
CHAPTER 20

POLITICS: Local, State, and National

The American Nation:
A History of the United States, 13th edition
Carnes/Garraty

CONGRESS ASCENDANT

- Congress controlled the government as a series of weak presidents occupied the White House
- Senate was more influential than House
 - Filled with wealthy men of long tenure who had the opportunity to learn politics
 - Small enough to engage in real debate
 - Had a long-established reputation for wisdom, intelligence, and statesmanship
- House of Representatives was a disorderly and inefficient legislative body

CONGRESS ASCENDANT

- Political parties divided into sections, with South solidly Democrat, New England Republican, and the rest of the country split
 - Republicans: preponderance of well-to-do cultured northerners
 - Democrats: immigrants, Catholics, and non-black minorities
 - Plenty of exceptions: Scandinavians and Germans often voted Republican; many business leaders voted Democrat
- Balance of the people distributed their ballots fairly evenly between the two parties

THE RECURRENT ISSUES

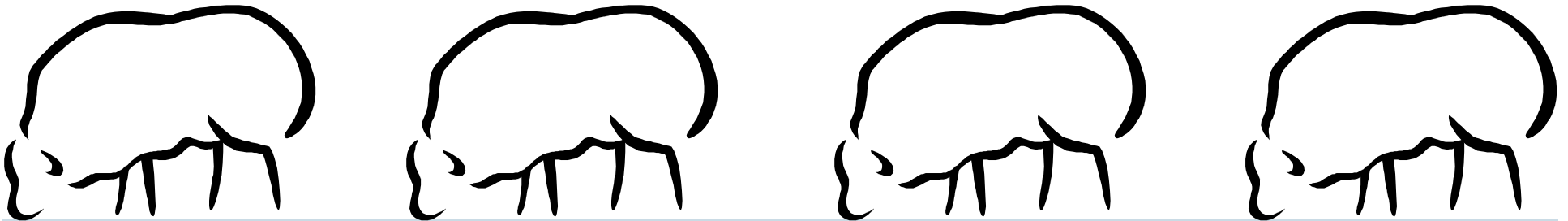
- **“Bloody Shirt”**: political tactic that consisted of reminding the northern states that the men behind the Confederacy and the Civil War were Democrats and, should they come to power, they would undo everything the Republicans had done
 - **Rights of Blacks**: Republicans tried to build numbers in the South by alternately appealing to black voters and trying to win conservative white support by stressing economic issues
 - **Veterans Pensions**: after Civil War, Union soldiers founded Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) which had a membership of 409,000 by 1890 and pressured Congress to aid Union veterans

THE RECURRENT ISSUES

- **Tariff:** While people talked about free trade, few believed it
 - Manufacturers desired protection for products
 - Workers believed it would protect wage levels
 - Farmers tended to favor despite low levels of imported, competing agricultural products
- **Currency Reform:** during war Congress had issued \$450 million in paper money (greenbacks) but after the war there was a fear these would cause inflation and pressure developed to withdraw them
 - Deflation after war hit debtors—especially farmers—hard, resulting in pressure for currency inflation
 - Came mainly from third parties

THE RECURRENT ISSUES

- **Civil Service Reform:** Federal employees rose from 53,000 in 1871 to 256,000 by end of century
 - Corruption, waste, and inefficiency flourished
 - Politicians argued patronage was the lifeblood of politics and refused to seriously consider reform



PARTY POLITICS: Sidestepping the Issues

- Because Democrats dominated the South and Republicans consistently took New England and most states west of the Mississippi, elections turned on a handful of populous states
 - New York (New Jersey, Connecticut)
 - Ohio
 - Indiana
 - Illinois
- As a result, of 18 Democrats and Republicans nominated for president between 1868 and 1900, only three were not from one of these states

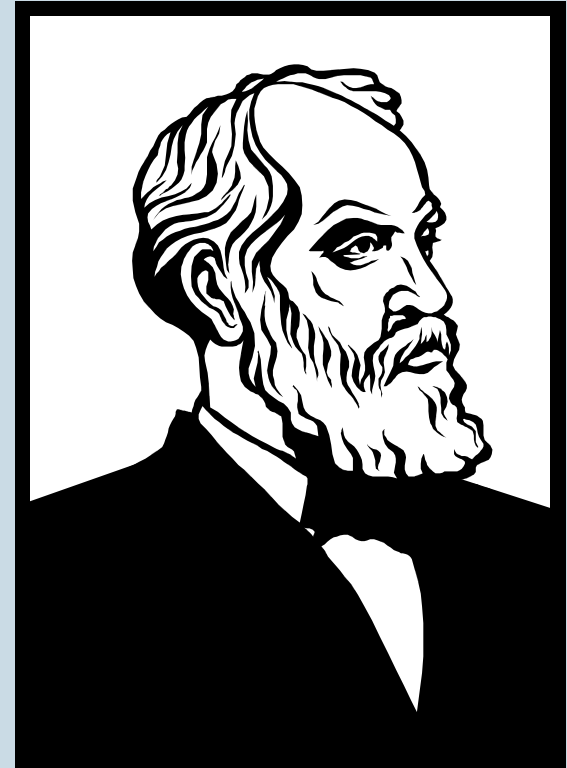
PARTY POLITICS: Sidestepping the Issues

- Partisanship was intense
- Politicking resembled parties, not serious debate
- Mudslinging, character assassination, lying and bribery were common
 - Drifters and others were paid cash or given drinks to vote the party ticket
 - Names of dead people were inscribed in voting registers and were impersonated at polls

LACKLUSTER PRESIDENTS: From Hayes to Harrison

Rutherford B. Hayes (1877-1881)

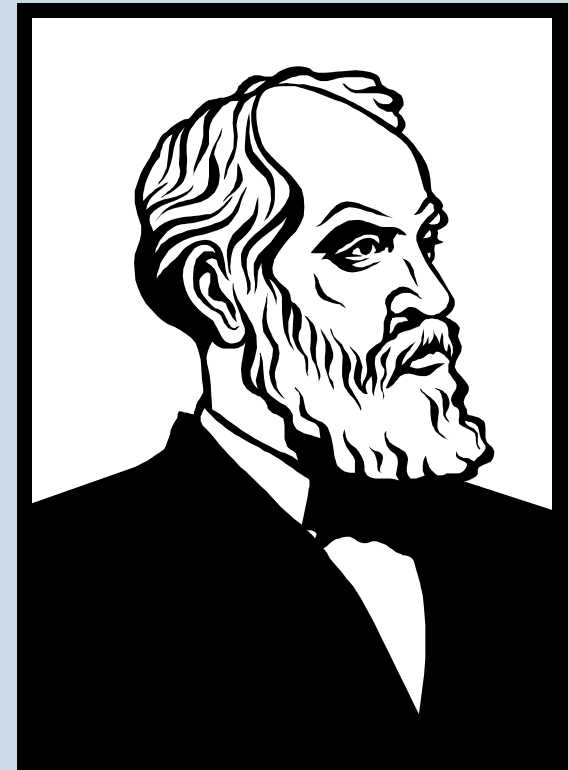
- Attended Kenyon College and Harvard Law
- Practiced in Cincinnati and served in Union Army, entering as major and ending as major general
- Elected to Congress in 1864 and as Governor of Ohio in 1868 where he served for three terms
- Nominated for president due to reputation for honesty and moderation



LACKLUSTER PRESIDENTS: From Hayes to Harrison

Rutherford B. Hayes (1877-1881)

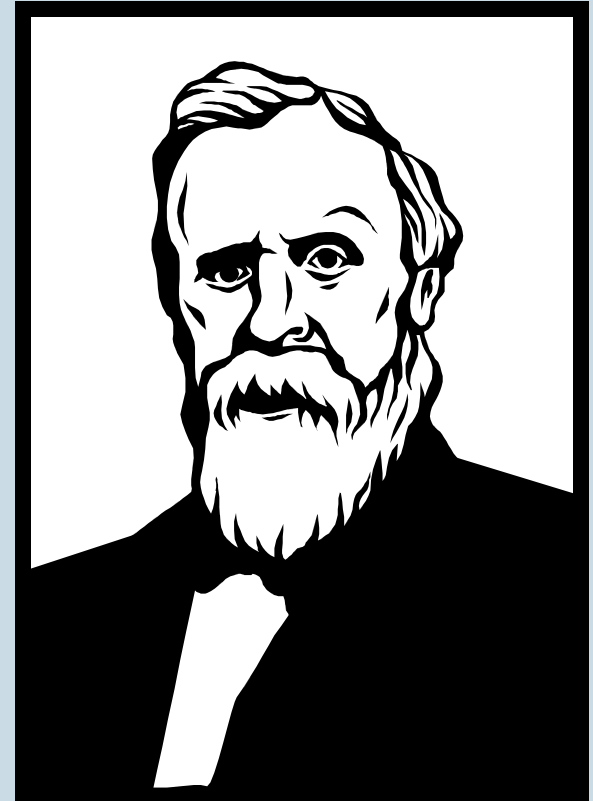
- Hayes played down the tariff issue
- Conservative on money issue
 - Approved the resumption of gold payments in 1879
 - Vetoed bills to expand currency
- Was opposed to the collection of political contributions from office holders and made requests for civil service reform but did not go any further
- Complained about southern treatment of blacks but refused to do anything



LACKLUSTER PRESIDENTS: From Hayes to Harrison

James A. Garfield (1881)

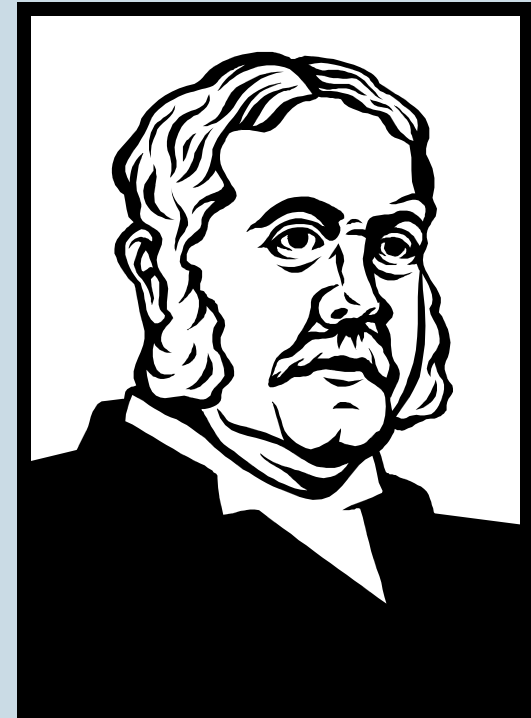
- Assassinated 4 months after inauguration
- During war had risen from lieutenant colonel to major general
- 1863: won a seat in Congress where noted for oratorical and managerial skills
- July 1881: an unbalanced Stalwart lawyer, Charles Guiteau, shot Garfield
- Garfield died on September 19, 1881



LACKLUSTER PRESIDENTS: From Hayes to Harrison

Chester A. Arthur (1881-1885)

- Became president upon Garfield's assassination
- New York lawyer and abolitionist who had risen through party
 - Appointed collectorship of Port of New York in 1871
 - Removed in 1878 for refusing to stay out of party politics
- Unblushing defender of spoils system despite personal honesty and excellent administrative skills
 - As president, handled patronage issues with restraint
 - Gave nominal support to civil service reform



LACKLUSTER PRESIDENTS: From Hayes to Harrison

Chester A. Arthur (1881-1885)

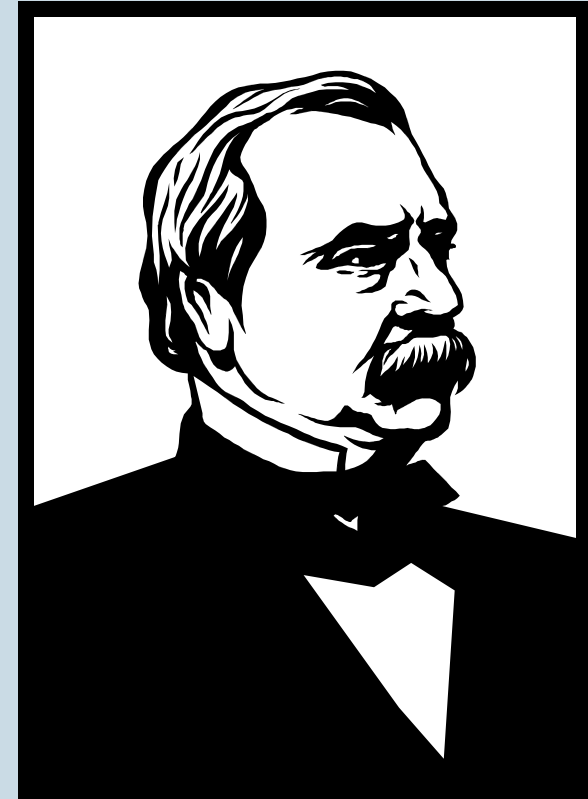
- 1883: Congress passed the PENDLETON ACT
 - classified about 10% of government jobs
 - created bipartisan Civil Service Commission to administer competitive examinations for these positions
 - made it illegal to force officeholders to make political contributions
 - empowered the president to expand the list of qualified positions at his discretion
- Arthur was a systematic, thoughtful, businesslike administrator
- Yet made little effort to push his agenda through Congress
- Did not run again

LACKLUSTER PRESIDENTS: From Hayes to Harrison

Grover Cleveland (1885-1889)

Democrat

- Grew up in western New York, studied law and settled in Buffalo
- Elected mayor of Buffalo in 1881 on the basis of his integrity and then became governor in 1882
 - No-nonsense attitude toward government—won over reformers
 - Basic conservatism pleased business leaders



LACKLUSTER PRESIDENTS: From Hayes to Harrison

- Election for president in 1884 revolved around personal issues since platforms were similar
 - Republican James Blaine had immense following but reputation soiled by connection with corrupt granting of favors to railways
 - Democrat Grover Cleveland, a bachelor, had fathered a child out of wedlock
 - Better behavior by Cleveland earned him the support of renegade Republicans known as Mugwumps
- Cleveland won by fewer than 25,000 votes

LACKLUSTER PRESIDENTS: From Hayes to Harrison

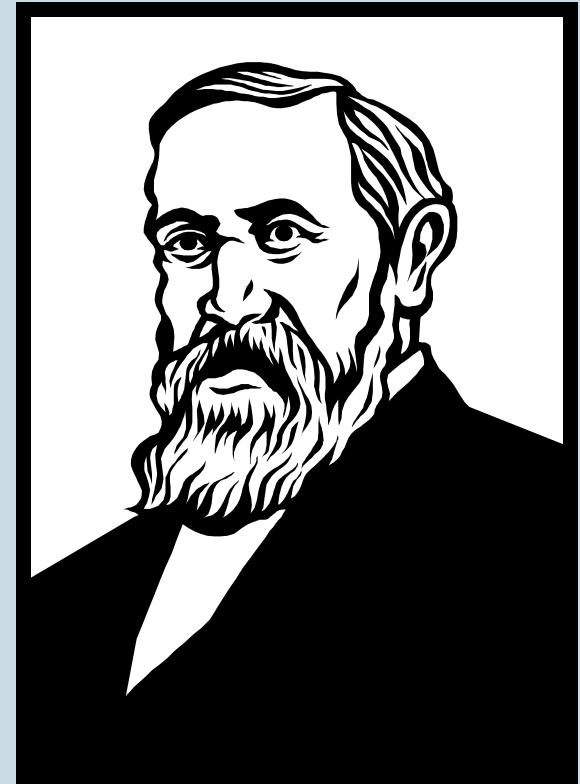
Grover Cleveland (1885-1889)

- Insisted on honesty and efficiency of all political appointees regardless of party
- Little imagination and a narrow conception of presidential powers meant he felt it was unseemly to pressure Congress
- Near end of term did try to provide leadership on the tariff question
 - Government was embarrassed by large revenue surplus which Cleveland wanted to reduce by cutting duties on necessities and raw materials used in manufacturing
 - Democratic Party was not happy he took stand during election year

LACKLUSTER PRESIDENTS: From Hayes to Harrison

Benjamin Harrison (1889-1893)

- Although Cleveland won plurality of votes in 1890 election, Benjamin Harrison (grandson of William Henry Harrison) won electoral contest 233 to 168
- Harrison was extremely reserved
- During Civil War had a reputation as a strict disciplinarian
- Ran unsuccessfully for Indiana governor before winning a Senate seat in 1881



LACKLUSTER PRESIDENTS: From Hayes to Harrison

Benjamin Harrison (1889-1893)

- Believed ardently in protective tariffs and was conservative in fiscal policies except in matter of veteran's pensions, where he was freehanded
- Flamboyant waver of bloody shirt
- While claimed to favor civil service reform, actually did little to forward it
- Congress under Harrison
 - Spent more than a billion dollars in a single session
 - Raised the tariff to an all time high
 - Passed the Sherman Antitrust Act
- Harrison's lackluster leadership led to the loss of Congress in 1890 and then the presidency, to Grover Cleveland, in 1892

BLACKS IN THE SOUTH AFTER RECONSTRUCTION

- Little federal support was offered to blacks after Reconstruction
- Initially blacks were not totally disenfranchised as rival white factions tried to manipulate them
- Starting with Mississippi in the 1890s, southern states began to deprive blacks of the vote
 - Poll taxes
 - Literacy tests (had “understanding” loophole for poor whites)
 - Louisiana had 130,000 black voters in 1896 and 5,000 in 1900

BLACKS IN THE SOUTH AFTER RECONSTRUCTION

Supreme Court rulings

- *Civil Rights Cases* (1883)
 - declared the Civil Rights Acts of 1875 unconstitutional
 - blacks who were refused equal accommodations or privileges by privately owned facilities had no legal recourse
- *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) Court ruled that even in places of public accommodation, segregation was acceptable as long as facilities of equal quality were provided

BLACKS IN THE SOUTH AFTER RECONSTRUCTION

- Total segregation was imposed throughout the South
 - Separate but hardly equal facilities were provided throughout the South
 - Northerners supported the government and the Court
- Progress in public education for blacks stopped with return of white rule
 - Church groups and private foundations supported black schools after 1877
 - Two efforts in vocational training: Hampton Institute and Tuskegee Institute
- Hampton and Tuskegee survived only because they taught a docile, essentially subservient philosophy, preparing students to accept second-class citizenship and become farmers and craftsmen
- Segregation imposed a crushing financial burden on poor, sparsely settled communities

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON: A “Reasonable” Champion for Blacks

- Most people, including scientists, were convinced that blacks were inferior beings
- By denying blacks decent educational opportunities and good jobs, the dominant race could use the blacks’ resultant ignorance and poverty to justify the inferior facilities offered them
- Southern black reaction
 - Racial pride and black nationalism
 - Revival of African colonization
 - Demanded full civil rights, better schools, fair wages, and a fight against discrimination of every sort

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON: A “Reasonable” Champion for Blacks

- Initially segregation helped some southern blacks who became barbers, undertakers, restaurateurs, and shopkeepers, because whites would not supply those services to blacks
 - Living standard of the average southern black doubled between 1865 and 1900
- Booker T. Washington founded Tuskegee Institute
 - Convinced that blacks must lift themselves up by their bootstraps and accommodate themselves to white prejudices

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON: A “Reasonable” Champion for Blacks

- Atlanta Compromise (1895)
 - Don't fight segregation and second class citizenship
 - Concentrate on learning useful skills
 - Progress up economic and social ladder would come from self-improvement
 - Asked whites to help blacks with economic self-improvement
- Won him lots of white support but blacks were more mixed in response

CITY BOSSES

- City governments were affected by religious and ethnic character of inhabitants and by:
 - Rapid, helter-skelter growth
 - Influx of European immigrants
 - Need to develop costly transportation, sanitation and other public utility systems
 - Crime and corruption that size, confusion and anonymity fostered
- Immigrants lacked experience with democracy and representative government
- Industrial workers moved frequently, undermining their ability to develop independent political influence

CITY BOSSES

- Difficulties of life in the slums tended to overwhelm newcomers who concentrated on surviving rather than on broad social issues
- All of the above enabled urban politicians—predominantly Irish—to take command of urban masses and control them at the polls
- City machines were loose-knit neighborhood organizations headed by ward bosses

CITY BOSSES

- Bosses performed many useful services for those they considered their constituents
 - Found jobs for new arrivals
 - Distributed food and aid in bad times
 - Would listen to and potentially aid those in trouble with the law, often “fixing” minor infractions
 - Often provided feasts or gifts on holidays or in recognition of their own birthdays
 - Unconsciously helped immigrants bridge gap from Old World to complexities of modern American life

CITY BOSSES

- Price of such aid was unquestioning political support which bosses converted to cash through such means as
 - Tribute on gambling
 - A hand in the liquor business
 - Control of issuance of peddler's licenses
- Better-known city bosses had less socially justifiable roles than the ward bosses, usually obtaining their money through bribes or kickbacks—returns from contractors who padded their bills in order to raid city funds and who split the take with city bosses who had helped them get the job
 - William Marcy Tweed [1869-1871]: New York
 - Richard Crocker [mid-1880s to turn of century] and Tammany Hall organization: New York

CITY BOSSES

- In the end, most bosses were essentially thieves who got away with it because most middle-class people ignored them or shared indirectly in the corruption
 - Tenement owners wanted to crowd as many people in as possible
 - Utility companies seeking franchises preferred a system that enabled them to buy favors
- Many urban reformers resented the boss system because it gave power to “unfit” men

CROPS AND COMPLAINTS

- While a complacent middle class could ignore most of the poor, who had little influence or power, one important group in society was increasingly disgruntled—farmers
- After Civil War, farmers did well
 - Harvests were bountiful
 - Wheat prices were high (over \$1 a bushel in 1870s)
 - Continued into 1880s, with population of Kansas rising 43%, Nebraska 134% and the Dakotas 278%
 - Land prices rose and farmers borrowed money to expand their farms
- In the 1890s, disaster struck with a succession of dry years and poor harvests

CROPS AND COMPLAINTS

- Then farmers in Australia, Canada, Russia, and Argentina took advantage of improvements in transportation to sell their produce in European markets that previously bought from U.S.
 - Price of wheat fell to 60 cents a bushel
 - Cotton (more than 30 cents a pound in 1866 and 15 cents in 1870s) fell below 6 cents during the 1890s
- Problems for farmers
 - Tariff on manufactured goods
 - Domestic marketing system, which enabled a multitude of middlemen to take a large share of the profits
 - Shortage of credit
 - Downward business cycle, which meant settlers had spent more on land than it was worth by borrowing money at high interest rates
 - Thousands lost their farms and returned eastward

THE POPULIST MOVEMENT

- Farm depression triggered new radicalism—the Alliance movement
 - Organizations of farmers' clubs which had emerged during 1870s
 - Knights of Reliance began in 1877 in Texas then expanded throughout northeastern part of the state and, after 1885, through the cotton states
 - Stressed cooperation
 - Co-ops bought fertilizer and other supplies in bulk and sold them at fair prices
 - Sought to market crops cooperatively but could not get necessary capital from banks, which led them to question financial and monetary system
- Similar though less influential movement developed in North

THE POPULIST MOVEMENT

- All Alliances agreed:
 - Agricultural prices were too low
 - Transportation costs were too high
 - Something was radically wrong with U.S. financial system
 - Need for political action if there was to be improvement
- Dakotas and Kansas joined Southern Alliance in 1889 but true national alliance was delayed by prejudices and conflicting interests
 - Northerners voted Republican, Southerners Democrat
 - Southerners opposed tariff, Northerners favored
 - Railroad regulation and federal land policy were vital to Northerners while financial questions were most important to Southerners
 - Northerners were receptive to third party while Southerners wanted to capture local Democratic machines

THE POPULIST MOVEMENT

- 1890: Farm groups entered politics
 - South: Alliance-sponsored gubernatorial candidates won in Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina and Texas
 - 8 Southern legislatures fell under Alliance control
 - 44 representatives and 3 senators were sent to Washington
 - West: Alliance candidates swept Kansas and captured majority in Nebraska legislature and enough seats in South Dakota and Minnesota to hold the balance of power
- February 1892: Farm leaders, Knights of Labor representatives and various professional reformers met in St. Louis and organized the People's party (Populists)
 - Issued call for national convention in July
- Convention nominated General James B. Weaver of Iowa for President

THE POPULIST MOVEMENT

Drafted a platform

- Graduated income tax
- National ownership of railroads and telegraph and telephone systems
- Advocated “subtreasury” plan that would permit farmers to keep nonperishable crops off the market when prices were low, government would loan farmers greenbacks until prices rose, farmers sold crops and repaid debts
- Demanded unlimited coinage of silver and an increase in the money supply to at least \$50 per capita
- Urged adoption of initiative and referendum procedures and election of Senators by popular vote
- Denounced the use of Pinkerton detectives in labor disputes and supported the 8-hour day and restriction of “undesirable” immigrants

THE POPULIST MOVEMENT

- Populists saw themselves as a victimized majority
 - Ambivalent about free enterprise system
 - Attributed social and economic injustices not to built in inequities but to nefarious conspiracies organized by selfish interests in order to subvert the system
- 1892: Presidential election saw Harrison and Cleveland re-fight the election of 1888

THE POPULIST MOVEMENT

- Populist speakers in 1892 election:
 - Tom Watson, Georgia
 - William A. Peffer, Kansas
 - “Sockless Jerry” Simpson, Kansas
 - Ignatius Donnelly, Minnesota
- Strategy in South was to wean black farmers away from Democratic organizations
 - Black farmers had their own Colored Alliance
 - White Populist leaders opposed black disenfranchisement and called for full civil rights for all
- Northwest: assailed “bankers’ conspiracy”

THE POPULIST MOVEMENT

- End results were disappointing:
 - While Populists swept Kansas and elected local officials in a number of western states, Watson lost congressional seat and Donnelly lost Minnesota gubernatorial race
 - The effort to unite white and black southerners failed miserably
 - Elsewhere, the party made little headway
- Cleveland won the election by 277 electoral votes to Harrison's 145 and Weaver's 22

SHOWDOWN ON SILVER

- 1892 showed that the money question, especially silver coinage, was of primary interest to voters
 - Real underlying question was what should be done to check deflationary cycle
- Traditionally, U.S. was on bimetallic standard with the number of grains of each in a dollar adjusted periodically to reflect their commercial value
- California gold rush had depressed the relative price of gold (a silver dollar was worth \$1.03) with the result was that silver was withdrawn and only gold circulated
- Then an avalanche of silver from Nevada and Colorado depressed the price of silver until, in 1874, it became profitable for miners to coin their bullion
 - Only then did they discover that the Coinage Act of 1873 had demonetized silver
- Silver miners and inflationists demanded a return to silver coinage while conservatives resisted

SHOWDOWN ON SILVER

- Result was a series of compromises
 - 1878 Bland-Allison Act: authorized purchase of between \$2 and \$4 million of silver a month at the market price
 - Since government consistently purchased minimum there was little inflationary effect
 - Commercial price of silver continued to decline
 - 1890 Sherman Silver Purchase Act: required government to buy 4.5 million OUNCES of silver a month but supplies exceeded demand and silver prices continued to fall.
- No one was happy
 - Silver miners' ore was still worth less than before
 - Debtors found value of their debt rising (worth twice as much as in 1865)
 - Advocates of gold standard feared silver would destroy the value of the dollar

THE DEPRESSION OF 1893

- After London banking house of Baring Brothers collapsed, financial panic resulted in a worldwide industrial depression
- In the U.S. hundreds of cotton mills and iron foundries closed permanently and millions were without jobs during the winter of 1893-1894
- Cleveland believed silver controversy had shaken the business confidence and led to depression
 - Exerted immense pressure on special session of Congress to repeal Sherman Silver Purchase Act in October 1893
 - Only result was to split Democratic party

THE DEPRESSION OF 1893

- 1894 and 1895: U.S. suffered worse depression it had known
- Spring 1894: several “armies” of unemployed (largest led by Jacob Coxey) marched on Washington to demand relief
 - Wanted government to undertake a program of federal public works;
 - And to authorize local communities to exchange non-interest bearing bonds with the Treasury for \$500 million in paper money and use the funds to hire unemployed workers to build roads

THE DEPRESSION OF 1893

- Cleveland appeared callous
 - Coxe and two other leaders were arrested and their followers were dispersed by club wielding policemen.
 - Federal troops were used to break up the Pullman strike in July 1894
- 1895: a series of reactionary Supreme Court decisions
 - *United States v. E.C. Knight Company*: refused to use Sherman Antitrust Act to break up the Sugar Trust
 - *Pollock v. Farmers' Loan and Trust Company*: invalidated a federal income tax law despite the fact one had existed during the Civil War and been upheld by the Court
 - Court denied a writ of habeas corpus to Eugene V. Debs and the American Railway Union

THE DEPRESSION OF 1893

- At the same time, a desperate financial situation developed
 - Throughout 1894 Treasury's supply of gold dwindled as people turned in greenbacks for hard currency and foreign investors cashed out U.S. securities
 - The government failed to boost reserves despite selling bonds
 - Early in 1895, reserve was at low of \$41 million
- J.P. Morgan and syndicate of bankers underwrote \$62 million in bonds, guaranteeing that half the gold would come from Europe
- Cleveland administration was discredited and Populist vote increased by 42 percent in interim elections of 1894

THE DEPRESSION OF 1893

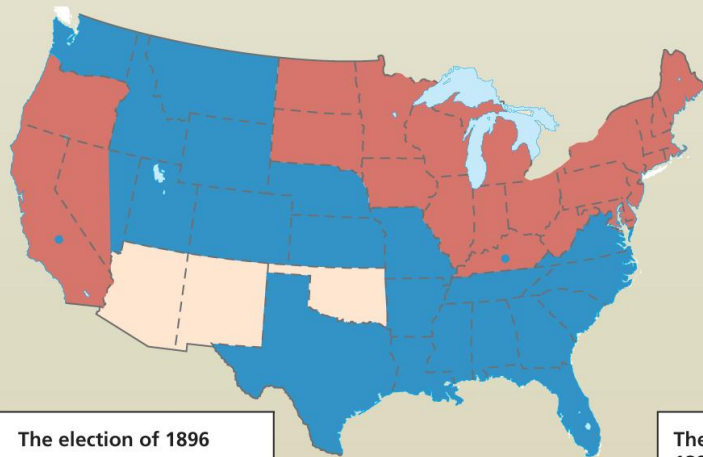
- Situation forced Democrats and Republicans to take a stand on the money issue
 - Republicans announced for the gold standard and nominated William McKinley of Ohio
 - Democrats called for free and unlimited coinage of silver at a rate of 16 to 1 after a stirring speech by William Jennings Bryan, whom they nominated for president
 - Pressured, Populists also nominated Bryan but ran Tom Watson as vice-president on their ticket

THE ELECTION OF 1896

- Republicans from silver mining states backed Bryan while solid-money Democrats voted for McKinley or refused to vote
 - Extreme Democratic goldbugs “National Democrats” ran their own candidate
- Republicans seemed to have advantage
 - McKinley had a war record and experience, while Bryan was young and inexperienced
 - Depression favored party out of power
 - Newspapers came out almost unanimously for McKinley, even the Democratic press
- Bryan responded with an unprecedented speaking tour of U.S.

THE ELECTION OF 1896

- Mark Hanna, an Ohio business man and McKinley's campaign manager, raised \$3.5 million dollars through persuasion and "assessing" a percentage of the assets of banks and insurance companies and of the receipts of big corporations
- Used the money to disburse 1,500 speakers and 250 million pieces of campaign literature
- McKinley sat on his front porch and received visitors in what appeared to be an informal, but actually highly staged and coordinated, event
- McKinley garnered 271 electoral votes to Bryan's 176

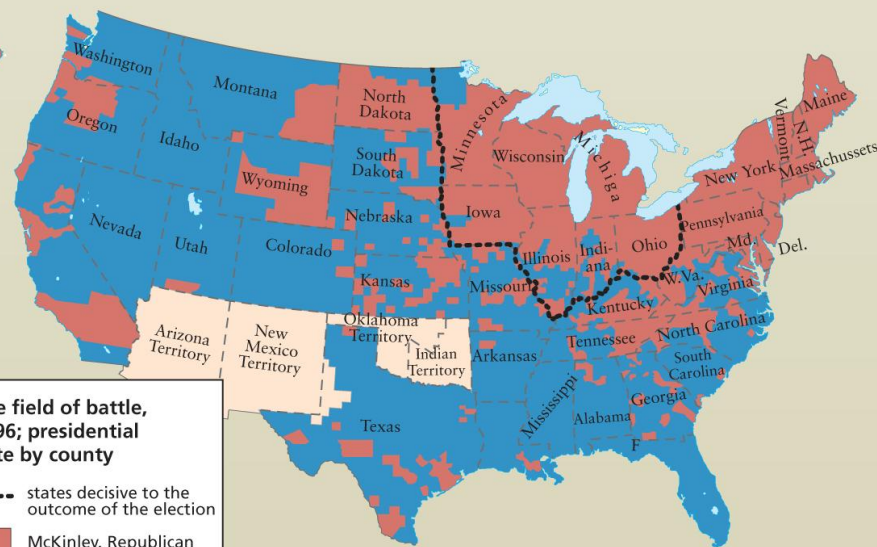


The election of 1896

- McKinley, Republican
- Bryan, Democrat
- territories not voting
- Kentucky and California cast one electoral vote to Bryan

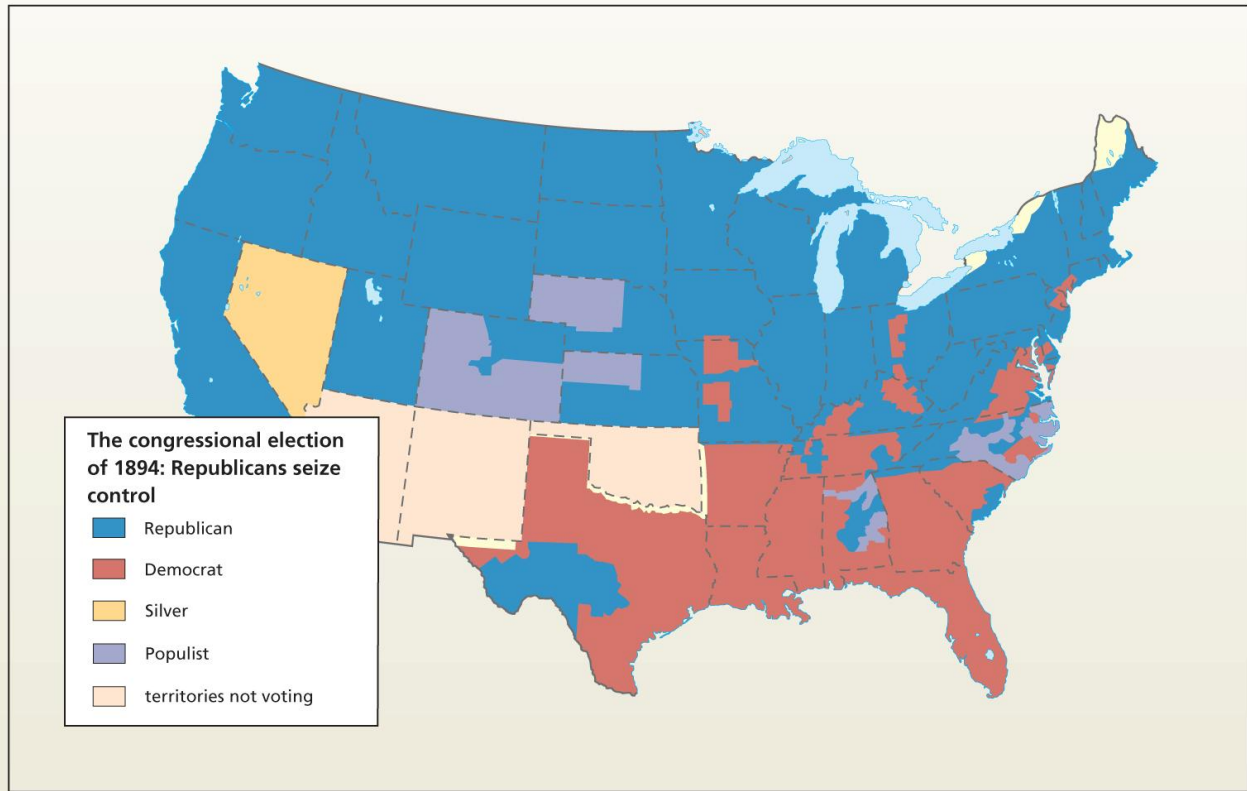
Election of 1896

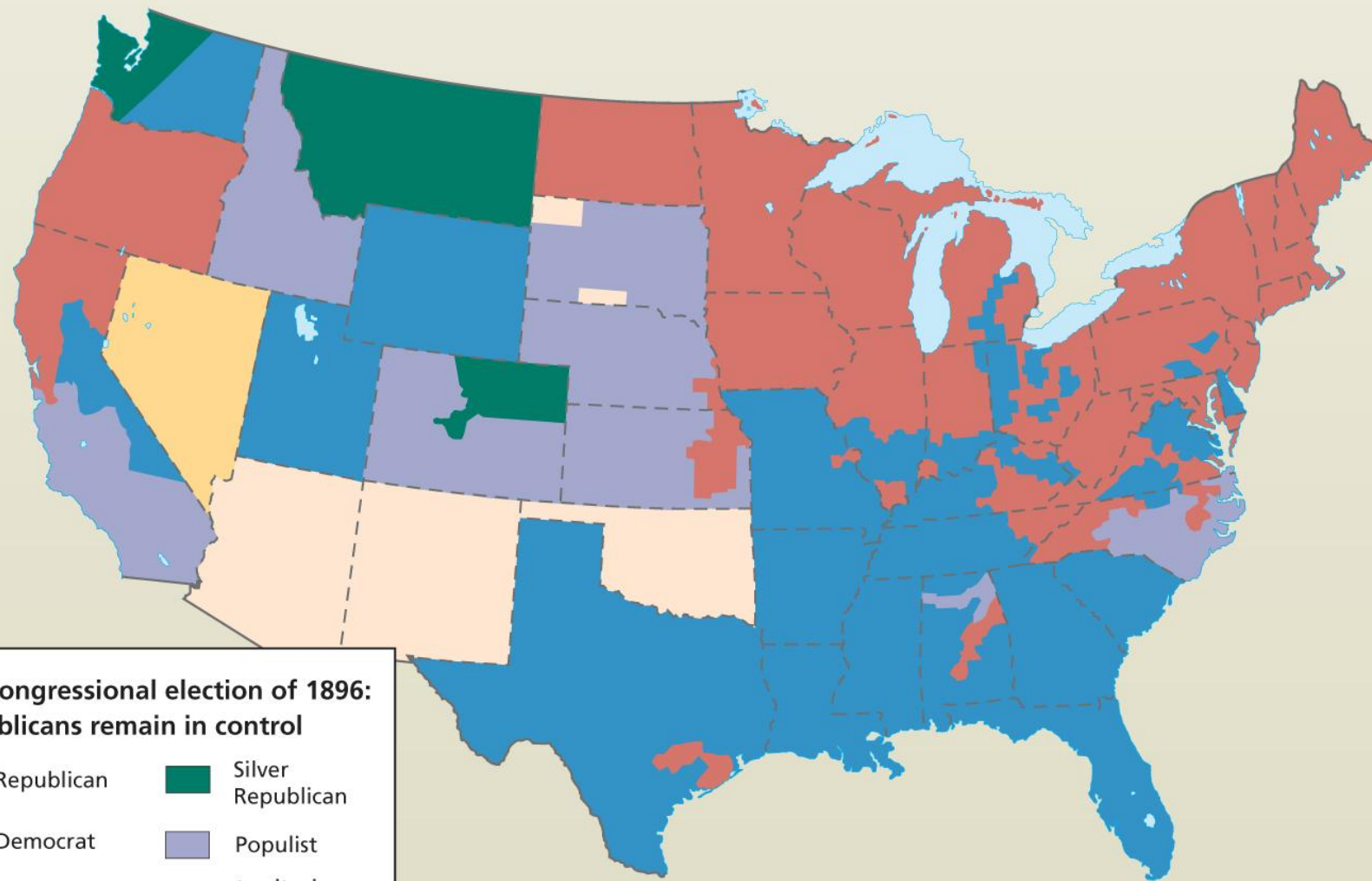
Electoral vote by state	Popular votes cast
Republican (McKinley)	271
Democrat (Bryan)	176
Total	447









The field of battle, 1896; presidential vote by county

- states decisive to the outcome of the election
- McKinley, Republican
- Bryan, Democrat





**The congressional election of 1896:
Republicans remain in control**

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Republican |  Silver Republican |
|  Democrat |  Populist |
|  Silver |  territories not voting |

THE MEANING OF THE ELECTION

- Election did not mark the triumph of the status quo but the coming of modern America
- Gold and silver actually figured little as new discoveries of gold in Alaska and South Africa and improved methods of extracting gold from low grade ore led to an expansion of the money supply
- McKinley's approach, unlike Bryan's, was national and he dealt pragmatically with issues

MILESTONES

- 1872 Ulysses Grant is reelected president
- 1873 Congress suspends the coining of silver ("Crime of '73")
- 1876 Rutherford B. Hayes is elected president
- 1877 Farmers Alliance movement is founded
- 1878 Bland-Allison Act authorizes government silver purchases
- 1879 Specie payments resume
- 1880 James Garfield is elected president
- 1881 Garfield is assassinated; Grover Cleveland becomes president
- 1881 Booker T. Washington founds Tuskegee Institute for blacks
- 1883 Pendleton Act creates Civil Service Commission
- Supreme Court Overturns Civil Rights Act of 1875 in *Civil Rights Cases*
- 1884 Republicans support Democrats during Mugwump Movement
- Grover Cleveland is elected president
- 1887 Interstate Commerce Act regulates railroad rates
- Cleveland delivers tariff message

- 1888 Benjamin Harrison is elected president
- Englishman James Bryce analyzes American politics in *The American Commonwealth*
- 1890 Sherman Silver Purchase Act requires government silver purchase
- 1890–1900 Blacks are deprived of the vote in the South
- 1892 People's (Populist) Party is founded
- Cleveland is elected president a second time
- 1893 Sherman Silver Purchase Act is repealed
- 1893 Panic of 1893 causes industrial depression
- 1894 Coxey's Army marches to Washington to demand relief
- 1895 Supreme Court declares federal income tax unconstitutional (*Pollock v. Farmers' Loan and Trust Company*)
- Booker T. Washington urges self-improvement in Atlanta Compromise Speech
- J. P. Morgan raises \$62 million in gold for the U.S. Treasury
- 1896 William Jennings Bryan delivers "Cross of Gold" speech
- William McKinley is elected president
- Supreme Court upholds "separate but equal" in *Plessy v. Ferguson*

WEBSITES

- James Garfield

<http://www.ipl.org/div/potus/jagarfield.html>

- Benjamin Harrison

<http://www.ipl.org/div/potus/bharrison.html>

- Chester Arthur

<http://www.ipl.org/div/potus/caarthur.html>

- William Jennings Bryan

<http://ap.grolier.com/article?assetid=0064310-00&templatename=/article/article.htm>

- William McKinley

<http://www.ipl.org/div/potus/wmckinley.html>

- The Era of William McKinley

<http://history.osu.edu/projects/mckinley>