

# 10

## CHAPTER

# A Democratic Revolution 1800–1844

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Europeans who visited the United States in the 1830s mostly praised its republican society but not its political parties and politicians. “The gentlemen spit, talk of elections and the price of produce, and spit again,” Frances Trollope reported in *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832). In her view, American politics was the sport of self-serving party politicians who reeked of “whiskey and onions.” Other Europeans lamented the low intellectual level of American political debate. The “clap-trap of praise and pathos” from a Massachusetts politician “deeply disgusted” Harriet Martineau, while the shallow arguments advanced by the inept “farmers, shopkeepers, and country lawyers” who sat in the New York assembly astonished Basil Hall.

The negative verdict was nearly unanimous. “The most able men in the United States are very rarely placed at the head of affairs,” French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville concluded in *Democracy in America* (1835). The reason, said Tocqueville, lay in the character of democracy itself. Most citizens ignored important policy issues, jealously refused to elect their intellectual superiors, and listened in awe to “the clamor of a mountebank [a charismatic fraud] who knows the secret of stimulating their tastes.”

These Europeans were witnessing the American Democratic Revolution. Before 1815, men of ability had sat in the seats of government, and the prevailing ideology had been republicanism, or rule by “men of TALENTS and VIRTUE,” as a newspaper put it. Many of those leaders feared popular rule, so they wrote constitutions with Bills of Rights, bicameral legislatures, and independent judiciaries, and they censured overambitious men who campaigned for public office. But history took a different course. By the 1820s and 1830s, the watchwords were *democracy* and *party politics*, a system run by men who avidly sought office and rallied supporters through newspapers, broadsides, and great public processions. Politics became a sport—a competitive contest for the votes of ordinary men. “That the majority should govern was a fundamental maxim in all free governments,” declared Martin Van Buren, the most talented of the new breed of professional politicians. A republican-minded Virginian condemned Van Buren as “too great an intriguer,” but by encouraging ordinary Americans to burn with “election fever” and support party principles, he and other politicians redefined the meaning of democratic government and made it work.

### IDENTIFY THE BIG IDEA

What were the main features of the Democratic Revolution, and what role did Andrew Jackson play in its outcome?



**The Politics of Democracy** As ordinary American men asserted a claim to a voice in government affairs, politicians catered to their preferences and prejudices. Aspiring candidates took their messages to voters, in rural hamlets as well as large towns. This detail from George Caleb Bingham's *Stump Speaking* (1855) shows a swanky, tail-coated politician on an improvised stage seeking the votes of an audience of well-dressed gentlemen and local farmers—identified by their broad-brimmed hats and casual attire.

Private Collection/The Bridgeman Art Library.

## The Rise of Popular Politics, 1810–1828

Expansion of the **franchise** (the right to vote) dramatically symbolized the Democratic Revolution. By the 1830s, most states allowed nearly all white men to vote. Nowhere else in the world did ordinary farmers and wage earners exercise such political influence; in England, the Reform Bill of 1832 extended the vote to only 600,000 out of 6 million men — a mere 10 percent. Equally important, political parties provided voters with the means to express their preferences.

### The Decline of the Notables and the Rise of Parties

The American Revolution weakened the elite-run society of the colonial era but did not overthrow it. Only two states — Pennsylvania and Vermont — gave the vote to all male taxpayers, and many families of low rank continued to defer to their social “betters.” Consequently, wealthy **notables** — northern landlords, slave-owning planters, and seaport merchants — dominated the political system in the new republic. And rightly so, said John Jay, the first chief justice of the Supreme Court: “Those who own the country are the most fit persons to participate in the government of it.” Jay and other notables managed local elections by building up an “interest”: lending money to small farmers, giving business to storekeepers, and treating their tenants to rum. An outlay of \$20 for refreshments, remarked one poll watcher, “may produce about 100 votes.” This gentry-dominated system kept men who lacked wealth and powerful family connections from seeking office.

**The Rise of Democracy** To expand the suffrage, Maryland reformers in the 1810s invoked the equal-rights rhetoric of republicanism. They charged that property qualifications for voting were a “tyranny” because they endowed “one class of men with privileges which are denied to another.” To defuse such arguments and deter migration to the West, legislators in Maryland and other seaboard states grudgingly

accepted a broader franchise and its democratic results. The new voters often rejected candidates who wore “top boots, breeches, and shoe buckles,” their hair in “powder and queues.” Instead,

they elected men who dressed simply and endorsed popular rule.

Smallholding farmers and ambitious laborers in the Midwest and Southwest likewise challenged the old hierarchical order. In Ohio, a traveler reported, “no white man or woman will bear being called a servant.” The constitutions of the new states of Indiana (1816), Illinois (1818), and Alabama (1819) prescribed a broad male franchise, and voters usually elected middling men to local and state offices. A well-to-do migrant in Illinois was surprised to learn that the man who plowed his fields “was a colonel of militia, and a member of the legislature.” Once in public office, men from modest backgrounds restricted imprisonment for debt, kept taxes low, and allowed farmers to claim squatters’ rights to unoccupied land.

By the mid-1820s, many state legislatures had given the vote to all white men or to all men who paid taxes or served in the militia. Only a few — North Carolina, Virginia, and Rhode Island — still required the possession of freehold property. Equally significant, between 1818 and 1821, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York wrote more democratic constitutions that reapportioned legislative districts on the basis of population and mandated the popular election (rather than the appointment) of judges and justices of the peace.

Democratic politics was contentious and, because it attracted ambitious men, often corrupt. Powerful entrepreneurs and speculators — both notables and self-made men — demanded government assistance and paid bribes to get it. Speculators won land grants by paying off the members of important committees, and bankers distributed shares of stock to key legislators. When the Seventh Ward Bank of New York City received a legislative charter in 1833, the bank’s officials set aside one-third of the 3,700 shares of stock for themselves and their friends and almost two-thirds for state legislators and bureaucrats, leaving just 40 shares for public sale (*America Compared*, p. 317).

More political disputes broke out when religious reformers sought laws to enforce the cultural agenda of the Benevolent Empire. In Utica, New York, evangelical Presbyterians insisted upon a town ordinance restricting Sunday entertainment. In response, a member of the local Universalist church — a freethinking Protestant denomination — denounced the measure as coercive and called for “Religious Liberty.”

**Parties Take Command** The appearance of political parties encouraged such debates over government policy. Revolutionary-era Americans had condemned political “factions” as antirepublican, and the new state

#### IDENTIFY CAUSES

What was the relationship between the growth of democracy and the emergence of political parties?

# AMERICA COMPARED

## Alexis de Tocqueville Letter to Louis de Kergorlay, June 29, 1831

In 1831, the French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) came to the United States to report on its innovative penal system. Instead, he produced a brilliant analysis of the new republican society and politics, *Democracy in America* (1835, 1840). This letter to a French friend reveals his thinking and insights.

Do you know what, in this country's political realm, makes the most vivid impression on me? The effect of laws governing inheritance. . . . The English had exported their laws of primogeniture, according to which the eldest acquired three-quarters of the father's fortune. This resulted in a host of vast territorial domains passing from father to son and wealth remaining in families. My American informants tell me that there was no aristocracy but, instead, a class of great landowners leading a simple, rather intellectual life characterized by its air of good breeding, its manners, and a strong sense of family pride. . . . Since then, inheritance laws have been revised.

Primogeniture gave way to equal division, with almost magical results. Domains split up, passing into other hands. Family spirit disappeared. The aristocratic bias that marked the republic's early years was replaced by a democratic thrust of irresistible force. . . . I've seen several members of these old families. . . . They regret the loss of everything aristocratic: patronage, family pride, high tone. . . .

There can be no doubt that the inheritance law is responsible in some considerable measure for this complete triumph of democratic principles. The Americans . . . agree that "it has made us what we are, it is the foundation of our republic." . . .

When I apply these ideas to France, I cannot resist the thought that Louis XVIII's charter [of 1814 sought to restore the pre-Revolutionary regime by creating] . . . aristocratic institutions in political law, but [by mandating equality before the law and retaining the Revolutionary-era inheritance laws giving all children, irrespective of sex, an equal share of the parental estate] within the domain of civil law gave shelter to a democratic principle

and national constitutions made no mention of political parties. However, as the power of notables waned in the 1820s, disciplined political parties appeared in a number of states. Usually they were run by professional politicians, often middle-class lawyers and journalists. One observer called the new parties **political machines** because, like the new power-driven textile looms, they

so vigorous that it was bound before long to destroy the foundations of the edifice it raised. . . . We are moving toward an unrestricted democracy . . . that . . . would not suit France at all. . . . [However,] there is no human power capable of changing the law of inheritance, and with this change our families will disappear, possessions will pass into other hands, wealth will be increasingly equalized, the upper class will melt into the middle, the latter will become immense and shape everything to its level. . . .

What I see in America leaves me doubting that government by the multitude, even under the most favorable circumstances — and they exist here — is a good thing. There is general agreement that in the early days of the republic, statesmen and members of the two legislative houses were much more distinguished than they are today. They almost all belonged to that class of landowners I mentioned above. The populace no longer chooses with such a sure hand. It generally favors those who flatter its passions and descend to its level.

Source: From *Letters from America: Alexis de Tocqueville*, edited, translated, and with an introduction by Frederick Brown, Yale University Press, 2010. Copyright © 2010 by Frederick Brown. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

### QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to Tocqueville, what is the legal basis of American social equality and political democracy? What is the comparable situation in France?
2. Why does Tocqueville doubt that democratic rule is a good thing, even in the United States, and "would not suit France at all"?

efficiently wove together the interests of diverse social and economic groups.

Martin Van Buren of New York was the chief architect of the emerging system of party government. The ambitious son of a Jeffersonian tavern keeper, Van Buren grew up in the landlord-dominated society of the Hudson River Valley. To get training as a lawyer, he



### Martin Van Buren

Martin Van Buren's skills as a lawyer and a politician won him many admirers, as did his personal charm, sharp intellect, and imperturbable composure. "Little Van" — a mere 5 feet 6 inches in height — had almost as many detractors. Davy Crockett, Kentucky frontiersman, land speculator, and congressman, labeled him "an artful, cunning, intriguing, selfish lawyer," concerned only with "office and money." In truth, Van Buren was a complex man, a middle-class lawyer with republican values and aristocratic tastes who nonetheless created a democratic political party. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution/Art Resource, NY.

relied on the Van Ness clan, a powerful local gentry family. Then, determined not to become their dependent "tool," Van Buren repudiated their tutelage and set out to create a political order based on party identity, not family connections. In justifying party governments, Van Buren rejected the traditional republican belief that political factions were dangerous and claimed that the opposite was true: "All men of sense know that political parties are inseparable from free government," because they checked an elected official's inherent "disposition to abuse power."



To see a longer excerpt of Martin Van Buren's autobiography, along with other primary sources from this period, see *Sources for America's History*.

Between 1817 and 1821 in New York, Van Buren turned his "Bucktail" supporters (who wore a deer's tail on their hats) into the first statewide political machine. He purchased a newspaper, the *Albany Argus*, and used it to promote his policies and get out the vote. Patronage was an even more important tool. When Van Buren's Bucktails won control of the New York legislature in 1821, they acquired the power to appoint some six thousand of their friends to positions in New York's legal bureaucracy of judges, justices of the peace, sheriffs, deed commissioners, and coroners. Critics called this ruthless distribution of offices a **spoils system**, but Van Buren argued it was fair, operating "sometimes in favour of one party, and sometimes of another." Party government was thoroughly republican, he added, because it reflected the preferences of a majority of the citizenry. To ensure the passage of the party's legislative program, Van Buren insisted on disciplined voting as determined by a **caucus**, a meeting of party leaders. On one crucial occasion, the "Little Magician" — a nickname reflecting Van Buren's short stature and political dexterity — honored seventeen New York legislators for sacrificing "individual preferences for the general good" of the party.

## The Election of 1824

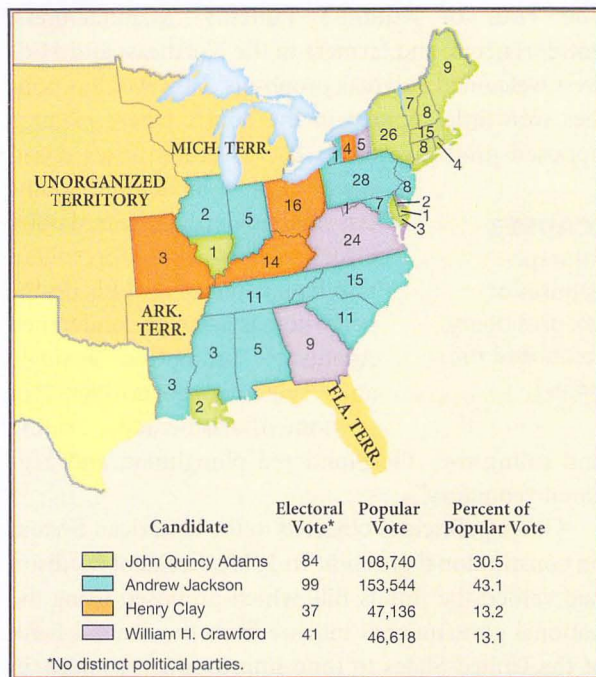
The advance of political democracy in the states undermined the traditional notable-dominated system of national politics. After the War of 1812, the aristocratic Federalist Party virtually disappeared, and the Republican Party splintered into competing factions (Chapter 7). As the election of 1824 approached, five Republican candidates campaigned for the presidency. Three were veterans of President James Monroe's cabinet: Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, the son of former president John Adams; Secretary of War John C. Calhoun; and Secretary of the Treasury William H. Crawford. The other candidates were Henry Clay of Kentucky, the hard-drinking, dynamic Speaker of the House of Representatives; and General Andrew Jackson, now a senator from Tennessee. When the Republican caucus in Congress selected Crawford as the party's official nominee, the other candidates took their case to the voters. Thanks to democratic reforms, eighteen of the twenty-four states required popular elections (rather than a vote of the state legislature) to choose their representatives to the electoral college.

Each candidate had strengths. Thanks to his diplomatic successes as secretary of state, John Quincy

Adams enjoyed national recognition; and his family's prestige in Massachusetts ensured him the electoral votes of New England. Henry Clay based his candidacy on the **American System**, his integrated mercantilist program of national economic development similar to the Commonwealth System of the state governments. Clay wanted to strengthen the Second Bank of the United States, raise tariffs, and use tariff revenues to finance **internal improvements**, that is, public works such as roads and canals. His nationalistic program won praise in the West, which needed better transportation, but elicited sharp criticism in the South, which relied on rivers to market its cotton and had few manufacturing industries to protect. William Crawford of Georgia, an ideological heir of Thomas Jefferson, denounced Clay's American System as a scheme to "consolidate" political power in Washington. Recognizing Crawford's appeal in the South, John C. Calhoun of South Carolina withdrew from the race and endorsed Andrew Jackson.

As the hero of the Battle of New Orleans, Jackson benefitted from the surge of patriotism after the War of 1812. Born in the Carolina backcountry, Jackson settled in Nashville, Tennessee, where he formed ties to influential families through marriage and a career as an attorney and a slave-owning cotton planter. His rise from common origins symbolized the new democratic age, and his reputation as a "plain solid republican" attracted voters in all regions. Still, Jackson's strong showing in the electoral college surprised most political leaders. The Tennessee senator received 99 electoral votes; Adams garnered 84 votes; Crawford, struck down by a stroke during the campaign, won 41; and Clay finished with 37 (Map 10.1).

Because no candidate received an absolute majority, the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution (ratified in 1804) set the rules: the House of Representatives would choose the president from among the three highest vote-getters. This procedure hurt Jackson because many congressmen feared that the rough-hewn "military chieftain" might become a tyrant. Excluded from the race, Henry Clay used his influence as Speaker to thwart Jackson's election. Clay assembled a coalition of representatives from New England and the Ohio River Valley that voted Adams into the presidency in 1825. Adams showed his gratitude by appointing Clay his secretary of state, the traditional stepping-stone to the presidency. Clay's appointment was politically fatal for both men: Jackson's supporters accused Clay and Adams of making a **corrupt bargain**, and they vowed to oppose Adams's policies and to prevent Clay's rise to the presidency.



MAP 10.1

### The Presidential Election of 1824

Regional voting was the dominant pattern in 1824. John Quincy Adams captured every electoral vote in New England and most of those in New York; Henry Clay carried Ohio and Kentucky, the most populous trans-Appalachian states; and William Crawford took the southern states of Virginia and Georgia. Only Andrew Jackson claimed a national constituency, winning Pennsylvania and New Jersey in the East, Indiana and most of Illinois in the Midwest, and much of the South. Only 356,000 Americans voted, about 27 percent of the eligible electorate.

## The Last Notable President: John Quincy Adams

As president, Adams called for bold national action. "The moral purpose of the Creator," he told Congress, was to use the president to "improve the conditions of himself and his fellow men." Adams called for the establishment of a national university in Washington, scientific explorations in the Far West, and a uniform standard of weights and measures. Most important, he endorsed Henry Clay's American System and its three key elements: protective tariffs to stimulate manufacturing, federally subsidized roads and canals to facilitate commerce, and a national bank to control credit and provide a uniform currency.

### UNDERSTAND POINTS OF VIEW

Why did Jacksonians consider the political deal between Adams and Clay "corrupt"?

**The Fate of Adams's Policies** Manufacturers, entrepreneurs, and farmers in the Northeast and Midwest welcomed Adams's proposals. However, his policies won little support in the South, where planters opposed protective tariffs because these taxes raised

the price of manufactures. Southern smallholders also feared powerful banks that could force them into bankruptcy. From his deathbed, Thomas Jefferson condemned Adams for promoting “a single and splendid government of [a monied] aristocracy . . . riding

and ruling over the plundered ploughman and beggared yeomanry.”

Other politicians objected to the American System on constitutional grounds. In 1817, President Madison had vetoed the Bonus Bill, which proposed using the national government's income from the Second Bank of the United States to fund improvement projects in the states. Such projects, Madison argued, were the sole responsibility of the states, a sentiment shared by the Republican followers of Thomas Jefferson. In 1824, Martin Van Buren likewise declared his allegiance to the constitutional “doctrines of the Jefferson School” and his opposition to “**consolidated government**,” a powerful and potentially oppressive national administration. Now a member of the U.S. Senate, Van Buren helped to defeat most of Adams's proposed subsidies for roads and canals.

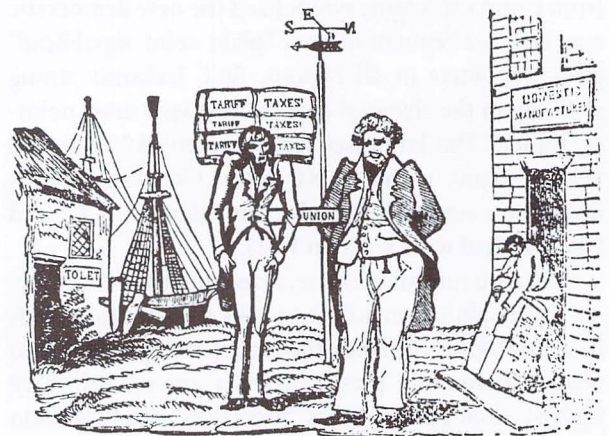
**The Tariff Battle** The major battle of the Adams administration came over tariffs. The Tariff of 1816 had placed relatively high duties on imports of cheap English cotton cloth, allowing New England textile producers to control that segment of the market. In 1824, Adams and Clay secured a new tariff that protected New England and Pennsylvania manufacturers from more expensive woolen and cotton textiles and also English iron goods. Without these tariffs, British imports would have dominated the market and significantly inhibited American industrial development (Chapter 9, *America Compared*, p. 289).

Recognizing the appeal of tariffs, Van Buren and his Jacksonian allies hopped on the bandwagon. By increasing duties on wool, hemp, and other imported raw materials, they hoped to win the support of farmers in New York, Ohio, and Kentucky for Jackson's presidential candidacy in 1828. The tariff had become a political weapon. “I fear this tariff thing,” remarked Thomas Cooper, the president of the College of South

Carolina and an advocate of free trade. “[B]y some strange mechanical contrivance [it has become] . . . a machine for manufacturing Presidents, instead of broadcloths, and bed blankets.” Disregarding southern protests, northern Jacksonians joined with supporters of Adams and Clay to enact the Tariff of 1828, which raised duties significantly on raw materials, textiles, and iron goods.

The new tariff enraged the South, which produced the world's cheapest raw cotton and did not need to protect its main industry. Moreover, the tariff cost southern planters about \$100 million a year. Planters had to buy either higher-cost American textiles and iron goods, thus enriching northeastern businesses and workers, or highly dutied British imports, thus paying the expenses of the national government. The new tariff was “little less than legalized pillage,” an Alabama legislator declared, calling it a **Tariff of Abominations**. Ignoring the Jacksonians' support for the Tariff of 1828, most southerners heaped blame on President Adams.

Southern governments also criticized Adams's Indian policy. A deeply moral man, the president supported the treaty-guaranteed land rights of Native



A CARTOON COMPARING CONDITIONS UNDER FREE TRADE AND PROTECTIVE TARIFF

From “*The United States Weekly Telegram*,” November 5, 1832.

### The “Tariff of Abominations”

Political cartoons enjoyed wide use in eighteenth-century England and became popular in the United States during the political battles of the First Party System (1794–1815). By the 1820s, American newspapers, the mouthpiece of political parties, published cartoons daily. This cartoon attacks the tariffs of 1828 and 1832 as hostile to the prosperity of the South. The gaunt figure on the left represents a southern planter, starved by high tariff duties, while the northern textile manufacturer has grown stout feasting on the bounty of protectionism. © Bettmann/Corbis.

### EXPLAIN CAUSES

What were the successes and failures of John Adams's presidency, and what accounted for those outcomes?

Americans against expansion-minded whites. In 1825, U.S. commissioners had secured a treaty from one faction of Creeks ceding its lands in Georgia to the United States for eventual sale to the state's citizens. When the Creek National Council repudiated the treaty, claiming that it was fraudulent, Adams called for new negotiations. In response, Georgia governor George M. Troup attacked the president as a “public enemy . . . the unblushing ally of the savages.” Mobilizing Georgia's congressional delegation, Troup persuaded Congress to extinguish the Creeks' land titles, forcing most Creeks to leave the state.

Elsewhere, Adams's primary weakness was his out-of-date political style. The last notable to serve in the White House, he acted the part: aloof, inflexible, and paternalistic. When Congress rejected his activist economic policies, Adams accused its members of following the whims of public opinion and told them not to be enfeebled “by the will of our constituents.” Ignoring his waning popularity, the president refused to dismiss hostile federal bureaucrats or to award offices to his supporters. Rather than “run” for reelection in 1828, Adams “stood” for it, telling friends, “If my country wants my services, she must ask for them.”

## “The Democracy” and the Election of 1828

Martin Van Buren and the politicians handling Andrew Jackson's campaign for the presidency had no reservations about running for office. To put Jackson in the White House, Van Buren revived the political coalition created by Thomas Jefferson, championing policies that appealed to both southern planters and northern farmers and artisans, the “plain Republicans of the North.” John C. Calhoun, Jackson's running mate, brought his South Carolina allies into Van Buren's party, and Jackson's close friends in Tennessee rallied voters throughout the Old Southwest. The Little Magician hoped that a national party would reconcile the diverse “interests” that, as James Madison suggested in “Federalist No. 10” (Chapter 6), inevitably existed in a large republic. Equally important, added Jackson's ally Duff Green, it would put the “anti-slave party in the North . . . to sleep for twenty years to come.”

At Van Buren's direction, the Jacksonians orchestrated a massive publicity campaign. In New York, fifty Democrat-funded newspapers declared their support for Jackson. Elsewhere, Jacksonians used mass meetings, torchlight parades, and barbecues to celebrate the candidate's frontier origin and rise to fame. They

praised “Old Hickory” as a “natural” aristocrat, a self-made man.

The Jacksonians called themselves Democrats or “the Democracy” to convey their egalitarian message. As Thomas Morris told the Ohio legislature, Democrats were fighting for equality: the republic had been corrupted by legislative charters that gave “a few individuals rights and privileges not enjoyed by the citizens at large.” Morris promised that the Democracy would destroy such “artificial distinction.” Jackson himself declared that “equality among the people in the rights conferred by government” was the “great radical principle of freedom.”

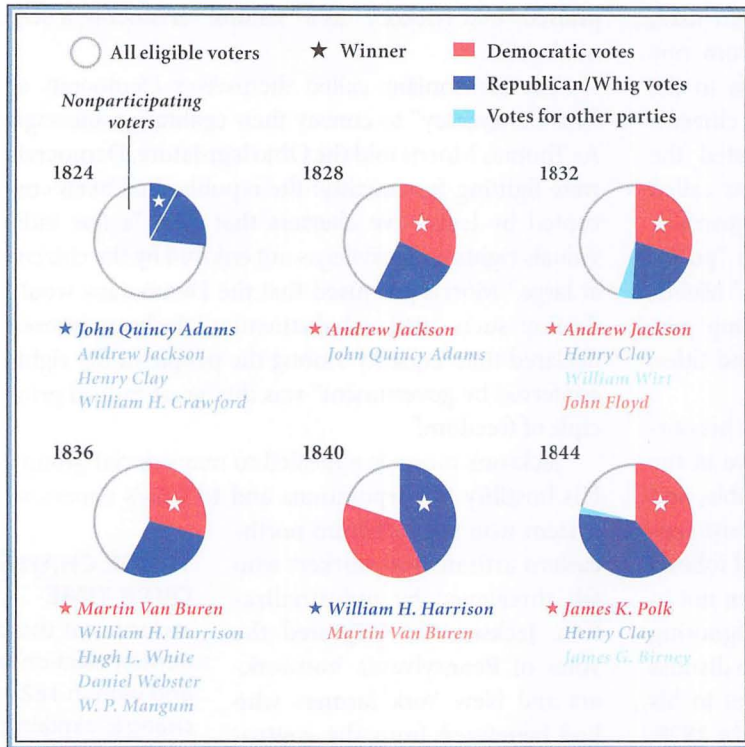
Jackson's message appealed to many social groups. His hostility to corporations and to Clay's American System won support from northeastern artisans and workers who felt threatened by industrialization. Jackson also captured the votes of Pennsylvania ironworkers and New York farmers who had benefitted from the controversial Tariff of Abominations. Yet, by astutely declaring his support for a “judicious” tariff that would balance regional interests, Jackson remained popular in the South. Old Hickory likewise garnered votes in the Southeast and Midwest, where his well-known hostility toward Native Americans reassured white farmers seeking Indian removal.

The Democrats' celebration of popular rule carried Jackson into office. In 1824, about one-quarter of the electorate had voted; in 1828, more than one-half went to the polls, and 56 percent voted for the Tennessee senator (Figure 10.1 and Map 10.2). The first president from a trans-Appalachian state, Jackson cut a dignified figure as he traveled to Washington. He “wore his hair carelessly but not ungracefully arranged,” an English observer noted, “and in spite of his harsh, gaunt features looked like a gentleman and a soldier.” Still, Jackson's popularity and sharp temper frightened men of wealth. Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, a former Federalist and now a corporate lawyer, warned his clients that the new president would “bring a breeze with him. Which way it will blow, I cannot tell [but] . . . my fear is stronger than my hope.” Supreme Court justice Joseph Story shared Webster's apprehensions. Watching an unruly Inauguration Day crowd climb over the elegant White House furniture to congratulate Jackson, Story lamented that “the reign of King ‘Mob’ seemed triumphant.”

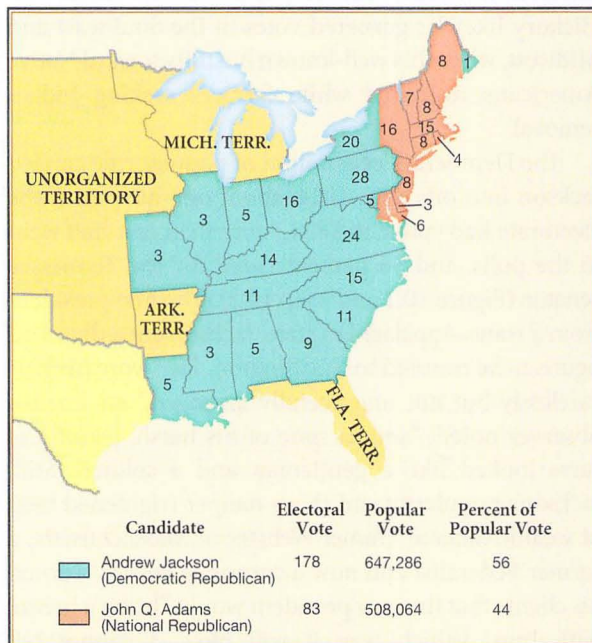
### TRACE CHANGE OVER TIME

Jackson lost the presidential election of 1824 and won in 1828: what changes explain these different outcomes?





**FIGURE 10.1**  
**The Rise of Voter Turnout, 1824–1844**  
 As the shrinking white sections of these pie graphs indicate, the proportion of eligible voters who cast ballots in presidential elections increased dramatically over time. In 1824, 27 percent voted; in 1840 and thereafter, about 80 percent went to the polls. Voter participation soared first in 1828, when Andrew Jackson and John Quincy Adams contested for the White House, and again in 1840, as competition heated up between Democrats and Whigs, who advocated different policies and philosophies of government. Democrats won most of these contests because their policies had greater appeal to ordinary citizens.



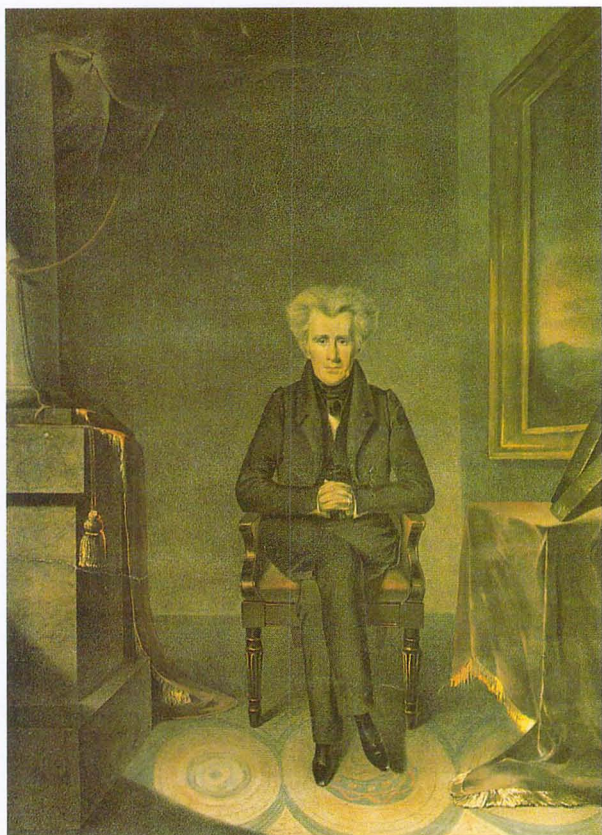
**MAP 10.2**  
**The Presidential Election of 1828**  
 As in 1824, John Quincy Adams carried all of New England and some of the Mid-Atlantic states. However, Andrew Jackson swept the rest of the nation and won a resounding victory in the electoral college. Over 1.1 million American men cast ballots in 1828, more than three times the number who voted in 1824.

## The Jacksonian Presidency, 1829–1837

American-style political democracy—a broad franchise, a disciplined political party, and policies favoring specific interests—ushered Andrew Jackson into office. Jackson used his popular mandate to transform the policies of the national government and the definition of the presidency. During his two terms, he enhanced presidential authority, destroyed the mercantilist and nationalist American System, and established a new ideology of limited government. An Ohio supporter summed up Jackson’s vision: “the Sovereignty of the People, the Rights of the States, and a Light and Simple Government.”

### Jackson’s Agenda: Rotation and Decentralization

To make policy, Jackson relied primarily on his so-called Kitchen Cabinet. Its most influential members were two Kentuckians, Francis Preston Blair, who edited the *Washington Globe*, and Amos Kendall, who wrote Jackson’s speeches; Roger B. Taney of Maryland, who became attorney general, treasury secretary, and



**President Andrew Jackson, 1830**

The new president came to Washington with a well-deserved reputation as an aggressive Indian fighter and unpredictable military leader. In this official portrait, Jackson looks “presidential” — his dress and posture, and the artist’s composition, conveyed an image of a calm, deliberate statesman. Subsequent events would show that Jackson had not lost his hard-edged authoritarian personality. Library of Congress.

then chief justice of the Supreme Court; and Martin Van Buren, whom Jackson named secretary of state.

Following Van Buren’s example in New York, Jackson used patronage to create a disciplined national party. He rejected the idea of “property in office” (that a qualified official held a position permanently) and insisted on a rotation of officeholders when a new administration took power. Rotation would not lessen expertise, Jackson insisted, because public duties were “so plain and simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance.” William L. Marcy, a New York Jacksonian, offered a more realistic explanation for rotation: government jobs were like the spoils of war, and “to the victor belong the spoils of the enemy.” Jackson used those spoils to reward his allies and win backing for his policies.

Jackson’s highest priority was to destroy the American System. He believed that Henry Clay’s system—and all government-sponsored plans for national economic development—were contrary to the Constitution, encouraged “consolidated government,” and, through higher tariffs, increased the burden of taxation. As Clay noted apprehensively, the new president wanted “to cry down old [expansive, Hamiltonian] constructions of the Constitution . . . to make all Jefferson’s opinions the articles of faith of the new Church.” Declaring that the “voice of the people” called for “economy in the expenditures of the Government,” Jackson rejected national subsidies for transportation projects. Invoking constitutional arguments, he vetoed four internal improvement bills in 1830, including an extension of the National Road, arguing that they infringed on “the reserved powers of states.” By eliminating potential expenditures by the federal government, these vetoes also undermined the case for protective tariffs. As Jacksonian senator William Smith of South Carolina pointed out, “[D]estroy internal improvements and you leave no motive for the tariff.”

### IDENTIFY CAUSES

Jackson cut the national budget and the national debt but increased the number of federal employees. How do you explain this paradox?

## The Tariff and Nullification

The Tariff of 1828 had helped Jackson win the presidency, but it saddled him with a major political crisis. There was fierce opposition to high tariffs throughout the South and especially in South Carolina. That state was the only one with an African American majority — 56 percent of the population in 1830 — and its slave owners, like the white sugar planters in the West Indies, feared a black rebellion. Even more, they worried about the legal abolition of slavery. The British Parliament had declared that slavery in its West Indian colonies would end in 1833; South Carolina planters, vividly recalling northern efforts to end slavery in Missouri (Chapter 8), worried that the U.S. Congress would follow the British lead. So they attacked the tariff, both to lower rates and to discourage the use of federal power to attack slavery.

The crisis began in 1832, when high-tariff congressmen ignored southern warnings that they were “endangering the Union” and reenacted the Tariff of Abominations. In response, leading South Carolinians called a state convention, which in November boldly adopted an Ordinance of Nullification declaring the tariffs of 1828 and 1832 to be null and void. The ordinance



### Who Will Be Jackson's Heir?

Elected vice president in 1828, John C. Calhoun hoped to succeed Jackson in the White House. He failed to account for the ambition of Martin Van Buren, who managed Jackson's campaign and claimed the prized office of secretary of state. When Van Buren resigned as secretary in 1831 and Jackson nominated him as minister to Britain, Calhoun sought to destroy his rival by blocking his confirmation in the Senate. The "Little Magician" pounced on this miscalculation, persuading Jackson, already disillusioned by Calhoun's support for nullification, to oust him from the ticket. Van Buren took his place as vice president in 1832, carried into the office—as the cartoonist tells the tale—on Jackson's back, and succeeded to the presidency in 1836. © Collection of the New-York Historical Society.

### UNDERSTAND POINTS OF VIEW

How did South Carolina justify nullification on constitutional grounds?

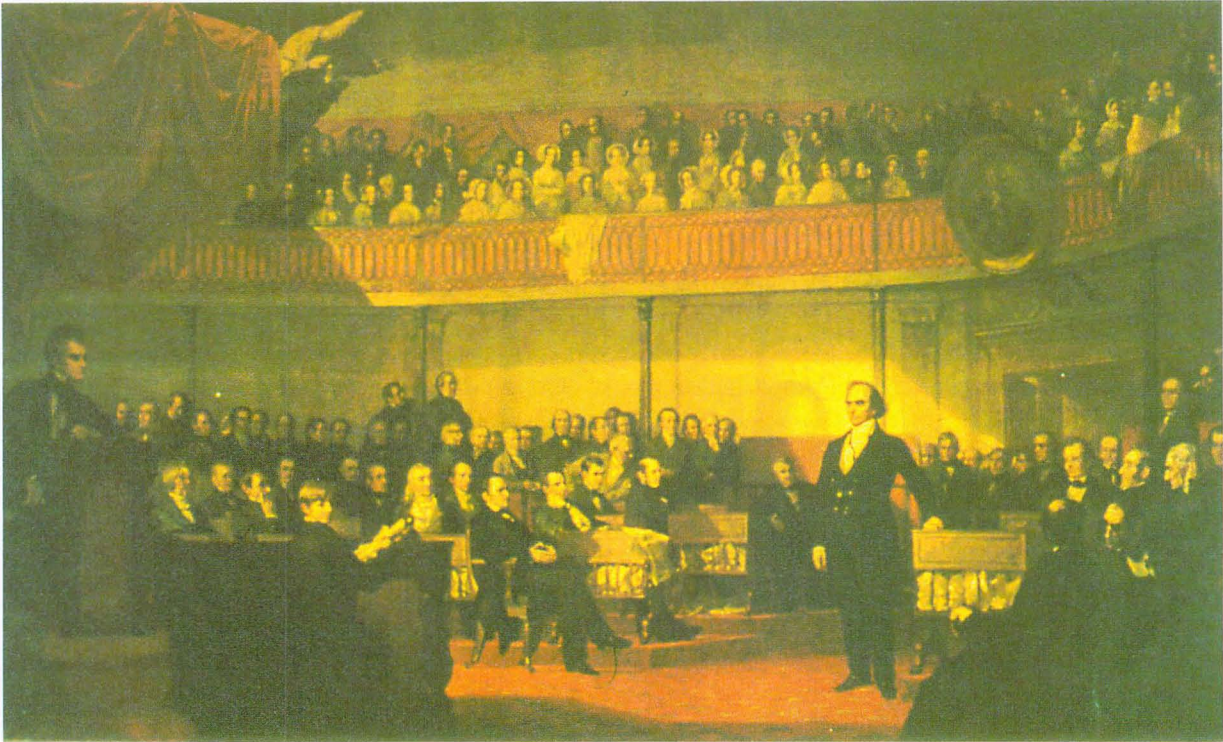
prohibited the collection of those duties in South Carolina after February 1, 1833, and threatened secession if federal officials tried to collect them.

South Carolina's act of **nullification**—the argument that a state has the right to void, within its borders, a law passed by Congress—rested on the constitutional arguments developed in *The South Carolina Exposition and Protest* (1828). Written anonymously by Vice President John C. Calhoun, the *Exposition* gave a localist (or sectional) interpretation to the federal union. Because each state or geographic region had distinct interests, localists argued, protective tariffs and other national legislation that operated unequally on the various states lacked fairness and legitimacy—in fact, they were unconstitutional. An obsessive defender of the interests of southern slave owners, Calhoun exaggerated the frequency and severity of such legislation, declaring, "Constitutional government and the government of a majority are utterly incompatible."

Calhoun's constitutional doctrines reflected the arguments advanced by Jefferson and Madison in the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions of 1798. Those

resolutions asserted that, because state-based conventions had ratified the Constitution, sovereignty lay in the states, not in the people. Beginning from this premise, Calhoun argued that a state convention could declare a congressional law to be void within the state's borders. Replying to this **states' rights** interpretation of the Constitution, which had little support in the text of the document, Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts presented a nationalist interpretation that celebrated popular sovereignty and Congress's responsibility to secure the "general welfare."

Jackson hoped to find a middle path between Webster's strident nationalism and Calhoun's radical doctrine of localist federalism. The Constitution clearly gave the federal government the authority to establish tariffs, and Jackson vowed to enforce it. He declared that South Carolina's Ordinance of Nullification violated the letter of the Constitution and was "destructive of the great object for which it was formed." More pointedly, he warned, "Disunion by armed force is treason." At Jackson's request, Congress in early 1833 passed a military Force Bill, authorizing the president to compel South Carolina's obedience to national laws. Simultaneously, Jackson addressed the South's objections to high import duties with a new tariff act that,



### The Great Webster-Hayne Debate, 1830

The “Tariff of Abominations” sparked one of the great debates in American history. When Senator Robert Y. Hayne of South Carolina (seated in the middle of the picture, with his legs crossed) opposed the federal tariffs by invoking the doctrines of states’ rights and nullification, Daniel Webster rose to the defense of the Union. Speaking for two days to a spellbound Senate, Webster delivered an impassioned oration that celebrated the unity of the American people as the key to their freedom. His parting words—“Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!”—quickly became part of the national memory. “Webster’s Reply to Haynes,” by G.P.A. Healy, City of Boston Art Commission.

over the course of a decade, reduced rates to the modest levels of 1816. Subsequently, export-hungry midwestern wheat farmers joined southern planters in advocating low duties to avoid retaliatory tariffs by foreign nations. “Illinois wants a market for her agricultural products,” declared Senator Sidney Breese in 1846. “[S]he wants the market of the world.”

Having won the political battle by securing a tariff reduction, the South Carolina convention did not press its constitutional stance on nullification. Jackson was satisfied. He had assisted the South economically while upholding the constitutional principle of national authority—a principle that Abraham Lincoln would embrace to defend the Union during the secession crisis of 1861.

## The Bank War

In the midst of the tariff crisis, Jackson faced a major challenge from politicians who supported the **Second Bank of the United States**. Founded in Philadelphia in

1816 (Chapter 7), the bank was privately managed and operated under a twenty-year charter from the federal government, which owned 20 percent of its stock. The bank’s most important role was to stabilize the nation’s money supply, which consisted primarily of notes and bills of credit—in effect, paper money—issued by state-chartered banks. Those banks promised to redeem the notes on demand with “hard” money (or “specie”)—that is, gold or silver coins minted by the U.S. or foreign governments—but there were few coins in circulation. By collecting those notes and regularly demanding specie, the Second Bank kept the state banks from issuing too much paper money and depreciating its value.

This cautious monetary policy pleased creditors—the bankers and entrepreneurs in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, whose capital investments were underwriting economic development. However, expansion-minded bankers, including friends of Jackson’s in Nashville, demanded an end to central oversight. Moreover, many ordinary Americans worried that the

Second Bank would force weak banks to close, leaving them holding worthless paper notes. Many politicians resented the arrogance of the bank's president, Nicholas Biddle. "As to mere power," Biddle boasted, "I have been for years in the daily exercise of more personal authority than any President habitually enjoys."

**Jackson's Bank Veto** Although the Second Bank had many enemies, a political miscalculation by its friends brought its downfall. In 1832, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster persuaded Biddle to seek an early extension of the bank's charter (which still had four years to run). They had the votes in Congress to enact the required legislation and hoped to lure Jackson into a veto that would split the Democrats just before the 1832 elections.

Jackson turned the tables on Clay and Webster. He vetoed the rechartering bill with a masterful message that blended constitutional arguments with class rhetoric and patriotic fervor. Adopting the position taken by Thomas Jefferson in 1793, Jackson declared that Congress had no constitutional authority to charter a national bank. He condemned the bank as "subversive of the rights of the States," "dangerous to the liberties of the people," and a privileged monopoly that promoted "the advancement of the few at the expense of . . . farmers, mechanics, and laborers." Finally, the president noted that British aristocrats owned much of the bank's stock. Such a powerful institution should be "purely American," Jackson declared with patriotic zeal.

Jackson's attack on the bank carried him to victory in 1832. Old Hickory and Martin Van Buren, his new running mate, overwhelmed Henry Clay, who headed the National Republican ticket, by 219 to 49 electoral votes. Jackson's most fervent supporters were eastern workers and western farmers, who blamed the Second Bank for high urban prices and stagnant farm income. "All the flourishing cities of the West are mortgaged to this money power," charged Senator Thomas Hart Benton, a Jacksonian from Missouri. Still, many of Jackson's supporters had prospered during a decade of strong economic growth. Thousands of middle-class Americans—lawyers, clerks, shopkeepers, and artisans—had used the opportunity to rise in the world and cheered Jackson's attack on privileged corporations.

the Treasury Department. Taney promptly transferred the federal government's gold and silver from the Second Bank to various state banks, which critics labeled Jackson's "pet banks." To justify this abrupt (and probably illegal) transfer, Jackson declared that his reelection represented "the decision of the people against the bank" and gave him a mandate to destroy it. This sweeping claim of presidential power was new and radical. Never before had a president claimed that victory at the polls allowed him to pursue a controversial policy or to act independently of Congress (*American Voices*, p. 328).

The "bank war" escalated into an all-out political battle. In March 1834, Jackson's opponents in the Senate passed a resolution composed by Henry Clay that censured the president and warned of executive tyranny: "We are in the midst of a revolution, hitherto bloodless, but rapidly descending towards a total change of the pure republican character of the Government, and the concentration of all power in the hands of one man." Clay's charges and Congress's censure did not deter Jackson. "The Bank is trying to kill me but I will kill it," he vowed to Van Buren. And so he did. When the Second Bank's national charter expired in 1836, Jackson prevented its renewal.

Jackson had destroyed both national banking—the handiwork of Alexander Hamilton—and the American System of protective tariffs and public works created by Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams. The result was a profound check on economic activism and innovative policymaking by the national government. "All is gone," observed a Washington newspaper correspondent. "All is gone, which the General Government was instituted to create and preserve."

## Indian Removal

The status of Native American peoples posed an equally complex political problem. By the late 1820s, white voices throughout the South and Midwest demanded the resettlement of Indian peoples west of the Mississippi River. Many whites who were sympathetic to Native Americans also favored resettlement. Removal to the West seemed the only way to protect Indians from alcoholism, financial exploitation, and cultural decline.

However, most Indians did not want to leave their ancestral lands. For centuries, Cherokees and Creeks had lived in Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama; Chickasaws and Choctaws in Mississippi and Alabama; and Seminoles in Florida. During the War of 1812, Andrew Jackson had forced the Creeks to relinquish millions of

### PLACE EVENTS IN CONTEXT

Why—and how—did Jackson destroy the Second National Bank?

**The Bank Destroyed** Early in 1833, Jackson met their wishes by appointing Roger B. Taney, a strong opponent of corporate privilege, as head of

acres, but Indian tribes still controlled vast tracts and wanted to keep them.

**Cherokee Resistance** But on what terms? Some Indians had adopted white ways. An 1825 census revealed that various Cherokees owned 33 gristmills, 13 sawmills, 2,400 spinning wheels, 760 looms, and 2,900 plows. Many of these owners were mixed-race, the offspring of white traders and Indian women. They had grown up in a bicultural world, knew the political and economic ways of whites, and often favored assimilation into white society. Indeed, some of these mixed-race people were indistinguishable from southern planters. At his death in 1809, Georgia Cherokee James Vann owned one hundred black slaves, two trading posts, and a gristmill. Three decades later, forty other mixed-blood Cherokee families each owned ten or more African American workers.

Prominent mixed-race Cherokees believed that integration into American life was the best way to protect their property and the lands of their people. In 1821, Sequoyah, a part-Cherokee silversmith, perfected a system of writing for the Cherokee language; six years later, mixed-race Cherokees devised a new charter of Cherokee government modeled directly on the U.S. Constitution. “You asked us to throw off the hunter and warrior state,” Cherokee John Ridge told a Philadelphia audience in 1832. “We did so. You asked us to form a republican government: We did so. . . . You asked us to learn to read: We did so. You asked us to cast away our idols, and worship your God: We did so.” Full-blood Cherokees, who made up 90 percent of the population, resisted many of these cultural and political innovations but were equally determined to retain their ancestral lands. “We would not receive money for land in which our fathers and friends are buried,” one full-blood chief declared. “We love our land; it is our mother.”

What the Cherokees did or wanted carried no weight with the Georgia legislature. In 1802, Georgia had given up its western land claims in return for a federal promise to extinguish Indian landholdings in the state. Now it demanded fulfillment of that pledge. Having spent his military career fighting Indians and seizing their lands, Andrew Jackson gave full support to Georgia. On assuming the presidency, he withdrew the federal troops that had protected Indian enclaves there and in Alabama and Mississippi. The states, he declared, were sovereign within their borders.

**The Removal Act and Its Aftermath** Jackson then pushed the **Indian Removal Act of 1830** through

Congress over the determined opposition of evangelical Protestant men—and women. To block removal, Catharine Beecher and Lydia Sigourney composed a Ladies Circular, which urged “benevolent ladies” to use “prayers and exertions to avert the calamity of removal.” Women from across the nation flooded Congress with petitions. Nonetheless, Jackson’s bill squeaked through the House of Representatives by a vote of 102 to 97.

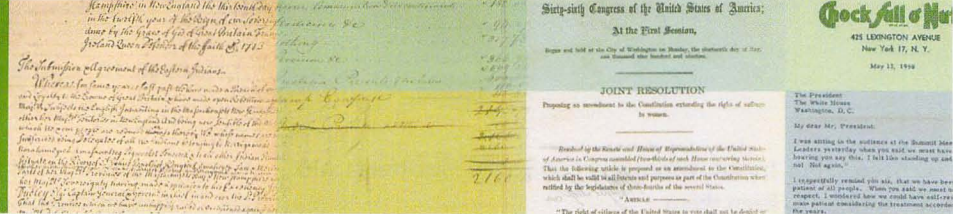
The Removal Act created the Indian Territory on national lands acquired in the Louisiana Purchase and located in present-day Oklahoma and Kansas. It promised money and reserved land to Native American peoples who would give up their ancestral holdings east of the Mississippi River. Government officials promised the Indians that they could live on their new land, “they and all their children, as long as grass grows and water runs.” However, as one Indian leader noted, on the Great Plains “water and timber are scarcely to be seen.” When Chief Black Hawk and his Sauk and Fox



**Blackhawk**

This portrait of Black Hawk (1767–1838), by George Catlin, shows the Indian leader holding his namesake, a black hawk and its feathers. When Congress approved Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Act in 1830, Black Hawk mobilized Sauk and Fox warriors to protect their ancestral lands in Illinois. “It was here, that I was born—and here lie the bones of many friends and relatives,” the aging chief declared. “I . . . never could consent to leave it.” Courtesy Warner Collection of Gulf States Paper Corporation, Tuscaloosa, AL.

## The Character and Goals of Andrew Jackson



From the start of his career, Andrew Jackson was a controversial figure. “Hot-tempered,” “Indian-hater,” “military despot,” said his critics, while his friends praised him as a forthright statesman. His contemporary biographer, the journalist James Parton, found him a man of many faces, an enigma. Others thought they understood his personality and policies: James Hamilton, a loyal Jacksonian congressman, recalled Jackson’s volatile temper. Henry Clay, his archrival, warned that Jackson’s quest for power threatened American republicanism, while wealthy New York Whig Philip Hone accused him of inciting class warfare. After talking with dozens of Americans, Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville offered a balanced interpretation of the man and his goals.

James Parton

### Preface to *The Life of Andrew Jackson* (1860)

If any one . . . had asked what I had yet discovered respecting General Jackson, I might have answered thus: “Andrew Jackson, I am given to understand, was a patriot and a traitor. He was one of the greatest of generals, and wholly ignorant of the art of war. . . . The first of statesmen, he never devised, he never framed a measure. He was the most candid of men, and was capable of the profoundest dissimulation. A most law-defying, law-obeying citizen. A stickler for discipline, he never hesitated to disobey his superior. A democratic autocrat. An urbane savage. An atrocious saint.”

James Hamilton Jr.

### Recalling an Event in 1827, as Jackson Campaigns for the Presidency

The steamer *Pocahontas* was chartered by citizens of New Orleans to convey the General and his party from Nashville to that city. She was fitted out in the most sumptuous manner. The party was General and Mrs. Jackson, . . . Governor Samuel Houston, Wm. B. Lewis, Robert Armstrong, and others. . . . The only freight was the General’s cotton-crop. . . .

In the course of the voyage an event occurred, which I repeat, as it is suggestive of [his] character. A steamer of greater speed than ours, going in the same direction, passed us, crossed our bow; then stopped and let us pass her and then passed us again in triumph. This was repeated again and again, until the General, being excited by the offensive course, ordered a rifle to be brought to him; hailed the pilot of the other steamer, and swore that if he did the same thing again he would shoot him.

Philip Hone

### Ruminating in His Diary on the Jacksonians’ Victory in the New York Elections of 1834

I apprehend that Mr. Van Buren [Jackson’s vice president] and his friends have no permanent cause of triumph in their victory. They . . . have mounted a vicious horse, who, taking the bit in his mouth, will run away with [them]. . . . This battle had been fought upon the ground of the poor against the rich, and this unworthy prejudice, this dangerous delusion, has been encouraged by the leaders of the triumphant party, and fanned into a flame by the polluted breath of the hireling press in their employ. . . .

The cry of “Down with the aristocracy!” mingled with the shouts of victory. . . . They have succeeded in raising this dangerous spirit [of the mob], and have gladly availed themselves of its support to accomplish a temporary object; but can they allay it at pleasure? . . . Eighteen thousand men in New York have voted for the high-priest of the party whose professed design is to bring down the property, the talents, the industry, the steady habits of that class which constituted the real strength of the Commonwealth, to the common level of the idle, the worthless, and the unenlightened. Look to it, ye men of respectability in the Jackson party, are ye not afraid of the weapons ye have used in this warfare?

Henry Clay

### Introducing a Senate Resolution Censuring Jackson, December 26, 1833

We are in the midst of a revolution, hitherto bloodless, but rapidly tending toward a total change of the pure republican character of the government, and to the

concentration of all power in the hands of one man. The powers of Congress are paralyzed, except when exerted in conformity with his will, by frequent and an extraordinary exercise of the executive veto, not anticipated by the founders of our Constitution, and not practiced by any of the predecessors of the present chief magistrate. . . .

The judiciary has not been exempt from the prevailing rage for innovation. Decisions of the tribunals, deliberately pronounced, have been contemptuously disregarded. . . . Our Indian relations, coeval with the existence of the government, and recognized and established by numerous laws and treaties, have been subverted. . . . The system of protection of improvement lies crushed beneath the veto. The system of protection of American industry [will soon meet a similar fate]. . . . In a term of eight years, a little more than equal to that which was required to establish our liberties [as an independent republic between 1776 and 1783], the government will have been transformed into an elective monarchy—the worst of all forms of government.

Alexis de Tocqueville

### **Analysis of Jackson in *Democracy in America* (1835)**

We have been told that General Jackson has won battles; that he is an energetic man, prone by nature and habit to the use of force, covetous of power and a despot by inclination.

All this may be true; but the inferences which have been drawn from these truths are very erroneous. It has

been imagined that General Jackson is bent on establishing a dictatorship in America, introducing a military spirit, and giving a degree of influence to the central authority that cannot but be dangerous to provincial [state] liberties. . . .

Far from wishing to extend the Federal power, the President belongs to the party which is desirous of limiting that power to the clear and precise letter of the Constitution and which never puts a construction upon that act favorable to the government of the Union; far from standing forth as the champion of centralization, General Jackson is the agent of the state jealousies; and he was placed in his lofty station by the passions that are most opposed to the central government.

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Sources: James Parton, *The Life of Andrew Jackson. In Three Volumes* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1860), vol. 1, vii–viii; Sean Wilentz, ed., *Major Problems in the Early Republic, 1787–1848* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1991), 374 (Hamilton) and 392–393 (Hone); Calvin Colton, ed., *The Life . . . of Henry Clay*, 6 vols. (New York: A. Barnes, 1857), 576–580; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, abr. by Thomas Bender (New York: Modern Library, 1981), 271–273.

#### **QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS**

1. Was Jackson a “democratic autocrat,” as Parton puts it? Would the authors of the other excerpts agree? Did Jackson instigate class warfare, as Hone suggests?
2. In your judgment, which writer, Clay or Tocqueville, offers the more accurate assessment of Jackson and his policies?
3. Do you agree with Philip Hone’s view that the Jacksonian Democrats mobilized “poor against the rich”? What evidence would support or contradict Hone’s assertion?



**COMPARE AND CONTRAST**

How did the views of Jackson and John Marshall differ regarding the status and rights of Indian peoples?

followers refused to leave rich, well-watered farmland in western Illinois in 1832, Jackson sent troops to expel them by force. Eventually, the U.S. Army pursued Black Hawk into the Wisconsin Territory and, in the brutal eight-hour Bad Axe

Massacre, killed 850 of his 1,000 warriors. Over the next five years, American diplomatic pressure and military power forced seventy Indian peoples to sign treaties and move west of the Mississippi (Map 10.3).

In the meantime, the Cherokees had carried the defense of their lands to the Supreme Court, where

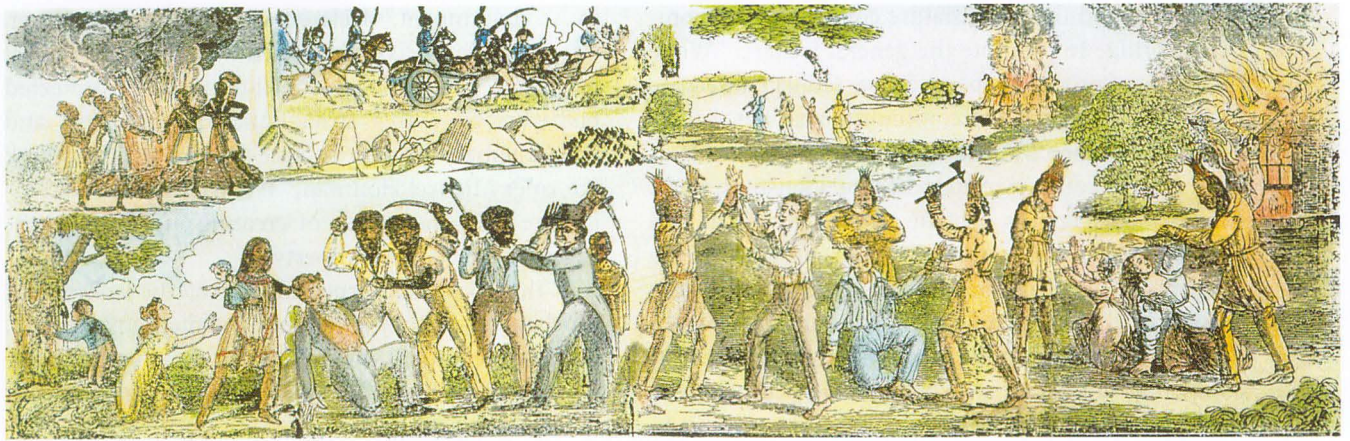
they claimed the status of a “foreign nation.” In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), Chief Justice John Marshall denied that claim and declared that Indian peoples were “domestic dependent nations.” However, in *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), Marshall and the Court sided with the Cherokees against Georgia. Voiding Georgia’s extension of state law over the Cherokees, the Court held that Indian nations were “distinct political communities, having territorial boundaries, within which their authority is exclusive [and is] guaranteed by the United States.”

Instead of guaranteeing the Cherokees’ territory, the U.S. government took it from them. In 1835, American officials and a minority Cherokee faction



**MAP 10.3**  
The Removal of Native Americans, 1820–1846

As white settlers moved west, the U.S. government forced scores of Native American peoples to leave their ancestral lands. Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Act of 1830 formalized this policy. Subsequently, scores of Indian peoples signed treaties that exchanged their lands in the East, Midwest, and Southeast for money and designated reservations in an Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River. When the Sauk, Fox, Cherokees, and Seminoles resisted resettlement, the government used the U.S. Army to enforce the removal policy.



### Raising Public Opinion Against the Seminoles

During the eighteenth century, hundreds of enslaved Africans fled South Carolina and Georgia and found refuge in Spanish Florida, where they lived among and intermarried with the Seminole people. This color engraving from the 1830s—showing red and black Seminoles butchering respectable white families—sought to bolster political support for the removal of the Seminoles to Indian Territory. By the mid-1840s, after a decade of warfare, the U.S. Army had forced 2,500 Seminoles to migrate to Oklahoma. However, another 2,500 Seminoles continued to fight and eventually won a new treaty allowing them to live in Florida. The Granger Collection, New York.

negotiated the Treaty of New Echota, which specified that Cherokees would resettle in Indian Territory. When only 2,000 of 17,000 Cherokees had moved by the May 1838 deadline, President Martin Van Buren ordered General Winfield Scott to enforce the treaty. Scott's army rounded up 14,000 Cherokees (including mixed-race African Cherokees) and marched them 1,200 miles, an arduous journey that became known as the **Trail of Tears**. Along the way, 3,000 Indians died of starvation and exposure. Once in Oklahoma, the Cherokees excluded anyone of “negro or mulatto parentage” from governmental office, thereby affirming that full citizenship in their nation was racially defined. Just as the United States was a “white man's country,” so Indian Territory would be defined as a “red man's country.”

Encouraged by generous gifts of land, the Creeks, Chickasaws, and Choctaws moved west of the Mississippi, leaving the Seminoles in Florida as the only numerically significant Indian people remaining in the Southeast. Government pressure persuaded about half of the Seminoles to migrate to Indian Territory, but families whose ancestors had intermarried with runaway slaves feared the emphasis on “blood purity” there. During the 1840s, they fought a successful guerrilla war against the U.S. Army and retained their lands in central Florida. These Seminoles were the exception: the Jacksonians had forced the removal of most eastern Indian peoples.

### The Jacksonian Impact

Jackson's legacy, like that of every other great president, is complex and rich. On the institutional level, he expanded the authority of the nation's chief executive. As Jackson put it, “The President is the direct representative of the American people.” Assuming that role during the nullification crisis, he upheld national authority by threatening the use of military force, laying the foundation for Lincoln's defense of the Union a generation later. At the same time (and somewhat contradictorily), Jackson curbed the reach of the national government. By undermining Henry Clay's American System of national banking, protective tariffs, and internal improvements, Jackson reinvigorated the Jeffersonian tradition of a limited and frugal central government.

**The Taney Court** Jackson also undermined the constitutional jurisprudence of John Marshall by appointing Roger B. Taney as his successor in 1835. During his long tenure as chief justice (1835–1864), Taney partially reversed the nationalist and vested-property-rights decisions of the Marshall Court and gave constitutional legitimacy to Jackson's policies of states' rights and free enterprise. In the landmark case *Charles River Bridge Co. v. Warren Bridge Co.* (1837), Taney declared that a legislative charter—in this case, to build and operate a toll bridge—did not necessarily bestow a

monopoly, and that a legislature could charter a competing bridge to promote the general welfare: “While the rights of private property are sacredly guarded, we must not forget that the community also has rights.” This decision directly challenged Marshall’s interpretation of the contract clause of the Constitution in *Dartmouth College v. Woodward* (1819), which had stressed the binding nature of public charters and the sanctity of “vested rights” (Chapter 7). By limiting the property claims of existing canal and turnpike companies, Taney’s decision allowed legislatures to charter competing railroads that would provide cheaper and more efficient transportation.

The Taney Court also limited Marshall’s nationalistic interpretation of the commerce clause by enhancing the regulatory role of state governments. For example, in *Mayor of New York v. Miln* (1837), the Taney Court

ruled that New York State could use its “police power” to inspect the health of arriving immigrants. The Court also restored to the states some of the economic powers they had exercised prior to the Constitution of 1787. In *Briscoe v. Bank of Kentucky* (1837), the justices allowed a bank owned by the

state of Kentucky to issue currency, despite the wording of Article 1, Section 10 of the Constitution, which prohibits states from issuing “bills of credit.”

**States Revise Their Constitutions** Inspired by Jackson and Taney, Democrats in the various states mounted their own constitutional revolutions. Between 1830 and 1860, twenty states called conventions that furthered democratic principles by reapportioning state legislatures on the basis of population and giving the vote to all white men. Voters also had more power because the new documents mandated the election, rather than the appointment, of most public officials, including sheriffs, justices of the peace, and judges.

The new constitutions also embodied the principles of **classical liberalism**, or *laissez-faire*, by limiting the government’s role in the economy. (Twentieth-century social-welfare liberalism endorses the opposite principle: that government should intervene in economic and social life.) As president, Jackson had destroyed the American System, and his disciples now attacked the state-based Commonwealth System, which used chartered corporations and state funds to promote economic development. Most Jackson-era constitutions prohibited states from granting special charters to corporations and extending loans and credit guarantees to private businesses. “If there is any danger to be feared

in . . . government,” declared a New Jersey Democrat, “it is the danger of associated wealth, with special privileges.” The revised constitutions also protected taxpayers by setting strict limits on state debt and encouraging judges to enforce them. Said New York reformer Michael Hoffman, “We will not trust the legislature with the power of creating indefinite mortgages on the people’s property.”

“The world is governed too much,” the Jacksonians proclaimed as they embraced a small-government, *laissez-faire* outlook and celebrated the power of ordinary people to make decisions in the voting booth and the marketplace.

## Class, Culture, and the Second Party System

The rise of the Democracy and Jackson’s tumultuous presidency sparked the creation in the mid-1830s of a second national party: the **Whigs**. For the next two decades, Whigs and Democrats competed fiercely for votes and appealed to different cultural groups. Many evangelical Protestants became Whigs, while most Catholic immigrants and traditional Protestants joined the Democrats. By debating issues of economic policy, class power, and moral reform, party politicians offered Americans a choice between competing programs and political leaders. “Of the two great parties,” remarked philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, “[the Democracy] has the best cause . . . for free trade, for wide suffrage, [but the Whig Party] has the best men.”

### The Whig Worldview

The Whig Party arose in 1834, when a group of congressmen contested Andrew Jackson’s policies and his high-handed, “kinglike” conduct. They took the name *Whigs* to identify themselves with the pre-Revolutionary American and British parties — also called Whigs — that had opposed the arbitrary actions of British monarchs. The Whigs accused “King Andrew I” of violating the Constitution by creating a spoils system and undermining elected legislators, whom they saw as the true representatives of the sovereign people. One Whig accused Jackson of ruling in a manner “more absolute than that of any absolute monarchy of Europe.”

Initially, the Whigs consisted of political factions with distinct points of view. However, guided by Senators Webster of Massachusetts, Clay of Kentucky, and Calhoun of South Carolina, they gradually coalesced into a party with a distinctive stance and coherent

### EXPLAIN CONSEQUENCES

How did the Taney Court and the Jacksonian state constitutions alter the American legal and constitutional system?

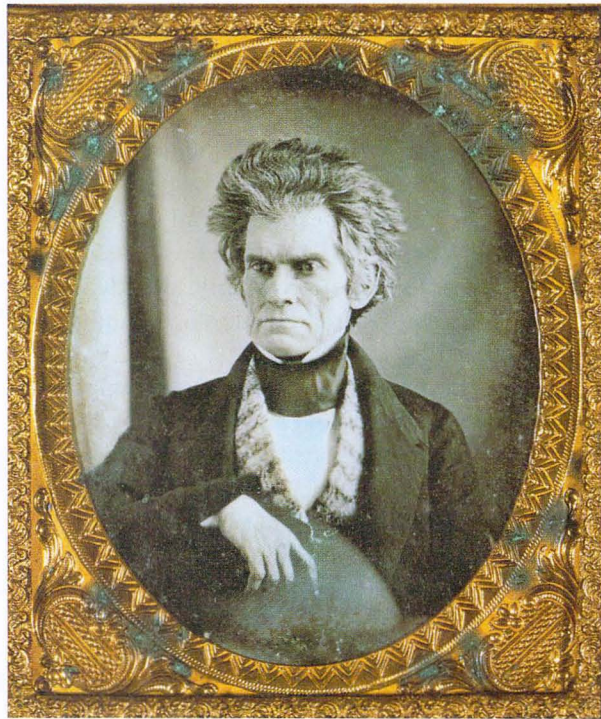
ideology. Like the Federalists of the 1790s, the Whigs wanted a political world dominated by men of ability and wealth; unlike the Federalists, they advocated an elite based on talent, not birth.

The Whigs celebrated the entrepreneur and the enterprising individual: “This is a country of self-made men,” they boasted, pointing to the relative absence of permanent distinctions of class and status among white citizens. Embracing the Industrial Revolution, northern Whigs welcomed the investments of “moneyed capitalists,” which provided workers with jobs and “bread, clothing and homes.” Indeed, Whig congressman Edward Everett championed a “holy alliance” among laborers, owners, and governments and called for a return to Henry Clay’s American System. Many New England and Pennsylvania textile and iron workers shared Everett’s vision because they benefitted directly from protective tariffs.

**Calhoun’s Dissent** Support for the Whigs in the South — less widespread than that in the North — rested on the appeal of specific policies and politicians. Some southern Whigs were wealthy planters who invested in railroads and banks or sold their cotton to New York merchants. But the majority were yeomen whites who resented the power and policies of low-country planters, most of whom were Democrats. In addition, some Virginia and South Carolina Democrats, such as John Tyler, became Whigs because they condemned Andrew Jackson’s crusade against nullification.

Southern Whigs rejected their party’s enthusiasm for high tariffs and social mobility, and John C. Calhoun was their spokesman. Extremely conscious of class divisions in society, Calhoun believed that northern Whigs’ rhetoric of equal opportunity was contradicted not only by slavery, which he considered a fundamental American institution, but also by the wage-labor system of industrial capitalism. “There is and always has been in an advanced state of wealth and civilization a conflict between labor and capital,” Calhoun declared in 1837. He urged slave owners and factory owners to unite against their common foe: the working class of enslaved blacks and propertyless whites.

Most northern Whigs rejected Calhoun’s class-conscious social ideology. “A clear and well-defined line between capital and labor” might fit the slave South or class-ridden Europe, Daniel Webster conceded, but in the North “this distinction grows less and less definite as commerce advances.” Ignoring the ever-increasing numbers of propertyless immigrants and native-born wageworkers, Webster focused on the growing size of the middle class, whose members generally favored Whig candidates. In the election of 1834, the Whigs



**John C. Calhoun (1782–1850)**

This daguerreotype, made close to the time of Calhoun’s death, suggests his emotional intensity and thwarted ambition. The prime advocate of the doctrines of nullification and states’ rights, a founder of the Whig Party, and a steadfast defender of slavery, Calhoun found his lifelong pursuit of the presidency frustrated by Martin Van Buren’s political skills and sectional divisions over tariffs and slavery. © Image courtesy of the Gibbes Museum of Art/Carolina Art Association.

took control of the House of Representatives by appealing to evangelical Protestants and upwardly mobile families — prosperous farmers, small-town merchants, and skilled industrial workers in New England, New York, and the new communities along the Great Lakes.

### COMPARE AND CONTRAST

How did the ideology of the Whigs differ from that of the Jacksonian Democrats?

**Anti-Masons Become Whigs** Many Whig voters in 1834 had previously supported the Anti-Masons, a powerful but short-lived party that formed in the late 1820s. As its name implies, Anti-Masons opposed the Order of Freemasonry. Freemasonry began in Europe as an organization of men seeking moral improvement by promoting the welfare and unity of humanity. Many Masons espoused republicanism, and the Order spread rapidly in America after the Revolution. Its ideology, mysterious symbols, and semisecret character gave the Order an air of exclusivity that attracted ambitious businessmen and political leaders, including George Washington, Henry Clay, and Andrew Jackson. In New

York State alone by the mid-1820s, there were more than 20,000 Masons, organized into 450 local lodges. However, after the kidnapping and murder in 1826 of William Morgan, a New York Mason who had threatened to reveal the Order's secrets, the Freemasons fell into disrepute. Thurlow Weed, a newspaper editor in Rochester, New York, spearheaded an Anti-Masonic Party, which condemned the Order as a secret aristocratic fraternity. The new party quickly ousted Freemasons from local and state offices, and just as quickly ran out of political steam.

Because many Anti-Masons espoused temperance, equality of opportunity, and evangelical morality, they gravitated to the Whig Party. Throughout the Northeast and Midwest, Whig politicians won election by proposing legal curbs on the sale of alcohol and local ordinances that preserved Sunday as a day of worship. The Whigs also secured the votes of farmers, bankers, and shopkeepers, who favored Henry Clay's American System. For these citizens of the growing Midwest, the Whigs' program of government subsidies for roads, canals, and bridges was as important as their moral agenda.

In the election of 1836, the Whig Party faced Martin Van Buren, the architect of the Democratic Party and Jackson's handpicked successor. Like Jackson, Van Buren denounced the American System and warned that its revival would create a "consolidated government." Positioning himself as a defender of individual rights, Van Buren also condemned the efforts of Whigs and moral reformers to enact state laws imposing temperance and national laws abolishing slavery. "The government is best which governs least" became his motto in economic, cultural, and racial matters.

To oppose Van Buren, the Whigs ran four candidates, each with a strong regional reputation. They hoped to garner enough electoral votes to throw the contest into the House of Representatives. However, the Whig tally — 73 electoral votes collected by William Henry Harrison of Ohio, 26 by Hugh L. White of Tennessee, 14 by Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, and 11 by W. P. Mangum of Georgia — fell far short of Van Buren's 170 votes. Still, the four Whigs won 49 percent of the popular vote, showing that the party's message of economic and moral improvement had broad appeal.

## Labor Politics and the Depression of 1837–1843

As the Democrats battled Whigs on the national level, they faced challenges from urban artisans and workers. Between 1828 and 1833, artisans and laborers in fifteen

states formed Working Men's Parties. "Past experience teaches us that we have nothing to hope from the aristocratic orders of society," declared the New York Working Men's Party. It vowed "to send men of our own description, if we can, to the Legislature at Albany."

The new parties' agenda reflected the values and interests of ordinary urban workers. The Philadelphia Working Men's Party set out to secure "a just balance of power . . . between all the various classes." It called for the abolition of private banks, chartered monopolies, and debtors' prisons, and it demanded universal public education and a fair system of taxation (*Thinking Like a Historian*, p. 336). It won some victories, electing a number of assemblymen and persuading the Pennsylvania legislature in 1834 to authorize tax-supported schools. Elsewhere, Working Men's candidates won office in many cities, but their parties' weakness in statewide contests soon took a toll. By the mid-1830s, most politically active workers had joined the Democratic Party.

The Working Men's Parties left a mixed legacy. They mobilized craft workers and gave political expression to their ideology of artisan republicanism. As labor intellectual Orestes Brownson defined their distinctive vision, "All men will be independent proprietors, working on their own capitals, on their own farms, or in their own shops." However, this emphasis on proprietorship inhibited alliances between the artisan-based Working Men's Parties and the rapidly increasing class of dependent wage earners. As Joseph Weydemeyer, a close friend of Karl Marx, reported from New York in the early 1850s, many American craft workers "are incipient bourgeois, and feel themselves to be such."

Moreover, the **Panic of 1837** threw the American economy — and the workers' movement — into disarray. The panic began when the Bank of England tried to boost the faltering British economy by sharply curtailing the flow of money and credit to the United States. Since 1822, British manufacturers had extended credit to southern planters to expand cotton production, and British investors had purchased millions of dollars of the canal bonds from the northern states. Suddenly deprived of British funds, American planters, merchants, and canal corporations had to withdraw gold from domestic banks to pay their foreign debts. Moreover, British textile mills drastically reduced their purchases of raw cotton, causing its price to plummet from 20 cents a pound to 10 cents or less.

Falling cotton prices and the drain of specie to Britain set off a financial panic. On May 8, the Dry Dock Bank of New York City ran out of specie, prompting worried depositors to withdraw gold and silver

coins from other banks. Within two weeks, every American bank had stopped trading specie and called in its loans, turning a financial panic into an economic crisis. “This sudden overthrow of the commercial credit” had a “stunning effect,” observed Henry Fox, the British minister in Washington. “The conquest of the land by a foreign power could hardly have produced a more general sense of humiliation and grief.”

To stimulate the economy, state governments increased their investments in canals and railroads. However, as governments issued (or guaranteed) more and more bonds to finance these ventures, they were unable to pay the interest charges, sparking a severe financial crisis on both sides of the Atlantic in 1839. Nine state governments defaulted on their debts, and hard-pressed European lenders cut the flow of new capital to the United States.

The American economy fell into a deep depression. By 1843, canal construction had dropped by 90 percent, prices and wages had fallen by 50 percent, and unemployment in seaports and industrial centers had reached 20 percent. Bumper crops drove down cotton prices,

pushing hundreds of planters and merchants into bankruptcy. Minister Henry Ward Beecher described a land “filled with lamentation . . . its inhabitants wandering like bereaved citizens among the ruins of an earthquake, mourning for children, for houses crushed, and property buried forever.”

By creating a surplus of unemployed workers, the depression completed the decline of the union movement and the Working Men’s Parties. In 1837, six thousand masons, carpenters, and other building-trades workers lost their jobs in New York City, destroying their unions’ bargaining power. By 1843, most local unions, all the national labor organizations, and all the workers’ parties had disappeared.

### “Tippecanoe and Tyler Too!”

Many Americans blamed the Democrats for the depression of 1837–1843. They criticized Jackson for destroying the Second Bank and directing the Treasury

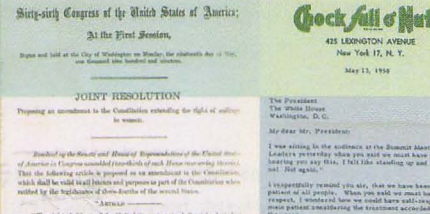
**IDENTIFY CAUSES**  
What factors led to the demise of the Anti-Masonic and Working Men’s political parties?



### Hard Times

The Panic of 1837 struck hard at Americans of all social ranks. This anti-Democratic cartoon shows unemployed workers turning to drink; women and children begging in the streets; and fearful depositors withdrawing funds as their banks collapse. As the plummeting hot-air balloon in the background symbolizes, the rising “Glory” of an independent America was crashing to earth. © Museum of the City of New York, USA/The Bridgeman Art Library.

# THINKING LIKE A HISTORIAN



## Becoming Literate: Public Education and Democracy

The struggle for a genuinely *democratic* polity—“government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” as Lincoln put it—played out at the local and state level in battles over who should participate in the political arena. As legislators argued over extending the franchise, they considered the knowledge that citizens needed to participate responsibly in politics. Although primary education was publicly supported in most New England towns (giving that region nearly universal literacy), it received only spotty funding in the other northern states and almost none in the South (restricting literacy there to one-third of the white population). The following documents address the resulting debate over publicly supported education and citizenship.

### 1. Editorial from the *Philadelphia National Gazette*, 1830. Pennsylvania was one of the first states to debate legislation regarding universal free public education.

The scheme of Universal Equal Education . . . is virtually “Agrarianism” [redistribution of land from rich to poor]. It would be a compulsory application of the means of the richer, for the direct use of the poorer classes. . . . One of the chief excitements to industry . . . is the hope of earning the means of educating their children respectably . . . that incentive would be removed, and the scheme of state and equal education be a premium for comparative idleness, to be taken out of the pockets of the laborious and conscientious.

### 2. Thaddeus Stevens, speech before the Pennsylvania General Assembly, February 1835. Pennsylvania’s Free Public School Act of 1834 was the handiwork of the Working Men’s Party of Philadelphia (see p. 334). When over half of Pennsylvania’s school districts refused to implement the law, the legislature threatened to repeal it. Thaddeus Stevens, later a leading antislavery advocate, turned back that threat through this speech to the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

It would seem to be humiliating to be under the necessity, in the nineteenth century, of entering into a formal argument to prove the utility, and to free governments, the absolute necessity of education. . . . Such necessity would be degrading to a Christian age and a free republic. If an elective republic is to endure for any great length of time, every elector must have sufficient information, not only to accumulate wealth and take care of his pecuniary concerns, but to direct wisely the Legislatures, the Ambassadors, and the Executive of the nation; for some part of all these things, some agency in approving or disapproving of them, falls to every freeman. If,

then, the permanency of our government depends upon such knowledge, it is the duty of government to see that the means of information be diffused to every citizen. This is a sufficient answer to those who deem education a private and not a public duty—who argue that they are willing to educate their own children, but not their neighbor’s children.

### 3. “Letter from a Teacher” in Catharine E. Beecher, *The True Remedy for the Wrongs of Women*, 1851. The public school movement created new opportunities not just for children of middle and lower classes but also for the young Protestant women who contributed to the “Benevolent Empire” as professional educators. Beecher’s academy (see p. 369) in Hartford, Connecticut, sent out dozens of young women to establish schools.

I am now located in this place, which is the county-town of a newly organized county [in a midwestern state]. . . . The Sabbath is little regarded, and is more a day for diversion than devotion. . . . My school embraces both sexes and all ages from five to seventeen, and not one can read intelligibly.

### 4. “Popular Education,” 1833. This piece appeared in the *North American Review*, the nation’s first literary and cultural journal and the mouthpiece of New England’s intellectual elite.

[T]he mind of a people, in proportion as it is educated, will not only feel its own value, but will also perceive its rights. We speak now of those palpable rights which are recognised by all free states. . . . [T]he palpable rights of men, those of personal security, of property and of the free and unembarrassed pursuit of individual welfare, it is obviously impossible to conceal from an educated and reading people. Such a people rises at once above the condition of feudal tenants. . . . It directs its attention to

the laws and institutions that govern it. It compels public office to give an account of itself. It strips off the veil of secrecy from the machinery of power. . . . And when all this is spread abroad in newspaper details . . . of a people that can read; when the estimate is freely made, of what the government tax levies upon the daily hoard, and upon apparel, and upon every comfort of life, can it be doubted that such a people will demand and obtain an influence in affairs that so vitally concern it? This would be freedom.

5. Judge Baker, sentencing hearing in the court case against Mrs. Margaret Douglass of Norfolk, Virginia, January 10, 1854. *Southern whites considered the acquisition of literacy by blacks, whether slave or free, as a public danger, especially after the Nat Turner uprising in Southampton County, Virginia, in 1831 (Chapter 11, p. 362). A Virginia court sent Mrs. Margaret Douglass to jail for a month "as an example to all others" for teaching free black children to read so they might have access to books on religion and morality.*

There are persons, I believe, in our community, opposed to the policy of the law in question. They profess to believe that universal intellectual culture is necessary to religious instruction and education, and that such culture is suitable to a state of slavery. . . .

Such opinions in the present state of our society I regard as manifestly mischievous. It is not true that our slaves cannot be taught religious and moral duty, without being able to read the Bible and use the pen. Intellectual and religious instruction often go hand in hand, but the latter may well exist without the former; . . . among the whites one-fourth or more are entirely without a knowledge of letters, [nonetheless,] respect for the law, and for moral and religious conduct and behavior, are justly and properly appreciated and practiced. . . .

The first legislative provision upon this subject was introduced in the year 1831, immediately succeeding the bloody scenes of the memorable Southampton insurrection; and . . . was re-enacted with additional penalties in the year 1848. . . . After these several and repeated recognitions of the wisdom and propriety of the said act, it may well be said that bold and open opposition to it [must be condemned] . . . as a measure of self-preservation and protection.

Sources: (1) "Religion and Social Reform," the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, [gilderlehrman.org](http://gilderlehrman.org); (2) *New York Legislature Documents*, Vol. 34, No. 65, Part 1 (Albany, NY: J. B. Lyon Company, 1919), 60; (3) Catharine E. Beecher, *Educational Reminiscences and Suggestions* (New York: J. D. Ford & Company, 1874), 127; (4) *The North American Review* 36, no. 58 (January 1833); (5) "The Case of Mrs. Margaret Douglass," *Africans in America*, [pbs.org](http://pbs.org).

6. Working Men's Party poster for immigrant voters, New York, 1830.

Source: Joshua R. Greenberg, *Advocating the Man*.

## ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

1. What arguments does the editorial in the *Philadelphia National Gazette* (source 1) advance? How does Stevens (source 2) reframe this argument?
2. What does the letter from a former student of Beecher's (source 3) tell us about the links between educational reform and other social movements, such as Sabbatarianism (p. 305)? How does it help us to understand the fate of the "notables" and the "log cabin campaign" of 1840?
3. What is the larger agenda of the author of source 4? How is the argument here similar to, or different from, that in sources 1 and 2?
4. How does Judge Baker (source 5) justify the denial of education to African Americans?
5. What do the occupations of the Working Men's Party candidates suggest about its definition of "worker" (source 6)? How does the political agenda of the party relate to the arguments advanced in sources 2 and 4? To present-day debates regarding the education of illegal immigrants?

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

As these selections indicate, the debate over education had many facets. Did the power traditionally held by "notables" rest on their access to private schooling? Should a democratic society ensure the literacy of citizen voters? Was religious instruction a telling argument for slave literacy? Using these documents, your answers to the questions above, and materials in Chapters 8 and 10, write an essay that discusses public education, responsible citizenship, and social reform in America between 1820 and 1860.



Department in 1836 to issue the **Specie Circular**, an executive order that required the Treasury Department to accept only gold and silver in payment for lands in the national domain. Critics charged—mistakenly—that the Circular drained so much specie from the economy that it sparked the Panic of 1837. In fact (as noted above), the curtailing of credit by the Bank of England was the main cause of the panic.

Nonetheless, the public turned its anger on Van Buren, who took office just before the panic struck. Ignoring the pleas of influential bankers, the new president refused to revoke the Specie Circular or take actions to stimulate the economy. Holding to his philosophy of limited government, Van Buren advised Congress that “the less government interferes with private pursuits the better for the general prosperity.” As the depression deepened in 1839, this laissez-faire outlook commanded less and less political support. Worse, Van Buren’s major piece of fiscal legislation, the Independent Treasury Act of 1840, delayed recovery by pulling federal specie out of Jackson’s pet banks (where it had backed loans) and placing it in government vaults, where it had little economic impact.

**The Log Cabin Campaign** The Whigs exploited Van Buren’s weakness. In 1840, they organized their

first national convention and nominated William Henry Harrison of Ohio for president and John Tyler of Virginia for vice president. A military hero of the Battle of Tippecanoe and the War of 1812, Harrison was well advanced in age (sixty-eight) and had little political experience. However, the Whig leaders in Congress, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, wanted a president who would rubber-stamp their program for protective tariffs and a national bank. An unpretentious, amiable man, Harrison told voters that Whig policies were “the only means, under Heaven, by which a poor industrious man may become a rich man without bowing to colossal wealth.”

The depression stacked the political cards against Van Buren, but the election turned as much on style as on substance. It became the great “log cabin campaign”—the first time two well-organized parties competed for votes through a new style of campaigning. Whig songfests, parades, and well-orchestrated mass meetings drew new voters into politics. Whig speakers assailed “Martin Van Ruin” as a manipulative politician with aristocratic tastes—a devotee of fancy wines, elegant clothes, and polite refinement, as indeed he was. Less truthfully, they portrayed Harrison as a self-made man who lived contentedly in a log cabin and quaffed hard cider, a drink of the common people. In fact, Harrison’s father was a wealthy Virginia planter who



#### The Whigs Boost Harrison and Tyler for the White House

In their quest for victory in 1840, Whig political strategists advanced a wide-ranging (and misleading) set of policies. This poster celebrates William Henry Harrison and John Tyler as candidates who would secure protective tariffs for American manufacturers—a policy that appealed to northern voters but one that Tyler opposed. It also promises to cut the size of the U.S. Army, which General Harrison did not favor. However, denouncing a large “Standing Army” would win votes in Virginia, where it recalled the fears of Radical Whig Patriots of 1776 and remained central to the states’ rights ideology espoused by Senator Tyler and other “Old Republicans.” Grouseland Foundation, Inc./Photo courtesy of “Fords the Art of Photography,” Vincennes, IN.



### President John Tyler (1790–1862)

Both as an “accidental” president and as a man, John Tyler left his mark on the world. His initiative to annex Texas made the election of 1844 into a pivotal contest and led to the war with Mexico in 1846. Tyler’s first wife, Letitia, gave birth to eight children before dying in the White House in 1842. Two years later, he married twenty-four-year-old Julia Gardiner, who bore him seven more children. White House Historical Association (White House Collection).

had signed the Declaration of Independence, and Harrison himself lived in a series of elegant mansions.

The Whigs boosted their electoral hopes by welcoming women to campaign festivities—a “first” for American politics. Many Jacksonian Democrats had long embraced an ideology of aggressive manhood, likening politically minded females to “public” women, prostitutes who plied their trade in theaters and other public places. Whigs took a more restrained view of masculinity and recognized that Christian women had already entered American public life through the temperance movement and other benevolent activities. In October 1840, Daniel Webster celebrated moral reform to an audience of twelve hundred women and urged them to back Whig candidates. “This way of making politicians of their women is something new under the sun,” exclaimed one Democrat, worried that it would bring more Whig men to the polls. And it did: more than 80 percent of the eligible male voters cast ballots in 1840, up from fewer than 60 percent in 1832 and 1836 (see Figure 10.1). Heeding the Whigs’ campaign slogan “Tippecanoe and Tyler Too,” they voted Harrison into the White House with 53 percent of the popular vote and gave the party a majority in Congress.

**Tyler Subverts the Whig Agenda** Led by Clay and Webster, the Whigs in Congress prepared to reverse the Jacksonian revolution. Their hopes were short-lived; barely a month after his inauguration in 1841, Harrison died of pneumonia, and the nation got “Tyler Too.” But in what capacity: as acting president or as president? The Constitution was vague on the issue. Ignoring his Whig associates in Congress, who wanted a weak chief executive, Tyler took the presidential oath of office and declared his intention to govern as he pleased. As it turned out, that would not be like a Whig.

Tyler had served in the House and the Senate as a Jeffersonian Democrat, firmly committed to slavery and states’ rights. He had joined the Whigs only to protest Jackson’s stance against nullification. On economic issues, Tyler shared Jackson’s hostility to the Second Bank and the American System. He therefore vetoed Whig bills that would have raised tariffs and created a new national bank. Outraged by this betrayal, most of Tyler’s cabinet resigned in 1842, and the Whigs expelled Tyler from their party. “His Accidency,” as he

### UNDERSTAND POINTS OF VIEW

How did Whigs and Democrats view women in politics, and why did they hold those views?

was called by his critics, was now a president without a party.

The split between Tyler and the Whigs allowed the Democrats to regroup. The party vigorously recruited subsistence farmers in the North, smallholding planters in the South, and former members of the Working Men's Parties in the cities. It also won support among Irish and German Catholic immigrants — whose numbers had increased during the 1830s — by backing their demands for religious and cultural liberty, such as the freedom to drink beer and whiskey. A pattern of **ethnocultural politics**, as historians refer to the practice of voting along ethnic and religious lines, now became a prominent feature of American life. Thanks to these urban and rural recruits, the Democrats remained the majority party in most parts of the nation. Their program of equal rights, states' rights, and cultural liberty was attractive to more white Americans than the Whig platform of economic nationalism, moral reform, temperance laws, and individual mobility.

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## SUMMARY

In this chapter, we examined the causes and the consequences of the democratic political revolution. We saw that the expansion of the franchise weakened the political system run by notables of high status and

encouraged the transfer of power to professional politicians — men like Martin Van Buren, who were mostly of middle-class origin.

We also witnessed a revolution in government policy, as Andrew Jackson and his Democratic Party dismantled the mercantilist economic system of government-supported economic development. On the national level, Jackson destroyed Henry Clay's American System; on the state level, Democrats wrote new constitutions that ended the Commonwealth System of government charters and subsidies to private businesses. Jackson's treatment of Native Americans was equally revolutionary; the Removal Act of 1830 forcefully resettled eastern Indian peoples west of the Mississippi River, opening their ancestral lands to white settlement.

Finally, we watched the emergence of the Second Party System. Following the split in the Republican Party during the election of 1824, two new parties — the Democrats and the Whigs — developed on the national level and eventually absorbed the members of the Anti-Masonic and Working Men's parties. The new party system established universal suffrage for white men and a mode of representative government that was responsive to ordinary citizens. In their scope and significance, these political innovations matched the economic advances of both the Industrial Revolution and the Market Revolution.

## CHAPTER REVIEW

**MAKE IT STICK** Go to **LearningCurve** to retain what you've read.



**TERMS TO KNOW** Identify and explain the significance of each term below.

### Key Concepts and Events

franchise (p. 316)  
 notables (p. 316)  
 political machine (p. 317)  
 spoils system (p. 318)  
 caucus (p. 318)  
 American System (p. 319)  
 internal improvements (p. 319)  
 corrupt bargain (p. 319)  
 “consolidated government”  
 (p. 320)  
 Tariff of Abominations (p. 320)  
 nullification (p. 324)

states' rights (p. 324)  
 Second Bank of the United States  
 (p. 325)  
 Indian Removal Act of 1830  
 (p. 327)  
 Trail of Tears (p. 331)  
 classical liberalism, or laissez-  
 faire (p. 332)  
 Whigs (p. 332)  
 Panic of 1837 (p. 334)  
 Specie Circular (p. 338)  
 ethnocultural politics (p. 340)

### Key People

Martin Van Buren (p. 317)  
 John Quincy Adams (p. 318)  
 Henry Clay (p. 319)  
 Andrew Jackson (p. 319)  
 John C. Calhoun (p. 324)  
 Daniel Webster (p. 324)  
 Nicholas Biddle (p. 326)  
 Roger B. Taney (p. 331)  
 John Tyler (p. 339)

**REVIEW QUESTIONS** Answer these questions to demonstrate your understanding of the chapter's main ideas.

- How did Andrew Jackson and the Democratic Party fundamentally change public policy? Illustrate your argument with specific examples.
- What were the various constitutional arguments underlying the debates over internal improvements, the tariff, and nullification?
- How and why did the policies of the federal and state governments toward Native Americans change between the 1790s (Chapter 7) and the 1850s, and what were the reactions of Indian peoples to those policies?
- THEMATIC UNDERSTANDING** Review the events listed under “Politics and Power” on the thematic timeline on page 283. As the timeline indicates, the Working Men's and Anti-Masonic parties rose and declined between 1827 and 1834, and then the Whig Party emerged. How do you explain the timing of these events?

## MAKING CONNECTIONS

Recognize the larger developments and continuities within and across chapters by answering these questions.

- 1. ACROSS TIME AND PLACE** The chapter argues that a democratic revolution swept America in the decades after 1820 and uprooted the old system of politics. After reviewing the discussions of politics in Chapters 6 and 7, explain how party systems and political alignments changed over time and then assess the strength of this argument.
- 2. VISUAL EVIDENCE** Look again at the political cartoons on the tariff (p. 320) and the vice-presidency (p. 324). What point of view does the cartoonist support, and how effective are the cartoons in championing that view? How are today's negative political advertisements on television similar or different?

## MORE TO EXPLORE Start here to learn more about the events discussed in this chapter.

Robert J. Conley, *Mountain Windsongs: A Novel of the Trail of Tears* (1992). Captures the human impact of Jackson's removal policy.

Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System* (1969). Lucidly explains the triumph of party politics.

Thomas N. Ingersoll, *To Intermix with Our White Brothers* (2005). Argues that fear of racial intermixture shaped popular thought and government policy toward Indians.

Robert V. Remini, *The Life of Andrew Jackson* (1988). Highlights Jackson's triumphs and shortcomings.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835). A classic that is still worth dipping into; also available at [xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/detoc/home.html](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/detoc/home.html).

Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic* (1986). Covers the ideology of working men.

**TIMELINE** Ask yourself why this chapter begins and ends with these dates and then identify the links among related events.

1810s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• States expand white male voting rights</li> <li>• Martin Van Buren creates disciplined party in New York</li> </ul>
1825	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• House of Representatives selects John Quincy Adams as president</li> <li>• Adams endorses Henry Clay's American System</li> </ul>
1828	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working Men's Parties win support</li> <li>• Tariff of Abominations raises duties</li> <li>• Andrew Jackson elected president</li> <li>• John C. Calhoun's <i>South Carolina Exposition and Protest</i></li> </ul>
1830	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jackson vetoes National Road bill</li> <li>• Congress enacts Jackson's Indian Removal Act</li> </ul>
1831	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Cherokee Nation v. Georgia</i> denies Indians' independence, but <i>Worcester v. Georgia</i> (1832) upholds their political autonomy</li> </ul>
1832	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Massacre of 850 Sauk and Fox warriors at Bad Axe</li> <li>• Jackson vetoes renewal of Second Bank</li> <li>• South Carolina adopts Ordinance of Nullification</li> </ul>
1833	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congress enacts compromise tariff</li> </ul>
1834	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whig Party formed by Clay, Calhoun, and Daniel Webster</li> </ul>
1835	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roger Taney named Supreme Court chief justice</li> </ul>
1836	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Van Buren elected president</li> </ul>
1837	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Charles River Bridge</i> case weakens chartered monopolies</li> <li>• Panic of 1837 derails economy and labor movement</li> </ul>
1838	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many Cherokees die in Trail of Tears march to Indian Territory</li> </ul>
1839–1843	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defaults on bonds by state governments spark international financial crisis and depression</li> </ul>
1840	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whigs win "log cabin campaign"</li> </ul>
1841	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Tyler succeeds William Henry Harrison as president</li> </ul>

**KEY TURNING POINTS:** Based on the events in the timeline (and your reading in Chapter 10), which five-year period brought more significant changes to American political and economic life: 1829–1833, Andrew Jackson's first term as president, or 1837–1842, the years of panic and depression? Explain and defend your choice.