A History of the Electoral College and the Election of 1824
For United States citizens, there tends to be a misconception as to how the president of the U.S is elected. A good many citizens are under the impression that they have a direct impact on the outcome of the election, while not knowing just how intricate and complex the system actually is. While it is true that citizens have the right to vote for their leader during the presidential election, they only play an indirect role, as the electoral college decides who the winner is. The electoral college is far from being a simple system and its intricacies and methods have been tweaked and changed several times over the course of its existence. The system is also far from being perfect, as the election of 1824 would reveal, since neither the winner of the popular vote or the electoral vote would lay claim to the presidency. This imperfection in the system would open the door for one of the more famous controversies in United States history, in what would be deemed the 'corrupt bargain.'

While the idea of the electoral college may sound unnecessarily complex, one needs to understand its historical context and the political temperament of the time period that led to its creation. The Founding Fathers faced several difficult questions in determining how to elect a president. The country consisted of thirteen states, each one which placed a heavy emphasis on states' rights and was wary of a strong national government, the nation consisted of 4 million citizens who were spread up and down the Atlantic coastline, which made political campaigning impractical, if not impossible. People tended to be suspicious of political parties, and they felt that true gentlemen should not campaign for public office. A popular saying at the time was, "The office should seek the man, the man should not seek the office." The Framers of the Constitution were also wary of giving the citizens the direct right to elect the president. Along with the belief that it was simply impractical, they also believed that citizens would only look to enhance their own local self-interests or that people lacked the necessary education to understand
politics and they could be easily fooled into believing false promises. The Founding Fathers used the Constitutional Convention to address these problems and the result was the formation of the Electoral College.

The Convention looked at several different methods of electing a president. One of the original ideas that was proposed was to have Congress choose the president. This idea was rejected for several different reasons. First, some felt that leaving such an important decision to Congress would be a divisive subject that could potentially lead to hard feelings in Congress. Others felt that this procedure could lead to political bargaining, corruption, and even foreign interference. Still others felt that this method could upset the balance of power between the Legislative and Executive branches of government, which would be counter-productive to what they were trying to achieve.

Another idea was to have the State Legislatures select a president. This idea was also rejected on the grounds that a president that was beholden to the State Legislatures might permit them to erode federal authority, which would undermine the whole concept of a federal government. One final idea, which was ultimately rejected, was the election of a president by a direct popular vote. The framers believed that citizens wouldn't have access to sufficient information about each candidate to make an informed and educated decision. As a result, they believed that regional loyalties would always shine through and no president would really have the nationwide support that was needed to effectively govern the country.

Eventually, the "Committee of Eleven," spearheaded by the proposal of James Wilson, settled on the indirect election of the President, and the Electoral College was established. While the term "college" may sound misleading, it merely refers to the electors that are responsible for
casting their votes for the presidency, rather than an actual college itself. David Leip also points out that the structure and function of the Electoral College bears some resemblance to several classical institutions. He notes that it is similar to the College of Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church who select the Pope, as well as the Centurial Assembly system of the Roman Republic. He also notes that this probably wasn't a coincidence, since many of the Founding Fathers were well-educated and were quite aware of ancient history.

The Electoral College has been tweaked and adjusted throughout its history but its original form is described in Article II, Section I of the Constitution. David Leip does a nice job of breaking down the finer points of its structure and function as detailed in the Constitution, while also offering some commentary. The number of electors in each state would be equal to its cumulative number of senators and representatives. Therefore, each state would have a base number of two electors due to the fact that each state has two senators, plus however many representatives a state had, which could vary every ten years with the census. Also, the process of choosing electors was delegated to the State legislatures, which helped to ease suspicions of a strong central government. Members of Congress and federal employees were barred from serving as electors in order to help maintain the balance between the legislative and executive branches of government. Electors were required to meet in their respective states, rather than at one big meeting, to try to prevent bribery, corruption, and interference, and electors were required to cast two votes for president. At least one of the votes had to be for a candidate that was not from their home state, to help prevent electors from serving their regional loyalties. The person with the most electoral votes, as long as it was a majority of the total votes, would become president and the runner-up would become Vice President. Lastly, in the event of a tie, or if none of the candidates received a majority of the electoral votes, the election would be sent
to the House of Representatives. Each state would be given one vote, as a concession to the smaller states, and again, an absolute majority was needed to determine the winner, and the runner-up would be declared the vice-president. In the event of another tie, the Senate would decide between the two top candidates.\textsuperscript{10}

While the design was quite complex and seemed to have enough safeguards in place to effectively determine a winner, the Electoral College, in its original format, only lasted through four presidential election periods. Part of the reason that the system lasted only four election periods was the emergence of political parties, despite the Founding Fathers original intent to keep parties out of politics.\textsuperscript{11} Also, even with all the safeguards put in place, it did not take long for controversies to arise. In the election of 1800, both Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr received the same number of electoral votes.\textsuperscript{12} The tie was eventually resolved in the House of Representatives, but it took thirty-six attempts and some deft political maneuvering before Jefferson was awarded the presidency.\textsuperscript{13} This kind of controversy, along with the backstage political dealings, were just what the Founding Fathers were trying to avoid, so it became painfully clear that changes needed to be made.

Four years after the Jefferson/Burr debacle, the 12th Amendment was passed to try to eliminate any future controversies. The 12th Amendment featured a few minor, but key changes. Rather than casting a vote for two different candidates, electors were required to cast one vote for President and one vote for Vice President. The votes would then be counted at the state level and forwarded to the president of the Senate for a full tally. The person with the majority of the votes would become President, and if there was no majority the House of Representatives would again decide the winner, under the same stipulations as before.\textsuperscript{14} Their decision also had to be
made by March 4th, although this was later changed to January 20th in the 20th Amendment.\textsuperscript{15}

The method of choosing the Vice President is also quite similar. The top vote getter, provided that total is a majority, becomes the Vice President. If there is no majority, the top two vote getters are voted on by the Senate, rather than the House of Representatives. Also, in the event of a tie, the current Vice President, since he is the head of the Senate, may cast a vote for himself, provided that he is running for re-election.\textsuperscript{16}

As one can imagine, the Electoral College has received its fair share of criticism over the years. As early as 1900, Walter Hawley raised some fair questions about the Electoral College and the role of the people in electing the President. Hawley wondered whether or not the elections are merely a popular custom permitted by the law of the country. He asked why, if the United States was really a democratic institution governed by the will of the people, would the vote be decided by the House of Representatives in the event of a tie.\textsuperscript{17} He also pointed out that the electoral votes can do a poor job of reflecting the people's desires. He cites the election of Grover Cleveland in 1892 as an example. In that election, Cleveland was declared to have won by a wide margin, but he only carried twenty-three states.\textsuperscript{18} Hawley also noted other so-called landslide victories in the electoral votes, when the popular vote was actually quite close. He observed that Harrison beat Van Buren by 176 electoral votes with only a 150,000 edge in the popular vote, Franklin Pierce carried 254 of a potential 296 electoral votes with a 214,000 edge in the popular vote, and despite Abraham Lincoln carrying 180 electoral votes to 123 for Beckinridge's 123, he received only 1,865,913 votes to 2,814,968 for the rest of his opponents.\textsuperscript{19} Hawley also pointed to the upcoming election of 1900, where a candidate could win the votes of only Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Ohio,
Pennsylvania, Texas, and Georgia, and win the election, even if the other candidate carried the remaining thirty-three states.\textsuperscript{20}

The idea that the Electoral College doesn't truly reflect the wishes of the nation as a whole is far from the only criticism of it. Other criticisms of the Electoral College include, the possibility of electing a minority president, the risk of "faithless electors," and the possibility of depressing voter turnout.\textsuperscript{21}

There are several ways in which a minority president could be elected. First, if there were more than three main candidates, there exists the possibility that none of the candidates would receive the majority of the electoral votes needed to win the election, and the vote would be sent to the House of Representatives, where any of them could be elected regardless of the popular and electoral vote. Also, a candidate could carry a few major states to take the election, even if the other candidate carried the majority of the states. These scenarios are what Hawley pointed to in his criticism of the Electoral College. He noted that the election of 1824 set a precedent for a minority candidate to win the presidency.\textsuperscript{22} In fact, there have been several instances where candidates have won the popular vote but lost the election. These candidates include Andrew Jackson in 1824, Samuel Tilden in 1876, Grover Cleveland in 1888, and Al Gore in 2000.

The risk of faithless electors is also a problem during election years. Faithless electors are members of the Electoral College who do not vote for the candidate that won the elector's state.\textsuperscript{23} There have been 156 examples of faithless electors in U.S history. Seventy-one of these voters changed their votes because the original candidate died before the day on which the electoral college voted, three voters abstained from casting a vote, and eighty-two votes were changed on the sole initiative of the elector.\textsuperscript{24} Of the eighty-two votes that were changed on the initiative of
the elector, twenty-three were an act of collusion in Virginia that took place in 1836, while the rest made the decision to change or abstain on their own.\textsuperscript{25} While the 1952 Supreme Court case \textit{Ray v. Blair} allowed states to require formal pledges by their electors, twenty-one states still do not require their electors to vote for the winning candidate, and the ones that do require pledges usually have only small punishments that are not strictly enforced.\textsuperscript{26} To complicate things even more, the winners of Maine and Nebraska only get two electoral votes, while the rest of the votes for those states are given to whoever won each congressional district in the state.\textsuperscript{27} As one can see, faithless electors have the potential to drastically change an election and it's only made worse by the fact that different states handle the matter differently, which makes the whole process seem quite arbitrary.

One final argument used by detractors of the Electoral College is that it reduces voter turnout. They argue that people may not participate in elections because their state has the same number of electoral votes regardless of whether they vote or not.\textsuperscript{28} As an example, a state that has a heavy Republican influence may not get a large voter turnout because people may believe that their vote is meaningless and that the winner of that state is basically predetermined.

Despite its detractors, there are plenty of people who are proponents of the Electoral College for several different reasons. Proponents argue that the Electoral College promotes cohesiveness within the country by requiring a distribution of popular support for an individual to be elected president, it enhances the status of minority interests, it creates political stability by encouraging a two party system, and it maintains a federal system of government and representation.\textsuperscript{29}

Supporters note that the College contributes to the cohesiveness of the country because it requires widespread support, rather than a focus on one region. They argue that the Electoral
College doesn't let heavily populated urban areas dominate rural ones. They also point out that no single region in the country contains the necessary amount of electoral votes to win the election, so candidates can't play to regional differences. Therefore, candidates have to make themselves appealing to a wide audience, which leads to them doing what is best for the country as a whole.  

While critics of the system argue that the Electoral College diminishes voter turnout and minority voting, supporters argue that it actually has the opposite effect. They believe that minorities will come out in full force during election time because their votes may make the difference in an election. Also, they note that many ethnic minorities tend to live in concentrated areas that also have the most electoral votes. Therefore candidates tend to be sensitive to the wishes and needs of minorities and winning their votes can help swing an election.

Supporters also argue that the Electoral College brings stability to the nation by encouraging a two party system of government. This is certainly true because it would be extremely hard for new or minority parties to win enough electoral votes in the election to force the House of Representatives to vote on a winner, and even if they were able to force the election to the House, they would still need a majority vote to capture the presidency. Proponents also argue that a two party system prevents political chaos and keeps new parties with radical views from popping up all the time, so the political landscape can remain stable.

Lastly, supporters of the Electoral College believe that the institution maintains a federal system of government and representation. When the United States was founded, people valued the idea of states' rights and were wary of a strong central government. The proponents of the
College argue that it is designed to represent each state's choice for the presidency and that a national popular vote would fly in the face of the Constitution and would lead to the nationalization of our central government.37

While there certainly are some fair criticisms of the Electoral College, the institution has functioned fairly well over the last 200 years and the system seems here to stay and is embedded in our government as well as in the Constitution. However, as the adjustments to the Electoral College have shown, the pieces are in place for a perfect storm to occur. Even more prominent than the Aaron Burr and Thomas Jefferson incident was the election of 1824. This election was remarkable for several different reasons. Not only did the candidate with the edge in the popular vote lose, but the top vote getter in the electoral college lost as well. The election of 1824 is invariably pointed to by detractors of the college as an instance of how a minority candidate can win the presidency, how the Electoral College didn't help to limit the number of candidates, and how the possibility for backstage political dealings can exist despite the efforts of the Founding Fathers. Also, the election of 1824 is the only presidential election that had to be decided in the House of Representatives after the passing of the 12th Amendment.

However, before looking at the election itself, a background of the political time period, as well as a look at the candidates, is crucial in understanding how this incident was allowed to happen. Starting in 1816, the years leading up to the election of 1824 were dubbed the "Era of Good Feelings."38 Whether or not this time period really was a period of "good feelings" is up for debate, however, the period did see a limited amount of party competition. The Federalist party began to dissolve due to disgrace from their opposition to the War of 1812 and the events of the Hartford Convention, and would never again be a major player in national politics.39
The "Era of Good Feelings" took place during the tenure of James Monroe's back to back presidential terms. Monroe favored a reconciliation between the Federalists and the Republicans, which neither group was opposed to. Harry Ammon points out that reconciliation was a natural fit because the Federalists knew that their party was on its deathbed due to their opposition to the War of 1812, and the Republican Party had already begun advancing down the road of Federalization by incorporating the Bank of the United States and the protective tariff into their programs. So not only were the Republicans endorsing some of the major policies of the Federalists, the Federalists were also driven to remove the stigma of disloyalty that haunted them, which could only be achieved by pledging their loyalty to the Republicans.

James Monroe wanted not only to close the gap between the two parties but wanted to eliminate parties altogether. He believed that the President should be the head of the nation and not merely the chief of a party. However, he was not willing to show as much leniency toward the Federalists as other believed he should. He did have an open-door policy, he extended offers of friendship toward the Federalists, he gladly received Federalist congressmen, and even was willing to discuss policy with them, but that was about as far as it went. He balked at proposals by those such as Andrew Jackson to include Federalists in his cabinet. While Monroe did want to end rivalries, he felt that Federalists still couldn't be trusted at this juncture and that the country needed to go through a period of de-Federalization, where no federal offices were held by Federalists. He viewed this as a necessity to break the firm grip that the Federalists still had on New England, and he believed that allowing them into his cabinet would only further entrench them in power. He also wanted to avoid arousing suspicion within the Republican party by giving too much power to the Federalists and wanted to show loyalty to those who had stood by the government. Lastly, Monroe was eager to avoid the party schisms and in-fighting
that had plagued Madison and Jefferson, which may have jeopardized his goal of eliminating parties altogether.\textsuperscript{47}

For several years it seemed as though Monroe's plan was working quite well, and party conflict was at a minimum. With the exception of Massachusetts, every state in New England was controlled by the Republicans and there were no signs in Congress of any organized opposition to Monroe's administration.\textsuperscript{48} Monroe also won his re-election bid in a landslide, which seemed to further illustrate his success. However, the Panic of 1819, the Missouri crisis, and the looming presidential election of 1824 opened the door for burgeoning political rivalries with the Republican camp. As the schisms and rifts within the party grew, five candidates for the 1824 presidential election soon emerged from the different factions. The list of candidates included John Quincy Adams, William H. Crawford, John C. Calhoun, Andrew Jackson, and Henry Clay. Adams, Crawford, and Calhoun all held positions in Monroe's cabinet and Jackson held several prominent military positions, which meant that these rifts and factions were developing right under Monroe's nose.\textsuperscript{49} Despite Monroe's beliefs, it soon became apparent that political opposition and the formation of different political parties was inevitable and, just like today, mudslinging campaigns by potential candidates soon began to occur, in order to hamper their opponents chances of being elected. As the campaigns for the presidential election of 1824 began to grow more intense, it signaled the end of the "Era of Good Feelings" and the end of the single party system of government.

The rifts and schisms that resulted in the end of the "Era of Good Feelings," resulted in the emergence of five potential candidates for the 1824 presidential election. An in-depth look at these five candidates is necessary before exploring the election itself. The first candidate that
deserves mentioning is John Caldwell Calhoun. John C. Calhoun was born on March 18th, 1782 in South Carolina. He graduated from Yale University with a degree in law in 1804, and was admitted to the South Carolina Bar in 1807.\textsuperscript{50} He served in South Carolina's legislature and also served three terms in the House of Representatives. Calhoun and Henry Clay were two prominent "warhawks," who were instrumental in convincing the House of Representatives to declare war on Britain in 1812.\textsuperscript{51} Calhoun also served as the secretary of war from 1817-1825 under James Monroe. Although he initially threw his hat into the race for the 1824 presidential election, he later withdrew from the race when he lost the endorsement of Pennsylvania, which Paul Johnson pointed out was crucial to his election bid.\textsuperscript{52} He then declared his intentions to run for the Vice Presidency and ran unopposed. He served as the Vice President under John Quincy Adams and was re-elected in 1828 under Andrew Jackson.\textsuperscript{53}

William Harris Crawford was another candidate who ran in the 1824 presidential election. Crawford was born in Nelson County, Virginia on February 24th, 1772. He later moved to South Carolina in 1779 and then to Georgia in 1783.\textsuperscript{54} He pursued an education in classical studies and, like John Calhoun, he practiced law. He was admitted to the Bar in Lexington, Georgia in 1799.\textsuperscript{55}

Many of Crawford's political views were shaped by James Jackson, who reformed the Georgia state government after the Yazoo Land Fraud.\textsuperscript{56} Crawford's political career began in 1803 where he served in the state legislature until 1807. He was later appointed to the United States Senate after the death of Abraham Baldwin. He also served as the President Pro Tempore of the Senate during the Twelfth Congress. Crawford would go on to decline an 1813 offer to become the secretary of war, and instead accepted an offer to become the minister to France.
However, he did later become the secretary of war upon his return from France. Lastly, Crawford took on the position of secretary of the treasury under James Monroe before being nominated for the presidency by a congressional caucus. However, his campaign for the presidency was severely hampered by illness. He was incapacitated by severe bouts of paralysis, which led people to begin questioning his ability to lead the nation. He would ultimately finish behind both John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson in the 1824 election, and he would later return to Georgia where he served as a judge until his death in 1834.

Now that the lives of both John C. Calhoun and William H. Crawford have been explored, it is time to look at the three most important men in the 1824 presidential election, Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams, and Andrew Jackson. While it is true that Henry Clay may have finished in last place in the 1824 election behind even the incapacitated William H. Crawford, the names Clay, Adams, and Jackson are the ones that are synonymous with the 1824 election, and they are the names that are also associated with the problems that surround the Electoral College and also the so called "corrupt bargain" of 1824.

The first of these men, Henry Clay, also known as the "Great Compromiser," has a long and storied political career. Henry Clay was born into a middle class family in Hanover County, Virginia on April 12th, 1777, and was the seventh of nine children He studied law in Richmond, Virginia, was admitted to the Bar in 1797, and began practicing in Lexington, Kentucky. It was also in Kentucky where he became interested in politics. He became a member of the State House of Representatives in 1803 and then was elected to the U.S Senate to fill the void caused by the resignation of John Adair. He served from November 19, 1806 to March 3, 1807, and his time spent in his first run in the Senate was notable, since he was younger than the Constitutional
age requirement of thirty years. He returned to the State House of Representatives after his first stint in the Senate, only to later return, this time to fill the vacancy left by Buckner Thruston.

After his second stint in the Senate, he won election to the U.S House of Representatives and was elected its speaker in 1811.

Clay's time spent in the U.S House of Representatives is when he really began to make a name for himself and earned the nickname of the "great compromiser." While Clay was a prominent Warhawk, he played a vital role in the peace negotiations in Ghent, which ended the War of 1812. He was also instrumental in forging the Missouri Compromise in 1820. Clay would soon emerge as a candidate for the 1824 election, but he finished last in the polls, and when the vote went to the House of Representatives, Clay's name was not among the candidates that were up for consideration. However, he would be named Secretary of State by the eventual winner John Quincy Adams, which would set off a fierce debate over whether or not a "corrupt bargain," actually took place. Clay would try several more times, albeit unsuccessfully, to run for the presidency. He did, however, return to the Senate, where he served until his death on June 29th, 1852.

The two remaining candidates for the presidency were John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson. The 1824 election would come down to these two individuals and when the dust had settled, there would be a multitude of controversies that surrounded the election and the winner. The first of these men, John Quincy Adams, was the son of a former president himself. He was born in Braintree, Massachusetts on July 11th, 1767. Adams received his early education in Europe at the University of Leyden, and later graduated from Harvard University in 1787 with a degree in law.
Adams began his political career by being appointed the minister to the Netherlands in 1794, to Portugal in 1796, and to Prussia in 1797. He was elected to the Massachusetts state senate in 1802 and made and was an unsuccessful candidate for the U.S House of Representatives in the same year. However, he did serve in the U.S Senate as a Federalist from March 4th, 1803 until his resignation on June 8th, 1808 after he split with the Federalist party.\textsuperscript{65}

After his resignation from the Senate, he served as the minister to Russia and to Britain, before being named Secretary of State under James Monroe and serving in that capacity to 1825.\textsuperscript{66} During this time period, the position of Secretary of State was seen as a springboard towards the presidency, so naturally, Adams became a candidate for the 1824 election. While things did not go as smoothly as planned, Adams would still end up in the White House where he served one term. After his presidency, Adams served in the U.S House of Representatives and would later become a member of the Whig party, which formed after the failure of the "Era of Good Feelings" to eliminate political parties. Adams would remain a member of the Whig party until his death on February 23rd, 1848.\textsuperscript{67}

The last remaining candidate for the presidential election in 1824 was Andrew Jackson. Andrew Jackson was born on March 15, 1767, in the Waxhaws area that bordered North and South Carolina. He was the third child of his Scottish-Irish parents.\textsuperscript{68} His father, also named Andrew, died in a logging accident just weeks before the younger Andrew’s birth, and his mother Elizabeth raised her children in South Carolina, in the home of one of her sisters.\textsuperscript{69}

During the Revolutionary War Jackson joined the Continental Army as a courier. His brother Hugh died in the Battle of Stono Ferry in 1779, and two years later in 1781, Andrew and his other brother Robert became prisoners of war for several weeks in 1781. The young boys
received poor treatment during their imprisonment, which caused Jackson to resent the British for the remainder of his life. Robert died of illness shortly after their release and their mother died of either Cholera or Ship Fever after her arrival at Charleston to nurse American prisoners of war. As a result, Jackson found himself an orphan and an only child by the age of fourteen.

When Jackson was seventeen he moved to Salisbury, North Carolina, where he studied law, just like all the other candidates previously mentioned. He was admitted to the Bar in September of 1787 and was the prosecuting officer for the Superior Court in Nashville Tennessee, which at the time was part of the western district of North Carolina. After the admittance of Tennessee to the Union, Jackson was elected the new state's first congressman. He was later elected to the Senate but he only held his seat for one session before resigning. After his resignation he returned to Tennessee, where he served for six years on the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Jackson resumed his military career in 1802 when he was elected Major General of the Tennessee militia. Ten years later, he was named Major General of the U.S Armed Forces. It was in the military that Jackson gained fame as a war hero against the Native Americans in the Creek War and against the British in the War of 1812 at the Battle of New Orleans.

Jackson would soon emerge as a candidate in the 1824 election. Paul Johnson points out that Jackson was the wild card candidate in the election. While he lacked major political experience, was prone to violence, and was accused of marrying a woman who was not officially divorced from her husband, his wartime heroics had made him immensely popular with the people.
Now that biographies of all the potential candidates have been examined, the election campaign itself needs to be explored. Everett Brown notes that the campaigning for the 1824 election began even before the 1820 election took place. While the "Era of Good Feelings" would ultimately be a failure, it did put an end to political rivalries for a short time. As a result, the only question leading into the 1820 election was, who would be James Monroe's successor, since the outcome of the 1820 election was all but a formality.76

Each candidate had their own strategy in 1820, in order to boost their chances for success in 1824. A caucus was held on April 8, 1820, with the hopes of nominating Henry Clay for Vice President, which was a complete and utter failure. Only forty-six members out of two-hundred and thirty attended, and on the motion of Colonel Richard M. Johnson, it was resolved that it was inexpedient to make any nomination.77 On the other hand, John Quincy Adams didn't want to run for Vice President in 1820 because he felt that doing so might actually hurt his chances of running for President in 1824. Adams did not want to run for the Vice Presidency against the incumbent Daniel Tompkins, and felt that he might need Tompkins' support in the future, so he didn't want to take any votes away from Tompkins.78

Adams also proved to be very good at breaking down the other candidates and assessing their chances at being elected. He considered Jackson to be a very formidable candidate but he also possessed a great deal of respect for him. He believed that if Jackson was elected, he would run keep the government free from bargains and corruption, unlike the other candidates. Adams regarded Crawford as his fiercest rival, and he also doubted that Clay would ever become president. Adams also proved to be eerily prophetic when he noted that the topic of slavery
would be the vital issue in the 1824 election, and the surplus of candidates might lead to the
election being decided in the House of Representatives. 79

As the election results began to pour in, the outcome was somewhat inconclusive. The
results reflected regional preferences and favoritism. Adams carried only New England and some
of New York, Clay won his home state of Kentucky and Ohio and Missouri, while Crawford's
support was centered in the Southeast. Andrew Jackson was the only candidate who seemed to
have national support. He won his own Southwest portion of the country. He also carried
Pennsylvania, New Jersey, North Carolina, Indiana, Illinois, and was a close second in several
other states. 80

Jackson's national support reflected his immense national popularity as a war hero. To
further break down the vote, of the sixteen states that chose presidential electors by the popular
vote, Jackson received 152,901 votes to 114,023 for Adams, 47,217 for Clay, and 46,979 for
Crawford. In total, Jackson received forty-two percent of the popular vote to thirty-three percent
for Adams. He also received the majority of the electoral vote by winning ninety-nine electoral
votes to Adams' eighty-four. 81 Jackson had every right to assume that he had won the election
since he carried both the popular and electoral votes, however, his ninety-nine electoral votes
were thirty-two short of the necessary one-hundred and thirty-one votes to take the election. As a
result, the vote was moved to the House of Representatives as mandated by the Twelfth
Amendment of the Constitution.

The Twelfth Amendment states that if the vote is sent to the House of Representatives,
only the top three candidates would be eligible to be voted for. Everett Brown notes that a
considerable amount of time passed before it was determined who the third candidate behind
Jackson and Adams would be, and it wasn't until the middle of December that the news broke that the third candidate would be Crawford.\textsuperscript{82} Even though Henry Clay was out of the running for the presidency, his role in the 1824 election was far from over. He still remained Speaker of the House of Representatives and he had enough support in the House to be able to swing the election in either man's favor.\textsuperscript{83} What soon transpired became one of the greatest controversies in the nation's history and earned the nickname of the "corrupt bargain."

The controversy was dubbed the "corrupt bargain" because it was believed that Clay used his position of power to swing the election in Adams' favor, in order to be awarded the position of Secretary of State, after he was rebuffed by Andrew Jackson. This position was important to Clay because as Paul Johnson points out, the position of Secretary of State was used by Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe as a springboard to the presidency.\textsuperscript{84}

While there is no clear evidence as to whether or not an act of collusion did take place, there certainly were reasons to be suspicious. Brown notes that at a dinner in honor of the Marquis de Lafayette in January of 1825, Clay sat next to Adams and told him that he wished to have a private conversation with him. The two men met for three hours and Clay divulged to Adams that he was determined to support him.\textsuperscript{85} In addition to this, many of Clay's friends were supporters of Andrew Jackson, which made Clay's decision seem even more suspicious to the Jackson camp.\textsuperscript{86} Once the votes were tallied by the House of Representatives, Adams was awarded the presidency by taking thirteen votes to Jackson's seven and Crawford's four. An immediate outcry erupted from Jackson's camp once the results were announced. Jackson had carried both the popular vote and the electoral vote, and Jackson and his supporters felt like they had been cheated. This is when they began to refer to the election and its results as a "corrupt
bargain" and the "lost election". The contemporary newspapers also had a field day with the results. While there were some newspaper editors such as the New Hampshire Sentinel that didn't believe Adams was the type of man to make unethical political deals, a good majority of newspapers attacked what they believed was an unfair election. Some newspapers such as the Norwich Courier went as far as comparing Clay and Adams to Anthony and Caesar.\(^{87}\)

However, it appears that the claims of a "corrupt bargain," are unfounded. Emotions always run high in competition and much of the anger would seem to have been the result of the Jacksonian camp losing what they believed to be an unfair election, rather than an act of collusion taking place. Brown notes that it appears that no assurances of a cabinet position were given during Adams' and Clay's meeting and Clay also stated in public that he wanted no office and was unsure whether he would be given a position if Adams was successful.\(^{88}\)

Also, as Everett Brown points out, there are a lot of variables involved in the election and it's highly unlikely that someone would lose an election simply because one man, such as Henry Clay, chose to support Adams. For instance, Adams' stance on the Federalists may have helped swing the election in his favor. Henry R. Warfield, a Federalist from Maryland, was concerned about giving his support to Adams because he felt that his election might exclude Federalists from office. After being personally assured by Adams himself, Warfield felt confident in offering his support to Adams and his stance helped swing Maryland in favor of Adams.\(^{89}\) A similar situation happened in New York, where Stephan Van Rensselaer was also hesitant to give his support to Adams. He was given the same assurance that Warfield was given and it was Van Rensselaer's vote that decided New York for Adams.\(^{90}\) Further evidence also suggests that Clay was inclined to support Adams regardless of the situation, simply because of the disdain he
harbored toward Jackson. Brown notes that Clay was fearful of what would happen if a military leader like Jackson was elected president. Clay also received letters of support after his decision from the likes of John Tyler, Chief Justice Marshall, and Judge Joseph Story. They noted that they would have been surprised if Clay had supported anyone else due to Clay's public stance on executive duties. So while accusations of a "corrupt bargain" ran rampant after Clay's decision to support Adams, it all seems to be the product of sky-high emotions and the agony of defeat, after losing what the Jackson camp believed to be rightfully theirs. In hindsight, Clay's decision seems to make sense. While Jackson was popular with the people, once the vote was sent to the House the odds were against him. He lacked major political experience and politicians were wary of a military leader, especially one with the background of Jackson, being elected President. Also, Jackson's military exploits were one of the things that his critics harped on during the campaign process.

As one can see, the election of the President of the United States is a complicated process. One of the problems facing the Founding Fathers was how to go about electing a president. They were wary of giving the people the direct power to elect a president, so a different method was sought out. The Constitutional Convention addressed this issue and after several rejected proposals, they settled on the creation of the Electoral College. The Electoral College has undergone some minor adjustments and tweaks over the years and while the system has its fair share of critics, the system seems to be here to stay.

However, as with any system, regardless of the safeguards that are put in place, the possibility always exists for complications and anomalies to arise. This was the case in the 1824 election, when John Quincy Adams was elected President over Andrew Jackson, who won both
the popular vote and the electoral vote but still lost the election. This incident highlights some of the arguments that critics fault the Electoral College for. They argue that the system opens the door for a minority president who that does not reflect the will of the people to be awarded the presidency. Proponents of the system argue that the Electoral College helps to maintain a two-party system that prevents more than two major candidates vying for office and helps to prevent backstage political dealing. Both of these arguments were heavily scrutinized in the election of 1824. There were four major candidates that ran for office, and while no solid evidence can be provided of backstage political bargaining, there were massive outcries that such bargaining did occur and it became one of the most heavily debated topics in U.S history.

Due to the outpouring of accusations of political bargaining, the election of 1824 was nicknamed the "corrupt bargain." People began to believe that Henry Clay, who had lost out on the presidency, used his political power to throw the election in favor of John Quincy Adams in order to boost his chances of being elected president in 1828. While these accusations remain unfounded, they helped to set the stage for the election of 1828. The 1828 election campaigns were notably intense with Jackson using the "corrupt bargain" as his platform, while his opponents attacked Jackson for his well-known acts of violence and the belief that he was a bigamist. Things did not work out the way Clay had planned because even though he did become Secretary of State in Adams' administration, he did not win the 1828 election, which went to Jackson. However, winning the Presidency did not come without a price for Jackson, as his beloved wife Rachel died shortly before he took office. Jackson would ultimately blame her death on the vicious campaign attacks that were directed at the two of them.
While the possibility does exist for incidents like the 1824 election to occur, the system has worked for over two centuries, and events like the 1824 election garner so much attention mainly because they are the exception, not the rule. As for the accusations of a corrupt bargain, it seems unlikely that there was any such thing. It seems more likely that the accusations stemmed from the fact that the Jackson camp felt like they had been robbed. Also, everything indicates that Clay was naturally more inclined to support Adams than Jackson. Clay had let it be well-known that he did not personally care for Jackson and was wary of his military background, therefore it comes as no surprise that when it came time to show his hand, he went with Adams.
Notes

32. David Leip. *The Electoral College*.
34. David Leip. *The Electoral College*.
69. Steven Case. "Andrew Jackson."
70. Steven Case. "Andrew Jackson."
71. Steven Case. "Andrew Jackson."
72. Steven Case. "Andrew Jackson."
73. Steven Case. "Andrew Jackson."
74. Steven Case. "Andrew Jackson."

Works Cited


