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

One American’s Story

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

A PERSONAL VOICE JOHN ADAMS

“[Adams] said ‘I will not.’ . . .
‘What can be your reasons?’
‘Reason first—You are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second—I am obnoxious, suspected, and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third—You can write ten times better than I can.’
‘Well,’ said Jefferson, ‘if you are decided, I will do as well as I can.’”
—quoted in John Adams: A Biography In His Own Words

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

Expanding Democracy Changes Politics

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

TENSION BETWEEN ADAMS AND JACKSON In the election of 1824, Andrew Jackson won the popular vote but lacked the majority of electoral votes. The House of Representatives had to decide the outcome, since no candidate had received a majority of the votes of the electoral college.
Because of his power in the House, Henry Clay could swing the election either way. Clay disliked Jackson personally and mistrusted his lack of political experience. “I cannot believe,” Clay commented, “that killing twenty-five hundred Englishmen at New Orleans qualifies [him] for the various difficult and complicated duties of [the presidency].” Adams, on the other hand, agreed with Clay’s American System. In the end, Adams was elected president by a majority of the states represented in the House.

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

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

**Jackson’s New Presidential Style**

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

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

**A PERSONAL VOICE  MRS. SAMUEL HARRISON SMITH**

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

—from a letter dated March 1829

**JACKSON’S SPOILS SYSTEM**

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

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

**Removal of Native Americans**

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

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

**INDIAN REMOVAL ACT OF 1830**

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

Congress passed the **Indian Removal Act** in 1830. Under this law, the federal government provided funds to negotiate treaties that would force the Native Americans to
Sequoyah, or George Guess, devised the Cherokee alphabet in 1821 to help preserve the culture of the Cherokee Nation against the growing threat of American expansion.

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

By 1840, about 16,000 Cherokee had been forcibly moved 800 miles west on routes afterward called the Trail of Tears. Because of the suffering they endured from cold, hunger, and diseases such as tuberculosis, smallpox, and cholera, one-fourth died.

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

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

By 1833, about 14,000 Chickasaw had relocated along the Red River under the terms of the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

Balancing Nationalism and Sectionalism 227

**GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER**

1. **Place** Where were most of the tribes moved?
2. **Movement** What do you think were the long-term effects of this removal on Native Americans?
move west. About 90 treaties were signed. For Jackson, the removal policy was “not only liberal, but generous,” but his arguments were mainly based on the rights of states to govern within their own boundaries.

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

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

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

Cherokee leader John Ross still tried to fight the state in the courts, but other Cherokee began to promote relocation. In 1835, federal agents declared the
minority who favored relocation the true representatives of the Cherokee Nation and promptly had them sign the Treaty of New Echota. This treaty gave the last eight million acres of Cherokee land to the federal government in exchange for approximately $5 million and land “west of the Mississippi.” The signing of this treaty marked the beginning of the Cherokee exodus. However, when by 1838 nearly 20,000 Cherokee still remained in the East, President Martin Van Buren (Jackson’s successor) ordered their forced removal. U.S. Army troops under the command of General Winfield Scott rounded up the Cherokee and drove them into camps to await the journey.

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

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

A PERSONAL VOICE TRAIL OF TEARS SURVIVOR

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

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

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NATIVE AMERICAN LANDS

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

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

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

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

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

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Effects

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

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

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