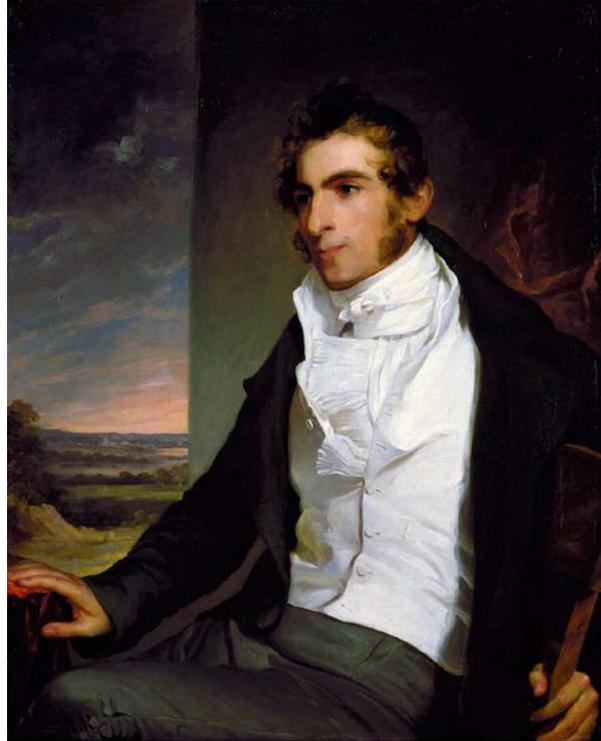


## Federalism to Jacksonian Democracy

Independence from Britain caused leaders of the American Revolution to face the problem of establishing a national government while at the same time maintaining the rights of the states. A national government based on a loose union of states was formed under the **Articles of Confederation**, but debt and regional factionalism threatened to dissolve it. The **Great Compromise of 1787** balanced the interests of the states with large populations and those with small ones by dividing a new national legislature into two bodies or houses. In this arrangement, the lower house was to represent the states according to population; in the upper house, the senate, all the states were represented equally, though senators were not to be directly elected by the people in the plan. A "**federalist party**" favored a strong central government drafted in a proposed new "constitution." The anti-federalists, fearing that a president or chief executive might become an oppressive dictator, or king, opposed the adoption of the constitution without guarantees that personal liberties would be protected. After a convention and careful drafting of the constitution, a questionable political strategy on the part of the Federalists led to the ratification of the document by each of the original thirteen colonies by 1790.



Federalists and non-Federalists, most of whom were among the nation's economic elite, believed that wealthy, well-educated men should govern. The nation's first two presidents, **George Washington** and **John Adams**, supported the ownership of land as a prerequisite to vote, as did **Thomas Jefferson** and **James Madison**. Land was a major economic resource. It was the determiner of social status and source of political power. It created most American fortunes in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, provided the basis for American economic development, and fueled public and private business transactions. Men like Daniel La Motte (in the portrait *Daniel La Motte*) would have been an ideal candidate for the role of governing the new nation. As a member of the economic elite, La Motte was a merchant based in Baltimore, and later in Philadelphia. He was related by marriage to the DuPont family, one of the richest

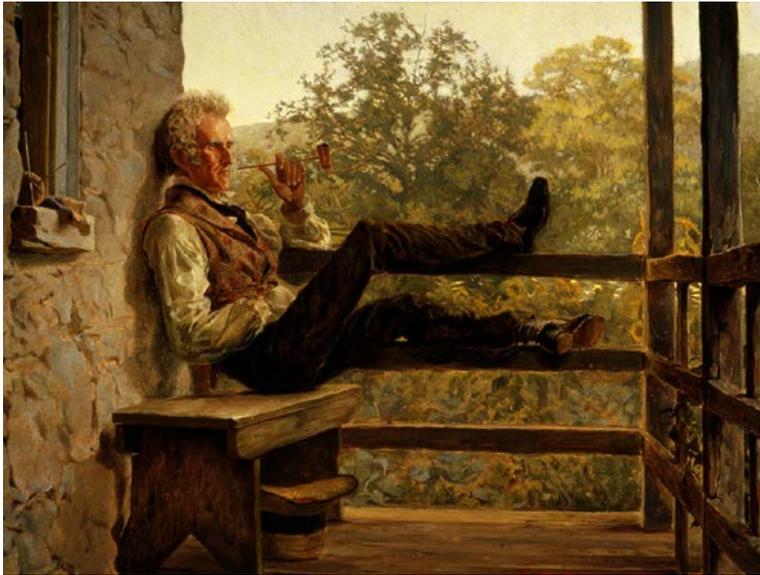
families in nineteenth century America and lead manufacturers of gun powder in the country. La Motte's portrait by famed English portrait painter Thomas Sully is emblematic of this elite economic class. Dressed in gentleman's attire, he is positioned in front of a window overlooking his vast land holdings – a visible and tangible symbol of his wealth.

With the inauguration of Jefferson in 1800, the **Democratic-Republican Party** came to power. In his inaugural address, Jefferson vowed to promote the "equal and exact treatment of all men." Jefferson opposed the proliferation and growth of cities and instead promoted the ideal of a peaceful agrarian nation governed through local assemblies. This view differed from the Federalist Party ideal of a government dominated by a wealthy elite.

Yet, the shift from Federalism to Democratic-Republicanism did not provide as large of a change as some likely hoped. Property owners with formal education and experience in managing estates were still thought to be the best qualified people to govern the new nation during Jefferson's administration. Women, African Americans, Native Americans, and most tenant farmers were unable to vote or participate in government. By the early 1800s farmland became scarce and expensive, preventing many settlers from acquiring land and the right to vote. The government of the new nation remained in the control of an elite of wealthy and well-educated men through the administration of **John Quincy Adams**.

## **Jacksonian Democracy and the Common Man**

The 1820s brought with it a radical change in the political atmosphere. The shift to a **Jacksonian Democracy** began after a long and arduous presidential campaign, when Andrew Jackson defeated the incumbent John Quincy Adams in the election of 1828. Jackson ran as the champion of the common man and as a war hero. He was the hero of the **Battle of New Orleans** of 1815, which was one of the few land victories of the **War of 1812** and was actually fought after the peace treaty was signed. As a native of Kentucky, Jackson was the first president to come from the frontier, outside the traditional centers of political power — Virginia and New England. Although Jackson represented the aspirations of the middle and lower classes, he was able to attract voters from all social sectors. Jackson felt that hardworking, motivated men should be allowed to achieve the same degree of financial and political success as those who inherited wealth. By the late 1820s, almost all states had ended the property requirements for voting for white males. Increased literacy and effective political advertising were also important factors in the election's outcome. As a result, the number of voters participating in 1828 doubled from the election of 1824.



Jacksonian Democrats believed that industrialization was essential to the progression of American industry – a far cry from Jeffersonian Democrats like Daniel La Motte who feared the consequences of industrialization and believed that the chosen class was the yeoman farmer, not the planter or common laborer. The portrait of **Squire** Jack Porter embodies an independent and

enduring spirit that, by the 1850s, had become an American ideal: an image emblematic of Jacksonian Democracy's self-made, "**Common Man**" which was celebrated by painters and writers alike. Squire Jack Porter was one of the pioneer settlers of Alleghany County, Maryland. Following his service as a captain during the War of 1812, Porter and his family settled on a farm outside of Eckhart, Maryland called "Rose Meadows," named for its profusion of wild roses. Porter made his living opening up coal mines on his property – the first mines opened for domestic use in Alleghany County.

Porter's home was known for its hospitality, having been known to always "keep a plate for the stranger." It was at Rose Meadows in the early 1850s that celebrated Baltimore artist Frank Blackwell Mayer painted this portrait of Squire Jack Porter. Mayer aptly evokes Porter's leisure years, financial well-being, and strength of character. Seventy-five years old at the time, Porter is depicted lounging on the porch of his farmhouse. As described by the artist, the painting shows Porter "on the porch of his stone cottage farm house in his shirt sleeves, smoking a corn-cob pipe, one foot comfortably resting upon the balustrade of the veranda, the other on the floor of the porch. . . looking out over his farm, his countenance depicting satisfaction, comfort and independence." Everything in the painting—house, bench, clothes, and pipe—has a quality that speaks of the squire's self-sufficient approach to life and the land. *Independence* is an affirmation both of Jefferson's ideal of an agrarian nation and Jackson's policies that made it easier for the lower and middle classes to obtain land.

## **Glossary**

**Articles of Confederation:** (1781) a written agreement by the thirteen original states that provided a legal symbol of their union by giving the central government no coercive power over the states or their citizens.

**Battle of New Orleans:** (January 8-15, 1815) the final major battle of the War of 1812. The American forces, commanded by then-General Andrew Jackson, prevented a much larger, combined British-American Indian force from capturing New Orleans.

**Common Man:** the everyday, working class man – not a wealthy landowner or man of power like a politician. Andrew Jackson, despite his high office, became emblematic of the common man because he came from humble beginnings.

**Democratic-Republican Party:** an American political party formed by Thomas Jefferson. They supported an agrarian-based, decentralized, democratic government. The party was established to oppose the Federalists who had pushed through the ratification of the US Constitution.

**federalist:** a member or supporter of the Federalist Party, the first American political party. Federalists supported a strong national government, economic growth, and an alliance with Great Britain. They were politically opposed by the Democratic-Republicans, led by Thomas Jefferson.

**George Washington:** (1732-1799) 1<sup>st</sup> President of the United States, Founding Father, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army. Known as the “father of his country” during his lifetime.

**Great Compromise of 1787:** a measure proposed at the U.S. Constitutional Convention of 1787 which created a system of proportional representation in the House of Representatives; also known as the Connecticut Compromise.

**Jacksonian Democracy:** also known as the Jacksonian Era. A movement for more democracy in American government. Led by President Andrew Jackson, the movement championed greater rights for the common man and was opposed to any signs of aristocracy in the nation, Jacksonian democracy was aided by the strong spirit of equality among the people of the newer settlements in the South and the West. It was also aided by the extension of the vote in eastern states to men without property; in the early days of the United States, many places had allowed only white male property owners to vote.

**James Madison:** (1751-1836) 4<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. He played a pivotal role in drafting and promoting the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

**John Adams:** (1735-1826) 2<sup>nd</sup> President of the United States, lawyer, diplomat, politician, and Founding Father. As a lawyer before the American Revolution, he defended the British soldiers in the Boston Massacre trials. This event catapulted him to notoriety and led to his political involvement in the American Revolution.

**John Quincy Adams:** (1767-1848) 6<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. American statesman, diplomat, Senator, and member of the U.S. House of Representatives; son of the 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. president John Adams.

**Squire:** a man of high social standing who owns and lives on an estate in a rural area, especially the chief landowner in such an area.

**Thomas Jefferson:** (1743-1826) 3<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States, Founding Father, author of the Declaration of Independence, and American lawyer. Jefferson oversaw the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France and arranged for the exploration of that territory by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark.

**War of 1812:** (June 1812-February 1815) a military conflict between the United States and Great Britain. The U.S. declared war for several reasons, chief among them the continued impressment of American sailors by the British navy, trade restriction brought on by Britain's war with France, and British support of Native American Indian tribes who opposed the American government over land disputes.