participated in the Whig campaign like never before, cheering avidly at rallies and torchlight parades. Whigs portrayed Van Buren as an extravagant aristocrat while lambasting Jackson for turning the federal government into a monarchy. Van Buren tried futilely to draw the campaign back to monsters, monopolies, and paper money. It was an uphill fight, however, and the Democrats faltered.

The Whigs swept to victory. Harrison carried 19 of 26 states with an electoral vote margin of 234 to 60. The real significance of the election, however, was the turnout—an astounding 80 percent of the eligible voters. Although he suffered defeat, Van Buren’s concept of parties and what it took to win elections triumphed. “They have at last learned from defeat the art of victory,” a Democratic newspaper moaned. “We have taught them how to conquer us.” It was a hollow victory, however. On March 4, 1841, the sixty-seven-year-old Harrison read the longest inaugural speech in history. Underdressed for the chilly Washington weather, he contracted pneumonia and died a few weeks later. Presidential leadership shifted to John Tyler, the first vice president to assume office on the president’s death. A Democrat in Whig clothing, Tyler did not buy into the Whigs’ legislative agenda. Thus, the Whigs’ next political battle would be with themselves.

THINKING BACK
1. What were the major differences between Democrats and Whigs?
2. How did the Whigs defeat the Democrats in 1840?

THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE: FOCUS ON TEXAS, THE LONE STAR REPUBLIC

The occupation of Texas by Anglo-Americans in the 1820s and 1830s was indicative of American support for territorial expansion. Andrew Jackson and Southern slave owners were particularly enthusiastic about Texas, reasserting the claim that John Quincy Adams had negotiated away in the Transcontinental Treaty (see pp. 270–71). Colonization resonated with American chauvinism.

During the 1820s and 1830s, Texas was a complex borderland of multiple and contrasting cultures. Native Americans, Tejanos, and Anglos (immigrants from the United States) formed an uneasy coexistence with one another. Political boundaries meant little at that time; people crossed and re-crossed them with relative ease. National identities were fuzzy too. Texas was a huge territory, yet most Tejano and Anglo residents were settled into a triangle formed by San Antonio, Goliad, and Nacogdoches in the southeast portion of the territory. Indians presided over the rest. Each culture group kept a distrustful eye on the others.

The ripples of President Andrew Jackson’s Indian removal policy could be felt in Texas. Bands of displaced tribes chose Texas over Indian Territory because Mexico had a better reputation for dealing with Indians than the United States. The largest contingent comprised Cherokees who crowded onto the traditional lands of various native Caddos along the Sabine River. The Caddos actually welcomed the powerful newcomers as useful allies. Cherokees also offered their services to the Mexicans who were defending themselves from marauding Comanches.

Most Tejanos were peasant farmers and stock raisers huddled around San Antonio and Goliad. A tiny military garrison at Nacogdoches ostensibly guarded the border with the United States, and a few ranchers owned herds of longhorn cattle that grazed on the dry prairies of South Texas. Tejanos were actually a mixed population of Spanish settlers, Canary Island immigrants, and mestizo soldiers (many of ancient Aztec ancestry). But a common Tejano culture and sense of community had emerged by the 1820s and are clearly evident today. Women grilled flat tortillas from stone-ground corn meal and tamales filled with chopped beef, beans, and hot cayenne pepper. Tejanos consumed beef like the Comanches utilized buffalo, crafting carpets, chair bottoms, beds, packs, and ropes out of the rawhide. They interacted with peaceful Indians and Anglos to such an extent that a member of a Mexican government inspection team in 1828 observed that “they are Mexican only by birth, for even the Castilian language they speak with considerable ignorance.”

By 1830 some 7,000 Anglos resided in Texas, twice the number of Tejanos. Stephen F. Austin had been the most successful of the empresarios (or contractors) that the Mexican government had contracted to bring 300 settler families from the United States. Indeed, Austin negotiated four more colonization contracts that brought an additional 900 families into Texas. Most of them were upstanding citizens, who

What caused the revolution in Texas?
content to mind their own business, farming and ranching in eastern and central Texas, but others dreamed of annexation by the United States or of an independent Texas republic. In 1826 Haden Edwards, a small-time empresario, led an unsuccessful revolt against Mexican authority, and in 1832 one of Andrew Jackson’s Tennessee army companions, Sam Houston, entered Texas with dreams of conquest. Despite Austin’s efforts to keep the Anglos under control, many of them violated Mexican law, sold land illegally to other immigrants, and openly smuggled through clandestine coastal landings. In response, alarmed authorities in Mexico passed the Law of April 6, 1830, which suspended further colonization and prohibited the importation of additional slaves. Illegal adventurers and vagabonds continued to pour into Texas, however, and by 1835 some 27,000 Anglos and 3,000 African-American slaves resided in Texas.

Political upheaval in Mexico City boded ill for Anglo Texans. Mexico’s federal system of government could not improve the economy, so in 1834 General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna disbanded the national congress and the constitution, assumed dictatorial power, and began centralizing authority in Mexico City. This action rankled the democratically minded Texans, Anglo and Tejano, who wanted local control—a situation similar to the conflict between Democrats and Whigs in the United States. Circumstances continued to worsen. In response to a Mexican military buildup in Texas, a militant faction led by William B. Travis, a hot-headed Alabama lawyer, demanded independence. Stephen F. Austin urged patience; he traveled to Mexico City and persuaded Santa Anna to grant more autonomy for Texas. But that did not placate the militants, and in 1835 an armed force of Texans overran a Mexican military garrison at Anahuac near the Gulf coast.

Santa Anna acted forcefully to suppress the Texas revolt. He arrested Austin, who returned to Texas and published a call for armed resistance. Santa Anna then led a major military assault on the disorganized rebels. In March of 1836, Santa Anna ordered an assault on a Texan garrison in the Alamo in San Antonio, killing all of the approximately 200 defenders, including Davy Crockett, William Travis, and a number of native Tejanos. He also ordered the execution of 371 Texans captured at Goliad. The Texans used the cry “Remember the Alamo” to rally support for independence. Believing that he held the upper hand, Santa Anna swept with his army toward the coast, foolishly overextending his supply lines. In April of 1836, Sam Houston, commanding a Texan force, surprised and annihilated the Mexicans in a
battle near the San Jacinto River. Afterward, Santa Anna, who had been taken prisoner, signed a document acknowledging Texas independence.

Most Texans assumed that President Jackson and the Democratic-controlled Congress would act promptly to bring Texas into the United States. And that no doubt would have happened if it had not been for slavery. But Martin Van Buren was seeking election to succeed Jackson as president, and Old Hickory and Van Buren both believed that the annexation of a slave state would split the party along sectional lines and might give election victory to the Whigs. Thus, Texas remained the Lone Star Republic. A slave-based plantation system developed that supplied cotton to British factories. In 1841, Texas launched a military invasion of New Mexico to lay claim to the entire Rio Grande River to its headwaters as well as Santa Fe. But nothing the Texans tried succeeded in establishing a viable economy.

Like the Jacksonian Democrats in the United States, Anglo Texans had demanded freedom for themselves alone. They brought more slaves into Texas and harassed free African Americans unmercifully. Anglos also turned against the Tejanos, including those who had fought alongside them for independence, pushing them off their land. Loyal Tejano leader Juan Seguin ultimately fled with his family after several racially motivated threats and attempts on his life. Thus, the Lone Star Republic incorporated many of the characteristics of the Jacksonian democracy that swept across the United States at that time.

THINKING BACK

1. Why did the citizens of Texas rebel against Mexican authority?
2. What role did Tejanos play in the Texas Revolution?

CONCLUSION

Democracy took a firm grip on American society during the 1820s and 1830s. Andrew Jackson, who led the movement to eliminate special privilege and regarded himself as the common citizens’ steward, proved to be correct on several key points in dispute about the economy. The tariff was helpful but not crucial to economic development. Commercial production and industrialization continued and even gathered strength despite the elimination of tariff protection. The war against the Bank of the United States revealed the BUS’s arbitrary power, although it too had been useful in managing the economy. In opposing nullification, Jackson had not intended to oppose Southern slavery. He was, after all, a slave owner himself. In fact, his simultaneous refusal to block the removal of Native Americans opened additional land for plantation agriculture. Jackson claimed victory in the crisis with South Carolina, but in the process he opened fissures in the party. Southern Democrats did not trust Martin Van Buren, and many of them went over to the Whigs. Democrats did succeed to a considerable extent in uniting farmers, planters, and laborers on the basis of limited government, self-sufficient rather than market-oriented production, and the powerful symbol of Andrew Jackson—a common man who embodied democratic values. Whigs kept the Market Revolution going and government partnership with business alive. But even they, clearly an elitist party, had to acknowledge the democratic changes in American culture were profound and irreversible.