

# “The Gilded Age”

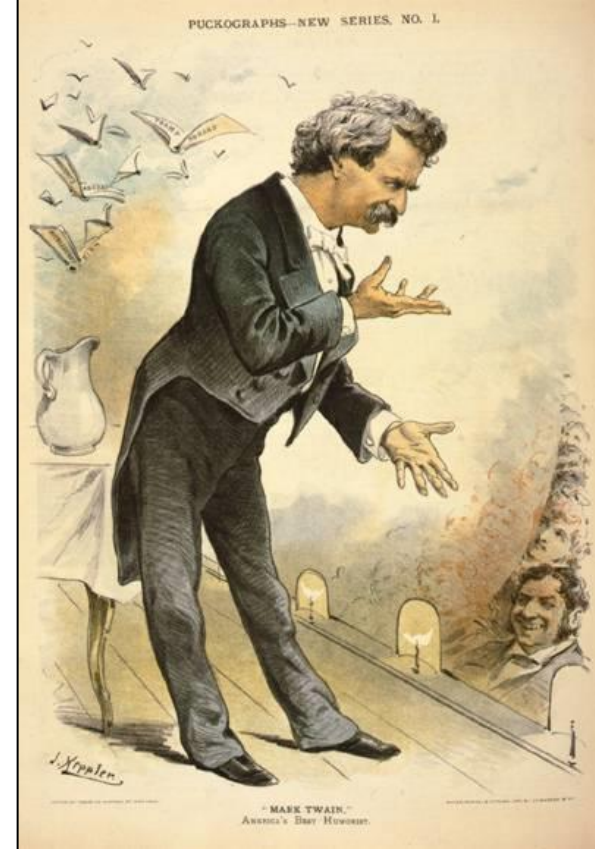
"What is the chief end of man?--to get rich. In what way?--  
dishonestly if we can; honestly if we must."

-- Mark Twain, 1871

# Mark Twain and the Gilded Age

Coined by Samuel Clemens (Twain's pen name) in his book of the same name:

- Explored political and economic corruption in the U.S.
- Central characters were tied together in a government RR bribery scheme
- Depicted a U.S. society that, despite its appearance of promise and prosperity, was riddled with corruption and scandal
- Set in Washington, D.C.



# The Gilded Age

Period of unprecedented economic, industrial, and population expansion from 1877-1900



Caused By

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Industrial Revolution
- Our “Free market” economy (Capitalism)
- *Laissez-faire* govt policies and regulation (“Big Business”, “Robber Barons”, or “Captains of Industry”)
- Urbanization and mass immigration



# 2<sup>nd</sup> Industrial Revolution: 1871-1914

Marked by enormous growth and consolidation of wealth and ownership

– Major Industries:

- RRs
- Automobile
- Steel
- Oil
- Electricity
- Communication

– “Robber Barons”/“Captains of Industry”

- William Vanderbilt (RR)
- Jay Gould (RR)
- Andrew Carnegie (Steel)
- John D. Rockefeller (Oil)
- J.P. Morgan (Banking)



# The “Bosses” of the Senate

## Patronage/Spoils System

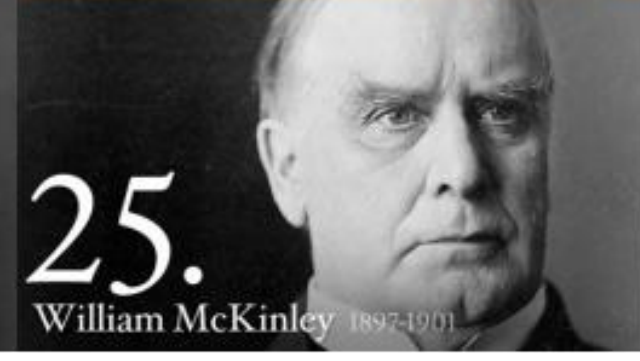
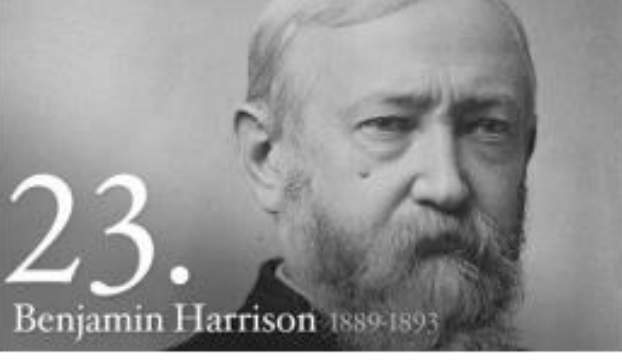
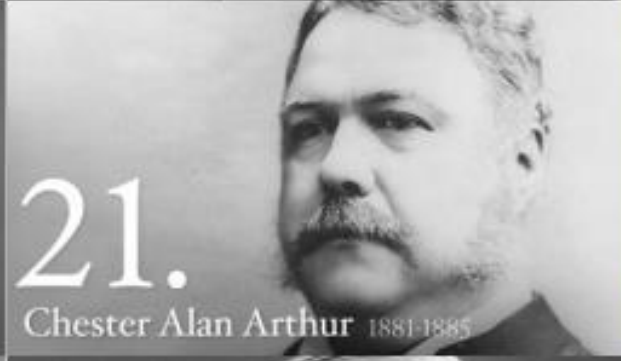
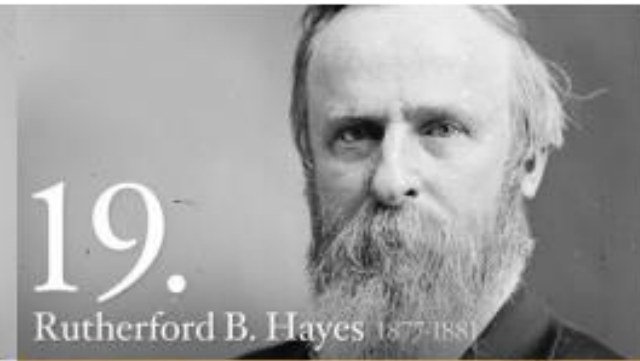
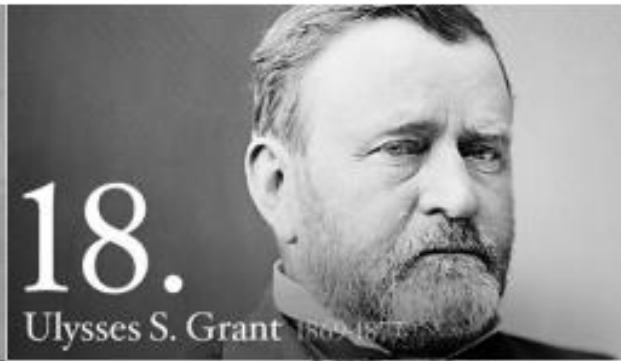
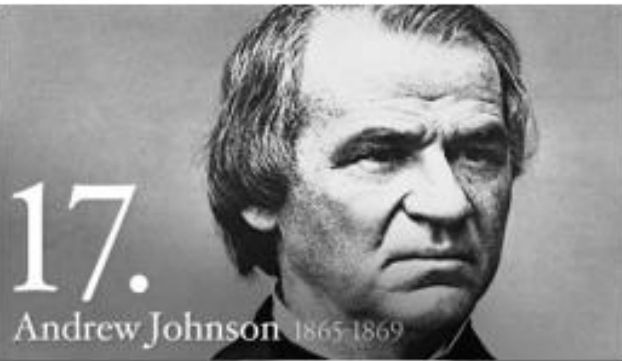
- Began with President Jackson’s attempt to have the govt represent the “Common Man”
- Giving govt positions to loyal followers that were not qualified (or merit-less) for their positions
- Led to political corruption, which became worse during the Gilded Age

## The U.S. Senate

- So corrupt, it became known as the **Millionaire’s Club**
- Led by Senator **James Blaine** of Maine
- Demanded kickbacks and bribes from monopolies in exchange for legislation that favored their industries
- Both political parties were corrupt, it really did not matter who won elections

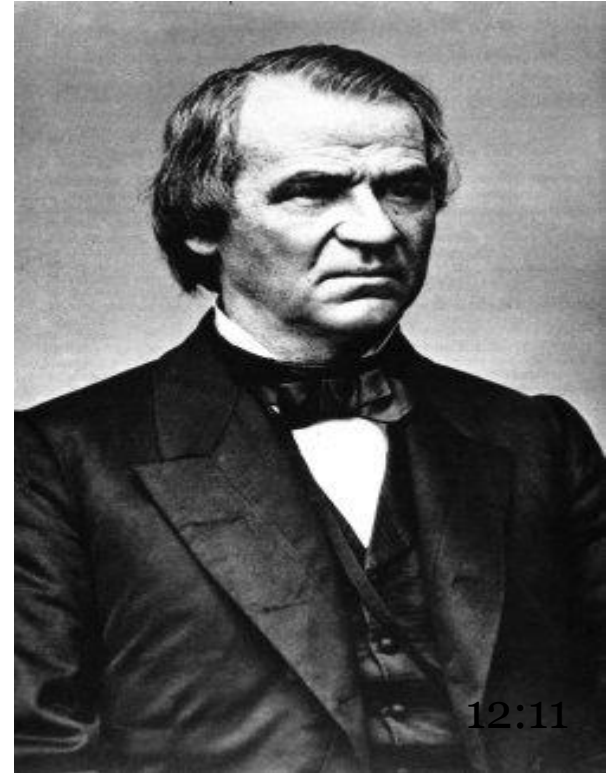


# Presidents of the Gilded Age



## ANDREW JOHNSON

- President during Reconstruction
  - Radical Republicans enact military occupation of the South
  - Ratify “Civil War Amendments”
- Vetoed the Civil Rights Act of 1866
- Impeached for violating the **Tenure of Office Act**
  - Presidents won't exercise much power from this point on → Congress gains power during the Gilded Age



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## ULYSSES S. GRANT

- Republican (1869-1877)
- Reconstruction president
  - 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment ratified
- Battle of Little Big Horn: “Custer’s Last Stand”
- Knights of Labor grow in size
- The Grangers begin
- Scandals: “Credit Mobilier”, Whiskey Ring





# 1872: Credit Mobilier Scandal

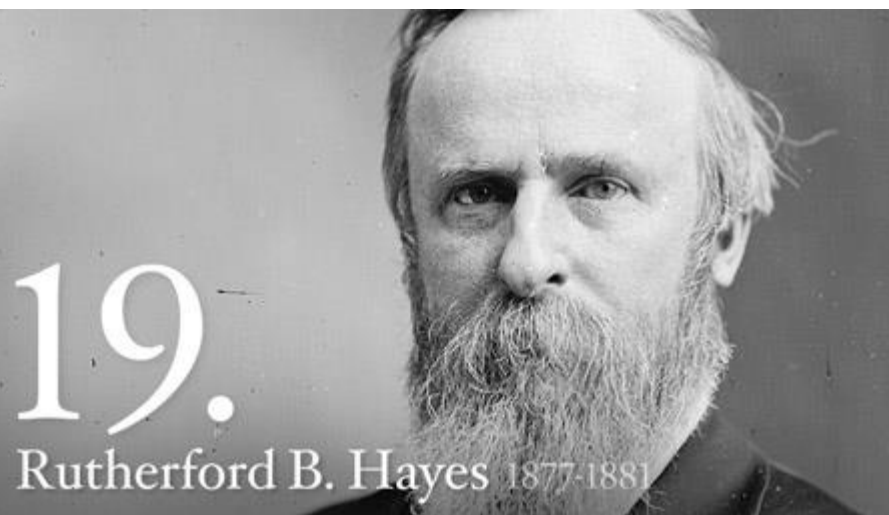
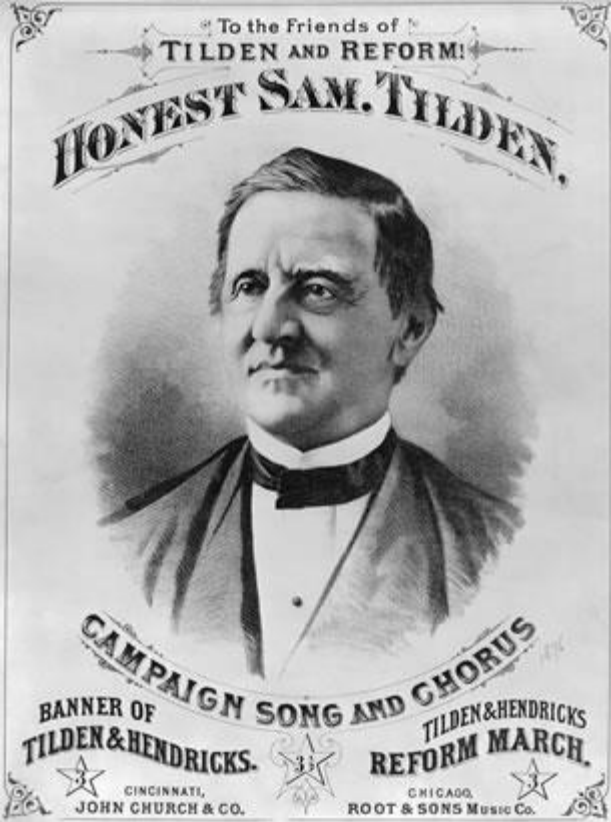
- Union Pacific RR company received a govt contract to built the Transcontinental RR → Hired Credit Mobilier to do the actual construction → Credit Mobilier charged the govt nearly twice the actual cost of the project → Scam discovered by govt officials, who were then offered bribes in the form of stock from the company to stop the investigation (hush money)
- Biggest bribery scandal in U.S. History, led to a greater public awareness of govt corruption



## 1875: Whiskey Ring Scandal

- Post-Civil War excise tax; developed into a conspiracy among whiskey distillers, IRS tax collectors, liquor distributors, and govt officials (St. Louis, Milwaukee, Chicago)
- Around \$3m was pocketed by officials, mainly Republicans linked to the scandal are blamed
- Grant pardons his personal secretary involved in the scandal, however was the first president to recommend a Civil Service Commission





[Guiteau Bio](#)

## ELECTION OF 1876

- Election fraud rampant throughout the U.S.
- Electoral commissions settled through →

## COMPROMISE OF 1877

- Reconstruction ends
- Rutherford B. Hayes (R) becomes president in exchange for the 5 Reconstruction districts being pulled from the South

## RUTHERFORD B. HAYES

- Republican (1877-1881)
- Nicknamed “His Fraudulency”
- Ends military occupation of the South
- Used military to end the **Great Railway Strike**
- Chief Joseph surrenders:
  - “I will fight no more forever.”

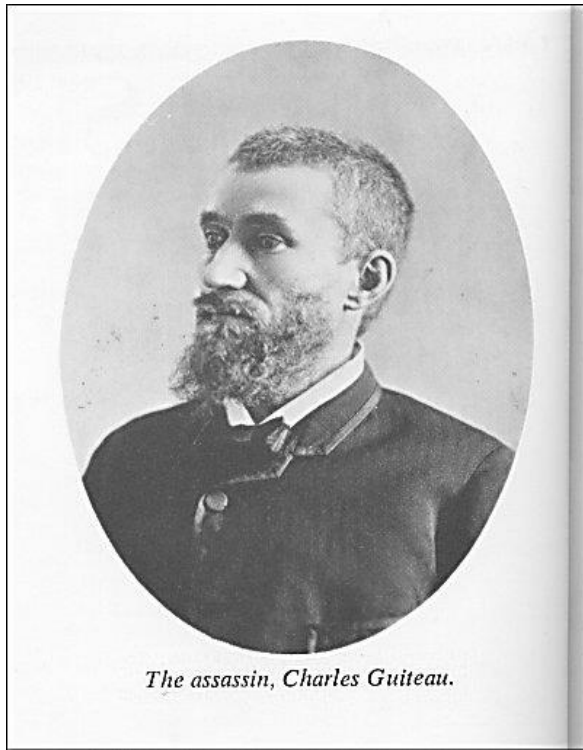
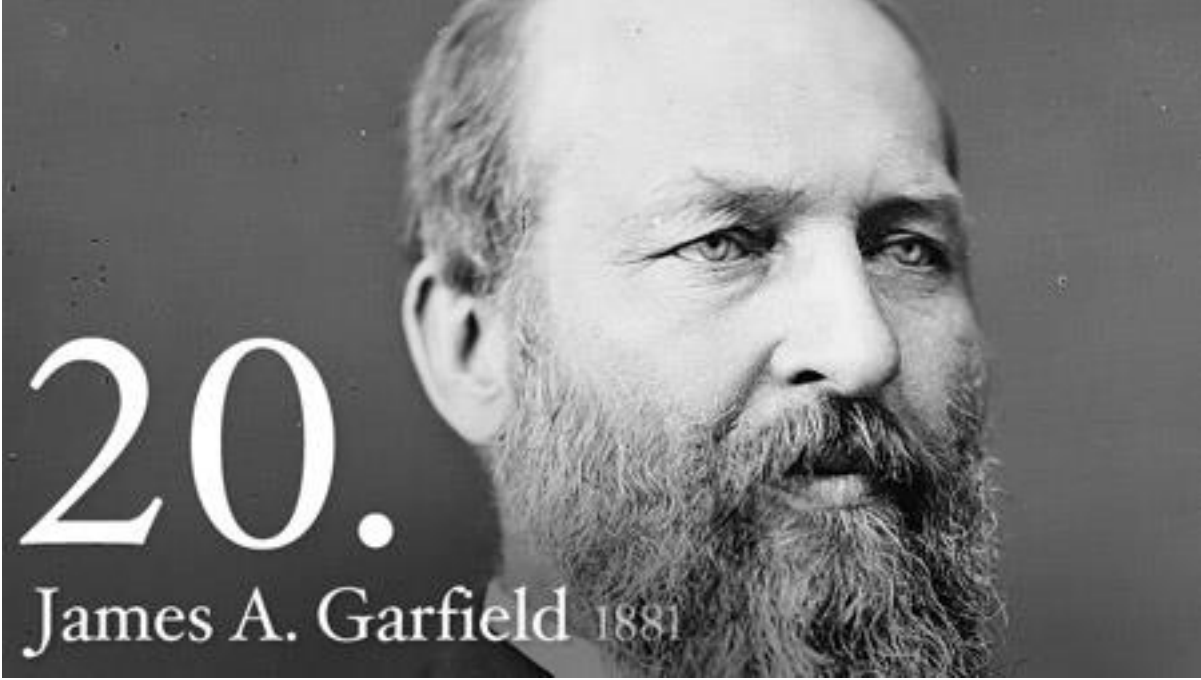
## JAMES GARFIELD

- Republican (1881)
- Assassinated by Charles Guiteau
  - Cause: “Patronage”/Spoils System

# THE PENDLETON

## ACT OF 1883

-Reform required workers to pass a civil service exam to get a govt job and be promoted based on the concept of “**meritocracy**”

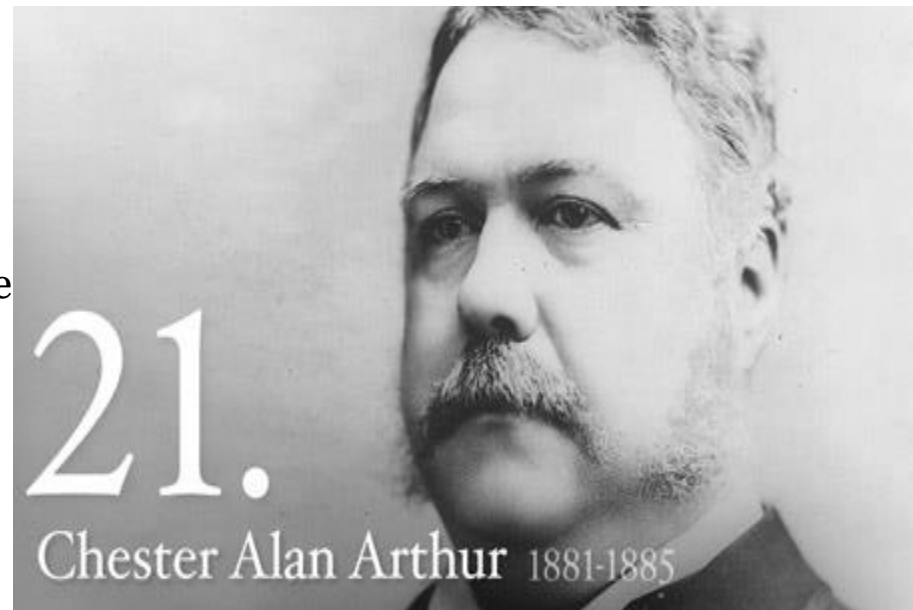


## CHESTER ARTHUR

- Republican (1881-1885)
- Pendleton Act passed during his administration
- New Immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe
- **Chinese Exclusion Act** – 10-year ban on Chinese Immigration; supported by nativists

## ELECTION OF 1884

- Candidates
  - Democrat: Grover Cleveland
  - Republican: James Blaine
- **Mugwumps:** “Reform Republicans” who supported Cleveland because Blaine was so corrupt
- **Half breeds:** supported Blaine but were more moderate compared to the Stalwarts of the Republican Party who were outwardly participatory of the Spoils System
- Cleveland scandal
- **“Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion”**
  - Speech given by a Presbyterian minister while Blaine was attending the meeting
  - Rum: Irish are always drunk
  - Romanism: Catholics are evil
  - Rebellion: Irish were Copperheads during the Civil War
  - Speech cost Blaine the election



# Election of 1884

-Republicans discovered reports that Cleveland had fathered an illegitimate child while he was a lawyer in Buffalo, NY

"Ma, Ma, where's my Pa?"

-Cleveland's instructions to his campaign staff were: "Tell the truth"

-Cleveland admitted to paying child support in 1874 to Maria Halpin, the woman who claimed he fathered her child named Oscar Folsom Cleveland

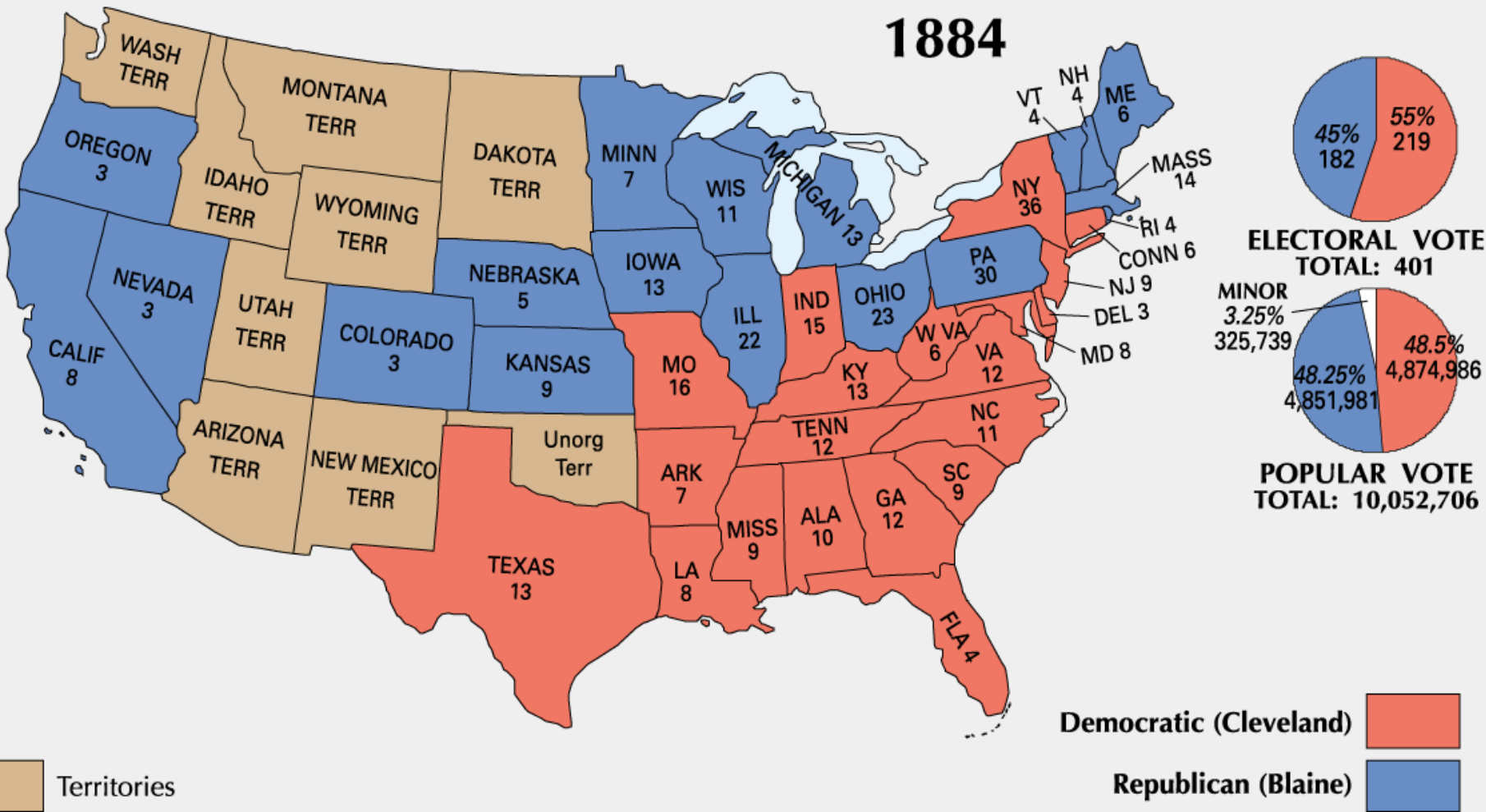
-Halpin was involved with several men at the time, including Cleveland's friend and law partner, Oscar Folsom, for whom the child was also named

-Cleveland did not know which man was the father, and is believed to have assumed responsibility because he was the only bachelor among them



"Ma Ma where's my Pa? Gone to the White House ha ha ha!"

# Election of 1884



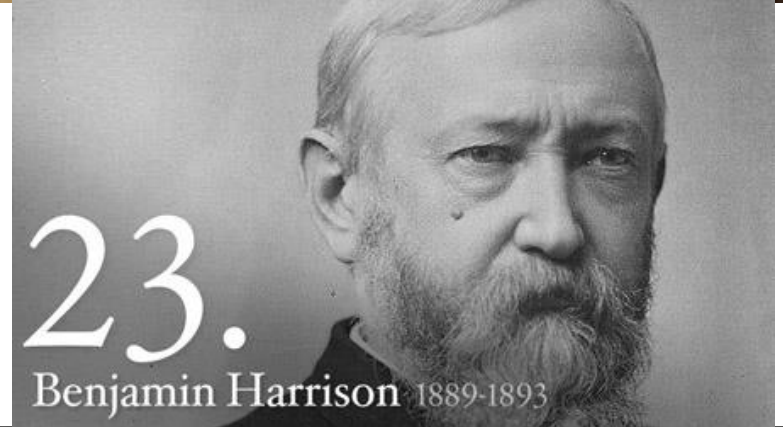
## GROVER CLEVELAND

- Democrat (1885-1889)
- **Dawes-Severalty Act:** forced assimilation of NAs
- **Interstate Commerce Act:** Congress regulates how much railroads can charge



## BENJAMIN HARRISON

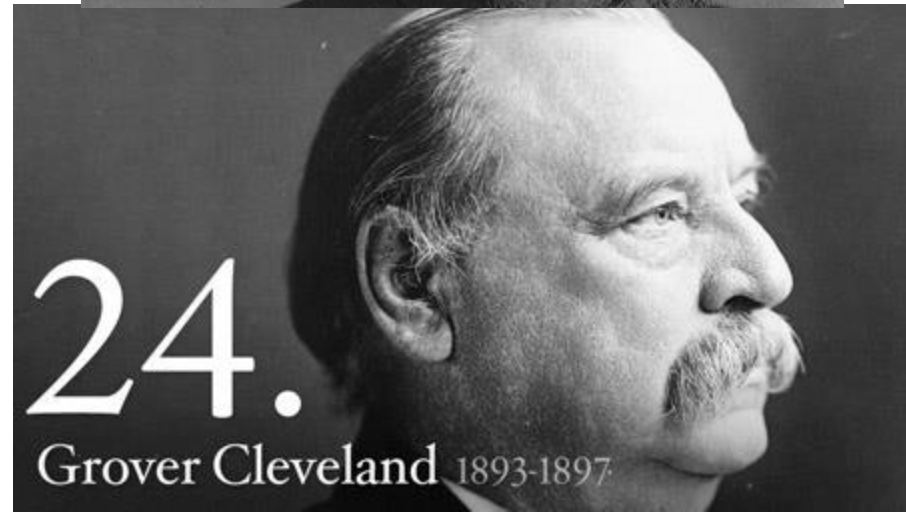
- Republican (1889-1893)
- First billion-dollar federal budget
- Populist Party gains momentum
- **Sherman Anti-Trust Act:** breaks apart monopolies/trusts (and UNIONS at first)
- Wounded Knee Massacre



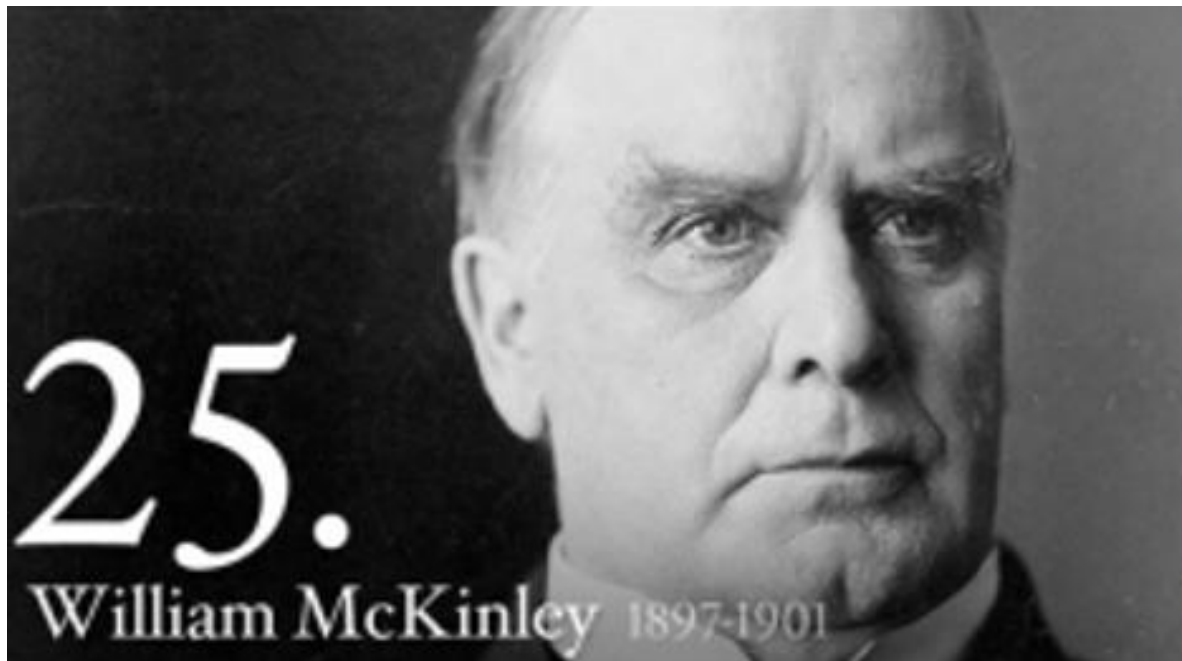
## CLEVELAND (2<sup>nd</sup> Term)

(1893-1897)

- **Panic of 1893** → which did not improve until the end of his term
- Opposed discrimination against Chinese
- Did not support equality for blacks or women
- Supported assimilation of NAs
- **Pullman Strike:** sent U.S. Army to break up strike







## **WILLIAM McKINLEY**

- Republican (1897-1901)
- Passed the Dingley Tariff Law: raises tariffs by an average of 57%
- 29 May 1899: issues an executive order exempting between 3,000-4,000 positions from competitive civil service examinations
- 7 March 1900: signs the Gold Standard Act, which fixes the standard of value for all money issued or coined by the United States to be backed only with gold
- 4 March 1901: North Carolina's George H. White leaves Congress, the last black member to serve for more than 25 years
- 6 September 1901: Leon Czolgosz shoots McKinley in the stomach while the president shakes hands at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York; Czolgosz, an anarchist, admitted to the shooting, and he expressed no remorse for his actions; died by electric chair on 29 October 1901