
The Age of Jackson

Part 1

Bringing Politics to the People

- As American politics became more democratic during the early 1800's, voter turnout and middle and lower class participation in politics experienced dramatic increases
 - Factors that democratized the US
 - Universal male suffrage
 - Party conventions
 - Popular election of the president
 - Third parties
 - More elected offices
 - Popular campaigning
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Bringing Politics to the People

- Universal Male Suffrage

- As frontier states were admitted to the US they adopted state constitutions that allowed for all white males to vote
 - This eliminated property qualifications that had prevented lower and middle class males from voting
 - This also eliminated the property qualifications for holding political offices, so now lower and middle class males could run for any public office
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Bringing Politics to the People

- In the past the “King Caucus” chose a party’s candidate for elections
 - King Caucus – a party’s leaders would hold a secret meeting to choose a candidate
 - Beginning in the 1820’s and 1830’s candidates for political offices began to be chosen at state and local conventions by the party’s supporters
 - This eliminated the secret meetings (King Caucus)
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Bringing Politics to the People

- As the political parties began to change their process for choosing candidates, so did the presidential election process change
 - In the past, the electoral college (who has always determined the election winner) was made up of delegates chosen by state legislatures
 - This changed in the early 1820's as states began to give their electoral votes to whichever presidential candidate won that states popular election
 - By the election of 1832 the only state still using the old elector system was South Carolina, all other states were using the popular voting system
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Bringing Politics to the People

- The two party system did alienate many people from politics who could not relate/identify with either party
 - The development of third parties offered many of these people a chance to participate in government
 - The first successful third party was the Anti-Mason party
 - The Anti-Masons attacked the secret meetings of political leaders and appealed strongly to the middle and lower classes
 - It was also responsible for the party nominating convention
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Bringing Politics to the People

- While most political offices had begun as appointments (the winner of an election would appoint people directly to the positions around him), during the early 1800's many political offices came to be elected positions
 - This gave people more of a reason to participate in government as they were now able to have a say in the decision of what political leaders would influence their daily lives
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Bringing Politics to the People

- Now that the “common man” was having such a powerful influence on elections political leaders realized that they would have to take their cause to the ‘everyday’ people, not just the elite of society
 - This led to modern campaigning methods
 - Parades and festivals
 - Public speeches for the masses
 - These campaigning methods appealed to the people and led to much larger voter turnouts
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The Election of 1824

- The election of 1824 is considered the last of the “old elections”
 - Though there was only one party at the time, the Republican party, the “King Caucus” system could not pick a candidate so four men ran for president... John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, and William Crawford
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The Election of 1824

- Jackson, by now a national war hero, won the popular vote and the electoral vote... BUT the Constitution states that the presidential winner must have a *majority* of the electoral vote, which Jackson did not
 - The election went to the House which Clay controlled
 - Clay and Jackson were bitter rivals so Clay sided with JQ Adams and he gave him enough votes to win the election
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The Election of 1824

- As JQ Adams was selecting his cabinet he appointed Clay as his Secretary of State, at the time one of the most prestigious positions in all of the US government
 - Jackson's supporters cried foul, claiming that Clay and Adams had made a dirty bargain during the election in the House
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The Splitting of the Republicans

- While president Adams pressed for many bills that alienated true Republicans
 - He requested money for internal improvements, aid for Northern manufacturing, and the infamous “Tariff of Abominations”
 - Jackson’s supporters called many of JQ Adams other requests ‘wasteful’
 - Money for a national university, funds for a national observatory (astronomy)
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The Tariff...

- In 1824 Congress had already increased tariffs
 - In 1828 Jacksonians had hoped to make Adams look even worse by pushing for even higher tariffs, a bill that would become the Tariff of Abominations
 - They had hoped that it would be so harmful that even Northerners would strike it down, making even them dislike Adams
 - Instead the Northerners made some small revisions and passed the bill... Southerners were appalled...
 - The bill was labeled by Southerners as the “Tariff of Abominations” who now reversed their decisions and pushed for it to be repealed, but it was too late...
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The Tariff...

- Cotton prices were falling because of overproduction
 - Southerners were now forced to sell their cotton at lowered prices and then buy foreign manufactured goods at much higher prices (the tariffs were increasing the prices of all foreign goods because of the added taxes)
 - Many Southerners quit buying the foreign goods and began buying Northern goods, thus the Tariff of Abominations hurt the Southern economy but helped the Northern economy
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The Election of 1828

- For Jacksonians, the election of 1828 began as soon as the election of 1824 had ended
 - They made appeals to the public
 - They stated that the candidate whom the people had chosen in 1824 had been taken away from them due to a corrupt and secret bargain
 - The idea of “Whole Hog for Jackson in 1828”
 - They created the moniker “Old Hickory” to make Jackson seem like a commoner
 - In reality Jackson was a wealthy plantation owner from the upper class
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The Election of 1828

- The election became a contest of slander as both campaigns turned to insulting the other to win public support
 - The Jacksonians accused Adams of marrying a woman who had been born out of wedlock
 - Adams was also accused of being a privileged man who freely spent the people's money... (he had purchased a billiards table and an expensive chess set for the White House
 - The supporters of Adams accused Jackson of being an adulterer
 - He had married his wife Rachel before his last divorce had been finalized
 - She died soon after the election and Jackson forever blamed the Adams campaign committee for her death
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The Election of 1828

- Jackson won the Southern and Western regions while Adams won New England
 - Jackson won the popular vote by more than 150,000 votes, and the electoral 178 to 83
 - The election showed the growing political power of the West as it played the deciding factor in the election
 - Adams would still be an important politician for the next 20 years and his funeral was the largest ever in Washington DC up to its time
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