Complicating the issue, Van Buren's administration left the Democrats strong, compact, and well organized in spite of a split-off party with an overwhelming defeat, and prepared to put up a winning fight four years later. It was Jackson's party still.

CHAPTER XIV
ONE MONTH OF WHIGISM, FORTY-SEVEN OF DEMOCRACY
1841-1845


Van Buren-Tyler administration belongs nominally to Whig history, but actually to Democratic annals. Harrison was an old Jeffersonian with Whig leanings and Tyler an anti-Jackson Democrat. Harrison's campaign and election much resembled Jackson's of 1828, and his few weeks in office carried the resemblance further, for hordes of office-seekers of the common or farm variety flocked to Washington and besieged the old General, many of them sleeping in the corridors of the White House, so as to be able to reach the President in the early hours before the crowd had gathered. "The latch string on the outside" had been a campaign slogan, and Harrison lived up to it thirty days. He fastened on the country as a national system what before had been only a party practice—the spoils system.

There were three references to the principles of Jefferson in the inaugural address; slavery agitation was deprecated, and paper money advocated which was taken to mean the President favored a national bank. Clay declined any place in the cabinet; Webster was given the State Department; Ewing, the Treasury; John Bull, War; Badger, Navy; Granger, the Anti-Mason Postmaster General, and Crittenden, Attorney General.

Clay and Webster immediately clashed on appointments and Harrison bluntly charged with attempt at dictatorship; shortly afterward he requested Clay to make his recommendations to him in writing. An extra session of Congress was called for May 21st.

Old and in shattered health, the exposure of a long inaugural ceremony in inclement weather, the cares of office and the harassment of office-seekers brought Harrison to his death in exactly thirty days.
THE STORY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The nomination and election of the Whig ticket in 1840 and the causes behind them had a portentous aspect not noticed at the time. To win success the party had discarded its real leader for a winner, and associated with him another vote-getter of a different faith; then death opened Pandora’s box on its head.

Clay had been campaigning, in a high sort of way, for the nomination ever since the last election, but instructed his friends as the convention drew near to withdraw his name if harmony or party success demanded. It was when cautioned that his course in the Senate was imperiling his chances that he exclaimed “I would rather be right than be President.”

Webster desired the nomination but formally withdrew in 1839, and neither he nor his friends supported Clay. Many other Whigs opposed Clay, too, for personal and political reasons. A notable device was used to injure him, called the “triangular correspondence.” Three Whig leaders in separate districts in New York each wrote the others—“Do all you can for Clay in your district for I am sorry to say he has no strength here.” Thus was Clay’s chances slaughtered by his reputed friends, for the letters were effectually used to show the uselessness of sending Clay delegates to the convention. General Winfield Scott, thought by some to be a leading candidate, was mostly only a stalking horse to detach delegates from Clay.

The Whig convention met at Harrisburg in December, 1839, 400 delegates from 22 states. Here another curious and elaborate device, originated by Thurlow Weed and joined in by Horace Greeley, was used to encompass the defeat of Clay, who was the favorite of the majority of the delegates. No general vote was taken, but, on motion of Sprague of Massachusetts, probably a Webster Whig, each state delegation chose a committee of three who took the sense of the delegation and reported to a general committee composed of all the members of these committees or three; a delegate named Perrose (from Pennsylvania?) moved an amendment embodying the unit rule, and the amended plan was adopted. For three days these committees labored and finally a majority was obtained and Harrison nominated. The first report showed Clay 102, Harrison 91, Scott 57. The main objection urged against Clay was his unpopularity with the Anti-Masons, and his unavailability generally.

Clay, who was in the city, was indignant when he learned the result. Henry A. Wise, who bore the intelligence to him, describes him as in a towering rage. His friends, he said, were.

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not worth the powder and shot it would take to kill them; he was always put forward when defeat was certain and betrayed when victory was sure; if there were two Henry Clays, one would make the other President. “No,” said Wise, “there would not be room for both on this continent; they would mutually destroy each other.”

A bolt was threatened, but Clay was loyal. His friends were entitled to second place, it was admitted, and John Tyler was chosen, in compliance, it was said, with a promise given him months before by Clay, but the great strength it was believed he would bring to the ticket was duly considered, in fact was alleged to be the controlling factor in the choice. This Clay-Tyler misalliance is one of the most curious episodes in American political history.

The Whigs adopted no platform and issued no address to the people, an omission caustically commented on by their opponents. Harrison, a retired old soldier, had never been active enough in politics, except as Whig candidate in 1836, to stand for any leading principle or policy in the public mind. When territorial delegate from Indiana he had sought permission to establish slavery there. As a Whig he was a very moderate one, a staunch admirer and profession follower of Jefferson, which constituted part of his popularity. He was a fine old American patriot with a good record in Congress and as territorial Governor, and famed for his honesty. He was so guarded in his utterances during the campaign that the Democratic caricaturists pictured him with a padlock on his mouth.

The 1840 campaign was that of 1828 over again except that now the Whigs had the old Hero and backwoodsman, the Democrat the city man. Harrison tall, gaunt, clean-shaven with long gray locks, just like Jackson; Van Buren tall and stout with bald head and mutton chop whiskers, with city manners and habits, just like John Quincy Adams. Log cabins, with a cider barrel at the door, took the place of hickory poles. Harrison’s manner, his frank honesty when he did speak, and other qualities attracted the very same sort of people that swelled Jackson’s great majorities—people who knew and cared little about politics, but voted for their favorite, the common people, the hurrah boys, the wool-hat crowd, by whatever name they are called. Even Jackson’s endorsement could not hold that element to Van Buren.

The Hero of New Orleans could not defeat, with a third person, the Hero of Tippecanoe.

A Democratic paper suggested that letting Harrison stay at
home and giving him plenty of hard cider would suit him much better than putting him in the White House. The Whigs used this sneer at an old patriot and hence the "Log Cabin and Hard Cider Campaign."

A newspaper called the Log Cabin appeared; in a few weeks it had attained a circulation of 60,000; its editor was one Horace Greeley, picked up two years before by Thurlow Weed, who had been attracted by some of his writings, and used in Seward's campaign for Governor. Thus was begun that famous political firm, Seward, Weed and Greeley, so dramatically dissolved by Greeley in 1854.

Clay's speeches were taken as indicating the Whig policies—no abuse of the veto power, a single term for the President, restriction of the power of removal from office, exclusive control of the Treasury by Congress and no power in the President to dismiss the Secretary of the Treasury, a stable and uniform currency either by a national, or carefully selected state banks, preferably the former, protection, internal improvements by states with federal aid, economy in government and slavery left as the Constitution placed it.

The Third National Democratic Convention met, six months later than the Whig meeting, at Baltimore, May 5, 1840. 21 states represented by 250 delegates. Van Buren was unanimously nominated but no Vice-President named, the conflicting claims of Polk and Forsyth being too evenly balanced. Both of these withdrew later in favor of R. M. Johnson of Kentucky, "Old Tecumseh," with a war record to offset Harrison's.

The Democratic platform of 1840, every section of which was separately and unanimously adopted, calls for careful study. It is the declaration of Jacksonian principles, and for sixteen years was the political constitution of the party. Readopted in its entirety in 1844, it constitutes the major part of the party platforms of 1848, 1852 and 1860.

**Democratic Platform, 1840**

1. Federal government of limited powers.
2. Internal improvements unconstitutional.
3. Assumption of state debts incurred for internal improvements unconstitutional.
4. Opposes fostering one branch of industry or one section of country to injury of another.
5. Rigid economy and no more revenue than necessary to run the government.
6. A bank unconstitutional and dangerous to institutions and liberties.
7. Congress no power to interfere with domestic institutions of the several states; condemns Abolitionists.
8. Separation of moneys of government from banking institutions indispensable to safety.
9. Reaffirms principles of Jefferson and favors liberal naturalization policy.

The declaration in favor of liberal naturalization laws was in opposition to a movement, in New York City mainly, against new and foreign-born citizens, which had developed into the Native American Party in 1835 and which elected a Mayor, Harper, in 1840. Later this society spread over the country, and grew into the Know-Nothing Party, electing Governors and legislatures in several states, and finally became the American Party which with Millard Fillmore as its candidate for President polled 875,000 votes in 1856.

In response to published letters addressed to the candidates Harrison stated that he believed in banks, a credit system and paper currency, and detested executive usurpation and the spoils system. The geography of the two tickets is worthy of notice. The Whigs, strongest in the East, ran a Westerner and a Southerner; the Democrats, strongest in the South, a New Yorker and a half-Westerner. Literature.

Van Buren's conduct in the campaign was bold and honest, with no noncommitalism in it; he answered letters from friend and foe; he said that with Congress' treatment of abolition petitions the President had no official concern, but that he believed Congress was justified in adopting the "log" rule. Harrison had promptly repudiated abolitionism too. Webster gave Macedonian aid to the Whig cause in splendid speeches not always logical or entirely consistent with the courses the two parties had pursued on the questions involved, and he kept silent on slavery, except to assure the South that "Harrison would not lay ruthless hands on the institutions under which he was born and educated"—Washington and Hanover, Virginia and Massachusetts were invoked; "How many bones of Northern men," he eloquently asked, "lie at Yorktown?" Preston of South Carolina added to the play for Southern support of Harrison, "a Southern man of Southern principles," against Van Buren, the supporter of that rank Federalist Rufus King who had fought Missouri's admission and favored free negro suffrage.
Some authorities say the campaign of 1840 was one of much enthusiasm and little thought. Certainly there was much of the former and more song and illustrated campaign literature issued, comparatively, than slavery in the North. "Harrison with Two Dollars and Roast Beef," were Whig ammunition. The Democrats laughed at the Whigs, whom they called "Van" because of coon-skin caps of the Whig action of the freemen, and "Cider Suckers," and at "Goody" or "Granny" Harrison. But the Whigs laughed loudest and longest and last; they fairly ridiculed Van Buren into defeat. The "bank bullies" in towns and the "coon hunters" in the country overrode the Locofocos and the Van Burensites generally. Tammany, now beginning to be "ruled up" instead of "ruled down," weakened in its support of its old ally and gave him less than 1,000 plurality in the city. Van Buren's wonderful political ability, invincible when used in behalf of others, was vulnerable now that he himself was the candidate. Early in the campaign he had said that the race was a farce or a tornado, and proved an avalanche.

Advertisements appeared in many papers that $5.00 per barrel would be paid for flour if Harrison was elected, $3.00 if Van Buren; $5.00 per hundred for pork against $2.50.

The Liberty Party also expected to be a success. Van Buren's "paddy" and the pro-slavery Whigs were to do their best to keep the Constitution and all laws, and declared against slavery in the District of Columbia and all territories. The name Liberty Party was formally adopted.

This party cast only 7,000 votes this year; it was not sufficiently strong in New York to make up to Seward the defection of the "dough-face" or so-called abolitionists, and he was elected Governor with only half of Harrison's New York majority. Four years later it was a tremendous factor in the Presidential race.

Ohio and Pennsylvania were the first to vote on Presidential candidates and both went to Harrison; it was the beginning of a landslide. The Democrats carried New Hampshire, Virginia, Alabama, South Carolina, Illinois, Missouri and Arkansas, 50 electoral votes against 234 for the Whigs. Harrison and Tyler carried eight slave states, with a popular majority in all the slave states of 56,000 in a total of 985,000 and had a majority of 90,000 of a total of 1,700,000 in the free states. This indicated the Whig ticket proportionately stronger in the South than in the North. Was this attributable to "Tippecanoe" or to "Tyler Too"? Three years and eleven months of United States history was greatly affected by that question.

The total cost of the campaign was $1,500,000 four years before was the occasion of a cry of fraud, but it was soon decided that the increased vote was due to the usual stay-at-home vote going to the polls. Van Buren took his defeat manfully and with his characteristic dignity. He wrote his last message to Congress while he could hear from the White House the song "Van, Van, the Man," but that did not mar its fine Democratic statesmanship.

Tyler was the first Vice-President to succeed to the Presidency by the death of his chief, and his first act was to repel Clay's assumption that his administration was to be "in the nature of a regency." It began the battle between the President and the party which had elected him, which lasted his entire term.

The new Chief Executive was of distinguished birth and well educated, with quite a distinguished career behind him, and he was conscious of all these facts. Optimistic and stubborn he seemed to have been, but in dealing with abolitionists, scrupulous and anxious to do the right thing by the Whig Party so far as possible with his ideas of duty and the Constitution. He described himself as a true Whig or pure Jeffersonian Republican, a states rights Democrat. He called the Clay Whigs Nationalist Whigs, the Webster Whigs Federalist Whigs. He had at one time been a strong Jacksonian, but parted with him on his coercive position toward South Carolina, being the only Senator voting against the Force bill in 1833.

Born in 1790, he was the youngest man to attain the Presidency. Educated at Williams and Mary, he had repeatedly been elected to the Virginia legislature; twice Governor of Virginia, as his father had been, he had defeated ex-Speaker Andrew Stevenson for Congress, and John Randolph for Senator in 1827 and been reelected in 1833. Resigning from the Senate in 1836 rather than vote for the Expelling Resolution, he had been candidate for Vice-President in the No-Party ticket of that year.

"Tylerism" as synonymous with treachery was the claim of
the Whigs in 1841-1845 and the same imputation against him survives in some histories. A careful inquiry, however, indicates that Tyler never intentionally deceived any one, but many men deceived themselves about him. It will be recalled how astonished Virginia was just after electing him Senator in 1827, to learn of his letter approving Clay's support of Adams. Had the least suspicion been entertained that such was his attitude he would not have been elected. Yet he asserted, and proved by consistent opposition to the Adams-Clay administration, that he was not of their party or politics.

His record in both houses of Congress was known to Clay, who acknowledged twenty years intimacy with him, during thirteen of which, he bitterly said, they had never once voted together on principle. It was known to all the Whig Congressional leaders. To accuse Tyler of treachery and bad faith for adhering to views and principles he had publicly advocated for twenty years is not just.

His views on the national bank question were known; in 1819 he had brought in a report to the House declaring that the bank had forfeited its charter and in a speech had argued a bank unconstitutional and urged a secede-faction to forfeit its charter. In 1828 in the Senate he voted against a recharter. During the 1840 campaign in answer to published letters he had twice referred to this speech and vote and announced that his views were unchanged, and that a bank was unconstitutional. In a letter written during the campaign and submitted to the Whig leaders, who suppressed it as impolitic, he had plainly declared that a Bank of the United States was unconstitutional. Opposed to this long and open opposition to a bank was only his conduct in opposing Jackson's removal of deposits, in which he was following the instructions of the Virginia legislature. In reply to a threat by Benton at the time, he stated in the Senate, where Clay and Webster sat, that he was and had always been opposed to a bank as unconstitutional.

On the tariff and internal improvements his record was equally anti-Whig, the first he opposed on principle, the latter as unconstitutional. No man in high public life except Calhoun was a stronger states rights advocate; in his speech against the Force bill he said:

"The pernicious doctrine that this is a national and not a federal government—This government was created by the States, is amendable by the States, is preserved by the States and may be destroyed by the States."
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