History Cold Case #1824

Did a “Corrupt Bargain” Occur?

U.S. History 2016
Document 1

Diary Entry 1

[Edward] Wyer [confidential informant] came also to the office [State Department], and told me that he had it from good authority that Mr. Clay was much disposed to support me, if he could at the same time be useful to himself...

I had conversation at dinner with Mr. Clay...

John Quincy Adams (December 15, 1824)

Diary Entry 2 [conversation with R. P. Letcher, member of the House of Representatives of Kentucky, Clay’s state]:

...The drift of all Letcher’s discourse was much the same as Wyer had told me, that Clay would willingly support me if he could thereby serve himself, and the substance of his meaning was, that if Clay’s friends could know that he would have a prominent share in the administration, that might induce him to vote for me...

John Quincy Adams (December 17, 1824)

Diary Entry 3

Mr. Clay came at six, and spent the evening with me in a long conversation explanatory of the present and prospective of the future.

John Quincy Adams (January 8, 1825)
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Document 2

The friends of [Jackson] have turned upon me, and with the most amiable unanimity agree to vituperate me…The knaves cannot comprehend how a man can be honest. They cannot conceive that I should have solemnly interrogated my conscience and asked it to tell me seriously what I ought to do. That is should have enjoined me not to establish the dangerous precedent of elevating, in this early stage of the Republic, a military chieftain, merely because he has won a great victory...

Mr. Adams, you know well, I should never have selected, if at liberty to draw from the whole mass of our citizens for a President. But there is no danger in his elevation now, or in time to come. Not so of his competitor, of whom I cannot believe that killing two thousand five hundred Englishmen at New Orleans qualifies for the various, difficult, and complicated duties of the Chief Magistracy.

Letter: Henry Clay to Francis P. Blair (January 29, 1825)
Document 3

I observe what you kindly tell me about the future Cabinet. My dear sir, I want no office. When have I shown an avidity for office? In rejecting the mission to Russia and the Department of War under one administration? In rejecting the same Department, the mission to England, or any other foreign mission under the succeeding administration? If Mr. Adams is elected, I know not who will be his Cabinet. I know not whether I shall be offered a place in it or not. If there should be an offer, I shall decide upon it, when it may be made, according to my sense of duty...

Letter: Henry Clay to Francis P. Blair (February 4, 1825)
**Handouts 4**

**Andrew Jackson on the Alleged “Corrupt Bargain”**

**Document 4**
To William Berkeley Lewis  
(private)  
Senate Chamber  
January 24th. 1825

Dear Major  

I wrote you in great haste the other day in which I gave you the rumors that were in circulation of intrigue, union, and corruption, about the Pl. election – I am told it has this morning developed itself, & that Mr Clay has come out in open support of Mr Adams – This, for one, I am pleased with – It shews the want of principle in all concerned – and how easy certain men can abandon principle, unite with political enemies for self agrandisement. I have said I was pleased with this development; it will give the people a full view of our political weathercocks here, and how little confidence ought to be reposed in the professions of some great political characters…

Andrew Jackson

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**Document 5**
To William Berkeley Lewis  
City of Washington  
Fbry 14th. 1825

Dear Major  

I am informed this day by Colo. R[ichard] M[entor] Johnston of the Senate that Mr Clay has been offered the office of Sec of State, and that he will accept it Mr Clay told Colo. J the above – so you see the Judas of the West has closed the contract and will receive the thirty pieces of silver – his end will be the same. Was there ever witnessed such a bare faced corruption in any country before…

Andrew Jackson

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“Clay voted for Adams and made him President and Adams made Clay secretary of state . . . Is this not proof as strong as holy writ of the understanding of corrupt coalition between them?”

Andrew Jackson, 1844
History Cold Case: Did a Corrupt Bargain Occur?
Handout 5
Chronology of a Bargain

- November 3, 1824: “general” presidential election takes place.

- January 8, 1825: John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay have dinner together.

- February 9, 1825: House of Representatives elects John Quincy Adams president of the United States.

- February 12, 1825: John Quincy Adams appoints Henry Clay to be his Secretary of State.
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Handout 6
Political Party Development in the United States
Investigative Report
History Cold Case

Directions: Now that you have completed your investigation of the History Cold Case, you must fill out the following report that explains your investigative conclusions. Is the case involving the alleged “corrupt bargain” still “cold,” or closed?

History Cold Case: _____________

Case First Opened: ________________

Case Disposition (circle one): Remains Open (“cold”) or Case Closed

Date of Your Disposition:

Disposition/Conclusion Explained:

Reasoning/Evidence:

Signature of Investigator: ________________________________
History Cold Case: Did a Corrupt Bargain Occur?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President A</th>
<th>Previously Held Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vice-president</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary of State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary of State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1*

What pattern or trend emerges from the data?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candidate A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2*

Which candidate seems most qualified to be President of the United States? Why?

Which candidate seems least qualified to be President of the United States? Why?
Which candidate received the most popular votes?

Which candidate received the most electoral votes?

Which candidate became President of the United States?

Was the result surprising in light of who you thought was most and least qualified?

**Read and annotate the 12th Amendment to the Constitution.**

**Amendment Twelve, United States Constitution (1804)**

“if no person have such a majority [of electoral votes], then from the persons having the highest numbers not exceeding three on the list of those voted for as President, the House of Representatives shall choose immediately, by ballot, the President...”

Identify the three important provisions of this Amendment in the space below.
The True Story:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President</th>
<th>Year He Was First Elected</th>
<th>Federal Office Held Before Elected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} George Washington</td>
<td>1788</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} John Adams</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Washington’s Vice-President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3\textsuperscript{rd} Thomas Jefferson</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>Washington’s Secretary of State, Adams’s Vice-President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4\textsuperscript{th} James Madison</td>
<td>1808</td>
<td>Thomas Jefferson’s Secretary of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5\textsuperscript{th} James Monroe</td>
<td>1816</td>
<td>James Madison’s Secretary of State</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5: Prior Offices Held by Early US Presidents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Quincy Adams</td>
<td>New England</td>
<td>President Monroe’s talented Secretary of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Clay</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>Speaker of the House of Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Crawford</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>President Monroe’s Secretary of the Treasury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Jackson</td>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>Hero of the battle of New Orleans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 6: Candidate in Presidential Election of 1824*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Popular Votes Received</th>
<th>Electoral Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Quincy Adams</td>
<td>108,740</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Clay</td>
<td>47,136</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Crawford</td>
<td>46,618</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Jackson</td>
<td>153,544</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 7: Results of Election of 1824*