

WHY A DONKEY AND AN ELEPHANT?

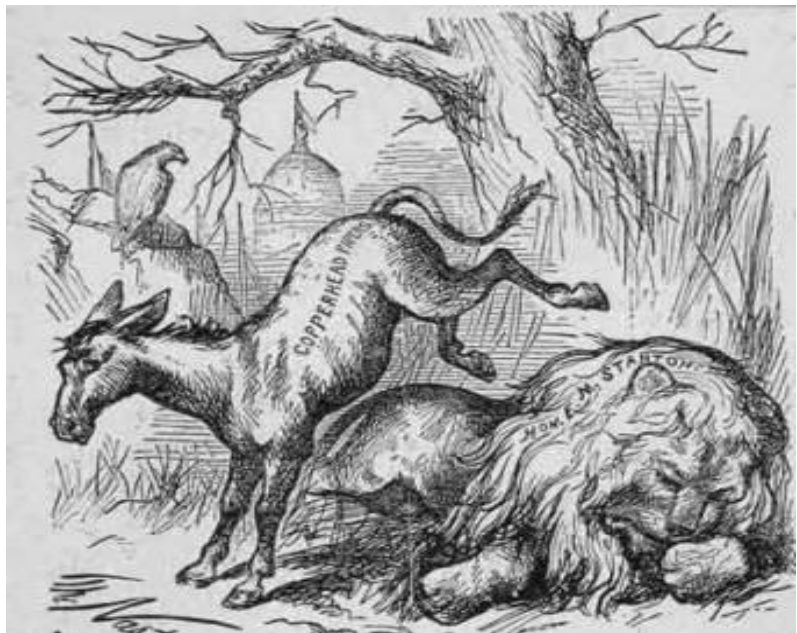
<https://www.history.com/news/how-did-the-republican-and-democratic-parties-get-their-animal-symbols>

The Democratic Party's donkey and the Republican Party's elephant have been on the political scene since the 19th century.

The donkey is stereotypically bumbling, slow, and stubborn; the elephant— big and clumsy. Being compared to one of these animals is not exactly flattering in this sense. Yet, for well over a century, they have been the popular symbols of America's major political parties – the donkey for Democrats and the elephant for Republicans. So how did the donkey and elephant enter into our political lexicon? As one could imagine, it all started with an insult.

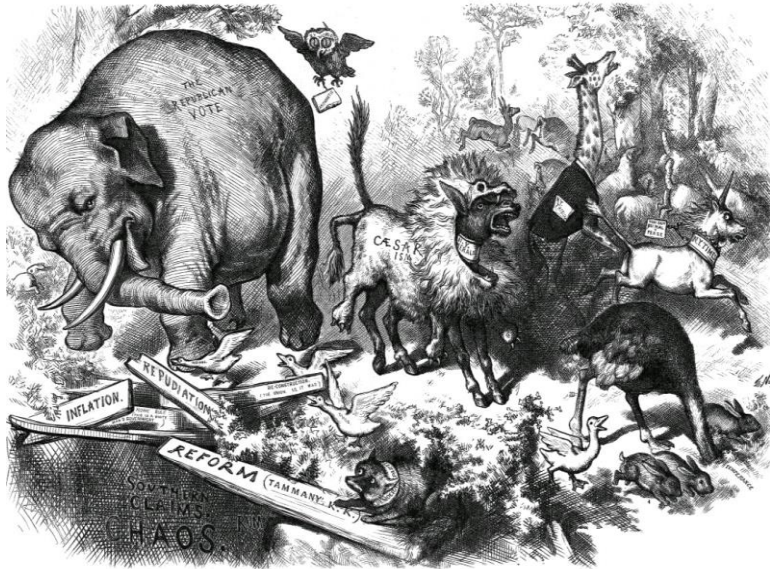
The origins of the Democratic donkey can be traced to the 1828 presidential campaign of Andrew Jackson. During that race, opponents of Jackson called him a jackass. However, rather than rejecting the label, Jackson, a hero of the War of 1812 who later served in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate, was amused by it and included an image of the animal in his campaign posters. Jackson went on to defeat incumbent John Quincy Adams and serve as America's first Democratic president. In the 1870s, influential political cartoonist Thomas Nast helped popularize the donkey as a symbol for the entire Democratic Party.

In a cartoon called "A Live Jackass Kicking a Dead Lion" that ran in an 1870 issue of *Harper's Weekly*, he used the donkey to represent the "Copperhead Democrats" – a faction of Northern Democrats that were in opposition of the Civil War. In it a donkey is kicking a dead lion, who was a stand-in for the recently deceased Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton. Nast thought Copperhead Democrats were anti-Union and believed the press' treatment of Stanton was disrespectful.



The Republican Party was formed in 1854 and six years later Abraham Lincoln became its first member elected to the White House. An image of an elephant was featured as a Republican symbol in at least one political cartoon and a newspaper illustration during the Civil War (when "seeing the elephant" was an expression used by soldiers to mean experiencing combat), but the pachyderm didn't start to take hold as a GOP symbol until Thomas Nast, who's considered the father of the modern political cartoon, used it in an 1874 *Harper's Weekly* cartoon. Titled "The Third-Term Panic," Nast's drawing mocked *The New*

York Herald, which had been critical of President Ulysses Grant's rumored bid for a third term, and portrayed various interest groups as animals, including an elephant labeled "the Republican vote," which was shown standing at the edge of a pit.



THE THIRD-TERM PANIC.
 "An lion, having got on the Lion's skin, roared about in the Forest, and scared himself by frightening all the feeble animals he met with in his wanderings."—Illustration or Engraving.

THE NEW YORK HERALD
 PAST: 7. THOMAS NAST

Ulysses S. Grant (whom Nast was a supporter and good friend of) had been president for two terms, elected in 1868 and again in 1872, and was contemplating a run for a third term. (It wouldn't be until 1951 and the 22nd Amendment that a term limit was placed on the presidency, thanks in no small part to FDR's four term run as president.) *The New York Herald* very much opposed Grant's potential run and wrote several articles complaining of "Caesarism" – meaning military or imperial dictatorship.

In "Third Term Panic," it shows a donkey wearing the skin of lion, with "Caesarism" emblazoned on it, scaring off other animals, including a wobbly, unbalanced elephant, labeled as "the Republican vote," about to fall into a pit (labeled inflation and chaos).

Thanks to Nast, by 1880 the donkey and elephant became the accepted symbols used by other political cartoonists and writers for the two political parties and the association has stuck around since.