

Advanced Placement United States History: American Political Parties

FIRST TWO-PARTY SYSTEM Federalists v. Democratic-Republicans, 1780s – 1801

Federalists (Hamiltonians)

1. Favored strong central government.
2. "Loose" interpretation of the Constitution.
3. Encouragement of commerce and manufacturing.
4. Strongest in Northeast.
5. Favored close ties with Britain.
6. Emphasized order and stability.

Democratic-Republicans (Jeffersonian Republicans)

1. Emphasized states' rights.
2. "Strict" interpretation of the Constitution.
3. Preference for agriculture and rural life.
4. Strength in South and West.
5. Foreign policy sympathized with France.
6. Stressed civil liberties and trust in the people

[In practice, these generalizations were often blurred and sometimes contradicted.]

SECOND TWO-PARTY SYSTEM Democrats v. Whigs, 1836 – 1850

Democrats

1. The party of tradition.
2. Looked backward to the past.
3. Spoke to the fears of Americans
4. Opposed banks and corporations as. state-legislated economic privilege.
5. Opposed state-legislated reforms and preferred individual freedom of choice.
6. Were Jeffersonian agrarians who favored farms and rural independence and the right to own slaves.
7. Favored rapid territorial expansion over space by purchase or war.
8. Believed in progress through external growth.
9. Democratic ideology of agrarianism, slavery, states rights, territorial expansion was favored in the South.

Whigs

1. The party of modernization.
2. Looked forward to the future.
3. Spoke to the hopes of Americans.
4. Wanted to use federal and state government to promote economic growth, especially transportation and banks.
5. Advocated reforms such as temperance and public schools and prison reform.
6. Were entrepreneurs who favored industry and urban growth and free labor.
7. Favored gradual territorial expansion over time and opposed the Mexican War.
8. Believed in progress through internal growth
9. Whig ideology of urbanization, industrialization, federal rights, commercial expansion was favored in the North.

MID-19TH CENTURY POLITICAL CRISIS

Disputes over slavery in the territories first erode, then destroy what had become America's second two-party system. The erosion began in the 1840s as various factions opposed to the post-Jackson Democratic political coalition begin to form.

Liberty Party

1. Run abolitionist candidate James Birney, for president in 1844.
2. Won only 2% of the vote but drew votes from the Whigs, especially in New York.

Free Soil Party

1. Not abolitionist but opposed to expansion of slavery in the territories.
2. Won 10% of the popular vote with Martin Van Buren as their candidate in 1848.
3. Lost 50% of their support in 1852 when their candidate repudiated the Compromise of 1850.

Whigs

- Split over slavery into:
1. Southern, "Cotton" Whigs who eventually drifted into the Democratic Party.
 2. Northern, "Conscience" Whigs who moved to new parties, i.e. Free Soil and, later, into the Republican Party.

American Party

1. Popularly known as the "Know Nothing" Party.
2. Nativist party based on opposition to immigration and on temperance.
3. Run Millard Fillmore in 1856 and win 21% of the popular vote.
4. Absorbed into the Republican Party after 1856.