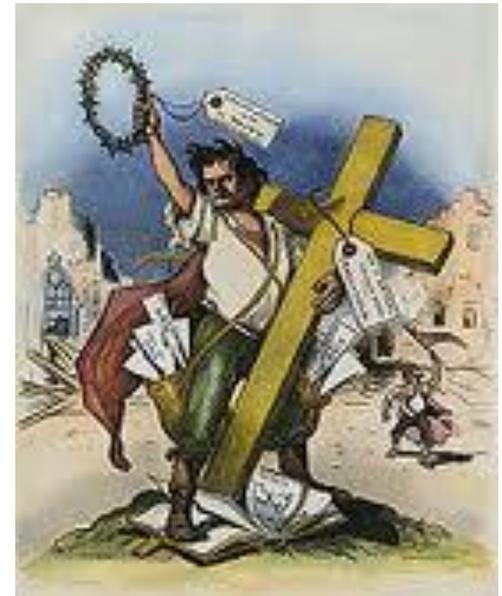


Politics in the Late 19th Century

Politics in the Late 19th Century

- ▶ “You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold” – W.J. Bryan
- ▶ As enormous changes took place economically and socially, people started to look towards the federal government for stability
- ▶ But the late 19th century political landscape was dotted with mediocrities



The Politics of Equilibrium

- ▶ The federal government, which the two parties were struggling to control, was doing relatively little of importance. (Do Nothing Laissez Faire Government)
- ▶ 1876 – 1890: The electorate was divided almost evenly between republicans and democrats
 1. 16 States solidly republican (North)
 2. 14 States solidly democratic (South)
 3. New York and Ohio were usually in doubt and decided elections (Why so many presidents were from Ohio and New York)

The Election of 1880

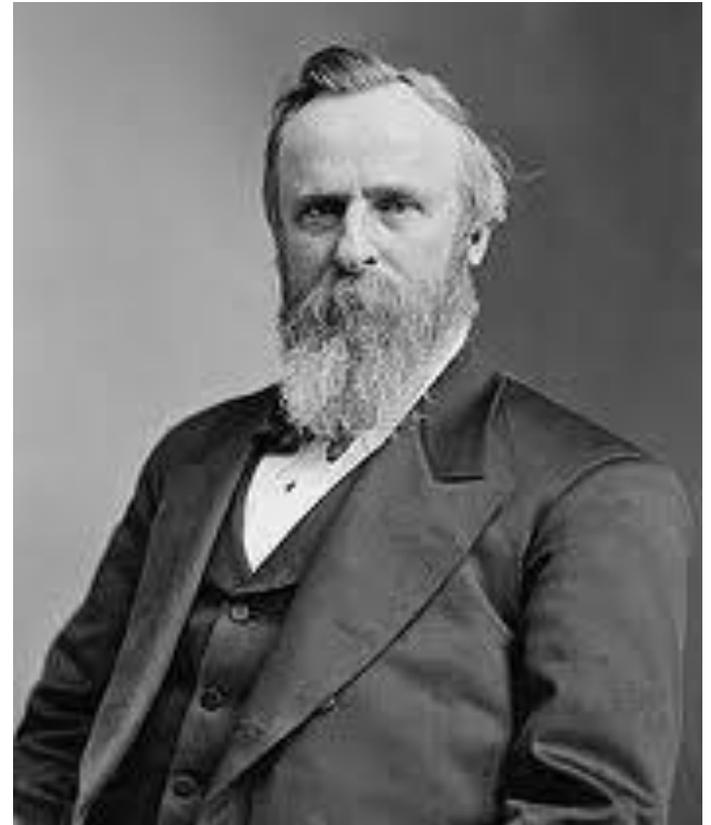


The Politics of Equilibrium

- ▶ Voter turnout from 1860–1900 averaged 78% compared to 50% in the 1980s and 1990s
- ▶ The federal government (and to some degree state and local governments as well) did relatively little except for supporting the economic development of the nation
- ▶ The national leaders of both parties were primarily concerned with winning elections and controlling patronage
- ▶ The office of president did very little except distribute government appointments, over 100,000 with most of them in the post office (largest government agency)

Presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes (1877–1881)

- ▶ Called “His Fraudulancy” or “Rutherfraud” due to the disputed election of 1876
- ▶ Wife was known as “Lemonade Lucy”
- ▶ Battle over patronage between Stalwarts, led by Roscoe Conkling, and Half-Breeds led by James G. Blaine; dominated his entire presidency
- ▶ He tried to satisfy each faction of republicans, but alienated both



Presidency of James A. Garfield (1881)



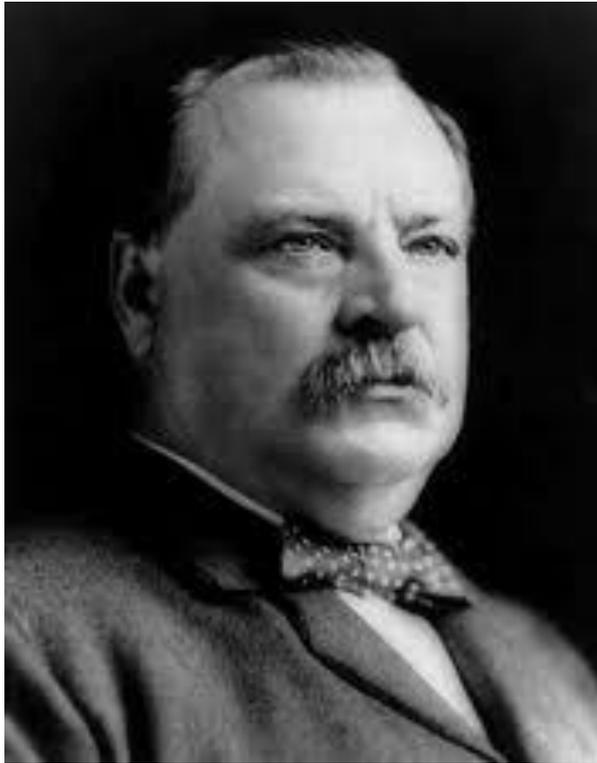
- ▶ Garfield defied the Stalwarts and showed support for civil service reform and publicly quarreled with Conkling
- ▶ 4 Months after inauguration, Garfield was assassinated by an unsuccessful office seeker who said, “I am a Stalwart and Arthur is president now.”

Presidency of Chester A. Arthur (1881–1885)

- ▶ Arthur, a Stalwart and Conkling man, surprisingly kept Garfield's appointments and supported civil service reform
- ▶ In 1883, congress passed the Pendleton Act which required written competitive exams for some federal jobs



Presidency of Grover Cleveland (1885–1889)



- ▶ First democrat elected since before the Civil War
- ▶ Very close election, decided by his home state of New York where he had been governor (23,000 votes)
- ▶ Cleveland was against high protective tariff rates as the federal government had too much of a surplus!!! WOW!!!
- ▶ Election of 1888 was all about protective tariffs, republicans for and democrats against
- ▶ Cleveland wins the popular vote but loses electoral vote to Benjamin Harrison of Ohio

Presidency of Benjamin Harrison (1889 – 1893)

- ▶ Passed the highest protective tariff ever, the McKinley Tariff
- ▶ The Sherman Antitrust Act (1890) was passed as a symbolic law to deflect public criticism
 - Was used more against unions than businesses
 - Teddy Roosevelt will find this useful later
- ▶ Overall, Harrison's record as president was little more substantial than his grandfather who died after a month in office



Presidency of Grover Cleveland Again!!! (1893-1897)



- ▶ Won again based on opposition to the highest ever tariff
- ▶ Wilson-Gorman Tariff modestly lowered the rates
- ▶ Public pressure was building to regulate the railroads; Congress had passed the Interstate Commerce Act in 1887 to empower the federal government to do just that but will have to wait...

The Agrarian Revolt

- ▶ Isolated from Urban industrial society, suffering from a long economic decline and afflicted with a painful sense of obsolescence, the farmers were eager for government assistance
- ▶ What emerged was one of the most powerful political protests in history = POPULISM



The Agrarian Revolt



▶ The Grangers

- A minor Agriculture Department official, Oliver H. Kelley founded The National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry (The Grange) to help farmers combat the isolation and drabness of rural life
- Farmers were brought together to learn the newest scientific agricultural techniques and formed social and self-help associations
- By 1875, The Grange had 800,000 members and 20,000 local lodges and was strongest in the South and Midwest
- Main political goal = subject the railroads to government control

The Agrarian Revolt

- ▶ The Farmers Alliances
 - The Grange gave way to the Farmers Alliances
 - By 1880, the Southern Alliance had more than 4 million members and the Northwestern Alliance was taking roots in the plains states
 - Women like, Mary E. Lease, played a prominent role in the alliances
 - As an orator, Lease was famous for urging farmers to “raise less corn and more hell”
 - In 1889, the Southern and Northwestern Alliances agreed to a merger and held a convention in Ocala, Florida and issued the Ocala Demands which were essentially a party platform



The Agrarian Revolt



- ▶ In 1890, Alliance-sponsored candidates won control of 12 state legislatures, 6 governorships, 3 Senate seats, and 50 seats in the House of Representatives
- ▶ In 1892, Alliance leaders and representatives of the Knights of Labor met in Omaha, Nebraska to form the People's Party which became known as the Populists
- ▶ In the presidential election of 1892, James B. Weaver won 8.5% of the popular vote and 22 electoral votes from 6 mountain and plains states

The Agrarian Revolt

▶ The Populists

- Chautauquas were travelling speakers who attracted enormous crowds in a time before radio and movies, and were a way for populist leaders to get their message out to a wide audience
- Populists had hoped to appeal to other groups, but it remained primarily a farmer's political party
- "Free Silver" became a Populists issue as they wanted to expand the money supply to include gold and silver as a basis for currency
- "Colored Alliances" were formed in the South and numbered over a million by 1890, but Southern conservatives quickly brought this attempt at unity to a halt

Attend
Chautauqua
You'll Enjoy it



The Agrarian Revolt

▶ Populists Platform

1. Abolition of National Banks
 2. The end of absentee ownership of land
 3. Direct election of US Senators
 4. Government regulation or ownership of railroads, telegraphs, and telephones
 5. A graduated income tax
 6. Remonetization of silver to inflate the currency
- ▶ Populists rejected laissez faire ideas of the time and advocated government intervention to help individuals and communities



Crisis of the 1890s

- ▶ The Panic of 1893 brought on the most severe economic depression the nation had yet experienced
 - 20% unemployment
 - Prolonged economic slump that lasted 8 years
- ▶ In 1894, Jacob S. Coxey, an Ohio businessman and Populist, led a march of unemployed men to Washington DC to demand a massive public works program to create jobs for the unemployed
- ▶ “Coxey’s Army” was barred from entering the capital and Coxey was arrested
- ▶ Homestead and Pullman Strikes occurred, and many people feared revolution



Crisis of the 1890s



▶ The Silver Issue

- Through most of American history, gold and silver (“bimetallism”) were used as a basis for the dollar
- 16 ounces of silver = 1 ounce of gold (16:1)
- By the 1870s, silver was worth more, and no one minted it
- So, in 1873, Congress passed a law to discontinue silver coinage = “The Crime of 73”
- Silver’s value went down below 16:1 and many people felt there was a conspiracy of big bankers to maintain the gold standard for oppression and exploitation

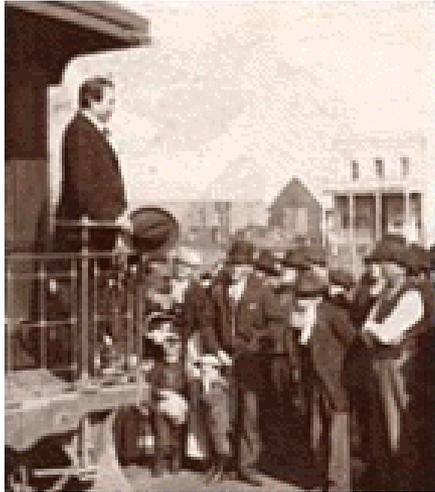


Crisis of the 1890s

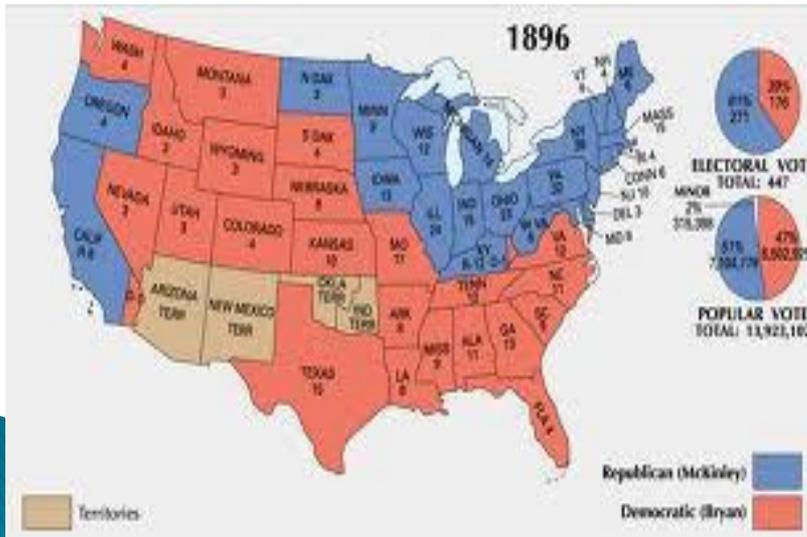
- ▶ The Democrats looking to neutralize the Populists, adopted many of their ideas including “free silver”
- ▶ They found their candidate after William Jennings Bryan, a 36 year old congressman from Nebraska, gave his famous “Cross of Gold” speech
- ▶ “You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold”



Election of 1896



- ▶ Populist party endorsed Bryan and was thus absorbed into the Democratic party and ceased to exist
- ▶ 1896 = The First Modern Campaign



- Republicans outspent Democrats \$7,000,000 to \$300,000
- Bryan broke longstanding tradition and “stumped” all around the country to campaign
- William McKinley and the forces of conservatism triumphed over Bryan

After the Election of 1896

- ▶ McKinley and Recovery
 - New highest tariff ever (Dingley Tariff)
 - Currency, or gold standard, Act of 1900 confirmed gold as the standard for currency
 - Prosperity began to return and conservatism remained entrenched (Foreign crop failures and a dramatic world-wide increase in the gold supply were responsible for the recovery)

