Chapter 10

The Triumph of White Men’s Democracy
Democratic Space: The New Hotels
Democracy in Theory and Practice

- Democracy became preferred description of American politics in 1820s and 1830s
- In democracy, the people were sovereign and could do no wrong
- Traditional ideas of deference declined further
Democracy in Theory and Practice

• Equality of opportunity all-important; the resulting inequalities of reward not really considered

• America became society of winners and losers
Democracy and Society

- Egalitarian expectations despite growing economic inequality
- No distinctive domestic servant class
- No class distinctions in dress
- Economic gap widened between propertied and labor classes; this was overlooked because legal equality of all white men still radical by European standards
Democracy and Society

• Egalitarian attack on licensed professions like medicine

• Popular press was the source of information and opinion
Racial Identity in a White Man’s Democracy
Democratic Culture

- Artists’ audience was broad citizenry of democracy, not refined elite
- Romanticism in America appealed to feelings and intuitions of ordinary Americans
Democratic Culture

• Popular literature sensationalized
  – Genres included Gothic horror and romantic fiction
  – Much popular literature written by and for women
  – Melodrama dominated popular theater

• By 1830s, subject of paintings switched from great events and people to scenes from everyday life
Democratic Culture

• Architectural style reflected the tenets of ancient Greek democracy

• Purpose of art in democratic society was to encourage virtue and proper sentiment
  – Landscape painters believed representations of untamed nature would elevate popular taste and convey moral truth

• Only a few truly avant-garde, romantic artists, like Edgar Allan Poe
Democratic Culture: Herman Melville
Democratic Political Institutions

- Most states adopted universal white male suffrage by the 1820s
- Many appointed offices made elective
- Professional politicians and stable, statewide party organizations emerged
- Politicians like Martin Van Buren promoted benefits of two-party system
  - Concept of loyal opposition accepted
Democratic Political Institutions

• Democracy spread to presidency
  – Most presidential electors chosen by popular vote rather than by state legislature by 1828
  – Participation rates rose from 27% in early 1820s to high of 78% in 1840
Economic Issues

• Interest in government economic policy intensified after 1819

• Political activity and debate around economic issues foreshadowed rise of parties based around economic programs
Economic Issues

• Republican ideology from Revolution made people suspicious of groups they did not identify with or benefit from
  – Jacksonians’ fear of “the money power”

• Debate over role of federal government in the economy
Labor Radicalism and Equal Rights

• Working men’s parties and trade unions emerged in 1820s and 1830s

• Goal was to protect equal rights that appeared to be eroding because of low wages

• Advocated public education reform, a ten-hour workday, an end to debtors’ prisons, and hard currency
Labor Radicalism and Equal Rights

• They made some gains but were set back by the depression that began in 1837

• The women’s rights movement and abolitionists made little progress
Jackson and the Politics of Democracy

• Jackson became a symbol of democracy’s triumph

• Actions of Jackson and his party refashioned national politics in a democratic mold

• Era known as “Jacksonian Democracy”
The Election of 1824 and J. Q. Adams’s Administration

- Election of 1824 a five-way race
- Jackson appealed to slaveholders and rural people opposed to Clay’s economic nationalism
- Jackson got plurality of popular and electoral vote, but not a majority
- Adams won in House of Representatives with Henry Clay’s support
The Election of 1824 and J. Q. Adams’s Administration

- Clay’s appointment as Secretary of State led to charges of a “corrupt bargain” between Clay and Adams
- Adams rejected anti-economic nationalism sentiment in his policies
- Mid-term election of 1826 gave Jackson’s forces control of Congress
- Tariff became key issue and logrolling produced “Tariff of Abominations” in 1828
The Election of 1824

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
<th>Electoral Vote*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J. Q. Adams</td>
<td>No party designations</td>
<td>108,740</td>
<td>84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td></td>
<td>153,544</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay</td>
<td></td>
<td>47,136</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crawford</td>
<td></td>
<td>46,618</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*No candidate received a majority of the electoral votes. Adams was elected by the House of Representatives.
Jackson Comes to Power

- “Corrupt Bargain” set motivation for 1828 election
- Influential state leaders supported Jackson
  - Calhoun in South Carolina, Van Buren in New York
  - Their efforts led to formation of Democratic party, first modern American party
- New electioneering techniques of mass democracy born
  - Parades, picnics, public rallies, etc.
Jackson Comes to Power

- Campaign dominated by personal attacks and mudslinging
- Jacksonians won by portraying Jackson as an authentic man of the people
- Jackson unclear about his stands on policy issues of the day other than Indian removal
Jackson Comes to Power

• Jackson’s democratic stamp on his administration
  – Defended “spoils system” as democratic
  – Replaced most of cabinet because of Peggy Eaton affair
Jackson Comes to Power
Indian Removal

- Indian removal policy inherited from prior administrations
- Jackson agreed with state complaints that federal government had not removed Indians quickly enough
- Some southern states asserted authority over Indians within their borders
Indian Removal

- Indian Removal Act of 1830—Jackson got federal government approval for state removal initiatives
- 1838—U.S. Army forced Cherokee west along the Trail of Tears
Indian Removal
Indian Removal
The Nullification Crisis

- South opposed 1828 tariff because it increased prices for manufactured goods and endangered access to foreign markets.
- John C. Calhoun anonymously spelled out doctrine of nullification—right of an individual state to set aside state law.
The Nullification Crisis

• Personal relations between Jackson and Calhoun soured

• 1830—Jefferson Day Dinner
  – Jackson: “Our Union: It must be preserved”
  – Calhoun: “The Union. Next to Liberty, the most dear”
The Nullification Crisis
The Nullification Crisis

• 1832—tariff passed, South Carolina nullified

• Jackson threatened to send army

• Compromise:
  – Force Bill authorized Jackson to use military to enforce federal law
  – Clay’s Compromise Tariff of 1833 lowered rates
The Nullification Crisis

• Nullification foreshadowed state sovereignty positions of the South in slavery debates
The Bank War and the Second-Party System

• “The Bank war” a symbolic defense of Jacksonian concept of democracy

• Two important results:
  – Formation of opposition party to Jackson—the Whigs
  – Economic disruption
Mr. Biddle’s Bank

• Bank of the United States unpopular, blamed in South and West for 1819 Depression

• 1823—Biddle took over and restored confidence
Mr. Biddle’s Bank

• Jeffersonians opposed bank on principle as being unconstitutional and preserving corrupt special privilege

• Bank possessed great power and privilege with no public accountability
The Bank Veto and the Election of 1832

• Jackson vaguely threatened bank in first term
• 1832—on advice of Clay, Biddle sought new charter four years before it was necessary
• Congress passed, but Jackson vetoed
  – Claimed the bank was unconstitutional
  – Defended veto as a triumph of equality
• Jackson’s victory in 1832 spelled bank’s doom
The Bank Veto and the Election of 1832
The Election of 1832

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<th>Popular Vote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>688,242</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay</td>
<td>National Republican</td>
<td>473,462</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wirt</td>
<td>Anti-Masonic</td>
<td>101,051</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Floyd</td>
<td>Independent Democratic</td>
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*Delegates chosen by South Carolina legislature
Killing the Bank

- Jackson destroyed bank by removing federal deposits
- Funds transferred to state ("pet") banks
- Biddle used his powers to cause recession, attempted to blame Jackson
Killing the Bank

• Clay got censure of Jackson through Senate for abusing his power (Jackson’s withdrawal of deposits from bank)

• Destruction of bank provoked fears of dictatorship, cost Jackson support in Congress
The Emergence of the Whigs

- Whig party a coalition of forces, first united in censure of Jackson
  - Clay and National Republicans
  - Webster and New England ex-Federalists
  - States’-rights Southerners
  - Anti-Masonic party

- Whigs defended activist government in economics, enforcement of “decency”
The Emergence of the Whigs

• Democrats opposed government regulation of morality

• Democrats weakened by:
  – Defection of Loco-Focos faction upset over pet banks
  – Specie Circular led to the Panic of 1837
Martin Van Buren
The Rise and Fall of Van Buren

- Martin Van Buren was Jackson’s handpicked successor
- Whig strategy in 1836: run four candidates and force election to House of Representatives; it failed
- Van Buren’s term began with Panic of 1837
- Panic caused more by complex changes in global economy than by Jackson’s fiscal policy
The Election of 1836

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Popular Vote</th>
<th>Electoral Vote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Van Buren</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>764,198</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison</td>
<td>Whig</td>
<td>549,508</td>
<td>73</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Whig</td>
<td>145,342</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>Whig</td>
<td>41,287</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangum</td>
<td>Independent Democratic</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>11</td>
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*Delegates chosen by South Carolina legislature
The Rise and Fall of Van Buren

- Laissez-faire philosophy prevented Van Buren from helping to solve the problems of economic distress
- Van Buren attempted to save government funds with independent subtreasuries
- Whigs blocked subtreasuries until 1840
The Rise and Fall of Van Buren

• Whigs fully organized by 1840

• Whig candidate William Henry Harrison
  – Portrayed as a common man who had been born in a log cabin
  – Running mate John Tyler chosen to attract votes from states’-rights Democrats

• Harrison and Tyler beat Van Buren because their revival of the American System seemed like a good response to economic crisis
Election of 1840

Electoral Vote by State

**WHIG**
William H. Harrison 234

**DEMOCRATIC**
Martin Van Buren 60

Popular Vote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Electoral Vote</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHIG</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>1,274,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEMOCRATIC</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1,127,781</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>2,402,405</td>
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Heyday of the Second-Party System

• Election of 1840 marked rise of permanent two-party system in the U.S.

• Whigs and Democrats evenly divided the electorate for next two decades
Heyday of the Second-Party System

• Parties offered voters a clear choice
  – Whigs supported a “positive liberal state”: government should support and protect industries that help economic growth
  – Democrats supported “negative liberal state”: government should not interfere in economy
Heyday of the Second-Party System

- Whigs
  - Industrialists, merchants, successful farmers; more likely Protestant

- Democrats
  - Small farmers, manufacturers; more likely Catholic
Alexis de Tocqueville
Tocqueville’s Wisdom

• Alexis de Tocqueville praised most aspects of American democracy

• Warned of future disaster if white males refused to extend liberty to women, African Americans, and Indians