



# The First American Political Conventions: Transforming Presidential Nominations, 1832-1872

*Stan M. Haynes*

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For almost two centuries, Americans have relied upon political conventions to provide the nation with choices for new leadership. As a quintessentially American spectacle, the modern conventions continue many of the traditions and rules developed during the first political conventions in the mid-nineteenth century. This study analyzes the birth of the convention process in the 1830s and follows its development over forty years, chronicling each of the presidential elections from 1832 to 1872, including campaigns that involved the giants of the era, Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, and Abraham Lincoln. For each election, the leading candidates, key issues, and memorable speeches and events that occurred on the convention floor are evaluated, as well as back-room deal-making, "dark horse" candidacies, and an analysis of the meeting halls, the accompanying parades, rallies, and other political hoopla that took place in the convention cities. By exploring the first political conventions, this volume sheds new light on a political ritual that is still the focal point of the modern American presidential campaign.

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