

## **Election of 1896 Fact Sheet**

- Many people considered the election of 1896 the most important election since Lincoln's election in 1860 because once again the nation was deeply divided.
- The American people were divided over the nation's money system, questioning whether U.S. currency should be backed with gold or silver.
- An economic depression that occurred in 1893 and brought the currency issue to the fore front of political debate.
- At this time the U.S. supported its money with gold. Those who supported the gold standard believed it would keep the value of the dollar high.
- Most who supported the gold standard were businessmen, bankers and investors.
- Those who supported the silver standard believed the value of the dollar was too high and that a high dollar drove down the prices of agricultural products.
- Most who supported the silver standard were farmers, laborers and small business owners.
- The Republicans chose William McKinley as their presidential candidate and the democrats nominated Congressman William Jennings Bryan.
- America's third party, The People's Party (the Populists) united with the democrats to support Bryan because they too supported the silver standard.
- The two candidates campaigned very differently. Bryan traveled the country visiting 27 states spending only \$650,000.00 on his campaign. McKinley adopted the front porch campaign strategy inviting people to his home in Ohio to hear him speak. He spend around \$3, 500,000.00
- McKinley won the election by less than 600,000 votes.