

Federalist elector candidate in 1800.<sup>31</sup> In the aftermath of the Federalist dissolution, Roger Brooke Taney, a former Federalist leader and candidate, became a Jackson supporter and a Democrat while Joseph Kent, a former Federalist Congressman, became an Adams supporter and a Whig. It has been suggested that Spiro Agnew changed his registration from Democrat to Republican to take advantage of a greater potential for political success.<sup>32</sup> An analysis based on party labels over an extended period of time is also subject to pitfalls and misinterpretation insofar as the political philosophies or platforms of the parties themselves change. For example, the Republicans and the Democrats of 1980 were perceived quite differently than the respective parties were in 1880 in their attitude toward civil rights and minority issues. A student of contemporary politics would be most puzzled by the description of the differences between the two major parties outlined in a 1921 book to educate Maryland women in the exercise of their newly won suffrage:

In broad statements, one may say that the Republicans have advocated a liberal construction of the constitution and extension of the central powers, and have believed fairly consistently in a high tariff to foster home industries. On the other hand, the Democrats have viewed jealously extensions of federal control as encroachments on states' rights and have insisted on a low tariff for revenue only.<sup>33</sup>

### **Maryland and Presidential Elections**

Except for census data, election results constitute the only periodically substantiated database spanning the nation's and Maryland's history of self-government. Every four years presidential elections create a set of numbers by which public attitudes, opinion and behavior may be gauged. Election returns translate social and economic issues into facts which permit the student, social scientist and interested reader to have a reference point in the search for understanding. In addition, election results are intrinsically interesting and worth preserving for interpreting the past and planning for the future.

Understanding presidential elections in Maryland requires that election data be collected and analyzed in terms of the basic political unit in the state—the county. Although county governments do not have independent sovereignty and possess only those powers delegated to them by the state constitution or the General Assembly, the county system has been of paramount importance throughout the history of Maryland.<sup>34</sup>

The local administration of government has always rested with the counties, first with county courts, then levy courts from 1798 until 1827 when boards of county commissioners began assuming the responsibilities.<sup>35</sup> The collection of state revenue and the corresponding distribution of state aid and benefits is based on the county unit. Even though reapportionment mandated by the Federal judiciary in 1968<sup>36</sup> altered the county-based allocation of representation in the state legislature, the county remains the most important unit in the organization of the political parties and campaigns in Maryland.<sup>37</sup> Politicians, interest groups and the general citizenry in Maryland are,