



HIS LEGACY  
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## The Andrew Jackson Portrait hanging in Abraham Lincoln's Presidential Office

In modern times our American Presidents each redecorate their own Oval Office as soon as they are first inaugurated, changing out the portraits, busts and other historic fixtures to reflect their own heroes and political alliances. Lincoln's office was a large rectangular space on the second floor of the White House, now used and known as the "Lincoln Bedroom." Lincoln's predecessor was the Fifteenth President, James Buchanan, a Democrat, who had served as Andrew Jackson's Envoy to Russia in 1832-1833 and later his Secretary of State from 1845- 1849. Predictably, Buchanan hung an oil painting of Jackson, created from life in 1840 by artist Miner Kelbourne Kellogg, over the President's Office working fireplace. Andrew Jackson, the Seventh President, was known as the Father of the Democrat Party, the arch-enemy of Abraham Lincoln's former Whig Party and the political foe of his personal heroes Daniel Webster and Henry Clay.

The first recorded political meeting Lincoln ever attended was an Anti-Jackson gathering in August of 1832. As a State Legislator, in January 1841, Lincoln even voted against a Resolution to commend Jackson's "distinguished services as a Statesman."

So why would Lincoln, the first Republican Party President, who had just defeated two Democratic candidates for the presidency leave the portrait of Jackson in his office?

Although no specific statement personally attributed to Lincoln has yet been discovered, several known facts may explain the mystery:

1. Lincoln was not a decorator. He paid little attention to such issues, deferring them to his wife. The portrait was already hanging there.
2. Like Jackson, who was the first President not living East of the Appalachian Mountains to be elected, Lincoln was a Western man, also born in the South and rising from poverty with little formal education.
3. Jackson, in 1833, appointed Lincoln to his first public office - Postmaster of the rural village of New Salem, Illinois.
4. Lincoln, like Jackson, intended to become and was, a People's President, inviting not just diplomats, but also the public in great numbers into the White House.
5. Jackson, a defender of the Constitution, also faced a Secession Threat from a Southern state in 1832-1833. Then, South Carolina threatened to leave the Union after Congress enacted two

tariff bills to protect New England's manufacturers from British imports. South Carolina, in 1860, again declared its secession from the United States just 6 weeks after Lincoln was elected, presenting him with exactly the same national crisis as Jackson had faced.

6. Jackson acted decisively to deny the earlier Secession movement, by issuing a Nullification Proclamation. Lincoln used this as the model for both language and arguments in his First Inaugural Address of March 1861. Thirty years earlier, Jackson also sent warships to Charleston harbor and had predicted that the next national crisis would be the "slavery question." Lincoln was faced with both issues. The New York Herald newspaper claimed "These times demand a Jackson." Just six weeks later, the Civil War erupted in Charleston harbor when Lincoln ordered provision ships to Fort Sumpter.

The man in the painting, Andrew Jackson, died in 1845 when Lincoln was only 36 years old, but before Abraham had entered national politics. The Jackson portrait remains in the Smithsonian Collection today. It is on display in the Diplomatic Reception Room of the Department of State. The only presidential painting which is consistently on display in Lincoln's former White House working office, now a bedroom, is by artist Douglas Volk and depicts Lincoln himself.

Ironically, Andrew Jackson was the first American President to suffer and survive an assassination attempt on January 30, 1835, when an insane man unsuccessfully attempted to fire two pistols at him in the Capitol. Before April 14, 1865, Abraham Lincoln would not likely have thought about the significance of history potentially repeating itself when he pondered Jackson's image above the fireplace each day.

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