

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

Class 4

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# What We Will Cover Today

- The Impact of Andrew Jackson
- 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

# Key Events of Jackson's Presidency

- The Battle of the Petticoats
- Indian Removal
- Veto of the Rechartering of the BUS
- The Maysville Veto
- Resistance to Nullification
- Paying off the National Debt
- Appointment of 6 Supreme Court justices, including Chief Justice Roger B. Taney
- Institution of the Spoils System

# The Battle of the Petticoats - 1

- Margaret “Peggy” Eaton was the well-educated, vivacious daughter of the owner of the Franklin House, a Washington boarding house
- In 1828, Peggy married Senator John Eaton, soon to be Jackson’s Secretary of War
- This and Peggy Eaton’s past led Cabinet wives and Washington socialites to snub Mrs Eaton

# The Battle of the Petticoats - 2

- Jackson had lost his wife, Rachel, months before his inauguration
  - He blamed her death on the vicious attacks made upon her
  - He saw Peggy Eaton as an innocent victim of the same type of slanderous allegations
- Since Martin Van Buren, a widower and Secretary of State, was kind to Mrs Eaton, he rose in Jackson's favor

# The Battle of the Petticoats - 3

- Jackson, who felt that the Vice President had at least tacitly approved of Floride Calhoun's attack on Mrs Eaton, became alienated from his Vice President
- The controversy led Jackson to demand the resignation of his cabinet
  - He then named Van Buren as Ambassador to Britain
- The vote on Van Buren's confirmation was a tie, allowing Calhoun to cast the deciding vote against Van Buren
  - This caused Jackson to go ballistic

# The Battle of the Petticoats

- The break between Jackson and Calhoun led Calhoun to resign the vice presidency and seek election to the Senate from SC
  - His presidential ambitions destroyed, Calhoun began his transformation from American nationalist to Southern sectionalist
- The Peggy Eaton affair led to Jackson choosing Van Buren as his Vice Presidential nominee in 1832

# Bank of the U.S. - 1

- Bank served as the Federal Government's fiscal agent even though it was a private bank
  - Handled its deposits (including tax receipts) and payments
  - Could issue its own currency notes
    - Issued 40% of all bank notes in circulation
    - By changing its demands on state and local banks for specie, it could regulate the whole economy
  - Conducted normal commercial bank functions



# Bank of the U.S. - 2

- Jackson with his strict constructionist views saw the BUS as constitutionally illegal
  - When Congress created it, it asserted a power not given to it by the Constitution
- Jackson saw the BUS as having a corrupting influence
- Jackson believed that specie constituted the only legitimate currency and that banks had no business issuing paper currency

# The End of the BUS - 1

- While the BUS charter did not expire until 1836, Henry Clay in 1832 had Congress pass a bill to recharter the Bank
  - Clay saw it as a win-win issue
    - If Jackson approved the bill, the BUS's future was secure
    - If Jackson unexpectedly vetoed the bill, Clay would have an issue he could use against Jackson in the 1832 election
- Jackson vetoed the bill
  - Claimed that it was unconstitutional
  - Denounced the BUS as an instrument of special privilege that favored rich at the expense of the “humble members of society – the farmers, mechanics, and laborers”

# The End of the BUS - 2

- After the veto
  - Jackson withdrew Federal deposits from the BUS and deposited them in pet state banks
  - Biddle worked to defeat Jackson
    - Subsidized anti-Jackson newspapers
    - Distributed anti-Jackson pamphlets, tracts, and journals
    - Made loans to pro-Bank congressmen
- The BUS veto became a major point of political polarization in the electorate
  - Broke the Republican party into two distinct factions – the Jacksonian Democrats and the anti-Jacksonian National Republicans (soon to be Whigs)

# Effects of the BUS veto

- Ensured the reelection of Jackson in 1832 and of his chosen successor, Van Buren, in 1836
- Led to a lending bubble on the part of the pet state banks
- When the bubble burst, the result was the Panic of 1837
- By destroying the BUS without providing a substitute for it, the veto left the U.S. banking system in a chaotic state
  - It was not until the creation of the Federal Reserve system in 1913, that the U.S. had an entity that could do what the BUS could do

# Maysville Road Veto

- Vetoed the Maysville Road project
  - Road between Maysville and Lexington KY
  - Advocates saw it as part of future Federal road system
  - Jackson vetoed the bill on grounds that federal financing of internal state improvements was not authorized by the Constitution
  - Was willing to enable states to construct roads and canals by distributing surplus federal funds to the states

# Tariffs - 1

- Apart from slavery, the tariff was the most heated political issue in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century
  - Manufacturers in New England and the mid-Atlantic states favored tariffs to shield themselves from foreign competition
  - Westerners favored tariffs as a source of funds for internal improvements that would link the West to the rest of the nation
  - Southern farmers and planters saw tariffs as punitive legislation that forced them to subsidize Northern manufacturers

# Tariffs - 2

- In 1789, Congress enacted a tariff law to raise revenue for the new government
  - Rate of 15% on iron, nails, hemp & glass and 5% on everything else
  - Hamilton saw tariffs as way to enable American manufacturers to undersell their foreign competitors
- In 1816, Congress enacted the first protective tariff – with the goal not only of raising revenue but also protecting American manufacturers from foreign competition
  - The average tariff rate was raised to 20%

# Tariffs - 3

- In 1828, in the so-called “Tariff of Abominations,” the average rate was raised to over 60%
  - This was higher than even the Smoot-Hawley Tariff of 1930
- Its enactment was the result of a political ploy by Jackson’s supporters that backfired



# Nullification - 1

- The Tariff of Abominations raised the issue of where sovereignty lay
  - Led to the Nullification controversy
- Nullification provoked by
  - Jackson's proposed tariff bill of 1832
  - Calhoun's change of view
  - Calhoun's break with Jackson as a result of the Peggy Eaton affair

# Nullification - 2

- SC legislature
  - Declared the tariffs unconstitutional and thus null and void
  - Barred collection of the tariff in SC
  - Threatened secession if the Federal government attempted to intervene
- Jackson responded vigorously
  - Dispatched warships to Charleston harbor
  - Issued a proclamation stating that no state has a power to annul a law of the United States
  - Asked Congress to enact a “force bill” authorizing use of the military to enforce the tariff law in SC

# Nullification - 3

- While Jackson believed in states rights, he also believed that the Federal government had legitimate constitutional powers
  - This included the right to enact a tariff
- Thus any attempt by a state to nullify a Federal law was both unconstitutional and incompatible with the existence of the Union
- Jackson also believed that in a democracy the majority had a right to govern

# Effects of the Nullification Episode

- The Nullification episode was a portent of eventual disunion and civil war
- It provided a precedent for Lincoln's actions in the Secession Crisis of 1861
- It led many Southern planters and states rights advocates to abandon the Jacksonian Democrats in favor of the Whigs
  - This led to a Whig Party with two very disparate wings that had little in common except opposition to Jackson as well as an economic linkage of Southern cotton producers and Northern textile manufacturers

# Whigs vs Democrats

# Democrats

- Had a skeptical view of industrialization and the workings of the market
  - Both could lead to concentrations of power that would result in exploitation, corruption, or infringements on personal freedom
- Believed in white supremacy and white equality
- Defended the rights and liberties of the individual against the expansive tendencies of the state
- The things to be feared were state tyranny and infringement of one's personal rights

# Democrats

- Supported states rights and a minimal role for the Federal government
- Views on slavery ranged from neutral indifference to support of slavery
- Supported the denial of votes to Blacks on grounds that political equality required social equality
- Supported territorial expansion of the country as distinct from expansion of the state

# Democrats

- Democratic constituency groups consisted of the following
  - 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, especially Catholics
  - Urban craftsmen and workers
  - Persons committed to white supremacy and the expansion of slavery
  - Areas settled by people from Greater Appalachia and by poorer migrants from the Deep South and Tidewater



# Whigs

- Believed that the state (including the Federal government) had a positive role to play in the economic development of the country
  - The focus of government activity, however, should be on increasing total wealth and not on improving the lot of the least advantaged in the society
- Had an optimistic view of industrialization and the workings of the market

# Whigs

- The things to be feared were anarchy and secession
  - The preservation of liberty required both internal discipline (“character”) and societal regulation
  - The development of character and the prevention of anarchy required public schools, temperance legislation, and sumptuary laws

# Whigs

- Supported internal improvements, establishment of a Bank of the United States, and high tariffs (to pay for the internal improvements)
- Southern wing consisted of the more affluent slaveholders who supported internal improvements to get their cotton and other products to market
- Northern wing consisted of upper- and middle-class beneficiaries of internal improvements and supporters of moral reform

# Whigs

- 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

# Whigs

- Northern Whigs tended to oppose the expansion of slavery
- Supported Sunday closing laws and temperance
- Had a nativist fringe that was anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic

# The 1840 Election

# 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



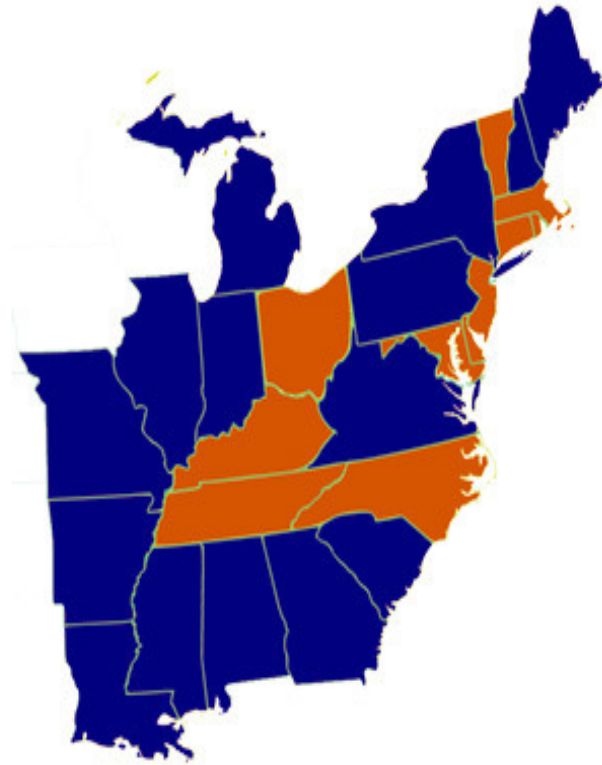
# Tyler as President

- 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

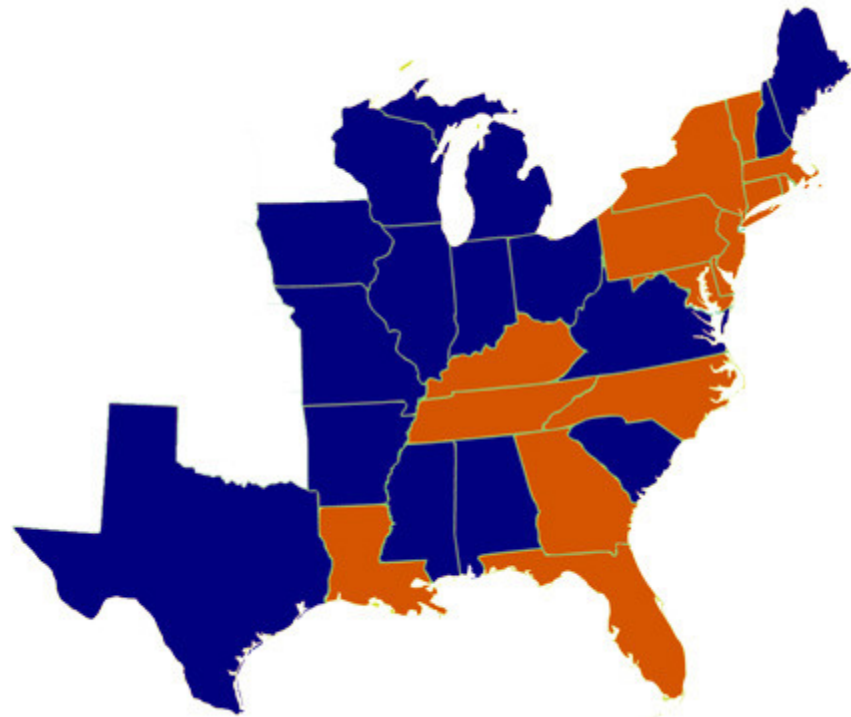
# Crucial Years – 1846-1848

- 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 103<sup>rd</sup> 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

# 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 Know-Nothings

- The mass immigration of Irish and German Catholics aroused anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic sentiment
  - The Irish were fleeing the potato famine
  - The Germans were fleeing both the potato famine and the failure of the 1848 Revolution
- Mass immigration led to the formation of the American or Know-Nothing Party
  - It also drove northern working-class Protestants out of the Democratic Party and into the Know Nothings

# The Know-Nothings - 2

- One appeal of the Know Nothings (besides their anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic outlook) was their American nationalism
- What did in the Know Nothings was:
  - Their incompetence in office
  - Their inability to handle the slavery issue
- The beneficiaries of Know Nothing failure were the Republicans in the North and the Democrats in the South

# The Kansas-Nebraska Act

- 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