

Chapter 47 - A Troubling House Vote In The U.S. Hands The Presidency To JQ Adams

Time: October-December 1824

The General Election Ends Without A Winner

Voting in 1824 takes place between October 26 and December 2. Turnout surpasses all prior contests, as three in every four states now choose electors based on the popular votes, and real competition draws public interest.

Popular Voting For President & Number Of States Where Electors Chosen By Their Votes

1788	1792	1796	1800	1804	1808	1812	1816	1820	1824
43,782	28,579	66,841	67,282	143,110	192,691	278,786	112,370	106,701	365,833
7 of 12	6 of 15	9 of 16	6 of 16	11 of 17	10 of 17	9 of 18	10 of 19	15 of 24	18 of 24*

* State legislators in Delaware, Vermont, New York, South Carolina, Georgia and Louisiana still choose electors in 1824

As expected, none of the four candidates reach the 131 electoral vote level needed to become president in the traditional fashion. Andrew Jackson comes closest, at 99 votes, with Adams a close second. Crawford edges Clay for third place, even though he remains physically incapable of serving.

Results Of The 1824 Presidential Election

Candidates	State	Party	Pop Vote	Tot EV
Andrew Jackson	Tn	Dem-Rep	151,271	99
John Quincy Adams	MA	Dem-Rep	113,122	84
William Crawford	Ga	Dem-Rep	40,856	41
Henry Clay	Ky	Dem-Rep	47,531	37
Unpledged			6,616	0
Total			365,833	261
Needed to win				131

Jackson alone demonstrates national appeal, garnering significant votes in all four regions of the country. Adams support is almost exclusively in the northeast. Crawford splits the old South with Jackson, and Clay wins his home state of Kentucky and its northern neighbor, Ohio.

Shifting State Alignments: Old/New And Slave/Free

	Slavery Allowed (12)	Slavery Banned (12)
Old Established East Coast States (15)	36 Crawford 33 Jackson 4 Adams 0 Clay 73 Total	77 Adams 37 Jackson 5 Crawford 4 Clay 103 Total
Emerging States West Of Appalachian Range (9)	22 Jackson 17 Clay 2 Adams 0 Crawford 41 Total	16 Clay 7 Jackson 1 Adams 0 Crawford 24 Total

Note: East Coast slave states (Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, NC, SC, Georgia); east coast free (Maine, Mass, NH, Vt, Conn, Penn, RI, NY, NJ); west slave (Ky, Tenn, Ala, Miss, La, MO); west free (Ohio, Ind, IL)

Time: Winter 1824

Sidebar: Detailed Tables From The Election Of 1824

Electoral Votes Cast: Total US

	Total	Jackson	Adams	Crawford	Clay
East	196	70	81	41	4
West	65	29	3	0	33
Slave	114	55	6	36	17
Free	147	44	78	5	20

Old Established East Coast States: With Slavery

	Total	Jackson	Adams	Crawford	Clay
Maryland	11	7	3	1	
Delaware	3	2		1	
Virginia	24			24	
N. Carolina	15	15			
S. Carolina	11	11			
Georgia	9			9	
Total	73	35	3	35	

Old Established East Coast States: No Slavery

	Total	Jackson	Adams	Crawford	Clay
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Massachusetts	15		15		
Maine	9	1	8		
New Hampshire	8		8		
Vermont	7		7		
Connecticut	8		8		
Pennsylvania	29	3	26		
Rhode Island	4		4		
New York	28	28			
New Jersey	17	8		5	4
Total	125	40	76	5	4

Emerging Western States: With Slavery

	Total	Jackson	Adams	Crawford	Clay
Kentucky	14				14
Tennessee	11	11			
Alabama	5	5			
Mississippi	3	3			
Louisiana	5	3	2		
Missouri	3				3
Total	41	21	2		17

Emerging Western States: No Slavery

	Total	Jackson	Adams	Crawford	Clay
Ohio	16				16
Indiana	5	5			
Illinois	2	2			
Total	23	7			16

Time: February 9, 1825

Clay Maneuvers To Insure That The House Elects Adams

According to the 12th Amendment rules, the choice of president now falls into the House of Representatives, which meets on February 9, 1825, to decide the outcome. Each state will cast one vote for the winner within their caucus. Since there are 24 states in total, a candidate must take at least 13 to be elected.

In the general election, Jackson has led the pack, winning twelve states, with Adams as runner-up with seven.

States Won In General Election

Candidates	#
Andrew Jackson	12
John Quincy Adams	7
Henry Clay	3
William Crawford	2

Jackson's lead, however, quickly slips away in the House. He loses Delaware and North Carolina to Crawford, and then Louisiana to Adams. At the last moment, New York also slips away, after Daniel Webster and Henry Clay convince the Dutch patron, Stephen Van Rensselaer, to break his promise to Van Buren, and cast a deciding vote in the caucus for Adams.

The rest of Jackson's losses also trace directly to the Speaker. From the beginning, Clay dismisses Jackson's readiness to be president in no uncertain terms:

I cannot believe that killing 2500 Englishmen at N. Orleans qualifies for the various, difficult and complicated duties of the Chief Magistrty.

He is joined in this conclusion by Jefferson and others who regard the General's temperament as too rash for the office, as demonstrated by his recent rampages in Florida.

But Clay now must choose between Adams and Crawford, and he meets with the former before the House vote. Two very different views of this meeting emerge in hindsight. One is that Adams convinces Clay that he will support the Speaker's "American System" initiatives if elected. The other is that Adam's secures Clay's support by promising to name him Secretary of State.

Whatever the reason, Clay decides to steer three key states he won in the general – Kentucky, Missouri and Ohio – over to Adam's column on the first ballot. This give him the thirteen states needed for victory.

House Run-Off For President: 1st Ballot (13 Needed To Win)

Old East - With Slavery	General	Jackson	Adams	Crawford
Maryland	AJ		X	
Delaware	AJ			X
Virginia	WC			X
North Carolina	AJ			X
South Carolina	AJ	X		
Georgia	WC			X
Total		1	1	4
Old East – No Slavery				
Maine	JQA		X	
Massachusetts	JQA		X	
New Hampshire	JQA		X	
Vermont	JQA		X	
Connecticut	JQA		X	
Pennsylvania	JQA	X		
Rhode Island	JQA		X	
New York	AJ		X	
New Jersey	AJ	X		
Total		2	7	0
New West – With Slavery				
Kentucky	HC		X	
Tennessee	AJ	X		
Alabama	AJ	X		
Mississippi	AJ	X		
Louisiana	AJ		X	
Missouri	HC		X	
Total		3	3	0
New West – No Slavery				
Ohio	HC		X	
Indiana	AJ	X		
Illinois	AJ		X	
Total		1	2	0
Grand Total		7	13	4

Time: April 25, 1825

Clay Fights Yet Another Duel To Defend The Election

When Adams names Clay as his Secretary of State, Jackson is convinced that a “corrupt bargain” trumped the will of the American people and cost him an election that was his. He quickly vents his spleen:

Clay voted for Adams and made him President and Adams made Clay Secretary of State. Is this not proof as strong as holy writ of the understanding and corrupt coalition between them? So, the Judas of the West has closed the contract and will receive the thirty pieces of silver. His end will be the same. Was there ever witnessed such a bare faced corruption in any country before.

With that the 56 year old General resigns from the Senate and rides back home to Tennessee, with the firm commitment to defeat Adams in 1828 election and oppose Clay at every future step of the way.

Adams attempts to move past the fractious election, but many Jackson supporters are in no mood to either forgive or forget. This soon leads to another episode of violence involving high government officials.

The impetus in this case is a speech made by the ever-volatile Senator, John Randolph of Roanoke. In a six-hour harangue on the floor, he accuses the administration of violating America’s long-standing policy of “avoiding foreign entanglements” by wishing to participate in Bolivar’s upcoming Panama conference

As his rhetoric becomes increasingly inflammatory, John C. Calhoun, serving as pro-tem of the Senate, allows him to rail on – a fact which Adams properly interprets as treachery from his own Vice-President.

Randolph ends with a personal attack on both Adams and Clay, whom he refers to as...

The Puritan and the Blackleg.

The Puritan, of course, is Adams, the stern Massachusetts man, and the Blackleg – a vicious disease which kills livestock, not to mention slang for a card-cheat – is Clay.

Randolph is well known to Clay. He is Thomas Jefferson’s cousin, and his career in congress dates back to 1799. Along with Clay, he is a co-founder of the American Colonization Society in 1816, who will, if fact, free all of his slaves in his final will.

His political values are those of the extreme “states-rights” wing of the party, including a belief that federal laws can be “nullified” by a vote of local legislators. His fame rests on his general

flamboyance, his powerful oratory, his capacity for consuming alcohol, and his shooting prowess.

The latter is no deterrent to Clay, who challenges him to a duel for his remarks on the floor. Attempts by the Secretary's friends to avoid the obvious risks are met with characteristic resistance.

No public station, no, not even life, is worth holding, if coupled with dishonor.

Randolph is astonished to receive the challenge, saying that it violates a senator's right to protected speech within the chamber. He informs his aides, but not Clay, that he has no intention of firing to harm should the duel actually take place.

Clay, however, plunges ahead, much as he had back in 1809 when called a "liar" in the Kentucky State House by Representative Humphrey Marshall. This affair ended with a total of four shots exchanged and both men wounded, Clay to the extent that further rounds were called off.

On April 25, 1825, rowboats carry the two combatants across the Potomac to their native Virginia, and the two men – a 51 year old United States Senator and the 49 year old Secretary of State – square off with pistols.

Randolph appears in a vast morning gown, which makes the outline of his body difficult to discern.

Tensions are high, and the hair-trigger on the Senator's gun causes a misfire, which Clay forgives.

Both men then let off their first shots, with neither hit. On the second round, Clay's shot nicks Randolph's outer garment, while Randolph fires aimlessly in the air – signaling the Secretary that the event is over.

In accord with tradition, the two men shake hands and exchange cards. Clay purportedly says that he is thankful not to have injured Randolph, and Randolph retorts that Clay now owes him a new coat. With that the two sail back across the river, with at least minimal courtesy restored.