

The Jacksonian Impulse

- Jackson was the first president not to come from a prominent colonial family
- Symbolized the changing social scene
- **Fluid new economic environment** fostered scramble for material gain and political advantage
- Calling the Jacksonian era **the “age of the common man”** is misleading
 - Even though political participation increased, common folk remained *common*
 - There was never true economic and social equality
 - Distinctions in society remained

Setting the Stage

- Jackson’s nickname: Old Hickory

Appointments and Rivalries

- Jackson replaced fewer than 20 percent of officials
- Administration was divided between Van Buren and Calhoun
 - Calhoun defended Southern interest
 - Jackson sought Van Buren’s advice

The Eaton Affair

- Peggy Eaton affair favored Van Buren against Calhoun
- Wife of John Eaton, Secretary of War—accused of adultery in the past
- Jackson sympathized with her—his cabinet, especially Van Buren, chastised her
- **Jackson accused Calhoun with a conspiracy against her and drew closer to Van Buren**

Internal Improvements

- Jackson was opposed to federal financing of transportation improvements, but Calhoun supported it
- **Maysville Road bill:** passed by Congress, offered Jackson a happy chance for a dual thrust at rivals Calhoun and Clay. **The bill authorized the government to buy stock in a road from Maysville to Lexington.**
 - Part of larger scheme to link with National Road
 - **Jackson vetoed, calling it unconstitutional, on the grounds that it was a purely local undertaking (road was only within Kentucky)**
 - **Jackson set important precedent: limiting federal support of internal improvements**
- **Jackson supported interstate projects**

Nullification

Calhoun’s Theory

- **Calhoun: war-hawk nationalist --> state rights sectionalist**
 - Conditions in South Carolina (his home state) brought about this change
 - Suffering from agricultural depression
 - Blamed protective tariffs—British and French couldn’t afford to buy southern cotton

- Low cotton prices, exhausted lands
 - North's criticism of slavery
- Denmark Vesey slave insurrection of 1822
- **Tariff of 1828:** (the one Calhoun had schemed earlier and surprisingly was passed)
 - Prompted his writing of *South Carolina Exposition*: opposed the tariff, nullification stopped short of secession from the union
- **He wanted to preserve the Union by protecting the minority rights that the agricultural and slave-holding South claimed**
 - Very similar to Jackson
 - **His concept of interposition—states could nullify federal law—followed the Constitution**
 - Interposition would be organized by state convention

The Webster-Hayne Debate

- **The debate sharpened the lines between states' rights and the Union**
- **Immediate question of the debate was public land**
 - Samuel Foot proposed restriction on sale of western lands
 - Thomas Benton denounced Foot Resolution as an effort to empower factory labor
 - Robert Hayne supported Benton and policy of cheap land.
- **Daniel Webster defended the East.**
 - Lured Hayne into defending states' rights and upholding the doctrine of nullification instead of pursuing a coalition with the West
 - **Hayne** took the bait and argued in support of *South Carolina Exposition*, Hartford Convention, and that **federal government could not be the judge of its own powers**
 - **Webster** countered by arguing that a **state could neither nullify a federal law nor secede from the Union**
- **Webster had the better argument. Union > individual states.**

The Rift with Calhoun

- **Jackson opposed interposition. Calhoun was for state rights. The two opposed each other.**
- P. 393 Jackson removed all Calhoun partisans from cabinet and reappointed one entirely loyal to him. **Calhoun's chances of becoming president at this point were virtually zero.**
- Van Buren became minister to Great Britain
- **Jackson accepted protective tariffs but called for a reduction on a few consumer goods to appease Southerners**
- **Reductions continued due to nullificationist pressure**

The South Carolina Ordinance

- South Carolinians were afraid that tariffs could be used to end slavery
- **A state convention was summoned and it adopted an ordinance of nullification which repudiated federal tariff acts of 1828 and 1832 and forbade collection of duties in the state after February 1, 1833.**
 - **Also, anybody whose property was seized by federal government would be reimbursed by state government**

Jackson's Firm Response

- South Carolina found itself standing alone.

- Jackson urged that tariff be enforced but that rates should be lowered.

Clay's Compromise

- Jackson sent federal soldiers and ships to South Carolina, which countered with state militia
- Jackson requested “force bill”: would authorize military use to compel compliance with federal law in South Carolina
 - He already had this authority—wanted to reinforce it
- Henry Clay was urged to circulate a bill that reduced the tariff—less than South Carolina preferred, but worked
 - South Carolina convention rescinded its nullification of the tariff acts
 - Jackson nullified force bill
 - Jackson had upheld the supremacy of the Union, and South Carolina had secured a reduction of the tariff.

Jackson's Indian Policy

- Jackson's view: Indians are barbarians and better get out of the way.
- Battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1814, Jackson's federal troops massacred 900 Creeks
- “just, humane, liberal policy toward Indians”

Indian Removal

- Indian Removal Act of 1830: Authorized president to give Indians federal land west of the Mississippi River in exchange for the land they occupied in the east and the south
 - Remarkably little resistance from Indians, who were wooed
 - Black Hawk War—Sauks tried to reoccupy land with peaceful intentions
 - Seminoles and Cherokees put up stubborn resistance
 - Osceola was their leader—when he was seized, efforts faded

The Trail of Tears

- Georgia declared that the authority of the state law would extend over the Cherokees within the boundaries of the state
- Discovery of gold stimulated whites' appetite for Cherokee land
 - Cherokees sought relief in Supreme Court
 - *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* ruled that Court lacked jurisdiction because Cherokees were a domestic dependent union
 - *Worcester v. Georgia*: the Court held that Cherokee nation was a “distant political community” within which Georgia law had no force. **The Georgia law was therefore unconstitutional**
 - Cherokees gave up their land in the Southeast in exchange for tracts in the Indian Territory west of Arkansas
- Forced march to Oklahoma: **Trail of Tears**

The Bank Controversy

The Bank's Opponents

- **Question of re-chartering the Bank of the United States was the primary question**
 - Jackson made no public commitment but was personally opposed
- Under **Nicholas Biddle**, Bank of the US had prospered.
 - As govt. revenues soared, Bank became most powerful lending institution
- **Enemies of the bank: state banks, debtors, businessmen, speculators, financiers on Wall Street**
 - Calhoun supported the bank, even though he was for state's rights
- **Many, including Jackson argued that bank put too much power in private hands**
 - Jackson questioned its constitutionality and talked of a compromise: a bank completely owned by government

The Re-charter Effort

- Friends of the Bank held a majority in Congress—Jackson would lose re-election support if he vetoed
- **Jackson vetoed.**

Campaign Innovations

- **For the first time, a third party was witnessed during the election of 1832. The Anti-Masonic party** grew out of popular hostility toward the Masonic order, members of which were suspected of having kidnapped and murdered a New Yorker for revealing the “secrets” of his lodge. A short-term party.
 - **Three important firsts**
 - First third party
 - first party to hold a national nominating convention
 - First to announce a platform, William Wirt for president
- Major parties also held national conventions
 - Republicans nominated Henry Clay
 - Democrats nominated Jackson and Van Buren but had no formal platform, unlike others
- **Democrats (Republicans/Jacksonians) won**

The Removal of Government Deposits

- **Jackson wanted to weaken Bank of the US**
- Despite House study and resolution, Jackson resolved to remove all government deposits from the bank
- **Secretary of Treasury, Louis McLane**, opposed removal of the government deposits and suggested modifying the bank
 - Jackson cleaned out his cabinet and reappointed
 - **Roger Taney replaced McLane**
- **Taney began depositing government funds in state banks, not the national bank—pet banks**
- **Biddle ordered that the bank curtail loans throughout the nation—he sought to bring the economy to a halt, create a sharp depression, and reveal to the nation the importance of a nation bank**
 - Unleashed speculative binge encouraged by deposit of govt. funds in pet banks
 - New banks emerged
 - Sale of lands rose
 - States plunged into debt to finance internal improvements

- **Irony: Jackson didn't want this**

Fiscal Measures

- **Distribution Act and Specie Circular:** Distribution of the government's surplus funds to the states had long been a pet project of Henry Clay's.
 - By eliminating surplus, argument for cutting the tariff would be removed
 - **Much of the surplus resulted from "land-office business"** in western property sales
 - **Westerners sought to lower the price of land**
 - **Southerners preferred to lower the tariff**
- Even though debt was paid by 1835, surplus mounted
 - **Distribution Act:** Compromise: government would distribute most the surplus as loans to the states. To satisfy Jackson's concerns, the funds were technically deposits, but in reality they were never demanded.
 - **Specie Circular:** government would accept only gold or silver coins in payment for land
 - **Purposes:** repress frauds, withhold support from the monopoly of the public lands in the hands of speculators and capitalists, discourage ruinous extension of bank notes and credit
- **Both the Distribution Act and Specie Circular put many state banks in a plight. Federal funds were withdrawn from pet banks, state banks had to require borrowers to pay back loans, added strains on gold and silver supply**

Boom and Bust

- **Inflation was a result of increase of gold and silver payments from England and France, and, especially, Mexico**
 - Outward flow (exports) of gold and silver decreased
- In 1836, tighter British economy caused a decline in British investments and demand for American cotton—**led to panic of 1837.**
- Brief period of **recovery in 1838**—bad wheat harvest in Britain prompted purchase from America
 - Collapse of cotton prices set off **depression within the same year.**

Van Buren and the New Party System

The Whig Coalition

- **Jackson had slain the dual monsters of nullification and bank**
- **Enemies of Jackson became known as Whigs** because they thought Jackson a king—his followers were deemed 'Tories.'
- **Coalition of Whigs centered around John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster—diverse**
 - Even some Democrats joined the Whigs
 - Remnants of Anti-Mason
 - More British-American Protestants than Democrats, which were primarily Irish and German
- **Whiggery**
 - Henry Clay's economic nationalism
 - Urban banking and commercial interest, planter associates—South
 - Internal improvements—West
 - **States rights < Nationalism**

The Election of 1836

- **Van Buren (Democrat) vs. Daniel Webster (Whig), Hugh White (anti-Jackson Democrats), William Harrison (Anti-Mason)**
- Van Buren won, Harrison was second

The Panic of 1837

- **Drop in price of American cotton**
- **English banks cut investors in America**
- **Failure of wheat crop**
- States curtailed ambitious plans
- A lot of money placed in pet banks was lost
- **Middle class suffered most**
 - 1/3 workforce was jobless; wages cut for those who had jobs
 - Food and clothing prices soared
 - No govt. aid
 - Churches and voluntary services were main sources of support
- Van Buren's advisers wanted to blame depression on speculators and bankers
- **Van Buren himself didn't feel government had responsibility to rescue hard-pressed people**
 - **He did believe that government itself should be healthy, financially**
- Van Buren proposed to Congress that distribution of surplus capital should be postponed

An Independent Treasury

- **Van Buren proposed alternative to storing money in state banks: independent federal Treasury**
- **Independent Treasury Act** prompted opposition from Whigs who feared deflation
 - Van Buren got western support by backing a more liberal policy
 - Finally passed in 1840; Whigs repealed it in 1841; restored in 1846
- **Additional problems**
 - Slavery debate
 - Maine border debate—kept in check by General Winfield Scott

The "Log Cabin and Hard Cider" Campaign

- Delegates preferred Harrison over Clay after Van Buren's term
 - Anti-Masons liked him
 - Credentials: Tippecanoe victory, governor of Indiana, legislature, minister
 - Vice President nominee: John Tyler
- **Whigs had no platform—it would risk division of their coalition against Democrats**
 - "Tippecanoe and Tyler too"
 - Democrats criticized—ridiculed using symbols of cider and log-cabin
 - Whigs countered this by using those symbols to portray Harrison as a simple man of the people
 - Intense campaigning—emblems, banners, etc
 - **Harrison won against Van Buren 1840**

Assessing the Jackson Years

- Jacksonian impulse had endured
 - Political parties
 - Three times the number of adult white male voters from 1824 to 1840
 - More in north than south
 - Spoils system—favors (i.e. positions) given to supporters
 - Increased sense of democracy
 - Republican virtues
 - Free enterprise, less government regulation of economy