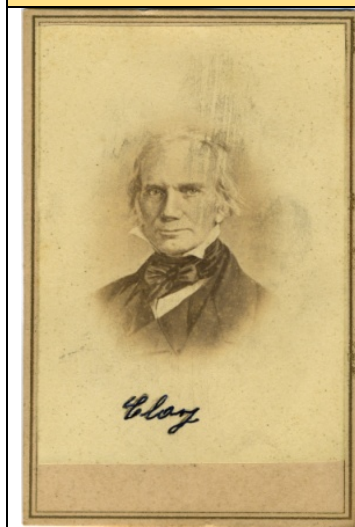


## Chapter 109 -- The Whigs Prepare To Challenge Van Buren For The Presidency



**Dates:**  
1836

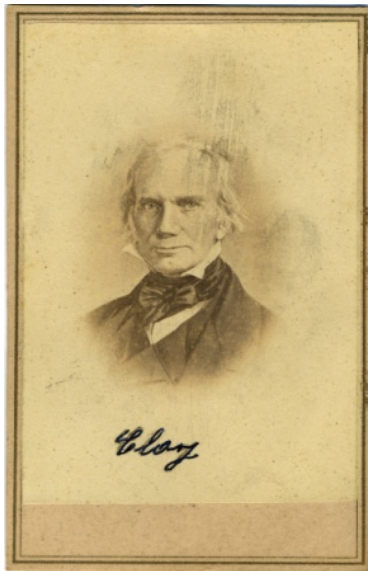
**Sections:**

- Henry Clay Advances The Whig Party
- The Whigs Nominate Four Regional Candidates

\*\*\*\*\*

Time: Fall 1836

### Henry Clay Advances The Whig Party



Henry Clay (1777-1852)

With Martin Van Buren set to run on the Democrat ticket in 1836, his opponents scramble to organize a credible challenge to his election.

Two of the parties created in 1832 to defeat Jackson – the Anti-Masons and the Nullifiers – have exhibited only limited regional appeal.

This leaves Henry Clay’s Whig Party as the only national option.

In settling on the Whig Party name in 1833, Clay declares his affinity with English politicians who are demanding the supremacy of an elected parliament over the autocratic policies of the ruling Tories.

In his case, the autocrat he opposes has been “King Andrew” Jackson.

But Jackson is now in retirement, and Clay himself has already suffered a humiliating defeat in 1832. If he is to overtake the Democrats, he must sharpen his party platform and his campaign strategies.

The policies in question follow a reasonably straight line back to Hamilton and the Federalists – belief in a strong central government, supporting the shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy, calling for federal funding of infrastructure projects to develop America’s domestic markets.

### Differences Between Democrat And Whig Policies In 1836

Issues	Jackson's Democrats	Clay's Whigs
Political Roots	Jefferson	Hamilton
Political Philosophy	Democracy/common man	Republic/leader class
Core Constituency	Small farmers	Farmers + city wage earners
Core Geography	South + West	Border + Northeast
Labor	Manual power	Manual + machines
Government Power	De-centralized/state's rights	Washington/federal control
Federal spending	Limit it/balance budget	Invest in infrastructure
Tariff	Lower and on fewer goods	Higher to protect mfrs.
Land prices	Lower	Higher to fund investments
Money	Hard/specie	Soft/paper
US Bank	Opposed/corporate privilege	Supportive/control currency
Capitalism	Suspicious/elites/corruption	Fundamental to growth

Clay also hopes to broaden the base of the Whig Party by uniting all forces who have opposed the Jackson Democrats – including remnants of the old Federalist and National Republican parties, the New York Anti-Masons, various southerners in the mold of his sometimes ally, John Calhoun, as well as the pro-business and pro-banking powers across regions.

\*\*\*\*\*

Time: 1836

#### The Whigs Nominate Four Regional Candidates

In addition, Clay is astute enough to recognize that 1836 is not the time for his name to appear at the top of the ballot.

Instead, he opts for a unique strategy, with a Whig ticket built around four candidates, all tied to at least some of the party's core principles, and all possessing regional popularity.

The four Whigs on the ballot are:

- Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, the acknowledged leader of the New England region.
- William Henry Harrison, frontiersman, ex-Governor of the Northwest and Indiana Territories, military victor in tribal battles, congressman and diplomat, and currently living on his farm in Ohio. His role in Clay's plan will be to win the far West now that Jackson is off the Democrat ticket.
- Senator Hugh White of Tennessee, a long-time Jackson supporter who falls out over his belief that the President has failed in his support of state's rights. White is expected to succeed in the deep South.
- Senator Willie P. Mangum of North Carolina, a momentary Democrat who backs Clay's "American System" objectives and will be asked to campaign in the coastal states of the south.

Clay's hope is that this four man contingent will deny Van Buren the electoral votes he needs to win outright, and instead throw the final call into the House where a compromise candidate might be chosen – perhaps even himself.