

Money, numbers made election of 1904 memorable

As elections go, the one in 1904 was particularly memorable. Money was at issue in a couple of different ways.

On the national level, Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican, was running against Democrat Alton B. Parker, whose name can't even be found in the biographical section of a recent Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.

Monroe County whole went Republican, casting 5,499 votes and giving Roosevelt 756 more than Parker.

There were three other candidates on the ballot: Prohibition (98 votes); Socialist, (6); and People's Party (17). According to the *Bloomington Telephone*, the Republican vote was an increase of more than 500 votes from the election in 1900.

Only the vote margin for Ira C. Batman, who ran for state representative, was higher than Roosevelt's. It was, in short, a rout for local Democrats.

The ink wasn't dry on the election returns before the subject of money appeared in print.



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

A *Telephone* reporter made the rounds of prominent local Democrats to ask why they lost. Several mentioned the name of William Jennings Bryan, who had been defeated twice by William McKinley in the election of 1896 and 1900. Gold as the national monetary standard had been at issue.

Said John C. Dolan, "Thousands of Bryan Democrats would not vote for Parker. And you see that where Bryan was the strongest Parker runs behind, as illustrated in the south part of this county."

Another Democratic Party spokesman said, "Our own men wanted to punish the Democratic party and especially the gold element that dictated the policy this campaign. They were mad, and when they got a chance they voted Republican straight."

The other way in which money reared its head in the local election was in regard to a highly illegal practice — that of buying votes. In a post-election article on Nov. 10, the *Telephone* estimated that together the Democrats and Republicans had spent \$10,000 on garnering votes.

The newspaper's readers were informed that the going rate for a bought vote was more expensive in the City of Bloomington than out in the county.

"From \$3 to \$5 will buy a vote a way out, but in town here they are educated adepts, and it is no secret that from \$10 as high as \$15 was a ruling price this morning."

The *Telephone* also revealed, "Each party today had about \$5,000 so it is said — for the exclusive purpose of caring for the festive fiat, and no less than \$5,000 is being spent within Bloomington in this way."

The newspaper also suggested that potential vote-sellers were more sophisticated than they used to be. "Whiskey and tobacco no longer cut a figure on election day."

In the article the *Telephone* speculated

about the motivation of the various vote-sellers.

"In Monroe County there are about 5,000 voters, and of this number it is said by knowing ones that almost 1,000 have their price — if facts must be told. With perhaps half of these it's a pure matter of cold business, but the other half have various excuses, but really must have something. Still another class are the fellows who always vote their ticket, but must be paid for doing so."

The election in Monroe County in 1904 was memorable for still a third reason. In a little back page item, the *Telephone* of Nov. 15 reported that the votes of Salt Creek residents didn't count.

As the newspaper explained it, "What ordinarily would have almost caused a revolution, passed by as a joke.

"In making up the county vote, above each column of figures, the clerks did not write the names of the candidates to whom the figures were credited. There was now no one to count them for. ... So Salt Creek has as well not voted for the county ticket."

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