

President Jackson led the most improbably of lives – soldier, brawler, lawyer, duelist, romantic and politician; anything but a scholar. Father died when he was under 1 and he was orphaned at age 14 (the Revolutionary War claimed lives of mother and brothers). He spent his life seeking order amid chaos and authority among men. He was the first president targeted for assassination, and the only one to attack his assailant.

Jacksonian Era, 1824-1840

Election by the "Common Man"

- ↳ John Quincy Adams was the first president ever to be voted for by the common citizenry, as the 1824 United States Presidential election was the first in which all free white male citizens without property could vote (with the exception of in 6 states).
- ↳ The Anti-Masonic Party, an opponent of Jackson, introduced the national nominating conventions to select a party's presidential and vice presidential candidates, allowing more voter input.

The period 1824–1832 was politically chaotic.

- ↳ The Federalist Party was dead, and with no effective opposition, the old Democratic-Republican Party withered away.
- ↳ Every state had numerous political factions, but they did not cross state lines. Political coalitions formed and dissolved frequently, and politicians moved in and out of alliances.
- ↳ Many former Democratic-Republicans supported Jackson; others, such as Henry Clay, opposed him.
- ↳ Most former Federalists, such as Daniel Webster, opposed Jackson, although some like James Buchanan supported him.
- ↳ In 1828, John Quincy Adams pulled together a network of factions called the National Republicans, but he was defeated by Jackson.
- ↳ By the late 1830s, the Jacksonian Democrats and the Whigs politically battled it out nationally and in every state.

Election of 1824

- ↳ "Corrupt bargain" widened the view of corruption
- ↳ No candidate initially secured enough required by the Electoral College, thereby putting the outcome in the House of Representatives.
- ↳ To the surprise of many, John Quincy Adams won over rival Andrew Jackson.
- ↳ It was widely believed that Henry Clay convinced Congress to elect Adams, who then made Clay his Secretary of State as a favor
- ↳ (Some historians support this today, but a new line of thought asserts it was a sincere vote)

Indian Removal Act of 1830

- ↳ Forced removal of Indians from their native lands and resettlement elsewhere.
- ↳ While the guise was that they voluntarily left, the reality was they signed treaties under duress.
- ↳ States were eager to gain access to lands inhabited by Indians, especially Georgia
- ↳ Opposition by Christian missionaries and Congressman David Crockett of Tennessee.
- ↳ Trail of Tears

Economic depression, 1837-1844

Reforms

Jackson fulfilled his promise of broadening the influence of the citizenry in government, although not without controversy over his methods.

- ↳ Jacksonian policies included ending the Bank of the United States
- ↳ Territorially expanding the nation westward
- ↳ Removing American Indians from the Southeast.

Jackson was denounced as a tyrant by opponents on both ends of the political spectrum, such as by Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun

Jacksonian democracy had a lasting impact on allowing for more political participation from the average citizen

- ↳ Although Jacksonian democracy itself largely died off with the election of Abraham Lincoln and the rise of the Republican party.

Jackson created a system to clear out elected officials in government of an opposing party and replace them with his supporters as a reward for their electioneering.

With Congress controlled by his enemies, Jackson relied heavily on the power of the veto to block their moves.

- ↳ One of the most important of these was the Maysville Road veto in 1830.
- ↳ A part of Clay's American System, the bill would have allowed for federal funding of a project to construct a road linking Lexington and the Ohio River, the entirety of which would be in the state of Kentucky. Jackson's primary objection was based on the local nature of the project. It was not the Federal government's job to fund projects of such a local nature, and or those lacking a connection to the nation as a whole.

Jackson as soldier: He won glorious battles and popular songs were written about him; but there were darker moments too.

- ↳ He massacred Indians in combat
- ↳ He executed military deserters and British subjects after he preemptively invaded Florida in 1818
- ↳ He married the love-of-his-life Rachel Donelson Robards before she was divorced from her husband (he believed the stress of the scandal killed Robards prematurely)

Jackson believed the financial sector of the American economy was spoiled, corrupt and bad for the overall health of the nation, so he destroyed (at great length, drama and cost) the Bank of the United States.

- ↳ The country descended into financial panic shortly after he left office

He was convinced that church and state should remain separate, and so he resisted calls for the formation of a Christian party in politics. He was troubled by ministers who involved themselves in the political arena.

Petticoat Affair of 1830-1831

Scandal involving members of Jackson's cabinet and their wives. What started out as private matters affected the political careers of several men.

"The America of Andrew Jackson professed a love of democracy but was willing to live with inequity; aimed for social justice but was prone to racism and intolerance; believed itself one nation but was narrowly divided and fought close elections, and; occasionally acted arrogantly toward other countries while craving respect from them at the same time."

Author Jon Meacham, Newsweek
10 November 2008

Andrew Jackson sought to expand democratic opportunity to some while he defended slavery and masterminded the removal of Native Americans from their native lands.

Foundation belief of Jackson's governance: "The majority is to govern"

Nullification Crisis of 1832

- ↳ South Carolina passes the Ordinance of Nullification, which declared the Tariff of 1828 ("Tariff of Abominations") and 1832 null and void within the borders of the state.
- ↳ Radicals in Charleston were raising an army to defend South Carolina's right to nullify (declare invalid) any federal laws it chose not to accept. Jackson believed this was the first step toward succession and war. Jackson considered arresting and hanging the leaders.
- ↳ He wrote the 'Proclamation to the People of South Carolina', a message which conveyed to would-be radicals that succession by force is akin to treason and suggests anyone in support of such actions would have the many lives inevitably lost on their conscience.
- ↳ In response to the dwindling public support, the radicals stood down.
- ↳ Jackson rescued the Union from a confrontation with the South!

Regarding the possibility of a civil war, Jackson wrote "Dis-union by armed force is treason" (he underlined the word treason)

Jackson reinvented how politics is done.

- ↳ He viewed the president as the head of the national party; fighting for a mandate from the people to govern in particular ways on particular issues; depending upon a circle of advisors to help guide the affairs of the country; mastering popular media of the age in order to transmit a consistent message at a consistent pace; using the veto as a political, not just constitutional, weapon; facing difficult confirmation battles in a Washington that is at once politically and personally charged.
- ↳ All these are departures from how the presidency and government were seen by previous presidents. Before Jackson it was possible to think of America without putting the people at the center of politics; after him, such a thing was inconceivable.

His legacy is mixed, viewed as a protector of popular democracy and individual liberty for American citizens, checkered by his support for slavery and Indian removals

