

**UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA;
THE CHIEF PHASES OF
PENNSYLVANIA POLITICS IN THE
JACKSONIAN PERIOD. A THESIS**

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University of Pennsylvania; The Chief Phases of Pennsylvania Politics in the Jacksonian Period.
A Thesis by Marguerite G. Bartlett

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MARGUERITE G. BARTLETT

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**The Chief Phases of Pennsylvania
Politics in the Jacksonian
Period**

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BY
MARGUERITE G. BARTLETT

A THESIS

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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BY

MARQUERITE G. BARTLETT

PREFACE

In the state of Pennsylvania, the Jacksonian epoch witnessed the rise of a new party, the regeneration of an old party and the union of both. In the origin and development of the Whigs—a party formed of many elements, the period saw the restoration of a two party system in politics. The Whigs or Coalitionists were arrayed in opposition to the Democratic Republicans, who at this time of the state's history, and under the abbreviated name, Democrats, reached the culmination of their power. Their thoroughgoing organization made the state of Pennsylvania a power to reckon with in presidential elections.¹ The party brought into closer cooperation federal and state politicians and established a firmer union between the nation and the state. The party owed its entity not to organization alone, rather more to its common adoration of the great Democratic leader, the soldier president, whose personality dominates the age to the exclusion of that of all other renowned public men. Few Pennsylvania leaders of the time were eminent as statesmen. Many, as worthy politicians and zealous partisan workers, contributed to the maintenance of Jacksonian supremacy and thus interest us as typifying a phase of the political life of the day. Other leaders typify the age in their espousal of extreme democratic measures, for the age was characterized by exaggerated democratic tendencies. It was at this time that the people of the state were to discover that extreme democracy had its victims as well as its proteges. Every sort of monopoly was feared. In the name of democracy, the Second United States Bank was threatened, assailed, and finally

¹ Mss., Buchanan—February 23, 1827; July 11, 1827; Mss., Van Buren—November 2, 1829—Letter from Fayette County.

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ruined. In the name of democracy, the Ancient and Honorable Institution of Free Masonry was reviled and discredited. The political emancipation and social equality of the Negro was a question of serious debate in the constitutional convention which met in 1837. The time, then, was one of social and political unrest, fostered by ideas of excessive democracy.

Private ownership of canals and railroads was frowned upon with the utmost severity. In this period, Pennsylvania built her great system of Internal Communication with the West. The state itself undertook the work in all its details. Her system of financing the project and of publishing the records of expenditure, from the salary of the highest state commissioner to the price of the smallest implement of construction contrasts strikingly with methods then obtaining in England, and later in more modern times in our own country.

All of these questions, it may here be added, have been treated only in their partisan aspect as influencing the political life of the state in the period of Jackson's control.

The opening chapter introduces the political parties, emphasizing the struggle of the National Republicans to throw off their hereditary name, Federalist, and the efforts of the Democrats to canvass every locality in the state. We see the Antimasons coming to the fore as a third party of no mean power to sway elections. A later chapter shows the union of the Anti-Jackson groups under the good old name, Whig.

In chapter two, the Bank question receives separate treatment as a paramount political issue.

The "American System" in all its amplifications is dealt with in chapter four. Here the tariff figures only in its partisan character, and citations occur of the opinion of leading Pennsylvania politicians regarding the South Carolina Nullification. The completion of Internal Improvements being purely a state venture could not be disassociated from politics.

With the inauguration of a new state constitution, the subject is concluded. The debates, lengthy and stormy, which characterized the proceedings of the convention are touched upon only to indicate the prejudices of the politicians of the day. Their views are sketched on such familiar problems as the use of the German language in the public schools, the treatment of conscientious objectors, the observance of the Sabbath, and the extension of the franchise.

Throughout the entire study, the attempt to mold public opinion has been stressed. Popular prejudices in all their crude exaggerations have been dragged from hiding to throw light on the trend of the times. The rôle played by the Pennsylvania "Germans"—so called, as evinced by the long line of "German" governors, has not been obscured. Traces of Anti-British sentiment have been placed in their true setting.

In discovering the attitude of the people of the state and the action of politicians, full use has been made of partisan newspapers. The periodicals on file in Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Lancaster, and Doylestown furnished entertaining material. At the Library of Congress may be found the papers of Thaddeus Stevens, which, however, proved disappointing for this period. The manuscript letters of Van Buren and Jackson were a source of information. Most of the material here utilized has been derived from the private, unofficial and unpublished letters of Buchanan, Wolf, Ritner and lesser lights. The "Governor's Papers" in Manuscript at the State Library were of no small value.

This subject was suggested by Dr. William Roy Smith of Bryn Mawr College. At the University of Pennsylvania, further encouragement and assistance was generously given by Dean Herman V. Ames, Professor John Bach McMaster, and Dr. Albert E. McKinley.

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