The Untethered Republic

The United States of America, 1800-present

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# 1. The Revolution of 1800

By 1800, the United States was, if still young, out of its awkward adolescence. The national disarray of the Confederation years, when the nation seemed on the verge of collapse repeatedly and the Congress little more than an assembly of ministers plenipotentiary, had been put behind it by the ratification of the Constitution of 1787, and the new institutions it established, truly unified the nation under a single federal government consisting of the presidency, the two Houses of Congress, and a Supreme Court. The economies of the several states began to unite into one, the nation slowly turned into a single cohesive unit, and the immediate fear of national collapse began to subside.

However, this also saw the rise of several growing pains. The nonpartisanism that surrounded President Washington when he first became president in 1789 began to fall apart, around the rivalry between his ambitious Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton and his equally ambitious Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson. Hamilton’s desires to establish an eastern-looking United States of bankers and commerce-men, that resembled nothing more than Britain’s Guelph monarchy, clashed with Jefferson’s desires to make a western-looking United States of agrarian freeholds and plantations[[1]](#endnote-1). With the outbreak of the French Revolution, this only escalated: to Hamilton, the Revolution was disordered anarchy contrary to Anglo-American tradition, and to Jefferson the Revolution was the reverberations of America’s own and deserved to be celebrated as such. It did not take long for these divides to spiral in the open, and it quickly divided the American republic into two national factions[[2]](#endnote-2). The signing in 1794 of the Jay Treaty between America and Britain, which promoted Hamiltonian goals of close relations, turned this breach into a chasm; Jefferson finally departed government and fully joined the Republican opposition to Hamilton’s Federalism. Washington’s nonpartisanism was buried by history; though today, we remember him as having lacked a party, in truth, he had become a Federalist, and the United States had truly entered an age of party.

The 1796 presidential election was the first competitive election in American history – the still-popular Washington exhausted after the chaotic politicking of the era. Lacking anything resembling systems of committees or conventions, both the Federalist and Republican parties nominated their leaders through simply assembling their congressmen into a caucus and having them nominate candidates by majority vote. The obvious deficiencies of this mode of nomination were clear even at this time, but this was an unprecedented situation; as far as both sides were concerned, only the houses of Congress could be said to be national institutions. The Federalists nominated for president John Adams, the incumbent vice president John Adams, a skilled if dull statesman and a doctrinaire follower of Hamiltonian principles, and for vice president they nominated the South Carolinian diplomat Thomas Pinckney. On the other hand, the Republicans nominated for president Thomas Jefferson, and for vice president they nominated Aaron Burr, who had already made his name as an opponent of Federalism and, being the highest New York Republican, arch-enemy of Alexander Hamilton. The ensuing election was bitter and chaotic: the Federalists accused Jefferson of plotting an American Reign of Terror on the French model, while the Republicans accused Adams of plotting to establish a Guelph-style monarchy over the United States. The election ended messily: a narrow victory for Adams and the Federalists, that presidential elections were, at this point, indirect and both parties disorganized[[3]](#endnote-3) led to his vice president being none other than Thomas Jefferson.

The election having gone the way he wanted, Washington easily handed power off to John Adams, who even retained Washington’s cabinet. This practically meant Hamilton dominated the government through friendly cabinet secretaries[[4]](#endnote-4). And inevitably, his presidency became consumed with a single question, the question of war with France. The Anglophilic attitude of the Federalists, in the middle of the War of the French Revolution, led to French attacks on American shipping, and Adams, Hamilton and the rest of the Federalist establishment became increasingly belligerent. Tensions growing, Adams organized a commission to go to France and negotiate, although that it consisted of two Federalists – John Marshall and Charles C. Pinckney – and one nonpartisan man, Elbridge Gerry. France’s foreign minister, the infamously slippery Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, sought first to delay the proceedings, and then he asked for a series of bribes. This culminated in Pinckney rejecting the bribes by saying, in no uncertain terms, “No, no, not a sixpence!”. Concluding the mission a failure, Adams readied for war, and the publication of several dispatches, including the bribe-trail, in what came to be known as the XYZ Affair, led to an uproar which culminated in the approval of attacks on French ships, but fearing military retaliation not a war – in what is known as the First Quasi War[[5]](#endnote-5).

The ensuing conflict blew open the casket of domestic tensions; to Federalists, the Republicans’ endorsement of the French Revolution and opposition to war meant treason, and to the Republicans, this was simply a plot to establish a despotism. At home, it stoked fears that immigrants were secretly loyal to their mother countries, and combined with criticism of the war that Hamilton regarded as disloyal, it led to the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts. Giving the president broad power to deport immigrants, delaying naturalization, and making it a crime to make false statements against the government, it set the tone for the Adams presidency and ensured he would be remembered as a despot. Additionally, Adams faced growing pressure for escalating the war, to turn it into a war of international conquest. Alexander Hamilton readied himself with increasingly ambitious war plans to not only go after the French, but also to take Louisiana and the Floridas from their Spanish allies. The 1798 House and Senate elections saw, in the passions of wartime, a Federalist landslide, but a backlash slowly escalated. The enforcement of the Sedition Act against political opponents only sparked further crisis, as it provided easy proof for the Republican charge that the Federalists were plotting to end constitutional government and establish a despotism.

This opposition moved, and having been blocked from the newspapers, it moved to the Republican-controlled states, in the form of the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1798 and 1799. Ghostwritten by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, respectively, the resolutions not only declared the Alien and Sedition Acts bad laws, but they also declared it unconstitutional. The Virginia Resolutions merely declared each state could declare laws unconstitutional, but the Kentucky Resolutions went so far as to declare states could entirely nullify laws within their boundaries. If either state had hoped to get others to join them, they entirely failed; instead, most states, including those controlled by Republicans, rejected them outright. And Hamilton, hard at work on building up the army, suggested launching a military force into Virginia to suppress its government. As the national crisis continued to deepen; as 1799 turned to 1800, all could see the ensuing election would be a most chaotic affair.

For the coming elections, the Federalist caucus nominated John Adams as many would have expected; and for their vice presidential nominee, they nominated Charles C. Pinckney, whose role in the XYZ Affair had made him a Federalist icon – and he was a Southerner, who would appeal to slaveowners terrified at revolutionary equality. Similarly unsurprisingly, the Republican caucus nominated Thomas Jefferson as president, and for vice president they nominated Aaron Burr, whose masterful organizing of the party in New York was a harbinger of the coming era of democracy. The ensuing election was the dirtiest and most chaotic in American history – it would only be exceeded by the disaster year of 1840. The Federalists spoke of Jefferson as a Francophile traitor loyal to the French enemy, who would launch a reign of terror and ally himself with the government of Saint-Domingue (today Haiti)[[6]](#endnote-6) and inaugurate the end of the white race. In contrast, the Republicans spoke of the Alien and Sedition Laws as harbingers of a plot to establish an American monarchy, no less tyrannical than the lately overthrown Guelphs, and imprison all their foes. And all feared that, whatever the result, there would be civil war as the losing side would seek to prevent the treason of the other side – violently.

Communication across the nation taking days, this meant each state cast its vote for the presidency gradually. A decisive moment in the election came from New York, where a Federalist scheme to change its electors were frustrated by Aaron Burr’s embryonic political machine securing control of the state assembly for the Republicans; promptly, the state cast its votes for Jefferson and Burr. This did not decide the election by itself, but it did mean that, when the last state, South Carolina, cast its votes, it would decide the whole election. It was a state whose elections returned a legislature in flux between Federalists, Republicans, and independents; its vote consumed many hours of debate, but in the end those independents, motivated by southern sectionalism, split their tickets for Jefferson and Pinckney. This meant, in the final totals, that Jefferson came in first and Pinckney in second, with a one vote difference between the two. The election had come down to the wire, but it had ended with a Republican win. If Burr, and many other Republicans, were unhappy with the way the vice presidency had gone, they could still exalt in victory.

The next great question was whether Adams and the Federalists would accept their loss at all, or instead hold on to power. What ensured they would is a few things – divisions within the Adams cabinet, as he chafed at the capture by Hamilton appointees; the consolation prize of Pinckney rather than the overly democratic Burr as vice president; and perhaps a secret deal between Adams and Jefferson. But whatever the details, there would be a peaceful exchange of power, in an unprecedented event in history; the succession was secured with little more than shaking heads[[7]](#endnote-7). The Age of the Federalists had come to an end; the Age of Jefferson had begun.

# 2. The Age of Jefferson

Already by 1800, Thomas Jefferson was a grand man of the republic. Born in 1743 to a planter family in Virginia, Jefferson had immense privilege; despite this, he scorned it in favor of the principles of the Age of Reason, and in the early emancipationist phase of his life he opposed the institution of slavery despite his family’s wealth being dependent on it[[8]](#endnote-8). As George III’s centralizing designs pointed through the increasingly-submissive Parliament towards the Thirteen Colonies, Jefferson became a revolutionary, and as a delegate to the Continental Congress, he wrote the Declaration of Independence, which elevated the American Revolution from simply another stage in the British conflict between crown and the people, into the inauguration of the Age of Revolutions, in skilled rhetoric encapsulating the values of the Age of Reason that has since become iconic. After serving as the foremost revolutionary leader of Virginia, Jefferson won election to Congress during the Confederation years, which resembled less the Congress of today and more the International Forum[[9]](#endnote-9), Jefferson nevertheless achieved a great victory against slavery in the form of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which barred slavery from what is today the Middle West; most historians agree that, in its absence, slavery would have assuredly expanded to Ohio and Indiana. After the passage of the Constitution, Washington selected him as his Secretary of State, where he led the opposition to Hamilton’s Federalist agenda. Resigning after the Jay Treaty, Jefferson became the leader of the Republican opposition to the Federalists and, after losing the 1796 election, became increasingly radical in his opposition to the Adams administration over the Alien and Sedition Acts, and wrote the Kentucky Resolutions of 1798-9 which declared them null and void. His ascension to the presidency was nothing less than the final prize of a man who had spent many years close to or near the halls of power.

Almost immediately, Jefferson swiftly abandoned several monarchical trappings his predecessors followed. He refused to wear a sword during his inauguration ceremony, and he sold off the luxurious carriage purchased under the Adams presidency. Indeed, to his inauguration, he walked like an ordinary citizen to the Capitol, in what has since become a tradition. His inauguration address, advocating unity and reconciliation after the tumultuous election season, received widespread republication, as proof of party principles. This was only one of two speeches he gave to Congress – his second being his other inauguration – as he gave his annual messages to Congress in the form of writing, because his republicanism was so astute that he considered the act of giving it in the form of a speech too similar to the Throne Speeches which the Guelph kings were contemporaneously giving in the British Isles[[10]](#endnote-10).

As president, Jefferson’s cabinet resembled the sort of coalition that got him into power. Having to satiate the ambitious and charismatic Aaron Burr, whose party organization work was crucial to his victory, Jefferson made him Secretary of State. As his Secretary of the Treasury Jefferson selected another leading Northern Republican, Albert Gallatin, an emigrant from Geneva, France (then an independent city-state), and like Jefferson a learned child of the Age of Reason. Additionally, not long after his inauguration Jefferson organized for the establishment of a Domestic Department led by his disciple, James Madison. These three figures would dominate the Jefferson cabinet and animate its various goals. Jefferson’s creation of the Domestic Department, to weaken the position of Burr within the cabinet, represented the growing divide that had emerged between the two. Additionally, Jefferson took a remarkably measured attitude towards federal patronage; though Burr advocated wholesale replacement of the Federalists in positions of power, Jefferson instead declined to do so. Perhaps it was out of principle, regarding it as corruption, or perhaps it was part of a deal made with Adams to secure the peaceful transition of power in the first place. But regardless, it set the tone for the Jefferson presidency, less the wholesale destruction of the Federalist agenda, and more Jeffersonian ends through Hamiltonian means.

The single greatest goal of the Jefferson administration was the elimination of the national debt. He regarded national debt not as the blessing Hamilton praised it as, but rather as a curse. He believed it to be a sin applied on future generations by overspending of the current. Thus, though Jefferson abolished all internal taxes, he nevertheless allowed for an annual surplus, for the payment of all debt, through drastic cuts on spending. And though he initially sought to abolish the Bank of the United States, Gallatin convinced him that it might instead be a useful tool in paying off the debt, and that it should instead be allowed to retire peacefully when the time came. The result of this policy may be seen below:

Figure : National debt, 1801-9

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Year** | **National debt outstanding** |
| 1801 | $83,038,050.80 |
| 1802 | $80,712,632.25 |
| 1803 | $77,054,686.40 |
| 1804 | $71,427,120.88 |
| 1805 | $63,312,150.50 |
| 1806 | $55,723,270.66 |
| 1807 | $48,218,398.64 |
| 1808 | $41,196,317.97 |
| 1809 | $33,023,192.09 |

The success of the plan was such that the debt would be fully paid off in 1814, although by then the American government was beginning to break from Jeffersonianism.

Beyond this, Jefferson was faced with a significant political battle, over the judiciary. Immediately before his presidency was due to end, John Adams appointed several judges to federal courts, and he passed the Judiciary Act of 1801 which reorganized the judiciary and opened several new judicial seats, which he promptly filled with Federalists. Though Jefferson successfully had the Act repealed, he failed to pass a new judiciary bill to replace it, by a margin of one vote in the Senate; this instead meant the restoration of the 1789 Judiciary Act, and rather than risk another humiliating defeat, Jefferson chose to stick with it. With the defeat of this attempt at reform, Jefferson instead sought to truncate the power of the Supreme Court. Dominated by Federalists, and the huge personality of its Chief Justice, John Marshall, he now sought to confront it.

Associate Justice Samuel Chase, an alcoholic who openly opposed the Jefferson administration rather than maintain even a thin veneer of impartiality, was an obvious target, and against this Jefferson organized no less than the impeachment and removal of him from office. The successful impeachment and removal from office of another Supreme Court Justice, John Pickering, undoubtedly provided this case with momentum; however, Chase ended up acquitted, as enough Republicans regarded this as a politically-motivated trial, and they believed that impeachment should only be done for serious crimes, that they voted to acquit. The presence of Vice President Pinckney, who openly opposed the impeachment and, as President of the Senate, used all his knowledge of procedure to frustrate it, Jefferson blamed for this failure. But nevertheless, it collapsed the effort to remove Federalists from the Supreme Court, and when Jefferson did secure a friendlier Vice President, he would not force the issue It ensured that the Supreme Court would remain a stronghold of Federalism; and when the Marshall Court laid claim to the ability to strike down federal laws in *Marbury v. Burr* (1803), Jefferson had no choice but to accept it.

This failure was merely a blemish on the era, however. The end of the War of the French Revolution brought Europe to an uneasy peace, and this allowed for economic prosperity as British and French attacks on shipping came to an end; it also vindicated reductions of the army and navy, as they became less necessary against the weakly-settled neighbors of British North America and Spanish Luisiana. Democracy, albeit the democracy of the white man, became the political order at home as states relaxed voting requirements, and genteel Federalists found themselves simply unable to compete in the newly popularized elections without compromising their very own values. Western settlement continued apace, and wishing to take it further, Jefferson sent several expeditions into Spanish Luisiana in the name of exploration. An expedition in 1803 to the Pacific, led by his good friend Meriweather Lewis, crossed the Mississippi over St. Louis in modern-day Minasota; it would never be heard of again[[11]](#endnote-11). Jefferson sent several other expeditions into Spanish Luisiana, but all of them either disappeared, or in the case of the famous Pike expedition of 1806-7, arrested by Spanish authorities. This blatant intrusion into their territory resulted in growing Spanish concern worry over their claims being ignored. Combined with the Selkirk settlers of modern-day Assiniboia similarly encroaching on Luisiana from the north, it led to the construction of several Spanish forts, as well as it organizing settlement from St. Louis to New Orleans. Nevertheless, such settlement could not hope to match American settlement over its frontier, and many regarded it as simply a matter of time before Luisiana would simply fall into the laps of the United States.

Re-elected in a landslide over his vice president in 1804 – and successfully securing Burr’s win of the vice presidency – Jefferson proved a popular president with the American people at large. Economic prosperity and the end of Federalist abuses of power made him wildly popular, and by the time his presidency came to an end, it was clear that Federalism was worn out, utterly obsolete and due simply to wither away. By the time Thomas Jefferson turned power to his more vigorous vice president, few could deny his success.

# 3. Burr and Democracy

Aaron Burr was not a grand old man of the republic; rather he was the product of a new age of American history. Born in 1756 to a prominent family in New York, he abandoned his education to become an officer in the American Revolution. Serving with skill in command of a disorganized mass of troops, he was forced to retire in 1779; however, his career as an officer did allow him to meet one Theodosia Prevost, the wife of a prominent Loyalist soldier. The two fell in love and had an affair; after her husband’s death, the two of them married. Their relationship represented the very pinnacle of the Age of Reason, as the two regarded one another as equals – the two even strongly admired early women’s rights activist Mary Wollstonecraft, and they raised their only child, a daughter, with the education and manner usually reserved for men[[12]](#endnote-12). After the Revolution, Burr became a prominent politician, and in particular he was in command of New York City’s Tammany Society, which he turned into a powerful political machine, befitting the coming age of democracy[[13]](#endnote-13).

Joining the Senate in 1791, he quickly became a leading member of the Republican opposition. Much of this was personal; Burr and Hamilton were both ambitious New Yorkers, and this inevitably made them enemies. But regardless, Burr became a firm Republican and a supporter of the French Revolution. The Democratic Societies that emerged across the Northern United States, headed by Aaron Burr, were among the first organizations of the era to use the term “democracy” positively, in an era where many regarded it as synonymous with mob rule. In the 1796 election, though the Republican caucus nominated him for vice president, the various electors for the presidency split their vote away from Burr, and in the end he was quite far from winning the vice presidency. This disappointment aside, he continued to organize the Republican Party in New York. Seeing the Alien and Sedition Acts as an attack on immigrants, he quickly became the patron of immigrants to the city, particularly the many Irish immigrants who came fleeing the British suppression of the Great Irish Rebellion. Founding the Manhattan Company in 1799, nominally as a water company, he successfully secured passage of its charter through the state legislature, complete with a section that allowed it to invest surplus funds in any cause that did not violate the law. Using this to the fullest extent possible, he used it to turn the Company into a bank; given that both the Bank of New York and the state branch of the Bank of the United States, the only two banks in the state, were dominated by Federalists, this successfully broke the local banking monopoly. With it institution, he organized loans and extended credit to the lower classes, and through this he successfully got them to qualify for the franchise despite restrictive laws on the subject. Combined with his considerable talents as a political organizer at a time when most politicians maintained a genteel façade of indifference, it successfully turned New York’s state legislature Republican the following year. This won the state for Jefferson in the 1800 election; however, Burr found himself frustrated from the vice presidency again when South Carolina voted for Jefferson and Pinckney.

Needing to prevent a man as talented as Burr from being alienated from the party, Jefferson made him his Secretary of State. Here, the two of them had a testy if working relationship. Jefferson regarded Burr’s involvement in mass politics less as political organization, and increasingly more as pure demagoguery. In terms of policy, Burr was no fan of Jefferson’s refusal to take advantage of federal patronage, and additionally he opposed Jefferson’s refusal to spend; instead, he wanted large-scale investment in internal improvements, to unify the nation together and to keep the west as part of the country. No doubt, this was much of the reason Jefferson established a Domestic Department led by his disciple, James Madison, to relegate the Department of State on foreign affairs in which the two concurred. In the 1804 election, Burr won nomination for the vice presidency once more, and this time he won it. Here, he was extremely effective, and his presiding over the Senate won him plaudits even from Federalists who despised him. And his farewell speech from the Senate was so eloquent it left observers in tears.

Come 1808, he was the inevitable candidate for the presidency. Despite this, in the Republican caucus, there was a large effort from the South, regarding Burr as a demagogue and as unsound on slavery, to depose him and instead nominate James Madison; however, it failed, not in the least because other Southern states were jealous of the potential election of two Virginia-born presidents in a row, and so there was no unified Planter Ascendancy that could stop him. This nomination secured and Virginians unhappy about Madison satiated by his selection of James Monroe as vice presidential candidate, Burr campaigned for the presidency openly, organizing Republican support from his residence in Washington and publishing open letters in newspapers; in an era where politicians were expected to maintain a genteel aloofness, many regarded this as little more than demagoguery. But Burr nevertheless won easy election over the Federalists’ Charles C. Pinckney, and he became president.

In office, Burr changed tack from Jefferson almost immediately. He fired over ten percent of all people holding government positions, in a total cleanout which he replaced by appointing his friends. This, many regarded as dangerous, more essentially able to relegate the government under the command of one man. As patronage opportunities rapidly expanded thanks to the growth of semaphoric telegraph lines over his presidency, such fears only enhanced in scope. This remains controversial – some historians regard this a move to prevent the formation of a state-within-a-state, and others regard it as simply rewarding political friends, and increasing corruption as a result. At the time, a strange coalition of Federalists and ultra Republicans who criticized this as an act of executive aggrandizement; despite this Burr got away with it. This wave of firings also reached the cabinet, where Burr replaced all of Jefferson’s appointees except for Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin, who he regarded as a close ally.

Another change in political tack came when Burr authorized an unprecedented programme of spending on, in the parlance of the era, internal improvements. This was hardly a new policy – beyond Hamiltonian Federalist policies, Albert Gallatin had in 1808 presented a plan to Congress for constructing canals and roads across the nation. This plan was received with enthusiasm, and most historians agree that Jefferson planned, once the debt was paid off, to make money available for it once the national debt was paid off, but Burr wanted it available earlier. Thus, he proposed a bill through Congress which would authorize the use of federal funds to construct a series of canals across the nation, and despite opposition from ultra-Republicans, he secured its passage through Congress. The centerpiece of this was the Erie Canal; though begun construction with New York’s state funds in 1806, the federal funds made available helped its construction dramatically and turned this into Burr’s pet project. But it was hardly alone in this, as it was one of several canals planned to the west, and it was joined by several intracoastal canals cutting peninsulas to quicken shipping times. These programs received Burr the strong support of the West in particular. But this also drew opposition, including from one notable figure. In retirement on his plantation, Thomas Jefferson criticized this as loose construction of constitutional powers, and with his support Virginia issued resolutions condemning this as unconstitutional. Despite this, when the federal government handed Virginia money to use to whatever end it may desire, its long-held ambitions of cutting the way through canals only made it too happy to accept it. Additionally, the Tariff of 1810, by increasing tariffs in a time of public prosperity, ensured that the budget would still be balanced and the national debt be paid off. Increasingly, Jefferson fumed; he regarded Burr as nothing short of an American Catiline, using demagoguery to erode constitutional norms and limits for his personal aggrandizement. In such feelings, he was also influenced by his bottom line – the tariff undercut the export of raw cotton that was the entire basis of the Southern economy, after all.

Such controversy only increased when it came time to renew the Bank of the United States. As an institution, this was the only bank chartered by the federal government, and it served some but not all of the duties of a modern central bank. Its banknotes served as a medium of exchange, and in a time when specie was rare, it was the only medium of exchange available all across the US. Additionally, it served a sort of supervisory role over the various state banks; it served something of a regulating role in that it intentionally collapsed state banks lacking enough deposits to back its loans, and other, more critical state banks it helped support by extending loans. Established in 1791 in an effort spearheaded by Hamilton, Jefferson allowed its continued existence only to pay off the national debt; with its 20-year charter up for renewal in 1811, he believed it was best to allow it to simply cease to exist. However, Burr believed a national bank necessary to establish financial security for the nation at large; as such, he presented a bill to renew its charter, but with several broad changes. Together, they would make it into an institution similar to the Manhattan Company – only American residents would be able to own shares, individuals would be capped in terms of how many shares they would own, and its directors would be several Republicans. However, this bill saw the opposition of many Republicans, not in the least Jefferson, and combined with Federalist votes it got handily defeated. The Bank of the United States would expire; its assets ended up getting purchased by the Philadelphian banker Stephen Girard, who made it the basis of a smaller bank that nonetheless was the only one with a national scope. Legitimately believing a central bank to be necessary for American economic prosperity, in 1812 Burr successfully established a smaller bank specifically meant to operate in the capital, the Fiscal Bank of Washington. Though it proved important in the growth of the capital from a small set of villages, it was not a central bank, and this defeat helped further divide Burr and Jefferson.

The 1812 Republican caucus saw Burr nominated, although a section of the party refused to accept this and instead nominated William Crawford of Georgia. Most of the Party stood with Burr, but it was a close-run thing – his vice president also won renomination, with notably higher enthusiasm from the southern section of the party. The ensuing election saw the Republicans prevail over both the Federalists’ John Marshall and the ultra-Republicans’ Crawford; that was, however, where the real drama was just beginning. A large section of the electors for Crawford voted also for Monroe, the same number of the electors for Burr decided not to also vote for Monroe, instead throwing their vote away. The result was that Burr and Monroe ended up tied in number of votes won, in an unprecedented moment in American electoral history[[14]](#endnote-14).

Figure . The 1812 election, by state

Note: Each elector, counted individually in “Electors”, cast two different ballots for president. For the sake of simplicity, votes for candidates other than Burr and Monroe are grouped under “Other”

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **Electors** | **Burr** | **Monroe** | **Other** |
| Massachusetts | 22 | 0 | 0 | 44 |
| New Hampshire | 8 | 8 | 2 | 6 |
| Vermont | 8 | 8 | 7 | 1 |
| Rhode Island | 4 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| Connecticut | 10 | 0 | 0 | 20 |
| New York | 33 | 33 | 0 | 0 |
| Pennsylvania | 26 | 26 | 25 | 1 |
| New Jersey | 8 | 8 | 8 | 0 |
| Delaware | 4 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Maryland | 11 | 7 | 7 | 8 |
| Ohio | 8 | 8 | 8 | 0 |
| Virginia | 25 | 10 | 25 | 15 |
| Kentucky | 12 | 12 | 12 | 0 |
| Tennessee | 7 | 7 | 7 | 0 |
| North Carolina | 15 | 5 | 15 | 10 |
| South Carolina | 11 | 2 | 11 | 9 |
| Georgia | 8 | 0 | 8 | 8 |
| **Total** | **220** | **139** | **139** | **162** |

Under the Constitution, this crisis was to be resolved through another unprecedented act in American history[[15]](#endnote-15), namely a contingent election. The House would vote for the two highest-performing candidates, Burr and Monroe; whoever would win the support of a majority of state delegations, would be president, and whoever didn’t, the vice president. Given how unprecedented this was, many feared that whoever would lose, be it Burr or Monroe, would not accept their defeat, that either Burr would refuse to leave office, or Monroe would attempt to unseat Burr by force. But in the end the contingent election ended up with Burr prevailing, most Federalists[[16]](#endnote-16) backing him as better than Monroe, Northern Republicans backing him out of sectional pride, and Western Republicans supporting him over internal improvements. Monroe accepted the result and became vice president for another four years, and despite some angry talk from the South, most particularly from Thomas Jefferson, so too did the Southern Republicans. But Southern anger and fear towards Burr continued to sizzle in the background.

The contingent election saw the breach between Burr and Jefferson turn into a chasm. Organizing his supporters in the North, West, and a smattering in the South, in a political convention of delegates in 1813, Burr formally constituted them as the Democratic Party. In contrast, Jefferson issued public letters declaring his continued fidelity to traditional Republican principles, and drawn somewhat out of retirement, he began the work of organizing a renewed Republican Party around his protégé James Madison. Additionally, the Federalists shattered as a party; in the North, they tended to join the Democrats, and in the South, they tended to join the Republicans; a rump Federalist Party, under Alexander Hamilton, lasted until the revelation of the Hamilton Plot. Additionally, in foreign policy, the two parties quickly diverged. The Republicans grew Francophobic, French abolitionism since 1794 having cooled Southern Republican enthusiasm for the republic; and they also grew Anglophilic, viewing the British as both a counterweight against the French and a potential ally against the Spanish. The Democrats were marked by a firm Anglophobia, partially due to memories of the Revolution but also reflexive of the prominence of Irish immigrants fleeing the brutal suppression of the Irishmen; and they also Francophilic, both because of the same Anglophobia, and because of enthusiasm for the French Republic.

Burr’s second term was met more with a rising party tension. Jefferson and Madison regarded him as nothing less than a would-be despot, and the two sought to do whatever they could to stop him. More privately, Jefferson, even spoke of the potential future necessity of secession or revolution. Though Virginia’s legislature issued resolutions condemning Burr’s actions as unconstitutional, it simultaneously accepted money for internal improvements within its borders, which left many wholly unsure of whether it was even serious in this opposition. Behind the scenes, Burr made plans on how to deal with a potential secession crisis; he did not need it, as it mostly waited out the end of his presidency, to defeat him in the ballot box. Despite all this scheming, the economy was doing well and, despite his antipathy and aversion towards the institution, Burr did not make any moves on slavery that might have united the South against him. Jefferson’s increasingly frantic rhetoric against Burrism was met on deaf ears. Additionally, the settlement of the frontier resulted in several wars with Indigenous tribes; in the Middle West, William Henry Harrison successfully forced a confederacy led by the Shawnee chief Tecumseh into exile in Canada, while an internal Creek civil war, in which American forces intervened on the pro-government side, ended with the Red Stick tribe forced into exile in the Spanish-ruled Floridas[[17]](#endnote-17).

The most famous moment of this era is undoubtedly the opening of the Erie Canal in 1815; President Burr himself travelled up to New York to formally open the canal. This represented the vindication of Burr’s spending policies; it demonstrated he was not burning money to invest in paper tigers, but instead he was connecting the nation together. Additionally, every other state in the nation wanted to build their own canals, and they campaigned to receive federal investments to do so. This too, Jefferson regarded as part of a scheme of consolidating the federal government; he believed the way it now owned shares in canal companies, granted them influence within politics that fell outside the powers granted by the constitution.

Coming into the 1816 election, it looked as if whoever the Democrats would nominate would win election. Holding the first-ever national nominating convention[[18]](#endnote-18), consisting of delegates selected by the several party organizations across the nation, it formally nominated a candidate – and many ended up shocked that it nominated Aaron Burr for an unprecedented third term. By this time, George Washington’s decision to refuse to run for a third term in 1796 was mythologized into a precedent, of dispassionate republican politicians voluntarily conceding their own power; Jefferson’s refusal to run for a third term in 1808 simply strengthened this idea. By running for a third term, Aaron Burr seemed to prove all his critics right, and several of his supporters ended up backing the Republicans in order to maintain this constitutional norm[[19]](#endnote-19). In particular, Jefferson published an open letter to the American people, accusing him of being a no less than the American Catiline, a demagogue pandering to the whims of the people, all for the singular goal of the destruction of the American constitution and, in its place a personal despotism[[20]](#endnote-20).

With the Republicans nominating Jefferson’s handpicked successor, James Madison[[21]](#endnote-21), in a nomination caucus, they too readied for the election. The ensuing campaign was, though hardly the chaotic epoch-smashing mess of 1800, certainly a mess. The Democrats accused Madison of being less a man and more an effete aristocrat, with one paper not only accusing him of being a dandy, but also riding a posh English-style carriage in full livery –complete with a corset[[22]](#endnote-22). And the Republicans accused Burr of being a wannabe Catiline, seeking to usurp power and make himself a despot, all under the aegis of the large force of government officers who he appointed to their roles. But in the end, the very fact that Burr was running for an unprecedented third term was enough to give the Republican accusations enough credit that Madison won in an election that, if close, was nevertheless decisive[[23]](#endnote-23).

Figure . The 1816 election, by state

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **Electoral votes** | **Madison** | **Burr** |
| Massachusetts | 22 | 0 | 22 |
| New Hampshire | 8 | 8 | 0 |
| Vermont | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| Rhode Island | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Connecticut | 10 | 10 | 0 |
| New York | 33 | 8 | 25 |
| Pennsylvania | 26 | 9 | 17 |
| New Jersey | 8 | 8 | 0 |
| Delaware | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Maryland | 11 | 11 | 0 |
| Ohio | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| Indiana | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Virginia | 25 | 22 | 3 |
| Kentucky | 12 | 4 | 8 |
| Tennessee | 7 | 5 | 2 |
| North Carolina | 15 | 13 | 2 |
| South Carolina | 11 | 11 | 0 |
| Georgia | 8 | 8 | 0 |
| Yazoo | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **Total** | **226** | **119** | **107** |

Though many feared Burr would refuse to accept this election and instead try to keep his office, being a committed democrat he accepted his defeat. He was even present to witness Madison’s inauguration, thus formally handing power off to him. But it hardly meant the end of Burr’s presence on the political stage; having inaugurated mass politics that came hand-in-hand with Jeffersonian democracy, he had all the tools to re-enter political office. Travelling home to New York, he was met with commiserations from its Tammany Society, and he plotted for the future[[24]](#endnote-24).

# 4. The Conquest of Space

The opening of the Erie Canal was the occasion of the season. On November 23, 1815, President Burr travelled aboard a packet ship, the *Constitution*, departing from New York City with a barrel of water from the Atlantic Ocean, and he zipped up the canal in four days – not the two weeks by stagecoach it once took. At the village of Black Rock, he opened the barrel and emptied it, and he declared, “The waters of the Atlantic Ocean and the Great Lakes are no longer separate: they are forever intermingled”. Black Rock’s inhabitants cheered, not in the least since they could see the great future before them. After a brief trip up to Niagara Falls where he revelled in the magnificent sights, Burr travelled back down the Canal; he watched fireworks light up the sky of New York City, happily cheering the man who made their city the gateway to the West[[25]](#endnote-25). Here, he accepted toasts from all the city government, from the Tammany Hall that served as the lynchpin of the city’s Democratic Party, and from the Irish immigrants who revelled in patronage from Burr. The impact was such that the New York Irish put portraits of him on their walls, side-by-side with Edward Fitzgerald[[26]](#endnote-26) - among these Irish immigrants was Thomas Addis Emmet, although his famous son Curran was yet to be born.

This event was but the harbinger of a Canal Mania that consumed the nation. For it was not only that the canals eased transportation; they also virtually changed the topography of the nation. The Erie Canal compressed the distance between New York City to Black Rock, and by doing so it transformed New York into a city just next door to the Middle West. It was suddenly cheaper to transport freight and people from New York to Cincinnati than it was to transport the same from Philadelphia; practically speaking, this made it closer to New York. New England, suffering from both a high birth rate and a paucity of land, was already seeing a large section of its population emigrate to Upstate New York; suddenly the Erie Canal allowed it to settle vast numbers of people all across the Middle West, particularly in Ohio, northern Indiana, and New Ireland[[27]](#endnote-27). Combined with the rising steamboat in the same era, the nation became much closer and tighter than ever before. The tyranny of distance that had so long worried observers of American observers was a thing of the past, to be destroyed by the all-powerful force of the canal[[28]](#endnote-28). The Burr years saw money flow like wine from the federal government, flush from tariffs, to projects in the several states, or in the case of constitutionally-fastidious Virginia, to the states themselves. The Erie Canal would not be alone; it would soon be joined by the intracoastal Delaware and Chesapeake, Delaware and Raritan, and Cape Cod Canals, dramatically cutting time in the trade from Washington to Philadelphia to New York to Boston and, in a time when people feared British predations on commerce, allowing ships to remain securely in American territory while trading. Additionally, every state wanted to get the trade to the West, and it was this which resulted in the most dramatic part of the canal boom[[29]](#endnote-29).

Even before the completion of the Erie Canal, from 1810 the Union Canal from Washington to Pittsburg had begun construction under the aegis of the federal government, and after several impressive feats of engineering helped by the recent invention of the hydraulic drill and despite it ending up way overbudget and requiring fundraising through bond-selling, it was finally completed in 1825. Even before its completion, it helped to fuel a boom in Washington and its growth into a great city, as the speculation market it generated fuelled a boom, and that the canal reached the coal center of Cumberland along the way helped fuel an industrial boom in Washington itself. Additionally, this resulted in Washington’s growth as a grand port of the middle Atlantic, and this came at the expense of Baltimore, whose own canal ambitions were squeezed by not only Washington, but also by Philadelphia and its own boom. This is because Pennsylvania used both state and federal funds to construct the Pennsylvania Canal system, connecting several rivers by canal to connect Philadelphia to Pittsburg. After several delays, from its beginning in 1813, it was completed in 1834, in a quite dramatic feat which required, most dramatically, the construction of a seven-kilometer tunnel below the summit of the Alleghenies. Virginia had long since nursed a dream of a canal connecting the James and Kanawha Rivers; and however much its political elites regarded Burr as an uncouth demagogue, it was only too happy to use the money he gave them for that purpose. Its completion in 1822 was another great achievement of the Canal Era. And further-south, the Tennessee Canal system connected the Tennessee River to several rivers with their mouths in the Atlantic, allowing goods to be transported from the ports of South Carolina and Georgia right to the border.

These canals had a profound impact on American life. New York rose to become the chief city of the United States, as commerce migrated there, and the Great Lakes port of Black Rock turned from a village to a great American city. All along the Erie Canal, the cities of Rochester and Albany boomed, and it became a truly strong economic corridor. Further south, the Union Canal turned Washington from a glorified set of villages, separated by fields of forest, into a real city worthy of the name as immigrants and merchants came to take full advantage of the canal. In this regard, it allowed Washington to dominate its economic neighborhood, as far north as Baltimore and as far west as Pittsburg, and it turned it into the center of commerce in the area. The bonds floated by the Union Canal Company fuelled a speculation bubble, which fuelled ambitious economic development of the city; this, as well as the Fiscal Bank of Washington’s management of the project, created the Washington Board of Brokers, which became the leading stock exchange of the United States. Additionally, it built economic links between Washington and Pittsburg, bringing the latter city into the economic orbit of the South; come 1868, this had momentous consequences on the fortunes of the United States. And it became an important access point for Southerners seeking to migrate westwards. Further south, Richmond and Charleston boomed, and this slowly transformed the South and turned it into an increasingly urban and modern society – albeit with slavery intact.

The other great project that collapsed space in the United States in this era was its optical, Chappe-, or semaphoric telegraph network, which began a great communications revolution in American history. Almost deceptively simple, this system consisted of several semaphore towers in line with one another, each with a set of cranes at the top controlled through an apparatus at the bottom of the tower. Messages are turned, letter by letter, into the crane arrangements that, under the Chappe code, corresponded to it – although it was discovered not long afterwards that messages could be compressed further with the use of crane arrangements to represent whole letters or phrases. Each tower would act like part of a grand relay operation, examining the previous tower in line by telescope and replicating its crane arrangements, until they are sent to their reception-point, where they are converted back into plaintext. Invented in the early 1790s by one Claude Chappe, it immediately became adopted by the French Republic, facing as it was an invasion by all its rivals. From initial lines for military use from Paris to Lille, it only expanded with time, and by 1807 messages could be transmitted from Amsterdam to Milan within an hour. From its military uses, it multiplied. It became used for transmitting news bulletins from *Le Moniteur* across France and its dependencies, and it also became used to transmit data about financial securities, to prevent exploitation of price differences. In short, it was the harbinger of a revolution of information[[30]](#endnote-30).

The slow expansion of semaphoric telegraph networks in the United States, developed for shipping purposes, led to growing ambitions for something bigger. In 1810, President Burr successfully secured the passage of a bill to build a network from New York to Charleston, in the name of military preparedness against both the British and Spanish. With this network of semaphore towers a broad success, congressmen in the west campaigned for telegraph links of their own, and they got them. The ensuing boom saw, by 1825, lines connecting New York to Black Rock, from Washington to Pittsburg, and from Charleston to Knoxville; and from there they reached the Mississippi, where they would, if ever necessary, signal news of some activity across the border, all transmitted through ciphers quite similar to those used by diplomats[[31]](#endnote-31). Indeed, its impact was such that, when new towns would be laid out in the west, they would be centered around hills that they eagerly anticipated would see semaphore towers built upon them; even today, their legacy remains in the form of the many Telegraph Hills named after the towers that once stood upon them. Under the authority of the Post Office, this network swiftly became used for purposes other than military; along the French model, it transmitted weekly and later daily bulletins of the news; today, this has since evolved into the *Federal Bulletin[[32]](#endnote-32)*. Additionally, in order to prevent financial scheming across the several securities exchanges of the nation, it regularly transmitted prices of commodities and securities, in what was but the first step to the integration of the broker boards into a single clearing house. Furthermore, for the high price of several dollars, messages could be transmitted through this network for private use, with remarkable speed. Beyond this, managing the telegraph network required a body of operators and telegraphists, including people to man the towers and to send messengers in between them; this network being managed by the post office, this made it natural to send letters to and from the towers, which by their very nature were a very effective layout for the conveying of letters[[33]](#endnote-33). This made the post a more efficient service for the nation at large.

Together, the canal and the semaphoric telegraph unified the United States into a single and more cohesive nation. They allowed for news to travel across the nation quicker than ever before, and it allowed for the migrations of peoples all across the country. This had several influential consequences. First, the Erie Canal in particular birthed a very intense era of religious revival, which had ramifications all over the nation. Western New York had already been noted for its religious zeal owing to its settlement in the first place from New England, a region long noted for its high religiosity and indeed founded in the first place by Puritans, but as massive numbers of people flowed through it, this only escalated. Missionaries attracted zealous converts in Western New York, and the converts either moved to the west and took their religions with them, or they settled in Western New York where they influenced future barrages of immigrants. The sheer scale of this was such that the entire region received the nickname of the “Burned-Over District”, the fire of religiosity having metaphorically burned through it. Some of the more famous religious movements that emerged in this place included the Millerites, the Shakers, and the Spiritualists; but in general, religious revivalism included abolitionism, temperance, and other quite ambitious programs to realign society. All of this had immense ramifications for the nation at large; that such movements tended to be uncompromising in their politics helped inaugurate the age of social reform that preceded the Liberty and Union War.

Additionally, the new ease of communications resulted in an increase in sectional tensions. The division between the North, whose economy was based on free labor, and the South, whose economy was based on slavery, threatened to spiral out in the open, now that the two could so easily communicate with one another and grasp better the differences between each other. Precisely the fact that communication between free and slave states was easier than before, was what terrified the South, which consistently feared that messages from the North, transmitted through telegraph, were secret calls for a slave revolt; this was one reason why the issue of a local veto on federal appointments emerged, to prevent the appointment of northerners who would transmit calls for rebellion. And debates over slavery in Congress no longer simply died in Congress; instead, they became topics of discussion for the nation at large not so long after they took place, and congressmen now had to answer to constituents who were unwilling to accept compromise and eagerly examined their representatives’ records for it. The conquest of space by the canal and the semaphoric telegraph may have brought the nation together, but it also made its internal contradictions more stark.

# 5. The National Blessing

By 1800, the United States still had a fundamentally colonial economy. The focal point of economic development was the trading of raw goods from the western interior to the eastern ports, and then from these ports to the British Isles, where it would be turned from raw materials into goods, which were then exported back to the United States for its use. Very little trade diverted away from this, and as such fundamentally American trade was dependent on its former colonial masters. The chief motive that Alexander Hamilton had for his report on manufactures, and his high-tariff high-spending agenda was intended to substitute British manufacturing for American equivalents, all being used within a home market[[34]](#endnote-34). The Revolution of 1800 represented a defeat for this idea but by no means its demise; for all that Thomas Jefferson wanted a United States of yeomen-farmers and planters free of cities that he sneered as little more than boils on the body politic, he was not an enemy of commerce, nor of industry. Most notably the establishment of the Patent Office in 1802, by giving security to new inventions, helped make industry viable, and the Survey of the Coasts, established in 1807, began the process of constructing and improving a national market for commerce. It saw a slow rise in the first decade of the nineteenth century, particularly in New England.

Industry that did emerge and prosper did so because it was of immediate concern to the rise of agriculture; a fully automated flour mill was invented in 1789, and this saw immediate adoption across the United States. Additionally, the invention of the cotton gin in 1793 helped to turn cotton into the main crop of the South; the ease of processing it allowed enabled economies of scale which made it a lot more profitable than it was before – so much that it crowded out many of the South’s other crops – and much of the expansion of slavery into the Southwest was fuelled by the expansion of the cotton industry. In particular, New England’s textile industry was largely the work of one man, Samuel Slater, an immigrant from the British Isles who brought with him knowledge on and designs on textile factories; Yankee traders dominating America’s maritime trade for centuries, this established at least the potential of strong commercial links between the South and New England. This infant industry struggled under Jefferson’s firm belief in free trade, however, and most Southern planters exported their raw material to the British Isles rather than to industrialists within their own country.

With the Burr era, this began to change. The Tariff of 1810, though primarily established for raising revenue, was in part motivated by a nationalist desire to reduce dependence on the British, to substitute its imports with ones at home[[35]](#endnote-35). And indeed, it did have an effect on industry; not only did industry rise within New England along similar lines to the British factory system, but an iron industry emerged in Pennsylvania and Virginia, all the while fostered by both federal and state governments. Notably, at this early point, most of this industry used free white labor, on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line; to the extent to which Southern factories used slaves, it was for the most unskilled jobs, and this was because the high price of the average American slave made entirely slave-powered factories unprofitable. Additionally, the immigration of a great deal of Irish people with the suppression of the Great Irish Rebellion not only provided factories with cheaper labor; their Anglophobia led them to view commercial links with the British as a danger, a parallel of the situation their native island was stuck in. This view had a massive influence on the burgeoning Democratic Party, and the readiness of the Burr administration to support internal improvements certainly came hand-in-hand with a higher tariff to fund them. The leader of this new, brewing, American protectionism came from Matthew Carey, a United Irishman exile who settled in Pennsylvania, and though his voice was a minority, it nevertheless had a noted presence within the Democratic Party – even if only to justify the rise of tariffs with logic beyond simple revenue raising. The tariff ceased to be a prop for olden mercantilism; instead, it became a tool for promoting modernity and an industrial economy.

The slow growth of industry did have a booming market in place – the West. Already a growing phenomenon, settlement of the west turned into an avalanche in his era. An avid expansionist, Jefferson governed over a slow expansion of settlement; the Southwest saw booming cotton plantations, while the Northwest saw the expansion of settlement on the New England model. Burr saw a growth of infrastructure across the West that could get people there in the first place, chiefly the canal, and he also introduced the semaphoric telegraph which made it easier than ever for the East to keep in touch with it. This settlement became an avalanche with the opening of the Erie Canal in 1815; in the wake the Year Without a Summer, and the economic havoc that wreaked on New England, this led to an avalanche of settlers moving westwards. To assist these settlers came a series of markets, linked by roads and canals, to sell goods to this new, booming consumer base, and in this the rising industrialists of the Northeast became involved. This became more viable than ever as the canals and roads allowed for much easier and quicker selling of goods. Cincinnati, Pittsburg, and Black Rock became emporia for industrial goods, and they in turn fostered the growth of markets to sell them.

Additionally, industry even began to emerge in the West. Ohio, which was the oldest part of the West and had seen the growth of cities to populate its markets, saw its cities begin to grow, and this labor surplus provided capacity for the rise of industry. This was additionally fostered by the growth of canals across the state, funded by the Burr administration[[36]](#endnote-36); together, this allowed for goods to be imported and exported from Cincinnati to Sandusky, through a canal system. Additionally, that many of the workers who built the canals (mostly Irish and German immigrants) stayed in the places they had worked in, helped to foster the growth of an industrial working class, with a labor surplus that promoted the growth of factories. Sandusky in particular, within the Western Reserve region that had been settled directly from New England, became the industrial center of Ohio; eventually, industry migrated southwards to Ballytone and further to Cincinnati. As Indiana settled over the 1810s, its canal program saw the inklings of a proto-industrial economy emerge, and Michigan Territory (today New Ireland), also began to see industrial development as New Englander settlers brought equipment westwards. But by far, the industrial center of the west was Ohio, where Northeastern settlement collided with settled and mature economic and political institutions[[37]](#endnote-37). Industrial development made its true rise on the nation stage with the Harrisburg Convention of 1823, in which delegates campaigned for a higher tariff for purposes of protection and submitted petitions to this end to Congress; it did not lead to an immediate shift towards protection, rather it simply budged the needle towards protectionism, particularly within the Democratic Party.

Additionally, even at this point, industry was more of a Northern phenomenon than it was Southern. This didn’t mean it was solely the purview of the North –notably, Virginia saw the emergence of a substantial iron sector over the 1810s – but the difference in industrial development, was quite stark. This had to do with several reasons –the North attracted considerably more immigrants, precisely because of its lack of slavery; more inventions and patents came from the North, thanks to a far larger free population; without planter feudalism, commercialism made much greater headway in the North; and there was a lot less hostility towards urbanization in the North[[38]](#endnote-38). Most of these issues are at least tangentially related to the great difference of slavery; though slave-based industrialization was not impossible and, with the crash of the price of the slave over the 1820s and beyond, did happen, it was harder, and it required a greater conceptual leap. The growth of industry in the North helped to reinforce its numerical majority over the South, as it allowed for larger cities; this was, without a doubt, a contributing factor to the rise of sectional politics in the decades that followed.

# 6. Wolf by the Ears

By 1800, the United States was growing more divided over slavery than it was before. Influenced by the transcendental principles of the Age of Reason, the North gradually abandoned slavery, and manumissions greatly eroded the institution. In the South, however, it was not abandoned at all. Instead, it grew more firm, as all the states of the Southeast regarded slavery as, if not a positive good, definitely a necessary evil. With the opening of the Southwest to settlement, they too attracted slave settlement, and it was likely only the Northwest Ordinance that kept it out of most of the Middle West. The end of the Atlantic slave trade in 1808 did not restrict the growth of slavery at all; instead, it resulted in the growth of an interstate slave trade, in which slaves were taken, through the disturbing sights of the coffle, from the exhausted soil of the Carolinas and Virginia to the growing slave markets of Kentucky, Tennessee, Yazoo, and Mississippi. The slavery issue lurked beneath the politics of the era – the Federalists tended to be more Northern than Southern, and Republicans the reverse. This was such that, if not for the three-fifths compromise, Adams would have won the 1800 election. This left many disgruntled – in particular, the Federalist Timothy Pickering was so angered he plotted New England’s secession from the republic – but nevertheless national unity held, not in the least because Jefferson did have substantial support from the North.

The chief way the slavery issue popped up in this era came in the form of a fear of slave revolt from below. The Haitian Revolution heavily cooled Southern Republicans’ enthusiasm for the French Revolution, as they damned the rise of Toussaint to power and France’s abolition of slavery as nothing more than the end results of revolutionary principles, of calls for liberty and equality. When in 1800, the government of Virginia only narrowly stopped a well-organized slave revolt headed for the capital, it demonstrated this fear was real. Afterwards, the Virginian government debated on a course of action against this, including deporting slaves back to Africa or establishing some sort of penal colony in the American interior for “rebellious” slaves; however, this debate ultimately fizzled out due to divisions within Virginia’s legislature. It made a return in 1803, with the Chatham Manor Revolt in which a group of slaves killed their overseer and successfully fled into the forest, and over the next few weeks Virginians were terrified that these fugitive slaves were coming to kill them. By the time they were dispatched and, after a show trial, executed, a great fear escalated all across the Southeast, in which any slave feared of conspiring for rebellion got killed by terrified slaveowners, and talk emerged once more on action against this. The Virginian government once more advocated deportation of “criminal” slaves, and President Jefferson too, being a slaveowner, wanted action.

After a failed attempt to negotiate with the proprietors of Sierra Leone, a British colony on Africa for freedmen, to send American slaves there, in 1804 Jefferson shepherded through Congress a bill constituting the American Colonization Society. Its aim - to establish a colony in West Africa where states could deport slaves, and other Colored “undesirables” – put the slavery issue on the map in a way it hadn’t been before. The following year, an American navy squadron successfully secured Cape Mesurado, right next to Sierra Leone, as a colony which it christened “Fredonia”, and the American Colonization Society attracted a high-profile membership, along with a large chest of donations. In the North, it became a way to be antislavery – but respectably so, without desiring Colored equality or the specter of the much-feared “race-mixing”. In the South, however, it attracted a large number of slaveowners; they supported variously because they opposed slavery but wanted to end it by deporting the slaves, because they wanted to remove “rebellious” slaves, or to deal with free Coloreds who might potentially make common cause with them.

It would be this last point that caused a backlash; the free Coloreds of the North damned this movement as a plot to get them to leave their homes for a distant ancestral homeland with which they had no connection, a concept no less absurd, they said, than deporting white Americans to Europe. That the ACS often claimed that the Colored could never hope to win equality, only intensified this reaction. In particular, it was this moment which intensified the idea that they were properly denominated Colored-Americans; the term “African-American”, which was also common in this era, they condemned as implying they were foreign to the country[[39]](#endnote-39). Additionally, this organization fed into a free Colored-led abolitionist movement, as the several conventions and other organizations they established to condemn the ACS ended up becoming permanent bodies, in firm opposition to slavery and in support of their fellow Coloreds in chains, and in contrast with the far more moderate, white-led abolitionist societies that had existed previously. This additionally intensified the controversy over the issue of fugitive slaves; free Coloreds organized Vigilant Committees in several northern cities, for the purpose of preventing their capture by southern slave-catchers. With southern public opinion having long concluded the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 wholly insufficient to deal with the issue, it intensified agitation for a new, stronger version.

Opposition to the ACS also came from the ultra wing of the Republican Party. This wing, led by John Randolph of Roanoke and Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina, had long been motivated in its ultra stance in the fear that an overly strong central government would end up controlled by the North, which would use it to end slavery and ruin their plantation-based economic prosperity. They also feared this sort of dissension among the white population of the nation would inspire slave revolts. This resulted in increasingly determined ultra opposition to Thomas Jefferson, whose criticism of slavery they saw in fear, however much he did nothing to act on it, and when the Jefferson administration successfully shepherded a bill providing the ACT with federal funding, this opposition only became more frantic. With the ascent of Aaron Burr, a northern president known to be opposed to slavery, this sort of ultra opposition only escalated; with the 1812 election and the election between Burr and Monroe coming into the House, that Monroe was the candidate of the ultras could not be doubted, and Jefferson’s backing of Monroe at this point represented that he had moved in the same direction as them. The extent to which Jefferson’s increasingly vigorous defence of slavery after 1813 owes to the reconstituted Republicans’ more ultra stance remains in dispute, but most historians agree it played a role of some sort[[40]](#endnote-40).

Additionally, with the division of politics between the Democrats and Republicans, the sectional divide returned with a vengeance. The Democrats were, at their core, an alliance between the North and West, on a platform of internal improvements, western settlement, and also increasingly an attachment to the dignity of the free laborer. In contrast, the Republicans were led by the planters of Virginia, who made common cause with the planters in the rest of the South in what was already at the time dubbed the “Planter Ascendancy”[[41]](#endnote-41), and aligned with similar interests in the West and North, which advocated a weak federal government, protection of slavery, and opposition to “foreign agitators”. That neither side believed the federal government could interfere with the states meant the issue rose most particularly when it came to the settlement of the territories, where the issue lay in much doubt.

Here, the Northwest Ordinance made slavery illegal; despite this, many believed that its introduction would be an economic boon, and they juxtaposed the region with Kentucky and Tennessee where they claimed it helped fuel economic growth and mass settlement. As the Middle West became increasingly settled, as the canals from the east opened up more of the region to settlement, and as states zealously competed to attract migrants, it was only a matter of time before this issue, this great sectional difference, entered the domain of politics – and it was all over the admission of Illinois.

# 7. The Age of Party

However narrowly the 1816 election was, it did end with Burr’s attempt to win a third term defeated, and it saw the ascent of a man who was much more in keeping with traditional republican values. Born in 1750 to a Virginian planter family, Madison became involved in the American Revolution, and upon its end, in 1786 he became a delegate sent to the Continental Congress. Here, he witnessed the failure of the Articles of Confederation, and he became the leader of the effort to replace them with a more centralized constitution. As a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, he put an end to attempts to simply amend the Confederation, and instead he organized its replacement. His Virginia Plan proved to be the basis of the new Constitution of the United States of America, and along with Alexander Hamilton he co-wrote the Federalist Papers which successfully corralled support for its ratification. Breaking with Hamilton’s economic agenda, Madison affiliated with the Republican opposition and became close friends with Thomas Jefferson. With the Jay Treaty, this breach with Hamilton became permanent, and Madison became Jefferson’s second in command. With the Adams presidency and the rise of the First Quasi War, Madison wrote the Virginia Resolutions of 1798-9, which declared that the Alien and Sedition Acts were unconstitutional and called for the states to work together to interpose against them. More moderate than Jefferson’s calls for their nullification, this nevertheless failed as most states declared the federal judiciary to be the proper place to decide the constitutionality of federal laws. With the 1800 election, though Jefferson was forced by his party to make Aaron Burr his Secretary of State, he nevertheless established a Domestic Department and to head this post he appointed James Madison.

As Secretary of Domestic Affairs, Madison would be involved in many disputes over jurisdiction, but Jefferson successfully ensured these disputes went his way. The Domestic Department not only included the domestic sphere formerly under the control of the Department of State, but it also included Indian affairs, formerly under the Department of War, and a host of other duties which were previously divided randomly between government departments[[42]](#endnote-42). Additionally, being increasingly suspicious towards his Secretary of State, Jefferson increasingly turned to Madison as the second-in-command within his cabinet. With the 1804 election and Burr acceding to the vice presidency, Jefferson lifted Madison to the title of Secretary of State, making him second command in both function and form, and here he was a vigorous supporter of Jefferson’s agenda and worked much more smoothly.

Though some speculated upon Burr’s ascent to the presidency that Madison would continue to serve within the cabinet as Jefferson’s representative, such talk went nowhere; instead, Madison became a Congressman as a leader of the Republican Party. Often voting against Burr’s spending bills and regarding many of them as not just bad policy, but also unconstitutional, the two increasingly went to loggerheads; the 1812 election saw Madison become the foremost congressional leader in the effort to depose Burr and replace him with his vice president. Afterwards, Madison led the congressional opposition to the Burr agenda; despite his claim as Framer of the Constitution to understand it better than most, he ended up defeated, though this did give him support from the party at large. In particular, the Richmond Junto, a powerful coterie of Virginian planters that emerged around and in support of Thomas Jefferson and became one of the most important organs of the post-1813 Republican Party, gave its blessings to Madison, and this backing to the hilt was likely the chief reason he became the flag-bearer for republicanism in the years that followed.

The inevitable nominee in 1816, Madison hewed true to classical republicanism and emphatically did not campaign in the election; somewhat disturbed by the rapid growth of populistic campaigning to match Burr’s efforts, he nevertheless accepted it. Winning a narrow victory and blocking Burr’s attempts at an unprecedented third term, in his inauguration Madison talked as much about reconciliation as Jefferson did in 1800, but nevertheless it was clear that change was in the air. One place it didn’t, however, was when it came to federal patronage; Burr having filled government jobs with his supporters, Madison removed them and replaced them with Republican men. This was doubly supported because of the irrational fear that some Northerners were using the telegraph lines, controlled by the government, to incite a slave revolt; appointing securely Southern men was an important part of ensuring safety within it. Within the cabinet, southern states’ rights men became dominant, between his Secretary of State, James Monroe, and his Secretary of the Treasury, Langdon Cheves; neither of them had any ambitious projects planned, to reshape the nation. That both of them were firm Southerners, helped give credence to the claim among many northern Democrats that the conspiracy of the “Planters’ Ascendancy” was now in control of the nation, and though at this point this was only talk this led to the disputes over slavery of the future. Despite this move into retrenchment, Madison did govern over a program of naval expansion, as well as considerable expansion of telegraph networks and much of this was the result of southern fears that abolitionist France, particularly its (nominal) colony of Saint-Domingue, would launch some sort of landing and free its slaves.

Additionally, spending now slowed, although this was in part because of the Republican majority that rode Madison’s coattails was not so eager to support them. This did not mean the end of internal improvements, for the states now put up the money for projects that seemed to assure them prosperity; additionally, Madison was less opposed to the federal government building roads and canals as he was to it controlling them, so money did still flow from the federal government to the states. But to diminish state control, in 1817, the federal government sold off its shares in canal and road corporations[[43]](#endnote-43). Most of them ended up on the Washington Board of Brokers, where they swiftly changed hands, and this fuelled a boom in speculation and stock trading, which only added to the land speculation boom of the era[[44]](#endnote-44). Additionally, Madison cut down on the tariff; the South benefited the most from this now that its cotton was more easily available for export, and though British and French goods coming for import did damage the North’s economy somewhat, that it wasn’t based around industry as much as it later would be, meant the backlash from this was limited. Indeed, the global economy in this era was booming, and trade between the US and Europe (mostly Britain, but increasingly with France) was doing well.

However, this prosperity was based on an entirely unsustainable bubble. A bubble in land speculation had emerged since the Year Without A Summer and the ensuing escalation of migration westwards, now easier than ever with the Erie Canal, and this in turn fuelled new markets to sell goods to, in addition to new banks that gave easy credit and whose banknotes allowed for a means of exchange in a West where specie was nonexistent; this credit was based on almost nothing – and so too were the banknotes in an era where they were viewed less as a medium of exchange in their own right, and more a sort of transferrable loan. On top of this, the stocks, securities, and bonds that the Madison administration had sold off, resulted in extremely high amounts of speculation, among investors who cared less about seeing those projects to completion and more to sell off their securities at a high value, and this all became linked with western land speculation, provoked by the land rushes of New Englander settlers coming after their economic ruin of the Year Without a Summer. All this growth was based on the most unstable of all economic foundations, and that the nation lacked a central bank[[45]](#endnote-45) meant it had no way of controlling the speculation or otherwise popping the bubble before it truly expanded.

As such, come 1819, the foundations of economic prosperity were quite unstable indeed. It all unravelled come the failure of a series of far western banks, whose business was based on land rushes that had since evaporated; this in turn sparked runs on other western banks which soon shut their doors, and these failures cascaded eastwards. Westerners found their land suddenly the property of whoever bought them in bank liquidation sales. This pattern expanded eastwards, and it essentially became the state of the entire nation. Markets essentially ceased to exist, banknotes became worthless, and commerce ground to a halt. Suddenly, factories shuttered their doors, and their entire workforces simply migrated to the slums. The crisis was vast, and it was simply inescapable. In the South, this state of affairs achieved a bizarre and horrifying form: the expansion of banking in the region came in the form of plantation banks, which took slaves as collateral and had no assets aside from those slaves. The banks used this workforce of slaves to make a profit by making them work on plantations. The destruction of banks across the South meant the slaves, or else the plantations with them included, were suddenly sold off as part of bank liquidations. This suddenly reduced the price of the slave[[46]](#endnote-46); given that a quite large portion of Southern wealth was simply the price of the slave, this meant conditions verged on financial collapse. Additionally, this enabled the expansion of the slave labor economy, as the reduced price made it more viable than before; the slave economy expanded into western Virginia, as well as the Southwest.

Yet, this economic collapse ended up being completely overshadowed in the coming election by the seemingly routine admission of Illinois into the union. The state having ended up settled by people from the Upper South, it ended up being proslavery, and its desire to attract settlers coming from the Upper South additionally motivated this – such that when it was time to submit its constitution for admission, it included articles legalizing slavery. This was despite the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 having barred slavery from the Middle West, although even this had been moderated by most politicians interpreting it as merely prohibiting the introduction of new slavery, without touching the existing slavery in the region.

For this reason, when in 1819 Illinois submitted its constitution to Congress as a preliminary to it issuing an act enabling its statehood, a New York Democrat, James Tallmadge Jr., made a motion to amend it requiring it to abolish slavery. Specifically, it mandated that no further slaves would be introduced, and that it would have to free all children of current slaves over the age of 25. By doing this, Tallmadge hoped to force the South to put the money where its mouth was and to do something to support the end of the institution that it had long claimed to despise. It was additionally intended to diminish the South’s influence in government; the three-fifths compromise having allowed Madison’s victory in 1816 over Burr, only served to escalate such talk. In the ensuing frantic debate, southern congressmen threatened to incite a civil war; this amendment ended up passing the House of Representative by 97-70; northern congressmen voted for it by 96-7, and southern congressmen against by 69-1. Submitted to the Senate, where the slave and free states had near-parity, it ended up with a tie. This meant the decision devolved on the vice president DeWitt Clinton, who formally being the President of the Senate and empowered by the Constitution to break ties, voted for the Amendment. This then led to the bill going to President Madison, who vetoed it, and in an adjoining message, he declared the idea of providing restrictions to states entering Congress to be unconstitutional. Before it could debate this bill further, coming at the end of its session, Congress adjourned. Then the issue exited the halls of Congress – and all hell broke loose.

Across the North, mass meetings organized to put pressure on congressmen for admitting Illinois with restrictions on slavery, despite the clear impossibility of overcoming Madison’s veto. These meetings not only included Northern Democrats, but also Northern Republicans who were otherwise aligned with Thomas Jefferson. It also included the Federalist remnant party. With near-unanimity, northern state legislatures called upon their congressional delegations to unendingly support restriction of slavery. Like few other things, the issue of slavery unified the North, in firm opposition to its expansion westwards. Similarly, the South also became unified in support of Illinois’ admission with no restrictions – that is, with slavery intact. Indeed, when President Madison tried to pass through some sort of compromise allowing for partial slave restriction, several southern states, Virginia among them, threatened to dump him and support in the coming election someone more secure on the slavery issue.

Where this was shakier was in the West, where, despite a general opposition to slavery, southern commercial links and many settlers’ southern origins, many called for some sort of compromise to keep the sectional peace. There was a spectrum of difference on this – Ohio being well-settled by northerners by this point, firmly supported restriction, while Yazoo being well-settled by southerners and having an economy based on slavery, firmly supported the expansion of slavery – but in general the West was very much willing to compromise. There was additional pro-compromise sentiment within the Lower North and the Upper South; however, this competed with considerable anti-compromise sentiment. And in Illinois itself, public opinion swiftly radicalized; figures like Ninian Edwards declared that not only would the territory fight against any condition for its admission, but also that, to protect its rights, it may even declare its independence from the United States. 1819 additionally saw Aaron Burr make his political comeback on a platform of slavery restriction, winning election as the Governor of New York over the incumbent Nathan Sanford, a cipher for Burr’s despised rival DeWitt Clinton. It demonstrated his willingness for the Democrats to become the party of slavery restriction.

By the time Congress met once again, the battle lines were drawn in the sand. President Madison, very intent on a compromise, secured the support of Western Democratic congressman Henry Clay to putting this issue to rest – but he failed. Attempts to divide away the issues of manumitting existing slaves from introducing new slaves to Illinois ended up falling flat on their face; so did efforts to combine allowing Illinois to be admitted as a slave state with a more stringent slavery ban in the rest of the territories. When Illinois’ territorial delegate to Congress, John Scott, threatened that if Illinois was admitted with additional conditions it would secede from the Union, most Northerners did not become willing to compromise but instead they decided to call his bluff. Despite this, such talk increased among southern congressmen, many of whom declared that, if Congress voted for restriction, they’d leave the union, and that if this impasse continued, it might be best for North and South to negotiate terms of disunion.

This talk not only came from ultra Republicans like John Randolph of Roanoke, but from more moderate voices as well, whose fears of being dominated by a northern majority resembled the emerging reality[[47]](#endnote-47). This increasingly dangerous escalation of rhetoric brought some Northern Republicans towards mooting some sort of compromise, but it wasn’t enough to get a compromise through the intransigent House. All other talk came to an end; instead, the House simply talked. It talked the issue of slavery expansion to death – death that, for the union, might come to be most literal. It became increasingly clear that, coming into the election year of 1820, this issue would be what it would be fought over.

# 8. A Wilderness So Immense

In 1800, half of the modern-day United States was under Spanish rule, in the form of the provinces of Luisiana and the Floridas. It may be worth, therefore, to look at Spanish administration of these vast territories. Luisiana fell under Spanish rule in 1763, ceded by the French in compensation for Spanish support in the Seven Years War. In contrast, the Floridas had been Spanish territory since 1513, aside from a brief British interlude from 1763 to 1783. Despite this, Spanish rule over these provinces was weak, and they served less as colonies in their own right and more as a buffer against American encroachment southwards. Luisiana was more French than it was Spanish, while the Floridas were more Seminole and Creek than it was Spanish; over both, Spanish control was more nominal than real, and close to nonexistent outside of several forts and settlements[[48]](#endnote-48).

Plans to establish Spanish territory better in these territories entirely fell through thanks to the death of the capable, vigorous ruler of Spain, Charles III, in 1788; his successor, Charles IV, was very much not that, and instead he contented himself with living as a wealthy do-nothing aristocrat. Administration of Spain ended up dominated by his wife’s lover, Manuel de Godoy, and he ended up a corrupt, incapable man. The outbreak of the French Revolution turned Spain’s close ally into its enemy, and the execution of the king’s royal cousins brought Spain to war with the French Republic in 1793. The ensuing War of the Pyrenees was extremely brutal, and Spain was faced with oblivion. In an act that may have saved Spain from destruction, in 1795 Godoy signed a peace with France; the following year, Spain joined the War of the French Revolution, on the side of France, which brought the people who had killed the heads of the House of Bourbon with the remainder of the House of Bourbon. The ensuing war saw British encroachment on Spain’s colonial empire, most famously over Platina, but it notably did not include a reconquest of Florida or claims over Luisiana; when peace came in 1804, the British did not touch either territory[[49]](#endnote-49).

By this time, however, there was also growing American encroachment on the border. Settlement of Kentucky, Tennessee, Yazoo, and Mississippi increased at rate far greater than Luisiana’s and the Floridas’ population growth. Increasingly, the Spanish feared these settlers having designs on their territories, and in all truth, many of them did. By the Treaty of San Lorenzo (1795), Americans had a right to deposit their goods at New Orleans for reshipment, and this allowed the Mississippi, whose mouth was entirely under Spanish control, to become an important artery of the American commercial system. Coming with this was a smattering of American settlers, most famously Daniel Boone of Kentucky, and Spain tried, with middling success, to Catholicize them and make them loyal to the Spanish. That the existing settlers of these colonies, between the large slave and free Colored populations, the Minorcans who had arrived to the Floridas in British times, or the famous Creoles around New Orleans, could hardly be said to be unified under Spanish authority, only worsened the stability of Spanish rule, and it only ensured that this became Spain’s border country. Additionally came the Lewis expedition of 1803, which sought to lay a claim of discovery over the Pacific by crossing Spanish Luisiana, albeit over St. Louis, through modern-day Minasota. Fearing this encroachment, the Spanish sent several counter-expeditions to capture them, although from there Spanish records stop; they may very well have been guilty for the disappearance of the Lewis expedition, or it may have been that they got on the bad side of an Indigenous tribe, but either way it demonstrated that the United States did not respect Spanish control of Luisiana and Florida, and that it simply awaited the day they’d fall from Spanish rule like fruits from a tree.

This threat to Spanish rule served as the impetus of a program of fort construction up the Mississippi border. It additionally constructed forts along the Missouri River, which on its north end was facing encroachment by a British colonial project, the Red River Colony[[50]](#endnote-50). More impactful would be a plan to settle the territory. Aside from a small number of Canarians settled in the 1770s, the Spanish hadn’t sent many settlers into the region; French settlers in the south of Luisiana and around St. Louis continued to dominate the settler population of Luisiana. However, beginning in 1807, the Spanish organized waves of settlements, posting immigration agents in southern Germany, southern Italy, and Spain itself; entirely Catholic, they hoped they would reinforce Spanish rule and ultimately integrate into Spanish Caribbean culture. In total, this consisted of an estimated 30,000 people, and they were sent either to southern Luisiana or to the area around St. Louis, which meant they reinforced existing settlements rather than creating new ones. Despite this, they helped create a market for goods, which resulted in fur trappers organizing into the interior. This also helped to establish trading links between Santa Fe in the Internal Provinces and St. Louis, including the paving of the so-called Santa Fe Trail; though Spanish rule in the Internal Provinces could hardly be said to be firm, dependent on paying tribute to the fearsome horse-riding Comanche, and with a settler population so isolated they may as well have been on the moon; these new trade routes allowed for a commercial boom.

This came hand-in-hand with a more comprehensive program of economic growth. Luisiana and the Floridas had long been economically tied with the Caribbean, and this meant their settler economies were deeply tied with the institution of slavery. In particular, New Orleans represented something of a late survival of the French West Indies prior to slavery, complete with a large class of free people of color who owned slaves themselves, and an economy heavily based around sugar plantations. In the era between 1800 and 1823, the Spanish began a program of expanding slavery-based plantations across Luisiana, up the Mississippi, into the Arcansa River, and into the region of modern-day Missouri. This additionally saw an expansion of the slave trade; already quite a prominent part of the Spanish colonial empire, particularly in Cuba, slave ships now made their way up the Mississippi to supply plantations with new hands. A legacy remains in that the Colored people across the Mississippi were able to keep more of their West African cultural practices. Additionally, though initially these new plantations dealt with sugar, it did not take long for them to diversify. The cotton economy of Mexico fed into industrialization in Spain proper, particularly in Catalonia, as they fed its textile looms; given the success of cotton in the United States, Spanish authorities quickly sought to replicate it, and bringing cotton northwards from Mexico, along the Arcansa and Missouri Rivers, they did. Most of these plantations were owned by a few large landowners, many of them absentee and preferring to live either in New Orleans or in Cuba; bizarrely, it ended up that the overseers of these plantations were Americans who crossed the Mississippi.

This created something of a rivalry between them and the European settlers; in particular, it was at this time that modern-day Missouri saw both large-scale European settlement creating a smallholder class, and the rise of several absentee plantations so profitable that it made slaves too expensive for the smallholder. Together, this created a quite stark division between free labor and slavery, and this shaped the values of the burgeoning society west of the Mississippi – and the duel between competing economic systems which forever shaped American society. Economic growth in the Floridas was somewhat more tepid, although the flight of the Red Stick faction of the Creek southwards after their defeat by both American and official Creek forces, strengthened Spanish control over and ties with Indigenous tribes. To the extent there was economic expansion, it came in the form of cattle ranching, to feed the large booming population of Cuba, and most of this economic activity emerged either along the coasts or in the north of West Florida. Attempts to spread cattle into the interior largely failed because of the Seminole presence in most of the peninsula, and Spain’s bad relations with them.

Additionally, the expansion of slave trading over much of southern Luisiana led to slave-trading across the border with the US, a way to get around its ban on slave trading. Burr and Madison being both firmly opposed to the Atlantic slave trade, they sent patrols along the Mississippi to prevent this; however, they did not have enough ships to shut it down, as all erstwhile slave traders had to do was wait for them to pass, and then they could simply make their way across. This helped slavery to expand on not only the Spanish, but also the American side. The Mississippi was not yet the great slave river of the Americas, but it was on its way there. Indeed, it was thanks to this that the west of Kentucky and Tennessee became the most strongly pro-slavery area of those states, as from the very outset of settlement slavery was at the very heart of the economy and the feudal plantation the very basis of settlement. This also dramatically strengthened the position of slavery within Illinois; undoubtedly, this had a massive impact on the United States come the Liberty and Union War.

With the death of Charles IV in 1822, his son became King Ferdinand VII. Despising his parents and the corrupt court around them, he got to work purging their appointees. Manuel de Godoy found himself forced to flee into France, and Spanish administration became more vigorous – hardly a transformation towards constitutional reform, but rather a sort of modernized autocracy. To Luisiana, his new administrators now sought to make their mark, and they did this through new settlement plans. As famine broke out in Europe over the 1820s, the Spanish saw this as an opportunity to strengthen their buffer against the United States, and they then sent immigration agents to southern Germany, southern Italy, and Ireland to attract immigrants. Most of these were sent to Luisiana, about evenly divided between Upper and Lower Luisiana and quite impactful for the former, while a sizeable minority of them were sent to Texas, which represented the beginning of efforts to use that as a buffer. This in turn increased commerce with the United States over the Mississippi; this, as well as that many of these new migrants felt little Spanish identity, additionally made Luisiana a tempting target to the United States. Across the Mississippi, freebooter schemes emerged, commercial interests eagerly anticipated the swallowing of the mouth, and history would be made

Figure : Population of Luisiana and the Floridas 1800-1825

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Luisiana** | **The Floridas** |
| 1800 | 50,000 | 5,000 |
| 1805 | 70,000 | 6,000 |
| 1810 | 85,000 | 10,000 |
| 1815 | 100,000 | 20,000 |
| 1820 | 115,000 | 22,000 |
| 1825 | 150,000 | 30,000 |

Thus, over the 1820s, Luisiana was still very much a frontier colony, with two settlement zones – one, in Lower Luisiana around New Orleans, another, in Upper Luisiana around St. Louis, and a sort of diffuse zone around the Arcansa River that connected the two – and not a whole lot beyond that. Spanish attempts to establish settlement there were largely failures, as its settler population was well under 200,000, which was such that it continued to be drastically overshadowed by American settlement just across the Mississippi. Indeed, at this point, it was already clear that Luisiana was not in the economic orbit of the Spanish Caribbean, nor of the Internal Provinces, but rather of the United States; no matter what the Spanish could decree, no matter how much trade they could encourage, the laws of nature made it so. With the settler boom in America only escalating, it was clear those American settlers would cross the border, no matter what Spanish authorities would say – and it was also clear that there was little Spain could do about it[[51]](#endnote-51).

# 9. Fire-Bell in the Night

No single individual in the whole United States saw the Illinois Crisis with quite as much horror as Thomas Jefferson. From his plantation at Monticello, he previously watched the Burr administration with a growing horror; the 1816 election, and the defeat of his attempt to win a third term, he celebrated as a “Revolution of 1816” that was a return to the values of 1800[[52]](#endnote-52). The Illinois crisis, however, saw his horror and trepidation make a vivid return. Suddenly, the nation not only had to fear the charismatic demagoguery of Aaron Burr, who he knew would march to power; the entire compromise between slavery and freedom the entire country was built upon, the entire country which he spent his life making, threatened to evaporate in a puff of smoke. In his personal correspondence, Jefferson wrote, “this momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union”. But Jefferson was no impartial critic of the situation; on the issue of Illinois, his opinion made a complete turn from his writing of the Northwest Ordinance. He wanted it admitted, slavery and all – and he believed Congress had no ability to restrict slavery, but that it should instead be allowed to plant itself all over the territories. To justify this abrupt turn from the principles of the Declaration of Independence that, after all, he wrote, he claimed that, far from strengthening slavery by giving it new markets, the expansion of slavery weakened it. This was the so-called “diffusionist” argument: by spreading slavery over a larger surface, slave densities would decrease and with it so would economic activities depending on it. Thus, without abolition upending the economy, slavery could be more easily abolished[[53]](#endnote-53). This was, without a doubt, a self-serving argument, but it was an argument that allowed him to justify the proslavery politics he now came to hold, without technically abandoning his principles. Coming into the 1820 election, he reflected a large portion of the Planter Ascendancy – of which he was now its leader.

There was little doubt as to whom the Democrats would nominate. Holding a political convention in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, with a certain paucity of members from the Southwest, with unanimity the delegates nominated Aaron Burr to office, and departing from the Governor’s Mansion in Albany, Burr accepted on the convention floor. For its vice president, however, it reflected calls for national unity. Selecting William Henry Harrison, the popular former governor of Indiana, he was selected for several reasons: he was born in Virginia to an old planter family, he was popular across the West, and he had written several letters calling for national reconciliation and a compromise. Somewhat a voice out of sync with the free-soil Democratic Party, he was to represent the Democrats did not want to break the union, but instead to maintain it on principles of freedom. Like Burr, however, Harrison was consistently accused of being overly ambitious, and indeed Harrison had been one of the most aggressive of office seekers during the Burr years. This ticket represented a Democratic Party that certainly did not wish to break the union, but it did want a compromise on the North’s terms. Additionally, the Federalist remnant in the North attempted to take full advantage of this and, more unflinchingly advocating free soil politics, it nominated that great creature of the political wilderness, Alexander Hamilton, who hoped he could ride the issue all the way to the presidency.

The South, on the other hand, faced some real issues imposing unity. Madison’s willingness to countenance compromise led much of the Planter Ascendancy concluding him to be unsafe on the issue of slavery. Seeking to consolidate both Southerners and pro-compromise Northerners behind him, Madison’s allies organized a political convention in Baltimore, Maryland, which contained delegates from across the entire nation. After renominating Madison for a second term to the presidency, it nominated Jesse B. Thomas to the vice presidency. Needing to depose Vice President Clinton over his support of free-soil politics, Thomas was a congressman from Indiana and one of the handful of Northerners who opposed the Tallmadge Amendment; he was also one of the chief organizers of one of the failed compromises. It was a gesture to compromise, and Madison hoped it would net him support from both North and South to end the crisis. In addition to this, however, the legislatures of Virginia and South Carolina, dominated by people considering Madison unsound on slavery, nominated a diehard critic of his, Langdon Cheves.

The ensuing election was a chaotic mess. Every political campaign of the election engaged in quite aggressive electioneering, in a desperate attempt to end the crisis. Most famously, resigning his post as governor to do so, Aaron Burr held a tour across the North and West to promote his campaign, beginning in Portland, Massachusetts (now Maine) and ending in Lexington, Kentucky. In the east, Burr and the Democratic Party ran on a campaign stressing above all else the issue of slavery restriction, but in the west its campaign was somewhat more elaborate. Here, it stressed Burr’s support for internal improvements, as well as the deplorable state of the economy; by doing this, he hoped to win the votes of both moderates terrified at the collapse of the nation, as well as from the slave states of the Southwest. And all across the union, the Burr campaign stressed his belief in national unity, and that he firmly opposed the partition and division of the nation. The other campaign that could claim to be national in scope, the Republicans and the Madison campaign stressed the danger to national unity posed by the Democrats, and it called for a definitive resolution of the slavery issue. By doing this, it hoped to command the support of the South, the West, and a considerable minority of Northeasterners who would be sufficiently horrified at the possibility of disunion that they’d vote for them. Then, it hoped to use this to build a coalition to bring the sectional crisis to an end with a compromise. The Hamilton and Cheves campaigns, which in contrast could not hope to command anything close to national support, instead engaged in sectionalism: the Hamilton campaign talking a great deal about domination of politics by the Planter Ascendancy (while ignoring that Hamilton had not exactly been detached from the planter class), while the Cheves campaign talked a great deal about the danger poised by slavery restriction, and how it would allow for a permanent majority of the free states against the planters of the South.

The ensuing election demonstrated the sheer divisions within the nation well; Aaron Burr very nearly won, but he did not[[54]](#endnote-54).

Figure : The 1820 election, by state

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **Electoral votes** | **Burr** | **Madison** | **Cheves** | **Hamilton** |
| Massachusetts | 22 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| New Hampshire | 8 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Vermont | 8 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Rhode Island | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Connecticut | 10 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| New York | 33 | 27 | 4 | 0 | 2 |
| Pennsylvania | 26 | 22 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| New Jersey | 8 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Delaware | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Maryland | 11 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Ohio | 8 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Indiana | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Virginia | 25 | 0 | 10 | 15 | 0 |
| Kentucky | 12 | 8 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Tennessee | 7 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| North Carolina | 15 | 0 | 9 | 6 | 0 |
| South Carolina | 11 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 0 |
| Georgia | 8 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 0 |
| Yazoo | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **226** | **110** | **60** | **36** | **18** |

That this election ended with a hung electoral college demonstrated the extent to which the nation was divided. Had Burr won a mere four more votes, he would have won the presidency, and it is very possible that the result would have been a Liberty and Union War half a century ahead of schedule. It was yet another election which would have gone the other way without the three-fifths compromise. But ultimately, the divides within the North were too great for a consolidated Northern ticket to prevail in the election; indeed, some of this may be laid at the grounds of the division of states into presidential districts, which allowed for divides within the states to show their presence at the presidential level. In second place, with considerably fewer votes, was James Madison, whose votes came from a mix of the Lower North and the Border South; below that was two sectional candidates. With no candidate winning a majority, this meant that the election would instead go to Congress, in a contingent election, and the only two candidates eligible for election were Burr and Madison.

The ensuing contingent election saw many shades of 1812, but sectionalism was far greater than it was previously. With the reforms to the electoral system, however, it was a different process. The election would be held under a joint session of Congress, and each congressman had one vote. Of the two top candidates, Burr and Madison, the candidate winning a majority of votes cast would be president. Though given the majority votes for Illinois’ admission with restriction in both Senate and House, one would be forgiven for assuming this to be an easy vote for Burr, as with 1812 Burr made his fair share of enemies who hated him on a personal level, most notably Alexander Hamilton. Writing several open letters calling Burr a Catiline, a demagogue, and a vote-beggar, he called for Northerners to instead vote for Madison, or if they couldn’t countenance that, abstain. The result was that the 1821 contingent election saw Madison win a majority of votes, by 104-96. It was a clear result. Burr’s second attempt to win a third term was defeated, and Madison would be president for the next four years. However, there was a bone thrown to the North and the Democrats, as William Henry Harrison won the vice presidential contingent election. Despite this, with sectional tensions as high as they were, several congressmen, most notoriously Timothy Pickering, called for the North’s secession from the nation; but such sentiment was little more than loose talk. Burr, quite angered at Hamilton’s conduct at this point, went so far as to challenge him to a duel; Hamilton accepted. The ensuing duel ended up with neither party harmed in the slightest, and honor was satisfied. But as Burr went back to the governor’s mansion in New York, he continued to seethe.

Madison now having been granted a second term as president, he now found it easier than ever to resolve the Illinois Crisis. With Congress in its lame-duck session, he used the presidency’s powers of patronage to assure outgoing congressmen of jobs, and with it he successfully corralled a majority of Congress towards a grand compromise bill. This bill, the Illinois Compromise, was anything but; it permitted Illinois to join the union with no restrictions on slavery, and in the remainder of the Northwest Territory it established that further slaves could not be introduced, and existing slaves would be freed. Additionally, it established that Illinois was to be a landlocked state, despite Illinoians’ desire to get a small patch of Lake Michigan’s coastline; the portage stop of Chicago would instead be a part of whatever states would be created from the Northwest Territory. Within both North and South this was met with a furor, the North regarding it as a submission to the forces of the Planter Ascendancy, and the South concerned that Congress’ power now touched the institution of slavery. But a majority of voters in both sections reluctantly abided by the Illinois Compromise, and in future decades it would be upheld as a final settlement on the issue, now put under threat under the politicking of the era.

The territory of Illinois, under the leadership of Ninian Edwards, had already begun the task of writing a constitution for itself, and with it complete it formally constituted a delegation to send to Congress, in order to present slavery as a fait accompli to Congress whatever it may decide. This, too, was met with controversy when its constitution barred the settlement of free Coloreds from the state, which the North regarded as contravening the privileges and immunities clause of the constitution, and Illinois’ congressional delegation fell in to a sort of constitutional limbo where Congress debated accepting it; it did, in the end, after Henry Clay successfully passed some vague language which stated it would have to respect the rights of citizens of the several states. This was the so-called “Second Illinois Compromise”, and though it otherwise passed without much incident, it presaged controversies over Colored citizenship – and that the South did not believe this a concept.

# 10. The Twilight of the Age

With the closure of the Illinois Compromise, the issue of slavery fell into a slumber at the national level. Discussion of the issue continued, however, out of doors, and in the following years many talked about a national plan to finally free the US of the curse of slavery without igniting a civil war, or else creating a population of Coloreds which, most assumed, would be treated as second-class citizens. Within Congress, however, the South cohered as a single bloc against this; even Border Southerners opposed further congressional interference on the subject of slavery, out of the fear of this inciting a slave revolt.

Instead, Congress looked to the issue of the economy, which had in fact continued to be in freefall. Banks continued to collapse, and the deflation this caused, as banknotes suddenly ceased to contain value, continued to wreak havoc on the economy. Large swathes of the west were, by sheer necessity, forced to resort to either using playing cards as currency or instead doing barter – although in any case, the flight of bankrupt merchants eastwards made it much harder to find people to trade with. With this economic chaos having already been laid at the feet of free trade with the British, Congress easily passed a tariff, and despite some calling it unconstitutional – and some planters calling it a disguised attack on slavery – Madison signed it into law. The Tariff of 1821, most historians agree, was quite important when it came to protecting infant industry from the more mature and cheaper products coming from British hands. Additionally, with the financial chaos of the Panic years having convinced many that stable banking was necessary for the nation, Congress passed a bill establishing a Second Bank of the United States, along the same lines that Burr attempted to pass through Congress. However, Madison vetoed it, regarding a national bank as unconstitutional, and the numbers were not there to override his veto, and when Madison, always a “New School Republican” came back with a list of conditions he believed a national bank had to meet to be constitutional, a strange coalition of Democrats and ultra Republicans made sure it didn’t even get out of committee. Thus, an unstable economy continued to wreak havoc on the nation until his presidency came to an end – and the only reason it did not collapse further was because the only banks still standing were extraordinarily timid when it came to credit, and so they weren’t doing anything to fix the economy.

1821 saw, with the British intercepting Roussin’s fleet, a return to war in Europe. At home, this meant the collapse of British credit in America; given the collapse of the American financial system, British banks had been the only reliable source of credit in the nation, and its collapse only worsened the state of the economy further. Despite it, this was overshadowed by one consequence of this war. The collapse of Toussaint’s order in Saint-Domingue, and the flight of what little remained of its white population after Dessalines declared the independence of the Haitian Republic, inspired rabid panic in the South, as planters feared their slaves overthrowing them. This also inspired Southern closeness with the British; British banks being important sources of credit for the South had already inspired such closeness, but this only got further aggravated by its fighting the much-feared specter of French abolitionism. Thus, even as the British increasingly engaged in increasingly aggressive impressment of American sailors, up to and including firing upon several American vessels, inspiring several war scares in the act, the US did not, for a second, contemplate war with the British. Cries of opposition from the US came from the Democratic Party and their quite powerful Irish wing – not from the government itself. And though even the Republicans feared that, with the British at war with Spain, it would take New Orleans, Madison preferred to avoid this by negotiation rather than brinkmanship, and this stance was one the Republicans firmly supported.

Figure : The US Navy, 1817-1825

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Officers** | **Ship force** |
| 1817 | 204 | 14 |
| 1818 | 245 | 16 |
| 1819 | 287 | 17 |
| 1820 | 321 | 18 |
| 1821 | 353 | 18 |
| 1822 | 458 | 21 |
| 1823 | 521 | 24 |
| 1824 | 607 | 29 |
| 1825 | 688 | 33 |

But nevertheless, fears of France inciting slave revolts in the Caribbean or even in the United States itself did lead to a substantial naval buildup in this era. Many Northern congressmen found themselves frankly bewildered to see ultra Republicans deny the power of Congress to build or even support internal improvements, but yet wholeheartedly call for a navy rivalling the British in sheer scope; this, those ultras justified on the basis of the navy being an external expenditure. This did, at last, help to improve the economy – however, it was a recovery that was very lopsided. Shipyards along the Eastern Seaboard saw a dramatic increase in business, but frontier settlement continued to be nonexistent. To the extent that there was settlement along the west, it was through wholesale speculation, where investors successfully lay claim to land on the bank liquidation table and this entirely crowded out development by individual settlers. When planned towns or settlements ended up failing, this resulted in settlement collapsing and the land going back to some sort of investor or to a faraway bank, for this process to begin again. Land relief acts only defrayed this a little. This was all such that the West was less a singular range of settlement bound by frontier, and more a patchwork of different frontiers, with new wilderness growing between them. Not only did a large, powerful portion of the Republican Party oppose moves to improve the western economy, but Madison regarded most plans, not in the least a national bank, unconstitutional.

Thus, as it was, coming into the 1824 election, it seemed the time was coming for a Republican defeat. Though Burr had, as part of his (successful) gubernatorial run of the same year, pledged he would not run for the presidency again, he had moderated his antislavery politics and declared the Illinois Compromise a final resolution of the issue of slavery, and when it came time for the Democratic Party Convention of the same year, he did organize for support behind the scenes[[55]](#endnote-55) and he would ultimately cite popular support as a reason to go back on his pledge. However, much of the party was unwilling to support Burr’s attempt to run for a third term a third time, and it would take several ballots to decide on a candidate with the support of a majority of party delegates; against Burr stood none other than the incumbent vice president, William Henry Harrison. Having not made anywhere near as many enemies as Burr, and being a devoted supporter of the Illinois Compromise, to the party he could command support out of the Lower North and the West – including the Southwest. Nevertheless, the ensuing struggle over the nomination saw Burr prevail – and in a gesture of goodwill, he secured Harrison as his running mate and, in a private letter, assigned him as his successor. In contrast, with large elements of the Republican Party dissenting with Virginia’s domination of the party’s nomination, its convention culminated with the nomination of Georgian William Crawford, with the approval of both the ultra and Madisonian wings of the party which believed he was their man – but it seems he represented a strange midpoint between the two.

Despite the slavery issue having been thrown to the sidelines of congressional debate by the Illinois Compromise, both parties attempted to portray their candidates as, in the North, antislavery, and in the South, proslavery; but at the same time, as national figures aspiring towards national unity. But in the end, the issue that won the day was the quite poor state of the economy. Burr’s support of a national bank oriented towards the people won the support of many, both North and South, who blamed the lack of it for the unstable banking scene that wreaked havoc on the nation, the West in particular. Another factor was that during the election campaign came news of the Glorious Reform in France, which replaced the pure oligarchy of the Sieyesian system with a more popular government with the great Lafayette serving as its figurehead Grand Elector; Lafayette being, then and now, an American national hero, meant this inspired a wave of Francophilia, and given the Democrats had since their formation been the party of Francophilia, this only strengthened the momentum that was already behind them.

The result was a sweeping landslide for Burr, and he made his return to the presidency. As wits had it, his third run for a third term proved the charm. Though there were calls for southern secession, they had cooled since the Illinois Compromise which he declared he would uphold, and even Jefferson believed it was better for Virginia to stay in the union if only to corral opposition against him. The period between his election and his inauguration saw a mad rush of letters consume the nation; but if anyone had been looking at them, they would have seen that, for the most part, Southerners were cautioning one another against brash action like secession. Thus, Burr got to his inauguration, with nothing but some grumbling from some quarters; his long, but well-given and well-written inauguration speech set the agenda for the far-reaching reforms he wished to enact, and given the failure of Madison to deal with them, he had a strong mandate to do so.

Calling an early session of Congress, Burr immediately got to work. 1825 saw the establishment of the Second Bank of the United States. Rather than replacing the Fiscal Bank of Washington, it supplemented it; headquartered in Washington, it was clearly modelled on the Manhattan Company, rather than the more elitist First Bank. With a capitalization of five million dollars, it was a value far higher than the First Bank, to help raise money for the government; additionally, shares were to be sold at an initial price of fifty cents, to make it accessible to the masses. Furthermore, only US residents could buy shares, and the number of shares a single person could own was capped. Almost immediately, this capping was something the wealthy sought to make their way around – but it still had an impact. But nevertheless, new branches of the Second Bank were opened, and they made their way across the West. This allowed for the reestablishment of a national currency. Additionally came legislation providing for the federal buyup of surplus western land, which cut down on paper speculation, and a new tariff allowed for further protection of national industry and also gave the government new revenue. This came with new deposits of federal money towards internal improvements, and canal and road projects which had been essentially abandoned in the Panic years had begun to open again.

But more impactful would be the Burr administration’s actions abroad. With British ships impressing American sailors on the flimsy basis of their British birth, he began to ready troops for the national defence, if a war ever came. He began to make plans for war with the British. But instead, he decided to go to war with the Spanish. This was because, first, they were a much weaker nation. Second and more importantly, the British threatened to take New Orleans and with it American access to the Mississippi; their invasion of Venezuela, by then having successfully established a beachhead of a client state under the moderate revolutionary Francisco de Miranda, seemed little more than the first step in a plot to dominate the entire Caribbean, bringing them to America’s southern doorstep and enveloping them. Burr wanted to beat them to the punch, and a war with the British, he thought, might enable them to take it first through sheer naval power. Perhaps most decisive was when he revealed that James Wilkinson, an army officer who had formerly served as the leading officer in the American army, was a Spanish informant who sold out his own country for money; this had long since been suspected, but President Burr had in his hand decisive proof of his dealings with authorities in New Orleans, and this caused a massive national stir. Thus, he asked Congress to declare war on the Spanish in the name of protecting trade along the Mississippi, and he got it with a wide majority; only ultra Republicans and the Federalist remnant disagreed. With that, peace had ended. The Luisiana War had begun.

# 11. March of the Raccoon Skin Parade

In truth, the Luisiana War was a long time coming. The West had long since sought secure access to the Mississippi River, and though the Treaty of San Lorenzo (1795) had granted Americans access to it, along with the right to deposit goods in New Orleans, it was something which established a great divide in the American nation. For New Orleans, and indeed the mouth of the Mississippi River, was under Spanish rule, and this meant that the West, especially the Southwest, had stronger commercial links to Spanish territory than it did to the rest of the United States. The construction of canals and roads during the Burr years somewhat weakened this geographic fact, as the Ohio River became an important commercial artery for the American nation, and the several canals carved through Ohio and the Erie Canal allowed for goods to be shipped through New York, but it could not erase the great geographic fact that it was much easier to trade with the world through Spanish territory than it was through the rest of the United States; the new internal improvement programme only slightly alleviated this fact.

Indeed, access to New Orleans had been the source of several war scares; most notably, in 1803, the Spanish intendant in New Orleans revoked American right to deposit, which resulted in a war scare consuming the United States and several state governments preparing their militias, and this only came to an end when the Jefferson administration renegotiated right to deposit in New Orleans. This meant that when the Burr administration declared war on the Spanish, almost immediately the several state governments organized militias and armies pointed westwards. In particular, Kentucky and Tennessee organized their state militias; the iconic image of the Luisiana War fighter, of the citizen-soldier clad in buckskin robes, a raccoon skin cap, and a hunting rifle, is descended directly from these militias. Deployed almost immediately upon receiving the order by telegraph, they invaded westwards.

Crossing over the Mississippi River, this was something Spanish forces were not prepared for, due to the suddenness of it all, and several Spanish border forts fell; this demonstrated the sheer weakness of Spanish fortifications over much of the border. Where American efforts failed were in Lower Luisiana and near St. Louis; in Lower Luisiana, this was because of the scale of Spanish buildup and army, as well as its ample settlement of the area; and near St. Louis it was because Illinois’ small population meant it didn’t have many people to send enough of an army to capture the well-fortified city, and the defeat ended up an abject failure. Indeed, from Lower Luisiana the Spanish launched a counterattack, capturing Natchez from the United States – and even upriver, the Spanish successfully took Illinoistown, just across the river from St. Louis, though a further approach up Illinois was defeated.

Still, it did buy time for the Burr administration to send regiments from the east westwards, typically through canal and river barges, and these regiments spanned across the Mississippi, and along the border with the Floridas. Here, they were faced with a strike northwards; the Red Stick faction of the Creek attempted to make their way back to their homeland in Yazoo, but American regiments successfully destroyed them at the Battle of Fort Claiborne, forcing them into a retreat; American troops successfully followed them into East Florida, but the ensuing Battle of Pensacola ended in a resounding American defeat, and given the lack of American supply lines, it was a quite decisive one. Furthermore, an attempted strike at St. Augustine resulted in a short siege which was swiftly broken from the sea. Additionally, with enthusiasm for the war, volunteer societies of virtually every sort organized regiments – indeed, in this war, all one needed to become a colonel, or a captain, or a brigadier-general, was a big enough force to offer to the government –, and this resulted in new regiments to send to the border. However, the US Army was a disorganized mess, having been allowed during the Madison years to be shrunk to a few thousand, and planners in the government and the army figured the real point of these volunteer regiments was to buy time for a few months to train a force.

It was also here that Spanish forces engaged in its most notorious actions of the entire war. Seeking to force the US out of the war before it would be able to build common ground with the British, it established a blockade around America’s seaboard. This was a very leaky blockade, both because the Spanish didn’t have enough ships to spare for a tighter one and because Britain being at war, the British navy attacked these Spanish efforts. And even that aside, it was easy enough to simply skirt this blockade from trading through the St. Lawrence River, in British North America. Indeed, Montreal and Toronto (then York[[56]](#endnote-56)) boomed in the Luisiana War years, as they served as emporia for this trade. Additionally, this block on trade helped to kick off a boom in industry, to create the goods now that importation was a much harder effort. It would also be here that the Spanish engaged in several raids on American territory. Natchez already under Spanish control, several raids went up the Mississippi; the Sack of Memphis was a particularly humiliating event, even if it ended with the Spanish chased off by a peculiar alliance of settler and Chickasaw regiments.

But what is indisputably the most infamous event of the Luisiana War happened in the February of 1826. A Spanish force, operating from the sea, headed towards Charleston; though one of the largest ports of the United States, the far weaker US Navy found itself badly defeated – despite several ships being in its harbor, the Spanish easily destroyed them. This gave the Spanish free rein to do what it desired to the city; Charleston ended up sacked, with most of its slave population captured and taken to Cuba. The Sack of Charleston left the city burning rubble, and it traumatized South Carolina and helped shape the state’s peculiar inferiority complex in the decades to come. This came with several other naval strikes; a raid on Savannah was less than successful, and strikes pointed towards New England and Washington ended up miserable failures.

However, this did not chill prowar sentiments in the United States; instead, the so-called “Rape of Charleston” became a rallying cry for the entire war. New, trained regiments were sent to the fronts of the war, and they put St. Augustine to a siege, although the navy entirely failed to stop the Spanish from continuing to refuel the town. Additionally, American troops successfully swept through the Spanish beachhead on Illinois and captured St. Louis, which saw in quick succession the fall of the entire Missouri River. It would not take long for hunters from Kentucky to travel to the grave of Daniel Boone, the much-famed founder of their state, in something which has since been put to painting. However, when American troops tried to take the advantage down the Mississippi, it ended up defeated; a simultaneous advance on land and sea saw the sea advance swept by the Spanish fleet, and though the army reaching the Mississippi, that same Spanish fleet swept them from it.

Thus, the war had reached a puzzling stalemate. American superiority over land met Spanish superiority over the sea, and neither could truly make a decisive blow at this point. The Spanish were certainly able to establish a blockade and even launch raids on several cities, but they could not launch the blow necessary to truly collapse the American war effort; similarly, the Americans were certainly able to send troops across the little-defended Upper Mississippi, beyond the zone of navigability, but they could not capture Lower Luisiana, where Spanish naval superiority was decisive. Additionally, the United States was heavily encumbered by its low state capacity, it resembling in this era less a country and more a confederation of sovereign states, and this made it quite tough to even finance the war effort in the first place. In contrast, the Spanish had a long experience governing an intercontinental empire; however miserable its competence in doing so, it at least had some idea of what it was doing. But still, these disadvantages did not erase that the United States was a far more cohesive unit with a far larger population than that of the adjacent Spanish territories, and long-term the war pointed its way.

# 12. The Financiers

The establishment of the Second Bank of the United States in 1825 was something which ended up crucial to the financing of the war effort. With its president, Joshua Forman, using the expertise he had developed running the Erie Canal to vigorously establish bank branches all over the United States, including the West, the banknotes it printed became currency across the nation. This put an end to the makeshift currency arrangements that the post-Panic of 1819 scarcity of currency had established, and indeed the government went as far as to wait some months to establish a solid financial system before declaring war on the Spanish. To send money across the United States to pay the army, the government could simply transmit money across bank branches, rather than the potentially disastrous process of having to transmit and convert notes between different state banks it would have otherwise been forced into; cheques could be made between branches, and additionally, in the most urgent case, the semaphoric telegraph network that the government had built up to this point, could be used in sending and verifying large transactions. If the United States did not have a national bank, it would have been much harder for it to finance the war at all, and despite initial grievances against its establishment this gave it a newfound popularity; in any case, the European banks that the US could have otherwise received loans from, had no credit to offer because they were consumed in financing war in Europe. But it did, and the Luisiana War was a strong justification for a national bank in the years and decades that followed.

To raise money for the war effort, the government additionally issued a series of securities for this purpose; it did not consider printing its way through the war even for a second, as the experience of the Continental dollar inflating into worthlessness during the Revolution was still in living memory, and it was frankly traumatic. These came in the form of Treasury Notes sold by the government – better understood as a bond than a note, as their high denominations – the lowest-value Treasury Notes came at $100 – prevented circulation and they came with the interest rate of 5.4%, which would mature in one year. In other words, they were a commodity, and an investment. They had already been issued in large numbers by the government to alleviate the Panic of 1819, but the issuing of Treasury Notes only intensified during the war, and they would be repeatedly sold by the government until its end – and the money they raised would be crucial to the war effort. Most of these bonds ended up purchased by state banks, and this served to establish strong links between the government and the state bank systems; most of these banks were Northern and controlled by Democrats, which both demonstrated a partisan rift and that the North had a much more mature financial system than the South.

However, as the war continued, the government was forced to increase Treasury Notes’ interest rates in order to make up for the loss in national confidence as victory seemed far out of reach, and when it came due to pay for a particular set, the government paid for it by simply printing new ones and paying the money it got for them, although it made sure they would take longer to mature; this merely foreshadowed the immense difficulties that would be found in financing the Liberty and Union War. Public confidence was decreasing, and a great number of Treasury Notes ended up sold well below their written values; by the time the war ended and they did come due, many observers noticed the profits ended up pocketed by the rich. Additionally, the government was forced to negotiate several loans with state banks, and the war prevented the government from retiring state banknotes entirely. It must come to little surprise that, postwar, the American government embarked on several reforms to create a leaner and more centralized financial system.

Also damaging to the American war effort was the Spanish blockade, which though not a fully tightened stopper on trade, was decisive. This resulted in a stark dip in international trade, which greatly diminished the amount of money raised through tariffs. The war saw the introduction of several customs duties, such as on salt and paper, to make up this windfall, and the surge of patriotism the war made, also decreased smuggling around the tariff wall. The trade from British North America was, in contrast, only met with the barest of the tariff wall, as the border between it and the US did not, in any meaningful way, exist; attempts by the government to establish tariffs over the border were only partially and weakly held. And when it did try to establish a tariff wall over the Great Lakes, it ended up heavily unpopular and indeed threatened to crater the entire economy of the region. This instead forced the government, and its vigorous Secretary of the Treasury Richard Rush, to enact several internal taxes; this was despite them being mythologized, already, as a Federalist stain on national liberty. Taxes would be placed on, first, property, which was a mere extension of existing state taxes – but passing Congress with much raucous debate, and facing the staunch opposition of the Republican Party, were taxes on liquor, sugar, retail licenses, and auctions[[57]](#endnote-57). This resembled nothing less than the much-despised taxes imposed during the First Quasi War. As a result, following passage, these taxes faced immense unpopularity, and they were met with resistance and smuggling, although none of this provoked anything near the scope of the Whiskey Rebellion of Republican myth; it would only be the Sack of Charleston which diminished this resistance, as suddenly tax evasion seemed to be nothing less than treason. Taking full advantage of this opportunity, the government spread this view through the semaphoric telegraph, along with the *Federal Bulletin*; federal revenues spiked in the last two years of the war.

However, this difficulty in funding the war did not mean that it ended up entirely deleterious to the economy; industrial development boomed, both because the state needed to fill orders, and because of the cessation of trade provoked by the Spanish blockade. In New England, where industry was already rising, it boomed, as factories and industrialists flocked to fill orders for uniforms, guns, boats, and many other items, but it wasn’t relegated to there; Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Ohio became centers of industry in this era, and even in the Deep South manufacturing emerged to make up the windfall of blocked goods. Notably, the timber industry surged and expanded its scope well into the western frontier, to build the ships necessary for both defence and smuggling past the blockade. Such industries would have been smothered under a regime of free trade – and indeed, they were greatly damaged upon the end of the war – but instead they prospered across the nation, and this allowed them to become an economic constituency. Additionally, the war made it patriotic to produce and buy home goods, and the effects of this persisted. It must come to little surprise that, postwar, the import substitution that the United States had engaged in almost by accident became an intentional policy of industrial development, and an integral part of the economic policy that the United States would, with some small interludes, maintain until the Great Depression[[58]](#endnote-58). Additionally, this industrial development provided the government with a new source of revenue and new commerce to tax, and this windfall improved management of the war effort.

In short, the Luisiana War being an unprecedented situation in history since the Revolution, a lack of state capacity, and national institutions lacking maturity, meant it was a sloppy affair at best. The naval blockade by Spain greatly reduced national revenue; additionally, the Second Bank being a new institution and European banks being busy funding wars in Europe inhibited their capabilities to lend credit to the United States, when it would certainly need it. However, despite these failures the government was able to make a windfall in new taxes and by selling bonds, and this combined with the rise of industry meant that despite it the government was increasingly effective at going to war. The deficiencies the war exposed, however grave and almost comical they may have been, were by no means fatal; they did, however, lay a path for postwar reform for the American commercial system.

# 13. The Thunder of War

The failure to scare the US into peace over Charleston did not drive the Spanish to consider an alternate strategy, much less to the negotiation table. Given Spanish naval superiority, this led to it planning several other naval strikes towards the seaboard. One strike, headed towards Washington, ended up defeated by American ships at Chesapeake Bay; no doubt, this saved the nation from the rank humiliation of the capital destroyed. But it would be a strike northwards that would attract national attention. For here, a Spanish fleet headed towards New York; prevailing in battles off the coast of Long Island, it seemed ready to lay torch to the entire city. However, a fleet led by Commodore Stephen Decatur, coming out of New York’s harbor, launched itself straight at the Spanish fleet and engaged it in battle; though it was quite a lot smaller than the Spanish fleet, it was joined by several merchant navy vessels which made it seem bigger than it actually was. This forced the Spanish fleet to Sandy Hook, a barrier spit marked by shallow water, and this in turn beached several Spanish ships, and here Decatur launched a counteroffensive which ended up destroying the stationary Spanish fleet. The Battle of Sandy Hook became, almost immediately, the greatest victory of the Luisiana War, and Decatur, already an American national hero thanks to his daring conduct during the Barbary Wars, became a national icon. Additionally, this battle occurred in late November, 1826; November 25 was (and is) Evacuation Day, celebrating the departure of British Guelph forces from New York in the American Revolution. This auspicious coincidence only increased the subsequent celebration in New York City, as Decatur received acclamation after acclamation from New Yorker; and even beyond it, it became a symbol that the war was, indeed, on its way to victory.

This came with an increasingly vigorous offence southwards; American forces successfully took Natchez, after the Spanish supply of the city faltered, and similarly the siege of St. Augustine ended in an American victory, as the Spanish were forced to retreat from the town. Seeking to maintain the advantage before the Spanish sent a second fleet to the Gulf, American forces launched a strike southwards. This strike is one of the most celebrated parts of the war; it is often mythologized as the work of the citizen-militia, of common frontiersmen wearing buckskin robes and raccoon skin caps. This is the so-called “militia myth”, a myth which historians have punctured ever since the Luisiana War itself[[59]](#endnote-59). In reality, by late 1826 and early 1827, most of the US Army consisted of well-trained professional soldiers, wearing centrally-manufactured uniforms and drilled in arms manufactured from the factories of the east for the purposes of war; to the extent militia efforts contributed to the war effort, they held American positions before troops could come storming in. The central column of this force headed towards Lower Luisiana, and meeting at the American-occupied Fort San Esteban, it marched southwards, though well to the west of the lower Mississippi where the Spanish had their naval advantage. The Battle of Fort Miro demonstrated the vigor of the American war effort; soldiers successfully put the fort under siege, and this siege ended up a short affair as it broke after only a few days, and they successfully captured it. However, when forces marched southwards to Natchitoches, though they successfully took the city, Spanish ships travelled upriver from New Orleans and, after landing their troops and reinforcing their position over the Mississippi, forced the Americans into a retreat. This slog of an advance, where American troops advanced two steps forwards and one step back, would be reflected in the remainder of the war, as American supremacy on land faced Spanish supremacy by river, but the way did point towards the Americans.

It would also be at this point that one of the most infamous events of the war occurred. Alexander Hamilton, long sweltering in a long period of political wilderness as the Federalists collapsed and most of its membership broke for the Democratic Party of his rival Aaron Burr, had sought upon the opening of the Luisiana War to be enlisted as a general of some sort. However, in this he found himself frustrated. At the state level, Governor Ambrose Spencer, a close ally of Burr denied him leadership of any section of the New York Militia, and at the national level, he similarly found himself frustrated. This, most historians agree, was caused by Hamilton’s position as the leader of the remnant Federalist Party, and that the Burr administration and the wider Democratic Party had no desire to turn him into a war hero[[60]](#endnote-60). Despite this, Hamilton organized a private army anyways, with himself as its leader and his son as his second-in-command. What he wished to do with this is somewhat mysterious; to build it, he received money from several backers, not only from wealthy Americans but also government agents of both France and Britain. To get this money, he made a series of promises, including variously an invasion of Spanish territory but also half-baked invasion plans of Canada, or of the French West Indies, or of a march on Albany to depose Governor Spencer or even on Washington against Burr. The extent to which any of these were meaningful promises or else simply Hamilton saying what he could to get an army, remains doubtful, even to modern historians with full access to documents and archives, but publicly Hamilton affirmed he merely sought to create an army to send to the frontlines of the war. Some have since speculated that he was duped by his friends, but historians are no closer to determining what his plans were.

However, these plans, whatever they may have been, were entirely undone when Governor Spencer presented evidence of Hamilton’s promises to the Burr government, and he declared it nothing less than open treason. After Spencer submitted charges to the federal government, it declared its intentions to arrest Hamilton, but before it could, he gave them the slip. Along with his family, he packed his bags on a canal vessel and travelled up the Erie Canal. Narrowly escaping capture at Black Rock from authorities that had, by telegraph, been sent word that he was indeed arriving, he successfully crossed the border into British North America. From here, he successfully made his way to Toronto, and he charmed his way up the Family Compact. In quick succession, Hamilton enlisted in the British army and led an expedition to Venezuela, where he linked up with his old friend Francisco de Miranda; after Miranda’s death, the knives came out in Caracas and Hamilton fled with his family back to Toronto, where he spent the rest of his life in exile, doomed to see New York just over the horizon but to never return to it. Though Hamilton, when tried in abstentia, would be found not guilty by the Supreme Court if only for a lack of evidence, it permanently discredited Federalism. And what came afterwards was only the last nail in the coffin of the Federalist Party.

On January 11, 1827, in about three in the morning, the presidential mansion suddenly caught on fire, and the conflagration burned the entire building. When Burr was not among the people who fled, it did not take long for Vice President Harrison to be woken up and brought to the scene, and by the time firefighters suppressed the fire, they came across the ghastly sight of Burr’s charred body over what remained of his desk. It did not take long for Harrison to be sworn in as President[[61]](#endnote-61). Further investigation into the fire revealed it to be an accident – and indeed its origin being within the office where Burr was working[[62]](#endnote-62) – but it hardly stopped the speculation. One popular idea was that Hamilton had conspired to kill his enemy, and it only added to the name Alexander Hamilton and its place alongside Benedict Arnold and George Washington Woodward as one of the ultimate traitors of American history[[63]](#endnote-63). Whatever may have happened, almost overnight, Aaron Burr went from being a deeply controversial politician to a national hero and martyr, who died so America itself could be free. His name was attached to schools, towns, and cities, his statues were installed in public squares, plays glorifying him as a national saint and martyr populated the theaters of the nation, and his portraits were hung alongside the Father of the Nation, George Washington, himself. In the most dramatic way possible, the Burr era came to an end, and though he continued to hang as a pallor over the age, his death represented a generational change in government.

However, this saga was ultimately a sideshow to the wider process of the war, and though it did result in several troops being diverted northwards against some feared Hamilton-Guelphite invasion, no such invasion occurred, and in any case there was no indication the British were assembling an army or anything like that along the border with British North America. Notably, President Harrison’s sensitivity to Western interests only made him more eager for a victory, not less. American troops slowly advanced down the Mississippi, and the Spanish found increasing difficulties in maintaining its fleet on the river. Natchitoches fell to an American offensive, and troops continued to march southwards. The successful capture of Post du Rapides, after a relatively short battle which took the Spanish by surprise, showed the American advantage on land in the most stark of terms. Sending a force further south, the Americans faced defeat at Opelousas, due to the weakness of American supply lines; in the weeks that followed, they established makeshift telegraph lines to link them over and across Memphis to the rest of the United States, and along the way they brought supplies southwards. Its battle lines fortified, the Americans continued a push southwards, and they successfully took Opelousas[[64]](#endnote-64). This sluggish advance slowly advanced and reached closer and closer to the seabank – and it would be here that the Battle of New Orleans occurred.

Led by Zebulon Pike, already a national hero for his expedition of 1806-7, the American army approached New Orleans from its west. Their approach took several hours – and before they completed constructing their fortifications, the Spanish launched a preemptive attack on the Americans. However, General Pike had readied for this, and successfully fighting off this attack, he forced the Spanish into a retreat. Against this retreat, he then sent a further force, and this destroyed the Spanish attack, but failed to prevent the stragglers from sending back word of this to the capital. Nevertheless, in rapid succession, Pike was able to assemble a large force just outside New Orleans, and in short succession he then sent this force forward to capture the city. This quick approach saw the Spanish only minimally having prepared, and meeting them just outside the city, the Americans successfully and decisively crushed them. That Spanish troops came from further afield from its colonies in South America meant they were unprepared when it came to the terrain of the bayou – indeed, Spanish forces found themselves shooting at one another – and it was this above all which allowed for an American victory. Spanish administrators in the city having fled, General Pike made his approach and was greeted by the Cabildo of New Orleans as a hero. And thus it was that the “Liberator of New Orleans” paraded down Canal Street, and keeping dignity in victory, he kept the city fully intact and made sure to clamp down upon any soldiers who even thought about sacking it. In quick succession, troops successfully crushed the Spanish fleet within most of the Mississippi[[65]](#endnote-65). However, when Pike tried to maintain the advantage and sent a strike towards West Florida, this ended up defeated by a much larger force at Biloxi, by an army of both Spanish and the Red Stick faction of the creek. Nevertheless, the Battle of New Orleans was more than anything the decisive victory of the war, and at that point the Spanish could do nothing but prolong the war.

But even more decisive than this were events happening in Britain. Longstanding grievances among the British people against the unrepresentative nature of the contemporary House of Commons, greatly exacerbated by the war in Europe and the devastating famine in Ireland, turned into a series of riots which spread across the nation; into London, they quickly became a revolutionary affair, and King Frederick and Prime Minister Londonderry fled to Hanover before the mobs could reach them. The Popular Revolution saw, in quick succession, the organization of a provisional government which declared its intention to come to a general peace with France and Spain. But the Spanish did not find themselves eased by this; on the contrary, they considered the Franco-British enmity and division to be the only thing which kept them from being swept by the great revolutionary wave inaugurated in 1776. They found themselves terrified that the French might ally with the revolutionary British and then declare war on them – an alliance which would surely destroy the Spanish state with overwhelming force. The enthusiasm most Americans held for the Popular Revolution, which they saw as merely the aftershocks of their own, and the cheers of revolutionary fraternity they heard in response, only added to this attitude of fear, as they feared the Americans might join them. And thus it was, that the Spanish finally decided to come to peace with the Americans so that, if they did face a revolutionary republican alliance, at least America would not complete the puzzle[[66]](#endnote-66).

Securing an offer of mediation from Constantine I of Russia[[67]](#endnote-67) as 1827 turned to 1828, negotiations out of Petrograd (then St. Petersburg) saw both the Americans under Secretary of State Henry Clay and the Spanish under their minister plenipotentiary Francisco Dionisio Vives, maintain some maximalist positions; Clay lay claim to not only Luisiana and the Floridas, but also to the Gulf of Mexico down to Matamoros and the Pacific down to San Francisco, while Vives attempted to only cede New Orleans and the Floridas, while maintaining the Mississippi border. These maximalist positions eroded over the negotiations, however, and the eventual treaty ended up granting the US control over Luisiana and the Floridas but requiring it to grant to its new inhabitants the full privileges and immunities of American citizens; given that it only had partial control of East and almost none over West Florida, the US would pay the Spanish five hundred thousand dollars to secure it[[68]](#endnote-68), and it would additionally allow any inhabitants who wished to leave, to leave, with expenses paid by the United States – this largely meant the Red Stick faction of the Creek, who had no desire to live under American rule ever again, would be able to migrate to Spain’s new buffer of Texas without harassment from American authorities. Together, this peace deal more than doubled the size of the United States, although several sticking points such as the precise western boundary of Luisiana would remain unanswered. And there were still many, Clay included, who were unsatisfied that it left Texas outside America’s jurisdiction, and talk of revising the treaty would persist for the next several decades.

Still, when the Treaty of St. Petersburg was offered to Congress, it was met with general enthusiasm. Some would condemn the payment to the Spanish as rewarding the enemy, but most agreed with Harrison and Clay that continuing the war would mean spending more than that – and so it was, on net, a bargain. Additionally, the Republican Party condemned the annexation of territory by treaty as unconstitutional, and indeed in retirement on his plantation James Madison went as far as to write a draft a constitutional amendment for this purpose, because he believed it was both constitutional and a boon for the United States. Additionally, several Northeasterners, particularly those belonging of what little remained of the Federalist Party, condemned this as stripping power from their states, and even those who supported the incorporation of the new territories worried that it might weaken the United States by dispersing its population over a larger area. Despite these grievances though, the treaty was easily passed through Congress with large majorities, although to satisfy constitutional fastidiousness and to secure marginal Republican votes, Harrison and Clay declared their support for an amendment formally incorporating Luisiana and the Floridas and broadly stated the territories would be settled slowly, which did end up passing in 1829[[69]](#endnote-69).

The Luisiana War had come to an end. The United States was now at peace – and it was well over double the size that it was before. Celebrated in its own time as a Second Revolution, securing its independence and doubling its territory, it additionally made the Mississippi not America’s western bounds, a geographic fact which would forever weaken national cohesion; but rather its great public artery which would allow for the full exploitation of the Inland Waterways of the nation, and it ensured the great commercial entrepot of New Orleans would be part of the United States. And at the end of the day, and perhaps most momentously, it represented the twilight of the first generation of American independence, and the dawn of the second; the passing of Aaron Burr only put a spotlight on this great fact. The Age of the Founding Fathers had come to an end; the Age of Clay and Webster had begun.

# 14. The Dawn’s Early Light

The end of the Luisiana War, and the great national victory it represented, only added to the extreme public joy of the era. This had already begun some months before the end of the war, as the Popular Revolution in the British Isles ended the House of Guelph – the same that the United States had been formed in revolution against – and the monarchy, and this sparked widespread celebration, that the values of the American Revolution had come to London. This was not a unanimous feeling – there were many who viewed the pre-revolutionary British order as the true model for America’s constitution, with adjustments for colonial egalitarianism, and they saw its collapse as a portent for America. This largely included Northeastern Federalists, and ex-Federalist Democrats, including no less than Daniel Webster, and it also included several southern Republicans, particularly those of South Carolina. But nevertheless, most Americans cheered the Popular Revolution, regardless of political affiliation – indeed, the influence of it in the Northeast, by far the closest region to the British Isles, was such that it motivated Rhode Island to dispose of its established constitution (its former royal charter) and begin an era of constitutional reform[[70]](#endnote-70) – and Secretary Clay spoke for the median American when he declared of the deposed King Frederick, “I have no commiseration for princes. My sympathies are reserved for the great mass of mankind”. British immigrants came in huge numbers, and for an entire generation their migration to the United States was nothing less than a hose, which dramatically reshaped the nation, to the extent that some historians have argued this wave represented nothing less than the recolonization of the United States[[71]](#endnote-71). British immigrants ended up leading politicians and industrialists, they founded newspapers, corporations, and labor unions, and this sort of human capital boosted forwards the modernization of the American economy. In particular, Irish immigrants saw the influential role of famed Irish nationalist and living martyr Daniel O’Connell in the post-revolutionary government, and they cheered when this new government enacted measures that, at last put an end to the Great Famine which so devastated the island.

By the time the Luisiana War came to an end, this enthusiasm only intensified. Alongside celebration of Britain’s revolution came cheers of the doubling in size of the American nation, and war heroes such as Stephen Decatur and Zebulon Pike were paraded down the streets of the cities of the nation. President Harrison made a tour across the nation, where he was heralded as the “Washington of the West” for the sheer extent of the Luisiana War conquests, and all along his tour, which spanned from the Middle Atlantic states to the West, he received cheers of “Tippecanoe” from crowds of virtually every kind – even those who once sneered at the Democrats as a vehicle of abolitionism now cheered them as the party of the nation. And the fallen Burr had become a national martyr, who died for the cause of national security and cohesion, all his flaws forgotten and replaced with a national hagiography which greatly strengthened the Democratic Party, with several statues in his honor unveiled. American liberty not only triumphed at home; it triumphed across the pond and over the shore, and if such a triumphalist narrative required ignoring the millions of slaves, most white Americans did.

The 1828 election was less an election and more a coronation; throwing off any trace of sectionalism by selecting as his running mate a well-respected South Carolinian, William Lowndes. Tippecanoe Clubs emerged all across the nation in support of his candidacy, the campaign song “Tippecanoe and Lowndes Too” was heard across the nation, President Harrison received toasts from across the nation, and Harrison won the ensuing election in a sweeping landslide over the Republicans’ Langdon Cheves and the almost token Federalist campaign of Harrison Gray Otis. The cheers of national enthusiasm only continued as the British Isles wrote for itself a new constitution complete with a Charter of Liberty that seemed only an expansion of the American Bill of Rights; although the difference between America’s model of tripartite divisions of powers and Britain’s virtual parliamentary supremacy could not be more stark, most Americans could not help but celebrate that the values of the American Revolution had been brought home.

And seeking to prevent the issue of the expansion of slavery from emerging again, Harrison and Clay took full advantage of the public mood when, along with the 1829 constitutional amendment including Luisiana and the Floridas into the Union and segmenting it into three for structured settlement, they also passed a law dividing the most easterly segment three different territories, which would be opened to settlement: namely Orleans, out of the former Lower Luisiana and a state for its Franco-Spanish Creole population; Arcansa, out of the land to its north for Anglo settlement; and Missouri, of the remainder. Into Orleans and Arcansa Territories, slavery would be fully legal, while in Missouri, further introduction of slaves would not. Though this caused some controversy, the national mood was such that this was hardly noticed, the South seeing this as giving it plenty of room to expand and the North of it closing most of Luisiana to slavery. That slavery had already made its way into Luisiana under Spanish rule, had meant that the organization of Arcansa and Orleans as slave territories did not mean the introduction of slavery into what most Americans would have regarded as “virgin land”, which further prevented a sort of antislavery backlash; furthermore, Franco-Spanish Creole elites in Orleans itself, whose allegiance to the Union may have been weak in other circumstances, cheered on the protection of their institution. Additionally, both regarded this, a mere law, as a merely temporary settlement – and though there were many who instead spoke of it as an unamendable compact, that it was a mere law, would come to be a most critical portent.

The Popular Revolution had brought peace between Britain and France, and this allowed for both to trade with the United States in huge volumes. Indeed, from the British Isles in particular came a massive boom in trade, as suddenly cut off from its continental markets, it instead sought to make up for it through trade with the United States, which boomed massively in the years that followed[[72]](#endnote-72). American grain markets saw themselves dramatically expand, and the 1830s and 40s saw the West rapidly boom as its grain suddenly made its way into the mouths of hungry Britons. Indeed, many historians believe that, more than anything, American grain, and its export onto British markets, fuelled American commercial expansion and the push of the frontier westwards. In short succession also came American cotton and sugar onto British markets, fostered by the expansion of the United States across the Mississippi. A fraction of these exports was also sent to France, but it was notably far smaller; commercial ties between America and Britain, already strong thanks to old colonial links and the great fact of a common language were only fostered by the Popular Revolution, while in contrast France focused itself on self-sufficiency on a continent which was hostile to its own interests. The expansion of American settlerism was only fostered by the growth of this new zone of export.

However, it was only raw goods that benefited, on the American side, from this free trade; cheap goods produced in the mature industrial cities of Manchester and Birmingham, and even beyond that from Lille and Aix-la-Chapelle, suddenly swamped American markets. This came at the expense of American industry, which found itself unable to compete against all these new goods, produced with superior industrial techniques and having achieved maturity in an era where the United States merely had infant industry. This led to the passage of the Tariff of 1828, less to make a windfall of revenue and more in the name of protecting American industry, in what was a first for the United States; however, this in turn led to the emergence of sectional tensions, as the North supported the tariff to protect (largely northern) industry, while the South opposed it as an attack on its plantation economy. This wasn’t a total sectional division, as less industrial parts of the North, most especially New England’s prominent shipping industry, were lukewarm on the tariff; and in the South sugar interests supported the tariff and several Southwesterners, most especially the Kentuckian Henry Clay, supported it out of economic nationalism. In the years that followed, large sections of the South, especially South Carolina, became increasingly frantic in its opposition to the tariff, which they blamed for their economic decline, and indeed they went so far as to condemn protectionism as unconstitutional. This brewing crisis remained on the backburner, however, and the vice president represented a South Carolinian effort to calm tensions over the tariff.

Additionally emerged a growing panic over the rising influence of Catholics; hardly a new phenomenon, that the Harrison administration was readying to incorporate Lower Luisiana as the state of Orleans, with its Catholic and Franco-Spanish majority able to flex its muscles on the national stage, only escalated xenophobic fears that some immigrant-papist conspiracy was plotting to destroy American liberty. So emerged the Anti-Catholic Party, with particular strength in the old Puritan heartland of New England. Absorbing the remnants of the Federalists and free of the taint of Hamiltonian treason, it combined them with a new and more youthful class of politicians; its fearmongering of a “Hiberno-Spanish” Catholic conspiracy, which inspired mass popular appeal, turning into a mode of politicking ready for the age of democracy, it quickly became the main opposition to the Democratic Party in the Northeast and at least a force to be reckoned with in Ohio and Pennsylvania. In the South though, it fused easily into the Republican Party, further fortifying its position in the nation at large. In the act of its expansion, its original politics became diluted as it became joined by politicians who simply sought to ride the popular anger of the xenophobic mob as a vehicle to power; perhaps the best-known example of this is John Quincy Adams, an old Federalist- who switched parties to lead the Anti-Catholics to power as Governor of Massachusetts in 1833[[73]](#endnote-73).

However, this new northern oppositionism was but a sideshow to the rise of southern sectionalism in the era, representative of that great fact that politics was realigning and evolving in a new direction. It would dramatically escalate from the most curious of places – it would come from the British Isles, and its revolutionary abolitionism.

# 15. The American System

Coming at the end of a long period of party conflict and disorder, in which the very principles of government became the dividing line of faction, the windrush of nationalism that came after the Luisiana War allowed for a brief period where all politicians sought to establish a national unity which would transcend the division of faction. Within this came Secretary of State Henry Clay, who sought to and successfully did seize the moment, and he successfully turned himself into one of the leading personalities of the entire era – despite never having been president.

Born in Virginia, upon adulthood Clay made his way to Kentucky, where he became a leading frontier lawyer. At this early age, he supported emancipation and wanted the state to abolish slavery; he failed, however, and in the decades that followed his antislavery principles became buried behind his ownership of slaves and the growth of his plantation. But becoming a leading Republican, he successfully won election to the Kentucky House of Representatives; winning election to the Senate for three months in 1806-7 he foreshadowed his later career by being an intrepid and diehard supporter of internal improvements. This was a quite popular stance in the West; Kentucky at this point almost unanimously supported new roads and canals, as they would be necessary for its economic growth, and in any case it didn’t have the tax base to construct them by itself. This rupture with traditional Republican values led him to become a leading supporter of Aaron Burr when he became a Senator again from 1810-11, and after 1811 a congressman, as he was very ready to sponsor internal improvements across the nation as well as the tariffs required to fund them; however, and this is ironic given his later politics, he opposed Burr’s attempt to reform the National Bank on the basis of it being unconstitutional. Momentously, Clay successfully got himself elected as the House Speaker in 1814, and though this had formerly been a weak role, he successfully turned it into the fulcrum of business for the entire House of Representatives. This additionally served to strengthen his position with the Burr government, and from this he became the foremost leader of the Democratic Party’s western wing.

Hoping for a position within the coming cabinet, Clay found himself disappointed by Burr’s defeat in 1816; nevertheless, he continued to serve in the House. He made his name once again as a leading force there; during the Illinois Crisis, he attempted several compromises to establish sectional peace, and after the 1820 election, he successfully stitched one up. Afterwards, despite some speculation he would become a Republican, he became once more a leading Democrat as part of the stitch-up after the Illinois Compromise. In the years that followed, he became a leading War Hawk; once more representative of western interests, he sought to ensure that New Orleans would be secure for American commerce by annexing it; he would, however, briefly retire from the House, to make money as a Kentuckian lawyer after he lost it in the Panic of 1819. When Burr finally won a third term in 1824, as a slaveholding southerner Clay was a leader of efforts to calm sectional tensions before his inaugural, and afterwards he won appointment as Secretary of State. Despite chafing at Burr’s personality, he served deftly and with skill, leading the United States into the Luisiana War, and most historians agree, he was one of the greatest Secretaries of State in American history. The disarray of the war led him to cast off his aversions against the existence of the National Bank, which he now believed necessary for national unity; additionally, he saw the growth of domestic industry thanks to the blockade as wholly beneficial. Continuing to be Secretary of State after Burr’s death, Clay saw the Luisiana War to the end; a different Secretary may have been less intent on pushing far western borders in the Treaty of St. Petersburg, but as a westerner he sought nothing short but the expansion of the “Empire of Liberty”. Thus, upon the end of the Luisiana War, Clay was the second-most powerful man in the United States, and he sought to seize the moment. And thus it was that he gave a speech to a grand reception to President Harrison in 1828, which elucidated principles he hoped the Union would take with it in the years that followed.

In this speech, Henry Clay made a grand thesis. He declared the need to complete the work of Aaron Burr, to unify the nation in a web of canals and roads and to provide for the nation self-sufficiency and a solid balance of trade. For this, he believed in three policies, which would need to serve as the bedrock of a new American System in the decades that followed. First, he advocated the government pursue a policy of internal improvements, to fund projects for roads and canals, so that now goods and people could flow easily from one part of the nation, as well as telegraph lines to allow for easy communications. The Burr years had made clear that they essentially changed the topography of the nation by allowing for much quicker contact than before and brought it closer together; he believed the policy needed to be taken further and harder. Second, he advocated the continued existence of the Second Bank, to provide for financial stability and prevent sloppy local banks for overextending credit before the inevitable fall. The Panic of 1819 had left the West totally bereft of trade and commerce, Kentucky included; he promoted the reestablishment of a national bank as a cure to this. And third, he advocated a high tariff for protection purposes, to both provide for money for internal improvements and to allow for the growth of industry. The balance of trade had, since colonial times, been at the expense of America; the Luisiana War, with the blockade had exposed the economic consequences of this weakness. He believed the tariff could allow for the substitution of cheap goods imported from the industrial British and French economies with goods manufactured in America, all for the consumption of an internal American market. Western grain would go to the mouths of Eastern factory workers, Eastern factories would create goods for the West, Southern cotton would go to Northern textile mills, and Northern goods would travel to the South. This would link the nation together, stronger than before, and benefit both the producing East and the consuming West. And together, he declared, this would be an “American System”, consolidating the nation for the benefit of the whole.

A clear evolution of Burrite policies, this was met with popularity from North and West and reflected the sheen of war victory; the North wanted protection for its industry, and both bosses and mechanics believed a tariff would be necessary for their economic prosperity; and the West, including slaveowning Kentucky and Tennessee, was patriotically American and supported economic nationalism as a mode to create a strong and cohesive country, and a National Bank to save them from the petty tyranny of local banks. Although a smattering of figures in the Southeast similarly supported this new political order, the clear departure from Jeffersonianism this represented as well as fear an overly strong national government would abolish slavery, came in the way, and this resulted in a flurry of opposition emerging from there. But still, many in the Southeast could not but help shine in the light of national victory as well, and as ever even fastidiously Republican Virginia accepted the money this plan represented.

In the years that followed, the nation saw a huge industrial boom – particularly in the North – and for the first time, the whole coast between Boston and Richmond began to crystallize into a single hyper-city as industry developed all the way along it, linked and all oriented towards the West. The tariff allowed for the rapid growth of industry, to take the place of the imports that had been taxed into unprofitability; additionally, it saw the emergence of a textile industry in the north to take the place of British cotton looms, although this was only partially successful, and the British textile industry continued to be enmeshed with American cotton. In particular, in Pennsylvania, its extremely pure coal led to the state rapidly industrializing, and both Philadelphia and Pittsburg saw the emergence of huge iron industries. And in this era, New England fully transitioned into an urban, industrial economy, with more people living in the cities than the countryside for the first time – although this was uneven, with Massachusetts becoming a massive center of industrial capacity and Vermont and Maine (until 1870 an outlying part of Massachusetts) having close to none. This boom was not entirely smooth-sailing, as this led to the growth of a large, permanent class of mechanics, working in the factories of the nation; the old ideal of the nation as a union of independent yeomen-farmers, with working for a boss being merely an intermediate stage of life, found itself upended. This led to more pressure on the government for reducing the price of land, to give mechanics land out in the West to settle instead of working in dark, dangerous factories. Additionally, this led to increased nativism, as native-born mechanics accused immigrants of depressing wages, and this only helped fuel the Anti-Catholic Party. And though the end of war in Europe in 1832 did lead to much more immigration, especially from Germany, this raised the issue that, when war in Europe did start again, it would cut off immigration and make industrial labor scarce.

Furthermore, the boom allowed for the growth of industry in the South as well; Southern industry had emerged during to the Luisiana War blockade, and the tariff allowed for the nursing of this new infant industry. This was particularly in the Upper South – Washington became a huge industrial center, and Virginia saw the emergence of a huge iron industry which was only second to Pennsylvania’s – while in the Deep South, though industry certainly existed, it was much less prominent. Furthermore, the price of the slave, which was quite low and the conquest of Luisiana only somewhat increased as it had a well-developed plantation system, meant that Southern factory lords also tended to be slave-lords. Poor whites who would have otherwise been employed in those occupations instead found themselves shunted out of the economy, and despite the low price of the slave they could not afford any – thus, this era saw a development of an intense class divide between planters and poor whites, with the poor whites frequently finding it impossible to move to either the West or the North, instead forcing them to live in abject poverty against a planter class which truly became an ascendancy over the South.

# 16. The Real Object

After the Popular Revolution, Secretary of State Henry Clay was only too happy to establish good relations with the new order in the British Isles; travelling to Toronto, he opened negotiations with the British commissioner to Canada, George Tierney. The ensuing Clay-Tierney Treaty of 1830 put an end to territorial disputes between the United States and British North America – firmly in the favor of the former. Yet more decisive was the Clay-Tierney Declaration, a joint declaration issued shortly following the treaty’s confirmation, which declared that, if a former Spanish or Portuguese colony won its independence, the British and American governments would recognize it and would never allow it to be reconquered[[74]](#endnote-74). However, these positive relations abruptly came to an end when Britain’s parliament abolished slavery.

For the Popular Revolution had thrust aside moderate abolitionists like William Wilberforce out of the limelight[[75]](#endnote-75) and in their place came the decisively Thomas Clarkson and, most famously, the man dubbed to posterity as the Emancipator, Daniel O’Connell[[76]](#endnote-76); with planter interests greatly weakened within the reformed House of Commons by the obliteration of the rotten borough system, they successfully got their way. And it did not take long for the British abolitionist movement to point to America: the Free Produce movement, an influential movement within Dissenting Protestant circles which advocated an economic boycott of slave-produced goods, now won support within the halls of Parliament; the writer and journalist Harriet Martineau, returning from a trip to the United States, published *Society in America* (1837) on her observations, including a damning critique of slavery; and O’Connell himself damned American freedom as a fraud for its acceptance of slavery, he refused donations to the Irish nationalist movement by Irish-American slaveowners, and he declared he would never visit the United States so long as its soil was tarnished by slavery. Though most Britons still regarded America as a venerable example of a brother republic, its revolution as a predecessor of the British Isles’ own, and indeed both countries as sharing a single concept of liberty, this was beginning to change. And even in the United States itself, abolitionists pointed to the British example of emancipation; several abolitionists even went as far as to abandon celebration of the Fourth of July in favor of Britain’s own festival of national liberation, the Twenty-Sixth of January.

Suddenly, to the Planter Ascendancy, positive relations with the British Isles seemed less solidarity with revolutionary kin and more an abolitionist conspiracy to destroy slavery[[77]](#endnote-77). This additionally led to new links between the South and the pro-Guelph administration of Jamaica, as it seemed less the remnant of a dying monarchical order and more the last, best, hope for West Indies slavery; American freebooters became crucial to maintaining order against slave revolts, and freebooting leaders were praised as heroes, preventing Jamaica from becoming a new Haiti. And it suddenly provided credence to the idea that, despite President Harrison being Virginia-born, and Secretary of State Clay a Kentuckian slaveowner, they were part of a Northern conspiracy to work with British and Irish abolitionists to incite a race war to destroy slavery. Suddenly, the tariff seemed less bad policy and more a tool in this conspiracy, to replace the American cotton exported to British factories with cotton grown in India – and thus destroy the American cotton market. Vice President Lowndes attempted to get the government to agree to a tariff reduction to cool these tensions; however, the ensuing Tariff of 1830 ended up a rather modest reduction, protectionist interests successfully watering down a higher initial reduction. It did not take long for Lowndes to definitively break with the government, and though at this point he did not resign from the vice presidency, he became the leader of an opposition effort within the halls of power.

Within the halls of Congress, Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, who had initially been a New School Republican, had been brought to the extremes over slavery and the tariff to such an extent that he spoke of reviving the Principles of ’98. Pushing forward the anti-tariff effort within the halls of Congress, Calhoun gave several speeches towards this end – and his considerable powers of oratory impressed many. It became increasingly to establish a coalition between the South and the West in the name of a small federal government; in the act, he sought to make Harrison and Clay out to be traitors to western interests. It is one particular speech that grabbed attention, in which the Northeast of plotting to, at once, crush the South through a high tariff and the West through control of the public lands, all for its own personal aggrandizement. Against this, the great voice of Massachusetts, stood and gave a speech of his own. He declared that, contrary to Calhoun’s claims, the Northeast was but the closest friend of the West, that they were joined together in a love of free labor, and that the tariff was good for the nation as a whole. And he brought the topic towards national unity, and laying aim at Calhoun, he condemned him for seeking to divide the nation rather than strengthen its unity. Calhoun replied in kind, condemning Webster and the Northeast as hypocritical. He pointed to New Englander voices that called to secede over the election of Madison, over the Illinois Compromise. He derided Webster for having been a Federalist and ally of Hamilton well after it was respectable, and he pointed to him having opposed the tariff and given several speeches in praise of free trade before, apparently, economic shifts came. And he declared that, at least he and South Carolina were principled. It was a well-written speech, charismatically given which exposed hypocrisy in the most righteous of terms and was undoubtedly a strong act to follow. But Webster did, in what posterity calls the Second Reply to Calhoun.

Webster first disproved the personal claims. He declared that, for all that he considered Hamilton an economic genius, he had not for one second supported his conspiracy, he had condemned it immediately, and he considered his great idol not Hamilton, but Aaron Burr. He did not deny that he had praised free trade, but with the tariff having been imposed, Massachusetts had been forced to adapt and had prospered by doing so – and so too should South Carolina. Bringing the topic towards national, Webster brought the topic towards the great struggle for independence and Boston’s great role there, and he declared that, Massachusetts and South Carolina having worked together there, they should do so once more. And reciting a warning of what horrors nullification or secession might lead to, he concluded by declaring, “Liberty and Union, Now and Forever, One and Inseparable”. It was a bombastic end to one of the greatest speeches of history. The entire Senate looked stupefied by his furor, the silence only broken by Vice President Lowndes calling for order. Almost immediately, the Second Reply to Calhoun became distributed across the nation, from the manors of New York to the log cabins of Tennessee, and it turned Daniel Webster’s reputation national, into the “Expounder of the Constitution”. Calhoun would reply weeks later, but most agreed that it was unsatisfactory, and that Daniel Webster had truly prevailed. Over the decades that followed, the Second Reply to Calhoun became part of the patriotic canon; even today, schoolchildren across the United States recite its final passage, with its famed closing triptych.

Calhoun’s efforts to obtain Congressional support for his principles defeated, this resulted in opposition flowing out of Congress and the federal government and towards the states. The failure to reduce the tariff substantially, combined with the abolition of slavery in the British Isles, led to southern interests reviving the Principles of ’98. This effort was led by John C. Calhoun, who wrote a lengthy political tract declaring that, through a constitutional convention, any state could declare laws it deemed unconstitutional, null and void. This was the doctrine of nullification, and he aimed it straight at the tariff. Thus, from initially declaring the tariff simply unconstitutional, following the Tariff of 1830 South Carolina convened a nullification convention which declared all tariffs passed after 1810 unconstitutional. Outside of the Republican Party, Calhoun faced off against protectionist interests, while inside it he instead faced off against free traders who, nevertheless, did not support nullification; it would be the latter who was the strongest obstacle to his grand political aim, unifying the South against the tariff, turning the Republican Party into a vehicle of Southern sectionalism, and forcing the North and West to concede. The doctrine of nullification failed to make any headway in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Yazoo, which despite being slave states either supported protection out of nationalism or merely considered a high tariff bad policy; in Mississippi, it had some support but was a firm minority; and even in the Southeast the issue became heavily contested. No less than the Republican grandee James Madison declared that nullification was a perversion of the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions.

In Georgia, this combined with existing tensions over its Indigenous population; by treaty, large swathes of its territory were held by the Creek and the Cherokee, which were governed as nations with relations with the federal government – but Georgia believed that it had authority over Cherokee and Creek land within their borders, and it sought to force the issue. Harrison, or rather his Secretary of State Henry Clay, despised the sectionalist machinations of Georgia’s firebrand governor George Troup enough to send troops to protect the Cherokee from Georgian encroachment, but despite this the state government continued to force the issue by laying claim to jurisdiction over the Cherokee. When a case on the subject travelled up to the Supreme Court in 1831, Chief Justice John Marshall declared that Georgia had no authority over the Cherokee, and that relations between the Cherokee and the United States were international in nature. Despite this, Governor Troup declared that he did not recognize the authority of the Supreme Court over the issue, and he declared his intentions to nullify it. It would be after the great furor this caused, that Georgia convened a nullification convention, to not only strike down *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, but also the tariff. This finally led to the breakdown of the federal government’s strong position on the Cherokee, as they feared driving Georgia into the hands of South Carolina more than they did Troup’s machinations.

In addition came the discovery of gold in land adjacent to the Cherokee, and the ensuing gold rush saw prospectors simply ignore the border and cross over. When prospectors organized themselves into mobs to kill Cherokee and steal their land, the federal army chose not to interfere, on orders of Washington; neither Harrison nor Clay were friends of the Indigenous, and though they despised Troup, they were perfectly willing to sell the Cherokee out to prevent the formation of a nullification bloc. Thus it was that federal troops departed from the Cherokee Nation’s lowlands and allowed mobs and the state government to do what they would to the Indigenous there. Fleeing the ensuing violence, many Cherokee fled up to the Appalachian mountains; still others determined the United States was readying to open their land for settlers and, purchasing land to this end, moved to Spanish Texas which was only too happy to use them as a buffer against the Americans. In this, they joined the Red Stick faction of the Creek who had fled there after the end of the Luisiana War; coming with them were Chickasaw, Choctaw, and pro-American Creek, who similarly fled their reservations to the expanse of Spanish Texas before the government would force them. By the time the Indian Removal Act passed Congress and finally proved those who still trusted the federal government wrong, the bulk of those four nations were already in Spanish Texas, and the new reservations established for them within the former Luisiana were a much smaller affair[[78]](#endnote-78).

However, this did not stop Georgia’s drift into nullificationism; its convention returned a majority for the nullificationists, even if it prevented them from achieving the much-feared two-thirds majority. It promptly nullified *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, as well as the tariff, although the majority was weak enough failed to push for further action. Additionally, that the Harrison administration allowed blatant land-thievery against the Cherokee saw it firmly criticized within the Northeast, including by many of its own Democrats. Foremost among them was no less than the great Daniel Webster – although it did not stop him from supporting the administration. Though neither of these rifts were fatal, it demonstrated that the Harrison administration had laid claim to a very tenuous middle position that left nobody happy. And it was a victory for John C. Calhoun and his quest to turn the Republican Party into a vehicle for southern sectionalism.

The next state where the issue of nullification emerged was in Virginia. This was a momentous state here – it was the state of Thomas Jefferson, who had after all wrote the nullificationist Kentucky Resolutions and had additionally called protectionist tariffs unconstitutional. Additionally, it was the state of the Richmond Junto which headed the Republican Party, so to Calhoun winning its support was crucial. However, in this it faced strong opposition; though the compact theory of the constitution which Calhoun advocated was strongly held, the application of this towards nullification, especially of the tariff, was strongly disputed. One such voice was James Madison, who from his retirement condemned nullification as contrary to the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, and that though he believed protectionist tariff unconstitutional, he did not believe states could declare laws null and void within their borders. This reflected a civil war within the Virginia Republican Party, which was practically the entire state, as well as within the Richmond Junto that lay at his head.

Though Virginia’s legislature easily passed a resolution merely declaring protectionists tariffs unconstitutional – even legislators representing industrial interests believed so – the fight had merely begun. The governor, Peter V. Daniel, was a firm nullificationist – believing it a necessary counterweight to the “abolitionist” North and regarding Calhoun as Jefferson’s latter-day successor – and he worked the legislature to get it to call a convention for nullification purposes. This issue divided it into two sections, but in the end Governor Daniel successfully obtained enough support within its legislature to call for a nullification convention. The ensuing elections to it saw a hard fight between pro-nullification and anti-nullification parties – both of which were broadly factions within the Republican Party – but the result was a small majority for nullificationists. By the time the convention met, it formally declared the tariff null and void, and additionally it called for all states who opposed it to send delegates to meet in a general convention of the states, in opposition to protectionism. This represented Calhoun’s victory in receiving the headship of the Republican Party – and it was clear he would be the leading personality in ensuing Convention.

This additionally resulted in calls for the other states to meet at Norfolk, to join Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia to agree on joint action. In this, they received the concurrence of North Carolina, thus creating a united bloc; out in the Southwest, they additionally received the concurrence of Mississippi. However, by a narrow margin, Yazoo refused to do so, and by quite strong margins so too did Kentucky and Tennessee. This owed itself to their firm nationalism, and indeed with strong support for Harrison and Clay and their economic agenda. And so too did Orleans, which strongly supported a high tariff to protect its sugar-based economy, and in any case its Franco-Spanish Creole population did not wish to rock the union[[79]](#endnote-79). When the Norfolk Convention did meet, it declared that the tariff was unconstitutional and null and void within their states; however, it did not declare immediate action, and indeed Calhoun successfully got more eager nullificationists to sit tight for the coming election.

And thus, coming into 1832 the United States was an immensely divided country. The Republicans had been thoroughly overrun under the spirit of Calhoun, and few disagreed that it would surely be he who would lead their party in the coming election. For Harrison’s part, he believed the tariff was a symptom of the problem, that it was simply a policy which the Republican Party sought to ride to power. For him, the real object was nothing less than the disintegration of the Union and its reconstruction on the principles of the “Virginia and Carolina principles” of Jefferson and Calhoun. And thus it was, that coming into the coming elections, he would do whatever he could to ensure the victory of the constitution and cohesion of the nation.

# 17. The Power to Destroy

For all that Federalism had been swept from Presidency, from Congress, and from the state governments, there was one place it continued to survive – the Supreme Court. Here, Washington and Adams had constituted a Supreme Court consisting of Federalists, including its Chief Justice, John Marshall, and given that under the 1787 constitution Supreme Court Justices served for life and could only be removed by impeachment, there was little the Republicans and Democrats could do to change it. Marshall dominated the intellectual and political life of the Supreme Court until his death – little wonder we call the entire 1800-1835 era of the Supreme Court the “Marshall Court” – and here, Federalism not only lived, but prospered. Though President Jefferson wanted the Federalists purged from the Supreme Court, this ended up entirely failing after the defeat of the impeachment of Samuel Chase, and instead he sought to slowly undercut the Supreme Court when it came time to appoint new justices. This allowed the Marshall Court some time in the limelight – and he sought to bring its authority as far as possible, without provoking a counterreaction which might lead to a constitutional amendment.

The Marshall Court made its mark early in its history. Emerging in the political crisis with Jefferson’s succession to the presidency, John Adams had, as one of the last acts of his presidency, appointed several judges to vacant and newly-established posts, and indeed they had done so with such speed that the outgoing secretary of state had not been able to hand their commissions in time; by the time Jefferson came into office, his Secretary of State, Aaron Burr, simply refused to hand them to those appointed, declaring them void as that was done improperly. One of the commissions set aside was to go to William Marbury, and as he continued to be denied his commission he sued Secretary Burr for it. The Marshall Court subsequently declared that Burr’s refusal to hand the commission; however, it paired this judgement with a declaration that the section of the Judiciary Act of 1789 giving the Supreme Court jurisdiction over the case, unconstitutional, and therefore null and void and therefore it could not force Secretary Burr from offering the commissions. The case of *Marbury v. Burr* (1803) was a decisive one; it established the principle that the courts could strike down unconstitutional federal laws, while also avoiding a collision with the executive that would doubtless end with the judiciary defeated and impotent. The authority of the judiciary over Congress would thus be preserved until after the Liberty and Union War.

Another great episode of the Marshall Court came when the state of New Hampshire attempted to amend the charter of Dartmouth College unilaterally; this resulted in its board of trustees suing over this being against the terms of the charter, and taking the case to the Supreme Court in 1819. Famously, Dartmouth was represented by the great Daniel Webster, who in his defence declared, “It is, Sir, as I have said, a small college. And yet there are those who love it”, and whose defence was so moving it brought tears to Marshall’s eyes. In the end, the Supreme Court ruled that the college charter was binding and reversed New Hampshire’s attempt to amend it[[80]](#endnote-80). This ended up an important ruling, as it secured the autonomy of corporations from the state; though this autonomy was swiftly truncated when states simply included articles in corporate charters allowing them to amend them unilaterally, it had immense ratifications on the rise of industrial modernity in the years that followed. Even today, under the new constitution, it is only the federal government which may amend corporate charters without charters having relevant articles thereof.

Additionally, the Marshall Court played a quite decisive role in establishing a federalized financial system. Soon after the establishment of the Second Bank, several Republican-aligned southern states declared this unconstitutional, but they did not take further action as they tried to instead corral a unified state opposition, and then the Luisiana War put an end to such action. More influential would be when Ohio decided to levy a tax against the Bank, in part to discourage its existence but also to get a much-needed tax source. This resulted in a suit over its constitutionality, and it travelled to the Supreme Court. The ensuing case saw the Bank represented by Daniel Webster, and it resulted in the Supreme Court ruling the tax unconstitutional, with Marshall memorably declaring, “the power to tax involves the power to destroy”. With the Bank of the United States being the only bank with branches in every state, this meant that it was practically supreme over all the others.

Additionally, the banks of the several states were also issuing notes, backed by their deposits; many believed this violated the Constitution’s prohibition on states issuing bills of credit as their charters derived from state power, and a case on the subject travelled to the Supreme Court. The ensuing case, *Clark v. Illinois* (1830), saw Marshall and the majority rule that states and banks chartered by them could not issue notes; this did not immediately cause a collapse of state banks, as Congress issued a law declaring that there would be a one-year period where notes would continue to be valid, before they’d be converted into loans, but it did result in the positions of the state banks being greatly weakened and, for the next year, there was a mad rush to exchange them for National Bank notes[[81]](#endnote-81). This led to New York City’s exchange declining as state banknotes fell in value and got traded away; this meant there were fewer securities to trade on it. Additionally, it helped boost the economy of Washington and the whole federal district, as the Fiscal Bank of Washington being federally-chartered meant its notes were not struck down, and that as a result the district saw an impressive boom from the ensuing ease of credit relative to the rest of the nation.

Another ruling which enlarged the power of the federal government was over the Bill of Rights and their applicability to the state governments. Beginning over a dispute on state adjustments to the harbor of Baltimore which destroyed the business of a wharf owner, and the wharf owner suing that this destroyed his business without due process under the Bill of Rights. The ensuing case, *Barron v. Baltimore* (1833), saw the Supreme Court rule that the Bill of Rights did apply to the states. The results of this were not quite immediate – but it did immediately expand the authority of the Supreme Court. The largest impact of this was that due process meant two different things to the North and South: to the South, due process included the right to own slaves and have that right recognized; while to sections of the North, due process meant the right to be free. This tension, whether due process meant freedom or slavery, did not go to the federal level right away as the Marshall, Story, Spencer, and Van Buren Courts all successfully kept it out of the arena. The issue lay in slumber, but in time it would upend the United States as a whole.

But the issue that has given the Marshall Court the most fame and glory today is its dealings on Indigenous Americans. When the state government of Georgia attempted to unilaterally lay claim to Cherokee and Creek territory within its borders, several court cases on the subject travelled up to the Supreme Court. And here, the Marshall Court was unabashedly in opposition to Georgia’s encroachment. In a series of cases, it ruled that settlers could not purchase land from the Cherokee, that they could not imprison people engaged in commerce with the Cherokee, and finally, in 1830, in Cherokee Nation v. Georgia, it declared that Georgia had no authority over the Cherokee, and that relations between the Cherokee and the United States were international in nature. This was a stunning declaration of the supremacy of the federal government, and initially the federal government sent troops to protect the Cherokee from encroachment; however, on the ground, the Harrison administration was unwilling to help nullificationists make ground, and upon the Georgia Gold Rush (1831), it forced the Cherokee to abandon claims to the lowlands and it subsequently led to settlers violently storming those lands and, assisted by the state militia, settler mobs destroyed Cherokee society within these lowlands. And though Marshall was dead by the time Indian Removal passed Congress, his rulings were already a dead letter.

The Marshall Court nevertheless had a great impact on American jurisprudence; by the time Marshall died in 1835, his successor as Chief Justice, Joseph Story, continued much of this nationalist jurisprudence. The Story Court represented the high tide of old Democratic Party influence in the judiciary, and that for its own reasons the Democratic Party defended a strong federal government, meant that it continued his legacy of judicial nationalism. But it did inspire a backlash, and this backlash ultimately became a moving force behind the Republican opposition.

# 18. Towards the Verge

Coming in towards the 1832 election, the United States was a divided nation. The Democrats nominated William Henry Harrison for a third term with little controversy – Aaron Burr having totally upended the Washington precedent of the two-term limit, although some argued that this was merely Harrison’s second elective term – despite an attempt by some Kentuckian interests to put forward Henry Clay in his place which floundered. With Vice President Lowndes having left the Democratic Party in the name of nullification, however, the party instead selected Joseph Alston, the son-in-law of Aaron Burr and a Mississippian[[82]](#endnote-82). Both the Republicans and Anti-Catholics attempted to out-democracy the Democratic Party in that their convention’s delegates were elected directly from the members of local organizations, rather than indirectly by them. Unsurprisingly, the Republican Party easily selected John C. Calhoun as their nominee, on a platform of free trade and nullification, and it declared him the flag-bearer of Jeffersonianism; though they nominated a New Englander, Levi Woodbury, as its vice presidential candidate, several Republicans broke from this and instead nominated Harrison or the Anti-Catholic candidate. Meanwhile, the Anti-Catholics selected the ambitious Supreme Court Justice John McLean; he represented the extent to which the party had become a vehicle of opposition, of politicians who wanted to ride the nativist mob to power, although a truly committed Anti-Catholic, Samuel Morse, was selected as its vice presidential candidate.

The ensuing election saw President Harrison anointed by Democratic organizations as the Washington of the West, and the symbol of national unity. Although he did not campaign (aside from some vague, presidential speeches as he went on a national tour), the campaign the party went on focused on such themes as national unity. In contrast, Calhoun went on a national tour in the name of the principle of free trade and small government, and he attempted to add western and even Northeastern votes to his southern base; his appeals to appeal to mechanics and the working classes in the name of nativism and in opposition to “abolitionist industrial bosses” generally failed, however, as they rallied behind the tariff in the name of their livelihoods. While in contrast, the Anti-Catholic campaign focused less on the “threat to liberty” that Catholic immigrants posed, and more on a general message of national unity against the divisiveness of both the Democrats and the Republicans, though they did bring to the surface nativism in an attempt to attract both northern and southern votes to the cause – in the North, it could appeal to workers who regard immigrants as depressing their wages, and in the South, it could appeal to the longstanding fear of “foreign-born abolitionists” weakening slavery.

The resulting election would leave Harrison with a decisive victory[[83]](#endnote-83):

Figure : The 1832 election, by state

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **Electors** | **Harrison** | **Calhoun** | **McLean** |
| Massachusetts | 23 | 12 | 0 | 11 |
| New Hampshire | 8 | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| Vermont | 7 | 5 | 0 | 2 |
| Rhode Is. | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 |
| Conn. | 10 | 6 | 1 | 3 |
| New York | 44 | 36 | 0 | 8 |
| Pennsylvania | 32 | 29 | 0 | 3 |
| New Jersey | 9 | 6 | 3 | 0 |
| Delaware | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Maryland | 8 | 6 | 2 | 0 |
| Ohio | 22 | 17 | 0 | 5 |
| New Ireland | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Indiana | 10 | 8 | 1 | 1 |
| Illinois | 5 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Virginia | 23 | 1 | 22 | 0 |
| Kentucky | 15 | 14 | 1 | 0 |
| Tennessee | 15 | 10 | 5 | 0 |
| North Carolina | 15 | 3 | 12 | 0 |
| South Carolina | 11 | 0 | 11 | 0 |
| Georgia | 11 | 0 | 11 | 0 |
| Yazoo | 8 | 5 | 3 | 0 |
| Mississippi | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Orleans | 5 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| **Total** | **296** | **181** | **79** | **36** |

Though decisive, and that this showed the Democrats would easily prevail over a divided opposition led to an effort to consolidate and unify it, the victory for Harrison meant a defeat for Calhoun – and with it clear he would not be the next president, the nullification movement that he had hitherto put the brakes upon suddenly escalated. The Norfolk Convention issued an ultimatum declaring the protectionist tariffs nullified, and it issued an ultimatum declaring that the represented states would not allow the collection of these tariffs. This sudden escalation travelled to the states, and one by one their nullification conventions talked this over. This ultimatum was passed by the conventions of South Carolina, then Georgia, and then more narrowly Virginia. The Harrison administration, despite its decisively protectionist leanings and its firm support of nationalism and a strong central government, wanted a divided nation or a civil war even less, and it issued a conciliatory proclamation declaring that, though it believed the tariff both constitutional and good policy, it did not wish for disputes over the Constitution to turn into civil war. This in turn resulted in Secretary Clay finally bringing Calhoun to the table for negotiation.

Despite Calhoun’s quite extreme rhetoric on the issue, he too wanted to avoid the crisis over nullification turning into a civil war. He did not want to divide the United States – rather, he wanted to establish a unity, on Southern terms. And so, when Clay brought out feelers to negotiate with him, Calhoun accepted. The ensuing deal they hammered out was a curious win for both protection and free trade: the Compromise Tariff of 1833 would reduce the tariff by tenths until, by 1842, it would be reduced to the level of the Tariff of 1810 and thus it would exist for revenue purposes. This was a win for Harrison, Clay, and the protectionists since it would still maintain a protectionist tariff for the next decade by which time it could be renegotiated; it was also a win for Calhoun, Lowndes, and the nullifiers since it was an example in action of the principle of nullification used to force the government to back down. Both sides thought they’d be vindicated. However, in its passage through Congress, its passage was not a wholly harmonious affair, as from the Senate Daniel Webster declared this nothing short of surrender to disunionists. But despite his furious speeches against it, which made him more of a Democratic Party icon, the Compromise Tariff passed by large margins through Congress unamended. And President Harrison happily signed it into law. The Norfolk Convention dissolved, and so too did the several nullification conventions of the Southern states. The crisis had come to an end, and the Union was salvaged from the breaking point into sectional peace. But it was a fragile peace that had solved and answered nothing; there is a reason we call this merely the First Nullification Crisis.

Thus, as Harrison was inaugurated in the halls of the Capitol for a third term, he had protected the nation from ruin. He had prevented a collision of the South against the federal government, which would surely end with either disunion or a civil war. But it left the wider issues of the difference of the sections unresolved, it left the great divergence of the nation’s economy over the issue of slavery still ready to escalate, and this issue continued to fester. In time, it would reach a breaking point, and it would leave the nation ablaze.

# 19. Between the Crises

For the remainder of Harrison’s third term, the economy mostly continued to prosper. The tariff continued to be high, even if the Compromise Tariff meant that was due to expire; and factories continued to prosper under the tariff, and they prepared to adjust for the new tariff environment due to come. With the end of war in Europe in 1832, immigrants came in huge numbers, as adding to the numbers of Irish and British immigrants came a lot of Germans. While both Irish and British immigrants had a reputation for political radicalism thanks to the large numbers of radicals who had fled the pre-revolutionary monarchy, in contrast Germans had a reputation for being apolitical. It would be an oversimplification to view all German immigrants as moderates, but German radical exiles generally moved to either France or the sister republic of Tellgovie created during the recent European war. As such, German immigrants were tolerated in the South in a way that Irish and British immigrants were not, as they were considered proslavery.

And thus, the nation grew quietly. Settlers slowly moved into both the Old West, and the New West of Luisiana, and this resulted in a period of speculation as the land rush allowed for new investment opportunities, and so too did the commerce that the new settlement inaugurated. The Second Bank put a brake on this speculation, as it sought to avoid a catastrophic boom and bust cycle as had happened in 1819; when it saw new banks pop up that it considered unstable, it made large deposits and then withdrew them, which would force the bank into retrenchment, and it circulated its banknotes in place of those of the average western paper bank. But despite this, a boom cycle began in the second market, and the nation prospered as a result. For the growing markets in the west required goods and services, which only the factories and crops of the east could provide. Thus, not only did St. Louis and New Orleans boom with their integration into the American market: so too did New York, Washington, Philadelphia, and Richmond, which served as great gateways to the west[[84]](#endnote-84). The canal boom continued, and it was not only the state governments which invested in huge canal projects – especially Indiana, which sought to outdo Ohio’s ambitious canal system – but also the federal government, headed by the pro-internal improvements Harrison administration. Ambitious turnpike projects also spread across the nation, with equal ambition to the canals, and the first few railroad projects began to emerge, which would allow for even faster transport of goods and people than the steamboat allowed. Charleston had already been reconstructed by 1832, but now it became a larger city than before. Telegraph lines were constructed across the nation all under the authority of the postmaster-general, and now it was possible to transmit messages from New Orleans to Boston within two hours, assuming good weather conditions.

In the East, with its considerable population, came the rise of additional telegraph lines in parallel to the originals, to allow for additional transmission of messages; painted different colors; named “Color Lines”, these lines existed for private use, so the state could sell its services to citizens for an ample profit[[85]](#endnote-85). These were considerably more expensive than a regular mail message, but they were also considerably quicker, and the boom of the era only escalated[[86]](#endnote-86). Additionally, this era saw dramatic postal reform on the British model, which saw the implementation of low uniform prices for conveying letters, as well as pre-payment by the sender rather than the receiver; these dramatic price cuts resulted in a surge of postage[[87]](#endnote-87). In contrast, telegraph messages were priced based on distance, and though with this new buildup prices fell, it still cost several dollars for even a short message across a short distance in the east. This was was pricier than a letter would be – and most consumers were willing to put up with the delays in transmission that a letter provided, because it would be much cheaper. But costs did fall enough that it allowed for regularized transmission of messages, and they became common for commercial purposes; most notably, this allowed for newspapers to consolidate their funds to distribute news, beyond the mere bulletins transmitted by the state, in the hope of being the first to the story. News agencies formed from constituent newspapers, hoping to employ reporters anywhere in the nation who would write basic articles, and then to transmit them by pre-decided ciphers which would then be published in their constituent papers. The most notable of these is, without a doubt, the Board of News Proprietors that formed around several newspapers in Washington, running the gamut across the political gradient; in time, it adapted readily to the electric telegraph and the railroad, and it would be known under the tavern it met in – the Green Pine. Thus began the Green Pine Telegram Service.

Additionally, in 1835, an endowment from a British scientist, James Smithson, to the United States to create a scientific institution to spread knowledge, came due under the terms of his will; the Harrison administration sent Richard Rush to London to retrieve it, and through some savvy investments he grew the willed money to double the size of Harvard’s famously huge endowment. Debate in Congress over this endowment, on whether it should be accepted at all, and if so what it should be used for, were raucous; here, the slavery issue once more reared its head, as Calhoun declared that this might serve as a precedent for abolitionist industrialists endowing money for compensated abolition. But in the end, a bill on the subject was shuffled through Congress, and it constituted the Smithsonian Institution as a combination of a museum, a national university, a scientific research institution, and an observatory; that these various purposes could be brought together demonstrated the sheer magnitude of the endowment. In the decades that followed, the Smithsonian was headed by the great scientist and discoverer of electromagnetic induction, Joseph Henry. The Smithsonian was instrumental in the transformation of American science from something in its infancy into something rivalling those of France and the British Isles[[88]](#endnote-88). Additionally, Henry did not stop with scientific innovation, and indeed he and a research team beneath him would later be instrumental in the invention of the electric telegraph[[89]](#endnote-89). The electric telegraph would transform communications both in the United States and the world; not only did it allow for messages to be transmitted much faster, but it had much greater message capacity which allowed for it to challenge paper mail. But this communication revolution only came with the Webster administration; Harrison saw a considerable but more modest communication revolution as the semaphoric telegraph became increasingly commonplace.

But along with the constitution of the Smithsonian, 1835 saw the collapse of Lloyd’s Bank in the British Isles. This was a direct result of the unstable political and financial situation of post-revolutionary Britain; the collapse of the Bank of England with the Popular Revolution had turned Lloyd’s into the de facto fiduciary authority of the British Isles. This allowed for the return of modest British financial stability, which allowed for a boom of industry in these years. But this also resulted in it being drastically overstretched, and in 1835 several loan failures resulted in a run on the bank, which ended with its collapse. That Lloyd’s had also been a major investor in the United States, especially the South and its growing cotton economy, meant a sudden credit crunch and the Panic of 1835. This was not anything near the catastrophe of 1819, however; Harrison and Clay immediately invested in more internal improvements in the South, and the National Bank made money available by selling bonds to the stable and mature eastern state banks to raise money to make available as credit, although the slight crunch in Washington Bank notes this caused may have been somewhat counterproductive. By 1836, the economy was well on its way towards recovery, and the economy was back in a boom period[[90]](#endnote-90), though this time fuelled by loans and credit by American, and even French, banks[[91]](#endnote-91). The Panic of 1835 did not put an end to the economic boom; rather, it was simply a blip within it. The bust was several years away; when it did hit, however, with the several years the economy built up, it would be massive[[92]](#endnote-92).

But nevertheless, coming into 1836, the United States was in a period of economic boom and stability. The quite old Harrison declared his intention to retire, and leaving office he returned home to Ohio after a grand national tour, where he was greeted as a national hero. His death in 1843 would be widely mourned across the nation, as he was celebrated as the “Washington of the West”[[93]](#endnote-93) – although by that point, the United States had seen another crisis come and pass, and it was in the depths of another.

# 20. The Grand Tour

By 1833, Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, popularly known as his former aristocratic title of the Marquis of Lafayette, or simply Lafayette, was less a living human being, and more the human incarnation of the First Age of Revolutions[[94]](#endnote-94). In his body rushed the Battle of Brandywine and the barricades of Paris – indeed, the previous six decades of revolutionary agitation, in both their promise and their failings. Born into an aristocratic French family, of extraordinarily noble birth that could trace its lineage all the way to fighting alongside Joan of Arc in the Lancastrian War, and surrounded only by the most opulent displays of wealth, at the age of thirteen he enlisted in the French army and the wealth of his family swiftly took him up the officer corps, and for his eighteenth birthday he received a captaincy as a present. Imbibing the sentiments of liberty, he was attracted to the American revolutionary cause. In the auspicious year of 1776, the French planned to send an army across the pond to assist the enemy of their British enemies, and he successfully ensured he’d be part of that detachment; however, when that plan fell through, he decided to travel across the pond and enlist in the Continental Army nonetheless, not as a Frenchman but as a human being, but with all the knowledge of his military education to an army that needed.

At the age of nineteen, he became a general and, with his French military experience, he ended up crucial in efforts to bring the incompetent American troops into shape. Additionally, almost immediately he became not merely a political ally, but a good friend of George Washington; indeed he nothing less than his surrogate son. At his first battle, at Brandywine, faced with superior British armies, he was crucial to a successful American retreat and got wounded in the act, and as a right hand of Washington he repeatedly served with distinction. At the Battle of Rhode Island, where the Franco-American alliance was beginning to mesh together, was something where Lafayette attempted to put himself at its head, but he was rebuffed, and the stalemate of the ensuing battle demonstrated that an alliance needed to be a stronger affair. Returning to France to a hero’s welcome despite having gone against royal orders, his lobbying was successful, and he returned with a large force that brought up American spirits. This new alliance saw its immediate fruition with the Yorktown campaign, where Lafayette served with distinction as Washington’s second-in-command; the French fleet depriving the British general Lord Cornwallis of naval protection proved crucial to the grand victory for American fortunes that was the Battle of Yorktown.

With this success, Washington sent Lafayette back to France; still a young man and the “Boy General”, he became increasingly involved in local reformist politics; shaped by his long fight for liberty, he also joined an abolitionist society. But in the 1780s, France’s long financial crisis came due, and as early in 1787 he advocated reforming France into a constitutional state to cure this. Come 1789 and the convening of the Estates-General, though he was a noble he was also a firm sympathizer with the Third Estate and sought its supremacy within the burgeoning legislative system. When the Third Estate declared itself the National Assembly, Lafayette was the chief writer of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, with language clearly taken from across the pond, and he happily accepted the end of his royal title in favor of simply being “Citizen Lafayette”. With the storming of the Bastille and the true origin of the French Revolution, Lafayette became the commander of the National Guard, a role he became intimately connected with. However, the French Revolution became far more extreme in the years that followed; his moderation, as well as his fidelity to principles of limited monarchy, slowly eroded his popularity. With the Flight to Varennes, his popularity collapsed, and when he fired on protestors at the Champ de Mars, radicals called him nothing less than a traitor, plotting to destroy the French Revolution from within. He subsequently resigned from the National Guard; it would only take a little while for the government to issue a warrant for his arrest, in 1792. Fleeing the authorities, he migrated to the Austrian Netherlands, but before he could cross the shore for America the Austrians arrested him. Thanks to American efforts his prison was quite comfortable, even after he tried and failed to escape, and his family joined him in his prison. With peace between France and Austria in 1802, Lafayette was freed, and he swiftly returned to France.

Here, he refused to give his loyalty to the Sieyesian order, which he considered patently oligarchical; however, his son Georges Washington served with skill and deft within the French Army, and he ended up repeatedly promoted by the time war entirely came to an end. In 1804, Lafayette was made a Conservator to keep him out of the arena of active politics, and here he became a leader of the opposition and a foe, if a passive one of the oligarchical police state that developed in the years that followed. Knowing Minister Fouché kept him on tight observation, Lafayette was careful to make sure to be on the right side of the law, and though he did maintain contacts with some revolutionary secret societies, that none of them ended up turning to revolution meant he made sure to keep quiet about it; and when authorities questioned him about these contacts, he denied them. To the extent he made his public opposition known, it came in the form of meetings with the oppositionist Coppet circle of Madame de Staël, as well as speeches whenever the College of Conservators was irregularly called. Together, this gave him a profile as a committed oppositionist, and even the neo-Jacobins who hated him for the Champ de Mars massacre, still hoped he would topple the Sieyesian regime. With war with Britain in 1821, Lafayette was a core voice calling for peace and limited war, to prevent the shock a long war might result; this represented his rather moderate politics.

When 1824 came and the rest of Europe called for war against France, panic reigned on the streets of France; it seemed nothing less than a renewal of the Revolution. Given this emergency, the government called for the College of Conservators, and ultimately it decided to overturn the government. Seeing his profile as a revolutionary and a figure of opposition, and perhaps determining his old age would secure French liberty, when it came time to select their Grand Elector, they elected none other than Lafayette himself. After a generation of him having been in the outs with power, he made his way to its very head – albeit as a nominally powerless figurehead. Here, he appointed fellow oppositionist Bernard-Francois de Chauvelin as his Consul to head government, and with that began the era known to history as the Glorious Reform. Ruling over the end of the police state and the rise of institutions that recognized change in power, he was not the active leader of government, as Grand Electors of France were (and are) inactive national figureheads, but he approved of the several reforms to the French political system even if they went quite a bit further than what he wanted. As the war was a success even if a much larger effort than he had originally wanted, he remained quite popular, and despite his old age he was a quite vigorous man who regularly gave speeches and undertook the several duties of the Grand Elector with style. When the Popular Revolution shook the British Isles in 1827, he immediately gave a speech praising it, in this hoping to bring it to eternally good relations with France without the isolation that caused the French Revolution to descend into paranoia. In 1832, by the time eight years were up and peace came to Europe, Lafayette chose to finally leave office, in the fashion of George Washington of old, despite his term having been for life, and he retired to a manor in Paris, intent on setting a precedent for retirement. But it was the following year he received a most tantalizing offer.

The United States had continued to revere Lafayette as a national hero in the over half-century since independence, the Boy General who fought for their cause, and as much of the revolutionary generation passed into legend, Lafayette’s name only rose. President Harrison and Secretary Clay, seeking to bring the nation together, invited him on a tour of the United States. Having not seen America since a visit in the 1780s, Lafayette happily accepted, and he travelled with an entourage consisting of his son and several other associates, as well as an unofficial French envoy team. Making his way across the pond, the massive national jubilation was such that he extended what was supposed to be a four-month tour of the seaboard into a year-long tour of the entire nation where he would visit every state. Such a tour was not an unprecedented act – Aaron Burr’s 1820 tour came close – nor was it the greatest example of such a tour – that honor belongs to Daniel Webster’s 1844 tour – but it is the best remembered. And though some feared his advanced age would mean he would die without reaching home, he did not care; privately, he asserted if he died along the way, he would consider it most fitting.

Travelling from France to New York where he watched the fireworks, he visited Saratoga, the site of the great revolutionary battle, and he met several old veterans he fought with; they greeted one another as brothers. He then travelled up to New England where he visited Bunker Hill, then back south to Philadelphia to Independence Hall. Wherever he went, he met children dressed as Continental soldiers, and church bells rung in his honor for hours. States named their militia the “National Guard”, in the honor of the militia that he once led so long ago. From there, he then to Baltimore and Washington, where he was excitedly greeted by the government and officeholders of every stripe imaginable. Congress appropriated him 300,000 dollars and land in Arcansa; he never visited the land, nor did he ever spend this money, but he willed it to his son to set him well for future years.

In February 1834, travelling south he came face-to-face with slavery, an institution he had long since abhorred. He had hoped the Americans would have abolished slavery, or at least brought it along the road to extinction – but he could see it was doing as well as ever. The difference between the prosperous planter elite and the brutalized slave was stark, and Lafayette despised it. Not wishing to offend and knowing he was America’s guest, he refrained from criticizing slavery in public, but privately, in conversations with his good friend James Madison, he tried to convince him to speak out in favor of abolition and set an example by freeing his own slaves. But the Framer of the Constitution did not budge; by this point, he not only considered slavery acceptable, but he wanted it spread across the United States. It was a harrowing demonstration of the contradiction at the very heart of the United States.

Reaching New Orleans, whose French-speaking inhabitants cheered him as a symbol of the union of American republicanism with Frenchness, he briefly got a throat infection; refusing treatment, it got better and he continued with his tour. Travelling up the Mississippi, he made his way to St. Louis where he again saluted its inhabitants in French and called for them to become good Americans; in Illinois, he met Indigenous Americans descended by his fellow comrades-in-arms, and he travelled along the Ohio River. Crossing the Ohio and Miami Canal, his boat capsized; a panicked entourage immediately raised him from the canal. Again, he got sick and refused treatment, and again he recovered. It was remarkable for a man who was in his seventies. Observers wondered if nothing less than divine providence kept him alive. With that, after a trip to Niagara Falls, he then travelled across the Erie Canal, and after a farewell dinner in Washington to celebrate his 77th birthday in 1834, he then made his way across the Atlantic in a ship renamed the *Brandywine* in his honor. Here, he lived a hearty and active life, up to his very end; he died in 1836 after pneumonia, and his death would be widely mourned by French and Americans alike. The world mourned not only a man, but the passing of an era; the governments of both France and America flew their flags at half-mast and draped their chambers in black. And the bells tolled for him, one last time for eternity.

Lafayette’s tour of America was a defining event for the nation at large. No longer a boy general, he was now an elderly statesman; no longer wearing a powdered wig and breeches, he now wore a bicorne and pants. The Age of Reason that had produced him was over; now the world was in the throes of the Romantic era. But he was still an American national hero, and wherever he went Americans cheered in his honor. The nation, still badly divided over the First Nullification Crisis, suddenly cohered in his presence as everyone of every political stripe wanted his blessing. Millions of pieces of memorabilia were sold to commemorate his tour, and virtually every town he approached got into a mad frenzy and named streets, parks, and squares in his honor where they in short order commissioned new statues. A whole generation of American children was presented to the man, so they could in future years claim a link to the revolution of old. And his legend was further shored up and strengthened. A whole generation of Americans for whom the Revolution was merely ancient history now loved him, and they would stop at nothing to ensure his name would be remembered forever. For the next several decades, the name of Lafayette would be cited by every faction possible in the United States. To the Republicans, he was a symbol of the “republican virtue” of the Planter Ascendancy; to the Democrats, he was a good foreign radical making it big in America; and to the burgeoning abolitionist movement, his condemnation of slavery was proof that it contravened the old values of 1776.

The only man whose career rivals or exceeds Lafayette’s as a hero of two worlds, and an icon of republicanism, is that of the great Giuseppe Garibaldi. He had, after all, served in six armies including America’s own Constitutionalists in the Liberty and Union War. Although when President Bancroft made this comparison to his face Garibaldi scoffed and damned Lafayette as a moderate and a traitor to the cause of liberty, Lafayette’s and Garibaldi’s name remain intimately connected, as friends of America from across the pond who shed their blood for a foreign country. Their statues stand side by side in a position of pride in the National Colosseum today – heroes of America’s two great revolutions for liberty.

# 21. The Amicable Adjustment

The Luisiana War saw, to avoid the slavery issue breaking into open war again, the drawing of a line at the thirty-sixth degree, thirtieth minute parallel to the equator, above which further introduction of slavery would be barred from further entry and below which further slaves could be introduced. Subsequently, settlement drew into the territories of Luisiana in a huge land rush; in particular, New Orleans boomed and became a huge, great city of the United States, and St. Louis became a crucial point for trade over the Mississippi River network. But here, the slavery issue began to make a presence, and the United States buckled in its presence. Slave state settlers moved on the north side of the great line to the territory of Missouri, with their slaves in hand; if they didn’t simply ignore the legal restriction, they instead transferred their slaves to a person already resident in the state, and then upon settling them the slaves got transferred back – a fully-legal process which state administrators could do nothing to touch. Additionally, this allowed for slave markets to emerge in Missouri, and it was not only slave state settlers who bought slaves to work on their new farms; so too did free state settlers, who were only too happy to abandon their former principles to make a quick buck. Additionally, the absentee plantations of the territory ended up on sale, and wealthy merchants swiftly snatched them up to become their own planter lords.

The area around the Missouri River swiftly became a mere extension of the Planter Ascendancy of the South[[95]](#endnote-95), despite that it was supposed to be reserved for free soil, and there were already altogether many Northerners who spoke unhappily about it. However, bills to gradually emancipate Missourian slaves failed to make headway, Harrison and Clay successfully blocking them from making headway, and the issue continued to fester. But the issue ultimately couldn’t be blocked forever. When Missouri sent up a state constitution authorizing slavery, it had an air of inevitability when John Quincy Adams, at this point a congressman, proposed an amendment which would require Missouri to ban slavery. This was clearly a do-over of the Illinois Crisis, and the sudden ruckus in Congress was a simple repeat of 1819[[96]](#endnote-96). And the ensuing debate would see all the same issues be raised. Southerners declared it unconstitutional to bar slavery, and this not only included old Nullificationist Southern Republicans, but also Unionists, as well as Southern Democrats. While in contrast, the North, be they Democrats, Republicans, or from the diminishing contingent of Anti-Catholics, was largely unified behind restriction. This meant the Adams Amendment, requiring Missouri to write a constitution not permitting the further introduction of slavery, and requiring it to manumit its current slaves, passed through the House of Representatives by wide margins; however, in the Senate, this time it was blocked thanks to several Northerners voting with the South against it. And the issue seared into the open.

The Missouri Crisis was perhaps a greater crisis for the Union than the Nullification Crisis was. For several Southern anti-Nullificationists, who either supported the tariff or thought nullification over the tariff an absurdity, had a very different stance when it came to the restriction of slavery, which they were perfectly willing to break the Union over. When John C. Calhoun gave speeches threatening disunion if Congress were to restrict Missourian slavery, nearly the entire South hummed alongside him. In the North, anti-Missouri sentiment was not anywhere near as cohesive as anti-Illinois sentiments in 1819; however, it was solidly behind restriction, and several Northern states ordered their state delegations to restrict slavery. With the further settlement of the west, lines across it had been drawn further on the basis of slavery, and as a result pro-compromise sentiments had greatly decreased. However, there was something of a change here, in that the Democratic Party was no longer a party of free-soil antislavery, but rather pro-compromise. Here, Secretary Clay attempted to organize several compromises[[97]](#endnote-97) – notably, he tried to allow slavery in the state of Missouri and bar it from the rest of the territory, in an attempt to replicate the Illinois Compromise – but such efforts ended up failing, as latent free-soil sentiments within the party ended up stoked[[98]](#endnote-98).

Thus, the issue ended up coming into the election cycle of 1836. Lines on slavery were drawn, and so too would be the parties. With the Democratic Party having evolved towards being pro-compromise, antislavery sentiments instead migrated out of the party. Joining a small contingent of diehard Anti-Catholics who regarded slavery and Catholicism as two sides of the same coin of tyranny came a large swathe of Northern Democrats, as well as some Northern Republicans. Together, they formed the Anti-Missouri Party, with a single political platform: to keep slavery out of the West. To this end, they nominated John Quincy Adams, the man who had kicked this off with his amendment and who had since become the standard-bearer of the North with his opposition to slavery. This was not the best choice, and even at the time many Anti-Missourians realized that his former Anti-Catholic membership would alienate antislavery immigrants who might otherwise join. It was for this reason that the vice presidential candidate selected was Thomas Morris, a far more pro-immigrant figure who was still reliably antislavery. The Democratic Party, having lost a section of their northern base, easily nominated Secretary Clay whose presidential ambitions were obvious to all, and as vice presidential candidate they selected Richard Rush, the capable Pennsylvanian who now opposed further attempts to stoke sectional divides, and they were on a platform of compromise to end the crisis. Additionally came the Republican Party; it had so recently consolidated Anti-Catholics into itself and this crisis threatened to break the unity of the party. John C. Calhoun attempted to make himself, or some trustworthy ally of his, the party’s candidate, but having lost 1832 most of the party did not consider him the man to lead it into a new era. For this reason, the Republicans ended up looking outside the raw base of politicians, who may all succumb to the sectional divide, and instead they selected Zebulon Pike. The war hero who took New Orleans during the Luisiana War, he was a obvious pick for a presidential candidate; his selection led him to pen a letter accepting it, but he did not campaign for himself, nor did he elucidate his position on slavery. He was perfect to unify a divided nation behind the Republicans, by being a cipher everyone could project their dream candidate onto. Being a Kentuckian – like Henry Clay – he was considered a Southerner, and thus the vice presidential candidate had to be a Northerner, and Levi Woodbury was dug up for this purpose. Despite some attempts to organize a specifically southern ticket, in the end the Southern Rights Party and its ticket headed by George Troup ended up largely sidelined.

The ensuing election was a mad, raucous and chaotic mess. Adams, perhaps not a figure for the modern era of mass politics, refused to go on a tour of the nation in the fashion of Aaron Burr, and instead he maintained genteel respectability. His party was severely encumbered by his Anti-Catholic past, and it took little for opponents to simply read out his anti-immigrant screeds to push them away from him. In contrast, Secretary Clay did go on a tour of the nation and talked to cheering crowds; however, he was the representative of the pro-compromise middle and therefore found it hard to maintain support from cheering crowds. And Pike, who refused to campaign because he was serving as a Major-General in the army, received a groundswell of support as his military career had made him a national hero, and additionally campaigners in the North portrayed him as antislavery and campaigners in the South as proslavery. When results came in, it ended up with no candidate winning a majority; the election would go to Congress[[99]](#endnote-99).

Figure : The 1836 election, by state

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **Electors** | **Pike** | **Adams** | **Clay** | **Troup** |
| Massachusetts | 23 | 5 | 18 | 0 | 0 |
| New Hampshire | 8 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Vermont | 7 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Rhode Island | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Connecticut | 10 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| New York | 44 | 20 | 20 | 4 | 0 |
| Pennsylvania | 32 | 14 | 8 | 10 | 0 |
| New Jersey | 9 | 8 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Delaware | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Maryland | 8 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Ohio | 22 | 18 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| New Ireland | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Huron | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Indiana | 10 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Illinois | 5 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Virginia | 23 | 16 | 0 | 4 | 3 |
| Kentucky | 15 | 1 | 0 | 14 | 0 |
| Tennessee | 15 | 9 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| North Carolina | 15 | 10 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| South Carolina | 11 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Georgia | 11 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| Yazoo | 8 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Mississippi | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Orleans | 5 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| **Total** | **299** | **147** | **71** | **69** | **12** |

Pike’s campaign was quite strong, but in the end he was two votes away from winning outright. And Adams ended up losing the numerical and sectional advantage his campaign held. The election would instead travel to Congress, which would in joint session decide the victor between Pike and Adams. Between the two candidates, Harrison and Clay concurred, they much preferred Pike, and indeed the South threatened civil war if Adams ended up president. But in the end, Harrison and Clay organized enough Democrats either voting for Pike or abstaining outright, and this was more than enough to see Pike elected president.

With the nation having clearly voted for compromise, Harrison and Clay now found it easier than ever to bring one into being. The ensuing Missouri Compromise brought together several elements. Clay having successfully convinced the Missourian constitutional convention to bar the additional introduction of slaves, he presented this as a fait accompli to achieve its admission without restriction, and additionally he established gradual manumission in the remainder of the Missouri Territory; to satisfy Southerners angered at the use of congressional pressure to keep slavery out of most of the former Luisiana, he introduced a stronger Fugitive Slave Act, which would establish federal commissioners over the North who would capture suspected fugitive slaves if asked by slaveowners, and there would subsequently be a trial with a jury organized federally, although each juror would be paid an additional dollar if they would rule the accused a slave. This act was clearly lopsided in favor of the South in that it established a new class of officeholders specifically to snatch slaves, and almost immediately it resulted in a Northern backlash headed by Daniel Webster, but that it included some facsimile of a jury trial meant it had enough Northern support. Additionally came a measure for federally-organized Indian removal; a longstanding demand of westerners, this was to gain the support of the West, including the Southwest for the measure, although given that most of four of the Five Civilized Tribes had already seen the way the wind was blowing and fled to Spanish Texas before they could be forced, it was if anything a recognition of the untenable situation on the ground. It additionally reserved the lands of modern-day Cansa and Minasota for establishing new reservations for removed Indigenous tribes. After initially trying to pass these acts together in an omnibus bill which failed, Clay instead divided it into several bills, which each passed thanks to different coalitions per bill. Thus, the Missouri Compromise had passed, although both Indian removal and fugitive slave capture would be much longer processes. The nation had cohered, and it had only taken a compromise with slavery. However, this would be remembered as a decided betrayal of American values, that the entire government submitted to the Planter Ascendancy to the South, and slowly this issue festered[[100]](#endnote-100).

And thus it was that Pike was inaugurated president in a deeply divided nation; he swore to keep the nation together. He pledged that the Missouri Compromise was a final compromise and that he would keep the nation together. Over his presidency, however, it would be clear that this was easier said than done, and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1837 would be a running sore for the nation as a whole until the Liberty and Union War.

# 22. Liberty’s Twilight

Zebulon Pike was, at once, a national hero and a blank slate upon his ascent to the presidency. Born in 1779 to an old settler family, his father was a long-serving military officer, and he grew up along the frontier along several posts; subsequently, Zebulon joined the army, and he served along several frontier posts. He first made his name in 1806-7 when, under the orders of his commanding officer, he led an expedition into Spanish Luisiana, north of St. Louis, to find the source of the Mississippi and several rivers within its watershed. Leading this expedition, he travelled deep into Luisiana; travelling southwards, the Spanish captured him along the Cansa River. In one of the most spectacular bluffs in American history, he pretended to be lost and asked the Spanish counter-expedition, “Is this not the Mississippi River?”. Afterwards, Pike expanded on his claim that they had crossed the Mississippi quite by accident, on a position upstream where it was little more than a stream, and he spun a tall tale of meeting hostile Indigenous tribes of virtually every variety. Though it remains unclear as to if this claim was even remotely believed, or if they saw through his claim, the Spanish captured him, treating him well as a lost officer, and sent the expedition’s membership far south to a prison in Santa Fe and then to Sonora, before taking them to Tampico, to Galveztown, and then to New Orleans where they shipped him across the border back to the United States. Along the way, Pike wrote several journals on what he saw behind Spanish lines, and giving them to the army, it provided valuable intelligence on Spanish society in the Internal Provinces and Luisiana – far more than if he had simply provided information on the sources of various rivers. And he became a national icon, cheered by the nation at large as an intrepid explorer who bluffed his way out of execution.

Thus, Pike served as a military officer on frontier posts for over the next decade. Upon the Luisiana War, he was swiftly made a general and headed an army making a slow advance southward into Spanish Luisiana. This was a sluggish advance, where American superiority on land met Spanish superiority on sea and faced several reversals – but in the end, Pike led his army in a successful advance into New Orleans, and his decision to treat the city well upon its surrender only served to further make his name as a patriotic hero, perhaps the largest of the entire war. Though the war ultimately came to an end less thanks to Pike’s victory and more to the Popular Revolution in the British Isles forcing the Spanish to give up any hopes of a counterattack, that it came at the very end, meant that the Battle of New Orleans was the defining victory of the whole war. Pike went on to serve as a military officer, and the governor of the Huron Territory, although for the time being he avoided calls for himself, the “Liberator of New Orleans”, to be drafted as a presidential candidate[[101]](#endnote-101). But he continued to entertain such talk, and he would keep it on the table.

He did accept an offer of presidential nomination in 1836, albeit through the genteel traditionally republican manner of asserting that nomination to the presidency was not in his hands; he believed it was clear that he could very well win, and he wrote a series of open letters declaring that he supported sectional unity and the rights of the states, in other words that he was a standard Republican. When the election came due, he narrowly failed to win the presidency – but he did make a strong performance, and as the election travelled to Congress, he was clearly the favorite to win. When it came time for the contingent election, he travelled to Washington and he attempted to corral support through a series of dinners with congressmen, where he made several promises for their support, several of which were contradictory but none of which saw him conclusively pledge in writing on any true, solid policy. This succeeded, and he was elected president; shortly before his inauguration, he wrote an open letter praising the Missouri Compromise, and in his inauguration speech he maintained the same themes; as many wits put it, he was a candidate without policy.

Pike’s cabinet was almost immediately demonstrative of the leanings of his party. His Secretary of State was Joel R. Poinsett, a South Carolinian ally of Calhoun albeit a voice of moderation during the First Nullification Crisis, his Secretary of the Treasury was Levi Woodbury, a New Hampshire Calhounist, and his Secretary of Domestic Affairs was John Tyler, a Virginian who won election to the Senate on the basis of his support of nullification. It would be Secretary Tyler who administered over the introduction of fugitive slave commissioners, to enforce the newly-ratified Fugitive Slave Act[[102]](#endnote-102). This immediately was a controversial act, as many in the North regarded it as both unconstitutional and immoral, and indeed several called for open civil disobedience against the Act, but almost immediately Secretary Tyler sought to secure convictions under it. Indeed, from the very beginning, several northerners who had voted for Pike, suddenly declared their regrets for their choice, and this was a sudden blow to his popularity, though ultimately not for his position.

The specter of the Fugitive Slave Act almost immediately resulted in a mass exodus of free Coloreds towards Canada, free from the writs of the American government[[103]](#endnote-103), as it was clearly written under the assumption that any Colored person was guilty of being a slave unless ruled innocent, but it was not quick enough to stop commissioners from arresting suspected fugitive slaves and putting them under trial. It was almost immediately clear that the juries – to be called, under the Act, by the same commissioners – were packed, to consist of people who supported the law rather than nullify it, and certainly to exclude any free Coloreds from participating. Within the Lower North such juries were easy to find, but this immediately drew into controversy when it came to New England. When the commissioners of Boston arrested a fugitive slave, the state government refused it access to its jails to install him; instead, they had to place him inside a makeshift cell in the customs house. The abolitionist Vigilance Committee of Boston organized a plot to break the accused out of jail and shuffle him to Canada, but this plot ended up defeated. And when it came to assembling the jury, prospective jurors were required to swear that first, they wouldn’t nullify the law, and second, that they’d rule the accused free only if they found positive proof. This immediately saw mass protest; antislavery activists were additionally able to claim that this threatened the right to a jury trial for everyone. Most notably, several antislavery industrialists created a fund to pay jurors money for ruling the accused free. In the end though, the jurors all being proslavery thanks to the selection process resulted in them ruling the accused a slave. To send him to the South, Secretary Tyler sent several battalions to march him to the harbor; a crowd of thirty thousand gathered to jeer at the troops, in a scene which evoked nothing less than the Boston Massacre. To many observers, the Pike administration was no less tyrannical than the Guelphs of old.

In the national arena, Daniel Webster headed the charge of dissent against the Fugitive Slave Act and its implementation; however, he focused on the threat that packed juries posed against white Americans and their liberty. This represented the beginning of the reunion of the Democratic Party: Webster’s moderate antislavery wing converged on Clay’s moderate proslavery wing, and the two could agree that the liberties of white Americans were being threatened by this conduct. Indeed, jury-packing being one of the grievances that led to the British Isles’ Popular Revolution allowed the reunited Democratic Party to condemn the betrayal of national values, without verging on the sectionalist theme that slavery itself betrayed the Revolution. As Webster and Clay together reunited the Democratic Party, a section of the Anti-Missourians refused, and this section swiftly transitioned towards full-blown abolitionism. Headed by Congressman William Leggett, whose commitment towards classical radicalism culminated with him being radicalized against slavery, this section became known as the Equal Rights Party, and it advocated the end of slavery in all the territories, a ban on interstate slave commerce, and a prohibition on the National Bank participating in slavery. It was nothing less than the divestment of the federal government from slavery, to reduce the institution to a mere local level where it would be rendered extinct. However, the Equal Rights Party was a mere minority party, and even within the northern states it could only succeed in electing state legislators and a handful of congressmen; there was also a section of the abolitionist movement, headed by William Lloyd Garrison, which declared any participation within the government meant complicity in slavery.

The unprecedented organization of the abolitionist movement that the Equal Rights Party represented also resulted in a backlash. Within the South, the antislavery movement, once tolerated as a distinct undercurrent dating from the lofty ideals of the Revolution ended up entirely destroyed in several waves of mob violence, as the majority of whites viewed it as nothing less than treason against their section; and within the North, influential Republican figures and news editors claimed that Coloreds free blacks, upon receiving emancipation, would move northwards and take jobs. This propagandizing proved to be a successful affair, and it led to mechanics and the working class becoming less proslavery, and more anti-anti-slavery; they feared the abolitionists for what they might do to their livelihoods. Such attitudes combined into anti-immigrant sentiment, as nativist Republicans found it too easy to claim that abolitionism was some Irish and British plot to disrupt American society, of which abolitionist immigrants were merely the pawns. Abolitionist celebrations of British emancipation, or of its Charter Day, ceased to be displays of republican solidarity; instead, they were proof of some abolitionist conspiracy operating out of London and, to give it a special Irish tinge, they claimed it was managed by the infamous Daniel O’Connell. Anti-abolitionist mobs coursed through several Northern cities; even in Boston, that old stronghold of anti-slavery thought, a mob nearly lynched William Lloyd Garrison. But the one which attracted national attention was in Saint Paul.

A frontier town in Ontonagon Territory, Saint Paul was on the Mississippi River, in its far north, the only part free from slavery. Benjamin Lundy was an abolitionist who printed a newspaper to spread over the Mississippi River network. Hounded out of Illinois and Missouri by proslavery mobs, Lundy instead travelled up the Mississippi to free-soil Saint Paul, and he distributed the newspaper southward. However, this faced anger from its settler working-classes, which believed abolition a threat to their economic prosperity, and they destroyed his printing press three times. But each time, Lundy simply built a new press and got back to work. The fourth time, however, when the mob came, he was at his printing press. The mob snatched him and beat him to death[[104]](#endnote-104). News of Benjamin Lundy’s death coursed through the nation. Membership in abolitionist societies suddenly escalated dramatically, and they immediately heralded him as a martyr. The unceasing, radical abolitionist journalist William Lloyd Garrison, who was first converted to ultra abolitionism by Lundy, deeply mourned his life; and the great abolitionist agitator Wendell Phillips first made his name in a speech praising Lundy as a martyr and the just inheritor of the values of 1776. With the Liberty and Union War and the abolition of slavery, Lundy would ultimately be heralded as a national martyr; today, in the National Colosseum, a statue of Benjamin Lundy is one of several which represents the state of Ontonagon.

Thus, coming into 1839, the Pike administration saw the Missouri Compromise buckle, but nevertheless hold. Sectionalism bubbled beneath the surface, but it remained there. The abolitionist movement matured and became something cohesive complete with organizations and even a political party, but it could not grow beyond that, and indeed it faced a mass campaign of opposition, especially by the street mob. But opposition to Pike grew. The Democratic Party successfully surmounted the sectional divide, and slowly they organized an opposition to him and his administration. They pointed to him as nothing less than the second incarnation the Federalists, like them abusing national power – and in the years that followed, they would challenge his rule of the United States.

# 23. The New Resolve

Pike’s election also represented a new era in foreign policy. President Harrison and Secretary Clay held sympathies for republican revolution everywhere, including those that tended towards the abolition of slavery. Harrison and Clay both met the Popular Revolution in the British Isles with joy, and their Anglophobia very suddenly turned towards Anglophilia. Come 1830 and the British revolutionary government abolishing slavery, Harrison and Clay continued to have quite warm relations with the British Isles, but the Planter Ascendancy suddenly felt under siege. Having long feared the French would take their slaves, they now feared the British would join them and they saw the warmth of American relations as something dangerous[[105]](#endnote-105). This ultimately led to the anxieties that peaked with the First Nullification Crisis, but ultimately the stress to the union passed with the Compromise Tariff. In the years that followed, the Democratic Party tended towards Anglophilia and the Republicans towards Anglophobia – this foreign policy realignment directly owed itself to slavery.

Additionally came new relations with Venezuela. Venezuela’s nationhood was one which saw strong support in the United States. Francisco de Miranda was, before returning to Venezuela at the head of a British army, stuck in a long exile for over half a century where he had an exciting life as an eternal agitator for the cause of Spanish American liberty[[106]](#endnote-106); in the 1780s, he had for some time lived in the United States where he met George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and several other great Americans. Thus, by the time he made his return to Venezuela in 1823, Americans cheered him on and only lamented that it was the British and not the Americans who could aid him in this project of national liberation; the nation saw swift American recognition. And though that the traitor Hamilton, upon fleeing into exile in Canada, then made his way to Venezuela to assist Miranda, certainly tarnished the cause, it still seemed to the vast majority of Americans a quest for national liberty and an echo of America’s own revolution.

Upon the end of the Luisiana War, it did not take long for the United States to immediately make arms available for Venezuelan purchase, nor did it take long for several American veterans to enlist in the Venezuelan army, in order to fight against latent anti-independentist sentiment. In total, some ten thousand Americans took up arms in the Venezuelan Patriot army. This the Spanish government protested, but its fears of some grand republican alliance meant it did little beyond this. Instead, unofficial American assistance proved crucial for the Venezuelan cause, against both royalists, as well as independentists who hated the Patriots[[107]](#endnote-107); Miranda, and after his death José Antonio Anzoátegui, armed their troops with American guns, and by 1830 they successfully established a Venezuelan state; by the time the Spanish Interregnum permanently put an end to Spanish designs of reconquest, the line had already been drawn. Also in 1830 Venezuela ratified for itself a new constitution; within its complicated arrangements was freedom of the womb, which would bring slavery to extinction within several decades. The Venezuelan Patriots had already freed a large proportion of slaves, either because they enlisted in the army or because they were owned by royalists, and indeed winning the support of the Colored and mixed-race population, especially the *llanero* culture of the plains, was crucial to the success of the Venezuelan Patriots. But this put this policy at the front and center of its agenda. Suddenly, Southern opinion on Venezuela changed, as along with Haiti’s and Bahia’s independence as Colored republics, it seemed another chain in the link of “race-mixing”[[108]](#endnote-108).

In 1834, the Venezuelan government declared the convening of a congress of all the independent nations of the continent of America. Coming after the Popular Revolution and the ensuing collapse of Britain’s empire in the Caribbean, this included the United States, Venezuela, Bahia, Haiti, Grenada, Sainte-Lucie, and Youloumain; in addition, it called for British and French delegates as observers. A supporter of Pan-American independence[[109]](#endnote-109), Secretary Clay swiftly made for the sending of delegates to this new Pan-American Congress in Cumana; however, the Planter Ascendancy being beyond disturbed at the idea of entreating with the freedmen’s state of Haiti, and the mulatto state of Bahia, as equals, it successfully blocked congressional appropriations. Clay nevertheless sent delegates to Cumana – but here, talks proved unfruitful. Supreme Director Anzoátegui’s attempts to get an American alliance of mutual defence failed, and all these talks really succeeded in was loosening some trade restrictions. This made the nation a market for the burgeoning American manufacturing sector, although it was not much one. And with Haiti and Bahia, the American delegates maintained a cool indifference – both to avoid making a commotion, and to not treat them like equals – though even this, many Southerners regarded as too much recognition.

When Pike ascended to the presidency in 1837, he suddenly put an end to Clay’s ambitions of hemispheric liberty. He put an end to good relations with the “race-mixing” state of Venezuela, and suddenly relations became far more contentious. More momentous would be the dramatic changes to the diplomatic corps. The Planter Ascendancy, seeing Harrison and Clay as especially weak when it came to the international scope of slavery, sought to ensure that consuls and ministers to abroad would fight to ensure the protection of slavery from foreign threats – and thus, that they’d be from the South itself. No part of this change in personnel was as famous as the consul-general sent to the British Isles, Andrew Stevenson. A Virginian planter, he was a stark change from his antislavery predecessor Daniel Webster; he immediately got to work trying to fight against its increasingly influential abolitionist lobby, and here he tried to ensure the British government would not just not undercut American slavery, but also slavery anywhere else. Here, he got the enmity of perhaps the foremost leader of the abolitionist movement in the British Isles – the great “Advocate for Humanity” himself, Daniel O’Connell. After O’Connell repeatedly derided him as a slave breeder, a far more extreme condemnation than merely calling him a slaveowner, Stevenson challenged O’Connell to a duel to satisfy his tainted honor, and perhaps to kill him, to prevent him from influencing British politics. However, O’Connell was a committed pacifist, and so he refused all these entreaties to duelling. Despite Stevenson subsequently deriding him as a coward, it helped to set O’Connell above the honor code of the day – and it put Stevenson, and the American South as a whole, below the British Isles. This caused a great controversy and no shortage of embarrassment for Britain’s Russell administration – which now had to suddenly answer for a man it regarded as dangerous Irish radical, without also alienating its own wing of abolitionist moralists.

But most decisive was relations with France. The newly-appointed consul-general, William C. Rives, was an agent of the Planter Ascendancy but certainly a more measured one. Between France and the United States, a dispute emerged; France had, during the War of Roussin’s Fleet, impounded several American ships, and postwar negotiations over restitution stalled. A similar dispute with the British Isles having been resolved by the Clay-Tierney Treaty, American diplomacy increasingly focused on this situation. And though Rives attempted to negotiate French restitution to France early on in his tenure, these efforts were stalled by the French government; indeed, when the issue travelled to its legislature, the Tribunate and Council of State clashed against one another, and the legislature was wholly undecided. Across the pond, it seemed American honor had been violated, and many increasingly called for war, no less than President Pike. Such sentiments inevitably meshed with the slavery issue. This was for a variety of reasons: one that cannot be understated is that the French Republic had been an object of fear for many southerners, since it had abolished slavery in 1794, and its support of Bahia in its war of independence was only more evidence of some sort of “French abolitionist” conspiracy. The independence of Haiti was less a disproof of such a conspiracy, and more just proof that the French were willing to take the “disease” of abolitionism wherever it went, even at their expense. But another reason was that, despite the formal ban, the United States was increasingly enmeshed in the slave trade.

The French navy had, since the end of the War of the French Revolution in 1804, been involved in a unilateral war against the slave trade. This was only partially motivated by morality and the principles of the Rights of Man, for it also undercut its rivals whose economic well-being, after all, was dependent on the slave trade. This suppression slowly escalated over the course of the 1810s, and after the British abolished the slave trade in 1815, it too began to suppress it. With it being harder than ever to transport Africans across the Atlantic, this allowed for the bloom of a trans-Caribbean slave trade, as in their stead American slaves were exported from America. This was technically illegal, but the United States lacked any semblance of a navy or military to enforce this; additionally, neither France nor the British Isles wanted to get on America’s bad side, and this meant they did not inspect their ships. But this was only an undercurrent; it would only be after the Luisiana War in 1828, and especially the dawn of peace in Europe in 1832, that this slave trade escalated as France and the British Isles now worked together to suppress it, as squadrons sailed across West Africa to stop and force an end to the transatlantic slave trade. American ships docked the harbors of Spanish and Portuguese America, filled to the brim with Virginian slaves, and indeed slave-breeding in much of the South escalated to supply these new markets. But with Portugal barred by treaty from trading slaves across the Atlantic, French ships zealously inspected any ships which docked in the harbors of Recife, Rio de Janeiro, and Belem for slaves, and this meant they impounded many American ships. In particular came the French impounding of the *Seneca Chief* just outside the coast of Recife, and this sparked outrage across the United States. Coming at the same time as the controversy with France over restitution, this only increased the scale of the insult – and it only made it much harder for the French to attempt to renegotiate the issue.

In his annual message to Congress, Pike declared the impounding of American ships in Portuguese Brazil nothing short of an insult to American honor, and he declared the possible necessity of war. At this juncture, the British Isles came in and offered mediation; however, Pike refused it. Many, then and now, have accused Pike of cooking up a war to throw aside controversy over the fugitive slave controversy; if he did, it succeeded and, indeed, Americans both sides of the Mason-Dixon line joined together to condemn French conduct. In the end, 1839 saw Congress authorize not a declaration of war, but American retaliation against French shipping; Pike drew up letters of marque to arm a fleet for this purpose. Within the Democratic Party, the Clay and Webster wings joined together to condemn Pike’s conduct as having caused a useless war when it could have been avoided through simple negotiation, and despite a smaller minority which believed war having happened, needed to be fought honorably, the Democratic Party in general believed the war a mistake. Indeed, as Webster derided, fighting the war would spend more money than even a generous restitution would provide. They condemned it as a repeat of the Quasi War of Adams’ time; that we today call the war what they called it, the Second Quasi War, shows which view has ultimately succeeded[[110]](#endnote-110).

Under Consul Lafitte, France was hardly enthusiastic about it because it considered it a sideshow to the entire effort - but it did seek a swift retaliation campaign to bring America to the negotiation table. It saw that its navy was superior, and therefore it could be used to bring shock and awe to the to bring them to the negotiation table. Thus began the Second Quasi War – not a war that many wanted, but a war which happened nevertheless. Both sides could not back down – and so they fought. Thus began the war which dominated Pike’s tenure, brought him to the high point of his popularity, and led him to his end.

# 24. The Fallen Government

The declaration of reprisal against the French government saw a sudden wave of nationalism as Americans rallied around the flag. Though the Democratic Party was less sure that going to war was smart, for the moment most Democrats similarly rallied behind the war, but if only to bring it to a swift and honorable end; they feared that if they truly opposed the war, they’d be linked with “Hamiltonian treason”. And though the abolitionist movement and the Equal Rights Party condemned this as a war on behalf of the Planter Ascendancy, they found themselves a distinct minority. And thus, Pike saw ample support from among the American public for outfitting squadrons of ships into the Caribbean to engage French ships they came across, and from New Orleans, New York, and Norfolk, they made their departure[[111]](#endnote-111). More famous would be the use of letters of marque to deploy converted commercial ships to that same end – which was both a move to keep the war small, and to supplement American forces.

The first strike would come from just off the coast of Guadeloupe. Here, American ships successfully seized five entirely defenceless French merchant vessels as prizes – it having been too early for the French to prepare for the war – and this was quickly celebrated across the United States, and the man whose skill made this operation, Captain Robert F. Stockton, became an American national hero, almost overnight. He was paraded on the streets, cheered as America’s Lord Cochrane. But the United States did not have long to relish in this victory. French retaliation was swift, and it was decisive.

France already had a sizeable fleet scattered across the Caribbean, to protect its trading interests against the spike in piracy that came following Britain’s Popular Revolution, and indeed prior to the Popular Revolution France having invested in a large navy to fight against British naval superiority. It did not take long for it to get to work against American shipping interests. This proved fairly rapid; just outside the harbor of Caracas, the French seized no less than fifteen American merchant vessels, in what was less a battle and more an extended surrender. These seizures slowly expanded up the Caribbean, and the United States Navy, despite the degree to which it had been built up, had little to show for it. Additionally, French retribution against American shipping increased internationally; with New Englander ships, then and now, having a presence worldwide, French retribution made itself known as far as the Indian Ocean; operating out of the Mascarene Islands, it went after New Englander whalers, many of whom had not even heard of the war. Additionally, against the American freedmen’s colony on the coast of West Africa, the French launched a naval raid; to avoid potentially brutal retaliation, the colonists immediately declared independence as the Republic of Fredonia, in a decided blow against American honor. But this was counterproductive; if the French hoped this would bring the Americans to the table, it did not as instead Americans called for bloody retaliation to redeem national honor, and offers of British mediation continued to be refused.

An attempt to bring the French on the defensive came when an American fleet invaded Saint Pierre and Miquelon, a French dependency just off the coast of Newfoundland, in the hopes that the French having been at peace with the British since the end of the Popular Revolution, they had largely dismantled the naval apparatus in the area. But this proved a mistake; the ensuing battle pitted American vessels against a French protective fleet which had been sent there not long after relations broke down, and it culminated with most of the American fleet sunk. When the Americans launched a beating retreat to avoid being entirely, it ended with the remainder captured by French ships. This attempt to bring the war on the offensive thus ended in rank American humiliation and demonstrated it was, despite the great expansion of the Luisiana War, a second-rate power. And thus, the United States continued to assemble fleets to shadowbox with the French over the Caribbean and little outside there, and they failed to make their way to truly making a fight with them. At the same time, French attempts to bring the United States to the table largely failed, as Pike proved intransigent and instead requested higher and higher sums of money as compensation. When predictably, these offers failed, Pike came back to the American people and blamed the French for refusing them.

As the war continued, the position of the Democratic Party slowly changed. Suddenly, it declared that American honor had been satisfied, and it called for peace. And Pike seemed like nothing less than a warmonger, orchestrating a war between two great republics for nothing but his own personal gain. Daniel Webster, who had never been particularly prowar, suddenly turned hard against it, under the influence of New Englander opinion which wanted to reopen the now-bottled commerce. In Faneuil Hall in Boston he gave a speech damning Pike as a warmonger who turned American honor into an excuse for mindless militarism, and this turned this opinion respectable, and it spread. New Englander whalers were now far more reluctant to offer their services to the government, as they increasingly saw this as little more than a war fought on behalf of the Planter Ascendancy; instead, beached seamen in the ports of Boston and Portsmouth launched peaceful protests against the government. Some even talked of secession, declaring that as dear as Union was, Commerce was yet more dear, though this was nothing more than some loose talk; that trade was successfully redirected through the St. Lawrence, through British vessels, meant the bite to commerce that French attacks represented, wasn’t as bruising as would’ve seemed. But it was a bite to American commerce, which spread to encompass grain and cotton, and the Pike administration’s management of the home front did little to redirect trade through the secure St. Lawrence.

As more and more Democrats regarded this war as an increasingly pointless affair, antiwar sentiments expanded within it. The specter of the First Quasi War one generation ago, and its role in destroying the Federalist Party, hung over the war like a Sword of Damocles; and though Pike fastidiously avoided repeating the mistakes of the Adams administration, the Democratic Party increasingly flew the standard of the Jefferson-Burr ticket of 1800. Even the Western wing of the Democratic Party, which initially regarded this as an affair of national honor, saw this as little else than a repeat of the First Quasi War, with Pike being a puppet of Calhoun in the same way that Adams had been a puppet of Hamilton, and that they needed to oppose in the same fashion. Democratic newspaper editors increasingly dared Pike to repeat history by subjecting them to Alien and Sedition Acts; and though Pike refused to take the bait and tried to kill this opposition with kindness, such criticism only escalated. This increasingly-frantic criticism flowed into Congress, where Webster and Clay attempted to attach riders to war appropriation bills requiring President Pike to begin negotiations on ending the war. But with Republican majorities in both houses of Congress, these riders failed, and special elections to the House saw the confirmation that he still had broad enough support to keep the war going.

Thus, battles continued. The Caribbean saw some frantic battling between American and French fleets, and though the Americans consistently found themselves outmatched by the French state-of-the-art paddle steamers, that they were far more enthusiastic about this business than the French, closed in on this advantage. But still, the war was a miserable little affair, and the lack of truly decisive battles either way, as forces were involved in what seemed little else than shadowboxing, only served to diminish the war in its full capacity. It seemed less that American national honor was on the line and more that this was a silly little dispute which had been blown out of proportion. But yet, there was still a degree of enthusiasm for the war, especially in the South which had long regarded the French Republic as a source of abolition and “race-mixing”, and to a degree in the West which still regarded this, despite everything, as a war for national honor. Thus, as 1839 turned to 1840 and the nation turned towards the coming election, nobody knew if continuing or ending the war would win on the ballot.

# 25. The Spirit of ‘00

As election season came, the Democrats believed they would be ready for an easy electoral win. For just like 1800, 1840 was an election year happening in a time of a quasi war with France. Just like 1800, after one term, a president was accused of going to war for personal aggrandizement, while being a patsy for a traitor outside the Cabinet. This time, the accused traitor in question was not the centralizing Federalist Alexander Hamilton, but the decentralist Republican John C. Calhoun – but nevertheless, the Democrats believed the time had come for a Revolution of 1800. This was hardly the first time the specter of a ballot-box revolution had been raised[[112]](#endnote-112) – already, the 1816, 1824, and 1836 elections had all been compared in their own time to 1800, and in the future the 1844, 1852, 1868, and 1916 elections would all be compared to 1800 – but this time, the resemblance was a little uncanny.

Thus, when the Democrats held their national convention, the presidential nomination was a prize much fought over. Both its great personalities, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, fought their all for the nomination – indeed, to win the votes of antiwar Democrats, Clay wrote an open letter where he finally elucidated his opinion that the war needed to be brought to an honorable end – but in the end, what was decisive was Webster’s associations with antislavery. Southern Democrats went in hard on Clay, while Northern Democrats went in hard on Webster; in contrast, the West was divided, and though in the past it may have been all in on “Harry of the West”, both settlement from New England and Webster’s electioneering had successfully resulted in a West divided between him and Clay. The ensuing deadlock lasted for over a dozen ballots, until delegates finally called for drafting a compromise candidate. After an attempt to draft William Henry Harrison ultimately failed, this being too reminiscent of Burr’s two failed runs to prevail, instead delegates moved over to Admiral Stephen Decatur. Known as a supporter of the Democratic agenda, he had occasionally dabbled in presidential politics, but this had previously gone nowhere; his success in the Second Quasi War had suddenly brought his name on everybody’s lips, and it would, the delegates hoped, give credit to the Democratic position that the war had to be brought to an honorable end. This movement successfully made headway, and on the thirty-fourth ballot, Decatur won a majority of delegates. Being too busy in the war effort, Decatur did not go on a national tour– but he did become the focal point of a national campaign, which ran on his considerable personal reputation.

This faced off against President Pike, who the Republican convention easily acclaimed as their candidate. The ensuing campaign ran on the war, and it declared that only the Republican Party was the party of the war and national honor – and the Democrats as the party of surrender. This was a patriotic campaign which threw Republicans’ past of political sectionalism into the dust; this patriotism stitched up the party and allowed it to ignore its great divides. Despite the flagging popularity of the war, the Pike administration saw a groundswell of support for its agenda all across the nation, and despite the abstract nature of “national honor”, it proved a rallying cry for the nation at large.

And compounding this already hard-fought election was the run of the abolitionist Equal Rights Party[[113]](#endnote-113); it saw in how both the major parties nominated slaveowning southerners as evidence of the undemocratic and unrepublican Planter Ascendancy and its influence and prerogative over both parties, at the expense of the American people, which the war was simply a manifestation of. They also swiftly went to work calling themselves the only truly antiwar party, and they accused the Democrats of selling that cause out by nominating Decatur. To this end, after attempts to nominate Daniel Webster, John Quincy Adams, and several other high-profile politicians, it nominated William Leggett, a classical radical newspaper editor radicalized into supporting emancipation[[114]](#endnote-114) and who had briefly served as a congressman; even within this fringe party, his support of racial equality was controversial[[115]](#endnote-115). But nevertheless, he successfully won the support of a considerable portion of the North which similarly abhorred the outsized influence of the planters, and this only added to the convolution of the coming election.

The election would ultimately come down to the wire – in yet another reminiscence of the 1800 election. But where it ultimately was not reminiscent of 1800 was that the incumbent candidate prevailed. The abolitionist Leggett campaign hadn’t won any electoral votes – but it certainly swallowed a lot of Northern votes which would have otherwise gone for Decatur. President Pike would serve out for another four years, and most observers agreed that this would mean the war would be fought to its eventual end – be that victory or defeat[[116]](#endnote-116).

Figure : The 1840 election, by state

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| State | Electors | Pike | Decatur |
| Massachusetts | 23 | 3 | 20 |
| New Hampshire | 8 | 5 | 3 |
| Vermont | 7 | 1 | 6 |
| Rhode Island | 5 | 1 | 4 |
| Connecticut | 10 | 6 | 4 |
| New York | 44 | 24 | 20 |
| Pennsylvania | 32 | 12 | 20 |
| New Jersey | 9 | 7 | 2 |
| Delaware | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Maryland | 8 | 6 | 2 |
| Ohio | 22 | 14 | 8 |
| New Ireland | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Huron | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Indiana | 10 | 3 | 7 |
| Illinois | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| Virginia | 23 | 17 | 6 |
| Kentucky | 15 | 4 | 11 |
| Tennessee | 15 | 11 | 4 |
| North Carolina | 15 | 12 | 3 |
| South Carolina | 11 | 11 | 0 |
| Georgia | 11 | 8 | 3 |
| Yazoo | 8 | 5 | 3 |
| Mississippi | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| Missouri | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Orleans | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 302 | 166 | 136 |

The shipyards of the nation readied for new ships of the navy, and along the coasts many worried that France was plotting some sort of landing. In the South, fear that the French were stirring up some sort of slave revolt only escalated, and militias armed and readied for the landing of French troops. Such feelings had little basis in reality, but wartime paranoia nevertheless persisted. But yet, beneath the surface, the war was cooling. Pike was increasingly discontented at this pointless war, which seemed to cost more for the United States, than the entire restitution being fought over. And he also worried that he was nothing more than a patsy for the ambitious John C. Calhoun, who he now moved to sideline within his own party and increasingly jeered as a traitor to the nation, a latter-day incarnation of the infamous Alexander Hamilton. Following the election, there was a distinct shift in patronage, as government appointees loyal to Calhoun found themselves fired and replaced by members of the more nationalist, Madisonian wing of the Republican Party. Additionally, the collapse of the old Ottoman Empire in 1841 and the ensuing wars of independence of several of its subject peoples, especially Greece, inspired feelings of sympathy across the Western world, including the United States; many burgeoning “Philhellenes”, not in the least Daniel Webster and Henry Clay, advocated not only peace with the fellow republic of France, but an alliance with it on the side of the Greeks, as if to expand the Clay Doctrine into the Eastern Hemisphere.

Thus, in this evolving atmosphere Pike finally agreed to British offers of mediation, and at the same time French involvement in the First Circassian War from 1841 onwards made it more willing to agree to even the most extreme American offers. The ensuing Franco-American Convention saw the French agree to pay the United States forty million francs, a colossal sum greater than the money originally sought. By 1842, the Senate ratified the treaty, and Pike excitedly declared victory. This put an end to ambitious plots from Southerners to go on the offensive, to organize freebooting expeditions to secure the French Caribbean to slavery – but the nation cheered, including the Southerners who had previously feared French-supported slave revolts. And though many Democrats chuckled and sneered at Pike for stealing their clothes, of peace with honor, they nevertheless remarked that they were indeed good clothes to steal. And so, Pike launched a national tour, where he was met with cheering crowds – crowds which included many Democrats, who were only too happy to take credit for forcing enough pressure to push him into an honorable peace he would have otherwise avoided.

But 1842 also saw the upending of the Pike administration. For beneath the surface of the sheen of victory, there was a rot all over the economy – and when it finally collapsed, the results affected the entire economy, as well as the entire nation.

# 26. The Grip of the Ball

The Panic of 1842 was but the inevitable consequences of a long and unsustainable economic boom. The incorporation of so much territory from Spain resulted in inevitable land speculation, as boosters and speculators bought up land and tried to attract settlers to and near it. The ensuing land rushes, helped by the investments in canals and roads over the Harrison years only inspired an avalanche of speculation, as in came investors, bonds, and stock shares. Though the National Bank invested little in this boom, it preferring to invest in the East, and it even worked against the boom by trying to topple the several unfruitful projects popping up across the West, the boom continued to build in scale. The Panic of 1835 and the collapse of Lloyd’s over in London did not put an end to the boom, and all it did was slightly pull the breaks; instead, the land rushes escalated and so too did all the speculation beneath the surface. Paper land companies and their stocks and bonds flowed to the exchanges of Washington and New York, which inspired only further speculation based upon them as brokers bundled these securities with others, and this made new securities dependent on them. Several land companies did not even need to send a single settler to the new land they purchased; instead, they made money through printing stocks and bonds, declared bankruptcy, and pocketed the remainder. And slowly, the consequences of all this unsustainable investment came to roost.

What immediately began it was a cotton glut. As new land was opened to the cotton trade, as cotton was made easier to export by new canals and roads, and as large swathes of Orleans, Arcansa, and Missouri were cleared for cotton, the sheer amount of cotton on the market escalated. Cotton bonds and securities, sold as far afield as the Paris Bourse and the London Exchange, had previously boomed in value, but now they represented a smaller piece of a much larger pie. For some time, the effects of this had been mitigated by the collapse of the East India Company after Britain’s Popular Revolution, as the much greater supply of American cotton came into the void created by the Burmese conquest of Bengal, and the ensuing removal of its cotton from British markets[[117]](#endnote-117). But come 1842, the cotton glut had become too much and slashed its prices, and suddenly cotton securities became smaller pieces of a much greater pie. Prices began to crash. The effects of this quickly cascaded, as brokers sold off their securities, and the resulting loss of confidence shook not only the cotton market, but also the land speculation boom in the United States; new cotton plantations in the Southwest suddenly found themselves unprofitable and were abandoned, crashing prices. This popped the land speculation bubble. The westward frontier came to an end, and settlers suddenly were forced to move back before a neverending cascade of foreclosures and failures. This in turn had shocks on the Eastern economy, as several banks dependent on western speculation suddenly shuttered their doors and swallowed their depositors’ money. Myriad securities suddenly collapsed in value, and this had massive effects on the boards of brokers, as most securities they sold now had little value. Commerce was forced into a near-absolute standstill. At the same time, in 1842 the scheduled fall of the trade walls Compromise Tariff happened, and this meant the end of protection; this in turn led to a massive barrage of British and French goods into the United States, at the expense of home manufactures. With factories already strained by financial collapse, this led to a cascade of collapse within the halls of industry[[118]](#endnote-118). And thus was the Panic of 1842.

One of the great differences between this and the Panic of 1819 was the much larger population which lived in the city, even if this was still nowhere near a majority. This meant the effects of the Panic of 1842 were more immediate, as suddenly many workers found themselves forced into poverty. Out in the countryside, the new canals and roads allowed for a more interconnected economy, and this allowed for the effects of economic collapse there too to be immediate. The other great difference was the existence of a single, cohesive Bank of the United States, with branches all over the nation. It hadn't been imperiled by the financial collapse due to its reluctance to invest in the West, and that it had tried to clamp down on overspeculation had also meant that it was secure. With loans all over the place failing, suddenly their collateral devolved to the National Bank, and so happened a series of foreclosures. Additionally, several banks destroyed by runs ended up acquired by the National Bank, which in turn resulted in their assets, as well as all that they held as collateral, devolving upon it. In the North, it tended to be land used as collateral; in the South, however, it tended to be slaves. Thus, the Bank suddenly owned not only huge amounts of land, but it also ended up the largest slaveowner in the United States. To manage all these new assets, the Bank had to construct second branches in the states of New Ireland, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Huron, Missouri, Orleans, and Mississippi. With these new assets, the Bank would have preferred to sell them off, but with both the western land market and the price of the slave having crashed thanks to the state of the economy, this was impossible. Slaves were sold gradually to prevent overloading the market, and those who weren’t, the Bank instead brought its slaves and land together to use as plantations[[119]](#endnote-119). This resulted in unprecedented opposition to the National Bank from the abolitionist movement – that it became the largest slaveowner in the nation, meant they pointed to it as another piece in the Planter Ascendancy – and this was yet another complication. With its charter expiring in 1845, suddenly many wondered in what state it should be renewed – or whether it should be renewed at all.

The Bank’s unprecedented assets in the West also provoked opposition within the halls of Congress. Several bills, calling for some sort of reimbursement for the Bank’s assets by the federal government, or even for the use of eminent domain to simply nationalize it to bring it back into the public lands, were forwarded in Congress[[120]](#endnote-120) but they made little headway. The East had little desire to bail out the West, with money that could in any case be used to fix its own economic woes; while even within the West there were huge divisions over whether the Bank was the enemy or the friend of the settler, whether it was a monopoly or a protector against the tyranny of the petty bank. There were no majorities which could be found for any of these plans, and thus nothing could be done at all. Thus, all this land simply ended up idle, and the Bank had little reason whatsoever to engage in speculative investment in the western land that had, after all, only fallen into its laps because of financial collapse. And at the same time the Pike administration’s poor relations with the Bank meant it could do very little to work with it to fix the situation – and even if it wanted to, the low tariff, which he refused to tamper with, meant that the federal government simply lacked any money to pay the bank in return for its land.

Worsening the national crisis was the collapse of internal improvements with the tariff. For 1842 saw the Compromise Tariff fall to 1810 levels, bringing in considerably less money than before. Now, the only way the government could obtain revenue was through sale of the public lands – and the collapse of the frontier land market made that utterly unprofitable. Thus, the Pike administration had no money to spend on canals and roads anymore. Within the states, the same issue popped up as the wave of speculation and investment that came after the Luisiana War suddenly came to an end. Several states had accumulated enough debt that they were forced into a default – with their main creditors being Barings Bank in London, and the Bank of the United States itself. With this default, the credit which could allow those states to bring themselves out of the panic was nonexistent. At the same time, the National Bank was absolutely intent on getting the money owed and its agents, as well as agents of Barings, did whatever they could to pressure the state government, or barring that the federal government, into doing so. Additionally, the massive outstanding debts of the National Bank made it impossible for it to pump money into the economy, or given the several bank runs of the era, to even to print all that many banknotes. It had to focus its efforts on surviving.

Thus, coming into 1844, the Pike administration had totally failed. Its success with the Second Quasi War had already been dramatically overshadowed by the Panic of 1842. The United States suffered a massive financial collapse which brought the western frontier into a dramatic retreat, while in the east it destroyed its commerce and industry. And the Pike administration could do absolutely nothing to restore American well-being due to the collapse of the tariff and the ensuing reduction of public revenues, and neither could the states because several of them had in fact defaulted. In a very real sense, the nation was mired in an economic collapse it could not possibly get out of.

# 27. The Shaking of Debate

The abolitionist movement found itself having over the 1830s. The Missouri Compromise had created a lot of antislavery opinion, and though the bulk of it ended up joining the Democratic Party, a section did end up going abolitionist outright. It was from this movement that the Equal Rights Party rose, under the leadership of the famed laissez-faire radical newspaper publisher William Leggett[[121]](#endnote-121). And it was here that Anti-Slavery Societies emerged all across the North, each of which could boast large numbers, which only boomed following the murder of Benjamin Lundy, which they could not help but regard as an act of martyrdom. Abolitionists were still an absolute minority in the North, and most white Americans regarded them as lunatics, the Northern mirror image of the likes of the Nullificationists. But there were far more of them than there were before, and they made their voices heard. Though several societies believed in non-participation within a government hopelessly compromised with slavery, there were still others who believed action could be done within the government.

This came in the form of a mass petition campaign, targeted towards the federal government. These petitions came in the thousands, and they had well over one hundred thousand names in total. This petition campaign focused on abolishing slavery within the territories, especially in the capital District of Columbia. It would especially be the latter which inspired a counterreaction – if it was free, it would result in free territory in the middle of Virginia and Maryland, therefore weakening slavery in both. They travelled to congressmen, especially the committed opponent of slavery John Quincy Adams, who were duly honor-bound to present them to the House, even though they did not agree with them. But this horrified the South, which believed even the act of discussing slavery within the federal government threatened the institution and their very own stability. To prevent such rhetoric from making their way, one Henry L. Pinckney, a committed Calhounist Nullifier from South Carolina, proposed a series of resolutions to Congress, which would make it so that any petition or memorial on the subject of slavery would be immediately tabled, without any further debate or discussion. This was the famous Gag Rule, and that almost all petitions were sent to the House rather than the Senate meant this effectively shut down petitions against slavery. This represented a great divergence between North and South, on the very concept of constitutional rights – John Quincy Adams, and indeed the bulk of the Northern Democratic Party, opposed this as a violation of the right to petition, even if they didn’t necessarily support the content of such petitions; while in contrast the South believed the Gag rule necessary to ensure its own stability against dissent that might very well overturn the slave system. Nevertheless, panicked about threats of disunion and terrified by open threats of violence which only served to shut down debate, enough Northerners voted along with the Planter Ascendancy to get these resolutions passed, and when these resolutions expired and needed to be re-ratified over the next several years, they would be.

The uproar was enormous; John Quincy Adams, whose 1836 presidential run made him the leading opponent of slavery in the House, led the charge first against the ratification of the Pinckney Resolutions, and then against the Gag Rule itself. Thus, almost immediately, he challenged it. He introduced petition after petition on the floor of the House, despite him getting shouted out. He declared the right to petition was accessible to all, from the poor, to women, and even including slaves – an interpretation that was mainstream in the North, but only inspired shudders and horrors in the South. Against this, Adams, as well as other congresspeople who resisted the Gag Rule, most famously Joshua Giddings, received several threats of death or violence –a congressman from Yazoo, John Bennett Dawson, threatened to slit his throat from ear to ear – and these were not idle threats, as acts of violence were common, with challenges of duels nothing but the tip of the iceberg[[122]](#endnote-122). This culture of violence would only escalate until it finally broke into civil war. But for the time being, that Adams was quite old, and that he was the son of a president, meant that he had little to fear, despite the chaotic atmosphere of the era; this also made him by necessity the leader of the opposition to the Gag Rule. Additionally, Adams received the firm support of the North, including by many Republicans, who though disagreeing with abolitionism, nevertheless regarded the Planter Ascendancy as suppressing the free speech of the North.

Thus, Adams continued to fight against the Gag Rule. He believed he was fighting against the Planter Ascendancy and in favor of the rights of free speech and of the petition. In an effort to silence him, and with the Republicans’ position strengthened by the rush of patriotism that succeeded the opening of the Second Quasi War, in 1839 the House passed a new, stronger Gag Rule to prevent Adams from continuing to push petitions – but it didn’t work. That the rule passed by a mere six votes showed that Adams’ opposition was making inroads among Northerners who, though not opposed to slavery, nevertheless considered the Gag Rule suppressive of Northern free speech – and thus, Adams continued at it. He threw every parliamentary trick to break the Gag Rule – notably, he presented a “prayer” to Congress on the abolition of slavery within the capital, and he declared that it technically did not go against the rule, as it was a prayer and not a petition. Another time, he went so far as to present a petition by some anti-slavery Northerners calling for the dissolution of the Union, and though he declared that he disagreed with its contents, he nevertheless believed they had the right to be heard. The uproar was enormous, and Adams made great hay deriding Nullifiers for pretending to care about upholding the Union while plotting its dissolution. But perhaps the most famous part of the struggle came when he presented a petition on the subject of slavery written by slaves. When Southerners shouted this down, and when they accused Adams of plotting a slave insurrection, he declared they had the right to petition, despite their status. Then he presented their petition – and revealed that, in it, they petitioned in favor of slavery. He believed this was a coerced petition, but nonetheless it severely embarrassed the supporters of the Gag Rule.

All this struggle inspired an overwhelming counterreaction from the North. These were Southern solutions being imposed over the North, to silence it. It seemed to overwhelmingly diminish the honor of the North, and it did nothing but strengthen the idea that a conspiracy of planters had achieved ascendancy in the nation – not only among the sorts of extreme Garrisonian abolitionists who would always be expected to oppose slavery, but also among mainstream Northern Democrats and Republicans, who otherwise had no desire to touch the institution. To them it was an intrusion on the liberties of citizens that republican government was supposed to protect, and it shone a light on the contradiction between republicanism and slavery. Elections saw the erosion and defeat of the pro-southern doughfaces who had passed the Gag Rule, and increasingly many Southerners regarded it overly heavy-handed. With the end of the Second Quasi War and the great weakening of the Calhounites within the Pike administration, agitation against the Rule only escalated, and after the 1842 elections – the wins of the Democrats of that year inspired both by the rise of economic misfortune and the weakness and dishonor of Republican doughfaces – the Rule was finally repealed, in 1843. It was a great victory for Adams which gave his name renown that reverberates today[[123]](#endnote-123), and even his enemies begrudgingly defeated he fought well against the influence of Southern slavery.

The gag rule controversy represented the strength of the abolitionist movement – too weak to threaten the Union, but strong enough that its right to free speech needed to be positively defended – and it was yet another collision point between the North and the South. It showed that, far from falling out of the national view with the Missouri Compromise, the issue of slavery continued to fester beneath the surface – and the day would come when the issue would burn the entire nation into civil war.

# 28. For the Reform of Man

The era between 1829 and 1868 saw the rise of reform movements, which saw as their goal the transformation of the American people towards what was nothing less than utopia[[124]](#endnote-124). In their broadest origins, these movements came from America’s roots as a “City on a Hill”, a godly and perfect society, to enlighten the world by example; more precisely, they came from a moral revulsion towards the habits of the American people, in how they failed to match, indeed utterly contradicted America’s lofty ideals of liberty and equality. As the nation slowly grew out of the shine of its revolutionary victory, these movements gathered influence in the era – and with enough time and effort the minority opinion would go on to become a majority. The most prominent reform movement was, without a doubt, abolitionism; in this era, it turned from a few moderate white-led organizations into a truly mass movement which incorporated both white and Colored people, even if still on the fringes of American society. This was the era where William Lloyd Garrison first began his great, uncompromising agitation against slavery and the entire government of the United States that was infested with it; and this was when one Maryland slave named Frederick Bailey freed himself from his chains and gave for himself the name history calls him, Frederick Douglass. The Equal Rights Party represented an unprecedented organization of abolitionism, but aside from electing a few state legislators and the odd federal congressman, it did not break the great fact that the slave states of the South had outsized influence in government. But it continued to agitate, it continued to move against slaveowners and their brutality and power and come 1868, the antislavery movement would change the United States forever.

But this was hardly the only reform movement which wanted to change the habits of the American people. At its most absurd, reform came in the form of the many schemes to establish some sort of associationist utopia with, at its base, a village with all goods held in common. Perhaps the most famous example of this came from the celebrated industrial reformer Robert Owen, whose desire to establish happy lives for his workers turned, in the 1820s, into associationist utopianism. Moving for a time from hostile pre-revolutionary Britain to America, in this he obtained the support of Congress itself; with this in place, he established what he called New Moral Order, a huge building with a courtyard in the middle meant to house an entire village. In the end, this experiment did not work, which Owen blamed on the moral quality of the people who settled in his village, and after the Popular Revolution he made his way back to the British Isles where he made his name famous for more practical additions to the burgeoning ideology of associationism. This was not the only bizarre utopian associationist movement which coursed through the United States – the Icarian movement inspired by Étienne Cabet set up its fair share of failed village experiments – but it remains the best-known, and it is representative of the sheer ambition of the American reform movement. It not only wanted to improve the nation, but it sought to drive it into a new economic and moral system.

More influential at the time was the rise of the temperance movement. The nineteenth century United States was a wildly alcoholic nation; perhaps inheriting the great liquor traditions of the British Isles and Germany, hard cider, beer, whiskey, and everything in between, were drunk by virtually every American. It was not the odd weekly drink either; Americans drunk great amounts of liquor every day, and they were drunk almost all the time. Even Congress had a bar, where congressmen could make sure they were always a little buzzed. This inspired several temperance movements, which sought either to limit alcohol use or abolish it entirely. What led to the movement truly maturing was the 1820s, when the great many Europeans who emigrated to the United States during that decade of starvation inspired a truly colossal backlash; this nativist backlash routinely focused on the idea that immigrants, especially Catholic immigrants, were drunkards. This drew on longstanding stereotypes of the Irish, but it also pointed to the Germans and their beer.

Thus, the temperance movement grew, with the full backing of several Protestant preachers and particularly within the burgeoning Anti-Catholic Party, initially as a way of social control and later as a way to reform society. The American Temperance Society, founded in 1826, grew rapidly into a mass organization, which could boast of having over one million members. In this early stage, it had a strong intersection with the abolitionist movement, which viewed “slavery of the bottle” as equally perfidious as the “slavery of the lash”. But as it grew more mainstream, these links were severed, even if an abolitionist temperance movement continued to exist; and among Protestants, unsure of their religion in a changing world, it became an easy way to confirm their religion against “Catholic perfidy”. As the Anti-Catholic Party fused into the Republican Party, the Republicans gained a temperance wing, and it increasingly wished to set policy. Given both the weakness of the federal government before 1868 and the Republicans’ firmly decentralist politics, this movement flowed towards the states, where it sought to regulate, or even end altogether, the sale of liquors.

The 1830s saw a trend of states giving localities the power to restrict or abolish alcohol, although even these limited prohibitions saw several of the issues that plagued the movement overall – namely, that these legal bans merely brought the trade of liquor underground, that this liquor was untaxed and often of much lower quality in the absence of regulation, and that the rich could easily avoid the ban and the burden instead fell almost entirely in the poor. As this movement grew, temperance advocates grew more radical. The idea that merely intoxicating liquors should be banned, leaving wine, beer, and cider for all, was thrust aside; instead, they wanted a rigid and uniform ban on alcohol with only barely necessary exceptions. Where this movement first won a full-blown state ban was New Ireland, and such was the scale of this victory that state bans on liquor were, and still are, known as New Ireland Laws.

The New Ireland Law was passed due to several reasons specific to the state. For, as the name implied, it was no hotbed of nativist extremism, and it had a strong and influential Irish minority. Though this Irish minority originated with the United Irish diaspora, most of it came with the Irish flight from the Hungry Twenties. Their chief idol was not Citizen Fitzgerald; instead, they revered the great Daniel O’Connell. O’Connell was many things aside from an Irish nationalist; he was also an advocate of temperance, and closely affiliated with the Irish Nationalist Association he led was the Total Abstinence Society of Father Theobald Mathew, which required its members to entirely abstain from drink. At its peak, more than half of the population of Ireland made the abstinence pledge, though the movement ended up collapsing in the late 1840s; the movement did not take long to spread along with the Irish diaspora, first in Great Britain proper, and then to the United States. O’Connellite nationalism came hand-in-hand with temperance; and when Father Mathew made his way to the United States in 1844, he administered the pledge to hundreds of thousands of people – and this was especially successful in New Ireland. Thus, the state not only had the Protestant temperance movement the rest of the US; it also had a strong Catholic movement which, given the state’s tolerance of immigrants, had a presence in the field of politics. Thus, in 1846, New Ireland made history and became the first state in the country to ban alcohol entirely. Over the 1840s and 50s, several other states joined it, and by 1853 twelve states in the union made alcohol illegal. In practice these bans were easier said than done, and illegal alcohol was something of an open secret which, given the lack of regulation, tended to be of much inferior quality and sometimes quite dangerous. This, combined with the need of revenues that was only exacerbated following the economic panic which succeeded Railway Mania that attracted state legislators towards vice taxes, as well as public resentment over how its enforcement fell unjustly on the poor, led to a wave of alcohol relegalizations; come the Liberty and Union War and the frantic need for revenue seeing federal vice taxes becoming a permanent part of the tax book, alcohol prohibition entirely collapsed[[125]](#endnote-125), and so too did this temperance movement.

The other great social reform movement of the mid-nineteenth century was the women’s rights movement[[126]](#endnote-126). This emerged directly out of the abolitionist movement, which saw strong involvement by women; as they talked to one another, they viewed their status as nothing less than slavery. For they had no legal status apart from their husbands, they could not own property apart from them, and indeed they were considered absorbed into their husbands; in other words, they were nothing less than their slaves[[127]](#endnote-127). As the abolitionist movement grew, the prominent role of women within it was itself an abjuration of gender norms of the era, and it was not such an extreme departure to become explicitly supportive of women’s rights[[128]](#endnote-128). Thus, the women travelling along the abolitionist circuit in the 1830s increasingly agitated against the unequal status of their gender. In 1840, delegates from the United States travelled to the British Isles for the World-Anti-Slavery Convention, including women; that those women found themselves barred from the convention, unless as observers. This came as a shock and represented the unequal status of women in the world at large, and when they returned they became advocates of women’s rights. Thus, the 1840s saw the slow escalation women’s rights agitation. Come 1848, abolitionist women organized a national convention – this was the famous Seneca Falls Convention.

The Convention saw a series of debates, lectures, and discussions on the subject of women’s rights. This saw several of the personalities who defined the nineteenth century movement first make their presence known – it was here that the Great Triumvirate of Women’s Suffrage, of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucy Stone, first came to meet one another. The Convention culminated with the passage of the Declaration of Sentiments; written in exactly the same fashion of the Declaration of Independence and protesting the dominion of men over women as even more perfidious than that of the Guelphs over America, it was nothing less than the opening throe in a long fight against patriarchy and for equality. By far the most controversial part of the Declaration called for the women’s right to vote; this was very nearly excluded, both because women there genuinely opposed it and because they feared the backlash would obscure the rest of the cause, but the sympathetic Frederick Douglass gave a great speech in its favor and ultimately, it remained a part of it. When the convention came to an end, this last section, on women’s suffrage, overshadowed everything else. The reaction from the public at large was largely negative, including from abolitionists. But this represented the dawn of the women’s rights movement, and from here onwards, women’s suffrage lay at its very heart.

Not long afterwards, a second convention would be held at Rochester. This re-approved the Declaration but was otherwise more focused on organization in upstate New York. Starting from 1850, a series of National World Right’s Conventions would be held every year, and this became a permanent fixture of the movement, even held in a much-altered form today. But in terms of concrete victories in the short term, the movement was largely unsuccessful. In several states, it did successfully overturn the doctrine of coverture, in which the person of woman would be absorbed into her husband; where women’s suffrage succeeded in was only in Juniper and Pembina Territories, where their high gender ratios and strong lobbying from the women’s rights movement meant their legislatures passed it. Elsewhere, that the women’s rights movement was of a mere section of the fringe abolitionist movement, meant that it was politically quite toxic. Several attempts to expand women’s suffrage in the 1850s entirely failed, and it would take the Liberty and Union War for the principle to expand and finally prevail.

Thus, in the 1840s and 50s, the United States had quite strong reform movements. Though none of them had the support of anywhere near a majority of Americans, they were still prominent and made their presence in society known. They lay at the heart of America’s great contradictions, and they sought to resolve them. They all represented that American society was unstable; and it represented that, in time, change would swallow American society entirely.

# 29. Heaven and Hell

Thanks to the Erie Canal, Upstate New York saw a massive flow of people both settling there and moving through it, and because a massive proportion of these people were from New Englander Puritan stock, this region saw a huge religious revival. The extent of this was such that the region was nicknamed the “Burnt Over District”, and though the bulk of this revival was in the form of mainstream Methodism, several and far more fringe ideas emerged. One of the most fringe ideas was Swedenborgianism. This sect of Christianity came from an eighteenth-century Swedish philosopher, Emanuel Swedenborg; after a series of visions, it culminated in him seeing what he perceived as a visit from Jesus Christ, who showed him Heaven and Hell, and it did not take long for him to write what he had seen. He believed what he had seen was nothing less than the Second Coming of the Lord, and these visions did not stop; in short succession, he believed he conversed with spirits from Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, and the Moon. This elucidated a philosophy, derived from the most extreme elements of Christian mysticism. This included a belief that as one worships God, they slowly progressed towards God, they would become God itself; that the soul was the seed of God and upon death became reborn in the spiritual world, where in accordance to its nature it would fall to either Heaven or Hell and turn to an angel or demon; and the Bible to be rearranged, into a new order and with a secret meaning elucidated by a book of its own. Swedenborgians assembled themselves into what they called the New Church, considering themselves the assemblage of the New Jerusalem; from its origin in the British Isles, it spread to North America. Perhaps the most famous American Swedenborgian was John Chapman, better known as Johnny Appleseed, who planted apple trees all across the West; less well-known was that he did this as part of a holy mission to propagate Swedenborgianism.

More relevant for this chapter, though, is Swedenborgianism in the British Isles. Swedenborg himself made his way into the British Isles, and not long after his death his followers assembled as the New Church in 1787, which regarded itself as nothing less than a New Jerusalem for the world. This would be further supplemented by the addition of followers of George Rapp. This mystical sect itself emerged in Germany, in what was then the Duchy of Wurttemberg; Rapp declared himself a prophet, called for the ownership of goods in common, advocated celibacy, and spoke of worshipping divine wisdom as embodied by the “Virgin Sophia”. These heterodox beliefs were not well tolerated by the Germany of the era. After the Wurttemberg government began to prosecute Rapp, he and his Harmony Society ended up forced to flee; most of them fled to the United States, but a large section of them instead fled to the British Isles. With Rapp drawing much of his own mysticism from Swedenborg, it did not take long for the British Harmony Society to become part of the New Church, and its own ideas, including worship of the “Virgin Sophia”, to become part of it. These increasingly esoteric and, to the British government, un-Christian ideas were increasingly scrutinized; with the involvement of political radicals in the New Church, this was all it needed to launch prosecutions over the course of the 1820s[[129]](#endnote-129). The New Church found its licenses revoked, and with the arch-traditionalist tilt of the British government, it did not take long it to prosecute Swedenborgians for blasphemy. Though the Popular Revolution in 1827 found them liberated from their jails along with other dissenting Protestants, and though the new Charter granted them religious liberty and abolished all remaining blasphemy laws, the British public by and large considered the Swedenborgians to be un-Christian polytheists. Whether they should even stay in the British Isles became something of a topic of debate. The movement also found itself splintering; one section of this was led by one Bernard Muller.

Bernard Muller was a Rappite, if an unorthodox one; as his section split itself from the rest of the New Church, he gave himself a massive assortment of titles, including the “Count de Leon”, and he declared himself the “Lion of Judah”, to reestablish the “Kingdom of Israel” under his personal leadership. With his impressive charisma, he gained a considerable following within, and even without, the New Church; to cheering crowds, he recited visions he received from Emanuel Swedenborg, George Rapp, the Virgin Sophia, Jesus Christ, and the formless God himself. But with the chaotic post-revolutionary British climate being such as it was, Muller found himself at the bad end of not only Orange mobs, but also the National Volunteers, the Ribbonmen, and virtually every other political organization, which saw him as nothing less than a “British Muhammad” who would end up leading his own religion. With this, in 1834, Muller made a final decision. He called for his followers to come with him into the United States, and they did.

They made their way into New York, and travelling up the Erie Canal, they set up camp near Rochester, just outside it in a commune he declared “New Philadelphia”. Here, Muller with his self-styled aristocratic titles, and his followers were simply yet another strange scene in the religious ferment of the region. Combining local ideas of astrology and spiritism, he was perfectly able to adjust, and in the favorable climate of the area, he attracted a massive number of disciples. These followers called themselves the “New Canaanites”, with their explicit desire being to establish a New Canaan somewhere in North America – hardly an unusual goal given what New England had been founded as. Despite their self-denomination, they would become known, outside their membership, as the Sophians. Their churches, with statues of the “Virgin Sophia” at the front, distinguished them from the normal revivalist churches of the area. Their theologies, with ideas that one who worshipped God, became God; that Swedenborg, Rapp, and Muller were successor prophets of Jesus Christ; and that angels and demons were simply different states of man; were weird even by the standards of the Burnt-Over District, and slowly others noticed. It would not take too long for other nearby religious revivalists, who considered Muller nothing less than the American Muhammad, to launch violent attacks; in 1843, a mob from Rochester beat Muller, nearly to death[[130]](#endnote-130). But he lived and recovered, and the Sophians continued to consider him their leader; indeed, this gave him something of an aura of martyrdom, and through it he was able to expand his flock further.

After his recovery, he declared that while he was in his coma, he had been transported into the spirit world in the body of an angel and travelled to Heaven to receive messages from Swedenborg, Rapp, and Jesus and serve as their representative on Earth. With this new divine knowledge in hand, he declared that they should travel to the West, to the Pacific, where they could establish a kingdom of God in what he called the “spiritual antipode” of Jerusalem[[131]](#endnote-131). Most Sophians, considering his survival from the mob clear evidence of his powers of divinity, agreed. This was not an unprecedented act; the Oregon Country, along the Columbia River, had slowly seen European encroachment, reports of the land being lush with fur, and though most of this trade was done over the sea – the Russian, Spanish, and British trading posts in the area a testament to this – a land path had been lain, first by Canadian trappers and then by Americans following them, and in this era the slow track of mountain men was slowly being supplemented with a flow of farmers and, after discoveries in Australia, men hungry for gold. Nor was the idea of travelling to a land to establish a new godly state an innovative one; famously, Puritans founded New England in keeping with their Protestant ideals. More recently, in Southern Africa, the Boers were making their way from the Cape to establish a new state free from the godless Age of Reason that they believed their Dutch overlords represented. However, none of this did not stop that it would be a spectacular feat to travel to a land that, as with the Pilgrims of old, would give the Sophians room to establish a City on a Hill, in a state of absolute godliness.

The resulting travel, after an initial vanguard party successfully made their way across to the target destination, would be a long feat; they travelled along the Erie Canal, and then from Sandusky to the Ohio River, and from there all the way to St. Louis. All the while, they were met with nothing but scorn, especially in St. Louis where their New Englander aversion of slavery was a bad fit for what was slave country. From here, he declared they should make their way to Fort Independence on the Cansa River, and then from wagon across the Interior to the Pacific, to Vancouver Island. The settlement of this Oregon Country, along the Columbia River, was slowly beginning in this period; it being a region disputed by the Russians, Spanish, and British, with a steady but still modest stream of American settlers, it was prime territory for establishing a state of some sort. The ensuing travel along the so-called Oregon Trail was a perilous one, which saw several waves of wagons making their way there, and several did get destroyed either by hunger or attacks by the Indigenous, with one particularly infamous case of cannibalism – but they did make their way there.

At Vancouver and Quadra Island, Muller established what was, for all intents and purposes, a theocracy with himself at his head, and he declared it “New Canaan”, with its capital the port of New Jerusalem centered around what he declared the “Third Holy Temple of Jerusalem”. A meticulously-planned society, every town on the island was to be the same in miniature, taking advantage of the boom in urban planning that had consumed the Anglo-American world. Additionally, Muller triumphally declared the state open to the world; for all that he declared he wanted to convert humanity from materialism to spiritualism, he did believe prosperity a precondition to spiritual enlightenment. Here, the old and still-ill prophet died in 1847 – the Sophians consider him as having become God upon his death – but with the succession secure. The ensuing “Kingdom of New Canaan” was governed under a constitution which took many of its names from olden Israel, from its leader being called a “Shoffet” to its legislature being named the “Canesset”, or the judiciary being called the “Sanhedrin” – but in structure it resembled little more than the tried-and-tested constitution of most American states, which Muller had previously praised as indeed like that of the Kingdom of Judea. The state avoided attacks from both the Spanish and the British during the New Granadine War by accepting entreaties to become a protectorate of the Russian American Company, and it boomed by providing grain to the outposts of Alaska. The visit of the “uncrowned king of the Russian American Company”, Iosif Rezanov, to New Jerusalem to formally sign the compact, continues to be commemorated with a large statue in the city.

Among the Indigenous on the island already, relations were initially good as there was plenty of land to go around, but as the embryonic society expanded and monopolized land for itself, and as it ignored treaties providing for land-sharing and substituted them with individuated property ownership, it reached an inevitable collision. Land wars ensued. New Canaanite mission efforts largely failed, in part due to missionary arrogance and in part because the country already lay host to Orthodox and Catholic missions, and instead of conversion and persuasion the embryonic found itself launch several wars of dispossession which secured its domination of the island. In the years that followed, New Canaan would find its autonomy tested – the Russian-American Telegraph allowed it to communicate with the rest of the world, the Second Circassian War saw the downfall of Russia’s position and the state fall into British orbit, the settlement boom in the Oregon Country put an end to its isolation, and by the economic laws of gravity it found itself forced to associate with its neighbors – but in the end this new society would find itself able to exist, and it moulded the culture of the land in its image.

Thus emerged what remains perhaps the most unusual of Christian denominations, with land to establish a theocracy on the soil of North America. From its roots in the Swedenborgian and Rappist churches, it successfully developed a mysticism which allowed it to attract adherents towards its mission of enlightening mankind, and it was able to secure a land for itself. Though New Canaan is not an independent state today, and its government is not (formally) theocratic today, the Sophian Church, with its strange combination of British, American, and German roots, continues to make a presence today.

# 30. Nothing But The Country

Coming into 1844, it was clear to everyone that the presidential election would, barring some gigantic shift to the nation, end up with a Democratic victory. As such, the two big personalities of the Democratic Party, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, fought off each other for the nomination. As ever, Clay was the candidate of the South and Webster the candidate of the North, and both eagerly tried to obtain the support of the West. Webster’s near-success in winning the West in 1840 had meant that Clay took full advantage of his reputation as “Harry of the West” and presented a plan to bring National Bank land under federal authority. Against this, Daniel Webster went on a tour of the West in 1843 where he also had a plan to bring National Bank land under federal authority, but accompanied it with a proposal to establish a maximum price for the sale of Western land. With this in hand, Webster successfully won the support of much of the West, and additionally he rose the issue of the Equal Rights Party and how it split valuable northern votes and likely led to Pike’s re-election. Thus, on the third ballot, he won the nomination of the party. As his vice-presidential candidate was selected James L. Petigru, a man who had the honor of being virtually the only South Carolinian Democrat – and his presence on the same ticket as Daniel Webster was a demonstration of sectional unity. On the other hand, the Republicans nominated William C. Rives, a moderate from Virginia who represented a break from the legacy of Calhounism and an attempt by the Richmond Junto to restore its influence over the nation. The Equal Rights Party meanwhile saw the winds blown out of its sails due to Webster’s antislavery reputation; its nomination of William Jay was more perfunctory than anything else.

The ensuing election saw Webster launch a national tour, which was reminiscent to Burr’s famous tours of 1820 and 1824. Demonstrative of the sheer extent to which the nation had been stitched together by canals and roads, Webster made his way to almost every state in the Union, and here he took full advantage of his considerable oratorical ability to spellbind crowds, with rhetoric of national unity and economic security. This tour resembled nothing less than Lafayette’s tour of the nation, as frenzied crowds were only too eager to watch “Godlike Daniel” speak to them and marked it with new merchandise and squares. In contrast, Rives’ campaign was somewhat rudderless, as the Republicans had little else to do than coast on the victory of the Second Quasi War – which, by 1844, frankly seemed like ancient history.

By the time the election’s time had come, few were surprised when the election ended with a sweeping landslide for Daniel Webster, who won a sweeping 207 electoral votes, while in contrast Rives had a mere 97. Webster swept nearly the entire North and West, while Rives only had as a consolation that the Southeast held due to fear of Webster’s antislavery. It was a sweeping mandate for change and a stark departure from the failure of Republican policy. Before his inauguration, Webster launched a brief tour to cheering crowds from Boston to New York to Philadelphia, and finally to Washington. His inauguration was one of the most vibrant in American history, where he outlined his economic policy to the nation, to widespread jubilation and an utterly spellbound Congress.

Daniel Webster is a man who does not need any introduction, but for the sake of completeness one shall be included here. Born in 1782 in New Hampshire along what was then the American frontier, he made his way to Exeter Academy, where he learned many of the skills that would lead to his meteoric career. Admitted to Dartmouth in 1797, he immediately shone; his Independence Day address of 1800 demonstrated the oratorical ability that led to the American people to give him the title of “Godlike Daniel”, and it also demonstrated his strong support of Federalist principles. After graduation, he refused a clerkship because it did not fit his ambitions for greatness; he instead became a lawyer, and he swiftly became the greatest in all Portsmouth. Winning election in 1815 as a Federalist congressman, this first term of an epic career saw him serve as part of the collapsing “Hamiltonian Guard” that remained loyal to Federalism while most of the party instead joined Burr’s rising Democratic Party. Webster’s late affiliation with Alexander Hamilton, until shortly after Hamilton committed treason, would haunt him for the rest of his political career. Come 1816, Webster chose not to run for re-election, and instead he moved to Boston to focus on his legal career. In the larger legal market of Boston, he swiftly made it big once again; famously he successfully defended the sanctity of the corporate charter of Dartmouth to the Supreme Court in a speech so moving it brought tears to the eyes of the usually stoic Chief Justice John Marshall.

With this victory in hand, he won election to the House of Representatives, this time from Boston, in 1820, winning election on the basis of his bold but fiercely nationalist opposition to admitting Illinois with slavery. Here, he continued to be loyal to the Federalist Party, averse to Burr’s ambition and demagoguery and an admirer of Hamilton and his considerable abilities, comparing him to Minerva[[132]](#endnote-132); he did begin to move into the Democratic orbit, though, as his support of a strong federal government and criticism of Madison’s lackluster response to the Panic of 1819 merged onto Democratic principles. He continued to differentiate himself though, and notably he was a committed advocate of free trade, under the influence of New Englander Atlanticist sentiment. Supportive of the Luisiana War to secure New Orleans for American commerce, his bonds to the Federalists snapped and he became a Democrat fully supportive of the war. This meant that with the Hamilton Plot and his subsequent flight to Canada, he was not implicated, and he continued to remain in the political limelight. True to his Federalist roots, he opposed the Popular Revolution in the British Isles, but nevertheless he excitedly saw the end of the Luisiana War. Though he sought the acquisition of less territory, to prevent the dispersal of too many people over too much territory, he nevertheless voted for the Treaty of St. Petersburg.

In the years that followed, winning election to the Senate with his higher profile Webster was a moving force in the economic agenda of the Harrison administration, though he opposed the Compromise of 1829. During the First Nullification Crisis, he became the leader of the protectionist effort against Calhounism; his Second Reply to Calhoun remains perhaps the single greatest elucidation of nationalism in American history. And though he opposed the Compromise Tariff, he was nevertheless a strong supporter of President Harrison, Secretary Clay, and the American System; come the expiry of his Senate term in 1835, he was awarded for this by being appointed as Consul-General to the British Isles. Here, he was an excellent diplomat and quickly became the talk of high British society; however, he did not avoid being trapped in the labyrinth of British politics, and his sympathies for the British Moderate Party was something he wore on his sleeve. Daniel O’Connell, by then a Radical grandee whose sympathies for abolition had turned him into a diehard critic of American republicanism, repeatedly attempted to get the moderately antislavery Webster to either damn America along with slavery, or else show his true colors as a supporter of the institution. The raucous debate between the “Two Daniels” saw Webster play coy to avoid the rhetorical traps O’Connell made for him; it would serve as a prelude to both O’Connell’s more vigorous opposition to Webster’s successor and the limits of Webster’s mainstream political antislavery[[133]](#endnote-133).

This consulship conveniently meant that he was off the board of American politics come the Missouri Crisis, and though all knew that Webster would support restricting slavery, this was a happy coincidence come his presidential ambitions. Returning home after being recalled by the Pike administration, it did not take long for Massachusetts to return him to the Senate, and here he once again made his name. In the crisis after Missouri broke the terms of the Compromise and legalized slavery within its borders, and after several Northern juries nullified the Fugitive Slave Act, he outlined an addendum: Missouri would be allowed to restore slavery while juries would be allowed to nullify fugitive slave laws. Both were their positive right, he asserted; both sides should simply consider it water under the bridge and move on. This helped make him the foremost leader of the Democratic opposition; his firm opposition to the Second Quasi War, as well as increased outreach to the West, he successfully rode to the Democratic nomination in 1844, and then to the presidency.

After establishing a cabinet which, with the career diplomat Nicholas Biddle as his Secretary of State, the strong Ohioan Thomas Ewing as his Domestic Secretary, and his close ally James Wilson II as his Treasury Secretary, it was immediately clear that Webster was charting his own path, and he was clearly intending to be the most dominant man in his own government as none of these figures could be said to be party leaders. Friends of Henry Clay would instead find themselves towards the edges of the cabinet, and the Webster’s relationships with Clay, who clearly regarded himself as the real party leader, would prove to be testy at best. And at the same time, he appointed as fugitive slave commissioners people who supported, or else tacitly accepted, jury nullification, and this did calm the agitation over the fugitive slave crisis[[134]](#endnote-134).

The first great part of the Webster agenda was the restored protectionist tariff. This went against the terms of the Compromise Tariff, and the Tariff of 1845 would almost immediately be jeered as the “Black Tariff” – but it did not see a sudden wave of nullificationism. This was because the economic catastrophe of the last two years had weakened the cause of free trade even in the South, and more prosaically because Calhoun had plans to make his way to the presidency in 1848 which nullification might threaten[[135]](#endnote-135). And thus, the state revenues came in, and the Webster administration was now on a more solid economic foundation. Additionally, he sent a section of the raised revenue to the states, in order to pay off their outstanding debts; the era of the debt default was beginning to come to an end. This also allowed for the passage of pre-emption, now that state revenues were not so massively dependent on the sale of public lands.

And just as impactful would be the renewal of the Second Bank. Faced with western discontent over the Bank’s large holdings of land, to get the Bank renewed, and Webster certainly did, the government would need to deal with it. The ensuing renewal would see several reforms enacted. First, as a sort of compensation for removing its assets, the bank’s capitalization would be doubled to ten million dollars. This would allow for the sale of double its existing stock, which would be more than enough for its land and slaves. Second, bank land would be transferred to the state and restored to the status of public land to be distributed as normal, and in the future other land which would fall in its hands, would be deposited back into the public land treasury. Third, the Bank would free its slaves and deport them to Fredonia. This was an informal deal as the Lower South would have never authorized a congressional law on the subject, but it was an open secret which only avoided being a sectional crisis because the Upper South entirely supported it to keep the price of slaves up; none could deny, however, that the Bank had the right to treat their slaves as they see fit. And lastly, foreign holders of Bank shares could not vote for directors in corporate elections – a proposal to bar them from owning them entirely, failed because the government was frankly unsure if it would be able to raise money locally[[136]](#endnote-136).

The portion freeing slaves was the most controversial part of the renewal; it was not only not part of the congressional act, but it was simply a written promise between Webster and the Bank’s incoming president, Nathan Appleton which was kept secret[[137]](#endnote-137). It would only be implemented after the renewal of the Bank, as a directive issued by President Appleton – but it inspired a great degree of horror and revulsion from the Lower South which feared this would act as precedent for the Bank being a vehicle of emancipation, and Webster would need to send the army to enforce the Bank’s right to dispense of its property as it wished. At the time, most American foes of slavery cheered this as a bold act of emancipation, but it demonstrated the limits of mainstream political antislavery[[138]](#endnote-138); even at the time the abolitionist movement declared this an immoral act of deportation which contravened racial equality, and nobody was as vociferous in denunciation as free Coloreds. This had dramatic effects on Fredonia as well – these freedmen, nicknamed “Collateral”, were an important part of the expansion of the nation into the African interior; the Collateral being almost entirely men, they married local women and produced a new population of “Halfbreeds”, and after decades of disenfranchisement, they overthrew the oligarchical Fredish settler administration, and the ensuing revolutionary despotism of Leonard Butler saw the nation change from a settler state oriented towards the Atlantic into a creole state oriented towards the interior[[139]](#endnote-139).

Just as impactful on American fortunes was the newly enlarged capitalization of the Bank, double its former value. The ensuing sale of shares was a process it did gradually, to avoid handing brokers too many shares that would then plummet in value – but it did raise an additional four million dollars in total. With this in hand, it pumped a large number of banknotes into the economy, and the ensuing inflation allowed for commerce to move again. At the same time, with its money in hand, and to avoid its capitalization from crashing on the exchange boards, the Bank also invested in projects across the nation. The effects of this were immediate, as it allowed for new businesses to pop up[[140]](#endnote-140). The later 1840s would end up becoming a time of growing industrialization, as this the Bank considered industry a more stable investment than land speculation projects, although a section of this money did go to grain silos and other farming purposes – and even a section towards cotton, which was quickly recovering from the glut thanks to increased demand.

And at the same time, it invested in internal improvements, and here it considered the West to be a land wise investments. Indiana had, in 1836, passed a mammoth bill which would turn its capital of Concord into the center of a network of canals wrapping the entire state, turning it into a point for trading from the Ohio River to Ballyburr, on Lake Michigan, but it collapsed with the financial panic; Bank money would be crucial to getting this project up again. But most famously, the Rock Creek Canal project to connect Millewackie to the Mississippi watershed, which had collapsed after Huron simply ran out of money in 1842, now got to work again, and it would be completed in 1847[[141]](#endnote-141). And additionally, rather than loans and bonds, the Bank preferred to buy stock in these new enterprises, which demonstrated that it was beginning to act as a fiduciary authority, and though the Bank did make investments in companies that ended up collapsing, for the most part these investments were successful affairs and made back its money. Furthermore, with the sheer numbers of shares it owned, the Bank sent representatives to serve as company directors, who would inevitably serve both as its ear and its voice. The Bank had previously opened second branches to manage real estate and slaves; now, it opened second and even third branches to manage stocks in companies, and all of these monitored and influenced those companies’ conduct and made them responsible, ultimately, to the administrators of Washington. The scale of these investments was such that many called the Bank of the United States the coordinating office of the nation, which would unite the disparate corporations into a dispassionate outfit that was at least partially responsible to the people; several scholars have gone as far as to call the Bank proto-sociocratic[[142]](#endnote-142).

This investment came at a crucial juncture, as the new technologies of the railroad and electric telegraph came on the scene[[143]](#endnote-143). A great national Railroad Mania would gradually replace the great Canal Mania that had wrapped the nation since Burr and the Erie Canal, as the Webster administration in close affiliation with the National Bank established a railroad network on the hub-and-spoke model which tended to favor existing cities over new ones. By its very centralization, this meant that it avoided the extreme redundancy of similar manias that consumed countries like the British Isles; however, this also meant it favored settled land in the East over unsettled land in the West. However, the United States had already developed a huge network of inland waterways; this was an era where the canal and the steamboat could compete with the railroad in terms of both capacity and speed, and to replace canals with railroads would not only be costly, but also of minimal benefit. Indeed, this era also saw some degree of expansion of the canal system, as in some regards it was cheaper to expand the existing network than to build a railroad and require several changes from steamer to railroad[[144]](#endnote-144).

In contrast, it did not take long for the Post Office to put telegraph wires over their semaphore towers and turn them into receivers, allowing for far more rapid communications and superior capacity than ever before; by 1860, the semaphoric telegraph would only persist as a way to signal ships, and indeed by then the name “telegraph” referred to not the semaphoric telegraph invented by Claude Chappe, but rather the electric telegraph invented by Joseph Henry. It was a dramatic change, although here too the United States suffered from the handicap of the first mover as the existing semaphoric network slowed the expansion of the electric telegraph. Along with this new flow of monies came new opportunities for corruption, however; combined with whispers of the administration selling patronage positions, many slowly wondered how honest Daniel Webster truly was. Many wondered if Webster’s retainer from the National Bank was but the tip of an iceberg of corruption.

Thus, the nation was out of the throes of economic panic, and into the era of Websterism. If it was ceasing to be an agrarian state of producers and instead an industrial state with a permanent underclass – an underclass aside from the slaves of the South, of course – and despite this violation of republican principle, many still cheered the rise of progress, and those who were discontented could buy land which, thanks to the economic crash, was now at an all-time low. The nation boomed, and immigrants came in droves to take up jobs in the factories of the nation. But this economic boom would not take long to splutter, and though this did not ultimately upend Websterism, it did reveal its shaky foundations.

# 31. The Tyranny of Distance

The United States was not aloof from the world; it existed in the context of Europe, a continent increasingly divided between republicanism and monarchy. On one side was the republics of France, her sister states, and now the British Isles; and on the other was the monarchies of Austria, the German states, and Russia. The continent was mired in an escalating path of tension, and virtually any dispute threatened to break out into a general war. In 1847, Christian VIII of Denmark died; lacking issue, the succession was immediately disputed between the Elector of Hesse-Kassel, backed by France, and the Duke of Oldenburg, backed by Austria; this succession dispute was the exact push needed to bring Europe into war. The ensuing War of Danish Succession surrounded mainland Europe in bloodshed for the next seven years; this put an end to immigration to the United States[[145]](#endnote-145). With a large number of Americans migrating westwards, immigration had been the only thing keeping wages low enough to make industry profitable; now that German immigration was off the table, wages spiked. Goods got more expensive all across the board, and this reduced the margins for all the farmers and planters who used them. This had consequences all across the board for the American economy, and it severely compromised the recovery from the Panic of 1842. There was one part of the economy this did not affect, namely the slave-powered factories of the South. The price of the slave was still low, and so the goods they produced continued to have similar prices. This began the so-called “mechanic’s critique of slavery” – that as northern free labor existed within the same economy as southern slave labor, the two competed with one another and that slave labor, being free for the owner, would inevitably depress free labor towards its level. But at the time this was just an undercurrent, and most instead focused on the real labor crisis that emerged in the North.

To solve this, President Webster immediately did several things. First, he sent immigration agents deep into Europe, most particularly into the Giray Empire to attract migrants from Southeastern Europe; this gave the United States, for the first time, a small Slavic minority. But this was a long-term solution which, he could see, would take a while to pay off. The real solution came from the South. The slow boom and expansion of slavery in the South pushed a lot of poor whites from their former occupations, as they could not possibly compete with their labor; the collapse of the price of the slave after the Panic of 1842 only worsened this, as it became profitable to use them for more and more economic purposes. Poor whites got pushed out of their former jobs, and they found themselves pushed out of the economy entirely. Being unable to get the money to move, they instead had to make a living on the very edge of Southern economy, and with the institutions of state in their hand, the Planter Ascendancy passed laws to keep them under control. Most infamously, they passed vagrancy laws which subjected them to servitude only slightly above slavery; it did not take long for abolitionists to point to this as proof of slavery being bad for both Coloreds and whites.

With the South having an idle population, and with the North having a labor deficit, it did not take very long for Northern factory owners to look to getting Southern poor whites to migrate – which with the canal network having matured, and a railroad boom beginning to dawn, was now more viable than ever; they just needed to pay the bill. With the bank investing large amounts of money into the factory system, they also had the money for it, and thus beginning in 1847 was a large migration of poor “white trash” from the fringes of the South to the factories of the North. This dramatically changed the shape of the Northern working classes, as they tended to be antislavery, but also anti-Colored, blaming them for their economic misfortune; additionally, that they competed with immigrant labor and could claim to be American-born meant that they became easy pickings for nativism, although a wing of the nativist movement accusing them of being “swarthy” and “part-Colored” continued to persist. They also went on to being among the most zealously converted in the Third Great Awakening. In total five to seven million Southerners migrated northwards, and the enduring effects of this are such that it is today called the Great Migration[[146]](#endnote-146).

The outbreak of the New Granadine War of Independence in 1848 further escalated several economic issues. Breaking out over a Venezuelan filibuster to the West, when the British intervened in the conflict, it truly went out of control. The British Isles, under the control of the charismatic radical Lord Dundonald, had a strong affinity towards Spanish American liberation – prior to the Popular Revolution, Dundonald had served as admiral of the Venezuelan Navy, although in that capacity he is better known as Lord Cochrane – and it successfully turned that affinity into a declaration of war. Almost immediately, the British Navy launched a huge, dramatic war against the Spanish; Prime Minister Dundonald sent fleets not only to New Granada, but also across the Pacific to take the Philippines, and to Spain itself he attacked its harbors to destroy its navy[[147]](#endnote-147). Indeed, he proposed to the French that they conquer Spain itself and at last put an end to the House of Bourbon, but France considered a weak Spain dependent on it preferable to the free-for-all that might come with her collapse, and so instead Dundonald focused his efforts on shearing Spain from her colonies[[148]](#endnote-148). Dundonald had even attempted to gain American support in this war, but Webster was, if sympathetic, nevertheless deeply aware that allying with the antislavery British Isles would provoke a sectional crisis, which his tacit acceptance of jury nullification of the Fugitive Slave Act already contributed towards.

The British Navy’s sweeping attacks on shipping and blockades of ports resulted in a cessation of America’s considerable trade with Spanish America; most critically, it meant a pause on the trans-Caribbean slave trade. The Upper South had long exported slaves to the Deep South and the Tidewater had long become America’s Slave Coast, and indeed much of Virginia’s economy was based on slave breeding; after France and later the British Isles put the brakes on the transatlantic slave trade, as much out of economic self-interest as out of morality, the Upper South focused their exports southwards, over the Caribbean to Latin America, whose slave gender divides were so extreme, and the death rates so high, that slavery’s continued existence required constant import. The Second Quasi War damaged the ensuing trans-Caribbean slave trade, but its end saw it escalate yet further. The British blockade of much of Spanish America suddenly put an end to this, as American slave ships to Mexico, Guatemala, and New Granada, were turned back, and instead traders sold their slaves in the United States proper. The result was a sudden collapse in the price of the slave, and with it this shook slave bonds, cotton bonds, and the several other securities that brokers built around the price of the slave, and this in turn shook the economy of the nation at large[[149]](#endnote-149). It also led to a further expansion of slavery within the South –Missouri and Illinois particularly saw a huge expansion of slavery in this era – which forced yet more Southern poor whites out of their jobs and escalated the Great Migration. Thus, despite all of Webster’s efforts, and despite all of his investments, the nation’s economy continued to falter - come 1848, the state of the nation was certainly far better than it was in 1844, but it continued to be shaky at best.

Along with this came the fear that the British were plotting a strike on Cuba, Texas, California, or all of the above. Despite the strength of Anglophilia in the United States since the Popular Revolution, few genuinely wanted the United States to find itself surrounded by British territory; most notably the South had long feared British abolitionism, and the specter of being surrounded by British colonies populated by freedmen they could only meet with genuine fear. And though Webster fought quite hard to keep the British out of America’s southern neighborhood, going so far as to bluff to the British consul-general in Washington that he’d declare war if they did, he could only do so much. The South’s great fear of some British strike on Texas and Cuba which would serve as an example for American slaves to take their fates in their own hands, would drive panic in the election year that followed.

# 32. The Devil Against Daniel Webster

The shaky but still strong Webster administration was one which observers reckoned could be beaten through a sufficiently ambitious and effective campaign. Into this came John C. Calhoun[[150]](#endnote-150). Since the 1832 campaign and the First Nullification Crisis, Calhoun slowly attempted to rebuild his image as an American patriot, if one who believed in devolution of power to the states. Come the Missouri Compromise, where his attempts to establish a cohesive South issuing ultimatums to the North proved successful in establishing a slave-sided compromise. Choosing not to join the Pike administration, he was nevertheless influential within it and his allies held the bulk of cabinet positions. Calhoun was a driving force for Pike’s attempts to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act; in the negotiation whose breakdown preceded the Second Quasi War, he fully supported it as part of protecting and maintaining hemispheric slavery against the rising tide of abolitionism. Though he stumped for Pike in 1840 election and cheered on his win, he subsequently found himself outmaneuvered by Pike and his Secretary of State, Joel Poinsett, and he lost most of his influence in the halls of power. He lost his leadership of the Republican Party. Come the Panic of 1842, Calhoun served as a leading critic of Democratic proposals to deal with the economic havoc, and here he sought to jockey for power within the party – but sniffing out that it would be an electoral defeat, his 1844 campaign for the nomination was almost tokenistic, to keep himself close to the leadership. Horrified that the nationalist Daniel Webster won the Democratic nomination, however, he nevertheless stumped quite hard for Rives[[151]](#endnote-151), and he saw the announcement of Webster’s victory with great trepidation.

Over the next four years, Calhoun was hard at work building his name within the Republican Party, as a man who could represent not only the South but the entire nation. He took the charge against the Democratic agenda in the Senate and railed against the “Hamiltonian” economics of Daniel Webster. At the same time, he clamped down upon neo-nullificationist sentiment incited by the Black Tariff of 1845, to avoid provoking a counterreaction from the Republicans’ northern wing[[152]](#endnote-152); though the Bluffton Movement, which tried to use the specter of secession to end the Tariff, emerged in South Carolina under the charismatic Robert Barnwell Smith, it was a distinct minority even within that state. Additionally, Calhoun tried to attract the North to his agenda, with a special focus on the West which he believed could be brought onside through its strong commercial connections to the South. In an industrial convention in Memphis in 1846, to southern and western delegates Calhoun declared that he supported a program of industrial improvements to, at once, destroy the rapids in the Mississippi, build a set of railroads radiating from Memphis, and establish a more comprehensive network of canals. The South, he declared, would yield on the issue of internal improvements; the West would in turn agree to a reduction of the tariff. To this, he was met with cheers; that this would implicitly redirect the investment, currently being pumped by the bank in the East, towards the West, represented that Calhoun was now bidding for western support[[153]](#endnote-153). Calhoun also wanted some Northeastern support; the Anti-Catholic roots of much of the Northwestern Republican Party meant that it had never been particularly pro-Calhoun, but here he combined a critique of northern industrial commercialism with a defence of slavery. He declared that slavery was a moderating force on the development of American commerce and prevented, for all, potentially deleterious laissez-faire economics; in its absence, wages would rather than improving, instead fall to the level of subsistence. A section of the working-class movement had already drifted towards Webster in the name of a high tariff; much of the remainder did find itself falling into Calhoun’s orbit, however[[154]](#endnote-154).

With the economic shocks of 1847 and 1848, Calhoun became a leading critic of what he castigated as a corrupt scheme of spending, to cheers of the entire Republican Party against the vigorous nationalism of Webster[[155]](#endnote-155). He had done it; he had established a singular Republican Party which rallied behind him. Come the Republican party convention of 1848, he won its nomination by a broad margin. And he would face off Daniel Webster in one of the most hard-fought elections in American history. In a riposte to Webster, Calhoun had the convention nominate the New England Calhounian David Henshaw as his vice presidential candidate – many remarked that the two tickets were mirror images of one another, the Democrats with the Massachusettsian Daniel Webster and the South Carolinian James L. Petigru, and the Republicans with South Carolinian John C. Calhoun and the Massachusettsian David Henshaw. Both clearly wanted to revive the much-vaunted revolutionary alliance of Massachusetts and South Carolina, but very strongly on their terms.

Both Webster and Calhoun launched massive tours of the nation, to win support. Webster’s was more statesmanlike, as he was after all the serving president, while Calhoun’s was more oppositionist, but the two national tours resembled one another. All the work done in building canals and, increasingly, railroads now made it easier than ever to tour the entire nation, to win its votes. And though the two never met one another, they never used the opportunity to launch some national debates – although several of their speeches on their respective economic programs, or on the testy events of the New Granadine War of Independence, were clearly written in response to one another, and the viciously partisan press was only too eager to point to how one speech rebutted another. Whether one regards Webster or Calhoun as having prevailed in this contest of speeches, depended on one’s partisan leanings; today, most historians agree that Webster prevailed, but much of this may be because Webster is remembered as a great American patriot, and Calhoun as the evil genius of the Planter Ascendancy.

But nevertheless, the battle lines were drawn very stiffly in the West. The expansion of the National Bank with its capitalization came with economic growth, but it was a very uneven one. It tended to focus on the East as a more stable return on investment, and though it did invest in the East, this was mostly in Ohio and New Ireland, both of whom were urban, and they increasingly resembled the East more than they did the national image of the West. At the same time, Calhoun’s appeals to the West, towards an agenda that would wrap them more fully towards the mouth of the Mississippi were working, even if his many statements calling for a weak federal government went against him. He was no longer the crazy man of South Carolina, but instead the venerable successor to Thomas Jefferson who, yes, supported almost revolutionary doctrines that might threaten national unity, but was also a patriotic American who cherished his country and legitimately believed in its union. And though Webster did very strongly appeal to the west, and indeed he even went so far as to speak of a general Preemption Act setting a maximum price for public land, which though may go against the interests of the New England industrialists he represented, he nevertheless thought good policy for the nation

In the end, the 1848 election came to the wire[[156]](#endnote-156). With electric telegraphy beginning to span the nation, and with semaphore towers on their way to being either retired or turned into electric telegraph posts, election results permeated across the nation almost immediately. Most major cities could hear of every electoral vote coming in, as they came in. In the end it was a close-run thing – but Webster’s position as a figure of Northern pride, and his success in improving the economy, meant that he won[[157]](#endnote-157).

Figure : The 1848 election, by state

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **Electoral Votes** | **Webster** | **Calhoun** |
| Massachusetts | 22 | 22 | 0 |
| New Hampshire | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| Vermont | 6 | 6 | 0 |
| Rhode Island | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| Connecticut | 8 | 8 | 0 |
| New York | 40 | 32 | 8 |
| Pennsylvania | 29 | 26 | 3 |
| New Jersey | 11 | 10 | 1 |
| Delaware | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Maryland | 8 | 1 | 7 |
| Ohio | 26 | 16 | 10 |
| New Ireland | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| Huron | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| Indiana | 13 | 4 | 9 |
| Illinois | 8 | 1 | 7 |
| Virginia | 21 | 3 | 18 |
| Kentucky | 14 | 12 | 2 |
| Tennessee | 13 | 7 | 6 |
| North Carolina | 11 | 1 | 10 |
| South Carolina | 10 | 0 | 10 |
| Georgia | 10 | 0 | 10 |
| Yazoo | 10 | 0 | 10 |
| Mississippi | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| Missouri | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| Orleans | 7 | 1 | 6 |
| **Total** | **305** | **167** | **138** |

It was a narrow win, and Webster may have preferred a stronger one, but a win was still a win, and so he declared it joyfully so[[158]](#endnote-158). It was clear that Websterism had prevailed, and so economic buildup through the National Bank and the rise of industry would continue unabated. But the anger at the South which festered against Daniel Webster suddenly exploded. Calhoun had kept a tight lid on such sentiments by promising that, if he was elected president, he would reduce the tariff and thus Websterism would be a mere interlude. When Calhoun was defeated, if narrowly, suddenly such sentiments exploded. The Bluffton movement of Robert Barnwell Smith made strong headway, and South Carolinians looked to how they defeated the tariff in the time of Harrison. The Second Nullification Crisis was beginning[[159]](#endnote-159).

# 33. The Rotten Oak

Websterism had decidedly broke the terms of the compromise that ended the First Nullification Crisis. As much as it was necessary to raise revenue, the Tariff of 1845 was an explicitly protectionist measure, and this represented the revival of protection on the national stage. This saw immediate denunciations from much the South, which still regarded protectionist tariffs as, at best, bad policy which undercut the plantation system, and at worst, unconstitutional. It did not take long for the legislatures of South Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia to declare it so, although at this point neither of them moved towards nullification; at this point even many Southerners thought a higher tariff necessary for economic prosperity. But this remained an undercurrent, and it would be as ever in South Carolina that the issue erupted. The charismatic politician Robert Barnwell Smith, who held none of the patriotism of the great Calhoun but all of the ambition, immediately got to work; in the town of Bluffton, he held a political rally where he declared that the Tariff ought to be nullified, and if the federal government continued to do nothing, the South should exit the union. The Bluffton Movement expanded in the state, the oak under which Smith gave his speech became nicknamed the “Secession Oak”, and the so-called “Bluffton Boys” slowly became a presence in South Carolinian politics[[160]](#endnote-160). There was little hope that they could truly gain power in the state – South Carolina’s constitution resembled nothing less than the pre-revolutionary British one, after all – but they did make headway. For the time being, though, it was only a power in the state; Calhoun clamped down upon the movement to keep his presidential run from collapsing, and most South Carolinians had a wait-and-see mood towards the tariff.

But then the 1848 election came and passed. Calhoun had a strong run, but he ultimately lost. South Carolinians waited, and then they saw. Suddenly, Calhoun lost grasp of his state, and South Carolina swiftly radicalized. The legislature successfully passed through a resolution calling for a nullification convention. Suddenly, the Second Nullification Crisis had begun[[161]](#endnote-161). Webster sent Vice President Petrigru to liaise with the unionist movement in the state, and otherwise to stump against nullification, but this was to no avail; the ensuing elections saw nullificationists win a large majority, and everyone knew what they’d do when they’d meet. It was clear the crisis was due to continue, and with that the focus instead grew on managing it.

Against the rise of the neo-nullificationist movement, Webster immediately got to work. He organized a commission to examine lowering the tariff, contingent on turning the public lands into a new source of revenue. Led by his close ally Edward Everett, it sent representatives to several cities across the United States, from Portland to Charleston to New Orleans to Millewackie, to obtain their opinions on the subject. By making the tariff contingent on making public lands more expensive, Webster had successfully tied together the big western bugbear of making land cheap with protection, and thus won Western opposition to free trade; even in the South, the growing field of industry, as well as the sugar lobby, led to growing public opinion in favor of protectionism, and even supporters of free trade were now frankly unwilling to go so far as to support nullification. The ensuing Everett Commission Report declared that free trade was a minority opinion, and that the vast majority of Americans supported the tariff, if either out of protectionism or to keep public lands cheap[[162]](#endnote-162). With its completion, though Senator Calhoun tried to prevent its passage and declared it would mean a violation of public trust, the Report was praised by a joint resolution of Congress.

With the specter of nullification being clearly insufficient, when the convention met, it formally declared the tariff null and void, and that it would prevent its collection within its borders in a matter of months. It also invited the other states of the South to join it. However, in this it failed. Virginia refused, its growing industrial lobby fully supportive of protection and even many of its free traders considering it way too extreme; so too did Georgia, whose increasingly-prominent sugar lobby united with its growing industrial lobby against it. The nation had changed, and South Carolina was acting like it hadn’t. This time, it would be alone[[163]](#endnote-163).

With this in hand, President Webster decided he needed to dismantle and destroy the doctrines of nullification once and for all – and with it, secessionism. He issued a proclamation which declared that both nullification and secession were manifestly illegal and unconstitutional, that they may be justified as extralegal revolutionary acts, but they were not at all legal – and he asked Congress to pass for him an act authorizing him to send the army and navy into South Carolina to collect the tariff by force, although he prayed that the state would come to its senses and that he would never have to use it[[164]](#endnote-164). It was a grim realization to the nation at large that nullification beckoned the way towards civil war – but it also demonstrated that Webster would not bend to the whims of the minority. Congress passed the Force Act, and it gave Webster his army and navy to use against South Carolina – although it prayed that this would be simply a bluff[[165]](#endnote-165).

In the months that followed, the rest of the South dealt with Nullification and the Proclamation. One by one, their legislatures issued resolutions that, though they disagreed with South Carolina, they sympathized with their plight; the Southeastern states also damned the Nullification Proclamation for its condemnation of secession, which they thought might be necessary against the numerical majority of the North, if it ever deigned to take its slaves. But they did not join South Carolina in nullification; they did not rally behind it. It remained a party of one, and though several South Carolinians dreamed of their state as some sort of independent Caribbean-oriented republic[[166]](#endnote-166), the realists guffawed. But the state stood firm.

Against this, in the Senate, Henry Clay saw that the unstoppable force of Webster’s nationalism would hit the immovable object of South Carolina’s nullificationism – and he saw a civil war. Just as he had once done in 1833, he brought Calhoun to the table. The compromise the two hammered out was much like that of 1833, in that the tariff would be gradually lowered until it would reach a flat level come 1854 – although it would be a level higher than that of the Compromise Tariff[[167]](#endnote-167). When Clay and Calhoun presented it to Congress, Webster grimaced. He had no intention to compromise with secessionists who would light the union ablaze. Though he believed the measure constitutional and that therefore he could not veto it, he did use his powers of patronage to defeat it – and though it passed the Senate, it failed in the House. The Compromise Tariff of 1850 was dead.

But the other states of the South did not join South Carolina. The state remained wholly isolated, and it was forced to come to terms with the idea that Webster might simply flatten it. To be sure, the statements of sympathy did show the rest of the South might come to its aid – but it might not. And in the end, the state finally saw no alternative but to drop the issue, or else it might be forced to surrender at the end of a saber; at the same time, to sweeten the deal, Webster told South Carolina’s government he’d pass a bill nationalizing its debt, so it would be the federal government who would pay it off[[168]](#endnote-168). The nullification convention passed a measure rescinding its declaration that the tariff was null and void, although it continued to assert that it was unconstitutional and would shred national confidence if still enacted. But before dissolving, it did do one final act – it nullified the Force Act. There was no way this could ever be tested, with the customs house collecting the tariff as normal – but it was one last insult to the federal government which had forced it to surrender. It kept state honor intact. Despite this, the state saw serious recrimination, and in the decade that followed South Carolina would see state realignment that made it, for lack of a better term, a normal Southern state, one which would still defend slavery and the Southern way of life – but only in concerted action.

With that, President Webster now took a deep breath, utterly relieved that civil war had been avoided. He joyously declared the end of the Second Nullification Crisis, that the doctrine had been defeated without having to fire even a single shot. The national mood was jubilant, as not just Democrats but a large section of the Republican Party cheered on that Daniel Webster had stood resolutely against nullification and secession and won[[169]](#endnote-169). Celebrations consumed the nation, from New Orleans to New York. For his part, Webster chose not to rub the victory in. He instead planned a tour of the South, so he could prevent hard feelings from rising and to make sure it would be wholly part of the joyous national mood. But even as he departed Washington for Richmond, along a long circuit of the South, the scandal that would upend his administration began to erupt[[170]](#endnote-170).

# 34. The Full Scope of Imagination

Washington was a city which grew almost from scratch. After the constitution reserved some twenty-five square kilometers as a capital district, with only the towns of Georgetown and Alexandria circumscribed inside, within it the burgeoning federal government founded the city in 1791 to be America’s capital; its position between Virginia and Maryland in the upper tier of the Upper South, made it a perfect position between the great division of North and South. Congress and the American government formally moved to the city in 1800; it would be here that the first peaceful transition of power in American history, between Adams and Jefferson, happened. In this beginning, Washington was less a city, less a town and more a collection of villages connected by roads of dirt – with rain, these roads turn into mud in which carriages would regularly turn over. European visitors were astonished that the capital of the nation could be so miserable, entirely lacking any sophistication, and being utterly unlike London or Paris – when the British sociologist Harriet Martineau published her harshly critical travelogue *Society in America* (1837), this lackluster capital was one of the things at which she pointed. But by 1850, things had changed. In 1800, the whole capital District of Columbia contained a mere 8,144 people, mostly within the older outlying towns of Georgetown and Alexandria; come 1850, it now had 117,687 people, mostly within Washington itself. Washington was now a true city, connected by modern roads with a mature network of gaslines and lamps, and connected and fully integrated into a hinterland spanning all over the Middle West, which turned the city into, along with New York City and Cincinnati, one of the three poles of the nation[[171]](#endnote-171).

Figure : Population of the capital District of Columbia, 1800-1850

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Population** |
| 1800 | 8,144 |
| 1810 | 15,471 |
| 1820 | 27,336 |
| 1830 | 37,261 |
| 1840 | 61,745 |
| 1850 | 117,687 |

This was the result of several trends. Perhaps the greatest was the completion of the Union Canal. Begun in 1810, it connected Washington to Pittsburg; Pittsburg itself being an inland port of the Ohio River, this connected it to the entire Middle West. Additionally, several smaller canals in Washington, Georgetown, and Alexandria allowed for seamless trade and transit, and it helped to integrate Georgetown and Alexandria and turn them into its banleagues. With its completion in 1825, through the use of Irish and German mechanics, many of whom ended up settling in Washington itself, this turned the town into an emporium for trade. This led to a huge boom in the city, as new businesses popped up to take advantage of the new trading opportunities. Additionally, this allowed the ample coal from Pittsburg to easily come to Washington, and this invited an era of growing industry. And to cater to this new mass of people came a whole new batch of businesses. Farmer’s markets, eateries, grocery shops, and many other institutions developed to cater to this population[[172]](#endnote-172). This alone turned Washington into a great city of the United States; unlike its older and better-established neighbors of Baltimore and Richmond, its access to the West made it an obvious point for trade and transit, and it soared above them in growth[[173]](#endnote-173).

This only escalated with the creation of the Fiscal Bank of Washington. Created in 1812 after Congress refused to allow the Burr administration to create a renewed National Bank, and intended to only do business in the federal district, the Fiscal Bank swiftly got to work investing in the businesses in the city[[174]](#endnote-174). Allowing for easy credit, this allowed for a boom which, for the first time, turned Washington from the loose network of villages into a single cohesive town; the banknotes flowed all along the Union Canal, which helped unify the whole region from Pittsburg to Washington into a single economic unit[[175]](#endnote-175). Come the Panic of 1819, Washington was somewhat insulated from the economic turmoil of the era; that the Bank was somewhat more conservative than western institutions meant that it did survived, and when Washingtonian businesses did fall apart, the Bank was able to extend credit to keep them afloat. Additionally, Fiscal Bank notes allowed for useful credit in the entire Pittsburg-Washington area, and even beyond it in Baltimore and Richmond; with this being an era of low credit, these notes were virtually the only currency in the area. This served to link the entire region, from Pittsburg to Richmond to Baltimore, to Washington itself, and it helped to establish the city’s domination over this area. And that the city was not anywhere near as damaged from the Panic of 1819, it meant that by the time the economy boomed again in the 1820s, it was well ahead of the curve, and the boom only led to the city booming further.

When *Clark v. Illinois* (1830) barred state banks from printing banknotes, the Fiscal Bank ended up spared because it was chartered under the federal government[[176]](#endnote-176). This meant the city had a special ease of credit – even if Fiscal Bank notes were traded at a rate different to those of the National Bank – which allowed for a special boom, and its notes travelled along a large Middle Atlantic zone from Richmond to Washington to Pittsburg. At its head was clearly Washington, as businesses operating all over that region preferred to be headquartered there – and it only fuelled imports through the Port of Washington. Indeed, this gave Washington a special advantage in its rivalry with New York over their mutual hinterland of the Middle West. Additionally, come the establishment of the Second Bank of the United States, that it was headquartered in Washington meant that it became very strongly integrated with the Fiscal Bank. This only made credit in Washington even easier to obtain while also making the city’s financial order even more stable, and this helped enhance its boom.

The Washington branch of the Second Bank, and the Fiscal Bank of Washington, together represented a cohesive financial establishment. The financial center of the United States was previously Philadelphia; this had its origin in the post-revolutionary environment, where it was both the national capital and the largest city in the nation; thus here was established the Bank of North America, and then the First Bank of the United States. Chestnut Street became the main financial artery of the nation. Though New York began to rival it with the rise of its own financial establishment, that the Bank of the United States had branches in every state meant that it was dominant and couldn’t really be matched. Come 1811, the failure to renew the National Bank meant the end of Philadelphia’s status; though Stephen Girard’s purchase of the bank meant that it did not simply collapse, it was still eroded over the 1810s and 20s and New York grew in its place. The Panic of 1819 meant the collapse of the American financial system; banks either collapsed, or were forced into a period of retrenchment.

When the third Burr administration established a Second Bank of the United States, it was to be headquartered in Washington. As the financial system of Washington matured, so emerged a system of exchanging and selling financial securities, through a network of brokers. In the booming environment of the Luisiana War, this only escalated as the several wartime securities became distributed through these networks. In 1831 this arrangement became formalized with the establishment of the Washington Board of Brokers, which provided structured rules for the exchange of securities[[177]](#endnote-177). This swiftly became the leading financial exchange in the United States – when the Marshall Court demonetized banknotes from state banks, that they were traded on the New York exchange meant that exchange weakened. Being in the capital and the headquarters of the National Bank, the Washington Board of Brokers became the chief place to buy and sell securities; not just those the government and National Bank put upon it, but also for canal and railroad companies.

With the maturation of the city’s financial and commercial institutions, Washington saw a push to monumentalize the achievements of the American Revolution, which had by this point turned into national myth. Perhaps the first element of this push was the reconstruction of the presidential mansion, after it had so infamously burned down in 1827 with the incumbent president, Aaron Burr, inside. In the interim, and with the bulk of American revenues being spent on the American war effort, President Harrison resided in his vice presidential residence; but with the end of the war in 1828, reconstruction began almost immediately. Despite some talk of moving the residence elsewhere, that Burr had died there and, in the eyes of many, had been martyred, made it a sacred site; to move it would be a sort of surrender. The new presidential mansion, completed in 1833, included a new grandeur, with east and west wings that more than doubled its size. Additionally, Harrison included several busts of not only Burr, but several other presidents and other great figures, in a new monumental reception hall. And though it would take decades for this name to be official, already Americans were calling this the “Burr House”.

This would only be the beginning of an era, to monumentalize the greats of the past, as the revolutionary generation passed and gave way for the age of Clay, Webster, and Calhoun. Talk of a monument to George Washington led to the creation of a society in 1833; raising a lot of money through public subscription, it inaugurated an architectural competition. Several designs would be proposed, such as victory columns reminiscent of Paris’s Bastille Column, or a colossal obelisk surrounded by a colonnade – but what ultimately won the day was a massive triumphal arch with several bas-reliefs on its surfaces, clearly reminiscent of Roman examples but far larger, and at its very center it contained a huge equestrian statue of George Washington. Placed on the National Mall, along what would soon become an axis of monumentalism, its construction became a symbolic national act as virtually every part of the nation sought to sponsor a stone to be part of the whole. Its completion saw much tumult as the monument association had to be bailed out by National Bank, but by 1848 it would be completed.

In the decades before the Liberty and Union War, monumentalization continued. With the endowing of the Smithsonian Institution, architects and builders immediately got to work on building what became called “The Castle”, a distinctly neo-Gothic building made of brick, which was also a tribute to James Smithson’s British and aristocratic roots. Surviving the destruction of the Liberty and Union War, despite the buildup of the Smithsonian since its design continues to make it a distinct part of Washington’s landscape. Additionally, several statues popped up in this period, often with neoclassical plinths; these included Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Aaron Burr, and many other figures from the recent revolutionary generation. This was nothing compared to the monumentalization of the city postwar, but it was clearly a predecessor to that great wave. And it made the city feel like the political capital that it formerly was only on paper.

Thus, Washington became the capital of the nation, not just of government but for finances and the exchange of securities. The city’s population boomed in quick succession, and then and now it dominates an economic region from Richmond to Baltimore, turning the latter into an effective banleague. Swelling even beyond the limits of the city of Washington, Congress in short succession expanded it northwards. Additionally, the several settlements rose east of the Anacostia River were formally constituted as the city of Websterville in 1847, with its own mayor[[178]](#endnote-178); this was representative of the boom years of the era. It would only be during and immediately after the Liberty and Union War that urbanization swept the entire capital district, but development was clearly headed that way. Washington would never be the largest city of the United States, but it would become one of the largest.

# 35. The Advance of the Wire

The United States had already been transformed by two technologies by 1845, namely the semaphoric telegraph and the canal. The semaphoric telegraph allowed for communication from one part of the nation to the other, and under the authority of the post office they covered virtually every part of the nation which had some level of settlement. It was now possible to transmit messages from Boston to New Orleans within two hours – although this was only the case in times of good weather, and of course it was very rare indeed that the United States had good weather all across the board. Otherwise, semaphore towers would need to send runners to one another. But the results were immediate. Beyond the obvious military uses, the transmission of financial security values prevented exploitation of the boards of brokers, and the weekly transmission of news bulletins allowed every part of the nation to have a sense of the whole[[179]](#endnote-179) – although along the frontier and beyond, a lack of infrastructure meant instead the use of heliographs instead, after their invention by German mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss. Just as influential was the rise of the canal, which allowed for people and goods to travel from one part of the nation to the other. Once, the Alleghenies were virtually as great of an obstacle as the Atlantic, but now all one needed was a boat and they could make the approach within a few days. This made western expansion easier than ever, and it helped combine the nation into a single unitary market. The rise of the steamboat – although this was the paddleboat, and the screwboat was still several decades away – only helped accelerate this, because now one didn’t need mules to take a boat along. Little wonder the steamboat and the semaphore tower were the leading symbols of modernity in the era.

The Panic of 1842, and the collapse of the tariff in the same year put an end to investment in these new technologies. Banks either died or restricted credit to prevent themselves from dying, and beyond this the government simply didn’t have the spare money which had previously fed the boom. And by the time Webster came to the presidency, in truth a new era had come. The semaphoric telegraph had been replaced by the electro-telegraph – in time, it would simply be known as the telegraph – and the canal and steamboat were replaced by the railroad and locomotive. They became enduring symbols of the nineteenth century, and of the ambitious progress of the era, forever throwing the canal and semaphore tower into the dust of history[[180]](#endnote-180).

In truth, neither of these technologies were new. Human- and gravity-powered railroads were used for mines since medieval times, as had horse-powered rail. And though these were initially made of wood, in the late eighteenth century iron rail began to emerge. With the rise of steam power, it only took some time to put two and two together and, in 1804, the British inventor Richard Trevithick invented the railroad. The 1810s saw the rise of several railroads along with industry; though the British Isles saw several minor railroads for small-scale transport, France’s need for rapid troop transport in its hostile neighborhoods saw a lot of investment in rail connecting Paris to the rest of the nation, with a special focus on its Rhenish frontier. And though the War of Roussin’s Fleet put an end to French rail expansion, it nevertheless demonstrated its potential to transform a nation; they could be built in places and areas where canals were impractical and thus establish unprecedented interconnectedness. The 1830s saw the French pull well ahead from the British, whose financial collapse and revolutionary instability made its own investments tough; France successfully established a railroad network from Gand to Le Havre to Bordeaux to Nice, and even beyond to its sister republics. At the same time, the German states built railroads to rival their French enemies, and though the British still lagged behind, they were on their way. The Age of Rail had begun[[181]](#endnote-181).

The United States had invested in some rail over the 1830s, but lacking both the military need and the strong state, they were not overly substantial. One was the Camden and Amboy Railroad, to connect New York to Philadelphia; this project had begun in 1815 with a horse-driven railroad, but by 1831 this had since been substituted by steam locomotives imported by the British Isles. This came in tandem with a canal also being constructed to achieve the same goal; the Railroad was slightly ahead of the canal in completion, and it was a proof of concept which inspired the beginnings of railroad speculation. Equally influential was its use of an electric telegraph, as signalling between stops was a necessity for traffic control. This telegraph did not consist of the iconic Gauss code machines remembered today, but rather it used electromagnetism to adjust a series of needles to create images which would correspond to semaphore tower arrangements, to ease the technological shift. This limited use attracted some attention – in particular, Joseph Henry looked at this application of his own discovery of electromagnetic induction and he began to think – but these early electric telegraphs were clearly insufficient and far less practical than the semaphoric telegraph in transmitting across large distances.

Another early railroad project was the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad. Begun as a project soon after the end of the Luisiana War, it represented Charleston and its attempt to regain its prosperity; even before the Sack, it had fallen behind thanks to lacking a water connection to the West, and this was a bold attempt to rebuild bigger and better than before. This was a project spearheaded by Calhoun’s lieutenant Robert Y. Hayne, and Harrison and Clay being eager to tie South Carolina to the rest of the Union amid the Nullification Crisis, they got Kentucky and North Carolina to agree, although both required several branches to choice cities of their own; it is from there it got the Louisville part. With federal revenue being pumped into the railroad company, and with its ample bonds trading on the various broker boards, the company made good progress. Completed from South Carolina’s capital of Columbia to Cincinnati, and a line from Charleston to Branchville by 1837, these two sections were then completed from Columbia to Charleston by 1841. This proved a great success, and Charleston boomed as a port to the West. Even before this project ended, several states began working on railroad projects; as part of its Mammoth Internal Improvements Act, Indiana additionally allotted money for this purpose. But 1842 put an end to all investment in internal improvements. Still, the great railroad from Cincinnati to Charleston was a formative moment in American history, and it showed the future.

Come the election of Daniel Webster, the states slowly came out of their debt defaults, which made money available for internal improvements. Additionally came the renewal of the National Bank and the doubling of its capitalization, and the Bank now had to invest this money – or else risk the collapse of its stock. This money would be used in several ways, but the most relevant one here is in transport companies, and it generally preferred to do this in the form of owning stock. Though it still invested in several canal companies, it did begin to invest in rail. The bulk of these railroads were in the East, this being considered a more stable region to invest within in this era; it did not take long for there to be an arc of rail from Portland to Charleston. The Bank being a singular and quasi-public institution, this also allowed for an early standardization of the railroad system. Countries like the British Isles which saw private buildup of rail, saw conflicting gauges and other matters between different rail companies which required several decades to make common, and until then this severely hampered the rise of a single integrated railroad system. In the meantime, the United States saw almost immediately common standards, as with its shares in the various railroad companies, and with its representatives in the various company boards, the Bank was able to secure their recognition. A gauge of five and a half feet was immediately imposed on the various projects it supported, and this allowed for the establishment of common stations and systems for interchange. It became possible to ride a railroad from Portland to Charleston. And even non-Bank projects followed these standards, because they had become common[[182]](#endnote-182).

From this arc slowly emerged a network connecting from it. It is here that the hub-and-spoke nature of American rail emerged. For it was most common for the Bank to invest in a railroad project if it was adjacent to an existing or planned stop, and in contrast to the extreme centralism of the French system, American federalism meant that it couldn’t entirely be centralized in Washington; instead, in the East, the existing large cities became rail centers and therefore saw their positions fortified. But what did emerge was a bidding war along the way; every small settlement wanted to divert the railroad to their way. They wanted a terminus, and they wanted to be able to attract and sell goods to people moving all along the way. Thus, towns paid bribes to surveyors, if that didn’t work they’d pay bribes to the railroad company, and if that didn't work they’d pay bribes to the National Bank. Corruption thus became a quite common affair, and that unlike the canal the railroad was not as restricted in where it could be built, and that it wasn’t dependent on nearby water, meant that the bidding war was a new phenomenon. And as the railroads spread westwards, and as western states began to get to work on building rail on their own benefit, it led to an even more intense bidding war, and it promoted corruption in the halls of politics. And at the same time, railroad freight rates, both things much easier to control than equivalents for canals, were other arenas for corruption, as it became too easy for railroad conductors to rig them for either their benefit, or the benefits of their friends – and functionally, rates became a new measure of distance[[183]](#endnote-183). For the time being though, construction of the railroad was steady but slow. This was because the existing canals were, at this point, quicker in transporting goods and people, and the degree of buildup during Canal Mania meant this wasn’t just some theoretical thing either. But the groundwork had been laid for a railroad boom, and all could see it.

More immediate was the rise of the electric telegraph. Though such schemes were hardly new – the British inventor Francis Ronalds had presented an electric telegraph to the British government in 1816 before having it rejected – Joseph Henry’s discovery of electromagnetic induction, which allowed for a steady stream of electricity, made it much more viable; additionally, as people began experimenting, the overly-complicated telegraph schemes of old, which often featured a wire per letter, slowly simplified as inventors worked on it, which only served to make it more viable. Over the 1830s, the electric telegraph was tightly associated with the emerging railroad; the need for quick communications between the stations, to signal about issues, meant something quicker than the semaphoric telegraph was necessary. Here came the electric telegraph. Thus, over the 1830s emerged in the United States a series of electric telegraph lines. These were of very short range – early electric telegraphs needed human beings to examine weak signals in short stops, and then they needed to replicate what they looked like – and they were needle telegraphs, which used electromagnetism to move needles into arrangement which corresponded to semaphore arm arrangements. They used not the dots and dashes of Gauss code, but rather the shapes of Chappe code[[184]](#endnote-184). It was a primitive system, clearly not scalable, which competed with alternative solutions such as the pneumatic telegraph.

Despite talk of supplanting the semaphoric system with electric telegraphy, for the time being it was unviable. Indeed, to many observers, electric telegraphy seemed like less a new, modern mode of messaging and more in line with mesmerism, perpetual motion machines, and other fraudulent schemes associated with the rise of electricity. And to many who saw its potential, they could not see how it could be turned into a national network. What began to change this was the great Joseph Henry. Having been selected as President of the Smithsonian Institution, he became the leader of American science; here, he had a team to help him continue to push forward his work on electricity. Working on making electric telegraphy more viable, in 1841 he invented the electromagnetic relay. This is a switch which, when receiving a weak signal, would automatically repeat and therefore intensify it forwards; this allowed for telegraph messages to be transmitted along far longer distances. With this, Henry built a proof-of-concept electric telegraph line within Washington’s city limits; while not a seismic distance, it revealed that the nation very well could be connected by the electric telegraph, something necessarily with a much higher capacity than the semaphoric telegraph. In a display of republican patriotism, and as he worked on it at a public institution, Henry formally donated this to the nation[[185]](#endnote-185). Little wonder, then that, for its initial history, the electric telegraph was often known as the Henry-telegraph, or even the Henry-graph. Come the election of Daniel Webster, the nation now had the money to fund new federal projects, and with his position, Henry could now advocate for some money to be sent his way. To this end, in 1847, he constructed a successful Baltimore-Washington electric telegraph line which beat the existing semaphoric line, and this clearly demonstrated that the Post Office could revamp the American communications system. Semaphore towers saw their arms come down and replaced by metal pylons over which wires could be attached, and the offices within them now hosted not the complicated pulley arrangement to control a tower, but instead simpler desks to transmit and receive messages. This being when submarine cables were entirely infeasible, wires needed to be laid across river bridges. But in the end, the Webster administration did successfully replace the semaphore tower with the electric telegraph, at least between major cities and defensive positions where quick communication was crucial, and this only expanded the communication revolution; by 1860, the only extant use of the semaphore was to signal ships approaching harbors.

Figure : Telegraph wire length, 1847-1868

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Wire length (km)** |
| 1847 | 64 |
| 1850 | 4,223 |
| 1852 | 14,537 |
| 1854 | 22,349 |
| 1856 | 31,538 |
| 1858 | 43,295 |
| 1860 | 56,531 |
| 1862 | 69,285 |
| 1864 | 86,862 |
| 1866 | 119,356 |
| 1868 | 146,419 |

The electric telegraph could do all that a semaphoric line could, and more. It had much higher capacity, and bad weather, always a concern in the United States, did not interfere with its use. Thus, instead of transmitting weekly bulletins, the government could now transmit daily news, complete with small snippets of articles. Combined with the near-instantaneous transmission, it was now easier than ever for the federal government to conduct business. Additionally, the private message boom expanded dramatically – the semaphoric telegraph had allowed for some private messages, but it was quite expensive, and unless one was sending messages on the “Color Lines” of the built-up East, low capacity meant considerable delays and a high price – and the Wire Service of the Post Office was, though still expensive, now within the range of affordability. It would take several decades for the price of a telegraph message to even be remotely comparable to a regular mail message – but it was clear than the era was coming[[186]](#endnote-186).

Thus, by 1852, the United States was fully in the throes of modernity. The railroad was coming into town, and the telegraph wound the nation together. The nation had thrown its awkward adolescence aside, and these new technologies compressed distance and made the country smaller and closer than ever. But yet, these distances made the nation’s differences more vivid – more than anything, the difference between the slave and free states. Just as the canal and semaphoric telegraph made the Illinois and Missouri Crises inevitable, so too would the railroad and electric telegraph make the crises of the future inevitable.

# 36. The Queens of the West

High Websterism was as much the product of the new, rising West as it was the olden, industrial East with which he was so identified. There was no way it could not be, after all. The two previous presidents, Pike and Harrison, were both icons of the West, after all. And the West had been an important region for which both the Democrats and Republicans tried to win support from – and indeed, virtually every election from 1812 to 1868 was, in one way or another, decided by the West. Thus, from the outset, Webster campaigned for western support. This was crucial for, first, winning the candidacy of the Democratic Party and then finally, winning the election; his tour across the West, by which he won the latter remains an iconic moment in American politics. And across his entire presidency, Webster made sure to redirect money towards the West – and this was all demonstrative of a very real transformation that not just this region, but the entire United States was going through. Indeed, his reforms may well have put an end to a sort of Western sectionalism, which served to supplant it with more of a North-South divide along similar lines as the East – and ultimately, what was at this point called the “West”, thanks to all this economic growth, became called the “Middle West”.

By 1828, much of the groundwork for the Western boom had already been laid. The great Burr had established an array of canals and semaphoric telegraphs which stretched well into the West, and this allowed for both rapid communications and trade. Cities like Black Rock, Pittsburg, Cincinnati, Miami, Sandusky, and Louisville became trade emporia which allowed merchants to trade goods to and from the West; these wasn’t yet industrial or even proto-industrial hubs, but they linked together the hinterland with the booming markets of the East. Additionally, settlers moved to and from these cities, and though few of them stayed and most wanted a farm of their own, it was at least the groundwork for something bigger. And those new settlers would go to town to trade their goods, where those goods would travel between many arms of merchants towards either hungry easterners or abroad. In the economic disarray which succeeded the Panic of 1819, the trade networks in the West had become trimmer and leaner, and notably pork became one of the leading exports of the West as it could be easily preserved for such purposes with a little bit of salt. It was for this that Cincinnati got its nickname of “Porkopolis”. A system of factories developed towards this pork export, and this rescued the West from the economic doldrums of the period. It was, perhaps, the groundwork of a proto-modern economy, and it did help to create something of a national market which wrapped both the East and the West. And though compared to what came later this was nothing, compared to what came before it struck contemporaries as nothing short of a national miracle.

Following the end of the Luisiana War, this boom only escalated. Without the Spanish blockade, trade abroad escalated dramatically; additionally, the British Isles had its Popular Revolution, and the new revolutionary government immediately established good relations with the United States. This meant a rush of capital, as Barings, Lloyd’s, and other financial institutions invested in the United States; additionally, a large number of Britons emigrated to America, because this had been bottled during the war and now rushed out, because the average Briton considered the United States a better place to immigrate than the colonies, associated with penal exile, and because the nation had well-developed and similarly free national institutions. These two things alone would have caused a massive boom, but at the same time the post-revolutionary British government abolished the Corn Laws, a set of extremely high tariffs that had essentially blocked foreign grain from entering the markets. This created a new market opportunity for the United States, and with the canal network established by the Burr, and later the Harrison administration, it was easier to export. Another element that added to the mix was the independence of New Erin – in the wake of the Popular Revolution, Irish convicts in the penal colony of Australia declared and established their independence –in 1828, and in its wake, they created a strong relationship with Yankee traders that persisted for the next four decades and practically turned it into New England’s hinterland. New Erinnach wool became an important part of the American economic system. This sort of quasi-colonial relationship with this other former British colony was merely a sideshow to the developing Anglo-American relationship, however. For the next several decades, American grain dominated British markets, and this helped secure that, despite periods of cool relations, Americans and Brits still traded with one another. In the years that followed, the British removed other trade barriers: cotton produced by Southern slaves was the other mainstay of Anglo-American trade, but sugar and tobacco also made their way across the pond.

Additionally, positive relations between the United States and the British Isles also allowed unprecedented cooperation between the West and British North America in improving the St. Lawrence River for trade through canals and other projects; this allowed for a rush of trade along it, Montreal became a vital entrepot for American commerce from the Great Lakes, and indeed what was then known as Upper Canada saw American settlement so massive it was virtually an outlying American state. This boom benefited both the United States and the burgeoning colonies of British North America – while also integrating them into a singular unit. Thus, the 1830s saw a truly massive rush of American grain onto British markets, and most of this grain came from the West which surged to the opportunity. Canals made the West far more accessible for export than ever before, as they allowed American farmers to export their crop to hungry European markets; this allowed for an impressive economic boom across the widths of the nation, to the extent that it could be said that Western grain fuelled the economic boom of the nation of the era. Ohio, Indiana, and New Ireland truly boomed in this period, as settlers swarmed them for land of their own to take advantage of the boom. Thus, this became a period of immense prosperity, and the boom brought the frontier westwards - dramatically.

Additionally, the United States doubled its territory, which expanded the very meaning of the West to include over half of America’s territory. The Mississippi River, which had always been one of the great economic arteries of the nation, had become entirely American territory; so too did the cities of New Orleans and St. Louis. Though anxieties that dispersal of the population would lead to the nation losing all cohesion meant most of this was blocked for settlement, nevertheless explosive settlement and speculation did proceed. The years that followed saw a broad economic boom, as the Mississippi became an economic corridor for trade, helped along the way by American efforts to improve it for easier trade. The conquest of the rapids allowed for trade from St. Paul to New Orleans; this also seamlessly integrated into the Ohio and Tennessee River networks, allowing for easy trade of freight, without the use of fuel that trains used. This was the era of the much-romanticized paddle steamer travelling both up- and down-river, and this had several consequences. It further strengthened the river trade.

Cities like Cincinnati, Louisville, Concord, Lexington, and Memphis boomed as they could now more easily use New Orleans as an outlet for their trade. St. Louis and New Orleans saw similar booms thanks to the Mississippi River trade, turning the latter city almost in an instant into one of the grandest cities in the whole nation, and certainly the largest in the whole South. And it allowed for a further boom of settlement; Missouri became Anglo-majority within two decades of its annexation, and Orleans became the center of a distinctly creole, Catholic, and Caribbean-focused society, which further immigration fortified rather than defrayed. Additionally, the annexation of this territory provided the United States the opportunity to deport Indigenous beyond the Mississippi, with the less than humanitarian nature of these efforts being something most Americans chose to ignore; this allowed for the expansion of settlement within the old borders through several land booms. Thus, the American frontier expanded beyond the Mississippi River. New Orleans and St. Louis became centers of a trading network expanding well into the still-unsettled territories of what was, even then, called the Interior. And the nation expanded in sheer scope and scale, with its frontiers stretching beyond what was once thinkable.

But at the same time, this created a sort of Western sectionalism. The immense influence of the East, through institutions such as the National Bank and the Post Office, led many Westerners to view their relationship as fundamentally colonial. The rise of the canal only intensified it, as much of the West became the economic hinterland of the East, especially the booming cities of New York and Washington; this economic integration also saw the downfall of the Western independent press, as it could not possibly compete with the barrage of books and newspapers coming in from the East. But it had a cure: with the growing influence of the West in terms of population, it had the power to affect politics on the national level. One response was from Henry Clay, who represented Kentucky – a part of the West, but the older and more established West – who advocated an American System which would turn the United States into a singular and self-sufficient market, through a system of internal improvements, home manufacture, and a new banking infrastructure. It wanted to turn the East into something which would develop the West in terms of capital and trade. This agenda certainly had an appeal in the older West, including his Kentucky, but also Yazoo, Tennessee, and Ohio, and it saw its implementation in the later Harrison years.

But there was another response, from the newer West, which viewed the East with fear and trepidation. They did not believe they could develop a working relationship with the East at all, and so instead they wanted to mould the federal government in their image. They wanted to, at the very least, make federal lands easier to purchase, and at the very most, grant to the states all federal lands within their jurisdiction; they wanted to put an end to ideas of structured settlement and replace it with land rushes. They wanted to put an end to the power of the National Bank, which they regarded as a tool to transfer wealth eastwards; instead, they either wanted easy credit or an economy based on metallic bullion. Making an alliance with the Nullifiers of the South, this agenda saw itself come to power under Zebulon Pike, following the 1836 election. However, his presidency ended up something of a disaster, and indeed the most extreme parts of both the Western and Southern agendas ended up entirely jettisoned in the name of electability. Though the causes of the Panic of 1842 remain a topic of much debate today, to most observers at the time it was to be directly put at his feet. And he failed to enact most of his agenda; the National Bank was, if a weakened institution, still extant in this era.

The election of Daniel Webster in 1844 was a repudiation of this extreme western sectionalism – but it was not the end of the prominence of the West. His election was the product of an alliance between the Northeast and the West, linked by bonds of free-soil and desires to restore economic prosperity, and it was the beginning of the transformation of much of the West into a part of the North. And when he did become president, the pork-and-barrel spending he inaugurated was directed to the West – albeit the existing, mature West – which served to fortify it. The National Bank system, inaugurated by its renewal, included a new railroad network spanning much of the West, allowing for new conduits for trade. The pattern it imposed was of a hub-and-spoke model, which consisted of several terminals in the large existing cities and much smaller feeder lines to smaller towns; this meant it fortified the existing cities over the smaller ones. This meant several things: markets tended to be centralized around the cities with large termini, and those cities also became centers of profligate speculation. That the railroad was faster than the canal, and that it entirely avoided the issue of travelling upriver, meant that it allowed for goods to be exported that would otherwise perish.

It must come to no surprise that this era saw Cincinnati become the second-largest city in the nation, as a part of the better-established West which served as a chokepoint for most settlement as well as a stop in the trade from further West to both New York and Cincinnati; that it had one of the oldest railroad connections, meant it took advantage of the new opportunities it granted early, and under the National Bank system it became the site of several feeder lines, which fundamentally made those locations dependent on Cincinnati itself. Additionally, this era also saw St. Louis become important as a stop for stevedores to translate river shipping to the rail, or vice versa, and that it was already an important site for shipping made it an obvious terminus for many segments of the burgeoning railroad network; the years that followed saw it become a large and booming city. Even further south, the railroad inaugurated concentrated settlement and urbanization, as they became obvious places for plantations to sell their wares. It was in this period that Memphis became the large metropolis it is today. Beyond this, in the oldest parts of the West, industrial development was beginning: Ohio, Kentucky, and New Ireland saw large-scale National Bank investment in manufacturing, which only served to enhance urbanization and establish a modern industrial economy.

It would be the latter point which transformed the West. Ohio, New Ireland, and Kentucky became increasingly-urban societies which resembled less their agrarian pasts than their urbanized Eastern neighbors. To construct railroads in the first place, they needed to construct foundries, import or excavate iron, and employ people to lay out the rail and construct the new railroad terminals; in total, one tenth of working Americans were employed constructing railroads, and once they were done most of them got employment in the new factories that had sprung up to construct the railroads in the first place[[187]](#endnote-187). Miami, Sandusky, Cincinnati, Louisville, and Lexington became large centers, no longer market towns but places of production in their own right, which served markets across the nation – and thanks to the railroad and the steamboat, well beyond. The West was increasingly becoming the Middle West – an industrial foundry which offered goods for the world – and this proved momentous. But another thing this did was that it broke Western sectionalism. Increasingly, Ohio and Tennessee no longer saw themselves as part of one singular West; instead they saw themselves as parts of the North or the South. This was the result of another change wrapping the nation.

With the trans-Caribbean slave trade blocked by the War of Danish Succession and the New Granadine War of Independence, instead slave-breeders sold their slaves domestically. In a quite abhorrent case of the force of the market, this led to the price of the slave crashing. This allowed for a large expansion of slavery within the South, as plantations grew at the expense of poor white freeholds; additionally, planters used their control of state institutions to grow their plantations. Within the halls of manufacture, poor whites found themselves losing their jobs, and instead slaves found themselves doing most jobs. This expansion of slavery was decisive in Tennessee, Missouri, Illinois, and even much of Kentucky, turning them from frontier societies which merely contained a lot of slavery, into true slave societies[[188]](#endnote-188). In past times, they valued a sort of white settler democracy, but now they increasingly found themselves becoming dominated by quasi-feudal oligarchies; those poor whites who wanted not to be forced onto the margins of society, had to instead move elsewhere. This also decidedly meant the Mississippi was dominated by slavery, as plantations grew across it all the way up to Illinois; that it was, then as now, America’s largest commercial artery, only placed slavery at the very heart of the American nation. And what this meant was that the Southwest now looked not to Americans north of the Ohio for their cues, but instead to Savannah, or to Charleston. Similarly, in the Northwest many looked to New York or Boston, where they were linked not only with the canal, but with the railroad.

This hardly meant the end of western ties – a lot of trade continued from North to South through the Mississippi, there were still many Westerners who viewed those across the Ohio River as kin, and indeed there were many who travelled between the North and South through the large rail and river networks. Indeed, for all that Cincinnati and Louisville were separated by the Ohio River, they were still quite closely connected, and they still viewed each other as kin[[189]](#endnote-189). And there still was a sort of border country between North and South, including large swathes of Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky. But this pro-compromise country was greatly diminished in size, and the governments of those areas had broadly fallen to sectionalists. It did remove a source of pro-compromise sentiment, and it did polarize the nation between North and South. This did not mean a civil war by itself, but it did make it likelier. And it meant that, in the sectional crises of the future, the systems which brought the Union from the verge, would not exist anymore.

Thus, Daniel Webster saw much of the structure of the United States come to be. He saw a North and a South which stretched across the West, and he saw the nation increasingly become industrialized, with people increasingly concentrated in cities connected by railroads and canals. Cincinnati and St. Louis were growing from almost nothing into what were, by the standards of the time, massive cities. And he saw industrial goods come pouring out, rivalling those produced in Europe. The United States was no longer an agrarian community, shaped by independent farmers and planters; those elements still existed, but they were increasingly overshadowed by the rising factories of the nation. Instead, it was a nation of industry – industry that was growing in two distinct paths, with a distinct geographic divide – and room for districts states, and thus people, who could intermediate between the two, was collapsing. And this would ultimately have momentous consequences in the years to come.

# 37. The Zenith of the Nation

With the end of the Second Nullification Crisis, President Webster regarded this as an opportunity. Though to prevent resentment from rising, he launched a tour across the South, he nevertheless saw that the Planter Ascendancy was weaker than ever before. His tour across the South, where he encountered cheering crowds, which were only too happy to see “Godlike Daniel” speak. To be sure, there were still those who were unhappy with him – the South Carolinian government pointedly refused to greet him – but everywhere he went, crowds arrived, became spellbound by his speeches, and he successfully unified the nation wherever he went. But all the while, he made plans on what laws to enact, and by the time he made his return to Washington, he knew what he would do.

First, he looked to the as yet unsettled West. Though Webster was (and remains) closely associated with Massachusetts, a state known to be suspicious of western expansion and always close to the British, he was born in New Hampshire back when that was the frontier, and as such he did support the expansion of the nation – if in a way that would benefit the whole union. He supported the Luisiana War, in what was a distinctly minority position in Massachusetts, because he sought to secure the mouth of the Mississippi for American trade. Though when it came time for peace, he did not support the acquisition of the entire Luisiana Territory, instead trying to leave the Interior in Spanish hands, he did support the Treaty of St. Petersburg. In the decades that followed, he did support opening the eastern part of Luisiana to western settlement, and though he wanted slow and steady settlement which wouldn’t disperse population, this was hardly some extreme position of the eastern establishment, and it was in fact supported by older parts of the West, such as Ohio and Kentucky.

The next great moment of Webster’s western expansionism came with his Second Reply to Calhoun. This iconic speech is remembered today for Webster’s extraordinarily eloquent advocacy of American nationalism, but this whole controversy had begun over Calhoun’s entreaties to gain the support of the West for his doctrine of nullification. This was hardly some long shot, for indeed the West was severely unhappy with the federal government; being a weak, distant power whose only real influence was over the public lands, which in the West consisted of almost the majority of several states. This, most Westerners despised because it meant that they couldn’t control their own land, and there were many who called for the western states to simply declare that they owned public lands within their jurisdiction and dare the federal government to do anything about it. This included Governor Ninian Edwards of Illinois, who called for it in his annual message to the legislature – and though this was something of a special case, due to the unusual circumstances of its admission, this showed the potential – and Calhoun regarded this as simply the western equivalent of his nullificationism. Thus, Calhoun’s initial speech, that Webster had replied to, was one which damned New England as the enemy of Western expansion and called for a Southern-Western coalition which would obtain national approval for both giving public lands to the states and reducing the tariff, all to diminish the federal government permanently. And though the Second Reply to Calhoun is best remembered for its fierce nationalism, most of it consists of a defence of New England and a justification that it had, in fact supported the expansion of the West; it also argued that the Northeast and the West were both free soil territory, of yeomen farmers free of planterism. The great success of the Second Reply to Calhoun, which was reprinted from Maine to Tennessee, was the moment nullification would not spread to the West, and it made Daniel Webster a big name in both the North and the West.

Thus, by the time Webster became president, with the support of a large portion of the West, he had to do something to retain its support. With the Tariff of 1845, federal revenues were no longer so dependent on selling public lands, and this opened the door to adjust land prices to make them more accessible; though with the outbreak of war in Europe in 1847, and the following slowing of immigration to a trickle, attempts to cap land prices failed, despite the Webster administration’s attempts to lobby for it, because the East worried it would sap their worker base. But with the Great Migration of poor white Southerners into Northern factories, eventually Eastern opinions slowly changed, although the Webster administration continued to fail to secure a preemption act. Such an act only passed in 1850, to widespread cheers from the West; along the way, as part of the Second Nullification Crisis, Webster had successfully tied the issue to a high tariff to secure a strong majority for both policies.

But even before the Preemption Act, Webster’s sensitivities to the West had led to federal support to several internal improvements bills[[190]](#endnote-190). A Rivers and Harbors Act led to a lot of money to improve the harbors of many cities in the West, as well as the destruction of obstacles within the various rivers between them. Additionally, federal money allowed for internal improvements projects which had been paused by financial project, to continue. Most notable was a series of canals in Indiana which turned its coastal city of Ballyburr into a port for trade into the Mississippi network; similarly impactful was a project to connect the port of Millewackie to the Mississippi, thus allowing for a more direct connection. Ballyburr and Millewackie both boomed as a result; though the third part of the Tri-Cities Area, Chicago, talked about a canal project to connect it to the Mississippi, that the city itself was in Huron and the canal would cross state lines into Illinois, and Illinois being a slave state meant it was wary of a canal which would potentially bring in free state settlers. But the internal improvements projects did allow for a flow of settlers, as formerly-inaccessible land was now opened for settlement; combined with foreclosed land being redeposited into the public lands, this allowed for a considerable land rush in this era[[191]](#endnote-191).

At the same time, with the renewal of the Second Bank, and its recapitalization to double its value, it invested its newfound money into industry; with some nudging from Webster, it deposited some of this money into projects in the West. Most of this money travelled into Ohio and New Ireland, where it further advanced their already impressive boom which would turn both states urban, in this way more similar to the East than to the agrarian image of the West. At the same time, some of this money travelled to Kentucky and Tennessee, where it helped foster the often slave-powered industry in the region; Tennessee became a considerable base for iron production, and Kentucky became the nation’s leading source of saltpeter[[192]](#endnote-192). Tennessee’s factories were based around slavery, while Kentucky’s less so as the state had, to prevent a collapse of the price of the slave, banned interstate sales – but both became increasingly dominated by the Planter Ascendancy. And further south, Yazoo and Georgia saw impressive booms, with the burgeoning towns of Persitia, Lille, and Twickenham becoming industrial centers, albeit with slave labor. Thus, the Webster administration saw the very meaning of “West” change, as Ohio, New Ireland, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Yazoo became more similar to the East than to their own agrarian pasts. This new urbanization also fortified the settlement of their hinterland, as farmers became more prosperous as they now had markets to sell to; additionally, public lands became increasingly rare, as all the choice lands were taken. Indiana, too, was beginning to fill up, and so too was Huron; the remainder of the Northwest Territory was still open to settlement, but it was quite cold, and this naturally inhibited settlement. While within the more westerly slave states, the decreased price of the slave had allowed for an expansion of slaves which squeezed yeomen-farmers out of their territory, as they found themselves bankrupted and reduced to the status of “poor white trash”.

Increasingly, agitation rose for opening new territory for settlement. This had, at this point, been blocked by the South; by the terms of the Missouri Compromise, which many regretted, this would mean they would be free, and that they would border the slave states of Illinois and Missouri would leave them surrounded on three sides by free territory. Many feared that this would lead to slaves escaping there and winning freedom thanks to northern jury nullification, which they figured would turn both Illinois and Missouri into free states, and with it destroy planter control of the Senate. But with the Planter Ascendancy having been divided and defeated during the Second Nullification Crisis, it was now weaker than ever before; politicians like Calhoun, who had successfully blocked the opening of further territory, now found themselves in the outs. At the same time, squatters were finding their way into the unopened west, which though illegal was also something the American government could do little about, and this strain further opened agitation for western expansion. Furthermore, there were many who advocated a transcontinental railroad; though most regarded the Rocky Mountains as the limits of the nation, there were still those who wanted to obtain the territories of the Columbia River from the British, Spanish, and Russians who disputed it, and there were still others who believed this might one day become an independent republic but nevertheless a client of the United States, and it was clear that establishing a territory in the West was a precondition for it.

Thus, 1850 saw the opening of territory for settlement. Under a constitutional amendment passed in 1830, Luisiana was segmented into three sections, each section to the west to one another; the first section had already been largely opened to settlement and constituted as the states of Orleans, Arcansa, and Missouri; the ensuing act now opened the land above it, and named it Juniper Territory, after its chief river. This, Senator Calhoun railed against, but nevertheless it was opened. To the north of Missouri, and to the west of Illinois, this territory immediately saw a land rush, and it represented a triumph for the free-soil agenda of the Webster administration. But the states of Illinois and Missouri considered this a direct threat to the institution of slavery within their borders, and it did not take long for them to suddenly force the issue to prevent them from being surrounded. Thus, in 1851, the Missourian government formally declared that, under its constitution, its northern border included about half of Juniper Territory, and it declared its intentions to send in tax collectors to the territory that it had, in fact, considered under its rule. That this happened before the federal government had entirely assembled a territory in Juniper, meant the Missourian government was well-poised to present its claim – but against this, Webster was indignant. Tasking his cabinet to gather the appropriate documents on the subject, they did so, and Webster prepared a document on the subject.

The ensuing Juniper Proclamation was Daniel Webster at his very finest: in clear and precise language, it laid out the history of Missouri since its annexation to the present, including explicit proof that it had decided against such a far northern claim, and with this in hand he dismantled any argument that it could plausibly claim the northern half of Juniper. And Webster declared that he would enforce the true border of Juniper, and he requested Congress to pass a Force Bill for him to send an army to enforce it, although he prayed that he would not need it[[193]](#endnote-193). In the ensuing weeks, most of the South was singularly unenthusiastic about this claim, and despite Calhoun’s efforts to unify it in support of Missouri, even many of the most proslavery Southerners considered this improper conduct, a bad strategy on the subject. Indeed, it had also put an end to efforts to settle Juniper with proslavery Southerners, with the intention – like Illinois and Missouri before it – to turn it into a slave state, or else to send a case to the Supreme Court to legalize slavery, as the Planter Ascendancy was instead divided against itself, with legislatures seeing competing resolutions on the subject – although aside from South Carolina, most Southern legislatures ultimately regarded Missouri’s conduct as illegal. The result was that Missouri was forced to back down. The Juniper Crisis had come to an end – and it was a resounding defeat for Missouri. But there were several things it did show. First, the West was still a contested region. Though the sheer avalanche of Northerners migrating into it ensured that Juniper Territory would not relegalize slavery, the South was intent on securing the West for slavery – and given the impressive slave boom in both Missouri and Illinois, which had secured both states for slavery and turned the Mississippi into a great slave river, it had the population to do so.

But nevertheless, the Planter Ascendancy was defeated. Its attempts to expand slavery into Juniper had lost, and the Webster administration had won. The territory would be secured for freedom, and at least this time, the antislavery maxim of “Slavery Local, Freedom National” was upheld. That this may have been, more than anything, because of the tactical failures of the Planter Ascendancy, and that it was defeated but not broken, were obscured, however. For the time being, Daniel Webster was, yet again, “Godlike Daniel”, the “Expounder of the Constitution”, who had defended the nation against sectional threats that threatened to destroy it. And Juniper itself would become one of the most reform-minded regions of the entire Union – in particular, in 1854, by a margin of one vote, it legalized women’s suffrage[[194]](#endnote-194), in a moment it continues to memorialize by calling itself the “Equality State”. By the time Calhoun died in 1854, his principles were decisively in the outs, and though he died a prominent senator, even within his own South Carolina Calhounism found itself fighting a losing battle to political forces who wanted to turn the state into, for lack of a better term, a normal Southern state.

But at the same time, several reporters in Washington were tracing federal and National Bank money. They were tracing the many hands they travelled, and they were tracing who they benefited. And when they presented their report, it would chasten those who considered Websterism an unqualified triumph.

# 38. Rise Of the Thing

Daniel Webster was never a man with a clean reputation. He was, after all, a man who freely took in bribes from every business or interest possible; as Senator, he had turned from supporting free trade to being willing to break the Union over protection, as the interests who supported him simply changed. In office, he continued to take in a large number of bribes and presents – most especially, he was on retainer for the National Bank, technically to represent it in legal cases but unofficially to incentivize him to represent their interests in Congress and in the presidency. This was hardly a secret, and this was something his supporters, the opposition, and random observers knew. Despite this, it was hardly enough to demolish Webster’s name, nor was it enough to halt his renown as the “Expounder of the Constitution”, for this existed in a context of a time where corruption was regular and common.

But it did mean that, upon his election to the presidency, none would be surprised that he’d be corrupt. This came at its very beginning with the use of patronage. Though this was hardly a new thing, as since the Burr era patronage had been doled out by party and in the South it had been held by the most unscrupulous elements due to Democratic weakness there, Webster went as far as to sell government positions to the highest bidder. With the Post Office having a great many positions, especially with the expansive semaphoric telegraph network, this became the focal point for such selling[[195]](#endnote-195). So too were jobs sold within the Department of State, Secretary Biddle being perfectly willing to allow Webster to dominate, and so too did the Department of the Treasury, Secretary Wilson also being willing to allow such presidential domination. However, this was perfectly legal, and so there was little anyone could do about it. When anyone questioned him, President Webster claimed that this was simply a way to hire the best people to office, and in any case with secure Democratic control of Congress and the friendly Story Court in the judiciary, and with politics rather overshadowing such corruption, there was not very much that could be done on the subject.

But this was not the only opportunity for corruption. As part of the rechartering of the National Bank, the institution was recapitalized at double its original value, and with the ensuing profits from this new stock offering, the Bank then invested in a series of corporations and projects. These investments gave it the right to appoint directors and otherwise exercise influence on their conduct. But along the way, it allowed Bank officers to make money with kickbacks and bribes; that many of these projects ended up merely paper schemes, only allowed the Bank to artificially fuel bubbles, and for its officers to make a killing off of them. Additionally, the Bank gave to companies it invested in, artificial advantages within the market. These bribes, insider trading, and otherwise stock and bond manipulation, went all the way to the top to its president, Nathan Appleton – himself tightly associated with New England’s Suffolk Bank system; within his offices, he regularly had meetings with railroad presidents, factory bosses, and many others to make deals that skirted the very edge of illegality. Though all of this helped the Bank to make a profit and therefore benefit its shareholders, it was not within the public interest.

What kicked off the scandal was the construction of a railroad from Millewackie to Juniper City, in which the National Bank invested thoroughly. This was a far western railroad, and this therefore allowed the people on the ground a lot of power, especially the personnel at the secondary National Bank branch in Huron. When it came time to lay out the railroad, surveyors received bribes from every settlement along the way, who had dreams of turning their village into a grand, sprawling city – dreams that could only be achieved if the railroad went through it. The state of Huron did have a press, even if it was a highly partisan press of simple broadsheets; reporters within the *Millewackie Republican* observed this system of corruption, and after investigating its scale they successfully published it in an 1850 article. This was slow to reach eastwards, but it eventually did; it did not take long for Republican organizations and newspapers to similarly investigate railroad projects, where they found similar corruption and more – it did not take long for them to make hay of them. Virtually every railroad project saw massive amounts of bribery by settlements that speculators wanted to turn into the next big town; the larger projects saw the deliberate pumping of stock and bond bubbles, which would collapse only after the owners sold off their stock at the very peak. This whisper campaign slowly escalated until, come 1851, they appeared everywhere in the nation. In Washington, Republican-aligned reporters unveiled a corruption ring that wrapped the entire Eastern Arc and was meshed deep into the Washington Board of Brokers. This forced several brokers to resign, although that this was not illegal at this point, meant there was no further action to be done. But the scandal did not stop there; as reporters traced Appleton’s investments, they found that he consistently won large gains on stocks and bonds from precisely the same companies that had been so manipulated. Far from being a regulator and manager of the economy, this revealed it was but its exploiter. And the outcry was immense. Suddenly, the Bank seemed a threat to American economic prosperity. And though Webster swiftly pressured Appleton to resign and had him replaced with an outsider, Reverdy Johnson, who swiftly took action to root out corruption and more truly turn the Bank into the engine for economic growth and unity for it had been justified, it quite severely tainted the agenda of Websterism. The elderly John C. Calhoun took a brief time to claim victory; despite that he had lost over nullification, and lost over Juniper, he could claim this as proof for his economic agenda, but the ensuing backlash to Websterism took on a very different scope, throwing aside state’s rights and sectionalism for something more national.

But from there, the Republicans wanted to take one step further. They look at Webster’s well-known set of bribes, they tallied all his presents he took to his residence, and they looked at the various salaries he took, and they put it all together. They revealed that he had took in millions of dollars, and they revealed that the Department of the Treasury was less the organ for integrating and distributing public money, and more a tool for mass public enrichment. It was all depicted in several charts which were printed in the ensuing report, duplicated and serialized for nationwide publication. It was all very damning, and all the Democrats could do to defend him was to point to several other corruption scandals. Indeed, Webster also lost support within his own party – especially from the Western wing. They saw him as a man who taxed them, who distributed money to help the East and the cities and did less to them, and they saw in him a man captured and owned by coastal elites. No longer was he “Godlike Daniel”, the “Expounder of the Constitution”; now, he was America’s last Federalist, an unabashed elitist who tainted his very party’s name. They wondered what all the free-soil politics the Democratic Party was worth, if this is what it led to. And when Webster fired his Secretary of the Treasury and blamed the scandal on him, it was to no avail; it only made him look weaker, and his administration as due to collapse[[196]](#endnote-196).

Though the Democratic majority in Congress made impeachment unthinkable, the Republican press wanted to go in for the kill. Suddenly came new stories, on the most salacious gossip, on his many extramarital affairs; this was hardly news, and all could tell that his marriage was but a prop to get his wife’s family’s money, but with scandal already in the air, such rhetoric only became more common. And many could not help but now believe it. Webster’s name was now mud, and many could not help but deride him for it. The rhetoric in the Republican press simply escalated in tone; one that became common was to accuse him of having an affair with a Colored “mulatto” woman[[197]](#endnote-197). There was no proof of it, and most historians cannot determine the truth of this one way or another – and in any case, it hardly matters today – but many Americans could not help but believe it, in a time when people considered racial intermixing simply dangerous, a contravening of the white man’s democracy that had dominated the American nation ever since the Burr years . Once upon a time, Webster’s nickname of “Black Dan” signified merely his tanned appearance, his huge black eyebrows, and his black hair, but now it identified his dangerously possible sexual tastes.

Thus, in the last year of his tenure, Webster’s reputation was in tatters. No longer was he the vibrant “Godlike Daniel” who expounded the Constitution against his enemies, now he was “Black Dan” who stole from the nation and cheated on his wife with dozens upon dozens of women, of varying degrees of social acceptability. His name was tarnished; though it ultimately would not persist, and though his modern reputation remains but untouched by these blemishes, for the time being his administration floundered. Certainly, the economy was still doing well, and the union had certainly been absolutely held together – but the nation had since moved on. But there was one last act left in his great, epic presidency; he still had one year left.

# 39. To Plow the Sea

Much of the Webster administration was under the shadow of the New Granadine War of Independence. Beginning in 1848 over a minor skirmish between Venezuela and Spain, it rapidly blew up into a national revolt in New Granada with full Venezuelan support, and when the ensuing Spanish invasion of Venezuela threatened to subsume the entire country, the British government under its ambitious prime minister, Lord Dundonald, declared war on the Spanish and subsequently launched ferocious attacks on virtually its entire empire, with explosive ships and even the use of chemical warfare, in order to crack it and leave it a set of British client republics. In the United States, this suddenly sparked a massive wave of horror, as the specter suddenly rose that its territory would be surrounded on all sides by British or British-allied republics, and to the South in particular, it threatened to eliminate its slave markets and surround the South with free soil. Both the interruption of the trans-Caribbean slave trade, and a British charge on Tampico intended to provoke a Mexican national revolt, helped very nearly lead to Webster losing re-election in 1848 – but he didn’t.

The Second Nullification Crisis, where South Carolina jumped the gun and nullified the Tariff of 1845, was partially provoked by that state’s long memories of the Sack of Charleston, and given the British Isles’ new foreign policy, many feared it might sack Charleston again, and within the Union, with the full support of the Anglophilic Democratic Party. That the rest of the South did not join South Carolina, was in part because it regarded the Union a useful shield against the increasingly-abolitionist British Isles. This only reflected a great national divergence over the New Granadine War of Independence – the South opposed the British, viewing them as dangerous abolitionists who would separate them from their slave markets in the Caribbean; while in contrast much of the North supported them, viewing them as brothers in fighting for freedom in the Americas, and it looked to turn them into valuable trade partners[[198]](#endnote-198). Additionally, Henry Clay was one of those who supported the New Granadine War of Independence, and indeed he went so far as to advocate the United States declare war on the Spanish. In this view, he was out of lockstep of the South, including even his own Kentucky whose traditional Democratic leanings were eroding in this era[[199]](#endnote-199).

But despite Democratic Party Anglophilia, Webster made allowance for the South’s fierce anti-British stance, and his foreign policy on the war reflected his desire to seek some sort of compromise bringing it to an end on good terms. For the several years of the war, the South pressured the federal government into trying to prevent British encroachment on nearby Spanish territories, potentially even a war on the Spanish side; to satisfy them, Webster would routinely have the British Consul-General to Washington over to get him to stop attacks on Spanish soil near the US. And given that Prime Minister Dundonald sent massive fleets with the goal of cracking the entire Spanish Empire, a lot of them ended up close to the United States, and they caused several national uproars as a result. When the British briefly took Tampico, the Webster administration successfully negotiated British departure, although given the desired Mexican revolt failed to materialize, the British were planning to depart anyways. Additionally, in 1851, the British took Monterrey, on the coast of Spanish North California, with the clear plan to turn the Californias as a whole into a British client republic; the ensuing panic this caused in the United States, that a province with such potential on America’s border might become a British client, resulted in yet another call for war. This, President Webster once more resolved through deft negotiation which saw the British agree to depart, in return for a general American agreement that they’d bar Spanish settlement in the Columbia River watershed.

And at the same time, Webster sought to bring the British and Spanish over to the table to bring the war to an end. He saw that the very specter of war opened a cleavage between North and South, and he wanted it shut[[200]](#endnote-200). For some time, his attempts to end the war through negotiation failed, but he kept the option open, and he issued several reports proposing compromises which he thought might serve as working drafts for a final treaty. For some time, the British were unwilling to be brought to the table, the Dundonald administration being too busy trying to make the entire Spanish Empire into client republics of the British Isles; but come 1852, British support of the war was beginning to erode and the antiwar movement under the classical radical extraordinaire Richard Cobden won growing influence in Parliament[[201]](#endnote-201). With the offer being on the table, and with the war having proceeded quite well for the British, Dundonald increasingly found himself pressured into accepting the Webster administration’s offer on the subject – or else he might find himself losing the support of his own party. And thus, the British signalled to Washington that they’d be willing to accept American mediation, and Webster successfully also brought the Spanish to the table.

The ensuing negotiation for the Treaty of Washington was a chaotic affair. Accepting a British delegation under William Molesworth and a Spanish delegation under Ramón Cabrera, he immediately got them to work on bringing them towards peace. Overall, the two agreed that New Granada would become an independent state, but its precise borders would be a topic of debate. Additionally, the British sought to turn its conquests in Manila into an independent Filipino state, although it seems clear from the outset that the British sought to use it as a bargaining chip. The negotiations were managed by America’s Secretary of State, Nicholas Biddle, but above it Webster managed Biddle’s conduct. The sticking point of the entire negotiation was where the border between New Granada and the Spanish domain of Quito was to be set; the British sought something which would give New Granada access to the Pacific, preferably through the Isthmus of Panama, while in contrast the Spanish sought to deny New Granada even a Pacific coast. The United States also wanted to deny New Granada access to the Pacific, viewing it as a British client and such an arrangement as compromising its dreams of dominating the Americas – but it became clear that Molesworth would not agree to ceding New Granada’s access to the Pacific. Instead, Biddle and Webster focused their efforts on limiting it.

The bulk of British efforts were focused on securing the Isthmus of Panama for New Granada. Being within the borders of the Spanish Viceroyalty, British efforts to take it had largely failed, as had efforts from New Granada northwards; despite it, that it was so narrow a canal connecting the Atlantic and Pacific looked quite viable, and the British wanted it. But the Spanish wanted to build a canal of their own, and the issue came close several times to toppling the entire negotiation process. Several times, Biddle and Webster had to work their diplomatic magic to prevent a fatal breach – but they ultimately succeeded. But when it looked like the British might be successfully able to trade Manila for New Granadine control over Panama, Webster decided to scuttle it. This he did by mailing anonymously to Cabrera a report made by the Smithsonian – a report he had prepared for just this purpose – on the feasibility of constructing a canal on mainland New Granada across the Atrato River to connect the Atlantic and Pacific. In the eyes of the Spanish, this made it seem like the British were plotting to monopolize the trade by taking not only Panama, not only the Mosquito Coast, but also this path. Thus, predictably Cabrera was furious, and when Molesworth pointed his finger at them having done this deliberately, Webster and Biddle threw up their hands at what they called an unavoidable leak. But nevertheless, in the end the British were willing to concede, and negotiations proceeded.

In the end, Webster and Biddle were able to mediate for and make the Treaty of Washington. And though its final signing had something of a pallor, Webster having died during negotiations, the treaty was quite a fear; it gave to New Granada borders that nevertheless denied it Panama, while at the same time it also ensured for American commerce free access to the new country on the same terms as the British. And there was very little Lord Dundonald could do to scuttle the treaty, and with its ratification by both the Spanish monarchy and the British Parliament – the Treaty of Washington was ultimately Daniel Webster’s last victory.

# 40. The National Apprehension

The 1852 election was held in a most curious atmosphere. On the one hand, Daniel Webster had certainly accomplished what he had set out to do. He had saved the economy from total ruin, and the national decay which had reigned in the nation in 1845 had passed; in its place came a massive economic boom and the emergence of the telegraph and railroad as national infrastructure. He had eroded the onslaught of the Planter Ascendancy without alienating the South entirely, and he had seen the triumph of the Union over its enemies; instead, free-soil and progress made its headway all across the nation. But there were many reasons to be discontented. For the rise of industry came at the expense of much of America’s traditional social fabric; no longer was the United States a land of autonomous producers, where any white man could go from an employee to a prosperous producing yeoman-farmer, but instead a massive number of white people ended up workers in a massive corporate apparatus centered around the National Bank. In the South, the different between planter and slave became starker and more rigid than ever, and a large portion of whites, too poor to own slaves, ended up forced into the margins of Southern society, and their only hopes of making a livelihood was to migrate northwards. And it was grossly clear that Webster and the rest of the national network of industry was guilty of gross and extreme corruption. Thus, the nation was shaken by a strange combination of cheers and trepidation, and this decisively mixed national mood would shape the coming election year.

The Republican Party was decidedly shaken in this year[[202]](#endnote-202). Divided over the Second Nullification and Juniper Crises, it was decisively at war with itself; nevertheless, it was united in condemning Webster as a corrupt plutocrat. Seeking to nominate no type of sectionalist, it did nevertheless want to appeal to Northern voters who had clearly broken for Webster out of sectionalism, without alienating and creating a Southern splinter. Despite this, the Republican convention was a raucous event, which saw several candidates win and lose support, none able to win the support of a majority. It was only on the twelfth ballot that one Robert F. Stockton won the nomination of the Republican Party.

The grandson of a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Stockton was a scion of virtual New Jersey royalty. Joining the Navy during Burr’s sponsorship of naval expansion, he became one of the foremost figures of the American Colonization Society, leading a naval expedition which kept Cape Montserrado from falling to Kru invasion; this represented that, though he did oppose slavery, he sought its gradual abolition through deportation to Africa, rather than action which might bring the ire of the Planter Ascendancy. During the Luisiana War, he served quite well as an officer, rising up the ranks and ultimately, as Captain, he was part of the grand success of the Battle of Sandy Hook. This gave him a national sheen; in the 1830s, Stockton invested heavily in real estate, most especially a gold mine in Georgia, as well as the Raritan and Delaware Canal project. With the outbreak of the Second Quasi War, Stockton went back to the navy, and here he proved successful; after capturing several ships over the coast of Guadeloupe, he received national plaudits, and it did not take long for him to be promoted to the title history knows him as, Commodore. With the end of the war, as part of his shuffling of his cabinet, Pike appointed Stockton as his Secretary of the Navy, and here, he led aggressive efforts for military buildup and modernization, building several steamships with quite powerful guns. With the election of Daniel Webster, Stockton successfully arranged for his election as senator for New Jersey. Here, he represented the growth of a new movement within the Republican Party. Though still a doughface for the Planter Ascendancy, he was not just that; in opposing President Webster, Stockton did not want to return to an agrarian economy of producers but rather a New Republicanism of modernity, and he personally invested in the new infrastructure and industrial projects. Though he wanted a trimmed-down National Bank, he still wanted it to support industry albeit through loans rather than equity, and he still wanted a loose currency which would ensure national prosperity. And though he opposed government ownership of shares in corporations, he still wanted to support them with loans and land grants. It was all, he said, much less vulnerable to corruption than the existing system. This all came with a wave of patriotism national optimism; he supported international republican revolution with all the enthusiasm of Henry Clay, with the hopes of expanding American influence all around the world. It was a platform which gave the Republicans an answer to Websterism, and it was enough to have him win the nomination in 1852, despite some southern revulsion at his resemblance, as a supporter of republican revolution and a naval man supportive of modernization, to Lord Dundonald.

In contrast, the Democrats were somewhat worn out. Should they stick with Websterism on the basis of national recovery, or should they repudiate it to avoid being saddled with corruption? The result was a convention strongly divided between Edward Everett, who served as Webster’s successor, and Henry Clay, who despite his advanced age still wanted the presidency. In the end, despite the strong federalism of Webster having decidedly won over Clay’s compromising politics, the desire to repudiate Webster’s corruption meant his nomination. Thus it was that the Democrats nominated a seventy-five year old man, an ancient figure whose career stretched past the age of the median American.

The Clay candidacy would almost immediately collapse, in a most tragic manner. Planning a tour of the nation, he suddenly collapsed in his native Lexington, Kentucky, due to a heart attack, and he died; most strangely, he also died on July 4 – Independence Day. By an even more strange coincidence, so too died Daniel Webster on that same day, although in his case it was due to cirrhosis of the liver, caused by his gluttony and love of drink. It was a strange coincidence that immediately brought to mind the death of two other sometime-allies sometime-enemies, Adams and Jefferson, on July 4, 1826. Edward Everett, considered the greatest orator of his day, gave a joint eulogy which, nevertheless, served as a capstone for Webster’s great nationalist career. Their deaths immediately brought the nation into a period of grieving, as two figures who had defined its history for several decades were now dead. They were both fierce protectionists and modernizers, but Clay’s compromise politics were outmatched by Webster’s stony nationalism. Both Clay and Webster received the honor of laying in state at Rotunda Hall, and in the months that followed, their coffins toured the nation to receive mourners of every stripe. It was, however, also clear that Webster received far more mourners than Clay, his success in upholding national unity having made him a hero across party lines, and that their deaths were more a capstone for his national cohesion than Clay’s unity through compromise. It is Daniel Webster who is the enduring symbol of the era, not Henry Clay; it is Daniel Webster’s speeches, not Henry Clay’s, which are taught in schools today; and it is Daniel Webster, not Henry Clay, who thousands of children dress up as, complete with cravats and potbellies. In his life, Daniel Webster left the nation dizzied with his glory; and in death, he never stopped. Even today, the Free Democratic Party proudly declares itself the party of Aaron Burr and Daniel Webster.

More immediately, however, this forced the Democratic Party to nominate a new presidential candidate. They talked of nominating James L. Petigru, who had ascended to the presidency and was widely respected; however, he was something of a party of one as a South Carolina Democrat. But he didn’t want it; he wanted to serve as a caretaker president then leave. They also talked of nominating Edward Everett, who had the sheen of his great double eulogy; but he also refused, perhaps seeing that a Democratic defeat was imminent. Thus, the Democratic National Committee instead named John J. Crittenden, who had served as Clay’s loyal deputy, for the presidency, and they convened a “Little Convention”, of one-fourth of the delegates of the regular one to confirm it, which they did unanimously. However, this forced the Democrats to open a campaign from scratch by which point Stockton was already embarking on a national tour, which he had only briefly paused to make do for the double funerals of Webster and Clay. This put Crittenden at a strong disadvantage, and it made the conclusion of the election inevitable. Additionally, it forced the Democrats into a complicated process to replace Clay with Crittenden on all the ballots, and given that in this era each state held a different election, the Democratic National Committee needed to engage in a long process. And though it did replace the names in all the states, it was a long process which only further hampered the Crittenden campaign.

Both Stockton and Crittenden launched tours of the nation, Webster having established this as a firm precedent; nevertheless, as it was, the momentum was clearly with Stockton. This was not only because of the need to replace Henry Clay, but it was also because Stockton had a positive platform in a way that Crittenden did not. Additionally, though neither of them were the grand orators that Clay and Webster were, Stockton’s speeches were more clearly with the national mood than Crittenden’s; additionally, for much of the North, Stockton’s seeming resemblance to Lord Dundonald was a plus, as he seemed a man who may give the nation new glories. Supporters of economic growth and industrialization could stand proudly that Stockton was a firm supporter of, even an investor in, industrial schemes; those discontented with the rise of Websterism could be happy that Stockton did not support the same web of corruption that Webster established, even if he supported the US’s transition away from being an agrarian republic of producers. In contrast, Crittenden found himself both mired with questions over Websterite corruption, as well as over his opposition to Webster’s pro-growth policies; he answered such questions only haltingly.

Additionally, the abolitionist movement, regrouping after Websterism had stolen many of its clothes, re-established itself as “Young America”, clearly inspired by Giuseppe Mazzini’s Young Italy movement and its contemporary success in taking hold of and unifying Italy; his avowed hatred of slavery had turned him into a hero among American abolitionists, and the new rebrand of the Equal Rights Party was to make the party more modern and appealing to voters. Despite its nomination of John P. Hale, a former Republican, it clearly sought for and got many ex-Webster voters in the North, among those discontented with the Democrats nominating a Southerner, and that Stockton was a doughface meant it was not the Republicans but rather Young America who benefited from this. In contrast, Crittenden’s attempts to stop this bleeding, most regarded as waffling, and it did nothing to prevent Stockton’s success.

Thus, the 1852 election ended with Stockton winning by a lopsided margin, which demonstrated that he had presented an agenda that both served as a continuation of Websterist economic growth, and would seem to avoid the severe corruption scandals that marred it[[203]](#endnote-203).

Figure : The 1852 election, by state

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **States** | **Electoral Votes** | **Stockton** | **Crittenden** | **Hale** |
| Massachusetts | 24 | 12 | 12 | 0 |
| New Hampshire | 6 | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| Vermont | 5 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| Rhode Island | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Connecticut | 7 | 1 | 6 | 0 |
| New York | 41 | 30 | 11 | 0 |
| Pennsylvania | 28 | 20 | 8 | 0 |
| New Jersey | 8 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Delaware | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Maryland | 7 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| Ohio | 25 | 18 | 7 | 0 |
| New Ireland | 9 | 7 | 2 | 0 |
| Huron | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Indiana | 13 | 10 | 3 | 0 |
| Illinois | 9 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| Virginia | 21 | 17 | 4 | 0 |
| Kentucky | 13 | 4 | 9 | 0 |
| Tennessee | 12 | 10 | 2 | 0 |
| North Carolina | 10 | 8 | 2 | 0 |
| South Carolina | 10 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Georgia | 10 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| Yazoo | 10 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| Mississippi | 5 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Missouri | 9 | 2 | 7 | 0 |
| Orleans | 6 | 1 | 5 | 0 |
| **Total** | **302** | **211** | **90** | **1** |

The decided victory for Stockton was hardly unexpected, and it demonstrated the success of his modernizing New Republican agenda in winning national support, including from the North; however, there were some reasons for the Republicans to see worry. For Hale and Young America had won a strong minority in terms of Northern support, and much of this came at the expense of specifically the Democrats. If every supporter of Young America, if everyone who voted for Hale, had instead voted for Crittenden, the election would have been a close victory for him, and it showed that, if Stockton wanted to win the next election, he needed to do something to win the support of a larger section of the North.

But nevertheless, Stockton was to be president, succeeding the short caretaker Petigru administration, and he had a clear mandate for his New Republican agenda. He demonstrated that the Republican Party did still have some energy left within it, for the 1850s. And though ultimately his presidency would be remembered as something of a failure, he nevertheless did rejuvenate his party until it finally met its end.

# 41. The Consumption of the Iron Gates

Far from representing the end of the Websterite agenda of mass state investment, the election of Robert F. Stockton represented but its alteration – and in some ways, its expansion. No longer would Stockton push for funding railroads through equity, no longer would he push for the Bank to establish a structured system; instead, he either arranged for loans, with minimal terms of collateral, or more infamously he granted to railroad companies all land within a certain distance on both sides of their burgeoning roads. This he justified on the old Republican Party principle that a government, with shares in corporations, was a government with too much, and indeed unconstitutional, power. This allowed for a new mass of railroads to be established essentially without having to raise capital – now, all a railroad company had to do, was sell the land the government gave it, which it could now raise for much more money thanks to the rise of land prices, given that the railroad was coming. But far from inhibiting corruption, all it did was move it; instead of being centered around the National Bank, instead it was the petty corruption of railroad board directors, who now could not possibly be brought in line by the state. Formerly, the Bank, associated with the state, could negotiate matters that may be in the public interest, such as setting rate ceilings, through its directors; now it could not, and instead the railroads were shaken by the unregulated market.

The burgeoning railroad system of the Webster years was hardly mature. The centerpiece of the system was an arc from Portland, Maine (then a district of Massachusetts) to Charleston, South Carolina, with further legs being constructed south to Brunswick, Georgia and north to British Nova Scotia. There were additional networks – in the west, there was one centered around Cincinnati and stretching towards the banks of the Mississippi, supported by a dual system of federal and state investment – and this was connected to the coastal arc by the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad and a few other linking corridors. This was still an infant network, with railroad wagons uncomfortable, cramped, and toxic, with railroad tracks made of heavy iron rather than steel and frequently breaking in the cold or heat that was (and is) frequently part of American climate. But it was a network, and it demonstrated the success of a heavily statist process of industrialization and modernity.

Stockton’s agenda of modernization and railroad construction was not so managed by the state – there was no National Bank to manage the railroad network– but this did not mean that the state was not part of the process. For instead of endowing railroad companies with money through equity, which would conveniently give the state a slice of the profits, they were endowed with public land, within a large width on both sides of the railroad, on both sides of the burgeoning railroads, in a checkerboard pattern; this allowed them to make the money necessary to construct them by selling their land for profit. That land, predictably, saw its value climb tremendously thanks to the railroad being imminently constructed, and this in turn led to a race of profligate speculation. Indeed, this was such that railroad companies dealt less with constructing railroads; instead, they were more real estate companies that just happened to also make and manage a railroad – and often, they didn’t bother to make railroads in the end; instead, investors just ran away with the money they made by selling off all their land, by claiming the business had simply failed, all a technically legal process with commerce being as unregulated as it was. On occasion, railroad companies were endowed with land faraway, especially in the East where federal land was scarce, and this meant they had to raise money by selling an often-random chunk of land. Additionally, railroad companies frequently acted like the most unscrupulous sorts of banks, selling off bonds to investors and then, when it came time for it to be due, simply printing a new mass of bonds. Furthermore, railroads often preferred to build on land which was as of yet unsettled, so they could get the lion’s share of the land grant around it; this resulted in new land rushes and a renewed push towards western expansion. New bubbles popped all over the United States, and the National Bank under Reverdy Johnson was too weak, too uncredible after the Appleton affair, to do anything about it. While the railroad was constructed, the process of setting up stops saw extreme corruption, as surveyors received bribes from speculators all over the place who wanted to make their land a stop, and see their paper town become large in the aftermath. And after the railroad was completed, the greed didn’t stop; companies set freight rates at astronomically high prices to fleece people along their stops for all they were worth, although with a requisite price they offered wealthy merchants and corporations especially low rates. And without the National Bank having a voice, and with no laws whatsoever regulating the railroads, this gave them free rein to do whatever they wished.

Additionally, these railroad companies happened to be run by among the most unscrupulous and greedy directors imaginable, who stopped at nothing to do whatever they could to make money. Railroad companies turned into ruthless cartels, which demented and moulded all business around them, because of their sheer scale; indeed, in terms of sheer complexity, they resembled nothing less than the administration of government. This was less of an issue under Websterism, when railroads were partially owned by the National Bank, itself a quasi-governmental organ which made the railroad companies, at least partially, accountable to the people. But with Stockton’s schemes of investing in large-scale railroads without state-owned equity, this suddenly resulted in these quite powerful companies being entirely unaccountable. They were, in almost the original sense of the word, monopolies – unaccountable, powerful, bodies with extreme and utterly undemocratic power that moulded the very rules of commerce in their favor. These massive enterprises popped up all across the United States, connecting once-remote parts of the nation to the remainder through a series of railroad transfers; even beyond this, existing railroad corporations saw their shares, owned by the government sold off – although to avoid a collapse of prices as had happened disastrously under Madison, this was done slowly over several months if not years, and this process only touched the shares owned by the Bank after 1856, by which time the Stockton government finally filled the bank presidency with its own appointee who agreed to the process[[204]](#endnote-204). The powerful, unaccountable class of monopolistic directors and shareholders this created, was analogized to the petty feudal tyrants of the Roman-German Empire; they became known as the robber knights[[205]](#endnote-205).

As deleterious as this rise of unaccountable monopoly was, it did not mean the rise of the railroad did not come with several beneficial results. The Railroad Mania suddenly escalated into full swing, as the government was willing to offer support to virtually every plan it was offered; it did not need to raise capital through the tariff or bonds or any other special means, because it could simply endow them with land from the public repository. This led to railroad companies popping up all over the place. Railroad projects covered the entire nation, and they connected it better than ever before. And given the establishment of certain standards during the Webster years, this railroad network easily meshed together, without the growing pains many other countries had to deal with. By 1861, it would be possible to travel exclusively by railroad from Portland to New Orleans, or else from Charleston to Juniper City, within a matter of days. It would be quite costly, and it would be an uncomfortable ride, but it would be possible. And this came with a number of benefits. It became easier than ever to ship goods, or people, from one end of the nation to the other. The West boomed in the 1850s, as a new mass of people could now more easily migrate into it, and with it came development. New markets and emporia out in the West could now sell goods from the coast, or from abroad, and farmers out in the West could additionally sell their goods for mass export at least to the coasts, and depending on how perishable they were, potentially to abroad. The rise of refrigerated cars over the 1850s only expanded the number of items that could be exported; for instance, this was the era that frozen meat came on the market. The United States became nothing less than a single integrated market, with distance measured in railroad rates; this was another escalation to the transport revolution of the Canal Mania of the Burr years. And this inspired a massive national boom, which would entirely revolutionize the nation.

But the undemocratic rise of monopoly inspired a counterreaction from those who recognized its effects and sought to bring it under national control. This came with a series of organizations, but perhaps the most influential came in the form of the Farmer’s Leagues, consisting of the many rural producers who felt the pinch of the railroad corporation and despised it. What these platforms consisted of often varied from simply establishing a regulatory agency to entirely nationalizing the railroads, but what the rising Farmer’s Leagues focused on was setting ceilings on railroad rates, to make them more affordable[[206]](#endnote-206). With farmers being a typically Republican constituency, this led to an increasing movement within the Republican Party – but the Democrats saw the issue as an opportunity, and here they made a more sophisticated justification of the system around the National Bank that had emerged quite by accident. Some monopolies were inevitable, said the Democratic Party, and so the smart thing to do was to bring them under government regulation, for the benefit of the whole people. The way to do this, they asserted, was to get the National Bank, or else a new state organ for this purpose, to purchase shares of those monopolies, and hold them in trust on behalf of the whole people. With these shares, they could send representatives to monopoly boardrooms, who could negotiate good policies and harmonize them with the public benefit[[207]](#endnote-207). These tendencies built up, but it would be a slow process, for the 1850s proved to be an era of national boom.

Thus, Stockton would see the United States entirely remade. He saw great networks of iron swallow the United States and forever revolutionize the way it functioned. He saw the very remoulding of the geography of the nation, which brought it considerably closer together. And he saw the very remoulding and expansion of the national market, into a single network with reach over the entire nation – all managed by impossibly vast bureaucratic hierarchies with power and complexity only equalled by the government, which could command the very markets which they created and expanded. And for all that Stockton’s tenure saw the United States splutter and begin to fizz apart, and for all that it forced the United States to confront with the very contradictions it kept in its bosom, the great changes he unleashed would ultimately bring it together like never before.

# 42. Dawn of the New Empire

One of the other great legacies of the Stockton administration was the rise of a new internationalism. In the era of high Websterism, the United States was somewhat torn by two tendencies in its foreign policy – one wanted the nation to become a shining beacon for liberty around the world, and the other wanted an integrated and self-sufficient home market separate from the rest of the world. Webster’s fundamentally moderate politics, as well as the intimate connection of foreign policy with the great sectional divide between North and South, meant that his foreign policy tended towards isolationism. He did, however, look to securing commercial domination over the Western Hemisphere. He signed treaties of trade with British North America, Venezuela, and New Erin, with the view of dominating them, and this principle proved a success as American traders reaped the economic benefits. The protectionist economic order was not broken, but Stockton had ripped several holes within it. Additionally, he sought stability in America’s neighborhood on America’s terms, with one of the greatest achievements of his tenure being the Treaty of Washington that ended the New Granadine War of Independence. This was a far cry, however, from Harrison’s and Clay’s dreams of hemispheric liberty, or from Pike’s defence in the field of American slave commerce.

Being a Northerner with Southern politics, however, Stockton had a freer hand to reshape foreign politics in his image. One of the first things that he did was normalize relations with Jamaica. Jamaica had refused to accept the legitimacy of the British government following the Popular Revolution, and being a major base for the Guelph British war effort against the French during the War of Roussin’s Fleet, it had a large loyalist fleet headquartered there which could not be swayed by revolutionary principles, nor could the colony be scared into accepting the post-revolutionary government without some war that nobody wanted. Thus, Jamaica ended up practically independent under the planter-dominated parliament of the House of Assembly, and it successfully prevented a slave revolt by the troops from both the maroon settlements and the United States. Over the 1830s, Jamaica became increasingly dependent on militiamen and aid from the United States, especially the South, and its technical status as a colony of the Guelphs in Hanover did little more than paper over it. As American freebooters were employed to crush slave revolts, and as American ships dominated its commerce, it became increasingly part of the American sphere of influence. In the 1840s, Jamaica had declared independence under its House of Assembly as a republic with a constitution very much like an American state, and its president was the American adventurer William Walker, who turned himself into its despot with his superior arms[[208]](#endnote-208). It became clear that Jamaica was gunning for admission into the union as a slave state. Though Webster indignantly refused this, regarding it as a planter conspiracy to enlarge their power, the issue continued to fester. By the time Stockton came to power, many Republicans sought Jamaica’s admission, both to fortify the Planter Ascendancy and to balance the pending admission of several free states, without toppling parity in the Senate. And though Stockton was one of them, he saw that he did not have the votes in the Senate to achieve it, and so he focused more on laying the groundwork for admission in this period. He established normal relations with Jamaica, sending and accepting a consul-general, which regularized existing commerce – including the trans-Caribbean slave trade – and allowed for a boom in trade.

This additionally came with new attempts to shore up American commercial relations with Hispanic America. With the French and British having shut down the African slave trade, and with neither Spanish nor Portuguese colonies having self-sufficient slave populations, they instead relied on imports from the United States, despite this trans-Caribbean slave trade being dubiously legal under American law. With the Pike administration having secured the perpetuation of this slave trade with the Second Quasi War, it continued, and though the Danish War of Succession and New Granadine War of Independence cut them off as France blockaded the Portuguese and the British blockaded the Spanish, the Treaty of Washington in 1852 allowed the return of the trade to Spanish America; when the Danish War only came to an end in 1854, the slave trade from the United States to Portuguese America similarly boomed. Though many, especially moderately antislavery Northerners, hoped that the horrifying trans-Caribbean slave trade had been ended by the pause that war meant, it didn’t; that the supply of slaves which had once been exported were now employed for domestic use, only led to more slave breeders, producing slaves for both at home and abroad. In the years that followed, a massive slave trade brewed from the American South all across the Caribbean; slave ships travelled to Jamaica, Cuba, Mexico, modern-day Equador, and Guatemala. It was a booming business, and though it was only dubiously legal, this slave trading became a very important part of the American economy with the full support of the Stockton administration[[209]](#endnote-209). It was not only the South which participated in it; many of the people crewing the ships were, in fact, New Englanders, and this business was financialized and securitized in the forms of bonds, stocks, shipping companies, and many other schemes. In truth, the whole of the United States was becoming a great slave empire, backing a hemisphere not of liberty, but of slavery. And this, the Stockton administration fostered with its policies with both its domestic and foreign politics, signing reciprocity treaties which allowed for the further integration of the hemisphere into a single economy.

In terms of trade, Stockton was surprisingly moderate – he refused to push for the repeal the Tariff of 1845, declaring that the United States needed some sort of tariff to raise money for the government for internal improvements or for the navy – but he was a supporter of freer trade. Endorsing the principle of reciprocity, in which the nation would add precisely the same tariffs against foreign goods that those foreign countries had against American goods, he got to work with a series of treaty negotiations. This would be particularly beneficial for American relations with British North America, its economy then and now tightly associated with America’s, but it had several ramifications. One of the largest was that it made foreign capital more freely available in the United States. This foreign capital had been a very important part of the American financial system, but British financial instability following the Popular Revolution which the Panics of 1835 and 1842 only reinforced, as well as France’s financial system being too busy financing its own costly wars against royal Europe, to say nothing of the effects of several American states defaulting on their debts, meant this tapered off. Webster had successfully supplanted this with the National Bank, but nevertheless this sort of financial isolationism weakened American growth; the Bank’s moderate lending policy meant money went to the cities, to industrial projects assuredly a success, rather than the West. Stockton’s policies of reciprocity allowed British and French banks to more freely lend money to American enterprises, and being more stable institutions, they were more willing to make financial risks. The result of this was an impressive financial boom, which consumed the United States, especially the frontier; hundreds of millions would be pumped into new railroad enterprises, plantations, factories, and so many other projects which, otherwise, would be considered too risky. But Barings, Lafitte, and other European banks could accord some failures so long as the overall trajectory was of success – and it was. That this boom filled the West meant it also led to pressure to expand the second segment of old Luisiana to American settlement; the effects of this would inevitably undo American national cohesion.

One of the great foreign policy successes of the Stockton administration came when the ever restive region of Platina, at the tip of South America, declared independence; memories of disastrous rule by the Guelph Britons meant that the Platine revolutionaries indignantly refused any British aid. The Webster administration had immediately recognized the independence of Platina, under Supreme Protector Rivadavia, but it was only during the Stockton years that it had firmly won independence. Much of this may be laid at the feet of Stockton’s own actions – not long after his inauguration he sent a fleet to Buenos Aires to liaise with its government, as if daring the Spanish to retaliate, in a feat of daring only rivalled by his contemporary Dundonald, and this indeed forced them to accept the loss of their southern dominion – and today he is celebrated as a national hero in Platina. And though this new nation saw itself consumed in civil wars and regional-centralist tensions in the decade that followed, nevertheless American commerce made itself known in Buenos Aires and over the rest of the Rio de la Plata. And by the time Platina did stabilize under Carlos Duffy, relations with the United States would prove quite strong[[210]](#endnote-210). Of course, by then the nation had other, quite severe issues which left the issue of relations with a nation at the other end of the continent quite moot indeed.

Thus, Stockton governed over an impressive national boom, in no small part fostered by foreign policy. He saw the rise of a sort of hemispheric bloc of trade, spanning from British North America to Platina. He saw international investment in a boom which spanned the West and brought forward the zone of settlement. But these things brought the United States inexorably towards a national collision. The great slave economy boomed, not only involving the South but also the hopelessly compromised North, only bringing more credence to the Planter Ascendancy critique of slavery. The frontier of settlement crept westwards, bringing the nation further towards the need to open the next segment of the former Luisiana – and given that every expansion of settlement had seen severe national collisions over the issue of slavery, many Americans wondered if, in the absence of eminences of the same tier as Clay and Webster, a civil war was inevitable. And it would not take long for such doubts to see their confirmation.

# 43. The Segments of Babel

The United States was always a nation founded upon migration. How could it not, after all? Its origin is ultimately in a series of English settlements, which ruthlessly grabbed land from the Indigenous Americans; to boost their numbers against the Indigenous who wanted their land back, it was inevitable that they had to bring in new numbers of people. And thus would be the state of the early English colonies on the Seaboard – settlements which rapidly expanded in size and volume thanks to both a huge birth rate and a barrage of settlers, which with sheer numbers could destroy Indigenous opposition. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, settlement in the United States east of the Mississippi was largely an Anglo affair, aside from the New Netherlands (today New York) which was as diverse as the mercantile Dutch Republic which colonized it, but this would begin to change; Pennsylvania, founded as it was by the radically tolerant Quakers, welcomed a great deal of immigrants, especially Germans, although by modern borders many of them would have[[211]](#endnote-211); several Waves of Germanna gave the United States its Amish minority, whose unique cultural practices have preserved the Alsatian dialect which, in its homeland, is endangered thanks to hundreds of years of Francification[[212]](#endnote-212). The eighteenth century saw migration of Irish Scots to Appalachia to play much the same role they played under the British monarchy – a buffer against a hostile, native population, and this was the beginning of the great Irish migration to America. These three groups – Britons, Germans, and Irish – would define migration to the United States until well into the twentieth century[[213]](#endnote-213).

With the American Revolution, a small flow of Guelph Loyalists was no match to a continued flow of British and some Irish immigrants, all fostered by the American government. With the French Revolution and especially with the first phase of the Haitian Revolution, a lot of whites from what had been the French colony of Saint Domingue made their way to the United States; almost all of them were quite reactionary and considered Haiti the inevitable consequences of the principles of “Jacobinism”[[214]](#endnote-214). But this would find itself overshadowed in quick succession; the crushing of the Great Irish Rebellion saw a massive number of Irish migrate into the United States, both from people fleeing brutal British repression and others finding no opportunity in their war-torn country. The groundwork for this had already been laid by smaller Irish migrations – the celebrated Citizen Lord himself, Edward Fitzgerald, famously visited the United States in 1795[[215]](#endnote-215) – but the ensuing migration was like nothing the United States had ever seen. The radical United Irish diaspora had a profound effect on the United States, and though their values were a good match for American liberty, they were not viewed that way. Immediately they caused a massive backlash among a public which already feared the French Revolution, and who saw them as a dangerous rabble who’d import that Revolution to America. The result of this was the Alien and Sedition Acts, ruthlessly despotic legislation brought to form by Alexander Hamilton which gave the executive powers to deport and arrest immigrants, while also delaying the naturalization which would have otherwise forced the government to treat them as citizens. Despite this, United Irish refugees continued to make their way to America, and following the 1800 election and the ensuing sea change in government, the Jefferson administration restored immigration laws, and with it the United Irish diaspora became an active part of American life. Politically active and ecumenical in religion and never forgetting the circumstances of their departure, they immediately became an active part of the Republican and later Democratic Parties and led the nation towards legal codification, mass politics, and ultimately antislavery; no United Irishman exile is as famous as Thomas Addis Emmet, whose son Curran would give America much glory[[216]](#endnote-216).

With the end of the Luisiana War and, in the British Isles, the outbreak of the Popular Revolution, settlement took new shape. Germans, having faced the tumult of the Hungry Twenties, now made their way in large numbers to America; so too did a lot of Irish. This massive wave of settlers, of whom an unprecedented proportion was Catholic, produced a new nativism in the ensuing backlash. Additionally, with the Popular Revolution, the British Isles faced unprecedented levels of financial instability. The collapse of the Bank of England cut off easy credit, and this had severe repercussions on the British economy. Industrialization slowed to a crawl. This meant cities less able to absorb excess population, and instead Britons made their way to the United States. In contrast to Germans and other immigrant groups, British immigrants were almost invisible, as they spoke English and, at this point, the US and Britain had quite similar cultures. But there were differences, most of all that Britain was the country that the United States had won its independence against; Britons were incentivized to integrate into American society, or else face jeers of treason. The Popular Revolution changed this, as suddenly the United States and the British Isles seemed like nothing else than revolutionary kin; British cultural organizations emerged, celebrating the American and Popular Revolutions as demonstrative of fraternal unity, and Britons now freely celebrated their own culture. Additionally, the British radical movement made its influence known in the United States, advocating the same principles of legal codification[[217]](#endnote-217), secrecy of the ballot, land reform, and civil service examinations that had made such waves in the British Isles; indeed, the influence was such that, in the United States, the secret ballot came to be known as the “English Ballot”[[218]](#endnote-218). Thus emerged the British diaspora as a structured institution in the United States. And though its formation was not met with universal approval from the American people – the Republican Party decidedly became the anti-immigrant party partially in opposition to this new British immigration wave, and in the South, British societies were regarded as abolitionist and swiftly suppressed[[219]](#endnote-219) – that it could exist at all demonstrated the extent to which the Popular Revolution had changed relations between the United States and the British Isles. With the improvement of shipping times, the 1830s also saw immigrants from further afield, including from Scandinavia and the Balkans; although they came in small numbers, this lay the groundwork for larger migrations down the line.

Immigration continued in large numbers over the 1840s, but where it began to splutter was with the outbreak of war in Europe. With the Danish War of Succession in 1847, combined with the New Granadine War of Independence in 1848, European immigration nosedived because the sea and land routes to America fell into war. This had several consequences. With American settlement in the West underway, large numbers of Americans were continually migrating to the frontier, wages were only low enough to support industry due to mass immigration; this being cut off meant wages spiked, and it put American industry at risk as it suddenly became unprofitable. The United States had more immediately resolved this by, in the South by expanding slavery into more and more occupations, and in the North by bringing in the very same poor white Southerners who were forced out of their jobs by the expansion of slavery. This Great Migration had a massive impact on the United States and brought the nation inexorably towards civil war. But it was only a temporary solution to the problem of war interrupting migration; Webster sent immigration agents into the Balkans and the rest of Eastern Europe to get new arrivals. It would take some time for this process to be anything more than a trickle, but at least the process had begun, and it would bear fruit in later years.

It would bear fruit under Stockton, in fact. With the end of war in Europe, bottled-up immigration suddenly poured into the United States; large numbers of Germans came and settled both out in the West, to work as farmers, and in the cities, to work in factories. In contrast to the Irish diaspora, Germans tended to be staid and apolitical, political exiles preferring to emigrate to France or Tellia[[220]](#endnote-220) – but that this strengthened the extant free labor movement, and it began to shape burgeoning antislavery opinion, and with available land filling up, it put pressure to open the West further. The fall of Rome and the flight of the Papacy to Spain had serious impacts all around the Catholic world – and when it schismed into the Roman and several Independent Catholic Churches, the depths at which Catholicism had planted itself in the United States meant it had waves here, too – even if most Americans Catholics ended up rallying behind the Pope[[221]](#endnote-221). Additionally came many Italians – for much of the nineteenth century, Italians had been migrating to France, but bad relations with the rise of Mazzini had made France a little less welcoming to them – and though it never ended up large, nevertheless the United States did end up getting an Italian minority. That, with the recent schism, many of them were Independent Catholics rather than the Roman Catholicism or ordinary Protestantism of most immigrants, meant they had something of an in-built community network; with Italian Independent Catholicism, as it emerged, being strongly Mazzinian and Mazzini being strongly ideological and abolitionist, this meant almost immediately this church was meshed into the abolitionist movement. Thus, though it was small, the Italian diaspora in America had a massive and outsized impact on the burgeoning changes that would dramatically reshape the United States. And though the great Garibaldi had yet to step foot in America at this point, the groundwork for his entry was clearly laid[[222]](#endnote-222). Additionally came immigrants from Eastern Europe, especially Bulgarians, in large numbers. This was something unusual, for they did not come from Western Europe; additionally, their Orthodoxy was neither Catholic nor Protestant. Nor was it like Independent Catholicism, something in between; the origins of Orthodoxy came well before the Reformation after all. Absorbing them as immigrants was a tough process – but ultimately, these Orthodox Christians were considered not unlike Episcopalians, as Protestant but definitely close to the “Popish” side[[223]](#endnote-223).

Thus, the Stockton administration saw the rise of a new and more pluralistic immigrant population, who created new exclaves in the booming cities of the North and made their mark on society as a whole. The United States was becoming a different country, and that most immigrants came to the North only helped to reinforce its numerical majority. The difference between a North of diverse free labor and yeomen-farmers, and a South of planter feudalism and slavery, only became more astute; the economies of both diverged, and they increasingly looked to different directions. Something needed to break – and it ultimately did.

# 44. To be Heard

From its beginning in the backlash to the Missouri Compromise, the abolitionist movement slowly became more structured and influential. Societies popped up all across the North bringing together the free Coloreds of the North with sympathetic white people, and they supported campaigns of petition, slave smuggling, and jury nullification; though in proportion they were a distinct minority, in absolute terms they had hundreds of thousands of members, all giving their voice towards the end of slavery. And in terms of politics they had two distinct wings: one, led by William Leggett, wanted to use electoral politics to take control of the Union, abandon all federal support of slavery, ban it in the territories, and end the interstate slave trade to bring slavery towards extension; and the other, led by William Lloyd Garrison, wanted to abandon the Constitution, hopelessly compromised by slavery, and break the Northern states out of the Union, which would leave a purified northern confederacy and, without Northern support, leave Southern slavery to die. The former movement, under the banner of the Equal Rights Party, did achieve some successes; protest votes against the Planter Ascendancy domination of both parties had led to it receiving over five percent of the vote in 1840 and it elected a few state legislators and even, on occasion, congressmen; the latter movement integrated into a global abolitionist movement including such radical luminaries as Harriet Martineau, Daniel O’Connell, and Giuseppe Mazzini, and as such it served to embarrass the United States abroad[[224]](#endnote-224). What this served to do was to bring in focus the difference between American freedom and the existence of slavery.

With the 1844 election and the rise of Daniel Webster, suddenly the abolitionist movement faced a quite large threat. For Webster had a reputation for being antislavery – to be sure, he was no abolitionist, but throughout his career he displayed a New Englander Puritan moralism, including a firm opposition to slavery[[225]](#endnote-225) – and he was no doughface. Over his career, he had substantial support from abolitionists, even from William Lloyd Garrison, and when he won the candidacy of the Democratic Party, almost immediately much of the Equal Rights Party wanted to simply endorse him. In the end, these efforts failed, and the Equal Rights Party instead nominated William Jay, abolitionist son of the great John Jay, for the presidency. However, all could see that most of those who had voted for Leggett in 1840 would vote for Webster – that his candidacy was blamed for the re-election of Pike only added to the whispers of scandal – and come the election, Jay won less than one percent of the vote. The government no longer seemed to be fallen to the Planter Ascendancy, and most American foes of slavery were perfectly willing to support Webster and hope he’d truly establish the principle “Slavery Local, Freedom National”.

The Webster administration had a mixed reputation among the abolitionist movement – but he did spring off the most moderate section of it. His appointing of fugitive slave commissioners who were willing to accept jury nullification, immediately put an end to the much-mooted critique that the Planter Ascendancy was smothering jury rights through the Fugitive Slave Act. But what truly divided the abolitionist movement was the renewal of the Bank of the United States. By itself, the National Bank issue greatly divided American politics, and even within the abolitionist movement anti-Bank figures like William Leggett who came to abolitionism by supporting laissez-faire principles clashed with others who considered the National Bank a useful institution that could be directed against slavery to promote freedom. But more immediately came the terms of the renewal; the Bank deported the slaves it owned to Fredonia, where they would be free inhabitants of that country. This hammered at a critical divide within the antislavery movement, between those who believed Colored Americans should be admitted as equal citizens, and those who instead believed they should be deported and America become a lily-white republic – those of the former persuasion, which included virtually the entire free Colored population of the North, damned this as simply another demonstration of the power of the Planter Ascendancy. But it cleaved those of the latter persuasion from the abolitionist movement, and the Democrats increasingly mobilized followers of a sort of lily-white free-soil ideology. Thus, the abolitionist movement found itself reduced in size, but it now emphatically supported equal rights for the races, and it found itself a closer and more radical affair.

Nevertheless, that Webster permitted jury nullification of the Fugitive Slave Act, and that he refused to bend to planter threats, gave him credit from a large section of the abolitionist movement and he continued to have the support from the very same moralists who supported abolitionism. When it came time for the 1848 election, to avoid an 1844-style electoral catastrophe and fearing the election of John C. Calhoun, it endorsed Daniel Webster. A small splinter ticket, led by the abolitionist industrialist Gerritt Smith, entirely faltered, and though Webster’s narrow victory was a vindication of the nation against the very embodiment of the Planter Ascendancy, it nevertheless weakened the Equal Rights Party’s cohesion. The Second Nullification and Juniper Crises saw further numbers of abolitionists rally behind President Webster – and when he died, they sincerely mourned him as a hero. This all fundamentally weakened the old structures of the abolitionist movement, especially the mainstay of the Equal Rights Party; even Garrison’s anti-participation saw itself discredited by Webster’s undoubted success, although less so. Something needed to change to revitalize the movement – and it did.

In 1851, Italy saw the climax of the Risorgimento when Giuseppe Mazzini, and the Young Italy he led, took control of the Italian republics in a strike which was, at once, a coup d’etat and a constitutional electoral victory. Not long afterwards, Mazzini took decisive action to sideline the French who had, since conquering them the War of the French Revolution, been the overlords of the Italian republics, and he then signed a separate peace with Austria which, quite implicitly, made the Italian states independent; though the formal consolidation of these several states into the United States of Italy took until 1854, all could see that this process was coming. Italian Romantic nationalism had triumphed, and it reshaped the nation[[226]](#endnote-226). This made serious waves not only in Europe where it realigned its geopolitics, but also across the pond. Mazzini had long been a recognized name, in part for his lifelong agitation but mostly because of his views on slavery. He was an abolitionist – not only an abolitionist, but an admirer of Garrison and a supporter of the anti-constitutionalism he headed – and he had made this know in several places. Notably, the two had met during the World Convention of 1840 in London, where they greeted one another as colleagues in the cause of freeing humanity from the curse of feudalism and monarchy and towards true republicanism[[227]](#endnote-227). That this diehard critic of not only American slavery, but also the republicanism it touched, had such prominence electrified the abolitionist movement. In its eyes, the cause of Young Italy needed to be brought across the pond and rejuvenate the cause of abolition which had once been so flagging.

Thus, when the 1852 Equal Rights Party convention was held – hastily patching up the split from Gerritt Smith – it also made the decision to rebrand. Explicitly inspired by the Mazzinian example, it renamed itself Young America, and its platform included several cues to romantic Mazzinian nationalism[[228]](#endnote-228). When the Republicans nominated a doughface and the Democrats a Southerner, it found itself with a shot in the arm as it could now more plausibly point to the power of the Planter Ascendancy. Nominating an ex-Republican congressman John P. Hale, this rebrand was working; Hale’s a stump tour of the North gathered large crowds, although this was as much because the minority of abolitionists wanted to prove their numbers as it was because of an actual mass of popular support. Nevertheless, Young America did prove a success, mobilizing the same Northern moralist voters who had previously voted for Webster and now found themselves betrayed by Clay then Crittenden trying to repudiate it. The ensuing election saw Young America do better than its predecessor, winning one electoral vote and 8.6% of the popular vote; when accounting for that the party was only on tickets in the North, the sheer level of success is even greater. It was a party high which demonstrated that the abolitionist movement was well-established and though still unlikely to truly realign politics in a more abolitionist direction, it was well poised for future developments, to take advantage of them in the hopes of riding them to power.

But 1852 nevertheless saw the election of Robert F. Stockton. He was, without a doubt, a doughface, a Northern man with Southern values. He appointed fugitive slave commissioners who would pack juries to rule virtually every accused a slave, and he opened up relations with Walkerist Jamaica. The Planter Ascendancy was doing better than ever, and with the Democratic Party now seemingly rudderless without Webster and Clay, there was a void of authority which Young America would fill. Thus, the movement organized; with every fugitive slave trial they campaigned for freedom, and with every ship exporting slaves abroad, they protested the state’s seeming support of such efforts. The Planter Ascendancy was now more powerful than ever, and to many, it seemed only the abolitionist movement, be it Young America or else the Garrisonian movement, could oppose it. In the years that followed, many of the mainstays of the abolitionist movement emerged – abolitionists connected their movement with the American Revolution itself, they pointed to the Liberty Bell as a symbol, and they emphasized that the first American to die for the nation was the Colored man, Crispus Attucks, during the Boston Massacre. It was still the movement of a minority, but it was a large minority. Thus, out of the weakness of the Webster years, the abolitionist movement was now stronger and firmer than ever – and it was intent on reshaping the nation once and for all.

# 45. The Active Soul

For the first several decades after independence, the United States took almost all of its cultural cues from the mother country. In 1800, the median American read British books, wore British fashion, and looked to British art. This was fostered by a number of elements. Firstly, the United States was in constant communications with Britain; indeed, America continued to have a colonial economy, with raw materials transferred from west to east to Britain, where they would be turned into goods which would be sold for consumption around the world. Secondly, British works were not covered under American copyright law; this meant publishers freely sold them without having to pay their authors, in a mad rush of publication. This meant a mad glut of British books, British pamphlets, and British stories all across the United States. This glut greatly crowded out American authors, and publishers had no reason whatsoever to buy American works and pay copyright because they could simply copy and print works from across the pond. Thus, Americans acted and thought like Britons; the Declaration of Independence did not stretch to literature, thought, or culture. The United States faced an issue not unlike post-colonial states today: it had been ruled by an external force for so long, that it had to discover itself upon independence[[229]](#endnote-229). And though there were attempts to change this, be they from the United Irish diaspora which hated the British who forced them over the pond, or from older American nationalists who abhorred British filiation as treason, this was hardly enough to stop these powerful forces of unity.

But slowly, this changed. The Luisiana War led to a Spanish blockade of the United States; this was hardly an airtight one, and trade continued with the British Isles through its North American holdings. This too was hardly some smooth stream of trade, as the War of Roussin’s Fleet meant that British trade ships faced continual attacks from the French. The result was that the United States was forced to trade with itself, to build a home market. It became more isolated from the world, and this resulted in a boom of internal cultural shifts. Though the Popular Revolution in Britain led to renewed calls for Anglo-American unity based on common traditions of liberty, such feelings of nationalism continued to spread. Additionally, the war itself created new mythmaking, and it itself had a mark on American literature. And it gave the nation more confidence, and it meant a greater craving for a sort of literary independence to match the political one.

This Declaration of Literary Independence came in the form of a speech from one Ralph Waldo Emerson[[230]](#endnote-230). Emerson came from the very depths of the elite of Boston, and grew up with the very best education New England could offer. Entering Harvard, he very swiftly attained recognition for his literary gifts; here, he began writing a series of journals with material for lectures, which would in time become celebrated as one of the greatest works in American history. Graduating and entering divinity school, he was trained to become a Unitarian minister; his excellent oratorical gifts led him to great success here. However, he increasingly began to doubt Christian doctrines, even those of his denomination, influenced by the new field of biblical criticism; his sermons now focused less on Christian theology, and more on a spirit of self-reliance. With this alienation from Christianity, he resigned his ministry, and he sought to focus on his own quest for God. Here, he looked to nature, and he found his answer. He laid this out in an essay, simply called *Nature* (1836), which laid out his philosophy that the spirit of divinity was to be found diffused within nature. Despite much controversy over his unorthodox religious doctrines – one negative review called it “transcendentalism”, a name which ultimately stuck – it nevertheless had a profound influence on the burgeoning sphere of American literature, even deeply influencing that other great New England luminary, Henry David Thoreau. Nevertheless, *Nature* put Emerson on the map, and he had a platform to bring his career forward. In a controversial lecture over the Fugitive Slave Act, he called for mass civil disobedience against it, although ultimately he ended up moderating his position and “merely” called for jury nullification. This was an expression of his radical aversion to slavery, and he ultimately captured the moment for New England as a whole. But in the same year where he made a call for mass civil disobedience, he also gave a speech to a fraternity in Harvard; this speech became known as *The American Scholar* (1837).

Here, he called for the end of the dependence on American literature on foreign nations: “The millions that around us are rushing into life cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests”. He damned the timidity of the American freeman, who contented himself in following in the footsteps of great men from the past and from another continent. Rather than merely parroting the words of the likes of Cicero, Locke, and Bacon, Americans should instead view them as examples, to strike out like they did when they were young men. American books, and American universities like Harvard, should stop looking backward and instead make their march forward in time. And he spoke of two new forces the United States should instead look, for their new cues: the landscapes of the nation, and the individual spirit of the masses. The effects of this speech were seismic; they influenced an entire generation of writers to turn this rhetoric into practice. They reflected what was nothing less than a shift in American consciousness, although perhaps Emerson less provoked the change and more simply represented it. After all, the age of the median American in this era was under eighteen, with about seventy percent under thirty; combined with the values of the American Revolution triumphing in the mother country, the wave of national pride was truly infectious.

Thus, in the 1830s and 40s, the United States saw the emergence of a great many literary magazines, all reflexive of the mood of independence and self-reliance of an era. Magazines and newspapers emerged nationwide, all catering to a new mood for national literature, and new authors wrote stories and books for hungry American audiences; the United States being among the very most literate natures in the world, there was a massive audience for this. Luminaries such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, William Gilmore Simms, and Herman Melville published and attracted audiences[[231]](#endnote-231). An infectious cultural nationalism wrapped the United States, and the nation began to have something of a discrete identity.

An equally significant demonstration of the rising nationalism of the era was a desire for a new, nationalist history. In came George Bancroft, a man who needs very little introduction, but nevertheless, one shall be included here[[232]](#endnote-232). Born to an elite Massachusetts family in 1800 and the son of a Unitarian cleric, Bancroft swiftly received an elite education and graduated from Harvard; afterwards, he travelled to Germany, to the University of Gottingen, to receive a premium graduate education. Here, he met with the great personalities of the era, such as Goethe, Savigny, and Schelling, and here he was also taught an idea of liberty from his moderately constitutionalist professors. The idea that crystallized in his head, was that the flame of liberty originated in the mists of ancient Germany; from there, it travelled to England with the Anglo-Saxon migrations, and then after the smothering of the Puritan Revolution and the great migrations of Puritans westwards, it travelled to America. In other words, the United States had a holy mission to nurse the flame of liberty and keep it alive. Not long afterwards, Bancroft travelled back to the United States, and he became a Unitarian minister; however, his sympathies for Pike and the Republican Party put him at odds with the New England elite and his fellow Unitarians. But nevertheless, here he worked on his history of the United States, from the European discovery of the Americas to the Revolutionary War; exuding a certain Romanticism, this work had as its protagonist the United States as a nation, with its progress nothing less than divine providence and providing all humanity a certain creed of liberty. Bancroft revised this history several times over his life, all the way until his presidency. The reception of this history was widely enthusiastic; its Romantic Whiggism and its patriotism was a perfect match for the mood of the era, and though some Southerners derided this as a work of Yankee arrogance, nevertheless it made Bancroft America’s historian.

With the election of Zebulon Pike to the presidency in 1836, as perhaps the leading New England Republican, Bancroft received the lucrative appointment as customs collector to Boston, where he served well, and he supported Pike’s efforts to remove the Calhounists; in 1842, Pike subsequently appointed him consul-general to the British Isles, to replace the controversial Andrew Stevenson. Here, Bancroft served well because his philosophy of progress and liberty was a perfect fit for the Britain of the era, where admiration of the United States as revolutionary kin was widespread; returning home after the end of the Pike administration, Bancroft continued to be perhaps the most significant New England Republican. On this basis, he won election as governor of Massachusetts in 1846, in what many observers considered a reaction to Websterism, and his star only shone further. In office, he was less than successful, however; attempts to dismantle what he considered dangerous monopolies met with failure against their entrenched power within the state legislature; in particular, his attempt to dismantle the Suffolk Bank system failed against a coalition of Democrats and moderate Republicans. And come 1848 he faced electoral defeat, as he was perhaps unfairly associated with the toxic John C. Calhoun. Nevertheless, his influence and name were such that Stockton named him as his Secretary of War – and he accepted. Here, he was a leading part of Stockton’s aggressive nationalism – notably, he was the moving force behind the expedition to Platina – and he was nothing less than the embodiment of the New Republicanism of the era.

But at the same time, Bancroft ignored the issue of slavery. To be sure, like any good Yankee of Puritan stock, he abhorred slavery, and he hoped the day would come when this great aberration over American slavery would be put to an end. But he wanted disunion or a civil war even less, and he was perfectly willing to give the Planter Ascendancy what it wanted to avoid this. His republicanism was for the white man, and he did everything he could to paper over this great difference. He supported the Fugitive Slave Act, and he was perfectly willing to allow the continuation of the dubiously-legal trans-Caribbean slave trade. Like the median white Northerner, his abhorrence of slavery was something he kept closely to his chest, to be cast aside in the name of national goals; however, also like the median white Northerner, he found those beliefs tested. When antislavery rose, Bancroft would switch horses and ride it; and when the moment came, Bancroft would serve as the arm of the nation.

# 46. The Blessed Leaves

Until the nineteenth century, China had a virtual monopoly on tea production. This was not a total monopoly – there were other varieties of tea growing elsewhere around the world, and Japan, Korea, and Vietnam had tea plantations of their own – but what is regularly consumed and called “tea” today was largely Chinese. But China was a closed society which kept its secrets close to the heart – and Japan, Korea, and Vietnam being squarely within the Sinosphere, were similar in this regard – and this meant that this monopoly continued. Thus, though there were other places that could plausibly grow it, if anyone wanted tea, they would need to get it from China – on its terms, with whatever prices were dictated by its sellers. In an era of growing Western imperialism, where the British, the French, the Dutch, and the Portuguese were now able to project power into eastern Asia, it would not take long for them to smuggle the tea out.

This smuggling was the work of one Dutch trader, Cornelius Curtius. Operating out of Canton in the 1830s, where foreign traders to China were allowed to operate from a series of factories, Curtius had some experience in gardening and horticulture; thus, he was the natural candidate for smuggling not only the tea, but also the knowledge on how it was grown. In 1834, he thus made his way into Canton, and with only a thin coat of yellow makeup, he made his way deep into China. And though his disguise was unconvincing, and though his command of the Mandarin language was halting at best, he simply claimed he came from northern China. The China of the time being a closed society in which the movement of people even within its borders was tightly controlled, the average person he met tended to believe him, as for all they knew northern Chinese people looked like that and spoke with that strange accent. With this intact, he made his way to several tea plantations, observed and recorded how they were planted and treated, and he took several plants and seeds with him. Making his way back to Canton, and narrowly escaping security which would have noticed he was, in fact, a white man, he returned to the Dutch factory with several tea saplings and seeds, and copious amounts of notes on the subject[[233]](#endnote-233). Travelling to Batavia, the lynchpin of the Dutch East Indies, they were planted in an experimental garden, along with tea plants smuggled less sensationally from Japan, and they grew successfully. Over the next several decades, tea plantations grew across Java, Sumatra, and Ceylon, at the expense of the crops of the common peasant. It would also not take long for tea to be grown by other colonial powers, with Dutch tea nowhere near as protected; the Portuguese took tea with them to Brazil, the British to its remaining Indian holdings – and Americans to the South.

Tea production in the United States was truly a national project. For it was chiefly New Englanders who traded with Asia, and it was them who brought tea abroad to America[[234]](#endnote-234). That it would be planted in the United States, in the South, was demonstrative of the level the American economy truly was an integrated whole. Planted in 1844, in Georgia – a state always welcoming of new innovations that could enhance its prosperity – despite some hiccups along the way, tea planters were more than able to hire British and Dutch planters to better understand how to do it. With that, it further expanded – from Georgia, it then travelled to South Carolina, and then it went to Mississippi[[235]](#endnote-235). Not all of these tea projects were successful, but enough of them were to change the economic landscape of the South, and the business was quite lucrative indeed. This additionally further diversified the Southern economy, diverging it further from the cotton monoculture it once was. But there were ways that tea production was much like cotton. Most tea existed for export – a legacy of the American Revolution was that Americans much preferred coffee over tea – and this meant that it strengthened the free trade movement within the South. There was a protectionist wing among tea planters, who hoped to replace imported coffee with the tea they produced, but this was only a faction within the movement. Additionally, like cotton, tea was produced by slaves, working in the open field. The expansion of tea production only served to strengthen the great division of the United States, between slave and free, as with their control of state institutions planters forced poor whites off their land and, in their place, those planters established large tea plantations.

Additionally, the rise of tea in the 1840s and 50s served to integrate the United States into a larger global market. For tea could be sold all over Europe – and even beyond it, to Asia – and this strengthened the position of the United States. This was similarly helped by events in China – the 1850s saw it break into civil war, which ultimately reduced its ruling Qing dynasty to a rump state in the far north and saw the new, revolutionary Bai dynasty take hold in the remainder, but along the way the brutal warfare tanked trade – and the ensuing reduction of tea supply meant American tea could only be sold elsewhere[[236]](#endnote-236). This further allowed for the rise of tea plantations in the United States, as it made them more profitable, and it motivated American tea sellers – who were largely New Englanders, demonstrating the scope of national economic integration – to find new markets where they could fill the void created by Chinese tea. This gave the United States a growing amount of economic influence, a fact also helped by its neutrality in Europe’s various wars, and it gave it new confidence. And with these new markets in hand, enabled by networks of American traders, Americans could also now look to selling new goods – not just tea, but also industrial goods produced in the factories of the nation[[237]](#endnote-237). No longer was the United States a nation of imports; now it could increasingly boast of exports. To be sure, on net the nation imported more than it exported until well after the Liberty and Union War – but the balance of trade was changing. In this era, the United States was thus breaking out of its shell, and it threw off its old colonial habits in favor of national confidence. And this was in part thanks to the rise of the tea industry.

Thus, tea production in the United States served to change not only the South in which it was grown, but also the whole nation. Its economy was no longer restricted to its home market, or to the export of raw material for its former colonial master, but instead it was diverse, producing goods, both raw and industrial, and for both home and foreign markets. But this economic integration this created also led to growing economic conflict within the United States. Suddenly, goods produced in the free North had to compete with goods produced in the slave South. For industrialists who wanted to make money – in the northern case, for workers who wanted higher wages – they suddenly needed to look to their rivals in the other section. And this made conflict inevitable.

# 47. A Taste of Immortality

Of all the inventions of the nineteenth century, few have been as significant as the striaphone. Giving human beings the ability to record and play back sound for the first time in human history, it caused something of a communications revolution. It changed the way human beings think about sound, and it established a whole new variety of human experiences. And it all started with one man – Samuel Morse[[238]](#endnote-238).

Born in 1791 to a family within the very top of Boston’s elite, he was part of its most traditionalist section; for the remainder of his life, he fought to maintain its Puritan Calvinist traditions against those, both within and without New England, who in his eyes wanted to destroy it. Studying at Yale, he learned about religious philosophy, science, and mathematics – all matters that would impugn upon his life forever. After graduating in 1810, Morse made his name as an artist; his art expressed his traditionalist and Calvinist leanings, and they made his name within New England. In this era, his political leanings shifted to those which defined the rest of his career; he went from being a Federalist to a Jeffersonian Republican. This was not an extraordinary shift in politics, and there were more than a handful of Federalists whose aversion to Burr led them to come to terms with Jeffersonian, but unusually his opinions ultimately became quite extreme; Morse’s defence of slavery and nativism would define the remainder of his career. Achieving some critical renown for his painting work and moving to New York to be part of America’s art establishment, he helped establish an academy for painting shortly after the Luisiana War – and from here, he became drawn into politics.

For the war resulted in a period of intense nativism. The annexation of Luisiana and the Floridas suddenly gave the United States a large Catholic minority, which could additionally be expected to make up majorities in one or several states in the future; additionally, postwar, immigrants poured into the United States, in a massive wave which, to many Americans, threatened to entirely remould society. In the period of political disarray that succeeded the war, this in turn led to the formation of the Anti-Catholic Party, and Morse ended up a founding member of the new party. In New York City, then and now a major entrepot for immigration, this backlash was particularly immense, and Morse sought to make this known in the municipal stage. Running for mayor in 1831, he ran a campaign where he combined longstanding resentment at the Tammany political machine which had dominated the city since the time of Burr, along with this new anti-immigrant sentiment. He ultimately won, in a narrow election acclaimed in its day as a victory against both immigrants and Tammany clientele politics. In office, Morse proved less successful, however; his establishment of a police force, to control the new mass of immigrants, and New Yorkers resisted this as a military force imposed on America’s own people. Additionally, he directed this force against Tammany, in an effort to break its political machinery and establish in its place a new arrangement of clientele politics fixated around a new nativism. This proved highly controversial, and it gave to Tammany an aura of martyrdom which it would relish in the years that followed. Come the end of his one-year term as mayor, his political coalition was broken, and Tammany ultimately prevailed[[239]](#endnote-239).

Not long afterwards, the Anti-Catholic Party was absorbed into the Republican Party, a combination which Morse looked on approvingly; he had previously been at odds with its abolitionist bloc, and he considered himself vindicated by this new unification. Despite this, after the Luisiana War, he largely went back to painting, and travelling to Europe, he got new material to paint. Several paintings, including one of the Louvre gallery, attained national acclaim, and it only served to make him further one of the foremost leaders of American art. Indeed, not long afterwards, he travelled to Washington, which in this era saw a national boom which increasingly turned it into a cultural and financial capital to match its political status; he served as the president of the National Academy of Art for several years. And though his former political career was not something he dropped by, and he continued to be a committed Calhounist and an influential part of the Republican political scene in the city. And increasingly, his endeavors into science and technology replaced his political and artistic careers.

What ultimately attracted Morse to the field of sound was when in 1841 he read a scientific study of the ear by an Italian doctor who, during the War of Roussin’s Fleet, studied human anatomy while treating patients. Combined with the early studies of calotypography in this era, he wondered if it was possible to somehow inscribe sounds on a surface, and then use another machine to read and replay it. The first step of this process was to inscribe the sound in the first place, and in this he was deeply informed by the same anatomy of an ear that inspired him. He did this by installing a trumpet attached to a thin membrane, serving as a diaphragm, that would act like an eardrum. To this, he attached a sharp stylus, which would inscribe the message on a cylinder of plaster. After a few tests, including several where he inscribed what he got, on paper –inscriptions which still survive today – in 1843, he was content enough to make what may be called the “first” striaphone record, in the form of indents on plaster. True to his intense religiosity, this record’s message consisted of him repeating, “What Hath God Wrought”, from the Bible’s Book of Numbers.

These messages gave him a way to inscribe sound – but what he now needed was a way to reproduce this. This was a more difficult endeavor, and it could perhaps only be done in the era of the Industrial Revolution. For part of it was the screw, and it was only with the rise of the factory that screws became consistent, that they could be expected to fit a standard hole. After some pondering of the subject – and several discussions with scientists at the Smithsonian – he determined the solution would be to engrave the record in a metal surface to turn it into a set of indents, and then to use a similar arrangement to what he used to make the record in the first place, a stylus connected to a diaphragm in turn connected to a trumpet, to reproduce the sound. This would take much fiddling, as well as help from Smithsonian scientists – but he did ultimately achieve it. On May 23, 1846, Samuel Morse would achieve history; he successfully played back his recording of himself saying, “What Hath God Wrought”[[240]](#endnote-240). A brand-new set of human experiences were now unlocked. That this came at around the same time Talbot invented the calotype only served to enhance the revolution of the era.

In the years that followed, this proved to be a massive craze. Though the quality of these early devices were not good, they were still audible; the sounds could be heard, and human speech distinguished. Naming his invention the “striaphone”, for how it played sound based on a recording based on the indent, he put it on the market and he founded the Morse Striaphone Company to sell it and protect his patent rights. Though expensive, sales were quite good, there were many who were only too happy to get their own voice recorded for posterity, and there were still others who wanted to buy recordings of “Great Men” that he sold and reproduced in the thousands through the use of moulds[[241]](#endnote-241). They also slowly improved over the 1850s; early recordings could only be replayed a few times before they were rendered useless. Additionally, early striaphones were hand-cranked, and it would take some time for spring-based or pneumatic versions, which had a consistent playback speed, to emerge on the market. Furthermore, he eventually replaced his early tin records, which deteriorated with every recording, with cheaper and more reproducible shellac or wax on a base of wood or cork.

Few individuals owned striaphones, the price prohibiting this for all but the very wealthiest people; instead, benevolent societies and companies bought them up for corporate use. Another enterprise that emerged by the 1850s was striaphone stalls, where customers could for a price listen to a record they had on a general-purpose machine, and Morse got in on this business too by opening his very own in virtually every city of the nation. Additionally, though Morse did make a fortune through his invention, he faced several issues; it was trivial for competitors to duplicate his invention. His fight against what he regarded as intellectual theft would consume much time, and in the West there were frankly no courts to deal with the issue. This was to say nothing of the rising foreign industry – including that just over the Great Lakes in British North America – which American patent law could not touch, or the many copies of records that he could hardly control. Beyond that, his cylinders could only record four minutes at maximum. This cut off his hopes of turning this into a new literary medium, which would supplant the bound book in the same way the bound book had once supplanted the scroll. Instead, the genre that almost monopolized this new medium was music, and it must come to no surprise that this era also saw singers and musicians become sensations, in a way that would have been unthinkable only a few years prior. Morse later supplemented these cylinder records with striadisks which could store more audio – but it merely extended storage space to twenty minutes, hardly enough to store books[[242]](#endnote-242). Additionally, faced with the tinny nature of striaphone audio, Morse began experimenting with amplifying audio through compressed air, and these experiments would see their vindication within his lifetime; by 1868, virtually every American city had at least one general-purpose compressed-air striaphone, although most of them were not of Morse make[[243]](#endnote-243). Nevertheless, his greatest hopes of achieving a communications revolution were hopeless, at least for the time, and it remained something for the future.

Despite this, Samuel Morse had made for himself a fortune which turned him into a quite influential man. He had become a robber knight, one of the new rich created by the boom of the Webster and Stockton years, and he poured much of his fortune into the Republican Party in the hopes of strengthening the causes of slavery and nativism. His name was famous not only in America, but around the world – for he was the man who turned sound into something which could be recorded and played back for all eternity. If Morse’s unyielding support of proslavery and nativist politics, and his Richmondism during the Liberty and Union War for which he ultimately emigrated, adds a few shudders to his name today, it does not then erase that he was one of the most influential men of the nineteenth century, who forever revolutionized the way human beings think about sound.

# 48. Rise of the Wire

By 1853, the electric telegraph was an emergent technology. Though experiments with it had begun as early as the 1790s, and though Joseph Henry’s discovery of electromagnetic induction in the 1830s had made it viable, it took some time for it to become regarded as anything other than one of the many quackish electric schemes that emerged in this era. But it ultimately did, thanks to a man no less credible as Joseph Henry making his own telegraph line in 1847, complete with relays that made long-range electric telegraphy viable. This allowed for much higher capacity than the semaphoric telegraph which had already reshaped communications in the nation, and the Webster administration began the process of replacing semaphore towers with wires. Come 1853, most large American cities were now part of a network of wire and cable which allowed nearly-instantaneous communication, with much higher capacity. But it wasn’t a complete network; to send a message beyond these connected cities, one still needed to transmit them through the semaphoric telegraph to and from the wired city in question. That the electric telegraph in this era used needles which, through electromagnetism, modelled Chappe code, made this easier than it would be to convert the message. Nevertheless, the semaphoric telegraph was still a bottleneck which made the dream of mass communication through telegraphy unviable.

Nevertheless, when Stockton came to power in 1853, he saw a future where the post office would run a letter service and a telegraph service in tandem, with similar and even rules. To this end the Postmaster-General he appointed, Amos Kendall, a veteran politician well-connected with the growing number of Republican robber knights, acted like a Telegraphist-General under him. Beyond general desires to reduce the corruption that shaped the Post Office in the Webster years, he embarked on some pretty seismic reforms He declared his intentions to reform the telegraph service on the same lines as the letter service. Like a letter, he declared, the telegraph service would offer a uniform rate for transmitting messages anywhere in the United States. And like a letter, he declared, it would be strictly prepaid, and mailmen would then send the message to the recipient like a regular letter. This couldn’t be done immediately – the semaphoric telegraph served as a bottleneck, and the Post Office still needed to train telegraphists with the new electric technology – but it was something he began to plan out. As the Post Office laid wires across former semaphore towers, and as the existing telegraph message service became cheaper, the possibility of establishing a uniform rate became more viable. Come 1855, Postmaster Kendall announced a new policy for the telegraph message service. For twenty-five cents, anyone could send a message on the electric telegraph network to anywhere else along the same network, and for an additional fee they could then send the message to the mailbox of the recipient. This suddenly attracted a great deal of business, and it turned what had formerly been the reserve of commercial enterprises and the rich to something much more commonplace.

But this had several growing pains; the rush of people trying to get their messages through resulted in this network reaching a bottleneck, as senders found themselves placed in queues in which they’d need to pay extra fees to be expedited. These queues were still quicker than sending a mail message, but it hampered the communications revolution that the telegraph represented. But as the telegraph network matured, and as its capacity grew, the queues shrunk in size, and message transmission became more timely. Communications expanded, and indeed every American political constituency campaigned for their own electric telegraph[[244]](#endnote-244). This was a demonstration of the power of the state control of the telegraph, and its integration with the Post Office; similar attempts to establish uniform rates in the British Isles, and elsewhere, failed because telegraph companies didn’t have the infrastructure to easily send messages to every customer, and lacking control over the entire telegraph system they simply couldn’t take advantage of economies of scale the same way America’s could.

Thus, it was in the 1850s United States that the power of the telegraph to rival the letter-post became decidedly clear; finally, after over a century of some sort of telegraph being an international phenomenon, it now became a tool for general public use which connected people like never before. All somebody needed to do to send a telegraph message was fill out a form with a postal address, pay a quarter, and send the message over. Even this got simplified, because businesses were able to, for a special fee, get a telegraph address; several, like Morsephone, Civiguard, and Dramatique, have since become more iconic than the company name themselves. At a fundamental level, this allowed for people at entirely different ends of the nation to interact with one another almost as easy as they could within the same city. It was now easier to manage companies which crossed thousands of kilometers of territory, for now operations far away could be managed by the center, which could continually receive information. Though newspaper associations for using telegraph lines to transmit stories quickly, like Green Pine, already existed, they were now larger and more able to transmit stories than ever before, to such an extent that newspapers which subscribed to any of these associations faced something of an information overload. And the National Bank, tied with the state and therefore to the Post Office, was now able to provide services for transmitting, or “wiring”, money around the nation within a day, providing unprecedented amounts of convenience in the fields of commerce[[245]](#endnote-245). Indeed, the English language itself changed around the rise of the telegraph, as people compressed language into fewer words or characters so they could pay less, in a puzzling dialect nicknamed “telegraphese”. The scale of communications was such that people fell in love and even married one another, just through interacting over the wire. And though the biggest hope, that the electric telegraph would put an end to all disagreements and establish world peace, ultimately came to naught, the effects that it had were nevertheless massive.

But even with the state monopoly on the telegraph, its zealous guarding of the patents involved, and the idea that mediums of communication should be held by the state for the benefit of the people having very deep American roots, several telegraph companies still emerged. This was because the Post Office specialized in a telegraph network that gilded and connected its offices, with mailmen doing the last leg of physically moving the letters – companies specialized in additional uses beyond this. The railroads needed telegraphy to signal about issues between stations, and they’d only sometimes request and get state support for new lines; nevertheless, this allowed for private telegraphs to get some degree of business – and though they competed with pneumatic message lines, private telegraph companies could and did make business here.

Another place where private telegraph companies saw success was catering to private businesses, where the Post Office did not build lines; to the extent to which the Post Office built lines away from existing postal stops, they were to halls of government, or schoolhouses, or stock exchanges, or other places where the state considered it necessary. Thus, if private institutions wanted to build immediate connections, they needed to subscribe to a telegraph company. What allowed this industry to grow, without much state scrutiny, was that it did not use the Henry patents owned by the state, but instead an entirely different system invented and patented by one David Edward Hughes. This system, invented in 1851 and called a “type-graph”, allowed a way for users to type messages through a keyboard – an adjusted piano keyboard – and based on what key was pressed, it would adjust the typewheel, consisting of a position for every key, to the corresponding position. The wire would then transmit this position to the other end, which would adjust the typewheel to the corresponding position; based on this, it would then print the corresponding letter. This thus allowed for transmission of messages, but through plaintext; users did not need to learn some elaborate code to send messages. All they needed to do was type and receive, in plain English. And though the Hughes type-graph was a great deal slower than the Henry telegraph, though it frequently jammed, and though it required either somebody else to crank the wheel or the use of steam or pneumatic power, it was user-friendly – and the patent was not owned by the state. Thus, the 1850s saw several Hughes type-graph networks, municipal in scope, emerge across the nation, connecting businesses which frequently subscribed and built networks through chambers of commerce, professionals such as lawyers, and even homes of the rich to one another in a tighter but simpler network; indeed, it helped escalate the uses of the telegraph. And though many Americans were critical of these private networks – they granted to elite subscribers a special room for communication, which gave them an advantage over those who couldn’t afford it – and though several politicians advocated their nationalization, the type-graph would remain an influential part of the American telegraph scene[[246]](#endnote-246), and private telegraph companies would remain part of the American system until the Liberty and Union War.

The other part of the American telegraph network was the submarine cable, connecting it to Europe and the world at large. Experiments in laying cables under the water would fail over the 1830s and 40s, as the materials, to cover wires with, simply did not exist. The calorization of rubber was still several decades away, after all, and experiments with leather and other insulants did not succeed. Indeed, until the submarine cable became viable, to transmit messages over bodies of water, there were only a few ways to do this. One was to send messages by ship, which was the only way to do so across oceans and large seas and lakes. Another was to use semaphore towers, where the two ends of a body of water were within eye of sight of one another; the best-known example of this remains the towers at Cap Gris-Nez in France and the Cliffs of Dover in the British Isles, which allowed for cross-channel communications and would only be retired permanently in 1874[[247]](#endnote-247). Another was to simply lay wire across a bridge, although this could only be done if a bridge could be constructed at all; nevertheless, this did allow for communications across most American rivers. The means to build a submarine cable did not, as of yet, exist.

What changed this was when, in 1853, the French scientist Rémi Cerf serendipitously discovered that rubber from the balata tree, being both naturally hard and an insulant, was a perfect material to use for insulant for submarine cables[[248]](#endnote-248). In the years that followed, submarine cable projects escalated dramatically – first came a cable from Britain to Ireland, and next came in quick succession a cable from France to the British Isles. These faced severe issues, however; the signal came out tinny and weak, and it also came slower than expected. This was because of the Leyden jar effect: the wire induced a reverse electric current in the water around it, which both weakened and slowed the signal. The brilliant British scientist William Thomson discovered the law of squares, in which the signal deteriorated at a rate equal to the square of distance[[249]](#endnote-249). It was a sobering thought, and attempts to overcome this effect by dramatically increasing pressure only shorted the cables in question. The Britain-Ireland cable failed in 1859, and so too did the France-British Isles cable in 1864. Eventually, the Leyden jar effect would be overcome through experimentation, improved manufacture, and the use of repeaters – but it put an end, for the time being, to dreams of building a cable across the Atlantic. Dreams of connecting America and Europe instead looked the other way so that a message could be sent from Washington, transmitted through the Oregon Country, up to Alaska, under the Bering Strait, over Siberia, to Moscow, and then finally to the rest of Europe. This was a daunting endeavor, to be sure, and at the time many condemned it as folly, but it was more thinkable in the 1850s than it would have been before. For the collapse of the Qing dynasty in China had allowed Russia to take over much of China’s northern fringe, in the name of protecting the Qing rump state. Building a telegraph line across Siberia would be a way to protect these holdings while also giving room for the Tsar’s desires to send settlers East, and that building the line across the Bering Strait would bring American investors on the project, only made that a logical extension of it. So began the Russian-American Telegraph.

Beginning in 1856, this project represented a strange union of American and Russian capital. From one end, the United States would need to send a telegraph line far and wide, over its frontier into the Oregon Country, with its overlapping British, Russian, and Spanish claims. From there, it would then need to draw it into Vancouver Island, to a Russian settlement in its north, and from there Russia would draw it into its Alaskan holdings, to the seaport of Mednovtsy. On the other end, Russia would need to construct a huge telegraph line all the way to the eastern coastal port of Vladivostok (today Haishenwai). And though both Russian and American investors saw that building a submarine cable between Vladivostok and Mednovtsy would be no easy feat, they hoped it would be doable by the time the cables got to that point; if it wasn’t, then for the time being, telegraph messages could simply be printed out on ticker tape, conveyed by boat from one of these ports to the other, and then fed into the telegraph on the other end. Constructing the Russian-American Telegraph would be no easy feat – the American government had to construct it beyond its loosely controlled frontier, avoid the expected dispute with British and Spanish claims over the Oregon Country, convince the Sophians on Vancouver Island who viewed America with much suspicion; while the Russian government had to survey much land in Siberia, and indeed even in its holdings in Alaska which it only technically controlled. But it would be done; both Russia and the United States had full incentives to see a telegraph connection through[[250]](#endnote-250).

The project ran well over its expected price and negotiations would be tough, but by 1867 it would be possible to send a message from Washington to Paris, and save only for it travelling from Vladivostok to Mednovtsy on a boat, it would be transmitted on the wire almost instantaneously. Now, the perilous nature of this boat leg meant that taking telegraphs across the Strait could take anywhere from less than a week in the best of conditions to a month in the worst– but it did not take long for these perilous voyages to be romanticized as the Iceclipper Express[[251]](#endnote-251). And though the submarine cable from Vladivostok to Mednovtsy was only fully laid in 1871, it would be done piece by piece, along the way gradually reducing the size of the voyages[[252]](#endnote-252); and when it was fully laid, it turned this faraway northern line into a chokepoint for global communications[[253]](#endnote-253). Additionally, with its integration in the European telegraph network[[254]](#endnote-254), the United States began the process of transitioning over to Gauss code, which had by then already become the norm in Europe and, though certainly less intuitive than the Chappe needle telegraph, it was quicker[[255]](#endnote-255). And ultimately, it was an impressive communications revolution.

Thus, the United States had become, in truth, a telegraph nation. It saw the promise of the telegraph truly come to be, as now for a uniform fee any American could send a telegraph message anywhere else in the nation. Private telegraph companies rose, catering to a separate niche for private business and for the homes of the rich, as they could not possibly compete with the postal telegraph. The promise of the telegraph era was reaching fruition, as it became increasingly common in its use. And a new wire connected America to Europe, through the great expanses of Siberia and Alaska, allowing for their integration into a global telegraph network. This would all be a momentous event, which allowed for near-instantaneous communications within the United States, and from it to the rest of the world. But this all came with several consequences. The rise of rapid communications between the South and the North, and censors found it almost impossible to keep news of the brutality of the slave system from reaching the North. The electric telegraph system, like the semaphore before it, was used to catch and detain criminals, among them runaway slaves; unlike the semaphore before it, it had much higher capacity which allowed for the transmission of the minutiae – and the minutiae horrified observers. The abolitionist movement found it much easier to act with near-instantaneous communication; the deluge of information that the telegraph allowed, also meant it received far more intelligence, and though it could not organize in the South, it could gather information from it and organize on the North upon it. The sectional divides that wrapped the nation were being tested – and it must surprise no one that, ultimately, the 1860s saw it snap.

# 49. The Path of Horrors

As 1855 turned to 1856, it was clear that Robert F. Stockton was a success. Industrial growth continued unabated and in fact escalated, and though it was hardly a corruption-free affair, the corruption was now detached from the government. The beginnings of the California Gold Rush in 1854 allowed a flush of gold into the United States, and this also allowed for a dramatic increase in banknotes issued; this inflation fuelled the economic boom. The nation maintained a new, aggressive foreign policy based on hemispheric solidarity and which inspired a new rush of trade across the Americas. To be sure there were many dissenters, be they abolitionists sickened by the trans-Caribbean slave trade or Northern mechanics and producers who felt themselves squeezed by the new industrial economy – but such dissent lay at the margins, and the national boom was such that it masked these growing issues. Despite this, the Democrats were not silent in this era, and they tried to lay as many aspersions at Stockton as they could. They accused him of corruption, pointing not only to the railroad schemes but also to his use of patronage, which they derided as not only corrupt, but also hypocritical given Republican aspersions towards Webster. Democratic opposition had continued virtually unabated at the Stockton administration in this era, and many hoped this would be enough to narrow the vote in the coming election. Additionally, within the Republican Party, many considered Stockton to be weak on the slavery question. He had, after all, supported the Tariff of 1845, and at this point he did not seek to annex Walkerist Jamaica; though he supported a more aggressive enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act and his foreign policy was supportive of Planter Ascendancy interests, to many this simply wasn’t enough. Thus, this period saw the organization of a Whig Party in the South, so named because just as the Whigs of England opposed executive power, they opposed the power of the federal government. Opposing both the Democrats and Republicans, they failed to make much headway – most Southerners were still happy with Stockton, or given Websterism they at least considered him a lesser evil – but they did make themselves known as a presence.

Nevertheless, the Democrats did believe they had a shot to win the presidency. Their convention nominated the man who they thought could’ve beaten Stockton in 1852 – Edward Everett. He was the man of the North – he was the successor to Daniel Webster – and thus the man to return to the Democratic fold those who had voted for Hale in the last election. The rank humiliation of the last election discredited the possibility of nominating a figure from the southern moderate Clay wing, and though the youthful Kentuckian Richard Menefee ran for the nomination it was fundamentally an unserious candidacy. Perhaps the greatest orator of his day, Everett immediately launched a tour of the nation, and he attracted vast crowds which wanted to see him speak; however, they were rather unenthusiastic about his actual policies, and many considered him something of a damp squib. Few were convinced that a National Bank owning shares in the new railroad corporations was necessary to keep the economy stable, and few considered Everett’s assailing of the alleged corruption of the Stockton administration to be credible. Additionally, he declined to push the Planter Ascendancy critique of slavery, as he worried of losing support from Southern Democrats; by avoiding these more visceral critiques, he failed to win support from moralist abolitionists who might have otherwise considered him the second coming of Daniel Webster. Thus, his national tour was a failure, and to most Stockton was still in the lead. Additionally, though Everett did swallow most of the Young America vote, the Hale candidacy of the same year was still a force in the North, mostly at the expense of Everett.

At the same time, the Whigs sought to make their mark on the scenes of American politics. Very much the residue of Calhounism, they only existed within the South, and even there they were a minority party; even South Carolina, chastened after the Second Nullification Crisis, was severely divided between a Republican faction, led by James L. Orr which sought to turn the state into a normal Southern state, and a Whig faction, led by Robert Barnewell Smith which sought to keep the flame of Calhounist radicalism alive[[256]](#endnote-256). In this election, the Whigs wanted to force the nation into a contingent election where the South could make itself heard as a bloc, or barring that, to force the Republicans into a more pro-planter position. In the coming election, they nominated Abel Upshur for the presidency; Upshur was a Virginian, and through this the Whigs hoped of winning votes outside of South Carolina. However, though he was respected as an intellectual, the South was changing; no longer was it a land of planters who solely grew cotton on their plantations, but now its planters grew sugarcane, tea, or even owned slave-powered factories. Many Southerners supported the tariff and were fully onboard Stockton’s refusal to lower it; of those who opposed it, they did not wish to go as far as nullification, and they were happy with Stockton’s aggressive enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act.

In contrast, Stockton declined to go on a national tour, and this only made him seem more presidential. He declared that his presidency stood for itself. What he focused on was getting support from as many interests as possible, behind the scenes. Among Northerners, he campaigned for and received support from industrialists and robber knights, who did not want to be regulated by the National Bank the way Everett was speaking about. And among Southerners, he assured that, after the election, he would do everything in his power to admit Walkerist Jamaica as a slave state, forever assuring its position in America’s economic orbit and preventing the abolitionist British from standing over it like a Sword of Damocles. And he succeeded, and the ensuing election proved to be nothing less than a coronation[[257]](#endnote-257).

Figure : The 1856 election, by state

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **States** | **Electoral Votes** | **Stockton** | **Everett** | **Upshur** |
| Massachusetts | 24 | 4 | 20 | 0 |
| New Hampshire | 6 | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| Vermont | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Rhode Island | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Connecticut | 7 | 2 | 5 | 0 |
| New York | 41 | 32 | 9 | 0 |
| Pennsylvania | 28 | 24 | 4 | 0 |
| New Jersey | 8 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Delaware | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Maryland | 7 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| Ohio | 25 | 19 | 6 | 0 |
| New Ireland | 9 | 7 | 2 | 0 |
| Huron | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Indiana | 13 | 9 | 4 | 0 |
| Illinois | 9 | 7 | 2 | 0 |
| Virginia | 21 | 16 | 3 | 2 |
| Kentucky | 13 | 4 | 9 | 0 |
| Tennessee | 12 | 10 | 2 | 0 |
| North Carolina | 10 | 8 | 2 | 0 |
| South Carolina | 10 | 6 | 0 | 4 |
| Georgia | 10 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| Yazoo | 10 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| Mississippi | 5 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Missouri | 9 | 7 | 2 | 0 |
| Orleans | 6 | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| **Total** | **302** | **212** | **84** | **6** |

The election ended with a landslide for Stockton. To be sure, not all of this was because of his own personal skill – Everett entirely failed to seize the moment, and Hale splintered the northern oppositionist vote. while Upshur failed to win the support of the divided South – but it was a commanding win. But much of this was thanks to his personal work. He had won it by making several contradictory promises behind the scenes, and he won on the basis of a booming economy – which was only booming thanks to a bubble, which ended up unstable. Thus, Stockton had to deal with several growing issues which would, in short time, not only upend his administration but also entirely consume the nation – and he was not the man to deal with them.

# 50. The Bride of the Nation

Jamaica was perhaps fundamentally linked to the United States. Like the American South, it was a slaveholding Anglophone society; like the American South, it was a spin-off of Barbados. Much of Jamaica’s original slave population was imported by Americans. But with the American Revolution, this sort of unity broke. Despite its own grievances with the British, Jamaica was an island dependent on trade with Britain, and it feared slave revolution inspired by the very same countries with which American revolutionaries had aligned. Thus, come war, Jamaica rallied behind the British, despite some individual Jamaicans supporting the American cause; in any case, its navy swiftly ringed itself around the island against the French. In the years that followed, US-Jamaica relations were a strange, heterogeneous mix of hot and cold; the British sought to cut off trade between the United States and Jamaica, but they largely failed, and it continued unabated. The Deep South, as ever looking to the Caribbean, found itself trading amply with Jamaica and the rest of the British West Indies, and despite bad relations between America and pre-revolutionary Britain, such trade merely lurked behind the surface.

Come 1827 and the Popular Revolution, Jamaica did not jump on board the new British government; due to the War of Roussin’s Fleet, much of the Royal British Navy was headquartered there, and both officers and the rank-and-file watched the Revolution with nothing less than horror and trepidation. Thus, the colony declared its loyalty to the House of Guelph, with full support of both the military and the planter elites – and though when the British government ultimately proceeded with emancipation and several slave revolts ensued, the Jamaican government crushed them with its ample military reserves, with Maroon support. Planter solidarity strengthened; for an island that seemed assailed in all directions, any dissent was nothing less than treason that would allow Jamaica to turn into a second Haiti. In the years that followed, Jamaica survived tenuously, and unlike other loyalist colonies, it never broke for the British government. It shored up its support with other post-revolutionary British exiles and tried to tie itself to the exiled Guelphs in Hanover, but most decisive would be when shored up support from the American South. This was the result of, first, a new rush of trade with the United States to take the place of the lost commerce with Britain; and second, the Planter Ascendancy of America having a newly expansive vision of pro-slavery solidarity. Additionally, Jamaica became an entrepot of the booming trans-Caribbean slave trade. Together, this meant Jamaica became a client state of the United States of America, despite its protestations of loyalty to the Guelphs and its hopes of restoration; slowly its planters and the House of Assembly moved towards shoring up relations with the United States. As American trade boomed, as American volunteers crushed slave revolts, and as American slaves were sold on the markets of Kingston, more and more of the planter oligarchy rallied behind formalizing this relationship. As it became clear that it was only close relations with Americans from the South that kept Jamaica from falling to British expeditions, Jamaica became more and more detached from its nominal overlords in Hanover. More planters talked of formally declaring Jamaica’s independence, or even of annexation into the United States to secure slavery once and for all. And though the Webster administration indignantly refused to accept annexation and supported on principle Jamaica’s re-annexation by the British, those Jamaican planters thought that might change in the future. It was into this environment that William Walker rose[[258]](#endnote-258).

Born in 1824 in Nashville, William Walker was surrounded by American slavery. He was not, at the outset, an ideologue – but as an elite Southerner, he was a part of the planter class, and he certainly never rebelled against it. With ample powers of intelligence, he got degrees in law and medicine, his studies even taking him to Europe – yet, he increasingly felt an urge towards adventure, to escape his settled life. At this time, Jamaica sent recruiters across the American South to enlist Southerners as soldiers to keep the slaves down; in 1850, Walker, at this point a doctor in New Orleans, accepted. With his strange charisma, for which he was nicknamed the “grey-eyed man of destiny”, he recruited forty-five other men who travelled with him – and leading this company, he received the rank in the Jamaican army of captain. In this role, he gained followers, and successfully crushing several slave revolts and maintaining order, he won influence. Within the army, he won promotion after promotion and, especially after winning a duel against a rival officer, he maintained popularity among it; within the planter class, he associated with reformists who wanted to move Jamaica in a more pro-American direction. He plotted – and in 1853, his plans achieved fruition.

In that year, he put himself at the head of several army battalions, and they marched on the House of Assembly. Seizing the assembly hall, he got it to declare him “President of Jamaica”. Other institutions of the state, fearing that dissension would allow slave revolt, recognized Walker’s ascent to power. And with that in place, he then assembled a Constitutional Convention which united the planter oligarchy of the House of Assembly, with the naval interest and other forces within Jamaica. Together and under his leadership, they ratified a constitution which resembled little else other than that of an American state, with a President elected for four years, a Congress consisting of a Senate and a House of Assembly, and a Supreme Court, with these three powers formally separated from one another, although practically they were all dependent on Walker and his close allies; this was clearly a preliminary for admission as an American state. Formally accepting a Consul-General from the United States, President Walker successfully achieved recognition and averted an invasion from Dundonald’s Britain. With this intact, he now openly advocated annexation into the United States, and he won ample support from the South which, similarly, sought to protect Jamaican slavery while also fortifying the position of the Planter Ascendancy within the United States. And though at this point, the Stockton administration did nothing on the subject, and though the Democratic Party indignantly refused to admit Jamaica, support within the Republican Party slowly grew. Jamaica’s isolation seemed to be on the verge of coming to an end.

The Stockton administration only took action on this after he won re-election, but with this secure, it got to work negotiating a treaty. His Secretary of State, John Y. Mason, issued the so-called “Mason Manifesto”, which made a case for the annexation of Jamaica – albeit in a nationalist manner, a case for its annexation benefiting the entire nation, by which he sought to avoid alienating the North. Nevertheless, the uproar was enormous, and the Democratic Party did not take long to damn the very idea of admitting Jamaica. Edward Everett, still the highest representative of the Northern Democrats, declared Jamaica’s admission a plot by the Planter Ascendancy to override the will of the North; so too did John J. Crittenden, who was at this point still the foremost Southern Democrat. Nevertheless, their leadership was hardly commanding over their party and both of them were ineffective at best in their roles, and there was a substantial number of Southern Democrats who broke from the party line by supporting annexation. Combining them with affirmative votes from Northern Republicans, Stockton hoped to achieve the two-thirds majority necessary for admitting Jamaica.

Under the 1789 Constitution, treaties require a two-thirds majority of the Senate which by its very nature overrepresented the South, and despite the precedent of the acquisition of Luisiana seeming to show that a constitutional amendment was a prerequisite for annexing territory, the Stockton administration considered it vague enough that they could push their way. By the time Stockton presented the treaty of admission to the Senate, he was already hard at work deploying patronage to get it through. This caused a massive ruckus; Northern Democrats quickly declared this proof of a Planter Ascendancy hard at work destroying American liberty, and beyond that several Northern Republicans were quite disturbed at the idea of admitting another slave state. A mass agitation of anti-Jamaica sentiment broke out across the North, involving both Democrats and Republicans. And though Everett’s leadership of the anti-admission effort left much to be desired, and though more radically antislavery opposition under Joshua Giddings only served to throw Southern Democrats towards admitting Jamaica, in the end the backlash was enough to scuttle admission. The vote was 30 to 18 –close to the two-thirds margin required, but not enough, though well above a majority – and with that, admission of Jamaica collapsed. Though the close margin made some hope for a second attempt, in the end the Northern backlash was enough that Northern senators who voted for admission now either had to recant their vote or lose re-election. No vote of admission would come so close, and everyone knew it.

Nevertheless, though this was a defeat for the Planter Ascendancy, it hardly meant its destruction. It still had considerable support in the Senate, and in the House it could similarly boast of representation well and above what pure numbers would assume. If it could not be permitted to expand slavery by annexing Caribbean territories, then it could surely look elsewhere – and where else, but the plains of the as yet unsettled West? To be sure, this would require scrapping the terms of Indian Removal, which guaranteed much of it to the very same expelled tribes forever – but not many Americans, North or South, considered sticking to such terms too strictly. But talk of expanding the zone of settlement in a slave-sided manner only increased, and it would not take long for such policy to be enacted.

As for Jamaica, though President Walker was defeated, he did not consider even once leaving power. If he could not lead an American state as his fiefdom or expand his influence into American politics, then he could at least rule over his own country as a despot. Thus, in the years and indeed decades that followed, though Walker maintained hopes that his country would be admitted as an American state, he focused himself on modernizing reforms that would establish Jamaica as a citadel of modernized slavery. He maintained good relations with the United States – all the way until that meant, with the Liberty and Union War, taking a side in a brutal and fratricidal war. And thus it was that the name “William Walker” became synonymous with the planter elite of Jamaica – and indeed, with an entire era of Jamaican history.

# Appendix 1. Map of the United States of America



# Appendix 2. States of the United States of America

|  | **State** | **Date admitted** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Delaware | 1787 |
| 2 | Pennsylvania | 1787 |
| 3 | New Jersey | 1787 |
| 4 | Georgia | 1788 |
| 5 | Connecticut | 1788 |
| 6 | Massachusetts | 1788 |
| 7 | Maryland | 1788 |
| 8 | South Carolina | 1788 |
| 9 | New Hampshire | 1788 |
| 10 | Virginia | 1788 |
| 11 | New York | 1788 |
| 12 | North Carolina | 1789 |
| 13 | Rhode Island | 1790 |
| 14 | Vermont | 1791 |
| 15 | Kentucky | 1792 |
| 16 | Tennessee | 1796 |
| 17 | Ohio | 1803 |
| 18 | Indiana | 1813 |
| 19 | Yazoo | 1814 |
| 20 | Mississippi | 1821 |
| 21 | Illinois | 1829 |
| 22 | Orleans | 1832 |
| 23 | New Ireland | 1832 |
| 24 | Missouri | 1837 |
| 25 | Wisconsan | 1844 |
| 26 | Arkansaw | 1859 |
| 27 | Florida[[259]](#endnote-259) | 1861 |
| 28 | Juniper | 1861 |
| 29 | Ontonagon | 1867 |
| 30 | Nibrasca | 1869 |
| 31 | Kances | 1870 |
| 32 | Maine | 1871 |
| 33 | Alleghania | 1872 |
| 34 | Franklin | 1878 |
| 35 | Cimarron | 1883 |
| 36 | Anacostia | 1895 |
| 37 | Tahosa | 1897 |
| 38 | Minasota | 1901 |
| 39 | Shackamia | 1907 |

# Appendix 3. Population of the United States of America

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Census year** | **Population** | **Growth rate** |
| 1790 | 3,929,214 | 41.32% |
| 1800 | 5,308,483 | 35.10% |
| 1810 | 7,139,881 | 34.50% |
| 1820 | 9,438,453 | 32.19% |
| 1830 | 11,866,020 | 25.72% |
| 1840 | 16,069,453 | 35.42% |
| 1850 | 21,691,876 | 34.99% |
| 1860 | 28,943,321 | 33.43% |
| 1870[[260]](#endnote-260) | 34,503,313 | 19.21% |
| 1880 | 30,943,304 | -10.32% |
| 1890 | 36,426,458 | 17.72% |
| 1900 | 45,631,424 | 25.27% |
| 1910 | 60,822,125 | 33.29% |
| 1920 | 69,087,852 | 13.59% |
| 1930 | 84,307,906 | 22.03% |
| 1940 | 99,904,868 | 18.50% |
| 1950 | 132,074,236 | 32.20% |
| 1960 | 158,092,860 | 19.70% |
| 1970 | 181,047,943 | 14.52% |
| 1980 | 203,099,583 | 12.18% |
| 1990 | 229,055,710 | 12.78% |
| 2000 | 259,176,535 | 13.15% |
| 2010 | 286,934,342 | 10.71% |
| 2020 | 310,893,360 | 8.35% |

# Appendix 4. Presidents of the United States of America

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **President** | **Political Party** | **Administration** |
| 1. | George Washington | Independent | 1789-1797 |
| 2. | John Adams | Federalist | 1797-1801 |
| 3. | Thomas Jefferson | Republican | 1801-1809 |
| 4. | Aaron Burr | Democratic | 1809-1817 |
| 5. | James Madison | Republican | 1817-1825 |
| 6.  | Aaron Burr | Democratic | 1825-1827 |
| 7. | William Henry Harrison | Democratic | 1827-1837 |
| 8.  | Zebulon Pike | Republican | 1837-1845 |
| 9. | Daniel Webster | Democratic | 1845-1852 |
| 10.  | James L. Petigru | Democratic | 1852-1853 |
| 11.  | Robert F. Stockton | Republican | 1853-1861 |
| 12.  | Richard H. Menefee | Democratic | 1861-1865 |
| 13. | George Wash. Woodward | Republican | 1865-1868 |
| 14.  | William Pitt Fessenden | Free Democratic | 1868-1869 |
| 15.  | George Bancroft | Free Democratic | 1869-1870 |
| 16.  | Tenant Pendleton Kennedy | Free Democratic | 1870-1877 |
| 17.  | John Wentworth | Free Democratic | 1877-1879 |
| 18.  | Curran Emmet | Free Democratic | 1879-1886 |
| 19.  | John A. Logan | Free Democratic | 1886-1891 |
| 20.  | John W. Foster | Free Democratic | 1891-1892 |
| 21.  | Galusha Pennypacker | Free Democratic | 1892-1898 |
| 22.  | John M. DuBois | Free Democratic | 1898-1904 |
| 23.  | Cromwell Hutton | Free Democratic | 1904-1910 |
| 24.  | Martin Fueger | Free Democratic | 1910-1916 |
| 25. | Paul Drennan Cravath | Radical | 1916-1922 |
| 26.  | Robert Brinkerhoff | Radical | 1922-1928 |
| 27.  | Pancrace Landry | Free Democratic | 1928-1934 |
| 28.  | Leonidas C. Dyer | Free Democratic | 1934-1940 |
| 29.  | Robert G. Menzies | Radical | 1940-1946 |
| 30.  | Herman Trisch | Free Democratic | 1946-1950 |
| 31.  | Bess Gervasi | Free Democratic | 1950-1958 |
| 32.  | Zimri Kovack | Radical | 1958-1964 |
| 33.  | Gerhardt Stiller | Radical | 1964-1970 |
| 34.  | Milton Soozoocky | Free Democratic | 1970-1976 |

# Appendix 5. Leaders of the Monetary Authority of the United States

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Presidents of the Bank of North America** | **Administration** |
| 1. | Thomas Willing | 1781-1791 |
|  |  |  |
|  | **Presidents of the First Bank of the United States** | **Administration** |
| 1. | Thomas Willing | 1791-1807 |
| 2. | David Lenox | 1807-1811 |
|  |  |  |
|  | **Presidents of the Second Bank of the United States** | **Administration** |
| 1.  | Joshua Forman | 1825-1835 |
| 2.  | Jonathan Thompson | 1835-1840 |
| 3.  | James Gadsden | 1840-1845 |
| 4.  | Nathan Appleton | 1845-1851 |
| 5.  | Reverdy Johnson | 1851-1856 |
| 6.  | Vernon K. Stevenson | 1856-1861 |
| 7.  | Charlemagne Tower | 1861-1866 |
| 8.  | Vernon K. Stevenson | 1866-1868 |
|  |  |  |
|  | **Presidents of the War Bank** | **Administration** |
| 1.  | Thomas Hillhouse | 1868-1877 |
| 2.  | Lawrence Baker | 1877-1883 |
|  |  |  |
|  | **Secretaries of Fiduciary Affairs** | Administration |
| 1.  | Thomas B. Ingersoll | 1883-1887 |
| 2.  | Daniel P. Jordan | 1887-1898 |
| 3.  | Aaron B. Walters | 1898-1916 |
| 4.  | Webster Waller | 1916-1918 |
|  |  |  |
|  | **Administrators of the United States Fiduciary Office** | Administration |
| 1.  | Webster Waller | 1918-1933 |
| 2.  | Lazare F. Walsh | 1933-1943 |

# Appendix 6. Leaders of the Railroad Authority of the United States

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Major-General of the United States Railroad Corps** | **Administration** |
| 1.  | Daniel McCallum | 1868-1878 |
|  |  |  |
|  | **Commissioners of the National Railroad Board** | **Administration** |
| 1.  | John V.L. Pruyn | 1878-1883 |
| 2.  | Arthur M. Wellington | 1883-1905 |
| 3.  | Lawrence Siemens | 1905-1918 |
| 4.  | Marius Goodman | 1916-1918 |
|  |  |  |
|  | **Administrators of the United States Railroad Office** | **Administration** |
| 1.  | Marius Goodman | 1918-1938 |
| 2.  | Jarvis Wise | 1938-1953 |
| 3.  | Jonah Spendler | 1953-1973 |
| 4.  | Joseph Bernardo | 1973-1988 |
| 5.  | Richard Mueller | 1988-2003 |
| 6.  | Frank Yoshida | 2003-2018 |
| 7.  | Alexandra F. Kennedy | 2018- |

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1. Witty, Alicia. *Faction and Republic: The Birth of American Party Politics, 1789–1801*. (Quiner University, 1972). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Azèrre, Claudine. *The Ghost of Thermidor: Jefferson, the French Revolution, and the Transatlantic Republic*. (Éditions de la République, 1981). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Prior to 1815, presidential elections were held in two stages. Each state selected a slate of electors, equal to the sum of representatives and senators they sent to Congress. The manner they selected differed by state, but most states chose them by popular election. Afterwards, each of the electors then elected the president, and the person in second would be Vice President. In 1796, the electors for neither the Federalists and the Republicans rallied behind their vice presidential candidates and instead split their votes several ways, resulting in Jefferson being in second place, despite only Republican electors having voted for him. See Nackamoorah, Miriam. *From Confederation to Constitution: The Forging of the American Republic, 1781–1801*. (1986, Dartmouth College Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Pennington, Robert, *Alexander Hamilton: Anatomy of a Traitor* (1988, Smithsonian History Press). For a revisionist look at the Adams presidency, see Jenny Pantakrov, *Forgotten Founder: The Life and Times of John Adams* (2003, Websteropolis Historical Society). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Poots, Bess. *The First Quasi War: Naval Conflict and Presidential Power, 1798–1801* (Naval Historical Review, 1978). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. By 1800, the Haitian Revolution had come to an end and the “Black Spartacus” Toussaint Louverture had established himself as Governor-General of Saint-Domingue, with the country only nominally a dependency of France. Saint-Domingue only declared independence as Haiti upon Toussaint’s death in 1821 and the ensuing power struggle. See Dubois, René. *The Black Spartacus: Toussaint Louverture and the Hand of Destiny*. (Libre Haïti Press, 1969). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. To contrast with the other great examples of republics, France had seen no peaceful exchanges of power since 1789, but instead a coup d’etat the previous year by General Joubert establishing the Sieyesian political order, while Great Britain was a monarchy under George III, nicknamed the Corrupter-General for his use of patronage to render Parliament inert to the will of him and his Prime Minister, Henry Addington. See Summers, Henry, *The Question of Succession: Exchanges of Power in a Republican Country* (1945, London University Press) and Wentworth, Sidney, *The Decline and Fall of the House of Guelph* (1984, Dublin Historical Studies). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Thomas Jefferson’s stance on slavery is something which has seen debate in recent years. See Humbert, Jacques, *Thomas Jefferson: The National Hypocrite* (2003, University of Laurentia Press) for an argument that, for all his intentions, Thomas Jefferson was only antislavery in name only, and his vigorous defence of slavery in the 1810s and 20s represented less an abandonment of his former politics and more a self-realization that he was, fundamentally, the leader of the Planter Ascendancy. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Indeed, the Congress of the Confederation years may have influenced the constitution of the modern International Forum, as Thomas Paine’s ideas for an Association of Nations, which would maintain peace, were influenced by the Articles of Confederation, and in turn influenced the ideas of the International Forum. See Humbert, Jacques, *Thomas Paine and the Rights of Man* (2018, University of Laurentia Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. In the days of the British monarchy, kings would every year give a speech to Parliament setting the agenda for the next year. This is rooted in the origins of Parliament as an advisory assembly, a way for kings to enact special decrees. Nevertheless, the United States kept it, its utility as a way to set the agenda meant that it was kept, and so too did the British Isles after the Revolution. See Kirk, Racine, *The Anglo-American Tradition of Liberty* (1941, University of Laurentia Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. The fate of the Lewis and Clark expedition remains the topic of some debate. It seems likely they faced the wrong end of an Indigenous tribe, fearing all the diseases they’d bring with them; additionally, it also seems possible the Spanish, who sent several counter-expeditions to stop their intrusion into Luisiana, stopped and either arrested or killed them all. See Edwin Miller, *The Lewis and Clark Expedition: Disappearance and Memory* (1994, University of Harrisonopolis). [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Burr’s endorsement of women’s rights made him an icon of the women’s rights movement over the course of the nineteenth century. See Schultz, Anna, *The Franchise: How Women won the Right to Vote* (2019, Webster University). [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Tammany Societies originated in Philadelphia in honor of a Lenape Indigenous chieftain, Tamanend. Growing after the Revolution which turned Tamanend into an American patron saint, Tammany Societies grew all across the United States in the name of patriotism. Its transformation from a nativist benevolent society into the Irish-dominated backbone of Burr’s Democratic Party machine is best covered by Brickley, F.M., *Machine Made: Aaron Burr, Tammany Hall, and the Making of American Democracy* (2021, Library of Alexandria Publishing, Anacostia). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Library of Alexandria. *Alexandria Atlas of Elections, 10ed*. (2011, Library of Alexandria). [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Due to the 1812 election revealing the possibility of an electoral tie in presidential elections, it led to an amendment to the Constitution, passed in 1815, which abolished the elector system. Instead, each state was divided into a series of electoral districts, the number being equal to the state’s congressional delegation. Whichever candidate (for both the presidency and the vice presidency) won a plurality would win one electoral vote, and whichever candidate would win a majority of electoral votes, would be president. If no candidate was able to win a majority of electoral votes, instead the election would be decided by a joint session of Congress, voting among the two top candidates. See *Alexandria Encyclopedia of Early American History*, 2020 ed. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. The main Federalist who refused to back Burr was Alexander Hamilton, who went so far as to endorse and campaign for Monroe instead. Hamilton stated this was founded on opposition to Burr’s lack of principles and his demagoguery; most historians believe he was simply scared of losing his position of leadership within the Federalists to Burr. See Pennington, *Alexander Hamilton: Anatomy of a Traitor* (1988). [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Poole, Tomás, *The Rise of Sequoyah: The Five Tribes in Exile, 1837-1916* (2004, University of Monterrey Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Party conventions were a somewhat new innovation, but there were several antecedents at the state level, most primarily the political convention which nominated Simon Snyder as the candidate of the New School Republicans for governor in Pennsylvania’s election of 1811. See *Alexandria Encyclopedia of Early American History*, 2020 ed. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. See Bland, Deckard, *Burr and Liberty: The Rise of American Democracy* (2021, Library of Alexandria Publishing, Anacostia). [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Jefferson, Thomas, *Notes on the State of the American Confederacy* (1816, Archives of the Library of Alexandria, Anacostia). [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. See Pennington, Robert, *Thomas Jefferson: The Master of Monticello* (Smithsonian History Press, 1991). [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. This was a popular narrative, which percolated in several newspapers. It appears to have originated from a book published in Lexington, Kentucky published in 1815, called *Life of James Madison*. See *Alexandria Encyclopedia of Early American History*, 2020 ed. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Library of Alexandria. *Alexandria Atlas of Elections, 10ed*. (2011, Library of Alexandria). [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Bland, *Burr and Liberty* (2021). [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. For this, I am indebted to Bland, Deckard, *Burr and Liberty: The Rise of American Democracy* (2021, Library of Alexandria Publishing, Anacostia). [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. The relationship between Irish republicanism and the ideology of the Democratic Party in the Burr years is a topic of much discussion. See Smith, Fitzgerald, *The Harp and Stars: The Great Irish Rebellion and Burr, 1799-1823* (2003, Dublin Historical Studies). [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Note that New Ireland was initially named Michigan; its settlement was the direct result, after the Erie Canal opening the path, and the Burr administration opening settlement in the area to the New York Irish Emigrant Aid Company. Headed by Thomas Addis Emmet (father of Curran), initial settlement of the territory was not exclusively Irish but they ended up leaving a strong mark on the region, enough to provide its name. See Fitzgerald, *The Harp and Stars* (2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. This idea was hardly an innovative one, but most Americans’ introduction to the idea came from the eighteenth-century French political theorist Montesquieu, who in *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748) warned that a large republic would destroy itself in ambition and corruption. The idea that the United States was somehow too large worried Americans of every political stripe in this era. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. O’Callaghan, Judith. *The Grand Canals: The Infrastructure Mania of the Burr Years*. (2006, Great Lakes Historical Society). [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Pinchot, Geoffrey, *The First Spark of the Information Age: The Semaphore in France and the Sister Republics, 1793 to 1855* (2014, University of Paris). [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. The role of the semaphoric telegraph system in popularizing cryptography, including the now-famous Jefferson disk, is well attested. See Brickley, F.M., *The Cipher Men: The Semaphore and the Age of the Analyzer* (2011, Library of Alexandria Publishing, Anacostia). [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Hedly, Bonifacius. *Two Centuries in Action: The Federal Bulletin, 1812-2012* (2012, Smithsonian History Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Additionally, steamboats were used to convey letters, with the Post Office conveying letters across the nation through contracted steamboats. See Schmitt, Frank, *Paddleboat Nation: The Steamboat in Antebellum America, 1811-1868* (2001, Naval Institution Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Hamilton, Alexander, *Report on the Subject of Manufactures* (1791). [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Brickley, F.M., *Banking, Booms, and Busts: American Finances in the Antebellum Years* (2023, Library of Alexander Publishing). [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. The bases of this network were the Ohio and Miami Canal, connecting Cincinnati to Miami (albeit just over the border in Michigan), and the Ohio and Erie Canal connecting Ballytone to Sandusky. See O’Callaghan, Judith. *The Grand Canals: The Infrastructure Mania of the Burr Years* (2006, Great Lakes Historical Society). [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Armstrong, Wealthow. *The Rise of the Old West: Urbanization and Investment from Sandusky to Sowashee, 1800–1825*. (1974, Quiner University). [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. This is the now-iconic Sectional Thesis of American history. As a thesis, it was first laid out by Frederick Webster Turner, during the Reconstruction Exposition, in *The Significance of the Geographic Section in American History* (1891, Williamsburg University Press), and it has been argued ever since. Turner himself argued that it was rooted in the discrete settlement patterns of the American colonies – New England by the Puritans, New York by the Dutch, Philadelphia by the Quakers, Virginia by the Cavaliers, South Carolina by the Barbadians, and Appalachia by the Scots-Irish – and as an idea, it has had a deep influence in American history; despite this, ever since, it has been hotly debated by American historians. See Warden, Denis, *Frederick Webster Turner and the Rhetorical Impact of the Sectional Thesis, 1891 to Today* (2013, American Philosophical Society). [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. See Johnson, Zimri, *What’s in a name? African, Colored, and Other Terms in the American Republic, 1776-1840* (2013, Harvard Historical Studies). [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. On one end is Bland, *Burr and Liberty* (2021), which argues it was rooted in fear that the increasingly-prominent United Irishmen diaspora, and its leanings towards antislavery, would lead to the Democratic Party being an agent of antislavery. On the other is Pennington, Robert, *Thomas Jefferson: The Master of Monticello* (Smithsonian History Press, 1991), which argues it played a much more role and that most of it had to do with a dissatisfaction with the increasingly democratic tone of American politics, which Burr spearheaded, and the fear that it would lead to a demagogic tyranny. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. The term “Planter Ascendancy”, most historians agree, came from the United Irish diaspora. Fleeing as they were the suppression of the Great Irish Rebellion by an alliance of British authorities and the native Protestant Ascendancy, they compared the planter aristocracy of the South, and the extreme amounts of influence they had, to their own experience under the ascendancy of a small Anglican elite. See Fitzgerald, *The Harp and Stars* (2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Newton, Charles. "The Domestic Department: Its Founding and Early History". (Smithsonian Institution Journal of History No. 34., 2008). [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Sullivan, Peter. *The Jeffersonian Republic: National Debt, Expansion, and Foreign Relations*. (Ogden University Press, 1987). [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. This speculation boom was mostly the result of the Year Without a Summer of 1816, which in turn led to a massive flow of settlers westwards. This in turn resulted in booming land sales, as well as booming sales in goods to the frontier; this in turn resulted in several banking institutions emerging to back it, which gave easy credit and, in the form of their notes, currency. See Brickley, F.M. *Banking, Booms, and Busts: American Finances in the Antebellum Years* (2023, Library of Alexandria Publishing, Anacostia). [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. This is not entirely true: Suffolk Bank in New England played many of the same economic roles today associated with central banks, and so too did the Fiscal Bank of Washington in Maryland and eastern Virginia. Those areas saw less economic calamity during the Panic of 1819. See ibid., pp. 54-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. An additional reason for the reduction of slave prices was the result of a cotton glut, the direct result of the internal improvements of the era allowing for easier export; this made many cotton plantations simply unprofitable, and they sold off large sections of their plantation labor. See ibid., pp. 63-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Freeman, Olivia. *The Broken States: A Comparative Study of the Illinois and Missouri Crises*. (Yale University Press, 2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Luisiana and the Floridas were part of an expansive frontier in the north of Spanish America, including the entire territory of modern-day Buenaventura. It was so isolated from the rest of the colonial empire that it might as well be part of the Moon, and the ensuing frontier culture, most historians agree, comes from this very isolation and has forever affected the traditions of this region. See O’Donnell, Federico, *On the Importance of the Frontiers in Buenaventuran History* (Republican University of San Francisco, 1908). [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. This is not entirely true; as part of the final peace between Spain and the British Isles, Lord Selkirk successfully campaigned for recognizing the forty-seventh latitude as the boundary between Spanish Luisiana and British territory. Additionally, peace between the British and Spanish also meant British abandonment of the so-called State of Muskogee, a Creek state in the Floridas led by the British adventurer William Augustus Bowles. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. The Red River Colony was a project organized by Scottish aristocrat Lord Selkirk to alleviate poverty in his native Scotland. Several waves of settlers beginning in 1807 populated the region, and its settlements grew towards the Missouri River. They also became joined by Irish settlers, and together this became the founding population of Assiniboia. See Callaghan J.M., *The Founder: How a Scottish Dilettante Created Assiniboia* (2004, University of Dunedin Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Murphy, William. *Empire at the Crossroads: Spanish America and the United States in the Early 19th Century*. (University of Garibaldi Press, 2001). [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Thompson, Edwin. "Revolution by Ballot: The Legacy of 1800 in American Politics." (1897, Columbia University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. See Pennington, *The Master of Monticello* (1991). [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. Library of Alexandria. *Alexandria Atlas of Elections, 10ed*. (2011, Library of Alexandria). [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. See Bland, *Burr and Liberty* (2021). [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. The city was named after Frederick Guelph, the erstwhile Duke of York in 1793. It was only renamed Toronto in 1828, after the Popular Revolution saw Frederick, by then the King of Great Britain, overthrown and the monarchy abolished. See Lawson, Hugh, *The Adolescent Nation: Canada, 1828-1890* (2013, Toronto University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. Congress went so far as to debate internal taxes on stamps and paper, but such taxes resembled the grievances the American revolutionaries had held against the Guelphs too greatly to pass. Despite some controversy over the liquor taxes resembling the taxes that caused the Whiskey Rebellion, however, necessity meant it passed Congress, and vice taxes became an important part of the national budget. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. Imamolu, Ismail. *For Prosperity: The Slow March of Industry in the Newest World* (1994, Darfultun Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. Fonteneau, Ximena. The Raccoon Men: *The Militia Myth and the Luisiana War, in the Light of American History, 1828 to Present* (2019, Republican University of New Orleans). [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. See Pennington, *Alexander Hamilton: Anatomy of a Traitor* (1988). [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. There would be something of a dispute over whether Harrison was the President, or merely the Vice President acting in the capacity of the presidency. However, by being sworn in he lay claim to the full power of the presidency, and he went so far as to return mail written to him as the “Vice President” or “Acting President” back to the sender. Given the wartime situation, it did not take long for him to establish this as a precedent. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. *Report of the Select Committee to Investigate the Late Conflagration of the President’s Mansion* (1827, Congressional Reports). More recently, historians have investigated the subject, and they may be best summed up by the conclusion of Charles Wilkins. “Whatever the precise origins of the fire that killed Aaron Burr, it seems likely it began in the President’s Office, when Burr was the only man inside. There must have been an accident, which ignited the President’s Office that consumed the rest of the mansion in short order”. Wilkins, Charles, *The Death of Aaron Burr: An Analysis of its Causes* (2001, Smithsonian History Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. The origin of the fire that killed Aaron Burr remains a topic of speculation; conspiracy theories around it have not only fixated around the Hamilton conspiracy, but also from the Planter Ascendancy, which regarded Burr as an abolitionist; or the Spanish, which regarded him as the architect of the Luisiana War; or the British Guelphs, who regarded his patronage of Irish immigrants as dangerous; or even some alliance of some or all of these elements. These theories, most historians agree, are unjustified. See Bland, *Burr and Liberty* (2021). [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. Belknap, George, *The Expanse of the Sword: The Luisiana War, 1825-8* (2000, University of Wilmington). [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. Pike’s troops put fire to the Spanish fleet in the harbor before anybody could do anything, and this resulted in the fleet being forced to evacuate before the fire consumed it. See Clank, Henry, *A Military History of the Luisiana War* (1994, Orleans State University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. A fuller description of the international crisis of confidence which came after the Popular Revolution may be seen in Morris, Alexander, *The Second Age of Revolutions in Global History: 1827-1880* (2020, London University Press, 1945). [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. An offer of negotiation had already been offered by Constatine’s predecessor Alexander, and though it would be rejected, after Alexander’s death in 1827 and the confusion afterwards, Constantine offered a similar one. See Chouars, Boris. *The National Void: The Russian Empire, 1796-1837* (2003, University of Geneva). [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. A fuller description of the negotiations that ended the Luisiana War may be seen in Sutherland, Christine, *Henry Clay and the Empire of Liberty* (2012, Smithsonian History Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. This amendment declared that the Floridas and Luisiana would be incorporated as territories pending statehood, their inhabitants granted full rights as Americans, and the former Luisiana divided into three divisions of settlement with north-south lines, so that each division would only be settled upon the settlement of the one to its east. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. For the full, immediate, consequences of the Popular Revolution, see Jameson, Ronald, *Liberty Across the Atlantic: American Aftershocks of the Popular Revolution, 1827-1868.* (Columbia Historical Review, 1889). [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. Indeed, for much of this period, British migrants widely considered the United States a better target to migrate to than the settler colonies. This was a result of emigration to the colonies being associated with penal migration since pre-revolutionary days, as well as the perception of the United States as a land of liberty with a well-developed democracy complete with public institutions. Though the opening of the Australian Gold Rush in 1839 gave these emigrants another target, massive numbers of Britons nevertheless happily emigrated to America throughout this period. See Antonov, Dennis, *The Brother Republics: British Emigration to the United States, 1830-1868* (University of Shackamia Press, 2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. Prior to the Popular Revolution, the British Isles was tied in personal union to the Electorate of Hanover, which it was heavily tied to; additionally, it was part of a network of trade with several traditionalist European monarchies. From here, it received a lot of raw material, such as timber from the Baltic, which it turned into product through its factory system. The Revolution cut off this trade, as the government of Hanover became an exilic administration ever striving for a restoration, with the support of the monarchies of Europe. To make up for the loss of raw goods, post-Revolutionary Britain instead opened up trade with the United States and its colonial empire, and it did so successfully. See Ross, Tanya, *Rise of the Fond Accord: Anglo-American Relations, 1830-1868* (Gracchi Institute, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. For a history of the Anti-Catholic Party, see Attwood, Caleb "*The Cross and the Crescent: Anti-Catholicism and the Birth of Mass Politics in the Age of Burr.*" New Albion Historical Quarterly, vol. 3, no. 2, 1980. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. Kenzler, Sidney. *The Meeting that Changed the World: Henry Clay and George Tierney, the Flames of Liberty, and Toronto, 1830* (2001, Toronto University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. The pre-revolutionary British Isles contained a moderate abolitionist movement, the so-called Clapham Sect, which emerged from the Church of England. Wilberforce was merely its head. This movement was largely ineffective, strongly supportive of the government – notably, Wilberforce supported the Birmingham and Clontarf Massacres – and with the Popular Revolution, many of its members fled to Hanover. Though it did persist as a tendency within the Moderate Party, its power was largely broken. Notably, it managed Sierra Leone, a West African colony for freedmen; after the Popular Revolution, this colony was sold to the American Colonization Society and integrated within the burgeoning colony of Fredonia. See Wallace, Horace, *The Atoners: The Clapham Sect, Controlled Opposition, and the Nature of Traditionalist Reform* (1974, Lunar University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. Daniel O’Connell was originally dubbed the Emancipator for his undying agitation for, and accomplishment of, Catholic emancipation; however, his role in pushing the Emancipation Act of 1830 through Parliament led to the label being extended, and so too was his undying support of American slavery. See Bourke, Maurice, *The Advocate for Humanity: Daniel O’Connell, the Man, and his Times* (2011, Dublin Historical Studies). [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. For a full analysis of the breach between the United States and the British Isles following the end of slavery, see Oldfield, Geoffrey, *The Atlantic Schism: Relations between the British Isles and the United States, 1830-1868* (2003, London University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. See Poole, Tomás, *The Rise of Sequoyah: The Five Tribes in Exile, 1837-1916* (2004, University of Monterrey Press), on the exile of American Indigenous tribes in modern-day Buenaventura. On the establishment of reservations in the Interior, see Romanov, Warren, *Refugees in their Own Country: The Indigenous Tribes After Removal*, *1837-1916* (1987, University of Shackamia Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. Despite Anglo settlement in the years after American conquest, Orleans continued to be dominated by Franco-Spanish Creoles, and indeed their position found itself strengthened by the boom of commerce that followed, which led to immigration of many Hispanic Catholics, as well as Irish Catholics who ultimately integrated into Orleaner Creole identity. See Dubreuil, Antoine "*Creole Continuity: Identity and Integration in Antebellum Orleans, 1829–1868.*" Journal of Southern Cultural History, vol. 7, no. 1, Spring 1912, pp. 47–73. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. Zelazny, Robert. *Inseparable: The Life and Times of Daniel Webster, 1782-1852* (2002, University of St. Paul). [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. Xavier, Thomas. *History of the Financial System of the United States, 1781-1868* (1997, Gracchi Institute). [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. Alston was initially from South Carolina – he had even briefly served as its governor, from 1812 to 1814 – but he had found himself cast out of its political scene, and afterwards he travelled westward to a state where he could more easily attain influence and power. See Tangue, Hezekiah, *The Undesired One: The Life and Times of Joseph Alston* (1999, Burr University) and Pacque, Tatiana, *The Grand Old Woman: Theodosia Burr Alston and America, 1783-1864* (2011, Burr University). [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. Library of Alexandria. *Alexandria Atlas of Elections, 10ed*. (2011, Library of Alexandria). [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. Armstrong, Wealthow, *The Western Boom: Urbanization and Investment from St. Louis to New Orleans, 1829–1842*. (Quiner University, 1968). [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. Note that there were also several private semaphore lines which ran parallel to lines; some of them ended up going out of business and consolidated as Color Lines. Similarly, the boom also saw private semaphore lines in places without postal lines. See Porterfield, Isaac, *Semaphore Republic: America’s First Communications Revolution*. (Library of Alexandria Publishing, 2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. Porterfield. *Semaphore Republic*. (2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. These were the Cobden-McCulloch reforms, implemented in 1832 by the revolutionary Whitbread administration, which established a uniform post of a centum per letter and pre-payment by the sender verified through a postage stamp, which eventually came in the form of a separate adhesive piece of paper. Though many observers thought these low prices would bankrupt the fragile British government, it instead led to a massive boom in letters which more than made up for the lost margins, and in the years that followed similar reforms were implemented in other countries, such as the United States. See Derbyshire, Charlotte, *For All the Mail in England: The British General Post Office, 1829 to Present* (London University Press, 2019). [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. Lawrence, Milton. *The Birth and Rise of the Smithsonian Institution* (Smithsonian History Press, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. Stoddard, Hortense. *Genius in the Tower: The Science and Statesmanship of Joseph Henry* (Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, 1952). [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. Brickley, F.M., *Banking, Booms, and Busts: American Finances in the Antebellum Years* (Washington: Library of Alexander Publishing, 2023). [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. Hayes, Carolyn. "Clark v. Illinois and the Centralization of American Credit." (Economic Review, no. 1., 2005). [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. Cartwright, A. W., *The Collapse of Canal Mania: Financial Panic and Infrastructure Retrenchment, 1839–1844* (Mackintosh University Press, 1994). [↑](#endnote-ref-92)
93. Holloway, Thomas. *Saint Tippecanoe: The Life and Times of William Henry Harrison* (University of New Jersey, 1985). [↑](#endnote-ref-93)
94. Most of this narrative of Lafayette’s early life comes from MacDonough, Bob, *Hero of Two Worlds: The Life and Times of Citizen Lafayette* (2001, Atlantic & Sons). [↑](#endnote-ref-94)
95. Martinez, Rafael. *Slavery’s Frontier: Expansion, Illegality, and Subversion in Missouri Territory, 1830–1836*. (Republican University of Matamoros, 1996). [↑](#endnote-ref-95)
96. This comparative analysis is perhaps best elucidated by Freeman, Olivia. *The Broken States: A Comparative Study of the Illinois and Missouri Crises*. (Yale University Press, 2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-96)
97. Holloway, Thomas. *Master of Compromise: Henry Clay and the Politics of Delay*. (University of New Jersey Press, 1978). [↑](#endnote-ref-97)
98. Foster, Elaine. *From Luisiana to Liberty: The Crisis of 1836 and the Making of a Divided Republic*. (University of Memphis, 1984). [↑](#endnote-ref-98)
99. Library of Alexandria. *Alexandria Atlas of Elections, 10ed*. (2011, Library of Alexandria). [↑](#endnote-ref-99)
100. A work no less famous than Frederick Bauer’s seminal and influential four-volume work *On the Planter Ascendancy* (Cincinnati Gazette, 1859-1882), specifically *Volume I: A Critique of Political Economy* (1859), declares this election the moment that the United States fell to the Planter Ascendancy. [↑](#endnote-ref-100)
101. Wickers, Allen, *The National Nadir: The Pike Presidency and the Slow Crisis of the Sections* (University of Harrisonopolis Press, 1977). [↑](#endnote-ref-101)
102. Morgan, Elias. *The Chain Reforged: The Planter Ascendancy in the Pike Administration*. (University of Harrisonopolis Press, 1962). [↑](#endnote-ref-102)
103. The Upper Canadian government, under Governor Joseph Willcocks and his successor William Lyon Mackenzie, refused to give slave catchers even the right to enter, much less to take fugitive slaves with them. Most of Canada’s modern Colored population is descended from fugitive slaves fleeing northwards, and Canada’s modern national identity, as a nation embodying the same values of its southern neighbor but at its very best, owes itself to the fugitive slave controversy. See Turnbull, Malcolm. *From Freedom to Flight: The Colored Exodus to Canada, 1837-1845* (Toronto University Press, 1989). [↑](#endnote-ref-103)
104. Harmon, Elijah. *The Death of Benjamin Lundy, Holy Martyr for Emancipation* (firsthand account, serialized in The Liberator, 1840). [↑](#endnote-ref-104)
105. Whitmore, Charles. *Bonds of Anxiety: British-American Relations in the Age of Abolition*. (2010, London University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-105)
106. For a full treatment of the life of Francisco de Miranda, see Hugo de los Reyes’ four-volume biography, *The Liberator: The Life of Francisco de Miranda, 1750-1828* (Universidad Autónoma Republicana de Ciudad Miranda, 1994-2014). On his long exile, see *Volume II: The Great Exile, 1771-1798* (2001, trans. 2005) and *Volume III: The Conspirator of Liberty, 1798-1823* (2007, trans. 2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-106)
107. Morgan, Elias. The Chain Reforged: The Planter Ascendancy in the Pike Administration. (1962, University of Harrisonopolis Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-107)
108. Davis, Juliette. *Race, Revolution, and Republics: The U.S., Haiti, and Bahia in the 19th Century Imagination*. (2022, University of Ballyburr Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-108)
109. For a full analysis of Henry Clay’s idea of hemispheric liberty, and its ultimate faltering, see Thompson, Harold. *The Pan-American Idea: Diplomacy and Disillusionment, 1829–1837*. (1988, Websteropolis University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-109)
110. Belknap, George, *The Miserable Little Conflict: The Second Quasi-War, 1839-42*. (1993, University of Wilmington Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-110)
111. Belknap, George, *The Miserable Little Conflict: The Second Quasi-War, 1839-42*. (University of Wilmington Press, 1993). [↑](#endnote-ref-111)
112. Thompson, Edwin. “Revolution by Ballot: The Legacy of 1800 in American Politics”. (Columbia University Press, 1897). [↑](#endnote-ref-112)
113. Palley, Lazare, *The Long, Hard Struggle: Antislavery in the Antebellum Era, 1829-1868* (Websteropolis University Press, 2001). [↑](#endnote-ref-113)
114. Gurley, Annette, “The Equal Rights Man: William Leggett and the Radical Roots of the Free Democratic Party” (Harvard University Press, 1989). [↑](#endnote-ref-114)
115. Leggett, William, “Address to the Voters of the North". (Equal Rights Party, September 1840). [↑](#endnote-ref-115)
116. Library of Alexandria. *Alexandria Atlas of Elections, 10ed*. (2011, Library of Alexandria). [↑](#endnote-ref-116)
117. Delacroix, Jean-Pierre. *From Bengal to Arcansa: Cotton, Empire, and Collapse*. (1967, Éditions Nouvelle République). [↑](#endnote-ref-117)
118. Jacobs, Thomas, *Broken Nation: Internal Improvements and the Unmaking of Pike’s America*. (1979, Cahokia Historical Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-118)
119. Journal of the Proceedings of the Board of Directors, Second Bank of the United States, Vol. 8 (1842–1844). Internal Records Division. [↑](#endnote-ref-119)
120. Wainwright, Samuel. *A Bank for the Nation: The Second Bank of the United States, 1825–1868*. (1977, Macror Publishing). [↑](#endnote-ref-120)
121. Gurley, Annette, “The Equal Rights Man: William Leggett and the Radical Roots of the Free Democratic Party” (Harvard University Press, 1989). [↑](#endnote-ref-121)
122. Roberts, Sylvia, *Blood and Fire: Violence and Resistance in the Antebellum House of Representatives*. (Smithsonian History Press, 1998). [↑](#endnote-ref-122)
123. “If the Liberty and Union War was our Popular Revolution, then John Quincy Adams was our Charles James Fox – the late, lonely voice of opposition to the rise of autocracy that threatened all free institutions of state. And though, like the values of Fox, the values of Adams were but a whimper in his lifetime, they would ultimately prevail in the fields of battle”. From Mercer, Elijah, *Echoes of Dissent: Republicanism and Resistance in the Liberty and Union War*. (Tara Hill Press, 1893). [↑](#endnote-ref-123)
124. Langford, Edwin, “Unbending the Arc”: Reform Radicalism and the Political Mainstream, 1829–1868. Journal of American Political Development 18, no. 2 (2005): 239–274. [↑](#endnote-ref-124)
125. Thorne, Caleb, *Temperance and Tyranny: Vice, Virtue, and the American State*. (Gracchi Institute, 1993). [↑](#endnote-ref-125)
126. Forfanah, Delilah. *Gendered Liberty: Women’s Rights and the Political Economy of Reform*. (Mackintosh University Press, 1994). [↑](#endnote-ref-126)
127. Ichicahua, Heliodoro. *Chains Within Chains: Gender, Race, and the Abolitionist Conscience*. (Republican University of San Francisco, 2007). [↑](#endnote-ref-127)
128. de la Torre, Esperanza. *A New Republic of Sisters: Women’s Political Networks and Radical Reform, 1838–1855*. (Broderick University Press, 2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-128)
129. In particular, the famed radical William Blake was briefly a part of the New Church, although his esoteric views on religion were too esoteric even for them and he drifted away. See Ridley, Benjamin, *Celestial Hierarchies and Radical Bodies: Mystical Christianity in Revolutionary Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-129)
130. This mob attack may also be considered a result of there being a large unemployed population after the Panic of 1842, which needed a scapegoat. See Brickley, F.M., *Banking, Booms, and Busts: American Finances in the Antebellum Years* (Library of Alexander Publishing, 2023) [↑](#endnote-ref-130)
131. Vance, Catherine, *From Erie to Eternity: The Great March of the Sophians* (Mackintosh University, 1989). [↑](#endnote-ref-131)
132. From an 1823 speech: “He smote the rock of the national resources, and abundant streams of revenue gushed forth. He touched the dead corpse of the Public Credit, and it sprung upon its feet. The fabled birth of Minerva, from the brain of Jove, was hardly more sudden or more perfect than the ﬁnancial system of the United States, as it burst forth from the conceptions of Alexander Hamilton”. From *Speeches of Daniel Webster: Vol I: 1800-1825* (1988, Library of Alexandria Publishing). [↑](#endnote-ref-132)
133. Webster was, at the time, frequently compared to Edmund Burke, an eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish politician frequently regarded as the founder of moderate ideology. O’Connell had a special enmity for Burke, who he regarded as a traitor to Ireland. See Kirk, Racine, *The Moderate Mind: From Burke to Webster* (1949, University of Laurentia Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-133)
134. Foster, Abigail. *The Second Nullification Crisis: Webster, Clay, Calhoun, and the Preservation of the Union* (Atlantic & Sons, 1890). [↑](#endnote-ref-134)
135. Randall, Judith, *The Last Stand of Nullification: South Carolina and the Force Act* (2024, Orleans State University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-135)
136. Wainwright, Samuel. *A Bank for the Nation: The Second Bank of the United States, 1825–1868*. (1977, Macror Publishing). [↑](#endnote-ref-136)
137. At the time, the Bank was headed by James Gadsden, who was a South Carolinian and a member of the Planter Ascendancy. Webster kept him out of the deal – but Gadsden’s term was due to expire, and Webster had Appleton selected as his successor. See Wainwright, *A Bank for the Nation*. (1977). [↑](#endnote-ref-137)
138. Though Webster is, along with Burr and Washington, one of the most beloved presidents of the antebellum era, then and now the decision to send freed slaves to Fredonia is either placed in a context of antebellum colorphobia, or condemned for entrenching colorphobia in contemporary institutions. For the former view, see Julius R. Manning, "Pragmatism and Prejudice: The Politics of Colonization in the Webster Presidency," Massachusetts Historical Review 68, no. 1 (1913): 25–61. For the latter, see Danielle Volkov, "Colorphobia Enshrined: Fredonia and the Myth of Benevolent Segregation," in Rewriting Freedom: Critical Essays on Slavery and the American Republic, ed. Theodore Clarke (University of New Jersey Press, 1987), 201–233. [↑](#endnote-ref-138)
139. Matthews, Henry. Collateral Dreams: The Butlerian Crusade and the Founding of Modern Fredonia. (1912, University of Libertopolis Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-139)
140. Wainwright, *A Bank for the Nation* (1977). [↑](#endnote-ref-140)
141. Dawson, Ellen, *Canals to Railroads, Semaphores to Telegraphs: Technology in High Websterism* (North Atlantic Press, 1894). [↑](#endnote-ref-141)
142. This is a controversial thesis, but one which has some scholarship behind it. Russia’s High Council of Sociocracy gave it its stamp of approval: Before being named Chief High Sociocrat, Isaak Ozimov wrote an entry in the *Sociocratic Encyclopedia*, 5ed. (1948) praising the Second National Bank for giving the United States the benefit of sociocratic organization; however, in the United States, this thesis is chiefly associated with the Radical critique of the Belle Epoch. See Kuskov, Alexandria, *For Autonomy and Freedom: The Birth and Rise of the Radical Party, 1894-1916* (2004, Yale University Publishing). [↑](#endnote-ref-142)
143. Dawson, *Canals to Railroads* (1894). [↑](#endnote-ref-143)
144. This is the handicap of the first mover, where the adoption and widespread dissimulation of a technology, which may allow for an efficient and effective system, prevents the adoption of a superior technology because the costs of replacement may exceed whatever short-term advantages may be obtained. The problem of an effective network of inland waterways preventing the adoption of the railroad is most famously observed in China, although there at least the revolutionary changes of the 1850s, be it the downfall of the Qing dynasty or the 1850s floods of the Yellow River, were enough of a shock to force a gradual adoption of the railroad. See Li, Guiyang, *The Problem of Modernity: Bai China between Revolution and Reunification, 1854-1898* (2023, Guozijan Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-144)
145. Klein, Friedrich, *The Crisis of the Thrones: Correspondence from Europe, 1847–1853* (Schwäbische Zeitung, 1859). [↑](#endnote-ref-145)
146. Schmitt, Angela, *The Southern Diaspora North: Class, Race, and Migration in Antebellum America* (Transylvania University Press, 2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-146)
147. Torres, Ramon, *The Lost Empire: Spain, Britain, and the Collapse of Bourbon Power in the Americas* (Complutense University, 2021). [↑](#endnote-ref-147)
148. Chouars, Boris, *Cochrane’s Empire: The People’s Admiral in the New Granadine War of Independence* (University of Geneva, 2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-148)
149. Holcomb, Calvin, *Slavery, Bonds, and Panic: American Finance and the Collapse of the Caribbean Trade* (University of Millewackie Press, 1987). [↑](#endnote-ref-149)
150. Miller, Zenobia, *America’s Satan: The Life and Times of John C. Calhoun* (1998, Library of Alexandria Publishing). [↑](#endnote-ref-150)
151. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-151)
152. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-152)
153. Agu, Isaie. "Rails, Rivers, and Republicanism: John C. Calhoun’s Memphis Strategy." American Historical Quarterly, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Fall 1989), pp. 212–239. [↑](#endnote-ref-153)
154. Pantakrov, Sidney, *The Mudsills of the North: The Mechanics of the North and the Peculiar Institution, 1789-1868* (1968, Websteropolis University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-154)
155. Miller, *America’s Satan* (1998). [↑](#endnote-ref-155)
156. Library of Alexandria. *Alexandria Atlas of Elections, 10ed*. (2011, Library of Alexandria). [↑](#endnote-ref-156)
157. Bryant, Timothy, *The Devil Against Daniel Webster: Webster, Calhoun, and the Election of 1848* (2012, Yale University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-157)
158. Bryant, Timothy, *Tariffs, Territories, and Treason: The Political Economy of the Webster Era* (2005, Yale University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-158)
159. Randall, Judith, *The Last Stand of Nullification: South Carolina and the Force Act* (2024, Orleans State University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-159)
160. McPherson, Harold. "The Secession Oak and the Bluffton Movement: Planting the Seeds of Richmondism." Southern Historical Quarterly 42, no. 3 (1975): 215–239. [↑](#endnote-ref-160)
161. For this, I am indebted to Foster, Abigail. *The Second Nullification Crisis: Webster, Clay, Calhoun, and the Preservation of the Union* (Atlantic & Sons, 1890). [↑](#endnote-ref-161)
162. Everett, Edward. *Report of the Everett Commission on the Tariff and Public Lands*. Government Printing Office, 1849. [↑](#endnote-ref-162)
163. Randall, Judith, *The Last Stand of Nullification: South Carolina and the Force Act* (Orleans State University Press, 2024), 88–90. [↑](#endnote-ref-163)
164. Webster, Daniel, "A Proclamation to the State of South Carolina," August 1849. From *Speeches of Daniel Webster: Vol III: 1845-1852* (1998, Library of Alexandria Publishing). [↑](#endnote-ref-164)
165. Bryant, Timothy, *Tariffs, Territories, and Treason: The Political Economy of the Webster Era* (2005, Yale University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-165)
166. The idea of South Carolina as a Caribbean-oriented oligarchical republic is deep-seated and ultimately derived from its very origin as an outpost of Barbados and ultimately under the old British monarchy. See Blanchet, Bess, *Too Large for an Insane Asylum: Antebellum South Carolina and Her Society* (2013, Library of Alexandria Publishing). [↑](#endnote-ref-166)
167. Henry Clay, “Remarks on the Necessity of Compromise”, Senate Speech, May 1849. From *Speeches of Henry Clay: Vol III: 1837-1852* (1994, Library of Alexandria Publishing). [↑](#endnote-ref-167)
168. Foster, *The Second Nullification Crisis* (1890). [↑](#endnote-ref-168)
169. The National Intelligencer, September 2, 1850, "The Collapse of Nullification: Webster Triumphs." [↑](#endnote-ref-169)
170. Bryant, Tariffs, *Territories, and Treason* (2005). [↑](#endnote-ref-170)
171. Jackson, Everett, *The Birth of a Capital: Washington City, 1789–1868* (Yale University Press, 1957) [↑](#endnote-ref-171)
172. Miller, Diana, *Urban Expansion and Institutional Development in Antebellum Washington*. (Smithsonian Institution Journal of History No. 24, 1989). [↑](#endnote-ref-172)
173. Harrington, Melissa, *Empire of Trade: How the Union Canal Shaped Early Washington*. (Tammany Books, 1981). [↑](#endnote-ref-173)
174. Foster, Leonard "The Fiscal Bank of Washington: A Study in Regional Banking." American Economic History Review, no. 4 (1967): 501–525. [↑](#endnote-ref-174)
175. Foster, "The Fiscal Bank of Washington" (1967). [↑](#endnote-ref-175)
176. Hayes, Carolyn "Clark v. Illinois and the Centralization of American Credit." Economic Review, no. 1 (2005): 88–115. [↑](#endnote-ref-176)
177. Samuels, Roger "The Rise of the Washington Board of Brokers: 1800–1840." Journal of Washington Studies 7, no. 1 (2011): 34–59. [↑](#endnote-ref-177)
178. For a more thorough look at the expansion of Washington into its hinterland, see Miller, *Urban Expansion*. (1994). [↑](#endnote-ref-178)
179. Porterfield, Isaac. *Semaphore Republic: America’s First Communications Revolution*. (Library of Alexandria Publishing, 2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-179)
180. Cartwright, A. W., *The Collapse of Canal Mania: Financial Panic and Infrastructure Retrenchment, 1839–1844* (Mackintosh University Press, 1994). [↑](#endnote-ref-180)
181. Mansoure, Louis. *The Locomotive: The Rise of the Railroad and the Dawn of Modernity* (Éditions Wosniac, 2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-181)
182. Pruitt, Nathaniel, *The National Bank and the Arc of Iron: State Commercialism and the Railroad Revolution, 1830–1868* (Curran Emmet University, 2006). [↑](#endnote-ref-182)
183. McNeil, Webster. *Corruption on the Rails: Banking, Bribery, and the Bidding War for the West* (Middle Western Studies in Transport, 1936). [↑](#endnote-ref-183)
184. Gauss code could be transmitted quicker than the Chappe system, and many talked about conversion over to it almost as soon as the electric telegraph system came; it would only be adopted over the 1860s, at first slowly, and then quickly, after the creation of the Trans-Russian telegraph and especially with the need for communication with the Liberty and Union War. See Sutter, Sidney, *The First Telecommunications Revolution: The Rise of the Electric Telegraph* (Cambridge University Press, 2021). [↑](#endnote-ref-184)
185. Stoddard, Hortense, *Genius in the Tower: The Science and Statesmanship of Joseph Henry* (Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, 1952). [↑](#endnote-ref-185)
186. Burgh, Clara, *The Wires of Empire: Telegraphy, Territory, and Technology in Antebellum America* (Burr University, 1911). [↑](#endnote-ref-186)
187. Douglas, Reed. *From Frontier to Furnace: Industrial Development in the Western States, 1825–1868* (2001, University of Ballyburr Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-187)
188. Note that a few cities in the Upper South, St. Louis in particular, contained large white working classes which frequently coexisted with slavery which they regarded as an economic competitor. See Acrement, Anastace, *The Origins of the St. Louis Mechanics’ Uprising* (2012, University of St. Louis). [↑](#endnote-ref-188)
189. This was also a result of Louisville being on the Ohio River, which meant slavery was necessarily unstable as slaves could make their way across the river. To be sure, much of the territory just north of the Ohio was part of the “Lower North”, where juries reliably ruled accused fugitives as indeed being slaves – but if slaves travelled just beyond that, they could rely on juries to nullify the Fugitive Slave Act. For this reason, slavery in Louisville was smaller-scale relative to the norm in the state, often relegated to domestic help; there was also something of a hostage system, as many slaves in Louisville were part of families further south, and the specter of retaliation against them was a powerful incentive against escaping. See Beavers, James, *The City of the Falls: A History of Louisville, 1778 to Present* (1999, University of Louisville). [↑](#endnote-ref-189)
190. Stanton, Clara. *The Websterian Moment: Nationalism and Order in Antebellum America*. (Columbia University Press, 1988). [↑](#endnote-ref-190)
191. O’Callaghan, Judith. *The West and the Canal Revolution: Trade, Transport, and Regional Hubs in the Webster Era*. (Great Lakes Historical Society, 2015). [↑](#endnote-ref-191)
192. Douglas, Reed, *From Frontier to Furnace: Industrial Development in the Western States, 1825–1868*. (University of Ballyburr Press, 2001). [↑](#endnote-ref-192)
193. Webster, Daniel, "A Proclamation to the State of Missouri and Territory of Juniper," August 1849. From *Speeches of Daniel Webster: Vol III: 1845-1852* (1998, Library of Alexandria Publishing). [↑](#endnote-ref-193)
194. Juniper’s legalization of women’s suffrage was, beyond being lobbied by the women’s rights movement, also an effort to attract women into the territory, to alleviate the huge gender disparity created by the sudden land rush. See Forfanah, Delilah. *Gendered Liberty: Women’s Rights and the Political Economy of Reform*. (Mackintosh University Press, 1994). [↑](#endnote-ref-194)
195. Carver, Milton. “Patronage or Plunder? The Post Office and the Selling of State in the Webster Years”. Journal of Early American Institutions, Vol. 42, No. 3 (2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-195)
196. Eastlake, Henry. *Corruption and the Constitution: The Webster Presidency, 1845–1852* (Gracchi Institute, 1971). [↑](#endnote-ref-196)
197. Bellamy, Simone. “From Black Dan to the Bank Scandal: Race, Reputation, and Political Collapse”. American Historical Quarterly, Vol. 89, No. 2 (2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-197)
198. Hollis, Gerald. *A Hemisphere Divided: American Sectionalism and the New Granadine War*. (Middle Western Historical Review, 1933). [↑](#endnote-ref-198)
199. Sutherland, Christine. *Henry Clay and the Empire of Liberty*. (Smithsonian History Press, 2012). [↑](#endnote-ref-199)
200. Ferguson, D.W., *The Webster Doctrine: America, Mediation, and Empire*. (Williamsburg University Press, 1974). [↑](#endnote-ref-200)
201. While Daniel Webster, then and now, is primarily an icon of British moderates, a direct result of his time as Consul-General, his successful arbitration of the Treaty of Washington led to the British peace movement praising him as a hero; the establishment of the International Tribunal was a direct attempt to bring this sort of arbitration to the table and make it a permanent part of the international system. See Bourke, Maurice. *Towards the Abolition of War: The British Peace Movement, 1793-1940*. (Dublin Historical Studies, 2002). [↑](#endnote-ref-201)
202. Waters, Penelope. *In the Shadow of Calhoun: The Republican Party and the Burdens of Industrialization, 1835–1868*. (New Ireland Historical Press, 2006). [↑](#endnote-ref-202)
203. Library of Alexandria. *Alexandria Atlas of Elections, 10ed*. (2011, Library of Alexandria). [↑](#endnote-ref-203)
204. Russell, Henry. *Steel and Sovereignty: The Railroad Age and the Fall of the Antebellum Republic* (University of New Jersey Press, 2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-204)
205. This nickname is sometimes attributed to Frederick Bauer’s *On the Planter Ascendancy* (Cincinnati Gazette, 1859-1882), especially *Volume II: The Rise of the Robber Knights* (1864). Though it certainly played a role in popularizing the term, and though Bauer may have been influenced by his German roots in looking at the term, it was already fairly common by the time he published it. [↑](#endnote-ref-205)
206. Stein, Karl. *The Farmers’ Leagues: Reform and Rail in the Antebellum Era* (Smithsonian History Press, 1968). [↑](#endnote-ref-206)
207. Russell, Henry. *The Rise of the Corporate State, 1845-1910* (Gracchi Institute, 2018). [↑](#endnote-ref-207)
208. Golding, Tim. *The Residue of the Plantocracy: Jamaica and the Long Tyranny, 1827-1885* (2003, University of Jamaica). [↑](#endnote-ref-208)
209. Fish, Robert. *The Immense Slave Empire: The Planter Ascendancy and American Foreign Policy, 1800-1868* (2019, University of New Jersey Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-209)
210. Flaherty, Bernardo. *For a Free Hemisphere: Relations between Platina and the United States, 1850-1900* (2011, Universidad Republicana de Buenos Aires). [↑](#endnote-ref-210)
211. This is the Sectional Thesis of American history, that American society is driven by early American settlement patterns and their impact on American culture. Its antecedents may be found as far as the beginning of American settlement itself, but coming into focus during the Liberty and Union War, it came to the surface in Frederick Webster Turner’s famous Richmond Exposition thesis. The most recent book the subject is Tackahashee, Alastair, *American Nations: The Seven Nations of the United States* (Cahokia Historical Press, 2008), which models the United States as a federal union of seven separate ethnocultural nations – namely Yankeedom, of Greater New England; New Netherlands, of New York City; the Midlands, of Pennsylvania and stretching to the central Middle West; Tidewater, of the coastal Upper South; Greater Appalachia, of Appalachia and its environs; Deep South, of most of the lowest South; and the Interior, of the far west. [↑](#endnote-ref-211)
212. Schiller, Carl. *The Pennsylvania Dutch and the American Religious Patchwork, From the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-212)
213. Korchakov, Alexey. *The Teuton Seed: German, Saxon, and Hibernic Lifeways in America, 1600 to the Present* (University of New Jersey Press, 1992). [↑](#endnote-ref-213)
214. Dubreuil, Antoine. “The Flower and the Stars: The French White Diaspora in the United States, 1789-1868”. Journal of Southern Cultural History, vol. 5, no. 1. (1909). [↑](#endnote-ref-214)
215. Guiney, Patrick. *Citizen, Lord and Martyr: The Life, Times, and Trials of Edward Fitzgerald, 1763-1800* (Dublin Historical Studies, 1987). [↑](#endnote-ref-215)
216. For a book on the antislavery dimensions of the United Irish diaspora, see Smith, Fitzgerald, *The Harp and the Purple: The United Irish Diaspora and the Antislavery Movement, 1799-1868* (2011, Dublin Historical Studies). [↑](#endnote-ref-216)
217. Legal codification was not exclusively a British diaspora phenomenon –the subject came almost immediately after the revolution, and nothing came of it. The United Irish diaspora, especially William Sampson, backed legal codification, and New York did end up codifying the Civil Code in 1824. Additionally, following the Luisiana War, with Orleans following Franco-Spanish law, it adopted the Cambacérès Code. What the British diaspora did do was focus the codification movement. See Doyle, Maureen, *Codification and Empire: Law and Nation in the Anglo-Atlantic World* (Meridian Legal Studies, 2021). [↑](#endnote-ref-217)
218. The term “English Ballot” for the secret ballot – or rather an electoral process in which ballots, placed on tables in secrecy which voters would place in an envelope, to cast in a box – comes from its origins in the post-revolutionary British Isles, where it emerged as a way of stabilizing democracy. From there, it was exported across the British colonial empire, and then it slowly rose in the United States. See Boskov, Henry, *Democracy and the Red Atlantic: Anglo-American Radicalism in the Great Plateau of the Age of Revolutions, 1830-1868* (Quiner University, 2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-218)
219. In general, the South sympathized with the Guelphs and viewed the American Constitution as nothing less than the British constitution under the Guelphs adjusted for Western liberties. Come the Popular Revolution, it regarded the new revolutionary order as nothing less than a betrayal of America’s own values, and when it committed itself towards abolitionism, such feelings of aversion were only amplified. See Boskov, Henry, *Democracy and the Red Atlantic* (2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-219)
220. For a full study of the nineteenth century German diaspora, see Wimmer, Benoit, *The Flight of the Reichsadler: The German Diaspora, 1793-1880* (Éditions de la République, 2008). [↑](#endnote-ref-220)
221. Most places in which Catholics were a distinct minority saw their Catholic population rally behind the Papacy despite some scoffing and revulsion at papal infallibility, the United States among them; however, there were some Independent Catholic schisms that emerged, especially Maryland which had a well-established elite Catholic minority which scoffed at the rise of papal infallibility. See Attwood, Caleb, *Altar or Democracy? Roman Catholicism in the United States, 1789 to Present* (Dartmouth College Press, 1973). [↑](#endnote-ref-221)
222. Vitelli, Jean-Baptiste. *Mazzini or Columbus: The Italian Diaspora in America* (University of Marseilles, 2013). [↑](#endnote-ref-222)
223. Antonov, Dennis. *The Warping of Slavonia: Orthodox Christianity in the United States, 1840 to Present* (University of Shackamia Press, 1999). [↑](#endnote-ref-223)
224. Boskov, Henry. *Abolition, Democracy, and Radicalism: The International Movement against Slavery, 1830-1868*. (Quiner University, 2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-224)
225. Langford, Edwin, “Puritan Moralism, Websterism, and the Abolitionist Movement”. Journal of American Political Development 20, no. 2 (2007): 342–364. [↑](#endnote-ref-225)
226. See the four-volume work by Blanchet, Émile. *The Unification of Italy, 1796-1854* (Éditions de la République, 2011-2024), specifically *Volume IV: The March on Milan and the Fall of Rome, 1845-1854* (2024). [↑](#endnote-ref-226)
227. The international dimensions of the American abolitionist movement, linking it with figures such as Mazzini, O’Connell, and Schoelcher, are best covered in Boskov, Henry, *Abolition, Democracy, and Radicalism: The International Movement against Slavery, 1830-1868* (Quiner University, 2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-227)
228. Boskov, Henry. *Young America, Young Italy, and Transatlantic Revolution* (Quiner University, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-228)
229. A good study of the process of decoloniality in the American context is Davis, Juliette, *Decoloniality of the American Mind, 1789-1868* (2016, University of Ballyburr Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-229)
230. Much of this narrative comes from Lafitte, Jonathan, *To Transcend the Self: The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (2003, University of St. Paul). [↑](#endnote-ref-230)
231. Lafitte, Jonathan. *Towards Literary Independence: The Rise of the American Novel, 1800-1900* (1995, University of St. Paul). [↑](#endnote-ref-231)
232. For this, I am indebted to Watkins, Joseph, *The Winds of Democracy: George Bancroft and the Arm of Destiny* (1997, Cahokia Historical Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-232)
233. For a full description of Curtius’ expedition to China, see Waszkiewicz, Louis, *For All the Tea in China: How Cornelius Curtius Stole the Tea from China* (2001, Éditions Gonzalez). [↑](#endnote-ref-233)
234. Trade between the United States and China had happened even before the Revolution, with New Englander traders doing the physical trading but selling goods from across the nation. Notably, Appalachian ginseng was a hot commodity in China, along with opium and silver one of a few goods its government eagerly traded for, and its presence gave Americans a leg up in the trade to Asia. See Tanackah, Aurelius, *The Eagle to Canton: The Yankee Trade to China, 1757-1901* (2023, Yale University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-234)
235. Stoyanovich, Eliezer. *From Treason to Tempest: Tea in Antebellum America, 1844-1868* (2013, Ogden University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-235)
236. A full analysis of the results of the Qing transition to Bai, with all its chaotic dimensions, may be best seen in Mingue, Racine, *The Nadir of the Dragon: China, 1800-1901* (1984, Université républicaine de Nouvelle-Hollande). [↑](#endnote-ref-236)
237. Lufton, Abram. *The Island and the World: The United States and Foreign Trade, 1845-1911* (1993, Transylvania University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-237)
238. This narrative comes from Manigault, Azucena, *The Leonardo of the Ascendancy: The Life and Times of Samuel F.B. Morse, 1791-1871* (1981, Republican University of Monterrey Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-238)
239. Burroughs, Frank & Scrivener, Lawrence. *The Babylon of the West: New York City to 1868* (1994, Burr University). [↑](#endnote-ref-239)
240. Lieven, Anthony. *The Revolution of the Disc: The Striaphone, 1846-1900* (2004, University of Shackamia Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-240)
241. Indeed, one of the most celebrated striaphone recordings done by the Morse Striaphone Company is of Daniel Webster, reciting the famed last sentence of his Second Reply to Calhoun. Morse despised Webster and hoped his presidency would fail, but he wanted the money and gave Webster a cut of it. Though the master recording mould was destroyed during the Liberty and Union War, nevertheless surviving copies have long since been numerized and reproduced for general use. See Osterberg, David, “Early Striaphone Recordings in the Library of Alexandria Collection, 1846-1900”. Journal for the Library of Alexandria, Music, vol 19, no. 10 (1982). [↑](#endnote-ref-241)
242. Though Morse experimented with early striatapes to store more, his experiments were largely unsuccessful as he was unable to find a material both flexible and stable for enough to engrave. It would take decades to achieve this. See Stern, Casimir, *The Winds of Progress: Technology in the Long Nineteenth Century, 1789-1892* (2019, Éditions Gonzalez). [↑](#endnote-ref-242)
243. Indeed, over the course of the 1860s, compressed-air striaphones replaced much of the role traditionally held by the town crier, their lower fidelity being overcome by their convenience. See Lieven, *The Revolution of the Disc* (2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-243)
244. Schwab, Frederick. *The Holy Wire: The Electric Telegraph in American History, 1847-2000* (2008, Quiner University). [↑](#endnote-ref-244)
245. Additionally, the National Bank was one of only a few banks to exist in more than one state and certainly the only one to be in every state. The average American bank was, and remains, a small-scale institution in only a single state or metropolitan area. Though several New York banks tried to establish wire services of their own, for the most part banks instead wired them through the National Bank infrastructure. See Wainwright, Samuel, *A Bank for the Nation: The Second Bank of the United States, 1825–1868* (1977, Macror Publishing). [↑](#endnote-ref-245)
246. Porterfield, Isaac, *The Typegraphed Municipality: Private Telegraphy in the Antebellum Era*. (2014, Library of Alexandria Publishing). [↑](#endnote-ref-246)
247. The France-British Isles semaphore was briefly retired in 1859, but it was restored after the submarine cable failed. It was only retired after the cross-channel cable was secure. Additionally, with this semaphore being iconic, it was reopened in 1944 for tourism purposes; messages are today still transmitted, for the amusement of tourists. See Johansdottir, Kirsten, *Submarine Cables in the Light of History, 1853-1937* (2003, University of Laurentia Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-247)
248. Additionally, not long afterwards, the Dutch discovered that the gutta-percha tree could be used to create a rubber very much like that from the balata tree, which inspired a scramble for the East Indies as European powers rushed for land to grow gutta-percha trees. See von Hertingshausen, Wilhelm Tell, *The Gutta-Percha Rush: The European Conquest of the Malay Archipelago, 1854-1900* (2012, Kaiserliche Universität zu Frankfurt am Main). [↑](#endnote-ref-248)
249. This also forced widespread revisions to theories of electricity that percolated in this era; in particular, this drove the effort to codify and establish the four Fundamental Laws of Electrodynamics, to improve transmission rates. See von Brösigke, Hermann, *The Euclid of Dresden: The Life and Times of Karl Anton Schrader, 1865-1907* (1997, University of Jena). [↑](#endnote-ref-249)
250. Russia in particular had a large incentive to construct a telegraph line across Siberia, to serve as a prelude to building a railroad which would allow it to send settlers to not only Siberia, but also the Qing remnant in what were traditionally Mongolian and Manchu areas. The work of surveying the land would be crucial in the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad in the 1860s and 70s, which in turn allowed the Russian government to send settlers to its eastern Pacific frontier – setting the stage for the Russo Chinese War. See Shemolov, Hsiu-ying, *The Iron Despotism: The Trans-Siberian Railroad and the Path to the War of Reunification* (2011, White Deer Grotto Academy Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-250)
251. The mythology of the Iceclipper Express is much too complex to get into here – but it remains a part of the lore of both the American West and the Russian East, before being crushed by the all-crushing power of modernity. See Lawson, Esther, *The Most Perilous Run: The Iceclipper Express and its Place in World History* (1998, Press of the National Academy of New Canaan). [↑](#endnote-ref-251)
252. The line from Vladivostok to Mednovtsy consisted of first, a cable from Vladivostok to Shikarsk (today Shikarusuku), then a cable from Shikarsk to Petropavlovsk, then finally a cable from Petropavlovsk to Mednovtsy. This segmentization was a direct response to the Leyden jar effect, seeking to minimize it through overland stops on the way. See Johansdottir, *Submarine Cables* (2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-252)
253. Indeed, this was such that, during the Russo-Chinese War, and in the period of instability that followed, there were no interruptions in telegraph service; Chinese, Japanese, and White Russian remnant authorities had no desire to put a pause on the flow of telegraph messages over the Bering Strait. See Shagenov, Mario, *The Fall of the Russian Pacific: The Russo-Chinese War and its Aftermath, 1893-1915* (2014, Republican University of San Francisco). [↑](#endnote-ref-253)
254. This era also saw standardization within Europe. The end of the Danish War of Succession in 1854, along with the fall of the Dundonald government in 1857, created a brief window of internationalism that came in the form of peace congresses, the formation of an International Tribunal, and several Telegraph Conventions that set new standards for the rising technology including Gauss code, were implemented across Europe. America’s transition to Gauss code represented its acceptance of the International Telegraph Convention. See Boskov, Henry, *The Rise of Internationalism: Richard Cobden, John Morley and the Road to the International Forum* (2024, Quiner University). [↑](#endnote-ref-254)
255. Gauss code was invented by the famed German mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss in 1821 for his solar telegraph, to encode letters in the form of short and long flashes of sunlight reflected by a mirror. The popularization of the heliograph on military frontiers made this internationally-known, and though electric telegraph systems used several different codes, the use of Gauss code on heliographs made it a natural choice for standardization. See Wiercinska, Karl, *The Telegraph in Central European History* (2001, Königliche Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin). [↑](#endnote-ref-255)
256. Blanchet, Bess. *Too Large for an Insane Asylum: Antebellum South Carolina and Her Society*. (2013, Library of Alexandria Publishing). [↑](#endnote-ref-256)
257. Library of Alexandria. *Alexandria Atlas of Elections, 10ed*. (2011, Library of Alexandria). [↑](#endnote-ref-257)
258. Most of this narrative comes from Golding, Tim, *The Grey Man: The Life and Times of William Walker* (2017, University of Jamaica). [↑](#endnote-ref-258)
259. Originally admitted as West Florida; when re-admitted into the Union in 1884, amalgamated with East Florida and subsequently renamed. [↑](#endnote-ref-259)
260. Estimated by the Library of Alexandria; due to the Liberty and Union War, no census was held. [↑](#endnote-ref-260)