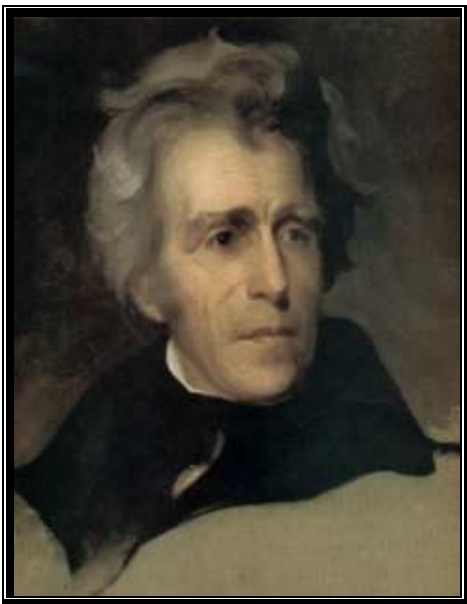


“NOW DEFEND YOURSELF,
YOU DAMNED RASCAL!”

Amy Hissom
American History I
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Andrew Jackson



Thomas Hart Benton

Andrew Jackson and Thomas Hart Benton became good friends after Benton personally presented at the Hermitage, a plan, which he convinced to recruit three regiments of volunteers. Being very impressed by this, Jackson made Benton his personal aide. He helped to raise a force of over 2000 men. Not only was he Jackson's personal aide, he also became colonel of one of the infantry regiments. By early 1813, this force of men was on its way to defend New Orleans.

While Benton was in Washington presenting Jackson's claims to be reimbursed for the expenses he incurred while leading his men 800 miles back home to Nashville, Jackson was trying to make peace between two of his army officers, who between them passed a challenge for a duel. These two officers were Major WILLIAM Carroll and Esign Lyttleton Johnston. This argument was settled but in the process, Benton's brother Jesse, who was Johnston's second, got into an argument with Major Carroll and ended up fighting a duel with him. Andrew Jackson was Carroll's second.

Carroll was known to be a poor pistol shooter. Jackson arranged the rules for the duel. The two fighters had to stand back to back and ten feet apart. When the signal was given they would wheel and fire their guns. When the signal was given, Jesse wheeled around in a squatting position and got shot in the rear end. I am sure that his pride was hurt more than his butt! What an embarrassing situation this must have been. No wonder it was laughed about for years to come.

Benton was very upset with Jackson after he returned to Tennessee and learned about what had happened to his brother. He felt that Jackson was not acting like a friend in handling the situation the way that he did. Because of all this, Jackson and Benton ended up in a duel against each other. Their duel ended up as a bloody brawl in which

Benton was stabbed five times, but shot Jackson in the shoulder. Benton sealed his victory by breaking Jackson's sword across his knee.

On Jackson's orders, Benton stayed in Nashville for recruiting, but left the army early in 1815 and ended up in Missouri where he became one of the first U.S. Senators. Ten years went by before Jackson was to see Benton again. Jackson was elected a Senator of Tennessee in 1823. He arrived at the capitol to take his seat in the Senate Chamber, which just so happened to be right next to Benton. Both Jackson and Benton turned down offers from other senators willing to change seats with them. They were also on the same committee. They finally ended up getting over the past and becoming good friends once again. Much of Jackson's fame came from the help of Benton. He stuck by Jackson from this time on and through thick and thin. He played a big role in Jackson becoming president in 1828.

When the Senate charged Jackson with improper conduct when he removed all the government money from the Bank of the US, Benton vowed not to rest until the Senate expunged the resolution from the official record. After three years in a row of praising Jackson in every session of Congress, in 1836 it became a national issue. He put his whole heart into clearing Jackson's name. When the expunging was voted on, it passed by a vote of 24 to 19.

Here you have two men who knew what the true meaning of friendship really is. A true friend is one that will forgive you for your bad choices. They started out being very good friends and even though they had a terrible disagreement which caused their friendship to end, they went back to being even better friends.

As bad as the outcome of their argument was, they found it in their hearts to forgive one another and go back to having the friendship they had once before. Andrew Jackson was a very lucky man to have had such a devoted and loving friend as he did in Thomas Hart Benton. I have always believed that you are truly blessed if you can find one true friend before your life comes to an end. Jackson was definitely blessed!