
The Kansas Response to the Haymarket Affair

by Fred Whitehead



What began as a peaceful meeting in Chicago's Haymarket Square erupted into explosive violence, as depicted here in Harper's Weekly. Kansans were quick to respond to the Haymarket Affair, either deploring or sympathizing with those who had called the meeting and were arrested as the anarchists who, if they had not actually thrown the bomb, encouraged it.

FOR MUCH OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, the state of Kansas has suffered the reputation of being a conservative bastion, yet during the 1880s, through the Populist movement of the following decade, and even until the anti-radical repressions of World War I, it was a dramatic laboratory of social experimentation, free thought, and wild political insurgency. The Haymarket Affair of 1886-1887, in which several men were convicted and hanged on the charge of conspiring to dynamite a radical meeting in Chicago, figured prominently in the newspapers and public debates of Kansas.

Haymarket was widely used by Republicans to attack all progressives; correspondingly, it served as a kind of social template for the radicals, and their responses are instructive in their vitality, sense of history, and political courage. This latter quality was in fact prominent in the character of one of the men who was hanged, and who had had significant connections with the state.

In his capacity as a labor organizer, Albert Parsons toured Kansas, Nebraska, and Missouri in the summer of 1885. On July 4 he spoke to a crowd of some three thousand in Ottawa on the topics of political economy,

socialism, and the present struggle against capitalism.¹ He found himself in a turbulent atmosphere, as the Knights of Labor had won a strike against the Union Pacific and were in the process of winning another on the Southwest lines of Jay Gould, which ran through the state.² He also addressed large meetings in Topeka, Omaha, Kansas City, and St. Joseph.

After the Topeka talk he reported: "The capitalistic papers denounced us the next day, and threatened your humble speaker with lynching, but it is far more probable that the workingmen of Topeka would lynch the capitalists of Topeka than to allow themselves to be mobbed by them." In St. Joseph he stated that "the conservative workingmen, who profess to have faith in the curative powers of the ballot-box, strikes, arbitration, etc., were loud in their denunciations of the revolutionary Socialists, and they were at great pains to have the public understand that the Knights of Labor was an organization which had nothing whatever to do with these 'Communists,'" but Parsons claimed to have drawn the largest number of people to such a gathering in the city's history. It is evident, however, that there was a local faction of the Knights opposed to his views. Parsons proceeded to the "Little Balkans" coal region of southeast Kansas and addressed miners in Scammonville, Weir City, and Pittsburg. He saw unemployed men traveling "on the wayside everywhere," and in the Market-Square of Kansas City he spoke to a mass meeting, "mostly 'tramps.'" Summing up his month's tour of the region, he estimated that he had reached "fully 20,000 wage slaves," and concluded:

The working people thirst for the truths of Socialism and welcome their utterance with shouts of delight. It only lacks organization and preparation, and the time for the social revolt is at hand. Their miseries have become unendurable, and their necessities will soon compel them to act, whether they are prepared or not. Let us then redouble our efforts and make ready for the inevitable. Let us strain every nerve to awaken the people to the dangers of the coming storm between the

propertied and the propertyless classes of America. To this work let our lives be devoted. Vive la Revolution Sociale!³

Thus, Albert Parsons had firsthand knowledge of Kansas' militant workers, and they of him.

The following spring of 1886 was marked by an enormous national agitation for the eight-hour day. In addition, the second or "Great" Southwest railroad strike was a central element in the social drama of those months. Under the able leadership of a socialist, Martin Irons, the Knights of Labor confidently hoped to better their conditions, and when a shopworker and fellow Knight was discharged by the Texas and Pacific at Marshall, Texas, all the Knights on the Gould lines struck in early March.⁴

Workers killed steam engines in numerous places, prompting a severe reaction by state and local officials. On March 25, for instance, Gov. John A. Martin of Kansas issued a proclamation:

We are now in the third week of the most serious business disaster that has ever befallen our State. The forcible stoppage of transportation on a long line of railroad touches the interests of a third of the people of Kansas, several hundred thousand in number. Supplies of food and fuel are cut off in many localities; farmers, mechanics and manufacturers are prevented from selling and shipping their stock and goods, and from paying thousands of laborers hitherto in their employ.⁵

He called out the national guard to protect non-striking workers running the trains, and soon the strike was completely broken. Hundreds of workers were dismissed and blacklisted, and the failure of the strike greatly contributed to the subsequent decline of the Knights of Labor.⁶ Meanwhile, as far away as Brooklyn, a Knights assembly issued a "Blood Curdling Address," stating: "The consequence of Gould's treachery has been riot and disaster, brought on by his armed thugs and minions. Before the bar of American public opinion we impeach and indict him! We charge him with

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1. *Life of Albert Parsons With a Brief History of the Labor Movement in America* (Chicago: Lucy E. Parsons, 1889), 25-34. In this volume the Ottawa speech is dated July of 1884, but from the context it is almost certainly a misprint for 1885.

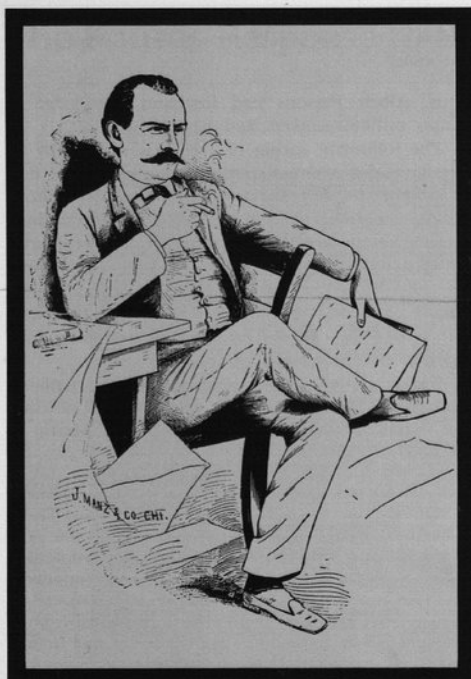
2. Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, 4 vols. (New York: International Pubs. Co., 1975), 2:50-53.

3. *Life of Albert Parsons*, 25-34. These and other details of Parsons' visit to the region are chronicled in this source.

4. *Ibid.*, 83-86; Ruth A. Allen, *The Great Southwest Strike* (Austin: University of Texas, 1942) is the standard work.

5. John A. Martin, Governor's Proclamation, Kansas State Executive Department, Topeka, March 25, 1886. Printed proclamation in the Kansas State Historical Society Library.

6. Foner, *History of Labor Movement*, 86-92; Allen printed photographs of the grave of Martin Irons at Bruceville, Texas, over which the Missouri Federation of Labor erected a monument. See also Philip S. Foner, ed. *Mother Jones Speaks: Collected Writings and Speeches* (New York: Monad Press, 1983), 280-81, 312, for her memories of Irons, her visit to his grave, and her campaign for the monument.



This engraving depicts Albert Parsons in his jail cell and was included in a volume about Parsons' life. The book was published by Parsons' widow, Lucy, after his execution.

treason and high crimes against humanity!... Fellow countrymen, how long is this archfiend Gould to ride roughshod over this land of ours?"⁷ This atmosphere of bitter tension across the country culminated in the Chicago dynamite explosion on the evening of May 4.

In the aftermath of the explosion, a close friend of Parsons who sheltered him from the police suggested that he make his way to Kansas.⁸ Parsons, however, opted for nearby Wisconsin. Out in Valley Falls, Kansas, fellow anarchist Moses Harman was writing his first response to the whole affair. Harman, a survivor of the Civil War period in Missouri, had settled in this small town in the northeastern part of the state to commence the publication of his remarkable newspaper, *Lucifer*,

the *Light-Bearer*.⁹ A freethinker and proponent of advanced views on sexual matters, Harman was inclined to pacifist notions, and his first response to Haymarket was one of outright hostility:

Again has the cause of Labor—the cause of Freedom and of Justice—been betrayed and crucified in the house of its professed friends. The so-called Socialists—the self-styled Anarchists of Chicago, have precipitated a 'reign of terror' in that city. While calling themselves Anarchists their acts prove them to be the exact opposite. Instead of Anarchists they have shown themselves to be Archists of the most rabid and dangerous kind. If we must submit to Archism—to despotism—we much prefer that such despotism should take the form of an organized government, even though that government be administered in the interests of a band of robbers—rather than that we should fall into the hands of an unorganized despotism and mob—such as wrecked buildings and destroyed life in Chicago a few days ago.

The time for the rightful use of the dynamite bomb in America has not yet arrived, and it is sincerely to be hoped will never arrive.¹⁰

In the next week's issue of the paper, Harman was more cautious, and wrote of considering "the causes that led to the murderous affray," concluding: "From all we can learn it would now seem that free speech is on trial in Chicago, as well as the Socialistic strikers."¹¹ News of the atmosphere of hysteria and repression in Chicago undoubtedly prompted Harman to consider the whole matter more deeply. He was much concerned to shore up his position: "Our Anarchism was learned in the school of Franklin, Jefferson and Paine—not in that of Robespierre and Marat," and he again called for the "peaceful dethronement of capital from its usurped seat of power, and the enthronement of labor in its stead."¹² Within two months he was supporting a call for legal defense funds for the Chicago radicals.¹³

Harman had some reason to be circumspect during those days, for other radicals in Kansas were receiving harsh treatment. Harry Vrooman, a student at Washburn University, had met Albert Parsons in Topeka in 1885.¹⁴ Vrooman had been attacked as a dynamiter and member of the Red International by the Topeka *Commonwealth* shortly afterward, and in an eloquent letter he declared

9. Hal D. Sears, *The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977) is an outstanding study of Harman and his circle. For his discussion of Harman's response to Haymarket see pages 137-139.

10. *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Valley Falls, May 7, 1886. Harman's printed date gave the year as E.M. 286, which stood for the Era of Man, beginning with the year of Giordano Bruno's execution in 1600.

11. *Ibid.*, May 14, 1886.

12. *Ibid.*, May 21, 1886.

13. *Ibid.*, June 25, 1886.

14. *Life of Albert Parsons*, 30.

7. Quote from newspaper clipping in "Strike Clippings," Vol. 1, 83-84. Kansas State Historical Society Library; the clippings indicate that the probable newspaper was the *New York Tribune*, and printed in mid-April, 1886.

8. Paul Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 243.

that he did indeed believe in dynamite, but in the form of radical ideas and education.¹⁵

During the summer and fall of 1886, Harry's brother Walter was refused permission to speak in Ottawa, where Parsons had addressed thousands just a year before. In Kansas City and St. Joseph he was arrested, but he wrote of one speech he was able to deliver: "I began to thump the crowd over the head pretty hard with the golden rule, carve their vitals with the sword of the spirit, and depress the minds of some with weighty truths from holy writ." Young Walter's Socialism was apparently of the Congregational kind, but still Red enough to impress the authorities. At an outdoor rally in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on May 9, 1887, Walter Vrooman was again arrested for having provoked a fight among his listeners by declaring that "in light of the miscarriage of justice in the trial of the Haymarket anarchists the American flag had been reduced to a mere rag on a stick." He was fined twenty-five dollars and costs on a charge of disorderly conduct.¹⁶

During the summer of 1887, it became apparent across the nation that the Chicago anarchists were in real peril of their lives, and consequently liberals and radicals rallied to their support. In Topeka a young attorney named G. C. Clemens had been active in politics, and he took up their case in a pamphlet entitled *A Common-Sense View of The Anarchist Case, with Some Points Apparently Unnoticed by Others. By a Common Home-Spun Western Lawyer*. Contrary to the claims of its title, the pamphlet, while cogent in noting many holes in the case of the prosecution, offered little that already had not been written elsewhere, except for a bizarre claim that the Pope was somehow behind the impending executions because "American policemen are almost to a man Irish Catholics." Clemens concluded that the real charge against the Chicago men was for thinking: "...the idea of metaphysical crime was evolved." In Kansas and throughout the subsequent history of the United States, such crimes of intellect have figured prominently in the repression of radicalism.¹⁷

Clemens did not restrict his activities to writing pamphlets, but spoke several times during the summer



Albert Parsons spoke in the Market-Square of Kansas City, Missouri, during his 1885 tour of Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.

in behalf of the condemned men and also against police brutality in Topeka itself. He was the author of a broadside boldly headed "DAMNABLE! POLICE INFAMIES OF A SINGLE WEEK" and addressed to "Lovers of Liberty." This spoke of "a dozen workmen arrested 'on suspicion' and sent to the rock pile twenty-five days without trial or evidence," as well as similar incidents, and concluded with a call to a rally, seeking the abolition of the police court and jail: "Let thousands come and join in this demand. Any man that stays away, deserves to be bossed, bullied, choked and locked up, as he will be when his turn comes."¹⁸

Meanwhile down in Winfield, Henry and Leopold Vincent established a newspaper, *The American Non-*

15. Reference to Topeka *Commonwealth* cited in Ross E. Paulson, *Radicalism & Reform: The Vrooman Family and American Social Thought, 1837-1937* (University of Kentucky Press, 1968), 42-47.

16. Paulson, 49-56; Paulson notes that Eleanor Marx Aveling, Karl Marx's daughter, met Walter Vrooman after her speech in Kansas City on November 21, 1886, and was quite favorably impressed with his youthful enthusiasm for the cause of socialism.

17. Michael J. Broadhead and O. Gene Clanton, "G. C. Clemens: The 'Socialist Socialist,'" *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 40 (Winter 1974): 475-502; G. C. Clemens, *A Common-Sense View of the Anarchist Case, With Some Points Apparently Unnoticed By Others. By a Common Home-Spun Western Lawyer* (n.p., n.d.), 8. I am grateful to

Professor Clanton for first drawing my attention to Clemens' connection with Haymarket. Clanton gives the place of publication of the pamphlet as Enterprise, Kansas, and the date as 1887, but the copy in the Kansas State Historical Society Library lacks this information. This copy does bear Clemens' signature, with a penned reference to a letter of Illinois' Gov. Richard J. Oglesby of May 1, 1894.

18. "Damnable!" broadside signed by G. C. Clemens as author and dated August 7, 1887. Copy in the collections of the Kansas State Historical Society.

conformist and *Kansas Industrial Liberator*, transferring it from its beginning in Iowa. The Vincents were allied with the Union Labor party and the Knights of Labor. On the front page of their issue of November 4, 1886, they printed a story about Albert Parsons' wife Lucy being refused entry into a hall she had rented in Jersey City, New Jersey; whereupon the crowd broke down the doors and went in anyway, and she gave her talk. Just below the story was a bit of homespun humor:

"So you are an anarchist are you?"

"Pray sir, what is an anarchist?"

"An anarchist is—er, yes, a—dang my buttons! I did know once, but shot if it isn't gone from me, an anarchist is, blow'd if I do know and that's all about it."

"It is an abolitionist, isn't it?"

"Yes, yes, that's it, an abolitionist, that's it."

"Well an abolitionist is a pretty good sort of a fellow."

"Let's have none of your sass."

With the execution of the Chicago men scheduled a week away, the moment was not especially humorous; indeed, on an inside page of the same issue was printed a bold headline "CITIZENS!! LOOK INTO THIS THING! AND IN ANY EVENT DEFEAT IT!" The patriarch of the Vincent clan, James Vincent, Sr., had written an open letter "By An Old Time Abolitionist" to Judge Gary, and as the Chicago newspapers did not print it, it appeared in distant Winfield. After comparing the condemned men to Archimedes and Christ, the elder Vincent wrote:

You talk of putting down anarchy and socialism! I freely admit I know but very little of these systems, but from what I have learned, their foundation principle seems to me to be the old abolition principles. That is the principle I was trained in. I worked under it under such men as Clarkson, Wilberforce, Geo. Thompson, and later with Garrison, Pillsbury, Phillips, Sumner, Gerritt Smith, Lovejoy, John Brown and that class who 'loved their fellow men.' And if the old abolition doctrine is the doctrine of those so-called anarchists and socialists, get ready your noose Judge Gary, but I am for giving them all the help I can. I used to help the black slaves at the risk of fine and imprisonment. I am as ready to help both black and white slaves to-day, with death staring me in the face, in their efforts [sic] to shake off the worse yoke of bondage to corporate oppressions, than the yoke of chattel slavery was. So far from putting down anarchy you will make anarchists. Once more.

It was undoubtedly in the context of many daring raids by the abolitionists that the police in Chicago took unprecedented security measures at the time of the executions. On November 7, John Brown, Jr., sent to each of the prisoners a box of Catawba grapes with

a message of support, and in a letter to close family friend, Franklin Sanborn, he wrote: "Father's favorite theme was that of the *Community plan of cooperative industry*, in which all should labor for the Common good, 'having all things in common' as did the disciples of Jesus in his day. This also has been, and still is, my Communistic or Socialistic faith."¹⁹

After the executions, newspapers and other observers widely noted the comparison with John Brown, one of the heroes of Kansas history.²⁰ The *Labor Chieftain* of Topeka, affiliated with the Knights of Labor, wrote: "They were hung legally, perhaps, and so was John Brown. But it took four years of war, millions of treasure, unnumbered lives, and heart-broken wives and mothers, and fatherless children to correct this grievous 'legal' error."²¹ In *Lucifer*, Moses Harman expressed similar views:

The proslavery monopolists demanded the blood of John Brown and his comrades, believing that by this means they could 'stamp out' abolitionism in the United States. The result was that they stamped out their own 'peculiar institution.' The monopolists of to-day demand the execution of Spies, Parsons, Fielden, et al., believing that by this means they can stamp out the great popular uprising against the despotism of corporate capital. Their success will probably equal that of their illustrious predecessors.²²

Harman expressed his horror at the fact that the hanged men had died slowly by strangulation, but prefaced his comments by an odd and flinty note:

Many of our Labor and Socialistic exchanges are coming to us heavily dressed in mourning in honor of the murdered men of Chicago. While heartily sympathizing [sic] with the spirit which prompts this manifestation of respect for the worthy dead, we do not reverse our column rules, for the reason that we regard public mourning as a vain ostentation. Especially do we deprecate the profuse display of somber black as calculated to add needless gloom and pain to the fact and scenes of death. Then, also, the habit imposes a grievous burden upon the poor, who generally think they must vie with the wealthy in the outward acknowledgment and assertion of their grief.²³

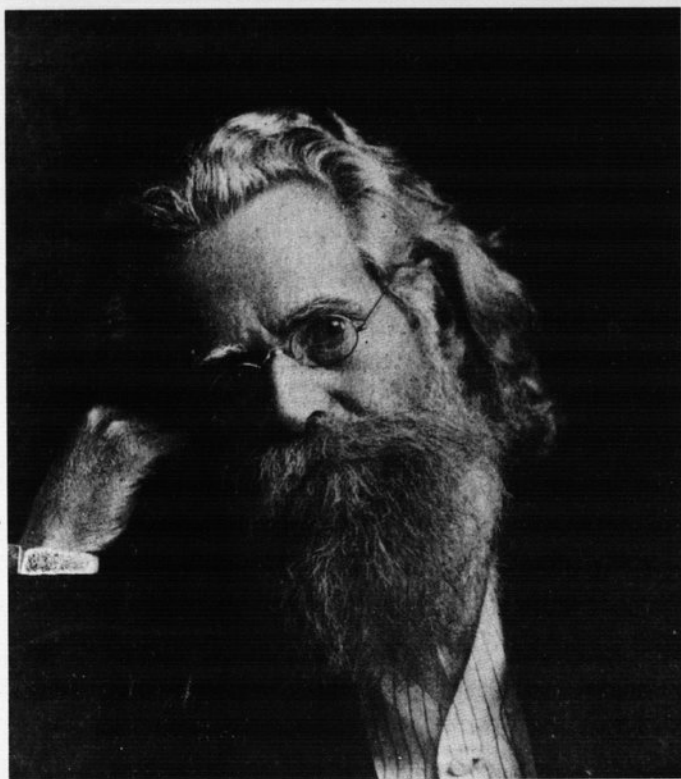
19. *American Nonconformist*, Winfield, November 4, 1886. Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy*, 342-43.

20. Avrich, 405, 410-11, and see index under "John Brown" for additional references to the influence of his example on the whole historical and cultural milieu of the 1880s radicals.

21. *Labor Chieftain*, Topeka, November 18, 1887.

22. *Lucifer*, November 11, 1887.

23. *Ibid.*, November 28, 1887. In L. Frank Baum, *The Wizard of Oz* (Chicago: Reilly and Lee Co., 1956), 231, Dorothy says to the Good Witch Glinda: "My greatest wish now . . . is to get back to Kansas, for Aunt Em will surely think something dreadful has happened to me, and that will make her put on mourning; and unless the crops are



Moses Harman, editor of *Lucifer*, the Light-Bearer, was at first critical of the Chicago radicals, but he soon joined in their support when the repressive atmosphere of Chicago led him to reevaluate the situation.

Ever opposed to Puritanism and doctrinaire religion in all its forms, Harman had in any case come far from his initial condemnation of the Chicago comrades.

In Winfield the conflict arising in part from Haymarket took a particularly tense and divisive form. All along, as we have seen, the *American Nonconformist* defended the anarchists, if not in all of their positions at least in their legal rights and progressive purposes: "It is charged that the NONCONFORMIST above all other journals is an 'anarchist sympathizer.' The reason for that is that it has been recognized as the most powerful organ in Kansas in opening the eyes of the people to the situation the country is in."²⁴

better this year than they were last I am sure Uncle Henry cannot afford it." I am grateful to Thomas F. Averill of Washburn University for calling this passage to my attention. Apparently this famous classic has an entire "sub-text" of political allegory; see Henry M. Littlefield, "The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism," *American Quarterly* 16 (Spring 1964): 47-58.

24. *American Nonconformist*, November 17, 1887.

Among those who thus charged them was the redoubtable Edwin P. Greer, publisher of the *Winfield Courier*. He proclaimed that theories "'smacking of anarchism'" were dangerous: "It is the duty of every citizen...to at once and emphatically stamp out this treason in our midst."²⁵ Eleven months later Greer was able to commence his plan of achieving exactly this result, when on October 4, 1888, he published an expose of the Vincent brothers' involvement in a secret organization called the National Order of Videttes, a kind of shadow directorate of the Union Labor party. Papers including a coded constitution, oaths of office, and ritual of the Videttes had been given to Greer by George W. Poorman, a printer who had been fired from the *American Nonconformist*. On October 18 further reve-

25. Quoted in Harold Piehler, "Henry Vincent: Kansas Populist and Radical-Reform Journalist," *Kansas History* 2 (Spring 1979): 15. This originally appeared in the *Weekly Courier*; during the same time there was also a *Daily Courier*.

lations about the Videttes were published by the *Courier*, this time from one Charles A. Henrie, another turncoat printer who had met Albert Parsons in Topeka in 1885. All around Kansas the Republican newspapers reprinted the *Courier* articles.

Then occurred one of the most remarkable and mysterious incidents in Kansas history. In the town of Coffeyville, about one hundred miles from Winfield, a railway express package addressed to the latter town exploded, seriously injuring two women. Both the name of the sender and that of the addressee were fictitious. The *Courier* charged "Evidences of Anarchism in Kansas are Increasing," but the Vincents alleged a Republican plot to frame them, as had occurred in Chicago. An election was coming up in a few days, and the whole amazing controversy affected the outcome in favor of the Republicans. Three years later a joint legislative investigation produced mountains of "evidence" on both sides, but the sender of the explosive package was never identified or found (similarly with the Haymarket bomber).²⁶ The whole affair of the Coffeyville explosion warrants a place in what Paul Avrich has aptly called the "Cult of Dynamite" which was such a striking feature of the era.²⁷

The Union Labor party disappeared soon after the election of 1888, but the Vincents and other Kansas radicals became just as dedicated to the Farmers Alliance and the People's party which immediately succeeded it. A recent history has called the Populists "the largest democratic mass movement in American history."²⁸ Anything resembling even a brief summary of this movement is beyond the scope of this essay, but it is apropos to note that during that period the issues which Haymarket raised were very much alive in Kansas. For example, out in Medicine Lodge, the city marshal of

the town, a former rancher by the name of Jerry Simpson had decided to run for Congress on the Alliance ticket. During the summer of 1890 the campaign heated up considerably. The *Medicine Lodge Cresset*, a Republican newspaper, charged in the August 1 issue: "Religiously, this man is an infidel, but tries to keep this from the public, knowing that it is an unpopular belief. He also claims that the state of Illinois was in error when it hung the Chicago anarchists; that if they desired to wave the red flag they could, for to him it was as good as the stars and stripes." In its issue of August 22, the *Cresset* reprinted from the *Wichita Weekly Journal* a "story" of Jerry's arrival in that city:

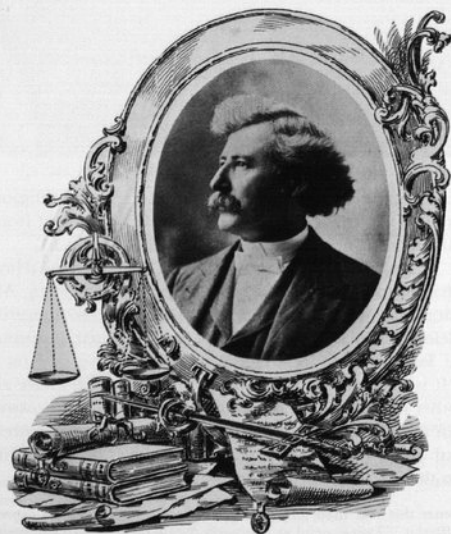
Simpson's reputation as an anarchist preceded [*sic*] him to Wichita and a committee composed of Bob Coates, Frank Smith and J. R. Brown was appointed to search the gentleman and take from him any dynamite bombs that might be lurking about his person.

After this precaution Rufe Cone advanced, and welcomed the visitor, and through force of habit started with him for the county jail, but was recalled to his

26. *Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Legislature of the State of Kansas, Appointed at the Session of 1891, to Investigate the Explosion Which Occurred at Coffeyville, Kansas, October 18, 1888* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1891), compiles 647 pages of documents, newspaper reports, editorials, maps, testimony concerning the explosion, Parsons' 1885 visit to Topeka, C. A. Henrie's expulsion from the Knights of Labor, etc. See also Piehler, "Henry Vincent," 16-18; Sears, *Sex Radicals*, 139-43; James C. Malin, *A Concern About Humanity: Notes on Reform, 1872-1912 at the National and Kansas Levels of Thought* (Lawrence: James C. Malin, 1964), and *Winfield Courier* (weekly), October 25, 1888.

27. Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy* 160. On the front page of each edition of Denver's *Labor Enquirer*, the reader could find quoted, instead of a stock market summary, the current price of dynamite. See Joseph R. Buchanan, *The Story of a Labor Agitator* (New York: Outlook Co., 1903), 68-69.

28. Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), vii. The standard work on Kansas is O. Gene Clanton, *Kansas Populism: Ideas and Men* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1969).



G. C. Clemens, symbolically surrounded by the sword, pen and scales of justice, warned against repression and poked holes in the prosecution's case against the Chicago radicals.

DAMNABLE!

POLICE INFAMIES OF A SINGLE WEEK.

LOVERS OF LIBERTY :

You who believe this should be a government of laws, not of men--you whose humble station marks you a victim of the police, read this record and see how

"Proud man, dressed in a little brief authority,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven,
As make the angels weep."

A woman complains of having been beaten, *and is locked up* by the police while they go in search of her assailant. On the way, they threaten to arrest a woman for laughing in their presence, and when her husband objects, they throw him down and choke him. A dozen workmen arrested "on suspicion" and sent to the rock pile twenty-five days without trial or evidence, feel outraged and refuse to work; whereupon they are put in the "bull-pen" and tortured into submission. A citizen arrested for not giving a proper funeral to a dead horse, is violently thrown down at the city jail, and one policeman chokes him while another searches the victim's pockets for money, valuables, and interesting private letters and papers, after which he is locked up and shortly fined \$10, but no rebuke to the policeman. A stranger eating lunch in a restaurant is arrested and fined \$10 for being an inmate of a house of ill-fame. A Mexican arrested "on suspicion" is sent twenty-five days to the rock-pile for disgusting the police and the Police Judge with his inability to talk police court English. A workman just up out of a sick bed is arrested "on suspicion" while hunting a boarding house; treated like a runaway slave by the Police Judge, and, *for nothing*, sent twenty-five days to the rock-pile, where being forced by a policeman to go to hard work in the hot sun, the poor fellow in a few minutes falls to the ground unconscious, and the doctors are in doubt whether he will live. And so on. What poor man or woman is safe under such a reign of terror? Two hundred poll-tax warrants are out now, under which men will be arrested next week, taken from their work, searched like common thieves, and \$1,000 or more of hard earnings be filched from them in fines. If the thousands of hard-working men in this city are not craven cowards, this sort of thing will stop, and stop very soon. To this end there will be

A Grand Rally at the City Park Sunday at 3 O'clock,

to petition the Mayor and Council to abolish the Police Court and jail, and put the police beneath the constitution and the law.

Let thousands come and join in this demand. Any man that stays away, deserves to be bossed, bullied, choked and locked up, as he will be when his turn comes.

The Chicago police force's activities during the Haymarket Affair led some Kansans to reexamine their own police departments. In 1887 G. C. Clemens published this broadside accusing the Topeka police of brutality and demanding that the police court be abolished.

senses by a dig in the ribs by F. F. McMechan and the line of march was changed, and the visitor was escorted to a convenient watering place where he was sized up by all the boys. A Journal reporter saw him, and fell into a dead faint at the sight.

Jerry Simpson is a man who looks as though he had not been out of the woods ten days. He is uncultivated, uneducated and almost uncivilized in appearance. If he is an anarchist and a true believer in the red flag his looks do not deceive him, if not, he should sue himself for slander and malicious libel.

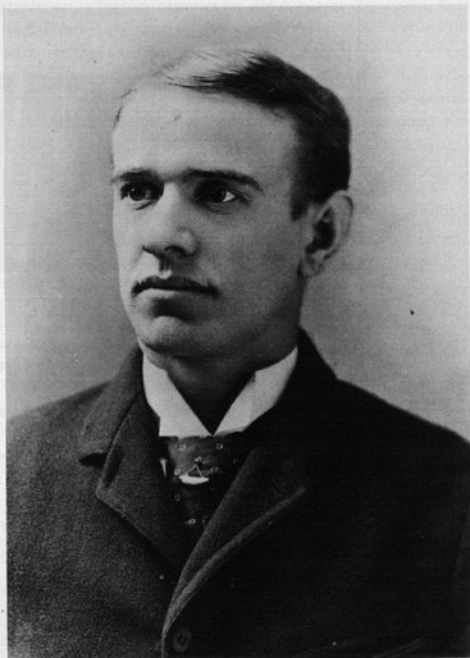
'Great Scott!' remarked Bob Coates, 'is that the man we are expected to endorse and support? Well, I'll be d—d if I do it! Gentlemen, it's no go, I don't mind being led from the straight and narrow path of democracy, but to follow this—well, I'll just not do it.'

Coates seems to have expressed the ideas of a majority of the crowd present, and the unwelcome stranger was finally turned loose to follow the dictates of his own will. He drifted about awhile, amusing the republicans, scaring the ladies, and disgusting the democrats....

In response, the *Barber County Index* stated tersely: "The *Index* flatly denies that Mr. Simpson is an anarchist or an atheist."²⁹ By the end of September it was apparent that Simpson's forces were going to make a strong showing. On the 27th of that month there was an enormous parade through Medicine Lodge of some four hundred wagons flying banners which carried such sentiments as "Death to trusts," "Abolition of National Banks," and "Brother laborers, the power is with us." Simpson addressed a joyous crowd of perhaps four thousand, and the *Index* resounded: "If there was anarchy in that welcome, God pity this country!"³⁰ Simpson won the election in a landslide, and became famous as the "Sockless Socrates of Kansas."

29. *Medicine Lodge Crescent*, August 1, August 22, 1890; *Barber County Index*, Medicine Lodge, August 27, 1890. T. A. McNeal, *When Kansas Was Young* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1922), 204, provides some additional insights as to the question of free thought, its connection to Jerry Simpson, and its fate at that time and place: "Jerry was naturally a radical both in politics and religion. Before he became especially interested in politics he was known to his acquaintances as a 'free thinker' or infidel. He had accumulated a number of books defending his views, such as Thomas Paine's 'Age of Reason,' Huxley, and Ingersoll. He loaned them to a family by the name of Jesse to read, but shortly afterward most of the Jesses were converted by an evangelist and decided that the first thing they ought to do was to make a bonfire of Jerry Simpson's books, which they did. Robert Jesse became imbued with the belief that the Almighty had made him immune to hurt from guns and to prove his faith offered any man \$100 who would take a shot at him. His neighbors refused to take him at his word and had him incarcerated in the hospital for the insane."

30. *Barber County Index*, October 1, 1890. For a contemporary, if rather sentimental biography, see Annie L. Diggs, *The Story of Jerry Simpson* (Wichita: Jane Simpson, 1908). Simpson was a member of the Knights of Labor, as indicated by the record of his fraternal visits to the local assembly of nearby Kiowa. See also, minute book in the Stockade Museum of Medicine Lodge.



Henry Vincent with the rest of the Vincent family waged their own battle from Winfield, Kansas.

In the elections of 1892, Kansas elected "The First People's Party Government on Earth," and the Topeka *Advocate* proclaimed:

CALAMITY

Overtake the Apostles of Plutocracy!
The Golden God Lies Beneath an Avalanche of Votes.
The Cyclone Swept from Shore to Shore,
Then Bennie's Party Was No More.
'Tis Out of Sight, O, Sad to Tell;
It Disappeared in Spite of—Well,
Lift Up Your Heads, You Kansas Men,
For Kansas is Herself Again!
No Bloody Shirt, No Crimson Glory,
The Ballot Tells a Different Story.
THE PEOPLE STOOD UP FOR KANSAS!³¹

Despite the fact that more Populist congressmen were elected, the governor and other state officers plus the state house of representatives was evenly divided with the Republicans; and when the house convened in

31. *Advocate*, Topeka, November 9, 1892.

early 1893, there ensued what is known as the Legislative War. There were disputed election results, but the courts ruled that according to the constitution, the house had to be a judge of its own contests. Armed men took their stand on the steps of the capitol, and for some weeks there were two houses meeting separately. Finally, the Republicans broke down the door to the house while the Populists were meeting there. Some punches back and forth followed, and the whole thing went again to the courts. Since the Republicans controlled these, they won.³² A contemporary Populist account of the whole affair commented: "This cry of revolution and anarchy, raised against the recent political movement for unity of action among the people, illustrates a great national heresy and error."³³ Thus, did the themes of insurgency run like red and black threads through the tapestry of Kansas politics.

Illinois' Gov. John P. Altgeld's pardon of the surviving Haymarket prisoners on June 26, 1893, provoked another spate of controversy. The conservative *Topeka Daily Capital* commented sourly: "Several democratic voters are added to the strength of that party by Gov. Altgeld's pardon of the Haymarket anarchists."³⁴ Such a statement was heavily sarcastic in view of the subsequent end of Altgeld's political career.

On the other hand, one of the leading Populist journals printed a long essay by the persistent G. C. Clemens entitled "Anarchism as Anarchists Understand It." Clemens began with the local context: "For daring to be true to our convictions, and because in the hour of their triumphant supremacy we dared accuse as murderers certain decorous, mammon-inspired Chicago assassins, some of us in Kansas have for seven years endured all the villifications of which malicious ignorance and hired libel are capable." He reviewed the case, and noted that thousands of people had just attended the dedication of the martyrs' monument in Waldheim Cemetery. Furthermore, Clemens considered the international context: "The persecution of these men by American capitalism was identical in its motive with the persecution of the socialists by Bismarck." Waxing eloquent, he declared that "the crime of these men was in preaching no more than the Omaha platform affirms." Clemens soared yet further: "Anarchism is the philosophy of peace—of universal brotherhood. The much cursed red flag merely symbolizes the sentiment that God has made of one blood all the nations of the earth." Then he claimed: "I trust I have succeeded in

showing that anarchism, whether foolish or wise, is at least neither un-American nor wicked; that it rests upon the Declaration of Independence and the Sermon on the Mount." Concluding, he returned to his first theme: "May I not hope that after this exposition of our creed, our hope and our aim, we 'Kansas anarchists' may enjoy a cessation of libelous attacks to which hitherto we have been subjected?"³⁵

This remarkable summation was shortly answered in the columns of the same paper by one Eugene B. Sandfort of Winfield, who objected that the Chicago men were members of the nefarious "International" and were dedicated to dynamite and violence as a way of life. Furthermore, Sandfort charged that Clemens had insulted the framers of the moderate Omaha platform by comparing them to anarchists. Clemens responded in the same issue that the "International" had not had a political platform of dynamite, and finished the dispute thus: "Anarchism has an extensive literature. The writings of its expounders are accessible to all who choose to read them. They are, as a rule, the works of ripe scholars who were masters of style. They are not dreary reading, and no man can rise from their perusal without feeling his nobler impulses stirred." Naming a long list of famous radicals such as Pierre Proudhon, Prince Petr A. Kropotkin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Edmund Burke (the latter surely a strange inclusion), he then recommended Albert Parsons' book on the subject, saying that its purchase would help his widow and orphan to live: "I shall be delighted to help any convicted sinner to obtain anarchist books, including the New Testament, of which I find a most lamentable ignorance prevailing among anarchism's bitter foes."³⁶

The next year, in June of 1894, Clemens was involved in advising the movement of homeless workers gathering and passing through Kansas on their way to Washington as part of Coxey's Army.³⁷ Soon afterward he moved toward Socialism, heading the state ticket in 1900.³⁸ Unrepentant to the end, G. C. Clemens was one of the most intellectual and articulate of all the Kansas radicals.

Fusion with the weak candidacy of William Jennings Bryan in 1896, along with the ultra-patriotic campaign of McKinley, and the subsequent imperialist adventures of the Spanish-American War all combined to more or less finish the Populist movement in Kansas. Moses Harman, after suffering several prosecutions, had

32. Clanton, *Kansas Populism*, 131-36.

33. Ed. S. Waterbury, *The Legislative Conspiracy in Kansas. Courts vs. Constitution. Who Are the Anarchists?* (Topeka: Kansas Bureau and News Co., 1893), 1.

34. *Topeka Daily Capital*, June 27, 1893.

35. *Advocate*, July 5, 1893.

36. *Ibid.*, July 19, 1893.

37. *Topeka Daily Capital*, June 1, 1894; *Topeka State Journal*, June 1, 1894; *Pratt County Union*, Pratt, June 7, 1894.

38. Broadhead and Clanton, "G. C. Clemens," 497-502.

taken *Lucifer* to Chicago. In 1891 Sen. John James Ingalls had loftily declared on the floor of the Senate in Washington: "The Anglo-Saxon, Mr. President, is not by nature or instinct an anarchist, a socialist, a nihilist, or a communist."³⁹ At the end of the decade Kansas City editor, George W. Martin, could seal a similar idea in stony language: "I appear as a Republican, tired of Republican shystering with this un-Republican heresy and practice, dreadfully wearied and disgusted with Republican candidates and politicians, constantly and hypocritically catering to a noisy lot of Populists, anarchists and socialists..."⁴⁰ The intensity of his tone suggests that the Republican victory was not yet quite final.

In the first part of the twentieth century, a kind of dreary calm descended over the great midwest of the United States. Vachel Lindsay bitterly expressed it in his unforgettable poem "The Eagle That Is Forgotten," in which his hero Governor Altgeld had "gone to join the ironies with old John Brown." In 1911 Emma Goldman visited Kansas, and later commented:

The State of Kansas, like Massachusetts, lives on past glory. Had it not given John Brown to the cause of the slaves? Had not the rebel voice of Moses Harman sounded there? Had it not been the stronghold of free thought? Whatever its historic claim to progress, Kansas now gave no sign of it. The Church and Prohibition had evidently performed the last rites at the interment of liberalism. Lack of interest in ideas, smugness, and self-complacency characterized most cities of the State of Kansas.⁴¹

39. *A Collection of the Writings of John James Ingalls: Essays, Addresses, and Orations* (Kansas City: Hudson-Kimberly Publishing Co., 1902), 314.

40. George W. Martin, "Organized Labor in Wyandotte County. Its Record of Lawlessness, Infamy, and Disaster to Workingmen, Their Wives and Children" (March 14, 1899), 8. Copy in the Kansas State Historical Society Library.

Emma did speak at the university in Lawrence, and the tone of her comments suggests regret that she simply had not had more invitations. While there is certainly something to what she said about the triumph of Puritanism as a general rule, during this same period her comrade Alexander Berkman, who had served time in prison for shooting the industrialist Henry Clay Frick, was telling of his life to the young writer Meridel LeSueur in a Fort Scott kitchen; the Socialist party still had locals in some 140 Kansas towns; and one of the greatest free-thought publishing ventures of all time, the Little Blue Books of Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, was about to be launched in Girard.⁴² The radical and anti-war prisoners in the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth managed to stage a wild and fervent May Day demonstration within its walls in 1918.⁴³ And thus ended a phase in the early history of Kansas radicalism, arising in part from its connections with and responses to the Haymarket Affair. [KH]

41. Emma Goldman, *Living My Life: The Autobiography of Emma Goldman* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs M. Smith, 1982), 477-78.

42. Meridel LeSueur, *Crusaders: The Radical Legacy of Marian and Arthur LeSueur* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984), xxi; introduction by LeSueur to the Salt Lake City edition of Goldman's autobiography, *Living My Life*. This autobiography was first printed in 1930 and has gone through several reprints. See also, ditto list of Socialist party locals in Kansas during 1915, in author's personal possession; Mark Scott, "The Little Blue Books in the War on Bigotry and Bunk," *Kansas History*, 1 (Autumn 1978): 155-76. An outstanding collection of the Little Blue Books, as well as the famous *Appeal to Reason*, much of the personal library of E. Haldeman-Julius, etc., is in the library of Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kansas.

43. Susan Kling, "A most unusual May Day celebration," *New York Daily World*, April 27, 1978. An undated flyer, printed in red ink, for a Topeka May Day celebration is in the Kansas State Historical Society; the inclusion of the poet Harry Kemp on the program would make it circa 1908-1912, for he was a student at the University of Kansas around that period.