

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 19th 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

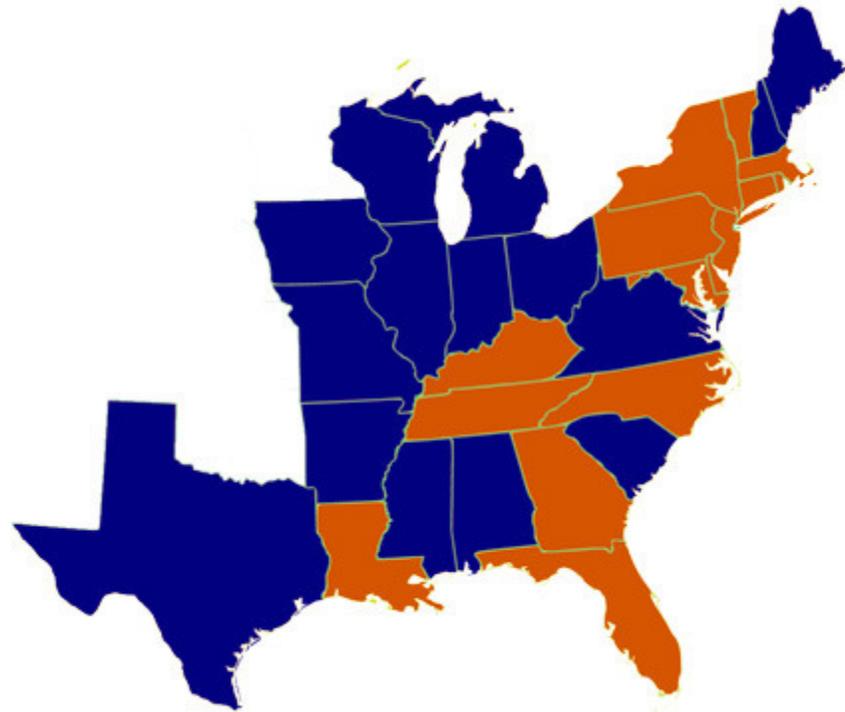
Crucial Years – 1846-1848

- 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 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

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