

## **Good Whig Hunting**

This will be an oral presentation

**ABSTRACT:** In the early nineteenth-century, a political career often rose and fell with success or failure of one's political party. While those issuing patronage jobs might attempt to place qualified people into appointment positions, this consideration was second to fulfilling party promises made during the course of a political campaign. John Drennen's career with the Department of Indian Affairs is a prime example of this system. John Drennen was a prominent businessman and politician. During the course of his life, he served as mayor of the city of Van Buren, Arkansas, co-chairman of the Arkansas constitutional convention, and ran a number of successful businesses. On a federal level, he concurrently as acting Director of the Southern District of the Department of Indian Affairs. The rise and fall of his career with the Department of Indian Affairs has been shrouded as to detail and thus somewhat a mystery. Drennen, a member of the Whig Party, received his appointment during the presidential administration of fellow Whig, Zachary Taylor. Drennen was relieved of his post four years later upon the election of Franklin Pierce, a Democrat, with no explanation given of why he was removed from his post. In this ambiguity lies this author's thesis: Drennen's rise and fall with the Indian Affairs was a result of the "spoils system." John Drennen's career with the Department of Indian Affairs started because of his involvement with the Whig party and his removal from his position was due to the Democrats regaining control of the government, and not to personal or ethical failing on his part.