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by

**James Dale Yoder**

**Rural Pennsylvania Politics in  
a Decade of Discontent, 1890-1900.**

by

**James Dale Yoder**

**A Dissertation**

**Presented to the Graduate Faculty of  
Lehigh University in Candidacy for the  
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**An Abstract**  
**of**  
**The Dissertation**  
**Rural Pennsylvania Politics**  
**in a Decade of Discontent,**  
**1890-1900**

**by**

**James Dale Yoder**

Most recent studies of nineteenth-century Populism have aimed at measuring certain previously neglected quantitative aspects of that movement. Ignoring the former controversy over the Populist as villain or hero, recent authors have concentrated on numerous unanswered questions about Populism. Who were the Populists? What were their unique characteristics? What prompted one man to turn to Populism while his neighbor in the same economic condition remained a Republican?

For a number of reasons, Pennsylvania lends itself to an examination of this type, even though Populism never gained any significant following in the state. First, Pennsylvania's large rural area that rejected Populism contrasts with the Populist areas, and clarifies Populist development through comparison. Second, the Populist movement had unusual success in a few Pennsylvania voting districts, which could be quantitatively examined for Populist motivations, characteristics, and origins. Thus, Pennsylvania's experience provides some data in the continuing quest for pertinent information about the Populists and their age.

Essentially Pennsylvania rurality was very different from Populist areas of Kansas and Nebraska. While those western areas teemed with internal divisions, particularly a town-countryside antagonism, Pennsylvania's rural residents had reached a high level of integration into the larger community. Politically, socially, and economically, Pennsylvania farmers functioned within the larger community and exhibited little of the frustration that so characterized Populist farmers, although both shared similar economic hardships. Since traditional parties and local communities had not shut farmers out, as had been done in Populist areas, Pennsylvanians had little reason

to respond to third party entreaties. In addition, local institutions - newspapers, agricultural societies, farm journals - constantly influenced farmers to stay within the traditional structure.

Yet the Populist movement did exist in Pennsylvania for a decade. The state committee, however, suspiciously represented none of the usual Populist interest groups. None of the strongest Populist areas sent representatives to the annual state convention. In fact, the large number of newspaper men within the state organization was that group's only common characteristic, thus suggesting that Pennsylvania Populism at the state level was a product of radical journalists interested in sensationalism.

At the same time, the party at the local level functioned as a catch-all for political dissidents driven to a radical posture because of isolated grievances. In this way, certain Erie laborites used Populism to protest local management's de-unionization efforts; Tioga miners supported Populism because the local Democratic Party rejected a miner's political candidacy; Potter County dairy farmers differed with the Democrats over prohibition and cultural style, and with the Republicans over county politics, and thus turned to Populism; Crawford farmers imitated certain successful Populist farmers and thus used politics as status seekers; and last, Indiana farmers continued their earlier Greenback tradition as "agrarian radicals" in the Populist Age.

In the final analysis, the multiple causes of Pennsylvania Populism (all basically non-economic), the contrast between Pennsylvania rurality and western rurality, and the unique nature of eastern rural politics indicate that Pennsylvania politics in the Populist decade offers aid in understanding the scope and meaning of the national Populist movement.

## Preface

Progressive historians concluded that the rural uprising of the last decade of the nineteenth century, historically popularized as the Populist Revolt, was, in fact, a group protest by embattled farmers against avaricious plutocrats, thereby forging the foundation for twentieth century reforms.<sup>1</sup> This long-standing estimate of the Populist as a liberal hero and exploited underdog first encountered severe criticism in the 1950's. The original broadside was fired by behavioral scientists seeking historical origins of periodic political aberrations in twentieth century American politics.

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1. John Hicks, The Populist Revolt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1931) is the basic study that develops this view. State studies of the same persuasion would include Alex Arnett, The Populist Movement in Georgia (New York: Columbia Press, 1922); John Bunyan Clark, Populism in Alabama (Auburn: Auburn Printing Co., 1927); Roscoe C. Martin, The People's Party in Texas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1934).

These writers fashioned a new Populist image containing such illiberal characteristics as jingoism, anti-semitism, conspiracy-mindedness, and neo-fascism.<sup>2</sup> Eventually, this attack was recognized as an intellectual reaction, best explained by the pressures of the early 1950's. (McCarthy, Korean War, rejection of Stevenson). The arguments that ensued over the Populist as hero or villain have now been laid to rest, and historians have turned to more meaningful questions concerning the Populist Revolt.<sup>3</sup>

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2. This school of thought is best represented by the essays in Daniel Bell, ed., The Radical Right (Garden City: Doubleday Inc., 1964) with essays by Bell, Richard Hofstadter, David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, Peter Viereck, Talcott Parsons, Alan Westin, H. H. Hyman, and Seymour M. Lipset. Also Edward Shils, The Torment of Secrecy: The Background and Consequences of American Security Policies (Glencoe, Ill.; Free Press, 1956). Two articles by Victor Ferkiss, "Ezra Pound and American Fascism," The Journal of Politics, XVII (May, 1955), pp. 173-179, and "Populist Influences on American Fascism," Western Political Quarterly, X (June, 1957), pp. 350-373. Richard Hofstadter, often associated with this position for Age of Reform (New York: Alfred Knopf Co., 1955) and his essays in Radical Right, was, in fact, much more tempered in his judgment. Although he sensed the illiberal nature of Populism, he likewise found "much that was good and usable" in the Populist tradition. Furthermore, there were no fascist charges made against the Populists to place them in the historical tradition of American fascism, a la Ferkiss or Viereck. Actually, Hofstadter was more concerned with the "psychic crisis of the 90's" of which Populism was just one manifestation. See The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays (New York: Knopf Co., 1967), especially "Manifest Destiny and the Philippines."
  3. Oscar Handlin, "Reconsidering the Populists," Agricultural History, XXXIX (October, 1965), pp. 68-74.

Many questions currently being raised about Populists were first raised during the more scholarly revision of Populism that was also a product of the 1950's. This started with the examination of late nineteenth century land mortgages of the Middle Border published by Allan Bogue in 1955.<sup>4</sup> Particular details will be considered later, but in general Bogue demonstrated a remarkable difference between the real nature of the mortgage structure of the Middle Border and the alleged mortgage abuses claimed by Populists. With Bogue's findings, the entire Populist explanation, as developed by the Progressive historian, required closer examination. Unfortunately, this approach has not been actively pursued. So little has been done, in fact, that one observer claimed in 1965 that "historians know very little more about Populists today than they knew following the publication of C. Vann Woodward's Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel in 1938."<sup>5</sup> He was disturbed that the debate over Populism had been going on without any precise idea of who actually were the Populists. To conclude that groups are progressive, or reactionary, or anti-Semitic, or irrational without knowing who they are, is questionable to say the least. So historians must first answer some elementary questions about Populists. Who were they? What kind of people were they? What was their ethnic or occupational background? How do they compare with their contemporary

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4. Allan G. Bogue, Money at Interest: The Farm Mortgage on the Middle Border (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1955).
  5. J. Roger Hollingsworth, "Commentary Populism: The Problem of Rhetoric and Reality," Agricultural History, XXXIX (October, 1965), p.81.

non-Populists? When information of this nature is collected, then some definite conclusions on Populism may be possible.<sup>6</sup>

The following study of rural Pennsylvania was initiated with many of these questions and ideas in mind. Although weak in the state, the Populist Party had strong following in some areas, which can be studied for Populist characteristics and motivations. Also, by comparison of Populist areas with non-Populist areas in Pennsylvania, some light might be shed on the movement's general nature.

In addition, eastern rural politics during the Populist decade have been badly neglected. With renewed interest in the Populist period, rural politics of the East have become important, both for their own sake as well as their importance in illuminating Populism.

Thus this study of Pennsylvania rurality seeks two fundamental aims: to analyze rural politics in an eastern state during the Populist decade, and to discover who were the Pennsylvania Populists and their role, if any, in the national Populist Movement. The effort is to discover evidence which

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6. There is also the influence of certain trends in current historiography which in general is revising the progressive tradition, and in particular is using a grass-roots analysis to test existing conclusions. Lee Benson, The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy, New York as a Test Case (Princeton: Princeton Press, 1961) and Samuel Hays, "History as Human Behavior," Iowa Journal of History, LVIII (July 1960) exemplify this point of view. Economic causation is especially subjected to re-evaluation as Benson writes on page 165, men are "more influenced by their ethnic and religious group membership than by membership in economic classes or groups". Also Hofstadter has questioned political man's ability to decide his own economic interests and then vote for the politician who best represents that self-interest. See "Pseudo-Conservatism Revisited-1965" in Paranoid Styles in American Politics. Thus the approach to Populism as Hollingsworth defined it would follow these guidelines. In his latest publication The Progressive Historians (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968) p. 442, Hofstadter further sophisticates his position, again refuting the progressives' economic dualism but noting that economic causation cannot be eliminated as one of a "multiplicity of historical forces."

might explain why some men were Populists and some were not. And if this can be done within the framework of Pennsylvania politics, perhaps some clue will be uncovered that helps in understanding the national reception of Populism.

It is not possible to acknowledge every individual who has contributed to the completion of this study. To the many, including Lehigh's history department members not directly associated with this project and literally scores of library personnel all over the state who aided in the search for specific references, a general acknowledgment of gratitude must suffice at this time.

To a few some special recognition is owed. Mrs. Peggy Friese of the Albright College library staff and Mrs. Olive Stengel of the Lehigh University library were especially helpful in locating difficult sources and securing interlibrary loans. Typing services of Mrs. Jeanette Swartley, Mrs. Lois Brown, and Mrs. Jeannette Houk were invaluable. Most important, Professors Joseph Dowling, Lawrence Leader, and William Shade provided constant inspiration and guidance. Each showed great wisdom and patience, and for their efforts I am deeply grateful.

## Chapter I

### The Background for a Study of 19th Century Rural Pennsylvania

Rural areas that rejected nineteenth-century Populism have received scant historical attention up to this time. Research on late nineteenth-century rural politics has concentrated on Populist areas, but such emphasis has created an undesirable imbalance since many rural areas were not Populistic, especially in the East. Since the northeastern rural areas rejected Populism in near unanimous proportions, they have not been examined with any vigor. Furthermore, scattered references to eastern rurality in the Populist decades are suspect since they represent a kind of Eastern corollary to the Progressive explanation of western and southern Populism, an explanation which is no longer considered tenable.

For example, Solon Buck contended that diversified farming and a fair amount of prosperity diminished the Populist appeal for the eastern farmer. But above all Buck stressed the idea that, "the great flood of migration to the Middle West drained off the elements that were disadvantageously situated or were inclined to be discontented with their lot. . . those who resisted. . . were generally of the prosperous and conservative class."<sup>1</sup> Thus, according to Buck, eastern farmers were diversified, fairly prosperous, conservative people—certainly not typical participants in a protest movement.

John Hicks also pointed out that eastern farm communities were older and better established. They suffered less from debts and drought. Also

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1. Solon Buck, The Granger Movement: A Study of Agricultural Organizations and Its Political, Economic, and Social Manifestations, 1870-1880 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), p.5. (Italics mine.)

eastern farmers were receiving prices for their products that would have broken the back of frontier Populism in a season, claimed Hicks. Furthermore, proximity to markets made Eastern farmers less susceptible to railroad abuses. Interest rates and taxes were likewise less prohibitive, so from the Hicks point of view, the Eastern agriculturalist was in far better economic condition.<sup>2</sup> In these brief statements with practically no data other than the absence of Populist votes in the East, the pattern for the twentieth century understanding of the East's rejection of Populism was set.

No fuller examination of Eastern Populism or eastern rural politics has ever refuted this Progressive position. All available sources either briefly concur in the economic estimate or remain silent on the subject. Eastern state histories have made little effort to explain rural political concerns in this age.<sup>3</sup> Textbooks have continued to emphasize western and southern rural politics.<sup>4</sup>

2. John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1931), p. 268.
3. See Sylvester K. Stevens, Pennsylvania Birthplace of a Nation (New York: Random House, 1964); Wayland F. Dunaway, A History of Pennsylvania (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1935); Paul Wallace, Pennsylvania: Seed of a Nation (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).
4. For examples see the texts of John D. Hicks, The American Nation: A History of the United States from 1865 to the Present (3rd ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1958); Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, The Growth of the American Republic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953); Dexter Perkins and Glyndon G. Van Deusen, The United States of America: A History (2nd ed.; New York: Macmillan Co., 1968); Richard Hofstadter, William Miller, and Daniel Aaron, The United States The History of a Republic (2nd ed., Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Inc., 1957).

No agricultural historians have studied eastern rural politics in the Populist decade.<sup>5</sup> And a 1967 listing of more than 1,000 master's and doctoral dissertations on agricultural history written throughout the twentieth century included none that dealt with political problems of the nineteenth-century rural East.<sup>6</sup>

Although largely inadvertently, Progressive historians, who saw Populism as frontier sagacity in the face of economic hardships, have created a corresponding thesis for the East. In their opinion, the lack of economic grievances explains the failure of eastern agriculturalists to unite against the moneyed classes. Therefore, the supposed panacea of Populism held no attraction for economically successful Pennsylvania farmers. Pennsylvania historiography, though brief, confirms this viewpoint. Nothing in the general histories of the state indicates any alternate explanation.

Only two monographs have been written on the Pennsylvania role in the Agrarian Crusade. One is a history of the Pennsylvania Grange, authored by a Grange member. A compendium of facts, the book offers no interpretive history. Yet it does show the Grange's political positions, mainly on economic matters, and its pursuit of these through the traditional parties. A second book, the history of the Greenback-Labor Movement in Pennsylvania, was published in 1966. According to the author, economic grievances forced Pennsylvania farmers into that movement so enthusiastically that Pennsylvania became a leading state in the national movement, with both agriculture and

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5. Examples are Nathan Fine, Labor and Farmer Parties in the United States 1828-1928 (New York: Rand School of Social Research, 1928); Everett E. Edwards, "American Agriculture - The First 300 Years," U. S. Department of Agriculture Yearbook (Washington: Govt. Printing Office, 1941) pp. 176-276; Joseph Schafer, The Social History of American Agriculture (New York: Macmillan Co., 1936); Carl C. Taylor, The Farmer's Movement, 1620-1920 (New York: American Book Co., 1953).

6. Dennis S. Nordin, "Graduate Studies in American Agricultural History," Agricultural History, XLI (July, 1967), pp. 275-312.

labor supporting the goals of Greenbackism. In addition, he emphasized that a number of prominent national leaders came from Pennsylvania. However, in each book, the Progressive influence is unmistakable, as economic interests were thought to polarize the participants into a have versus have-not conflict.<sup>7</sup>

There have also been a number of published articles and unpublished master's theses which deal with Pennsylvania rurality within the context of national events - the election of 1896, the Grange Movement, free silver.<sup>8</sup> Again, all dwell on economic conditions.

Only two articles have been written on Pennsylvania Populism, and both emphasize economic motivation.<sup>9</sup> William Lyons, in the most recent article, contended that Pennsylvania Populism developed in areas that had shifted from a lumber economy to an unstable agricultural base. Tenuous farm conditions resulted in agricultural discontent and a Populist following. This explanation can not survive close examination, because in Potter County, for instance, lumbering in Populist townships had ended by 1880, and the

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7. Fred Brenckman, History of the Pennsylvania State Grange (Harrisburg: State Grange, 1949) and Ralph K. Ricker, The Greenback-Labor Movement in Pennsylvania (Bellefonte: Pennsylvania Heritage, Inc., 1966).
  8. Jeanette P. Nichols, "Pennsylvania and the Agitation for Cheap Money," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, LIX (July, 1935), pp. 245-54; Sylvester K. Stevens, "The Election of 1896 in Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania History, IV (April, 1937), pp. 65-87; Marian Silveus, "The Election of 1896 in Western Pennsylvania," Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, XIV (May, 1933), pp. 99-124; Ralph R. Ricker, "The Election of 1896 in Philadelphia; A Study in National Politics in Its Social Aspects," (M.A. thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 1936); Byron Richards, "The Presidential Campaign and Election of 1896 in Centre County - A Study of National Politics Applied in Rural Pennsylvania" (M.A. thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 1936); Jack Christenson, "Free Silver Comes to Pennsylvania," Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, (October, 1967), pp. 281-290; Louis Rathgeber, "The Democratic Party in Pennsylvania 1880-1896" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1955).
  9. William Lyons, "Populism in Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania History, XII (October, 1965), pp. 59-65; Louis Rathgeber, "Populism in Pennsylvania," Pennsylvanian, IX (May, 1951), pp. 13-14.

new farms there were more successful than those in other parts of the county. The supposed crisis never really existed and many residents actually cheered the demise of lumbering.<sup>10</sup>

In summary, economic motivation remains central in all these studies of eastern rurality, and Progressive interpretations dominate the historiography of this problem. But new concepts and approaches make possible new, more extensive investigations of eastern rural phenomena.

One last point should be made about the general evaluation of Populism's lack of appeal in the East. Specifically, if economic grievances produced the Populist protest, why did not the disgruntled farmers of the East join? Although western farmers faced a more serious economic plight, the complaints of many Pennsylvania farmers were long and loud. Even if these farmers only thought their conditions were severe, Populism would seem to be the logical solution for economic hardships if that were the basic reason for joining the Movement, as Progressive historians claimed.

Pennsylvania farming underwent difficult situations in the 1890's. The President of the Berks County Historical Society said in 1890, "It is quite out of the question to attempt to keep Pennsylvania's deplorable condition from the knowledge of the world. Any man with half an eye, and whose wits are not hopelessly out of repair, knows that our agriculture has been stepping down hill with unremitting celerity in late years."<sup>11</sup> A York County farmer stated, "I will say that agriculture in Pennsylvania is at a low ebb, that none of the staple crops make a profit, nay often do

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10. This condition is discussed in Chapter 5.

11. State Board of Agriculture, Agriculture of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg: State Board of Agriculture, 1891), p.294 . Hereafter this will be referred to as Agriculture of Pennsylvania.

not make expenses, that things are getting worse instead of better."<sup>12</sup> On farm values, a state document reported in 1890: "The losses in market values of farms rises up to hundred of millions of dollars . . . between 1870 and 1880, \$68,000,000 . . . 1890 will show even heavier shrinkage."<sup>13</sup> Railroads also received a barrage of criticism. References to the "plunder of a little band of speculators" and "the destruction of the farmers through railroad rates" circulated throughout the agricultural community.<sup>14</sup>

Fruit growers and dairymen also voiced strenuous objections to the economic conditions. Their complaints were well founded since hundreds of thousands of bushels of apples and peaches just rotted on the ground in the early 90's because it did not pay to pick them.<sup>15</sup> Dairy farming was also at a low ebb throughout the 80's and 90's, only returning to a level of prosperity after 1900.<sup>16</sup> "Does dairy farming of any kind pay?" was a typical question debated by dairy farmers in these decades.<sup>17</sup>

Complaints of taxes and interest rates were also common.<sup>18</sup> Foreclosures, though mild by western standards, were reaching a peak for Pennsylvania in the late 80's and the early 90's.<sup>19</sup> Undoubtedly, farmers of the state

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12. Ibid., p. 292.

13. Ibid. (1890), p. 357.

14. Ibid. (1895), p. 261.

15. Stevenson W. Fletcher, Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life, 1840-1940 (Harrisburg: State Historical Commission, 1955), p. 277.

16. Ibid., p. 202.

17. Agriculture of Pennsylvania (1886), p. 28.

18. Ibid. (1890), pp. 290-298 is one example. Others appear regularly throughout the annual reports of the 90's.

19. Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Division of Forestry, Annual Report for 1896 (Harrisburg: State Printers Office, 1896), pp. 50-51.

faced difficult economic conditions and, by their standards, many viewed their predicaments as critical.

Thus, though eastern farm problems were not as severe as those of the West and South, the laments of Pennsylvania farmers sounded similar to those that Hicks cited for the West. If Populism was closely related to economic distress, one seems compelled to ask, how much distress was required to make the farmer cast his lot with the Populist Party? Many farmers in the West and almost all farmers in Pennsylvania never did. Had these farmers remained politically traditional because their economic problems were less severe? Admittedly this is possible, but recent studies on western and southern Populism suggest that non-economic factors also contributed to its development. This view seems strengthened by Pennsylvania's failure to embrace Populism in times of serious economic distress. Since there was a certain similarity in the economic conditions of rural East and West, one must look beyond economic factors to explain the obvious political difference of these sections.

However, eastern farming and its relationship to Populism has only been examined in one study: the New York farmers' rejection of Populism.<sup>20</sup> This identified the New York farmer as one of many groups acutely affected by world-wide depression in the late 19th century. By documenting the New Yorkers' improverishment, he went a step beyond the Progressive historians. However, New York farmers did not become Populists, because Populism

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20. Lee Benson, "The New York Farmers' Rejection of Populism: The Background" (M.A. thesis, Columbia University, 1948).

"represented a social philosophy and program that they thought at variance with their own."<sup>21</sup> It is important to analyze this explanation to determine if Pennsylvania's rejection of Populism followed a similar pattern.

New Yorker farmers' philosophy and program grew from the sectional nature of the problems they faced. Their program was economically derived because they faced three economic problems: competition of the "cheap, fertile prairie," middle-man exploitation, and unequal and burdensome taxation. Though these economic difficulties required immediate attention, Populism offered no solutions. Obviously the first difficulty was not going to be solved by Populism. New York farmers blamed their distress on western competition, and since Populism was viewed as a western philosophy, it would be highly unnatural for New Yorkers to unite with their antagonists. Second, the New York charge of middleman exploitation, which sounds very Populistic, differed from the western concept of middleman exploitation. In New York the middleman under attack was the local dealer. The western rhetoric that condemned unscrupulous middlemen meant railroaders, money lenders, or Wall Street financiers, and thus had little meaning in New York. The enemies of the two sections went by the same label, but were very different groups. And finally, New York farmers suffered under and complained about tax burdens that traditional parties recognized. "Though something always happened" to prevent proposed tax reform, the farmers apparently channelled their anger into traditional party-politics. The Populist Party was not needed to fight for the farmers' cause, because traditional parties, though unsuccessful and highly demagogic, had taken this role upon themselves.

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21. Ibid., p. 122.

Benson also felt that regional influence helped to promote the New York philosophy. Urban proximity, newspapers, agricultural journals, the few successful farmers, and agricultural organizations all contributed to a sectional loyalty distinctive from western or southern ideology. The "imperialistic environment" persuaded farmers to be comfortable with forces vehemently denounced by western and southern rhetoric: "Wall Street was not built on the backs of farmers" as western Populists claimed. Likewise, the handful of prosperous farmers and the leaders of agricultural organizations called for increased scientific farming to solve impoverishment. Railroads were only at fault because they aided the western farmer, not because they were exploitative. These were not Populist sentiments. In this fashion, sectional differences were accentuated, and eastern and western farmers went their separate ways, one to embrace the Populist ideology enthusiastically, the other to reject it emphatically.

Such an evaluation can validly describe Pennsylvania rurality because it, too, differed from Populist country. Traditional politics, regional influences, and western competition supported Pennsylvania's rejection of the Movement. But more is needed than a simple confirmation of Pennsylvania's parallel to the New York example. Benson wrote before the recent criticisms of Populist historiography, as well as the latest penetrating descriptions

of western Populism.<sup>22</sup> These works add a dimension to Populism that can aid in understanding non-Populist agricultural areas. Kansas and Nebraska Populists, for instance, have been distinguished from their contemporaries elsewhere and show some characteristics that are not economically-based. By contrasting Pennsylvania farmers to Populists of this description, one can establish the different influences that caused contemporary farmers to take opposite political positions.

In considering these western areas, it is well to remember that the Progressive tradition had produced different explanations for the Populists' development in various states. For Kansas, Raymond Miller promoted the accepted view that peculiar local conditions of an economic nature had accentuated the general cleavage between agriculturalists and moneyed interests.

<sup>23</sup> In Kansas, Populism resulted from a falsely stimulated economy that produced abnormal settlement and excessive construction. Bonds were voted and sold not only for railroad expansion, but for such doubtful ventures as prospecting for coal, oil, and other minerals, and for establishing

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22. In particular, the writings of James Malin, Walter Nugent, and Stanley Parsons, as well as the aforementioned writings of Allan Bogue. Malin's important works include A Concern for Humanity (Lawrence: Kansas, 1964); "At What Age Do Men Become Reformers?" Kansas Historical Quarterly, XXIX (Autumn, 1963), pp. 251-60; "Notes on the Literature of Populism," Kansas Historical Quarterly, I (February, 1932), pp. 160-64; "Mobility and History," Agricultural History, XVII (October, 1943), pp. 177-191. Nugent's works are The Tolerant Populists (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963); "Some Parameters of Populism," Agricultural History, XL (October, 1966), pp. 255-70. Parson's, "Who Were the Nebraska Populists?" Nebraska History, XLIV (July, 1963), pp. 83-99, is extremely useful.
  23. Raymond Miller, "The Populist Party in Kansas" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1928); "The Economic Background of Populism in Kansas," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XI (March, 1925), pp. 469-89.

such enterprises as mills, cheese factories, and meat-packing plants. Investments were over-extended, quite frequently creating a non-productive installation; for instance, street cars installed in fifteen Kansas boom towns by 1890 produced revenue at the rate of only \$0.079 per mile. Prosperity purchased through bond issues was artificial and due for collapse, claimed Miller, despite optimism by local businessmen and editors in Kansas.<sup>24</sup>

The collapse came in the winter of 1887-88. Plunging farm prices, climatic conditions, and loss of confidence ended the boom. The colossal debt, both private and public, had to be met in a deflationary period, and suddenly all the so-called evils, from mortgage rates to railroad rates, exploded on the scene.<sup>25</sup> Farmers were apparently hardest hit by this collapse, and thus the growth of the Populist multitudes came as a reaction to these economic difficulties.

Studying Nebraska, John Barnhart saw Populism as a product of climatic unreliability.<sup>26</sup> Acknowledging that rainfall alone was not a satisfactory explanation for Populism, Barnhart insisted that climatic conditions cannot properly be omitted in analyzing Populism. In brief, he showed that the Populists were strongest in the central portion of the state, while western and eastern townships rejected the Movement. Barnhart emphasized rainfall's influence in creating this pattern. Eastern Nebraska was good farm country with adequate annual rainfall. When this area was settled people began to move farther West in the early 80's. Believing in the incredible notion

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24. Ibid., pp. 472-73.

25. Ibid., pp. 476-77.

26. John Barnhart, "Rainfall and the Populist Party in Nebraska," American Political Sciences Review, XIX (August, 1925), pp. 527-40.

that cultivation increased rainfall, and noting that in the first years of Nebraska's expansion in the mid-80's rainfall had been sufficient, these farmers expanded their ventures and followed the farming techniques of the eastern Nebraska. However, when drought came in 1888, problems multiplied. The year 1890, the year of greatest droughts, coincided with Populist origins. Rain conditions now tied in logically with Populist development, argued Barnhart, since the East had no rainfall problems and no Populism, while the middle townships became Populistic after the drought became severe. Furthermore, the far western townships had not initiated farming. As cattle ranchers, they were less severely affected by drought, and therefore did not need Populist solutions. Barnhart ended by stating that the Nebraska farmer did not hold the politician responsible for the shortage of rainfall, "but it is quite another matter to suggest that drought in Nebraska made a bad set of agricultural conditions worse and that politicians were held responsible for some of the conditions."<sup>27</sup>

Progressives used this argument to separate people into economically polarized camps. And whether the specific local condition was the diminishing state of silver mining, depression of the cotton industry, or railroad

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27. Ibid., p. 540.

abuses, the various sectional cries were seen as the oppressed unified against entrenched plutocrats.<sup>28</sup>

In recent times there has been a greater awareness of the complexities of agricultural life. Recognizing that economics alone has not directed farm life, many historians have stressed certain influential social and cultural attitudes.<sup>29</sup> The "search for order," Robert Wiebe called it, as he wrote about social struggles in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America.<sup>30</sup> Just as late nineteenth century urban life was marked by reorientation, so too, was farm life. The growth of railroads, machinery and scientific advances placed farmers within the "distended society" as the "island community" gave way to the sprawling urban centers. And the protests at the turn of the century were rooted in the defense of this old way of life.

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28. Leon Fuller, "Colorado's Revolt Against Capitalism," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXI (December, 1934), pp. 343-60. Melvin J. White, "Populism in Louisiana During the Nineties," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, V (June, 1918), pp. 3-19. Haile Farmer, "The Railroads and Frontier Populism," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XIII (December, 1926), pp. 389-97. Herman C. Nixon, "The Cleavage Within the Farmers' Alliance Movement," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XV (June 1928), pp. 22-33, seems contrary to this statement. However, the "cleavage" Nixon refers to rests upon local differences, and the author actually supports the Progressive view of the embattled farmers versus the plutocrat.
29. Some examples are Gilbert C. Fite, The Farmers Frontier, 1865-1900 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966); Louis Atherton, Main Street on the Middle Border (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954); Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); Robert Dykstra, The Cattle Towns (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968).
30. Wiebe, Search for Order, p. 42.

Old social arrangements of the face-to-face personal type were replaced by impersonal city contacts. In this way, the farmers' uprising was one portion of the resistance to social upheaval.

The view of nineteenth century events as more than simple economic divisions is given credence through recent studies of Populism. The efforts of Allan Bogue's Money at Interest have been mentioned. In particular, he disregarded Populist claims and explored land mortgage conditions on the Middle Border. The investments of one New York family and the career of one Western mortgage broker illustrated how at least one large group of the Middle Border borrowers secured their mortgages, repaid their loans, lost their farms, and so forth. And then by studying the complete mortgage structure in two townships, one in Kansas and one in Nebraska, Bogue formed a number of convincing conclusions.

As Bogue saw it, the Populists attacked mortgage practices because they thought a mortgage was a sign of distress, rates were too high, money power was out to get the farm, and the mortgage company's use of personal judgments against debtors meant that farmers eventually would lose even more than their farms. But Bogue's sources indicated no support for the myth of the "Shylock" money lender.

To begin with, the foreclosure debacle of the 80's and 90's came about more through misunderstanding than any malicious or avaricious intention. For instance, mortgage brokers did promote the belief that cultivation would increase rainfall, but out of ignorance, not deception. Money lenders were interested in having their security, the land, increase in value, so their interests and the farmers' generally coincided. Also when an investor took over land due to failure to meet mortgage payments, the property often

was less productive, through renting or resale, than if the interest had accrued from the original borrower. When depression struck, mortgage companies were caught between borrowers who could not pay and investors who wanted their money. So the Populist was on very shaky ground when he charged that the lender desired his land. Nevertheless, the records that Bogue used, was a loan made when the borrower's ability to repay was in doubt.

Also, as Bogue pointed out, a review of available mortgage records showed that only 9 per cent of the mortgages had been negotiated to relieve acute financial distress. Most mortgages were for productive purposes, basically to buy additional real estate. Yet the Populists cited these mortgages as "proof that the farmer was sinking into peasantry." "Many of these mortgages were a monument to shattered hopes, but they were not indicative of distress in the beginning."

Likewise, Bogue illustrated the inconsistency of the farmers' charge of high interest rates. Rates of 36 per cent, common in Kansas and Nebraska during the 1850's, had dropped to 10 and 12 per cent in western Kansas, and 8 and 9 per cent in central Kansas during the late 80's. Attempts by mortgage brokers to hold a uniform rate failed. The supply of funds was too large and the agencies of credit too varied to allow rate standardization. So here again Populist rhetoric does not fit the conditions.

And finally, Bogue found little evidence to support the Populist charge that personal judgments were a means to gain additional economic control over the debtor. The only time a personal or deficiency judgment was followed up was when it was felt the borrower had deliberately intended to defraud the lender. Although Bogue admits need for further study of this

question, it appears that here, too, the Populists had little basis for their attack on the lending institutions.

After Bogue's perceptive beginning, Kansas and Nebraska have naturally received the greatest attention from revisionist historians. Their efforts have exposed some contradictions in lingering Populist conceptions. Furthermore they have introduced new concepts that help to distinguish Populists. This is exceedingly important because it grapples with the problem of why one farmer remained Republican, while a neighbor in similar economic status accepted Populism.<sup>31</sup>

Stanley Parsons has presented the following analysis of the Nebraska Populists. A small-town-farmer rivalry had been festering in the state in the decades leading up to the Populist period. It erupted over political control, since small towns dominated the political apparatus. The rivalry was further intensified by disagreement over programs to be instituted by government. Furthermore, townspeople became exceedingly displeased with the farmer's "calamity howling" which, they believed, kept new settlers from moving to their area. Since new settlers would increase the value of the community, the "calamity howling" was particularly obnoxious to townspeople promoting their areas.

Also the farmers' cooperative merchandizing ventures became a major concern of town merchants. There was little room for open competition in a struggling frontier community. This was probably the severest of the town-rural quarrels, and left the two segments sharply opposed to one another.

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31. The following paragraphs are drawn from the writings in footnote 21 above, and Hollingsworth, "Commentary Populism: The Problem of Rhetoric and Reality."

Parsons cited various written examples of the hostility between the villagers and farmers. He also introduced voting results to show that Republican support was reduced in the rural precincts, while Populist support increased. The record shows that Republican support declined 12 per cent in the rural precincts between 1888 and 1896. By 1896, Republican votes were 20 per cent higher in towns than in the countryside, thus illustrating the political differences between town and country. Though one might wish that the statistics were a bit more empirically drawn to illustrate the Populist cross-over, there is no question that Parsons has opened up a very significant area of investigation.

Certain cultural characteristics were also considered in the Parsons article. Prohibition, ethnic loyalty and religious ideals played a role in Nebraska politics of this age. Unfortunately Parsons was even less explicit in establishing the particular effect these cultural factors may have had on Populism. Nevertheless, he did discover that many German Republicans left the Party because Republicans had embraced Prohibition, with most switching to the Democrats, but a few joining the Populists. Protestants gave more support to the Populist Party than Catholics did; precincts with a high percentage of people of native birth did not parallel Populist strength thus challenging the inference that Populism and nativism were partners.

In his closing remarks, Parsons concluded that economics still lay at the root of Populism. But this was not the same kind of economic explanation of Populism that has persisted for fifty years. Parsons claimed the Populist was not the poorest, most interest-burdened farmer in the state. Rather wheat farming, the one constant that could be traced throughout the Populist precincts of Nebraska, was particularly vulnerable to economic prices. Thus,

these wheat farmers embraced the Populist ideology out of their economic desperation when wheat prices fell.

The Kansas Populist differed in a number of ways from his Nebraska cohort. Economically, the Kansas corn-hog farmer was the most likely Populist. Substantial evidence indicates that as a newcomer, the corn-hog producer had not adjusted to the new environment in central Kansas and thus turned to Populism. Also Populist interest problems were different from other Kansas farmers, for Populists' mortgaged the land they lived on, while Republicans and Democrats engaged in speculative real estate ventures. Since Populists mortgaged their land out of necessity, a depression affected them more severely than it did speculators.

Other identifying features of the Populists include their slightly less formal education, their older age, and their past history of chronic failures and personal frustrations. (Younger men, ironically, were more reluctant to turn their backs on established political traditions.) From this viewpoint, Populism was seen as a panacea by malcontents, who grabbed out of desperation, frustration, or possibly ignorance. According to Hollingsworth, with these people in the party there is ample reason to question the sophisticated social theory allegedly involved in Populism.

Also, the Kansas details reveal that every reform advocated by Kansas Populists had previously been proposed by a major or minor party. Thus their program was not unique. And when Populists gained control of the state government, intense party squabbles prevented the implementation of their reform program.

In conclusion, the research on Kansas exposed an urban-rural antagonism that paralleled the Nebraska situation. As in Nebraska, Populists were

rarely urbanites. Leadership in the professional, commercial, and political activities fell to the townspeople, thus shutting the Populists out of positions of importance. Their frustration over such exclusions heightened tension and may well have turned rural dwellers to a Populist alternative.

Though most certainly inconclusive at this time, the new thoughts on Populism offer a better understanding of Populism. Though economic considerations are obviously not eliminated, it is clear that both economic and cultural factors require more analysis in order to determine their effect upon Populism. No longer will rhetorical speeches of Populist politicians or party platforms suffice for Populist motivation. Undoubtedly the meaning of Populism goes much deeper than railroad abuses or mortgage excesses.

In going beyond economic explanations, the latest studies have opened up new dimensions for exploring the pattern of western and southern Populism. As a result, the East in general and Pennsylvania in particular are ready for some reinterpretation, especially in terms of non-economic factors.

## Chapter II

### Rural Life in 19th Century Pennsylvania - A Contrast with the Populist Areas

Rural life in nineteenth century Pennsylvania was decidedly different from the Kansas-Nebraska Populist areas described by Nugent, Parsons, and Malin. However, these differences were not simply economic, with different sections raising different crops, but were social or cultural. Clear distinctions existed between social or cultural patterns of the states in question; most specifically, town-country hostility in Populist areas contrasted with town-country cooperation in rural Pennsylvania. Kansas-Nebraska studies have documented farmers' resentment to town political control, legislative abuses, or farmer rejection at the polls, but Pennsylvania farmers were well-represented in the state legislature, and gained some significant legislative victories. While Kansas-Nebraska farmers created cooperative merchandizing ventures and thus angered the local merchants, Pennsylvania farmers patronized their community merchants and developed an economic interdependency. While Kansas-Nebraska agricultural organizations competed with similarly-conceived town groups, Pennsylvania farm organizations illustrated a town-rural cooperation, with many town dwellers actively involved in these organizations. In effect, then, Pennsylvania rural areas had reached a level of community complexity that found farmers actively functioning within small-town life, and thus not playing the role of the unrecognized, unwanted, outsider.

Pennsylvania rural life was marked by a spirit of cooperation between town and countryside. Despite some evidence of cooperation, the phenomena has been largely unexamined. Some explanations suggest the sociological view that rural areas, small town included, were united by their contrast

to urban centers. In turn, this leads to the glorified and romantic rural life offering sanctuary from the wicked or apathetic values of the city. Thus, the idea of rural cooperation in Pennsylvania, while an accurate conclusion, has been drawn from inaccurate or suspect premises. Two sources have depicted the virtuous rural life and its commonality throughout the nation. The first is the historical tradition that has described rural life; the second is the specific studies, including Pennsylvania, influenced by traditional ideals.

For instance, the general version of rural Pennsylvania has been drawn from long-standing assumptions on the ethical value of rural life.<sup>1</sup> An ageless image of the honest yeoman tilling his soil, wiping his brow, nursing his sick cow, or doing whatever else he does that has earned him high esteem in the folklore of man. Likewise the romantic version of rural life is limited to no geographic area. Rather the virtues of honest labor, independence, and equality of spirit are the natural amenities that are found down on the farm, regardless of its location. With rural dwellers all cast in a similar mold, and rural life as a common experience that thankfully missed the vicissitude of urban sin and destitution, Pennsylvania rural areas fit logically into this broad generalization as a haven of happiness.

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1. Richard Hofstadter discusses the agrarian myth and its place in American folklore in chapter one of Age of Reform. The traditional esteem of husbandry is found in the brief history of the agrarian tradition by Paul H. Johnstone, "In Praise of Husbandry," Agricultural History, II (April, 1937), pp. 80-95 and his Turnips and Romanticism," Agricultural History (July, 1938), pp. 225-55. Also, Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950) illustrates the presence of the myth and its effect on Western history.

This mythical formulation has not remained unchallenged. Recent scholarship and specific agrarian radicalism (a Huey Long or a George Wallace) have cast some doubt on the historical tradition that goes back to classical writers (Xenophen, Cato, Cicerone, and others) and is carried on by later propagandists (French physiocrats, Jefferson, Crèvecoeur, Turner and others). Though subjected to some serious qualifications, the agrarian myth has had continuing effect, and the honest-yeomen stereotype still has its supporters.

The tendency to see rural life as a general cultural pattern that transcends time and space is not solely the work of past and present romantics. Even a careful study like Fred Shannon's investigation of 19th century farming has contributed to this concept. While precisely specifying the economic differences among rural sections Shannon suddenly generalizes about rural life styles. Housing was typical; McGuffey's readers were ever present; rural teachers were underpaid and underprepared; rural people were suspicious of outsiders.<sup>2</sup> These descriptions were assigned to a common 19th century rurality. They applied to Pennsylvania, Kansas, or Alabama.

Investigations directed to specific geographic areas also support the common experiences of rural life. The writings of Stevenson W. Fletcher on Pennsylvania and Gilbert C. Fite on Kansas could be practically interchanged in their accounts of particular social customs. Fite lists singing socials, literary and debate societies, spelling bees, Fourth of July

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2. Fred Shannon, The Farmers' Last Frontier (New York: Farras and Rinehart, Inc., 1945), pp. 268-78.

celebrations and Christmas parties as highlights of the Kansas farmers' social season. Yet these same festivities are part of the Pennsylvania social structure recorded by Fletcher.<sup>3</sup>

The similar mores of the states in question are further illustrated by personal accounts. A Kansas farmer wrote on December 24, 1885, "In the evening took wife and children over to the schoolhouse where we participated in the Christmas tree festivities and enjoyed ourselves very much . . . A very large crowd was present and everything went off nicely."<sup>4</sup> A Pennsylvania farmer, recalling the early 1880's, related, "After the chores were done . . . we piled in the first neighbor's sled that was bound for the schoolhouse. The schoolhouse was packed from corner to corner. The whole neighborhood, old and young, was there." The event was a singing social; the evening was reported as most successful.<sup>5</sup>

The impression of a common rural experience, nurtured in virtue and offering the good, wholesome life, can be gleaned from the historical record. Yet this record is based on thin evidence. A life without street-lights or a life permeated by the constant smell of manure, certainly part of rural life most anywhere, does not prove cultural similarity. In fact, under closer scrutiny, cultural similarity becomes more rhetorical than empirical. It would be unthinkable to argue the common experiences of a

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3. Fite, Farmers' Frontier, p. 219; Fletcher, Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life, pp. 510-514.

4. Fite, Farmers' Frontier, p. 219.

5. Fletcher, Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life. p. 515.

poverty-stricken, South Carolina share cropper and an affluent, Montana rancher, yet both are rural. It is almost as ridiculous to join the Kansas farmer of the 1890's, living fifty miles from the nearest village, with the Pennsylvania farmer living ten miles from Philadelphia. These men had different lives, and these differences need to be recognized. The tendency to assume a common pattern in rural life becomes a superficial generalization at best, and, at worst, a meaningless distortion.

Therefore, rural life in Pennsylvania, as used here, must deal in particulars comparable to developments in Populist areas. Existing literature has not provided the necessary evidence for this study. Additional data is needed to understand the cultural controls that may have shaped the rural politics of the state.

Of all the characteristics of the Populist Movement discovered in recent investigations western town-rural antagonism is a most useful contrast to rural Pennsylvania. Other characteristics like age, or education, or nativistic tendencies can not be used since Pennsylvanians were in the traditional party structure. Thus there was no Populist sampling to compare in age, education, or nativisim with Republican or Democratic samples, as in the Kansas-Nebraska studies.<sup>6</sup> However, town-rural rivalry of the West compared with the Pennsylvania town-rural relationship represents the fundamental clue to the political variations that developed between East and West.

The utility of comparing town-rural attitudes does not rest solely

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6. Of course, where Pennsylvania Populists do exist these characteristics will be identified.

with Parsons', Nugent's, and Malin's application of the phenomenon to western Populism. Actually there is a theoretical base, as well. Robert Dykstra has noted the failure of social historians to understand fully the rural-urban relationship.<sup>7</sup> A characteristic social cleavage has been urban versus rural,<sup>8</sup> with small towns lining up on the rural side of the polarity. However, Dykstra has pointed out that at some point in American history "the country town and the countryside parted company."<sup>9</sup> A mutual distrust and hostility underscored the interaction between farmer and townsman. Rejected by the townspeople, farmers turned to one of the few specific powers they had—politics. Dykstra examined the experiences of cattle towns in the 1870's and 80's, but the theory may apply to local tensions in the Populist period.

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7. Robert Dykstra, "Town Country Conflict: A Hidden Dimension in American Social History," Agricultural History, XX (October, 1964), pp. 195-202. Others who have shown awareness of the town-countryside antagonism include, Thorstein Veblen, Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution (New York: Macmillan Co., 1915), pp. 332-340, and Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times: The Case of America (New York: B. W. Huebsch Co., 1923) and "The Country Town," Freeman VII July 11, 1923), pp. 417-20 and (July 18, 1923) pp. 44-443. Also works of fiction like Sinclair Lewis, Main Street (New York: Harcourt Co., 1920), pp. 56-57, 228-229, 264, 269; Edward W. Howe, The Story of a Country Town (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1917), p. 167; in addition, Lewis Atherton whose Main Street on the Middle Border was criticized by Dykstra for not acknowledging the anti-rural dimensions in rural life, does recognize the validity of Veblen's identification of town-rural hostility in "The Midwestern Country Town - Myth and Reality," Agricultural History, XXVI (July, 1952), p. 76.
  8. Dykstra, "Town-Country Conflict," p. 195.
  9. Ibid., p. 195.

The local tension that abounded in western Populist centers did not occur in Pennsylvania. No divisive power-struggle developed in Pennsylvania to cause the resentment that Nugent and Parsons observed in the West. In Pennsylvania politics town-rural cooperation occurred in various ways. Farmers were constantly represented in the state government.<sup>10</sup> From 1878 to 1898, the state legislature had a percentage of farmers ranging from a low of 10% in 1880 to a high of 25% in 1890. These figures indicate that farmers were not shut out at the polls, and only lawyers outnumbered them in Pennsylvania's legislative assemblies through these two decades.

Furthermore, the farmers' political demands were honored frequently throughout this period, including establishment of a state board to regulate veterinary medicine, creation of a state board to control and suppress diseases of domestic animals, appointment of State Game Commissioners, legal dehorning of cattle, and appointment of a Food Commission with authority to inspect and set standards.<sup>11</sup>

Farmers also expressed interest in the local schools. An act to promote cleanliness and healthfulness in and about public schools resulted from support by Pennsylvania farm organizations. In addition farmers supported free text-books for the public schools.<sup>12</sup>

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10. The biographies of the Pennsylvania legislators are found in John A. Smull, Legislative Handbook (Harrisburg: Lane Hart, 1870-1890) and Thomas Cochran, ed., Smull's Legislative Handbook and Manual of the State of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg: State Printers' Office, 1891-1900), hereafter cited as Smull's Handbook.

11. Brenckmen, Pennsylvania State Grange, p. 82. Also the Grange newspaper The Farmers' Friend and Grange Advocate added details on the legislative practices.

12. Brenckman, Pennsylvania State Grange, p. 83.

Taxation provided farmers the usual opportunity for dissent. The claim that real estate carried a disproportionate share of the tax burden can be found throughout records of the 1890's. But evidence exists of attempts to soften the tax, indicating cooperation in a volatile area such as taxation. The State Grange in 1894 reported that three-fourths of the personal property tax and all liquor-licensing fees had been returned to county treasurers to meet local needs. Over \$90,000,000 in real estate taxes had been returned to local governments in the nine previous years, with farmers the major beneficiaries.<sup>13</sup>

The state legislature offered a sympathetic ear to the farming community. Though there were points of debate and distrust, the central theme of hostility identified in Populist areas is absent in Pennsylvania. Also, creation of a State Board of Agriculture in 1876, and its elevation to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in 1895 suggested the state government's interest in the farming population. Services rendered by this body obviously unified the government and farmers.

Pennsylvania's concern for the farmers, and its effect on promoting rural harmony, is found in Governor Pattison's inaugural address of 1890. At the same time that farmers in other states were turning to Populist protests, Pennsylvania farmers heard these sentiments:

There is a baleful vice in the form of government that inflicts a penalty upon lands and houses and makes their ownership difficult and burdensome. The farmer and householder has no right to any exemption from his fair share of the public expense, but he has a right to just and impartial treatment that cannot be ignored except at a cost of social tranquility. The inequality referred to

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13. Ibid., p. 86.

is patent to every eye. There is not a citizen in the commonwealth paying a tax upon his home or farm who cannot point to some neighbor owning many times as much in personal goods and idle capital who yet pays in immeasurably less amount of tax. It is useless to answer such undeniable facts by any intricate theory as to the ultimate distribution of all taxation. Such unjust discrimination is working untold evil to our people, is oppressing the poor; is exempting the rich; is day by day establishing unfortunate social distinctions that are foreign to our principles of government, destructive of the happiness and energies of men and blasting the hopes that we have all prayerfully entertained of our country becoming the home of a content and happy people.<sup>14</sup>

Pennsylvania farmers also benefitted by actions of the national government. Creation of a cabinet level Secretary of Agriculture in 1889 had been promoted actively by Pennsylvania farmers through the state Grange. In addition, passage of the Rural Free Delivery Act for mail delivery in 1895, won support from Pennsylvania farmers. Farmers had debated the issue for a number of years. When it became apparent that most farmers supported Rural Free Delivery, the government had acted swiftly.<sup>15</sup>

Local government also proved to be an ameliorating rather than an alienating force in town-farm relations. School and road control are two potentially argumentative issues but school administration was apparently meeting farmer approval, and the road administration did not produce any major confrontation because farmers dominated the county road boards.<sup>16</sup> Any criticism of poor roads or road taxes could not be directed to town officials. Rather the culprits, if any, were farmers who controlled the road boards.

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14. "Papers of the Governors", Pennsylvania Archives, 4th Series, (Harrisburg: State of Pennsylvania Printer, 1902).

15. Brenckman, Pennsylvania State Grange, p. 75.

16. Fletcher, Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life, pp. 322-23.

Farm organizations, a fundamental source of the town-country friction in Populist areas, caused little dissension in Pennsylvania. In fact, the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture was chartered by persons from all classes and occupations, with politicians, lawyers, doctors, and businessmen joining farmers in the state's first agricultural organization. Other organizations followed this early lead.<sup>17</sup> The State Agricultural Society, an outgrowth of the Philadelphia Society, was an example.<sup>18</sup> County farm organizations had programs that appealed to more than just farmers and thus were less likely to cater to irrational thoughts against non-farmers. H. H. Ritter, a newspaper editor in Hughsville, was corresponding secretary of the Muney Valley Farmer's Club.<sup>19</sup> The Grange and local farmers' clubs also had non-farming members. There is no evidence of rival organizations, one town based and one rural based, competing with one another in the way Malin described the Kansas organizations.

State or county fairs in Pennsylvania were major activities of most agricultural organizations. These brought the countryside and towns together, for these occasions were happy and eagerly awaited.<sup>20</sup> The building of fair grounds created permanent structures used as public-service-buildings when fairs were not in progress. It is estimated that the State Agricultural Society alone built structures worth more than \$200,000, all

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17. Rodney True, Sketch and History of the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Society, 1939), pp. 5-9.

18. Fletcher, Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life, pp. 408-09.

19. Smull's Handbook (1893), p. 573.

20. Fletcher, Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life, p. 442.

able to serve the fair-towns. Furthermore, the local reaction to the fairs and picnics was good and most often towns asked for their return.<sup>21</sup>

Pennsylvania did not suffer from the commercial competition between town and farmers that plagued the Kansas-Nebraska scene. Grange attempts at cooperatives in Pennsylvania were very unsuccessful. In fact, the Order fell into a certain amount of disrepute through these activities, and only returned to some cooperative ventures in the twentieth century.<sup>22</sup> Undoubtedly, town merchants were not suffering economic losses as they did in Nebraska towns, so again the town-country relationships differed considerably in Pennsylvania.

What Benson called the "imperialist environment" in New York was certainly part of the Pennsylvania experience in the Populist years. This "environment" was evidence of the cooperation between town and farm, as well as the reason for perpetuation of the condition. Newspapers both molded opinion and supported the existing order. Most big city papers and small town papers tended toward conservatism. Thus they promoted traditional politics and identified Populism as a radical notion. In the same fashion as the New York papers, the Pennsylvania ones maintained rural-town unity and weakened Populist sentiment.<sup>23</sup>

Also, similar propagandists of the New York environment worked in Pennsylvania. Successful farmers, eastern economists and academicians,

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21. Ibid., p. 424.

22. Ibid., p. 412.

23. The sampling of newspapers throughout the state provided the basis for this statement. See bibliography for list.

politicians, and leaders of the farm organization distributed a wide variety of information, all of which added up to a common ideology that supported town-rural unity.

The explanation for the esprit de corps found between town and countryside might be based upon the demography of the state. Rudolf Heberle has expressed the opinion that the effect of environment is often overlooked when explaining social development.<sup>24</sup> This seems to have happened for rural Pennsylvania in this period. Towns and villages were spread evenly throughout the state, and contact between town and countryside was natural and easy. The Census of 1890 has 783 enumerated villages, boroughs, with the average county having at least eleven such towns.<sup>25</sup> Also many counties had centers of population that never received borough charters and thus these towns are never separately identified in the census. However, they served the same function as enumerated towns, for they had all the activities of chartered boroughs except town government. Therefore, there were more small towns than the figures indicated.

Statistically, the population of the state in 1890, was 5,258,014. Population concentrated in cities or boroughs of 8,000 or more was 2,152,046. The 739 small towns or villages (under 8,000) had a population of 881,371, while the rural population outside enumerated villages and boroughs stood at 2,224,598. These figures point up the significance of the small town,

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24. Rudolph Heberle, "On Political Ecology," Social Forces, XXXI (October, 1952), p. 2.

25. Considerably different than Kansas-Nebraska statistics.

for they represent about 17 per cent of the states' population, and excluding the five major urban centers from total population, small towns constituted nearly 30 per cent of Pennsylvania's population.

However, small towns did not polarize positions with the surrounding countryside; the areas of cooperation have already been enumerated. Perhaps the proximity of towns created a rapport between town and country, since rural people had easy access to the town and its ways. Undoubtedly, the kind of marketing that Pennsylvania farmers did, must be considered. By raising some perishable produce, the farmers depended on local towns for marketing. This traditional view of Pennsylvania agriculture was accurate. And in developing the local market, farmers tied themselves to the local community. Entertainment, relatives, friends, church, and school were other aspects of neighboring towns with which the farmer could associate.

This is perhaps the answer. Pennsylvania had attained a rural life that placed farmers within the class structure of the small town community. Dykstra had admitted that even though town and countryside had parted company, an eventual union might one day take place.<sup>26</sup> With town and country becoming closer and closer through population expansion, road improvement,

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26. Dykstra "Town-Country Conflict," p. 196; also Sidney Glazer, "The Rural Community in the Urban Age," Agricultural History, XXIII (October, 1949), pp. 130-134. There is also some evidence of rural alienation in Pennsylvania in earlier times. Fletcher's work in Pennsylvania agriculture prior to 1840 gives some hint of this, although he did not pursue the idea. Also the article by Henry Young, "Agrarian Reaction to the Stamp Act in Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania History, XXXVI (January, 1967), pp. 25-30, reflects agrarian reactions of earlier times.

and technology, Pennsylvania farmers differed from their farming contemporaries of the Populist areas. Also, sociological studies have indicated that small-town class structure includes the farmer as one of the members identified in the broad spectrum of small-town life.<sup>27</sup>

Thus late 19th century Pennsylvania was an age of the non-alienated farmer, very unhappy with his economic lot, but still secure in his community. His life, though difficult because of economic conditions, was controlled by community leaders who heard his complaints. His life goals still seemed within reach. His interaction with the town uncovered a sympathetic concern that allowed him to count on support. These conditions prevented alienation.<sup>28</sup> The Pennsylvania farmer seemed equipped to function within the traditional party structure. Economics undoubtedly had a hand in Populism's lack of appeal in Pennsylvania, but in a way that requires further explanations.

The reliability of this argument is enhanced by the actions of certain Pennsylvania Populists, particularly those of Potter County. However, the latest versions of Kansas and Nebraska have only suggested certain characteristics and explanations and require additional study, especially as applied to Pennsylvania rural life.

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27. Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensmen, Small Town in Mass Society, Power and Religion in Rural Community, Anchor Books (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1960), Chapter 3.
  28. Melvin Seeman, "On the Meaning of Alienation," American Sociological Review, XXIV (December, 1959), pp. 783-91. Also, Murray Levin, The Alienated Voter (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961).

### Chapter III

#### Pennsylvania's "Populist Revolt" - The Early Years

While western and southern Populists used the election of 1890 to launch their attacks on existing political structures, Pennsylvania farmers stood on the sidelines, apparently unmoved by the People's campaigns. Only three local office seekers ran as Populists in Pennsylvania elections that year, all in Mercer County. All three were locally inspired, had no state organization behind them, and were soundly beaten, an inauspicious beginning for Pennsylvania Populism.<sup>1</sup> Though Populism eventually organized itself and entered Pennsylvania politics, it never attained political success in its ten year existence.

The Populist Party never came close to electing any state candidates after 1890. Moreover, one party could not become a balance-of-power in state politics. In fact, the Populists were actually a fourth party, with the Prohibitionists consistently receiving a larger share of the vote. Yet, Populism in Pennsylvania deserves historical consideration even if only to explain failure in the rural environment.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the reasons cited earlier<sup>3</sup> help to explain the failure of Pennsylvania Populism to attract significant following, and its failure to start (even in weakened form) in 1890 with the Populist Movement elsewhere. Basically, traditional parties in Pennsylvania continued to show

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1. Smull's Handbook (1891), p. 277.
  2. Of course, as previously stated, at the few local levels where Populism reached major party designations, there is an important local sampling to examine for comparison to National Populism and non-Populist Pennsylvania.
  3. See Chapter II, pp. 37-38.

concern for rural needs, thus eliminating possible political alienation which could stimulate Populist development. Likewise, newspapers, farm journals, and agricultural organizations actively promoted traditional politics, either Republican or Democrat, but rarely (if indeed ever) Populist.

Political events in Pennsylvania in 1890 confirmed that state and local conditions made Populism an unnecessary alternative for rural Pennsylvanians. The Democratic Party's platform planks called for some far-reaching reforms: elimination of Republican bossism, tariff revision, secret election ballots, legislative reorganization, labor reforms, mining safety standards, and agricultural benefits. In particular the Democrats planned tax reforms to eliminate the inequity of real estate taxes, and measures to prevent the reduction of farm values.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the Democrats nominated the popular ex-governor Robert Pattison for governor.<sup>5</sup> This was important to the reform-minded since Pattison had been successful in Philadelphia as a young, aggressive city controller, and had carried this reputation into his first governorship, 1882-1886.<sup>6</sup> That victory had not been due to his own political style only, for the solidly Republican nature of the state prevented Democratic power.<sup>7</sup>

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4. Smull's Handbook (1891), pp. 123-24.
  5. This was the first year he was eligible for re-election since the Pennsylvania Constitution prevented consecutive gubernatorial terms.
  6. Stevens, Birthplace of a Nation p. 263; Lewis Rathgeber, "The Democratic Party in Pennsylvania, 1880-1896" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1955).
  7. Between 1866 and 1900 Pennsylvanians elected the Democratic gubernatorial nominee on only two occasions, 1882 and 1890 (both times Pattison). In that period no Democratic presidential aspirant received the state's endorsement. See Appendix X for voting percentages in the major elections of Pennsylvania - 1866-1900.

But, internal Republican dissension that year, turned the usual pattern inside out, and dissident Republicans entered their own Independent gubernatorial candidate. By splitting the Republicans, these men had handed Pattison a plurality victory. Nevertheless, after his election, Pattison earned himself a national reputation for reform efforts<sup>8</sup> as "Pennsylvania's Grover Cleveland."<sup>9</sup> Thus in 1890, his political reputation ranked high and, although again aided by Republican dissension, Pattison's strength may have been sufficient to win without Republican difficulties.

Certainly rural Pennsylvanians accepted the Pattison candidacy in 1890, as voters shifted solidly Republican, rural counties like Warren, Mercer, McKean, Butler, Jefferson, Venango, Carmeron, Washington, and Erie into the Democratic column. Other rural counties like Potter, Tioga, Somerset, Snyder, Indiana, and Bradford showed increased Democratic strength, although not enough to win the county.<sup>10</sup> Pattison's earlier administration and his position on agricultural reform, as well as the rural sympathies of the Democratic platform and campaign, must have had some effect on the voting pattern in 1890. Democratic politics indicated the general political climate that weakened any Populist development in the state.

The Republican record cannot be neglected either. Though its position may have been less influential, especially for the 1890 election, the Republican platform did call for real estate tax reform.<sup>11</sup> More lasting was

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8. He was prominently mentioned as a Presidential candidate in 1892, for instance.
  9. Stevens, Birthplace of a Nation, p. 263.
  10. Small's Handbook (1891), pp. 172-255, records the county vote.
  11. Ibid., pp. 120-23.

the long tradition of Republican politics in agricultural circles, most notably in agricultural organizations. Thus, while Republicans did not have a Pattison, they had a program, promoted by traditional institutions, that appealed to the rural population. State and local politics clearly contributed, therefore, to limiting Populism's appeal in Pennsylvania in 1890, and this influence continued in following years.

Populism officially came to Pennsylvania in June of 1892, when the first state convention was held in Franklin, Venango County.<sup>12</sup> Though Pattison had not emerged as a strong governor,<sup>13</sup> and his reputation underwent some serious revision after he used the National Guard against the Homestead strikers in the summer of 1892, there seemed to be no substantial change in Democratic or Republican philosophy at this time. Therefore, Pennsylvania Populism cannot be traced to any drastic change in traditional state party structure.

Populism's origin may be more involved than a simple shifting of political loyalties. In examining leadership of the Populists there are indications that the state Populist committee may have been formed for reasons other than commitment to farmers' needs. While lacking incontestable proof, a number of characteristics of the central committee made that group seem less than a naturally-formed, political organization representing an interest group or redressing specific grievances.

First, thirty-nine members of the state organization can be identified by their participation in the state committee or nomination for office. Most

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12. Oil City Derrick, June 23, 1892.

13. Stevens, Birthplace of a Nation, p. 264.

of these are historically obscure, with little information available on their backgrounds.<sup>14</sup> However, none of the available facts tied them together in any interest group that would be aided by such Populist measures as agricultural relief, mining safety standards, or labor reforms. Thus these men were assembled not to enact the Populist program and benefit an agricultural or labor group, but to benefit themselves. A common occupational bond appeared in the number of state leaders who were associated with newspapers. At least ten Populists held newspaper positions of some type.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, more than twenty Populist newspapers were published in Pennsylvania (a state such as Virginia had only two). Thus newspapers played a central role in Pennsylvania's Populist experience. Perhaps the party's continuance, in a state that had no large voter interest in the movement, might be traced to newspaper efforts of radicals who may have engaged in journalistic sensationalism.

Moreover, there was no connection between the state organization and grass-roots areas of Populism. Of key leaders in the state organization, only R. A. Thompson of Indiana County represented a significant local following (and this county had the smallest Populist vote of all areas under scrutiny).<sup>16</sup> But others in the state organization, such as Victor Lotier

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14. None of these thirty-nine left any kind of local records or local legacy that I could find. In addition, only R. A. Thompson had a biographical profile printed in any of the various local histories.
  15. Such a figure seems especially large when considering that one judge, one farmer, and one laborer were the only other occupations identified in the thirty-nine man group.
  16. See Part III, Chapters 5 and 6.

of Montour County, J. P. Correll of Northampton, Jerome Ailman of Juniata, J. B. Akin of Washington County, Silas Swallow of Dauphin, and Herbert Welsh of Philadelphia, all newspaper men, came from counties with little or no Populist vote. In fact, of thirty-nine Populists identified in the state organization, only nine came from the counties with Populist tendencies.<sup>17</sup> (And none from Potter or the mining districts of Tioga, the two strongest Populist centers). And of these nine, only R. A. Thompson proved important in his own county's Populist activities. Thus these men, not united in Populist interest groups, represented something other than oppressed areas seeking a redress of grievances.

Furthermore, in viewing specific conditions which prompted local Populist outbursts, there was little overlapping between state and local Populists in promoting party ideals and there was little connection between state and local areas in either philosophy or politics. Local Populists rarely mentioned the state platform. Instead each area seized upon its own needs, and fashioned its own grievances. Two separate Populist experiences emerged: one, at the state level utilized much national rhetoric as part of the national Movement; the second, at the grass-roots level was a collection of local areas, each with different circumstances which led to its protest vote, and each paying little heed to the state committee. Obviously, these local factions supported state candidates, but the state platform had little to do with these votes. Rather, it was a protest mechanism utilized by disgruntled voters. Therefore, since the state committee had some reason for existence, and since it had little relation to local

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17. See Appendix II for complete list.

needs, the number of newspaper men involved suggest that Populism was a promotional device to increase newspaper sales. At any rate, even if the state committee was composed of dedicated individuals who just happened to be newspaper men, state committee interests differed from those of the local Populist voters. The Pennsylvania Populist Movement had a dual description: first, Populism at the state level; and second, Populism as a local phenomenon.

In examining the Populism at the state level, a particular pattern appears with little variation in each election from 1892 to 1895. First, the organization united in various ways with the national Movement, thus turning outward rather than addressing itself to local issues. Second, the party demonstrated its ineffectiveness as a state-wide voting attraction.

For instance, at the Franklin meeting of June 1892, the immediate issue was the political ideals of the Farmers' Alliance which had taken shape in the initial Populist program in 1889.<sup>18</sup> The delegates at Franklin discussed the proposals considered at St. Louis in 1889, and officially endorsed them, including direct election of the President, referendum, free coinage of silver and the Australian secret ballot. Also, the convention named delegates to the national convention at Omaha in July of 1892.

State issues on which Populists concentrated also reflected the influence of the national Movement. A condemnation of the Reading Railroad combine which was created in violation of the state constitution, an attack

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18. Small's Handbook (1893), p. 228.

on unequal taxation, and recognition of the laborers' plight were singled out by the Populists.<sup>19</sup> These abuses had to be corrected and so, in its own fashion, Pennsylvania's "Populist Revolt" was underway.

The party also supported the National presidential ticket and entered a full Populist slate in the state elections. However, no Populist candidate did well in 1892. In another Republican election year for Pennsylvania, the Populists lagged far behind, even trailing the Prohibition Party. Populist Weaver received 8,714 votes while Prohibitionist Bidwell received 25,123. In the vote for Congressman-at-large, Populists S. P. Chase and G. W. Dawson had 7,466 votes and 4,313 votes respectively, while Prohibitionists Simeon B. Chase (no relation to the Populist) and James T. McCorty received 22,677 and 22,930 respectively. Both splinter parties fell far behind the 500,000 plus votes of the Republican winners; furthermore, Republican figures exceeded the combined votes of all other parties, emphasizing Populism's insignificance in this election.<sup>20</sup>

The Populists had even less support in the legislative elections. Populists had entered eight of the twenty-eight Congressional races, and their votes ranged from a low of 138 (18th district) to a high of 824 (25th district). Twenty-five state Senate seats were up for election in 1892, and Populists ran candidates in seven. Here again, Populist returns were extremely poor. One candidate received only fifteen of his district's 9,000 votes. Daniel Clark of the 25th district captured the largest vote, with nearly 1,200 of his district's 21,000 votes. Of 37 Populist candidates

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19. Ibid., p. 228, gives the state platform.

20. Smull's Handbook (1893), pp. 490-617.

for the lower House (204 total membership), none was a serious threat in the election. Populists came closest to victory in Potter County, receiving 975 of the 5,000 county's total votes. This was nineteen per cent of the vote and constituted the highest proportionate vote received by any Pennsylvania Populist in 1892.<sup>21</sup>

Certain geographic areas responded more positively to Populism than others. The 25th district composed of Potter, Tioga and McKean counties can be so identified. Also, in state-wide votes for Weaver and Congressmen-at-large, a number of counties cast Populist votes above the state average. Potter county, in particular, with sixteen per cent of its votes for Weaver, had developed a significant third party. Also Crawford, Indiana, and Erie counties had Populist votes of four to eight per cent, forming a potential balance-of-power for future local elections.<sup>22</sup>

Though their success was clearly limited, Populists expressed some optimism for their party's future. A major reason for ebullience may have been the successful campaign of Joseph C. Sibley of Meadville. Sibley, officially listed as a Democrat in his candidacy for Congress in the 26th district (Erie and Crawford counties), had gained Populist endorsement for his advocacy of free silver.<sup>23</sup> Populist endorsement gave Sibley strength to win the House seat. Election statistics indicate how this happened.

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21. Ibid., pp. 490-617, gives the vote by precincts and county.

22. Ibid., pp. 490-617.

23. Lewis Rathgeber "Joseph Sibley, Pennsylvania's Political Maverick" (M. A. thesis, Pittsburgh, 1952), p. 69.

In the district's presidential contest, where the Populist vote went to Weaver, the Republican (Harrison) beat the Democrat (Cleveland) by 1,750 votes. However, in the Congressional race, the Populist vote went completely to the Democrat, Sibley. The combined Democratic-Populist vote defeated the Republican.<sup>24</sup> This type of political power was probably the Populists' ambition, since any future as a major party was out of the question. Yet the Populists never again duplicated this achievement. In fact, Sibley's victory was the only one for Pennsylvania Populists.

The off year election of 1893 produced few surprises. Meeting at Williamsport in June, the Populists again reaffirmed their allegiance to the National People's Party and cited national planks of particular interest to Pennsylvanians. Pennsylvania reform proposals centered primarily on labor needs. Repeal of labor conspiracy laws, abolition of company stores, the right to unionize, state ownership of coal mines, and compulsory weekly pay suggested Populists' concern with the labor vote. Agricultural interests were not overlooked, however. Free textbooks in public schools, uniform taxing laws, and exemption of actual homesteads from levy or sale for debt showed specific Populist concern for farmers' problems.<sup>25</sup>

Again, Democratic and Republican platforms detracted from the Populist appeal. The Republicans noted that the critical problems of farmer and laborer and proposed some relief measures. However, their basic solution was to remove Democrats from office, because "unprecedented national distress"

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24. Smull's Handbook (1893), pp. 490-617.

25. Smull's Handbook (1894), pp. 257-59.

followed the Democratic victory of 1892. The Democrats, at the same time, called for tax reforms and Republican defeat.<sup>26</sup> Once more the traditional platforms covered enough ground to offer "all things to all men", and thus keep the vast majority of Pennsylvanians within the two party system.

The election tallies showed the Republicans, as usual, on the top, and the Populists, as usual, on the bottom, with the votes running approximately 450,000 for the Republicans, 300,000 for the Democrats, 21,000 for the Prohibitionists, and 7,000 for the Populists. Erie, Crawford, Indiana and Potter counties were still most responsive to the Populist slate, but their returns ranged from five to twelve per cent of the total vote, actually a reduction from the previous year.<sup>27</sup> In retrospect the Populists had little to be jubilant about in 1893, if they sincerely sought political power.

Political rewards were potentially greater in 1894, with the governor's seat as the primary goal. The Populists predicted success for their party, but pre-election events were grim testimony that verbal optimism was but political rhetoric. The Populist state convention got off on the wrong foot. One newspaper reporter, on the eve of the May 1st meeting, could find no Populist delegate in Harrisburg, site of the session.<sup>28</sup> Finally assembled the next day, the Populists could not use the courthouse, so they substituted new quarters. Insufficient funds necessitated an unscheduled passing

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26. Ibid., pp. 249-254.

27. Smull's Handbook (1894), pp. 558-710, includes the election votes for that year.

28. Lyons, "Populism in Pennsylvania," p. 54.

of the hat to meet additional expenses.<sup>29</sup> Eventually situated in a nearby hall, the convention at last turned to the business at hand, but their problems were not yet over.

The major order of business was the nomination of a candidate for Governor. J. C. Sibley, the Democrat-Populist of Crawford County, was the overwhelming favorite. A coincidental event added to his popularity at the convention. Coxey's Army had been routed on the day that the Convention opened, so the participants voted to send a sympathy telegram to Coxey. Sibley, seeing the concern, returned a wire stating that "Coxey's men shall not suffer for bread as long as I have anything."<sup>30</sup> After this act, his nomination was certain, if he wanted it.

Confusion developed at the Convention when one delegate claimed to have a letter from Sibley stating his willingness to run as governor. A reading of the letter revealed that Sibley only desired "to serve the people as a private citizen."<sup>31</sup> The Citizen Press, however, reported that Sibley would accept the Populist nomination if he had Robert Pattison's and William Harratty's support for the nomination at the June Democratic convention. When the two Democrats refused, Sibley declined the Populist nomination.<sup>32</sup> He obviously knew that a Populist had no chance of success without some sort of fusion, the plan that had worked for him in 1892.

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29. Harrisburg Patriot, May 1, 1894.

30. Lyons, "Populism in Pennsylvania," p. 55.

31. Ibid., p. 55.

32. Citizens Press, May 3, 1894

After Sibley's refusal, the convention turned to a leader in the Pennsylvania Grange, Jerome T. Ailman, as its gubernatorial choice, with Jerome Akin as running mate. In addition, Abraham Louch was nominated for Secretary of Internal Affairs and W. M. Deisher for Auditor-general. Two candidates for Congressmen-at-large completed the nominations of the 1894 convention. Finally the delegates endorsed the same platform formulated at Williamsport the previous year.<sup>33</sup>

In the meantime, Republicans and Democrats prepared their own plans for the gubernatorial race. Daniel Hastings, who had served under Governor Beaver as Auditor-general and had won statewide admiration for aiding the Johnstown flood victims, was the Republican nominee. His reputation was further enhanced in some circles because earlier in his career he had stood up to the Republican machine and Matthew Quay.<sup>34</sup> This stand had threatened to end Hastings' political advancement, for Quay had denied Hastings the Republican nomination for Governor in 1890.<sup>35</sup> Now, in 1894, Hastings had an enviable "boss-free" image for "reform-bent voters", and yet had Quay's machine support which controlled a large bloc of voters. Quay, who maintained his party control despite attacks from inside and outside the party until his death in 1904, apparently threw his support to Hastings to insure Republican control of the governor's mansion.

The Democrats nominated Philadelphia newspaper-man William Singerly.

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33. Smull's Handbook (1894), p. 674.

34. John Serff "The Life of James A. Beaver" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1955), is the only study of his career.

35. Stevens, Birthplace of a Nation, p. 267.

His selection was not strategic, since Singerly had not been a very strong friend of Pattison.<sup>36</sup> Thus the Democrats carried an internal rift into the election and, with all circumstances considered, the outcome could be easily predicted.

Traditional parties again acknowledged the serious problems of farmer and laborer. Both party platforms denounced the opposition and claimed that the plight of the poor was caused by the other party's policies. Though the Republican platform offered little specific reform, vague general statements encouraged long-time Republican farmers to continue supporting the Republican Party. "The interest of the producers of the country, the farmer and working man, demand that every dollar, paper or coin, issued by the government shall be as good as any other." In denouncing the Democratic assault on protectionism under Cleveland, the Platform stated, "it (Democratic policy) has reduced to idleness 2,000,000 workmen; . . . it strikes with equal cruelty, the farmer, the miner, the lumberman, the iron glass and textile worker; . . . it fosters the plantation system and destroys the farm; . . . it resorts to war taxes and increased internal and direct taxes to make up the deficiency it needlessly creates."<sup>37</sup>

The Democratic platform attacked Republican failures, including neglect by Republican controlled state legislatures "to equalize taxes in response to the demands of over-burdened labor and of agricultural interests of the Commonwealth." In addition the Democrats deplored "the unequal distribution

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36. Ibid., p. 263.

37. Small's Handbook (1895), pp. 663-69.

of profits in economic operations"; "the gross disparity in social conditions," and "the differences between employer and employee."<sup>38</sup> The major parties continued to offer hope to most individuals. The voter did not need the Populist Party to find a political creed that fit his own needs. Rural voter alienation, in other words, was not a general condition in Pennsylvania in 1894.

The election results encouraged many Populist die-hards. Though the total vote had fallen from the previous election (a natural development in an off-year election), the Populist vote reversed this trend. Specific returns for the Populists in 1894 were as follows: Governor, (Ailman) 19,464; Lieutenant Governor, (Akin) 18,295; Auditor-General, (Deishers) 17,918; Secretary of Internal Affairs, (Louch) 17,891; Congressmen-at-large, (Lotier) 17,820 and (Greenmen) 17,299. With the Populists receiving between 4,300 and 8,700 votes in 1892, their percentage of the total vote had jumped from .6% to 2.0% in 1894. Since only the Republicans maintained their previous level of support, the Populists may have made some headway in their political struggles.<sup>39</sup>

On the local level there were again no Populist winners. Yet, with sixteen candidates in Congressional races, ten candidates for State Senator, and ninety-three candidates for the lower State House, Populists showed increased numbers at every level. In addition, the returns showed the upward trend for which Populist leaders must have hoped. Crawford, Indiana, Potter, and Erie counties again displayed Populist tendencies, casting ten percent of their

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38. Ibid., pp. 669-70.

39. Ibid., pp. 427-585.

votes for Populist candidates. Other Populist possibilities were Jefferson, Susquehanna, Tioga, Warren, McKean, Mercer, and Venango counties, casting about a five percent Populist vote.<sup>40</sup>

Even defeat of the Populist hero, J. C. Sibley, did not demolish the optimists' vision of future success, since the Populists had a logical explanation for Sibley's failure. Even though he had not wished to succeed himself, the local committee placed his name in nomination. But ill health prevented him from campaigning, so he offered no rebuttal to questions over his actual residence, his early ties with the Prohibition Party, and his affluence. Failure to answer the charges led to Sibley's defeat.<sup>41</sup> Explained in this manner, Sibley's rebuke was not an attack on his Populist principles. Thus, many in the People's Party drew positive conclusions from the results of 1894 and anticipated continued growth in coming elections.

Perhaps the Populists should have viewed their increased votes as based not on growing acceptance of their opinions, but rather on issues such as the Pattison-Singerly split at the state level, or local Tioga County problems. Invariably, the Populist increase came from Democratic decreases. In these situations, then, the Populist vote was a protest vote, having little to do with Populist ideals. Populist optimism was hardly warranted.

In 1895, the Populists concentrated on national events, a plan to prepare the electorate for the Presidential campaign of 1896. For instance, the platform adopted at Williamsport on July 4, 1895, emphasized national

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40. Ibid., pp. 427-585, gives the voting statistics.

41. Rathgeber, "Joseph Sibley", p. 69.

developments. The silver issue, absent from the state platform since 1892, was subtly present as a ten percent tax on all future gold contracts. A denunciation of the government's arbitrary action against Eugene Debs in the Pullman case, a condemnation of increases in new appointive offices and salaries, and an attack on the Supreme Court's defeat of the income tax were added to usual Populist demands, like railroad controls and the initiative and referendum.<sup>42</sup>

The convention nominated four Populists for state offices, a candidate for State Treasurer and three candidates for Judges of the Supreme Court. Also ten People's candidates ran in 25 state senatorial contests. All did poorly. William Dawson, People's candidate for State Treasurer, received 7,802 votes of 769,136 cast. Three candidates for the Superior Court each received votes of less than 9,000, while winners of the state-wide election received about 450,000 each. Even the Prohibition candidates gathered nearly 21,000 votes each, so it was not an encouraging election for the Populists. Crawford and Potter counties were again the strongest Populist areas, polling eleven and thirteen percent of the vote respectively for party candidates. No Populist candidate for state senator approached the ten percent level in these counties, however.<sup>43</sup>

The Agrarian Crusade involved more than election statistics, however. Growth of the Farmers' Alliance, the candidacy of a prominent Grange leader

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42. Smull's Handbook (1896), pp. 420-21.

43. Ibid., pp. 462-71.

on the Populist ticket, the Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association featuring James B. Weaver in its annual convention in 1892, and the increase in the number of Populist newspapers all indicated a possible shift in political sympathies in Pennsylvania.

However, the performance of the Farmer's Alliance in Pennsylvania suggested some problems. As an organized companion of Populist politics, the Alliance was an essential ingredient in Populism's national strength. Pennsylvania's Alliance was particularly impotent by contrast. The actual history of the Alliance in the state is obscure. Nelson Dunning's The Farmers' Alliance History and Agricultural Digest claimed that the Alliance came to Pennsylvania in the spring of 1890. H. C. Demming of Dauphin County had gone to Washington, D. C. and taken the secret oath of the National Alliance. On his return to Pennsylvania, he began a Dauphin County group and in November of 1890, he organized a state chapter in Harrisburg. Officers were H. C. Shavely of Lebanon, president; Curtis Clark of Crawford County, vice-president; J. S. Potts of Indiana County, lecturer; Henry Demming of Dauphin, secretary; and Valentine Haag of Somerset County, treasurer. This was the extent of the Alliance history of the state recorded by Dunning.<sup>44</sup>

A number of scattered references can be added. Fletcher wrote that the Alliance was organized in Pennsylvania in 1880, but gave no evidence to support that earlier date and no record of Alliance activity throughout the rest of the century.<sup>45</sup> Also, the state Agricultural Report

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44. Nelson A. Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History and Agricultural Digest (Washington: Alliance Publishing Co., 1891).

45. Fletcher, Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life, p. 414

listed 100 active local alliances in the late 90's, but not during greatest national Alliance activities.<sup>46</sup> Some limited information came from the National Alliance newspaper, the National Economist, after 1892. At that time, the Pennsylvania Alliance president was listed among state and national Alliance leaders, and Pennsylvania Alliance news centered on the Mount Gretna state picnic, and the Alliance decision to make it an annual affair. Local history retained few details on the Pennsylvania Alliance. Press releases announcing forth coming Alliance meetings suggested functioning local alliances in Erie and Venango Counties, but news accounts contained nothing of substance.<sup>47</sup> One local historian called the Erie County Alliance "the most influential local Alliance in the Union," but did not support his claim.<sup>48</sup>

Outside of these few references, the Pennsylvania Alliance remains a mystery. But the record indicates that the Pennsylvania Alliance was neither large or politically active in the early years of Populism. Without this, the future of Populism in the state was exceedingly dim. Though the Alliance certainly functioned in the state, and most likely increased in size, the actual gain did not affect Pennsylvania Populism.

Other agricultural organizations, loyal to traditional politics, overwhelmed any movement toward Populism. The Grange's political independence might seem threatened by the nomination of Jerome Ailman as Populist

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46. Agriculture of Pennsylvania, (1899), p. 10.

47. Citizen Press, January 14, 1892

48. Benjamin Whitman, Nelson's Biographical Dictionary and Historical Reference of Erie County, (Erie Historical Society, 1896), p. 94.

gubernatorial candidate in 1894. As a Grange lecturer, his candidacy could violate the organization's long standing opposition to partisan politics. But the state's Grandmaster, Leonard Rhone, clarified the matter in a letter published in The Farmers' Friend and Grange Advocate in October of 1894.<sup>49</sup> Rhone reaffirmed the Grange's political independence, denied that Ailman would ask for Grange support, and admitted his own private comment that Hastings, the Republican would win by a large majority. His Republican sympathies were a private citizen's political preference, Rhone claimed. But certainly leaders of the Grange were not throwing Grange support to the Populists; if anything, the Republicans came closer to breaking the Grange's non-partisan posture. Ailman participated in politics as a private citizen, a responsibility the Grange urged on its members. However, Ailman was no longer on the Grange newspaper staff or a Grange lecturer the next year,<sup>50</sup> which indicates that Grange conservatism did not appreciate private politics wandering too far afield. The Pennsylvania Grange was not a part of the Populist Revolt.

Another political surprise was James B. Weaver's appearance as the featured speaker at the annual convention of the Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association in spring 1892.<sup>51</sup> This was not typical of a Pennsylvania agricultural organization. J. C. Sibley most likely designed this program, for he introduced Weaver at the meeting and leaned toward the Weaver

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49. Farmers' Friend, October 20, 1894.

50. Ailman's name was dropped from the credits with no explanation after January 12, 1895.

51. Dairymen's Association Minutes in the Agriculture of Pennsylvania (1892), p. 40.

political philosophy. However, true radicalism was never evident as Weaver played to his audience; he condemned vested wealth, attacked the Vanderbilt manipulations, and asked the organization to "take up the battle". He certainly was not the flaming radical, exhorting to action, and the group's response was "polite applause". Furthermore, the meetings following Weaver's visit gave no indication that the Dairymen's Association had any inclination to "take up the battle". The program and discussion in these post-Weaver sessions emphasized the organization's traditional interests — improvements in milk production, lowering feed costs, providing new technical data.<sup>52</sup>

Occasional political aberrations observed in Pennsylvania farm groups were rare and insignificant. A review of available records leads to the conclusion that Benson's "imperialist environment" was unmistakably at work, for agricultural groups did not participate in the "Agrarian Crusade" and by their attitude prevented any Populist support.

Another promising sign for some Populists, grasping for any token of strength, was the number of Populist newspapers throughout the state. Judging newspapers as both an indication of increasing concern and a key promotion of Populist ideals, certain party members were delighted by the increasing number of Populist organs. But again realism sets the record straight.

Pennsylvania had a handful of Populist newspapers in the early 90's

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52. Minutes of following meetings, pp. 60-80.

and their number doubled between 1892 and 1894.<sup>53</sup> But the papers were extremely ephemeral. One, the Farmer's Voice of Coudersport, lasted only four months. Most were published for less than one year.<sup>54</sup> And the paper that had the longest consecutive run, the Erie People, proved to be extremely vacillating in editorial policy. Beginning as a Populist paper in 1892, the People made a basic change by 1894, and labelled itself the organ of the Erie Knights of Labor. Circulation statistics are not available, but most likely the figures would be low. With the exception of the People only scattered issues of a few papers still exist.

Suggestions of strength for the People's Party in Pennsylvania could not be derived from the rural press. While the Populist press struggled to maintain itself, the "Eastern environment" was at work through a decidedly anti-Populist press which had its own political preferences.<sup>55</sup> Thus Populist sentiment, as featured in six or eight Populist papers, was overwhelmed by the traditional newspapers.<sup>56</sup>

The ideas expressed by the agricultural press probably illustrated environmental influence on the farmers of Pennsylvania.<sup>57</sup> Though claiming political non-partisanship, papers and journals of this type still showed their political preferences.

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53. Smull's Handbook (1892), pp. 371-376, and (1894), pp. 387-394.

54. Victor Beebe, History of Potter County (Coudersport: Potter County Historical Society, 1934), p. 216.

55. Smull's Handbook (1895). Also, the bibliography contains a list of Pennsylvania newspapers consulted.

56. Although there were more than 20 Populist papers in Pennsylvania, there were never more than 8 published in any one year.

57. Bernard Berelson, "Communications and Public Opinion," in Bernard Berelson, ed., Reader in Public Opinion and Communications (New York, 1953), contends that printed material from within interest groups is a tremendous influence on the decisions of that group, p. 6.

The National Stockmen and Farmer, a Pittsburgh publication from 1877 to 1928, took a negative stand on the silver issue in April 1890. Stating that there was more money than ever in circulation, the Stockman could see little value in the Silver Crusade. If silver were remonetized, all prices would go higher, and the farmer would pay more for his essentials. Rather, said the Stockman, end the "gambling in growing produce." This would end over-production of certain products, the real cause of low prices.<sup>58</sup> Yet, the paper stated in September of 1890, that it did not want "to be a battlefield for political opinion." To do so, "it would lose its usefulness as a farm paper."<sup>59</sup>

In 1892, it maintained its non-partisanship by printing each of the four platforms. Then, the Stockman wrote, "now reader, you've got 'em in a bunch and each can interpret for himself. Do not ask Stockman, though, to explain what any of their expressions mean, for nothing ever framed is capable of as many and varied interpretations as the average political platform."<sup>60</sup>

However, the Stockman neutral intention becomes suspect as political inferences slip through news accounts. Condemnation of the Homestead strike, hedging on Coxey's army, an article on the value of "established" parties, and an article on farmer deposits in banks, (Question posed,

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58. National Stockmen and Farmer, April 24, 1890.

59. Ibid., September 25, 1890.

60. Ibid., July 14, 1892.

"if farmers have money in the banks, what's all the fuss about hard times?")<sup>61</sup>  
suggested a significant partisanship.

The Farmer's Friend and Grange Advocate, published in Mechanicsburg from 1874 to 1902, basically a Grange organ, contained more of the same. Though professing non-partisanship, anti-Populist sentiments slipped into the paper, and therefore into the hands of Pennsylvania farmers. In assessing the opening of the 1892 campaign, the paper predicted "no radical change from one extreme to the other will be attempted no matter which candidate is successful." The Populist candidacy was overlooked and the article referred to the Democrat-Republican contest.<sup>62</sup> Later in the campaign, candidate Wm. Weaver was quoted, "one of the great political parties has been eliminated from the nation already this year." The paper followed with a condescending, rhetorical question, aimed at making the Populists appear foolish, "Now General, confidentially, which one?"<sup>63</sup>

Perhaps, nothing indicates the power of the agricultural journals more than an article in the Farmer's Friend of October, 1892. The Agrarian Crusade was not mentioned, but the attack on Populism was clear. The article, "Why Farmers Should Be Contented," called to mind romanticized farm life. "The farmer who sees frost in every cool breeze, or a flood in every passing cloud are (sic) in a minority and either lazy or dyspeptic." Rather the farmer should glory in his lot, for he has much to be thankful for. His life contains the following ingredients for happiness: Good health,

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61. Ibid., August 18, 1892; May 10, 1894; September 22, 1892; June 23, 1893.

62. Farmer's Friend and Grange Advocate, July 2, 1892.

63. Ibid., July 2, 1892.

Freedom from drunkenness, Leisure time due to new machinery, The Grange, Houses as elegantly furnished as the neighbors, Libraries, Less work for mother with sewing machine and modern creamery, Music, Good schools with every facility, Political fame for those farmers who want it. In summary, "When the matter is carefully considered one can not but see that the farmers should be and are as contented as any class, and that the grumblers are in the minority."<sup>64</sup>

Similar policies can be discovered in the Cultivator and County Gentlemen, a New York paper widely distributed throughout rural Pennsylvania, the Farm Journal, published in Philadelphia, and the American Agriculturalist, another New York journal with Pennsylvania distribution. Each claimed political non-partisanship and stated their purpose as agricultural improvement by dissemination of new ideas and discoveries. Yet each contributed the sectional influence that weakened Populism in Pennsylvania.

Populism floundered in the state, and Populist optimism to the contrary, there was no growing rural receptiveness. Rural Pennsylvanians were detached from the Populist programs and espoused other alternatives, basically within traditional political approaches. Perhaps nothing better exemplifies this Pennsylvania attitudes of the early 90's than a speech made by a Bucks County newspaper editor at a local farm picnic in 1894.<sup>65</sup> The editor, W. H. H. Davis, approached farm problems traditionally. Noting that rural prosperity

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64. Ibid., October 3, 1892.

65. W. H. H. Davis Papers, Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, Pennsylvania. The address was given at Doylestown during the summer of 1894.

was not a universal absolute, and recognizing that Pennsylvania farmers were considerably impoverished compared to the post-Civil War boom, he asked, "Isn't it time to shake off this enemy, domestic comfort, and return to the more careful habits of our father and father's father?" In this vein, though he acknowledged economic problems, he dismissed them as a reason for rural activism and went on to point out how the farmer received his place in the community.

I would keep the farm buildings well painted, fences mended and white washed, fence rows cleaned up and ditches open. When it comes to crop raising, I would grow things of the very best, a little better than my neighbors from potatoes to Bovines, even if it cost a little more, for they would be sure to find a market. I would pick off the little fruit, and yield no return; I would keep the fruit and shade trees trimmed up, and the farm machinery in the dry. In a word, I would keep the farm in such condition generally, which high authority tells us would be "joy forever." That in appearance, it would be a thing of beauty to the farmer and his family.

While Davis may have been exercising in oratory to fit the occasion, the majority of farmers in Pennsylvania believed these ideals were more desirable than most of the Populists goals. By accepting this point of view, farmers stood firm in the community they had helped to create, a community that would serve their needs without radical changes demanded by the Populist Party.

Populism faced insurmountable opposition in Pennsylvania during the early 90's. The majority of Pennsylvania voters never needed Populist alternatives, most likely because they never sensed that their own party had failed them. Furthermore, the majority of Pennsylvania institutions remained loyal to their own traditional party and voting pattern. The earliest years of the Populist decade showed that Pennsylvania Populism

was not a broad-based, reform movement tied together by common interest. Instead, the Movement consisted of a state organization, directed by men whose newspaper affiliations were their only distinguishing common bond, and a collection of disconnected localities that supported Populist candidates. Actually, the state organization and the local Populist groups were dissimilar in both personnel and philosophy. And though events in 1896 would alter this to a limited degree, these fundamental characteristics of Pennsylvania Populism remained throughout its ten-year existence in the state.

## Chapter IV

### The Election of 1896 and the End of Populism in Pennsylvania

Political events during the election of 1896 did nothing to strengthen the limited appeal of Pennsylvania Populism. In fact, the Democratic nomination of William Jennings Bryan and his subsequent endorsement by the national Populist Convention proved detrimental to a separate Populist Party in the state. First, the question of fusion behind Bryan unleashed a heated internal struggle that weakened party apparatus. Second, changes within the state Democratic Party resulted in a program condemned by many as "Populistic". Thus the Populist Party's value as a political alternative was reduced considerably. J. C. Sibley, for example, forsook the Democratic Party to rally the Nation's free silver forces behind his own presidential bid until Bryan's nomination and Pennsylvania Democrats free-silver stand revealed the party's changing ideals.<sup>1</sup> Sibley then decided that Democrats were pursuing acceptable goals and returned to the party in 1896.<sup>2</sup> So considering the impotence of Pennsylvania Populism to begin with, the party could not withstand internal dissension or outside competition from Democrats in 1896.

The internal problems of the People's Party were visible at the state convention held in Pittsburgh that year. When the Populists convened on August 6, certain party members had already decided that fusion was obnoxious.

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1. Marian Silveus, "The Election of 1896 in Western Pennsylvania," Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, XVI (May, 1933), pp. 108-09.
  2. Ibid., p. 109.

Heated debate in the first session indicated the volatility of fusion.<sup>3</sup> Some disagreement existed over fusion on the national ticket and fusion for state contests.<sup>4</sup> The opening statement of the state platform indicated acceptance of national fusion by endorsing Bryan and declaring "Fealty to the principles . . . in the platform . . . of Omaha (1892) . . . and essentially those of St. Louis (1896)." However the platform suggested, if the state's Democratic electors opposed fusion that the People's executive committee had plenary power to appoint true Populists as electors. The Pittsburgh Post reported that this committee was "empowered to work out a deal with the Democrats" and could even remove one of the Populist nominees for Congressman-at-large if needed as a concession.<sup>6</sup> Thus the provision conditionally accepted fusion on the presidential ticket, while the state Populists hoped to maintain party autonomy through the executive committee power defined in their platform.

The Populists were even more demanding over fusion on the Pennsylvania ticket. At this level, the platform stated that to achieve fusion the Pennsylvania Democratic Party had to rid itself of the "traitors to free silver among the heads of the Party."<sup>7</sup>

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3. Pittsburgh Post, August 6, 1896.
  4. The platform recorded in Smull's Handbook (1897), p. 431, provides the evidence for this conclusion.
  5. Ibid., p. 431.
  6. Pittsburgh Post, August 6, 1896.
  7. Smull's Handbook (1897), p. 432.

Apparently unconvinced that the Democrats would accept this demand, the Populists selected from their own ranks for Congressmen-at-large races. Jerome Ailman and John Carroll were put in nomination.<sup>8</sup> In addition several Populists were selected to vie for Congressional seats, while twenty-five tried for the state House and six nominees ran for the state Senate.<sup>9</sup> The platform also made a special plea for the initiative and referendum, and condemned a number of legislative actions as detrimental to the people. This plan, Populists hoped, would serve their interests in 1896 and preserve their party for the future.<sup>10</sup>

While the Populists struggled to formulate a program for 1896 that would counter the threat of fusion to their identity, the Democrats made some decisions that eliminated the possibility of future victories for the Populists. Bryan's nomination necessitated some hasty reshuffling within Pennsylvania's Democratic power structure. At the first Democratic state convention during April, sound-money men had prevailed, and their platform policies disagreed with subsequent decisions of the national Democrats.<sup>11</sup> The Allentown convention had fashioned a conservative Democratic program which Pennsylvania Populist rejected. However, events after the national convention indicated considerable changes in the Democracy of Pennsylvania. For one thing, there was local support for Bryan and the Chicago platform. The rank and file of the party throughout the state supported the Chicago

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8. Ibid., p. 431.

9. Ibid., pp. 624-65.

10. Ibid., pp. 624-65

11. The Allentown platform is recorded in Smull's Handbook, along with the national platform of the Chicago Convention, pp. 427-28.

decisions and openly rebelled against any who opposed them. When the Lancaster County Democratic Chairman publicly denounced the national platform, the local party members forced his resignation.<sup>12</sup> Thus party regulars accepted the "free silver" direction of the national party.

At the same time, the party underwent a purge that seemed to accede to the Populist demand that the Democratic Party rid itself of its "traitors to free silver."<sup>13</sup> While the impetus for withdrawal from the party was actually self-developed, many Democratic "goldbugs" repudiated the "new Democracy" of 1896. Specifically, many old-time party leaders absented themselves from their local ratification meetings in the weeks after the national convention. Others had announced they would not support a silver ticket. Resignations of key leaders occurred throughout the state. State Chairman Robert Wright, a strong gold man, resigned his post on August 7. Charles Fagan, Chairman of the Allegheny County committee, had resigned in July, stating he could not work for the national ticket. State delegates, electors, and local candidates also withdrew their names. And the titular leader of the Pennsylvania Democratic organization, William Harrity, withdrew from politics during 1896, although he did not formally resign his position as National Committeeman.<sup>16</sup>

The end result was a conservative bolt, with a nucleus of emphatic sound-money men offering a sound-money platform and candidate under a

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12. Sylvester K. Stevens, "The Election of 1896 in Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania History, IV (April, 1937), p. 80.

13. Smull's Handbook (1897), p. 432

14. Silveus, "Election of 1896", p. 114.

15. Pittsburgh Post, August 1, 1896.

16. Silveus, "Election of 1896", p. 114

national Jeffersonian Party. The plan had taken shape throughout July and August when Pennsylvania's conservative Democrats met in an effort to counter the Bryan support.<sup>17</sup> "I do not know of a single Democratic manufacturer or business who will support Bryan,"<sup>18</sup> claimed George Baer, railroad magnate and a leading figure among the "goldbugs". The attitude of this group led to active support of the Indianapolis Convention in late August that formally opposed Bryan and nominated its own Jefferson Party ticket.<sup>19</sup> With the conservative Democrat gravitating to the Jeffersonian Party, regular Pennsylvania Democrats assumed the radical posture formerly associated with Populists and, as such, further reduced the Populist viability as a political alternative.

One last act of the Democrats in the long summer of political manipulations insured the demise of the Populist Party. The second convention of Democrats, assembled in Harrisburg in September, formally revised party policies for the election. By their decisions, the Democrats virtually swallowed the Populist Party. Enthusiastic endorsement of Bryan and the national platform and silencing of an unrelenting gold minority proved that silver forces were in control.<sup>20</sup> Then, in an unintentionally destructive act, the Democrats approved of formal union with the Populist Party and apportioned four electors to them, thereby eliminating them as an independent factor. Jerome Ailman, the Populist's candidate, was endorsed for Congressman-at-large.<sup>21</sup> Though differences still existed (vice-presidential nominees for instance), Democratic policies had stolen the Populist program and

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17. Stevens, "Election of 1896," pp. 78-80.

18. Philadelphia Record, August 7, 1896.

19. Stevens, "Election of 1896," p. 80

20. Ibid., p. 83.

21. Smull's Handbook (1897), p. 427.

absorbed the party. Populists in Pennsylvania had little hope for survival as a separate entity. From this point on, Populist and Democratic fortunes were bound together for 1896.

In contrast, the Republicans had a unified party that supported the ticket enthusiastically.<sup>22</sup> Matthew Quay's earlier resistance to the McKinley boom ended when Quay recognized the inevitable McKinley triumph; no repercussions developed as Quay made his peace with the McKinley forces.<sup>23</sup> Thus, Republicans confidently anticipated their November victory because the Democrats were weakened by the defection of the Jeffersonian Party. Also any claim that Populists would offset the Jeffersonian losses was unrealistic, since "Populistic" tendencies were liabilities in Pennsylvania politics.

Some pre-election events illustrating Democratic difficulties bolstered Republican confidence. Democratic Chairman John German was reported as conceding the commonwealth to the Republicans.<sup>24</sup> Also damaging attacks on the Democrats came from normally Democratic newspapers. The Record stated, "the platform adopted by the Chicago Convention is such a declaration of purposes and principles as no consistent Democrats and no lover of the country can conscientiously approve."<sup>25</sup> Other papers such as the Times, the Columbia Herald, the Chronicle, and the Sun, expressed similar anti-Democratic

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22. It's true that some of the Republicans like Donald Cameron, and even Quay after a fashion, had flirted with silver, see Nichols, *Pennsylvania and the Agitation for Cheap Money*, pp. 245-54, but there was a fundamental agreement throughout the party that contrasted remarkably with the Democrats at this time.
  23. Silveus, "Election of 1896," pp. 105-06; Stevens, "Election of 1896," p. 73, also points out that the Republican reformers revolting against "Quayism" were a threat to party unity, but their reaction was generally confined to local developments.
  24. Stevens, "Election of 1896," p. 81.
  25. Philadelphia Record, July 11, 1896.

sentiments. Such overt defections could only mean trouble for the Democratic-Populist fusion. While only the election would provide the final answer, Republican confidence seemed justified in pre-election months.

Not every Democrat was swept up in the dump-Bryan frenzy. Many party regulars stood firm in their loyalty to the Party, and this was a ray of hope for the silverite leaders. However, Democrats had to effect a remarkable political reversal between 1892 and 1896 in order to remain loyal to the Party. Some Democratic newspapers were able to endorse Cleveland and monometalism in 1892 and Bryan and free silver in 1896.

The Centre Democrat of Bellafonte, in an editorial on July 16, 1896, stated,

During the past the Centre Democrat advocated the gold standard because it believed it to be the most stable unit of value . . . the Republican Party has now adopted the gold standard. The Democratic Platform has declared for free silver. In the convention over two-thirds of the delegates professed their belief that this would relieve the mass from the ills of the present day . . . it is entirely consistent for any Democrat to yield his opinions to the verdict of the majority upon this question.<sup>26</sup>

The paper further substantiated its turnabout by noting the personal qualities of the Democratic nominee. Free from any allegiance to corporate interest or debt-assuring politicians, this "self-made man and educated Christian" deserved Democratic backing, claimed the paper. Other papers had a similar conversion, and Democratic newspapers throughout the states supported Bryan as enthusiastically as they had Cleveland. The Democrat, the Eye, the News, the Messenger and other small town papers took this position.

Not only did small town Democratic papers reverse themselves, but a major newspaper, the Post was caught by changing circumstances. As a

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26. Centre Democrat, July 16, 1896.

Democratic paper, the Post advocated sound money and ridiculed McKinley's failure to take a stand during the early months of 1896. Then the free silver movement gained momentum, and the possibility increased that a free silver advocate could carry the Democratic Convention. Sensing this drift, the Post declared that while free silver could be a danger, the wishes of the party majority should be honored.

And suppose as appears probable, that the issue may be narrowed down between a free-coinage Democrat nominated at Chicago and McKinley, what choice is there in the alternative for sound-money Democrats? An honest and capable free-coinage candidate may command respect, What of the shuffling, evasive and cowardly McKinley? Only contempt. He is as weak as water, unstable as the winds, and today an object of almost universal derision and ridicule by the sound-money element of all parties absorbed in that one issue, as so many are. <sup>27</sup>

When Bryan received the nomination, the Post took the final step and became a Bryan backer and a free silver advocate. As both an influence on and an indicator of public opinion, these newspapers conversions indicated that Democratic-Populists could muster support, but the real question was how much support?

The Republicans were clearly the favorites, and because of their optimism, their campaign performance was perfunctory. In Pennsylvania, Republican fears were aroused early in the campaign when some reports indicated that voters favorably viewed Bryan and free silver.<sup>28</sup> By early August Republican campaign headquarters received counter-information that described workers as "having sober second thoughts" and realizing "the fallacies of free silver."<sup>29</sup> Although they continued to hold rallies and send campaign

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27. Pittsburgh Post, June 8, 1896.

28. Silveus, "Election of 1896," p. 112.

29. Ibid., p. 118.

literature, the Republican party was quiet the remainder of the campaign. So sure were they of victory that the party's prominent national leaders were rarely called upon at Pennsylvania political rallies, and leading Pennsylvanians actually spent more time campaigning for Republicans in other states than at home in a "secure Pennsylvania".<sup>30</sup>

The Democratic-Populist alliance, in the meantime, struggled. Failure to establish party unity among Democrats and the late date of the final convention turned the Democratic campaign into near shambles and left little time for campaigning. Newspaper defections and the problem of "Populistic" tendencies put the party on the defensive and, for the most part, cast a defeatist atmosphere over the Democratic forces.

Obviously, voices still spoke out for Democratic victory, with most Democratic papers remaining loyal to the party.<sup>31</sup> The Populist press made its contribution to the Bryan candidacy since at least eight Populist papers were published in 1896.<sup>32</sup> Calculating the exact influence of these papers is impossible, but given the considerable Republican lead, their influence was most likely minimal.

Other examples of Bryan support included the reform effort of Philadelphian

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30. Generally an increase in optimism existed everywhere. Newspapers and political leaders reflected this feeling. Theodore Roosevelt (quoted by Silveus, p. 119) wrote to his sister, "I believe the tide has begun to flow against him." (Bryan)

31. See Stevens and Silveus.

32. Populist newspapers in 1896 included the Populist Advocate (Homestead), the Kicker (Reading), the Sledgehammer (Meadville), the Queen City Leader, the People (Erie), the Pilot (Wilkes Barre), the Oval Ledger, the Sunday Call (Easton).

Wharton Barker who vigorously supported free silver.<sup>33</sup> Barker, a long time Philadelphia newspaper publisher, added some national fame to the Pennsylvania campaign.<sup>34</sup> His earlier Liberal Republicanism had received national attention, and his newspaper, The American, had preached Republican reform throughout the 1880's. In 1890, he backed the reform campaign of Democrat Robert Pattison and became Pattison's champion in a bid for the presidential nomination in 1892. Thwarted in this contest, Barker left for Europe, apparently in dejection. However, he returned the next year and immediately became involved in the silver crusade. In correspondence with Sibley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Henry Cabot Lodge,<sup>35</sup> he promoted the "American League," a program he hoped would pull all dissidents together, either behind one existing party or in a new third party.<sup>36</sup> His American League was nothing new. It attacked the overcapitalization of corporations, the crime of demonetization of silver, and the tariff stand of traditional Republicans. As a formal statement of action, it stood as a working paper for those who believed in these ideas. At the same time Barker wrote a book defending and explaining the principles of free silver,<sup>37</sup> and he also prepared to renew publication of The American.

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33. Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. or the Collection of Barker's newspaper, The American, held by the Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pa.
  34. Frank Evans, "Wharton Barker and the Republican National Convention of 1880," Pennsylvania History, XXVII (January, 1960), pp. 28-43.
  35. Copies of the letters he sent to these leaders are in the Barker papers.
  36. The published statement of the "American League" and his plans for it are in the Barker papers.
  37. Bimetallism or the Evils of Gold Monometallism and the Benefits of Bimetallism published in 1896 and considered to be an effective statement on the silver issue.

By 1896 there was even some indication of a Barker for President movement.<sup>38</sup> However, when Bryan was nominated in Chicago, The American (started again July of 1895) declared "Americans must vote for Mr. Bryan."<sup>39</sup> The Populist and free silver forces now joined Barker in support of Bryan. Throughout the summer, The American released a stream of pro-Bryan, pro-silver advice. However, Barker's known reputation as trustee of the University of Pennsylvania, a bank official, and newspaper publisher<sup>40</sup> contrasted with the usual image of the Populist as a hayseed socialist. He probably influenced many to accept the Populistic tendencies of the Democratic ticket and remain loyal to their traditional party.

Nevertheless, Democrats showed signs of increasing pessimism as election day approached. Besides the private concession of the State Chairman, national Democrats apparently believed that Pennsylvania was not worth a vigorous effort, since Bryan only scheduled two campaign stops in Pennsylvania; one, a whistle stop visit on his way to a big New York rally and the second, a single Philadelphia speech in late September.<sup>41</sup> Campaign funds were also a serious problem since much of the big money had shifted to the Jeffersonian Party. Thus handicapped, the Democratic campaign was less effective at the local level. Even campaign literature was in short supply because of the money problem. When the business

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38. A number of letters to Barker recommend this, and tell of others who feel the same way.

39. The American, July 11, 1896.

40. A Biographical Album of Prominent Pennsylvanians, 3rd Series (Philadelphia: American Biographical Publishing Co., 1890).

41. Stevens, "Election of 1896," p. 83. He did make a third stop at Sibley's request; see discussion of this later in study.

leaders bombarded their workers with information on the disasters to come because of free silver, or on some occasions threatened workers<sup>42</sup>; the Democrats had no money to counter the accusations or intimidations.

Only Sibley's home district, the twenty-sixth, provided a true contest.<sup>43</sup> Sibley's reputation and money offset the Republican lead. In addition, national Democrats were interested in returning Sibley to Congress, for he had brought himself considerable fame in his first term in 1892.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, the national team sent help. Lafe Pence, Senator William Stewart of Nevada, and ex-Congressman Martin A. Foran all made trips to the district and the battle became intense. A number of local Democrats had joined the McKinley side, adding interest to the outcome. Personal accusations became commonplace and a few heated debates threatened to get out of hand. As the summer wore on, predictions varied on the ultimate winner in this race, so each side struggled harder to gain support.<sup>45</sup>

Sibley worked night and day himself, but he felt no improvement in his chances for victory.<sup>46</sup> For this reason he called on Bryan to save the day. In a letter of July 30, Sibley pointed out the Democratic difficulties in the state and informed Bryan of a major attempt at unification of Pennsylvania

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42. Philadelphia Record, November 3, 1896.

43. Silveus, "Election of 1896" p. 121. Also, The New York Journal, November 18, 1896, reported that Republicans had spent \$75,000 to defeat Sibley.

44. Lewis Rathgeber, "Joseph C. Sibley, Democratic Presidential Aspirant in 1896," Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, XXXVII (Summer, 1954), pp. 107-15.

45. Silveus, "Election of 1896," p. 121.

46. Ibid., p. 121.

Democrats at Erie on August 26. All the State Democratic Clubs were to assemble in Erie to plan strategy for the last months and establish the missing unity. Whether Sibley's aim was personal or truly for the state party can not be ascertained, but Bryan's appearance would benefit him. "You can make this meeting of the State Clubs a tremendous energy toward success," Sibley wrote. "While Erie is in my congressional district, where I am making the campaign for Congress, and though requested to ask your presence in this portion of the state, I have steadfastly refused to do so, because I did not want the idea to prevail for one moment that selfishness could prompt such a request upon your time and energies."<sup>47</sup> But with the State Clubs' decision to hold the meeting in Erie, Sibley could justify this request as a benefit to the state Democracy.

Sibley's personal plea worked and Bryan appeared in Erie on the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh of August. The Erie Journal, a local Democratic paper, reported that an enthusiastic crowd of 7,000 or more heard Bryan speak on free silver. He referred to the fusion of Populism and Democracy and the general atmosphere was reported as "favorable to the chances of Democratic victory."<sup>48</sup>

But all Democratic efforts failed. The predicted Republican victory became a fact on November 5. Throughout the state, as the returns came in, one district after another provided evidence of Republican ascendancy.

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47. Bryan Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. Letter from Sibley to Bryan, July 30, 1896.

48. Erie Journal, August 27, 1896.

The presidential contest was first proof of the Republican landslide.<sup>49</sup> While the state increased in its total votes cast by 19% (1,003,010 to 1,194,335), the Republicans gained 40% (516,011 to 726,998). At the same time the Democratic vote fell by 6% (452,264 to 422,051). Even if Bryan's Populist and Free Silver totals are included, his total was still 19,000 less than the Democratic vote in 1892. This loss could not be traced to Jeffersonian desertions, since their total was only 11,000. In the end, Bryan carried only 12 counties: Berks, Clarion, Columbia, Crawford, Fulton, Greene, Monroe, Montour, Northampton, Pike, Sullivan and York. Of this group only Crawford had not been carried by Cleveland in 1892. However, it should be recognized that the McKinley runaway was an urban victory. Using the ten largest cities of the state, 158,000 of the 300,000 victory was piled up. No city of 20,000 population or more voted for Bryan, and of 44 urban centers (8,000 or more)<sup>50</sup> only four favored the Democratic ticket (Shenandoah, South Bethlehem, Pittson, Titusville). From the complete urban vote, McKinley received nearly 200,000 of his 300,000 vote lead. And this despite the fact that urban votes totalled only 489,184 as opposed to 705,151 rural votes.<sup>51</sup>

The significance of the Populists in the presidential election is difficult to determine. Bryan received 6,103 votes in the Populist column, less than Weaver's 8,714 in 1892. But many Populists may have voted for

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49. Statistics for the election of 1896, used in the following paragraphs are from Smull's Handbook (1897), pp. 448-667.

50. The Census definition of an urban area is 8,000 people or more.

51. The urban vote was computed by adding all votes cast in the urban areas of 8,000 people or more.

Bryan in the Democratic column. Tioga, Potter and Indiana counties were the largest Populist centers. Crawford, on the other hand, did not have Bryan on the ballot as a People's candidate, so he received no votes from one of the more Populistic counties in earlier elections.

The contest for Congressman-at-large adds certain details to the Populist-Democratic vote division. With Ailman on the ballot as both the Democratic and Populist nominee, but with different second choices from each party, there is opportunity to contrast the voters' response. Ailman received 414,659 as a Democrat, about 7,500 less than Bryan's Democratic vote, and 1,817 as a Populist, about 4,000 less than Bryan's Populist total. DeWitt C. DiWitt received 412,051 as the second Democrat; John Correll received 7,482 as the second Populist. Some Populists must have voted for Ailman in the Democratic column, indicating ticket splitting or perhaps voter confusion. At the same time Ailman ran considerably behind the Presidential ticket, indicating that voters split their tickets. But while the Populist association with the traditional Democratic slate had considerable effect on voting statistics, the straight Populist vote once again had no real significance as the Republican won both seats with 300,000 vote margins; a few thousand Populist votes made no difference one way or another.

The Congressional districts were no better for the Democrat-Populist coalition or the individual Populist Party. Sibley lost his race by a narrow margin, waiting for three days after the election to concede defeat. In all, Republicans won 25 of the 28 districts, and even in three other districts, the Populists did not carry a balance-of-power. In none of the seven contests entered by Populists did their vote come close to the winning plurality.

The struggle for the state legislature also ended in Republican triumph. In the Senate, Republicans held 44 of the 50 seats, while in the House, Republicans won a majority of 172 to 32. Again the Populists gained no seats, and played an insignificant role in the election. Their total nominees for the various seats had declined since 1894, and in none of the local contests did they poll enough votes to change the positions of the major parties. Thus the Populist Party, as an individual entity, had had an exceedingly poor election.

The fusion ticket in Pennsylvania had not performed up to standards either. The post-election reaction was a curious combination of optimism and pessimism. However, the optimism was public, while the pessimism was private. Sibley wrote to Bryan on the day following the election, and compared the Republic to Carthage and complained that "money power could accomplish political victory," and the "noble fight" was often not rewarded. To comfort Bryan, he wrote, "Elected or defeated you are none the less dear to your friends." Commenting that his own election was probably lost, Sibley added, "but had you won, I should have had no regrets."<sup>52</sup> He made no predictions of future success and perhaps had already made up his mind on his future course, a return to the Republican Party and a non-political life as a gentleman farmer.<sup>53</sup>

Surprisingly little was said about fusion in post election comments. Apparently most Democrats in the state took a wait-and-see attitude, or their reaction has not been preserved. In reflecting on election results,

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52. Bryan Papers, Sibley to Bryan, November 4, 1896.

53. Rathgeber, "Presidential Aspirant," p. 107.

a few typical experiences must be recognized. Once again the "eastern environment" was influential. The role of the newspapers has already been noted. Agricultural publications continued to claim a non-partisan view, but then broke their own policy. The Farmer's Friend had reported on October 10th "that one of the brainest Grandmasters of the Grange, Cyrus Luce, is firm in his support of Major McKinley."<sup>54</sup> In a post-election comment, the paper revealed its true sentiments on the election, sentiments inferred throughout the campaign:

The Republican victory of last Tuesday means primarily that the people rule and that their good sense in a crisis can be trusted to guide them right . . . neither bimetalism or any other cause will succeed, hitched to a wagon of Populism and anarchism . . . The Republican victory means that the old men still live . . . the country needs the old man's dollars and experience.<sup>55</sup>

Pennsylvania agricultural organizations were not "agricultural radicals." Leonard Rhone, Grange Grandmaster, had expressed the opinion that Pennsylvania farmers would be for free silver.<sup>56</sup> The Grange considered this an indiscrete statement and many members actually tried to force him from office because of his political stand.<sup>57</sup>

Before turning to local areas to examine the Populist voters' motivations, it should be remembered that the Populist Party did not die in 1896. Some optimists within the ranks even talked of future victories. On the day after the election results were tabulated, Wharton Barker had written the "Platform for 1900." In this editorial he stated, "we

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54. Farmer's Friend, October 10, 1896.

55. Ibid., November 7, 1896.

56. Lancaster Intelligencer, August 4, 1896.

57. Stevens, "Election of 1896," p. 83.

have been beaten, but not crushed. Defeated we have been, but routed no. The struggle for the emancipation of our producing classes will go on, but it must be fought out on broader lines."<sup>58</sup> Earlier in 1897 the Meadville Sledgehammer, official organ of the Pennsylvania People's Party, proclaimed "Our principles are everlastingly right and will ultimately prevail."<sup>59</sup> Later in the month, the paper reminded its readers of the political situation.

McKinley is elected, Bryan is not. The election is over, the campaign is not. Confidence has been restored, prosperity has not. The capitalists are banqueting, the common people are not. The population is increasing, the volume of money is not.<sup>60</sup>

While a certain amount of Populist rhetoric and surface optimism still existed in Pennsylvania in these waning years of the nineteenth century, the party was actually even less productive than in the early years of the decade. In 1897, the party had no state convention for the first time since 1892. A few local Populists ran on tickets and so kept the party barely alive. None did well.<sup>61</sup>

The gubernatorial election in 1898 awakened political interest, and in this spirit the state Populist convention assembled at Williamsport. The delegation however was composed of "interested individuals," not duly commissioned delegates; even Boss Quay had some of his Republican cronies in attendance.<sup>62</sup> The convention stuck to the old Populist line, adopting

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58. The American, November 7, 1896.

59. The Sledgehammer, February 10, 1897.

60. Ibid., February 17, 1897.

61. Smull's Handbook (1898), pp. 645-793.

62. Williamsport Sun, April 27, 1898.

the St. Louis platform, but selected Dr. Silas Swallow, a Prohibitionist, as the gubernatorial nominee.<sup>63</sup>

The condition of the Populist Party can be seen by this nomination. Swallow, choice of the Prohibition, Honest Government and Liberty Parties, was a Methodist minister of Harrisburg who had gained some fame by attacking the state government in 1897, and then winning an acquittal from the state's counter charge of libel.<sup>64</sup> He had no Populist leanings; he actually had been advised by some followers to reject the Populist nomination.<sup>65</sup> Swallow decided that he could not refuse any support however, and so his name was included on the ballot as a Populist. But, he declared that he was bound to no platform except his own—a single plank that said quite simply, "Thou shalt not steal."<sup>66</sup>

Swallow did not do well as a Populist. He received only 2,058 votes in the Populist-column<sup>67</sup> (1,236 being probable "mistake" votes in Philadelphia).<sup>68</sup> Justus Watkins, on the other hand, with some valid Populist credentials, polled 6,321 Populist votes for Lieutenant Governor. In summary, the Populists had again done poorly. Their non-fusionist

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63. Smull's Handbook (1899), p. 590.

64. Herbert Welsh Papers, Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pa. contains information on this incident. Welsh was the chairman of Swallow's campaign.

65. Welsh Papers, George Earle to Swallow, April 18, 1898.

66. Welsh Papers, Swallow to Welsh, May 4, 1898.

67. Smull's Handbook (1899), p. 628.

68. The Populist votes were probably a voter error in that column because Philadelphia had never had any proportionate number of Populist votes. The Welsh-led campaign for Swallow had been presented to Philadelphians on an "Honest Government" ticket, and it seems likely that the voters were responding to this campaign, not to the Populist appeal.

nominee for state Secretary of Internal Affairs had won only 4,700 votes. Fusion with the Democrats on the Congressman-at-large had again not worked, so once more there was no reason for celebration.

By 1899, the Populists recognized that they faced outright extinction.

A resolution of the state convention at Philadelphia read:

That to those former members of the People's Party of this state who have withdrawn from the regular State Organization and have voluntarily absented themselves from this convention, we extend an invitation to join with us during the ensuing campaign, and to reunite with us in our future deliberations.<sup>69</sup>

The convention platform went on to emphasize the shortcomings of the state legislature. By failing to pass a new ballot law, by placing state funds in favored banks, and by reducing state appropriations to education, the Legislature had abandoned its true purposes. Court favors to corporations were also condemned. Only the demand for the initiative and referendum remained of the perennial Populist planks.<sup>70</sup>

The Populists emphasized state needs in this election, but the people failed to respond. Populist candidates for state judgeship and state treasurer received between 1,900 and 2,400 votes. No county gave more than 4% of its vote for any of the candidates.<sup>71</sup>

The year 1899 was the last to see a Pennsylvania Populist convention, since the Populists decided to use the initiative and referendum for internal operation of the party in 1900, as suggested by the National Committee.<sup>72</sup> Nominations for Congressmen-at-large and Auditor-general were

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69. Smull's Handbook (1900), p. 595.

70. Ibid., pp. 594-95.

71. Smull's Handbook (1900), pp. 636-41.

72. Ibid., (1901), p. 586.

made in this way. Problems at the national level also affected the state organization, with one wing of the party backing Wharton Barker, and a second group endorsing fusion and Bryan, accentuating party weakness and division. Barker and vice-presidential candidate Donnelly were on the Pennsylvania ballot, but Populism's end was drawing closer. Only 638 votes were cast for this team and the rest of the ticket did little better; no one received 1,000 votes.<sup>73</sup>

The following year a few self-proclaimed Populists remained on the state ticket, but by 1902 there were none.<sup>74</sup> The passing of the party went virtually unnoticed. The inevitable end, so obvious in the last years of the century, had excited neither rhetoric nor emotion.

It ended as it began, with a few local candidates and few hundred votes. In intervening years the party had grown stronger, but never became a threat to the existing political order. Democratic and Republican Parties had brushed the Populists aside with almost effortless disdain. Only in 1896, when the fusionist principle had called attention to Populist tendencies in the Democratic Party did Populist ideas receive any statewide publicity. But in the Pennsylvania campaign, Democrats were the major force; Populist demands were so suppressed that "radical Tom Watson" for Populist vice-president, seen as an Achilles heel for Bryan, rarely rated any mention.<sup>75</sup>

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73. Ibid., pp. 630-778.

74. Ibid., (1902, pp. 578, 751-72.

75. J. Rogers Hollingsworth, The Whirligig of Politics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 68.

Throughout the last years of the decade the "eastern environment" played a major role in the Populist failure in Pennsylvania. Although the demise of the national Movement insured the ultimate end of the state party, state politics, and state institutions also influenced the rural voter to Populism. Party platforms, campaigns, and the press all participated in Populism's downfall.

Solely as a Pennsylvania phenomenon, then, the party would rate little more historical consideration than the Honest Government, McKinley Citizens, Jeffersonian, Liberty or any of the other microscopic protest parties that burst on the scene with a particular grievance that has failed to be acknowledged by either major party. But because the Populist Movement was a significant national event, Pennsylvania's part in the movement necessitates documentation; moreover, a close look at the few pockets of Populism in the state can provide clues to many aspects of the Movement, from motivation to composition; and from a careful examination of these localities, one can see that Pennsylvania Populism was a collection of disassociated, disgruntled voting districts that had little connection with the central committee of the party.

## Chapter V

### Potter County Populism

Rural Pennsylvania differed considerably from Populist regions of other states. Those characteristics of Populism, political, cultural, social, and economic, made it unacceptable to Pennsylvania farmers. However, the Pennsylvania county that contained the largest number of Populist voters had some features that approximated Populist regions of Kansas-Nebraska, and certainly had definite variations from non-Populist areas of rural Pennsylvania. Potter County, situated in north-central Pennsylvania on the New York border, had a Populist record unique for Pennsylvania.

A number of circumstances in the 1890's made possible the unfolding of the local Populist movement in that county. Briefly, isolation of the movement within a particular section of the county allowed precise identification of the participants, and a number of local conditions suggested reasons for the Populist phenomenon there. A series of intra-county conflicts broke out in the local political system. One was an anti-town hostility which became anti-Republican in certain rural quarters, since Republicanism was equated with town (Coudersport) control. A second was the bitter rivalry between hemlock and pine lumbermen. The Democratic Party was associated with the rural hemlock industry, and was active in the anti-Coudersport spirit, but the ex-pine men (Potter Populism followed the outline of the extinct pine forests), though anti-Coudersport, resisted any association with hemlock lumbermen, and therefore, had difficulty joining the rural alliance against Republicans. And last, Potter County had a strong prohibitionist segment that complicated intra-county rivalries.

When prohibition became an inflammatory political issue about 1890, neither traditional party could serve all the splintered positions. In general, Republicans stood for prohibition; Democrats argued for local licenses. But, those Potter residents who supported Populist candidates were actually Democratic prohibitionists, who consequently had no comfortable place in the Republican Party or the Democratic Party. As a result, the Populist Party (available because of the activities of the state organization, but not created to accommodate prohibition-prone Democrats) became the logical expression of discontent or resentment.

In order to understand how these characteristics resulted in Potter Populism it is essential that the Populist development there be specifically identified. Voting totals between 1892 and 1895 readily reveal the intensity and location of the movement.<sup>1</sup> Significantly, 72 and 79 percent of all the county's Populist votes in the four, pre-fusion elections came from eleven townships. In effect, the Populist Party was an effective third party here, and even the predominant party in a few instances.<sup>2</sup> A composite of townships in four elections indicates how well Populists fared in that area. Remember that Populist candidates generally received less than two percent of the vote in the average Pennsylvania election, and polled less than the Prohibitionists.

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1. Small's Handbook (1892-1896) was the source for all statistics in these paragraphs.

2. See p. 92 of this study.

Composite Vote of 11 Leading Populist Townships of Potter, 1892-95.

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>People's</u>	<u>Prohibition</u>
<u>1892</u>	748	545	595	60
<u>1893</u>	711	478	396	71
<u>1894</u>	845	430	412	70
<u>1895</u>	731	262	373	42

Plotting the eleven townships on the Potter County map provides a second description of the Movement. They are geographically contiguous, and form a square in the extreme northwest corner of the county.<sup>3</sup> This description suggests local conditions that would explain this political formation.

Some townships had proportionately more Populists than others, but all eleven were more Populistic than the rest of the county in one or more election and much more so than the state as a whole. Clara Township, as one example, supported the state wide Populist candidate in every election between 1892 and 1895.

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3. See Appendix III, Map 2.

Genesee and Allegheny, on the other hand, fell from an approximate 20 percent Populist vote in 1892 to almost none in 1895. However, the Prohibition question may have been instrumental in this decline. The exact results of all the townships were as follows.

Potter County Populist Townships

<u>County</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Prohibition</u>	<u>People's</u>
Alleghany	1892	71	51	17	32
	1893	66	35	15	14
	1894	87	40	12	11
	1895	80	34	9	3
Clara	1892	24	13	1	28
	1893	27	13	1	29
	1894	21	7	0	29
	1895	23	5	0	33
Eulalia	1892	85	95	7	58
	1893	76	63	3	38
	1894	79	75	3	50
	1895	24	23	3	36
Genesee	1892	91	81	7	48
	1893	92	79	5	22
	1894	100	80	9	24
	1895	131	53	2	8
Hebron	1892	67	16	4	82
	1893	85	20	5	65
	1894	94	14	6	58
	1895	81	9	5	57
Homer	1892	16	10	2	24
	1893	13	6	3	22
	1894	23	6	2	19
	1895	15	5	2	20
Oswego	1892	120	62	3	52
	1893	129	66	2	34
	1894	140	49	3	24
	1895	125	41	4	15
Pleasant Valley	1892	21	12	4	27
	1893	15	16	4	21
	1894	21	14	5	15
	1895	15	17	4	14

Potter County Populist Townships - continued

<u>County</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Prohibition</u>	<u>People's</u>
Roulette	1892	101	86	5	85
	1893	87	84	16	50
	1894	85	55	10	79
	1895	92	27	6	81
Sharon	1892	104	49	10	87
	1893	95	38	16	50
	1894	153	40	15	56
	1895	111	35	7	49
Sweden	1892	48	69	0	62
	1893	35	58	1	51
	1894	42	50	5	47
	1895	34	13	0	57

In identifying the local Movement, it is not only necessary to know the area of Populist response but also the people involved. Between 1892 and 1895, the names of forty-one Populists appeared in the local press as candidates for local offices or representatives at local Populist meetings. During the same years thirty-two Republicans and twenty-one Democrats were also identified, either as they vied for the same county offices or by mention in the newspapers with some politically designating caption like "leading Democrat," or "Republican merchant." A variety of local references provided further biographical information for most of these individuals.

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4. See Appendix V for names of the persons in the respective parties. Republican and Democratic numbers are less than the Populist figures because each of these Parties frequently had the same individuals crop up in their respective party in successive elections, thus reducing the number of names that could be discovered by this system. The Populists, on the other hand, seemed to have different individuals from year to year. Likewise, the Republicans outnumbered the Democrats because more Republicans were specifically named through the various press releases, a natural thing considering the Coudersport base of Republicanism and the Coudersport publication of the news.

Naturally, a few people listed could not be discovered in the available sources, while others left a more detailed local legacy. But taken together, the information provides party profiles and suggest motivations for party programs and alignments.

Some of the data eliminates factors that have created social and political cleavage in other places and times. Individual origins was a case in point. Following Lee Benson's theory of political motivation, and postulating that Potter County Populists shared a common ethnic background may seem logically and historically sound, but was not justified by Potter County evidence. Thirty Populists, thirteen Democrats, and twenty-three Republicans could be traced to their birthplace. In addition, birthplaces were found for the parents of twenty-two Populists, thirteen Democrats, and twenty-two Republicans. The following tables compare origins of the party members, and their parents.

Place of Birth

<u>Populists</u>			<u>Democrats</u>			<u>Republicans</u>		
<u>Location</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Pennsylvania	21	72	Pennsylvania	6	47	Pennsylvania	14	63
New York	6	20	New York	5	39	New York	8	37
Vermont	1	3	New Jersey	1	7			
Ireland	1	3	Ireland	1	7			

Parents' Birth Place

Pennsylvania	16	33	Pennsylvania	7	27	Pennsylvania	13	29
New York	15	31	New York	11	42	New York	23	52
Rhode Island	1	2	Massachusetts	1	4	Massachusetts	1	2
Connecticut	3	6	Connecticut	1	4	Vermont	3	7
New Jersey	1	2	New Jersey	2	8	Ireland	4	9
Ireland	8	17	Ireland	2	8			
Prussia	4	8	Prussia	2	8			

Members of the parties showed similar origins, with Pennsylvania-New York backgrounds predominating in each. Furthermore, the names show party leaders to be of English descent. Thus Populism did not reflect local ethnic antagonisms.

Benson also contends that religious differences determines political divisions. Such a contention was more difficult to examine because Potter County sources did not indicate religious preferences. Still, the religions were found for seventeen Populists, nine Republicans, and seven Democrats. These religious affiliations were as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<u>Populist</u>		
Baptist	3	17
Lutheran	2	12
Methodist	7	41
Seventh Day Baptist	2	12
Roman Catholic	2	12
Episcopalian	1	6
<u>Democrat</u>		
Baptist	1	14
Lutheran	1	14
Methodist	2	28
Roman Catholic	3	42
<u>Republican</u>		
Baptist	1	11
Lutheran	3	33
Methodist	4	44
Roman Catholic	1	11

Again there is a similarity in the profiles of each party. Certainly the representation of Catholics, Baptists, and Methodists in each party indicated that Populists were not all of one religious persuasion. Populists were not a religious group fighting its own "holy war," since limited information suggests that all parties in the county had a heterogenous religious composition.

In addition, all leading denominations were found in Populist and non-Populist sections of the county.<sup>5</sup> Distribution of congregations throughout the county reduces the possibility that Populist voters were Baptist, for example, since there were many Baptist elsewhere in the county who did not vote Populist. The same could be said for every other religion in the county.<sup>6</sup>

Religion cannot be simply dismissed, however. As a catalyst for the district's political division, it probably had an effect on the eventual Populist record, as suggested by views on the prohibition question. The high number of Baptist and Methodist churches, with their intense anti-alcohol viewpoint in Populist areas, accentuated the prohibition ideals so fundamental to Populist political development. These ideals were present in the Northwest corner of Potter County for more than religious reasons. At the same time, the Catholic church at Irish Settlement, Genesee Township, stood on the "other side" of the question. In this way religious attitudes contributed to Populist development, although they did not produce the movement, since similar regions of Methodism-Baptism elsewhere found non-Populist answers to the people's political needs.

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5. See Map, Appendix IX - Township assessment records listed the churches and their locations. Year used was 1892.
  6. The Seventh Day Baptist Church at Hebron was the one example of a church within the Populist area that was not also represented in other parts of the county. However, the Seventh Day Church had no disagreements with the Regular Baptist (North), the Baptist branch that was spread throughout the county, except the honoring of the Sabbath. Furthermore, the church in Hebron was a small one, with seating capacity of less than 100, and less than 100 communicants. Thus, while the Seventh Day Baptists may have been significant in developing Populism (see p. 161) they were hardly the sole cause.

While Potter County's political groups had a heterogeneous religious and ethnic composition, other distinctions existed between the parties. Occupational differences were the most striking, with Populists generally farmers. (Only two of the twenty-seven Populists were non-farmers, one a carpenter, the other a local school teacher.) The Republican Party, in comparison, contained two bankers, three lawyers, two doctors, and four merchants. Of the remaining twelve, six were farmers, four of them "gentleman farmers," four laborers, and two school teachers. The Democratic organization had eight lumber or saw mill operators, two lawyers, one doctor, one surveyor, one carpenter, and four farmers. Populists were agriculturally oriented, Republicans had foundations in the county business and money structure, and Democrats centered in the lumber industry. The absence of Republican merchants in the lumber industry was most important in intra-county rivalries.

If Populist agricultural strength resulted from local dissidents looking for solutions, there would have to be economically disadvantaged individuals whose problems differed from those in areas where Populism failed. Perhaps in their remote corner, their isolation from markets presented some of the problems Progressives associated with western Populism, including falling prices and high expenses.

Actually, no details support such an analysis. A review of county mortgage and debt records indicated that Populists were no more debt-ridden than others in the county.<sup>7</sup> Only four of the known Populists had

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7. Mortgage and Debt Books (1890-1900), Potter County Courthouse, Pa.

recorded debts from 1890-1900. (One was the school teacher.) Democrats and Republicans had a higher percentage of debtors. Also, though precise economic records are difficult to uncover, what is available shows the Northwest corner of Potter County suffering no more seriously from price declines than other areas of Pennsylvania.<sup>8</sup> And lastly, this area was not isolated from markets. The residents in Northwest Potter County were the first to benefit from railroad service. The line west out of Coudersport opened in 1882. Eastern and southern Potter County did not have similar services until after 1890.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, after the Civil War, the lumber industry had established contacts northward into New York and had built roads southward to the Susquehanna River's path to the Williamsport lumber facilities. There is little to establish the similarity of the Potter County Populist with the Hicks version of the embattled farmer, even though Potter County Populists were primarily farmers. Progressive economic interpretation cannot explain the unusual Populist record in Potter County.

One last comparison can be drawn from the party profiles. This is the difference in ages among members of the three parties. The differences point to a number of conclusions, which, when added to other information, may explain the eruption of Potter County Populism. The ages were found of twenty-eight Populists, twenty-three Republicans, and thirteen Democrats:

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8. Reports of the State Board of Agriculture and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Agriculture of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg: State Printers Office, 1890-1900).

9. Beebe, Potter County, pp. 157-160.

Age of Party Members in Potter County

<u>Age of Party Member</u>	<u>Populist</u>		<u>Democrat</u>		<u>Republican</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
25 - 29	1	3	1	8	2	8
30 - 34	6	22	1	8	4	16
35 - 39	2	7	2	15	2	8
40 - 44	2	7	2	15	5	21
45 - 49	4	14	1	8	5	21
50 - 54	1	3	1	8	2	8
55 - 59	5	18	2	15	2	8
60 - 64	2	7	0	-	0	-
65 - 69	1	3	2	15	0	-
70 - 74	4	14	1	8	1	4

The mean age of the Populist was 49.3, the Democrat 50.00, and the Republican 45.4. Median ages, in the same order, were 47, 48, and 43. The modal age could not be computed since each party was multimodal. However, by using general age classifications acceptable for political purposes, young, middle-aged, and old, and assigning them limits (young 20-39, middle-age 40-59, old 60-79), a modal age for each party can be computed. Again statistics are similar although Populists were slightly older than Democrats, and the age of Republicans drops below both the mean and median Republican level. Specifically, the Populist was 48.7, the Democrat 48.5, and the Republican 42.2.

If these samplings, consisting of the local leadership in each party, are approximations of the parties themselves (and there is reason to believe that this is so), then additional conclusions on Potter County politics can be drawn from the age factor. The Republican Party becomes the organization for the "early-middle-aged." Matched with occupational information and existence of the strong, Coudersport-based Republicanism, the Republican Party attracted those who found success in the "urban" market place. The absence of old men in their ranks is understandable, since business development was of recent vintage in the "frontier environment" of Potter County. The traditional old-timer would be, most likely, a farmer. (The one Republican over 60 was a "gentleman farmer"; the seven Populists and three Democrats in this "old" category were all farmers.) The Potter County Republican is the "early-middle-aged" professional whose economic success placed him among the local upper class.

Neither Populists nor Democrats lend themselves to definite conclusions based on age groups. It is tempting, for instance, to suggest that Populists were either old men, so frustrated by conditions that they turned to radical notions in their twilight of life (7 of 28 were over 60, 10 of the 28 were over 58), or young men filled with youthful exuberance who seized new ideas to correct old abuses (7 of the 28 were under 34, 9 of the 28 were 36 or under). Frustration, accentuated by age differences, over dominant Republicanism and its values caused some conversions to Populism, but the obvious age difference between Populists and Republicans was more a symptom than a cause of the Populist Movement.

The Democrats' near-even age distribution probably reflected the general state of the party in the county. Democrats were a broad-based

party that traditionally came in second in the county. Though the high incidence of lumber mill operators indicated one type of vested interest, Democratic votes came from all townships and boroughs, and Democratic members from most occupations. Thus Democrats by age, occupation, and voting returns, were less subject to labels and found their place as the loyal opposition.

However, locating the Populist Movement in the county's northwest corner, identifying the voting strength of competing parties, and describing characteristics of various parties have not explained the development of the Potter County movement. Only occupational and age differences have been noted, but these indicate little, especially since farmers were in no unusual economic despair, nor rebelling against difficult times. Likewise age variations can be at best only contributory to Populist development, and might be only symptoms of the movement.

However, most information about county politics takes shape when analyzed within the framework of the three developments mentioned earlier: changing status of the lumber industry in the late 1880's and early 1890's, local prohibition's effect on Potter County politics, and the anti-Couderport spirit that pervaded the county creating a town-countryside hostility. Interacting together in the northwest corner of Potter County, these forces resulted in a growth of localized Populism.

The lumber industry in Potter originated in the early history of the county. The county's most valuable product, pine forests of northwestern Potter were considered the finest in the Nation. The great forests followed the Oswayo River and its tributaries through the entire northwest section, corresponding to the eleven townships noted before.

The lure of virgin trees standing straight and tall, 100 to 150 feet in height, bare of branches for fifty feet, attracted lumbermen seeking their fortune. Soon lumbering became the County's major business, especially after the Civil War. However, by 1880 the pine forests were depleted. The last of the pine-runs down the Oswayo took place in 1889. After closing pine lumbering, many settlers remained, permanently converting cleared timber land into dairy farms. The Northwest corner took on a new stability, and many residents had openly applauded the end of lumbering because it also put an end to the floating, degenerate population of lumber camps.<sup>10</sup>

As pine lumbering ended in the 1880's, the hemlock began to attract attention. These forests grew throughout the southern areas of Potter County. At first hemlock was thought useful only in the tanning process, and a few tanneries were built after 1873 in hemlock areas. But since the bark was the only part used in tanning, hemlock lumbering was not a major occupation. As pine became scarce, hemlock lumber acquired value as a building material. New railroad development coincided with the interest in hemlock lumber. Many new lines stretched into untapped hemlock woodlands, and thus increased the wood's availability. Reduced costs put a new emphasis on hemlock, and Potter suddenly had another lumber boom.<sup>11</sup>

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10. The history of the county's pine lumbering is found in Beebe's work, Chapter 8. References to the local reaction to lumberjack is recorded there. Also Charles Webb, Tioga County, printed by the local Chamber of Commerce, no publication date. Other sources include references in the contemporary press, and interviews with living residents who have some recollection of the late 19th century.

11. Beebe, Potter County, pp. 178-86.

Frank H. Goodyear, a lumber and coal dealer from Buffalo, assisted the spurt in hemlock lumbering. As early as 1880, he made some inroads into Potter County's lumber industry, with a small hemlock camp and mill south of the pine area. By 1885, he expanded and began building railroad lines that made Austin the center of the hemlock industry. Austin, in the southwest corner of the county, was surrounded by hemlock forests that followed the Freeman Run, South Fork, Sinnemahoning and Moore's Run creeks. A new region and a new generation of settlers grew up with this lumbering development.<sup>12</sup>

Austin became a Pennsylvania boom town. As a crossroad post office in 1886, the town, known then as Freeman's Run, was virtually without population. By 1890, its population approached 2,000. A number of lumber mills, a kindling wood factory, a chemical plant for making wood alcohol, and a hub and veneering plant added to the industry in "Hemlock City" as Austin was called. New blacksmith shops, wagon shops and produce stands were part of a prospering economy that made Austin the economic center of Potter County.<sup>13</sup>

The town itself, however, contained flimsy, almost temporary construction. Fires were common in the town's early years; in addition, poor planning and sanitary conditions threatened life and health in the community. One epidemic, the "Austin fever," indicated the potential devastation.<sup>14</sup> The "solid" citizens to the north looked askance at such "progress."

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12. Ibid., pp. 178-86.

13. Ibid., pp. 182-83.

14. Ibid., p. 183.

The boom town also developed entertainment facilities that shocked many "solid" citizens. Victor Beebe, a local historian, refers to the "lawlessness that is usual with towns of mushroom growth." Frequently, editorials pointed out the town's lack of virtue and morality. Drunken riots, "pigs ears" (illegal taverns), illicit ladies, and pool rooms were all criticized by the Potter County press. The hemlock industry and its life-style produced a definite intra-county resentment.<sup>15</sup>

Lumberjacks of the hemlock woods received a steady barrage of criticism. Many Potter County residents saw them as "different from the pine lumberman,"<sup>16</sup> a breed apart, high-living, reckless, and of immoral character. While much was exaggeration and emotion, there is some support for such characterizations of lumber camps. The daughter of a leading hemlock lumbermen recorded her observations, which present a balanced picture of the conditions, free of the personal animosity of attacks by resentful local residents.<sup>17</sup>

Although she sympathetically portrayed the few tender moments of group singing and folk dancing, many lumbercamp ways would cause Potter County conservatives to protest. She did not overcook the crudeness of the lumber men who suffered from lice and became so accustomed to them that they ignored delousing facilities, who covered cabin floors with

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15. Beebe and the local press illustrate this development.

16. Webb, Tioga County, makes this point most vividly.

17. Marie Kathern Nusche, "Hicks, Fighters, and Clog Dancers: Early Lumber camps in Freeman Run Valley," Pennsylvania History, XIX (October, 1952), pp. 435-51.

tobacco stains, who enjoyed wild drinking parties, who were bums and drifters, often driven by liquor to threaten many camps, who engaged in camp brawls which often ended by chewing an ear off the loser.

The problem of the "bum" gives us some idea of the life in the lumber camp. As the author observed:

Every camp had a set of rules for the men to live by, and they followed them fairly well for a few years; but, as time passed and many of the hicks began to suffer physically from the effects of too much liquor, the foreman had problems to know what to do with them. They were classed as bums when drunk and only second rate workers when sober. They would travel between camps and check in for work over Sunday in order to get a few good meals before starting work on Monday morning. They would eat a hearty breakfast on Monday morning, but before the foreman could interview them and assign their work, they would disappear. Sometimes they would work a week and then disappear and move on to another camp. Some of the camps had to keep a roster of these men, and if they came to the camps looking for work they were politely thrown (sic) out.<sup>18</sup>

Naturally many resented the rollicking, brawling hemlock camps. County Republicans, with their affinity for prohibition and piety, opposed the lumbermen. More veiled, but clearly more significant, was the opposition coming from the northwest. In that section, where the pine industry had been replaced by dairying and many pine lumberjacks settled down to become "model husbands" and "raise fine families,"<sup>19</sup> anti-hemlock sentiment flourished. Pine lumbermen in Clara, Oswayo, or Pleasant Valley during the 1890's would recall the good old days of the pine woods when the hemlock was held in contempt. Their new status as dairy farmers would account for the high number of farmers in Populist ranks. The older age

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18. Ibid., p. 442.

19. Ibid., p. 451.

of many Populists conjures up long winter sessions with white-haired old timers gathered around pot-bellied stoves reinforcing each other's convictions about the abominable hemlock. Given the commonly-held impression that pine lumbering camps differed from hemlock camps, and that pine hicks differed from hemlock hicks, and that dairy farming brought an aura of stability to Northwest Potter County, it is apparent that a local status system had formed. The alienation between these contrasting life-styles was strong, and led to serious intra-county disagreements. An alliance between the hemlock industry and the Democratic Party led to the latter's condemnation and indicated how it affected politics. The cultural alienation that developed out of the contrasting lumbering produced a political division that could have created a third party, especially since the Northern corner felt estranged from the county's Republican forces.

Town-countryside hostility prevented the Northwest Potter County from joining Republican ranks. Republicans dominated county politics since the Civil War, with much of this power centered in Coudersport. As time went on, local opponents disapproved of the Coudersport power, frequently referring to the "Coudersport Ring". Republican power was not broken, but a distinct anti-Coudersport, anti-Republican spirit had formed, making town-countryside unanimity impossible.

Most significantly, cooperative spirit typical of the Pennsylvania rural community did not operate in Potter County. From 1878-1889, in contrast to the state pattern, no farmer represented Potter County in the state legislature. In local government, political power was firmly established in Coudersport, which controlled local road development. Railroads had to secure approval of Republican authorities, which created

a local suspicion, not found in other Pennsylvania areas. In addition, Potter (without the transient and recent population of Austin included) was one of four Pennsylvania counties with over 90% of its population living outside of incorporated boroughs in 1890.<sup>20</sup> Of the four, Potter was largest in area, so its population density was the lowest in the state. This was Pennsylvania's last frontier, so Potter County may have been the one place in the state that was the near-equivalent of western Populist regions. At the very least, Coudersport control was at odds with the county's rural nature.

Local conditions also contributed to hostility. In 1893, the Coudersport bank failed. An unproven rumor circulated that internal manipulation of funds was the direct cause, and the Jones family, in charge of the bank, had escaped financially unscathed. There was never any proof of wrong doing, but rumors of scandal had an effect on those who resented Coudersport power in the first place, especially since W. K. Jones, bank president, was a key Republican leader.<sup>21</sup>

Unquestionably, the county had an anti-Coudersport, and hence anti-Republican, spirit which would explain how pockets of Democracy developed against the Republicans, but it does not explain Populism. To understand this, it is important to note that Populists were primarily "expatriated" Democrats. Throughout the Populist period in Northwest Potter County,

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20. Computed from statistics of the 1890 Census.

21. The local press carried the details. An interview with Mrs. Mary Welfling, long time secretary of the Potter County Historical Society, revealed the issue of the unproved scandal surrounding the failure.

Republicans maintained their plurality while the Democratic vote rose and fell in relationship to Populist totals. The percentage of votes in eleven "Populistic" townships ran as follows:<sup>22</sup>

<u>1890</u>	--	Republicans	-	49.2%
		Democrats	-	50.2%
<u>1892</u>	--	Republicans	-	39.0%
		Democrats	-	27.4%
		Populists	-	30.1%
<u>1893</u>	--	Republicans	-	42.9%
		Democrats	-	29.0%
		Populists	-	23.9%
<u>1894</u>	--	Republicans	-	48.2%
		Democrats	-	24.4%
		Populists	-	23.2%
<u>1895</u>	--	Republicans	-	53.5%
		Democrats	-	19.1%
		Populists	-	27.2%

In a limited way, loss of Democratic votes might be traced to voter frustration over perennial Republican leadership. The state-wide Populist response seems to corroborate this view.<sup>23</sup> Exasperated with Couderport Republicans, and sensing the failure of their own party to break Republican control, Democrats may have switched to an available third party in protest. Such, perhaps, could have been the case for a few voters.

Other voters chose their parties because of the hemlock-pine controversy. Strong political sentiments are often tied to cultural differences

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22. Smull's Handbook (1891-1896), Included is the last major pre-Populist election which shows the Democratic-Republican ratio before the Populist days began.

23. See Appendix VIII; the fourteen leading Populist counties were all predominately Republicans, 1866 - 1900.

that seem slight to outsiders. Some voters may have joined the third party because of a specific local disagreement, for Democratic and Populist sections divided at the boundary between hemlock and pine.

But a third, more persuasive reason existed for party crossover. Populists were a prohibition wing of the Democratic Party. Both traditional parties were objectionable to potential Populists, since one had begun war on prohibition by 1890, and the other was synonymous with the despised Coudersport ring. The Prohibition Party was likewise not a viable choice for the dissidents, since it received its main thrust from the Coudersport W. C. T. U., and hardy farmers would not associate with a Coudersport ladies group.

The county had established its local prohibition law in April 1866 through an act of the State legislature.<sup>24</sup> Methodists and Baptists in the county originally sponsored this law, but by 1890 it had become a political issue. The Democratic Party supported local licensing while Republicans supported the existing prohibition law. As the elections of 1890 approached, local papers carried article after article on the liquor question, the "only important issue in the election." Democrats claimed that restrictions on drinking were impossible to enforce since the law stopped no one who wanted to drink. By forbidding liquor licenses, the county lost thousands of dollars, which were replaced by burdensome taxes.

In addition, they accused the existing law of creating "prohibitory drunks," since liquor could be purchased by the gallon, but not by the

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24. Beebe, Potter County, p. 146.

drink. And so even with prohibition, Democrats estimated that Potter County had one of the highest per capita alcohol consumption rates in the state. Republicans, in turn, contended that no man could do his job under the influence of alcohol, and pointed to the sin that followed the bottle. Lumberjacks evidenced this equation of corruption and alcohol.<sup>25</sup>

The occupational and political ties cited earlier fit logically in Potter County's political structure. Hemlock lumbermen gravitated to the Democratic position on liquor. Hemlock jobbers knew that the men they needed to work the lumber camps were accustomed to a style of life that included heavy drinking. However, the illegal "pigs ear" was hardly the best way to fulfill the alcoholic needs of the "hicks." Incessant trouble surrounded tavern activities, from disreputable operators to county harassment and entanglements.<sup>26</sup> Undoubtedly legalized drinking would alleviate lumber mill operators headaches. The Democratic stand for local licensing would satisfy their need. Republicans, standing on county tradition and religious principle, supported prohibition. Those who voted Populist, also prohibitionist, could not express their views through the Republican Party because of their anti-Coudersport attitude. Thus, they turned to the Peoples' Party.

A number of reasons support the view that Potter County Populists were, in effect, a band of Democratic prohibitionists. First, references appeared in the local press, including a letter specially critical of the of the Democratic position on prohibition. Also the voting record after

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25. Ibid., pp. 182-184.

26. Ibid., Potter County, p. 183.

1896 provides some indication of Prohibitionist influence. Particularly revealing was the 1898 election for governor with Silas Swallow on the fusion ticket as both Prohibitionist and People's candidate. Swallow, as expected, received a large vote from Populist townships. However, in the election of lieutenant governor, where there was no fusion, the Prohibitionist received the vote of Populist townships. The People's candidate received only 123 votes.<sup>27</sup> The prohibition question seems therefore the important one, as Prohibition, not Populism, attracted the vote.

Also, in 1900 agitators finally succeeded in ending the local prohibition law. However, local areas could still restrict liquor sales by refusing to grant licenses to applicants. Townships of the northwest corner overwhelmingly selected this alternative, with the exception of Genesee (settled by Irish Catholics).<sup>28</sup>

In summary, the Populist experience in Potter County has relevance in identifying political motivation. Economic motivation falls short as an explanation of the Populist phenomenon, since the economic conditions there were no different from conditions elsewhere. These farmers had no more reason to rebel because of economic grievances than thousands of others throughout the state. However, unique cultural conditions of the northwest corner constituted valid reasons for rebellion.

Greatest Populist success occurred in an area where a thriving pine industry had ended and was succeeded by dairy farming. The ex-pine men who settled there differed considerably from the hemlock lumbering interests in the southern part of the county. Emphasizing their "pine"

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27. Smull's Handbook (1899), p. 320.

28. Beebe, Potter County, p. 218.

distinctions and their new achievement of stability and community interest, these northwesterners looked askance at the rollicking ways of the hemlock camps. Included in the values of many northwest residents was prohibition, a belief that was greatly reinforced by a Baptist-Methodist mentality. With the hemlock industry supporting the Democrats and replacement of prohibition by legalized drinking through local licensing, northwestern dissidents rejected the Democratic party.

At the same time, Potter County had developed urban-rural antagonism concentrated in an anti-Coudersport and hence anti-Republican sentiment. Unable to overcome their aversions to Republicanism even though the Republicans supported a more suitable prohibition position, many northwest corner voters were left without a home in either major party. But Populism was available, and these people, having become dairy farmers, could easily accept the agricultural rhetoric of the national Peoples' Party. In turn, their virtual isolation allowed them to fashion their own political structure. Consequently, Populism became an acceptable political alternative and rose to significant proportions in this small rural locality in Pennsylvania. The primary causes for the unique development were cultural, and the explanation for this segment of Pennsylvania Populism corresponds to many recent ideas on national Populism, ideas that have revised the economic emphasis of Progressive history and instead drawn attention to non-economic factors in historical events.

## Chapter VI

### Other Populist Areas of Pennsylvania

In addition to Potter County, four other Pennsylvania counties had Populist votes that contrast with the average Populist vote in the state.<sup>1</sup> These four, Tioga, Indiana, Crawford, and Erie, maintained an average Populist vote of five to ten percent prior to 1896 and had a particular feature that added a dimension to Pennsylvania's Populist movement.

First, Tioga County had four isolated districts which contained most of the county's Populist vote. The Populist intensity in one district, where the party polled fifty percent of the vote, was greater than any other precinct in the state.<sup>2</sup> The Populist area corresponded to Tioga County's mining district, thus suggesting a connection between the Populist vote and mining conditions. However, one explanation lies less with resistance to mine hazards or low wages, or community divisions over ethnic or religious loyalties, than might be expected.<sup>3</sup> Actually, unusual local conditions pushed Tioga miners into the Populist camp. A traditional, independent spirit existed among miners who had long and successfully resisted mine operator excesses. When one of the miners' heroes, William B. Wilson, was given shoddy treatment by Tioga Democratic leaders, a local uproar followed, and local voters adopted the Populist candidates as a protest against the Democrats' autocratic maneuvers.

Crawford County had no concentrated Populist voting districts.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See Appendix VIII and Chapters 3 and 4.
  2. See Chapter 6, p. 117 of this study.
  3. The details of Tioga County with documentation follow on pp. 116-127.
  4. The details of Crawford County with documentation follow on pp. 127-134.

However, it had a rather curious collection of affluent land holders, wealthy farmers who preached Populism and followed the lead of J. C. Sibley in producing showcase farms and thoroughbred animals. Many Populist votes were cast by less successful farmers who may have emulated their successful leaders, or perhaps believed the philosophy of the Populist platform.

Erie County, in the same Congressional district as Crawford, had a different Populist experience.<sup>5</sup> That county's Populist leaders often opposed Crawford Populists over candidates and policies, for Erie County Populism was tied to labor troubles in the city of Erie. Dictatorial practices of the superintendent of the Erie Motor Company prompted resistance in the form of third-party Populism, but strong-armed tactics, economic retaliation, and worker apathy, prevented the movement from growing.

Of all the counties, Indiana proved most difficult to analyze.<sup>6</sup> There was no predominant Populist area, and local Populists were not easily identified. The few who were identifiable, however, seem agricultural in interest. Thus Indiana County's Populist vote was a slightly greater example of the scattered response to Populism engendered throughout western and northern Pennsylvania, excluding the local areas cited above. In brief, a small number of farmers accepted Populist solutions to their own problems, either real or imagined, economic or sociological. Invariably the Populist vote was drained from the Democratic column; most often the county with a Populist tendency was staunchly Republican; and always the county was in the

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5. The details of Erie County with documentation follow on pp. 127-134.

6. The details of Indiana County with documentation follow on pp. 134-138.

North or West of the state with a good part of its economy devoted to farming. Thus the general Populist vote in the state was a farmer protest vote, seeking changes which were apparently not forthcoming through Republican leadership. Indiana County probably produced more votes than the typical Pennsylvania "Populist farm county" because the wealthy and influential Populist state chairman, R. A. Thompson, lived there and attracted votes for the cause. Also the Greenback tradition was strong in Indiana County, so the county must have had some of the same conditions that prompted earlier Greenback unrest, and undoubtedly many like Thompson moved into Populism, seeing it as a parallel to agricultural radicalism.

Each of these counties now requires some intensified examination. The semi-bituminous coal district of the Blossburg area of Tioga County gave the greatest Populist support in the state. In particular, Bloss Township represented the original stronghold of Populist support, and eventually surrounding townships joined to create a unique pocket of Populism for Pennsylvania.<sup>7</sup> The map (see appendix) shows the location of the districts and the coal mines which played such a role in this development.<sup>8</sup>

Although Tioga County's Populist following fell short of that of Potter, Crawford, Erie, and Indiana, Bloss Township was, by far, the most successful single township for Populism in the state. The following statistics show how well the Populist candidate at the head of the state ticket fared from 1892 to 1895.

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7. Smull's Handbook (1893-1896), provides the facts for the following pages.

8. See Appendix IX.

Bloss Township

	<u>Election</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Peoples'</u>	<u>Prohibition</u>
1892	President	163	44	241	9
1893	State Treasurer	53	13	57	3
1894	Governor	243	32	300	10
1895	State Treasurer	145	20	98	6

The other townships that eventually participated in Tioga Populism compiled the following record:

	<u>Election</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Peoples'</u>	<u>Prohibition</u>
1892	President	Blossburg	242	158	17	26
		Hamilton	163	178	3	10
		Liberty	177	182	8	6
1893	State Treas.	Blossburg	156	81	16	32
		Hamilton	65	50	7	2
		Liberty	89	88	7	2
1894	Governor	Blossburg	201	71	128	33
		Hamilton	133	50	55	6
		Liberty	87	79	74	3
1895	State Treas.	Blossburg	162	37	38	21
		Hamilton	99	14	4	3
		Liberty	54	47	17	6

A composite of the four districts with the percentage of Tioga's Populist vote in each election is as follows:

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Populist</u>	<u>% of Tioga Populism in these districts</u>	<u>Prohibition</u>
1892	795	562	276	(75%)	44
1893	363	232	87	(63%)	39
1894	664	221	557	(64%)	52
1895	460	118	157	(55%)	36

Why did the Populist candidate receive the high proportion of vote in this section, especially in the Bloss Township district? Knowing that Bloss Township consisted almost entirely of two company-owned mining towns, Arnot and Landaus, perhaps the answer rests with this feudalistic arrangement. Miners were aware of the Populist offer to help the working classes, and therefore may have supported Populists in order to gain relief from oppressive mine practices. But Tioga mining conditions were not, by the standards of the time, extremely hazardous, or the work demands excessive. The reports of the mine inspector throughout the Populist decade record the conditions of Tioga as fair to good, whereas mines in other parts of the state received a poor grade, and some actually had to be closed.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, mining conditions alone could not produce the Populist response because the majority of Pennsylvania mining districts did not swing to Populism. The Tioga Populist activity was more complex, and involved some particular local conditions.

There seems little internal cleavage among various groups in Bloss Township which would grow into political factions. No religious or ethnic

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9. Pennsylvania Department of Internal Affairs, Report of the Inspector of the Mines. (Harrisburg: State Printer's Office, 1890-1900).

division exists that might explain Populism as some isolated local group, seeking aid or recognition through politics. Party membership provided little evidence, for the traditional secrecy of mining unions and fraternal orders, the absence of newspapers in Arnot, the mining community's habit of looking to outside individuals for political leadership made it difficult to associate miners with any particular party. Only two active Tioga Populists, for instance, were miners from the Populist districts. Thus, the Populist voting area was not tied to the Tioga county organization, just as many county organizations were not tied to the state organization. Most of Tioga's Populist leaders were local farmers from other areas of the County. Thus an analysis of the party yields no description of the mining community, beyond the fact that the miners participated in politics as anonymous voters.

Still some features of Arnot and the surrounding area must be recognized to understand the Populist voting pattern. Ethnic or religious affiliation did not parallel the area's eventual political divisions. Ethnic divisions of Arnot in 1880 were as follows: Scotch, 23%; English, 21% Irish, 17%; Polish, 6.4%; Swedes, 6.0%; Welsh, 2.5%; Baden, 1.2%; Hessian, 1.0%; French .9%; and Wartenberg, .9%. While such divisions are hardly proof of community harmony, the fragmented groups were so small that none could be considered "Populist," while the others formed the Republican or Democratic Parties. The same could be said of an "American vote" gathered against various foreign elements. The native American group was much smaller than the Populist vote, forming 14% of the Arnot community.<sup>10</sup>

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10. Manuscript Census of 1880 on microfilm in the State Library, Harrisburg, Pa.

Religious composition also splintered, with different churches organized throughout the community, and again none numerically similar to the Populist votes. In Arnot, the spectrum of churches included Presbyterian, Protestant-Episcopal, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Puritan Congregational, and Swedish Mission.<sup>11</sup> In addition, county histories describe the even distribution of parishioners among the larger congregations, so here too there was little likelihood that religious groups converted into political factions, since four major churches had approximately 200 communicants each, and two minor churches had less than 100 each.<sup>12</sup> With three major and one minor Parties in the county, a precise fit becomes impossible.

While the above information does not exclude the possibility of certain ethnic or religious combinations and a Populist vote along these lines, numerous references to community harmony suggest no severe internal divisions. The integrated pattern of the town, with various national groups interspersed throughout, prevented creation of geographic subcultures within Arnot, the so-called "Little Italy" or "Germantown."<sup>13</sup>

In addition, Arnot had developed a certain esprit de corps supporting local athletic teams.<sup>14</sup> Weekly debates also indicated a fellowship that existed in Arnot. Individuals of various nationalities actively participated

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11. Tax assessor records of Tioga Townships in Wellsboro Court House; year used—1892.
  12. History of Tioga County (R. C. Brown and Co., 1897).
  13. The Manuscript Census shows this integration since the information was collected on a door to door basis.
  14. Interview with Robert Pharoah, local Tioga resident, born in 1885, who seemed to have sharp recollections of his early youth, when the Populist record was unfolding.

in the debate, speaking in the only language they knew, their own native tongue. The audiences reacted courteously, even though many could not understand the words.<sup>15</sup> These positive endorsements, supplemented by published histories of Tioga county and coal mining, strongly suggest the lack of social turmoil that often occurred in mining communities. Thus, Arnot and the surrounding districts were relatively secure and stable, with no internal conflicts that could create a third party aberration.

Two reasons can be offered for Populist growth in Tioga County. One is the unique history of mining in the area, which witnessed substantial victories for the miners in Tioga's labor-management wars of the Post-Civil War times. Second was a local hero, William B. Wilson, and his political difficulties in the early 90's, which rallied Arnot miners to his cause.

Activities of the post-Civil War age saw some developments in Tioga mining that had meaning for Populism. The first strike occurred in 1865 when the Blossburg coal company refused to grant miners a fifteen cent per ton increase on the coal they brought to the surface. Morris Run and Fall Brook miners immediately joined the strike. Since coal companies owned all the houses throughout the area, with the exception of Blossburg and a few farms in northern Bloss Township, the company fought back by evicting strikers from these homes. Company officials also secured a change in the state law requiring a 90 days notice for eviction of workers

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15. William B. Wilson Papers, Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pa.

from company-owned houses. The law was changed to allow a ten day notification. Though the women of the miners resisted the sheriff and his eviction posse in the streets, the miners were sent out of their homes. Moving into the "free" city of Blossburg, the strikers held out several months more before they had to accept company terms. The mine operators required all members to accept a no-union decree and a twenty cent per ton cut in pay. The miners never forgot the company's high-handed tactics, and it proved to be the only strike the miners ever lost in the Blossburg district.<sup>16</sup>

In 1866 the Blossburg Company planned and built the town of Arnot, west of Blossburg. In 1873, conditions in this new mining area led to the county's second major strike and lock-out.<sup>17</sup> Although Tioga mining towns approximated industrial feudalism, with property owned entirely by coal companies, this did not cause the strike. Despite company stores, company houses, company roads, and even company money, the area had no labor difficulty from 1865 to 1873.<sup>18</sup> But 1873 brought a serious economic down turn. The demand for coal sagged badly, and mine operators defrayed the losses by holding back wages and demanding that miners sign pledges not to join unions. The operators ran into resistance and another strike. This time the miners survived, apparently because of the attitude of the countryside.<sup>19</sup> Blossburg

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16. Andrew Roy, A History of the Coal Miners of the U. S. (Columbus: J. L. Trauger, 1902).

17. Roy, Coal Miners of U. S., p. 103.

18. Herbert Gutman, "Two Lockouts in Pennsylvania 1873-1874", Pennsylvania History, 83 (July, 1959), pp. 307-26.

19. Roy, Coal Miners of U. S., p. 104.

merchants, probably upset at the mine operators monopoly of merchandizing in company towns, and neighboring farmers supported the strikers.<sup>20</sup> Unable to attract replacements to work the mines, the operators finally relented and met with the strikers' union, a local of the American Miner's Association. The strikers had won and established a pattern for Tioga labor negotiations.<sup>21</sup>

By 1877, local unions had disbanded again, apparently victims of depression in the 1870's when miners worked only four or five days a month.<sup>22</sup> But the Knights of Labor filled the vacuum and served the miners in various encounters. In 1880 the miners asked for a ten percent increase in wages. When the company refused, a strike was called. The company backed down and granted the increase.<sup>23</sup> The miners right to select their own weigh-men was honored by the mines in 1887. In addition, miners wanted to be paid twice monthly, rather than once a month. Again the company honored the request.<sup>24</sup>

Having experienced limited success in negotiations with coal operators, and having a lingering memory of what the operators could and would do, the miners of Tioga had become formidable. By the Populist decade they had developed an independent spirit that could turn to an alternate political party if conditions warranted it. The miners found cause when the Democratic

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20. Gutman, "Two Lockouts," p. 31.

21. Roy, Coal Miners of U. S. p. 110.

22. Gutman, "Two Lockouts," p. 32.

23. Roy, Coal Miners of U. S., p. 112.

24. Ibid., p. 114.

Party reneged on its pledge to nominate their leader, William B. Wilson, for Congress in 1892, and backed instead F. K. Wright of Wellsboro.

Wilson had earned the loyalty of his fellow miners through dedication and service. Ultimately appointed the country's first Secretary of Labor in 1913, his earlier local efforts marked him as a man of integrity and perseverance. His childhood reads like a Horatio Alger story.<sup>25</sup> After coming to Arnot from Scotland in 1870, his father's illness cut short his eagerly-sought education. Although he worked all day in the mines, Wilson continued his education at night. At age 16, he was admitted to secret meetings of the local Knights of Labor and became its secretary. As a spokesman for labor causes, the mine operators pegged him as a trouble maker. By 1880, operators boycotted him or assigned him to least desirable areas of the mine. As a result, he left Arnot, and for a number of years traveled widely, always keeping the interests of the union in mind whenever he came in contact with other workers throughout the country.

Wilson's father had encouraged the young man's rebellious nature by interesting the family in the Greenback campaigns, and Wilson notes the town's constant interest in third party politics, further indicating its political independence. In fact, in 1896, Wilson's father, a Populist since 1892, switched and became an active Socialist.<sup>26</sup>

When Wilson returned to the area in the mid-1880's, he still found it difficult to obtain constant employment in the mines. Living in

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25. Wilson's early history is recorded in an uncompleted autobiography found in his personal papers, hereafter referred to as Annals.

26. Wilson Papers.

Blossburg, he barely managed a living for his wife and growing family.<sup>27</sup> However, he remained a problem for mine operators. He stood beside the workers in disputes over mine conditions and he spoke before miners' gatherings on the values of unionization.<sup>28</sup> This placed him in good standing with the mining community and paved the way for the situation of 1892.

By 1892, Wilson had decided to enter politics.<sup>29</sup> Local Democrats of Wellsboro, the county seat, had assured Wilson of the district's Democratic Congressional nomination. However, the week before the convention, the Democrats had second thoughts. They turned to F. K. Wright and rejected the Wilson candidacy. The snub of Arnot's local hero became an inflamed local issue. The Blossburg Advertiser, claiming independence, but constantly leaning toward the miners' causes, came forth with a seething attack:

Wright is not a representative Democrat, and is the choice of the railroad element and is neither qualified by ability or learning, and were it not that he is a mere pigeon-stool put forward to further the interests of Mr. Hopkins, he would never have been nominated. Mr. Wilson had been assured that no one else sought the office. Wright had not the manliness to announce his intentions. . . a dirty piece of political knavery . . . he deserves no support from the Democratic masses. The Advertiser has no choice but to oppose him. . . Now let his weak-kneed organ, the Gazette, secure his election.<sup>30</sup>

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27. Roger Babson, William B. Wilson and the Department of Labor (New York: Brentano's 1919).

28. Wilson Papers.

29. The record of Wilson's political attempt is found in the issues of the Blossburg Advertiser.

30. Blossburg Advertiser, Aug. 19, 1892.

The Advertiser described the virtues of the Populist Party. Supporting it seemed a natural way to retaliate against Democratic leaders, and Arnot rose to the occasion with its remarkable vote for the Populist Weaver.

The Advertiser committed itself to the Populist cause and program. Wilson received regular coverage in the paper, with careful notation of the "Populist meetings" that he attended or helped to organize during the next year. In 1894, the Advertiser was extremely vocal in the Ailman campaign. "The Peoples' Party has come to stay and will prove itself a giant in the coming battle," "A Vote for the Peoples' Candidates is a vote for government by the people, not by corporation," typify the sentiments of the newspaper and much of the community. Ailman was hailed as the "hope of the working man and an active member of a labor organization." Such influence would strengthen the Populist response. Although the Advertiser was the only source for details of Arnot's loyalty to Wilson and the simultaneous growth of Populism,<sup>31</sup> the relationship of Tioga Populism to Wilson's personality seems irrefutable.

Thus, Populist reaction in Tioga County was a product of unique conditions in the mining community. Certainly the volatile nature of mining

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31. None of the biographies of Wilson cover this phase of his life. In the most recent study, it mentions that scattered references of the Advertiser are available to give some details of Wilson's life. Actually the complete run of the Advertiser is available at the Harrisburg State Library. Wilson, himself is very vague about his own part in the Movement. This might be expected, however, since he was preparing his bibliography while Secretary of Labor in a Democratic administration, so his radical party identification might be best overlooked. For latest study see Clarke Lawson Wilhelm, "William B. Wilson: First Secretary of Labor" (Ph.D. D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1967).

life sustained the movement and gave it strength. But lack of evidence of serious internal cleavage, either social or economic, suggests that the specific impetus for the Populist vote came from events outside Arnot-- that is, the Wellsboro Democrats' rejection of Wilson.

Populist development in Erie and Crawford County reveals still another experience. Joined together as the twenty-sixth Congressional district, these two counties had given Populism a moment of exhilaration with the Sibley election on the Democrat-Populist ticket in 1892. The Populist vote undoubtedly elected Sibley, but Populism here had different motivations than in other areas. Populism in the twenty-sixth district revealed how complex a voting analysis can be. Separate party structures existed in each county, with differing goals and virtually no intra-district cooperation.

Populist confusion began when L. A. Tucker, the district's original Populist candidate for Congress, withdrew in favor of the Democratic nominee, J. C. Sibley. Though some claimed foul play, Tucker apparently believed that Sibley, with a chance to win, was the right person for the Populists to back. The Crawford County Peoples' Party accepted Tucker's advice and endorsed Sibley.<sup>32</sup>

The Erie Populists refused to go along. Instead, they backed Frank L. Hirt, on the ballot as a Union Laborite. The Erie Peoples' Party stressed

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32. The local press of Crawford County provided the details of the Party development in this period.

the needs of the laboring man. Sibley, a millionaire addicted to fancy white suits, did not seem to fulfill this need. On the other hand, Hirt based his campaign on shameful employer practices, attitudes of Frick and Carnegie, multiplication of trusts, and indifference of leaders to the people's welfare and rights. He proposed to reduce work hours, cut unemployment, stop child labor, give government control of all natural monopolies, develop a new tax to end special privileges, and finally, fulfill the People's platform of Omaha.<sup>33</sup>

The split between Erie and Crawford Committees produced crises through the campaign. Erie Populists made a major issue of Sibley's Prohibition ties, both his personal association with that party in the past and the Prohibition Party's endorsement of him in 1892. Also Sibley's wealth came under frequent attack. "He dresses like a farmer when he's on the prowl for votes", but "he's really a country square." Sibley's opponent emphasized his \$100,000 a year income from Standard Oil stock, making this fact common knowledge among laboring men. Influenced by this, "the hardy sons of toil," as Erie laborers billed themselves, rejected Sibley's bid.

A meeting in Erie on October 21, 1892, hoped to bring third party elements together. Philip Willet of the Crawford People's Party was speaker. When he began by noting that two candidates (the Republican Flood and Sibley) sought the congressional seat, an Erie editor stood up in protest. "Common courtesy demands the recognition of candidate

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33. The People, Oct. 1, 1892.

Hirt also." Hirt, who was present, rose to agree. When Willet refused to acknowledge the protest, over 300 of the 400 assembled walked out.<sup>34</sup>

Harmony had not been achieved.

It is hard to judge the meaning of this because of many variables in the district election of 1892. Sibley's victory in a year of general Republican success in the district demonstrates importance of the Populist vote. Hirt received only four votes in Crawford and 178 votes in Erie. Apparently many Erie Populists voted for Sibley, because later Populist totals in Erie were significantly larger than Hirt's 1892 figure; certainly Crawford Populists voted for Sibley. Perhaps then the best way to approach the question is to compare Crawford and Erie County Populists.

The differences between Erie and Crawford Populism in 1892 can be seen in the individuals from the two counties working for the Party. Erie participants were linked to the laboring class in the city of Erie.<sup>35</sup> They were machinists, typesetters, steel workers, or carpenters, and frequently hostile toward farmers, whom they depicted as ready to take lower wages. The Crawford County Party, on the other hand, consisted of farmers, joined by a few Meadville sympathizers.<sup>36</sup>

Frank I. Hirt, the Erie choice, born in 1852, had been a working man since the age of 15, long active in union activities, and a writer for labor journals. In 1892, he was a machinist in Erie.

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34. Ibid., Oct. 28, 1892.

35. Most of the biographical material was found in The People. A few names were also discovered in the local histories of Erie County. (See Bibliography.)

36. See Appendix V for list of Erie Populists.

Charles Louis Mehler, the Erie Populist candidate for State Senator, came from a similar background. Born in Bavaria in 1847, he immigrated to this country as a youth and later joined the Republican Party. Although he left the factory to be a carpenter in the mid 70's, he still maintained his sympathies for the laboring class. His labor interest conflicted with the Republican position, and he gradually developed the ideas that brought him into the Populist circles in 1892.

These individuals led the Erie Peoples' Party. Others in the Party had a similar tie to labor. They tried to lead the working class into the Party, using an 1892 issue as their rallying point: resistance against autocratic methods of the local superintendent of the Erie Motor Company. The Erie Populist paper, The People, fostered a major campaign against Superintendent Pfetich and labeled him "Frick Number 2."<sup>37</sup>

The confrontation started when company workers organized a union without Pfetich's permission. In the past any complaint presented to the company had been rejected. Workers now had union help. But Pfetich responded by firing all union officers. Pfetich "smiled like an old maid," reported The People, and denied that union leadership was the cause of the firing. "I know nothing of any union," Pfetich claimed, as he explained the firings were for other reasons. But the workers understood, and abandoned the union attempt.

The Peoples' Party kept Pfetich's methods before the public, however, as the primary example of corporate evils. Pfetich was accused of spying,

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37. All of the information on the Pfetich affair came from The People, during October and November of 1892.

running a slave camp, destroying city streets with his trolleys while paying light taxes, and giving high wages to farm boys.

The message reached few workers, for the 178 votes that Hirt received hardly indicated a major labor uprising. Still, Erie Populists were labor oriented. Party membership and the campaign emphasis revealed the labor influence. Lack of a labor response to Hirt's candidacy can be traced to a combination of things, including the perennial loyalty to traditional politics. Other effective controls included intimidation, the Republican Party's influential newspapers, the unpopular image of a third party, and the general confusion created by Sibley's presence as a second Populist.<sup>38</sup> Yet, this beginning of the Erie Populist Revolt marks a notable digression from usual Populist activity in the state.

Crawford County Populists, on the other hand, had a different power base,<sup>39</sup> a heavy proportion of farmers.<sup>40</sup> The Sledgehammer, local Populist paper in Meadville, in contrast to the People, emphasized the farmer orientation in its editorials. Crawford Populists, drawing from Sibley's success, used fusion as a political tactic. Many local candidates had the support of both Democrats and Populists throughout the Populist period and, as a consequence, it becomes more difficult to isolate Populists and identify their motives. Populist leaders in Crawford County had one uniting feature—status as wealthy farmers. Sibley's wealth has already been noted. More

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38. County newspapers that indicated these positions included the Erie Journal and the Erie Democrat. Some worker threats were printed by the People.

39. The local press provided the information on the Crawford participants. See Appendix VI for the list of Crawford Populists.

40. 12 of the 15 known Populist occupations were agricultural.

particularly, he left an estate of more than three million dollars at the time of his death.<sup>41</sup> Other party members owned "showcase farms."<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, deed records confirm the real property wealth of party members. Only twenty clearly identified party members could be found in Crawford County, but nineteen of the twenty were multiple property owners, some with as many as 15 properties. At the same time, no mortgages were listed against them.<sup>43</sup> Republicans and Democrats in the area did not parallel this Populist affluence, so it is apparent that Populist Party leaders represented the county's rural elite.

Neither Crawford or Erie had any Populist concentration that matched those of Potter and Tioga. However, two farming districts in Crawford County, Beaver and Mead townships, gave Populism enough support to make it the second party, and Mead even gave the Populist candidate the lead in the 1895 State Treasurer contest.<sup>44</sup> But the vote was extremely low, down more than 50% that year. Traditional parties stayed home, while Populists came out in their usual number. In these two farm districts about 25 to 30% of the farmers listened to the rhetoric of the county's successful farmers and cast their votes accordingly. In fact, the 10% vote that Crawford County generally gave to Populists seems best explained in this fashion. Crawford County farmers were in no worse economic condition than other Pennsylvania farmers. No intra-county resentments or isolated problems existed as in Tioga and Potter. Although highly speculative, perhaps Crawford County farmers

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41. Rathgeber, "Joseph Sibley," p. 114.

42. Populist farmers identified in this way in the local press included C. W. Miller, Andrew Storry, and Levi Putnam.

43. Mortgage and Deed Records (1890-1900), Crawford County Courthouse, Meadville, Pa.

44. Smull's Handbook (1893-1896).

attempted to emulate the successful leaders of the local Party. The Populist rhetoric mixed with some local status-seeking may have generated the above average (for Pennsylvania) Populist responses in the County.<sup>45</sup>

No Erie township ever gave a Populist candidate the lead in any statewide election. Generally the city of Erie provided about one-third of the county's Populist vote, and this was the dissident labor vote. Erie city's proportionate returns for the Populists was generally higher than other cities of the state, but never rose above 4% of the total votes cast in the city, 1892-95.<sup>46</sup>

The vote from outlying townships in the county formed a pattern that approximated the Crawford County example. Again it is difficult to ascertain Populist motivation since there were few identified participants and no isolated Populist areas, but those townships with the greatest Populist tendencies (Conneant, McKean, Wayne) were again farming districts. Thus, this portion of the Erie County Populist vote probably derived from the same sources as Crawford County: Populist rhetoric, successful leaders, and status-seeking.

Elections in the twenty-sixth district after 1892 did little to clarify Populism. Ironically, the Erie Party had a change of heart in 1894, and supported Sibley in a losing effort. The People announced that Sibley had proven his convictions in his first term and deserved to be returned to Congress. As explained earlier, Sibley had not earnestly sought the election, and this may be the reason for his defeat.

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45. See explanation of Indiana Populism, p. 136 for additional reasoning on how other farmer votes may have been gathered throughout the state, including Crawford and Erie.

46. Smill's Handbook (1893-1896):

There seemed little change in the Populist pattern. Erie city harbored labor-prone Populists, and Crawford County Populists demonstrated a penchant for Democratic fusion. The election of 1896, with the heavy concentration and national interest in the twenty-sixth district, discussed earlier, showed the vitality of this principle.

In reflecting on Populism in Erie and Crawford, it becomes clear that the vote came from many different sources. The Erie voters were the few dissident workers. Undoubtedly a larger body of workers would have followed if retaliatory forces, from political propaganda to economic sanctions, had not intervened. A small number of Erie farmers also gave limited support to Populist candidates. Crawford County drew most Populist votes from the farmers, although actual leaders seem to be a curious antithesis of the familiar Populist dissident. Wealthy and influential, they used Populism. Certainly leadership of the local elite influenced farmers who supported Populism as a kind of status-seeking. Populist platform support of agricultural values made it natural for some farmers to take this political road, leading to a Crawford County Populist vote of nearly ten percent.

Populism in Indiana County was less subject to analysis, since it had few active Populists and no strong Populist centers.<sup>47</sup> In fact, only three districts gave Populists a second place in any pre-fusion elections: Burrell in 1893 and 94, Rayne in 1894, and Glen Campbell in 1895. None revealed much about Populism in the county since each was small with

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47. See Appendix VII for list of Indiana Populists.

minimal county significance. In addition, there were no obvious connections between them, for rural Glen Campbell was in the North, Burrell was in the South, and Rayne in the center. Discounting these exceptions, the county's Populist vote was rather evenly distributed from rural areas, with town dwellers rejecting the Populists. Rural areas cast approximately ten percent of their vote for Populists, while towns gave Populists one-half of one percent of their votes.

Since the type of answers obtained from Potter County cannot be gotten from Indiana County, any reasons suggested for Indiana Populism must come from other, general impressions. Though less precise, these impressions do provide a logical explanation for Indiana Populism. For one thing, Populist leaders were farmers, and most Populist votes came from rural areas. Since not all Indiana farmers joined the Populists, additional information is required before reaching any conclusion.

Voting statistics suggest that Populists were agricultural leftovers of the Greenback-labor movement of the 1870's and 1880's. Indiana County had been one of Pennsylvania's strongest Greenback counties, combining agricultural and labor votes to develop a formidable third party which outranked the Democrats on one occasion. From 1878 through 1888, each party's percentage for major candidates was as follows:<sup>48</sup>

1878 - Republican 43%	Democrat 21%	Greenback 30%
1880 - Republican 57%	Democrat 26%	Greenback 18%
1882 - Republican 53%	Democrat 26%	Greenback 16%
1884 - Republican 56%	Democrat 24%	Greenback 13%
1886 - Republican 57%	Democrat 28%	Greenback 9%
1888 - Republican 64%	Democrat 27%	Union Labor 6%

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48. Smull's Handbook (1878-1896) was the source for computing the percentages in the following paragraphs.

In 1890, Robert Pattison's candidacy united the Democrats and third party elements and one vote was Republican 54% and Democrats 44%.

However, when Populism offered a new third party to Pennsylvania voters in 1892, the Indiana County "renegade" farmer could not resist. Voting statistics show how the "unified" Democrats of 1890 redivided during the early Populist years.

1892 - Republicans 61%	Democrats 28%	Populist 5.9%
1893 - Republicans 64%	Democrats 26%	Populist 6.5%
1894 - Republicans 68%	Democrats 22%	Populist 7.5%
1895 - Republicans 70%	Democrats 23%	Populist 5.2%

Populist totals were smaller than Greenback totals because labor apparently did not join the third-party, as it did the Greenback Movement.

Indiana Populists were therefore agriculturalists dissatisfied with Republican philosophy or the conservative influence present in agricultural organizations and publications. While the controls discussed earlier - farmer representation in government, town associations, traditional politics - kept the majority of Pennsylvania farmers within traditional political machinery (generally Republican), some broke the bonds of tradition. This was true in Indiana and other counties with Populistic tendencies (more than 3% of the vote). All were in the West or North of the State;<sup>49</sup> all had a large part of their economy devoted to farming;<sup>50</sup> all had a record of Republican leadership since the Civil War.<sup>51</sup> Such information suggests that the economic argument was of some relevance for certain farmers isolated from markets or concerned with other problems unique

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49. See Map 4 in Appendix IX.

50. Agriculture of Pennsylvania (1890).

51. See Appendix VIII

to their area. This would account for East-West differences in Populist totals. Also since fourteen counties with strong Populist tendencies were traditionally Republican and since the Populist vote was siphoned from the Democratic Party, politically-frustrated Democratic farmers were the source of this portion of Pennsylvania's Populist vote. Thwarted in politics by Republican power, these erstwhile Democrats turned to Populism when individual problems in Indiana County seemed insurmountable. Some of the farm vote in Erie, Crawford, Potter, and Tioga, as well as lesser Populist areas, was undoubtedly attracted for the same reasons.

This type of Populist vote was strongest in Indiana county because of earlier Greenback impetus. Though no records exist with which to contrast Indiana economics with those of Populist counties such as Beaver, or McKean, or Warren, Indiana County may have had more severe economic or social problems. However, the presence of R. A. Thompson might also account for the Indiana lead. As an active Greenbacker turned Populist, his leadership and affluence would attract a following. Thus, the Populists of Indiana County were ahead of other farm counties.

In summary, Indiana Populism illustrated the transfer of Greenback radicalism to Populist candidates. Frustrated by continued Republican control, unable to accept the Democratic Party, and suffering from personal, economic, social, or geographic problems, these agricultural voters contained Pennsylvania's direct agricultural response to Populist philosophy.

And by their minimal numbers they substantiated the contention that Pennsylvania farmers had little need of Populist alternatives. The majority of Pennsylvania farmers seldom felt the frustration so fundamental in strong Populist areas. Simply stated, Pennsylvania rurality was politically stable, having traditional institutions that recognized agricultural needs and made some efforts to meet those needs. Thus, few farmers were forced to assume a radical posture.

## Conclusion

This study of rural Pennsylvania politics in the late nineteenth century has focused on two factors. First, the differences between rural Pennsylvania and other rural areas during the 90's. And, second, the actual Populist movement scattered in a few isolated precincts throughout the state. General rural life and politics of Pennsylvania contrasted with Populist rurality, thereby explaining the thorough rejection of Populism by Pennsylvania farmers. Analyzing Pennsylvania Populism added a chapter to the national movement, thereby providing further insight into Populist personality, origins, and motives.

Pennsylvania's rural environment proved very different from other Populist areas. Characteristics of Kansas-Nebraska Populism vividly illustrate these differences. Most important, rural alienation, so visible in Kansas and Nebraska, was not part of the Pennsylvania scene. Instead of town-countryside antagonism over political offices, merchandizing techniques, or control of agricultural societies, Pennsylvania had a high level of rural-town cooperation.

Political differences were confined to the traditional party structure, leaving third parties with few adherents. Farmers maintained this traditional loyalty because various accommodations had been won—political representation, tax relief, road and school support. Though farmers suffered in the total economy because of difficult times, they had no running feud with town merchants since cooperative ventures of the Grange or Farmers' Alliance, so irritating in Populist areas, had not survived in Pennsylvania. Town and countryside, more geographically allied than in Populist territory, joined in church, school, and fraternal orders.

Thus, Pennsylvania farmers functioned as an integral part of the larger community.

As a result of these differences, Pennsylvania farmers felt little frustration or bitterness against entrenched leadership so typical in the West. In addition, newspapers, farm journals, and agricultural associations promoted traditional politics. Under their influence, few Pennsylvania farmers accepted Populism as a political alternative, and the movement failed to achieve any significant following.

A few Populist centers were scattered throughout the commonwealth. Clearly though, these centers were not components of a well-run, influential organization aimed at revolutionizing the social, economic, or political fabric of Pennsylvania. Instead they were a series of obscure local protests, uncoordinated and in many way unrelated. The only common bond seems to have been utilization of available Populist candidates and labels, and occasional adaptation of Populist rhetoric.

The composition and activities of the state central committee revealed the lack of internal cohesion in Pennsylvania Populism. Although the committee drew members from all corners of the state, the specific counties that were the strongest Populist areas went practically unrepresented, indicating a dissimilarity in personnel and purposes between Populist leaders and Populist voters. And although party platforms in different election years repeated many national party slogans and viewpoints, the individuals who headed the Pennsylvania committee showed few Populist-type characteristics. Significantly, the only common description for many committee members was their association with newspaper

work, consequently arousing suspicions that the committee may have been prompted for avaricious reasons, not political or social ones.

Due to the lack of evidence, any explanation of the central committee's membership remains conjectural, and can only suggest the fragmentation of Pennsylvania Populism. Actual Populist experiences throughout the state provided proof that decentralized and separate motivations dominated the movement in Pennsylvania. Each local protest grew out of different political experiences, developing in an independent fashion.

Pennsylvania's Populist Party functioned as a catch-all for the few politically discontented driven to a radical posture because of grievance in their own area for which they found no help from either traditional party. Dissatisfied laborites of Erie reacted to local management and voiced their feeling in Populist support at election time. Tioga miners rallied to their local hero, William B. Wilson, who had been snubbed by county Democrats, and voted for the Populist candidates. In adjacent Potter County, dairy farmers of the Northwest corner refused to follow either the Democrats or Republicans, since the former were associated with hemlock lumbering and alcohol and the latter with Coudersport control of county politics. As a consequence, Northwest residents turned to Populism whose agricultural orientation fit their occupational standards, and whose attitude on the prohibition was acceptable. Crawford County Populists, led by local farmers who controlled large real estate holdings, responded to agricultural Populism and sought to increase their own status. In Indiana County, farmers followed the earlier tradition of Greenbackism and embraced the agricultural reforms in Populism. Along

with a few other farmers of western and northern counties, these constituted Pennsylvania's "agrarian radicals."

While identification of Pennsylvania Populism as a political catch-all, with little internal cooperation or coordination, offers a general description of the Pennsylvania Movement itself, other characteristics warrant consideration. First, local Pennsylvania Populists had little or no association with national Populism, and shied away from national politics in general.<sup>1</sup> With the exception of Indiana, and to a degree Crawford, local campaigns showed little interest in national platforms, turning instead to issues of their local area. Free silver and the sub-treasury plan held no attraction for the miners of Arnot or the lumbermen of Potter County. Sibley's struggles in his various elections constituted the major exception, and even his defeat in 1894 was attributed to his failure to honor local demands. And though the central committee consistently sent delegates to national meetings and supported the national platform, these were desultory efforts and not representative of grass-roots Populists.

Ironically, the wide disparity in the components of the Pennsylvania Movement produced a curious feature - many opposing explanations of national Populism find credence in Pennsylvania. In one case, workers in the city of Erie demonstrated that labor could join the agricultural protest, thus forming a labor-farmer coalition. At the same time status seeking ideas were at work in Crawford and Potter, as residents sought to reach the economic achievements of their leaders, or protect alcoholic abstinence while condemning the free-living ways of hemlock lumber camps. In

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1. For example, the presidential papers of Harrison, Cleveland, and McKinley, and the papers of Bryan contain no correspondence with any local Pennsylvania Populist.

addition, the agricultural following in Indiana and other counties of Western and Northern Pennsylvania may illustrate "agrarian reformers" who supported Populist remedies in times of adversity. The small proportion of the agricultural population that followed this political path indicates the effectiveness of Pennsylvania conditions in thwarting Populist development. Nevertheless, the small number so identified expressed attitudes which indicated that some farmers could espouse Populism simply as a rural political philosophy that served their needs.

In the final analysis, Pennsylvania rural politics gains added significance within the context of political history of the eastern United States. Discovering that Pennsylvania Populism had many of the same characteristics as the New York state movement increases the possibility that a pattern of northeastern rural conditions actually existed during the Populist era which deserves historical recognition. Certainly in both New York and Pennsylvania, an eastern rural persuasion affected political alignments keeping agriculturalists outside the Populist Party and reinforcing, instead, the sanctity of the traditional parties. Thus considered, eastern rural politics of the Populist decade emerges as an important entity in its own right, as well as being a means for better understanding the Populist Movement.

Appendix I

People's Party Platforms of Pennsylvania 1892-1899

A. 1892

The People's Party

Platform:

1. We reiterate the preamble and endorse the platform of the St. Louis conference.
2. We demand the right of any township, borough, city, county or state to borrow money from the general government to be used in operating productive industries that will give employment to labor.
3. We demand the referendum system of submitting important national and state legislation to a vote of the people.
4. Whereas, The United States government, up to the present time, has made no provision for protecting by law the American labor market from foreign competition and the foreign labor, as now admitted to said labor market is detrimental and injurious to American labor, both in employment and wages; therefore be it  
Resolved, That the United States laws should compel the employer of alien labor to pay an annual amount of not less than \$100 per capita, for each alien employed, for the term of five years.
5. Resolved, That the unequal burden of taxation borne by real estate is a grievous wrong, and we demand that our tax laws be so amended as to compel all forms of property to bear an equal share of necessary taxation, all valuations to be on a cash value basis.
6. We demand a uniform series of public school books to be furnished by the state free of cost to the different school districts.
7. We demand the suppression of the use of private armed detectives by individuals and corporations for personal interests as oppressive to the individual and a menace to a popular government.
8. We demand that the President, Vice President, United States Senators and postmasters be elected by a district vote of the people.
9. We demand that the right of suffrage be inherent in citizenship, irrespective of sex.
10. We demand the Australian ballot law, pure and simple, but denounce the caricature on justice called the Baker ballot law.

11. Resolved, That the recent combination of railroad known as the Reading railroad combine, is in direct opposition to the provisions of our state constitution; has already thrown large numbers of laboring men out of employment; has raised the price of coal to consumers; places the productive industries under still further bonds to English capital, and if not overthrown will create a single great monopoly in a necessity of life; we therefore demand of our state authorities such immediate action as will prevent its consummation, as the South-Penn deal was prevented a few years ago by our present executive, even if necessary to the forfeitures of the rights and franchises derived from the State of Pennsylvania.
12. Resolved, That in the strife between the capitalist and laborer, our sympathy is with the laborer, whose expended brawn and brain is the source of wealth, and we extend an invitation to workmen of all trades and advocates to join with us in obtaining the redress of the grievances through popular legislation.
13. Resolved, That we demand a service pension bill, both in justice to the soldier and as a means of increasing the currency of the country.
14. We demand the free and unlimited coinage of silver and denounce the scheme to call an international conference to fix an international ratio between gold and silver by the monarchial nations of the old world as un-American and a subterfuge to catch votes.

B. People's Party Platform - 1893

Platform:

We reaffirm our allegiance to our National People's party platform and reiterate its general demands.

We earnestly call the attention of the people of the State to the foregoing important national questions, all of which we favor, and as to questions of State nature, we ask the considerate judgment of all to the following principles.

We demand the referendum system of submitting important national and state legislation to a vote of the people.

We demand that the President, Vice President, United States Senators and postmasters should be elected by a direct vote of the people.

We demand a graduated income and inheritance tax for raising State, county and municipal revenue.

We believe the present State school book law, being clearly in the interest of the School Book Syndicate, should be amended so that the State shall publish

a uniform system of text books and furnish them free to the children of the Commonwealth.

We demand a law making the mine boss of coal mines a State officer, to be selected through the civil service rules, the salary of the mine boss to be made up by a levy upon the output of the mine.

We favor the State ownership and operation of the coal mines, and hereby express our sympathy with the radical delegates to the late Anti-Coal Combine convention at Chicago.

We demand that the actual homestead, to a limited amount, owned and paid for, shall be exempted from levy or sale for debt.

We demand that all property in the State now taxable be assessed at its cash value for State, county and municipal purposes, and to pay an equal millage.

We demand service pensions to all men who contributed to the restoration of the Union, by army and navy services, payable in additional issues of full legal tender paper money direct from the United States treasury to pensioners.

We demand the absolute repeal of the labor conspiracy laws; the adoption of a law making it a grave offense for any employer to interfere in any manner with an employe's right to join or affiliate with any party or organization that he or she may see fit; the enactment of laws compelling corporations and firms to pay employes weekly; the abolition of company stores, and the adoption of a law giving mechanics and laborers a first lien on the product of their labor for the full extent of their wages.

We are opposed to the issue of State bonds for road purposes, or any other purposes.

We demand such amendments to the Baker law as will permit all parties to be represented on the official ballot without reference to per cent of votes cast.

Resolved, That we, the People's Party, of the State of Pennsylvania, do reaffirm our adherence to the two great fundamental principles of the constitution namely, civil and religious liberty, embodied in the first amendment to the constitution.

#### C. People's Party Platform - Pennsylvania - 1894

##### Platform:

We re-affirm our allegiance to our National People's Party platform, and reiterate its general demands.

We earnestly call the attention of the people of the State to the foregoing important national questions, all of which we favor, and as to the

question of State nature, we ask the considerate judgment of all to the following principles.

We demand the referendum system of submitting important national and State legislation to a vote of the people.

We demand that the President, Vice President, United States Senators and the postmasters should be elected by a direct vote of the people.

We demand a graduated income and inheritance tax for raising State, county and municipal revenue.

We believe the present State school book law being clearly in the interest of the school book syndicate should be amended so that the State shall publish a uniform system of text books and furnish them free to the school children of the Commonwealth.

We demand a law making the mine boss of coal mines a State officer, to be selected through the civil service rules, the salary of the mine boss to be paid by a levy made upon the output of the mine.

We favor the State ownership and operation of the coal mines, and hereby express our sympathy with the radical delegates to the late anti-coal combine convention at Chicago.

We demand that the actual homestead, to a limited amount owned and paid for, shall be exempted from levy or sale for debt.

We demand that all property in the State now taxable, be assessed at its cash value for State, county and municipal purposes, and to pay an equal millage.

We demand service pensions to all men who contributed to the restoration of the Union, by army and navy service, payable in additional issues of full legal tender paper money direct from the United States treasury to pensioners.

We demand the absolute repeal of the labor conspiracy laws; the adoption of a law making it a grave offense for any employer to interfere in any manner with an employe's right to join or affiliate with any party or organization that he or she may see fit; the enactment of laws compelling corporations and firms to pay their employes weekly in lawful money; the abolition of company stores, and the adoption of a law giving mechanics and laborers a first lien upon the product of their labor for the full extent of their wages.

We are opposed to the issue of State bonds for road purposes of any other purposes.

We demand such amendment of the Baker ballot law as will permit all parties to be represented on the official ballot without reference to percentages of votes cast.

Resolved, That we, the People's Party of the State of Pennsylvania, do re-affirm our adherence to the two great fundamental principles of the Constitution, namely, civil and religious liberty, embodied in the first amendment to the Constitution.

D. People's Party Platform - Pennsylvania - 1895

Platform:

We, the members of the People's Party of Pennsylvania convention assembled, on the 118th anniversary of independence, do set forth the following declaration of the People's Party of Pennsylvania, and ask the consideration of the people.

- Resolved, 1. That we endorse the Omaha platform.
2. That we condemn the action of the recent vicious and corrupt Legislature in creating great numbers of new offices increasing the salaries of others, until the aggregate amounts to nearly \$1,000,000 annually.
  3. We condemn the policy of the Democratic and Republican parties in our national government of bonding the nation in time of peace.
  4. We demand the material reduction of the salaries of county, state and national officers.
  5. We demand proportional representation and cumulative voting.
  6. We demand direct legislation by the people through the initiative and referendum, to be applied to all national, state and municipal affairs.
  7. We demand the state manufacture and sale of liquor without profit.
  8. We demand the equal rights of women with men, politically, socially and economically.

Resolutions:

We denounce as revolutionary the action of the United States Court in sending Hon. Eugene V. Debs and his associates to prison without trial by jury.

We denounce the late decision of the United States Court on the income tax.

We denounce a state tax of ten per cent, upon all future contracts made payable in gold, to be paid by the holder.

E. People's Party Platform Pennsylvania - 1896

Platform:

The People's Party of Pennsylvania, in convention assembled, reaffirms

its fealty to the principles annunciated in the platforms adopted by the National Convention in Omaha, July 4, 1892 and essentially at St. Louis, July 22, 1896.

We hereby concur in the work of the People's Party assembled in St. Louis in their selection of William J. Bryan, of Nebraska, as a candidate for President, and of Thomas E. Watson of Georgia, for Vice President of the United States as the standard bearers of a down-trodden people, and in order to more fully secure their election we advocate fusion with Democratic electors in this State, provided that if the Democrats are opposed to fusion on Presidential electors, the executive committee to be clothed with plenary power to appoint electors known to be true Populists, to carry out the wish of the National Convention at St. Louis for the nomination of Bryan and Watson.

We demand that all public questions be submitted to the people through the initiative and referendum.

We condemn the Legislature for passing the act of Assembly which aims at and is intended to crush and destroy the independent pipe lines and refineries and the act of favoring the consolidation of street car lines, as they both are instrumental in creating monopolies which the People's party unequivocally condemns, and we also condemn the issue of interest-bearing bonds for the making of roads or for any other purpose, and the calling together of the several county commissioners of this State at its expense to further this purpose.

We hereby condemn the repeal of the Sherman act without the substitution of a free coinage law, and point out to the people that whatever prosperity we enjoyed from 1879 until 1893 was owing to the issue of \$559,000,000 of silver and treasury notes during the period of the Bland and Sherman acts, resulting in the importation of \$224,000,000 of gold in excess of exports; also the increase in the circulation of the national banks from about \$200,000,000 to \$355,000,000 during the first five years of the Bland act, thereby increasing the circulation and keeping up values; and that the panic of 1893 was brought about by a conspiracy of bankers to force the repeal of the Sherman act and the issue of bonds.

We demand that if the Democracy of Pennsylvania desire the support of the People's party in the coming election, they must at once proceed to get rid of the traitors to free silver among the leaders of the party.

(No Convention or Platform in 1897)

F. People's Party Platform Pennsylvania - 1898

Platform:

Resolved, That the People's party of the State of Pennsylvania in convention assembled, hereby adopt the following platform:

Resolved, That the government alone should issue all the money, gold, silver

and paper - in amount not less than \$50 per capita.

Resolved, That no bonds should be issued to carry on the war with Spain, but its cost should be paid for in taxes to be levied, and in the coin age of silver bullion now in the treasury, and the issue of treasury notes all money issued to be full legal tender.

Resolved, That we are in favor of the Initiative and Referendum.

Resolved, That we are in favor of all necessary reforms in our state Government, as shown by the expositions made by Rev. S. C. Smellow and by Hon. John Wanamaker.

Resolved, That we recognize the St. Louis People's party platform as our national standard.

#### G. People's Party Platform - Pennsylvania - 1899

##### Platform

We, the People's Party of Pennsylvania in convention assembled, do reaffirm all the principles of our party as embodied in the latest official expression of our party by our National Convention at St. Louis in 1896.

On State issues for the ensuing campaign, we declare as follows:

We oppose and condemn the corrupt management of the Treasury of Pennsylvania in the past. We condemn the placing of deposits in politically favored banks for political purposes. We urge that all sums due from the State Treasury to counties or municipalities should be paid as soon as due.

We disapprove of the way in which our courts have in recent years too frequently taken sides in favor of capital and corporations and against the laboring and producing classes. All citizens and all legal interests should be absolutely equal before the law. We depend upon an upright judiciary to be absolutely impartial in the dispensing of justice, regardless of the wealth or poverty of those applying for justice.

We declare direct legislation, consisting of the initiative and referendum, to be the only hope for true people's government, which is sorely needed, particularly in our large cities.

We condemn the last Legislature for failing to pass a bill, presented in both houses, granting the right of the people to demand a referendum on the subject of the granting of public franchises, in the cities and towns in this State.

We condemn the last Legislature for not giving to the people a just ballot law.

We condemn the reduction of the school appropriations by the present administration.

We demand a law giving the Commonwealth and defendant equal rights in the selection of jurors in criminal cases.

We favor taxation of franchises.

We favor the election of United States Senators by direct vote of the people.

We invite all citizens of all parties to join us in carrying into effect the above principles, to the end that the interests of every citizen of our State and nation may be better served.

Resolutions:

Resolved, That we are opposed to any policy or system that will increase or perpetuate the national bonded debt.

Resolved, That we condemn the national administration for not issuing full legal tender paper money instead of the government bonds during the war with Spain.

Resolved, That to those former members of the People's Party of this State who have withdrawn from the regular State organization, and who have voluntarily absented themselves from the convention, we extend an invitation to join with us during the ensuing campaign, and to reunite with us in all our future deliberations.

Resolved, That we demand such legislation as will preserve to properly qualified electors the right to cast a properly marked ballot, and will insure to such electors the certainty of said ballot being counted without change or revision by returning officers.

Resolved, That we heartily disapprove of the act of the United States army officer interfering with the organizations of laboring men and mechanics, as was lately seen in the State of Idaho.

Appendix II

Populists on Party's Central Committee or  
Nominated on State Ticket (with their home counties).

<u>Ailman, Jerome T., Juniata</u>	<u>Lotier, Victor, Montour</u>
<u>Akin, J. B. Washington</u>	Louch, Abraham, Erie
Atwood, Nathan, Erie	Main, George, Susquehanna
Ayer, H. S., Warren	Mason, E. T., Crawford
<u>Barker, Samuel, Philadelphia</u>	<u>Maurer, C. A., Reading</u>
Brigham, Robert, Venango	McCombs, R. B., Lawrence
<u>Carroll, John P., Northampton</u>	<u>McKee, C. T., Philadelphia</u>
Chase, S. P., Tioga	Moore, O. G., Clarion
Clark, Curtis, Crawford	Rheem, William C., Venango
Coughlin, D. O. Luzerne	<u>Rynder, T. P., Erie</u>
Dauson, George, Beaver	Sisler, J. M., Blair
Frye, R. B., Washington	Stevenson, John, Alleghany
Greenaman, B. F., McKean	<u>Swallow, Silas, Dauphin</u>
Harrun, A. C., Bradford	Taylor, C. F., Philadelphia
Huston, J. Newton, Chester	<u>Thompson, R. A., Indiana</u>
Johnson, Dennis, Erie	Triskett, William, Cumberland
Kane, James F., Alleghany	Watkins, Justus, Tioga
Leslie, J. Edd, Alleghany	Weiler, Jerry, Carbon
Logan, David, Crawford	Windsor, F. M., McKean

\*Those underlined were newspaper men.

Appendix III

Names of People in Potter County Political Parties

A. Populists

Alvas Carpenter  
Wilharn Cole  
Arthur Miller  
E. D. Roche  
Albert Allen  
F. E. Lyon  
A. W. Cummings  
D. H. Cobb  
J. P. Gates  
W. A. Gardner  
Amos Newton  
Robert McDowell  
Elvin Burdick  
M. R. Card  
William VanKuren  
Elymus Haskett  
Nelson Allen  
M. J. Young  
G. C. Hiskok  
M. Windsor

Jacob Lehman  
A. H. Herring  
O. H. Crosky  
J. M. Lyman  
L. C. Kirbe  
Joseph O'Donnell  
E. A. Burdick  
Silas Stillman  
J. B. Davidson  
M. C. Duncan  
A. Barto  
Ira Bishop  
A. S. Wordon  
L. W. Lyman  
Daniel Clark  
James B. Turner  
A. J. Quinley  
V. M. Allen  
Herman Fleshatz  
Thomas Harrington  
R. L. Lyman

B. Democrats

Owen Metzger  
Herbert Avery  
John Stone  
Bryan McGinnes  
John V. Lewis  
Frederick Woefel  
Jones Walker  
W. W. Tassall  
John Kilborne  
John Collins

A. A. Raymond  
F. J. Andrew  
Charles Coates  
Thomas Hill  
Luther Seibert  
James Coulston  
Charles Huston  
George Clark  
James Benson  
Layfayette Rice  
A. Miller

C. Republicans

W. K. Jones  
William Crosley  
Albert Rennels  
Bureditts Harrison  
Dana Drake  
Harrison Gates  
Charles Bailey  
E. H. Ashcraft  
Consider Stearns  
James W. Dickenson  
John R. Groves  
Arthur Mann  
E. R. Mays  
Arthur Olemstead  
Lyman Cobb  
Frank Bronson

Alonso Moore  
Stephen Bash  
Warren Brightsman  
John Reis  
Sanford Lewis  
James Dexter  
Martin Fessender  
Francis Van Wagner  
Fred Leonard  
Edelbert Eaton  
Chauncey Tucker  
M. V. Larrabee  
E. M. Gillon  
Asa Raymond  
Albert Heck  
E. R. Gustin

Appendix IV

Tioga County Populists

Justus Watkins

Albert F. Packard

John J. Jones

William B. Wilson

Edward Bynes

James Hall

Daniel P. Jones

Samuel Davis

William Shearer

Appendix V

Erie County Populists

A. T. Marsh

Judson E. Turner

L. W. Olds

C. C. Parker

W. E. Euer

Charles Hedrick

H. L. Bullock

A. J. Louch

A. J. Foster

J. F. Gingenback

J. A. Brace

F. L. Hirt

L. Rusterholtz

F. C. Sapper

George Spalding

Charles Howard

W. H. Miller

J. L. Babcock

Samuel Weiss

Charles Anderson

J. P. Rynder

C. L. Mehler

James A. Henry

Appendix VI

Crawford County Populists

William McGill

George Bixby

Robert McMaster

Philip Willet

Wilber Higby

L. L. Luse

John Seip

C. A. Stranahan

Levi Putman

T. J. Brush

O. P. Blakeslee

C. H. Blystone

J. M. Williams

W. O. Beach

C. W. Miller

George B. White

S. E. Bunday

A. W. Smith

J. W. Wood

Andrew Storry

Appendix VII

Indiana County Populists

R. A. Thompson

B. C. Fleck

A. W. Wilson

C. M. Cribbs

B. F. Lydick

J. W. Clark

D. R. Jenkins

Thomas North

Terry Smith

Gilbert McCrea

John M. Marlin

Appendix VIII

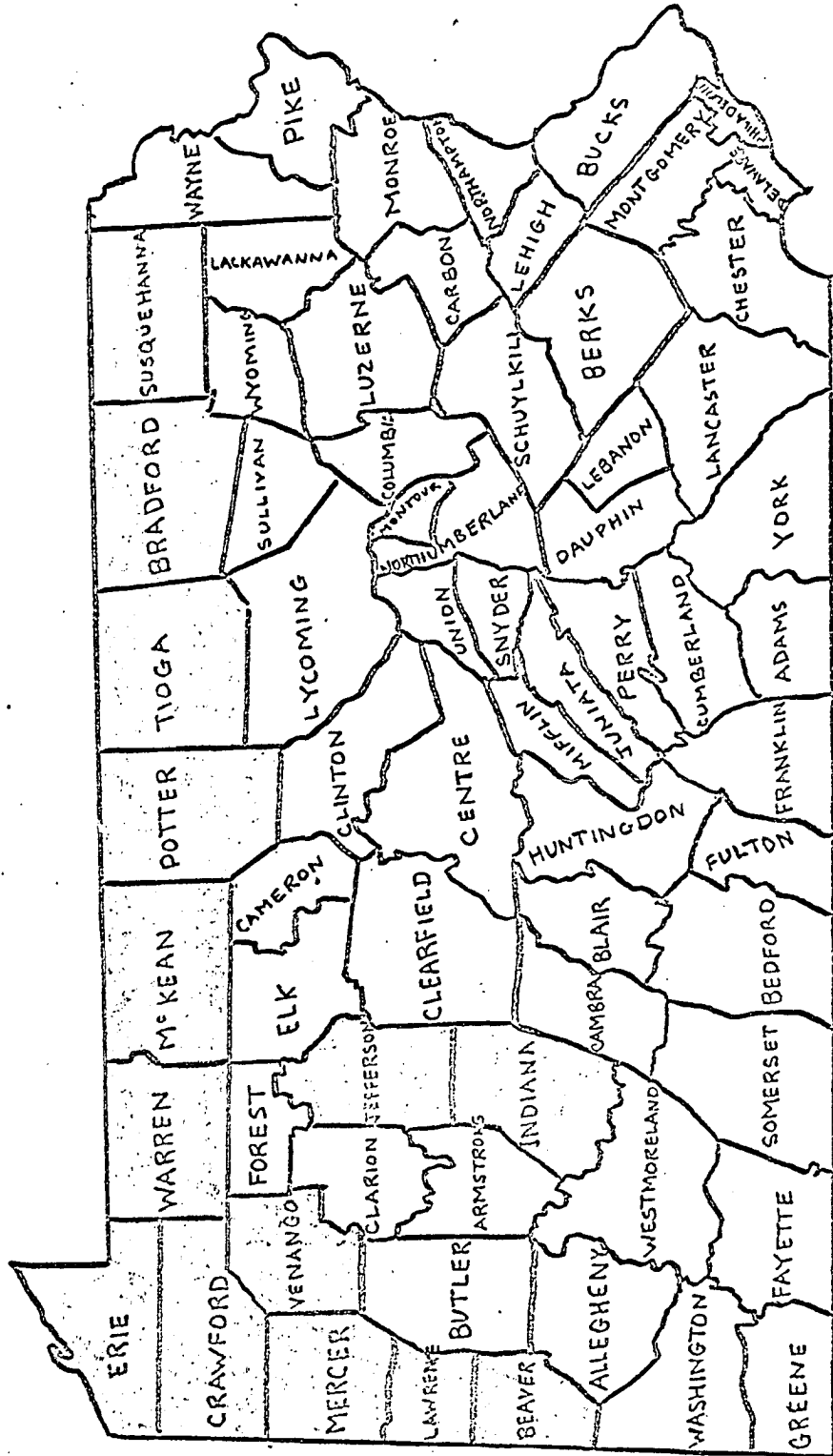
Pennsylvania Counties With More Than a  
3% Populists Vote in Any of Elections Between 1892 and 1895

	<u>1892</u>	<u>1893</u>	<u>1894</u>	<u>1895</u>
Beaver	3.76	2.50	10.34	3.34
Bradford	1.08	0.56	3.71	3.22
Crawford	7.04	6.42	11.50	11.62
Erie	3.62	6.67	6.36	5.05
Indiana	5.97	6.42	7.52	5.29
Jefferson	4.42	3.65	7.74	2.14
Laurence	1.72	2.79	3.25	1.53
McKean	3.81	3.97	5.50	3.36
Mercer	1.01	2.52	4.00	2.17
Potter	15.89	11.35	12.27	13.25
Susquehanna	0.71	2.23	5.40	4.92
Tioga	3.50	2.30	9.82	4.65
Venango	3.92	2.75	4.11	1.63
Warren	4.84	4.23	6.15	3.60

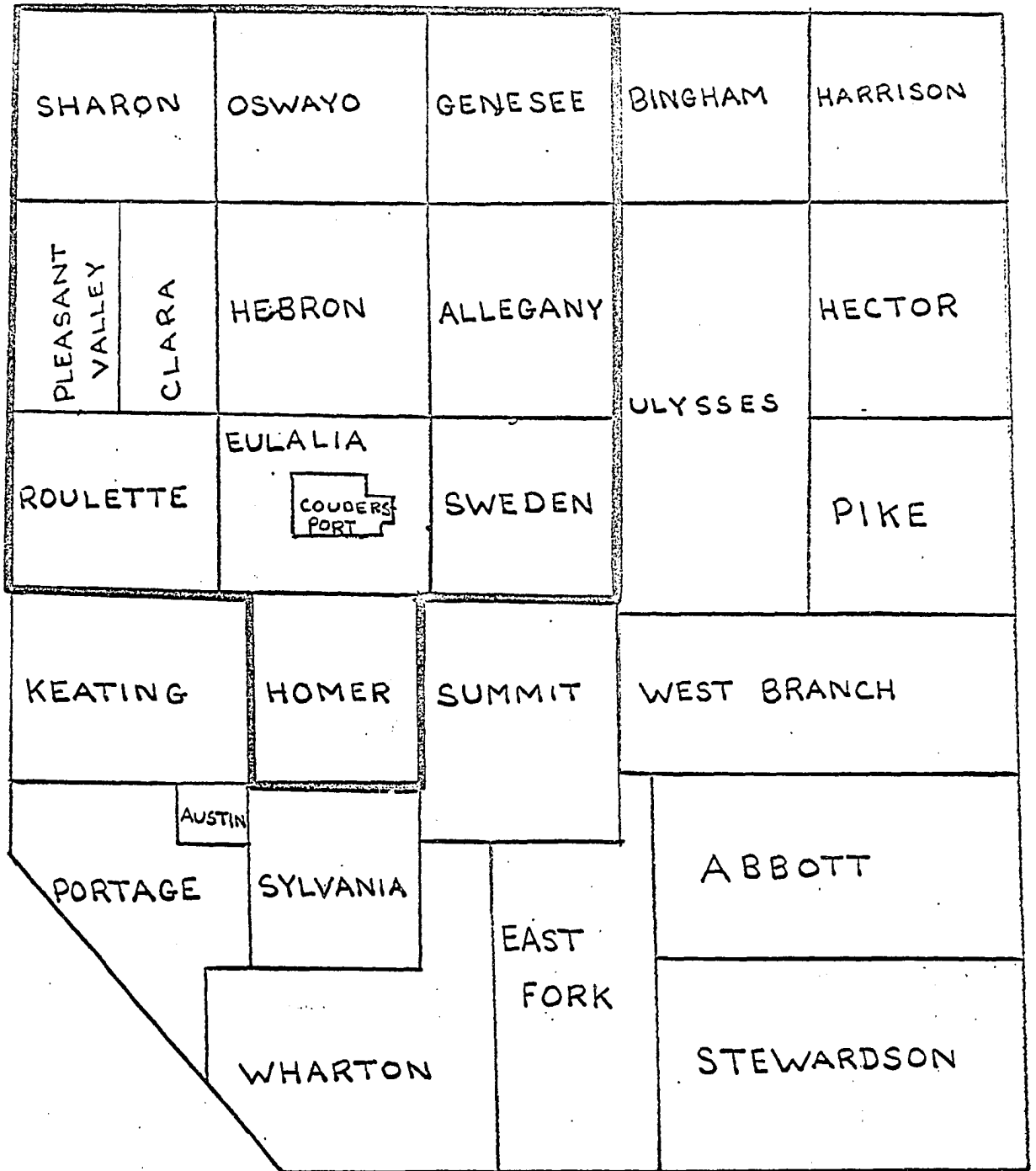
Appendix VIII

Map 1

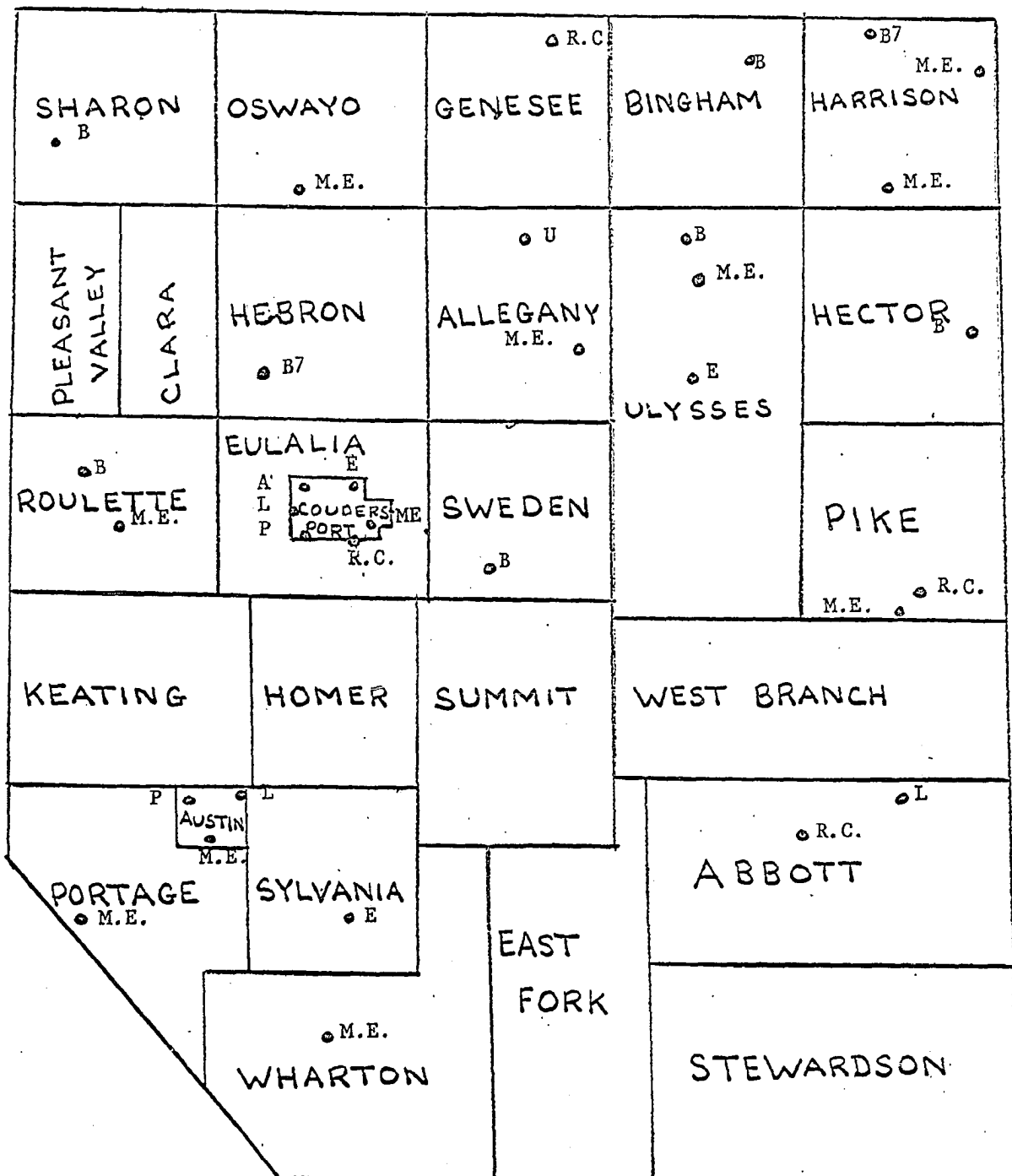
Populist Counties of Pennsylvania



Populist Townships of Potter County



Church Locations in Potter County - 1892

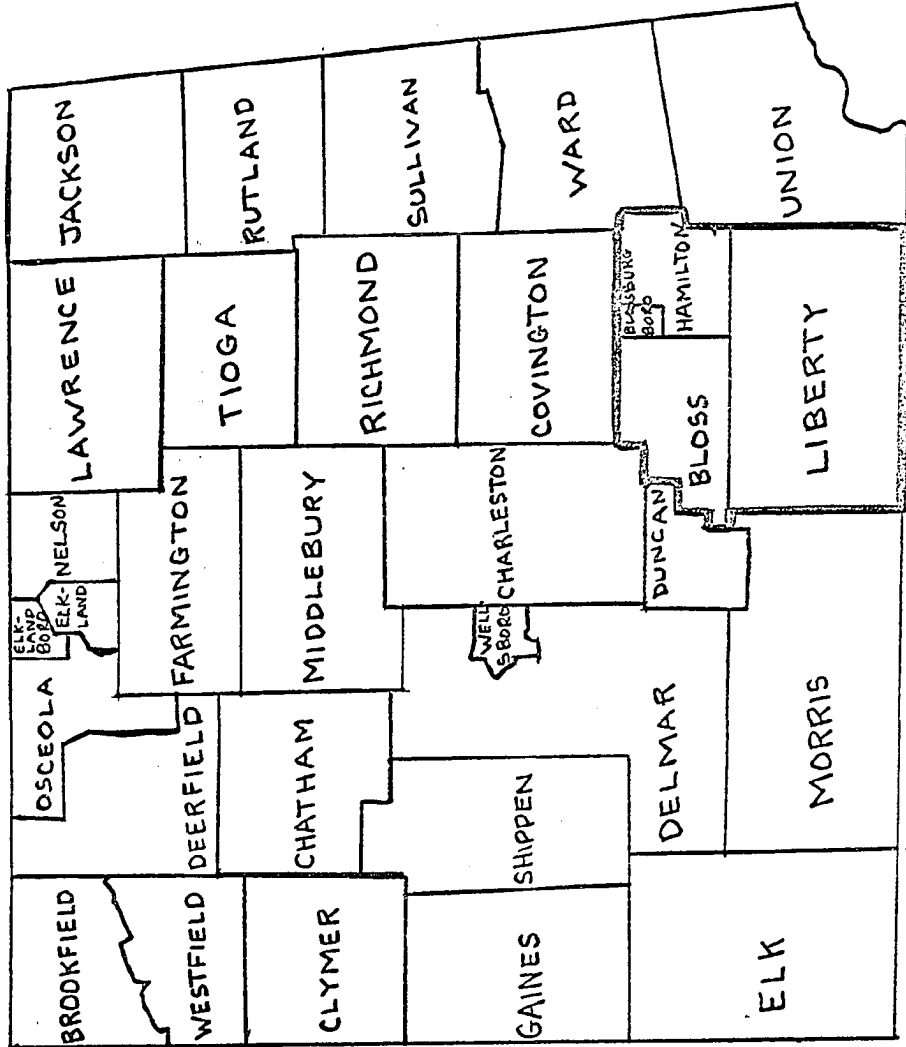


Key

- |      |                       |    |             |
|------|-----------------------|----|-------------|
| B    | - Baptist (North)     | L. | - Lutheran  |
| B7   | - Seventh Day Baptist | E. | - Episcopal |
| M.E. | - Methodist Episcopal | A. | - Adventist |
| P.   | - Presbyterian        | U. | - Union     |
| R.C. | - Roman Catholic      |    |             |

Map 4

Populist Townships of Tioga County



Appendix X

Comparison of Democratic and Republican  
Percentages 1866-1900

		<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>
1866	Gov.	51.43	48.56
1868	Pres.	52.20	47.79
1869	Gov.	50.39	49.60
1872	Gov.	52.53	47.25
1872	Pres.	62.26	37.73
1875	Gov.	49.90	47.92
1876	Pres.	50.62	48.25
1878	Gov.	45.75	42.53
1880	Pres.	50.83	46.57
1882	Gov.	42.42	47.76
1884	Pres.	52.68	43.67
1886	Gov.	50.32	45.12
1888	Pres.	52.73	44.77
1890	Gov.	48.22	50.01
1892	Pres.	51.54	45.09
1894	Gov.	60.34	34.98
1896	Pres.	60.86	35.33
1898	Gov.	49.00	36.87
1900	Pres.	60.74	36.15

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## Vita

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