

1. The Age of Jackson

At Andrew Jackson's **1828** inauguration, hundreds of bearded, buckskin-clad frontiersmen trashed the White House while celebrating the election of one of their own to the Presidency. Though born in South Carolina, Jackson, like many others, had moved to the frontier. Indeed, America was a country on the move west.

On July 4, 1826, less than two years before "**KING ANDREW**" ascended to the "throne," the Yankee **JOHN ADAMS** and the aristocratic Virginian **THOMAS JEFFERSON** both passed away. America's Revolutionary generation was gone. With them went the last vestiges of the **FEDERALIST** and Republican parties. This helped to bring about a new balance of political power, and with it two new political parties. The 1828 election was portrayed by Jackson's Democrats as proof of the "common people's right" to pick a President. No longer were Virginia Presidents and northern money-men calling the shots. Class systems were breaking down. To that end, some states had recently abolished property requirements for voting. These poorer folk supported General Jackson.

Jackson's strong personality and controversial ways incited the development of an opposition party, the **WHIGS**. Their name echoes British history. In Great Britain, the Whigs were the party opposed to a strong monarch. By calling themselves Whigs, Jackson's enemies labeled him a king. And they held firm in their opposition to "King Andrew" and his hated policies.

Sectional rivalries bubbled to the surface as the **ERA OF GOOD FEELINGS** slipped into history. The South began feeling more and more resentful of the influential manufacturers of the North. The South's resentment came to an ugly head in the nullification battle of the early 1830s in which South Carolina considered leaving the Union because it disagreed with a federal law. The Second Bank of the United States was seen by westerners and southerners as a tool to make northerners and easterners rich at the expense of the rest of the country. Through force of personality, Jackson got his way in the nullification battle and triumphed again when he vetoed the charter of the national bank. These regional rifts would only get worse over time.

Finally, the westward movement was not only reserved for pioneers. Native Americans were moving west as well – and not because they wanted to. Andrew Jackson had initiated an Indian removal policy that forced all natives to relocate west of the Mississippi River. Indian lands were open to settlers and land speculators. Thus began another sad chapter in the federal government's dealings with Native Americans.

The Jacksonian Era was nothing short of another American Revolution. By 1850, the "common man" demanded his place in politics, the office of the president was invigorated, and the frontier exerted its ever more powerful impact on the American scene. Hated by many, but loved by many more, Andrew Jackson embodied this new American character.

2. The Rise of the Common Man

Growth, expansion and social change rapidly followed the end of the **WAR OF 1812**. Many an enterprising American pushed westward. In the new western states, there was a greater level of equality among the masses than in the former English colonies. Land was readily available. Frontier life required hard work. There was little tolerance for aristocrats afraid to get their hands dirty.

The west led the path by having no property requirements for voting, which the eastern states soon adopted, as well.

The **COMMON MAN** always held a special place in America, but with Jackson, he rose to the top of the American political power system.

In the campaign of 1828, Jackson, known as "**OLD HICKORY**," triumphed over the aristocratic, reclusive and unpopular incumbent **PRESIDENT JOHN QUINCY ADAMS**.

The first six Presidents were from the same mold: wealthy, educated, and from the east. Jackson was a self-made man who declared education an unnecessary requirement for political leadership. Indeed, Jackson launched the era when politicians would desperately try to show how poor they had been.

The **ELECTION OF 1828** was a rematch of the **ELECTION OF 1824** between John Quincy Adams and Jackson. In the earlier election, Jackson received more votes, but with no candidate having a majority, the House of Representatives chose Adams. Four years later the voices of the people were finally heard.

Jackson's inauguration in 1828 seemed to many the embodiment of "**MOB RULE**" by uneducated ruffians. Jackson rode to the White House followed by a swarm of well-wishers who were invited in. Muddy hob-nailed boots trod over new carpets, glassware and crockery were smashed, and chaos generally reigned. After a time, Jackson ordered the punch bowls moved outside to the White House lawn, and the crowd followed. Naturally, Jackson's critics were quick to point to the party as the beginning of the "reign of King Mob."

As a military hero, a frontiersman, and a **POPULIST**, Jackson enchanted the common people and alarmed the political, social and economic elite. A Man of the People would now govern the nation – America did not disintegrate into anarchy.

No one who was at Washington at the time of General Jackson's inauguration is likely to forget that period to the day of his death. To us, who had witnessed the quiet and orderly period of the Adams administration, it seemed as if half the nation had rushed at once into the capital. It was like the inundation of the northern barbarians into Rome, save that the tumultuous tide came in from a different point of the compass. The West and the South seemed to have precipitated themselves upon the North and overwhelmed it. On that memorable occasion you might tell a 'Jackson man' almost as far as you could see him. Their every motion seemed to cry out 'Victory!'

- Arthur J. Stansbury, Jacksonian contemporary

3. A Strong Presidency

Jackson was committed to remaining a **MAN OF THE PEOPLE**, representing and protecting the Common Man. He possessed a commanding presence, a strong will, and a personality that reflected his strength and decisiveness. Jackson had a lot going for him in the view of the electorate. In the War of 1812, he defeated the British at **NEW ORLEANS IN 1815**. He was renowned as an Indian fighter. Jackson's military service had produced a large and influential group of supporters and friends who urged him to seek the Presidency.

The campaign of 1828 was far from clean. Although Jackson and John Quincy Adams removed themselves from the **MUDSLINGING**, their parties waged a dirty campaign. Jackson was aghast to find his opponents labeling his wife Rachel an adulteress. Shortly after the campaign, Rachel passed away. Jackson blamed his political enemies for her death. To deal with his rivals and the general public, Jackson relied on his "**KITCHEN CABINET**," an unofficial group of friends and advisers.

Jackson's "Kitchen Cabinet"

Martin Van Buren	Secretary of State, Later V.P.
John H. Eaton	Secretary of War
Amos Kendall	Auditor of the U.S. Treasury
Major William B. Lewis	Second Auditor of the Treasury
Isaac Hill	U.S. Senator and Editor, <i>New Hampshire Patriot</i>
Francis P. Blair, Sr.	Editor, <i>Washington Globe</i>
Duff Green	Owner, <i>United States Telegraph</i>

The Founders of the nation feared a tyrannical President – they believed that only a strong Congress could best represent the people. Jackson felt that the Congress was not representing the people – that they were acting like an aristocracy. Jackson took the view that only the President could be trusted to stand for the will of the people against the aristocratic Congress. Jackson's weapon was the veto. "**ANDY VETO**" used this power more often than all six previous Presidents combined.

At the same time, Jackson espoused the "**SPOILS SYSTEM**" in awarding government offices. In his view, far too many career politicians walked the streets of Washington. These people had lost touch with the public. Jackson believed in rotation in office. America was best served with clearing out the old officeholders and replacing them with appointees of the winning candidates. This "spoils system" would eventually lead to considerable **CORRUPTION**. To Jackson, rotating the officeholders was simply more democratic.

While he made his share of enemies, Jackson transformed the Office of the President into one of dynamic leadership and initiative. His direct appeal to the people for support was new and has served as a model for strong Presidents to this day.

4. The South Carolina Nullification Controversy

By the late 1820's, the north was becoming increasingly industrialized, and the south was remaining predominately agricultural.

In 1828, Congress passed a high protective tariff that infuriated the southern states because they felt it only benefited the industrialized north. For example, a high **TARIFF** on imports increased the cost of British **TEXTILES**. This tariff benefited American producers of cloth – mostly in the north. But it shrunk English demand for southern raw cotton and increased the final cost of finished goods to American buyers. The southerners looked to Vice President John C. Calhoun from South Carolina for leadership against what they labeled the "**TARIFF OF ABOMINATIONS**."

Calhoun had supported the Tariff of 1816, but he realized that if he were to have a political future in South Carolina, he would need to rethink his position. Some felt that this issue was reason enough for dissolution of the Union. Calhoun argued for a less drastic solution – the doctrine of "**NULLIFICATION**." According to Calhoun, the federal government only existed at the will of the states. Therefore, if a state found a federal law unconstitutional and detrimental to its sovereign interests, it would have the right to "nullify" that law within its borders. Calhoun advanced the position that a state could declare a national law void.

In 1832, Henry Clay pushed through Congress a new tariff bill, with lower rates than the Tariff of

Abominations, but still too high for the southerners. A majority of states-rights proponents had won the South Carolina State House in the recent 1832 election and their reaction was swift. The **SOUTH CAROLINA ORDINANCE OF NULLIFICATION** was enacted into law on November 24, 1832. As far as South Carolina was concerned, there was no tariff. A line had been drawn. Would President Jackson dare to cross it?

Jackson rightly regarded this **STATES-RIGHTS** challenge as so serious that he asked Congress to enact legislation permitting him to use federal troops to enforce federal laws in the face of nullification. Fortunately, an armed confrontation was avoided when Congress, led by the efforts of Henry Clay, revised the tariff with a compromise bill. This permitted the South Carolinians to back down without "losing face."

In retrospect, Jackson's strong, decisive support for the Union was one of the great moments of his Presidency. If nullification had been successful, could secession have been far behind?

5. The War Against the Bank

Jackson's actions with regards to the Second Bank of the United States resulted in his censure by Congress for abuse of power. This cartoon depicts Henry Clay sewing Jackson's mouth shut.

“You are a den of vipers and thieves. I intend to rout you out, and by the eternal God, I will rout you out.”

Andrew Jackson, to a delegation of bankers discussing the recharter of the Second Bank of the United States, 1832

The **SECOND BANK OF THE UNITED STATES** was chartered in 1816 for a term of 20 years. The time limitation reflected the concerns of many in Congress about the concentration of financial power in a private corporation. The Bank of the United States was a depository for federal funds and paid national debts, but it was answerable only to its directors and stockholders and not to the electorate.

The supporters of a central bank were those involved in industrial and commercial ventures. They wanted a strong currency and central control of the economy. The opponents, principally agrarians, were distrustful of the federal government. The critical question – with whom would President Jackson side?

At the time Jackson became President in 1828, the Bank of the United States was ably run by **NICHOLAS BIDDLE**, a Philadelphian. But Biddle was more an astute businessman than politician. His underestimation of the power of a strong and popular President caused his downfall and the demise of the financial institution he commanded.

Jackson had been financially damaged by speculation and a tightening of bank credit early in his business career. He retained a distrust of financial institutions throughout his life. At first, however, Jackson's position on the Bank was not outwardly antagonistic. He was concerned about the Bank's constitutionality and the general soundness of paper money in place of gold and silver ("**HARD MONEY**"). Jackson was also sympathetic to "**SOFT-MONEY**" supporters from the west who wanted access to easy **CREDIT**.

In January 1832, Biddle's supporters in Congress, principally Daniel Webster and Henry Clay, introduced Bank recharter legislation. Even though the charter was not due to expire for four more years, they felt that the current Congress would recharter the Bank. They felt that Jackson would not risk losing votes in Pennsylvania and other commercial states by vetoing it. Jackson reacted by saying to his vice-president, Martin Van Buren, "The Bank is trying to kill me, Sir, but I shall kill it!"

Jackson's opposition to the Bank became almost an obsession. Accompanied by strong attacks against the Bank in the press, Jackson vetoed the **BANK RECHARTER BILL**. Jackson also ordered the federal government's deposits removed from the Bank of the United States and placed in state or "**PET**" **BANKS**. The people were with Jackson, and he was overwhelmingly elected to a second term. Biddle retaliated by making it more difficult for businesses and others to get the money they needed. This caused an economic contraction at the end of 1833 and into 1834. The bank charter expired in 1836.

6. Jackson vs. Clay and Calhoun

Henry Clay was viewed by Jackson as politically untrustworthy, an opportunistic, ambitious and self-aggrandizing man. He believed that Clay would compromise the essentials of American republican democracy to advance his own self-serving objectives. Jackson also developed a political rivalry with his Vice-President, John C. Calhoun. Throughout his term, Jackson waged political and personal war with these men, defeating Clay in the Presidential election of 1832 and leading Calhoun to resign as Vice-President.

Jackson's personal animosity towards Clay seems to have originated in 1819, when Clay denounced Jackson for his unauthorized invasion of **SPANISH WEST FLORIDA** in the previous year. Clay was also instrumental in John Quincy Adams's winning the Presidency from Jackson in 1824, when neither man had a majority of the vote and the election was thrown into the House of Representatives. Adams' appointment of Clay as Secretary of State confirmed Jackson's opinion that the Presidential election has been thrown to Adams as part of a corrupt and unprincipled bargain.



Courtesy of AWL Online

Roads and canals were built to across the nation during the early to mid-1800s. Clay's "American System" would have funded such improvements.

Clay was called **THE GREAT COMPROMISER**, and served in the Congress starting in 1806. He had a grand strategic vision called the American System. This was a federal government initiative to foster national growth through protective tariffs, internal improvements and the Bank of the United States. Clay was unwavering in his support for internal improvements, which primarily meant federally funded roads and canals. Jackson believed the American System to be unconstitutional – could federal funds be used to build roads? He vetoed the **MAYSVILLE ROAD BILL**, Clay's attempt to fund internal improvements. His veto of the Bank Recharter Bill drove the two

further apart.

Jackson's personal animosity for Calhoun seems to have had its origin in the Washington "social scene" of the time. Jackson's feelings were inflamed by the Mrs. Calhoun's treatment of Peggy, wife of Jackson's Secretary of War, **JOHN EATON**. Mrs. Calhoun and other wives and daughters of several cabinet officers refused to attend social gatherings and state dinners to which Mrs. Eaton had been invited because they considered her of a lower social station and gossiped about her private life. Jackson, reminded of how rudely his own wife Rachel was treated, defended Mrs. Eaton.

Many political issues separated Jackson from Calhoun, his Vice President. One was the issue of states rights. Hoping for sympathy from President Jackson, Calhoun and the other states-rights party members sought to trap Jackson into a pro-states-rights public pronouncement at a Jefferson birthday celebration in April 1832. Some of the guests gave toasts which sought to establish a connection between a states-rights view of government and nullification. Finally, Jackson's turn to give a toast came, and he rose and challenged those present, "**OUR FEDERAL UNION – IT MUST BE PRESERVED.**" Calhoun then rose and stated, "The Union – next to our liberty, the most dear!" Jackson had humiliated Calhoun in public. The nullification crisis that would follow served as the last straw. Jackson proved that he was unafraid to stare down his enemies, no matter what position they might hold.

7. The Trail of Tears – The Indian Removals

Over 20,000 Cherokees were forced to march westward along the Trail of Tears. About a quarter of them died along the way.

Not everyone was included in the new Jacksonian Democracy. There was no initiative from Jacksonian Democrats to include women in political life or to combat slavery. But, it was the **NATIVE AMERICAN** who suffered most from Andrew Jackson's vision of America. Jackson, both as a military leader and as President, pursued a policy of removing **INDIAN TRIBES** from their **ANCESTRAL LANDS**. This relocation would make room for **SETTLERS** and often for **SPECULATORS** who made large profits from the purchase and sale of land.



According to legend, a Cherokee rose, the state flower of Georgia, grew in every spot a tear fell on the Trail of Tears. Today the flowers grow along many of the trails that the Native Americans took West.

Indian policy caused the President little political trouble because his primary supporters were from the southern and western states and generally favored a plan to remove all the Indian tribes to lands west of the Mississippi River. While Jackson and other politicians put a very positive and favorable spin on Indian removal in their speeches, the removals were in fact often brutal. There was little the Indians could do to defend themselves. In 1832, a group of about a thousand **SAC AND FOX INDIANS** led by **CHIEF BLACK HAWK** returned to Illinois, but militia members easily drove them back across the Mississippi. The Seminole resistance in Florida was more formidable, resulting in a war that began under **CHIEF OSCEOLA** and lasted into the 1840s.

The **CHEROKEES** of Georgia, on the other hand, used legal action to resist. The Cherokee people were by no means frontier savages. By the 1830s they developed their own written language, printed newspapers and elected leaders to representative government. When the government of Georgia refused to recognize their

autonomy and threatened to seize their lands, the Cherokees took their case to the U.S. Supreme Court and won a favorable decision. John Marshall's opinion for the Court majority in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* was essentially that Georgia had no jurisdiction over the Cherokees and no claim to their lands. But Georgia officials simply ignored the decision, and President Jackson refused to enforce it. Jackson was furious and personally affronted by the Marshall ruling, stating, "Mr. Marshall has made his decision. Now let him enforce it!"

Finally, federal troops came to Georgia to remove the tribes forcibly. As early as 1831, the army began to push the Choctaws off their lands to march to Oklahoma. In 1835, some Cherokee leaders agreed to accept western land and payment in exchange for relocation. With this agreement, the **TREATY OF NEW ECHOTA**, Jackson had the green light to order Cherokee removal. Other Cherokees, under the leadership of **CHIEF JOHN ROSS**, resisted until the bitter end. About 20,000 Cherokees were marched westward at gunpoint on the infamous **TRAIL OF TEARS**. Nearly a quarter perished on the way, with the remainder left to seek survival in a completely foreign land. The tribe became hopelessly divided as the followers of Ross murdered those who signed the Treaty of New Echota.

The Trail of Tears is the most sorrowful legacy of the Jacksonian Era.