

Andrew Jackson

(1767-1845)

Andrew Jackson was a national hero for his defeat of the British at New Orleans in the War of 1812. He was born in what is today Lancaster County, South Carolina, and later moved to what is now Nashville, Tennessee. In 1796, after serving as a delegate to Tennessee's first Constitutional Convention, Jackson was the first person elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from the state of Tennessee. The following year, he won a seat in the U.S. Senate but soon resigned for personal and financial reasons. From 1798 to 1804 he served as a superior court judge in Tennessee, then retired to live the life of a country gentleman.

When war broke out in 1812, Jackson returned to public life as a military leader and rose to the rank of major general. His 1815 defeat of the British at the Battle of New Orleans won him widespread fame; he became the South's great hero and was affectionately known as "Old Hickory." After serving briefly as governor of Florida when it was admitted as a new U.S. territory in 1821, Jackson returned to the Senate and in 1824 ran for president against Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams, and William Crawford. The House of Representatives decided the election in favor of Adams, because no candidate had an electoral majority. Jackson possessed the largest popular vote, but he narrowly lost the election despite his supporters' charges of a "corrupt bargain" between the Clay and Adams adherents. Four years later, Jackson was elected to the first of two terms as the seventh president of the United States.

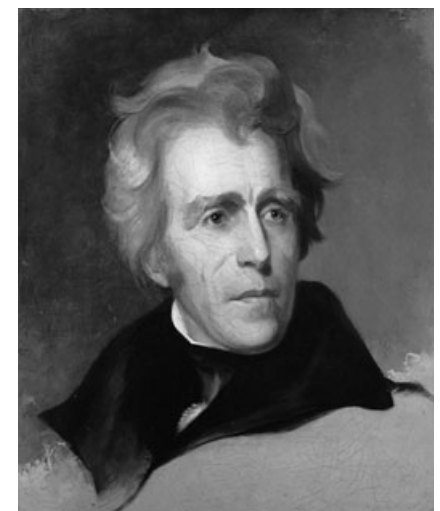
Beloved by his supporters as a champion of the common man, Jackson met with controversy during both of his terms. A principal topic early in his administration was nullification, as South Carolinians threatened to nullify federal tariffs they found oppressive—or secede if not permitted to do so. The president made clear that he stood firmly for the Union, and he fought hard to pass a tariff act to resolve the issue. The debate over nullification and states' rights continued into the 1832 presidential campaign, and

In 1824 Thomas Sully painted a study portrait from life of Andrew Jackson. The hero of the Battle of New Orleans was by then a U.S. senator and a Democratic nominee for president. Two decades later, Jackson's ill health prompted Sully to copy his 1824 study portrait; the replica, which closely resembles the study, was completed shortly before Jackson's death in April 1845. It is now owned by the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Sully used the replica as a model to create a full-length portrait of Jackson as the battle hero (this painting is now owned by the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.). The National Gallery's portrait was long assumed to be the original 1824 life study until it was discovered that the artist had not purchased the linen on which it was executed until the mid-1830s. The original 1824 study was privately owned by Mrs. Breckenridge Long in 1940, but its current location is unknown.

The portrait now in the U.S. Senate was painted several years after Sully's other Jackson portraits, probably in the late 1850s. Though it is clearly based on the 1824 and 1845 likenesses, it differs from these works in three distinct ways. First, the canvas is considerably larger, a result of a later mounting of the original canvas on another, increasing the size by four inches at the sides and top and by six inches at the bottom. This expansion necessitated painting an addition: the dark cloak below the collar (which has darkened into an undefined mass).

Second, the pose is slightly altered. The characterization shifts from poetic and introspective to vigorous and engaged. The head tilts more, throwing the chin completely out of the vertical centerline. The chin also is painted more emphatically, with a strong highlight, which subtly alters the appearance of the face when compared with the 1824 and 1845 Sully paintings.

Third, Sully's mature style, as seen in the 1824 and 1845 Jackson portraits, is not congruent with that of the Senate painting. In the latter, the paint surface is built up and emphatic, exaggerating



This 1845 portrait of Andrew Jackson by Thomas Sully is a replica of the artist's original 1824 life portrait.

(Andrew W. Mellon Collection, © 1999 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.)

Andrew Jackson

Attributed to Thomas Sully (1783-1872)

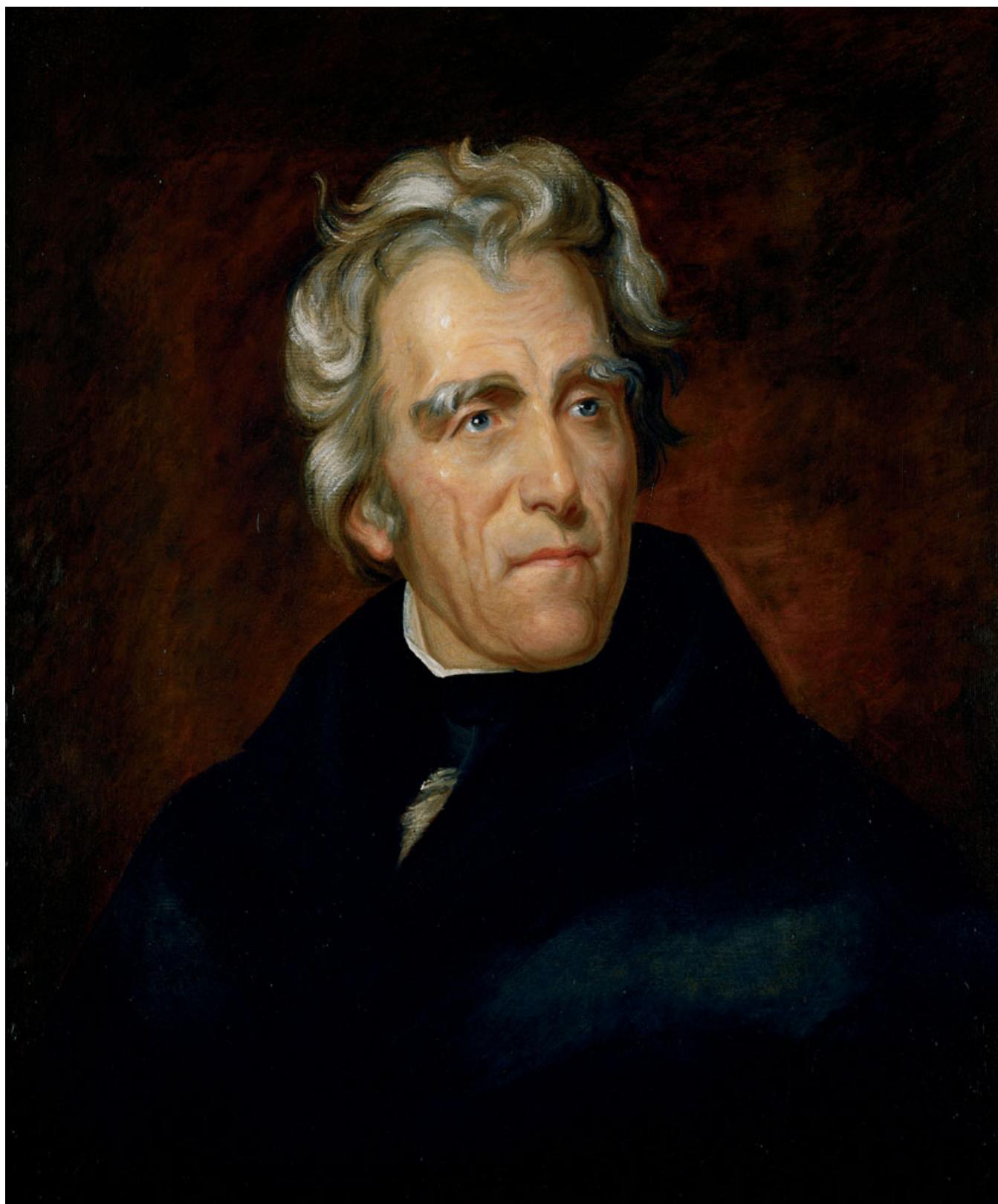
Oil on canvas mounted on board, ca. 1857

29¼ x 24¼ inches (74.3 x 61.6 cm)

Unsigned

Purchased by the Joint Committee on the Library, 1922

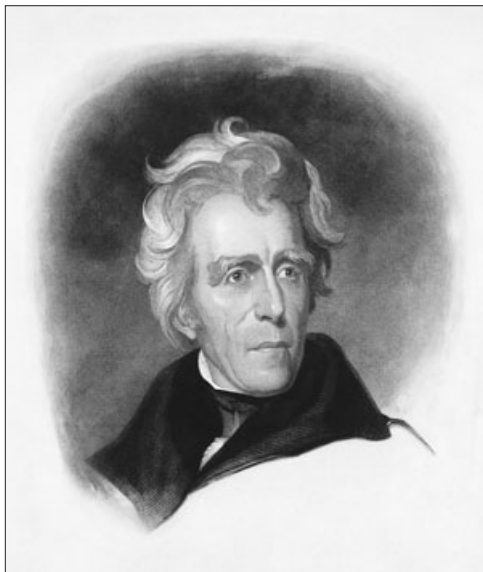
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only eased the following year with the passage of a compromise tariff engineered by Henry Clay.

Jackson's long fight against a bill to recharter the Bank of the United States was also a source of political conflict during the 1832 campaign. His anti-bank stance appeared democratic to voters, however, and Jackson was elected to a second term, defeating Henry Clay, who supported a national financial institution. Jackson, who wanted to ensure the demise of the bank, subsequently withdrew federal monies and deposited them in state banks, an action thought to have contributed to the economic Panic of 1837. In addition, Jackson would later receive criticism when thousands of Native Americans were forced to relinquish their land and relocate to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma).

A strong chief executive who expanded the power of the presidency, Jackson also exerted significant influence over the Democratic Party. After dictating his choice of a successor (Martin Van Buren), Jackson retired to his country home, the Hermitage, near Nashville. He died there in 1845.



Thomas B. Welch copied one of Thomas Sully's paintings of Andrew Jackson in order to complete this 1852 engraving.

the appearance of the hair and the eyebrows, as well as the chin, creased cheek, and forehead. In contrast, Sully's 1824 and 1845 Jacksons are painted with a light touch—a fluidity of brushwork that creates an effect of transparency. In the Senate painting, one finds repeated shapes and insistent rhythms (for instance, in Jackson's hair) that are not found in the earlier portraits and do not seem typical of Sully. In addition, the skin tone is swarthy, a tone not typical of the artist or, for that matter, of Jackson.

Engraver Thomas B. Welch introduced many of the stylistic exaggerations found in the Senate painting (especially in the hair, eyebrows, and facial furrows) in his 1852 engraved copy of Sully's earlier likenesses. Although Sully might have replicated an engraving of his own painting, it is also possible that the Senate painting was copied from Welch's engraving by another, unidentified artist.

The provenance of the Senate painting, on the other hand, appears to support an attribution to Sully. On June 6, 1872, Garrett C. Neagle, son of the artist John Neagle and grandson of Thomas Sully, wrote to Architect of the Capitol Edward Clark to confirm receipt of two Sully paintings that Garrett Neagle had sent to the Joint Committee on the Library. The paintings, a portrait of Andrew Jackson and one of Thomas Jefferson (p. 212), "painted by Mr. Thos. Sully in the years 1856 and 7," were being offered for sale by Neagle for \$300 each. According to Neagle, the Jackson portrait was "painted from studies taken from life" and was considered a fine likeness of the former president. After Sully's death on November 5, 1872, Neagle wrote that the portraits now "should be worth to Congress, at least \$500 each." Clearly, Garrett Neagle had no doubt about the authenticity of the portraits, although he stood to benefit financially from their sale.

The Joint Committee on the Library considered the matter at leisure and in May 1874 purchased the Jefferson portrait (for only \$200) and returned the Jackson painting to Neagle. Half a century after Neagle's first offer, a New York art firm offered the Jackson portrait again to the U.S. government. This time the Joint Committee on the Library authorized its purchase on March 1, 1922, for \$1,200.

Right:

The Senate's painting of Andrew Jackson once hung in the office of the secretary of the Senate in the Capitol.

(1999 photograph)

