

THE EARLIER POLITICAL CAREER
OF THOMAS HART BENTON
1820-1833.

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Introduction.

Benton gained his first experience in politics while he was a resident of Tennessee. In that state, he became prominent as a lawyer, and served one term in the State Senate.¹ His early friendship with Jackson,² though interrupted for several years by their noted affray,³ was so important in relation to his later political career that it should be mentioned in this connection. During the War of 1812, Benton was a colonel of a regiment under the command of Jackson.⁴

This study, however, is concerned only with Benton's career in Missouri, therefore, mention is made of the incidents connected with his life in Tennessee, only to show that when he came to St. Louis, he was not altogether inexperienced in public life, and as a politician with experience he could soon forge to the front in Missouri. Benton left Tennessee largely because of his unpopularity after his affray with Jackson.⁵ The reason he decided to locate in St. Louis⁶ was because of the opportunities for advancement that were offered a young lawyer and politician in a frontier community like Missouri at that time. Missouri then offered rich opportunities to lawyers because of the litigation growing out of the confusion in land titles.⁷ Benton was said to have been successful

1. Benton, T. H. Thirty Years View, Autobiog. 3. Hereafter referred to as "View". 2. Meigs, Life of Thomas Hart Benton, 67-72. 3. Ibid. 73-79. 4. View I, Autobiog. 3. 5. Meigs, 79. 6. Meigs, p. 72, fixes the date of his arrival as 1815. 7. Shoemaker, F. C. Missouri's Struggle for Statehood. 156.

in defending the cases of those who were holders of the Spanish land grants, and later, when he was a candidate for election to the United States Senate, one argument advanced by his friends in support of his candidacy was that his record had proved that he would be more liberal to the holders of the French and Spanish grants than his opponent would be.⁸

It was during his early years in St. Louis when the duel with Charles Lucas occurred,⁹ and although the details of that affair belong to the biography of Benton and not to a discussion of his political career, however, it should be mentioned here because of the relation that it bears to his later career. For some of the most violent opposition that Benton met with in his first election to the Senate and even in 1826, came from the elder Lucas and his group of politicians.¹⁰

In local politics, Benton joined the group that surrounded Clark, the territorial governor of Missouri,¹¹ and the influence of this group of politicians was a powerful aid to him in his efforts to rise.

At the time Benton came to St. Louis, Missouri was a territory of the highest grade, and was ready for admission into the Union. In the "St. Louis Enquirer", of which he was editor, he forcibly urged her claims to statehood.¹² Missouri was soon to take her place in the sisterhood of states, and Benton, the ardent champion of her rights, was destined to be

8. See below, p. 12.

9. MSS. Papers relating to Benton-Lucas Duel. Missouri Historical Society. 10. See below, p. 37. 11, Viles, J., A History of Missouri, p. 87. 12. View I, Autobiog. 5.

her senator for thirty years.

The purpose of this study is to consider the part that was taken by Benton in the political affairs of Missouri during the earlier years of his service in the Senate, to determine what were the influences and factors that tended to bring him into power, and to account for the prominent position that he held in state politics for so many years.

CHAPTER I.

BENTON'S FIRST ELECTION TO THE SENATE.

The real beginning of Benton's political career dates from the application of Missouri for admission into the Union. It was on the eve of this struggle for admission when he came to St. Louis. As editor of the "Enquirer", he soon found his opportunity to rise in Missouri politics by taking an active part in the agitation for admission.¹

Petitions praying for admission were presented in Congress in the early part of 1818,² and in the fall of the same year, a memorial to Congress asking for admission was adopted by the Territorial Legislature of Missouri.³ A bill to admit Missouri into the Union was introduced during the session of 1818-1819, and the debate over the Tallmadge amendment excluding slavery was followed by a vigorous discussion of the whole question in Missouri.

The two St. Louis newspapers, the "Enquirer", edited by Benton, and the "Missouri Gazette," edited by Charless, took the lead in the discussion. Both papers agreed in opposing congressional restriction on slavery in Missouri; but the editor of the "Gazette" favored some kind of restrictive clause being incorporated in the proposed state constitution,⁴ while Benton, on the other hand, came out boldly

1. View I, Autobiog. Sketch, 5.

2. Annals of Congress, 1, 591.

3. Benton, T. H. Abridgement of Debates of Congress, VI, 381.

in the "Enquirer" as an anti-restrictionist, and opposed any legislative interference with slavery whatever.⁵

The proceedings of Congress also occasioned a number of public meetings of protest in Missouri. At a meeting of St. Louis city and county, held in St. Louis on May 15, 1819, Benton was the principal speaker, and in his speech in support of the resolutions which were afterwards adopted, he gave expression to what was the general attitude of the people of Missouri, - that the proposed slavery restriction infringed upon the sovereignty of Missouri, and that it was contrary to both the Federal Constitution and the treaty of cession.⁶ Benton made no defense of slavery as a system; he said that if the restriction went forward to the time when the abolition of slavery throughout the Republic should be the order of the day, then, "it might be that the people of Missouri would go voluntarily as far as any other portion of the Union."⁷ But what he opposed was the singling out of Missouri by Congress, directing the hostile attack against her alone, and trampling under foot what he considered to be her own constitutional rights to deal with matters of purely local concern without any congressional interference. Benton's attitude in the "Enquirer" was always one of opposition to congressional restriction on slavery in Missouri, and when the election of delegates to the constitutional convention took

5. Enquirer, Mar. 31, 1819; Shoemaker, 103.

6. Mo. Gazette, May 19, 1819.

7. Enquirer, May 19, 1819.

place, his paper favored anti-restrictionist candidates.⁸ There can be no question that his firm and uncompromising stand as an anti-restrictionist greatly strengthened him with the more powerful political element in Missouri.

After the passage of the first Missouri Compromise, the people of the Territory seem to have had no apprehension that there would be any further difficulty, thinking that as soon as they would draw up a constitution and present it for approval, it would be accepted as a matter of course.⁹ So they proceeded to arrange for the constitutional convention, according to the provisions of the Enabling Act.

The election of delegates to the constitutional convention involved a struggle between the restrictionists and the anti-restrictionists in which the latter proved to be by far the more powerful element.¹⁰ As was stated before, Benton favored the anti-restrictionists candidates in the "Enquirer", while Charless in the "Missouri Gazette" upheld the views of the restrictionists. Since the question of congressional restriction was now settled, the anti-slavery element could give freer expression to their views, so a public meeting of restrictionists or those who favored some sort of legislative restriction on slavery was held at St. Louis on April 10, 1820.¹¹ Joseph Charless was chairman, and the resolutions adopted, though opposing any interference with slaves then in the Territory, favored limiting the further

8. Shoemaker, 122.

9. Ibid. 114.

10. Ibid. 115.

11. Mo. Gaz., Apr. 12, 1820.

importation of slaves into Missouri.¹²

The most bitter fight for delegates was in St. Louis. Benton belonged to the largest and most influential group of anti-restrictionists.¹³ His name was not listed with the other candidates in the newspapers, but it must have been understood that he was a candidate, as he was one of the group of anti-restrictionists who resolved to control the election of delegates from St. Louis County.¹⁴ As only eight delegates were to be selected, the thirteen men agreed to select eight of their number as the regular running candidates, and the other five were to resign so that they might present a united front against their opponents, the anti-restrictionist candidates.¹⁵ Accordingly, each one of the thirteen appointed a deputy, and these deputies met in secret session in St. Louis on April 10, 1820, and chose by ballot seven candidates, as follows: David Barton, Edward Bates, Wilson P. Hunt, Alexander McNair, Bernard Pratte, William Rector, and John C. Sullivan. For the remaining candidate, a tie between Benton and Chouteau finally resulted in the choice of the latter. The eight delegates thus selected constituted the regular anti-restrictionist slate of St. Louis and they were supported by Benton's paper.¹⁶ The restrictionists also met and made out their slate. At the head of their ticket was John B. C. Lucas, father of Charles Lucas, whom Benton had killed in a duel, and this added to the bitterness of the

12. Mo. Gaz. Apr. 12, 1820.

13. Shoemaker, 121.

14. Mo. Gaz. Apr. 12, 19, 26, 1820.

15. Mo. Gaz. Apr. 26, 1820.

16. Ibid. Apr. 19, 26, 1820.

newspaper quarrel between the "Enquirer" and the "Gazette."¹⁷

The contest for delegates was indeed a one-sided affair, and when the forty-one delegates to the Constitutional Convention met in St. Louis in June, 1820, there was only one delegate on the side of restriction.¹⁸

The constitution as drawn up by the Convention was very conservative in tone, and reflected the views of the older inhabitants rather than of the frontier communities. The clauses relating to slavery are particularly interesting. The legislature was prohibited from passing laws for the emancipation of slaves without the consent of their owners, or without compensation, and was also forbidden to pass laws preventing settlers from bringing their slaves with them. Another clause made it the duty of the legislature to pass laws necessary to prevent free negroes and mulattoes from coming into and settling in the state.¹⁹

In the convention there was little or no opposition to the provisions concerning slavery. The "Enquirer" remarked that "There was no discussion on the principle, and only an hour spent in arranging some details and the phraseology of the article."²⁰

The Constitution was adopted on July 19, 1820, and on that day Missouri became a "de facto" State.²¹

17. Mo. Gaz. Apr. 12, 1820. 18. View I, Autobiog. 5. The Enquirer May 10, 1820, said "We undertake to say that there is not a single confessed restrictionist elected throughout the territory, nor a disguised one who will venture to confess himself in the convention." 19. Mo. Const. 1820. Art. III, Sec. 26. 20. Enquirer, June 28, 1820. 21. Shoemaker, 254.

The people then proceeded to the organization of the machinery of government and the election of state officers. The first state election was not a contest between rival political parties; it was a contest in which the influence and personality of the candidates counted very largely.

The leading candidates for governor were William Clark, the territorial governor of Missouri and Alexander McNair. McNair was supported by the "Gazette" and its following, while Clark had the support of the most prominent of the lawyers and politicians of St. Louis, and he had been the choice of the leaders of the Convention.²² A caucus of the St. Louis lawyers and politicians met and drew up a slate with Clark as a candidate for governor, Benton and Jones as candidates for the United States Senate and Barton and Cook for judges of the Supreme Court.²³ The influence of the St. Louis lawyers junto is shown by the fact that every one of the caucus candidates except Clark was elected or appointed to an important State office.²⁴ Although the first slate was afterwards changed and some of the names dropped, Benton and Clark remained before the public as prominent candidates and they were made the center of attack by Charless.²⁵ Benton especially was violently attacked in the "Gazette". The following will serve to show the extreme violence of the editor of the "Gazette"; he described Benton as a "man crimsoned with the blood of one of our most promising

22. Shoemaker, 258.

23. Mo. Gaz. June 28, 1820.

24. Shoemaker, 259.

25. Mo. Gaz. Aug. 9, 1820.

young citizens under circumstances of cold and deliberate calculation, whose only fault was to be in the way of his ambitious designs, whose character and reputation was spotless, and operated as a reproach to that of this ferocious enemy. We say that such a blood-thirsty man is much worse than a panther."²⁶

The greatest interest in the election centred in the election of governor. There being 9132 votes cast. Of these, McNair received 6576, and Clark 2556. There were 8050 votes cast for lieutenant ^wgovernor, and Scott, Missouri's territorial delegate in Congress was elected her first representative without opposition, and received only 5380 votes.²⁷

There was a very large number of candidates for the State Legislature, and generally speaking the delegates to the convention were looked upon with disfavor as candidates for the first General Assembly, the principle of "rotation in office" being made to apply in this case. Besides, the delegates were unpopular because of the high salary clauses which they had put into the constitution, and many were in disfavor because they had been connected with a caucus.²⁸ There seems to have been some effort made to ascertain the views of the candidates in regard to the election of United States Senators, although this was not generally true.²⁹

The members elected to the first General Assembly

26. Mo. Gazette, July 12, 1820.

27. Missouri Intelligencer, Sept. 30, 1830.

28. Ibid. Aug. 12, 1820, Article signed "an elector".

29. Missouri Republican, June 22, 1826.

met at St. Louis, Sept. 18, 1820.³⁰ The election of United States Senators was one of the first matters considered by that body. On the third day of the session, a resolution was introduced calling for the election of Senators on September 25. If this resolution had passed, it is possible that Benton could not have been elected, as it would not have given time for his forces to organize. But the time finally agreed upon by the two houses was October 2, at 3 p. m.³²

All accounts of the election indicate that there was considerable opposition to Benton in the Legislature, but just what was the nature of that opposition is not very clear from the sources. The fact that Lucas, the father of the young man Benton had killed in a duel, was one of his principal opponents would indicate that much of the opposition was of the nature of that which has been mentioned as being characteristic of the "Gazette" editorials. Benton's violent temper and overbearing manner³³ no doubt prejudiced many against him, and this may account for some of the opposition.

The account of the election as given by Darby and Switzler is no doubt true as to most of the details, but it is seriously in error in some of the particulars given, if the legislative journals can be relied on as giving the facts of the case. Barton was not, as Darby states,³⁴ elected without opposition; neither is it true, judging by the

30. Shoemaker, 270.

32. Senate Journal, 28.

31. Enquirer, Sept. 30, 1820.

33. Meigs, 115.

34. Darby, Personal Recollections, 29.

legislative journals, that the election which finally resulted in the choice of Benton as Barton's colleague was continued throughout several days.³⁵ However all accounts agree that Barton was assured of at least a safe majority, and that his influence had much weight in the selection of his colleague. John B. C. Lucas, Henry Elliott, John Jones, and Nathaniel Cook were the opponents of Benton. Lucas was his principal rival, and in his case, personal enmity was added to political hostility.³⁶

After about twenty-five votes were assured for Benton, every pressure was brought to bear by his friends upon those of the members whom it was possible to influence in any way. The pressure was brought to bear strongest upon Leduc, who had previously sworn not to support Benton, but he was finally won over by being convinced that Benton was more friendly to the holders of French and Spanish land claims than was Lucas - that such had been Benton's record as a lawyer, and that Lucas, as a member of the Board of Commissioners for adjusting titles under these grants had been inimical to the land claimants.³⁷ Even after Leduc's vote was assured, it was found that to make the necessary majority, another vote was needed; so Daniel Ralls was brought down from the sick room to cast the vote which was to make Benton a senator.³⁸

35. Switzler, William, History of Missouri, 1541-1877, p.213, says, balloting continued through several days without success."

36. Mo. Intel. Nov. 4, 1820.

37. Darby, John F., Personal Recollections, 301.

38. Ibid. 32 f.

The election was held on Monday, October 2, at 3 p. m., according to previous arrangement, and the voting was viva voce. Each member voted for two candidates, and the two highest were to be elected provided each of the two had the majority as required by the law. After the vote was taken, the result stood as follows: David Barton, 34; Thomas H. Benton, 27; John B. C. Lucas 16; Henry Elliott, 10; John R. Jones, 9; Nathaniel Cook, 8. After all the votes were thus taken and counted, it was found that David Barton and Thomas H. Benton were duly elected.⁴⁰

Of the twenty-seven votes received by Benton, twenty-two were from the group of members who voted for Barton also. The five members remaining who voted for Benton but not for Barton distributed their votes as follows: for Lucas, 2; for Cook, 1; for Elliott, 1, for Jones, 1. The following counties were represented by these members: St. Charles, Howard, Cape Girardeau, Pike, and St. Genevieve.

The votes of the 12 members who supported Barton, but not Benton were distributed as follows: for Cook, 7; for Lucas 2; for Jones, 2; for Elliott, 1. 4 of the 12 members were from the county of St. Louis; 3 from Howard county, 3 from Cooper county, and one from each of the counties of Jefferson, St. Charles, and St. Genevieve. All but six of Benton's votes came from St. Louis and Cooper Counties and

39. Senate Journal, 28.

40. Senate Journal, 28.

the counties north of the Missouri river; likewise all but six of Barton's votes came from those sections. The six votes received by Benton outside of this section were from the counties of Franklin, New Madrid, St. Genevieve, and Cape Girardeau. The six votes received by Barton not from the section mentioned were from the counties of New Madrid, St. Genevieve, Franklin, and Jefferson. All but three of the votes for Lucas came from south of the river, and all the votes for Elliott were from south of the river. Jones received one vote from St. Louis county and one from St. Charles county, the rest of his votes being drawn from south of the river. Cook received his votes from the counties of Cooper and St. Louis, and from the counties north of the river. Thus an analysis of the vote shows that it was largely sectional, and that St. Louis county and the Boone's Lick counties were in control of the Legislature.⁴¹

This was the greatest fight for the United States Senatorship that Benton ever experienced until his final defeat in 1850. It is true that he met with opposition in subsequent elections, but never were his chances of success so questionable and the margin by which he was elected so close as in the first election. There were fifty-two members of the state legislature, and he received only twenty-seven votes, the bare majority for an election.

Benton's election in 1820 raised him from the ranks of lawyer and newspaper editor to that of United States Senator. His success was due in part, no doubt, to his record as a lawyer in dealing with land claims but the real

41. Shoemaker, p.368-9, gives a list of the members of the first General Assembly.

reason for his success was the bold and uncompromising stand he had taken against restriction of slavery.

When Congress met in December, Benton, Barton and Scott were present, but as the admission of Missouri was delayed on account of the objectionable clause in the State constitution barring free negroes, they did not take their seats during the session of 1820-1821.⁴² They did, however, receive pay as regular members.⁴³ Scott would have been allowed his seat as a delegate, but he considered that as Missouri was no longer a territory, but a State, it was beneath his dignity as her first representative to sit in Congress as a territorial delegate.⁴⁴

The delay in Congress and the quibbling over the free negro clause of the state constitution seem to have greatly irritated Benton. In a letter to the "Intelligencer" dated November 22, 1820, Benton wrote, "They make a pretext of that part of our State constitution which provides for keeping out free negroes and mulattoes when almost every State in the Union, even the free states themselves have the same provisions, as will be fully shown in the course of the debates here."⁴⁵ His attitude is shown further in a letter dated December 19, 1820. After speaking of the delay in the passage of the resolution for the admission of Missouri, he says, "All the friends of Missouri here consider her to be a

42. Mo. Intel., Dec. 18, 1820; Jan. 1, 1821

43. Stat. at Large III, 628.

44. Shoemaker, 290. Extract from letter of Scott dated Dec. 31, 1820. From Inquirer, Jan. 27, 1821. 45. Mo. Intel. Jan. 1, 1821.

State in point of fact and in point of right, and expect her to go on calmly and firmly with the operation of her government, preserving all the points of relationship with the government of the United States which here } anomalous position will admit of." ⁴⁶

The delay in Congress was brought to an end by the passage of the Second Missouri Compromise of which Clay was the author, and after President Monroe's proclamation on August 10, 1821, the admission of Missouri was complete.

Benton took the oath of office and was admitted to his seat on December 6, 1821. ⁴⁷ He and Barton drew lots to determine who was to have the longer term. Benton was successful, drawing the longer term which was to expire on March 3, 1827. ⁴⁸

46. Mo. Intel. June 29, 1821.

47. Annals of Congress, 17th Cong. 1st. Sess. 21f.

48. Ibid.

CHAPTER II.

BENTON'S RISE TO POWER

The elevation of Benton to the rank of United States Senator did not at once complete the establishment of his influence. Considering the opposition to him in his first election, it is evident that some change in popular sentiment would have to be effected if he was to hold that position of dignity and honor for thirty years. A careful study of Benton's public life during his first term as Senator will show that while his record in the Senate was such as would appeal to all western people, the popularity which he thus gained was not alone sufficient to account for the prominent position which he held in Missouri politics for so many years. That position was largely made possible to him by his early alignment with the party that was destined to be dominant in the State and in the Nation.

Benton's earliest official acts proved him to be an ardent champion of Western interests. The leading measures that he advocated were in favor of the people of a frontier state like Missouri. The fur trade was an industry in which many prominent Missourians were engaged, and he showed his loyalty to them by urging legislation in their favor. He led the fight against the iniquitous Indian factory system that finally resulted in its overthrow in 1822.¹ The Santa Fe trade was another western and Missouri interest championed by him in the Senate. This trade was growing in importance with

1. Chittenden, American Fur Trade, of the Far West, I, 15.

the people of Missouri, and some protection was needed to insure the success of the enterprise. Benton pointed out in the Senate the great advantages which the trade offered to the people of his State and urged measures for its protection.² He also urged measures for the protection of the settlers from the Indians and for the relief of the settlers on the public land.³ He early began the fight for the repeal of the tariff on salt and the salt tax became so closely connected with Benton's name that to mention one was to call to mind the other.⁴

At the time he entered the United States Senate, that body held as noble an array of talent as ever graced the nation's councils, and yet the position occupied by Benton in the Senate was by no means unimportant. During the first session that he served, he was a member of the committees on public land, Indian affairs, engrossed bills, and was appointed for a time to fill a vacancy in the committee on military affairs.⁵

One circumstance connected with the session of 1823-1824 was so important in its relation to Benton's rise to power that it should not be overlooked in this connection. This was the renewal of his friendship with Jackson. Jackson at the beginning of that session entered the Senate as a senator from Tennessee, and was already plunged into the

2. Mo. Intel. Jan. 25, 1825. Letter from Benton dated Dec. 13, 1824.
3. Ibid.
4. Meigs, 156.
5. Annals of Cong. 17th Cong. 1st. Sess. 26.

midst of a great campaign, which, although it was not to result immediately in his election to the Presidency, was to bring ^{him} forward as the leader in a great democratic movement that was to sweep over the country; and this campaign, which stands at the beginning of that movement, was destined to make and unmake political careers. While Benton's close political connection with Jackson does not date as far back as 1823, the circumstance connected with that year was of great importance, as it was fortunate that old grievances could be forgotten and that the two could again be on terms of friendship.

In the presidential election of 1824, there were no rival political parties with well defined political issues. It was a campaign in which the personality of the four leading candidates, Clay, Adams, Jackson, and Crawford counted for more than any principles that they were supposed to represent. Unquestionably, the choice of the people of Missouri was Henry Clay. The Missourians looked upon the Kentucky statesman as a westerner who would be favorable to the interests of the western people. His services in helping to secure the admission of Missouri into the Union also added to his popularity in the State. The fact that many of the Missouri settlers came from Kentucky⁶ accounts for some of the loyalty to Clay. Besides, Clay's program of the American System

6. Viles, 54.

was looked upon favorably by the people of Missouri in 1824. Especially did it appeal to the people of St. Louis and the Boone's Lick Country, two of the oldest and most populous sections of the State. As early as 1822, Clay had been nominated for President by the Legislature of Missouri.⁷

It was foreseen early that there would probably be no choice made by the electoral college, and that the election of the President would devolve upon the House of Representatives; hence, considerable interest centered in the choice of the congressman who was to cast the vote of Missouri in the House. Scott was a candidate for re-election and was pledged to support Clay.⁸ Strother, his leading opponent, had made a similar pledge.⁹ Indeed it is likely that no candidate for Congress could have been elected without having thus obligated himself to the people of Missouri. But there seems to have been no effort made to require of the candidates a statement as to their second choice for President.

It is said that Benton at first favored Crawford for the presidency. Some indication that he first supported Crawford is given by Adams.¹⁰ In his "Memoirs", Adams speaks

7. Mo. Intel. Nov. 26, 1822.

8. Letter to Benton, *Mol Advocate*. Jan. 14, 1826.

9. Mo. Intel. July 3, 1824.

10. *Memoirs V*, p. 483 f. Under date of January 6, 1822,

he wrote "He (D.P. Cook) said he would offer another resolution for information, the return of which would show the loss of large sums of money to the public by deposits of it in banks known to be insolvent, with stipulations that they should have the benefit of it for six months. This made all the directors of all these broken banks in the western country ardent elect-

of electioneering that was done for Crawford early in 1822 by directors of some of the insolvent banks in the West, and in the same connection, he mentions the Missouri Senator who was a director of the Bank of St. Louis when it became insolvent. But later in the campaign, after public sentiment in Missouri became clear, Benton became the advocate of Henry Clay for President and supported him warmly until the time for the November election.¹¹ It was said that Benton at first did active electioneering against Jackson. It was later charged against the Missouri Senator that he said in a public speech in Missouri that if Jackson were elected, members of Congress would have to legislate "armed with pistols and dirks" for defense, and that he continued so to represent Jackson until on the eve of the election in the House.¹²

In the November election, the people of Missouri showed their loyalty to the author of the Second Missouri Compromise. The following abstract of the popular vote of the State in the election will aid in an understanding of how

electioneering partisans of Crawford. It was done particularly for the Bank of St. Louis, in Missouri, negotiated here by Benton, the Senator, who, when the bank broke, published in the newspapers that he had had no agency in the direction of their affairs, because he had been absent all the time at Washington.

11. Mo. Rep. Jul. 19, 1831. The editor states that Benton first supported Clay in 1822.

12. Mo. Rep. Sept. 25, 1832. Benton denied having ever made such a statement. Extracts from the speech purported to have been delivered later appeared on placards which were used for political purposes against him. Several years later when Clay made some remarks in the Senate relating to the speech, a serious quarrel followed which almost terminated in a duel between the two men.

strong the loyalty must have been, and will also indicate to a certain extent who was the second choice of the people.

Electoral District	Counties	Clay	Jackson	Adams
First:	Clay	74	39	
	Ray	13	35	
	Chariton	67	109	
	Howard	337	92	
	Boone	257	94	
	Cole	20	11	
	Saline	10	21	
	Callaway	109	62	
	Cooper	136	53	
	Lillard	38	94	
Totals		1111	610	
Second:	Ralls	78	62	1
	Pike	81	33	12
	St. Louis	239	86	100
	St. Charles	61	46	40
	Montgomery	62	6	2
	Lincoln	83	6	4
Totals		604	239	159
Third:	Jefferson	23	22	17
	St. Genevieve	50	10	1
	St. Francois	22	35	
	Washington	107	44	2
	Wayne	1	14	
	Cape Girardeau	102	180	11
	New Madrid	10	1	1
Scott	12	11		
Totals		327	317	32
Grand Totals		2042	1166	191

These figures are based on official returns as given in Senate Journal, 3rd. General Assembly, p.43. The 32 votes listed for Adams in the 3rd. District were for R. J. Dawson, possibly an Adams elector. Adams' strength in St. Louis may be accounted for in part by the fact that it was an older and more conservative section of the State and many of the people in that county had come from the eastern states.

A cursory examination of the electoral returns seems to indicate that Jackson was clearly Missouri's second choice, and that Adams had no following worth considering in the State. However, had the contest in the November election been between Jackson and Adams only there is an unsettled question as to how the 2,042 votes that were cast for Clay would have been distributed, although it is not likely that Adams would have attracted much of a following in a western frontier state like Missouri. For another reason, also, the returns from the November election cannot be taken as a very definite gauge of the popularity of the respective candidates. The small vote polled may be considered to a certain extent as an indication of the lack of interest in the election.¹³

On December 1, the three presidential electors, Todd, Musick and Logan met at St. Charles and gave their decision unanimously for Henry Clay as president and Andrew Jackson as vice president.¹⁴

On the official count in Congress it was found that no candidate had a majority, and the election of president devolved upon the House of Representatives. As the vote in the House would be given by states, the vote of the one representative from Missouri would count for as much as the votes

¹³. Including all scattering votes, only 3432 were polled in November. In the August election there had been 10,796 votes cast for Governor, and 10,684 for representative in Congress. Mo. Intel. Sep. 14, 1826.

¹⁴. Mo. Intel. Dec. 11, 1824.

of the thirty-four representatives from New York or of the twenty-six from Pennsylvania. Hence, much interest was manifested in Scott's course, both by members of Congress and by the people generally. In the Missouri Senate, a resolution was submitted on December 16th, 1824, requesting Scott "in conformity to the expression of the aforesaid people (of Missouri) at the late Presidential election, holden on the first Monday of November, 1824, to vote for Andrew Jackson of Tennessee for President of the United States if the favorite of Missouri, Henry Clay, should not get into the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States with the constitutional majority for the office aforesaid." This resolution, however, failed to pass by the close margin of seven to nine.¹⁵

On January 11, 1825, a resolution requesting Scott to vote for Wm. H. Crawford for president was unanimously rejected,¹⁶ and when on the same day the resolution requesting Scott to vote for John Quincy Adams for president was submitted it met a similar fate, being unanimously rejected by fourteen nays.¹⁷

If, from the evidence that we have, we are justified in saying that Jackson was Missouri's second choice for president, Scott was really under moral if not legal obligation to vote for him. In his pre-election pledge, he had said that in giving his vote for an elector, he

15. Senate Journal, p. 114.

16. Ibid. p. 181.

17. Ibid.

would be guided by individual feelings corrected by his best judgement. But in case he was called upon to cast the vote of Missouri in the House of Representatives, he would become the organ of the people and the expressed will of the people would be his guide.¹⁸ Scott seems to have been at first uncertain as to how he should vote. He was in frequent communication with Barton regarding the election. On January 26, 1825, he wrote to Barton " The approaching presidential election produces on my part much embarrassment. Missouri having lost her first choice, Mr. Clay, I have no decisive indications on which I can rely who is her second choice. Although as a Senator from Missouri you have not the vote to give, and might avoid all responsibility attached to the vote, yet, as a citizen of that State and a colleague in public duties, I hope you will feel willing to give me your views on the subject. I shall be glad of your opinion for whom you think under all circumstances the vote of our State ought to be given, and the reasons on which you found that opinion. I wish to gratify my constituents on this and all other questions, and to discharge my duties in such a way as shall result to the public good."¹⁹

Barton's answer was clear and unmistakable as to his own views, and no doubt greatly influenced Scott in his decision. On January 28, he wrote to Scott, that he would

18. Mo. Advocate, Jan. 14, 1826.

19. Mo. Intel. Oct. 28, 1825.

give his views with the candor in which he understood the inquiry to be made, and would be ready to "share the responsibility" of their correspondence on the subject, should it become necessary. Barton said he considered that an elector was bound to vote for the man preferred by the State or district that made him an elector, but "when the election devolves upon the House of Representatives, voting by states under the authority of the people of the United States it is manifest that members are not bound by the preference of their respective states; for if they were, the result of the electoral votes could never be varied, and the constitutional provision for an election by the House would be nugatory. In the one case, the vote is given under a power delegated by a state; in the other, under a power delegated by the Union; and the respect paid by a member to the preference of his state must necessarily be subordinate to the paramount duty he owes, in the case in question to the whole people of the United States, under the Federal constitution." Barton considered that the only criterion for Scott's decision was the will of the people of the United States and his own opinion as to the qualifications of the respective candidates. As to his own wishes in the election, Barton said he preferred Adams, giving as the main reasons for his choice that he believed him to be better qualified, that as a president coming from the Northern states he would do more towards removing local prejudices and animosities than a president from the south or West could do; and he

believed he would promote, at least as far as any other of the candidates the interests of the western states.¹⁹

Benton is said to have canvassed for Crawford in the House until some time in January, when he came out openly for Jackson, and in conference with Scott urged upon the Missouri Representative the support of Jackson.²⁰ But on February 5, Scott wrote to Benton that "notwithstanding the correspondence we had on Thursday evening and on Friday from which you might justly conclude that I would not vote for Mr. Adams, I am now inclined to think differently, and unless some other change in my mind takes place, I shall vote for him. I take the earliest opportunity to apprise you of this fact, that you may not commit yourself with friends on the subject."²¹

On the following day, Benton replied to Scott's note and said in part, "Sinister rumors, and some misgivings of my own had been preparing my mind for an extraordinary development; but it was not until I had three times talked with you face to face that I could believe in the reality of an intention so inconsistent with your previous conversations, so repugnant to your printed pledges, so amazing to your

19. Mo. Intel. Oct. 28, 1825.

20. Mo. Advocate, Jan. 14, 1826. Scott in a letter to Benton dated Feb. 8th, 1825, said in part: "As to your 'personal wishes in this election' they were known to me to be in favor of Mr. Crawford; but as his prospects declined, and the necessity of choosing between Mr. Adams and General Jackson became more and more apparent, you then for the first time, expressed a preference for the General over Mr. Adams." ✓

21. Mo. Intel. Apr. 12, 1825.

constituents, so fatal to yourself. The vote which you intend thus to give is not your own. It belongs to the people of the state of Missouri. They are against Mr. Adams. I, in their name do solemnly protest against your intention and deny your moral power thus to bestow your vote. - - - - Tomorrow in the day for your self-immolation. If you have an enemy, he may go and feed his eyes upon the scene; your former friend will share the afflicting spectacle."²²

While Benton did not believe in the charge of "corrupt bargain" against Adams and Clay, he did believe that Jackson was the people's choice, and had been deprived of an office that was rightfully his; and he at once threw in his lot with Jackson and became the acknowledged leader of the opposition in Missouri.

It had been pointed out that judging by the expressed will of the people in the November election there was at least some justice in the claim of Jackson to the vote of Missouri in the election in the House. At any rate, the significance of Scott's decision in relation to his and Barton's future political careers cannot be over-emphasized. Barton in agreeing to "share the responsibility" with Scott, placed himself in a position to go down to defeat with the Missouri representative, who, according to Benton, had violated the sacred trust bestowed upon him by the people of Missouri. The charge that Jackson had been cheated out of the Presidency

drew to "Old Hickory" a large following even from among those who had previously been indifferent toward him. All those who had been supporters of Adams in the House were denounced by Jackson's followers as traitors to the people's cause. Even as early as 1826, one could read the signs of the times in the congressional election of that year. The strength of the opposition element in the State was shown by the overwhelming defeat of Scott.²³ In a later chapter it will be shown how Barton was compelled to "share the responsibility" with Scott.

On the other hand, Benton, in "hitching to the Jackson Star" became the acknowledged head of the opposition group in the State, and was to become in a few years virtually the political dictator.

Breach between Barton and Benton.

Some circumstances connected with the election of 1824 indicated that the two Missouri senators were no longer on terms of friendship. Doubtless the personality of the men made it impossible for them to work together harmoniously. It has been stated before that Benton was of a domineering disposition,²⁴ and the impression that one gets from a study of Barton is that he was not more amenable.

The breach in their friendship seems to have begun with the Barton-Rector affair in 1823, the circumstances of

23. In the August election, he received only 4155 votes, while Bates, his opponent, received 6635 votes and was elected. Mo. Intel., Sept. 21, 1826. 24. See above p. 11

which were as follows: William C. Rector had been serving as surveyor of the district including Arkansas, Illinois, and Missouri and was a candidate for re-appointment. Serious charges had been brought against him, and Barton was the leader in the opposition to him in the Senate, while Benton supported him. ✓

In the "Missouri Republican" of June 25, 1823, there appeared an article signed "Philo" in which it was charged among other things that Rector as surveyor-general let the best contracts to his relatives, and that they would sublet the contracts for less than what the government paid principal deputies. Immediately after the article appeared, Thomas Rector, a brother of the surveyor-general, inquired who was the author of the anonymous article, and when told that it was Joshua Barton, a brother of David Barton, a challenge followed, and in the duel Barton was killed, while Rector escaped unhurt.²⁵ The Rector and Barton families had long been enemies and this affair increased the hostility.²⁶ Benton, by supporting Rector, placed himself in the list of Barton's enemies and after 1823 the two senators were not on terms of friendship.

In his campaign for re-election to the Senate in 1824, Barton met with Benton's opposition. Tales were circulated to the effect that Barton was frequently intoxicated in the

25. Mo. Rep. July 2, 1823.

26. Ibid. July 9, 1823

Senate and he was also arraigned for alleged immoral conduct at Washington.²⁷ It was understood that many of the tales were circulated by his colleague in the Senate.²⁸ Benton also wrote letters to Clark and Ashley claiming that Barton had spoken against sending troops up the river and on the roll-call had hypocritically voted for the same measure in order to justify himself on the journals.²⁹ Barton pronounced these charges false.³⁰ After Barton had made his statement denying the charge made by Benton to Clark and Ashley, Benton again insisted that Barton had spoken one way and voted another.³¹

It does not seem, however, that the opposition to Barton had great weight in the state legislature as he was re-elected, receiving 30 votes more than all his opponents.³²

It is likely that Barton's course in advising Scott to vote for Adams increased the hostility between the two senators. In the following chapter it will be pointed out how Barton opposed Benton in the Senate.

27. Mo. Intel., Aug. 21, 1824. Art. signed Darby Buckeye.

Ibid. Sept. 18, 1824, Ibid. Dec. 4, 1824.

28. Mo. Intel. Dec. 4, 1824. This charge was made by Barton.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid. Dec. 18, 1824.

32. Ibid. Dec. 4, 1824.

CHAPTER III.

THE GRADUATION BILL AND BENTON'S RE-ELECTION TO
THE SENATE.

By 1826, Benton had both found his place as a leader in the opposition to the Adams administration in Congress and had become the recognized exponent of the rights of the new West as opposed to the dominance of the East. The fur trade, the Santa Fe' trade, and the removal of the Indians have been mentioned as interests of the western people ably supported by him in the Senate.¹ There can be no doubt that Benton's general attitude of loyalty to his own section greatly added to his popularity in Missouri.

But the one subject affecting the welfare of the western people which Benton had most at heart was the relief of the settlers on the public lands, and no discussion of his position and influence in the politics of the State during his earlier career as a statesman would be complete without some consideration of that measure on which he spent his best efforts in the Senate. The measure just referred to, the Graduation Bill, was intimately related to Benton's public life during the whole of the period with which this study is concerned. How it was used by him for the advancement of his political interests and how it was largely responsible for his re-election to the Senate in 1826 will now be explained.

When Benton entered the Senate there was no provis-

1. See above, p. 17-18.

ion either for pre-emption or for a homestead. Land was sold to the highest bidder and was too often the prey of speculators. Apparently, at any rate, the idea back of the government's land policy was to use the land as a source of revenue for the general government rather than to attract settlers to the West.² Benton believed all this should be changed; that the government ought to adopt a more liberal land policy and encourage settlement rather than continue to hold back the public lands for revenue they might bring into the treasury.³ These ideas were embodied in his Graduation Bill.

The original bill⁴ provided that lands which had previously been offered for sale, and remained unsold, should be offered at private sale in parcels conformable to sectional divisions and subdivisions at graduated prices, beginning with a dollar an acre, and followed by an annual reduction of twenty-five cents per acre. Also, lands which should thereafter be offered for sale at auction and remained unsold at the close of the sale should then be offered at private sale, beginning with a dollar and twenty five cents at the end of the first year, and with an annual reduction of twenty five cents per acre. These specifications for graduation of price were combined with provisions for donations to actual settlers and a cession of the refuse lands to the states in which the same might lie. Although the details of

2. View I, 12.

3. View I, 104 ff.

4. Annals of Congress,
13th Cong., 1st Sess.
532-3.

the bill were altered from time to time during the years it was before Congress, some provisions for graduation of price, donations to actual settlers and cession of the refuse lands to the states continued to constitute the outstanding features of the bill.

The bill was first introduced into Congress on April 28, 1824,⁵ but as Benton knew there would be no chance of passing it at that session, he did not press it forward to a vote, wishing to have time first to educate the public to an understanding of the provisions of the bill. The bill was introduced again in the session of 1825-1826 and on May 16, 1826, he took up the discussion of it in the Senate and made a lengthy speech on the subject of the public lands.⁶

Benton's principal arguments in this speech were, that land remaining unsold at a fixed price was not worth that price; that no arbitrary price could be set, and that the minimum should vary according to the quality of the land, that quality to be determined by the length of time the land remained unsold on the market. As freeholders are the most natural support of a republic, the government, he reasoned, should increase the number of freeholders by turning over the land to the people at a reasonable price and giving to those who were unable to buy, enough land to make a living upon. He considered that it was far more important that the land should be peopled with thrifty settlers, than that it be

5. Annals of Cong., 18th. Cong. 1st. Sess. 582.

6. Debates in Cong., 19th. Cong., 1st. Sess. 720-749.

held back by the government to supply the treasury with revenue. Even at this time Benton did not press the bill to a vote, but the speech which he delivered in the Senate he had printed and it was distributed widely in the western states, especially in Missouri?

The newspapers that were at all friendly to him were used to laud both the bill and its author. In St. Louis, the old "Enquirer" had now combined with the "Missouri Advocate" and under the latter name was the leading Benton political organ in the State. In the Boone's Lick Country, the "Missouri Intelligencer" was giving its columns over to a liberal discussion of the Graduation Bill, and in 1826 the editorial policy of the paper was decidedly favorable to it.

The "Missouri Advocate" was loudest in the praise of Benton and everything that he stood for. The Graduation Bill was praised in numerous editorials, and the author of it was pictured as the greatest and most profound statesman west of the Alleghenies.⁸ There were also several anonymous articles contributed to that paper eulogizing Benton. Just how much the editorial policy was dictated by Benton is largely a matter of conjecture, but it is very possible that at least some of the articles in the "Advocate" were from the Senator's own pen.

In the issue of the "Missouri Intelligencer" for August 31, 1826, there appeared a lengthy communication signed

7. No. Rep. June 29, 1826.

8. Beginning with the issue of Jan. 28th, 1826, a number of such articles appeared in the Missouri Advocate.

"Boone's Lick" in which it was claimed for Benton, among other things, that he had cleared the soil ~~from~~ the Indians which infested it; that he had secured favorable Indian treaties; that the road to Mexico and protection of the fur trade were due to him; and above all, he was praised as the author of the Graduation Bill. The writer declared that, "The bill to graduate the price of public land is an era in the prosperity of the western country. The speech which supports it throws all the enemies of the measure into the background, overwhelms them with facts and arguments which they cannot answer, and drives them into the meanness of personal abuse. That speech is hailed throughout the western country, and the measure which it recommends will be supported by every western member that regards the welfare of his country or wishes of his constituents."⁹ There is some evidence that this article was written by the one whom it was designed to praise. The fact that Benton himself was the author of similar articles appearing in the "Missouri Intelligencer" was later admitted by the editor.¹⁰

Benton believed in newspaper publicity, and as far as he was able, he used the papers to further his political

9. Mo. Intel. Aug. 31, 1826.

10. In the following issue (Sept. 7, 1826), a correspondent signed "A Friend to Modesty" inquired of the editor whether Benton did or did not write the article signed "Boone's Lick." The editor made an evasive answer at that time. But later, in the issue of Oct. 25, 1834, Mr. Patten confessed that "while we were in the good graces of the Colonel, he was in the practice of sending us similar articles for re-publication, complimentary to himself. We have a formidable bundle of Colonel Benton's letters to us which contain secrets worth knowing."

interests in Missouri. This was true to a greater or less extent during all his public career.

While Mr. Patten, the editor of the "Missouri Intelligencer" was friendly to Benton at this time, his paper did not show any strong bias. Space was given in its columns for several communications that criticised the Graduation Bill severely, and seemed quite antagonistic to its author. One writer spoke of Benton's speech on the bill as "the Eastern Senator's Electioneering Circular", and said that it was "about as well calculated to prove that Andrew Jackson ought to have been elected President instead of Adams, as ----- to show the utility of reducing the price of public land according to his bill."¹¹

The strongest opposition Benton experienced from newspaper sources was from the "Missouri Republican". This paper was the old "Missouri Gazette" under a new name and the attitude of the editor toward Benton remained unchanged. In its columns there appeared from time to time a number of articles under such fictitious signatures as "A Farmer" and "Curtius".¹² It developed that the author of the article under the caption of "A Farmer" was John B. C. Lucas, the inveterate personal enemy of Benton and his leading opponent in the first senatorial election.¹³

Some of Benton's strongest opposition came from

11. Mo. Intel., August 24, 1826, Article signed "Think for Myself."

12. Mo. Rep. June 22, 1826.

13. Ibid. Nov. 9, 1826.

his colleague in the Senate. Since the time of the Barton-Rector affair, the breach between the two Missouri Senator's had been growing wider all the time, and from the very first, Barton opposed the Graduation Bill. After Benton's lengthy speech in support of the bill, Barton at once arose and attacked it and its author.¹⁴ As it was both late in the day and late in the session when Barton arose to speak, he did not attempt at that time to argue the question in detail, but said he would later show that "The bill to graduate the price of public lands, or in other words, to destroy by indirect means the sound and salutary land system of the United States - - - - is a compound of electioneering and speculation."¹⁵

In a letter dated June 5th, 1826, Barton stated that the Graduation Bill had been held back until the close of the session of Congress for the purpose of preventing a reply, so that the speech in support of it might be sent out unanswered to electioneer for its author during the summer. "I admit," said he, "that no man has more need of some grand pageant to divert public attention from himself than Mr. Benton, and he fancies that he has found it in his land hobby."¹⁶

The Graduation Bill was not the only point of attack of the enemies of Benton. There were objections raised

14. Debates in Congress, 19th Cong., 1st. Sess. 749.

15. Ibid. 753.

16. Mo. Rep. July 13, 1826.

to his official conduct, and an attempt was made at an impeachment of his honesty. One contention of his opponents was that in the session of 1824-1825, he had charged for mileage \$1619.20 more than his colleague.¹⁷ He was also assailed on the ground that as one of the directors of the Bank of Missouri, he had had a part in defrauding the government and the people out of a large sum of money that had been deposited in the bank for safe keeping.¹⁸ Most of the charges made against him were of a private nature and had been long standing. On the whole, they seem to have originated with Lucas and others of Benton's private and public enemies including Senator Barton. Benton never attempted to answer any of these charges, as he always said that it was a rule of conduct with him never to reply to any mis-representation of his private character.¹⁹

Besides these charges which were largely personal, one more general objection urged against the election of Benton was that made by some of the citizens of the Boone's Lick District. A writer in the "Missouri Intelligencer" complained that the people of the central part of the State "have grown tired of the St. Louis Dynasty."²⁰ It is true that the city of St. Louis and the little county of St. Genevieve had been furnishing all of Missouri's representation in Congress, and this was no doubt a cause of some

17. Mo. Intel. Oct. 19, 1826.

18. Ibid. Aug. 24, 1826.

19. Ibid. Sept. 16, 1825.

20. Ibid. June 16, 1826.

Correspondent signed "Howard".

grievance on the part of the settlers ~~from~~ north of the Missouri River. 9

The re-election of Benton was not, generally speaking, made an issue in the August election of 1826. Members of the legislature were not as a rule pledged to vote for any certain candidate for Senator. There are, however, indications that in a few cases the candidates had expressed an intention as to whether they would or would not support Benton. But whatever preferences they expressed were not in the nature of public pledges, but were given privately and in most cases on the election ground.²¹ In a few precincts a poll was opened to ascertain the will of the people in regard to the senatorial election.²²

It seems that there was some opposition to Benton in the Legislature at the first of the session. The election was postponed until late in December and there was a rumor that Edward Bates was to be put in nomination against him.²³ On December 29, the two houses met in joint session and proceeded to the election of Senator.²⁴ Joseph C. Brown and William Clark were Benton's opponents. When the vote was taken, it was found that Benton was elected, the vote being: for Benton, 40; for Brown, 15; for Clark, 1.²⁵

An analysis of the opposition to Benton in this election shows that it came largely from St. Charles and

21. Mo. Rep. Oct. 26, 1826.

22. Mo. Intel. Aug. 17, 1826.

23. Ibid. Dec. 28, 1826.

24. Mo. Rep. Jan. 11, 1827.

25. Ibid.

Lincoln counties, and from the counties in the eastern part of the State south of the Missouri River.²⁶ His greatest strength was in the Boone's Lick Counties and in St. Louis County.²⁷

The complete failure of the attempt to defeat Benton for re-election was due in part to lack of well organized opposition; in part, also, to the inability of his opponents to find a strong rival to put in nomination against him; but the real reason for the failure of the opposition was that the majority of the members of the legislature knew if they voted according to the wishes of the people, Benton was the only logical candidate, hence they felt bound to support him.²⁸ The large majority of votes received by him in this election shows that he had made a great gain in strength with the people of the State since 1820. During his first term in Congress he had represented the people ably and well; he had proved that he was loyal to his own section by his support of those measures which were of greatest interest to the western settlers; he had insisted that a representative should be guided by the will of the majority of the people who made him a representative, and by taking a

26. The analysis of the vote in the House based on incomplete data, as no House Journal for this session was available. The above statements are true for the vote in the Senate, and also for the vote in the House so far as definite information concerning the residence of the members could be obtained. I was unable to locate the following members of the House who voted against Benton: Allen, Baring, Cook, Postin, and Sittin.

27. Brown received one vote from St. Louis County and one from Howard County.

28. Mo. Rep. Jan. 11, 1827.

a bold and uncompromising stand for this principle in 1825, he greatly strengthened himself with the great masses of democratic voters in the State. It is such a record as this that accounts for his complete triumph in the election of 1826.

CHAPTER IV.
BEGINNINGS OF PARTIES AND ISSUES
BENTON A DICTATOR IN STATE POLITICS.

Between 1825 and 1828, the supporters of Jackson were gradually marshalled into line and formed into a great faction opposed to the Adams administration. All who were induced to believe the cry of bargain and corruption and all who believed Jackson the best representative of western and democratic interests united in opposition to Adams and Clay. Principles do not seem to have counted for much in the earlier days of the history of the Jackson party. Jackson's views on the tariff and other questions of the day were very indefinite and seem to have been given little consideration by the voters. He had voted for the tariff of 1824, believing that it would ^{give} a home supply of articles necessary in time of war and would produce revenue to pay the public debt.¹ In fact, he could have been consistently supported by believers in high tariff and no doubt many who joined the opposition at first believed its famous leader to be in favor of protection. Neither were the views of Benton on the American System very positive at this time. He had likewise voted for the tariff of 1824, the measure being drawn in such a way that it could be logically supported by any western congressman.² But by 1828, in the politics of the State, a division on the tariff and internal improvements was becoming more and more a matter of newspaper comment. In the issue

1. View I, 34.

2. Ibid.

of July 13, the editor of the "Missouri Intelligencer" remarked that the contest was "decidedly a contest between the friends of the American System and its enemies. The latter deny, and the former affirm the right of the general government, under the Constitution to prosecute that system."³ To Mr. Patten the editor, who was leading advocate of the American System it may have seemed that such was the nature of the contest. But, as will be pointed out later, the division in 1828 was not in every case between the friends of the American System and its enemies.

Just how early the Jackson element in the State was definitely organized and united as a great party of opposition to all Administration candidates is not very clear from the sources. There is no evidence that it was responsible for the election of Governor Miller in 1825. Neither did it figure in the congressional election of the following year; for while Scott, an Adams supporter, was defeated for re-election, his successful opponent, Bates, was likewise friendly to the Administration and had voted for Adams in 1824.⁴ But early in the campaign of 1828, it showed that it was under capable leadership. Its main leaders in the State were Senator Benton and Governor Miller, the latter being the candidate of the Party for re-election as governor.

In 1828, there were three candidates for Representative in Congress in the field, Edward Bates, Wm. Carr Lane

3. Mo. Intel. July 13, 1828.

4. Mo. Rep. June 8, 1826, Address of Bates to the people.

and Spencer Pettis. Bates was the candidate of the Administration group.⁵ In a published statement, he avowed his adherence to the policies of the Administration. He said that a careful study had "resulted in a thorough conviction that it is a good policy and greatly for the interest of the people to afford adequate protection to all such articles of domestic manufacture as the country is capable of producing in sufficient abundance and of quality equal to similar articles of foreign production." Regarding internal improvements, he said he had never doubted the power of Congress to dispose of funds for such purposes, and he had voted in favor of the appropriation for the Cumberland Road. However, he said he preferred seeing such works in the hands of the states.⁶

While Bates' views on the tariff and internal improvements were rather definite, it cannot be said that they were in marked contrast with the views of some Jackson adherents. For Buckner, Ashley, and other Jackson candidates later expressed views about as favorable to the American System as were those of Bates.⁷

The two opponents of Bates, Pettis and Lane, were both Jackson candidates. Pettis was said to have been an ardent Crawford supporter in the election of 1824, but as there were no Crawford electors in his district, he voted the Clay ticket.⁸ It was charged that it was not until he became possessed with the idea of being elected Representative

5. Mo. Rep. May 13, 1828.

6. Ibid. July 22, 1828.

7. See p. 63.

8. Mo. Rep. July 29, 1828.

that he, realizing the strength of the Jackson party in the State, decided to throw in his lot with the "Old Hero".⁹ The views of Pettis were quite opposed to the American System. In a statement of the principles to which he adhered he said, "I am decidedly in favor of the improvements of the country by means of roads and canals; but whether the general government has, by the Constitution, the power of appropriating public money to effect these objects and of prosecuting a general system of internal improvements through the several states is a question involving much difficulty, a great variety of opinions, and much embarrassment. I have tested this question by the general system of political principles which I have drawn from the Constitution, and I am free to disclose that I believe no such power is conferred."¹⁰

In a circular purporting to be that of a Jackson committee of general correspondence and signed by Mr. Birch of the "Western Monitor" and J. F. Ryland, all Jackson voters were urged to reject Lane and support Pettis as the regular candidate of the party. It maintained that out of six thousand voters supposed to be within that district Pettis would not lose one hundred if he would lose one Jackson vote; but that the adherence of any of the party to Lane under such circumstances would be the means of creating a division and of electing Mr. Bates.¹¹

9. Mo. Rep. July 29, 1828.

10. Mo. Intel., July 18, 1828.

11. Ibid. Aug. 1st, 1828. This circular was dated July 17, 1828.

Lane in a published statement came out decidedly in favor of Jackson and was as logical an opposition candidate as Pettis.¹² The editor of the Missouri Intelligencer suggested that "it is certain that neither of these gentlemen would have thought of offering themselves as candidates for Congress had they not supposed the popularity of General Jackson would hoist them into office."¹³

Since the strength of the party was divided between the two¹⁴ if both remained in the field it would have resulted in certain defeat for the opposition party in the congressional election. Consequently it was agreed between the two Jackson candidates in concert with the party leaders of the state that the question should be submitted to Benton as to which of the two had the greater strength with the people. The one selected by him was to be the regular candidate and the other was to retire from the race. Benton chose Pettis giving as his reason that it had been "proved" to his "entire conviction"

12. Mo. Rep. July 29, 1828. 14. Mo. Rep. July 29, 1828.

13. Mo. Intel. Jul. 11, 1828. In view of the high standing of Pettis and Lane, this criticism is hardly deserved. Pettis was a native of Virginia and had come to St. Louis about 1824. He had been a prominent lawyer, and was appointed Secretary of State by Governor Miller in 1826. Darby, 188 f.

Lane was a native of Pennsylvania and was educated at Jefferson college and Dickinson college in Pennsylvania. He later studied medicine at Louisville, Kentucky and at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1819 he came to St. Louis and practiced medicine in partnership with Dr. Merry. He was the first mayor under the new charter, and was re-elected five times in succession. After an interval of nine years, he again served three terms as mayor. Conard, Encyc. of Mo. Hist.

that Pettis would better unite the support of the people and especially of their political friends than would Lane.¹⁵

Benton's position in this case was one of great responsibility and it is not probable that he allowed himself to be influenced much by personal motives or preference in his selection of the one and rejection of the other. There may be some truth in the assertion of the editor of the "Missouri Republican" that he knew Pettis "would not be choked off" so easily as Lane.¹⁶ But in the absence of any strong evidence to the contrary it is only fair to Benton to assume that in this case he acted from motives of party loyalty solely, and chose Pettis because he believed him to be the proper person to lead the party to victory in the Congressional election.

How completely the "will of the dictator" was obeyed by the supporters of Jackson in the State is indicated from the results of the election. The party showed no signs of disunion in the ranks and was successful in both State and National elections. It elected every candidate for State office by an overwhelming majority and the Jackson electoral ticket carried every county in the State.¹⁷

The "Missouri Republican" published the following

15. Mo. Rep. July 29, 1828. The following is the text of the "proclamation" of the dictator" dated July 24, 1828: "Having been appointed an umpire between Dr. W. C. Lane and Spencer Pettis, Esq., candidates for a seat in the 21st Congress and having heard and considered all the information laid before

16. Mo. Rep. July 29, 1828
17. Ibid, Nov. 25, 1828 (Election Returns)

letter¹⁸ as indicating the spirit in which the election was conducted. A letter from Lincoln county dated August 5th, said, "Here as elsewhere the Jackson party are well drilled, and hesitate not to stoop to the lowest and most virulent abuse of every measure and every public character attached to the Administration. Benton's emissaries together with his general orders in the shape of handbills had the desired effect in deceiving the people." A correspondent from Franklin county wrote under date of August 7th, "I believe the Jackson men to a man voted for Pettis. They had received Benton's orders to do so and felt bound to obey. I believe many of them had rather incur the displeasure of their God than of Benton, for they think that those who do not obey him will get no land."

Bates in a circular replying to charges made against him by Benton brought out clearly some of the tactics used by "The Dictator" to defeat him for re-election. Benton had written letters to Lawless accusing Bates of gross misconduct

me by their respective friends, relative to the strength of each before the people at this time, and finding the weight of the information to be decidedly in favor of Mr. Pettis, I do accordingly, and in conformity to the only principles on which I could consent to act as umpire in a case of so much delicacy and responsibility, and in obedience to the only legitimate principle of action in republican government that the will of the majority ought to prevail, declare that it is proved to me, to my entire conviction that Mr. Pettis unites at this time more the support of the people, and especially of their mutual political friends than Dr. Lane does; and that according to the terms of the reference, it devolves upon the latter to withdraw from the canvass. In delivering this opinion it becomes my duty to state 18.Mo.Rep.Aug.12,1828

in regard to Spanish land claims. Lawless refused to publish the letters and would not allow Bates to read them. The letters were passed around from hand to hand among persons liable to be influenced by them. Following the letters Benton issued a handbill with a view to sustaining the credit of the letters, the handbill bearing date of July 25. As this was just a few days preceding the election, no doubt it influenced many voters against Bates.¹⁹

The editor of the "Missouri Republican" thus commented on the election. "A result so unexpected and to the reflecting men of both parties so mortifying, was produced by the concert of action which immediately succeeded the appearance of Colonel Benton's declaration. The various elements of the Jackson party were thus commingled, conflicting interests for a time ceased to operate, private feuds were hushed up, and the incongruous mass actuated by one impulse alone, directing their exertions to the election of Pettis. From this moment it became a trial of the strength of the administration and Jackson parties; and 'Jackson and Reform' became the watch words of the party. - - - A distinguished man of the Opposition has said that such is the strength of of the Jackson party and such the materials of which it is composed that a mere man of straw could be elected to office in the State if he should happen to belong to that party."²⁰

that the conduct of Dr. Lane in agreeing to submit to the umpirage, and in the mode of conducting the inquiry, has been most honorable and disinterested, and that the friends of Mr. Pettis (John M. Bass, Esq. 19. Mo. Rep. Nov. 4, 1828. and George W. Kinnerley) who 20. Ibid. Aug. 12. 1828

Not only did the election indicate that the wave of Jacksonian democracy had completely overwhelmed the State, but it proved conclusively that Benton was now on the crest of that wave. A party that could abide by the decision of one man in the selection of a candidate for so important an office as that of representative in Congress, must have looked upon that man not only as the most powerful, capable, and trustworthy leader in the State, but as one whose knowledge of political conditions and tendencies was unimpeachable.

undertook to act for him in his absence have in my opinion assumed a patriotic responsibility, which entitles them to the thanks of our friends."

(Signed) Thomas Hart Benton.

CHAPTER V.

THE GRADUATION BILL AND THE DEFEAT OF BARTON.

After 1828, Benton was almost supreme in Missouri politics. It was the Graduation Bill, together with his early alignment with the powerful Jackson element in the State that had brought about this supremacy. It has been shown how some of the causes that operated to bring him into power also resulted in the defeat of two of his political opponents, Scott and Bates. Those same causes were soon to bring about the defeat of another, and that the most powerful and dangerous of his political rivals, his colleague in the Senate. To some, it may seem that Benton's hostility to Barton was an act of ingratitude on his part, considering the fact that it was only by the strong support of the latter that Benton was elected in 1820. But, as was pointed out before, the two Missouri Senators for several years prior to the year of Barton's defeat for re-election had been personal enemies and political opponents. They could not work together harmoniously in the Senate. On the question of the public lands, which to Benton was the most vital of all the questions before Congress, the two did not agree. Benton no doubt realized that if the Graduation Bill was to pass, Barton's place must be filled by some one more friendly to the measure.

The fact that Barton opposed the Bill when it

was first introduced into the Senate has been mentioned in another connection. On January 9th, 1827, the Bill was again taken up for consideration in the Senate on the motion of Barton, who on this occasion delivered a lengthy speech against the plan as outlined in the Bill.¹ In his discussion of the Bill, Barton said that the graduation of price, if practicable at all, should have been adopted at the beginning, and a means provided for ascertaining the different rates of land at the time of survey. He considered that there were not men enough in the country to occupy all the land before it had reached the proposed minimum, and the result would be that all the land would be reduced in price to twenty-five cents an acre in five years. This, he thought, would offer a more tempting field for speculation than did the old credit system.² Concerning the plan for making small donations to actual settlers Barton said, "It seems to tantalize the indigent by first inviting the speculators to the sumptuous feast and then calling in the poor to pick up the crumbs that fall from the rich men's tables."³

The Bill was not brought to a vote during that session, but in 1828, it was again considered in the Senate and on April 22, 1828, was finally forced to an issue. On the

1. Debates in Congress, 19th Congress, 2d Session, 39.

2. Ibid. 45

3. Ibid. 47.

roll-call, it was found the Bill was defeated by a vote of 21 to 25, Barton being one of those who voted in the negative.⁴

How Barton's attitude was looked upon in his own State was indicated from the proceedings of the State Legislature that fall. When the General Assembly met in November, 1828, it at once showed a friendly attitude toward Benton and the Graduation Bill. Governor Miller in his message to the Legislature, devoted considerable space to a discussion of the public lands, and recommended to the members of the General Assembly that they make known to Congress their wishes in regard to the graduation of the price of public lands.⁵ Acting on Governor Miller's suggestion, the Legislature sent a memorial to Congress asking for the passage of a law embodying the general provisions of the Graduation Bill.⁶

In still another way the General Assembly went on record as decidedly favorable to the Graduation Bill and its author. On the third day of the session, November 19, the following joint resolutions were introduced into the State Senate: "Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Missouri, that we highly approve of the bill lately pending before the Senate of the United States to graduate the price of public lands, to make donations to actual settlers, and cede the refuse to the states in which

4. Debates in Congress, 20th Congress, 1st. Session, 678.

5. Senate Journal, 16.

6. Ibid.

they lie; and that the thanks of the Legislature are due to Thomas Hart Benton, a Senator in Congress from this State, for his able, patriotic, and unwearied exertions in endeavoring to procure the adoption of a measure in which the people of this State have so important an interest." And, "Resolved, that the Honorable David Barton, a Senator in Congress from this State be instructed and the Honorable Edward Bates, the Representative from this State in Congress be requested to use their best exertions to procure the passage of the bill mentioned in the foregoing resolution, either as it originally stood, or as amended in the Senate of the United States at the last session, or in the nearest attainable form thereto; and the said Senator be instructed, and the said Representative be requested to oppose all amendments to said bill which may have the effect of preventing its passage or dividing its friends or delaying its decisions or giving to one state or description of states, in the time, mode, or condition of bringing the public lands into the market." There was also a third resolution thanking Senator Tazewell, of Virginia, for the "magnanimous and efficient support which he had so liberally afforded to the bill referred to in the aforesaid resolutions."⁷

On the following day, the resolutions were taken up for consideration in the House, and on November 25, a motion was made to amend them by striking from the section

the words, "the Honorable David Barton" and inserting in their stead "our Senators", and substituting for "the Honorable Edward Bates, the Representative from this State" the words "our Representative". This amendment, however, was lost by a vote of 16 to 26.⁸ An effort to amend the resolution in a similar way also failed in the Senate by a vote of 2 to 12.⁹

So the resolutions passed both houses without amendment and were approved by Governor Miller on November 29.¹⁰ The only concession to the opponents of the resolutions was the right to enter on the journal of the House a resolution of protest against the action of the Legislature in eulogizing Benton and in indirectly censuring Barton and Bates.¹¹

The resolutions passed by the Legislature are important for two reasons. In the first place, they show that Benton was endorsed by the people's representatives, and that one reason for that endorsement was the Graduation Bill. In the second place, the resolutions show that, as the Bill had been used to humble one political opponent, Bates, it was now to be made instrumental in securing the defeat of Benton's colleague in the Senate, who dared to vote contrary to the will of the majority of the people; for, as was pointed out in the protest that was entered on the Journal, the second resolu-

8. House Journal 35.

9. Senate Journal 23.

10. Ibid.

11. House Journal, 45-46.

tion was plainly intended as an indirect thrust at Bates and Barton. That this was the purpose of that resolution is further indicated by the fact that all attempts to alter it so as to make it less personal failed completely in both houses of the Legislature.

From what has been said, it is evident that Barton's opposition to the Graduation Bill was made one of the principal points of attack by Benton and his political allies in the effort to defeat him for re-election to the Senate in 1830. At least, so far as his official conduct was concerned, we are safe in asserting that his opposition to the Bill was at this time one of the main charges brought against him by his opponents. But there were also objections to his re-election that were concerned more with his personal than with his official conduct. The old charges of drunkenness and misconduct at Washington which were brought against him in 1824 were re-iterated by his opponents in 1830. The "Beacon" was the main instrument in circulating the defamatory charges.¹² Just how much the editorial policy of that paper was subject to Benton's dictation, it is impossible to say, but it was asserted by the editor of the "Missouri Republican" that it was known in St. Louis that Benton was the secret editor of the "Beacon".¹³ All the charges of drunkenness and misconduct were positively denied by Barton.¹⁴ A careful we

The election of a United States Senator was one of

12. Beacon, Aug. 19; Sept. 16; 1830.

13. Mo. Rep., Aug. 3, 1830.

14. Beacon, Sept. 16, 1830.

the two leading issues in the campaign of August 1830. The other was that of amending the State Constitution by changing the judicial tenure from life or good behavior to a term of four years. The latter shows how the Jacksonian idea of "rotation in office" was brought over into State politics and in this instance was to be applied to the judicial department. In most cases, the candidates for the State Legislature were pledged on both of these questions.¹⁵ As a rule, those opposed to the re-election of Barton favored the amendments, while those in favor of Barton were opposed to the amendment.¹⁶ The division appears to have been for the most part between the friends of Jackson on the one hand, and the friends of the American System on the other.¹⁷ According to the editor of the "Times" the friends of the amendments connected them with Jackson's name, believing that his popularity would be sufficient to carry them through.¹⁸ But there were many loyal Jackson supporters who refused to favor any such radical and unwise alteration of the Constitution.¹⁹

The "Beacon" reported that in St. Louis County, a ticket was in the field called the Constitutional ticket, opposed to the amendments, and that under this name, it was "defended in print, speech, and writing, until after the election was over." But immediately after the election, it was called the Barton ticket. In this way, many of the

15. Mo. Intel. Aug. 4, 1830.

16. Ibid.

17. Mo. Rep. Jul. 27, 1830.

18. Times, Oct. 9, 1830

19. Ibid.

conservative Jackson supporter, who were not willing to vote in favor of the amendments, were induced to vote for members of the Legislature pledged to Barton, and they did not realize their mistake until after the election was over.²⁰

When the election returns came in, it was generally conceded that the defeat of Barton was certain. Even the "Missouri Intelligencer" admitted that his re-election could not be foretold with certainty.²¹ "The Beacon", which was now the leading Benton organ in the State, predicted that of the members elected, a majority of two-thirds could be relied upon in favor of the Jackson candidate for United States Senator.²² According to the "Western Monitor" Barton would have at most 27 votes and the number opposed to him would be at least 38.²³

After the August election, Benton's friends began at once to organize for the purpose of electing a Jackson Senator as Barton's successor. Among the candidates for the United States Senate mentioned by the "Beacon" early in July were Governor Miller; R. W. Wells, attorney-general of the State; General Ashley; Major Benjamin O'Fallen; Spencer Pettis, the representative in Congress, and Lieutenant Governor Dunklin.²⁴ Later in the year, and a short time before the meeting of the Legislature, the following names made up the "Beacon's" list of candidates: Governor Miller, Major O'Fallen, Alexander Buckner, General Ashley, Spencer Pettis, and R. W. Wells.²⁵

20. Beacon Aug. 5, 1830.

21. Int. Sept. 18, 1830.

22. Beacon, Aug. 12, 1830.

23. Western Monitor, Sept. 1, quoted

in Beacon, Sept. 9, 1830.

24. Beacon, Jul. 8, 1830.

25. Beacon, Oct. 21, 1830.

The name of Governor Miller generally headed the list of the Jackson candidates, and it was understood that he was Benton's choice.²⁶

Benton himself took an active part in marshalling the Jackson members into line. On October 10, he wrote to Dunklin from St. Louis, "The belief here is that D. B. is given up since his failure to make any changes in his favor in the counties on the Missouri. Intrigue and division among ourselves is what they now depend on, but I hope their dependence is a broken reed. All the candidates on our side leave the election wholly to the members, and wish them after they assemble to interchange sentiments with each other, ascertain the strongest, unite upon him, and have the election over immediately. I hope this course will be adopted. Out of about forty members who are on our side, I think 34 can be gotten to act promptly, energetically and harmoniously, sacrificing all private and particular feelings to the success of the cause. Buckner writes me that he is in favor of this course, Ashley tells me the same, and others I know are so. There will be no struggling to impede or embarrass the election. The members will be free as air to act for the best."²⁷

The "intrigue" of the Coalitionists or Anti-Jackson element mentioned by Benton in this letter was doubtless the same as that spoken of by the "Beacon". This was a scheme of Benton's opponents to elect some nominal Jackson man who

26. Mo. Rep., Dec. 21, 1830.

27. Benton Mss., Mo. Hist. Society.

would be at heart in sympathy with the Coalitionists, and who would, if elected, thwart and embarrass every measure advocated by Benton.²⁸

When the Legislature met in November, it was soon perceived by the friends of Barton that he could not be re-elected.²⁹ It was known that Barton's real strength on a joint ballot would be but 26 with all members present and voting, and 33 were necessary for a choice.³⁰ His friends, wishing to do the next best, then tried to prevail on the majority to support a man from their own group who could be considered a good compromise candidate. But the Benton members would have none other than a Jackson man. So as the Clay members found they could not secure the election of one of their own men, they decided to unite on the Jackson man, whose views most nearly co-incided with their own. Governor Miller had said he would not be a candidate unless it was necessary to unite the party. He was known to be an uncompromising Jackson man, and the Clay members could not unite on him. Buckner was a prominent candidate. He was more conservative in his views than the other candidates were, and it was understood that he was favorable to the leading principles of the American System.³¹ To the friends of Clay, it seemed he was the logical man on whom they should unite.

The Jackson members expected that at least one attempt would be made by Barton's friends to elect him, so

28. Beacon, Oct. 21, 1830. 29. Where not otherwise specified, my account of this election is based on the report of the election as given by a correspondent from Jefferson City to the Times, Dec. 10 1830. 30. Mo. Intel. Dec. 11, 1830. Letter from Jefferson City. 31. Mo. Intel. Dec. 11, 1830.

they expected no election on the first ballot, but intended to concentrate on Miller on the second, and thus elect him.³²

On November 30, the two houses met in joint session for the election of a Senator.³³ Buckner, Miller, Ashley and McRee were put in nomination, and when the vote was taken, to the surprise of the Jackson members, their opponents concentrated on Buckner and elected him on the first ballot.³⁴ The official count stood as follows: Buckner 35, Miller 26, Ashley 2, so Buckner was declared elected.³⁵ Both sides claimed the victory. It is a fact that the election of Buckner was brought about by the union of Barton's friends with those of Buckner, and to this extent, at least, the victory was to the coalitionists, whose main object was to defeat Miller. Of the thirty-five votes cast for Buckner, all but nine were drawn from the opponents of Jackson.³⁶ The nine Jackson members who voted for Buckner were likely his close friends and admirers and they would very possibly have ^{my} given over to Miller if it had been necessary in order to elect a Jackson man to the Senate. Buckner received the support of the entire St. Louis delegation in the Legislature. A member of the Legislature, wishing a statement of Buckner's political views, directed a letter to him, to which Buckner replied on the day following the election, saying that he believed in the right of Congress to make internal improvements, that he favored protection to

32. Mo. Intel., Dec. 11, 1830.

33. House Journal 65.

34. Times, Dec. 4, 1830.

35. House Journal 65.

36. Times, Dec. 4, 1830.

domestic manufactures by tariff laws, and was opposed to the nullification doctrine and party.³⁷ To all the friends of Clay, this seemed to represent Buckner as a thorough-going friend of the American System. The editor of "The Missouri Intelligencer" said that, "looking to principles rather than to men the friends of the American System, internal improvements, etc., have obtained a signal victory."³⁸ The "Times" thus commented on the election, "While we admit our first choice would have been another man, we rejoice to have achieved so much. We have utterly discomfitted Mr. Benton and his colleagues who have for several years past ruled the State with a rod of iron. - - - - This is victory; it is more, it is triumph."³⁹ Buckner was represented by the "Times" as "opposed to the proscription of the present administration", and as a friend of Henry Clay.⁴⁰

But from another view-point the victory was wholly with the Jackson party. Buckner was one of the regular candidates of that party; his name was listed as a candidate in the "Beacon" and other Administration papers; the mention of him by Benton in the letter to Dunklin, suggests that he was one of the inner circle of Benton's political friends. Also, in a statement published in the "Jeffersonian", December 11, Buckner avowed himself to be the supporter of the Administration.⁴¹

Only in one respect were Benton's friends defeated.

37. Mo. Intel., Dec. 11, 1830

40. Times, Dec. 18, 1830.

38. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

39. Times, Dec. 18, 1830.

They lost their first choice, Governor Miller, through the coalition of their opponents with the friends of Buckner. By a skillful intrigue, the opposition had succeeded in their main purpose, which was to defeat the candidate most strongly endorsed by Benton.

THE BANK ISSUE AND BENTON'S
RE-ELECTION IN 1832.

During the years following the election of 1830, political parties began to take shape more definitely in Missouri. Although, as has been stated before, the issues of the tariff and internal improvements were beginning to divide the people into two great political groups as early as the election of 1828, yet, even at that time, the personality of the leader was the most important factor. Benton himself voted for the tariff of 1828¹ and for the appropriations for the Maysville Road which Jackson afterwards vetoed,² so the division between the friends and enemies of the American System must not have been so complete as the editor of the "Missouri Intelligencer" believed it to have been.³ But the years between 1830 and 1832 were to see the emergence of two great political parties, each held together now not only by the personality of its leader but also to a greater extent by reason of the principles to which the leader adhered. It becomes, much more a division of the friends of the American System against its enemies.

In the meantime, also, a new issue was coming forward in the State and in the Nation which was for several years to overshadow all others. That issue was the re-chartering

1. Debates in Cong., 20th. Cong., 1st. sess. 786.
2. Ibid. 21st. Cong. 1st. Sess. 432.
3. See above p. 44

of the United States Bank, and however undecided the candidates seem to have been on other issues, on the question of re-chartering of the United States Bank almost all were definite and positive in their opinions.

During the years that Jackson was in power at Washington, the leader in the Senate in his fight against nullification and the United States Bank was Thomas Hart Benton. It is not the purpose of this study to give the details of the struggle over these questions in Congress. The story of that struggle is^s concerned more with Benton's career as a national statesman than with his relation to the politics of Missouri. However, since the re-chartering of the bank was made an issue in State politics in 1831 and during the years immediately following, it will be necessary for the purposes of this study to explain Benton's position on the Bank.

Long before Jackson's fight against the United State Bank began, Benton showed a distrust of banks. As editor of the "Enquirer" in 1819 he expressed his opinion against banks in general.⁴ The failure of the Bank of Missouri likely helped to confirm him in his opinion.⁵ Even before Jackson was elected President, Benton manifested in the Senate a certain hostility to the United States Bank. As

4. Meigs, 191.

5. Ibid. 190.

early as March 3, 1828, he introduced a series of resolutions in regard to the balances of United States money in the Bank, in which he hinted that the Bank ought to pay interest on its balances.⁶ In the next session he introduced similar resolutions the third clause of which read, "The Bank of the United States ought to be required to make a compensation to the people of the United States for the use of public money in its hands."⁷

Jackson's first message served to make him more positive in his convictions, and when the second message made the re-charter a real issue, Benton at once fell in with the anti-bank forces and fought the bank as a monopoly that should have no existence in a republic. He continued in this fight until the re-chartering of the Bank was no longer possible. Immediately following the second message, Benton asked leave to introduce into the Senate a resolution in these words, "That the charter of the United States Bank ought not to be renewed."⁸

That the people of Missouri should be interested in the bank and that division should exist among them as to the expediency of re-chartering such an institution was only natural. There was a branch of the United States Bank at St. Louis, and under the efficient management of John O'Fallen, it had been rendering splendid service to the people. This

6. Debates in Cong., 20th. Cong. 1st. Sess. 379.

7. Ibid. 2d. Session. 18.

8. Ibid.

no doubt greatly strengthened the sentiment in favor of the Bank in St. Louis.⁹ Also, in the Boone's Lick district, another of the older and more conservative sections of the State, the sentiment in favor of the Bank was strong. But the people of the frontier communities of the State, like all other western people, distrusted banks, and soon joined Jackson and Benton in the fight against what they considered an undemocratic institution.

Even as early as the Congressional election of 1831 the bank issue had found its way into State politics. David Barton, defeated for re-election to the Senate, was nominated by the friends of the American System in St. Louis as the candidate of their party for Congress.¹⁰ In his letter of acceptance, he announced that he was in favor of re-chartering the United States Bank or some similar institution.¹¹ Spencer Pettis, his leading opponent, was a candidate for re-election. Pettis was a strong supporter of the Jackson Administration, and was opposed to the Bank.¹² In his speeches during the campaign he both attacked the Bank on general principles and criticized its management severely.¹³ However, it is hardly true that Pettis' overwhelming defeat of ^{Barton} Barton can be attributed to his attitude on the Bank question alone.

An unhappy incident, resulting from the campaign of

9. Stevens, Missouri I, p.363.

10. Mo. Intel. June 11, 1831.

11. Ibid.

12. Mo. Rep. Jul. 19, 1831.

13. Ibid.

Pettis for re-election, served to strengthen the sentiment against the Bank in many parts of the State. The stand taken by Pettis on the Bank aroused the indignation of Major Thomas Biddle, a brother of Nicholas Biddle, President of the United States Bank.¹⁴ A bitter newspaper controversy between Biddle and Pettis followed in the "Times" and "Beacon". Early one morning just before the election. Biddle went to the hotel where Pettis was stopping and gave him a severe horse-whipping. Pettis consulted Benton as to the course he should take for reparation and he was advised to challenge Biddle to a duel but to wait until after the election. An encounter followed in which they fought with pistols at close range, and both men fell mortally wounded.¹⁵ After this affair, it was at once charged by the opponents of the Bank that Pettis had fallen a victim to the "man-destroying institution."¹⁶

The death of Pettis necessitated another election to supply the vacancy in Congress. In this election, R. W. Wells, a Jackson supporter, and opponent of the Bank¹⁷ was defeated by William H. Ashley, also a Jackson candidate but in favor of rechartering the Bank.¹⁸ Ashley's success was due almost altogether to his personal popularity. He had been prominent in the fur trade on the Missouri and had amassed quite a fortune.¹⁹ He was well known and his position as one

14. My account of the Pettis-Biddle affair is from Edward Dobyns, Personal Recollections, Benton MSS. Collection, Mo. Hist. Soc'y. 15. Mo. Rep. Aug. 30, 1831. 16. Western Monitor, quoted in Mo. Rep. Sept. 20, 1831. 17. Mo. Rep. Nov. 8, 1831. 18. Ibid. Oct. 11, 1831, Ashley's statement of views. 19.

of the most prominent citizens of the State was possibly more largely responsible for his success at the polls than any views he may have held in regard to the tariff, or internal improvements or the Bank.

While the re-chartering of the Bank was to a certain extent an issue in the election of 1831, it was more an issue in the campaign of the following year. Through the press and in campaign speeches made throughout the State, Benton made known his views to the people. He said he considered the Bank inadmissible as an institution in a republic, too strong even for a limited monarchy. He declared he could not vote for renewing the charter "in any form nor under any circumstances."²⁰

When Jackson, on July 10, 1832, issued his famous veto message²¹ which the friends of the Bank were unable to override in Congress, the sensation it created in Missouri was great, and the friends of the Bank at once began to hold mass meetings. At a meeting in St. Louis at which William Carr Lane presided, resolutions were introduced expressing "deep mortification and regret" because of the veto, and declaring that the Bank had been "highly beneficial to the nation at large and indispensably necessary to the commercial and individual comfort of the western people."²²

On the same day, the anti-bank forces in St. Louis also met. At a meeting presided over by Dr. Samuel Merry,

20. Mo. Rep. Nov. 29, 1831

21. Debates in Congress. 22nd. Cong. 1st. Sess. Ap. p. 73 f.

22. Mo. Rep. July 26, 1831.

resolutions were introduced declaring all banks and banking institutions "possessing exclusive privileges and powers of monopoly as of dangerous tendency in a government of the people," and also declaring the stand which Jackson had taken "against the moneyed powers of Europe and America as a mark of firmness and patriotism not surpassed by any patriot or statesman since the light of liberty first dawned upon the country."²³

These two meetings are significant for two reasons. In the first place, they show that the Bank question was of sufficient importance to divide the people. In the second place they show that with the Bank issue in the foreground, old political alliances were being broken up and new ones formed. For Lane, formerly a supporter of Jackson, was now at the head of the group that was denouncing his action in vetoing the Bank charter.

Although the Bank was a subject of much discussion in the campaign of 1832, the election was not fought out on that issue alone. For while Bull, a Jackson candidate for governor, favorable to the Bank,²⁴ was defeated by Dunklin, an anti-bank man,²⁵ the popularity of Ashley was again sufficient to elect him over Wells. Ashley's success can be explained by his great popularity and in no other way. He was not in sympathy with the leading Jackson men on the issues of the tariff, internal improvements and the Bank. Neither did he have Benton's endorsement at this time.²⁶ For he and Benton

23. Mo. Rep. Jul. 26, 1831.

24. Mo. Intel. Jun. 16, 1831.

25. Mo. Rep., Dec. 3, 1833.

26. Ibid. Jan. 3, 1832. Letter of Buckner.

differed radically on all the issues.²⁷

In the senatorial election, however, the issue was more clearly between the Bank and its enemies. Benton stated in an address to the people that he could not vote for renewing the charter in any form nor under any circumstances whatever, and if instructed to vote for it, he would avoid the question by resigning his seat.²⁸ Thus, early in the campaign, he made the Bank the issue on which he was determined to make the fight for re-election to the Senate.

There seems to have been no organized opposition to Benton's re-election in 1832. As the victory of Jackson was so evident to the voters before the August election, it was generally recognized that the defeat of his right hand men in the Senate would be out of the question.

The only manifest opposition to Benton in the election of members of the General Assembly was in the counties of Boone and St. Louis. In the former county three representatives were elected who were pledged to vote against him in the Legislature.²⁹ In St. Louis county, a vacancy was occasioned by the death of Joel L. Musick and an unsuccessful attempt was made by Benton and his friends to defeat Lane in the special election that was held to supply the vacancy.³⁰

The same charges were made by the opponents of Benton that were used in the attempt to defeat him for re-

27. Mo. Rep. Nov. 6, 1832. Editorial

28. Mo. Intel. Dec. 3, 1831.

30. Ibid. Aug. 13, 1832.

29. Mo. Rep. Aug. 12, 1832.

election in 1826. The editor of the "Missouri Republican" insisted that Benton had left the State and was a citizen of another.³¹ It was also alleged by the editor of that paper that Benton was the writer of the "East Room Letter", which so grossly misrepresented Adams by picturing extravagance of the Administration that did not exist.³² The charges which Bates had made in his circular to the effect that Benton was a public defaulter, that he had had a part in the Bank swindle in Missouri, and that he had overcharged for mileage to and from the Capital were often referred to by his opponents.³³ It was reported that Bates brought up these latter charges in the Legislature in the fall, but the president of the Senate called him to order and would not allow him to proceed.³⁴

The accounts of the election as given in the newspapers do not indicate that there was any organized opposition in the Legislature to defeat Benton. The election took place early in the session. On November 25, the two houses assembled for the purpose of electing a Senator. Benton and Abram J. Williams were put in nomination. On the first ballot, Benton had 46 votes and Williams 12. There were also scattering votes for Ashley, Barton, Thornton, Tucker and Reynolds, a total of 22 votes being recorded against Benton.³⁵

An analysis of the vote shows that Benton's opposi-

31. Mo. Rep. Sept. 11, 1832.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid. Nov. 4, 1828.

34. Ibid. Dec. 11, 1832.

35. House Journal, 55.

tion came almost entirely from Boone County and the counties in the eastern part of the State grouped around St. Louis. Four of the votes against ^{him} were from Boone County, four from Washington County, and three from St. Louis. Besides these three counties, the counties of St. Genevieve, St. Charles, Montgomery, Lincoln, Pike, Clay, Perry, and New Madrid were represented in the list of members who voted against Benton's re-election. It is quite possible that the influence of the branch bank accounts for much of the opposition to Benton from in and around St. Louis. It has been stated before that in Boone County the sentiment was quite strong in favor of the United States Bank, and this fact accounts in some measure for the opposition in that County.

This was, generally speaking, the easiest victory Benton ever won. The opposition to him was not at all pronounced, and the effort required on his part was less than at any other time when he was a candidate for re-election. The great popularity of Jackson's democracy is one explanation of the success of the leader of that democracy in Missouri. The editor of the "Missouri Republican" commenting on the result of the election said: "After the success of General Jackson in the Presidential contest we did not look for any other result. Senator Benton is but the shadow of General Jackson and moves as he moves."³⁶ But Benton had more than Jackson's

³⁶ Mo. Rep. Dec. 4, 1832.

name to bolster him in Missouri. The masses of the people of the States were proud of the record of their Senator in Congress. He had represented them ably and well; he had supported those measures which were of both local and general interest in the State; but above all, he had stood for the rights of the common people, and had proved himself to be an able exponent of the democracy in which all western people believed.

CONCLUSION

The re-election of Benton in 1832, marks the establishment of his influence. During the years of Jackson's second administration, the Missouri Senator distinguished himself by the lead which he took in Congress in the fight against the Bank. His valiant defence of Jackson in the Senate and the stand which he took in favor of sound currency give him a place in the history of the nation. But as his interests became more centered in Washington, he took a less active part in the politics of his own state. Therefore, the years of Benton's public life, which to the student of American history are in many respects the most interesting and important are not of special interest in a study that is concerned chiefly with his rise to power in state politics.

By 1832, Benton was not on good terms with either Ashley or Buckner, but when Linn succeeded Buckner to the Senate, Benton had a colleague with whom he could agree, and they worked together harmoniously. It was seldom that they voted on opposite sides of a question.

With the election of Van Buren and the growing influence of the southern leaders in the Democratic Party, Benton's influence at Washington declined. The issues of the currency and banking were used against him by his opponents in the State and almost effected his overthrow as early as 1844. The story of this early opposition has formed the subject

of another study of Benton's political career.¹

In conclusion it should be again remarked, that Benton's great influence was a result of his unwearied exertions in behalf of the western settlers. He was a western statesman. He never overlooked the interests of the people of his section of the Union. As his success can be understood only in connection with his interests in the West and western affairs, likewise, it can be understood only in connection with Andrew Jackson. For to disassociate Benton and Jackson would be as difficult as to think of Benton without thinking of the Graduation Bill, to think of Benton without recalling his fight on the Bank; it would be as difficult as to think of a Benton at Washington who was not "Old Bullion".

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Missouri Gazette.

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Missouri Republican.

The Missouri Republican was under the management of Edward Charless, and Company, and was edited by Josiah Spaulding. After 1826, Charless become sole proprietor. This was an anti-Benton paper, and favored the American System. The Missouri Historical Society at St. Louis has complete files from March, 1822.

Missouri Intelligencer.

The Missouri Intelligencer was first established at Franklin, Howard County, Mo., April 23, 1819, and was known as the Missouri Intelligencer and Boone's Lick Advertiser. It was the first paper established west of St. Louis. The Editor was N. Patten. In 1826, the paper was moved to Fayette, and in 1830, to Columbia. In 1835, it was bought by James S. Rollins, and under the new management was known as the Patriot. After

1826, this was an anti-Benton paper, and it favored Henry Clay for President. The State Historical Society at Columbia has files from April 23, 1819, to Dec. 5, 1835.

Enquirer.

The St. Louis Enquirer was published at St. Louis and was edited under the direction of Benton. Isaac N. Henry and E. Maury were associated with him, and the paper was published under their name. The paper was used freely to advance Benton's political interests in the State. The Missouri Historical Society at St. Louis has files from Sept. 1, 1819 to Aug., 30, 1820.

Missouri Advocate.

The Missouri Advocate was first established at St. Charles, Mo., and was moved to St. Louis in 1826. It combined with the old St. Louis Enquirer and was a strong Benton paper. The Mercantile Library at St. Louis has incomplete files from Dec. 24, 1824 to Dec. 1826.

Beacon.

The Beacon was published at St. Louis and was edited by Charles Keemle and Charles Orr. The paper was a continuation of the Missouri Advocate and St. Louis Enquirer and first became known as the Beacon in 1827. Under the new name it continued until 1832. It was the leading Benton organ of the State while it was in existence. The St. Louis Public Library has incomplete files for 1829 and 1830.

Times.

The St. Louis Times was established at St. Louis in 1829 by Stone and Miller. It continued until 1832. It was an anti-Benton paper, and favored Clay for President. The Mercantile library at St. Louis has files from July 9, 1831 to March 1832.



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