

♦ ♦ ♦ U.S. PRESIDENTS FROM ♦ ♦ ♦ NORTH CAROLINA

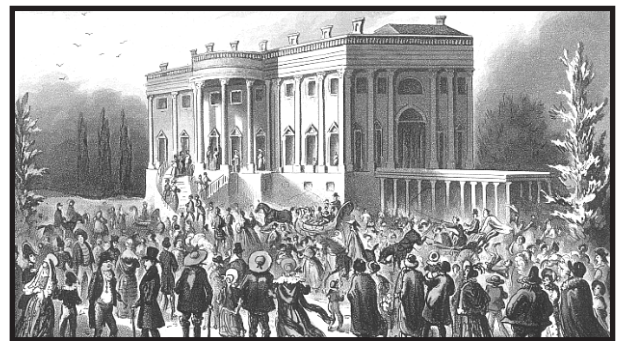
PART 2: ANDREW JACKSON'S CONTROVERSIAL PRESIDENCY (1829–1837)

LEARNING OUTCOME:

Students can:

- ♦ *Describe and explain the historical significance of the following controversial events that took place during the presidency of Andrew Jackson: the nullification crisis, the controversy over the Second Bank of the United States, the creation of the spoils system, and the Indian Removal Act.*

Andrew Jackson was the seventh president of the United States. He was the first American president who was not one of America's "Founders" or the son of a Founder. Jackson rose from poverty to become the hero of the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812. He was extremely popular at the time he was elected president of the United States in 1828. However, as president, Andrew Jackson was a controversial figure, and he is even more controversial today.



A painting depicting crowds arriving at the White House to celebrate Andrew Jackson's first inauguration.

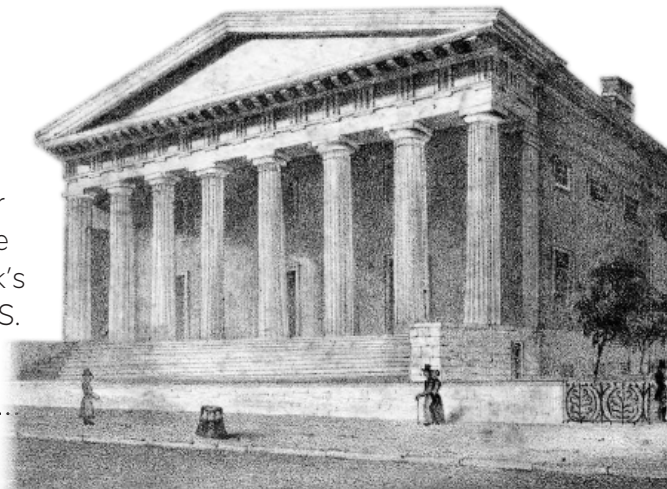
THE NULLIFICATION CRISIS

When Jackson was president, his political opponents called him "King Andrew" because he strengthened the role of the president compared to what it had been in the past. For example, in 1833, Andrew Jackson threatened to use military force in response to South Carolina's effort to "nullify" U.S. government tariffs on imports. (**Imports** are products being brought into the United States to be sold. **Tariffs** are taxes on imports that are charged when products from other countries arrive in the United States to be sold.) During Jackson's presidency, the U.S. government increased tariffs, making foreign products more expensive and risking the possibility that other countries would put tariffs on U.S. products. Leaders in South Carolina did not agree with these tariffs, so they declared the law creating the taxes to be "**nullified**" (not valid) in South Carolina. In other words, the South Carolina government declared that it would not allow these taxes to be collected within the borders of South Carolina. In response, President Jackson began preparing to send the U.S. army into South Carolina to force the state to obey U.S. law. South Carolina's leaders backed down and agreed to allow the tax to be collected.

THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE SECOND BANK OF THE UNITED STATES

Also, Jackson vetoed a bill to renew the charter of the Second Bank of the United States, a government-owned bank. The Second Bank of the United States had been created after the War of 1812. It had a **charter** (license from the government) to operate until 1836. Without Jackson's signature, the bill to renew the bank's charter did not become a law. President Jackson also removed U.S.

The Second Bank of the United States



government money from the Bank of the United States and opened accounts at state banks to hold U.S. government money. President Jackson's political opponents claimed that he was misusing his power as president. But Andrew Jackson claimed that having a bank made the U.S. government too powerful. He claimed to be acting to limit the power of the U.S. government, including the power of future U.S. presidents. In 1836, the Second Bank of the United States closed.

THE SPOILS SYSTEM

As president, Andrew Jackson also began a controversial system for hiring government workers, which was called patronage or **"the spoils system."** While he was president, Jackson required people who worked for the U.S. government to be members of his Democratic Party. If a government worker was not a member of the Democratic Party, he would be fired, and a loyal Democrat would be hired for the job. This system became known as the spoils system. Critics of this system claimed that it was corrupt and led to the hiring of U.S. government workers who did not have the skills necessary to do their jobs.

President Jackson, however, thought this system would be fairer than allowing unelected government workers to hire other government workers, creating a system that could eventually operate independently of the country's elected officials. At least under the spoils system, ordinary citizens who didn't have any relatives already working for the government (the "common man") had the chance of being hired for good-paying U.S. government jobs, as long as they were loyal and active members of the president's political party.

Over time, both U.S. political parties began using the spoils system. So, throughout most of the 1800s, when a new president took office who was not from the same party as the previous president, many U.S. government workers were fired, and a new group of government workers was hired.

THE INDIAN REMOVAL ACT

For many people living today, Andrew Jackson's most controversial decision was signing the Indian Removal Act of 1830. This law gave the president authority to remove Native American nations that existed outside the authority of the U.S. government in the southeastern United States and require them to move west of the Mississippi River. (This law did not apply to individual Native Americans who identified themselves as citizens of a U.S. state, but only to groups of Native Americans who were organized tribally like separate countries within southeastern U.S. states.)

The Indian Removal Act required the removal of the Seminole, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Cherokee nations from Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, eastern Tennessee, and western North Carolina. Four of these Native American nations relocated peacefully to land "reserved" for them in the present-day state of Oklahoma. (This was the beginning of the creation of Native American "reservations.") However, the Cherokee resisted. They had established a "Cherokee Republic" with its own constitution, which did not operate under the laws of the states in which it was located (Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina) or the laws of the United States. In response, in 1838, President Martin Van Buren (the president after Andrew Jackson) authorized the U.S. army to remove the inhabitants of the Cherokee Republic forcibly to land west of the Mississippi River. This event is known today as the "Trail of Tears," since the Cherokee were so sad to be forced to give up the land on which they had lived for generations and because many Cherokee and their black slaves died along the way. (Slavery was legal in the Cherokee Republic as it was in the southeastern United States at that time.)

The forced removal of Native Americans from lands east of the Mississippi River had actually begun long before Jackson's presidency. "Indian removal" had been taking place in the Northeast and Upper Midwest regions of the United States for decades. However, today, Andrew Jackson is the U.S. president

who is most well-known for his involvement in the long-term effort by the U.S. government and state governments to force Native Americans to move west onto lands that eventually became known as reservations. Native American reservations were often set up on land that nobody else wanted because it was isolated from the rest of the country and not very good for farming. The Indian Removal Act is still controversial today since many of the descendants of the Native Americans who were forced to move west still live on reservations in Oklahoma and other western states.

Today, some people think of Andrew Jackson as a hero, but others think of him as a villain. However, it is hard to deny that, for better or worse, this native North Carolinian had a major impact on American politics.

READING REVIEW QUESTIONS:

Explain why Andrew Jackson threatened to send the U.S. army into South Carolina in 1833.

Write a paragraph describing the spoils system and summarizing the arguments for and against it.

Write a paragraph describing the Indian Removal Act and explaining why it is still controversial today.
