

## The Age of Jackson (1824 to 1840)

Popular politics began in America during the 1820's. Perhaps the most notable president of this era was Andrew Jackson. The years from 1829 to 1837 are often called the **Era of the Common Man** or the **Era of Jacksonian Democracy**. The changing politics of the Jacksonian years parallel complex social and economic changes in America.

By 1830, America had become a land of equality. In hotels men and women of all classes sat at the same dining table. On stagecoaches and steamboats, (and later in rail cars), there was only one class for passengers. Men of all backgrounds wore identical dark clothing and women wore similar looking, fancy, yet confining, full-length dresses.

The white majority saw this as an opportunity for white males to become the "self-made" man. However, the same principle did not work for blacks, either free or enslaved.

Between 1824 and 1840 politics had reached the homes of lower and middle-class white males. The numbers eligible to vote increased dramatically. In 1824 about 350,000 voted in the Presidential Election, by 1840 over 2.4 million men voted. One major reason was the change in **State Suffrage Laws** as more citizens were allowed to vote. They no longer needed to own land to be eligible. In addition, changes in political campaigning and political parties improved voter education. The newspapers were now full of political news, hence educating the general public.



Election Day in America

## **Political changes and reforms during the Jacksonian Era.**

### **Universal Male Suffrage**

There were several Western states added to the Union [Indiana in 1816, Illinois in 1818, Missouri in 1821] and these new states adopted state constitutions that allowed all white men the right to vote and hold office. No longer were there any religious or landowning requirements. Other states soon followed this example. Now people in the lower and middle-classes could hold office on a local basis.

### **Party Nominating Conventions**

Previously party candidates were nominated by either their state legislatures or by “King Caucus” – closed door meetings of a political party’s leaders in Congress. There was no opportunity here for the common man to participate. In the 1830’s closed caucuses were changed to **nominating conventions**. Politicians and voters were now meeting together in the same meeting halls. One of the first political groups to use this system were the Anti-Masons.

### **Popular Election of the President**

By 1832 every state except South Carolina used a more democratic method of allowing voters to choose the state’s list of Presidential Electors.

### **The Two-Party System**

Because of the popular election system for the President, the two-party system grew. Presidential campaigns now were conducted on a national level, therefore requiring larger political parties.

### **The Rise of Third Parties**

The two main parties during this time were the **Whigs and the Democrats**. However other parties were formed that reached out to those who were previously not interested in politics. For example, the Anti-Mason and Workingmen’s parties were formed during this time

### **More Elected Officials**

During the Jacksonian Era more state and local officials were elected to office (rather than just being appointed). The voter now had more say which ultimately increased their participation.

### **Popular Campaigning**

Campaigns were now geared towards the interests and prejudices of the common person. Politics became a form of entertainment, with parades, bands, and large rallies. Unfortunately, this also led to personal attacks on opponents and often downplayed the real issues at hand.

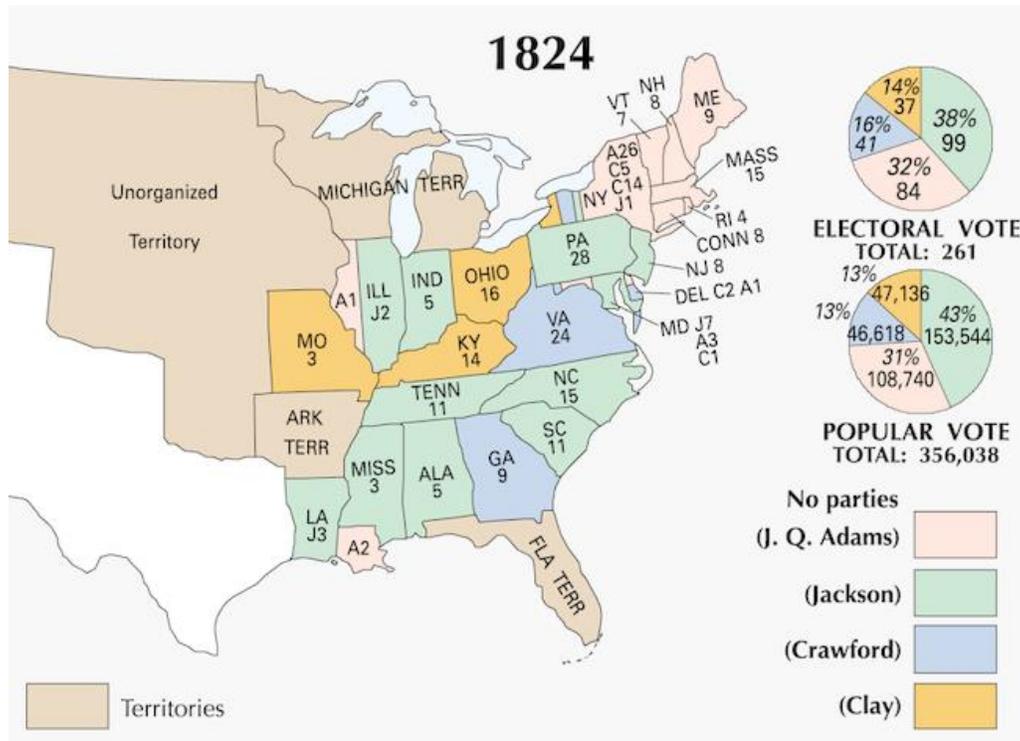
## The Spoils System and Rotation of Officeholders

Andrew Jackson was a President who strongly believed in **patronage**. He openly appointed people to federal positions based on the merit if they had previously campaigned for him and assisted in his political career. Anyone who was not a loyal Jacksonian Democrat was fired and quickly replaced by one of his followers. It was called the “**spoils system**” as it quickly led to corruption within the government.

Jackson also believed in a system of rotation in office. To allow the maximum number of Democrats in office he would limit the tenure to just one term and then appoint another deserving Democrat as a replacement. In defense of these actions Jackson once said, “No man has any more intrinsic claim to office than another.” This led to Jacksonians having contempt for political experts and believed that any one man was as good as another.

The spoils system and the rotation of officeholders helped build stronger Two-Party Systems!

## The Election of 1824 – Andrew Jackson versus John Quincy Adams



**In the Election of 1824 Andrew Jackson won more popular and electoral votes than any other candidate but lost the election!**

The Era of Good Feelings from James Monroe gave way to bad feelings in America. Because there was no longer the old caucus system, the Democratic-Republican Party had four presidential candidates:

**John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, William Crawford, and Andrew Jackson**

## The Outcome of the Election

Andrew Jackson won the greatest number of votes but because the vote was split four-ways **he lacked the majority in the Electoral College**, as required by the Constitution. In this case the **House of Representatives** chooses the new President from the top three candidates. Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams worked together and Clay used his political influence in the House of Representatives to provide John Quincy Adams (Mass.) with enough votes to win the presidency. When Adams appointed Clay as his Secretary of State, Jackson and his supporters accused them of “corrupt bargaining.”

## The Presidency of John Quincy Adams

While he was the President, Adams upset Jackson again when he asked Congress for money to go to internal improvements, aid to manufacturing, a national university, and an astronomical observatory. These were deemed by Jackson as a waste of money and a violation of the *Constitution*. In 1828, towards the end of the Adams presidency, Congress patched together a new tariff law which favored Northern manufacturers and alienated Southern plantation owners. Southerners call this act the “**Tariff of Abominations.**”

**In 1828 Adams sought reelection. Southerners and Westerners voted “Old Hickory” (Jackson) for President.** His campaign went beyond parades and parties. Jackson’s campaign accused Adam’s wife of being born out of wedlock. Adams retaliated accusing Jackson’s wife of adultery. This created great interest and three times the number of voters participated than ever before in the 1828 election.

Andrew Jackson won easily, carrying every state West of the Appalachian Mountains. Ironically, these people voted for Jackson because he was the hero of the War of 1812 and of his image of being a Western frontiersman. To them the issues of the day and the slandering were not important.

## The Presidency of Andrew Jackson



Andrew Jackson was a new kind of President. He dominated the nation’s politics and became a symbol for the common man, the working man, and the middle class. He was born in a frontier cabin, won the Battle of New Orleans, lived in a mansion in Tennessee, was a wealthy planation and slave owner, he never went to college, was rough mannered, chewed tobacco, fought several duels, and had a violent temper.

Andrew Jackson represented himself as a representative of the people and protector of the common man from the abuses of the rich and wealthy businessman. He **opposed** increasing federal spending and national debt. He interpreted the Powers of Congress narrowly; he vetoed more bills (12) than the past six presidents combined.

Advising Jackson was a group of men who did not belong to his official cabinet. They became known as his **“kitchen cabinet”** and his appointed cabinet had less influence than those under earlier presidencies.

### The Peggy Eaton Affair

Jackson’s wife died just prior to his 1828 campaign. Peggy O’Neale Eaton was the wife of Jackson’s Secretary of War, and the target of malicious gossip. Cabinet members refused to invite her to their private functions as they believed that she was an adulteress. Jackson tried using force so the other cabinet wives would accept her, but those cabinet members resigned. In addition, Jackson’s Vice-President, John C. Calhoun resigned a year later, partly over the same issue. As his replacement, Jackson chose Martin Van Buren of New York.

### The Indian Removal Act (1830)

Andrew Jackson sympathized with the land-hungry Southern whites. He believed that the most humane solution was to compel the Native Americans to leave their traditional homelands and resettle west of the Mississippi River. By 1835 most Eastern tribes had reluctantly complied and moved west. To assist in these forced relocations, Jackson created the **Bureau of Indian Affairs** in 1836.

A majority of politicians in various states agreed with Jackson’s policy. Georgia and other Southern states passed laws requiring **Cherokee Indians** to migrate westward. When the Cherokee Nation challenged the state of Georgia, the issue went to the Supreme Court. In the Case of **Cherokee Nation v. Georgia** in 1831 the Supreme Court ruled the case invalid as the Cherokees were not “Americans” and if they saw themselves as a foreign nation, they could not challenge the system as the Constitution does not allow foreign nations to appear before the Supreme Court.

A second Supreme Court case was submitted, **Worcester v. Georgia** in 1832. This time the court, through Chief Justice John Marshall, ruled that the laws of Georgia had no legality to force within the boundaries of the Cherokee Territory so the Native Americans could not be forcefully removed.

In this clash between states’ laws and the federal courts, Jackson sided with the states. He said defiantly **“John Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it.”**

In 1835 a settlement was attempted for the Cherokee people to move to land provided for them in the west. Most Cherokees rejected this offer. In 1838, after Jackson left the office of the presidency, the U.S. Army forced 15,000 Cherokees to leave Georgia. The hardships on the **“Trail of Tears”** caused over 4,000 Native American to die on their tragic relocation.



## The Nullification Crisis

Andrew Jackson was a strong advocate for States' Rights, as long as it did not lead to any disunion within the nation. In 1828, South Carolina declared the "**Tariff of Abominations**" unconstitutional. By doing this, it confirmed the **Nullification Theory** of John C. Calhoun which claimed that each state had the right to decide whether to obey a federal law or to declare it **null and void**.

In 1830, Daniel Webster (Mass.) had debated Robert Hayes (SC) on the nature of the Federal Union under the *Constitution*. Webster had attacked the idea that any state could defy or leave the Union. Following the Webster-Hayes debate, Jackson declared his position on the subject while during a toast at a state function he said, "**our federal union, it must be preserved.**" Calhoun immediately responded with another toast, "**The Union, next to our liberties, most dear!**"

In 1832, South Carolina held another convention to nullify the Tariff of 1828 and also adopted the resolution against the federal government forbidding them to collect tariff fees in the state of South Carolina. Jackson quickly responded to this act against his laws by telling his Secretary of War to prepare for military action against Georgia. He even persuaded Congress to pass a bill giving him the authority to take military action in South Carolina. Jackson then issued a **Proclamation to the People of South Carolina**, clearly stating that nullification and disunion was an act of treason.

Federal troops did not invade South Carolina. Jackson made a compromise by having Congress lower the tariff and South Carolina postponed nullification and subsequently rescinded their actions. Jackson's strong defense of federal authority forced the militant advocates for States' Rights in South Carolina to retreat.

## The Issue of Slavery

Andrew Jackson shared the southerners' alarms about the emerging anti-slavery movement in the Northern states. He used his executive power whenever possible to stop any anti-slavery legislation in Congress and being sent by U.S. Mail to the Southern States. Jacksonians in the South could now trust the president to **NOT** extend the benefits of democracy to African Americans.

## The Bank Veto

Jackson had always believed that the National Bank was unconstitutional. Jackson had many disagreements with the bank's president, Nicholas Biddle. In addition, Jackson's chief political opponent, Henry Clay, was in favor of the National Bank. In 1832, Clay challenged Jackson on this issue and persuaded the majority of Congress to pass a **Bank Recharter Bill**. Jackson **vetoed** the bill, denouncing it as a private monopoly that enriched the wealthy and foreigners, at the expense of the common people. Jackson later moved federal money to his "**Pet-Banks**" in the South to avoid the use of the National Bank.

## The New Two-Party System

Andrew Jackson’s supporters became simply known as **Democrats**. Henry Clay’s supporters were called **Whigs**. The Democratic Party backed the old Republican ideas of Thomas Jefferson. The Whig Party resembled the old Federalist Party of Alexander Hamilton.

<b>Democrats and Whigs during the Age of Jackson</b>		
	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Whigs</b>
<b>Positions on Issues</b>	<p>Favored local rule, limited government, free trade, equal economic opportunity for white males only</p> <p>Opposed monopolies, a National Bank, high tariffs, high land prices.</p>	<p>Favored Henry Clay’s American System ( a National Bank, federal funding of internal improvements, a protective tariff favoring Northern industry)</p> <p>Opposed immorality, vice, and crime, which some people blamed on immigrants</p>
<b>Base of voter support</b>	<p>Southerners, Westerners, small farmers, urban lower-class workers</p>	<p>New Englanders and residents of the Mid-Atlantic and Upper Mid-Western states, Protestants of old English stock, middle-class urban professionals.</p>

### The Second Term for Andrew Jackson

After winning the 1832 Election, Jackson had to face the consequences of opposing the National Bank or the Bank of the United States. Jackson, aided by his Secretary of the Treasury, Roger Taney, continued to take federal money and put it in his “**pet banks.**”

### Specie Circular

As a result of his financial policies and feverish speculation in the Western lands, prices for land and various goods became badly inflated. In order to check inflation, Jackson passed a Presidential Order known as **Specie Circular**. It required that all future purchases of federal lands be made in either gold or silver rather than by paper banknotes. Soon afterwards banknotes lost their value and land sales decreased. This led to the **Panic of 1837** and the nation’s economy went into a depression.

## The Election of 1836

Andrew Jackson did not run for a third term. However, to ensure that his Democratic Party stayed in power he nominated his Vice President, **Martin Van Buren**. In response, the Whigs nominated three candidates from different regions, hoping for another decision in the House of representatives as no candidate would achieve a majority vote. This failed, Van Buren received 58% of the vote.

President Martin Van Buren inherited the **Panic of 1837** in his first year of office. One bank after another closed its doors due to the depression and the consequences of Specie Circular. The Whig Party was quick to blame the Democrats for *laissez-faire* economics and bad management by allowing little or no federal involvement in the economy.

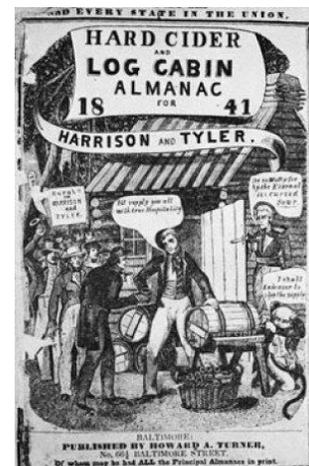
By 1839 the Whig Party was in a very strong position to challenge the incumbent Democrats.

## The Election of 1840 – The Log-Cabin and Hard-Cider Campaign.

The Whigs nominated a popular war hero, **William Henry “Tippecanoe” Harrison** as their candidate. The Whigs used campaign “hoopla” into action. They put log cabins on wheels and paraded them down the streets, passing out hard-cider for the onlookers and giving away political buttons and hats to the audiences. The Whigs then attacked Van Buren as an aristocrat with a taste for foreign wines, calling him unpatriotic.

On election day, 78% of the eligible voters cast their ballots. The **Popular Vote was even** between Harrison and Van Buren but in the **Electoral College vote, Harrison and his running-mate John Tyler swept most of the nation**. Their victory established the Whigs as a true national party.

Unfortunately, the 67-year-old Harrison was in ill health. Less than one month after taking office he died of pneumonia, with the less popular Tyler taking his place. With Harrison’s victory and sudden death, the Jacksonian Era was now in its last stages. However Jackson’s political legacy was to continue for decades afterwards.



The Log-Cabin and Hard-Cider Campaign of “Tippecanoe and Tyler Too”