

During the Jackson Era, the American democracy expanded and our modern political system began to take shape.

New Parties Emerge

SS.8.A.1.2, SS.8.A.4.8, SS.8.A.4.16, SS.8.C.1.4, SS.8.G.4.6

What new ways of campaigning appeared during the elections of 1824 and 1828?

From 1816 to 1824, the United States had only one major political party. This was the Democratic Republican Party. The party was far from united. In 1824, four Democratic Republican candidates competed for the presidency. Party leaders chose William H. Crawford, a former senator from Georgia, to be their candidate. Three other candidates were **favorite sons**—that is, they received backing from their home states rather than the national party. Their views reflected the interests of their regions.

Two favorite sons, Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay, were from the West. Clay, of Kentucky, was Speaker of the House of Representatives. Jackson, of Tennessee, was a hero of the War of 1812. Raised in poverty, he claimed to speak for Americans who had been left out of politics. The third favorite son, John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts, was the son of former president John Adams. He was popular with merchants of the Northeast.

The House Chooses the President

In the election, Jackson received a **plurality** (pluh • RA • luh • tee) of the popular vote—the largest share. No candidate received a **majority**, or more than half, of the electoral votes.

The Constitution requires that the House of Representatives select the president when no candidate has won a majority of the electoral vote.

As the House prepared to vote, Clay met with Adams. Clay agreed to use his influence as Speaker to defeat Jackson. With Clay's help, the House chose Adams for president. Adams quickly named Clay to be secretary of state. In the past this office had been the stepping-stone to the presidency. Jackson's followers accused the two men of making a "corrupt bargain" and stealing the election.

Adams as President

Adams and Clay denied any wrongdoing. No one ever uncovered any evidence of a bargain. Still, the charge cast a shadow over Adams's presidency.

In his first message to Congress, Adams announced his plans. In addition to improving roads and waterways, he wanted to build a national university and support scientific research.

Adams's proposals upset his opponents. They wanted a more limited role for the federal government. It would be wrong, they believed, for government to spend money on such projects. Congress finally approved funds for improving rivers, harbors, and roads, but this was far less than Adams wanted.

The Election of 1828

By 1828, the Democratic Republican Party had split. Jackson's supporters called themselves Democrats. The National Republicans supported Adams. Most Democrats favored states' rights and distrusted strong central government. The National Republicans wanted a strong central government. They supported measures such as building roads and a national bank to **facilitate** economic growth.

During the campaign, both sides resorted to **mudslinging**, or attempts to ruin their opponent's reputation with insults. The candidates also used slogans, buttons, and rallies. Such practices became a regular part of American political life.

In the election, Jackson received most of the votes cast in the frontier states. He also received many votes in the South, where his support for states' rights was popular. John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, who had been Adams's vice president, switched parties to run with Jackson. Calhoun also supported states' rights. Jackson won the election easily. Shortly after the election, Jackson's supporters officially formed the Democratic Party.

Making Connections What practices of the 1828 election are still used today?

Jackson as President

SS.8.A.4.8, SS.8.A.4.16, SS.8.C.1.4

How did Andrew Jackson make the American political system more democratic?

Andrew Jackson had qualities most Americans admired. He was a patriot, a self-made man, and a war hero. Thousands of ordinary people came to Washington for his inauguration. Later, many attended a White House reception.

Expanded Voting Rights

President Andrew Jackson promised "equal protection and equal benefits" for all Americans—at least, all white American men. Jackson's promise reflected the spirit of the times.

In the nation's early years, only men who owned property or paid taxes could vote. By the 1820s, many states had loosened these requirements. White male sharecroppers, factory workers, and others could now **participate** in the political process. By 1828, nearly all states let voters, rather than state legislatures, choose presidential electors. Women still could not vote. African Americans and Native Americans had few rights of any kind.

Making Government More Democratic

Democrats wanted to further open government to the people. They argued that ordinary citizens could do most government jobs. They were disturbed that the federal government had become a **bureaucracy** (byuh • RAH • kruh • see), a system in which nonelected officials carry out laws.

Soon after taking office in 1829, Jackson fired many federal workers and replaced them with his supporters. The fired employees protested. They charged that the president was acting like a tyrant.

One Jackson supporter said: "To the victors belong the spoils." In other words, because Jackson had won the election, his supporters had the right to the spoils, or benefits, of victory. This practice of replacing current government employees with supporters of the winner is called the **spoils system**.

Jackson's supporters also abandoned the unpopular caucus system, in which top party leaders chose the party's candidates for office. Instead, parties began using **nominating conventions** (NAHM • ih • nayt • ing kuhn • VEN • shuhnz), where delegates from the states chose the party's presidential candidate. This system allowed many more people to participate in the selection of candidates.

Analyzing How did nominating conventions make government more democratic?

The Tariff Debate

SS.8.A.4.16, LA.8.1.6.1

How did a fight over tariffs become a debate about states' rights versus federal rights?

A tariff is a tax on imported goods. The high tariff on European manufactured goods was pleasing to Northeastern factory owners. Tariffs made European goods more expensive. This encouraged Americans to buy American-made goods. Southerners disliked the tariff. They had a profitable trade selling their cotton to Europe. They feared that taxing European goods might hurt this trade. In addition, tariffs meant higher prices for the goods they bought from their European trading partners.

In 1828 Congress had passed a very high tariff law. Vice President Calhoun claimed that a state had the right to nullify, or refuse to accept, a federal law if it was not in that state's best interests. President Jackson disagreed with this reasoning. He feared that nullification would destroy the Union.

In 1830, at a Washington dinner marking Thomas Jefferson's birthday, Jackson had a chance to make his feelings on nullification known. He offered a toast. Looking directly at Calhoun, the president declared, "Our Union! It must be preserved!" Answering Jackson's challenge, the vice president rose with a toast of his own: "The Union, next to our liberty, most dear." To make sure his meaning was clear, Calhoun added, "It can only be preserved by respecting the rights of the states."

Not long after Jackson and Calhoun faced off at the dinner, Congress passed the Maysville Road bill. The bill provided federal funds for the building of a road in Kentucky. Jackson vetoed the bill. Jackson argued that because the road would be entirely within Kentucky, it should be a state project. In other words, the federal government should support only projects that benefited the entire nation.

In 1832 Congress passed a lower tariff. It was not enough to cool the protest. South Carolina passed the Nullification Act, declaring it would not pay "illegal" tariffs. The state threatened to secede, or break away, from the Union if the federal government interfered.

Jackson believed in a strong Union. He asked Congress to pass the Force Bill. This act allowed him to use the military to enforce federal law. South Carolina accepted the new tariff but nullified the Force Bill.

Making Inferences How might the workers at a factory in the Northeast react to the lowering of the tariff?

LESSON 1 REVIEW

1. Show understanding of the following terms by using them in a sentence about the election of 1824.

a. plurality b. majority

LA.8.1.6.1

2. Use the following terms in a sentence that illustrates how the terms are connected.

a. bureaucracy b. spoils system

LA.8.1.6.1

Answer the Guiding Questions

3. **Evaluating** How do you think new election campaign methods affected American democracy?

SS.8.C.1.4

4. **Analyzing** How did the election of 1828 show the growth of democracy?

SS.8.A.4.16

5. **Explaining** How was the fight over tariffs related to the issue of states' rights?

SS.8.A.4.16

6. **EXPOSITORY WRITING** Andrew Jackson once said "One man with courage makes a majority." Write a paragraph explaining what you think Jackson meant by this quote and how this idea influenced his leadership.

SS.8.A.4.8, SS.8.A.4.16