

## II.

### Indian Removal Act

## Tragedy for Native Americans

Jackson took a firm stand on another key issue. It affected the fate of Native Americans. Since the early colonial era, white settlers had forced Native Americans off their land. Indian leaders like Pontiac and Tecumseh had failed to stop the invasion of white settlers.

**Indian Nations in the Southeast** The Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, and Seminole nations lived in the Southeast. Many hoped to live in peace with their white neighbors. Their fertile land, however, was ideal for growing cotton. Settlers wanted the land for themselves.

Like earlier Presidents, Jackson sided with the white settlers. At his urging, the government set aside lands beyond the Mississippi River and then persuaded or forced Indians to move there. Jackson believed that this policy would provide land for white settlers as well as protect Native Americans from destruction.

Few Indians wanted to move. Some, like the Cherokee nation, had adapted customs in order to preserve their way of life. They created a legal system and government that blended European and Cherokee traditions.

In 1821, Sequoyah (seh kwoy uh) created a written alphabet for his people. Using Sequoyah's letters, Cherokee children learned to read and write. The Cherokees also published a newspaper.

**A Legal Battle** Many states wanted to prevent tribes like the Cherokees from forming their own independent governments within state boundaries. In 1828, Georgia passed a law declaring that all Indians in the state must be governed by state laws. Mississippi and Alabama took similar action. The Cherokees went to court, arguing that treaties with the federal government protected their rights and property. The case reached the Supreme Court. In the 1832 case of *Worcester v. Georgia*, Chief Justice John Marshall declared Georgia's action unconstitutional and stated that Native Americans were protected by the United States Constitution.

President Jackson refused to enforce the Court's decision. In the Nullification Crisis, he had defended federal power. In the Cherokee case, he backed states' rights. The federal government, he said, could not stop Georgia from extending its authority over Cherokee lands.

**Forced to Leave** Jackson supporters in Congress pushed through the Indian Removal Act in 1830. It forced many Native Americans to move west of the Mississippi. Whites did not mind turning land over to Indians that they thought was a vast desert. In 1838, the United States Army drove more than 15,000 Cherokees westward. The Cherokees trekked hundreds of miles over a period of several months. Thousands perished, mostly children and the elderly. The Cherokees' long, sorrowful journey west became known as the Trail of Tears.

III,  
States Rights/  
Nullification  
Crisis

## A Crisis Over Tariffs

In 1828, Congress passed the highest tariff in the history of the nation. Southerners called it the **Tariff of Abominations**. An abomination is something that is hated.

Just like earlier tariffs, the new law, which was passed before Andrew Jackson's first term, protected manufacturers from foreign competition. Most manufacturers lived in the North. Southern planters, however, were hurt by the tariff. They sold their cotton in Europe and bought European goods in return. The high tariff meant that southerners had to pay more for these imports. Many people thought the tariff was unconstitutional.

**Calhoun Versus Webster** A leader in the South's fight against the tariff was Vice President John C. Calhoun. Calhoun claimed that a state had the right to nullify, or cancel, a federal law that it considered to be unconstitutional. This idea is called **nullification**. Calhoun supported states' rights. He argued that the states had final authority because they had created the national government.

Daniel Webster disagreed. He made a speech in 1830 before the Senate attacking the idea of nullification. The Constitution, he said, united the American people, not just the states. If states had the right to nullify federal laws, the nation would fall apart. Because Calhoun strongly disagreed with Jackson, he resigned from the office of Vice President. He was then elected as a senator from South Carolina. The debate over states' rights would continue for years.

**The Nullification Crisis** Anger against the tariff increased in the South. Congress passed a new tariff in 1832 that lowered the rate slightly. South Carolina was not satisfied. It passed the **Nullification Act**, declaring the new tariff illegal. It also threatened to secede, or withdraw, from the Union if challenged. Jackson was furious. He knew that nullification could lead to civil war.

Publicly, the President supported a lower compromise tariff proposed by Henry Clay. Jackson also asked Congress to pass the Force Bill. It allowed him to use the army, if necessary, to enforce the tariff.

Faced with Jackson's firm stand, no other state chose to support South Carolina. Calhoun supported the compromise tariff that Clay had proposed. South Carolina repealed the Nullification Act, and the Nullification Crisis passed. However, tensions between the North and South would increase in the years ahead.

IV.  
National  
Bank  
Controversy

## The Bank War

President Jackson waged war on the Bank of the United States. Like many westerners, he thought that it was too powerful.

**Mr. Biddle's Bank** The Bank of the United States had been a subject of dispute since its early days. The Bank had great power because it controlled loans made by state banks. When the Bank's directors thought that state banks were making too many loans, they limited the amount these banks could lend. The cutbacks angered farmers and merchants who borrowed money to buy land or finance new businesses.

President Jackson and other leading Democrats saw the Bank as undemocratic. Although Congress created the Bank, it was run by private bankers. Jackson condemned these men as agents of "special privilege" who grew rich with public funds. He especially disliked Nicholas Biddle, president of the Bank since 1823.

Biddle came from a wealthy Philadelphia family. He was well qualified to run the bank, but he was also arrogant and vain. Jackson felt that Biddle used the Bank to benefit only the rich. He also resented Biddle's influence over certain members of Congress.

**The War Begins** Biddle and other Whigs worried that the President might try to destroy the Bank. Two Whig senators, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, thought of a way to save the Bank and defeat Jackson at the same time.

The Bank's charter was not due for renewal by Congress until 1836. However, Clay and Webster wanted to make the Bank an issue in the 1832 election. They persuaded Biddle to apply for renewal early.

The Whigs believed that most Americans supported the Bank of the United States. If Jackson vetoed the bill to renew the charter, they felt sure that he would anger voters and lose the election. Clay pushed the charter renewal bill through Congress in 1832. Jackson was sick in bed when he heard that Congress had renewed the Bank's charter. "The Bank . . . is trying to kill me," Jackson fumed, "but I will kill it!"

**Jackson's Veto** In an angry message to Congress, Jackson vetoed the Bank bill. He gave two reasons for his veto. First, he declared the Bank unconstitutional, even though the Supreme Court had ruled in the Bank's favor. Jackson believed that only states, not the federal government, had the right to charter banks. Second, Jackson felt that the Bank helped aristocrats at the expense of the common people.

As planned, the Whigs made the Bank a major issue in the election of 1832. They chose Henry Clay as their candidate to run against Andrew Jackson. The counted votes showed that Jackson had won a stunning election victory. The common people had surprised the Whigs by supporting Jackson and rejecting the Bank of the United States.

**The Bank Closes** Without a new charter, the Bank would have to close in 1836. Jackson refused to wait. He ordered Secretary of the Treasury Roger Taney to stop putting government money in the Bank. Instead, Taney deposited federal money in state banks. They became known as pet banks because Taney and his friends controlled many of them. The loss of federal money crippled the Bank of the United States. Its closing in 1836 contributed to an economic crisis.

## Martin Van Buren and Hard Times

Andrew Jackson left office after two terms. Americans then elected Martin Van Buren President. Van Buren had served as Vice President during Jackson's second term.

Although Martin Van Buren did not have the popular appeal of Andrew Jackson, he was also a self-made man. As a politician he was clever and intelligent. As President, however, Van Buren needed more than sharp political instincts.

**The Panic of 1837** Two months after taking office, Van Buren faced the worst economic crisis the nation had known. It was called the Panic of 1837. The panic had several causes. During the 1830s, the government sold millions of acres of public land in the West. Farmers bought some land, but speculators bought even more, hoping to earn huge profits. To pay for the land, speculators borrowed money from state banks. After the Bank of the United States closed, the state banks could lend money without limit. To meet the demand for loans, state banks printed more and more paper money. Often, the paper money was not backed by gold or silver.

Before leaving office, Jackson was alarmed at the wild speculation in land. To slow it down, he ordered that anyone buying public land had to pay for it with gold or silver. Speculators and others rushed to state banks to exchange their paper money for gold and silver. Many banks did not have enough gold and silver and were forced to close.

**Economic Depression** The panic worsened when cotton prices went down because of a surplus. Cotton planters often borrowed money, which they repaid when they sold their crop. Low cotton prices meant that planters could not repay their loans. As a result, more banks failed.

The nation plunged into a deep economic depression, a period when business declines and many people lose their jobs. The depression lasted three years. In the worst days, 90 percent of the nation's factories were closed. Thousands of people were out of work. In some cities, hungry crowds broke into warehouses and stole food.

Many Americans blamed President Van Buren and his policies for the economic depression. Van Buren believed in laissez faire—the idea that government should play as small a role as possible in the nation's economic affairs. His limited actions did little to help the economy. He tried to set up a more stable banking system. He also cut back on government expenses. Still, the depression wore on and criticism of Van Buren increased.