The People’s Party of Kansas: Campaigning in 1898

by John M. Peterson

The Populist movement in Kansas is conceived by many as a sort of crusade, a spontaneous rising up of the downtrodden farmer and worker against economic oppressors. Numbered among the latter were the railroads, grain dealers and speculators, and the eastern money powers whose actions had led to or intensified the economic distress which wrecked the farm states in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Although the concept of Populism as a crusade contains an element of truth, the People’s party in Kansas also rapidly became an orderly political organization which conducted well-organized campaigns at all levels down to the township or precinct. Much has been written about the Kansas Populists, but relatively few documents related to their organized vote-getting activities at the local level have been available. Consequently, the discovery of over two hundred fifty pieces of correspondence relating to the Populist campaign in 1898 is of considerable interest. This paper, using those letters as a major source, will attempt to sketch some of the Populists’ techniques and tactics, giving special attention to efforts to induce particular groups to support Populist candidates.

The origin and history of the Populist movement is too vast for this study. Briefly, it must be noted that the Populists were not doctrinaire socialists; they proposed government ownership only in a few limited circumstances where they felt there was no other effective means of correcting an abuse. Also, even though the People’s party had considerable political success in Kansas, it was a minority in that its statewide and congressional victories came almost exclusively when allied, or “fused,” with the Democrats. Lastly, many of the Populists’ economic complaints were legitimate. Many freight rates were unfair, the grain trade often cheated the farmer, the financial procedures and institutions which made credit available to the farmer frequently were manipulated to the debtor’s disadvantage, and hard money, the gold standard monetary system, favored by bankers and businesses, worked to the farmers’ disadvantage.

In Kansas conditions became particularly desperate in the late 1880s. The land boom had collapsed, the price of farm products had begun a sharp decline, and the western two-thirds of the state was plagued by a multi-year drought. Farmers who had lost their land and, in some cases, were even having difficulty getting food for their families, were ready to take any step or join any organization which held out a reasonable promise of relief. The National Farmer’s Alliance and Industrial Union, which originated in Texas, came to Cowley County, Kansas, in 1887 and by 1888 had consolidated a base in south-central Kansas. As economic conditions deteriorated, the movement spread rapidly and by December 1888 a statewide organization had been established.

Many of the early Alliance leaders favored staying out of politics and working only through the established parties, but this approach proved infeasible. In Kansas the first slate of candidates sponsored by the Alliance appeared in a local election.

John M. Peterson has B.S. and M.A. degrees from the University of Kansas, and since his retirement from budget work for the U. S. government in the Washington, D.C., area, he has devoted much of his time to Kansas history and archeology.

1. The terms “Populism” and “Populist” will be used in a limited sense referring to the movement for economic and political reform in the United States which grew out of the National Farmer’s Alliance and Industrial Union and became an important political force in the 1890s. People’s party refers to the political party which developed from that movement and contested national, state, and local elections from 1892 into the 1900s.
3. The newly discovered letters, now held in the Watkins Community Museum, Lawrence, complement a ninety-seven item collection which has been on file in the Manuscripts Department, Kansas State Historical Society, for a number of years. These two collections will be cited as Riddle, Watkins, and Riddle, KSHS, respectively. Letters addressed to Taylor Riddle, Chairman, People’s Party State Central Committee, make up most of both collections. Although the letters date from August 1888 into 1899, very few items written in October 1888 appear in either collection.
5. Raymond Curtis Miller, “The Background of Populism in Kansas,” Mississippi Valley Historical Review 11 (March 1925): 469-80; Goodwyn, Democratic Promise, 33-36, 47-50, 99-107, 143-49. Over 75,000 were recruited in nine months beginning in spring 1889.
in 1889. When the Republicans, who had lomg
dominated state politics, rebuffed or ignored Alliance
proposals, a grass roots movement led to a statewide
convention in August 1890 to nominate candidates
who would "carry the Alliance banner." Nominees for
state offices, Congress, the Kansas house of
representatives, and local elections were selected and
the campaign was pursued with great enthusiasm at all
levels. None of the Alliance candidates won a
statewide office but five of the seven congressmen
elected were Alliance nominees, as were 96 of the 125
members of the house of representatives. This success
made it possible for the Alliance to replace its most
irritating antagonist, Sen. John J. Ingalls, with William
Peffer, a leading Populist journalist.

Alliance victories in Kansas and elsewhere in the
nation stimulated calls for a national party, and the
Populists for the first time organized at a convention held
in St. Louis in February 1892. In Kansas the failure to
gain the governorship in 1890 and losses in local
elections in 1891 led the Populists to seek support from
the Democrats in the 1892 election. The
Democrats, willing to take any action which would
acquire Kansas from the Republicans in the presidential
election, voted to endorse the Populist presidential
candidates and nominees for state offices. This maneuver
was a success. James B. Weaver, Populist candidate
for President, garnered the Kansas electoral votes and the
Populist candidates swept the state offices, led by
Lorenzo Lewelling as governor. In the election for
Congress, Populists won five of the eight positions, including
the new congressman-at-large. The People's
party also won the state senate but to its great surprise
the election in the house of representatives was close and
the results much disputed, leading to the notorious
"Legislative War of 1893."

In 1894 the Democrats refused to fuse with the
People's party because the Populists endorsed woman
suffrage. The ensuing election largely reversed the
results of 1892 with the Republicans winning all statewide
offices, all but one congressional race, and 91 of the 125
places in the house of representatives. The Populists
were left with only a majority in the state senate.

The election of 1896 often has been cited as a
"key" or "decisive" election in U.S. history. Campaign
rhetoric was dominated by the "Silver Question," the demand
for the free and unlimited coinage of silver at a ratio with
gold of 16 to 1. The Republicans nominated William
McKinley for President on a strictly "gold," or hard
money, platform, and the Democrats enthusiastically
nominated William Jennings Bryan who strongly
supported the silver side of the question. The hard
money advocates among the Democrats had enough
cloth, though, to successfully install Arthur Sewall, a
banker and railroad owner from Maine, as Bryan's
running mate. The subsequent national Populist
convention favored Bryan but many delegates
opposed Sewall. Bryan asked that his name be
withdrawn but the People's party nominated a ticket
composed of Bryan for President and Tom Watson, a
Georgia Populist, for Vice-President.

The Kansas delegation to the Populist convention
was one of those, mostly from the western states, that
stood by Sewall. In view of this, Kansas Democrats
indicated a willingness to allow the Populists to name the
state ticket if they were allowed to select the
presidential candidates. Thus, the "Fusion" ticket was
composed of Bryan and Sewall in the presidential
election and Populists in the state and congressional
campaigns. The Kansas Republicans, supporting McKinley,
were forced to drop support of the free and unlimited
coinage of silver, causing many silver advocates to
leave the party. Known as Silver Republicans, they
were sufficiently numerous in some places to organize
and conduct county conventions. Their support of the
Fusion ticket was partially offset by the Gold
Democrats, created when the national Democratic
convention repudiated Cleveland's hard money
policies. Even the Populists had a split as diehard
Watson supporters nominated a "Middle of the Road"
Populist ticket of /ectors for Bryan and Watson.

The outcome of these splits was a victory for the Fusion
forces which won all state offices; John W. Lecdy
became governor; six of the eight congressmen were
elected; and there were handy majorities in both
houses of the legislature.

There was no presidential campaign in 1898, and
national affairs, primarily the war with Spain, tended
to distract voters from state politics and local issues.
The Populists rightfully worried that their slim
majorities of 1896 would not stand up in view of

7. Peter H. Argetsinger, "Road to Republican Waterloo: The
Farmer's Alliance and the Election of 1890 in Kansas," Kansas
Historical Quarterly 35 (Winter 1967): 451-60; Peter H. Argetsinger,
"The Most Picturesque Drama: The Kansas Senatorial Election of
1891," Kansas Historical Quarterly 37 (Spring 1972): 45-64, is a full
account of this contest.
Historical Collections 16 (1925-1926): 243-54. The Democrats had won
the Kansas governorship only once and usually polled only one-half
to two-thirds as many votes as the Republicans. They labored under
the stigma of having been in power in the South during the Civil
War. This issue, characterized as "waving the bloody shirt,"
dominated many campaigns in the late nineteenth century in
Kansas and elsewhere. For a detailed description of the "Legislative
Historical Quarterly 51 (Fall 1965): 249-58.
improved economic conditions and the popularity of the war directed by a Republican administration. Within the state the Populists also had problems. Even though they controlled the governor’s office and both houses of the legislature for the first time, they failed to push much of their program through the legislative process. Three primary reforms—initiative and referendum procedures, reduced interest rates, and regulated railroad rates—had not been realized. In particular, failure to establish effective railroad regulation was galling; the weak bill passed by the legislature was vetoed by Governor Leedy.12

On June 8 the Republican convention nominated a slate headed by William E. Stanley of Wichita for governor. The Populists renominated Leedy and his administration. The Democrats, seeing fusion as their only hope, voted again to work with the Populists at the state level and in congressional and local contests wherever a fusion ticket could be agreed upon. The Silver Republicans held their own state convention and endorsed the Fusion ticket. The Prohibition party nominated William A. Peffer, former Populist U.S. senator, for governor; the Socialist Labor party picked Caleb Lipcomb for that post.13

The platform adopted by the People’s party of Kansas in its 1898 convention was largely derived from the national platform adopted in St. Louis in 1896. Besides expected commendations and criticisms, the bulk of the platform was a list of reforms needed in Kansas. Several were proposed for consideration by a state constitutional convention: setting up initiative and referendum procedures; establishing public livestock market facilities operated at cost; providing insurance protection at cost; instituting proportional representation; and placing utilities under public ownership. Other proposed reforms, to be enacted by the state legislature or Congress, were: free and unlimited coinage of gold and silver at a ratio of 16 to 1; issuance of legal tender notes rather than interest-bearing bonds; pensions for all Union veterans; extension of the free textbook law; creation of a court of commissioners to fix railroad freight rates and classifications; state labor laws to improve mining safety; free public employment agencies; and giving wage earners a prior lien in insolvency cases.14 Most of these proposals were not new, although some were quite radical for the time; also, the party shielded away from the controversial subjects of woman suffrage and the resubmission of the prohibition of alcoholic beverages.

The platform adopted by the Kansas Republicans in 1898 can best be described as innocuous. President McKinley and his conduct of the war with Spain were praised; Hawaii should be annexed; pension laws should be interpreted liberally; honorably discharged soldiers should be given preference in employment and other matters; and procedures should be established to give soldiers on active duty an opportunity to vote. The only plank relating to Kansas opposed the use of convicts to mine coal, even for use by state offices.15 The Republicans, like the Populists, ignored calls for woman suffrage and the resubmission of prohibition.

For the most part the Populists and Democrats “fused” successfully in congressional and local contests, as they had at the state level; joining them in many jurisdictions were the Silver Republicans. Only in the Sixth District was there a problem in uniting the Democrats and Populists behind a single candidate. There, the incumbent, Nelson B. McCormick, was the Fusion pick, but some in the Democratic party got behind William G. Hoffer who ran as a Democrat. Populist Harry Freese, editor and proprietor of the Hays Free Press, claimed that Hoffer’s nomination “means McCormick’s defeat and election of the Repub[lican].”16

Elsewhere fusion went more smoothly. S. W. Baxter of Pittsburg, chairman of the Populist Congressional Committee for the Third District, claimed the two parties’ joint agreement in his district was a model for wider use and would keep state officials from becoming involved in local controversies.17 In the Fourth District the nomination of Henderson S. Martin as the Fusion candidate for Congress was reported to have pleased the Democrats but not the Silver Republicans. This complaint was not taken seriously as the Silver Republicans were said to have been given better representation on the state ticket—insurance commissioner and assistant attorney

13. Peffer, replaced as senator in 1897 by the Populist legislature, said he still believed in Populist principles but felt neither the Populist nor Republican leaders had seriously tried to enforce prohibition. Topeka Daily Capital, June 9, 1898.
15. Topeka Daily Capital, June 9, 1898.
16. Harry Freese to Riddle, September 8, 1898. Riddle, Watkins, McCormick concurred in this evaluation: “some of the Democrats have a gold lining and would rather see a Republican elected than a silver man.” N. B. McCormick to Jacob C. Ruppenthal, June 27, 1898. Jacob C. Ruppenthal Collection, Correspondence, March 1893-August 1907, Manuscript Department, KSHS.
17. S. W. Baxter to Riddle, August 29, 1898, Riddle, KSHS.
The Producer Consumed.

Showing the Unfair and Unequal Distribution of Wealth Created in the United States.

BY S. S. KING,

Author of Bondholders and Breadwinners, Seed Time and Harvest, A Few Financial Facts, The Gulf Outlet, etc., etc.

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The Lane Printing Company, 1898.
VICTOR AND VICTIMS OF GOLD.

Campaign rhetoric of the 1890s focused on the "Silver Question" and its hard money, "gold" opposition.

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general—than was justified by their number. In the Fifth District the Democratic convention approved incumbent Populist William D. Vincent as congressional nominee. W. H. L. Pepperrall, secretary of the Democratic State Central Committee, enthusiastically reported to Taylor Riddle: "We done her up brown and Vincent feels mighty good over the endorsement he received at our hands. . . . We are the People in the old fifth and must be respected by God." At the county level fusion was achieved in Barton County by setting up a joint executive committee composed of the chairman and secretary of both the Populist and Democratic county committees and publishing a circular letter describing procedures and objectives. Bourbon County followed exactly the same procedure, as did Jefferson County. In Lyon County the Populist convention selected a Silver Republican for one of the two state representative seats, but Ed S. Waterbury was enthusiastic and bragged that "both our men will be elected and our splendid city [Emporia] will be represented by two Populists the peers of any whom the County ever sent to the legislature." In Montgomery County there was fusion on the county ticket but at the township level only two had Fusion tickets while the other seven had People's party lists. Only one individual was shown as running as a Democrat. This may be evidence that at the grass roots the Populist organization was much more complete than that of the Democrats and was possibly on a par with the Republicans.

Of course, fusion was not achieved so readily everywhere. Z. T. Harvey noted that the Fusion forces had not worked well together in Morris County in 1897 and it would be hard to get them to do so in 1898. In Labette County the two parties supposedly had agreed that the Democrats would withdraw their slate of county officers in return for the right to nominate both candidates for state representative. Later the Populists refused to endorse the Democrats in one district while the Democrats refused to withdraw their slate in the other. One disgusted Populist leader wrote that the party was in the process of "electing a Democrat to the legislature in this district as a reward for the Democrats of this County nominating a complete ticket from County Commissioner to Probate Judge and we . . . get absolutely nothing in return. . . . something must be done, the tail must go with the hide." Apparently the hide and tail were reunited as three weeks later union with the Democrats was reported. In Crawford County fusion took an unexpected course when the Republicans and Democrats fused on the office of county attorney. One Populist leader professed to be unconcerned, describing this action as "a deal which was made between the gold bug wing of the democratic party and the republicans before the democrat convention was held. . . . This matter is . . . so well known to be a fact, that it is going to add greatly to our strength." The Populists and Democrats did fuse in the contests for probate judge and clerk of the district court but were unable to agree on candidates for county superintendent and county commissioner.

In contesting the election of 1898, Chairman Riddle and his fellow Populists were confronted by the perpetual problem experienced by minority parties—lack of funds. Most of the supporters of the People's party continued to be impoverished farmers and workmen with little spare change to devote to political purposes. Some could and did contribute generously, but the party had little access to large and continued political donations. The Populist chairman expressed the situation this way: "The Peoples Party is made up of poor people. Likewise, their state committee having no corporations, banks, or other institutions to draw upon, money for campaign purposes is therefore much restricted."

The Populists' one reliable source of funds was the officeholders who had been elected or appointed.

19. W. H. L. Pepperrall to Riddle, September 2, 1898. Riddle, Watkins. A correspondent of the Topeka Daily Capital saw things differently claiming many Democrats were not satisfied with the convention's action and would not abide by it. Topeka Daily Capital, September 11, 1898. Fusion forces no doubt viewed this report as another example of biased reporting by a pro-Republican newspaper.
20. Circular Letter from the Joint Executive Committee, August 29, 1898, Riddle, Watkins. W. P. Feder, secretary of the Democratic Committee, called it "a satisfactory and harmonious fusion." W. P. Feder to Riddle, August 29, 1898, Riddle, Watkins. Carl B. Drake to Riddle, undated (received September 27), Riddle, KSHS.
22. In Butler County the Democrats and Free Silver Republicans endorsed the entire Populist ticket. F. P. Gillespie to W. H. Sears, August 18, 1898, William Henry Sears Collection, 1805-1898, Manuscripts Department, KSHS [hereafter cited as Sears Collection].
25. Z. T. Harvey to W. H. Sears, September 25, 1898, Sears Collection.
26. Frank F. Lamb to Riddle, August 19, 1898, Riddle, Watkins. Francis M. Brady to Riddle, September 9, 1898, Riddle, KSHS. The pot for the Democrats was sweeter a little as they received a high school trustee, commissioner, and both representatives for dropping their county ticket.
27. Oliver T. Beaz to Riddle, September 8, 1898, Riddle, Watkins. Pittsburg Headlight (weekly). November 10, 1898. All fusion candidates won in Crawford County including the Democrat/Republican who ran for county attorney. In the two races in which the Populists and Democrats ran separate candidates, the Republicans won.
130 sharp and 8 o'clock
—VOCAL MUSIC BY THE—

PEOPLE'S PARTY GLEE CLUB.

By Order Campaign Committee.

A. STALEY, CHAIRMAN.

FRANK LEACH, Master of Ceremonies.

Music was an integral part of Populist meetings, and a campaign songbook was available.

under the party's sponsorship. Sometimes they were merely asked to contribute, but the state committee took the more formal approach of assessing officeholders specific dollar contributions, presumably based on salary level. An undated paper lists the amount paid and the amount due for about sixty statehouse employees, headed by Governor Leedy. About half of the assessed total of slightly over $2,600 had been paid. The highest assessments, and the only ones over $100, were $110 levied on the governor and the supreme court justices, each. Evidence that these assessments were to be taken seriously appears in a form letter sent out from "Headquarters, People's Party of Kansas." It read, in part: "Do not delay in your remittance and compel this committee to send a collector to get it, but remit promptly and cheerfully and thereby contribute not only your money to the success of the campaign but your good will."

Some officeholders were expected to contribute at more than one level and in more than one jurisdiction. The judge of the district court in Johnson County listed contributions of $25 each to the state committee, the Johnson County campaign fund, and the Miami County Committee. A modern sounding complaint was voiced by Rep. W. D. Vincent who grumbled, "Every time I turn around I am called on for contributions from $1.00 to $100.00." Judge A. C. T. Geiger not only sent his $25 from Oberlin but promised that the court stenographer would soon be making a contribution.

Despite these collections, the amounts raised by the Populists were small, and campaign workers constantly scratched for what now seem to be miniscule amounts. In Crawford County, which includes the city of Pittsburg, the Populists were expected to have not more than $400 for the entire campaign; in Atchison County it was said to be almost impossible to raise $200. The governor's office lacked sufficient party funds to pay the way of a musical

27. Compilation headed "State House," Riddle, Watkins. With columns for "Amount Paid" and "Amount Due" for each name under various offices, it is typed on the back of Headquarters, People's Party of Kansas, letterhead paper. The assessment appears to have been five percent of salary. O. S. Allen to Riddle, September 22, 1898, Riddle, SKHS; Taylor Riddle to A. M. Harvey, September 12, 1898, Riddle, Watkins. A note on the back indicates Harvey, presumably Alexander M. Harvey, the lieutenant-governor, forwarded his $25 check immediately.

28. John T. Burris to Riddle, November 3, 1898; W. D. Vincent to Riddle, September 14, 1898; A. C. T. Geiger to Riddle, November 4, 1898, Riddle, Watkins. A Dodge City judge, when forwarding his contribution, said his stenographer's money would go to the local committee which needed help. B. F. Miller to Riddle, November 3, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.

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group from Topeka to Kansas City even though part of
the amount had been promised by a candidate for
office. The lack of a few dollars kept party speakers
and representatives from travel or completing assign-
ments. Expense accounts sometimes totaled only ten
dollars and included items as small as thirty cents.99

The railroads, which felt they had been unfairly
singled out by the Populists, made no bones about
desiring a Populist defeat and undoubtedly funneled
some money to Republican coffers. Accused by the
other parties of favoring the Republicans in the matter
of issuing passes, there were denials. The Santa Fe
insisted that time passes were given only to the
chairmen and secretaries of state central committees
and not to officers of county or congressional
committees, and that all parties were treated equally.100
Even so, many Populists doubted the railroads’
impairment. H. E. Pyle, a field worker, when told no
free transportation could be obtained for him,
objected: “The Republicans have it and are getting it
right along and I think the R. R. ought to stand up to
their bargain.” The question of railroad favoritism
also came up at election time. Students and other reliable
party members away from home frequently were given
money for a trip home to vote on election day. The
railroads did not dare issue passes to members of only
one party but were suspected by a Lawrence Populist
of providing funds to Republicans which ostensibly
came from the Republican county central committee.101

Political campaigning in 1898 bore a surprising
resemblance to political campaigning today, with
the major exception of radio or television. What might
seem to be another major difference, the lack of
automobiles or planes to allow a candidate or
campaign worker to fliq from one town to another,
probably did not make as much difference. In 1898 the
state was crisscrossed by railroads and in many areas a
party worker could take part in meetings in more
than one town in a day. One party organizer, in schedul-
ing Attorney General Louis C. Boyle for a day meeting in
Independence and one at night in Coffeyville, explained:
“You see owing to railroad facilities they can
speak at the two places [in one day] as well as not.” A
campaign worker, who described himself as “hustling
like old Harry,” stopped in Lawrence on September 7,
visited Endora, went on to Ottawa where he wrote a
note to Topeka, and planned to do some work in
Chanute later that day. On the 8th he expected to
return with stops at both Iola and Garnett. Even more
remarkable, he expected campaign booklets he
ordered from Topeka on the 7th to be in Iola and
Garnett the next day. Another worker, W. H. Johnson,
planned to canvass salt workers in Hutchinson on
Thursday and then visit Wichita, Fort Scott, Parsons,
and Kansas City by Sunday.102

Control of the media, newspapers, and magazines
was crucial to the success of a political campaign. In
Kansas the Populists were faced with a press largely
favoring the Republican party. There were a number
of Populist papers but almost all of the major
newspapers in the state were anti-Populist.103

Fair and unbiased reporting was not considered a
major virtue in much of this press and the Populists’
complaints varied from a failure to give any notice or
report of a meeting to out-and-out misrepresentation.
Ed Waterbury started out a letter by saying: “Lest you
should be mislead [sic] by the ridiculous report in this
morning’s Capital of our Emporia convention of
yesterday.”104 Even stronger was F. J. Buck’s charge that
Republican newspapers knowingly published false
statements made by a discharged employee
concerning conditions at the Kansas State Insane
Asylum at Osawatomie.105 A few newspapers delighted
in repeating scurrilous statements. Consider, for
example, the characterizations of the two candidates
for governor, quoted with approval by the Pittsburg
Headlight. “Stanley [Republican] is cultured, dignified,

99. Oliver T. Boze to Riddle, September 15, 1898; Church J.
White to Riddle, September 14, 1898; Harry B. Fleharty to Riddle,
August 23, 1898; H. E. Pyle to Riddle, August 20, September 1, 1898;
A. A. Jones to Riddle, November 5, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.
100. A. A. Hurd to Riddle, August 27, 1898, Riddle,
Ridgway. This was the heyday of the railroad pass. They were issued
generously to officials, veterans, scientific expeditions, and others.
101. H. E. Pyle to Riddle, August 16, 1898; Hans Jensen to
Chairman of the Populist Central Committee, Hays City, Kansas,
November 3, 1898 (this example is probably from a R.U. student to
his home Populist committee); D. W. Featherkill to Riddle,
November 5, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.

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religious; Leedy [Populist] is ignorant, boorish, profane. 36 What there was of the Populist press was not completely free from this type of journalism, but it was more inclined to print long party tracts attacking Republican policies.

These tracts and other printed material—handouts, circulars, flyers, pamphlets, and newspaper reprints—were one way in which the Populists sought to make up for their weakness in the newspaper field. These means of disseminating their message and familiarizing the public with their candidates fitted well with their long reliance upon the printed word in educational campaigns. Particular emphasis was placed on the 1898 campaign handbook which many letters in the Riddle correspondence mention. The handbook was a forty-one page pamphlet issued by the Kansas State Central Committee. 37 It began with the detailed platform adopted by the state convention in Topeka on June 15 and then discussed each plank in considerable detail, including the historical background and arguments favoring it. Brief biographies of each Fusion candidate for statewide office were found in the last few pages.

Public meetings were the mainstay of political campaigns at every level. This worked to the advantage of the Populists as the entire movement was based on informing and instructing the populace on economic and social issues. The movement's leaders considered education to be a major function and they hired lecturers whose only duty was to carry the Populist message throughout the state. When the Populists moved into politics, many of the needed attitudes, personnel, and procedures already were in place.

A principal function of state and county political committees was to schedule meetings and to obtain the services of capable speakers. The State Central Committee of the People's party was relied on to provide speakers for both purely political functions and local celebrations, reunions, fairs, and other gatherings throughout Kansas. The Populists long had been known for talented orators and, although Mary Elizabeth Lease had left Kansas, many others still were in demand. W. P. Harrington of Gove County listed his choices for the last major meeting of the campaign as "Leedy, Harris, Boyle, Doster, or Botkin in the order named." In Marion a good speaker for an old soldiers' convention was requested; if available, Representative-at-Large Botkin would do. 38 In other cases a speaker

attuned to or representing an ethnic or racial group was requested. In Independence "a good colored speaker" was needed, and in Arkansas City an Emancipation Proclamation celebration provided an opportunity for another black orator. 39 These are only samples of much correspondence on obtaining and scheduling speakers.

The Populist campaign of 1898 did not lack for volunteer speakers. Many offered their services in the same vein as M. A. Housholder who wrote: "Being very anxious that the cause of the people should not fail at the polls this fall...I hereby tender my services to your committee during the last month of the campaign. I will be willing to go any place that you think I can do any good towards working up interest and enthusiasm among our fellows. I would want my actual expenses paid." 40

A few wanted pay in addition to expenses; one suggested fifteen dollars a day, but most were satisfied with travel costs and whatever per diem the party could afford. Surprisingly, there were several women speakers among the volunteers even though in Kansas at the time women could vote only in municipal elections. Representative Edwin R. Ridgely selected Miss Helena Mitchell as a party canvasser and speaker, pointing out that she "took an active part in the '96 campaign in the Seventh District, and did very effective work." 41

Political meetings were a form of free entertainment and the political message often was made more palatable by interspersing speeches and musical numbers. Singing had long been an important part of Populist meetings and rallies and prevailed in Kansas where Mrs. Lease had often led the Kansas Singers. In the 1898 campaign this means of increasing attendance was not neglected and a campaign songbook was available. Six copies were requested in September by a Populist official of the Free Silver Parties of Butler County. Other letters were concerned with performances of vocal ensembles including Mr. Whitman's singers, who were scheduled to entertain in a "Pop" tent in Kansas City, and a band engaged to play at a Lawrence meeting to get out the

the state committee, wanted all of them. Mayo Thomas to Riddle, September 17, 1898; Thomas O. Kelly to Riddle, September 9, 1898; Riddle, Watkins, Kelly originally wanted Leedy and Botkin, which he spelled "Bodkin."


40. M. A. Housholder to Riddle, August 17, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.

41. Frederick L. McGhee to W. G. Jones, September 6, 1898, Riddle, Watkins. McGhee was a black lawyer from St. Paul, Minnesota, who Jones, county attorney of Graham County, had recommended to Riddle on August 17. There is no evidence in this correspondence that McGhee was hired.

42. E. R. Ridgely to Riddle, September 3, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.

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black vote. The Spokane Quartette, which had sung at Populist meetings for four years, advised the state committee that they again were ready to entertain for the party on reasonable terms and had suitable songs in their repertoire.43

Conversations between individuals and in very small groups were a major means by which Populist doctrine had been spread and Populist leaders felt personal persuasion was not something to be left to the inclination of local leaders but was a technique which they should encourage and direct. An 1895 proposal suggested that carefully selected members be assigned to discuss Populist programs and doctrines with members of other parties who had been identified as potentially discontented with their current political affiliation. Quiet persuasion and carefully presented literature were held to be more effective in making permanent converts than public meetings. In 1898 the headquarters of the People’s party of Kansas suggested the appointment of “talking committees” of ten or more party men in each township to use “soft sell” techniques in discussing issues and candidates in conversations with their neighbors. W. B. Brooks of Kansas City, a black supporter, agreed that individual conversations or discussions in small groups were most effective techniques. He felt them to be more useful than speeches by party orators. He contended that “it is a certain fact that our people will not, in any large number, turn out to hear any speaker of their opposite politics [i.e., Populists] . . . but a man in high authority in the church can get together 10 or 20 or more men every day in the week under some honorable [sic] call and then drift into politics and his words are regarded as true.”44

In addition to encouraging local party workers to use personal persuasion in seeking votes, the State Central Committee sponsored or employed canvassers to do the same thing in a wider context. Some directed their efforts to a geographical area; others to a trade, ethnic group, or social organization to which they belonged or with which they were familiar. Thus, in these letters we hear from canvassers who were working among the miners in southeastern Kansas, railroad workers in Topeka or Newton, or Masons or Civil War veterans throughout the state. Many were volunteers who were only reimbursed for expenses. Others were paid, or at least were promised payment.

No doubt the canvassers knew the state committee would be interested in any irregularity on the opposition’s part which might serve as a point of attack. A few, though, seem to have taken the collection of rumors and possible scandal to be a major part of their job. H. E. Pyle of Wichita traveled through much of central Kansas and frequently wrote to Chairman Riddle concerning information he had picked up which was “dynamite” and too “hot” to be entrusted to the mails.45 Little seems to have come of this, as available correspondence indicates Riddle did not respond with the travel funds and personal attention which Pyle felt his scoops deserved.

Pyle’s expense accounts also reveal that some of the time-honored methods of influencing American voters were used by the canvassers. He listed such items as one dollar for beer and sixty cents for cigars at Pratt; fifty cents for beer and fifteen cents for cigars at Kingman; and two dinners, beer, and cigars at Hampton. Accompanying his activity reports and claims of having secured valuable information, Pyle voiced plaintive requests for additional funds: “I had to borrow money yesterday as I have run out” and “you know my financial condition sufficiently to know that I cannot lay around as I have done. I must do something even if I have to go to work on the [railroad] section.”46

The development of effective political organizations and tactics at the grass roots level was of much concern to Populist leaders and fellow fusionists. Letterheads and other documents indicate that in at least some areas the People’s party system of committees extended to the township level.47 There is also evidence of working groups below the township to the school or road district level. In the mid-1890s the People’s party and Democratic state committees jointly issued an organizational and work plan to be adopted in every county. Under this plan in each road district in the state, said to number 9,000, a true fusionist was to be found who would lead an effort to identify lukewarm and wavering fusion voters and attempt to revive their interest and attachment to the cause. The same group also would study known Republican voters and in each district pick out one to three disaffected ones for special conversion efforts. The key was to concentrate local efforts on a few targets; state officials would provide aid in the form of literature and personal letters, where warranted. This effort could

43. Goodwyn, Democratic Promise, 384–85; W. F. Benson to Riddle, September 6, 1898; Harry B. Flaherty to Riddle, August 23, 1898, Riddle, Watkins; L. H. Corse and H. S. Clarke to Riddle, November 4, 1898; Alfred T. Donald to John W. Leadey (sic), September 16, 1898, Riddle, KSHS.

44. “Practical hints to Kansas populists about methods of work,” (Wellington: Voice Printing, 1895), Kansas Collection, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas; unsigned form letter on Headquarters, People’s Party of Kansas, stationery, September 29, 1898; W. B. Brooks to L. C. Boyle, October 25, 1898, Riddle, KSHS.

45. H. E. Pyle to Riddle, August 4, 24, 29, September 2, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.

46. H. E. Pyle to Riddle, August 29, September 1, September 12, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.

47. D. C. Flint to Riddle, August 23, 1898; Nees Olsen to Riddle, September 16, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.
Among the Populists to take office after the 1896 election were John W. Leedy, governor; W. H. Morris, auditor; David Hefflebower, treasurer; and J. D. Botkin, congressman at large.
possibly mean the difference between a winning and losing campaign; the switch of one Republican in each district would change state totals by 18,000 votes.49

On September 29, 1888, a letter along similar lines was issued by the People's party headquarters of Kansas. The first of its proposals was the appointment of a "talking committee" in each township. A second suggestion was that each county chairman purchase a few dozen torch lamps to be distributed to reliable party members. Whenever an evening meeting was scheduled the local torch-holder would light the torches, carry them to the meeting place, and set them up in the grounds, thereby attracting the attention and curiosity of many who otherwise would not attend. Another proposal sought to appoint a good party worker in each school district to contact all sure party voters the day before the election, call on them on election day, and make certain they got to the polls early. In justifying this suggestion the state party leaders claimed, "We have the votes to win this election... but owing to the war [Spanish-American] it will require a special machinery and numerous workers to avoid leaving a few of our votes out of the ballot box in each precinct. One such vote to a school district means in this state over 7,000, enough to win or lose." In a similar letter the Populist leaders even proposed that local party workers make transportation to the polls available to reliable Populists who had not voted by 2:00 p.m.50

The many school districts then in Kansas validate the importance the Populists attached to what sometimes was called "a school house campaign." With much of their support in rural areas, candidates for county, or even congressional offices, could benefit in many places by scheduling small meetings in schoolhouses. Fusion leaders in Montgomery County announced in September a plan "to flood the school houses of this county with local speakers next month." The Geary County Populist campaign concluded with meetings in two school districts each evening during the last week before the election. The Populist chairman for the Third District congressional campaign reported, "I am keeping Mr. Ridgely in the rural districts stirring the voters and he is reporting good meetings[;] a School house campaign is the ONLY campaign for US to make and so sure as we neglect the school houses we get left."51

The State Central Committee sometimes was chided by its correspondents for not taking local conditions into account when scheduling meetings. The failure to provide sufficient time for adequate publicity was a tactical error which wasted the entire effort. In the words of Harry Freese of Hays, "Plenty of notice must be given to get the folks to come." Failure to do so had caused recent meetings to be "a perfect fizzle." An Atchison correspondent advised that Saturday evening meetings be avoided: "The stores are open until Mid Night, the Working Men who get Paid on Saturday do their Trading that Night and it is very bad Night to get a crowd to [a] Politicul Meeting."52

Party leaders knew their margins were razor thin in 1896 and that the Spanish-American War had given the Republicans a major boost in popularity. They felt the party must redouble its efforts in 1898 and devote special attention to groups who should be natural allies of the People's party but tended to retain Republican ties. In Kansas the two largest such groups were the blacks and the Germans. Even a small percentage increase in their support might well make the difference between a loss or a win in the three congressional districts won in 1896 by less than one thousand votes and two others where the margin of victory had been less than three thousand. Even more at risk were state legislative seats where, in a good many cases, the Populist candidate had been elected by less than one hundred votes.

Although blacks had lived in Kansas since earliest territorial days, it was not until after the Exodus of 1879 that there were enough black voters to evoke the interest of political parties. In the early 1880s they numbered about twelve thousand potential voters, mostly concentrated in the cities but also numerous in a few rural areas, notably around Nicodemus in Graham County. Experiences under slavery and in the post-Reconstruction South caused blacks to vote, almost to a man, with the Republicans. That party cultivated the black vote in the first part of the decade as is evidenced by the election of Edward P. McCabe to the office of state auditor in 1882 and again in 1884. About 1886 the Republicans appeared to become indifferent to the needs and aspirations of the black voter, dropping McCabe and failing to oppose increased prejudice, more stringent limitations in accommodations and job opportunities, and intensified anti-black lawlessness.53 Many consequently lost faith in the GOP but could not bring themselves


49. Unsigned letter, September 29, 1898, Riddle, KSHS; Topeka Daily Capital, October 11, 1898.

50. Mayo Thomas to Riddle, September 23, 1898, Riddle, Watkins; Junction City Tribune, November 4, 1898; S. W. Baxter to Riddle, September 19, 1898, Riddle, KSHS. Ridgely was the only Fusion candidate for Congress who won.

51. Harry Freese to "Brothers" (presumably the state committee), September 24, 1898; W. S. Sullivan to Riddle, September 19, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.

to switch to the Democrats. Thus, when the People’s party began contending for votes early in the 1890s, conditions were favorable for a break in the almost complete Republican monopoly of black votes.

Unfortunately for the Populists, only about a quarter of the black voters were gainfully employed in agriculture or mining. Also, many black city laborers tended to reject the Populist message based on cooperation among the working poor because their experiences had led them to believe poor whites generally were more prejudiced than the well-off, and that labor unions frequently were the biggest obstacles to their employment. Even so, the Farmer’s Alliance/Populists tried to organize black farmers and workers and evidenced concern for them on both national and state levels. Benjamin F. Foster was the first prominent black Kansan to support the Farmer’s Alliance and he was nominated for state auditor in 1890. Even though he lost, this recognition attracted the attention of black voters. In 1892 the Populists worked for the black vote while the Republicans took it for granted; the Kansas City Call claimed forty-five hundred black Republicans voted for the Populists. After their victory in 1892 the Populists recommended blacks for appointment to posts in Topeka never before held by members of their race, including jobs in the post office and state capitol. There even was some improvement in protection; Gov. Lorenzo D. Lewelling dispatched state troops to Salina to prevent a lynching. In 1893 after many black candidates lost in the Republican primaries, Fred Jeltz, black editor of the Kansas State Ledger, Topeka, began to support the People’s party. When the Populists lost in 1894 there was some cooling off. Many blacks were disappointed that state patronage could no longer be continued, and some Populists complained that blacks tended to vote Populist at the state level and Republican at the county level in an attempt to maximize patronage opportunities. William F. Chafe concludes that black support for Populism was rather unstable because of differing experiences and perceptions; blacks were willing to work for recognition and patronage but did not strongly support Populist economic organizations and policies.

In the election of 1896 black voters provided considerable assistance to the Populist campaign and received some rewards. The Leavenworth Herald cited the Graham County Populists as doing the fair thing in nominating and electing several black county officials. A Graham County journal agreed, pointing out the Populists had rolled up victories in the county for six successive years and “has stood nobly by the colored race notwithstanding the party receives a very small per cent of the colored voters. The republican party claims to be the special friend of the colored man yet keeps him at arm’s distance from the public crib.”

John W. Leedy, the Populist governor elected in 1896 and renominated in 1898, was favorably regarded by black leaders for his actions in two areas. He appointed black officers to black volunteer regiments and he gave blacks statehouse jobs. His appointment of black officers up to and including the commanding officer of the Twenty-third Kansas Infantry contrasted sharply with the Republican practice of appointing no black officer above captain. He also was credited with appointing three times more blacks to paying positions in state institutions than had his predecessor, Governor Morrill, who had received roughly ten times as many black votes. In the words of the Young Men’s Colored Independent League, “The Republicans have gone upon the theory that they have the negroes with them anyway, and they can see no need of giving him an equal recognition for their party’s practical benefit.” As a result, many blacks left the GOP for its failure to nominate or support blacks for elective office and to provide a fair share of appointive jobs. W. A. Adams concluded, “Mr. Leedy is a friend to the colored people at home and in war, and should receive a large support from the colored in November.”

The People’s party platform for the 1898 election contained no provision or plank specifically referring to any racial or ethnic group. This is not surprising as the Populists considered their program to be of benefit to the farmer and working man regardless of color or ethnic origin. And, although the delegates favored help for the downtrodden, it is unlikely more than a few gave much time to the consideration of the prejudice, unequal schooling opportunities, job discrimination, and other burdens encountered by blacks in Kansas and elsewhere in the United States. Furthermore, the black vote was a major factor in only a few of the jurisdictions represented by the delegates.

When the actual campaign got underway, in those days mercifully limited to the period from August through the first week in November, this attitude changed. Those in charge of state or congressional district campaigns realized the black vote might tip the balance in more than one contest. Many county leaders knew an increase in black support of fifty or one hundred votes might insure a Populist win.

53. Ibid., 409-17.
54. The Leavenworth Herald quoted in People’s Review, Hill City, May 6, 1897.
55. Young Men’s Colored Independent League, “Gov. Leedy and the Negro Race,” undated; Modern Light, Columbus, November 3, 1898, clipping, Riddle, KSHS. Adams extended his recommendation to include Representative Ridgely of the Third District and all Populists running for office in Cherokee County.
That letters were written concerning the black vote in Kansas City, Leavenworth, Lawrence, and Graham County is not surprising, but such letters from Labette County, Phillips County, Olathe, and Osawatomie, among others, seem to indicate Populist politicians were concerned with black voting outside the areas of concentration. More than token support frequently was recommended. Henry S. Clarke, treasurer of the People’s party in Kansas, felt the black vote was of such value the party would do well to spend money on it and that an allocation of half as much as was to be given to the Democrats would be justified. Mayo Thomas, organizer for the Allied Silver forces of Montgomery County, considered the black vote a possibly determining factor in his area and wanted the local candidates to promise blacks jobs in the courthouse and county high school. He also suggested giving some black canvassers ten or twelve dollars per week for expenses, and he demanded “a good colored speaker for about 4 or 5 speeches the week before the election.”

In providing speakers and canvassers to bring the Populist message to black voters, the State Central Committee felt members of their own race would be most effective, and a number of black speakers sought such duty. One highly recommended applicant, Frederick L. McGhee, a lawyer from St. Paul, Minnesota, wanted fifteen dollars a day plus expenses. In contrast, two volunteers who did not mention compensation were J. P. Nevis of Topeka and W. D. Venerable of Kansas City. Nevis, who had lived in Johnson County and taught in Doniphan County, felt that a number of blacks who had “supported the Republican Ticket will be with us, or vote a part of our ticket...[if they have] the underlying principles of our party clearly set before them.” Venerable claimed that “Having extensive acquaintance in Kansas and being identified with church and secret organizations, I should be able to do you much good. I should like to follow that little 2 x 4 fellow, Gibbs, and just wipe up the earth with him.”

Other volunteers included T. L. Walker, who canvassed in Douglas County and other parts of eastern Kansas giving talks and distributing campaign booklets, and the Rev. Turner Foster, credited by black voters in the Olathe area with turning them from lifelong support of the Republican party to the Populists. The Rev. T. Jeff Ross of Oswego, a Methodist pastor, was recommended to the state committee by five of the Labette County Fusion candidates. He had stumped in Colorado for Bryan in 1896 and claimed to have “carried my people with me. There never was such an Exodus before among them.” Taylor Riddle must have hoped for a similar exodus of Republicans in Kansas as he responded immediately.

J. W. Browder, an active campaigner for the Populists, ran into trouble in Holton in September. After giving a speech which he felt was effective in stirring up a favorable response from the black crowd, he was arrested by the Jackson County sheriff and charged with giving a fraudulent mortgage. In his opinion, “This is the method he and others at Holton has resorted to, to cause my failure or checkmate my stumpings the state for the peoples ticket.” As mentioned earlier, W. B. Brooks, rather than making stump speeches, promoted the Populist cause in small meetings of church leaders. R. P. Banks of Paola took a more direct approach to the use of religious channels, stating he had supported the Populists in his sermons. He went on to say that blacks “are tired of being Put of[f] with Promises but what They want is fair Play.”

Possibly the most active and effective black campaigner was Col. A. A. Jones. He agreed to speak in September and October whenever the state committee wanted for $150 and expenses. He spoke in many parts of the state—Graham County, Junction City, Iola, Fort Scott, Pittsburg, and elsewhere. He received good marks and was sought by many local leaders. G. W. Jones of Graham County reported in September that Col. Jones’ three speeches before large audiences had done the party good and recommended the committee “Keep Col. Jones on the stump until election.” His praise was echoed by another Graham County leader who felt “sure it will be a good step to send him back a little later.” The undersheriff of Leavenworth County reported that “Jones has stirred up a large feeling among the colored voters for us” and expected fairly good support at election time as a result. The chairman of the Sixth District committee requested Jones be sent to Speed in Phillips County. This was based on good reports he had received from Hill City. It is doubtful Jones made that date for early in November he was speaking in southeastern Kansas.

58. T. L. Walker to Mr. Tipton, September 7, 1898; J. McKinnie, Green Nelson, Robert Young to W. T. Tipton, September 21, 1898; T. Jeff Ross to Riddle, September 15, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.
59. J. W. Browder to Riddle, September 23, 1898, Riddle, KSIS.
60. R. P. Banks to Riddle, August 23, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.
61. W. L. Sayers to Riddle, September 23, 1898; S. W. Meyers to Riddle, November 3, 1898; F. C. Johnson to Riddle, September 21, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.
Jones was considered to appeal to both white and black voters, as is evidenced by a letter assuring the state committee that in Iola "we will have a good crowd out to-night to hear Col. Jones, both white and colored." Considering the many favorable comments his work received, it seems remiss that the committee frequently did not advance Jones expense money on a timely basis. Sometimes he had to pay his own train fare and then beg for reimbursement. One can sympathize with his plea that "it is not treating me just right in sending me down among the miners again without a dollar in my pocket." Even after the campaign was over, Jones reminded Riddle, "you are in my debt for rail road fare and the last 8 days work." Again we are reminded that lack of funds may have been the deciding factor in the Populist campaign of 1898.

Newspapers controlled and edited by blacks were not numerous in Kansas in the nineteenth century, but there were at least seven in 1890, all of which favored the Republican party. By 1898 several of these had been discontinued, and newspaper support for the People's party was meagre. The Kansas State Ledger, which had switched to the Populist banner in 1893, and the Leavenworth Herald may have been the only two black newspapers in the state favoring the Fusion candidates in 1898.

An opportunity to add a third black journal was brought to the attention of the state committee in August 1898. Mayo Thomas advised that for 100 to 200 new subscriptions the American of Coffeyville would support the entire Fusion ticket. The cost would be only $75 to $100 and might swing twenty-five votes to the party. Local candidates, however, felt fairly secure and in all would pledge only about half of the needed money. Thomas felt the state committee should supply the rest and would get good value for its money. The American had stopped listing the Republican ticket on August 6 and hinted editorially that the Populists and Democrats might not be so worse than the Republicans. It is not known what action, if any, the Populists took or whether the Republicans stepped in with sufficient funds to keep the newspaper on their side, even though the Republican State Committee was said to have refused help earlier. In any case, by October 1 the American had reverted to a strongly Republican position, editorializing that "every Negro of intelligence knows the Republican party has done more for the Negroes than the Populist party can ever do."44

The only other minority or ethnic group in Kansas in 1898 of sufficient size to justify a widespread effort to influence its voting propensities was the Germans. The census of 1890 showed 52,000 German-speaking adults in Kansas who had been born abroad. In addition, there were many others born in this country who spoke and read the language and participated in German organizations and cultural heritage. To the Populists the Germans were an enticing target but a very difficult one, even though most were farmers who had experienced the same economic difficulties as others in Kansas agriculture.

The three main German centers in Kansas were the German-Russian Lutherans in Russell County, the German-Russian Catholics in Ellis and Trego counties, and the Mennonites in Marion County and nearby areas. The Catholics were mostly Democrats so were not of much concern in 1898. The Lutherans, however, were mostly Republicans, and the Mennonites tended to be rock-ribbed Republicans. Furthermore, in common with most other Central European immigrants, the Germans generally were opposed to prohibition and woman suffrage. Much of the Populist rank and file favored prohibition while many of their leaders were personally in favor of votes for women. Thus, proselytizing the Germans was a ticklish business and a wrong move, such as the endorsement of woman suffrage, could wreck fusion and lead to disaster.45

There were, of course, German communities scattered elsewhere throughout the state and concentrations in several of the larger towns. One area with enough German communities to warrant special attention in correspondence between the central committee and local observers was the line of counties along the Nebraska line, from Smith in the west to Nemaha in the east. G. H. Allen of Belleville advised the state committee that even though the numerous Germans on the northern border favored the gold standard and voted for McKinley in 1896, they should side with the Populists on state issues and were worth some extra attention. A Marshall County correspondent echoed that sentiment: "We have a great many Germans in our Co.,[nty] and Some good work can be done by the right kind of a German-

62. Chris S. Ritter to Riddle, November 3, 1898; A. A. Jones to Riddle, November 3, 1898; A. A. Jones to Riddle, November 17, 1898; Riddle; Watkins; American, Coffeyville, August 6, 20, October 1, 1898. In late August, Jackson A. Dodd was dropped as editor; by early October the Fuller brothers, W. H. and L. D., had taken over both editing and publishing.
64. Mayo Thomas to Riddle, August 20, 26, 1898, Riddle, Watkins; American, Coffeyville, August 6, 20, October 1, 1898. In late August, Jackson A. Dodd was dropped as editor; by early October the Fuller brothers, W. H. and L. D., had taken over both editing and publishing.
Charles H. Herold of Nemaha County agreed that much benefit could come from concentrating on German voters but that the party "must be careful not to get religion mixed up with politics. ... it would not do to send a Catholic Paper to Protestants or vice versa but a paper that treats entirely of politics and news and is not devoted to religion in any way will do to send to all of them." In contrast to Populists' efforts among black voters, there evidently was little attempt to obtain or schedule German-language speakers. In September a Kansas City, Kansas, correspondent advised, "The Germans of this county are going to celebrate German Day at Chelsea Park in this city, and the committee asked me to write to you for a speaker for that occasion Sunday October 2/98. If you send some one let it be a man who is handy with the Dutch." An Atchison Democrat reported that the Republicans brought in a German from Wichita to work in the German neighborhoods and implied that the Populists should have done the same.

The lack of references to German speakers is more than made up for by correspondence concerning printed material in the German language. There were German-language newspapers in Kansas City, Wichita, Marysville, Lawrence, Leavenworth, Atchison, Newton, Russell, and Hillsboro. Thus, many parts of the state were in the circulation areas of German-language newspapers, few of which consistently supported the Populists. F. W. Frasier, writing several months before the campaign, claimed none supported the Populist cause and that the reform forces could "strengthen the people's party numerically by getting after the GERMAN VOTE." He said that the best way to do so was to establish a weekly German newspaper, and he expressed a willingness to start such a paper in Topeka if the state committee got one thousand or more cash subscriptions at one dollar each. The committee accepted his offer and the Topeka Volkstall began publication on July 26. On September 13 the Volkstall began to list the Fusion ticket and to strongly defend the Populist record. Several weeks later, in reply to a statement in the Topeka Daily Capital that all of the German-language papers in the state except the Volkstall were supporting Republican William E. Stanley for governor, the editor pointed out that the Wichita, Kansas City, and Marysville papers and even Topeka's Kansas Telegraph had not uttered a word in favor of Stanley.

The Marysville Post provided such strong support to the Populists that the State Central Committee requested candidates to contribute funds for sending the paper to German voters. W. D. Vincent, candidate for reelection to Congress from the Fifth District, sent twenty-five dollars and regretted being unable to send more. Riddle and his committee also sponsored an article in the Post which reviewed at length previous support for prohibition by Republican Stanley, Stanley disdained any such actions, at least when speaking in German communities. William Meyer, a liquor dealer, reported late in the campaign that a long editorial in the Wichita German paper "on Stanley's position on Prohibition while a member of the Legislature... has done a great deal of good through this county." A Smith County leader, when asked about a pamphlet or article on the silver question, replied, "A strong article on the Resubmission line [prohibition amendment] would do much more good than on the money question. My personal acquaintance with several of the leading Germans makes me feel confident of securing their vote on that line while [on] the money question, they are Gold Standard to a finish."

German newspapers published outside of Kansas also could be sent to German-language voters at what seemed to be reasonable fees. For one cent a week the National Reformer of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which claimed to be the oldest German reform newspaper in the United States, could be mailed to anyone in Kansas. In addition, a pamphlet in German on the silver question cost only five cents and could be mailed for an additional two cents. It is not known if copies of the Reformer were distributed, but the publisher did send some books to Taylor Riddle. Also, the chairman of the People's party in Atchison County sent two dollars in September "for 100 copies of the German Paper we were talking about." This, of course, could have been for copies of the Volkstall or Marysville Post.

66. G. H. Allen to Riddle, September 11, 1898, W. H. Dexter to Riddle, September 17, 1898, Riddle, KSHE; Charles H. Herold to Riddle, September 16, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.
67. William L. Wood to W. H. L. Pepperell, September 21, 1898 (Pepperell was secretary of the Democratic state committee); Church J. White to Riddle, November 4, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.
68. F. W. Frasier to State Central Committee, April 20, 1898, Library, KSHE; Nugent, The Tolerant Populists, 220. Frasier undoubtedly supervised publication of the paper but may have been too busy to edit it as he ran for state senator in the Seventeenth. His campaign was unsuccessful. Topeka Volkstall, July 26, September 13, October 25, 1898. After the election the name was changed to Kansas Volkstall. The Kansas Telegraph was an older German-language newspaper which began publishing in Atchison in 1880 and moved to Topeka in 1881.
69. W. D. Vincent to Riddle, September 14, 1898, W. S. Glass to Riddle, November 1, 5, 1898; William Meyer to Riddle, November 4, 1898; Charles S. Uhl to Riddle, September 15, 1898; Riddle, Watkins; Marysville Post, November 4, 1898.
70. Robert Schilling to Riddle, August 19, September 15, 1898; W. S. Sullivan to Riddle, September 19, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.
The Republican party also zealously pursued the German voter and sought to preserve its majority position in the German-language press. J. J. Entz, a Hillsboro Populist, reported the Republicans had paid off the mortgage he held against the Hillsboro Post, a German paper, and now it was assured “that nothing but Rep. doctrine will be published.” The Republican version of this event was that Entz offered not to foreclose when the mortgage came due if the paper would switch its support to the Populist side and that the Republicans responded by raising the funds needed to pay off the mortgage. Taylor Riddle was quoted as saying this action showed how afraid the Republicans were of having the German-Russians read a little truth.71

The Populist's campaign headquarters apparently requested some or all county chairmen to provide a list of German voters to be used in sending out newspapers, pamphlets, and other German-language campaign literature. Replies to this request, dating about mid-September, are noted from Nemaha, Douglas, Marion, Smith, and other counties. More specific plans to use mailings to German voters were mentioned in other letters. Henderson S. Martin, Populist candidate for Congress in the Fourth District, passed on several proposals for preparing and distributing circulars to German-language voters in Marion and nearby counties. He also suggested planting in an independent paper such as the Kansas City Star a short article concerning the anti-war principles of the Mennonites and their voting habits, having it translated, and bringing it to the attention of Mennonite voters by one means or another. The article's point would be that, as Mennonites would not bear arms or accept the offices of sheriff or governor whose duties might violate their religious principles, they should not, if consistently applying their beliefs, participate in electing a person to those offices. Henderson changed his mind more than once as to how and when these articles or circulars should be distributed, recognizing “the danger that the local Republicans would get on it and expose the business.”72 Whether any such circulars or articles actually were used has not been determined, but it seems doubtful the state committee diverted any of its scarce funds to schemes which at best would only deduct a few votes from opposing candidates while probably adding none to the Populist tally.

In view of the considerable volume of correspondence on efforts to influence black and German voters, there is a surprising scarcity of reports concerning work among industrial workers. Possibly this reflects a failure of the Kansas Populists to enlist those workers or it may have been they were treated as part of the general party effort not requiring special techniques or approaches. There is evidence that the Populists sent canvassers to work among the miners in southeastern Kansas. As early as August 28 the possibility of a lecturer in the mining district was mentioned in a letter from Crawford County. Shortly later, S. S. Lehman wrote from a mining area in Allen County: “The attendance so far has been surprisingly large. I have seen more republicans at our meetings than I ever did before... we are going up to LaHarp and Lola today and work the smelter men.” In August, O. T. Boaz of Pittsburg was “very strongly of the opinion that some money is being used [by the Republicans] at the voting precincts of Chicopee, Frontenac, and Yale” and that a strong effort by the governor with the miners was needed. Ten days later he characterized Cherokee and Crawford counties as crucial and felt success could be realized only if the miners were given some positions in the coal mine at the state penitentiary. This was a sore point with the miners who had been promised such benefits in the past but received nothing. Boaz claimed that if he could “promise about three positions to leading men at Chicopee and about three more in the Yale District, I believe I can have those fellows all in the harness, working beautifully; but I will not make any such promises unless I am authorized to do it by some person who will carry it out after the election.”73

Railroad workers also received some attention. W. H. T. Johnson, reporting on promoting harmony and distributing literature to railroaders in southeastern Kansas, mentioned that Stanley clubs were being formed but he argued they would be of little effect because they plainly were being promoted by the companies. He also planned to organize salt workers in Hutchinson and visit several other railroad or industrial centers. Even as late as November 3 the submission of a list of railroad section hands shows

71. J. J. Entz to Riddle, September 6, 1898, Riddle, Watkins; Marion Record, October 7, 1898, reprinted story from Topeka State Journal, October 3, 1898.
72. Henderson S. Martin to Riddle, September 5, 14, 17, 1898, Riddle, Watkins. In the letter dated the 17th, Martin suggested preparing a circular based on a speech in January by his congressional opponent, J. M. Miller, proposing an alliance between the United States and England. His plan was to send this circular to “Irish Catholic Republicans in the district. There are only a hundred or two of these people, but I think a circular of that kind, signed by some well-known Irishman would turn every one of these Republicans to me.”
73. D. C. Flint to Riddle, August 28, 1898; S. S. Lehman to Riddle, September 4, 1898; Oliver T. Boaz to Riddle, September 8, 1898, Riddle, Watkins; and Boaz to Riddle, August 27, 1898, Riddle, KSHS.
that railroad workers were considered worthwhile targets of Populist appeals.  

One interest group no political party could afford to ignore was the Civil War veterans. Basically this meant the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) which long had been a mainstay of the Republican party but into which the Populists had made inroads. Governor Leedy's energetic actions in raising troops for the war with Spain and the Populist program planks pushing jobs and pensions for veterans impressed many. W. J. Walker, writing from Chanute concerning a local GAR reunion, regretted the illness of Governor Leedy, "the soldier's friend," and asked that Sen. William A. Harris be substituted if the governor proved unable to fill the date. Further evidence that leading Populists generally were available to speak at GAR events is found in letters about the Marion County Soldiers Re-Union of October 11-15. The committee in charge wanted both the governor and the candidate for congressman-at-large, J. D. Botkin, but had to settle for Botkin when Leedy became ill. Additionally, speakers with GAR affiliations were sought. H. G. Toler, secretary of the Wichita State Fair Association, recommended Judge Charles Hatton, former GAR adjutant general, as a speaker who was acquainted with many veterans' leaders across Kansas and had done good work for the ticket in 1896.

Political appointments wanted by veterans could be political dynamite. H. E. Pyle, a Populist canvasser, detected much anti-Republican sentiment in the Pratt area caused by Republican rejection of two veterans who were candidates for post office jobs. Pyle wrote, "I never saw in all my life such feeling against the ticket (Rep) as exists in Pratt." He talked to many of the disaffected Republicans and passed their names to Jerry Simpson, the Populist candidate in the Seventh District.

The 1898 campaign, generally dismissed by historians of the period as a dull affair between a dispirited Populist organization and a slate of lackluster Republicans, appears to have been strongly contested and its result was in doubt until election day. The Republicans, in view of the Populists' poor legislative performance and the benefit of the reflected glory of the war with Spain, worked hard as they saw a good chance to regain control of the state. The Populists, sometimes described as recognizing their gradual demise and allowing their organization to decline, give evidence through the Riddle correspondence of competing wholeheartedly and devoting much time and effort to strengthening their organization down to the school district level.

There were weaknesses on both sides. Dissatisfaction with the renomination of Leedy was high and Harris and Leedy did not get along. Leedy's veto of the railroad bill, which he said he had to do because it was unconstitutional, offended some supporters. Fusion with the Democrats, although generally successful, had weak areas such as in the Seventh District. Additionally, Governor Leedy's illness kept him out of the campaign for nearly a month, a significant loss in a campaign where full-scale activity lasted only about twelve weeks. Infighting among the Populists, while not a major problem, sometimes led to serious local conflicts with an undoubted attendant loss of votes. The Republicans' chief difficulty was overcoming Stanley's lack of name recognition and his nomination as a compromise, which caused some support to be less than enthusiastic.

With the science of statistics still in its infancy and mass political polling not yet in existence, the best way state party officials had of determining where help was needed, what speakers were most effective, and what issues seemed to be the voters' chief concerns was to request local politicians to estimate how the campaign was faring in their areas. This information could be used to bolster pleas for money or other help and to allocate speakers, canvassers, literature, and other means of influencing voters. Late in the campaign the State Central Committee of the People's party appears to have gone out to some or all county chairmen and some other observers with a final request for an estimate of election results.

74. W. H. Johnson to Riddle, September 13, 1898; Chris S. Ritter to Riddle, November 3, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.
75. W. J. Walker to Head quarters Com. People's party, September 15, 1898; Thomas O. Kelly to Riddle, September 3, 9, 1898; H. G. Toler to Riddle, September 12, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.
76. H. E. Pyle to Riddle, August 29, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.

77. W. F. Benson to Riddle, September 6, 1898, Riddle, Watkins; Solon Gray to W. H. Sears, July 27, 1898; J. A. Reser to W. H. Sears, September 10, 1898, Sears Collection.
78. On September 6 the Topeka Daily Capital noted that Governor Leedy had not appeared for a meeting at which he and Stanley were expected to speak. On the 9th the same paper reported Leedy to be recovering from an illness. Campaign appearances were cancelled and Senator Harris was scheduled to fill in on a number of dates. W. T. Tipton to W. H. Sears, September 19, 1898, Sears Collection. Recovery was slower than expected; about September 25, Leedy went to the Bath House Hotel in Geuda Springs for further treatment, staying until October 1. Geuda News, Geuda Springs, September 23, 29, October 7, 1898. Shortly thereafter he returned to the campaign. His illness was never specified; eye problems, rheumatism, and nervous exhaustion were mentioned.
79. For instance, a Smith County correspondent condemned the tactics of local Populist leaders: "such a plain violation of Populist principles can not much longer be carried successfully at the polls. When we do exactly what the republicans have done, only more so, our argument is gone and the vote with it."]. A. Wright to Riddle, August 17, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.
80. Although a convention fight was avoided, Stanley was the second choice of Cy Leland and other influential party leaders. Topeka Daily Capital, June 6, 8, 9, 1898.
Thirteen letters providing estimates have been preserved; most, but not all, were optimistic. Some gave specific plurality estimates for the gubernatorial race. One Ellis County observer predicted a Leedy plurality of 700 votes while a second expected the Fusionists to take the state ticket by about the same margin (500), as in 1896. Other estimates saw Leedy winning Montgomery County by 200; Sedgwick County by 500 to 500; Leavenworth by 400 to 500; and Finney by 100. In Atchison County the estimates were much less favorable. One foresaw a plurality for the Republican candidate of not more than 250; the other said only, "I don't like the looks of things." Four of these estimates were correct as to the winner but not very accurate as to the size of the plurality. Leedy won Ellis County by 378 votes and Leavenworth by 160 and lost Atchison, but only by a margin of 82. The others were too optimistic. Leedy lost Montgomery and Sedgwick by about thirty votes each and Finney by 180.81

Estimates from other counties generally were less specific. Marshall County was said to look favorable for the Fusionists but Johnson appeared to be in doubt, although not hopeless. In Seward County a narrow loss by not more than fifteen votes was predicted for the state ticket but the Fusion campaign was expected to be successful in the legislative and county races. One Wabaunsee County observer looked for a Fusion win by a small majority; another said they would lose by less than thirty votes which would be an improvement over 1896.82 All of these estimates were overly sanguine. Leedy came close in Johnson County but lost by seventy-two votes. In both Marshall and Wabaunsee he lost by several hundred while in Seward, where only 152 voted, he failed, 56 to 88. One can only conclude that many reported their hopes rather than reasonable expectations; whether a pollster could have done better is a matter of opinion.

The weather forecast for Kansas for election day, November 8, 1898, was "partly cloudy and much colder; north winds."83 The weather, however, was seldom cited as the cause of the low turnout throughout the state. Telephone or telegraph reports came in fairly rapidly, and the next morning the Topeka Daily Capital proclaimed the election of Stanley. That announcement was based on a Republican estimate of a 5,000 majority made at 4:00 a.m.; at that hour Riddle claimed the governorship for Leedy by a majority of 8,000. Neither party had changed its estimate by 10:00 a.m. the next day, but convincing evidence of a Republican landslide soon came in and the Fusion forces conceded.

The final tally in the race for governor was around 149,000 for Stanley: 134,000 for Leedy; and about 4,700 votes going to other candidates. Even more disastrous to the People's party was the loss of all congressional seats except that of E. R. Ridgely in the Third District and the loss of the state house of representatives by a margin of three to one. Even the two senatorial seats being contested went to the Republicans, as did all of the elections of district judges. County races were more mixed although the Republicans made substantial gains. In some counties, such as Geary and Marshall, the Republicans had a near sweep, but elsewhere, for example Neosho and Crawford counties, the positions were pretty well split. Local issues often were dominant. In Gove County the Fusion forces were victorious in the county races for the first time because of a split in Republican ranks; this did not carry over to the state ticket where the Fusion candidates lost. In contrast, in nearby Ness County, Leedy and his state slate won, but the county and congressional races went to the Republicans. This result was blamed by some on the defection of Democrats and middle-of-the-road Populists. In Montgomery County the Fusion loss of state and legislative contests, despite victories in most county races, was blamed on a county high school bill passed by the legislature and the failure of Fusion forces to get out the rural vote.84

Oliver L. Lennen, People's party chairman for Ness County, best summarized the 1898 results by saying, "We got badly whipped compared with '96." Many of the explanations given for this rather startling reversal have been mentioned, but overall the improvement in economic conditions in Kansas and the failure of the Populist legislature to pass more reform legislation seem most damaging. One Populist, discussing the dilemma resulting from the railroad regulation fiasco, pointed out, "the railroad fight at the last session of the legislature was rotten to the core. If

81. [J. B. Brady] to Riddle, November 5, 1898, Riddle, KSHS; Theo. Munk to Chairman, People's Party, November 7, 1898; Mayo Thomas to Riddle, November 5, 1898; Wm. Meyer to Riddle, November 4, 1898; H. B. Horn to Riddle, November 3, 1898; B. F. Milton to Riddle, November 3, 1898; H. B. Horn to Riddle, November 5, 1898; Church J. White to Riddle, November 4, 1898, Riddle, Watkins. County voting results used here and elsewhere in this essay are from Clarence J. Hein and Charles A. Sullivan, Kansas Votes, Gubernatorial Elections, 1856-1976 (Lawrence: University of Kansas Governmental Research Center, 1958), 52-85.

82. W. S. Glass to Riddle, November 1, 1898; John T. Burris to Riddle, November 5, 1898; Cha. Hibbard to Riddle, November 3, 1898; William T. Riddle to Riddle, November 7, 1898; Riddle, Watkins; C. L. Culvert to Riddle, November 2, 1898, Riddle, KSHS.

83. Topeka Daily Capital, November 8, 1898.

84. Republican, Hays, November 12, 1898, estimated Republicans had won 490 out of 530 county offices statewide. W. P. Harrington to Riddle, November 9, 1898; O. L. Lennen to W. T. Tipton or Riddle, November 9, 1898; Mayo Thomas to Riddle, November 8, 1898, Riddle, Watkins.
Hon. Tevly Riddle,
Topeka, Kans.

Dear Sir:

We are preparing for a big afternoon and evening meeting on Nov. 7th. We are going to make a special effort to get the colored voters out to our meeting. We have engaged a colored band, and are going to have the colored people give Gov. Leedy a reception. I believe they will come out to this meeting, and believe it advisable to have a colored speaker here providing we can get the right one. I believe Cyrus Lindell could do us a great deal of good here on that day, and if you can possibly arrange to do so you must send him here. If he is billed to speak at some other place where there is not so large a meeting it would be advisable to cancel the date, send some one else there, and have him come here. An ordinary speaker would do us no good. Mr. Lindell spoke here a few days ago, and did not have a good meeting. Those who heard him were very much pleased, and are working up a meeting for him on Monday. We can assure you that it is very important that he be here on that day.

Yours truly,

[Signature]

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Special efforts were made to bring black and German voters to the Populist cause. In a Douglas County letter, Riddle was advised: "We are going to make a special effort to get the colored voters out to our meeting. We have engaged a colored band, and are going to have the colored people give Gov. Leedy a reception."
9-15-6
Reedville, Kan.
9/15/6

Empire Riddle
Topeka, Kan.

Dear Sir,

I enclose you a partial list of German names as requested. Just as I get them from the
"1st. person." I will send you an another list in a short time. We have a
great many German boys in our Co. and some good work can be done by the
right kind of a farm

Peace. What have you in the way of Oat.

From Reedville, Kansas,
Riddle received a list of the
"great many German in our
Co."

and from Burttow,
Kansas, came twenty-five

cents and a request for a

A request

R. J. Shire

THE PEOPLE'S PARTY OF KANSAS
we publicly sustain the Governor now we must necessarily condemn the legislature and if we sustain the Harris [railroad] bill we must condemn the Governor’s veto.” Another campaigner blamed the Fusion defeat on “the fact that the democrats in Kans. in the aggregate did not keep their pledges to the people’s party.” No doubt a search of Democratic party sources would turn up a corresponding complaint about the Populists.

One last intriguing question remains: Did the Populist efforts to cultivate black and German voters bear fruit? An answer is difficult to obtain as no one records voting results by ethnic or racial group. Thus, indications of such voting activity can be obtained only by looking at figures for political entities where the group in question was a majority, or at least a significant minority in the total population and, presumably, in the voting public. Even there, local issues or conditions may distort results. It seems valid to assume, however, that a consistent or sizable variation in voting results in county, city, or smaller units where an ethnic or racial group has a strong representation can be used as evidence of the voting behavior of that group without being wrong in too many cases. Fortunately, the existence of a township by township report of gubernatorial voting in Kansas in 1898 makes possible some analyses at that level to supplement the more readily available county by county figures.

Turning first to the German voters, it is difficult to draw any conclusions from statewide or regional figures. Voting results in the ten counties with the highest percentage of German-language residents in the 1895 state census show no positive result from the Populists’ efforts with that group. In those counties, ranging from 22 to 7 percent German, the Fusion candidate for governor polled 16.7 percent fewer votes in 1898 than he did in 1896, while the Republican candidate lost only 7.2 percent of his support. These percentages are in close agreement with the statewide figures of a 20 percent loss for the Fusion candidate and 7 percent for the Republican. Regional figures lead to a similar conclusion. For instance, if, as indicated in the Riddle correspondence, the Populists made a considerable effort to influence Germans in the counties on the northern border, it either was ineffective or was insufficient to offset other losses. Taking the seven counties from Smith eastward through Nemaha, Governor Leedy retained only Smith County in 1898 of the four he won in 1896. In those counties he won 52 percent of the votes in 1896; in 1898 his share shrank to a little below 47 percent.

Looking at some of the other German counties, the Roman Catholic, Democratic, and Fusion counties of Ellis and Trego remained just that, although the Fusion majority dropped from 596 in 1896 to 389 in 1898, a switch of about one hundred votes. Russell County, safely Republican with German-Russian Lutherans, became even more so as the GOP’s margin more than doubled, rising from 131 in 1896 to 274 in 1898. In the heavily Mennonite counties of Harvey, Marion, and Rush, even Rush County went Republican in 1898 and totals for the three counties show a drop of 850 in the Fusion vote in contrast to a loss of only a little over 200 for the Republicans. Clearly none of these figures attest to significant help for Governor Leedy from Fusion efforts to attract German voters.

Analyzing voting results in individual townships, we find somewhat different results. A review of the makeup of township populations reveals twenty to thirty in which German-speaking residents ranged from 50 to nearly 100 percent of the population. Table I compares election results in a number of the strongly German townships, mostly in northeastern Kansas, with county figures:

Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Percent German</th>
<th>Percentage change in vote for Fusion from 1896 to 1898</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marshall County</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 most German townships</td>
<td>60 to 80</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nemaha County</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 most German townships</td>
<td>40 to 60</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington County</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 most German townships</td>
<td>40 to 60</td>
<td>-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickinson County</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 most German townships</td>
<td>50 to 70</td>
<td>-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barton County</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 most German townships</td>
<td>60 to 80</td>
<td>-17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

87. Population figures are derived from the 1895 Decennial Census figures published in Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Twelfth Biennial Report (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Co., 1896), 252-255. German language users were obtained by adding the figures for residents born in Germany to those born in Russia. The few Russian-born persons not of German descent were assumed to be much more than offset by German-language Swiss and Austrians recorded under “Other Northern European.”

88. The percentage of German-language residents by township was obtained from J. Neale Carman, Foreign Language Units in Kansas (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1962). Professor Carman used 1895 figures in much of his analysis. As noted above, his practice of considering immigrants of Russian origin in Kansas in 1895 to be German-language users has been followed.
These figures suggest that in Marshall and Nemaha counties the Fusion campaign did much better and the Republicans did much worse in the German townships than in the rest of the county. In the other three counties, it appears the Germans did not favor the Fusion candidate any more than did other voters in the county but were much more negative about the Republican candidate. Possibly this indicates that Fusion efforts among the German voters discouraged a sizable group from again voting Republican but was not successful in getting enough to switch to the Fusion ticket. Elsewhere, strong German townships in Osborne and Mitchell counties also show a strengthening of the Fusion position but township figures in the German-Russian Mennonite areas generally show a widening of the Republican margins over 1896.

Applying the same kind of analysis to black voting in 1898, township by township figures can be used in only a few instances because only a handful of rural townships had high concentrations of black voters. Nicodemus Township, Graham County, was about ninety percent black. There the Republicans enjoyed a 46 to 18 majority in 1896 while in 1898 the margin shrank decidedly to 36 to 25. In Wild Horse Township, just south of Nicodemus and about fifty percent black, the Fusion majority of 38 to 25 dropped slightly in 1898 to 36 to 28. Just north of Nicodemus, Pioneer Township, nearly all white, was strongly Fusion, 59 to 22, in 1896 but gave Governor Leedy only a 47 to 37 margin in 1898. These figures show that black voters supported the Fusion ticket much more strongly in 1898 than in 1896, in contrast to the white voters, many of whom deserted the Fusion cause. However, the increased Fusion effort among Graham County blacks was not strong enough to cause a majority to desert the Republican party.

The effectiveness of the Populist appeal to black voters in the cities is difficult to determine because black concentrations frequently did not coincide with voting precincts. General statements can be found such as that of J. W. Browder of Leavenworth who estimated, "The colored people in Kansas as in this city and county, gave us sixty-five to seventy-five percent of their vote." If true, this certainly would prove a Populist success in obtaining more black support, but Browder provided no evidence. As far as Leavenworth city and county are concerned, the election results do not conflict with his assertion. In the city, the number of Republican votes dropped 32 percent from 1896 to 1898 while the Fusion count went down only 15 percent; in the county comparable reductions were 28 percent for the Republicans and 17 percent for the Fusionists. These figures are in marked contrast to the statewide losses of 7 percent for the Republican and 20 percent for the Fusion candidate for governor. It very well may be that the black population of 16 percent in the city and 14 percent in the county played a significant part in this reversal of statewide results.

Analysis of voting results in the larger cities provides some, but far from conclusive, support for the thesis that Fusion efforts to garner more black votes in 1898 were successful. Table 2 separates the larger cities in Kansas at that time into two groups: seven with 12 percent or more black residents, averaging 14.5 percent; and eight with 9 percent or less, averaging 6 percent blacks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Population in 1898</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% Voting for Fusion Candidate in 1896</th>
<th>% Voting for Fusion Candidate in 1898</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kansas City</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topeka</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leavenworth</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atchison</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Scott</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsons</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wichita</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plattsburg</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emporia</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas City</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winfield</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are too many unknown factors to make these figures worthy of rigorous statistical analysis but some interesting observations can be made. Comparing 1896 and 1898 percentages, the Fusion candidate for governor fared better in all of the cities with twelve percent or more blacks in the population than he did in the state as a whole; in most of the cities where the percentage of blacks was much lower, the Fusion candidate did worse than in the statewide campaign. It may be argued that this difference is a 91.

91. Population figures and percentage of blacks are derived from State Board of Agriculture, *Tenth Biennial Census*, 558. Of the sixteen largest cities, Salina had to be deleted because no data for nativity or race was published. Kansas City population figures combine the listed figures for Kansas City, Rosedale, and Aitkin; this was advisable as available voting figures were such that Wyandotte County percentages had to be used in the voting columns.
function of the city's size. However, Wichita was third in size in the state and Parsons was smaller than Pittsburg, Hutchinson, or Emporia. Furthermore, in Lawrence, Leavenworth, and Atchison the Fusion campaign made relatively large gains while in Fort Scott, Topeka, and Kansas City it at best held its own. Another argument might be that the larger cities were more industrialized and the industrial workers responded more favorably to the Fusion campaign than did the general population. This conclusion is weakened by the fact that most, if not all, of the cities in the lower group were railroad centers and railroads were a considerable part of Kansas' industrial development in the 1890s. In summary, although available figures do not prove the 1898 Fusion campaign to have influenced black voters successfully, it may well be significant that the Fusion candidate for governor received as high or a higher percentage of votes in 1898 than in 1896 in most cities where there were large numbers of potential black voters and lost ground in almost every city where black voters were scarce.

The 1898 election was not quite the last gasp of the Populists in Kansas. In 1900, in thorough fusion with the Democrats, a mixed ticket from the two parties failed to win the governorship by 17,000 votes and lost both branches of the legislature by large margins. In the next legislative session the Republican majority passed an election law providing that no candidate for office could accept the nomination of more than one party, thus outlawing fusion campaigns.92 This and other factors, such as the co-opting of Populist issues by elements of the Republican party as well as by the Democrats, led to the rapid dissolution of the People's party in Kansas.

Some historians claim the Populist movement became moribund after embracing fusion and the silver issue in 1896. This may be so, but in Kansas, one of the states in which the Populists had their greatest political successes, the party never won a state office except when combined with the Democrats. According to W. P. Harrington, a participant and close observer of Kansas politics at the turn of the century, without fusion the Populists of this state "would probably never have accomplished more than to elect a few members of congress and perhaps hold the balance of power in the legislature." Even so, the Populist movement left a considerable legacy to Kansas and the rest of the nation; many of its principles and proposals soon found their way into the programs of the two major parties and have long been embodied in the laws of Kansas and other states.93

93. Ibid.