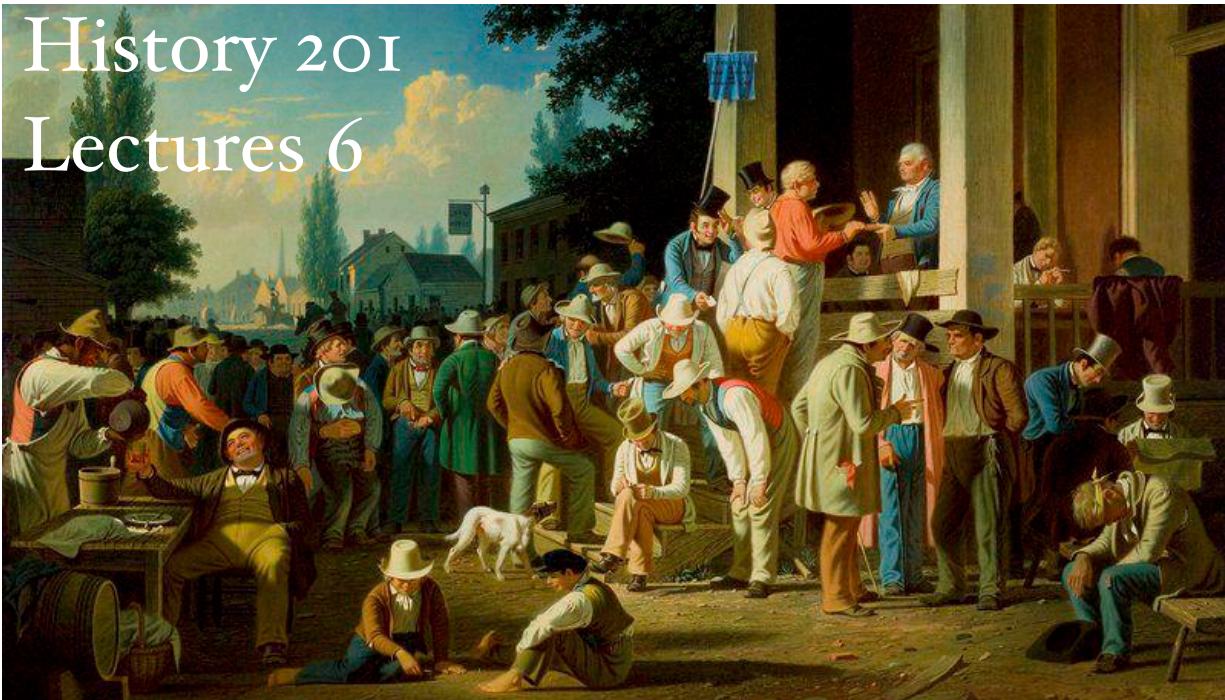


# History 201

## Lectures 6



### America in the 1820s

By the mid 1820s it had become fashionable for wealthy Europeans to tour the United States. In the past the fashionable activity was to take the grand tour, a tour of Europe, in early adulthood, then when an affluent European got older, to visit favorite places in Europe selectively. But in the 1820s, it became popular with the European upper class to take an American tour when older. Lots of Europeans came over, and they wrote letters, books, memoirs about what they saw here. They are interesting because these people saw differences between Americans and their European cousins that the average American was likely to miss. So, what did they see?

The big word is change, constant and rapid change. Tourists were astonished to see new ideas, new inventions, new innovations, growing in the cities and even the country on the nation with a rapidity that they found bewildering. A French traveler noted, “men change their houses, their climate, their trade, their condition, their party, their sect; the states change their laws, their officers their constitutions... the soil itself, or at least the houses, partake in the universal instability. The existence of a social order in the bosom of this whirlpool seems a miracle, an inexplicable anomaly.”

The pace of life in America was much faster than in Europe. Americans never stood still. Americans moved from place to place with amazing frequency, they changed places of residence, jobs, professions, with a speed and frequency that horrified Europeans. In Europe most people were born in one place and spent most of their lives in the same place, held the same job, not only for one lifetime, but often passed it down for generations. French commentator Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, “an American will build a house in which to pass his old age, and sell it before the roof is on; he will plant a garden and rent it just as the trees are coming into bearing; he will clear a field and leave it to others to reap the harvest; he will take up a profession and leave it, settle in one place and soon go off elsewhere with his changing desires.” Francis Grund, a Czech visitor to America, wrote of Americans, “life consists of motion; and, as far as that goes, the United States present certainly the most animated picture of universal bustle and activity of any country in the world. Such a thing as rest and quiescence does not even enter the mind of an American.”

The pursuit of the almighty dollar: one traveler noted that the pursuit of money in the U.S. resembled nothing so much as a “holy crusade.” Francis Trollope, an English lady tourist, noted, that one ‘never overheard Americans conversing without the word dollar being pronounced between them. Such unity of purpose, such sympathy of feeling, can, I believe, be found nowhere else, except perhaps, in an ants’ nest.’

Business dominated American life: Grund wrote, “it is as if all America were but one gigantic workshop, over the entrance of which there is blazing the inscription ‘*no admission here except on business.*’” Michel Chevalier, a visiting French nobleman was not entirely happy to note that

Everything is here arranged to facilitate industry; men of business, instead of being scattered over the town, occupy a particular quarter, which is devoted exclusively to them... The manners and customs are altogether those of a working, busy society. From the moment he gets up, the American is at his work, and he is engaged in it till the hour of sleep. Pleasure is never permitted to interrupt his business. Even mealtime is not for him a period of relaxation, in which his worried mind seeks repose in the bosom of his friends; it is only a disagreeable interruption of business, an interruption to which he yields because it cannot be avoided, but which he abridges as much as possible.”

America was a place where fortunes could be made,... And lost, and made again. In Europe, by the early 19th century, there were very few opportunities for the poor to gain wealth. Society was very stratified. It might be possible for a wealthy industrialist to go broke, but there was little opportunity for a poor person to strike it rich. In America there were undreamed-of opportunities. Several tourists remarked that Americans might not make one fortune, but might make, lose, and remake fortunes several times. Michel Chevalier

noted that in America, “riches and poverty follow on each other’s traces, and each in turn occupies the place of the other. Whilst the great men of one day dethrone those of the past, they are already half overturned themselves by those of the morrow.

Fortunes last for a season, reputations, during the twinkling of an eye.”

All of the visitors were struck with American equality. (always excepting slavery). They were struck with the narrowness of the social ladder. Wealth was distributed much more equally than in Europe. The difference between the wealthiest and poorest Americans was much smaller than in Europe. There were few beggars, and few families of enormous wealth. Social mobility was so malleable that Americans all saw themselves as equal to each other—

regardless of their current personal wealth. Any assumptions of superiority based on wealth, or for that matter, much of anything else was regarded as un-American. Tourists were horrified that everyone, regardless of status, shook hands with everyone else. Terms like “lady” and “gentleman” which were fraught with social meaning in Europe, were meaningless pleasantries in America. To admit to social distinctions in public was considered incorrigible behavior. More than one tourist from Europe was taken aback when they found that, in a frontier hotel where they stopped for the night, they were seated at dinner next to their valets, or maidservants. The hosts were equally taken aback, if

the tourist informed them that this was their servant who should be fed in the “servants’ quarters.” A German traveler noted that a group of legislators were trying to get through a crowd in an American city one day. To facilitate his movement, one of them yelled out “make way! We are the representatives of the people!” They received this reply. “make way yourself! We *are* the people!”

Just about this time—the 1820s and 30s — people start to refer to household servants as “the help.” The word “servant” implies difference of class, and class is un-American. “the help” didn’t carry the same



Alexis de Tocqueville



implications. Europeans were appalled. So were some Americans. John Randolph of Roanoke wrote “I love liberty, I hate equality!” This emphasis on equality made public opinion a chief determiner of policy. Politicians now begin to look with even closer scrutiny at the likes, dislikes, prejudices, and attitudes of the “common man.” Popularity becomes more important than good policy. A European military officer on tour reported home that in the militia in the North the privates elected their officers, who were not necessarily the most able, but were the most popular. This, he noted, violated all sense of propriety and order.

Americans also took pride in all of this. These attitudes of equality were inexorably tied to American notions of nationalism. Equality was tied up in liberty, and liberty in the American Republic itself. Dare to criticize the Republic and you risk a brawl.

Humility was not among the character traits listed by Europeans of Americans. Americans were brash, loud, lacking in refinement. Their table manners were a source of constant horrified fascination to visitors. Americans ate poorly prepared and seasoned food quickly, efficiently and quietly. They washed it down with water, or whiskey or ale. They ate together. Europeans saw dining as something that was defined by class. Americans didn't. They saw dining as a necessity that provided energy for business and industry. Dress and fashion provided much the same problem. In Europe what you wore defined who you were. The clothes both made and defined the social status of the man. In America, Europeans couldn't use the signals of dress to identify a person's class. Confused Europeans couldn't tell whether they had just shaken hands and were conversing with the president of the local bank, the mayor, or a day laborer in his best suit.

The place of women also confused European visitors. Americans presumed that all women were ladies. The period produced an almost nauseating praise of the American women. Harriet Martineau, an English Feminist who visited America in the early 1800s was practically driven nuts by this new American literature of praise. James Fenimore Cooper wrote of American women:

We believe them to be the repositories of the better principles of nature. Retired within the sacred precincts of her own abode, she is preserved from the destroying taint of excessive intercourse with

the world. She must be sought in the haunts of her domestic privacy, and not amid the wrangling, deceptions and heart-burnings of keen and sordid traffic [business]. The husband can retire from his own sordid struggles with the world to seek consolation and correction from one who is placed beyond their influence.

American upper class women were expected to retire into their homes, concern themselves with the “gentle arts,” and ignore such sordid activities as politics and business. Historians call this notion about women the “cult of domesticity.” It was certainly an urban and largely middle-class ideal. We might compare this with the lives of women on the frontier. There, women were no better off than men, and in some cases worse. One in three frontier women died of childbirth. They worked in the fields with the rest of the family, *and* did the housework.

Some inequality existed in the period, especially in the great northern trade cities like New York, Philadelphia and Boston, and in the South where the great planters had their own social distinctions. Northern magnates imitated European styles and tastes. But they still couldn't meet European standards of gentle breeding. The British say that it takes three generations to make a gentleman from a successful tradesman. Three generations living at leisure on money that you didn't earn. Rich



Americans didn't want to wait, so, in the 1820s and 30s the first self-improvement book industry appeared. The first were manuals of manners—how to be a gentleman in ten easy lessons. 28 such were published in the 1830s—most were best sellers. It took a lot to make a European-style gentleman out of an American style gentleman... Here is an example of a social gathering of society gentlemen at a recital described by British tourist Francis Trollope: “the gentlemen spit, talk of elections and the price of produce, and spit again.” And at a theater... “men came into the lower tier of boxes without their coats; and i have seen tucked up to the shoulder; the spitting was incessant, and the mixed smell of onions and whiskey was enough to make one feel even the Drakes' acting dearly bought by the obligation of enduring its accompaniments.” In other words, it might take more than a how-to book to turn American wannabe gentlemen into a refined European-style gentry.

In the South you could tell who was important in society by military titles. Planters were militia officers, the higher the rank in society, the higher the rank in the militia. Southern society was dominated by colonels and majors. Mrs. Trollope tells of a trip on a steam boat up the Mississippi. “the gentlemen in the cabin would certainly from their language, manners, nor appearance, have received that designation in Europe; but we soon found that their claim [to be gentlemen] rested on more substantial ground, for we heard them all addressed by the titles of general, colonel, and major.” On remarking that it was strange that there were no captains among them, Mrs. Trollope was told that the captains were all on deck. She goes on to describe the eating habits of these military gentlemen...

The total want of all courtesies of the table, the voracious rapidity with which viands were seized and devoured, the strange uncouth phrases and pronounciation; the loathsome spitting, from the contamination of which it was absolutely impossible to protect our dresses; the frightful manner of the feeding with their knives, till the whole blade seemed to enter the mouth; and the still more frightful manner of the cleaning of the teeth afterwards with a pocket knife, soon forced us to feel that we were not surrounded by the generals, colonels, and majors of the old world; and that the dinner hour was to be anything rather than an hour of enjoyment.

American religion astounded Europeans. Europeans were convinced that a stable society demanded if not absolute uniformity of religion, then at least a stable state church. But by the 1820s there was no national state religion, and most states had ceased to have any established, state funded religion. Instead there were dozens of religious sects, ranging from the staid and conservative Episcopalian Church (the American Church of England) to Pentecostal sects. By European standards the United States should have been plunged into anarchy and atheism at best, religious civil war at worst. But in fact what happened was a sort of free market for religion. Preachers had to compete with each other for their congregations. In general this meant that religion, no matter what the sect, became attuned to the needs of as wide a range of worshipers as possible. Since the 1830s saw an upsurge in demand for revivalism, ministers of all sects competed to gave the people what the wanted. The result was a new revivalism in America, often called the Second Great Awakening. There was a bewildering diversity of religions, every year saw the variation, schism of existing sects, and recombination into yet more sects. Simultaneous acceptance of religious

A "camp meeting" revival. An important religious activity during the Second Great Awakening.



toleration and strong religious feeling in America shocked Europeans. But, they began to realize that religious diversity didn't necessarily mean anarchy and atheism.

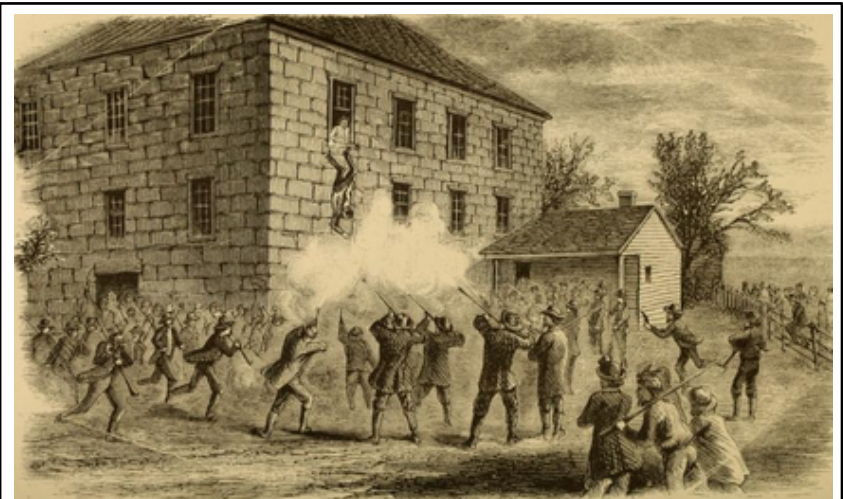
They also began to realize something that they had really known anyway, that majority rule didn't immediately establish complete liberty for all. Instead it might cause a tyranny of the majority. Combine majority rule with an obsession with public opinion, and you can suppress any minority. Alexis de Tocqueville made the observation that "nothing in the United States is capable of resisting the majority." If you are within the very wide realm of the mainstream in religion or politics in the United States, you can defend

your right to be a bit different. But if you are outside of that mainstream, public opinion and majoritarianism will destroy your right to be different, and maybe you. In Connecticut, Roman Catholicism was outside the mainstream. The result was the burning of convents and Catholic churches. Mormons were hounded out of New York, Illinois, Ohio, and their founder, Joseph Smith was murdered by an anti-Mormon lynch mob in Carthage, Illinois. The Mormons were finally forced to find refuge in Utah, and even then, they were chased by U.S. troops. In politics you can be a Jacksonian Democrat, or a Jeffersonian Republican, a Whig, or even a lonely Federalist, but if you a politically active Abolitionist, look out, even in places where abolitionism was beginning to become fashionable as a social position like Massachusetts.

The American press also confused Europeans. So many newspapers. Between 1833 and 1837 in New York 34 new papers were started. Everybody read the papers. They were cheap, easy to read, and violently partisan. They proliferated as propaganda media. And became the first mass media. Jackson understood the power of

the press as a propaganda instrument. He was not the first; the Revolutionary papers had been a propaganda tool of either Patriots or Tories; newspapers were employed in the political propaganda wars of the Federalists and Republicans. Papers could shape and direct public opinion, and could direct political action. Newspapermen were seen as despicable characters, but Jackson knew their power and employed them with regularity. The newspaper became the field upon which politics, especially presidential politics were played.

So what does all this mean. What was happening in the U.S. In the 1820s? How would it shape the nation? Remember, in the early 1800s a debate had begun over what the nation was to become. What was the place of national government? The answer appears from these ideas that the nation was growing in its own way and its own time. Most Americans were democratic and majoritarian in their politics (a Jeffersonian legacy), but they were acquisitive free marketeers, out for what



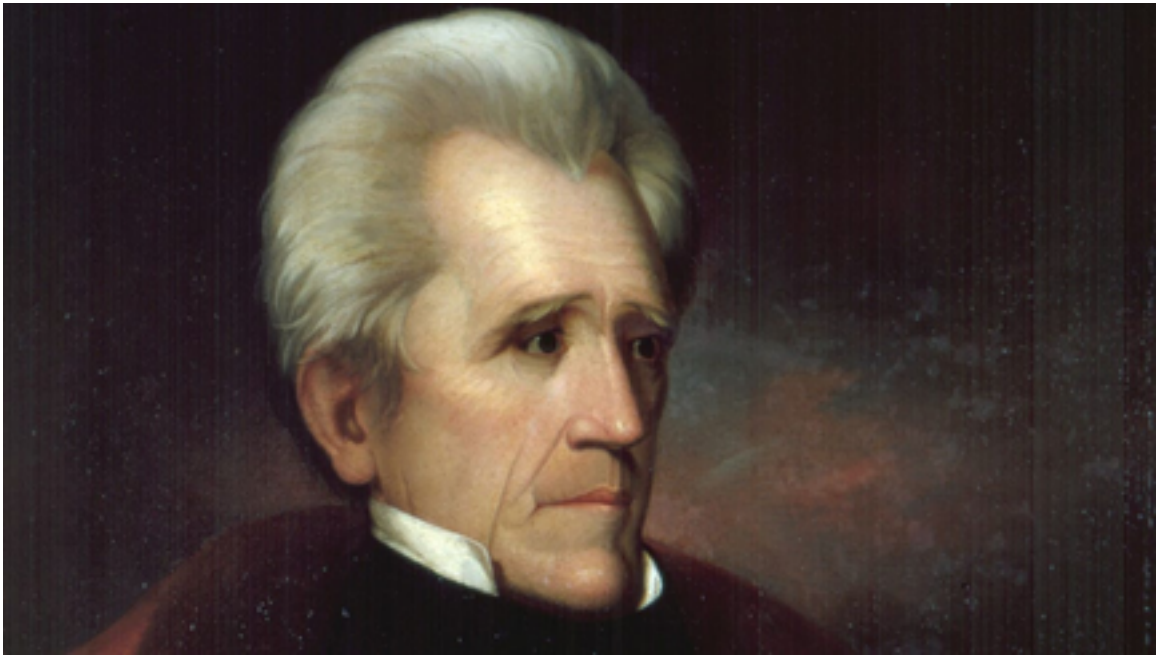
Murder of Joseph Smith and Mormons by a lynch mob in Carthage, Illinois in 1844.



one historian has called “the best chance.” They might worry about the results of wealth, and they were certainly much more enthusiastic about the market than Jefferson, but they were into the market up to their elbows, getting all they could from it. We will explore the implications of this in more detail over the next few classes as we enter the age of Andrew Jackson.



Stump Speaking by George Caleb Bingham



## Andrew Jackson

In the election of 1828, Andrew Jackson was carried into office by a popular landslide. His supporters included western farmers, eastern laborers, and southerners who expected that Jackson would reduce the tariff. The traditional view of the age of Jackson is that his supporters were evidence of a new democratic revolution, and that the “common man” supported Jackson the Democrat against the more aristocratic John Quincy Adams. A closer look at Jackson’s supporters might lead us to assume, however that more was at work here. Historians are pretty confused about Jackson and the meaning of the election of 1828. For some, Jackson represents the spirit of the western entrepreneur against eastern commercial interests. For others, like Arthur Schlesinger, Jackson is a sort of predecessor of Franklin D. Roosevelt—who offered a “New Deal” in the 1820s. So what’s the story? Who voted for Jackson and why? Well, lots of folks were drawn in by the election propaganda. Voters may have supported the image of Jackson, the great general on a white horse, more than the issues (some elements of politics don’t change). As usual, most voters vote on a non-rational basis most of the time. But, let’s flatter the voters of 1828, and assume that they responded to issues. So who voted for Jackson?

- 1) Debtors -- Jackson was thought to favor cheap money (inflation). Debtors have a much easier time repaying their debts with inflated money, so Jackson was their man!
- 2) State bankers who wanted the national bank gone because it restrained their ability to issue lots of bank notes.
- 3) The South supported Jackson, because his supporters led them to believe that he would reduce tariffs.
- 4) Some urban laborers who also favored cheap money.
- 5) Folks who wanted to pick a winner, because that was how they could acquire places in government, patronage, appointments and so forth.

There was certainly a bandwagon effect; not every state voted at the same time, so when it became obvious that Jackson was a winner, lots voted for him



so as not to waste their vote. This even included a lot of Federalists in New England, and National Republicans elsewhere. His military exploits impressed many. Jackson's supporters represented a pretty mixed and factious bag. Surrounded by Martin Van Buren of New York and John Calhoun of South Carolina, it is difficult to figure out what the party had in common. In the election, Democrats offered folks whatever would sell in their region, and since there were no TV reporters, no cable, they often offered one state the opposite of another, and got away with it. Whatever Jackson stood for, the image that he presented was one of a more broadly democratic America.

In the election of 1824, there was no one or two candidates who stood out in national politics, so four "favorite sons" were nominated by their states, and regions. They were Andrew Jackson of Tennessee; Henry Clay of Kentucky; William Crawford of Georgia; and John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts. All of them were Republicans. Jackson received the largest number of electoral votes, but not a majority. As no one of the candidates secured a majority of the electoral vote the decision was thrown into the House of Representatives. Henry Clay gave his support to Adams.

Jackson learned that Clay had been named Secretary of State by Adams. Jackson was convinced that a political deal had been struck between Adams and Clay for the sole purpose of robbing him of the presidency. This was most likely the case. Adams and Clay were both "National Republicans," that is, they both supported the use of federal funds for national improvements. So, it should not have surprised Jackson that Clay would have shifted his support to Adams after he was out of the running. Nevertheless, Jackson and his friends were angry and were determined that no such "Corrupt Bargain" would keep Jackson from the presidency in 1828.

The followers of Jackson gradually built a political party around the personality of their hero – "Old Hickory." Former Republican Party strong men such as John C. Calhoun of South Carolina and

Martin Van Buren of New York joined the Jackson throng after 1824. The party of Jackson took the name "Democrat" in order to stress the basically Jeffersonian flavor of their political beliefs. The new party began to organize for the election of 1828, almost immediately after the election of 1824 had ended.

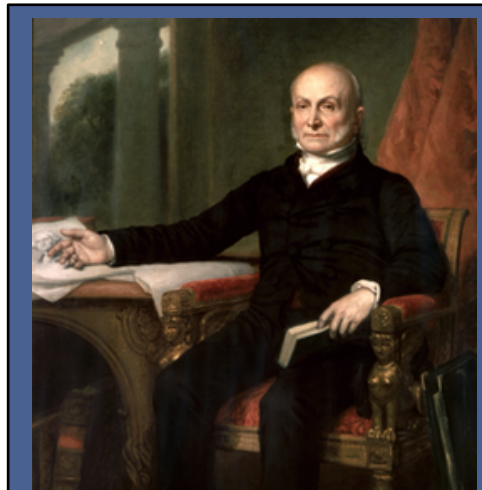
John Quincy Adams' administration met with one frustration after another. Congress refused to follow his nationalistic program of building roads, canals and strengthening the navy. The Senate quarreled with him over his proposal to send delegates to the Panama Congress of Latin American Republics (1826). The Georgia legislature ignored his claims that that state had to honor treaties made with the

Cherokee Indians; The British government saw him as an ineffectual snob and refused to settle outstanding differences between the two countries.

Adams himself was a poor choice for president in the "Age of the Common Man." The son of John Adams, John Quincy was about as close to a "natural aristocrat" as America had to offer. He was a wine connoisseur in a country that drank whiskey and beer. He dressed like a wealthy man of the previous generation. He furnished the White House with its first billiard table, in an age

when billiards was a rich man's pastime. He refused to give interviews, or have anything to do with members of the press.

The election of 1828 had a carnival flavor. Jacksonians described the election as a contest between democracy (Jackson) and aristocracy (Adams). Adams was shown up as a would-be monarch, a parasite, an enemy of the common people—Jackson was the hero of the Indian wars, a frontier paladin, and yet still one of the common men. Adams supporters retaliated, describing Jackson as an inexperienced country bumpkin, an incompetent, a hot headed, drunken, murderous, adulterer. They said that Jackson had stolen his wife from another man (partly true), and that he had murdered several men in cold blood (actually he had killed a number of men in duels). As the election approached the mud slinging got worse and worse.



John Quincy Adams



On May 30, 1806, Andrew Jackson and Attorney Charles Dickinson duelled. The outcome? Jackson was wounded and Dickinson died.



It is undeniable that Jackson had the complete support of the frontier voters. He also carried most of the South and the labor vote in the industrialized North. He carried the popular vote. He won the electoral vote 178/83. Adams carried only New England, New Jersey, Maryland and Delaware.

Jackson knew that he could not govern without the wholehearted support of his party. Thus, he began his presidency much as Thomas Jefferson had, with the wholesale dismissal of National Republicans from places in government service, and their replacement with his friends and political supporters. He likewise filled his cabinet with men to whom he owed political favors, then he virtually ignored them. The real movers and shakers of his administration, Jackson's real advisors were an informal group of important and influential party hacks and Democratic newspaper editors whose function it was to create and shape popular opinion. This "Kitchen Cabinet," as it came to be called" included important newspaper men like Amos Kendall, Isaac Hill and Francis Preston, and politicians like Martin Van Buren.

Programs and policies? Mostly they formed them on the fly, based on public opinion. Reform and clean government? Hardly. The Jackson appointments were just as corrupt as the Adams men who were removed, and frequently more so. Jackson had no real formal principles of government. Problems were handled as they came along—the term that Jackson's critics used for his system was an *ad boccracy*. Jackson and his party had no discernible overriding ideology beyond a few vague principles: 1)

at least a rhetorical belief in white equality and opportunity; 2) a real belief in the necessity of national unity. He is similar to Jefferson—in many ways the Jackson election is a return to Jeffersonian principles, preference for agriculture, and for smaller government. Jackson, like Jefferson understood that in a republic image counts as much as reality, and public opinion is what keeps a politician in power. Jackson also understood that in order to make it as a political figure and as a party in American politics you had to have national support. A regional candidate with primarily regional support could not forge an effective national party.

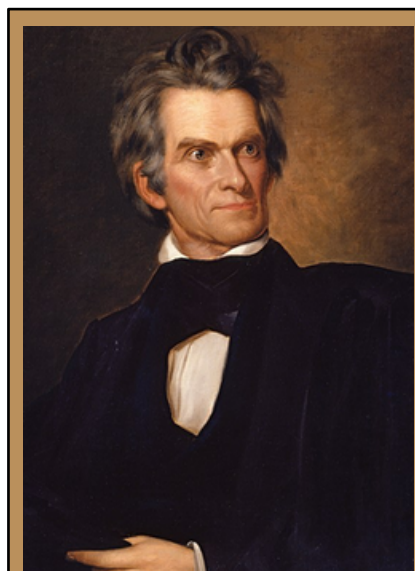
Jackson's administration was marred by a series of social and political problems which had a fairly negative effect on his first term. A central figure in all of Jackson's difficulties was Vice President John C. Calhoun of South Carolina. From the start Calhoun had expected to have a controlling influence over Jackson. Calhoun felt that Jackson would be a weak president and would rely on Calhoun and four of his political supporters in Jackson's Cabinet. Social difficulties made the problems between Calhoun and Jackson worse.

The worst challenge to Jackson's first term is called the "Eaton Malaria" Trouble arose in Washington over the refusal of various officials' wives to accept Peggy O'Neill Eaton. Peggy was the wife of Secretary of War John Eaton, a close friend of Jackson's. Mrs. Floride Calhoun led the movement to snub Peggy Eaton because Mrs. Eaton had been the daughter of an inn keeper in Washington, D.C., and a divorcee. Jackson supported the Eatons. He

refused to go to any social occasion to which the Eatons had not been invited. His friendship with Calhoun was dampened by the "Eaton Malaria."

During the Eaton affair, Jackson discovered that Calhoun had suggested that Jackson be recalled and court martialed during the first Seminole War. At the time (1818) Calhoun had been the Secretary of War to James Monroe. Monroe had complained to Calhoun that Jackson frequently disregarded presidential directives about going into Spanish territory. Calhoun suggested that Jackson be relieved of his command and tried in military court for insubordination. When president Jackson found out about the incident he was outraged. The rift between Jackson and Calhoun became complete. In 1831 Jackson made an almost complete reorganization of his Cabinet. He removed any Cabinet members who were Calhoun supporters. Calhoun's influence over Jackson's policies were ended. Calhoun himself soon resigned from the vice presidency and became a senator from South Carolina.

As I have said before, Jackson was elected with the support of the frontier voters. They expected him to protect their interests, they were not to be disappointed. Jackson's policy toward the Indians was simple. He intended to remove all tribes west of the Mississippi River. He proposed more than 90 Indian treaties during his administration. The treaties forced the Indians to surrender millions of acres of eastern land and to move west. Trouble developed with several tribes who refused to leave their ancestral homes. [1] the Sacs and Fox Indians of Illinois were crushed by the Illinois militia [2] the Cherokee nation in Georgia resisted the attempt to infringe on treaty rights that they had received from Britain before the revolution and George Washington after. They sued the government in the Supreme Court to keep their lands. Chief Justice Marshall found in favor of the Cherokees. He stated that they could stay in Georgia. Jackson used federal troops to forcibly evict them (the Trail of Tears). Marshall protested and Jackson told him that he shouldn't make decisions which



John C. Calhoun



Cigar box shows President Jackson introduced to Peggy O'Neal (left) and two lovers fighting a duel over her (right).

he could not enforce! [3] the Seminoles refused to leave their homes in Florida. They reopened hostilities with the United States which did not end until they were defeated and practically wiped out in the 2nd Seminole War (ended 1842). The movement of large Indian populations, was a tragic event in our history. Tens of thousands of Indians died during the "Trail of Tears."

The quarrel between Jackson and Calhoun went deeper than first met the eye. It was closely associated with the controversy over protective tariffs and a fundamental question of the nature of the Union created by the Constitution. During the decade that followed the passage of the tariff of 1816, the South had begun to oppose tariffs in general and the tariff of 1816 in particular. South Carolina led the opposition. When Calhoun had advocated protection in 1816 he had expected his state to share in the industrialization of the nation. But South Carolina, like most of the lower states became dedicated to cotton cultivation. As the production of cotton in the South grew, cotton prices steadily decreased. The planters of many of

the southern states sold much of their cotton to foreign markets, especially Britain. Tariffs on foreign imports forced southern planters to pay higher prices for goods which they purchased in Europe. At the same time that their profits from the sale of cotton declined.

New England textile interests hoped that the tariff would force southern cotton producers to sell their cotton to them at a lower price than the growers could get in Britain. At the same time that the desire for the repeal of the tariff grew in the South, there was a steady growth of protectionism in the rest of the United States. Eastern industrialists, and farmers from the Middle States and the West supported a strong nationalistic and protectionist program proposed by Henry Clay of Kentucky. A protectionist bill was introduced in the senate in 1820. It failed by one vote. A second bill which raised tariffs was passed in 1824. In 1828 a convention of textile millers recommended that tariffs be raised even higher. As a result a new tariff bill was introduced in congress in 1828.

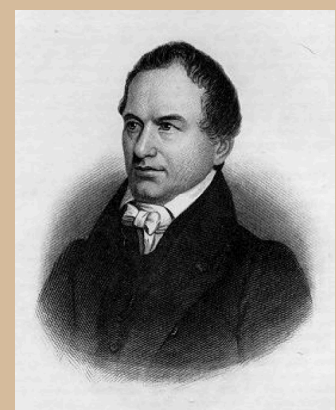
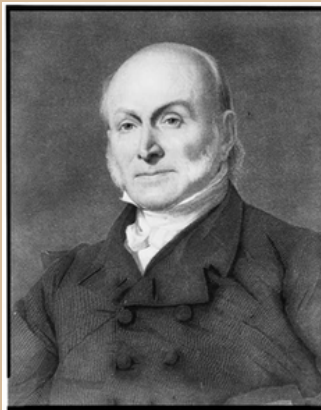
The Tariff Bill of 1828 resulted from an attempt by Jackson supporters to persuade both pro- and anti-tariff elements that Jackson was on their side. Jackson was running for president and his supporters were trying to get support from both sides on the tariff issue. If Jackson supported the tariff he would lose a lot of southern support. On the other hand, if he came out against the bill, he would lose his support in the Middle States and New England. So, Jackson supporters in Congress persuaded the southern Congressmen that if they pushed the duty rates to incredibly high levels, even the new Englanders would be shocked by the rates and abandon the bill. In fact the New Englanders were pleased by the rates. When the bill passed the

southerners were outraged.

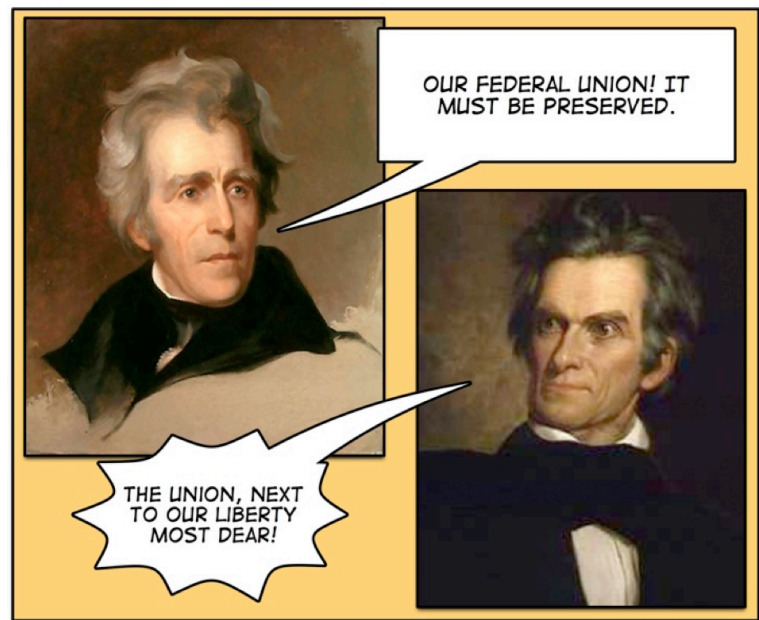
Calhoun was afraid that the protest over protection might reach a point that the issue would dissolve the Union. He devised a formula called nullification as a check against such an occurrence. He based his idea on Jefferson's compact theory of the Constitution. Nullification was based on the premise that each state was sovereign. He proposed that a state convention should be held in a state to determine whether a federal law was Constitutional. If the state found the law unconstitutional the state legislature would call a convention that would, in turn, pass state ordnances which would have the effect of nullifying the federal law in that state. The state law would simply prevent local enforcement of the federal law. Accordingly, the South Carolina legislature called a state convention that passed a series of resolutions condemning the 1828 tariff as unconstitutional. At that time Calhoun was running for vice president on the Jackson ticket. He urged his state to wait and see how Jackson would handle the tariff situation. Jackson was worried about the nullification movement. Jackson held a deep belief in the rights of the states; he also became convinced that the southern states were getting a raw deal, but he refused to accept that the states could nullify federal laws, or that any state could be allowed to secede from the Union.

The southern Congressmen made a deal with the Westerners. The South would be willing to give western states a free hand in the disposal of public lands if the West would support the South on the tariff issue. The Westerners liked the idea. If the western states were able to dispose of federal lands the states would become very wealthy and land speculators would make a bundle. In 1830, a debate broke out over federal limitation of sales of public

The Hayne-Webster Debate: Robert Hayne of South Carolina (right) explained doctrine of nullification on the Senate floor. Daniel Webster of Massachusetts (Left) replied that the doctrine was a threat to the federal system, was treason, and will surely lead to civil war.



lands. Missouri Senator, Thomas Hart Benton, denounced the proposal, and went on to denounce the attempts by easterners to restrict the growth and prosperity of western states. South Carolina Senator, Robert Hayne, supported Benton, and opened a general attack upon New England. Hayne's slur was answered by Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster. The Hayne-Webster Debate then drifted from the question of public lands to the question of whether the Union was operating under the Constitution. Hayne elaborated on the South Carolina doctrine of nullification. Webster countered that the doctrine was a menace to the federal system, a vile attempt to shatter the Union. Any attempt to dismember the Union, said Webster, was treason and would lead to civil war. Soon after the debate, at a public dinner,



Jackson made a toast while looking directly at Calhoun. Jackson's toast was, "Our Federal Union! It must be preserved!" Jackson's toast was both an indication that he realized that Calhoun was the author of the nullification movement and a sign of the growing rift between Jackson and Calhoun. Calhoun was shocked and visibly shaken by the toast. Lifting a shaky glass to the President, in a quiet but firm voice, Calhoun replied, "The Union... after our liberties most dear!" The rift would finally cause Calhoun to resign from the vice presidency the following year.

On July 14, 1832 Jackson signed the Tariff Act into law. The duties had been lowered somewhat by the time the bill had passed. The South Carolina legislature promptly passed a resolution for a convention to consider the constitutionality of the act. On November 24, 1832, the state convention passed an ordinance that stated that the tariff acts of 1828 and 1832 were null and void. The duties required by the tariff acts would not be collected in the state of South Carolina. The ordinance concluded that South Carolina would secede from the Union if the federal government used force to enforce the tariffs.

Jackson was determined to enforce the federal laws. He warned South Carolina that nullification was incompatible with the preservation of the Union. Jackson stationed warships in Charleston Harbor and held troops in readiness on the South Carolina state lines. It appeared that the United States was on the verge of a civil war.

In order to avert civil war, Clay and Calhoun proposed a compromise on the tariff question. In 1833, Congress enacted the Force Bill. The bill authorized the president to use the army and navy to collect duties or enforce other federal laws when necessary. At the same time Clay and Calhoun introduced a new tariff that lowered the duty rates gradually by about 20% over 10 years. Congress passed the bills and Jackson signed them into law. On March 15, 1833 South Carolina accepted the compromise and withdrew its nullification ordinances. But, as a last gesture to Jackson, the South Carolina Convention declared the Force Bill unconstitutional, and thus null and void. Jackson had enough tact to overlook this slight, and, at least for almost another three decades the Union remained secure.

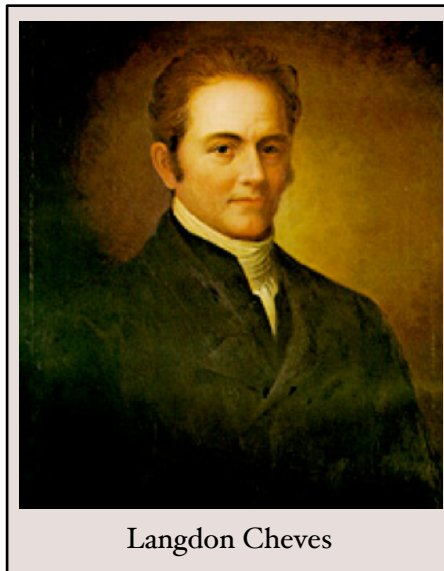
In order to talk about Jackson's animosity toward the Bank of the United States, it is necessary to give you some background to the controversy. There was no Bank during the war of 1812, and many politicians felt that one of the reasons that the U.S. had fared so poorly in the early period of the war was the fact that it had been difficult for the national government to get the funds necessary to prosecute the war. So, after the war, Republicans chartered a new bank. Like its predecessor, the bank was private, but provided funds, and regulation from the national government. It was also designed to regulate and curb state banks by providing them with loans to be repaid with specie. If the bank had been well run it might have served its purpose.

The headquarters bank of the Second Bank of the United States on Chestnut Street in Philadelphia, opened in 1816.



better. The man chosen to run the bank was William Jones. Jones was a good politician, but a lousy banker. It wasn't that he was personally dishonest, but there were dishonest people in the Bank, and Jones didn't do anything to curb their greed. Two things led the bank into trouble. First, a stock fraud took place in the 1810s, in which several bank officials purchased Bank stock on credit, which was against the law. One of them was James McCulloch, the Baltimore bank manager. The second problem was that Jones exerted virtually no control over either the 18 branch banks of the Bank of the United States, or over the state banks. State banks borrowed millions of dollars from the B.U.S. II (as it was called) and the national bank exerted no regulatory pressure to get the loans brought in. As a result, state banks printed an increasing quantity of bank notes, confident that the national bank would leave them alone. State banks were only supposed to print out bank notes that were backed up by U.S. currency in their vaults, but some state banks printed a great deal more notes than they could cover. In short, the Bank, under Jones, was not regulating the economy as it should, and many state banks were playing fast and loose with their money on hand. The result was a booming, but inflationary economy. The inflation might have been far worse were it not for the fact that there was plenty of available land to spend it on.

In 1819, Jones was replaced with Langdon Cheves. Cheves was a lousy politician, but an excellent banker. He reviewed the Bank's books and found that there were millions of dollars in overdue outstanding loans, and began to recall them. In addition to insisting on repayment, he also began to require that state banks show some kind of security in order to get further loans. Many state banks were unable to secure loans, or to repay their outstanding debts, and, so, they folded. This tightened policy caused national deflation. The nation was already heading into a recession, this tipped it into a depression. Millions of Americans blamed the depression on the Bank. In fact, most of the problem was caused by the unsound banking policies of



Langdon Cheves

state banks, but most Americans trusted their state banks, and when local bankers blamed the B.U.S. II, which already had a bad reputation left over from the age of Jefferson and Hamilton, local businessmen and savers, eager to place blame, blamed the Bank it acquired the name "the Monster." Jackson, thus had a readymade rant to use in his rhetoric. He could champion debtors (which was mostly small farmers, land speculators, and workers) by raging against the Monster. Jackson could ask "for whom is the nation run, for wealthy business men from the East who are benefitted by the Bank, or for the common man?" The question was very effective, if a little simplistic and disingenuous. After all no one benefitted from a



Cartoons portraying Jackson's "struggle" with the Bank. Left, Jackson slaying the "many headed monster." Right Jackson's opponents accuse Jackson of exercising despotic power with his charter veto.



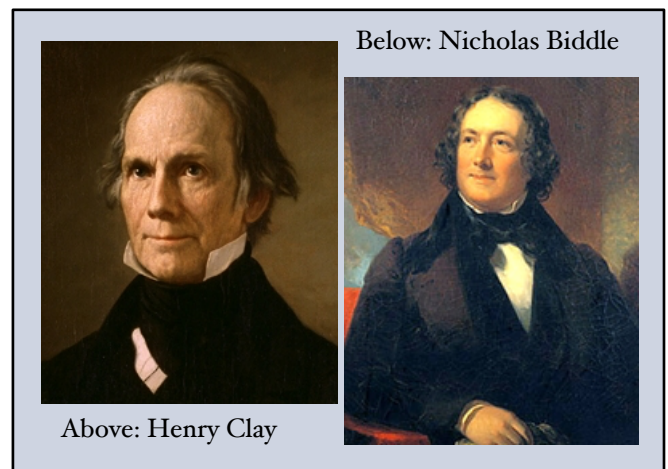
depression. But, it probably put him into the White House in 1828. It is really rather ironic. The Bank's charter was to run out in 1836. Had no controversy been brought up between 1828 and the time when it was time for Congress to renew it, the Bank might have survived Jackson. But political wrangling by Bank supporters and Jackson's enemies in 1832 doomed the Bank, and played in Jackson's favor.

During the same week that he signed the tariff of 1832, Jackson made an important move in his war against the Bank of the United States by vetoing the bill to grant the Bank a new charter. Henry Clay, the Republican Party's nominee in the election of 1832, believed against all of the evidence to the contrary, that the Bank was popular with American voters. Clay was eager to make Jackson's attitude toward the bank the major issue of the presidential campaign. Clay persuaded Nicholas Biddle (the president of the Bank) to apply for a new federal charter from Congress. This was not really necessary because the old charter was not due to run out until 1836. At Jackson's request, the Bank Bill passed both Houses of Congress, so that Jackson could veto it.

Jackson maintained in his Veto Message that the Bank was unconstitutional. He added that it had become a dangerous monopoly that benefited wealthy easterners and foreign investors at the expense of poor workers and farmers. He also charged that the Bank was hostile to the interests of small banks, especially in the West.

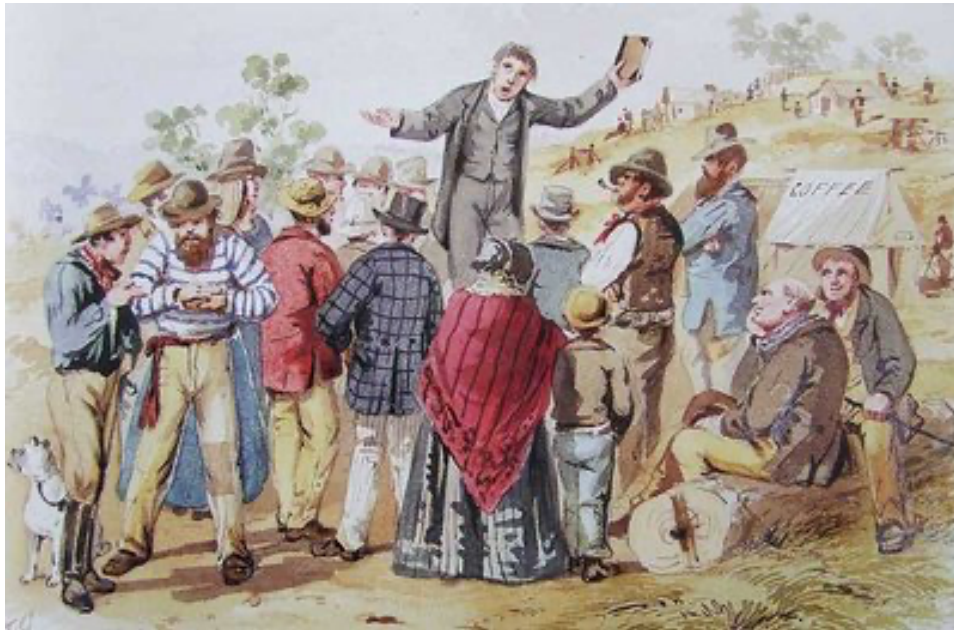
Clay felt that he could defeat Jackson on the issues of the bank and national improvements (the

American System). Clay miscalculated badly. He failed to consider both the popularity of Andrew Jackson in the West and among northern laborers, and the unpopularity of the Bank of the United States. Jackson soundly defeated Clay. In a landslide. Jackson garnered 219 electoral votes to Clay's 49. Jackson interpreted his reelection as a popular mandate to destroy the B.U.S. II. He was convinced that Nicholas Biddle ("Czar Nicholas" as Jacksonians called him) was mismanaging the Bank and that, as a result, it was nearly bankrupt. Jackson asked his Secretary of the Treasury, Louis McLane, to quit using the bank as a depository for federal funds. McLane was a supporter of the Bank, and promptly refused. Jackson fired him and appointed Roger Taney of Maryland as the new Secretary on the condition that Taney would draw all federal surpluses out of the Bank. These funds were then deposited into state banks called "pet banks" by Jackson's critics. When the national Bank's charter ran out in 1836 it became a Pennsylvania state bank.



Above: Henry Clay

Below: Nicholas Biddle



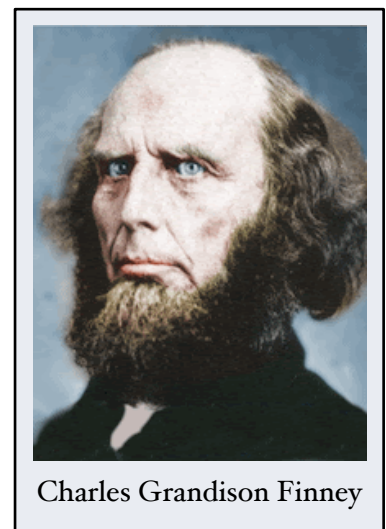
## Antebellum Reform

American Protestantism was in a state of constant ferment during the early nineteenth century. The separation of church and state, a process that began during the Revolution, was now complete.

Government sponsorship and funding for state churches had ended, or would soon end, for the established churches of the Colonial Era, such as the Congregationalists of New England and the Episcopalians of the South. Dissenting groups, such as Baptists and Methodists, welcomed full religious freedom because it offered a better chance to win new converts. All pious Protestants were concerned with the spread of “infidelity,” their word for secular humanist beliefs.

Revivalism provided the best way to extend religious values and build up church membership. The Great Awakening of the mid-eighteenth century had shown the wonders that evangelists could accomplish and new revivalists repeated this success by greatly increasing the proportion of the population that belonged to Protestant churches. Highly emotional camp meetings, organized by Baptists or Methodists, and sometime Presbyterians, became a regular feature of religious life in the South and Lower Midwest. In the southern states, religious fervor fostered societies to improve morals—to encourage temperance and discourage dueling—they usually shied away from social reform. The conservatism of a slaveholding society discouraged radical efforts to change the world.

Reformist tendencies were more evident in the distinctive kind of revivalism that originated in New England and Western New York. Northern evangelists were mostly Congregationalists and Presbyterians, strongly influenced by New-England Puritan traditions. Their greatest successes were not in rural areas but in small to medium sized towns and cities. In general, while often stirring they were less extravagantly emotional than the camp meetings of the South. The northern brand of evangelism resulted in formation of societies devoted to the redemption of the human race in general and American society in particular. The first great practitioner of the new evangelical Calvinism was Lyman Beecher of Litchfield, Connecticut. Beginning before the War of 1812, he promoted a series of revivals in the Congregational churches of New England. Another



Charles Grandison Finney

famous and more radical revivalist was Charles Grandison Finney, a Presbyterian minister.

The northern wing of the Second Great Awakening, unlike the southern, inspired a great movement for social reform. Converts were organized into voluntary associations that sought to stamp out sin and social evil and win the world for Christ. They generally believed in the perfectibility of man—and thus wanted to work hard for saving those who were less than perfect. They promoted an active and outgoing Christianity, not one that called for a retreat from the world.

Most of the converts were middle-class citizens active in the lives of their communities. They sought out ways to adjust to the bustling world of the Market Revolution that would not violate their traditional moral and social values. Their generally optimistic and forward-looking attitudes led to hopes that a wave of conversions would save the nation and the world.

The American Bible Society, founded in 1816. This organization sought to make Bibles available everywhere. Its members distributed more than 140,000 Bibles all over the country, but especially in the West.

The Temperance Movement of the first half of the 19th century promoted moderate use of alcohol rather than abstinence, which, at the time would



Lyman Beecher

have been an exceptionally hard sell in American society. Lyman Beecher himself was a big player. The temperance movement is a very good example of the extent to which the nation and its values had changed by the 1830s or so. In the Colonial and post-Revolutionary periods, Americans believed that alcohol consumption was both appropriate and beneficial to health. In short, Americans drank *a lot* during these earlier periods. But by the second decade of the 19th century, physicians had begun to change their tune on the subject of alcohol consumption. In part this change had to do

with an increasing American taste for straight whiskey instead of grog (watered rum) that caused an increase in health and behavior problems in heavy drinkers. Also, it was a reaction by the middle class to the problems of drink in a workplace that the Industrial Revolution had made both more inefficient and more dangerous. On-the-job accidents caused by inebriated workers were messy, shocking and unprofitable. More and more church spokesmen and capitalists wrote about and promoted temperance, especially among the working class.

We have already talked about the Cult of Domesticity, that renewed focus on child rearing and the home as the appropriate practice and place for women. The movement simultaneously celebrated and restricted the roles that the “true





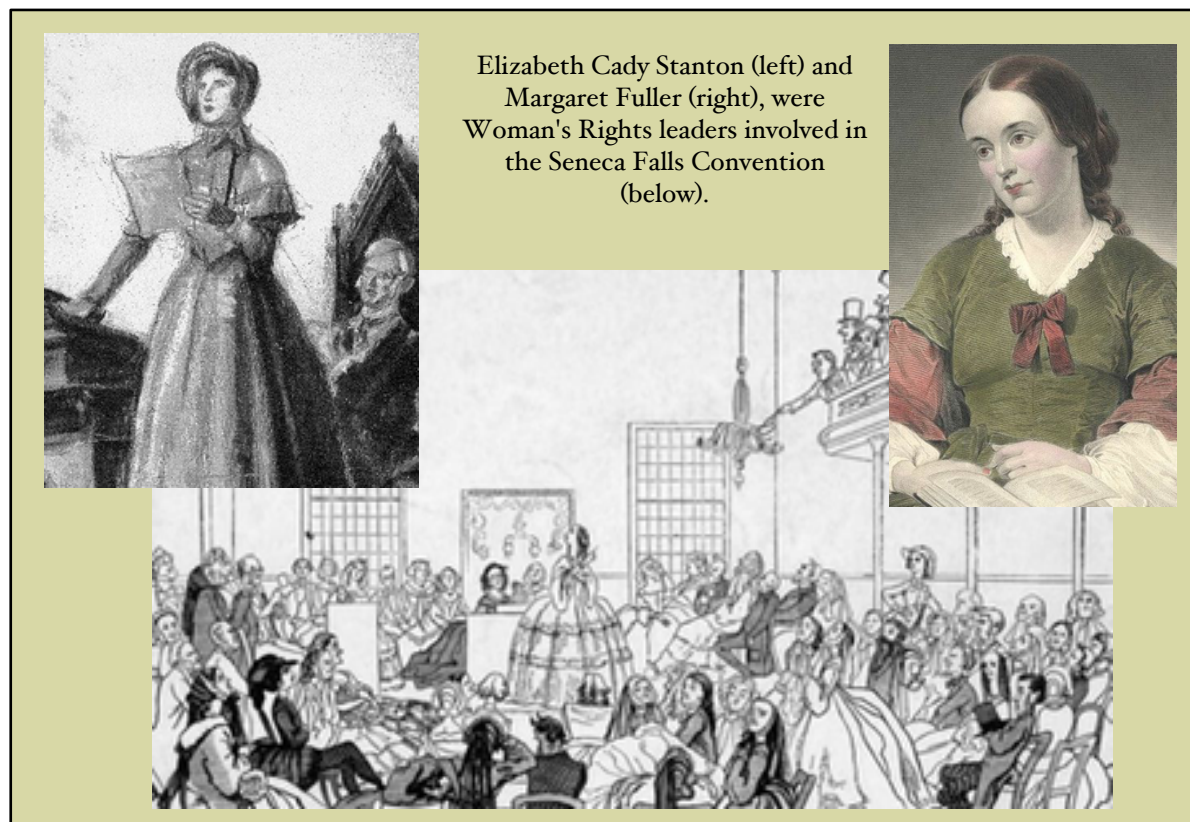
woman” could play in polite society. Women were, in spite of their rarified place in society, viewed as the keepers of the nation’s moral conscious, and as a result, many women found a role in reform movements of all kinds during the period.

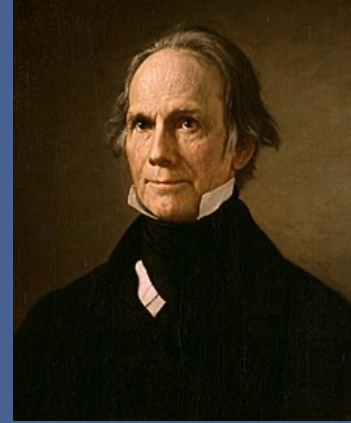
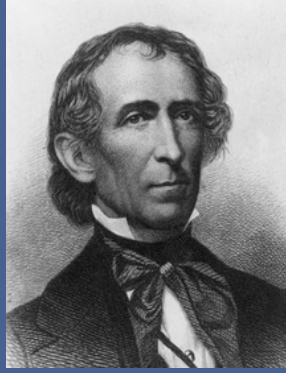
The campaign for women's rights comprised another important element of the antebellum reform movement. Many women participated in the movement for humanitarian reforms. Their participation became a force for demands to remove political, legal and social discrimination against them. The demand for civil rights for women caused changes in the laws in several states. In the Women's Rights Convention held in Seneca Falls in 1848, members demanded that women be given the right to vote and to be allowed equal opportunities in work and education. Among the most important women in the movement were Margaret Fuller, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

The first half of the 19th century saw the expansion of both the quality and scope of public education in the United States that laid the foundations for the

modern American public school system. Many excellent private schools were founded during this period. At the same time several states began programs of free, compulsory public elementary education. Massachusetts, under the leadership of Horace Mann created a model system of secondary schools between 1837 and 1848. Mann was a pioneer in broadening educational curricula, and in creating teacher-training programs. In 1850 there were 80,000 elementary schools with 3.3 million pupils attending, and 6,000 high schools with 250,000 students attending. The period also saw the growth of higher education. Although colleges primarily remained concerned with the training of ministers, many schools began professional training programs in law, science and medicine as well.

The movement that would have the greatest impact on the nation in the first half of the 19th century, and eventually lead to civil war and the end of this course was the abolition movement. In fact, the abolition movement is so important that we will take a look at it in some detail in a later lecture.





Left to right: William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, Henry Clay.

### The American Whigs

While Andrew Jackson is sometimes a puzzling figure in American political history, his challengers, the Whigs, are possibly even more puzzling. Before the 1970s, historians usually depicted the Whig party as a party without programs or platforms, devoted to but one political goal—ousting Jackson and Jacksonians from government. More recent works of the 80s have taken a different view of the Whigs. I would like to present both views, and some of the history of the party today.

In the old historical view, Whigs were depicted as a primarily conservative party without either principles or cohesive policy. They were a shaky coalition of primarily northern manufacturers and merchants and southern planters and merchants who had little in terms of ideology or policy beyond an abiding hatred of Jackson and his party. The party was comprised of:

- Conservatives who had come to resent Jackson's attacks on monopoly and his war on the Second Bank of the United States;
- Northerners and westerners who supported the use of federal funds for state and local improvements.
- Native born Americans who were hostile to the growing foreign born population, and wanted policies that would restrict immigration.
- Southern states' rights advocates who had left the Democratic Party in a huff over Jackson's handling of the Tariff of Abominations and the nullification controversy.
- According to the traditional view of the Whigs, because they represented such a wide political spectrum, there was much disagreement within the Whig movement; thus, they could not achieve any lasting political policy.

More recent historians have accepted that Whigs were more complex in their ideology than older views would suggest. Starting with historian Daniel Walker Howe in his 1979, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs*, Whigs are more often presented as 19th century liberals and reformers. While more recent historians agree that the Whigs represented a coalition of Jackson opponents, they have found some ideological similarities among them that contrast Whigs with Jacksonian Democrats.

Whigs tended to be more progressive in terms of their views on the expansion of industry and manufacturing. They supported federal funding for transportation. They were against unrestrained western expansion, fearing that 1) necessary workers would leave their jobs to farm on the cheap new western lands, and 2) rapid western movement would place a strain on American society in the East. Henry Clay was an important spokesman for federal support of industrial progress and federal funds for transportation with his policies called the American System.

Whigs tended to embody an urban eastern ethic and ideology rather than the frontier ethic of the Democrats. Whigs believed that problems, personal, political and social should be solved through compromise rather than through violence. They were opposed to western expansion (in the 1840s) because it appeared that the only means of attaining the Mexican Southwest would be through war.

Because Whigs stressed the importance of social order, they tended to be more progressive in terms of social reform than the Democrats. Jacksonians were rugged individualists who did not think that reform in such areas as prisons, help for the poor and insane or alcoholism were problems that required outside help. Jacksonians overemphasized liberty at the expense of order. Most of the reformers of the Age of Jackson were, in fact, Whigs.

Whig evangelists like Joshua Giddings and Lyman Beecher (father of Harriet Beecher Stowe) stressed personal reform as a means of social reform and stressed community support as part of a wider movement toward personal and societal improvement. Additionally, many of the members of the Workingman's Party became Whigs, and brought with them ideas about economic and social reform to improve the lot of working people. Many Northern Whigs (Conscience Whigs) were also involved in the Abolition Movement, and the Colonization Movement. (Harriet Beecher Stowe, Lincoln, Seward are examples). They viewed slavery as both a moral and social evil, but were also worried about free blacks as a threat to society as well. They generally supported colonization.

#### The Election of 1836

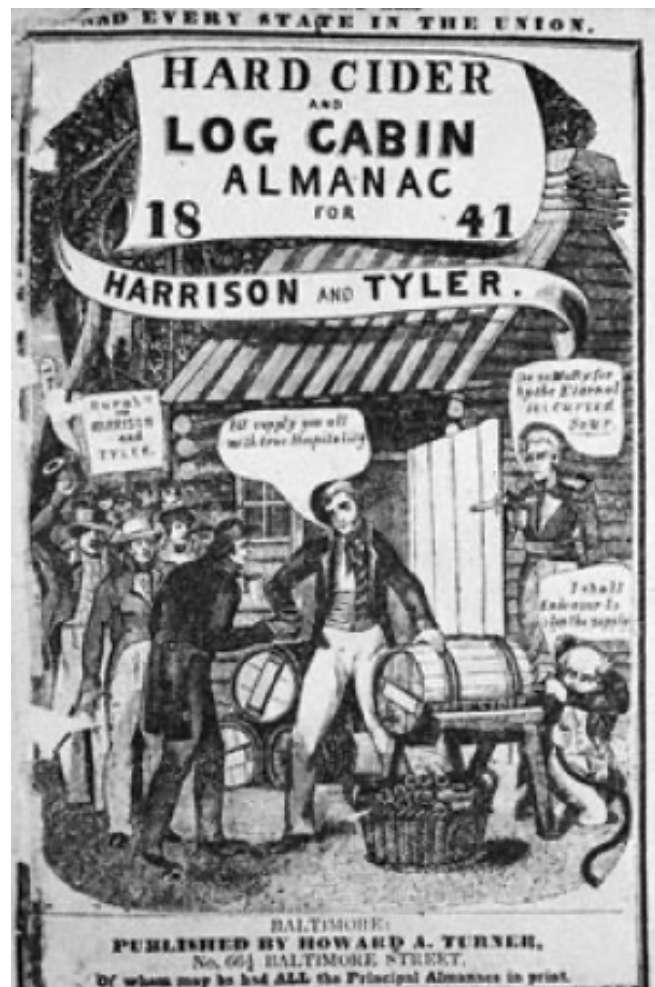
Jackson's influence in 1836 was powerful enough to insure the election of his candidate, Martin van Buren. Van Buren had served Jackson first as Secretary of State, and then as Vice President. The Whigs hoped to throw the election into the House of Representatives by voting for different favorite son candidates in several areas of the country; Daniel Webster of New England; William Henry Harrison of the Northwest; and Hugh White in the southwest. The attempt failed. Van Buren won with little difficulty.

#### The Election of 1840

The nation had been plunged into a recession in 1837. Van Buren's attempts to fix the economy largely

failed. In 1840 the Whigs based their political platform on criticism of the Van Buren Administration for the way it handled the panic of 1837. The Whigs also blamed Jackson's crippling of the Bank of the United States for the Panic.

The Whigs deserted their logical leader, Henry Clay, and nominated William Henry Harrison—the hero of Tippecanoe. They presented their candidate in very Jacksonian terms. Harrison was presented as a “man of the people,” and a military hero. They contrasted Harrison against an image of Van Buren as an eastern aristocrat and corrupt political manipulator. Harrison's running mate was John Tyler. Tyler was a moderate states'-rights Virginian who hated Jackson, but was not a follower of Clay either. The campaign was remarkable for its noise, and for the incessant display of Western artifacts. The Whigs, in an effort to convince western voters that their party was the “peoples' party,” engaged in a constant display of coonskin caps, apple cider barrels, and miniature log cabins. In fact, neither



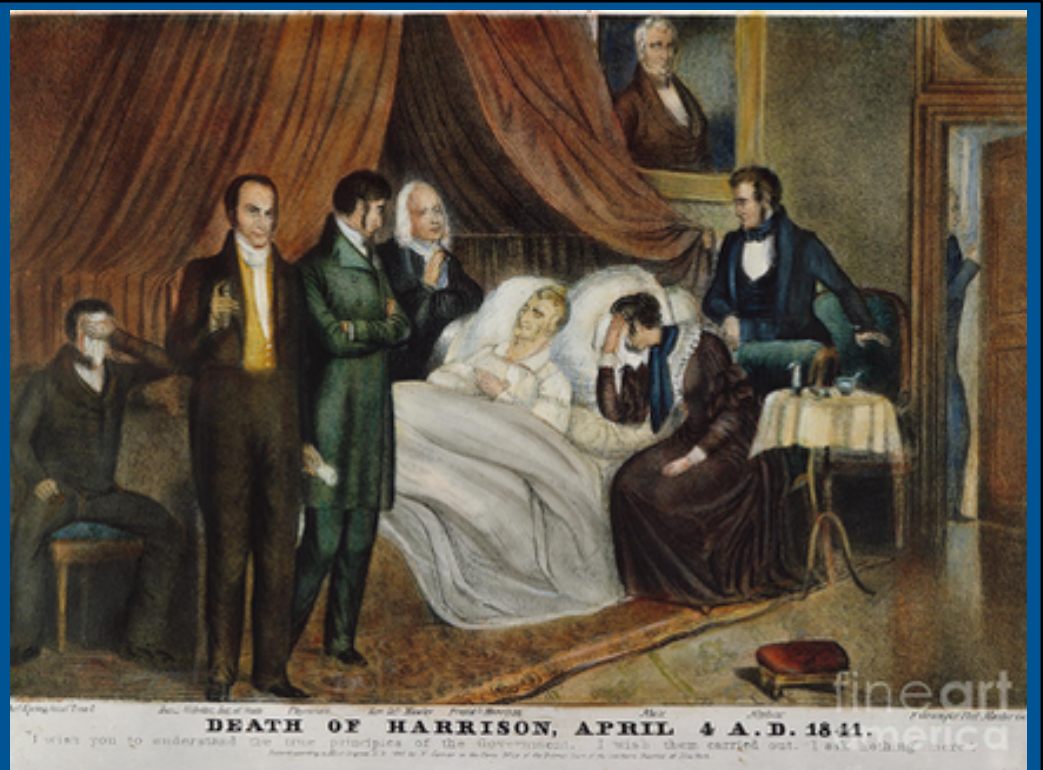
Harrison nor Tyler were frontiersmen or poor farmers. Both were influential and wealthy planters. But, as is often the case in politics, the propaganda worked. Harrison defeated Van Buren by a narrow margin of popular votes, but Harrison swept the Electoral College, winning 234 to Van Buren's 60.

Within 5 weeks of his inauguration Harrison was dead. Harrison has the dubious honor of being the only American president to kill himself with his own inaugural address. He took the oath of office on Thursday, March 4, 1841, on a cold and wet day. He braved the cold weather and chose not to wear an overcoat or a hat, rode on horseback to the ceremony rather than in the closed carriage that had been offered him, and delivered the longest inaugural address in American history. As a result of his exertions, Harrison came down with pneumonia, and died within a month of his term. Harrison was succeeded by his vice president, John Tyler. The new president was determined to provide leadership for his party and his nation but several factors made this impossible. The most important were impediments were that, almost immediately after Tyler took office, Henry Clay began to challenge Tyler for leadership of the Whigs; and the fact that Tyler disagreed with practically the entire program that the Whigs had drafted under the guidance of Clay and Harrison.

As soon as Congress assembled in 1841 Clay introduced a package of legislation that he insisted he and Harrison had put together. The package was comprised of essential elements of Clay's American system. It included a charter for a new Bank of the United States, a new protective tariff, a series of federally-funded state transportation improvements, and a system of distribution to the states of the proceeds from public land sales. The program was very like the program of the National Republicans in 1825.

Tyler consistently opposed virtually the entire Whig program. He repeatedly vetoed Clay's protective tariffs, internal improvement bills, bank charter bills and state allotment bills. In fact the only significant piece of legislation that Tyler signed into law was a higher tariff. After Tyler vetoed the Bank Charter Bill a second time, his entire Cabinet, except for Secretary of State Daniel Webster, resigned. Webster was busy negotiating a treaty with Britain at the time. When the Webster-Ashburton Treaty was finished, Webster quit too. Tyler became a president without a party. He rebuilt his cabinet by appointing what few friends he had left in Washington, D.C. Most of the new Cabinet consisted of Democrats or Southern Whigs who refused to follow Clay.

The death (by inaugural address) of President William Henry Harrison.



Tyler found himself virtually expelled from his own party. He was at war with his fellow Whigs over domestic policy. So, he turned his attention to territorial expansion and international policy. The first and most important issue that he took up was Anglo-American relations. Then he turned to the thorny question of Texas Annexation.

Since Texas became independent from Mexico in 1836, some Americans, and some Texans as well, desired that the Lone Star Republic become a part of the United States. Jackson had wanted Texas to join the Union, but had been unable to do much about it during his presidency. When the Texas ambassador in Washington, D.C., proposed annexation to the administration of Martin Van Buren in August 1837, the request was refused since the administration anticipated that it would lead to war with Mexico. Texas withdrew the annexation offer in 1838, and chose to exist as an independent nation, recognized by both the United States and United Kingdom. In 1843, Britain opposed annexation, but President John Tyler decided to support it. Despite the fact that Mexican dictator Antonio López de Santa Anna warned that annexation would be “equivalent to a declaration of war,” Tyler signed the treaty of annexation with Texas in April 1844. The Republic of Texas President, Sam Houston, and the Texas Congress consented to the annexation, however, annexation by treaty would have been impossible for Tyler to accomplish because the confirmation of a treaty requires a two-thirds vote of the Senate. Too many Senators from Free States were prepared to resist Tyler and vote against an annexation treaty. To avoid that impasse, Tyler prompted Congress to adopt a joint resolution of both Houses. A simple majority of both houses passed the resolution, and Texas became the 28th state in the Union.

The annexation of Texas and a lasting peace with Great Britain and Tyler’s only accomplishments as the United States’ only “President without a Party.”