

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"Carroll County and the Election of 1894"

Carroll County Times article for November 6, 1994

by Jay A. Graybeal

A century ago Carroll Countians prepared to vote in a mid-term election. Although the issues were different the election of 1894 has some surprising similarities to the present election. Democratic President Grover Cleveland faced the possibility of an unpleasant political prospect as described by the editor of the Westminster Democratic Advocate. "The result [of the election] will determine whether the Democrats will continue in the majority in the Senate and House, or whether the Republicans shall succeed to power." On the national scene a tax reform debate, known then as Free Trade vrs. Protectionism, dominated the campaign. The Westminster Democratic Advocate outlined the Democratic party's position.

The election next Tuesday will decide whether the principle of Protection or of Tariff for Revenue will govern the tax policy of the United States.

The Democratic party has reformed the tariff, made living cheaper, started the wheels of industry and made trade freer, believing freer trade will widen the markets for the products of our farms and factories. If successful in the balloting next Tuesday the party will complete the tax reform promised in the platform of 1892. All laws that create classes will be repealed, and the farmer and the manufacturer will be placed upon an equal footing. Agriculture has been laid under tribute for a quarter of a century to bolster up manufactures, and as the one has increased the other has declined. Agriculture is the basis of all wealth, and when it is depressed all other interests suffer. But for the great extent and fertility of the land of America; but for the improved machinery and the industry and frugality of the American farmer, agriculture would have been entirely ruined and manufactures with it. The McKinley law, by taxing raw material, made the products of the factory so high that the demand was lessened, and manufacturing languished. Foreign trade was shut out, and the markets for our wheat and corn and pork and beef were curtailed. Our customers for these articles sought their supplies elsewhere, and the demand stimulate production. By the new tariff bill raw materials are made free and the tax greatly lessened upon all goods of prime necessity. This enables the manufacturer to produce articles cheaper, increases the demand at home and enables him to go out into the markets of the world. The reduction of the tax on wool, on iron ore, on coal, and upon various other articles, will revive trade with foreign nations, and our farm products and manufactures will be taken in exchange.

The Westminster American Sentinel carried the Republican Party's position on the issue.

No Voter in Carroll county who believes that Democratic free trade is detrimental to the welfare of the country, should throw away his vote on side issues, however important they may seem to him. The contest between protection and free trade is between the Republican and Democratic parties. It is the leading issue of the campaign, as it is the most pressing. The success of the Democratic party will mean an endorsement by the people of the policy that is bringing business, industrial and financial ruin upon the county, and assure the continuance of that policy for years. All other issues involved can abide the result of future elections. This one question is imperative and pressing. Let every believer in protection in this county vote for it in the person of Wm. B. Baker, the Republican candidate for Congress. Voting otherwise he not only consents to the perpetuation of free trade, but gives it, indirectly, the moral support of his ballot.

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The whole country is having practical evidence, every day, of the baneful effects of low tariff legislation, yet the concurrent declaration of the purpose of the Democratic party to further prosecute their plans of so-called "tariff reform" are too plain to be gainsayed or denied. The voters are called upon to say, by their ballots, on Tuesday next, whether tariff legislation which inures, in large measure, to the benefit of foreigners and to the detriment of our own people, is not only to be maintained but prosecuted still further until every vestige of protection shall have been destroyed.

Next week's column will present the results of the Election of 1894. Did the Democratic rooster crow or did the Republican elephant trumpet in victory?

Photo caption: President Grover Cleveland as he appeared in an 1892 campaign photograph by Napoleon Sarony of New York. His Free Trade policies became a central issue in the mid-term election of 1894. Historical Society of Carroll County Collection, gift of Dr. George S. Wills, 1953.