A comparison of the presidential elections of 1896 and 1912 and their lasting impact on modern elections

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A COMPARISON OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF 1896 AND 1912 AND THEIR LASTING IMPACT ON MODERN ELECTIONS

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by

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ABSTRACT

A Comparison of the Presidential Elections of 1896 and 1912 and Their Lasting Impact on Modern Elections

by Samantha Rose Levine, advised by Professor Marc Landy.

This thesis examines the presidential elections of both 1896 and 1912 from all angles and their lasting impact on modern elections. It looks deeply into the platforms of the Democrat and Republican parties' platform, the influence of third Parties, the importance of the candidate-centered organized campaign, the necessity of fundraising and the use of technology and media. It also attempts to explain the fact that political capital was no longer located in the Northeast and parts of the South, but in the Midwest, Deep South, and parts of the Far West. Primary and secondary sources were used to explore these two elections and then to help compare them to modern day political contest. This thesis attempts to prove that the lessons of 1896 and 1912 can be applied to modern day elections.

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Part 1. Introduction

The Presidential elections of 1896 and 1912 were turning points in American history. The decisions made in these two elections dramatically changed how politics were practiced from that point forward. Everything from what the Democrat and Republican Parties' platform said, to the influence of third Parties, to the importance of the candidate-centered organized campaign, to the necessity of fundraising and the use of technology and media were forever altered. Also, political capital was no longer located in the Northeast and parts of the South, but in the Midwest, Deep South, and parts of the Far West. Despite their long lasting effects on the political landscape for over a century, the Presidential elections of 1896 and 1912 did not happen in a vacuum. The United States had made it through its infancy and growing pain years. By the turn of the century, America was ready to continue in a new direction. It was ready to stand up for its citizens and to take its rightful place as a world leader. Although these changes did not happen over night, the groundwork for their monumental impact was set in these two election years.

To fully understand how and why the elections of 1896 and 1918 were so important to the federal electoral landscape for over a century, it is necessary to understand what was happening in America at the time. The economic direction of the nation was changing, as was its financial and political epicenter. But America wasn't the only place changing. The world was changing as well. Isolationism, which had served America well in the past, was being tested and Europe and South America were calling for intervention. The nation was at a crossroads. Change was in the air and it was no

surprise that these emotions spilled into the Presidential elections of the time. In 1896 and 1912 that is exactly what happened.

Chapter 1. History of the election of 1896

The drama of the 1896 election started long before the conventions and continued straight through to Election Day. The election was much more than a race between Democrat William Jennings Bryan and Republican William McKinley. It was an election that shook party structure and lines to the core and brought great importance to Third Parties. It was as much about personal style as issues and truly was won and lost of the heels of economic pressure and organization. Before the election even began, the whole country was captivated by the silver question.

> "The silver question had become the nation's most important topic of conversation and was everywhere serving to widen and make permanent the break in party ranks. All over the midlands, the West, the South, and even parts of the East, the doctrine of free silver was consuming the land, completely overshadowing all other subjects. (Hollingsworth, p.33)"

To truly understand the election of 1896, it is important to understand what the silver question was and what it meant to those on each side of the issue. A gold and silver standard had long ago been determined and most in the nation, who did not work in the banking industry, did not pay it much attention. In 1873, a depression that shook the nation, and hit hardest in the country's midsection, changed everything. Money and economic standing was all that was thought and talked about. Farmers in particular were unhappy and wanted something done. Many political leaders from the Midwest, a quickly growing epicenter of the country politically who although they aligned with the two major parties, had strong Populist influences, began to rethink the banking structure and the effectiveness of the Coinage Act of 1837.

> "Under the Coinage Act of 1837 the coinage ratio between the two metals [gold and silver] had been fixed at the market prices then prevailing. Shortly after the passage of the Act of 1837 increased production of gold caused its market value to decline in relation so silver. As a result, the official coinage ratio undervalued

> silver, and no silver was delivered to the government mints for coinage…In 1873 Congress, in passing a new coinage law, took cognizance of the fact that silver was not being minted and included in the law no provision for the coinage of silver. Little publicity was given to this fact; and when, a short time later, increased production of silver brought prices down, making it advantageous to coin silver under the Act of 1873, silver producers expressed strong indignation when their product was turned away from the government mints with the explanation that the new coinage law made provisions for silver coinage. (Jones, p.6)"

When word of this spread, people who had not been paying attention to the issue were horrified. Sides were quickly taken and almost overnight people felt strongly connected to the idea of either leaving the gold standard alone or being in support of free silver. Because of the sweeping recession, especially in the middle portion of the country, this monetary issue brought stronger emotions than anyone could have guessed. Many in the Midwest region felt that free silver would help them to pull out of debt and hopefully curb the recession. People in the Northeast and those involved in the banking community were afraid of what inflation would do to the country long term by loosing the gold standard.

> "The silverites demanded the government make silver money on a 16:1 ratio. They hoped this would flood the nation with silver, raise prices and lower the cost of old debts. Whether any of that would happen is a matter of speculation. The "silverites" argued that using silver would inflate the money supply and mean more cash for everyone, which they equated with prosperity. The gold advocates said silver would permanently depress the economy, but that sound money produced by a gold standard would restore prosperity. (http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Bimetallism)"

Unlike most issues of the day, this silver issue did not fall down party lines. Both the Republicans and Democrats had men who strongly believed one way or the other. The Populists and even the Prohibitionists lined up on the side of free silver, but for the major parties this was a trying time. Those in the Northeast were generally in favor of the gold standard and those in the Midwest and West were in favor of free silver. This

breakdown happened just at the time when the Midwest and West were finally coming out from behind the Northeast's shadow politically. It also happened a time when the country was changing. The silver issue was about much more than just the gold standard. It was about a way of life and set of ideals in the Midwest, a desire for reform pushing against the Northeast's stronghold on political and economic life. Silver was the catalyst that sprung these already festering ideals of reform into motion.

> "But the revolt of the 1890's cannot be explained simply in terms of silver and gold. The depression and the demand for more money had permitted silver to become a symbol of a wide program of reform. It stood for things deep and fundamental. For the farmers, it became the issue on which they were willing to fight the battle of agrarianism again the increasing denomination of industry. Trade unions and other urban elements who earlier had considered free silver illusory began to pay lip service to the white metal. Silver had become synonymous with attempts to end court injunctions against strikers and to reform a Supreme Court that prevented the equalization of the tax burden. (Hollingsworth p.34)"

To think that the only issue that divided the nation was silver would be naive. Though silver took precedence at the conventions and throughout the election because of its strong visual aspects and ability to relate to anyone who used or needed money to live their life and run their business, it was not the only thing on Americans minds.

> " Gold versus silver was not the only issue driving the battalions into combat readiness. In 1894, when the Democrats still controlled Congress, they had passed the first peacetime income tax as an amendment to the lengthy Wilson-Gorman bill, which lowered tariff rates across the board…Since fewer than a hundred thousand American earned enough to qualify, the tax, which Cleveland signed into law, was largely a symbolic swipe at the wealthy…But a year later, the Supreme Court, in its *Pullock* decision, stuct down the law..calling it a 'stepping stone' toward 'a war of the poor against the rich.' (Kazin p. 51)"

In 1896, especially for the Democrats, the pot was boiling. Tough issues could no longer be ignored and the Presidential Election was the perfect forum for all of the nation's grievances to be aired. Tough economic questions were asked, the political

epicenter was shifted, third party candidates were not ignored, and election practices were changed. Although 1896 was a huge turning point for electoral and party politics, every change did not take place in one year. The changes continued and came to another catalyst during the presidential election of 1912.

Chapter 2. History of the Election of 1912

To set the stage of what happened in 1912, it is important to look at the figures involved. Six men ran for president that year, Eugene Chafin, a Prohibitionist from Illinois, Eugene Debs, a Socialist from Indiana, Arthur Reimer, a Socialist Labor from Massachusetts, Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt, first a Republican and then a Progressive from New York, William Taft, a Republican from Ohio, and Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat from New Jersey (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_1912). Although all six men ran enthusiastic campaigns, the real drama surrounded Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson. It was as if each man's path was set out for him long before the election cycle began. Their meeting in this year was the culmination of a lifetime of political and personal events that shaped their ideas of where the nation was headed and prepared them for this historic election. It was this clash of philosophy, personality and sense of, or lack of, tradition that brought fireworks to the election.

Theodore Roosevelt was by far the strongest personality involved in the election. His actions, and the reactions of those running against him defined 1912. His ambition and drive, piggybacked with his popularity and inability to sit back and watch history unfold around him gave a sense of spirit and importance to the election. Roosevelt was born 1856 in New York to a wealthy family and lived the kind of life others only dreamed of. (www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/tr26) Despite having every opportunity imaginable, Roosevelt struggled with his health and through many personal tragic events. It was these events that taught him to fight and to have pride in himself and his country. Early on, he took a strong interest in politics and war. After three years in the

New York Assembly, a failed attempt to run for Mayor of New York City, and the death of his first wife, Roosevelt moved West to escape life. Upon his return to New York, it appeared he had shed his elitist persona and gained the new image as a bit of a loose cannon but also a more mature man of the people. During this influential time, his political views were solidified.

> The two greatest issues of Roosevelt's career were the response of government to the growth of big business and the role of the United States in world affairs…He learned about discontent over new economic conditions in the New York Mayoral race in 1886, when he not only lost to a democrat but also placed third behind the radical spokesman…Foreign affairs became a concern for Roosevelt during the same period. Starting with *Naval War of 1812* historical research [project] had familiarized him with American expansion. His urge to fight in a war led him to offer to raise a cavalry…for the Mexican border troubles in 1886. (p.33-34 Cooper, The Warrior and The Priest)"

The newly remodeled Roosevelt was fast tracked for greatness. He fought in the Spanish American War, served on the Civil Service Commission, and become the Police Chief of New York. His image as a Rough Rider only helped his ability to connect with people and be seen as a common man who understood the average American struggle. In 1897 he was appointed as Secretary of the Navy, and in 1900 was added to the McKinley ticket as Vice President. As it was famously rumored after "Senator Mark Hanna of Ohio, suggested privately, 'Don't any of you realize that there's only one life between this madman and the White House?' (p.28 Cooper, Pivotal Decades)," that Roosevelt was only appointed to the ticket because the New York Republican Party bosses did not want him around anymore. Whether the rumor was true or not, he was next in line to lead the country after McKinley was assassinated in 1901.

As president, Roosevelt was just as free spirited as he was in New York. He did, however, stick to a strong set of ideals and managed his Presidency accordingly.

> "As President, Roosevelt held the ideal that the Government should be the great arbiter of the conflicting economic forces in the Nation, especially between capital and labor, guaranteeing justice to each and dispensing favors to none. (www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/tr26)"

Some of Roosevelt's many achievements as president were pursuing antitrust suits under the Sherman Act, constructing of the Panama Canal for faster transportation of goods, creating the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine which allowed for US intervention in Central and South America, mediating the Russo-Japanese War which won him a Nobel Prize, securing the Gentlemen's Agreement to allow Japanese immigration, organizing the Great White Fleet tour of the Navy, and founding the conservation movement in America. (www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/tr26) Despite all of his successes, Roosevelt decided to follow tradition and not seek reelection in 1908. He chose William Taft of Ohio to be his anointed successor, but in no way took a bad seat to Taft, or anyone else in the Republican Party. After returning from a safari in Africa, he dove back into politics as a progressive in 1912, shaking up the system forever.

Politics and circumstance played quite a trick on William Taft. He was supposed to be Roosevelt's chosen successor, instead he was the man who was in charge of the Republican Party when Roosevelt came back and tore the system apart. Taft was born in Ohio in 1857. After attending Yale University, he moved up the political food chain through judicial appointments in Ohio and eventually splashed onto the national scene. He was made Secretary of the Navy under Roosevelt and then the air apparent to Roosevelt himself. It was no secret that Taft hated politics and felt uncomfortable campaigning. Taft called the campaign "one of the most uncomfortable four months of my life.' (www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/wt27)" Although he put his fears behind him to overcome his hatred of the trail in 1908 when he draped himself in the

shroud of Roosevelt, this insecurity would wind up being an extremely detrimental character flaw in the eyes of the voters in 1912. However, it would also help to align him with the urban machine bosses and the Old Guard of the Republican Party secure him his Party's nomination.

As president, Taft was extremely different than Roosevelt. He was a much stricter constitutionalist than Roosevelt and much more conservative as well.

> "Taft recognized that his techniques would differ from those of his predecessor. Unlike Roosevelt, Taft did not believe in the stretching of Presidential powers. He once commented that Roosevelt 'ought more often to have admitted the legal way of reaching the same ends.' (www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/tr26)"

Although many of their beliefs were similar, Taft had a habit of taking some of Roosevelt's ideas and taking them to the extreme. Just one of many examples was that Taft took up twice as many anti-trust cases as Roosevelt did.

> "His presidency was characterized by trust-busting, strengthening the Interstate Commerce Commission, expanding the civil service, establishing a better postal system, and promoting world peace.
> (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Howard_Taft)"

The tension within the Republican Party did not start with Taft and Roosevelt, but neither did anything to help curb the problem. There was a clear divide in 1910 between conservative Republicans and progressive Republicans. When Roosevelt returned from his safari, after months of studying and then talking with Herbert Croley about his book *The Promise of American Life* which for Roosevelt spelled out a whole new set of ideals and governing philosophies, he was not ready to sit back and let Taft flounder. It was no secret that Roosevelt was disappointed in Taft and his alignment with the Old Guard at a time when he was exploring and embracing progressive ideas. Despite appearances that

Roosevelt was supporting Taft to help elect Republicans, at heart he was supporting insurgents and finding his new political way.

> "Roosevelt bared his political soul soon after the elections. 'I am a radical,' Roosevelt confessed in December 1910, 'who most earnestly desires the radical programme to be carried out by conservatives. I wish to see industrial and social reforms of a far-reaching nature accomplished in this country…but I want to see that movement take place under sober and responsible men, not under demagogues. (p.159 Cooper, Pivotal Decades)"

Despite both Roosevelt and Taft's best efforts, the Republican Party lost seats nation wide and at every level of elected politics. As a result, the Progressive Republican League formed with Senator Robert La Follette as its leader. A civil war within the party had officially begun and tensions were on the rise. (p.160-162 Cooper, Pivotal Decades) With neither Roosevelt nor Taft stepping down and letting the other try for unity within the Party, the Democrats had a golden opportunity to enter the 1912 election season with a strong, viable candidate, Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey.

Woodrow Wilson was the perfect man to fill the void that the infighting within the Republican Party had created. His calm, academic personality was also the perfect foil for Roosevelt's brutish, aggressive tactics. Wilson was born in Virginia in 1856. As the son of a Presbyterian Priest, he was a deeply religious man. He attended Princeton University, got a law degree from the University of Virginia Law School, and a doctorate from Johns Hopkins University. (www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/ww28)

By the end of his graduate study, Wilson published what should have been a mark of his brilliance in political science academia. *Congressional Government* was not accepted with open arms.

> "The main contemporary criticism of *Congressional Government* were that Wilson too readily accepted popular participation and parties and, contradictorily, that he wished to imitate undemocratic British Practices. The main subsequent

> criticism by political scientists has been that he overrated the power of Congress and underrated the actual and potential powers of the president. (p. 49 Cooper, The Warrior and The Priest)"

These criticisms along with other failed works, made it clear that Wilson was not the political protégée that many hoped he would be. Although Wilson recognized his limitations, he was able to work around them in remarkable fashion. Despite his struggled as an author, his reputation as a professor mushroomed. He continued teaching and writing and while on the lecture circuit and mid writing of what was to be his most explosive work, *Philosophy of Politics*, he was asked to be the new president of Princeton University.

Once at Princeton, Wilson started making changes right away. He created three major initiatives and dove right into them. "His brother-in-law Stockton Axson later claimed that in 1895 or 1896 Wilson had outlined three departures of his Princeton presidency – the new curriculum; the tutorial scheme, which came to be called the preceptorial system; and the residential idea, later labeled the 'quad plan.' (p. 92 Cooper, The Warrior and The Priest)" Unfortunately for Wilson, he may have left a legacy that put Princeton at the top of the academic sphere and catapulted him to national fame, but he left in what he felt was a disgrace when two of his major plans failed. With his tenure falling apart, Wilson went on to run for Governor of New Jersey. "Success in politics never completely took away the sting left from his Princeton presidency. While Wilson was campaigning for governor in October 1910, Payne and his faction among the [Princeton] trustees forced his resignation in summary fashion. (p.107 Cooper, The Warrior and The Priest)"

Despite what Wilson felt was a disastrous end to his time at Princeton, the Democratic Party saw a gem. He had not only succeeded in making Princeton one of the most prestigious universities in the nation, but he had run a wildly successful gubernatorial campaign in New Jersey. Wilson was a calm, even-tempered conservative Democrat who had the ability to captivate crowds. "The social and intellectual similarities with Roosevelt made Wilson an almost instant front-runner for the 1912 Democratic nomination. Evan before his gubernatorial successes, newspapers and magazines were mentioning him as a presidential candidate. (p. 167 Cooper, Pivotal Decades)" Although Wilson had to put up a fight to get his Party's nomination, he emerged from the process looking far more presidential than either of the two Presidents in the race, Roosevelt and Taft.

With Wilson, Roosevelt, and Taft in the picture, the election of 1912 was truly larger than life. Roosevelt spearheaded much of the drama, Taft clung to tradition with both hands, and Wilson took advantage of a nation divided. These three men were responsible for one of the most animated, process changing elections in all of American history.

By understanding the history and background that took place leading up to both redefining elections, it is easy to appreciate the change that occurred during and long after 1896 and 1912. Unlike elections in the 21st century, candidates did not announce their candidacy sixteen months in advance of the first primary. There were no real primaries in the 19th century and conventions were the time when candidates were chosen. They debated, gave speeches, voted, used parliamentary procedure for their benefit and won over followers who would go out and help them win their respective

states. They also worked hard to draft their party's platforms to create a document that all on their ticket could run on. This process, especially in years like 1896 and 1912, was very challenging and had the ability to change the course of history. That is exactly what happened in these two years.

Part 2. Conventions and Platforms

Chapter 1. Conventions and Platforms background

Presidential conventions are, and always have been, an integral part of the presidential electoral process. They gave members of a particular party a chance to get together every four years to talk about the issues of the day, where they saw themselves heading, correct any mistakes they might have made in the past, and most importantly, gave their party leaders a sense of what their members back home think.

Before modern technology, the national convention gave members of each party a chance to see one another. It gave them a chance to build relationships and a venue for real decisions and change to be made. It also gave the national party a chance to connect with their base throughout the country. People in California had different concerns than those in Minnesota, which are different from those in Oklahoma or New York. The national meeting gave everyone a chance to connect.

The convention also serves another large purpose, to choose and nominate the party's nominee for President and Vice President. Before the beginning of the 20th century, the convention did just that. Delegates to the convention debated, argued, created nominating committees, voted, re-voted, and eventually chose their party leader. After the turn of the century, the convention was more used as a formality to lift the anointed candidate as the true leader of the party and to send them off into the general election with their party's full support behind them.

> "In use since the Jacksonian Era, it [nominating convention] is the official agency for the selection of each party's candidates for president and vice president and for the ratification of each party's platform. At the same time, it is the party's supreme policy-making authority, empowered to make the rules that govern party affairs.
>
> "The national convention historically has served another function of prime importance to the parties. It has been a meeting ground for the party itself, one in

> which leaders could tap rank-and-file sentiments and in which the divergent interests that make up each party could, at least in some fashion, be accommodated. In its classic role, the national convention presents an opportunity for the national party – the fifty state parties assembled – to come to terms with itself, permitting leading politicians to strike the necessary balances and to settle temporarily the continuing questions of leadership and policy. (Keefe, p. 89)"

The convention also gave everyone a chance to talk about the party platform. Every four years, each party was given the opportunity to understand where it had been and where it wanted to go. It allowed to them to reassess their standing with the American people and those around the world. Everyone had to take stock in what they are doing and debate the top issues of the day. It kept the parties honest and aware of the world and country in which they operate.

Once each party had decided how it stood on the issues it chose as most important, it wrote up a document that then had to be voted on, and eventually sold to the American public. Although the platform was not technically binding, it gave the voters insight into where their party and its candidates stood. It also gives the party leaders a chance to flex their muscles and make sure that their opinions are present in the document.

> "Ordinarily the most important convention committee is the committee on resolutions, which is in charge of drafting the party platform. The actual work of this committee begins many weeks in advance of the convention, so that usually a draft of the document exists by the time the convention opens and the formal committee hearings begin. When a president seeks reelection, the platform is likely to be prepared under his direction and accepted by the committees 9and alter by the floor) without major changes. (Keefe, p. 111)

Conventions and platforms were the official springboard for candidates to move on and run the general election that they desire. In 1896 and 1912, the conventions and

platform writing were really the last of their kind. They both marked the end of an era and were the precursor to the modern convention and platform.

Chapter 2. Election of 1896

1896 was the year of the larger than life conventions. The silver debate was ripe for the picking and tempers all over the nation were flaring. With the country anxiously waiting to find out what direction it would be headed, the Republican campaign got underway first. William McKinley, the former Governor of Ohio calculatingly threw his hat in the ring and decided to take a run at his Party's nomination. His campaign had officially launched in 1888 with help from the political master mind, Mark Hanna. McKinley and Hanna patiently waited almost a decade for the perfect set of circumstances to come along and to give them time to build up an organization larger and more efficient than anyone had ever seen in presidential politics. The campaign that they created together would forever change the landscape of electoral politics and put both men on the map for being branding and public opinion swaying geniuses. Most of the drama within the party took place before the convention, leaving the convention to be a sort of organized stump for McKinley and his pre-chosen platform. Despite the easy time they had at the convention, it was not easy getting there. Their first optical was Hanna himself.

> "A kind of political mythology soon accumulated around the friendship of McKinley and Hanna. The first element in this myth was the public image of Hanna himself. To his enemies he appears as a clever and ruthless manipulator of men, a greedy and self-centered business man, crudely exploiting his inferiors…To his friends Mark Hanna appeared as a superb manager of men and money, an honest and dependable associate, a man who reached his decisions on the basis of careful calculation and logic, who, within their experience, gave way to his emotion on one ground alone – in his devotion to William McKinley. (Jones p.103)"

There was no question that Hanna was the mastermind behind the campaign, but McKinley was no stranger to politics either. Although "William McKinley had devoted

his career to tariff protection with a singular concentration. It was literally true that he knew nothing else, that the issues of money and banking and foreign policy and so on, were large mysteries to him, (Jones p.108)" he was an extremely politically savvy man. No decisions were made without him. He and Hanna set up headquarters in Canton, Ohio because it was his hometown and because the Midwest was the focus of the campaign. They changing political landscape was no secret to McKinley and Hanna. They knew that could capitalize on McKinley being from Ohio and bring new focus to the Midwest. They did not forget about the rest of the country, however, elaborate organizations were set up in the East, South, and Far West with surrogates, relatives and close friends and supporters.

McKinley had political sense and experience. Hanna had money and organizational skills unparalleled by anyone of his time. Neither one ever forgot who they were and what their role in the campaign was. They were a perfect marriage.

> "In their relationship, therefore, it remained true that while Hanna developed a unique mastery of politics, he always bowed to McKinley's judgment in that field [politics] as superior to his own, while McKinley viewed Hanna as a prince-like prototype to of the successful business man, the figure who stood in his option at the apogee of civilization, the finest of man's historical development. (Jones p. 106)"

McKinley kept their political hopes alive by doing what he did best, being a politician. And Hanna kept them monetarily afloat with his personal finances and his ability to raise money at rates never seen before at that time. He was trusted by businessmen and bankers alike through out the Northeast and other areas where financial institutions were worried about the Democrats and their free silver platform.

To add to this dynamic, McKinley and Hanna decided they did not need the party bosses to win the election. They felt confident that they could win without having to

change themselves to fit what the bosses wanted. In 1896, the Middle West was the heart of the election, and machine politics and the bosses of the Northeast were not going to have a say. "The people against the bosses" become the McKinley motto. There was no love lost between the two groups: the bosses did not like McKinley. Unfortunately, they could not come together as a group to pick just one candidate to support in hopes of slowing McKinley down. Some wanted Speaker of the House Thomas Reed of New Hampshire; others wanted Senator Matthew Quay from Pennsylvania. There was also a split between Levi Morton, the Governor of New York and Senator William Allison from Iowa. This lack of organized support in relation to Hanna's meticulous organization left the bosses without a chance. Although machine bosses were not organized enough to stop McKinley and his quest to his party's nomination, they certainly tried to cause a few serious roadblocks. But these roadblocks and attempts to stop McKinley's progress were not strong enough to make a dent in his popularity. They were more of an annoying bug in his ear than an actual threat. By the time the convention rolled around in St. Louis, it was the McKinley/Hanna show.

Hanna organized everything for the convention. He did not leave any detail unplanned and made sure the entire event was completely designed and derived in the best interest of McKinley and his push for the nomination.

> "To those who were watching the pre-convention activities in St. Louis it was evident that the McKinley forces were on the ground earlier and more aggressively than anyone else. Their objectives now were to obtain McKinley's nomination on the first ballot, to assume effective control of the machinery of the campaign, and to mold the platform in such a way as to make it possible McKinley and the party to win the election. (Jones p.160)"

Everything was calculated. The platform had been previously decided on, the temporary and permanent chairmen had already been approved along with their speeches, and the

overzealous attention to McKinley's being a Civil War Veteran were meticulously planned out in Canton, Ohio before anyone even arrived in St. Louis. Hanna was not going to leave anything up to chance.

Although Hanna did his best to keep everything under control, there were a few hiccups along the way. The largest one was around the free silver question.

> "Traditionally, the newer states in the Far West had been Republican, and their admission to the Union had brought important new strength to the Republican Party in the Electoral College and in the Congress. Republicans from these areas had been staunch supporters of protective tariffs and other Republican policies. They were, however, from the great silver producing state in the Union…The result was that every Republican congressman from the Far West was an advocate of free silver. (Jones p.92)"

When the Republicans adopted a platform at the convention that contained support of the gold standard, despite both McKinley and Hanna being sure it was the way to go, the Silver Republicans, let by Senator Teller, chose to leave. They did not, however, create a large spectacle when they left, thus allowing the McKinley/Hanna team to keep a strong hold over the convention and essentially solidifying the McKinley brand. This ability to keep a semi-united front, in comparison to what would happen at the Democrat convention, allowed the Republicans to come out of the gate stronger, more cohesive, and looking ready to govern. Their platform, which was presented without too much drama, officially kicked off their appeal to the general public and to those who were undecided about which party to support. It was indeed a platform filled with strong Republican ideals and not just one of monetary support.

> "Though the monetary plank received widest attention, the Republican platform contained a comprehensive review of all major public issues. In fact, the tariff issue received greater emphasis than the money question…Special support was also promised for the civil service law, the free ballot, arbitration of industrial disputes, efforts to lessen and prevent evils of intemperance, and measures to protect the rights and interests of women. On overseas policies the platform asked

> for United States control Hawaii, a Nicaraguan Canal to be built, owned and operated by the United States, the purchase of the Danish Islands for use as a naval station, governmental efforts to end the massacres in Armenia, the assertion of the Monroe Doctrine 'in its full extent,' and the union of all English-speaking parts of the American continent by free consent. The Republican platform also expressed sympathy for Cuba…and an enlargement of the navy, improvement of coastal defense, and the admission of the territories at the earliest practical date. (Jones p.173)"

As the convention went on just as Hanna has planned, McKinley was easily given the nomination with Garrett A. Hobart from New Jersey as his running mate. This decision solidified McKinley as a viable candidate and let him start his general campaign strong and in a position to make a real run at the Presidency. By coming out of the gate in this manner, the only way to defeat the Republicans would be for the Democrats or Third Parties to become the most organized, the most precise, and garner the most public appeal. With the instability within these groups, it was highly unlikely that they could outshine what Hanna had created. Needless to say, with the Republican convention winding down, the ball was firmly placed in the Democrats court.

When the Democrats convened in Chicago in July the atmosphere was anything but similar to that of the Republicans in St. Louis. There was no clear-cut candidate who looked like he could win the nomination, let alone the Presidency. There was also no consensus on which direction the platform should go. The silver issue was splitting the Democratic Party, just as it was splitting the nation. Prior to 1896, the silver and gold Democrats had their favored candidates. The gold Democrats, generally from the Northeast and generally with the support of party bosses had history on their side. They had been successful in the past and the Northeast had always been a political powerhouse. But times were changing. The Midwest was an emerging political hotbed and men who supported free silver were gaining confidence and support. Once

Cleveland's men, who after staying silent on the issue for much longer than anyone in the Party had hoped leaving a large void that was filled with infighting for control finally come out in support of the gold standard, they had reason to worry. Cleveland's silence on the issue lost them any sort of control they might have had over the convention and the future of their Party.

The Midwest and Southern Democrats were generally in support of free silver. They were from farm country and their constituents were being hit hard. They also felt a change in the wind. They knew that this was the year when the Midwest would be just as important, if not more so, than the Northeast. The Populist Party, which believed in free silver, had made a tremendous showing in the South and Midwest during the midyear elections, and those sentiments were carrying over to 1896. The free silver Democrats showed up in Chicago ready for a fight and ready to take on the gold supporters, and the long-standing political machines.

The number of names being floated for presidential nominee was something to be seen. It was no wonder that the Republicans felt confident going into 1896. It was clear that the democrats were being pulling many different directions without a strong leader.

> "Although Richard Bland was indeed the front-runner, 3 to 1 odds were very generous and should have attracted a lot of action. Bland's support was broad but shallow and fell far short of the two-thirds majority needed for the nomination. At this point, most observers would probably have put Horace Boies of Iowa in second place, followed by Claude Matthews of Indiana, John McLean of Ohio, Joseph Blackburn of Kentucky, Ben Tillman of South Carolina, and Sylvester Pennoyer of Oregon. The two wild cards were Vice-President Adlai Stevenson, whose availability was impaired by the opposition of his home delegation of Illinois, and Senator Teller. All of these were silver men. The leading cold candidate was Robert Pattison of Pennsylvania, who was also the only hard-money man to enter the contest formally. David Hill of New York, William Russell of Massachusetts, and William Whitney of New York were also mentioned as gold possibilities but had no intention of accepting a nomination on

> a silver platform even in the (outrageous unlikely) event it were tendered. (Bensel p. 41)"

With so many candidates in contention, it was no surprise that the silver and gold groups fought over everything. "The two factions battled over the identity of every convention official – temporary chairman, permanent chairman, chairman of the resolutions (platform) committee, keynote speaker – and the makeup of several state delegations, including that of Nebraska. The silverites won every vote and seemed eager to humiliate their rivals. (Kazin p. 54)"

As the victories for the silver camp increased, the rumors about the gold camp's defection increased equally. First, Senator Daniel, a solid silver man, was chosen to be temporary chairman of the convention. Then the legitimacy of the seating of the delegates themselves came into question, particularly those who came from gold supporting states. And finally, the platform was created and in it, the support of silver was clearly stated. The gold standard supporters could no longer stand by and let this happen. They felt that the Party in which they had based their careers around was heading in the wrong direction and with the tide turning; there was no longer a place for them. After trying to strike to compromise with the silverites, they eventually had enough.

> "Because of the impending party's commitment to silver meant that many hard-money politicians would either have to endorse silver or sacrifice their political careers, there were constant rumors of defections from the gold camp in the week before the convention opened. However, even if they defected from gold in order to maintain ties with their party, most of these Democrats faced very long odds in election contests with hard-money Republicans. The problem was that divisions over the monetary standards were sectionally aligned with much of the gold sentiment in the country residing in the Northeast and the major cities of the Great Lakes States…Most gold Democrats were thus caught in the horns of a dilemma. Either they converted to silver in order to maintain their place within local and national party councils and then lost elections or they kept their commitment to gold and watched other more nimbly opportunistic read them out of the party. (Bensel p. 89)"

No decision of defection was made right away, but for the gold men, the hits kept coming. “In the end, the Committee on Resolutions decided to include many traditional, if not downright hoary, declarations in the platform, among them one supporting lower tariff rates. (Bensel p.205)” But despite how traditional the platform was in many ways, it was not enough to bridge the gap. The money question was indeed, a ‘money question’ and in order to come out of the convention victorious, one side had to win not only the nomination, but the platform position as well.

The nail in the coffin of the gold Democrats was indeed William Jennings Bryan. Although he was not considered a feasible candidate for nomination, he had spent the past few years being the voice of the free silver movement in the House of Representative and all over the speaking circuit. He was also far and away the best orator of his time. He was chosen to give a speech on behalf of the silverites during the platform debate. He followed Senator Tillman whose speech had flopped.

The coliseum in Chicago was a difficult place to deliver a speech in. It was loud, the crowd was rowdy, and it was expected for cheers and jeers to be present no matter who was speaking. These conditions did not help Tillman’s speech, but they did help to skyrocket Bryan to be the hero of the convention. Between his oratory skills, his ability to be the only speaker of the entire multi-day event to captivate the entire audience, and his religious metaphors, Bryan stole the show with arguably the most famous speech in the history of presidential electoral politics, all in the name of free silver.

> “Bryan then stepped forward a few inches and straight into the headlines of American History. ‘Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, support by the commercial interest, the laboring interest and the toilers everywhere.’ He declared, before raising his hands to his temples and stretching

> his fingers out along his forehead for the penultimate phrase, 'we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to then: You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.' (Kazin p. 61)"

When Bryan finished speaking, he stood in front of the entire mesmerized audience with his hands outstretched in the shape of a cross and watched them watch him. For a whole minute there was uncomfortable silence, until, without warning, the entire coliseum erupted in cheers that lasted longer than his speech. From that moment on, Bryan became the man to watch. And silver all but secured itself the strong position in the platform fight.

After Bryan's speech, the platform decision was easy. The silver stance had made its mark and the Democrat Party was officially taking a new path, one that was never seen before in history, and one that would forever change the Democrat Party forever.

> "Unlike the typical document of the era, which concealed internal party differences under a blanket of downy clichés, it shouted defiance at Cleveland and his futile policies…The Chicago platform was an act of protest and transformation. Never during seven previous decades of nominating conventions had a majority of delegates thoroughly repudiated the incumbent president of their own party. And the issues for which they [Democrats] chose to fight in 1896 set the Democrats on a course the led away from their laisssez-faire past toward the liberalism of the New Freedom, New Deal, and the Great Society. To demand that the government control the money supply, tax the rich, and defend the right to strike was not quite a blueprint for a regulatory state. But the platform officially declared that Democrats were in favor of beginning to redistribute the wealth and power in American. In rhetoric at least, the party has never gone back. (Kazin p. 56)"

With history changed, and a new path set for the Democrat Party, the gold Democrats, who now represented more than just gold, but their Party's traditional way of thinking and respect towards its past, needed to make a decision. Stay and support their Party, which now barely resembled what it once had, or leave and support their cause,

their values, and their ideals. In the end, the defecting Democrats started the new National Democratic Party with a platform of supporting the gold standard and their traditional views. With the two major conventions out of the way, the changes that were starting to happen had really taken charge. A similar turn of events happened during the convention of 1912.

Chapter 3. Election of 1912

The changes in the convention process that started to skim the surface in 1896 reached a climax in 1912. Once again, the country was at a turning point and it was up to the parties to decide which was to go. The Republicans went to their convention first, and they did not hold back. Roosevelt and Taft's personal falling out only added to an already tense situation within their Party.

> "The break between Roosevelt and Taft had tragic elements, because each man's greatest virtue impelled him to fight the other. The two did not differ that much in their political viewpoints. Taft [as well as Roosevelt] also pictured himself as a reasonable conservative pursuing reform to stave off threats of revolution…Yet more than tactics separated the two men. Taft offended Roosevelt's political calling because he fumbled both as a party professional operating within the Republican faction situation and as a popular leader attempting to channel discontent in constructive directions. Roosevelt affronted Taft's judicial sense of rectitude both because he trifled with respect for law and the Constitution and because he consorted with element that each of them considered dangerous radical. With those traits on the line, they could not avoid the battle that would wreck both their political careers. (p.151 Cooper, The Warrior and The Priest)"

For a while, and for the good of the Party, Roosevelt and Taft called a truce. Taft added some reformist ideas to his platform and Roosevelt was content to know that if he stayed quiet and either let Taft bow out of the race or fail in the general election, that he would be called upon to be the Party's savior once again. This truce almost worked, but eventually, Roosevelt grew impatient. He believed that he was the right candidate for the job, and refused to sit by and watch Taft throw away everything he had worked for. Roosevelt used his opposition to an arbitration treaty Taft signed with Brittan to catapult his entry into the 1912 election. His reasoning rested on the idea that he was a man of the people, not a puppet of the Old Guard as Taft was.

Roosevelt putting his hat in the ring in January of 1912 was unheard of. Ex-Presidents did not run for reelection while their chosen successor was sitting in the White

House seeking another term. But Roosevelt felt that his values and ideals about how government should be run were being attacked. He refused to sit by and watch, despite understanding that he could not win his Party's nomination. "The intraparty campaign that followed added little to the debate over governmental regulation. It came to focus almost exclusively on the question of popular choice versus boss rule. (p. 156 Cooper, The Warrior and The Priest)"

Up until this time, the Old Guard, along with Party leaders, often led by machine bosses and other influential business men would either appoint delegates to the republican convention or hold caucus on a state by state basis. The Republican machine of its time was truly a machine. With their backing, any candidate was assured at the very least a strong showing in the election. They could make or break a candidate, and out of tradition and possibly fear, they threw their entire support behind Taft. He was the sitting president and they would support him even if, as many thought at the time, he had no chance of winning in the general election.

> "It might seem strange that such hard bitten-professional politicians would stick with the likely loser rather than stick to their party's only potential winner, and some Republicans did support Roosevelt despite disagreement or indifference toward his stands on issues. But most party leaders stayed loyal to Taft, in part because Roosevelt's reformist stands made him unpalatable to them. Other Taft loyalists shared Roosevelt's faith in the Democrats' unsoundness, particularly on economic questions, and predicted that the currency and tariff policies of a Democratic administration would frighten business, cause a depression, and swiftly sweep their party under conservative control, back into office. (p.172 Cooper, Pivotal Decades)"

Despite Party leaders, and many close friends' begging, Roosevelt went on with his campaign full steam ahead. "Opposed by the Republican machinery for the first time, TR hoped that an unprecedented candidate-centered campaign, which embodied a broader commitment to direct democracy, might wrestle the electorate free from the

stranglehold of party bosses. (Ch. 3 p.2 Milkis)" His strategy started with the six states that had direct primaries, North Dakota, California, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Nebraska. If he could make the direct primary a national issue, he felt he would get elected on his popularity alone. The Taft camp fiercely rejected this idea. They knew that the Party's power lived in its ability to pick candidates and did not intend to give this power to the masses. But Roosevelt's pursuit of the direct primary was relentless.

> "The issue may be stated as follows: Should election laws be framed with a view to the interests of politicians or should election laws be framed with a view to carrying out the popular will?...We regard the present contest [between Roosevelt and Taft] not as a contest between individuals – for we are not concerned with the welfare of a particular individual, neither with mine nor with any other man – but as a contest between two radically different views of the function of politics in a great democracy. (ch. 3 p. 4 Milkis)"

The debate waged on for months. Many, including the New York Times, felt that the direct primaries were a bad idea. It required candidates to raise large sums of money and get financial backers. This meant that candidates were not as indebted to their Party as to an outside funder. It also required campaigns to be highly organized. Grassroots teams were created, local headquarters set up in each state, campaign workers were hired and paid for their services, and cross country speaking programs and press events were planned (Milkis)**.** Despite insider outcry against the primary system, people loved the idea and Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Maryland, Ohio, and South Dakota all adopted the system. Due to Roosevelt's skillfully organized plan and widespread popularity, he was able to walk away with all but 2 of the primaries. Roosevelt's success did not spill over to the states where party leaders chose delegates. Taft was able to easily secure delegates from the other states and continue to have the full support of the Old Guard. This stubbornness of both groups to keep attacking one another and taking

their fight to the streets wound up not only putting them in a handicapped spot for the general election, but changed the face of electoral politics and constitutional philosophy forever.

> "…regular Republicans stood resolutely for the party organization's authority to dictate candidates, an independent judiciary, and, apart from pro-business policies, restraining the power of the national government to regulate the society and economy. And yet, their snub of Roosevelt's insurgency only ensured a national hearing for his Progressive Party campaign. Indeed, TR's success in the primaries, combined with his steadfast defense of pure democracy, extending even to popular referenda on judicial rulings, animated an election of deep constitutional significance. His battle for the nomination of the Republican Party – framed as a fight for 'the right of the people to rule' – launched a campaign that raised the deepest constitutional questions and instigated a debate about the future of constitutional government in the United States. (ch.3 p.8 Milkis)"

This was the heart of the debate. Through the entire primary and caucus season, while delegates were being fought over and selected, the Old Guard, with Taft, were fighting for their traditional ways, strong constitutional interpretation, and conservative views of the judiciary. These ideas, with a non-charismatic leader who every one knew did not stand a chance in the general election, led the Taft camp. The other side championed popular rule and had one of the most charismatic leaders in history. It is no wonder that as Taft began to loose his footing and Roosevelt became more and more confident, the barbs exchanged got more and more heated. Eventually, after the Massachusetts primary, Taft was forced to take Roosevelt seriously and start campaigning state by state.

"As the 'duel of the presidents' heated up, however, there was no substitute for the candidates to meet the voters in person: mobilized by the Taft and Roosevelt machines, 'towns and cities that had not greeted a President or an ex-President for half a century came out and listened in audiences of thousands and tens of thousands. (ch.3 p.

34 Milkis)" The rules of campaigning had changed. Staffers were hired and paid, trains were rented for easier mobility, and hand shaking became the way of the campaign. The ground teams mobilized in this election were truly the precursor to the present day grassroots efforts. They not only made an impact on the electorate, but also on the entire country as two heated factions met in Chicago for the nominating convention.

> "The end of the primary campaign thus left the campaign of 1912 in a swirl of personal acrimony, party maneuvers, and fundamental conflict over the rules by which presidential candidates were selected. The struggle between the old and the new political order…was clouded by the clash of personalities and ambitions as well as serious disagreement among progressives about how to translate the ideal of pure democracy into political and governmental practice. (ch. 3 p. 46 Milkis)"

When the Republicans finally gathered together in June in Chicago for their nominating convention, tensions ran high. True to form, Taft stuck with tradition and stayed home from the convention, waiting to hear when he received the nomination at his house. Roosevelt, on the other hand, was in the convention hall, drumming up support. For everyone involved, there was more at stake than who would receive the Party's nomination; the core philosophy of the Republican Party was up for grabs. The Old Guard decided it would rather go down in flames with Taft than win with Roosevelt. Roosevelt's idea of direct primary and referendum would mean the Party would loose control of the presidency and thus its power. Taft summed up their perspective clearly.

> "I quite agree with you that the victory in November is by no means the most important purpose before us. It should be to retain the party and the principles of the party so as to keep it in a condition of activity and discipline a united force to government and conservative institution…It is the Republican Party with its old principles that we must labor to maintain to keep vitalized and active. If victory comes in November well and good; if it does not we shall know that in June we accomplished a great victory and that we are merely holding out forces in line for victory in the future… (ch. 3 p.48 Milkis)

The fight over delegates started early. Taft began the convention 235 delegates to Roosevelt's 19. Roosevelt knew he deserved more delegates and accused Taft and the Old Guard of foul play. Disputes over delegates from California and Texas only added to mounting pressure between the two camps. Roosevelt added to the tension by giving a fiery speech that upstaged the entire Republican Party.

> "TR told the nearly six thousand wildly enthusiastic supporters who came to the Coliseum to hear him that between 60 and 80 delegates had been stolen by the party bosses who controlled the convention. It did mot matter to Roosevelt and his supporters that he had used the very same tactics in 1908 to designate Taft as rightful heir or that the weight of tradition was on the side of regular Republicans. TR claimed to champion the cause of new form of politics, justified by the primary contests, which required party leaders to worship at the shrine of public opinion. (ch. 3 p. 53 Milkis)"

Roosevelt did not stop there. He had been warning the Old Guard of a walkout should he and his supporters not be taken seriously. But, while giving his speech, he took his idea of a walkout and encouraged his supports, along with the Progressive Republican League who answered his call, to up and bolt while he uttered the words that would be his new Party's battle cry:

> "It would be far better to fall honorably for the cause we champion than it would be to win by foul methods, the foul victory for which our opponents hope. But the victory shall be ours, and it shall be won as we have already won so many victories, by clean and honest fighting for the loftiest of causes. We fight in honorable fashion for the good of mankind; fearless of the future, unheeding of our individual fates; with unflinching hearts and undimmed eyes; we stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord. (ch 3. p.55 Milkis)"

The stage was now set. When Taft was declared winner of the Republican nomination and the Party was notably more conservative than before, Roosevelt and his supporters marched out and began to start a new Party. "No other ex-President has denounced both the party that elected him and the other major organization [and] …Rarely has any politician aroused enthusiasm so close religious frenzy that a Michigan

delegation chanted…and a New York delegation sang. (p.210-211 Goldman)" Taft was left to accept his nomination by surrogate with a much smaller crowed and relief that the days of having rebels within his Party were over. Roosevelt quickly met with his supporters and expressed interest in running for President under their new Party name and with his new style of candidate centered campaigning. The Progressive Party in America was born.

The fireworks sparked between Wilson and Roosevelt outdid those between Roosevelt and Taft or Roosevelt and Debs. Wilson was a worthy opponent for Roosevelt who could, and did, give him a run for his money. With them both having the ability to incite crowds, the national stage had not seen anything like this since the days of Lincoln. Wilson had the security of a strong unified party behind him. Roosevelt, heading up the Progressive Party that had begun using the term Bull Moose Party, had popularity fit for a Hollywood actor. On top of being extremely charismatic, both men stood strong for reform and change. "For the first time the two major candidates for the Presidency were progressives, and for the first time a major split in reform doctrine was being argued before a national audience. (p.216 Goldman)" And argue they did.

Each man stood for a clear set of principles. And each man had been influenced by a major mind of the time. Years earlier, Roosevelt had read Croly's work and was influenced strongly by it. "Putting the 'national need' before any other concern, the subjection of property to the 'public welfare,' the exaltation of the executive and the acceptance of trusts…(p.209 Goldman)" became Roosevelt's core philosophy. He embraced *New Nationalism* so much so, that it inspired him to not only challenge Taft in the primary, but to break off and start the Bull Moose Party.

Boston lawyer, Louis Brandeis, similarly influenced Wilson. Brandies, a famous mind working to create well-populated ideas of where the Democratic Party should go, was a confidant of Wilson's and helped him to create *New Freedom*. "Wilson invented the slogan the 'New Freedom,' to distinguish between the New Nationalism and his call for the restoration of 'free enterprise.' Trust regulation, tariff reduction, and banking reform were the three principal issues emphasized by Wilson, and all three were tied into an attack on monopoly. (p. 215 Goldman)"

As the campaign went on, the phrases *New Nationalism* and *New Freedom* took on a life of their own. Although they did stand for something and were at the core of each candidate's beliefs, they grew and changed as the election went on. They became umbrella terms that were pulled upon in any situation. They were also guaranteed to incite the crowd into frenzy and make average citizens feel as though they really believed in an idea bigger than themselves. There was no question that *New Nationalism* and *New Freedom* were based on true philosophical ideas of where the country should go, but since there was little difference in each plan, they were more effective campaign slogans than actual distinctive policy points.

Despite having two different philosophies taken from two prominent thinkers of the time, Roosevelt and Wilson were not as different as they appeared. They may have delivered one of the arguably greatest debates in history, but what were they really debating about? The truth was, both candidates were progressives and there was little difference in their philosophies. They both "advocated similar reform measures for workers, farmers, consumers, and business, and their party platforms differed mainly in the Democrat's greater stress on agriculture and the Progressives' on labor and the tariff.

(p.183 Cooper, Pivotal Decades)" Roosevelt and Wilson were not carbon copies of one another, however. They did differ in, even if slightly, in 4 major areas, the tariff, woman suffrage, black Americans, and trusts.

> "Their differences on the tariff did not go much beyond their respective platforms…Roosevelt affirmed his belief in protection, but he argued that such protection must be instituted on a 'scientific' basis by an expert regulatory commission. In an unusual move for a Democrat, Wilson endorsed protection in principle at the same that he lambasted it in Republican practice as special privilege. (p.183 Cooper, Pivotal Decades)"

> "The issue of woman suffrage also seemed to disappear during the campaign. Although Roosevelt supported and Wilson opposed a constitutional amendment, neither man took a strong stand on the issue. (p.184 Cooper, Pivotal Decades)"

> "The plight of black Americans also evoked little interest or disagreement from Roosevelt and Wilson…Roosevelt avoided mentioning race during the campaign, but he evidently made his distance from blacks clear enough to reap some modest electoral rewards…Wilson held no strong racial views, which was unusual for a Southern-born white of the era. (p184 Cooper, Pivotal Decades)"

> "There were fundamental disagreements between Roosevelt and Wilson on the economics underlying the trust issues, the nature of democratic leadership, and conceptions of human nature. Although they overlapped on antitrust policy, the men diverged sharply in their analysis of the American economy. Roosevelt believed that there were, in his terms, more 'good trusts' than 'bad trusts' and that current distribution of power among business was likely to last…Wilson believed that there were, in his terms, more 'trusts' than big businesses.' He was convinced that, without unfair interference, the current distribution of economic power would not last because fresh competitors would succeed in wrestling dominance over trusts. (p.185 Cooper, Pivotal Decades)"

The differences in these two men's philosophies were slim. It was clear that America was ready for a progressive President, the question was: did they want it to be a Progressive or a Democrat? "Thus an election that asked American voters to make principled and programmatic choices of far-reaching consequences, a great contest that would determine the fate of constitutional government, was sometimes reduced to dueling styles of popular leadership. America, it seemed, was asked, not to invest their

faith in New Nationalism or New Freedom, but, rather to select the individual candidate who best embodied the ambitions of the ‘whole people. (ch.5. p.84 Milkis)” They were also asked to embrace the philosophy of the new style of convention and platform writing that had started in 1896 and continued again in 1912. From this year forward, this part of the presidential campaign would look very different than it ever had before.

Chapter 4. Influence on Today

The largest, most public part of any presidential election, both in 1896, 1912 and today was the nominating convention. Historically, this was the time when the party got together and talked. It decided what it wanted to do, what direction it was headed, who would be its leader, and how it would get the people to vote for them. The major candidates did not attend the convention. Instead, they had proxy's attend on their behalf and waited anxiously to see if they had been chosen. Although there was a lot of behind the scenes meetings and deal makings, the convention, as proved in 1896 with Bryan winning his party's nomination out of nowhere, was the time when the party could go in any direction. After the implementation of direct primaries beginning in 1912, and fully supported by Roosevelt, this all but stopped.

Candidates interested in being their party's nominee had to win over the voters in each of the 50 states long before the convention even started. They spent months campaigning all over the country. In order to be successful, candidates had to start their fundraising early, so early in fact that it often happened years in advance. They needed to get to know the electorate through speeches and media buys all over the United States. They also had to be present in as many areas as possible. Surrogates were still important because no one could be in one more than one place at a time, but they were not the sole spokesperson for the candidate. It was now up to the candidate and his staffs to win over the voters in the primary before they can even get to the convention.

In this new system, once the primary season was over the convention season started. Those involved in 1896 and 1912 would not recognize the conventions of today. They were now a completely orchestrated event. The rules of the convention might be

similar to what they were historically, but the execution was far from it. If done properly, a convention was a four-day free media infomercial. It was the time for the party to come together, stand as one, and officially launch their chosen candidate into the general election. They now had the national stage to sell their platform, introduce or reintroduce their leadership and rising stars, and to brand their election. Often a theme song was chosen, a color scheme was produced, and prime time flashy speeches were given. In the sound-bite media centric world of today, the convention was no longer a place to debate ideals and chose a party direction; it was now a large-scale media buy and sales pitch.

The change in the convention was not the only thing that changed in this time period. Both major party platforms changed as well. The decisions made in 1896 and 1912 changed the course of history forever. The election of 1896 most dramatically changed the Democrat Party. The changes made to the Democrat platform turned its back on seven decades of following in the footsteps of the previous Democrat President's policies and opened the door to protest and transformations. These changes, which included accepting a silver monetary standard and protecting the rights of the working class and poor, left the way to a party that believed in liberal redistribution of wealth and gave America such programs as New Freedom, The New Deal, and The Great Society.

What happened to the Democrat Platform in 1896 happened to the Republican Platform in 1912. Though he wound up running under the Bull Moose Party, Teddy Roosevelt's Progressive ideas and his desire to see his Republican Party change with the times easily swept Taft and his Old Republican Guard ways to the back burner. Roosevelt stood for primaries, pure democracy, and popular referenda on judicial rulings all pointing in the direction of 'the right of the people to rule.' Through his policy of New

Nationalism, Roosevelt led the Republican Party down a path that changed the way it looked as its domestic and foreign affairs from that day forward.

Part 3. Third Parties

Chapter 1. Importance of Third Parties

The most important point to understand about third parties was that they do not refer a specific third party, assuming that the Republican and Democrat party were parties number one and two. Instead, 'third party' refers to any party outside of the two major parties. In any given election, there can be three, four, five or more 'third party' candidates. Third parties had their own convention, platform, strategy and candidates.

Not everyone in the United States easily fit into the Republican or Democrat box when voting. Although, generally they leaned one way or the other, they may not have felt at home in a large party that needed to keep itself broad in order to attract members. This was where third parties step in. They were often single-issue parties, focused on social and political issues. Many important issues that had changed America had been pushed first by third parties. Women's rights, workers rights, immigration reform, income tax, and crime fighting have all been spear headed by third parties. Third parties historically pushed issues that the main stream was not ready to address yet. Because they did not have to answer to a large group or really worry about legislating, they can educate the public and push their agenda. Often, they were successful when their pet issue was adopted by one of the major parties.

> "J. David Gillespie, professor of political science at Presbyterian College and author of "Politics at the Periphery: Third Parties in Two-Party America," notes that third parties have always been a part of America's political process and although a third-party candidate has never won the presidency, the organizations play several important roles -- from educating voters on specific issues to affecting real change in government policy.
>
> "Third parties actually strengthen the government, Gillespie says, by providing a legitimate outlet for those unhappy with the status quo. They give "dissidents a chance to air their grievances within the confines of the electoral process," he explains. "And that, then, probably reduces the prospect of more violent or more aggressive kinds of approaches to political action in this country

(http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2004/August/20040830165442frllehctim0.307461.html)."

In some years, third parties played a more important role than others. They were able to motivate the masses, change the debate, and bring their issues to the forefront so that the major parties had to address them. In 1896 and 1912, this was exactly the case. In fact, third parties played such a major role that it seemed as though they were going to forever have a seat at the table. As always though, they made a huge splash in the election, had some of their issues adopted by the to major parties, and took their rightful place back on the fringes of the electoral process.

Chapter 2. Election of 1896

Third parties were a huge part of the election in 1896. With silver such a hot button issue and with the Democrat party changing and the walk outs that were staged at both the Democrat and Republican convention, the climate was ripe for the third parties, especially those related to free silver, to take their place in the electorate. They may not have become the new major party, but they certainly made the election more interesting.

All of the excitement around the free silver platform was well deserved, but there was more for Democrats to worry about than their defecting colleagues. In 1896 there was a real threat of a third party strong hold throughout the Midwest and South. Populism was on the rise and it appeared that party lines were not going to be enough to win the election this time around. Creating strategic political coalitions was the only way that any party could win any election in 1896.

> "Once they had nailed down the platform and nominated their ticket, silver Democrats realize that the best they could hope for was the neutrality of the gold faction. Even nominal endorsements of the national party nominees on a silver platform appeared out of reach, while at least some public defections to McKinley and the Republicans seemed inevitable. To make up for these losses and perhaps make sizable addition to the party, silver Democrats hoped to attract both Populists and silver Republicans to their ticket. In fact, because there appeared to be no way in which the silver wing could practically placate the gold faction (and thus reunite the party), a major third-party effort in the presidential contest by either the Populists or silver Republicans would doom a silver Democrat. As a result, both Populists and silver Republicans held a practical veto over the carious candidates; to nominate someone who would be unaccepted to either group would be to lose the election before the campaign began. (Bensel p. 197)"

With this in mind, the only decision left to be made in Chicago was to strategically pick the party nominee who would best satisfy the remaining Democrats and also attract at least one, if not two or three, of the Third Parties to the Democrats side of the table. Everyone knew that this choice was going to be a difficult to begin with, but

with so many candidates and then the rise of Bryan's popularity after the Cross of Gold speech, the decision seemed close to impossible. With such an important decision to make, everything had to be thought about carefully. This was very difficult when no one could agree, there ware so many options, and it was unclear how outsiders were viewing this convention and which candidate would be most attractive to them. To matters more confusing, most of the candidates were not even in Chicago. They had surrogates and supporters representing them, but they were no there to help with any last minute whipping of votes and policy confirmations.

In the end, and after 5 ballots, William Jennings Bryan, previously the voice of free silver, became the voice and figurehead of the entire Democrat Party. With Sewall as his Vice President, he hit the road on a speaking tour that had him zigzagging around the nation. Bryan was an interesting and smart choice on the part of the Democrats. Though he was not nearly as popular as McKinley, he had a strong track record supporting free silver and all of the other new motions and philosophies that the Democrats were trying to embrace. He had also spent most of his career trying to get people to believe that he was not a Populist. Although he was on the record denying his association with the Populist Party, he was on the record as leaning in the Populist direction, thus putting him in an interesting position to garner Populist support. Bryan was also an orator like none other of his time. His ability to captivate crowds was unmatchable. This coupled with the Democrats new strategy of taking the campaign on the road to as many cities as possible instead of bringing the people to Bryan, made him a strategic choice for the Democrats to make a strong showing in 1896.

Bryan's attempt at creating a coalition with the Populist Party and other Third Parties was just one reason why Third Parties held so much power in 1896. Not only did the Democrats and Republicans have to decide how to deal with the Populists, Silver Party and Gold Democrats, but the Democrats, and especially Bryan, needed to navigate the field mine set up by these groups and potentially gain their support for a chance at winning the general election.

The adoption of the free silver platform by the Democrats went a long way to gain the support of the Populists and Silver Party, but the union was not easily made. These Parties, along with the prohibitionists, were about more than just free silver. They were long standing Parties with pasts and convictions that their leaders hoped ran deeper than the silver question. In the end, however, they did not. As is often the case with third parties, they were loud and drew a lot of attention, but in the end, most fell in line with the Democrats behind Bryan. "The activities of the Populists [and the other third parties] were particularly significant. They postponed their convention until the other two parties had held theirs on the assumption that the Republican and Democratic parties would declare for gold, forcing the bolters from both parties to move into the Populist camp. (Hollingsworth p.48)"

The Populists in general were unsure of Bryan. Though he had Populist tendencies, he had spent his career fighting off the label of Populist and pledging loyalty to the Democrat cause. The Populists and Silver Republicans, as well as at times the Silver Party hoped that the Democrats would nominate a bolting Silver Republican, specifically Senator Teller of Colorado. These groups felt that the Silver Republicans, Populists, and Democrats alike could easily endorse Teller. "In effect, the Populists and

Silver Republicans were blackmailing silver democrats. The Democrats were told that if they did not support Teller, he would run on a third-party ticket. (Hollingsworth p.50)" The threat of another Third Party did scare the Democrats, but not enough for them to support Teller. In a field as congested as the Democrat candidate field was, blackmail attempts just could not work. This plan backfired anyway because the Democrats wound up nominating Bryan, a strong silver supporter. Luckily for all involved in this alliance, Teller was more interested in supporting silver than running for president.

> "But only after much maneuvering and many protestations was he able to bring the reluctant Silver Republicans into the Bryan Camp. He then turned his attention to the Populists in an effort to prevent them from making an independent nomination. (Hollingsworth p.64)"

Teller was much more conciliatory than many of his fellow free silver supporters. Populists in general did not want to follow the Democrat lead and support Bryan. They felt that their party was about more than just free silver and were very aware that Bryan, though he had some Populist tendencies, was not a Populist. After much back and forth and potential lines being drawn in the sand, it was a speech given by Senator William V. Allen of Nebraska, who was a Bryan supporter, who finally tipped the scale.

> "If by putting a third ticket in the field, you would defeat free coinage; defeat the withdrawal of the issue power of national banks; defeat government ownership of railroads, telephones, and telegraphs; defeat income tax and foist gold monometalism and high taxation upon the people for a generation to come, which would you do? It is for you to choose and not for me, but you should choose wisely, as doubtless as you will. (Hollingsworth p.65")

In the end, the Populists chose to fight their battle with Sewall and not Bryan, by nominating their own Vice Presidential candidate, Tom Watson. This decision kept them in line with Bryan by accepting his nomination for the Presidency but proved their point they were not just collateral that would bow at the foot of the Democrat Party. They also

took a stand in their platform. "In their platform too, the Populists showed radical deviations from the Democrats, demanding besides free and unlimited coinage of silver and the establishment of postal savings bank, direct election of Senators and of Presidents and Vice-Presidents, the initiative and referendum, government ownership of public utilities, and Federal public-works expenditure for the unemployed. (Cunningham, p.77)" This made the support of the Populist Party very tricky for Bryan. He could not win a general election without them, but with their movement away from the Democrat Platform and the nomination of Watson as Bryan's running mate made his candidacy have to overcome a huge hurdle that McKinley, who was already in a better position to win the general election coming out of his convention, did not have to face.

The Populists were not the only ones who joined the Bryan camp. The Prohibitionists joined the Democrat cause as well. Although they were first and foremost in favor of condemning liquor trafficking, "they were diverted from their first enthusiasms by their new found enthusiasm for free silver. They were converts now to a campaign for free silver under the leadership of Bryan and Sewall. They pressured that campaign more strongly than they urged a prohibition plank in the Populist platform. (Jones p. 253)" Labor could have put up a huge roadblock for Bryan, but when Eugene Debs did not show up in St. Louis for the Third Party convention and did not follow through on his party nomination, the road was clear for Bryan to build a coalition of the Democrats, Populists, Prohibitionist, and parts of the Labor movement. It was only the success of the Republicans and possibly the newly created National Democrat Party and its gold standard platform that could stand in Bryan's way.

Not all bolters from the Democrat Party joined the new National Democrat Party. "most conservative Democrats in the eastern states concluded that on the basis of both issues and personalities the victory of the Republican Party and McKinley was essential. (Jones p.265)" Others could not stand the idea of a Republican winning the Presidency and organized the National Democrat Party as a challenge to both McKinley and Bryan.

With the Midwest and Upper South as their targets, the National Democrat Party looked to Cleveland to be a leader of this new movement. These sound money Democrats met in Chicago for another try at a convention where their views on the gold standard would be heard and taken seriously. General John M. Palmer of Illinois won his new party's nomination after Cleveland refused it. Confederate general Simon Bolivar Buckner was nominated as the Vice-Presidential Candidate. They had a long road ahead of them and put themselves in a bad spot from the very beginning.

> "The National Democrats from the first found themselves uncomfortably in the no man's land of the campaign, open to attack from all sides. Even conservative Democrats, who might at least have refrained from criticism, accused them of harming the cause of sound money by dividing the supporters of McKinley…One factor caused some in the new party to be more reserved in their support of McKinley [at least openly]. That was the hope that this party would become the base for the continuation of the Democratic party, if they accomplished Bryan's defeat…However, the mounting hysteria of the campaign tended to subordinate any thought of party organization for the future to the desperately felt need to win a McKinley victory. (Jones p.273)"

In the end, the National Democrat Party functioned as an extension of the Republican Party and played little threat on Bryan and the Democrats. When the general election kicked off, there were two viable candidates, and 4 others. This was often what happened with third parties. They made a big showing in the debate and in the lead up to the campaign, but when it came to the general election, they often took a back seat. A famous case where this did not happen was in 1912. In this year, the biggest third party of

its time lead by a larger than life ex-president did better than the one of the two major parties.

Chapter 3. Election of 1912

With the general election underway, the big fight was between Roosevelt and Wilson. Taft did do his best to stand firm. "In truth, Taft chose to stand – or hide – behind the Republican Party. Having been badly rebuked in his effort to match Roosevelt's direct appeal to voters during the primary contest, Taft decided to withdraw to the customary presidential practice of leaving the general election to the party organization. (ch.5 p.8 Milkis)" The only major speech he gave was in Massachusetts where he spoke of the importance of preserving the institution of the Constitution. As a true conservative he did not even acknowledge Roosevelt and his 'third party' of rabble-rousers who he felt had no respect for the Constitution.

> "After this brief interlude, Taft was content to remain on the sidelines during the dramatic campaign of 1912, attending to presidential responsibilities in a 'business as usual' fashion…The President's refusal to become actively involved in the general election – his decision to suspend participation in the candidate centered contest – was part and parcel of his belief in the party system and his view that it had becomes a keystone of constitutional democracy...Having thwarted Roosevelt's effort to capture the Republican party…Taft felt that the most important task remaining was to uphold the two party system. 'If we were to be defeated by the Democrats,' which the president admitted was the likely outcome, 'we can still retain the Republican party, and it may not suffer from defeat.' Defeat was likely to increase the GOP's 'discipline.' More to the point, Taft added, the election and its aftermath were likely to impart an important lesson on the value of political parties. (ch. 5 p.10 Milkis)

With that, Taft left the fight up to the other two men. He became the first sitting president to come in third when running for reelection.

Despite the major battle being between the Progressives and the Democrats, the Socialists did make significant headway during 1912. With the tide turning more and more radical throughout the country, many were attracted to Socialism, and its leader, Eugene Debs. Debs was from Terre Haute, Indiana and had the remarkable ability to

connect with small town Midwesterners. “In fact, one of the distinguishing features of Deb’s socialism was its sui generis American form. Debs styled himself as the champion of the working class, but urged middle class American to join the Socialist crusade, which he portrayed as the fulfillment of the Declaration of Independence. (ch. 5 p.65 Milkis)”

Debs was the perfect candidate to fit into the race with Wilson and Roosevelt because he was just as charismatic as they were and could captivate audiences in his own right. He even went so far as to charge admission to his famously engaging speeches. This celebrity like embodiment of Debs helped the Socialist Party peak in 1912 and appeared to have some real staying power.

> “Most important, the Socialist party seemed poised in 1912 to flower into an American social democratic organization, to play the same sort of role in remaking politics in the United States that social democrats were undertaking in Germany and Great Britain. For the first time, the Socialist platform pronounced against ‘violence as a weapon of the working classes,’ signifying that the moderate wing of the Party committed to political rather than ‘direct’ action, had secured control of the campaign. (ch5 p.27 Milkis)

Debs did not attend his Party’s convention, giving a nod to the importance of Parties as Taft had done. He felt that Socialism was taking off and in order for it be successful as a major Party, it had to act like one. It was no shock that Roosevelt tried to steal some of Debs’ thunder by claiming to be the one and only true alternative to the two major parties.

> “Given the growing strength of the Socialist Party, it is not surprising that Roosevelt and the Progressive party deliberately sought to steal its thunder. Roosevelt chose the crimson bandana handkerchief as the symbol of his third party movement, thus hoping to signal to potential Debs supporters that the Progressives represented a more practical alternative to the Democratic and Republican parties…Symbolism was joined to programmatic ambition. The Progressive party platform, especially the plan on ‘Social and Industrial Justice,’ endorsed many of the objectives of the Socialist party: the regulation of hours and

> wages; the prohibition of child labor; support for the graduated income tax; the adoption of a system of social insurance that would protect against the hazards or old age, sickness, and unemployment; and equal suffrage for men and women. (ch. 5 p. 69-70 Milkis)

Despite Roosevelt's attempt to steal Debs' thunder, the Socialist party was still able to walk away with their best results ever in a presidential election. "Debs received more than 900,000 votes in 1912, around 6 percent of the total, which was more than double the support he had garnered four years earlier. (ch.5 p.75 Milkis)" With Debs and the Socialists making such a great showing, it was clear that reform was on the minds of many Americans in 1912, and Roosevelt and Wilson were ready for a heated battle that would prove just how reformist each could each be. This was the biggest showing from a third party in modern history. After this election, third parties went back to their place to educate the public and try to steer the debate. They also morphed into a new type of political entity, the interest group or the 501c3 organization.

Chapter 4. Influence on Today

Although the United States had generally been a two party system, third parties have always been a part of equation. In 1896 there were many parties involved. Other than the Democrats and Republicans, there was the National Democratic Party, the Silver Party, the Populist Party, the Prohibitionist Party, and the Labor Party. Although none of these parties had significant numbers or posed real threat to overtake the two major parties (though the Populist made some headway in local and Congressional elections) they were able to stir up trouble during the General Election. Each was able to leave their lasting mark on the political structure. They were also able to educate the public on their issues. They set the groundwork to changing the center of political capital from the Northeast to the Midwest. They also brought up the issue of farmers troubles and economic problems happening the Midwest and the South. They also continued the fight for workers' rights, for women's rights, and for the rights of those who were not considered equals. These third party efforts were necessary to create a more equal society.

1912 was slightly different than 1896 in terms of third parties. There were a lot of them and they were active. Democrats, Republicans, Prohibitionists, Socialists, Socialist Laborers, and Progressives all took center stage in this election. The difference was that the Progressive party, or the Bull Moose Party, had a better showing than any third party since the Republican Party took control in the Lincoln era. After this election, however, third parties appear to decline. Staged walkouts and ex presidents running for office under a different banner just did not happen after this year. In the 1990's third parties attempted to make resurgences, but they were never successful enough to gain enough

popularity to qualify for federal matching funds, money that the government gives to candidates and parties designed to help underdogs gain even financial footing in elections.

Despite not necessarily being as successful as they once were, third parties have morphed into something just as important, if not more important than they once were. The general purpose of a strong third party, other than make electoral headway and possible gain office, was to raise awareness about their pet issue. In modern campaigning, interest groups and the legally created 501c3 groups have filled the shoes of the third party. Elections like those of 1896 and 1912 proved just how important another voice, other than the two major parties was and how they could positively influence policy shifts in America. They also proved that no matter what the political climate, it was hard, if not impossible, to get elected as a third party candidate for the presidency. By being a single-issue group, their ideas and opinions could be heard, public opinion could be swayed, and changes to public policy could be made. Interest groups could have more members because they were not restricted by party affiliation, they could raise money, and they could campaign year round while also lobbying Congress and the White House in between election cycles. Although third parties still existed and were active in electoral politics, the single interest groups that have grown out of their image are having more long term success in making the changes they desire in both the minds of the general public and Congress and the White House.

Part 4. General Election

Chapter 1. General Election History

The general election has always held an important place in electoral history. Aside form the obvious, where the actual President was chosen and the country knew what direction it was heading, the general election also gave way to many political advances. It bent the rules, tested new theories, and did its best to get as many citizens involved as possible.

The general election has always been about the candidate. For the first one hundred years or so of electoral history, the local political bosses ran the election. It was their opinions, their efforts, and their followers who did the voting. After 1896 and then again 1912, everything changed. All of a sudden, the candidate-centered campaign was a must. As a direct result of Roosevelt's support, direct primaries began happening in every state and it was up to the organization of the candidate and his staff. Campaigns began to be about swaying the public's vote in a whole new way. Large sums of money were needed to be successful, a relationship with the media as well as a calculated communication strategy became a must, and grassroots organizing and 'get out the vote' plans were commonly created. The general election was no longer a fight between two candidates that happened after each had won over their respective parties through the convention process. It was now a longer process that lasted much longer, started well before the convention, and became an entire political field unto itself.

Chapter 2. Election of 1896

Both the Democrat and Republican parties took very different strategies. McKinley and Hanna, on the Republican side took the safe route, leading the campaign from its headquarters while flooding the market with materials they created.

> "Hanna organized the most sophisticated campaign to that point in US history, one that became a model for the selling of future presidents to be. From duel headquarters in Chicago and New York, he hired some fourteen hundred speakers to stump in doubtful states and oversaw the printings of more than 120 pieces of literature. The party distributed pamphlets in nine European languages…The campaign even hired two pioneer cameramen to film McKinley strolling and chatting in front of his porch in Canton…[and] In the end the Republican National Committee raised at least $3.5 million and didn't even spend it all. (Kazin p.66-67)"

With McKinley flooding the market and spending more money than anyone else could have imagined, Bryan took an active role in making his presence heard and felt in every corner of the country.

> "Against this juggernaut, the primary weapon that Democrats and Populists possessed was the voice of one man. The two parties together could match only about a tenth of the GOP's war chest, which left practically nothing to pay the expenses of auxiliary orators…Before the campaign of 1896, it was thought rather unseemly for a nominee to crisscross the nation, proclaiming his ideas and burnishing his reputation… Bryan was determined to turn necessity into a virtue. With little help from the Democratic National Committee or its inept chairman, Senator James Jones, he organized a tour by rail that lasted, save a few days of rest, from the first week of August until November 2, the eve of Election Day. (Kazin p.67)"

For all parties involved in the election of 1896, the general election was full of public outreach. The amount of pamphlets, speeches, and debates grew to a number that no one had ever seen at that time. Public opinion was going to win this election. No longer could any of the candidates rely on party loyalty to win. Since all candidates spent their conventions waging war against the Northeast machine bosses, they could not rely on them to turn out their loyal supporters in the larger states. So the only technique left

was to reach the voters individually. Pamphlets were handed out by the millions. Surrogates, or just enthusiasts, took up the speaking circuit in numbers never seen before and the amount of talk and speculation of the outcome overtook most conversations nation wide.

Newspapers and magazines also took a lead role in the campaign as well. They used as much space as they could to print everything they were allowed on the campaign. They educated the public, reported on speeches and debates, printed parts of certain pamphlets, and even took up the debate themselves. "They printed specially prepared articles setting forth the general and specific arguments of the great debate on money. Their columns were particularly adaptable to arguments addressed to special interest groups, and there were to be fond numerous articles describing how free silver would affect the industrial worker, the farmer in and out debt, the widow living on a pension, the retired and unretired railroad worker, the holder of an insurance policy, and so on. (Jones, p. 333)" Newspapers had always played a large role in presidential politics, but the stance they took in the election of 1896 took them to another level.

Employers took an active role as well. Many, who put their support behind one candidate or another, invited candidates and their surrogates to talk to their employees. And employees were forced to support, at least publicly, the candidate that their employer supported. Otherwise, their job would be at risk. Scare tactics and other forms of pressure were not uncommon during the election of 1896. With so much at stake, and the money issue standing as a visual representation of a new way of life fighting against the traditional ways, everything was at stake. Business leaders, railroad owners, and mortgage bankers all did everything they could to get their employees and friends to

support the gold standard and the Republican Party as to protect their interests, while many farmers and southern Americans fight hard for free silver and their hopes a new way of banking and life in general. Everyone knew that this year would be different. The results models of old were thrown out the window and anyone who felt strongly about who would win the election did everything they could to influence as many voters as possible.

Election day turned out to be more anticlimactic than originally expected. McKinley won hands down. Republicans as a whole won New England and the Mid Atlantic states by large numbers. The Old Northwest went for McKinley as did the North Central section, Rocky Mountain, and Pacific Coast. The Democrats, with the help of the Populists, were able to hold onto the South, but not the Upper South. Despite all of the loud and boisterous talk of free silver and a nation that would look out for the best interest of its farmers instead of its bankers, the results did not follow the hype. McKinley easily won the presidency without a sweat. Bryan barely made a dent in the Electoral College, though he was able to make some headway in the popular vote, just enough to begin to turn the tide of the new Democrat Party. Third parties did make the showing they had hoped to. "Thus, 'the battle of the standards,' which had appeared to offer great opportunities for the third parties because of the apparent capacity to disrupt the old parties, proved in the end to be a consolidating rather than a disrupting force. The chief casualties of 'the battle' were the third parties, whose members now found acceptable homes in the two traditional parties. (Jones, p.349)"

Bryan may have lost the election, but he won the battle. The Democrat Party would never be the same after 1896. They were now the Party of the people, the party

that would fight for the New Deal and the Great Society and leave a legacy of helping those who need it and reaching down to make sure that everyone had what they needed and deserved. McKinley, on the other hand, changed the way in which elections were run. Organization was now a must, along with hard and fast fundraising, and using new technology to reach voters. 1896 was truly a landmark election because it changed the course of history for both parties, and laid the groundwork for cutting edge electoral techniques. These monumental changes continued well into the election of 1912.

Chapter 3. Election of 1912

What made this campaign so intriguing and so redefining was the way it was fought. It was so intense that one might confuse it for a modern day election even though it took place in 1912. The attacks did not start right away, but once they did, they were fast and furious. Wilson took the first shot on Labor Day in Buffalo when he likened the Progressive Party's platform intention of helping the less fortunate to Socialism. Roosevelt hit back four days later when he attacked Wilson's trust regulation approach. He then focused on Wilson's lack of experience and a few missteps with the press that he had made. Wilson did not take these attacks lying down. He hit Roosevelt as often as he could, claiming Roosevelt had had his time in the spotlight, decided to give up the Presidency, and now should not be coming back for more. The way the two men, and their surrogates, attacked one another head to head was something the public had not seen to this extent and they ate it up. (Cooper, The Warrior and The Priest)

The barbs went back and forth throughout the entire campaign season. Both men had their ups and downs as the months went on, but it appeared that they brought out the best in one another. There was no question that the crowds loved the show. Each man was able to draw hundreds of thousands of people to listen to his speech. They appeared to thrive under the pressure. Both men came alive during this time, and the debate of reform and where the country should head was on everyone's mind. In all of the excitement, both Roosevelt and Wilson lost their voices. This only excited people more; they saw concrete evidence of how hard the candidates were working for their vote. Despite the physical drain on their bodies, both candidates kept firing shots at one another.

Verbal shots were not the only ones being thrown around. On a train to Milwaukee, an assassination attempt was made on Roosevelt's life. This did not discourage him one bit. He went on with his planned speech immediately after being shot. "Roosevelt compared his present campaign to leading his regiment in war…'I never in my life was in any movement in which I was able to feel as I do in this that common weal. I have fought for the good of our common country'. (p.201 Cooper, The Warrior and The Priest)" He should have stopped talking there, but because of his injury, he rambled on for a long time. When his speech finally ended, Roosevelt was taken to the hospital, and was only able to give one more speech during the campaign. Wilson, out of respect for his opponent, did not continue with his campaign until Roosevelt was out of the hospital and back on the trail.

In the end, Wilson won as many had predicted. He received 6,296,284 votes equaling 41.8% of the popular vote and claimed 435 electoral votes. Roosevelt received 4,122,721 votes equaling 27.4% of the popular vote and claiming 88 electoral votes. Taft received 3,486,242 votes equaling 23.2% of the popular vote and claiming 8 electoral votes. Neither Debs, Chafin, nor Reimer were given any electoral votes and each received 6%, 1.4% and 0.2% of the popular vote respectively. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_1912)

What makes this election stand out in history is that no other has had as many long lasting effects on the electoral system, campaign tactics, and reform. 1912 was truly the first modern election. "The primary contest between Roosevelt and Taft had demonstrated the perils as well as the virtues of 'pure democracy.' So the general election campaign, which was dominated by Roosevelt and Wilson, encouraged a debate on the

merits of candidate-centered campaigns. (ch5. p.80 Milkis)" But the fight was over more than just over candidate-centered campaigns, it got to the core political parties and their roles from this point forward.

> "Put simply, the Progressive campaign of 1912 was an attack on the whole concept of political parties. Roosevelt's unabashed promotion of dramatic electoral and constitution reform reflected an unwavering devotion to direct democracy. (ch5 p.78 Milkis)"

Never again, did a candidate need to rely solely on their Party and machine bosses to get them the nomination or the election. Primaries quickly swept the nation. People liked the idea of having control over their elected officials and enjoyed being a part of the process. Parties and machine bosses had to learn to change with the times if they wanted to stay relevant, and underdogs had a better shot of winning an election by being charismatic and organized.

Grassroots organizations, civic groups, and fundraisers all became relevant and necessary after 1912. Money had to be raised in large sums in order to keep the campaign moving and give the candidate a chance to meet and persuade the masses to vote for him. Creating personal organizations developed to help each candidate raise funds and awareness and create a steady group of trusted surrogates became a must.

> "Wilson had captured the Democratic nomination with the support of a personal organization formed to his own image and programmatic concerns. Even more notable, however, was the manner in which this organization continued its effective campaigning into the general election…The Wilson machine was significant, not only because the candidate could 'depend upon it for political work'; its real contribution was that he could rely on it 'almost exclusively. (ch5 p.82 Milkis)"

This was now the new way. Organizations and grassroots teams made in the image of the candidate, not the Party were the key to winning an election. The most important part was to make sure surrogates had the same beliefs as the candidate and

could match his charisma and enthusiasm. One long lasting and important way to do this was to rely on true star power.

> "That Thomas Edison and other celebrity endorsements became an important feature of Roosevelt's crusade point to how the Progressive party marked a critical transformation of American Politics; in its emphasis on candidates rather than parties, direct appeal to voters through new methods of publicity, and reliance on civic groups and celebrity endorsements, the Bull Moose campaign embodied a shift in American politics from localized party politics to mass democracy. (ch 5 p.79 Milkis)"

Another effective way that Roosevelt and Wilson outreached to the masses that revolutionized campaigns from that day forward was through film. The motion picture allowed candidates to reach people in all parts of the nation, ensure that while they were making countless trips around the country in order to meet as many voters as possible, none were left out.

> "Both the Roosevelt and Wilson campaigns contracted with companies to produce films that would be shown in theaters around the country. Both campaigns hoped to take advantage of the new popular medium of motion pictures to communicate directly with voters. These films, which marked the first use of political advertisements in presidential elections, would provide an effective way to supplement the whirlwind of tours the candidates and their surrogates made throughout the general election campaign. (ch.5 p.84 Milkis)"

These innovations that took place in just a few months in 1912 have changed the face of campaigns forever. It was the perfect formula of personality, circumstance, technology, and a nation being ready for true reform. It is amazing how one man, refusing to sit on the sidelines was able to inspire so much change to a process that was designed to make change difficult. Change did not end when the election was over. *New Nationalism* and *New Freedom* went on to influence the Wilson Presidency and more importantly, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidency. The changes in domestic and

foreign policy as well as the technological advances made during these years have changed the face of America forever.

Chapter 4. Influence on Today

Present day campaigns look nothing their counterparts of old. They were now a high tech compilation of messaging, polling, fundraising, and vote swaying. These changes did not happen over night or in a vacuum. They happened slowly over time, but the largest changes began in 1896 and continued through 1912. Prior to 1896, candidates being considered for higher office stayed out of the way and let their staff and volunteers run the election. In 1896, McKinley and Hanna took this idea and perfected it. Their calculated efforts forever made organization and strategy the most important part of a campaign. This aspect of campaigning that never changed. Organization, grassroots, and field operations were the legacy of the McKinley/Hanna campaign. After 1896, no candidate even had a shot at winning his or her race without it. Entire careers were focused around these tactics. Pandering to the masses, trying to get their attention and reminding them to vote on Election Day were the new key to being elected.

Bryan also changed campaigning forever in that he made the art of speech delivery a must for any candidate. He also brought his campaign to the people instead of bringing the people to him. Although many historical political figures were great orators, it was not a necessary skill on the campaign trail. The candidate or his staff could write speeches and although they were delivered in public, the number of people who heard it directly was small. Transportation and media coverage were not what they are today. The media that was able to cover the candidates' speeches had to do so in print. Reading a speech in the paper a few days after it was given was much different than seeing it on TV or streaming live on the Internet. After 1896 and definitely 1912, technology was changing. Candidates were able to travel more and see more voters face to face. They

were able to give addresses in person at large arenas, over the radio, and eventually on TV and online. This change led to more transparency in campaigns and to candidates having to be more charismatic, interesting, better speakers, and able to spend at least a year and a half on the road constantly. They also had to be able to think on their feet and be fully prepared for any question at any time on any aspect of their campaign or personal life.

On top of being a good orator and as transparent as possible, in 1912, Roosevelt made the candidate centered campaign a must. With the pressure to have state by state primaries and basically to win a popularity contest, the candidate was almost more important than the Party. 1912 also made party bosses obsolete. Taft was the only candidate in 1912 that relied heavily on the Old Machine Bosses to win. His campaign was consequently unsuccessful. The invention of the primary system and the idea of the candidate-centered campaign revolutionize presidential elections in a way that no one at the time could have guessed. Although political parties continued to remain relevant over time, they are a shadow of what they once they were. Candidate-centered campaigns required a person with a strong personality, a tough as nails exterior, and a smart demeanor to run for election. It also required a staff of speechwriters, pollsters, strategizers, media consultants of all types, grassroots organizers, and dozens of other people all working to get one person elected. It also requires a more money than most could imagine. This was why the party and machine bosses held on for so long before 1912 and to some extent have a significant but smaller role today. They were equipped with funds, organization, and advice. But in reality, today, they were no matches for a highly trained campaign staff.

The candidate-centered campaign was one of the single largest changes to presidential politics, but it was the combination of that, with the importance of fundraising in order to utilize technology, grassroots organization, and the media that solidified this change in modern history. Each of these was a mainstay in contemporary elections, but in 1896 and 1912, they were just beginning. Money was always necessary when launching a campaign, but in 1896, McKinley raised so much money and used that money in such creative ways, that it was officially necessary to have a strong fundraising plan and financial backing to be considered a viable candidate. He also used grassroots organizing in a very new and different way. In 1912, this idea was taken farther with Roosevelt's desire to have the word of the people known and thus launched a complicated and necessary world of grassroots organization and base empowerment that we know today. Without these techniques, no candidates could be successfully elected.

Film was used for the first time in these years. Its impact was enormous and completely unprecedented. There was no question that these films that were made were the precursor to the political ad, the most important tool to reach as many likely voters as possible. It was also one of the best ways to visually explain a candidate's stance on an issue, defend a position, or attack an opponent. In recent elections, the media had always played a part in the elections, but in 1896 and 1912 it became an art form. With more money available for travel and new technology available to reporters and candidates to utilize, information was able to travel faster than it ever had before, and ideas were circulating at rates never seen before. It is easy to see how this has effect present day elections. Media buys run rampant, the use of the Internet and social networking had exploded and the press had taken it upon themselves to do candidate vetting for the

public. All of these aspects of the modern campaign could directly be linked to the increase to the rise of candidate-centered campaigns, an increase in money, organization, and technological advances that happened in 1896 and 1912. Without the changes made 1896 and 1912 modern day elections would look very different.

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