

**Volume 17**

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**A House Divided: (31) – The  
Collapse of the Whig Party - II**

**Lead: One hundred and fifty years ago the Republic was facing its greatest crisis. This continuing series examines the American Civil War. It is *A House Divided*.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: The term “whig” comes out of English political history and is derived from the Scottish word “whiggamor” or cattle driver. It was a term of abuse and derision directed against**

**Scottish Covenanter Presbyterian opponents of King Charles I. It came into wide use in the “Exclusion Crisis” of the 1680s and was applied to those who wished to exclude from the English throne, James, Duke of York, the brother of King Charles II, because James was a Roman Catholic.**

**The Whig tradition in English history became identified with a strong Parliament as opposed to a strong monarch or executive, Whigs were opposed to the Roman Catholic Stuart line of monarchs, and enthusiastic for the Protestant Hanovarian line of monarchs, King Georges I, II, and III. Whigs**

supported the emerging free market economy, and insisted upon full political participation in English public life by non-Anglican, so-called dissenters, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists. The Whig Party was the dominant party in English politics for most of the 1700s. Many American patriots during the American Revolution called themselves whigs and many English Whigs supported American independence.

In America, the Whig party emerged in the 1830s because of the extravagant assertion of executive power by President Andrew Jackson. His vicious

**treatment of native Americans, opposition to state sovereignty, high-handed attitude toward Congress and the Courts and his antagonism toward Federal assistance to business such as the Bank of the United States and high tariffs created this new opposition party. As opposed to Jackson and the Democrats, Whigs were enthusiastic about high tariffs, Federal support for internal improvements: roads, canals, railroads, especially the Transcontinental Railroad, and other legislation that would help grow the U.S. economy. Many who became Whigs were also caught up in the Second Great Awakening. Many of these evangelicals, at least**

**those in the North, were also drawn into the Abolitionist movement seeking the end of slavery.**

**Among leaders of the Whig were Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and a young one-term congressman from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln. Four serving Presidents were Whigs: William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore, though Tyler and Fillmore inherited the White House upon the deaths of Harrison and Taylor after each of the latter served a short time in office. Next: the collapse of Whiggery.**

# **In Richmond, Virginia, this is Dan Roberts.**

## **Resources**

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