

JACKSONIAN DEMOCRACY

By

CHARLES GRIER SELLERS, JR.

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JACKSONIAN DEMOCRACY

By Charles Grier Sellers, Jr.

Few phases of American history should appeal more strongly to both teachers and students than Jacksonian Democracy. The hatchet-faced old Indian fighter and military hero who dominated the American scene in the 1830's was one of the most colorful figures in our history. But more important, the 1830's saw the triumph in American politics of that democracy which has remained pre-eminently the distinguishing feature of our society. Today we take democracy so much for granted that we might have a hard time explaining precisely what it is, how it originated, or under what conditions it can flourish. What, then, could be more valuable to the student of American history than a real understanding of the period when democracy finally emerged as a dominant influence?

No sooner do we dig beneath the surface of Jacksonian Democracy, however, than we discover that its characteristics are elusive and that historians disagree widely about it. Old Hickory's masterful personality and aggressive policies, we find, made him one of the most controversial figures ever to occupy the White House. To his contemporaries Andrew Jackson was either the wise, patriotic Old Hero, or a rash, despotic King Andrew, while later historians have likewise found it difficult to achieve neutrality or detachment about him. Yet even without Jackson's personality, the democratic triumph he symbolized would still be controversial. For as long as democracy remains pervasive in American life, its historical characteristics will remain elusive, and historians will continue to argue about the period and symbol of its triumph.

The past, after all, interests us not so much for its own sake as for its relevance to our present concerns. It follows from this that the historian's approach to any particular past must inevitably be influenced by the forces and problems that are of greatest concern in his own day. Because historians writing in different periods have different "frames of reference," each generation sees the events of the past in a somewhat different light. Similarly two

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historians writing at the same time may see the same segment of the past differently because they make different assumptions about the nature of man and society or have different values and loyalties. It is easy to understand why German historians take a different view of Bismarck from French historians; and we should be no more surprised to find, for example, that American historians who are enthusiastic about democracy's possibilities describe the democratic upsurge of Jackson's day in rather more favorable terms than other historians who are more concerned with democracy's shortcomings.

In recent years historians have come to realize how greatly their evaluations of the past are influenced by their frames of reference, and this awareness has made them better able to recognize and avoid the more obvious distortions that result from the various ways of looking at things which they inevitably carry to the past. They have come to realize, too, that frames of reference may prove fruitful if critically employed, that they may furnish hypotheses and reveal features of the past which might otherwise be overlooked. Thus in order to understand the current state of Jacksonian historiography, it is essential to understand the various frames of reference that various groups of historians have brought to this aspect of the American past and the various "schools of interpretation" that have resulted.

While American democracy emerged victorious on the plane of political ideology around 1776 or 1800, and on the plane of political practice around 1828, it did not achieve respectability in American historical writing until about 1900. From the Jacksonian era to the end of the nineteenth century historians of Jacksonian Democracy echoed the views of the Whig politicians who had opposed Old Hickory so vehemently in his own day. This "Whig" school of Jacksonian historiography included the first two important Jackson biographers, James Parton and William Graham Sumner; the authors of the first two detailed American histories extending to the Civil War, Hermann von Holst and James Schouler; and M. I. Ostrogorski, who wrote an enormously influential study of *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*.

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All these authors were extremely critical of Jackson personally. Sumner thought him a "barbarian" who "acted from spite, pique, instinct, prejudice or emotion;" von Holst was appalled at the "ingenuous coarseness" of this "arrogant general;" Schouler flatly declared him "illiterate;" Ostrogorski expatiated on his "autocratic policy;" and Parton, despite a grudging admiration for some aspects of Old Hickory's character, lamented "the elevation to the presidency of a man whose ignorance, whose good intentions, and whose passions combined to render him, of all conceivable human beings, the most unfit for the office."

Yet it was not fundamentally Jackson's personality that turned the Whig historians against him, nor was it the general policies he pursued as president. These writers were all liberals of the nineteenth-century stripe and actually approved the laissez-faire tendencies of most of the Jacksonian measures. How, then, could Parton say that "notwithstanding the good done by General Jackson during his presidency, his election to power was a mistake"? How could von Holst speak of "the frightful influence . . . which he exercised during the eight years of his presidency"?

A clue may be found in the horror with which the Whig historians uniformly treated Jackson's policy of removing his political enemies from federal office to make way for his friends. Indeed, for these writers, the institution of the spoils system on a large scale became almost the distinguishing feature of Jackson's administration. "If all his other public acts had been perfectly wise and right," said Parton, "this single feature of his administration would suffice to render it deplorable."

Yet the spoils system was only a symptom of the real disease—the new system of democratic politics that both Jackson and the spoils system symbolized. "Popular sovereignty," said von Holst, would be "a dreadful condition of things;" while Schouler lamented the fact that, all too often, "the great body of our American democracy . . . slips back unconsciously into the mire whence the poverty-stricken millions emerge and falls too easy a prey to vice and ignorance." Ostrogorski got to the heart of the Whig historians' case against Jacksonian Democracy when he complained that it "excluded men of sterling worth and high principles from public life." Von Holst similarly argued that since Jackson "the people

have begun to exchange the leadership of a small number of statesmen and politicians of a higher order for the rule of an ever increasing crowd of politicians of high and low degree, down even to the pothouse politician and the common thief, in the protecting mantle of demagogism." And as a result, said Parson, "the public affairs of the United States have been conducted with a stupidity which has excited the wonder of mankind."

It is important to remember that the Whig historians all came from eastern or European middle-class or upper-middle-class families with traditions of education, social prestige, and public service, the kind of families that had claimed social and political leadership as their natural right during the early days of the republic. By the time these men began to write the history of Jacksonian Democracy, however, their kind had been largely ousted from political leadership by the professional politicians and new-style parties that had arisen as the institutional embodiments of the Jacksonian democratic revolution. At the same time, this older elite was losing its superior social status to the vulgar *nouveaux riches* spawned by the Industrial Revolution. The Whig historians were writing, moreover, in the era of Grantism in national politics and Tweedism in local politics, when the least lovely aspects of both democracy and plutocracy were most conspicuous.

The Whig school of Jacksonian historiography can be viewed, in fact, as one phase of the significant movement in late nineteenth-century America that historians have called "patrician liberalism," a movement that sought to restore the pristine purity of American politics by eliminating the spoils system, destroying the unholy alliance between government and business, breaking the power of the political bosses, and placing gentlemen in public office. What could be more natural, then, than for the Whig historians to find in Jacksonian Democracy the origin of the features of American life they most deplored? These scholars displayed, in short, the class bias of an elite displaced from leadership by a vulgar and frequently corrupt democracy.

By the 1890's patrician liberalism was giving way to the broader movement of Progressivism, which was soon to effect a profound shift in the mood and direction of American life. A corresponding shift in the mood of American historiography was signalled

small number of states—the rule of an ever-increasingly low degree, down even to the level of a thief, in the protection of the public and Parton, “the public was infected with a stupidity of its own.”

High historians all came from upper-middle-class families, and public service, moral and political leadership were the days of the republic. The history of Jacksonianism was largely ousted from the hands of politicians and new-style moral embodiments of the same time, this older and more vulgar *nouveaux* Whig historians. The Whig historians’ liberalism in national politics was at least lovely aspects of conspicuous.

History can be viewed, as it was in late nineteenth-century “patrician liberalism,” as the purity of American life, destroying the unholy alliance, breaking the power of the aristocracy in public office. What high historians to find in the features of American life, indeed, in short, the class was led by a vulgar and fre-

ing way to the broader public in order to effect a profound change in life. A correspondence in history was signalled

in 1893 when the young Wisconsin historian, Frederick Jackson Turner, read his famous paper emphasizing “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” Yet Turner’s real significance lies less in his controversial frontier thesis than in his influence as leader of the massive shift of American historiography to a pro-democratic orientation. For a whole new generation of young historians—men like Woodrow Wilson, John Spencer Bassett, William E. Dodd, Charles A. Beard, and Vernon L. Parrington—stood ready to echo Turner’s vibrantly sympathetic description of democracy emerging, “stark and strong and full of life, from the American forest.”

Two facts should be especially noted about these young scholars who were to transform the writing of American history. One is that nearly all of them came from rural or small-town backgrounds in the West or South, and this in itself brought a new point of view into a field previously dominated by the urban Northeast. The second significant fact is that though they came from substantial middle-class families, they lived in a period when middle-class Americans, and particularly middle-class intellectuals, were being swept into the current of reform. The Progressive campaign to preserve the traditional values of American society in the threatening new context of industrialism and urbanism was made possible by a revival of faith in the possibilities of the Whole People, and the Progressives characteristically devoted much of their energy to making the democratic process work more effectively. Small wonder, then, that the young scholars of the Progressive era responded enthusiastically to Turner’s reaffirmation of the long tarnished democratic faith of an earlier day.

Andrew Jackson and his democracy were naturally among the leading beneficiaries of the new pro-democratic orientation of American historiography. Out of the “frontier democratic society” of the West, said Turner, “where the freedom and abundance of land in the great Valley opened a refuge to the oppressed in all regions, came the Jacksonian democracy which governed the nation after the downfall of the party of John Quincy Adams.” This Jacksonian Democracy was “strong in the faith of the intrinsic excellence of the common man, in his right to make his own place in the world, and in his capacity to share in government.”

Turner's contemporaries quickly took up the refrain. William E. Dodd pictured the "brave and generous" Old Hickory as "a second Jefferson," whose mission it was "to arouse the people to a sense of their responsibility;" while John Spencer Bassett published in 1911 a distinguished biography describing Jackson as "a man who was great, spite of many limitations." Though Jackson had ample faults, said Bassett, "all lose some of their infelicity in the face of his brave, frank, masterly leadership of the democratic movement which then established itself in our life." The new orientation was pushed furthest perhaps by another young scholar, Carl Russell Fish, who almost made a Jacksonian virtue of the spoils system. "The spoils system paid for the party organization . . . which established a 'government of the people' in the United States in 1829," he declared, and in so doing, "it served a purpose that could probably have been performed in no other way, and that was fully worth the cost."

The pro-democratic orientation that transformed Jacksonian historiography at the turn of the century has continued to be the dominant influence on writings about the Jackson period ever since. It permeated Marquis James's impressive Jackson biography of the 1930's as well as the extensive studies of the Jackson period by Claude Bowers in the 1920's and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in the 1940's. More significantly it has controlled the interpretations of Jacksonian Democracy to be found in nearly all general works on American history written in the twentieth century, from the widely influential accounts by Vernon L. Parrington and Charles and Mary Beard to the most obscure textbooks. Political scientists have joined in the chorus of approval, with such writers as John W. Burgess, Wilfred E. Binkley, and Leonard D. White praising Jackson and his followers for strengthening the presidency and developing the new-style political party as an indispensable democratic institution.

Despite this widespread acceptance, the twentieth-century democratic school of Jacksonian historiography has attained neither the unchallenged hegemony nor the unity of outlook that the Whig school enjoyed in the nineteenth century. For one thing, the Whig interpretation refused to play dead. Most embarrassing to the democratic view of Andrew Jackson has been the interpretation of Old

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Hickory's role in early Tennessee politics advanced by Thomas P. Abernethy. Abernethy presents Jackson as a frontier nabob who took sides against the democratic movement in his own state; actually this leader of the democratic movement in national politics was a demagogic aristocrat, says Abernethy, an "opportunist" for whom "Democracy was good talk with which to win the favor of the people and thereby accomplish ulterior objectives."

The Whig interpretation has received its fullest modern application to the Jackson movement as a whole, however, in Charles M. Wiltse's distinguished biography of Calhoun. Wiltse sees the reality of Jacksonian politics as a selfish struggle for office and federal subsidy. Jackson was in many respects "a frontier bully," and "in a growing, expanding, gambling, ebullient country like the United States of the 1820's and 30's, the frontier bully was a national hero."

Yet the democratic historians have suffered less from these dissenting views than from their own inability to make clear just what they mean by "democracy." The men of Turner's generation who originated democratic historiography conceived of the democratic process in a characteristically middle-class, Progressive way. Hating monopoly and plutocracy, they rejoiced in the egalitarian, anti-monopolistic tradition that stemmed from Jacksonian Democracy. But hating the class consciousness of Populism and Socialism as much or more, they shrunk from any interpretation of the American past that smacked of social conflict. Their enthusiasm for democracy rested on an essentially romantic faith in the Whole People, whom they saw as an undifferentiated mass, virtually free of inequalities and conflicts. Democracy, in the view which informed both Progressive politics and Turnerean historiography, was the process by which the Whole People's fundamentally virtuous impulses were translated into public policy.

Thus Turner was careful to assert that "classes and inequalities of fortune played little part" in frontier democracy. It "did not demand equality of condition," he insisted, for it believed that the "self-made man had a right to his success in the free competition which western life afforded." Mere inequality of condition was a negligible consideration to Turner alongside the mere spiritual brand of equality that frontier process had guaranteed. "Mere success in the game . . . gave to the successful ones no right to look

down upon their neighbors," he insisted, and he clung passionately to his conviction that the abundance of free land made it impossible for "the successful ones . . . to harden their triumphs into the rule of a privileged class."

However plausible this view of democracy may have been for the early nineteenth century, the free land was undeniably gone by Turner's day, while inequality of condition had become so gross that its danger to democracy could no longer be ignored. The successful ones now threatened either to harden their triumphs into the rule of a privileged class, or to provoke a bitter class struggle, and both alternatives horrified middle-class Americans.

It was this apparent crisis of democracy that produced both the Progressive movement and the democratic school of historians. Turner mirrored one mood of Progressivism in his desperate efforts to believe that there was no crisis, that the great monopolists themselves were products of the democratic West and "still profess its principles." But the more typical response of both Progressivism and democratic historiography was to rely upon a revival of democracy, a movement of the Whole People. The democratic historians were in effect supplying a historical tradition for Progressivism when they described the democratic upheaval of Jackson's day as an amorphous force, arising with no specific cause or particular program from the creative western forest, and spreading over the East by contagion.

The democratic historians' aversion to social conflict was a major factor in causing them to supplement the frontier thesis with a heavy emphasis on sectionalism. Conflict was simply too obvious in the Jackson era to be ignored, but Turner and his followers muted the discordant note of class struggle by transposing it into conflict among distinct geographical sections. Thus, alongside the Jacksonian rise of the Whole People, we find in their writings a three-way contest among the democratic West (epitomized by Jackson), the capitalist Northeast, and the planting and increasingly aristocratic South. Beard and Parrington, to be sure, made social conflict central to their interpretations. But even their dramas of struggle against privileged minorities were grounded on the same Rousseauistic concept of the Whole People as the conventional

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democratic interpretation; and more often than not they, too, fell back upon oversimplified sectional categories.

This vague conception of democracy remained prevalent in Jacksonian historiography until 1945, when Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., published *The Age of Jackson*. Schlesinger's thesis was that "more can be understood about Jacksonian democracy if it is regarded as a problem not of sections but of classes." Defining the central theme of American political history to be the efforts "on the part of the other sections of society to restrain the power of the business community," he interpreted Jacksonian Democracy as a movement "to control the power of the capitalistic groups, mainly Eastern, for the benefit of noncapitalist groups, farmers and laboring men, East, West, and South." Schlesinger traced the movement to the economic hardships of the 1820's, and he saw the East and the workingmen as playing the crucial roles in the Jacksonian coalition.

Schlesinger not only provided a sharper definition of the democratic movement and a clearer explanation of its origins, but he stirred up a warm debate, which prompted other historians to offer alternative definitions. The attack on *The Age of Jackson* was launched by a scholarly official of the New York Federal Reserve Board, Bray Hammond, who insisted that the real animus of Jacksonian Democracy was not against business but against the exclusion of new entrepreneurs from business opportunities.

Hammond was quickly joined in his criticism of Schlesinger by a group of historians at Columbia University who argued that Jackson was anti-labor rather than pro-labor and that workingmen opposed him at the polls more often than they supported him. These historians showed a considerable affinity for the Whig view of Jackson personally, especially in the version advanced by Thomas P. Abernethy. Their own interpretation of the Jackson movement was expressed best, perhaps, by Richard Hofstadter, who described it as "a phase in the expansion of liberated capitalism," and as "closely linked to the ambitions of the small capitalist."

Thus the recent historiography of Jacksonian Democracy has been dominated by the debate over Schlesinger's "class-conflict" or "labor" thesis on the one hand, and the "entrepreneurial" thesis put forward by Schlesinger's critics on the other. Schlesinger and

his supporters picture the democratic impulse as essentially a movement of protest against the unfair privileges claimed by an exploitative business elite, while the Columbia historians defend the diametrically opposed view that the democratic movement was itself strongly capitalist in spirit and objected only to any limitation on free entry into the game of capitalist exploitation.

Yet closer examination reveals some significant affinities between the two interpretations. For one thing, both were first worked out fully by the same man, the socialist publicist Algie Simons. In various articles and tracts around 1905 and then in a book published in 1920, Simons argued that the labor movement was not only an important part of the democratic upsurge of Jackson's day, but "measured by the impress it left, was the most important event in American history." At the same time Simons was too impressed by Turner's thesis to deny the frontier an important role in Jacksonian Democracy. But the frontier that he described was "distinctly individualistic and small capitalistic in its instincts." Jacksonian Democracy, in Simons' view, was "neither frontier, nor wageworking, or even purely capitalist in its mental make-up." It was the "democracy of expectant capitalists."

The striking fact that both the labor thesis and the entrepreneurial thesis found their first full development in Simons invites a further examination of their affinities. Both, it is clear, are indebted to Marxian analysis and represent a "realistic" approach to history, the Columbia historians maintaining a detached, analytical attitude, which occasionally betrays an implicit distaste for the middle-class norms of American democratic capitalism, and Schlesinger viewing democratic liberalism as being perennially sustained and advanced by anti-business elements, class-conscious and organized for social and political struggle. This "realism" explains the hostility of both to the diffuse Turnerean concept of democracy, but it does not account for the fact that writers of both schools are consistently critical of agrarian elements and seek to de-emphasize their importance in our history. These latter facts, when correlated with the personal origins and sympathies of the writers involved, suggest the belated emergence of the city as a major influence on American historical scholarship.

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the profound influence of frames of reference. Indeed the historians of Jacksonian Democracy might best be classified by the social and intellectual environments that seem so largely to control their interpretations. In place of the simple categories of a Whig school and a democratic school, we might distinguish three main groups.

First, a "patrician" school of historians, drawn from eastern middle or upper-middle-class backgrounds, dominated Jacksonian historiography until the end of the nineteenth century. Resenting the vulgar democracy and the equally vulgar plutocracy that were displacing their kind of social and intellectual elite from leadership, these men spoke for the conservative, semiaristocratic, Mugwumpish liberalism of the Gilded Age.

Around 1900 the patrician historians were displaced by an "agrarian democratic" school, drawn from western and southern middle-class backgrounds and reflecting the revival of old-fashioned democratic dogmas in the Progressive era. Fearful of both class antagonism and monopoly capitalism, these men effected a reorientation of American historiography around the concept of an agrarian-derived democracy of the Whole People.

Finally, in recent years, we have seen the emergence of a school of "urban" historians, drawn from eastern cities, who find the agrarian democratic theme naive or otherwise unsatisfactory. Most of these urban historians came to maturity during the New Deal years, and they manifest a greater sympathy for industrial labor than for farmers and middle-class businessmen. Their stance seems to be that of self-conscious intellectuals and critics, expressing through their detached, "scientific," faintly ironic, "realistic" analysis an alienation from the middle-class mainstream of American life that is reminiscent of the patrician school. The entrepreneurial thesis is the most characteristic product of this group, though the labor thesis grows out of many of the same influences.

Actually, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., the leading proponent of the labor thesis, emphasizes entrepreneurial elements in Jacksonian Democracy far more than his critics appear to realize; indeed he sees the western Jacksonians as almost wholly entrepreneurial in spirit. Basically, however, his *Age of Jackson* seems to represent a marriage of the agrarian democratic and the urban points of view. Schlesinger's "realistic" emphasis on class conflict is solidly urban,

but the democratic idealism with which he combines it is clearly in the tradition of Turner. Of course, the three schools as defined here represent central positions, leaving some historians on the fringes. Parrington and the Beards, for example, reveal urban tendencies in a context that is mainly agrarian democratic.

But what of Old Hickory himself and Jacksonian Democracy? What are we to conclude when, after a century of scholarship, historians still squarely contradict each other about the essential nature of both man and movement? Has the frame of reference cut us off from the past as it was? Do historical writings tell us more about their authors than they do about their purported subjects?

Before accepting these disheartening conclusions, it may be well to remind ourselves that an interpretation is not necessarily wrong merely because a writer seems to have been impelled toward that interpretation by a particular frame of reference. The conclusions of honest men, working within limits set by an abundance of reliable and relatively unchangeable evidence, must have some basis in the reality of the past they seek to interpret. This may suggest that each school of Jacksonian historiography has been correct up to a point, and that the real problem of interpreting Jacksonian Democracy is to define the proper relationship among the various elements emphasized by the different schools.

Several recent writers, in attempting to do just this, have concluded that the Jacksonian movement was essentially paradoxical. Louis Hartz describes the American democrat of the Jackson era as a hybrid personality—both a class-conscious democrat and an incipient entrepreneur—at once the “man of the land, the factory and the forge . . . who has all the proletarian virtues that Marx was forever contrasting with the pettiness of the petit-bourgeois,” and “an aggressive entrepreneur, buying ‘on speculation,’ combining ‘some’ trade with agriculture, making ‘agriculture itself a trade.’” He had “a certain smallness of entrepreneurial preoccupation which has never been glamorous in Western thought,” Hartz concludes, but at the same time he was involved in “two heroic dramas, the covered wagon drama of the American frontier and the strike-ridden drama of a rising labor movement, so that when we come to men like Jackson and Leggett we are never quite sure whether we are dealing with a petty hope or a glorious dream.”

combines it is clearly free schools as defined by some historians on the one hand, reveal urban schools as democratic.

Jacksonian Democracy? A century of scholarship, however, about the essential frame of reference cut by these writings tell us more about the purported subjects? In these discussions, it may be well not necessarily wrong to be impelled toward that conclusion. The conclusions reached by an abundance of scholars must have some basis in fact. This may suggest why it has been correct up to now in interpreting Jacksonian Democracy among the various schools.

So just this, have conclusions essentially paradoxical. That of the Jackson era was a free democrat and an individual in the land, the factory and the virtues that Marx called 'the petit-bourgeois,' coming from 'agriculture itself a pre-entrepreneurial preoccupation of western thought," Hartz concluded in "two heroic American frontiers and the result, so that when we are never quite sure of the glorious dream."

Another scholar has defined the paradox of Jacksonian Democracy somewhat differently. Judging from Jackson's own public papers, says Marvin Meyers, the Jacksonians appealed "not to some workingmen's yearning for a brave new world; not to the possibilities of a fresh creation at the western limits of civilization; not to the ambitions of a rising laissez-faire capitalism—not to any of these so much as to a *restoration* of old virtues and a (perhaps imaginary) old republican way of life." Meyers states the paradox thus: "the movement which in many ways cleared the path for the triumph of laissez-faire capitalism and its culture in America, and the public which in its daily life acted out that victory, held nevertheless in their conscience an image of a chaste republican order, resisting the seductions of risk and novelty, greed and extravagance, rapid motion and complex dealings." Still another scholar, John W. Ward, has found confirmation for this mood of Old Republican restorationism in the symbolic uses to which Jackson was put by his generation.

If these scholars are right about the paradoxical character of the Jacksonian democratic impulse, then it is easy to see why historians, in emphasizing different elements of the paradox, have reached such different interpretations. Viewed in this light, the frame of reference has served a valuable purpose after all, by leading historians to the different elements of the complex Jacksonian past out of which an overall synthesis must eventually be constructed.

Few phases of American history currently offer scholars a greater challenge to research and synthesis. Much digging in the sources will be required to establish the relative importance of the various factors already singled out, and new factors will be discovered. Historians know that they will never altogether reach the "objective reality" of the past—Jacksonian or any other—but they need not apologize for assuming it is there, or for believing that their zig-zag course brings them swinging in on a circle of ever closer vantage points for discerning its salient features.

FOR FURTHER READING

The following paragraphs describe those books and articles on Jacksonian Democracy that should make the most interesting col-

lateral reading for students, as well as those of greatest scholarly significance to teachers and advanced students. Asterisks indicate books especially recommended for school libraries.

General accounts and interpretations of American history: The older multivolume American histories by Herman von Holst and James Schouler are too narrowly political in scope and too dominated by the authors' Whig bias to be very helpful to modern readers. On the other hand, John B. McMaster, *A History of the People of the United States from the Revolution to the Civil War* (8 vols.; New York, 1883-1913)*, and Edward Channing, *A History of the United States* (6 vols.; New York, 1905-1925)*, contain much material on the social and economic, as well as the political, aspects of American development. While few students will undertake to read these multivolume histories straight through, selected chapters will yield a more intimate understanding of special phases of Jacksonian America than can be gotten any other way. The two most influential general interpretations of American history written in the twentieth century are Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization* (2 vols.; New York, 1927)*, and Vernon L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought: An Interpretation of American Literature from the Beginning to 1920* (3 vols.; New York, 1927-1930)*. They are indispensable for the teacher, while better students will find them beautifully written and exciting in interpretation. Equally indispensable for the teacher are Frederick Jackson Turner's interpretive essays, collected in *The Frontier in American History* (New York, 1920)* and *The Significance of Sections in American History* (New York, 1950)*. Turner's key frontier essay, along with the more important arguments by historians attacking and defending his frontier thesis, are conveniently available in George R. Taylor, ed., *The Turner Thesis Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History* (Boston, 1949). Among the most significant general interpretations of American history published recently are Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution* (New York, 1955), and Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York, 1954)*. The former will be rough going even for teachers but rewarding; while the latter should be

of greatest scholarly value. Asterisks indicate libraries.

American history: The Sherman von Holst and its scope and too domineeringly helpful to modern students, *A History of the Nation to the Civil War* (Channing, *A History 1905-1925*)*, contains as well as the political, students will understand through, selected reading of special phases in other way. The two American history written by Mary R. Beard, *The New York, 1927*)*, and Vernon Loggins, *From Thought: An Interpretation Beginning to 1920* (3 vols., indispensable for the student), a beautifully written and indispensable for the student. Interpretive essays, collected by (New York, 1920)* and *A History* (New York, 1927)*, with the more important reading his frontier thesis, by the editor, ed., *The Turner in American History* (General interpretations by Louis Hartz, *The Evolution of American History* (New York, 1955), and *A Tradition and the Future* (New York, 1955)). The former will be rough reading; the latter should be

stimulating to teachers and students alike. Algie M. Simons, *Social Forces in American History* (New York, 1920), the classic attempt to bring Marxian analysis to bear on American history, has greatly influenced both the entrepreneurial and the labor interpretations of Jacksonian Democracy.

Special studies of Jacksonian Democracy: The most concise and easily read history of the Jackson period is F. A. Ogg, *The Reign of Andrew Jackson: A Chronicle of the Frontier in Politics* (New Haven, 1919)*; it is almost devoid of interpretation. William MacDonald, *Jacksonian Democracy, 1829-1837* (New York, 1906), is a straightforward, mainly factual account of Jacksonian politics, heavily influenced by Turner's frontier thesis. For Turner's own handling of frontier and sectional themes for the early Jackson period see his *The Rise of the New West, 1819-1829* (New York, 1906)*; his study of *The United States, 1830-1850: The Nation and Its Sections* (New York, 1935)* features a detailed analysis of economic, geographical, and sectional factors, illustrated by a series of striking maps. Claude Bowers describes *The Party Battles of the Jackson Period* (Boston, 1922)* in a dramatic and intensely pro-Jackson spirit. Carl Russell Fish, *The Rise of the Common Man, 1830-1850* (New York, 1937)*, deals with social, economic, and humanitarian phases of the Jackson era. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., has written the indispensable book on *The Age of Jackson* (Boston, 1945)*. Students will be engrossed by Schlesinger's vigorous style and vivid characterizations, though most will find the complex array of characters and events rather confusing for sustained reading. Marvin Meyers, "The Jacksonian Persuasion," *American Quarterly* (Spring 1953), 3-15, brilliantly delineates a previously neglected aspect of Jacksonian America; while John W. Ward has made an original approach to the mentality of Jackson's generation in *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age* (New York, 1955)*, a book that students will enjoy reading, even if they miss the full meaning of its sophisticated analysis.

Biographies of Jackson: James Parton's *Life of Andrew Jackson* (3 vols.; New York, 1860) is still among the best; its extensive selections from contemporary letters and documents convey the real flavor of the man and the period. William Graham Sumner's anti-Jackson bias is conspicuous in his *Andrew Jackson As a Public Man*:

What He Was, What Chances He Had, and What He Did with Them (Boston, 1882), but the bluntness with which Sumner berates the Jacksonians is refreshing. John Spencer Bassett's *The Life of Andrew Jackson* (2 vols.; Garden City, 1911) is the most judicious biography, though students may find it dull. There is no brief Jackson biography especially suitable for students, but they will be fascinated by Marquis James's colorful yet scholarly *The Life of Andrew Jackson* (2 vols. in 1; Indianapolis, 1938)*, with its heavy emphasis on the inimitable Jackson personality. Thomas Perkins Abernethy's hostile view of Jackson will be useful mainly to teachers; it can be found in any of the following: "Andrew Jackson and the Rise of Southwestern Democracy," *American Historical Review*, XXXIII (Oct. 1927), 64-77; *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee: A Study in Frontier Democracy* (Chapel Hill, 1932); "Andrew Jackson," in Allen Johnson *et al.*, eds., *Dictionary of American Biography* (21 vols.; New York, 1928-1944)*, IX, 526-34.

Biographies of Jackson's contemporaries: The following are valuable for teachers and serious students alike: Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Union* (New York, 1956)*; Russel B. Nye, *George Bancroft: Brahmin Rebel* (New York, 1944); William N. Chambers, "Old Bullion" Benton, *Senator from the New West: Thomas Hart Benton, 1782-1858* (Boston, 1956)*; Margaret Coit, *John C. Calhoun, American Portrait* (Boston, 1950)*; Charles M. Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun* (3 vols.; Indianapolis, 1944-1951)*; Charles G. Sellers, Jr., *James K. Polk, Jacksonian: 1795-1843* (Princeton, 1957); Carl B. Swisher, *Roger B. Taney* (New York, 1935); Claude M. Fuess, *Daniel Webster* (2 vols.; Boston, 1930); Richard M. Current, *Daniel Webster and the Rise of National Conservatism* (Boston, 1955)*; Clement Eaton, *Henry Clay and the Art of American Politics* (Boston, 1957)*; and Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *The Life of Henry Clay* (Boston, 1937)*. The biographies by Bemis, Wiltse, Sellers, and Fuess are quite detailed; those by Current and Eaton are of brief compass; and the remainder are neither very detailed nor very brief.

Studies of political institutions: M. I. Ostrogorski has written the classic study of the connection between *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties* (2 vols.; New York, 1902); this work displays a violent Whig bias, but no serious investigator of

What He Did with which Sumner berates Bassett's *The Life of* is the most judicious there is no brief Jacksons, but they will be scholarly *The Life of* (1938)*, with its heavy weight. Thomas Perkins is useful mainly to teach Andrew Jackson and *American Historical Review to Plantation in* (Chapel Hill, 1932); eds., *Dictionary of* (1944)*, IX, 526-34. The following are valuable: Samuel Flagg Bemis (1956)*; Russel B. (1944); William (1956)*; Margaret Coit (1950)*; Charles M. (1944-1951)*; *Jacksonian: 1795-1843* *Taney* (New York, 1930); *The Rise of National* *Henry Clay and the* (1944); *Lyndon G. Van Deusen*. The biographies by Currier are neither

Ostrogorski has written *Democracy and the* (New York, 1902); this is a judicious investigator of

Jacksonian Democracy can afford to ignore it. More suitable for students is the brief summary of Ostrogorski's American materials, *Democracy and the Party System in the United States: A Study in Extra-Constitutional Government* (New York, 1910). Leonard D. White, *The Jacksonians: A Study in Administrative History, 1829-1861* (New York, 1954), is part of a pioneering three-volume history of federal administration before the Civil War and sheds much light on the character of Jacksonian Democracy. The following books, each easy to read and each standard for its subject, will be useful for special assignments: Carl Russell Fish, *The Civil Service and the Patronage* (New York, 1905); Wilfred E. Binkley, *The Powers of the President: Problems of American Democracy* (Garden City, 1937); W. E. Binkley, *American Political Parties: Their Natural History* (2nd ed.; New York, 1945)*; Chauncey S. Boucher, *The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina* (Chicago, 1916); E. Malcolm Carroll, *Origins of the Whig Party* (Durham, 1925); and Hugh Russell Fraser, *Democracy in the Making: The Jackson-Tyler Era* (Indianapolis, 1938).

History of labor: Foster Rhea Dulles, *Labor in America: A History* (New York, 1949)*, is a good general account, well suited for student use. The most detailed account of the Jacksonian labor movement is found in the *History of Labour in the United States* (2 vols.; New York, 1918) by John R. Commons and associates. Edward Pessen's article on "The Workingmen's Movement of the Jacksonian Era," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLIII (Dec. 1956), 428-43, presents the latest findings with regard to this controversial aspect of Jacksonian Democracy.

Economic history: George R. Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860* (New York, 1951)*, is an authoritative account of economic developments, which can contribute much to any teacher's presentation of Jacksonian Democracy. Jackson's crucial anti-Bank policies cannot be fairly evaluated without knowing Ralph C. H. Catterall's classic study of *The Second Bank of the United States* (Chicago, 1903); though pro-Bank, Catterall is scrupulously fair to Jackson. Equally indispensable in this connection is Bray Hammond's brilliant article on "Jackson, Biddle, and the Bank of the United States," *Journal of Economic History*, VII (May 1947), 1-23. The most important arguments for and against

the Bank, by both its contemporaries and later historians, are conveniently available in George R. Taylor, ed., *Jackson versus Biddle—The Struggle over the Second Bank of the United States* (Boston, 1949).

Contemporary writings: Few teaching techniques are more fruitful with able students than the assignment of research papers to be based partly on "primary sources," or writings contemporary with the events described. Harold Syrett, *Andrew Jackson: His Contribution to the American Tradition* (Indianapolis, 1953)*, collects the more important letters and documents by Jackson himself in a form that should appeal to students and convey something of Old Hickory's unique flavor. Joseph L. Blau, ed., *Social Theories of Jacksonian Democracy: Representative Writings of the Period 1825-1850* (New York, 1947), similarly collects documents expressing the ideas of the Jacksonian intellectuals and illustrating especially the more radical elements of Jacksonian thought. The French observer Alexis de Tocqueville wrote the classic analysis of *Democracy in America* (2 vols.; New York, 1954)* during the Jackson period; selected passages presenting Tocqueville's brilliant insights into the strengths and weaknesses of American democracy should lead to stimulating class discussions about problems that are still relevant. Other important contemporary writings available in most good libraries are: John Spencer Bassett's edition of *The Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (7 vols.; Washington, 1926-1935); the sometimes choleric, often frank, and always fascinating *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848* (12 vols.; Philadelphia, 1874-1877), edited by Charles Francis Adams; and the bland but revealing *Autobiography of Martin Van Buren* (American Historical Association, *Annual Report*, 1918, II), edited by John C. Fitzpatrick.

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