

**Inquiry Activity: Was Jackson a president for the common-folk?**

*In this inquiry, students will break into groups to research one aspect of Jackson's presidency. They will then rejoin to teach one another about the narrow topic of his presidency. A suggested extension would be to debate whether he was a president for the common folk?*

**Background:** The election of Andrew Jackson in 1828 marked a change in American politics. For the first time a presidential candidate had been elected from west of the Appalachian Mountains, marking an end to the streak held by wealthy eastern elitists. Jackson represented the emergence of a new middle, working-class America. The war hero from the Battle of New Orleans who did not have a college education, chewed tobacco, and dueled with pistols to defend his wife's honor reflected the ideals of the western portion of the United States. The appeal of Jackson to the ordinary man helped lead to the new period known as "the common folk era."

The Age of Jackson and the "Jacksonian Democracy" that it brought with it were markedly different from anything the nation had yet experienced. Unlike the early republic, which had been dominated by wealthy politicians, the Age of Jackson was a new age of the common folk, a period of American cultural history that shunned wealth and aristocracy in favor of humble origins, log cabins, and frontier ruggedness.

During this period, more and more American men were granted the right to vote, as property ownership and literacy restrictions for voting were abolished in more and more places. As universal manhood suffrage became the norm, the lower and middle classes gained an outlet to express their political opinions.

As president, Andrew Jackson embraced the role of protecting "common men" — his decisions in matters such as the rotation of office holders can be argued as being in their interest. By limiting a federal office holder's tenure to one term, Jackson could make room for another deserving candidate, promoting the concept that one man is just as good another. However, some might argue that rotating office holders left room for government corruption, as party loyalty played an important role in the replacement of office holders from previous administrations.

Jackson increased the power of the executive office more than any previous president. He repeatedly ignored the Supreme Court, challenged the Constitution when he dismantled the Bank of the United States, and changed the nature of the presidential veto. Jackson wielded executive power so forcefully that his National Republican and Whig enemies dubbed him "King Andrew I."

Jackson's veto of the Bank charter was especially revolutionary. Whereas previous presidents had vetoed bills that they believed to be unconstitutional, Jackson's veto marked the first time that a president vetoed a bill because he personally disliked it. Jackson's action reminded Americans that even though the Supreme Court had the power of judicial review, it had to rely on the compliance of the president to carry out its decisions.

President Jackson's title as "the common folk president" often detracts students from looking further into his decision-making to unveil contradictions. The question we must ask is to what extent was Andrew Jackson truly a common folk? How do we measure Jacksonian Democracy in light of his treatment of groups such as Native Americans?



### Groups

Use the documents provided and the chart below to examine Jackson's actions in relation to the...

- *Indian Wars and Native Removal*
- *Elections of 1824, 1828, & 1832*
- *National Bank Veto and the Nullification Crisis*
- *Jacksonian Democracy and the Spoils System*
- *The Peggy Eaton Affair*

**Summative Table**

Event	Andrew Jackson's Action	How does this impact his title as a "common folk" president?
Indian Wars and Native Removal		
Elections of 1824, 1828, & 1832		
National Bank Veto and the Nullification Crisis		
Jacksonian Democracy		
Spoils System		
Peggy Eaton Affair		



### **Conclusion**

*With your group and based on the evidence presented in the Summative Table, determine whether Jackson was a president for the common people. In the space below, explain why you and your group feel this way. Which evidence do you find more convincing? Why?*



***\*Indian Wars with Creek and Seminole and Native Removal***

*Read and annotate each of the documents below. Consider the question, was Jackson a common folk president?*

**Evidence that Jackson was a president for the common folk:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Evidence that Jackson was NOT a president for the common folk:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Document: Cherokee Indian Removal Timeline**

**1785** First treaty between Cherokee and United States, established peaceful relations.

**1796** George Washington initiated "civilization" program among Cherokees.

**1802** Georgia ceded some of its western land to the United States; the U.S. government, in exchange, promised to purchase for Georgia all of the Indian lands remaining within the state. However, the Federal Government could only buy land through treaty.

**1808-1810** First major Cherokee migration to land west of the Mississippi.

**1820s** Cherokees became the most "civilized" of the five "Civilized Tribes" (Creeks, Chikasaw, Seminole, Choctaw and Cherokee). The Cherokee had a newspaper and many had converted to Christianity; they adopted a Constitution; they had farms and owned slaves.

**1828** Andrew Jackson elected President and declares his support for removal.

**1828** Georgia extended its state power over Cherokee Nation and nullified (makes illegal) Cherokee law.

**1832** Cherokee won their case in *Worcester v. Georgia*. U.S. Supreme Court upheld Cherokee sovereignty in Georgia. Andrew Jackson ignored the ruling.



- 1836** Treaty of New Echota signed; provided for removal of Cherokees to land west of the Mississippi. Chief John Ross led 15,000 in protesting the treaty. Only 2,000 Cherokee agreed to migrate voluntarily.
- 1838** U.S. government sent in 7,000 troops, who forced the Cherokees out at bayonet point. 4,000 Cherokee people died of cold, hunger, and disease on their way to the western lands.
- 1839** Execution of Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot for their role in the Treaty of New Echota.

*Reading Like a Historian. "Cherokee Indian Removal Timeline." Stanford History Education Group. Last modified 2020. <http://www.sheg.org>.*

**Document: Jackson's 1830 State of the Union Address**

"It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of the Government, steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements is approaching to a happy consummation. Two important tribes have accepted the provision made for their removal at the last session of Congress, and it is believed that their example will induce the remaining tribes also to seek the same obvious advantages.

The consequences of a speedy removal will be important to the United States, to individual States, and to the Indians themselves. The pecuniary advantages which it promises to the Government are the least of its recommendations. It puts an end to all possible danger of collision between the authorities of the General and State Governments on account of the Indians. It will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters. By opening the whole territory between Tennessee on the north and Louisiana on the south to the settlement of the whites it will incalculably strengthen the southwestern frontier and render the adjacent States strong enough to repel future invasions without remote aid. It will relieve the whole State of Mississippi and the western part of Alabama of Indian occupancy, and enable those States to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power. It will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites; free them from the power of the States; enable them to pursue happiness in their own way and under their own rude institutions; will retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers, and perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the Government and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community.

What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms embellished with all the improvements which art can devise or industry execute, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization and religion?

The present policy of the Government is but a continuation of the same progressive change by a milder process. The tribes which occupied the countries now constituting the Eastern States were annihilated or have melted away to make room for the whites. The waves of population and civilization are rolling to the westward, and we now propose to acquire the countries occupied by the red men of the South and West by a fair exchange, and, at the expense of the United States, to send them to land where



their existence may be prolonged and perhaps made perpetual. Doubtless it will be painful to leave the graves of their fathers; but what do they more than our ancestors did or than our children are now doing? To better their condition in an unknown land our forefathers left all that was dear in earthly objects. Our children by thousands yearly leave the land of their birth to seek new homes in distant regions. Does Humanity weep at these painful separations from everything, animate and inanimate, with which the young heart has become entwined? Far from it. It is rather a source of joy that our country affords scope where our young population may range unconstrained in body or in mind, developing the power and facilities of man in their highest perfection. These remove hundreds and almost thousands of miles at their own expense, purchase the lands they occupy, and support themselves at their new homes from the moment of their arrival. Can it be cruel in this Government when, by events which it cannot control, the Indian is made discontented in his ancient home to purchase his lands, to give him a new and extensive territory, to pay the expense of his removal, and support him a year in his new abode? How many thousands of our own people would gladly embrace the opportunity of removing to the West on such conditions! If the offers made to the Indians were extended to them, they would be hailed with gratitude and joy.

And is it supposed that the wandering savage has a stronger attachment to his home than the settled, civilized Christian? Is it more afflicting to him to leave the graves of his fathers than it is to our brothers and children? Rightly considered, the policy of the General Government toward the red man is not only liberal, but generous. He is unwilling to submit to the laws of the States and mingle with their population. To save him from this alternative, or perhaps utter annihilation, the General Government kindly offers him a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement.

*President Jackson's Message to Congress "On Indian Removal." Last modified December 6, 1830. Records of the United States Senate, 1789-1990. Record Group 46. National Archives and Records Administration.*

#### **Document: Letter by Elias Boudinot to Chief John Ross**

...I consider my countrymen, not as mere animals, and to judge of their happiness by their condition as such, which to be sure is bad enough, but as moral beings, to be affected for better or for worse, by moral circumstances, I say their condition is wretched. Look, my dear sir, around you, and see the progress that vice and immorality have already made!...

If the dark picture which I have drawn here is a true one, and no candid person will say it is an exaggerated one, can we see a brighter prospect ahead? In another country, and under other circumstances, there is a better prospect. Removal, then, is the only remedy--the only practicable remedy. By it there may be finally a renovation--our people may rise from their very ashes to become prosperous and happy, and a credit to our race....I would say to my countrymen, you among the rest, fly from the moral pestilence that will finally destroy our nation.

What is the prospect in reference to your [John Ross's] plan of relief, if you are understood at all to have any plan? It is dark and gloomy beyond description. Subject the Cherokees to the laws of the States in their present condition? It matters not how favorable those laws may be, instead of remedying the evil you would only rivet the



chains and fasten the manacles of their servitude and degradation. The final destiny of our race, under such circumstances, is too revolting to think of. Its course must be downward, until it finally becomes extinct or is merged in another race, more ignoble and more detested. Take my word for it, it is the sure consummation, if you succeed in preventing the removal of your people. The time will come when there will be only here and there those who can be called upon to sign a protest, or to vote against a treaty for their removal--when the few remnants of our once happy and improving nation will be viewed by posterity with curious and gazing interest, as relics of a brave and noble race. Are our people destined to such a catastrophe? Are we to run the race of all our brethren who have gone before us, and of whom hardly any thing is known but their name and perhaps only here and there a solitary being, walking, "as a ghost over the ashes of his fathers," to remind a stranger that such a race once existed? May God preserve us from such a destiny.

I have the honor to be, Sir,  
Your obedient and humble servant,  
E. BOUDINOT.

*Boudinot, Elias. Letter to John Ross. Last modified 1837.*

*Annotation: Elias Boudinot was a Cherokee leader who supported Indian Removal (and who signed the Treaty of New Echota in 1835 that gave away Cherokee land in Georgia). The letter is to Chief John Ross, leader of the Cherokees who opposed Indian Removal.*

### **Document: Essay on Andrew Jackson's Native Removal**

The symbolic freighting of this subject can hardly be overstated. Just as Jackson—child of the frontier, self-made man, homespun military genius, and plain-spoken tribune of the people—has sometimes served to stand for everything worth celebrating in American democracy, Indian removal has come to signify democracy's savage and even genocidal underside. It opens a door behind which one finds Jackson the archetypal Indian-hater, the slave owner, the overbearing male patriarch, and the frontiersman not as heroic pioneer but as imperialist, expropriator, and killer.

To Schlesinger (who was no racist) and to others who have seen Jackson's essential importance in his championship of the common folk, the "little guy," against corporate domination, Indian removal appeared to be an aside, at worst a regrettable failing, but to many today it shows Jackson and his white man's democracy at their core. There is no doubt that removing the American Indians, particularly those in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, was centrally important to Jackson. Together with purging the federal bureaucracy of his political opponents and instituting what he called "rotation in office" (and what his enemies dubbed the "spoils system"), it stood at the head of his initial presidential agenda. Jackson's motives and methods in pursuing Indian removal were deeply controversial at the time and remain so today. He claimed to be acting only on impulses of duty and philanthropy. American Indians could not, without violating the essential rights of sovereign states, remain where they were; their own self-preservation required quarantine from pernicious white influences; and the terms offered for their evacuation were reasonable and even generous. Critics, then and since, have branded these as artful rationalizations to cover real motives of greed, racism, and land-lust.



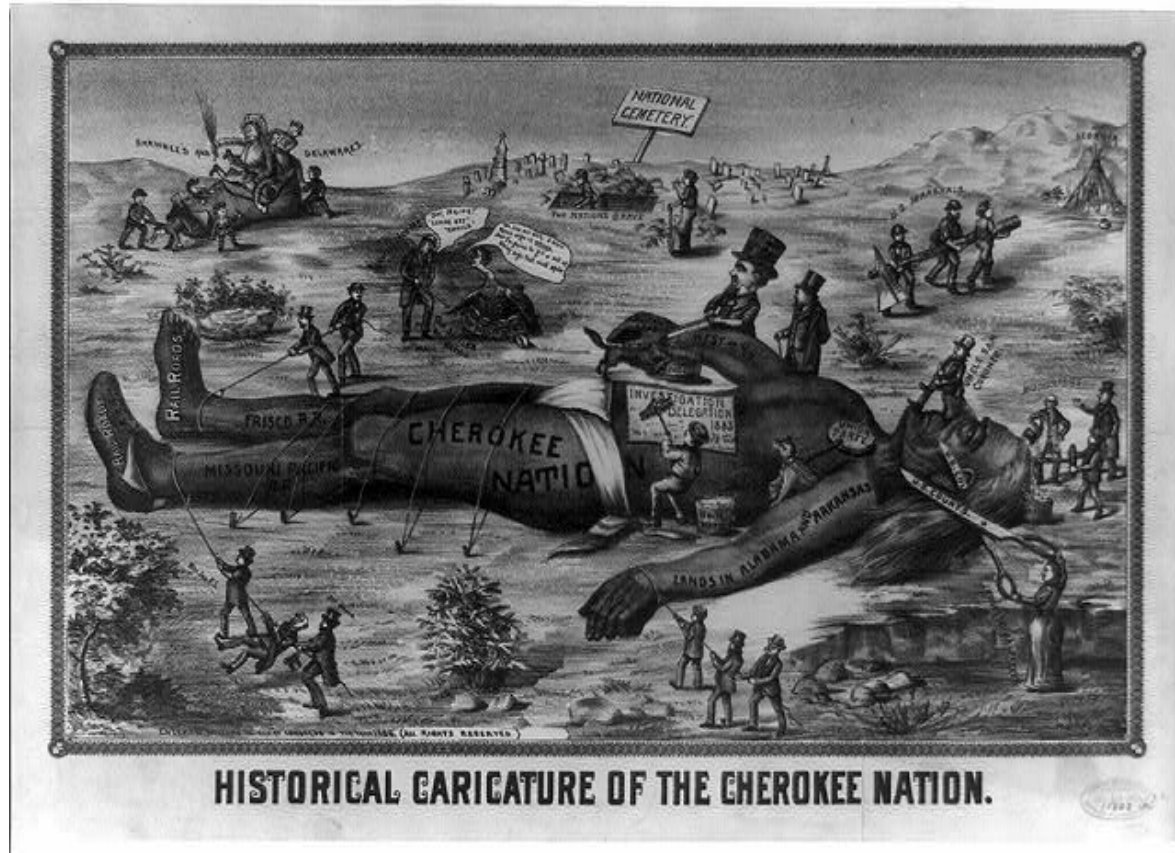


Connecting directly to our widely shared misgivings about the human cost of Euro-American expansion and the pejorative racial and cultural attitudes that sustained it, the recent debate over Jackson's Indian policy has gone mainly one way. A handful of defenders or apologists – most notably Jackson biographer Robert V. Remini – have dared to buck the tide, but for most scholars the question is not whether Jackson acted badly, but whether he acted so badly as to exclude considering anything else he might have done as palliation or excuse. Both inside and outside the academy, at least until the sudden resuscitation of Jackson as anti-corporate champion, the arch-oppressor of Indians had become Jackson's prevalent image. Far more American schoolchildren can name the Cherokee Trail of Tears (which actually happened in Martin Van Buren's presidency, though in consequence of Jackson's policy) than the Bank Veto, the Nullification Proclamation, or perhaps even the Battle of New Orleans.

No simple conclusion offers itself. Jackson's reputation, like the man himself, defies easy summary. The one thing that seems certain is that Americans will continue to argue about him.

Feller, Daniel. "Andrew Jackson's Shifting Legacy." *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History* Last modified 2019. <http://ap.gilderlehrman.org/essay/andrew-jackson%27s-shifting-legacy>.

#### Document: Historical caricature of the Cherokee nation





*Historical caricature of the Cherokee nation. , 1886. [Place not identified: Publisher not identified]  
Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2008661841/>.*

### **Document: Davy Crockett on Jackson's Policies**

*Annotation: In this letter, written in December 1834, Davy Crockett complains about President Andrew Jackson's forced removal of the Cherokees from their homes to Oklahoma. Crockett opposed that policy and feared Vice President Martin Van Buren would continue it, if elected president. He even goes so far as to say that if Van Buren is elected, Crockett would leave the United States for the "wildes of Texas." Crockett writes, "I will consider that government a Paridice to what this will be. In fact at this time our Republican Government has dwindled almost into insignificancy our [boasted] land of liberty have almost Bowed to the yoke of of [sic] Bondage." Crockett actually went to Texas before Martin Van Buren was elected president, and he died in the Battle of the Alamo on March 6, 1836, months before the election.*

I have almost given up the Ship as lost. I have gone So far as to declare that if he, Martin Van Buren is elected that I will leave the united States for I never will live under his kingdom. before I will Submit to his Government I will go to the wildes of Texas. I will consider that government a Paridice to what this will be. In fact at this time our Republican Government has dwindled almost into insignificancy our [boasted] land of liberty have almost Bowed to the yoke of Bondage. Our happy days of Republican principles are near at an end when a few is to transfer the many.

*Crockett, David. Letter to Charles Schultz. Gilder Lehrman Collection. Last modified December 25, 1834. <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/davy-crockett-removal-cherokees-1834>.*

### **Document: Helen Hunt Jackson A Century of Dishonor**

There is not among these three hundred bands of Indians [in the United States] one which has not suffered cruelly at the hands either of the Government or of white settlers. The poorer, the more insignificant, the more helpless the band, the more certain the cruelty and outrage to which they have been subjected. This is especially true of the bands on the Pacific slopes. These Indians found themselves of a sudden surrounded by and caught up in the great influx of gold-seeking settlers, as helpless creatures on a shore are caught up in a tidal wave. There was not time for the Government to make treaties; not even time for communities to make laws. The tale of the wrongs, the oppressions, the murders of the Pacific-slope Indians in the last thirty years would be a volume by itself, and is too monstrous to be believed. It makes little difference, however, where one opens the record of the history of the Indians; every page and every year has its dark stain. The story of one tribe is the story of all, varied only by differences of time and place; but neither time nor place makes any difference in the main facts. Colorado is as greedy and unjust in 1880 as was Georgia in 1830, and Ohio in 1795; and the United States Government breaks promises now as deftly as then, and with added ingenuity from long practice. . . .

In 1869 President Grant appointed a commission of nine men, representing the influence and philanthropy of six leading States, to visit the different Indian reservations, and to "examine all matters appertaining to Indian affairs." In the report of this commission are such paragraphs as the following: "To assert that 'the Indian will



not work' is as true as it would be to say that the white man will not work. 'Why should the Indian be expected to plant corn, fence lands, build houses, or do anything but get food from day to day, when experience has taught him that the product of his labor will be seized by the white man tomorrow? The most industrious white man would become a drone under similar circumstances. Nevertheless, many of the Indians" (the commissioners might more forcibly have said 130,000 of the Indians) "are already at work, and furnish ample refutation of the assertion that 'the Indian will not work.'

There is no escape from the inexorable logic of facts. "The history of the Government connections with the Indians is a shameful record of broken treaties and unfulfilled promises. The history of the border, white man's connection with the Indians is a sickening record of murder, outrage, robbery, and wrongs committed by the former, as the rule, and occasional savage outbreaks and unspeakably barbarous deeds of retaliation by the latter, as the exception. "Taught by the Government that they had rights entitled to respect, when those rights have been assailed by the rapacity of the white man, the arm which should have been raised to protect them has ever been ready to sustain the aggressor. "The testimony of some of the highest military officers of the United States is on record to the effect that, in our Indian wars, almost without exception, the first aggressions have been made by the white man, and the assertion is supported by every civilian of reputation who has studied the subject. In addition to the class of robbers and outlaws who find impunity in their nefarious pursuits on the frontiers, there is a large class of professedly reputable men who use every means in their power to bring on Indian wars for the sake of the profit to be realized from the presence of troops and the expenditures of Government funds in their midst. They proclaim death to the Indians at all times in words and publications, making no distinction between the innocent and the guilty. They irate the lowest class of men to the perpetration of the darkest deeds against their victims, and as judges and jurymen shield them from the justice due to their crimes. Every crime committed by a white man against an Indian is concealed or palliated. Every offence committed by an Indian against a white man is borne on the wings of the post or the telegraph to the remotest corner of the land, clothed with all the horrors which the reality or imagination can throw around it. Against such influences as these the people of the United States need to be warned."

*Jackson, Helen Hunt. "A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch Of The United States Government's Dealings With Some Of The Indian Tribes." Boston: Robert's Brothers, 1889. Retrieved from The Project Gutenberg EBook. Last modified November 27, 2015.  
[https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50560/50560-h/50560-h.htm#Page\\_257](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50560/50560-h/50560-h.htm#Page_257).*

### **Document: Oral History**

The Choctaws in Mississippi were a law abiding and cultured farming people. They had good homes, churches....

All of the Indians in this District gathered at Memphis, Tennessee, in 1832 and were transported across the Mississippi in the steamboats... In crossing over the Choctaws sang this song:

Fare thee well to Nunialchwayah (meaning to the land we love so dear)...



In loading my people got separated from each other for there were hundreds of wagons on this journey. When they reached the Ouachita (meaning 4th River) River, it was on a rampage and out of banks. The roads were almost impassable. It was raining and cold. Even for all the well and strong, the journey was almost beyond human endurance. Many were weak and broken-hearted, and as night came there were new graves dug beside the way. Many of the Indians contracted pneumonia fever and the cholera. They camped a mile from the Ouachita, waiting for the water to recede so they could cross. While they were camped here, Ezekiel Roebuck, father of my grandfather, William Roebuck, became ill but said nothing. When the river was low enough to cross, everyone got in the wagons and started on the journey but Ezekiel was so sick he became unconscious and fell over. Some one told the driver and he said, "I will have to stop and put him out as we can't afford to have any one with the Cholera along." So they stopped by the road side and put him out. My great grandmother said, "You can put the children and me out too," and the driver replied, "All right, but he will soon be dead and you and your three children will have to walk the balance of the way." Each child had a small blanket. My great-grandmother had a paisley shawl she had brought along a bucket of honey and some cold flour from their home. This flour is made by parching corn and grinding it in a coffee mill until pulverized. This food she carried along for her six months old baby. She begged the driver for food and a blanket for Great-grandfather, and he grudgingly gave the blanket and one days supply of food.

Great-grandfather was conscious at times. He had dubbed Great-grandmother "Little Blue Hen" and when he became conscious of their plight, he would say, "Dear Little Blue Hen, why didn't you take the children and go on, I can't last much longer, and my Soul will rest much easier if I knew you were safe. My body is just dust and will be all right any place." She replied, "As long as you live I'll be with you, Dear." Then the Little Blue Hen and two boys, aged ten and twelve, set about fixing a bed.

*Lattimer, Josephine Ustray. Interviewed by Amelia Harris. October 13, 1937. Retrieved from Montiero, Lorrie. "Family Stories from the Trail of Tears." Sequoia Research Center: American Natives Press Archive. Last modified ND. University of Little Rock Arkansas. <https://ualrexhibits.org/tribalwriters/artifacts/Family-Stories-Trail-of-Tears.html>.*



### ***\*Elections of 1824, 1828, & 1832***

*Read and annotate each of the documents below. Consider the question, was Jackson a common folk president?*

**Evidence that Jackson was a president for the common folk:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Evidence that Jackson was NOT a president for the common folk:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

#### **Document: Essay on Jackson and Presidential Elections**

*The Campaign and Election of 1824*

The Virginia presidential dynasty was coming to an end with the second term of James Monroe. Three seasoned members of his cabinet vied for the succession... Compared to these men, Jackson had scanty qualifications as a statesman, with only brief and undistinguished service in Congress and as a territorial governor. Where all Presidents since Washington had served extensive administrative and diplomatic apprenticeships, Jackson had never held a Cabinet post or even been abroad. He spoke no foreign languages and even wrote English roughly. On the other hand, his heroics as a general had a far greater hold on the public imagination than the governmental experience of his competitors.

All five men were Jeffersonian Democratic-Republicans, but in the absence of organized opposition, party affiliation had ceased to be much of a political marker. In past years, Jeffersonians had selected their presidential candidate through a congressional party caucus. Held in Washington where congressmen were gathered anyway, the caucus was a convenient mechanism to unite the party against the Federalist foe. But the withering of Federalism after the War of 1812 had undercut its rationale...

There was no organized national presidential campaign in 1824. Candidacies built on a regional base: Adams was the favorite in New England, Jackson in the Southwest, Clay in the Ohio valley, Crawford in his native Virginia...



Many political professionals, especially Clay, did not take Jackson's candidacy entirely seriously at first. The returns showed their mistake. He proved to be the only aspirant with a truly national popular following. Along with the entire Southwest, Jackson carried Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and the Carolinas, for a total of eleven states out of twenty-four. He led the field with 43% of the popular vote and 99 electoral votes, less than a majority.

Since no candidate had a majority in the electoral college, under the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution the choice between the top three now fell to the House of Representatives, where each state delegation cast one vote. Speaker Clay, out of the running, announced his support for Adams, warning that Jackson was a mere "military chieftain" unfit by training or temperament for the presidency. With his aid, Adams drew the votes of thirteen states – a majority – on the first ballot in the House. Promptly Adams named Clay secretary of state, the traditional stepping-stone to the presidency. Jackson swore that a "corrupt bargain" had swindled him out of the office. Promptly he began to gird for a rematch in 1828.

#### *The Campaign and Election of 1828*

The four years of the John Quincy Adams administration constituted one long, acrimonious, and in the end, one-sided presidential campaign. Determined not to be paralyzed by his status as a minority President, Adams overreached with controversial policy initiatives. He threw his support behind the "American System," Henry Clay's program of congressional aid to economic development through transportation subsidies and protective tariffs. Adams's activism backfired as Jackson and his publicists mounted a cry to clean out the corruptionists and restore purity and economy in government...

This diffuse coalition included both friends and foes of the American System. To break it, Adams men tried to smoke out Jackson's position. Jackson refused to be pinned down, while his followers fended off questions about his qualifications and experience by touting his battlefield exploits, indomitable patriotism, and opposition to aristocracy and corruption. A good deal of mud was slung on both sides, much of it aimed at Jackson's marriage, his violent escapades, and the incidents of ferocious discipline and of disrespect for civilian authority that dotted his military career. Adams men painted him as a grasping and bloodthirsty character, a budding tyrant in the model of Caesar or Napoleon, whose election would spell the death of the republic. Jacksonians branded Adams as a corruptionist, an aristocrat, and – ridiculously – a libertine.

In the end, none of the slanders could touch Jackson's invincible popularity. He won easily in 1828, with 56 percent of the vote and 178 electoral votes...

#### *The Campaign and Election of 1832*

Jackson stood for re-election in 1832. By this time he had come out publicly against the American System. He had also created a new issue by vetoing the recharter of the Bank of the United States... Despite the new issues and innovations in party organization, the election was essentially a replay of 1828... Jackson read his victory as a popular ratification of his policies, especially the Bank veto. Opponents chalked it up to his untouchable personal popularity.



Feller, Daniel. "ANDREW JACKSON: CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS." *The Miller Center*. Last modified 2019. <https://millercenter.org/president/jackson/campaigns-and-elections#:~:text=The%20Campaign%20and%20Election%20of,second%20term%20of%20James%20Monroe>.

#### Document: Election Results from 1824

Political Party	Presidential Nominee	Electoral College	Popular Vote
Democratic-Republican	John Quincy Adams *	84	113,122
Democratic-Republican	Andrew Jackson	99	151,271
Democratic-Republican	William H. Crawford	41	40,856
Democratic-Republican	Henry Clay	37	47,531

\* No candidate received a majority of the Electoral College vote. John Quincy Adams was elected president by the House of Representatives on February 9, 1825.

"Presidential Election of 1824: Resource Guide." *Library of Congress*. Last modified October 23, 2018. <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/elections/election1824.html>.

#### Document: Vice President John Calhoun Letter

Washington  
10th March 1825

Strictly Confidential

My dear sir,

I have seized the first leisure on the termination of my official duties to renew our correspondence on my part. We have passed through many and strange events during last winter, which are but little known to the country. The result of which is, that we have triumphed in part and been defeated in part. The policy of Mr. Monroe's administration I consider fixed. He is too popular to be attacked. This is a great point; but there ends our victory. The mass of political and moral power, which carried the late administration through in triumph, has been wholly neglected in the new organization; and in the final stages of the election, the voices and the power of the people has been set at naught; and the result has been a President elected not by them, but by a few ambitious men with a view of their own interest, I fear. This result has caused the deepest discontent, and in my opinion deservedly. There is a solemn feeling of duty, that it must be corrected at another election, or the liberty of the country will be in danger. It is my opinion, that the country will never be quiet till the example is corrected, and the Constitution so amended as to prevent the recurrence of the danger. The country will appear to subside, but the appearance will be deceitful. Principles cannot be violated in this country with impunity. In four years all that has happened will be reversed, and the country will settle down on sound principles, and wise policy.

As to my self, I do not think of moving under existing circumstances. I know the force of my position, and my friends need not fear, I trust, either ambition, or imprudence on my part. I however, cannot but see what must come; and I shall never separate from principles, let the consequences be what it may. I see in the fact that Mr. Clay has made the President against the voice of his constituents, and that he has been





rewarded by the man elevated by him by the first office in his gift, the most dangerous stab, which the liberty of this country has ever received. I will not be on that side. I am with the people. And shall remain so. I would say much more but you can get all the information which you may desire from Gou'r...

With great respect, I am

JC Calhoun

*Calhoun, John C. Cited in Hay, Thomas Robson. "John C. Calhoun and the Presidential Campaign of 1824: Some Unpublished Calhoun Letters, II." The American Historical Review, Vol. 40, Issue 2. January 1935. 287-300.*

#### **Document: John Pemberton Letter to Jackson**

I have not language to express to you, the deep sorrow, and mortification I feel in the result of the late Election, by the Representatives of the People (falsely so styled) in their choice of a President of the US... Louisianans! Degraded-- Ungrateful men to vote against you! you! who under God are indebted for their soil! The Protector of the Chastity of their wives and daughters!!

*Pemberton, John. Letter to Andrew Jackson. Last modified 1825. Transcript.  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/maj010669/>.*

#### **Document: Election Results from 1828**

Political Party	Presidential Nominee	VP Nominee	Electoral College	Popular Vote
Democratic	Andrew Jackson	John C. Calhoun	178	642,553
National Republican	John Quincy Adams	Richard Rush	83	500,897

*"Presidential Election of 1828: A Resource Guide." Library of Congress. Last modified October 23, 2018. <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/elections/election1828.html>.*

#### **Document: Voter Participation**

Year	% Voter participation
1824	26.9%
1828	57.6
1832	55.4



1836	57.8
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*"Voter Participation in Presidential Elections." Info Please. Last modified December 1, 2020.  
<https://www.infoplease.com/us/government/elections/voter-participation-in-presidential-elections-1824-1928>.*

### Document:

The election of 1828 was significant as it heralded a profound change with the election of a man widely viewed as a champion of the common people. But that year's campaigning was also noteworthy for the intense personal attacks widely employed by the supporters of both candidates.

The incumbent John Quincy Adams and the challenger Andrew Jackson could not have been more different. Adams was the highly-educated son of the nation's second president and had traveled widely as a diplomat. Jackson was an orphan who clawed his way to success along the frontier before becoming a national hero at the Battle of New Orleans.

While Adams was known for thoughtful introspection, Jackson had a reputation for violent encounters and duels. Perhaps the one thing they had in common was that they both had long careers of public service. And by the time the votes were cast, both men would have wild stories circulated about their pasts, with lurid charges of murder, adultery, and procuring of women being plastered across the pages of partisan newspapers.

### *The 1828 Campaign Was Shaped By Party Conflict*

In 1827 supporters in both the Adams and Jackson camps began concerted efforts to undermine the character of the opponent. Even though the two candidates had strong differences on substantial issues, the resulting campaign turned out to be based on personalities. And the tactics employed were outrageously underhanded.

The 1824 election had not been marked with strong party affiliations. But during the Adams administration the defenders of the status quo began calling themselves "National Republicans." Their opponents in the Jackson camp began calling themselves "Democratic Republicans," which was soon shortened to Democrats.

The 1828 election was thus a return to a two-party system, and was the precursor of the familiar two-party system we know today. The Democratic loyalists of Jackson were organized by New York's Martin Van Buren, who was known for his sharp political skills.

### *Careers of Candidates Became Fodder for Attacks*

For those who detested Andrew Jackson, there existed a goldmine of material. Jackson was famed for his incendiary temper and had led a life filled with violence and controversy. He had taken part in several duels, killing a man in a notorious one in 1806.

When commanding troops in 1815, he had ordered the execution of militia members accused of desertion. The severity of the punishment, and its shaky legal foundation, became a part of Jackson's reputation.

Those opposed to John Quincy Adams mocked him as an elitist. The refinement and intelligence of Adams were turned against him. And he was even derided as a



“Yankee,” at a time when that connoted shopkeepers reputed to take advantage of consumers.

#### *Coffin Handbills and Adultery Rumors*

Andrew Jackson’s reputation as a national hero was based on his military career, as he had been the hero of the Battle of New Orleans, the final action of the War of 1812. His military glory was turned against him when a Philadelphia printer named John Binns published the notorious “coffin handbill,” a poster showing six black coffins and claiming the militiamen Jackson had ordered executed had essentially been murdered.

Even Jackson’s marriage became fodder for campaign attacks. When Jackson first met his wife Rachel, she mistakenly believed her first husband, whom she married as a teenager, had divorced her. So when Jackson married her in 1791, she was still legally married.

The legal situation of the marriage was eventually resolved. And the Jacksons were remarried in 1794, to ensure that their marriage was legal. But Jackson’s political opponents knew of the confusion.

Jackson’s marriage on the frontier nearly 40 years earlier became a major issue during the 1828 campaign. He was accused of adultery and vilified for running off with another man’s wife. And his wife was accused of bigamy.

#### *Attacks on John Quincy Adams*

John Quincy Adams, the son of founding father and second president John Adams, began his career in public service by working as the secretary to the American envoy to Russia when he was still a teenager. He had an illustrious career as a diplomat, which formed the basis for his later career in politics.

The supporters of Andrew Jackson began spreading a rumor that Adams, while serving as American ambassador to Russia, had procured an American girl for the sexual services of the Russian czar. The attack was no doubt baseless, but the Jacksonians delighted in it, even calling Adams a “pimp” and claiming that procuring women explained his great success as a diplomat.

Adams was also attacked for having a billiards table in the White House and allegedly charging the government for it. It was true that Adams played billiards in the White House, but he paid for the table with his own funds.

#### *Adams Recoiled, Jackson Participated*

As these scurrilous charges appeared in the pages of partisan newspapers, John Quincy Adams reacted by refusing to get involved with the campaign tactics. He was so offended by what was happening that he even refused to write in the pages of his diary from August 1828 until after the election.

Jackson, on the other hand, was so furious about the attacks on himself and his wife that he got more involved. He wrote to newspaper editors giving them guidelines on how attacks should be countered and how their own attacks should proceed.

#### *Jackson Won the Election of 1828*

Jackson’s appeal to the “common folk” served him well and he handily won the popular vote and the electoral vote. It came at a price, however. His wife Rachel suffered



a heart attack and died before the inauguration, and Jackson always blamed his political enemies for her death.

When Jackson arrived in Washington for his inauguration he refused to pay the customary courtesy call on the outgoing president. And John Quincy Adams reciprocated by refusing to attend the inauguration of Jackson. Indeed, the bitterness of the election of 1828 resonated for years. Jackson, it can be said, was angry the day he became president, and he stayed angry.

McNamara, Robert. "The Election of 1828 Was Marked By Dirty Tactics." ThoughtCo.  
<https://www.thoughtco.com/the-election-of-1828-1773861> (accessed December 1, 2020).

#### Document:

Despite the presence of major issues, particularly the protective tariff and growing southern sectionalism, the papers concentrated on personal attacks. The Jacksonians, not surprisingly, focused on the "corrupt bargain" of 1825, but also made ridiculous accusations about Adams' personal habits. He was accused of procuring young American girls for the Russian Czar, using public funds to buy a pool table and other gambling equipment for the White House, and being a friend of monarchy, much like his father before him. The abuse aimed at Jackson, though, was worse. At one time or another, he was called ignorant, a duelist, a bigamist and adulterer. He was also accused of practicing the slave trade, plotting with Aaron Burr to commit treason, murdering his own troops during the War of 1812, and being the son of a prostitute. "The whole object of the coalition is to calumniate me," Jackson complained. "Cart loads of coffin handbills, forgeries, and pamphlets of the most base calumnies are circulated by the franking privilege of members of Congress, and Mr. Clay. Even Mrs. J. is not spared, and my pious Mother . . . has been dragged forth . . . and held to public scorn as a prostitute who intermarried with a Negro, and my eldest brother sold as a slave in Carolina . . . I am branded with every crime."

Some of the most vitriolic rhetoric came from newspapers in the states where voters and politicians had questioned the outcome of the House election in 1824. For example, an influential Jacksonian, Amos Kendall, used his paper the *Western America*, to remind voters continuously that, in 1824, "Mr. Clay transferred your vote to John Quincy Adams without your consent and contrary to your will. He now calls on you to ratify the bargain." Adams, according to Kendall, was no less than "the enemy of the West, the clumsy negotiator and the vindictive man to whom you were sold by Henry Clay." Kentuckians would help answer the major question before the people, the question "of monarchy – the Secretary succession. Since the accession of Jefferson, each President has appointed his successor. . . . the whole administration uses the patronage of the first four years to secure the election of the President for the second four, and of the second four to secure the succession; so that the country is filled with corruption." The *Lexington Kentucky Gazette* echoed Kendall, asserting, "Of all the various classes among mankind, a proud monied aristocracy is the superlatively contemptible. These are the men who have been laboring by means of bribery and corruption to cheat the people out of their liberties." Clearly, the remedy for the Kentuckians was the removal of the source of the corruption: John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay.

The Jacksonians did not hold a monopoly on using the newspapers to their advantage, though perhaps they were better organized. In North Carolina, where the



voters had shown their outrage at those members who supported Adams by voting most of them out of office in 1826, they were reassured that it would be “impossible to cheat them out of their choice as was the case in the last election.” But, warned, the Raleigh Register, and North Carolina Gazette, “party rage is no apology for . . . such grossness and vulgarity” as was being demonstrated. Questioning the propriety of the Democratic campaign tactics, the paper quoted the following toast drunk at a dinner in South Carolina, which was being reprinted throughout the country in papers favorable to Jackson: “Adams, Clay & Co. – Would to God they were like Jonah in the whale's belly: the whale to the devil; the devil in hell; and the door locked, key lost, and not a son of Vulcan within a million miles to make another.” More often than not, however, the newspapers urged voter action – “Rush then to the polls, ride, walk, or swim to reach them, and let your song of triumph be Jackson and our Country forever” – and in this both sides were very successful. The outcome of the election was not close. Jackson won overwhelmingly with 642,553, or 56.0 percent, of the vote. Adams garnered only 500,897 votes, or 43.6 percent, with 4,568 (less than one-half percent) given to minor candidates. In the Electoral College, Jackson's victory was even more decisive – 178 to 83, or 68 to 32 percent.

Thomason, Lisa. “Jacksonian Democracy And The Electoral College: Politics And Reform In The Method Of Selecting Presidential Electors, 1824-1833.” *Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of Doctor Of Philosophy University Of North Texas*. Last modified May, 2001, p.91-93. Retrieved from [https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc2775/m2/1/high\\_res\\_d/dissertation.pdf](https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc2775/m2/1/high_res_d/dissertation.pdf).



### ***\*National Bank Veto and Nullification***

*Read and annotate each of the documents below. Consider the question, was Jackson a common folk president?*

**Evidence that Jackson was a president for the common folk:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Evidence that Jackson was NOT a president for the common folk:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

#### **Document: An Essay on Andrew Jackson: Bank Veto**

There are a few focal points upon which Jackson's modern reputation has turned for better or for worse. One is his attack on corporate privilege and on the concentrated political influence of wealth. In his famous Bank Veto of 1832, Jackson juxtaposed "the rich and powerful" against "the humble members of society – the farmers, mechanics, and laborers," and lamented that the former "too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes." No president before and few since have spoken so bluntly of economic antagonisms between Americans. Jackson went on, in his Farewell Address in 1837, to warn of an insidious "money power," made up of banks and corporations, that would steal ordinary citizens' liberties away from them. (It said something of Jackson's sense of his own importance that he presumed to deliver a Farewell Address, an example set by Washington that no previous successor had dared to follow.)

Jackson's Bank Veto was so riveting, and so provocative, that in the ensuing presidential election both sides distributed it as a campaign document. Foes of bankers, corporations, Wall Street, and "the rich" have turned to it ever since. Populists and other agrarian insurgents in the nineteenth century, and New Deal Democrats in the twentieth, claimed it as their birthright. Writing in the wake of the Great Depression and the New Deal, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. made the Bank Veto the centerpiece of *The Age of Jackson* (1945), the foundational work of modern Jacksonian scholarship.

In the late twentieth century, Jackson's strictures attracted some historians who were articulating a class-based analysis of American history, and who used them to





interpret Jackson as a foe not only of capitalist abuses and excesses, but of capitalism itself. To other recent scholars, though, the Bank Veto has seemed merely demagogic, while to most people outside the academy the whole Jacksonian struggle over banking grew to appear baffling and arcane, divorced from our present concerns. All of that has suddenly changed. Since the financial collapse of 2008, Jackson's warnings seem not only urgently relevant but eerily prescient. They are again often quoted, and his reputation has enjoyed, at least for the moment, a sharp uptick...

Most southern states in Jackson's day vehemently opposed the "protective tariff," an import tax that provided most of the government's revenue and also aided American manufacturers by raising the price of competing foreign (mainly British) goods. In 1832 the state of South Carolina declared the tariff law unconstitutional and therefore null and void. In assuming this right, independent of the Supreme Court or anybody else, to judge what the US Constitution meant and what federal laws had to be obeyed, South Carolina threatened the very viability of the federal union. Although he was himself a southerner, no great friend of the tariff, and a South Carolina native, Jackson boldly faced down the nullifiers. He first confronted nullification's mastermind (and his own vice president), John C. Calhoun, with a ringing public declaration: "Our Federal Union—It must be preserved." He then responded officially to South Carolina's action with a blistering presidential proclamation, in which he warned that nullification would inexorably lead to secession (formal withdrawal of a state from the United States), and secession meant civil war. "Be not deceived by names. Disunion by armed force is treason. Are you really ready to incur its guilt?" Bloodshed was averted when Congress passed a compromise tariff that South Carolina accepted and Jackson approved. Although he played no direct role in its passage, Jackson took much credit for the compromise, and even many political opponents conceded it to him.

For his own generation and several to come, Jackson's defiance of nullification earned him a place in the patriotic pantheon above the contentions of party politics, at least in the eyes of those who approved the result. In the secession crisis thirty years later, Republicans—including Abraham Lincoln, an anti-Jackson partisan from his first entry into politics—hastened to invoke his example and quote his words. In 1860 James Parton, Jackson's first scholarly biographer, managed to praise Jackson's unionism while providing a negative overall assessment of his character.

*Feller, Daniel. "Andrew Jackson's Shifting Legacy." The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History Last modified 2019. <http://ap.gilderlehrman.org/essay/andrew-jackson%27s-shifting-legacy>.*

### **Document: Jackson on Public Revenue in his First Inaugural Address**

The management of the public revenue--that searching operation in all governments--is among the most delicate and important trusts in ours, and it will, of course, demand no inconsiderable share of my official solicitude. Under every aspect in which it can be considered it would appear that advantage must result from the observance of a strict and faithful economy. This I shall aim at the more anxiously both because it will facilitate the extinguishment of the national debt, the unnecessary duration of which is incompatible with real independence, and because it will counteract that tendency to public and private profligacy which a profuse expenditure



of money by the Government is but too apt to engender. Powerful auxiliaries to the attainment of this desirable end are to be found in the regulations provided by the wisdom of Congress for the specific appropriation of public money and the prompt accountability of public officers.

With regard to a proper selection of the subjects of impost with a view to revenue, it would seem to me that the spirit of equity, caution and compromise in which the Constitution was formed requires that the great interests of agriculture, commerce, and manufactures should be equally favored, and that perhaps the only exception to this rule should consist in the peculiar encouragement of any products of either of them that may be found essential to our national independence.

Jackson, Andrew. "Andrew Jackson's inaugural address, on being sworn into office, as President of the United States, March 4th." Washington. Printed at the office of the United States Telegraph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.19301800/>.

#### Document: King Andrew the First



"King Andrew the First." Last modified 1833. Library of Congress.  
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsca.15771>.



*Annotation: President Andrew Jackson's opponents accused him of abusing his Presidential powers. This cartoon shows Jackson as a tyrannical king, trampling on the Constitution.*

**Document: Daniel Webster on the Bank Veto**

The Bank Veto.--This is the most wholly radical and basely Jesuitical document that ever emanated from any Administration, in any country....It impudently asserts that Congress have acted prematurely, blindly, and without sufficient examination. It falsely and wickedly alleges that the rich and powerful throughout the country are waging a war of oppression against the poor and the weak; and attempts to justify the President on the ground of its being his duty thus to protect the humble when so assailed. Finally, it unblushingly denied that the Supreme Court is the proper tribunal to decide upon the constitutionality of the laws!! The whole paper is a most thoroughgoing electioneering missile, intended to secure the mad-caps of the South, and as such, deserves the execration of all who love their country or its welfare.

*Webster, Daniel. Response to the Bank Veto. Digital History. 1834.*

**Document: Boston Daily Advertiser**

The national bank, though not properly a political institution, is one of the most important and valuable instruments that are used in the practical administration of the government.... As the fiscal agent of the executive, it has exhibited a remarkable intelligence, efficiency, energy, and above all, INDEPENDENCE. This...has been its real crime. As the regulator of the currency, it has furnished the country with a safe, convenient and copious circulating medium, and prevented the mischiefs that would otherwise result from the insecurity of local banks. As a mere institution for loaning money, it has been...the Providence of the less wealthy sections of the Union....Through its dealings in exchange at home and abroad, the bank has materially facilitated the operations of our foreign and domestic trade. The important advantages which have thus been derived from this institution have been unattended by any countervailing evil.

*The Boston Daily Advertiser. Digital History. 1832*



**Document: Jackson and the Bank of the United States**



Robinson, Henry R., -1850. *General Jackson slaying the many headed monster*. Pennsylvania, 1836. N.Y.: Printed & publd. by H.R. Robinson. Photograph.  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2008661279/>.

*Annotation: Andrew Jackson hated the idea of the Bank of the United States. He thought it wasn't fair to the poor people. He wanted to destroy it. The many-headed monster is the states, who are fighting Jackson to keep the bank. Jackson raises a cane that says "veto."*

## Document: Davy Crockett to John Drurey

*Annotation: Jackson's decision to divert funds from the bank drew strong support from many business people who believed that the bank's destruction would increase the availability of credit. Jackson, however, hated all banks. Based partly on his unpleasant personal experience with debt, Jackson believed that the only sound currency was gold and silver. The President launched a crusade to replace all bank notes with hard money. In the Specie Circular of 1836, he prohibited payment for public lands with anything but gold or silver.*

Initially, land sales, canal construction, cotton production, and manufacturing boomed following Jackson's decision to divert federal funds from the bank. At the same time, inflation increased dramatically; prices rose 28 percent in three years. Then in 1837, just after the election of Jackson's hand-picked successor, Democrat Martin Van Buren, a deep financial depression





*struck the country. Not until the mid-1840s would the country fully recover from the effects of the Panic of 1837.*

*In this letter, David Crockett (1780-1836), the famous frontier hero and an anti-Jackson member of Congress from Tennessee, attacks Jackson's withdrawal of government funds from the Bank of the United States and calls the president a tyrant ruled by personal ambition. Crockett blamed the economic panic on Jackson and his war on the bank. In 1835, pro-Jackson forces defeated Crockett's reelection bid.*

I will now give you a history of the times at headquarters [Washington, D.C.]. We are still engaged in debating the great question of the removal of the [Federal government's] deposits [from the Bank of the United States.] This question have consumed almost the whole of the session [of Congress].... The Senate took the vote last week on Mr. Clay's Resolutions [on the administration's decision to divert federal funds from the Bank]. First resolution was that the Secretary's reasons were insufficient, and was not satisfactory to the Senate and the other was that the President [Jackson] has violated the Laws and the Constitution. The first resolution was adopted 28 to 18 and the Second by a vote of 27 to 19.... This was the vote of the Senate and I hope the vote may be taken in the House next week. It will be a close vote. Both parties claim the victory. I am still of [the] opinion that the House will adopt similar Resolutions to that of the Senate. My reasons for these opinions is that in so large and intelligent body of men called Honourable men cannot violate principle so much as for a majority to vote for a measure that every man that knows anything must acknowledge is contrary to the laws and Constitution. I have conferred with some of our own numbers that has not acknowledged that the act was not right, that Jackson had not a friend in Congress but was sorry that the act was done, but that they must sustain their party. This is what may be called forsaking principle to follow party. This is what I hope ever to be excused from. I cannot nor will not forsake principle to follow after any party and I do hope there may be a majority in Congress that may be governed by the same motive....

I do consider the question now before Congress is one of deep interest to the American people the question is whether we will surrender up our old long and happy mode of government and take a despot. If Jackson is sustained in this act we say that the will of one man shall be the law of the land. This you know the people will never submit to. I do believe nothing keeps the people quiet at this time only the hope that Congress will give some relief to the Country. We have had memorials from more than three hundred thousand people praying for the restoration of the deposits and a revival of the Charter of the United States Bank. They state that the manufactures have all stopped and dismissed their hands and that there is men, women and children ro[a]ming over the country offering to work for their victuals. You know that such a state of things cannot be kept quiet long. This have never been the case before since previous to the old war [the War of 1812]. The people petitioned in vain...and at length we knew what followed and...my great dread is a Civil War. I do consider the South Carolina question [the Nullification controversy] nothing to compare with the present moment. We see the whole circulatory medium of the Country deranged and destroyed and the whole commercial community oppressed and distressed.... Just to gratify the ambition of one man [Jackson] that he may [w]reck his vengeance on the United States Bank. And for what? Just because it refused to lend its aid in upholding his party. The truth is he is



surrounded by a set of imps...that is willing to sacrifice the country to promote their own interest....

I have no doubt of the people getting their eyes open yet in time to defeat the little political Judas, Martin Van Buren.... Never was the money of Rome more compleat on the hands of Caesar than the whole purse of the nation is at the time in the hands of our President Jackson.... He is now in possession of both sword and purse. Caesar said to the secretary of Rome give me the money and the secretary said no person have a right to ask that but the Roman Senate and Caesar said to him that it would be as easy for Caesar to take your life as to will it to another. With that the Secretary knowing that Caesar had all power he stepped aside and Caesar took the money. How was it with Andrew Jackson when he asked Mr. Duane to remove the deposits and he refused & he was then dismissed and a more pliable one appointed and the act is done and I believe they are sorry for it. No man knows where the money of the Country is. Congress has no control over it. This is a new scene in our political history.

Crockett, David. *Letter to John Drurey*. Digital History. Last modified 1834.  
[https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=307](https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=307).

### **Document: Andrew Jackson's Veto Message Regarding the National Bank**

*Annotation: President Andrew Jackson, like Thomas Jefferson before him, was highly suspicious of the Bank of the United States. He blamed the bank for the Panic of 1819 and for corrupting politics with too much money. After congress renewed the bank charter, Jackson vetoed the bill. The following was the message he gave to congress after issuing his veto. Jackson's decision was controversial. Some Americans accused him of acting like a dictator to redistribute wealth. Others saw the act as an attack on a corrupt system that only favored the rich.*

The bill " to modify and continue " the act entitled "An act to incorporate the subscribers to the Bank of the United States " was presented to me on the 4th July instant. Having considered it with that solemn regard to the principles of the Constitution which the day was calculated to inspire, and come to the conclusion that it ought not to become a law, I herewith return it to the Senate, in which it originated, with my objections.

A bank of the United States is in many respects convenient for the Government and useful to the people. Entertaining this opinion, and deeply impressed with the belief that some of the powers and privileges possessed by the existing bank are unauthorized by the Constitution, subversive of the rights of the States, and dangerous to the liberties of the people, I felt it my duty at an early period of my Administration to call the attention of Congress to the practicability of organizing an institution combining all its advantages and obviating these objections. I sincerely regret that in the act before me I can perceive none of those modifications of the bank charter, which are necessary, in my opinion, to make it compatible with justice, with sound policy, or with the Constitution of our country.

The present corporate body, denominated the president, directors, and company of the Bank of the United States, will have existed at the time this act is intended to take effect twenty years. It enjoys an exclusive privilege of banking under the authority of the General Government, a monopoly of its favor and support, and, as a necessary consequence, almost a monopoly of the foreign and domestic exchange. The powers,





privileges, and favors bestowed upon it in the original charter, by increasing the value of the stock far above its par value, operated as a gratuity of many millions to the stockholders.

*Jackson, Andrew. Cited in Richardson, James D. ed. A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1908. Government Printing Office: Washington, 1908, II: 576-591.*



### ***\*Jacksonian Democracy and Spoils System***

*Read and annotate each of the documents below. Consider the question, was Jackson a common folk president?*

**Evidence that Jackson was a president for the common folk:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Evidence that Jackson was NOT a president for the common folk:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

#### **Document: The Jacksonian Democratic Party**

The Democratic party and its program emerged in stages out of the largely personal following that had elected Andrew Jackson President in 1828. As progressively defined by Jackson during his two terms, the party's outlook was essentially laissez-faire. Anointing themselves as Thomas Jefferson's true heirs, Democrats stood for simple, frugal, and unintrusive government. They opposed government spending and government favoritism, especially in the form of corporate charters for banks and other enterprises. They claimed that all such measures invariably aided the rich, the privileged, and the idle – the aristocracy – against the humble yet meritorious ordinary working people.

Again following Jefferson, the Democrats espoused anticlericalism and rigorous separation of church and state. At a time of great evangelical fervor, Democrats stood aloof from the nation's powerful interdenominational (but primarily Presbyterian-Congregational) benevolent and philanthropic associations; and they denounced the intrusion into politics of religious crusades such as Sabbatarianism, temperance, and abolitionism. Democrats thus garnered adherents among religious dissenters and minorities, from Catholics to freethinkers.

Under Jackson and his successor Van Buren, Democrats pioneered in techniques of party organization and discipline, which they justified as a means of securing popular ascendancy over the aristocrats. To nominate candidates and adopt platforms, Democrats perfected a pyramidal structure of local, state, and national committees,



caucuses, and conventions. These ensured coordinated action and supposedly reflected opinion at the grass roots, though their movements in fact were often directed from Washington. The "spoils system" of government patronage inaugurated by Jackson inspired activity and instilled discipline within party ranks.

Jackson and the Democrats cast their party as the embodiment of the people's will, the defender of the common folk against the Whig "aristocracy." The substance behind this claim is still in dispute. After the War of 1812, constitutional changes in the states had broadened the participatory base of politics by erasing traditional property requirements for suffrage and by making state offices and presidential electors popularly elective. By the time Jackson was elected, nearly all white men could vote and the vote had gained in power. In 1812, only half the states chose presidential electors by popular vote; by 1832, all did except South Carolina. Jackson and the Democrats benefited from and capitalized upon these changes, but in no sense did they initiate them.

The presence of a class component in Jacksonian parties, setting Democratic plain farmers and workers against the Whig bourgeoisie or business elite, is argued to this day. One can read Democratic hosannas to the plain people as a literal description of their constituency or as artful propaganda. Once the popular Jackson left the scene, the two parties were very nearly equal in their bases of popular support. Presidential elections through the 1840s were among the closest in history, while party control of Congress passed back and forth.

Close competition and nearly universal white-male suffrage turned political campaigns into a combination of spectator sport and participatory street theater. Whigs as well as Democrats championed the common folk and marshaled the masses at barbecues and rallies. Both parties appealed to ordinary voters with riveting stump speeches and by crafting candidates into folk heroes. Whigs answered the popularity of "Old Hickory" Andrew Jackson, hero of New Orleans, with figures like "Old Tippecanoe" William Henry Harrison, victor of the rousing "log cabin" presidential campaign of 1840. With both parties chasing every vote, turnout rates spiraled up toward 80 per cent of the eligible electorate by 1840.

*Feller, Daniel. "Andrew Jackson: The American Franchise." The Miller Center. Last modified 2019. [https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-essays-collection?field\\_full\\_node\\_value=&page=5](https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-essays-collection?field_full_node_value=&page=5).*

### **Document: Jackson on Democracy in his First Inaugural Address**

In administering the laws of Congress I shall keep steadily in view the limitations as well as the extent of the Executive power trusting thereby to discharge the functions of my office without transcending its authority. With foreign nations it will be my study to preserve peace and to cultivate friendship on fair and honorable terms, and in the adjustment of any differences that may exist or arise to exhibit the forbearance becoming a powerful nation rather than the sensibility belonging to a gallant people.

*Jackson, Andrew. "Andrew Jackson's inaugural address, on being sworn into office, as President of the United States, March 4th." Washington. Printed at the office of the United States Telegraph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.19301800/>.*



### **Document: Jacksonian Democracy and the Electoral College**

Jacksonians constantly promoted democratic ideals and feared that the growing strength of the business community in the United States was heightening class and monetary status differences among the people. This in turn would limit independence and equality. Clay's followers often showed concern about relying on the opinion of the uninformed masses, especially in areas of business and economic prosperity. Historian Harry Watson sums up the differences: "... in an age of democracy and economic development, Andrew Jackson and his supporters feared that democracy might suffer at the hands of development, while Henry Clay and his admirers worried that the opposite might be true."

...The issue of electoral reform was addressed first at the national level, where once again the call for a constitutional amendment was heard. For three years, leaders of the Jacksonian Democrats pushed for an amendment that would give the vote to the people and remove the House of Representatives from the election process. Although no amendment proposal came close to passing, the Democrats were able to keep the issue before the American public, reinforcing the perception that the election had been stolen from Jackson and the people. This, in turn, helped reinforce the efforts of the party, at the state level, to change electoral laws.

*Thomason, Lisa. "Jacksonian Democracy And The Electoral College: Politics And Reform In The Method Of Selecting Presidential Electors, 1824-1833." Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of Doctor Of Philosophy University Of North Texas. Last modified May, 2001, p.40, 150. Retrieved from [https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc2775/m2/1/high\\_res\\_d/dissertation.pdf](https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc2775/m2/1/high_res_d/dissertation.pdf).*

### **Document: Frederick Robinson**

The aristocracy of our country...continually contrive to change their party name. It was first Tory, then Federalist, then no party...then National Republican, now Whig....But by whatever name they reorganize themselves, the true democracy of the country, the producing classes, ought to be able to distinguish the enemy. Ye may know them by their fruit. Ye may know them by their deportment toward the people. Ye may know them by their disposition to club together, and constitute societies and incorporations for the enjoyment of exclusive privileges and for countenancing and protecting each other in their monopolies....They are those, with some honorable exceptions, who have contrived to live without labor...and must consequently live on the labor of others.

*Robinson, Frederick. Digital History. Last modified 1834.*

### **Document: Democrats Statement of Democratic Principles**

We believe, then in the principle of democratic republicanism, in its strongest and purest sense. We have an abiding confidence in the virtue, intelligence, and full capacity for self-government, of the great mass of our people--our industrious, honest manly, intelligent millions of freemen. We are opposed to all self-styled "wholesome



restraints" on the free action of the popular opinion and will, other than those which have for their sole object the prevention of precipitate legislation.

*"Statement of Democratic Principles." Digital History. Last modified 1834.*

#### **Document: Calvin Colton**

Ours is a country, where men start from an humble origin, and from small beginnings rise gradually in the world, as the reward of merit and industry, and where they attain to the most elevated positions, or acquire a large amount of wealth, according to the pursuits they elect for themselves. No exclusive privileges of birth, no entailment of estates, no civil or political disqualifications, stand in their path; but one has as good a chance as another, according to his talents, prudence, and personal exertions. This is a country of self-made men, than which nothing better could be said of any state of society.

*Colton, Calvin. Digital History. Last modified 1834.*

#### **Document: Background on the Spoils System**

*Annotation: From ourdocuments.gov, General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives.*

##### *Document*

Although President George Washington made most of his Federal appointments based on merit, subsequent Presidents began to deviate from this policy. By the time Andrew Jackson was elected President in 1828, the "spoils system," in which political friends and supporters were rewarded with Government positions, was in full force. The term "spoils system" was derived from the phrase "to the victor go the spoils." In the years after Jackson's Presidency, the flaws and abuses in this system were serious. Political appointees were required to spend more and more time and money on political activities. As the Federal bureaucracy grew, Presidents were increasingly hounded by job seekers. In Jackson's time there were approximately 20,000 Federal employees. By 1884 there were over 130,000. Additionally, with the industrialization of America, Federal jobs became more specialized and required special and specific skills.

*"Pedelton Act (1883)." Our Documents. Last modified 2020.*

*<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=48>.*

#### **Document: Jackson and the Spoils System**

[Jackson] carved out a stronger role for the presidency. Jackson replaced many government officials on partisan grounds, inaugurating the "spoils system." Catering to his core regional constituency of Southern planters and Western frontiersmen, he condemned antislavery agitation, favored cheaper public lands, and strong-armed Indian tribes into removing west of the Mississippi. In a confrontation between Georgia and the Cherokee Nation, Jackson backed state authority against tribal sovereignty and refused to protect Indians' treaty rights despite their recognition by the United States Supreme Court. Jackson wielded executive powers vigorously, defying Congress,



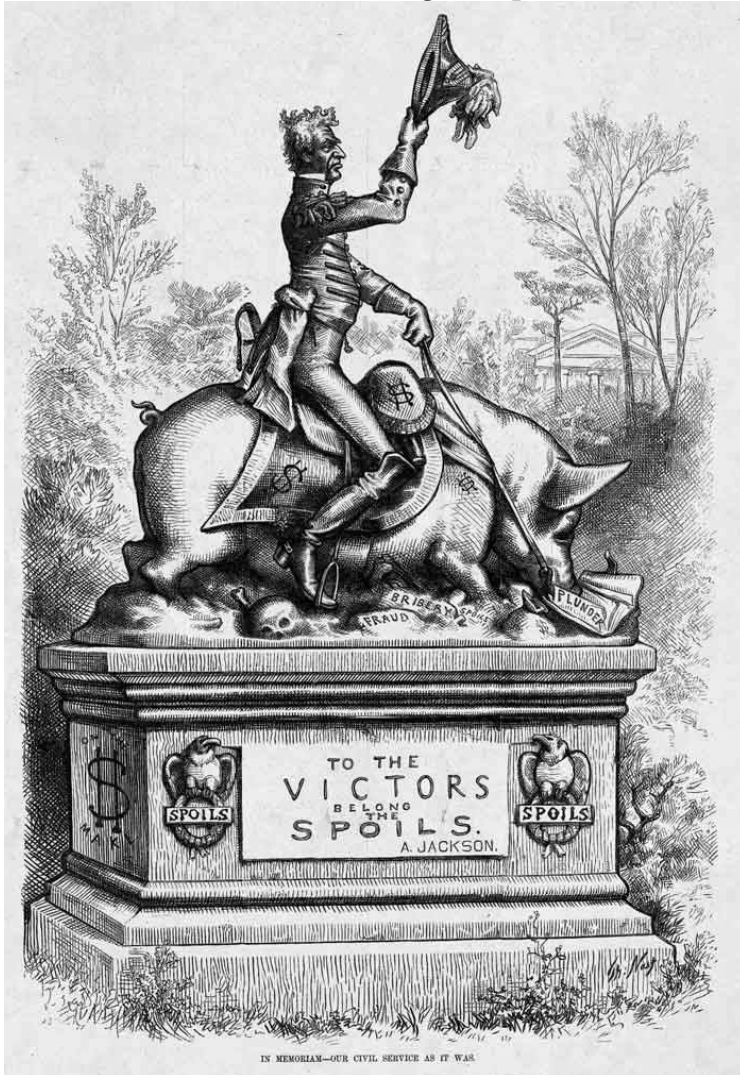


vetoing more bills than all his predecessors combined, and frequently reshuffling his cabinet.

Strong-willed and sharp-tempered, a fierce patriot and rabid partisan, Jackson was always controversial, both as a general and as President. He personalized disputes and demonized opponents. In a notorious episode, Jackson broke open his first Cabinet and forced a rupture with Vice-President John C. Calhoun by championing the character of Peggy Eaton, the vivacious and controversial wife of the secretary of war. Yet behind Jackson's towering rages often lay shrewd calculation of their political effects.

Feller, Daniel. "Life in Brief." Miller Center. Last modified 2019.  
<https://millercenter.org/president/jackson/life-in-brief>.

### Document: To the Victor Belong the Spoils



Nast, Thomas, Artist. In memoriam--our civil service as it was / Th. Nast. United States, 1877.  
Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/90710858/>.





*Annotation: Jackson's motto seemed to be "To the victor belong the spoils," and he certainly employed the "spoils system". One of his first acts was to fire dozens of federal employees, some who had been there since the days of George Washington. In their place he appointed people who had supported him. These appointments did not always work out so well. One member had to quit after having a well-publicized affair. The words, "fraud, bribery, and plunder" are seen underneath the pig. A skeleton is also seen under the pig, and the pig has dollar signs on it. Spoils: goods stolen or taken forcibly from a person or place: the looters carried their spoils away.*

### **Document: Jackson on Spoils System in his First Inaugural Address**

The recent demonstration of public sentiment inscribes on the list of Executive duties, in characters too legible to be overlooked, the task of reform, which will require particularly the correction of those abuses that have brought the patronage of the Federal Government into conflict with the freedom of elections, and the counteraction of those causes which have disturbed the rightful course of appointment and have placed or continued power in unfaithful or incompetent hands.

In the performance of a task thus generally delineated I shall endeavor to select men whose diligence and talents will insure in their respective stations able and faithful cooperation, depending for the advancement of the public service more on the integrity and zeal of the public officers than on their numbers.

A diffidence, perhaps too just, in my own qualifications will teach me to look with reverence to the examples of public virtue left by my illustrious predecessors, and with veneration to the lights that flow from the mind that founded and the mind that reformed our system. The same diffidence induces me to hope for instruction and aid from the coordinate branches of the Government, and for the indulgence and support of my fellow-citizens generally. And a firm reliance on the goodness of that Power whose providence mercifully protected our national infancy, and has since upheld our liberties in various vicissitudes, encourages me to offer up my ardent supplications that He will continue to make our beloved country the object of His divine care and gracious benediction.

*Jackson, Andrew. "Andrew Jackson's inaugural address, on being sworn into office, as President of the United States, March 4th." Washington. Printed at the office of the United States Telegraph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.19301800/>.*



### ***\*Peggy Eaton Affair***

*Read and annotate each of the documents below. Consider the question, was Jackson a common folk president?*

**Evidence that Jackson was a president for the common folk:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Evidence that Jackson was NOT a president for the common folk:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

#### **Document: The Peggy Eaton Affair**

The Eaton Affair, sometimes insultingly called the “Petticoat Affair,” began as a disagreement among elite women in Washington, D.C., but it eventually led to the disbanding of Jackson’s cabinet.

True to his backwoods reputation, when he took office in 1829, President Jackson chose mostly provincial politicians, not Washington veterans, to serve in his administration. One of them was his friend John Henry Eaton, a senator from Tennessee, whom Jackson nominated to be his secretary of war.

A few months earlier, Eaton married Margaret O’Neale Timberlake, the recent widow of a navy officer. She was the daughter of Washington boardinghouse proprietors, and her humble origins and combination of beauty, outspokenness, and familiarity with so many men in the boardinghouse had led to gossip. During her first marriage, rumors circulated that she and John Eaton were having an affair while her husband was at sea. When her first husband committed suicide and she married Eaton just nine months later, the society women of Washington had been scandalized. One wrote that Margaret Eaton’s reputation had been “totally destroyed.”

John Eaton was now secretary of war, but other cabinet members’ wives refused have anything to do with his wife. No respectable lady who wanted to protect her own reputation could exchange visits with her, invite her to social events, or be seen chatting with her. Most importantly, the vice president’s wife, Floride Calhoun, shunned Margaret Eaton, spending most of her time in South Carolina to avoid her, and Jackson’s



own niece, Emily Donelson, visited Eaton once and then refused to have anything more to do with her.

Although women could not vote or hold office, they played an important role in politics as people who controlled influence. They helped hold official Washington together. And according to one local society woman, “the ladies” had “as much rivalry and party spirit, desire of precedence and authority” as male politicians had. These women upheld a strict code of femininity and sexual morality. They paid careful attention to the rules that governed personal interactions and official relationships.

Margaret Eaton’s social exclusion thus greatly affected Jackson, his cabinet, and the rest of Washington society. At first, President Jackson blamed his rival Henry Clay for the attacks on the Eatons. But he soon perceived that Washington women and his new cabinet had initiated the gossip. Jackson scoffed, “I did not come here to make a cabinet for the ladies of this place,” and claimed that he “had rather have live vermin on my back than the tongue of one of these Washington women on my reputation.” He began to blame the ambition of Vice President Calhoun for Floride Calhoun’s actions, deciding “it was necessary to put him out of the cabinet and destroy him.”

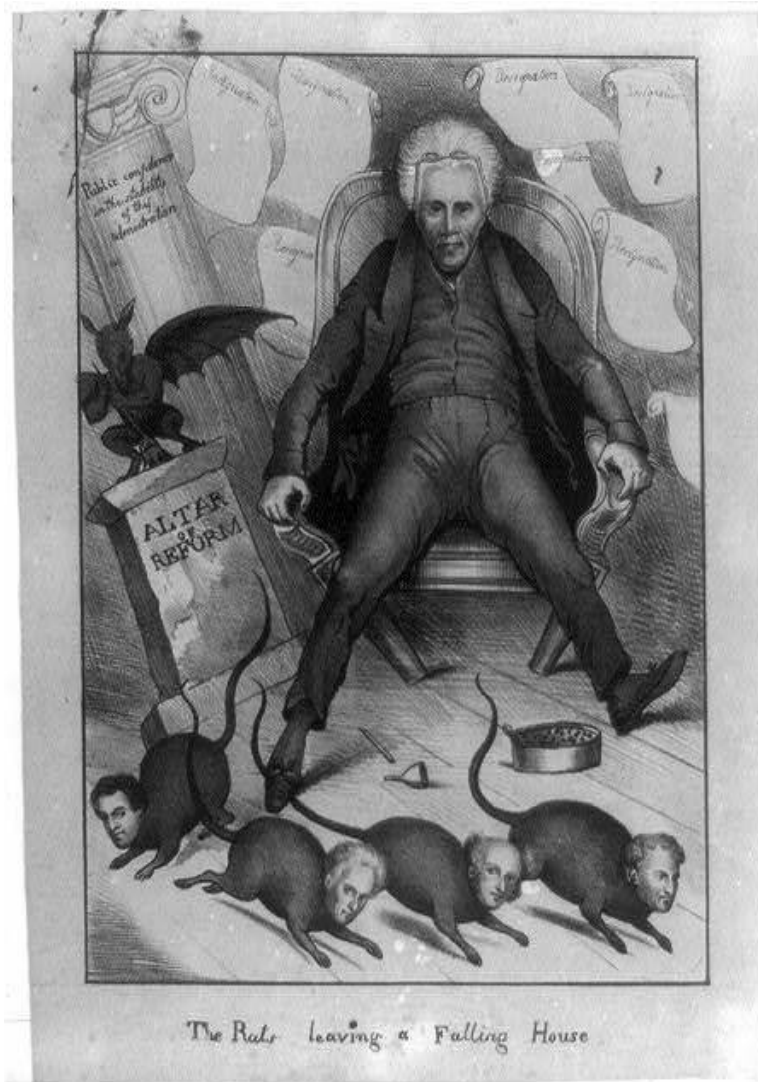
Jackson was so indignant because he had recently been through a similar scandal with his late wife Rachel. Her character, too, had been insulted by leading politicians’ wives because of the circumstances of her marriage. Jackson believed that Rachel’s death had been caused by those slanderous attacks. Furthermore, he saw the assaults on the Eatons as attacks on his authority.

In one of the most famous presidential meetings in American history, Jackson called together his cabinet members to discuss what they saw as the bedrock of society: women’s position as protectors of the nation’s values. There, the men of the cabinet debated Margaret Eaton’s character. Jackson delivered a long defense, methodically presenting evidence against her attackers. But the men attending the meeting – and their wives – were not swayed. They continued to shun Margaret Eaton, and the scandal was resolved only with the resignation of four members of the cabinet, including Eaton’s husband.

*“The Eaton Affair and the Politics of Sexuality.” Lumen Learning. Last modified 2020.  
<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-ushistory1ay/chapter/the-eaton-affair-and-the-politics-of-sexuality/>.*

### **Document: The Rats Leaving a Falling House**





*The Rats Leaving a Falling House. , 1831. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2008661748/>.*

*Annotation: Jackson is seated in a collapsing chair, with the "Altar of Reform" toppling next to him, and rats scurrying at his feet. The rats are (left to right): Secretary of War John H. Eaton, Secretary of the Navy John Branch, Secretary of State Martin Van Buren, and Treasury Secretary Samuel D. Ingham. Jackson's spectacles are pushed up over his forehead, and his foot is planted firmly on the tail of the Van Buren rat. "Resignations" fill the air behind him, and a pillar marked "Public confidence in the stability of this admistration [sic]" falls to the left.*

### **Document: American Presidential Scandals**

Just as Trump/Russia is a cluster of related scandals rather than a single node of wrongdoing, so does Stormy Daniels stand in for a whole category of Trump infidelity and sexual misconduct. To the extent that accusations of sexual misconduct have shaped previous presidencies, however, they have turned less on the



morality of the conduct in question and more on the ability of a president or candidate to make his version of contested events the master narrative.

President Andrew Jackson, for instance, imbued every moment of his life with a comically exaggerated sense of honor – so much so that his first administration was dominated by the Petticoat Affair, a scandal over the sexual reputation of the wife of one of his cabinet members.

...This infuriated Jackson, whose own wife, Rachel, had long been accused of similar impropriety, and had just passed away. Incapable of interpreting any occurrence or event except through the lens of loyalty to himself, Jackson attempted to defend O'Neale's honor with the same combination of verve and recklessness he used to defend his own. "She is chaste as a virgin!" he allegedly declared in a cabinet meeting called to demand that the wives of his cabinet members socialize with the Eatons.

When this failed, the only solution turned out to be mass resignation of the cabinet. The big loser was John Calhoun, whose wife Floride was at the center of the anti-Eaton cabal. The big winner was Martin Van Buren, who, as a widower, had avoided the problem altogether. He became Jackson's preferred political successor and the heir to the Democratic Party itself.

Subsequent presidential sex scandals have been more salacious but ultimately less transformative of the path of American politics.

*Horger, Mark. "American Presidential Scandals." Oklahoma State University. Last modified November 2018. <https://origins.osu.edu/article/donald-j-trump-scandal-history-american-political-wrongdoing-russia-burr>.*

### **Document: Mrs. Smith's Letter on Mrs. Eaton**

*Annotation: In a letter to Mrs. Kirkpatrick written on New Year's Day, 1829, Margaret Bayard Smith explained the enthusiasms of Mrs. McLane of Delaware, whose husband expected to be tapped for an office in the new Jackson administration. He was eventually selected by Jackson to be a minister to Britain. When Jackson replaced his cabinet in 1831, McLane would become the secretary of the treasury. Smith also discusses the Eatons, due to be married that evening. It is clear that Mrs. Smith does not realize that Rachel Jackson, the president-elect's wife, had died on December 22, 1828.*

[Mrs. McLane] is in excellent spirits--animated and political--her husband has staked everything on his political measures, his practice injured, his popularity in his own state gone --Jackson's election affords him something more than mere triumph. I have no doubt he builds on it hope, nay almost certainty of office. But alas! I fear disappointment awaits him, as well as many other supporters of Jackson. All cannot be in the Cabinet--Those who are not what will they do? Turn against him? One of his warmest partisans speaking about Mr. McClain last night said he must remain in the Senate. They will not spare him, for certainly as his seat was vacated an administration man would be put in--After the example of your state, who mean, we are told, to turn out Gov'r. D. and put in Mr. Southard. The aim of the defeated party certainly is to get a majority in the Senate and thereby to control the President.

Tonight Gen'l. Eaton, the bosom friend and almost adopted son of Gen'l. Jackson, is to be married to a lady whose reputation, her previous connection with him both before and after her husband's death, has totally destroyed. She is the daughter of





O'Neal who kept a large tavern and boarding house whom Littleton knew. She has never been admitted into good society, is very handsome and of not an inspiring character and violent temper. She is, it is said, irresistible and carries whatever point she sets her mind on. The General's personal and political friends are very much disturbed about it; his enemies laugh and divert themselves with the idea of what a suitable lady in waiting Mrs. Eaton will make to Mrs. Jackson and repeat the old adage, "birds of a feather will flock together." Dr. Simm and Col. Bomford's families are asked. The ladies declare they will not go to the wedding, and if they can help it will not let their husbands go. We spent the evening at Dr. Simm's last night. All present were Jacksonians--Dr. Simm the most ardent and devoted. He had lately received a letter from Gen'l. J. which he promised to show me. I wanted to see it immediately, suspecting, as I told him, if he deferred showing it, it would be with the intention of correcting the orthography. He laughed and joked on the subject very good naturedly and about Mrs. J[ackson] and her pipe in the bargain. What a change will take place in our society--how many excellent families shall we lose. I told the Doctor I should cry all day long on the 4th of March, for my politics were governed by my heart and not my head--To dismiss Mr. Wirt! Where will he get such another man? Oh, how sorry, very sorry I should be. Our intimacy is progressing and time might transmute it into friendship. But these miserable fetters will deprive me of this hope.

For eight years how I did love to go to the President's house on this day. The gracious countenance that then beamed on the thronging multitude, the sweet mild voice, the cordial pressure of the hand, I could no longer meet and therefore I will not go. How much goodness and greatness then dwelt there--now shrouded in the cold and narrow grave--the home of all men. Thither we are hastening, the humble and the ambitious, the poor and rich, the vanquished and the triumphant. How trivial and inconsequent are the rivalships and conflicts which now make such a stir. A few years and the eager, animated actors on the present scene shall be still and silent and forgotten—

*Smith, Margaret Bayard. Letter to Kirkpatrick. Library of Congress. Last modified January 1, 1829.*

### **Document: Why marriage was so important to women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Marriage changed women's legal status dramatically. When women married, as the vast majority did, they still had legal rights but no longer had autonomy. Instead, they found themselves in positions of almost total dependency on their husbands, which the law called coverture. As the English jurist William Blackstone famously put it in his *Commentaries on English Law* (1765–1769):

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in the law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing.

Coverture was based on the assumption that a family functioned best if the male head of a household controlled all of its assets. As a result, a married woman could not own property independently of her husband unless they had signed a special contract called a marriage settlement. Such contracts were rare and even illegal in some parts of the country. In the absence of a separate estate, all personalty a woman brought to her



marriage or earned during marriage, including wages, became her husband's. He could manage it or give it away, as he chose, without consulting her...

The courts were increasingly willing to bypass colonial precedents that favored men in custody disputes. Instead, they placed young children and daughters (although not sons) under the care of mothers. These reforms reflect the rising importance of the gender-based ideology of separate spheres, which gave women moral preeminence in the private sphere of the home and men supremacy in the marketplace and politics. Women would use the concept of moral motherhood to great advantage in their struggle for social justice over the next century.

*Salmon. Marylynn. "The Legal Status of Women, 1776-1830." Gilder Lehrman Institute.*

*Annotation: As it pertains to the Peggy Eaton affair, women's entire status and existence was defined by marriage. Married women became "Mrs. So-and-so" losing her childhood first and last name, and while perhaps oppressive today, landing a good match and securing the protections and stability it provided consumed courtship. The legitimacy of marriage was incredibly important to women's social status and hierarchy. This helps explain why Mrs. Floride Calhoun would stake her husband's career on excluding this woman from society.*

#### **Document: Jacksonian Democracy and The Electoral College**

Calhoun, who had anonymously written the South Carolina Exposition and Protest four years earlier, thought he would be able to use his influence with Jackson to see that the tariff rates were lowered. Jackson himself believed that tariffs should be used, but more judiciously than in previous years. Despite his support for Jackson's presidency and his position as vice-president, Calhoun found himself in no position to influence the president when Congress set the 1832 tariffs. Calhoun's loss of strength was due in part to the Peggy Eaton Affair. Peggy O'Neale Eaton, the wife of Secretary of War John Eaton, had been the target of malicious gossip from other cabinet wives, similar to that which Rachel Jackson had endured during the 1828 campaign. When Jackson tried to force the cabinet wives to socialize with Peggy Eaton, most of the cabinet resigned. Calhoun's wife, Floride, was also opposed to accepting her and the vice-president suffered for her actions.

*Thomason, Lisa. "Jacksonian Democracy And The Electoral College: Politics And Reform In The Method Of Selecting Presidential Electors, 1824-1833." Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of Doctor Of Philosophy University Of North Texas. Last modified May, 2001, p.125. Retrieved from [https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc2775/m2/1/high\\_res\\_d/dissertation.pdf](https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc2775/m2/1/high_res_d/dissertation.pdf).*

#### **Document: One Woman so Dangerous to Public Morals**

Many politicians and their families were particularly critical of Jackson's choice for secretary of war, John H. Eaton, largely because of his "late unfortunate connection" by marriage to the notorious Margaret (O'Neil) Timberlake. On the basis of a decade's worth of local gossip, Washington's political wives had decided that Margaret Timberlake was an immoral woman to be avoided at all costs. In their opinion, her new husband's elevation to the cabinet brought Margaret dangerously close to the center of



political power, where her "malign influence" would surely corrupt the country's leaders. As far as Jackson was concerned, however, these wagging tongues represented nothing more than snobbery and female meddling: "I did not come here to make a cabinet for the Ladies of this place."<sup>2</sup> For the next two and a half years, the ladies shunned Margaret Eaton, Jackson sought to prove her purity and bring her into society, and his political allies and subordinates tried to justify taking sides. Eventually, conflicting interpretations of Margaret Eaton's character and relationship to politics divided not only Jackson and the local ladies, but politically concerned Americans all across the country. In addition to spawning hot debate over the dangers that women posed to politics, this "Eaton Affair" also engendered controversy over the privileges and responsibilities of men in public life, issues that grew out of the rising tension between the president and his cabinet. Having provoked over two years of debate about female influence and male authority in politics, the Eaton Affair provides historians with an exceptional lens for viewing the workings of gender and start of the Jacksonian era.

... Whether their emphasis is on policy or ambition, political historians fail to explain why it was possible for men in Washington to pursue political goals by choosing sides on the question of Margaret Eaton's sexual behavior. Furthermore, such interpretations often skim over the extensive newspaper war that exploded in the summer of 1831, in which masculinity and femininity were repeatedly and explicitly connected to the dissolution of Jackson's first cabinet. Finally, because many of the charges against Margaret Eaton involved behavior that other women in the capital routinely engaged in, we must also consider how and why men's responses to women's behavior became politically decisive at the moment of Andrew Jackson's accession to the presidency. All of the participants in the Eaton Affair used gendered language and logic to explain the scandal and thus shape its repercussions. Gender mattered because the interrogation of Margaret Eaton's sexuality raised questions about women's influence over men and about how men should behave toward women and toward each other. At the most basic level, the participants agreed that men and women had different characters and responsibilities, and that the exercise of power could easily become the abuse of power. Despite this general consensus, however, there was enormous room for conflict. Two issues were particularly divisive. The first concerned women's power, specifically the nature of women's influence on men and politics. The second concerned relationships among men, particularly among those who served the nation as appointed or elected officials. In her analysis of South Carolina, Stephanie McCurry has observed that "[a]ppeals to manly identity and manly duty ... were not so many words tossed into the wind. Rather, they served as touchstones for a whole political culture." The Eaton Affair suggests that both masculinity and femininity were central to national political culture in this period.

If the issues involved in the Eaton Affair were slightly different than previous interpretations have suggested, so too were the players. Historians have long known that cabinet secretaries Samuel D. Ingham, John Branch, and James M. Berrien disapproved of the Eatons, as did Vice President John C. Calhoun and Jackson's own nephew Andrew Donelson. Equally familiar is Jackson's stalwart defense of Margaret Eaton's purity. Less well understood, but perhaps more influential and certainly more numerous than these men, were the women who constructed their opposition to Margaret Eaton as an example of women's special gift for moral discernment. These women—the wives and daughters of Washington's politicians—not only started the



scandal by shunning Margaret Eaton but also set the terms for the debates that followed both within the executive branch and in the public press.

The struggle to control its meaning lent the Eaton Affair much of its dynamic tension. All of the people involved recognized that their careers depended in no small measure on their ability to convert others to their viewpoint. In this sense, the Eaton Affair is an excellent example in miniature of how "symbolic conflicts over cultural issues closely parallel or overlap with struggles over who gets what tangible resources."<sup>7</sup> Jackson, his advisers, and the cabinet realized that the voters' reaction to the Eaton Affair could decide their political futures and the shape of the Jacksonian coalition.

Wood, Kirsten E. "'One Woman so Dangerous to Public Morals': Gender and Power in the Eaton Affair." *Journal of the Early Republic* 17, no. 2 (1997): 237-75. Accessed December 3, 2020. doi:10.2307/3124447.

**Document: She did not know her place**

She did not know her place; she forthrightly spoke up about anything that came to her mind, even topics of which women were supposed to be ignorant. She thrust herself into the world in a manner inappropriate for a woman. ... Accept her, and society was in danger of disruption. Accept this uncouth, impure, forward, worldly woman, and the wall of virtue and morality would be breached and society would have no further defenses against the forces of frightening change. Margaret Eaton was not that important in herself; it was what she represented that constituted the threat. Proper women had no choice; they had to prevent her acceptance into society as part of their defense of that society's morality.

Marszalek, John F. *The Petticoat Affair: Manners, Mutiny and Sex in Andrew Jackson's White House*. Louisiana State University Press, 2000.

