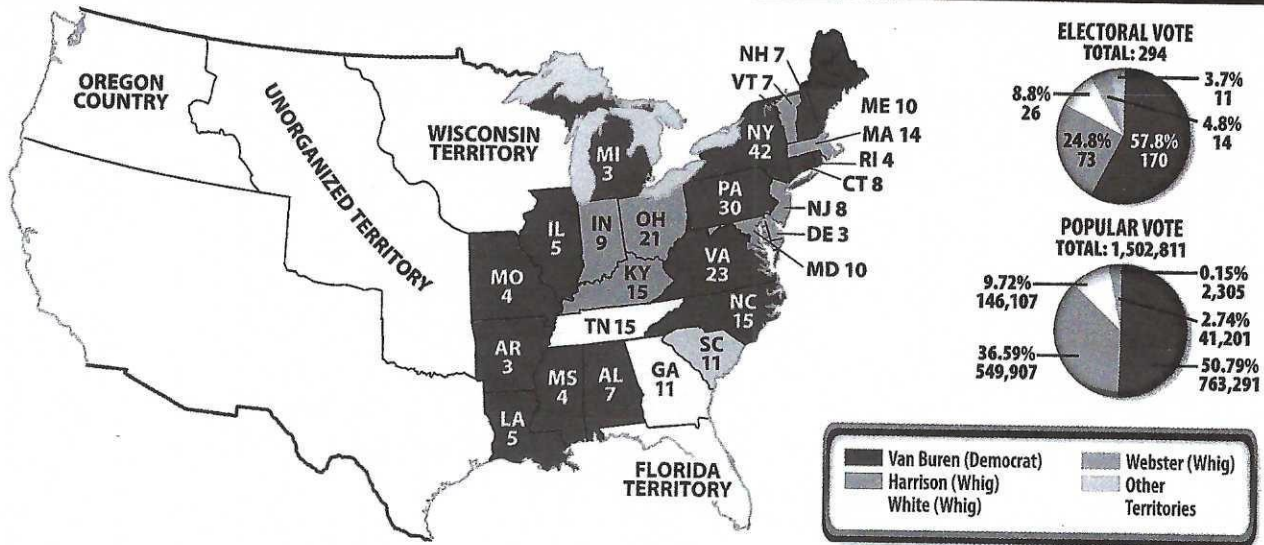


# The Whigs in Power

**GUIDING QUESTION** What events occurred during the 1840s that led to the weakening of the Whig party?

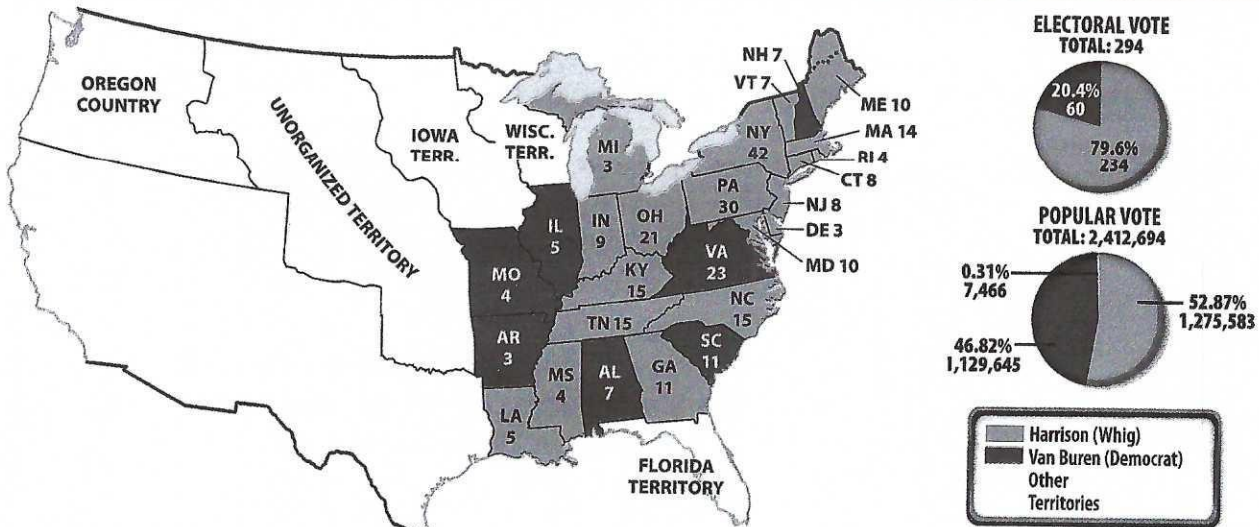
When Van Buren ran for reelection in 1840, Democrats had held the White House for 12 years. Now, with the country still in the depths of depression, the Whigs thought they had a chance to win the presidency.

## ELECTION OF 1836



\* Numbers on map show electoral votes per state.

## ELECTION OF 1840



\* Numbers on map show electoral votes per state.

### INFOGRAPHIC

Although the Whigs' tactics, or methods, failed to win the presidency in 1836, different tactics propelled William Henry Harrison into the White House in 1840.

**1 IDENTIFYING** Which states that supported Van Buren in 1836 turned to Harrison in 1840?

**2 CRITICAL THINKING**  
*Drawing Conclusions* What factors might explain the shift in support for the two parties shown in these maps?



## The Log Cabin Campaign

To run against Van Buren, the Whigs united behind one of their 1836 candidates, William Henry Harrison. Like Andrew Jackson, Harrison was a hero of the War of 1812. John Tyler, a planter from Virginia, was Harrison's running mate. Harrison had first gained fame with his victory over Tecumseh's followers in the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811. The Whigs made reference to this event in the campaign slogan: "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too."

Harrison needed the support of the workers and farmers

who had voted for Jackson in order to win the election. The Whigs portrayed Harrison, who in reality was a wealthy Ohioan, as a simple frontiersman like Jackson. The Democrats attacked this image. They said that all Harrison was good for was sitting in front of a log cabin and collecting his military pension. These attacks played right into the hands of the Whigs, who adopted the log cabin as the **symbol** of their campaign.

While presenting Harrison as a "man of the people," the Whigs portrayed Van Buren as a wealthy snob with perfume-scented whiskers. They blamed him for the depression and

accused him of spending the people's money on expensive furniture for the White House. The Whigs' tactics and the effects of the depression seemed to work. A record number of voters turned out to elect Harrison by a wide margin, making him the first Whig president.

Inauguration day, 1841, was bitterly cold. Harrison insisted on delivering his long speech without a hat or coat. He died of pneumonia 32 days later. He served the shortest term of any president, and John Tyler became the first vice president to gain the presidency because of the death of a president. At age 50, Tyler was also the nation's youngest president up to that time.



During the campaign of 1840, the log cabin image appeared in paintings, banners, and political cartoons.

### Reading HELPDESK



#### Academic Vocabulary

**symbol** a word or object that stands for something else

#### Reading Strategy: Summarizing

A summary is a short restatement of the ideas in a text. Summarizing helps you digest and remember the main points in what you have read. Read the text about the Log Cabin Campaign. On a separate sheet of paper, write one or two sentences that capture the main ideas about the campaign.



## John Tyler's Presidency

John Tyler won the vice presidential election as a Whig. However, he had once been a Democrat and had opposed many Whig policies. Whig party leaders had put him on the election ballot with Harrison mainly to attract Southern voters. Whig Party leaders Daniel Webster and Henry Clay had believed they could control Harrison and run the country behind the scenes. Harrison's death ruined that plan.

President Tyler vetoed several bills sponsored by Whigs in Congress. His lack of party loyalty outraged many Whigs. When he twice vetoed a bill to renew the charter of the Bank of the United States, all but one of his cabinet members resigned. Only Daniel Webster remained as secretary of state. Whig leaders actually expelled Tyler from the Whig Party.

The biggest success of the Tyler presidency came in the area of foreign relations. In 1842 the United States and Great Britain signed the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. This agreement settled a long dispute over the border between Maine and Canada and set a firm U.S.- Canadian boundary from Maine to Minnesota.

Except for opposing Tyler, the Whigs could not agree on their party's goals. Increasingly, they voted by region—North, South, and West—not party. This division may explain why the Whig candidate, Henry Clay, lost the election of 1844 to Democratic candidate James Polk. After only four years, the Whigs were out of power.

The Whigs elected just one more president, Zachary Taylor, in 1848. Taylor also died in office. By then, the Whig Party had become badly divided over the issue of slavery. By the early 1850s the party had nearly disappeared. Many Northern Whigs left the party and helped to form a new political party—the Republican Party that we have today.

### PROGRESS CHECK

**Describing** How did the Whigs lose power in the election of 1844?

## LESSON 3 REVIEW

### Review Vocabulary

1. Use the word *veto* in a sentence that demonstrates your understanding of the term.

### Answer the Guiding Questions

2. **Identifying Cause and Effect** Describe the events that occurred as a result of the closing of the Second National Bank.

3. **Describing** Why did Tyler's policies differ from those of the Whig Party?

4. **ARGUMENT** Write a campaign slogan for Martin Van Buren and for William Henry Harrison that each man could have used on campaign signs to attract voter support in 1840.