**EIGHT ELECTIONS THAT MADE POLITICAL HISTORY**

**1800: SUPRISING TIE**

Four men competed for the offices of President and Vice President. U.S. President John Adams and Thomas Pinckney were both Federalists.  Aaron Burr and U.S. Vice President Thomas Jefferson were Democratic-Republicans.  The candidate who won the most electoral votes would become President; the runner-up would become Vice President.

It was a bitter campaign—the first to involve political party machinery and organized campaigning.  But it made the record books for another reason.  Jefferson and Burr tied for first place, with 73 electoral votes each.  The House of Representatives took over, as the Constitution required.  Its members chose Jefferson as President and Burr as Vice President. In office, Jefferson worked to change the method of electing Vice Presidents.  The Constitution’s 12th Amendment, ratified in 1804, instructs electors to cast separate votes for President and Vice President.

**1824: UNPOPULAR VICTORY**

In a four-way race, Andrew Jackson of Tennessee got the most popular votes (153,544) and electoral votes (99).  Yet John Quincy Adams, with 108,740 popular votes and 84 electoral votes, became President.  To win outright, a candidate has to win a majority. Then 131 votes—in the Electoral College.  Since two other candidates won a total of 78 votes, no candidate had a majority in 1824.  So, the U.S. House of Representatives took over, and its members chose John Quincy Adams.  Throughout the U.S., there was a feeling that the House had gone against the will of the people.  In the next election (1828), Jackson trounced Adams.

**1860: A NATION DIVIDED**

Of the four Presidential candidates, Abraham Lincoln was the least known.  His chief rival, U.S. Senator Stephen A. Douglas, was a leading spokesman for the Democratic Party.  However, that  party, like the nations, was split on the slavery issue.

When Southerners bolted from the 1860 Democratic convention, the Northern Democrats, who stayed, nominated Douglas for President.  The Southern Democrats chose John Breckinridge, and the Constitutional Union movement chose John Bell, another breakaway Democrat.  To oppose these Democrats, the young, anti-slavery Republican party nominated Abraham Lincoln.  Though Lincoln was not in favor of abolishing slavery, Southerners believed he was, and abolitionists supported him.  Lincoln won.  On hearing the news, South Carolina’s legislature called a state convention, which on December 20 voted to sever the state’s ties to the federal union.  Over the next six weeks, 10 other Southern states seceded from the Union.

**1876: A LOSER WINS**

The Democrats nominated Samuel J. Tilden, a popular governor of New York.  Tilden got 4,284,020 popular votes; Rutherford  B. Hayes, the Republican governor of Ohio, got 4,036,072.  Tilden won 184 electoral votes and Hayes won 166.    But Tilden did not win the election.  To do that, he needed 185 electoral votes-then a majority of the Electoral College.  Neither candidate won a majority because of irregularities in three Southern states, which left 19 electoral votes in dispute and, therefore, uncounted.    To settle the dispute, President Grant appointed an Electoral Commission.  Seven of its members were Republicans; six were Democrats.  Commission members negotiated with Southern governors, legislators, and electors.  Deals were made.  Finally, all 19 electoral votes went to Hayes, who ended up with 185 electoral votes to Tilden’s 184.

**1912: THIRD-PARTY WEDGE**

In a Presidential election, the incumbent usually has a advantage.  But that was definitely not the case in 1912.  Incumbent President William Howard Taft won only eight electoral votes!  His Democratic opponent, Woodrow Wilson, won 435.

Taft’s problems resulted mostly  from the candidacy of a former Republican President, Theodore Roosevelt.  In 1908, Roosevelt had supported Taft.  However, by 1912, a split had developed between the Republicans’ conservative wing, led by Taft, and its progressive wing, led by Roosevelt.  When Taft was nominated at the Republican Convention, Roosevelt organized the Progressive “Bull Moose” Party.  As the Progressive candidate, Roosevelt won 88 electoral votes.

**1948: THE POLLSTERS’ DEFEAT**

Democratic prospects seemed hopeless in 1948.  Harry Truman, who had become President on Franklin D. Roosevelt’s death in 1945, had little popular appeal.  He faced a strong Republican

contender, Thomas E. Dewey, and third-party pressures from Progressives and “Dixiecrats.” (Southern Democrats in the States’ Rights Party)

Political experts-and nearly every public opinion poll-predicted a Dewey victory.  Chicago’s Tribune (see photo) felt safe in printing a “Dewey Defeats Truman” headline before all the votes were counted.  Actually, Truman defeated Dewey-with 24,105,812 popular votes and 303 electoral votes.  Dewey won 21,970,065 popular votes and 189 electoral votes.

**1960: THE FIRST TV DEBATES**

John Kennedy had two strikes against him, many thought.  First, he was a Catholic, and many remembered how Herbert Hoover had beaten another Catholic, Alfred E. Smith, in 1928.  Second, Kennedy faced a tough Republican opponent-Richard M. Nixon, who had been Vice President during the two Eisenhower Administrations.

But four TV debates-the firs ever for Presidential candidates-helped Kennedy defuse the religion issue and take some of the luster off Nixon’s image.  On TV, Nixon appeared nervous, sweaty, tired, defensive, and in need of a shave.

Kennedy seemed calm, collected, sophisticated, and mature.  Political analysts feel that the debates gave Kennedy the edge he needed to squeak through to victory.

**1964: HARD-HITTING ADS**

In 1964, hard-hitting TV ads became a major weapon in a Presidential candidate’s arsenal.  The TV commercials used in the 1952, ’56, and ’60 campaigns were simple presentations of the candidates’ abilities and stands on issues. What made the TV ads in the ’64 campaign different were the “hidden messages” that put the opposition in a bad light.  For instance, an ad for the Democratic candidate, Lyndon Johnson, showed a little girl counting backwards as she pulled petals from a daisy.  The countdown ended with an atomic explosion.  The not-so-hidden message: a vote for Barry Goldwater, the Republican candidate, could mean nuclear war.

The Goldwater camp used TV ads of this type, too.  But the Johnson forces created the most.  The TV ads were so hard-hitting-one media expert  called them “bitter and vicious” – that some people wanted political ads outlawed.  But, 20 years later, political ads on TV are still with us, along with the issue of their fairness and honesty.