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The Old Republic: Clientelism in American Political Development

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Research Article

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Abstract

The American state was a republic of patrons and clients throughout the Long Nineteenth Century. Unequal ties of hierarchy and reciprocity went far beyond the partisan administration and electioneering that we associate with the spoils system. As a form of "belated feudalism," clientelism proved resilient because it was a familial property relation embedded within a diverse and changing society. Officeholding politics subsumed a host of racialized and gendered dependents—White men of lower status, women, children, and the enslaved—into the penumbra of the state, which itself was governed via the extended party household. What elements of patron–client relations endured or changed from the colonial inheritance until the New Deal? This article reinterprets the republic's classical age, first, by exploring the origins of party patrimonialism, and then, by examining the dynamics of officeholding political economy and the rise of markets for patronage. Political rule before the New Deal had a different orientation. Clientelism fused older lineages of dependence with the kind of profit-seeking exchanges typical of the burgeoning capitalist economy. It was this mixed state, at once patrimonial and capitalist, that proved so difficult to reform at the turn of the twentieth century.

1. Croker's demesne

At first glance, Glencairn Castle in Dublin County, Ireland might seem like an odd monument to nineteenth-century democracy in America. The "great house" had the look of a Gilded Age mansion oddly crowned with medieval flourishes (Figure 2). Centered by an Irish battlement tower, and surrounded by a fortified roofline, it was as if an up-jumped feudal lord had earned a fortune by speculating in Manhattan real estate. Inside were all the trappings of an aristocratic life: six family bedrooms, a grand hall, study, and library, a Japanese Room with tapestries, a billiard's room, and a chapel with a vaulted ceiling. The 500-acre environs boasted picturesque rivulets and glens, a conservatory to raise orchids, a walled fruit garden, and a croquet yard for leisure. Its stud farm housed Orby, winner of the English Derby, along with a dozen other thoroughbreds.

Richard Croker of Tammany Hall, New York City's regular Democratic Party, retired to this sprawling Irish manor in 1905 (Figure 1).[1] There, he took on the duties of a country gentleman by employing a small army to serve the estate, by funding charities, and by resolving local disputes.[2] Tammany Hall's electoral turf was truly worlds away from Croker's demesne in the lush Irish countryside. His New York political organization represented the densest urban neighborhoods on the planet; lower Manhattan was overcrowded with immigrant proletarians working daily for industrial wages (Figure 3). From this Great Metropolis, Richard Croker extracted wealth with the calculated genius of a powerful baron harvesting the spoils of mass suffrage.[3]

Unlike feudal barons from days of yore, however, Tammany Hall was an avowedly capitalist enterprise. In 1899, Richard Croker once stated flatly to investigators of the Mazet Committee that he was "[a]ll the time" working for his own pocket, "same as you."[4] Tammany had already minted the personal fortunes of two generations of party leaders by the 1890s.[5] And yet, in the style of Glencarin's odd crenelated roof, Croker's businesslike approach to politics was also steeped in, and self-consciously referential to, an older tradition than the modern drive for profit.

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[1]Richard Croker was the leader of Tammany Hall from 1886 to 1902.

[2]*New York Sun*, January 12, 1908, 5; National Folklore Collection, Glencairn, Stillorgan, Roll 2472, The Schools' Collection, Volume 0797, 188, duchas.ie, https://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/4428233/4387419/4458948.

[3] M.R. Werner, *Tammany Hall* (New York: Garden City, 1928), 474–81; Mark Hirsch, "Richard Croker: An Interim Report on the Early Career of a 'Boss' of Tammany Hall," in *Essays in the History of New York City: A Memorial to Sidney Pomerantz*, ed. Irwin Yellowitz (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1978), 101–31.

[4]Terry Golway, *Machine Made: Tammany Hall and the Creation of Modern American Politics* (New York: Liverlight. 2014), 175.

[5]Jeffrey Broxmeyer, *Electoral Capitalism: The Party System In New York's Gilded Age* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

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Figure 1. Richard Croker of Tammany Hall.
The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print Collection, The New York Public Library.

When Boss Croker mounted a public defense of Tammany Hall, he did so on very different grounds than invocation of commercial self-interest. Writing in the *North American Review*, a fashionable literary magazine, Croker explained that his organization worked to preserve the values of hierarchy, order, and loyalty within a "system of deferential compromise."[6] How could Tammany be so vilified in the court of respectable opinion, Croker supposed, when clientelism was a cherished tradition deeply embedded within the country's own representative institutions? The magazine' Gilded Age society audience might have hemmed and hawed, as Protestant U.S.-born middle-class readers wary of Tammany's working-class, Catholic and immigrant electorate. But many contemporaries, beginning with elite reformers, conceded Croker's basic point about historical legacy.

To explain Croker's demesne, we need a framework for thinking about how long-term inheritances of social inequality shaped American officeholding politics. I argue the old American state should be understood as a republic of patrons and clients during the Long Nineteenth Century. From the late colonial era to the New Deal, politics was never quite feudal, in the medieval sense, although arrangements relied upon a renovation of monarchical lineages of patrimonial dependency. Nor were the spoils of office fully capitalist, even if by mid-century patronage was highly commodified, and premised upon the asymmetric exchange of material benefits. Unlike aristocratic societies, clientelism was never by hereditary title, even when practitioners assumed that society was organic and that inequalities were natural. Leveraging public authority for personalistic and party gain was fundamental to governance. Yet, the advent of mass politics made goals of capital accumulation conditional upon electoral competition for control over the state's bounty. The country was a "mixed" polity, in the parlance of the time, invoking a balance of different forms of authority.[7] "It is not Democracy—nor Aristocracy, nor monarchy," explained John Quincy Adams, "but a compound of them all."[8] The "compound" quality of the American state during its classical age deserves another look.

Reinterpreting clientelism in American political development helps to explain why the century's democratizing currents were often tempered and redirected. To make this case, first, I situate patron–client relations within an Orrenian "belated feudalism" framework, arguing that patterns of officeholding patrimonialism embedded social inequality into republican institutions. Then, I outline the racialized and gendered penumbra of the old American state, and its relationship to formal political representation. Early moments in U.S. state formation presented not only rupture with monarchy but also adaptation of old modes of governance. For this reason, I detail the feudal lineages of the American "spoils system" going back to the late colonial period and the early republic. Officeholding political economy during the Long Nineteenth Century was central to party formation. Thus, in the following section, I explore the honors and emoluments associated with customary officeholding practices, which explains how many politicians became propertied as part of their structural position during the old republic. By mid-century, the intimate political household organized around ties of affective dependence had become bureaucratized by the rise of mass politics. Markets for patronage transformed from the personal discretion of gentlemen to the coalitional brokerage of party leaders. The essay concludes by assessing the legacy of clientelism in American political development. Scholars might consider whether core features of the old republic have simply disappeared over time or whether customary elements have persisted into the modern era, for instance, when it comes to officeholding emoluments.

2. Belated feudalism revisited

Essential features of the nineteenth-century state are no longer the enigma for scholars that they were just a few decades ago. *Building a New American State*, now a classic in the field of political development, emphasized the weak capacity of national government during this period's decentralized patchwork of "courts and parties."[9] William Novak's "well-regulated society," by contrast, countered that governance was robust but located primarily at the state

[6]By "deferential compromise," Croker meant that Tammany Hall's district and ward representatives were subordinate to the organization's leadership through a collective process of negotiation and patronage. By the time of Croker, leaders were much more powerful than in earlier decades when power had been shared among an inner "ring," as during the Boss Tweed years. Still, lower rungs on the organizational ladder were not mere supplicants but also potential rivals. Richard Croker, "Tammany Hall and the Democracy," *North American Review* 154, no. 423 (February 1892): 225–30.

[7]Lance Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), Chapter 1.

[8]Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 77.

[9]Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877–1920* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

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Figure 2. Glencairn Castle.
G. & T. Crampton Photograph Archive, University College Dublin Digital Library.

and local level.[10] The "associational state" foregrounded the role of civic forces in mobilizing private networks for an expansive array of public purposes, although less has been noted about voluntarism's patrimonial imprint.[11] Richard Bensel's "Yankee Leviathan" concept advanced the Civil War as a critical juncture in the creation of an empowered fiscal-military state.[12] Each of these approaches capture key dynamics of the republic's classical age before major restructuring during the twentieth century.[13]

Questions linger, however. What accounts for the relative stability of the old American state across the Long Nineteenth Century, a period of momentous change? The United States experienced an epochal shift from an agrarian settler society with legible boundaries into an abstract national polity governed by impersonal economic and bureaucratic forces. Second, how can we make sense of democratization amidst the appearance of novel kinds of capitalist inequality? Democracy and capitalism are two highly combustible elements of political economy. In the former, "the people are turbulent and ever changing." With the latter, "all that is solid melts into air."[14] Mass suffrage and party competition, imperial aggrandizement, inter-continental migrations, and the construction of a slaveholders' republic followed by uncompensated emancipation and Reconstruction—all left open the very real prospect that the United States might cleave into pieces or simply dissolve into incoherence. By the turn of the twentieth century, the United States had become an industrial behemoth; economic booms were bigger, but so were the busts. Whether a polity like this could govern peoples of varied origins and civic status across far-reaching terrain was a constant anxiety of political leaders.[15]

The origins and development of clientelism are a good place to begin answering questions about the relationship between social

[10]William Novak, *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[11]Theda Skocpol, "The Tocqueville Problem: Civic Engagement In American Democracy," *Social Science History* 21, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 455–79; Brian Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority In Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Elisabeth Clemens, *Civic Gifts: Voluntarism and the Making of the American Nation-State* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

[12]Richard Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859–1877* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[13]The twentieth-century rise of a popular presidency, an empowered administrative apparatus, and the post-World War II Rights Revolution together marked the creation of a fundamentally different kind of American state. Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877–1920* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Sidney Milkis, "The Presidency and U.S. Political Development," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Development*, ed. Richard Valelly, Suzanne Mettler, and Robert Lieberman (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 286–308.

[14]The first quote expressed Alexander Hamilton's skepticism of democracy at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. The second quote comes from Marx and Engel's description of capitalism's tendency toward creative destruction in the *Communist Manifesto*.

[15]Selinger argues that the most pressing concern of party leaders during the nineteenth century was how to manage the great issues of the day without precipitating political violence and the dissolution of the Union. Political leaders approached this conundrum by settling, subordinating, or avoiding the most contentious issues. Jeffrey Selinger, *Embracing Dissent: Political Violence and Party Development in the United States* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 14, 22.

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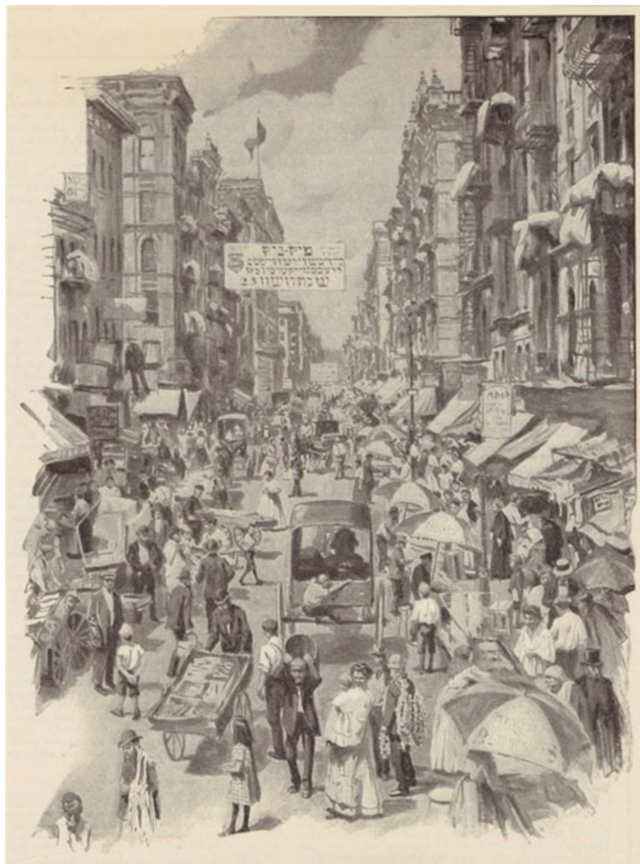

Figure 3. Packed Streets on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, 1910.
The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Picture Collection, The New York Public Library.

instability and political economy. For this, we need renewed attention to how historical actors rejected, adapted, and remade longstanding monarchical inheritances. Many forms of social order derived from Europe—feudalism, for instance—did not simply disappear with colonial settlement in North America or the American Revolution. Historians typically consider feudalism to be an archaic form of vassalage specific to medieval Europe.[16] It can also be conceptualized, however, as a distinct form of governance. Feudal relations organize social institutions around presumptions of naturalized inequality where the right to rule is based on ascriptive characteristics. An essential component of every feudal regime is not self-ownership and individual autonomy, as in liberalism, but rather collective dependence in relation to a patriarch. Many of the qualities of American party politics and officeholding, including its patrimonial style and mercenary character, emerged out of a feudal shell.[17] In this study, the term feudal refers to a set of principles and political relations and not to their original historical setting.

From a theoretical approach, then, "belated feudalism" endured in pockets of American life at least well into the twentieth century. Karen Orren, for example, has written about the subsumption of manorial authority, guild rights, and medieval social rank into American common law.[18] Up until the New Deal, the medieval master's authority over servants was lodged in the judiciary as the employer's private dominion over workers. The judicial realm was hardly unique. Whether slavery should be considered an antique vestige of domination—an "imperfect" feudalism[19] and "premodern" social order[20]—or as the dynamic greenshoots of an emerging racialized capitalism, is an ongoing debate.[21] The question of whether plantation slavery was capitalist, however, is arguably distinct from how it achieved political legitimation. To southern ideologists, slavery was a "domestic" institution organized around the monarchical prerogatives of a White patriarch, an "office not sought" but inherently endowed by supposed racial superiority.[22]

Beyond labor law and slavery, the family was also a pre-liberal realm. Eileen McDonagh has noted that family relations during the nineteenth century drew from direct parallels with monarchy and aristocracy; many post-colonial countries with European lineages have material and symbolic links between patriarchal household care and the historical development of state benevolence.[23] The family was not a unit of political rule based upon consent so much as from hierarchies acquired at birth that were perceived as a natural form of inequality.[24] In the oeconomical realm of "private relations," masters, husbands, and parents were considered not only citizens but also private authorities who exercised governance.

Judges deferred to private hierarchies where figures with patriarchal positions held traditional rights to authority over dependent wives and children.[25] This was because, as Paula Baker explains,

[16]Whether feudalism is the appropriate framework for a phenomenon stripped from its original context in medieval Europe has been a source of dispute. See Robert Zieger, "How Organized Labor Created Modern Liberalism," *Reviews in American History* 21, no. 1 (March 1993): 111–15. North American colonies emerged from centralized monarchies of the early modern period during the 17th and 18th centuries and not from medieval societies, per se. Centralized monarchies in England, France, and Spain can be viewed as a distinctive political development that marked a crisis of reproduction in feudal society. Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (London: Verso, 1992); Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1993).

[17]Max Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A.M. Henderson and T. Parsons (Oxford University Press, 1947), 341–47; Julia Adams, Julia and Mounira Charrad, "(Old) Patrimonial Forms Made New," *Political Power and Social Theory* 28 (2015): 1–5; John R. Hall, "Patrimonialism," in *The Encyclopedia of Political Behavior*, ed. Fathali Moghaddam (Sage Press, 2017), 7–41.

[18]Karen Orren, *Belated Feudalism: Labor, the Law, and Liberal Development* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[19]Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1991), 147–48.

[20]Eugene Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989).

[21]The History of Capitalism school has shown how modern business instruments like insurance, accounting, and workplace management techniques arose from making slavery increasingly profitable in the decades leading up to the Civil War. Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman ed., *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of Economic Development* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); John Clegg, "A Theory of Capitalist Slavery," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 33, no. 1 (March 2020): 74–98. James Parisot argues that "the [antebellum] south was a complex amalgam of different types of social labor," including capitalist (market-oriented plantations) and non-capitalist (household subsistence) varieties. James Parisot, *How America Became Capitalist: Imperial Expansion and the Conquest of the West* (London: Pluto Press, 2019), 114.

[22]Kenneth Greenberg, *Masters and Statesmen: The Political Culture of American Slavery* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 20–21.

[23]Eileen McDonagh, "The Feudal Family versus American Political Development," in *Stating The Family: New Directions in the Study of American Politics*, ed. Julie Novkov and Carol Nackenoff (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2020), 164–93; Eileen McDonagh, "Ripples of the First Wave: The Monarchical Origins of the Welfare State," *Perspectives on Politics* 13, no. 4 (December 2015): 992–1016.

[24]Eileen McDonagh and Carol Nackenoff, "Gender and the American State," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Development*, ed. Richard Valelly, Suzanne Mettler, and Robert Lieberman (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 112–31.

[25]Karen Orren, "Officers' Rights: Toward a Unified Field Theory of American Constitutional Development," *Law and Society Review* 34, no. 4 (2000): 873–909, 882;

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"distinctions between family and community were often vague; in many ways, the home and the community were one."[26] Americans "looked to family relations as a political mode," even as views about the proper roles for White men and White women were heavily contested by section and party with the rise of mass politics; Whig-Republicans advanced a moral role for woman in guiding "benevolent" government action, whereas Democrats tied marriage and slavery to "domestic" institutions in which the federal government had no right to interfere.[27] Familial inequality was one of the "ancient hedgerows," as Karen Orren put it, around which the Constitution of 1789 and the antebellum state of "courts and parties" were constructed.[28]

Clientelism was an expression of belated feudalism that grew out of the patrimonial household. Scholars typically think of clientelism as a particularistic distribution of material benefits in return for political support.[29] Indeed, the spoils system that took hold between the Jacksonian era and the Gilded Age exploited public administration for partisan electoral gain.[30] There is hardly a better example of instrumentalism in politics than the use of patronage to win elections. But that prevailing approach is also too narrow. Clientelism was never understood by historical actors as a mere appendage of partisanship. Nor were political ties so limited or superficial as mere transactions in an anarchic marketplace.

Rather, clientelism was an intimate economy that organized social power and political representation around perceived gradations of racial, gender, and class difference. A reciprocal hierarchy of social, economic, and political emoluments was shared unequally between a patron and clients, whether it be individuals, friends and family, or party organizations. What bound them all together—as sticky social units continuously made and unmade—were patrimonial expectations of loyalty, service, and deference in return for material rewards. Formal and informal social control was "coupled" through elite networks that pulled upon hierarchies to reproduce order through political institutions.[31] Many challenges from below during the nineteenth century became nested in reorganized hierarchies of dependence, for example, early trade unions, Black men after emancipation, and women officeholders before the Nineteenth Amendment. In this way, feudalism was renovated for a federal republic.

3. Republic of patrons and clients

Political rule in the old republic was obscured by a range of shadows cast over three distinct realms. There was an official zone expressly organized by written constitutional arrangements and congressional initiatives. This was the public record of statesmen as they interpreted, experimented with, and sometimes invented, legislative, executive, and judicial powers. In a formalized public sphere, leaders passed laws, created civic rituals, and invented national symbolism that was crucial to the post-colonial state-building project.

The second realm consisted of the hazy arena of political "management," as it was often derisively called. Hidden proximately behind powerful leaders were lesser luminaries, party agents, and hangers-on, along with various civic and business figures who managed the backchannels of public affairs. Under this shadow, factions, juntos, and parties became arenas of deliberation and decision-making. As E.E. Schattschneider famously observed, informal mechanisms of coordination arose by necessity outside the confines of constitutional structures.[32] Presidents formed a "kitchen cabinet" of handpicked advisors. In Congress, the Speaker's private discussions with allies or political caucus began to set a policy agenda.[33] Correspondence, local meetings, and conventions relied heavily on interpersonal relationships to nominate candidates and conduct party affairs.[34]

It was not until gradual implementation of civil service reform, beginning with the Pendleton Act of 1883, that parties were prevented from exploiting public administration for private political uses.[35] The "lodge democracy" of fraternal political organizations during the mass party era reconciled elite-led mobilization with the energies of common White men. The inner sanctums of political committees, however, lay ambiguously between a closed social club—with all its ascriptive presumptions about race and gender—and a mass civic association.[36] During the Gilded Age,

Gwendoline Alphonso, Gwendoline, "Naturalizing Affection, Securing Property: Family, Slavery, and the Courts in Antebellum South Carolina, 1830–1860," *Studies in American Political Development* 35, no. 2 (2021): 193–213.

[26]Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780–1920," *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 3 (June 1984): 620–47, 622.

[27]Rebecca Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery: Gender in American Party Politics from the Civil War to the Progressive Era* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 16, 19, 27.

[28]Orren, "Officers' Rights," 890; Skowronek, *Building a New American State*, 24–31.

[29]Bob Jessop, *State Theory: Putting Capitalist States in their Place* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 162–63; Allen Hicken, "Clientelism," *Annual Review of Political Science* 14 (2011): 289–310; Didi Kuo, *Clientelism, Capitalism, and Democracy: The Rise of Programmatic Politics in the United States and Britain* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 14.

[30]Matthew Crenson, *The Federal Machine: Beginnings of Bureaucracy in Jacksonian America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975); Richard McCormick, *The Party Period and Public Policy: American Politics from the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986); Martin Shefter, *Political Parties and the State: The American Historical Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), Chapter 3; David Rosenbloom, *The Federal Service and the Constitution: The Development of the Public Employment Relationship* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014).

[31]For an example of how this coupling worked, and what it looked like when challenged by external forces like the post-bellum centralization of federal power and the nationalization of markets, see Obert's study of political violence, *The Six-Shooter State: Public and Private Violence in American Politics* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 9.

[32]Political parties, per Schattshneider, were the most important extra-constitutional development that arose to make governance possible during the early republic. E.E. Schattschneider, *Party Government* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1942).

[33]Even before legislative party structures became permanent, decisions were being made "out of doors," as John Quincy Adams once complained of Henry Clay's speakership during the Era of Good Feelings. Robert Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1991), 81.

[34]Imbued in the widely held norm against candidates making direct appeals to voters was the notion that a gentleman's network of supporters would organize a campaign presenting them as "available." Traveling candidates would be met with boisterous deputations at city limits or serenaded by crowds of supporters, while custom proscribed a stump speech promoting their own advancement as dangerously lacking civic virtue. Instead, it was up to an informal entourage of trusted surrogates to deliver speeches, denounce rivals in the press, and generally perform the unscrupulous work of political bagmen. See, for instance, Jean Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1998), 300. When Lewis Cass sought appointment as Territorial Governor of Michigan, he instructed a trusted agent to draft a petition on his behalf and collect signatories, but also to carefully avoid the appearance that "my presence influenced people to sign." Such "front porch" campaigns for higher office, including the presidency, were the norm until the Twentieth Century. Lewis Cass to Charles Larned, December 29, 1813, Folder 8, Box 1, Lewis Cass Papers, Clements Library, University of Michigan.

[35]Emphasis on gradual. Twenty years after the Pendleton Act of 1883, only half of the federal civilian workforce operated under merit rules. Ronald Johnson and Gary Libecap, *The Federal Civil Service and the Problem of Bureaucracy: The Economics and Politics of Institutional Change* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 12.

[36]Robert Wiebe, *Self-Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 73–74.

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"rings" of officeholding entrepreneurs found ingenious ways to extract economic windfalls by using political institutions to speculate in business.[37] Public law only began to reform party activity by regulating nominations and ballot access in the Progressive Era.[38] Parties exercised all sorts of private discrimination until the Supreme Court ruled against explicit racial exclusion in *Smith v. Allwright* (1944). Before the twentieth century, internal party operations were conducted like extensions of a patrimonial household, the activities of which were often obscured from public view.

A great deal of the politics studied by historians and political scientists took place within these proximate shadows of political management. Margaret Bayard Smith, Dolley Madison, and other elite women working behind the scenes emerged as powerful brokers of federal patronage in the national capital during the Jeffersonian era.[39] Meeting officeseekers discretely in parlors under ostensibly social auspices helped to populate administrations with political supporters while guarding husbands and relatives against charges of favoritism, nepotism, and corruption.[40] Henry Clay's entourage later in the 1830s and 1840s included acolytes from around the country, but none more loyal than his Kentucky protégé, John J. Crittenden. This "friend" was so dutiful that Crittenden once delivered up his own U.S. Senate seat to advance Clay's presidential aspirations, a choice practically unthinkable from the standpoint of the radical individualism presumed by Ambition Theory in officeseeking.[41] When U.S. Senator Roscoe Conkling expressly forbade Chester Arthur from accepting the 1880 Republican nomination for vice president, but Arthur did so anyway, it sparked a crisis that threw Republicans out of power in New York State and posed an existential threat to the Garfield Administration.[42]

Many political ties were never considered equal during the nineteenth century among the councils of powerful White men, even as suffrage expanded after the 1820s. To assume that they were in practice would ahistorically flatten the complexity of clientelistic relations. Asymmetrical roles expressed through the language of familial affection were an ever-present but rarely publicized element of patrimonial officeholding.

A third, expansive domain of the old American state encompassed the penumbra of White male representation—those racialized and gendered social dependents who made up a majority of people living in the United States. These people were to be neither seen nor heard from the standpoint of republican institutions. To understand this penumbra, we must look to the remarkably rigid hierarchy of civic belonging during the Long Nineteenth Century. People experienced life through unequal social positions of ascribed difference in the family, community, and polity. Cold War-era scholars like Louis Hartz once argued that the absence of a landed aristocracy in the United States paved an early road to liberal hegemony.[43] But America was not a society of rights-bearing civic equality for women, children, servants, the enslaved, and the Indigenous—not in terms of norms, legal status, or representation.[44]

The existence of those living in the Old Republic's penumbra was expressed only indirectly through governing institutions as propertied relations of political and ideological "dependence" to a White male patriarch.[45] Gretchen Ritter explains, "when free white men entered the public realm, they met there as members of the social compact and as liberal individuals enjoying equal rights. But in their households, they were republican masters."[46] Historical actors themselves understood politics as the struggle for a place in society beyond the domination or exploitation of others. For this reason, a major goal of Black abolitionists and women's rights advocates was to emancipate themselves from the depths of this republican penumbra and to carry their own resolve into public affairs.

In the Jeffersonian tradition, the genius of republican government was secured by the civic independence granted by land ownership. To be acknowledged as a Lockean subject capable of self-government, by definition, presumed being a White property-bearing male head of household.[47] Expansionist federal policy was therefore principally about engineering majority White populations in Native territory through land transfers to male

[37]Jeffrey Broxmeyer, "Bringing The 'Ring' Back In: The Politics of Booty Capitalism," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 19, no. 2 (April 2020): 235–45.

[38]Alan Ware, *The American Direct Primary: Party Institutionalized and Transformation in the North* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), Chapter 3.

[39]Catherine Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006).

[40]Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which The Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 128–46.

[41]Albert Kirwan, *John J. Crittenden: The Struggle for the Union* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1962), 90–91. On ambition theory, see Joseph Schlesinger, *Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States* (Chicago, IL: Rand McNally, 1966).

[42]Thomas Reeves, *Gentleman Boss: The Life and Times of Chester Alan Arthur* (Newtown, CT: American Political Biography Press, 1975), 178–81; Broxmeyer, *Electoral Capitalism*, 81–81, 90–91.

[43]Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1991).

[44]Rogers Smith, "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: Multiple Traditions in America," *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (1993): 549–66; Aziz Rana, *The Two Faces of American Freedom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Cathleen Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869–1933* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); David Bateman, *Disenfranchising Democracy: Constructing the Electorate in the United States, the United Kingdom, and France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Gwendoline Alphonso, *Polarized Families, Polarized Parties: Contesting Values and Economics in American Politics* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

[45]On dependence, see Alex Gourevitch, *From Slavery to Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the Nineteenth* Century (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Jonathan Levy, *Ages of American Capitalism: A History of the United States* (New York, NY: Random House, 2021), 54–60. Here, I draw from the concept of social property relations developed by Robert Brenner and Ellen Meiksins Wood to analyze long capitalist transitions. Social property relations represent "the *ensemble* of political and economic, as well as juridical, administrative, culture and religious relations that constitute, through a range of class struggles, the conditions of capitalist development." Maïa Pal, "Radical Historicism or Rules of Reproduction? New Debates in Political Marxism," *Historical Materialism* 29, no. 3 (2021): 33–53. For a survey and primer on the Brenner-Wood thesis, see T.H. Aston and C.H.E Philpin, ed., *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origins of Capitalism: A Longer View* (London: Verso, 2017).

[46]Gretchen Ritter, *The Constitution as Social Design: Gender and Civic Membership in the American Constitutional Order* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 21. Even a theoretical "equality of equals" among White men was unevenly experienced and openly contested throughout the Long Nineteenth Century. Federalists, then Whigs, and later Republicans were often highly skeptical about this kind of civic levelling even among those who claimed Whiteness. Adherents to this political tradition supported or proposed measures like property and taxpayer qualifications (early in the century) or voter registration and the reimposition of poll taxes (after the 1870s) as way to exclude lower-class men, White and Black. Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), 33–42. Above all, the Whig-Republican tradition relied upon the 'hereditary power' of intergenerational wealth as expressed through indirect forms of representation in government.

[47]Rana, *Two Faces of American Freedom*, 33–36. Even so, women were central political actors in mass party politics and social movements during the nineteenth century, often campaigning, bringing new issues to the fore, and carving out room for public interventions in areas like abolition of slavery, temperance, and urban reform. Rebecca Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery: Gender in American Party Politics from the Civil War to the Progressive Era* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997).

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settlers.[48] The titular White male head of household could then expect to be served by an intimate court of "lesser" dependents at home, on the farm, in the workshop, or on the plantation.[49] Historical oeconomics are thus crucial to understanding the political development of clientelism.

The reason is because capitalism in America emerged out of the extended household and its unequal terms of status, obligation, and reward. The northern "free labor" farm, with its subsistence and composite agriculture, the mercantile house, which built international trade links, the banking house, and its ties to financial markets, the artisanal workshop, from which manufacturing emerged, and the plantation system of slavery—each of these pillars of the increasingly capitalist economy emerged from patrimonial enclaves. A household was not just the direct familial unit subject to patriarchal rule, but also those wage workers, domestic servants, and enslaved people who labored in the penumbra. Such domains were unevenly distributed, to be sure. Many White men remained propertyless or nearly so, especially after economic panics in 1837, 1857, 1873, and 1893. Mid-century capitalist trends like proletarianization and urbanization also generated a crisis of the Jeffersonian ideal. Waves of labor republicanism, first in the 1830s, and then the 1860s and 1880s, carved out spaces of non-domination by expanding suffrage rights, overturning slavery, and promoting collective advancement through associational politics, mass protest, and trade unions.[50] So did the demands of Black freedmen and freedwomen for land redistribution and equal rights during southern Reconstruction.[51] But the nineteenth-century social world remained primarily a struggle over autonomy understood as a spectrum from dependence to independence.

Ultimately, the greater host of clients were not found among elite parlor women or the Crittendens and Arthurs, the lieutenants of statesmen. Most clients were instead submerged several gradations deeper into the shadows beyond the *res publica* itself. Charles Dupuy, an enslaved man, followed Henry Clay to the capitol as a valet like his father, Aaron, before him. The Dupuys traveled across the country to serve the "Great Compromiser," thereby making possible his storied political career. Dupuy the younger helped to manage the Ashland plantation back at home in Kentucky where, in Henry Clay's lifetime, 120 Black men and women were enslaved as part of a diversified portfolio that included land speculation and investments in nascent manufacturing. The elder Dupuy and his wife, Charlotte, were sent with James Brown Clay to Portugal from 1849 to 1850, after James' appointment as *chargé d'affaires* was secured by the influence of his famous father. Earlier in life, Charles' mother, Charlotte, had petitioned the courts for her freedom without success.[52]

People enslaved by Henry Clay stood not just off to the side of the public arena but beyond all civic recognition. Even in this realm, of course, the patrimonial household was contested. Ona Judge fled captivity from George Washington's household during his presidency.[53] The women of Lowell, Massachusetts halted work at the looms to demand better treatment from the Whig patriciate in the early days of industrialization.[54] Still, the American polity collapsed into a personalized zone of governance wherever the family met the state through the extended household.

4. Lineages of the patrimonial state

Elite reformers during the Gilded Age understood clientelism as an inheritance from which they sought to make a clear rupture. In 1877, President Rutherford B. Hayes charged Dorman B. Eaton, chair of the American Civil Service Commission, to publish an official account of the spoils system and to investigate the potential for appointment by merit.[55] Political parties hungry for patronage had entrenched themselves in the nation's custom houses, postal service, and other organs of federal administration. Locally, the dilemma was also acute. Party organizations had implanted within the governing structures of rapidly growing industrial towns and cities.[56] Hayes was the first president to risk any political capital by

[48] Paul Frymer, *Building an American Empire: The Era of Territorial and Political Expansion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 10; Parisot, *How America Became Capitalist*, 15–16.

[49] It is a challenge to generalize about patrimonial social property relations because they were historically diverse and geographically rooted. Patriarchs ruled over a host of dependents, ranging from total enslavement of Black men and women in the antebellum south, to "hireling" wage workers in mill towns, to White women living under couverture, and children with limited rights. See Seth Rockman, "Liberty Is Land and Slaves: The Great Contradiction," *OAH Magazine* 19, no. 3 (May 2005): 8–11; Nancy Folbre, *The Rise and Decline of Patriarchal Systems: An Intersectional Political Economy* (London: Verso, 2021), 7–8, Chapter 2; Patricia Strach, "The Family," in *Oxford Handbook of American Political Development* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016); Parisot, *How America Became Capitalist*, 14–16, 37–48, 73, 101–07, 140–46. Regional examples included an early failed experiment in neo-manorial tenancy in New York where gentleman landlords had both political and economic responsibilities, a system that went into crisis with Jacksonian populism; territorial expansion of the patriarchal homestead, in which the male head served as master over familial agricultural labor, which thrived in the antebellum north; and a system of patron-peonage adapted from Spanish colonization of California and the southwest, and, with it, a distinctive genre of Native enslavement, which only came under U.S. authority after the 1848 Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo. For neo-manorialism, see Reeves Huston, "Popular Movements and Party Rule: The New York Anti-Rent Wars and the Jacksonian Political Order," in *Beyond the Founders: Explorations in the Politics of the Early American Republic*, ed. Jeffrey Pasley, Andrew Robertson, and David Waldstreicher (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 355–87. On the northern farm, see Ariel Ron, Ariel, *Grassroots Leviathan: Agricultural Reform in the Rural North in the Slaveholding Republic* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020). For patron-peonage in the west, see Thomas Richards Jr., *Breakaway Republics: The Unmanifest Future of The Jacksonian United States* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020) and María Montoya, *Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and the Conflict over Land in the American West, 1840–1900* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2005). On Native enslavement in the southwest, see Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (New York: Mariner Books, 2016). It is beyond the scope of this present limited study to categorize each form of patrimonial social property relations, except to note that they were often layered on top of each other, as when U.S. presidents appointed White federal officeholders to superintend colonized populations in the continental southwest, Caribbean islands, and Philippines. For example, see Philip Gonzales, *Política: Nuevomexicanos and American Political Incorporation, 1821–1910* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 6–7 and Daniel Immerwahr, *How To Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2019).

[50] These three waves included the Jacksonian-era labor movement, Lincoln's "free labor" coalition, and the Knights of Labor upsurge during the Gilded Age. Gourevtich, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth*.

[51] Freedmen's conception of masculinity was directly tied to their claims to civic autonomy, most clearly in the case of Black Civil War veterans. Donald Schaffner, *After The Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 13.

[52] Henry Clay emancipated Charles Dupuy in 1844 at the age of 37, after which he worked for Clay another four years. Remini, *Henry Clay*, 618–20, 720–21, 726. Among others, Henry Clay owned the entire Dupuy family—seven people, including Charles' parents, brothers, and sister. Lindsay Apple, *The Family Legacy of Henry Clay: In The Shadow of a Kentucky Patriarch* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky Press, 2011), 89–90; Ashland: The Henry Clay Estate (2024), Charles Dupuy, https://henryclay.org/mansion-grounds/enslaved-people-at-ashland/charles-dupuy/.

[53] Erica Dunbar, *Never Caught: The Washington's Relentless Pursuit of their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2017).

[54] Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979), Chapter 5.

[55] John Sproat, *Liberal Reformers in the Gilded Age* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1968), 263–64.

[56] Steven Erie, *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1988).

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taking at least halting steps toward the reform of partisan national administration.[57]

An obvious place for Dorman Eaton to begin with a history of the spoils system might have been Andrew Jackson's announcement of "rotation in office" during his first State of the Union Address; or, perhaps, with William Marcy's declaration before the U.S. Senate in 1832 that "to the victor belong the spoils."[58] Instead, in his report to President Hayes, Eaton, a Harvard-educated railroad lawyer from a prominent New England family, drew upon English whig historiography. He traced the problem all the way back to the "feudal spoils system" of the medieval British Isles and the evils of centralized patronage under the early modern English crown. For Dorman Eaton, the origins of the American crisis in the 1870s and 1880s lay far earlier in British political development.[59] Colonialism had carried the practice of governing with royal patronage to the shores of North America, and with it, officeholders who hoped to turn a quick profit before returning to the metropole.[60]

Picked up and reinvented by Eaton's generation of reformers, this "whig science of politics" had permeated thinking about officeholding during the late colonial period and early republic.[61] Antifederalists like Cato warned ominously at Ratification that establishing a new chief executive with powers of appointment would approximate, and perhaps recreate, the follies of monarchy. The presidency would essentially constitutionalize the king's "numerous train of dependents."[62] Early modern states in Europe were built outwards through war and marriage and inwards by centralizing royal authority over feudal lands; English monarchs, for example, had aggrandized executive power by distributing lucrative offices to manage Parliament. Whig critics of royal authority argued that corruption arose from those "intimate obligations" associated with a private realm of generosity, the practice of which signified an honor; that is to say, a public fixture of social rank.[63] From this English whig interpretation, then, officeholding remained dangerous even in a republic where free-born citizens owed no allegiance to the crown.[64] There is perhaps no better depiction of this idea than the anti-Jackson cartoon "Office Hunters for the Year 1834" (Figure 4) which portrays the president as a manipulative devil pulling strings to make people across the society jump to his will.

The American president was no monarch draped in the divine legitimacy of hereditary rule. Nevertheless, the Constitution of 1789 placed monarchy's implied powers of discretion into the hands of a single executive, along with a legislative veto and the sword. Crucially, new presidential powers also included the right to bestow lower administrative office. Executive patronage had been part of a royal tradition of protection and beneficence.[65] Anti-Federalists warned that under the command of a domineering president, subordinate officeholders might be tempted to trade liberty for political dependence. No matter how limited, the personal rule of executives fit awkwardly with republicanism as a government "of Laws and not Men."[66] Classical whig theory placed subservience to the will of a single individual, a national patriarch, in sharp contrast to the rule of law negotiated in open debate by a legislature chosen by the people. Would grasping executives now use "monarchical" discretion to erect a tyranny? The more extensive the offices controlled by an executive, according to the whig critique, the greater the influence to bribe, intimidate, or degrade the entire community.[67] Such concerns were part of the Constitution's logic in prohibiting aristocratic title and the acceptance of foreign gifts.[68] The afterlife of monarchy—executive discretion in public affairs and patronage—might live on as a potential source of corruption even in tamed republican form.

Cato was prophetic. Executive patronage was ever present in national politics. As early as 1796, Thomas Jefferson wrote to James Madison denouncing the establishment of a postal road from Maine to Georgia that would "be a source of boundless patronage to the executive, jobbing to Members of Congress & their friends."[69] Andrew Jackson's allies in 1828 stitched together a national party coalition through the active support of federal officeholders, especially in the post office, the republic's largest

[57] Ari Hoogenboom, *Outlawing the Spoils: A History of the Civil Service Reform Movement, 1865–1883* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1968), 176–78.

[58] Andrew Jackson, First Annual Message to Congress, December 8, 1829; Hans Sperber, Hans and Travis Trittschuh, *American Political Terms: An Historical Dictionary* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1962), 421–22.

[59] Dorman B. Eaton, *Civil Service in Great Britain: A History of Abuses and Reforms and their Bearing Upon American Politics* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1897); Dorman B. Eaton, *The "Spoils System" and Civil Service Reform in the New York Custom-House and Post-Office at New York* (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1881).

[60] Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 89; Rosenbloom, *Federal Service and the Constitution*, 25–26.

[61] Bailyn, *Origins of American Politics*, 72–81, 88, 92, 96. The English whig intellectual tradition is not to be confused with the American Whig Party (1830s–1850s), although its partisans drew inspiration from whig theory (as did their Jacksonian rivals). Some reformers like Thomas Jenckes, a congressman from Rhode Island and the "Father of Civil Service Reform," were whigs in political philosophy and members of the defunct Whig party. Ari Hoogenboom, "Thomas A. Jenckes and Civil Service Reform," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47, no. 4 (March 1961): 636–58.

[62] Cato, "Various Fears Concerning The Executive Department," *Antifederalist*, No. 67 (1788).

[63] Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1991), 83.

[64] The monarchical tradition of executive benevolence continued in the U.S. through appointments for "deserving" candidates, often in dire need, which critics viewed as creating bonds of political dependence. Consider the case of Samuel A. Pancoast, an outspoken Union supporter during the Civil War hailing from Virginia. Pancoast was imprisoned for 17 months by the Confederacy. His iron manufactory was seized and his home was burned down. Destitute at the war's close, Pancoast turned to the U.S. government for aid and was appointed federal tax commissioner in Georgia in August of 1865. The applicant himself, his endorsers, and even the Internal Revenue Service Commissioner, William Orton, were all explicit about the hiring rationale: Pancoast's appointment was justly due to a staunch Union man as compensation for suffering and property lost during the war. Samuel A. Pancoast Letter of Application, March 25, 1864; Isaac Newton to William Orton, August 3, 1865; Briefed Recommendations of Samuel A. Pancoast as Direct Tax Commissioner of Georgia (Summary of Applicant's Complete File); Letters of Appointment, 1864–66, Direct Tax Commissions in Southern States, Arkansas; Samuel A. Pancoast to Salmon P. Chase, September 15, 1863; Jason A. Pollock to Salmon P. Chase, September 17, 1863; Alfred Ely to Commissioner Taylor, August 12, 1865; J.B. Stewart to Hugh McCulloch, August 1865; Correspondence of the Commission, 1865–67, Direct Tax Commissions in the Southern States: Georgia, RG 58: Records of the Internal Revenue Service, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

[65] Peter Richards, *Patronage in British Government* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963); McDonagh, "Ripples from the First Wave," 995–98.

[66] John Adams to John Penn, March 27, 1776, Robert J. Taylor, ed., *The Papers of John Adams, Volume 4: February to August 1776* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1979). Digital Edition: Massachusetts Historical Society, https://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/PJA04d039.

[67] Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1972), 143–50.

[68] Zephyr Teachout, *Corruption in America: From Benjamin Franklin's Snuff Box to Citizens United* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Kevin J. Hickey and Michael A. Foster, "The Emoluments Clauses of the U.S. Constitution," Congressional Research Service, 2021.

[69] Leonard White, *The Jeffersonians: A Study in Administrative History, 1801–1829* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1967), 2.

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Figure 4. Office Hunters for the Year 1834.
Sir Emil Hurja Collection, Tennessee Historical Society, Tennessee State Library & Archives, Nashville.

and most geographically extensively federal presence.[70] Henry Clay made campaigns against "a principle which wears a monarchical aspect" the basis for a coherent opposition "whig" party; his first speech in the Senate criticizing President Jackson was a lengthy denunciation of the spoils system.[71] Wartime presidents like James Polk and Abraham Lincoln filled the army with politically reliable generals.[72] President James Garfield was assassinated by Charles Guiteau precisely because the Gilded Age party system depended upon the factional division of spoils. At the height of Jim Crow, the "rotten boroughs" of southern Republican state parties often supplied the decisive convention votes required to nominate presidential tickets.[73] The officeseeking host permanently trailing the presidency was "enough to sicken one of public life," wrote one prominent Whig party leader in 1840. "How wretched he, who hangs on prince[']s favors."[74]

And yet, executive patronage shorn of a broad political base proved to be incompetent. John Tyler in 1844 and Andrew Johnson in 1868, two partyless creatures, discovered that it was impossible to propel reelection ambitions with spoils alone. Even popular presidents in good party standing claimed nothing close to a monopoly on executive offices. The Constitution of 1789 bound nominees by legislative "advice and consent." In good whig practice, appointed officials informally served congressional parties at least as much as presidents, if not more. During the Second Party System, the surest way to a federal appointment was through the recommendation of a member of Congress, or a cabinet official who had been a U.S. Senator. The Tenure of Office Act years between 1867 and 1887 were famously coercive of executive power on appointments, requiring a vote in the Senate for removal as well as confirmation. Hard limits to presidential authority suggest that royal prerogative in bestowing "honors" was successfully republicanized.

But that monarchical inheritance also endured through officeholding's link to clientelism. Instead of one Caesar, America's

[70]Richard R. John, "Affairs of Office: The Executive Departments, the Election of 1828, and the Making of the Democratic Party," in *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History*, ed. Meg Jacobs, William Novak, and Julian Zelizer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 50–84.

[71]Opposition to the Jackson administration began to call themselves "whigs" after Clay's Senate speech on April 14, 1834. Clay's view of the Jackson and Van Buren presidencies was that "The Scotch dynasty continues…We have had Charles the First, and now have Charles the Second." Remini, *Henry Clay*, 362, 458–61, 598. Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, and the Yankee mercantile elite shrouded themselves in the political culture of the English "country party." Jean Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1998), 148–58. According to the American Whig party, Jackson was a despot because of his tyrannical use of martial law (after the Battle of New Orleans), his executive usurpations of congressional authority (with his bank veto), and because of his dangerous politics of leveling for White men (racial populism). By contrast, Whig gentry sought to preserve liberty and property by checking Jackson's highly personalized style of rule and the threat of demagogy. Howe, *Political Culture of the American Whigs*, 77, 83.

[72]Richard Winders, *Mr. Polk's Army: The American Military Experience in the Mexican War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 35–40; Andrew Polsky, *Elusive Victories: The American Presidency at War* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[73]Boris Heersink and Jeffery Jenkins, *Republican Party Politics and the American South, 1865–1968* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[74]Francis Granger, the New York Whig leader, references Cardinal Wolsey's speech in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. Rather ironically, Granger had only months before written to president-elect William Henry Harrison to caution against making any appointments in the state before consulting him in advance. Francis Granger to William Henry Harrison, November 25, 1840; Francis Granger to unnamed, December 6, 1840, Correspondence, 1840–1841, Francis and Gideon Granger Papers, Library of Congress.

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decentralized fragmentation produced a dispersed, loosely connected set of lesser patrons like Richard Croker of Tammany Hall. "The superstition of divine right has passed from a king to a party," George W. Curtis lectured the National Civil-Service Reform League in 1892. "[T]he old fiction of the law in monarchy that the king can do no wrong has become the practical faith of great multitudes in this republic in regard to party."[75] Indeed, victorious parties presumed something akin to a party "right to office" under the spoils system. City and state bosses of the party period aspired to lord over parochial enclaves by grasping at whatever power they could amass through appointments, contracts, franchises, charters, and other uses of public authority. The old radical whig fear of that "baneful poison" of patronage was just as likely to explode over appointments to a local public works department or state canal commission as over federal "plums" like the custom house.[76] Fiscal and administrative capacity in the nineteenth century developed the fastest among state and local authorities. Subnational officials experimented with a host of quasi-public tools, from the chartering of banks and corporations to the building of vital infrastructure and adventures in public debt-financing.[77] Amidst a polity expanding by leaps and bounds, the stakes multiplied exponentially in state and local politics over who would control, distribute, and benefit from the proliferation of public offices.

For these reasons, Richard Croker's defense of clientelism in the pages of *North American Review* rings true. If any political force in the United States at the dawn of the twentieth century could legitimately stake claim to represent the dynastic legacy of an ancient house of the American republic, it was Tammany Hall. What made Tammany unique was not its status as a so-called fountainhead of corruption, as many critics charged, or even its alien social base, which enraged anti-Catholic opinion. Clientelism was *the* dominant political relation in American political institutions throughout the Long Nineteenth Century. And yet, only Tammany Hall could boast to a continuous organizational existence.[78] That was the Tammany difference.[79] Others came and went. Only Tammany endured—a common refrain of drunken toasts at social gatherings. The Hall celebrated its centennial during Croker's reign.

[75]Curtis' neo-whig critique continues: "Armed with the arbitrary power of patronage, party overbears the free expression of the popular will and entrenches itself in illicit power. It makes the whole civil service a drilled and disciplined army whose living depends upon carrying elections at any cost for the party which controls it. Patronage has but to capture the local primary meeting and it commands the whole party organization. Every member of the party must submit or renounce his allegiance, and with it the gratification of his political ambition, and such is the malign force of party spirit that in what seems to him a desperate alternative he often supports men whom he distrusts and methods he despises lest his party should be defeated." George W. Curtis, *Party and Patronage, An Address Prepared for the Annual Meeting of the National Civil-Service Reform League, April 28, 1892* (National Civil-Service Reform League, 1892), 10–12.

[76]William Hartman, "The New York Custom House: Seat of Spoils," *New York History* 34, no. 3 (1953): 149–63; John Larson, *Internal Improvements: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 204–017.

[77]C.K. Yearly, *The Money Machines: The Breakdown and Reform of Governmental and Party Finance in the North, 1860–1920* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1970); Stefan Link and Noam Maggor, "The United States as a Developing Nation: Revisiting the Peculiarities of American History," *Past and Present* 246, no. 1 (2020): 269–306.

[78]Jerome Mushkat, *Tammany: The Evolution of a Political Machine, 1789–1865* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1971).

[79]The political development of Tammany Hall remains to be written. There were many critical junctures in its historical development that substantially changed Tammany's social base, elite composition, and issue positions, not to mention organizing practices. Tammany Hall was arguably "continuous" in the same way the Democratic Party of the twentieth century claimed lineage from Jefferson and Jackson.

5. Officeholding political economy

Officeholding was a reliable means of *embourgeoisement* during the Long Nineteenth Century. Officeholding political economy ran on a mix of honors and emoluments that arose from customary practices and traditional usages inherited from monarchy. Political appointments were "not patronage," lectured the Gilded Age political boss U.S. Senator Roscoe Conkling to Edwards Pierrepont, an ambitious corporate lawyer and future attorney general. Rather, in Conkling's view, they were "exaltation."[80] Official position conferred favored status during an era when individual "reputation" was how communities interpreted the fluidity of social rank.[81] Orlando Bloom, a Kentucky officeseeker in the 1840s, explained: "The strong nature with me is a desire to leave my children a name, at least, of some little honor." A position like Governor of Iowa Territory, Bloom wrote to his patron, would "add the letter of Government…to distinguish us from the millions who hear our name."[82]

The meaning of officeholding, of course, was historically specific and sometimes contested. Wealthy gentlemen complained bitterly about the "vulgar" culture of "blatant officeseeking" that emerged in the wake of suffrage expansion during the Second Party System.[83] A similar protest arose in the south during the Civil War and Reconstruction. The prospect of Black men holding office for the first time became a major propaganda tool when the Union's political legitimacy itself was disputed by the southern White population. Read against the grain, however, strenuous objections like these highlighted real stakes as people understood them at the time. The allure of public distinction remained a powerful draw throughout the Long Nineteenth Century, despite loud protests to the contrary.

There were very practical reasons why. Even minor officeholding elevated the status of a newspaper editor, merchant, or lawyer above competitors. Until the era of commercial advertising, an editor's cultivation of political patronage was the most common way for newspapers to establish stable readership and subscriptions.[84] In the 1790s, the post office became a haven of Federalist party-aligned printers, merchants, and innkeepers. Entrepreneurs who

[80]Original emphasis. The historical context for Conkling's insistence was Republican criticism of the Tweed Ring, which was embroiled in patronage scandals at the time in New York City. Roscoe Conkling to Edwards Pierrepont, February 19, 1871, Folder 20: Roscoe Conkling, Box 1, Series 1: Correspondence 1845–1902, Edwards Pierrepont Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. Conkling made a far more explicit defense of patronage as a positive good during his speech at the Republican State Convention of 1877 in Rochester, New York. See Alfred R. Conkling, *The Life and Letters of Roscoe Conkling: Orator, Statesman, Advocate* (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1889), 538–49.

[81]Judy Hilkey, *Character Is Capital: Success Manuals and Manhood in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). A prime example of how this worked in practice: the Suffolk Bank System in New England, a Whig institution, reconciled access to credit with social rank and individual reputation. It became the industry standard for banking during a time of questionable paper money. See, for instance, Joshua R. Greenberg, *Bank Notes and Shinplasters: The Rage for Paper Money in the Early Republic* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 8–9, 29–31. Howe argues that because of its minority party status, the apogee of Whig politics became the party's commitment to building prosperous banking and manufacturing institutions. Howe, *Political Culture of the American Whigs*, 106.

[82]Orlando Brown to John J. Crittenden, January 29, 1841, John J Crittenden Papers, Reel 4, Library of Congress.

[83]Glenn Altschuler and Stuart Blumin, *Rude Republic: Americans and their Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); see, also, Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 130.

[84]William E. Ames, "Federal Patronage and the D.C. Press," *Journalism Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (1972): 22–30; Summers, *The Press Gang: Newspapers and Politics, 1865–1878* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

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operated at key nodes in the circulation of information, goods, and travelers welcomed the steady income and a way to boost provincial family business with an official status.[85] Amos Kendall, who later became Jackson's Postmaster General in 1835, purchased his first job as town postmaster after the War of 1812 to financially support a share of the *Minerva*, the newspaper of Richard M. Johnson, a congressman from Kentucky who became his local patron.[86] Remarkably, arrangements based on officeholding property and even kinship were still in place in some locales as late as the Great Depression.[87] In 1939, one party broker requested a postal appointment in Albuquerque, New Mexico be transferred from father to son like an inheritance. The postmastership had been controlled by the same Putney family for 35 years. The position brought "considerable business" to their dry goods store, and allowed them to serve "acting practically as bankers…there for everybody in the little community."[88]

Dynamics were similar in the legal profession. Timothy Pickering's rise to prominence as a member of the Massachusetts Bar was "affirmed" by Salem town election as selectman in 1772; Pickering later went on to serve in the Washington and Adams Administrations, and to build the Federalist Party.[89] At mid-nineteenth century, before running the Central Pacific Railroad or serving in the U.S. Senate, Leland Stanford operated a frontier courthouse out of his saloon in Cold Spring, California. There, he adjudicated petty mining claims and property disputes. But he only established himself there after failing to do so in a small Wisconsin town where his political career hit a dead end.[90] Being one of the rare Black lawyers in the South during the 1870s and 1880s meant something far more significant that just occupation alone. Joseph E. Lee was a general broker, community leader, and conduit for business in Florida between 1887 and 1913, holding numerous offices from municipal judge to state senator to port collector.[91] One of the first Black lawyers admitted to the Florida bar, Lee handled legal cases like administrative issues, divorces, land sales, and disputes involving "over 100 pounds of moose." At the same time, he was also active in acquiring religious books, establishing fraternal organizations, settling teacher pay, and engaging in personal business.[92] Public officeholding was a common path to stature for lawyers in nineteenth-century communities.

Officeholding's greatest allure, of course, were the emoluments. Public office was treated as a fungible form of property at a time when the line between public property and the private household domain was thin, if any line existed at all. Early congressional debates over presidential removals left the issue of officeholding property unresolved.[93] Interpretations about decorum were ultimately left to those elite gentlemen considered "fit" for office during the First Party System. Practices defaulted to customary usages and local traditions like nepotism, patronizing allies with hiring and contracts, clandestinely subcontracting out undesirable tasks, and doing favors on government time.[94] Later party leaders and local committees of the Second- and Third-Party Systems were far less ambiguous than statesmen who rhetorically denounced favoritism while faithfully serving allies in private.[95]

Grassroots partisans spoke freely and with urgency about what they believed was their fair "share" of spoils—a materially divisible slice of the American state that was due in proportion to political influence.[96] William Seward invoked this popular mercenary spirit as a fresh-faced Senator arriving in the capitol at the dawn of the Zachary Taylor Administration in 1849. "The world seems almost divided into two classes, both which are moving in the same direction," Seward noted wryly: "those who are going to California in search of gold, and those going to Washington in quest of office."[97] Dividing spoils at national conventions and through cabinet deliberations became a focal point of factional conflict during the Gilded Age, for example, between Republican Stalwarts and Half-Breeds in the 1880s.[98]

Competition was fierce because some offices were highly valuable beyond modest fixed salaries. Dating from the colonial period, elected and appointed officials were often empowered to collect a variety of specialized fees, bounties, moieties, and gifts from the communities they governed as compensation for leadership.[99] Under these conditions, the "perquisites" of office, as they were called, became an acknowledged way to build a personal fortune. Positions like judicial, militia, and territorial offices on the frontier were part of the allure for White men to migrate westward, conquer Native territory, and profit by selling land title to other settlers.[100]

[85]Carl E. Prince, *The Federalists and the Origins of the U.S. Civil Service* (New York, NY: New York University, 1977), 18, 184.

[86]Donald Cole, *Amos Kendall and the Rise of American Democracy* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2004).

[87]On the persistence of the sale of post offices, especially by Republican Party leaders in southern states under Jim Crow, see Boris Heersink and Jeffery Jenkins, "Race, Corruption, and Southern Republicanism: The Patronage Scandal of the 1920s," *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 21, no. 1 (2024): 50–76.

[88]Richard H. Hanna to John J. Dempsey, January 17, 1938, Folder 20: Prince Estate, Misc. Correspondence, 1926–1938, Box 8, Richard H. Hanna Papers, Southwest Research and Special Collections, University of New Mexico-Albuquerque.

[89]Gerard Clarfield, *Timothy Pickering and the American Republic* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980), 13.

[90]Roland De Wolk, *American Disrupter: The Scandalous Life of Leland Stanford* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2019), 47–48.

[91]Edward Akin, "When a Minority Becomes a Majority: Blacks in Jacksonville Politics, 1887–1907," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (1974): 123–45; Canter Brown Jr., *Florida's Black Public Officials, 1867–1924* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 103–04.

[92]For an example of how Lee's legal, civic, and business concerns mixed in his Treasury Department correspondence as a revenue collector, see T.B. Brown to Joseph E. Lee, September 4, 1879, Joseph E. Lee Papers, Jacksonville Public Library, accessible via https://jaxpubliclibrary.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16025coll2/id/154/rec/386.

[93]Rosenbloom, *Federal Service and the Constitution*, 30–31.

[94]For an overview of these arguments see the preface of Prince, *Federalists and the Origins of the U.S. Civil Service*.

[95]Leonard White, *The Jacksonians: A Study in Administrative History, 1929–1861* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1954), 396–97.

[96]In making a recommendation for a territorial governorship, for example, one Iowa Democrat wrote to Grover Cleveland's Secretary of Interior, "the State of Iowa claims to be remembered in the distribution of honors and emoluments to Citizens as a state that has always born her full share of the burdens freely and constantly." Original emphasis. B.J. Hall to Lucius Q.C. Lamar, December 12, 1885. For similar complaints about North Carolina Republican's proper "share" of offices, see William Canaday's Recommendation of Edward Cantwell, July 23, 1877, Box 1, Central Office Appointment Papers, 1849–1907, Governors and Secretaries of Territories, RG 48: Records of the Department of the Interior, Appointments Division, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

[97]Frederick William Seward, ed., *Seward at Washington, As Senator and Secretary of State: A Memoir of His Life, With Selections from Letters, 1846–1861*, Vol. 2 (New York: Derby and Miller, 1891), 100.

[98]David Jordan, *Roscoe Conkling of New York: A Voice in the Senate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), 367–91.

[99]Nicholas Parillo, *Against the Profit Motive: The Salary Revolution in American Government, 1780–1940* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

[100]Malcom Rohrbough, *The Land Office Business: The Settlement and Administration of American Public Lands, 1789–1837* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1968), 32–33; Alan Taylor, *American Republics: A Continental History of the United States, 1783–1850* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2021), 27.

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Law enforcement, a quintessentially local function, was especially profitable. The Sheriff of San Francisco County in the 1850s was among the highest paid officers in the country, collecting in fees four times the president's salary.[101] Beyond legal rates, policemen, jailers, and most officers tasked with implementation of health, building, lottery, or liquor codes, were known to accept monetary indulgences from criminal suspects, inmates, and businessmen.[102] The urban revolution that swelled populations between 1870 and 1920 created regional anchors of economic activity and powerful voting blocs who pressed for local control.[103] This "municipal pot of gold," as Steve Erie called it, generated ample sources of partisan financing from a range of local emoluments.[104]

Another allure was that personal finances were intimately mixed with public monies. It was common practice for state and county treasurers to accumulate private interest on taxpayer deposits. Elected officials, including treasurers and comptrollers, were often presidents, directors, or investors in banks that safeguarded public funds. Government revenues of all kinds were frequently embezzled as fonts of capital with which to speculate or pay personal debts.[105] Infamously, Andrew Jackson's Collector of the Port of New York, Samuel Swartwout, diverted tariff revenues to purchase tens of thousands of acres of land in Mexican Texas in the 1830s. Swartwout then supported independence with financing and political support to make the investment pay. During 9 years in office, he embezzled a fortune—somewhere between $1 and $2 million.[106] Scandal only erupted if the prospects of a speculative venture collapsed, as they did with Swartwout, and the embarrassed officer's personal finances were too shattered to return equivalent funds, thereby exposing a conspicuous deficit.

Even more lucrative than fees or bounties were indirect officeholding emoluments tied to developmentalist economic agendas. "Spatial emoluments" were a major benefit tied to the associational state's flexible capacity. Voluntarism was leveraged to achieve important public goals, as scholars from Theda Skocpol to Brian Balogh to Elisabeth Clemens have noted.[107] Somehow, far less has been said about the flip side of private benevolence. The political generation of local real estate markets through place-making public works became a common way to achieve public ends. It was also a reliable conduit for state and local patrons to enrich themselves, going all the way back to George Washington's private land speculations around the nation's capital and public land sales in the old northwest territories.[108]

Civic boosters such as Jesup Scott of Toledo, Ohio, or Le Baron Bradford Prince of Santa Fe, New Mexico, would enhance the value of private land investments by building governing institutions, donating land, chartering schools, and establishing churches.[109] Internal improvements like canals, harbors, turnpikes, and later, railroads, helped to build regional and then national markets in land, natural resources, and agricultural commodities.[110] Tammany Hall employed precisely the same strategies as Scott and Prince—leveraging public works to boost private land values and, thus, to monetize associational networks. But Tammany did so in Manhattan, the most expensive real estate market in the country after the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825.[111] At the height of influence during the Gilded Age, when Tammany patronized a wide range of religious and benevolent groups, it was just as much a real estate brokerage firm as a political organization.[112]

6. Party oeconomics

The institutional setting from which party organization emerged helps to explain patrimonial features of the old American state. We know that mass politics drove party bureaucratization. Under competitive pressures of electoral mobilization, party bosses and committees superseded local notables and elite reputational networks, culminating, by 1896, in national structures that were increasingly centralized.[113] But, more specifically, democratization emerged out of a patrimonial enclave in household politics that continued to shape party development. From George Washington to Frederick Douglass, nearly every public figure of consequence

[101]On the Sheriff of San Francisco County, see Mark W. Summers, *The Plundering Generation: Corruption and the Crisis of the Union, 1849–1861* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1987), 25. Economic surplus drawn from urban policing in the latter-half of the nineteenth century was nothing less than breathtaking. John Kelly of Tammany Hall earned an estimated $159,712 during two terms in office as County Sheriff in New York during the 1860s. Calculations based upon New York Mayor William Havemeyer's audit of the sheriff's office in 1874. Document A: Mayor's Office (William Havemeyer), New York, September 14, 1874 in *John Kelly v. Nelson Waterbury*, New York Court of Appeals (New York, M.B. Brown, 1881), 73. See also Jeffrey D. Broxmeyer, "Fernando Wood's Long Gilded Age," *New York History* 104, no. 1 (Summer 2024): 78–105, 100–1 for a discussion of Sherriff James Lynch of New York County during the 1860s.

[102]Timothy Guilfoyle, *A Pickpocket's Tale: The Underworld of Nineteenth-Century New York* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), 122, 130–31.

[103]Robert Lieberman, "The City and Exceptionalism in American Political Development," in *The City in American Political Development*, ed. Richardson Dilworth (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 17–43.

[104]Erie, *Rainbow's End*, 5.

[105]Prince, *Federalists and the Origins of the U.S. Civil Service*, 35; Summer, *Plundering Generation*, 77–78; Robin Einhorn, *American Taxation, American Slavery* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 35–36; K.W. Swart, *Sale of Offices in the Seventeenth Century* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1949), 45.

[106]Leo Hershkowitz, "The Land of Promise: Samuel Swartwout and Land Speculation in Texas, 1830–1838," *New-York Historical Society* 48, no. 4 (1964): 307–26.

[107]Skocpol, "Tocqueville Problem"; Balogh, *Government Out of Sight*; Clemens, *Civic Gifts*.

[108]Adam Costanzo, *George Washington's Washington: Visions for the National Capital in Early Republic America* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2018); Rohrbough, *Land Office Business*, 32–33.

[109]Jessup Scott, *A Presentation of the Causes of Tending to Fix the Position of the Future Great City of the World in the Central Plain of North America* (Toledo, 1876). For an example of how building social capital increased property values in the western territories during the Gilded Age, see Jeffrey D. Broxmeyer, "Associational State Capitalism: Officeholding In New Mexico Territory During the Nineteenth Century," in *Parties, Power and Change: Developmental Approaches to American Party Politics*, ed. Jessica Hejny and Adam Hilton (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, Forthcoming 2025).

[110]Carter Goodrich, *Government Promotion of American Canals and Railroads, 1800–1890* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1960); Larson, *Internal Improvements*; William Adler, *Engineering Expansion: The U.S. Army and Economic Development, 1787–1860* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021).

John Tipton of Indiana offers a paradigmatic example of the interlocking connections between Native dispossession, public officeholding, land speculation, and internal improvements. Tipton served as Indian Agent at Fort Wayne in the 1820s and as a county land officer. He was later elected Indiana's U.S. Senator in the 1830s. Tipton was instrumental to organizing Indiana's ambitious "Mammoth System" of canals and highways, which included the Wabash and Erie Canal that he expected would generate a personal fortune from his share of Native land cessions. Thomas J. Campion, "Indian Removal and the Transformation of Northern Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History* 107 (March 2011): 32–62, 41.

[111]David Scobey, *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002).

[112]Broxmeyer, *Electoral Capitalism*, 68–73; Leo Hershkowitz, *Tweed's New York: Another Look* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, 1977), 123, 203.

[113]Morton Keller, *Affairs of State: Public Life In Late Nineteenth Century America* (Belknap Press, 1977), Chapter 7; Martin Shefter, *Political Parties and the State: The American Historical Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Scott C. James, "Patronage Regimes and American Party Development from 'The Age of Jackson' to the Progressive Era," *British Journal of Political Science* 36, no. 1 (January 2006): 39–60; Daniel Klinghard, *The Nationalization of American Political Parties, 1880–1896* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

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practiced politics as an extension of the household favoring kin and close friends.[114]

It was not quite that politics was suffused with nepotism, but, rather, by ties of affective dependence. Before Amos Kendall could officially join the Jacksonian camp, for instance, he had to sever business with Henry Clay by settling his personal debts.[115] Personalism was an expression of household politics that never disappeared so much as it was transformed and absorbed by party institutions.[116] As the century progressed, household social ties became more abstract, bureaucratic, and, especially when it came to party politics, reliant on symbolic rituals of collective adherence.

By mid-century, kinship was no longer mere biological family or intimate friendship but also devotion to the "shrine of party"—the greater partisan imagined community.[117] Office hunters came to rely for the promotion of their claims upon party endorsements from local public meetings, county and state party committees, and, above all, the support of powerful political bosses. Claims of personal intimacy were still an important measure of political influence as late as the Gilded Age. In practice, however, the impersonal bureaucratization of party often strained those claims to friendship beyond credulity.[118]

The gradual and uneven emergence of internal party markets for public office are a concrete example of how patrimonial discretion was stretched in new ways across the century. Mass mobilization required geographically and demographically expansive coalitions; yet there were simply too many patronage claims to adjudicate. And, because there was no single route to any appointment, officeseekers did whatever they could to first secure and then retain a position. To avoid removal from a long-held postmastership in Albany, New York, Solomon Van Rensselaer secured a private audience with President Andrew Jackson through the patrician Edward Livingston. At this meeting, Van Rensselaer bared his chest to reveal old wounds from the War of 1812, a tactic dramatic enough to win support from the former general at a moment when gentry incumbents were in peril.[119] Advantages of petitioning in person for a lucrative "situation" were simply too important to pass up, which remained an axiom of officeseekers throughout the century.[120] Yet, few people enjoyed the benefits of Van Rensselaer's kind of personal access. Many of those trampling the White House lawn for a spot at the punchbowls celebrating Jackson's first inauguration were office hunters little different than Van Rensselaer; the main difference was they failed to penetrate Jackson's inner court.

The officeseeking crowd could manifest as unruly mobs, especially at moments of party alternation. When the Whigs finally came to power in 1841, William Henry Harrison arrived to find his first cabinet meeting jam packed with applicants descended from around the country. Harrison himself had also been a career beggar for offices.[121] A decade earlier, General Harrison had come to Washington because he felt "entitled to reward" at a time when "[m]y coat was scarcely decent and my finances so low that I was not able to make carriage in the worst weather."[122] Now that he was in position as the republic's grand patriarch, President Harrison appealed in earnest for all officeseekers obstructing his cabinet meeting to vacate in the name of public business. The crowd refused, much to his dismay, "unless he would receive their papers and pledge himself to attend to them." The president's pockets, hat,

[114]President Washington appointed his brother-in-law, Fielding Lewis, to a surveyorship and several nephews: Thomas Peter (postmaster), John Lewis (internal revenue collector), and Miles Lewis (auxiliary officer of the internal revenue). Prince, *Federalists*, 115–117, 199. Aronson's study of early appointed federal officeholders found that nearly one third of the Adams Administration had traceable kinship ties to other incumbents. Decades later the reproduction of political power through family networks in Andrew Jackson's Administration was still nearly as strong, despite Jackson's rhetorical campaign against elitism and promises to "clear out the Noursery." Sidney Aronson, *Status and Kinship in the Higher Civil Service: Standards of Selection in the Administrations of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Andrew Jackson* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 140, 142–44. A good example of how this familial process worked among members of Congress was when John J. Crittenden's niece wrote to him on behalf of her brother to secure the consulship at Galveston, Texas in the early 1840s. The letter is filled with adept pulls on the patriarch's heartstrings to secure a "lucrative" post for the needy family member. Mary to John J. Crittenden, January 27, 1841, Van Buren-Harrison-Tyler (1837–1845), Corwine, R.M. Through Dancy, F.L., Series: Applications and Recommendations For Public Office, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives and Records Administration. President John Tyler was probably the most conspicuous in appointing his eldest son, nephews, and family by marriage. When congressional opponents abolished the post of military storekeeper at the Frankford, Pennsylvania arsenal, where Tyler had placed his daughter's father-in-law, Thomas Cooper, the president went so far as to nominate Cooper as surveyor at the Port of Philadelphia. Norma Peterson, *The Presidencies of William Henry Harrison and John Tyler* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1989), 147–48. Frederick Douglass also embraced this role as family patriarch by finding places for his extended family during Reconstruction. He was deeply ensconced in Republican Party circles and himself served as an officeholder of high status as U.S. Marshal for the District of Columbia and foreign minister to Haiti. David Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2018), Chapter 26, 627–28.

[115]Amos Kendall's ties to the Clay household were actually through Lucretia, Clay's wife, who had rendered Kendall significant aid during a period of ill health and given him employment in the family as a tutor. Henry Clay later loaned Kendall $1,500 and offered to him a position in the State Department at a salary of $1,000. Kendall declined that post but had to organize Jacksonian supporters to help him liquidate his financial debt to Clay. Cole, *Amos Kendall*, 88–90.

[116]Social roles once closely associated with gentlemen politicians of the First Party System, like responsibility for poor relief or for opening lines of credit, were absorbed by parties. See, for instance, Brian Murphy, *Building the Empire State: Political Economy in the Early Republic* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Broxmeyer *Electoral Capitalism*, Chapters 1 and 2. Informal reciprocity associated with elite deference during the early republic gave way in the era of mass politics to a set of written commitments elaborated in campaign books and party platforms. John Gerring, *Party Platforms in America, 1828–1996* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[117]Joel Silbey, *The American Political Nation, 1838–1893* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), Chapter 7.

[118]One candidate vying for a job in the Department of Interior forwarded by Governor Shelby Moore Cullom of Illinois in 1879 urged President Hayes to "please see and hear" his "personal friend." In truth, Governor Cullom was so little acquainted with the applicant that his name was flagrantly misspelled on the cover letter. Shelby Moore Cullum to Rutherford B. Hayes, January 10, 1879, Box 1, Appointments Division, Central Office Appointment Papers, 1849–1907, Governors and Secretaries of Territories, RG 48: Records of the Department of the Interior, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

[119]Richard R. John, *Spreading The News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 231.

[120]Dolley Madison wisely instructed one officeseeker about traveling to Washington: "the advantages of your being in this place will be considerable." Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 50. The best strategy, of course, was building a personal relationship wherever the president happened to be. To secure appointment as Collector of the Port of New York in the early 1870s, Thomas Murphy, a wily machine politician, purchased a summer home in Long Branch, New Jersey just down the street from Ulysses S. Grant. Murphy's appointment was the fruit of a friendship built from a mutual love of fast horses. Broxmeyer, *Electoral Capitalism*, 70–71. There was a truly arbitrary element to patrimonial recruitment. U.S. Senator William Sprague of Rhode Island once advanced a candidate for a position in the Treasury Department who delivered him a package that had been misplaced. Cindy Aron, *Ladies and Gentlemen of the Civil Service: Middle-Class Workers in Victorian America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 1987), 98.

[121]Robert Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 15, 39, 41.

[122]The rather pathetic scene depicted by Harrison about his financial condition should be understood in biographical context: he was the downwardly mobile scion of Virginia gentry. William Henry Harrison to Lewis Cass, August 29, 1831, Folder 23: August 27, 1831 to August 31, 1831, Box 1, Lewis Cass Papers, 1774–1924, Clements Library, University of Michigan. "[M]y sword is almost my only patrimony" he once wrote. On Harrison's modest financial situation as an officeholder, see Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer*, 39, 41, 51, 170–1.

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and arms, and those of his attending marshal, were then loaded up with claims and testimonials, after which the two men "marched up stairs with as much as they could carry."[123] Many of these valiant efforts by office hunters ended in vain. Shortly thereafter, Harrison died unexpectedly, leaving patronage matters to John Tyler. With only the most tenuous connections to party regularity, Tyler moved decisions over patronage from Whigs to Representative Henry Wise of Virginia and his circle of proslavery friends.[124] Patrimonial job markets were vulnerable to even the most subtle partisan shifts.

Crowds with similar hopes stalked the doors of governors, mayors, port collectors, and other executives around the country with the power of appointment. Where competition was fierce for the most lucrative posts, bidding wars opened up party markets for venal office, yet another lineage of the medieval European state.[125] Distinctive approaches cemented a divide between competition for office by merit of party service, for Democrats, or by moral and social desert, for Whig-Republicans.

The Democratic Party's approach was anathema to Whigs because "it holds out the idea that all *men* are qualified for *all offices*, and decries the value of experience, faithfulness and skill."[126] Whigs, Republicans, and later elite Progressive Era reformers thus favored the refining of officeholders through appointments to boards, commissions, and public corporations that were based upon social credentials, technical expertise, and propertyholding. By contrast, to Democrats the spoils of office were viewed as a just reward for competition between Jeffersonian equals (meaning, White men) that was inherent to party regularity.[127] They tended to be wary of publicly chartered corporations, the Second National Bank of the United States, most famously, but also state-chartered canal companies and railroads that placed a mix of public and private capital into the hands of political appointees. Democrats preferred elected offices, for example, in clashes over urban governance with state legislatures about home rule that increasingly arose after the 1870s.

The extent to which internal party markets were stable and coherent, however, depended upon the ability of a local leader who could accept clients' money and credibly guarantee what was promised—no easy feat. Because of men's ambitions and the fragility of coalition politics, party markets were often made and unmade, with a good deal of uncertainty baked into the process. Here is at least one measure: the burden of political assessments (party taxes) and the speculative cost of nominations grew so onerous that, by the Gilded Age, one strategy of civil service reformers was to air the complaints of officeholders' wives and children about the household burdens of paying for office.[128]

The officeholding career of Kate Brown offers a vantage to understand how the extended party household was adapted to periodic advances in democratization. During the heyday of Reconstruction, Brown was a Black appointee to the U.S. Senate who worked as an attendant in the "ladies' retiring room." Thousands of women entered the federal workforce during the Civil War for the first time in American history.[129] The Union's crisis suddenly opened the prospect of property-bearing citizenship for freedmen and freedwomen that republican officeholding had always implied for White men. As the historian Kate Masur has shown, Kate Brown held her Senate post for 20 years, accumulating a modest amount of property by carefully saving and investing her salary.[130] Those resources enabled her to become a benefactor of two churches and a host of civic associations in the local Black community. When she was physically assaulted and thrown off a train in 1868 for riding in the ladies' car, at a critical juncture in congressional debates over racial discrimination, Brown rallied support from Republican Senators like Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. She pressed her civil right to public transportation in the courts and won a landmark case, including $1,500 in damages.[131]

Kate Brown offers an illuminating example of both continuity and innovation in clientelism. By nineteenth-century standards, her actions were part of a tradition in which civic stature and moral leadership was directly linked to officeholding political economy. To be sure, Kate Brown led an uncommon life.[132] Formerly enslaved, she divorced an abusive husband in the 1860s at a time when that was rare. She successfully sued a railroad company over a violation of her civil rights. And she became a crucial ally for Black officeseekers during Reconstruction, often forwarding their applications to U.S. Senators that she knew for consideration.[133] In this way, Brown's case also shows the impact of political change. Extending the responsibilities and benefits of officeholding to previously dependent groups, even minor offices, signaled the potential to reorder socially inherited inequality. During the Civil War and Reconstruction, Democrats argued forcefully that

[123]Francis P. Blair to Andrew Jackson, April 4, 1841 in John Spencer Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, Volume 6, 1839–1845* (Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1933), 97–8.

[124]Peterson, *Presidencies of Harrison and Tyler*, 81, 147.

[125]Jeffrey D. Broxmeyer, "The Boss's 'Brains': Political Capital, Democratic Commerce, and the New York Tweed Ring," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 28, no. 3 (September 2015): 374–40; Swart, *Sale of Offices*; Heide Gerstenberger, *Impersonal Power: History and Theory of the Bourgeois State* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2007), 384–85. The purchase of office was also common during the Qing period in imperial China. The contrast with the United States, however, is instructive. Sales in China were officially managed and regulated as a source of public revenue for state-building purposes and for the financing of wars. Prices were transparent. Appointed offices were neither guaranteed nor hereditary. Zhang's study covers the early Qing but also the nineteenth century, which was contemporaneous with the informal party-based sale of office in the United States during the Second and Third Party Systems. Lawrence Zhang, *Power for a Price: The Purchase of Official Appointments in Qing China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[126]Malcom Carroll, *Origins of the Whig Party* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1964), 177–78.

[127]Jackson, *First Annual Message*; Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 130–68.

[128]Broxmeyer, *Electoral Capitalism*, 111–16.

[129]Jessica Ziparo, *This Grand Experiment: When Women Entered the Federal Workforce in Civil War-Era Washington, D.C.* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

[130]Kate Masur, "Patronage and Protest in Kate Brown's Washington," *Journal of American History* 99, no. 4 (March 2013): 1047–71.

[131]Brown's particular case was part of a larger project of Black officeholders to defend their right civil rights in public opinion and in the courts. Masur, "Patronage and Protest." For a brief survey of these cases, which were typically of Black men who held elected office, see Eric Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), xxvii.

[132]Rebecca Edwards argues that the Whig-Republican "maternal" model of home offered women some space to press their "moral authority" into the public sphere. Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery*, 38. While middle-class ideals of domesticity presumed that "respectable" women stayed home to care for children and to keep house (Baker 1984), it is crucial to distinguish between ideology and historical practice. With the normalization of wage labor by the Gilded Age, many working-class women, and especially Black women, worked outside the home by necessity Baker, "The Domestication of Politics"; Richard White, *The Republic For Which It Stands: The United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865–1896* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), Chapter 6.

[133]For historical context, Van Gosse shows that free Black men in the antebellum north were integrated into political patronage networks in a limited way. However, even in post-bellum Reconstructed states where Black voters constituted a substantial voting bloc, patronage to Black appointees was limited by coalitional politics with northern Whites and local White southern Unionists. Van Gosse, *The First Reconstruction: Black Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 272–76.

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the Republican Party's program would unravel social order itself.[134] Kate Brown represented not only the abolition of slavery and the prospect of equal rights, but also a challenge, more fundamentally, when racialized and gendered "dependents" stepped out of the republican penumbra to stand as political actors in their own right.

Battles over the meaning and substance of citizenship before the modern era were often contested upon a 'familiar' terrain of who ought to rightfully take their place at the forefront of political representation. Importantly, the history of women's officeholding long predates the Nineteenth Amendment and, in notable cases, even state-level suffrage rights.[135] White women appointees to the Indian Bureau during the Gilded Age like Florence Etheridge and Flora Warren leveraged maternalistic guardianship over Native peoples into potent examples of civic authority for the women's suffrage movement. By contrast, some Native employees like Gertrude Bonnin, a Sioux woman, became staunch defenders of tribal sovereignty and cultural autonomy.[136]

The same link between officeholding and rights was dramatically illustrated by strident opposition from White southern Democrats to Black postmasters, port collectors, and other federal employees who survived in the early Jim Crow South by navigating Republican Party convention politics.[137] The 1903 nomination of William D. Crum, a Black medical doctor, to lead the Charleston custom house was filibustered for years by "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman, an avowed White supremacist. Crum framed his Senate confirmation struggle as a larger question of where the penumbra of representation fell nearly a half-century after emancipation: "[I]t is up to the people of this country to say once and for all, whether we are citizens or not."[138]

7. The Republic's classical age

America erected a mixed state during the Long Nineteenth Century that was at once both patrimonial and capitalist. Between the late colonial period and the New Deal, governance under the old republic grew out of the confluence of customary officeholding practices and changing social property relations. By the mid-nineteenth century, feudal lineages of dependence had fused with the kind of profit-seeking political exchanges typical of a more freewheeling capitalist economy. This historical co-development embedded layers of hierarchy and inequality within the American polity, largely by drawing boundaries of social difference around the extended party household. The lengthy penumbra cast by the American state over racial and gendered dependents throughout this long period was constitutive of political clientelism, including its party oeconomics. Political developments like the rise of mass patronage markets were linked not only to electoral competition and officeholding political economy but also to claims by excluded groups that sought to occupy legitimate space within the public sphere.

The social embeddedness of the patrimonial state offers perspective on why political incorporation proved so frustrated when it came to expanding civic rights to groups like Black Americans, women, and Native peoples. It also explains why so many efforts to depoliticize the civil service were frustrated, even after the passage of landmark merit-based laws like the Pendleton Act of 1883 and the election of successive waves of Progressive Era reformers to municipal government. Officeholding was not simply about winning elections or securing control over policy. It was a far more expansive struggle for social power within the household state.

Under the Old Republic, representation was based upon an intimate political economy that related to both civic status and access to economic capital. A White male head of household was empowered to broker an official, public relationship with a host of dependents even as those dynamics were bureaucratized by the mass party. People stuck on the outer reaches of the republican penumbra during the nineteenth century did not typically experience civic equality but rather patrimonial rule. When democratizing currents lifted excluded groups out of this penumbra, the result was often the creation of yet another layer of patron and client relationships.[139] In this way, the old American state was something to be negotiated on personal terms.

A "new" democratic state that prioritized a capacious *demos* over private inequalities was born in fits and starts between the Civil War and the Great Depression.[140] From an officeholding standpoint, however, only the New Deal signified a break with this longstanding clientelistic mode of governing. The political resolution to the Great Depression of the 1930s reorganized political economy to match interest group liberalism with the twentieth century's bureaucratization of corporate capital. The New Deal Order established new institutional venues, mechanisms of administrative rule, and legal innovations that recognized abstractions in group interest and the separation of public from private property, even as it carved out exceptions for racial authoritarianism in the Jim Crow south.[141] Hatch Act (1939) prohibitions on electioneering, and the management of public property by professionally trained technocrats, ensured the trend in modern statecraft was to strip away traditional forms of personal and party discretion in favor of impersonal, programmatic goals. Most significant in curtailing an intimate patrimonial household economy was labors' right to collective bargaining in the 1930s, which brought rule of law to the workplace, and the erection of a Civil Rights State after the 1960s, which challenged private forms of discrimination. The party's old sources of patrimony shrank considerably but unevenly as the sphere of public regulation grew and "dislodged governance previously in place."[142]

Let us not forget, however, that clientelism proved resilient and adaptable to varied historical conditions over a remarkably long era. Explaining the persistence of the *ancien régime* in Europe up to World War I, Arno Mayer wrote of "a marked tendency to neglect or underplay, and to disvalue, the endurance of old forces and

[134] Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery*, 19–21, 27.

[135] Elizabeth Katz, "Sex, Suffrage, and State Constitutional Law: Women's Legal Right to Hold Office," *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 33, no. 2 (2022): 110–93.

[136] Cathleen Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869–1933* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

[137] Heersink and Jenkins, *Republican Party Politics and the American South*; Eric Yellin, *Racism in the Nation's Service: Government Workers and the Color Line in Woodrow Wilson's America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

[138] Quoted in Willard Gatewood, "William D. Crum: A Negro in Politics," *Journal of Negro History* 53, no. 4 (October 1968): 301–20.

[139] The paradigmatic example of this political incorporation of democratizing currents into clientelism is the subsumption of trade unions into machine politics. See, for instance, Shefter, *Political Parties and the State*, Chapter 4.

[140] William Novak, *New Democracy: The Creation of the Modern American State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022).

[141] Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York, NY: Liverlight Press, 2013).

[142] Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, *The Policy State: An American Predicament* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 6.

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ideas and their cunning genius for assimilating, delaying, neutralizing, and subduing capitalism modernization."[143] Patron–client relationships supplied the old American state with a deep reservoir of flexible resources, popular legitimacy, and powers over particularistic beneficence. But this system also created the kind of polity where a Federalist postmaster, on a whim, could unilaterally censor or even block the mail of Jeffersonian rivals. Defying a party leader even just once during the age of mass politics could end a promising public career or temporarily strip a community of influence. Government was for-profit, if not by express design, then at least by established tradition. Political behavior had every incentive to take on a mercenary character because officeholding emoluments were subject to party competition for nominations and appointments. Plainly, the extended household state harbored all the vices of patrimonial administration.

Rethinking the classical age of republicanism raises a number of questions for the study of American political development. Did patrimonial enclaves simply disappear with the rise of the modern administrative state and the gradual expansion of rights to formerly excluded groups? Or did the older representational inequalities of "belated feudalism" become smuggled under the patina of shiny modernist edifices, passing hidden into the twentieth century state and even today? We know that the presidency generates a kind of "political time" that structures political institutions and historical behavior.[144] To what extent do the honors and emoluments of republican officeholding, and its reciprocal social hierarchies, foster recurring patterns of clientelism? Will patrimonial governance revive if access to citizenship is again circumscribed by race and gender, if the Roberts Court strikes down modern agency rulemaking, if future presidents lift civil service protections, and if the Administrative Procedure Act and the Hatch Act are ignored?[145] Richard Croker's Irish castle may cast a lengthier shadow than many scholars have been willing to acknowledge.

[143] Arno Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (London: Verso 2010), 4.

[144] Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2008).

[145] Erich Wagner, "Trump Has Endorsed A Plan To Purge The Civil Service of 'Rogue Bureaucrats," *Government Executive*, July 27, 2022, https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2022/07/trump-endorsed-plan-purge-civil-service-rogue-bureaucrats/375028/; Nicholas Jacobs, Desmond King, and Sidney Milkis, "Building A Conservative State: Partisan Polarization and the Redeployment of Administrative Power," *Perspectives on Politics* 17, no. 2 (June 2019): 453–69; Zachary Callen, "State-Building As Parlor Trick: Trump, The Executive Branch, and the Politics of Deconstruction," in *American Political Development and the Trump Presidency*, ed. Zachary Callen and Philip Rocco (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 151–63; Stephen Skowronek, John A. Dearborn, and Desmond King, *Phantoms of a Beleaguered Republic: The Deep State and the Unitary Executive* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021); Institute for Policy Integrity, "Roundup: Trump Era Agency Policy In The Courts," New York University School of Law, 2022, https://policyintegrity.org/trump-court-roundup.

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