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Lilburn W. Boggs and the Case for Jacksonian Democracy

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ABSTRACT
Lilburn W. Boggs and the Case for Jacksonian Democracy

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Lilburn W. Boggs was lieutenant governor of Missouri from 1832 to 1836. He was governor of Missouri from 1836 to 1840. Political upheaval was the order of the day as Jacksonian democrats overthrew, through the power of the ballot box, the establishment of the patrician leadership in the United States. Issues of equity, slavery, religion, settlement of the West, and divisive sectionalism threatened the Union of the states. President Andrew Jackson was the representation of the common man and the enemy of the monied oligarchy that assumed the right to rule the common people. Jackson’s leadership enabled a powerful change in party politics as he became the charismatic figurehead of the Jacksonian Democratic Party. Boggs was a protégé of Thomas Hart Bennett, the powerful ally of Jackson and leading senator from Missouri. Boggs, beginning as a young man, rode the coattails of Benton right into the governor’s mansion in Columbia, Missouri. This thesis examines Boggs’ life and political career to ascertain whether or not he was truly a Jackson man as he represented himself to be to the electorate.

Keywords: Jacksonian democracy, Andrew Jackson, Thomas Hart Benton, Lilburn W. Boggs, Missouri, Mormons, Extermination Order, Jackson county, Bank of the United States, slavery, Indians, removal, the West, Joseph Smith, Alexander Doniphan, Daniel Dunklin
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Chapter One: Jacksonian Democracy

Introduction

Lilburn W. Boggs served as the governor of the state of Missouri from 1836 until 1840. He had served previously as lieutenant governor from 1832 until he assumed the office of governor upon the resignation of Governor Daniel Dunklin in September of 1836.

In order to understand Boggs one must understand the social, economic, and political environment of the time. This was a tumultuous time in Missouri’s history and in the United States of America. It was the time of Jacksonian Democracy. Jacksonian Democracy will be discussed in detail later in the thesis but as an introductory explanation it can be defined as government for the common people and very much against the privileged, wealthy people who controlled the political and financial structure of the United States before 1820. It was the time

1 Buel Leopard, *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of the State of Missouri Volume I* (Columbia, Missouri: The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1922), 3. Boggs delivered to the General Assembly his message as acting governor on one day (November 22, 1836) and on the next day delivered his inaugural address as the regularly elected governor.

2 Joseph F. Gordon. "The Political Career of Lilburn W. Boggs," *Missouri Historical Review* 52, no. 2 (January 1958), 113. Gordon wrote that the incumbent governor of Missouri in 1836, Daniel Dunklin, resigned to accept an appointment as Surveyor General in the summer of 1836; the Lieutenant Governor and Governor-Elect Lilburn W. Boggs became the acting governor for the remainder of Dunklin’s term and began his own four-year term to which he was elected in late 1836. The National Governors Association website (www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.29fab9fb4add373a0ddcbeeb50101a/) records that the date of Boggs’ assumption of the office of Governor, upon the resignation of Governor Dunklin, was September 30, 1836. The beginning of Boggs’ subsequent elective term was November 23, 1836; Boggs completed his elective term as governor on November 16, 1840.
of Manifest Destiny. 3 An editorial in the November, 1839 issue of the Democratic Review defined “Manifest Destiny” to be:

The far-reaching, the boundless future will be the era of American greatness. In its magnificent domain of space and time, the nation of many nations is destined to manifest [here is a suggestion of the phrase] to mankind the excellence of divine principles; to establish on earth the noblest temple ever dedicated to the worship of the Most High – the Sacred and the True. Its floor shall be a hemisphere – its roof the firmament of the star-studded heavens, and its congregation and Union of many Republics, comprising hundreds of happy millions, calling, owning no man master, but governed by God’s natural and moral law of equality, the law of brotherhood – of peace and good will amongst men. 4

This was a time when strong individuals could grab hold of opportunity and obtain land and wealth. It was the age of the common man – a time when powerful personalities could exploit the ambitions of others and orchestrate their behavior in order to realize their own aspirations. Andrew Jackson characterized the social conflict as “The house of Have and the house of Want.” 5

Why was Lilburn W. Boggs, a man from humble beginnings, able to ascend to the lofty office of governor of the State of Missouri in such a tumultuous time? Was he really a Jacksonian Democrat in his politics and actual practices? Did he show to all that he was a ‘Jackson man’ in the major facets of his administration? This thesis will answer these questions by examining studies of previous historians regarding Boggs and his administration in the context of Jacksonian Democracy.


4 Julius W. Pratt. "The Origin of "Manifest Destiny"." American Historical Review, (July 1927), 796-797. Pratt attributes the originator of the term “Manifest Destiny” to John O’Sullivan, editor of a monthly publication, the Democratic Review.

The decades of the 1820s and 1830s, when Boggs emerged as a man of power in Missouri politics, was a time of violence in American society; many major cities in the United States experienced mob riots and horrible violence. The issue of slavery was constantly under attack and at the fore in most elections. Native Americans (Indians) were scattered, driven, and resettled (“removed” in the vernacular of the time) to accommodate the land hunger of the white settlers. Religious fervor was rampant and troublesome.

The U.S. economy was in shambles having recovered from one financial crisis only to sink into another. Panic prevailed in business and personal financial affairs, agricultural markets were unpredictable, and bank failures were commonplace. United States export focus was morphing from the exportation of raw materials to providing finished goods to foreign markets. Domestic demands for finished goods increasingly were met by enterprising businessmen of the northeast. Investors curtailed the purchase of ships for the transport of export products in order to invest in plant works and factories. Most currency became completely worthless.

Emigration from east to west stoked the fire of land speculation. Settlement of the west sparked fears of depopulation of the major cities of the northeast. The “monied oligarchy” of

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6 David Grimsted. "Rioting in Its Jacksonian Setting." *American Historical Review* 77, no. 2 (April 1972), 362-64. Grimsted wrote that the first quarter of the nineteenth century was relatively free of internal group violence but in the 1830’s riot once again became frequent; citing twenty incidents between 1828-1833, at least sixteen in 1834, and thirty-seven in 1835. At times between 1834 and 1837 there was in some men’s minds a sense of real possibility of social disintegration. Also see Warren Abner Jennings, *Zion Is Fled: The Expulsion of the Mormons from Jackson County, Missouri*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Inc., 1962), 324.


8 Shade, *Politics and Parties*, 486-487. Shade talks about the “burned over” nature of the populace in terms of evangelical zeal, meaning that great energy had been expended by many to preach and convert non-believers. People were willing to “take to the streets” over economic, social, religious, and moral issues.
the north fretted over shifting policy in finance and banking. The “Southern Aristocracy,” the plantation owners of the south, faced oppressive and vague behavior in the demand and prices they could expect in foreign markets for their chief export crop of cotton, the main engine of the agricultural economy of the south. The common man was adrift in the channel between realizing his dreams and feeding his family; how to get ahead?

**Boggs Place in the Party**

In 1832, as a forty-year-old man, Boggs was elected lieutenant governor of Missouri, principally because he was known to be “a Jackson man.” His platform was whatever Andrew Jackson espoused as good policy for the country and for the states. In fact, the previous national election of 1828 came down to a Jackson vote or an anti-Jackson vote. The ‘other’ candidates’ totals were not even reported in many states. Jackson was a political phenomenon and personal loyalty to him was overwhelming among Jacksonians. Robert V. Remini quotes the *Niles Weekly Register*, “The devotion to him is altogether personal without reference to his course of policy.” An exploration of the policies Andrew Jackson trumpeted to the nation occupies historians to this day, nearly two hundred years since “King Andrew the

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9 Max Savelle. *Seeds of Liberty: The Genesis of the American Mind*, (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 236. Savelle explained that the landed gentry of the South had been given large grants of land and this placed them in a position to exploit the great influx of immigrants, white and black, and that by either renting or selling the land at high prices with long-term payments, or by the mechanisms of slavery, became wealthy at the expense of those who actually developed the land.


First” was elected president of the United States of America, an office he held for two consecutive terms.  

In order to grasp firmly what Jacksonian Democracy was one must have an understanding of how Jackson inserted himself so thoroughly into the fabric of life among the common people of the time. A short biographical sketch of Jackson along with the politics of his time will be helpful in understanding Jacksonian Democracy.

Andrew Jackson was born on March 15, 1767, although it is not clear whether he was actually born in North Carolina or South Carolina. Jackson ultimately called Tennessee his home and his military and political career began in Nashville. His first political office in Tennessee as the attorney-general of the Western District of the Southwest Territory before statehood was granted to Tennessee. He also became judge advocate for the Davidson County militia in what is now Tennessee. Tennessee was admitted to the Union in 1796 and Jackson was elected as the first U.S. Representative in Congress for Tennessee. He ran for the U.S. Senate in 1797 and won the election but resigned within the year because of serious personal financial setbacks. After his resignation from the U.S. Senate he was appointed, by the State Legislature, to the Superior Court where he would earn the highest wage in the state,

13 Remini. *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom, Vol. II.*, 1981, 385. Remini cites a cartoon depicting Jackson in full regal attire, complete with ermine robe, crown, and scepter. In his left hand he holds a rolled document labeled “veto” and he stands on a tattered copy of the Constitution and an emblem with the motto, “Virtue, Liberty and Independence.” At the top of the picture are the words, “Born to Command.”

14 Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, (New York: Mason Brothers, 1860), 1:52-58. Although Jackson always thought of himself as a South Carolinian he was born just feet away from South Carolina in North Carolina. An explanation of the determination that he was born in North Carolina is included in this segment of Parton’s book.

15 Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, 1:119. The Western District was renamed the District of Mero in honor of a Spanish officer, Esteban Miro [sic.].

except for the governor, and be able to travel the state and be with the people. He served on the Superior Court until 1804.  

Jackson was a powerful man with a charismatic personality and became known for his masterful military command and great success in prosecuting war. Jackson was involved in the first of the three Seminole Wars and also in liberating Florida from the British and the Spanish after the war of 1812 had ended with provisions in the Ghent Treaty for the British and the Spanish to divide Florida. By the time he commanded his last battle he had become a national hero and champion for United States’ supremacy. George Dangerfield chronicled Jackson’s military victories: “Behind the Battle of New Orleans lay the storming of Pensacola; behind the storming of Pensacola lay the victories of Talladega, Emuckfaw, Enotachopco, and Horseshoe Bend; and sandwiched between Horseshoe Bend and Pensacola were twenty-three million acres ravished from vanquished Creeks at the Treaty of Fort Jackson. Such were the military achievements of Andrew Jackson, and they had been crowded into the space of fourteen months.”

Jackson had become a national hero and people already called him “Old Hickory” because of his toughness. He was known as a duelist with unflinching courage. His character and intractability in the face of odds against him appealed to the common man. James L. Bugg,  

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17 Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1966), 36-43. Parton called the court, to which Jackson was elected by the Tennessee State Legislature, the Supreme Court of the State of Tennessee (see Parton, 1:227).


19 Augustus C. Buell, *History of Andrew Jackson: Pioneer, Patriot, Soldier, Politician, President*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1904), 155. The notable duel Jackson had was with Charles Dickinson on May 29, 1806. Buell offered substantial explanation of the motive and outcome in his book. Dickinson was killed by Jackson and Jackson was severely wounded. Jackson suffered the rest of his life from the memory and the wounds of the duel (see Parton 3:63).
Jr. said he “Became the selfless and noble champion of the common man, fearlessly battling and righteously conquering the forces of privilege, corruption, and oppression.”

As the common man loved Jackson, so he loved them. Bugg wrote of Jackson, “Yes, as autocrat as he was, Andrew Jackson loved the people, the common people, the sons and daughters of toil, as truly as they loved him, and believed in them as they believed in him.”

Prior to Jackson’s election the electorate had not voted for heroes and Indian fighters; presidents of the United States had always been selected from patrician circles – those of high birth, educated men; the powerful who had demonstrated political deftness. Later in his life Jackson referred to the mighty and powerful ones as the “monied capitalists and the ‘hydra’ of corruption.”

Life and politics in the United States were changing in radical ways by the late 1820s; a new generation was ready to push aside the establishment of the social and economic elite. Jackson recognized that he had wide-spread appeal with the electorate and also that the winds of change were in his favor because of his popularity growing out of his commonality with the people. Friends in Tennessee asked Jackson to run for president of the United States and when he agreed so to do his friends were able to get the legislature of Tennessee to nominate him for president in 1822. In order to strengthen his campaign his friends convinced him to run for the


22 Bugg, *Jacksonian Democracy*, 36. The word ‘hydra’ is defined by Merriam-Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary as a many-sided problem or obstacle that presents new difficulties each time one aspect of it is solved or overcome. Another usage of the word is to describe a protozoan polyp, some free-swimming and some fixed on marine vegetation, that can reproduce from eggs or from buds that break off and regenerate. In other words, the term “hydra of corruption” describes personalities whose ambition cannot be controlled and who are opportunistic in their search for enrichment.
U.S. Senate and he won that election. Jackson campaigned hard and won the popular vote for
president against three others: Jackson – 152,901 votes; John Quincy Adams – 114,023 votes;
William Crawford – 46,979; Henry Clay – 47,217 votes. Although Jackson easily won the
popular vote, none of the four candidates could win the electoral vote. The election then fell to
the United States House of Representatives and a considerable campaign for congressional
votes ensued; Jackson, however, would not participate in the king-making negotiations that
necessarily enter into such a contest. Jackson, much to his chagrin, lost to John Quincy Adams.
Jackson committed himself to campaign for the 1828 presidential election.\(^\text{23}\) He would see that
the will of the people would determine the next election.

As it turned out, John Quincy Adams, of patrician lineage, essentially handed the next
election to Jackson in 1828 when he signed the Tariff of 1828 which alienated a good portion of
the electorate in the states in which he had the best chance to carry the vote. The Tariff of 1828
was a protective tariff (import tax) primarily on manufactured goods from England and other
overseas origins. The tariff, even in 1828, was called “The Tariff of Abominations” because it
protected the manufacturers of the north at the expense of the agricultural interests of the
South.\(^\text{24}\) By instituting protective duties ranging from 33 1/3% to approximately 50% the tariff
made manufactured goods from the north cheaper than imported goods, thereby protecting the
business profitability of the northern manufacturers while making domestically manufactured
goods more expensive than imported goods would have been for everyone in the United States.
At the same time, England could not sell its manufactured goods to the United States because of
the tariff and the common belief was that England then would not purchase cotton and other raw


materials from the United States as a retaliatory trade sanction against the tariff. Northern interests in Congress prevailed over the interests of the agricultural sections of the country. Jackson, touting the will of the people in all things, won the election in a landslide: Jackson -- 647,276; Adams -- 508,064. The electoral vote was worse for Adams: Jackson: 178; Adams: 83. Beginning with his inauguration, Andrew Jackson would do the will of the people. Jackson was determined to prove that a commoner could ascend to the presidency. He would prove that the people could chart their own course through the power of the ballot. Through the ballot, the people really could change things and take the government from the aristocratic few and exercise the power of the majority in choosing elected leaders committed to do the will of the people rather than looking for self-enrichment through favoritism and cronyism.

Because Jackson was from the West and the people of the West identified so closely with him, the election returns seemed to be an affirmation that government by aristocracy was a thing of the past and the government would change in radically good ways for the common people; access to government seemed assured through their friend and colleague Old Hickory. Things were going to change. This election was going to be won by popular vote—the voice of the people. In fact, Jackson considered himself to be one of the people. Remini shared an anecdote of Jackson returning to Washington from Tennessee. His carriage stopped at a tavern for refreshment. Another party traveling by stagecoach heard that he was in the neighborhood and went to the tavern to find him. As soon as they entered the room the President stood and


26 Remini, *Andrew Jackson*, 103.

27 Remini, *Andrew Jackson*, 103. By the time he was elected President he actually was aristocratic in his self-made wealth and the size of his holdings. People still expected that he would create links between the government and the common people.
greeted each of them with a firm handshake and conversation. A drunken Irishman entered the room and demanded introduction. The Irishman’s questions and comments seemed humorous and impertinent but Jackson took it all in stride. As the stagecoach was leaving all were amazed at the idea of the President of the United States and the drunken Irishman sitting together in a public place conversing informally; they considered it a “striking picture of democracy.”

The election of Andrew Jackson to be the President of the United States did signal a fundamental change in government. Daniel Webster wrote of the inaugural, “I never saw such a crowd here before. Persons have come five hundred miles to see General Jackson, and they really seem to think that the country is rescued from some dreadful danger!”

Jackson wrote, attempting to describe Jacksonian Democracy, “people could know if they would simply ask political candidates a few basic questions; they could distinguish true Democrats from “Whiggs, nullies & blue light federalists” by the answers they received. The people ought to enquire of them, are you opposed to a national bank—are you in favor of a strict construction of the federal and state constitution—are you in favor of rotation in office—do you subscribe to the republican rule that the people are the sovereign power, the officers their agents, and that upon all national or general subjects, as well as local, they have a right to instruct their agents & representatives, and they are bound to obey or resign—in short are they true republicans agreeable to the true Jeffersonian creed?”


Majority Rule

“Forms of government have been, for the most part, only so many various modes of tyranny,” wrote George Sidney Camp in Democracy which was published in 1841. Jackson believed that government could never leave out the voice of the people. Democracy cannot progress if the people are allowed to be excluded from the actual process; they must be involved and they must be the primary check of abuse of power. Jackson did, indeed, feel that the will of the people had been subverted in a conspiracy of corruption. He felt that the vote of the House of Representatives had been manipulated by promises of power to the influential, particularly Henry Clay. To his friend, Major William B. Lewis, Jackson wrote, five days after the election,

“I am informed this day, by Colonel R. M. Johnson, of the Senate, that Mr. Clay has been offered the office of secretary of state, and that he will accept it. So, you see, 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 barefaced corruption in any country before? The Senate (if this nomination is sent to it) will do its duty. No imputation will be left at its door. We will soon be with you. Farewell.” The popular vote had been lost. The electoral vote had been lost. The election had been referred to the House of Representatives and then high-jacked by power-mongers; deals had been made to swing the vote in a direction contrary to the representative duty of the members of the House.

Jackson was so firm in his faith in the rule of the people and in their faith in him that it can be observed that from time to time he appeared to over-reach his authority. One such

32 Parton, Life of Andrew Jackson, 3:72.
instance was during the prolonged battle he waged to disenfranchise the Bank of the United States. His battle was with the capitalist elite and he would not back down. He believed that the bank was monopolistic and corrupt. In order to try to ‘kill the bank’ he withdrew all federal deposits at the Bank of the United States which left the bank teetering on bankruptcy. The anti-Jackson people, led by Henry Clay, cried “executive despotism.” This was followed by a motion in the Senate by Clay to formally censure the President; the motion carried and President Jackson was censured.33

Thomas Hart Benton, a powerful senator from Missouri, became a staunch ally of Jackson in Washington. Missourians sometimes included his name in describing the form of government Jackson espoused; Jacksonian-Benton Democracy. Jackson and Benton certainly were hand-in-glove in their representation of the people and in their ambitions to reform democracy and restore the government to the people. Benton has been called one of the greatest orators ever to hold a seat in the U.S. Senate. He spoke in defense of President Jackson in the Senate proceedings of censure:

The ambition which leads me on, is an anxious desire and a fixed determination, to return to the people, unimpaired, the sacred trust they have confided to my charge—to heal the wounds of the constitution and preserve it from further violation; to persuade my countrymen, so far as I may, that it is not in a splendid government, supported by powerful monopolies and aristocratical establishments, that they will find happiness, or their liberties protected, but in a plain system, void of pomp—protecting all, and granting favors to none—dispensing its blessings like the dew of heaven, unseen and unfelt, save in the freshness and beauty they contribute to produce. It is such a government that the genius of our people requires—such a one only under which our States may remain for ages to come, united, prosperous, and free.34


34 Thomas Hart Benton. Thirty Years’ View or, A History of the Working of the American Government for Thirty Years, from 1820 to 1850, New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1864, 427. The censure came of ill-will toward Jackson because of his relentless attack on the Bank of the United States. The Senate demanded papers from Jackson concerning the withdrawal of tax deposits in the bank. Jackson refused and the Senate censured him for his refusal to comply. Benton fought for almost three years to expunge the censure and was finally successful.
Later, Senator Benton introduced a motion the last day of the Senate Session of 1834 to counterattack Clay and the anti-Jacksonians for their cry of “executive despotism;” the motion was called an “Expunging Resolution.” Benton fought for two and a half years to have the censure expunged. Finally, in January of 1837, Benton’s Expunging Resolution passed by a vote of 24-19 in favor of President Jackson’s censure being expunged.

Jackson’s anti-aristocratic, plain government trusting in and depending upon the genius of the people rang true to the central principal of Jacksonian Democracy. Majority rules! As Jefferson formulated—equal rights with special privileges for none!

Thomas Jefferson said in his first inaugural address:

> The vital principle of republics [is] -- absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority. But what were the other “essential principles” of his enumeration but a bill of exceptions to this “vital principle”? They were, in fact, a catalogue of rights placed out of reach of the majority, for fear that the majority might destroy them. “The minority possess their equal rights … and to violate [them] would be oppression.”

The “people,” incidentally, were clearly defined by Jackson as “the farmers, mechanics, and laborers,” or “the humble members of society,” or “those who earn their living by the sweat of their brow.” Certainly not businessmen, monopolists, emerging capitalists, or any other elitist group. The majority!

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Speaking of the destructive nature numerical majority can play in a democracy in a Senate speech from 1833, John C. Calhoun said:

The government of the absolute majority is but the Government of the strongest interests; and when not efficiently checked, is the most tyrannical and oppressive that can be devised…. Whatever interest obtains possession of the Government will, from the nature of things, be in favor of the powers, and against the limitations imposed by the constitution, and will resort to every device that can be imagined to remove those restraints. …To maintain the ascendancy of the constitution over the law-making majority is the great and essential point. “There is a remedy,” however, “and but one”: to organize society with reference, not to individuals, but to interests. This could be done only “by giving to each part the right of self-protection.”  

Conversely, Jackson believed that all offices in government, no matter what level of government, whether elected or appointed, “must ultimately fall under the absolute control of the people. Appointed offices should be rotated, preferably every four years. Elected offices must be filled directly by the people.”

In other words, “In the United States free individuals were the ultimate governors of the nation. Government implies power and the instrument of power for the individual was the ballot.”

As migration to the new country in the west increased dramatically, the old aristocracy “lamented the raw, muddy democracy born of the frontier. Others shuddered when the western states seemed to threaten conservative bulwarks by providing for election, rather than executive appointment, of judges and, above all, by clamoring for cheap money, decentralized banking,

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40 Schlesinger, *The Age of Jackson*, 52-53. John Caldwell Calhoun served as a U.S. Senator from South Carolina and also as Vice President of the United States.

41 Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom, Vol. III*, 342. Jackson tried to have the electoral college eliminated by proposing a constitutional amendment. He felt that the Senate was an elitist organization and that their terms should be limited to one four-year term.

and free lands.”43 Jackson was a symbol, to the ‘old guard’, of reckless abandonment of, and a threat to, the established way of doing business and conducting government. Jackson, on the other hand, agreed with Thomas Jefferson, that the “natural democrat is guided by fundamental law.”44 Decent men know what is right and what is wrong.

Reform

From the beginning President Jackson demanded morality in office. He issued his “Outline of Principles” on February 23, 1829, wherein he directed his cabinet to examine the operations of their respective departments for corruption and inefficiency and to report to him. He wanted to down-size government and insure efficiency in the operation of all functions of government. Jackson wanted to limit the scope of government in the lives and business of the nation.45 He wanted rotation in office of the professionals that managed the day-to-day functions of government. He wanted a natural limit to their tenure that would result from rotation at election time. The election cycle, especially if he could establish term limits in the Senate and the office of the Presidency, would naturally reduce corruption in office as the appointees cycled in and out with the elected officials. Many professional bureaucrats worried about dismissal from their jobs. The reform undertaken by Jackson was termed the “reign of terror” in Washington. The exaggeration of what was happening could be summed up in the

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sentiment “the government formerly served by the *elite* of the nation, is now served, to a very considerable extent, by its refuse.”46

Jackson proposed to Congress, with a powerful argument, that appointed office had become a form of property to those with long tenure and that it was, on its face, undemocratic to allow office holders to feel entitlement to support from the government which exceeded the support and security a common man could enjoy. He argued that the functions of the appointees did not require skills unavailable in the marketplace. Since no man is entitled to support above another in the democratic scheme then there was no evil in rotating appointees in concert with the election cycle. He argued that there would be less corruption as tenure decreased among appointees. It would be wrong, however, to replace a good and effective appointee with a bad one.47

President Jackson had promised reform, retrenchment, and economy in his administration; that included Indian removal, rotation in appointed offices, debt reduction, and alteration of the Bank of the United States among other things. He said he felt as if Congress wanted to make his administration the “most extravagant administration since the commencement of the Government. This must not be; The Federal Constitution must be obeyed, State-rights preserved, our national debt must be paid, direct taxes and loans avoided and the Federal Union preserved. These are the objects I have in view, and regardless of all


consequences, will carry into effect."\(^{48}\) Jackson was punctilious in his approach to spending and he vetoed measures that would stretch expenditures beyond expected revenues.

**The Constitution, the Courts, States’ Rights, and the Union**

Jackson was also firmly in favor of states’ rights. His view was that the federal government should be limited so that the states could provide for the needs of the citizens without interference. In his own words he said that one of the tests of whether or not a man was a Jacksonian Democrat would be to ask if he was “in favor of a strict construction of the federal and state constitution.”\(^{49}\)

Jackson believed that the courts could easily over-step the bounds of their constitutional power and that giving the Supreme Court the right to interpret the Constitution would give the government back to the aristocrats. He believed that the courts could review and interpret the law but he would not assign them ultimate authority in pronouncing “the true meaning of a doubtful clause of the Constitution” that would then be binding on all. In a true democracy the people ultimately decide the question of constitutionality and they do it through the ballot box.\(^{50}\) Jackson did believe that all federal judges should be elected and that would include U.S. Supreme Court justices, once a Constitutional amendment could be passed to that effect.\(^{51}\)

\(^{48}\) Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom, Vol. II*, 252. Jackson appointed Martin Van Buren, then a Senator from New York, to be his eyes and ears in Congress to watch for expenditures that would require borrowing or increased taxation.


Before Andrew Jackson was elected president of the United States, John Quincy Adams, because of the Tariff of 1828, faced the threat of nullification -- the idea that a state could declare an act of Congress unconstitutional. The politics of the Jacksonians were delicate and tenuous. Preserving the Union “consists in leaving individuals and States as much as possible to themselves – in making itself felt, not in its power, but in its beneficence; not in it control, but in its protection; not in binding the States more closely to the center, but leaving each unobstructed in its proper orbit.”52 Despite his unflagging espousal of states’ rights he was passionate in his nationalism. He knew that freedom was best protected by a strong nation. “There is nothing that I shudder at more than the idea of a separation of the Union,” he wrote. “Should such an event ever happen, which I fervently pray God to avert, from that date, I view our liberty gone.”53

In fact, South Carolina had threatened to secede from the Union over the Tariff Act of 1828.54 Jackson reacted in terms not to be misunderstood when he said that the Constitution “forms a government, not a league … a single nation having been formed, it follows that the states do not possess any right to secede.”55

The rhetoric of nullification by those in South Carolina reached its peak when the state threatened to secede. John C. Calhoun, former Vice President to President Jackson and then Senator for the State of South Carolina, led a charge from the State of South Carolina for

nullification. Calhoun went so far as to espouse secession from the Union for South Carolina. Jackson threatened that he would use the military to prevent their secession and then appealed to the people of South Carolina by reiterating his position as chief executive: “The laws of the United States must be executed. I have no discretionary power on the subject; my duty is emphatically pronounced in the Constitution. Those who told you that you might peaceably prevent their execution deceived you—they could not have been deceived themselves. Their object is disunion; but be not deceived by names; disunion by armed force is treason.”

Jackson, acknowledging that the Union was at risk, said that the support of the people would be the test. “I will die with the Union.”

Although Jackson called for amendments to the Constitution on several occasions and in spite of the times that he used his veto power in surprising ways, he loved the Constitution for the power that it gave the people and was determined to make sure that the people retained the power it gave them.

The Economy

It is obvious from even a cursory study of Jacksonian Democracy that it was a class struggle between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots.’ “With Old Hickory’s election a fluid

56 John C. Calhoun was elected Senator from South Carolina on December 12, 1832. Calhoun resigned as Vice-President on December 28, 1832 in order to assume his seat in the Senate. His fight with Jackson over nullification and secession effectively ended their friendship. On his deathbed Jackson expressed regret that he had not executed Calhoun as a traitor (see Remini, Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom, Vol. III, 14). Nullification was a movement, led principally by South Carolina, to insure that states’ rights were preeminent to federal law; that should the federal government pass a law injurious to an individual state the state could nullify the federal law by refusing to enforce the federal law within the state or in conduct of state business.

57 Frederic Bancroft, Calhoun and the South Carolina Nullification Movement, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1928), 138-139.

58 Remini, Andrew Jackson, 134.
economic and social system broke the bonds of a fixed and stratified political order. Originally a fight against economic privilege, rallying to its support a host of rural capitalists and village entrepreneurs, Jacksonian Democracy rejected privilege for a few and servitude for the rest of the people.59

Jackson was anti-special interests. The Bank of the United States was his prime target in the struggle against the corruption that so often accompanies alliances between special interests and the government. “The twin powers of the purse and sword … were in Jackson’s opinion the ultimate tests of sovereignty; and to turn over the money of the government to private use, he believed, was as grave an abrogation of sovereign rights as would the use of the army and navy by private interests for private ends.”60 Any entity that had power to influence government decisions and actions because of connections to individuals ‘on the make’ was corrupt. “Money is power … and when controlled by business elite will inevitably destroy the democracy.”61

As mentioned earlier, President Jackson vowed in his inaugural address that one of his primary goals would be to alter or kill the charter of the Bank of the United States. Jackson’s view of the Bank of the United States was that it was a “struggle in both democratic and moral terms, specifically as a struggle of honest workers against corrupt aristocrats, between the many and the few, between the laboring poor and those who would exploit them.”62


Andrew Jackson and Thomas Hart Benton were fiercely loyal to each other in the ensuing battle over the Bank of the United States. Benton was the first to introduce a resolution not to renew the charter of the Bank of the United States. In the congressional session of 1830-1831 Benton spoke of three basic objections to the Bank of the United States: 1.) The institution was too big and too powerful to be tolerated and that the money power of the Bank would eventually amass too much political power; 2.) The rich would get richer and the poor would get poorer. The Bank was unfavorable to small capitalists; 3.) The stockholders were given exclusive privileges that yielded too much capacity for abuse of the common people.63

The Bank of the United States was created by Alexander Hamilton as an extension of the United States Government. Hamilton believed that organized wealth should drive the government and that stability would be the end product of capitalizing the Bank of the United States with enough money to have far-reaching influence in business and in the credit markets. Thomas Jefferson was rigidly opposed to the establishment of the Bank of the United States as was Andrew Jackson. Of the Bank of the United States Jefferson said, “We are completely saddled and bridled, and the bank is so firmly mounted on us that we must go where they will guide us.”64 He wrote, ten years later, “Now while we are strong it is the greatest debt we owe to the safety of our Constitution to bring this powerful enemy to a perfect subordination under its authority.”65 Jackson was in lock-step with Jefferson and others in his fear and contempt of the Bank of the United States.


64 Bugg, *Jacksonian Democracy*, 45.

The Bank of the United States was chartered by Congress in 1816 for twenty years; the charter expired in 1836 on the twentieth anniversary of its charter. The Bank of the United States ostensibly was meant to manage foreign borrowing following the War of 1812 but it became much more than that as it became the depository for all tax collections of the United States Government. With its huge capitalization and even more in deposits the Bank of the United States monopolized the financial markets. Stockholders of the Bank of the United States, including foreign nations, had enormous influence on business and also on politics, sometimes even controlling elections.66

Congress voted to re-charter the Bank of the United States but President Andrew Jackson vetoed, as he had said he would, the bill and Congress was unable to over-ride the veto. The Bank of the United States survived on its own for five more years but then went bankrupt in 1841.67 “[The Bank’s] destruction was apparently esteemed by many of the [Jacksonians] as their finest accomplishment. It rumpled and demoralized the aristocrats they envied. It redistributed vested rights. It established laissez faire. It freed banks from federal credit regulation. It reduced the government's monetary powers by more than half. It stimulated business. It furthered the interests of New York City, Boston, and Baltimore at the expense of Philadelphia.”68

Jacksonians were zealously anti-monopoly. Entrepreneurism was encouraged and revered. One particularly pernicious aspect of the plantation reality was that a few ‘monied


68 Bugg, Jacksonian Democracy, 102.
capitalists’ could effectively monopolize the entire cotton trade by factoring the planting and selling of the cotton. \(^69\) These factors would lend planters money for seed and other necessaries at a high interest rate and then they would broker the cotton for a percentage of the gross sale. Most large-scale growers were always in debt to the factor and always felt helpless to control his destiny. \(^70\)

Jackson despaired especially over speculation that fueled corruption. Remini explains “Equally malignant in undermining the purity and complicating the simplicity of our virtuous Government,” according to Jackson, was “the paper system.” “The wretched business,” he said, “has introduced a thousand ways of robbing honest labour of its earnings to make knaves rich, powerful and dangerous.” Also, “it seems to me that one of the greatest threatners of our admirable form of Government is the gradual consuming corruption, which is spreading and carrying stockjobbing, land jobbing, and every species of speculation into our Legislature, state and national.” \(^71\) Jackson spoke of stock-jobbers, brokers and gamblers—“would to God, they were all swept from the land!” \(^72\)

The Jacksonian era was the time of the Industrial Revolution. It was a time when an ambitious man could get rich if he could get a fair chance. “The humbly born and rugged

\(^69\) Factoring in agriculture was the business of lending to a planter or farmer the cost of planting, cultivation and harvest of a crop. A planter would borrow money against his eventual harvest from a wealthy man or business involved in factoring…called a factor. Factors also were engaged in brokering the harvest, particularly the cotton harvest, by paying a fixed rate minus a percentage for commission to the planter. Sometimes the factor would agree on a fixed price to the planter and then profit by timing the market for the best possible price domestically or overseas.


\(^72\) Schlesinger, *The Age of Jackson*, 121. Jackson was especially aware of the problem of currency issued by the ever increasing number of unregulated banks who were able to issue their own currency. The currency would be depreciated and not be accepted at face value. Some speculators would even buy lots of depreciated currency and turn around and sell it to unsuspecting people at face value.
individualists who were gaining fortunes by their own toil and sweat, or wits, were still simple Americans, Jeffersonian, anti-monopolistic, anti-governmental, but fraught with the spirit of enterprise and fired with a sense of what soon would be called manifest destiny.”

Jackson was passionate about liquidating the national debt. He envisioned a day when the government would generate surpluses to be returned to the people for re-investment in land and business rather than lining the pockets of the few who held the debt and received the usury of the credit instruments. Opportunities abounded for the Federal Government to spend appropriated or borrowed money on internal improvements. Jackson vetoed the Washington Turnpike Bill (Maysville Road Project) and reaffirmed that Congress should limit appropriations to projects of defense and other vital national benefits. Appropriations for anything else could inadvertently advantage one group of taxpayers over others; this was not democratic in any sense.

Slavery

Slavery and racism toward Blacks and Indians were firmly rooted in the Jacksonian ethos. Remini wrote:

To Jackson and his followers, therefore, the question of slavery was not something the government could address with impunity. To them it was akin to discussing the right of the government to confiscate individual property. The right to hold slaves was a basic right, as basic as liberty itself. Put baldly and badly, slaveholding was as American to these Jacksonians as capitalism, nationalism, or democracy. As James Oakes remarked in his book, *The Ruling Class*, it was as natural as racism. William Cooper, in *Liberty and Slavery*, has argued that the white southern celebration of liberty always included the freedom to preserve black slavery. That states Jackson’s own position precisely.


A Jacksonian Democrat believed that holding slaves was a natural right, in other words, owning a slave was like owning a cow or a horse, a wagon or a plow. A slave was property to be cared for, certainly, in order to get a return on investment. “The right of property exists before society,” wrote Representative William O. Goode of Virginia. “The Legislature cannot deprive a citizen of his property in his slave. It cannot abolish slavery in a State. It could not delegate to Congress a power greater than its own.”

Jackson had become quite wealthy as a planter. His plantation included about one-hundred fifty slaves. Jackson bought and sold them just like any other planter. Jackson treated his slaves with savage cruelty or paternal affection (depending on the circumstances), believed they were innately inferior, and did not free a single one when he died, although he told them he hoped to meet them all in heaven.

Dangerfield observed that the slaveholder considered the slave as “not a man; but a thing that bore the semblance of a man.” Dangerfield continued, “Emotionally, it was drifting into the base assumption that the Negro was congenitally inferior to the white man and had been created for the sole purpose of serving him.”

Many of those sympathetic to slavery believed that the slave trade was the will of God. “For, after all, were they not in Africa in a condition of darkness, ignorance, superstition, and slavery to one another? And might it not be reasoned as one author wrote for the American

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75 Remini, The Legacy of Andrew Jackson, 89.
76 Remini, The Legacy of Andrew Jackson, 90.
77 Remini, The Legacy of Andrew Jackson, 90.
78 Dangerfield, Era of Good Feelings, 212.
79 Dangerfield, Era of Good Feelings, 212.
Magazine, that “for their deliverance from this wretched condition, God … made them and their expediency known to the enterprising Europeans, when their assistance was requisite for clearing and tending the American uncultivated wilderness; for which end they are inspired with a spirit of captivating and selling, instead of killing those that fall into the power of their Headmen amongst them; to be purchased and transported by the means or permission of the African company established in London.”

The doctrine of states’ rights became one of the primary defenses of slavery because it called upon the Federal Government to stay out of matters that should be decided by the states. The Federal Government was to protect the states from foreign interposition and to provide benefits that could apply to all states equally. Jackson was a common man but he was also a gentleman and plantation owner; one who depended upon slavery to operate his business.

Further, the slave trade itself had become quite an integral part in the overall enterprise of the large and small planter in the South. Importation of slaves was no longer legal but there was a healthy market for buying and selling domestic slaves. Some slave owners depended upon selling and renting slaves for a good portion of their income. Despite the long-held tradition of slavery and the pride of the southern gentlemen in having many slaves the actual profitability of slavery was questionable. Where the land was productive and prices for crops was reasonable, slave owners did a rough accounting—comparing cost of supporting slave families and the income from the harvest was called the “appropriable surplus”—but there is

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80 Savelle, Seeds of Liberty, 239.

doubt that modern bookkeepers would put much confidence in “appropriable surplus” to determine the actual profitability of slavery to plantation owners.82

**Indian Removal**

Jackson saw himself as a paternalistic caregiver to the Indians. He was convinced that the Indians would be annihilated by the encroachment of the white settlers into their domain through the spread of disease and by armed conflict. In his own mind, removal was the only way to protect them. He wrote, “Removal of the Indians [is] the only means we have in preserving them as nations, and of protecting them.”83 Jackson felt the extinction of the Indian was inevitable unless the Government adopted a policy of removal. Jackson did not hate the Indians, evidenced by the fact that he adopted an Indian child after the battle of Tallushatchee. He acted toward them as if he was their father and they were his children. He felt that they were naturally inferior to the white Americans. He ridiculed John Calhoun’s concept that the Indians had sovereignty over land within the states.84

The American people of the time believed that the work they were doing in Indian removal was humanitarian in nature; they were preserving and protecting the Indians. It is fair to say that this was not just Jacksonian policy because his opponents continued the same practices once they won the presidency. By the time Jackson had served two terms, nearly forty-six thousand Indians had been relocated to lands beyond the Mississippi River.

82 Dangerfield, *Era of Good Feelings*, 210-211.
83 Remini, *The Legacy of Andrew Jackson*, 56.
Americans traded sixty-eight million dollars and thirty-two million acres of land west of the Mississippi for something over one-hundred million acres of land that the Indians gave up in the removal process. 85 What Jackson did to the Indians was certainly done in harmony with the contemporary will of the majority—perhaps the tyranny of the majority. 86

85 Remini, The Legacy of Andrew Jackson, 81.

86 Benton, Thirty Years’ View, 27. Usurpation of Native American Lands is a complex topic. Here is an indication of Senator Benton’s (and Boggs’) concept of the righteousness of what America did to the Indians:

The victories of General Jackson over the Creeks, and the territorial cessions which ensued made the first great breach in this vast Indian domain; but much remained to be done to free the southern and western States from a useless and dangerous population – to give them the use and jurisdiction of all the territory within their limits, and to place them, in that respect, on an equality with the northern and middle States. From the earliest periods of the colonial settlements, it had been the policy of the government, by successive purchases of their territory, to remove these tribes further and further to the west; and that policy, vigorously pursued after the war with Great Britain, had made much progress in freeing several of these States (Kentucky entirely, and Tennessee almost) from this population, which so greatly hindered the expansion of their settlements and so much checked the increase of their growth and strength. Still there remained up to the year 1824 – the last year of Mr. Monroe’s administration – large portions of many of these States, and of the territories, in the hands of the Indian tribes; in Georgia, nine and a half millions of acres; in Alabama, seven and a half millions; in Mississippi, fifteen and three quarter millions; in the territory of Florida, four millions; in the territory of Arkansas, fifteen and a half millions; in the State of Missouri, two millions and three quarters; in Indiana and Illinois, fifteen millions; and in Michigan, east of the lake, seven millions. All these States and territories were desirous, and most justly and naturally so, to get possession of these vast bodies of land, generally the best within their limits. Georgia held the United States bound by a compact to relieve her. Justice to the other States and territories required the same relief; and the applications to the federal government, to which the right of purchasing Indian lands, even within the States, exclusively belonged, were incessant and urgent. Piecemeal acquisitions, to end in getting the whole, were the constant effort; and it was evident that the encumbered states and territories would not, and certainly ought not to be satisfied, until all their soil was open to settlement, and subject to their jurisdiction. To the Indians themselves it was equally essential to be removed. The contact and pressure of the white race was fatal to them. They had dwindled under it, degenerated, become depraved, and whole tribes extinct, or reduced to a few individuals wherever they attempted to remain in the old States; and could look for no other fate in the new ones.
Missouri in the Jacksonian Era

It is declared that America is about the pursuit of happiness. To many in Boggs’ time the pursuit of happiness was the chance to own land and to provide for a family in a comfortable lifestyle. It was about independence and freedom from interference in one’s life pursuits. In Jacksonian America the individual was preeminent. Government was full of layers of checks and balances with federal, state, and local laws all centered on individual liberties; all protecting the individual against the possible tyranny of government leading to trespasses against the individual. David Grimsted juxtaposed European values to American values as he quoted Eugene Dumez in his work on vigilantism. Dunz said “In contrast to Europe, where society is everything and the individual nothing, and where society crushes without pity all that stand in its way, in America the individual is all and society nothing. There [in America] an admirable system of laws protects the feeble, the poor, and the accused; there especially is the jury favorable to the defense; and finally, there all aspects of the law are subordinated to individual right, which is the basis and essence of the republic.”87 The preeminence of the individual and the protection of the feeble and poor were fundamental to Jacksonian Democracy. The settlement of Missouri was a result of thousands of people searching for independence and self-sufficiency; most of the early settlers in Missouri did not have

87 David Grimsted. “Rioting in Its Jacksonian Setting.” The American Historical Review, 77, no. 2, 366. Dumez did acknowledge that “the great advantages of the American system had their reverse in the difficulties of punishing wrong doers, especially among “un people ne d’hier.”” One cannot escape the reality of the monetary cost of defending the individual rights of the people of this nation; individual liberties are expensive.”
much more than hope for an opportunity to carve a living out of the wilderness; they came to Missouri for opportunity and they needed protection.

History presents frontier America as having a lawlessness that reflected a laissez faire approach to government; protect us but leave us alone. Jacksonian America was a product of a very strong ethos of self-determination among the people who pushed ever westward in fulfillment of Manifest Destiny. These people were a hardscrabble bunch who, while fiercely independent, followed the party line to defeat the establishment and realize their own self-interest. Andrew Jackson was their charismatic leader and Boggs was one of the chief players in Missouri of the 1830’s. Grimsted quoted Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., who got right to the nub of the issue of law and order on the American frontier when he said “law has much less to do with man’s highest responsibilities than it does with telling bad men just how much they can get away with; in any legal system decisions must be based as much on technical requirements as on unfettered pursuit of justice.” By virtue of his executive power, both as lieutenant governor and then as governor, Boggs became the man who decided just how much bad men could get away with in Missouri during his terms as lieutenant governor and governor.

From the first Union of the colonies the survival of the Union was in doubt. Self-interest manifested in regional values and political maneuvering to serve regional interests was ever-present in the national politics of the 1800s. The Union was precarious because of the dual allegiance generated by state politics. The insightful Richard P. McCormick wrote, “The Founders, and those of their successors who were committed to maintaining the Union, were conscious of threats to its persistence. Chief

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among these were the attachments citizens had to their respective states and the rivalry among distinctive regional subcultures. Strains on the Union were evident from its inception.”

The Missouri Compromise of 1820 was a prime example of the checks and balances necessary to maintain the Union of the states. Slavery was a critical issue and in order to maintain a balance between Slave States and Free States, Maine, a Free State, and Missouri, a Slave State, the two offsetting each other, were jointly admitted to the Union. Additionally, the latitude of 36°30’, the latitude of Missouri’s southern border was established to be the northernmost limit of slave states to be admitted to the Union from the Louisiana Territory. Henry Clay, a figurehead of the Whigs, was the chief architect of the Compromise of 1820. The country was perilously close to civil war at the time and, even though the Compromise of 1820 was the result of a national dialogue, sectional unrest was not entirely eliminated. Forbes wrote “If the first Missouri Compromise of 1820 promised a limit to slavery expansion, the second, passed a year later, contained the seeds of civil war.” Anti-slavery politicians claimed victory because they had stopped the northward march of slavery. Pro-slavery politicians claimed victory because they had assured themselves of room for slavery to expand. Even after the Compromise of 1820, slavery was a critical consideration in the lives of people in Missouri. Jacksonian politics were all about balancing personal liberties with the Union of the states; states’ rights must be honored while preserving the Union.


Preeminence of states’ rights weakened the Union of the states, but compromise became the vehicle of maintaining the Union. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 was an example of negotiating to accommodate contrasting interests of the various states of the Union.

Missouri grew and transformed itself with increased transportation options and with the rise of the factory system. Migration continued and accelerated as settlement continued to the west. All of this growth and increased commerce meant opportunity -- opportunity in business and in politics for those who would grab hold. Sean Wilentz concluded that “the new party professionals, although they proclaimed they followed principles and not men, in fact stood for the orderly pursuit of office, in which loyalty, merit, talent, and hard work for the party – not honor, reputation and family connections, and certainly not the pursuit of larger ideological goals – brought preferment and power.”

Modern politicians call the orderly pursuit described by Wilentz ‘political capital.’ Political capital is what earns politicians opportunities for political advancement. Boggs was an example of the political model Wilentz described. Although he had some legitimate family connections through marriage his real progress in politics came through his ascension as he won elections because of his loyalty to the party: county clerk, state senator, lieutenant governor, and finally governor.

Many opinions exist about the time frame of Jacksonian democracy. Andrew Jackson’s actual presidency spanned two four-year terms, 1829-1837. William Shade suggests, in agreement with Robert Vincent Remini and Edward Pessen, that Jacksonian

democracy survived President Jackson’s administration by about a decade and defines the era as including the years 1828-1848.  

Although Jacksonian ideals were about the individual, particularly the common man, Jackson could not resist the power of his office to distribute what are commonly called political spoils, appointing friends and supporters to government positions of influence and power. Jackson’s appointments “smacked of cronyism.” The Government Land Office was one of the most important departments of government in the Jackson years. Shade quotes Malcolm J. Rohrbough, “Not one of these land officers distinguished by integrity and attention to duty was a Jacksonian appointee. The men put into the land business by Andrew Jackson and his party were made up of politicians not public servants.” Jacksonian land policies were for preemption and equivocally for graduation. Land availability was a currency for growth and development, both on the frontier and in the older, established states to the east.

In a broad sense one can recognize Jacksonian Democratic doctrine. High on the list of protected rights are the rights of individuals to determine their own destiny, the sovereignty of the states but also the sanctity of the federal Union, equity for protection and benefit under the law, manifest destiny or the right for white Americans to settle, through cession of lands by others, wherever Americans wanted to settle, limited government, and rule by the majority.  

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This thesis will employ chapter one as a metric to discern how Governor Boggs’ administration reflected his commitment to Jacksonian Democracy.
Chapter 2: Boggs’ Early Years

Origins

Little has been written about Lilburn W. Boggs’ early years. While it is known that he was born in Lexington, Kentucky, his exact birth date is not certain. His gravestone, located in Napa, California, is etched with a birth date of December 14, 1796.1 His parents were John M. and Martha Oliver Boggs.2 At the beginning of the 19th century the financial means of most of the people in Kentucky were meager. In 1798 Congress debated a bill that was introduced to tax property, both land and improvements. Thomas Davis, the Congressman from Kentucky, in debating the bill announced that “Kentuckians lacked money to pay a tax because they had no market to convert their surplus products to cash.”3 Kentucky was primarily an agrarian economy and, although some owned their own land, most people made only a subsistence living. Soltow estimated that only about thirty percent of the free white males in Kentucky owned land in the early 19th century.4 Thus, there seemed to be little likelihood of Boggs’ owning land without inheriting it. The fact that he pursued a military career, not as an officer

1 Alexander L. Baugh. “Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs and the Mormons,” John Whitmer Historical Association Journal 18, (1998), 111-32, note #3. Baugh uses the inscription from Bogg’s headstone and data from the 1850 census for Sonoma County, California to set the date of December 14, 1796. Baugh also has documented that a date of December 14, 1785 has been recorded in a family Bible and cites LeRoy R. Hafen, ed., “The W. M. Boggs Manuscript about Bent’s Fort, Kit Carson, the Far West and Life Among the Indians,” Colorado Magazine 7, (March 1930), 46, note #5. In Lawrence O. Christensen’s Dictionary of Missouri Biography, (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, c 1999), 91, is recorded a birth date of December 14, 1792. For the sake of uniformity and clarity the birth date of December 14, 1796 will be used in this paper; sources place the year of his birth variously in 1785, 1792, or 1796. The Battle of Tippecanoe was fought in November of 1811 so Boggs would actually have been fourteen years of age at the Battle of Tippecanoe, turning fifteen after that battle but before the War of 1812.

3 Baugh, “Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs and the Mormons,” 111.


4 Soltow, “Kentucky Wealth at the End of the Eighteenth Century,” 618.
but as a volunteer, indicates that he was not from the landed elite. Kentucky was his home but not his future.

One short biographical sketch says of Boggs:

Lilburn W. Boggs was born in Kentucky in 1792. Of pioneer stock, of the breed of Kentuckians who could not tolerate a neighbor within a day’s ride, he soon left his home for adventure and to seek his fortune. He ran away from home and volunteered for the war of 1812. Before leaving Kentucky he had heard the wonderful stories of the new territory called Missouri, a land flowing with milk and wild honey, the paradise for game, where the Indians were brave and offered a fighting man a gamble for his life. To Missouri came William Boggs, already a veteran of one war.⁵

Having joined the military as a very young man, he fought in the Battle of Tippecanoe with William Henry Harrison against Chief Tecumseh’s alliance of Indians at Prophetstown near the Tippecanoe River in Indiana Territory⁶.

⁵ Buel Leopard, Messages and Proclamations, 165. Leopard gives attribution for the biographical sketch to William Southern, Jr.

⁶Baugh, “Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs and the Mormons,” 111. Alexander L. Baugh, a respected scholar of Missouri history wrote, “As a sixteen year-old young man, he enlisted with the Kentucky troops in the War of 1812 and he served for eighteen months, participating in the Battle of Tippecanoe.” Baugh implied that the Battle of Tippecanoe was part of the War of 1812 but it was not; no doubt the battle was one of many causative
Move to Missouri

After fighting in the War of 1812 he worked as a bookkeeper in the insurance bank of Kentucky. In 1816 Boggs moved to St. Louis, Missouri, and established a store but, “within a year had become cashier of the newly created Bank of Missouri.” As a twenty year old youth, he married Julia Ann Bent in August of 1817, the daughter of Judge Silas Bent. Marrying the daughter of a “prominent jurist and political figure in the territory … helped Boggs gain entrée to the upper echelons of state leaders.”

In 1818 Boggs moved his family west to Franklin, Missouri, a major outfitting point for the Rocky Mountain fur trade, and again opened a general store. In 1820 “his business success was ensured when he was appointed by the U.S. government as the assistant factor at Fort Osage, in the western part of the state, providing government trade goods to the Indians.”

actions of the War of 1812 but the Battle of Tippecanoe was fought in November of 1811. The United States declared war on Great Britain in June of 1812 when the War of 1812 commenced. In fact, Marshall Smelser in his article, “Tecumseh, Harrison, and the War of 1812” published in *Indiana Magazine of History*, 65, no. 1, p. 39, said that when the war of 1812 was declared General Harrison had to be recalled to military duty.

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7 Lawrence O Christensen, *Dictionary of Missouri Biography*, Edited by Lawrence O. Christensen, (Columbia, Missouri, University of Missouri Press, c1999), 91.

8Christensen, *Dictionary of Missouri Biography*, 91.

9 William M. Boggs. “A Short Biographical Sketch of Lilburn W. Boggs,” *Missouri Historical Review*, IV, no. 2, 1910, 106-110. According to William M. Boggs the Bent family was “one of the oldest families of St. Louis.

10 *Missouri Gazette*, August 2, 1817.

11 Rhoda R. Gilman, “The Fur Trade in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1630-1850," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* (Wisconsin Historical Society) 58, no. 1 (1974): 13-16. In a series of legislative acts called the Nonintercourse Acts, the U.S. Government established forts which included trading posts to function as the center for trade with the Indians. It was called the ‘factory system’; the government appointee in charge of the factory was the ‘factor’. Boggs’ appointment as “assistant factor” would, indeed, have assured his financial success in that he had unfettered association with the Indians in the general trade and had an opportunity to build relationships with the leading personalities on both sides of the fur trade. The factory system was terminated by Congress in 1822; functioning outside of the contraints of conflict of interest as assistant factor, Boggs would have
William Boggs wrote that his Father’s first wife, Julia Ann, died while she was young after she had given birth to two sons, and that Boggs then married Panthea Grant Boone, a grand-daughter of Daniel Boone, the great frontiersman from Kentucky.  

Boggs and his second wife, Panthea, had ten children. William Boggs was a son of Panthea.  

William Boggs wrote further that his father was engaged in merchandising in different towns along the Missouri river, such as old St. Charles, old Franklin, opposite the City of Boonville in Cooper County, Missouri, Fort Osage (near where the writer of these lines was born in 1826, October 21), from which point L.W. Boggs hauled his goods out to his trading posts among the Osage and Kaw Indians. He finally settled down in the old frontier town, Independence, Missouri, in Jackson County, and at one time was engaged in the Santa Fe trade about the year 1832 or 1833. 

In addition to trading posts, Boggs was involved in the Santa Fe trade. Missouri was at the edge of Indian Territory and the jumping-off place, so to speak, for traffic into Mexico via Santa Fe. Mexico had heavy demands for manufactured goods that either came to America from overseas or were produced in America. Mexico had gold and silver mines and the bullion (specie) obtained in trade with Mexico was extremely important to Missourians, particularly in the struggle to survive the Panic of 1837 when specie (gold and silver bullion or coinage) was the only reliable form of money.  

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12 Missouri Republican, August 13, 1823.


Boggs’ trading business enabled him to become acquainted with the settlers on the frontier and them with him. He had as much knowledge of the western region of Missouri as any man because of his experience as a “local lawyer, doctor, postmaster, and eight years in the backwoods of Missouri.” More recently, Robert Nelson, in his biography, states that Boggs was so well-respected by the Indians that they called him “the Big Trader.”

Congress discontinued the factory system in 1822 which eliminated the security of Boggs’ appointment as “assistant Factor,” meaning that he was second in command at Fort Osage. Boggs then opened a regular store, without government stipulations or interference, in Sibley, Missouri, located near Fort Osage in 1822. From Sibley, he traveled throughout the region selling his wares and in so doing became very well-known. In fact, “Boggs became one of the best-known men in western Missouri, a powerful advantage in his later political career.” And “Three years later [1825] Boggs moved his business to the newest Missouri boomtown, Independence, Missouri, which soon supplanted virtually all other centers for outfitting traders going to the West.”


17 Robert Nelson. *Enemy of the Saints: The Biography of Governor Lilburn W. Boggs of Missouri*, (Baltimore: PublishAmerican, LLLP, 2011), 30. This book has more anecdotal background than this writer has found in all of his research; Nelson’s work is interesting but not well documented and includes some glaring errors. For example, Nelson claims that Boggs served as a congressman on (p 34). Boggs never campaigned for, nor was he elected to Congress.

18 Rhoda R. Gilman. “The Fur Trade in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1630-1850.” *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 58 no. 1 (1974), 16. In order to regulate trade with the Indians the U.S. Government set up trading posts that were the only authorized place for traders and Indians to bring their furs for sale and trade. Each trading post had a ‘factor,’ an appointed government job and the factor and his assistants were well known throughout the region. Boggs had been an assistant factor at Fort Osage.
Boggs was the first county clerk of Jackson County and “The first purchase he made for the county was an account book bought at Liberty for which he charged the county $3.50. In his handwriting is the oldest record of Jackson County still to be seen in the clerk’s office at Independence.”20

Soon after settling in Independence Boggs was popular enough in the region that he ran for the Missouri State Senate. Because of his wide-spread popularity in the region he ran unopposed and won his first term as a state senator. His term in office began in 1826 as a representative for Lafayette, Clay, and Ray counties. He ran for the State Senate again after two years in office, when Jackson County was formed, and won handily; he began his second term, this time for four years, in 1828.21

National and Missouri Political, Social, and Economic Conditions

Following the War of 1812 vast sections of land, designated as Indian Territory were opened to settlement by Americans. William Henry Harrison and his army drove the Native Americans out of the region, then called the Northwest, in what is now Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and most of Missouri. Andrew Jackson freed the Gulf Region from Indian title making large tracts of that country available for settlement. Settlements spread to the west, mostly concentrated near the rivers which were major tributaries of

19 Christensen, *Dictionary of Missouri Biography*, 91.

20 Leopard, 166. Robert Nelson claimed that the purchase price for the account book was $1.50. Perhaps Boggs bought the account book for $1.50 and turned around and sold it to the County for $3.50 (Robert Nelson, *Enemy of the Saints*, 45).

the Mississippi, including areas adjacent to the Missouri River. The American population doubled every 22.5 years in the early 1800s and the diversity of the culture of the migrants was dynamic.

Frederick Jackson Turner, noted American historian, in his paper “The Colonization of the West, 1820-1830,” described migration tendencies from the states east of the Appalachians to the new land that opened up after the Indians were forcibly removed. The migrants from the New England states tended to move to western New York and Ohio. Residents of Pennsylvania and New Jersey removed to southern and central Ohio. “But Kentucky and Tennessee (now sufficiently settled to need larger and cheaper farms for the rising generation), together with the up-country of the South, contributed the mass of the pioneer colonists to most of the Mississippi valley prior to 1830. Missouri’s population was chiefly Kentuckians and Tennesseans.”

E. M. Violette presented a paper at the first meeting ever to be held by The Missouri State Historical Society on December 5, 1901 in Columbia, Missouri. His paper dealt with the rapid settlement of the territory and state in the early 1800s.

Howard County in its early days in its issue of November 19th, 1819 says: Immigration to this country and particularly to this county during this season exceeds almost belief. Those who have arrived in this quarter are principally from Kentucky, Tennessee, etc. Immense numbers of wagons, carriages, carts, etc., with families, have for some time past been daily arriving. During October it is stated no less than 271 wagons and four wheeled carriages and 55 two wheeled carriages and carts, passed near St. Charles bound principally for Boone’s Lick. It is calculated that the number of persons accompanying these wagons, etc., could not be less than 3,000. It is stated in the St. Louis Enquirer of the 10th inst. that about twenty wagons, etc., per week passed through


23 Shade, 486.

24 Turner, "The Colonization of the West ," 308-309. A southern culture, including slavery, would have been the ‘norm.’
St. Charles for the last nine or ten weeks with wealthy, respectable immigrants from various states whose united numbers are supposed to amount to 12,000. The county of Howard, already respectable in numbers, will soon possess a vast population and no section of our country presents a fairer prospect to the immigrant. (*History of Howard and Cooper Counties*, pp. 126-7).\(^{25}\)

By 1830 Boone’s Lick had become very heavily populated and settlement had reached the western boundary of the state.\(^{26}\) By that time Jackson and Clay counties had populations nearly as great as Boone’s Lick. Missouri had three centers of population: St. Louis, Boone’s Lick, and Independence, now a suburb of Kansas City.

“There was some sort of continuous occupation from the mouth of Missouri [River] to the western Boundary of the state. In 1816 there were only seven counties in the state but by 1830 there were twenty-four new ones.”\(^{27}\)

Source of data for graph: Violette, “Early Settlement of Missouri, 47.

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\(^{26}\) Boone’s Lick, is located just west of Columbia. A “lick” is a natural concentration of salt on the surface where wildlife congregate. Boone’s Lick then is a salt lick named in honor of Daniel Boone.

\(^{27}\) Violette, "Early Settlements in Missouri," 51.
In 1795 there were 2,093 people in what is now Missouri; in 1798 the number was 6,025; in 1803 the number was pegged at 10,340, but some believe it may have been as large as 16,000. The population of “Upper Louisiana” was estimated to be 25,000 in 1804. Of course, the huge increase in migration to Missouri in 1803 and 1804 was the natural result of a hunger for land. The Louisiana Purchase provided a huge reserve of land, including Missouri, that was made available for settlement.28 Cheap land was alluring to almost everyone in that agrarian time. The obligation of the United States to protect the people in the newly acquired Louisiana Territory, coupled with the relocation of the Indians, may have been just the enticement needed to jump-start migration. Missouri in the early 1800’s really was the land described by Buel Leopard as “flowing with milk and wild honey” that enticed Boggs in his early years.29

Political culture of the frontier at the time was simply “grasping materialism.”30 Get rich, or even, get rich quick. “Often the prospect of greater prosperity and wealth, or the hope of retrieving financial misfortunes, indeed [led] many to seek new homes in the far west.”31

The aim of a portion of the migration was simply to get to the frontier, or beyond. Many cherished their independence, freedom from crowds and crowd-like

28 Violette, 47. The Louisiana Purchase occurred in 1803.
29 Leopard, “Messages and Proclamations,” 165.
30 Sean Wilentz, "On Class and Politics in Jacksonian America,” 58.
31 Violette, "Early Settlements in Missouri,” 45.
thinking and behavior. The hazards of living on the edge of the frontier must have been intriguing or perhaps addictive. Violette called it “the love for hazardous enterprises.”

“Old America seems to be breaking up, and moving westward.” Beginning with the end of the War of 1812 until the 1820s, this was a time of unprecedented migration from the established states and commonwealths in the east to the new lands and territories west of the Appalachian Mountains. It was a time when adventurous people could obtain land almost for the asking. Turner concluded:

By the march of the Westerners away from their native states to the public domain of the nation, and by their organization as territories of the United States, they lost that state particularism which distinguished many of the old commonwealths of the coast. The section was nationalistic and democratic to the core. The West admired the self-made man and was ready to follow its hero with the enthusiasm of a section more responsive to personality than to the programmes of trained statesmen. It was a self-confident section, believing in its right to share in government, and troubled by no doubts of its capacity to rule.

Boggs fit well the mold that Turner described. He was a strong individual and he was a self-made man. He was also nationalistic in his political philosophy and believed in democracy, or at least a convenient version of it. He was very politically active and always acted with resolve. Self-confidence was evident in all that he attempted. He fought with Harrison against the American

32 Violette, , "Early Settlements in Missouri,” 45.


34 Jeffrey N. Walker, "Mormon Land Rights in Caldwell and Daviess Counties and the Mormon Conflict of 1838: New Findings and New Understandings." BYU Studies 47, no. 1 (2008), 14-20. Beginning in 1830 settlers who knew how to work the system could actually end up with land as cheap as $1.25 per acre. If a survey of a land block had not been completed by the government a settler could go to the Government Land Office and make an application for preemption rights on as many as 160 acres; when the application was formally acknowledged the claimant could occupy the land without any payment at all until the government survey was completed at which time the claimant would pay the price of the land.

Indians and undoubtedly felt a vested interest in the land newly available for settlement which he helped usurp. Missouri would have seemed a land of great promise to an eighteen-year-old man freshly discharged from the military. The prospects of cheap land and the economic opportunities inherent with new settlements must have been alluring elements of Lilburn Boggs’ aspirations.  

Political power may have trumped the allure of cheap land, new wealth and frontier living among some of the more powerful frontier characters. Wilentz engaged Richard Hofstadter when he applied the broad-brush of cynicism declaring “On close examination, the leading Jacksonians were shown to be not champions of deprived workers and small farmers, but cold-blooded political entrepreneurs, often men of great wealth or men eager to become wealthy, whose main purpose was to get power and keep it. Jackson himself, it turned out, was an inconsistent opportunist, a shady land speculator, a political fraud – and a strikebreaker to boot.”

Boggs’ quick rise to prominence in politics supports the idea that political power and business success are linked; called networking in today’s vernacular. Boggs was elected because he was so well known in the region through his trading businesses. We

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36 McCandless, *A History of Missouri*, 70-71. Senator Benton began pushing for cheaper and cheaper land to be made available to the public. His approach to the matter was called “graduation.” In 1824 he introduced an amendment to a bill in the U.S. Senate that would provide for a public price for land to be set that would be reduced by twenty-five cents per acre each year that the property remained unsold until it would finally be sold for twenty-five cents per acre. Although Benton pushed for graduation beginning in 1824, the measure was not passed into law until after his time in the Senate. Congress passed the Graduation Act in 1854 providing for an annual drop in the price of public land until it had been on the market for thirty years at which time it could be purchased for twelve and a half cents per acre. Benton was never able to get a graduation bill through Congress but it did finally pass as The Graduation Act of 1854, just four years after Benton failed to win re-election (St. George L. Sioussat, “Andrew Johnson and the Early Phases of the Homestead Bill,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Dec., 1918), 258.

shall see that Boggs’ political ascension did not end with his two terms in the Missouri State Senate; his career, in both business and politics, beginning as an appointee in Fort Osage as the assistant factor, propelled him to the chief executive’s office in Missouri.

Boggs was a “staunch disciple” of Jackson; a Democrat through and through. 38 He was closely associated with Thomas Hart Benton who became the most powerful democrat in the State of Missouri; and a forceful leader in the movement to obtain statehood for Missouri. 39 As Benton’s political fortunes increased so also did Boggs grow in influence and political power.


39 McCandless, 6. McCandless wrote (on pages 13 and 14) in his book that a powerful group centered in St. Louis, establishment men in other words, termed the “little junta” banded together to secure policies favorable to their interests. Included in this group was Thomas Hart Benton, although he denied the association. The little junta had determined that Benton would be one of the senators from the new State of Missouri.
Boggs was a very popular man in the western portion of Missouri. Robert Nelson wrote, “He was a gifted conversationalist who had a quiet and pleasant manner of speaking and he frequently entertained children with advice and stories in the homes of various settlers. His popularity grew and spread over a large area of the state. Contrary to some critics who have accused him of being contentious, it seems he was pleasant and personable. His agreeable personality became the basis for a successful political career.”

Boggs himself said that he “was about as popular as Colonel Benton in the party.” Inasmuch as Benton had already served two terms as U.S. senator and remained solidly in control of politics in Missouri until the end of his last term, he was heaping a lot of praise upon himself. He was nominated by the Democratic Party to run as lieutenant governor, after having served nearly six years in the Missouri State Senate, on the ticket headed by Daniel Dunklin for governor. His six years in the State Senate had proven his loyalty to the “Jackson-Benton Democrats.” It had been a time when he had


2 “Napa County Biographies, Governor Lilburn W. Boggs.” *History of Napa and Lake Counties*, (San Francisco: Slocum, Bowen & Co., 1881), 373-386. Napa County Biographies said that Benton and Boggs eventually became estranged because when Boggs was serving as Governor he made appointments in the Missouri State Government without consulting Benton.
consistently supported their policies. In his final term as senator he was elected president pro tempore, an indication of the approbation of his peers in the Senate.³

Daniel Dunklin served as lieutenant governor during the four years preceding the election of 1832. “Four years ago, Mr. Dunklin was elected lieut. governor by the mere force of party numbers. The party voted for him as a Jackson man, without knowing him, & without enquiring whether he could read, write or cipher. The only act of his administration, by which he has gained a general notoriety, is a decision made, as president of the Senate, during the coldest weather, winter before last, that the door of the Senate Chamber should not be shut, because the constitution says that “each house shall sit with open doors!!”⁴ Of course, newspaper satire is not always a fair evaluation of a person. Dunklin was well enough regarded to win the election.

A convention meeting was held December 3, 1831 in Jefferson City for the purpose of nominating candidates for governor, lieutenant governor, and electors of the president and vice president of the United States for the upcoming state elections. The Missouri Intelligencer announced the results on December 3, 1831, “Daniel Dunklin was nominated by the convention as its candidate for Governor; L.W. Boggs for Lieut. Governor; and Mssrs. Haden, Lakey and Bollinger, as Electors.”⁵ Only ten of twenty-nine counties of the state sent


⁴ Missouri Intelligencer, June 30, 2. Bias is evident in the article and demeaning to Lt. Governor Dunklin but the insult does suggest that Dunklin probably needed some help on the ticket.

⁵ Missouri Intelligencer, December 3, 1831, 3. There was discussion as to whether or not the caucus should make nominations or wait till a forum could be organized where a better representation of the counties could be had. A motion was made to adjourn without nominations on the ground that any nomination made under such circumstances, would not be satisfactory to the people, or likely to be acquiesced in by them. A majority overruled the motion. Represented counties: Howard, Boone, Callaway, Cole, Saline, Jackson, Randolph, Marion,
delegates to the convention. It is interesting that the ten counties represented at the convention were somewhat distant from St. Louis. The establishment (wealthy and influential people) clustered around St. Louis had no delegates to represent them while the poorer newcomers were in the counties that were represented by delegates. Boggs was from Jackson County, way out west; he would have been among friends and supporters. The Democratic Party chose Boggs to run because of his power base in the western part of the state. Both Dunklin and Boggs were elected with comfortable majorities.⁶

During the campaign Boggs published an article in the *Missouri Intelligencer* stating his position on the critical issues of the day. First of all he stated that he was absolutely in support of Andrew Jackson for re-election to be president of the United States. He also said that he would support whatever Jackson would do which would be consistent with what he had done in the past. He opposed the Tariff of 1828 which he thought was protectionist and bad for business. The tariff was also the primary impetus for the movement for nullification; he was for the Union, in other words. He also spoke against re-chartering the Bank of the United States.

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⁶ Christensen, *Dictionary of Missouri Biography*, 91.
An 1832 article in the *Missouri Intelligencer* reads as follows:

To the People of Missouri:

Fellow-Citizens: -- the Convention which met at Jefferson City in November last, did me the honor of placing my name before you, as that of a suitable person to be voted for as Lieutenant Governor.

This nomination I have accepted. In obedience to a custom, the propriety of which it becomes no republican to call in question – I proceed to give a brief outline of my political sentiments.

I am not only in favor of the re-election of Andrew Jackson, to the presidency of the United States, but I am also in favor of all the leading measures of his administration. Judging of the future, from the past, we have the surest guaranty, should he be re-elected that the Government will be administered faithfully, and upon the true principles of the Constitution.

I am opposed to the present Tariff; it is almost entirely based on the principle of protection; and so far I believe it to be un-constitutional. It will be the natural and inevitable effect of a tariff of Revenue, to protect Domestic Manufactures, and I do not doubt that one graduated to the wants of the Government, may be so arranged as to afford every necessary aid to Manufactures, without oppressing any portion of the people.

That the Bank of the United States, has afforded great assistance to the Government in its financial operations, is unquestionably true; but deeming the incorporation of such institutions by the General Government, at variance with the Constitution, I am consequently opposed to its being re-chartered.

The principal duties of the office of Lieutenant Governor, are to preside over the deliberations of the Senate. In the discharge of those duties, (should I be elected,) and all others connected with that office, a strict adherence to the principles of the constitution, and an impartial observance of Parliamentary rule and usage, will be my guide.

Should I be elected, fellow citizens, my unwearied exertions will be used to advance the great interests of the State, to promote the public good, and to sustain the dignity and importance of the station conferred to my charge.

Your fellow citizen,

Lilburn W. Boggs
Jackson County, MO. May 21, 1832

The lieutenant governor’s main responsibility, besides representing his constituency, was to be the president of the Senate. Though a heavy responsibility, it did not require that he be in the capital except when the General Assembly was in

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7 Lilburn W. Boggs. "To the People of Missouri." *Missouri Intelligencer*, June 2, 1832, 2.
session or when he would have had committee responsibilities; for that reason he did not relocate his family to Jefferson City and remained domiciled in Independence.  

During the years 1832 through 1836 when Boggs was serving as lieutenant governor there were several critical issues developing that demanded his attention. The Bank of the United States and currency issues were both high priority items; the Tariff of 1828 was an increasingly difficult issue and politics surrounding nullification was a threat that could end the Union. The politics of slavery was still a huge concern and Missouri was a slave state. Growth in the state also became an extremely bothersome problem to accommodate. During the time that Dunklin was governor the only issue that fomented to climax was the Mormon problem. Dunklin became very publically involved but Boggs stayed out of the picture, not becoming overtly involved with the problem, but remained very active in the background.  

The United States Government had a vast inventory of land that was being settled by frontiersmen but which had not yet been surveyed. On May 29, 1830, Congress passed the Preemption Act of 1830 whereby this un-surveyed land became available to homesteaders. Much credit for the passage of this act of Congress is ascribed to Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri. The provision of this congressional act was that homesteaders could occupy land and make improvements without deed to the land and then, at the time the land was surveyed and put up for sale,

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8 Christensen, Dictionary of Missouri Biography, 91. It appears from the record that Boggs was passive in his office inasmuch as he did not reside in the capitol.

9 Baugh, “Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs and the Mormons,” 114.

they could exercise preemptive rights to buy the land at an advantageous price, sometimes as low as twenty-five cents per acre if their homesteading activities resulted in improvements to the land.\textsuperscript{11} Thus, land speculation became rampant in Missouri in the 1830s.

Joining in to the homesteading, land-speculating bonanza in Missouri were the Mormons.\textsuperscript{12} They settled in Jackson County, Missouri, mostly in and around the county seat, Independence. The experience in Missouri with the Mormons is commonly known among historians as the ‘Mormon problem’ and because it was centered in Jackson County, Boggs, who lived in Independence, was particularly vexed with the problem even though he was, at that time, the lieutenant governor of Missouri. Both Dunklin and Boggs were resolutely in support of Andrew Jackson’s national policies, including westward migration.

The ‘Mormon problem’ began early in 1831 when five Mormon missionaries from New York and Ohio arrived in Independence, Missouri.\textsuperscript{13} Four men were originally called by Joseph Smith to undertake a mission to the Lamanites; perhaps as far away as the western border of Missouri.\textsuperscript{14} The original four were: Parley P. Pratt,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Historically, members of today’s Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were called Mormons. The name of the Church has changed since its organization in 1830 from The Church of Christ to the Church of Latter-day Saints, and finally to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For clarity and ease of understanding, ‘Mormon’ will be used as the name of the Church and to refer to its members.
\item Edgar T. Lyons. "Independence, Missouri, and the Mormons, 1827-1833," BYU Studies 13, no. 1 (1972): 4. Lyons said that in “1831 – four men representing a new religious group appeared on the ungraded, ungraveled streets of the thriving frontier town.” He neglected the fact that Frederick G. Williams joined with the
\end{enumerate}
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Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Jr., and Ziba Peterson. These four came into contact with Frederick G. Williams in the Kirtland, Ohio area and after Williams accepted baptism and became a member of the church he joined, as the fifth, with Pratt, Cowdery, Whitmer, and Peterson on the mission to the Lamanites.15

Soon after arriving in Independence, Pratt said that two of the group began employment in Independence as tailors and the rest crossed the Missouri River and started to work with the Indians.16 Peter Whitmer was a tailor by trade and Boggs became very friendly with him. He employed him to tailor a suit for his inaugural and even offered to let Whitmer locate his business in his home.17 Boggs’ friendliness and encouragement toward the Mormons, however, proved to be transitory.

Joseph Smith had instructed Parley P. Pratt and his companions to report back to him about what they found in their travels pertinent to future settlements of the Mormons. Oliver Cowdery wrote a letter on May 7, 1831 giving a promising report of the land and agricultural possibilities but gave a very disparaging report concerning the people in Jackson County. However “The physical features and potential agricultural wealth of Jackson County appealed to them.”18


16 Smith, History of the Church, 1:61.

17 Baugh, “Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs and the Mormons,” 114.

Mormon Scholar, Ivan J. Barrett described what Independence and Jackson County were like when the Mormons first arrived:

At the time of the Mormons’ arrival, the frontier village consisted of a small log courthouse which had been built five years earlier, three stores, and twenty houses, most built of logs. Present in the vicinity was a recognizable element common to the fringes of society, the “rabble and ruffians, the outcasts from society generally who found safety from the arm of the law in these western outposts. But nearly all of the 2800 inhabitants of Jackson County were small farmers who had left behind their poorly producing small acreages in the mountainous regions of the South for the political and economic motives of ensuring Missouri’s admission to the Union as a slave state in 1820. They lived a hard life; scattered about on small farms, their homes were log huts with wood floors in which windows were covered with quilts or boards to keep out the cold and cooking was done at the hearth over an open fire. Corn and meat made up the diet and the skins of wild animals provided most of the clothing. The majority was illiterate and, owing to their support for the institution of slavery and the presence of slaves, many deemed physical labor beneath the dignity of whites.\(^{19}\)

Joseph Smith taught that God would prepare a place where Zion could be established. Zion was a place where the Mormons could live together in peace and safety; a place free of persecution; a place where they could live according to their religious beliefs; the place prophesied to be the location of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. After Joseph Smith received the report from Cowdery about Jackson County he received a revelation in July of 1831 (now Section 57 of the Doctrine and Covenants) identifying Independence, Missouri as the “center spot” of the “city of Zion.”\(^{20}\)

The Mormon migration to Jackson County was augmented by a considerable number of new converts to the Church. The Missourians were happy, at first, to have the Mormons settle amongst them but their happiness was short-lived. The Mormons became “very obnoxious to the other settlers of that section.”\(^{21}\) Because of their

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\(^{20}\) Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:189-191. The Doctrine and Covenants is a volume of revelations Joseph Smith received which are considered the word of God and canonized scripture by the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
independence, communitarian trading habits, and ideals of self-sufficiency, the Missourians began to resent them.

Historians do not all agree on the reasons why the Mormons' arrival caused such a storm in Missouri’s history, but there is general agreement on the major issues:

1. The religious beliefs of the Mormons were not consistent with the norm. They isolated themselves from the older settlers because of their religious practices.
2. The old settlers were pro-slavery and, although the Mormons tried to have a neutral stance on slavery politically, their doctrine condemned one man owning another. The old settlers accused the Mormons of interfering with their slaves.
3. The saints were Yankees and the old settlers were mostly southerners and had their roots in the slave culture.
4. The Mormons were a political threat. In July of 1833 twelve-hundred individuals of the total population of thirty-five hundred individuals in Jackson County were Mormons. The old settlers were afraid that the Mormons would vote as a block and overpower them at the polls.
5. Mormons were anathema to the local merchants and the real estate market. The Mormons’ communitarian practices of barter amongst themselves did not improve conditions for the merchants as they had hoped. Instead of buying small parcels of land as individual families, the Mormons either obtained their lands as settlers on government lands with preemption rights or they made purchases of large parcels and then subdivided for the Mormon community. Real estate values were expected to increase with the influx but they really did not because the Mormons bypassed the speculators or middle-men. 22
6. Relations with the Indians, “illicit communications” in Dunklin's terms, were a vital part of the lives of the old settlers and they shared the belief that the Mormons were in collusion with the Indians to accomplish their goals. 21

In the spring of 1833, anti-Mormon Missourians held a mass meeting in Independence to consider the Mormon problem. Leading up to this meeting, local Protestant ministers published a tract which declared “The Mormons are common enemies of mankind and ought to be destroyed.” 24 Following the mass meeting a ‘secret constitution’ began to circulate signed by

21 Walter Bickford Davis and Daniel S. Durie,  An Illustrated History of Missouri,  (St. Louis, Missouri: A.J. Hall and Company, 1876), 105.


23 Smith, History of the Church, 2:462.

many of the most powerful older settlers in the county, published as “The Manifesto of the Mob.” The full text of the document is not included in the thesis but the includes in the following paraphrased list:

1. Missourians want to rid themselves of the pretended sect, the Mormons.
2. Civil law does not provide a guarantee against the evils of the Mormons.
3. A self-formed group will make it easier to realize their purpose of getting rid of the Mormons.
4. The Mormons are the dregs of society and daily increase in number.
5. The Mormons are tampering with the Missourians’ slaves.
6. The Mormons openly blaspheme God.
7. The Mormons openly declare that they shall have all the lands of the county.
8. The Mormons are not fit companions for their wives and daughters.
9. The Missourians pledge their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor to use whatever means it takes to remove the Mormons.  

The flow of Mormons into Jackson County and the character of the people were vividly described by an address drafted by a committee of the old settlers (non-Mormons) during a community meeting of four or five hundred held July 20 of 1833 for the purpose of ridding themselves of the Mormons:

…the Mormons numbered some twelve hundred souls in that county; and that at each successive spring and autumn, they poured forth in swarms among the people, with a gradual falling off in the character of the latter, until they had nearly reached the low condition of the black population. …the citizens [old settlers] had been daily told that they were to be cut off and their lands appropriated to the Mormons for inheritances. [the number of Mormons was becoming so great that] they would soon have all the offices of the county in their hands; and that the lives and property of other citizens would be insecure, under the administration of men who are so ignorant and superstitious as to believe that they have been the subjects of miraculous and supernatural cures, -- that they hold converse with God and his angels, and possess and exercise the gift of divination and unknown tongues. For these, and other good and sufficient reasons, the committee reported that no Mormon should, in future, move into and settle in the county; that such as were therein should give a definite pledge of their intention within a reasonable time to remove out of it, and should have time to sell their property and close their business without material sacrifice; that the editor of the “Star” should be requested to close his office, and discontinue the business of printing in the

25 Smith, History of the Church, 1:374-376.
26 This is the meeting called for in the “Manifesto of the Mob.”
county, and, upon failure, prompt and efficient measures should be taken to close the same. 27

The above address was presented to the entire group in attendance and was adopted by acclamation. Another committee presented the terms of their proposal to the Mormon leaders. The editor of the “Star” and the Mormon bishop both refused to answer “whereupon it was resolved that the printing office should be destroyed, and the type and press secured. This resolution was, with the utmost order and the least possible disturbance, forthwith carried into execution.” 28

Community leaders convened again on July 23, 1833, and appointed a committee to confer with the Mormon leaders. “An amicable agreement was entered into; whereby the latter stipulated to remove, with their families, out of the county, on or before the first day of January, 1834, on condition that the owner should be paid for the loss of his printing office, which was agreed to. The meeting then adjourned.” 29

The mob action of July 20th against the printing press of W.W. Phelps was later described in the Nauvoo Times and Seasons:

In a short time hundreds of the mob gathered around the printing office, which was a two story brick building, which they soon threw down. The press was thrown from the upper story, and also the apparatus, book work, paper, type, etc. A family residing in the lower story was also thrust out in great haste. After destroying the printing establishment, they proceeded to Gilbert & Whitney's store for the same purpose, but Gilbert agreeing to box the goods, soon, they concluded to let it alone. 30

27 Davis, An Illustrated History of Missouri, 105-106. The full text of the address can be found in History of the Church 1:396-399.

28 Davis, An Illustrated History of Missouri, 105-106.

29 Davis, An Illustrated History of Missouri, 104-105.

30 Smith, History of the Church, 390 fn.
After finishing with the printing press the mob went after Bishop Edward Partridge. An account of this is given by Partridge in his autobiography. Partridge was violently tарred and feathered in the public square. The violence did not end with Phelps and Partridge. “Charles Allen was next stripped and tарred and feathered, because he would not agree to leave the county, or deny the Book of Mormon. Others were brought up to be served likewise or whipped.”31

On the morning of July 23, 1833, the “mob assembled again, armed with “rifles, dirks, pistols, clubs, and whips.” ready to battle.32 They threatened the leaders with up to five hundred lashes each and promised to demolish their homes and crops. The leaders of the saints under this duress agreed to a “treaty” to leave the county or die.33

On September 28th, following the signing of the treaty with the mobs, Joseph Smith and other leaders of the Mormons petitioned Governor Dunklin for redress and assistance in re-settling the saints in Jackson County.34 Governor Dunklin responded positively and encouraged the Mormon leaders to pursue their rights in the courts. All seemed to be well and the saints resumed their daily activities of making a living off the land.

Heeding counsel from Dunklin, Bishop Partridge and W.W. Phelps consulted with four attorneys about civil suits for damages during the episode on July 20 and the 23. The attorneys (William T. Wood, Amos Reese, Alexander Doniphan, and David Atchison) responded that

31 Smith, History of the Church, 391.

32 Smith, History of the Church, 412.

33 Smith, History of the Church, 412. The full text of the “treaty” or memorandum of agreement is available in History of the Church, page 413.

34 Smith, History of the Church, 410-415.
they would be risking a good deal of their client base by taking the side of the Mormons but that they were willing to do so because the mob had threatened each of them if they should represent the Mormons and they wanted the mob to know that they could not be intimidated. However, because they faced a potential loss of clientele, they were forced to charge a very large fee of two-hundred fifty dollars each or a total of one thousand dollars which they acknowledged was a “large sum for a fee for lawyers in this country.” Partridge and Phelps reluctantly agreed to the fees for the work. Hoping that some redress would be made and that peace could then be established, they gave the attorneys their note for one-thousand dollars.

On the night of October 31, 1833, a mob of forty or fifty persons armed with guns attacked the Mormons west of Big Blue River. Violence spread until all of Jackson County was in commotion and the saints were forced from their homes. November would have been cold and women and children were wandering in search of any kind of shelter. By November 7th “the shores of the Missouri river began to be lined on both sides of the ferry, with men, women and children; goods, wagons, boxes, chests, and provisions; while the ferrymen were busily employed in crossing them over.”

Husbands were inquiring for their wives and women for their husbands, parents for children and children for parents. Some had the good fortune to escape with their family, household goods, and some provisions; while others knew not the fate of their friends and had lost all of their goods. The scene was indescribable…. By the close of the year not a Mormon was left in the county.

35 Smith, History of the Church, 424-425.
Some were wounded and two men of the mob and one Mormon were killed. The mob also beat and whipped many of the Mormons. The mob also destroyed two-hundred homes by fire or other means as well as crops, furniture and personal possessions, and the cattle of the saints were taken or destroyed by the mobs.38

Governor Dunklin’s response of October 19, 1833, to the Mormon petition for redress echoed Calhoun’s Senate speech:

Your memorial, soliciting my interposition against violence threatened you, and redress for injuries received by a portion of the citizens of Jackson County, has been received, and its contents duly considered. I should think myself unworthy the confidence with which I have been honored by my fellow-citizens, did I not promptly employ all the means which the constitution and laws have placed at my disposal, to avert the calamities with which you are threatened.

Ours is a government of laws; to them we owe all obedience; and their faithful administration is the best guarantee for the enjoyment of our rights.

No citizen, no number of citizens, have a right to take the redress of their grievances, whether real or imaginary, into their own hands. Such conduct strikes at the very existence of society, and subverts the foundation on which it is based. Not being willing to persuade myself that any portion of the citizens of the state of Missouri are so lost to a sense of these truths as to require the exercise of force, in order to ensure a respect for them, after advising with the Attorney-General and exercising my best judgment, I would advise you to make a trial of the efficacy of the laws. The judge of your circuit is a conservator of the peace; if an affidavit is made before him by any of you, that your lives are threatened, and you believe them in danger, it would be his duty to have the offenders apprehended and bind them to keep the peace.39

While sympathetic at first, Governor Dunklin eventually turned on the Mormons in favor of public opinion. After several rounds of correspondence Governor Dunklin observed “The laws, both civil and military, seem deficient in affording your society proper protection; nevertheless, public sentiment is a powerful corrector of error, and you should make it your

38 Smith, History of the Church, 426-438.

39 Smith, History of the Church, 1:423-424.
policy to continue to deserve it.”40 He seemed sympathetic to the end but never did anything to help them.

Dunklin’s placating, yet impotent, counsel to the Mormons in October of 1833 to “continue to deserve” public sentiment as “a powerful corrector of error” was exposed in a wrenching way in July of 1836 as Governor Dunklin essentially washed his hands of the Mormon dilemma just prior to his resignation as Governor of the State of Missouri in September of 1836:

City of Jefferson, July 18th, 1836.

Messrs. W. W. Phelps and Others:

Gentlemen:—The treatment your people have received, and are now receiving, is of an extraordinary character, such as is seldom experienced in any country by any people. As an individual I sympathize with you, and as the executive of the state, deeply deplore such a state of things. Your appeal to the executive is a natural one; but a proper understanding of our institutions will show you that yours is a case not for the special cognizance of the executive. It is a case, or, I may say, they are cases of individual wrongs. These, as I have before told you, are subjects for judicial interference; and there are cases sometimes of individual outrage which may be so popular as to render the action of courts of justice nugatory, in endeavoring to afford a remedy. I would refer you to the charge of Judge Lawless, made to the grand jury of St. Louis. Public sentiment may become paramount law; and when one man or society of men become so obnoxious to that sentiment as to determine the people to be rid of him or them, it is useless to run counter to it.

The time was when the people (except those in Jackson County) were divided, and the major part in your favor; that does not now seem to be the case. Why is this so? Does your conduct merit such censures as exist against you? It is not necessary for me to give my opinion. Your neighbors accuse your people of holding illicit communication with the Indians, and of being opposed to slavery. You deny. Whether the charge or the denial is true I cannot tell. The fact exists and your neighbors seem to believe it true; and whether true or false, the consequences will be the same (if your opponents are not merely gasconading), unless you can, by your conduct and arguments, convince them of your innocence. If you cannot do this, all I can say to you is that in this Republic the vox populi is the vox Dei.

Yours respectfully,

Daniel Dunklin41

40 Smith, History of the Church, 1:489.
Meanwhile, what was the lieutenant governor doing to magnify his office in all of this uproar? He lived in Independence; what did he do considering his close proximity to the disturbance? Joseph Smith wrote that Boggs said, “you now know what our Jackson boys can do, and you must leave the country.” Marie Nelson claims that everyone in Missouri, from Lieutenant Governor Boggs on down, mocked every effort the Saints made to obtain protection.

Joseph Smith characterized Boggs’ behavior by first observing that “Lieutenant Governor Boggs has been represented as merely a curious and disinterested observer of these events; yet he was evidently the head and front of the mob, for as may easily be seen by what follows, no important move was made without his sanction.” Smith claimed that Boggs was a secret mover in the meetings and riots of July 20th and 23rd, 1833. More sternly, Smith charges that Boggs had “only to wink, and mob went from maltreatment to murder.” Alexander Baugh wrote that an eye-witness account given by William Boggs, the six-year old son of Lilburn, suggests the lieutenant governor was present during the July disturbances.

Historian Stephen LaSueur also leaves the question of Boggs’ direct involvement in the riots unresolved but he affirms that “Boggs clearly shared the predominant prejudices against

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46 Baugh, “Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs and the Mormons,” 114.
the Mormons.” He openly referred to them as deluded people and his son, William Boggs, said that his father “could not endure the obnoxious doctrines promulgated by the Mormon leaders. Boggs speculated in large tracts of land in western Missouri, which brought him into conflict with the Mormons, who were also buying a considerable amount of land.”

LaSueur wrote that the troubles experienced by the Mormons in Jackson County was only a prelude and “can be seen as the working out of dominant forces in American social and political development. In this respect, the Mormon War represented a Jacksonian expression of democracy and majority rule. The Mormons found themselves in the same position as Indians, Blacks, abolitionists, and other groups whose activities, values, or physical appearance conflicted with the community norms.”

Interestingly, Boggs spoke in his third biennial address, just over a year after the Mormons had been driven from the state, of the excitement and good tidings of thousands of new settlers being added to the population. Said he, “It is an act of justice that this increase of population should be entitled to all the privileges which have been heretofore accorded to older emigrants, and which the constitution warrant them in demanding at your hands.”

Meanwhile, Governor Dunklin resigned in September of 1836 to accept an appointment from President Andrew Jackson to be the Surveyor-General of Missouri, Illinois, and

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48 LeSueur, The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri, 253.

49 Leopard, Messages and Proclamations, 205.
Arkansas.\textsuperscript{50} Lieutenant Governor Boggs, who had already won election for the next
gubernatorial term, filled the remainder of Dunklin’s term.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{50} Leopard, \textit{Messages and Proclamations}, 123. Aside from the Mormon issue which was not mentioned
in the short biographical sketch provided by Leopard, Dunklin was best known for his efforts to establish education
as a priority in Missouri. He had proposed for two consecutive years that a state bank be chartered but failed to
convince the General Assembly of the soundness of his proposal. Dunklin passed away in 1844.

\textsuperscript{51} Leopard, \textit{Messages and Proclamations}, 3.
Boggs had been looking forward to becoming governor for quite some time. Dunklin was not seeking re-election and Boggs quite naturally became the front-runner for governor.\(^{52}\) Senator Benton’s popularity was so widespread at the time that people even talked about him as one who could be elected to the vice presidency of the United States.\(^{53}\) He had benefited throughout his political career by riding the coattails of Senator Benton who was such an ally to President Jackson; things never looked better from him politically. In February of 1835 the Democratic Party announced that Benton was running as a candidate for vice president of the United States on the same ticket with Martin Van Buren for president. Boggs headed the Democratic ticket for the state elections running as Governor on the same announcement.\(^{54}\) The announcement of the nomination of Benton was published in the *Farmers and Mechanics Advocate* on February 7\(^{th}\) but the *Advocate* had already published an article on January 31\(^{st}\) that Benton would not accept the nomination to run as the Democratic candidate for the office of Vice President.\(^{55}\) In both announcements, Lilburn W. Boggs was the nominee for governor of Missouri by the Democrats.

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\(^{52}\) Baugh, “Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs and the Mormons,” 115. Baugh put early 1834 as the time when Boggs began planning his election strategy.

\(^{53}\) *Farmers and Mechanics Advocate.* "Benton Declines Nomination for Vice President." January 31, 1835.

\(^{54}\) *Farmers and Mechanics Advocate.* "Announcement of Nominations." February 7, 1835.

\(^{55}\) *Farmers and Mechanics Advocate.* "Democratic Nominations." February 14, 1835. The writer found it interesting in contemplation of the difficulties of publishing a newspaper without instant communications that Benton’s withdrawal from the ticket was announced before another publication of his intention to run. Benton was actually nominated but withdrew shortly after the nomination.
When he eventually ran for the office of governor he ran against a man who was immensely popular, William H. Ashley. Ashley concentrated his campaign on the old money establishment in St. Louis and the older river counties near St. Louis and adjacent to the Missouri River. He supposed that his overall popularity would carry the remainder of the state. Boggs, younger and less well-known, focused on the “fringe” counties and his association with the Jacksonians/Bentonites.

Boggs, who had continued living with his family in Independence during the years that he served as lieutenant governor, had been actively campaigning for the office of Governor since early in 1835. When Governor Dunklin resigned in September of 1836 Boggs became the acting Governor; it then became necessary to move, with his family to Jefferson City.

His campaign focused on the critical issues with which he was very familiar because of his time in the General Assembly and his years as lieutenant governor. His stand on each of the key issues was straight Jackson-Benton Democratic Party line.

First and foremost he was a Jackson man. In his address to the General Assembly on November 22, 1836, he praised Andrew Jackson with worshipful flourish:

Allow me here to say, that the prosperity of our own State is not the only cause for congratulation; the condition of the citizens of our sister States, is greatly advancing in wealth and improvements; and in this happy state of affairs, is to be seen the effect of an untiring zeal on the part of the present worthy Chief Magistrate of the Union; one who has devoted a long life to the service of his country, both civil and military; whose stern virtue, honest heart, and wise head, have been conducting our federal government to its present elevated and enviable height. We have been, during his administration, struck with wonder and astonishment at the rapidity with which one grand stroke of public policy was succeeded by another; we have barely had time to express our approbation of one great measure, before it was followed by another and another in such rapid succession that the brilliancy of the last seemed to shed a luster on those which preceded it. He is shortly to retire from that station which he has filled with so much credit to himself and honor to his country; let us indulge the hope, that his mantle will descend upon his
successor, and our federal government be advanced, step by step, until it reaches the summit of human wisdom.  

Like Jackson, he was against the Bank of the United States; he was a hard-money man. Yet he espoused chartering a state bank to promote sound financing for the growth of the state. He pronounced the need to uniformly value land for taxation purposes. He proposed building a new capitol building. He outlined a plan for new railroad lines that would promote commerce in the state and proposed that they petition Congress for land grants to provide the rights of way and financing for the proposed railroads. He wanted to establish public schools with special attention to a state university. He proposed consolidation of court venues for the Supreme Court.

On November 17, 1840 Boggs, in his Third Biennial Address reported that “Since your last session, the University of the State has been located, and the public buildings are now in a rapid state of progress. Under the provisions of a law passed by the last General Assembly, the town of Columbia in the county of Boone was selected as the permanent site of this institution. Although he had worked before his term with Governor Dunklin and then four more years as Governor to establish the University of Missouri, it did not open until after his term as Governor. Governor Boggs did not speak long about the University of Missouri but it was obvious in his speech that he took great pride in finally getting things underway:

It has long been a matter of reproach to our state, that, with the liberal donation of Congress, and the accumulated fund for the support of a seminary of learning, not provision was ever mad for the

56 Leopard, Messages and Proclamations, 168.

57 ‘Hard money’ men were those who preferred that gold and silver coinage be used in commerce. ‘Soft money’ men were those who preferred that currency be exchanged in business transactions and that other non-metallic instruments of credit also be used. Jacksonian Democrats espoused hard money. The Whigs and other non-Jacksonians preferred currency and letters of credit to gold and silver bullion transactions.

58 Leopard, Messages and Proclamations, 204. The website for the University of Missouri credits 900 citizens of Boone County and their donation of $117,921 for the establishment of the university (http://www.missouri.edu/about/history/mu-history.php).
education among ourselves, of our youth in the higher branches of science, and that for the proper acquisition of this knowledge our citizens were indebted to foreign institutions. It forms a subject of congratulation that this reproach can no longer rest upon us, but can be met by the fact that our energies have been excited in the cause of advanced education, and that our zeal in its behalf has been manifested by our determination to concentrate intelligence among us. It is a strong evidence of the improved condition and increasing importance of our state, that we have had the honor to rear the first institution of this character on this side of the mighty father of waters.  

He explained how the state militia was organized and laid out a plan of reorganization and increase in size of the militia. He talked of having Congress build a military road along the western boundary of the state. The Santa Fe trade was vitally important, yet taxes were levied on overland trade but not levied on goods transported on the waterways, so he proposed equalization in order to preserve the Santa Fe trade.

The national debt had been discharged so he proposed drafting a petition to Congress to make land cheap in order to facilitate settlement by families that would then strengthen the economy. He justified this by explaining that since the national debt had been paid off the proceeds from land sales were accruing providing a surplus to the federal treasury and the surplus was extremely difficult to dispose of in satisfactory ways.

The election became a referendum of Jacksonian policies. In fact, at a state convention of Democrats held in Jefferson City in January 1835 Lilburn W. Boggs was named as the Democratic candidate for governor; a declaration came out of the convention that no other candidates should be considered as true Jackson men – a statement aimed particularly at William Ashley who purported to be a Jackson supporter.


although he had non-Jacksonian ideas. Despite this, Boggs and his entire ticket were elected. The final vote count for the gubernatorial seat showed Boggs winning over Ashley by 1,258 votes: 14,315 for Boggs and 13,057 for Ashley.

On a personal level, Boggs was personable, kind, and considerate. Julie Appletoft tells of the time when Boggs and his family were moving to Jefferson City. They were waiting to cross the Missouri River and had to spend the night before gaining passage on the ferry. The Boggs family met another family, by the name of Burch, who seemed to be poor and needy. The governor promised the man that, in the morning, he would help him find a place to live and also see if he could help him find work. The next morning he found a comfortable residence for the family. A few days later he sent word to the man that he would like to have him come to his office. When the man arrived, the governor gave him an appointment to be the warden of the state prison; the job provided a fine home for the family and a comfortable salary for the man. One of the sons of the Burch family later became an attorney and was elected to represent the Northern District of California in Congress.

Boggs was a very sociable man, a very important attribute for a politician. Appletoft describes what his home, filled with their children, was like during his term as Governor:

During Governor Boggs’ term of office at Jefferson City, he maintained and kept an open house. His parlors in the Governor’s residence were always full, and his hospitality became proverbial. The poor and the rich were alike welcome to his home and board. While at Jefferson City the governor received much company, and his house was scarcely ever clear of guests. He was


62 Gordon, 113. Fringe counties would be considered the new counties and those in the interior of the state away from the Missouri river.


particularly fond of receiving his old backwoods and frontier friends, and [treated them with
great cordiality].

Benton, who considered himself the political boss in Missouri, expected that his friends
would receive the spoils of his political power. Benton was known as a kingmaker, in other
words, he decided who would receive appointed jobs in Missouri. Benton’s expectations
notwithstanding, Boggs began making appointments in his first days and weeks in office
without consulting the Senator. When Benton learned of Boggs’ appointments he made threats
and the two had a serious falling-out. When word got back to him of Benton’s displeasure and
threats he responded:

If Colonel Benton was going to act as Governor of the State, he would take his family back to
their home in Jackson County, and he would retire from public office and resign, but as he was
elected Governor he would remain at Jefferson City and discharge the duties of chief executive of
the State, regardless of Colonel Benton or any of his friends. This decided course gathered
around him quite an array of warm personal friends, many of whom took issue with Colonel
Benton on political questions, and thus began the “Anti-Benton” party in Missouri, which finally
caused the great statesman’s downfall and final defeat in his own State.

Boggs’ Time in Office

As Boggs began his administration he effusively asserted to the General Assembly the
day before his inauguration that the state was prospering:

Our state continues rapidly to advance in population; the tide of emigration which has been
flowing westward, brings with it an increased and increasing accession of wealth, intelligence,
and virtue, and Missouri bids fair, at no distant period, to hold an exalted rank among her sisters
of the confederacy. The value of every species of property has been greatly enhanced; our
farmers have reaped bountiful crops; labor of every description commands a high price, and the
blessings of health have been enjoyed by our population to an unexampled degree; whilst peace
and plenty reign throughout our borders. With the finest lands for agriculture, and our great
mineral resources, it needs only an enterprise commensurate with such advantages, to make us a
rich and happy people. For these accumulated blessings we cannot fail to express our gratitude,

65 Appletoft, napacountygenealogy.com, 4.

66 Appletoft, napacountygenealogy.com, 3. Boggs was really a one-term governor. He did not run for re-
election when his full four-year term expired. His falling out with Senator Benton could have been one reason for
his decision not to run again.
and trust that the efforts of judicious legislation may cooperate in extending and rendering
beneficial the gifts of a bounteous Providence.67

Boggs was so very positive about the “peace and plenty throughout our borders” and yet
one of the first legislative bills he signed dealt with the ongoing dilemma associated with the
Mormons. This legislation divided Ray County into two counties; the county directly north of
Ray was called Caldwell County and was set aside for Mormon occupation; the county
immediately north of Caldwell was named Daviess County, and was considered to be available
to all.68

When Boggs spoke on November 22, 1836 of the great prosperity of Missouri and the
United States and the likelihood of a continuation of such good things, he had no idea of the
ponderous initiatives that had already been put in play by hard money Jacksonians that would
result in the worst financial crisis the young nation had yet experienced - the Panic of 1837.

Banking in the United States was mostly decentralized. One national bank known as
The (Second) Bank of the United States was in operation and it existed primarily as a tool to
manage the nation’s borrowing following the War of 1812. Aside from the Bank of the United
States, banking was done either with private insurance companies or banks with a charter from
their state. The Bank of the United States accepted all tax deposits for the U.S. government so
it had a major portion of the specie in circulation.69 All banks issued currency, but most
currency was only accepted locally or by the big banks in New York City. Not all currency was
redeemable in gold and silver which made the worth of currency tenuous.

67 Leopard, Messages and Proclamations, 168.
69 Gold and silver coinage is referred to as “specie.”
The Bank of the United States was chartered by Congress for twenty years; its charter expired in 1836 on the twentieth anniversary of its charter. Congress voted to re-charter the Bank of the United States, but President Andrew Jackson vetoed the bill, and Congress was unable to over-ride the veto. The Bank of the United States survived on its own for five more years but then went bankrupt in 1841. Jackson claimed that his defeat of the Bank of the United States was one of his greatest achievements. Ultimately, the demise of the Bank of the United States may have been desirable, but the timing of its elimination and its role as the only real manager of currency and monetary policy for the young nation was disastrous when viewed in combination with other initiatives under way, namely The Specie Circular and the official Distribution of the Surplus to the states in 1837.

Andrew Jackson sponsored the Specie Circular which mandated that federal receivers could no longer accept currency for land purchases after August 15, 1836. Thereafter, the only legal tender for land purchased from the Government Land Office could only be gold or silver (specie). In 1836 the government sold nearly twice as much land as it had in any year before or after. Anticipating land purchases would quite naturally cause people to hoard specie since that was the only way they could make their land purchases.

The national debt had been liquidated and Congress had authorized that all surplus in excess of five million dollars be distributed to the states according to their populations in four

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73 Rousseau, "Jacksonian Monetary Policy," 461.
quarterly payments beginning January 1, 1837. The first three quarterly payments exceeded twenty-eight million dollars; it is presumed that a good portion of those payments would have been made in specie adding additional withdrawal pressure to the reserves of specie in the banks. The Bank of England increased its discount rate twice in 1837 and ceased accepting bills of exchange from American banks. The Bank of England’s actions caused a drop in demand for U.S. cotton imports. The combined effects of lower cotton prices and ‘specie-only land purchases’ in turn depressed land prices. All of these things—reduction in specie reserves because of the distribution of the federal surplus, the additional demand for specie for land purchases, and a drop in cotton prices—resulted in the Panic of 1837.74

When one considers how long it took to disseminate information in those days it would follow that people would hoard their gold and silver even if they were not anticipating purchasing land from the government. Peter L. Rousseau has made the case that if every person living in the United States at that time added just sixteen cents to their personal holding of specie, it would have exhausted the specie reserves of the entire country.75 Without dependable currency and with a shortage of specie, the economy was in shambles.

Rousseau declared:

The financial panic that gripped the U.S. economy in the Spring of 1837 was among the most severe in its history. In the five years that followed the nation’s first general suspension of specie payments by the banks, failures and loan losses reduced the book assets of the state chartered banks by 45 percent, and 194 of the 729 banks with charters in 1837 were forced to close their doors. Prices of banking, railroad, and industrial securities in the early stock markets plummeted.76


75 Rousseau, “Jacksonian Monetary Policy,” 483.

Schlesinger spoke of the financial distress in the lives of the common people in their subsistence purchases:

The crash brought suffering and distress. Prices of essential foods shot out of reach of the poor. Flour, which had sold at $5.62 a barrel in March, 1835, rose to $7.75 in March, 1836, and $12 in March, 1837. Pork climbed from $10 in March, 1835, to $16.25 a year later and to $18.25 in March, 1837. The wholesale price of coal mounted from $6 a ton in January, 1835, to $10.50 in January, 1837, and rents increased proportionately.77

In November 1836, when Boggs made his plea to the General Assembly to charter a state bank, he could not have known how treacherous the financial markets would become. In his address to the General Assembly on November 22, 1836 he made a remarkably non-Jacksonian supposition as he spoke of the need for a state bank – “The incorporation of a Banking Company is at this time a subject of engrossing importance. Though monied monopolies may justly be regarded as anti-republican in their spirit and tendency it may yet be reasonably doubted whether they are not so interwoven with the Bank of the United States and interests of the people, as to render their immediate abandonment productive of great inconvenience, if not totally impracticable.”78 He knew by practical experience, rather than ideology, that Missouri and the state and nation needed more sophistication in their banking practices to grow the economy.

Here is Boggs’ proposal:

It is obvious that we cannot return, unaided by legislation, to a pure specie currency; we must depend on the notes of foreign banks,79 and those notes will continue to form a large proportion of our circulating medium. Might we not then be better enabled to guard this currency against depreciation, and to promote the important object, which seems to be the policy of the present administration of our federal government; of increasing the amount of specie and causing all the minor monied transactions of society to be performed with gold and silver, the establishment of a sound, well restricted and specie paying State Bank? This interesting question, it is for the wisdom of the assembled Representatives of the people to determine. I am sensible that there are difficulties which embarrass either course which you may think proper to adopt.80


78 Leopard, *Messages and Proclamations*, 171. These observations by Boggs are really quite a departure from the ‘hard money’ position espoused by Jackson men.

79 “Foreign Banks” include any bank outside of Missouri, domestic and international.
The General Assembly did charter the Bank of the State of Missouri in 1837, closely following the restrictions outlined by the Governor. The bank did not please everyone, especially the farmers who felt that the bank of an agrarian community could offer better rates to farmers.\(^8^1\) The bank did not fail but it was far from popular and weighed in negatively on Boggs’ popularity. Thus Boggs deviated in a major way from the Jacksonian approach to banking, which was to destroy monopolistic banks and to rely on specie.

Boggs spoke to the General Assembly on November 22, 1836, as acting governor in his biennial address and made an impassioned plea for a new capitol building. The existing capitol building was a small building of frame construction and housed both the executive’s residence and the General Assembly. The House of Representatives had become so large that there was barely room to house the legislators and provide space for spectators. Such lack of space violated the constitutional requirement that the legislative session should be open to the public. He pointed out that the House of Representatives would continue to grow as additional counties were created in the present session.\(^8^2\) The building was also not secure from fire, accidental or otherwise, necessitating that a new building be fireproof. Ironically, two years later in his second biennial address given on November 20, 1838, he commented that the original capitol building burned down and all official records of the State were destroyed.\(^8^3\) The cause of the fire was the defective manner in which the building was constructed.\(^8^4\)

\(^8^0\) Leopard, *Messages and Proclamations*, 172.


\(^8^3\) Leopard, *Messages and Proclamations*, 195.
His projection at the time was that the building would cost about $75,000 to construct. It is important to note that the entire revenue for the State of Missouri in 1837 was projected by the governor to be $68,000 and $75,000 for 1838; the revenue projections provide an indication of the scope of a seventy-five thousand dollar construction project; it was huge! Deficit reduction, a hallmark of Jacksonian ideals, was not a priority to the Governor.

In his biennial address of 1838 he reported that he had arranged to borrow $70,000 for the construction of the capitol and that he had raised another $5,000 by selling state owned city lots in the city. Two years later, he needed an additional $125,000 – an amount he believed would be ample to prepare the building for use by the next General Assembly. Two years later, at the end of his administration, the building remained incomplete requiring another $50,000 to finish its construction; bringing the total for construction cost to $250,000– a far cry from the original $75,000 that he originally proposed. The capitol building was completed but not during his term. Many of the vetoes President Jackson issued were because he would not support borrowing for internal improvements, especially if the benefits of the improvements could not be enjoyed equally by the people. His building of the capitol building was completely counter to the basic doctrines of the Jacksonian Democrats!

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88 The capitol building constructed under Boggs’ direction was destroyed by fire, caused by a lightning strike, on February 15, 1911. A third capitol building was completed in 1917 and is still in use today (Robin Carnahan, Missouri Secretary of State, sos.mo.gov).
Nor did he stop with buildings. In his address to the General Assembly on November 22, 1836 he called for construction of railroads. Steamboat traffic was heavy to St. Louis on the Mississippi River, continuing on the Missouri river to Independence and Westport. Westport was the western-most terminus of steamboat access on the Missouri River and Boggs knew that to keep commerce growing in Missouri there had to be a means of freight transport beyond the main artery of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. He observed that railroads were considerably less expensive to construct than canals. Boggs proposed three routes that would give the most utility to the citizens. Two of the proposed routes traversed the state from east to west beginning at St. Louis to the western boundary at Westport. The third route traversed the northern part of the state from north to south ending at Jefferson City. He proposed the legislature petition Congress for land grants to construct the railroads which he suggested should consist of eight-hundred sections or about five-hundred thousand acres to construct about eight hundred miles of railroad. He maintained that with the land grant and the borrowing capacity of his proposed state bank they could finance the construction. Although Boggs’ administration never carried the initiative forward, credit must be given to him for his foresight and understanding of how to promote commerce and industry. However, borrowing or taxing for internal improvements was a departure from the Jacksonian party line and quite Whig-ish.

In his second biennial address Boggs mentioned that his view of the importance of railroads to the State of Missouri had not changed. He said that he knew of no effort to get a charter from the federal government and acknowledged that there simply was not capital enough.

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89 Lyon, "Independence, Missouri, and the Mormons," 7. In the spring of 1833 the Missouri river flooded and the channel shifted away from Independence. A new town, Westport, was established upstream from Independence and a better landing was established. Westport took over much of the fur trade and Santa Fe trade that had been centered in Independence.

90 Leopard, Messages and Proclamations, 175-176.
available to initiate any internal improvements of any sort.\textsuperscript{91} Significantly, the first rail laid west of the Mississippi in Missouri was not traffic-worthy until December of 1852; a five mile stretch in St. Louis. Stymied by the Panic, it was not till late 1855 that rail traffic finally extended from St. Louis to Jefferson City.\textsuperscript{92}

He also proposed petitioning Congress to make land cheaper to settlers in order to strengthen the states as population grew and commerce increased. He said that the national debt had been liquidated so there was no longer any reason to create revenue to the federal government in land sales. He did not speak of the matter again in either of the remaining biennial addresses. The federal government eventually began distributing annual surpluses to the states on a proportional basis per population. Although Boggs could never effectuate the policy, the federal government did pass the Graduation Act of 1854 through which the purchase price of government lands lessened each year it remained unsold.\textsuperscript{93} Economic advantage to the people was one of the major pledges of Jacksonian Democrats. Since most of the proceeds of the land sales were used to pay off the national debt, it would have been un-Jacksonian not to lower the price of land. Boggs’ work was influential in the eventual passage of the Graduation Act of 1854.

Boggs also recommended that the State Supreme Court be provided a place where all work could be centralized rather than being spread out in various separate locations. He observed that they had a decent library for the court to rely upon and that in a few years it would

\textsuperscript{91} Leopard, \textit{Messages and Proclamations}, 187-188.


\textsuperscript{93} See footnote 48.
be the largest library in the State. He said that it was only sensible to have the Supreme Court in Jefferson City with access to an expanding library so that decisions could be considered through research in the library and more uniform decisions could be rendered.94

In 1840 he was still pleading with the General Assembly to provide a central location, at the seat of government, for the Supreme Court to meet. This time, however, he was lamenting the loss of all their records to fire and enjoined the General Assembly not only to provide a central location for the Supreme Court but also to find a way to re-establish a law library for the State. He explained that, following the burning of the capitol, the only way replace transcripts would be to obtain copies of the decisions from the very old practicing attorneys who might have the decisions in their collections; a secure archive was urgently needed.95 Jacksonians, generally, were skeptical of the power of the courts. President Jackson thought of the Justices as aristocrats with too much power. For Boggs to facilitate and aggrandize the courts was an indication that he valued the courts more than the normal Jacksonian would.

94 Leopard, Messages and Proclamations, 178.
95 Leopard, Messages and Proclamations, 178.
Chapter Five: Assessment

What of his Administration?

When we judge politicians of the past we must be cautious. We use the content of our libraries and institutional memory to judge them when we cannot fully appreciate the context of their lives. Our biases, based on the experience and context of our own lives, often betray us as we try to fathom the life and experiences of someone in the past. Particularly germane to this thesis about Boggs is to know whether his actions were true to Jacksonian political ideals.

How shall we characterize his four plus years as governor? Was he a good governor or was he a bad governor? Was he Jacksonian? With an understanding of bias and context, we should ask the historians.

William Southern, Jr., in his biographical sketch included in Buel Leopard’s book wrote:

Of his service as Governor there is little record. He presided at the laying of the cornerstone of the State Capitol building which was burned and replaced by the magnificent building now overlooking the Missouri river on the same site. The outstanding history of his four years as Governor was the so-called Mormon war. Citizens of Caldwell and Ray counties appealed to Governor Boggs for help. In hysterical letters they represented that their lives were in danger from Mormons and that their towns would be sacked and burned unless help was sent. Governor Boggs called out the militia, authorized the organization of armed forces and sent an army into the field under General Alexander W. Doniphan and General Chas. D. Lucas. Doniphan at one time refused to obey the Governor and returned with his brigade to Liberty.1

Seventy years later Alexander L. Baugh wrote a bit more about Boggs than William Southern, Jr.:

During his four years as the state’s chief executive, Boggs spearheaded the chartering of the state bank, established the University of Missouri at Columbia, and organized the public school system. However, his administration was not a popular one. Merchants generally objected to the bank. He was criticized for his “Extermination Order” and the handling of the 1838 Mormon War, as well as the Honey War, a boundary dispute between Missouri and Iowa. His appointments also caused political in-fighting among members of the Democratic Party,

1 Leopard, Messages and Proclamations, 166.
particularly with that of Missouri’s powerful senator, Thomas Hart Benton. However, most of the rancor levied against him centered in the way he tried to secure money for the building of a new state capitol and the final cost for the structure. In 1837, he got $75000 appropriated for its construction from the state bank which was to be paid back in fifty years. However, in 1839, after construction was well under way, it was determined that $200,000 would be needed to complete the building. To secure the extra funds, Boggs borrowed an additional $125,000 from the state bank on a one-year loan, rather than the original fifty-year loan agreement. His actions were highly criticized and by the end of his term in 1840, public and party support for him and his policies waned, so he chose not to run for re-election.  

Perry McCandless, after explaining the cause of the panic of 1837 and describing how difficult the national economy was, talked about the Boggs years in Missouri:

In general Missouri escaped trouble in the late thirties and weathered the full depression cycle better than most other states. Several factors contributed to Missouri’s rather unique position. The past decade had been a period of relatively sound economic growth and development. There was an increasing migration from the East, and the new immigrants frequently brought money with them that stimulated a demand for Missouri goods. The Santa Fe trade brought hundreds of thousands of dollars in specie into the state. The heavy deposits of the national government in St. Louis for purchases to supply frontier military posts for Indian agencies, the income derived from the far western fur trade, and the business of supplying the immigrants going to the Far West all contributed to Missouri’s advantageous position. Moreover, lead mining and tobacco production in the state both expanded, since the depression had a limited effect on the market for those products.

Missouri’s sound banking system and the absence of speculative internal improvement projects also contributed greatly to the state’s relatively good economic condition. Missouri’s only state bank, the Bank of the State of Missouri, conservatively managed under its very restrictive charter, went through the panic without a depreciation of its notes. On the other hand, the state needed transportation facilities, the business community needed currency and credit, and the economy needed a boost. Missouri may have been relatively better off than her sister states less because she did nothing than because they did things so badly.

Boggs would likely agree with most things McCandless wrote. He knew that Governor Dunklin turned over to him a state that was in sound fiscal condition. He understood what a great thing the growth, primarily through migration, was for the prospects of the state. Of all men, he understood how vital the Santa Fe trade was for Missouri; he had been involved as a

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trader. He had petitioned Congress to put the Santa Fe overland merchants on the same footing from a tariff standpoint as those using water transports. Having been involved in the Indian trade most of his life he understood the impact of that commerce. He tried to initiate railroad construction to enhance the mineral and agricultural resources of the state. He was the man, later to take heavy criticism from the Missourians, who established the Bank of the State of Missouri with a very restrictive charter to make sure that its currency would not depreciate. Boggs did some great things, not “nothing” as McCandless infers. McCandless got it right, though, it did not seem like he did much, at least to the voters. Although other states were having a much harder time coping with the difficulties of the times, how much worse someone in another state was doing did not help Missourians feel better about how badly they were doing. Boggs received the blame, as politicians always do when things are going badly.

Joseph F. Gordon had much to say about Boggs’ involvement in the financing and construction of the new capitol building. None of it was flattering. Gordon was highly critical of the mismanagement of the whole affair and explained the reaction the General Assembly had to Boggs’ slick maneuvering to borrow $155,000 on a one-year note which the governor secured from the Bank of Missouri when the state was unable to sell the authorized bonds for construction on the terms set by the General Assembly:

That money obtained from the Bank of Missouri for building the Capitol, was not obtained according to, but in violation of law. The Bank possessed no power to loan to the Executive of the State any sum of money; nor had the Executive any power, under law to borrow, in the name of the State money for the purpose of erecting the Capitol, for a shorter period than fifty years, with the privilege of paying in twenty-five years.4

Although Boggs’ inappropriate use of his influence with the Bank of Missouri to obtain funds to complete the capitol building did nothing for his own finances, it was a special

privilege he should not have exercised; his action was one of the three objections Benton had spoken of as he waged the battle against the Bank of the United States in the Senate.

Boggs had volunteered as a youngster to fight Indians with William Henry Harrison at Tippecanoe and again in the War of 1812. He did not shy away from war. During his administration he committed Missouri forces to three wars. The first of the wars was the Seminole War that ended the Seminole people’s settlement of Florida. Not long before Martin Van Buren was inaugurated in 1837 he was speaking with Senator Benton about the troubles with the Seminole people. Van Buren rehearsed the grave nature of the conflict with the Indians and asked Benton for advice. Benton responded that the Seminoles could not deal with Missourians and that their residency in Florida would be cut short if Missouri forces were called upon. Van Buren asked Benton if he thought Missourians could do better in Florida than the regular army had done. Benton responded that he was sure that they could. Following his inauguration Van Buren approached Benton and asked if it was really practicable to send Missourians to Florida. Benton responded affirmatively and Van Buren called upon Governor Boggs to send two regiments of mounted men to go to Florida and fight the Seminoles.

Governor Boggs issued the call and twelve to fourteen hundred marshaled in St. Louis for transport by steamship to New Orleans and then to Tampa. Several of the ships ran aground and many horses were lost. General Richard Gentry was in command and he dismissed the men who were without horses and took the rest to Okee-cho-bee Lake where they prevailed in a battle with the Seminole because of their previous experience fighting Indians and knowing their tactics.5

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5 Walter B. Stevens, *Centennial History of Missouri (The Center State): One Hundred Years in the Union 1820-1921 Vol. II*, (St. Louis: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1921) 2:267-68. McCandless recounts the
The Honey War also occurred on Boggs’ watch. It was not much of a war but the expense was adverse to the State of Missouri and the obstinancy of Boggs was an embarrassment to the State. The War was a boundary dispute with the Iowa Territory. Boggs reported on the Honey War to the General Assembly in his Second Biennial Message on November 20, 1838. Boggs reported that the President of the United States’ had appointed Commissioner for the General Government to act with a Commissioner form Missouri and Iowa Territory. Boggs declined and said that the State could not act without authority of the General Assembly and that had not been possible before the day of the speech. The matter was finally settled by Congress when Iowa became a state.

The third war on Boggs’ watch was called the Mormon War. This thesis will not deal in detail with the Mormon War other than the difficulties culminating in mob action that occurred in Jackson County in 1833 which have already been addressed. Governor Dunklin dealt with those problems as Lieutenant Governor Boggs remained overtly detached from the crisis. The issue at that time involved about twelve-hundred Mormons. By 1838 there were over fifteen-thousand Mormons in Missouri. Caldwell County, which had been created and set apart for the settlement of Mormons, was heavily populated and the Mormons had also same experience but he put the number of volunteers at 600 of which only 432 stayed with the forces long enough to get to New Orleans. After the loss of horses there remained fewer than 300 to fight the Indians. The battle was fought Christmas Day in 1837. General Zachary Taylor actually charged the Missourians with incompetency and cowardice. After General Taylor made the charges the General Assembly investigated and said that the Missourians fought with honor and that the problem was that they had not received adequate support from the regular army (McCandless, 118-119).

6 Leopard, Messages and Proclamations, 197-198.

7 Alexander L. Baugh wrote an outstanding book, A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri, which would be helpful to anyone looking for information about the Mormon Wars. The archives of the State of Missouri have a Mormon Wars collection in Jefferson City.

8 Jennings, Zion Is Fled, 302.
occupied most of Daviess County; additionally, there were Mormon settlements in Ray and Carroll counties.9

Tensions between the old settlers and the Mormons escalated until things were so violent that Governor Boggs called out the State Militia and issued an executive order on October 27, 1838. Governor Boggs issued an order to state militiamen to execute Joseph Smith and other leaders of the Latter-day Saint Church being held in Liberty Jail and exterminate or expel the Mormons from the State of Missouri.10 “The Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the State if necessary for the public peace – their outrages are beyond all description.”11 After riots, skirmishes, and eventual slaughter the Mormons were, indeed, driven from the state in the middle of the winter to land north of the Missouri River.12 Governor Boggs presided over what he termed the “extermination and driving” of the Mormons from Missouri.


10 Christensen, 92.

11 Stevens, Centennial History of Missouri, 2:110.

12 Historians generally call this executive order the ‘Extermination Order’ and it was finally rescinded in 1976 by then Governor Christopher S. “Kit” Bond who is, at present, serving as U.S. Senator from Missouri. Bond was awarded the Thomas L. Kane Award for outstanding service to the Mormon community by a non-Mormon in May of 2010 by the Mormon History Association. In a recorded video message and acceptance of the award he acknowledged the wrongs of the past. “The treatment of the Mormon people in Missouri in the 1830’s and beyond was barbaric. Women were raped and tortured. Men were killed by mobs or driven out of the state. Their property was stolen. The lucky ones were those who were left alive with nothing and were forced to make their way into a more hospitable state. What makes it especially hard to understand was that the barbarism was state-sanctioned, Bond said, adding that Boggs’ order made it legal to kill anyone who belonged to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. What surprised me was that as late as 1976, the law was still on the books, though thankfully, it had not been enforced and nobody paid attention to it” (Lloyd, R. Scott. "Former Missouri governor honored for rescinding Mormon 'extermination order'." Deseret News, May 31, 2010).
Roger Launius’ biographical sketch paints a somber tone about the gubernatorial term ending and “Boggs returned to Independence and working in his business. Boggs did not emerge again in public light until 1842 when he was shot and nearly killed by an unknown [would-be] assassin while reading in his Independence home.”

Boggs was readily elected to the state senate in the fall of 1842, “Perhaps because of the publicity associated with his attempted assassination, serving four years before retiring from public office.”

Boggs implored to the General Assembly in his third Biennial Address (already cited) given November 17, 1840, just days before his term ended, to cleanse the reputation of the State. To this writer his words concerning the Mormon War do not reflect regret; it reflects outrage at the bad press Missouri was receiving in the newspapers of the land and overseas. His remarks were simply odious self-justification for the way the State and its Chief Executive conducted the Mormon War – how their conduct of the war saved lives.

Here is an example of the negative press Boggs and the State of Missouri received from the Sun of New York; “…after giving some extracts from St. Louis papers, showing the outrages of the people of Missouri against the Mormons,” the editor proceeded:

That Captain Bogart must be very much like a blackguard and a coward, if he is not a decided candidate for both titles. He was one of those who started the horrible stories of the ‘cutting up of Missourians, fifty at a hatch, by the Mormons.’ Probably he ran away from his company, and imagined the horrible stories he carried. The shooting down of a flag staff bearing a flag of truce is characteristic of the bravery of a coward, when backed by 3,000 men against 700.

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13 Stevens, Centennial History of Missouri, 2: 119. Stevens states that the assailant was Porter Rockwell. Boggs had been shot in the back of the head but he was not killed. General John B. Clark who was General Atchison’s superior in the Mormon War told Boggs years later, “That Mormon didn’t know you as well as I do. He didn’t know you had no brains, or he wouldn’t have shot you up there” (p.119).

14 Christensen, Dictionary of Missouri Biography, 92.
They must have a primitive mode of administering justice in Missouri. These Mormons are as much citizens as the others, and yet, without trial, upon the ex parte testimony of the persons who had provoked the Mormons to retaliation, the Governor issues orders, if we understand the case, for the expulsion of the Mormons from the State of Missouri.

The Emperor of Russia, the Shah of Persia, or the Sultan of Turkey could not embrace in his own person more legislative, judicial, and executive power than is here assumed. Legislative, in the enactment and promulgation of an edict of banishment. Judicial – extra judicial – in sentencing them to banishment under it. Executive, in summoning the force of the State to put in force his own judgment upon his own edict. Well done, Governor Boggs!

We are sorry to hear of the massacre of the Mormons by the armed mob; however, this violence, being the natural promptings of infuriated men is positively less culpable than the cool ignorance and impudent, illegal assumption of the Governor of Missouri. 15

At the beginning of Boggs’ term as governor the debt of the State of Missouri was $54,659 and the projected debt in 1837-1838 was projected by Governor Boggs to be $21,501.33. Instead of reducing debt by $33,158 in two years as he projected, he increased debt by $104,962; nearly tripling the debt to $159,621. As he completed his term he reported state debt of $404,631; nearly eight times the debt with which he began his administration. 16 If the Governor would have had to stand for re-election based upon his fiscal prowess (or lack of it) he would certainly have lost by a landslide. He won election after election expressing support for the Jacksonians and espousing Jacksonian conservatism and then involved the State of Missouri in a course of seemingly reckless borrowing in a program of internal improvements the people could not afford. His fiscal management was an affront to Jacksonian Democracy.

War, Indians, and Mormons

Boggs was firmly Jacksonian in his attitude toward removal of the Indians. As with President Jackson, Boggs believed that the Indians must be removed for their own good. He did

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not believe that the Indians were safe in the company of white settlers and he knew that white settlers were not safe in the proximity of the Indians. His part in ordering Missouri troops to Florida during the Seminole War was consistent with Jacksonian dogma in providing for the safety of the Union and in helping with the removal.

As with the Indians, the Mormons had become so vexatious to the citizens of Missouri that Boggs saw removal as the only solution. He ordered them to be driven from the state, or exterminated, just like they were Indians. The Mormons were citizens and ‘basic law’ was violated and Jacksonian Democracy was sacrificed for the expediency of eliminating the Mormon problem.

The Honey War was purely a states’ rights issue. In the Jacksonian mind the state is inviolable and independent in its self-determination. Iowa Territory seemed to be encroaching and a state could not let that happen. The surprising thing in Boggs’ handling of the Honey War is that he was eventually amenable to intervention by the federal government.

In the matter of war, Indians, and Mormons Governor Boggs was solidly Jacksonian in his actions and reactions.

Education

Governor Boggs celebrated with the General Assembly that the University of Missouri had been established and the State of Missouri had been relieved of the reproach of not having done a better job with education. Jacksonian Democracy is about the enrichment of the common man and education is the way to make common men and women more capable and powerful in their lives. Boggs not only established the University of Missouri but he insured a healthy and efficient common school system for the youth of the state. Education is a state’s
right and obligation and it is clear that the lack of an educational infrastructure prior to his administration weighed heavily on the Governor.

**Banking**

One must remember that Boggs began his business career as a bank teller. With his experience in the bank, even though of short duration, he would have learned a great deal as he watched the daily activity in the bank. President Jackson was the ‘killer’ of the Bank of the United States. The Jacksonian approach to banking was ‘hard currency’ and independence. Monopolistic banking was a threat to democracy and an impediment to fair elections. Boggs appeared to be in line on the banking issue at first but later he was responsible for the establishment of The State Bank of Missouri, but with stringent policies of safety. Although the State Bank was unpopular with the citizens of Missouri it did not fail and lent stability to the state in a time when other states were struggling in the aftermath of the Panic of 1837. Surprisingly, Boggs announced his final campaign, for the State Senate, on the ‘soft money’ ticket. Clearly Boggs was only conditionally in the Jacksonian camp regarding banking matters. His practicality trumped his philosophy.

**Internal Improvements**

Boggs’ handling of the construction and financing of the new capitol building was atrocious behavior and it was a scandal he could not overcome. The first prediction of a total cost of seventy-five thousand dollars was enormous; it exceeded the projected one-year tax revenue for the state at the time. President Jackson regularly vetoed appropriations that exceeded cash on hand. Boggs ended up borrowing another one-hundred fifty-five thousand
from the State Bank on a one-year note instead of a fifty-year note authorized by the General Assembly. His approach on the capitol building was completely opposite what a true Jacksonian Democrat would do.

Boggs asked repeatedly for authorization to build railroads in Missouri. His approach to the financing of the railroads was to ask for land grants from Congress that would then provide the land for the actual rail network and the revenue from land leases and sales would finance the borrowing for the construction. Jacksonian policy was against internal improvements that had to be financed and only for projects that had a very universal benefit to all citizens. Additionally, the federal government was for protection of the citizenry and not necessarily for commerce. Boggs was willing to give up his Jacksonian base in order to obtain federal help in Missouri’s need for internal improvements.

**Land**

Jacksonian policies provided for conversion of land to cash for the federal government and wide availability of land for expansion of the borders of the United States and settlement by its citizens. Boggs was insistent that land be made cheaper and cheaper for the people. Once the national debt was liquidated he asked that the land prices be put on an annual price graduation wherein the land dropped in price each year that it remained unsold. Boggs was completely Jacksonian in his approach to the national land policy.
Courts

President Jackson thought of the Supreme Court as an elitist group of the monied oligarchy. He felt that the courts should not have the power to define the law but to interpret the law. He felt that the judges should be elected and easily removed through the election process. Jackson did everything he could to diminish the power of the courts. Boggs, on the other hand, was an activist in terms of what he wanted the courts to do and in the way that he was trying to improve the courts’ abilities to administer the law. Boggs pretended to Jacksonian thought concerning the courts.

Slavery

The writer has not ascertained that Boggs owned any slaves for labor but he did get involved in the domestic trading of slaves. His politics were clearly pro-slavery and one of his issues with the Mormons was that he bought into the popular idea that the Mormons somehow wanted to upset the slave vote equilibrium that had been so carefully crafted in the Compromise of 1820. Boggs was Jacksonian to the core in matters dealing with slavery.

Jacksonian or Not?

Boggs, evaluated by the metric above, was Jacksonian in just four out of seven major issues of primary importance to the citizens of Missouri; clearly he was not a pure Jacksonian. His
politics changed according to what he felt he had to do for his constituency. The measurement of his overall record as governor could simply be reflected in his decision not to run again for the governorship. His chance of re-election was not good.

He had keen foresight as to the infrastructure needed to sustain growth and prosperity in order that Missouri could transform itself from back-woods wilderness to a flourishing state. His establishment of the State Bank of Missouri, though very unpopular, was very important and beneficial to the State’s economy. His establishment of the University of Missouri and his commanding support of the common schools proved to be the genesis of a lasting legacy for the State of Missouri. The writer is of the opinion that history has shown that, although he was elected to office repeatedly as a Jacksonian Democrat, he did what he thought he must do as Governor of the State of Missouri for the State and that he was willing to deviate, in major ways, from Jacksonian Democratic ideals in order to do what he must do.

Epilogue

Boggs returned to the State Senate in 1842 but he never played a significant role in Missouri affairs. “He did announce his candidacy for governor, surprisingly, on the ‘soft money’ ticket in 1844 but withdrew in 30 days in favor of Charles “Horse” Allen of Palmyra.”

President Jackson, a ‘hard money’ man, felt that his very proudest moment was when he vetoed the re-chartering of the Bank of the United States. For Boggs to then announce that he was running for office on the ‘soft money’ ticket would have been an astounding turn from the Jacksonian ideals. When his term in the State Senate ended in 1846 he retired from public life.

He moved to a farm east of Independence.\footnote{Gordon, "The Political Career of Lilburn W. Boggs," 121.} Launius wrote that “In 1846 Boggs’ business fell apart, and he lost his home in an economic depression.”\footnote{Christensen, Dictionary of Missouri Biography, 92.} After calling Boggs “politically impotent” LeSueur quotes Joseph Gordon “…when Boggs left office “he was a man without a party and, as far as the state as a whole was concerned, without friends or support.”\footnote{LeSueur, The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri, 121-122.} He left with his family by wagon on May 10, 1846, for California where he hoped to start anew. He reached Sutter’s Fort in November and within a short time had been appointed alcalde (chief civil authority) of California north of Sacramento.

Joseph Gordon wrote of Boggs’ good fortune in California. In his duties as Alcalde he sent his sheriff to have John Sutter appear before him but received a curious reply.

Boggs sent his sheriff to Captain John Sutter to inform him that unless he appeared for trial a judgment of $300 would be rendered against him. Sutter replied that he was too busy to attend court as gold had been discovered at his fort and sent a bag of dust which he valued at $300. The gold rush was on, but it was not necessary for Boggs to pan the precious metal as his little store turned into a private gold mine. He became “staker” and banker; he would supply the prospector with the provisions and then store and dispose of his dust for a percentage of the find.\footnote{Christensen, Dictionary of Missouri Biography, 92.}

In 1852 he purchased a farm in Napa Valley and retired from business. He lived there in relative seclusion until his death on March 4, 1860.\footnote{Christensen, Dictionary of Missouri Biography, 92.}
Historiographic Essay

The writer has attempted to put the following works in order of the chronology of Boggs’ life rather than arranging the sources topically:

“The Colonization of the West, 1820-1830” was written by Frederick J. Turner and published in *The American Historical Review* (1906). Frederick Jackson Turner laid out migration patterns and concluded that migration was regional both in origin and destination. Turner declared that the new country opened by migrating settlers was a “Self-confident section, believing in its right to share in government, and troubled by no doubts of its capacity to rule.” Migration to the west was a god-given entitlement to opportunity and security through land ownership.

Dan E. Clark argues that an adventurous, ambitious, and mostly upstart group of strong individualists comprised the men and women who made the western push beyond the Allegheny Mountains. Historians have mapped migration patterns from a regional standpoint but the overall thrust was west to the Pacific. The mindset of these hardy settlers was what historians call manifest destiny. Clark wrote in *The Pacific Historical Review* (1932) an article “Manifest Destiny and the Pacific” of a “chosen people” with a divine duty and mission to control the land from coast to coast to create a land of liberty. Missouri was settled by people who believed in self-enrichment.

William G. Shade writes of the “Age of the Common Man” in his article “Politics and Parties in Jacksonian America” which was published in *The Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (1986). This article deals with the realities of politics and society in a nation whose population
doubled every 22.5 years. “The House of Have and the House of Want,” drove the political process in the early 1800’s according to Shade. Land issues, including preemption are included in this informative article.

Shade refers to an insightful article by Sean Wilentz in which Wilentz calls Andrew Jackson “shady land speculator, a political fraud – and a strikebreaker to boot.” This article “On Class and Politics in Jacksonian America” which was published in Reviews in American History (1982) by Johns Hopkins University Press sheds light on the part that religion played in the class politics of the time of Boggs’ administration.

Richard P. McCormick wrote in his article “The Jacksonian Strategy” in Journal of the Early Republic (1990) of the fragile nature of the federal Union which progressed from the time of the founding fathers. Leaving individual states to themselves was paramount to the viability of the Union. The federal government should not interfere with the states and should primarily be concerned with protecting the federation from foreign threats and from wars between the states. The number of Free states and slave states must remain equal. Regional or sectional politics could threaten the federation and must be guarded against for the Union to prevail.

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. won a Pulitzer Prize for The Age of Jackson (1945), which debates the question – can the nation survive the rule of the people? Jackson was the peoples’ president and the age of the common man had arrived. Schlesinger was a powerful historian and well respected internationally. A chapter in his book deals with majorities and minorities and was especially helpful in this thesis.

Robert V. Remini is one of the great scholars on Jacksonian Democracy and also the life of Andrew Jackson. The writer may well have relied on Remini to excess but he was easy to

The *Centennial History of Missouri (The Center State): One Hundred Years in the Union, 1820-1921* (two volumes, 1921) was most helpful in writing about Missouri and issues that Boggs had to sort out in his political career. Volume I had nothing to say about Boggs but Volume II had much to say and the detail was informative and logically set out for the reader.

Independence, Missouri was established in 1827 as a strategically located marketplace of vital importance for both the Santa Fe trade and for the fur trade. Independence was accessible by water to get the trade goods needed for the Santa Fe trade and also a gathering place for the trappers from the west. T. Edgar Lyon published “Independence, Missouri, and the Mormons, 1827-1833” in *BYU Studies* (1972) in which he succinctly explains the economics of Missouri in 1827 and addresses the issues of a wild frontier town contrasted with the strict moral code of the Mormons and their communitarian ways. Boggs, ever active in both politics and business, was heavily involved personally and by association with the key players in both the Santa Fe trade and the fur trade.

Politics in Boggs’ time in Missouri was essentially a two-party system of Jacksonian Democrats and the Whigs. Jacksonian Democrats were about states’ rights, slavery, self-determination, and laissez-faire capitalism; it was about the common man overcoming or even overthrowing the economics of elitism. Richard B. Latner’s article “A New Look at Jacksonian

A portion of Merle Curti’s book, *The Growth of American Thought* (1943) helped the writer understand the transition from government by the elite, “patrician” founders of the nation to the ‘blue collar’, uneducated, and unsophisticated people who were able to tame a wilderness and change a government all while providing a living from the ground. The revolution was social as well as intellectual.

*The Era of Good Feelings* (1952) defined by George Dangerfield to be from 1814-1829 is detailed primer on the key political events of the Era defined. His book includes a great deal of explanation of Andrew Jackson’s life and particularly his military career. Missouri has a prominent place in the book and the writer depended on the background to a greater extent than the footnotes might indicate.

Boggs was a party man. Missouri was caught in a tug-of-war between the frontier people of the west and the establishment in the east. The dominant power in politics was the Jacksonian Democrats and the most powerful Missourian in the party was Thomas Hart Benton the United States Senator who had the ear of Andrew Jackson. Latner’s article focuses on the polarization of the people along party lines in Jacksonian America.

Boggs’ life was closely tied to the life of Thomas Hart Benton who was the first Senator from Missouri and is regarded, even today, as one of the great orators of the nation. William Nisbet Chambers masterfully chronicles the life and career of Senator Benton, including the interaction he had with Boggs and other great citizens of Missouri, in his book *Old Bullion Benton: Senator from the New West, Thomas Hart Benton, 1782-1858* (1956). Seldom quoted
in this thesis but heavily relied upon, nonetheless, is Thomas Hart Benton’s own work *Thirty Years’ View; or, A History of the Working of the American Government for Thirty Years, from 1820-1850*, (1864). Although difficult to read and harder to research because it is mostly a compilation of speeches in very small print and inadequate chronological markings, the book is fascinating and compelling as one imagines being in the Senate gallery watching and listening to such a great lawmaker.

Most useful is the work by James Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson* (three volumes, 1859-1860). Parton wrote the history in narrative form and, although filled with vital and detailed information, it reads almost like a novel. The three books helped the writer connect with Andrew Jackson and his time.

A collection of letters about the slavery issue and statehood addressed to James Barbour, a United States Senator from Virginia, was published as “Missouri Compromise” in *The William and Mary Quarterly* (1901). This collection of letters includes the genesis and implications of Missouri as a slave state. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 provided that Maine and Missouri be admitted at the same time and that, in order to maintain the balance between free and slave states, Maine would be a free state and Missouri would be a slave state. These letters, including letters from Ex-Presidents James Madison and James Monroe, explain the importance of the slavery issue and preservation of the Union. Missouri’s history is closely linked to slavery and Boggs and the Mormons were cogs in the machinery of slave politics.

Lee Soltow wrote about wealth in early America, specifically addressing the economic conditions in Kentucky, the childhood home of Boggs, at the beginning of the nineteenth century in his article “Kentucky Wealth at the End of the Eighteenth Century” in *The Journal of*
Economic History (1983). Soltow concludes that most Kentuckians were poor subsistence farmers without prospects of improvement. They had the necessities of life without the conveniences and niceties of wealth. William Boggs looked for opportunity beyond the limited future he had in Kentucky. Missouri held promise with its rapidly growing population, the fur trade, and the Santa Fe trade.

Governor Boggs’ life had been intertwined with the Mormons since they first arrived in Jackson County; the violence in Jackson County beginning in 1833 made the relationship he had with them increasingly problematic. Mormon settlement in great numbers had an unsettling effect on the earlier settlers of Missouri and a profound impact on the economy of western Missouri. The Joseph Smith Papers: Journals Volume 1:1832-1839 (2008) provides a historical introduction of the Mormon migration to Missouri with a contextual explanation of the way the Mormons bought land and how they carried on their business. Preemption rights for land ownership, which are explained in this book, became an important factor in where the Mormons settled and this ultimately affected the earlier settlers. The Joseph Smith Papers also addresses Governor Daniel Dunklin’s initial support of Zion’s Camp; also Boggs’ executive order commonly referred to as the ‘extermination order.’

T. Edgar Lyon wrote a concise and revealing explanation of the real motivation of the early Missouri settlers’ issues with the Mormons in his article “Independence, Missouri, and the Mormons, 1827-1833” which was printed in BYU Studies (1972). Lyon blames the difficulties on greed and commerce. He explains the Santa Fe trade with details of the trade’s value and necessity to the economy. He also talks of the fur trade and the importance of the far-west location of Independence.
The State Historical Society of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri maintains microfilm copies of each newspaper that has been published in Missouri. In order to find what scarce primary sources may be available dealing with Governor Boggs’ life this writer visited the archives at the State Historical Society of Missouri and searched for articles concerning Boggs’ life, particularly articles about his businesses and his political career. Newspapers searched for this thesis include: *The Jeffersonian Republic* (1833), *The Missouri Argus* (1835-1839), *The Missouri Gazette* (1816-1819), *The Missouri Republican* (1823-1828), *The Missouri Intelligencer* (1819-1835), and *The Evening and Morning Star* (1833-1834).

Boggs served as Lieutenant Governor from 1832 to 1836; Daniel Dunklin was serving at the time as governor. The Mormons were forced from their homes and separated from their belongings by mob action in Jackson County, Missouri in early November of 1833. Governor Dunklin’s initial response to violence against the Mormons was to promise them protection as they re-entered Jackson County to re-possess their homes and belongings, however, he could not legally protect them on an on-going basis once they were again in possession of their homes. Peter Crawley and Richard L. Anderson in an article “The Political and Social Realities of Zion’s Camp” in *BYU Studies* (1974) document the dialogue between the Governor and the Mormons and expound upon the formation of Zion’s Camp in Kirtland Ohio as a means of protecting the Saints after returned to Jackson County. Boggs lived in Independence (Jackson County) and would have known of the dealings of Governor Dunklin with the Mormons. The violence of 1833 was just the beginning and Boggs’ involvement was bound to increase.

Lilburn W. Boggs served as governor of the state of Missouri from 1836 to 1840. Official papers chronicling his administration are scarce because the capitol building housing his official and unofficial papers burnt to the ground on February 5, 1911. Governor Boggs’
son, William M. Boggs, wrote two short works about his Father’s life; one was a biographical book entitled *A Short Biographical Sketch of Lilburn W. Boggs* (1910) and the other was an article in the *Missouri Historical Review* (1912) under the title “Reminiscences of Wm. M. Boggs, Son of Governor Lilburn W. Boggs.” *A Short Biographical Sketch of Lilburn W. Boggs* (1910) provides information about the Governor’s early life and genealogical data but quickly devolves into a lively indictment of the Mormons.¹

The article “Reminiscences of Wm. M. Boggs, Son of Governor Lilburn W. Boggs” is a perfunctory explanation of his life on the frontier as a trapper and trader and his subsequent involvement in politics and a life of service to the citizens of Missouri. The younger Boggs wrote of relationships his father had with Daniel Boone, who became the Governor’s grandfather-in-law, and Kit Carson; both great frontiersmen.

An encyclopedic sketch of Boggs’ life was written by Lawrence O. Christensen in *Dictionary of Missouri Biography* (1999). This work includes details about Boggs’ business endeavors, his establishment of political ties -- particularly with Thomas Hart Benton, and his political offices leading to his eventual appointment as governor of Missouri and his subsequent election to a second term.

A book by Buel Leopard *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of the State of Missouri Volume I* (1922) was published by The State Historical Society of Missouri. This book is a collection of documents scanned and converted to text using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software on computer and then after having been digitized it was printed as

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¹ Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are routinely referred to as Mormons; the name derives from the Book of Mormon which is a volume of scripture translated by the Church’s founder, Joseph Smith. The Church’s members believe the Book of Mormon to be a companion to the Holy Bible and a Second Witness of Jesus Christ.
a single volume. Volume I includes the few papers concerning Governor Boggs that the State Historical Society of Missouri has in their archives. This book is essential in understanding the personal involvement, or non-involvement, Boggs had in key happenings during the time of his administration. Included in this book is a short biographical sketch by William Southern, Jr. Southern explained that because of the destruction of most of the State records at Jefferson City there is not much in the archives about Boggs. He did his biographical sketch from newspaper clippings, old records of Jackson County, and from old letters of his son from California.

Joseph F. Gordon wrote an incisive review of the political experiences Boggs experienced in Missouri entitled “The Political Career of Lilburn W. Boggs” published in The Missouri Historical Review (1958). Gordon focused on three principle failings of Boggs’ administration: a) establishment of a State bank; b) construction of a new capitol building; c) the prosecution of three wars during his administration.

_Enemy of the Saints: The Biography of Governor Lilburn W. Boggs of Missouri_ (2011) was written by Robert Nelson. Nelson asks why seemingly good people with outwardly strong morals can be guilty of horrible crimes in very public settings; he talks of “bigotry, violence, mobocracy and ruthless disregard for certain groups including slaves, Indians, and in Boggs’ time—the Mormons.” Nelson’s biographical information includes great detail and he is powerful in his presentation of the context of Boggs’ life, especially in the early years of his life. Although he does not give attribution often in his book he does use reliable sources for the

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2 Buel Leopard. _The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of the State of Missouri Volume I._ Columbia, Missouri: The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1922, 167. Leopard said: It is a curious thing that there are practically no official records of the life Lilburn W. Boggs. The State records at Jefferson City were destroyed by fire and the records of his official life in California were also burned. I have gathered the story as written, from paragraphs here and there, the meager stories in the various histories of Missouri, from newspaper clippings in Kansas City Library, the old records of Jackson County, and from letters of his son from California.
citations he does give. Boggs early life is, at least anecdotally, filled with compassion and generosity but then a remarkable contrast to compassion is described by the writer as he tries to fathom the meaning of “The Extermination Order.”

Included in his book *A History of Missouri, Volume II, 1820 to 1860* (1971) Perry McCandless makes a credible attempt to explain in just six pages the history of the Mormons in Missouri. He characterized the Missourians as conventional in their religion and loosely structured in their society while contrasting the Missourians with Mormons who were members of an authoritarian church. Religious issues and considerations of land ownership are suggested to be the cause of the difficulties between the Mormons and the Missourians.

In a sobering article published in the *Legal Studies Forum* (1997) Marie H. Nelson contributed an article “Anti-Mormon Mob Violence and the Rhetoric of Law and Order in Early Mormon History” in which she outlines the violence against Mormons in the early history of the Church in New York, Ohio, Missouri and Illinois. Nelson observed that rioting and mobocracy was common in major cities of American cities before 1850. According to Nelson, vox populi, the voice of the people seemed to be justification enough for violence against groups or individuals in the days of Governor Boggs.

Parley P. Pratt wrote *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (edited 2000) in which he expended great energy in discrediting Governor Lilburn W. Boggs using his own rhetoric and also numerous letters of prominent Missourians and excerpts from several Missouri newspapers and some newspaper articles published in other states. Pratt ascribes much of the persecution of the Mormons directly or indirectly to Boggs. Although some of Pratt’s verbiage is venomous
he leaves no doubt that he speaks as an observer and victim of the radical treatment received by the Mormons.

*BYU Studies* (1973) published “Eliza R. Snow Letter from Missouri” in Volume 13:4 that included an address given to the vanquished Mormons by General John B. Clark at Far West, Missouri on November 5, 1838. The speech General Clark gave was really just a recitation of the terms of the ‘treaty’ ending the military actions against the Mormons, coupled with a stern admonition by Clark that if the treaty should be broken the Mormons could expect no mercy and extermination would follow. Scholars debate the intentions of General Clark’s Commander in Chief, Lilburn W. Boggs, when he issued the extermination order – did he intend that the Mormons be killed? General Clark left no doubt among the Mormons at Far West the extent to which he would go to carry out the order.

“The Last Months of Mormonism in Missouri: The Albert Perry Rockwood Journal” was published in *BYU Studies* (1988) and contains personal journal entries of Albert Perry Rockwood that are taken from three manuscripts; two housed in the LDS Church Archives in Salt Lake City and the other at the Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut – the publication was edited by Dean C. Jessee and David J. Whittaker. The editors establish the rarity and value of primary sources from the Missouri period of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Rockwood’s journals are a contemporary account of the Mormon War and the feelings of the Mormons toward the Missourians, particularly of Governor Boggs’ attitude toward the Mormons.

Joseph Smith and B.H. Roberts wrote *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1904) which is an exhaustive compilation of journal manuscripts and notes and
minutes from meetings of the time. Chapters 5 through 8 of Volume 2 recount the Zion’s Camp expedition with vivid descriptions of happenings on the trail and actions and proposals the Mormons made to leaders in Missouri, particularly those in Jackson County. The writings are chronologically arranged, day by day, and include experiences of the authors as well as their observations of those who surrounded them.

_Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, vol. 1_(1930) is a massive work by B.H. Roberts chronicling the major events and undertakings by the leaders of the Church in chronological order. Chapters 21-27 of Volume 1 deal with the Missouri period including the time when there were really ‘two centers’ of the Church with leadership resident in Kirtland, Ohio and Independence, Missouri. These chapters talk of the troubles in both places and how the Church leadership and most of the membership was forced from Kirtland to Missouri. Zion was identified by revelation and the main body of the membership moved from Kirtland to a new country where they could establish Zion.

Jeffrey N. Walker in _BYU Studies_ (2008) in an article titled “Mormon Land Rights in Caldwell and Daviess Counties and the Mormon Conflict of 1838: New Findings and New Understandings” explains how property became available to settlers through homesteading and preemption rights. Walker suggests that the Mormons had ultimately obtained the best land in the region and that, in addition to other religious biases, angst between the Missourians and the Mormons had its source in jealousy over land ownership.

The land issues in northwestern Missouri were ever-present in the conflict between Mormons and Missourians. At one point Caldwell County was designated as the place of gathering for the tremendous influx of Mormons. Daviess County also became a place where
the Mormons wanted to settle. Leland H. Gentry wrote “The Land Question at Adam-ondi-Ahman” which was published in *BYU Studies* (1986). Gentry explained what preemption rights meant and how they were administered. He also explained that, whatever commitment may have been implied in the land rights pertaining to Caldwell County, it was never actually written into law.

Boggs’ life will forever be linked with the Mormons and their part in Missouri history. Although this thesis did not explore in depth nor explain the Mormon War, societal realities and issues between early Missouri citizens and the Mormons are inextricably parts of the life of Lilburn W. Boggs. Alexander L. Baugh of Brigham Young University wrote a piece for the *John Whitmer Historical Journal* (1998) entitled “Missouri governor Lilburn W. Boggs and the Mormons.” This article includes great details of Boggs’ life as an early settler of the western part of Missouri and explains his rise to prominence in Missouri politics. Baugh deals fairly with the inevitable clash between the Mormons, Missourian mobs, and the role played by the state government in the difficulties of the time.

*From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans* (1947) by John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr. is a comprehensive work on African Americans and slavery. One cannot understand Missouri and the cast of characters surrounding Boggs without understanding the place slavery had in Missouri politics and in American national politics. Franklin and Moss helped the writer to understand the part played by the slaves in the westward migration.

Newell G. Bringhamurst’s article “The Mormons and Slavery: A Closer Look” which was published in the *Pacific Historical Review* (1981) explores the Mormon stand on slavery.
Bringhurst concludes that Mormons were both anti-slavery and also anti-abolitionist during their time in Missouri. He relies on the individual stands of prominent leaders of the Church and also on the words of a revelation included in the Doctrine and Covenants to reach this conclusion. Although the moral beliefs of Mormonism were against slavery the Mormons knew that they could not survive as abolitionists in the slave state of Missouri.

Paul C. Richards wrote “Missouri Persecutions: Petitions for Redress” which was published in BYU Studies (1973) wherein excerpts of the persecuted Mormons detailed their losses and injuries in the mob violence during the Mormon War. Richards postulates that Boggs seemed to try to stir both sides up in the Jackson County difficulties of 1833; he quotes a conversation had between Isaac Morley and the then Lieutenant Governor.

General David Rice Atchison did a great deal to restrain armed aggression against the Mormons. Atchison was a close associate of Alexander W. Doniphan who is known to have been a great friend of the Mormons. Both Atchison and Doniphan had been retained, on occasion, to represent Mormon interests as legal counsel. “Atchison’s Letters and the Causes of Mormon Expulsion from Missouri” was written by Richard Lloyd Anderson and published in BYU Studies (1986). Although Anderson’s work deals mostly with the Mormon War he includes many instances of Governor Boggs tipping his hand, so to speak, in terms of his predisposition to favor the Missourians over the Mormons.

Jacksonian democracy being founded upon absolute majority rule is explained by Stephen C. LeSueur in his work The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri (1990). Boggs’ whole life was devoted to the ethos of manifest destiny. LeSueur vividly describes the times in which

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3 The Doctrine and Covenants is a canonized collection of revelations Joseph Smith received from God that set forth the official doctrines and principles of the Church. The teachings are binding upon the membership of the Church. The article by Bringhurst refers to Doctrine and Covenants Section 134:12.
Boggs’ governed a people convinced of their God-given entitlement to exploit the frontier and to make a nation of self-made opportunity and wealth; any race or group of people that interfered with the realization of their destiny must necessarily be removed; Boggs was stuck squarely in the middle of an untenable situation as governor for all the people of Missouri.

_The Encyclopedia of Mormonism_ (1992) provides the exact wording of Governor Boggs’ executive order known as the Extermination Order. The editor of the article on extermination, Daniel H. Ludlow, explains that the legality of Boggs’ order was never tested and that it was not rescinded until June of 1976 by Governor ‘Kit’ Bond.

Morris A. Thurston wrote an article following an exhaustive study of the case of the attempted murder of Governor Lilburn W. Boggs in Independence, Missouri. “The Boggs Shooting and Attempted Extradition: Joseph Smith’s Most Famous Case” was published in _BYU Studies_ (2009). Thurston recounts the shooting of the ex-Governor and the legal wrangling that followed to try to convict Joseph Smith as a conspirator to murder.

The State Historical Society of Missouri has assembled an amazing archive of microfilm images of the earliest newspapers in Missouri. The writer spent time in the archives of The State Historical Society of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri and accessed over two-hundred and seventy-five articles in search of news relevant to the life of Lilburn W. Boggs. Newspapers searched in this effort include: _The Jeffersonian Republic_ (1833), _The Missouri Argus_ (1835-1839), _The Missouri Gazette_ (1816-1819), _The Missouri Republican_ (1823-1828), _The Missouri Intelligencer_ (1819-1835), and _The Evening and the Morning Star_ (1833-1834). Articles, advertisements, and social announcements are included in the product of the search that add great contextual understanding to the study of Governor Boggs.
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