

Chapter 13: The Rise of a Mass Democracy (1824—1840)

The "Corrupt Bargain" of 1824

Recall

Notes

- last old-style election was marked by **corrupt bargains** of 1824
 - there were four clear candidates
 - John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts
 - Henry Clay of Kentucky
 - William H. Crawford of Georgia
 - Andrew Jackson of Tennessee
 - all candidates said they were "Republican" even though there was no clear political party yet
- Jackson had the strongest appeal, especially in the West where he campaigned against corruption
 - won twice as many of the popular votes as the next two candidates
 - failed to win a majority of the electoral votes
 - Twelfth Amendment eliminated the 4th candidate, Henry Clay, but he became Speaker of the House and had power over the House of Representatives who got to decide who won the election
 - Clay could give the election to basically anyone, so we went through process of elimination
 - eliminated Crawford because he suffered a paralytic stroke
 - hated Jackson, and Jackson hated him back
- John Quincy Adams elected President, Henry Clay secretary of state
 - 3/4 of the secretaries of state had gone on to be the President, it was thought that Adams bribed Clay to support him in return for promoting Clay to secretary
- Jacksonians angry and shouted "corrupt bargain"
 - Jackson condemned clay as "Judas of the West"
- a deal was never officially confirmed to be struck
- outcry over election showed that change was coming
 - it would not be tolerated to bribe officials; seen as furtive, elitist, subversive of democracy

A Yankee Misfit in the White House

Recall

Notes

- John Quincy Adams was really closed off, irritable, sarcastic, tactless; yet few people had come into the presidency with such a good record in statecraft
 - most successful secretaries of state, one of the least successful presidents
- came into the White House "sentence" under charges of "bargain," "corruption," and "usurpation"

- did not possess usual skill of politicians and scored those who did
 - commanded respect rather than courted popularity
- enemies condemned him for striking a corrupt bargain, allies wished he'd strike a few more
- refused to create vacancies in the government for his supporters
 - only removed twelve public servants
 - countless of supporters gave up
- still had extreme nationalistic views when the rest of the country was moving towards sectionalism and states' rights
 - first annual address urged infrastructure like roads and canals, proposal for a national university, advocate federal support for an astronomical observatory
 - met with annoyance from just about everyone, more so Southern
- Westerners didn't like the attempts to curb expansion
- White Georgians wanted the Cherokee Indians out of Georgia
 - Adams tried to deal with the problem fairly
 - Georgia governor resisted federal authority

Going "Whole Hog" for Jackson in 1828

Recall

Notes

- Andrew Jackson started his political campaign on the day that John Quincy Adams was elected by the House
- before 1828, Republicans of the Era of Good Feelings had already split into two camps
 - National Republicans supported Adams
 - Adamsites adopted oak as the symbol of their "oakenly independent candidate"
 - Democratic Republicans supported Jackson
 - Jacksonites planted hickory poles to symbolize Jackson himself
 - said Jackson was a "rough-hewn frontiersman and a stalwart champion of the common man"
 - denounced Adams as a corrupt aristocrat
- Jackson was actually a wealthy farmer who lived in a mansion off the labor of his many slaves
- Adams was far from corrupt, but he was an aristocrat
- Adams tried to stay away from "gutter tactics", insulting the opponent, but his supporters were less proper
 - called Jackson's mother a prostitute and his wife an adultress
- Jacksonites referred to billiard tables and chessmen as "gambling furniture" for the "presidential palace"
 - criticism directed at Adams for accepting large amounts of money in federal salaries even though they were well earned
 - accused of serving as a pimp
- Jackson's support mostly came from the West and the South
 - middle states and Old Northwest was divided

- Adams won New England and "better elements" of the Northeast
- Jackson won electoral votes by 178:83

"Old Hickory" as President

Recall

Notes

- Jackson was orphaned
 - much more interested in brawling and cockfighting than reading or spelling
 - learned to write but had wack grammar and spelled the same word wrong, in multiple ways, in the same letter
- moved to Tennessee where fighting was more valued than writing
 - became a member of Congress through native intelligence, force of personality, powers of leadership
 - afflicted with a number of duels, stabbings, a violent temper
- first President elected from the West, second nominated without a college education (Washington first)
- frontier aristocrat, owned many slaves, cultivated broad acres, lived in one of the finest mansions in America at the time
- Jackson's inauguration allowed the White House to be open to the masses, who streamed in and threatened the President
 - punch bowls out on the lawn had been spiked
- Jackson vulgarity replaced Jeffersonian simplicity

The Spoils System

Recall

Notes

- Democrats, always suspicious of the federal government, went on to strike a bargain of their own
 - **spoils system** allowed political supporters to have a position in the public office
 - firm grip on New York and Pennsylvania
- Jackson defended his spoils system under democratic ideals
- no party overturn had happened in Washington since 1800
- men had bought their way into high office
 - illiterates, incompetents, and crooks were given positions of public trust
 - Samuel Swartwout got to be collector of the customs of the port of New York
 - ended up leaving for England with close to \$1 million withdrawn from his bank account - stole \$1 million from the Washington government
- spoils system forced Americans to choose a party and stick to it

The Tricky "Tariff of Abominations"

Recall

Notes

- tariffs protected American industry against competition from European manufacturers

- drove up prices for all American goods
- middle states supported protectionist tariffs
 - New Englanders like Daniel Webster gave up defense of free trade to support higher tariffs
- wool and textile industries were booming, demanded higher tariffs
 - promoted a high-tariff bill which passed in 1828, essentially handing the problem off to Jackson
 - Southerners, who consumed more manufactured goods than produced, called it the **Tariff of Abominations**
 - Southern states protested, South Carolina lowered flags
 - "*Let the New England beware how she imitates the Old,*"
- Southerners believed the "Yankee tariff" discriminated against them
 - Northeast experienced a boom in manufacturing
 - West experienced growing population and rising property values
- Southerners sold cotton unprotected by tariffs but had to pay tariffs on manufactured goods in the American market
- South had growing anxiety about slavery
 - aborted slave rebellion in 1822 led by a free black named Denmark Vesey
 - government might try to pressure states into stopping slavery
- South Carolinians took the lead in protesting against the Tariff of Abominations
 - legislature published a non-formal pamphlet called *The South Carolina Exposition*
 - secretly written by John. C. Calhoun, who had to hide his identity because he was the vice president
 - denounced the tariff as unjust and unconstitutional
 - bluntly proposed the states nullify the tariff

"Nullies" in South Carolina

Recall

Notes

- needed two-thirds vote to nullify in South Carolina
- Congress passed the new Tariff of 1832 and it cancelled the worst parts of the 1828
 - Southerners still didn't like it, especially because it seemed to make the 1828 permanent
 - **Nullification Crisis** deepened
- "Nullies" won in the 1832 election with over two-thirds majority
 - delegates met a few weeks later declared the tariff void within South Carolina
 - threatened to take South Carolina out of the Union if Washington tried to force collection of the tariff
- Jackson was not to be intimidated
 - threatened to take the state with the military and hang the nullifiers
- Henry Clay did not want to see the state crushed, so he proposed a compromise which would reduce the 1832 tariff by 10% over 8 years
 - by 1842 the tariffs would be at the same protective level as 1816

- **compromise Tariff of 1833** passed Congress, but barely
 - opposed heavily by New England and middle states
- Congress passed the **Force Bill** to save face, which just allowed the president to use the army and navy to collect taxes if necessary
- no clear cut victory for Jackson or the "nullies"
 - Clay saved the conflict from turning into a civil war and bloodshed

The Trail of Tears

Recall

Notes

- Jackson's Democrats were dedicated to expansion, but that meant forcefully evicting the people who were already living there
- 125,000 Native Americans still lived east of the Mississippi
- 1790s, Washington government recognized them as tribes and agreed to legally get land through them
 - but Americans routinely violated the agreement, like the pieces of shit they are
- many white Americans felt respect and admiration for the Indians and wanted to assimilate them into white society
 - "civilizing" the Indians and converting them to Christianity
- many tribes resisted white encroachment, but some agreed peacefully to learn it
 - Cherokees of Georgia made a big effort to learn the ways of the whites
 - abandoned semi-nomadic life and adopted agriculture
 - opened schools and created a constitution
 - became prosperous cotton planters and got slaves
 - Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles were the "Five Civilized Tribes"
- Georgia declared the Cherokee tribal council illegal and the Cherokees appealed to the Supreme Court, which held the rights of the Indians three times
 - Jackson refused to acknowledge the decision because he wanted to settle on their lands
- Jackson proposed removal of the eastern Indian tribes, mainly Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Seminoles, to beyond the Mississippi
 - it was supposed to be voluntary, but we all know what happened instead
 - Congress passed the **Indian Removal Act** in 1830
 - forcefully evicted 100,000 Indians from their homes
 - forced Indians to march along the **Trail of Tears**
 - established a "permanent" free of white encroachment territory
- Sauk and Fox tribes from Illinois and Wisconsin were led by Black Hawk and resisted eviction
 - crushed in the **Black Hawk War** of 1832
- Seminole Indians in Florida were joined by runaway slaves and retreated to the Everglades
 - waged a guerrilla war for seven years resulting in 1500 deaths
 - most were moved to Oklahoma

The Bank War

Recall

Notes

- Jackson didn't like monopolistic banking and started to dislike the Bank of the United States
 - bank had a lot of power and controlled a lot of gold and silver
 - private institution accountable to the elite circle
 - bank president Nicholas Biddle had an immense and unconstitutional power over the nation's financial affairs
 - profit over public service
- **Bank War** erupted in 1832 when Daniel Webster and Henry Clay tried to renew the bank charter
 - Clay wanted it to be an election issue so he pushed for renewal
 - wanted to push a recharter bill through Congress and signed by Jackson, alienating his western followers
 - if he vetoed, it would dissuade his wealthy followers
- Jackson vetoed the recharter bill, declaring it to be "unconstitutional"
 - the Supreme Court already declared it constitutional in *McCullock v. Maryland*, but we both know how well he follows the Supreme Court
 - vetoed the bill because he personally found it harmful to the nation
- Clay's plan failed because the people saw the veto as for the benefit of the nation

"Old Hickory" Wallops Clay in 1832

Recall

Notes

- Clay and Jackson run against each other in 1832
- third party entered the race, the **Anti-Masonic party**
 - opposed influence and secrecy of the Masonic order
 - energized by the 1826 murder of a New Yorker who was threatening to expose Masons
 - spread throughout middle-Atlantic and New England states
 - appealed to American suspicion of secret societies
 - condemned as citadels of privilege and monopoly
- Jackson was a Mason and so the Anti-Masonic party was also an anti-Jackson party
 - supported by Protestant groups
- called parties to name candidates officially
- Henry Clay had some advantages
 - \$50,000 "life insurance" from the Bank of the United States
 - newspapers were bribed to sweet talk Clay
- Jackson still won though, heavily sweeping West and South, with 219:49 electoral votes

Burying Biddle's Bank

Recall

Notes

- Bank of United States supposed to expire in 1836 after charter denied
 - Jackson wanted to bury the bank entirely and removed the federal deposits from its vaults in 1833
 - proposed not depositing any more funds with Biddle and shrinking the existing deposits
 - cut off government funding and bleed the bank dry
- even Jackson's closest advisors said not to do that, but Jackson didn't listen and went to go find other people who would agree with him
 - reshuffled cabinet twice before he could find a secretary of the Treasury
- death of the Bank resulted in a financial vacuum in the American economy
 - surplus funds were placed in **pet banks**
 - flooded the country with paper money
- 1836 "wildcat" currency had become so unreliable that Jackson authorized the Treasury to issue a **Specie Circular**, which required all public lands to be purchased with metallic money

The Birth of the Whigs

Recall

Notes

- 1828 Jackson's supporters started calling themselves the "Democrats"
- Jackson's opponents didn't like his ironfisted use of presidential power and started calling themselves the Whigs, named after the English Whigs who were against the idea of absolute monarchy
- the Whig party was originally "an organized incompatibility", only sticking together by hating on Jackson
 - evolved to bring in anyone that Jackson alienated; supporters of Clay's American System, southern states offended by Jackson on nullifications, northern industrialists and merchants, evangelical Protestants associated with the Anti-Masonic party
- Whigs considered themselves conservatives
 - supported active government programs and reforms
 - wanted internal improvement like infrastructure, telegraph lines, prisons, asylums, and public schools
 - welcomed market economy, like Northern manufacturers, Southern planters, and merchants and bankers
- Whig party absorbed the common man's interests as much as the Democrats did
 - portrayed Jackson and Martin Van Buren as aristocrats
 - turned the Jacksonian rhetoric on its head, claiming Whigs to be the defender of the common man, Democrats as the party of cronyism and corruption

The Election of 1836

Recall

Notes

- Jackson wanted to appoint Martin Van Buren as his successor in 1836
 - "rammed his favorite down the throats of the delegates"
 - Van Buren supported by Jacksonians non-enthusiastically
- Whigs were incapable of nominating a singular candidate
 - they were like "hey, what if we ran SEVERAL candidates, so no one wins the 50% needed to be president, and the votes go to the House of Representatives?"
 - it didn't work and Van Buren won with 170:124

Big Woes for the "Little Magician"

Recall

Notes

- Van Buren first president born under the American flag
- "first-class second-rate man"
- had a lot of experience in both legislative and administrative life and apparently more intelligent and educated than the average of the other presidents
- machine-made candidate resented by many Democrats
 - "bastard politician"
 - the people felt let down, especially militarily after Jackson
- Jackson left the singular task of fixing the depression to Van Buren, and he didn't know how to do it

Depression Doldrums and the Independent Treasury

Recall

Notes

- **panic of 1837** was a symptom of financial sickness
 - caused by mania of get-rich-quickism
 - borrowed capital with the "wildcat banks"
 - spread to canals, roads, railroads, slaves
- failures of wheat crops then ravaged by the Hessian fly gave in to further distress
 - grain prices were forced so high that NYC mobs stormed warehouses to steal four barrels
- 1836 two British banks failed and they had to call in foreign loans
- American banks collapsed by the hundreds including Jackson's "pet banks", carrying down several million in government funds
 - commodity prices drooped, sales, customs revenues
 - factories closed and unemployed workers filled the streets
- Whigs proposed active government remedies for the economy
 - expansion of bank credit, higher tariffs, subsidies for internal improvement
- Van Buren tried to fix things the Jacksonian way, and he did something called the "Divorce Bill"
 - divorce the government from banking altogether
 - establish an independent treasury where the government could lock up surplus money

- never highly popular even among Democrats
 - Democrats supported it lukewarmly
 - Whigs condemned it because it meant the Bank of the United States couldn't be brought back
- Independent Treasury Bill passed Congress in 1840, only to be repealed by Whigs the next year
 - reenacted by Democrats in 1846 then continued until the Republicans made a network of national banks during the Civil War

Gone to Texas

Recall

Notes

- Americans wanted more land and they eyed up Texas like a snack
- Mexicans won their independence in 1821 and started a new regime in Mexico City which stopped arrangements for granting land to American families
 - immigrants were established Roman Catholics and properly Mexicanized
- Texans remained Texans, even in foreign territory
 - annoyed at Mexican soldiers, who used to be convicts
- about 30,000 Texan Americans by 1835
 - most were law-abiding folks, but some left just so they wouldn't be caught by police
 - Davy Crockett, rifleman
 - Jim Bowie, knife man, genuine Arkansas toothpick
 - Sam Houston, ex-governor of Tennessee
- pioneers of Texas were not easy to push around
 - friction between Mexicans and Texans over slavery, immigration, local rights
 - Mexicans ended slavery in 1830 but Americans kept bringing in more slaves
- Stephen Austin went to Mexican dictator Santa Anna and Santa Anna "clapped him in jail for eight months"
 - Santa Anna wiped out local rights and tried to raise an army to suppress Texans

The Lone Star Rebellion

Recall

Notes

- 1836 Texas declared independence and unfurled the Lone Star flag, named Sam Houston commander in chief
- Santa Anna swept into Texas and trapped about 200 Texans at **Alamo** in San Antonio, with his army of 6000
 - wiped them all down to a singular man after 13 day siege
 - Texans' commander Colonel W. B. Travis said "I shall never surrender nor retreat... Victory or Death."
- 400 Mexicans executed American volunteers who had surrendered at **Goliad**
- of those died including Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie, became legendary in death with cries of "Remember the Alamo!" "Remember the Goliad!" and "Death to Santa Anna!"

- Sam Houston's army retreated to the east, luring Santa Anna to **San Jacinto**
 - Mexicans and Texans were numbered 1300:900
 - April 21 Houston took advantage of the fiesta that was going on and wiped out the Mexicans and captured Santa Anna
- Santa Anna agreed to sign two treaties
 - withdraw Mexican troops and recognize the Rio Grande as the southwestern boundary of Texas
 - reported agreement as illegal because he was extorted under duress
- problem went to the US government who heavily aided the Texans
 - US eventually nullified some legislation in 1837, right before Jackson left office
- many Texans wanted independence to be recognized as well as to join the rest of the United States, and offered annexation in 1837
 - Northern anti-slavery crusaders were opposing annexation and thought the South just wanted more slave states

Log Cabins and Hard Cider of 1840

Recall

Notes

- Martin Van Buren renominated by Democrats in 1840
 - there was no other nominee to oppose "Martin Van Ruin"
- Whigs united behind William Henry Harrison, who won against the Indians and British at the Battles of Tippecanoe and the Thames
- Democrats played into Whig hands and insulted Harrison as an impoverished old farmer who would be content with a pension, log cabin, and a barrel of hard cider
 - Whigs adopted hard cider and log cabins as their campaign symbols
 - portrayed Harrison to come from his cabin and plough away corrupt Jackson spoilsmen
- *"Old Tip, he wears a homespun shirt, He has no ruffled shirt, wirt, wirt. But Matt, he has the golden plate, and he's a little squirt, wirt, wirt."*
- Harrison won electoral 234:60
- in the aftermath of the first depression, voters were faced with two opposing viewpoints on how to fix it
 - Democrats favored entrenchment and ending high-flying banks and aggressive corporations
 - Whigs wanted to expand and stimulate the economy

Politics for the People

Recall

Notes

- 1840 election demonstrated two major political changes since the Era of Good Feelings
 - populist democratic style where democracy was respectable
 - people who were too clean, too well dressed, too grammatical were not as respected

- wealthy people had to get in touch with the common man
- wealthy people still sneered at the newly elected candidates in office
- common man moved towards the center of the national political stage
 - sturdy American who would wear trousers rather than buff breeches, coonskin cap rather than silk top hat, wore no man's collar, not even his own
- America bowed to the divine right of its people

The Two-Party System

Recall

Notes

- vigorous two-party system formed after 1840
- both Democrats and Whigs grew out of Jeffersonian republicanism
 - Jacksonian Democrats glorified liberty of the individual and opposed inroads of "privilege" into government
 - Whigs boasted the natural harmony of society and community and disliked leaders whose self-interest created conflicts
 - Democrats liked states' rights and federal restraint in regards to social and economic affairs
 - Whigs wanted to get the national bank back along with protective tariffs, internal improvements, public schools, moral reforms, abolition of slavery
- two parties separated by philosophy and policy
- Democrats tended to be more humble while Whigs more prosperous
- both parties formed social classes but also within the parties to prevent extremism