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WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN;  
"AMONG FRIENDS" IN ARKANSAS

FOR  
DR. RAY GRANADE  
HONOR'S INDEPENDENT STUDY  
OUACHITA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

BY  
C. J. HALL  
MAY 5, 1982

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN:  
"AMONG FRIENDS" IN ARKANSAS

I have been visiting Arkansas now for more than 20 years. I think it is about 22 years since I first came into your state to speak. I found a very friendly feeling in Arkansas -- it has been one of the states to which I have always returned with delight, and yesterday morning when I reached Little Rock, in telegraphing to my wife, I put in three words that I felt justified in putting in, and I knew that they would please Mrs. Bryan, 'Am among friends.'<sup>1</sup>

Campaign style has changed dramatically since the turn of the century when William Jennings Bryan captured the political limelight. Bryan, a three time Democratic nominee for President, developed a new campaign tactic during the 1896 Presidential election; he continued to employ the new style for the remainder of his life. In 1896 Bryan's political organization could not compete with the well-financed Republican system, so the "Great Commoner" took his cause to the people.<sup>2</sup> Presidential candidates were not supposed to actively campaign for the office, but Bryan broke the norm. After the 1896 election, Bryan continued to travel around the country speaking to the people. William Jennings Bryan's new idea did not catch on immediately, but Woodrow Wilson utilized it successfully in 1912, and under Franklin Roosevelt, active campaigning reached its full maturity.<sup>3</sup>

Early in his political career, Bryan developed close ties with Arkansas. This union of friendship and cooperation remained stable for three decades. A study of Bryan's Arkansas tours provides an example of his new campaign style. Through analysis of the "Great Commoner's" contact with Arkansas, one can also discover the real person in William Jennings Bryan.<sup>4</sup>

Bryan's first visit to Arkansas actually occurred before the 1896 election, on August 6, 1895.<sup>5</sup> Although he would not achieve true national political recognition until the next year, Bryan already enjoyed a reputation as a free silver supporter.<sup>6</sup> Dr. Carl Epler, a college friend of Bryan's, invited him to come to Fort Smith to address the bimetallic issue. There, he joined Governor James Paul Clarke and other notable Arkansan politicians for the one-day visit.<sup>7</sup>

Four years passed before Bryan returned to Arkansas. By 1899 Bryan had fully developed his campaign style, and his two visits to the state that year exemplify the Nebraskan's operating method. Hot Springs hosted an important silver conference on March 25-26, 1899, and William Jennings Bryan lectured a group of distinguished national politicians there.<sup>8</sup> After leaving Hot Springs, Bryan journeyed to Little Rock, where at the Arkansas Legislature's invitation, he delivered an address. Before leaving for his home state that evening, the Nebraskan spoke for nearly two hours to an enthusiastic crowd in Little Rock's Glenwood Park.<sup>9</sup> William Jennings Bryan returned to Arkansas on July 24, 1899. Springdale College President Josiah Shinn invited Bryan to speak during the Chautauqua program.<sup>10</sup> The year before Bryan

had promised to come, but his participation in the Spanish-American War prevented the excursion.<sup>11</sup> He delivered two lectures in Springdale during his day's stay in the city.<sup>12</sup> Bryan's successful style with the people is evidenced by crowds in Rogers forcing him to make brief stops in their city on his way to and from Springdale.<sup>13</sup>

William Jennings Bryan also spoke in Arkansas on two separate occasions in 1902. While on an extensive tour of the South, Bryan stopped in Little Rock en route to Oxford, Mississippi on April 29 to make an address in Glenwood Park.<sup>14</sup> About two months later, on June 19, Bryan arrived in Monte Ne, Arkansas to speak at the official opening of William Hope "Coin" Harvey's summer resort.<sup>15</sup> The week of June 8 through June 14, 1905, William Jennings Bryan again came to Arkansas. Bryan's primary purpose for coming in 1905 involved pecuniary as well as political interest, since he evidently received fees for most of his lectures. Bryan visited more of Arkansas' interior on this trip, although he delivered no speeches in Little Rock.<sup>16</sup>

William Jennings Bryan's third unsuccessful bid for the Presidency in 1908 did not end his speaking career. He still visited the state quite often. Little Rock received a sample of the "silver-tongued orator's" wares in 1909. During the April, 1909, visit Bryan primarily addressed two subjects: religion and politics. The Arkansas Legislature heard Bryan's key address in 1909.<sup>17</sup>

Bryan's most influential contact with the people of Arkansas came during a five-day whirlwind tour of the state in 1910. Governor George W. Donaghey asked the "Great Commoner" to come and

campaign for the proposed Initiative and Referendum Amendment, and the Nebraskan agreed to do so.<sup>18</sup> In a train tour of the state, Bryan addressed thousands of people. The trip covered 1,750 miles. Whatever Bryan's actual influence in the campaign, Arkansans did vote in favor of the proposed amendment.<sup>19</sup>

After 1910, Bryan's contact with Arkansas citizens cooled a bit, since he did not visit the state as often. After resigning as Secretary of State, Bryan returned to Arkansas in September, 1915, to lobby for peace.<sup>20</sup> The "Great Commoner" delivered several addresses in Little Rock and Hot Springs, and all speeches promoted world peace and American neutrality.<sup>21</sup> After Bryan resigned from the Wilson administration, his impact on the national political scene began to fade. When he delivered speeches in Arkansas, the press coverage did not match the usual publicity the Nebraskan received. Bryan lectured at the Rogers Chautauqua on July 26, 1917, but the Rogers Democrat only noted the event in a short article which ended, "It is a matter of great regret that we have not the space for a detailed report."<sup>22</sup>

The Nebraskan Democrat spent four days in Arkansas during 1918 making speeches. He addressed the Y.M.C.A. in Little Rock on March 3, and then traveled to Nashville, DeQueen, and Ashdown to speak.<sup>23</sup> One month later William Jennings Bryan returned to Little Rock to open the city's Liberty Bond campaign.<sup>24</sup> In July 1919, Bryan brought his wife to Hot Springs so she could bathe in the mineral water. Mrs. Bryan stayed in Hot Springs until December, and her husband visited the state periodically during those months. Her tenure and his visits received virtually no publicity.<sup>25</sup>

Bryan returned to Arkansas once more before his death -- a one-day stop in Little Rock in 1924.<sup>26</sup>

Bryan spoke on a variety of topics during his many tours in Arkansas, but he usually utilized a standard lecture on each trip. In the 1895 Fort Smith speech, Bryan advocated the free and unlimited coinage of both gold and silver.<sup>27</sup> Little Rock's 1899 audience heard a speech on subjects that became the main issues of the 1900 Presidential election. In Little Rock, Bryan asserted that the money question still remained unresolved. He went on to denounce the proposed annexation of the Philippine Islands.<sup>28</sup> In his lecture to the Springdale Chautauqua that same year, Bryan took as his topic, "It should be the object of government in all departments, judicial and legislative, to put into practice the maxim of Jefferson, 'Equal rights to all, special privileges to none,'"<sup>29</sup>

During the 1902 and 1905 excursions into the state the audiences heard one of three lectures: "The Value of an Ideal," "Conquering Nations," or "The Prince of Peace." The "Value of an Ideal" and "The Prince of Peace" lectures both reflected Bryan's religious convictions. During the 1896 election, Bryan avoided speaking on religious topics because he did not want to mix religion and politics. After the 1900 election, he began to accept invitations to speak at church gatherings and Y.M.C.A. meetings, and these two lectures became Bryan's standard religiously oriented speeches. In both lectures, Bryan used nature to show God's omnipotence. The development of a radish from a tiny seed served as an example of the mystery of creation. A watermelon's

ability to produce thousands of seeds exemplified the power of God's creation. The "Conquering Nations" lecture addressed America's imperialistic adventures in the Spanish-American War. Bryan's stance against imperialism in the speech did not enjoy universal popularity, but he did utilize the "Conquering Nations" lecture several times in Arkansas.<sup>30</sup>

On the next Arkansas tour, Bryan had some new speeches, though on the same general topics. His speeches to church groups contained a profound and emotional denunciation of Darwin's evolution theory. Arkansas legislators heard Bryan's most important address of the 1909 trip. In the ninety-minute speech, Bryan decried Republican tariff policies, and severely reprimanded the twenty-eight Democratic Congressmen who had voted with the Republicans on the last tariff bill. The referendum and the bank guaranty bills received Bryan's endorsement.<sup>31</sup>

Every audience of the 1910 trip heard the same speech, though sometimes in shortened form. Bryan came to Arkansas to campaign for the proposed Initiative and Referendum Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution. In short, the speech advocated passage of the amendment by counteracting opponents' arguments. Attorneys constituted the primary opposition force to the measure. According to them, the amendment contained a "joker" clause which would supposedly allow local governments to negate state legislation through the use of the initiative and referendum. Bryan asserted that the courts would interpret the intended essence of the bill. In defending the bill's wording, Bryan argued that the measure worked well in other states, and to guard against possible legislative graft, the people should vote in favor of Amendment Ten.<sup>32</sup>



When Bryan returned to Arkansas to speak in 1915, national issues had changed; and predictably, Bryan metamorphorized his lectures. He had recently resigned from the Wilson administration because of his peace and neutrality convictions. All the 1915 speeches in Little Rock and Hot Springs promoted world peace and American neutrality.<sup>33</sup> Issues were also different in 1917 and 1918, when Bryan again visited Arkansas. Significant portions of the speeches then dealt with his endorsement of the women's suffrage movement. He also campaigned for passage of a prohibition amendment.<sup>34</sup>

The "Great Commoner" returned to Arkansas in 1924. Little Rock's Civitan Club invited Bryan to make an address on evolution, and when accepting the invitation, Bryan requested the opportunity to also make a political address. The State Democratic Committee convened at noon on January 26 to hear Bryan's speech. In the talk, Bryan presented his choice for the Democratic nomination in 1924: Dr. Albert A. Murphree, President of the University of Florida. That afternoon, in the Christian Church Tabernacle, the Nebraskan condemned evolution.<sup>35</sup>

As previously mentioned, Bryan avoided speaking in churches during election campaigns, but after the 1900 contest, he began to accept invitations to speak in churches and to Y.M.C.A. conventions. Churches played a definitive role in Bryan's relationship with Arkansas. When speaking in churches, the "Great Commoner" would sometimes address solely religious topics. For example, during the 1924 visit, Bryan spoke to an audience in Little Rock's Christial Church Tabernacle on evolution; he ignored politics.<sup>36</sup>

Bryan never hesitated to make political lectures in a religious setting, as exemplified by his 1918 speech in Nashville's Baptist Church. In this talk, Bryan spoke on the war, prohibition, and women's suffrage, but no religious topics.<sup>37</sup> Usually William Jennings Bryan blended religion and politics into the same speech. In Dardanelle's Methodist Church in 1905, Bryan talked primarily about the authenticity of the Bible, but he also addressed the rise of the spirit of commercialism.<sup>38</sup> The Nebraskan may have spoken in churches simply because they were the largest auditorium available, but he evidently felt comfortable speaking on almost any topic while in the sanctuary.

William Jennings Bryan's Arkansas rallies were held in a variety of other places, besides churches. Usually theaters, outdoor parks, or courthouse lawns held Bryan's audiences, but the Nebraskan could speak virtually anywhere. Bryan lectured from the Fort Smith Episcopal Church's pavilion when he visited there in 1895.<sup>39</sup> When Bryan spoke in Springdale in 1899, he lectured on the school's Chautauqua grounds.<sup>40</sup> Little Rock's 1902 audience heard him speak in the city's Glenwood Park, and "Coin" Harvey's newly completed auditorium held the 1902 audience in Monte Ne.<sup>41</sup> During the 1905 excursion, the orator spoke from a variety of places, including Elks Theater in Pine Bluff, the fair grounds in Clarksville, Dardanelle's Methodist Church, the cotton compress building in Camden, and Beauvoir College in Wilmar.<sup>42</sup> In 1909 Bryan gave both Little Rock speeches in the Capital Theater.<sup>43</sup> Tents erected on the Presbyterian Church lots in Conway contained the 1909 audience there.<sup>44</sup> The rear car of the train served as the main speaking platform during the 1910 campaign,

although Bryan talked several times in city parks and on courthouse lawns.<sup>45</sup> While in Hot Springs in 1915, the "Great Commoner" delivered his peace lecture on top of the mountain behind Bathhouse Row.<sup>46</sup> Bryan spoke in Little Rock's Presbyterian Church and the Y.M.C.A. building in 1918, and he utilized theaters for the lectures in Nashville, DeQueen, and Ashdown.<sup>47</sup> The Nebraskan lectured twice in Little Rock in 1924: once in the Hotel Marion's ballroom, and once in the Christian Church Tabernacle.<sup>48</sup>

Bryan usually did not speak first at the Arkansas meetings. His speech customarily followed another speech, or some kind of warm-up activity. At the 1895 Fort Smith rally, Bryan spoke after Governor James Paul Clarke delivered a lecture based upon current financial issues.<sup>49</sup> Springdale's South Methodist Church chorus led the crowd in singing "America" and "Yankee Doodle" prior to Bryan's speech there in 1899.<sup>50</sup> Michael P. Huddleston, who introduced Bryan in Little Rock in 1902, did not deem it necessary to say much, "since there was no one in the house who did not know Mr. Bryan."<sup>51</sup> In Camden during the 1905 excursion, a band played "Dixie" before Bryan entered the city's new cotton compress building to speak.<sup>52</sup> With a speech of his own, Senator Joseph T. Robinson introduced Bryan at Wilmar in 1905.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, Governor George W. Donaghey presented a lecture to the Conway audience in 1909, before introducing the main speaker for the evening.<sup>54</sup> Bryan himself spoke first at nearly all the "whistle-stops" made during the 1910 tour, but at Van Buren, before Bryan spoke, a quartette sang to the tune of "Love Me And The World Is Mine,"

We care not for the Rose opinion,<sup>55</sup>  
We care not for the lawyer's pen,  
We only know we need it --  
Vote for Amendment No. 10.  
Donaghey, Donaghey  
He is just all right,  
He's winning the people's fight  
Donaghey, Donaghey,  
He's for Amendment No. 10.<sup>56</sup>

Bryan's 1915 Hot Springs speech happened on his and Mrs. Bryan's wedding anniversary, so all the people present proposed a grape-juice toast to the couple before he spoke.<sup>57</sup> Governor Charles H. Brough's speech preceeded Bryan's main address of the 1918 trip, the one to the Arkansas Legislature.<sup>58</sup> In Nashville that same week, the Baptist Church's pastor introduced Bryan as the "world's greatest and most prominent private citizen."<sup>59</sup> In an introductory speech by Governor Thomas C. McRae in 1924, he compared Bryan to Disraeli, Calhoun, and Caesar.<sup>60</sup>

Towns on Bryan's agenda usually tried to present their best side to the Nebraskan. Various forms of decorations, gifts, and entertainment greeted Bryan in the cities he visited. In 1902, Monte Ne's residents erected a huge evergreen arch, bearing the name "Coin Harvey" to impress the visitor. When Bryan passed through Bentonville on his way to Monte Ne, sixteen little girls went through some marching "evolutions" to entertain the "Great Commoner."<sup>61</sup> During the 1910 campaign for the initiative and referendum, Rogers residents presented Bryan some apples grown in the area, on which he breakfasted.<sup>62</sup> In Batesville that same year, a large picture of Bryan, painted by a local stonemason, decorated the side of a building near the speaker's platform.<sup>63</sup> A bouquet of blooming cotton garnished the speakeaker's stand

in Hope in 1910.<sup>64</sup> On the same trip, in Leslie, two little girls reportedly impressed Bryan. One carried a poster saying, "Welcome Bryan," and the other carried an American flag.<sup>65</sup> Not all decorations were pro-Bryan, as evidenced by a poster in Batesville during the 1910 visit which read,

It makes me smile. Bryan says the Republicans have been stealing his platform, and now Bryan and his party are trying to steal the Socialist platform. So let's roll up a big Socialist vote and make them steal it all or get down and out and let us have the range. Whoop 'em boys, we are getting returns on our votes.<sup>66</sup>

At the "Great Commoner's" request, supporters put the poster aboard the train, in a very prominent position.<sup>67</sup>

William Jennings Bryan truly was the "Great Commoner," and he cultivated the name while in Arkansas. Many episodes attest to his popularity among the common people of the state. At the Springdale Chautauqua in 1899, the audience paid to hear Bryan speak, but just before the lecture began, he requested that "Professor Shinn open all the gates and admit all, which was done."<sup>68</sup> Bryan's attendance at a baseball game between Lake Providence, Louisiana and Beauvoir College in 1905 helped link the Nebraskan with ordinary citizens.<sup>69</sup> During the 1910 campaign for the initiative and referendum, an old man in Batesville passed out because of the heat. Bryan stopped speaking and helped carry the gentleman into the shade of the speaker's platform.<sup>70</sup> Even Bryan's anecdotes in his speeches helped identify him with rural Arkansas. In a 1918 speech on spiritual obedience, Bryan told the story of a Negro who said, "If God tells me to butt my head

against a stone wall, I butts."<sup>71</sup> The newspapers certainly contributed to Bryan's image as the "Great Commoner," by reporting every conceivable bit of news about him. Newspaper coverage during Bryan's era usually consisted of a chronological account of the activities, along with a verbatim text of the speech. The papers usually offered little analysis, although their opinions were exhibited throughout the article. After the 1899 Springdale Chautauqua, the Springdale News recounted the day in depth, by including a street by street account of the parade route, an itemized report of Bryan's clothes (including hat size), and a detailed description of his facial features (with his nose being described as "Roman"). The paper overly dramatized Bryan's arrival at the depot that morning.<sup>72</sup>

Railroads did serve as the primary means of long distance transportation in Bryan's day. He always traveled to and from the state by rail, and usually journeyed around the state on trains. Parades, bands, and important Arkansan politicians usually greeted Bryan at the depot upon his arrival. The Arkansas Gazette compared his reception at Union Station (Little Rock) in 1909 to the "stirring days of 1896 and those equally active times of 1900."<sup>73</sup> Railroad travel at the turn of the century seemed luxurious when compared to other methods, yet it could be very unpleasant and trying. The 1910 trip consisted of a very regimented schedule, involving many short stops each day. Near Gurdon, on September 9, the engine's rear wheels left the track during an engine change and caused a fifty-minute delay, thus interrupting the entire day's schedule. Bryan's 1910 train consisted of an engine, Pullman sleeper, observation car, diner,

and baggage car. Thirty-five people packed into these cars for each day's tour, and at least twenty-five people slept on the train each night.<sup>74</sup>

Bryan did not do all his traveling in the state by train. On the 1899 visit to Springdale, Bryan rode in a one-seated buggy in the parade and around the town.<sup>75</sup> The first mention of Bryan traveling by automobile is in 1905. He motored from Russellville to Dardanelle, and according to the Gazette account, at sunrise that morning he crossed the largest pontoon bridge in the world.<sup>76</sup> Automobile travel could be very dangerous, as shown by a near-accident in Searcy during the 1910 trip. Following a speech, Bryan and Governor Donaghey were driving back to the train. One of the car's tires suddenly flew off. The car swerved out into a ditch to avoid hitting a team of kicking mules. The machine threatened to upset -- Bryan was on the point of jumping. Luckily, the car righted itself, and no one got hurt.<sup>77</sup>

The most amusing account of Bryan's encounter with automobiles in Arkansas occurred on April 17, 1909. Even though he was due in Conway at three o'clock, Bryan accepted an invitation to deliver a short speech to the Y.M.C.A. State Conference in Little Rock that morning. Despite assurances to the contrary, Bryan missed the train to Conway. Two men consequentially decided to drive the speaker to the engagement. A party of ten left Little Rock just before noon in two cars, a Franklin touring car and a Cadillac. In Argenta (North Little Rock) the convoy barely missed colliding head-on with a street car. From Argenta to Conway the roads were so bad that the party, including Bryan, walked

at times. W. L. Tedford, one of the drivers, described the roads as "having boulders as large as lime barrels and mud that covered the hubs and stumps."<sup>78</sup> The group finally reached Conway at 2:50, having completed the thirty-mile run from Little Rock to Conway in two hours and fifty-two minutes. Judging from the Arkansas Gazette's reporting of the incident and considering road conditions, the party made the trip in record time. After the trip, Tedford called Bryan a good fellow.<sup>79</sup>

Generally Bryan also shared good relations with Arkansas' leading politicians, and the Nebraskan definitely influenced some of the state leaders through his speaking circuits. In Fort Smith during the 1895 visit, both ex-Governor William M. Fishback and Governor James Clarke were on hand to greet the orator.<sup>80</sup> After the speech, Little Rock Congressman William Leake Terry announced his support for free silver.<sup>81</sup> Bryan's followers in Arkansas, led by Senator James K. Jones, soon gained control of the state Democratic Party.<sup>82</sup> Bryan's friendship with Senator James H. Berry is evident, since the Senator met Bryan in Springdale for the Nebraskan's one-day stay in the state in 1899.<sup>83</sup> During the 1905 tour, Senator Joseph T. Robinson sent his personal secretary to escort Bryan around the state.<sup>84</sup> In 1909, Bryan made a special visit to Senator Jefferson Davis' Little Rock office to express sympathy over Mrs. Davis' recent death.<sup>85</sup> Governor George Donaghey picked up the expenses Bryan incurred during the 1910 campaign for the initiative and referendum.<sup>86</sup>

Not all Bryan's associations with Arkansan politicians were harmonious. Senator James H. Berry and Governor Jefferson Davis opposed each other in a heated campaign for the United States



Senate during Bryan's 1905 trip to Arkansas. Bryan found himself in the center of the dispute, since both men wanted to introduce the speaker in Clarksville. To Davis' chagrin, Berry received the privilege of making the introduction.<sup>87</sup> Two controversial incidents erupted during Bryan's 1910 campaign, one again involving Jeff Davis. Davis, who opposed Amendment Ten, sat on his porch in Alma during Bryan's speech there, and refused to even greet the guest.<sup>88</sup> The other incident involved the chairman of the Little Rock reception committee, Harmon L. Rempel.<sup>89</sup> In order to make the amendment a bipartisan issue, the committee selected a Republican, Rempel, as its head. Many Little Rock Democrats were peeved at the committee's choice and refused to attend the rally.<sup>90</sup>

Bryan himself created controversy by accepting fees for some of his lectures. In all instances, it is not clear if Bryan received payment for the services rendered in Arkansas, but on several occasions, he definitely benefitted financially. At the Springdale Chautauqua in 1899, Professor Shinn charged admission to Bryan's two speeches, an indication that the orator received payment.<sup>91</sup> Reserved seats for Bryan's 1902 Monte Ne lecture cost fifty cents, and general admission seats cost a quarter.<sup>92</sup> The Gurdon Times reported that entrance fees of fifty and seventy-five cents would be collected at Camden's 1905 Bryan rally.<sup>93</sup> Bryan received one thousand dollars for his Wilmar lecture during the same tour.<sup>94</sup> Bryan and the Hendrix College Athletic Association divided the eight hundred dollars in proceeds from the lecture there in 1909.<sup>95</sup> Bryan evidently received no fees for his 1910 speeches, although Governor Donaghey picked up the expenses incurred on the tour.<sup>96</sup> In 1918, the Arkansas Gazette reported that all

but two hundred of the tickets to the noon luncheon had been sold, though the article makes no mention of Bryan charging a fee for the lecture.<sup>97</sup> Even though Bryan's opponents criticized his habit of charging for speeches, the Nebraskan received no negative publicity about the habit from the Arkansas press.

Bryan usually benefitted from the trips to Arkansas, and some of the tours produced prompt tangible results. Immediately following the 1895 visit, Congressman Terry decided to support silver, and Bryan forces captured the state Democratic Party.<sup>98</sup> Arkansas supported Bryan in all three of his Presidential election bids, though the state would probably have supported any Democratic candidate. Bryan probably made a profit from the 1899, 1902, 1905, and 1909 speaking tours; and of course, he profited from the publicity.<sup>99</sup> Although Bryan evidently did not make a financial gain from the 1910 campaign, he did receive the satisfaction of seeing the amendment pass. The extensive contact with the people during the 1910 trip endeared the "Great Commoner" in the hearts of many Arkansans forever.<sup>100</sup> The last two visits possibly benefitted Bryan financially, but he primarily wanted to influence his listeners. In the April 1918 speech, Bryan encouraged Little Rock citizens to purchase war bonds, and the city responded by buying \$350,000 worth the first day.<sup>101</sup> In 1924, Bryan unsuccessfully tried to persuade Arkansas Democrats to support Dr. Murphrees for the Presidency.<sup>102</sup>

Bryan definitely influenced the people of Arkansas, but to how many people did Bryan actually speak? Estimating the number of people in a crowd is a difficult chore. Newspaper reporters' estimates provide the only crowd "statistics" from Bryan's day,

and they are certainly questionable. When evaluating the crowd estimates, the number of minors, Negroes, and women in the total population must be taken into consideration, because adult white males comprised the majority of nearly every political audience. In one example, the Arkansas Gazette judged the 1910 Jonesboro crowd to be 8,000 -10,000 people.<sup>103</sup> According to the 1910 census, Jonesboro's total population was 7,123.<sup>104</sup> If 8,000 - 10,000 people attended the rally, then every man, woman, and child in the city had to be present, plus 900 to 3000 more from the surrounding area. Bryan stopped in some cities outside Jonesboro (Weiner, Hoxie, and Tuckerman), thus making it ludicrous for these people to travel to Jonesboro to see Bryan.<sup>105</sup> However, some of the crowd estimates seem more plausible, such as the 1500 Van Buren residents who supposedly greeted Bryan there in 1910.<sup>106</sup> Van Buren's 1910 population was 3878.<sup>107</sup> Bryan had relatives in the city, and he enjoyed a good reputation, so the figure could be accurate.<sup>108</sup> On an overall perspective, most of the crowd estimates are mathematically possible, but highly improbable.

Regardless of the number of Arkansans who attended Bryan rallies, no one in the state ever heard him speak again after the 1924 visit. Bryan died July 25, 1925. His successful campaign style is evident from the state's response to his death. Former Governor Thomas C. McRae, in a memorial speech in Prescott, lauded Bryan as, "one of the greatest figures in American life during recent years."<sup>109</sup> Dr. Calvin B. Waller, pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Little Rock, stated that, "There has never been one like Bryan, and there never will be another."<sup>110</sup> "There is no one to take Bryan's place," Senator Thaddeus H. Caraway declared.<sup>111</sup> Governor Thomas J. Terral issued a proclamation

proclaiming the day of Bryan's funeral a state holiday, on which all state offices would close to honor the "Great Commoner."<sup>112</sup>

William Jennings Bryan's death signaled the beginning and the end of an era in American campaign style. Bryan invented a campaign technique that developed into the norm, yet Bryan himself died before his style matured. The new method proved very effective when combined with mass media coverage, such as during Franklin Roosevelt's tenure, and afterwards. William Jennings Bryan received three Presidential nominations from the Democratic Party. To accomplish this feat, the "Great Commoner" had to maintain electoral support, and he did so through personal visits with the people. Regardless of the number of times Bryan visited Arkansas, he definitely came much more than any person would expect from a contemporary Presidential aspirant. Arkansans did not forget about Bryan because he kept in touch. Towns like Gurdon, Hoxie, and Shirley will probably never host a Presidential candidate again, although a candidate will speak to the citizens of these towns. The mass media now permits candidates to visit the home of every American citizen. William Jennings Bryan did not benefit from radio and television -- he himself had to go to Gurdon, Hoxie, and Shirley.<sup>113</sup>

The "Great Commoner" visited Arkansas several times between 1895 and 1924, and each visit provides an example of Bryan's campaign style and methods. William Jennings Bryan cultivated Arkansas' support through speaking circuits, and the state responded by supporting Bryan in his three tries for the White House. Even when the Nebraskan began to fade from the national scene, Arkansans still turned out in mass to greet him and hear him

lecture. Through these lectures, many of the state's citizens became more enlightened. Bryan gave Arkansans political enthusiasm, even though the "Great Commoner" never succeeded in becoming President. Through analysis of his trips to Arkansas, one can thoroughly study the campaign style that Bryan invented, and in the process, obtain a glimpse into the real person -- William Jennings Bryan.

<sup>1</sup>"Thousands In City Monday To See Bryan," Nashville News, 6 March 1918.

<sup>2</sup>The "Great Commoner" was Bryan's nickname, which he cultivated to the fullest extent.

<sup>3</sup>Louis W. Koenig, "The First Hurrah," American Heritage, April/May 1980, pp. 4-11; Paul Glad, McKinley, Bryan And The People, (Philadelphia & New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1964).

<sup>4</sup>For a complete biography of Bryan, see Paolo Coletta, William Jennings Bryan, 3 volumes, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964).

<sup>5</sup>See Appendixes I and II, pp. 26 and 27 for a chronological listing of Bryan's trips to Arkansas and a state map.

<sup>6</sup>Free silver was a main issue of the 1896 Presidential election. According to the silverites, the minting of silver would put more money in circulation and cure the deflationary condition prevalent at the time. See Paul Glad, pp. 113-141 for a thorough explanation.

<sup>7</sup>"Big Silver Meeting," Arkansas Gazette, 8 August 1895; "William J. Bryan," Daily News Record (Fort Smith), 6 August 1895; James Paul Clarke served as Arkansas governor 1895-1897.

<sup>8</sup>"Bryan At Hot Springs," Arkansas Gazette, 26 March 1899.

<sup>9</sup>"Mr. Bryan's Day In Little Rock," Arkansas Gazette, 28 March 1899.

<sup>10</sup>The Chautauqua was an institution of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to further education through lectures. For further information, see Theodore Morrison, Chautauqua, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

<sup>11</sup>Bryan himself raised a troop of Nebraska men and led them in the Spanish American War. See Coletta.

<sup>12</sup>"Bryan Day At The Chautauqua," Springdale News, 28 July 1899.

<sup>13</sup>"Wm. J. Bryan," Rogers Democrat, 27 July 1899.

<sup>14</sup>"Mr. Bryan Lectures," Arkansas Gazette, 30 April 1902.

<sup>15</sup>"Bryan At Monte Ne," Rogers Democrat, 26 June 1902; William Hope "Coin" Harvey, a good friend of Bryan's wrote a best-seller book during the 1896 campaign (Coin's Financial School), which Bryan used extensively. For a biography, see Lois Snelling, Coin Harvey, Prophet Of Monte Ne, (Point Lookout, Missouri: S of O Press, 1973).

<sup>16</sup>"Wm. J. Bryan In Pine Bluff," Arkansas Gazette, 9 July 1905; "Bryan Coming," Gurdon Times, 10 June 1905.

17 "Will Address The Arkansas Legislature And Its Guests," Arkansas Gazette, 16 April 1909.

18 George W. Donaghey served Arkansas as governor, 1909-1913.

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43 "Full House Hears Bryan's Lecture," Arkansas Gazette, 16 April 1909.

44 "Big Crowds Hear Bryan," Log Cabin Democrat (Conway), 19 April 1909.

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48 "Many Politicians," Arkansas Gazette, 24 January 1924.

49 "Bryan," Daily News Record, 6 August 1895.

50 "Bryan Day," Springdale News, 28 July 1899.

51 "Mr. Bryan Lectures," Arkansas Gazette, 30 April 1902; Huddleston served as an Arkansas State Senator from the First District, 1901-1903.



- 52 "South Arkansans," Arkansas Gazette, 13 June 1905.
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- 54 "Big Crowds," Log Cabin Democrat, 19 April 1909.
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- 56 "Notes," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, Autumn 1953, Volume XXII, p. 289.
- 57 "Drinks Grape Juice Toast To Mrs. Bryan," Arkansas Gazette, 2 October 1915.
- 58 "Bryan Visits," Arkansas Gazette, 4 March 1918; Charles H. Brough was governor of Arkansas, 1917-1921.
- 59 "Thousands In City," Nashville News, 6 March 1918.
- 60 "Political Issue," Arkansas Gazette, 27 January 1924; Thomas C. McRae served Arkansas as governor, 1921-1925.
- 61 "Bryan At Monte Ne," Rogers Democrat, 26 June 1902.
- 62 "Bryan In Rogers," Rogers Democrat, 15 September 1910.
- 63 "Bryan Completes A Strenuous Day," Arkansas Gazette, 9 September 1910.
- 64 "Thousands Hear Bryan's Address," Arkansas Gazette, 10 September 1910.
- 65 "North Arkansas Invaded," Arkansas Gazette, 11 September 1910.
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- 79 "William Jennings Bryan Visits Conway," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, Winter 1952, Volume XI, p. 333; Ibid.
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- 81 William Leake Terry served as United States Congressman from District Four, 1891-1901.
- 82 "Bryan," Daily News Record, 6 August 1895; Richard L. Niswonger, "Arkansas And The Election Of 1896," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, Spring 1975, Volume XXXIV, p. 46; James K. Jones served Arkansas in the United States Senate, 1885-1903. He was Bryan's National Chairman during the 1896 election.
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- 87 "Senator Berry Presents Bryan," Arkansas Gazette, 10 June 1905; Paige E. Mulhollan, "The Issues Of The Davis-Berry Senatorial Campaign In 1906," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, Spring 1961, Volume XX, p. 119.
- 88 "Bryan Speaks To 15,000," Arkansas Gazette, 8 September 1910.
- 89 Harmon L. Rimmel, a prominent Arkansas Republican, ran unsuccessfully for governor of Arkansas in 1894, 1896, and 1900.
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- 91 "Bryan Day," Springdale News, 28 July 1899.
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- 94 William Tyler Spence, "History Of Beauvoir College," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, Autumn 1958, Volume XXVII, pp. 325-26, 333.

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- 102 "Political Issue," Arkansas Gazette, 27 January 1924.
- 103 "Thousands Hear," Arkansas Gazette, 10 September 1910.
- 104 World Almanac And Book Of Facts For 1913, (New York: New York World, 1913), p. 664.
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- 108 "Bryan Visited Realties In Van Buren Several Times," Arkansas Gazette, 1 August 1925.
- 109 "Bryan Praised By Former Governor," Arkansas Gazette, 30 July 1925.
- 110 "Life of Bryan Is Pastor's Subject," Arkansas Gazette, 30 July 1925.
- 111 "Caraway Pays Tribute To Bryan," Arkansas Gazette, 30 July 1925. Caraway was a United States Seantor from Arkansas, 1921-1931.
- 112 "Capital To Close To Honor Bryan," Arkansas Gazette, 31 July 1925. Terral was governor, 1925-1927.
- 113 "Bryan Coming," Gurdon Times, 10 June 1905; "Bryan Completes," Arkansas Gazette, 9 September 1910; "North Arkansas Invaded," Arkansas Gazette, 11 September 1910; Koenig, "The First Hurrah," American Heritage, April/May 1980, pp. 4-11.

## APPENDIX I

TOWNS BRYAN VISITED  
(CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)1895

Fort Smith (6 August)

1899

Little Rock (27 March)

Springdale (24 July)

1902

Little Rock (29 April)

Monte Ne (19 June)

1905

Pine Bluff (8 June)\*

Clarksville (9 June)\*

Russellville (10 June)

Dardanelle (10 June)

Mount Nebo (10 June)\*

Dardanelle (11 June)

Little Rock (11 June)\*

Arkadelphia (12 June)

Gurdon (12 June)

Camden (12 June)\*

Wilmar (13 June)\*

1909

Little Rock (15 April)\*

Hot Springs (16 April)\*

Little Rock (17 April)

Conway (17 April)

Van Buren (18 April)\*

1910

Fort Smith (6 September)

Clarksville (6 September)

Ozark (6 September)

(Night aboard train)

Rogers (7 September)

Springdale (7 September)

Fayetteville (7 September)

Van Buren (7 September)

Alma (7 September)

Mulberry (7 September)

Russellville (7 September)

Altus (7 September)

Morrilton (7 September)

Conway (7 September)

Little Rock (7 September)\*

Batesville (8 September)

Newark (8 September)

Newport (8 September)

Tuckerman (8 September)

Hoxie (8 September)

Jonesboro (8 September)\*

Weiner (8 September)

Hickory Ridge (8 September)

Brinkely (8 September)

(Night on train)

Camden (9 September)

Hope (9 September)

Prescott (9 September)

Gurdon (9 September)

Arkadelphia (9 September)

Malvern (9 September)

Benton (9 September)

Little Rock (9 September)\*

Kensett (10 September)

Searcy (10 September)

Heber Springs (10 September)

Shirley (10 September)

Leslie (10 September)

Green Forest (10 September)

Berryville (10 September)

St. Joe (10 September)

Marshall (10 September)

Harrison (10 September)

Eureka Springs (10 September)\*

1915

Little Rock (30 September)\*

Hot Springs (1 October)

1917

Rogers (25 June)

1918

Little Rock (3 March)\*

Nashville (4 March)\*

DeQueen (5 March)

Ashdown (5 March)\*

Little Rock (6 April)

1919

Hot Springs (4 July)

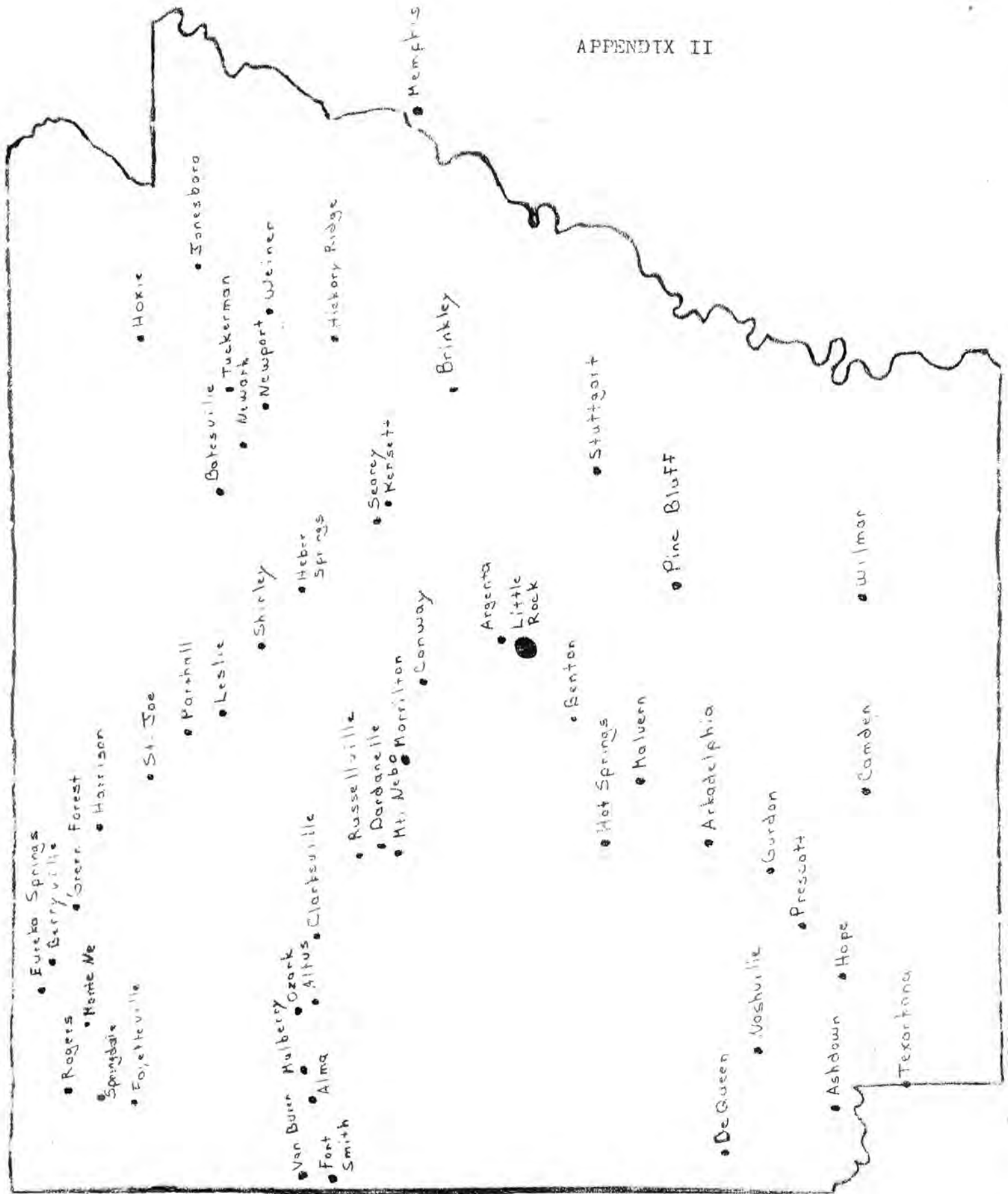
(Periodic visits through  
December)1924

Little Rock (26 January)

Texarkana, Texas (26 January)\*

\*Denotes where Bryan spent  
nights.

APPENDIX II



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