

Amos Kendall Biography

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Biography

Amos Kendall (1789-1869), American journalist and politician, was postmaster general under President Jackson and a leading member of his "Kitchen Cabinet."

Amos Kendall was born in Dunstable, Mass., on Aug. 16, 1789. As a child, he worked long hours on his father's farm, attending the free public schools when he could. He graduated at the head of his class from Dartmouth College in 1811. He studied law for two years but, undecided about his future, traveled to Kentucky and spent a year as tutor in the family of Henry Clay. In 1816 he became editor of the *Argus of Western America* in Frankfort, Ky., demonstrating exceptional journalistic ability. He married Mary B. Woolfolk in 1818; she died in 1823, and in 1826 he married Jane Kyle.

In 1828 Kendall switched allegiance from Clay to work effectively for the election of Andrew Jackson. Following Jackson's victory Kendall went to Washington, D.C., to become fourth auditor of the Treasury. More importantly, he became the President's intimate adviser. He proved an able administrator and in 1834 became postmaster general, holding office until 1840.

Kendall suffered financial reverses in the early 1840s. He had founded an unsuccessful paper, *Kendall's Expositor*, and became tangled in litigation over earlier disputes with mail contractors. He was found guilty of refusal to pay debts, but he was exonerated in his appeal to the Supreme Court. In 1845 Kendall's fortunes improved. He was engaged as business manager by Samuel F. B. Morse to exploit Morse's newly invented telegraph, and during the next 15 years both men made fortunes.

Kendall retired in 1860 to live out his life as a philanthropist, contributing mainly to churches and establishing an institution for the deaf and dumb. He remained a Democrat during the Civil War but supported the Union. He died on Nov. 12, 1869.

Kendall's importance to American history rests on his labors as Jackson's assistant and his influence upon both the form and substance of Jacksonian Democracy. He wrote most of the President's annual addresses and drafted Jackson's veto of the bill to recharter the Second Bank of the United States. He also produced much of the newspaper material that appeared throughout the country to build support for Jackson's programs. Kendall left his mark upon American society in a crucial period of its development.