

*Jacksonian Democracy in Mississippi.* By Edwin Arthur Miles. *The James Sprunt Studies in History and Political Science*, Volume 42. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960. Pp. 192. Bibliography, index. Paperbound, \$2.50.)

This monograph is a readable summary of politics in the state of Mississippi from the 1824 presidential campaign through the first years of President Martin Van Buren's administration. The writer has shown how leaders of Mississippi reacted to policies of "Jacksonian Democracy" when these policies were implemented at the national level. In the account we see the expression of grassroots sentiment on key domestic issues which we identify with Andrew Jackson: Indian removal, the tariff, nullification, and "Mr. Biddle's Bank."

To say that Andrew Jackson enjoyed prestige in frontier Mississippi from his Indian fighting days through the years of his public life would be a gross understatement. That an effective political party would coalesce around his commanding figure was, in the light of southwestern frontier circumstances, almost inevitable. Yet, as Miles demonstrates, there was hardly unanimity among those who rode Old Hickory's coattails. The test facing the ambitious Mississippi politician in the 1820's and 1830's was simple: How far can I pursue my independent course and still enjoy the protection of the great Jackson name? Senator George Poindexter is the prime example of a Mississippian who felt secure enough to swim against the currents of Jacksonian popularity; most—including Samuel Gwin and Robert J. Walker—drifted with the currents, even when the currents appeared to be flowing upstream. Martin Van Buren eventually inherited Andrew Jackson's national title but not his aura, and after 1836 the once effective Democratic coalition in Mississippi splintered away its unity and power.

In depicting Mississippi politics of the Jacksonian era, the writer lifts the veil from some of the practical conditions which triggered overt political action. We see, even in this thinly settled state, clear evidence of rural-urban rivalry. We see "pet banks" with varying degrees of fiscal stability and "paper railroads" which would always remain trackless. We observe the corroding effect of land hunger on political principles. And we are given new insights into the perennial American debate which we have come to identify as the state versus federal authority. Professor Miles's study should encourage scholars to explore similar facets of frontier history more diligently. His documentation, based on scores of contemporary newspapers and an impressive array of other primary sources, gives some valuable guidelines.

The only point on which one might take issue with Miles relates to some indecision (in the Preface) as to whether his study concerns Jacksonian "Democracy" or Jacksonian "democracy." A close reading of the book resolves the dilemma in favor of the capitalized form of the term, for in doing so one finds still further evidence that the early nineteenth century American frontier is not an appropriate place to seek "political democracy" of the idealistic variety.

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