

## William Jennings Bryan on the Chautauqua Stage in 1909

The silver-tongued orator finally visited Waxahachie and spoke at the Chautauqua Auditorium on September 13, 1909 after several invitations over the past several years from the Waxahachie Chautauqua Board. This was big news because William Jennings Bryan was one of the best-known names in the country at that time and was a Democratic candidate for the presidency. His appearance in Waxahachie was part of a lecture trip to Texas that included Dallas, Fort Worth and Weatherford. Prior to coming to Waxahachie he had spent time in Mission, Texas where he had farming interests. While in Waxahachie he was to deliver his newest lecture entitled "The Price of a Soul."



**William Jennings Bryan being met at the Waxahachie railroad station. This was taken during Mr. Bryan's speaking engagement at the Chautauqua Auditorium in Waxahachie Texas in 1909.**

*Part of George W Cook Dallas/Texas image collection at Southern Methodist University.*

A reception committee was formed that would make plans and arrangements for meeting Mr. Bryan at the train station and entertaining him while he was here. The Honorable C.W. Gibson was the chair of this committee. General admission tickets to his lecture at the Chautauqua Auditorium were sold for 50 cents. The front seats were \$1.00. Proceeds went to the Waxahachie Chautauqua general fund.

The committee along with a crowd of about 1,000 met Mr. Bryan at the Katy depot late in the afternoon and escorted him to the Rogers Hotel for a dinner reception before going to the Auditorium.

While crowds gathered in the Auditorium, the Wise Orchestra performed. When Mr. Bryan took the stage, the band played "Dixie" with resounding approval. In his speech he talked about money and greed, gambling and related these to the stock market. He talked about government and political parties, saying "...a man ought not allow love for party to bind him to human frailties." "... When a party becomes more concerned about winning than about its purity, then corruption would set in." He closed his speech with a denunciation of preparing for war in a time of peace.

The following morning Mr. Bryan delivered an address at the Fair grounds auditorium in Dallas entitled "The Democracy and the Tarriff" in which he criticized the Texas platform of 1896 that declared a tax on raw materials, such as lumber, wool, hides, oil, iron ore, coal, cotton binding twine and bagging.

Sources: *Waxahachie Enterprise*, Sept. 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 20, 21, 1909