Van Buren (both Freemasons), implying that the Democrats were part of the antidemocratic conspiracy. In the process, the Whigs presented themselves as opponents of aristocracy and exclusivity. They were, in other words, attacking the Democrats with the Democrats' own issues.

Whigs' Call for Economic Union

Birth of the Whig Party

Democrats' Emphasis on Opportunity

Anti-Masons

Religious and ethnic divisions also played an important role in determining the constituencies of the two parties. Irish and German Catholics, among the largest of the recent immigrant groups, tended to support the Democrats, who appeared to share their own vague aversion to commercial development and entrepreneurial progress and who seemed to respect family- and community-centered values and habits. Evangelical Protestants gravitated toward the Whigs because they associated the party with constant development and improvement, goals their own faith embraced. These and other ethnic, religious, and cultural tensions were often more influential in determining party alignments than any concrete political or economic proposals.

The Whig Party was more successful at defining its positions and attracting a constituency than it was in uniting behind a national leader. No single person was ever able to command the loyalties of the party in the way Andrew Jackson did the Democrats. Instead, Whigs tended to divide their loyalties among three figures, each of whom was so substantial a figure that together they became known as the “Great Triumvirate”: Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and John Calhoun.

Clay won support from many of those who favored his program for internal improvements and economic development, what he called the “American System”; but his image as a devious operator and his identification with the West proved to be serious liabilities. He ran for president three times and never won. Daniel Webster, the greatest orator of his era, won broad support with his passionate speeches in defense of the Constitution and the Union; but his close connection with the Bank of the United States and the protective tariff, his reliance on rich men for financial support, and his excessive and often embarrassing fondness for brandy prevented him from developing enough of a national constituency to win him the office he so desperately wanted. John C. Calhoun, the third member of the Great Triumvirate, never considered himself a true Whig, and his identification with the nullification controversy in effect disqualified him from national leadership in any case. But he had tremendous strength in the South, supported a national bank, and shared with Clay and Webster a strong animosity toward Andrew Jackson.

The problems that emerged from this divided leadership became particularly clear in 1836. The Democrats were united behind Andrew Jackson’s personal choice for president, Martin Van Buren. The Whigs could not even agree on a single candidate. Instead, they ran several candidates, hoping to profit from the regional strength of each. Webster represented the party in New England; Hugh Lawson White of Tennessee ran in the South; and the former Indian fighter and hero of the War of 1812, William Henry

Harrison, from Ohio, was the candidate in the middle states and the West. Party leaders hoped the three candidates together might draw enough votes from Van Buren to prevent his getting a majority and throw the election to the House of Representatives, where the Whigs might be able to elect one of their own leaders. In the end, however, Van Buren won easily, with 170 electoral votes to 124 for all his opponents.

## Van Buren and the Panic of 1837

Andrew Jackson retired from public life in 1837, the most beloved political figure of his age. Martin Van Buren was very different from his predecessor and far less fortunate. He was never able to match Jackson’s personal popularity, and his administration encountered economic difficulties that devastated the Democrats and helped the Whigs.

Van Buren’s success in the 1836 election was a result in part of a nationwide economic boom that was reaching its height in that year. Canal and railroad builders were at a peak of activity. Prices were rising, money was plentiful, and credit was easy as banks increased their loans and notes with little regard to their reserves of cash. The land business, in particular, was booming. Between 1835 and 1837, the government sold nearly 40 million acres of public land, nearly three-fourths of it to speculators, who purchased large tracts in hopes of reselling them at a profit. These land sales, along with revenues the government received from the tariff of 1833, created a series of substantial federal budget surpluses and made possible a steady reduction of the national debt (something Jackson had always advocated). From 1835 to 1837, the government for the first and only time in its history was out of debt, with a substantial surplus in the Treasury.

Congress and the administration now faced the question of what to do with the Treasury surplus. Reducing the tariff was not an option, since no one wanted to raise that thorny issue again. Instead, support grew for returning the federal surplus to the states. In 1836, Congress passed a “distribution” act requiring the federal government to pay its surplus funds to the states each year in four quarterly installments as interest-free, unsecured loans. No one expected the “loans” to be repaid. The states spent the money quickly, mainly to encourage construction of highways, railroads, and canals. The distribution of the surplus thus gave further stimulus to the economic boom. At the same time, the withdrawal of federal funds strained the state (or “pet”) banks in which they had been deposited by the government; they had to call in their own loans to make the transfer of funds to the state governments.

Congress did nothing to check the speculative fever, with which many congressmen themselves were badly

Cultural Issues

Clay’s American System

Election of 1836

Distribution Act



**“THE TIMES,” 1837** This savage caricature of the economic troubles besetting the United States in 1837 illustrates, among other things, popular resentment of the hard-money orthodoxies of the time. A sign on the Custom House reads: “All bonds must be paid in Specie.” Next door, the bank announces: “No specie payments made here.” Women and children are shown begging in the street, while unemployed workers stand shoeless in front of signs advertising loans and “grand schemes.” (*New-York Historical Society*)

infected. Webster, for one, was buying up thousands of acres in the West. But Jackson, always suspicious of paper currency, was unhappy that the government was selling good land and receiving in return various state bank notes worth no more than the credit of the issuing bank.

In 1836, not long before leaving office, he issued a presidential order, the “specie circular.” It provided that in payment for public lands the government would accept only gold or silver coins or currency securely backed by gold or silver. Jackson was right to fear the speculative fever but wrong in thinking the specie circular would cure it. On the contrary, it produced a financial panic that began in the first months of Van Buren’s presidency. Hundreds of banks and businesses failed. Unemployment grew. Bread riots broke out in some of the larger cities. Prices fell, especially the price of land. Many railroad and canal projects failed. Several of the debt-burdened state governments ceased to pay interest on their bonds, and a few repudiated their debts, at least temporarily. It was the worst depression in American history to that point, and it lasted for five years. It was a political catastrophe for Van Buren and the Democrats.

#### Panic of 1837

Both parties bore some responsibility for the panic. The distribution of the Treasury surplus, which had weakened the state banks and helped cause the crash, had been a Whig measure. Jackson’s specie circular, which had started a run on the banks as land buyers rushed to trade in their bank notes for specie, was also to blame. But the depression was only partly a result of federal policies. England and western Europe were facing panics of their own, which caused European (and especially English) investors to withdraw funds from America, putting an added strain on American banks. A succession of crop failures on American farms reduced the purchasing power of farmers and required increased imports of food, which sent more money out of the country. But whatever its actual causes, the Panic of 1837 occurred during a Democratic administration, and the Democrats paid the political price for it. The Van Buren administration, which strongly opposed government intervention in the economy, did little to fight the depression. Some of the steps it took—borrowing money to pay government debts and accepting only specie for payment of taxes—may have made things worse. Van



Buren did succeed in establishing a ten-hour workday on all federal projects, by presidential order, but he had only a few legislative achievements.

The most important and controversial of them was the creation of a new financial system to replace the Bank of the United States. Under Van Buren's plan, known as the "independent treasury" or "subtreasury" system, the government would place its funds in an independent treasury at Washington and in subtreasuries in other cities. No private banks would have the government's money or name to use as a basis for speculation; the government and the banks would be "divorced."

Van Buren called a special session of Congress in 1837 to consider the proposal, which failed in the House. In 1840, the last year of Van Buren's presidency, the administration finally succeeded in driving the measure through both houses of Congress.

### The Log Cabin Campaign

As the campaign of 1840 approached, the Whigs realized that they would have to settle on one candidate for president this time if they were to have any hope of winning. As a result, they held their first national nominating convention in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in December 1839. Passing over the controversial Henry Clay, who had expected the nomination, the convention chose William Henry Harrison and, for vice president, John Tyler of Virginia. Harrison was a descendant of the Virginia aristocracy but had spent his adult life in the Northwest. He was a renowned soldier, a famous Indian fighter, and a popular national figure. The Democrats nominated Van Buren. But because they were not much more united than the Whigs, they failed to nominate a vice presidential candidate, leaving the choice of that office to the electors.

The 1840 campaign was the first in which the new popular "penny press" carried news of the candidates to a large audience of workers and tradespeople. It also illustrated how fully the concept of party competition, the subordination of ideology to immediate political needs, had established itself in America. The Whigs—who had emerged as a party largely because of their opposition to Andrew Jackson's common-man democracy, who in most

regions represented the more affluent elements of the population, and who favored government policies that would aid business—presented themselves in 1840 as the party of the common people. So, of course, did the Democrats. Both parties used the same techniques of mass voter appeal, the same evocation of simple, rustic values. What mattered now was not the philosophical purity of the party but its ability to win votes. The Whig campaign was particularly effective in portraying William Henry Harrison, a wealthy member of



**HARRISON AND REFORM** This hand-colored engraving was made for a brass brooch during the 1840 presidential campaign and served the same purposes that modern campaign buttons do. It conveys Harrison's presumably humble beginnings in a log cabin. In reality, Harrison was a wealthy, aristocratic man; but the unpopularity of the aristocratic airs of his opponent, President Martin Van Buren, persuaded the Whig Party that it would be good political strategy to portray Harrison as a humble "man of the people." (*Collection of David J. and Janice L. Frent*)

the frontier elite with a considerable estate, as a simple man of the people who loved log cabins and hard cider. They accused Van Buren of being an aloof aristocrat who used cologne, drank champagne, and ate from gold plates. The Democrats had no defense against the combination of these campaign techniques and the effects of the depression. Harrison won the election with 234 electoral votes to 60 for Van Buren and with a popular vote majority of 53 percent.

### The Frustration of the Whigs

Despite their decisive victory, the Whigs found their four years in power frustrating and divisive ones. In large part, that was because their popular new president, "Old Tippecanoe," William Henry Harrison, died of pneumonia one month after taking office. Vice President Tyler succeeded him. Control of the administration thus fell to a man with whom the Whig party leadership had relatively weak ties. Harrison had generally deferred to Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, whom he named secretary of state. Under Tyler, things quickly changed.



**AN ATTACK ON VAN BUREN** This “pull card,” made during the 1840 presidential campaign, which Van Buren lost to William Henry Harrison, satirizes the president as an aristocratic dandy. The card displays Van Buren grinning while he drinks champagne in the White House. Pulling a tab on the card changes his champagne glass to a mug of hard cider (with Harrison’s initials on it) and changes his expression from delight to revulsion. (*Division of Political History; American History Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.*)

Tyler was a former Democrat who had left the party in reaction to what he considered Jackson’s excessively egalitarian program and imperious methods. But there were still signs of his Democratic past in his approach to public policy. The president did agree to bills abolishing Van Buren’s independent treasury system and raising tariff rates. But he refused to support Clay’s attempt to recharter a Bank of the United States. And he vetoed several internal improvement bills that Clay and other congressional Whigs sponsored. Finally, a conference of congressional Whigs read Tyler out of the party. Every cabinet member but Webster resigned; five former Democrats took their places. When Webster, too, left the cabinet, Tyler appointed Calhoun, who had rejoined the Democratic Party, to replace him.

A new political alignment was emerging. Tyler and a small band of conservative southern Whigs were preparing to rejoin the Democrats. Joining the “common man’s party” of Jackson and Van Buren was a faction with decidedly aristocratic political ideas, who thought that government had an obligation to protect and even expand the

institution of slavery, and who believed in states’ rights with almost fanatical devotion.

### Whig Diplomacy

In the midst of these domestic controversies, a series of incidents in the late 1830s brought Great Britain and the United States once again to the brink of war. Residents of the eastern provinces of Canada launched a rebellion against the British colonial government in 1837, and some of the rebels chartered an American steamship, the *Caroline*, to ship supplies across the Niagara River to them from New York. British authorities in Canada seized the *Caroline* and burned it, killing one American in the process. The British government refused either to disavow the attack or to provide compensation for it, and resentment in the United States ran high. But the British soon had reasons for anger as well. Authorities in New York, attempting to exploit the *Caroline* affair, arrested a Canadian named Alexander McLeod and charged him with the murder of the

The *Caroline* Affair



## THE PENNY PRESS

On September 3, 1833, a small newspaper appeared in New York City for the first time: the *New York Sun*, published by a young former apprentice from Massachusetts named Benjamin Day. It was four pages long; it contained mostly trivial local news, with particular emphasis on sex, crime, and violence; and it sold for a penny. It launched a new age in the history of American journalism, the age of the “penny press.”

Before the advent of the penny press, newspapers in America were



**THE NEW YORK SUN** This 1834 front page of *The Sun*, which had begun publication a year earlier, contains advertisements, light stories, a description of a slave auction in Charleston, S.C., and homespun advice: “Life is short. The poor pittance of several years is not worth being a villain for.” (Collection of the New-York Historical Society)

produced almost entirely by and for the upper classes. Some published mainly business news; others worked to advance the aims of a political party. All were far too expensive for most ordinary citizens to buy. But several important changes in the business of journalism and the character of American society paved the way for Benjamin Day and others to challenge the established press. New technologies—the steam-powered cylinder printing press, new machines for making paper, railroads and canals for distributing issues to a larger market—made it possible to publish newspapers inexpensively and to sell them widely. A rising popular literacy rate, a result in part of the spread of public education, created a bigger reading public.

The penny press was also a response to the changing culture of the 1820s and 1830s. The spread of an urban, market economy contributed to the growth of the penny press by drawing a large population of workers, artisans, and clerks—the genesis of an industrial working class and a modern middle class—into large cities, where they became an important market for the new papers. The spirit of democracy—symbolized by the popularity of Andrew Jackson and the rising numbers of white male voters across the country—helped create an appetite for journalism that spoke to and for “the people,” rather than the parties or the upper classes. Hence Benjamin

Day’s slogan for his new paper: “It Shines for ALL.” *The Sun* and other papers like it were self-consciously egalitarian. They were eager to tweak and embarrass the rich and powerful (through their popular gossip columns). They were also committed to feeding the appetites of the people of modest means, who constituted most of their readership. “Human interest stories” helped solidify their hold on the working public. Condescending stories about poor black men and women—ridiculing their subjects’ illiteracy and their accents—were also popular among their virtually all-white readership.

Within six months of its first issue, the *Sun* had the largest circulation in New York—8,000 readers, more than twice the number of its nearest competitors. Its success encouraged others to begin publishing penny papers of their own. James Gordon Bennett’s *New York Herald*, which began publication in 1835, soon surpassed the *Sun* in popularity with its lively combination of sensationalism and local gossip and with its aggressive pursuit of national and international stories. The *Herald* pioneered a “letters to the editor” column. It was the first paper to have regular reviews of books and the arts. It even launched the first daily sports section. By 1860, it had the largest circulation of any daily newspaper in the world: more than 77,000.

Not all the new penny papers were as sensationalist as the *Sun* and

American who had died in the incident. The British government, expressing majestic rage, insisted that McLeod could not be accused of murder because he had acted under official orders. The foreign secretary, the bellicose Lord Palmerston, demanded McLeod’s release and threatened that his execution would bring “immediate and frightful” war.

Webster as secretary of state did not think McLeod was worth a war, but he was powerless to release him. The prisoner was under New York jurisdiction and had to be tried in the state courts, a peculiarity of American jurisprudence that the British did not seem to understand. A New York jury did what Webster could not: it defused the crisis by acquitting McLeod.

At the same time, tensions flared over the boundary between Canada and Maine, which had been in dispute since

Aroostook War

the Treaty of 1783. In 1838, groups of Americans and Canadians, mostly lumberjacks, began moving into the Aroostook River region in the disputed area, precipitating a violent brawl between the two groups that became known as the “Aroostook War.”

Several years later, there were yet more Anglo-American problems. In 1841, an American ship, the *Creole*, sailed from Virginia for New Orleans with more than 100 slaves aboard. En route the slaves mutinied, took possession of the ship, and took it to the Bahamas. British officials there declared the slaves free, and the English government



the *Herald*. Both the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* and the *Baltimore Sun*, founded in 1836 and 1837 respectively, strove to provide more serious coverage of the news. The *Baltimore Sun* even developed a Washington bureau, the first of the penny papers to do so. The *New York Tribune*, founded in 1841 by Horace Greeley (later a major antislavery leader and a Republican presidential candidate), hired some of the most important writers of the day—among them Charles A. Dana, Margaret Fuller, Henry James, and William Dean Howells—and prided itself on serious reporting and commentary. All

of it was tinged with a conspicuous sympathy for socialism (Greeley once hired Karl Marx as a London correspondent) and for the aspirations of working people. As serious as the *Tribune*, but more sober and self-consciously “objective” in its reportage, was the *New York Times*, which Henry Raymond founded in 1851. “We do not mean to write as if we were in a passion—unless that shall really be the case,” the *Times* huffily proclaimed in its first issue, in an obvious reference to Greeley and his impassioned reportage; “and we shall make it a point to get into a passion as rarely as possible.”

But the *Times*’s dutiful restraint and self-conscious respectability was rare in the penny press. More typical was the front page of the June 4, 1836, *Herald*, devoted in its entirety to the sensational murder of a prostitute by a frequent patron of brothels. “Why is not the militia called?” Bennett’s paper asked breathlessly at the beginning of the main story. “We give . . . testimony up to the latest hour. . . . The mystery of the bloody drama increases—increases—increases.”

No papers in the 1830s had yet begun to use the large banner headlines of modern tabloids. None had photographs, and only a few—Bennett’s *Herald* notable among them—ran drawings to accompany their stories with any regularity. But within their columns of unbroken newsprint lay the origins of the press we know today. They were the first papers to pay their reporters and thus began the process of turning journalism into a profession. They were the first to rely heavily on advertisements and often devoted up to half their space to paid advertising. They reached beyond the business world and the political clubs and communicated with a genuinely mass market. They were often sensationalist and usually opinionated. But they were often also aggressive in uncovering serious and important news—in police stations, courts, jails, streets, and private homes as well as in city halls, state capitals, Washington, and the world.



**THE FIRST “EXTRA”** This 1840 “special edition” of the *New York Sun* was innovative in two ways. It was probably the first “extra” edition of any daily newspaper in America. It was also one of the first examples of large and (in this case at least) lurid illustration in the daily press. This dramatic picture accompanies a story about the explosion of the ship. (Print Collection Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division, New York Public Library; Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations)

refused to overrule them. Many Americans, especially southerners, were furious.

At this critical juncture, a new government eager to reduce the tensions with the United States came to power in Great Britain. In the spring of 1842, it sent Lord Ashburton, an admirer of America, to negotiate an agreement on the Maine boundary and other matters. The result of his negotiations with Secretary of State Webster and representatives from Maine and Massachusetts was the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842. Its terms established a firm northern boundary between the United States and Canada along the Maine–New Brunswick border that survives to this day; the new border gave

Webster-Ashburton Treaty

the United States a bit more than half of the previously disputed territory. Other, smaller provisions placated Maine and Massachusetts and protected critical trade routes in both the northern United States and southern Canada. In a separate exchange of notes, Ashburton eased the memory of the *Caroline* and *Creole* affairs by expressing regret and promising no future “officious interference” with American ships. The Webster-Ashburton Treaty was generally popular in America, and in its aftermath Anglo-American relations substantially improved.

During the Tyler administration, the United States established its first diplomatic relations with China. In 1842, Treaty of Wang Hya Britain forced China to open certain ports to foreign trade.

Treaty of Wang Hya

Eager to share the new privileges, American mercantile interests persuaded Tyler and Congress to send a commissioner—Caleb Cushing—to China to negotiate a treaty giving the United States some part in the China trade. In the Treaty of Wang Hya, concluded in 1844, Cushing secured most-favored-nation provisions giving Americans the same privileges as the English. He also won for Americans the right of “extraterritoriality”—the right of Americans accused of crimes in China to be tried by

American, not Chinese, officials. In the next ten years, American trade with China steadily increased.

In their diplomatic efforts, at least, the Whigs were able to secure some important successes. But by the end of the Tyler administration, the party could look back on few other victories. In the election of 1844, the Whigs lost the White House. They were to win only one more national election in their history.

## CONCLUSION

The election of Andrew Jackson to the presidency in 1828 marked not only the triumph of a particular vision of government and democracy. It represented as well the emergence of a new political world. Throughout the American nation, the laws governing political participation were loosening and the number of people permitted to vote (which eventually included most white males, but almost no one else) was increasing. Along with this expansion of the electorate was emerging a new spirit of party politics. Parties had once been reviled by American leaders as contributing to the spirit of faction. Now a new set of ideas was emerging that saw in institutionalized parties not a challenge, but a contribution to democracy. Party competition would be a way of containing and muting disagreements that might otherwise run amok. It would be another of the healthy restraints—another part of the system of checks and balances—that made American government work.

Andrew Jackson was a party man, and he set out as president to entrench his party, the Democrats, in power. He was also a fierce defender of his region, the West, and

a sharp critic of what he considered the stranglehold of the aristocratic East on the nation’s economic life. He sought to limit the role of the federal government in economic affairs, fearful that it would serve to entrench existing patterns of wealth and power. He worked to destroy the Bank of the United States, which he considered a corrupt vehicle of aristocratic influence. Jackson was, finally, a nationalist. And he confronted the greatest challenge to American unity yet to have emerged in the young nation—the nullification crisis of 1832–1833—with a strong assertion of the power and importance of the Union. These positions won him broad popularity and ensured his reelection in 1832 and the election of his designated successor, Martin Van Buren, in 1836.

But the Democrats were not the only ones to have learned the lessons of the age of parties. A new coalition of anti-Jacksonians, who called themselves the Whigs, launched a powerful new party that used much of the same anti-elitist rhetoric the Democrats had used to win support for their own much more nationalist program. Their emergence culminated in the campaign of 1840 with the election of the first Whig president.

## INTERACTIVE LEARNING

The *Primary Source Investigator CD-ROM* offers the following materials related to this chapter:

- A short documentary movie, **Cherokee Removal**, on the federal government’s forced removal of thousands of Native Americans to Indian Territory (Oklahoma) and the tragic results (D6).
- Interactive maps: **U.S. Elections** (M7) and **Indian Expulsion** (M9).
- Documents, images, and maps related to Jacksonian democracy, the forced removal of Native Americans

to western territories, and the rise of the Whig Party. Highlights include a series of portraits of Andrew Jackson, a protest memorial about Cherokee removal, paintings of Native Americans, the Supreme Court decision in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, and a series of cartoons satirizing Jacksonian democracy.

### Online Learning Center ([www.mhhe.com/brinkley13e](http://www.mhhe.com/brinkley13e))

For quizzes, Internet resources, references to additional books and films, and more, consult this book’s Online Learning Center.

## FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (2007) and Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: From Jefferson to Lincoln* (2005) are two important, broad studies of the "age of Jackson." Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (1945), a classic study, represents Jacksonian politics as an eastern, urban democratic movement of working men and upper-class intellectuals. Bray Hammond, *Banks and Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War* (1957) challenges Schlesinger by arguing that the Bank War was essentially a struggle between different groups of capitalist elites. Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (1990) provides an important newer synthesis of Jacksonian politics. Donald B. Cole, *Martin Van Buren and the American Political System* (1984) examines the emergence of modern notions of party through the career of Van Buren. Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1740-1840* (1969) traces the growing acceptance

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