The Age of Jackson

The Age of the Common Man/Era of Jacksonian Democracy

1. The Rise of Democratic Society
   1. Equality was a governing principle of American society
      1. Primarily, equal opportunity for white males
         1. “Self-made man” was a heroic ideal
2. Politics of the Common Man
   1. Universal Male Suffrage
      1. All white males could vote regardless of class or religion
      2. New states admitted to the union (Western) adopted constitutions that promoted universal male suffrage
         1. 1824- 350,000 ballots cast
         2. 1840- 2.4 million ballots cast
   2. Party Nominating Conventions
      1. 1830s – conventions among voting men to select candidates rather than by state legislatures or “King Caucus” (closed sessions open to only political leaders)
   3. Popular Election of the President
      1. Common people had more say in choosing state electors
   4. Two-party system
      1. Large political parties/organizations were needed to conduct campaigns/elections on a national scale
   5. Rise of Third Parties
      1. Ex. Anti-Masonic Party and Workingmen’s Party
   6. More elected offices
      1. Less political appointments and more sovereignty to individuals
   7. Popular Campaigning
      1. The rise of large political campaigns and rallies appealed to large groups of people
   8. Spoils System
      1. Dispensing government jobs/political appointments in return for party loyalty (Patronage)
   9. Rotation of Officeholders
      1. Appointing people to a political position and then rotating them out in an effort to disperse patronage appropriately
         1. “No man has any more intrinsic claim to office than another” – A. Jackson
3. The Election of 1824: Jackson v Adams
   1. The Era of Good Feelings comes to an end and Americans look for new leadership in 1824
   2. Four Democratic-Republicans campaign:
      1. John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, William Crawford, Andrew Jackson
      2. Jackson won the majority of the popular vote, but no clear majority was reached for electoral vote (required majority was 131)
         1. Jackson 99
         2. Adams 84
         3. Crawford 41
         4. Clay 37
      3. However, since the majority required by the electoral college was not met, a run off had to occur in the House of Reps (12th amendment)
   3. “Corrupt Bargain” – Henry Clay persuaded congressmen to vote for John Quincy Adams, thus Adams wins the presidency
4. Presidency of John Quincy Adams
   1. Ushered in “Big Government Ideals”
      1. Govt money to infrastructure projects, national university, etc.
      2. Tariff of 1828 = “Tariff of Abominations”
         1. Satisfies N. manufacturers, but alienates southern planters bc of dependence on N. for goods
         2. Created by Jacksonian Democrats in an attempt to make Adams look bad to the South (by favoring the North)
            1. Conversely, it ends up impacting Jackson’s presidency negatively
5. The Revolution of 1828
   1. Andrew Jackson v. John Quincy Adams
      1. Political mudslinging and attack tactics focused more on personal issues than political ones
         1. Jackson accused Adams’ wife of being born out of wedlock
         2. Adams accused Jackson’s wife of adultery
      2. Large voter turnout – Jackson easily won, winning every state west of the Appalachians
6. Presidency of Andrew Jackson
   1. Andrew Jackson
      1. “Old Hickory”: As strong as a Hickory tree
      2. Strong leader
      3. Symbol of working and middle class aka “common man”
      4. Gained fame as a hero of war and fighter of natives
      5. Wealthy plantation owner and aristocrat but still maintained temperament of a frontiersman
      6. No college education
      7. The first “democrat”
      8. Favors states rights
      9. “King” Jackson – name given by critics
   2. Presidential Power
      1. Saw himself as the protector of the common man from the abuses of power by the government
      2. Opposed increasing spending (and thus, national debt)
      3. Strict interpreter of the constitution
         1. Vetoed more bills than all 6 preceding presidents combined (12 total)
         2. Ex. Vetoing construction of Maysville Road in Ky. Because it only impacted one state
      4. The “Kitchen Cabinet”
         1. Closest group of advisors to Jackson, who weren’t part of his official cabinet.
            1. Reduced influence of his cabinet.
      5. Peggy Eaton Affair
         1. The wife of Jackson’s sec. of war.
         2. The other wives of the cabinet members didn’t accept her into their inner clique due to claims of adultery
         3. John C. Calhoun, Jackson’s VP eventually resigns as a result
         4. Thus, Martin Van Buren is chosen as VP for Jackson’s second term
   3. Indian Removal
      1. Land- hungry American’s want to settle western lands
         1. Many of western lands, esp. in the South were territorially claimed by natives
      2. Indian Removal Act (1830): forced the resettlement of many natives to the west of the Mississippi
         1. Bureau of Indian Affairs (1836): created to assist resettled tribes
      3. Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831): Cherokees don’t have the right to sue in federal court
      4. Worcester v. Georgia (1832): Georgia law has no force on Cherokee territories
      5. Trail of Tears (1838):
         1. After Jackson’s presidency, the US Army forced 15,000 Cherokees to march west (4000 deaths)
   4. Nullification Crisis:
      1. 1828: South Carolina declares the “Tariff of Abominations” (Tariff of 1828) to be null and void
      2. South Carolina Exposition and Protest: John C. Calhoun, VP, declares the Tariff to be null
         1. In accordance with the Va. And Ky. Resolutions (from Alien and Sedition Act nullification)
         2. Nullification theory: each state has the right to decide whether to obey a federal law or to declare it null and void
      3. Jackson: “Our federal union, it must be preserved!”
      4. 1832 Tariff:
         1. Encourages South Carolina legislature to forbid the collection of tariffs in that state
      5. Jackson persuades congress to pass a Force Bill which gave him authority to act against SC
         1. Uses military threat and treason to scare SC into submission
   5. Appeal to N. and South
      1. Defends the tariffs for northerners
      2. Defends slavery for the southerners
   6. Second Term
      1. Wins reelection in 1832
      2. Bank Veto
         1. Henry Clay wants to recharter the Bank of the US in 1832
         2. Jackson vetoes the recharter bill
            1. Denounces bill as a private monopoly that enriched the wealthy and foreigners at the expense of the common man
            2. “the hydra of corruption”
         3. “Pet Banks”
            1. Jackson withdraws federal funds from the National Bank and redistributes to smaller, state-run banks

Pet bank is a term critics used

* + 1. Bad Economics
       1. Bad economic policy by Jackson and high speculation of land in the west creates high inflation of currency
       2. To combat, Jackson issues executive order known as “Species Circular”
          1. All legal tender in US had to be gold or silver (circular coins), thus paper currency lost value and land prices plummeted
       3. Leads to Financial Panic of 1837

1. Two-Party System
   1. Andrew Jackson (Democrats) v. Henry Clay (Whigs)
   2. Similar to D-R’s and Federalists of old, but were created to respond to the necessities of the time
   3. Democrats
      1. Jeffersonian
      2. For: Local rule, limited govt, free trade, opportunity for white males
      3. Against: monopolies, national bank, high tariffs, high land prices
      4. Supporters: South and West, Urban workers
   4. Whigs
      1. Hamiltonian
      2. For: national bank, federal funds for internal improvements, protective tariffs (the “American System” of Henry Clay)
      3. Against: immigrants and crime associated with them
      4. Supporters: New England and Mid-Atlantic States, Protestants of English heritage, Urban professionals
2. Election of 1836
   1. Jackson steps down after two terms, following precedent set by predecessors
   2. Whig party puts up three candidates from different regions to fight against Democratic hopeful Martin Van Buren (and Jackson’s VP)
      1. Premise: 3 candidates will spread votes out enough so that reaching electoral majority would give the vote to the house
         1. This happened in the 1824 election with Jackson and John Q Adams (w/ Jackson losing)
      2. Van Buren wins easily, taking 58% of the electoral votes
3. Martin Van Buren Presidency (1836-1840)
   1. Presidency is essentially destroyed by the 1837 financial panic
      1. Americans largely blamed Democrats and “laissez-faire” policies for this ruin
4. William Henry Harrison and John Tyler Presidency (1841-1845)
   1. Whigs take back control of the white house
      1. Harrison campaigns as a war hero, Henry “Tippecanoe” Harrison
      2. Attacked Martin Van “Ruin” with political mudslinging
      3. Campaigned with log cabins on wheels and hard cider to accentuate his humble beginnings
   2. Harrison dies of pneumonia less than a month into presidency, thus John Tyler “His Accidency”, becomes first pres. to succeed office
      1. Harrison was more of a Democrat, although Whig in name
         1. Vetoed national bank bills and favored Southern and Expansionist interests
5. Jacksonian Era comes to an end with the Mexican War