**How John Quincy Adams’ ugly win changed politics forever**

*By NCC Staff | National Constitution Center – 21 hrs ago*

On a December day in 1824, a presidential election was sent to the House of Representatives after the country was left without a president-elect. Out of the ashes came our current two-party system and the start of modern politics as we know it.

john quincy adams

John Quincy Adams. Source: Wikimedia.

In the end, John Quincy Adams became president, partisan political campaigns become the norm, and the roots of the Democratic and Republican parties were planted.

During the eight years prior to the 1824 race, political partisanship was at an all-time low. In the “Era Of Good Feelings,” President James Monroe ran basically unopposed for re-election in 1820.

But the unity inside the Democratic-Republicans, the one remaining political party in the United States, crumbled as the issues of slavery, states’ rights, regionalism, and the economy drove wedges between former comrades.

The nation became deeply divided as four candidates, instead of one, ran for high office in 1824. Each was a prominent figure, and each represented a different faction.

Two of the candidates had been in Monroe’s nonpartisan cabinet: Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and Treasury Secretary William Crawford. Andrew Jackson was the hero of the War of 1812, while Henry Clay of Kentucky was the powerful speaker of the House of Representatives.

In the general election, Jackson led with 99 electoral votes, but he needed 131 to win the presidency. Clay came in fourth with 37 electoral votes, which was enough to cost Jackson the election.

The election was officially sent to the House on December 1, 1824, for a runoff vote.

Under the provisions of the 12th Amendment of the Constitution, the election in the House involved the top three vote getters: Jackson, Adams, and Crawford (who had suffered a stroke during the election campaign).

It was Clay, like Alexander Hamilton in 1800, who interceded to decide the House election, in favor of the New Englander, Adams.

Clay secured enough votes for Adams to win on the first House ballot, despite Jackson’s wide lead in the popular vote.

And in a deal that shocked the political establishment, Adams then appointed Clay as Secretary of State, which was the second-highest position in 1824 politics, and the usual job held by the favorite to become the next president.

The anger of Jackson and his supporters about the “corrupt bargain” led to the official formation of the Democratic Party, with Jackson as its leader.

Adams’ opponents also stopped him from passing legislation in Congress, and he was largely ineffective as president.

The bargain also changed the nature of political campaigning. The 1828 rematch between Adams and Jackson was perhaps the nastiest presidential campaign in history.

After Jackson’s re-election in 1832, the remaining political factions united to form the Whig Party, to oppose the Democrats. The Whigs subsequently elected two presidents (William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor), and many Whigs left the party in the 1850s to form the current Republican Party.

Among the Whigs who joined the new Republican Party was Abraham Lincoln.

John Quincy Adams went on to serve a distinguished career in the House of Representatives, where he was a vocal opponent of slavery.

But the legacy of the 1824 election controversy was the two-party political system we still currently see in most presidential elections.

<http://news.yahoo.com/john-quincy-adams-ugly-win-changed-politics-forever-102339102.html>