

900 heard William Jennings Bryan speak

In the spring of 1898, Bloomingtonians were treated to a lecture appearance by a man who had just barely missed catching the brass ring of the presidency of the United States, but nevertheless was in the process of leaving his mark on the pages of American history. The man was William Jennings Bryan, and the date was April 8, 1898.

The Bloomington *Telephone's* front-page article about the famous orator's visit contained many interesting details, but the sponsors of the speech were not among them. He spoke in the relatively-new Indiana University gymnasium, which stood east of Owen Hall and was renamed the Assembly Hall in



Looking back

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1917. It may have been the largest hall in town able to accommodate the crowd a man with Bryan's reputation was likely to attract.

According to the *Telephone*, "About 900 people paid 50 cents to hear (the) Hon. W.J. Bryan talk free silver — or bimetalism — at the gymnasium last night. The audience was perhaps the
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