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Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON AT THE HERMITAGE
IN FIRST DAY OF ISSUE STAMP CEREMONY COMMEMORATING
200TH . BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY OF ANDREW JACKSON
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

One senses a great presence in this stately mansion. It bears the mark of a unique man and his times. There is a peace here, and a feeling of lives well spent -- joined in purpose as well as in love.

I have visited The Hermitage before, stopping off on some of my many trips from Texas to Washington, often with two little girls stuffed into the back seat. I love this graceful house more each time -- for it is like meeting with an old friend.

And so to join Governor Ellington, the ladies of The Hermitage and you who are admirers of Andrew Jackson on this occasion, is very special to me.

Together, we honor an authentic American, a rare man of heroic stature. Of all the Presidents of the United States, there are only a few, I believe, whose image remains strongly with us today. Men whom we can visualize as having once been flesh and blood and not vague shadows on the pages of history. For me, Andrew Jackson was one of these men.

Following the Presidential election of 1828, a Nashville newspaper printed this item:

"George Ridley, one of the oldest and most respectable citizens, came to the polls yesterday and voted for General Jackson. Mr. Ridley observed after depositing his vote in the ballot box that he was then willing to die...."

This was the spirit widespread in that election. Andrew Jackson by his deeds had excited the new nation. In his heroic defense of New Orleans, he had confirmed a young nation's confidence in itself.

For the first time, a rugged man from the West was in the White House -- for, as you know, Tennessee in those days was regarded as a western frontier state.

After Jackson's inauguration, a new spirit pervaded national affairs. "It was a proud day for the people," wrote a Kentucky newspaperman to his paper, "General Jackson is their own president."

To some, he was Old Hickory. To others, "the gentle savage," or "the fighting President." Whichever of his roles they knew him by, farmer, lawyer, merchant, general or President, the people were touched by him. He was one of them.

Blunt and straightforward, he brought respect -- a candor to public life.

No man, one of his contemporaries vowed, knew better the difference between firmness and obstinacy.

As he leaned back, smoking his old Powhatan bowl pipe with its long stem, resting it on his crossed legs, I can hear him saying, "Hairsplitting is a dangerous business."

And he grew stronger after every contact with the people. Van Buren, who worked closely with him as his Secretary of State, described him this way: "(The people) were his blood relations -- the only blood relations he had...."

The Jacksonian era was a period of wide political and social reform. The battle was fought and won for the principle of free, compulsory public schools.

The public educational system as we know it today came into being and crystalized during this great transitional period in our history.

But today it faces new trials. The great overriding mandate of the 1960's is for equality in education. This can and must lead the way for the other equalities so long declared by Jefferson and Jackson -- political and economic equality.

As Horace Mann, the educator, said, "education is the great equalizer of the conditions of men -- the balance wheel of the social machinery.... It does better than to disarm the poor of their hostility toward the rich; it prevents being poor."

Today's pioneering new ventures in education might be called a second Jacksonian Revolution.

Under 18 new laws, old problems are being attacked with new methods. I have seen them these last two days and I think you and Mr. Jackson would be pleased.

The Teacher Corps, which we saw in action in Canada Township in North Carolina yesterday, is bringing fresh hope and light into our blighted areas and disadvantaged schools. It has the spirit of our early missionaries -- except today's challenges lie in our landlocked hills and in city slums.

On Monday, in Charleston, West Virginia, we participated in a Student-Parent Project that is an exciting effort to open the school to the community and make it a focus of local life.

The excitement doesn't stop there. There are many new dimensions. Educational TV and computers will soon be coming into wide use in education. I understand in one computer system, a student may simply dial a central computer bank for subject material or perhaps make ^{up} a class missed. The machine will serve as tutor, allowing each student to work at his own pace.

These imaginative efforts to spread more and better education through our land are surely nothing short of revolutionary. And much of it had its beginning here -- in a seed sown from The Hermitage.

For all these reasons, it is with pride that I meet with you today to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Andrew Jackson and to dedicate this handsome postage stamp in his memory. It is based on a portrait by Thomas Sully in the White House. It is said to have been Lincoln's favorite painting of Andrew Jackson, and it hangs today, as it did in Lincoln's time, in the Lincoln Room upstairs.

But this is not the first Jackson stamp. In fact, over the years, Old Hickory has been honored fourteen times on our postage stamps -- and "The Hermitage" once.

The unique thing about the first Jackson stamp, issued in 1863, is that it marked a change in Post Office policy. Up until that time -- only Washington, Jefferson and Franklin had appeared on our stamps. The issuance of a Jackson stamp so soon after his death, indicated, I believe, that his country was prompt to recognize Andrew Jackson among our greatest Presidents.

I hope that this stamp today will rekindle in the hearts of all Americans a more vivid appreciation for the man who brought a new meaning to the word democracy and a new hope to the people that they might share equally in the fruits of that democracy.

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