

Andrew Jackson, on the left, attacks the many-headed Bank of the United States with a veto stick. Bank president Nicholas Biddle, in the center, wears a top hat. The many heads represent the 24 state directors of the bank. Vice President Martin Van Buren, in the center, chokes Massachusetts and Delaware.

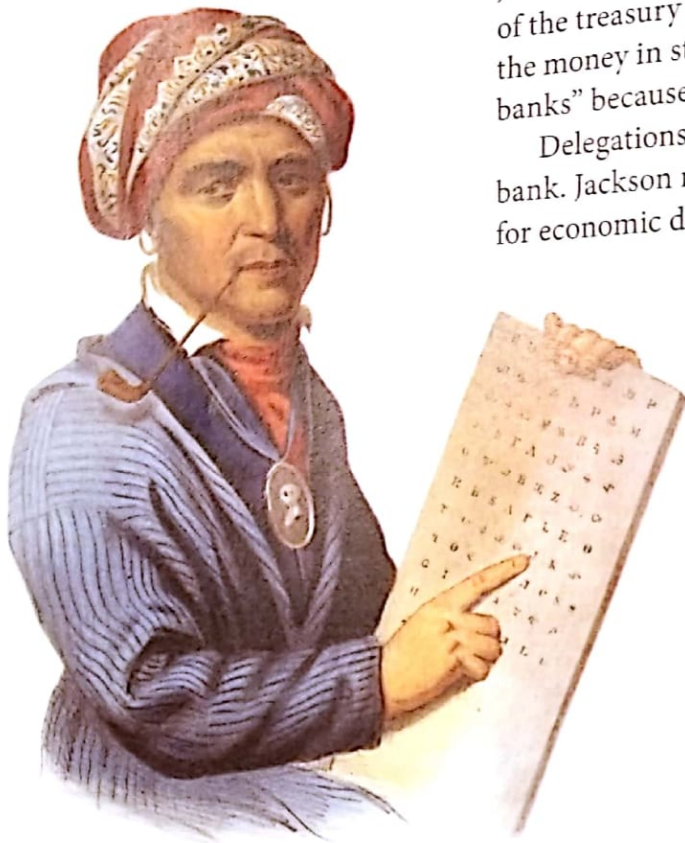
14.6 Jackson Battles the Bank of the United States

Andrew Jackson saw himself as the champion of the people, and never more so than in his war with the Bank of the United States. The bank was partly owned by the federal government, and it had a monopoly on federal deposits.

Jackson thought that the bank benefited rich eastern depositors at the expense of farmers and workers, as well as smaller state banks. He felt that the bank stood in the way of opportunity for capitalists in the West and other regions. He also distrusted the bank's president, Nicholas Biddle, who was everything Jackson was not: wealthy, upper class, well educated, and widely traveled.

The bank's charter, or contract, was due to come up for renewal in 1836. Jackson might have waited until after his reelection to "slay the monster." But Henry Clay, who planned to run for president against Jackson in 1832, decided to force the issue. Clay pushed a bill through Congress that renewed the bank's charter four years early. He thought that if Jackson signed the bill, the farmers who shared his dislike of banks would not reelect him. If Jackson vetoed the bill, he would lose votes from businesspeople who depended on the bank for loans. What Clay had forgotten was that there were many more poor farmers to cast votes than there were rich bankers and businesspeople.

Jackson vetoed the recharter bill. Even though the Supreme Court had held that the bank was constitutional, Jackson called the bank an unconstitutional monopoly that existed mainly to make the rich richer. The voters seemed to agree. In 1832, a large majority elected Jackson to a second term.



Sequoyah (seh-KWOI-uh) developed an 86-letter alphabet for the Cherokee language. The alphabet contained both Roman letters and symbols Sequoyah created. Even though these Indians developed what many whites considered an advanced civilization, wealthy planters and poor settlers were determined to force them out and seize their lands.

Rather than wait for the bank to die when its charter ran out, Jackson decided to starve it to death. In 1833, he ordered the secretary of the treasury to remove all federal deposits from the bank and put the money in state banks. Jackson's enemies called these banks "pet banks" because the president's supporters ran them.

Delegations of business owners begged Jackson not to kill the bank. Jackson refused. Abolishing the bank, he believed, was a victory for economic democracy.

14.7 Jackson's Indian Policy

As a frontier settler, Andrew Jackson had little sympathy for American Indians. During his presidency, it became national policy to remove Indians who remained in the East by force.

White settlers had come into conflict with Indians ever since colonial days. After independence, the new national government tried to settle these conflicts through treaties. Typically, the treaties drew boundaries between areas claimed for settlers and areas that the government promised to let the Indians have forever. In exchange for giving up their old lands, Indians were promised food, supplies, and money.

Despite the treaties, American Indians continued to be pushed off their land. By the time Jackson became president, only 125,000 Indians still lived east of the Mississippi River. War and disease had greatly reduced the number of Indians in the East. Other Indians had sold their lands for pennies an acre and moved west of the Mississippi. Jackson was determined to remove the remaining Indians to a new Indian Territory in the West.

Most of the eastern Indians lived in the South. They belonged to five groups, called tribes by whites: the Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole. Hoping to remain in their homelands, these Indians had adopted many white ways. Most had given up hunting to become farmers. Many had learned to read and write. The Cherokee had their own written language, a newspaper, and a constitution modeled on the U.S. Constitution. Whites called these Indians the "Five Civilized Tribes."

While the Five Civilized Tribes may have hoped to live in peace with their neighbors, many whites did not share this goal. As cotton growing spread westward, wealthy planters and poor settlers alike looked greedily at Indian homelands. The Indians, they decided, had to go.

The Indian Removal Act In 1830, urged on by President Jackson, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act. This law allowed the president to make treaties in which American Indians in the East traded their lands for new territory on the Great Plains. The law did not say

that the Indians should be removed by force, and in 1831 the Supreme Court held that Indians had a right to keep their lands. An angry Jackson disagreed. Groups that refused to move west **voluntarily** were met with military force, usually with tragic results.

This was true of the Sac and Fox Indians of Illinois. Led by a chief named Black Hawk, the Sac and Fox fought removal for two years. Black Hawk's War ended in 1832 with the slaughter of most of his warriors. As he was taken off in chains, the chief told his captors,

Black Hawk is an Indian. He has done nothing for which an Indian ought to be ashamed. He has fought for his countrymen, the squaws [women] and papooses [young children], against white men who came, year after year, to cheat them of and take away their land. You know the cause of our making war. It is known to all white men. They ought to be ashamed of it.

The Trail of Tears Many whites were ashamed over the treatment of Indians and sent protests to Washington, D.C. Still, the work of removal continued. In 1836, thousands of Creek Indians who refused to leave Alabama were rounded up and marched west in handcuffs. Two years later, under President Martin Van Buren, more than 17,000 Cherokees were forced from their homes in Georgia and herded west by federal troops. Four thousand of these Indians died during the long walk to Indian Territory, which took place in the winter. Those who survived remembered that terrible journey as the **Trail of Tears**. A soldier who took part in the Cherokee removal called it "the cruelest work I ever knew."

Trail of Tears the removal of Cherokee Indians from Georgia to Indian Territory in 1838 and 1839

This artist painted an unrealistic picture of the Trail of Tears. Most of the Cherokees had no horses or warm blankets. They were dragged from their homes and allowed to take only the clothes they had on. Many died as they walked barefoot for hundreds of miles.

In this chapter, you read about the presidency of Andrew Jackson and evaluated how well he promoted democracy from the perspectives of various groups.

From the Frontier to the White House Andrew Jackson was a self-made man who rose from poverty to become president of the United States. First-time voters, many of them farmers and frontier settlers, helped elect Jackson in 1828. His supporters celebrated his election as a victory for the “common man” over the rich and powerful.

Jackson’s Approach to Governing As president, Jackson relied on his “kitchen cabinet” rather than the official cabinet. He replaced a number of Republican civil servants with Democrats in a practice that became known as the spoils system.

The Nullification Crisis A controversy over higher tariffs led to the nullification crisis, in which South Carolinians threatened to secede from the United States. Although Jackson forced them to back down, the crisis was another sign of developing tensions between North and South.

The Battle Against the Bank Jackson thought the Bank of the United States benefited rich eastern depositors at the expense of farmers, workers, and smaller state banks. He also thought it stood in the way of opportunity for capitalists in the West and other regions. Jackson vetoed the bank’s renewal charter.

Jackson’s Indian Policy Jackson’s Indian policy was simple: move the eastern Indians across the Mississippi to make room for whites. The Indian Removal Act caused great suffering for tens of thousands of American Indians.

Andrew Jackson was the nation’s first president from the frontier. He came to office with great popular support. His supporters viewed him as a president of the people. His critics did not believe he was the sort of man who should be running the government.

