

Chapter 13- The Rise of a Mass Democracy

1824-1840

A. The “Corrupt Bargain” of 1824

1. As James Monroe, the last of the Virginia dynasty, complete his second term; four candidates towered above the others: John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts, Henry Clay of Kentucky, William H. Crawford of Georgia, and Andrew Jackson of Tennessee
2. All four rivals professed to be “Republicans” but well-organized parties had not yet emerged and John C. Calhoun was vice-presidential candidate to Adams and Jackson
3. The results of the noisy campaign were interesting but confusing
 1. Jackson, the war hero, clearly had the strongest personal appeal, especially in the West, where his campaign against corruption and privilege in govt. resonated deeply
 2. Jackson polled as many popular votes as his next two rivals combined but he failed to win majority of electoral votes and in such a deadlock, the House of Representatives, as directed by the Twelfth Amendment, must choose among the top three candidates and Clay was thus eliminated but as Speaker, he presided over the House
4. The influential Clay was in a position to throw the election to the candidate of his choice and he reached his decision by the process of elimination
 1. Crawford, recently felled by a paralytic stroke, was out of the picture
 2. Clay hated the “military chieftain” Jackson, his archrival for allegiance of the West and in turn, Jackson bitterly resented Clay’s public denunciation of his Florida attack
 3. The only candidate left was the puritanical Adams, with whom Clay had never established a cordial personal relations but the two men were common politically because both were fervid nationalists and advocates of the American System
 4. Shortly before the final balloting in the House, Clay met privately with Adams and assured him of his support and decision Day came early in 1825 when on the first ballot, thanks largely to Clay’s influence, Adams was elected president
5. A few days later, Adams announced that Henry Clay would be the new secretary of state
6. The office of secretary of state was the coveted position as three of the four preceding secretaries had reached the presidency; by allegedly dangling the position as a bribe before Clay, Adams, the second choice of the people, apparently defeated Jackson
7. Masses of angry Jacksonians raised a roar of protest against this “corrupt bargain” and Jackson condemned Clay as “Judas of the West” and John Randolph assailed the alliance

B. A Yankee Misfit in the White House

1. A closeted thinker rather than a politician, John Quincy Adams was irritable, sarcastic, and tactless; a man of puritanical honor, Adams entered the White House under charges of “bargain,” “corruption,” and “usurpation”—he was the first “minority president”
2. Adams achieved high office by commanding respect rather than by courting popularity
3. While Adams’s enemies accused him of striking a corrupt bargain, his political allies wished that he would strike a few more but Adams resolutely declined to oust efficient officeholders in order to create vacancies for his supporters
4. Adams’s nationalistic views gave him further woes; much of the nation was turning away from post-Ghent nationalism and toward states’ rights and sectionalism
 1. Adams swam against the tide and Adams urged upon Congress in his first annual message the construction of roads and canals, renewed Washington’s proposal for a national university and advocated federal support for an astronomical observatory
 2. The public reaction to these proposals was prompt and unfavorable and South, in particular was annoyed; if the federal government should take on such heavy financial burdens, it would have to continue the hated tariff duties to pay for its debt
 3. Adams’s land policy antagonized the westerners who clamored for wide-open expansion and resented the president’s well-meaning attempts to curb feverish speculation in the public domain—fate of Cherokee Indians brought out bitterness
 4. The Georgia governor, by threatening to resort to arms, resisted the efforts of the Washington government to interpose federal authority on behalf of the Cherokees

C. Going “Whole Hog” for Jackson in 1828

1. The presidential campaign for Andrew Jackson started early—on February 9, 1825, the day of John Quincy Adams’s controversial election and continued for four straight years
2. Even before the election of 1828, the temporarily united Republicans of the Era of Good Feelings had split into two camps: the National Republicans supporting Adams and the Democratic-Republicans supporting the fiery Jackson as their head
 1. Rallying cries of the Jackson zealots were “Bargain and Corruption,” “Huzza for Jackson,” and “All Hail Old Hickory”—Jacksonites planted hickory poles for hero
 2. Adamsites adopted the oak as the symbol for their oakenly independent candidate
3. Jackson’s followers presented their hero as a frontiersman and a stalwart champion of the common man and denounced Adams as a corrupt aristocrat and argued that the will of the people had been thwarted in 1825 by the backstairs “bargain” of Adams and Clay
4. Much of this talk was political hyperbole as Jackson was a wealthy planter and Adams though perhaps an aristocrat, was far from corrupt (puritanical models were too elevated)

5. Mudslinging reached new lows in 1828, and the electorate developed a taste for bare-knuckle politics; Adams would not stoop to gutter tactics but his backers did
6. Criticism of Adams was directed at the federal salaries Adams had received over time
7. On voting day the electorate split on largely sectional lines
 1. Jackson's strongest support came from the West and South; the middle states and the Old Northwest were divided, while Adams won the backing of his own New England and the propertied "better elements" of the Northeast part of the United States
 2. But when the popular vote was converted to electoral votes, General Jackson's triumph could not be denied as Adams was beaten by the electoral count of 178 to 83
 3. Although a considerable part of Jackson's support was lined up particularly in New York and Pennsylvania, the political center of gravity clearly had shifted away from the conservative eastern seaboard toward emerging states across the mountain

D. Old Hickory" as President

1. Old Hickory's irritability and emaciated condition resulted in tuberculosis, and lead poisoning from two bullets that he carried in his body from near-fatal duels
2. Jackson's upbringing had its shortcomings as he grew up without parental restraints
3. The youthful Carolinian shrewdly moved "up West" to Tennessee, where fighting was prized above writing; there, through native intelligence, force of personality, and powers of leadership, he became a judge and a member of Congress (profound passions)
4. The first president from the West, the first nominated at a formal party convention in 1832, and only the second without a college education (Washington), Jackson was unique
 1. His university was adversity & he had risen from the masses, but was not one of them
 2. Essentially a frontier aristocrat, he owned many slaves, cultivated broad acres, and lived in one of the finest mansions in America (the Hermitage near Nashville)
 3. More westerner than easterner, more country gentlemen than common clay, more courtly than crude, he was hard to fit into a neat category
5. Jackson's inauguration seemed to symbolize the ascendancy of the masses; nobodies mingled with notables as the White House, for the first time, was open to the multitude
6. To conservatives this orgy seemed like the end of the world; "King Mob" reigned triumphant as Jacksonian vulgarity replaced Jeffersonian simplicity; faint-hearted traditionalists shuddered, drew their blinds, and recalled the French Revolution

E. The Spoils System

1. Under Jackson the spoils system—that is, rewarding political supporters with public office—was introduced into the federal government on a large scale; Senator William Marcy’s remark: “To the victor belong the spoils of the enemy”
2. Jackson defended the spoils system on democratic grounds and the routine of office was though to be simple enough for any upstanding American to learn quickly, why encourage the development of an aristocratic, bureaucratic, office-holding class?
3. Better to bring in new blood, he argued, each generation deserved its turn at the trough
4. Washington was due or a house-cleaning—no party overturn had occurred since the defeat of the Federalists in 1800 and even that was had not produced wholesale evictions
 1. The questions asked of each appointee were not “What can he do for the country?” but “What has he done for the party?” or “Is he loyal to President Jackson?”
 2. Scandal inevitably accompanied the new system and men who had openly bought their posts by campaign contributions were appointed to high office
 3. Samuel Swartwout, despite ample warnings of his untrustworthiness, was awarded the lucrative post of collector of the customs of the port of New York (stole money)
5. But despite its undeniable abuse, the spoils system was an important element of the emerging two-party order, cementing as it did loyalty to party over competing claims based on economic class or geographic region (promise of patronage)

F. The Tricky “Tariff of Abominations”

1. The touchy tariff issue had been one of John Quincy Adams’s biggest headaches and now Andrew Jackson felt his predecessor’s pain; tariffs protected American industry against competition from European manufactured goods, but they also drove up prices for all Americans and incited retaliatory tariffs on American agricultural exports abroad
 1. The middle states had long been supporters of protectionist tariffs; the wool and textile industries were booming, and forward-thinking Yankees came to believe that their future prosperity would flow from the factory rather than from the sea
 2. In 1824 Congress had increased the general tariff significantly, but wool manufacturers bleated for still-higher barriers; Jacksonites promoted a high-tariff bill, expecting to be defeated, which would give a black eye to President Adams
 3. To their surprise, the tariff passed in 1828 and Jackson received the tariff problem
2. Southerners, as heavy consumers of manufactured goods with little manufacturing industry of their own, were hostile to tariffs; they were outraged by the Tariff of 1828; hotheads branded it the “Black Tariff” or the “Tariff of Abominations”
3. Why did the South react so angrily against the tariff?
 1. Southerners believed that the “Yankee tariff” discriminated against them

2. The bustling Northeast was experiencing a boom in manufacturing, the developing West was prospering from rising property values and a multiplying population, and the energetic Southwest was expanding into virgin cotton lands
3. But the Old South was falling on hard times and the tariff was a scapegoat;
4. Southerners sold their cotton and farm produce in a world market unprotected by tariffs but were forced to buy their manufactured goods in an American market heavily protected by tariffs (protectionism protected Yankee and middle-state manufacturers; the farmers and planters of the Old South felt they were stuck
4. But much deeper issues underlay the southern outcry—in particular, a growing anxiety about possible federal interference with the institution of slavery
 1. The congressional debate on the Missouri Compromise had kindled those anxieties and they were further fanned by an aborted slave rebellion in Charleston in 1822, led by a free black named Denmark Vesey (South Carolina tied to British West Indies)
 2. Abolitionism in America might similarly use the power of the government in Washington to suppress slavery in the South (the tariff was the issue, to take a strong stand on principle against all federal encroachment on states' rights)
5. South Carolinians took the lead in protesting against the “Tariff of Abominations” and their legislation went so far as to publish in 1828 a pamphlet known as *The South Carolina Exposition*, which had been secretly written by John C. Calhoun
6. The Exposition denounced the recent tariff as unjust and unconstitutional; it bluntly and explicitly proposed that the states should nullify the tariff

G. Nullifiers in South Carolina

1. Through Jackson's first term, the nullifiers—“nullies,”—tried strenuously to muster the necessary two-thirds vote for nullification in the South Carolina legislature; but they were blocked by a determined minority of Unionists, scorned as “submission men”
2. Back in Washington, Congress tipped the balance by passing the new Tariff of 1832; although it pared away the worst “abominations,” it was still frankly protective and fell far short of meeting southern demands—had disquieting air of permanence
3. South Carolina was now nerved for drastic action; Nullifiers and Unionists clashed head-on in the state election of 1832; the state legislature then called for a special convention; several weeks later, they solemnly declared the existing tariff to be null and void in SC
4. As a further act of defiance, the convention threatened to take South Carolina out of the Union if Washington attempted to collect the customs duties by force
 1. Andrew Jackson was the wrong president to stare down; although he was not a die-hard supporter of the tariff, but he would not permit defiance or disunion; Jackson privately threatened to invade the state and have the nullifiers hanged

2. He dispatched naval and military reinforcements to the Palmetto State, which quietly preparing a sizable army; the lines were drawn and if civil war were to be avoided, one side would have to surrender, or both would have to compromise
5. Conciliatory Henry Clay of Kentucky stepped forward; although he supported the tariffs, he threw his influence behind a compromise bill that would gradually reduce the Tariff of 1832 by about 10 percent over a period of 8 years (rates would be back to 1816 in 1842)
6. The compromise Tariff of 1833 finally squeezed through Congress with most of the opposition naturally coming from protectionist New England and the middle states
 1. Calhoun and the South favored the compromise, but at the same time, Congress passed the Force Bill, known among Carolinians as the “Bloody Bill” which authorized the president to sue the army and navy to collect federal tariff duties
 2. South Carolinians welcomed this opportunity to extricate themselves and no other southern states had sprung to their support; moreover, a Unionist minority within South Carolina was gathering guns, organizing militia, and criticizing separation
 3. Face with civil war within and invasion from without, the Columbia convention met again and repealed the ordinance of nullification and nullified the Force Bill
7. Neither Jackson nor the “nullies” won a clear-cut victory in 1833; Clay was the true hero

H. The Trail of Tears

1. Jackson’s Democrats were committed to western expansion, but such expansion necessarily meant confrontation with the current inhabitants of the land
 1. More than 125,000 Native Americans lived east of the Mississippi in the 1820s and federal policy toward them varied; beginning in the 1790s the Washington government recognized the tribes as separate nations and agreed to acquire land from them only through formal treaties; the Indians were shrewd and stubborn negotiators
 2. Many white Americans felt respect and admiration for Indians and believed that the Native Americans could be assimilated into society (“civilizing/Christianizing”)
 3. The Society for Propagating the Gospel Among Indians was founded in 1787 and many denominations sent missionaries into Indian villages; in 1793 Congress appropriated \$20,000 for the promotion of literacy and instruction among Indians
2. Although many tribes violently resisted white encroachment, other followed the path of accommodation; the Cherokees of Georgia made especially remarkable efforts to learn the ways of the whites; they abandoned their semi-nomadic life and adopted a system of settled agriculture and a notion of private property (schools and Cherokee alphabet)

1. In 1808 the Cherokee National Council legislated a written legal code, and in 1827, it adopted a written constitution that provided for executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government; some Cherokees became cotton planters and slaveholders
2. For these efforts the Cherokees—along with the Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles—were numbered by whites among the “Five Civilized Tribes”
3. All this embrace of “civilization” apparently was not good enough for whites; in 1828 Georgia legislature declared the Cherokee tribal council illegal and asserted its own jurisdiction over Indian affairs and Indians lands; the Cherokees appealed this move to the Supreme Court, which thrice upheld the rights of the Indians
4. But President Jackson, who clearly wanted to open Indians lands to white settlement, refused to recognize the Court’s decisions (in a jibe at the Indians’ defender, Jackson reportedly snapped, “John Marshall has made his decision; now let him enforce it”)
3. Feeling some obligation to rescue “this much injured race,” Jackson proposed a bodily removal of the remaining eastern tribes—chiefly Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles—beyond the Mississippi; emigration was supposed to be voluntary because it would be cruel/unjust to compel the aborigines to abandon their land
4. Jackson evidently consoled himself with the belief that Indians could preserve their native culture in the wide-open West; Jackson’s policy led to the forced uprooting of more than 100,000 Indians; in 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, providing for the transplanting of all Indians tribes then resident east of the Mississippi
 1. Ironically, the heaviest blows fell on the Five Civilized Tribes
 2. In the ensuing decade, countless Indians died on forced marches to the newly established Indian Territory where they were to be “permanently” free (15 years)
5. Suspicious of white intentions from the start, Sauk and Fox braves from Illinois and Wisconsin, ably led by Black Hawk, resisted eviction; they were bloodily crushed in 1832 by regular troops, including Lieutenant Jefferson Davis of Mississippi
6. In Florida the Seminole Indians, joined by run-away slaves, retreated to the swampy Everglades and for seven years, they waged a bitter guerrilla war that took the lives of some fifteen hundred soldiers; the spirit of the Seminoles was broken in 1837 when the American field commander seized their leader, Osceola, under a flag of truce
7. The war dragged on for give more years but the Seminoles were doomed and some fled deeper into the Everglades, but about four-fifths of them were moved to Oklahoma

I. The Bank War

1. President Jackson distrusted monopolistic banking and over-big businesses, as did his followers; he came to share the prejudices of his own West against the Bank of the US

1. The national government minted gold and silver coins in the mid-19th century but did not issue paper money; paper notes were printed by private banks and their value fluctuated with the health of the bank and the amount of money printed, giving private bankers considerable power over the nation's economy
2. No bank in American had more power than the Bank of the United States; in ways the bank acted like a branch of government—it was the principal depository for the funds of the Washington government and controlled much of the nation's gold/silver
3. A source of credit/stability, the bank was an important part of the expanding economy
2. But the Bank of the United States was a private institution, accountable not to the people, but to its elite circle of moneyed investors; its president Nicholas Biddle held immense—and to many unconstitutional—amount of power over the nation's financial affairs
3. Enemies of the Bank dubbed him Czar Nicolas I and called bank a “hydra of corruption”
4. To some the bank's very existence seemed to sin against the egalitarian credo of American democracy; the conviction formed the deepest source of Jackson's opposition; the Bank also won no friends in the West by foreclosing on many western farms and draining “tribute” into eastern coffers—profit, not public service, was its first priority
5. The Bank War erupted in 1832 when Daniel Webster and Henry Clay presented Congress with a bill to renew the Bank of the United States' charter (would not expire until 1836)
 1. Clay pushed for renewal early to make it an election issue in 1832; Clay's scheme was to ram a recharter bill through Congress and then send it on to the White House
 2. If Jackson signed it, he would alienate his worshipful western followers
 3. If he vetoed it, as seemed certain, he would presumably lose the presidency in the forthcoming election by alienating the wealthy and influential groups in the East
6. The recharter bill slid through Congress but was killed by a scorching veto from Jackson; the “Old Hero” declared the monopolistic bank to be unconstitutional; of course the Supreme Court had declared it constitutional in the case of *McCulloch v. Maryland*
7. *Jackson's veto message reverberated with constitutional consequences; it not only squashed the bank bill but vastly amplified the power of the presidencies; all previous vetoes had rested almost exclusively on questions of constitutionality but Jackson essentially argued that he was vetoing the bill because he found it harmful to the nation*

J. Old Hickory” Wallops Clay in 1832

1. Clay and Jackson were the chief gladiators in the looming electoral combat; the grizzled old general, who had earlier favored one term for a president and rotation in office, was easily persuaded by his cronies not to rotate himself out of office

1. The “Old Hero’s” adherents again raised the hickory pole and bellowed, “Jackson Forever: Go the Whole Hog”; Clay’s admirers shouted, “Freedom and Clay”
 2. Novel features made the campaign of 1832 especially memorable; for the first time, a third-party entered the field—the newborn Anti-Masonic party, which opposed the influence and fearsome secrecy of the Masonic Order (force in New York)
 3. The Anti-Masons appealed to long-standing American suspicions of secret societies, which they condemned as citadels of privilege and monopoly; but since Jackson himself was a Mason and gloried in his membership, it was an anti-Jackson party
 4. The Anti-Masons also attracted support from many evangelical Protestant groups seeking to use political power to effect moral and religious reforms
2. A further novelty of the presidential contest in 1832 was the calling of national nominating conventions to name candidates; the Anti-Masons and a group of National Republic added still another innovation when they adopted formal platforms, publicizing their positions on issues—Henry Clay and his National Republicans enjoyed advantages
1. Ample funds flowed into their campaign chest; most of the newspaper editors, some of them “bought” with Middle’s bank loans, wrote badly about Jackson
 2. Yet Jackson, idol of the masses, easily defeated the big-money Kentuckian; a Jacksonian wave again swept over the West and “South, surged into Pennsylvania and New York, and even washed into rock-ribbed New England (219 to 49)

K. Burying Biddle’s Bank

1. Its charter denied, the Bank of the United States was due to expire in 1836 but Jackson was not one to let the financial octopus die in peace; he was convinced that he now had a mandate from voters for its extermination and feared that Biddle might force a recharter
 1. Jackson decided in 1833 to bury the bank for good by removing federal deposits from its vaults; he proposed depositing no more funds with Biddle and gradually shrinking existing deposits by using them to defray the day-to-day expenses of the government
 2. Removing the deposits involved nasty complications; president’s closest advisers opposed this unnecessary, possibly unconstitutional, and certainly vindictive policy
 3. Jackson was forced to reshuffle his cabinet twice before he could find a secretary of the Treasury who would bend to his iron will; a desperate Biddle called in his bank’s loans, hoping to illustrate the bank’s importance by producing a minor financial crisis
 4. A number of wobblier banks were driven to the wall by Biddle’s Panic, but Jackson’s resolution was firm; but the death of the Bank of the United States left a financial vacuum in the American economy and kicked off a lurching cycle of booms and busts

2. Surplus federal funds were placed in several dozen state institutions—the so-called “pet banks,” chosen for their pro-Jackson sympathies; without a central bank in control, the pet banks and smaller “wildcat” banks flooded the country with paper money
3. Jackson tried to rein in the runaway economy in 1836; “wildcat” currency had become so unreliable, especially in the West, that Jackson authorized the Treasury to issue a Specie Circular—a decree that required all public lands be purchased with “hard” money
4. This drastic step slammed the brakes on the speculative boom, a neck-snapping change of direction that contributed to a financial panic and crash in 1837
5. His successor would have to deal with the damage of the financial panic and crisis

L. The Birth of the Whigs

1. New political parties were gelling in the 1830s lengthened; as early as 1828, the Democratic-Republicans of Jackson had adopted the once-tainted name Democrats
2. Jackson’s opponents, fuming at his ironfisted exercise of presidential power began to coalesce as the Whigs—a new deliberately chosen to recollect 18th century British and Revolutionary American opposition to monarchy (King Andrew I)
3. The Whig party contained so many diverse elements that it was mocked as “an organized incompatibility”; hatred of Jackson and his “executive usurpation” was the only cement
 1. The Whigs first emerged as an identifiable group in the Senate where Clay, Webster, and Calhoun joined forces in 1834 to pass a motion censuring Jackson for his single-handed removal of federal deposits from the Bank of the United States
 2. After, the Whigs evolved into a potent national political force by attracting other groups alienated by Jackson: supporters of Clay’s American System, southern states’ righters offended by Jackson’s stand on nullification, northern industrialists and merchants, and many of evangelical Protestants associated with Anti-Masonic party
4. Whigs thought of themselves as conservatives, yet they were progressive in their support of active government programs and reforms; instead of boundless territorial acquisition, they called for internal improvements and supported institutions
5. The Whigs welcomed the market economy, drawing support from manufacturers in the North, planters in the South, and merchants and bankers in all sections
6. By absorbing the Anti-Masonic party, Whigs blunted much of the Democratic appeal to the common man; anti-Masons portrayed Jackson and Van Buren as imperious aristocrats

M. The Election of 1836

1. The secretary of state, Martin Van Buren of New York, was Jackson’s choice for “appointment” as his successor in 1836; leaving nothing to chance, Jackson carefully rigged the nominating convention and rammed his favorite down the throats of delegates

2. Van Buren was supported by the Jacksonites without wild enthusiasm, even though he had promised “to tread generally” in the footsteps of his predecessor
3. As the election neared, the organization of the Whigs showed in their inability to nominate a single presidential candidate; their long-shot strategy was instead to run several prominent “favorite son,” each with a different regional appeal and hope to scatter the vote so that no candidate would win the majority (vote would belong to the House)
4. The “favorite son” was General William Henry Harrison, the hero of the Battle of Tippecanoe, the schemes of the Whigs availed to nothing, however
5. Van Buren, squired into office by the close popular vote but by the comfortable margin of 170 to 124 votes (for all the Whigs combined) in the Electoral College

N. Big Woes for the “Little Magician”

1. Martin Van Buren, eighth president, was the first to be born under the American flag
2. An accomplished strategist and spoils man—the “wizard of Albany”—he was also a statesman of wide experience in both legislative and administrative life
3. From the outset the new president labored under severe handicaps
 1. As a machine-made candidate, he incurred the resentment of many Democrats—those who objected to having a “bastard politician” smuggled into office behind Jackson
 2. Mild-mannered Martin Van Buren seemed to rattle in the military boots of his testy predecessor; the people felt let down and Van Buren inherited the Jackson’s enemies
 3. Van Buren’s four years overflowed with toil and trouble; a rebellion in Canada in 1837 stirred up ugly incidents along the northern frontier and threatened to trigger war with Britain; the president attempted to play a neutral game
 4. The antislavery agitators in the North were in full cry; among other grievances, they were condemning the prospective annexation of Texas; worst of all, Jackson bequeathed to Van Buren the makings of a searing depression—hard times ordinarily blight the reputation of the president and Van Buren was no exception

O. Depression Doldrums and the Independent Treasury

1. The panic of 1837 was a financial sickness of the times; its basic cause was rampant speculation prompted by a mania of get-rich-quickism—gamblers in western lands were doing a “land-office business” on borrowed capital, much of it the shaky currency of “wildcat banks”—the speculative craze spread to canal, roads, railroads, and slaves
2. But speculation alone did not cause the crash; Jacksonian finance, including the Bank War and the Specie Circular, gave an additional jolt to an already teetering structure
 1. Failures of wheat crops, ravaged by the Hessian fly, deepened the distress

2. Grain prices were forced so high that mobs in New York City Stormed warehouses and broke open flour barrels, three weeks before Van Buren took the oath
3. Financial stringency abroad likewise endangered America's economic house of cards; late in 1836 the failure of two prominent British banks created tremors, and these in turn caused British investors to call in foreign loans—resulting pinch in the United States, combined with other setbacks, heralded the beginning of the panic
4. Europe's economic distresses have often become America's distresses, for every major American financial panic has been affected by conditions overseas
3. Hardship was acute and widespread; American banks collapsed by the hundreds, including some "pet banks," which carried down with them several millions in gvt funds; commodity prices drooped, sales of public lands fell off, and customs revenues dried
4. Factories closed their doors and unemployed workers milled in the streets
5. The Whigs came forward with proposals for active government remedies for the economy's ills; they called for the expansion of bank credit, higher tariffs, and subsidies for internal improvements but Van Buren spurned all such ideas (shackled by Jackson)
6. The beleaguered Van Buren tried to apply vintage Jacksonian medicine to the ailing economy through his controversial "Divorce Bill"; convinced that some of the financial fever was fed by the injection of federal funds into private banks, he championed the principle of "Divorcing" the government from banking altogether
7. By establishing a so-called independent treasury, the government could lock its surplus money in vaults in several of the larger cities; government funds would thus be safe, but they would also be denied to the banking system as reserves (lest credit resources)
8. Van Buren's "divorce" scheme was never highly popular; his fellow Democrats only supported it lukewarmly and the Whigs condemned it primarily because it squelched their hopes for a revived Bank of the United State—after a prolonged struggle, Independent Treasury Bill passed Congress in 1840 but was repealed in the next year (reappeared)

P. Gone to Texas

1. Americans, greedy for land, continued to covet the vast expanse of Texas, which the United States had abandoned to Spain when acquiring Florida in 1819; the Spanish authorities wanted to populate this unpeopled area but Mexico won its independence
2. A new regime in Mexico City thereupon concluded arrangements in 1823 for granting a huge tract of land to Stephen Austin, with the understanding that he would bring into Texas three hundred American families—they were to be of Roman Catholic faith
 1. Two stipulations were largely ignored; hardy Texas pioneers remained Americans at heart (didn't become Mexicanized) and resented the trammels imposed by a

“foreign” government—they were especially annoyed by the presence of Mexican soldiers

2. Energetic and prolific, Texan-Americans numbered about thirty thousand by 1835; most of them were law-abiding, God-fearing people, but some of them, had left the “States” only one or two jumps ahead of the sheriff (“G.T.T.” Gone to Texas)
3. Among the adventurers were Davy Crockett, the famous rifleman, and Jim Bowie, the presumed inventor of the murderous knife that bears his name; a distinguished latecomer and leader was an ex-governor of Tennessee, Sam Houston
4. The pioneer individualists who came to Texas were not easy to push around; friction rapidly increased between Mexicans and Texans over issues such as slavery, immigration, and local rights; slavery was a particularly touchy topic
5. Mexico emancipated its slaves in 1830 and prohibited the further importation of slaves into Texas, as well as further colonization by troublesome Americans
6. When Stephen Austin went to Mexico City in 1833 to negotiate these differences with the Mexican government, the dictator Santa Anna clapped him in jail and the explosion final came in 1835 when Santa Anna wiped out all local rights and started to raise an army

Q. The Lone Star Rebellion

1. Early in 1836 the Texans declared their independence, unfurled their Lone Star flag, and named Sam Houston commander in chief; Santa Anna, swept ferociously into Texas
 1. Trapping a band of nearly two hundred Texans at the Alamo in San Antonio, he wiped them out to a man after a thirteen-day siege
 2. Colonel W. B. Travis had declared, “I shall never surrender nor retreat.... Victory or Death”; a short time later, a band of about 400 defeated the American volunteers, having thrown down their arms at Goliad, were butchered as “pirates”
 3. All these operations further delayed the Mexican advance and galvanized American opposition; slain heroes like Jim Bowie and Davy Crockett, well known in life, became legendary in death—Texan war cries swept up into the United States
2. General Sam Houston’s small army retreated to the east, luring Santa Anna To San Jacinto (near Houston); the Mexicans numbered about 1,300 while the Texans about 900
 1. Suddenly on April 21, 1836, Houston turned; taking full advantage of the Mexican siesta, the Texans wiped out the pursuing force and captured Santa Anna
 2. The dictator was forced to sign two treaties; by their terms he agreed to withdraw Mexican troops and to recognize the Rio Grande as the extreme SW border of Texas; when released, the repudiated the agreement as illegal because it was extorted

3. These events put the U.S. government in a sticky situation; the Texans could hardly have won their independence without the help in men and supplies from their American cousin
 1. The Washington government, as the Mexicans bitterly complained, had a solemn obligation under international law to enforce its leaky neutrality statutes
 2. But American public opinion, favorable to the Texans, openly nullified the existing legislation; the federal authorities were powerless to act and President Jackson (in 1837) extended the right hand of recognition to the Lone Star Republic
4. Many Texans wanted not just recognition of their independence but outright union with the United States; the radiant Texas bride petitioned for annexation in 1837
 1. Uncle Sam was jerked back by the black hand of the slavery issue; antislavery crusaders in the North were opposing annexation with increasing vehemence; they contended that the whole scheme was merely a conspiracy of southern “slavocracy”
 2. At first glance, a “slavery plot” charge seemed plausible; most of the early settlers in Texas, as well as American volunteers during the revolution, had come from the states of the South and Southwest; but scholars have concluded that the settlement of Texas was merely the normal and inexorable march of the westward movement
 3. Most of the immigrants came from the South and Southwest cause they were closer
5. Many Texans, still, were slaveholders and admitting Texas would mean enlarging slavery

R. Log Cabins and Hard Cider of 1840

1. Martin Van Buren was renominated by the Democrats in 1840 without enthusiasm; the party had no acceptable alternative to what the Whigs called “Martin Van Ruin”
2. The Whigs, hungering for the spoils of office, learned from their mistake in 1836 and the Whigs united behind one candidate, Ohio’s William Henry Harrison; he was not the ablest statesman (Webster or Clay) but he was believed to be their ablest vote-getter
 1. The aging hero, was known for his successes against Indians and the British at the Battles of Tippecanoe and the Thames; “Old Tippecanoe” was nominated primarily because he was issueless and enemy-less—a tested recipe for electoral success
 2. John Tyler of Virginia was selected as vice-presidential running mate (afterthought)
3. The Whigs published no official platform, hoping to sweep their hero into office with a frothy huzza-for-Harrison campaign reminiscent of Jackson’s triumph in 1828
 1. A Democratic editor played directly into Whig hands; stupidly insulting the West, he lampooned Harrison as an impoverished old farmer who should be content with a pension, a log cabin, and a barrel of hard cider (poor westerner’s champagne)

2. Whigs adopted honest hard cider and sturdy log cabin as symbols of their campaign; Harrisonites portrayed him as the poor "Farmer of North Bend" who had been called from his cabin to drive corrupt Jackson spoilsmen from the "presidential palace"
3. They denounced Van Buren as a supercilious aristocrat; the Whig campaign was a master piece of inane hoopla; log cabins were dished up in every conceivable form
4. In truth Harrison was from one of the "First Families of Virginia," he was not poverty-stricken, he did not live in a one-room log cabin, but rather in a mansion; he did not drink hard cider, he did not plow his fields, but the details didn't matter
4. Harrison won by a surprising close margin in the popular vote but by an overwhelming electoral margin of 234 to 60; Van Buren was washed out of Washington (no real issues)

S. Politics for the People

1. The election of 1840 conclusively demonstrated two major changes in American politics since the Era of Good Feelings; the first was the triumph of a populist democratic style
 1. Democracy had been something of a taint in the days of the lordly Federalists
 2. But by the 1840s, aristocracy was the taint, and democracy was respectable; politicians were now forced to unbend and curry favor with the voting masses
 3. In truth, most high political offices continued to be filled by "leading citizens" but now these wealthy and prominent men had to forsake all social pretensions and cultivate the common touch if they hoped to win the presidential elections
2. The common man was at last moving to the center of the national political stage; instead of old divine right of kings, America was now bowing to the divine right of the people

T. The Two-Party System

1. The second dramatic change resulting from the 1840 election was the formation of a vigorous durable two-party system; the Jeffersonians had been so successful in absorbing the programs of their Federalist opponents that a full-blown two-party system had never truly emerged in the subsequent Era of Good Feelings
2. The idea had prevailed that parties of any sort smacked of conspiracy and "faction" and were injurious to the health of the body politic in a virtuous republic; by 1840, political parties had finally come of age, a lasting legacy of Andrew Jackson's tenaciousness
3. Both national parties, the Democrats and the Whigs grew out of the rich soil of Jeffersonian republicanism and each laid claim to different aspects of the republic inheritance
 1. Jacksonian Democrats glorified the liberty of the individual and were fiercely on guard against the inroads of privilege into government
 2. Whigs trumpeted the natural harmony of society and the value of community, and were willing to use government to realize their objectives

3. Whigs also berated those leaders—and they considered Jackson to be one—whose appeals to self-interest fostered conflict among individuals, classes, or sections
4. Democrats clung to states' rights and federal restraint in social and economic affairs as their basic doctrines while the Whigs tended to favor a renewed national bank, protective tariffs, internal improvements, public schools, and increasingly, moral reforms such as the prohibition of liquor and eventually the abolition of slavery
4. The two parties were thus separated by real differences of philosophy and policy; but they also had such in common; both were mass-based parties that tried deliberately to mobilize as many votes as possible for their cause; although it is true that Democrats tended to be more humble folk and Whigs more prosperous, both parties commanded the loyalties of all kinds of Americans, from all social classes and in all sections
5. The social diversity of the two parties fostered horse-trading compromises within each part that prevented either from assuming extreme or radical positions; by the same token, the geographical diversity of the two parties slowed the emergence of purely sectional political parties—it temporarily suppressed, though compromise, the issue of slavery