Chapter 23

Political Paralysis in the Gilded Age, 1869–1896
I. The “Bloody Shirt” Elects Grant

• A good general:
  • Soured by the wrangling of professional politicians in the Reconstruction era
  • The notion prevailed that a good general would make a good president.
  – Grant the most popular northern hero:
    • A hapless greenhorn in the political arena
    • His one presidential vote had been cast for the Democratic ticket in 1856
    • His cultural background was breathtakingly narrow.
I. The “Bloody Shirt” Elects Grant (cont.)

• The Republicans:
  • Freed from the Union party coalition of war days
  • They nominated Grant for the presidency 1868
  • Their platform called for continued Reconstruction of the South
  • Grant “Let us have peace.”

• The Democrats:
  • Meeting in their own nominating convention:
    – Denounced military Reconstruction but could agree on little else
I. The “Bloody Shirt” Elect Grant (cont.)

- Wealthy eastern delegates demanded that federal war bonds be redeemed in gold
- Poorer midwestern delegates called for redemption in greenbacks
- Debt-burdened agrarian Democrats hoped to keep more money in circulation and keep interest rates low
  - These disputes introduced a bitter contest over monetary policy that continued until the century’s end.
    - Midwestern delegates got the platform but not the candidate
    - Nominee Horatio Seymour repudiated the Ohio Idea.
I. The “Bloody Shirt” Elect Grant (cont.)

• Grant nominated:
  — Republicans energetically nominated Grant by “waving the bloody shirt”—
    • reviving glory memories of the Civil War
    • which became for the first time a prominent feature of a presidential campaign
  • Grant won, with 214 electoral votes to 80 for Seymour
  • Grant received 3,013,421 to 2,706,829 popular votes.
    — Most white voters supported Seymour, and the ballots of three still-unreconstructed southern states (Mississippi, Texas, Virginia) were not counted at all.
I. The “Bloody Shirt” Elects Grant (cont.)

- An estimated 500,000 former slaves gave Grant his margin of victory
- To remain in power the Republican party had to continue to control the South—and to keep the ballot in the hands of the grateful freedman.
  - Republicans could not take future victories “for granted.”
II. The Era of Good Stealings

– The postwar atmosphere stunk of corruption:
  • Freewheeling railroad promoters left gullible bond buying
  • Unethical stock-market manipulators were a cinder in the public eye
  • Too many judges and legislators put their power up for hire
  • Cynics defined an honest politician as one who, when bought, would stay bought.
II. The Era of Good Stealings (cont.)

• Two notorious financial millionaire partners:
  – “Jubilee Jim” Fisk and Jay Gould:
    • The corpulent and unscrupulous Fisk provided the “brass”
    • The undersized and cunning Gould provided the brains
    • They concocted a plot in 1869 to corner the gold market
      – Their plan would work only if the federal Treasury refrained from selling gold
II. The Era of Good Stealings (cont.)

• The conspirators worked on President Grant directly,
  – And through his brother-in-law, who received $25,000 for his complicity
• For week Fisk and Gould madly bid the price of gold skyward, so they could profit from its heightened value
  – On “Black Friday” (September 24, 1889) the bubble broke when the Treasury, contrary to Grant’s supposed assurances, was compelled to release gold
  – The price of gold plunged
  – Scores of honest businesspeople were driven to the wall
  – A congressional probe concluded that Grant had done nothing crooked.
II. The Era of Good Stealings (cont.)

• The infamous **Tweed Ring:**
  – Displayed the ethics of the age:
  – “Boss” Tweed employed bribery, graft, and fraudulent elections to milk the metropolis of $200 million:
    • Honest citizens were cowed into silence
    • Protesters found their tax assessments raised
    • Tweed’s luck finally ran out:
      – The *New York Times* published damning evidence and were offered $5 million not to publish it
II. The Era of Good Stealings (cont.)

• Gifted cartoonist Thomas Nast pilloried Tweed mercilessly:
  – New York attorney Samuel J. Tilden headed the prosecution.
  – Unbailed and unwept, Tweed died behind bars.
III. A Carnival of Corruption

• Misdeeds of the federal government leaders:
  – **Credit Mobilier scandal (1872):**
    • Union Pacific Railroad insiders formed the Credit Mobilier construction company:
      – Then hired themselves at inflated prices to build railroads line
      – They earned dividends as high as 348 percent
      – The company then furtively distributed shares of its valuable stock to key congressmen
      – There was a newspaper expose and congressional investigation of the scandal led to:
III. A Carnival of Corruption (cont.)

– The formal censure of two congressmen
– The revelation that the vice-president had accepted payments from Credit Mobilier.

• Breath of scandal in Washington reeked of alcohol:
  – In 1874-1875 the Whiskey Ring robbed the Treasury of millions in excise-tax revenue
  – Grant’s own private secretary was among the culprits
  – Grant volunteered a written statement to the jury that helped exonerate the thief.

• Bribes:
  – Secretary of War William Belknap (1876) forced to resign after pocketing bribes from supplies to the Indian reservations. His resignation accepted “with great regret.”
IV. The Liberal Republican Revolt of 1872

• Liberal Republican party:
  – Slogan “Turn the Rascals Out” urged purification of the Washington administration
  – And ended the military Reconstruction
  – They muffed their chance when at their Cincinnati convention they nominated:
    • Erratic Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*
    • He was dogmatic, emotional, petulant, and notoriously unsound in his political judgments.
IV. The Liberal Republican Revolt of 1872 (cont.)

• Democrats:
  – Endorsed Greeley’s candidacy
  – He had blasted them as traitors, slave shippers, saloon keepers, horse thieves, and idiots
  – He pleased them when he pleaded for clasping hands across “the bloody chasm”
  – The Republicans dutifully renominated Grant
  – The voters had two choices.
IV. The Liberal Republican Revolt of 1872 (cont.)

• Election of 1872:
  • Republicans denounced Greeley as an atheist, a communist, a free-lover, a vegetarian, a brown-bread eater, and a consigner of Jefferson Davis’s bail bond.
  • Democrats derided Grant as an ignoramus, drunkard, and a swindler.
  • Republicans chanting “Grant us another term” pulled the president through:
    – Electoral count was 286 Grant to 66 Greeley
    – Popular column 3,596,745 Grant, 2,843,446 Greeley.
THEY ARE SWALLOWING EACH OTHER.
V. Depression, Deflation, and Inflation

• Panic of 1873:
  • Grant’s woes deepened in the paralyzing economy:
    – Age of unbridled expansion
    – Overreaching promoters laid more railroad track, sunk more mines, erected more factories, sowed more grain fields than the existing markets could bear
    – Bankers made too many imprudent loans to finance these enterprises
    – Profits failed to materialize, loans went unpaid, the whole credit-based economy fluttered downward.
    – Boom times became gloom times as more than 15,000 American businesses went bankrupt.
V. Depression, Deflation, and Inflation (cont.)

- Black Americans were hard hit
- The Freedman’s Saving and Trust Company had made unsecured loans to several companies that went under
- Black depositors who had entrusted over $7 million to banks lost their savings
- Black economic development and black confidence in savings institutions went down with it
- Hard times inflicted the worst punishment on debtors
- Proponents of inflation breathed new life into the issue of greenbacks
- Agrarian and debtor groups—”cheap money” supporters—clamored for a reissuance of the greenbacks.
V. Depression, Deflation, and Inflation (cont.)

• The “hard-money” advocates carried the day:
  • 1874 persuaded Grant to veto a bill to print more paper money
  • Scored victory in the Resumption Act 1875:
    – Which pledged the government to the further withdrawal of greenbacks from circulation
    – And to the redemption of all paper currency in gold at face value, beginning in 1879.
  • Debtors looked for relief in the precious metal silver.
V. Depression, Deflation, and Inflation (cont.)

- In 1870s the Treasury maintained that an ounce of silver was worth only $\frac{1}{16}$ compared to gold
- Silver miners stopped offering the silver to the federal mints
- Congress dropped the coinage of silver dollars (1873)
- With new silver discoveries in late 1870s, production shot up which forced silver prices to drop
- The demand for the coinage of more silver was nothing more nor less than another scheme to promote inflation.
V. Depression, Deflation, and Inflation (cont.)

• Hard-money Republicans resisted the scheme and called on Grant to hold the line
  – He did not disappoint them:
    • The Treasury accumulated gold stocks until the day of resumption of metallic-money payments
    • Coupled with the reduction of greenbacks, this policy was called “contraction”
      – It had a noticeable deflationary effect, worsening the impact of the depression.
V. Depression, Deflation, and Inflation (cont.)

• The new policy did restore the government’s credit rating
• It brought embattled greenbacks up to their full face value
• When Redemption Day came 1879, few greenback holders bothered to exchange the lighter for more convenient bills for gold
• Republican hard-money policy had a political backlash
  – In 1878 it helped elect a Democratic House of Representatives
  – 1878 it spawned the Greenback Labor Party, polled over a million votes, elected 14 members of Congress
  – The contest over monetary policy was far from over.
VI. Pallid Politics in the Gilded Age

• Gilded Age:
  – A sarcastic name given to the three-decade-long post-Civil era by Mark Twain in 1873
  – Every presidential election was a squeaker
  – The majority party in the House switched 6 times in 7 sessions between 1869 and 1891
  – Few significant economic issues separated the major parties yet were ferociously competitive
How can this apparent paradox of political consensus and partisan fervor be explained?

- In the sharp ethnic and cultural differences in the membership of the two parties:
  - In distinctions of style and tone, especially religious sentiment
  - Republican adhered to those creeds that traced their lineage to Puritanism:
    » Their strict codes of personal morality
    » They believed that government should play a role in regulating both the economic and the moral affairs of society.
VI. Pallid Politics in the Gilded Age (cont.)

– Democrats:
  » Immigrant Lutherans and Roman Catholics figured heavily
  » Were more likely to adhere to faiths that took a less stern view of human weakness
  » Their religion professed toleration in an imperfect world
  » They spurned government efforts to impose a single moral standard on the entire society.

– Differences in temperament and religious values often produced raucous political contests at the local level, where issues like prohibition and education loomed large.
VI. Pallid Politics in the Gilded Age (cont.)

• Democrats had:
  – A solid electoral base in the South
  – In the northern industrial cities—with immigrants and well-oiled political machines

• Republicans:
  – Strength lay largely in the Midwest and the rural and small-town Northeast
  – Grateful freedmen in the South continued to vote Republican in significant numbers
VI. Pallid Politics in the Gilded Age (cont.)

– Members of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR)—a politically potent fraternal organization of several hundred thousand Union veterans of the Civil War.

– Patronage—lifeblood of both parties
  • Jobs for votes, kickbacks, party service
  • Boisterous infighting over patronage beset the Republican party in the 1870s and 1880s
  • Roscoe (“Lord Roscoe”) Conkling—embraced the time-honored system of civil-service jobs for votes
VI. Pallid Politics in the Gilded Age (cont.)

– Half-Breeds wanted some civil-service reform:
  • Championed was James G. Blaine of Maine
  • These two personalities succeeded only in stale-mating each other and deadlocking their party.
VII. The Hayes-Tilden Standoff, 1876

• Grant thought about a third-term:
  – House derailed this by 233 to 18
    • Passed a resolution of the antidictator implications of the two-term tradition.

• Republicans
  – Turned to a compromise candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes, “The Great Unknown.”
    • Foremost qualification: hailed from Ohio
    • Where he served three terms as governor.
VII. The Hayes-Tilden Standoff, 1876 (cont.)

- Democrats:
  - Nominee was Samuel J. Tilden:
    - Raised to fame by Boss Tweed in New York
    - 185 electoral votes needed Tilden got 184 with 20 votes in four states—three of them in the South (see Map 23.1):
      - Tilden polled 247,448 more popular votes than Hayes, 4,284,020 to 4,036,572
      - Both parties to send “visiting statesmen” to the contested Louisiana, South Carolina, Florida.
VII. The Hayes-Tilden Standoff, 1876 (cont.)

• Disputed states:
  – All sent two sets of returns: one Democratic and one Republican:
  – A dramatic constitutional crisis:
    • The Constitution merely specified that the electoral returns from the states shall be sent to Congress
    • And in the presence of the House and Senate, they shall be opened by the president of the Senate (see the Twelfth Amendment in the Appendix).
VII. The Hayes-Tilden Standoff, 1876 (cont.)

• But who should count them?
  – On this point the Constitution was silent:
    • If counted by the president of the Senate (a Republican), the Republican returns would be selected
    • If counted by the Speaker of the House (a Democrat), the Democratic returns would be chosen
    • How could the impasse be resolved?
VIII. The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction

• The **Compromise of 1877**:  
The election deadlock was to be broken by the Election Count Act:
  – Passed by Congress early in 1877
  – Set up an electoral commission of 15 men selected from the Senate, the House and the Supreme Court (see Table 23.1)
  – In February 1877, month before Inauguration Day, the Senate and House met together to settle the dispute.
VIII. The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction (cont.)

– The roll of states was tolled off alphabetically
– Florida, the first of three southern states with two sets of returns—
  • The disputed documents were referred to the electoral commission, which sat in a nearby chamber
  • After prolonged discussion the members:
    – By the partisan vote of 8 Republicans to 7 Democrats, voted to accept the Republican returns
    – Outraged Democrats in Congress, smelling defeat, undertook to launch a filibuster.
VIII. The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction (cont.)

• Uses of other parts of the Compromise of 1877:
  
  • The Democrats reluctantly agreed that Hayes might take office in return for withdrawing intrusive federal troops from the two states in which they remained, Louisiana and South Carolina.
  
  • The Republicans assured the Democrats a place at the presidential patronage trough.
  
  • And supported a bill subsidizing the Texas and Pacific Railroad’s construction of a southern transcontinental line.
VIII. The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction (cont.)

• The deal held together long enough to break the dangerous electoral standoff:
  – The Democrats permitted Hayes to receive the remainder of the disputed returns—all by the partisan vote of 8 to 7:
    • So explosive that it was settled 3 days before the new president was officially sworn into office.
VIII. The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction (cont.)

• The compromise bought peace at a price:
  – Partisan violence was averted by sacrificing the civil rights of southern blacks
  – With the Hayes-Tilden deal, the Republican party abandoned its commitment to racial equality

• The **Civil Rights Act of 1875:**
  – Last feeble gasp of congressional radical Republicans
  – The Supreme Court pronounced much of the act unconstitutional in the *Civil Rights Cases* (1883).
VIII. The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction (cont.)

- The Court declared that the Fourteenth Amendment prohibited only *government* violation of civil rights, not the denial of civil rights by *individuals*.
- When President Hayes withdrew the federal troops that were propping up Reconstruction governments, bayonet-backed Republican regimes collapsed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Senate (Republican majority)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House (Democratic majority)</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Court</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE "STRONG" GOVERNMENT 1869–1877.

THE "WEAK" GOVERNMENT 1877–1881.
IX. The Birth of Jim Crow in the Post-Reconstruction South

• The Democratic South:
  • Solidified and swiftly suppressed the now-friendless blacks
  • White Democrats ("Redeemers") relied on fraud and intimidation, reassumed political power in the South
  • Black who tried to assert their rights faced unemployment, eviction, and physical harm
  • Many blacks were forced into sharecropping and tenant farming
  • The “crop-lien” system was where storekeepers extended credit to small farmers for food and supplies, in return took a lien on their harvest.
IX. The Birth of Jim Crow in the Post-Reconstruction South (cont.)

– Farmers remained perpetually in debt
– Southern blacks were condemned to threadbare living under conditions scarcely better than slavery (see May 23.2).
– Now the blacks were forced into systematic state-level legal codes of segregation known as Jim Crow laws.
– Southern states enacted literary requirements, voter-registration laws, and poll taxes
IX. The Birth of Jim Crow in the Post-Reconstruction South (cont.)

– Tolerated violent intimidation of black voters.

• The Supreme Court:

– Validated the south’s segregationist social order in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896):
  
  • Ruled that “separate but equal” facilities were constitutional under the “equal protection” clause of the Fourteenth Amendment
  
  • Segregated in inferior schools and separated from whites in virtually all public facilities including railroad cars, theaters, and restrooms.
IX. The Birth of Jim Crow in the Post-Reconstruction South (cont.)

- Southern whites dealt harshly with any black who dared to violate the South’s racial code of conduct.
- Record number of blacks were lynched in the 1890s
  - Most often for the “crime” of asserting themselves as equals (see Table 23.2).
- It would take a second Reconstruction, nearly a century later, to redress the racist imbalance of southern society.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Whites</th>
<th>Blacks</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>64</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>113</td>
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<td>1885</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>74</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>1895</td>
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<td>113</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>106</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>56</td>
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<td>1920</td>
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<td>1925</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>1930</td>
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<td>21</td>
</tr>
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<td>18</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1940</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Table 23.2: Persons in United States Lynched (by race), 1882–2005*
X. Class Conflicts and Ethnic Clashes

• Scenes of class struggle:
  – Railroad workers faced particularly hard times:
    • While they watched the railroads continue to rake in huge profits
    • Struck back when their wages were going to cut by 10 percent
    • President Hayes called in federal troops to quell the unrest by striking laborers
    • Failure of the great railroad strike exposed the weakness of the labor movement.
X. Class Conflicts and Ethnic Clashes (cont.)

• The federal courts, United States Army, state militias, local police helped to keep business operating at full speed.
  – Racal and ethnic issues among workers fractured labor unity
  • Divisions were particularly marked among Irish and Chinese in California (see pp. 500-501):
    – Chinese came originally to dig in the goldfields and to sledgehammer the tracks of the transcontinental railroads:
    – When gold petered out and the tracks were laid many returned home to China with their meager savings.
• X. Class Conflicts and Ethnic Clashes (cont.)

– Those who remained in America faced extraordinary hardships:

  • Worked menial jobs: cooks, laundrymen, domestic servants
  • Without women or families, they were deprived of means to assimilate
  • In San Francisco, Denis Kearney incited his followers to violent abuse of the hapless Chinese

  • **Chinese Exclusion Act (1882):**
    – Prohibiting nearly all further immigration from China
    – The door stayed shut until 1943.
X. Class Conflicts and Ethnic Clashes (cont.)

– Native-born Chinese:
  * Supreme Court case *U.S. v. Wong Kim Ark* (1898) stated that the Fourteenth Amendment guaranteed citizenship to all persons born in the United States
  * The doctrine of “birthright citizenship” as contrasted with the “right of blood-tie,” which based citizenship on the parents’ nationality) provided important protection to Chinese Americans as well as other immigrant communities.
XI. Garfield and Arthur

• Presidential campaign of 1880:
  – Hayes was a man without a party
  – James A. Garfield was from the electorally powerful state of Ohio
  – His vice-presidential running mate was a notorious Stalwart henchman, Chester A. Arthur of New York
  – Democratic candidate was Civil War hero, Winfield Scott Hancock.
XI. Garfield and Arthur (cont.)

- Statistics:
  - Garfield polled only 39,213 more votes than Hancock—4,453,295 to 4,414,082:
  - but his margin in the electoral column was a comfortable 214 to 155.
  - A disappointed and mentally deranged office seeker, Charles J. Guiteau, shot President Garfield in the back in a Washington railroad station.
XI. Chester and Arthur (cont.)

– Garfield lingered in agony for eleven weeks and died on September 19, 1881.
   • Guiteau was found guilty of murder and hanged.
   • His death had one positive outcome:
     – It shocked politicians into reforming the shameful spoils system.
     – The unlikely instrument of reform was Chester Arthur.

– The Pendleton Act (1883):
   • The so-called Magna Carta of civil-service reform
   • It made compulsory campaign contributions from federal employees illegal
XI. Chester and Arthur (cont.)

- It established the Civil Service Commission to make appointments to federal jobs on the basis of competitive examinations rather than “pull.”
- At first covering 10% of federal jobs, civil-service did rein in most blatant abuses.
- The “plum” federal posts now beyond their reach,
  - Politicians were forced to look elsewhere for money, “the mother’s milk of politics.”
  - They increasingly turned to the coffers of big corporations.
  - A new breed of “boss” emerged.
XI. Chester and Arthur (cont.)

– The Pendleton Act:
  • Partially divorced politics from patronage,
  • It helped drive politicians into “marriages of convenience” with big-business leaders (see Figures 23.1).

– President Arthur’s display of integrity offended too many powerful Republicans.

– His ungrateful party turned him out to pasture, and in 1886 he died of a cerebral hemorrhage.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Males per One Female</th>
<th>Percentage U.S.-Born</th>
<th>Total Chinese Immigrants in Preceding Decade*</th>
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<td>1850</td>
<td>4,018†</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>34,933</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>107,488</td>
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<td>435,062</td>
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<td>2008</td>
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<td>.90</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>631,476</td>
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<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Approval Rate</td>
<td>Total Votes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur 1884</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13,780 of 131,208</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKinley 1901</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>106,205 of 256,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson 1920</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>497,603 of 691,116</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt 1939</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>662,832 of 920,310</td>
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<tr>
<td>Truman 1952</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>2,278,446 of 2,603,267</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nixon 1970</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>2,393,000 of 2,645,000</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.H.W. Bush 1990</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>1,694,000 of 2,940,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton 2000</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>1,351,072 of 2,734,338</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.W. Bush 2007</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>1,298,263 of 2,670,857</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama 2009</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
<td>1,382,047 of 2,859,724</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
XII. The Blaine-Cleveland Mudslingers of 1884

• James G. Blaine:
  • His persistence of party’s presidential nomination paid off in 1884:
  • The clear choice of the Republican convention in Chicago
  • Some reformers, unable to swallow Blaine, bolted to the Democrats—called Mugwumps.

• Democrats:
  – Turned to reformer, Grover Cleveland
    • From mayor of Buffalo to the governorship of New York and the presidential nomination in three years.
XII. The Blaine-Cleveland Mudslingers of 1884 (cont.)

• Cleveland’s admirers soon got a shock:
  – Learned he had an illegitimate son
  – Made financial provision for him.

• The campaign of 1884 sank to perhaps the lowest level in American experience:
  – Personalities, not principles, claimed the headlines
  – The contest hinged on the state of New York, where Blaine blundered badly in the closing days of the campaign
  – Republican clergy called the Democrats the party of “Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion” insulting the culture, the faith, the patriotism of New York’s Irish American voters.
  – Blaine was present but refused to repudiate the phrase.
XII. The Blaine-Cleveland Mudslingers of 1884 (cont.)

– The New York Irish vote gave the presidency to Cleveland

– Cleveland swept the solid South and squeaked into office with 219 to 182 electoral votes

– 4,879,507 to 4,850,293 popular votes.
XIII. “Old Grover” Takes Over

– Cleveland in 1885 was the first Democrat to take the oath of presidential office since Buchanan, 28 years earlier:

– Cleveland was a man of principles:
  • Staunch apostle of the hands-off creed of laissez-faire
  • Summed up his political philosophy in 1887 when he vetoed a bill to provide seed for drought-ravaged Texas farmers.
    – “Though the people support the government,” “the government should not support the people”--Cleveland.
XIII. “Old Grover” Takes Over (cont.)

• He was outspoken, unbending, and profanely hot-tempered

• Narrowed the North-South chasm by naming to his cabinet two former Confederates

• Cleveland was whipsawed between the demands of
  – The Democrats faithful for jobs
  – The Mugwumps who had helped elect him, for reform
  – At first he favored the cause reformers,
  – But eventually caved to the carpings of Democratic bosses:
    » fired almost two-thirds of the 120,000 federal employees, including 40,000 incumbent (Republican) postmasters, to make room for “deserving Democrats.”
XIII. “Old Grover” Takes Over (cont.)

• Military pensions gave Cleveland some of his most painful political headaches:
  – The politically powerful Grand Army of the Republic (GRA) routinely lobbied hundreds of private pension bills
  – Benefits were granted to deserters
    » To bounty jumpers
    » To men who never served
    » To former soldiers who in later years incurred disabilities in no way connected to the war
  – The conscience-driven president read each bill carefully:
    » Vetoed several hundred of them
    » Then laboriously penned individual veto messages for Congress.
XIV. Cleveland Battles for a Lower Tariff

- Higher tariff:
  - Jacked up to raise revenues for the insatiable military machine
  - Republican profited from high protection
  - Piled up revenue at the customhouses
  - By 1881 the Treasury had an annual surplus of $145 million
  - Most government income, pre-income day, came from the tariff.
XIV. Cleveland Battles for a Lower Tariff (cont.)

• The surplus could be reduced:
  – To squander it on pensions and “porkbarrel” bills—curry favor with veterans and self-seekers
  – To lower the tariff—the big industrialists vehemently opposed
  – Cleveland knew little and cared less about the tariff before entering the White House
  – As he studied the tariff arguments, he favored downward revision of the tariff schedules.
XIV. Cleveland Battles for a Lower Tariff (cont.)

– It would mean lower prices for consumers and less protection for monopolies
– It would mean an end to the Treasury surplus
– Cleveland saw his duty and overdid it:
  • Made an appeal to the Congress late 1887
  • Democrats were deeply frustrated
  • Republicans rejoiced at his apparent recklessness:
    – That lower tariffs would mean higher taxes, lower wages, and increased employment
  • First time in years, a real issue divided the two parties.
XIV. Cleveland Battles for a Lower Tariff (cont.)

• Upcoming 1888 presidential election:
  – Democrats dejectedly renominated Cleveland in their St. Louis convention:
  – Republicans turned to Benjamin Harrison:
    • Grandfather former president William Henry (“Tippecanoe”) Harrison
    – The two parties flooded the country with 10 million pamphlets on tariff:
      • Spurred the Republicans to frantic action
      • Raised a war chest of $3 million—the heftiest yet—largely by “frying the fat” of nervous industrialists.
XIV. Cleveland Battles for a Lower Tariff (cont.)

- Money used to line up corrupt “voting cattle” known as “repeaters” and “floaters”
- In Indiana, always a crucial “swing” state, votes were shamelessly purchased for as much as $20 each.

– Election day:
  - Harrison nosed out Cleveland 233 to 168 electoral votes
  - A change of about 7,000 New York ballots would have reversed the outcome
  - Cleveland polled more popular votes: 5,537,857 to 5,447,129
  - Became the first sitting president voted out since Martin Van Buren in 1840.
XV. The Billion-Dollar Congress

• Republican in office:
  – Had only three more votes than necessary for a quorum of 163 members in the House
  – Democrats prepared to obstruct all House business by refusing to answer roll calls
    • Demanded roll calls to determine the presence of a quorum
    • And employing other delaying tactics.
  – The new Republican Speaker of the House: Thomas B. Reed of Maine.
XV. The Billion-Dollar Congress (cont.)

- Reed bent the intimidated House to his imperious will
- He counted as present Democrats who had not answered the roll and who, rule book in hand, furiously denied that they were legally there
- By such tactics “Czar” Reed dominated the “Billion-Dollar Congress”—the first to appropriate that sum
  - Congress showered pension of Civil War veterans
  - Increased government purchases of silver
  - Passed the McKinley Tariff Act of 1890:
    » Boosting rates to their highest peacetime level
    » An average of 48.4 percent on dutiable goods.
XV. The Billion-Dollar Congress (cont.)

• Results of the McKinley Tariff Act of 1890:
  – Debt-burdened farmers had no choice but to buy manufactured goods from high-priced protected American industrialists
  – Were compelled to sell their own agricultural products into highly competitive, unprotected world markets
  – Mounting discontent against the Tariff caused many rural voters to rise in wrath
  – In the congressional election (1890) Republicans lost their majority—seats were reduced to 88 as 235 Democrats
  – McKinley went down in defeat
  – New Congress included 9 Farmers’ Alliance, a militant organization of southern and western farmers.
XVI. The Drumbeat of Discontent

• People’s party or “Populists”:
  – Rooted in the Farmers’ Alliance, met in Omaha
    • Adopted a platform that denounced “the prolific womb of governmental injustice”
    • Demanded inflation through free and unlimited coinage of silver—16 ounces of silver to 1 ounce of gold
    • Called for a gradual income tax
    • Government ownership of the railroads, telegraph, and the direct election of U.S. Senators; a one-term limit on the presidency; the adoption of the initiative and referendum to allow citizens to shape
XVI. The Drumbeat of Discontent (cont.)

legislation more directly; a shorter workday and immigration restrictions.

– The Populists uproariously nominated the Green-backer, General B. Weaver

– **Homestead Strike:**
  
  • At Andrew Carnegie’s Homestead steel plant, near Pittsburgh, company officials called in 300 armed Pinkerton detectives in July to crush a strike by steelworkers over pay cuts
  
  • Strikers forced their assailants to surrender after a vicious battle that left 10 dead and 60 wounded.
XVI. The Drumbeat of Discontent (cont.)

• The Populists’ remarkable showing:
  – In the presidential election (see Map 23.3)
  – Achieved 1,029,846 popular votes and 22 electoral votes for General Weaver
  – One of the few third-parties to break into the electoral column
  – Fell short of an electoral majority
XVI. The Drumbeat of Discontent (cont.)

• The South unwilling to support the new party:
  – 1 million southern black farmers organized in the Colored Farmers’ National Alliance:
    • Shared many complaints with poor white farmers
    • Their common economic goals to overcome their racial differences
    • Populist leaders reached out to the black community
    • Black leaders, disillusioned, did not respond to the Republican party.
XVI. The Drumbeat of Discontent (cont.)

• Alarmed, the conservative white “Bourbon” elite in the South played upon historic racial antagonisms to counter the Populists’ appeal for interracial solidarity to woo back poor whites.

• Southern blacks were heavy losers

• White southerners used literacy tests and poll taxes to deny blacks the ballot

• The **grandfather clause:**
  – Exempted from those requirements anyone whose forebear had voted in 1860
  – When, of course, black slaves had not voted at all
  – More than a century would pass before southern blacks could again vote in considerable numbers.
XVI. The Drumbeat of Discontent (cont.)

- Jim Crow laws:
  - Laws designed to enforce racial segregation in public places:
    - Including hotels and restaurants
    - Enforced by atrocious lynchings and other forms of intimidation.
  - Conservative crusade to eliminate black vote had dire consequences for the Populist party itself
    - Tom Watson abandoned his interracial appeal and became a vociferous racist himself
    - Populist party lapsed into vile racism and advocated black disfranchisement.
XVII. Cleveland and Depression

• Cleveland in office again (1893):
  – Only president ever reelected after defeat
  – Same Cleveland, but not the same country:
    • Debtors were up in arms
    • Workers were restless
    • The advance shadows of panic were falling.
  • Devastating depression of 1893 burst:
    – Lasted for about four years
    – Was the most punishing economic downturn of 19th century.
XVII. Cleveland and Depression (cont.)

– Economic depression of 1893--causes:
  • Splurge of overbuilding and speculation
  • Labor disorders and ongoing agricultural depression
  • Free-silver agitation had damaged American credit abroad
  • The usual pinch on American finances came when European banking houses began to call in loans from the United States.

– Depression ran deep and far:
  • 8,000 American businesses collapsed in six months
  • Dozens of railroads lines went into receivers’ hands.
XVI. Cleveland and Depression (cont.)

- Soup kitchens fed the unemployed
- Gangs of hoboes (“tramps”) wandered the country
- Local charities did their feeble best
- The federal government (bound by the let-nature-take-its course philosophy) saw no legitimate way to relieve the suffering masses.

— Cleveland, who had earlier been bothered by a surplus, was now burdened with a deepening deficit:

- Treasury was required to issue legal tender notes for the silver bullion that it bought
XVI. Cleveland and Depression (cont.)

• Owners of paper currency would then present it for gold and by law the notes had to be reissued.

• New holders would repeat the process:
  – Draining away precious gold in an “endless-chain” operation.

• The gold reserve in the Treasury dropped below $100 million:
  – Cleveland engineered repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890.
  – For this purpose he summoned Congress into special session.

• Cleveland developed a malignant growth in his mouth that called for removal with extreme secrecy.
XVI. Cleveland and Depression (cont.)

• If he had died, Vice President Adlai E. Stevenson, a “soft-money” person, would be president—
  – which would have deepened the crisis
• In Congress, the debate over the repeal of the silver act was running its heated course
  – William Jennings Bryan championed the cause of free silver
  – Friends of silver announced that “hell would freeze over” before Congress would pass the repeal measure
  – Cleveland broke the filibuster
    » He alienated the Democratic silverites like Bryan
    » Disrupted his party at the outset of his administration.
XVI. Cleveland and Depression (cont.)

- Repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act:
  - Partially stopped the drain of gold from Treasury
    - February, 1894, the gold reserve sank to $41 million
    - United States in danger of going off the gold standard
    - Cleveland floated two Treasury bond issues in 1894 totaling over $100 million
    - The “endless-chain” operations continued relentlessly.
  - Early 1895 Cleveland turned in desperation to J.P. Morgan, “the bankers’ banker,” and head of a Wall Street syndicate.
XVI. Cleveland and Depression (cont.)

• After tense negotiations at the White House, the bankers agreed to lend the government $65 million in gold
  – Charged a commission of $7 million
  – They did make a significant concession when they agreed to obtain one-half of the gold abroad
  – The loan, at least temporarily, helped restore confidence in the nation’s finance.
XVIII. Cleveland Breeds a Backlash

• The gold deal stirred up the nation:
  – The deal symbolized all that was wicked and grasping in American politics:
    • Cleveland’s secretive dealings with Morgan were savagely condemned as a “sellout” of the national government
    • Cleveland was certain he had done no wrong.
• Cleveland suffered embarrassment with the passage of the Wilson-Gorman tariff in 1894
XIII. Cleveland Breeds a Backlash (cont.)

• Wilson-Gorman tariff in 1894:
  – Democrats pledged to lower tariff:
    • They billed in Congress; only made it through with loaded special-interest protection
    • Outraged Cleveland allowed the bill to pass:
      – It contained a 2% tax on incomes over $4,000 to become law without his signature
      – When the Supreme Court struck down the income-tax provision in 1894:
        » Populist and disaffected groups found proof that the courts were only the tools of plutocrats.
XIII. Cleveland Breeds a Backlash (cont.)

- Democrats’ political fortunes:
  - Suffered several setbacks:
    - House Democrats were dislodged in 1984
    - Revitalized Republicans won the congressional election of 1894 in a landslide:
      - 244 seats to 105 for the Democrats
      - Republican looked forward to the upcoming presidential race of 1896:
    - Cleveland failed utterly to cope with the serious economic crisis of 1893:
      - Became one of the “forgettable presidents” along with Grant, Hayes, Garfield, Arthur, and Harrison.
**CHRONOLOGY**

1868  Grant defeats Seymour for presidency

1869  Fisk and Gould corner gold market

1871  Tweed scandal in New York

1872  Crédit Mobilier scandal exposed
      Liberal Republicans break with Grant
      Grant defeats Greeley for presidency

1873  Panic of 1873

1875  Whiskey Ring scandal
      Civil Rights Act of 1875
      Resumption Act

1876  Hayes-Tilden election standoff and crisis

1877  Compromise of 1877
      Reconstruction ends
      Railroad strikes paralyze nation

1880  Garfield defeats Hancock for presidency

1881  Garfield assassinated; Arthur assumes presidency

1882  Chinese Exclusion Act

1883  *Civil Rights Cases*
      Pendleton Act sets up Civil Service Commission

1884  Cleveland defeats Blaine for presidency

1888  Harrison defeats Cleveland for presidency

1890  “Billion-Dollar” Congress
      McKinley Tariff Act
      Sherman Silver Purchase Act (repealed 1893)

1892  Homestead steel strike
      Coeur d’Alene (Idaho) silver miners’ strike
      People’s party candidate James B. Weaver wins twenty-two electoral votes
      Cleveland defeats Harrison and Weaver to regain presidency

1893  Depression of 1893 begins
      Republicans regain House of Representatives

1895  J. P. Morgan’s banking syndicate loans $65 million in gold to federal government

1896  *Plessy v. Ferguson* legitimizes “separate but equal” doctrine