

From 'Factions' to Attack Ads – A History of American Politics

Class 4

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What We Will Cover Today

- Political Conventions & the Nominating Process in Presidential Elections
- The 1840 & 1844 Elections
- The Mexican War and its consequences
- Immigration and the Collapse of the Second Party System
- The Coming of the Civil War
- Reconstruction – The Republican Dilemma

Political Conventions and the Nominating of Presidential Candidates

Selecting Presidential Candidates

- The means of choosing presidential candidates has gone through stages
 - Congressional caucus/State legislature nominations
 - National political party convention selection of the presidential candidate
 - Presidential primary selection of the presidential candidate with the convention becoming a coronation

Congressional Caucus

- Presidential candidates nominated by their party's congressional caucus
- This system lasted from 1796 to 1824
- This system worked well as long as
 - The generation of leaders that fought the Revolution and wrote the Constitution was still around
 - Potential candidates were known to congressional leaders
 - There was an obvious line of presidential succession

State Legislatures & Conventions

- In 1824, the Congressional Caucus system broke down since its nominee, Crawford, was challenged by others
- In 1824, Adams, Clay, and Jackson persuaded their respective state legislatures to pass resolutions placing their names in nomination
- In 1825, the Tennessee legislature nominated Jackson as its candidate for the 1828 election

Conventions - 1

- The Anti-Masonic party was the first party to have a convention of party leaders choose the nominee
 - This was done in 1831
- Both the Democrats and the Whigs adopted the convention in 1832 since it was a way to involve state and local party leaders in the selection of the candidate and do away with the congressional caucus system.

Conventions - 2

- Conventions were made possible by the steamboat and railroad which made it possible to have gatherings in a distant city far from where many of the attendees lived
- They allowed state and local party leaders as well as elected officials to participate in the selection of a presidential nominee
- The primary purposes of the convention was to select the presidential and vice-presidential candidates and to write a platform

Conventions - 3

- Since the purpose of the party was to win elections:
 - Presidential nominees were selected largely on the basis of either high public visibility or acceptability to all of the major party factions
 - Vice-presidential nominees were often an afterthought, chosen to placate a faction of the party whose candidate for nominee had lost
 - Platforms tended to affirm universally-held beliefs and opinions, avoid controversial subjects, and lambaste the opposition

Conventions - 4

- Political conventions developed a set of traditions
 - Keynote speeches
 - Nominating speeches
 - Primary nominating speech
 - Mention all the great attributes of the candidate with his name not mentioned until the end of the speech
 - Demonstration
 - Seconding speeches
 - A delegation or a letter sent to inform the nominee of his nomination

Presidential Primaries

- Presidential primaries originated with the 1912 election
 - The importance of primaries lay not in their relatively few delegates, but in their ability to demonstrate vote-getting appeal to the party leaders
 - But winners of the primaries did not necessarily get the nomination
- After 1968, the McGovern Commission recommended that delegates be chosen in primaries and open party caucuses

Presidential Primaries - 2

- As more states added primaries, the party bosses and the convention ceased to select the presidential nominee
 - The convention turned into a televised coronation of the nominee
- The only substantive function of the Convention was to adopt the platform and select the Vice-Presidential nominee
 - Typically, the platform would be drafted by the aides and early supporters of the nominee
 - Typically, the Convention would simply ratify the nominee's vice-presidential selection

Impact of Primaries - 1

- One thing that primaries did was to make campaigning for president much more expensive
- Since primaries usually attracted few voters (especially in non-presidential election years), it was sometimes possible at the state level for candidates, unappealing to the party as a whole and often unelectable, to win the nomination for governor, senator, or congressman
 - E.g. Christine O’Donnell of “I am not a witch” fame & Sharron Angle in the 2010 elections

Impact of Primaries - 2

- The expenses of running in a primary (magnified in an age of television) heightened the influence of the early caucus and primary states
 - It give Iowa (the first caucus state) and New Hampshire and South Carolina (the first two primary states) an inordinate influence in winnowing out the candidate field and even determining the eventual nominee

The 1840 Election

Democrats

- The Democrats appealed to those who favored limited government, free trade, and white supremacy
 - These people saw themselves as ‘outsiders’ -- suspicious that an activist government would favor ‘insiders’ and infringe on their lifestyles
 - Inhabitants of areas bypassed by canals, rivers, and railroads
 - Smaller cotton and tobacco planters
 - Immigrants
 - Urban craftsmen and workers
 - Persons committed to white supremacy and the expansion of slavery

Whigs

- The Whigs appealed to those who favored a strong Federal Government, internal improvements, tariffs, and moral reform (and hated Andrew Jackson)
 - The Whigs drew their support from:
 - New England Yankee and Yankee-descended upper and middle classes of New York State and the Upper Mid-West
 - Large cotton and rice planters
 - Farmers and town/city dwellers that had benefitted from canals, roads, and railroads
 - Former Federalists
 - Persons opposed to Andrew Jackson and his policies

The 1840 Election

- The Whigs nominated William Henry Harrison and John Tyler
 - While Harrison was a Whig who supported both the Bank of the US, the tariff, and internal improvements, Tyler favored states rights and strict constructionist interpretation of the Constitution
 - He was chosen for two reasons:
 - He opposed Jackson and Van Buren
 - The Whigs figured that he could win the votes of Calhoun supporters who hated Jackson
- The Democrats renominated Martin Van Buren and Richard Mentor Johnson

The 1840 Election

- There were three things significant about the 1840 election
 - First, the Whigs mounted a campaign designed to appeal to all cultural regions not on the basis of issues but on symbolic identities
 - William Henry Harrison was a Virginia gentleman, a backcountry settler and war hero, and the candidate of a political party that accepted New England ideas of moral reform and government creation of the infrastructure needed for progress

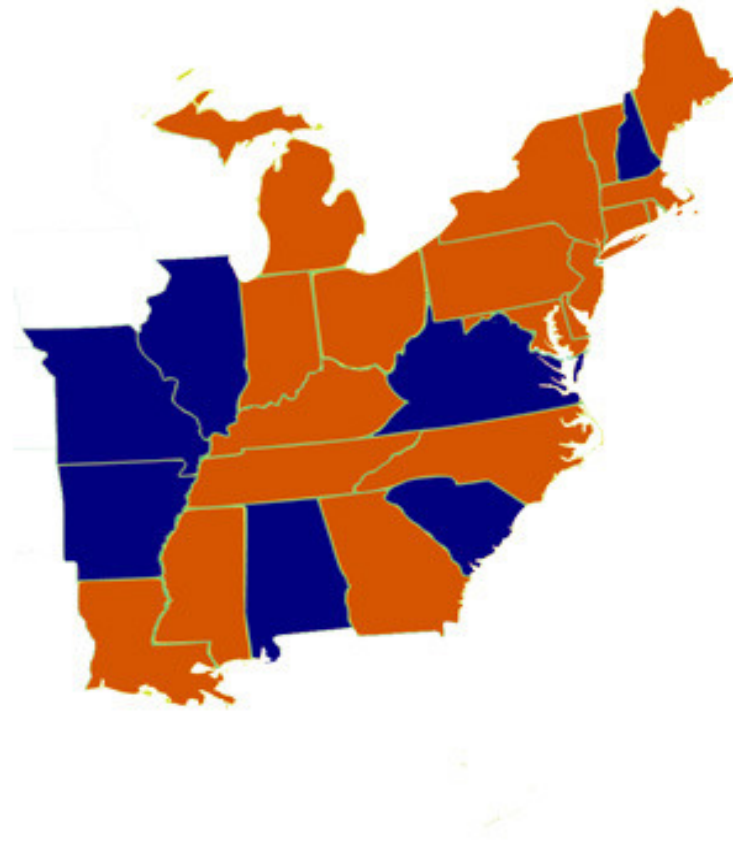
The 1840 election

- Second, the Whigs perfected the idea of image politics
 - They made a Virginia-born aristocrat from a noted family into a man of the people
 - They turned a person from a poor farm family who rose by hard work and political smarts to become president into a foppish, extravagant aristocrat with luxurious tastes

The 1840 Election

- Third, the Whigs showed that you could win a presidential election by avoiding any discussion of major issues
- Finally, the Whigs not only copied Jackson's campaign techniques, but improved upon them
 - Enlisted women in the campaign to write pamphlets, ride on floats in parades, sew banners, and even wear sashes saying "Whig husbands or none"
 - Gave expressions like "keep the ball rolling" and "booze" to the English language

Election of 1840



Tyler as President

- Harrison died after only a month in office & Tyler became president
- By vetoing Whig-sponsored legislation, Tyler precipitated a break with the Whigs
- The key accomplishment during Tyler's term of office was the annexation of Texas
 - This in turn paved the way for war with Mexico since Mexico did not recognize either Texas independence or the Texas-claimed Rio Grande boundary

Election of 1844

- The Democrats nominated James K. Polk and George M. Dallas
 - This resulted from the 2/3rds rule
- The Whigs nominated Henry Clay and Theodore Frelinghuysen
- The big issue was the annexation of Texas and the Oregon territory – “Fifty-four Forty or Fight”
- Polk won a narrow election victory
 - Last election where states voted on different days

Election of 1844



James K. Polk

- Was a former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and a former Governor of Tennessee
- Known as “Young Hickory” and the “Napoleon of the Stump”
- Announced that he had 4 goals for his presidency
 - Establish an Independent Treasury System
 - Reduce tariffs
 - Acquire some or all of the Oregon Territory
 - Acquire California and New Mexico from Mexico
- Accomplished all of these goals

Origins of the Mexican War

- Polk sent John Slidell to Mexico to offer the Mexicans up to \$30 million to purchase California and New Mexico.
- Mexico refused to receive Slidell.
- Polk then sent GEN Taylor and an army to the area between the Nueces and Rio Grande rivers
- This led to a clash with Mexican forces
- Polk used this clash as a reason to ask for a declaration of war

The Mexican War

- Led to the Annexation of New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and California
- Raised the issue of the status of slavery in these territories
- Led, via land warrants of 160 acres to enlistees, to the settlement of the Northern Plains states and territories
- Made Zachary Taylor a war hero and subsequent Whig presidential nominee in 1848

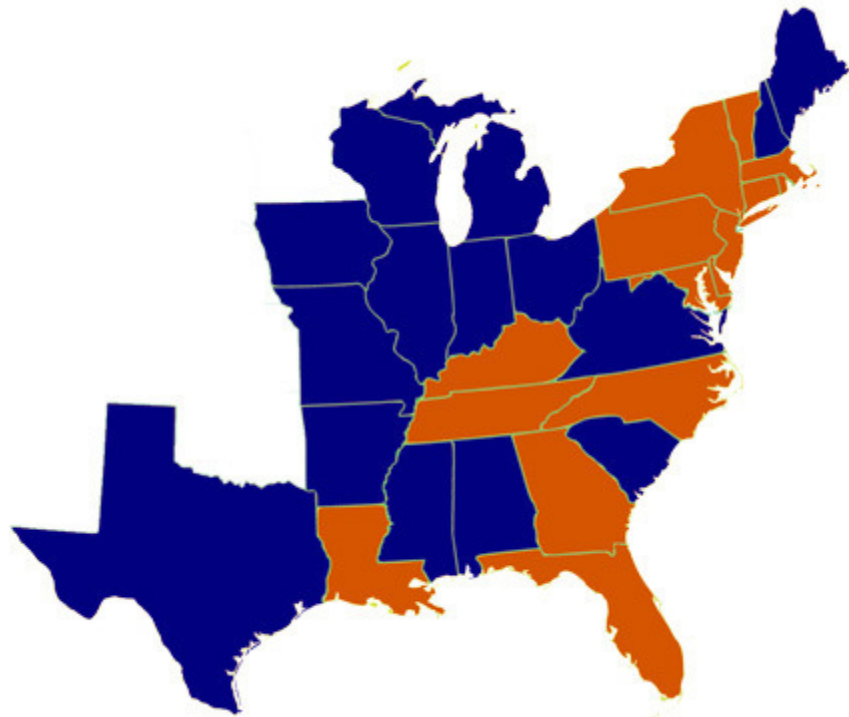
Crucial Years – 1846-1848

- Events in 1846-1848 determined the U.S. would have a Civil War
 - The Mexican War
 - The Irish and European Potato Famine
 - The repeal of the English Corn Laws
 - The discovery of gold in California
 - The failed European Revolutions of 1848

Election of 1848

- The Whigs nominated GEN Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore
- The Democrats nominated Lewis Cass and William Butler
- The Free Soil Party nominated Martin Van Buren and Charles F. Adams
- In 1848, all states for the first time had the presidential election on the same day
- Taylor won the election

1848 Election



The Slavery Issue – Front and Center

- Victory in the Mexican War raised two key issues:
 - The status of slavery in the territories
 - Wilmot Proviso – passed the House & failed in the Senate
 - How many territories would there be
- South wanted the Missouri Compromise line extended to the Pacific & a stronger fugitive slave law
 - Texas boundaries
- North wanted the Wilmot Proviso & slavery abolished in the District of Columbia

Compromise of 1850

- The crisis came to a head when California requested admission as a free state
 - After much acrimonious debate, the Compromise of 1850 was enacted
- Compromise of 1850
 - Admitted California as a free state
 - Organized Utah Territory and New Mexico Territory with slavery to be decided by popular sovereignty.
 - Texas dropped its land claims to land north of the 32nd parallel north and west of the 103rd meridian west in return for the US government assuming Texas's debts.
 - Slave trade was abolished in Washington, D.C. (but not slavery itself)
 - Fugitive Slave Act was strengthened.

What the Compromise Did

- It temporarily silenced Southern threats of secession
- It severely split the Whig Party since the strongest supporters of the Wilmot Proviso and the Fugitive Slave Law were both Whigs
 - Reflected in the decisive defeat of the Whigs in the 1852 election
- The Fugitive Slave Law alienated Northerners who resented being made complicit in enforcing it
 - Northern resistance to the Law in turn provoked anger in the South

The Kansas-Nebraska Act

- As I mentioned last class, the Kansas-Nebraska Act
 - Led to the fracturing of the Democratic Party,
 - Was a major factor in the collapse of the Whig Party,
 - Led to the formation of the Republican Party
 - Led to “Bloody Kansas”

Pierce and Buchanan

- Pierce followed policies that exacerbated sectional animosities and strengthened both Northern abolitionists and Southern extremists
- Buchanan in turn adopted policies that made the situation worse
 - His hatred of Douglas led to the fracturing of the Democratic Party
 - This in turn paved the way for the election of Abraham Lincoln

Cultures Become Sections

From Cultures to Sections

- What were four distinct founding cultures became two distinct sections by the mid-19th century together with a region (the West) that was slowly being incorporated into either the North or the South
- This process was the consequence of the following trends
 - The Westward Movement
 - The mingling of founding cultures in the West
 - The development of different economies in the South, North, and West with the economies of the North and West becoming closely interlinked due to the railroad

From Cultures to Sections

- Given both the cultural predilections, and their differential economies, North, South, and West had different political wants
 - South wanted a minimal Federal government
 - Favored states rights and minimal tariffs
 - North wanted a strong Federal government
 - Favored internal improvements (roads, dredged harbors, subsidies for RR construction) and high tariffs
 - West wanted a strong Federal government to protect against Indians and facilitate development
 - Favored internal improvements to get its agricultural products and minerals to market

A Note About the South - 1

- Over time, the North (New England, Mid-Atlantic, and the Old Northwest) became somewhat more culturally homogeneous
- The South tended to split into three distinct regional subsections differentiated by
 - Type of agricultural economy
 - Degree to which the subsection economy was linked to the Northern economy
 - The relative proportion of the population that consisted of black slaves

A Note About the South - 2

- The Three Souths
 - The Lower South
 - States that bordered the Gulf of Mexico plus Georgia and South Carolina
 - Economy dominated by plantation cash-crop agriculture (mostly cotton but also rice and sugar)
 - A large proportion of the population consisted of black slaves – 47%
 - Economic links were primarily with Great Britain
 - Links with the North mostly in the form of the North being a market for their cotton exports

A Note About the South - 3

– The Middle South

- North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, and Arkansas
- Economy consisting mostly of family farms with relatively few plantations
 - Major cash crop is tobacco. Some cotton is grown
- Smaller proportion of black slaves in the population than the Deep South but more than in the Upper South
 - 32% vs 47% for the Lower South and 13% for the Border South

A Note About the South - 4

– The Upper South

- Consisted of Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, Missouri, and that portion of Virginia that is now West Virginia
- Stronger economic links to the North than to either the Middle or Lower South
- Economy consists mostly of family farms with some industry, especially in the growing cities
 - Major cash crops are tobacco and grain. Horsebreeding also a major agricultural industry
- Relatively low proportion of black slaves in the population – 13%
 - Significant proportion of the black population consists of free blacks (21% in the Upper South vs 7% in the Middle South and 1.5% in the Lower South)

Impact of the Fact of 3 Souths

- The three Souths acted very differently in the Secession Crisis of 1861
 - The Lower South seceded prior to Lincoln's inauguration
 - The Middle South seceded only after Ft Sumter and Lincoln's decision to use force to fight secession
 - The Border South remained loyal to the Union

A Note on Slavery - 1

- During Colonial Period, slavery was legal in all 13 colonies
- American Revolution led to subsequent abolition of slavery in the North
- Early 19th Century: Slavery seen everywhere as a regrettable institution contrary to both Christianity and Natural Rights
 - Fear of emancipation in places with large Black populations

A Note on Slavery -2

- By 1815, the first wave of emancipation had run its course
 - VA-MD-NC slaves were put to work growing wheat instead of tobacco
 - VA-MD began selling slaves westward or southward
 - In cities, slavery declined
 - Slaves could ‘hire their own time’ in return for a percentage of the earnings
 - By 1830, 30% of Baltimore’s Blacks were free. So were 40% of New Orleans’ Blacks.
 - Escapes were easier

A Note on Slavery -3

- After 1815, short-staple cotton made slave labor highly profitable
 - Short-staple cotton led to the expansion of slave-plantation agriculture far beyond the areas that sustained tobacco, rice, and indigo cultivation
- After 1815, the apologetic attitude toward slavery gave way to the idea that slavery was a positive good
 - Planter paternalism toward a ‘childlike’ people
 - Without slavery, white supremacy would be at risk and Black social & political equality with whites would follow

The Cotton Kingdom

- The Rise of the 'Cotton Kingdom'
 - Converted thousands of semi-subsistence farmers into cotton producers
 - Provided 59% of U.S. exports in 1840
 - Fostered through the manufacture of cotton textiles the Industrial Revolution in both Europe and the American North
 - Gave rise to textile mills in New England

What the North Had Become

- Two of the regional cultures, the Puritan and the Middle States, had largely merged, especially in the Old Northwest
- The North had become to some extent both industrialized and urbanized
- In the urban areas, a substantial Yankee middle class and immigrant working class had developed
- Northern agriculture had remained an economy of family farms growing wheat and corn
 - Subsistence farmers were becoming entrepreneurs subsisting on the sale of their wheat and corn
- The area had been influenced by the reform movements arising out of the Second Great Awakening

What the South Had Become

- Two of the regional cultures, the Tidewater South and the Frontier, had largely merged, especially in the trans-Appalachian cotton South
- The Southern economy was still overwhelmingly agricultural, dominated largely by the cotton plantation elite
- Slavery formed the basis not only of the southern economy but also of southern society and culture
- Racism served not only to justify slavery but also to dampen class conflict among whites and foster a sense of white egalitarianism.

European Potato Famine

- Over one million Irish emigrated, with more than 500,000 settling in the United States.
 - There was also a large emigration from Germany, the Scottish Highlands, and Scandinavia as well
- It precipitated discontent in Western Europe, helping to precipitate the revolutions of 1848
 - The failure of the 1848 revolutions led to emigration of a number of German intellectuals and politicians to the U.S.
- Led to the repeal of the British Corn Laws

Impact of Immigration

- Large-scale Irish and German immigration destabilized American politics in the decade before the Civil War
 - Fostered a nativist anti-Catholic reaction among native Protestants
 - Led to the creation of the Know-Nothing Party
 - Weakened the Democrats
 - Greatly weakened the Whigs
 - Paved the way for the rise of the Republicans
- Increased the relative population of the North vis-à-vis the South
 - This intensifying Southern fears of political marginalization which in turn intensified pro-secession sentiment

The collapse of the Whig Party

- The party had been deeply divided over slavery
- The cultural issues of anti-immigrant nativism and temperance shattered the Whigs in the North and gave rise to the Know-Nothings
- After a strong showing in the 1854 elections, the Know Nothings once in office showed itself to be incompetent, failed to deliver on either its reform or anti-immigrant promises, and proved unable to handle the slavery issue
- The failure of the Know Nothings paved the way for the rise of the Republicans

The Coming of the Civil War

- A Stable Democracy requires:
 - The existence of a competitive party system
 - The acceptance of opposition parties as legitimate
- Most southerners, however, did not see the Republican party as legitimate
 - Defeat in 1860 was not perceived as a temporary setback but as a fateful defeat with disastrous consequences
- Result: Secession

The Coming of the Civil War

- In April 1861, both North and South went to war to save democracy as they understood it
 - For the South, at stake was the right of southern whites to control their own destiny and preserve their traditional society and culture
 - For the North, the war was a struggle to uphold the democratic principle of majority rule, as expressed in a free and fair election, and to preserve the Union, which northerners believed was inseparably linked to democracy