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Explore

Andrew Jackson

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About this Person

Born: March 15, 1767 in Waxhaw, South Carolina, United States

Died: June 08, 1845 in Nashville, Tennessee, United States

Nationality: American

Occupation: President (Government)

Other Names: Old Hickory

Full Text:

Andrew Jackson was an American military leader who was elected the seventh president of the United States in 1828. Jackson was born into a poor family and later became a lawyer and a congressman from Tennessee. He earned the rank of general in the War of 1812 (1812–1815) and became a war hero for his actions at the Battle of New Orleans. Jackson first ran for president in 1824, but he was defeated in a controversial election. He ran again in 1828 and won the presidency after a hostile campaign. Jackson was a very influential president who believed he was a representative of the common American. However, he was also a very stubborn leader who angered many people in government.

Fast Facts

Fast Facts

- Jackson was known for his violent temper, which led him to engage in many duels throughout his lifetime.
- Jackson blamed his opponents' mudslinging during the presidential election of 1828 for the death of his wife, Rachel.
- Jackson survived the first assassination attempt of a sitting president of the United States when he was targeted in 1835.

Early Life

Andrew Jackson was born in 1767 near the border of North and South Carolina. His parents were poor Irish immigrants. Jackson was the youngest of three boys in his family. His father, Andrew, died just before Jackson was born, and he and his brothers were raised by their mother, Elizabeth. Jackson only attended school occasionally as a child. When he was thirteen, he fought with a militia during the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783). One of his brothers was killed in battle, while his other brother and mother died of illness during the war. At the time of his mother's death, Jackson was just fifteen years old.

After the war, Jackson began reading law books. He became a lawyer in 1787 and a public defender in North Carolina in 1788. He moved to the Tennessee territory and began to acquire land, building himself a small estate.

Jackson married Rachel Donelson Robards in 1794. After marrying, Jackson decided to enter the world of politics. He became the first congressman from Tennessee when it became a state in 1796. The next year, he became a US senator, but he despised the job and quit soon afterward. In 1804, Jackson bought the Hermitage, a cotton plantation outside of Nashville, Tennessee.

In the early 1810s, the United States engaged in battle with Great Britain in a conflict known as the War of 1812. Because of his experience running a local militia, Jackson was commissioned into the military as a major general. He helped lead troops on the southern frontier. Jackson was known for his stubborn nature. His troops gave him the nickname "Old Hickory" because of his tough demeanor.

As the war was nearing its end in January 1815, Jackson was in command of a military force defending the city of New Orleans,

Louisiana. When British forces attacked, Jackson's troops were outnumbered. The Americans managed to hold off the British and eventually emerged victorious. Jackson's efforts made him a war hero among the American public.

Jackson remained in the military after the war. He was sent to the southeastern United States to fight a group of Native Americans known as the Seminoles. Jackson chased the Seminoles into Florida, which was a Spanish territory at the time. The Spanish and many officials in Washington, DC, were very angry at Jackson. However, Spain did not have a strong enough army to drive the Americans out. By 1821, Spain officially gave up Florida to the United States.

Critical Thinking Questions

Critical Thinking Questions

- Why might future presidents look to Andrew Jackson for inspiration?
- For what reasons might Andrew Jackson be remembered for being a representative of average Americans?
- What is the significance of Jackson's nickname "Old Hickory"?

Presidential Bids

Jackson was so popular with the American people that he decided to run for president in 1824. Although he won both the popular vote and the electoral vote, he did not receive the 131 electoral votes needed to win the presidency. Jackson received 99 electoral votes, while his opponent, John Quincy Adams, won 84. According to the laws of the United States, the House of Representatives would decide the winner of the election. After a debate, the House voted for John Quincy Adams to be the next president. The vote angered Jackson who believed Adams had made a deal with some members of the House to win the election.

Jackson decided to run for president again in 1828. He and some of his supporters left the Democratic-Republican Party to form the Democratic Party. This is the same political party that still exists today. The 1828 campaign between Jackson and the incumbent president Adams was known for an enormous amount of mudslinging and name-calling, most of which was aimed at Jackson. Jackson campaigned as a man of the people, opposing the establishment and wealthy politicians. With support in the southern and western states, Jackson won the presidency easily. He was the first US president who hailed from a frontier state and was not from either Massachusetts or Virginia.

Presidency and Beyond

Jackson believed he represented the average person, also known as the "common man." As president, Jackson often angered Congress by using his presidential powers to push through his own political ideas. As president, Jackson believed he was working for the public and his actions were meant to help everyday Americans.

Jackson had been opposed to the existence of a national bank since its creation, and he consistently challenged it as president. He passed several bills and regulations designed to weaken the Second Bank of the United States. He wanted to make it more difficult for the institution to operate. He was also known for his exceptionally harsh policies toward Native Americans. In 1830, Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, which forcibly relocated many Native American tribes from their homelands to reservations west of the Mississippi River.

The American public was generally pleased with Jackson's leadership, granting the president an easy win in his bid for reelection in 1832 against Henry Clay. Jackson pursued many of the same policies in his second term, eventually causing the Second Bank of the United States to fold in 1836.

After his second term as president, Jackson returned to his plantation. He suffered from health issues, many of which were the result of his time in the military or duels he had fought. Two lead bullets that remained in Jackson's chest had slowly given the former president lead poisoning, which may have contributed to his death in 1845. Even though Jackson is often remembered for his political controversies and aggression as a politician, he is commonly considered one of the most influential presidents in US history.

Words to Know

duel

A conflict between two people that is fought by agreement with weapons such as guns in front of witnesses.

militia

A fighting force made up of civilians.

mudslinging

The use of insults and unjust accusations to damage the reputation of a political opponent.

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