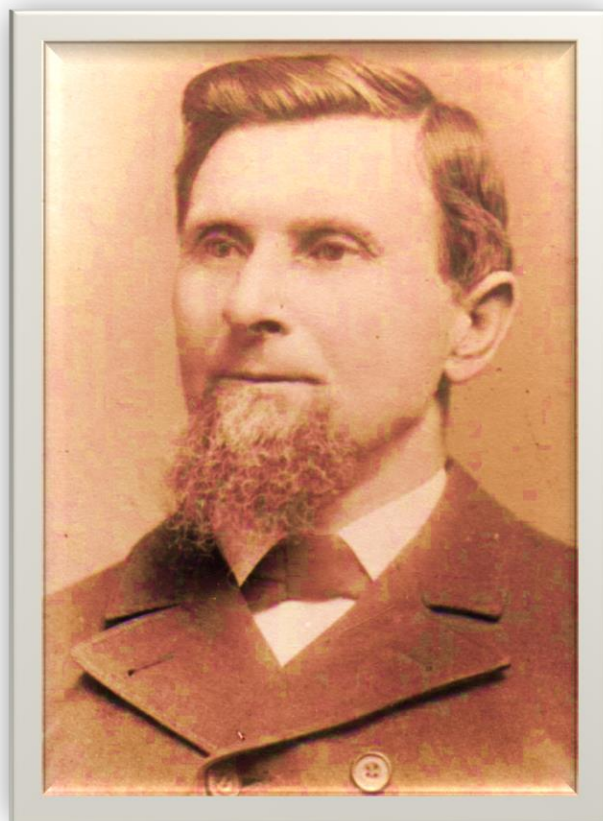


The Great Turkey Bet of 1896

In September 1896, the presidential campaigns made headlines. Ohio Governor William McKinley was the Republican running against Democratic-Populist William Jennings Bryan. Good friends Dr. Royal Foster Dow & insurance man Christian Boest made a bet over dinner at Dow's Painesville home on Mentor Ave. Dr. Dow favored Bryan while Boest was rooting for McKinley. The doctor wasn't much of a betting man, so was reluctant to gage the ballot count. But he agreed to the friendly wager on the general outcome. Mr. Boest named his terms. The loser would be obligated to host a full Thanksgiving dinner for their whole circle of friends.

Because their gathering would require quite a large turkey, the doctor thought ahead to pre-select a promising bird should he lose the bet. He found it at a friend's farm and arranged to have the farmer carefully feed and tend the turkey to fatten it to a weight of 30 pounds. Win or lose, the turkey would be a delicious main course for the feast.



Mr. Christian F. Boest

AN ELECTION BET PAID.

Dr. Dow of Painesville Pays for a Bounteous Thanksgiving Dinner.

About two months ago Mr. C. F. Boest and family, with a number of friends, were visiting at the home of Dr. R. F. Dow, on Mentor avenue, in Painesville, and as politics came up during the visit the doctor proposed to back the Bryan ticket in Ohio. Mr. Boest, a lifelong Republican, told the doctor that he did not wish to take advantage of him on so sure a thing, but would give him 25,000 the best, and then bet him 2 to 1.

That seemed for the time to discourage the doctor, but after a while he said: "Well, I have never made a bet, but I will bet you on the general result." Mr. Boest, who had never bet on an election, answered: "Name your terms." The doctor said: "A Thanksgiving dinner for the party." Mr. Boest agreed.

A day or two after that, while driving through the country, the doctor spied a very beautiful specimen of a Thanksgiving bird, and being well acquainted with the owner made arrangements to have the bird well fed and cared for so as to bring its weight up to thirty pounds, so that whichever way the election went the party would have a good fat turkey for dinner. The doctor, however, had no idea that he would have to furnish that dinner, but advised Mr. Boest that he had secured the bird for that occasion.

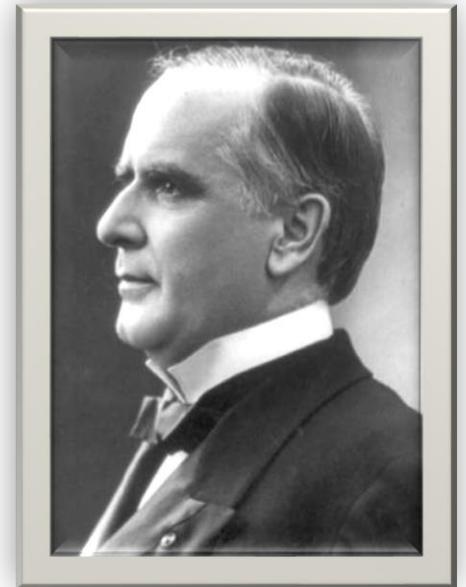
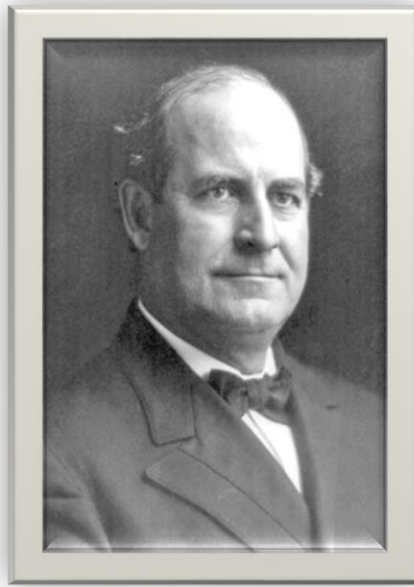
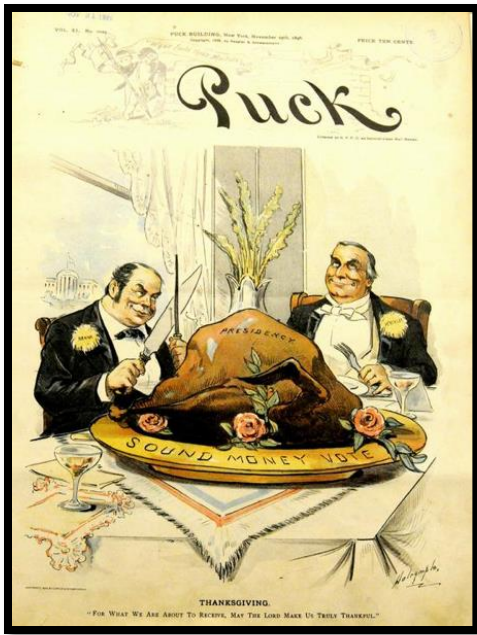
Thursday Mr. Boest and family, Mr. P. E. Hathaway and wife, and a number of friends from Lake and Geauga counties gathered at the doctor's house on Mentor avenue to do justice to that noble bird, the dressed weight of which was twenty-seven and one-half pounds, which together with chicken pie, oysters and pumpkin pie, and all the other good things, made a most excellent dinner for the party, numbering thirty-two people. Most happy of all was the doctor. He is real glad that Mr. McKinley is elected, and Thanksgiving day, 1896, proved one of the events of his life.



Home of Dr. Royal Foster Dow & his wife Fidelia Armstrong Dow , 720 Mentor Ave. - Painesville, Ohio



Candidate William McKinley wanted to keep the gold standard, while Bryan called for a standard of gold and silver that would help poor farmers and other debtors. McKinley remained at home in Canton, Ohio, greeting delegations of Republicans at his front porch and giving carefully prepared speeches. Prominent Republican Mark Hanna of Cleveland tapped big businesses for enormous campaign contributions & directed Republicans to portray Bryan as a dangerous radical and McKinley as “the advance agent of prosperity.”



Hanna's strategy was a success. William McKinley won the election, and Royal Dow would pay as promised. The doctor, no doubt with the considerable assistance of his wife Fidelia, delivered the sumptuous Thanksgiving meal. Thirty-two gathered for the feast at the Dows' home at 720 Mentor Ave. in Painesville. The Plain Dealer covered the story on Nov. 29, 1896 and reported that the doctor was glad that McKinley was elected after all. He marked the occasion as a happily memorable event.

1896 Presidential Election				
Presidential Candidate	Political Party	Electoral Votes	Popular Votes	
William McKinley	Republican	271	7,104,779	52%
William Jennings Bryan	Democratic Populist	176	6,502,925	48%
Total			13,607,704	

