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On January 9, 1861, Mississippi followed South Carolina's example and became the second state to secede from the Union. This was not the first time Mississippi had responded to a secession crisis. The first was nearly thirty years earlier. In 1832 resentment towards the Tariff of 1828, as well as the recently passed Tariff of 1832, prompted South Carolina to create the Ordinance of Nullification. The ordinance proclaimed that the state had the right to overrule federal legislation or nullify any law within the borders of South Carolina. The ensuing Nullification Crisis resulted in some of the first serious secession talks in American history and laid the political groundwork for the eventual American Civil War.[1]

The Nullification Crisis, however, was different from the sectional crisis twenty-eight years later in one very significant way—it failed to gain support. Whereas Mississippi and other southern states quickly came to South Carolina's aid in 1861, South Carolina stood alone in 1832 and 1833. In fact, Mississippi and other southern states united to support President Andrew Jackson's staunch opposition to secession. Many southern states, including Mississippi, endorsed Jackson's Force Bill of 1833, which allowed the president to use "whatever force necessary" to suppress insurrections.[2]

This unionist attitude on the part of Mississippians was in marked contrast with attitudes in 1861 when Mississippi eagerly followed South Carolina into secession and war.[3] A combination of factors contributed to Mississippi's stance in the winter of 1832 and 1833. Mississippi's population was relatively small, and it lacked the trademark sense of

[1] William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966). Freehling's work on the Nullification Crisis, the definitive source on the subject, established the narrative still largely used when discussing the conflict's role in American historiography.

[2] Richard E. Ellis, *The Union at Risk: Jacksonian Democracy, States' Rights, and the Nullification Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 24-26, 50-51. Ellis expands on Freehling's thesis a bit by touching on some of the broader implications of the Nullification Crisis outside South Carolina.

[3] Michael B. Ballard, *The Civil War in Mississippi: Major Campaigns and Battles* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 4-6.

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state identity that characterized it decades later. It was in the midst of an economic boom commonly referred to as the "Flush Times," and the seemingly radical nature of South Carolina's call to action alienated planters, most of whom did not see the tariff as an insurmountable obstacle. As a fairly new state, Mississippi showed resolute patriotism, which was particularly fervent because of the state's ardent loyalty to President Andrew Jackson. Though Jackson did not pioneer many of the policies that his supporters so closely linked to his presidency, such as inclusive democracy for white men, they still saw him as the embodiment of the common man and egalitarian principles. Mississippi's love for President Jackson was particularly fervent because of his military accomplishments in the Creek War and the War of 1812, both of which held vast implications for the Mississippi Territory.[4] Andrew Jackson's role in preventing further crises cannot be emphasized enough, and, in the words of historian Wallace Hettle, "The Age of Jackson seems appropriate even to historians skeptical of the notion that great men shape history."[5] For these reasons, Mississippi ultimately refused to back South Carolina in 1833. But the state was still conflicted, and, in the wake of the Nullification Crisis, Mississippi's nullifiers, such as John A. Quitman, gained more prominence and solidified states' rights rhetoric in the Magnolia State's political identity.

Understanding why Mississippi chose not to follow South Carolina and its subsequent drift towards South Carolina's way of thinking is essential to understanding the Nullification Crisis and the significant part it played in promoting states' rights and the coming of the Civil War. Though the crisis failed to bring about disunion, it was more than merely a false alarm between South Carolina and the federal government. It was a definitive political event in the South and throughout the Union. Understanding the full implications of the Nullification Crisis is vital to understanding the entire historiographical narrative of the United States because the crisis first framed the question of eternal Union that was answered by the American Civil War thirty years later. It raised the ultimate question of state versus federal authority that defined national

[4] Edwin Arthur Miles, *Jacksonian Democracy in Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1960). Discussion of Mississippi's early years of statehood throughout. Christopher J. Olsen, *Political Culture and Secession in Mississippi: Masculinity, Honor, and the Antiparty Tradition, 1830-1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[5] Wallace Hettle, *The Peculiar Democracy: Politics and Ideology of the Southern Democrats in Secession and Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 54-66.

political arguments for decades to come. It could be said that the crisis planted the seeds that would eventually blossom into full-scale rebellion thirty years later by generating the national dialogue that fed into the political discourse over the next generation.

Though the Nullification Crisis reached a peaceful conclusion by compromise, it failed to answer any of the important questions it raised. It, therefore, established a precedent with broad implications. From that point forward, the idea of "perpetual Union" was ever in question, and most states, including Mississippi, came to see secession as a viable option of last resort. Though Mississippi hesitated to follow South Carolina into disunion in 1833, the state's inner political conflict initiated a gradual change in its perspective. In the wake of the Nullification Crisis, a breed of "John Tyler Whigs" rose throughout Mississippi and their close adherence to states' rights defined the political conflict within the state. Though the Whig Party is often construed as the conciliatory party during the Jacksonian and Antebellum eras, it championed the cause of states' rights in Mississippi in a time when most Jacksonian Democrats quickly denounced state opposition to federal measures.[6] With the election of Abraham Lincoln decades later, a generation of Mississippi statesmen who cut their teeth in a post-Nullification Crisis nation, quickly saw secession as a practical option. The downward spiral toward disunion began after the Nullification Crisis.[7]

Renowned historian William Freehling's 1966 work *Prelude to Civil War* established the historical narrative about the Nullification Crisis that is still commonly used today. Freehling contended that the crisis applied mostly to the state of South Carolina and that there was not enough support in the political atmosphere of 1832 and 1833 to instigate widescale sectional hostilities. A closer examination of other states, including Mississippi, reveals that the crisis brought sectional enmity to the brink in many southern states and served as a transitional moment for state politics. Freehling also argues that slavery was always at the heart of nullification, and that South Carolina merely used the tariff issue as a means to create a national silver bullet to protect slavery from

[6] Lawrence Frederick Kohl, *The Politics of Individualism: Parties and the American Character in the Jacksonian Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[7] David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: 1848-1861* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1976). For more on the coming of the Civil War and the political discussions that separated the nation in the 1850s, see Potter's work on the subject.

the burgeoning abolitionist movement.[8] Though this use of nullification was true for South Carolina, most nullifiers outside of the Palmetto State were motivated by issues including but not limited to the tariff and Indian Removal. By focusing almost exclusively on South Carolina and tying nullification as a whole to the slave question, Freehling's work misses some significant historical nuances.[9]

Though the slavery issue often took a back seat to other political matters between the Missouri Compromise in 1820 and the Mail Crisis in 1835, politicians frequently expressed their concerns that any given dispute could result in national collapse. As noted by historian Elizabeth Varon, commitment to eternal Union was never set in stone. Politicians and ordinary citizens frequently expressed their anxieties concerning the young nation's longevity. Additionally, influential figures threatened disunion, not only as a response to anti-slavery sentiments, but every time a contentious issue presented itself.[10] Thomas Jefferson called the Missouri Crisis a fire bell in the night, and that event exposed the Union's vulnerability along slave lines. However, what is often not recognized is that the Union never stopped being vulnerable and, though other political issues overshadowed slavery in the years immediately following the Missouri Compromise, Americans lived in fear that the young republic could collapse at any time. The young republic was fragile, and not only because of divisions regarding slavery.[11]

To understand the Nullification Crisis's importance in Mississippi and its impact on the state's political landscape going forward, one can focus on Mississippi's prominent newspapers and influential political figures. Newspapers are limited as a source in that they cannot be used

[8] Freehling, *Prelude,* Introduction 1-6. Freehling focuses specifically on South Carolina's political strategies and their implications.

[9] John Mills Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 21-25. For example, Alabama Representative Dixon Hall Lewis was a devout nullifier and states' rights supporter but, unlike his colleagues in South Carolina, his main issue was Indian Removal. Lewis believed that individual states, not the federal government, should supervise Indian relations, and he supported nullification because he believed Alabama should have the last word on the topic.

[10] Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion!: The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), Introduction.

[11] Matthew W. Hall, *Dividing the Union: Jesse Burgess Thomas and the Making of the Missouri Compromise* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2016). Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South, 1787-1840* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). Ford's excellent examination of southern politics during the early years of the republic analyzes the relationship between southern politics and slavery.

as exact indicators of how the majority of citizens thought about certain issues, nor do they reflect any sort of polling or broad consensus. However, they do serve to show the issues that mattered to their reading base and give the historian a bit of insight into the types of arguments people encountered. Newspaper editors were opinion-makers, and so a close examination of Mississippi's leading publications is most revealing of the way people thought. Another lens through which one can examine the Nullification Crisis in Mississippi is that of prominent political figures, in this case, the ones who endorsed nullification. Though men such as John A. Quitman and George Poindexter did not speak for most Mississippians in the early 1830s, they did initiate a great deal of the political dialogue that permeated throughout the state and trickled down to the next generation. These men pioneered the Whig Party in Mississippi, and the Nullification Crisis was the event that ignited their movement. But to understand Mississippi in the 1830s, one must first understand the state's early development.

Mississippi's early history revolved around the city of Natchez, which was well established as a regional hub in colonial times long before Mississippi became a state in 1817. By the 1810s, Natchez was a stable community inhabited by planter families, many of whom were already wealthy profiteers of slave labor. Beginning in the 1810s, people from other southern states began to move into the largely uncleared expanse of wilderness outside of Natchez, which was almost exclusively inhabited by Native Americans.[12] These new settlers gradually grew to challenge the political domination of the old Natchez aristocracy. The competition between the old gentry and the new yeomanry defined early Mississippi politics.[13] The established residents generally favored policies such as land requirements for suffrage and a careful check on the number of slaves admitted into the state. The new settlers favored more lenient suffrage rights and considered slave importation and Indian removal to be the most important issues. As even more settlers poured into the state throughout the 1820s, the Natchez aristocracy found itself fighting

[12] DuVal, Kathleen, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (New York: Random House, 2016). Native Americans had a presence in the lower Mississippi Valley, and conflicts between white settlers and Native Americans reached back generations. By the 1820s, most settlers saw Indian Removal as the natural conclusion to these conflicts and Andrew Jackson cloaked his removal rhetoric in humanitarian prose.

[13] Thomas D. Clark, and John D. W. Guise, *The Old Southwest, 1795-1830: Frontiers in Conflict* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 180-196.

a losing battle against an ever-growing yeomanry who found political representation in the towering figure of Andrew Jackson.[14]

Mississippi settlers already admired Jackson for his military accomplishments in the War of 1812, which took place very near their new home.[15] He was also a great champion of Indian removal, which made him, if possible, even more popular in the newly-settled parts of Mississippi, which enthusiastically supported his three presidential campaigns. The Jackson administration rewarded their support with a series of Indian removal treaties beginning with the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek in 1830 and followed by the Treaty of Pontotoc Creek in 1832. These treaties forced Choctaw and Chickasaw tribesmen to cede territory to the United States and compelled many of them to leave their land entirely. Because of Jackson's harsh policies, Mississippi settlers in the newly-settled region become fervent Democrats for generations to come. Natchez and the established river communities, however, swelled with John Quincy Adams supporters, many of whom became dedicated Whigs. These well-established Mississippi planters viewed Jackson as an illiterate, unsophisticated commoner unqualified for the executive office.

By 1830, the political culture was divided between Jacksonian settlers who supported Indian removal and feared federal centralization and the established river gentry who supported Adams, the Bank of the United States, and Henry Clay's American System. As Indian removal treaties made land available in other parts of the state, Natchez gradually lost power, and, ultimately, a robust Jacksonian majority won control in state and national politics. Jacksonian strongholds, such as Woodville, gained influence during these years.[16]

Before Mississippi became a state in 1817, the Tariff of 1816 passed Congress with a bipartisan and cross-sectional majority. However, in the wake of the Panic of 1819, which desolated millions of farmers, particularly in the South, the proposed successor Tariff of 1824 became a much more contentious issue. South Carolinian George McDuffie's "40 Bale Theory" asserted that forty percent tariffs cost southern planters

[14] Clayton D. James. *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 90-94, 112-116, 278.

[15] Henry Eugene Sterkx and Brooks Thompson, "Philemon Thomas and the West Florida Revolution," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 39 no. 4 (April 1961): 378-386. It is also worth noting that many Natchezians took part in the West Florida Rebellion, though the city itself did not fall under the short-lived republic's tentative jurisdiction.

[16] Christopher J. Olsen, *Political Culture and Secession in Mississippi: Masculinity, Honor, and the Antiparty Tradition,* 1830-1860 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6-9, 20-31.

forty percent of their profits. Economist John A. James conducted a study and calculated that the actual losses were closer to twenty percent.[17] At the time, however, it was impossible to economically prove the impact of the tariff one way or the other. The tariff's dubious nature as a tax is probably why it was the federal government's main source of revenue throughout the nineteenth century. No one could say definitively how much harm it caused. Despite its uncertain status, by the mid-1820s, many southern planters and northern merchants developed a strong aversion to the tariff.[18] Though the Missouri Crisis of 1820 clearly displayed the young nation's fragility along slave lines, the Tariff of 1824 certainly exacerbated the rise of sectionalism.[19]

Though southern states opposed the tariff in the 1820s, it was not an especially controversial issue in Mississippi where small towns like Woodville generally focused on other political discussions. Woodville was not an old river town like Natchez, but it was a stable community by 1828 when the tariff debate reemerged on the national stage. The locally-published *Woodville Republican's* editors disagreed on which candidate to support between then-President John Quincy Adams and his opponent Andrew Jackson.[20] Consequently, the *Republican* was a surprisingly bipartisan periodical which, in a few instances, referred to Adams as a "corrupt tyrant" and Jackson as an "illiterate barbarian."[21]

With regard to the impending tariff vote, the *Republican* showed little preference either way.[22] In 1828 the political hostility toward the tariff was minimal at most. The indifference with which the *Republican* treated the Tariff in 1828 suggests that it was not an issue of great

[17] John A. James, "Public Debt Management Policy and Nineteenth Century American Economic Growth," *Explorations in Economic History,* 21, no. 2 (April 1984).

[18] Sydney Nathans, *Daniel Webster and Jacksonian Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). Nathans argues that Daniel Webster, through clever political maneuvering, redirected the discussion around the tariff toward a discussion concerning South Carolina's loyalty. He first identified nullification as an act of sedition and borderline treachery.

[19] Daniel Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815-1840*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 58-60, 169-172, 184-187. William K. Bolt, *Tariff Wars and the Politics of Jacksonian America* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2017). Donald Ratcliffe, "The Nullification Crisis, Southern Discontents, and the American Political Process" *American Nineteenth Century History*, 1, no. 2 (2000).

[20] Lynda Lasswell Crist, *" 'Useful in His Day and Generation': James Alexander Ventress, 1805-1867"* (PhD diss., University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1980), 83.

[21] *The Woodville Republican,* April 15, 1828.

[22] Ibid. In addressing the tariff, the editor of the *Republican* reflected, "The Tariff, in the language of the intelligencer, drags heavily. Nothing decisive has been done yet."

importance to readers at the time. By March 20, the paper stopped discussing the tariff altogether and instead focused primarily on the issue of private land titles.[23] This diminished discussion of the tariff indicated that people were aware of the political battle surrounding the tariff, but that it was not yet a subject of much interest in southwest Mississippi. Perhaps the most revealing indication of the tariff's status as a non-issue came on May 6, 1828, only thirteen days before the new tariff passed Congress. The editors wrote, "There is hardly anything from Washington sufficiently interesting to give our readers."[24] Evidently, people living in Woodville's sphere of influence were uninterested in the tariff prior to its passage in 1828. It is possible that they did not understand the financial implications of the question at this time, or that they did not perceive it as favoritism to another region. Even ardent complaints from their congressman did not appear to stir much interest in the tariff.

One week after its observation that nothing interesting was happening in Washington, the *Republican* printed a speech from Jacksonian representative and Woodville resident William Haile in which the frustrated congressman ranted:

> The people cannot be blind to the fact that Congress is daily exercising powers not delegated to them in the Constitution . . . What are all the laws for promotion of domestic manufacturers but violations of both the letter and spirit of that sacred instrument? . . . These acts can be viewed in no other light than a device to rob the pockets of the inhabitants of the South, for the purpose of creating and giving permanence to monopolies to impair the interests of our state by curtailing foreign commerce and thereby diminishing the value of our staple product.

This speech was the first of many in which Haile spoke out against what he believed to be sectional favoritism inherent in the tariff. Haile feared that the tariff could lead to the growth of cotton in other parts of the world, such as Egypt and India, which would allow the British to stifle the burgeoning southern economy. He further complained that

[23] *The Woodville Republican,* March 20, 1828. Eventually, tariff news dwindled down to tedious excerpts that read, "Mr. Smith of South Carolina presented several petitions from the state against further protecting duties."

[24] *The Woodville Republican,* May 6, 1828.

the new tariff bill should protect southern crops. But his proposal to add indigo and castor oil to the list of protected goods fell on deaf ears.[25] Most Mississippi citizens did not share Haile's views in 1828. The *Republican* quietly acknowledged the passage of the tariff bill shortly thereafter.[26] Although the paper did not speak out against Haile, he lost his ensuing reelection bid to Thomas Hinds. He even lost his home county of Wilkinson by sixteen votes. The constituents from his district town did not appear to be impressed by his bold opposition to the tariff. Haile, however, proved to be ahead of his time. In the subsequent months and years, hostility to the tariff became far more popular in the newly-settled region. The Natchez District, however, remained firmly pro-tariff.

Most Mississippians were pro-Jackson in the 1820s, but wealthy, influential Adams supporters made their voices heard from the affluent stronghold in Natchez. Though Natchez voted for Jackson in 1824 and 1828 by narrow margins, many of the wealthy planter families were devout Adams supporters. Adams County was named for John Quincy's father, John Adams, whom Natchezians admired a generation earlier. Though only mildly financially successful, *the Natchez Ariel*, a widely-circulated newspaper first published in 1825, was unapologetically pro-Adams.[27] Adams, who stated in a speech reprinted by the *Ariel* in 1828 that he had a keen interest in promoting gradual emancipation and contributing to colonization societies, seemed like an odd favorite for Natchez planters. By 1828, Natchez was well on its way to becoming one of the wealthiest slaveholding cities in America. Despite his opposition to slavery, which the *Ariel* never attempted to sugarcoat, Adams had a passionate following among the Natchez aristocracy, partly because of his interest in internal improvements.

Though unapologetic slave owners, wealthy Natchezians embraced many of the ideas about social transformation and structural innovation envisioned by Adams and his National Republican supporters. Firm believers in education, achievement for the greater good, internal improvements, and a central banking system to pay for them, the *Ariel* even

[25] *The Woodville Republican*, May 13, 1828. Though most Mississippians did not grow indigo in 1828, Haile believed that the crop could make a comeback if the tariff could stave off competition from foreign markets.

[26] *The Woodville Republican,* May 27, 1828. After the tariff passed, the Republican casually observed, "We are informed by Mr. Haile, our Representative, that the tariff bill passed the Senate but with some alterations and amendments from its shape in the lower house."

[27] James, 101-107.

dedicated an entire section of its paper to women's development called the *Ladies' Parterre*.[28] Naturally, the paper also favored the tariff in its early days because of its association with internal improvements.[29] At first glance, such fervent support for an anti-slavery president who sought to strengthen the federal government seems out of place for wealthy slave owners. Upon closer examination, however, it makes sense because wealthy slave owners had much to gain from the transportation networks facilitated by internal improvements. Thus, most wealthy Natchez slave owners remained loyal to Adams, even when the president freed the famous "Prince Among Slaves" Abdull Rahman Ibrahima by executive order.[30]

The call for internal improvements in Mississippi was understandable, but more surprising was the *Ariel's* genuine desire to assist manufacturers in other parts of the nation even when the legislation had nothing to do with Mississippi's interests.[31] Early Mississippi newspapers were defined by national patriotism, and most showed pride in being a part of the United States. Mississippians who supported Adams, Clay, and the tariff were patriotic to the extent that they were willing to make sacrifices to help other Americans in distant sections of the country.[32] Jacksonian and anti-tariff Mississippians were not content with everything going on in Congress. Still, they were proud to be a part of a new state where men considered citizenship a great privilege

[28] Joshua D. Rothman, *Reforming America, 1815-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), Introduction, 24-28. Rothman discusses the development of American intellectual, spiritual, and political ideas at great length.

[29] *The Ariel*, February 16, 1828. In its article, the editor explained, "No man can deny that a good road is a benefit to the community or that a canal facilitates commerce, therefore, no man can at heart be opposed to internal improvements; for they consist mainly of making or bettering roads and canals."

[30] Terry Alford, *Prince Among Slaves: The True Story of an African Prince Sold into Slavery in the American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[31] *The Ariel*, May 14, 1828. An example of this apparent selflessness can be seen in this post by an anonymous citizen that elaborates, "Without the protection of the tariff, the new manufactories could not be established . . . it does seem to be a cold and heartless objection when it rests upon the chance of reduction of price. Would we refuse fire or water to a neighbor? Or let him perish from cold and hunger that there may be one mouth less to keep up the price of provisions? Is there no moral obligation to assist the efforts of each other even when it must be done at some sacrifice? Much more when the boon asked for is little more than a mere courtesy."

[32] Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). It is worth noting here that Natchez was close to Louisiana, the only state in the Deep South to fervently support the tariff. As noted by Ferrer, Spanish monopolization of the Cuban sugar trade made competition difficult for Louisiana sugar planters. They relied on stiff federal protection for sugar. Natchez's close relationship to Louisiana may have influenced its opinion of the tariff.

rather than an arbitrary birthright. Though they clearly self-identified as Mississippians, residents had a strong national identity before they developed a strong state or regionally southern identity. This lack of state distinctiveness partly explains why Mississippians of 1828 did not identify with South Carolinians when that state introduced nullification into the political discourse.[33]

The *Ariel* strenuously opposed Jackson's bid for the presidency in 1828, a fact that surely enraged the candidate's devout followers all around Natchez and probably spurred the creation of many Jacksonian newspapers in the early 1830s.[34] One of the main questions the *Ariel* raised during the election of 1828 was the query of where exactly Andrew Jackson stood on any political issue.[35] A cunning politician, Jackson carefully played both sides of the tariff issue by hinting to both sides that he supported them. Though the *Ariel* was pro-tariff and pro-internal improvements, they were eager to destroy Jackson's reputation in Mississippi. The paper's editor pointed out that though Jackson was generally considered to be anti-tariff, his statements in 1824 reflected that he was in favor of the tariff.[36] The *Ariel's* use of the tariff, which they supported in 1828, as a tool to discredit Jackson indicated that its opposition to Jackson overshadowed its support for the tariff.

Another early Natchez publication, the *Southern Galaxy,* printed weekly political pieces and pledged "to be neutral between Adams and Jackson." The *Galaxy*, however, quickly abandoned this promise and proclaimed support for the Adams administration and a belief in the stability that could be provided by "a strong federal government."[37]

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[33] James, 283-284.

[34] *The Ariel,* March 29-April 5, 1828. The editor repeatedly referred to Jackson as illiterate and lacking the mental capacities to govern the nation. He scrutinized every aspect of Jackson's private life in order to find character flaws and harm his reputation. The most surprising articles were those that attacked Jackson's military record and competence as a general, an act that could have resulted in a duel under the right circumstances.

[35] *The Ariel*, April 5, 1828. The editor delved into Jackson's politics and asked, "Has he any fixed principles on national policy? If he has, who knows them? In Pennsylvania, he is supported as devoted to the Tariff and Internal Improvements . . . In the South, he is understood to be determined to support these plans no further than they have already been advanced."

[36] *The Ariel*, April 12, 1828. Another example of the *Ariel's* use of the tariff issue reads, "The reply of the General was evidently an attempt to wind himself along to the presidency through both the tariff and the anti-tariff parties . . . and therefore his friends in the manufacturing states, particularly Pennsylvania, cried him up as being in favor of the tariff; and those in southern states, especially in Virginia, to take up the General Jackson cause and do away with the policy of the current administration."

[37] *The Southern Galaxy*, May 22, 1828.

Though the *Galaxy* insisted upon neutrality, it was possibly even more pro-Adams than the *Ariel*. Concerning the tariff, the *Galaxy* immediately adopted a proactive stance and condemned South Carolina for its early measures to oppose the tariff in 1828. It subsequently mocked South Carolina's "idle threats" in an article that referenced previous American seditious movements. The *Galaxy* lampooned:

> In organizing their army, we would advise them to beat up for recruits up north. Shay's men are not all yet dead we believe they would make grand soldiers. As for officers, send to Pennsylvania. What could equal the spirit of the ringleaders of the whiskey insurrection? But if these cool and deliberate South Carolinians truly wish to fight without quarreling, and legislate these measures out of existence, we would move for a convention to be called forthwith and that the atmosphere of Connecticut, say Hartford, would offer a congenial temperature for their patriotic labors.[38]

Here, the *Galaxy* cited three prior acts of insurrection in Shay's Rebellion, the Whiskey Rebellion, and the Hartford Convention in order to condemn South Carolina's approach, which already hinted at nullification.[39]

In 1828, the *Galaxy* fervently supported the American System and the tariff that sustained it. But the *Galaxy's* view of the tariff took a sharp turn in 1830 when it realized certain economic realities. In an article detailing cotton's economic future, the *Galaxy* determined that the tariff would result in "nine millions of dollars taken from the people."[40] The *Galaxy's* change of heart about the tariff coincided with similar turns all around Mississippi. As South Carolina's sectional complaints trickled down to Mississippi, once strong Adams supporters and Jacksonians alike began to subscribe to the notion that the tariff harmed

[38] Ibid., June 5, 1828.

[39] William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 257-259.

[40] *The Southern Galaxy*, February 2, 1830. In a reversal of its previous position, the *Galaxy* asserted, "There is no cloth, cassimere, flannel, or baize now worn in the United States, foreign or domestic, for which we must not pay three dollars for two dollars' worth . . . Even supposing this calculation to be overrated, which we do not admit, the warmest admirers of the tariff must acknowledge that the woolen imitators take a pretty large pinch out of the public snuff box"

the southern economy.[41] Though most papers and political figures took the tariff more seriously after 1828, they still scoffed at South Carolina's proposed solutions. The *Galaxy* eventually adopted an anti-tariff position in 1830, but it continued to scorn South Carolina and John C. Calhoun, whom it accused of using political strife to propel his own career.[42] Mississippi publications certainly did not perceive Calhoun as a great champion of the slave states, nor did they draw connections between the tariff and slavery.

Though slavery was never a non-issue in Mississippi's political sphere, it was briefly overtaken by other issues, including the tariff, the Bank of the United States, and Indian removal. Nationally, the institution of slavery was more secure in the 1820s and early 1830s than it was in any prior or subsequent decades, and though newspaper editors were defensive about slavery, they did not perceive abolitionist sentiment as a significant threat. While it is true that slavery was always a principal issue to Mississippi politicians and newspaper editors, it was never their *only* political concern. Thus, when newspapers complained about issues such as the tariff and Indian removal, their complaints were sincerely directed at *the tariff* and *Indian removal*. They did not carry a hidden agenda, nor was fervent opposition to the tariff a mask for real intentions to protect slavery from future abolitionist threats.[43]

By 1832, virtually all Mississippi newspapers, besides a few poorly-circulated papers in Natchez, opposed the tariff. In Woodville, where the tariff was of minor significance in 1828, the tariff became the second most discussed issue behind Indian removal. The *Southern Planter* emerged in 1832 as a short-lived competitor to the *Woodville Republican* and immediately began to publish articles attacking the tariff.[44] Two weeks later, the *Planter* fully acknowledged the threat of

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[41] Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 396-397.

[42] *The Southern Galaxy*, February 2, 1830, Olsen, 31-33; James, 101-106. The Natchez "Junto" emerged as a pro-Jackson wing in Natchez. Despite their best efforts, Natchez retained its reputation as an elitist stronghold.

[43] Lucie Robertson Bridgeforth, "Mississippi's Response to Nullification, 1833," *Journal of Mississippi History*, XLV, no. 1 (February 1983): 3, 17-21.

[44] *The Southern Planter,* January 24, 1830, February 2, 1832. One article explained, "There is no species of injury to which the people of the country are more alive than unjust, unequal and unnecessary taxation . . . if a farmer, mechanic or manufacturer were convinced that all his working tools, machinery and agricultural implements were taxed twenty, thirty or even fifty percent merely to promote the interests of a few hundred wealthy iron masters, would he not complain of the tax?"

secession:

> It must be obvious to any statesman in our Union who possesses any degree of political foresight that unless the tariff laws are speedily modified or repealed, some of the southern states will inevitably secede. If but one state secedes, our political chord is broken and the constitution will be dissolved. Other states from more slight and trivial pretexts will seek to follow the example until our consistency as a government will be entirely destroyed and converted into general mass discord.[45]

Though the *Planter* reflected a sectional consciousness as it related to the tariff, it never identified Mississippi as a secessionist state and remained strictly unionist. A consistent theme in Mississippi and other southern states is that the tariff threatened the Union and could lead to secession *somewhere else*. Mississippians refused to paint a target on their backs by admitting that their state could be the one to leave. The *Planter* fiercely opposed the tariff but consistently condemned nullification and all perceived measures of disunion. It also accused John C. Calhoun of using nullification to further his own political ambition to become president and remained fervently loyal to Andrew Jackson.[46] In May 1832, the Planter explained:

> The people of this state have already . . . repeatedly remonstrated and protested against the protective tariff system and declared their interminable hostility to it. While the feelings of our people have been strong and urgent on this subject they have nevertheless exercised a spirit of moderation and forbearance under the prospect of relief being afforded, before endurance would become intolerable . . . our hopes have been strengthened and encouraged from the patriotic and independent course which has been pursued by the present Executive of the United States.[47]

[45] Ibid., April 21, 1832.

[46] Ibid., January 12, 1832, April 14, 1832.

[47] Ibid., May 19, 1832.

Here the *Planter* resolved to fight the tariff but also pledged to seek the path of moderation because that was what Jackson advised. The *Planter's* attitude demonstrated that sectional hostilities were on the rise due largely to differences over the tariff and the American System. Opposition to Andrew Jackson, however, remained downright unthinkable.

In the bustling city of Vicksburg, born from the economic boom of the early 1830s, even ardent Clay supporters opposed the tariff.[48] Though Clay was a virtual non-entity in Mississippi and did not so much as appear on the ballot in 1832, one would have never known it after reading the *Vicksburg Advocate and Register* (*VAR*), which supported him with great enthusiasm.[49] Although the *VAR* supported Henry Clay for president, it did not find it contradictory to also oppose the tariff. In September 1832, the *VAR* published an elaborate article that detailed the events of the "Anti-Tariff Meeting" in Philadelphia. The *VAR* approvingly outlined the parts played by the state's U.S. senators, Powhatan Ellis and George Poindexter, and noted that many in the anti-tariff meeting were ardent Clay and American System supporters who only opposed the tariff on the grounds that it was harmful to free trade.[50] The *VAR's* stance reflected that most Mississippi politicians who opposed the tariff made a point to distance themselves from South Carolina and nullification. Because the word "nullification" carried such a negative connotation and because anti-tariff views could be misconstrued as being anti-Clay, the *VAR* chose to use the term "free trade supporter." By advocating free trade, the *VAR* could oppose the tariff without directly opposing Henry Clay.[51]

By 1830, the *Natchez,* the successor to the *Ariel*, was one of the few papers that still favored the tariff. Following Andrew Jackson's statement in which he spoke favorably of the tariff, the *Natchez* decreed:

> This chops down our state-right and anti-tariff folk of the South . . . why did not the manufacturers also send

[48] Rothman, 157-161, 181.

[49] Bridgeforth, 12. *The Vicksburg Advocate and Register*, September 3, 1831. The editor opined, "If we could have our free choice for the next President, it would assuredly be Henry Clay. . . But we would not hesitate for a moment to sacrifice these predilections even for him upon the alter of our country's welfare if satisfied of its necessity . . . to see Jackson replaced in office."

[50] *The Vicksburg Advocate and Register*, September 11, 1831.

[51] Ibid., March 22, 1832.

> him a scalping knife? It would have been an excellent accompaniment. If the President goes on at this rate, we will certainly rally around his standard. And why not? He supports the tariff. [52]

A hint of sarcasm could have been detected in this statement, but the *Natchez* clearly clung to the ideal of the tariff as a means to fund internal improvements, even as other publications changed sides.[53]

The *Natchez,* however, was the last newspaper advocate for tariff support in Mississippi. Gradually, more and more Mississippi citizens, both Jacksonians and national Republicans, came to loathe the tariff. By 1832, a tutor from Connecticut, Julius A. Reed, said of Natchez, "I hear so much slang about the tariff and so much vile slander heaped upon men for whom I entertain profound respect that I am ready to consent that the South should cut loose from the Union."[54] Many among the wealthy planter class, who originally supported the tariff, soon became its most vigorous opponents. The *Natchez*, however, persisted in supporting the tariff, until it went out of business.

To the Vicksburg-based *Mississippian*, the tariff was a more important issue even than Indian removal by 1832. Earlier that year, Secretary of the Treasury Louis McLane negotiated what many northerners and southerners believed to be an adequate compromise bill that favored gradual reduction in tariff rates.[55] In response to the report published by the Department of the Treasury, the newspaper referred to the tariff as "most oppressive." However, it maintained, "The world was not made in a day and perhaps it was somewhat unreasonable to indulge the expectation of completely removing at once an evil which has been continually accumulating for many years past." Loyalty to Jackson played a part in this attitude of compromise, and the *Mississippian* continued, "Our venerable President . . . that the plan of compromise may be met with the spirit of compromise and that the patriotic efforts of the administration to avert the danger of disunion may be crowned

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[52] *The Natchez*, March 29, 1830.

[53] Ellis, 24-25. *The Natchez*, May 26, 1830. Oddly enough, the *Natchez* was correct in calling Jackson a supporter of internal improvements. In spite of his opposition to Henry Clay and the American system, the federal government spent more money on internal improvements under President Jackson than under all previous administrations combined.

[54] James, 142.

[55] Freehling, *Prelude,* 247-248.

with complete success . . . We style the Hero of New Orleans the savior of his country." These statements confirmed that the *Mississippian* stood with Jackson first and foremost. The newspaper also favored U.S. Representative Franklin Plummer, whom it supported as the champion of their cause. The editor of the *Mississippian* condemned Martin Van Buren for his involvement in the Tariff of 1828 but agreed to endorse him because Jackson supported him. Though the editors never failed to back Jackson, they occasionally published the belligerent misgivings of local citizens who hinted at supporting states' rights. One article authored by "a southerner" elaborated:

> Shall not the states of Alabama and Mississippi, with their virgin soil richer than the Nile, be heard in loud revoke of this system . . . which is destroying millions in their wealth? . . . Should the great constitutional principles of liberty and free trade be crushed under the weight of northern power? . . . This is probably the last grand struggle for southern rights and, I fear, for human liberty.[56]

Though they detested the tariff, their approval of Andrew Jackson and the decisions of his administration kept the publishers satisfied. As with many Mississippi newspapers, it could be said that the *Mississippian* loved Andrew Jackson more than it hated the tariff.

The Woodville Republican expressed nonpartisan disinterest in the tariff in 1828, but by 1833, it had come to fully denounce the tariff.[57] Where the *Republican* thought little of South Carolina's complaints in 1828, it viewed them sympathetically in 1832. It praised the Ordinance of Nullification as a document by stating:

> The paper before us remarks upon the eloquence of the documents emanating from the nullifiers . . . they are written in a vein of real feeling and energy which is calculated to make men pause and ponder. There is

[56] Ibid., March 3, 1832.

[57] *The Woodville Republican*, January 12, 1833. In an article with the title "Good News," *The Republican* gleefully announced, "We have a letter from a member of Congress . . . which states on the highest authority that the Committee of Ways and Means of the House of Representatives have digested their tariff bill. That the act of 1816 is taken as a base to which the duties are to come down."

> a boldness and vigor about them far different from the tone and temper of official documents generally . . . We speak thus with regard to the literary merits of these documents – but we hold another opinion concerning the doctrines which they avow.

Here the *Republican* editor confirmed that he identified with the complaints listed in the Ordinance of Nullification but did not approve of its revolutionary suggestions. The *Republican* had come to oppose the tariff and sympathized with South Carolina, but it did not support nullification as a solution. Its attitude was due, at least in part, to its admiration for Andrew Jackson and his policies.[58]

Unlike other Mississippi papers, most of which hailed the Compromise of 1833 as a victory, the *Republican* believed that it was unsatisfactory. An article it reprinted from the *New York Evening Post* complained:

> Either the protective principle must be utterly abandoned by the next session of Congress or the Union will be at an end . . . The northern people will not submit to further delay on this matter . . . We cannot perceive any good reason why all the states except South Carolina which are oppressed by the tariff . . . should continue to be content simply because South Carolina was a bit hasty and unorthodox in its methods . . . It is not the southern states alone which are aggravated by the tariff . . . No state is fully for the tariff . . . Not even New Jersey and Pennsylvania where it is most supported . . . The reduction now proposed will appease the South . . . But is this half way justice worth the price of our Union?[59]

This article reflected more animosity toward the tariff and more

[58] *The Woodville Republican*, February 2, 1833. The Question shows . . . differences of opinion in Wilkinson County . . . I will begin with the nullifiers. A small party composed of worthy and intelligent persons . . . A majority are friendly to the Senator (Poindexter) . . . If the wishes of the state of Mississippi are to be degraded–nullified–merely to accommodate the Clay and Adams Party in Wilkinson County and to gratify the personal friends, very few, of Mr. Poindexter then the practical operations of the representative Democracy are very different from what every patriot has supposed.

[59] *The Woodville Republican*, March 6, 1833.

approval for the possibility of disunion than almost any article written in Mississippi throughout the crisis. Though the *Republican* used this extract, its own editors never embraced anything approaching the possibility of supporting disunion. Almost all citizens of Mississippi were too content in 1832 and 1833 to consider the possibility of secession.

By 1833, Natchez ceased to be a haven for obscure, pro-tariff support.[60] Soon, Natchez fell in line behind the rest of the state in opposing the tariff. *The Natchez Courier and Adams, Franklin and Jefferson Advertiser* relied upon multiple extracts that supported the cause of states' rights, something other newspapers hesitated to do. The *Courier* carried its hostility against the president to an extreme greater than that of other papers. Concerning states' rights, it used an extract from *the Banner of the Constitution* that denounced individual states' rights but supported other southern states rallying to South Carolina by announcing:

> As far as the North is concerned, the question of state rights is irrevocably settled . . . In favor of the President . . . If the southern states should be equally unanimous in reference to the opposite side of the question, then we have arrived at the fearful moment apprehended by Washington at which a geographical line has commenced to divide parties. Henceforth the North will be arrayed against the South and the South against the North . . . in this relation their connection cannot long subsist . . . Which must terminate in the establishment of a Southern Confederacy, or what is far more probable when the relative strength of the parties are considered, in a southern submission to a government of unlimited powers . . . And should this catastrophe occur . . . The victims have only themselves to blame. Had they put forth their moral strength in a common struggle for state rights instead of splitting hairs about individual state remedies? Had Virginia not been denouncing the doctrines of South Carolina in 1832 whilst she professed adherence to her own of 1798 . . . Then we say the existing posture of affairs could not have occurred . . . It has been nothing but the belief entertained in the North

[60] *The Natchez Courier and Adams, Franklin and Jefferson Advertiser*, January 8, 1833.

> that South Carolina stood alone that . . . prepared the public's mind for a favorable reception to the President's proclamation.[61]

This intriguing bit of foreshadowing showed that these sectionalist attitudes existed in Mississippi long before secession in 1861. While most viewed South Carolinians as fanatics, some believed that the South should unite and demand states' rights as a section lest they be forced into secession, war, and ultimate submission.[62]

Amid the tariff debates, the *Courier* featured one of the first examples of northern abolition registering in the minds of slave owners. An extract from the *Mobile Times* criticized the North not only for the tariff but for northern attacks upon the South's three-fifths representation of slaves. It also quoted, with some derision, New Haven, Connecticut Reverend Joslyn, "The true cause of nullification is slavery. In order to strike a clear blow at nullification, slavery must be put down." The *Mobile Times* rejected this notion and claimed that this statement was a northern ploy to further attack the South. It responded, "The same consciousness that leads you to believe that a tariff is just also leads you to believe that attacking our institutions is just." This opposition to the threat of abolitionism was one of the few examples of Mississippi newspapers linking nullification to slavery in any way, and it was an extract from the Mobile newspaper that was written in response to a northerner's comment. There was nothing printed on the possibility of using nullification to perpetuate slavery. However, this hostile response reflected that white male southerners were often paranoid about slavery and always prepared to defend the institution at the slightest sign of opposition.[63]

Though most Mississippians remained loyal to Jackson during the

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[61] Ibid., February 15, 1833.

[62] Ibid., February 22, 1833.

[63] Ibid., March 8, 1833. South Carolina ought to be spurned with indignation . . . South Carolina has valued the existence of the Union by dollars and cents . . . However, much the South may be disposed to condemn South Carolina . . . Will the South not expostulate the North? Will she not say repeal the tariff and adopt one that is equal . . . Right or wrong, we cannot consent to force this tariff upon South Carolina . . . Let us put an end to this war that disturbs the harmony of this Union . . . If you (northern tariff supporters) value the Union more than you value a tariff, offer it a free and willing sacrifice upon the alter of public patriotism . . . The people of Mississippi call for a repeal of the tariff, they will not consent to the use of force, they will not join to compel South Carolina into submitting to a law they themselves deem unconstitutional.

Nullification Crisis, John A. Quitman and George Poindexter were notable outliers. Quitman was a transplant from New York who moved to Natchez in the 1820s and quickly worked his way up in the ranks of elite slaveholders. A supporter of the Bank of the United States and the tariff to a lesser extent, Quitman was also an outspoken supporter of nullification, a position that made him the target of much enmity during Jackson's presidency.[64] Complex and controversial George Poindexter shared Quitman's views. Though appointed to the United States Senate as a Jacksonian in 1830, Poindexter engaged in what many Mississippians characterized as betrayal when he condemned Jackson's Force Bill and became an outspoken Calhoun advocate. His unpredictability prompted President Jackson to refer to him as "that damned rascal Poindexter."[65] Quitman and Poindexter united to support nullification in Mississippi, and Mississippians disillusioned by Jacksonians and national Republicans alike flocked to support them.[66]

While Poindexter fought on behalf of nullification in Washington, Quitman supported it on the ground in Mississippi. Though Poindexter persuaded Senator John Black as well as Representative Franklin Plummer to oppose Jackson's Force Bill, he could not convince any Mississippi congressmen to support Calhoun outright. Plummer explained, "Though I agree with the nullifiers in principle, I find it inexpedient to follow them to the brink of dissolution." As noted by historian Donald Ratcliffe, most representatives from the South, including Plummer, actually voted for the Tariff of 1832, which decreased tariff duties. The fact that many southerners viewed the Tariff of 1832 itself as a reasonable compromise left them less sympathetic to South Carolina's call for nullification the following winter.[67]

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[64] Robert E. May, *John A. Quitman: Old South Crusader* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 1985), 2-3, 19. May, 23-24, 29. Olsen, 31-32.

[65] Miles, 54-59, 64. *The Natchez Gazette*, November 22, 1831. Former Poindexter supporters in the Mississippi General Assembly, who once voted for him under the impression that he was pro-Jackson, denounced him as early as 1831. That year, the Jacksonian *Natchez Gazette* published an article titled "The Cat is Out of the Bag," in which the editor systematically attacked George Poindexter and called him "no true friend of the President." Robert J. Bailey, "George Poindexter" *Journal of Mississippi History*, XXXV, no. 3 (August 1973), 227-247. So great was Jackson's animosity for George Poindexter that he accused Poindexter of hiring Richard Lawrence to assassinate him after Lawrence misfired in the first ever attempted presidential assassination.

[66] Ellis, 24-26, 50-51.

[67] Ratcliffe contends that the 1820s saw many close calls that nearly led to outright rebellion, but that the Jackson administration took important steps to alleviate southern discontent, including pursuing a lower tariff in 1832.

Quitman had no more success on the state level. In 1832, Governor Gerard C. Brandon proclaimed, "I oppose the Tariff of Abominations, but it is not a power delegated to an individual state to declare any act of congress unconstitutional." In response to Quitman, prominent Natchezians led by Robert J. Walker met to reaffirm their commitment to the Union. Samuel Gwin of Clinton, for instance, declared, "You may rest assured South Carolina has our sympathies, but we cannot support her in her mad career of separation."[68] Finally, even the legislature of Mississippi officially denounced South Carolina and nullification.[69]

Though many aristocratic Natchezians considered the tariff to be the state's most important issue in the early 1830s, most Mississippians saw Indian removal as more important. Andrew Jackson's Treaty of Pontotoc Creek persuaded most citizens of Mississippi that the federal government had addressed the most pressing issue.[70] With Native Americans removed, settlers from other states began pouring into the newly-available land, and with them came a tremendous amount of capital, which generated a flourishing credit system in the early 1830s. The land and slave investments, often supported by credit loans, quickly generated enormous cotton crops and even more capital. This era was the beginning of the "Flush Times" in Mississippi, and the early 1830s were a high-water mark for white male economic prosperity. In this atmosphere of progress, the tariff failed to generate widescale complaint. This prosperous atmosphere contrasted greatly with South Carolina in the 1830s.[71]

In South Carolina, the economy still suffered due to the fallout from the Panic of 1819. John C. Calhoun had emerged as the face of the state's dissatisfaction, and he successfully brought his constituents' complaints to the political forefront during Jackson's presidency. Calhoun, however, did not inspire mass appeal in most southern, anti-tariff states, including Mississippi, because these states did not face South Carolina's same economic and political downturn. "The hero" Andrew Jackson served as the nation's executive, and economic opportunity gen-

[68] James, 283.

[69] John Mason Williams, *Nullification and Compromise a Retrospective View* (New York: Francis & Loutrel, 1863), 14.

[70] Olsen, 30.

[71] Rothman, 5-9, 27-32.

erated feelings of optimism in the minds of most voters in Mississippi.[72] Andrew Jackson was too popular and the atmosphere was too sanguine for nullification to get off the ground in 1833 in any other part of the state besides Natchez.[73] Even in Natchez, future senator Robert Walker staged pro-Union, anti-nullification rallies.[74] If Mississippi had possessed similar suffrage laws to South Carolina, where only the wealthy held sway, then the political situation might have played out differently. As it was, Quitman, Poindexter, and the other members of the elitist states' rights aristocracy found themselves marginalized. Their fringe status, however, did not stop them from taking action.[75]

In January 1833, following Andrew Jackson's proclamation denouncing nullification and subsequent proposal of the Force Bill, Mississippi's top nullifiers came together to form the States' Rights Party of Mississippi. John A. Quitman, Senator George Poindexter, Judge William Sharkey, Judge Cotesworth Pinckney Smith, George Winchester, Isaac Caldwell, and John I. Guion founded the party on May 19, 1833. As its first statement, the States' Rights Party announced, "The Legislature's support for Andrew Jackson had been unrepresentative of the public opinion in Mississippi . . . Mississippians would have rushed to South Carolina's rescue had Jackson dared use force to butcher her citizenry." This development echoed similar calls to arms in Georgia and Virginia, where many citizens proclaimed that Jackson would march on South Carolina only over their dead bodies.[76] The States' Rights Party recruited disillusioned Jacksonians and former Adams supporters. It gained momentum as a viable third party in early 1833 but soon lost steam. The Compromise Tariff of 1833 appeased many Mississippians, and shortly thereafter, the South Carolina legislature repealed its Ordinance of Nullification. When South Carolina made peace with the federal government, the States' Rights Party of Mississippi no longer had a central ally.[77]

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[72] See Miles, *Jacksonian Democracy in Mississippi* for an excellent discussion of Mississippi politics during this era.

[73] Miles, 64-66.

[74] Bridgeforth, "Nullification, 1833," 8.

[75] James, 284.

[76] Ellis, 70-72, 110-112, 135-137.

[77] Freehling, *Disunion*, 271-281.

Poindexter and Quitman continued to promote the party. But the Panic of 1837 killed the States' Rights Party once and for all. The emergent Whig Party appeared and presented a viable alternative to Jackson's Democratic Party.[78] Mississippi's Whigs shared little with their eastern and northern counterparts who adored Henry Clay and Daniel Webster. If these southern Whigs had a leader, it was John Tyler who changed parties in 1833 after he refused to endorse Jackson's Force Bill. This particular breed of southern Whig opposed Jacksonian populism and supported states' rights, but never favored the tariff or the American System.[79] Judge Sharkey, Senator Black, and eventually even Senator Poindexter left the States' Rights Party and joined the Whig Party in 1834. Quitman held out the longest, but eventually, a letter from Senator Black persuaded him that the Whig Party was the only hope for defeating the Democrats and that the States' Rights Party would only distract from the anti-Jacksonian movement. Quitman, however, was an unenthusiastic supporter. In the years that followed, he crossed political streams from Whig to Democrat and back again on multiple occasions. States' rights was always more important than party loyalty to Quitman.[80]

Quitman was early to see nullification as a way to repel future threats against slavery. His early support could have been because he identified abolition as a viable threat years before slavery became the nation's most divisive issue. A native New Yorker, he frequently returned to his birth state to visit friends and relatives. In the 1830s, Quitman encountered early supporters of the abolitionist movement. On a visit to Rhinebeck, New York, in 1831, Quitman expressed distress upon witnessing evangelical Christian revivals, many of which featured people who spoke out against Indian removal and slavery. He denounced northern opposition to slavery and stated, "I am heartily tired of the North and, except parting from my relations, shall be happy when I set my face homeward." He watched the abolitionist movement develop in the early 1830s and carried his paranoia back to Mississippi. The abolitionist movement was in its early stages at this time. William Lloyd Garrison first published his abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator,* in January of

[78] Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815-1840,* 169-172, 184-187.

[79] Kohl, *The Politics of Individualism: Parties and the American Character in the Jacksonian Era*. For further reading on Whig identity, Kohl's work is enlightening.

[80] May, 61-63.

1831 only a month before Quitman's visit to the North.[81] Shortly after his return to Mississippi, Quitman became a states' rights advocate, a position he retained for the rest of his life. Quitman, however, was ahead of his time. Most Mississippians did not detect a threat against slavery growing in the North in the early 1830s. Almost all anti-tariff arguments revolved around the sectional inequality of the tariff and insisted upon the use of constitutional means to fight it. Though most opposed the tariff, only Quitman and a small group of significant allies advocated the use of nullification to defeat it. The vast majority of Mississippians supported slavery, yet newspapers and correspondents never expressed interest in using nullification to perpetuate it. Moreover, the founding members of the States' Rights Party of Mississippi never openly advocated nullification for any reason other than to combat the tariff.[82]

In 1832 and 1833, white male Mississippians had every reason for optimism. The economy was improving, Indian removal treaties had opened land for growth, the state's hero was serving as the nation's executive, status as a new state translated into fervent patriotism, a new state constitution created satisfaction with a majority of white males, and the population of 80,000 was relatively manageable. The future looked even brighter from the perspective of white males. The tariff was the one obstacle in an otherwise blissful time. This position is in marked contrast to that of South Carolina's in 1832. The state of affairs for white male landowners in antebellum South Carolina was on the decline. The recession had weakened the economy. Only those with wealth and land had a voice in the government. Andrew Jackson was widely ridiculed. Allegiance was more to state and less to nation, and the state's overall influence was declining.[83] To South Carolina, the tariff was a problem stacked on top of many other problems. Mississippi and South Carolina were not compatible allies in 1832 and 1833 because the only complaint they shared was their disapproval of the tariff.

Though the Nullification Crisis failed to divide the nation, its legacy played a substantial part in the sectional conflict that grew in the next decades. Andrew Jackson's anointed successor, Martin Van Buren, barely won the state of Mississippi in 1836 due partly to the role he once played in constructing the Tariff of 1828. Though Jacksonians in the legislature were quick to vote George Poindexter out of office in 1836,

[81] Freehling, *Disunion*. 273.

[82] May, 47-49.

[83] Ellis, 68-72, 165, 194-198.

by the late 1830s, Mississippi had a Whig governor, a Whig senator, and Van Buren lost to William Henry Harrison in Mississippi in the election of 1840. Uncompromising support for the Union died in Mississippi when Andrew Jackson left office.[84]

John Quitman never apologized for his pro-nullification views. Not one to surrender his convictions for political expedience, Quitman stuck to his guns concerning nullification, which temporarily hindered his career. Years later when he visited the barbershop of William Johnson, the famous black entrepreneur and slave owner, a Natchez man harassed Quitman and called him "a damn nullifier."[85] His convictions, however, paid political dividends in the 1840s and 1850s when his states' rights ideas gained popularity in the South. He spent the rest of his career bouncing back and forth between Democrat and Whig parties, always choosing the party that best represented states' rights. In 1851, Henry Foote referred to nullification in Mississippi as "Quitmanism." Ultimately, Quitman served as Mississippi's governor twice and briefly as military governor of Mexico City after Mexico's surrender in 1848.[86]

Many other men who became Whigs in order to support states' rights in the 1830s switched to the Democratic Party as it became its chief proponent in the 1840s and 1850s. Their loyalty was never to the political party but, rather, to states' rights, and they frequently swapped parties. Mississippi was anything but solid before the Civil War, but the Nullification Crisis laid the foundation for secession. L. Q. C. Lamar, Confederate statesman and the author of Mississippi's Ordinance of Secession, clearly identified Mississippi's cause with slavery. Still, he also acknowledged that many problems that had lain dormant in times of peace were now surfacing to create conflict and surmised, "The tendency of all such struggles as this, is to throw to the surface those moral disorders which, in quiet times, lie concealed in the bosom of society."[87]

According to a retrospective account of the Nullification Crisis written by John Mason Williams during the Civil War in 1863, the federal government's use of appeasement in 1833 gave legitimacy to the idea that secession could be used as a threat to achieve political goals. Indeed, South Carolina's use of nullification during the crisis set an example for

[84] Olsen.

[85] William Ransom Hogan and Edwin Adams Davis, eds., *William Johnson's Natchez: The Ante-Bellum Diary of a Free Negro* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000).

[86] May, Conclusion.

[87] Hettle, 4.

other states that began to see secession as an option of last resort.[88] This political realization yielded harrowing results decades later by fueling secession and Civil War.

[88] Williams, 15-19.