

The Age of Jackson

MAIN IDEA

Andrew Jackson's policies spoke for the common people but violated Native American rights.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The effects of land losses and persecution faced by Native Americans in the 1800s continue to be reflected in their legal struggles today.

Terms & Names

- Andrew Jackson
- Democratic-Republican Party
- spoils system
- Indian Removal Act
- Trail of Tears

One American's Story

The era of the leaders who had founded the nation passed with Adams's and Jefferson's deaths in 1826. During an extended conversation with John Adams in 1776, Thomas Jefferson had tried to convince him to draft the Declaration of Independence.

A PERSONAL VOICE JOHN ADAMS

"[Adams] said 'I will not.' . . .

'What can be your reasons?'

'Reason first—You are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second—I am obnoxious, suspected, and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third—You can write ten times better than I can.'

'Well,' said Jefferson, 'if you are decided, I will do as well as I can.'

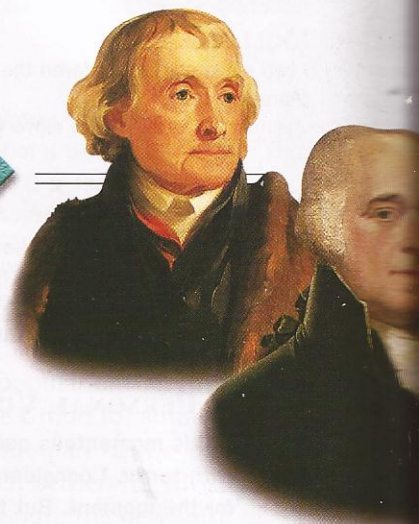
—quoted in *John Adams: A Biography in His Own Words*

Thus began a mutual regard that would last for 50 years. On July 4, 1826, exactly 50 years after the delegates approved the Declaration of Independence, both men died. Now the presidency belonged to another generation.

Expanding Democracy Changes Politics

When John Adams died, his son John Quincy Adams was in the second year of his single term as president. He had succeeded James Monroe as president but was not effective as the nation's chief executive. The principal reason was **Andrew Jackson**, his chief political opponent.

TENSION BETWEEN ADAMS AND JACKSON In the election of 1824, Andrew Jackson won the popular vote but lacked the majority of electoral votes. The House of Representatives had to decide the outcome, since no candidate had received a majority of the votes of the electoral college.



▲ This portrait of Thomas Jefferson (above left) was painted when he was 78. The portrait of John Adams was painted in 1798 when he was 63.

Because of his power in the House, Henry Clay could swing the election either way. Clay disliked Jackson personally and mistrusted his lack of political experience. "I cannot believe," Clay commented, "that killing twenty-five hundred Englishmen at New Orleans qualifies [him] for the various difficult and complicated duties of [the presidency]." Adams, on the other hand, agreed with Clay's American System. In the end, Adams was elected president by a majority of the states represented in the House.

Jacksonians, or followers of Jackson, accused Adams of stealing the presidency. When Adams appointed Clay secretary of state, the Jacksonians claimed that Adams had struck a corrupt bargain. The Jacksonians left the Republican Party to form the **Democratic-Republican Party** (forerunner of today's Democratic Party) and did whatever they could to sabotage Adams's policies.

MAIN IDEA

Predicting Effects

A How might reducing property requirements for voting affect political campaigns?

DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP During Adams's presidency, most states eased the voting requirements, thereby enlarging the voting population. Fewer states now had property qualifications for voting. In the presidential election of 1824, approximately 350,000 white males voted. In 1828, over three times that number voted, and their votes helped Andrew Jackson. However, certain groups still lacked political power. Free African Americans and women did not enjoy the political freedoms of white males. **A**

Background

The Battle of New Orleans in 1815 made Jackson a national hero. The British attacked Jackson's forces at New Orleans in January 1815. American riflemen mowed down advancing British forces. American casualties totaled 71, compared to Britain's 2,000.

Jackson's New Presidential Style

The expansion of voting rights meant that candidates had to be able to speak to the concerns of ordinary people. Andrew Jackson had this common touch.

JACKSON'S APPEAL TO THE COMMON CITIZEN During the 1828 campaign, Jackson characterized Adams as an intellectual elitist and, by contrast, portrayed himself as a man of humble origins—though he was actually a wealthy plantation owner. Jackson won the election by a landslide. He was so popular that record numbers of people came to Washington to see "Old Hickory" inaugurated.

President-elect Andrew Jackson on his way to Washington, D.C., to be inaugurated in 1829



Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith described the scene.

A PERSONAL VOICE MRS. SAMUEL HARRISON SMITH

“The President, after having been *literally* nearly pressed to death and almost suffocated and torn to pieces by the people in their eagerness to shake hands with Old Hickory [Jackson], had retreated through the back way, or south front, and had escaped to his lodgings at Gadsby’s. Cut glass and china to the amount of several thousand dollars had been broken in the struggle to get the refreshments. . . . Ladies fainted, men were seen with bloody noses, and such a scene of confusion took place as is impossible to describe; those who got in could not get out by the door again but had to scramble out of windows.”

—from a letter dated March 1829

KEY PLAYER



ANDREW JACKSON
1767–1845

Andrew Jackson thought of himself as a man of the people. The son of Scots-Irish immigrants, he had been born in poverty in the Carolinas. He was the first president since George Washington without a college education.

At the time of his election at the age of 61, however, Jackson had built a highly successful career. He had worked in law, politics, land speculation, cotton planting, and soldiering. Victory at New Orleans in the War of 1812 had made him a hero. His Tennessee home, the Hermitage, was a mansion. Anyone who owned more than a hundred slaves, as Jackson did, was wealthy.

Underlying Jackson’s iron will was a fiery temper. He survived several duels, one of which left a bullet lodged near his heart and another of which left his opponent dead. His ire, however, was most often reserved for special-interest groups and those whose power came from privilege.

JACKSON’S SPOILS SYSTEM If Jackson knew how to inspire loyalty and enthusiasm during a campaign, he also knew how to use the powers of the presidency upon gaining office. He announced that his appointees to federal jobs would serve a maximum of four-year terms. Unless there was a regular turnover of personnel, he declared, officeholders would become inefficient and corrupt.

Jackson’s administration practiced the **spoils system**—so called from the saying “To the victor belong the spoils of the enemy”—in which incoming officials throw out former appointees and replace them with their own friends. He fired nearly 10 percent of the federal employees, most of them holdovers from the Adams administration, and gave their jobs to loyal Jacksonians. Jackson’s friends also became his primary advisers, dubbed his “kitchen cabinet” because they supposedly slipped into the White House through the kitchen. **B**

MAIN IDEA

Summarizing

B What is the spoils system?

Removal of Native Americans

Since the 1600s, white settlers had held one of two attitudes toward Native Americans. Some whites favored the displacement and dispossession of all Native Americans. Others wished to convert Native Americans to Christianity, turn them into farmers, and absorb them into the white culture.

Since the end of the War of 1812, some Southeastern tribes—the Cherokee, Choctaw, Seminole, Creek, and Chickasaw—had begun to adopt the European culture of their white neighbors. These “five civilized tribes,” as they were called by whites, occupied large areas in Georgia, North and South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Many white planters and miners wanted that land.

INDIAN REMOVAL ACT OF 1830 Jackson thought that assimilation could not work. Another possibility—allowing Native Americans to live in their original areas—would have required too many troops to keep the areas free of white settlers. Jackson believed that the only solution was to move the Native Americans from their lands to areas farther west.

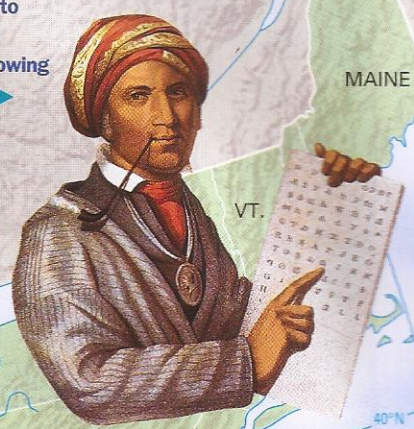
Congress passed the **Indian Removal Act** in 1830. Under this law, the federal government provided funds to negotiate treaties that would force the Native Americans to

Effects of the Indian Removal Act, 1830s–1840s



Many Cherokee in the western territory, like the woman pictured here, taught their children at home in order to keep the Cherokee language and customs alive.

Sequoyah, or George Guess, devised the Cherokee alphabet in 1821 to help preserve the culture of the Cherokee Nation against the growing threat of American expansion.



In 1834, about 16,000 Cherokee had been forcibly removed 800 miles west on routes called the Trail of Tears. Because of the suffering they endured from cold, hunger, and diseases such as tuberculosis, smallpox, and cholera, one-third died.

Nearly 15,000 Creek, many in handcuffs and chains, were removed from Alabama and Georgia to the Canadian River Indian Territory in 1835.

By 1834, about 14,000 Choctaw had relocated along the Red River under the terms of the Indian Removal Act of 1830. About 7,000 remained in Mississippi.



Detail from "Trail of Tears," a painting by Robert Lindeux

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER

- Place** Where were most of the tribes moved?
- Movement** What do you think were the long-term effects of this removal on Native Americans?

move west. About 90 treaties were signed. For Jackson, the removal policy was “not only liberal, but generous,” but his arguments were mainly based on the rights of states to govern within their own boundaries. **C**

In 1830, Jackson pressured the Choctaw to sign a treaty that required them to move from Mississippi. In 1831, he ordered U.S. troops to forcibly remove the Sauk and Fox from their lands in Illinois and Missouri. In 1832, he forced the Chickasaw to leave their lands in Alabama and Mississippi.

THE CHEROKEE FIGHT BACK Meanwhile, the Cherokee Nation tried to win just treatment through the U.S. legal system. Chief Justice John Marshall refused to rule on the first case the Cherokee brought against Georgia, though, because in his view the Cherokee Nation had no federal standing; it was neither a foreign nation nor a state, but rather a “domestic dependent nation.” Undaunted, the Cherokee teamed up with Samuel Austin Worcester, a missionary who had been jailed for teaching Indians without a state license. The Cherokee knew the Court would have to recognize a citizen’s right to be heard.

In *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), the Cherokee Nation finally won recognition as a distinct political community. The Court ruled that Georgia was not entitled to regulate the Cherokee nor to invade their lands. Jackson refused to abide by the Supreme Court decision, saying: “John Marshall has made his decision; now let him enforce it.”

Cherokee leader John Ross still tried to fight the state in the courts, but other Cherokee began to promote relocation. In 1835, federal agents declared the

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Issues

C Why did Jackson think that Native Americans should be moved west of the Mississippi?

POINT

“The Indian Removal Act of 1830 was a terrible injustice.”

John Marshall, chief justice of the Supreme Court, believed that the Cherokee had “an unquestionable right” to their territory “until title should be extinguished by voluntary cession to the United States.”

In their protest against the Indian Removal Act, the Cherokee people referred to past treaties with the federal government and stated, “We have a perfect and original right to remain without interruption and molestation.”

Congressman Edward Everett of Massachusetts described Indian removal as “inflicting the pains of banishment from their native land on seventy or eighty thousand human beings.” Rejecting claims that the removal was necessary to protect the Indians

against white settlers, Everett demanded, “What other power has the Executive over a treaty or law, but to enforce it?”

In their 1832 protest against the Act, the Creek pointedly asked, “Can [our white brethren] exempt us from intrusion in our promised borders, if they are incompetent to our protection where we are?”

COUNTERPOINT

“The Indian Removal Act of 1830 was unfortunate but necessary.”

Blame for the displacement of Native Americans was sometimes placed on the states or on the law, which, it was argued, all people must obey. As Secretary of War John Eaton explained to the Creek of Alabama: “It is not your Great Father who does this; but the laws of the Country, which he and every one of his people is bound to regard.”

President Andrew Jackson contended that the Indian Removal Act would put an end to “all possible danger of collision between the authorities of the General and State Governments on account of the Indians.”

Jackson also claimed that the Indian Removal Act would protect Native Americans against further removal from their lands. He found support for his point of view from Secretary of War Lewis Cass, who defended “the progress of civilization and improvement.” Cass wished “that the aboriginal population had accommodated themselves to the inevitable change of their condition,” but asserted that “such a wish is vain.”

THINKING CRITICALLY

1. CONNECT TO HISTORY Analyzing Primary Sources

On what central issue regarding the Indian Removal Act did Jackson and Native American tribes disagree? Explain your opinion of the Act.

SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R22.

2. CONNECT TO TODAY Analyzing Issues

Research how one of the five tribes was affected by the Indian Removal Act. Write a proposal for how the U.S. government might today make reparations to the group for land losses in the 19th century.

minority who favored relocation the true representatives of the Cherokee Nation and promptly had them sign the Treaty of New Echota. This treaty gave the last eight million acres of Cherokee land to the federal government in exchange for approximately \$5 million and land “west of the Mississippi.” The signing of this treaty marked the beginning of the Cherokee exodus. However, when by 1838 nearly 20,000 Cherokee still remained in the East, President Martin Van Buren (Jackson’s successor) ordered their forced removal. U.S. Army troops under the command of General Winfield Scott rounded up the Cherokee and drove them into camps to await the journey. **D**

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Effects

D How did the Cherokee react to the Indian Removal Act?

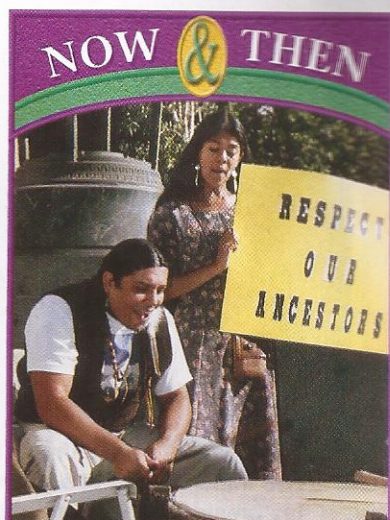
THE TRAIL OF TEARS Beginning in October and November of 1838, the Cherokee were sent off in groups of about 1,000 each on the long journey. The 800-mile trip was made partly by steamboat and railroad but mostly on foot. As the winter came on, more and more of the Cherokee died en route.

A PERSONAL VOICE TRAIL OF TEARS SURVIVOR

“Children cry and many men cry, and all look sad like when friends die, but they say nothing and just put heads down and keep on go towards West. Many days pass and people die very much.”

—quoted in *From the Heart: Voices of the American Indian*

Along the way, government officials stole the Cherokee’s money, while outlaws made off with their livestock. The Cherokee buried more than a quarter of their people along what came to be known as the **Trail of Tears**. When they reached their final destination, they ended up on land far inferior to that which they had been forced to leave.



NATIVE AMERICAN LANDS

More than 170 years after the Trail of Tears, Native Americans continue to struggle for recognition of land rights.

In the 1995 picture above, two members of the Chumash Nation protest a proposed construction project on Chumash sacred sites in California.

Other present-day Native Americans have won recognition of their land claims. Over the past 25 years, the federal government has settled property disputes with several tribes in Connecticut, Maine, and other states and has provided them with funds to purchase ancestral lands.

SECTION 3

ASSESSMENT

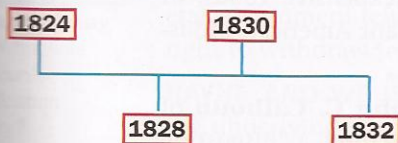
1. TERMS & NAMES For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Andrew Jackson
- Democratic-Republican Party
- spoils system
- Indian Removal Act
- Trail of Tears

MAIN IDEA

2. TAKING NOTES

Create a time line like the one shown here, listing key events relating to Jackson’s political career.



Do you think Jackson was an effective leader? Why or why not?

CRITICAL THINKING

3. EVALUATING

If you were a U.S. citizen voting in the 1828 presidential election, would you cast your ballot for John Quincy Adams or Andrew Jackson? Support your choice. **Think About:**

- each candidate’s background and political experience
- each candidate’s views of the national bank and tariffs
- where you might live—the South, the West, or New England

4. ANALYZING EVENTS

In your opinion, what factors set the stage for the Indian Removal Act? Support your answer. **Think About:**

- the attitude of white settlers toward Native Americans
- Jackson’s justification of the Indian Removal Act
- why Jackson was able to defy the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Worcester v. Georgia*