

## **Steve Jobe: Spartanburg HS**

### **Guiding Question:**

- A. How does Bingham's "County Election" relate to the rising importance of the "common man" in the Jacksonian Democracy period of American History.

### **Background:**

Visitors to the United States in the 1830s were amazed by the informal manners and democratic attitudes of Americans. In hotels, under the American Plan, men and women from all classes ate together at common tables. On stagecoaches, steamboats, and later in railroad cars, there was also only one class for passengers, so that the rich and poor alike sat together in the same compartments. It was also difficult for European visitors to distinguish between classes in the United States. Men of all backgrounds wore simple dark trousers and jackets, while less well-to-do women emulated the fanciful and confining styles illustrated in wide-circulation magazines. Equality was becoming the governing principle in American society.

Among the white majority in American society, there was widespread belief in the principle of equality, or more precisely, equality of opportunity for white males. At the same time, the oppression of black slaves and discrimination against free blacks coexisted with the contradicted whites' ideals of equality. Also, Native Americans were pushed farther west to make room for common man farmers. Equality of opportunity would, at least in theory, allow the young man of humble origins to rise as far as his native talent and industry would take him. The hero of the age was the "self-made man."

There was no equivalent belief in the "self-made woman," but feminists in a later period would take up the theme of equal rights and insist that it should be applied to both women and men.

Between 1824 and 1840, politics moved out of the fine homes of rich southern planters and northern merchants who had dominated government in past eras. These were the years when white males of the lower and middle classes began to vote in large numbers. The number of votes cast for president rose from 350,000 in 1824 to over 2.4 million in 1840, a nearly sevenfold increase in just 16 years. The new state suffrage laws that enabled more citizens to vote were a significant cause of the changes. But there were other reasons as well. Changes in political parties and campaign methods, improved education, and increases in newspaper circulation also contributed to the democratic trend.

**Day 1:**

- A. Cover the vocabulary terms
- B. Discuss how the common man became important in politics
  - 1. Universal manhood suffrage
  - 2. Party nomination conventions
  - 3. Voters choosing electors
  - 4. Rise of the two-party system (Whigs v. Democrats)
  - 5. Third parties
  - 6. More state and local level offices elected by the people
  - 7. Popular campaigning
  - 8. Spoils system
  - 9. Rotation of office
- C. Discuss Jacksonian Democracy and the Common Man
- D. Discuss who was excluded from the “common man” equation
- E. Discuss Jackson’s presidency
- F. Relate the above information with Bingham’s County Election painting

**Day 2:**

Free Response questions:

- A. In what ways did the common man gain importance during the Age of Jackson?
- B. To what extent did Jackson’s presidency live up to the ideals of the common man?

**Vocabulary**

Suffrage

Caucus

Conventions

Electors

Political parties

Two-party system

Third parties

Spoils System

Rotation of office

Democrats

Whigs