Chapter 13

The Rise of a Mass Democracy

1824–1840

In the full enjoyment of the gifts of Heaven and the fruits of superior industry, economy, and virtue, every man is equally entitled to protection by law; but when the laws undertake to add to those natural and just advantages artificial distinctions . . . and exclusive privileges . . . the humble members of society—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers . . . have a right to complain of the injustice of their government.

Andrew Jackson, 1832

The so-called Era of Good Feelings was never entirely tranquil, but even the illusion of national consensus was shattered by the panic of 1819 and the Missouri Compromise of 1820. Economic distress and the slavery issue raised the political stakes in the 1820s and 1830s. Vigorous political conflict, once feared, came to be celebrated as necessary for the health of democracy. New political parties emerged. New styles of campaigning took hold. A new chapter opened in the history of American—and world—politics, as many European societies began haltingly to expand their electorates and broaden democratic practices. The American political landscape of 1824 was similar, in its broad outlines, to that of 1796. By 1840 it would be almost unrecognizable.

The deference, apathy, and virtually nonexistent party organizations of the Era of Good Feelings yielded to the boisterous democracy, frenzied vitality, and strong political parties of the Jacksonian era. The old suspicion of political parties as illegitimate disrupters of society's natural harmony gave way to an acceptance, even a celebration, of the sometimes wild contentiousness of political life.

In 1828 an energetic new party, the Democrats, captured the White House. By the 1830s the Democrats faced an equally vigorous opposition party, the Whigs. This two-party system institutionalized divisions that had vexed the Revolutionary generation and came to constitute an important part of the nation's checks and balances on political power.

New forms of politicking emerged in this era, as candidates used banners, badges, parades, barbecues, free drinks, and baby kissing to "get out the vote." Voter turnout rose dramatically. Only about one-quarter of eligible voters cast a ballot in the presidential election of 1824, but that proportion doubled in 1828, and in the election of 1840 it reached 78 percent. Everywhere people flexed their political muscles.

The "Corrupt Bargain" of 1824

The last of the old-style elections was marked by the controversial **corrupt bargain** of 1824. The woods were full of presidential timber as James Monroe, last of the Virginia dynasty, completed his second term. Four candidates towered above the others: John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts, highly intelligent, experienced, and aloof; Henry Clay of Kentucky, the gamy and gallant "Harry of the West"; William H. Crawford of Georgia, an able though ailing giant of a man; and Andrew Jackson of Tennessee, the gaunt and gutsy hero of New Orleans.

All four rivals professed to be "Republicans." Well-organized parties had not yet emerged; their identities were so fuzzy, in fact, that South Carolina's John C. Calhoun appeared as the vice-presidential candidate on both the Adams and Jackson tickets.

The results of the noisy campaign were interesting but confusing. Jackson, the war hero, clearly had the

Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: Nelson Trust, 54-9. Photograph by Jamison Miller

Canvassing for a Vote, by George Caleb Bingham, 1852 This painting shows the "new politics" of the Jacksonian era. Politicians now had to take their message to the common man.

strongest personal appeal, especially in the West, where his campaign against the forces of corruption and privilege in government resonated deeply. He polled almost as many popular votes as his next two rivals combined, but he failed to win a majority of the electoral vote (see Table 13.1). In such a deadlock, the House of Representatives, as directed by the Twelfth Amendment (see the Appendix), must choose among the top three candidates. Clay was thus eliminated, yet as Speaker of the House, he presided over the very chamber that had to pick the winner.

The influential Clay was in a position to throw the election to the candidate of his choice. He reached his decision by process of elimination. Crawford, recently felled by a paralytic stroke, was out of the picture. Clay hated the "military chieftain" Jackson, his archrival for the allegiance of the West. Jackson, in turn, bitterly resented Clay's public denunciation of his Florida foray in 1818. The only candidate left was the puritanical Adams, with whom Clay—a free-living gambler and duelist—had never established cordial personal relations. But the two men had much in common politically: both were fervid nationalists and advocates of the American System. Shortly before the final balloting in the House, Clay met privately with Adams and assured him of his support.

Decision day came early in 1825. The House of Representatives met amid tense excitement, with sick members being carried in on stretchers. On the first ballot, thanks largely to Clay's behind-the-scenes influence, Adams was elected president. A few days later, the victor announced that Henry Clay would be the new secretary of state.

The office of secretary of state was the prize plum then, even more so than today. Three of the four preceding secretaries had reached the presidency, and the high cabinet office was regarded as an almost certain pathway to the White House. According to Jackson's supporters, Adams had bribed Clay with the position, making himself, the people's second choice, the victor over Jackson, the people's first choice.

Masses of angry Jacksonians, most of them common folk, raised a roar of protest against this "corrupt bargain." The clamor continued for nearly four years. Jackson condemned Clay as the "Judas of the West," and John Randolph of Virginia publicly assailed

TABLE 13.1 Election of 1824

Candidates	Electoral Vote	Popular Vote	Popular Percentage
Jackson	99	153,544	42.16%
Adams	84	108,740	31.89
Crawford	41	46,618	12.95
Clay	37	47,136	12.99

the alliance between "the Puritan [Adams] and the black-leg [Clay]," who, he added, "shines and stinks like rotten mackerel by moonlight." Clay, outraged, challenged Randolph to a duel, though poor marksmanship and shaky nerves rendered the outcome bloodless.

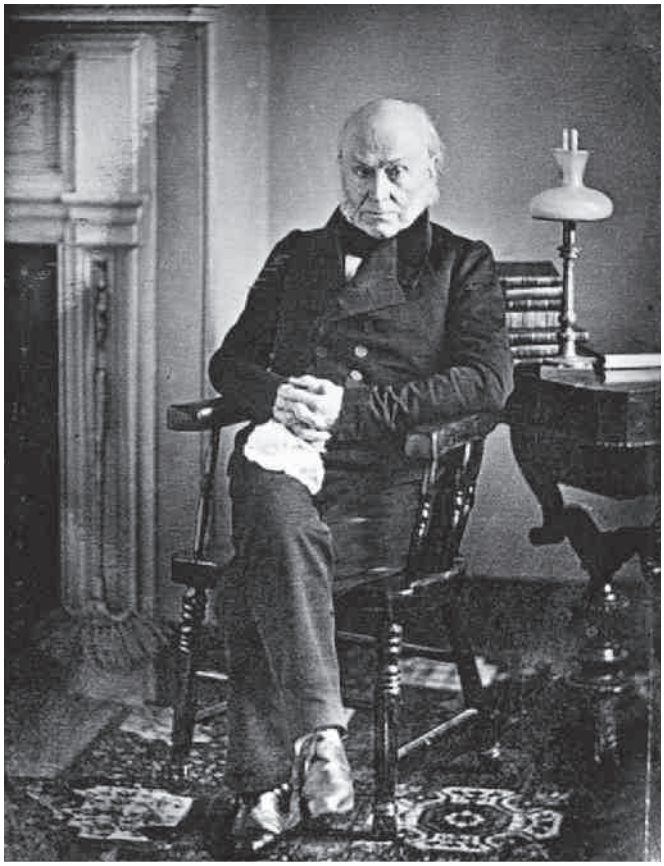
No positive evidence has yet been unearthed to prove that Adams and Clay entered into a formal bargain. Clay was a natural choice for secretary of state, and Adams was both scrupulously honest and not given to patronage. Even if a bargain had been struck, it was not necessarily corrupt. Deals of this nature have long been the stock-in-trade of politicians. But the outcry over Adams's election showed that change was in the wind. What had once been common practice was now condemned as furtive, elitist, and subversive of democracy. The next president would not be chosen behind closed doors.

A Yankee Misfit in the White House

John Quincy Adams was a chip off the old family glacier. Short, thickset, and billiard-bald, he was even more frigidly austere than his presidential father, John Adams. Shunning people, he often went for early-morning swims, sometimes stark naked, in the then-pure Potomac River. Essentially a closeted thinker rather than a politician, he was irritable, sarcastic, and tactless. Yet few individuals have ever come to the presidency with a more brilliant record in statecraft, especially in foreign affairs. He ranks as one of the most successful secretaries of state, yet one of the least successful presidents.

A man of scrupulous honor, Adams entered upon his four-year "sentence" in the White House smarting under charges of "bargain," "corruption," and "usurpation." Fewer than one-third of the voters had voted for him. As the first "minority president," he would have found it difficult to win popular support even under the most favorable conditions. He did not possess many of the usual arts of the politician and scorned those who did. He had achieved high office by commanding respect rather than by courting popularity. In an earlier era, an aloof John Adams had won the votes of propertied men by sheer ability. But with the dawning age of backslapping and baby-kissing democracy, his cold-fish son could hardly hope for success at the polls.

While Adams's enemies accused him of striking a corrupt bargain, his political allies wished that he would strike a few more. Whether through high-mindedness or political ineptitude, Adams resolutely declined to oust efficient officeholders in order to create vacancies for his supporters. During his entire administration, he removed only twelve public servants from the federal payroll. Such stubbornness caused countless



The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of I. N. Phelps Stokes, Edward S. Hawes, Alice Mary Hawes, and Marion Augusta Hawes, 1937. (37.14.2) Photograph © 1996 The Metropolitan Museum of Art

President John Quincy Adams (1767–1848), Daguerreotype by Phillip Haas, 1843 Adams wrote in his diary in June 1819, nearly six years before becoming president, "I am a man of reserved, cold, austere, and forbidding manners: my political adversaries say, a gloomy misanthropist, and my personal enemies an unsocial savage."

Adams followers to throw up their hands in despair. If the president would not reward party workers with political plums, why should they labor to keep him in office?

Adams's nationalistic views gave him further woes. Much of the nation was turning away from post-Ghent nationalism and toward states' rights and sectionalism. But Adams swam against the tide. Confirmed nationalist that he was, Adams, in his first annual message, urged upon Congress the construction of roads and canals. He renewed George Washington's proposal for a national university and went so far as to advocate federal support for an astronomical observatory.

The public reaction to these proposals was prompt and unfavorable. To many workaday Americans grubbing out stumps, astronomical observatories seemed like a scandalous waste of public funds. The South in particular bristled. If the federal government should take on such heavy financial burdens, it would have to

continue the hated tariff duties. Worse, if it could meddle in local concerns like education and roads, it might even try to lay its hand on the "peculiar institution" of black slavery.

Adams's land policy likewise antagonized the westerners. They clamored for wide-open expansion and resented the president's well-meaning attempts to curb feverish speculation in the public domain. The fate of the Cherokee Indians, threatened with eviction from their holdings in Georgia, brought additional bitterness. White Georgians wanted the Cherokees out. The ruggedly honest Adams attempted to deal fairly with the Indians. The Georgia governor, by threatening to resort to arms, successfully resisted the efforts of the Washington government to interpose federal authority on behalf of the Cherokees. Another fateful chapter was thus written in the nullification of the national will—and another nail was driven in Adams's political coffin.

Going "Whole Hog" for Jackson in 1828

Andrew Jackson's next presidential campaign started early—on February 9, 1825, the day of John Quincy Adams's controversial election by the House—and it continued noisily for nearly four years.

Even before the election of 1828, the temporarily united Republicans of the Era of Good Feelings had split into two camps. One was the National Republicans, with Adams as their standard-bearer. The other was the Democratic-Republicans, with the fiery Jackson heading their ticket. Rallying cries of the Jackson zealots were "Bargain and Corruption," "Huzza for Jackson," and "All Hail Old Hickory." Jacksonites planted hickory poles for their hickory-tough hero; Adamsites adopted the oak as the symbol of their oakenly independent candidate.

Jackson's followers presented their hero as a rough-hewn frontiersman and a stalwart champion of the common man. They denounced Adams as a corrupt aristocrat and argued that the will of the people had been thwarted in 1825 by the backstairs "bargain" of Adams and Clay. The only way to right the wrong was to seat Jackson, who would then bring about "reform" by sweeping out the "dishonest" Adams gang.

Much of this talk was political hyperbole. Jackson was no frontier farmer but a wealthy planter. He had been born in a log cabin but now lived in a luxurious manor off the labor of his many slaves. And Adams, though perhaps an aristocrat, was far from corrupt. If anything, his uncompromising morals were too elevated for the job.

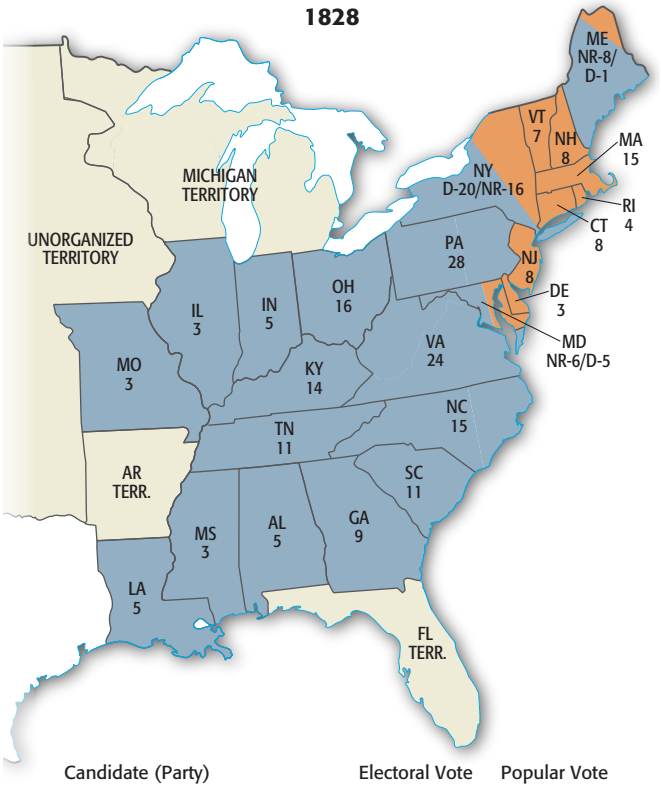
Mudslinging reached new lows in 1828, and the electorate developed a taste for bare-knuckle politics. Adams would not stoop to gutter tactics, but many of his backers were less squeamish. They described Jackson's mother as a prostitute and his wife as an adulteress; they printed black-bordered handbills shaped like coffins, recounting his numerous duels and brawls and trumpeting his hanging of six mutinous militiamen.

Jackson men also hit below the belt. President Adams had purchased, with his own money and for his own use, a billiard table and a set of chessmen. In the mouths of rabid Jacksonites, these items became "gaming tables" and "gambling furniture" for the "presidential palace." Criticism was also directed at the large sums Adams had received over the years in federal salaries, well earned though they had been. He was even accused of having procured a servant girl for

Rachel Jackson A devoted wife who did not live to become first lady, Rachel died a month after the election of 1828. Andrew Jackson was convinced that his enemies' vicious accusations that she was a bigamist and an adulteress had killed her. The more complicated truth was that Andrew Jackson had married Rachel Robards confident that her divorce had been granted. Two years later, when they discovered to their dismay that it had not been, they made haste to correct the marital miscue. Granger Collection

the lust of the Russian tsar—in short, of having served as a pimp.

On voting day the electorate split on largely sectional lines. Jackson's strongest support came from the West and South (see Map 13.1). The middle states and the Old Northwest were divided, while Adams won the backing of his own New England and the propertied "better elements" of the Northeast. But when the popular vote was converted to electoral votes, General Jackson's triumph could not be denied. Old Hickory had trounced Adams by an electoral count of 178 to 83. Although a considerable part of Jackson's support was lined up by machine politicians in eastern cities, particularly in New York and Pennsylvania, the political center of gravity clearly had shifted away from the conservative eastern seaboard toward the emerging states across the mountains.



MAP 13.1 Presidential Election of 1828 (with electoral vote by state) Jackson swept the South and West, whereas Adams retained the old Federalist stronghold of the Northeast. Yet Jackson's inroads in the Northeast were decisive. He won twenty of New York's electoral votes and all twenty-eight of Pennsylvania's. If those votes had gone the other way, Adams would have been victorious—by a margin of one vote.

One anti-Jackson newspaper declared,

"General Jackson's mother was a Common Prostitute, brought to this country by the British soldiers! She afterwards married a MULATTO man with whom she had several children, of which number GENERAL JACKSON is one."

"Old Hickory" as President

The new president cut a striking figure—tall, lean, with bushy iron-gray hair brushed high above a prominent forehead, craggy eyebrows, and blue eyes. His irritability and emaciated condition resulted in part from long-term bouts with dysentery, malaria, tuberculosis, and lead poisoning from two bullets that he carried in his body from near-fatal duels. His autobiography was written in his lined face.

Jackson's upbringing had its shortcomings. Born in the Carolinas and early orphaned, "Mischievous Andy" grew up without parental restraints. As a youth he displayed much more interest in brawling and cockfighting than in his scanty opportunities for reading and spelling. Although he eventually learned to express himself in writing with vigor and clarity, his grammar was always rough-hewn and his spelling original, like that of many contemporaries. He sometimes misspelled a word two different ways in the same letter.

The youthful Carolinian shrewdly moved "up West" to Tennessee, where fighting was prized above writing. There—through native intelligence, force of personality, and powers of leadership—he became a judge and a member of Congress. Afflicted with a violent temper, he early became involved in a number of duels, stabbings, and bloody frays. His passions were so profound that on occasion he would choke into silence when he tried to speak.

The first president from the West, the first nominated at a formal party convention (in 1832), and only the second without a college education (Washington was the first), Jackson was unique. His university was adversity. He had risen from the masses, but he was

In 1824 Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) said of Jackson,

"When I was President of the Senate he was a Senator; and he could never speak on account of the rashness of his feelings. I have seen him attempt it repeatedly, and as often choke with rage. His passions are no doubt cooler now . . . but he is a dangerous man."

English novelist Charles Dickens (1812–1870) traveled to the United States just a few years after Alexis de Tocqueville (see "Thinking Globally: Alexis de Tocqueville on Democracy in America and Europe," pp. 252–253). He had his own views on the implications of America's vaunted "equality":

"The people are all alike too. There is no diversity of character. They travel about on the same errands, say and do the same things in exactly the same manner, and follow in the same dull cheerless round. All down the long table there is scarcely a man who is in anything different from his neighbor."

not one of them, except insofar as he shared many of their prejudices. Essentially a frontier aristocrat, he owned many slaves, cultivated broad acres, and lived in one of the finest mansions in America—the Hermitage, near Nashville, Tennessee. More westerner than easterner, more country gentleman than common clay, more courtly than crude, he was hard to fit into a neat category.

Jackson's inauguration seemed to symbolize the ascendancy of the masses. "Hickoryites" poured into Washington from far away, sleeping on hotel floors and in hallways. They were curious to see their hero take office and perhaps hoped to pick up a well-paying office for themselves. Nobodies mingled with notables as the White House, for the first time, was thrown open to the multitude. A milling crowd of rubbernecking clerks and shopkeepers, hobnailed artisans, and grimy laborers surged in, allegedly wrecking the china and furniture and threatening the "people's champion" with cracked ribs. Jackson was hastily spirited through a side door, and the White House miraculously emptied itself when the word was passed that huge bowls of well-spiked punch had been placed on the lawns. Such was "the inaugural brawl."

To conservatives this orgy seemed like the end of the world. "King Mob" reigned triumphant as Jacksonian vulgarity replaced Jeffersonian simplicity. Fainthearted traditionalists shuddered, drew their blinds, and recalled with trepidation the opening scenes of the French Revolution.

The Spoils System

Once in power, the Democrats, famously suspicious of the federal government, demonstrated that they were not above striking some bargains of their own. Under Jackson the **spoils system**—that is, rewarding political supporters with public office—was introduced into the federal government on a large scale. The basic idea was as old as politics. Its name came later from Senator William Marcy's classic remark in 1832, "To the victor belong the spoils of the enemy." The system had already secured a firm hold in New York and Pennsylvania, where well-greased machines ladled out the "gravy" of office.

Jackson defended the spoils system on democratic grounds. "Every man is as good as his neighbor," he declared—perhaps "equally better." As this was believed to be so, and as the routine of office was thought to be simple enough for any upstanding American to learn quickly, why encourage the development of an aristocratic, bureaucratic, officeholding class? Better to bring in new blood, he argued; each generation deserved its turn at the public trough.

Washington was due, it is true, for a housecleaning. No party overturn had occurred since the defeat of the Federalists in 1800, and even that had not produced wholesale evictions. A few officeholders, their commissions signed by President Washington, were lingering on into their eighties, drawing breath and salary but doing little else. But the spoils system was less about finding new blood than about rewarding old cronies. "Throw their rascals out and put our rascals in," the Democrats were essentially saying. The questions asked of each appointee were not "What can he do for the country?" but "What has he done for the party?" or "Is he loyal to Jackson?"

Scandal inevitably accompanied the new system. Men who had openly bought their posts by campaign contributions were appointed to high office. Illiterates, incompetents, and plain crooks were given positions of public trust; men on the make lusted for the spoils—rather than the toils—of office. Samuel Swartwout, despite ample warnings of his untrustworthiness, was awarded the lucrative post of collector of the customs of the port of New York. Nearly nine years later, he "Swartwouted out" for England, leaving his accounts more than a million dollars short—the first person to steal a million from the Washington government.

But despite its undeniable abuse, the spoils system was an important element of the emerging two-party order, cementing as it did loyalty to party over competing claims based on economic class or geographic region. The promise of patronage provided a compelling reason for Americans to pick a party and stick with it through thick and thin.

The Tricky "Tariff of Abominations"

The touchy tariff issue had been one of John Quincy Adams's biggest headaches. Now Andrew Jackson felt

Thinking Globally

Alexis de Tocqueville on Democracy in America and Europe

On May 11, 1831, a twenty-six-year-old Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville, stepped ashore in New York City and began his fateful acquaintance with Andrew Jackson's America. For nine months he visited the cities of the Atlantic seaboard from Boston to Washington, trekked west to Detroit, and floated down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans, keenly observing the American scene. Four years later he published the first volume of his monumental work *Democracy in America*. It remains to this day probably the most insightful analysis of American society ever written and provides an indispensable starting point for understanding both the nature of modern democracy and the American national character.

Tocqueville was born in the French Revolutionary era, and he witnessed the so-called July Revolution in France in 1830, which widened the French electorate. He was following closely the agitation in Britain for a broader, more democratic franchise, which culminated in the landmark Reform Bill of 1832. He also knew of the several independent democratic republics that had blossomed in Latin America as the disruptions of the Napoleonic Wars weakened Spain's imperial grip: Venezuela proclaimed its independence in 1811, Argentina in 1816, Chile in 1818, Mexico and Peru in 1821. (Brazil declared its independence from Portugal in 1822, but remained a monarchy until becoming a republic in 1889.) Those events convinced him that democracy was the irresistible wave of the future, but he was far less certain about what that democratic future might mean for human happiness, political stability, and social justice. Thus he studied America to understand Europe's—indeed the world's—fate. "In America I saw more than America," he wrote. "I sought there the image of democracy itself . . . in order to learn what we have to fear or to hope from its progress."

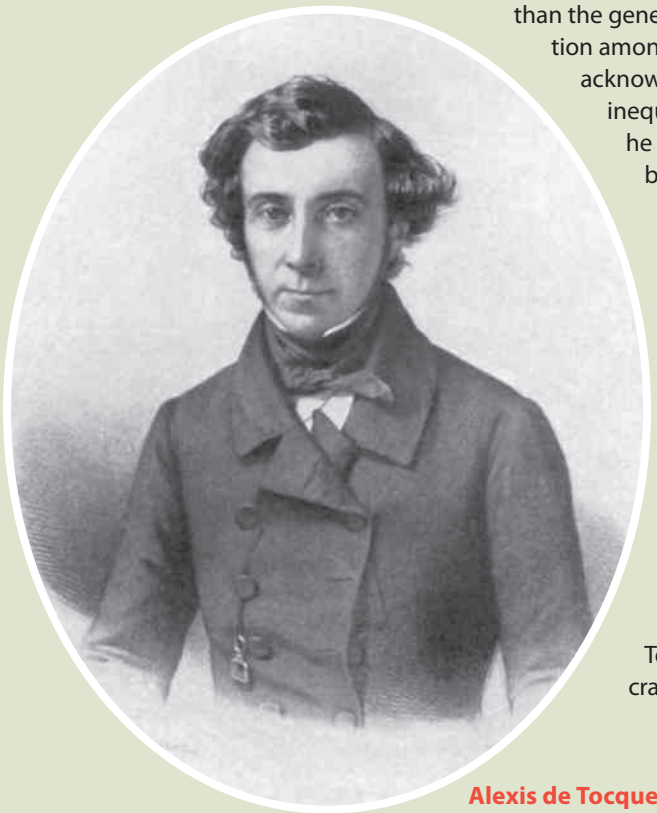
He announced his central insight in his book's first sentence: "Among the novel objects that attracted my attention during my stay in the United States, nothing struck me more forcibly than the general equality of condition among the people." (He acknowledged the gross inequality of slavery, but he considered slavery to be something that was "peculiar to America, not to democracy.") The "primary fact" of equality, he argued, exercised a "prodigious influence on the whole course of society."

It is easy to understand why the scale and pervasiveness of American equality made such an impression on Tocqueville. Mass democratic participation was already a well-established fact when he arrived. Almost 1.2 million voters—nearly 50 percent of the adult white male population—had cast their ballots in the election that brought Jackson to the White House in 1828. In contrast, France's July Revolution had enfranchised fewer than 200,000 propertied males, less than 1 percent of the total population, in 1830. And Britain's Reform Bill of 1832 would extend voting rights only to some 800,000 male property holders—in a country with 50 percent more people than the United States.

Tocqueville repeatedly remarked on the seething, restless energy that American equality unleashed, and he speculated on two possible futures for the United States. They might be called, respectively, the *centripetal* and *centrifugal* scenarios.

In the first scenario, Tocqueville thought that the doctrine of equality might breed a suffocating conformity that would eventually invoke the power of the state to enforce a stern and repressive consensus—the kind of "tyranny of the majority" that had worried Founders like James Madison. Tocqueville thought he saw signs that such a future was already emerging. "I know of no country in which there is so little independence of mind and real freedom of discussion as in America," he wrote.

In the second scenario, equality might foster radical *individualism*, a word that Tocqueville coined to capture the unique psychology he encountered everywhere in America. "As social conditions become more equal," he wrote, people "acquire the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone, and they are apt to imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hands." In this case, gnawing individual loneliness and even social anarchy might define America's future. "Democracy makes every man forget his ancestors," Tocqueville wrote. "It throws him back forever upon himself alone and threatens in the end to con-



Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) Granger Collection

Courtesy, The Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum

Election Day in Philadelphia, by John Lewis Krimmel, 1815 The German immigrant Krimmel recorded as early as 1815 the growing popular interest in elections that would culminate in Jacksonian democracy a decade later. Although politics was serious business, it also provided the occasion for much socializing and merriment. Even disfranchised free blacks, women, and children turned out for the festivities on election day.

fine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart."

Tocqueville noted several factors that mitigated both of those grim prospects and held American democracy in a healthy balance: the absence of hostile countries on its borders; a vigorously free press; robust voluntary associations (especially churches and political parties); and, crucially, "habits of the heart," which sustained a sense of civic belonging and responsibility. But Tocqueville raised troubling questions about whether those factors would prove durable. If not, what would the ultimate fate of democracy be?

Ironically, today the United States has markedly *lower* rates of political participation than many other countries, especially those in Europe (see Table 13.2). Can it be that America—the pioneering mass democracy that served as Tocqueville's laboratory and his window on the future—has proved to be less fertile soil for the development of democracy than the Old World societies with which he compared it in the 1830s?

TABLE 13.2 Voter Turnout by Country, 1840–2008

	1840		1900		1960	2008
	Percentage of Voting-Age Population*	Percentage of Eligible Voters†	Percentage of Voting-Age Population	Percentage of Eligible Voters	Percentage of Voting-Age Population	Percentage of Voting-Age Population‡
United States	30 (1841)	79 (1841)	34	73	63	58 (2008)
United Kingdom	4 (1842)	58 (1842)	14 (1902)	49 (1902)	77 (1958)	58 (2005)
France	1	79	33 (1898)	76 (1898)	68 (1961)	77 (2007)
Germany	—	—	26	68	87	72 (2005)
Japan	—	—	—	—	71 (1958)	67 (2005)
Mexico	—	—	—	—	52	64 (2006)

*Voting-age population includes individuals of any race and both genders. For France and the United Kingdom, individuals over the age of twenty are included in population estimates. For the United States, the voting-age population is an approximation of the total population over age twenty-one.

†Virtually all blacks and all women were ineligible to vote in the United States. Landholding requirements severely limited eligibility in the United Kingdom and France.

‡The voting age was reduced to eighteen in the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany in the second half of the twentieth century. The voting age in Mexico was eighteen for both the 1958 and 2000 elections. The voting age in Japan is twenty.

(Sources: *Historical Statistics of the United States*, vol. 5; *State, Economy and Society in Western Europe, 1815–1975*; *International Historical Statistics, 1750–2005: Europe*; and *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*.)

South Carolina Belle Sewing Palmetto Cockade The "Tariff of Abominations" of 1828 drove many people in South Carolina—the "Palmetto State"—to flirt with secession. Anti-tariff protesters wore palmetto blossoms, real or sewn from fabric, to symbolize their defiance of the federal law. The blue cockade indicated support for the ordinance of nullification. Granger Collection; Inset: Collection of McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina

his predecessor's pain. Tariffs protected American industry against competition from European manufactured goods, but they also drove up prices for all Americans and invited retaliatory tariffs on American agricultural exports abroad. The middle states had long been supporters of protectionist tariffs. In the 1820s influential New Englanders like Daniel Webster gave up their traditional defense of free trade to support higher tariffs, too. The wool and textile industries were booming, and forward-thinking Yankees came to believe that their future prosperity would flow from the factory rather than from the sea.

In 1824 Congress had increased the general tariff significantly, but wool manufacturers bleated for still-higher barriers. Ardent Jacksonites now played a cynical political game. They promoted a high-tariff bill, expecting to be defeated, which would give a black eye to President Adams. To their surprise, the tariff passed in 1828, and Andrew Jackson inherited the political hot potato.

Southerners, as heavy consumers of manufactured goods with little manufacturing industry of their own, were hostile to tariffs. They were particularly shocked by what they regarded as the outrageous rates of the Tariff of 1828. Hotheads branded it the "Black Tariff" or the **Tariff of Abominations**. Several southern states adopted formal protests. In South Carolina flags were lowered to half-mast. "Let the *New* England beware how she imitates the *Old*," cried one eloquent South Carolinian.

Why did the South react so angrily against the tariff? Southerners believed, not illogically, that the "Yankee tariff" discriminated against them. The bustling Northeast was experiencing a boom in manufacturing, the developing West was prospering from rising property values and a multiplying population, and the energetic Southwest was expanding into virgin cotton lands. But the Old South was falling on hard times, and the tariff provided a convenient and plausible scapegoat. Southerners sold their cotton and other farm produce in a world market completely unprotected by tariffs but were forced to buy their manufactured goods in an American market heavily protected by tariffs. Protectionism protected Yankee and middle-state manufacturers. The farmers and planters of the Old South felt they were stuck with the bill.

John C. Calhoun (1782–1850), leader of South Carolina's offensive to nullify the Tariff of 1832, saw nullification as a way of preserving the Union while preventing secession of the southern states. In his mind he was still a Unionist, even if also a southern sectionalist:

"I never use the word 'nation' in speaking of the United States. I always use the word 'union' or 'confederacy.' We are not a nation, but a union, a confederacy of equal and sovereign states."

During the crisis of 1832, some of his South Carolina compatriots had different ideas. Medals were struck off in honor of Calhoun, bearing the words, "First President of the Southern Confederacy."

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution/Art Resource, NY

John C. Calhoun (1782–1850), by John Trumbull, 1827
Calhoun was a South Carolinian, educated at Yale. Beginning as a strong nationalist and Unionist, he reversed himself and became the ablest of the sectionalists and disunionists in defense of the South and slavery. As a foremost nullifier, he died trying to reconcile strong states' rights with a strong Union. In his last years, he advocated a Siamese-twin "dual presidency," probably unworkable, with one president for the North and one for the South. His former plantation home is now the site of Clemson University.

But much deeper issues underlay the southern outcry—in particular, a growing anxiety about possible federal interference with the institution of slavery. The congressional debate on the Missouri Compromise had kindled those anxieties, and they were further fanned by an aborted slave rebellion in Charleston in 1822, led by a free black named Denmark Vesey. The South Carolinians, still closely tied to the British West Indies, also knew full well that their slaveowning West Indian cousins were feeling the mounting pressure of British abolitionism on the London government. Abolitionism in America might similarly use the power of the government in Washington to suppress slavery in the South. If so, now was the time, and the tariff was the issue, to take a strong stand on principle against all federal encroachments on states' rights.

South Carolinians took the lead in protesting against the "Tariff of Abominations." Their legislature went so far as to publish in 1828, though without formal endorsement, a pamphlet known as *The South Carolina Exposition*. It had been secretly written by John C. Calhoun, one of the few topflight political theorists ever produced by America. (As vice president, he was forced to conceal his authorship.) *The Exposition* denounced the recent tariff as unjust and unconstitutional. Going a stride beyond the Kentucky and Virginia resolutions of 1798, it bluntly and explicitly proposed that the states should nullify the tariff—that is, they should declare it null and void within their borders.

"Nullies" in South Carolina

The stage was set for a showdown. Through Jackson's first term, the nullifiers—"nullies," they were called—tried strenuously to muster the necessary two-thirds vote for nullification in the South Carolina legislature. But they were blocked by a determined minority of Unionists, scorned as "submission men." Back in Washington, Congress tipped the balance by passing the new Tariff of 1832. Though it pared away the worst "abominations" of 1828, it was still frankly protective and fell far short of meeting southern demands. Worse yet, to many southerners it had a disquieting air of permanence. The **Nullification Crisis** deepened.

South Carolina was now nerved for drastic action. Nullifiers and Unionists clashed head-on in the state election of 1832. "Nullies," defiantly wearing palmetto ribbons on their hats to mark their loyalty to the "Palmetto State," emerged with more than a two-thirds majority. The state legislature then called for a special convention. Several weeks later the delegates, meeting in Columbia, solemnly declared the existing tariff to be null and void within South Carolina. As a further act of defiance, the convention threatened to take South Carolina out of the Union if Washington attempted to collect the customs duties by force.

Such tactics might have intimidated John Quincy Adams, but Andrew Jackson was the wrong president to stare down. The cantankerous general was not a

At a Jefferson Day dinner on April 13, 1830, in the midst of the nullification controversy, President Andrew Jackson (1767–1845) offered a toast:

"Our federal Union: It must be preserved."

John C. Calhoun rose to his feet to make a countertoast:

"To the Union, next to our liberty, most dear."

diehard supporter of the tariff, but he would not permit defiance or disunion. His military instincts rasped, Jackson privately threatened to invade the state and have the nullifiers hanged. In public he was only slightly less pugnacious. He dispatched naval and military reinforcements to the Palmetto State, while quietly preparing a sizable army. He also issued a ringing proclamation against nullification, to which the governor of South Carolina, former senator Robert Y. Hayne, responded with a counterproclamation. The lines were drawn. If civil war was to be avoided, one side would have to surrender, or both would have to compromise.

Conciliatory Henry Clay of Kentucky, now in the Senate, stepped forward. An unforgiving foe of Jackson, he had no desire to see his old enemy win new laurels by crushing the Carolinians and returning with the scalp of Calhoun dangling from his belt. Although himself a supporter of tariffs, the gallant Kentuckian therefore threw his influence behind a compromise bill that would gradually reduce the Tariff of 1832 by about 10 percent over a period of eight years. By 1842 the rates would be back at the mildly protective level of 1816.*

The **compromise Tariff of 1833** finally squeezed through Congress. Debate was bitter, with most of the opposition naturally coming from protectionist New England and the middle states. Calhoun and the South favored the compromise, so it was evident that Jackson would not have to use firearms and rope. But at the same time, and partly as a face-saving device, Congress passed the **Force Bill**, known among Carolinians as the "Bloody Bill." It authorized the president to use the army and navy, if necessary, to collect federal tariff duties.

South Carolinians welcomed this opportunity to extricate themselves from a dangerously tight corner without loss of face. To the consternation of the Calhounites, no other southern states had sprung to their support, though Georgia and Virginia toyed with the idea. Moreover, an appreciable Unionist minority within South Carolina was gathering guns, organizing militias, and nailing Stars and Stripes to flagpoles. Faced with civil war within and invasion from without, the Columbia convention met again and repealed the ordinance of nullification. As a final but futile gesture of fist-shaking, it nullified the unnecessary Force Bill and adjourned.

Neither Jackson nor the "nullies" won a clear-cut victory in 1833. Clay was the true hero of the hour, hailed in Charleston and Boston alike for saving the country. Armed conflict had been avoided, but the fundamental issues had not been resolved. When next the "nullies" and the Union clashed, compromise would prove more elusive.

*For the history of tariff rates, see the Appendix.

The Trail of Tears

Jackson's Democrats were committed to western expansion, but such expansion necessarily meant confrontation with the current inhabitants of the land. More than 125,000 Native Americans lived in the forests and prairies east of the Mississippi in the 1820s. Federal policy toward them varied. Beginning in the 1790s, the Washington government ostensibly recognized the tribes as separate nations and agreed to acquire land from them only through formal treaties. The Indians were shrewd and stubborn negotiators, but this availed them little when Americans routinely violated their own

William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan

Jackson the "Great Father" An anonymous cartoonist satirizes Jackson's alleged compassion for the Indians, but in fact his feelings toward Native Americans were complicated. He made ruthless war on the Creeks as a soldier, but he also adopted a Creek Indian son (who died of tuberculosis at the age of sixteen). At least in part, his motives for pursuing Indian removal stemmed from his concern that if the Indians were not removed from contact with the whites, they would face certain annihilation.

Granger Collection

The "Trail of Tears" In the fall and winter of 1838–1839, the U.S. Army forcibly removed about fifteen thousand Cherokees, some of them in manacles, from their ancestral homelands in the southeastern United States and marched them to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). Freezing weather and inadequate food supplies led to unspeakable suffering. The escorting troops refused to slow the forced march so that the ill could recover, and some four thousand Cherokees died on the 116-day journey.

covenants, erasing and redrawing treaty line after treaty line on their maps as white settlement pushed west.

Many white Americans felt respect and admiration for the Indians and believed that they could be assimilated into white society. Much energy therefore was devoted to "civilizing" and Christianizing the Indians. The Society for Propagating the Gospel Among Indians was founded in 1787, and many denominations sent missionaries into Indian villages. In 1793 Congress appropriated $20,000 for the promotion of literacy and agricultural and vocational instruction among the Indians.

Although many tribes violently resisted white encroachment, others followed the path of accommodation. The Cherokees of Georgia made especially remarkable efforts to learn the ways of the whites. They gradually abandoned their seminomadic life and adopted a system of settled agriculture and a notion of private property. Missionaries opened schools among the Cherokees, and the Indian Sequoyah devised a Cherokee alphabet. In 1808 the Cherokee National Council legislated a written legal code, and in 1827 it adopted a written constitution that provided for executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. Some Cherokees became prosperous cotton planters and even turned to slaveholding. Nearly thirteen hundred black slaves toiled for their Native American masters in the Cherokee nation in the 1820s. For these efforts the Cherokees—along with the Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles—were numbered by whites among the "Five Civilized Tribes."

All this embrace of "civilization" apparently was not good enough for whites. In 1828 the Georgia legislature declared the Cherokee tribal council illegal and asserted its own jurisdiction over Indian affairs and Indian lands. The Cherokees appealed this move to the Supreme Court, which thrice upheld the rights of the Indians. But President Jackson, who clearly wanted to open Indian lands to white settlement, refused to recognize the Court's decisions. In a callous jibe at the Indians' defender, Jackson allegedly snapped, "John Marshall has made his decision; now let him enforce it."*

Feeling some obligation to rescue "this much injured race," Jackson proposed a bodily removal of the remaining eastern tribes—chiefly Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles—beyond the Mississippi. Emigration was supposed to be voluntary

*One hundred sixty years later, in 1992, the state government of Georgia formally pardoned the two white missionaries, Samuel Austin Worcester and Elihu Butler, who figured prominently in the decision Jackson condemned. They had been convicted of living on Cherokee lands without a license from the state government of Georgia. They had served sixteen months at hard labor on a chain gang and later had accompanied the Cherokees on the "Trail of Tears" to Oklahoma.

One survivor of the Indians' forced march in 1838–1839 on the "Trail of Tears" to Indian Territory, farther west, remembered,

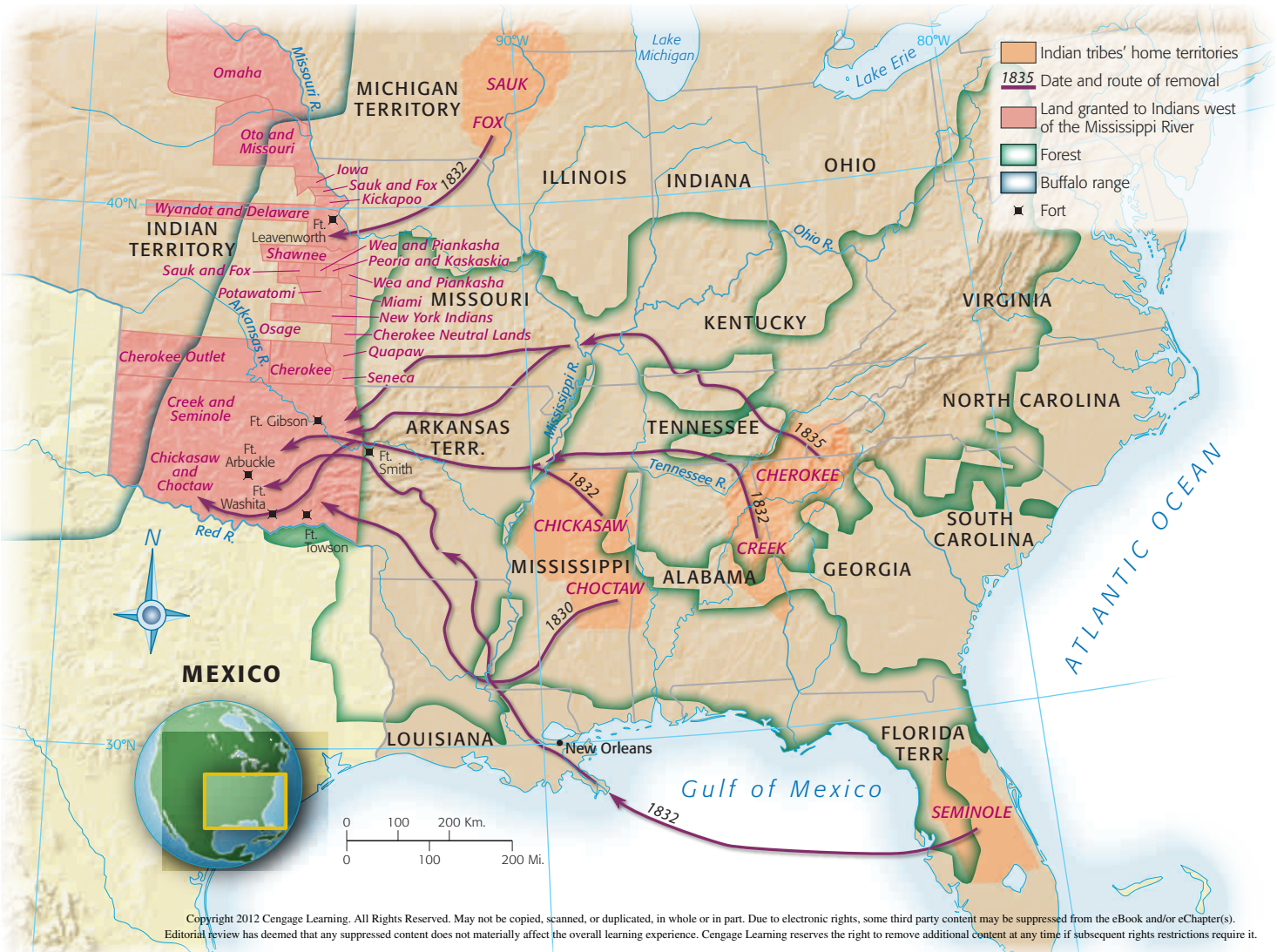
"One each day, and all are gone. Looks like maybe all dead before we get to new Indian country, but always we keep marching on. Women cry and make sad wails. Children cry, and many men cry, and all look sad when friends die, but they say nothing and just put heads down and keep on toward west. . . . She [his mother] speak no more; we bury her and go on."

because it would be "cruel and unjust to compel the aborigines to abandon the graves of their fathers." Jackson evidently consoled himself with the belief that the Indians could preserve their native cultures in the wide-open West.

Jackson's policy led to the forced uprooting of more than 100,000 Indians. In 1830 Congress passed the **Indian Removal Act**, providing for the transplanting of all Indian tribes then resident east of the Mississippi (see Map 13.2). Ironically, the heaviest blows fell on the Five Civilized Tribes. In the ensuing decade, countless Indians died on forced marches—notably the Cherokees along the notorious **Trail of Tears**—to the newly established Indian Territory, where they were to be "permanently" free of white encroachments. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was established in 1836 to administer relations with America's original inhabitants. But as the land-hungry "palefaces" pushed west faster than anticipated, the government's guarantees went up in smoke. The "permanent" frontier lasted about fifteen years.

Suspicious of white intentions from the start, Sauk and Fox braves from Illinois and Wisconsin, ably led by Black Hawk, resisted eviction. They were bloodily crushed in the **Black Hawk War** of 1832 by regular troops, including Lieutenant Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, and by volunteers, including Captain Abraham Lincoln of Illinois.

MAP 13.2 Indian Removals, 1830–1846 © Cengage Learning



Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Black Hawk and His Son Whirling Thunder, by John Wesley Jarvis, 1833 Chief Black Hawk and his son are depicted here in captivity. After their surrender in the Black Hawk War of 1832, they were put on public display throughout the United States.

In Florida the Seminole Indians, joined by runaway black slaves, retreated to the swampy Everglades. For seven years (1835–1842), they waged a bitter guerrilla war that took the lives of some fifteen hundred soldiers. The spirit of the Seminoles was broken in 1837, when the American field commander treacherously seized their leader, Osceola, under a flag of truce. The war dragged on for five more years, but the Seminoles were doomed. Some fled deeper into the Everglades, where their descendants now live, but about four-fifths of them were moved to present-day Oklahoma, where several thousand of the tribe survive.

The Bank War

President Jackson did not hate all banks and all businesses, but he distrusted monopolistic banking and overbig businesses, as did his followers. A man of virulent dislikes, he came to share the prejudices of his own West against the "moneyed monster" known as the Bank of the United States.

What made the bank a monster in Jackson's eyes? The national government minted gold and silver coins in the mid-nineteenth century but did not issue paper money. Paper notes were printed by private banks. Their value fluctuated with the health of the bank and the amount of money printed, giving private bankers considerable power over the nation's economy.

No bank in America had more power than the Bank of the United States. In many ways the bank acted like a branch of government. It was the principal depository for the funds of the Washington government and controlled much of the nation's gold and silver. Its notes, unlike those of many smaller banks, were stable in value. A source of credit and stability, the bank was an important and useful part of the nation's expanding economy.

But the Bank of the United States was a private institution, accountable not to the people, but to its elite circle of moneyed investors. Its president, the brilliant but arrogant Nicholas Biddle, held an immense—and to many unconstitutional—amount of power over the nation's financial affairs. Enemies of the bank dubbed him "Czar Nicolas I" and called the bank a "hydra of corruption," a serpent that grew new heads whenever old ones were cut off.

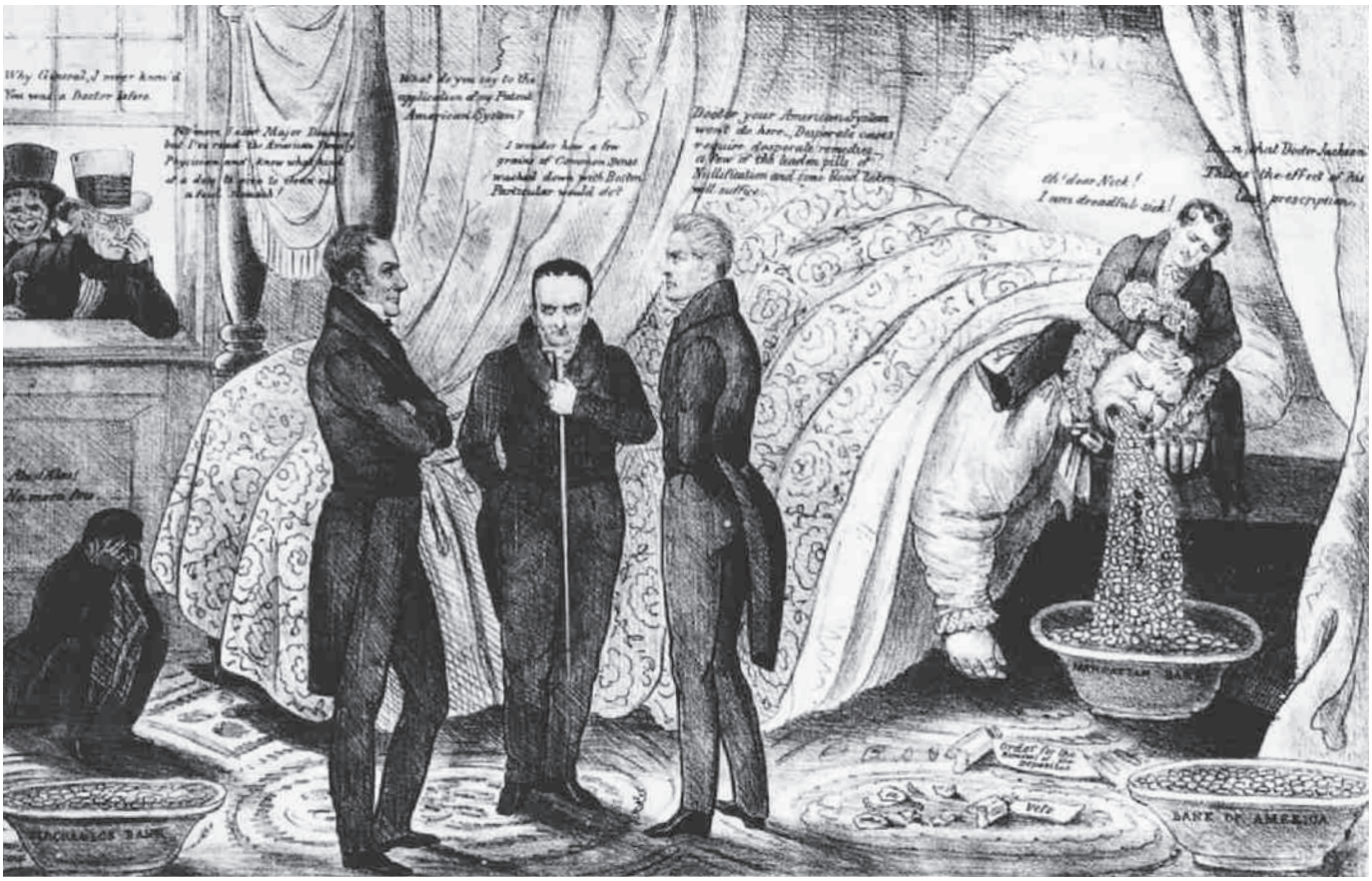
To some the bank's very existence seemed to sin against the egalitarian credo of American democracy. The conviction formed the deepest source of Jackson's opposition. The bank also won no friends in the West by foreclosing on many western farms and draining "tribute" into eastern coffers. Profit, not public service, was its first priority.

The **Bank War** erupted in 1832, when Daniel Webster and Henry Clay presented Congress with a bill to renew the Bank of the United States' charter. The charter was not set to expire until 1836, but Clay pushed for renewal four years early to make it an election issue in 1832. As Jackson's leading rival for the presidency, Clay, with fateful blindness, looked upon the bank issue as a surefire winner.

Clay's scheme was to ram a recharter bill through Congress and then send it on to the White House. If Jackson signed it, he would alienate his worshipful western followers. If he vetoed it, as seemed certain, he would presumably lose the presidency in the forthcoming election by alienating the wealthy and influential groups in the East. Clay seems not to have fully realized that the "best people" were now only a minority and that they generally feared Jackson anyhow.

The recharter bill slid through Congress on greased skids, as planned, but was killed by a scorching veto from Jackson. The "Old Hero" declared the monopolistic bank to be unconstitutional. Of course, the Supreme Court had earlier declared it constitutional in the case of *McCulloch* v. *Maryland* (1819), but Jackson acted as though he regarded the executive branch as superior to the judicial branch. The old general growled privately, "The Bank . . . is trying to kill me, but I will kill it."

Jackson's veto message reverberated with constitutional consequences. It not only squashed the bank bill



Library of Congress

In Mother Bank's Sickroom Pro-bank men Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and John C. Calhoun consult on the grave illness that is causing Mother Bank to cough up her deposits. While Nicholas Biddle, president of the Bank of the United States, ministers to the patient, U.S. president Andrew Jackson looks on with pleasure.

but vastly amplified the power of the presidency. All previous vetoes had rested almost exclusively on questions of constitutionality. But though Jackson invoked the Constitution in his bank-veto message, he essentially argued that he was vetoing the bill because he personally found it harmful to the nation. In effect, he was claiming for the president alone a power equivalent to two-thirds of the votes in Congress. If the legislative and executive branches were partners in government, he implied, the president was unmistakably the senior partner.

Henry Clay's political instincts continued to fail him. Delighted with the financial fallacies of Jackson's message but blind to its political appeal, he arranged to have thousands of copies printed as a campaign document. The president's sweeping accusations may indeed have seemed demagogic to the moneyed interests of the East, but they made perfect sense to the common people. The bank issue was now thrown into the noisy arena of the presidential contest of 1832.

Banker Nicholas Biddle (1786–1844) wrote to Henry Clay (August 1, 1832) expressing his satisfaction:

"I have always deplored making the Bank a party question, but since the President will have it so, he must pay the penalty of his own rashness. As to the veto message, I am delighted with it. It has all the fury of a chained panther biting the bars of his cage. It is really a manifesto of anarchy . . . and my hope is that it will contribute to relieve the country of the domination of these miserable [Jackson] people."

"Old Hickory" Wallops Clay in 1832

Clay and Jackson were the chief gladiators in the looming electoral combat. The grizzled old general, who had earlier favored one term for a president and rotation in office, was easily persuaded by his cronies not to rotate

himself out of office. Presidential power is a heady brew and can be habit-forming.

The ensuing campaign was raucous. The "Old Hero's" adherents again raised the hickory pole and bellowed, "Jackson Forever: Go the Whole Hog." Admirers of Clay shouted, "Freedom and Clay," while his detractors harped on his dueling, gambling, cockfighting, and fast living.

Novel features made the campaign of 1832 especially memorable. For the first time, a third party entered the field—the newborn **Anti-Masonic party**, which opposed the influence and fearsome secrecy of the Masonic order. Energized by the mysterious disappearance and probable murder in 1826 of a New Yorker who was threatening to expose the secret rituals of the Masons, the Anti-Masonic party quickly became a potent political force in New York and spread its influence throughout the middle Atlantic and New England states. The Anti-Masons appealed to long-standing American suspicions of secret societies, which they condemned as citadels of privilege and monopoly—a note that harmonized with the democratic chorus of the Jacksonians. But since Jackson himself was a Mason and publicly gloried in his membership, the Anti-Masonic party was also an anti-Jackson party. The Anti-Masons also attracted support from many evangelical Protestant groups seeking to use political power to effect moral and religious reforms, such as prohibiting mail delivery on Sunday and otherwise keeping the Sabbath holy. This moral busybodiness was anathema to the Jacksonians, who were generally opposed to all government meddling in social and economic life.

A further novelty of the presidential contest in 1832 was the calling of national nominating conventions (three of them) to name candidates. The Anti-Masons and a group of National Republicans added still another innovation when they adopted formal platforms, publicizing their positions on the issues.

Henry Clay and his overconfident National Republicans enjoyed impressive advantages. Ample funds flowed into their campaign chest, including $50,000 in "life insurance" from the Bank of the United States.

Library Company of Philadelphia

Fistfight Between Old Hickory and Bully Nick, 1834 An aged President Andrew Jackson faces off against the bank's director, aristocratic Nicholas Biddle. Comically presented as sparring pugilists undressed in the style of the popular sport, the two are assisted by their seconds, Daniel Webster and Henry Clay for Biddle, Vice President Martin Van Buren for Jackson.

Most of the newspaper editors, some of them "bought" with Biddle's bank loans, dipped their pens in acid when they wrote of Jackson.

Yet Jackson, idol of the masses, easily defeated the big-money Kentuckian. A Jacksonian wave again swept over the West and South, surged into Pennsylvania and New York, and even washed into rock-ribbed New England. The popular vote stood at 687,502 to 530,189 for Jackson; the electoral count was a lopsided 219 to 49.

Burying Biddle's Bank

Its charter denied, the Bank of the United States was due to expire in 1836. But Jackson was not one to let the financial octopus die in peace. He was convinced that he now had a mandate from the voters for its extermination, and he feared that the slippery Biddle might try to manipulate the bank (as he did) so as to force its recharter. Jackson therefore decided in 1833 to bury the bank for good by removing federal deposits from its vaults. He proposed depositing no more funds with Biddle and gradually shrinking existing deposits by using them to defray the day-to-day expenses of the government. By slowly siphoning off the government's funds, he would bleed the bank dry and ensure its demise.

Removing the deposits involved nasty complications. Even the president's closest advisers opposed this seemingly unnecessary, possibly unconstitutional, and certainly vindictive policy. Jackson, his dander up, was forced to reshuffle his cabinet twice before he could find a secretary of the Treasury who would bend to his iron will. A desperate Biddle called in his bank's loans, evidently hoping to illustrate the bank's importance by producing a minor financial crisis. A number of wobblier banks were driven to the wall by "Biddle's Panic," but Jackson's resolution was firm. If anything, the vengeful conduct of the dying "monster" seemed to justify the earlier accusations of its adversaries.

But the death of the Bank of the United States left a financial vacuum in the American economy and kicked off a lurching cycle of booms and busts. Surplus federal funds were placed in several dozen state institutions—the so-called **pet banks**, chosen for their pro-Jackson sympathies. Without a sober central bank in control, the pet banks and smaller "wildcat" banks—fly-by-night operations that often consisted of little more than a few chairs and a suitcase full of printed notes—flooded the country with paper money.

Jackson tried to rein in the runaway economy in 1836, the year Biddle's bank breathed its last. "Wildcat" currency had become so unreliable, especially in the West, that Jackson authorized the Treasury to issue a **Specie Circular**—a decree that required all public lands to be purchased with "hard," or metallic, money. This drastic step slammed the brakes on the speculative boom, a neck-snapping change of direction that contributed to a financial panic and crash in 1837.

But by then Jackson had retired to his Nashville home, hailed as the hero of his age. His successor would have to deal with the damage.

The Birth of the Whigs

New political parties were gelling as the 1830s lengthened. As early as 1828, the Democratic-Republicans of Jackson had unashamedly adopted the once-tainted name "Democrats." Jackson's opponents, fuming at his ironfisted exercise of presidential power, condemned him as "King Andrew I" and began to coalesce as the Whigs—a name deliberately chosen to recollect eighteenth-century British and Revolutionary American opposition to the monarchy.

The Whig party contained so many diverse elements that it was mocked at first as "an organized incompatibility." Hatred of Jackson and his "executive usurpation" was its only apparent cement in its formative days. The Whigs first emerged as an identifiable group in the Senate, where Clay, Webster, and Calhoun joined forces in 1834 to pass a motion censuring Jackson for his single-handed removal of federal deposits from the Bank of the United States. Thereafter, the Whigs rapidly evolved into a potent national political force by attracting other groups alienated by Jackson: supporters of Clay's American System, southern states' righters offended by Jackson's stand on nullification, the larger northern industrialists and merchants, and eventually many of the evangelical Protestants associated with the Anti-Masonic party.

Whigs thought of themselves as conservatives, yet they were progressive in their support of active government programs and reforms. Instead of boundless territorial acquisition, they called for internal improvements like canals, railroads, and telegraph lines, and they supported institutions like prisons, asylums, and public schools. The Whigs welcomed the market economy, drawing support from manufacturers in the North, planters in the South, and merchants and bankers in all sections. But they were not simply a party of wealthy fat cats, however dearly the Democrats wanted to paint them as such. By absorbing the Anti-Masonic party, the Whigs blunted much of the Democratic appeal to the common man. The egalitarian anti-Masons portrayed Jackson, and particularly his New York successor Martin Van Buren, as imperious aristocrats. This turned Jacksonian rhetoric on its head: now the Whigs claimed to be the defenders of the common

Examining the Evidence

Satiric Bank Note, 1837

Political humor can take more forms than the commonly seen caustic cartoon. Occasionally historians stumble upon other examples, such as this fake bank note. A jibe at Andrew Jackson's money policies, it appeared in New York in 1837 after Jackson's insistence on shutting down the Bank of the United States resulted in the suspension of specie payments. The clever creator of this satiric bank note for six cents left little doubt about the worthlessness of the note or Jackson's responsibility for it. The six cents payable by the "Humbug Glory Bank"—whose symbols were a donkey and a "Hickory Leaf" (for Old Hickory)—were redeemable "in mint drops or Glory at cost." The bank's cashier was "Cunning Reuben," possibly an anti-Semitic allusion to usurious Jewish bankers. Can you identify other ways in which this document takes aim at Jackson's banking policies? What symbols did the note's creator assume the public would comprehend?

Collection of the New York Historical Society

man and declared the Democrats the party of cronyism and corruption.

The Election of 1836

The smooth-tongued and keen-witted vice president, Martin Van Buren of New York, was Jackson's choice for "appointment" as his successor in 1836. The hollow-cheeked Jackson, now nearing seventy, was too old and ailing to consider a third term. But he was not loath to try to serve a third term through Van Buren, something of a "yes man." Leaving nothing to chance, Jackson carefully rigged the nominating convention and rammed his favorite down the throats of the delegates. Van Buren was supported by the Jacksonites without wild enthusiasm, even though he had promised "to tread generally" in the military-booted footsteps of his predecessor.

As the election neared, the still-ramshackle organization of the Whigs showed in their inability to nominate a single presidential candidate. Their long-shot strategy was instead to run several prominent "favorite sons," each with a different regional appeal, and hope to scatter the vote so that no candidate would win a majority. The deadlock would then have to be broken by the House of Representatives, where the Whigs might have a chance. With Henry Clay rudely elbowed aside, the leading Whig "favorite son" was heavy-jawed General William Henry Harrison of Ohio, hero of the Battle of Tippecanoe (see p. 220). The fine-spun schemes of the Whigs availed nothing, however. Van Buren, the dapper "Little Magician," squirmed into office by the close popular vote of 765,483 to 739,795, but by the comfortable margin of 170 to 124 votes (for all the Whigs combined) in the Electoral College.

Big Woes for the "Little Magician"

Martin Van Buren, eighth president, was the first to be born under the American flag. Short and slender,

bland and bald, the adroit little New Yorker has been described as "a first-class second-rate man." An accomplished strategist and spoilsman—"the wizard of Albany"—he was also a statesman of wide experience in both legislative and administrative life. In intelligence, education, and training, he was above the average of the presidents since Jackson. The myth of his mediocrity sprouted mostly from a series of misfortunes over which he had no control.

From the outset the new president labored under severe handicaps. As a machine-made candidate, he incurred the resentment of many Democrats—those who objected to having a "bastard politician" smuggled into office beneath the tails of the old general's military coat. Jackson, the master showman, had been a dynamic type of executive whose administration had resounded with furious quarrels and cracked heads. Mild-mannered Martin Van Buren seemed to rattle about in the military boots of his testy predecessor. The people felt let down. Inheriting Andrew Jackson's mantle without his popularity, Van Buren also inherited the ex-president's numerous and vengeful enemies.

Van Buren's four years overflowed with toil and trouble. A pair of short-lived rebellions in Canada in 1837, mostly over political reform but aggravated by unregulated immigration from the United States, stirred up ugly incidents along the northern frontier and threatened to trigger war with Britain. The president's attempt to play a neutral game led to the wail "Woe to Martin Van Buren!" The antislavery agitators in the North were also in full cry. Among other grievances, they were condemning the prospective annexation of Texas (see p. 268).

Worst of all, Jackson bequeathed to Van Buren the makings of a searing depression. Much of Van Buren's energy had to be devoted to the purely negative task of battling the panic, and there were not enough rabbits in the "Little Magician's" tall silk hat. Hard times ordinarily blight the reputation of a president, and Van Buren was no exception.

Cincinnati Museum Center—Cincinnati Historical Society Library

The Long Bill Americans who bought on credit, confident that they could make their payments later, were caught off guard by the panic of 1837. Customers like the one shown here found themselves confronted with a "long bill" that they could not pay, particularly when the banks holding their savings collapsed.

Depression Doldrums and the Independent Treasury

The **panic of 1837** was a symptom of the financial sickness of the times. Its basic cause was rampant speculation prompted by a mania of get-rich-quickism. Gamblers in western lands were doing a "land-office business" on borrowed capital, much of it in the shaky currency of "wildcat banks." The speculative craze spread to canals, roads, railroads, and slaves.

But speculation alone did not cause the crash. Jacksonian finance, including the Bank War and the Specie Circular, gave an additional jolt to an already teetering structure. Failures of wheat crops, ravaged by the Hessian fly, deepened the distress. Grain prices were forced so high that mobs in New York City, three weeks before Van Buren took the oath, stormed warehouses and broke open flour barrels. The panic really began before Jackson left office, but its full fury burst about Van Buren's bewildered head.

Financial stringency abroad likewise endangered America's economic house of cards. Late in 1836 the failure of two prominent British banks created tremors, and these in turn caused British investors to call in foreign loans. The resulting pinch in the United States, combined with other setbacks, heralded the beginning of the panic. Europe's economic distresses have often become America's distresses, for every major American financial panic has been affected by conditions overseas.

Hardship was acute and widespread. American banks collapsed by the hundreds, including some "pet banks," which carried down with them several million in government funds. Commodity prices drooped, sales of public lands fell off, and customs revenues dried to

Philip Hone (1780–1851), a New York businessman, described in his diary (May 10, 1837) a phase of the financial crisis:

"The savings-bank also sustained a most grievous run yesterday. They paid 375 depositors $81,000. The press was awful; the hour for closing the bank is six o'clock, but they did not get through the paying of those who were in at that time till nine o'clock. I was there with the other trustees and witnessed the madness of the people—women nearly pressed to death, and the stoutest men could scarcely sustain themselves; but they held on as with a death's grip upon the evidences of their claims, and, exhausted as they were with the pressure, they had strength to cry 'Pay! Pay!'"

a rivulet. Factories closed their doors, and unemployed workers milled in the streets.

The Whigs came forward with proposals for active government remedies for the economy's ills. They called for the expansion of bank credit, higher tariffs, and subsidies for internal improvements. But Van Buren, shackled by the Jacksonian philosophy of keeping the government's paws off the economy, spurned all such ideas.

The beleaguered Van Buren tried to apply vintage Jacksonian medicine to the ailing economy through his controversial "Divorce Bill." Convinced that some of the financial fever was fed by the injection of federal funds into private banks, he championed the principle of "divorcing" the government from banking altogether. By establishing a so-called independent treasury, the government could lock its surplus money in vaults in several of the larger cities. Government funds would thus be safe, but they would also be denied to the banking system as reserves, thereby shriveling available credit resources.

One foreign traveler decried the chaotic state of American currency following the demise of the Bank of the United States and the panic of 1837:

"The greatest annoyance I was subjected to in travelling was in exchanging money. It is impossible to describe the wretched state of the currency—which is all bills issued by private individuals; companies; cities and states; almost all of which are bankrupt; or what amounts to the same thing, they cannot redeem their issues. . . . And these do not pass out of the state, or frequently, out of the city in which they are issued."

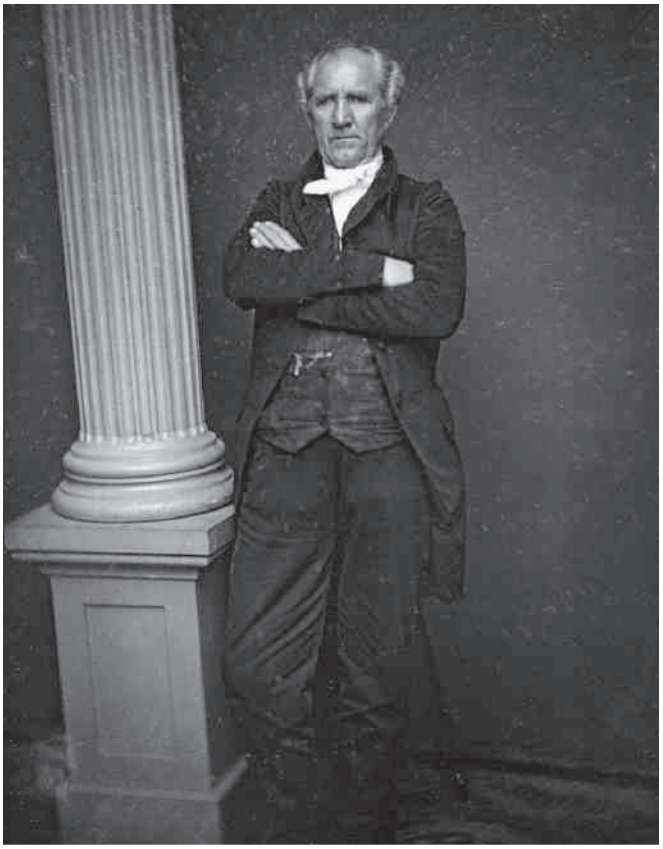
Van Buren's "divorce" scheme was never highly popular. His fellow Democrats, many of whom longed for the risky but lush days of the "pet banks," supported it only lukewarmly. The Whigs condemned it, primarily because it squelched their hopes for a revived Bank of the United States. After a prolonged struggle, the Independent Treasury Bill passed Congress in 1840. Repealed the next year by the victorious Whigs, the scheme was reenacted by the triumphant Democrats in 1846 and then continued until the Republicans instituted a network of national banks during the Civil War.

Gone to Texas

Americans, greedy for land, continued to covet the vast expanse of Texas, which the United States had abandoned to Spain when acquiring Florida in 1819. The Spanish authorities wanted to populate this virtually unpeopled area, but before they could carry through their contemplated plans, the Mexicans won their independence, in 1821. A new regime in Mexico City thereupon concluded arrangements in 1823 for granting a huge tract of land to Stephen Austin, with the understanding that he would bring into Texas three hundred American families. Immigrants were to be of the established Roman Catholic faith and upon settlement were to become properly Mexicanized.

These two stipulations were largely ignored. Hardy Texas pioneers remained Americans at heart, resenting the trammels imposed by a "foreign" government. They were especially annoyed by the presence of Mexican soldiers, many of whom were ragged ex-convicts.

Energetic and prolific, Texan Americans numbered about thirty thousand by 1835 (see "Makers of America: Mexican or Texican?" pp. 268–269). Most of them were law-abiding, God-fearing people, but some of them had left the "States" only one or two jumps ahead of the sheriff. "G.T.T." (Gone to Texas) became current descriptive slang. Among the adventurers were Davy Crockett, the famous rifleman, and Jim Bowie, the presumed inventor of the murderous knife that bears his name. Bowie's blade was widely known in the Southwest as the "genuine Arkansas toothpick." A distinguished latecomer and leader was an ex-governor of Tennessee, Sam Houston. His life had been temporarily shattered in 1829 when his bride of a few weeks left him and he took up transient residence with the Arkansas Indians, who dubbed him "Big Drunk." He subsequently took the pledge of temperance.



Collection of the New York Historical Society

Samuel ("Sam") Houston (1793–1863) After a promising career in Tennessee as a soldier, lawyer, congressman, and governor, Houston became the chief leader and hero of the Texas rebels. Elected to the U.S. Senate and the governorship of Texas, he was forced into retirement when his love for the Union caused him to spurn the Confederacy in the Civil War.

The pioneer individualists who came to Texas were not easy to push around. Friction rapidly increased between Mexicans and Texans over issues such as slavery, immigration, and local rights. Slavery was a particularly touchy topic. Mexico emancipated its slaves in 1830 and prohibited the further importation of slaves into Texas, as well as further colonization by troublesome Americans. The Texans refused to honor these decrees. They kept their slaves in bondage, and new American settlers kept bringing more slaves into Texas. When Stephen Austin went to Mexico City in 1833 to negotiate these differences with the Mexican government, the dictator Santa Anna clapped him in jail for eight months. The explosion finally came in 1835, when Santa Anna wiped out all local rights and started to raise an army to suppress the upstart Texans.

The Lone Star Rebellion

Early in 1836 the Texans declared their independence, unfurled their Lone Star flag, and named Sam Houston commander in chief. Santa Anna, at the head of about six thousand men, swept ferociously into Texas. Trapping a band of nearly two hundred pugnacious Texans at the **Alamo** in San Antonio, he wiped them out to a man after a thirteen-day siege. The Texans' commander, Colonel W. B. Travis, had declared, "I shall never surrender nor retreat. . . . Victory or Death." A short time later, a band of about four hundred surrounded and defeated American volunteers, having thrown down their arms at **Goliad**, were butchered as "pirates." All these operations further delayed the Mexican advance and galvanized American opposition.

City of Gonzales/Picture Research Consultants & Archives

"Come and Take It" This mosaic, done in 1959 by Bert Rees of Austin, Texas, shows one of the defenders' cannon, as well as their legendary battle flag of defiance.

Friends of the Governor's Mansion

The Battle of the Alamo, 1836
Long celebrated in song and story, the battle was a military defeat but a spiritual victory for the Texas rebels, whose annihilation to a man inspired others and led eventually to independence from Mexico.

Slain heroes like Jim Bowie and Davy Crockett, well-known in life, became legendary in death. Texan war cries—"Remember the Alamo!" "Remember Goliad!" and "Death to Santa Anna!"—swept up into the United States. Scores of vengeful Americans seized their rifles and rushed to the aid of relatives, friends, and compatriots.

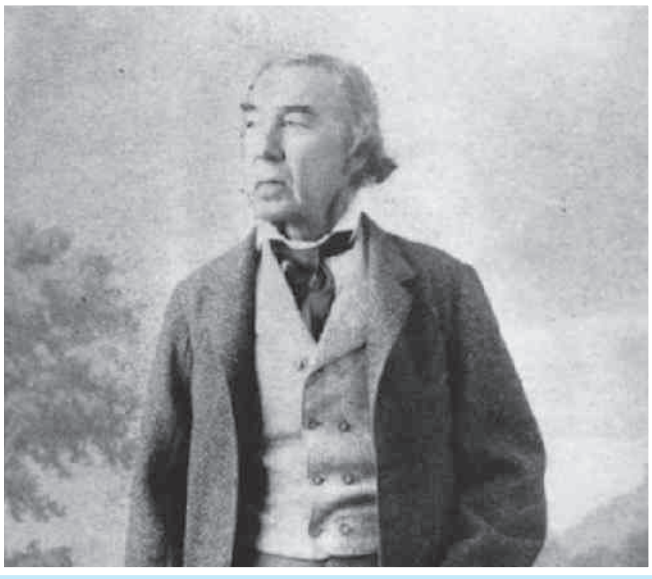
General Sam Houston's small army retreated to the east, luring Santa Anna to **San Jacinto**, near the site of the city that now bears Houston's name (see Map 13.3). The Mexicans numbered about thirteen hundred men, the Texans about nine hundred. Suddenly, on April 21, 1836, Houston turned. Taking full advantage of the Mexican siesta, the Texans wiped out the pursuing force and captured Santa Anna, who was found cowering in the tall grass near the battlefield. Confronted with thirsty bowie knives, the quaking dictator was speedily induced to sign two treaties. By their terms he agreed to withdraw Mexican troops and to recognize the Rio Grande as the extreme southwestern boundary of Texas. When released, he repudiated the agreement as illegal because it had been extorted under duress.

MAP 13.3 The Texas Revolution, 1836 General Houston's strategy was to retreat and use defense in depth. His line of supply from the United States was shortened as Santa Anna's lengthened. The Mexicans were forced to bring up supplies by land because the Texas navy controlled the sea. This force consisted of only four small ships, but it was big enough to do the job.

Mexican or Texican?

Moses Austin, born a Connecticut Yankee in 1761, was determined to be Spanish—if that's what it took to acquire cheap land and freedom from pesky laws. In 1798 he tramped into untracked Missouri, still part of Spanish Louisiana, and pledged his allegiance to the king of Spain. He was not pleased when the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 restored him to American citizenship. In 1820, with his old Spanish passport in his saddlebag, he rode into Spanish Texas and asked for permission to establish a colony of three hundred families.

Austin's request posed a dilemma for the Texas governor. The Spanish authorities had repeatedly stamped out the bands of American horse thieves and squatters who periodically splashed across the Red and Sabine Rivers from the United States into Spanish territory. Yet the Spanish had lured only some three thousand of their own settlers into Texas during their three centuries of rule. If the land were ever to be wrestled from the Indians and "civilized," maybe Austin's plan could do it. Hoping that this band of the "right sort" of Americans might prevent the further encroachment of the buckskinned border ruffians, the governor reluctantly agreed to Austin's proposal.



Texas State Library and Archives Commission

José Antonio Navarro (1795–1871) A native of San Antonio, Navarro signed the Texas declaration of independence in 1836.

Upon Moses Austin's death in 1821, the task of realizing his dream fell to his twenty-seven-year-old son, Stephen. "I bid an everlasting farewell to my native country," Stephen Austin said, and he crossed into Texas on July 15, 1821, "determined to fulfill rigidly all the duties and obligations of a Mexican citizen." (Mexico declared its independence from Spain early in 1821 and finalized its agreement with Austin in 1823.) Soon he learned fluent Spanish and was signing his name as "Don Estévan F. Austin." In his new colony between the Brazos and Colorado Rivers, he allowed "no drunkard, no gambler, no profane swearer, no idler"—and sternly enforced these rules. Not only did he banish several families as "undesirables," but he ordered the public flogging of unwanted interlopers.

Austin fell just three families short of recruiting the three hundred households that his father had contracted to bring to Texas. The original settlers were still dubbed the "Old Three Hundred," the Texas equivalent of New England's Mayflower Pilgrims or the "First Families of Virginia." Mostly Scots-Irish southerners from the trans-Appalachian frontier, the Old Three Hundred were cultured folk by frontier standards; all but four of them were literate. Other settlers followed, from Europe as well as America. Within ten years the "Anglos" (many of them French and German) outnumbered the Mexican residents, or *tejanos*, ten to one and soon evolved a distinctive "Texican" culture. The wide-ranging horse patrols organized to attack Indian camps became the Texas Rangers; Samuel Maverick, whose unbranded calves roamed the limitless prairies, left his surname as a label for rebellious loners who refused to run with the herd; and Jared Groce, an Alabama planter whose caravan of fifty covered wagons and one hundred slaves arrived in 1822, etched the original image of the larger-than-life, big-time Texas operator.

The original Anglo-Texans brought with them the old Scots-Irish frontiersmen's hostility to authority. They ignored Mexican laws and officials, including restrictions against owning or importing slaves. When the Mexican government tried to impose its will on the Anglo-Texans in the 1830s, they took up their guns. Like the American revolutionaries of the 1770s, who at first demanded only the rights of Englishmen, the

These events put the U.S. government in a sticky situation. The Texans, though courageous, could hardly have won their independence without the help in men and supplies from their American cousins. The Washington government, as the Mexicans bitterly complained, had a solemn obligation under international law to enforce its leaky neutrality statutes. But American public opinion, overwhelmingly favorable to the Texans, openly nullified the existing legislation. The federal authorities were powerless to act, and on the day before he left office in 1837, President Jackson even extended the right hand of recognition to the Lone Star Republic, led by his old comrade-in-arms against the Indians, Sam Houston.

The Witte Museum, San Antonio, Texas

West Side Main Plaza, San Antonio, Texas, by William G. M. Samuel, 1849 (detail)
Even after annexation, Texas retained a strong Spanish Mexican flavor, as the architecture and activities here illustrate.

Texans began by asking simply for Mexican recognition of their rights as guaranteed by the Mexican constitution of 1824. But bloodshed at the Alamo in 1836, like that at Lexington and Concord in 1775, transformed protest into rebellion.

Texas lay—and still lies—along the frontier where Hispanic and Anglo-American cultures met, mingled, and clashed. In part the Texas Revolution was a contest between those two cultures. But it was also a contest about philosophies of government, pitting liberal frontier ideals of freedom against the conservative concept of centralized control. Stephen Austin sincerely tried to "Mexicanize" himself and his followers—until the Mexican government grew too arbitrary and authoritarian. And not all the Texas revolutionaries were "Anglos." Many *tejanos* fought for Texas independence—seven perished defending the Alamo. Among the fifty-nine signers of the Texas declaration of independence were several Hispanics, including the *tejanos* José Antonio Navarro and Francisco Ruiz. Lorenzo de Zavala, an ardent Mexican liberal who had long resisted the centralizing tendencies of Mexico's dominant political party, was designated vice president of the Texas republic's interim government in 1836. Like the Austins, these *tejanos* and Mexicans had sought in Texas an escape from overbearing governmental authority. Their role in the revolution underscores the fact that the uprising was a struggle between defenders of local rights and the agents of central authority as much as it was a fight between Anglo and Mexican cultures.

Many Texans wanted not just recognition of their independence but outright union with the United States. What nation in its right mind, they reasoned, would refuse so lavish a dowry? The radiant Texas bride, officially petitioning for annexation in 1837, presented herself for marriage. But the expectant groom, Uncle Sam, was jerked back by the black hand of the slavery issue. Antislavery crusaders in the North were opposing annexation with increasing vehemence. They contended that the whole scheme was merely a conspiracy cooked up by the southern "slavocracy" to bring new slave pens into the Union.

At first glance a "slavery plot" charge seemed plausible. Most of the early settlers in Texas, as well as

American volunteers during the revolution, had come from the states of the South and Southwest. But scholars have concluded that the settlement of Texas was merely the normal and inexorable march of the westward movement. Most of the immigrants came from the South and Southwest simply because these states were closer. The explanation was proximity rather than conspiracy. Yet the fact remained that many Texans were slaveholders, and admitting Texas to the Union inescapably meant enlarging American slavery.

Log Cabins and Hard Cider of 1840

Martin Van Buren was renominated by the Democrats in 1840, albeit without terrific enthusiasm. The party had no acceptable alternative to what the Whigs called "Martin Van Ruin."

The Whigs, hungering for the spoils of office, scented victory in the breeze. Pangs of the panic were still being felt, and voters blamed their woes on the party in power. Learning from their mistake in 1836, the Whigs united behind one candidate, Ohio's William Henry Harrison. He was not their ablest statesman—that would have been Daniel Webster or Henry Clay—but he was believed to be their ablest vote-getter.

The aging hero, nearly sixty-eight when the campaign ended, was known for his successes against Indians and the British at the Battles of Tippecanoe (1811) and the Thames (1813). Harrison's views on current issues were only vaguely known. "Old Tippecanoe" was nominated primarily because he was issueless and enemyless—a tested recipe for electoral success that still appeals today. John Tyler of Virginia, an afterthought, was selected as his vice-presidential running mate.

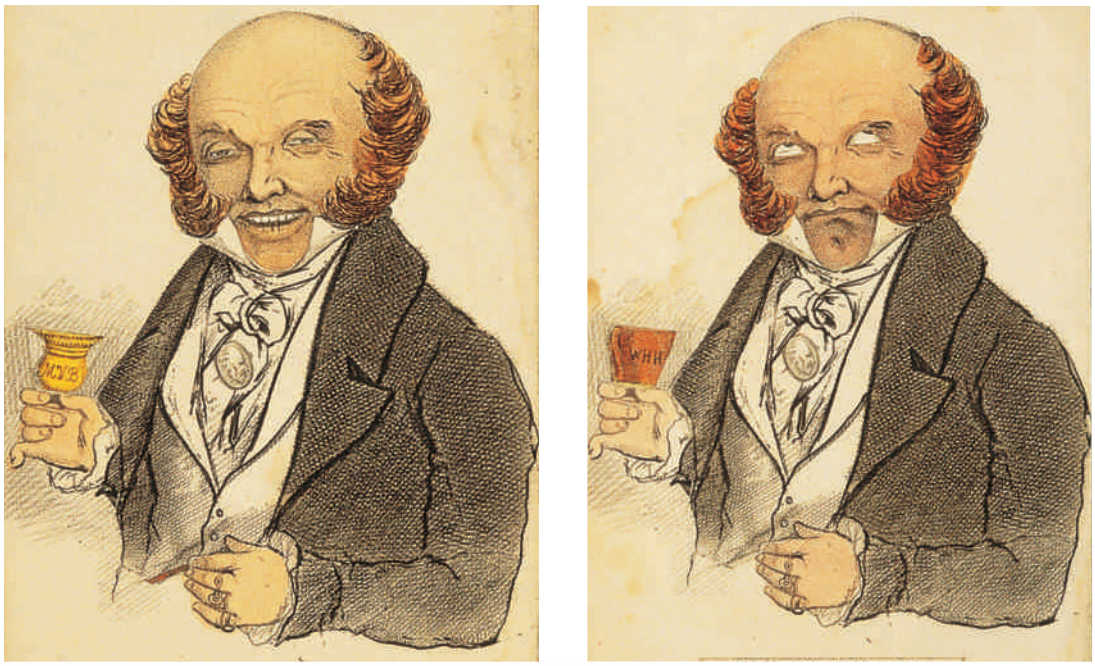
The Whigs, eager to avoid offense, published no official platform, hoping to sweep their hero into office with a frothy huzza-for-Harrison campaign reminiscent of Jackson's triumph in 1828. A dull-witted Democratic editor played directly into Whig hands. Stupidly insulting the West, he lampooned Harrison as an impoverished old farmer who should be content with a pension, a log cabin, and a barrel of hard cider—the poor westerner's champagne. Whigs gleefully adopted honest hard cider and the sturdy log cabin as symbols of their campaign. Harrisonites portrayed their hero as the poor "Farmer of North Bend," who had been called from his cabin and his plow to drive corrupt Jackson spoilsmen from the "presidential palace." They denounced Van Buren as a supercilious aristocrat, a simpering dandy who wore corsets and ate French food from golden plates. As a jeering Whig campaign song proclaimed,

> *Old Tip, he wears a homespun shirt, He has no ruffled shirt, wirt, wirt.*
> *But Matt, he has the golden plate, and he's a little squirt, wirt, wirt.*

The Whig campaign was a masterpiece of inane hoopla. Log cabins were dished up in every conceivable form. Bawling Whigs, stimulated by fortified cider, rolled huge inflated balls from village to village and

William Henry Harrison Home, Grouseland, Indiana

Harrison and Tyler Campaign Kerchief, 1840 As the two-party system came into its own by 1840, presidential elections became more public contests. Lively campaigns used banners, posters, flags, and other paraphernalia like this kerchief to whip up voters' support. Log Cabin Whigs took particular interest in attracting female supporters. They gathered up women at campaign stops, supplied them with Harrison kerchiefs for waving at key moments, and included them conspicuously in events. Although women could not vote, they had moral influence on their menfolk that the Whigs hoped to tap.



Collection of Janice L. and David J. Frent

Martin Van Buren Gags on Hard Cider This 1840 "pull-card" shows Van Buren on the left as an aristocratic fop sipping champagne. When the right-hand card was pulled out, Van Buren's face soured as he discovered that his "champagne" was actually hard cider. The cartoonist clearly sympathized with Van Buren's opponent in the 1840 presidential election, William Henry Harrison, who waged the famous "log cabin and hard cider" campaign.

state to state—balls that represented the snowballing majority for "Tippecanoe, and Tyler too." In truth, Harrison was not lowborn, but from one of the FFVs ("First Families of Virginia"). He was not poverty-stricken. He did not live in a one-room log cabin, but rather in a sixteen-room mansion on a three-thousand-acre farm. He did not swill down gallons of hard cider (he evidently preferred whiskey). And he did not plow his fields with his own "huge paws." But such details had not mattered when General Jackson rode to victory, and they did not matter now.

The Democrats who hurrahed Jackson into the White House in 1828 now discovered to their chagrin that whooping it up for a backwoods westerner was a game two could play. Harrison won by the surprisingly close margin of 1,274,624 to 1,127,781 popular votes, but by an overwhelming electoral margin of 234 to 60. With hardly a real issue debated, though with hard times blighting the incumbent's fortunes, Van Buren was washed out of Washington on a wave of apple juice. The hard-ciderites had apparently received a mandate to tear down the White House and erect a log cabin.

Although campaigners in 1840 did their best to bury substantive issues beneath the ballyhoo, voters actually faced a stark choice between two economic visions of how to cope with the nation's first major depression. Whigs sought to expand and stimulate the economy, while Democrats favored retrenchment and an end to high-flying banks and aggressive corporations.

Politics for the People

The election of 1840 conclusively demonstrated two major changes in American politics since the Era of Good Feelings. The first was the triumph of a populist democratic style. Democracy had been something of a taint in the days of the lordly Federalists. Martha Washington, the first First Lady, was shocked after a presidential reception to find a greasy smear on the wallpaper—left there, she was sure, by an uninvited "filthy democrat."

But by the 1840s, aristocracy was the taint, and democracy was respectable. Politicians were now forced to curry favor with the voting masses. Lucky indeed was the aspiring office seeker who could boast of birth in a log cabin. In 1840 Daniel Webster publicly apologized for not being able to claim so humble a birthplace, though he quickly added that his brothers could. Hopelessly handicapped was the candidate who appeared to be too clean, too well dressed, too grammatical, too highbrowishly intellectual. In truth, most

Saint Louis Art Museum, Gift of Bank of America

The County Election, by George Caleb Bingham, 1851–1852
The artist here gently satirizes the drinking and wheeling and dealing that sometimes marred the electoral process in the boisterous age of Jacksonian politics.

high political offices continued to be filled by "leading citizens." But now these wealthy and prominent men had to forsake all social pretensions and cultivate the common touch if they hoped to win elections.

Snobbish bigwigs, unhappy over the change, sneered at "coonskin congressmen" and at the newly enfranchised "bipeds of the forest." To them the tyranny of "King Numbers" was no less offensive than that of King George. But these critics protested in vain. The common man was at last moving to the center of the national political stage: the sturdy American who donned coarse trousers rather than buff breeches, who sported a coonskin cap rather than a silk top hat, and who wore no man's collar, often not even one of his own. Instead of the old divine right of kings, America was now bowing to the divine right of the people.

The Two-Party System

The second dramatic change resulting from the 1840 election was the formation of a vigorous and durable two-party system. The Jeffersonians of an earlier day had been so successful in absorbing the programs of their Federalist opponents that a full-blown two-party system had never truly emerged in the subsequent Era of Good Feelings. The idea had prevailed that parties of any sort smacked of conspiracy and "faction" and were injurious to the health of the body politic in a virtuous republic. By 1840 political parties had fully come of age, a lasting legacy of Andrew Jackson's and Martin Van Buren's tenaciousness.

Both national parties, the Democrats and the Whigs, grew out of the rich soil of Jeffersonian republicanism, and each laid claim to different aspects of the republican inheritance. Jacksonian Democrats glorified the liberty of the individual and were fiercely on guard against the inroads of "privilege" into government. Whigs trumpeted the natural harmony of society and the value of community, and were willing to use government to realize their objectives. Whigs also berated those leaders—and they considered Jackson to be one—whose appeals to self-interest fostered conflict among individuals, classes, or sections.

Democrats clung to states' rights and federal restraint in social and economic affairs as their basic doctrines. Whigs tended to favor a renewed national bank, protective tariffs, internal improvements, public schools, and, increasingly, moral reforms such as the prohibition of liquor and eventually the abolition of slavery.

The two parties were thus separated by real differences of philosophy and policy. But they also had much in common. Both were mass-based, "catchall" parties that tried deliberately to mobilize as many

President Andrew Jackson advised a supporter in 1835 on how to tell the difference between Democrats and "Whigs, nullies, and blue-light federalists." In doing so, he neatly summarized the Jacksonian philosophy:

"The people ought to inquire [of political candidates]—are you opposed to a national bank; are you in favor of a strict construction of the Federal and State Constitutions; are you in favor of rotation in office; do you subscribe to the republican rule that the people are the sovereign power, the officers their agents, and that upon all national or general subjects, as well as local, they have a right to instruct their agents and representatives, and they are bound to obey or resign; in short, are they true Republicans agreeable to the true Jeffersonian creed?"

voters as possible for their cause. Although it is true that Democrats tended to be more humble folk and Whigs more prosperous, both parties nevertheless commanded the loyalties of all kinds of Americans, from all social classes and in all sections. The social diversity of the two parties had important implications. It fostered horse-trading compromises *within* each party that prevented either from assuming extreme or radical positions. By the same token, the geographical diversity of the two parties retarded the emergence of purely sectional political parties—temporarily suppressing, through compromise, the ultimately uncompromisable issue of slavery. When the two-party system began to creak in the 1850s, the Union was mortally imperiled.

Varying Viewpoints

What Was Jacksonian Democracy?

Aristocratic, eastern-born historians of the nineteenth century damned Jackson as a backwoods barbarian. They criticized Jacksonianism as democracy run riot—an irresponsible, ill-bred outburst that overturned the electoral system and wrecked the national financial structure.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, another generation of historians came to the fore, many of whom had grown up in the Midwest and rejected the elitist views of their predecessors. Frederick Jackson Turner and his disciples saw the western frontier as the fount of democratic virtue, and they hailed Jackson as a true hero sprung from the forests of the West to protect the will of the people against the moneyed interests, akin to the progressive reformers of their own day. In his famous 1893 essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Turner argued that the United States owed the survival of its democratic tradition to the rise of the West, not to its roots in the more conservative, aristocratic East.

When Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., published *The Age of Jackson* in 1945, however, the debate on Jacksonianism shifted dramatically. Although he shared the Turnerians' admiration for Jackson the democrat, Schlesinger cast the Jacksonian era not as a sectional conflict, but as a class conflict between poor farmers, laborers, and noncapitalists on the one hand, and the business community—epitomized by the Second Bank of the United States—on the other. In Schlesinger's eyes the Jacksonians justifiably attacked the bank as an institution dangerously independent of democratic oversight. The political mobilization of the urban working classes in support of Jackson particularly attracted Schlesinger's interest.

Soon after Schlesinger's book appeared, the discussion again shifted ground and entirely new interpretations of Jacksonianism emerged. Richard Hofstadter argued in *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (1948) that Jacksonian democracy was not a rejection of capitalism, as Schlesinger insisted, but rather the effort of aspiring entrepreneurs to secure laissez-faire policies that would serve their own interests against their entrenched, and monopolistic, eastern competitors. In *The Jacksonian Persuasion* (1957), Marvin Meyers portrayed the Jacksonians as conservative capitalists, torn between fierce commercial ambitions and a desire to cling to the virtues of the agrarian past. In an effort to resolve this contradiction, he argued, they lashed out at scapegoats like the national bank, blaming it for the very changes their own economic energies had unleashed. Lee Benson contended in *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy* (1961) that the political conflicts of the Jacksonian era did not correspond so much to class divisions as to different ethnic and religious splits within American society. Using new quantitative methods of analysis, Benson found no consistent demarcations—in class, occupation, or region—between the Jacksonians and their rivals. Local and cultural issues such as temperance and religion were far more influential in shaping political life than the national financial questions analyzed by previous historians.

In the 1980s Sean Wilentz and other scholars began to resurrect some of Schlesinger's argument about the importance of class to Jacksonianism. In *Chants Democratic* (1984), Wilentz maintained that Jacksonian politics could not be properly understood without reference to the changing national economy. Artisans watched in horror as new manufacturing techniques put many of them out of business and replaced their craftsmanship with the unskilled hands of wage laborers. To these anxious small producers, America's infatuation with impersonal institutions and large-scale employers threatened the very existence of a republic founded on the principle that its citizens were virtuously self-sufficient. Thus Jackson's attack on the Bank of the United States symbolized the antagonism these individuals felt toward the emergent capitalist economy and earned him their strong allegiance.

The scholarly cycle came full circle with the publication of Charles Sellers's *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815–1846* (1991). In many ways this ambitious synthesis offered an updated version of Schlesinger's argument about class conflict. American democracy and free-market capitalism, according to Sellers, were not twins, born from the common parentage of freedom and opportunity, reared in the wide-open young Republic, and mutually supporting each other ever since. Rather, Sellers suggested, they were really adversaries, with Jacksonians inventing mass democracy in

order to hold capitalist expansion in check. Like Schlesinger's thesis, Sellers's interpretation provoked a storm of controversy. To supporters, the concept of the "market revolution" (see p. 302) provided a useful organizing tool for seeing social, cultural, political, and economic transformations as interdependent. To critics, Sellers's book suffered from a hopelessly romantic view of preindustrial society and a pronounced ideological bias. In an era of tightly contested elections, they argued, no party could expect to prevail by appealing exclusively to rich or poor along class lines.

Published a decade and a half later, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (2007), Daniel Walker Howe's equally sweeping synthesis of the period, took a different view of the relationship between commercialization and democracy. Howe argued that mass political participation did not emerge as an antidote to the crushing yoke of industrialization; rather, it evolved out of the same forces that drove market expansion—the "twin revolutions" in transportation and communications. Advances in printing and the proliferation of newspapers were prerequisites for mass political parties, which depended on the largely partisan press to publicize their platforms and rally support. The turnpikes, canals, and railroads that delivered local goods to increasingly distant markets also carried ministers to far-off parishes, setting off a religious revival that helped transform the political landscape. New churches, representing a multiplicity of faiths, created venues for debates on issues ranging from abolition to women's rights, issues that were intentionally kept out of the halls of Congress. Howe argued that Jackson's supporters did not object to new commercial opportunities. At the same time that Jackson worked to dismantle the Bank of the United States, he also funded transportation projects in the territories to promote westward expansion and built harbors along the eastern seaboard to fuel international trade. According to Howe, Jacksonians welcomed commerce, but they disagreed with Whigs over the *direction* of development, favoring a more agrarian, atomized economy.

Chapter Review

KEY TERMS

corrupt bargain (246)
spoils system (251)
Tariff of Abominations (254)
Nullification Crisis (255)
compromise Tariff of 1833 (256)
Force Bill (256)
Indian Removal Act (258)
Trail of Tears (258)
Black Hawk War (258)
Bank War (259)
Anti-Masonic party (261)
pet banks (262)
Specie Circular (262)
panic of 1837 (264)
Alamo (266)
Goliad (266)
San Jacinto, Battle of (267)

PEOPLE TO KNOW

John Quincy Adams
Andrew Jackson
Denmark Vesey
John C. Calhoun
Black Hawk
Nicholas Biddle
Daniel Webster
Henry Clay
Martin Van Buren
Stephen Austin
Sam Houston
Santa Anna
William Henry Harrison

TO LEARN MORE

Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, *Rude Republic: Americans and Their Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (2001)
Andrew Burstein, *The Passions of Andrew Jackson* (2003)
Daniel Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise, 1815–1840* (1995)
Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal* (1982)
Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (2007)
Louis P. Masur, *1831: Year of Eclipse* (2001)
David Andrew Nichols, *Red Gentlemen and White Savages: Indians, Federalists, and the Search for Order on the American Frontier* (2008)
Lynn Hudson Parsons, *The Birth of Modern Politics: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and the Election of 1828* (2009)
Merrill D. Peterson, *The Great Triumvirate: Webster, Clay, and Calhoun* (1987)
Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835, 1840)
Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (1990)

A complete, annotated bibliography for this chapter—along with brief descriptions of the People to Know—may be found on the American Pageant website. The Key Terms are defined in a Glossary at the end of the text.

CHRONOLOGY

1822 Vesey slave conspiracy in Charleston, South Carolina

1823 Mexico opens Texas to American settlers

1824 Lack of electoral majority for presidency throws election into House of Representatives

1825 House elects John Quincy Adams president

1828 Tariff of 1828 ("Tariff of Abominations")
Jackson elected president
The South Carolina Exposition published

1830 Indian Removal Act
July Revolution in France

1831–1832 Alexis de Tocqueville tours United States

1832 "Bank War"—Jackson vetoes bill to recharter Bank of the United States
Reform Bill in Britain expands electorate
Tariff of 1832
Black Hawk War
Jackson defeats Clay for presidency

1832–1833 South Carolina nullification crisis

1833 Compromise Tariff of 1833
Jackson removes federal deposits from Bank of the United States

1836 Bank of the United States expires
Specie Circular issued
Bureau of Indian Affairs established
Battle of the Alamo
Battle of San Jacinto
Texas wins independence from Mexico
Van Buren elected president

1837 Seminole Indians defeated and eventually removed from Florida
United States recognizes Texas republic but refuses annexation
Panic of 1837

1838–1839 Cherokee Indians removed on "Trail of Tears"

1840 Independent treasury established
Harrison defeats Van Buren for presidency

AP* Review Questions for Chapter 13

1. What is meant by the term *corrupt bargain* in reference to the 1824 presidential election?
   (A) The selection of the president by the House of Representatives rather than the popular vote
   (B) Efforts by Andrew Jackson's campaign to bribe members of the House of Representatives to vote for their candidate
   (C) An alleged private deal between John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay to ensure Adams's presidency
   (D) John C. Calhoun's ability to run for vice president on both the Adams and Jackson tickets
   (E) The arbitrary elimination of the fourth-placed candidate from consideration of the presidency by the House of Representatives

2. John Quincy Adams was largely an unpopular president for all of the following reasons EXCEPT that he
   (A) replaced existing officeholders with his political supporters.
   (B) supported federal construction of roads and a national university.
   (C) sought to curb land speculation in the West.
   (D) was seen as having stolen the 1824 election.
   (E) was unwilling to court or campaign for public approval.

3. Which of these statements about the election of 1828 is NOT true?
   (A) The two main contenders were both Republicans.
   (B) Adams refused to engage in the negative campaign tactics that Jackson used.
   (C) Jackson's campaign depicted him as the champion of the common man.
   (D) It revealed a shift in political power toward new states west of the eastern seaboard.
   (E) The vote in the middle states was split between both candidates.

4. In his famed book about his tour through America, *Democracy in America*, Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville was most impressed by
   (A) the persistence of slavery in America.
   (B) the roughhewn character of President Andrew Jackson.
   (C) the nation's bustling cities and commercial centers.
   (D) America's emerging industrialization.
   (E) the general equality of the American people.

5. What was the major significance of the spoils system, as employed by Andrew Jackson?
   (A) It enabled him to revitalize the federal government with new appointees.
   (B) It paved the way for him to expand the powers of the presidency and presidential appointees.
   (C) It became an important tool of the emerging two-party system.
   (D) It revealed the potential for scandal and corruption in American politics.
   (E) It led to the first case of embezzlement against the government.

6. Southerners hated the so-called Tariff of Abominations (1828) for all of the following reasons EXCEPT that they
   (A) felt it favored the North.
   (B) feared it would lead the federal government to intervene in slavery.
   (C) had little manufacturing and had to purchase the items affected by the tariff.
   (D) thought it would stall their thriving economy.
   (E) felt the government was overstepping its authority.

7. In simplest terms, the Nullification Crisis that began with South Carolina in 1828 describes
   (A) the state's attempt to block passage of the Tariff of Abominations in Congress.
   (B) South Carolina's effort to declare the tariff void within its borders.
   (C) a protest by several southern states to prevent the tariff from being collected.
   (D) the first time the South threatened to secede.
   (E) efforts in Congress to remove the most hated sections of the tariff in subsequent legislation.

8. What was the Cherokee strategy for dealing with white encroachment?
   (A) Violent resistance
   (B) Accommodation
   (C) Intermarriage with white settlers
   (D) Voluntary relocation
   (E) Negotiating treaties and land sales

9. The Trail of Tears is best described as
   (A) the Seminoles' seven-year guerrilla warfare in Florida to protect their land.
   (B) the practice of negating Indian treaties to allow for white encroachment on Indian land.
   (C) the forced march of the Five Civilized Tribes from their eastern homelands to resettlement in the West.
   (D) the bloody Indian resistance in the Black Hawk War to eviction by white settlers.
   (E) the promise by the U.S. government to create a permanent Indian homeland on the frontier.

10. Which of these was NOT among Andrew Jackson's reasons for vetoing the bill to recharter the Bank of the United States in 1832?
   (A) He hated monopolies.
   (B) He felt the bank had too much control over the nation's economy.
   (C) He considered it to be unconstitutional.
   (D) He thought the bank was potentially harmful to the nation.
   (E) He wanted to win over wealthy voters from the North and East in his reelection campaign.

11. The election of 1832 changed the face of American politics by
   (A) beginning the tradition of nominating conventions.
   (B) expanding the power of the presidency.
   (C) creating presidential "war chests" (campaign contributions).
   (D) demonstrating the power of the Electoral College versus the popular vote.
   (E) showing the power of voting blocs and interest groups.

12. The primary cause of the Panic of 1837 was
   (A) the bank crisis.
   (B) widespread speculation and get-rich-quick schemes.
   (C) the Specie Circular.
   (D) economic crises in Europe that expanded to America.
   (E) excessive government tariffs and subsidies.

13. The Texas Revolution and independence posed a thorny issue for the United States because
   (A) almost all of the revolutionaries were Americans.
   (B) the U.S. government had lent money and munitions to support the rebels.
   (C) Texans sought annexation by the United States.
   (D) it fueled a battle between Spain and Mexico.
   (E) Santa Anna threatened to move the battle onto U.S. soil.

14. What was the main difference between the Whigs and Democrats, the two parties that took hold in the late 1820s and 1830s?
   (A) Democrats tended to be wealthier; Whigs were typically more mainstream.
   (B) Democrats focused on the common good; Whigs celebrated individual freedom and self-interest.
   (C) Democrats favored states' rights; Whigs sought federal involvement, including tariffs, schools, internal improvements, and a national bank.
   (D) Democrats tended to be from the North and Old West; Whigs were often from the South and newer western territories.
   (E) Democrats were typically farmers; Whigs were primarily merchants.

15. John C. Calhoun stated, "I never use the word 'nation' in speaking of the United States. I always use the word 'union' or 'confederacy.' We are not a nation, but a union, a confederacy of equal and sovereign states." Which action exemplifies this philosophy?
   (A) Advocating a "dual presidency" in which the North and South were represented
   (B) Accepting the vice-presidential nomination in the election of 1828
   (C) Working in Congress to create compromises to deal with the slavery issue
   (D) Cooperating with Henry Clay on a South-West alliance
   (E) Authoring the South Carolina Exposition and Protest

16. All of the following tensions existed between American settlers in Texas and the Mexican government EXCEPT that
   (A) Mexico abolished slavery, but Americans insisted upon bringing slaves into Texas.
   (B) Americans expected to live by their own rules and resented the Mexican military presence.
   (C) The majority of American settlers were Christian, but not Catholic as required by Mexico.
   (D) Mexico expected significant industrial output from settlers who planted little.
   (E) Mexico permitted 300 American families to settle; 30,000 people, including some fugitives, arrived.